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# ABSOLUTE UNDERGROUND

## COVERING THE UNDERGROUND MUSIC SCENE SINCE 2004

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# VICTORIA'S LOCALS ONLY



## HOG

By John Carlow

**Absolute Underground: Introduce yourselves.**

**HOG:**

Guitar/Vocals: Liam McLaren (Xana, ex-Zoo Riots/The Archers)

Bass/Vocals: Evan Hillier (ex-222/River)

Drums: Caleb Belknap (Decryptor, ex-Happy Ending)

**AU: How did the band come around?**

**H:** I moved back home to Victoria in 2019 after spending a few years in Toronto. I was having

a hard time getting back into the music scene here, when I met Caleb's mom at a butcher shop we both worked at. She mentioned Caleb was a drummer, and after a number of failed introductions, she somewhat forcefully introduced us to each other. We hit it off right away, bonding over our mutual tastes in punk bands. Specifically, ones from Victoria's legendary scene. We spent about two years as a duo writing and rehearsing but found that we were lacking something to get us off the ground. We figured adding guitar and someone who could actually sing to the mix might do the trick, so I tracked down my old high school pal Liam at an open mic in Fernwood one day and asked if he'd be interested. We had been in a few bands together during and just after high school, so I knew he

was good, and that we worked well together. Luckily, he was up for it, and it was in fact, just what the band needed.

**AU: What's your creative process?**

**H:** So far the songs typically start out as demos which I record at Caleb's place on bass and drums. Once I show the guys, Liam will write guitar and vocals, and from there we start really shaping the song. We usually add or alter sections, tighten up transitions, and generally try to refine the songs as much as possible. Some tunes take a long time to get right, so we often need to play them over and over before we land on an arrangement, we're happy with. Collaboration is important to us, so a lot of this process involves guiding each other to ideas that work. We each have different musical backgrounds, and it seems like

the intersection of those perspectives elevate the songs in a way greater than any one of us could write on our own.

**AU: Bands that have inspired your sound?**

**Evan:** NoMeansNo is by far my biggest influence for the bass and drums, but I think we also take after bands like Big Black, Pigment Vehicle, the BCASA, Tool, and definitely Rage Against the Machine.

**Liam:** I see Queens of the Stone Age for both the guitar and vocal styles, Death From Above 1979, and probably a bit of Kurt Cobain too.

**Caleb:** I try to go for some Bad Brains and Dead Kennedys type drums, especially on the more punk tunes. I try to harness as much John

Wright as possible, but no one really plays like that guy. Bill Ward from early Sabbath albums is hugely influential.

**AU: Your take on the local scene?**

**H:** At first it seemed a little dead, but the longer we stay in it and the deeper we go, the more vibrant and alive it becomes. There are a lot of passionate people who just want to help and be a part of the community. We're really proud to be able to contribute and just want to find our place with it and be as supportive to the scene as we can.

**AU: What have you recorded?**

**H:** Our first full length album will be released October 4th!

**AU: Shout outs?**

**H:** Want to shout out our good friend and producer Liam Moes for the immense amount of work he put into producing our recordings. Brock McFarlane for doing mastering on the whole album. Lucas McKinnon at Silverside Sound and Tom Dobrzanski at Monarch Studios for providing us with such amazing spaces for recording. Josh Harrison for being the low-key best tour manager of all time. And of course, the ultra talented Charlie Penn for designing countless pieces of artwork including our album cover.

**AU: The road ahead?**

**H:** Well, our aforementioned debut album will be out in October, and with that we want to keep playing shows and touring as much as possible. We all know how tough it is to make a living these days as a musician, but our goal is to be able to do this full time. For us, it's all about performing and sharing our music - so the more of that the better.

**AU: Where do people find your stuff?**

**H:** You can find anything and everything Hog at our website: [thebandnamedhog.com](http://thebandnamedhog.com)

*Photos by Finding Charlotte Photography*

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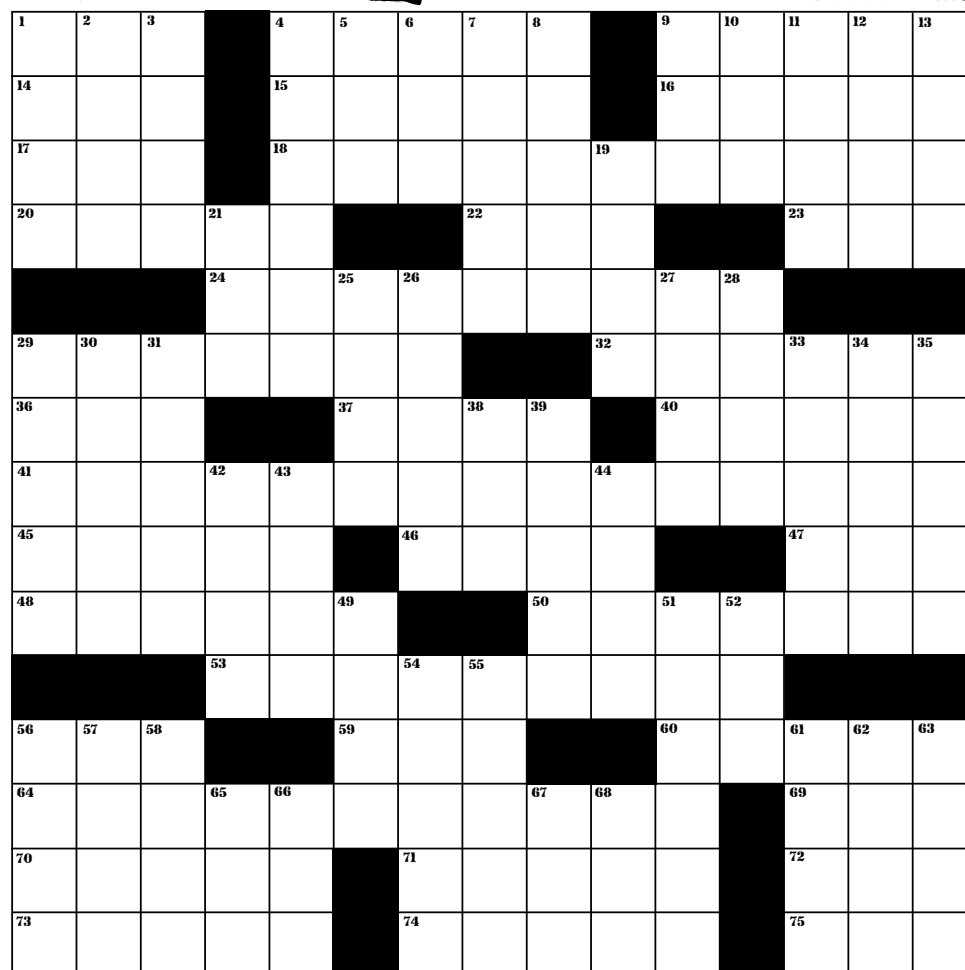
HUMP DAY

## ACROSS

1. \*Tech giant
4. "The Hunger \_\_\_\_\_"
9. \* "John Carpenter's The \_\_\_\_\_"
14. Word surrounding 'Sinner' in a Dayglo's title
15. 9/11 mastermind
16. "\_\_\_\_\_ Killed the Radio Star"
17. Quebec town known for its soft cheese
18. TV competition for 41-across
20. Shade of purple
22. Pie \_\_\_\_\_ mode
23. Hormone that controls the kidney
24. \* With 73-across, actress who played 53-across on film
29. Go to sea
32. A do-over on a film set
36. Lion or Oiler, for ex. (abbr.)
37. Boring in Boucherville
38. High-tech tavern?
40. Film director Christopher
41. \* Monstrous cartoon franchise?
45. Get used to
46. Old ski lift
47. Actress Arthur of "Maude"
48. Chorus line from "Rehab"
50. Moves back (in horror)
53. Theme of this crossword linked to the starred clues
56. Letters following a cameraperson's name
59. Charged particle
60. Toronto music tabloid, '98-'07
64. Actress in "X" and the "Scream" franchise
69. Common German article
70. The Polecats "Red Ready \_\_\_\_\_"
71. Sounded kittenish
72. Province named for Queen Victoria's father
73. See 24-across
74. Adjective with Rock
75. Oft-used description for 41-across

## DOWN

1. Singer Billy
2. Carvings found in some bars
3. Shade of greenish blue
4. "I understand"
5. "Evil Dead" hero
6. "Maggie \_\_\_\_\_"
7. Actresses Watson and Stone



CROSSWORD NO. 119

HALLOWEEN, 2025

8. \_\_\_\_\_ Ste. Marie
9. Idiot boxes
10. "\_\_\_\_\_ me up"
11. A lightbulb in cartoons
12. Bookish kid
13. "Gee whiz!"
19. Old hair-removal brand
21. Cool contraptions (abbr.)
25. Reynolds-Bridges film of 2013
26. \_\_\_\_\_ ease
27. "99 Luftballons" singer
28. Pink Floyd's "\_\_\_\_\_ Heart Mother"
29. "Nights in White \_\_\_\_\_"
30. Prefix with 'centric'
31. Its HQ is in NY
33. A perp needs one
34. Superman
35. "Orinoco Flow" singer and namesakes
38. Hosp. transport (abbr.)

39. Ivan, Peter and Nicholas
42. "Pretty Maids All In \_\_\_\_\_"
43. People of Northern Canada
44. He hangs with Daphne and Velma
49. Annette Funicello's "\_\_\_\_\_ Mio"
51. Literally, 'village' in Iroquoian
52. "Hey!" in Spain
54. Oscar winner "\_\_\_\_\_ Rae"
55. "\_\_\_\_\_ Sandman"
56. Not quite closed
57. Many a truck
58. US consumer channel
61. Iggy Pop's "\_\_\_\_\_ Man"
62. Competed (for)
63. Children's author Blyton
65. Japanese tech giant
66. Onasis, to his friends
67. Farm mom
68. Word before X or Z

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## Armed Conflict - China's New Apex Predators

Interview with AJVTAR (vocals) and Ic4nH4ndl3thi\$ (guitar)  
By Ryan Dyer

Armed Conflict are one of the new faces of brutal Chinese metal who, alongside bands like Dehumanizing Itatrain Worship (who they recently toured with), Human Instrumentality Project, and Leviathan, are poised to be a force to be reckoned with in the years to come. The band thrives at the intersection of chaos, groove, and self-identity, fusing streetwise aggression with unexpected fluidity and rhythm. In this interview, vocalist AJVTAR and guitarist Ic4nH4ndl3thi\$ walk us through the meaning behind their name, the ethos of their debut full-length *ARMEDCIAGA*, and the local and international influences that have shaped their distinct approach to brutal yet accessible metal.

**AU:** The band is known as Armed Conflict in English, but is a little different in Chinese.

**Could you explain the differences?**

**AJVTAR:** Compared to the English name, the Chinese name has these two extra characters, which mean “for no reason.” It gives the Chinese name a slightly more chaotic vibe. Honestly, we just added them to give it that uniquely Chinese poetic touch. The Chinese name came first—the English one was just to help international friends understand it more directly.

**AU:** In China, where guns are banned, conflicts often take the form of knife fights or street altercations. Do you see this reality reflected in the band's identity and attitude?

**AJVTAR:** Yeah, China has really strict bans on guns and controlled weapons. But the whole weapon imagery we use is really more about the band's visual style. It's definitely a strong way to show that aggressive edge, but honestly, it doesn't have a deep connection to the band's core message.

**AU:** There's a strong street mentality in Armed Conflict and also in bands like Holy Mercy. In North America, acts like Peelingflesh bring a similar style to heavy music. How does that influence the way you approach writing and playing guitar?

**Ic4nH4ndl3thi\$:** Lately, I've been obsessed with the band Peelingflesh too! I'm big on hip-hop normally, so when I'm writing, I'm always trying to work that style into the band's tracks.

**AU:** Armed Conflict were already active for a few years before you joined. How did you become part of the lineup?

**Ic4nH4ndl3thi\$:** The lead singer of my other band Holy Mercy knew AJVTAR before I did. I met AJVTAR at the One of Us Music Festival back in 2021, and not long after, they were short on people—so I hopped right in!

**AU:** Your debut full-length *ARMEDCIAGA* took four years to complete, with each track going through multiple rewrites and refinements. Can you walk me through the concept of the album?

**AJVTAR:** Basically, you could think of the album as our way of introducing ourselves. *ARMEDCIAGA* is like a summary of everything we've been through with the band over the past six years. While making the music, we gradually shaped our own identity, and I think the “armed family” concept is a solid representation of where we are right now. Sound-wise, the album isn't heavy in the traditional sense; our approach puts self-identity first, smooth flow and groove second, and heavy aggression last. I'd describe it as



something totally new—very distinctive, but still super easy to get into. Hope everyone likes it!

**AU:** The track “sān bù guān” was re-recorded for *ARMEDCIAGA*. Why was that particular song important to revisit and refine for the album?

**AJVTAR:** The main reason we connected with this track was because it really captures this feeling of

being like wild dogs stuck in the mud, struggling but unable to break free from their fate. That kind of powerless, trapped vibe—we all really loved that imagery and concept.

**AU:** Your alias Ic4nH4ndl3thi\$ suggests a digital, futuristic identity. How intentional is that aesthetic for the band?

**Ic4nH4ndl3thi\$:** My name's actually spelled “I can handle this.” It comes from that letter-switch thing some American rappers do, and honestly? I just used my video game ID for it.

**AU:** One of Us has been important in championing this new breed of heavy artists in China, acting as both a label and a festival. What has their involvement meant for Armed Conflict?

**AJVTAR:** One of Us was a huge help to us early on, both financially and resource-wise. You could say they were both a friend and a backer. They helped us get out of our hometown and reach more people in the early days. We're really grateful for their support.

**AU:** Kiryu from Dehumanizing Itatrain Worship contributed to the album's cover design, and you recently shared a stage with them at the Anime Conflict show in Bangkok. What was that experience like, and how did Thai fans respond to Chinese brutality?

**AJVTAR:** Thailand is absolutely wild! We got a small taste of a different kind of freedom there. The local crowds were so energetic and awesome—playing that show with DIW in Bangkok was an unforgettable experience.

**AU:** After seeing Armed Conflict live, I felt that the future of Chinese brutal metal is in safe hands. Bands like The Dark Prison Massacre will eventually step aside, but groups like Armed Conflict, Leviathan, Human Instrumentality Project, and Dehumanizing Itatrain Worship are now leading the new era. How do you see your place in this future?

**AJVTAR:** In the future, we're definitely going to be at the top of the pyramid—the apex predators. We'll dominate the game, set the trends, and be the ones making the rules.

# JEFFERSON'S

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## BRAIN FOG talks *The Black Coffee* EP

By Ray MacKay

**AU: Who are we talking to and what are you most famous or infamous for?**

**Brain Fog:** Hello! I'm El Jeffe, the founding guitarist and songwriter in Brain Fog. I'm probably most famous for being a bass playing band slut in the Vancouver punk scene in bands like Dissent and Nunstalker. I also used to race in marathons and Ironman Triathlons. As you might imagine the punk rock lifestyle didn't gel too well with my that. I'd get home from playing a show at the Cobalt or wherever at 2AM then be out running 20 miles at 7am the next morning. It's a pretty unique combo, John Joseph from the Cro-Mags is pretty much the only other guy I know of that's doing this. These days I can no longer race, but I still coach marathon runners full time.

**AU: Where are you from and what's the music scene like there?**

**BF:** I'm originally from Vancouver and I got involved in the punk scene in the early 90's as a kid going to shows. By 1993 I was playing shows and by 1998 I had my first serious band called the Francophobes that signed to Spawner Records and started doing tours across Canada. I toured and recorded with several bands for the next 25 years, the last one being the Belushis. We were

on tour in Alberta somewhere and it occurred to me that my heart was no longer in it. I came home, quit the band and sold all my gear. Eight years ago I moved to the Okanagan and I've been involved in the scene here for about four years now. The first two years I spent just going to shows and meeting friends, and the last two years I've spent getting Brain Fog together. The Okanagan scene is rad, everyone is so supportive and the shows are always great. I love it here!

**AU: Give us a brief history of Brain Fog.**

**BF:** Three years ago I got seriously injured when a drunk driver who was doing 130km/hr ran me over on my motorcycle. I suffered some very traumatic injuries and was never supposed to survive. The most serious was my head injury which still impacts my short-term memory and balance today. As part of my rehab I picked up the guitar again and started trying to heal my brain. It was pretty wild how I could remember how to play songs from my younger days note for note, but I couldn't remember a new song two minutes after I wrote it. Eventually I built a studio in my basement and came up with a way to record songs as I wrote them. Then I'd put them into a playlist and listen to them on repeat hundreds of times until I could mostly remember them. The songs started to pile up and eventually I thought I should try and get a band together. I switched from bass to guitar and eventually found some guys out here to play with. I met a drummer out here named Will Bruce who played for the Kamloops band Let's Go. We named the band Brain Fog as a joke about my memory issues and the fact Will is such a stoner. We spent a few months working on the tunes and we couldn't find a singer. So Will suggested he just sing on the demos until we find someone. After hearing him it was pretty clear we wouldn't find a better singer than him, so we just found a new drummer instead. Our first rhythm section consisted of Victoria punk legend Mike McKinnon (Tim, Class Of 1984, Knife Manual) and our drummer buddy Kevin Hargrave. Our current rhythm section is Cole Chilton who also plays in Early Work and a rad new metal drummer named Casey James. I'm at the point now with my head injury where I can

memorize about 30 minutes worth of songs on a good day, so here we go!

**AU: You've just released *The Black Coffee* EP on August 5th - tell us all about it!**

**BF:** We have a buddy out here in Summerland who owns Pink Weasel Coffee Co and he suggested we do a Brain Fog/Pink Weasel coffee collab. I thought it was a fun idea to sell coffee and mugs at the shows, and as far as I can tell no other band is selling coffee at the merch table. People seem to love it, and the coffee is great! So I wrote a song called "Hug A Mug", a nod to the Descendents' "Coffee Mug". We had a few other songs that didn't make it onto our first record because they were too heavy but they fit the vibe. These four tunes are way faster and heavier than our first record.

**AU: Tell us about the process behind writing and recording of *The Black Coffee* EP.**

**BF:** We had a lot of help recording and mixing from my high school buddy Sean Colig who played guitar in SNFU, Savannah, Minority, and Side Sixty-seven. He's also working with Occultavators Of Doom right now, so I guess we're both like his pet projects as he works to establish himself as a record producer. He's been so much help in getting our music out. He produced, mixed, and mastered both our records. Thanks Sean!

**AU: What track on *The Black Coffee* EP are you most excited for people to hear?**

**BF:** Well, the thing about a four song EP is that it'll generally be pretty on point. The whole thing is about eight minutes, start to finish. I think our favourite song to play live is "The Guillotine" which is about holding the greedy oligarchs who have seized control of the government accountable for their actions.

**AU: What song would you recommend to anyone who hasn't heard of Brain Fog? What album?**

**BF:** "Complete Control", the first song off our first record *Foggedaboutit*. It's been the first song of our set for every show we've played so far and really sets the tone.

**AU: What's the most personal song you've written?**

**BF:** On *Foggedaboutit* there's a song called "One Year" which is about my experience dealing with the Canadian legal system after that drunk driver nearly killed me. My life has been forever changed, and he only got one year in jail. The system is so broken, and heavily favours protecting the rights of the accused while almost completely ignoring justice for the victims. It's so frustrating and my heart goes out to anyone else who's had their life impacted by the acts of somebody who will never be properly held accountable under the current system. It's a legal system, not a justice system.

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

**BF:** We just got a band van for Brain Fog and are eager to hit the road more. We got to play shows in the Kootenays and all over the Thompson Okanagan this summer. We got to play a few shows with Krang from Czechia and King Thief from Edmonton, plus the Hogkegger fest which was rad! Next, we'd love to make it to the Island and Alberta, or even up North. Hit us up, we'll find a weekend to come play anywhere!

**AU: Anything else to promote? Any upcoming tours?**

**BF:** We are making our first trip to Vancouver on November 22nd to play Lana Lou's with our buds The Fomites and Stolen Goods. Come hang out. Also, we'll be playing:

Thurs Nov 20, Kelowna @ Jackknife Brewing w/ Real Sickies

Fri Nov 21, Kamloops @ Pizza Pi w/ A Case In Point

Sat Nov 22 Vancouver @ Lana Lou's w/ the Fomites

**AU: Where can we find you online? Website/ socials/etc?**

**BF:**

Instagram: [@brainfogpunkrock](#)

Band Camp: [brainfogpunkrock.bandcamp.com](#)

**Also on Spotify, iTunes and everywhere else you stream music.**

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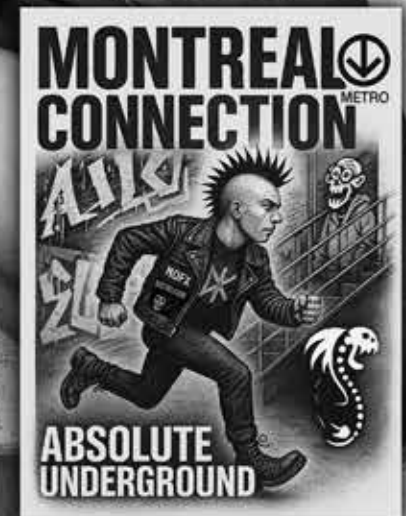
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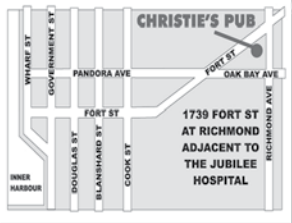
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### **BROKE & HUNGRY "CANADA" IS DOING THE RIGHT THING THIS HOLIDAY SEASON**

The war on the poor continues at home with forced recovery models, the continued criminalization of homelessness, and seemingly never-ending policy failure deaths in the overdose epidemic. It's no secret that things are tough all over, and to make matters worse, the cost of living keeps rising as wages remain the same and shrinkflation is all that and a 1/4 bag of chips!

**BROKE & HUNGRY "CANADA"** is a national food-drive benefitting communities in need. It's also a call to action to band together and make as much noise as we can about food insecurity in this country. This November and December the underground punk rock community joins forces in a unified front in cities across the nation to be part of the solution. A tour of events has been scheduled in every major city possible, from St. John's to Dawson City, and there's still time to join the campaign by adding a show of your own! We're collecting non-perishable food items leading up

to, and during the events, to donate to reputable food-sharing services and Indigenous resource centres in each city. Each and every show is guaranteed to be a wild party to celebrate the power of the people and share in our indestructible spirit and connection. There will be hardcore punk rock, hip hop, comedy, raffle prizes and good times to be had by all. 'OPERATION BROWN BAG' is a money pool running in tandem with the tour. Your donations directly fund

bagged lunches for under-housed individuals and encampment residents. These meals will be assembled and distributed by band/community members in an outreach mission, every stop on the tour.

**The BROKE & HUNGRY "CANADA" compilation album will be released on November 1st!** The collection features one song from every band

on the tour and will be available through each band's Bandcamp for a donation to their local food-sharing charity of choice.

We need your help to spread the message. Come to a show or put one on, make a donation, share the events, spread the word! **More information can be found at: [linktr.ee/ttt416](http://linktr.ee/ttt416)**

**Or contact [contacttwitchytantrum416@gmail.com](mailto:contacttwitchytantrum416@gmail.com) to get involved.**

The government hates us, so let's help each other out for the holidays because it's the right thing to do. The world is on fire my friends; THE ONLY WAY FORWARD IS COMMUNITY.

In Solidarity, Twitchy T. Tantrum (HOBO BANDITOS)



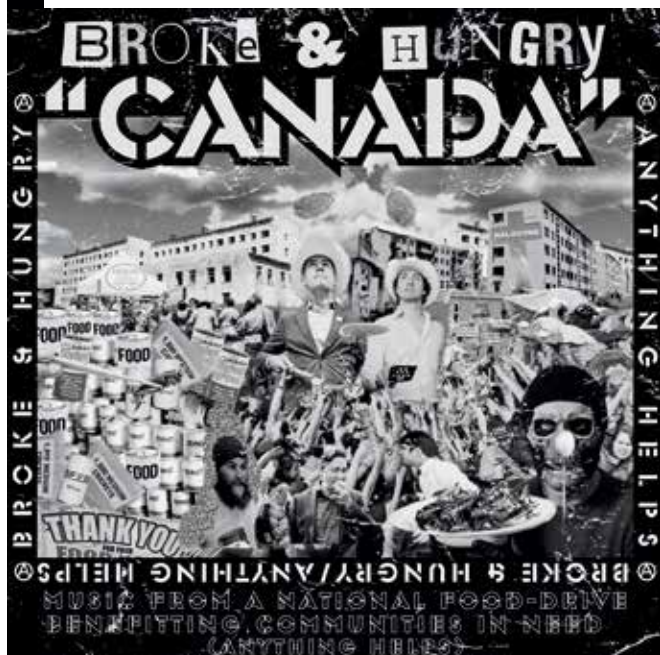


# BROKE & HUNGRY "CANADA"

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(ANYTHING HELPS)



THE ONLY WAY FORWARD IS COMMUNITY



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## Toronto's OUST Prepares For A Hardcore DEBUT

By Ray MacKay

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

**OUST:** Adam, Baxter & Colin. Colin made Michael Cera an iced coffee in 2012. Does that answer the second question?

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

**O:** Well Colin got told by his therapist to play in a band again, and he found Adam online, Baxter saw a Facebook post looking for a bassist referencing some cool bands as influences and hit them up. Adam plays guitar and sings, Baxter plays bass and does some light backup vocals, and Colin plays the drums.

**AU: Tell us about your musical experience leading up to forming Oust.**

**O:** We've all been playing in bands of various degrees of seriousness since our early teens, and just never stopped. Adam grew up in Rochester, New York and played in bands such as Like Wolves, and Pomelo. Colin slept on various floors all throughout the golden horseshoe, and played in Vallens. Baxter grew up in Vancouver playing in bands such as Inherent Vices & Search Parties, before moving to Toronto in 2013 and playing in Warm Frames.

**AU: Do you feel like each band member brings something unique to the**

**table? How so?**

**O:** Yeah, we definitely do, according to Colin, Adam is the George, Baxter is the Ringo and Colin is Lars. We all obviously come with our own tastes and influences and that shows in our sound. Colin brings more of a darkened metal/hardcore influence, Adam loves Wire, and in classic bassist fashion, Baxter keeps trying to put slap bass in one of our songs.

**AU: Where are you from and what's the music scene like there?**

**O:** We're all transplants, but based in Toronto. The music scene here is pretty sick, you can go see stuff all the time in basically every genre you can think of. The youth of the city are just unflappable, as much as the city tries to stop them they will keep trying to have a scene.

**AU: What's the most memorable live show you've performed and why?**

**O:** We're hoping our first show will be pretty memorable for us and a confirmation of the hard work we've been putting in at practices. As far as in our other bands, Colin played with Captured By Robots at the Rockit. Adam played a show in Missoula, Montana to a bunch of circle pitting Juggalos. Baxter had a Christmas tree fall on him

during a show one time at an after hours venue in Vancouver.

**AU: Your band's sound has been described as "post-hardcore" before. How would you describe Oust's sound?**

**O:** There's so much leeway under the description of "post-hardcore", I think there's some post-punk elements with angular guitar lines, and a locked-in rhythm section in our sound, we also have some straight forward more classic punk influences on certain songs as well. If we're called "post-hardcore" to one person then to them we are, if we're called something else by another, so be it. It's so hard to narrow down what the "sound" is without putting limitations on yourself for the future.

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

**Adam:** 90's Rustbelt Noise Rock & Bossa Nova.

**Colin:** Speaking specifically drum wise, Mclusky, Shellac, maybe some Kraut Rock, The Wipers.

**Baxter:** There's a lot of Mclusky influence in my parts as well, The Misfits, Idles, and I'd be lying if I didn't say I'm always trying to steal from Matt Freeman.

**AU: What do you consider to be the essential post-hardcore album?**

**Adam:** *Yank Crimes* by Drive Like Jehu.

**Colin:** *Owls* by Owls.

**Baxter:** *The Argument* by Fugazi.

**AU: Any plans to release a single or an album in the future?**

**O:** Absolutely, that's the next plan after the show, get a demo together of our current songs, and then work our way to a full album.

**AU: Any upcoming shows? Tell us all about it!**

**O:** October 12th were playing the Dock Ellis in Toronto with Fed Ash, Uugggh & Miracle Blade.

**AU: It's Halloween here at Absolute Underground. Any plans for Halloween this year?**

**Baxter:** I have once again failed to pull off being as ripped as Danzig, so I do not have a costume or any plans yet.

**Adam:** Taking my 3 year old trick or treating at a street party.

**Colin:** Well, I was going to go as Doyle Von Frankenstein, so what am I supposed to do now Baxter?

**AU: What are some of your favourite horror movies?**

**Colin:** *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*(the original), *Event Horizon*.

**Adam:** The original *Alien*, *The Thing*.

**Baxter:** It's stupid but I love *Black Roses*, is it too early to say *Weapons?*, *Green Room*, *Friday the 13th*.

**AU: What's your favourite horror movie soundtrack?**

**Colin:** That truck movie with the AC/DC soundtrack, that's the Stephen King

book..... *MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE*.

**Adam:** The original *Suspiria* soundtrack.

**Baxter:** *Queen of the Damned*.

**AU: Anything else to promote?**

**O:** Sadly, we don't have an oust-coin yet. So no.

**AU: Where can we find you online? Website/ socials/etc?**

**O:** We're just on Instagram at the moment, we are @oouusstt, but we'll once we get some recording done we'll have more.



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## SELF//CARE Talks New Album, *DAWGY*

By Ray MacKay

**AU: Who are we talking to and what are you most famous or infamous for?**

**SELF//CARE:** My name is Jamie and I'm the bass player and lead vocalist for SELF//CARE. We are probably most famous for the unabashed earnestness we inject into what are otherwise pretty light-hearted and fun songs.

**AU: Where are you from and what's the music scene like there?**

**S//C:** Vancouver's music scene is extremely robust and brimming with talent from people of all ages and genres. There always seems to be someone locally that has managed to claw their way out of the city to gain some more widespread notoriety. That said, the people who have set up shop to make their art and music in Vancouver are also some of the most ambitious risk-takers around.

There's also a bustling community of supporters that empower these artists to get weird and make something special.

**AU: Give us a brief history of SELF//CARE.**

**S//C:** Jamie and Andy (guitar, vocals) have been playing music since high school, in some capacity. Luke grew up playing in bands in Edmonton and after living in Vancouver for a few years was looking for some new people to play with. After Jamie and Andy started a new project together, they recruited Luke after he was referred from a mutual friend.

**AU: You released a new album, *Dawgy*, on August 5. Tell us all about it!**

**S//C:** *Dawgy* is the culmination of the first Self//Care songs. We rarely finish any songs that we aren't truly interested in completing, so the self-editing really refined this album into a collection that we're really proud of. Some of the songs were started back in 2017 and finally recorded a few years later with Michael Kenyon, who also produced the record, at Phony Records. Lyrically, most of the songs are reflections on friendships and the people we were or the people we could have been if things were slightly different.

**AU: Tell us about the process behind writing and recording all the songs for *Dawgy*.**

**S//C:** We connected with Michael Kenyon of Phony Records pretty early in the process, recording and releasing our first single "All The Way" with him. He understood the vision we had and really took the time to craft a certain tone for the record. We recorded the rest of the record in batches over the course of a year or so and it gave us time to sit on the songs and develop new ideas for certain parts. Stuart McKillop of Rain City Mastering did a great job with the mastering process and also a bit of additional recording at the end.

**AU: What's the most personal song you've written?**

**S//C:** The whole record was fairly personal because it was all about the important people who we've shared our lives with, either past or

present.

**AU: What's your favourite song to perform live?**

**S//C:** We were recently asked this in an interview for CJ5F's Vancouver Mixtape and it just so happened we ended up all agreeing that "Attics" and "Little Big League" were the live favourites. "Little Big League" starts with a spicy drum fill from Luke that really establishes the energy for the rest of the song. "Attics" is fun because it feels like it just gets better as it goes and from the bridge through to the very end of the song it's just a whole lot of fun to play!

**AU: You also released two singles this year, "Little Big League" and "Loose Ends". Tell us about them!**

**S//C:** "Little Big League" felt like a fun one to release because it's one of our more jumpy songs and people tend to enjoy it live. It's been our most well received single, along with "Places", so that's been nice! "Loose Ends" always felt like it would be a single to us because those chorus harmonies are a blast to sing and it's definitely one of the more pop-centric vocal hooks we've written! Plus, Andy gets go full sad boy with the lyrics in the intro.

**AU: It's Halloween here at Absolute Underground. Do you have any Halloween traditions you'd like to share?**

**S//C:** Getting ghouled up and crushing mini packs of Reese Peanut Cups is a hard one to beat.

**AU: What's the spookiest record you'd recommend to someone this Halloween?**

**S//C:** Spookiest is a tough question, but *Three Cheers for Sweet Revenge* by MCR is truly GOATed and definitely has a certain degree of spooky vibes.

## VANCOUVER VENGEANCE

**AU: In your opinion, what's the best horror soundtrack?**

**S//C:** Colin Stetson never misses the mark with his soundtracks. His work on the *Hereditary* soundtrack was pretty great!

**AU: Any tours/shows coming up?**

**S//C:** We've got our last show for a little while coming up September 27th at Take Your Time, then we plan on taking a little break from shows to focus on finishing up some songs and starting some more new ideas we've had cooking for a while!

**AU: Anything else to promote?**

**S//C:** Not yet, but hopefully we'll have some new music to share sooner rather than later. In the meantime, you should check out the rest of the killer pop-punk bands in the B.C. scene: Cawston, Cloud Sick, Cloaker, just to name a few!

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

**S//C:** Thanks for being interested! We're all doing this because we love playing music together and we like fast, jumpy songs make us feel young again

**AU: Where can we find you online? Website/socials/etc?**

**S//C:** selfcare.band/ will have links to everything, but if you want to check us out directly, we're on Instagram @selfcare.band and we're on all the streaming services (Bandcamp, Spotify, etc.)

Thanks again and chat soon!

Photos by @what\_are\_thee\_auds and @justbeingkyle (Instagram)





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VIOLET CHACHKI & GOTTMIK - OCT 28  
GWAR - OCT 29 (LOW TICKETS)  
SONS OF THE EAST - OCT 31 (LOW TICKETS)  
DWAYNE GRETZKY - NOV 1  
4BATZ - NOV 2  
LOVEJOY - NOV 4  
PETEY USA - NOV 5  
ROMESH RANGANATHAN - NOV 9

MIDNIGHT TILL MORNING - NOV 10  
MODI - NOV 12  
NEKO CASE - NOV 13 (SOLD OUT)  
HANNAH BAHNG - NOV 14  
NURSE BLAKE - NOV 15  
JACK'S MANNEQUIN - NOV 18  
ROBERT PLANT'S SAVING GRACE - NOV 19 (SOLD OUT)  
JESSIE REYEZ - NOV 21 & 22 (SOLD OUT)  
PH-1 - NOV 26  
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PACHYMAN & MNDSGN - OCT 24  
NOLAN TAYLOR - OCT 25  
BALD & BOJEE: THE PITBULL PARTY - OCT 25  
TORS - OCT 29  
SUPER TASTE PRES: DANCE PARTY 2000 HALLOWEEN EDITION - OCT 31  
BORN RUFFIANS - NOV 1

PARADE OF LOST SOULS AFTER PARTY - NOV 1  
WATER FROM YOUR EYES - NOV 2  
SAVIO JOSEPH - NOV 6  
STAN WALKER - NOV 7  
80S DANCE PARTY - NOV 8  
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## The Whatevermen Talk New LP *Exordium*

By Ray MacKay

**AU: Who are we talking to and what are you most famous or infamous for?**

**Whatevermen:** Ev, Drw, and Kyle.

**Ev:** We don't claim fame but people tell me I sweat alot.

**Drw:** I'm told I drink gasoline on stage.

**Kyle:** ...Chernobyl Wolves? Well I mean this is my second interview for Absolute Underground...

**AU: Where are you from and what's the music scene like there?**

**Ev:** We're from the dirty Peg. Heavy music scene exists here, we are doing our part in keeping the punk side of it alive.

**AU: Give us a brief history of The Whatevermen.**

**Ev:** Back in 2014 some buddies and I started the band, had a year of fits and starts, then hung it up until 2018 when we put it back online; members came and went from start to restart and in the next few years shaking off dust. By late 2020

Drw and Kyle were in the drum and bass seats, respectively; and we've found our stride and sound.

**AU: If possible, describe the sound of The Whatevermen.**

**Kyle:** It's whatever we want it to be when we start writing. That's the beauty of the name.

**Ev:** We're punk rockers I guess...? Anywhere from three chords and a dream to riffy.

**AU: You released your debut LP *Exordium* on April 25th. Tell us about it!**

**Kyle:** We buckled down late last year to get that all laid down in time for a planned tour... songs we all wrote together.

**Ev:** The album really solidifies what us three bring to the table. Kind of a mash of feels in the songwriting but I think we held a throughline.

**Drw:** One and two and three and four. Smash smash smash.

**AU: What song from *Exordium* have fans responded to the most?**

**Ev:** "No Shoes", which we released as a single ahead of release has had the most attention and response.

**Kyle:** It's a good tune; definitely don't stop there though.

**Ev:** It's kind of a baiter, for sure. Second to that though "I.F.Y.D." for being a middle cut has had a lot of positive comments! Hahaa. My personal fave on the album is "Fitting Fate".

**AU: What are you planning to submit to the Punk Canada Volume Five Vinyl Collection?**

**Ev:** We are going to be honoring some local Winnipeg brothers in Crown of Thorns (est 1987). Not to be confused with the other crown of thorns.

**AU: You recently just had a show at home in Winnipeg with the Ripcordz. How was it?**

**Kyle:** We had a young local opener which was

great to see; great opportunity for em. Paul from the Ripcordz is a cool guy.

**Ev:** Man the Ripcordz are the real deal, was an honor to play with em and be asked by Paul to do the comp. Was a good time ripping the stage with them. Also as Kyle said, the young guns coming up in town are heartening to see.

**AU: From March-April of this year you toured with Shit Happens. How was the tour? Any crazy stories you'd like to share?**

**Ev:** Tour was a blast. We made our stamp put to the west coast n back, I think we were well received. It wasn't a bust, that's for sure.

**Kyle:** At one point I choked out Drw. Twice. Love each other all the more now. Yaddadameeaaan.

**Drw:** Alot of beers. Alot of gasoline. Skate hockey game in Edmonton with the Unwashed and the Jaks crew was a highlight for me. Smash smash smash.

**AU: It's Halloween here at Absolute Underground. Do you have any Halloween traditions you'd like to share?**

**Ev:** Drw is the biggest Halloween head here, I'll let him take the reigns. I'm a basic bitch enthusiast. I enjoy the candy and the horror movies with my lady this season.

**Drw:** Me and my wife Jackie do 31 days of horror. A horror movie or two every night for October also scaring the neighbourhood with our haunted decorations. And my bois are getting older so getting the trick or treating in before they find me not kool to go with them.

**AU: What's the spookiest record you'd recommend to someone this Halloween?**

**Drw:** *Walk Among Us* by The Misfits.... "Stalk And Slash Summer" by The Jasons.... *Curse Of The Coffin* by Nekromantix....

**AU: In your opinion, what's the best horror soundtrack?**

**Drw:** *ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW*.... *Phantom Of The Paradise*....

**Ev:** I'll pipe in here with *Repo: The Generic Opera*.

## WRETCHED WINNIPEG

Apparently we like musicals? I remember liking the Fear Factory remix on the first *Resident Evil* movie soundtrack as well, back in what 2002 or whenever that was.

**AU: What should we know about you that we don't already? What don't you want your family members to know?**

**Ev:** That we ain't stopping anytime soon; next album is halfway in the bag writing wise and I hope to get this out by next spring/summer and keep the ball rolling. As for question two, nice try.

**AU: Anything else to promote?**

**Ev:** We are in a factory phase at present with the band and this next album as well as the punk Canada track, so no imminent shows to report. But what I will say is; something that most people holding this won't need to hear now that I think about it: get out to the shows in your town, grab that merch, have some fun. It helps keep warm as it's getting cold. Support your local scene, that whole old saying.

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

**Ev:** One thing I've found in life is that showing up is more than half the battle. Get out to where the energy is and things will fall into place; nobody likes to vibrate all weird alone.

**AU: Where can we find you online? Website/socials/etc?**

**Ev:**

Website: [thewatevermen.bandcamp.com](http://thewatevermen.bandcamp.com)

Facebook.com/TheWhatevermen

@thewatevermenband

And the released tunes are also up on all those dirty streaming platforms as well. Cheers.

Photos by All My Relations Photography.





## Rising Stars CALLING ALL CAPTAINS talk single, "A New Type Of Grey"

By Ray MacKay

**AU: Who are we talking to and what are you most famous or infamous for?**

**Calling All Captains:** We are Calling All Captains. We're not famous yet, but we will be.

**AU: Where are you from and what's the music scene like there?**

**CAC:** Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. It's the best, we have an amazing scene with lots of bands. Lots of hardcore and metal bands. Hidden gem of Canada honestly!

**AU: Give us a brief history of Calling All Captains.**

**CAC:**

-Formed in 2014

-Signed by Equal Vision Records in 2018

-Signed by New Damage Records in 2021

-Perform in 3 countries and played over 300 shows

**AU: You have a new single, "A New Type Of Grey" out as of September 18. Tell us all about it!**

**CAC:** This song is the first single from our upcoming EP *The Things That I've Lost*! The lyrical content on this release will be a sort of "part 2" to *(e)motion sickness*. We are still singing about the ways that our emotions can overtake many aspects of our life. Now further compounded by acknowledging all of the things we no longer have control of. This song is a great stepping stone into what we're talking about on this EP.

**AU: Tell us about the process behind writing and recording "A New Type Of Grey".**

**CAC:** Came together fast honestly! Probably only three weeks from writing, producing, to recording the song itself. We always work really well with our Producer Quinn Cyrankiewicz. This time was no different, we just got in a room and created something special.

**AU: What song would you recommend to anyone who hasn't heard of Calling All Captains? What album?**

**CAC:** Honestly, just check out "A New Type Of Grey"! It's got a lot in there! If that's not enough, check out our songs "Skin & Bones", "Loyalty" and "Fools Gold".

**AU: What track from *The Things I've Lost* are you most excited for people to hear?**

**CAC:** "Blood For Blood" is up there. It's one of our heaviest and catchiest songs and we think people will really enjoy this side of CAC.

**AU: What do you love about music?**

**CAC:** Everything.

**AU: What's the most personal song you've written?**

**CAC:** "Unlike Me" for sure, that one still stings.

**AU: What's your favourite song to perform live?**

**CAC:** "Loyalty" with absolute certainty. It just rips haha.

**AU: It's Halloween here at Absolute Underground. Do you have any Halloween traditions you'd like to share?**

**CAC:** I can't say on this interview.

**AU: What's the spookiest record you'd recommend to someone this Halloween?**

**CAC:** Literally any song by The Misfits.

**AU: In your opinion, what's the best horror soundtrack?**

**CAC:** Whatever they were doing for the first *Insidious* was crazy.

**AU: What should we know about you that we don't already? What don't you want your family members to know?**

**CAC:** We are a band that doesn't party! It's off to sleep after the shows 100% of the time.

**AU: Any tours/shows coming up?**

**CAC:** Yes! Cross Canada right now. Find tickets on our website: [callingallcaptainsband.com/tickets](http://callingallcaptainsband.com/tickets)

**AU: Anything else to promote?**

**CAC:** Pre-Orders for our EP *The Things That I've Lost* are up right now!

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

**CAC:** Our motto has always been "thoughts become things" so think big and dream bigger.

**AU: Where can we find you online? Website/socials?**

**CAC:** Head to [callingallcaptainsband.com](http://callingallcaptainsband.com)!

Website: [callingallcaptainsband.com](http://callingallcaptainsband.com)

Instagram: [@callingallcaptains](https://www.instagram.com/callingallcaptains)

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# Puttin' On The Foil are making their Hollywood debut at Whisky a Go Go!

On December 29 and 30 Canadian hard rock band Puttin' On The Foil is set to make their Hollywood debut with two back-to-back nights at the world-famous Whisky a Go Go in West Hollywood. On December 29, 2025 they'll be sharing the stage with Enuff Z'Nuff and Pretty Boy Floyd and on December 30, 2025 they'll be supporting glam rock legends Faster Pussycat.

Puttin' On The Foil are based out of Okotoks, Alberta and regularly deliver high-octane tunes that blend punk energy with hard rock swagger. Over the years, they've built a reputation for bringing the party wherever they play, which has built a loyal following across Western Canada. The Whisky dates mark a milestone for the band, bringing their Alberta-bred rock'n'roll spirit to one of the most



iconic venues in the world.

"This is huge for us," says frontman Trayne Rekk. "We've played a ton of Dive Bars, Rock Bars, Festivals across Canada — now we get to bring our chaos and fun to Hollywood, the birthplace of so much music I grew up on. And to do it alongside Faster Pussycat, Enuff Z'Nuff, and Pretty Boy Floyd. That's the dream."



Fans can expect a mix of blistering riffs, crowd participation, and the kind of rowdy, good-time energy the band has become known for on the Canadian rock circuit. Tickets for both nights are available now through Eventbrite: December 29 (Enuff Z'Nuff/ Pretty Boy Floyd): [www.eventbrite.ca/e/1539106251229?aff=oddttdtcreator](http://www.eventbrite.ca/e/1539106251229?aff=oddttdtcreator) Dec 30 (Faster Pussycat): [www.eventbrite.ca/e/1539125990269?aff=oddttdtcreator](http://www.eventbrite.ca/e/1539125990269?aff=oddttdtcreator) And for more info on these hardcore Canadian rockers go to: [www.puttinonthefoil.com](http://www.puttinonthefoil.com)

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## DEVOLVER

Interview with Jaylen Elias (bass)

By Asher Thrasher

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

**Jaylen Elias:** Thanks for having me! My name is Jaylen Elias, and I play bass in Devolver.

**AU: You released your new album *Non Compos Mentis*. What can you tell us about this record?**

**JE:** We did! Man. *Non Compos Mentis* has been our goal and sole point of focus for over 5 years now. We booked in with Mark to record this thing in 2019. We were supposed to fly down to Nashville and start recording in March 2020. Well, COVID happened, as you know, so that set us back quite a while. We were all in though and we made a choice not to compromise our vision for this thing and just wait it out so we could get exactly what we wanted from the album. It gave us more time to refine the songs and write some more, and we did actually release a standalone single titled *Unscathed* during that time just to keep busy. Fast forward, we ended up flying Mark up here to Grande Prairie to hang out and record in our drummer Bevin's studio for a few weeks. We got all the vocals, bass, and rhythm guitar done here, and then Devin and Bevin went down to Mark's studio to record lead guitars and drums. It was a long process but we could not be happier with what we got out of all that time and effort. That intentionality really laser focused us on the sound we wanted, the songs we chose, and everything

that led us to this point.

**AU: You've said this album is meant to be played start to finish. How did you build that flow across the tracklist?**

**JE:** I think the ritual of sitting down and really listening to an album has gotten kind of lost in the age of streaming. These songs cover a lot of dynamic ground. The album breathes a little bit, and I think there's something on here for everyone. Hearing just one song could give you a certain impression, but we're not just one song. I think it's only when you sit down and take that ride through these songs that you can really get a proper picture of who we are as a band, and see what we were trying to do with this album.

**AU: How did working with producer Mark Lewis elevate the sound and intensity of the record?**

**JE:** Oh yeah, 100%. Mark is the man. He was stoked on the demos we showed him, so right away he kind of knew what we were going for and what he could bring to push it over the edge. His input on the songs and ideas for vocals or tempos or what-have-you was exactly what we needed to sharpen the edges that extra bit. He's been doing this for a long time and has so many killer records under his belt, it was a ton of fun working with him.

**AU: Which track do you think pushed you the most creatively or technically in the studio?**

**JE:** I think a big moment was Mark and Chris trying more clean vocals. It wasn't really a conscious effort until we hit a point where, one day during vocal tracking they came up with this unreal catchy chorus for *Wraiths* that we had a moment of like, this rules but is this Devolver? We decided pretty quickly that, yes, it was really elevating the song and that there was even more we can do with that added melodic element.

**AU: Which song do you think will surprise fans the most when they hear it live?**

**JE:** I think the title track is a killer live song. The recording is great and all, but I feel like it really comes alive in a live setting. It's just got a good

## GRANDE PRAIRIE, HELLBERTA

groove that I think really translates well live, and that a crowd can kinda hook onto.

**AU: The title track is based on a real murder in your guitarist's family history. How did you approach turning that into music?**

**JE:** Yeah! It's such a wild story. Our guitarist Devin Babcock's ancestor, Amos Babcock, was sentenced to death in 1805, after he murdered his sister in front of his family of nine kids, and proceeded to try and hide her body in a snow bank before being apprehended. Sounds insane, right? The story goes that there was a traveling priest spending some time in town, and he was whipping the people into a religious mania. Amos and his family fell victim to this, and Amos, in a frenzied moment, committed the murder. You can find all the details online. It was in Shediac, New Brunswick, and at his trial, he was deemed "non compos mentis" (not of sound mind), and hanged for the crime. Honestly, the surreal nature of this story, and that it was actually connected to one of us by blood, was just so interesting, the lyrics wrote themselves. It's such a bold story, it felt like a natural choice to kinda put that foot forward with the album title and artwork and everything.

**AU: Tell us about your collaboration with Grain Bin Brewing. How did "Brews of the Maw" come to life?**

**JE:** We still can't really believe it, but we approached the wonderful people at Grain Bin Brewing about having our album release show at the brewery, and doing a beer to celebrate, and they actually said yes! It was a really cool process working with their head brewer, picking the style of beer and everything. I really just wanted something that was easy drinking and delicious, and nodded to the album. We did a blackberry and blood orange pale ale, and it is honestly amazing, haha. Besides being a rad flavour combo, we kinda picked those flavours to match the colour theme of the album artwork. And then, we had to come up with a silly name, of

course, haha. So, "Brews of the Maw" was born as a pun on our track "Jewels of the Maw". One of the coolest things we've gotten to do as a band.

**AU: The "Merciless Storm" video features a hot dog smoothie—how did that idea come about, and who suffered most?**

**JE:** Haha, yeah, it sure does. We worked with our friend Mike Evans (burgerpizzamike) to do the video. He's a super funny guy and has a history of making ridiculous videos, so we wanted to lean into that. I think the idea was "hot dog eating contest where we all die". From there, it evolved into everyone having different techniques for eating the hot dogs, which, naturally, evolved into someone drinking a hot dog smoothie. I had the honour of hoisting that chalice. It was truly awful. It smelled and tasted exactly how you would think, in the most horrifying way, hahaha. We actually made two smoothies. One for the outdoor shots, and then another to grab some footage in front of the green screen, and it was honestly so much worse inside because it was fresher, so it was still warm, and the smell filled the whole room. I was gagging and barely holding it together, haha. Mike lit a pumpkin spice scented candle to cover it, which was also an insane move haha. After that we were all off hot dogs for like a year. Just the thought of them was too much. Made a great video though so it was worth a little hot dog related trauma haha.

**AU: What's next for Devolver now that *Non Compos Mentis* is out in the world?**

**JE:** It still feels weird and amazing to have finally released it! We're just gonna yell from the rooftops about the album for the rest of the year. We're gonna be relatively quiet beyond that, we might have a few shows here in Alberta before the end of the year but we'll see. We're also working on plans to hit in the new year and really get out and perform these songs live. And then I guess, start working on the next one? Haha.





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## The Fixer & Teknosis - Ugly Knots Tour

### Interview with The Fixer's Vic Sin and Melladonna

Interview By Asher Thrasher

**Absolute Underground:** You just released your new single, "It Will End Tonight". What inspired it, and how does it connect to your album *Your Lie*?

**Vic Sin:** It was written after *Your Lie* while we were sorting out what direction we wanted to go with our new music. It still uses influences from the darker side of music, like you hear on *Your Lie*, but combined with the energy of melodic hardcore. It was inspired by sticking around in a shitty situation and coming to the realization that no matter the effort you put in, it won't get better, and walking away for the sake of self-preservation.

**AU:** How has your sound evolved between *Your Lie* and your latest standalone single, "It Will End Tonight", and your earlier work?

**Melladonna:** I think we keep getting more refined. We are both evolving our sound but also learning and growing as musicians.

**VC:** Our sound has had a stronger focus on

melody, and our lyrical content has gotten more serious since *The Prowl* EP. We used to create with the idea of the band being summed up in three words: "Dark, Sexy, and Loud". We still do that from time to time, but we've made efforts to be heartfelt alongside that.

**AU:** What's the message you hope fans take away from your music when they hear it live on this tour?

**VC:** One of our unreleased tracks is called "Love Today", and it really sums up what I hope the band's impact will be. Its sentiment is: No matter how much darkness we all are facing in our lives, we will try to approach situations with love and understanding. I have seen creating music as a bit of a purging of darkness for myself, and I hope that others can also find comfort in our music. We want to help fans get through the harder situations in life, in a constructive way, like live music, and face their next day in a better mindset than before they came to our show.

**Melladonna:** We know the world can get really dark, but we want to spread kindness and empathy and strive to understand one another. I really thrive getting to perform live and always hope to inspire others to participate in music or other related arts, like dance.

**AU:** How did signing with Wormholedeath Records shape the direction or production of your latest album?

**VC:** Wormholedeath was very supportive of what we were doing when we first came into contact with them. We had most of the *Your Lie* album demoed, and they gave us feedback on the parts that were weaker in our songs for us to develop a bit more. But, they still let us keep being ourselves and supported our project as it was. I think one of the biggest things that it did for shaping The Fixer is that we started to look at what we were writing a little more critically and seriously. We didn't expect our music to travel as far as it did when we first started the band.

**AU:** What are you most excited to bring to the stage during the UGLY KNOTS TOUR?

**Any surprises planned?**

**Melladonna:** Well, if we told you, it wouldn't be a surprise, would it?

**VC:** We do have a couple of surprises in store that we are excited about. You will have to come out to see what it is, though! We are always excited to get out and play live music. Live music has always been one of the best ways to connect with

different people, and it is always exciting to be around that.

**Melladonna:** I'm also excited to bring back some of our heavy old songs that I haven't had much opportunity to play live, and get to share and show off new songs that are unreleased.

## THUNDER DOME BAY

## The Fixer & Teknosis - Ugly Knots Tour

### Interview with Teknosis' Andrew (vocals)

By Asher Thrasher

**AU:** Your latest EP, *Return to Civilization*, sounds like a statement—what does that title mean to you as a band?

**Andrew:** It's a statement of our presence. An amalgamation of our sound that shows everyone what we're all about.

**AU:** How does this EP reflect where Teknosis is creatively right now compared to past releases?

**Andrew:** *Return to Civilization* was the beginning for us, but its creation has led to a lot more drive within the band to write more and more. We have a lot more material now, and we will be releasing more new stuff in the near future.

**AU:** What themes or emotions were you exploring in *Return to Civilization*?

**Andrew:** There are a couple more personal songs ("The Cycle", "Relapse", and "Resume") that deal with personal struggles and general struggles that we all endured during the pandemic. The rest of the songs on the EP are about different true crime stories that stuck with me. I'm a huge fan of true crime podcasts and docuseries.

**AU:** How are you preparing to translate the EP's energy into your live shows on the UGLY KNOTS TOUR?

**Andrew:** We incorporate the rawness of our music into our live shows and use samples to keep our crowds engaged even during breaks in songs. Expect high energy, with soundscapes that bring you into the emotion of the songs.

**AU:** What does it mean to you to hit the road with fellow Thunder Bay band The Fixer, any shared history or chemistry there?

**Andrew:** Teknosis and The Fixer started actively playing shows right around the same time, so naturally, we played a few local gigs together, and we found that we all kind of became friends. After doing a couple of out-of-town trips with them over the summer of 2023, they were kind enough to invite us out for another run, and we couldn't be more excited.





## Interview with SAGO

by Bowser Tabarnak

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

**Sago:** Chad, Mike, Alex, Marty and Piers from Sago.

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

**Chad:** Forming in 2015 from ex-members of Sofistifucks, Cerebral Scrub, Black Faxes, Villepend and Single File To Freedom. Releasing our first LP in 2016

called *City Wide Garbage Strike* then our second album in 2018 called *Flood Island*.

**Mike:** Chad and I had known each other for a decade mostly from punk shows at Siesta Nouveaux. Marty and I lived together and were both into the wave of crusty hardcore and dbeat that were happening at the time. When Alex and Piers asked me if I wanted to start a fast heavy punk band I was into it. We linked up with Marty right away and Chad a few weeks later. Somehow 10 years flew by. We have put out a bunch of songs and played a load of shows and parties around Ontario and Quebec.

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

**Mike:** Each song has its own message. Usually having a stick up our ass about one systemic issue or another.

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

**Chad:** Fast and heavy hardcore punk rock.

**AU: What is your creative process like?**

**Chad:** Between Crossley on bass and Marty and Chad on guitars, they usually come up with riffs and the other two collaborate with Piers on the drums



and write the music for Alex to spill vocals onto. Alex also asks the guitarists and bassist for back up vocals.

**Mike:** Songs come from all different places, it could be a lyric, riff or beat. Usually music first though then Alex gets fired up listening to it and writes something.

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

**Chad:** We are recording new songs at the beginning of October and plan to record more songs in 2026.

**Mike:** The most recent thing we've released is our cover of Kittens' "Great Dane" on *Punk Canada Volume 3*. We haven't put it on the internet so it's only available on that record.

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

**Chad:** Corporate greed, corruption and the police, the shortcomings of white privilege.

**Mike:** We have one making fun of billionaires in space.

**Alex:** Highly relatable anti-oppressive sing-alongs addressing the persons and systems we've all grown to hate.

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

**Chad:** Hard out of the gates, high

energy punk rock with three back up vocalists supporting our hardcore lead vocalist.

**Mike:** Like hard-boiling an egg that's been in your fridge for ten years, on like a 600 degree burner.

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

**Chad:** Hard to find venues to play compared to ten years ago.

**Mike:** It's enormous. Much bigger than anyone thinks. There are so many artists in different genres playing so many shows and releasing music at any given time, you just have to know where to look.

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

**Chad:** Be good to each other and beware of the traps that simple stupid politicians create so they can keep power over everyone.

**Mike:** Hell yeah what he said.

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

**Sago:**

**Bandcamp:** [Sagopunx.bandcamp.com](https://sagopunx.bandcamp.com)

**Instagram:** @Sagoisaband

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We have some good stuff up on YouTube too, just search "Sago Punk Toronto."

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## HARVESTED OTTAWA ONSLAUGHT

### Answered by Mitchi Dimitriadis (Guitars)

#### By Asher Thrasher

**Absolute Underground: Welcome back to Absolute Underground Magazine. Who are you and what do you do?**

**Mitchi Dimitriadis:** We're Harvested! A death metal group hailing from Ontario, Canada, and Quebec. Based in Ottawa and the Gatineau area.

**AU: What does the title *Dysthymia* mean to you, and why did you choose it for the album?**

**MD:** Nothing is more brutal than real life and the human psyche. Every horror or evil you can imagine is something that first developed in someone's mind.

**AU: Mental illness is a major theme—how did you approach writing about such a heavy topic?**

**MD:** We have had our own experiences with friends and family, and saw the significant impact mental health has on people on an individual level, as well as on a collective society.

**AU: How would you describe the sound of *Dysthymia* to someone who's never heard Harvested before?**

**MD:** If you like cannibal corpse and metal bands alike. We should be right up your alley!

**AU: Which track do you think best represents the band's identity, and why?**

**MD:** Our title track is "Harvested". It showcases the different styles that we incorporate in our music. And that's the only track that touches up on physical violence and organ harvesting. Still, all due to mental illness!

**AU: How did working with Dark Moon Productions shape the final sound of the album?**

**MD:** Joe from Darkmoon is a staple in the Ottawa community for any audio and video work that bands require. Working with him for over a decade is a privilege and a half! Producers and engineers are key to the impression the music will have on the public.

**AU: What's next for Harvested now that *Dysthymia* is out in the world?**

**MD:** We're now in the phase of investing and acquiring equipment to take our live production to the next level, as well as expand our merch line.

**AU: Any touring plans for the band?**

**MD:** Due to the reality of the industry these days. Without the support of the community or resources provided by record labels. The only way a band of our level can tour is if we

independently organize, invest, and plan logistics ourselves. We're all nearing our mid-30s, and it's becoming more and more unrealistic to throw all our eggs in this basket. However, if the reception does well and we truly have the support of the metal community and industry, then you can expect to see more activity from us!

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

**MD:** Big shout-out to everyone who gave us their support and believed in us from day one! It's only up from here, and you'll be hearing from us very soon!



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# Deadly Apples talk new single, “Sacrifice”

By Ray MacKay

**AU: Who are we talking to and what are you most famous or infamous for?**

**Deadly Apples:** I’m Alex, the frontman and lyricist of the band Deadly Apples. We’re probably most known for our intense live shows, our cinematic and emotionally raw sound, and our collaborations with some legendary artists. Also maybe a few injuries on stage.

**AU: Where are you from and what’s the music scene like there?**

**DA:** We’re based in Montreal, Canada. It’s a city with a deep artistic undercurrent, but we never really fit in any local scene, we always did our own thing.

**AU: Give us a brief history of Deadly Apples.**

**DA:** It’s an unusual history, but essentially the current version of the band was formed in 2017. My bandmate Antoine and I joined forces – he’s a great composer and also a great drummer. Deadly Apples became an outlet for everything we couldn’t express anywhere else — the emotions that were too raw, too personal, too uncomfortable. Since then, we were fortunate

enough to tour the world with big acts like Korn, Marilyn Manson, Rob Zombie and Deftones. Now we’re back with a new album called *Distress*, which we’re releasing gradually over time.

**AU: You have a new single, “Sacrifice” out now - tell us all about it!**

**DA:** “Sacrifice” is the first song that was written for the new album. It features Richard Patrick from Filter doing some additional vocals and Danny Lohner from Nine Inch Nails and Till Lindemann on guitars and bass. It’s heavy, cinematic, and

brutally emotional. The music video was directed by Antoine, it just dropped and it matches the intensity of the track.

**AU: Tell us about the process behind writing and recording “Sacrifice”.**

**DA:** The music that Antoine wrote really moved me. In terms of lyrics, I was in a very dark place in my life with a dreadful feeling of losing everything I had built for myself up to that point, so it’s deeply meaningful and painful. We went through several versions of that song and we worked on pre-production with Michael Beinhorn (Korn, Soundgarden). The final version was recorded in LA, and we actually used Lars Ulrich’s actual Black Album kit for the drums. Antoine produced it, Ben Grosse (Depeche Mode, Marilyn Manson) mixed it, and Tom Baker (Nine Inch Nails, Marilyn Manson) mastered it.

**AU: What song would you recommend to anyone who hasn’t heard of Deadly Apples? What album?**

**DA:** To most people, I would say “Sacrifice” as it’s definitely more accessible. For heavier music fans, I would say “Volatile” would be the best start. And when the full album *Distress* drops, listen front to back. It’s meant to be experienced as a whole story.

**AU: You’ve had quite the year so far, with shows like Welcome to Rockville and the Vixen Rock Festival in Peru, where you played the main stage alongside musical legends like**

**Avenged Sevenfold and Marilyn Manson. What was that like?**

**Tell us about your recent show experiences.**

**DA:** It’s been surreal. Sharing the main stage with artists we grew up listening to — and holding our own — felt like a full-circle moment. The energy in Peru was unreal, and Rockville in Florida was just massive. Our live shows are intense, physical, and emotional. That’s where the songs come alive.

**AU: After the smash hit that was your previous single, “Volatile”, how are people reacting to “Sacrifice”?**

**DA:** The reaction’s been incredible so far. It’s already at over 100k streams on Spotify and YouTube in barely over a week, and it’s already getting major editorial support and fan response. It seems to connect deeply with a lot of people and I believe it’ll keep building and expand to new listeners.

**AU: What’s your favourite song to perform live?**

**DA:** Probably “Volatile” right now — it’s explosive live. But “Sacrifice” is becoming a favorite quickly. It’s got this slow-burning intensity that just builds and erupts on stage. Also ends with a few bruises.

**AU: What’s a song you’d want to cover for a future album?**

**DA:** We’ve talked about covering something totally unexpected — maybe something from Portishead or Massive Attack, but make it heavy and distorted. Or go the opposite direction with a very soft electro version of a Slayer song for instance.

**AU: It’s Halloween here at Absolute Underground. Do you have any Halloween traditions you’d like to share?**

**DA:** Maybe play “Every Day is Halloween” by Ministry on loop.

**AU: What’s the spookiest record you’d recommend to someone this Halloween?**

**DA:** Not sure if I’d call it spooky, but I really enjoy

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Kruller by Author & Punisher, it’s got such a heavy, dark and dreadful vibe, but also some soothing elements to it.

**AU: In your opinion, what’s the best horror soundtrack?**

**DA:** *The Guest* and *It Follows*. We actually used music from those for our pre-show playlists.

**AU: What should we know about you that we don’t already? What don’t you want your family members to know?**

**DA:** Let’s just say the uncensored “Volatile” video which remains unreleased wasn’t exactly family-friendly, but it was artistically necessary. As for what you should know — we’re not here to play it safe. Everything we do is 100% real and comes from a place of truth.

**AU: Any tours/shows coming up?**

**DA:** Yes — we’ve got more tour dates and festivals coming in North America and beyond. We’ll be announcing those very soon. We can’t wait to get back on stage and smash everything.

**AU: Anything else to promote?**

**DA:** “Sacrifice” is out now, and the music video is live. Stream it, share it, scream it. And stay tuned — *Distress* is coming soon. It’s the most important thing we’ve ever made.

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

**DA:** Thank you for the support — whether you’ve been with us since the beginning or just found us through “Volatile” or “Sacrifice”, this is just the start. We’re building something dark, intense, and real. We hope you feel it.

**AU: Where can we find you online? Website/ socials/etc?**

**DA:** You can find everything at [deadlyapples.com](https://deadlyapples.com). We’re on all socials — Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube — [@deadlyapples](https://@deadlyapples).

Photos by Emmanuelle Guilbault Daif



# NIAGARA FALLS TO THE WALL



## IVY GARDENS

Interview with Sebastian Hogg  
By Asher Thrasher

**Absolute Underground:** Welcome back to Absolute Underground Magazine. Who are you and what do you do?

**SH:** My name is Sebastian Hogg. I play keys and make noise in Ivy Gardens. Mostly down in Ontario, around Niagara, sometimes across Canada.

**AU:** You released your second album, *Death of Don Valley*. What can you tell us about this new record?

**SH:** It's heavy. It's complicated. We really pushed to get into new territory. It leans a lot into old progressive rock ideas, experimental stuff, but it's

ultimately a big heavy slab of sludge.

**AU:** The album talks a lot about death and decay. What made you want to explore those themes?

**SH:** We see this all around us. *The Death of Don Valley* is about life-giving natural spaces being corrupted by industrialization and urbanization. In Ontario we see this all the time. All these little towns sprawl outwards and bulldoze more and more wetlands to build more and more "luxury" apartments and million dollar houses. The death and decay of the natural world is mirrored in the human experience, and the resulting violence is a big theme of the record as well.

**AU:** You took once again a DIY and Live off the floor approach for this album? How did you decide to take this route? How do you find it appeals to your sound?

**SH:** The naturalistic approach is very important to

us. The act of making music together in a room full of blaring amps is a lot different than making music one guitar track at a time. Our experiences touring have really focused our live sound and we wanted to capture a real performance for the record.

**AU:** Some songs are based on real stories, like "Frozen Limbs." How do you decide which stories to turn into music?

**SH:** Picking our subject matter was very deliberate. Every story here is contributing to the theme of the record.

*Frozen Limbs*, for example, is about a bush pilot in the Canadian north. He crashed in the wilderness and resorted to cannibalism to survive. I'm not gonna yap about the "intended meaning", art should be interpreted. What I can say is that there are a lot of human themes and ecological themes on the record. "Frozen Limbs" puts both in conflict with each other.

**AU:** What's one thing you learned about yourselves while making this record?

**SH:** It takes a lot of experience, discipline, and a focused artistic drive to make a cohesive piece of work like this. We wanted our music to sound like this for a long time.

**AU:** How's your cross-Canada tour going? Any

memorable shows you like to mention?

**SH:** As I write this, we're driving to Quebec City. So far, we've played most of our East Coast half, and we're close to taking a break before our big West Coast trip. I personally enjoy being in the maritime provinces. Cape Breton is particularly beautiful. We played a phenomenal show in Sydney, Nova Scotia, recently. Last year, we put out a live record of our last Sydney show, and it looks like lots of folks were hyped for us to come back. Traveling across Canada, seeing forests turn

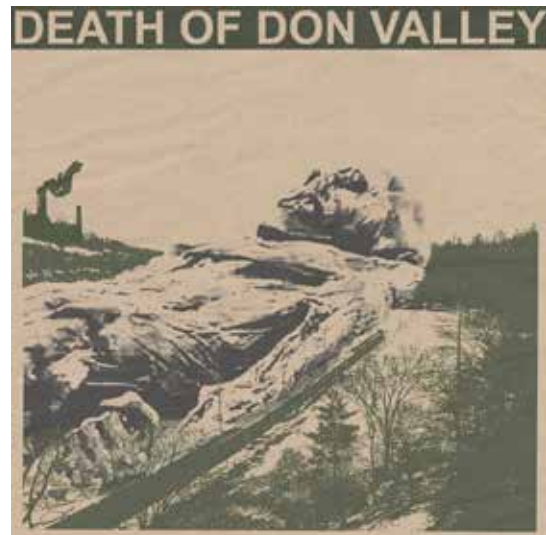
to hills, hills to grassy plains, and the shores of the Atlantic has been a real treat. Very much looking forward to crossing the Rockies and seeing the Pacific.

**AU:** What's next for Ivy Gardens after *The Death of Don Valley*?

**SH:** We're gonna really focus on our local scene for a while. We wanna build up something great here down in Niagara and Hamilton. We'll keep writing, of course, and another project will be conceived once we've survived our current journey.

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

**SH:** Go sit in the woods. Get familiar with your natural spaces and protect them. Listen to Rush. That's all.



## HAPPY HALLOWEEN



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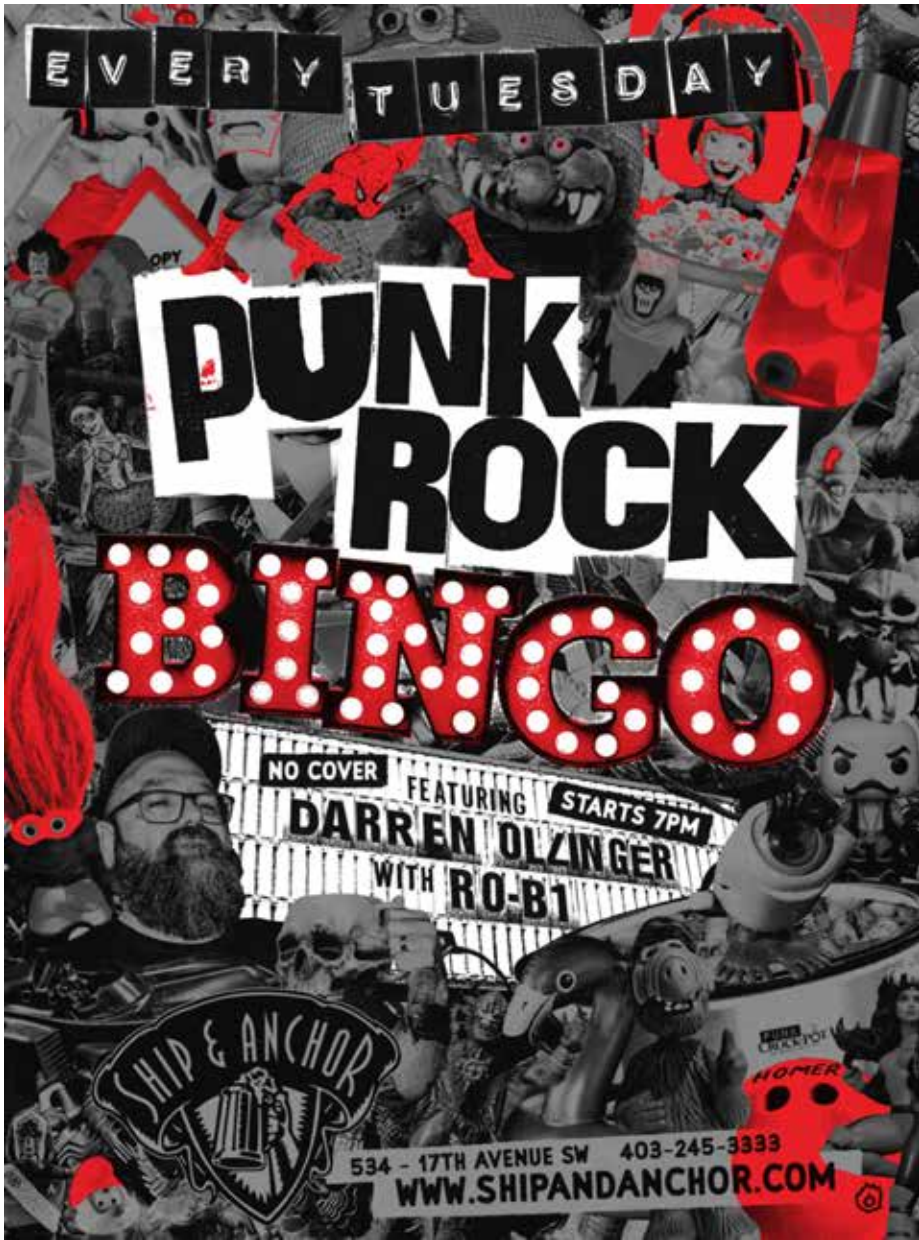
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## BENEATH THE WHEEL



### Beneath The Wheel: REVELATOR

Interview with Revelator by  
Sheldon "Named Enity" Byer

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

**REVELATOR:** Revelator comprises five equal entities that equate to a total ungodly sum. We all scribe thee as we travel from Kamloops to Langley on a short Western Canadian conquest.

**AU:** For anyone who hasn't heard Revelator - describe your sound.

**RL:** Revelator conjures triumphant black metal, forged in the cryptic chambers of the Canadian North!

**AU:** You have a new album out via Nameless Grave Records *Light The Devil's Fire*, tell us a little bit about the album.

**RL:** *Light the Devil's Fire* was recorded by Rob

Lawless, mixed by Derek Orthner & mastered by Drew Copland. We are confident in its offering and created a memorable and dangerous black metal album. It is streaming EVERYWHERE now, available at our gigs and at Nameless Grave Records.

**AU:** Christmas is coming! What gift would you buy Jesus for his birthday?

**RL:** A better lawyer.



**AU:** If you had to give our readers one track to check out on the new album what would it be?

**RL:** *Light The Devil's Fire* an abomination of all things evil.

**AU:** Though the album leans heavily on blackened death metal, the music also comes off heavily inspired by riffs of the older days of heavy metal. What are some of your earliest inspirations?

**RL:** Bathory, Venom, Dissection, Nifelheim, your mom, Mortuary Drape.

**AU:** What is Iconoclastic's favorite perverted whisper? This is Absolute Underground - anything goes!

**RL:** Embrace the baphomet.

**AU:** What's next for Revelator?

**RL:** The album was released September 12, we are relishing in the present evil, not the future unknown.

**AU:** What is your favorite flavor of Vex? I like Electric Lemonade.

**RL:** We don't vex, we hex.

**AU:** How do we find you online & where do we pick up a copy of *Light The Devil's Fire*?

**RL:** Streaming everywhere, at our gigs, and at Nameless Grave Records.

**AU:** Any last words for the filth encrusted putrid satanists torn from hell's womb on the 6th hour of 6th day of the 6th year?

**RL:** We, who reign with the devil, labor not in pain but prosper in triumph and power.







# UNPUNISHED

## Interview with Jean-Christophe (singer)

### Interview by Asher Thrasher

**Absolute Underground: Welcome to Absolute Underground Magazine, who are you and what do you do?**

**JC:** I'm J-C, lead singer for Unpunished.

**AU: You just released your new EP *Echoes of History*, what can you tell us about this record?**

**JC:** This is our 2nd EP, it has five songs, into which we put a lot of effort in a period that was challenging for all of us personally. It's musically diverse as we wanted to avoid any formulaic approach and also to allow each band member's influences to shape our sound. The result is an EP that takes from metalcore, melodic death metal, death metal, and deathcore and blends it all. Some songs are more straight-up metalcore, but some are much more melodic death metal-oriented. Globally, we were looking to have songs with groovy, melodic, and heavy elements. We see this EP as a new step in our band's evolution and our evolution as musicians.

**AU: You've described this EP as a journey through emotional and societal battles. How did you approach that balance musically and lyrically?**

**JC:** We usually write starting with guitar riffs. Both

Dean and PL, our guitarists, come up with portions of a song or a very rough version of songs with programmed drums. PL and I, being the lyricists, often take the time to listen to each demo and see what emotions the music evokes. This is a way to make sure the emotions conveyed by the music are aligned with the emotions and topics in the lyrics. We sometimes have lyrics already written and adapt them to a demo if we see a good fit. I know that I personally write a lot about humanity's issues and flaws and social

injustice, topics that are important and inspiring to me. I wouldn't see myself singing about gore topics or demons, as these are not topics I read about or are not part of my interests, but I totally respect bands that are inspired by these themes.

**AU: How does *Echoes of History* differ from your previous releases in terms of sound and message?**

**JC:** We all evolved as songwriters and musicians since our first EP was released in 2022. *Shadows and Dust* was written during the pandemic, when we were not allowed to jam together, so songs were less collaborative as we all worked on them separately. Lyrically, I was not involved as much and not as comfortable as I am today in writing and creating the vocal melodies. I feel this EP was more of a group effort, where we debated the song choices a lot, debated the musical direction we wanted. Writing *Echoes of History* was not an easy record to write; it brought out intense discussions, and we all experienced personal difficulties during the process, but in the end, it's an EP I believe we can all relate to. Musically, we stepped up in terms of technicality, speed, and complexity, but we also kept our key elements of melody and groove. Justin, our drummer and producer, really improved technically as a musician and as a producer. It allowed us to write faster and more intense songs while improving our recording process to better reflect our personality. As far as the message, we maintained similar themes of personal struggles, human flaws, and social injustice, but I believe the depth

and quality of the writing also evolved.

**AU: Was there a moment during writing or recording when the EP's concept really clicked into place?**

**JC:** We didn't write the EP with a specific concept in mind, but as songs emerged and especially as I was writing more lyrics, the theme of humanity repeating the same mistakes over and over emerged. As I began working on the album cover, I searched online for symbolism on fate, time running out, etc. The ouroboros symbol came out, and it captured the idea that history repeats itself, and humanity repeats the same mistakes. We all felt that image was aligned with our lyrical themes and the atmosphere our songs convey.

**AU: What's the biggest challenge of writing music that's both brutally heavy and emotionally vulnerable?**

**JC:** It has to be genuine in how you record and mix it. We didn't want to have an over-produced sound, even if that's a huge trend in modern metal. We feel some bands sound very (too) polished, and that can translate into a lack of emotion or authenticity. We wanted the emotion in the lyrics to be felt by the audience, to feel the anger, despair, and rage in the most raw way possible. Many reviews we got recently mention that they felt the emotions and that the mix sounded raw, which is what we were aiming for. Metal can be brutally heavy, but it doesn't mean it can't take you to deep emotional places.

**AU: What's one musical moment on the EP that you're especially proud of?**

**JC:** Personally, I would say the bridge section in "As Water Fills My Lungs". We worked hard on creating a good melody and adding many layers of vocals to have depth and really carry the emotion and message of that section. It talks about a moment of ultimate despair, when you feel you're drowning in sadness, so the vocals had to be on point. Musically, I also love the instrumental outro on *Echoes of History*. Dean wrote beautiful riffs, and the guitar harmonies that slowly fade out totally relate to the theme of history repeating itself.

# QUEBEC SIN CITY

**AU: Justin Lefebvre produced the EP. How did having your drummer take on that role shape the final sound?**

**JC:** We're really lucky to have him! The fact that he has the talent, the passion, and the time to handle production is such an advantage. Justin spent a lot of time perfecting his craft, and he's still learning every day. We're all perfectionists, especially Dean and I, so he had to be open-minded and willing to spend a lot of time on perfecting the sound, which he did! Recording at Justin's house, where we also rehearse, is amazing. We're able to take more time recording, mixing, or reworking some parts without the pressure of fitting in a studio schedule. Financially, it also allowed us to invest more into other areas instead of paying for studio hours, such as investing in our equipment, in merch, in PR, etc. The final sound of the EP took shape gradually, but we all agreed that we wanted a sound influenced by the early 2000s metalcore bands we love, but using the benefits of modern technology. We wanted the listeners to feel the music as if we were playing right there in their car or living room, to feel the emotion and intensity. Some modern metal can sometimes sound over-processed and not in-your-face, so even though this fits perfectly for some, this is not what suits our sound. Justin really worked hard, and we feel he really captured what we all wanted.

**AU: What was the most rewarding part of self-producing this EP as a band?**

**JC:** It allowed us to debate ideas freely, to avoid external pressure and deadlines. At this point in our band, I believe we needed to go through that process to better develop our sound. It's also very rewarding to know that we did everything by ourselves, even if this is such a huge amount of work. In the future, we might want to work with a producer if we believe it can take us further, but at this stage, it was the right thing to do.

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## ANCIENT THRONES

Answered by Sean Hickey  
(drums and vocals) and  
Dylan Wallace (guitar)

By Asher Thrasher

**Absolute Underground:**  
Welcome back to Absolute  
Underground Magazine. What's  
Ancient Thrones been up to?

**Sean:** Thanks for having us back!  
We have a brand new album called  
*Melancholia* that came out on  
September 19th.

**AU:** What can you tell us about  
your new album, *Melancholia*?

**Sean:** It's easily the most brutal  
and fast music we've released thus  
far, but we wanted it to sink pretty  
deep into the mind of the listener  
as well. Our intentions were to  
have songs you could mosh to,  
while also painting a concept  
album that rewards the people  
who want a little more. That's the  
kind of stuff we love to find in albums. There's  
plenty of that going on here.

**AU:** What inspired the story of a colourblind  
character turning to psychedelics? Was  
it based on personal experience or pure  
imagination?

**Sean:** So many things. I was about a year sober  
after a traumatic experience with psychedelics,  
and then I ended up suffering a bad heat stroke  
that prevented me from being outside for the  
entire summer, leaving me to stay in the dark a lot  
of the time with some serious brain dysfunction.  
I remember staring out from my window and  
seeing such a lack of colour in everything; it  
wasn't what I remembered life looking like. That

was sort of the catalyst for the story. It's about  
being alienated from the world, and having the  
chance to live this idyllic life, and how there's a  
danger in being attached to that idea.

**AU:** How does the album explore the tension  
between fantasy and reality as the character's  
trip unfolds?

**Sean:** The album is narrated under that  
dichotomy. I tried to describe the landscapes  
and spaces they're exploring  
in ways that are both surreal  
and anchored in some kind of  
reality. When I was writing it,  
I visualized what reality might  
look like for the character  
versus what they're seeing  
through a psychedelic lens.

**AU:** Which track pushed you  
furthest out of your comfort  
zone musically?

**Sean:** "Melancholia", the title  
track, is set at 260 BPM, straight  
blasting. I had to learn new  
techniques in order to play it,  
and it also pushed me vocally as  
well to try to match that speed.  
That song is very challenging  
to play live. The same goes for  
"Sacred Swollen Glass"; it's just

a complete marathon of blast beats for the first  
four minutes.

**Dylan:** The whole thing! When we set out to write  
a new record, it's always about pushing outside  
of the comfort zone, whether that's technically or  
sonically. We want to constantly evolve the sound  
with each new record, build upon what we liked  
about the last, and push into new territory.

**AU:** How did influences like Gojira, Russian  
Circles, and Ulcerate shape the sound of  
specific songs?

**Dylan:** Gojira and Russian Circles have been in  
my ears for a long time, leading up to this record.  
What I think both of those bands have in common  
is superb dynamics. The sheer size of their

sound can release into the quietest moments of  
anticipation, and then really nailing the payoff,  
that's always been very inspirational to me.

**Sean:** Ulcerate influenced me specifically with  
the atmosphere they create on their records. It's  
like the sound of having all of your bones broken  
inside a giant, droning, bellowing void; there's no  
light, there's no hope. I looked to achieve that  
same sense of dread on this album.

**AU:** What was it like incorporating post-black  
metal and black & roll elements into your usual  
style?

**Dylan:** I just think that we are inspired by so  
much music, not just other  
metal sub-genres, but other  
stuff too, that's off the metal  
map a little bit. When we  
are working on the narrative  
elements of the music, these  
influences will naturally  
shape that writing. So when  
we shoot for another style,  
it's usually a reflection of  
the narrative themes in the  
song or story. Since most  
of what we do is heavy on  
the conceptual end of song  
writing, sometimes a good  
straight-forward black'n'roll  
riff is just the thing.

**AU:** How do you approach writing instrumental  
passages that carry narrative weight without  
lyrics?

**Dylan:** I have always been very into film scores  
for this exact reason. The ability to still convey  
the feelings or themes from a narrative with  
just music has always been a huge inspiration  
for me. Sean and I have worked on a few film  
projects together; he had made a few short films,  
and I usually work on the score music, so that  
relationship has helped stimulate that same type  
of songwriting in the band. Knowing the themes  
and flow of the story helps a lot with what the  
music needs to do. So it's a challenge, but it helps  
get out of the "cool riff is cool" kinda mindset

that metal  
music can  
fall into. Not  
that there's  
anything wrong. With that, but I like to have  
intentions set before writing, as it guides me  
through writer's block, and helps see the whole  
record as a bigger picture than just a snapshot of  
a riff in a song.

**Sean:** Even though I have little hand in writing  
those passages, they still take part in telling the  
story and aren't just filler to the music. Everything  
is intentional with us.

## HELLIFAX

**AU:** How did sampling  
Gaspar Noé's *Enter the Void*  
help set the mood for the  
album and live shows?

**Sean:** It's such an unsettling  
sample that sets up the music  
well. The film inspired the lyrics  
themselves, so it's only fitting.  
The song "Blight" is sort of a  
jarring callback to the title  
track, much like the character  
in the film is calling back to his  
own childhood after death.

**AU:** Recording remotely  
during the pandemic

must've been a challenge. How did that  
process shape the final sound of the album?

**Dylan:** It was such a challenge that we decided  
to just do it ourselves. I have been working with  
a few bands over the last few years, producing  
and recording in my home studio. So when it  
came time to do this, we figured, why not do it  
ourselves? We are very much in-house with most  
everything we do as a band, so it felt right. But  
it was my first time at the helm recording such  
challenging music, so there was a lot of learning  
and going back and reworking things. All in all,  
I think that made for a unique-sounding record,  
due to inexperience in some ways but also  
because we had absolute freedom and time to  
tinker and just do whatever we wanted.





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# POWELL RIVER



## ASHES OF THE SUN

Interview with Ethan Henry (drums)

By Asher Thrasher

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

**Ethan Henry:** My name is Ethan Henry. I'm the drummer and songwriter with the band Freya. I recently released my solo album *GODS WITH MACHINES* under the project name ASHES OF THE SUN.

**AU:** What can you tell us about your debut album, *Gods With Machines*?

**EH:** *Gods With Machines* came to be after years of writing music for my bands in the past that didn't quite fit the genre or direction we were going. I had a pile of songs and continue to have a pile of songs that I liked that weren't quite there. I didn't

want to leave the songs on the shelf any longer and decided to compile them into a cohesive album. I felt that if I stayed away from screaming and sang these songs with a heavier tone, it would make a decent rock album.

**AU:** What was it like creating this entire album as a one-man band?

**EH:** I'm used to writing music and composing by myself, so it wasn't too much of a stretch. But I typically don't release those songs. I present them to the groups I'm jamming with, and we rewrite, pull parts out, and sometimes use the whole songs, but everybody puts their touch on it. This was a little different because it tends to go in the direction that I write without the

outside influence. I was concerned I might not challenge myself enough. But I'm overall happy with the product.

**AU:** Did working solo give you more freedom to explore personal themes without compromise?

**EH:** Yeah, for sure. I write scripts for movies and television shows, so creative writing is always fun. It's always a cool challenge to tell a story and have it flow together and rhyme in just a few words. I don't know if I'm necessarily the best lyricist, but I enjoy the process

**AU:** The album deals with betrayal by trusted figures. How did you channel that emotion into your music?

**EH:** It's interesting when I start writing and what comes out musically and lyrically. I tend to write music and put lyrics to that music after I have the song laid out. Once I write the lyrics for the first song, it sets the tone for the rest of the album.

In this case, I wanted the album to have a story kinda. Sometimes when I look back at it, I don't know if the songs really line up perfectly, but I feel it starts at a place and has an ending that works.

**AU:** How do you hope listeners interpret the spiritual arc of the chosen one's story?

**EH:** I've been on a spiritual journey for the past 10 to 15 years. I think a lot of the problems with the world today are because of the lack of faith in God or some higher power. Whether it's real or just something we made up, I think the lack of faith in anything is obviously affecting the way people act. Hopefully, more people try to open their minds to the concept of a higher power, not necessarily religion or god per se, but something else, and the fact there could be more after this life. Maybe there are consequences or rewards for our actions in this life. idk, in my head it sounds nice, but sometimes when you say it out loud, it's a hard pill to swallow.

**AU:** How did your experience with Freya influence the sound or vision of *Ashes of the Sun*?

**EH:** A lot of these songs started out as potential Freya songs. I've been working with Freya, Karl, Erick, and Bulldog since 2004, when we were still on Victory Records. Freya has always been an outlet to do whatever we wanted. We all have other bands that have their styles and sounds locked in. Freya could kind of do whatever we wanted with whomever and experiment a little bit. So when I was writing, I kinda just wrote riffs and bits of songs that I thought could work. If they didn't make the cut, I would keep those demos, break them up for other projects, or

## AMERICAN IMPORT

whatever. But some of these songs, I just liked the way they were. And I discovered when I sang on them as opposed to screaming, everything, they almost sounded like some weird hybrid of the old metal. I listen to grunge or hard rock. One of my friends would say they're half-baked. Depends on who you're playing it for, I suppose. But I wanted these songs to have a simple approach like 90s rock or grunge with a metal edge.

**AU:** What do you hope listeners walk away with after experiencing *Ashes of the Sun*, emotionally, spiritually, or intellectually?

**EH:** I hope they just enjoy the album and what it is. I think it sounds good and cranks in any stereo. In my mind, my influences dictate who I thought would be interested in this, but as we move forward and I reflect on it today, I think it's a grungy, heavy rock album that blends nicely. I think it's normal for people to question why we are

and what the hell the purpose is. I know I haven't figured that out, but I'm still searching and wanting to believe in something. Maybe it's just that simple, just believe there is more beyond this life, and maybe our actions do affect whatever comes next.

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

**EH:** I'm just a man on this rock, banging sticks, strings, and yelling into the air, trying to create interesting noises that people can listen to and enjoy. Or maybe not. Haha, maybe it's just noise. Enjoy.







no one can believe it. He was a great Raider buddy, musical encyclopedia, and movie buff. He was also a big supporter of Little King and came to see us last time we played in El Paso, all of this is hitting heavy on this day, 9/26/25, as *Lente Viviente* has just been released nine hours ago. I loved those dudes, and it fucking hurts.

**AU: You released your 8th studio album, *Lente Viviente*. What can you tell us about it?**

**RR:** I co-founded a business called LivingLens Memoirs here in Arizona last year. "Lente Viviente" is Spanish for "living lens," so there you go. The core of our business is interviewing folks who've had long and interesting journeys. The purpose is, of course, to document them for future generations, but also for RIGHT NOW! The moment is all we have, so the process of interviewing and getting to know these folks has been absolutely riveting. I'm inspired by the happenings in my world and outside of my world. These seven songs are my reflection on the perceptions of all we see...our relationships, our filters in the brain, the lenses by which we see immigration and addiction, and really, how we choose to spend the NOW.

**AU: How did working with Dave and Tony shape the sonic identity of *Lente Viviente*?**

**RR:** So glad you asked. As you know, or don't know, Eddy Garcia was the drummer for Little King from 2007 until 2023. At least in the studio... we played with other drummers live, because Eddy is busy with his other bands and his shop, taking care of his folks and kiddos, etc. Ed is a brother for life. He was also the engineer for all of our albums since 2004! So having a new team of drummer/engineer was a big change just on its own. Tony and I met online! Ha ha...not like that.

But he was in Tucson for a while with his sister, and he was looking for a project. Little did he know! But we connected and jammed, and I was just enamored with his playing and we got along really well. Good dude, cares a lot, and has a great sense of humor. A Mexican mensch, really. Dave and I have collaborated since 2019. He arranged the strings for Little King songs on Occam's Foil in 2019 and Amuse De Q in 2021. We all love Dave! He's a great guy, so fun to jam with, and he's honestly about the best musician I know. His bass playing, cello playing, and arranging skills are amazing. Our bass player from 2019-2024, Manny Tejada, is still one of my best friends. We actually toured together a bit last summer. But Manny has a full-time job supporting 2 small children, one teenager, and he's married and living in Rehoboth Beach, DE. Just wasn't a great logistical fit, and Dave is a BEAST, so the transition was a no-brainer. Dave is a master musician, and Tony is an incredibly talented and experienced player. They're both better than me, hands down. THANK GOD. I only wanna do that anymore...my ego is not a part of this equation. Make me better, Dave! Make me work harder, Tony! Ricky Wascher, the new engineer (Cimamusic in Tucson) was like that, too. Especially with his vocal harmony creativity. Just a huge boost to our music and I'm grateful to all of them. Dave is in a really popular funk band called Fungi Mungle. He brings that... but he's also classically trained and runs a school district music department. Beast! Tony has played all over the world, and he has an incredible mastery of all styles. He hears so well, too...the most underrated skill in all of music, probably. In life, too.

**AU: How has your perspective on songwriting evolved over the course of eight albums?**

**RR:** Tailing from what we were just talking about...I think I'm more comfortable making personal music that isn't so couched in big universal truths. I just wanna write about my life. It always resonates when it's honest. Musically, it's more challenging as you get older to not repeat yourself. Again...also in life! But

seriously, I have a lot of songs. 70-ish, I think? So I definitely go through them before I get serious about writing to make sure I'm not cloning my own ideas. Yeah, it's inevitable that we retread some themes, both musically and lyrically. But the key is to present them in a way that shows different perspectives or the growth of an idea. The different players throughout Little King's studio history pretty much ensure that, too. Never gets stale when you're bringing in a new set of badassess like we did this time. I think I am more trained in writing and maybe even better at words than guitar, but I still feel like a guitar player FIRST. I used to shred, dude. A lot. I still do...but it's far from the thing anymore. I think Alex Lifeson once said that "There are a million people who can play a million times faster than me on Instagram" or something to that effect, and I sure can appreciate that. I can play MY songs with unique emotion and feeling, and yeah, they are really hard sometimes to sing and play simultaneously. Might think it's a superpower, but it's not. It's just fucking GRINDING. When it's done, it's DONE. I am better at that, too. Second-guessing should be a younger man's game, but it's not. All of us do it. I think my mental health is served by NOT doing that. You can ALWAYS beat yourself up over a decision. The wrong note, the wrong word, the wrong person, the wrong place, and time...If I could have just done this, then that would have happened. Fool's game. I guess I can just let things go a little better, and that's growth as a songwriter and as a human.

**AU: What do you hope people feel or think after hearing *Lente Viviente* from start to finish?**

**RR:** I hope people feel Hope. That they have taken some time to maybe give a chance to a new band, or give a band another chance, and see if the journey is as worth it as I claim it will be!

## LITTLE KING

### Interview with Ryan Rosoff

By Asher Thrasher

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

**Ryan Rosoff:** Nice! I'm Ryan, and I play in and write for a band called Little King. Lots of other things, too. But yeah...I guess that's why we are here. I founded Little King in El Paso way back in 1996, and we have just released our latest album, *Lente Viviente*, this morning. That's "release" number eight, although we put out a couple of singles in 2023 as well. Honestly, I am in mourning today. I've lost two friends in two weeks, and I don't feel okay just yet. Maybe talking with you can help? My friend and musical inspiration/mentor/collaborator, Ruben Gutierrez, passed away a couple of weeks ago. He actually played keys on our album *Legacy of Fools* in 2007, and he was a monster of a musician and an even better dude. Smart, funny, sarcastic, passionate, big-hearted. His funeral was last Saturday in El Paso. Then, I got word last night that my friend Mark passed at age 38 at home, also in El Paso, and

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emotions became the heart of the album?

**CM:** I think that is my overall intent when creating music for Vistiant. It's gotta come from somewhere real to me. Between family passing away and more brutal experiences and losses I had endured throughout. I felt fortunate to have Vistiant as a place to bleed, so to speak. I'd

**AU:** You recorded vocals using a Disney Princess mic. How did that lo-fi texture influence the final sound?

**CM:** There's a part in the track Briars that I use it on alone. It's at the tail end of the song. It gave it a really spooky old telephone kind of sound. And we used the mic throughout some of the layers in the harsher vocal. It gave it a grittier texture, which was really neat. I love using more abstract tools and instrumentation. I hope we get to experiment more in the future.

**AU:** Tony handled engineering and orchestrations. What's it like working with a drummer who's also shaping the sonic landscape?

**CM:** I love it, to be honest. Tony is brilliant. He is easy to convey ideas to. No matter how abstract they may seem. He truly has an awesome ear and is one of the most creative people I've ever worked with.

**AU:** How do you manage writing and recording across two states, Massachusetts and Pensacola, and still stay creatively connected?

**CM:** I think over the years, especially with COVID, it just became a part of life. We live in a digital world. I do miss just jamming out on any given day in a band, but this feels just as real and present to me. I also fly to Massachusetts for recording. And in this next writing process for Vistiant, I think we're going to fly Tony to Florida!

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

**CM:** I truly appreciate this interview. Thank you for taking the time, and thank you to everyone who has listened to the album so far. I hope you guys enjoyed it and continue to follow us for things to come. The future will be bright. I know it.

**Check out Rubidium by Vistiant, out now!**

## VISTIANT

Interview with Chelsea Marrow (vocals)

By Asher Thrasher

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

**Chelsea Marrow:** My name is Chelsea Marrow, and I am the vocalist of Vistiant.

**AU:** You've described *Rubidium* as shadow work. How did that idea shape the writing and recording process?

**CM:** It definitely became a way to face everything that was occurring in my life head-on. And even in the recording process, there were moments where Tony was just like I want you to think about all of the things that are hurting you right now, and just let out all of your pain. Maybe he didn't word it exactly like that, but there were moments in the album where it truly was just raw emotion. But it was healing. The whole creation of that was healing.

**AU:** Grief, loss, and vengeance are central themes. Was there a moment when those

rather it be through music than on my friends.

**AU:** How do you hope listeners connect with the darker emotional layers of the record?

**CM:** I hope they know they aren't alone.

**AU:** How do you balance personal trauma and storytelling in your lyrics without losing yourself in the process?

**CM:** I feel like I lost myself in the process. Lol. And every time I perform, I experience those things again. But I think that's what makes it shadow work. You face the darkness

head-on. And process through it. That's what makes it feel real or raw. The music. You know?



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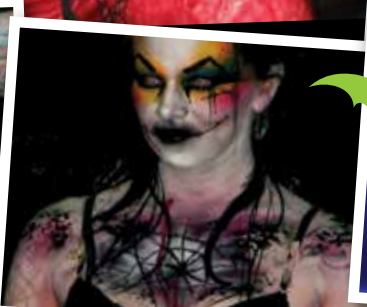
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# The Hit Heard Around the World

## Interview by Peter Illing

In 1995, the world of recorded music was unfolding in every direction. You couldn't put a finger on the zeitgeist's pulse. In Texas, the musical landscape was in constant shift - That year we lost the Queen of Tejano, Selena; Al Jourgensen of Ministry was busted on heroin charges in the quiet retirement community of Horseshoe Bay while recording/writing Filth Pigs, and major label A&R reps were tearing through central and northern Texas in search of the next act to sign. Texas would bring development, disruption, and monumental releases that continue to shape the music landscape today.

One group would release a massive 90s anthem that took over the radio and became an unavoidable global hit that's still in rotation today.

Que Paso, Canada - Today, I bring you Todd Pipes: frontman, educator, and studio hauss. Pipes is best known as the voice behind Deep Blue Something (DBS),

**Absolute Underground: DBS early formation was named "Leper Messiah" as not only being a Ziggy Stardust line, but various bands connected to David Bowie in some way. I have another obscure connection for you that isn't fully sounded out, but your original band name "Leper Messiah" was named after a Ziggy Stardust lyric, and Ziggy Stardust drew inspiration for the alias from a Lubbock musician by the name of Legendary Stardust Cowboy - we have come full circle?**

**Todd Pipes:** Yes, we were inspired by Bowie, but we didn't know that Metallica had a song called "Leper Messiah", so some thought we were either a Metallica tribute band, or at least a thrash band, so we changed it. I have heard about Bowie taking inspiration from The Legendary Stardust Cowboy-and I remember hearing him as a child, so yes it does come full circle doesn't it!

**AU: The north Texas scene had a diverse music landscape. Tripping Daisies, Rev. Horton Heat, Toadies, Sugarbomb, The Nixons. What was going on in the 90s in north Texas that these Major A&R reps were coming to make deals with y'all?**

**TP:** The key ingredient was a radio station KDGE 'The Edge.' George Gimarc ran the station and he'd play local artists that he felt were original and making an impact-if the track got a good response, he'd play it more. Radio play (at the time especially) impacted sales, and if you're selling,

A&R guys come running.

**AU: "Breakfast at Tiffany's" is a massive track that's still in rotation around the world. It was a regional hit, and then in 1995 with a major label backing you it became a hit worldwide. What's it like creating an anthem of the 90s and the infamy that came with it?**

**TP:** I can honestly say that I'm amazed it happened at all, and I just can't believe how it continues to grow and carry on year after year. It feels strange. The song has a life of its own. It is out there right now, running around.

**AU: "Breakfast at Tiffany's" had a polarizing reception; people loved it, it climbed the charts and was featured in big films, but there were a handful that hated the track. Some local Texas press were pretty harsh upon its release. What were the ingredients that seemed to captivate everyone whose paths crossed this song?**

**TP:** I think it's the weird rhythm--the lyrics are on the upbeat, while the music pushes the downbeat. I was worried that people would be distracted by the fact that I insisted that the lyrics didn't rhyme-and no one ever even noticed. Some of the Texas press hated everyone-that was their 'thing.' Certainly didn't hurt us any.

**AU: Do you feel the massive success of "Breakfast at Tiffany's" overshadowed other tracks?**

**TP:** It definitely did, but I don't mind it. It allows us to remain true to who we are. The song does all of the work, and we just make the music we want to make.

**AU: It's not often a band has the label support, success and reception DBS has had - What was that attention like for y'all?**

**TP:** It was a lot of work, and I appreciate their efforts, but we were the ones playing until 1am, getting on a bus- driving overnight, to wake up and play a morning radio show at 6am. . .in every city. . . Success and attention means lots of

## ¿Que Paso, Canada?

## Deep In THE Sound of Texas

opportunity, and we were willing to do it.

**AU: What's your favorite project that DBS music has appeared in?**

**TP:** *Yellowjackets* I really like the premise. I also like that one of the networks uses a lot of our music during football broadcasts--they never use Tiffany's; it's always an obscure album track.

**AU: Life outside of Deep Blue Something, you're a family man, a studio owner and an educator. You wear many hats. Does being a professional musician spill over into your personal life or vice versa?**

**TP:** I love to be busy-I get so much more accomplished when I have to wedge things into my schedule. My family is the most important, but now that the kids are older, my wife is the one pushing me to be more active with the band--it's funny really--maybe she just wants me out of the house!!

**AU: What was their role in the regional acts' success?**

**TP:** Paul Nugent was our booking agent first--he booked a lot of bands in the region before we all got deals--he was amazing at keeping us all working. Then he created a management/label project called Rainmaker Records.

**AU: Outside of Deep Blue Something what would you like Absolute Underground readers to know?**

**TP:** Music is still fun--and there's great music out there--you just need to find it. Take it all in, because AI will ultimately destroy it all.

**Thank you for existing, Todd! Keep on loving and listening.**

@yoyallpeter



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**Mountain Collective American Tour 2017:  
The Storm of the Century Part 5**

**By Brydo “Hot Dog” Parker**

So a quick recap on me and Ira's tour of the Coast Mountains/Cascade Mountains, the Sierra Nevada range and the Rockies in an old 34 foot RV with only three brakes and all the amenities of home.

We find ourselves leaving Squaw Valley. After one of the best two days of my ski life. One of my personal missions on this trip was to visit in reverse order the ski resorts that the character Harkin Banks in the movie Hot Dog goes to! My life has been based on this classic ski movie. Pulling off this trip is my tour to Mecca and skiligious crusade. So the Norse god of snow Ullr has been hammering us with legendary snow cycles and drowning in snow is a real possibility. We are headed to



a half day that was epic bluebird and deep open glades. These late day runs were like the best heli-skiing ever and more deep snow on the way for tomorrow.

Day two I was trying to guide Ira to Hole in the Wall, a crazy backside run, when out of nowhere a skiing mammoth came out of the trees and was headed our way. Just when I thought we would be crushed by the charging costumed behemoth it turns and followed the tree line down a deep gully. Well that was it, the chase was on! Ira has a serious addiction to all furry ski mascots from bananas to unicorns to in this case a Woolly mammoth and down we go on a mammoth hunt. This thing was like Snuffleupagus, over here one second and over there the next! Gone into thin 10,000 ft air. Whoever was in that mammoth costume was a super



wicked skier. Saw the beast from the chair a few more times over the day but never got close to catching it. Ira cornered it at one point and grabbed a photo. I think it was a tame one, not the wild mountain mammoth that rips huge turns and launches fat airs into super deep fresh pow.

We received the whole storm of the century weather from early morning bluebird to afternoon California warm up to the black clouds of doom headed our way. With passes exhausted, we made the call to head down the steep snowy mountain pass and get a jump on the storm before we got closed in.

Leaving the Sierra Nevada range in the rear view with Ira on sandwich making duties, we added another epic resort to the tally.

A couple of interesting tidbits. Dave McCoy borrowed \$135,000 in 1953 to buy the eastern Sierra land and sold it a few years ago for 385 million. After Mammoth Mining Co. Which was named after

the profile of the mountain formed by the blast radius of a giant super volcano which looks like a mammoth if you have had enough to drink. The

reason mammoths are extinct is because they are delish!

**Secret spots:** Gravy Chutes, Big Glades, Cornice Bowl and the Hole in the Wall. Be careful! A very high cliff is just on the other side of the Hole. Do not make a wrong turn here or you will be extinct!

**Next stop on the Hot Dog ski tour is Taos, New Mexico, and Taos Ski Valley in the**

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Mammoth Mountain, the highest resort in the Sierra Nevada range at 11,053 ft high, and a annual snowfall of 339 inches. The season we rode there they had a base of 485 and on the day we arrived there was 65 inches of fresh powder.

On the way we gotta get up the mountain and find a place to park the big rig before they close the pass. We had just enjoyed a half day of riding at Squaw because the road was closed in the morning we need a repeat now. And we got it.

Snow tire chains on, snow tire chains off, snow tire chains on, repeat, repeat, but we made it. Got parked and used one of our two day passes on



**Schneller Geist**  
**A Page Torn from the Book of Brydo**  
**By Brydo Parker**

I was inspired to write this story just so it gets told. A wise editor I know told me one day after reciting to him this very story. He said it's not a true story until it is written down. So here is a doozy.

I was travelling through Switzerland in an RV with several other chefs/skiers. We had recently graduated from North Island College chef program and we were very hungry, so we stopped at a very old stone chalet restaurant way up in the Alps. The date was December 19, 1987. It was a Monday evening, and we were looking to get some late dinner. Our hosts, an elderly couple named Mila and Herman invited us in and sat us down. The restaurant was packed with skiers. We muddled through ordering off the ancient menu. This way before cell phones and language apps. Herman asked us in broken English if we were here to visit and speak with the dead. "The dead?" we replied. "Ya vol," he said. "The Schneller Geists are the ghosts of those who have died in the mountains skiing or mountaineering; they're fast ghosts who ski beside you and you can see in your side eye. I can see you are interested, perhaps my wife can explain to you, her English is better." Mila came over and proceeded to tell us that we had stopped at the epicentre for people to come and communicate with the Schneller Geists from peoples past. She said, "Go to out the door, grab our skis, head up the mountain, and get a night skiing pass. Ski as fast as you can so you don't dare divide your attention; that is when the geists come to visit. You can talk to them, and they will answer." We were obviously very interested in night skiing, but communing with the dead? This is a new one. So, what did we do? We grabbed our skis and headed up the mountain bought night passes. Cost? 10 Swiss marks. That's before the euro too! About \$6 in Canadian dollars way back then. When I tell this story, the

first question people ask is, "What ghosts did you meet," then, "What language do they speak," and finally, "How fast did you have to go?"

First, I was able to see my old dead buddies who had died when I was very young and continued meeting dead friends throughout time as I rocketed down the mountain, going so fast and seeing people flying beside me just in my peripheral vision.

Second, my dead friends coming to visit spoke English.

Third, I was going faster than I ever have before- at least 99 kms per hour.

After this stunning revelation, it took a few minutes once I got to the bottom of the run to figure out whether I had shit my ski pants or was I flashing back to a high school acid trip or what just happened but I knew I wanted more. The boys showed up at the lift base and we all had had a paranormal experience. We took the lift back up, excited to see if we could replicate that incredibly unbelievable experience. We tried to ride down together but the geists did not come to us. Maybe going too slow? Maybe it only works when you are alone? We gave it another try. After reaching the top, we rode down individually and sure enough. I was flying as fast as I could go, passing other skiers, and I could hear them laughing or crying or shouting but could not hear or see geists around the other skiers, just me! By now I was familiar with the concept and have tried it in other ski areas, but I only get the odd flash of a geist or spirit. We stayed up all night in the RV telling stories and comparing paranormal experiences with each other. When the sun rose, we decided to go back to the restaurant to have breakfast and thank Herman and Mila. We went around a steep decline and corner where the restaurant was located. To our surprise, it was gone- just a pile of stones and old timbers with a deteriorating menu blowing in the cold mountain wind.





## Gothic Tendencies (and Tentacles)

By Vince D'Amato

In one of my insomniac deep-dives into Wikipedia during the small weird hours of the morning, I stumbled across an article on Horace Walpole's 1764 gothic novel "The Castle of Otranto". Not even two days later, this very novel was being featured (along with other gothic reprints by the Penguin publishing company) in the bookstore I'd walked into. Not only did I grab a copy, but this novel got stuck in my mind all month. The story behind Walpole's "The Castle of Otranto" is actually kind of crazy and cool – back when it was first published, the literate public unanimously felt that any genre literature was low-brow and beneath them – and that the genre in general probably should never be published at all. When "The Castle of Otranto" appeared, it was marketed as lost true-account text that had been recently unearthed. This marketing campaign worked, and the book was a commercial hit. When the publisher took the book out for a second printing, it was then that they revealed the text to be a work of contemporary gothic fiction by author Horace



Walpole (the text had previously been published anonymously). When the literate public found out that they had been 'tricked' into reading (and enjoying) contemporary gothic fiction (of all things!), they lost their fucking minds. However, Walpole's novel, the first commercial printing of gothic fiction in centuries, would influence storytelling for

centuries more to come, especially through the 19th and 20th centuries and the early part of the 21st century.

Gothic fiction tends to conjure certain visions and visual tropes that are classically associated with it – dark castles, stormy nights, supernatural undercurrents, etc., with novelists like gothic queen Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823) and in novels associated with the gothicism like "Frankenstein", "The Vampire", "Carmilla", and "Dracula".

...As a side note, adventurous film-seekers should try Ken Russell's 1986 film *Gothic*, a fictionalized account of the famous writers' retreat where Mary Shelley came up with "Frankenstein" and Lord Byron & John Polidori "The Vampyre".

Moving on through the 20th century, the gothic genre, at various points, expanded into Urban Gothic, Space/Sci-Fi

Gothic, Surreal/Dream Gothic, Cerebral Gothic, Southern Gothic, and Tales of Revenge, plus others. Some of the described Southern Gothic tales do bleed into the horror genre, like the novels of Anne Rice, but most Southern Gothic tales rely on that sweaty,



anxiety-riddled visceral aspect of uniquely Southern stories where things are not what they seem or appear to be, giving off an eerie current of unsolved mystery and hidden death – as in the novels of Joe R. Lansdale or

Tom Piccirilli's amazing "The Choir of Ill Children", and in movies like *Black Snake Moan*, *The Paperboy*, *Where the Crawdads Sing*, and *Stoker*. On the theme of revenge, I even placed Steven Soderbergh's criminally underrated *The Limey* in my list of favourite gothic films – indeed, *The Limey* is a revenge

thriller, but it also maintains a viscosity that I would associate specifically with gothic fiction. That gothic visceral tone is how you know you're experiencing something in the gothic realm of fiction. The idea of revenge, in a more explicitly gothic setting, is executed to perfection by author Ray Russell in his flabbergastingly brilliant novella "The Vendetta" (available in a collected edition by Penguin books). There are also some perfect gothic movies, many of which lean towards the supernatural in the form(s) of vampires and werewolves – *The Hunger*, *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992), *The Company of Wolves*, and *Werner Herzog's Nosferatu* (1978) – and even more contemporary/ commercial fare that have relied heavily on gothicism: *Blade Runner*, *Black Rain*,

*The Lost Boys*, *Dead Again*, *Ernest Dickerson's Bones*, and John Sayles' *Lone Star* – just to name a few with twists and variations on gothic themes in Hollywood. Following this cinematic line, it's a genuine shame that John Frankenheimer's *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1996) did not reach its potential heights of gothic lunacy – although it did reach stellar heights of its own straight-up lunacy, which may or may not have begun when original director Richard Stanley was fired from the project before it even began filming.

It is intriguing to imagine what Stanley would have created back in 1996, up to that point he was one of my favourite experimental gothic filmmakers, having done the weirdly dark and engaging cyber-gothic *Hardware*, which was immediately followed up by the enigmatic serial killer neo-duster/gothic *Dust Devil*. Both of those films were produced by JoAnne Sellar, which I believe was a key ingredient to their creative success; she went on to produce Clive Barker's equally dark and dusty *Lord of Illusions*, which was based on one of his short horror tales in his "Books of Blood – Volume VI". Sellar's production style definitely elevated this unique gothic-horror tale, however, author/director Clive Barker lost himself in the convoluted expansions of his original short story, which had simply concerned a private detective who had been hired by a widow to babysit the



corpse of her famed magician husband overnight. The short story boasted a more satisfying and imaginative visceral experience than the longer film version did – something that the story's own creator could not leave alone, as he went on to marry both the literary and cinematic versions of *Lord of Illusions*, "The Last Illusion" and *Hellraiser*, "The Hellbound Heart" into his 2015



mash-up novel "The Scarlet Gospels". Meanwhile, director Richard Stanley would branch off into

H.P. Lovecraft territory (sans Sellar) with his adaptation of *The Color Out of Space*. Lovecraft's writing and imagination is at least partly (mostly?) responsible for tentaculating the genre out into the innovative realm of 'The Weird', which has become an important sub-genre of horror and speculative fiction, as authors like Jeff VanderMeer (*Annihilation*) further explore and expand the borders of the genres. *The Color Out of Space* featured Nicolas Cage in the lead role of a Lovecraft story directed by the guy who'd made *Hardware* and *Dust Devil*, which all sounded like it should have yielded one of the most amazing horror movies ever made – so what happened? I can only imagine that director Richard Stanley, by 2019, could not retain the same chops that his younger, hungry, filmmaking self possessed in the 1990s – coupled with the fact the far, far superior Cage surrealist-horror (and Lovecraft-adjacent) *Mandy* had been released theatrically just a few months prior, setting that particular bar astoundingly high.

Now, midway through the 2020s, I think we might be seeing a real natural decline in the truly gothic themes of mass-marketed fiction, as we see films being produced simply as "second-screen" content, regardless of genre; and with literature being dictated by the potential commercial

viability of selling it off as a Netflix or Hulu streaming series. And while I enjoyed Tim Burton's *Beetlejuice* reboot (*Beetlejuice Beetlejuice*) and his Netflix series *Wednesday*, the latter is fuelled by Harry Potter-esque themes over its own potentially dark and gothic themes; and

*Beetlejuice Beetlejuice* was shockingly stolen by the matriarch from the Canadian comedy series *Schitt's Creek* (not that I'm complaining about that, Catherine O'Hara is amazing). For almost 300 years, gothic fiction had a good run – I hope we haven't seen the last of it.

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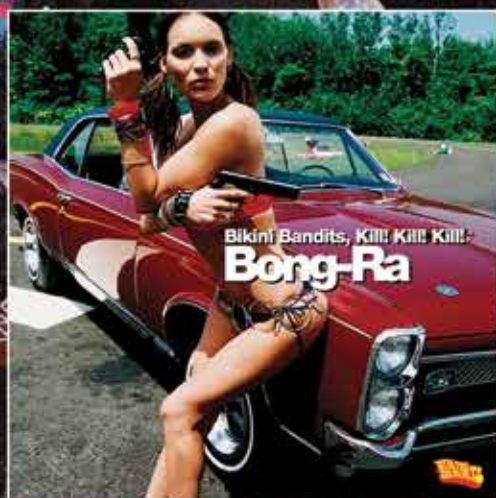
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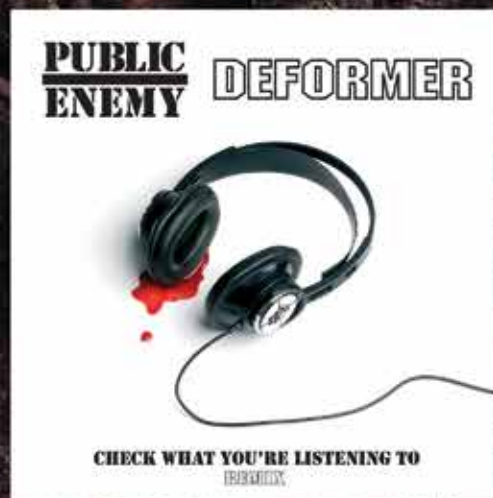
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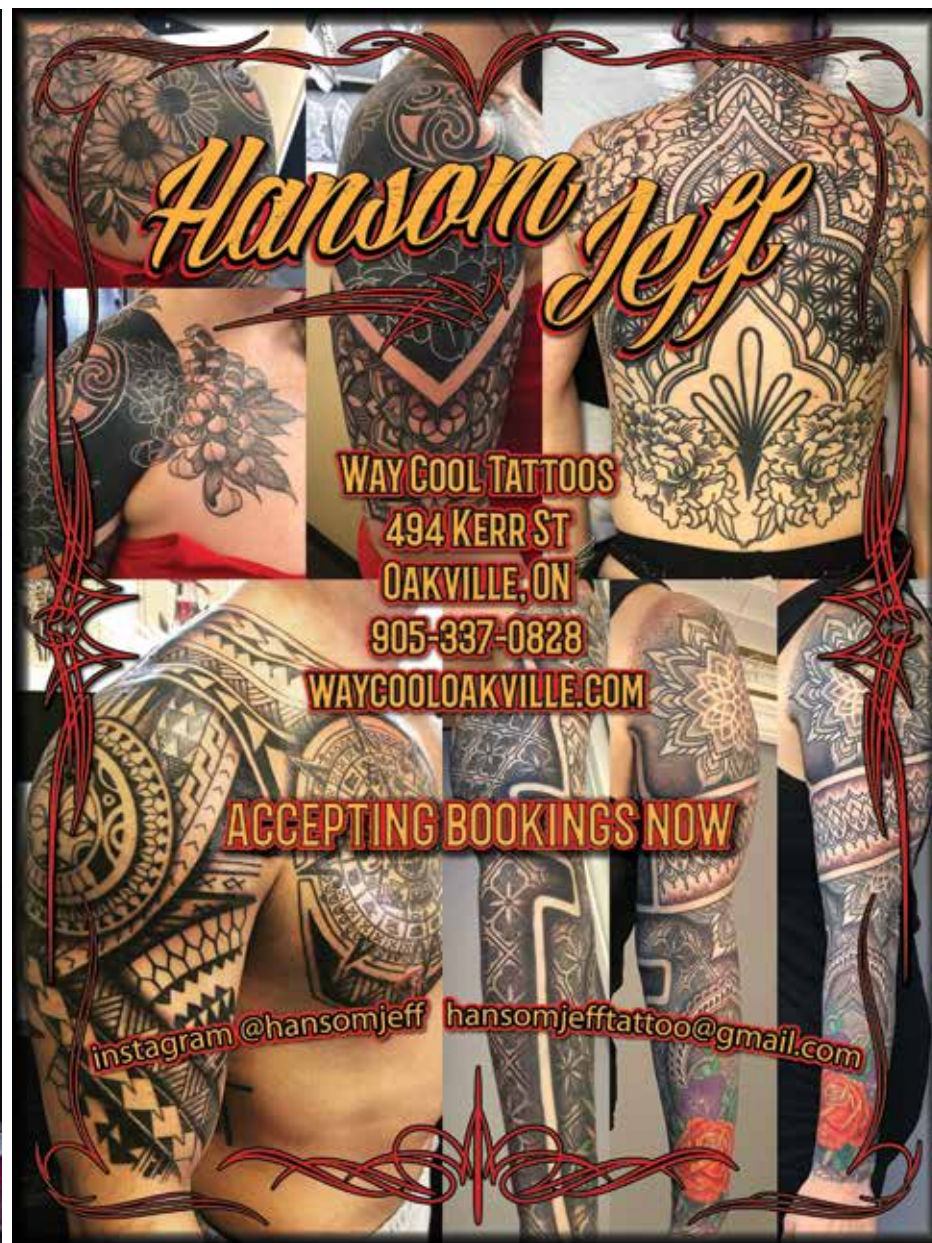
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## Tales from the Darkside:

### It really was a SUPER-Channel... (or, the Glorious B-Movie Discoveries of a Misspent Youth)

By Vince D'amato

From '95 to '01, I used to go regularly (read: obsessively) to a local independent video store called Tom's Video, which had so many VHS tapes that it was two stories high. Up there on the second level, there were two "sections" (as we used to call them) that sat side-by-side – "Cult Movies" and "B-Movies". It did not go unnoticed that most of the movies that came from Roger Corman's company were in the "Cult Movie" section, the movies from Charles Band's Full Moon Entertainment and the movies of TROMA were in the "B-Movies" section – while the films of Frank Henenlotter, Stuart Gordon, and Brian Yuzna straddled that border, showing up in both sections. This is where I felt like I'd discovered it all – but that wasn't exactly true...

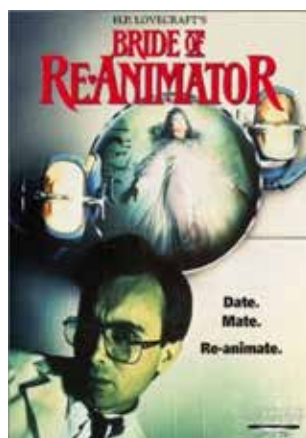
In the mid-'80s, Canadian households could have access to (if they paid for it) additional "subscriber" movies channels, First Choice and Superchannel. The latter was more prominent, eventually buying out the former and becoming "First Choice/Superchannel" for a while before simply rebranding back to just "Superchannel". And this is where pre-teens of the '80s like myself could discover an array of genre films, like *They Live*, *Deathcream*, *Night of the Comet*, *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome*, *Never on Tuesday* — most of which would eventually appear in one of those two VHS sections in the top floor of Tom's Video over a decade later.

These movies felt like movies that were made

for watching, they weren't produced as mere content/filler as "second screen" viewings for those of us who can't manage to drop our cell phones or iPads for 90 minutes to give undivided attention to movies, no matter how short they may be — but also, why, now, should we? The massive amount of content is no longer even made to be watched with our undivided attention.

This year I've finally discovered the Criterion Channel streaming platform — and as of this writing, they've put together some crazy categories of their own, Nunsploitation and 70s Thrillers collections ("sections"?), and tons of others — many of the newly-added films rotate on a monthly basis (much like Superchannel did in the '80s)... the films here are not and have never been intended to be "second-screen" content. There's a lot of wonderful weirdness here, I've recently discovered the films of Sara Driver and some kinda wacky horror films (and "arthouse-horror", as described by Criterion). Those of us who still remember the excitement of getting the new month's Superchannel movie guide in the mail can get, dare I say, the closest similar experience with Criterion, who even go so far as to send out two monthly mail-outs, one featuring what's new for the month, the other warning of what's leaving. Currently, this might just be the best way to discover movies that were not just being produced to be time-passing fodder while we scroll through our social media on our phones.

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## TALES FROM THE DARKSIDE







## Lee Conklin Talks Tattoo Artistry

By Ray MacKay

**Absolute Underground: How long have you been an artist? What got you started?**

**Lee Conklin:** I've enjoyed drawing and making art for as long as I can remember. My grandmother was a painter and I was always fascinated with how you could make something where there was nothing before. I've been tattooing professionally since 1999 but was making mistakes for about five years before that, haha!

**AU: What style of tattooing are you best known for?**

**LC:** I would say that generally I like to take an illustrative approach to my tattooing with influence coming from Japanese and American tattoo styles. People seem to like the black and

gray realism that I do as well.

**AU: Who did you apprentice under?**

**LC:** I got my first position as an errand boy at a biker shop on the north side of Edmonton in 1997. The owner was Trevor Grimolfson, he gave me my first break into the industry.

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

**LC:** Filip Leu, Shigenori Iwasaki (Shige), Steve Moore, Clint Danroth, James Tex are some of the "big names". I could add to this list ad infinitum. The fine people here at Porchlight are an inspiration as well, Isaac Holland, Jada Thompson and Celeste Brown. The team at Union tattoo on Yates were a joy to work with too.

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

**LC:** Illustrative, somewhat comic booky, perhaps?

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

**LC:** I am very versatile and can handle all styles of tattooing. I have over two decades of experience and welcome all ideas and motifs. I will put my whole self into making something both me and my clients love. I strive to do large scale work but am more than happy to do anything from fine line script to a traditional rose and dagger. No idea is insignificant or too small for me.

**AU: You work at Porch Light Tattoo in Victoria, BC. Tell us about it!**



**LC:** Isaac and I have known each other for a few years now and I was thrilled to see him open up his own spot and am equally happy to work here. The atmosphere is of a place where art happens, from the art shows that have been held here to the string of guest artists frequently visiting, it's a bustling hub full of creative minds, I'm stoked to be a part of that. My space is large enough that I am able to have an art studio and work station in one room, kind of a dream come true!

**AU: Who else works at Porch Light Tattoo?**

**LC:** Isaac Holland, Jada Thompson, Celeste Brown.

**AU: Do you guys do piercings as well?**

**LC:** No.

**AU: Where can people find you to give them a totally rad tattoo?**

**LC:** 1821 Cook St. Unit 201 Victoria BC. Email me directly at shorthandtattoo@gmail.com or find me on instagram under the same name.

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



**LC:** Either stop by the shop to say hello or contact me to schedule a consultation.

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

**LC:** A woman asked me to tattoo her vagina so it looked like a butterfly.

**AU: It's Halloween here at Absolute Underground. What's the spookiest tattoo you've ever done?**

**LC:** Spooky, hey? I just recently started a xenomorph from the *Alien* movies, I guess that's spooky. I've done so many skulls and demons over the years, hard to single anything out.

**AU: What's the scariest tattoo you've ever seen?**

**LC:** That's a tricky



question because it's so subjective. I find a poorly designed or poorly executed tattoo to be the scariest. There's a couple guys that did something called "The Brutal Black Project" and the videos for those are terrifying!

**AU: What's your favourite scary movie?**

**LC:** *Mirrors* (2008).

**AU: What's the scariest movie you've ever seen?**

**LC:** *Candyman* (1992) I was 12 years old and me and a bunch of friends went to see it in the theatre, probably

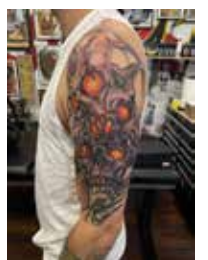
shouldn't have at 12 but it was the early nineties and a different world. I didn't sleep for a week after that.

**AU: Anything else to promote? Any final words for our readers?**

**LC:** I'm working on finishing up a few oil paintings and starting a few more, come by the studio to have a sneak peek and maybe order a print! Go buy art! Get tattooed! Not only from myself but all the other talented artists out there. We all need to support each other.

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

**LC:** Instagram @shorthandtattoo and porchlighttattoo.com



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## Interview with tattoo artist extraordinaire Kevin Newberry

By Ray MacKay

**Absolute Underground: How long have you been an artist? What got you started?**

**Kevin Newberry:** I've been tattooing for around 15 years. I have always loved tattoos and graffiti art. I got my first tattoo when I was 14 years old and have been in love ever since. I grew up skateboarding and doing graffiti in downtown Toronto through the 90's, that has for sure impacted my style and approach to art.

**AU: What style of tattooing are you best known for?**

**KN:** I love doing many different styles of tattoos, but due to my upbringing and tattoo journey, I am definitely influenced by Asian and traditional Buddhist art the most.

**AU: Who did you apprentice under?**

**KN:** I am blessed to have been apprenticed under master tattooer Hori Naga (Diao Xiang) in SE Asia. He has become a father figure for me and helped me to not only grow as a tattooer but also as a human being.

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

**KN:** I am heavily influenced by my Sifu and brothers in Taiwan, China, and Japan. I am extremely honored to have had the opportunity to learn from them. There are also many local artists here who are very talented, and push me every day to get better.

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

**KN:** As an artist, I feel blessed to be able to tattoo for a living. I love doing custom collaborative work with my customers. I look forward to doing more.

**AU: You recently joined Kreative Ink in Victoria, BC. Tell us about it!**

**KN:** I have been at Kreative Ink for a few months now. After looking carefully for a family to join here, I feel like I have found a home. I was looking for a place free from ego and drama, super stoked to have met them, as that is exactly what I found. Focused people who are truly about the art. I also often



piercings as we are focused on



tattoo at our shops in SE Asia and China when I am over there.

**AU: Who else works at Kreative Ink?**

**KN:** I work with Nick and Autumn. Two amazingly chill and talented people. I am blown away every day by their work and the environment they have created. It is an amazing place to be and get tattooed in.

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

**KN:** I would describe my style as Asian and graffiti-influenced tattoos. Though I truly believe that variety is the spice of life.

**AU: Do you guys do piercings as well?**

**KN:** We don't do piercings as we are focused on tattooing. But I can recommend some amazing piercers.

**AU: Where can people find you to give them a totally rad tattoo?**

**KN:** I can be found on IG: kevlaroner\_shadow\_society and by email at kevlaroner@gmail.com

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

**KN:** Contact me there to book a tattoo.

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

**KN:** I love doing "crazy" tattoos. But the craziest tattoos are always because of placement rather than art, lol.

**AU: Anything else to promote? Any final words for our readers?**

## INK SLINGERS



**KN:** I also make clothing and have my brand named **Police And Thief Clothing**. Reach out if you like limited-run street wear.

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

**KN:**

**IG:** kevlaroner\_shadow\_society





## AGNOSTIC FRONT

### Echoes In Eternity

Interview with vocalist Roger Miret  
By Ira Hunter and Ray MacKay

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

**Roger Miret:** I'm Roger Miret from Agnostic Front and I am famous for being the singer, the wild man, the main man of Agnostic Front. That's me.

**AU: What is new with Agnostic Front?**

**RM:** We have a new record coming out November 7th called *Echoes In Eternity*. We're really excited about it. There's a lot of cool surprises. One song features our friend Darryl "DMC" McDaniels from Run-DMC. We did a song together and just shot a video for it. It was so much fun—such a great time. That'll be out soon, I think October 14th.

**AU: How did you hook up with Reigning Phoenix Music?**

**RM:** Reigning Phoenix Music came about when

we were on Nuclear Blast Records. Nuclear Blast split up and started Atomic Fire Records. Then from Atomic Fire, they wanted to switch the name again. They split up, and it became Reigning Phoenix Music. We were always kind of "riding the lightning." Our catalogue kept moving from Nuclear Blast to Atomic Fire, and now to Reigning Phoenix. We've been working with them since 2003 with some of the same crew and some new people. We know Gerardo Martinez, he's a friend of ours. They knew we were doing a new record and why not stay where you are, you know?

**AU: Is there a music video for "The Eliminator"?**  
**Can you tell us what that song's about?**

**RM:** Yes. "The Eliminator" was a song we wrote back in 1985. It was on the *Cause for Alarm* record. This song is "Eliminator" 2020. We re-recorded it for a single. That song came about on our first US tour. We used to go into these military army-navy stores and to be honest with you, those were where all the lyrics came out. They were all quotes from the T-shirts, which is funny when people know it. For example, one of the most famous quotes of that song is "More than one face of

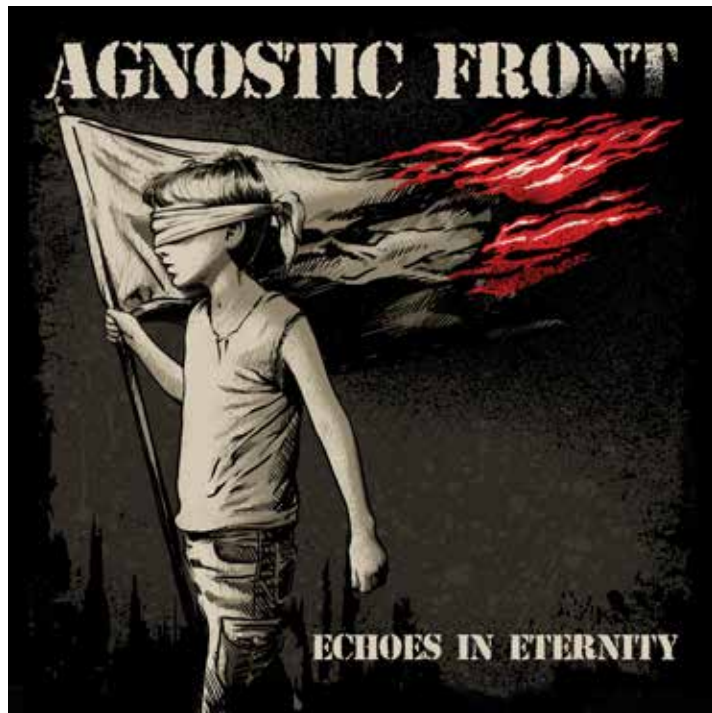
death." I think Dave Mustaine had a song, similar lyric-wise and people thought we got it from that. No, it had nothing to do with that. It had to do with the T-shirts on the wall at this army-navy store.

**AU: You recently had the book *Agnostic Front - With Time: The Roger Miret Archives* come out. Can you tell us a bit about that?**

**RM:** We did the film, *The Godfathers Of Hardcore*. That was a really beautiful, visual film based on the band, but it was beyond the band. It was done by Ian McFarland and had a lot of success. It was on Showtime here in America for two years and is still available everywhere. I released my autobiography, *My Riot: Agnostic Front, Grit, Guts & Glory* shortly after that. The whole time, I began collecting all the Agnostic Front stuff from my archives—my flyers, my photos, all the really cool stuff, like the acetates, test pressings and T-shirts. I started putting it together. I wanted to make this really cool and visual, with the most intimate times of Agnostic Front, like a story you could visually follow along. It's in chronological order. It starts with Vinnie Stigma in the late 70s, moves into Agnostic Front and closes off in '86. Inside the book there is a very special diary that I kept in 1985. It was really weird to keep a diary, but we did. We had put entries and stuff in it, so you can follow us along on our tour, which is really cool. It was an odd thing that I kept so I said, well, let's get this going in it.

**AU: You mentioned your documentary, and Harley from the Cro-Mags just had his documentary come out. Curious who you think should have the next documentary?**

**RM:** Oh, so many people. Harley is great because he lived through a very magical, cool time. He was very young. We're included in his documentary. Some of my footage is in it. All the early Agnostic stuff like me, Vinnie, and him. It is really cool. Our



documentary is not just about us, it's about all our friends who are also a part of it. I think next up, if anybody should have a documentary, Jimmy G from Murphy's Law deserves one. That's been a band that's had crazy times. They went on tour with the Beastie Boys and Madonna. They've done so much and he's such a great character.

**AU: Can you tell us more about the new album? The name and some of the new tracks?**





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**RM:** The record's called *Echoes In Eternity*. I was watching *Gladiators 2* and in the opening scene they were getting ready to go into battle. I remember him saying, "What we do here, what we do now, echoes in eternity." I was like, "Wow, what a name for an album" because I always felt like Agnostic Front would echo in eternity too, you know? Oddly, it's not a song title in any of the songs on the record. Some song titles on the record are "Way Of War", our first single. Then we

the 15 tracks. The whole thing is 27 minutes, so expect some crazy fast stuff too.

**AU:** You're back to good health now?

**RM:** Yes, I am, thank you. Yes, I am.

**AU:** How's Vinnie doing? Mr. Stigma.

**RM:** Vinnie's crazy as ever. Haha. We're doing his big 70th birthday celebration in New York City on December 6th at Urban Plaza. He's really excited about that. You know, celebrate his life.

**AU:** Are you guys still on this LAST WARNING TOUR with Bad Religion or is that over now?

**RM:** No, that's over. We're about to start a tour with Strung Out on the West Coast on October 15th through November 2nd. Then we start another tour on the East Coast with Raw Brigade and Violent Way. That starts December 4th in Massachusetts and goes all down the East Coast and ends December 21st. Then from there, we take it on and we start moving into next year.

**AU:** This is a bit of a Halloween issue. Have you guys played any legendary Halloween shows? Did you ever play with the Misfits back in the day or anything like that?

**RM:** Unfortunately, no. We've really never been one of those bands that played Halloween. For legendary Halloween shows you definitely have to give that to Murphy's Law. Nobody would even attempt to book anything on Halloween because we all knew Murphy's Law was doing a Halloween show. They claimed Halloween way back. But it would have been amazing if we did get to play any of the Halloween shows with the Misfits.

**AU:** When I was at the Punk Rock Museum in Vegas there was lots of Agnostic Front stuff in there. Have you been there? Have you been one of the tour guides?

**RM:** Absolutely. I've done tour guides twice and in fact, this weekend I fly to Vegas to be a guide from the 26th to the 28th. I'll be going through there and talking about all that stuff which I love. It's my upbringing and a lot of those bands influence us. I think that place is way cool.

**AU:** I assume this new record is going to sound like Agnostic Front and you probably haven't reinvented the wheel.

**RM:** Yes. The new record is very refreshing and has a little bit of everything from all our last records. It's produced by our good friend Mike Dijan who's also part of our band, at this point. He's really been part of our band throughout all these years. The mix was done by Zeuss. He does an incredible job, so it sounds really big.

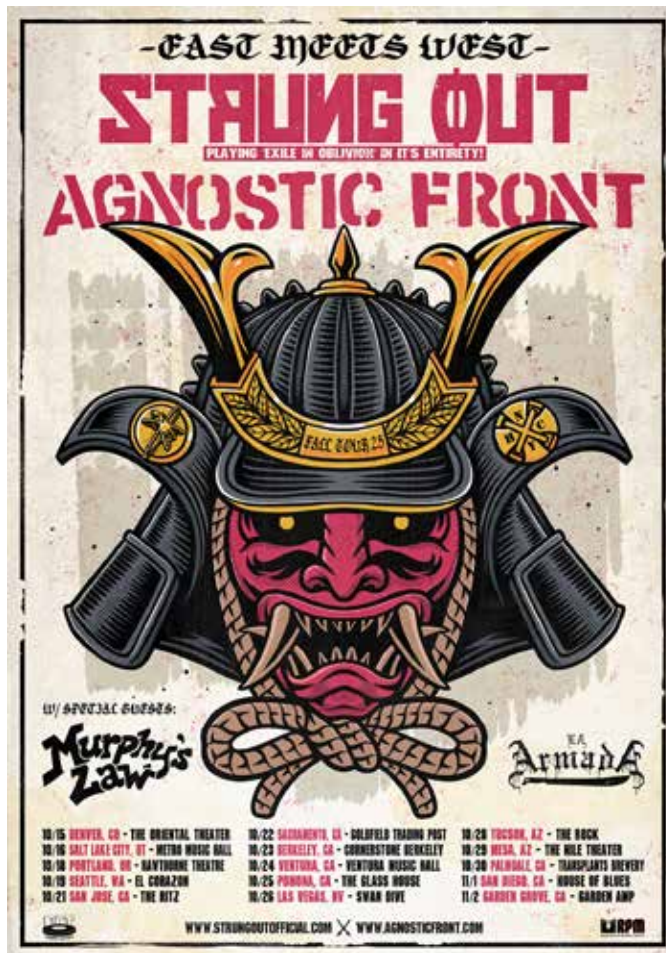
**AU:** How do people find you guys online?

**RM:** Agnostic Front is on Instagram, Facebook and recently we got on TikTok.

**AU:** I appreciate your time and look forward to hearing it. Will you guys be hitting up Canada?

**RM:** No, but we are going to Seattle which is close. I forget the date but it should be a really good show. It's at El Corazón.

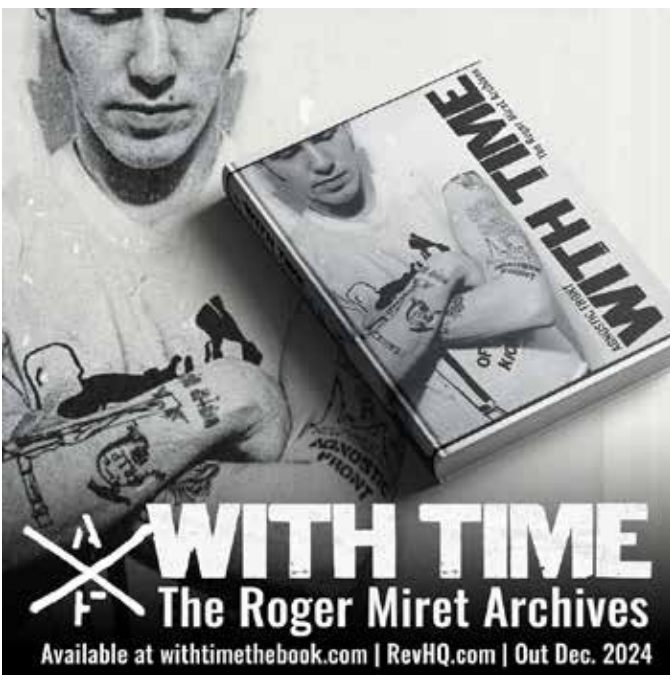
**AU:** Oh yeah, that's a great venue.



**RM:** Yeah, that's a really good club. That's a fun tour, because it's Strung Out and us co-headlining. Murphy's Law is on that tour too and so is La Armada from Chicago, so it should be a really fun tour.

**Album drops November 7th. Watch official "Way Of War" video at [agnosticfront.com](http://agnosticfront.com)**

Photo Credit: An Maes



have "You Say". "Matter Of Life & Death" is the song with Darryl from Run-DMC. "Tears For Everyone" is a song written about the fires in Los Angeles. "Divided" says a lot. Actually, a line pulled out of "Divided" was the visual used for the album cover. "Sunday Matinee", which is historical for us, obviously that says a lot. "I Can't Win" is another great turn up the volume. "Art Of Silence", "Shots Fired", "Hell To Pay", "Evolution Of Madness", "Skip The Trial", "Obey" and "Eyes Wide Open". Those are



# SHRED SESSION



## Interview with BARRIER KULT's Mike McKinlay

By Dustin Jak and Wade Garrett

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

**Mike McKinlay:** My name is Mike McKinlay and I'm a filmmaker living out of Vancouver, BC. I've been working pretty closely with the Barrier Kult for several years now on most of their video content.

**AU: What's the skateboarding scene like there?**

**MM:** Uhhh it's ok? Honestly I don't have much interest in where mainstream skateboarding is at right now. Deeply invested in large scale corporate shoe brands. Everyone seems to be pretending that it's all ok. It feels uncomfortable to me.

**AU: Give us a brief history of Barrier Kult.**

**MM:** The Barrier Kult began (I believe) in around 2003 and it was birthed out of two guys (Deer Man of Dark Woods and Depth Leviathan Dweller). From what I know they were pretty over the corporate skateboarding world and the ego driven ideologies that swirl around the professional skateboarding culture. Inject 20 years of nature worship, occult practices, Black Metal music obsession, and strict barrier skateboarding rituals and you have the Barrier Kult.

**AU: You have a new skate video coming out**

**- HORDE 3, coming out this fall. Tell us about it!!**

**MM:** Yes, I've been directing their 3rd installment and it will be by far the biggest full length video we've done. We're all so fucking proud of this documentation of barrier skating and excited to release it. There will be six full parts from our main dudes - BEAST OF GEVAUDEN, PERMAFROST CORPSE EATING HRAESVELGR, LUTHER MOSS-COVERED WITCHMAKER CANDLEMAS, GAUZED INVISIBLE TERROR REIGN, MUSKELLUNGE OF DARK ISLAND and DEER MAN OF DARK WOODS. There will also be a full length part of an actual goat. That's all I can say about that.

**AU: Tell us about the creative process behind HORDE 3.**

**MM:** I helped shoot their last two videos and we've always maintained this sort of standard definition aesthetic. We're going 4K (which was kind of a big decision for the Kult and was put to a vote). No regrets though as the footage is fucked looking and the payoff has been HIGH DEF accounts of barrier rituals in its absolute most powerful aesthetic forms. The choice to shoot with better cameras has opened up new creative approaches not often used in previous BA. KU. documentation. Heavy cinematic intros/ skate camera movement - as a filmmaker it's been fun to push further into the dark powerful atmosphere that the Kult aesthetic demands. Music has also been a massive part



of all of our videos as the Barrier Kult is immersed daily in the mandatory rituals of the Black Metal genre. *Horde 3* will be no exception as we have been working closely with several bands such as Blasphemy, Wolf Lust, and Diocletian (to name a few specifically).

**AU: What inspired you to start making the HORDE videos?**

**MM:** There was clearly something very different about the Barrier Kult (compared to other skate subcultures) that drew me to want to document them. Unlike other skate factions, the Kult has a sort of narrative story arc to them and they never seem to sway from their core beliefs and obsessions. This is appealing to me. There are strong undercurrents of 'policy' that also intrigues me - they've never treated their movement as any kind of irony or satire, and they take their beliefs very seriously. This on top of their overall 80's obsessed skate aesthetic has drawn me heavily to

what they offer the skateboard world.

**AU: DOES THE KULT SKATE ANYTHING ELSE BESIDES BARRIER?**

**MM:** From what I know the roots of 'spot inspiration' for them dates back to the earliest days of 80's shallow end pool skating. The jersey barrier (in ways) is an accessible means of replicating this abrupt skateboarding experience for them. Beyond that, no, they truly don't skate anything else. I've logged weeks on end with them and it's literally just barrier spot to barrier spot. I've never seen them skate anything else or have heard them speak of any other kind of spot.

**AU: Do they surf or snowboard as well?**

**MM:** Not that I've ever seen, no.

**AU: What else does Barrier Kult do?**

**MM:** Listen to the likes of: SARCOFAGO, GOAT PENIS, GOAT SEMEN, BLASPHEMY, BEHERIT, MORTUARY DRAPE, MYSTIFIER, CONQUEROR, BLACK WITCHERY, DIOCLETIAN, WOLFLUST, AND INQUISITION.

**AU: It's Halloween here at Absolute Underground. DOES THE KULT have any Halloween traditions you'd like to share?**

**MM:** I once went to a Halloween skate event and saw like three people dressed as Deer Man. It's a Halloween costume now I guess. As for the Kult, no idea what kind of fucked up shit they get up to when it comes to

Halloween.

**AU: What's the spookiest thing that's happened to you while skateboarding?**

**MM:** During a collaboration that they got up to with skate legend Sam Hitz (LARV VOMIT), I was subjected to documenting Depth Leviathan Dweller doing a ritual sacrifice in a forested park for like two hours. My camera was acting up all sketchy during shooting and when I looked at the footage later I noticed super weird streaks of ghost-like light/ scratches etc in my footage that didn't exist while I was filming it. I've never had the same issues while filming before or since that night.

**AU: WHICH HORROR FILMS ARE THE KULT MOST INSPIRED BY?**

**MM:** INQUISITION, MAGDALENA, POSSESSED BY THE DEVIL, THE WITCHMAKER, WITCHES MOUNTAIN, THE HOUSE BY THE EDGE OF LAKE, ZOMPIRE, IMAGES IN THE CONVENT.

**AU: What should we know about these guys that we don't already? What don't you want your family members to know?**

**MM:** It's interesting actually, I've seen several 'hesher' dudes meet with the main Kult members abroad and they're often surprised by what they get. Depth Leviathan Dweller and Deer Man of



Dark Woods don't drink, don't do drugs, party, etc any of that shit. There's a preconceived idea of what you're signing up for when you hang with them and it's usually way off. They're cold in their demeanor, never loud or obnoxious, and this is often unsettling to those who have a run in.

**AU: Anything else to promote?**

**MM:** I'd like to give a shout out to Skull Skates and PD's Hot Shop. The Skull Skates brand has been extremely supportive of my video endeavours (and to the Kult as a whole). There will be a fleet of BA. KU. merch coming out with the *Horde 3* video including boards, shirts, patches so keep an eye out for it all.

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

**MM:** I guess just that I've been a documentary filmmaker for 25 years now and I pinch myself when I think about how much cool shit I've had the opportunity to be a part of with my camera - working on nature films, social related docs etc. The bonus round has been this really fucking cool honour of documenting the Barrier Kult. I've sort of watched them grow over the years into something I'm sure they themselves never would've expected or predicted. I'm stoked for them, and I'm super hyped to see all the shit that's happened throughout their 20+ years - from signature shoes with Emerica to top tier collaborations with the likes of Creature and DGK. This has definitely fueled my motivation to do them all justice for this new *Horde 3* video and I'm excited to blow the top off of the skateboard world with this new video. HAILS.

**AU: Where can we find you online? Website/ socials/etc?**

**MM:**

Instagram: @barrierkult

mikemckinlay.com

skullskates.com

thebarrierkult.blogspot.com



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# SHRED SESSION



## Interview with BARRIER KULT's DEER MAN OF DARK WOODS

By Dustin Jak

**Absolute Underground:** What was the first true metal LP you skated to when you were coming up?

**Deer Man:** My first ever LP that got me obsessed was the possessive sounds of MYSTIFIER's *GOETIA*. This album pushed me over the edge into the

Black Metal realms and put all other metal to shame.

**AU: Who are your favorite Skaters that inspired Barrier Kult?**

**DM:** Garry Scott Davis for his ditch obsession and anonymity, Neil Blender for his tight quarterpipe skills, Allen Losi, Blaize Blouin vert, early Gator vert, Carlos Longo and his earliest barrier rituals. These are the skateboarders who inspired us originally (to skate barriers).

**AU: You guys have a huge part in bringing Metal and Skating together...Do you see it getting stronger?? You seem to have a lot of followers**

**DM:** It's a weird one as we feel small and insignificant as compared to the Black Metal ethos. A tiny skate faction drawing music and inspiration from this deep, rich metal scene that has curated itself over decades into what it is today. We're late to the game but we're honoured and pay great tribute and respect to these bands who associate with us. Stoked as fuck to see skateboarders leaning into bands that we've introduced them to.

**AU: What bands are you guys into lately??**

**DM:** Scarcofago, Blasphemy, Diacletion, Mortuary Drape, Mystifier, Conqueror, Inquisition. I've been listening to this band Abysmal Lord a lot lately too.

**AU: What would be your dream band to have on the soundtrack to the next Video?**

**DM:** Well we're sort of living it right now. We've got permission currently to use Blasphemy, Wolflost, and Diocletian right now for *Horde 3*. We want to thank Blasphemy for their massive



amounts of support over the years.

**AU: Where is your favorite place to skate?**

**DM:** RITUAL barriers. Always.

**AU: What does it take to be a BAKU rider?**

**DM:** Barrier skills, minimal levels kook.

**AU: Why don't you guys start a fuckin band?**

**DM:** It would never be good.

**AU: Do you guys like being on Skull Skates? You have definitely brought new hype and a whole new type of skater into the mix... PD must be proud!!**

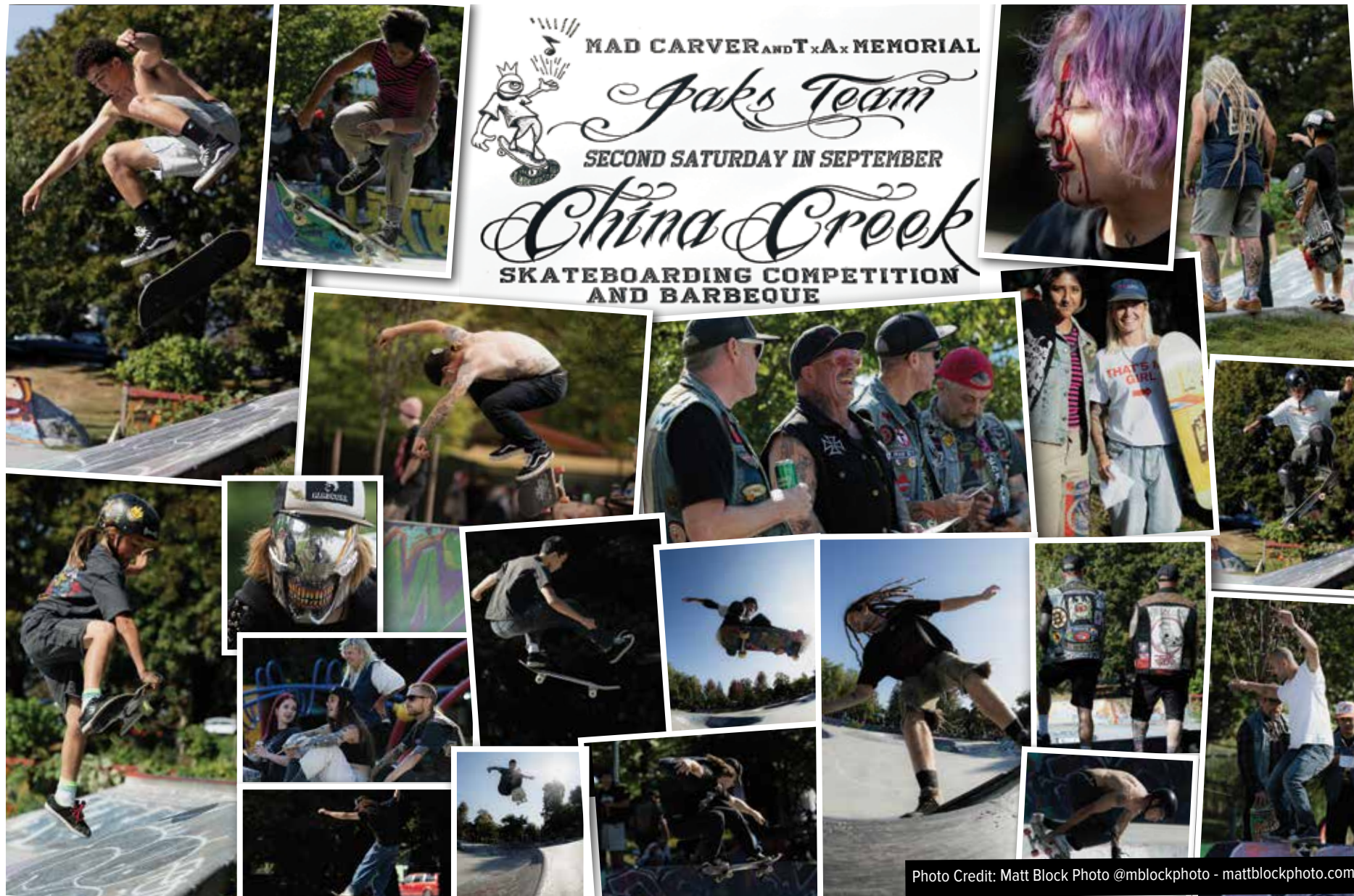
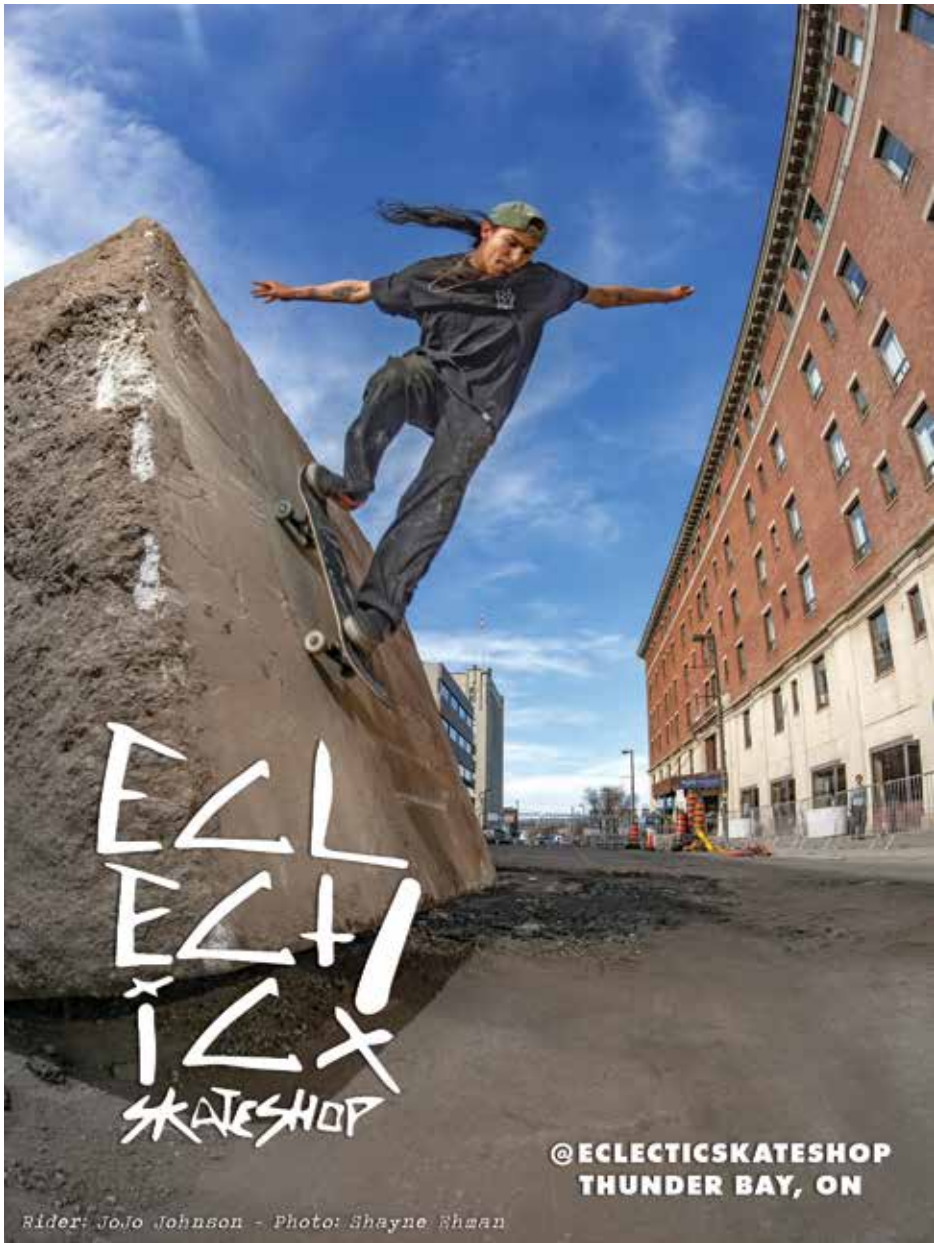


Photo Credit: Matt Block Photo @mblockphoto - mattblockphoto.com





## Interview with Writer/Director Of the *Grotesque* movies, Brandon Rhiness

By James Borsa

**Absolute Underground:** Brandon, welcome to Ultrasonic Film.

**Brandon Rhiness:** Thanks for having me!

**AU:** I enjoyed your films *Grotesque* and *Grotesque 2*, you have a cheery, gleeful, central character, and I really think that's what makes those films work so well. Was that character always written that way?

**BR:** We call Mildred a lovable psychopath. I think that she's just so darn cute. And actually, no, we did not intend it to be that way. Originally, when I came up with the concept, it was supposed to be a very serious slasher movie. And Mildred was supposed to be a middle-aged woman who was concerned that she's aging, and she's jealous of all the younger, prettier girls. So she goes to have plastic surgery, and it gets botched, so she goes around, killing... It's a similar storyline, but it was very serious.

**AU:** Elizabeth Chamberlain was great in both films. Her performance draws you in.

**BR:** After working with Elizabeth Chamberlain,

and realizing how great of an actor she is. I was like, you know what, I want Elizabeth to play Mildred, but all of a sudden, that story doesn't make sense anymore. So there has to be a different reason that she's angry at the world. So I was like, oh, what if she has some kind of deformity, like a big nose or something, and that's what leads her to get plastic surgery. Then that became a comically large nose, and we just exaggerated everything. And the whole thing turned into about as much comedy as it is horror.

**AU:** In the close-ups of the cheesy gore effects are you specifically making them look as cheesy and fun as they come off?

**BR:** I'm of the opinion, honestly, I would rather see a crappy practical effect than a good CGI effect. Especially with slasher films, it's like... It's part of the charm, right? And we did the best with what we could. Some of them worked, some of them didn't, but it's like, whatever, it's funny. And even the bad ones, no one's ever criticized it. Sometimes people criticize other stuff about the movies, they've never criticized the bad effects.



**AU:** One of the fun parts of checking out *Grotesque 2* was that you're using much of the same cast of actors from the first film in different roles.

**BR:** Yeah, everyone did so great. I kind of hate to, like, throw them all aside... "okay, you're all gone now, we're gonna work with a bunch of new people." Obviously,

Elizabeth's gonna come back, Julie Whalen, who plays the lead female villain in both movies. We can't just not have her in it, so it's like, how about we just have everyone back playing different roles? A couple new people, but it was a huge cast, too, there was a lot of people.

**AU:** What are some of your favorite movies as inspiration for your current career? Films that

you that you look back on and enjoy?

**BR:** The two movies that really... made me want to make movies were *Reservoir Dogs* and *Leon the Professional*. It was in high school, I watched both of those on one day and I'd always been interested in writing and comics and stories and stuff, but... watching those, that's what made something click, and I was like, I want to make movies! I had a love for low-budget slashers, where even, like, a bad slasher tends to be entertaining, as long as they're trying. There's some kind of charm there that I just love, and I tried to replicate a piece of that with *Grotesque*.

**AU:** These films are made out of Edmonton, and they reference Edmonton a lot. It gives them kind of a unique feel, I'm sure, as people are watching them all over the world.

**BR:** Yeah, that's one thing, too. Even a lot of movies that are shot in Edmonton, they never take place here. It's kind of like, oh, you gotta have it set in New York or LA. I'm like, why? Edmonton's a pretty big city, we have stuff here. So it's like, hey, we live here, They're gonna notice landmarks and realize where it is. They're not gonna believe this is Chicago or something, so let's just reference Alberta, reference Edmonton, and people from here, they'll be like, oh yeah, they'll get the reference. And if you live somewhere else... no one's not gonna watch a movie, because it takes place in Edmonton.

**AU:** Yes Exactly, no one will mind where the film is set.

**BR:** They're watching it for the kills, they're

## ULTRASONIC FILM



watching it for Mildred, right? For the entertainment value. I think I've set pretty much every single project we've done in Edmonton, and I try to throw in some references, you know, I'll mention White Avenue, so people will be like, oh, I know where that is, you know, it's just like, why not? Why not support the community that supported us?

**AU:** Absolutely, I think that's a great way of looking at it.

**Brandon, what else do you have coming on up? I assume you've got many projects that you're working on in the future.**

**BR:** Yeah, I've been writing a lot. Honestly, *Grotesque 2* took a lot out of me, both financially and just the incredible amount of work it took. I've been working on found footage horror films. I'm writing a script for *Grotesque 3*. Whether or when it'll happen is still, you know. Maybe one year, maybe 50 years, I don't know, it's hard to say, but I'm like, you know what, I just... I owe it to people to write it.

**AU:** Brandon Rhiness, the writer-creator of *Higher Universe* Films. I want to thank you very much

for joining me here on Ultrasonic Film, you can find your films on Tubi and the "Higher Universe" Youtube Channel.

**BR:** Thanks James, I appreciate it!

Check out [www.youtube.com/@jamesthemoviefan](http://www.youtube.com/@jamesthemoviefan)

Headshots by Kristin Zabos





# PHAETON

## Interview with Ferdy Belland (Bass)

By Asher Thrasher

**Absolute Underground: Welcome back to Absolute Underground. How's Phaeton doing these days?**

**Ferdy Belland:** We're the best we've ever been. When Colin first assembled us, we weren't thinking grandiose career ambitions. Phaeton was supposed to be a casual songwriting-recording project, just for shits and giggles. But we clicked immediately, personally and musically. Excitement ensued. We had the first album done and out within a year. We ramped up our live-performance game. And then the goddamned pandemic thwacked us upside the balls. So we waited that out. And just when all the lockdowns were lifting, Colin got sick. And he almost died. But, stubborn warrior that he is, he out-fought cancer and survived, and Phaeton began again for real. We received a lot of glowing acclaim for *Between Two Worlds*, and we've just kept ramping everything up from 2023 onwards. We're closer as friends, and tighter as a band. We're exploring more ambitious goals. The creativity is just on fire. Nothing is for certain anymore, so chase the things you love - we're taking that to heart.

**AU: You're releasing your new album *Neurogenesis*; how would you describe the shift in sound from its predecessor, *Between Two Worlds*?**

**FB:** *Between Two Worlds* is our heaviest, most aggressive album yet. We took our original first-album blueprint and intensified the model. It's more on the "metal" side than "prog," and we're all proud of it. The *Neurogenesis* songs are exploring more angular directions of emotion, as opposed to bludgeoning intensity...more "prog" than "metal." I'm not saying "we're growing as artists" - that crap usually implies you're wearing out and have no fire and punch left. There's fire and punch by the bucketload in the *Neurogenesis* songs. There's more cerebral intensity, too. Take a listen. Take ten listens. You'll like it - trust me.

**AU: You mentioned the songs on *Neurogenesis***

**are more compact—was that a conscious decision or a natural evolution?**

**FB:** The *Neurogenesis* songs are compact only because when we finished recording and then squinted at Kevin's DAW screen, we were startled to find the running times were considerably shorter than most of our earlier songs. That's really it. We weren't desperate for pop-friendliness to shove Olivia Rodrigo off the Spotify Top 50. That's just how it all ended up. It was natural - an accident of composition. "Prog" means anything you want it to. There's a lot going on within these new songs. Everything swirls by in a blistering storm, and it's crashing to a halt before you know it.

**AU: As an instrumental band, how do you approach storytelling without lyrics? And do you think instrumental music can be more powerful than lyrics when exploring philosophical themes?**

**FB:** It's the same approach all instrumental bands have always taken: Link Wray, Duane Eddy, the Ventures, Dick Dale, Joe Satriani, Steve Vai, or Animals as Leaders, Intervals, or Scale the Summit. If your songs aren't musical vehicles for delivering lyrical storylines, then the story's in whatever melodies your instruments create. You're capturing the listeners' hearts and minds with the sounds and the dynamics. We give it our all when we write and perform, but it's always a personal experience for the listener. We're thrilled when we're approached and told how people feel about our music. We have our own explanations and descriptions, and we're happy to share them, but we want feedback from the listener. Phaeton isn't just us four. Phaeton's also our audience. Instrumental music isn't superior or inferior to standardly-sung songs: both have their place. Humans had rhythm and tones in Neolithic antiquity before we had speech to sing.

We certainly sigh and gasp and weep and snarl and smile when we listen back to the music we've written. We only hope that whoever's listening also sighs and gasps and weeps and snarls and smiles.

**AU: How do you balance jazz-fusion influences with prog-metal intensity in your compositions?**

**FB:** Kevin and I both attended the same music school. We were working-class misfit savants, wanting to explore music's magic. Jazz was the curriculum there. Kevin and I aren't jazzbos, but we appreciated the harmonic complexity. Some of those musical mechanics are in our songwriting. All four of us are metalheads and

progrgers first, but both metal and prog owe a partial debt to jazz. The lines between jazz-fusion and prog-metal blur and grey out. Listen to "Vital Transformation," off the first Mahavishnu Orchestra album from 1971 - those lunatics are blazing away in 9/8 time at Warp Factor 4! Can you say Billy Cobham isn't thrashing his kit? Can you say John McLaughlin isn't melting the fretboards on his

Gibson double-neck? Is it jazz fusion? Sure. Is it prog-metal? Sure. What's old is new. All styles of modern music are variations of established themes. So - jazz? Take what you want and leave the rest. The same goes for prog, or metal, or whatever. Ultimately, we four have wide-ranging musical influences. We cram it all into the cauldron and see what boils.

**AU: What's the biggest challenge of writing music that's both technically complex and emotionally resonant?**

**FB:** You don't want to be mediocre, but you also don't want to be all technicality and no heart. There's a difference between writing and typing. There's a difference between jacking off at 200kmh, or using your chops sparingly to truly impress yourself and the listener. If you're too ponderous and pretentious, you'll piss off the kids into forming punk-rock bands in violent protest. We focus on melody over masturbation - it's up to the listener to decide whether we succeeded. We impress people on record, and we impress people tenfold at our shows and blow their minds with how heavy and aggressive our songs translate at point-blank range in tight, hot, sweaty rooms. Check us out and see for yourself.

**AU: How do you keep your arrangements fresh and engaging without vocals to guide the listener?**

**FB:** If nobody's on mic, yelling like Tom Araya or angelically spiralling like James LaBrie, then our instruments need to do the singing, and we better be singing well or everything goes to shit.

We don't follow standard structures, but we don't staple together random riffs and say "here you go!" We agonize over songwriting. Kevin barely leaves the Cube - his studio enclosure - always scheming over a hot DAW with a blistering Lydian mode in hand. Dan's always hunched over his DAW with his guitar arsenal at the ready, blazing out one million-dollar riff after another. Colin's a living biological extension of his drumkit - which dovetails nicely into our overall *Neurogenesis* concept - endlessly keeping us in line, braying how he needs RIFFS-RIFFS-RIFFS because he's a genius arranger. And I'm stitching myself into it all with my bass. We're ruthless editors who trim the fat: all killer, no filler.

**AU: What's one moment on the album that you feel best captures the band's current identity?**

**FB:** "Tethys Rising" was the first song I brought in. I gave free rein to the guys to find their own voices in what was presented. I wanted to contribute as a songwriter, but I was nervous about creating something that matched Dan's and Kevin's standards, and I didn't want to tell the others what they could or couldn't play. It became this jaw-dropping epic that burst out of nowhere, without me waving any sorcerer's staff. But it's a difficult question to answer. Any of our songs, on any of our albums, captures our identity. We're all there, ablaze. Colin the Octopus Tornado on drums. Kevin the spider-fingered Mad Scientist on lead guitar. Dan the Riff Engine is murdering his 7-string. And me, still channeling my fledgling Chris Squire / Geezer Butler / John Paul Jones / Cliff Burton bass influences. It's all out in the sonic open. You just have to listen. You'll not just know the songs - you'll know us, too.

**AU: What's next for Phaeton after this release? Are you already thinking about future sonic directions?**

**FB:** We're almost finished recording "Clouds of Mercury," a 22-minute epic which is far more atmospheric and moody than what we usually write. This was inspired by Colin's recent fights against cancer, and we're conveying his tribulations into the music. It's the most emotionally invested work we've ever done. The length of it wasn't pre-determined - it just ends up that way. If it sticks, we fling it. We never want to be repetitive or stale. We're composing another handful of songs in a more familiar Phaeton prog-metal voice which will round out the album. We'll release it before the end of 2026. And we're writing sketches for the follow-up album after that. We're born again hard. There's no time to waste. We're grabbing the muse by the horns and pulling real hard.

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

**FB:** We've rediscovered our love for gigging. We love blasting out to a curious and skeptical audience and knocking them all dead. Have a gig, will travel! I love meeting new friends in an excitable musical environment - doesn't everybody? We prefer to open shows on multi-band bills. We light it up and leave it scorched - whoever's following us has to match the intensity and energy. We're happy to spend the rest of the night sipping pints sidestage, watching the other bands as fans. We're young enough to believe in what we're doing. We plan on kicking serious ass for years to come - not competitively, but to earn our place. Adventure is the ambition.



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## FIRE SALE'S CHRIS SWINNEY TALKS ABOUT THEIR NEW 7", SPLIT PERSONALITY

By Ray MacKay

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

**Fire Sale:** This is Chris Swinney, I play guitar in Fire Sale. I used to be in The Ataris and I have a podcast called, That One Time On Tour.

**AU:** Where are you from and what's the music scene like there?

**FS:** I am from Indiana. The scene currently leaves a lot to be desired, but back in the day there was a great punk and metal scene.

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

**FS:** I wrote some songs during the pandemic that I really liked. I sent them to my buddy, Matt Riddle and we decided to start the band as a little lockdown project... then labels got involved and we became a real band. Haha.

**AU:** Tell us about your upcoming four song split 7", *Split Personality*, out on September 5.

**FS:** It's really cool. Pulley our friends of ours. Our label wanted us to do a split...so I hit up Scott and they were down. The rest is history. We are so excited to be a part of this release!

**AU:** For *Split Personality*, you collaborated with Pulley. How did this

collaboration come to be?

**FS:** Like I said earlier. I just hit up Scott. Our bands compliment each other well. We think people will really dig it.

**AU:** What was the collaborative process with Pulley on *Split Personality* like? How did it work?

**FS:** There wasn't really any collaboration...we were able to hear the songs ahead of time and it made us even more excited because they are so good. It pushed us to really work hard on our stuff.

**AU:** What song are you most excited for people to listen to from *Split Personality*?

**FS:** Riddle wrote the music for the song "Call Of The Void". It is super catchy and so much fun to play live! I think fans of Fire Sale will really like it.

**AU:** It's Halloween here at Absolute Underground. Do you have any Halloween traditions you'd like to share?

**FS:** I'm a Dad...so we go trick or treating every

year. My kids are excited because Halloween is a Friday this year...no school the next day. My wife and I watch horror movies also.

**AU:** What's the spookiest record you'd recommend to someone this Halloween?

**FS:** AFI - "All Hallows" EP.

**AU:** In your opinion, which horror movie has the best soundtrack?

**FS:** Pumpkinhead...haha. I don't really know.

**AU:** What should we know about you that we don't already? What don't you want your family members to know?

**FS:** I love my family very much. It means the world to me that my wife and kids allow me to still follow my musical dreams. I am answering these questions from a hotel room in Quebec...and my family is super supportive. Shout out to my

amazing wife, Felicia, and my kids Silas and Indi!!!

**AU:** Anything else to promote?

**FS:** We will have a full length out next year! Follow us on our socials and on the streamers!

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

**FS:** Thank you so much for checking our Fire Sale if you have already. It means a lot to us that anyone cares about our band. We love you!

**AU:** Where can we find you online? Website/socials/etc?

**FS:**

firsaleisaband.com

All socials: @firsaleisaband

Photo courtesy of Fire Sale





**Dylan Rhymer is a Vancouver based comedian and actor. He will be performing his 25th anniversary show on Nov 15th at China Cloud Studio in East Vancouver.**

What has 25 years in stand-up comedy taught me?

I am standing in the lobby of a cheap motel on the outskirts of Calgary. The guy behind the counter takes one look at me and clocks me for who I am. "Another damn stand-up comic."

"You're the comedian?" He says. I can't tell if this is a confirmation or an accusation.

"Yes."

"Don't make soup in the coffee pot. You damn comics always do that."

He walks to the back of the lobby and collects my room key. He knows exactly the room to give me, and it's not the Presidential suite. This will be the shittiest room in a mediocre hotel. It will stink of decades or cigarettes and cheap rye. It will be at the very end of an uneven hallway adorned with rooms occupied by newly divorced men. This is how a working comic lives.

Of course I made soup in the coffee pot. It's the

first life hack you pick up on the road. I stick with clear soups like Mr Noodle, I'm not a monster. I would never cake a motel coffee pot with Chunky Soup or canned chilli.

What have I learned in 25 years as a stand-up? You can make soup in a hotel room coffee pot.

Comedy has always been around in one form or another. Shakespeare's most popular plays were his comedies, killing the groundlings on the floor like a champ, night after night. Before that, the Latin playwright Juvenal was telling truth to power as far back as 100 AD. His satires about the Roman upper crust were so scathing that he was banished, lucky to have avoided crucifixion. Now that's what I call cancel culture.

I am certain there were hilarious cavemen punching down on neanderthals. Andrew Dice Cave? While comedy as a concept has been around as long as human beings have had the impulse to laugh, standup as a form is relatively new only going back about 100 years. In the UK, around the turn of the 1900's, an early form of stand up was birthed at the ends of the piers and in the music halls as MC's bantered with the punters between vaudevillians. Stateside, stand up took its first baby steps in the strip clubs and

jazz bars of New York City. British stand up tends to be from a far more performative and broad tradition whereas American stand up is far more down to earth and confessional.

For my part, I have been a Vancouver comic since the 90's. It was a great time to start out because it was about as far from cool as you could possibly get. Standup comics were the saddest freaks in society. It was about as popular as being a human statue or rodeo clown. As a result, the only people who ever really got into it were doing it for the love of the craft. Some of the best stand up I have ever seen was in the backs of bars and coffee houses in the mid 90's as they plied their jokes for nothing more than a free beer and momentary sense of validation. In Vancouver there were 2 full time clubs: Punchlines in Gastown and Yuk Yuk's in the Plaza of Nations. Both clubs ran all week and featured touring headliners. I watched Mike McDonald, Brent Butt, Janine Ducharme, Irwin Barker, Janice Ungaro, Tom Stade, and countless others work these rooms 5 nights a week.

If the pro clubs were a comedy college, then the alt rooms were art school. A small Mexican restaurant in the West End called the Poco Loco ran shows seven nights a week in the basement, a tiny black box outfit that seated roughly 40 people at a variety of whatever tables and chairs they had handy. For a fiver, curious comedy fans could watch a variety of journeyman comics, established headliners and hopeless amateurs. Most of them are stoned, drunk or both.

Those who couldn't get stage time in the pro clubs could come down and do anything they wanted. And I do mean anything. I probably saw

more nudity on that stage than any of the strip clubs in town.

Standup was on the decline, but sketch was in its heyday thanks to the popularity of The Kids In The Hall. CBC was awash with sketch comedy programs like the Kids and Newfoundland's chaotically sublime satire CODCO. Some plucky upstarts get on the air and then disappear. RIP The Vacant Lot and Three Dead Trolls In A Baggie



I took to this world like a flushed baby alligator, growing and adapting in the dark underground of the city, grown albino for lack of daylight, mingling with the other misfits. It was 1993 and it would be another 20 years before comedy's second renaissance on social media. This was the beginning of alternative comedy.

How has comedy changed in the last quarter century? Social media's popularity has fundamentally changed how we embrace it. Media is so ubiquitous now that there is no

longer a need for alternative comedy. I don't have the slightest idea what it will look like in another 25 years. I am of the past. Like that caveman.

From what I've seen of this new batch of fresh faces appear to me altogether, more compassionate, and supportive of each other. Their comedy isn't as combative and as the stages where I cut my teeth. These new acts will not have to resort to grinding it out on the road for weeks at a time. They can start their own tv networks on their phones without ever leaving their rooms, never mind weeks on the road.

They will never know the pleasure of fresh Mr. Doodle out of a coffee pot.

## Allanah Brittnay talks new comedy album, *Bimbo of the Year*

By Ross Hansen

**Absolute Underground: Tell us a bit about yourself. How did you get into comedy?**

**Allanah Brittnay:** I went to get a BFA in acting, and to a conservatory acting program. Hated it. Dropped out (classic). Then I started doing stupid films and tv, making web series(don't look them up pls). People in my life always said "you should do stand up or improv" because I used comedy as a coping mechanism for my deep deep sadness (also classic). I was tired of people saying I should do it so one day, out of pure spite, I tried stand up comedy. My plan was that I would do it, it would go poorly, embarrass myself enough to have a story to tell people when they said "you should try stand up". Something good like, "I pissed myself onstage I was so nervous, and everyone boo'd me, and I cried covered in piss on the bus all the way home". That didn't happen. It actually went not horribly. Was it love at first sight? Did I immediately know this was the singular art form I was waiting for? No. But it was fun. And I liked being able to write, direct and star in my own little one woman show anytime I wanted. So I was hooked pretty quickly.

**AU: Is there somewhere in Canada where you**



**thought "This place is kind of fucked up?"**

**AB:** Places always surprise me. I try really hard to not have a preconceived notion of someone or somewhere I haven't experienced yet—but you can't help it. I thought for sure Pemberton BC would be very uptight rich people (for context before going there for comedy I had only been for a birthday party of this girl I knew from University's grandfather, which was at this big fancy property and they served oysters and made art installations... I am pretty sure the Mayor was also there... anyway... that was what I knew of Pemberton). But when I did the show it was so rowdy and fun. A mix of ages and background, super lively and wild. Someone offered me shrooms in the bathroom, which I thought was very kind. The only thing that was weird was that they ALL knew what hotel we were staying in and called it "the pemhole" which was a bit worrisome. They said they would "come find us later"... So the other comics and I went for a walk so we couldn't be found. I was too high though (bathroom shrooms will do that to you) and thought we were walking towards a bear. Eventually I realized that what I was convinced was a bear was actually garbage can. That was kinda fucked up, to have black bear sized garbage cans in a mountain town....

**AU: You just released an album. Where can we find it?**

**AB:** I did! She is out! It is called *Bimbo of the Year* and is available on all the streaming sites (Spotify, Apple, honestly I might make it my voice mail message?). It was done with the good people at Comedy Records, who make some of the best albums in the country, hands down. I feel really lucky to be in their roster.

*Photo by Pascal Lamothe-Kpines.*

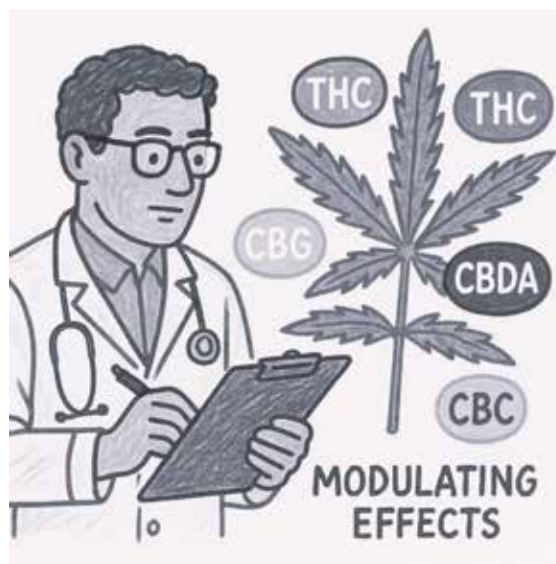
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## CBD: DANGER – The surprising positive and negative CBD drug interactions.

By Ted Smith

The potential harms of cannabis have been overstated and drilled into youth by the medical establishment. For some people, cannabis can have negative impacts but for the most part it is one of the safest, most effective medicines on the planet. Ironically, some potential harms from using the herb are only becoming known now, but they are not what you might think.

Recent developments in strains and extractions have led to some of the greatest negative consequences of using cannabis. These new discoveries raise important questions about the use of cannabis medicines in conjunction with prescription drugs, with surprising positive and negative interactions. Others suggest that these issues should lead patients to using whole plant medicines rather than isolated chemicals.

For many patients interested in cannabis as a medicine who are wary of the intoxicating effects of the plant, cannabidiol (CBD) has become the obvious answer. Though it does not have all of the positive benefits of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), there are many medical effects of CBD that are similar, like the relief of inflammation, anxiety and pain. However, we are beginning to learn about potential drug interactions with CBD that are concerning, that do not appear to happen with THC.

The medical benefits of cannabis have been rediscovered mostly by accident by recreational

consumers long before researchers provided any scientific evidence. A study by Dr. Marilou Gagnon and Heather Hobbs from the Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research, "Becoming a Medical Cannabis User" Revisited: Understanding the Role of Low-Threshold Access Points in British Columbia, Canada, documents the means by which cannabis has evolved into being used as a medicine in social settings where patients exchange products and experiences. The more patients use and share cannabis with others, the more knowledge there is about its potential uses and consequences.

The liver's main function is to regulate chemicals in the bloodstream. Any drug that affects the specific enzymes which break down substances can generate unexpected results if taken with certain prescription drugs.

One of the lesser known effects of CBD is how it slows down the liver's ability to break down other drugs in the bloodstream. In most cases, this is actually a positive interaction, where patients can use less of the prescription drug to achieve the same medical outcome. Unfortunately, this potential drug interaction is not well known amongst patients, pharmacists, or cannabis distributors, which could lead to serious health problems.

In this diagram CBD molecules enter into the liver where they attach to cytochrome P450 drug metabolizing enzymes, which also break down the popular blood thinner Warfarin and other drugs. When CBD is being broken down by P450, more Warfarin and/or these other drugs pass through the liver intact than would otherwise occur.

An explanation for this interaction was published in 2021 by Premalatha Balachandran, Mahmoud Elsohly and Kevin P Hill in a study titled Cannabidiol Interactions with Medications, Illicit Substances, and Alcohol: a Comprehensive Review. "CBD is known to interact with cytochrome... P450 drug metabolizing enzymes, and this affects co-administration of CBD with other pharmaceutical drugs that are also inhibited or metabolized by these enzymes."

The most worrisome interaction found so far is with some blood thinners. If the liver cannot

break down the drug as fast as expected, a buildup of the medication could cause an increased risk of bleeding and swelling. CBD does not affect the breakdown of all blood thinners.

On a more positive note, opiates and THC are also broken down more slowly when CBD has been taken. This should be a critical component of harm reduction if the medical establishment changes course and embraces cannabis.

As a result of CBD's interaction with P450, these medications are broken down more slowly by the liver if taken together:

Blood thinners: Warfarin, Apixaban and Rivaroxaban.

Antidepressants: Imipramine, Trimipramine, and Desipramine.

Antiseizure: Clobazam, lamotrigine, Oxcarbazepine, Valproate and Diazepam.

Thyroid: Levothyroxine.

Heart: Amiodaron.

Anticonvulsants with reduced effect: Ethosuximide, Clonazepam, Chlordiazepoxide  
Other: Opiates, THC and Alcohol.

All of these drugs can still be safely used with CBD. However, in most cases the amount of the prescription drug required may need to be changed accordingly. As far as interactions go these are not terrible as long as the patient adjusts their medicine.

For those taking opiates, CBD could be a perfect complimentary drug. By helping reduce pain and inflammation on one hand, and increasing the lifespan of opiates in the bloodstream, patients using both should experience excellent pain relief

and reduce their use of opiates. Indeed, everyone taking opiates should also be using CBD as a harm reduction measure.

These drug interactions are only becoming known as patient's experience unwanted side-effects and report them to healthcare practitioners, producers, distributors and researchers. CBD has not, and will not likely ever, receive a Drug Identification Number, which is how pharmacists generally learn... about prudential side-effects. Therefore, it has not been put through the rigorous testing normally done before a drug hits the market.

Indeed, the evolution of cannabis as medicine has been like a big drug experiment on the general public.

Popularized because unlike its cousin THC, the ingestion of CBD does not create strong intoxicated effects, it's only in the last 20 years that strains high in CBD and concentrates were made for patients. As more CBD is being used by patients, particularly the elderly who often take a number of different medications, we are discovering positive and negative interactions with a number of drugs. Unfortunately these interactions are not widely known, even in the pharmaceutical industry.

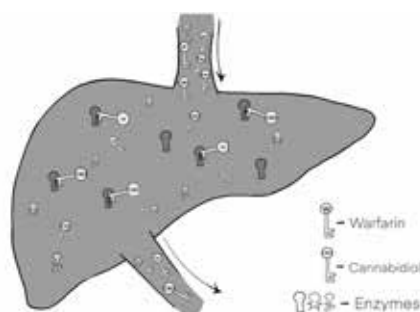
This study was done in 2021, the same year as the research on CBD and blood thinners we cited

earlier. Since there is not just one manufacturer of CBD, reports of drug interactions are not consolidated. This information about CBD is so new, and the research so disjointed, that this study missed drug interactions with blood thinners entirely, which seems to be the most serious potential problem! As time goes on and more evidence is revealed in real life settings and studies, these drug interactions will become common knowledge. For now they are little known, even amongst pharmacists.

There are still several other concerns. As Balachandran, Elsohly and Hill explained, "The consequence of the lack of information on drug-drug interactions is an inadequate knowledge of their potential adverse reactions when consumed together. Interactions, either additive or synergistic, or contraindications are largely undescribed and are a major health concern. As evidenced from drug interaction databases such as the Medscape Drug Interaction Checker, which healthcare professionals and researchers primarily use to check for drug interactions, searches for CBD interactions typically yield few results. Therefore, a comprehensive detailed review is warranted to provide insight into this topic." It is possible that other prescription drugs, ones that are less commonly used than those we listed, might also interact in this way with CBD. We might not be aware of these interactions yet because... of the lack of research and limited avenues to report these types of side-effects. This could be a serious concern if some cancer fighting prescription drugs are affected by CBD in this way. Another rising concern is the possible drug interactions patients will experience as they try other isolated cannabinoids. Now that cannabis is legal, companies are looking for novel cannabinoid products that have specific medical benefits without the intoxicating effects of THC. These constituents may be safe when combined together in low doses in the natural plant. However, we really have no idea what type of effect these isolated chemicals will have when taken individually.

Cannabinoids like CBG (cannabigerol), CBN (cannabinol), and CBC (cannabichromene) have emerged on the market, each with its own unique properties and potential benefits. There are over 100 cannabinoids, with more being discovered almost every year. Flavonoids, terpenes, terpenoids, waxes and other possibly active chemicals in cannabis plants also have potential medical applications. Each with its own set of potential drug interactions. Companies are also creating novel new synthetic cannabinoids and derivatives, in some cases to work around legal loopholes. In many cases these legal synthetic drugs can cause far more harm than the actual plant and the concentrates historically made from it.

The potential prescription drug interactions with these products are completely unknown. With so much interest in using CBD as a medicine, it is critical that health care providers inform patients about potential drug interactions. At the Victoria Cannabis Buyers Club we have taken a renewed interest in this issue, updating our pamphlets and engaging with old members that are starting to add CBD to their medicine cabinet. We hope that by putting a spotlight on potential drug interactions with CBD we will avoid any health scares and help patients lower their dose of pharmaceutical drugs.



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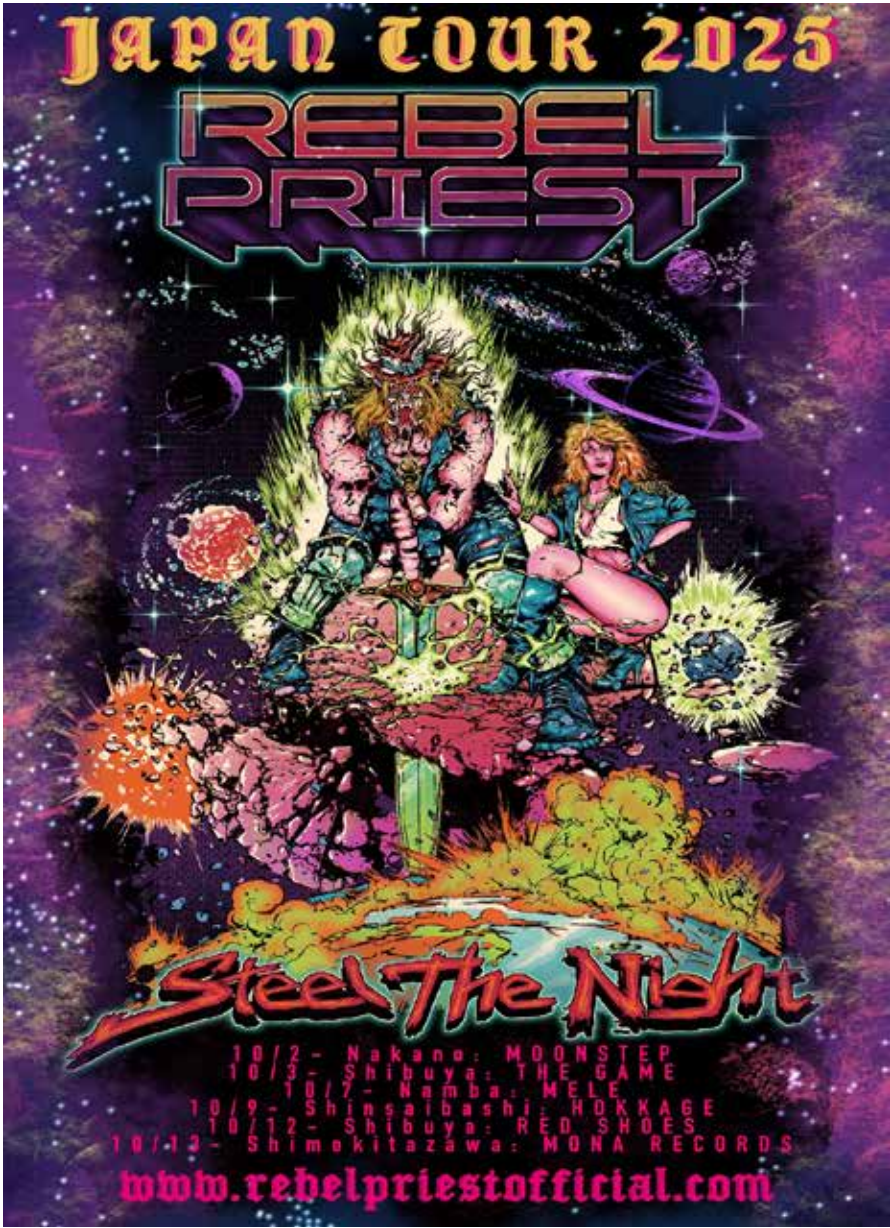
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## CANNABIS CORNER

# Sassy Weed

## Sassy Weed Interview

By Iree-I

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

**Holly and Cam:** We're Holly and Cam from Sassy Weed—best known for our passion for the plant... and Cam's safe word, Pineapple.

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

**H/C:** We started smoking in our early teens, and by 17, Cam had already fired up 40 lights and never looked back.

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

**H/C:** The love of the plant and its medicinal properties. The money didn't hurt either. Honestly, it never felt like we were harming—it felt more like being fashion-forward in our thinking, being a part of the good old shady days.

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

**H/C:**

- **Dank Sinatra** – a smooth indica that fuels creativity and boosts your mood.
- **Tokin' Tax** – citrusy, high-hitting... you've already paid the tax, might as well smoke it.
- **Gasquatch** – a legendary heavy indica; it'll sneak up on you like Bigfoot.
- **Wake 'N' Flake** – a sativa that gets you moving, maybe skipping work to paint murals or start that band you keep talking about.

**AU: Do you prefer Sativas or Indicas?**

**H/C:** Depends. Need to clean the garage? Sativa. Need to forget the garage exists? Indica. We keep both—like shoes, you need the right pair for the occasion.

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

**Holly:** Kosher Tangie—citrusy, flavorful, perfect.

**Cam:** Indicas at night, Sativas in the day. Translation: we just like all weed.

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

**H/C:** At first, it was Monopoly. Then came Snakes & Ladders. Add a splash of Plinko. And now with international trade—it's Risk. If we've learned anything,

it's that only the government could fuck up drug dealing.

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

**H/C:** Because BC Bud is legendary. Local craft growers are the soul of our industry—without them, we lose not just great flower, but history, culture, and that world-renowned "BC Bud".

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

**H/C:** Hands-on care, attention to detail from clone to stone, and willing to try new things.

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

- Learn your strain, dial it in.
- Curing is especially important, low and slow.
- Almost anyone can grow a plant, but attention to detail makes it great.

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

- **Sassy Weed** – our flagship. Big, bold, unapologetic.
- **BC Craft Roadtrip** – five growers, one mix pack. Basically the weed version of a pub crawl.

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

**H/C:** Evergreen Cannabis in Kitsilano, and tons of other cool retailers who don't mind putting in a little extra hustle to bring in craft products



via Direct Delivery. Evergreen will ship to you anywhere in the province from [www.ecsvan.ca](http://www.ecsvan.ca)

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

**H/C:** Walking into a grow room and seeing the plants praying back at you. Hunting new genetics with magical entourage effects. Basically, forever searching for the unicorn strain.

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

**H/C:** Love the ganja and it'll love you back. Watch your VPD and pH, embrace live soil organics—feed the soil, not the plant.

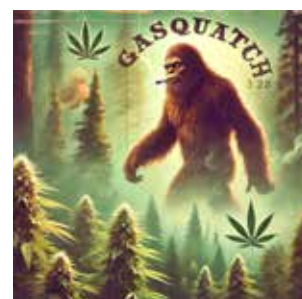
**AU: How else can this amazing plant be used to save the planet?**

**H/C:** We have

endocannabinoid system in our bodies for a reason. Trust Mother Nature, Pharma can take a backseat.

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

**H/C:** We're on Instagram at @Sassy\_Weed, on the web at [sassyweed.com](http://sassyweed.com), and if you've still got a UHF tuner, tune in—we're on E.T.'s frequency.







Interview with Pulley's  
Mike Hardy on new 7",  
Split Personality

By Ray MacKay

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

**Pulley:** Hello AU this is Mike from the band Pulley, I play guitar. Hope you all are doing well!

**AU: Where are you from and what's the music scene like there?**

**P:** We grew up in a suburb of Los Angeles California called Simi Valley. Oddly Simi is part of Ventura County to the North (Oxnard, Ventura, Santa Barbara). We were connected to the Nardcore scene which was born out of Oxnard CA. That being said we played and went to shows all over the place, from Baja to NorCal to out of state. It was a big surf and skate punk culture.

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

**P:** Our singer Scott and I used to play in a band called Scared Straight. After I left the band, they changed the name to Ten Foot Pole. Around 1994 Scott left TFP, and it was then that we started Pulley.

**AU: Tell us about your upcoming four song split 7", Split Personality, out on September 5.**

**P:** Scott had been talking to those guys, and with Matt Riddle (Former bass player for Pulley) playing with them there was a nice connection. Seemed the obvious thing to do would be to put out a split 7" together. It's always been a fun thing to do over the years, and a great way to bond with

other bands.

**AU: For Split Personality, you collaborated with Fire Sale. How did this collaboration come to be?**

**P:** Separately, both bands wrote two songs each. The collaboration was really just doing the split together, it's always fun hearing each other's songs for the first time, and hearing how they flow back-to-back. You never know what the finished work will sound like, but by the will of brotherhood or something, it always comes out good.

**AU: What was the collaborative process with Fire Sale on Split Personality like? How did it work?**

**P:** Same as above.

**AU: What song do you think people will react to most on Split Personality?**

**P:** I really couldn't tell you, I like all the songs, they all offer a little something different. When you release new music it requires a lot of luck, sometimes the timing is off with where peoples' heads are at, and other times people latch on. Nonetheless it's always an exciting moment in time.

**AU: It's Halloween here at Absolute Underground. Do you have any Halloween traditions you'd like to share?**

**P:** Actually, my birthday is on Halloween, so that's pretty cool, lol! Plus I just love the holiday, it's a good one!

**AU: What's the spookiest record you'd recommend to someone this Halloween?**

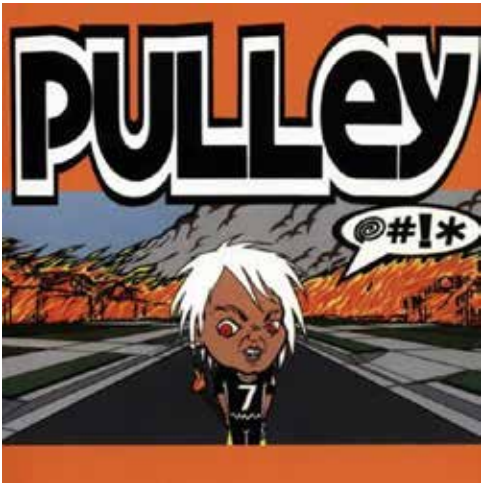
**P:** Check out *Punk Rock Halloween II*, it's a compilation, we have a couple songs on there!

**AU: In your opinion, which horror movie has the best soundtrack?**

**P:** Not sure, but *Jaws* has a pretty epic score on it, and it's still one of the best movies ever, not really a horror movie I guess, lol!

**AU: What should we know about you that we don't already? What don't you want your**

PURE PUNK



**family members to know?**

**P:** My family members know everything about me at this point, all the good, and all the bad! Some people may not know that I've had a career in aviation as long as Pulley has been together, never quit doing it.

**AU: Anything else to promote?**

**P:** Request Pulley on "Faction Punk" ask them to play some of our back catalogue stuff along with the new split!

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

**P:** Just a huge thank you to all our fans who have hung with us for the past three decades, we love you guys!

**AU: Where can we find you online? Website/ socials/etc?**

**P:**

**Facebook:** @Pulley

**Instagram:** @Pulleymatters)

**(X Members music)**

*Photo Courtesy of Pulley*



**HAILS (SAULT STE MARIE)**  
covers The Almighty Trigger Happy

**A.S.O.P. (TORONTO)**  
covers Guilt Parade

**THE MURDER BIRDS (WINNIPEG)**  
covers The Nils

**HIPPIECRITZ (KELOWNA)**  
covers Gentlemen of Horror

**THE VICIOUS CYCLES (VANCOUVER)**  
covers Déja Voodoo

**EAST END RIVALS (MONCTON)**  
covers Birds of Passage

**HUNG UP (VICTORIA)**  
covers The Submlauts

**WILLFUL DISOBEDIENCE (SAINT JOHN)**  
covers Bad Luck 13

**HALF DEAD (EDMONTON)**  
covers Negative Gain

**66 ACES (SASKATOON)**  
covers Death Sentence

**AVOID THE COMMENT SECTION (WINDSOR)**  
covers Grim Skunk

**THE GARY BUSEYS (TIMMINS)**  
covers The Black Halos

**MEAN BIKINI (CUMBERLAND)**  
covers Personality Crisis

**THE PAGANS OF NORTHUMBERLAND (CALGARY)**  
covers The Von Zippers

**MAVERICK (MONTREAL)**  
covers The Northern Vultures

**SCRIBBENS (PRINCE GEORGE)**  
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# HELLBENT DESIGNS Is Crafting Beautiful Leatherwork And Chainmaille Accessories

Interview by Ray MacKay

**Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today?**  
**Hellbent Designs:** My name is Jasmine and I am the owner/designer of Hellbent Designs.  
**AU: What is the origin story and history of Hellbent Designs?**

**HD:** I was in school for fashion design and started listening to a lot of Judas Priest. I kept listening to "Hellbent For Leather" on repeat and it made me realize I wanted to focus more on leatherwork than textiles.  
**AU: What kind of products do you have to offer?**  
**HD:** I make heavy metal inspired leather and chainmaille accessories. Everything from belts, harnesses, stage gear to purses.  
**AU: How do you assemble these pieces?**  
**HD:** If it's a chainmaille item, it involves opening and closing many rings and weaving them into various patterns. It's very time consuming. As for leather, most of the items I make are either riveted or sewn together, or a combination thereof, it really just depends on the design.  
**AU: Take us through the process of building one of your pieces.**  
**HD:** It starts with a vision, then taking that vision and turning it into a fully functional design. Once the design stage is complete, then comes sourcing the materials, making patterns/mockups and then finally assembling



the item.  
**AU: What makes Hellbent Designs' approach to this unique?**  
**HD:** In a world of fast fashion and disposable items, I focus on creating high quality products. I believe in reducing waste by using high quality materials and a high level craftsmanship that will last a lifetime.  
**AU: Do you do custom orders?**  
**HD:** Yes I do! Everything from everyday leather items to stage gear to chainmaille bikinis.  
**AU: What's the coolest piece you've built for a customer?**  
**HD:** There have been a few! One was a leather and chainmaille vest for a local metal musician. Another was a pair of pauldrons with a cape used in a music video. Both of those projects were challenging and helped me to learn and strengthen my skills.  
**AU: What is your mission statement as a business?**  
**HD:** To create high quality heavy metal inspired accessories that will last a lifetime.  
**AU: Any special events planned in the near future?**  
**HD:** I will be at the Halloween market on October 25-26th at the Da Vinci Center in Victoria.



**AU: Anything else you would like to mention or promote?**  
**HD:** Please support your local artists and craftsmen/women. Whether it is purchasing an item or just sharing their posts on social media.  
**AU: Final words of wisdom for our readers?**

**HD:** Bring back 80's speed metal.  
**AU: How do people find Hellbent Designs online?**  
**HD:** I am on Instagram @hellbent.designs as well as Etsy and my own website [www.hellbentdesigns.ca](http://www.hellbentdesigns.ca)



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# SHOOT TO KILL BOB HANHAM

By John Carlow

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

**Bob Hanham:** I'm Bob Hanham, a long-time concert and event photographer (started in the late 70's), best known now as the oldest guy in the pit still shooting and oftentimes mistaken for fellow Victoria photog Don Denton. Over the years I have had shots in various publications including *Spin*, *Stereo Embers*, *Big Takeover*, *OX Fanzine*, *the Vancouver Sun*, *the Georgia Strait*, *Province*, *Absolute Underground* as well as many online publications.

**AU: When did you first start showing an interest in photography?**

**BH:** I developed my interest in photography right after attending my first concert in Vancouver after migration from a staunch religious Grande Prairie, Alberta background. It's April 1977 and right in front of an excited me was my idol Iggy Pop together with David Bowie on keyboards at the PNE Gardens (it was "The Idiot" tour). Bonus thrill was seeing Blondie with Gary Valentine still onboard as the openers. I kept thinking somehow a person must capture/preserve these moments in order to relive them.

**AU: Did you ever have formal training for photography?**

**BH:** Other than graduating from the Vancouver

Film School Class 5 all my formal camera training was taken at night classes - self-taught by my myriad of mistakes, including exposing film rolls, losing rolls, dropping lenses, done them all. As well just comparing notes with other shooters has been a huge fountain of knowledge for me.

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

**BH:** When I made the move from film to a DSLR in 2014 after a long period of photography inactivity whilst helping to raise our twin boys and earn a living I went with Canon - still my choice today (probably 300,000+ shutter actuations later). I have accumulated a stockpile of lenses since then but my go to concert lenses remain my 15mm Fisheye, a 16-35mm, a 24-70mm and a 70-200mm all sharing 2 Canon 6D Mark II full frame bodies. These cover most situations even with the lack of a flash setup (following the 3 songs, No Flash mantra).

**AU: What do you like shooting most?**

**BH:** I like the challenge of shooting anything that moves basically - with concert photography offering ample challenges. Besides music I've shot wrestling (from ECCW to WWE), burlesque, sports, street, wildlife, protests and portraits - whatever interested me at the time or what I was approached to do.

**AU: What drew you to music photography?**

**BH:** I still get excited going out to shoot a show - getting ready, waiting for a photo pass or if no pass & photo pit access then being there early enough to establish a good 'safe' vantage point. But its the people, the noise, the excitement, the music combined - and as a non-musician (sadly

the bass wasn't for me) just to be part of this scene for so long even in such a small way is very satisfying to me.

**AU: Fav band to shoot?**

**BH:** My all time favorite band to shoot has to be Flipper with Jesus Lizard frontman David Yow as front man on their 40th Anniversary tour at the Astoria in Vancouver (2019). It was packed and rowdy to the extreme - I started at the front of the stage but ended up on the stage by the drummer somehow by the time it was over without even being aware. Another fav band to shoot is Starcrawler with Arrow de Wilde lead singer. At their Fortune Sound Club gig she ended up on my shoulders while I tried to balance my camera in one hand and her in the other as we wandered through the crowd. I'll mention Vancouver local artist Betty Bathory - always fun to shoot, a million different personas, very talented and very visual.

**AU: Do you follow or are you inspired by other photographers?**

**BH:** First would have to be Bob Gruen, I saw him at an early Clash Commodore show, and he seemed surprised I knew who he was but as an avid Rock Scene magazine devotee I was very familiar with his work. I had a conversation with him that really encouraged me. Another early inspiration for me would have to be Bev Davies - when I first saw her shooting at the Smilin' Buddha I had no idea of how influential her work would be in providing such great coverage of the Vancouver music scene.

**AU: Biggest hurdle you face with photography?**

**BH:** I have to factor in my equipment and my own age so keeping an awareness of what's going on behind me is important when its moshing time and I'm in the heat of the action if I want to keep doing this. With hardware I've not been so lucky - at a recent Dwarves show I was checked into the stage monitors and had a lens sustain some major damage that set me back about \$700.

**AU: Do you have a favourite photo? If yes...why is it your favourite?**

**BH:** One of my favorite pics is of a high-flying Mike Hodsall (DOA bassist) airborne and at the point where our eyes met for a split second. It was taken at Commodore in Vancouver in 2024. I also have to mention a pic I took of Iggy Pop at Rifflandia in 2023 - our eyes met which I love to capture in a photo - that quick almost intimate connection where you realize you've got a special shot and not just a static portrait.

**AU:What is your measure of success?**

**BH:** Certainly not monetary success but enjoying life to its fullest. Along the way I've made some very good friends, heard lots of great music, experienced some amazing shows and now that I'm retired, I feel so lucky to still be able to do what I love doing. Life is good and I will continue shooting until I physically can't and my camera is pried out of my hands.

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

**BH:** For now #momsbigtub @bobhanham

Photos by Bob Hanham



"Please Hold" by The Cavernous is a concept album released via calling a telephone number. It is a hold sequence featuring music, false dial ups, automated operators, and other features of being on hold.

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### DON CHESSA

In this new feature Absolute Underground takes a few minutes to highlight someone in the local Victoria BC scene.

**John Carlow/ Finding Charlotte Photography**  
**Absolute Underground: Introduce yourself.**

**Don Chessa:** Don Chessa / dbchessa / DonBruno.

**AU: What would we know you best for?**

**DC:** Music promoter. Door guy. Bass player. Driver. Life Lover. Rifflandia transit guy.

**AU: How long have you been part of the local music scene in Vic?**

**DC:** Since 1996. I moved here from Vancouver, walked into Open Space Arts Centre and signed up as a volunteer. Involved myself with the New Music Committee. Became part of a team that invited music to Victoria. Mostly avant-garde and Jazz. That's when I met Mats Gustafson, Pete Brotzmann, Merzbow and many artists that became friends over the years. Made wonderful contacts with all kinds of musicians. My roots in Vancouver helped. I was involved with the beginning of the Jazz Festival. This was back when cigarette companies sponsored festivals. When I came to Victoria, I invited musicians to play here. I like to network artists to play together on a show. Locals with visiting musicians.

**AU: Thoughts on the current state of the local scene?**

**DC:** The local music scene at this time is solid. Young players are all around. New venues are happening. All genres of music are available for audiences to explore.

**AU: What did Logans – Tavern of the Damned (RIP) mean to you?**

**DC:** An opportunity to meet and listen to bands I would have not heard otherwise. Meeting the local scene; humans that played the music and the fans that supported it. I became aware of the importance of the early punk rock scene that Victoria was.

**AU: Is there a favourite tale or two from your years there?**

**DC:** Working beside Scott Henderson was always an adventure. A true musicologist. Watching the local patrons toss the jerks when needed. All I had to do was grab the cash box and stay out of the way.

**AU: What is important to you?**

**DC:** New music. Youth. Volume. Grassroots. Commitment. Being understanding and helpful. To keep moving forward in life. Family, friends.

**AU: Shout outs?**

**DC:** Music venues. Musicians. Promoters. Victoria's art scene. Logans - music at it's best when it was. fifty fifty arts collective - active member. Open Space - My coming out as a music promoter in Victoria. Cavity Curiosity, Rifflandia crew, independent record stores - past co-owner of Black Swan Records. All my band members, past and present. My Dad lives here and is 101 years old. His music collection was the first records I listened to. Sonny Rollins, The Bridge, Sonny Criss and Go Man Go. Nanaimo. Best music and fan vibe. Nice hub for music. The Vault. The Globe. The Terminal. The Queens. Noisagonymayhem. The Black Dot. No pretensions. Everything seems real.

**AU: What would we find you doing these days?**

**DC:** Record spinner at Cenote. Bass player with EVIL! And Cosmic Foam. Driving, running for various bands at various venues. Coordinating rides for Rifflandia.

**AU: There must be a favourite tale or 2 from**

**your years driving talent for Rifflandia.**

**DC:** Wow! So many. Driving Iggy Pop. Hearing him break out laughing when he saw the pumpkin patch near Pat Bay. First time he ever saw a pumpkin patch. Crazy funny.

Hugs and Chats from Chuck D. Getting a video with Killer Mike at the airport. Danny Brown, who doesn't sleep. This is year 12 of doing Rifflandia. Working with the same crew of volunteers has been amazing.

**AU: How about all the arena sized shows you run for? Must have been a moment or two you warmly recall.**

**DC:** Hanging with The Deftones guitar techs a few weeks ago, then sitting in and watching the band rehearsal on the floor at the arena. Chatting with James Taylor about Ice hockey. Dallas Green. Setting up Jelly Roll's bed at the Empress. Driving Russell Peters with a carload of his favourite show food; Kentucky Fried Chicken. The Cult; sitting backstage and asking this guy what he does in the band, not knowing I was talking with Ian Astbury. ha-ha. Still hurts. Santana; being in his presence. Styx; they travel with a shit load of guitars. Rodriquez; I was his personal driver for 3 days. He supports all things local on tour. Graphic design for shirts. Helping to decide which logo to go with. Backstage outside " tuning up" waiting for the encore. John Fogerty. Thank you for using all your guitars. Paris Hilton asked me if it's ok to be nervous before a show, then being

thanked by her later for my pep talk and advice. Driving Bill Gibbons in my Caprice to his gig this year. Two old guys cruising in an old car. Had a Chicago Blues tape playing. Little Walter. He loved it. And then he starts showing me pics of his houses.

**AU: What kind of books do you read when you get the chance?**

**DC:** I read music biographies. Many avant-garde jazz musicians. Latest includes Eric Dolphy, Cecil Taylor, Henry Threadgill, Sonny Rollins and William Parker. Books with pictures are fun.

**AU: I know you own a ton of vinyl. What are the highlights of your collection?**

**DC:** Mostly a few rare jazz things. John Coltrane - mono test presses. Impulse Records. Sonny Criss-Go Man. Original. Discogs has it worth \$1000.00

**AU: What's the future for you?**

**DC:** Every day is an adventure. More music.





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| 10<br>OCT | <b>DARK ANGEL +</b><br><b>Vio-Lence + Midnight</b><br>The Rickshaw |
| 11<br>OCT | <b>XUL + Omnia Nihil</b><br>The Cobalt (early show)                |
| 12<br>OCT | <b>SEVERED ARM +</b><br><b>Extensive Slaughter</b><br>The Cobalt   |
| 25<br>OCT | <b>DEAD QUIET</b><br>Rickshaw Theatre                              |
| 28<br>OCT | <b>REVOCATION</b><br>Rickshaw Theatre                              |

|           |                                                                 |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| 01<br>NOV | <b>COVERPALOOZA</b><br>Astoria Pub                              |
| 07<br>NOV | <b>CROBOT / THE ATOMIC</b><br><b>BITCHWAX</b><br>At The Waldorf |
| 11<br>NOV | <b>INGESTED</b><br>Rickshaw Theatre                             |
| 13<br>NOV | <b>THE WATCHER</b><br>The Cobalt                                |
| 15<br>NOV | <b>POLTERGEIST + DEAD</b><br><b>CELLS</b><br>Astoria Pub        |
| 15<br>NOV | <b>CRAZY DIAMONDS</b><br>Hollywood Theatre                      |

|           |                                                                 |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| 20<br>NOV | <b>Holy Locust + Clanna</b><br><b>Morna</b><br>Green Auto Popup |
| 21<br>NOV | <b>Stainless + Syrinx</b><br>Astoria Pub                        |
| 27<br>NOV | <b>PRIMITIVE MAN</b><br>Astoria Pub                             |
| 29<br>NOV | <b>OMNIUM GATHERUM</b><br>Rickshaw Theatre                      |
| 12<br>DEC | <b>DERMABRASION</b><br>The Cobalt                               |
| 13<br>DEC | <b>ELECTRIC CITIZEN</b><br>Astoria Pub                          |



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# BLAST FROM THE PAST



## HOW 'EARTH' BECAME 'BLACK SABBATH' AND THE 'CADILLAC VIKINGS' GET KISSED

By Clark 'Super' Mantei

Hello again past blasters. This Halloween, I thought I'd do a simple reminder of how the Birmingham band Black Sabbath attained its name.

**Dateline 1967:** John "Ozzy" Osbourne was advertised as "Ozzy Zig needs gig. Have P.A." Many moons later, Tony Iommi (guitar) saw the ad. He and Bill Ward (drums) went to meet Ozzy and they decided to give it a go. Adding Terence "Geezer" Butler on bass, Alan Clarke on saxophone and Jimmy Phillips on guitar—in 1968, they became The Polka Tulk Blues Band. Soon after they changed their name to Earth and played heavy blues in

a psychedelic jazzy form, Tony broke up the band and reformed it again without the Sax or second guitarist. This began the lineup of Ozzy, Geezer, Tony and Bill. Still calling the band Earth, they recorded and released a single called "The Rebel". In 1969, they were at their rehearsal space and noticed a long line up at the movie theater across the street. The feature film was the 1963 release of Black Sabbath, an

Italian horror anthology film directed by Mario Bava, featuring three stories, all portrayed by Boris Karloff. Geezer once said that the group discussed the fact that "folks were lining up to see something that scared the shit out of ya!" And lo and behold they decided right then and there to write "scary music" and also to change their name from Earth to Black Sabbath. Their first song was "Black Sabbath" and featured "the forbidden note," for all those historians. They practiced hard and wrote enough tracks to make a whole album.

**Dateline Friday, February 13th, 1970:**

The album *Black Sabbath* was released and the rest is history. They released eight albums over the next eight years until

Ozzy departed and became a solo sensation. The band continued non-stop with several lineups. 35 years later, in 2013, they released the album *13*,

reunited with Ozzy. Sadly, Bill Ward was absent.

**Dateline July 5th, 2025:**

Birmingham where it all began. A farewell concert entitled *Back To The Beginning* celebrated the life of Ozzy and brought back the original lineup of Black Sabbath to the stage one last time. It was a monumental moment that brought both cheers and tears to millions around the world, as 45,000 lucky fans experienced it live at Villa Park in Aston, Birmingham, England. Sadly, 17 days later Ozzy Osbourne passed away at home surrounded by his loved ones. He always shocked us, but this was truly a soulful, heartfelt sadness felt world wide. You entertained us all throughout our lives, 1967 to 2025. Thank you man. I love you so very much. Black Sabbath invented heavy metal. They are forever remembered and left us 21 albums to enjoy. 56 years of sonic sensory sensation. God bless Black Sabbath and Ozzy for placing that advert on a town hall wall. It is indeed great music for a Halloween howling. Ripeace, Ozzy.



whole school was awestruck. On October 9, KISS took part in the football team's rehearsal and practices, and also joined in the Friday parade preparations. They played along with the high school band and it went worldwide in all the fan magazines. What a blast! The concert in the gym was outstanding and left many in awe of the surreal experience—America's soon-to-be number 1 band coming to our community to

celebrate with us all. The Mayor held a pancake breakfast and gifted the band with a key to the city and yes folks, everyone in attendance was wearing makeup like that of the fearsome foursome. Gene Simmons claims it became "Planet KISS" and now its legend! The team won the game and KISS had its very own float in the parade. When the festivities ended, a helicopter landed on the field and KISS got in and



flew away, but not before dropping hundreds of signed leaflets reading "Cadillac High - KISS Loves You!" over the town. You can find footage on YouTube from those that captured the historic event. In 2015, Cadillac unveiled a monument dedicated to this event. Legends never die. The synergy that held football and KISS together has stuck now for decades, as KISS songs play on loudspeakers at breaks in most major league

football games to this very day. It's hard to believe that it has been 50 years.

**Dateline November 14-16, 2025:** The KISS *Kruise: Land-Locked In Vegas* event celebrates the 50th anniversary of everything KISS. From the live shows that were captured on the album *KISS Alive!*, to the formation of the KISS Army, the 30th anniversary of KISS conventions and of course, KISS at Cadillac High School. And yes people, KISS will be performing as well to

embrace the event with their "in concert magic" and I wish I was going too.

That brings this issue to a close. It's been a long journey that will continuously flow into the future leaving memories for all our lives. I wish you all a safe and HaPyP Halloween to enjoy. Have a howl. Until the next blast...Rock out and Rrrrrroll on.

Clark 'Super' Mantei

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**Dateline October**

**9-10, 1975:** KISS turns the Cadillac High School Vikings into a championship victory.

KISS. A bizarre rock band from NYC had been playing and putting out albums since 1973. By March 1975, they had released three studio albums and were touring non-stop. On September 10, they released a double live album called *Alive!*, and it was selling faster than stores could keep it in stock. This was cause for a celebration for KISS, who yearned to break into the scene with a show no one had ever seen. They wanted the audience to see the best show ever. Their make-up, explosive lights, and antics galore—combined with the bombastic sounds of their high-energy rock and roll—sent them soaring through the stratosphere, becoming a full-blown phenomenon by 1975. You wanted the best and you got it! The hottest band in the land... KISS!!

Cadillac High School's football coach, Jim Neff, saw KISS in Detroit and was amazed at their positive energy that was surging through America. The high school football team, the Vikings, were on a long-time losing streak and needed a boost. Coach Neff started playing KISS records in the locker room and during practices, which seemed to energize the team into a frenzy, using the song titles as names to the team's playbook.

As a result, The Vikings started winning all their games. Coach Neff thought how incredible it would be to contact the band and ask if they'd come to the high school to meet the team and watch the homecoming game. He contacted KISS manager Bill Aucoin and they arranged for KISS to attend the festivities and play live in the school gymnasium. KISS coming to Cadillac became an event for the small town of 10,000 to look forward to.

The high school team was being lifted by the spirit of rock and roll. The band arrived and the









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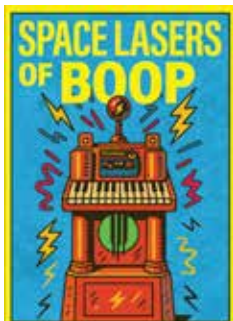


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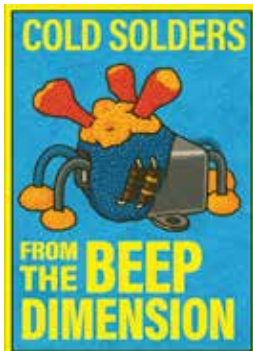
## Monkey C Interactive's Artcade unveils "Cult of Cute Catastrophes"



Victoria, BC – This October, Victoria's celebrated Artcade premieres a new Halloween spectacle: Cult of Cute Catastrophes. Running October 22 – November 2, this interactive art show invites audiences of all ages to step inside a world of curious contraptions, playful

experiments, and delightfully unpredictable results.

Building on the success of last year's popular



Adoragore: The Art-ening, the 2025 expansion dives deeper into the mad experiments of Monkey C Interactive. Guests will encounter new rooms to explore, interactive machines that refuse to behave, and creations that blur the line

between art, music, and mischief

The Artcade is Victoria's only hands-on, screen-free interactive art and music playground—consistently receiving five star reviews from guests around the world.

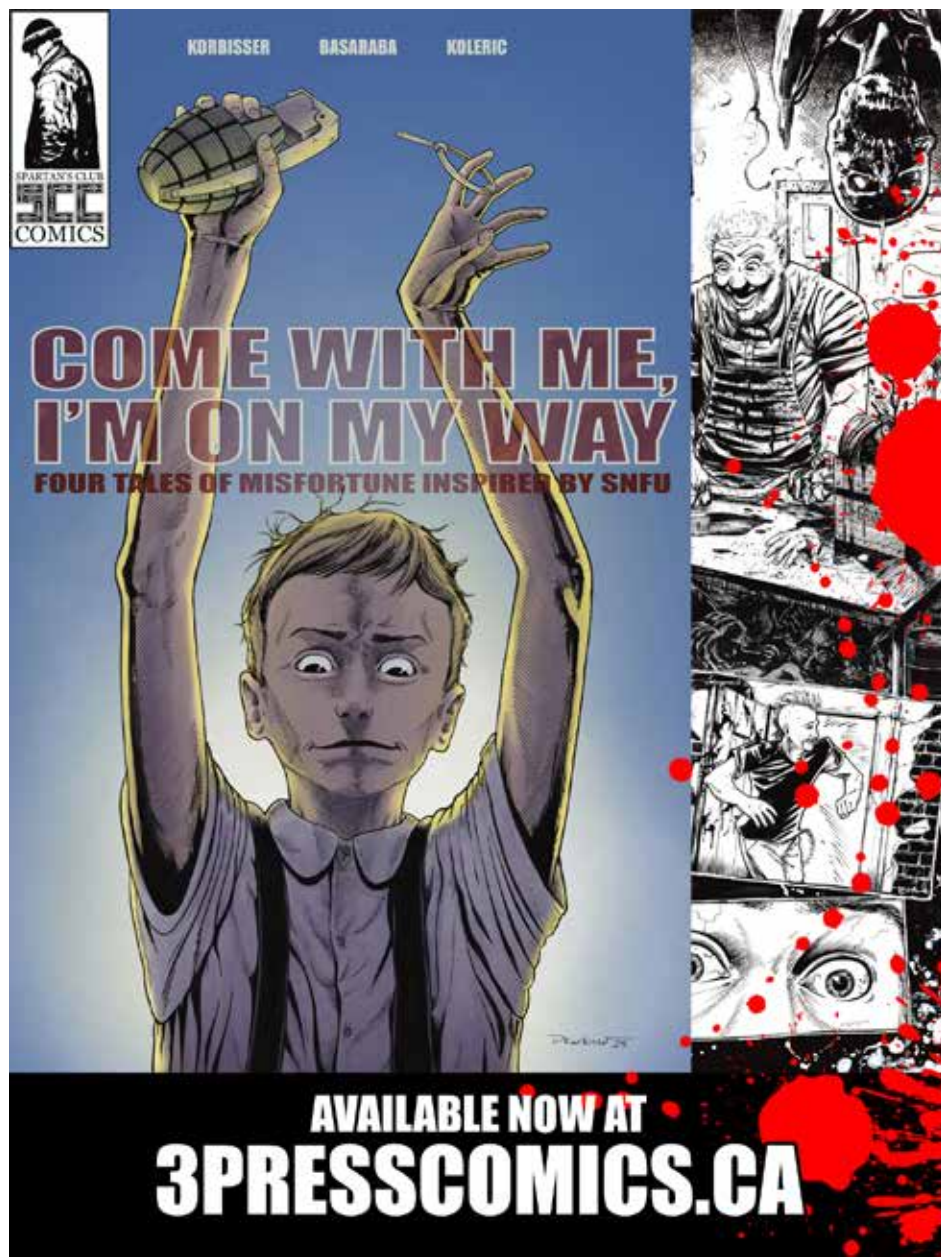
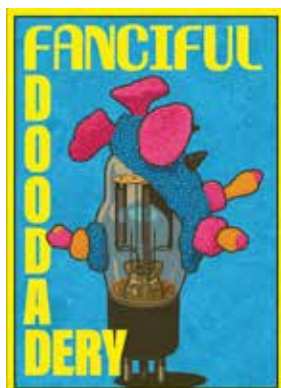
Event Details:

October 22 – November 2, 2025 | Wednesdays–Sundays, 2 pm–10 pm

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## Do YOU want to learn the art of Hollywood special effects and makeup from a PRO?

Autumn is upon us, and as the veil thins, there's no better way to out scare the creatures of the night than with a totally awesome retro horror Halloween makeup. These upcoming workshops by industry pro **Kyla Rose Tremblay** (*Cabin In The Woods*, *Fantastic Four*, *Supernatural*) will give you all the skills you need. Or if you're just curious about the inner workings of the craft, feel free to check out the free video presentation and out-of-kit fx demos coming up on Thursday October 2nd at Cavity Shop.

### WORKSHOP DETAILS:

All classes take place at Little Fernwood (in the back) 6-9pm.

**Sunday, Oct 19th: GOREY FX**

Kyla will demo a few super gorey wounds with cotton, latex and paint and you can follow along, and then take home a small kit. She'll also show you how to make your own realistic blood.

**Sunday, Oct 26th: CHARACTER MAKEUP**

Kyla will be showing some more advanced character makeup techniques including wax, latex stipple for old age and zombie effects, and some hair laying. Work with a partner or bring a mirror and work on yourself.

All classes are sliding scale \$75 - \$150, including supplies!

These are diverse and welcoming spaces for people of all abilities, and are neurodivergent friendly. Free spots are available for low income. Both venues are wheelchair accessible.

Teacher Kyla Rose Tremblay worked as a special makeup fx artist for almost 20 years on films like *Cabin In The Woods*, *Fantastic Four* (2005), *Final Destination 3*, *X-Men: The Last Stand*, *Slither*, *The Fog*, and the series *Supernatural* amongst many other projects. She ended up on the island during

## Special Makeup Effects VIDEO PRESENTATION & Out-of-Kit FX Demos



Covid and decided to leave the film industry, but still loves the art and craft of fx makeup, and is excited to teach it again to again!

### Want to get some tickets?

E-transfer or Eventbrite:

**Sunday, Oct 19th: GOREY FX:**

www.eventbrite.ca/e/gorey-fx-tickets-1735877228519

**Sunday, Oct 26th: CHARACTER MAKEUP**

www.eventbrite.ca/e/character-make-up-tickets-1735883537389

Your incredibly talented teacher can be found @ **hawthorn\_emporium** or under the name "Kyla Rose Tremblay" on Facebook.

Or if you want to see more of her credits, check out "Kyla Rose Tremblay" On IMDB: m.imdb.com/name/nm2015837/

**P.S.** If you're looking to learn more advanced fx, she's happy to weave it into these classes if you're willing to put in some extra time and acquire some specialty supplies. DM Kyla if interested.





## MRS. HENRY will *Keep On Rising!!*

By Ray MacKay

**AU: Who are we talking to and what are you most famous or infamous for?**

**Dude Cervantes:** My name is Dude Cervantes, infamous for playing guitar as a member of the

San Francisco-originated Howlin Rain, leader of the San Diego-based rock 'n' roll band tour de force MRS. HENRY, and six-string picker and singer in the Robbie Robertson-sanctioned revival of The Band—Chest Fever.

**AU: Where are you from and what's the music scene like there?**

**DC:** I'm originally from San Diego, and the music scene there is eclectic—from surf rock to stoner rock to classic country.

**AU: Give us a brief history of Mrs Henry.**

**DC:** I started MRS. HENRY in 2012, and there have been several iterations and reformations over the years. The longest-running ensemble was from 2015-2022, which consisted of myself on guitar and vocals, Jody Bagley on keyboards and vocals, Blake Dean on bass and vocals, and Chad Lee on drums and vocals. Our biggest accomplishment to date is the making and release of our three-act rock opera called *Keep On Rising*.

**AU: You're currently on the Chest Fever last Waltz Tour - tell us about it!!**

**DC:** Our 2025 *Last Waltz* is gonna be a riot! This is our first run of *Last Waltz* shows since Massey Hall in 2023, and our third year touring the production with ten plus local guests joining us in each city, including three shows in Canada: Vancouver, Toronto, and St. Catharines. Fans of The Band can expect to hear the songs from the entire *Last Waltz* concert (film and soundtrack), and then some! It's an all-night affair, a big bang, and everyone gets to smoke their favourite smoke afterwards and eat ice cream in bed.

**AU: Where are you now? Where are you headed?!**

**DC:** I'm currently on a plane flying from my newfound place of residence, Nashville, Tennessee, back to San Diego to rehearse for our upcoming tour. We've got about 45 songs in the queue this year, so there's a lot to get swinging at sooner rather than later!

**AU: One of your most impressive musical accomplishments to-date is *Keep On Rising*, a 21st century rock opera. Tell us about it!**

**DC:** Our rock opera, *Keep On Rising*, was recorded

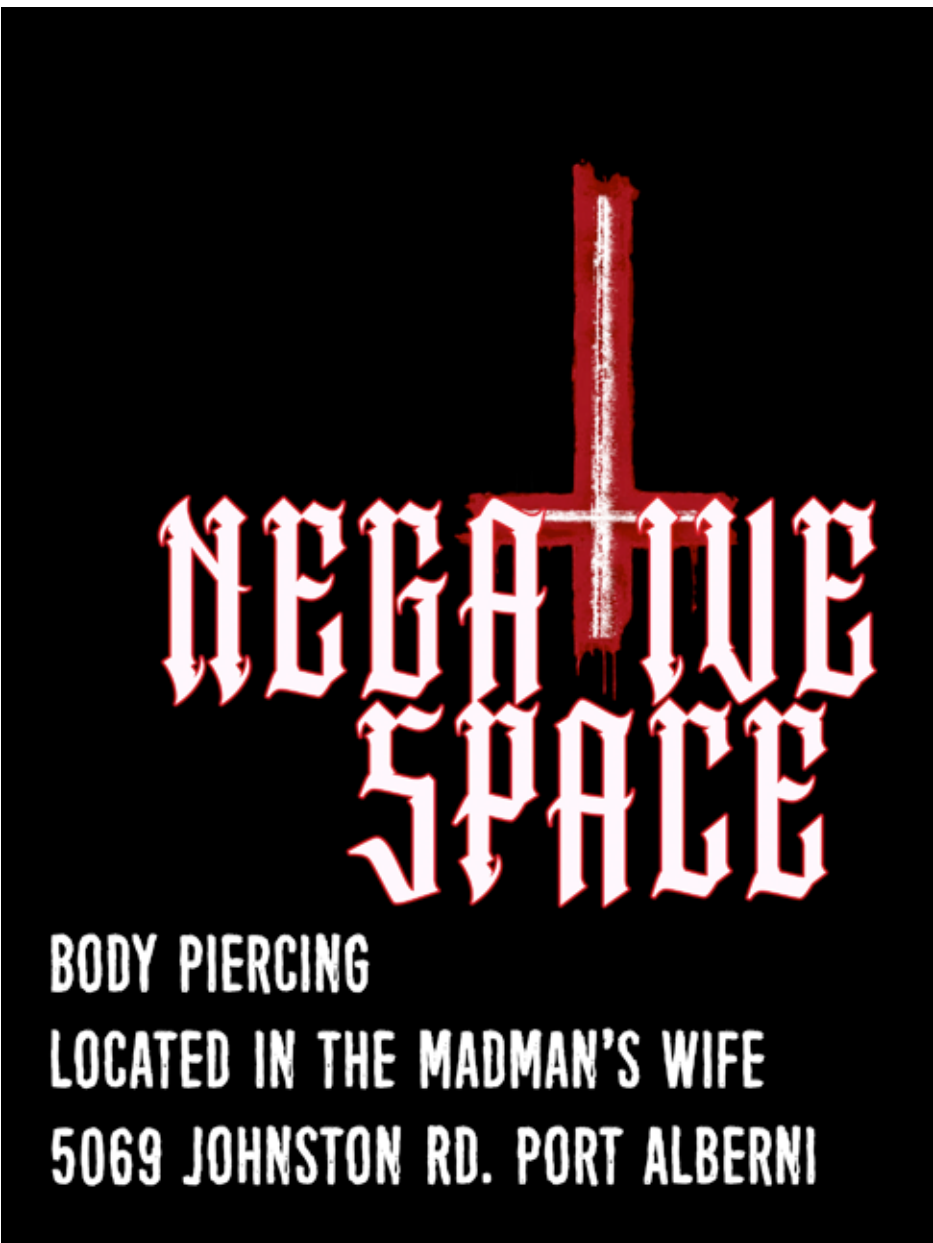
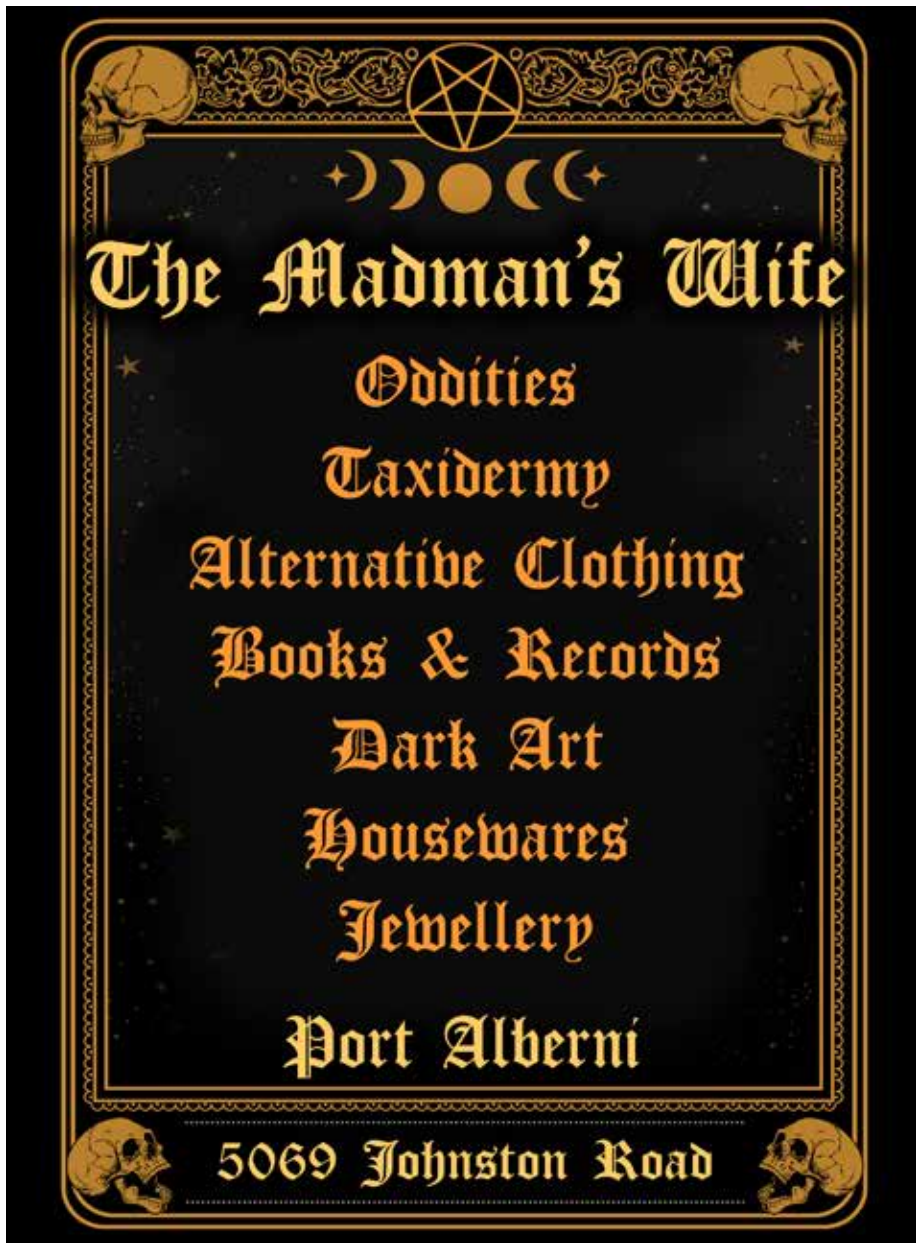
during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic over the course of an entire year. From June 1 of 2020 to June 1 of 2021, we spent almost every single day in the studio to create a three-act, three-album, 38-song concept album—a definitive rock



opera. It's our Sistine Chapel, our *Guernica*, our very own *Don Quixote*.

**AU: Tell us about the process behind writing and recording *Keep On Rising*.**

**DC:** The music spans the spectrum of rock—





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all shades and colours of the rainbow—with a throughline of meticulously crafted vocal harmonies and production. We went full-on Metallica *Black Album* meets *Sgt. Peppers* with the level of precision and time put into each composition. It was the one time in our lives we had all the time in the world to work on music together as a band.

**AU: What song would you recommend to anyone who hasn't heard of Mrs. Henry? What album?**

**DC:** I would recommend the song "Hope, Keep On Rising", from our rock opera *Keep On Rising*, to anyone who has never heard of MRS. HENRY and looking to discover our sound. Not only is the song a musical culmination of themes from throughout the album, but it showcases our trademark lead vocal baton toss between myself and Jody Bagley. Not every group has two lead singers who can belt rock 'n' roll the way we do, let alone a band that sonically drives the needle on tape and the drivers on a speaker. It's as powerful as it gets and a great song at the end of the day.

**AU: What's the most personal song you've written?**

**DC:** My solo work tends to be the most personal, but with MRS. HENRY the entire rock opera is a manuscript of more than half a lifetime in the music industry playing rock 'n' roll. Hopes, dreams, downfalls, abandonment, success, ambition, faith, and fate - it's all a looking glass from within. My internal alarm clock wakes me every morning to the words "I will sleep when I have to and rise when I need to", lyrics from the anthemic "We're Gonna Win." Personal mantras and meanings are scattered throughout.

**AU: It's Halloween here at Absolute Underground. Do you have any Halloween traditions you'd like to share?**

**DC:** My wife and I love Halloween and always aim to hook the kids up with handfuls of candy. We go all out with party lights and props from past music video shoots. The last couple of years we've had fun with the flight suits and disco space helmets from our music video "Peace, Love, Rock N Roll". Add a fog machine, dummy-set up, Iron

Maiden and Black Sabbath blaring—you've got yourself a good time.

**AU: What's the spookiest record you'd recommend to someone this Halloween?**

**DC:** Let's go with Pink Floyd's *Ummagumma*—I



could see "Several Species of Small Furry Animals Gathered Together in a Cave and Grooving with a Pict" stuck on a loop getting really weird on a few too many mushrooms... I suppose if I owned *Rain in Blood* on vinyl, "Angel of Death" would also do the trick.

**AU: In your opinion, what's the best horror soundtrack?**

**DC:** *Return of the Living Dead*—fun classic deep cuts and 80s punk in there. Roky Erickson, The Cramps, The Damned.

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

**DC:** I have three corgis... perhaps I have mentioned this before? Elvira aka Eve; Mama Daisy; and Elvis. The latter just passed away and was a legend of a legend, if there ever was one.

Long live Elvis Elvis Pupsley, aka Elvis White Cervantes!

**What don't you want your family members to know?**

**DC:** I suppose I don't want my family members to know about my secret society membership or the portal beneath my basement to NYC... perhaps my copious drug intake or my by-name basis at sex clubs worldwide? I definitely don't want them to know I write interview questions at the break of dawn for a Canadian publication...

they'd hang me right-side up with an American flag in New England! I assume they know just by looking at me that their crazy uncle/brother/son/weirdo consults with occultists and has an album called *The Sex Sells, Love Drugs, Rock N Roll Society*, but hey, I guess now they know if they didn't know already!

**AU: Do you have any plans to release an album in the near future?**

**DC:** We have many plans to release many

albums in the future! For fans of rock operas and archetypal rock 'n' roll bands, MRS. HENRY has a new live record set to run wild in the streets in 2026! It was recorded on tour in 2024 during our first official headlining show in Powell River, British Columbia, at the Carlson Loft. Mixed by B.C. legend and engineer Cecil English, it is a double LP with working titles *Rock N Roll Band LIVE*, or *Made in Canada*. Yes... we love Deep Purple. The next album on the docket for imminent release from Blind Owl Records would be a new solo record with my solo band The Panchos called *The Ride or Die of Dude Cervantes and The Panchos*. It features Dylan Donovan of heavy-psych rock band Sacri Monti, Justin De La Vega from punk-metal trio Warish, and the rock steady ginger-haired bassist Ryan Grenda. It's a bona fide rock n roll live album. The next *Live* from Budokan! For fans of The Band and Chest Fever, our massive Massey Hall live recording will surface in 2026 as well. It's an almost four-concert spanning six LPs and three CDs, and compiling it has been quite an undertaking. We're in the process of finding the project a good home on a fine Canadian record label — so, to all lovely Canadian record labels out there, feel free to give us a ring!

**AU: Tell us about your upcoming Winter Tour - "Rock And Roll Can Save Your Soul"!!**

**DC:** That tour was actually earlier this year, in the winter running from January to March ... and it was an awesome trek! We should be back on the road before you know it as MRS. HENRY in 2026!

**AU: Anything else to promote?**

**DC:** MRS. HENRY, *Keep On Rising*, *Chest Fever*, *The Last Waltz*, *Dude Cervantes*, and *The Ride or Die of Dude Cervantes and The Panchos*. That covers it!

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

**DC:** I default to the eloquent philosophy of the late great Viv Savage from Spinal Tap: "Have a good time ... all the time." Rock N Roll!

**AU: Where can we find you online? Website/socials/etc?**

**DC:** @chestfeverofficial @mrshenryrocks @dudecervantes @blindowlrecords

Photos by Tom Oddballs, Oddballs Photography



## The Howling Interview with Joe Dante, Dee Wallace and Belinda Balaski at 2025's Calgary Horror Con

Interview by James Borsa

**Absolute Underground:** I recently saw *The Howling* at a theater, and there was cheering during Roger Corman's cameo. Would *The Howling* have even been done if it wasn't for Roger Corman?

**Joe Dante:** I wouldn't be sitting here if it wasn't for Roger Corman. The thing about Roger is he gave jobs to people who didn't know what they were doing, but they knew what they wanted. They wanted to be in movies. Roger was a very good judge of people who really cared enough and were willing to stay late and

make the best Women-In-Prison movie. That they could make out of the material that he gave them, which is usually pretty sparse. He produced 1000 movies, some of them very good, some of them not very good. But he was a pioneer, in a way. The great thing on *The Howling*, is there is a scene

where Dee is on the phone and she thinks the killer is outside, and it turns out to be Roger Corman. And in a magnanimous gesture he agreed to look for change from the phone booth, because he was known to be very parsimonious...

**Belinda Balaski:** (laughs) That's Funny!

**Dee Wallace:** (laughs) Nice way to put it.

**BB:** I have to say as well, I wouldn't be here either if it wasn't for Roger Corman.

**DW:** And I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for this guy (points at Joe Dante) it's all very incestuous.

**AU:** One thing that I noted as well is that the practical effects of *The Howling* particularly in this new 4K transfer look amazing! There were a couple of other werewolf movies that were released around the same time. *An American Werewolf*

*in London* and *Wolfen* were two of them, your wolves in *The Howling* look spectacular though. Was there really a special effort to set it apart from the other guys?

**JD:** We based them on woodcuts, old woodcuts. And we didn't want to go the same route of all of the other werewolf movies. And the producer of the movie Dan Blatt, when he showed me the script, he said, you know this is an amazing story! People turn into animals! I said... Dan, this is practically a subgenre! He didn't watch those types of movies, so he didn't know that this wasn't a breakthrough! There were a lot of werewolf movies out there and it was difficult to try to rise to the top, but we somehow managed. The effects for the time were very groundbreaking. I would say the techniques we used are now probably obsolete. In the sense that everything is CGI now. But there's something to be said for practical effects on the set, you see it in the camera, and it's done.

**AU:** Dee, when I rewatched the film a moral of the story occurred to me, "Don't follow your wife up to her therapy!" (laughing)

**DW:** (Laughs) And every husband that I've had has learned that too!

**AU:** When all three of you think about the experience of *The Howling* what first comes to mind, all these years later?

**DW:** Fun! I mean, we worked ourselves to death. The schedule was three nights then turned around into days. It was tough.

**BB:** It was like shooting TV really, it was that kind of schedule.

**DW:** But I happened to be engaged to Christopher, who played my husband, they didn't know that when they hired him, by the way, so...we had a lot of fun in our trailer.

**BB:** (Laughs) That's why you were in the trailer!

**DW:** But you can't work with Joe and not have fun! He's just fun!

**JD:** We try to make it fun. It's tough enough to make movies. It really is hard. There are directors who get their stuff out of making people uncomfortable on the set. Being tyrannical and stuff. And I don't think that's the way to do it.

**DW:** I would just shut down.

**JD:** The crew won't like it as well, and I've known directors who were sabotaged by their own crews, because they were so mean to them. The crew is part of your family. You need these people to make the movie. And any idea they come up with that's better than your idea, take it! Because

it's all for the best of the movie.

**BB:** That's the great thing about working with Joe, he's always open to your creative input. And I've written scenes, I've added so much improv. Joe is just in the moment.

**AU:** Filmmaker and terrific writer John Sayles, has a wonderful cameo in the film as well, I really think he sets *The Howling* apart from so many other genre films. His sense of humor and his sly and savvy way of putting the screenplay together.



**JD:** John's a really smart guy and he's also a really hip guy. Werewolf movies at the time weren't hip, they were set in the past and kinda stale. At the risk of having the genre seeming old-fashioned we wanted to bump it up and make it a modern kind of story. To the point of when we sold the movie, we didn't sell it as a werewolf movie, it was



sold as a slasher movie. Because the distributor Avco Embassy had a lot of luck with *Prom Night* and other kinds of slasher pictures that they made. So they said, let's do a campaign where you don't tell people that it's about Werewolves.

**DW:** I never knew that.

**BB:** I didn't know that either!

**JD:** And it worked!



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DW: You sly fox, you! (Laughs)

AU: One of my most treasured interviews on my channel "Ultrasonic Film" is I got to chat with legendary character actor Dick Miller right before he passed away. I definitely want to throw a shout-out to Dick Miller. He steals every scene that he's in.

BB: Every scene! Even when he's not in the scene, he steals the scene!

AU: Joe, what was the process? Dick Miller is in almost all of your films. Do you just call him up? How did your working relationship start with him?

JD: I worked with Dick the first time on *Hollywood Boulevard*, my first picture. Where he plays a sleazy agent, perfect casting. (laughs) And we got along great! And I had been watching him for years in Roger Corman movies, starting with *Bucket of Blood* and other movies. And so I thought, I really like this guy, I like to watch him act. So every time I make a movie, I like to see if there's a part for him. And when I got to do *The Howling*, there wasn't a big part, but there was this bookstore owner and he delivers all this werewolf lore.

AU: There's rapid fire dialogue delivery there!

JD: It was a much better way to get the werewolf lore than, say, listening to a professor expound. It's the first scene that we shot. When the footage came in and it went to Avco, they looked at it and they said "Is this a horror picture or a comedy?"

Frankly through my career I've been getting nothing but that reaction from every picture that I make.

BB: Which is what makes your pictures so wonderful.

JD: The tone of my pictures is rather odd. And sometimes the studio guys just can't quite figure it out.

DW: Shocker! (laughter)

JD: I have a lot of Mad Magazine influence. I love Mad Magazine. My movies are like those, particularly those panels that you would look at several times and realize that there are extra jokes in there. That you didn't get when you first read it because you were too young. So if you look at my movies over and over again, as I have to do, there's a lot of little easter eggs hidden around it in case you want to see it again.

BB: But that's why they last so long, that's why they work!

AU: I would imagine that the trailer-cutting that you did for years with Roger Corman, influenced your style as well?

JD: Trailer cutting is a great way to learn how to make movies. Because you have to take a scene that is maybe three minutes long and you have to cut it down to ten or twenty seconds. And by doing that you have to figure out what shots you still need to make that point. So when you figure out how little you can get away with, you go on set and you can be like "I don't need this shot, I don't need that shot", "If I shoot this here, I don't have to turn the camera", and that's the magic of working for Corman was that you learn how to

do things with the most efficiency. It doesn't mean that you do them badly. Or to give up and make them shitty. But there was a way to get what you wanted on a small budget. And still get quality, by knowing what you were doing.

AU: You have an incredible cast in *The Howling* in what is presumably not an enormously budgeted film. How did you do it? How did you arrange everybody and get everyone together?

JD: It was a pretty low-budget movie, a million dollars all in. We had to ask for more money to get more werewolves. But at that time, character actors were frequently doing those kinds of movies. As long as the parts didn't take many days to shoot. And that's the secret of getting those kinds of people into those kinds of movies, is to make sure that the parts are compressed, so they can be all over the whole movie, but you can shoot them out in a day or two.

AU: For all three of you, what were some of the challenges of filming *The Howling*?

DW: Energy. There was a lot of energy and emotion required for my character. And we were working day and night, so we needed to keep that energy up!

JD: It was a little more money than I had for my previous picture, but it was very ambitious. And to make it on that budget, with that cast, I was very lucky with the cast. Every time I had to cut to somebody, it was somebody good.

DW: Thank you Joe.

JD: Dealing with the effects and the fact that the first bunch of effects that we shot didn't work. And we had to go back and reshoot them. And I had to ask for more money and for my mother to become an investor. It was a difficult movie to make but I can't say that I didn't enjoy it. I had a good time on the set because I loved these people.

BB: The biggest challenge for me was getting the part, because Joe wouldn't let me audition. He said "you have the part," and he was holding auditions, and I was in Hawaii. So I said, "Don't you want me to fly in?" He said, "No, you already have the part." I said, "Why are you holding auditions?" He replied, "Because I have to." I said, "Please let me fly in," and he said

"What if you blow it?" (laughter all around)

DW: Oh, You! (Dee playfully pushes Joe)

BB: So when I was on the set with John Sayles. John turned to me and said, "you know, I wrote this part for you." I said, "I'm sorry what?" He said, "I wrote this part for you because I love what you did with the character in *Piranha*." I never knew that, that was just delightful for me. So I was challenged to really be as good in *The Howling* as he wanted me to be.

AU: I want to thank all of you for this interview... Joe, Dee and Belinda, for this remarkable film that is still one of the best werewolf movies out there.

Check out [www.youtube.com/@jamesthemoviefan](http://www.youtube.com/@jamesthemoviefan)



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# DOUG VERMEEREN Talks His Career And Releasing Long-Forgotten, Cult-Classic, Satanic Film, *The Baphomet Seance*

By Ira Hunter and Ray MacKay  
**Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you most famous and or infamous for?**

**Doug Vermeeren:** My name is Douglas Vermeeren. I'm probably best known for things like *Mafia Spies* on Paramount+, or *Black Creek* and *Jackknife* which are now streaming on all platforms.

**AU: Give us a brief history of your career in film.**

**DV:** I started acting when I was a kid. The first show that I did was a program for CBC. I acted more through my middle school and high school years. I often used to skip school to go be on movie sets. I've been acting ever since, but I've also done a little producing and interacting as well.

**AU: Some of your recent cinematic releases include the chilling anthology *Black Creek*, the taut thriller *Tenants*, the action-packed *Broken Sky*, and the gritty horror *Fresh Meat*. Tell us about these films!**

**DG:** These were all really fun and very different experiences. With *Black Creek* I had the

opportunity to work with several legendary martial arts action stars. This included people like Cynthia Rothrock, Dan, the Dragon, Wilson, Keith, Cook, Richard Norton and others. It was an amazing experience. One of my favourite things with *Tenants* was when we got to show it at the Los Angeles Film festival. One of my favourite awards that I ever received was best supporting actor from the Hollywood blood Horror festival for my role as Leonard. I have that award on my desk. It just looks super cool. They did a good job with it. *Broken Sky* was super fun because I got to ride around in these really cool military vehicles.

I literally felt like I was a G.I. Joe action figure. *Fresh Meat* was one of my favourites and it's a very unique experience of how I got that role. I met the director Daniel Tures and his wife at the Cannes Film Festival in France. We clicked instantly and he more or less auditioned me on the spot and offered me the role. I'm so excited and I understand that it will be coming to theatres later this year.

**AU: You're also credited as an executive producer on films like *The Seance*, *Boys From Below*, and *Tenants*. For those who don't know, can you explain what an executive producer does for a film?**

**DG:** Executive producer is actually a weird kind of title lol there's a lot of different

ways to interpret that and if I'm being honest, the job on each of these was quite different. To answer this question I decided to even Google executive producer and even that definition is unclear. I think sometimes in Hollywood certain credits really change meaning depending on who you ask lol. I had a fun time with each of these

projects, but I think my favourite role with all of these was the acting part.

**AU: What's your favourite genre of film to be involved in?**

**DG:** For me, film is about helping people feel some kind of emotion or connection to the film. Every genre does that in its own way. I've done a lot of horror movies over the last couple of years and I think the reason I've chosen them is I think that they're a very special kind of movie that helps tap into emotions. Fear is one of the strongest emotions that we have as humans but I do like all genres. It seems lately I'm doing a lot more work in the action adventure space. But I love everything for different reasons.

**AU: Who are some of your favorite film collaborators?**

**DG:** I've been very blessed to be included in some really cool films. And I've also worked with a lot of incredible and amazing people. I'm not really sure the best way to answer this and I'm afraid I would leave someone out. I guess one of my favourite people that I continue to work with pretty regularly is Jeff Roldan from creative realm entertainment. Most of the work that I've done for him has been TV work as I've hosted quite a few shows for him. Some of our favourite collaborations were the upcoming TV show "unexplained paranormal files" and "the video games that changed the world." We had a really fun time doing those.

**AU: What are some of your favorite projects you've worked on?**

**DG:** Literally, I've had fun on everything that I've been involved in. I think that is the way you have to approach your work. But I think there have been some that have been really special and stand out. Although it's not listed on my IMDb, I really enjoyed working on *Open Range* with Kevin Costner, Robert Duvall, Annette, Benning, and others, and I also really loved working on *Mafia Spies*. Both of them were really good experiences.

**AU: Any advice for aspiring directors/ screenwriters/actors out there? What advice would you give someone who wants to do what you do?**

**DG:** I think one of the best pieces of advice that I was given is to never forget that this is show business. You need to be good at the show part and you also need to understand the business part. There's a lot that you can do to increase the likelihood that you will be cast in certain films and also when you're not being casted, I believe it's smart to try and go and make your own movies. I know I will probably get a little flak for this, but traditionally actors have been told to go and spend a lot of money on acting classes and training and those are all good things. But I'm a firm believer that you should also be spending some of your own money on making movies. To

me that's always been smarter because not only are you learning from those experiences you are creating something that can be a showcase piece for yourself. Believe in yourself enough to invest in yourself.

**AU: You've also been involved in the releasing of the long-lost, cult-classic *The Baphomet Seance* from 1983. How did you become involved in this revival?**

**DG:** *The Baphomet Seance* is a very peculiar project. One of the original negatives was discovered in a New York art house cinema. Some of the footage was quite distressed and damaged. I didn't know much about the film, but the more I learned about it the more intriguing it became. When I first saw it, I have to confess it freaked me out for days since the rerelease of this film, many people have told me that they have had similar experiences. I recently saw a publication suggesting that it is the scariest movie ever made, and probably needs to be banned again. I would invite you to see it and make your own decision.

**AU: Tell us about what it's been like releasing this heavily censored film. How have you approached it? What have some of the highlights and setbacks been? Has there been any pushback against releasing the film today - as it was so heavily censored in the 80's.**

**DG:** We have received quite a bit of pushback to not release this film from a lot of different sources. As we are prepared for the release, we have just tried to put some material out there and allow people to decide for themselves. You can find a lot of the feedback both positive

and negative on YouTube right now. Although I agree, it is very scary and creepy. I'm not sure that it deserves to be banned, but I do feel like a person watching it should approach it with caution. I must admit, even for the hard seasoned horror fan it might not be what you're expecting. Remember it's not your typical horror movie. It's an instructional video of how to talk to the dead in a seance. The feedback I have gotten is that there have been some very bizarre experiences, resulting from people engaging in some of the ritual elements from the film. Please be careful.

**AU: How was your experience attending and being a guest at Calgary Horror-Con this summer?**

**DG:** I always love attending the Calgary Horror-con. I think it's a great event. I'm so happy that Dan takes the time and effort to put it on each year. It's a great place for fans to come together and celebrate the movies they enjoy. I'm happy to be a supporter.

**AU: What was the project you are working on where regular people could pay to be in**



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#### the film and get killed by famous horror celebrities?

**DG:** The film that you were referring to is called "until there is one." This film is attempting to break the Guinness book of world records for the most kills in Film.

The funding model for this film is similar to other crowdfunding films. Many people come to the horror conventions and pay to get a simple picture with a celebrity they admire. I think this film is special because it gives people the chance to actually be killed in a film by the same celebrities they admire. It's a very rare opportunity and with the Guinness book of world record, This is also destined to become a part of cinema history. If you've ever wanted to be in a movie, this is a really incredible experience. I should also mention that we have already shot several elements. CTV came and did a story on this, which can also be found on YouTube. Everyone had incredible experiences on set.

It was fun for the days that we had Douglas Tait with us. You'll probably remember that he played Michael Myers in *Halloween Kills* and Jason Voorhees and *Freddy Versus Jason*. He shared lots of great behind-the-scenes stories and

demonstrated how some of the kills were done in those films and brought that knowledge to help this Film. One of the really special things about this project that is different than the previous record holder is the kills will be done with practical effects and not CGI. That means that there will be lots and lots of blood on the set. Come join us. It's gonna be a great time.

#### **AU: Anything else to promote?**

**DG:** I've just signed on to do a series of verticals.

Verticals mini movies are becoming very, very popular on platforms like TikTok, and there are quite a few distributors now getting involved in this form of filmmaking. I can't say too much



leans heavily into the tropes of the spy genre. I'm actually really enjoying it. I think everyone will find it quite fun. By the way, I've never had a cat before and my co-star is kind of growing on me lol.

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

**DG:** I just wanna say how much I am grateful for those who are supporting the film and TV industry by watching these films. I don't like to call the people that enjoy my projects fans. I prefer to call them friends. I also am a big fan of cinema, and I love the same kind of movies that the fans do. That's why I called them friends. We have much more in common than you realize. Thank you for supporting cinema and the film industry by coming to watch movies.

I would encourage you to continue to do so in the theatre because that's the best viewing experience for film films and that's where they're designed to be shown. Again, I can't express how grateful I am to be part of this industry and to share these incredible stories with the world. I also want to thank media like yourself for giving us the opportunity to connect with those who enjoy these movies. I think what you're doing is incredible and I encourage you to

keep up the good work.

#### **AU: Where can we find you online? Website/ socials/etc?**

**DG:** I am on Instagram @douglasvermeeren and I can be found on pretty much every other platform by just typing in my name. But I think I'm most active on Instagram. And I like to share a lot of behind-the-scenes stuff so that people interested in these films can join us on the journey of making them.



about the project, but it is awesome. I have a significant background and stuff work and this is gonna be a high-level action spy adventure called "the spy and his cat". It's a James Bond style series where my cat and I are partners in solving international espionage stories. I know it sounds like a funny premise, but it actually takes itself very seriously and

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PHONING HOME  
WITH THE E.T. FAMILY

Featuring Henry Thomas (Elliot),  
Dee Wallace (Mom), and Robert  
MacNaughton (big brother Mike).  
Calgary Horror Con Panel moderated by  
Adam Klassen.

AU: We have Robert, Dee and Henry from E.T. one of the most iconic films ever. I'm excited because I'm with the brother I never had. This is emotional. I have my mom here, in the sense that Dee, to me, is my mom from TV and film. I wanted to say I didn't mention Henry. I kind of wanted to beat him up when I was a kid because I was like, he took my job. Why did I have to be raised in Saskatoon and not be cast and to make Steven Spielberg cry. His audition was just so powerful.

Robert MacNaughton: I read with all the other actors trying out for his part. He was like the last one cast and he won it. I think he's the best possible person to play the part.

AU: This week E.T. turned 43 and we have royalty with us today. We are so stoked to have you at the Con. How has it been for you guys? Dee Wallace: So many nice people. I love Canada.

AU: Henry, what's it like to be here in Calgary?

HT: It's been fun. I shot a movie here 30 years ago, Legends of the Fall.

AU: How long did it take to film E.T.?

RM: The shoot for E.T. was 66 days. I have the call sheet.

DW: Of course you do. I tell you, every time we do a Q&A like this I learn something new. I never heard before that Robert read with all the people trying out for Elliot's part.

RM: Yeah, they kept me around. I went to Mike Fenton and Jane Feinberg's office.



DW: The casting directors.

RM: I got in on a late audition for the part of Michael. I had missed all the preliminary rounds because I was in New York doing a play. So then they got me in and while I was there, they were reading the other actors who had gotten pretty far in the process for his part. So because Mike Fenton was a casting director, and not an actor, if you watch Henry's audition when he cries, the guy reading the lines is Mike Fenton. So they wanted somebody reading Michael's part and all the other lines. I knew a lot of these other kids and they were very actory. Not all of them, but they were professional Hollywood children. But none of them had the quality that Elliot needed. That the whole film hinged on and it wouldn't

have worked without Henry, this man here, playing the part of Elliot. It would not have worked. The movie wouldn't have been what you all remember, if it would have been one of those guys instead.

DW: I didn't have to audition. Steven had auditioned me for a film called Used Cars and unfortunately he didn't think I was right for that. But Mr. Spielberg works very far ahead and he saw the quality that he wanted in Mary. Sweet and vulnerable.

RM: The more I watch that movie, the more I'm impressed by Dee's performance. As I became an adult and a parent and because I sort of got out of the acting business, I really

learned to appreciate the movie. Without being self conscious about my own performance and my voice and everything else and I really do get more of an appreciation for her performance every time I watch it.

AU: Anyone you always wanted to work with?

DW: Anthony Hopkins.

RM: David Lynch.

HT: A director called Michael Haneke. There's so many people but ultimately, here's me on a Tuesday afternoon, the phone rings, What? Where? Yeah, sure I'll go. No I don't care who's involved. I need a job. I think it's nice though to keep people in mind that you would like to work with because it helps you in those moments where you're somewhere you probably shouldn't

be thinking, Oh, what has my life become?

AU: Robert, I found it very interesting when Henry playing Elliot says about how his dad would believe him but his dad is in Mexico with his girlfriend. We see Dee's amazing reaction and Robert is like, oh man, I'm going to kill you. Thanks to that scene, I realized the age gap between Mike and Elliot and how Mike was probably there as the marriage dissolved and that Elliot might not have understood how that could hurt his mother. This is kind of a testament to you, Robert, playing in that patriarchal role. You have the most amazing mom on the screen and having your baby brother and Drew Barrymore who is not here. We need Gertie.

HT: My favorite thing in that scene is these reactions and we did a lot of takes on it. That is hard to do.

DW: The first thing that I remember in that scene is I was not supposed to get up and leave the table. It was not in the script. But he said that line to me and I took such a hit. I felt these tears coming up and I thought, I can't let the kids see me cry. So I got up and left. When we cut, Steven came over and said "Why did you do that Dee? Why did you get up and leave the table?" So I explained to him what happened to me and this is the magic when you have a director that's in tune with the reality of what happens to you. He looked at me for a minute and turned around to the crew and said "You've got 30 minutes, I need a new wall here in the kitchen with a sink with running water. So he could take me from the table over to the sink and bring me into that big close up where I say, He hates Mexico.

AU: To be that raw and real and emotional, to be able to notice how as a mom you interpret that role in that scene, the best Mom, she's right here.

DW: Don't you feel it in your heart? I have to protect them. I have to put on the front that everything is okay. I've lived it. We all have those real moments. Our job is to be brave enough to live those moments in a pretend setting.

AU: You made the moment.

DW: I didn't make it. Mary made it. That is what actors live for. A lot of directors would have gone, it's not in the script. Stick to the script, right? But Steven felt the realness of that and went with it and I will be forever grateful that he did.

RM: Besides the scenes with E.T. that scene was probably filmed from more angles and filmed over the course of I think, two days.

HT: Then after Mary leaves because they had

the new wall and sink, Spielberg was like, oh Elliot goes to the sink and you have to do the dishes.

AU: What was it like going to high school after being called penis breath?

DW: That was another moment. That line just came out.

RM: I love her reaction. Penis breath comes out and that was something Melissa overheard from some teenagers in the grocery store. The woman who wrote the script, Melissa Mathison, at the time she was with Harrison Ford. Most of teenager's stuff in E.T. is stuff she gleaned from his two teenage sons and their friends.

HT: Like Elliot's fashion choice of long johns with overalls over them, that was all Harrison Ford's son, Willard.

RM: He had two kids named Willard and Ben and he said it wasn't after the rat movies.

HT: I thought it was after the rat movies.

AU: The chemistry between the three of you is incredible. How many conventions and how many years have you done this together?

DW: We had it from the beginning. Always.

HT: Since the movie was released we've always reunited and done events together for the film. We've been in contact ever since 1981.

RM: The film kept getting re-released in theaters. It wasn't on videotape. So like in 1982 and then again in 1986, so they'd bring us together to promote it. They would put us up in a hotel in New York. I remember one time when we were hanging out. Drew was a little bit younger, so Drew's mom was like, "Drew hasn't had anything to eat all day. Will you take Drew down to get a hamburger?" So me and Henry and Drew just went down to McDonald's. We were close to the same age that we were in the movie. I didn't get recognized that often but Henry did. But together, all three of us, that was the first time I've ever had a mob scene. People were going out on the street and getting other people and bringing them in.

DW: Was that scary though?

RM: It was scary. I'd never had that happen to me. It was scary because all of a sudden, I didn't have an exit strategy for just taking my burger and getting back to the hotel.

DW: I got really scared one time. It was at a big event in New York and it was right after E.T. and we had to walk through this mob of people. This



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one guy came up and said something, I said hi and he got up in my face and said "You're a Bitch!"

**AU: You are not by the way, he was wrong. Maybe it was because of the Cujo thing. You kept the kid in the hot car. Another question for Henry, you've become a staple in Mike Flanagan's shows like Midnight Mass and The Haunting of Hill House. What makes you want to keep returning to work with Flanagan?**

**HT:** Well, it's a job. I mean, the money. No, it's great. We first worked together on this film called *Ouija: Origin of Evil* that he directed. He brought me into meet with him. I was expecting an audition but he just wanted to sit there and talk about E.T. and other films. I kind of just thought this guy just wants to meet me because he can. He said something that I've heard like a thousand times, which is, I want to cast you in everything that I do. I really want to work with you. I was like here we go. Okay, hope to see you, great, it was nice to meet you. Then he kind of followed through for eight projects, eight years. It was a great thing all around creatively and personally. But then like now Mike's doing other projects and my phone hasn't rang.

**AU: What role outside of E.T. are you most proud of?**

**DW:** Cujo

**RM:** Her performance was amazing. I thought she should have got an Oscar nomination.

**DW:** Yeah, they give them so often to horror films.

**AU: Horror is so underrated.**

**DW:** If you do horror movies then you know that they're harder than any other genre you can do.

**RM:** I did a small part in one of Damien Leone's movies he did before *Terrifier*. There's an enthusiasm for horror that isn't necessarily there in other film genres. Also the horror fans are the ones creating. Like Eli Roth is a number one horror fan. Damien Leone was a number one horror fan. Rob Zombie, his music was horror-related. They're fans of the genre first.

**DW:** Yeah, but the genre has changed so much. In the 80s you had really hard-core, great work that had stories, great performances and not CGI. It was real special effects. Not techno effects.

**AU: As a kid watching E.T., I believed it because you were there with E.T. and your reactions were so genuine. How did you find working with practical effects versus now with CGI?**

**DW:** Look guys, it's our job to make whatever we do come alive. I've worked with kids and dogs all my life and wouldn't have had a career if I didn't. I can emote as much to a yellow piece of tape as I can to if the dog's really there. Is it as fulfilling for me? Not at all. But that's my job, to do it. They're remaking *Cujo*, so I hear, and all the dogs will be CGI I'm sure, but my first question was, who the hell would want to do that? Not me.

**RM:** On E.T. though we did have a luxury in that the E.T. model itself was about as lifelike as could be. If you saw the original before they added some CGI for the special edition, it was like working with another actor in a lot of respects. Except for the voice which was usually Steven reading the lines.

**AU: We're sad we don't have Matthew De Meritt, one of the performers who was in the E.T. suit, here with us. Would have been great.**

**RM:** That's the other thing, E.T. also had a lot of heart due to the people that brought him to life. Which was Matt, to a large extent, who spent a

lot of time in the suit.

**DW:** We also had a mime, Caprice Roth, that did all the E.T. hand movements and arm movements.

**RM:** It was a big part of E.T.'s personality.

**HT:** She was actually a big touchstone for me in my performance because she would always have to lie beneath the lens and sort of angle herself to where her arms looked as though they were coming out of E.T.'s body. But I could see her face down below the frame. So if I felt like I couldn't connect to this latex thing, I could look down and her hands were human hands. So it made it real.

**DW:** Carlo Rambaldi's design was just the best. The first day on the set I walked through the doors and there were three guys standing there with E.T. and I stopped in my tracks. I looked at this little E.T. and I went, my god, I feel like I know him. It's just the way he was made, it's like he had a soul. I don't know how else to explain it.

**RM:** They wouldn't let me see him until the scene where I first see him, to get my reaction when I back up in horror from him.

**AU: Do you still remember that, like it's yesterday, being in that zone?**

**RM:** Yeah and also they didn't tell me what they were going to do. They had a bunch of shelves behind me and it was on a soundstage so they had guys on the other side and they pulled all the pins at once, so the shelves all fall down. So that bumped up my reaction a little bit but really the reaction was first seeing the working model of E.T. which looks exactly like you see in the film.

**DW:** But your reaction was so subtle, Robert. It was so real. A lot of kids that I've worked with would have gone Ahhh! All that bullshit that you think you do. But when you really see something that stuns you,

you just kind of go, Holy fuck, am I really looking at this? Takes a minute to take it in.

**AU: Working as kids, especially in a genre like horror. Could you sum up what you needed as kids to feel supported? Especially when you look at that generation, with the Coreys and Macaulay Culkin, the trauma and addiction.**

**DW:** I would have killed anybody that didn't take care of these kids. I would have.

**AU: Again, best mom in the world!**

**RM:** When you're a kid, you're a kid. But when you're on a film set, you're a professional. So the adults tend to accept you as one of their own. But it's important that the adults always remember that there are kids on set and that those kids don't have as much experience as the adults. So it's a shared group responsibility to be good mentors.

**AU: The 80s are the best decade for film, and we could not have had three better people coming to Calgary to represent it's ultimate finest. We love you guys.**

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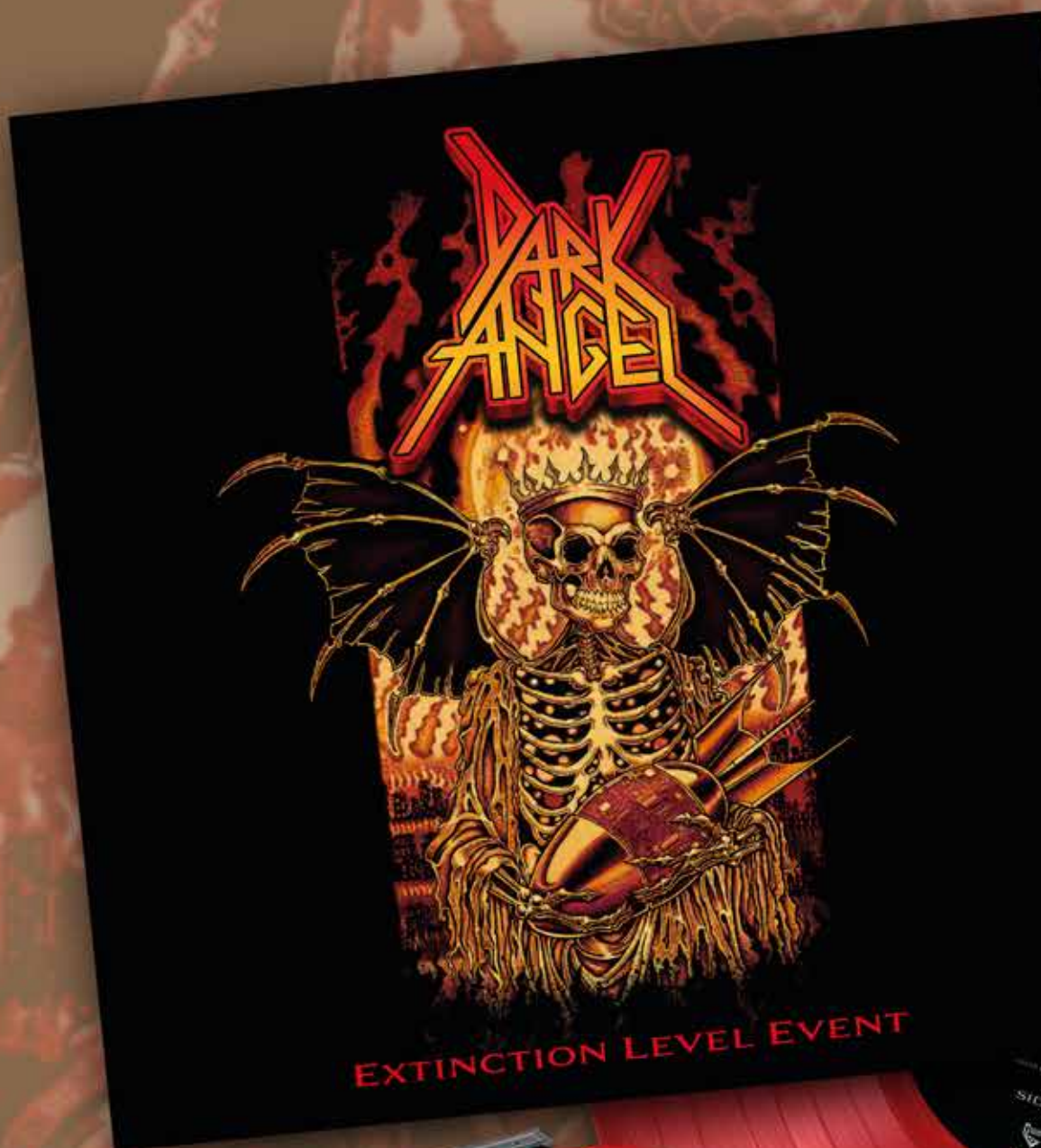
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## Friday the 13th: A New Beginning Revisited

Q&A with our final girl, Jason behind the mask, and the most memorable stars!

Featuring Melanie Kinnaman, Tom Morga, Ron Sloan and Tiffany Helm.

Calgary Horror Con Panel Moderated by Katrina Kryzalka

**AU:** We're going to be diving into one of the most talked about chapters of Friday the 13th, Part 5: A New Beginning. The film that dared to break the mould and stir up decades of debate. I would love to welcome our incredible guests Melanie Kinnaman, who led the charge as a tormented but resilient Pam. Tiffany Helm the unforgettable Violet whose iconic robot dance moves we'll never forget. Ron Sloan as Junior

Hubbard possibly the most quotable redneck in the franchise and Tom Morga the only actor to play Jason, Leatherface, Michael Myers and more, a true horror legend. Let's start at the beginning. What was the casting process like for Friday the 13th Part 5 and were any of you fans before you joined the franchise?

**Ron Sloan:** I was doing a showcase in Hollywood and that night the casting directors were there for a movie called Repetition, which was actually Friday the 13th Part 5. They asked me if I could portray a hillbilly. Well, of course. I got called in and I met the director Danny Steinmann. Then luckily I got called back to meet Frank Mancuso Jr. who was the producer and the rest is history.

**Tom Morga:** Well, I'm a stunt guy. Dick Warlock was the stunt coordinator for Friday the 13th Part 5 and we're both members of the Stuntmen's Association. One day, he says, "You might be a good guy for this movie we're going to do. I'll bring you in to meet the director." He had a couple of other guys, we all went in and walked like Jason. Then Warlock went over to Steinmann muttered something to him and said "Okay, we picked you."

**Melanie Kinnaman:** I didn't know anything about Friday the 13th. I'd soon become a horror fan but at the time I didn't go to horror movies at all. I went into the audition. I met all the big wigs. They had me do a few scenes and then said, "We'd like to see you do an improvisation where you're being murdered." So I go out the door and get myself ready. I come in and I kick the door open and I do it in the middle of this big room. All I know is when I finished, I remember I was lying on the floor and it's dead quiet. So I thought I either was terrible or I did okay. When I left, I thought, I don't know about this. But by the time I got home, there was a message on my answering machine and it said please call your agent. I called them and they said, "You got it." But I knew nothing about what I was up for.

**Tiffany Helm:** I was never told to like dance or exercise or any of that. I just know that she was written as a Pat Benatar hard body type. Because that was Hollywood's idea of punk rock, of goth, of alternative.

**AU:** Did you dress as the character?

**TH:** Well, I was dressed as me. They loved me and I was authentic. They thought they knew what they wanted but they really didn't understand what alternative was. You can't really write a character if you don't know anything about it. I don't remember any specifics like what the scene was. That was kind of a foggy time for me. But yeah, landed a freaking awesome job.

**AU:** So how much of your own inspiration went into playing the character of Violet? Was any of the punk stuff written or was that all you?

**TH:** It was pretty much all me. I mean, the script was the script but wardrobe took me out shopping and gave me carte blanche to pick what I wanted. That was my hair but it was a home job. So they sent me to a salon to get it done proper. I got to work with a makeup woman on how my makeup should be because they wanted to do KISS makeup. I'm like, that's not what we do. That's not goth. Fortunately, I had autonomy.

**AU:** Ron, you mentioned that the film was originally called Repetition. I heard that lots of you when you first went in didn't know that you were on a Friday The 13th set. When did you first know what the real situation was?

**RS:** For me, the first day of shooting. You're meeting your fellow cast members. I was excited because I had never done a horror film before or a part that big. I'm talking with Miguel A. Núñez and I asked him "How do you die?" He goes "I get killed in an outhouse, a spear goes through me." He goes, "How do you die?" "I get decapitated while I'm riding my motorcycle." Just then, good old Tom Morga walks by in costume, he's carrying a machete and he stops and he looks at every single one of us. It was like lighting a stick of dynamite. All of us are going, Oh my God, we're doing Friday the 13th. It took it to that next level.

**TM:** I knew ahead of time, even though it was called Repetition, that I was going to be a Jason. When I went in and saw the director he says, "Can you act like Jason, walk like him." But that's common for scripts and new movies that they'll have a different name when starting production.

**MK:** They told me it was a Friday the 13th up front, maybe because I was going to be the final girl. I said, well maybe I should see part four because I don't know anything about this series and part four will at least tell me what I'm getting into. So I'm watching this thing going, oh my God. I can't believe this is what I'm going to be doing. It was very enlightening and kind of a little scary. In the script there wasn't a whole lot written about Pam Roberts. So they let me create the character that I thought she should be. To make her someone that the audience would care about and like. To have the audience engaged in the movie they have to relate to at least one character and you care if they die or not. It's important.

**TM:** You liked me, didn't you?

**AU:** Everyone loves the

killer. You talked about seeing Tom in the Jason mask. Did you have a lot of interaction with Tom during the filming?

**RS:** No, I don't think he and I even talked at all.

**TM:** We were busy getting things together. I wasn't going to interact with the cast with dialogue so I didn't run lines or anything. I had to get ready to be Jason and kill them.

**MK:** You didn't have any lines.

**TM:** Yeah, that's why they hire a stuntman. The



scariest stunt a stuntman can ever do is dialogue. We have to rig up the scenes and action we're doing. So we're busy with that over here and they're getting ready to do their acting stuff. So I



didn't interact with them until I killed them.

**MK:** Tom and I didn't meet each other until our scenes together. We worked for two months, half of which he and I were alone. Just us two actors for weeks on end. All night running, chasing.



**TM:** In the water, in the rain.

**MK:** They'd yell cut and like prize fighters, we'd go to our separate corners. I'd go over to a heater and a blanket and you went in the corner somewhere.



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Then they'd say "Again. Action!" and we'd be doing this intense stuff then "Cut!" and we'd go to our corners. We never talked. At one point he felt sorry for me. It was part of the chase scene and it was brutal. I'm crawling in the mud with the rain machines and it was so cold. I forget what happened but you came over to me when they said cut. I was laying on the ground, you took the mask off and I saw your face for the first time. I thought, he's a nice looking guy. He's not at all what I expected behind that mask. But that's the only time I saw any feeling from Tom as Jason.

**TM:** She was freezing and I was feeling really sorry for her. I put a wetsuit underneath my overalls because I knew it was going to be drenching wet.

**MK:** My clothes were soaking wet and see-through and horrible. Not only have they got these rain machines, they're also hosing me down. There's some guy on set and his sole job is to hose me down. I hated that guy.

**AU: I hope that's in the credits, the hoser.**

**TM:** Wanted a water tank for her to jump in and climb out but they said, "We'll just use the hose."

**AU: What was it like working with Dick Warlock through those scenes?**

**MK:** The chainsaw scene, which is my favorite, Dick Warlock trained me because it was a real working chainsaw. I'm little and I picked up the chainsaw for rehearsal and it was heavy and then they turned it on. So now this thing's vibrating and it went from feeling like 30 pounds to 100 pounds. Dick is training me with this professional stunt man how to stage fight with a chainsaw. He's got a machete. They were great and taught me everything. Then the last thing Dick Warlock said to me before they said action was "Don't hurt my boy." Because I have to throw the chainsaw. But it worked great. Having never done stunts before and now I'm working with power tools.

**AU: Ron, speaking of stunts, your motorcycle scenes and your decapitation scene, did you do your own stunts?**

**RS:** I had Gene Hartline, a great body double. He did the porch scene because I really could get decapitated. Also Gene LeBell who was a wrestler?

**TM:** Yeah. He was the toughest man in the world.

**RS:** He was the one who had to watch me ride the bike initially. They had a camera mounted on the handlebars and the director said to me "This camera is \$50,000. You drop the bike, I really will kill you." So now I'm trying to do what I've got to do and I'm thinking about this darn camera. I screamed so much that night that I lost my voice. Of course in the movie you see just for a moment the decapitated head hit the ground and that was it. But in the original take the head hits the ground, rolls down a hill and looks right at camera. That didn't pass the censors.

**AU: Did you see the movie before the MPAA butchered it?**

**RS:** I saw my death before it got butchered. It was scary, it freaked me out.

**AU: You can't find it on Youtube or anywhere.**

**RS:** No, they destroyed the footage in that particular one.

**AU: You and your mother in the film, Ethel, were the funniest duo ever. What did you base your character off of?**

**RS:** I thought of a friend of my brother who was really just this goofy idiot and I thought, I can do that. It just kind of got carried away from there and Carol Locatelli, she even brought out more. It took everything for me not to crack up watching her do her thing with the chicken. She was a riot.

**AU: Tiffany, speaking of legendary scenes, your dance scene, did you make that up yourself or was it choreographed and did you pick the soundtrack for it as well?**

**TH:** Yep, yep, yep. Actually I went to a club and they would have this alternative new wave night and there were a few of us who did that particular dance to certain songs. So I had been

doing that dance for a while and I didn't really know anything else. So when they changed it from exercising in my room to dancing. You can see initially I'm doing this weird sway thing but then I did the robot mime moves and they really liked it. As far as the music, that was done in post that I brought that song in because the initial songs that I brought into them they couldn't use. It was like Bauhaus, The Sisters of Mercy and Siouxsie and the Banshees and they're like, yeah, we cannot afford those songs. I couldn't even die in front of Sid Vicious for financial reasons. So I brought Pseudo Echo to them and nobody had heard of them. They loved it and it was available.

**AU: How was filming your death scene and how did you feel about them changing things?**

**TH:** We went into overtime that night. It was really late. But I was looking forward actually to the kill, the original kill (stabbed in crotch instead of stomach). I'm like, oh this is kind of badass. I had that makeup on and I kept saying, "Check this out, I'm doing an ad for brawny tampons." I know, it's so tasteless, isn't it? Violet. They said it wouldn't get past the ratings. It would be an X-Rating, just like the decapitated head thing. But it is what it is. I think it's a great film. It's funny. There's some comedy gold there hitting all the tropes. I was happy to be part of that project.

**AU: Any pranks on set?**

**MK:** Not on my end. John Shepard and I stayed in character the whole time. I worked with these guys, I call them the kids. But we didn't have any interaction. John, Tom and I were in a whole different movie from what they were all doing.

**RS:** Dick Warlock, the stunt coordinator, was training John Shepard and I to do our fight scene and while in training Dick actually connected and knocked me down. Which I think John learned because he did the same thing in the movie. It wasn't a prank, it sure felt real. Bringing it up to present day, I saw Dick at a convention and I said, "Hey man, you knocked me out." and he'd go "Oh thank you." "No, you knocked me out!" and we had this great camaraderie at that moment. He grabbed my head, I usually bring the decapitated head to conventions, he grabbed it and goes "Oh, that's right I already did this once."

**TH:** For pranks, the only thing I remember is Tom spooking Juliette Cummins and myself in the Orange Grove, he'd hide there in the dark.

**TM:** I was trying to stay in character.

**AU: Tom, how did you differentiate from playing the scenes with Jason from playing**



**Roy in disguise? Spoiler alert.**

**TM:** No different at all. I just played Jason. You can call him anything you want, but Jason's an imaginary character and Roy's double was an imaginary character and they were the killers. I put on a mask and walked around and did some action and as a stuntman that's what we do. So it wasn't like it was a hard thing. I did a lot of fights. I'd done weapons before and I just was Jason.

**AU: What makes a good final girl?**

**TM:** Survival.

**MK:** I've always been a survivor from a young



age. Actually all actors, what we have to go through just in the audition process takes a lot of strength, courage, and self-confidence. So I had that anyway. I brought that to Pam and I think that makes a good final girl. You have to exude some kind of self-confidence even in the face of something you think you can never overcome. Also, if you have a decent scream, that's good too. Because I've always felt that her scream tells the whole story of what she's going through. As a little aside Shavar Ross had the best scream in the whole movie. He should have been the final girl.

**AU: Did you keep anything from the set or your wardrobes from the movie?**

**MK:** I kept the whole outfit. They gave it to me because it was unusable. It was torn, hosed down and muddy. I kept the pink sweater, believe it or not. That damn pink sweater which I hated, I have.

**TM:** When you've done principal photography the director knows there's always going to be pick-up shots. So you never get to keep any props, masks or weapons because they have to match. Unless you're really clever, like

Kane Hodder who managed somehow or another.

**MK:** He steals stuff.

**TM:** He got a mask. What he did is get a mask just like it and the last night, he wore the one he bought and kept the other one.

**TH:** I got the belt that I was wearing at the breakfast scene. I wanted the gray dress, that was like my unicorn, but I couldn't get it.

**MK:** But they don't let you keep important props like the machete or anything like that.

**RS:** Well, I was real lucky. I wasn't able to take the head home with me after because of all that. But

I was on an audition two years later at Las Palmas Studios and I saw a sign that said Reel FX. Wow, those are the guys that made my head. I thought maybe I can buy it. So I knock on the door, the guy answers, and I said "I'm Ron Sloan, I did a movie called Friday the 13th Part 5 and you guys made my head. I was just wondering if you still had it and could I buy it?" and he goes, "Come with me." I followed him. It was like going to Costco for horror. We're talking shelves of body parts, dinosaurs and just gore everywhere. I look and there's my head sitting on the top shelf next to Sylvester Stallone. It was in alphabetical order. He grabs it and says "I've got to apologize, we shot you in the head last weekend." So half of that head is blown out in the back. He put it in a bag and said "Here take it, man. You deserve it."

**AU: When the film first came out, I know it was very divisive. How did you all feel about the copycat killer angle?**

**MK:** It meant nothing to me. I didn't know that Jason was so important. So I didn't know about the problem with it being a copycat until I went to conventions and the fans were very angry that it was not Jason. But I say to them, it was Jason to me. He was chasing me. I was running to save my life and to save their lives and it was Jason.

**TM:** Time makes a difference. Because when it first came out, of course it was, you're not the real guy. We don't like the movie. But that seems silly. It's a good movie and Jason is as imaginary as Roy. But after people saw numerous sequels and other films, they get back to seeing this one 020000000 and this one was entertaining. It had good comedy and had great kills. Had a great Jason, right? So we appreciate it and we've had more people in the last few years come up and say, "You know, I really liked Five." They've grown to love it. It's changed around quite a bit.

**RS:** Maybe it was just me but I didn't know the difference, really. I saw the first Friday the 13th,







okay there's Jason. But looking at our film, wait a minute. What are they talking about copycat? There was a Jason in the grave with the right mask. Wasn't that Jason? There was a couple of different Jasons. So yes, Roy was a copycat killer. But Jason to me in my mind at that time, he was in the movie. So what's everybody bitching about? Come on, move on. Great film. A lot of fun and from there when you went into the other Friday the 13th films those are kind of far-fetched, you know? But the whole franchise is really good.

**TM:** When they first said that you weren't really Jason, I said, "Well, I was in all the flashbacks."

**RS:** Isn't that real Jason? I think so yes.

**MK:** Parts one through five have the same kind of feeling, a vibe. There's a certain look about them. After five they changed.



They kept it consistent two, three and four. It was very courageous of them to try something different for part five. It's kind of nice to step out of the formula.

**TM:** A New Beginning.

**AU:** After you filmed did you have any idea that 40 years later you'd still be talking about it?

**MK:** Absolutely not. I'm stunned every year when I go to shows. People are so interested in the characters, the movie, the whole franchise.

**TM:** People will say their parents showed me these movies and now I'm a fan. It's generational.

**TM:** You'll never know until the audience decides what they like. I've done movies I thought were going to be a hit and they tank. Other movies that you have no idea what's going on, this is going to be stupid.

I did Ghostbusters and they were using computer generation and they're going to make ghosts on the walls and everybody's looking at nothing. I thought well this is going to be dumb. I remember the stunt coordinator told us "Guys when you get your checks cash them right away."

**MK:** Well, that's true on this film, Friday the 13th. I used to run to get my check to cash it right away.

**AU:** Tom, you have also been Michael Myers and Leatherface. How did you get those roles?

**TM:** Well, just good fortune. I'm a member of the Stuntmen's Association and Dick Warlock was a member and so was Fred Lerner and they were both coordinators. Fred Lerner was a coordinator on Halloween 4. I'm the right height and I've worked with the guys before and I have a little bit of ability with weapons and action. They both said when they were trying to cast the guy "Well, why don't I bring you and let them see you too?"

**AU:** In the 80s the horror movies are kind of built around horror and then the nudity in it. Did you get approached with the option of doing nudity? Do you get paid more to do it?

**MK:** I've done movies where nudity was required for a certain role and you try to negotiate out of



it or you try to limit it. Yes, you do get paid more for it. It's not fun. I'm the lucky one in this movie as there's no nudity for Pam Roberts at all.

**RS:** I got paid not to take off my clothes.

**AU:** Anything new you want to promote?

**TH:** I just shot a film in LA with my mom Brooke Bundy. We just shot CATnip. We're calling it Gremlins for grownups. It's Chevy Chase, Bruce Dern, Joey Lauren Adams, Geoffrey Arend that are being terrorized by killer cats on Christmas Eve. We are using all practical effects.

**MK:** I'm doing a movie with Bradley Cooper. I can only say that I play a bad guy. I'm also doing a horror film where I am playing the lead female and my love interest is Doug Bradley.

**RS:** I was just killed by a werewolf. My little head got stomped by a werewolf. But I do have an identical twin who comes back in the sequel. But I can't talk about the title. I'm sworn to secrecy.

**TM:** Repetition.

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## DOUGLAS TAIT

### Man or Monster?

Interview by Ira "Horrorshow" Hunter

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

**Douglas Tait:** My name is Douglas Tait and I'm most infamous for a couple of characters. Jason Voorhees in the finale of Freddy vs Jason, I am the Michael Myers stunt double in Halloween Kills and I am the Jack Link's Sasquatch in the beef jerky commercials.

**AU: When did decide you wanted to be a stunt man and how did you get your start?**

**DT:** So I am an actor first but some of my roles have required stunts but I've mostly been pursuing acting. I started in high school working at Universal Studios playing Frankenstein, the Wolfman, Phantom and also doing extra work during the summer months. That's kind of where it all began.

**AU: How many movies have you been in as an actor and as a stunt man?**

**DT:** I have over 120 credits as an actor and like 27 or 28 as a stunt person.

**AU: What happens in the final scene of Freddy versus Jason?**

**DT:** Well, Jason comes out victorious with Freddy's

head and ends the movie. He basically won.

**AU: The Michael Myers in Halloween Kills role. How did you approach that one? That's another pretty iconic role.**

**DT:** I was always a fan of Michael Myers so I kind of grew up knowing the movements and whatnot. I was supposed to be a part of it in 2015 with

Halloween Returns, but it didn't work out and the movie got shelved. Then I got a call to be the stunt double in Halloween Kills because they knew who I was and Sean Clark and Chris Nelson put my name in for it. So that's kind of how it all came to fruition.

**AU: Were you also in one of the Hellboys as well?**

**DT:** The third Hellboy. I played the villain Gruagach in it. David Harbour from Stranger Things plays Hellboy in that one. We shot that for several months in Bulgaria.

**AU: Then the Jack Link's Sasquatch. Is this your most comedic role to date?**

**DT:** Yeah, it's very comedic. We actually shoot all of them mainly in Canada in Toronto and Vancouver. It's basically me being silly, I just kind of improv. I've done the character so long that funny stuff just happens off the cuff. When you get a role sometimes it takes a while to get into that character. With Sas I know him and I just roll with it. It's fun.

**AU: Can you tell people about Calgary Horror Con and what they've missed this weekend, if**

**they weren't here?**

**DT:** Well, Calgary Horror Con is an amazing convention. The fans came out, it was packed and I had a great time. So happy I was able to fit it in to my schedule.

**AU: What's the next project you're working on?**

**DT:** I am working on a movie right now with James Franco called Toad. We are shooting that right now. Also I'm a part of the new Five Nights at Freddy's 2 coming out December 5.

**AU: Were there any guests here this year that you were excited to see?**

**DT:** Oh yeah, E.T. (the Extra-Terrestrial). Growing up in the 80s that was probably one of the biggest movies. I got to hang out with the cast of E.T. and take pictures. They're super nice. I brought my E.T. VHS tape and they signed it. So that was pretty incredible actually.

**AU: Any advice for people that want to get into the game?**

**DT:** I would say as somebody that's been doing this for 30 years now, don't wait. You can't wait for an agent to do something for you. It's all about doing things on your own. You can film stuff on your own and post it to YouTube. It just keeps your chops up, keeps you learning the craft. A lot of people say, I want to be an actor. Then they just sit around waiting to get a call and it will never work that way. You have to be out hustling. You have to be doing it to get better. I still get better every year. I improve as an actor, it's just the

way it is. It's an art. The best actors are older actors because they've been doing it so long.

**AU: What were some of the scenes that you did in Halloween Kills?**

**DT:** I did the SUV scene at the park. James Jude Courtney plays him in the movie brilliantly and I was able to assist him in that scene jumping off the SUV and different things like that. It was really amazing to be in that mask after growing up

being such a fan of it.

**AU: To have been Jason and Michael, that's so wicked.**

**DT:** Yes, actually I'm one of only two people that have been behind both of those iconic masks. The other one is here at Horror-Con too, Tom Morga.

**AU: He was also Leatherface so you have to get a Texas Chainsaw credit.**

**DT:** I know he's got me beat. He was Leatherface in one scene.

**AU: When you were doing Freddy versus Jason, were you dealing with the Freddy stunt double or was Robert Englund involved?**

**DT:** It was only me and Robert Englund and I'm actually the last person to work with him in a movie in his full makeup. That's the last time he played Freddy Krueger in a film. So that's pretty special because I was a huge fan of his, it was my first big movie and here I am with someone I grew up watching.

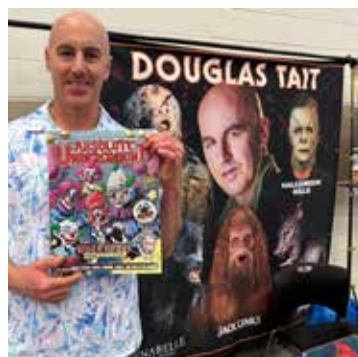
**AU: How do people find you online?**

**DT:** You can find me @actordouglastait on Instagram and TikTok and Facebook fan page, Douglas Tait. I'll be posting about my roles that I have coming out. I also directed a movie that's out right now. It's called Angel Baby. It's a thriller. I'm the villain in it, so go check that out.

**AU: Final words for Canadian horror fans.**

**DT:** Canadian horror fans, if you are anywhere near Calgary come to Calgary Horror Con next year, you will not be disappointed.

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## KELLI MARONEY: SURVIVING COMETS, KILLBOTS AND CULT CLASSIC FAME

Interview by James Borsa at Ultrasonic Film

Actress Kelli Maroney has appeared in many films, including the 1980s cult classics *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, *Night of the Comet* and *Chopping Mall*. Kelli appeared at the Calgary Horror Convention, June 14th and 15th. I caught up with her ahead of the event.

**AU: Welcome Kelli. We're very happy to have you here. I look forward to meeting you at Calgary Horror Con. It's going to be awesome to check it out. How often do you come to Canada?**

**Kelli Maroney:** Hi, thank you. I haven't been to Canada in a long time. I was going to do a convention but the pandemic hit so this is probably my second time doing a convention in Canada.

**AU: On your website, you've got all kinds of really cool stuff, like autographed DVDs and Blu-rays. Will you be bringing some of that with you when you come?**

**KM:** I'll be bringing all of it when I come. And I have a baby Killbot! His head moves around, his arms move around. He's on a blood-spattered tile. Haha.

**AU: Of course, that would be from Chopping Mall!**

**KM:** Haha. Yes. Yeah, I pretty much have whatever is on the website and some things that I don't have on the website too.

**AU: When did you start attending fan conventions?**

**KM:** Probably 1998 or 1999. I did Chiller, while it was most certainly still a big convention, it wasn't like it

is now.

**AU: What's your favourite part of doing the conventions? I would imagine meeting the fans is probably a big thing? You and Catherine Mary Stewart get recognized a lot from this film and I would imagine that just took off when the internet happened.**

**KM:** When the internet came about, none of us, including myself and Catherine were aware. "You've got to go see this shrine to *Night of the Comet* that's up." Like, what?! We didn't know! I was told that *Chopping Mall* is a big favourite. And I was like, it is? We had no idea. I thought people liked it. Now, all this time later, we have new fans that are younger. And so, you know, who am I kidding? I'm going to die on this hill. Hahaha.

**AU: It's been over 40 years since these films have come out. I would imagine the passionate fans bring you back to the experience of actually making these films.**

**KM:** I find that the more I talk about it, the more things I remember. It's very rare over a weekend that somebody doesn't say something I had never thought of before about the movie, so I'm always learning from them too.

**AU: You did *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* around 1982. You played a valley girl. Then in 1984, *Night of the Comet*, you played another valley girl. But in 1983, the film actually called *Valley Girl* came out. Were you on the radar for that at all, as far as playing one of the valley**

**girls? I know it was a low budget film in L.A. at that time.**

**KM:** It was L.A. and I was still in New York playing a very terrible teenage girl on a Soap.

**AU: The quintessential '80s valley girl is definitely something that you get recognized for.**

**KM:** It's so strange because I was doing *Fast Times* and I wanted to get that accent. I knew the song "Valley Girl", but I realized that was exaggerated. One day I was standing in the girls' room—because in high school, you smoke in the girls' room, that's what you do—and they had so much makeup on, they were so sophisticated. But that's how I picked up the accent. The real girl that I played, actually was a good sport about it and said she was exactly like that.

**AU: As you mentioned, you were on a soap, *Ryan's Hope*. Catherine Mary Stewart was on a soap too. *Night of the Comet* was shot for a very low budget at that time. You two must have been running and gunning and doing single takes for that! But I'm guessing that's something that the two of you were very well experienced in and really knew how to do.**

**KM:** A lot of filmmakers in Los Angeles—I don't know if they did it on purpose, or if it was just kind of a survival thing—but they cast young people, teenagers on soaps. You can find a soap opera in almost everyone's past. It didn't matter what happened, how bad you screwed up your line, if they yelled "fire", it didn't matter. If you stopped the tape, chances are you'd get fired. Maybe not on the spot but that is what was drummed into us. You just don't. No matter what, then you're prepared. I think that the low budget indie films kind of knew to get somebody who's been on a soap. With *Night of the Comet* it was serious to the point where they do one take

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and then one take for safety, they call it. They'd say, okay, we'll do it again for safety. And we'd be like... "We get to do it again? We get another shot at it? Wow!" It felt really luxurious.

**AU: When was the last time that you actually sat down and watched *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* or *Night of the Comet*? Would it be at one of these conventions?**

**KM:** Yes. That would be the only time, because I'm certainly not going to sit down and watch myself.



I hate watching myself. I hate listening to myself. We all do that.

**AU: Many, many actors are very, very hard on themselves, but you are still working to this day. You're still doing projects, still releasing projects. There are tons of people who dress up at conventions now when they come to meet you. What are some of the more impressive folks you've seen? Have you come across some pretty unique Kelli's at conventions?**

**KM:** Yes. I was just in Tennessee. Someone had dressed as Sam and Reggie and they had

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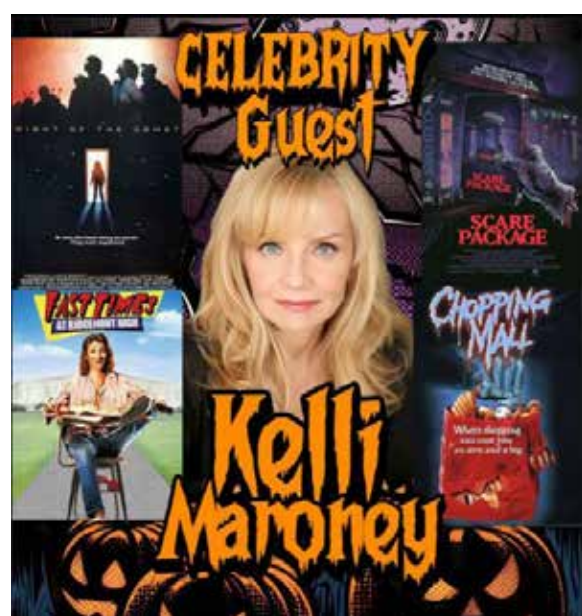


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copied Reggie's blouse, which is very hard to copy—the colour and the style and everything. They don't make those materials anymore. They were amazing! They had wigs on too. That was incredible. I think everybody's incredible when they do it. I mean, to sit down and make the sweater and the skirt. I love when they do the skirt thing though. A little three-year-old girl came in and they sent me a tape of it. She comes in, she goes, "Daddy would have gotten us Uzis." I was like, oh my God. Oh my God. They look adorable! That's a huge treat for me.

**AU: When you appear on panels at conventions, do you get a lot of interesting questions?**

**KM:** I do. Sometimes they're too shy to ask, but if you really drag it out of them, they'll start asking. They either ask a film question because they have something to do with film, or they just ask a fan question.

**AU: When you think back to that key sequence in *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, where you're trying to get everybody pepped up! What**

**crosses your mind?**

**KM:** I asked if it would be okay if they put it in. It was in the book, but it was not in the script. And I said to Cameron Crowe, can we put this back in? Because it's the whole reason she's doing this. And he looked at me and went, "yeah." Amy said it was okay too.

**AU:** I think it's really cool that you had the support of your director, Amy Heckerling, to actually change that and put that back in. Because this was one of your first movies.

**KM:** Yeah, a lot of times things get cut out just

because they're cutting, cutting, cutting!

**AU:** I saw an anniversary poster of the cast of *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* a few years ago and you were in it. Did you make a lot of friends on the set?

**KM:** I run into Amy Heckerling every so often, we like each other's posts on social media and stuff like that. I was great friends with Pam Springsteen, the other cheerleader in the film. She became a photographer. Amanda Wyss, I see, because she's kind of horror adjacent. She does the conventions too. It's always fun seeing her!

**AU:** It seems your relationship with Catherine Mary Stewart has stood the test of time over the years. You both go to fan conventions together from time to time. The two of you had incredible chemistry together. We really believed you as sisters. I think that really also makes the film as good as it is. As does Thom

**Eberhardt's incredibly tight direction and screenplay on that, the tongue-in-cheek. I had heard that he was kind of fighting to keep it more of a fun tongue-in-cheek kind of film when it was being made.**

**KM:** It was weird because when he first wrote it, he had me dying and Reg and Hector finding a baby and everyone went, "I'm going to kill myself if I have to watch that movie." Haha, keep that character alive, because she's the weird one. So, it was back and forth. He also showed me *My Man Godfrey* and that's obviously a very madcap kind of thing. I think he wrote *Night Of The Comet* in, very close, to one day.

He just sat down and wrote it because they said, "you know how *Valley Girl* was a big hit? We'd kind of like something along those lines...but do what you want to do. Do whatever you want, but do *Valley Girl*!" But he just wrote it right out. He also did a movie called *Sole Survivor*, so I think that's where his mind was originally. *Night Of The Comet* read so funny that he obviously intended to make it funny. But there was confusion on the set—is this funny or is this serious? It's like when the producers came and said, "why are they laughing?" To the world, it should be serious. When should it be serious? We just didn't pay any attention. We just have to play this scene, so we

just played it all straight, because the situation itself was wacky enough and serious enough. You know, we can be serious about it. And being that serious about it, is what makes it funny. And being that laid back about something that's really serious...what if you break out? Hahaha. Oh, no, I broke out laughing!

**AU:** It ended up being a remarkable movie and a remarkable career move for you. You're in a lot of different films that people truly love.

**KM:** Yay! Thank you.

**kellimaroney.com**

**youtube.com/@JamestheMovieFan**







## IN A VIOLENT NATURE

### Rampant Kills and Gnarly Gore Interview with Canadian actor, writer, and producer Ry Barrett

By Ryan “Decapitator” Dyer and  
Ray “Machete” MacKay

**AU: What are you best known for?**

**Ry Barrett:** I'm Ry Barrett, folks most recently know me as the killer 'Johnny' in the film IN A VIOLENT NATURE, but I've been acting since the early 2000's in other films like 'The Hyperborean', 'Cult Hero', 'The Demolisher', 'The Heretics' or 'The Chamber of Terror'.

**AU: When did you first catch the acting bug?**

**RB:** It's always been there, but the acting bug and first really understanding it, would've been in grade school, when I was 10 or 11, when I played Scrooge in a Christmas play.

**AU: What was the first role you ever landed?**



filmmaking careers. **AU: What do you consider your break-out role?**

**RB:** I don't really consider any one film to be a break-out role, but there is a steady chain of trying to constantly step up and take bigger swings along the way. I had my first taste of real festival & critical love for a film called 'Neverlost' (2010), it's still a film I'm very proud to have been a part of and was responsible for booking me multiple other roles. 'In A Violent Nature' has definitely been the film that has popped off in such a massive and unexpected way out of all of them. I play a character whose face is covered in masks and prosthetic makeup fx, and you never hear my voice, so I get to have a certain amount of anonymity with the role of Johnny. I'd say it's easily the biggest break-out film as a whole that I've been lucky to have been a part of.

**AU: How did you get the part in In A Violent Nature, and how did you approach the role?**

**RB:** I had been contacted by one of our

producers, Shannon Hanmer, while they were having some issues during the first attempt at shooting the film. They had run into a grocery list of issues during that initial shoot, one being that they lost their actor, and had several others step in as replacement, but it just wasn't working. I had a meeting with director Chris Nash and I was definitely keen to work with them, being a fan of their previous work. We did some fittings and walkthroughs to get a feel of who or what 'Johnny' was and how he moved, and that was pretty much a done deal. I approached the role in a very tactile way, as much of creating Johnny is all about his movement and slight details in how he is motivated of in how he was to lineup with the practical sfx work and action of those sequences. It's a very hands on role and often not perfect visibility due to multiple masks and the actions within them, so a lot of the work goes into knowing my exact steps, marks and distances and going over those movements until they become muscle memory and as familiar as possible, so they appear fluid and instinctual.

**AU: What was it like working with director Chris Nash? Did you do your own stunt work?**

**RB:** Working with Chris Nash was/is a treat. Nash is one of those guys who has a vast array of skills that you just never know what he's going to pull out of his back pocket. He's a wizard with practical effects and understanding the physics of how to pull off really interesting sequences and buildups to them, which comes from a wealth of film knowledge and experience. I did my own stunt work for the film, but it wasn't too extensive, mainly action choreography moving into positions to make the practical fx work.

**AU: What was the filming process on In A Violent Nature like?**

**RB:** It was a very technical shoot on my end, all about making sure I held my part in hitting exact marks while maintaining character, being extremely consistent in pacing to match with Pierce Derks, our cinematographer. We really had to move as one, invisibly tethering ourselves with timing during the walking and approaches to some kill sequences. It was the product of a lot of communication and often we just fell into a symbiotic synch once we started rolling.

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**AU: The film has this uncanny, almost video-game-like feel, reminiscent of the Friday the 13th game.**

**RB:** It definitely does feel like a first person horror game, and I love those kinds of games, but I didn't really use anything like that as a model for Johnny. I focused more on classic films within the slasher genre, and the performances in them that I find to be the most memorable, and intriguing, and then really tried to pull tiny movements and characteristics and then rework and amalgamate them into something unique and vicious, that would hopefully feel fresh while still familiar.

**AU: Any advice for aspiring actors/filmmakers?**

**RB:** It's such a strange climate in the world today regarding technology and what exactly is happening in the film/tv industry, so I think the only real advice I could give would be to aim to be versatile for the changes that inevitably come. Also try to figure out your strengths and weaknesses as soon as you can and focus on them, because your other skills will grow over time with the ones that come more naturally, and those strengths build confidence in working on any weaknesses if you keep focused and aware

while shooting.

**AU: What horror films would you recommend to someone who is new to the genre?**

**RB:** There's so many great entries, specifically with camp-related slasher films, some of my favourites would be 'Just Before Dawn', 'The Final Terror', & 'The Burning'. They each have some really interesting on location cinematography, great casts and sfx. A few lesser known others, 'The Prey' is a fun, slower paced entry and I'm also a huge fan of the proto-slasher/survival film 'Rituals', which was shot very close to the same places we filmed In a Violent Nature, near Sault Ste Marie.

**AU: Any Halloween traditions to share?**

**RB:** I love Halloween. Personally, I'm always watching horror films throughout the year, but I really let the season get the better of me and I really do watch a lot more than usual. I also like to revisit Halloween specials from my youth.

**AU: Do you still have Johnny's costume?**

**RB:** I don't have the original costume, it's property of Shudder/IFC, but I'm working on getting my hands on a recreation to have as a display.

**AU: Would you wear it for Halloween?**

**RB:** I've considered buying one of the cheap knock offs on Temu to wear to a party as a joke.

**AU: Any easter eggs in the film to point out?**

**RB:** If you look closely, when Johnny enters the ranger station to get his mask/weapons, he holds up a photo of a few park rangers, one of them is me and it's the only time you see my actual face.

**AU: Most important elements of filmmaking?**

**RB:** Collaboration. Getting a film made is such a team effort, and getting everyone streamlined into one working unit with the same goal and a shared vision is such a key element, and clear communication is important to achieve that.

**AU: Any chance of In A Violent Nature 2?**

**RB:** There is currently a sequel in the works!

**AU: Enjoy being a guest at Calgary Horror Con?**

**RB:** I had a blast at the Calgary Horror Con. It's always fun to meet and chat with fans and other guests who I've gotten to casually interact with, who are absolute legends to me. I've had to pinch myself many times in the past few years.

**AU: Anything else to mention or promote?**

**RB:** A film I worked on called 'The Last Anniversary' is currently touring festivals. It's written and directed by The Butler Bros. You can also keep an eye out for a comedy horror film called 'Turn It Up' about a rock band that opens a portal to hell, from the Collingwood Film Co. I also did voice work on a puppet horror film titled 'Kylgor in the Grisly Abyss', which is like Conan the Barbarian meets The Thing, but entirely made with puppets, directed by Mason Derushie. There's also a film titled 'Passenger Jet' directed by Jake Burgess and written by Tony Burgess about a wild, hallucinatory trip that a lost hitchhiker experiences deep in a surreal forest.

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

**RB:** Have a killer All Hallows' Eve!!

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# Hello Mary Lou: Prom Night II Featuring actress Lisa Schrage Calgary Horror Con Panel Moderated by Katrina Kryzalka

**AU: We are here with the beautiful Lisa Schrage. Did you always want to be an actress?**

**Lisa Schrage:** Yeah. I was always that performing child. So, I went to a few different theater schools. I trained as an actor, that was always my intention. I was aiming for film and television.

**AU: Was Prom Night 2 your first acting role?**

**LS:** Yeah, I think it was. At the time there wasn't a lot of film production in Toronto. So I did a lot of commercials. I started at 12 doing commercials. Then I went away to theater school, and when I came back Mary Lou was my first big audition.

**AU: Remember anything about the audition?**

**LS:** When you're in an audition, you're so immersed in what you're doing. I don't think you really remember the audition. What I mostly remember is who's in the waiting room before you go in to the audition. I remember everybody in the waiting room and thinking, oh, she looks so good. She's going to get the part. You always think that somebody else is going to get the part. But I did one of these panels with Bruce Pittman, who was the director of Mary Lou, and he said he knew right away that it was going to be me. I think I had a feel for it. I resonated with that character. So that made it pretty easy.

**AU: The movie was set in the fifties. Were you a big fan of fifties culture and fashion?**

**LS:** I was. I was the weird dresser in high school. I wore all vintage clothing. '40s and '50 dresses and a fur coat. So I think by the time Mary Lou came around I already knew what the fifties was like.

**AU: Did you get to keep the dress from set?**

**LS:** No. I didn't actually want that dress because they never let me out of it. I couldn't go for lunch

with other people because I couldn't get out of the dress. I was sewn into the dress. So I had to eat all by myself in that high school like detention. Although, it would be sort of nice to have it now.

**AU: The school was shot in Edmonton. What were the filming locations like?**

**LS:** There was 2 high schools. There was the exterior high school, which I think is Westmount Junior High. The other one was called Highlands. That's where the interior was shot. Then there was a really cool gothic church we shot in.

**AU: Did you have a lot of interaction with the castmates who shot the '80s parts of the film?**

**LS:** No, it was like two different movies. There was the fifties and then there was the eighties. So I never interacted much with those actors.

**AU: It's really cool seeing the differences.**

**LS:** The eighties is the retro thing now for the present day, but it was the fifties back then. So now it's a double retro kind of vintage movie.

**AU: When did you realize it was a cult classic?**

**LS:** Like, a year ago? I'd been to one horror convention in Toronto and I went to Texas Frightmare. There was so much Mary Lou stuff. It was like t-shirts, shadow boxes, albums. I'm like, wow this is a popular movie. I really had no idea.

**AU: Many people love Prom Night 2 way more than the original Prom Night and I know the only thing that really ties it together is that it took place at the same school.**

**LS:** It did? I didn't know that. The Jamie Lee Curtis one, was that the same school?

**AU: Yeah. Didn't they have this film originally titled The Haunting of Hamilton High?**

**LS:** Yes. We all signed on to a script called The Haunting of Hamilton High. That's what Michael Ironside signed up for. It was different. It was a bit campy and tongue and cheek. It made references to a lot of horror films. That was written by Ron Oliver, his first script. So it was finished and I went back to my life. Then I was invited to some reshoots. They reshot many scenes, the locker room scene, the kiss scene. We shot in Edmonton, but the reshoots were done in Toronto. Then suddenly the name was changed to Hello Mary Lou: Prom Night 2 because they owned the rights to Prom Night 1. They thought there would be a bigger audience if they changed the name. So it became a scarier movie and that's how it evolved into what it is now. It was shot in the summer of 1986, came out 1987. There was a screening party

and they did a mask that was of me.

**AU: Are you a horror fan yourself?**

**LS:** No I have way too delicate a nervous system. I would just close my eyes.

**AU: So not being a horror fan, how did you get into the character of Mary Lou?**

**LS:** I don't think you have to be a fan of horror to like to play something scary. Watching it and doing it is very different. I don't think I even tried to be scary. I never tried to be a horror or a villain. That's kind of cliché, right? If you twirl your moustache, tried to be evil, nobody plays that. That's what an actor does, finds the intention. Mary Lou wanted a crow, she was ripped off, and then she came back to get it. So I played a woman with a very strong purpose. Somebody who didn't like to play by the rules. Because in the fifties there was very restrictive social conventions. Sexual conventions and all that bullshit.

**AU: For the fire scene where the stink bomb gets thrown and Mary Lou gets lit on fire, you had a stunt double for that. Did you get to watch your stunt double? How was that?**

**LS:** Phenomenal, unbelievable. It's on that stage. I was just part of the audience watching that. That stunt was incredible. That somebody would do that, set herself on fire. That's an interesting occupation. She did a great job. You can see when it's a lot of make up, it's a stunt double. When most of the face is burnt, it's not me. I had part of the make up and there were scenes with the fire behind me. I remember shooting them and then really close-up. But when it gets further back than that, then it's a stuffed dummy.

**AU: What was the process like when you got your makeup done?**

**LS:** Well, I do remember that there was a test run of the make up. I don't know if this woman had ever done that kind of makeup before. I think she used crazy glue. Well I was a new actress, I was up for anything. Sure go ahead put crazy glue on

my face. So yeah that was horrible.

**AU: Have a favourite scene in Prom Night 2?**

**LS:** I loved the confession scene, messing with the priest. I loved the prom. I liked getting the crown.

**AU: I loved the aesthetics. People say it's like a horror version of David Lynch's Blue Velvet.**

**LS:** The cinematographer was John Herzog and Rick Wincenty was the DP for the second unit. It is a whole team of people. I'm just one piece of the puzzle. But all those people made it happen.

**AU: When I first saw this movie, I said this girl who plays Mary Lou, she is the female Freddy Krueger, and that you would show up again.**

**LS:** Oh, I see, like a franchise? No, I never heard from the producers again.

**AU: How was the kiss with Michael Ironside?**

**LS:** I thought it was a great kiss. That lighting and the cinematography was beautiful. Funny thing is many years later, I'm at a party and Michael Ironside is there. I hadn't seen him for years. I said, "Hey, we did a movie together. I kissed you." He looked at me, just blank. He didn't remember me. So it wasn't memorable for him, obviously.

**AU: Has your family watched the movie?**

**LS:** Yes. My older son is into metal and horror. He rented some horror movies with his girlfriend and one of them was this movie and I think she hadn't realized and he said, "Well, that's my mom."

[www.horror-con.ca](http://www.horror-con.ca)

[instagram.com/iamlisaschrage](https://www.instagram.com/iamlisaschrage)







**GWAR talk new EP, graphic novel, and exhibit in LA.**  
**Interview with Beefcake the Mighty**  
**By Ferdy “Berserker Mode” Belland**  
**Absolute Underground:** So how’s life in Antarctica these days? I imagine the penguins and the sea lions remain the core audience for GWAR on your icy continental homeland. Is it hard to book Antarctic shows and tours with the lack of stadiums and arenas, or do the research scientists at McMurdo Station invite you guys to play Icestock every New Year’s Eve?  
**Beefcake:** Well, life in Antarctica has its pros

and cons. Sure, it’s freezing cold and miserable, but there are no Republicans and the rent’s cheap. There’s really nowhere to play there, the scene in McMurdo has sucked since the early 90s. We really just go to Antarctica to get away from all of the stressful demands of being omniscient pan dimensional gods. Kinda like a time share.  
**AU:** Your upcoming GWAR exhibit opened on September 13th at the Beyond the Streets Gallery in Los Angeles and runs until November 2nd. Attendees can admire all sorts of original costumes, stage props, customized musical instruments, stage relics, video installations, album artwork, and other assorted memorabilia, and it’s high time you guys were celebrated as such. How’s the public response been so far?  
**Beefcake:** Yes, it is a glorious tribute to the rich tapestry of GWAR’s accomplishments on this ridiculous shithole planet. The response has been predictably and overwhelmingly positive. It’s really an amazing exhibit. Gastman and Gorman and Beyond The Streets knocked it out of the park!  
**AU:** Where does GWAR fit in the wild and wacky human world of the 2020s? Does humanity need GWAR’s diabolical musical mission more than ever?

**Beefcake:** GWAR is, and always has been the dirty reflection of society in a cracked mirror. We’re the secret that you hide under your mattress, secretly hoping your mom finds it and has a stroke. But as horrific as GWAR is, it’s nothing compared to the real world. GWAR is just good, not so clean, fun.  
**AU:** Your recent stage antics include mock beheadings of Donald Trump and Elon Musk. Which other notables deserve onstage decapitation?  
**Beefcake:** We have been giving politicians and celebrities the business for 40 years. We’ve killed every President since Clinton and even brought the smoldering corpse of Ronald Reagan back a few times. No one is immune from the wrath of GWAR! We kill everything! But GWAR is so much more than just a bunch of aliens slaughtering the cream of the crap of humanity. We also rock hard as fuck!  
**AU:** Your graphic novel *GWAR in the Duoverse of Absurdity* has widened the band’s multi-media assault on human senses, as has the anthology *Mind Control Monthly - the Complete Collection*. Are you at liberty to discuss any other artistic tidbits GWAR has been nefariously scheming behind the scenes?  
**Beefcake:** Man, I don’t know. We’re always doing shit. Comics, records, action figures, coffee, dildos, crack pipes, booze, books, signature guitars. I can’t keep up with it all.  
**AU:** GWAR last released new music in 2022 with your fifteenth album *The New Dark Ages*.



**When can all of us yearning, ravenous GWAR fans expect a new album?**  
**Beefcake:** Where the hell have you been ? We recently released an EP, *The Return of Gor Gor!* Three brand new songs and a B side of pure live GWAR gold! As for the fans and their pointless expectations, you’ll get what you get when you get it.  
**AU:** What else would you like to declare to the quivering hordes of pathetic humanity who await eternal agonized enslavement by GWAR?  
**Beefcake:** Be patient. We will be coming to your town soon to bathe you all in pus and bile. Call the NFL and demand that GWAR should play the Super Bowl! **GWAR LIVES!**

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## PUBLIC ENEMY Still Number One

Interview with rap superstar Chuck D  
By Jason 'Cold Lampin' Lamb

**AU:** Chuck D, it's massive pleasure to meet you and talk to you. I've been a Public Enemy fan for a very long time. I'm 54 years old and you just turned 65. You look amazing.

**Chuck D:** You're a baby.

**AU:** I remember being in my buddy's bedroom at 16 years old, he had a copy of *Yo! Bum Rush the Show* and that was it for me. I was already getting into the Beastie Boys and Run-DMC.



wasn't on Def Jam but they helped create it.

**AU:** That's true. I was talking to Nick (Blasko), who is one of the guys that runs Rifflandia festival here and we were saying fuck the Oasis reunion. Public enemy in 2025 is probably the most important thing happening in my world

and most of our worlds.

**Chuck D:** We found a way to fit it in. It's been phenomenal and I think Flavor in 2025 has been like 55% of Public Enemy's total energy. He's been phenomenal.

**AU:** You can feel it by just seeing that you guys are just in the groove. That's very cool. There's an S1Ws documentary coming out or maybe it's already out.

**Chuck D:** Yeah, it's out I think it was at TIFF already. They get a chance to tell their story.

**AU:** Has there ever been a proper documentary done about Public Enemy in general?

**Chuck D:** Well before documentaries became this thing all of a sudden that people stream. We have more than any other rap band ever. We had about six or seven unofficial documentaries. Now they make documentaries pretty and cute. Sequel them in four or five parts and all that. So those are always possibilities. But yeah, it's always something going on with PE.

**AU:** I downloaded the Bring the Noise app a little bit ago. I haven't actually properly got into it. Can you talk a little bit about that? What that's all about?

**Chuck D:** The Bring

the Noise app works like a combination of like how Instagram posts used to work or TikTok, I would say. It relates to the fans of FAMS. That's filmmakers, artists and musicians.

**AU:** You're just this multi-talented guy. I've also been following your artwork.

**Chuck D:** That's what I do on a hot day. I cool off with art for about 10 years now. I've been really all art all the time. It's funny because Chali 2Na, who is also like a renowned artist, and Schoolly D we've been talking about this for years on how we can do an art hip-hop tour of art galleries. So I think maybe next year will be the year we make it happen.

**AU:** So you played Calgary a of couple nights ago and you're doing Rifflandia in Victoria today. Are you still in the middle of touring?

**Chuck D:** No, we just got a busy September. We had a great summer on our own tour and also we opened up for Guns N' Roses.

**AU:** How did that go? Interesting pairing, but it kind of works.

**Chuck D:** Anything works when you're in front of 80,000 people. Trust me, I've seen a lot. I've seen groups play stadiums. I've never seen a group hammer a stadium for four hours like that. They got levels of four guys going at it. I mean, without Izzy, but they got, Axl, Duff and Slash. Each one of those guys themselves could hammer an hour and a half, two hours. So you put it all together. We did our 45 minutes and it went well. The people loved it.

**AU:** Ok we are wrapping this up now. I don't know what else to say. I love you, man. I just think that Public Enemy is the greatest.



**One quick thing I wanted to say. One of the best ways I've discovered new music is diving in and figuring out samples.**

**Chuck D:** If you pull down the Bring the Noise app it's the only app that also locks into our Rapstation 12 Station Internetnetwork.

**AU:** Okay. I was going to talk about samples and a quick question. Early on, whose record collection

were those samples all coming from?

**Chuck D:** We were DJs, Spectrum City, Hank Shocklee and Keith Shocklee. I had to categorize all those records, 6,000 records. But we knew the records. One thing is to have them, another thing is to know them, and the other thing is to not use them per se, just like use them to just rap over. But you gotta kind of stitch them together and also create new sounds out of blending them. Mix-Masters. We took pride in doing that. I'm a lyric writer, so sometimes I might go to a sample that's saying something and line my lyrics up with that.

**AU:** Chuck, thank you so much for your time. I really appreciate it, man.

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## BEN ADDRESS TALKS BLACKTOP RECORDS

By Aeryn Shrapnel

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

**Ben Address:** I'm Ben Address and I think charm is my main skill. I'm also the owner and operator of Southern Ontario based record label Blacktop Records.

**AU: What got you started and how long have you been doing it for?**

**BA:** I feel like I've been doing this forever. As far back as I can remember I have been making sure to pass along new music to buddies. Back in 2002 when I was in high school I got permission from a bunch of cool bands and made a compilation CD called 'Down With The Scene Vol 1' and handmade a bunch of copies and handed them out at local shows. I was a kid and dick and fart jokes were funny so I made up a 'fake' record label called

Bumtouch Records.

**AU: What's the origin story of your Blacktop Records?**

**BA:** Like most origin stories mine started out of spite. I was in a band called Blacktop Recess at the end of high school and my first year of college. We played a bunch and wanted to be like Thursday & Alexisonfire but I was a real shit singer. The rest of the guys kicked me out and continued. I booked all the shows for our band and kept getting e-mails and calls to book us so I passed all those show offers along to some buddies in a band called A Walk With Anastasia. Around 2005 those dudes recorded an EP and didn't know what to do with the songs so I started a label called Blacktop Records. We did a run of 500 CD-Rs of the EP, booked a sick CD Release show and tour and had a lot of fun. I fell in love with the process

and here I am.

**AU: What services do you have to offer?**

**BA:** Other labels more than likely have more money and resources than us but we do our best. We have helped pressed music on CDs, cassette tapes and vinyl. We also have digital distribution through Redeye Worldwide. We have got a few of our artists on some slicks shows and tours. We grind to see what kind of promo we can do that doesn't come out of the artist's pocket. Whatever to make sure good people get to hear good music by good people.

**AU: What kind of bands are on your roster?**

**BA:** We dabble in all genres from emotional rock to metal to nerdcore to country. Whatever makes sense. As long as the people making the music are cool and making interesting tunes then I'm down to figure out a way to help get it out into the world.

**AU: How can musicians get a hold of you to get more info?**

**BA:** If you toss up the Bat Signal into the sky we will find you. If that doesn't work we will more than likely respond to your message if you hit us up on one of our social media accounts or e-mail.

**AU: Where can people find your catalogue? (In person or online)**

**BA:** One of the best places is **blacktoprecords.bandcamp.com**. All the releases are in order on our Bandcamp page and if we have physical stock left of any of those releases you can order it there directly from the label. We do our best to make sure shipping prices are kept low. You can find our releases digitally on most digital service providers and from time to time stumble across physical releases at some ma & pa record shops.

**AU: Where are you located?**

**BA:** Blacktop Records is located in Tillsonburg, Ontario, Canada. I run the label out of my basement with my amazing girlfriend Mercedes. I sometimes get my kids or old man cat Albert to help.

**AU: What's the music scene in your city like?**

**BA:** The music scene here is pretty dope. I'm the in-house promoter at a venue my buddy Patrick owns called Paddy's Underground. We bring a lot of really snazzy bands around to our small town. We also set up a yearly music festival with our buddy Jon Snodgrass in our town called Buddies Fest. It's a great scene and worth the roadtrip.

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

**BA:** Dive into all the bands we work with. Give them a follow on their socials and if they come to your town on tour go out and tell them Ben sent you.



**AU: Where can you be found online? Socials/ website/etc?**

**BA:** We do have an official website at [www.blacktoprecords.ca](http://www.blacktoprecords.ca) that we should update more often. We are a pretty DIY label so of course our website is very DIY. Once again one of the best places to find us is **blacktoprecords.bandcamp.com**. You can also say hello at our socials like Facebook and Instagram at **@blacktoprecords**.

*Guns N Roses shirt Photo Credit: Dalton Puhr  
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**SWAG - VINYL - TOUR DATES**



**By Ray MacKay**

as Kicksie. Since then, I've dropped about five more, writing, producing, recording, and engineering all the songs from start to finish. In recent years, I started bringing on a live band when I used to perform solo, and although the lineup has changed maybe one million times since then, I landed on a couple people that really brought Kicksie to life in a way I never thought was possible - my drummer Morgan Dunbar and bassist Alex Kessler. Both of them have been such a massive support for the Kicksie project, and what once was a solo-project now feels like a true collaborative effort. They both recorded their parts onto the newest record *BIG SUCKER*, and I believe their contributions are the reason it's the best record I've ever made.

**AU: Tell us about your upcoming album, *BIG SUCKER*.**

**K:** *BIG SUCKER* dropped this year on June 6th, 2025. After being signed to a label for my last record *Slouch*, I wanted to do this one independently because I really felt like I wanted *BIG SUCKER* to be fully my own. It's a project that genuinely represents who I've always wanted to be as an artist, where previously I was still experimenting on my path to get there. My sound feels fully realized, and for the first time ever on any project I've ever released, I'm proud of every second on that 39 minute album.

**AU: Tell us about the creative process behind *BIG SUCKER*.**

**K:** I grew up really loving pop punk and emo, but as time went on I started listening to more hip hop and R&B. It seems that both influences came together to create something somewhere in the middle of that. I would write emo chord progressions and sample 70's funk beats over them, or do vice-versa and write R&B chord progressions with really heavy drums. I messed around a lot with sampling which was never something I did previously, and I stopped trying to be so perfect with everything I would record. A lot of the pieces on the final record were improvised, including some of the main vocals which were actually supposed to be improvised adlib-type backing vocals that I switched with the original main vocals I had because I thought the improvised ones were WAY cooler. A lot of



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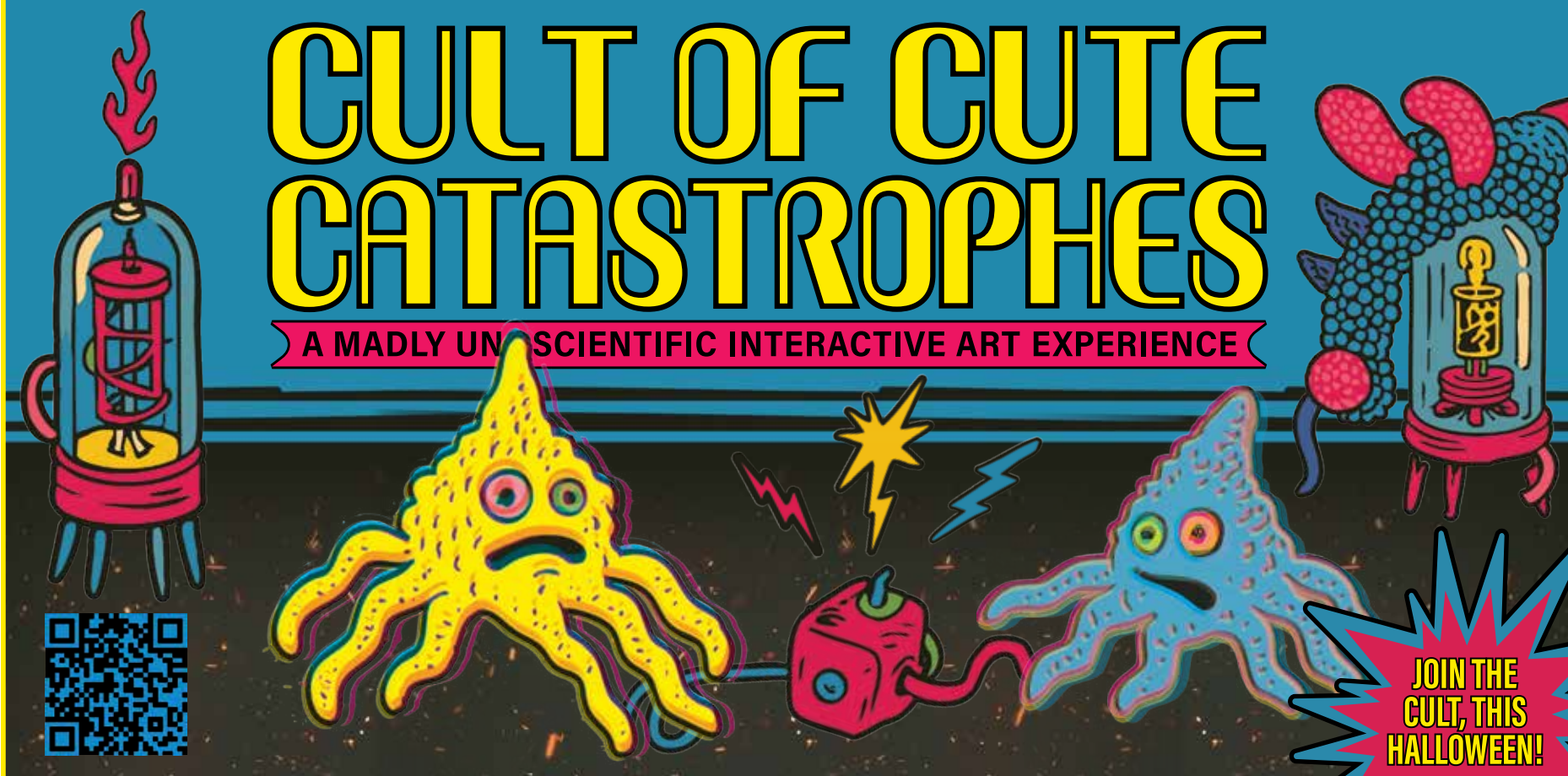
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### TWO's Brian and Tara Byrne talk their new single "Love You More".

By Ray MacKay

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

**TWO:** Hey! We're Tara & Brian Byrne, The husband and wife duo behind Two. We're an acoustic indie/folk/country duo. But probably best known for Brian's work as the frontman of I Mother Earth. We are definitely more chill than Brian's days of running and jumping around on stage screaming like a lunatic. Our project together is known for intimate performances, story telling and our DIY approach to the industry.

**AU: Where are you from and what's the music scene like there?**

**TWO:** Currently we are in Ontario, Canada, but we've travelled extensively with our music and our family. The scene is a mix here, supportive and

small. You have to be open and create your own opportunities. Touring around has shown us how different every local music scene is, and we love connecting with communities everywhere we go.

**AU: Give us a brief history of you and your band. Why did the two of you decide to form a band?**

**TWO:** Umm well, We have been together for 15 years. And playing at kitchen tables and fires our entire relationship. We still aren't really sure why we didn't think about it sooner. Everything aligned I guess, now here we are, just us "Two."

**AU: You have a new single releasing September 26th - tell us about it!!**

**TWO:** The new single is called "Love You More" it's a personal song that Brian's had for years. Oddly enough the phrase was engraved on the inside of my wedding band. It's tender, intimate and speaks to the small yet profound moments of love and connection we all chase. We can't wait for everyone to hear it!

**AU: What song of yours would you recommend to anyone who's not familiar with TWO?**

**TWO:** Shameless plug... "Love You More"... obviously. We are new on our journey in music together so we think the best is yet to come.

**AU: Brian, on top of being a musician, you're also a tattoo artist - what's it like balancing those two careers?**

**TWO:** We were both tattoo artists at one point. We even owned a few tattoo shops together. But it's been a decade since either one of us has done anything in the industry. Quite frankly, Tara was actually incredibly talented at tattooing but because of me there's a lot of bad tattoos out there now, haha sorry everyone. I took the art and medium very seriously. I did a long traditional apprenticeship, I was into drawing my whole life but I couldn't get it, it never translated. Tara got it right away, with ease and I thought "yup, I'm done, fuck this." Haha.

**AU: What style of tattooing are you best known for?**

**TWO:** Brian... The shitty kind. When Tara was into it her preference was to do realism, both color

and black and grey.

**AU: Where can people track you down to give them a totally radical tattoo?**

**TWO:** Any parking lot really as long as you bring all the gear we will do it outta the back of our car. Haha.

**AU: It's Halloween here at Absolute Underground. Do you have any Halloween traditions you'd like to share?**

**TWO:** Our youngest son, Axl is absolutely bat shit crazy about Halloween. His prep for this starts right after Christmas. He is obsessed with all things horror and loves doing crazy make-up, sooo letting his creativity go wild is our tradition.

**AU: In 2012, the two of you founded the OCD Collective - tell us about the organization and its goals.**

**TWO:** The idea, originally was to just raise money for awesome causes that we aligned with and we successfully did that for a number of things. The biggest being "Arizona-Miss You Most Project" and "Surf Sing Change." It's funny you know, we quickly realized that most people's efforts are defined by "what's in it for them." So we moved away from that.

**AU: What's the spookiest record you'd recommend to someone this Halloween?**

**TWO:** Drop LSD, put on some old school headphones and listen to the middle section of "Whole lotta Love" on vinyl. That's spooky!

**AU: What should we know about you that we don't already? What don't you want your family members to know?**

**TWO:** Ummm well... We think we are pretty transparent but we do like chasing things that scare us a little or make us uncomfortable. We like things that keep us sharp and challenged. Neither one of us are very good with just mindlessly doing "stuff." Whether it's a new sound or live performance, a new extreme sport or some creative risk that might fail spectacularly. I think our family would like us to be "safe" and unhappy but what they don't know is... we are totally cool and comfortable diving into the unknown.

**AU: Anything else to promote?**



**TWO:** Obviously our new single "Love You More" is coming out on September 26th. We've also started a project called "Unmade," an artist Incubator designed to walk a musician through the whole process from vocal coaching to songwriting, arrangement, performance, recording, touring, and education in the industry. Aligning musicians, writers and creators with the right people, the right tools with an artist first approach. We want to empower the independent artist to create on their own terms. There's a lot of this going on right now but behind the curtain remains the legacy control. We want the artist to be in control and understand how to navigate and sustain their career. To us, there's no industry without the artist, unfortunately we seem to have forgotten that. As artists we keep giving up our assets based on false hopes and promises.

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

**TWO:** Keep being weird, creative and authentically you. The world needs that now more than ever!

**AU: Where can we find you online? Website/ socials/etc?**

**TWO:**

Our website is [www.templelifetwo.com](http://www.templelifetwo.com)

Instagram : @thetduo\_two

Facebook: @thetduotwo

Linktree: [linktr.ee/Thetduotwo](http://linktr.ee/Thetduotwo)

Photos by Tara Byrne





## STAB Talks New Four-Song Demo

By Ray MacKay

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

**Stab:** I'm Joe and I play guitar in Stab. I'm probably most well known for the record I have in hockey- I took my skate off and tried to stab somebody. I'm the only guy who ever did that.

**AU: Where are you from and what's the music scene like there?**

**S:** We're all spread out around Maine and the NH seacoast area. The punk and hardcore scene right now in the area is awesome. There's so many great shows and so many great bands everywhere you look. Shout out to SVU 207, Chris Link and Cheap Life Records and Breakaway shows for all the work they're putting in to keep shit alive around here.

**AU: Give us a brief history of STAB.**

**S:** Matt and I had been playing in Hard Ca\$h together for a couple years, and were wanting to do something a little more laid back than the stuff we had been playing. We wrote the instrumentals for what ended up becoming "Rinse" back and in January, but never really did anything with it. Back

in early July, Matt sent the tracks to Nik and he dropped some vocals on it, and we knew we had something cool. Within a matter of three weeks we had written and recorded a few other songs and released the demo.

**AU: You just released your four-song demo - tell us all about it!**

**S:** Yeah, we put out the demo back in late July. Musically, it leans pretty heavily on some of the early 2000's melodic hardcore- we've been compared to bands like Crime in Stereo, Reach the Sky, Title Fight, and Saves the Day. I had been playing the new Tony Hawk Pro Skater games a lot around the time that we were writing the demo and I think it shows hah. Nik's lyrics are deeply personal, touching on several subjects that shaped his life, including addiction, violence, graffiti, and falling in love. We also included a cover of "Push" by Matchbox 20. Someone threw out the idea and we were all kind of iffy on it, but I think as it



started to come together we realized it was a great fit. It's also genuinely funny seeing people pit during a Matchbox 20 song.

**AU: Tell us about the process behind writing and recording of your four song demo.**

**S:** It all came together really quickly. Matt and I were sending riffs and ideas back and forth constantly, once we had a full song fleshed out Nik started working on vocals. It was done completely DIY, I recorded, mixed, and mastered the entire thing in my kitchen.

**AU: What are some influences you draw on while writing music?**

**S:** This list could go on for days. Like I had mentioned before, I was playing THPS nonstop around the time we were writing this, so bands like Suicide Machines, Millencolin, and MXPX were pretty fresh in my head. Some other bands that

come to mind that influenced the music are The Menzingers, Drug Church, and Skinhead to name a few.

**AU: What's your favourite song to perform live?**

**S:** It's a toss up. "Casco St" is super fun to play from my perspective, I don't know if it could ever get old. People go off when we play the cover too, so that one gets an honorable mention.

**AU: What's a song you'd want to cover for a future album?**

**S:** I'd love to play "Degenerated" by the Lone Rangers. *Live In Prison* might be the best debut album ever made, and Chazz Darby's guitar playing is legendary.

**AU: It's Halloween here at Absolute Underground. Do you have any Halloween traditions you'd like to share?**

**S:** I love Halloween. I work in a deli as my day job, but Salem Mass has actually dubbed me as the city's official 'Halloween Helper'. I spend most of the evening monitoring the city and making sure everyone is safe. A few years ago a kidnapper was on the loose and I had to track them down. Turns out it was my mother - she had kidnapped all the kids who made fun of me. It was a fucked up situation tbh.

**AU: What's the spookiest record you'd recommend to someone this Halloween?**

**S:** *Walt Disney's Chilling, Thrilling Sounds of the Haunted House*. "Track 16 (Assorted Screams)" is incredibly spooky.

**AU: In your opinion, what's the best horror soundtrack?**

**S:** It's gotta be the soundtrack to the original *Halloween* movie. I don't know if that's even my opinion, I think that's everyone's opinion. While

## ENDNOTE RECORDS

we're on the subject of horror movies, you should go listen to the song "Chopping Mall" by Yellow Stitches.

**AU: Any tours/shows coming up?**

**S:** Yeah, we have a handful of shows coming up. We're playing in Portland ME with End It at the end of October, another showing early November with Can't Lose, NYC Shootout and Outnumbered, and we're playing in early January with Cruel Hand, and a few other dates that haven't been announced yet.

**AU: Anything else to promote?**

**S:** I just want to shout out all our friends Jake Daws, Risk, Opposition, Saco Valley United, Chris Link & Cheap Life Records, BG & Manchester Hardcore Shows, Ben & Breakaway Shows, Underdog Barbershop, Fools Game, Negative Force, Bitter Bones, Mortar, Retract, Suicide Eyes, Quick to Judge, Sowing, Pull Your Card, Street Power, Fire in the Blood, End Note Records, Can't Lose, Collapsed Skull, Zinc, On the Outside, Cruel Hand, Lovewell, Headcase, Jeez, Half Step, Hard Ca\$h, Condition, and so many more.

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

**S:** Knibb High football rules!

**AU: Where can we find you online? Website/socials/etc?**

**S:** @stab.207 on Instagram and stab207.bandcamp.com



Check out STAB's website where they're still selling tapes of their wicked music: [www.endnoterecords.ca](http://www.endnoterecords.ca)

Photos by Ian Ray (@ian.ray13)

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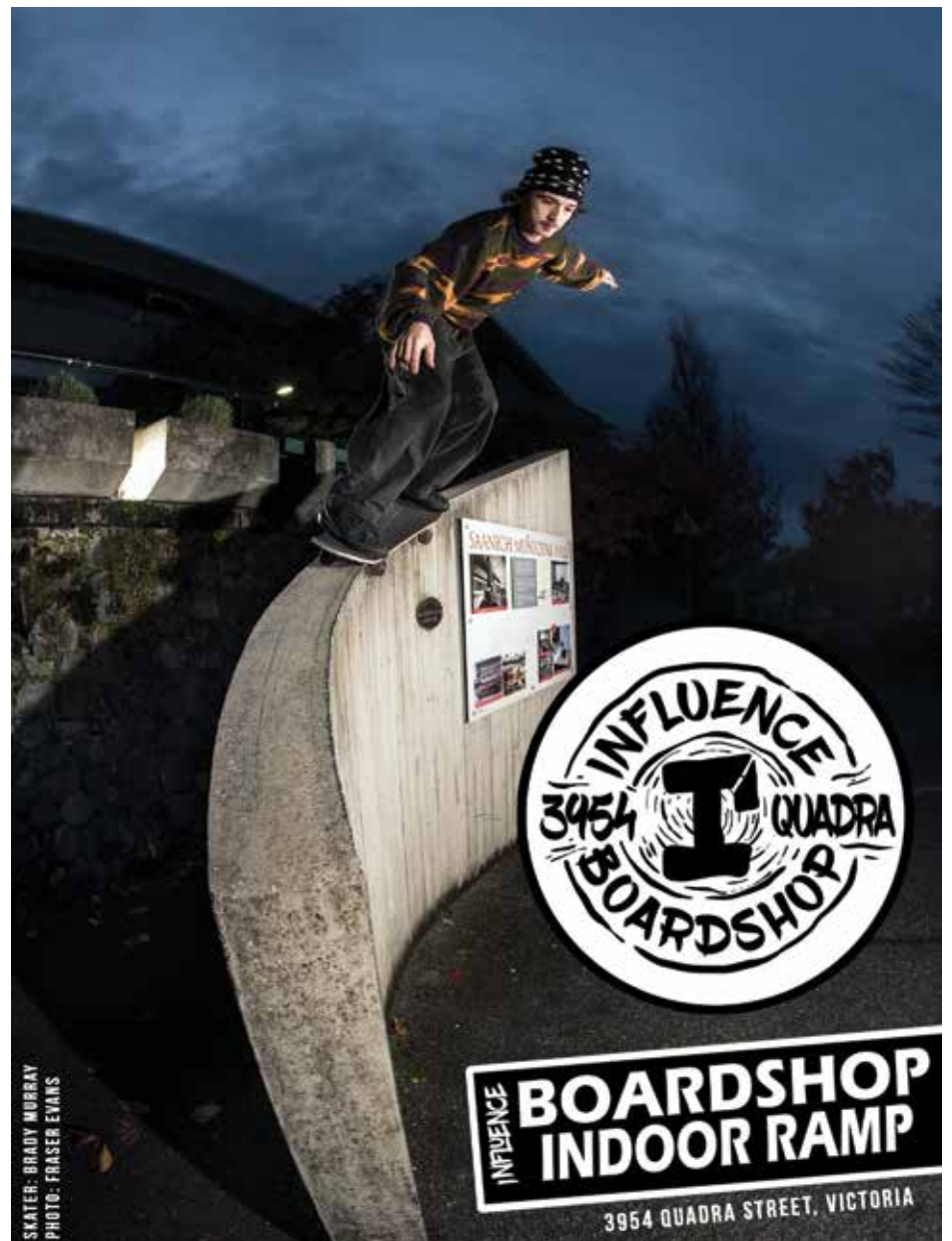
Friday, October 24 The Astoria (19\*)  
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## Quit It! talks Anti-Fascist Skate Punk Anthems

Interview by Laurie Storrie

**AU: Who am I talking to and what is your role in the band?**

**MB:** I'm Mikey and I play drums and yell things.

**SJ:** I'm Spencer Jo and I play guitar and sing and yell.

**JB:** I'm Jordan Barrett and I also play guitar and sing!

**TB:** I'm Tyler, I play bass and growl.

**AU: Your new Album *Through the Debris* is coming out this month, how would you describe the album?**

**QI:** Written during a time of collapse and recalibration, the record blends teeth-bared frustration with melody-driven resilience — songs about disconnection, corporate decay, soft apocalypse, and the weird persistence of hope.

**AU: Your last album *Spilling Out* is a hard album to follow, what makes this one even better?**

**SJ:** Thanks for that. This album follows a more collaborative path, having a more even mixture of songs written by each member. Whereas the last album grew out of the ashes of our previous band (River Jacks), this album found its own



life. *Through the Debris* is the product of a tried and tested machine.

**TB:** *Through the Debris* is more of an aggressive album than *Spilling Out*. You can sense the frustration. Once hopeful, it is now becoming harder to stay optimistic, and I believe you can hear that in this record. A struggle to stay optimistic, while pessimism persists.

**JB:** Yeah it really showcases the growth we've had as a band. Like a new pair of shoes. The first record was breaking it in. We're real cozy now.

**AU: Songs are like kids, everyone has a favourite. What song are you most excited for on the new album?**

**MB:** I love "Kevanu 91". It's a love/hate song about our (my) old tour van that we had a lot of troubled but also amazing times with. RIP.

**JB:** Yeah Kevanu rips, but I'm really into "Mindless/Monotonous" right now. It's got the juice.

**TB:** I'm really excited by our first single "Video Days". It's a love song I wrote about skateboarding. Something I'm not very good at but have been doing my whole life. The song's meaning has turned into a nostalgic anthem for me, reminding me of the nights my late

father and I would spend skating the clover bowl at millz when I was a young child. I'm lucky to have gotten to show my dad this album before he passed. He was really stoked on "Bed Crumbs", our second single. He also loved how clever the lyrics in "Don't Be A Jerk" are.

**AU: With four singers, is the songwriting process individual to each or do you write collaboratively?**

**MB:** I would say it's mixed. For the most part

## OUTHOUSE RECORDS

someone comes with a song and we all work our touch into it to make it collaborative.

**AU: You recently took your music off all streaming platforms except bandcamp. What inspired the exodus?**

**SJ:** All streaming services were built on an exploitive model. Most artists accepted that it was something we had to endure to get our music heard. The industry rallied around streaming numbers as a metric for success and we played their game begrudgingly. Then we started to see what their CEOs were doing with the massive bonuses they were being paid out. Spotify's CEO invested almost a billion dollars into AI war machines. That was our tipping point. We joined a movement of artists taking their music back from industry tyrants. Feels good.

**JB:** Ditto. It's impossible for us to be involved in such a capitalistic monster.

**AU: What's the best way to get a hold of a vinyl?**

**MB:** From our label, Outhouse Records, bandcamp or a show! We will also be dropping it in record stores where and when possible.

**SJ:** Come to a show and get one from us, personally! You can also find them online at the Outhouse Records store. We hope to have them in independent record stores from coast to coast by the end of the year.

**AU: What's next for Quit It?**

**SJ:** We're touring as far east as Quebec City October 11-25!

**AU: Finally how do our readers find you online?**

**MB:** bandcamp: [quit.it.bandcamp.com](https://quit.it.bandcamp.com)

Instagram: [@quit.it.music](https://www.instagram.com/quit.it.music)

Photos by Jay Munoz

# The Mendozaz

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## PROJECTION ROOM

**By Dylan Rhymer**

With an inhuman Jack O'Lantern sitting in the White House these days every day feels like a horror movie. As we Canadians are feeling a surge of patriotism I haven't experienced in my life, Absolute Underground offers up some Halloween movie picks that keep it creepy in Canada this spooky season.

**The Changeling (1980)**

Directed by Peter Medak. Starring George C. Scott

For my money this is the scariest movie ever made. Filmed in Vancouver and Victoria most of the story unfolds in the biggest, creepiest and haunted-est house ever committed to film. Eschewing gore and shocks in favour of long, drawn out atmospheric dread. The Changeling makes use of tape recorders, a wheelchair and even a rubber bouncy ball to terrifying effect.

Spook-o-Meter: 5

**The Gate (1987)**

Directed by Tibor Takács. Starring Stephen Dorff, Christa Denton

Slice of freaky fun and a Halloween rite of passage for suburban Canadian kids of the 80's. When youngsters accidentally open a pit to hell in their backyard, they must survive the night as their Toronto house becomes a playground for scores of tiny demons. The highlight is its army of claymation critters from beyond. Never traumatizing but always freaky. This movie is a gate into Halloween fun.

Spook-o-Meter: 3



**April Fool's Day (1986)**

Directed by Fred Walton. Starring Deborah

Forman, Griffin O'Neal

BC filmed cult horror flick filmed around Victoria, BC. Notorious prankster Muffy St. John invites a crew of 80's stock characters to her isolated island home for a spring weekend but all is not as it seems. 80's types are dispatched one by one. Famous for its divisive ending, this is a slice of west coast horror that keeps you guessing until the end. Canadian acting royalty Leah Pinsent solidifies its Canuck cred. It also features one of my favourite movie posters.

Spook-o-Meter: 3

**The Stepfather (1987)**

Directed by Joseph Ruben. Starring Terry O'Quinn

"Wait a minute. Who am I here?" wonders Terry O'Quinn's titular patriarch in the chilling moment when the penny finally drops. Few things are more frightening than horror in the home. How can you possibly protect your family from a threat who is actually in your family? O'Quinn makes a meal of every scene and is utterly compelling to watch. BC acting legends Gabriel Rose and Jackson Davies turn up. Lots of mid 1980's Vancouver to look at in the background.

Spook-o-Meter: 4



**Pin (1988)**

Directed by Sandor Stern. Starring David Hewlett, Cyndy Preston

This creepy psychological horror was a staple of CBC late night for years. Every Friday after midnight the Ceeb became the Pin Network. Weirdo Leon becomes unnaturally obsessed with a life sized medical dummy that his surgeon father keeps around the house for some



reason. Friends and family gradually move from concerned to cadavers as Pin messes with Leon's fragile sanity. Terry O'Quinn is back as another horror daddy. Breaking Bad's Jonathan Banks turns up in what has to be his most bizarre credit. Filmed in Montreal.

Spook-o-Meter: 2

Dylan Rhymer is a Vancouver based comedian and cinephile. He is a host of The Black Dog Video After Dark Podcast.

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# STEVE MIGLIARESE TRIBUTE

**The Indomitable Life and Charm of “Mr. Hell”**

*Few people leave a mark on music and community like Steve, known to many as “Mr. Hell.” From basement jams to commanding the stage with unmistakable energy, his life became a soundtrack for countless friends and fans. To honour his spirit and charm, four friends share stories that reveal not only Steve the musician, but Steve the man.*

I had the privilege of meeting Steve in 1989 when he was 13 years old and introduced him to heavy metal. He quickly latched onto KISS, especially Gene Simmons, and even mimicked Gene on stage in his earliest performances. Music wasn’t just a passion for Steve—he also cared about the business side, knowing the importance of keeping his copyrights in his own name.

I took Steve to his first concert, the KISS *Hot in the Shade Tour*. After that show, he declared, “I’m buying a bass guitar.” Not long after, I took him to his second KISS concert, and the master was born. A trip to Lyle’s Place in Victoria opened his eyes to countless genres of music he’d never experienced before. His tastes grew fast, and soon he was infatuated with Biohazard, a spark that pushed his bass playing to the next level.

By 1993, Steve formed Meatlocker Seven and his music career took off. What began with the energy of a teenager discovering heavy metal became the foundation of a lifetime devoted to writing, performing, and living music.

It was incredible to watch Steve’s passion grow from those first KISS shows into the unstoppable force he became on stage. He carried that same fire and determination from his teens all the way through his career and I’ll always hold those

memories close. Steve, you were a true friend. All the years together, not one argument.

— **Rouge, longtime friend and early musical influence**

Not sure when I first met Steve, but when I did, it was undeniable he was a force of nature. Our bands crossed paths many times in the mid to late 90s. The only time I recall playing the same show was a “Battle of the Bands” at Wasteland—a farce, as the band that won had never played a show in Victoria. We laughed about that for years.

I also had the pleasure of playing in two bands with “Mr. Hell.” When I was asked to join Meatlocker Seven, I was surprised—they’d just returned from a cross-Canada tour with Cryptopsy. It took me a day or two to decide, but I finally agreed. Why would I pass up the chance to join

one of Victoria’s premier, long-running metal bands? I already knew the guys well, but it was Steve’s encouragement that truly sealed the deal. Looking back, it was short-lived, but I’m grateful we had the chance to record music together.

After ML7 ended, our drummer and I started writing tunes but needed vocals. Steve reached out, super interested. I said, “Of course. If your lyrics are like your sharp-as-a-blade LiveVictoria posts—especially under “El-Fuckface-O”, they’ll be perfect.” We played our first show at Lucky Bar, essentially holding vocal auditions on stage. Steve was on fire, lyric sheet in hand. That band became Rotterdam. One of Steve’s requests was that the band be named that—perfect. The next almost decade was spent playing shows, having fun, and marveling at his quick wit...mocking us or others.

Glad I got to see him a week and a half before he passed. Although our band had dissolved, whenever we saw each other it was all smiles. Definitely the hardest passing of a brutha I’ve experienced. Gonna miss ya, man.

— **Darryl C.**



I was playing in a band called Detached, when my buddy Darryl Curren told me about a vocalist opening for Meatlocker Seven, a premier local metal band. I reached out and my first meet-up was amazing—they loved my writing and vocal style. I instantly had a new group of best friends and nobody was more welcoming than Steve. He instantly made me feel like I had been a part of the band forever. Very much the big brother syndrome which I appreciated to no end. He even made a batch of his famous rice balls to welcome me, which I could never get enough of.

A few weeks later we were guests of honour at a house party. The homeowner had 50 live lobsters and everyone had pre-ordered, except me. From the moment we arrived, Steve made me feel comfortable and super important as he introduced me to everyone as their kick-ass new vocalist. He kept assuring me I would get all the lobster I could eat. It took several hours but by the time late evening rolled around, many of the party goers had left. Needless to say, I was sitting in the kitchen with more lobster than I could ever eat in my life... Steve was in there with me saying, “I told you so brother.”

Despite his title of “Mr. Hell”, his love of horror and all things demonic, Steve was one of the most solid, friendly, generous, intelligent, caring, sensitive guys ever. He was the solid backbone of us all. When emotions ran high, he was there to calm us down. When the tour van got circled by an angry group of residents, he was the guy to lead the charge in the fight for our survival LMAO. “Despite his title of ‘Mr. Hell,’ Steve was one of the most solid, friendly, generous, intelligent, caring, sensitive guys ever.”

Typing this out is extremely hard, as just three weeks before he passed, Mike, Steve and I met and made plans for a ML7 reunion. We were all so excited about it. Love you and miss you, brother.

— **Bram H., ML7 and 24 Doors of Trouble**

I first met Steve around ‘92-‘93 through a “Metal Guitarist Wanted” ad he posted at Long & McQuade. He was in a band called Threshold, with Craig Stewart and Glen Blochinger. I showed up at his bedroom jam spot—his parents’ house, literally a kid zone—and instantly felt welcomed. That jam led not only to lifelong friends but to

knowing his whole family, who were incredibly awesome and welcoming. Threshold jammed for a few months, then life drifted us to different projects. Eventually, Steve, Bram, Tony Oliveira, Grimlord, and I pooled cash for a jam spot in an old meat locker on Chatham Street, with drummer Dave Askins and vocalist Aaron Clark. We had a handful of songs ready for ShredFest. Everyone from the Dayglo Abortions to Caustic Thought were on the bill and we really wanted to get a show, but we had no name. None of us could brainstorm a name, so we threw our meat locker door number on the cassette—and thus, was born Meatlocker Seven. We released several albums and demos, toured across BC, Alberta, and Canada, and even joined a Cryptopsy tour, where Steve stepped in on vocals when Bram got sick. Through countless lineup changes, Steve remained steadfast. He was the glue of the band—intelligent, hilarious, serious when needed, and unwavering in his dedication.

Just weeks before he passed, Bram, Steve, and I met to plan a 20-year ML7 reunion. We were excited to rehash old songs and write some new ones. We all left that meeting super stoked, especially Steve. Many have since asked if it’s something we’ll do in his memory but at this point, I don’t think I can. I don’t think WE can. Steve was the glue that held it all together for over a decade. He was that Indomitable force. He was the Life. He was the Charm. The Indomitable Life & Charm of Steve Migliarese. My friend. I will miss you always. I’m not crying, you are. Horns up my brother.

— **Mike S.**

**Forever “Mr. Hell”**

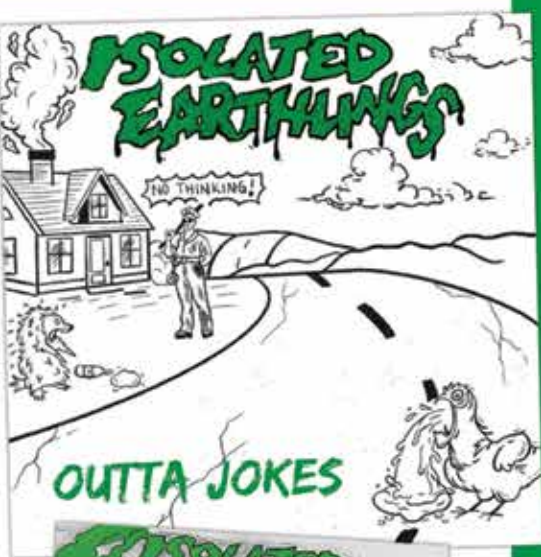
**Steve’s legacy doesn’t live only in the songs he played, but in the countless lives he touched. For those who knew him—and for those still discovering his music—Steve remains more than a local legend. He is a reminder that when life is lived with passion and heart, it leaves a sound that never fades.**

— **Marisa F., editor and friend**



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## SUBURBAN SLAG – PISS ON YOU!

### Calgary Punk Rock, 1980

**Doug Boland** – bass, **Jeff Burns** – guitar

**Mr. Eerie** – vocals, **Jon Card** – drums

*Interview with Doug Boland by Jason Flower*

I met Jon at an early punk hall show in 1979 (age 18). Playing that night were the Breeders, the Verdex and the Sturgeons. Funny story there. My friend met Jon at the urinals and asked Jon if he knew of anyone looking for a bass player. Jon said he was, so my friend found me in the crowd and then pointed out Jon. The rest is history. I believe the show was at the Albert Park Community Hall in Forest Lawn.

We had one singer for a rehearsal or two (can't remember his name). Then we got Mr. Eerie. We might have found him through the Bargain Finder Press or Long & McQuade's Musician Wanted board, which was the way local musicians found

each other back then. We were young and free and had no idea what our plan in life was. We were called Plasterscene for the first couple of gigs. We didn't like the name that much and Jon came up with Suburban Slag and we liked that much better.

Some of our influences were the Ramones, Damned, Buzzcocks, Saints, Subhumans and Modernettes, as well, of course, as the classic rock stuff we heard and loved as teens! It was just rock music then.

Like most smaller Canadian cities in 1979, the punk scene in Calgary comprised a small group of kids. I met some guys in high school who had a few punk records. Then I started to see posters around on lampposts and in record shops of upcoming shows. They were mostly hall shows to begin with. There were a few gigs at the Calgarian Hotel, the National Hotel and Alberta College of Art (ACA), but in the beginning it was slim pickings for shows. Believe it or not, each member of the band was from a different quadrant of Calgary. I don't think any of us knew each other prior to the band starting.

Our first public show was in the parking lot of St. Francis High School in Calgary. We plugged into their power outlets and away we went. I'm pretty sure the cops shut that one down. We played with bands like the Sturgeons, Silicone Injection, and the Subhumans, who were an early highlight. We shared the stage with them at the Calgarian (oddly enough, Jon ended up drumming with the Subhumans when they reformed in 2005).

The Calgarian was a rough and tough dive bar all through the 70s and 80s until it burnt down. There were barroom brawls on a regular basis, with tables and chairs being thrown around. A sign at the front commanded, "Check knives at door." Basically, there was a gnarly drinker's bar in the front, which us young punks had to walk through on our way to the backroom, which is where the punk and new wave bands played. It was pretty well the first Calgary bar that would book punk bands.

In early 1980, we recorded in Jon's parents' basement in the Charleswood area. It was a great-sounding room and his parents let us play loud. The recording was done on my Sansui cassette deck with two of Jon's microphones, which we hung from the ceiling about four feet apart. It seemed to capture everything with a nice mix. We each contributed equipment, so it was kind of a co-production.

Jon was a great and funny guy who also was an amazing drummer back then. He was jazz-trained and had won awards. Jeff was another great guy who I was friends with and would see on a regular basis till he passed. Jeff was also trained in music. He went into many other bands and did a huge amount of recordings of local acts in



his studio in the 90s. Mr. Eerie was from Ontario, new to Calgary and loved Teenage Head. He was a natural vocal talent, singing with power, and he was also funny as hell. I was a young scruff trying to get into a punk band for the first time and got lucky right out of the gate when I met Jon and Jeff, and then many other musicians who are still friends to this day. Suburban Slag was the catalyst for all of us, as it was our first punk band.

The group – with me, Jeff, Mr. Eerie and Jon – stayed the same till our demise. We were young, and some guys wanted to take a more serious approach to life and music, and we had differing opinions about our futures. In the end, we were young and dumb, but having fun!

After Suburban Slag, I went on to Riot .303, the Doris Day Film Festival, the Legendary Few, the Von Zippers and a few others. Jon (RIP) went on to Personality Crisis (I'll blame them for our demise), SNFU, DOA, the Subhumans, and others. Jeff (RIP) played in Citrus Park among others but he also went into studio work and recorded probably hundreds of local bands, including mixing almost every Von Zippers record. Anybody who was recording in the early to mid-1990s in Calgary knew who Jeff was. He was great at recording and engineering and was well loved. He was a great friend of mine.

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## Interview with MOMENT OF TRUTH WRESTLING's Leader, JOHNNY ROSTYN

By Mike "Zubaz pants" Croy

Happy Halloween and Welcome to another spooky edition of Turnbuckle Sandwich, as the days are getting shorter and the nights longer, I recently caught up with the new leader of the largest wrestling faction in the world. We talked about wrestling, fried chicken and leading the MoT what follows is our discussion:

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

**Johnny Rostyn:** A wolf in sheep's clothing, The Whiskey Creek Menace Johnny Rostyn!

**AU: What are you best known for?**

**JR:** Professional wrestling on Vancouver Island.

**AU: How long have you been wrestling?**

**JR:** 3.5 almost 4 years.

**AU: How did you get into wrestling?**

**JR:** I've been watching it since I was a kid.

**AU: What do you enjoy doing outside of wrestling?**

**JR:** I'm in the middle of modifying a 94 Audi A4 2.8L 30 valve V6 and I play baseball.

**AU: How do you define success?**

**JR:** Achieving the goals you set.

**AU: Who inspires you?**

**JR:** Jordie Taylor... well... did. He was my biggest influence... but we will save that till later.

**AU: If you could invite anyone for dinner, who would you invite and why?**

**JR:** Sawyer Stein because he is always about having a good time. I'm only here for a good time, not a long time.

**AU: Who did you train with?**

**JR:** VIPW Training Center.

**AU: What's the craziest match you've been involved in?**

**JR:** The fans bring the weapons match in November 2024 for 365 Pro Wrestling! Three teams and two managers, the place was a total mess by the end.

**AU: What's the funniest thing you've seen happen at a show?**

**JR:** Eddie Osborne getting hit with a banana.

**AU: Who do you enjoy working**

**with?**

**JR:** Sawyer Stein, Devon Shooter, Badman Mccan, Jordie Taylor, Elliot Tyler, Eddie Osborne, Krofton, Haviko, BJ Laredo, Zack Andrews, Josh Cadwell, The Good Thelonious, Mat Maverick, Marty Sugar,

Cremator Von Slasher, Machete Brown, Rad Dad and the list could go on.

**AU: As the new leader of the Moment Of Truth, what is now in store for the largest wrestling faction in the world?**

**JR:** Change and focus. You will have to keep your eyes on the MoT and find out...

**AU: How has wrestling impacted your life?**

**JR:** Changed it for the better, every single day I'm alive.

**AU: Do you have any comments for Jordie Taylor?**

**JR:** Bud, you were like the best older brother to me, you showed me everything I know... I didn't turn my back on you, you turned your back on us. You said you had this handled, you said "no don't worry about it kid I got it"... I said "nah yah don't"... Now there is a new damn king sitting on top of the world. I took everything from you and you showed me how to take it... I got it handled now... kid.

**AU: Where's your favorite place to grab a burger?**

**JR:** What about fried chicken... Cause Chester's Chicken is fire son!!

**AU: Growing up, who was your favorite wrestler?**

**JR:** DDP and Scott Hall.

**AU: Do you have a favorite venue to perform in?**

**JR:** Nanaimo Beban Park centennial building and the Frank Crane Arena.

**AU: What can our readers expect from Johnny Rostyn coming up?**

**JR:** Changes with everything! This is the dawn of a new era of Rostyn. I am the WCP of MoT now and everything is gonna change, stay tuned.

**AU: Have you sustained any significant injuries?**

**JR:** A few concussions.



**AU: Is there anyone in specific, you're interested in squaring up with still i.e. dream opponent?**

**JR:** Jordie Taylor! I'm not done with him and I'm sure he isn't either. Mat Maverick is gonna get it one of these days too.

**AU: Who are you currently listening to?**

**JR:** Counterparts are amazing and my walk out music is by them.

**AU: What's your favorite storyline you've been involved in so far?**

**JR:** The one I'm in currently, where I took Jordie's world and made it mine.

**AU: What's something you can't live without?**

**JR:** Fried chicken!

**AU: As we wrap things up here Johnny, is there anything else you'd like our readers to**

**know?**

**AU:** I'm a new man after June 27th, I took over MoT. I'm not the greenhorn you have seen, I'm the rising rookie that you need to keep your eyes on. I promise, that this is the year you watch Rostyn become everything y'all thought he wasn't.

**Make sure to check out Johnny Rostyn at VIPW, 365 Pro Wrestling and Trash Wrestling or @Johnnyrostyn on instagram and facebook.**

Photos by Darren Ho





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To wander the eerie paths of this haunted night.  
Thirteen tales await, dark and sublime,  
Comics and horrors to haunt your time.  
So, step closer, dear reader... don't shrink, don't flee,  
The season of screams is calling... and it calls for thee.

#### Archie's Halloween Spectacular (One-Shot)

**Publisher: Archie Comics**

**Release Date: October 1, 2025**

Archie's world gets its spooky fix with a one-shot full of tricks and treats. The South Side Serpents' initiation adds a sinister edge, while classic characters bring the lighthearted fun. A seasonal sampler for fans who love Riverdale with a scare.



#### Bump in the Night: Tales of Cryptids and Monsters

**Publisher: Limit Break Comics**

**Release Date: October 2025 (exact day TBA)**

An anthology diving into

folklore and beasts from Europe's shadowy corners. Expect strange cryptids, eco-horror themes, and artistic spins from over 40 creators worldwide. A bite-sized, culture-steeped scarefest perfect for autumn nights.

#### DC Horror Presents...

**Publisher: DC Comics**

**Release Date: Late October 2025**

DC brings capes into the crypt with a new horror anthology. Stand-alone tales twist familiar heroes and villains into unnerving shapes. From psychological dread to supernatural shocks, this is for fans who like their tights tangled in terror.



#### Dick Tracy Halloween Special #1

**Publisher: League of Comic Geeks**

**Release Date: October 2025 (exact day TBA)**

The yellow-coated detective trades his



spotlight for shadows in this Halloween noir. A mix of classic crime drama and eerie thrills, it's Dick Tracy as you've never seen him—grappling with sinister plots under flickering streetlamps.

#### Grubbs Loves Halloween #1

**Publisher: Keenspot Entertainment**

**Release Date: October 8, 2025**

Billy "Grubbs" Watson is back to turn Halloween into a carnival of chaos. Haunted houses, prank wars, and stink bombs collide in a madcap one-shot bursting with rowdy energy. Mischief, mayhem, and candy hoarding are the order of the day.



#### Happyland, Vol. 1

**Publisher: ABLAZE Manga**

**Release Date: November 26, 2025**

Shingo Honda's horror manga turns amusement parks into waking nightmares. Beneath the flashy rides and cheerful mascots, visitors discover the true meaning of terror. Gory, psychological, and unsettling—this series asks: what if fun was fatal?



#### Hello Halloween #1

**Publisher: BOOM! Studios**

**Release Date: October 22, 2025**

Part of BOOM!'s Hello Darkness line, this special serves up spooky shorts by R.L. Stine, Carola Borelli, Robert Hack, and more. Creepy yet cozy, it's the kind of comic that feels like cider and chills, with enough variety to keep every reader on edge.



#### Marvel: Black, White & Blood and Guts #1

**Publisher: Marvel Comics**

**Release Date: October 8, 2025**

Marvel's latest horror anthology goes heavy on the contrast—stark black-and-white panels with splashes of crimson. Blade leads the charge against vampires, Iron Man faces uncanny threats, and top creators cut deep with bloody tales.



#### Nocturnals: The Sinister Path #1

**Publisher: Dark Horse Comics**

**Release Date: October 1, 2025**

Dan Brereton's cult favourite returns in a supernatural noir steeped in fog and menace. Monsters, magic, and crime spill through Pacific City's alleys as a creeping eldritch force rises. A must for fans of pulp horror with painterly visuals.



#### Our Brilliant Ruin: Horror at Crane Mansion #1-3

**Publisher: Dark Horse Comics**

**Release Date: Issue #1 (March 26, 2025); Collected Edition (November 18, 2025)**

A gothic mystery steeped in Edwardian grandeur. Detectives investigate deaths at a wealthy heiress's estate, uncovering occult forces known as "the Ruin." Social intrigue curdles into supernatural dread in this eerie, candlelit saga.



#### Sayuri

**Publisher: Kodansha**

**Release Date: Fall 2025**

Rensuke Oshikiri's horror manga finally arrives in English. A family moves into their dream home, only to watch it unravel into a nightmare of hauntings, tragedies, and body-horror dread. Creeping silence and



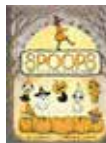
grotesque reveals make this a slow-burn scare.

#### Spoons: The Little Spirits of Halloween

**Publisher: Top Shelf Productions / IDW Publishing**

**Release Date: September 2, 2025**

When Holly Hollowell meets pumpkin-born "Spoons," Halloween magic returns to her life. Told in rhyming verse with charming illustrations, this is a cozy, whimsical fable. Perfect for kids—or nostalgic adults who like their scares with a smile.



#### Zatannic Panic! #1

**Publisher: DC Comics**

**Release Date: October 8, 2025**

An 80-page special where Zatanna leads DC's mystical heroes against Halloween's darkest adversaries. Featuring Raven, Swamp Thing, The Demon, and more, this anthology conjures magic, dread, and playful frights under a haunted moon.



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**SUN. OCT. 12 W/ SECONDS FLAT, MAKE IT RIGHT, RED GATE ART'S SOCIETY, VANCOUVER, ALL AGES**

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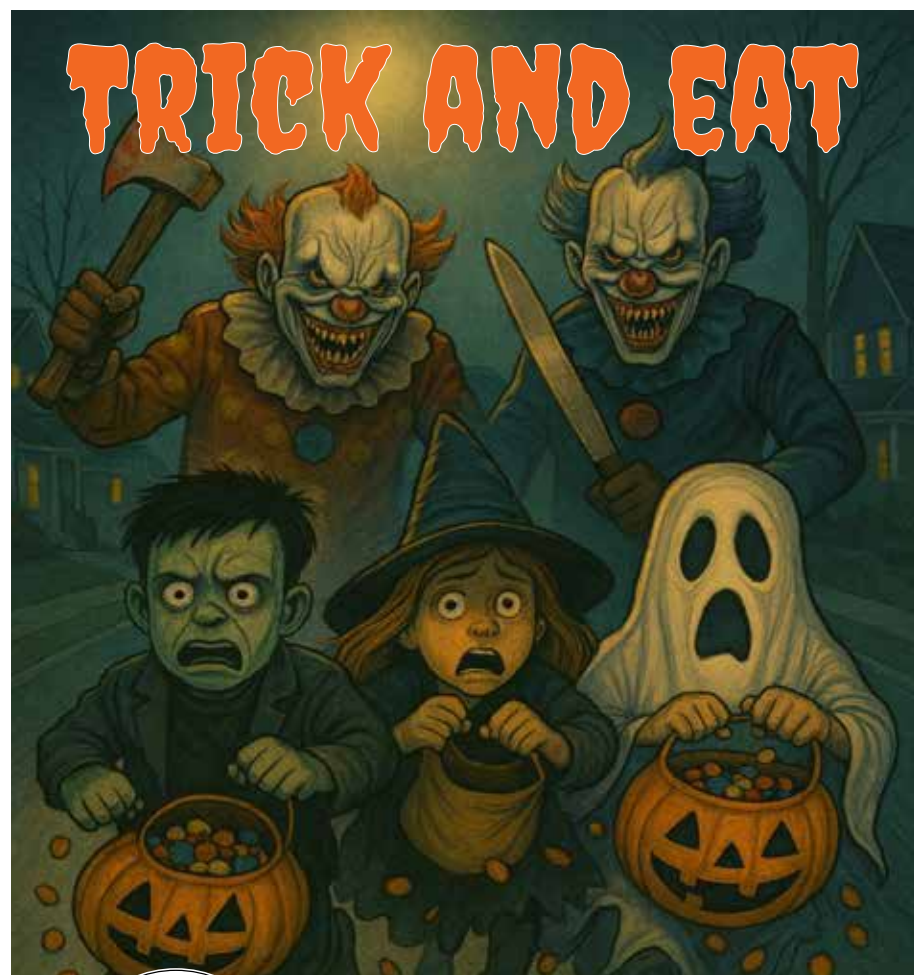
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# LISA SINNER TATTOOS

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## LIGAMENT are preparing to unleash their debut EP

By Ray MacKay

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

**Jayden:** Yo yo yo, it's Jayden — lead guitar and vocals. I'm most famous for being insanely cool.

**Diego:** Talking to the drummer, and I'd say I'm infamous for being a better drummer than people think I am.

**Ernesto:** My name is Ernesto Robles and I play guitar for Ligament.

**Ayden:** I play the bass guys.

**AU: Where are you from and what's the music scene like there?**

**Jayden:** I'm from Oshawa. The scene is pretty cool, especially being so close to Toronto. Lots of diversity, but the youth needs to be re-educated in the ways of metal.

**Diego:** We're from Oshawa, and honestly the scene here is diverse — everything from death metal to RnB. Way better than some places where everyone listens to mumble rap. No hate, tho.

**Ernesto:** I was born in Cuba, but growing up in

Oshawa I've only recently gotten into the metal scene.

**Ayden:** We're based in Oshawa. It's pretty quiet here in terms of brutal metal, but we're hoping to bring something new that people can connect with.

**AU: Give us a brief history of LIGAMENT.**

**Jayden:** Made the band around 2023. Rotating lineup, worked on a ton of songs. Finally found Diego and Ernesto in 2024. After some tough times — including Diego leaving and coming back — now we're tight as a bootyhole.

**Diego:** Bro had a band, then lost it. I came in as drummer, we jammed and built, got kicked out 'cause the lead is stubborn, then came back.

Better progress, and now we're here.

**Ernesto:** I joined in 2024 after meeting Diego through our school's rock club. He asked me to join, I said yes, and we've been working on music ever since.

**Ayden:** LIGAMENT is still a young band, but we're hungry. We're in the process of finding our sound and identity.

**AU: You're currently working on your debut EP - tell us all about it!!!!**

**Jayden:** We've got five songs rehearsed. We're recording them in my basement — raw quality, pure aggression.

**Diego:** Songs we've had for almost a year now are finally getting recorded. We're planning to give people new and better metal music to listen to.

**Ernesto:** Most of the songs were written by Jayden, but I do have my own solo in there — melodic and inspired by Coheed and Cambria.

**Ayden:** It's going to be heavy, raw, and unlike anything else. We want to carve out our own vibe.

**AU: Tell us about the process behind writing and recording your debut EP.**

**Jayden:** I write most of the guitars. Ideas just come to me, then I record them on Reaper. Sometimes we jam and come up with stuff on the spot — then I tab it out so we don't forget.

**Diego:** Our process is just this PC in Jayden's basement, not the best. Add in Jayden's not-so-great electronic kit with a crappy bass drum... but it's part of the process.

**Ernesto:** For my solo, I just had an idea in my head, inspired by Randy Rhoads and Coheed. I worked until it fit perfectly.

**Ayden:** Still evolving. We're experimenting a lot, trying to balance heaviness, energy, and something memorable.

**AU: What are some inspirations you draw on while writing music?**

**Jayden:** Honestly, anything — from metal to reggaeton. We're 3/4 Latino, so those influences show up.

**Diego:** Inspiration from Lamb of God (technical), Pantera (groove), Death (death metal), plus Sepultura, Korn, and more.

**Ernesto:** Randy Rhoads, Marty Friedman, Megadeth, Metallica, Gojira. "Tornado of Souls" blew my mind and made me want to write solos like that.

**Ayden:** Heavy music in general — riffs, aggression, atmosphere.

**AU: Have you had any shows recently? Tell us about them!**

**Jayden:** We just had our first show at The 222 in Oshawa. Such a blast! We're trying to hit the stage more to force our music into people's ears.

**Diego:** First show was last Thursday at The 222. Didn't expect the crowd to go so hard — I was drenched in sweat. Amazing energy. Old guys gave us props, moshers went wild. Loved it.

**Ernesto:** We debuted at The 222. Great experience — met other bands and the crowd liked our original songs.

**Ayden:** My first show with the band just happened at The 222 — it was dope.

**AU: What's a song you'd want to cover for a future album?**

**Jayden:** "Davidian" by Machine Head, or anything from Exploded Chicken (best slam band).

**Diego:** "Territory" by Sepultura or "Crystal Mountain" by Death.

**Ernesto:** "Holy Wars" by Megadeth.

**Ayden:** "Floods" by Pantera.

**AU: It's Halloween here at Absolute Underground. Do you have any Halloween traditions you'd like to share?**

**Jayden:** I like to scream at kids, steal their candy, and say "trick or treat."

**Diego:** Throw pumpkins at the crowd. Maybe candy. And toilet paper.

**Ernesto:** I like to do stuff.

**Ayden:** Not really — just music all year.

**AU: What's the spookiest record you'd recommend to someone this Halloween?**

**Jayden:** *Exorcist* soundtrack.

**Diego:** "Funeral Fog" by Mayhem — actually the whole *De Mysteriis Dom Sathanas* record.

**Ernesto:** *Bark at the Moon* by Ozzy Osbourne.

**Ayden:** Still building my collection.

**AU: In your opinion, what's the best horror soundtrack?**

**Jayden:** *Exorcist* — I know the theme from *Possessed*.

**Diego:** Michael Myers theme. Don't really know much else.

**Ernesto:** Yeah I don't know this one man.

**Ayden:** Not sure, but I like how horror soundtracks create mood and tension.

**AU: Where can we find you online? Website/ socials/etc?**

**Jayden:** @[ligament.band](https://www.instagram.com/ligament.band) on Instagram — we're all tagged. My personal is @[jaydenf.33](https://www.instagram.com/jaydenf.33)

**Diego:** @[die\\_.ndzz](https://www.instagram.com/die_.ndzz)

**Ernesto:** @[ligament.band](https://www.instagram.com/ligament.band) and my personal IG @[ernesto\\_robles76](https://www.instagram.com/ernesto_robles76).

**Ayden:** All updates on Instagram — follow @[ligament.band](https://www.instagram.com/ligament.band) and my personal @[ayden.p09](https://www.instagram.com/ayden.p09)

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# COMICBOOK ICONS



## DAKOTA ALEXANDER Draws THE HUNTER's Saga

By Ray MacKay

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



**Dakota Alexander:** Hi, I'm Dakota Alexander and I'm probably best known as "that old school comic artist on Facebook".

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

**DA:** I got into comics and superheroes very young with cartoons and started drawing when I was eight.

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

**DA:** I'd say my biggest influences at a young age were Byrne, Mignola, Alan Davis and Frank Miller during his *Sin City* era. However, in the past ten years, it's been Romita Sr, Gil Kane, John Buscema, Michael Cho, Darwyn Cooke, and Chris Samnee.

**AU: How did you first get involved in the comic industry? What was your first published work?**

**DA:** I think my first published work was a set of pin-ups I did for *The Liberty Brigade* comic back in 2020. Michael Finn, the creator, sent me a DM and we were good to go. Later that year, I was working with Austin Hough for *The Masters* comic- which was 80's DC *Who's Who* style character pages.

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

**DA:** Bronze age. Though I do a lot of specific "emulations" of iconic artists styles for certain pieces. It's all about creating a connection to the era I'm going for.

**AU: Recently, you've had great success funding the first issue of your creator owned book, THE HUNTER, on Kickstarter. Tell us about it!!**

**DA:** It's my first attempt at making a comic. I never wanted to do interiors for a comic before- after all, it's a lot of work. Plus, I live in Japan, so I needed someone in the US to help get this made. I contacted longtime friend and comics bro, Judah Radd - creator of Trouble Comics. He was on board immediately and knew much of the process of running a Kickstarter. His book *Charon 13* was already on its second issue, so he had two successful Kickstarter campaigns under his belt. After that it was very much about milking

the following I had created on Facebook with my Bronze Age art. Basically all those comments that were saying, "you need to make a comic book" and then finally being able to reply with, "ok, here you go." Hahahaha.

**AU: Tell us a little about the plot of THE HUNTER!**

**DA:** It is very very much like an early 80's superhero TV show pilot, hahahaha! A novelist finds a magical amulet and out pops Herne, God of the Hunt. Herne needs an avatar, a human

vessel, so he can fight monsters to perform his sacred duty to the gods. They merge into the Hunter and it's very much 90's Ghost Rider meets the dual consciousness of Firestorm. Imagine if Dan Ketch could communicate with Zarathos as they were fighting evil - and Dan would have more agency and control if he felt that Zarathos was crossing a line.

**AU: Tell us about the creative process behind THE HUNTER - why you're doing it, the influences, etc.**

**DA:** Why am I doing it?

That is an excellent question. I am in my mid-forties and never did a comic before and now I am trying to make a book that looks exactly like it came from the early 80's, which was a big part of my comic collection as a kid. On paper that sounds very much like a mid-life crisis, hahahaha! But really the reason is, and this is addressed in the letters page, is that I came up with the idea one day while hungover and in about 48 hours I had a full backstory, character design and several story plots devised. This whole book is just a fantastic exercise in proactively responding to inspiration. These stories are constantly in my head, and being the artist as well as the writer, I can simultaneously devise plot, dialogue and panels. So on top of whatever story I am currently making, I can visualize much of the stories to come. Plus, since I'm also the letterer, when I finally put them to page, I can edit with ease. It actually saves a tremendous amount of time when everything is done in-house.

**AU: What are the future plans for THE HUNTER?**

**DA:** I have about 15 issues planned. As I said, I am in my mid-forties so I don't have too many years left for a project like this. So I figure 15 issues is a good number. It's an episodic book, so most stories will be about two issues long. But I do have single issue stories peppered in there as well. Each story will be a different monster. I am a big fan of folklore and cryptids, and as such that means I am not focusing much on the traditional monsters we've come to expect, but rather those from cultural myth and folklore. Monsters I plan to use are: the rougarou (from cajun legend), the manananggal (from the Philippines), the Point Pleasant Mothman, the popobawa (from Tanzania), various types of Japanese yokai, a proper demon from hell, and even the Lost Boys vampires (I am from Santa Cruz where the Lost Boys was filmed and that comic shop is my LCS).

**AU: What are some of your career highlights and works you are most proud of?**

**DA:** *The Hunter* is without a doubt the highlight of my career.

**AU: What is the secret to writing a solid comic book script?**

**DA:** Well, I certainly HOPE my book feels like a solid script, hahaha. But, yeah I dunno, I would probably go with what is your intention in terms of story. Mine is to focus on getting the reader to the action in basically the three act structure.

Since the stories are mostly gonna be two issues, you have your first half work as Acts 1 (setup) and 2 (confrontation), ending with a climax. The second half is mostly Act 3 (resolution). The trick is how you incorporate the non-action elements to feel natural, as in most cases they are really there for exposition dumps via dialogue. You have to make it feel like these characters are really talking to each other and not just spouting info, so it feels organic and enjoyable to read. Supporting characters were often primarily functional in nature, an opportunity for the hero to discuss the plot with someone, but they also were the opportunity for interesting personalities, banter, romantic interludes, levity and comic relief. That's what makes the book more than simple pulp action. Also, since I employ the long-outdated caption box, I reinforce the image in the panel with a kind of literary flair. It helps manage the sequence of the action, which in-turn needs to have a choreography. It can't just be splash panels - it needs to move, it needs to use its location and it needs to service the plot. Heroes can't just defeat villains with their powers, that removes suspense from the story. They need to use their wits and luck and circumstance because you want to make the reader feel that there are actual stakes, and that the hero could really be in danger.

**AU: It's Halloween here at Absolute Underground. What are some of your favourite horror comics? Horror movies?**

**DA:** *Moon Knight* and *Ghost Rider* were the ones I probably enjoyed most, if those qualify. Horror was never my thing as a kid, though I watch a ton of horror movies now, because they are often pretty funny. We do a lot of MST3K riffing on them.

**AU: What's the scariest comic you've ever read?**

**DA:** *V for Vendetta*. Fascism scares the hell out of me.

**AU: Any upcoming projects to promote? What's next for you and THE HUNTER?**

**DA:** Nothing to promote other than we have our issue one at the printers so things are finally moving forward to getting our backers their copies. We will have extra copies for sale on my etsy, DRUMS OF THE SERPENT. Beyond that it's back to work for issue two!

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

**DA:** If you love the Bronze Age, you will love this book. The Hunter is straight-up cover to cover authentic early 80's superhero horror, done in the Marvel style! On top of the art and writing, have old skool coloring, the newsprint, and we will have our version of those iconic 80's ads! Even our version of the Hostess ads! Our promise is that if you look at this book, you WILL feel like you've traveled back in time to the 80's.

**AU: Where can we find you online? Website/ socials/etc?**

**DA:**

**FB:** Dakota Alexander

**IG:** @drumsoftheserpent

**Etsy Shop:** [www.etsy.com/shop/drumsoftheserpent/](http://www.etsy.com/shop/drumsoftheserpent/)





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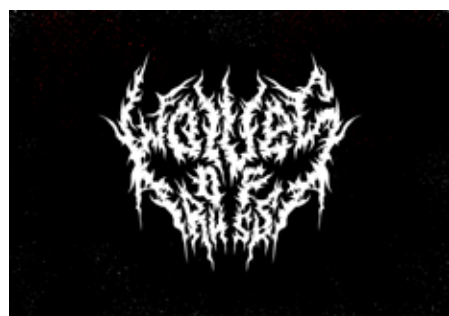
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## Wolves Of Russ

### Knee Deep In Gore

By Ray MacKay

**AU:** What're you most famous or infamous for?

**Wolves Of Russ:** We are the Wolves Of Russ, a metal band based on the grim dark universe of Warhammer 40000. The songs are written from the perspective of a group of space marines known as the "Wolves Of Russ" consisting of Space Wolves, White Scars, and other loyal legions. This Chapter has been gathering and intercepting sonic data from lost Imperial outposts, xenos counter intelligence, the psychobabble of chaos, and war songs of various astartes chapters. These transmissions make up the music of the Wolves Of Russ. We are most famous for the eclectic sound of our music catalog, having crooner ballads about the Great Unclean One Nurgle to progressive metal epics about fighting for the fate of mankind. We are most infamous for not playing shows and being studio-holics, putting more emphasis on creating than playing live.

**AU:** Where you from and what's the scene like?

**WOR:** We are based out of Victoria B.C. and from our perspective the local metal and punk scene is vibrant and thriving. Victoria has a history of birthing some great metal and punk bands, and will continue to do so. The only thing we need is more venues for bands to cut their teeth.

**AU:** Give us a brief history of Wolves Of Russ.

**WOR:** The Wolves Of Russ is a bit of a

Frankenstein's monster in that it was a passion project that started to run wild. The idea of a Warhammer band seemed awesome as a fan of the lore, in 2020 lockdown we recorded the first album. The process was infectious and we quickly realized how much we loved making songs about our favourite characters and moments in Warhammer. Soon we were on the second album with no stopping in sight.

**AU:** How has your love of Warhammer influenced your music?

**WOR:** We are Warhammer fans all the way from the books, to the table top game, to the video games. Warhammer 40000 has a lot of darker themes and imagery that works well for metal songs. Warhammer has a great way of being gnarly and still not taking itself too seriously.

**AU:** You have a new album, *Knee Deep In Gore*, out now. Tell us all about it!

**WOR:** *Knee Deep In Gore* is the continuation for the Wolves Of Russ saga. It picks up after the last album telling the story of how the Wolves Of Russ must battle a Chaos Battlecruiser to keep the primordial forces from getting the *Warp Anomaly*. The Wolves Of Russ find themselves *Knee Deep In Gore* fighting for their lives against endless hordes of chaos forces. This album is a journey through metal music with influences from early 80's to modern metal. *Knee Deep In Gore* is a metal epic full of Wolves Of Russ lore set to blast beats, heavy bass and howling solos.

**AU:** Tell us about the process behind writing and recording *Knee Deep In Gore*.

**WOR:** When finishing the last album *Warp Anomaly*, we all wanted to try doing a heavier album. We had always made albums with multiple genres and this time we wanted to narrow the focus to more guitar driven tracks, when in the past we had done at least one or two electronic or hip-hop songs on the albums. We also knew we wanted to focus on the narrative and lore a bit more, making a more linear story for the listener. The next thing we wanted to include was more guitar solos. With the invention of "the breakdown", solos are being neglected so we wanted to make sure all the solos were ripping.

**AU:** What song would you recommend to

anyone who hasn't heard of Wolves of Russ?

**WOR:** We recommend listening to either "For Those About To Die" or "Sleeping In The Red Snow" off the new album *Knee Deep In Gore*. Both those songs give you the full force of the Wolves Of Russ sound and also give you the narrative elements for you to enjoy the story telling aspect of the band. Plus both have barn burner solos and epic vocals. If you like something that shows the humour of the band we recommend "Nurgle Loves You" off the album *Warp Anomaly*.

**AU:** Favourite song to perform live?

**WOR:** Now this is a loaded question, currently we have not played any live shows but they are coming. We can tell you that we will be playing some of the songs off the first album like "Call Of Nurgle" and "Weather The Storm". We want to bring the epicness to the shows so we are working on how to play with full astartes armour.

**AU:** Is there any song that you want to cover?

**WOR:** We did do a rendition of "I Hate The Bloody Queen" by *The Queen Haters* called "I Hate The Bloody Orks" and it was a riot to write and record.

**AU:** Any Halloween traditions to share?

**WOR:** We love our horror movies especially the sci-fi practical effect classics like *The Fly* and *Event Horizon*. As wolves we also love a good howl at a moon too. We try to do a horror movie a day during October. Nothing better than watching *The Thing* or *In The Mouth Of Madness* for some metal music inspiration.

**AU:** Any shows coming up?

**WOR:** We are getting the pieces together to deliver an epic performance. Our vision is an onstage heavy metal epic with characters in armour playing your favourite Wolves Of Russ songs during a space battle.



**AU:** Anything else to promote?

**WOR:** We are focused right now on promoting the new album. There is some animation in the works and we want to get some awesome visuals to go with our songs.

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

**WOR:** We thank you for your support. Without all of you, we would never beat the forces of Chaos. The Wolves Of Russ can promise that we will work tirelessly to bring you the best music that is out there in the warp. The Wolves Of Russ are just getting started and expect to see a lot more music and videos from us. Emperor Protects.

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

**WOR:** Find the Wolves Of Russ at [Wolvesofruss.com](http://Wolvesofruss.com) or on all platforms at [Wolvesofrussofficial](http://Wolvesofrussofficial) or [Wolvesofruss](http://Wolvesofruss). Listen to the Wolves Of Russ on all streaming platforms.

Art by Matias Pascual / Pirolnogolongo





## Interview with HOODED MENACE's guitarist and founding member Lasse Pyykkö about their new album

By Ray MacKay

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

**Hooded Menace:** Lasse Pyykkö, famous and especially infamous for playing in Hooded Menace.

**AU: Where are you from and what's the music scene like there?**

**HM:** Finland. The metal scene is very active up here. In fact we have the most metal bands in the world per capita. Also, statistics say that my home town, Joensuu,

has the second most metal bands per capita in Finland. A tiny place called Lemi is number one, but it's hardly a town, so screw it! (laughs)

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

**HM:** Hooded Menace was formed in 2007 heavily inspired by the '80s Candlemass, early Cathedral, the

slower side of Autopsy, and The Blind Dead movie series from the '70s. You can label us death/doom metal or perhaps death/doom/heavy metal, if you like, since the last two albums have a strong '80s heavy metal influence also. The current line up is Lasse Pyykkö on guitar, bass and keyboards, Pekka Koskelo on drums, and Harri Kuokkanen on vocals.

**AU: Tell us all about your new album, Lachrymose Monuments of Obscuration, out October third!**

**HM:** Lachrymose is our seventh album and it has an even stronger emphasis on the 80's heavy metal than the previous LP The Tritonus Bell. We're super excited to get it out finally.

**AU: Tell us about the creative process behind Lachrymose Monuments of Obscuration?**



**HM:** It was pretty much the same as always. I wrote all the music and the other guys learnt the songs based on my demos. Harri wrote lyrics for "Daughters of Lingering Pain", former Hooded Menace member, Teemu Hannonen, for "Into Haunted Oblivion" (for which I wrote the spoken part), and I penned the rest.

**AU: You also have a new music video out for your song "Portrait Without A Face". Tell us about it!**

**HM:** Yeah, very talented Tekla Vally directed it and it turned out really cool. We came up with some basic ideas, she took it from there, and at the end of the day she had pretty free hands to do her thing.

**AU: It's Halloween here at Absolute Underground? Do you have any plans for the day?**

**HM:** Not really, but you guys have a good one!

**AU: Do you have any traditions for Halloween you'd like to share with our readers?**

**HM:** None. Halloween is not a big deal over here. Salesmen try to make it big, but it's a relatively small celebration still.

**AU: What horror-centric influences do you draw on while writing your music?**

**HM:** A lot of our lyrics are inspired by - rather than based on - horror movies. On the new album we have songs inspired by The Blood Splattered Bride, Carnival of Souls, and of course, The Blind Dead.

**AU: Greatest career highlight to date?**

**HM:** I guess I should say the new album, right?!

**AU: Anything else to promote? Any**



**upcoming tours?**

**HM:** Nope. We stopped playing live in 2018. Seen it, done it - it's not for me. Then again, never say never, but right now it doesn't look realistic at all.

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

**HM:** If you read this far - thank you! Now grab our new album and make your Halloween a tad grislier!

**AU: Where can we find you online? Website/ socials/etc?**

**HM:**

You can follow Hooded Menace on Bandcamp, Facebook and Instagram:

**Bandcamp:** hoodedmenace.bandcamp.com/

**Facebook:** Hooded Menace

**Instagram:** hoodedmenaceofficial

Photos by Pasi Nevalaita







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## PENSKE FILE INTERVIEW

By Chuck Andrews

**AU: Who am I talking to and what do you do in the Penske File?**

**Penske File:** Travis: Guitar and Vocals.

**AU: Where is your band from?**

**PF:** Burlington and Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

**AU: Can you give us a little bit of background information about how and when the Penske File formed?**

**PF:** The three of us have been playing music together for 20 years; since we were 12 and 13. Alex's Dad and my Dad were pals since Grade 7 and James moved across the street from me when he was four years old and my mom was his daycare provider. I've known these guys longer than just about anyone in my life. One of my first memories of wanting to start a band goes like this: me and Alex were in my basement listening to blink 182's live album *The Mark, Tom and Travis Show*, while our parents were carrying on upstairs one weekend. We were miming along to the songs on whatever household items looked to us like instruments. I said I wanted to be

Tom DeLonge, Alex said he wanted to be Travis Barker. After "playing along" to a few songs we decided we should write our own. Lyrics to this first song, written at about age nine definitely included such illustrious rhymes as "saw Mickey Mouse in the house," and "caught Blues Clues drinking booze." Fast forward a couple years and we got some real instruments, wrote some slightly more mature material, played a couple gigs and filtered through a couple bass players. Near the end of elementary school we added James into the fold and carried on throughout our high school years as "The Bad Names," playing a ska punk

blend (as is tradition) before switching the name and sound and starting fresh, officially as The Penske File, nearing the end of our high school tenure in 2010.

**AU: How would you describe the sound of your band for anyone who isn't familiar?**

**PF:** We're a punk rock band who love good songwriting, good hooks, and don't shy away from letting our influences outside of the genre inform our sound.

**AU: You guys have a new album out on Stomp Records called *Reprieve*. Anything you would like to share with us about the new record?**

**PF:** The recording of *Reprieve* differed from our past three albums, for one, we decided to work with a new producer — Adam Michael — on the project. Adam is an old friend of ours and a very talented musician, and bringing him on board

for this felt like adding another member to the band throughout the process. Also, we had a lot of conversations early on in the writing process about different ways we wanted to approach the record than we had in the past. We decided that we wanted to move as quickly as possible from the writing to recording process, and record as much as possible live, in an attempt to retain the initial sparks of excitement and inspiration surrounding the songs on the actual recordings. As such, we didn't really demo many of the songs and just went straight from the rehearsal space to the studio. In the end we came out with a record we're extremely proud of that expands upon the sonic landscape of everything we've done in the past. There are songs on here that are faster and more straight to the point punk rock than we've ever done, but there are also songs that are stripped down, more folk based and introspective than we've done in the past. Through all that we came out with a cohesive record that I'm extremely proud of and excited for folks to hear!

**AU: Is there anywhere in Canada that you haven't played that you are specifically excited about getting to sometime soon?**

**PF:** I think we've played in every province across this country of ours over the years. It would be cool to, one day, get way up north into the territories and play in Yellowknife or Whitehorse or something.

**AU: Where have you toured outside of Canada recently and where do you want to tour in the near future?**

**PF:** We've done a lot of touring in Europe, and Germany specifically in more recent years. We've got a tour planned there (with a couple dates in Switzerland as well) coming up this November and are really excited for that! It would be cool to get over to Australia or Japan one day.

**AU: What do you guys collectively consider the ideal meal while on the road?**

**PF:** I feel like the answer to this has definitely changed over the years. In the early days when we toured in America a lot and existed on a 5-10 dollar a day budget it was all about the Taco Bell dollar menu. A necessity that filled you up and

left you enough money to buy smokes haha. These days, I don't know, just something relatively healthy and filling is great! When we tour Europe it's great because most often the food provided at shows is home cooked and covers our bases nicely.

**AU: It's Halloween here at Absolute Underground. Any Halloween Traditions you'd like to share?**

**PF:** My wife and I had a running Halloween party for years, with a prize (a box full of booze) for best costume. That was always fun. We've also spent a lot of past years spending Halloween as a band in and around The Fest in Gainesville, FL

**AU: Do you like Scary movies? What's your favourite horror soundtrack?**

**PF:** To be honest, I don't love them. The first time I watched a scary movie I was like 14 and pretending not to be terrified because a girl I was dating was into them. After getting over my initial fear I realized that, in reality, a lot of scary movies are more so cheesy and over the top than actually scary. I am no connoisseur of the genre, but I do like some of the Mike Flanagan series of recent years, like *The Haunting of Hill House* and *Midnight Mass*. I thought those were wicked and well done!

**AU: Is there anything else you would like to share with our readers?**

**PF:** I'd just like to say thanks for reading and I hope you take the time to check out the album, if it seems like your thing :)

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

**PF:** @the\_penskefile on Instagram  
[linktr.ee/thepenskefileband](http://linktr.ee/thepenskefileband) for everything else

**AU: Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions!**

**PF:** Thanks for taking the time to ask them!





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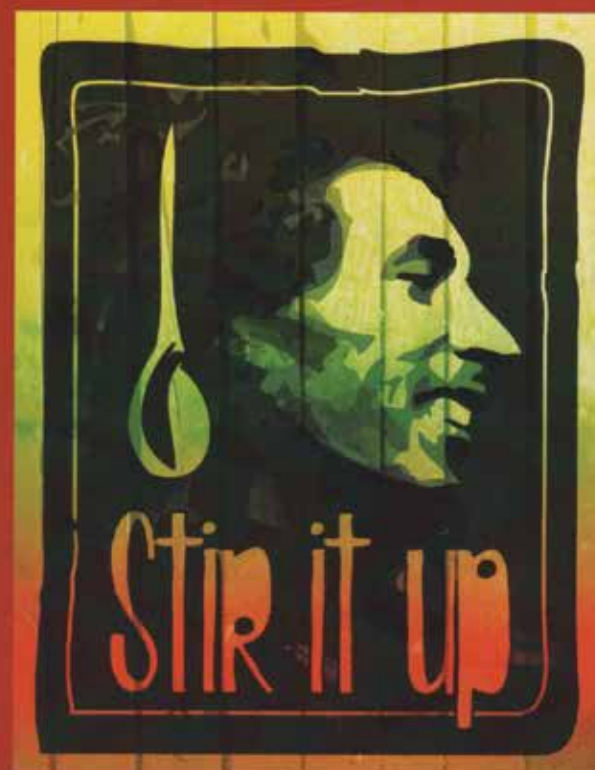
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## For Music's Sake: Interview with Jinjer's Eugene Abdukhanov

Interview conducted by Alia  
Synesthesia

**Absolute Underground:** You just came back from your summer tour in the USA, and in October you are hitting the road again with Trivium. Are you excited to come back on the road?

**Eugene Abdukhanov:** Yeah, looking forward to this. I've been home for a month and a half now, and it's quite a long time for me...almost too long [laughs].

**AU:** How are you spending your downtime between the tours? And what's your touring routine like?

**Eugene Abdukhanov:** Between the tours, I pretty much do nothing [laughs]. I like assembling model plane kits, which is one of my hobbies. Doing jiu-jitsu. Just having my time off and

enjoying it as much as I can. I also spend time with my family. When I'm on tour, my daily routine is pretty much always the same: I wake up, I do some exercises, a bit of stretching - nothing serious. Then, I warm up - I practice bass every day. Because I sleep in late, I typically have a couple of hours before soundcheck, and these couple of hours fly by very quickly. I don't like eating late, so after the show, I might retreat into the trailer and play some video games. I don't really party -

I don't enjoy it much. All I do - I do for music's sake [laughs]. I actually have quite a boring and, at the same time, very happy life, I think.

**AU:** What do you enjoy more: playing live or recording in the studio?

**Eugene Abdukhanov:** It's a very hard question. In the past, I definitely enjoyed playing live more. Having more experience recording, I started to enjoy it more and more. It came to a point when I think it just leveled itself out on both sides. There are pros and cons to each; there are things that stress you out, and then there are things that bring you joy. I can find merit in both.

**AU:** Do you prefer smaller, more intimate venues where there's a lot more of that DIY feel, or larger ones, where more things are under control but there's also less connection to the audience?

**Eugene Abdukhanov:** It's another tough one. Of course, I think every musician will say that they enjoy playing bigger venues. Especially if we compare bigger venues with pubs and bars with a capacity of up to 100 people that have no stage or proper gear. At the same time, when we were already an established band in the summer of 2018, we played this show in Philadelphia at Kung Fu Necktie. I don't know if you have heard about that venue, but it's just a bar for 150 people

max. Somehow we managed to squeeze in almost 200 people there, and seriously, it was a sick, sick show.

We also played some venues in China that were on the smaller side, and it was cool in its own way. We played in that old, basement-style venue. Insanely cool. Loved it.

**AU:** What's on your pedalboard these days?

**Eugene Abdukhanov:** It's only the Quad Cortex. It's right there under my feet, actually. I only use the Quad Cortex by Neural DSP, and that's it. I don't see any point in pedals.

**AU:** After your tour with Trivium, what's next for Jinjer? Are you coming back to the studio?

**Eugene Abdukhanov:** We will actually have our first European headline tour in over five years or so. It's happening next winter. I am looking forward to it a lot because we have an insane tour package: it's us, Unprocessed, and Textures. Textures is one of my all-time favourite bands.

Their 2008 album, *Silhouettes*, for me is one of the most influential albums in the new wave of progressive metal. They were on hiatus for many years, and now they're back. It's their first tour after the hiatus, and it's a big thing for me to be on tour with them.

**AU:** When you're on the road, what kind of music lands on your playlist?

**Eugene Abdukhanov:** To be honest with you, the same bands that were on my track list for years and years. I'm very conservative in my music tastes. I think I'm just getting older and it's getting more and more difficult to find



something new and appealing. So, I listen to a number of the same bands: Opeth, Anathema, Katatonia, sometimes Death. Also, At The Gates, and today is a sad day because Thomas passed and I was really, really shocked by the news this morning. *Slaughter of the Soul* is one of the greatest metal albums ever. And Thomas's vocals on that particular record are extraordinary. I don't think anyone could ever recreate something like this; it's such a unique thing. And uniqueness in music is priceless.

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# Earthly Music: Interview with Ancient's Kenny Cook

Interview conducted by Alia  
Synesthesia

**AU:** You're in the middle of your USA tour.  
How's it going so far?

**Kenny Cook:** It's been great so far! The response  
and the shows have all been really awesome.  
More than we could have expected.

**AU:** While you're on tour, what are you  
listening to? What's on your playlist?

**Kenny Cook:** It's all over the map. We draw a  
lot of inspiration from all sorts of different types  
of music. Last night we were listening to Bryan  
Adams on our drive from San Diego. Cat Stevens  
this morning, Miles Davis, Cannibal Corpse, Anne  
Murray. It's a wide plethora. [laughs]

**AU:** Ancients formed in one of the most  
beautiful parts of Canada (BC). Does nature  
influence your songwriting?

**Kenny Cook:** It definitely does. I feel that your  
surroundings influence the art that you make. We  
live in a very mountainous area, so vast and epic.  
So we try to make our music sound somewhat like  
that, I guess. Different regions provide different

sources of inspiration. As for the  
sound of our music, we try to keep  
it as earthy and vast as possible.  
[laughs]

**AU:** Your most recent record,  
Beyond The Reach Of the Sun, was  
written remotely, and I believe  
you've already talked about how  
this writing process feels very  
different from writing together in  
the same room, but at the same  
time - it has its benefits. Do you  
feel that remote collaboration still  
works for you?

**Kenny Cook:** It definitely helps. For  
decades we all lived within an hour  
of each other, so we would rehearse

a couple of times a week at the same time every  
day. It started to burn us all out in the end,  
because it forces you to show up and try to make  
something happen. The benefit of remote writing  
is that each person can take their time with the  
track. We're grown adults now, so we all have  
obligations. When you work on things remotely,  
you can work on them on your own schedule.  
You're not trying to force things in the jam room.  
The lightning in a bottle of being in the same  
room with the band members still matters greatly,  
but as far as laying the foundations, getting  
things started remotely and sharing files back and  
forth is a great start. When we do get in the same  
room, we already have a solid foundation to work  
with and can take things further.

**AU:** Next question is a weird one, ready? If each  
band member could be an element or a force  
of nature like fire, air, water, thunder, cosmic  
ray, etc. - what do you think they would be and  
why?

**Kenny Cook:** That's a tough one. In the past I  
could have easily answered that, but right now we  
would all kind of represent water because we're  
all really on the same wavelength. We're very  
similar people. With the unit of members we have  
right now, everything's super easy-flowing and we  
all get along great. We never have arguments and  
everyone's just happy to be out doing this. So that  
would be my answer. No one really has a strong

difference in personality enough to relate it to a  
different element.

**AU:** This is an excellent answer. And a sign of  
good interpersonal communication between  
all of you. What would you say is the best thing  
and the worst thing about being on the road?

**Kenny Cook:** The best thing is the camaraderie  
and being able to share our music with the fans.  
It's a great time and a fun vacation away from  
work at home. [laughs] The worst thing is missing  
your family. I have a 10-year-old son and a wife,  
so it gets tough on the road sometimes missing  
them. So yes, the hard part is family and friends  
back home. But if you are surrounded by people  
who understand your love for going out there  
and playing music, it definitely makes it easier.

**AU:** What are your plans after the tour? Have  
you started working on anything new yet?

**Kenny Cook:** Yeah, we've got quite a bunch  
of ideas floating around. After this tour, we're  
home for three weeks, and then we're flying  
to Edmonton to play a show with the recently



reformed Acid Bath. After that we have another  
tour of the eastern states and Canada that will last  
about 28 dates. That's gonna finish our year off,  
and then, at the beginning of the next year, we're  
gonna start piecing together all the material we  
have. Right now we've just got a lot of different  
pieces of songs and ideas compiled, but we  
haven't started arranging them into full pieces.  
There are a couple of songs that are almost there,  
but for the most part it's a brainstorm of ideas.

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## Teenage Bottlerocket Interview

By Chuck Andrews



underground music, Seaweed, and FIREHOSE played Laramie. My twin brother Brandon helped bring a lot of bands to Laramie. Against Me! shredded the Cowboy; so did Fugazi. So, yes, Laramie always had a punk scene.

**AU: Teenage Bottlerocket has a new album out recently on Pirates Press Records called *Ready to Roll*. Can you tell us a little bit about it?**

**TBR:** It's my favorite TBR record. I say that about every new record we release so there's nothing surprising there. I love the individual personality injected

into everyone's songwriting. We have three songwriters/singers on this record. That's a first. Miguel sings lead vox on three songs. Each of those songs really helped break up the album. We've always had that, for every record, but now it's like adding another 1/3 of it.

**AU: You guys are ready to roll, you were already rocking then, correct?**

**TBR:** Yes.

**AU: Can you share some details about some of the new songs such as "I Want to Die on My Birthday" or "All About It"?**

**TBR:** "I Want to Die on My Birthday" started as a song title first, like a lot of TBR songs. I was driving the van on my b-day through Wyoming and there were a ton of semi trucks tipped over on the side

of the road. Every truck south bound on I25 near Cheyenne had pulled over and lined the sides of the road. We had to get to a gig in Denver so we were whizzing by. Problem was that every gap between the semi trucks would allow 150 km/h winds to blast the side of the van and trailer. It was like almost dying every 36 feet. I kind of just came to terms with it and thought of the song title. "All About It" is about being on the road with your friends. It's the best.

**AU: What are your favourite tracks from your new record?**

**TBR:** I like "I Figured Out That I'm Stupid" the best. I tried to sing it karaoke-style as an encore in London, Ontario... it went ok. I noticed the band had taken it off the set list the next night though.

**AU: Can you share a bit about the band's transition from Fat Wreck Chords to Pirates Press Records after 10 years with Fat?**

**TBR:** Pirates Press is a real breath of fresh air. When you are on a label for five releases you can start to see everything just spinning around on repeat. It's nice to have new people with new ideas. Pirates Press have really helped facilitate tons of bad ass ideas. Fat rules, but they were going through a transition themselves. I mean, it's hard to release a record on a label that is being sold by the two people that own it. So yeah, now we have 5 releases that are on Hopeless. I mean, that's what happened right? We moved to Hopeless and Pirates at the same time. I'm still sorta spinning around in circles.

**AU: It's Halloween here at Absolute**

**Underground, and one of your new songs is "What To Be For Halloween." Do you have any Halloween traditions or plans for this year you'd like to share?**

**TBR:** Kody always has a Halloween party in Denver, his costumes are amazing. I need to step up my shit. I wanted to be Dark Helmet like the song says. That would really rule. I think I'm going as Vector.



**AU: Do you have any upcoming tour plans that you would like to share?**

**TBR:** Yes, November in California, and December in Texas. *[editor's note: see full tour dates at [teenagebottlerocket.com](http://teenagebottlerocket.com)]*

**AU: Is there anything else that you would like to add to this? Anything else upcoming you can talk about?**

**TBR:** We have some 7"s coming out on Pirates. They look amazing. They sound amazing.

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

**TBR:** You can find us online on the internet. Just type in Teenage Dirtbag.

*[editor's note: Teenage Bottlerocket can be found at the following links]*

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

Instagram: @teenagebottlerocket

Facebook: @Teenage Bottlerocket

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

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has been working on some new tunes that I look forward to tackling with Jen's style in mind.

**AU:** Your progressive punk band, *Invasives*, released *Feel Good Live Forever* a couple of years ago. What's the overarching message or theme running through the songs you wrote for that record?

**Byron:** *Feel Good Live Forever* is a tour de force of a record. In my mind it's the most unrelenting in the *Invasives* catalog. The songs lyrical content sits heavily in a disassociated perspective: lost love, habitat, safety, and worth but bathed in the splendour of the universe that we exist within. I feel the closing track "Life is but a Dream" sums up the overall content and delivers the most beautiful and harsh moments on the album - wrapped in a Poe-esque bow. Spooky stories to tell at night meets Jackie Chan's *Police Story*.

**AU:** When the band first formed, you went by the name *Married To Music*. Was there a reason for changing the name to *Invasives*?

**Byron:** *Married To Music* was a name we gave the band without much thought. As we gained more exposure, we ran into issues and confusion, so we happily changed it to

*Invasives*.

**AU:** *Sweet Kicking and Screaming* - one of the most popular *Married To Music/Invasives* records - is about to hit its 20th anniversary. Does it feel like it's been that long? How has the band evolved over the years?

**Byron:** *Sweet Kicking and Screaming* is our second album and definitely when we hit our stride and grasped our mission statement as a unit. It does and doesn't feel like it's been 20 years - I still remember writing some of those songs. SNFU released the album on their Rake Records label and took us out on the road as an opener for a few tours. It is a time I remember very fondly. We have evolved as we became better players and have definitely become better song crafters since that record, but something just hits folks when they give that one a spin. Still sounds great to me - some of those high notes are no longer in my range, that's for sure. Hopeful to get a remastered reissue on vinyl for next year :)

**AU:** What's next for Byron Slack?

**Byron:** Well, there are about 5 weeks left of this *Dead Bob* tour, and

then some western Canadian shows when we get home. Then it will be Christmas and 2026!!! *Invasives* have plans to record some new songs, as does *Rong*. *Dead Bob* has an album in the can that you can expect to see a release date for sometime soon. You can also catch me hitting the tubs for *Darkest Of The Hillside Thickets*.

**AU:** Thanks for doing this with me! Any final words for the faithful readers of *Absolute Underground*?

**Byron:** Thank you Steve, I love the mag and have a lot of appreciation for the faithful readers that keep underground music alive and well! Much respect.

**AU:**

Follow 'em on IG!

@byronslack

@dead.\_.bob

@rongbandyvr

@invasivesmusic

@kindacoolrecords

## BYRON SLACK - LIVE FROM EUROPE!

Interview by Steve Pearson

**Absolute Underground:** I'm joined by my pal **Byron Slack** - rock star triple threat - currently tearing it up in *Dead Bob*, *Invasives*, and most recently, smacking skins with the Vancouver power trio known as *Rong*. You're currently on tour in Europe with *Dead Bob*. How have the first shows been? Any standouts?

**Byron Slack:** We are a week and a half in, and so far the shows have been great, with sold-out nights in Germany, Poland, and Czech. Our hosts have been gracious and the crowds have been very responsive - lots of smiling faces. Getting to see people I haven't seen in years and observing the response to John's legacy is wonderful to witness. The band and crew are all getting along swell as usual - no complaints here!

**AU:** As you've alluded to, *Dead Bob* was started by your longtime friend, John Wright of *NoMeansNo*. What's it like creating music with him? What's the band dynamic?

**Byron:** "Just Breathe" is the only song I brought to the band. I sent John the demo and he totally turned it on its head - making the chorus the verse and utilizing a turnaround I had in there for the chorus. It was a gas hearing his interpretation. The song turned out great and it's super fun to play live. All the other songs I've played on have been me adding guitar or vocals to John's mostly completed pieces of music. The process is open and playful and any idea is good for a try. If it works, it works. If it's a dud - down the drain it goes.

**AU:** In *Dead Bob* you play guitar alongside Kristy-Lee Audette, and now you're drumming in her band *Rong*. How would you describe her as a musician and entertainer?

**Byron:** Kristy is awesome - people often refer to her as a force of nature. She is enormously talented and has a vision that does not waver. She delivers every time without fail, and her unique ability to cut the listeners head off with a scream and then shred the guitar, trumpet, and keys is just too much. I am often looking out at an audience with gleefully stunned expressions on their faces. The first time I saw Kristy fronting *Rong* was before I had met her, and I was one of those people.

**AU:** *Halloweeniepee*, *Rong*'s Halloween EP, is back in season. The band's former drummer - and one of Vancouver's best - Jen Foster, recorded the drums on their first three releases. Has it been challenging to re-create some of her signature style?

**Byron:** Jen is a fabulous drummer - top shelf. I am hopeful that I am able to re-create some of what she brought to *Rong* as a player. I've definitely dumbed down some of the drum tasks so they better suit my abilities. Filling her shoes took a lot of homework. The songs are so fun to play, Kristy



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### TOUR TIP NUMBER 92



#### WANNA MEET PEOPLE? HANG OUT AT THE MERCH TABLE

### TOUR TIP NUMBER 93



#### YOU ACTUALLY HAVE TO PAY ATTENTION TO THE MAX 40km/h SIGNS IN THE ROCKIES

...or you might find yourself at the bottom of Deadman's Gorge.

### TOUR TIP NUMBER 94



#### IF IT TAKES YOU EXTRA TIME TO SET UP, PLAY A SHORTER SET

Don't make the other bands cut their set because you're not ready on time. It won't make you many friends.

### TOUR TIP NUMBER 95



#### AFTER YOUR TOUR IS BOOKED, CONFIRM ALL SHOWS. THEN, A MONTH LATER CONFIRM THEM AGAIN.

### TOUR TIP NUMBER 96



#### BE POSITIVE

...especially when talking to other bands looking for feedback. Real life ain't the internet. Don't criticize what you don't like, encourage what you do like.

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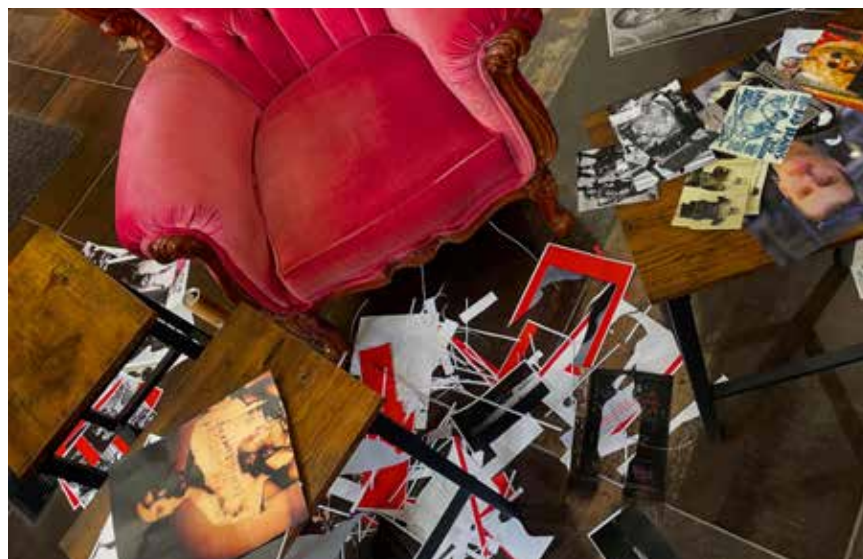
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## Banshees (Vancouver BC) Tribute Through Fashion

By John Carlow

**Absolute Underground:  
Introduce yourself**

**Banshees:** We're Banshees. We're located in North Vancouver, Lower Lonsdale and we serve a growing community of rebels with D.I.Y. tribute tees, custom print designs & vintage apparel. It is owned by Sacha Hebbert and run by both her and her husband.

**AU: Tell us how this store/ company came all together.**

**B:** Banshees is a personal backlash against corporate disillusionment and burnout and launched in July 2025. The first spark came with my Punk Archive Tees collection, celebrating local heroes like D.O.A. (my first punk show as a teen!) alongside first-wave punk icons like The Clash and the Sex Pistols. From there, the energy just erupted. The walls of the shop became canvases for chaos collaged with band posters, photos and magazine clippings that just spilled out of me; it was an explosion that redefined the space and it felt fucking awesome! Now people come to experience the vintage throwback vibe and hang out. They stand in front of the massive collage walls, pointing out their favourite artists/icons, or watch old VHS movies on our 1970s TV. It's become a place where people talk about music and rebel culture. It's a place where I also get to educate some of the younger ones about different music genres.

**AU: How did you learn how to do all of this?**

**B:** As an executive marketer and content creator, I've honed graphic design skills over the past decades, and while in university studying art and communications, I was hugely impacted by the early pioneers of collage

art and the Dada movement. (I think the early punk art aesthetic is greatly influenced by this movement as well.) These influences, combined with an additional short stint in college as a fashion design student, converged.

**AU: Tell us about the physical store and the online component of your business.**

**B:** People love this shop! It's a place where you can find one-of-a-kind punk tribute tees, vintage band tees from almost all genres out of the 70's, 80's, and 90's as well as other unique vintage finds such as VHS tapes and cassettes. It's a place where you can hang out on our vintage velvet couches and feel part of something. My T-shirt collections can be found online and range from \$35-45. My custom order tees start at \$60. Just visit my IG for more info~

**AU: Featured pieces?**

**B:** Isle of the Dammed Tribute Tee! It features the face of Dave Vanian, from The Dammed, and is done in a Dadaist style, and includes some of the early newspaper clippings about the band! I think it's important because The Dammed often gets overlooked despite being the first UK punk band to drop an album.

**AU: Upcoming work?**

**B:** I am continuing my theme of rebel-culture and going to drop a small line of Post-Punk Goth bands from the 80's later this fall, just in time for spooky season. No spoilers.

**AU: What's in the future?**

**B:** The Banshees shop is currently expanding, and folks can expect a lot more curated vintage pieces that pull from high-fashion & punk D.I.Y. inspirations

as well as upcycled apparel providing a blend of current streetwear shapes made with thrifted fabrics.

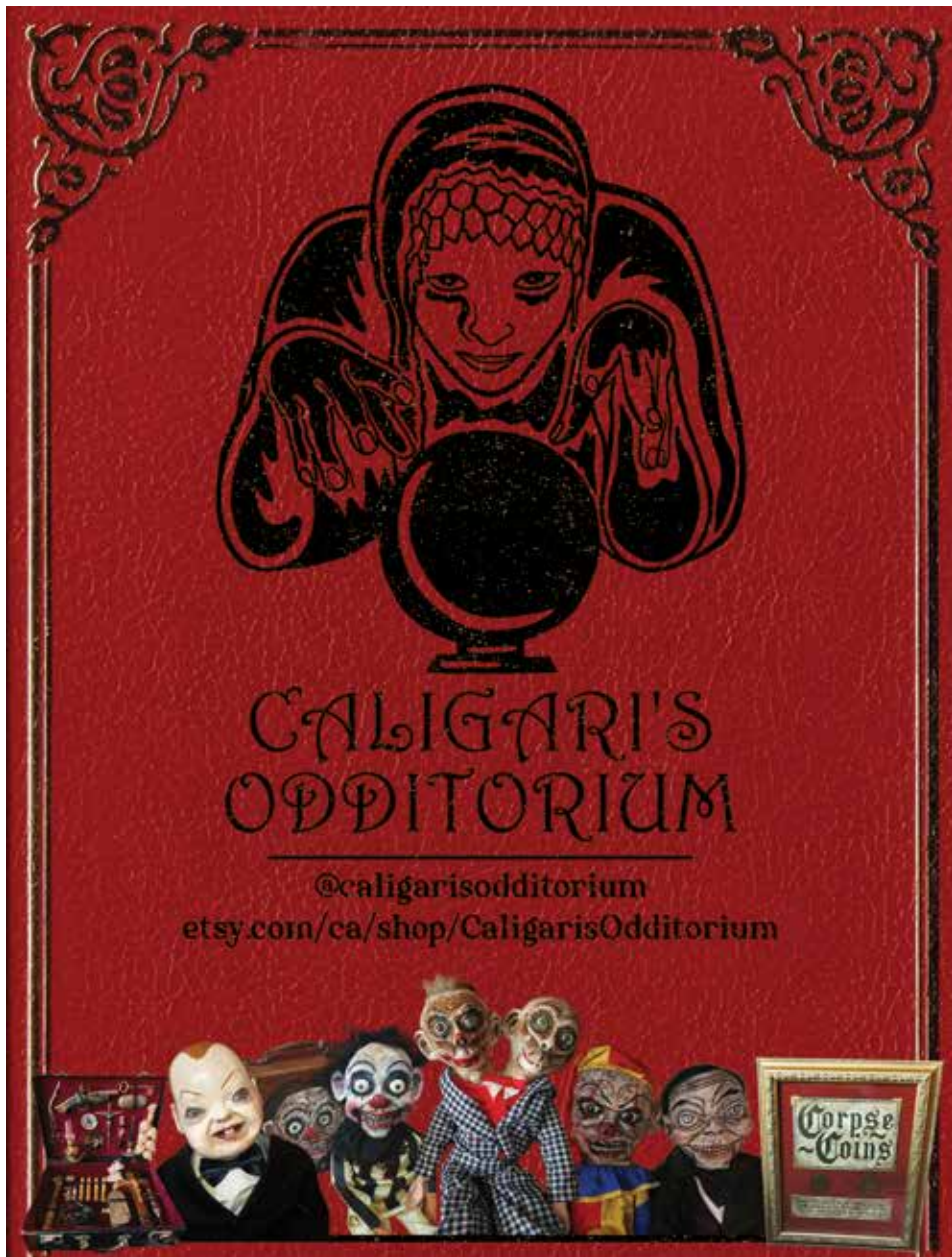
**AU: Where can you be found?**

**B:** We can be found at: **225 1st St E, North Vancouver, BC V7L 1B4**

Instagram: @banshees\_vintage







## Blood, Ink & Broomsticks: Kitchen Witchery for Fall

By Lily Fawn

The fall season is an invitation to slow down and work with what the earth is offering. Inks from plants, paper laced with herbs, a broom bound from driftwood, and a jar of spiced blood vinegar — these aren't just crafts, they're ways of appreciating and utilizing nature. As the nights grow longer, let your herbal creations remind you that even in the dark, there is color, medicine, and magic waiting in the simplest things.

For all my witchy herbalists out there, this is your season! Autumn is the time to harvest powerful spices and root medicines, to set intentions with spells and sage bundles, and to stock your apothecary for the cold months ahead. Sure, plastic cobwebs from the dollar store and artificial pumpkin spice syrups from corporate latte machines have their charm, but let's dig into the true nature of the season. Let's make some magic with our own hands: find the beauty in weeds, conjure ink colors from roots and berries, and brew elixirs in your kitchen cauldron. So if you're ready for a little kitchen witchery, here are some of my favorite DIY projects: homemade botanical inks and paints, handmade herbal paper, a driftwood-and-cedar witch's broom, and one hell of an edible Blood Vinegar to sip, splash on your Thanksgiving Feast.

### Charcoal & Rosemary Black Ink for Your Spell Book

Plant pigments have been used for centuries in spellbooks, love letters, and murals. Making your

own ink is a great ritual to set intentions. A true witch writes her spells in colors ripped straight from the earth. Here's how to make black and red ink.

- 1 tbsp activated charcoal powder (or grind up burnt sticks into a fine powder)
- 2 tsp cornstarch
- 2 tbsp strong rosemary tea
- 1 pinch of salt

Brew Rosemary tea and add salt. Mix into a thick paste, add more tea until it flows like ink. Rosemary adds a protective vibe — good for banishing bad energy. Use a fine tip

paint brush to dip in the ink like a pen.

### Blood-Red Hibiscus Ink

- 1 cup dried hibiscus petals 2 tsp cornstarch
- ½ cup water 1 pinch of salt
- 1 tsp vinegar + 1 tsp salt

Simmer until blood-red, add vinegar and salt, strain, and bottle. Perfect for blood letters.

### DIY Herbal Paper



Paper-making is messy, magical, and deeply satisfying. You can embed herbs into the pulp for both magic and aesthetics. Shred some scrap paper, soak overnight in water. Then blend it into a pulp. Stir in dried herbs: lavender for calm, rosemary for protection, rose petals for romance. Add a couple drops

of your favourite essential oil fragrance. Pour the pulp onto a screen (or window mesh), spread thin, press out water. Leave it to dry. Once fully dry it will turn into paper!! Stitch them together with black thread, and you've got yourself a spell book ready to be filled.

### Craft Your Own Witch's Broom

A true Witch's broom is rooted in its place. Victoria BC forests and beaches are perfect for foraging everything you need to make your broom.

- **Handle:** Find yourself a stick! Driftwood is

perfect — sun-bleached, wave-worn, already imbued with ocean magic.

- **Bristles:** Dried broom (yes, actual Scotch broom grows everywhere here), cedar twigs, or long grass stalks. Add some dried mugwort for dream power.

- **Binding:** strong black cord or hemp twine.

Gather a bundle of broom twigs or cedar. Lay them around the end of your driftwood handle. Bind tightly with cord, add a few dabs of hot glue while you wrap tight, until it looks like it could survive flight through a storm. Trim the twigs as desired (It will clean the floors but No guarantees it'll actually fly, but belief is half the magic.)

### Blood Vinegar (Cranberry Spice Elixir)

Here's an herbal treat that works in cocktails, over roasted veggies, or drizzled on a salad when you're feeling fancy. Think of it as a gothic antidote to pumpkin spice.

- 2 cups fresh cranberries, lightly crushed to release juice
- 1 cup apple cider vinegar
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 1 tsp cloves

## HERBAL WITCH

- 1 strip orange peel and 1 tbsp of squeezed juice
- ¼ cup honey

Dump it all in a clean glass jar. Seal, shake, and stash in a dark place for 2–3 weeks. Strain and bottle. The flavor is tart, warming, and complex—like autumn in a glass. Try splashing it over roasted squash, mixing with sparkling water, or stirring into a whiskey sour for a blood-red twist. Use in a blood-colored vinaigrette, splash into gin for a vampire cocktail, or on the rocks sip straight if you're that hardcore.

The fall season is an invitation to slow down and work with what the earth is offering. Inks from plants, paper laced with herbs, a broom bound from driftwood, and a jar of spiced blood vinegar — these aren't just crafts, they're ways of appreciating and utilizing nature. As the nights grow longer, let your herbal creations remind you that even in the dark, there is color, medicine, and magic waiting in the simplest things.

# BRENDAN + CHERYL

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



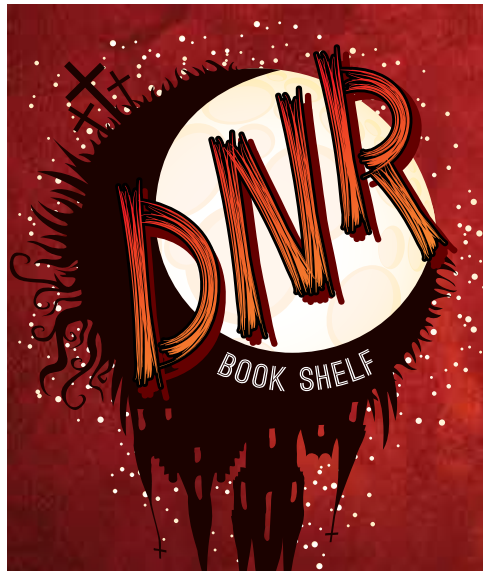
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## DO NOT RESUSCITATE DO NOT READ

REVIEWS DEDICATED TO THE MOST EXTREME, HORROR, BIZARRO, NOIR, SPLATTERPUNK, GRINDHOUSE, WEIRDO,  
FUCKED UP, COUNTER CULTURE, UNDERGROUND, SATANIC, EROTIC, & MUSIC RELATED BOOKS WE CAN FIND!

**OF THE FLESH: 18 STORIES OF  
MODERN HORROR**  
Susan Barker, J. K.  
Chukwu, Bridget  
Collins, and More  
The Borough Press,  
October 10th 2024

'Modern horror' is such an interesting generalization, and one that I am always excited to see interpreted by more authors. Like the folkloric horror of times past, monsters and other entities can act as a stand-in for real world fears—historically often warning children to stay out of the forest at night, or away from the water. Through the modern lens, the stand-in becomes more specific, reflecting the timeless archetypes in a more focused manner, and often with a rebellious edge. Stories that may have previously urged against too much individuality now throw up a middle finger, showing that perhaps the only way to survival is through that individuality.

A short story anthology is always an assortment of highs and lows, and OF THE FLESH has its share of both. Though some stories certainly out-play the others, it was nevertheless wholly worth the read. Opening with a tale of ghostly retribution, and closing out with a former writer trapped in a meek existence who sees a possible way out when faced with a common house mouse, each story provides a window into a different life. A couple of personal favourites include Emilia Hart's "Apples", a feminist fable involving a magical apple tree, and Robert Lautner's "Shade" in which a child working in a mine ends up with

a surprising ally. Keep an eye out as well for an illustrated story in the middle of the collection, about a loner who discovers that what she draws in her mother's old sketchbook becomes real. Whatever you look for in modern horror, you're bound to get a taste of it from this collection.

Laura Phaneuf

**THE AMITYVILLE BUKKAKE**

Edward Lee, R.J.  
Benetti, Judith Sonnet  
Brainsplash Books,  
March 31, 2024

'The Amityville Bukkake' is an extreme horror novel created by well-known authors Edward Lee, R.J. Benetti, and Judith Sonnet. I personally have not read anything by Benetti or Sonnet before, but they pique my interest after this one. Fans of Lee already know what to expect by the title. I felt like the tone was not classic Lee, but the story and style was. An outrageous idea run amok in the best way - I'm certain they had a blast putting it together. Half "laugh out loud" and half "oh Jesus no," you can ensure there is something for everyone in this novella. If you have a weak stomach or don't like gross out, don't bother. If you like books so bad they are good, then get your cum rag and enjoy.

The book begins with a group of pornstars - Lois, Shauna and Shooter- and their producer, Joey are all hired by an eccentric to shoot a bukkake porn in you guessed it, the famous Amityville house. What could go wrong? The haunted house takes the pornstars' already

heightened sexuality and cranks the knob to 17, and chaos ensues. The characters are all over the top where we find humour, absurdity, and lots of snappy comebacks. Some you cheer for, some you are glad at the fates they meet. If you ever needed to learn more names and descriptions for human anatomy and secretions, well, fear not, there are plenty of hilarious ones in this book.

Demonika

**THE WAY OF THE EIGHT WINDS:  
ELEMENTAL MAGIC AND  
GEOMANCY IN THE PA-  
GAN TRADITION**

Nigel Pennick  
Inner Traditions,  
June 3, 2025

The basic idea of 'The Way of the Eight Winds' is to recapture the magical connection between everyone and everything that we've lost in our increasingly isolated and disconnected modern lives.

Look into your own experience and be honest with yourself. Do you feel more connected to the world than you did, say, ten years ago.

Nigel has a lovely engaging style of writing. Our environment has a great impact on our personalities and lives. We've all been to places that oppress us, and we've all been to places that uplift us, that is elemental magic and geomancy in action.

An engaging and enlightening book. Highly recommended.

Steve Earles





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## Interview With The Original Vlogger WEIRD PAUL PETROSKEY About His Video Making History, Lo-Fi Music Career and Why He Chooses VHS to This Day!

By Josh Schafer

*Originally published on LunchmeatVHS.com on March 6, 2016*

**Weird Paul Petroskey is a guy who could rightly be seen as a veritable amateur video production pioneer. His predilection for popping up in front of the video camera and creating... well, just about anything he wanted, began in the early 80s and has yet to cease. Over the past 30+ years, Paul has created an incredible array of rewindable recordings with content that truly spans the spectrum ranging from what could quite possibly be the first food review video to ever exist to comedic one-man covers of groovy tunes to modern day mini-docs on his plethora of vintage collections. No matter the theme of his videos, Paul's admirable imagination, peppy personality and stance as an ardent retro aficionado pour out of every analog-drenched second. Oh, and he's also a renowned underground lo-fi musician and probably one of the coolest people on the planet. Read on, my fellow Videonauts, and get ready to rewind the perpetual party with Weird Paul....**

**Absolute Underground:** Tell us a little bit about yourself, man. You're the "Original Vlogger". Can you tell us about that title, and when it all started?

**Weird Paul:** My parents came home from a shopping trip with an RCA color video camera in September 1984. It was not actually a camcorder, because it had to be attached to the VCR to tape something. If you wanted to walk around and film with it, you had to carry the VCR around with you on a strap, around your shoulder (which I did for years). My dad did NOT want me to get near the camera. But I did not let that stop me; I knew my destiny was to have that camera filming me as much as possible. When I started uploading the old 80s videos that I'd made to the internet in 2012, some people took notice because they resembled the videos that were currently being made by people for YouTube. Only I'd made mine over 25 years before. So some of my subscribers started calling me "The Original Vlogger", they told me I should use that title. So



mowing his lawn outside the window, a music video (for "DRIVE" by The Cars), a documentary on my family's feet, my impression of Tiny Tim, a prank (dropping ping pong balls on my sister's head), a UFO cover-up drama starring myself - and that was all in the first day! And the day after that, I filmed what is probably my most popular YouTube video, a review of a 1984 McDonald's Breakfast - very similar to food reviews that are made on there now. I had seen The Homemade Comedy Special before we got the camera. I had also seen Len Cella's movies on The Tonight Show. Len Cella was my first big influence. There was also a special program on TV, I think in 1983, which were all films people had shot at home with their video cameras. Not just home movies, but actual short films. So I thought, I can make stuff like this, too, and maybe it'll get

shown somewhere, though I didn't have any real plans to make that happen. But now everybody in the world can see what I shot, because I'm uploading it to my YouTube channel at [www.youtube.com/user/weirdpaul](http://www.youtube.com/user/weirdpaul) I have around 130 hours of footage, so I keep uploading more of it. I have another channel for all the stuff I made with copyrighted music in (like the over 600 homemade music videos I made), that channel is [www.youtube.com/weirdpaulvideos](http://www.youtube.com/weirdpaulvideos). My "sweded" video for "We're Not Gonna Take It" by Twisted Sister is popular on there.

**AU:** You're a radical lo-fi musician, man. When did you start recording music? It was covers at first, I believe? When did you start doing your own stuff?

**WP:** In early 1984 (this was even before we got the video camera) I was 13 and I had finally gotten into popular music. I thought, I can make my own albums on cassettes (I thought I could do anything that anyone else did and I was usually

right). The first ones I made were all parodies of songs I heard on the radio. Most of them were about my teachers I didn't like; my history teacher Mr. Lebboda was a main target. I recorded them by going into the bathroom (good acoustics in there) and playing the actual song ("You Might Think" by The Cars for instance) on one tape recorder and just singing over it. I captured this on a second tape recorder also in the room. Eventually, I got my first guitar in 1985 and I started writing my own primitive songs and recorded albums with a mix of the parodies and originals. I would lend these tapes out to kids at my high school, most of whom thought I was really strange. In 1987, I released my first cassette IN CASE OF FIRE THROW THIS IN of all original songs and sold about 50 copies of it around my school. We'd have Friday night concerts in a friend's garage and all the kids would come out to hear me play. I'd make music videos for my songs, filmed on VHS. After high school, I got signed to

I did.

**AU:** I'd say that was a groovy move, man. What kind of stuff did you record at first? Did you have any particular plans for the footage? Where can we see all of your early video camcorder footage?

**WP:** The first thing that I filmed after my parents were done testing the camera was the contents of our toilet. My dad was not amused by it at all. He took the camera away and erased my footage. That afternoon I got the camera back, though, by whatever means were necessary. It was attached to my hand the rest of that day. I filmed a room tour, my neighbor

Homestead Records who had put out albums by Sonic Youth, GG Allin, Dinosaur Jr and Daniel Johnston, just to name a few. I've kept releasing music (over 30 albums) and playing live (over 500 performances) to this day. And I still make many of my music videos on VHS.

**AU:** You're also a notable collector, with an interest in a variety of vintage things. Can you give us an idea of some of your collecting habits? I know you collect VHS, too. What are some of your favorite tapes?

**WP:** I've been collecting stuff since I was a kid. I started out collecting things I could get for free, like postage stamps, bottle caps and matchbooks. I have never had much money, so I've almost always been a "budget collector"; I rarely pay more than a dollar for anything. I usually shop for stuff at thrift stores, used book and record stores and flea markets. I've been haunting these kinds of places for so many years now that I've managed to build up quite a haul - some of this stuff you just can't find for the kind of prices I paid for it years ago. Records, old toys, old books, retro video games, etc. I show all of this stuff on my YouTube channel. And of course VHS! I have a lot of cool big boxes (Force Video is one company I really like) and anything strange/obscure/independent is always on my want list. But my favorite VHS company of all is Vestron. I picked up one of their print catalogs at a video store back in 1983 (which I still have) and I became obsessed with all the strange movies in it. So Vestron is my main label to collect and I've been trying for years to make a complete list of every title they released with catalog numbers. There is no complete list of that on the internet and I keep finding more I didn't know about!

**AU:** You're still recording a ton of videos for YouTube, and they're still shot on VHS. Why do you choose to shoot on video tape in a world of digital built-in cams? What is it about VHS that does it for you, dude?

**WP:** When I had my first viral YouTube video and my subscribers started calling me The Original Vlogger, I thought, well I can make new vlogs, too. But I didn't have a digital camera. All I had was a Video8 camera and I couldn't get the tape door to open. So my only option was to plug the Video8 camera into a VCR and film my vlogs onto VHS tape, then digitize them with a DV converter and edit them in iMovie on a 2005 iBook. And that's still exactly how I do it, almost 4 years later. I still don't have a digital camera, and I honestly don't need one. The VHS is so great to work with and I've been working with it since I was 13. I love how it looks, and it goes great with my channel, since most of what I talk about is retro-themed, anyway. My subscribers really like it too and I feel like it's unique in a world where almost everything you see looks the same. I got my first blank VHS tape in 1982 and I have filled up over 1000 VHS tapes with movies, TV and my own films since then. It's a great format!

**AU:** What's going on in Weird Paul's world right now? What're some current events or projects you'd like us to check out?

**WP:** I have the first in a series of limited edition

# LUNCHMEAT

7" releases coming up in a few months. I haven't had too many vinyl releases during my career yet, so this is exciting news. I've had some of my 80s films screening here and there and my 1984 McDonald's Breakfast Review is going to be screened at Giron in Chicago in March. It was chosen by VIDEO! VIDEO! ZINE from a bunch of home movie videos that were submitted for a contest. There is a documentary about me called WEIRD PAUL: A LO FIDELITY DOCUMENTARY that came out in 2006 and played at some festivals. I sell that on my website, but I just heard from some filmmakers that are interested in making a new up-to-date documentary on me. It will include the whole YouTube and internet story, as well. So, I'll have more news on that soon. I'm also planning on doing some concert appearances outside of Pittsburgh this year, so maybe I'll end up in your town - come out and say hi!

**AU:** Yo, I'd DEFINITELY be there if you came to the Philly area, man. That would RULE. Where can we keep up with you, Paul? Where's the best place to experience all of your analog-inclined output - past, present and future?

**WP:** I'm uploading my videos to my two YouTube channels: [www.youtube.com/weirdpaul](http://www.youtube.com/weirdpaul) for my old VHS footage and new vlogs about cool retro stuff and my memories about it. [www.youtube.com/user/weirdpaulvideos](http://www.youtube.com/user/weirdpaulvideos) is where I keep uploading all my old homemade music videos. So you can subscribe to those for all the fun. You can see featured older stuff I've done and keep up to date by liking my Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/weirdpaul](http://www.facebook.com/weirdpaul) - I post some pretty entertaining stuff there. You can listen to my lo-fi output of over 20 albums at [www.weirdpaul.bandcamp.com](http://www.weirdpaul.bandcamp.com). I've also posted

a lot of funny retro 6 second clips on Vine and I'm on Twitter, Instagram and Soundcloud doing the stuff they do there.

**AU:** Anything else you wanna shout out to all the Tapeheads hangin' in Lunchmeat Land?

**WP:** Everything old is new again, and everything new is cool again! There's a resurgence of popularity for 80s stuff and especially for VHS and it couldn't possibly be better timing! VHS is the best and I'm glad I'm helping to introduce young people to some of what they missed before they were born!

**Yo, so are we, Paul! In case you haven't noticed, Weird Paul just rules. Be sure to clickity-click on all the hot links above to explore his multifaceted magnetic magic kind of world, and don't forget to pay a lengthy visit to his YouTube channels. I analog assure you that there is a seemingly endless ocean of shot-on-video, homemade variety insanity just waiting to invade your brain, Tapeheads! So, wait... why are you still reading this?! Go hang with Weird Paul in a virtual world of the radical past, man! DIG IT!! Groove and Groove and Do It Your Way, Dude.**

*Photos Courtesy of Weird Paul*





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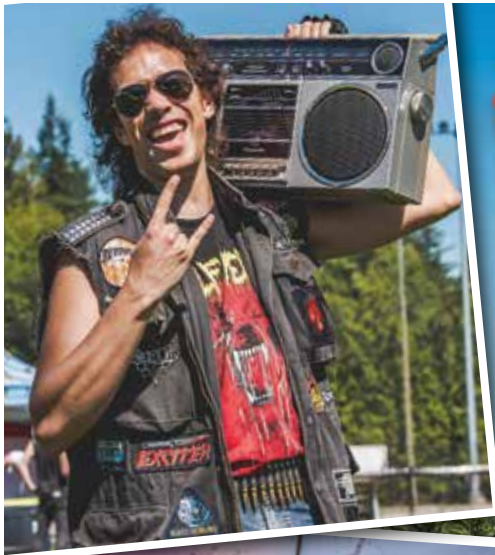
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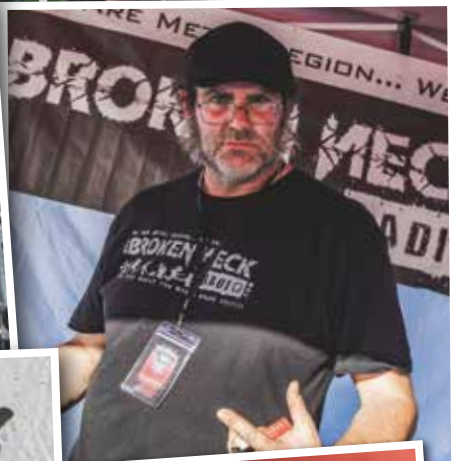
# MOSH THE ROCK

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## Interview With EMPRESS

Interview/photos by Jay Flett

**Jay Flett: Who are you guys, how long have you been a band and how would you describe your sound?**

**Empress:** We are Empress we have been around since 2016, we had a number of years we couldn't be active, our sound is post metal and blackened sludge.

**JF: Have you had any lineup changes?**

**EM:** It's always been three we started with our buddy Brenden we've known since we were kids he passed away before Covid that's why we weren't active and then it took us a number of years to get back on our feet kinda thing and then we got Mike. Current lineup is Peter/Guitar and vocals, Chris/ drums, Mike/Bass.

**JF: How's the Vancouver scene been for you and has it changed since you started?**

**EM:** It's always fluctuated since we were kids, it will go through down periods of like eh h h h h, and then periods where bands are taking off. Right now it's doing really good there is lots of DIY venues that help the scene thrive and stay alive.

**JF: How are you finding attendance at shows?**

**EM:** We have never had attendance issues. Post covid more people are at shows. Having three or so years kids couldn't go to shows that turned 19 during covid just sitting around waiting that were just ravenous for it.

**JF: What motivates you guys to continue to play?**

**EM:** It's not something we consciously think about, we just want to be doing it all the time. Just the love of the music and the road, one common goal is the show.

## TERMINAL SESSIONS



**JF: Do you guys play in other bands?**

**EM:** Bort, Ylem, and Dead quiet.

**JF: Slayer or Carcass?**

**Peter:** Seeing a Slayer show but would rather tour with Carcass.

**Chris:** Carcass.

**Mike:** Slayer.

**JF: What's down the road for you guys?**

**EM:** We are recording our album over the course of the year, we have drums done and in November guitars and bass. All our music is available on all streaming services. New album ballpark 2026.

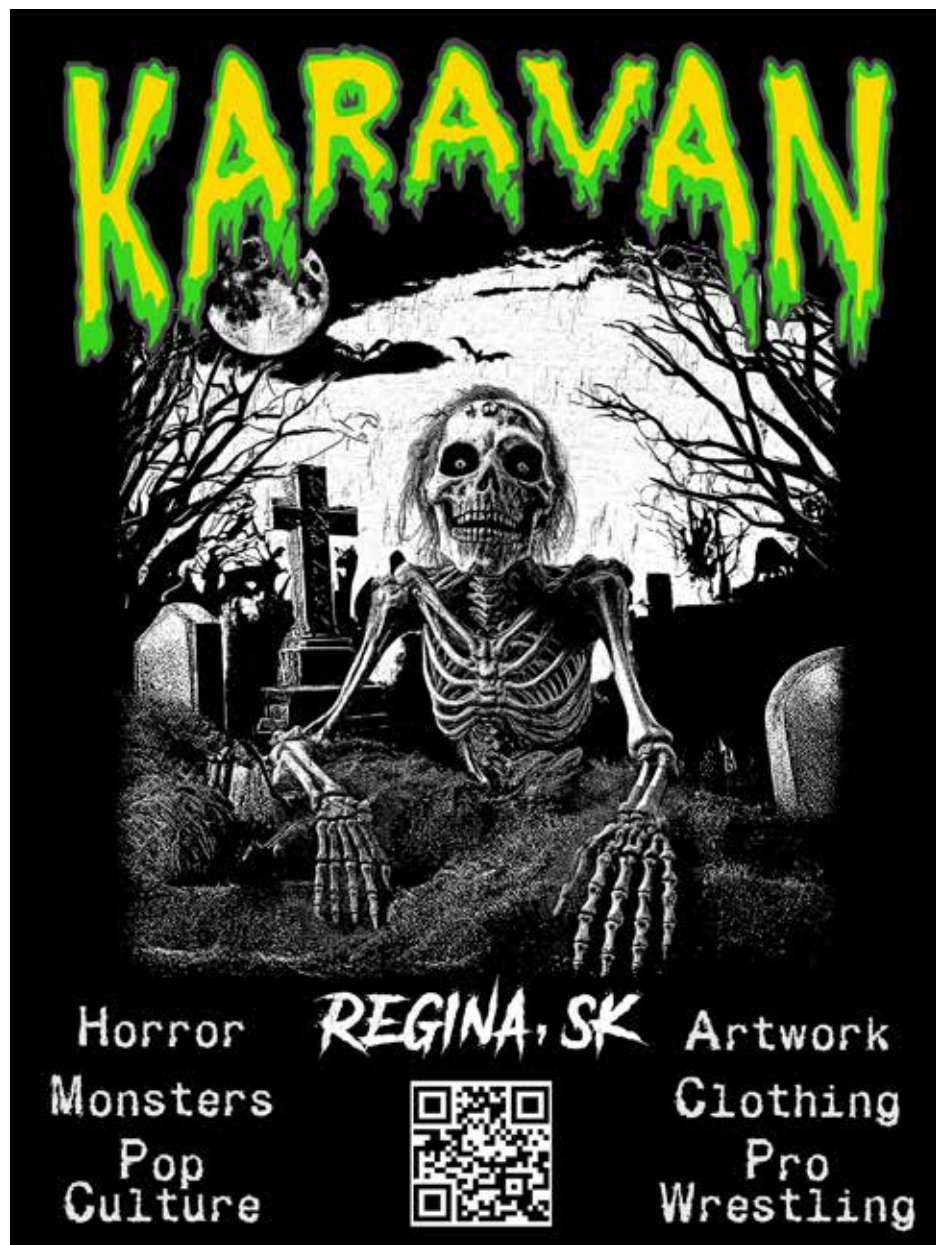
**JF: Do you have a favourite show or shows since you started?**

**EM:** Playing with High on Fire at Modified Ghost Fest, One of my bands played with Gojira, and Elder but Peter was in Iceland....

**JF: Any parting words?**

**EM:** Look for our album release show in mid 2026.

Check out @theterminalnaimo on Instagram!



## Give the Gift of Music

Donate an instrument today



### Our Mission:

The MUSIC Society is a volunteer run charity in Victoria whose mission is simple: get quality instruments to school aged children who otherwise couldn't afford them. This year's event will be held at Influence Boardshop on Christmas Eve.

Head to our website to make a monetary donation, or fill out the application form to receive a free instrument.

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Victoria

## The MUSIC Society is giving the gift of music to the next generation.

The MUSIC Society (Musicians United in Supplying Instruments to Children) is a

volunteer-run charity in Victoria, BC whose mission is simple: get quality instruments to school-aged kids who otherwise couldn't afford them. Inspired by an act of generosity, founder Avi Lugassy received a beat-up four-string guitar when he was a teen that changed his life, and the Society has turned that spirit forward, giving away hundreds of refurbished guitars, keyboards, violins and more since 2018.

### How the "Gift of Music" program works:

**Community donations** – locals drop off new, used or even lightly-damaged instruments at partner shops Guitars Plus, Influence Board Shop, or M2 Graphix.

**Refurbish & wrap** – Volunteers restring, clean and tag every instrument so it's fully playable.

**Holiday draw** – Families with children apply online each fall. A randomized draw matches the number of instruments collected; winners are notified by December 20th.

**Big hand-off** – On December 24, recipients pick up their instruments (often with small sibling gifts) at the city host location, turning Christmas Eve into a community-powered jam session!



### Ways to get involved right now:

**Donate an instrument** – Guitars, violins, ukuleles, small keyboards and band instruments in overall good shape are welcome; minor issues (missing strings, loose keys) are fine. Large items like pianos and full drum kits can't be accepted.

**Give funds** – Cash contributions via the Society's online portal can help cover strings, repairs and the purchase of new instruments at bulk discounts - [www.zeffy.com/en-CA/embed/donation-form/give-the-gift-of-music-2?modal=true](http://www.zeffy.com/en-CA/embed/donation-form/give-the-gift-of-music-2?modal=true)

**Volunteer** – From pickup runs and basic repairs to gift-wrapping, event coordination or graphic design, any skill set is useful - commit as much or as little time as you can.

**Become a drop-off partner or sponsor** – Local businesses can host donation boxes, supply parts, or offer discounted services.

Need an instrument? Parents and guardians can fill out a short request form which will be open in the fall.

### Why this matters:

Access to a real, playable instrument can spark creativity, confidence and community for a child. By giving unused gear a second life, the MUSIC Society removes cost barriers and proves that a small act of generosity can resonate for years.





## A WOLFGANG EXTRAVAGANZA! MAMMOTH RELEASES *THE END*

### Interview with Wolfgang Van Halen By Clark ‘Super’ Mantei

Wolfgang does it again. As the mastermind behind *The End*, Mammoth's new album delivers a mind-bending ride with 10 tracks that fully embrace your senses. The musical journey began in 2001, when his father gifted him a drum set for his 10th birthday—sparking a career of touring and recording. Already musically gifted, Wolfgang quickly mastered bass, guitar, and vocals, becoming an accomplished songwriter. He launched Mammoth in 2020, releasing albums in 2021 and 2023 and touring non-stop. The new album and tour are now ready, and I was fortunate to interview Wolfgang this past September.

**AU: Hello, Mr. Wolfgang. Welcome to *Absolute Underground's* Halloween issue. Can you let our readers know who you are and what you're most famous or infamous for?**

**Wolfgang Van Halen:** I play music. I don't know if that makes me famous or infamous, but I play music in a band called Mammoth. I was in a band with my dad that a lot of people probably know more, called Van Halen. Now, I have my own band called Mammoth where I play all the instruments. You can see it on our YouTube channel.

**AU: Your new Mammoth album *The End* comes out October 24. When did you start working on it and how long did it take to complete?**

**WVH:** We had the great pleasure of touring with Metallica on the M72 World Tour in 2023–2024. I started writing and recording *The End* right after the tour wrapped—we began working on demos, then I flew back to play the final show. Once I returned, we finished the demos, moved into tracking, took a short holiday break then wrapped up vocals, solos, and overdubs in January. Altogether, it took about three months to complete.

**AU: This time you didn't enter the studio with any demos. All ten tracks were created then and there at 5150 Studios with producer Michael “Elvis” Baskette. As the lone wolf musician and singer, what was the magic process or madness behind recording these songs so organically?**

**WVH:** Normally, I make demos on my laptop using Logic Pro, but this time around we had the studio up and ready early enough, that I would ask my engineer Jeff to put the click at a certain tempo, then I would play a guitar to it. Then, I would run out and play drums to that and kind of run back and forth playing everything. It was a lot more of a creatively exciting environment. I could tell pretty quickly if it was a good song idea to be working on, rather than being on Logic where you kind of get lost in the sauce. It was a lot easier and a more creatively fulfilling environment.

**AU: Is Michael's middle name really “Elvis” or is there a story as to why he is known by that name? I'm a huge Elvis fan.**

**WVH:** No, it's not. He looked like Elvis growing up, and he still kind of does when his hair is a certain way. That's his nickname. Nobody calls him Michael. In fact, I use it as a joke sometimes. I'll call him Mike out of nowhere and he does a double take. It's pretty funny.

**AU: You are an amazing vocalist. Have you ever had a vocal coach?**

**WVH:** I had a vocal coach who would warm Dad and me up before every Van Halen tour. It was running scales. Almost like weightlifting, but for

your voice. It wasn't a coach in terms of this is how you sing, but it was more of how to warm up well. He did give me pointers, but I've always been able to sing.

**AU: How do you find the magic ingredients to vocal harmonies?**

**WVH:** Harmonies are some of my favourite things in music, so I really relish that moment at the end of vocal tracking when I'm like, “Okay, where do the harmonies go?” It's a very fun part of the vocal process, and I love it.

Sometimes I already have ideas, but other times I wonder, “Should this be doubled here, or is there something to add in the background?” I just kind of take each song for what it is and what it calls for.

**AU: How do you create the lyrics? Do you carry a note book around?**

**WVH:** No, usually it's my phone. Anytime I have an idea, I'll use my voice memos to make sure to keep it, because half the time I always forget it. So that's really important. Even the smallest idea that feels like it might be nothing is important to write down.

**AU: Do you write material when you're on the road?**

**WVH:** A bit of both. I think that sometimes when you're on the road, you're so focused on being your best for the show that your not really creatively in that energy. So, usually it's when I get a break from touring that my brain starts to think creatively again. Sometimes during soundcheck when I'm noodling something really cool comes out, but when it comes to creative thinking that's when I'm at home.

**AU: This album is really good. It takes a few listens to grip the listener and then it just kind of crawls under your skin.**

**WVH:** That's what I love about music man. When I finished this record I was really stoked but I wasn't sure how I sat with it. Then I kept listening to it and I think everything started to grow on me. I think albums like that where you hear it the first time and you're not sure how you feel about it, and then it breaks through this layer and it becomes your favourite thing. Which is why I think this album is the best thing we've done yet. I'm really proud of it.

**AU: The name Mammoth is so great. Who came up with the idea of using your father's old band name and why is it just Mammoth now instead of WVH like before?**

**WVH:** I think it's a great nod to my family history without diving into the Van Halen aspect. It was one of many names of bands that my dad had growing up. It was one where he was singing, so I think I find a bit of kinship in that. I enjoy that I'm the singer of Mammoth, the same as he was. There is no more WVH because of all copyright stuff. We own it now and it's what we wanted it to be from the beginning.

**AU: Who created the LP jacket art to *The End* and what is the concept?**

**WVH:** Moon Patrol. He's an incredibly talented artist and I've been a big fan for many years. I'm very honoured to be able to use his art for our album cover. During the writing and recording process, it really spoke to me in terms of how my headspace was when I was writing the lyrics. I thought it just really symbolized the concept of what I was trying to do with the record.

**AU: Your videos have great intros and storylines, reminiscent of the ol' MTV 80s days. Do you come up with the concepts yourself, or does each producer collaborate with you?**

**WVH:** Normally, the ideas start with me, but then we take input from everybody in the Mammoth family. We just riff ideas and have a good time. I think our main thing is that it's important not to take ourselves too seriously. It's fun to just have a good time and make funny things with your friends.

**AU: The LP's title track and video, “The End,” are outstanding. The *From Dusk till Dawn*—**

**inspired theme is fantastic, and the scene where you walk on the tables during the guitar solo feels reminiscent of Van Halen's “Hot For Teacher,” where your father did the same. Any connection there?**

**WVH:** Yes. Good eye and thank you very much! It's fun to throw little Easter eggs in there now and then. Being able to work with Robert Rodriguez himself to do an homage to one of my favourite movies of his was a kind of a dream come true. To this day, I still can't believe we actually did it.

**AU: I saw you in concert in 2007 with Van Halen and Eddie was testing the “Wolfgang Signature Stratocaster.” You have your own signature guitar now—how does it differ from the Wolfgang model, particularly in electronics?**

**WVH:** The SA-126 has different pickups, and most notably, it's a semi-hollow rather than a solid-body guitar. We have special pickups that were wound by Tim Shaw. They're slightly hotter than what you would find in a normal semi-hollow, so you can get that grit, but it also cleans up really nice. It's really versatile.

**AU: How old were you when you started playing drums? You joined Van Halen on bass at just 16—when did you start focusing on guitar, and do you follow a regular practice routine?**

**WVH:** I was nine when I started playing the drums and I started playing guitar when I was 12. I started playing bass when I was jamming with my dad when I was 14. I don't know if there's necessarily a practice routine I stick to. Pretty much, we're always touring, so I'm always playing. It's not so much a formal practice routine.

**AU: Your bandmates replicate your studio parts so well live—it's spellbinding. Do they hear the album before it's finished, or is it a surprise? Are they the same musicians from the original Mammoth WVH tours?**

**WVH:** Yes, I've got a live band that plays everything and they've been here since the beginning and have played every show. I definitely let them in on the process. I showed them the demos this time around as I was working on them. I also send them stuff from the studio so they can hear stuff that I'm excited

about. I like sharing it with them

**AU: I'd love to come to your last show in L.A. this December and do a review. Any plans for 2026?**

**WVH:** Sure! The last show of the tour is always a good one to see because the band is comfortable and we are a well-oiled machine at that point. Then next year we are going to go everywhere that we didn't go on this headline tour out here. I know we've got plans to go to Canada and do Europe too. It's go time!

**AU: If you can, please come to Victoria. We'd love to see you in our arena.**

**WVH:** Oh for sure, that would be great.

**AU: It's so fitting that new Mammoth music is being released the week before Halloween and the tour starts on Halloween night. Good luck on the tour and thank you so much. Rock out and roll on man. HaPpY Halloween to your whole family, bandmates and crew. I'll end the questions with some fun. Do your palms get itchy and grow fur when there is a full moon and would that make you howl instead of sing?**

**WVH:** A full moon doesn't sit well with me. I feel weird, like I black out and then wake up naked in a forest, covered in blood. It's really alarming, but you know I haven't been caught yet so I think everything's okay.

**AU: Do four wolves create a wolfpack or is it always just a Wolfgang?**

**WVH:** I think wolfpack works for four. I think maybe a pack might be a little smaller, whereas a gang could probably be upwards of 10. Packs stick together, so four is probably a good number for a pack, but a gang could be upwards of 10, 20, 100, 500 or 1000. I know some modes on *Call of Duty* and shooting games can be upwards of 36 players, so maybe 18 would be a proper amount for a gang. I really don't know the answer. Happy Halloween from Wolfgang of one!

***The End* is available October 24**

**mammoth.band**

**Photo Credit: Travis Shinn**





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## WITCHES by G.B. JONES

Published by Heretic House & Midnight Mass Press

1st Edition 2024 ISBN: 978-1-7779042-1-0

G.B. Jones is an artist, musician, filmmaker and zine publisher. From 1980 to 1995, Jones and Caroline Azar lead the post-punk band Fifth Column while publishing the zine "Hide". In 1991, her first solo exhibition opened at Feature gallery in New York, highlighting her Tom Girl series first seen in her zine "J.D.s". Her art has been featured in publications such as *The Devil's Reign*, and *Hex* magazine, as frontispiece for the 2018 book "Folk Horror Revival: Field Studies", and on album covers by the band The Hidden Cameras and Filthy Gaze of Europe. Jones is represented by Toronto gallery Cooper Cole.

**Absolute Underground: The work is primarily a collection of your drawings, so I have to ask - when did you start drawing?**

**GB Jones:** As far back as I can remember, I was always drawing. The learning came from looking, whether it was art in children's books, comics, magazine illustrations, or the work found in galleries and museums. As far as formal training, we had art classes in school, I attended art camp in the summer and then I went to art college, where I had life drawing and illustration in my first year; however, the instructors didn't think there was much of a future for me in drawing so I gave it up and studied film and photography. I really wasn't planning to do this!

**AU: The essays intertwined in the pages - how did you select whose**

**words would be in this book?**

**GB:** Everyone included had previously been involved in independent publishing, either editing zines or writing for them, so I was already an admirer of their work. We shared an interest in everything mysterious and arcane, so this book was a fantastic opportunity to gather everyone's ideas about witches into one volume.

**AU: Have you always been fascinated by witches?**

**GB:** As a child, you couldn't tear me away from the TV when *Bewitched* or *HR Pufnstuf* or *Sabrina* cartoons were on. Then in the late 1960s, early 1970s, there was an explosion of media interest in the occult, folk horror and witches, which held my attention right through the Satanic Panic of the 1990s, and on to today.

**AU: Where was this project born?**

**GB:** I started drawing witches in 2016 and showed the first few at Participant gallery in New York. When I'd finished a series of witches portraits they were shown at Cooper Cole in Toronto. The publishers behind Heretic House came to the exhibition and expressed interest in doing a book, and then we met with Midnight Mass and began planning in earnest.

**AU: How long did the research take to collect so many sources?**

**GB:** I'd seen most of the movies and TV shows that featured the witches I've drawn, and I was familiar with quite a lot of the 'real life' witches from documentaries; the publishers added an entirely new level of research with their knowledge of books about witchcraft, so this has been a lifetime of research for everyone involved.

**AU: Is this book a good resource for those in the horror fandom universe as it references so many books and**

**movies in the same place?**

**GB:** Yes, and to make it easy, there's a bibliography and a filmography included which will be useful for anyone interested in going deeper and darker.

**AU: Who is the audience for this book?**

**GB:** I tried to approach the book from various angles so that it could talk to more than just one group of people because witches represent different things to different people.

**AU: There are many varied definitions but what is the definition of the name "witch" to you?**

**GB:** That's what's so fantastic about the word 'witch', the meaning varies from person to person, so I like to say that the witch exists in a multitude of meanings.

**AU: Why do you think the term "witch" was attached to women instead of men?**

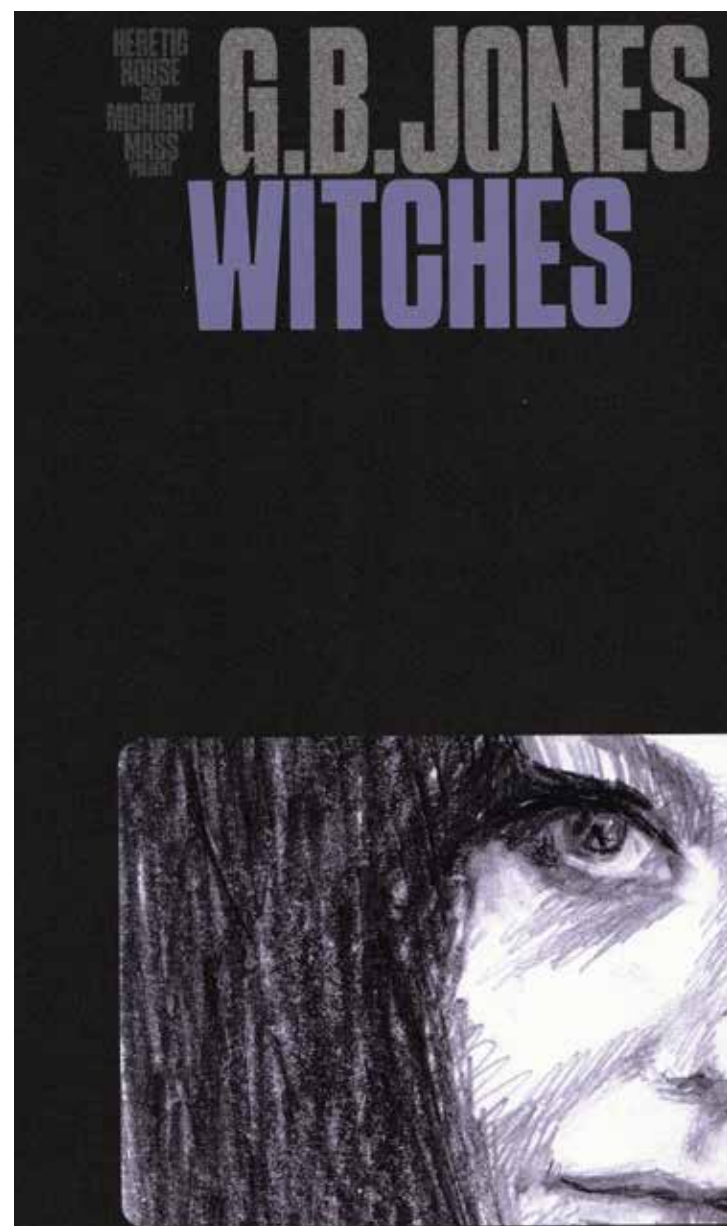
**GB:** The answer undoubtedly lies in how the term has been used over the centuries and the results that have been procured from it. The evidence is all around us. But now we're reclaiming the word and the power that goes with it!

**AU: I found a quote in an essay on the modern witch, that is essence said "if your witchcraft is not political, you are asleep. With our culture as racist, patriarchal, transphobic and materialist as it is, if you don't see the way witchcraft is radical and revolutionary, you have waking up to do". What are your thoughts on this statement?**

**GB:** TRUE.

**Thank you, GB**

**John Carlow**





# TOWARDS VITAL EXISTENCE



WWW.WHATISTHEPROGRAM.COM

## Halloween Playlist Picks plus Movie Pairings and Candy Considerations

By Jonathan Sohn

Spooky season is upon us! This means it's time for horror movie marathons, sugar binges (looking at you Chucky-Punch Fanta) and at least one opportunity to bust that sexy-milk-carton costume out of the back of the closet. Halloween wouldn't be Halloween without a high-quality soundtrack, and while there will always be room in my heart for the "Monster Mash" and "Goo Goo Muck", any playlist worth having needs an annual refresher. Let's raid the new releases and pick out some songs.

### Witchrot - "Throat Cutter"

from *Soul Cellar* (Fuzzed and Buzzed)

Witchrot dropped their latest full-length *Soul Cellar* in late spring. It's an eerie, unrelenting thrill ride. Most immediate is the track "Throat Cutter". This evil piece of psychedelic doom leans on fuzzy basslines and a truly menacing guitar riff. Vocalist Lea Reto screams from beyond. Ominous. Scary. Best paired with hardcore slasher films and black jelly beans.

### Jayniac Jr. - "UnDead Friends"

from *Girlfoe* (self-released)

Jayniac Jr. has released a couple EP's this year. The dynamic ska/punk/reggae sextet's most recent release includes "UnDead Friends". While technically not about the undead (it's about the phenomenon of your former pals re-appearing in your life when it best benefits them) it's still a ripper of a track that throws hardcore punk and hip-hop into the blender with tantalizing results. (try not to get blood in your eyes) Do it up with a teen horror comedy and those bat-shaped Reese things. Salty and sweet.

### Big Evil - "Zaplite"

from *Live From The Castle* (self-released)

Toronto trio Big Evil have been drip-feeding carnage and mayhem all year. It was hard to choose between the two songs off *Live From The Castle* but I went with "Zaplite". Sonic ultra-violence condensed into an ugly

little noise-punk package. Dissonant and terrifying. Vocalist Marcus Iannello shrieks like a man being electrocuted by means of a car-battery. Goes great with a zombie gore-fest and handfuls of pop-rocks.

### Bends - "Ghosty"

from *Picking Daisies* (self-released)

Bends' latest offering is a delicious assortment that includes space-age indie-pop and shoegazey goodness. Including their track "Ghosty" might be a bit on the nose, but for those who like their Halloween to be more fun than frightening, this track is right on the money as it buzzes and whirrs. Goes great with a family-friendly holiday haunt and an irresponsible amount of candy corn.

### Bloody Blue Darlings - "Vampire Hair"

from *Go Kick-Ass! 3* (Cartridge Heart)

"Vampire Hair" is the first single released by Bloody Blue Darlings in quite some time, though they've been teasing a meatier release to come sooner rather than later. This one was included on the massive *Go Kick-Ass! 3* compilation. The gothic retro-punks use repetition to hypnotize and lull the listener into a false sense of security before they pounce with a full-fanged attack. Complements a night with a vampire flick (obviously) and a blood orange soda.

### AAWKS - "Lost Dwellers"

from *On Through the Sky Maze* (Black Throne Productions)

Barrie psych-rockers AAWKS have carved out quite a name for themselves with their penchant for celestial rock symphonies. With "Lost Dwellers" they deliver another slice of space-faring doom. This one will blast you into orbit and pummel you with a meteor shower. In space, no one can hear you scream. But they can totally hear this track. Combine with a space sci-fi/horror classic and a pack of Rockets.

*Jonathan Sohn is an obsessive playlister and mix-cd maestro. You can find his opinions in the pages of Plastic and Wax or anywhere else that will let him get a word in. While Reese Peanut Butter cups will always be his #1, those Kraft caramel squares rot his teeth every Halloween.*

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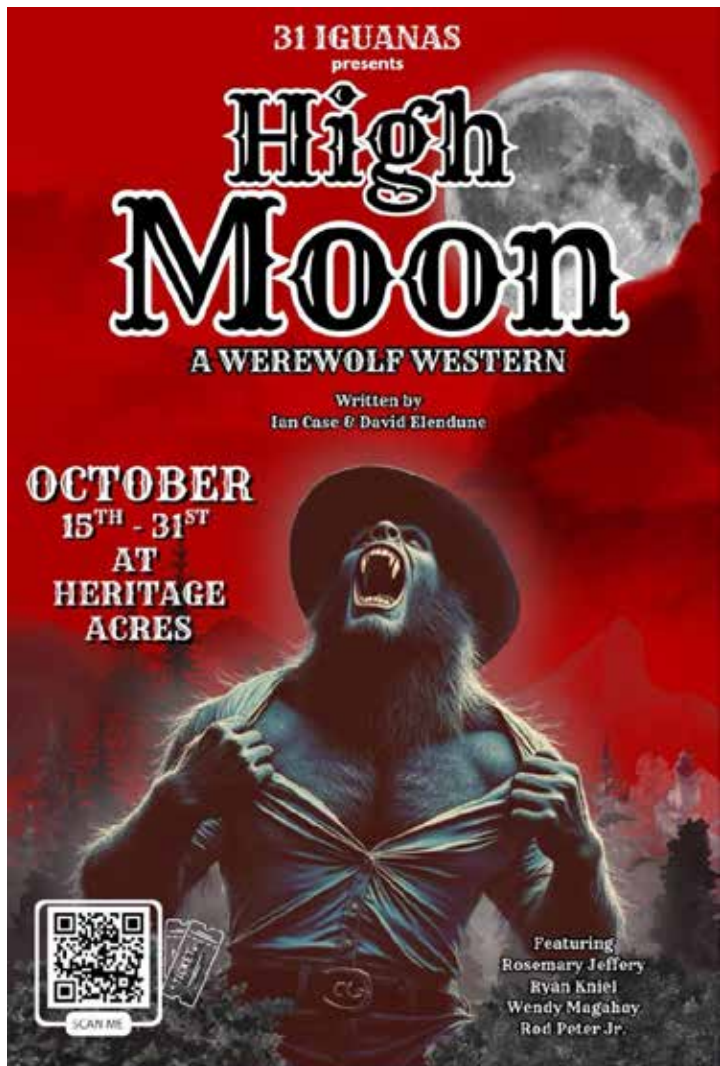
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# High Moon: A Werewolf Western Hits the Stage

has been produced worldwide—including England, Poland, and the United States—and many of his plays are available online for other theatre groups to perform. *Good Night Uncle Joe*, which he calls “a play that refuses

By Ed Sum

When the moon rises over Heritage Acres this Halloween, a new kind of terror is set to howl and be heard everywhere around Victoria, BC. *High Moon*, a werewolf western from local theatre veterans David Elendune and Ian Case, promises guns, ghouls, and a wild twist on the classic horror tale. With over a decade of creating chills, thrills, and interactive theatre experiences, these two are teaming up to deliver a show that’s equal parts spine-tingling and uniquely Canadian. This show will run from October 15 to 31st, at Heritage Acres 7321 Lochside Dr, Saanichton, BC and tickets can be purchased at [artsvictoria.ca/show/817032/view](http://artsvictoria.ca/show/817032/view)

**David Elendune** is primarily a writer, though he occasionally directs and acts. His work

to die,” continues to pop up on stages, and his imaginative take on *Winnie the Pooh* has even made it to American audiences.

**Ian Case** is the founder of Giggling Iguana Productions and a fixture in Victoria’s theatre scene. Beyond local stages, he has represented musicians nationally, performed internationally as an actor, and worked in film and TV. He’s perhaps best known locally for his interactive Halloween productions at Craigdorrha Castle, which have become a beloved highlight for audiences across the city. Together, Elendune and Case are combining their talents for *High Moon*, blending horror, history, and humour into a theatrical experience that promises to thrill audiences this Halloween. To learn more about how these two creative forces came together, I sat down with them for an in-depth conversation.

**AU: When did you merge your companies?**

**IC:** After I retired from UVic, combining forces made sense. Bigger projects, like *High Moon*, are easier to handle together.

**DE:** We complement each other: I handle writing and publicity; Ian handles contracts. Social media and personal networks help too—my old email list is back to 500, and ticket sales are already coming in. Victoria audiences are arts-engaged, and Halloween shows appeal to families seeking unique experiences.

**AU: How did High Moon come about?**

**DE:** It started in coffee shop conversations. We wanted a werewolf western—something no one had done on stage.

**IC:** The story centers on two brothers—one sees the curse as a gift, the other as a burden. The Civil War added depth. The first draft came together in a month, then we refined it with actors through workshoping.

**DE:** Horror often explores a hero fighting to avoid becoming a monster—that’s the tragedy. We also delve into war’s impact on the psyche, ideological politics, and freedom. Subtle references to abolition connect freedom with responsibility.

**AU: How did casting work in a community where everyone knows everyone?**

**IC:** We didn’t hold auditions; I suggested people

I knew. Wendy, Ryan, Magahay, Rod Peter Jr.—we’ve worked with them before and trust their skill. Rod’s been part of this scene since 2016, and he brings a lot to the table.

**DE:** Rosemary Jeffery and Ryan Kniel round out the cast. We plan to expand in future productions.

**AU: Any techniques or effects you’re particularly excited about?**

**IC:** Each scene has “magic” moments that make audiences ask, “How did they do that?” Transformations are gradual, immersive, and subtle, drawing inspiration from *American Werewolf in London* and Ionesco’s *Rhinoceros*.

**DE:** Beyond horror, we explore war’s effects on the psyche, politics, freedom, and morality. Even the “bad” brother is humanized; the audience sees loss, drive, and nuance.

**AU: How would you respond to fans who want more?**

**DE:** Come see our shows. We plan to run for 10 years, and hope *High Moon* has a couple of seasons. We may also produce family shows in spring or Easter, plus solo work. I’ve written a book this year, so the shows are varied—not all the same.

**AU: Any ambitions beyond horror?**

**DE:** There’s not enough sci-fi on stage. Ray Bradbury inspired me, and younger artists are exploring sci-fi theatre. We might set something on a space station, re-imagining Poe’s *Hop-Frog*.

**AU: Why is this show a must-see this Halloween?**

**IC:** If this show were a 50s B-movie poster, the tagline would be: *High Moon: a werewolf western. Be careful. Things could get hairy.*



# THE EXCHANGE

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# Absolute Graphic Novel Reviews

## ANIMAL MAN 30TH ANNIVERSARY DELUXE EDITION BOOK ONE

Written by Grant Morrison, Art by Chaz Truog & Others

I'd read Morrison's *Animal Man* before, but this new edition was a nice excuse to look at it with fresh eyes. The hardcover's a little bigger than previous printings, which lets the art really pop off the page.



The tone reminds me of Alan Moore's *Swamp Thing*; I know Moore and Morrison infamously don't get along, but it's hard to not see Moore's influence on this series, with a superhero story getting subverted to talk about the nature of humanity, the individual, and the growing threats of corporate culture and industrialization.

I'd forgotten how sad this book was, especially the first issues. I sat down to read it first thing in the morning, and wasn't prepared to feel such an intensity of emotions so early in the day. After getting into a couple of issues of *Animal Man*, I needed to chill out for a bit. It's a great story, but man, is it heavy. It talks about racism, animal testing, and other aspects of humanity that make you suspect maybe this world would be better off without creatures like us on it. Then again, it's also funny, loving, and compassionate, just like we all have the potential to be.

- Hank from Golden Age

## DAREDEVIL MODERN ERA EPIC COLLECTION: THE DEVIL IN CELL-BLOCK D

Written by Ed Brubaker, Art by Michael Lark and Others

I can't imagine the courage it would take to write *Daredevil*, knowing that many of the greatest comic writers of all time have already done some of the best work of their career with that character. Do you want to stand in the shadows of giants like Stan Lee, Frank Miller, and Brian Michael Bendis, when they were at their strongest? What would your stories look like next to theirs?



Ed Brubaker is, in my eyes, one of the greatest writers of crime comics the world has ever seen. He's also quite good at capturing the sublimely supernatural worlds of superhumans. And on his run of *Daredevil*, he's teamed up with some truly impressive artists, capable of capturing both great action scenes, emotional moments, as well as incredible locales.

All of which adds up to a book that's basically... fine. It's okay. I enjoyed it, but it didn't blow me away. Brubaker feels like he can't go as dark and dirty as he gets to be in his creator-owned work, and the result is a decent action comic that's a bit tepid when compared to Brubaker's other crime-dramas.

- Hank from Golden Age

## GROMMETS TP

Written by Rick Remender & Brian Posehn, Art by Brett Parson

1984, Sacramento California. Skate Punk Culture.



The leads of the book are a quietly handsome young man named Rick and an awkward doofus named Brian. The book was written by the quietly handsome Rick Remender and the awesomely dorky Brian Posehn. Are you allowed to do that? I dunno, but they did.

Creators Brian, best known for his portrayal of Fervel Lankman (Donnie in *The Crack'd Mirror*), and Rick, known for youthful action comics like *Deadly Class*, have teamed up with Brett Parson, artist of many *Tank Girl* stories, to make a comic that has me wishing I could stop typing this review and go crush pavement under my wheels.

Accurate to the time, the book is full of homophobic slurs and the awkward transitioning of machismo in a society learning to worship pop stars and malls. There's fights that really hurt; the verbal kind between best friends, and the bloody kind that break out when drunk jocks crash the house party.

This comic is like smoking illegal weed from a pop-can pipe and pounding back convenience store nachos, before spending the day cruising around on your board with your best friends. In other words, this book is rad as fuck.

- Hank from Golden Age

## IT'S JEFF: JEFF-VERSE TP

Written by Kelly Thompson, Art by Gurihiru

Have you heard of Jeff? He's a new character in Marvel comics; a little shark with legs who hangs out on land with superheroes, having adventures, eating snacks, and basically being the cutest little guy you've ever seen. It's as if they made a comic about one of my dogs.



Jeff's adventures are mostly little comic strips, largely without words. They're designed to be read by little kids, but yo, I'm 46 and I totally get the appeal. Jeff is adorable. He's like one of those squat pitties with a giant head and a big toothy smile, the kind who wags his tail so hard when he's happy to see you that his whole body wiggles.

We're talking real wholesome stuff. And in this world of bitterness, envy, and loss, maybe we could all use a bit more of that. Nothing sanctimonious or cloying, just some silly time spent with a nice little critter who wants everybody to have a nice day.

Comics can be mature literature for grownups, but they're also still allowed to be fun escapism for all ages. It's important we remember that — and let ourselves enjoy being a kid even as we age into crusty old weirdos.

- Hank from Golden Age

## LOST AT SEA

By Bryan Lee O'Malley

*Lost At Sea* was Bryan Lee O'Malley's first book — over two decades old now — but I'm covering it because there's a new hardcover edition, and it's the perfect summer read. It's chill and fun, but also just a little moodily maudlin.



*Lost At Sea* feels like the start of a good day, full of promise (like young O'Malley's career), but it also feels like the drive home after a day at the beach: windows down, sunburned, dehydrated, everyone quiet. A song you didn't pick plays on the radio while your mind drifts — happiness slowly tempered by the creeping sense of the return to responsibilities. Homework. Chores. Growing up.

Childhood asks: Did you have fun today? Adulthood asks: Did you find meaning today? Did anyone actually see you? Are you even really here, or are you just passing through life like a ghost without a soul? That's what this book feels like.

It's one of my favourites. If you've ever felt awkward or uncertain about your place in the world — especially in that hazy in-between of being too young to know who you are, and too old to ignore the question — then this is a book you'll want to sit with for a while.

- Hank from Golden Age

## THE RUNNING MAN

Steve MacManus, Horacio Lalia, Jim Watson

Published by Hibernia Books

*The Running Man* is a most inspired choice for Hibernia's latest in its long-running and successful Fleetway Files series reprinting classic comics from the past.



*The Running Man* originally ran (sorry!) in 1976 in the controversial and hugely-influential comic *Action*. It was scripted by future 2000AD editor Steve MacManus, and on the strength of his writing here, it's a shame he didn't pursue writing full-time, he really is very good (and still alive, so not too late to resume writing, Steve?). *The Running Man* lives up to its title and the pace never flags. It tells the tale of a British runner whose face is forcibly altered to resemble that of Mafia Don's murderous son. *The Running Man* must avoid numerous threats to survive long enough to prove his innocence. A highlight for me is the storyline featuring a coven of redneck Satanists, cleared inspired by the excellent cult film *Race with the Devil* (itself inspired by *The Devil Rides Out*), culminating in a jailhouse siege inspired by *Rio Bravo*. Laila's art is great, all-in-all, a stone-cold classic.

As a bonus, this book features the excellent story "Hold Him 109", which originally appeared in *Battle*, written by Steve, and drawn by the incomparable Jim Watson.

A worthy edition to anyone's collection!

- Steve Earles



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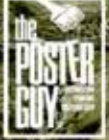
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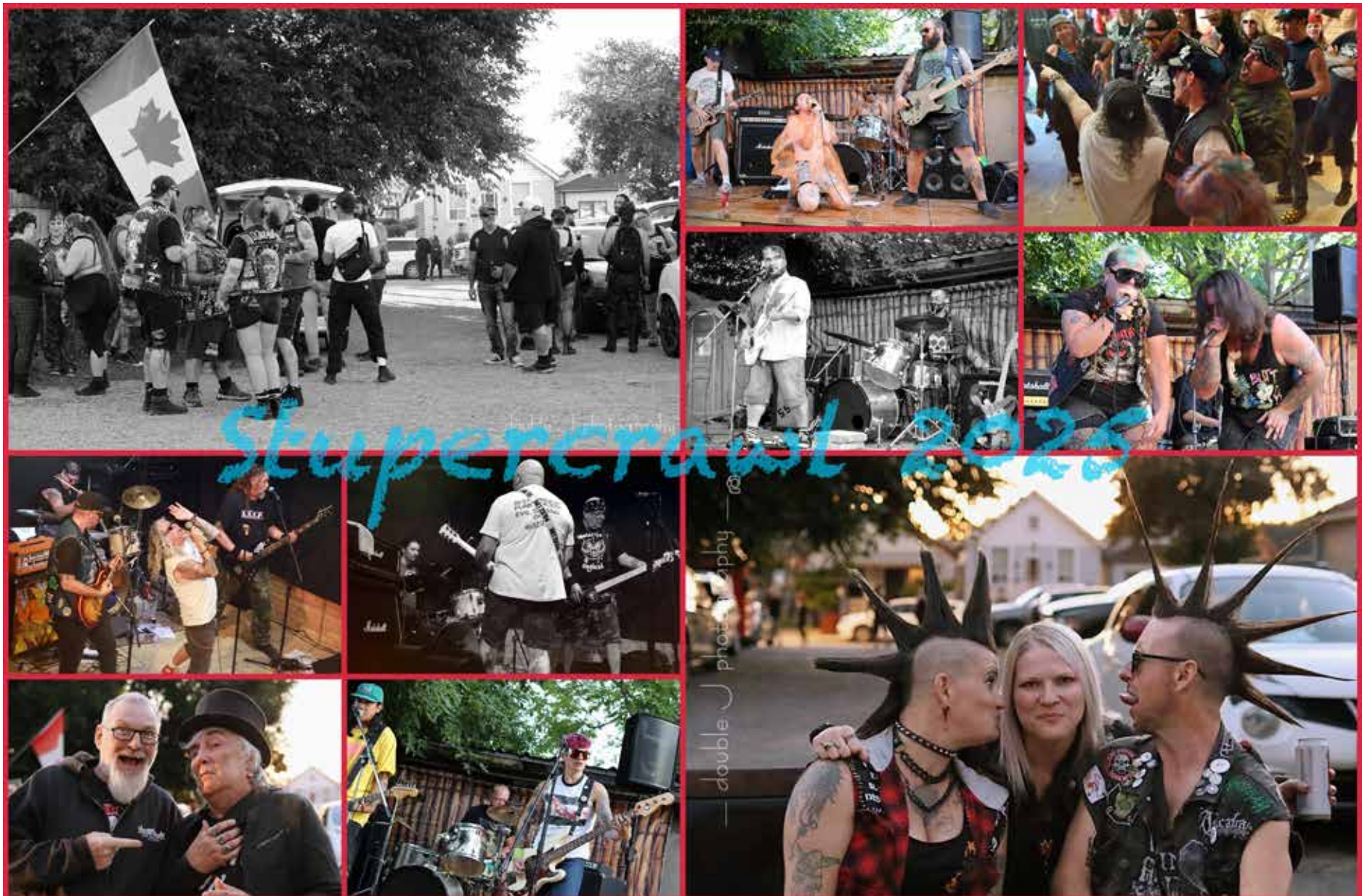
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# Absolute Movies

## Queen of Bones



Filmmaker Robert Budreau clearly admires A24 films, and *Queen of Bones* reflects that influence with its careful atmosphere and character-driven storytelling. Set in Depression-era Oregon, the film follows siblings Lily (Julia Butters) and Sam (Jacob Tremblay) as they struggle under the oppressive hand of their strict Protestant father (Martin Freeman). Every encounter with him carries weight, and the tension he creates permeates the entire film. The story thrives on slow-building psychological unease rather than overt scares. This filmmaker keeps every moment omnipresent with fear. That's expressed by the siblings' feelings of dread long before any explicit threat appears. Lily's budding ability to communicate with nature is central, but the film never treats it as full-blown witchcraft; her isolation and emotional struggles remain at the forefront. The narrative focuses on her growth, eschewing conventional teenage romance in favour of subtle, character-driven stakes. When Lily discovers a book of spells, *Queen of Bones* edges into folk horror territory. She quickly embraces the

magic and the audience has to figure out what she'll become—whether she likes it or not! Though the film leans more toward coming-of-age than pure horror, it effectively conveys existential anxieties. Patriarchal oppression, economic hardship, and isolation ground the story in human-scale dread. Budreau captures internal tension as effectively as external danger, making viewers feel trapped alongside Lily. The claustrophobic focus on her perspective evokes echoes of *The Lighthouse* and *The Witch*, even if the ending feels predictable. Ultimately, *Queen of Bones* succeeds because of its character-focused narrative, period detail, and careful tension-building. It's a thoughtful, measured horror story that introduces a unique world without over explaining it. A restrained approach to supernatural elements, combined with strong performances and evocative visuals, makes it a compelling and quietly unsettling experience.

3½ Stars out of 5

– Ed Sum

### Self Help

Halloween isn't just a backdrop—it's a time for reflection in Erik Bloomquist's *Self Help*. Young Olivia (Addison Timlin) must confront a past action, accidental or not. This horror drama isn't about cheap scares; it's about survival and feeling the world against you. After its FrightFest premiere, the film's VOD release is likely to be fast-tracked for the spooky season. The film's most compelling element is its exploration of masks. They don't just conceal; they reveal hidden selves. Clown, pumpkinhead, ghost, sheep, or Founders' Day masks carry symbolism rooted in folklore and literature, reflecting the wearer's inner world. The result is haunting rather than outright terrifying, reminiscent of *Season of the Witch* but distinct in its chilling approach.

While the second act is slower, patient viewers are rewarded. Timlin delivers a powerful performance, tracing Olivia's evolution from victim to observer to participant as she wrestles with her darker impulses. Every shift is tense, leaving audiences questioning her choices and survival. Jake Weber's Curtis, a cult leader with a Qui-Gon Jinn-like calm twisted toward menace, adds to the unease. His connection to Olivia's mother deepens the drama, conveying menace without overstatement. Ultimately, *Self Help* isn't a standard slasher. It prioritizes character-driven tension over splatter. Masks give it depth, performances keep it taut, and the folklore undercurrent adds bite. For those seeking more than blood and body counts this Halloween, Bloomquist offers a thoughtful, chilling alternative.

4 Stars out of 5

– Ed Sum

### The Conjuring: Last Rites

*The Conjuring: Last Rites* promises a grand finale, but delivers a hollow recap. While HBO Max plans to extend the Warrens' legacy with a series, this film proves the franchise's formula is running on fumes.

The story presented here doesn't even lean on Valak, the demon nun meant to embody corrupted faith. Yet the mythology, once chilling, now feels like reheated leftovers. The Smurl haunting, a case with real-world notoriety, is reduced to another haunted-house spectacle centered on a cursed mirror that never existed. The "based on real events" tagline never works because fiction has to override the facts.

Here, Judy Warren (Mia Tomlinson) is forced into the narrative spotlight. She has a bit of mom's gift and is reluctant to use it. And with the romance with Tony (Ben Hardy), she has to decide between following her heart of leaving it all behind. In truth, she avoided her parents' cases altogether. The manufactured subplot aims to grant her



independence but instead distracts from the Smurl's ordeal, leaving both threads underdeveloped.

The result is a film at war with itself: a half-hearted love story colliding with a haunted family that never earns the audience's sympathy. What should be a harrowing case plays is more like a roll call of past monsters from Annabelle to The Crooked Man. Instead of dread, the callbacks play like a franchise blooper reel. Wilson and Farmiga remain committed, but their performances can't mask how the film reduces its own mythology to a carnival of cheap tricks.

If this is the end of the Warrens' big-screen saga, it's a limp farewell. *Last Rites* doesn't expand the universe; it cannibalizes it. The Conjuring films once balanced supernatural thrills with the unsettling aura of "true story." Now, they lean entirely on spectacle, drained of authenticity.

The franchise isn't dead, but if the HBO series is to work, it must break free of recycled lore and confront the darker, more controversial truths behind the Warrens. Otherwise, we'll just keep circling the same haunted house.

3 Stars out of 5

– Ed Sum

### The Toxic Avenger (2025)



Body talk. Body talk. Welcome back to Tromaville. Nuke 'Em High has kicked off a new semester, and at BTH, the workplace is becoming more toxic by the day. Janitor Winston (Peter Dinklage) discovers he has just one year to live—and that his company insurance won't cover treatments caused by the company itself. Seeking money, he confronts the big shots (including Kevin Bacon) directly—only to be tossed out like yesterday's trash. When a plan to steal the company's funds goes awry, he is transformed into the 2025 version of *The Toxic Avenger*.

Directed by Macon Blair (*Green Room*), this film is not a direct remake of the Troma classic; it nods to the original enough to earn the name, but it doesn't fully embody it. Toxie must navigate Kevin Bacon's corporate minions, including Elijah Wood as a *Batman Returns'* Penguin-meets-Riff Raff hybrid, and a Juggalo-esque band hired as enforcers, all while trying to rescue his kidnapped son. Along the way, the usual visual gags, gore, and irreverent humor appear, though they often feel clunky, whether through editing, dialogue, or other stylistic choices.

Some technical decisions are distracting. The blood is noticeably CGI in many scenes, and Toxie's

mop is perpetually steaming—its toxic residue almost a character in itself. Even more jarring is watching Toxie's lips move while hearing Dinklage's voice, which only sometimes syncs. This Toxie is more subdued than previous iterations: heroic but lacking confidence. The transformation feels mostly aesthetic; it doesn't fully alter his mind or voice as in the original. He still very much feels like Peter Dinklage's janitor, just in a green Halloween costume.

The jokes elicit chuckles but aren't as sharp as the original's. The film is unrated but less shocking and less offensive. A restaurant scene features a gang terrorizing patrons—no dogs are shot, and though a head is run over, it's not a child's and the blood looks fake. Some references land nicely, like Motorhead's "Overkill" (a nod to Lemmy in Citizen Toxie) and Lloyd Kaufman's cameo. Because of this, it's clear that this version of *The Toxic Avenger* attempts to capture the spirit of its predecessor—but it's like ordering a double rye and Coke and taking a sip: mostly soda, little bite.

– Ryan Dyer

### WEAPONS (2025)

Directed by Zach Creggor

Starring Josh Brolin, Julia Garner, Amy Madigan, Benedict Wong

First off, *Weapons* is a very very good movie. Secondly, though it shares some DNA with director Zach Creggor's debut freak fest *Barbarian*, *Weapons* is a mixed bag in all the best ways. This is a film that resists simple classifications like horror or thriller or comedy. It is all of these things with a hearty dose of fairy tale. The result is a curious enigma of a movie that is the most satisfying movie going experience I've had this year. It's a dizzying and intoxicating experience and before the film reaches its satisfying conclusion you hardly notice that more than two hours has whizzed by. If ever there was a movie that benefits from knowing as little about it as possible going in, it's *Weapons*. That makes it a curious challenge to review except to say go see it now. I have seen it three times already and see new details in it every time. After 17 children mysteriously vanish in the dead of night, a traumatized town processes their collective shock, horror and helplessness in a variety of impulsive and rash acts. That's the plot and to reveal more would spoil the fun. Part *Magnolia*, part *Blue Velvet*. But funny. Like I said, it's a strange movie. The movie is told in a series of chapters, through the eyes of our central six characters. Each of our central six lead characters are deeply flawed people and the consequences of their bad decisions are on full display as we see not only their perspective, but the lives they thoughtlessly affect in the process. While their intentions may be noble, the results are often catastrophic. Unknowingly, they turn themselves into the film's titular weapons. The cast are perfect as they all skillfully balance the challenges of performing the scenes from many different perspectives. There is what they are saying, but also what others are hearing. In some moments a terrified police officer can be perceived as a violent thug. A heartbroken father comes across as bullying blowhard. We see their public faces and the crying behind closed doors. This is the year of Julia Garner, between *Weapons* and *Fantastic 4: First Steps* she was being showcased on half of the screens of the Edinburgh multiplex I went to. Only Pedro Pascal has her beat and was originally cast to play Josh Brolin's role. In a cast this great it's difficult to pick a strand out, but there is no question that Amy Madigan walks away with every scene that she's in. I'm a fan of Madigan, (she was Uncle Buck's squeeze for crying out loud) but I didn't recognize her until the very end. She is utterly hypnotic as a weird movie's chief weirdo. If she doesn't get an Oscar nod for this movie, there is no justice in Hollywood. Some viewers may

find the last act takes too long to get to the conclusion. But when so much originality and raw talent is on display it's like complaining that a cake is too delicious. For my part, I was entranced throughout. Horrifying, hilarious, heartbreaking, haunting. *Weapons* is among this year's very best and I look forward to seeing what young Mr. Creggor has in store for us next. I LOVED IT.

– Dylan Rhymor

### The Long Walk (2025)

Stephen King's *The Long Walk* has



long been a haunting meditation on endurance, trauma, and the human spirit. Director Francis Lawrence, known for his work on *The Hunger Games* series, brings a visceral intensity to this adaptation, transforming King's bleak narrative into a cinematic experience that is both emotionally charged and thematically rich. David Jonsson delivers a standout performance as Peter McVries. His interactions with Cooper Hoffman's Ray Garraty bring humanity to a story defined by physical and psychological extremity, making the stakes feel immediate and personal. The film trims the walkers from 100 in the book to 50, which is a wise choice. About ten are fully realized characters, each with distinct personalities, struggles, and backgrounds, while the rest populate the background. This reduction allows the audience to connect with individual walkers, making their suffering, endurance, and relationships feel tangible and emotionally resonant. The film is unflinching in its depiction of the Walk's brutality. From graphic injuries to the walkers' physical and mental strain, nothing is sanitized. The filmmakers also confront the bodily realities of endurance — exhaustion, injury, and other human vulnerabilities such as having to urinate or defecate — giving the audience a visceral sense of the toll exacted on the participants. Some details from the book, such as the gradual attrition of footwear and the walkers' long-term physical deterioration, are condensed in the film for pacing. Moments like twisted ankles or ruined shoes serve as striking visual shorthand, maintaining tension while compressing the slow-burn suffering that King meticulously develops over the pages. Amid the horror and brutality, the film carries a quiet, profound message: to appreciate the moments, even in the face of inevitable hardship. Life itself is a walk — everyone knows they will die, but the small victories, fleeting connections, and personal acts of courage make every step meaningful. Overall, *The Long Walk* (2025) is a powerful adaptation that captures the essence of King's story. Lawrence's direction, combined with Jonsson's compelling performance, the reduced yet well-developed cast, and the film's immersive, unflinching approach, makes it an emotionally resonant exploration of endurance, friendship, human vulnerability, and the beauty of fleeting moments.

– Ryan Dyer

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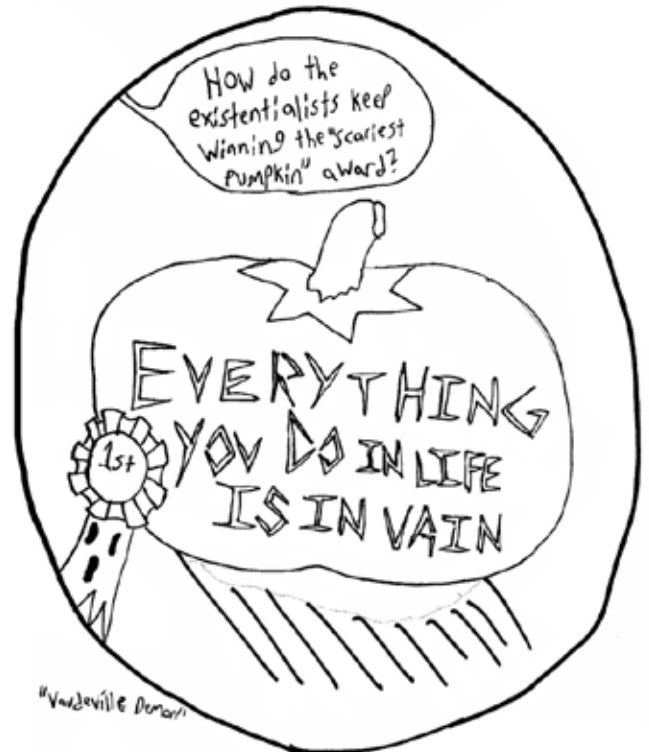


"Remember guys, makeup can complicate facial identification, so ask your drag queen friends for advice."



VanDeville Demari

BACKBOARD Cartoons



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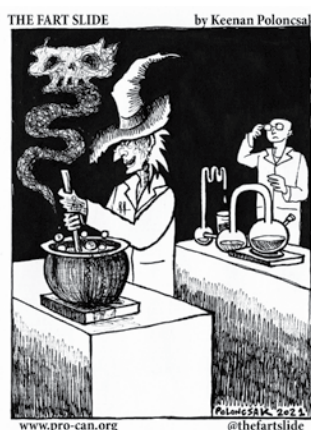
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|--------|-----------|----|-------|----|-------|----|--------|----|---------|------|-----------|----|-------|----|-------------|----|--------|----|--------|
| 1      | IT        | 2  | GAMES | 3  | THING | 4  | DIE    | 5  | OSAMA   | 6    | VIDEO     | 7  | OKA   | 8  | THEMUNSTERS | 9  | LILAC  | 10 | ADH    |
| 11     | CHRISTINA | 12 | SET   | 13 | SAIL  | 14 | RETAKE | 15 | ATH     | 16   | PLAT      | 17 | NOLAN | 18 | THEADAMS    | 19 | FAMILY | 20 | INURE  |
| 21     | TB        | 22 | BAR   | 23 | BEA   | 24 | NONONO | 25 | RECOILS | 26   | WEDNESDAY | 27 | ION   | 28 | NERVE       | 29 | JENNA  | 30 | ORTEGA |
| 31     | FEIN      | 32 | AMBER | 33 | MEWED | 34 | PEI    | 35 | RICCI   | 36   | ARENA     | 37 | ODD   | 38 |             | 39 |        | 40 |        |



# Absolute Album Reviews

## Astralasia

### The Seven Pointed Star Cherry Red Records

Astralasia emerged from the same underground music scene as The Prodigy, a remarkably fertile time for dance music and culture. I feel that the vibrancy of the music comes from the fact that it had something to kick back against. Following the brutal suppression of the Stonehenge Free Festival in 1985, rave culture grew from strength-to-strength with outdoor raves attracting huge crowds, fermenting freedom of thought, and causing much rabid media manipulated controversy, leading to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act in 1994 (That's what The Prodigy's "Their Law" is all about). Astralasia owe as much to the music ad ideals of Hawkwind, Gong and Osric Tentacles as they do to rave culture, their music sounds as vital now as it did back in the 90s. Maybe more so, after all we have more injustice and dictatorship to kick back against than ever.

- Steve Earles

## Cockney Rejects

### Greatest Hits Vol 1 and Greatest Hits Volume 2

#### Captain Oi Records

Ironically titled in true punk fashion, these two albums are actually the Rejects debut and follow up album packaged together in fine style. Though, again ironically, these albums actually charted well. And so they should have! Because the Rejects are and were the real deal from the street, not fake punk rockers like The Boomtown Rats then, or Rancid now! It's an easy review, two albums of sincere high energy street punk. I love it, and if you love real punk rock, you'll love it too!

- Steve Earles

## Girlschool

### Running Live & Live In London Cherry Red Records

Girlschool first came to fame during the New Wave of British Heavy Metal, though they were and are not actually a heavy metal band per se, more of a punky rock and roll outfit. However, Girlschool's energy and sincerity fit in greatly with the spirit of the age. Girlschool were label mates and friends with the mighty Motörhead, they even recorded an EP with Motorhead called *The St Valentines Day Massacre*, which got them both on top of the pops. Motörhead were good to Girlschool, taking them on tour. Girlschool released albums such as *Demolition* to great acclaim. However, a combination of line-up changes and a post-*Pyromania* shift in musical tastes, led Girlschool to attempt a more commercial direction with *Running Wild*. Time has been kind to those songs (was the '80s ever more popular?) and live, as evidenced on this album, they have an increased energy. Finally, it's worth getting this album for the beautiful cover by the late and much missed Ian Gibson, it's gorgeous!

- Steve Earles

## Obituary

### Godly Beings

#### Cherry Red Records

This is a most excellent value-for-money CD boxset of Obituary's first four truly ground-breaking albums. *Slowly We Rot* is simply genre-defining for death metal in the same way as say Metallica's *Master of Puppets* is for thrash, or Cathedral's *Forest of Equilibrium* for doom. Taking influences from Celtic Frost, Hellhammer, Venom, Bathory and Death and shoving them into a cement mixer, Obituary had a sound all of their own from the get go. Just listen to the title track. Insane! The vocals are as much an instrument as the drums and guitars. This is music made for

the pure dark joy of it all. Follow-up *Cause of Death* boasts a cleaner sound, Obituary's death metal is razor-sharp here. Highlights include a studio-recording of demo classic "Find The Arise" and an excellent cover of Celtic Frost's seminal "Circle of the Tyrants"! Album three *The End Complete* just crushes, listen to "Corrosive" for proof. Finally we have *Word Demise* which features one of my favourite Obituary tracks "Final Thoughts". Slow death! Garnished with excellent live and demo tracks, this is a must have! Simply one of the most significant metal bands of all time!

- Steve Earles

## Peter And The Test Tube Babies

### The Albums 1990-98

#### Cherry Red Records

The highlight of this value-for-money five album collection of Peter And The Test Tube Babies' 90s output is *The Shit Factory*. Which consists of savage cover versions of songs that were either written by or revamped by Stock, Aiken and Waterman. For those lucky enough not to know, their studio *The Shit Factory* dominated the UK charts of the time. Bog blast them! It's impossible not to love, nor to think of anything more punk rock than this. Moreover, I think their versions are better! Elsewhere we have *Cringe* (with the classic song-title "Shit British Tour"). We have the main albums *Supermodels* and *Schwein Lake Live*, with this collection being completed with the splendidly-titled *Alien Pubduction*. With the world in the miserable state it's in, these albums are a timely remedy to reality!

- Steve Earles

## The Donnas

### The Atlantic Years 2002-2005

#### Cherry Red Records

In a just world The Donnas would have been huge. They were a great rock and roll band, giving the best of Cheap trick, AC/DC and The Ramones their own unique spin. They play from the heart sincerely. *Spend The Night* still sounds fabulous and *Gold Medal* is even better, and its cover artwork is truly gorgeous. As a bonus there is an excellent CD of rarities. With the world getting darker by the hour, The Donnas' music is a welcome sunburst of light!

- Steve Earles

## Tuesday The Sky

### Indoor Enthusiast

#### Metal Blade records

Instrumental album #3 - Indoor enthusiast contains eleven songs of intrigue and pure refined artistic inspiration. Fates warning guitar player Jim Matheos lays down the awesome here. Guitar God, sound expander, atmosphere creator and pure genius, this is music to have a spiritual awakening. It's like a peyote trip of organic electric mystical magic, creative reckoning. Some musicians are blessed with outer worldly talent and that is definitely the case here. This album doesn't need a word, yet it's poetic, without lyrics it tells a compelling story. If you were to listen to this album in the dark on mushrooms you'd witness every colour in the universe infiltrating your ears and mind. This album is a trip and a thing of beauty and passion. Fans of certain eras of Pink Floyd will understand, as would anyone with a set of ears. Pure elevated instrumental genius.

- Matt Norris

## By A Thread

### Mirrored life

#### Spartan Records

Right from song number one, "The Void", this album has superb production, depth and tone. Just a huge crystal clear sound. A talented Vancouver band that delivers and deserves a piece of the mandatory Canadian content radio play cash.

With the right djs promoting this album and a few good slots on outdoor festivals, this band could be a popular Canadian household name. I hate to pigeon hole bands, but to me they sound like a better Foo Fighters. Not the same, just similar in power and vibe. Stellar musicians, crisp powerful vocals and a mix of 90's grunge and hard rock / pop punk undertones. By a thread is inspired, creative, melodic and genuine. Fans of Thrice, Hum, and Cave in will enjoy this as will most people. Songs Connaught and Void show off the talent of this incredible drummer. This is a great sounding album drenched in musical accomplishment. Check out videos for Void and Tempest on YouTube.

- Matt Norris

## Halloween

### Giants and Monsters

#### Reigning Phoenix Music

Formed in Germany 1984, 17 studio albums later this is a band still building fans and momentum after 40 years. These power metal/ thrash pioneers have kept the flame of metal alive after over 40 years and sound revived. Following the mass success of their 2021 self-titled album 2025 continues the wave of success with the new album Giants and Monsters. Breaking bad blood and old erratic egos, the band now has all three original singers united in a powerhouse trio of incredible vocal strength and dimension. Halloween is a standout in not just power metal, but all genres of metal. In my opinion, always better than Iron Maiden or new Judas Priest (scream sacrilege for me Long Beach). Giants and Monsters is a multi-layered beast of styles ranging from piano ballad to glam rock to thunderous glorious heavy metal, and bits of thrash. Less thrash than usual, it's an obvious attempt at bigger radio numbers and mainstream hard rock appeal. If Kansas was a metal band they'd wish they sounded like this. Epic thunderous, joyful, beautiful and progressive. If you claim to be a fan of metal and haven't listened to Halloween well hell, you ain't a fan of metal.

- Matt Norris

## Sauerkraut

### In Madness

#### Wormholedeath Records

This album starts like a freight train of perfect headbangability, great

riffs for a neck muscle workout and some brain rattling fun. Symbol of death (new single and YouTube video!!) is a perfect chugging metal riff with doubled vocals splitting styles perfectly. Super Fukin riffage and intense precision. This is metal, dark, doom, hardcore, hints of the good side of nu metal and some sick southern metal feel to seal the deal. Vocals yet intense are easy to comprehend and understandable, the band is crushing and super talented on all levels by all members. This is an awesome album with accomplished intensity. This band live is a mosh pit maker and ear breaking articulate devastator.

- Matt Norris

## Wretched

### Decay

#### Metal Blade Records

Oozing brutal talent Wretched is an American technical progressive death metal band whose fifth album just dropped on metal blade records. This is a firing squad of precision players playing passionate, relentlessly powerful metal. Moments of acoustic add dimension to the onslaught, giving it room to breathe and then strangle you with power unleashed when they take full stride. I sure wouldn't want to have a yelling contest with singer Billy Powers, man that guys got some pipes. This band plays metal the way metal fans want to hear it. Ripping, chugging, grooving, distorted and clean. It's got dimension in the extreme side of things. Great band killer drummer. The song clairvoyance mellows out for a brief second, reminiscent of Testaments, the ballad but don't let that fool you. It just adds to the pure metal joy. Check out the YouTube video for the song "Decay".

- Matt Norris

## Sasquatch Sisters

### Better Than Yesterday

#### 1442082 Records DK

Vancouver island's Finest commodity is back with a new album and a roller coaster of styles and 100% uniqueness. Formed in 2022 somewhere in the hills of British Columbia, this group has made leaps and bounds towards global attention with a consistently building online presence with songs like "Family and Friends" hitting millions of plays online. New album Better Than Yesterday is a full spectrum vibrant array of styles and vibes melding together into a gem of an album. Songs like Brain drain of the century and Fragile are polar opposites with the ability to connect

through musical inspiration. It's a trip hop album, with jazzy twists and universal musical creations and variations. Dueling male, female vocals featuring a mixed pallet of inspirations makes this unique, original and a sub sonically creative album. Songs like It's all right and Amazing show hope and positivity. The mix of joyous female vocals and wild raps is a next level artistic journey. If you want to support a group that is breaking out of the small time, give Sasquatch Sisters album Better Than Yesterday a listen on Spotify.

- Matt Norris

## TV CASUALTIES

### ORPHANAGE FIRE EP

#### National Avenue Recordings

TV Casualties are one of those bands that hold your attention hostage from the very first chord. They harken back to a time in the late seventies when Black Flag, DOA, and The Germs stunned audiences with aggression, grit, and volume. Adam Meng's unique approach to guitar is reminiscent of Ginn and Boon, he blends interesting leads with heavy and deliberate hardcore riffs. His vocal delivery is as "in your face" as any hardcore punk singer from the era that their sound comes from. Will Yannacoulis' bass tone is crunchy and powerful. He plays the lead in many parts of these three songs. The bassline in, "Mullets", is more of a lead guitar riff than it is a traditional bassline and makes the song the standout track on the EP. Ian McAlpine is a phenomenal drummer and his chops are on full display on all three songs. The unique fills and kick patterns in, "Dead Pulp", exemplify his unorthodox approach to writing drum parts. After you've spent your five minutes with these three songs, you'll find yourself immediately pressing play on it again just to catch anything you missed the first time.

- Cody Martinka

## Ramblin' Roze

### Moonfall

Ramblin' Roze's new album, Moonfall, is a striking achievement. While their 2020 release Howl of The Coomb was strong in its own right, Moonfall feels like the jump from Bleach to Nevermind—a bold expansion of vision, scope, and emotional impact. On this record, the band pushes beyond expectations, crafting sounds and melodies that feel fresh and adventurous. Notes bend unpredictably, occasionally nudging the listener off the familiar path. Tracks like "Plains on Fire" are

highlights, showcasing what first put the band on the map: refined riffs and ambitious vocal lines delivered by Hanxuan Peng. Meanwhile, "The Shadow" carries a Blue Öyster Cult / Led Zeppelin vibe, blending hypnotic rock energy with Eastern mysticism; the music video further expands on the album's striking artwork. Produced by Jun Zhou, mixed by Yiding, and mastered by Alexandr Vatagin, Moonfall fuses raw, lo-fi grit with expansive psychedelic layering, creating an immersive and introspective listening experience With this album, Ramblin' Roze prove they are not only one of China's most distinctive rock acts but also a band pushing the boundaries of heavy music on a global scale—crafting experimental, forward-thinking compositions without ever losing the power of riff-driven intensity.

- Ryan Dyer

## Knee Deep In Gore

### Wolves Of Russ

Let's start by saying this is a unique listen. It has a wall of sound, that tries breaking down the fucking wall. It's an onslaught of industrial tinged mosh worthy insanity based around the dark grim universe of Warhammer 40000. When the wall finally disintegrates, your ears have been awoken to a concept record that touches on original greatness, mixed with more than a wee share of madness. It's metal but it's not what you'd expect in any way shape or form. Song five on the album "Sabotaje" flips the switch. Cool fuzzed out guitar licks and lyrics that make you wonder what is happening, but in reality you care less why because it's awesome. I used to listen to a band called Lung from Vancouver and this reminds me of them with a tweaked out noise ridden Gwar influence. That being said it's layered and smothered in studio fun and the results are evidently off the charts. I personally love creativity and originality which makes the album *Knee Deep In Gore* an ear infection of genuine mutant musical attempts and they get flying colours in doing so. I listened to the whole album on a plane at forty thousand feet during turbulence, and had to take out my ear buds to make sure the plane wasn't crashing. A perfect album to indulge your inner love for all things heavy and completely off the rails. Just like I said, a uniquely wild ride. From Victoria B.C, watch for this band playing live in your city soon. Love it.

- Matt "War Hammered" Norris





# UNDERGROUND IN RECOVERY

## Underground in Recovery: The Hero's Journey

By Pat Horinawa

In 1949, professor Joseph Campbell published the book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. It quickly became a cornerstone of comparative mythology. In it, Campbell presented his concept of the *monomyth*, or Hero's Journey—a recurring narrative pattern found in myths, epics, and religious stories across time and culture.

Campbell's research spanned a vast range of traditions: ancient Greek and Roman epics, Hindu and Buddhist scriptures, Indigenous American and African folklore, Christian and Islamic texts, and medieval legends like the Arthurian Grail cycle. From these geographically disparate sources, Campbell drew one central conclusion: beneath cultural differences, there is a shared mythical pattern of transformation: A hero departs from the familiar, descends into the unknown, endures trials, and returns forever changed.

The Hero's Journey is more than just a storytelling device—it is literally a template for human growth and evolution. The journey stages are consistent throughout cultures: *separation, ordeal, and return*. In more organic evolutionary terms, these can be related to the principles of *challenge, adaptation, and resolution*.

Initially, a call to adventure disrupts the hero's ordinary life. Often, a mentor or situation appears, pushing him across the threshold into danger and mystery. Beyond the threshold may lie a literal wilderness—a forest, a cave, the ocean—or it may be a psychological dive into metaphorical darkness. Along the way, the hero faces resistance, pain, failure, and chaos. Companions may help him, but the decisive moment is his alone: the confrontation with the great dragon, the gatekeeper, the monster of the subconscious.

Confrontation is the heart of this journey. The dragon invariably guards some sort of treasure: love, wealth, wisdom, or transcendence. Sometimes the hero triumphs outright. Other times, he is struck down, slain, and is reborn to endure the challenge again. In either case, the final boon is not just physical treasure—it is fundamental transformation. The hero returns to his normal life with new strength and knowledge that benefits his community. That is what makes him heroic to his people, he has returned a leader, through struggle and triumph not

only for his own benefit, but for their sake as well.

In the philosophy of my own heroic journey, self-conquering requires confronting and overcoming several inner "dragons" that continue to hold me down. One of the most insidious dragons I still face is that of *intoxication*. While commonly associated



with substance abuse of alcohol or drugs, this term deserves a broader definition. Intoxication represents the presence of *toxic influence*. It refers not just to chemical impairment, but to any habitual behaviour, pattern, or response that basically poisons the mind, body, or spirit.

The term *toxic* can be defined as:

- Containing or being a poisonous substance, capable of causing serious harm or death.
- Exhibiting symptoms of poisoning or infection.
- Malicious, destructive, or emotionally harmful.

With these definitions in mind, we must ask: *Where in our own lives does toxicity dwell?* Have our habits drained our vitality?

Have our unresolved emotions poisoned our relationships?

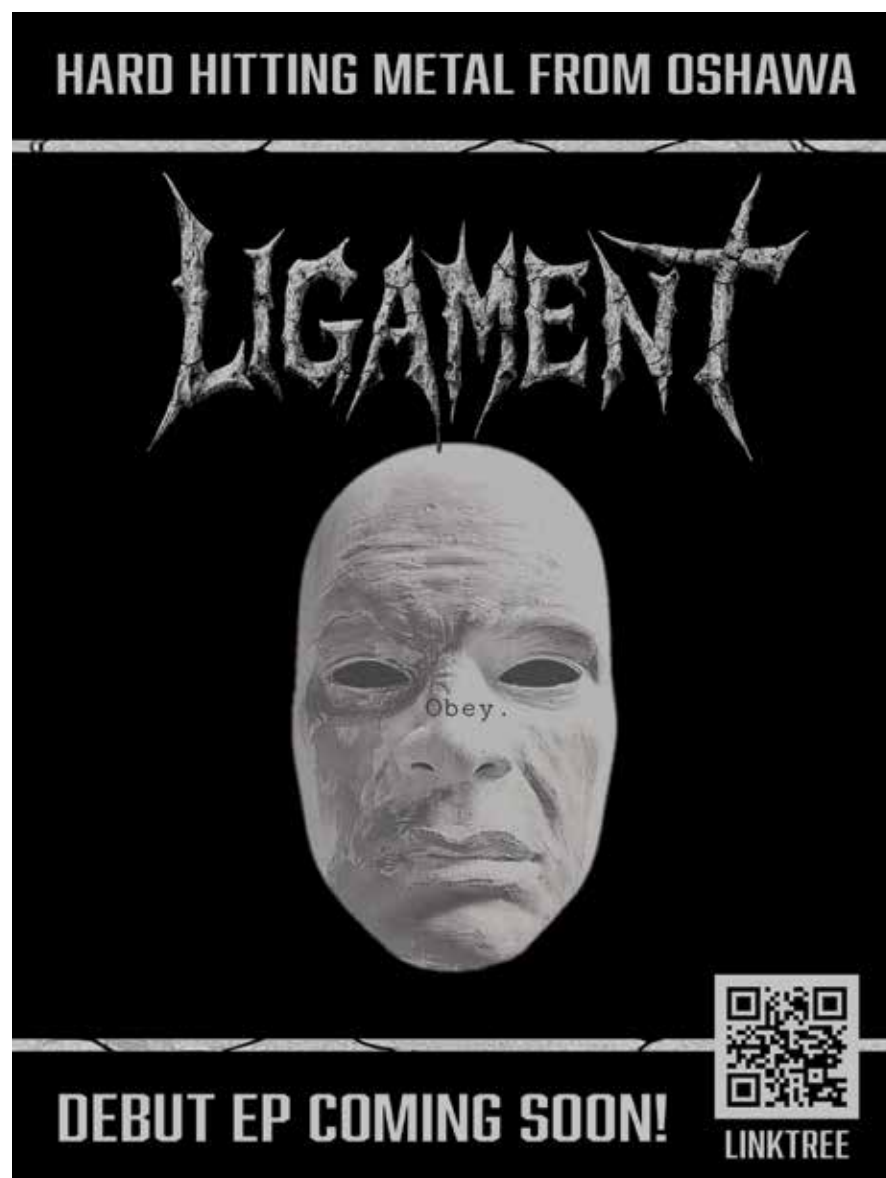
Have our choices legitimately damaged our self-respect, injured others, or diminished our standing within our community?

These are questions we can only answer for ourselves, with honesty and courage. If the answer is "yes", then it may be time to adopt a program towards becoming *unintoxicated*.

Toxic behaviours are not confined to one demographic. They are not the exclusive burden of men, or the poor, or the marginalized. They are also prevalent among women, the wealthy, the educated, the powerful, and the admired. No class, race, sex, or social group is immune. Whether expressed through self-righteous elitism or substance-fueled escapism, toxic patterns can degrade all walks of life. Acknowledging this universality is not cause for shame, it is a step towards recognition, accountability, and change.

The hero's journey must be restored. If not by our schools, then by our households. If not by our institutions, then by brave individuals committed to personal truth and growth. Our youth must be taught that life does not hand out rewards without merit—life helps those who help themselves. We must teach them to face trials, endure challenge, and return transformed.

Without the heroic trials, there is no passage from emotional adolescence into emotional adulthood. This is a tragedy. Without emotional adulthood, civilization will not progress; it will collapse under the weight of its own arrested development.





# Absolute Comic Reviews

## T THE KNIVES

Ed Brubaker (writer) Sean Phillips (artist)

The Knives isn't your usual crime-noir comic. It's the longest book in the *CRIMINAL* series, but it's really a collection of smaller stories interlaced to form a single narrative over several decades and a handful of lives. Small, personal stories about loss, and the losers experiencing those losses. An old man dies of cancer without the money for proper treatments, a middle-aged cartoonist heads to Hollywood knowing he'll be screwed over and heartbroken, a young woman hooks up with the wrong guy, again and again, ensnared in the bittersweet toxicity of youth and lust and the fantasy of fixing somebody. Throughout it all runs the fantasy of changing yourself; that you might force yourself to be stronger, smarter, braver, than you know yourself to be. While it does stand on its own, *THE KNIVES* will resonate more with an audience who's familiar with the earlier adventures these characters have had in previous *CRIMINAL* stories. However, I can comfortably say that this is one of the better books in one of the greatest crime graphic novel series of all time.

## SPECTATORS

Brian K Vaughan (writer) Niko Henrichon (artist)

*Spectators* is smut. Violent, sexual smut. Full-frontals, penetration, messy money shots — and that's just the opening scene of gun violence. But underneath all that, it's an endearingly sweet story about two people getting to know each other. Written by Brian K. Vaughan (*Saga*), *Spectators* follows a pair of ghosts on their first date. No cuts, just one long conversation as they drift through the world, watching life unfold. And what would you watch if you were invisible and powerless? Let's be honest — people. People living, people fighting, people fucking. Yes, it's graphic. Artist Niko Henrichon draws sex that's hardcore, but somehow tender, and affectionate. The violence, on the other hand, is brutal: we see a few mass killings, and maybe even the final end of humanity. But notably, the sex feels consensual, respectful — almost wholesome, in its way. *Spectators* is smut. But it's also smart, moving, charming, and will be remembered as one of the best books of the year.

## PIZZA WITCH

Sarah Graley & Stef Purenins

*Pizza Witch* is an adorable indie book with the energy of a young *Scott Pilgrim*, or a fun episode of *Adventure Time*. It's packed with a queer-positive romance story, and a talking cat sidekick, and a lotta pizza. At this point you know if this book is for you or not. If you're into queer positivity, romance, pizza, cats, and/or general cuteness, this is a book for you. It's not going to get overly nihilistic, it's not going to break your heart, and even when things get tough, you know you're gonna walk away with a smile in your heart. It's wholesome and kid-friendly, with a healthy dose of punky outsider vibes I'm always excited to order a book like this for the comic shop; it not only means supporting independent artists, but also getting to make a fresh story accessible to an audience that's hungry for fun new comics that reflect their experiences and values. I know that's probably a little cheesy, but come on, it's *PIZZA WITCH*, what'd you expect?

## AVENGERS VS ALIENS

Jonathan Hickman (writer) Esad Ribic (artist)

To paraphrase The Monks, nice art, too bad about the script. This was another popular comic with



good sales, so I don't mind saying, I just didn't get it. The story was packed full of prominent Marvel characters, but the characterizations were so thin and flat it was like chewing through a plate of room-temperature crepes. For a book about xenomorphic aliens battling superhumans, I was only surprised by how tedious this comic was. The ten year-old inside me should've been screaming with joy seeing little penis-monsters erupting from the chests of classic heroes and villains from the Marvel Comic Universe! There's spaceships! Future cities! Heroic stands at the end of civilization! And yet the story is so drab. This book should be fun. It should be a bombastic adventure through horrific scenes of surreal carnage. An r-rated nightmare beast tearing into the brightly coloured world of Spider-Man and the Hulk. But this book is a bummer, a meanderingly miserable story about sad people dying at the hands of an unstoppable enemy. And worst of all, it's boring. The illustrations are pretty cool though, so maybe it's worth it for that alone.

## he Editor's Cut

Published by Hibernia Books

Reviewed by Steve Earles

*The Editor's Cut* is the latest in Hibernia's long-running and truly invaluable comics archives. This series combines interviews/

features on important (and often unjustifiably obscure) comics creators, along with rare or hitherto unseen art. They really are special... and important...books. Highlights include an excellent interview with editor supreme the splendidly-named Kelvin Gosnell. A warm witty interviewee, I'd love to read his autobiography. There is an excellent piece on Kevin O'Neill. Hibernia previously published a fine archive of Kevin's work, which really needs to be reprinted and expanded.( A 'subtle' hint there, David!). There are great quotes from Kevin and fabulous art from the much missed Kevin, one of the greatest comics artists ever. There is a great piece on the much-missed Garry Leach, no one has ever drawn women as beautifully as Garry. Another highlight for me is the section on artist Mick McMahon, who also provided the incredible cover for this book. Mick comes across well and there is some incredible art. Elsewhere we find treasures like unseen Dredd art from the mighty Brendan McCarthy, and some fabulous art from Brett Ewins. A must have!

## The Running Man

By Steve MacManus, Horacio Lalia, Jim Watson

Published by Hibernia Books

Reviewed by Steve Earles

*The Running Man* is a most inspired choice for Hibernia's latest in its long-running and successful 'Fleetway Files' series reprinting classic comics from the past. *The Running Man* originally ran (sorry!) in 1976 in the controversial and hugely-influential comic *Action*. It was scripted by future *2000AD* editor Steve MacManus, and on the strength of his writing here, it's a shame he didn't pursue writing full-time, he really is very good (and still alive, so not too late to resume writing, Steve?). *The Running Man* lives up to its title and the pace never flags. It tells the tale of a British runner whose face is forcibly altered to resemble that of Mafia Don's murderous son. *The Running Man* must avoid numerous threats to survive long enough to prove his innocence. A highlight for me is the storyline featuring a coven of redneck Satanists, clearly inspired by the excellent cult film *Race With The Devil* (itself inspired by *The Devil Rides Out*), culminating in a jailhouse siege inspired by *Rio Bravo*. Laila's art is great, all-in-all, a stone-cold classic. As a bonus, this book features the excellent story 'Hold Hill 109', which originally appeared in *Battle*, written by Steve, and drawn by the incomparable Jim Watson. A worthy edition to anyone's collection!



# Absolute Snacks

## Ruffles Poutine Potato Chips

I follow a subreddit entitled r/PoutineCrimes and I've been debating if this chip deserves a post in the group. I suppose I can begrudgingly admit that they kinda taste like actual poutine. There's a distinct powdered-gravy vibe, and what might be a hint of artificial cheeses, all of which resides upon the back of a ridged cut of noble potato. They remind me a little of the steak and onion potato chips I used to eat up North in the 90's. Bizarre, unholy things, damned to exist in an uncanny valley of flavour, too similar to meat while never truly being meat, creating an abhorrent combination of textures that tells your brain something is fundamentally wrong with the universe, maybe not in a way you can register with your senses, but on a more subliminal, microscopic level. You can't put your finger on it, but on some level, some aspect of your lizard brain is telling you - this isn't right. I ate these for you. And because I was high. Honestly, you could probably finish the bag that's still curled up in my cupboard. I probably wouldn't even notice.

## Takis Buckin' Ranch

You ever seen somebody do a rail of coke through a Buckin' Ranch Takis? The kids call it "ridin' the bronco," and every teenager you walk past is doing it in the washroom at school, coming back to class with dried herbs and tangy buttermilk residue caked around their nostrils. One of those social problems nobody wants to talk about. I don't normally go too close to Takis because the standard Taki flavours have got a real "we want to hurt you" sorta vibe when it comes to their degree of hot spices. So when they offered a more subdued version of themselves in a flavour harkening back to Doritos Cool Ranch, I was willing to pony up some dough and take a spin. Three days later I woke up, broke and alone in a hotel room with a suitcase full of Alf Pogs and expired lunch meats, a death threat written across my chest in black lipstick. I should've known better, but I didn't. You should know better, and now you do, but it won't change anything. The only way to truly understand, is to have the experience. No matter what it costs you.

## Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle Pizza Party Freeze Dried Candy

To quote the advertising, this product "brings the fun of pizza into a totally tubular freeze dried candy experience." It's a gummy candy, a pizza jujube, that's been freeze dried, sorta like the ice creams eaten by astronauts, or so the legend goes. Or maybe they just found a bunch of old, expired jujubes, and figured this would be a good way to sell 'em. We may never know. I'm a TMNT fan all the way back. I bleed neon green mutagen, and just saying the words "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle Freeze Dried Candy" sounds like an occult chant or a savage battle cry. But at best, I can eat one of these a day. I'm a middle aged man, and that crystalized sugar hits my system like I'm tonguing the teeth of a fork that's got its other end stuck in an electrical socket. They're not bad, but they taste less like pizza and more like diabetes. If there hadn't been a recognizable cartoon character on the bag, I'd never have tried them. One and done. I'll eventually eat them all, but I'll never buy a second bag. Maybe kids like 'em. Kids eat all sorts of crap, right?

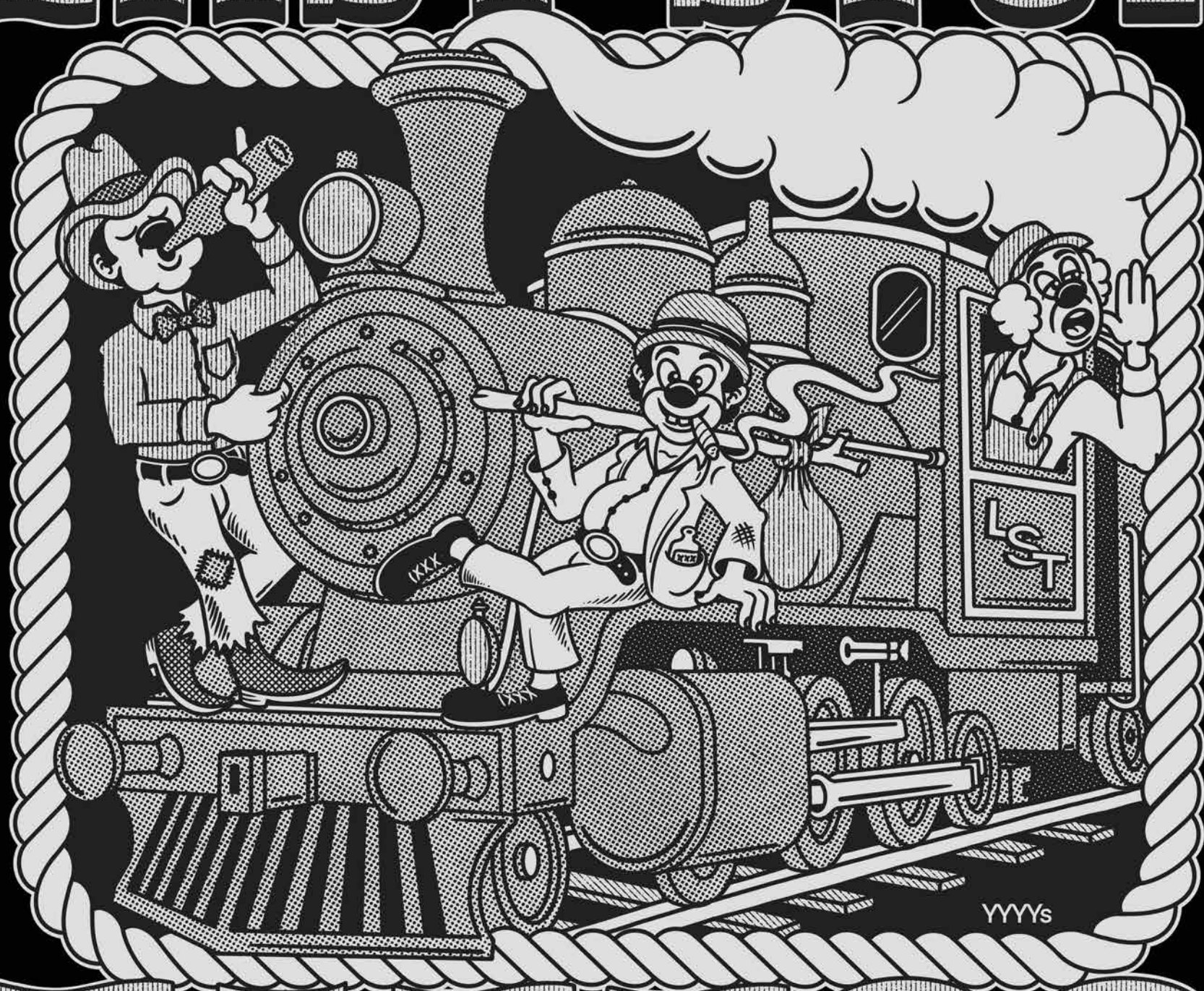
## Doritos Spicy Korean BBQ

Remember the 1996 movie *MARS ATTACKS*, when the little martian dudes would run around going "ack ack ack"? That was me after eating these chips, my tongue lolling out of my mouth like I'd lost muscular control of my face. The kindest thing I can say about these chips is that they were "edible", with a smoky aftertaste, but to be entirely honest, I'm not sure if these were even real, or just a dream I had while I was waiting for the best part of my life to finally start, in which they were sold to me on a street corner by a man dressed in an overly long chartreuse coat. He smelled of elderberries and rye, with a look on his face like he'd seen all the wars of man and learned to laugh at the chaos of the endless, eternal battlefield. I keep trying to finish the bag, but no matter how deep I dig, it would appear that I cannot plumb the depths of this perhaps bottomless cavern which contains only a sense of spiritual longing and that sensation of a cold hand wrapping its achingly long fingers about the bones of your spine.





# LAST STOP



# TATTOO

797 GOLDSTREAM AVENUE





**Dan:** Being a wasted pile of shit, hosting my

**AU: What's the origin story behind The East**

**D:** Dam! I'm a sober guy these days, so nothing too crazy, but I want to finish writing a horror script, film it in the summer and release it the following Halloween. When I was kid, I would binge watch all the trashy slashers on VHS, so it



Thanks and rock on, babe!



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# Absolute Live Reviews

## BODEGA

September 22nd, MTELUS, Montréal Qc

Brooklyn art-punk collective Bodega set the tone perfectly for the chaos to come, delivering a sharp and angular set that blurred the line between performance and protest. Their minimalist grooves, spoken-word bursts, and razor-edged lyrics built a hypnotic tension that kept the crowd locked in from the first note. Tracks like “How Did This Happen?!” and “Shiny New Model” pulsed with urgency, while front duo Ben Hozie and Nikki Belfiglio’s chemistry brought a raw, street-level energy to the stage. Smart, political, and irresistibly danceable, Bodega proved they’re more than just an opener — they’re one of the most exciting voices in post-punk today.

- Jean-Francois Gosselin

## THE BUZZCOCKS

August 30th, 2025, MTelus, Montreal

The Buzzcocks stormed into MTELUS with a set that proved

their music remains as vital as ever. Opening with “What Do I Get?”, they immediately tapped into the blend of urgency and melody that has defined their sound for nearly five decades. From there, the classics came fast: “I Don’t Mind”, “Promises”, and “Senses Out of Control” each carried the raw punch of punk’s early years. “Sick City Sometimes” and “Touch It” pushed the pace further, guitars sharp and unrelenting, while the rhythm section held everything together with relentless drive. The energy peaked with “Orgasm Addict”, still cheeky and abrasive, and the crowd roared as the band shifted into “Manchester Rain”, a track that added depth and atmosphere without losing momentum. The night’s emotional core came with “Ever Fallen in Love (With Someone You Shouldn’t’ve)”, where fans sang along in full voice. Its mix of heartbreak and urgency remains one of punk’s greatest anthems, and the delivery felt as immediate in 2025 as when it was first released. Closing with “Harmony in My Head”, the Buzzcocks left the

stage on a final surge of energy. No theatrics, no wasted motion—just song after song delivered with precision and passion. At MTELUS, the Buzzcocks didn’t trade on nostalgia; they reaffirmed their place as punk pioneers who still play with fire. Crisp, raw, and timeless, their performance was both a celebration of history and a statement of ongoing relevance.

- Jean-Francois Gosselin

## THE DESCENDENTS

August 30th, 2025, MTelus, Montreal

The Descendents stormed into MTELUS on Saturday night with the kind of velocity that only they can sustain. Opening with “Everything Sux”, they set the tone for a set that was fast, sharp, and relentlessly joyful. Within seconds, the pit ignited and the night became a shared release of energy. Milo Aukerman commanded the stage with his trademark blend of humor and urgency, bounding from one side to the other as he launched into “Hope” and “Grow Up”. His vocals

carried the same conversational honesty that defined the band’s early records, connecting directly with fans who sang along word for word. The setlist was a career-spanning sprint through fan favorites. “My Age” and “Victim of Me” came with breakneck precision, “Clean Sheets” added a bittersweet edge, and “My Dad Sux” reminded everyone of the band’s refusal to sugarcoat life’s frustrations. Later, the one-two punch of “Merican” and “Fat Burger” mixed satire with absurdity, keeping the mood light while the music hit hard. Midway through, the band leaned into their self-awareness with “When I Get Old”, a moment that drew knowing laughs but also underscored their timeless vitality. Far from slowing down, they only accelerated: “Silly Girl”, “Coolidge”, “On Paper”, and “I’m the One” landed like hooks sharpened over decades. By the closing run—“Suburban Home”, “Thank You”, “Food”, “Bikeage”, and the final burst of “Smile” - the room felt electrified. Bill Stevenson’s drumming remained a locomotive force, Karl Alvarez’s bass lines throbbd with punch, and Stephen Egerton’s guitar buzzed with clarity, together delivering the unmistakable Descendents sound: fast, tight, and endlessly catchy. What made the night unforgettable was the bond between band and audience. The crowd wasn’t just watching a show—they were part of it, chanting, laughing, and moving as one. The Descendents proved, once again, that their brand of melodic punk is ageless. At MTELUS, their urgency and hooks felt as necessary now as they did decades ago.

- Jean-Francois Gosselin

## RISE REGGAE FESTIVAL

August 8-10, 2025, Bassin Peel, Montreal

Montreal’s Bassin Peel came alive with the debut of the Montreal Rise Reggae Festival, a three-day celebration of Caribbean music and culture co-presented by Taste of the Caribbean and Nouvelle Vie. The festival’s lineup delivered a rich mix of reggae, dancehall, soca, reggaeton, afrobeat, konpa, and zouk. Each evening featured standout performances from international icons including Sister Nancy, DeMarco, Kranium, Lady G, Massive B, Anthony B, Romain Virgo, Gramps Morgan, Alison Hinds, Patrice Roberts, and Skinny Fabulous. Backed by live bands, their sets combined energy, precision, and stage presence, keeping the crowd moving from start to finish. Montreal talent added a local anchor to the festival, reinforcing the city’s multicultural identity and ensuring the event resonated both globally and locally. This blend of international stars and homegrown voices gave the programming depth and balance, turning Bassin Peel into a true crossroads of Caribbean sound. Beyond the music, the setting enhanced the experience. Food vendors filled the air with Caribbean spices, flags and

colors created a vibrant backdrop, and fans danced together beneath the summer sky. The result was less a standard concert series than a cultural gathering marked by unity, pride, and celebration. As its inaugural edition closed, the Montreal Rise Reggae Festival established itself as more than a promising newcomer. It was a confident declaration of reggae’s vitality in the city and a bold step toward making Montréal a destination for Caribbean music.

- Jean-Francois Gosselin

Photos by Jean-Francois Gosselin

## VIAGRA BOYS

September 22nd , MTELUS, Montréal Qc

There are punk shows — and then there are Viagra Boys shows. What happened at Montréal’s MTELUS wasn’t just a gig; it was a glorious collision of chaos, satire, and sweat-drenched catharsis that left the crowd howling for more. Launching straight into “Man Made of Meat,” the Stockholm misfits set the tone from the first riff — raw, unfiltered, and unrelenting. Frontman Sebastian Murphy stalked the stage like a beer-soaked prophet, equal parts stand-up comedian and punk shaman, his shirt long gone and his sneer firmly in place. It’s that mix of humor and heaviness that makes Viagra Boys so potent: they don’t just play songs, they detonate them. The setlist was a relentless barrage of crowd-pleasers. “Punk Rock Loser” and “Return to Monkey” turned the venue into a communal shout-along, while “Troglydye” and “Ain’t No Thief” pushed the energy into overdrive. Saxophonist Oscar Carls brought a manic edge to the chaos, his wild runs slicing through the dense wall of bass and drums like a sonic siren. Yet beneath the absurdity is a razor-sharp commentary on modern life. Tracks like “Pyramid of Health” mocked wellness culture with gleeful disdain, and “Research Chemicals” captured the surreal spirit of a society hooked on distraction. By the time the encore — “Bog Body”, “ADD,” and the feral “Worms” — exploded, the room was a swirl of bodies, beer, and beautiful disorder. Viagra Boys have built their reputation on being unpredictable, unpretentious, and unapologetically weird. Montréal got all that and more — a reminder that punk doesn’t just survive, it evolves when in the hands of a band unafraid to laugh at everything, including themselves. It was not just a concert. It was a glorious mess — and everyone wanted to live in it a little longer.

- Jean-Francois Gosselin



Photo by JF

## Korn

### Gojira

### Loathe

September 28 – Scotiabank Saddledome, Calgary

Twenty-five years ago, at the height of their popularity, touring behind Issues, I saw Korn at this very same venue. The Sick and Twisted Tour featured Powerman 5000 and Papa Roach as openers, with Korn commanding the stage as the face of a genre they helped define. Since that time, there have been various ups and downs — stylistic shifts, lineup changes, new eras of heaviness — but in 2025, Korn returned to the Saddledome with a sold-out show, reclaiming the same stage and proving their staying power and legacy. Opening with “Blind,” Korn set the tone immediately — primal, nostalgic, and explosive. The setlist balanced fan favorites with deeper cuts and mid-era highlights. Hearing “Twisted Transistor”, “Did My Time”, “Divine”, and “Dirty” in one night was a gift for longtime fans, blending their early aggression with later experimentation. The encore — “4U”, “Falling Away from Me”, “Divine”, and “Freak on a Leash” — felt like a cathartic journey through vulnerability and release. Visually, the show leaned abstract and moody — with cold-toned, atmospheric projections that evoked Nine Inch Nails more than Korn. A forest backdrop during “Clown” and other textured visuals acted less like literal storytelling and more like emotional undercurrents. Midway through the set, Jonathan Davis paused to reflect: “It’s hard to believe we’ve been around 31 years — and this many people still come out.” The crowd roared back, a living testament to Korn’s endurance and emotional resonance. Even after decades, their songs still tap into something universal that transcends nostalgia. Gojira utilized an impressive amount of fire throughout their set, transforming the Saddledome into a furnace. I saw them roughly fifteen years ago at The Warehouse in Calgary — a small club where their precision and force already hinted at greatness. Did I imagine they’d one day stand on the Saddledome stage, with video screens depicting them as astronauts exploring a new world? Perhaps not — but it was never out of the question. They were, and still are, that good. As for Loathe, the Liverpool band opened the night beneath a glowing red



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SE65

**PYTHON**  
*Shock Treatment b/w Pink Ladies*  
7" 45 | 1972 | Hard Rock / Proto Punk  
Vancouver, BC, Canada

Shock-treatment blues and snotty proto-punk. Featuring future Ultravox drummer Warren Cann.

NEW!

SE64

**DEBT OF NATURE / CREPITUS**  
*Imminent Purge, Eternal Unrest*  
12" LP | 1991-94  
Extreme Death Metal  
Victoria, BC, Canada

NEW!

SE66

**SACRED BLADE**  
*Of The Sun + Moon*  
12" LP | 1986  
Progressive, Sci-fi Power Metal  
Vancouver, BC, Canada

NEW!

SE53

**MORAL DECAY**  
*To Build An End*  
12" LP | 1989  
Thrash Metal  
Victoria, BC, Canada

NEW!

SE49

**THE NERVE**  
*Self Audopsy*  
12" MLP | 1978  
Punk Rock  
Edmonton, AB, Canada

NEW!

SE41

**THE DISHRAGS**  
*Four*  
12" LP | 1980  
Punk / Hardcore  
Vancouver, BC, Canada

NEW!

SE60

**JEFFERY SEZ**  
*Buiding Rafts Out Of Burnt Bridges*  
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Hard Rock / Grunge  
Victoria, BC, Canada

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Photo by Ryan Dyer

screen, delivering a set that felt like a Deftones simulation — lush and moody but lacking identity. Twenty-five years ago, Papa Roach filled this same slot and went on to build a career with staying power. Whether Loathe can do the same will depend on if they can carve out a sound that’s truly their own. In the end, this night was a full-circle moment. For fans who were there in 2000, Korn’s return to the Saddledome was both nostalgic and affirming: proof that the emotion that once shook the walls still resonates, now sharpened by time and survival.

- Ryan Dyer

Ligament

Shaking Foundations, Building Community

Off to a fiery start, Oshawa’s own Ligament is a fresh name in the local metal circuit, but don’t let the “new” tag fool you. From the moment they hit the stage at the twotwotwo, their energy, crushing riffs, and unmistakable passion made it clear: this band came to destroy, and they came prepared. My first encounter with Ligament left me speechless! Not a reaction I usually have, especially not at a debut show. The way they played was just locked-in. It had this raw, unmistakable hunger driving every riff. After the

set, I just had to compliment their performance and to my surprise, not only were they welcoming as hell, but that had just been their first-ever live show. Seriously. At their second show, they somehow raised the bar even further. With tracks like “Used As Nutrient”, “Declaration of Destruction (DOD)”, and “My Own Now”, Ligament laid down a set that bounced between groove, aggression, and precision, all while keeping the crowd fully locked in. The two encores, a Pantera jam and a Suffocation jam showed not only their roots but their range. Self-described as groove metal, the band pulls influence from the heavy-hitters but carves their own space. There’s no gimmick here, just raw skill, a deep love for the genre, and a live presence that hits like a sledgehammer. And by their second show, they had a bassist locked in, tightening their already bone-crushing rhythm section. But what really stands out beyond the breakdowns and blast beats is the sense of community. Ligament isn’t just playing shows, they’re showing up for other bands, hyping them up, and creating a space where underground metal thrives through mutual respect and support. It’s honestly sweet as hell and rare. For metalheads looking for something real, intense, and still in its early but explosive rise: Ligament is the band to watch. Catch them now, while you can still say you saw them before they went viral.

- Katrina Jacobs

Lynyrd Skynyrd: Celebrating 50 Years Outlaws

September 10, Saddledome, Calgary AB

Lynyrd Skynyrd are one of those rare bands whose songs feel as timeless and essential as anything by the Beatles, Elvis, or Bach. So when the opportunity comes to actually hear “Sweet Home Alabama” live, it borders on surreal. Not a cover, not a tribute — it’s Lynyrd fuckin’ Skynyrd. And yes — shouting “Play Free Bird!” was not only appropriate, it was rewarded. Even though none of the original members remain, the 50th anniversary celebration lit up the Saddledome. The last original member, guitarist Gary Rossington, passed away on March 5, 2023, at the age of 71. He was not only the longest-serving member of the band but also the final direct link to its origins. With his passing, Lynyrd Skynyrd now carries its history entirely through the music. The arena wasn’t fully sold out (something more common at the venue these days), and the floor was lined with chairs, but the multigenerational crowd’s energy carried the night. Opening the show were The Outlaws, whose set was a surprise treat. Performing for an hour, they found their stride as they went along, winning a standing ovation by the end. Their rendition of “(Ghost) Riders in the Sky: A Cowboy Legend” was a clear highlight, stretched into a jam that let all three of their guitarists shine. Skynyrd answered with their own three-guitar attack, keeping things lean with a 90-minute set that trimmed the fat and zeroed in on the hits: “Simple Man”, “Tuesday’s Gone”, “That Smell”, and of course the immortal “Free Bird”. Video screens cycled through archival footage, tributes to past members, and live shots of the band — a fitting backdrop without distracting

from the music. The stage itself was kept plain, the emphasis exactly where it belonged: on the songs. No, I’ll never be able to say I saw Led Zeppelin. No, I’ll never say I saw Pink Floyd. But I can say this: I saw Lynyrd Skynyrd play “Free Bird”. And that’s a bucket-list moment all on its own — and proof that Southern rock’s fire still burns fifty years on.

- Ryan Dyer

MUDHONEY

Capital Ballroom, Victoria - September 12, 2025

On a night filled with late 80’s and 90’s musical nostalgia in Victoria, what with Rifflandia 2025 offering up The Descendents and Public Enemy, it was the Capital Ballroom that drew me in to see grunge pioneers Mudhoney perform to a packed and highly reactive house. Even after three decades since their formation in 1988, Mudhoney’s raw energy and staying power were evident. Original members Mark Arm and Steve Turner, along with Dan Peters (drummer) and Jim Sangster on bass, showcased that they are still very much in their prime, with no signs of merely playing a Vegas nostalgia tour. Lead vocalist Mark Arm really showed his vocal stuff when he was freed from his instrument, roaming the stage while Steve provided his trademark fuzz and distorted solos throughout the evening. The performance was rough, loud, electrifying and the audience responded. I counted about 25 songs in the 90 minutes they played blending classics with recent cuts from their catalog and not just playing the hits - notably 6 tracks came from their latest album *Plastic Eternity* (2023) while 14 dated back to before 2000, including their all-time punk classic “Touch Me I’m Sick” (1988) followed by one of my current favorites the fun “Little Dogs” from 2023. Mudhoney didn’t reserve

their best-known showstoppers for the encore; instead, they hit the audience with them throughout the night. In 2025, Mudhoney remains a vital act worth seeing live. They were fully invested in their time here on stage, and the appreciative crowd responded with slam dancing, hair flailing, head bobbing and just having a good time, even though there was only one brave soul who actually stage dived. At the conclusion Mark Arm poignantly acknowledged, “We know you had other choices; we’re glad you chose us,” perfectly encapsulating the connection between this band and their audience. For me it was an unforgettable night.

By Bob Hanham (hanhambob@gmail.com)

The Viagra Boys - ‘The Infinite Anxiety Tour’

Malkin Bowl, Vancouver - September 11, 2025

Swedish post-punkers The Viagra Boys stormed Stanley Park’s Malkin Bowl in Vancouver for Day two of their North American tour. When the gates opened it was a toss-up - either hit the merch tent or get to the front of the stage for prime viewing - I decided to experience VB in the best way possible - up close and in the chaotic heart of the show, a decision I don’t regret. Openers Austin’s all girl quartet Die Spitz, kicked off the night with an electrifying blend of punk, metal, shoegaze, post-punk and grunge making a high energy introduction to what was to follow. When VB hit the stage the audience was immediately whipped into an energetic frenzy which continued throughout the show save for a brief, unexplained mid-set exit, only to return and continue the spectacle. Definitely one of post-punk’s most loved and liveliest bands in terms of the excited crowd’s reactions -

bouncing, surging, singing along. Frontman Sebastian Murphy almost always commanded the stage, first shockingly (to me) appearing hooded but that was gone after a couple songs in order to expose that iconic inked-up upper body that we had all come to see and worship at. Nailing it, he seized the spotlight for the night with the other band members locking it all together; bassist Henrik Hockert, drummer Tor Sjoden, sax & flute player Oskar Carls, keyboardist Elias Jungqvist and recent addition on guitar Anton. They kicked off the night with the new “Man Made of Meat” track from their latest album (*Viagra Boys*) with a pointed lyrical tweak - “Charlie Kirk who got shot...”. Another political reference later in the night to the ‘Free Palestine movement’ sparked a brief ‘Fuck You’ exchange with the crowd, promptly rebuffed by Sebastian. The band unleashed 17 high-octane cuts in total with nine of them coming from their new album seemingly commanding the crowd to get familiar with them NOW and eight of their staples “Punk Rock Loser”, “Sports” and the new crowd pleasing “Medicine for Horses” were clear stand-outs. “Research Chemicals” is still the traditional 10”+ closer and “Worms” was the encore favorite (“The same worms that eat me will someday eat you too”). I’m still sore days later but completely satisfied with my sojourn embracing the raw energy of the Viagra Boys’ crowd. They deserve to be partaken of live. After a bow from the band, we stumbled out to the fitting “Up Where We Belong” song.

By Bob Hanham (hanhambob@gmail.com)

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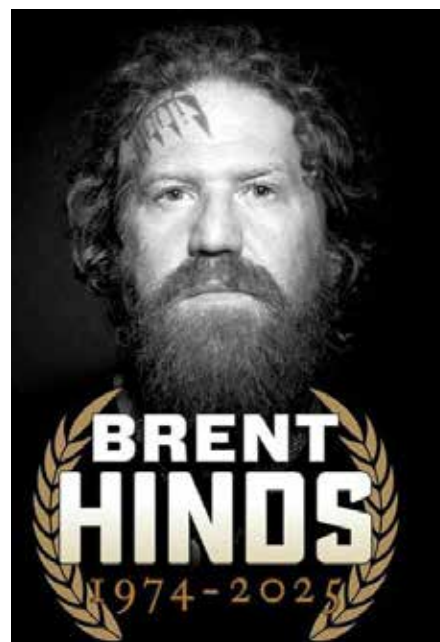
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## Brent Hinds - A Personal Tribute

By Steve Earles

I had hoped not to have to write another one of these after my Ozzy tribute last issue but as the old saying goes - 'Needs Must When The Devil Drives'. This isn't a piece regurgitating facts you already know, rather it's a personal story you don't. I love Mastodon and they've been great at frequently playing my native Ireland. In 2015 they played Cork, a lovely city. I met Brent in the splendidly named Fred Zeppelins earlier on the day they were playing. He bought pints of Guinness for the fans that met, and indeed, drank Guinness, always a good sign in my book, I can look back and say I drank Guinness with Brent Hinds. He was great company, warm, witty and friendly...great craic as we say here ('Craic' means fun in Ireland, not 'Crack'). The 'Don played a killer show, especially impressive since

they were one man down. They were sublime. Everything you could have wished, and they played a killed cover of 'Emerald'. I met Brent and Brann afterwards (I considered adopting them, we got on great!) and paid them the ultimate compliment, 'Philo would have loved your Lizzy cover.' They

were well chuffed. Brent was a true one-off, unique, original, he lived everyday like it was his last. When

the last day came, sadly too soon, at least he had lived before he died. A lesson to us all folk, live each like it's your last, give everyone and everything a chance to shine. As I read years ago, 'We are blind to the worlds within us/Waiting To Be Born'. While

he lived Brent gave birth to so much great music and that will live on immortal! A fitting tribute to Brent would be for the Jonah Hex soundtrack to get a proper release, it is awesome and had never appeared on any physical format, and a lot of the music wasn't even released digitally, and there is an entire unused soundtrack (unused due to extensive reshoots on the film). Imagine that, an unreleased Mastodon album!



Photo by Ryan Dyer

**R.I.P. DAN BROWN**

**Our friend and contributor DAN BROWN has passed away --:( HE WILL BE GREATLY MISSED.**

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