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THE ABSOLUTE UNDERGROUND

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CRATER SNAKES

Rewind the Grilled Cheese before Return

By John Carlow, Finding Charlotte Photography

Absolute Underground: Introduce yourselves.

Crater Snakes:

Rob Brelsford: Guitar/Vocals (Paper Bomb/Wolf Rider)

David Chenery: Guitar/Vocals (the Hex/the Purrverts/Black Valley Gospel)

Shawn Merrill: Bass & Organ (the Mants/the Dirty)

Dominic Downs: Drums (Mustache Invasion/Drunken Idiots/Tarbox)

AU: How did the band come together?

CS: Toward the end of 2024, David and Rob were hanging out in local unsavory watering-holes, and talkin' about King Kahn & BBQ Show, the Ohsees, the Black Lips, Ty Segall, and other garage bands and wanted to put a band together along those lines but with their own mark on it. Since

was made!

AU: Where did the name come from?

CS: Well, we're all pretty much a bunch of snakes (for better or worse) living and trying to slither on by this snake pit of a world. We just happen to be four saucy musical serpents with a fictitious (and facetious) origin story based out of Crater Lake in Strathcona Park on Vancouver Island.

AU: Sound seems like a combination of a few genres. Comment?

CS: Yeah, we've got a few different genres going on; garage rock, cowpunk, Satanic swamp polka, etc. We all grew up as feral punk and metal kids who eventually discovered a world of other music in dive bars and record stores and that simmering pot of diverse musical stew results in this.

AU: You've been busy right out of the gate and already recording. Tell us about that.

CS: Being a bunch of sleep deprived weirdos, we thought it might be fun and idiotic to head right into the studio to record some songs before we even played our first show! Luckily it paid off for us, and those sessions will be released as our debut EP, *Paddy Wagon*, coming out on one of Europe's premier garage rock labels, Chaputa Records, in March.

AU: Tell us about the Chaputa Records

Rob works directly with Dom, it was a no-brainer to recruit him to keep the beat and supply some stool-side antics. At the same time Dave knew that my old band, the Mants, was on a break (forced back to Uranus by the Mant queen!) and he approached me to hold down bass duties and brown notes for the new band. And that's how the Crater Snakes shit-sandwich

compilation and how you came to be connected with it.

CS: Oddly enough, shortly after Chaputa agreed to put out our record, they contacted us again to ask us if we could also contribute a song for their 100th release, the "Still Primitive," the Best of Pebbles, compilation. Problem was, they needed the song immediately and we'd only have two weeks to learn and record it. Since we wanted to be on this incredible tribute album, we went right back into the studio to bang it out and get it documented (all before we even played a gig, ha!).

AU: What is your creative process?

CS: Inserting grilled cheese into a VCR and hitting play; you have absolutely no idea what's going to happen! Also, Satan, true crime, strychnine and booze fueled delusions too? (looks at David)

AU: I was at your debut. You dudes are some snappy dressers. I didn't think Dave Chenery could be any more dashing, but there you have it.

CS: Well, you've got to polish a turd to make the corn shine, don't ya'! If we ever play a show on Wendy O'Williams' birthday or death day I'm hoping that we can all perform naked and mummified in saran wrap. That's snappy too, right?

AU: What's on the horizon for this band?

CS: Play some shows, put some records out, do some laundry and head back into the studio later this year to record a full-length album, hopefully for Chaputa Records as well.

AU: Shut outs in the local scene?

CS: Finding Charlotte Photography (nudge nudge wink wink), Wheelies, Logans (RIP), Lucky Bar,

VICTORIAS LOCALS ONLY

the Vault, Garage Grooves on CFUV, *Absolute Underground*, EVIL!, Top Ropes, Bad Hoo, Graham at Atomic Recordings, Jordan at the Noise Floor, Dave Read, Steve at Fascinating Rhythm, Dylan at Old Town Strings!

AU: Where can people find your music??

CS: Right now you can **pre-order the *Still Primitive compilation* LP from the Chaputa Records website** and **pre-orders for our *Paddy Wagon* EP should be up there too by the time this goes to print.**

As for digital and streaming, our track from the



***Still Primitive compilation* will be up on our Bandcamp page in February and the *Paddy Wagon* EP in March.**

If you can't wait until then, **we've got a couple of shows coming up in Nanaimo (Feb 20th) and Victoria (March 13th)**, so c'mon out for some live action fun!

AU: Final thoughts??

CS: Memento mori, make each day count and live it.

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THE CORPS

Keeping Skate Punk Alive and Thriving

By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: Hello and welcome to **Absolute Underground!** For those just discovering The Corps, tell us who you are, where you're from and what you do behind the scenes.

We're a 4-piece melodic skate punk band from Vancouver, BC.

AU: Skate punk has such a distinct energy and attitude. What originally pulled you toward that style, and what keeps it relevant for you today?

Fast and fun, as well as a tight scene, both as fans and musicians. Today it stays relevant with meeting and playing with all the new bands to the genre from around the world, something we are happy to be a part of!



venues really helping to build it up. Having that scene support, and the ability to play frequently really solidified our enjoyment of the band, and helped hone our live show.

AU: After years of playing together, what do you think defines The Corps most clearly now — speed, melody, attitude?

All three? We have always had a focus on melody, often incorporating all four of us singing at times. Speed, well that's just a given in the genre, but it definitely adds to the excitement of playing. As for attitude, as mentioned in what drew us to skate punk in the first place, trying to maintain that energy, of personally having a great time at the show, and doing your best to help everyone in the crowd have a blast as well. It's that magic combination that I think helps us stand out.

AU: You're about to hit the B.C. coast on the Heartcorps Winter Tour. What excites you most about getting back on the road and playing these coastal shows?

AU: Coming up in Vancouver, how did the local scene shape The Corps' identity — musically, culturally or even politically?

There has always been a scene for it in Vancouver, and when we first formed in 2014 it was no exception. There were (and still are) tons of other bands all getting together to put on shows, with promoters and

Our last tour ended early October, so it's been a few months since we've hit the stage. It's always exciting after a break, I think we're all itching for it! It's hard to describe, but it just feels a certain way, getting into the van and hitting the road.

AU: Skate punk has always been closely tied to community — skating, DIY spaces, all-ages shows. How important is that sense of community to bands today?

It's still very important, though I would say more challenging today. In Vancouver, starting a DIY space, especially if it's geared towards all ages, is trickier than ever and we've lost a few either to development or costs over the years. Fortunately there are still a couple available, and we do like to play all ages shows when it's possible.

AU: The tour kicks off February 13 in Squamish at the Brackendale Art Gallery with Idiofame and The Subteraliens. What kind of energy or shared spirit do those bands bring that sets the tone for the run?

Idiofame will be doing the majority of the run with us, so we're looking forward to hanging out with them a little longer this time. We've played with The Subteraliens as well, so it will be great to have friends help us kick off the first show together. All the acts are a bit of a different sound as well, complementing each other without it getting repetitive.

AU: From Vancouver to Chilliwack, Victoria, Nanaimo and Duncan, these shows hit a mix of

VANCOUVER VENGEANCE

scenes and spaces. Do different B.C. cities bring out different sides of The Corps live?

Not really. We try to deliver the same quality show regardless of where we are or how many people are there.

AU: What can fans expect from The Corps live set in 2026, and what would you say to anyone on the coast who's thinking about catching one of these February shows?

I would say brave the cold, come on down and hang out! As to the set, well you'll just have to be there.

AU: Where can people buy your music and merchandise and how can they connect with The Corps online?

The best way to buy merch from any band is at a show!

But if you are looking online, you can find our digital catalog on the-corps.bandcamp.com and a lot of clothing options at epicmerchstore.com/collection/artists/the-corps.

Our record label Thousand Islands Records has records and CDs available: thousandislandsrecords.ca

And you can find us online @the-corps2814

AU: This *Absolute Underground* issue has a theme of The Warriors (1979 cult classic film) and Valentine's Day. Any thoughts on either — from the romantic, to the brutal, to the brutally honest?

Come out to (watch us) play! Promise it'll be more fun than a gang street fight. But you can still dress up if you want!



Friday, February 13 - Squamish, BC - The R&B
Saturday, February 14 - Vancouver, BC - Green Room
Sunday, February 15 - Chilliwack, BC - Chilli House
Friday, February 20 - Victoria, BC - Encore
Saturday, February 21 - Nanaimo, BC - The Globe
Sunday, February 22 - Duncan, BC - Jas's on Queen

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NORTHERN RENEGADES

Interview with Garnett Tubman and Tyler Duffy

By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: Let's start at the beginning — for readers discovering your music for the first time, can you introduce NORTHERN RENEGADES and describe your role(s) in the band?

Garnett Tubman: We are NORTHERN RENEGADES and we like to party. We're a hard rock band with members residing in Red Deer, Calgary, Didsbury, and Niobe, Alberta. This past year we released our debut album, "FUCK, ARE WE GOOD!", on most major streaming services and as a limited cassette tape release. My roles have been primarily as co-performer, co-producer and co-songwriter/composer with Tyler Duffy, founding member. On stage and in the studio, I perform both lead and rhythm electric and acoustic guitars, harmonica and backing vocals. Tyler and I share dual lead guitar on some songs. Offstage, I oversee rights management, publishing, website and social media administration, art direction, merch, festival applications and production of the physical album release.

Tyler Duffy: Right, hello you beautiful legends! I'm Tyler Duffy — lead singer, rhythm guitarist/2nd lead guitar and contributing songwriter. Garnett ("Guitarnett") and I are the primary songwriters of the band. Sometimes we write separately and bring finished songs in to share, sometimes we co-write together, but all of NORTHERN RENEGADES' material comes from Garnett and me. Much of it is still unrecorded, but we're organizing resources to start getting all of it recorded and released.

AU: Your debut album, "FUCK, ARE WE GOOD!", is unapologetically bold, calling out global events and language policing. How did the pandemic shape the writing and recording of this record?

Garnett: All the songs were written long before the pandemic, and plans to record were already underway when lockdowns hit. We recorded most of the album in November 2020 as an act of rebellion against the strict gathering restrictions. The events of the pandemic only amplified the significance of our lyrics, and audiences who felt alienated and frustrated by these restrictions connected with it strongly.

Tyler: All the songs were written well before the pandemic, but this gave us the chance to finally take them into the studio. Garnett and I met 15 years ago playing open mic nights in Red Deer. I had just left my second band, Fiends for Pleasure, and wanted more stability with my vocals and guitar work. Bringing Garnett on board allowed me to focus on singing while we developed this material together.

AU: The album was released on streaming platforms and as a limited cassette tape run. What inspired a cassette edition?

Garnett: We considered vinyl, but costs were prohibitive. After reading a CBC article about *GetTapesHere* in Halifax, I corresponded with Graham and was able to order a run of 100 numbered, shrink-wrapped tapes with a pad-printed shell. Each tape includes a handmade download card with a bonus track, so even without a cassette deck, you can listen digitally. I wanted a tangible object for collectability and to

play in my car's deck.

Tyler: I've always appreciated physical media. Digital copies can vanish, but a cassette in your hand is forever. It's also a nod to supply-and-demand economics: if supply is low and demand is high, it's more valuable. I wanted something fans could physically hold and treasure, a collectible that reflects our music's energy.

AU: The NORTHERN RENEGADES mission statement is "to make war and poverty obsolete and a part of our history." How do your lyrics and music reflect that vision?

Garnett: That line comes from "Running Like a Renegade", my proudest track. It combines international conflict with the idea of interpersonal unity and freedom — freedom from war, poverty, and for free expression. That's our mission.

Tyler: Ok that's a fucking deep doozy of a question there, and to answer that I'd have to write a thesis proposal for a PhD in Psychology, but I'll try and keep it short. When Garnett and I met I was in my late 20's, had just quit my job in the engineering field and was going back to University taking a Bachelor of Arts Degree; Psychology major and a Philosophy Minor. I wasn't casually going back to school either, I was studying with purpose, not to earn a degree, I was seeking knowledge and understanding. I was attacking these text books with passion, and a ferocious desire to figure myself and the world out. So I was driven. That line comes from one of the songs I wrote called "Running Like a Renegade," and the line is "So why don't you come and walk with me, we'll make war and poverty obsolete and a part of our history, because we were born to be renegades."

After years of ferocious study and an unwavering desire to pursue knowledge and understanding, driven by a desire to find the truth as clearly as I could, I landed on the belief you can distill most of the world's problems down to a common root cause. Which is that the way the society is structured does not meet the social and emotional developmental needs of youth as they grow up. So some don't grow up, they age, but their mind doesn't develop socially, emotionally, and more importantly ethically. Unfortunately research shows that the frequency of this is alarmingly high, and some of these immature minds go on to wreak havoc on the world as adults. So all the research textbooks and research papers in psychology and philosophy that I read lead me to the belief that we will never move towards a peaceful global existence until this is recognized and addressed.

That is how you make war and poverty obsolete and a part of our history, by tightening the web of social support that kids get in their developmental years so that they become emotionally balanced adults, rather than emotionally stunted adults. One thing I firmly believe is that emotionally mature men will never create war, emotionally stunted infantile and adolescent minded boys that have biologically aged to adulthood create war, and then men have to do horrible things to end the conflict. This is something that Aldous Huxley talks extensively about in his classic novel "The Island." He talks about how Hitler and Stalin are two perfect historical examples of "Peter Pan's" that never grew up and unleashed havoc on the world. I believe that peace on earth will not be possible until we tighten the web of social support that kids get on a cultural level by increasing the amount, variety, and frequency of social support they receive, so the destructive "Peter Pan's" stop slipping through the cracks and then unleashing havoc on the world later in their lives. That is as short as I can make that answer.

AU: Your music has roots in previous bands, Fiends for Pleasure and Lethajesus. How did merging these histories influence NORTHERN RENEGADES?

Garnett: I'll defer to Tyler, as those bands were primarily his projects.

Tyler: Lethajesus was classic grunge mixed with rock; Fiends for Pleasure was punk. Merging those energies shaped our sound. My early influences included Led Zeppelin, AC/DC, Aerosmith, Guns N' Roses, Pearl Jam, Nirvana, and Alice in Chains. The combination of classic rock, grunge, and punk is the foundation of

NORTHERN RENEGADES.

AU: "FUCK, ARE WE GOOD!" blends aggression, free speech, and personal storytelling. How do you ensure your message lands hard without turning listeners away?

Garnett: We don't sugarcoat anything. Explicit content is intentional; listeners know what they're getting. We welcome feedback — positive or negative. It's about authenticity.

Tyler: Exactly. We hit hard, we mean to hit hard, and we won't apologize. Fans self-select: those who resonate stay, those who don't, leave. Being 100% authentic is key.

AU: How would you describe the energy at live shows, and what do you want fans to feel in the pit?

Garnett: We want people to mosh, headbang, and feel motivated, but also to help each other if someone falls. It's about connection and energy.

Tyler: Our live shows aim for rock-and-roll ferocity. The audience forms a unit, inspired and connected with us. I want fans to stomp, beat their chest, and feel the same energy as when you watch *Braveheart* and the Scottish warriors charge — unity, passion, brotherhood.

AU: You're performing at Wacken Metal Battle Canada 2026 in Edmonton. What does competing on that stage mean, and how are you preparing?

Garnett: It's exciting. We're rehearsing and prepping gear, connecting with other performers and aiming for provincial, national and ultimately international stages.

Tyler: Wacken is the heavy metal Olympics. We rehearse multiple times per week, improv audience interactions and pretend we're performing for sold-out crowds. Every rehearsal is treated as the big stage.

AU: Looking ahead to 2026 and beyond, what excites you most — in the studio and on stage?

Garnett: We have 8–10 more original tracks ready for recording, and balancing band life with our

CALGARY CARNAGE

day jobs is always a challenge.

Tyler: Recording and releasing more of our material is a top priority. We have a large library of songs ready to be recorded and shared.

AU: Where can people buy your music and connect online?

Cassettes are available in Calgary at: Melodiya, Hot Wax, Sloth, and Blackbyrd Myoosik, plus Eagle Rock Hi-Fi in Balzac.

Digital copies are on Spotify, Apple Music, Amazon Music, YouTube Music, Deezer, Tidal, Pandora, Anghami, and Bandcamp (includes bonus track "Man in the Mirror").

Rumble is our preferred free speech platform.

Facebook is the best place to connect; we avoid Instagram, X, or other social media.

Website: northernrenegadesmusic.com

AU: This *Absolute Underground* issue has a theme of *The Warriors*, 1979 cult classic film and Valentine's Day. Any thoughts?

Garnett: I've never actually seen *The Warriors*, only heard the phrases "Warriors come out and play" and "Can you dig it?" They're iconic, but the gang-on-gang violence isn't relatable. Speaking of gang violence — the St. Valentine's Day Massacre! Not just a play on words.

AU: Any dating or marriage advice?

Garnett: 20 years after high school, I got back with my high school sweetheart, and it's the best romantic relationship I've ever been in.

AU: Tinder profile?

Garnett: Never used Tinder; I don't own a cell phone.

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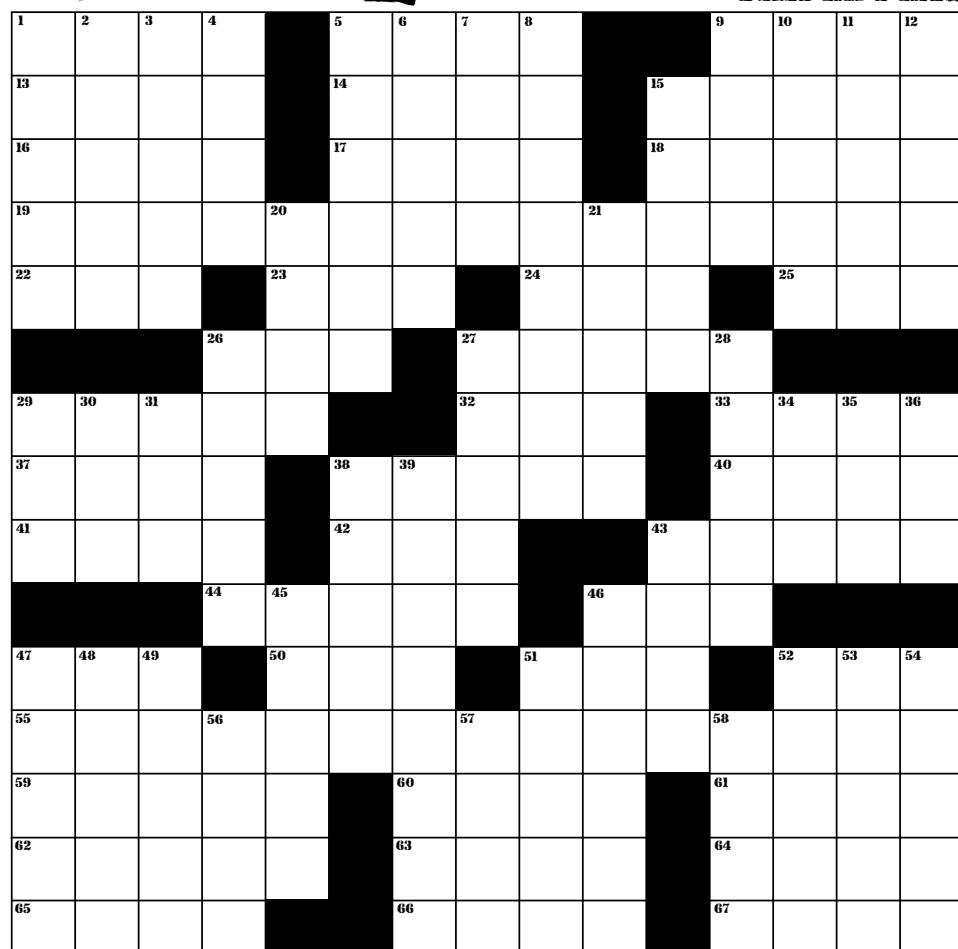
TRIPLE PLAY

ACROSS

- When tripled, part of a Billy Idol chorus
- When tripled, a first Gen Punk band
- When tripled, an Iggy LP
- You may knock someone down this
- 51 is a famous one
- Satchel in the MLB hall of fame
- March madness org.
- Oderus Urungus's band
- The Cramps "A Date With ____"
- Sign outside the Cobalt that inspired a Motley Crue song
- Graphic behing a news anchor
- Bo Derek film
- "Egads!" online
- Big shoe specification
- Winter depression (abbr.)
- What a sub does
- '76 film "The Gumball ____"
- LA neighbourhood ____-Air
- Apple standard
- Title role for Fonda
- A pirate may bury one
- Israeli PM Golda
- Finger
- ____-been
- Wrestler Piper
- Likely (to)
- A ____ of bricks
- ____ Khan
- Word with table or zone
- H. Rider Haggard novel
- Drain
- Erasure song about a greedy kid?
- "Love Train" group
- You may do this to a phrase
- The sound of water or a lion
- Straight up in Seville
- The price of participation
- River of central Italy
- When tripled, a Beatles chorus
- When tripled, a band obsessed with gun play?
- When tripled, a Damned song about someone with OCD?

DOWN

- Popular smoothie flavour
- Footnote abbr.
- Brings up
- It's fair in Quebec

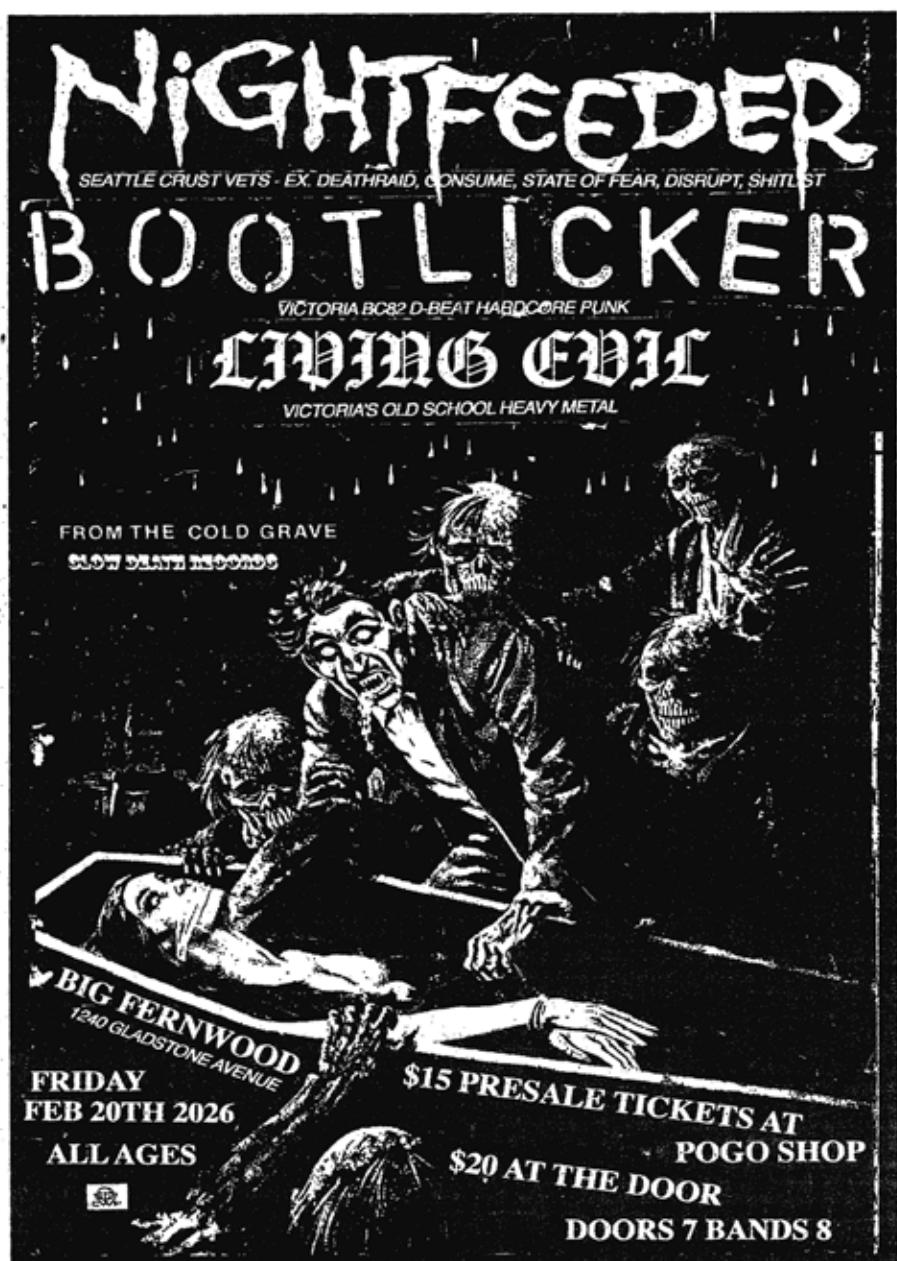


CROSSWORD NO. 121

FEBRUARY, 2026

- Harassed
- Disaster film producer Allen
- Vampire western "____ Dark"
- A place for rings
- Indonesia vacation destination
- Bibliothèque offering
- Quick on your feet
- Author of "Siddhartha"
- Mrs. Bundy
- Delay (a proceeding)
- "He who ____ it, dealt it"
- "No ____ Till Brooklyn"
- Too big for your britches?
- Chaos U.K. singer Greenham
- When tripled, a song by the Velvet Underground about a marathon?
- Words in the middle of some entrées
- The Eagle in Apollo 11
- It's good for what ails you
- It follows first or band
- When tripled, a Johnny Cash song about a bully's taunts?
- Cheech's partner
- Amateur golfers may have a large one
- Director Nicolas
- Actress Witherspoon
- "____ Centurions"
- Extreme pain
- The original action figure?
- Siren character in Borderlands 3
- Strike with a sword
- Campfire treat
- Early microwave brand
- He ran for President in '92
- Not true but not really a lie
- A man with a good habit?
- Hit for A Flock of Seagulls





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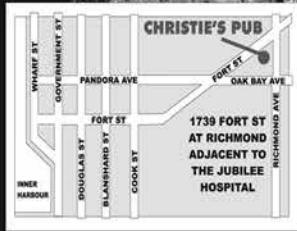
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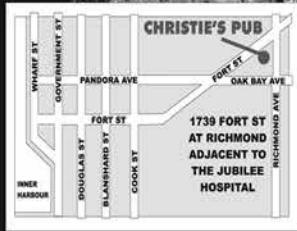
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Moments with DOLLHEAD

By John Carlow, Finding Charlotte Photography

Absolute Underground: Introduce yourselves.

Dollhead:

Bina – drums, percussion, bass, piano, synths, backup vocals. Current projects: Cultovar (bass) and Deep Filth (drums). Previously drums for Mendoza, Heron, Nostrum, Momy Fortuna, Cambodia, Ten Miles Wide, Queazy.

Bridget – guitar, lead vocals, synth, piano. Current projects are drums in a cover band, Richochet, previously in Headless Prom Queens.

AU: Tell us how the band came together.

DH: We met via the Georgia Straight musician ads! Our love of unusual pop/synth music mixed with a bit of riot girl.

AU: The story behind the name?

DH: I realized years later that it was my love for

Dolly Parton! Like the Grateful Dead have fans called Deadheads, we are Dollhead!!

AU: If someone asks what kind of music you play?

DH: Doom synth pop.

AU: Creative process?

DH: We live in separate towns, so we write riffs and send them back and forth using Garage Band or the likes, set it to a click track and practice on our own. We maybe only practice together a handful of times per year. We like to dress up in creative outfits for every gig.

AU: Bands that inspired your sound?

DH: Horror film soundtracks, Peaches, Kim Gordon, The Cure & L7.

AU: What are your songs about?

DH: Some are about our pets, most lyrics are written on the spot when we are together. We have songs about AI, menopause, gender power, hair and dating. We love to mix synth and electronics with live drums and guitar.

AU: Shout outs in the local scene?

DH: Loving Devours, Eye Labia, Jisei, Beaded Dragon, Verbody fest, Sunk City fest, Woodstove fest, Massif Fest, Loud Qathet, Turbofest, DIY venues, small venues like Grey Lab, Green Auto and Cobalt.

AU: Have you recorded anything? What are your plans for that?

DH: We started Dollhead around 2000. During covid I was stuck at home with no bands to jam with and watched a lot of horror movies. I was so inspired by the soundtracks that I wrote a bunch of weird synth riffs and sent them to Bridget to see what she thought. Our 2nd album *Sunshine and Rainbows* was released in 2023, so 23 years after we started Dollhead. Since then we've also recorded "Stop" just last year (2025) with a much dancier vibe. We are already writing for our next album for 2026. We had the pleasure of recording with Michael Kraushaar at Little Red Sounds, who is mind bogglingly talented and brings out our musical talents with so many ideas and fun tools.

AU: The road ahead?

DH: We'll be playing for my birthday in March in Cumberland, then Verbody fest in May. Hoping to get on some festivals this summer and do some small tours.

AU: Final thoughts?

DH: Predominantly Bina has been a hard-hitting metal drummer and Bridget a pop/rock player. We've come together to explore new and

VICTORIAS LOCALS ONLY

different sounds. We don't want to sound like another electronic or goth band. We are always searching for new expressions. Music is healing and depending on what is going on in the world today; that will spill out onto the stage.

AU: Where can fans find your music?

DH: We are on all platforms like Apple Music and Spotify, but we like to direct people to Bandcamp where the artists can make a small profit and control their content.



Dollhead1.bandcamp.com

Join our Instagram club at [dollhead_band](https://www.instagram.com/dollhead_band) to see where to find us live.

Gowns on New Years Eve Photo: Jennifer Lee Corbzy – 12/31/2025

Live at the Phoenix Photo: Finding Charlotte Photography



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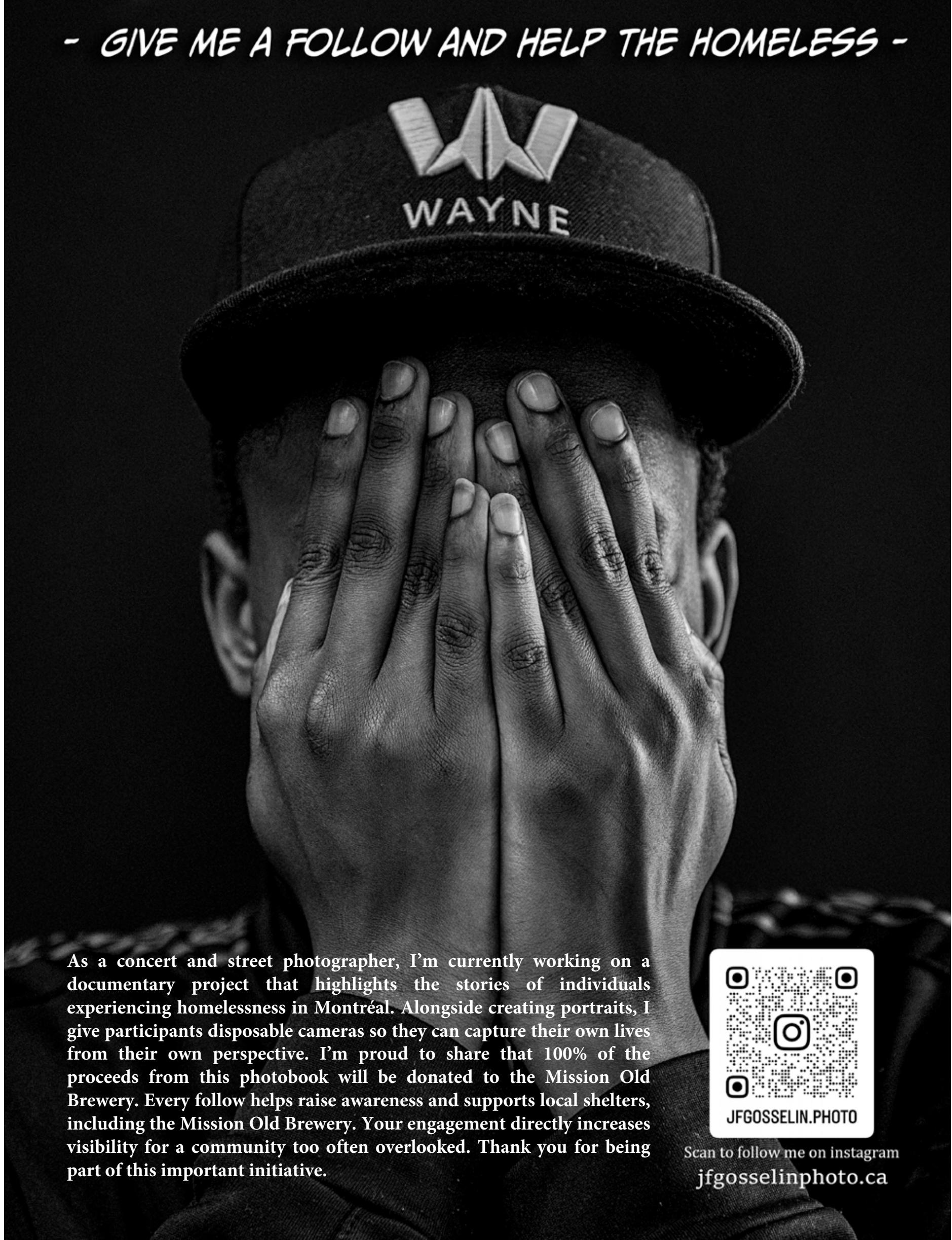
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WAYNE

As a concert and street photographer, I'm currently working on a documentary project that highlights the stories of individuals experiencing homelessness in Montréal. Alongside creating portraits, I give participants disposable cameras so they can capture their own lives from their own perspective. I'm proud to share that 100% of the proceeds from this photobook will be donated to the Mission Old Brewery. Every follow helps raise awareness and supports local shelters, including the Mission Old Brewery. Your engagement directly increases visibility for a community too often overlooked. Thank you for being part of this important initiative.



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TRUENT

Heavier Than Ever

By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: Let's start at the beginning — for readers discovering your music for the first time, can you introduce TRUENT and describe your role(s) in the band?

Matt Pancoust: Hey there! I'm Matt Pancoust, and I'm a guitarist and founder of the band TRUENT. We're a five-piece death metal band hailing from Vancouver, BC. We're always aiming to create music that's technically demanding and heavy while keeping songs catchy and fun. Our new/ current lineup consists of myself, Eli Slamang (guitars), Nic Landry (drums), Jason Whitewick-Bonfond (bass), and Darian Mazloomi (vocals).

AU: TRUENT has spent the last several years steadily building momentum across Canada, sharing stages with bands like Archspire, Voivod and Decapitated. Looking back, what do you feel has been most important in helping the band grow to this point?

MP: One of the most important things we have done as a band for long-term growth has been setting ambitious goals and pushing ourselves in every aspect of the band. Whether it is designing merchandise, the difficulty of the parts we play, our live shows, the business side, or booking tours, we have always strived to push ourselves

to the limit. Another beneficial aspect of our growth has been getting involved in our local music community and supporting our friends in other bands. We support our friends, and they also help support us, which has been integral to our development.

AU: You've recently welcomed a new vocalist and bassist into the lineup. How has this fresh configuration changed the band's dynamic — both creatively and live?

MP: With the new lineup, the creative process has undergone a significant shift. The band members have always lived in close proximity, having grown up in Maple Ridge, B.C. Now that we are spread out across the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island, we have had to adapt our rehearsals and writing process accordingly. Overall, the lineup change has been highly successful. The new members, Darian and Jason, have each brought a unique musical personality to the band. Our new music is developing into a sound that is similar but significantly heavier and more exciting than ever before.

AU: Progressive death metal thrives on precision, groove, and experimentation. How would you describe TRUENT's sound today, and how has it evolved since *Through the Vale of Earthly Torment*?

MP: Since the release of our last album, our music has become significantly more punishing and intense. We have been focusing on crafting music that is technically proficient while placing greater emphasis on riffs rather than solely aiming for technicality. Our new vocalist, Darian, also contributes a more deathcore-inspired vocal style, further shifting our music in that direction while keeping our more death metal-oriented roots.

AU: Your debut full-length made a strong impact, earning over 100,000 Spotify streams

and landing you on AltPress's "50 rising Canadian bands" list. How did that recognition affect your confidence or direction as a band?

MP: This milestone has undoubtedly bolstered our confidence within the band. When we initially began releasing music, I vividly recall the excitement we felt upon reaching the 1,000-play mark for one of our songs. At that time, as we were much younger, it appeared to be an insurmountable goal. Now that our music has garnered over 100,000 streams and received recognition from blogs, press, and online metal groups, it has undoubtedly provided the band with the momentum to continue on.

AU: You're heading out on a three-show Vancouver Island tour in late March 2026. What can fans expect from these shows, and how important is it for you to connect with Island audiences?

MP: Fans can anticipate songs from our last album, as well as several new songs that we have been working on. For these Island shows, we have also been booked almost exclusively with punk bands, a departure from our usual metal show lineups. We have always prioritized creating fun and engaging live performances, and playing alongside bands like DangerBox and Chronic Fatigue will only make it that much better.

AU: Touring has clearly been a big part of TRUENT's journey, especially with the success of the Creating Mortality cross-Canada tour. What did that tour teach you about yourselves as a live band?

MP: As a band, we gained valuable insights into resilience and overcoming seemingly insurmountable challenges. Our transmission failed in Edmonton, Alberta, before our first show even started. We had already invested a significant amount of money into the tour, so when faced with the decision to abandon the journey or continue regardless, we chose the latter. This resulted in us touring across

VANCOUVER VENGEANCE

Canada in a rented F-150 and trailer, resolving all the issues that arose along the way. This tour was a pivotal moment that provided us with a crash course in character building, discipline and resilience.

AU: With new music on the way, what can you tell us about what you're currently writing or recording — thematically, technically, or emotionally — without giving too much away?

MP: We have recently completed recording a new single, which is turning out to be one of the most intense and exciting songs we've recorded to date. Given the current trend of AI-driven and overproduced music in the metal genre, we have opted to avoid this style and instead pursue a recording that conveys a more dynamic and raw sound. This approach really enhances the overall excitement and explosiveness of the track.

AU: As ENGL amplification-endorsed artists, tone and precision are clearly a priority. How does your gear and setup factor into delivering TRUENT's technical, groove-driven sound live?

MP: For our sound, it is crucial that our tone is heavy while retaining significant clarity. We feature heavier breakdown sections in songs, but also sections with intricate details that are essential for the part to stand out and be effectively delivered. ENGL amps have consistently provided the appropriate clarity in tone at high gain, which is a fundamental aspect of our guitar tones.

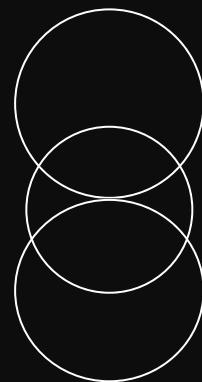
AU: Finally, what's the best way for people to hear your music, get tickets for the upcoming Island tour, and stay connected with TRUENT?

MP: Check us out on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) @ [truentmetal](#) for all the latest news. If you're looking for tickets to a show nearby, just click the link in our bio!

Photo Credit: Paradox Visuals (@prdxvisuals)

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RANDOM KILLING: Never Say Die!

Toronto Punk Legends' bassist Jim Moore discusses new album S.O.S.!

By Ferdy Bellard

"We're still trying to figure out what's now on the go with the band for 2026," says Jim "Mudd" Moore, bassist for Toronto's venerable punk veterans Random Killing. "But what's keeping us busy is creating our new album! So far we've got the album-cover artwork done, so that's a good start! We're all really busy writing new songs. We've got most of the songs done, but there's still a few more I'm busy finishing up. We'll end up with six or seven new songs for Side A of the album, and we have some really good recent live recordings that we'll probably place on Side Two. We're trying to wrap it all up within the next few months—we want the recording completed by March. We don't have a firm hard deadline for releasing the album, but we don't want to slack off either. Once it's all done and in the can, then we'll see where everything goes from there."

And it's a certainty that Random Killing will quickly devise a master plan for their events calendar. Renowned as one of Canada's longest-running bands (blasting it out since 1984, if you can believe that), the band has stayed true to its snarky-political, buzzsaw-riffing mission statement all through the waxing and waning of punk's risings and fallings in the fickle world

of public popularity—not that they ever gave a shit about passing trends. With the solid lineup of Moore, lead vocalist Andrew "Drool" Kiteley, drummer Chris "Boneless" Hill and guitarist John "Rusty Talent" Hadju, the band

exploded out of pandemic stasis with 2023's brilliant album *Bring Out Your Dead*, a spittle-punk sonic attack that hinted at great things to come. What sort of great things, you ask? How about their new album *S.O.S.*?

"We don't have any upcoming shows at the moment, but that'll change quick," says Moore. "We were supposed to go out on tour with the Exploited, but the logistics were starting to get really whacky for us. We were concerned about traveling through the Rockies in April, where you still find deep snow high in the mountain passes—we would've had to deadhead all the way out to Vancouver and then slingshot back to Calgary the next day. There were a number of things that could've gone really sideways. We didn't pull the plug or anything—everything was set up and good to go, and fortunately the guys in the Exploited were cool with everything. Which was such a relief for us—we really like those guys. We met them when we played an amazing show with them in Kingston and we were so stoked to go on the road with them. But life goes on! Onward and upward."

A band like Random Killing doesn't endure four decades of high-velocity ferocity without a few hiccups here and there, and Moore & Co. always know how to spin a plate of shit into manure to grow from.

"So we're going to refocus our 2026 schedule

to play a lot of local shows in the Greater Toronto Area, and a string of shows across Ontario and Quebec," says Moore. "At this point we won't be going out west, which we've been doing for quite a number of years now. But that'll give us the chance to re-explore towns and cities across Ontario that haven't seen us in their parts just because we were touring west. So everything will balance out. A weekend here, a weekend there, a block of two or three shows at a time. The punk-rock standard operating procedure!"

S.O.S. will prove to be as strong as anything

Random Killing has previously released, and the bandmembers are taking care to do the job properly, and on their own terms.

"We're handling the recording of this album ourselves, this time," says Moore. "When I have an idea for a song, I'll record a rough demo on my own... bass, guitars, drums, vocals, everything, just to sketch it out. I'll e-mail the demo off to Chris, who'll then record his real drums—and do a way better job! (laughs) The other instruments will then be tracked for real. "What kinda sucks is that I'd rather that all four of us were together in the same studio, like how we used to do it. But all the other guys are spread out all over the damn place. John and I are both in Toronto, but we live in different ends of the city. In Toronto, it can take two hours to drive fifteen minutes, you know what I mean? Chris lives out in Oshawa, which is an hour's drive north of Toronto if the traffic's good. And Drool lives way out in Montreal!"

"We still jam quite a bit, but without vocals, so usually it'll just be me, John, and Chris getting together at Chris' home studio—which is where we're recording. But I'm not really complaining. Chris is a good engineer. He's done other bands, like the great Ontario band Blackout. Chris' done three separate releases for Poison Fountain, which I also helped with the mixing. I'd like the process to be a bit more organic, but the logistics make it tough. Back in the day it seemed easier...you'd get an idea for a song, or for a verse or a riff or

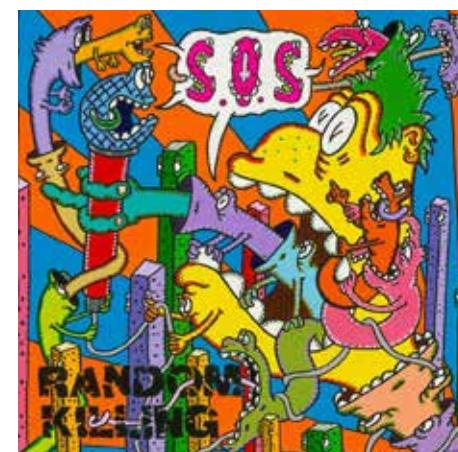
whatever and you'd bring it into band practice and just hash it out in rehearsal. The good thing is that you'd get everybody's feedback and input right away."

Regardless of scheduling nuisances, nothing says "punk rock" like holding one's own in the face of any adversity, and if any band can weather the storm, it's Random Killing.

"But in any case I'm handling the mixing of the album, and it's already halfway done," says Moore. "When it's all wrapped up, then we'll start seeing if any

label wants to put it out. We have a few particular labels in mind, but whatever...if nobody's interested then we'll just do it ourselves. However it's released, we know it'll be on vinyl. So, for those Random Killing fans out there—stay tuned!"

For more information on Random Killing, please visit:
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HOOD RATS: Montreal Punk Reunited and Unstoppable

**Bums on Main Street Documentary:
Chaos, Guitars and Comeback**

By Marisa Flora

Dig into the gnarly saga of Montreal's Hood Rats and the rocky road that forged their sound — a face-melting mix of hardcore, garage rock, and skate-punk fury.

Bums on Main Street: A Season With Hood Rats documents a defining chapter in the ongoing story of one of the city's most uncompromising underground bands. The 11-minute documentary follows the band through infighting, near-collapse, and an unexpected reunion, touching on the drugs, booze, bad behaviour and political bite that have shaped both their music and their cult following. Fresh off its debut screening in Montreal, the band is still standing, still loud and still moving forward. *Absolute Underground* caught up with the band to discuss the documentary.

Absolute Underground: For readers

discovering Hood Rats for the first time, can you introduce yourselves and the band?

Hood Rats: Hood Rats are a punk band from Montreal. We play high energy one minute songs with lots of guitar solos. After a six year break up the original members (Tony Salvador, Troy Lockard and J.F. Simoneau) have reformed to make a new studio album. Gorjus Pictures filmed a documentary about us getting back together.

AU: Bums on Main Street: A Season With Hood Rats is raw, chaotic, and unfiltered. What made you decide this was the right time to document your story?

HR: I think we could all use a bit more positive stories in our timelines right now. It's important to admit you can be wrong, especially when it's for a better purpose. The new album is shaping up to be a rock and roll banger. It never would've been made if we didn't put aside our differences and worked together.

AU: Watching a film that shows infighting, near-collapse, and personal struggles isn't easy. How did it feel seeing those moments on screen?

HR: I was expecting a tragedy but it turned out to be a comedy. At the premiere I noticed people laughing at moments I thought were supposed to be serious. It was a very "Spinal Tap" kind of

moment for me. I totally get it too, we're a bunch of characters.

AU: Hood Rats have always mixed hardcore, garage rock and old-school skate punk with a strong political edge. How does that attitude carry through in the film as much as in the music?

HR: Throughout the film the people being interviewed all share elements of punk rock and skating in their personalities. They're speaking from places of experience. They know we're not some fake AI band, we've gone through hell and back to make this music. Any political stance we take is always in favour of the people. The ruling class are destroying the planet and I'll never be ok with that. Free Palestine and abolish ICE.

AU: The film shows tension alongside loyalty and reunion. What keeps Hood Rats coming back together when things get rough?

HR: We work better together than apart, it's that easy. You can't mess with results.

AU: After near-collapse and an unlikely reunion, where do things stand now for the band? How has making this film changed your perspective on your own history?

HR: No time for bullshit. It's sort of like after a near death experience when you realize what's really important. While filming the documentary, Troy crushed his hand in a freight elevator. A week after that I shot a three inch nail through my hand with a nail gun. Both of our left hands

were messed up at the same time. We're lucky we can even pick up a guitar and play anything at all right now.

AU: With B.O.M.S. now available and reaching new audiences online, what's next for Hood Rats — creatively and personally?

HR: Creatively, we're going to the studio this month to record a new album. That's huge for us.

What to expect from me personally? I'm going to have fun and not stress about the little things. I remind myself it's a privilege to entertain others while having a good time with your friends. We get to express ourselves creatively while bringing good energy into people's lives. Every show is a celebration shared by people on the stage as well as off the stage.

AU: For those who haven't seen B.O.M.S. yet, what do you hope they take away from it—and where can they go to watch and support you?

HR: The takeaway from B.O.M.S. should resonate with fans of *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure* and that's "Be excellent to each other and party on!"

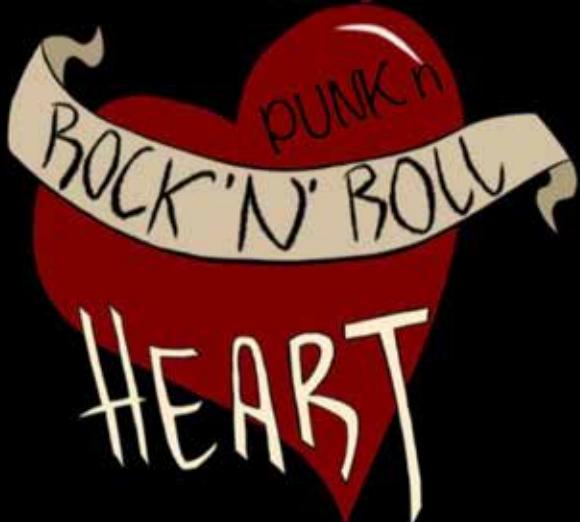
If you want to see us live in Montreal we're playing at the end of May. It's going to be an outdoor benefit show behind the Fattal Lofts in St Henri. All the proceeds go to repairing the community skate ramp.

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CRIME, HYSTERIA & USELESS INFORMATION

HOOD RATS: Montreal Punk Reunited and Unstoppable

Bums on Main Street Documentary: Chaos, Guitars and Comeback

By Marisa Flora

Dig into the gnarly saga of Montreal's Hood Rats and the rocky road that forged their sound — a face-melting mix of hardcore, garage rock, and skate-punk fury.

Bums on Main Street: A Season With Hood Rats documents a defining chapter in the ongoing story of one of the city's most uncompromising underground bands. The 11-minute documentary follows the band through infighting, near-collapse, and an unexpected reunion, touching on the drugs, booze, bad behaviour and political bite that have shaped both their music and their cult following. Fresh off its debut screening in Montreal, the band is still standing, still loud and still moving forward. *Absolute Underground* caught up with the band to discuss the documentary.

Absolute Underground: For readers

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HUMAN MISSILE CRISIS: Halifax Punk Veterans Back in the Studio

**Waste Away EP Marks a Bold Return
for Garage-Post-Punk Icons**

By Asher Thrasher

Halifax punk lifers Human Missile Crisis are back, and they're doing it loud, raw and uncompromising. Known for their chaotic live shows and fiercely personal songwriting, the band has returned to the studio after 20 years with their new two track mini EP *Waste Away*, a blistering mix of garage, post-punk and punk-rock intensity. Recorded live off the floor with longtime producer Jamie Foulds, the EP captures the band's signature energy while hinting at the evolution of their sound.

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

D.J. Vaters: Greetings! D.J. Vaters here. Guitar, vocals and management for Human Missile Crisis. I've been with the band since the early days, and now we're back, cooking up new material and reconnecting with our sound in ways we never expected.

smaller session and get something out sooner. We decided to bring our newest written songs to Jamie because they create a clearer picture of where the band is sonically right now. Working with him is always a dream. He's so professional, it lets us focus on our music without worrying about anything else. He understands our vision, and we trust him to let us do our thing.

The studio session itself wasn't about creating new ideas on the spot—we came in with pre-rehearsed material—but it reignited our creative engines. Back at our rehearsal space after recording, we've been in full writing mode. LP2 is already shaping up, and we can't wait to get the new tracks recorded.

AU: How do the two tracks on *Waste Away* reflect the band's evolution from heavy punk roots into your current garage-rock/post-punk identity?

D.J. Vaters: The tracks were chosen intentionally to show two sides of the band. We've always had songs that sound completely different from one another, and the EP highlights that. On the first album, some songs leaned more into punkrock because I wrote them before Matt and Justin added their touches. Now, we write together as a band, and things come out more garage-rock/post-punk leaning.

AU: You released your latest EP *Waste Away* this past November. How did returning to the studio with Jamie Foulds after 20 years unlock creativity for this EP?

D.J. Vaters: We went in with the goal of releasing two new tracks. Originally, I was debating holding off and doing a full LP when I had the funds together, but I felt it was best to do a

Expect more variety on the next record—dynamics, multi-genre experimentation. One track we're working on now even has a bit of a 2000s Nine Inch Nails vibe. It's exciting to see the band evolve without losing the aggression and energy we're known for.

AU: "Snake in the Grass" and "Mona Lisa" tackle very different emotional worlds. What drew you to pairing these two songs together?

D.J. Vaters: At the time, they were simply our two newest songs. Both have a subtle blue-collar perspective. "Mona Lisa" is direct and in your face, while "Snake in the Grass" is more nuanced—a warning about those people who sneak behind your back.

They're common in personal life, but especially in the workplace.

This pairing shows that even within the same band, our music can cover multiple emotional and stylistic ranges. It's intentional and a statement of where Human Missile Crisis is now—versatile but still chaotic, raw, and deeply personal.

AU: Your music often comes from deeply personal experiences with chaos, depression and life transitions. How did writing these songs function as a therapeutic process?

D.J. Vaters: Write what you know, they say, and that's exactly how it works for me. Writing has always been therapy, and these songs were no different. With "Mona Lisa", I'm speaking to my girlfriend. My night-shift schedule and time on the road make me wish I were home, and this song is my way of expressing that. I hope it resonates with listeners who feel distant from loved ones or are struggling to balance personal and creative life.

The goal is connection—both personally and through the music. If someone hears a track and it helps them process their own experiences, that's success in my eyes.

AU: Human Missile Crisis has always emphasized community over "fans." How does that philosophy shape the way you approach releasing new music?

D.J. Vaters: We want friends, not fans. I've had people

I met at a show come back to

help us with gear, talk about music and become genuine friends. That's the community we're building. With releases, it's never just about the music—it's about connection. We want people to feel it on stage, off stage, and in their lives. I think we've done a good job so far, and we're excited to expand that connection with *Waste Away* and LP2.

AU: Recording both tracks live off the floor in a single 10-hour session is bold. How did that influence the final sound?

D.J. Vaters: You think that's bold? We recorded our entire *Liquor Store Stories* album in two 10-hour sessions. That was biting off more than we could chew. Compared to that, this EP session was a light stroll in the park. Preparation was key—we knew all the parts and didn't overthink them. That approach captures our live energy in the studio. Shout-out to our roadie, Brady Hallett, who was invaluable during the session. He guided us when questions or doubts arose, keeping everything on track.

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

D.J. Vaters: Just a sincere thank you. If you're reading this, it means you care about independent, underground music and that says a lot about who you are. Without listeners and readers, none of this would exist. Platforms like *Absolute Underground* help spread the word about the world's best-kept secret artists.

2026 is just starting, and we're excited about what we're cooking up. LP2 production begins late spring or early summer. Stay tuned, take care of each other and above all, keep supporting independent music.

bandcamp.com/humanmissilecrisis

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HELLIFAX



TRISKELYON

Thrash from the Edge of the North Atlantic

By Asher Thrasher

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

Geoff Waye: Hello, Geoff Waye here. I'm the guitarist, lyricist and songwriter for the Canadian underground thrash band called Triskelyon. I'm also the guitarist for Category VI. Triskelyon operates primarily as a focused studio project, centred around the core trio of myself, Raul Marques on drums and Dwayne Pike on bass. The band's trajectory has been rapid. I founded the project in 2021, debuting with a self-released three-song EP in early 2022. By the end of that same year, we had already partnered with Moribund Records for our first full-length album. On Nov. 28, 2025, *Maelstrom of Chaos* marked four years and four albums of relentless momentum and a steady evolution of our sound.

AU: *Maelstrom of Chaos* marks your fourth studio album. What new creative or thematic territory were you determined to explore this time around?

GW: I'm inspired and enraged by world events, so a lot of the garbage that goes on in the world inspires lyrics, as do some personal life events.



With this album, there's also a rawer tension that I think will remind listeners of 1985-era thrash with a modern twist.

Triskelyon hasn't hidden behind fantasy or escapism; our foundation has almost always been built on the harsh, ugly realities of the world. For this fourth record, we descend even further into that darkness by exploring the breakdown of society and the chaos of the world we are in. Overall, I pushed for faster, more chaotic, and sometimes noisy arrangements, and a lyrical focus that mirrors the internal and external carnage of a world in collapse. The goal wasn't just to make another heavy record, but to create a sonic assault that feels as dangerous and unpredictable as the themes we're documenting.

AU: You've collaborated with several powerful guest vocalists across the new singles. How did these partnerships shape the album's identity and intensity?

GW: The collaborations on *Maelstrom of Chaos* were driven by a desire to find the right voice for the specific atmosphere of each song, though it's a double-edged sword because of how much weight some listeners place on vocals.

It's actually kind of annoying how people use vocals to pigeonhole a band. You can take a pure melodic groove-thrasher and put some growly death metal vocals on it, and suddenly people claim it's Death Metal. Or you take an extreme, blackened heavy thrash track and add soaring, melodic vocals, and someone calls it "Power Metal." It's not—it's still Thrash!

Working with a professional like Liv Jagrell (Liv Sin/Sister Sin) was a seamless process because she understood that balance without me ever having to explain it. I only provided some

NEWFOUNDLAND NIGHTMARE

maintaining that momentum in a very crowded musical landscape.

Releasing four albums in four years isn't about claiming territory. It's about the persistence required to even be noticed today. In an era where so many bands are fighting for even a second of attention, this fourth album represents my refusal to go away.

It marks the point where Triskelyon moves past the "new band" phase and proves I have the stamina to keep producing, regardless of how overcrowded the scene gets. For me, the long-term arc isn't about reaching some peak of underground fame, but about the personal discipline of creating this music and putting it out there, session after session, until the right audience finds it.

AU: Anything else you would like to add?

GW: If you're tired of the over-produced, sanitized sound that's taken over a lot of modern metal, give *Maelstrom of Chaos* a spin. We aren't trying to reinvent the wheel; we're just trying to drive it right over you with the kind of raw energy that made the old-school thrash scene so dangerous.

If you want to see the reality behind the songs, head over to the Moribund Records YouTube channel. We've posted weekly "descriptor" videos that break down the songs and their themes of collapse and social disorder that fuel this record. We also have music videos for new album songs "Of Dust and Divination" and the metallized-up cover "Major Tom (Coming Home)."

To the readers and the crew at Absolute Underground, thanks for taking the time to shine a light on what we're doing out here in the North Atlantic. Globally, it's a crowded scene, and we appreciate anyone who stops long enough to actually listen.

Stay angry, stay independent, and thanks for the support!

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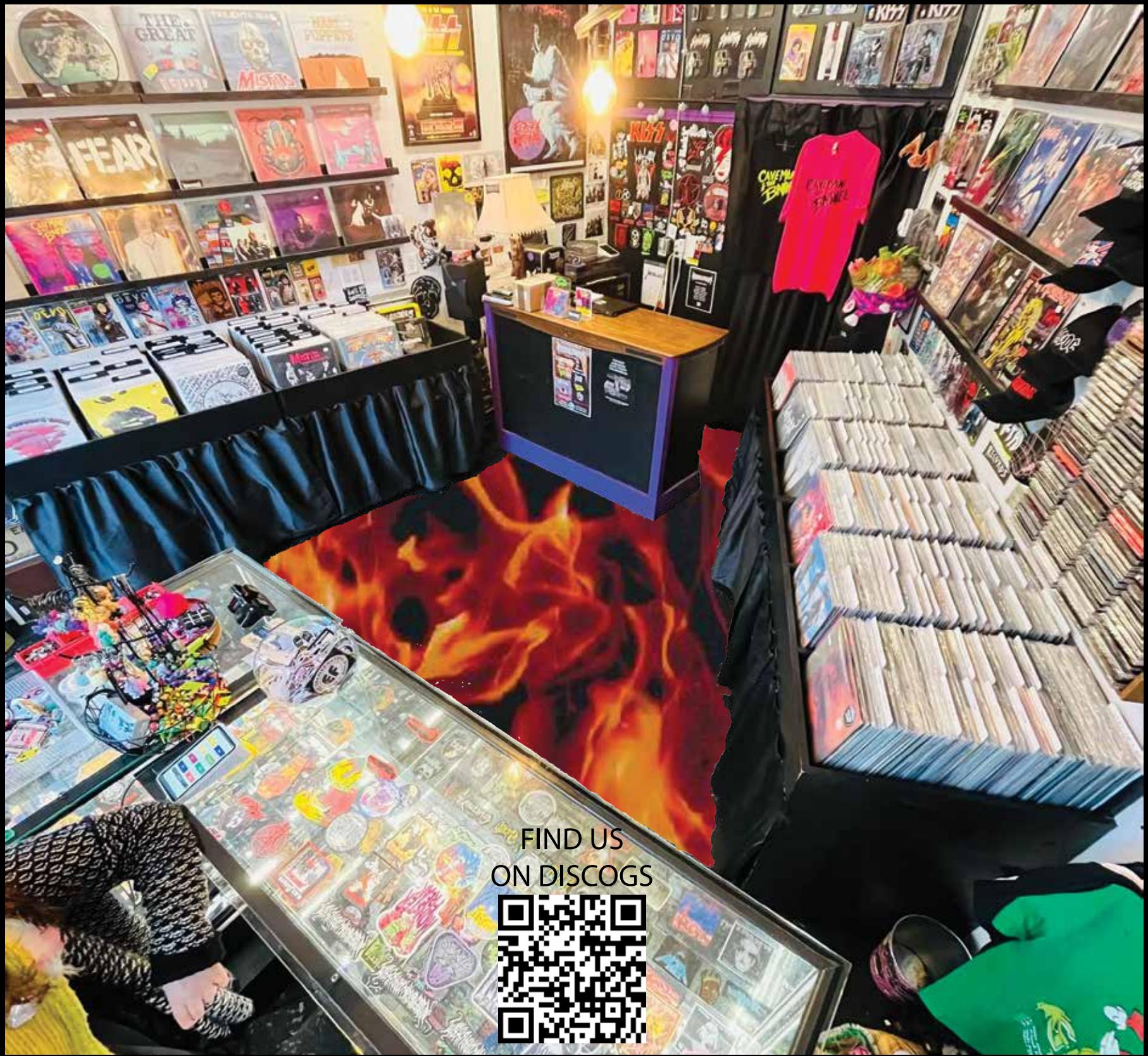
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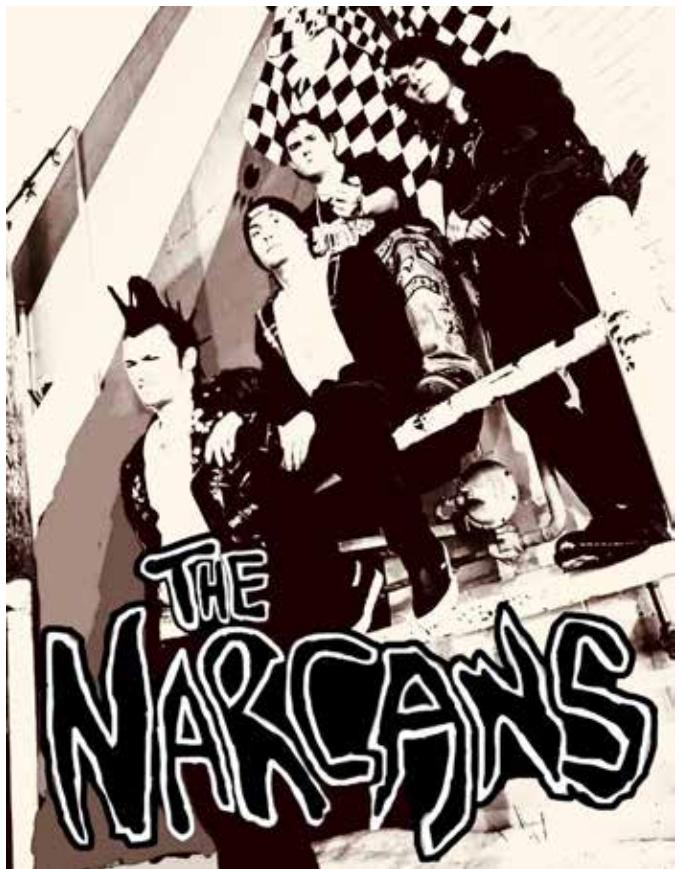
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THE NARCANS

Hardcore Punk from Prince George, BC
Interview by Mal Content

AU: What are you best known for?

Rowan: My name is Rowan Siebert; I am the singer for The Narcans. Most famous for my feet.

Nick: I'm Nick, the guitarist for The Narcans, also playing in the scene with the band Cynical.

Kay: I'm Kay and I play bass. We're best known for the energy we bring to the stage.

up, most shows consisted of four person mosh pits. The last six Narcans shows we've completely sold out, so I'd say it's a proud feeling to watch everything grow.

Kay: I'm from Prince George. The scene here is great, a lot of variety. It's a good community.

AU: How did you first get into punk?

Rowan: My parents raised me on Punk.

Nick: I discovered a band called Agent Orange and that opened a bunch of different music into my life. On top of that, The Exploited where a huge influence on my personality.

Matt: I'm Matt Campbell, drummer. Infamous for my luxurious mutton chops "too lazy to shave".

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

Rowan: I'm originally from Mackenzie, BC, but now live in Prince George and the music scene here is growing and I am stoked to be a part of it.

Nick: I was born in Edmonton, I went to high school in Saskatchewan, and I've been playing music in Prince George, BC for the last 6 years. The local scene in Prince George is a really tight knit community full of people who are very passionate about the music. Majority of the shows are hosted at the 2 big venues, either the Legion or the Omineca Arts Center. I'm lucky enough that I've been playing in PG long enough to watch the scene grow into what it eventually became today. When we first started this band

Kay: I started with The Misfits' *Static Age* album & the Tony Hawk Pro Skater 1 & 2 soundtracks, later got into Canadian bands like Dayglo Abortions and The Subhumans.

Matt: I got into punk music towards the end of elementary school, bands like Black Flag and Misfits. My first love of music is The Beatles. I also love Chixdiggit, Dayglo Abortions and Ripcordz

AU: If someone is just discovering your band, what's the one song they need to hear?

Rowan: Definitely, "Circling the Drain".

Nick: "Victim" is also a good track considering it was the first time we ever wrote together, and it ended up becoming one of our most loved songs.

Kay: We have an unrecorded song called "Throwaway", we want to get that recorded soon.

Matt: If it was recorded, "Just Can't Stick It In".

AU: DIY ethics are a big part of punk culture. How hands-on is your band?

Rowan: I do the artwork, write songs and hang posters in my high school and all over town.

Nick: When it comes to booking shows, I leave that up to our manager, Darlene Campbell. I've spent hours stamping out buttons and making merch, and I continually push our original music.

Kay: We're very hands-on with recording and promoting.

Matt: Our bassist makes posters and our singer makes our self-recorded cassettes. I write my drum parts, I help with merch, buttons, patches, handing out posters etc. Our mom-ager, Darlene (my mother) does all the bookings and promoting. All our parents help out running the door, working the bar, or at the Merch table.

AU: What's your favourite Narcans memory—show, scene, moment, or mishap?

Rowan: The Nov 21st show because it was such an awesome show, the crowd was unreal and a bunch of my friends from school came out to it.

Nick: When we played our Halloween show, I think that was one of my best performances with

EXILE IN PRINCE GEORGE

the band. There was a great vibe with the crowd. Everyone was on their best-worst behavior. I remember finishing the set and getting off stage and feeling really accomplished. Like we played a solid 45 minutes and that everyone performed tight. It also gave us a lot of exposure.

Kay: I loved our Halloween show; I think we played well and kept the energy high the whole set. And it's always hilarious to see Spider-Man moshing with Dracula.

AU: Any upcoming shows planned for 2026?

Rowan: We are looking at possibly getting on the road in the next few months. We've been offered to travel to a lot of cool places. There's a lot of thirst for punk music.

Nick: We have local shows booked for February 13th, "My Bloody Valentine" themed, then March 21st, "28 Days Later" themed, May 19th with Hard Charger out of New Brunswick, June 13th with The Unending from Kelowna and we are booked to share the stage with Ripcordz July 28th.

AU: Best way for people to find you online?

Rowan: Our YouTube has a basement demo and our Bandcamp has an EP. The best way to hear our music is live. Come to the shows, share the energy, share the moment. We're working on recording in the future. We do have a CD out too.

AU: Final message for the readers?

Rowan: Buy our CD!

Nick: Punks Not Dead.

Kay: Stay true to yourself and have a P.M.A.

Matt: Keep sticking up for what you believe in, even if things seem grim!

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CORREALE: Bangkok Dangerous

By Ryan Dyer

Bangkok glows like a fever dream — a city of contradictions where temples hum beside LED billboards and ghosts flicker through the heat haze. It's here that Italian musician Correale channels his vision of metal, synth, and mysticism colliding at the speed of neon. His new album *Conquer* feels like a midnight drive through a city possessed: equal parts serenity and violence, meditation and meltdown.

AU: Your track 'Krung-Thep' is named after Bangkok. How does the city influence your music and creative process?

Bangkok is a paradox, sacred and profane, ancient and futuristic. It's a city that never sleeps, drenched in neon and chaos, yet filled with quiet spirituality. Living here makes you hyper-aware of contrasts, and that duality naturally seeps into my music: aggression and serenity, distortion and ambiance, the beauty inside decay.

AU: Bangkok can feel chaotic, neon-lit, and cinematic—similar to the mood of films like *Only God Forgives*. Does that cinematic energy inspire your music?



Absolutely, I really like that film and also its evocative soundtrack; they fit perfectly together. It's a big source of inspiration and captures the most surreal, neon-lit side of Bangkok.

AU: "Jasmine Blow" is a striking title. Can you tell us what inspired it and what the track represents?

That's a secret. What I can say is that jasmine is a flower with an extraordinary scent, often used in tea, and it's very common throughout Asia and the Middle East. Everyone can interpret it in their own way. For example, when I recorded it, the co-producer in the studio thought "Jasmine Blow" was a person's name, and I liked that. It's interesting when people bring their own imaginations into my songs.

AU: How do you balance the aggression of metal with the atmospheric textures of synth in your music?

The synth gives breath to the guitar's violence. It's an instinctive balance. Metal is the flesh, synth is the spirit. The guitar cuts and stirs things up, while the synth creates an evocative atmosphere and expands it. I always try to make physical and meditative energy coexist. Together they create tension and release, destruction and transcendence in the same frame. It's like breathing inside a storm.

AU: Does living in Thailand shape your soundscapes or rhythms in a way you might not experience elsewhere?

Yes, definitely. Thai rhythm has a circular, hypnotic pulse. You can feel it in the traffic, in the chants, even in the way time slows down under the heat. That sense of suspended time influences how I structure my songs, with loops that evolve.

AU: This style of synthwave and synth-metal often feels very European—Perturbator, Carpenter Brut, and others come to mind. Why

do you think that is?

Yes, synthwave is basically electronic music with a deep sense of '80s nostalgia. I'm Italian; Italo-disco, krautrock, think of Giorgio Moroder or Tangerine Dream, were huge in the eighties, and those vibes are still in the air and always come back like waves. The same goes for classic English heavy metal, Norwegian black metal, and all those cult niche European metal bands. These worlds coexist well and have branched into many variations and subgenres. That said, music labels are mainly used for promotional purposes. They are usually born from a kind of "godfather," someone who sets the foundation, and then others follow, almost slavishly, those same stylistic rules. But I believe my music doesn't really fit into any ready-made category. Yesterday, a guy from a label that produces "dungeon synth" wrote to me saying, "I listened to *Conquer* and I have to say it really surprised me, but in a good way: on paper, the idea of mixing black metal, retrowave, and pop wouldn't normally excite me, but your songs have something outside all those genres that I can't quite define, and that makes them much more interesting than expected." By "on paper" he probably meant "tags," which nowadays are needed to make art visible and, in a way, validated to the audience. But I agree with him about not wanting to fit into a specific, already-defined genre. Not being a copy of anyone.

AU: Who are your biggest musical influences, and how do you see synthwave and synth-metal evolving in the future?

Definitely metal: Black Sabbath, Iron Maiden, Judas Priest, KISS. The extreme metal I was listening to while recording *Conquer*, Darkthrone and Burzum, also influenced me a lot. I love the synth scores by Gordon Ovsev, Goblin, Vangelis, Jan Hammer and also the more modern ones like *Drive*, *Stranger Things*, and *Only God Forgives*. I



ABSOLUTE ASIA

think the record label Italians Do It Better is awesome, not just for the name! I'm drawn to exotic noir soundtracks; for example, two tracks by Nino Rota come to mind: *Indo-China* and *Rice Fields*. I also love traditional Southeast Asian music, the blues, Hendrix and Albert King. As for the future, I believe the genre has huge potential. The nostalgic element will always be there, and it will continue to attract an audience in need of the right evocative vibes to escape into, recharge with, or simply lose themselves in. I think it will become more and more hybrid in terms of sound, an emotional art form, not just a stylistic one.

AU: Do you see Bangkok as futuristic, chaotic, mystical, or something else in your music?

All of that. Bangkok was cyberpunk before the word existed. I remember reading as a kid that Ridley Scott was inspired by it when creating *Blade Runner*, which is one of my favorite films. I've always wanted to see it in person. Temples glowing next to skyscrapers, monks scrolling TikTok, ghosts and LED screens sharing the same space. In my music it becomes a mythic city, both hell and heaven, concrete and dream. There's a saying that goes, "if it doesn't exist in Bangkok, it doesn't exist."

AU: What's your dream scene or vibe to capture in your music—rain-soaked streets, neon nights, quiet moments, or all of it?

Yes, all of it. And I'll add: flying on a plane at night, driving, walking under neon lights, and suddenly finding yourself in a tropical forest. I also often imagine my music as a heavy metal gig in a smoke-filled neon club straight out of a sci-fi movie like *Blade Runner*, *Cyborg 2*, *Johnny Mnemonic* and *Hardware*.

instagram.com/a_correale



EXISTENCE: A LOVE LETTER

Interview with Cory Baum, frontman of Croy and the Boys

By Peter Illing

Que Paso, Canada – I'll keep introductions short as this interview speaks for itself. Today I bring you Cory Baum, frontman of Croy and the Boys.

Absolute Underground: Fourteen years ago, you made the journey from the Midwest to Texas. Your career reflects a giant leap, hours of hard work, late nights and it seems to be paying off. You won "Best Country" at the 2023 Austin Music Award. Did you ever envision any of this when you decided to move to Texas?

Cory Baum: I need to update my bio because it's been more than 14 years ago now. I moved to Austin from my home town of Bowling Green, Ohio in August of 2009. I have to be honest with you: I had a serious case of big-fish-small-pond syndrome when I moved down so I really thought I was about to take the city by storm haha. I sent five paragraph emails to all of the biggest venues

in town detailing my life story with a link to my Myspace page. I'm sure they all went straight in the trash and to my surprise, I could only get gigs at open mic nights and coffee shops for several years. It was honestly the best thing for both my music and my character that I was humbled in that way. To be very honest, yes I did envision some measure of success, but I thought I'd be experiencing it in 2009, not 2025. Haha. I think to drop out of college and move across the country to play music, you have to believe in yourself a little bit.

AU: Your song "Don't Let Me Die in Waco" has become a hit, racking up over a million streams. Was it surprising to see a song that isn't on a Croy and the Boys album take off like this?

CB: It absolutely was a shock. It was written for the *Song Confessional* podcast. At the time (it has since changed), part of the challenge was the song had to be written AND recorded in two hours. I took about an hour to write it and then called the band and we recorded it with one microphone in between all of us, then never thought about the song again. We never played it live or anything. Several months later, the guy who came up with the *Song Confessional*, Walker Lukens called me and said hey man, that Waco song has been stuck in my head; I really think we should get a better recording of it and release it. I told him I was indifferent about the song but if he wanted to put us in a studio, we'd do it. So we went to Public Hi Fi and worked with Jim Eno of Spoon. It was a really fun experience, but again, afterwards we kind of forgot about the song. It wasn't until it started to get popular on the local radio and online that we finally learned how to play it live and worked it into our set.

AU: You've also covered The Dicks, Crass and have a punk outfit called Dumb. Where did your love for punk start?

CB: Man, my love for punk music started after a fateful trip to the mall in 1997. At that time, all Vans shoes came with a CD copy of Epitaph Records *Punk-O-Rama 2.1* (a slightly shorter version of *Punk-O-Rama 2*, with Vans branding on the cover). My parents had a VHS tape of this

¡Que Paso, Canada?

Deep In THE Sound of Texas

Rolling Stone Magazine history of rock n roll thing they had taped off of TV that had a brief section about punk, so I had heard some Sex Pistols and Ramones, but that CD opened my world up to punk.

AU: "On the Roof", a song from your project DUMB, captures a carefree, slacker vibe that feels uniquely Austin. When you first landed in Austin with a music career on your mind, what was the start of that arc like for you?

CB: "On the Roof" might be my personal favorite song I've written. Listening to it now and really all those DUMB recordings really put me back in that care free slacker life I was living in East Austin back then. Fun times. I played in punk bands growing up (my first real band that we started in High School just put our music on Spotify finally. Bullet Teeth - I played drums) but always did singer songwriter stuff as well. Growing up in a small town surrounded by farmland in Ohio, country music was everywhere but only the modern country of the day. Garth Brooks, Shania Twain, Lonestar etc. It wasn't until my 20's that I heard Waylon Jennings for the first time and it was *Honky Tonk Heroes* that absolutely blew my mind. I felt like it had the attitude and raw quality of punk, combined with the songwriting I was doing on acoustic guitar. When I moved to Austin, I wanted to start a country band but didn't know how to find musicians, so I just played solo under the name Taber Maine for years. At some point, I met my friend Michael Pierce who had a room at his house to jam in. We both were bag boys at Whole Foods and would go to his house every

day after work and jam. That's how DUMB was formed. Totally naturally, totally for fun.

AU: Can fans expect a new album soon? If so, is there anything you can share about it?

CB: YES! We are very close to being done with a new record. It's mostly songs that we have been playing live for years but that we haven't ever recorded, so in the studio we set up live and did the songs in one or two takes, capturing us as a four-piece, without overdubs. Then I started learning the three row diatonic accordion and now I'm trying to get good enough to record a song on accordion ha. So that's the hold up. But most of the songs are some form of polka, so the concept of the album is sort of political polka music. I'm sure it's destined for big success haha.

AU: Thank you, Croy, for taking the time to answer these questions. Is there anything else you'd like to share with our readers?

CB: I just want to sincerely thank anyone who seeks out independent music and listens to, and supports bands like us. And thank you to publications like *Absolute Underground*. For blue collar bands like Croy and the Boys, where we all work day jobs and have families and what not, we don't expect to ever be able to support ourselves with our art, so getting to do interviews and interact with fans who genuinely like what we do is really what it's all about for us. All of my favorite music from punk to honky tonk to conjunto has traditionally been made by people from their community for their community. That's all we aim to be and we couldn't be that without our community. So thank you!

LUKA LAJOIE: Tattoo Artist and *Ink Master* Finalist

By Jean-François Gosselin

Absolute Underground: We're sitting here far from where you started, far from your shop in Repentigny and I want to say this straight up: I'm extremely proud of you for being on *Ink Master*. Tabarnac d'ostie de calice. Honestly, hearing Québécois swearing on American TV... I don't even know how many people caught it but for those of us who did, it was priceless.

Now that you're here, with all that distance behind you, I want to talk about the path that led you from there to here.

Luka Lajoie: Thank you, man.

AU: When you design a tattoo, what part of the process matters the most but remains completely invisible to the client, something only another tattooer would understand?

LL: There's a whole creative process going on in my head that people don't see. Clients notice the realism and details but I'm thinking about longevity. I want the tattoo to pop over time. I'm thinking about contrast and structure and how to simplify the piece so it holds up. That's the difference between a real tattoo and a photo that's just going to dissolve.

AU: Is there a specific moment during a session when the tattoo stops feeling like a drawing and starts feeling alive to you? What usually triggers that shift?

LL: For me, tattooing is the fun part. Some of my friends love the drawing stage, but the second I sit in the chair and start tattooing, it already feels alive. I'm not drawing, I'm tattooing.

On bigger pieces, the first one or two hours are about adjustment. Finding the right tones, values and structure for the client's skin. Once that clicks, it becomes fun and games. I'm just tattooing.

AU: What was the last skill or technique you learned that genuinely changed the way you work, not just technically but mentally?

LL: Learning how to simplify. I'm working hard on being more flexible in my head. Flexibility brings creativity. Instead of trying to be 100 percent accurate to what I imagined, I accept

little mistakes and let them lead somewhere new. Sometimes that surprises me, and that's a good thing.

AU: How did working under constant cameras, time limits and judgment on *Ink Master* change the way you deal with pressure compared to real life in a shop?

LL: Man, that was fucking crazy. Totally different. I learned what my limits are and how I react to stress. The biggest realization was that my self-evaluation is completely wrong under pressure. I hyper focus on tiny details that don't matter. Every challenge, I was sure I was going home. I was never in the bottom and did well every time but my brain goes into hyper stress mode. Now I know I can't fully trust my own judgment when I'm under that kind of pressure.

AU: You work with people during vulnerable moments. What part of the emotional side of tattooing do you think is most underestimated?

LL: Finding the balance between what I want to do and what the client needs. People come in with emotional reasons for their tattoo and sometimes those reasons don't translate into a good tattoo. The challenge is meeting in the middle. Respecting their emotions while still creating something that works visually and emotionally long term. That balance is underestimated.

AU: Was there a moment on *Ink Master* where the emotional weight of a tattoo surprised you, either for you or for the canvas?

LL: Absolutely. There was a moment with a client who had scars from self harm. Seeing how deep someone's anxiety had been really hit me. Covering those scars meant everything to her. That meant a lot to me too.

AU: Did that moment stay with you after the cameras stopped?

LL: Yeah, for sure. I had to sit with it. She was so

happy about the little skunk I tattooed. Instead of seeing scars, she now sees something cute and positive. It became a good memory instead of a painful one.

AU: This season of *Ink Master* was titled Hometown Heroes. Before the show, what did hometown mean to you as an artist?

LL: I'm a French Quebecer and I'm proud of it. Before the show, I didn't even know that was the season theme. Once I realized I was the guy from Montréal, it changed everything. I felt like I had to represent not just French Quebecers but the English side too. It really made me think about where I come from and how special it is to be from a bilingual place like Montréal.

AU: Walking in as the first Quebecer to reach the finals, did you feel pressure to represent Montréal or Quebec?

LL: Absolutely. The second I swore on camera, I got so many messages. People immediately knew I was from Montréal. There was pressure but also a really good feeling knowing people were behind me. Seeing that people connected with how I came across was really cool.

AU: Tattooing often starts in underground scenes tied to art and music. Looking back now, how surreal does it feel that time moved so fast and you found yourself on *Ink Master*?

LL: It's insane. I was studying music at 17, then thought maybe I could tattoo because I was good at drawing. I bought a kit, tattooed my brothers and friends, and now, 18 years later, this is my career. I'm on an international TV show, tattooing people from all over the world. It's fucking insane. I just want to keep doing this as long as I can. I love tattooing.

AU: When it was announced that you'd be participating, how did that change the way people in Montréal interacted with you, including family, past clients and local peers?

LL: My family knew I was leaving for a few weeks. They were excited but worried because they know how anxious I can be. My mom straight up asked if I was sure I wanted to put myself through that. For everyone else, I couldn't say anything until the show aired.

AU: What was the biggest difference between how you imagined *Ink Master* would feel and what it was actually like once you were there?

LL: I knew it would be tough and I prepared a lot. What I didn't expect was how intense the emotional side would be. After five days, I called my girlfriend and told her I wanted out. Then one day got better, then the next and suddenly I was in the finale.

AU: Which tattoo you did during the competition are you the most proud of, and why?

LL: The dead trout I did early on. It was color realism, my comfort zone and I got great feedback. Later, I did a T Rex skull that people didn't love, but I did. That piece helped shift my

INK SLINGERS

mindset toward being more flexible and having fun.

AU: Was there a tattoo done by another competitor that really impressed you or stayed with you afterward?

LL: Matt's work. His thought process is insane. The Grim Reaper piece he did over scars was huge and risky. That one really impressed me.

AU: How did receiving critiques from judges like Ryan Ashley, Nikko Hurtado, and DJ Tambe change the way you evaluate your own work?

LL: It gave me perspective. Hearing how other top artists see my work helped me step back and evaluate things more objectively.

AU: Was there a moment during or after *Ink Master* when you realized you were no longer just chasing opportunities, but had stepped into a different stage of your career?

LL: Career-wise, I was mostly in survival mode. Personally, mid-season, I realized I could keep going and I wasn't going to die. Once I got used to the rhythm, I gained confidence.

AU: You didn't win *Ink Master*, but you went all the way to the finals. What does that journey represent for you now?

LL: I'm really proud of it. It was incredibly hard and I wouldn't want to do it again, but I did it. I don't need to win to feel at peace. I really own that third place.

AU: Did the competition change your trajectory, or did it simply sharpen the path you were already on?

LL: It sharpened it. I want to be more flexible in my style, trust myself more and explore things like seminars, media and teaching, while still tattooing full time.

AU: You were granted a work visa through the show. How does that open up your future, and how do you balance those opportunities with staying rooted in where you come from?

LL: I'll always be a guy from Montréal. The visa opens doors but I'm not leaving. My work is bilingual, my roots are here and that's not changing.

AU: What is a question you wish interviewers would ask you but never do?

LL: People never ask about the inside of the show. Who your friends were and how relationships formed.

AU: And what's the honest answer to that question?

LL: Matt was my best buddy. Total opposite of me, but it worked. Boucher too. We still talk every week. Sharing that experience with them was special.

Portrait by Jean-François Gosselin

Photos by Luka Lajoie

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PEOPLE OF PUNK ROCK RECORDS



ANOTHER JOE

Ready or Not

Interview with Jon Glen (vocals/guitar)

By Mike Willisko and Ira Hunter

AU: What are you best known for?

Jon Glen: Hey! It's Jon here, I'm best known for my Christmas dinners, pretending to know how to play guitar and ability to hide myself in a van while on tour and nobody knowing if I'm in it.

AU: History of the band and who is in it?

Jon: Another Joe's been around since 1996-ish with a 20 year pause to soul search. Alison plays bass, Ryan plays guitar, Gabe plays drums and I sing/play guitar.

AU: What local bands were already in the Vancouver punk scene when you started out?

Jon: BNU, Gob, D.B.S., Scum Element, so many amazing bands and LOTS of places to play.

AU: What inspired you to get back together and write a new album, Ready or Not, in 2023?

Jon: I think I was just ready to square away some time for Another Joe, I had some stuff I wanted to say and write about, I thought my kids would think it would be cool (I was wrong LOL) but it's been SO much fun.

AU: Ready or Not was released on People of Punk Rock Records. How has it been working with them and what do they bring to the table?

Jon: Oh they're great! Super easy going and they're really passionate about 90's punk for sure, so a good fit for us.

AU: Was Feuz Box basically the same band as Another Joe? What's the story behind changing the band's original name?

Jon: Oh yeah, wow, yeah, I think that was a name that pre-AJ was with myself and drummer John but it didn't stick around too long, it's a weird name, however I named a song on *Pee Against the Wind* that name.

AU: What bands has AJ shared the stage with?

Jon: Gob, Removal, BNU, Choke, Moneen, SNFU, No Use For A Name, AFI, Real McKenzies. We had a lot of opportunities to play with some cool bands

AU: You have a split album with GOB called Ass Seen On TV, how did that come about?

Jon: Tom (Thacker) from Gob had already released our first album *Pee Against the Wind* on his Indie label, Positive Records, so doing a follow up album as a split with Gob just made a

lot of sense! They also were wanting to get some new music out. The guys in Gob were really amazing to us by doing a split album with us. We of course, all came from the same music scene and supporting one another was a big deal and they really gave us an enormous opportunity and support.

AU: In 2000 Another Joe recorded *Plasti-Scene*. Were you trying to send a different message through your lyrics than previous albums?

Jon: I was writing music differently at that point. If we released another album that just sounded like the first few it would have made me crazy. So I guess we intentionally made an album that was fun for us because it was different.

AU: Ever toured outside of North America?

Jon: Never toured outside of North America but we have fans from all over the world now with Instagram and streaming and YouTube! It's really cool when somebody reaches out to us from another part of the planet and likes our music!

AU: What is the song Eat at Bernie's about?

Jon: When we were putting that song together at practice, Alison had a T-shirt on and the text on it said Eat at Bernie's so when I was putting together the melody, I just used those words lol and then when I sat down to write the lyrics, I incorporated those lyrics into an actual song... I won't go into what the song is about because to be honest I've heard lots of people talk to me about their interpretation of the song and I would hate to ever change someone's mind about what they take away from that song. It's actually really cool. The same is the case for the song on *Ready or Not* called "T-Bird Tattoo". That song originally was absolutely not what it ended up being, but I incorporated the T-Bird Tattoo into it because I liked how it sounded.

AU: What were the craziest gigs you played?

Jon: When we were on tour for *Plasti-Scene*, we were in Ontario somewhere and our drummer went AWOL lol but with that we got to the venue and we had the drums in the van so we got everything set up and we let the promoter know that we had no idea where the fuck our drummer was or if he was gonna show up, but we still intended to play... Somehow. What we ended up doing was letting everybody know right from the beginning that we didn't have a drummer that evening and that if there was anybody at the show that knew how to play drums and wanted to play some Another Joe music with us they were invited and there ended up being a lineup of kids that played drums and we just played Another Joe songs with them. It was easily the most memorable and awesome show I've ever been a part of.

AU: As this is our Valentine's issue, do you have any dating or marriage advice?

Jon: HAHAHA I'm the last person on the planet Earth that anybody wants to hear dating or marriage advice from however I think that if you keep the cardinal rule of "don't be a dick" you'll have a fighting chance of success!

AU: Any fetishes to share?

Jon: Yeah, I have a boatload of fetishes however it would terrify the average reader so I'll save you the subscribers lol.

AU: Any plans for Valentine's Day?

Jon: ...To not be a dick!

AU: What's in the future for the band? Will we see another album from Another Joe?

Jon: You sure will! Right now I probably have two albums worth of music that has been demoed which will be shaved down to one album and we are currently in the process of getting new music together off of the demos throwing out the shitty songs lol and then we will jump into the studio and record a new album. We actually already have the album name and we are all really excited. I'm personally over the moon excited because this iteration of Another Joe is absolutely incredible and it will be the first time that the four of us record together. It's gonna be a barn burner.

AU: It would be rad if Another Joe could play Punk Rock Bowling Festival in Vegas one day.

Jon: Right?! We would love to play that festival!

AU: Anything else to promote?

Jon: Follow our socials people! We will be posting lots of info when recording the new album.

AU: Any final words for our readers?

Jon: We are beyond grateful that anybody even thinks about Another Joe so thank you everybody so much for listening to our music or coming to our shows or interacting with us. It really means a lot! Get out there and support live music people! Bands are passionate and want nothing more than to play their music for you and it's with your support that a scene will grow and live music will thrive.

@anotherjoemusic

www.anotherjoe.com

Photo credit: Small Tyler



SHREO SESSION

SKULL SKATES IS ON THE MOVE

Interview with PD, founder and owner of Skull Skates/PD's Hot Shop

By Ira "Hosoi Hammerhead" Hunter

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

PD: I am PD from Skull Skates, famous for nothing and infamous for telling it like it is even though sometimes it's not what people want to hear.

AU: What's new with Skull Skates these days?

PD: We are hammering shut the designing for our fall 2026 releases and continuing to collaborate on various projects with friends and associates to make rad things happen. We recently updated our online catalogue platform to make it easier for people to support us internetly should they choose to do so.

We also have just introduced [cue the dramatic dreadful and ominous music] a system in our Qualicum Beach store enabling the use of major credit card for purchases. ["Don't do it

Terry, credit is a deadly dragon" - The Deaner.] Planning a bunch of events for this summer, continuing along our somewhat manic and wayward path doing our best to keep the bills paid without totally blowing it.

AU: What was the origin story of when and where you opened the first Skull Skates / PD's Hot Shop?

PD: The first shop was actually myself in my parent's home in Nanaimo bringing in things from California and selling to my skate pals circa 1975, then mailorder began in 1976 and the first brick and mortar shop began in Regina, Saskatchewan in 1978. This is also the year GNC Skates, which would become Skull Skates, was founded in Regina.

AU: After being located in Vancouver for 45 years, what prompted your move to Qualicum Beach, BC, on Vancouver Island?

PD: Let me say that we love Vancouver dearly and I still visit there often, however various forces beyond our control have made it, first difficult, and eventually impossible to be viable there. It was not an easy choice for us and we laboured over it, feeling a commitment to our friends and



supporters from over the decades. We are serving the grandchildren of our original customers there and I can't tell you how many skaters we have met as young kids and watch them grow into adults, of course we have also lost some along the way.

The original plan was to keep both locations, which we have done for 4 years, and have found it difficult to focus on both shops because of our being so hands on in the way we operate. We also continue to maintain our presence in Japan through our shop there that opened in 1994.

AU: Will it be hard saying goodbye to Vancouver? Are there other skate shops in Van where people will still be able to find Skull Skates stuff?

PD: In a personal sense I will not be saying goodbye, having spent all that time travelling around by bus, bicycle, skate and foot. I know that place in a very intimate way and continue to have a real affection for its various zones, having lived in every area of the downtown neighbourhoods. As for the business side, it will be left in the very capable hands of our friends who run The Drive skate shop on Commercial Drive in the East End. They will hold the exclusive Skull Skates dealership for the entire city and have already represented us there since June 2025.

AU: Do you have a big "Moving Sale" planned?

PD: Yes the Uplift Moving Party Plan is scheduled for Sunday March 15, 2026 and will feature select items at blowout prices reminiscent of our infamous yard sales plus a live in-store performance just confirmed and yet to be announced. The performance will be unique, like nothing we have hosted before, and is slated for a matinee show at 7pm.

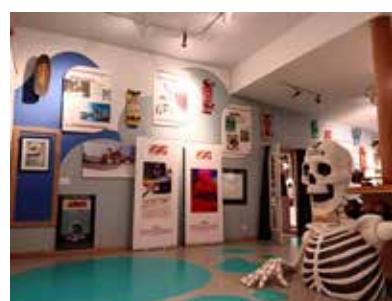
AU: What is the next exhibit at the Pop Cult Museum in Qualicum going to be?

PD: Have not exactly figured that out yet as we are fortunate to have a substantial collection of archived material but at the moment not a lot of time to stage a new exhibit as we are still in the process of completing the shift from one location to the other. Thinking it will be spring for sure. Anyone interested can follow us on Instagram, where we put up our event posters and various stuff related to the shop and the company.

AU: Anything else to mention

or promote?

PD: We have three bike cruises and a flea market planned for Qualicum this summer plus whatever other stuff we come up with... maybe a third installment of Backwoods Bedlam, our skate jam that takes place out in the bush outside QB and possibly a jam or demo at the new Qualicum



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skatepark. Again check our Insta account for details as they arise.

AU: What are some of the craziest moments, cool events, rad people who stopped by, and fondest memories that took place at the Vancouver locations?

PD: Lots of famous and not at all famous rippers from the worlds of skating, biking, snowboarding, skimming, music, art, custom culture and general bugging out have graced our hallowed grounds. Have almost never had to call the cops but have def experienced some crazy moments with people either completely out of their minds or just having a hard time. We don't judge, but we just have a couple of shop rules - don't steal from us and don't scare the other customers. As long as you can abide by those you're cool with us.



AU: What makes the Qualicum Beach Skull Skate location unique, what's the vibe, and why should people come check it out?

PD: We've been joking and calling the QB location the 'fancy store'. Mostly because we took longer to set it up than any other location and because of the inclusion of the Pop Culture Museum in the back section of the shop. The Vancouver shop has always been a destination of sorts, but with Qualicum we're finding it to be even more so because of our central location we receive a lot of visitors from all over the island, the mainland and beyond. The Skull Skates HQ here is becoming the Disneyland of skateboarding. Haha. skullskates.com @pdshotshop_qualicum_beach



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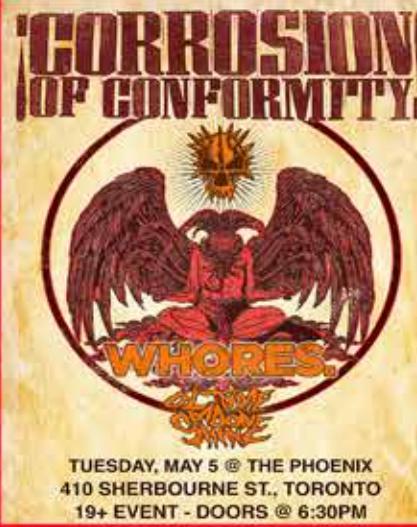




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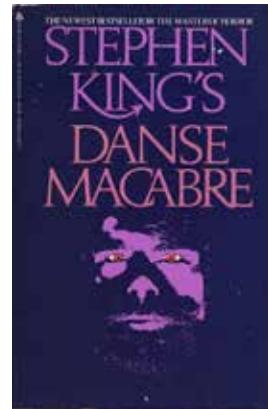


A LITTLE SOUTHERN COMFORT...

By Vince D'Amato

The Warriors is filmmaker Walter Hill's greatest cult film achievement – and deservedly so. An extremely prolific genre filmmaker in the 70s, 80s, and 90s, Hill's Hollywood directing credits landed mostly on action flicks, from the innovative (*The Warriors*, *Streets of Fire*) to the hilarious (*48 Hrs.*) to the explosive (*Red Heat*, *Another 48 Hrs.*); though at times, he was relegated to niche cult status (*The Driver*, *Johnny Handsome*, *Extreme Prejudice*) – and these were all only a part of Hill's extensive filmography. Outside of the action genre, he maintained a grip in the horror genre through his producing and screenwriting, specifically on the *Alien* franchise and HBO's *Tales from the Crypt* American reboots, which Hill produced alongside other Hollywood giants Robert Zemeckis, Joel Silver, Richard Donner, and David Giler. In 2000, Walter Hill almost made his own official horror directorial effort with what could've been an *Event Horizon*-type of space-horror opus, *Supernova*.

Supernova starred James Spader, Angela Bassett,



Lou Diamond Phillips, and Robin Tunney. I can't confirm that *Supernova* is the absolute mess it's reputed to be, this is one of the very few Walter Hill films I've never seen, and I've even seen *Bullet to the Head*. But the fact is that Walter Hill had to share directing efforts with horror filmmaker Jack Sholder (*Nightmare on Elm Street 2*), and neither director ended up taking credit on the final film; the directing credit went to the fictitious "Thomas Lee", a pseudonym Hill himself had requested. Crazily, even Francis Ford Coppola had been brought onboard to oversee the disastrous post-production and to try to create something releasable that would appease both the studio and the filmmakers (which included horror screenwriter William Malone). In the end, no one wanted their names on it, and the studio almost didn't release it at all. But it couldn't be *that bad*, could it? That might be an exploration for another time. Overall, Walter Hill has had far more creative triumphs than fizzle-outs, and his early action films (*The Warriors*, *48 Hrs.*) became huge influences on Hollywood's action genre overall, recreating the "buddy-cop" genre with subversive humour and the "reluctant partner" in *48 Hrs.* to the almost ballet-like slow-motion photography of the violence in his carefully orchestrated intimate action of *The Warriors*, *The Driver*, and *Southern Comfort*, which Hill re-crafted from the earlier films of Sam Peckinpah (for which Hill had also worked with as a screenwriter). But while Peckinpah may have been the first to experiment with the slow-motion spectacle of violence, his protege Walter Hill was the one who cemented that style into the Hollywood action-movie

mainstream, and whose work was copied thereafter.

One of Hill's earlier efforts, *Southern Comfort* (1981) is not a horror film per se, although diehard survivalist horror fans may sometimes classify this film in that subgenre as they do with *Deliverance*. It is worth noting that both of those films appeared in Stephen King's 1989 paperback reprinting of his non-fiction book about the horror genre, *Dance Macabre*. While I truly think that James Dickey's novel *Deliverance* is one of the best suspense novels ever written, as far as these survivalist films go, I prefer Walter Hill's *Southern Comfort*. Both films are about a group of middle-class white men who encroach on the backwoods territory of segregated locals, where a series of minor conflicts and poor decisions leads to murder and heartpounding attempts at survival within hostile environments. However, there is a huge amount of sociopolitical subtext in Dickey's novel that is unignorable, and which is then watered down so much in the film version that it can barely be seen under a microscope – whereas conversely, Hill's film contains those themes throughout, and at times *Southern Comfort* actually switches or blurs the lines between which side is right or wrong... and almost as if to amplify this ambiguity, some of Walter Hill's characters

here are clearly assholes, or just disagreeable, or downright unlikable (with a key exception being the level-headed Kieth Carradine, who is in one of his best roles here, in my opinion). Actor Kieth Carradine plays a member of the National Guard squad who are practicing maneuvers in the backwoods when they encounter a group of locals, whom some of the squad decides to harass for no reason other than to bully them, seemingly because they think they're better than the locals. The film also stars Powers Booth, Fred Ward, and T.K. Carter (*The Thing*). It's weird to me that all of those co-stars have all since died; I grew up seeing all of them in many genre films.

Survival, or more particularly themes of survival, seem to be a consistent concept in Walter Hill's filmography – from the most obvious, the *Alien* films (especially the first three), to the exciting *The Warriors*, which sees a novice street gang of youths running for their lives from every other bloodthirsty street gang in the urban jungle of New York City, to his most clearly conceived take on the theme in *Southern Comfort*. And that's not to say that the survival theme isn't present in his other films, where Eddie Murphy is fighting to not go back to prison in *48 Hrs.*, or with Mickey Rourke in *Johnny Handsome*; and these elements contribute the pulsating undercurrent in more of



Hill's electrifying filmography: *Extreme Prejudice*, *The Driver*, *Hard Times*, and *Last Man Standing* (a retelling of *For a Few Dollars More*). Characters' survival, while admittedly inherent to, or at least perceived in, most Hollywood action cinema, is what actually drives Hill's storytelling, and is part of what makes his films so exciting – and what makes him my personally favourite action director. It's also what makes him a wildly effective horror writer.

Clearly a huge fan of the Western genre, Hill's Westerns include *The Long Riders* and *Wild Bill*, and he also moves fluidly through neo-Western territory with *48 Hrs.*, *Red Heat*, *Extreme Prejudice*, *Crossroads*, and *Another 48 Hrs.* Hill would circle back and fuse the horror and Western genres in his side-producing project, *Tales from the Crypt*. In season 2, Hill wrote and directed the episode "Cutting Cards" about a gambler (Lance Henrickson, *Johnny Handsome*, *Aliens*) who plays against his long-standing gambling competitor, where they face off by wagering their own body parts over several hands of poker. Following this, Hill would



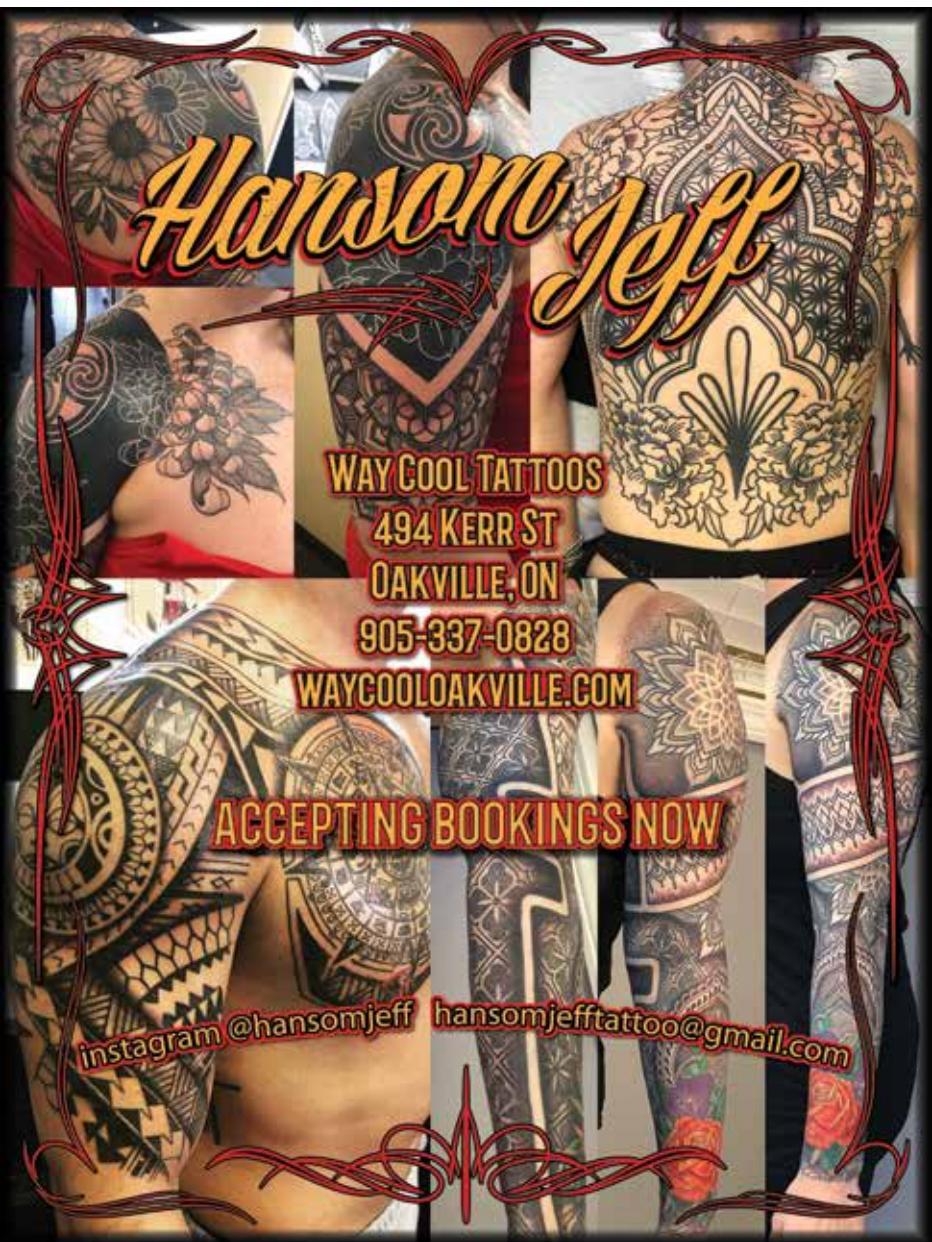
bring his team of Crypt-producers onboard for his urban thriller *Trespass* (with Bill Paxton, William Sadler, Ice-T and Ice Cube), which is my absolute favourite of Hill's neo-Western survivalist action-thrillers, about two firefighters trapped in a condemned building after witnessing a gang hit. And just a couple of years later, the same producing team would launch the big-screen debut of the Cryptkeeper in *Tales from the Crypt* presents: *Demon Knight*, which (coincidentally?) would be another Western-coloured showdown, though in the form of a balls-out horror movie, that sees William Sadler hole up in a converted church with seven other survivors of Billy



Zane's failed murderous con to retrieve a blood-key that could bring about the end of the world, and where said survivors must live through the entire night, pitted against Zane's mind-tricks and his army of killer demons from hell.

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I FEEL LOVE



from a pair of British graphic novelists, Julian Hanshaw & Kent Able, their first one was *I Feel Machine* (2018). Interestingly, the graphic novel format is seemingly far more acceptable (and artistically successful) for curated anthologies than the independent-film format. But I digress. *I Feel Love* (2022) contains 5 different stories by 5 creators, each proving to be radically diverse from each other; each creator has drastically different ideas of what the dark dungeons of "love" are, some of which veer so far away from the title's "love"-theme that they leave the whole idea of love kicked in the dust, bleeding out, and so anorexic that I actually wondered if the authors hadn't received the wrong memo of what the book was meant to be about. The creators' takes on the theme are twisted to a point well past irony. If it's valid to arbitrarily swap love purely for anxiety or obsession, then this concept was hugely successful. But hey, I'm all for exploring how creators turn love into the tunnels of darkness – case in point is another 2022 graphic novel, *The Me You Love in the Dark*, which features the well-treaded theme of a blocked and somewhat tortured artist who gets themselves stuck in an isolated environment, where things eventually turn horrific and deadly. Skottie Young's story is simple but effective and makes for a solid horror story steeped in the aforementioned anxiety and obsession. and Jorge Corona's artwork for this short graphic novel elevates it immensely. The basic theme and plot outline of *The Me You Love in the Dark* seems like something as old as time, and was popularized with Stephen King's *The Shining*. King himself would revisit the theme in his 2020 novella *Rat* (contained in the book *If It Bleeds*), and his 2020 twist on this is hilarious and

devious. Artists themselves may be more attracted to all of these stories mentioned here so far, but there is universal appeal to horror fans, for sure. One of our own filmmakers, Dakota Aesquivel also tackled this theme in his brilliant and humourous indie horror film *Deadly Crush*, which features William Sadler (*Trespass*, *Demon Knight*), Courtney Gains (*Children of the Corn*) and starlet Aria London, who plays the artist-in-solitude who is quickly harassed by ghosts, zombies, and a whacked-out preacher. Love hurts, I guess...



Tales from the Darkside: Love, Darkness, & Deadly Obsessions

By Vince D'Amato

Recently I'd visited a local independent bookshop which had the graphic novel anthology, *I Feel Love* – this neo-horror anthology looked very intriguing and heavily Lovecraft-influenced, which always piques my interest, and so I obviously left the shop with this book in hand. *I Feel Love* is the second anthology concept



TALES FROM THE DARKSIDE

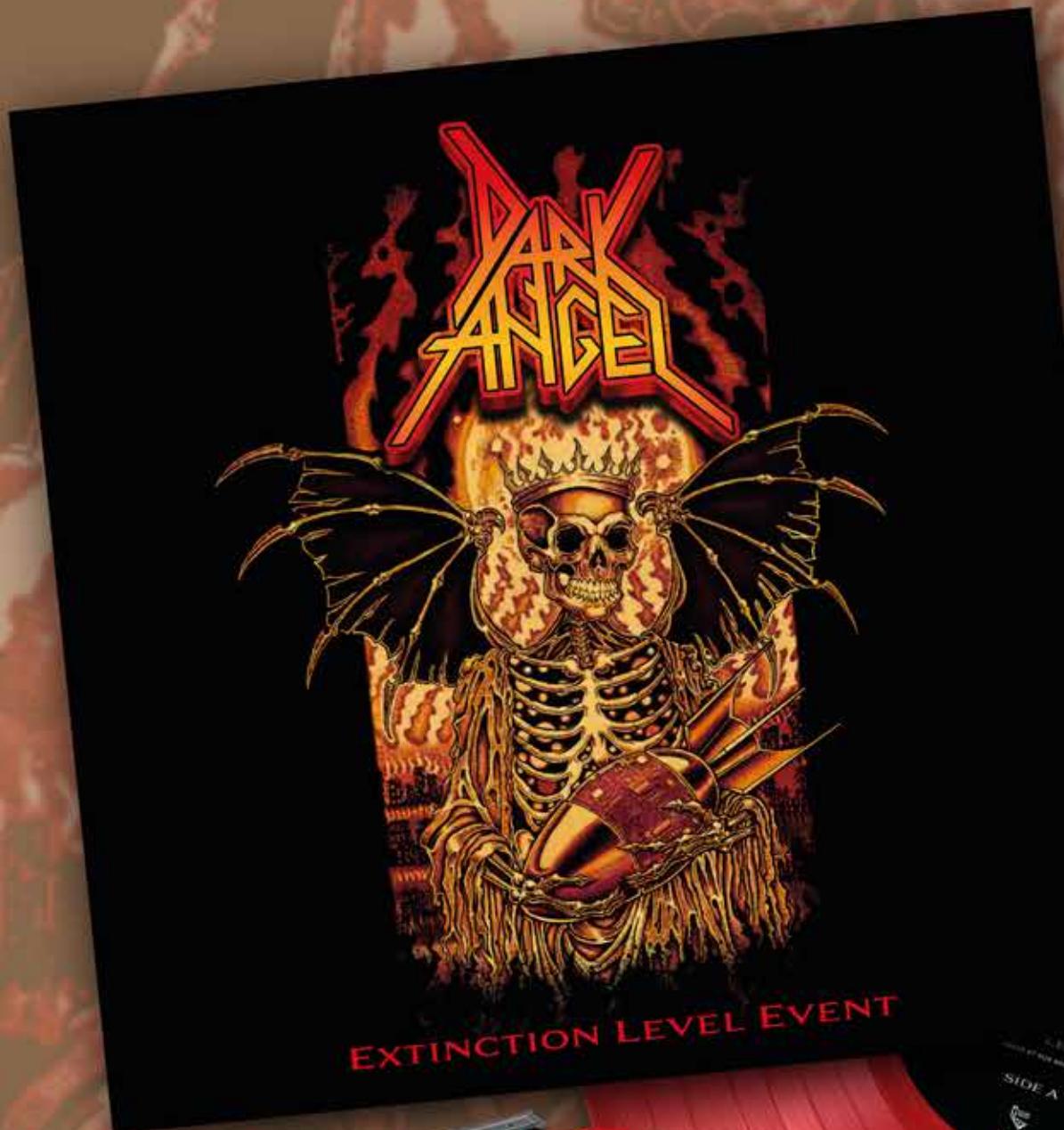


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THOMAS G. WAITES

FOX – THE WARRIORS

Interview by Jay Maher

AU: I'm speaking with Thomas G. Waites, who played the Fox in *The Warriors*. Please give us a brief history on your background.

Thomas G. Waites: I grew up in a place called Levittown, Pennsylvania. It's a rough steel factory town. I went to Catholic school there for 12 years. After that in '72 I went to a community college for a year and started getting into acting. I'd been in a terrible car accident when I was 14 and that removed any notion of becoming an athlete. So I switched from athletics to acting because that's where all the girls were, in the drama club.

When I got into college I auditioned for a play and I got the lead in that.

I auditioned for another one, got the lead in that and then my acting teacher at the time said, "I think you should audition for The Juilliard School." I said, "That's a music school isn't it?" He said, "They have an acting division now. It's run by John Houseman and I highly suggest you look into it."

"Now, I was broke. I was living in a junkyard, literally. Worked in the junkyard in the morning, worked at the community college all day and did plays at night. I think it was 25 bucks at the time, the application fee, and I worked like crazy on the two audition pieces and in December of '72 got in. I got the letter saying you've been accepted and you've been given a complete scholarship and you start in the fall of '73. I was there for three years then I got kicked out for being an idiot. Which I deserved. I was so driven by ambition and yearning to express what I'd learned as an actor at Juilliard, so committed to the work that I somehow cracked the code and I got in."

AU: Who were your biggest acting influences?

TGW: Marlon Brando and Al Pacino. After I saw *The Godfather*, I was like, Oh my god. Little did I know that I'd come to work with him in a few



years.

AU: We'll get to that. So let's start at the beginning. Your first major role in a feature film, if I'm not mistaken, was as Chilly in *On the Yard* from 1978. And that movie also featured your future *Warriors* co-star James Remar. Can you talk about your thoughts on that movie?

TGW: Yeah, it was a good experience. I worked with John Heard, who was a very talented actor. John must have watched me the first day and said, this guy's going to need help. So he literally coached me on every scene that I had in the movie. Thereby improving my performance about a thousand percent. James Remar only worked a couple of days on the movie. But he was very good and I've always liked James. We've been

friends for many years, we did four pictures together. Of course he's gone on to have a very successful career, largely due to the success of *The Warriors*, I think. But *On the Yard* was a good experience for me. I was 22 years old and it was hard, especially learning how to act in front of a camera, because I'd been a stage-trained actor.

AU: Your next film was *The Warriors*. How did you get your initial audition for that?

TGW: I'd done a few plays and I think I was starting to become known as an actor that might be of some note. They brought me in for the

first audition and they called me back. Then I had a third callback and they asked if I would come back a fourth time with Deborah (Van Valkenburgh) to see what our chemistry was like. Like I said, I think I had gained a reputation around town already. He's the guy who got *On the Yard*, he's the guy that was in *Old Molly* at the Spoleto Festival. A reputation was beginning to build underneath me and I think that attracted them to me. They were looking for, what, nine unknowns. Back then it was entirely different from today. It was "Seeking unknown actors, must be in good physical shape." Deborah and I liked each other very much, still do, and they cast us.

AU: Were you always auditioning to be a Warrior? Ever audition for another character?

TGW: No. I auditioned for the Fox from the first day. There was never any interest in me

for anything else, just to play the Fox who was supposed to be the character that Michael Beck ended up playing.

AU: This year marks *The Warriors*' 47th anniversary. What are your thoughts on why it still resonates with so many fans?

TGW: That's an interesting question. I'd say it's due to the fact that it was interracial. We had blacks, we had whites, Marcelino Sanchez was Puerto Rican. A lovely kid, the sweetest kindest young man, it's so sad that he's not around. He died way too young. Walter Hill went to his funeral, by the way. But I think to answer the question, it resonates because of two things. One is the director had a vision of how to convey violence in a way that made it appealing. He also had a great cinematographer named Andy Laszlo that gave the film a kind of look that I'd never seen before. So you combine that with, I think, this yearning at the time in our culture, unlike now, where we're beginning to realize it doesn't matter what color you are, man. If you're black, if you're white, if you're Puerto Rican, if you're Chinese, we're the same. We're all the same and I think that underlying theme was what was in people's hearts. Hey look, they're all together and they're black and they're white. I think that sense of camaraderie is also a part of what appeals about the film. We were a group of guys that were going to try to stick together and fight our way back.

AU: Are you surprised you're still being asked questions about it today?

TGW: I'm shocked. I mean it was a gig, we were lucky to get it. It was paying our rent. We were all happy to have a job and never had any idea it would become a sort of moment in cinematic history. Along with John Carpenter's *The Thing*, I just happen to be in them. A lot of actors have done way better than I have, but very few have been in not one, but two all-time classics.

AU: Did you personally get to bring anything to the character the Fox yourself? Like his demeanor, dialogue, or look?

TGW: I'm a method actor, so I created a character. I said to Walter, "He's the Fox. I think his hair should have like a red tint." So he allowed me to get my hair dyed slightly red. We also kind of agreed to sort of bring out the James Dean in me. That was my vision for the character.

AU: Initially the Fox was supposed to be the main love interest with Mercy and have a bigger part. That was what was being sold to you for your character from the start. Correct?

TGW: Yep.

AU: When that bigger role was taken away and the character Swan took over the love interest for Mercy. At the time did that bother you, it must have been frustrating?

TGW: I was devastated. However, I'd like to point out that I brought it on myself. If you get too big for your britches, sometimes the universe will come along and send you a message and say hey look, you're out of line here. Obviously I upset Director Walter Hill. I wish he would have given me a warning. I'm sure I would have adapted, because I'm an adaptable person. I'm an actor, I adapt, I adjust. But I was being difficult and disruptive. I caused him too much distress and he fired me and it devastated me. I called him right after I found out and he said, "I'm real sorry about this, that's the way it had to go." But then he said, "Hang on to your self." Those five words that have come back to me many times throughout the years where I've been in terrible situations. Hold on to your self. No matter what happens to you in your life, hold on to your self.

AU: Those words really resonated and meant something to you?

TGW: They really resonated for me and I've made amends to Walter and we're good now. I've written to him a couple of times. I think he was as upset about it as anyone but he felt he had to do it as a director. I know now that I've directed a bunch of stuff. I had to fire a good friend of mine in a play in Los Angeles. He was a good pal of mine, a drinking buddy. The producer in this situation came to me and said "You've got to get rid of him like yesterday. Get him out." So I kind of empathized with how Walter must have felt. But I do wish he would have given me a warning. But wishes are for fishes, I guess.

AU: He had regrets the way he dealt with it as well. He's come out and said that in video interviews. So I'm sure it was really difficult on him to have to do that.

TGW: It was painful and difficult. Again it wasn't his fault.

AU: You were young though.

TGW: I was a kid! I went from being broke sleeping on a park bench to Paramount Pictures signing me to a three-picture deal. The change was cataclysmic and I couldn't handle it. I thought I was this poor kid from Levittown and all of a sudden I'm somebody now. It went to my head and I paid a heavy price for it. The ego is the enemy.

AU: Even with the changes and everything, I have to say you still did a great job with the character the Fox itself.

TGW: Thank you. Someone at a signing recently said, if you didn't die I don't think I would have been as interested in the movie. Because once you get killed, we're like, the Fox has been killed. What's going to happen to everyone else? So it in a way had a kind of boomerang effect that ended up, I think, ultimately helping the movie. Which is really what it's all about. It would have been great for me career-wise and I'd probably be in a much better position than I am today. But again, one must acknowledge one's own part. Then, like an idiot when they asked where do you want your billing? I said let me see the movie and see how much I'm in it. I was still in this arrogant, solipsistic mode and I said remove my name from the credits. That really pissed off Walter Hill. That was like pouring gasoline onto a fire.

AU: What do you recall of filming the iconic conclave scene? Was it a difficult one to shoot?

TGW: It was difficult. There was a lot of stress on Walter. He was over budget, he was behind schedule. All these extras and some of them were real gangs. They took a long time to set up the shot. It was a lot of sitting around and waiting. At three o'clock in the morning, you finally get your close-up. It's tough. Movie making is not for the faint of heart. It's like going to war. You've got to be ready for fucking anything. What I remember most about it is I wanted my reaction to be almost like when you see European films, you see that they act with their whole body. I wanted my whole body to be in a state of shock. Guns were not around then. This is back in the '70s, guns were not on the street. Everyone had knives, sure. So the whole concept of the gun is what went through my mind. Is this going to change gang life forever if we go down this track? I remember enjoying the way Walter shot that. Even when I see the film today, I like the way he shot that.

AU: I've been to Riverside Park, at the conclave location a few times myself and it looks a lot

bigger on screen.

TGW: Well that's what the director does. He has to sell you on an illusion that this is like half of New York City. Believe it or not it's based on an actual event that took place in the Bronx in the early '70s. The head of some gang, called all the gangs together and basically got behind a microphone and said "There is way more of us than them. We outnumber cops by 7 to 1." He was giving his pitch to all the gang members and the cops found out about it and busted it up. That's what happened in reality.

AU: I personally always loved the Warriors vs Orphans scene. It's one of my favorites and your character was featured prominently in that one. What do you remember about filming that scene?

TGW: Paul Greco, he was such a good actor first of all. He made you interested in him and it wasn't because of his eye. We ended up working on another movie together many years later. And he was a great guy and I remember really enjoying acting with him. Again, sometimes we wouldn't start shooting a scene like that until two or three in the morning. We had been working nights for quite a while and I think a few of us, it began to get to our central nervous system. But I remember having a lot of fun shooting the Orphans scene. And I miss Paul, another that died far too young.

AU: After The Warriors you managed to score a role in another great film. I'm talking about

And Justice for All with Al Pacino. That must have been very satisfying for you? Especially with what you had just gone through with your exit from The Warriors. How did that come about and what are your recollections of filming that iconic picture?

TGW: I think what happened is Norman Jewison the director of And Justice for All. A really terrific director, underrated. He called my agent and said, "We heard this kid's trouble. Is that true? Because we want to bring him in on this. We think he's right for it." My agent very steadfastly stood up and said, "Tom is a pro. You have my word." So they brought me in to audition and I said, "Is it going to be with Al?" and he said, "Yes it is." I was like, Oh my god. You asked me who my influences were. Marlon Brando and who's the second actor? Al Pacino. I practically became Al Pacino after I saw The Godfather and I was going to get to act with him. So I show up on the day at Al's manager's and he went, "I'm so sorry. Can you come back tomorrow? I have to go to the dentist." So I came back the next day and I fucking killed it. The film did do a lot for my confidence, because I was like maybe I don't have any fucking talent. Maybe the problem is I'm just not good enough. Then a month later I get a good part in a movie with Al Pacino. Then I said well, maybe I'm talented but I'm fucked up and I need psychiatric help. Which I did and I got it and I need discipline. I became a black belt in a very hard style of karate. I learned discipline and made sure this didn't happen again.

AU: Can we also talk a bit about another classic that you were in. You were in three classics as far as I'm concerned. I'm talking about 1982's John Carpenter film, The Thing.

TGW: Oh, that was so much fun! Oh my god. First of all, I think it's a great movie. He keeps the tension in that movie from beginning to end and he never lets up. John is a great director to work with because he creates an atmosphere that makes it seem like you're having the time of your life but you're working. He also has that thing that very few directors that I've worked with have. He makes you want to get his approval. Walter had that too. He makes you in your mind start going, I want this guy to say that he likes what I'm doing. He didn't yell or scream, neither did Walter for that matter. John was very calm, he was just a fun guy, he loved to laugh. He also loved to let the actors create and he just sat back and filmed it as he saw it in his mind's eye. It was one of the high

points of my life. Aside from my children being born and meeting the mother of my children and falling in love with her, I would say it's up there in that category of the top 10 things in my life would be the making of The Thing.

AU: In 2005 Rockstar Games created a video game of The Warriors. Which along with the action figures introduced the movie to a whole new generation. You along with other Warriors cast members were hired to voice your characters for the game. How was that coming back to voice the Fox and were you paid well?

TGW: We got paid shit. We got \$1,350 for a two-day, I mean it made a billion dollars. You think they would have said we'll give you a couple of thousand or something. They gave us nothing, because that's SAG you know. But anyway, my manager called me up and said, "We have an audition for a voiceover for a video game," and I went, "What? I've never auditioned for a video game, what is it for?" He said, "Well, it's for a movie, *The Warriors*." I said, "I was in *The Warriors*." He said, "We know. So who am I auditioning for?" And they said, "Yourself." So went in and I auditioned for myself. And I guess I did a pretty good job of being me, laughs.

AU: Over the years have you kept in contact with any of your fellow cast members?

TGW: They're a good bunch of guys. I like them a lot and it's always good to see them when we do these signings.



AU: Whatever happened to the original Fox vest? Did you get to keep that? Do you still own it today?

TGW: No, I would love to know where the fuck it went. I believe Deborah Van Valkenburgh has it. I think she took it home with her but she says she didn't. Someone told me she did and she said she didn't, so I don't know. Maybe she's keeping it a secret. I'd love to know where it is. I don't think the costume designer has it either and I didn't take it home.

AU: Later in your career you became a musician and started your own

band called Heartbreak Waites, great name by the way.

TGW: Thank you. Actually the actor John Goodman came up with that name. He was an old mate of mine when we were young. In the very beginning, I had a Punk New Wave Band in the '80s and we were playing at CBGB's. When I was with John and we were drinking and stuff I would have a line for the girls to try to pick them up. I'd say, "Don't fall in love with me baby, I'll break your heart." He came up with Heartbreak Waites. So we were at CBGB's and John Goodman was at the bar and he's like, "Heartbreak Waites!" And I thought that was a great name for a band. We have two singles out on Apple. One song is called "Heartbreak Waites", eponymous name and the other one is called "Allentown Hair". We have an album coming out on the 17th of February called *Heartbreak Waites*. So please check them out. It's really good music. It's like Americana and now we're moving more toward the political serious scene writing about the horrors that are going on in our country.

AU: Can we talk a bit about your TGW Acting Studio that you own and operate in New York? When did you start the studio and what kind of classes do you offer?

TGW: It's pretty funny the way that started. You know the actor Vinnie Pastore that played Big Pussy on *The Sopranos*? He along with many other people were obsessed with this play, *American Buffalo*, that I was in with Pacino. It was down in the village, it was the '80s. It was just cool and Vinnie had come to see it two or three times. One day I'm getting ready to go out for a run, it's a matinee day. I'm going to do the show, go for a run, come back, eat and then do the second show. So I come out dressed in jogging shorts and I see this guy stealing the poster from the window. He is taking the glass off and stealing the poster of *American Buffalo*. Like it was a normal thing

to do. He goes, "Hey Tommy, could you come here a minute, could I ask you a question?" So I'm walking over watching him steal this thing. And thinking nothing of it, dismantling the window and taking the thing out. And he goes, "Hey Tom, listen you're great in the show by the way. I always wanted to be an actor. I got a bar, upstate it's closing, it's going under. I'm broke. But I always wanted to be an actor. How do you become an actor?" I said, "First you have to get training." He said, "Where?" I said "Well, there is a million acting schools here man, just look it up in the phone book." He goes, "What about you? Would you teach me?" Never in my life had I ever thought about being a teacher until that moment. When he said it my first impulse was going to be to say no. I don't teach, I'm not a teacher. But I kind of quickly ran through my head the fact that every movie or play I'd ever been in, people would come up to me and say, "Would you watch my scene and tell me what you think of it?" I guess I had an instinct for it. I'm really more of a director, although I call myself an acting teacher, but I just direct people the way they would be directed professionally. Anyway, long story short, Vinnie was my first student. He rented a flophouse in Times Square and I would meet him there once a week and take him through these basic exercises. A month later I had 35 students, all by word of mouth.

AU: What year did you start the studio?

TGW: 1980. It was really because people asked me and then luckily for me when work got slow as an actor, I had teaching to fall back on to support my wife and children. I didn't officially brand it until 26 years ago as the TGW Acting Studio. That was when I returned to New York in '99 and I resumed teaching.

AU: In your earliest roles you went by the name Thomas Waites. When did you decide to change it and was that solely because of the musician Tom Waits?

TGW: Yes, solely because of the musician Tom Waits. I was hanging out with him, actually. He's a very nice fellow, we're at the bar drinking and I'm like, "Tom what are we going to do about our names? Because everyone calls me Tom Waites."

He's like, "I don't know but if you get a record deal and you use Tom Waites, my record company is going to ask you to change it." He was getting more and more popular with each passing decade. So we're kicking names around and I said, "What about Tommy G. Waites?" he goes "Tommy G, I like that. It sounds like a boxer." I was going to go with that and then I said no, because I don't want anyone to forget who I am. I'm going to keep Thomas, I'm going to add the G and go that way.

AU: What was the first role that you went by Thomas G. Waites, do you remember?

TGW: I think it was *Clan of the Cave Bear* in '84.

AU: Anything you are working on currently that you would like to promote and where can people find out more about your activities?

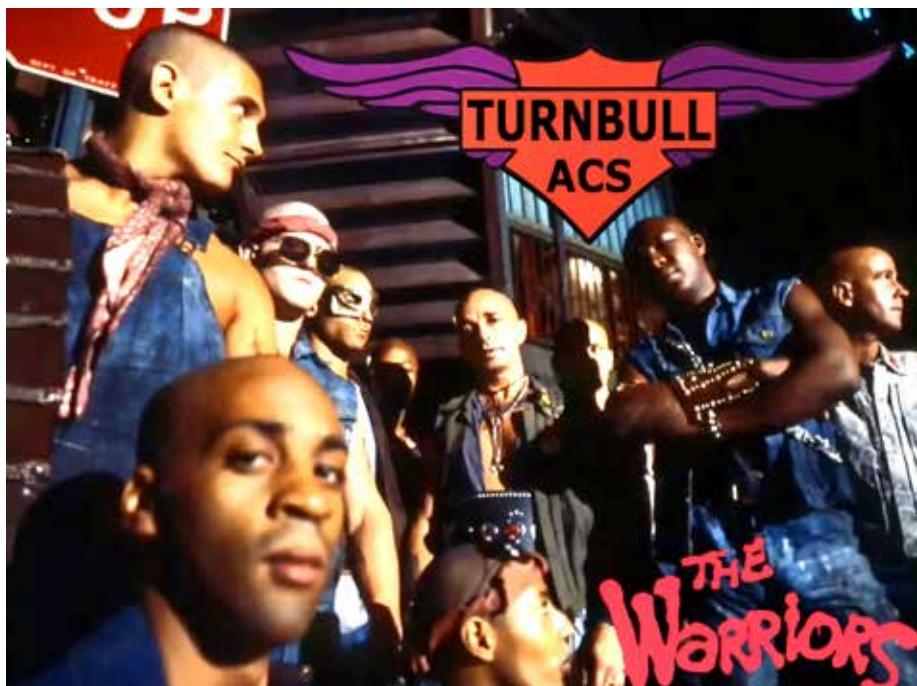
TGW: Please follow my band Heartbreak Waites on Instagram. I did a one-man show this summer called *Lucky Man, a Warrior's Journey*, that I'm trying to raise the money for. It's really like a rock monologue and it was really good. Raising the money in this climate is particularly difficult but I'm working on that. I have a movie coming out called *The Block*, which is a horror film by Craig Singer. I shot a movie in Seattle called *The Silver Game*, by a brilliant young kid named Brendan Cescon. He wrote and directed it. I've never done a screwball comedy on film. It's total comedy from beginning to end and it is just terrifically brilliant. I've done a lot of comedy on stage but not in film.

AU: Where can people find out more information about your acting studio?

TGW: ThomasGWaites.com is my website and TGW Studio is connected to it. So if you go to my website, it'll show you everything that's going on with me. We have a gig in New York on the 31st of January at 11th Street Place way downtown. We're playing *The Cutting Room* when our album drops on February 17th, which is a big deal. Check out my songs on Apple when you get a chance Heartbreak Waites and Allentown Hair.

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ENRICO ESPOSITO

Turnbull ACs

By Jay Maher

Absolute Underground: I am speaking to Enrico N Esposito, who played a prominent member of the Turnbull ACs in the cult classic film *The Warriors*. Thank you for taking the time to speak to *Absolute Underground*, Enrico, how are you doing?

Enrico Esposito: Great, happy to be here with you. Honoured to be here with you and a pleasure to meet you. Nice to see how you keep the cult movies alive for the fans. Great job with your publication.

AU: Can you please give the readers a brief history on your background and how you ended up auditioning for a role in *The Warriors*?

EE: Born in Brooklyn, played sports and trained most of my life. High school and college football. Also rugby, track and field (sprinter and shotput), martial arts. College: BS in Psychology, Dual Masters in Sports Med and Exercise Physiology; Doctor of Chiropractic, Advanced Doctoral work in Sport Psychology; Certified Strength and Conditioning Coach, Certified Athletic Training. I took pride in being street wise and book smart. Had a dual life: One part as a Sports Healthcare/Coaching/Training Athletes on all levels from PeeWee to Professional/Olympics and College Professor in Sports Medicine. My other part of my dual life was a love for the movie industry... especially Stuntman/Acting in mostly Gangster Action Movies. My students called me "Doc Ric The Guido Professor".

AU: Not only did you make it into the original trailer for the film, but you are one of the first two Turnbull ACs members we see on screen

during the Conclave scene. That must have been very satisfying to see happen?

EE: It was amazing seeing myself on the big screen for the first time. After the film was done, I went on to college to play football. When the movie came out, I went with the guys on the team to see it in the theatre. When my shot came up, the guys went wild. It was crazy. The entire theatre came up to me afterwards. What a feeling.

AU: What do you remember about filming the iconic Conclave scene, was it very challenging?

EE: Being educated in stunts and knowing how big action scenes are filmed, it was great to see such a massive amount of people look like chaos but calmly directed. It might have seemed like everyone was running crazy but we all were just walking around calmly and slowly. They slowed the film down

as they shot the scene and then edited it at regular speed to make it look like everyone was running in different directions.

AU: I have watched *The Warriors* well over 100 times, I seriously lost count a long time ago, lol. But looking at that scene even today, it's so brilliantly filmed. It completely sets up the rest of the movie, what are your thoughts?

EE: It really did. The concept was to have all the gangs band together and take over NY. Crazy scary idea. Then having the Warriors blamed for the shooting and having to "bop" their way back to Coney Island. One of the most trying times we had filming was the fact real gangs were coming to the set... and security had to move locations for certain scenes.

AU: Since filming wrapped in 1978, have you ever been back to Riverside Park at Dinosaur Playground where the Conclave was shot? I have visited there twice myself, once in 2017 and once in 2019. Both times it was absolutely surreal to be there. Apart from the staircase being gone, not much has changed.

EE: I had moved down south for school and other ventures, so I visited many years later, taking a friend around NY for her visit. I showed her the city and where I grew up and where we filmed. Many things changed and many things remained the same

but one thing is embedded and never changes... the memories of doing my first film, with my cousin who has now passed on. This film meant A LOT to me.

AU: One of my favourite scenes in the film is of course the Turnbull ACs chase scene with the Warriors. What do you remember about filming that entire scene?

EE: That was a great scene with the moving bus



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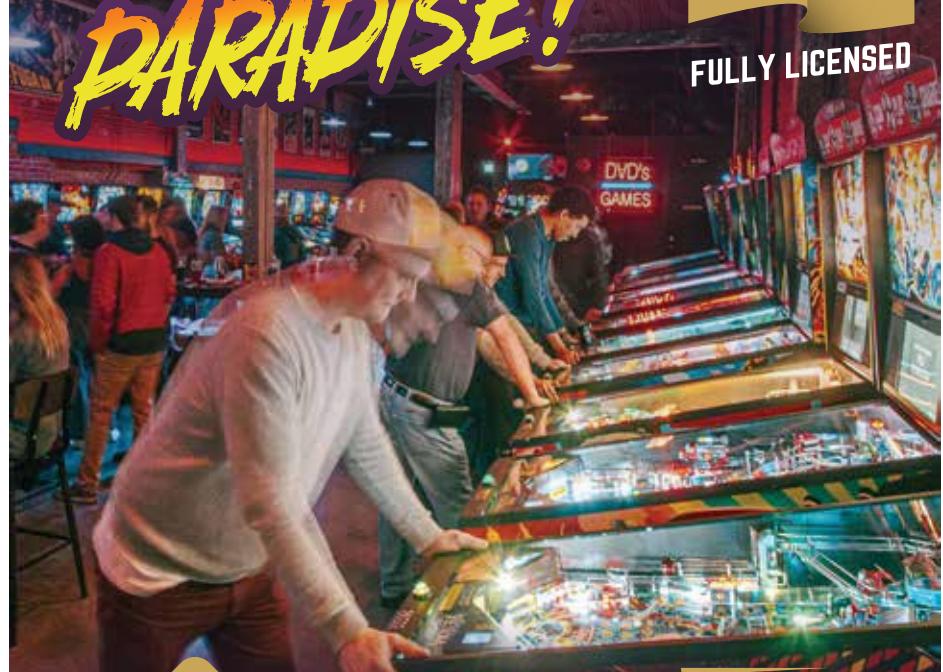
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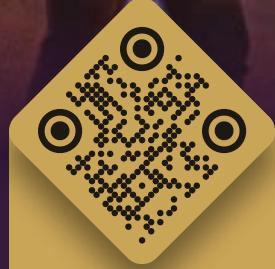
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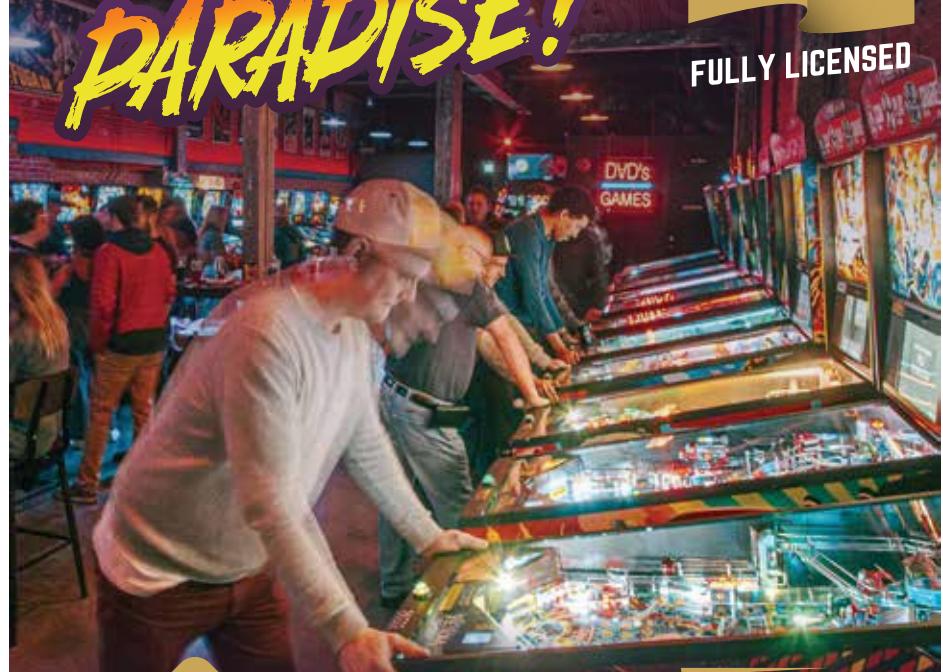
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and jumping over the turnstiles and running up to the platform. Myself and Billy Torres (RIP), gang members, were probably the most fit. We were the two to jump off the moving bus, up the stairs, over the turnstiles and up to the platform. Side note: When they gave me my costume, they gave construction boots... I told them, "Are you crazy?" I got my own Marine Corps boots, I could do anything with them. Lol.

AU: I have to say you were in hella shape in the film, I mean you were jacked! You must have had a pretty strong workout routine back then?

EE: I was jacked, I just got out of the Marine Corps and my cousin was a stunt coordinator for the movie industry and he asked me to come on the project. I did a lot of power competitions back then and was very physical. Trained every day with cops and firemen in a YMCA in Greenpoint/Williamsburg where I grew up. I prided myself in being big but very quick and powerful. I still train today... not as crazy, a bit smarter, not harder now, lol.

AU: I found it funny and very interesting to learn that since none of the ACs members had a driver's license at the time, Punks member and main stunt coordinator Craig Baxley donned a skull cap and became Turnbull's bus driver. Do you remember that?

EE: Yes. He was a personal friend of my cousin and was in a lot of scenes. I think it was more of a liability for any of us to drive. It's crazy because I was one who was hanging off the bus as it was moving. Go figure.

AU: How long did it take to film that entire bus chase including up the staircase onto the platform? That stunt you with Billy Torres (RIP) jumping over the turnstiles looked so cool! Must have been dangerous.

EE: It was a pretty straightforward scene which was filmed in one night. Jumping over the turnstiles was done in one take, which me and Billy (RIP) took pride in. Believe it or not, I did not even know where the cameras were as we jumped over them, so it was absolutely real and natural.

AU: Did you end up doing any other stunts in the film?

EE: That was the only physical scene. We did another scene listening to the radio at our gang house as the announcement went out that the Warriors did the shooting but it was cut.

AU: This year marks the 47th anniversary of *The Warriors*. Why does it still resonate worldwide?

EE: I think it's crazy! When I did the film, no one thought it would be so liked with millions of fans.

AU: What was it like working with Walter Hill?

EE: I basically dealt with the stunt personnel and extras, so I really didn't communicate with him.

AU: Do you still own your original Turnbull ACs

suspenders?

EE: The overalls were too loose, so I used mine. And like I said before, I used my own Marine Corps boots.

AU: What other opportunities came your way after filming *The Warriors*?

EE: This is a story in itself. While on set, chatter was going around about another gang movie coming up the pike, *The Wanderers*. I was a street kid from Brooklyn. I enquired and went to the Gulf and Western building and auditioned. While in the waiting room, there were actors with portfolios and acting history. They asked me what part I was going for. I told them, whatever part they give me. They looked at me like I was crazy. Lol. I read a part, nervous, and then the stunt coordinator told me to go outside, relax and come back. He said, "You grew up on the streets of Bklyn... be yourself." I followed the outline and ad-libbed on my own. Afterwards, he said, "Wait here." A few minutes later, he brought the casting director in and said, "You are in the queue." Well, my family went crazy all week. Kid from Bklyn on a roll. Vic Magnotta (RIP) called and told me, "I'm going to break your neck when I see you." He said, "You got the part." During this time, my Pop (RIP) argued with me to go back to school. He wanted me to continue my education. My cousin said,



"Go back to school." So I did. Later on, I got small parts over the years while teaching and training. I wish I was around for *The Sopranos*. My cousin was Gandolfini's double. I know I would have been cast. Life goes on. I moved on. Successful in healthcare and sports medicine. But once you have the bug, it never leaves you.

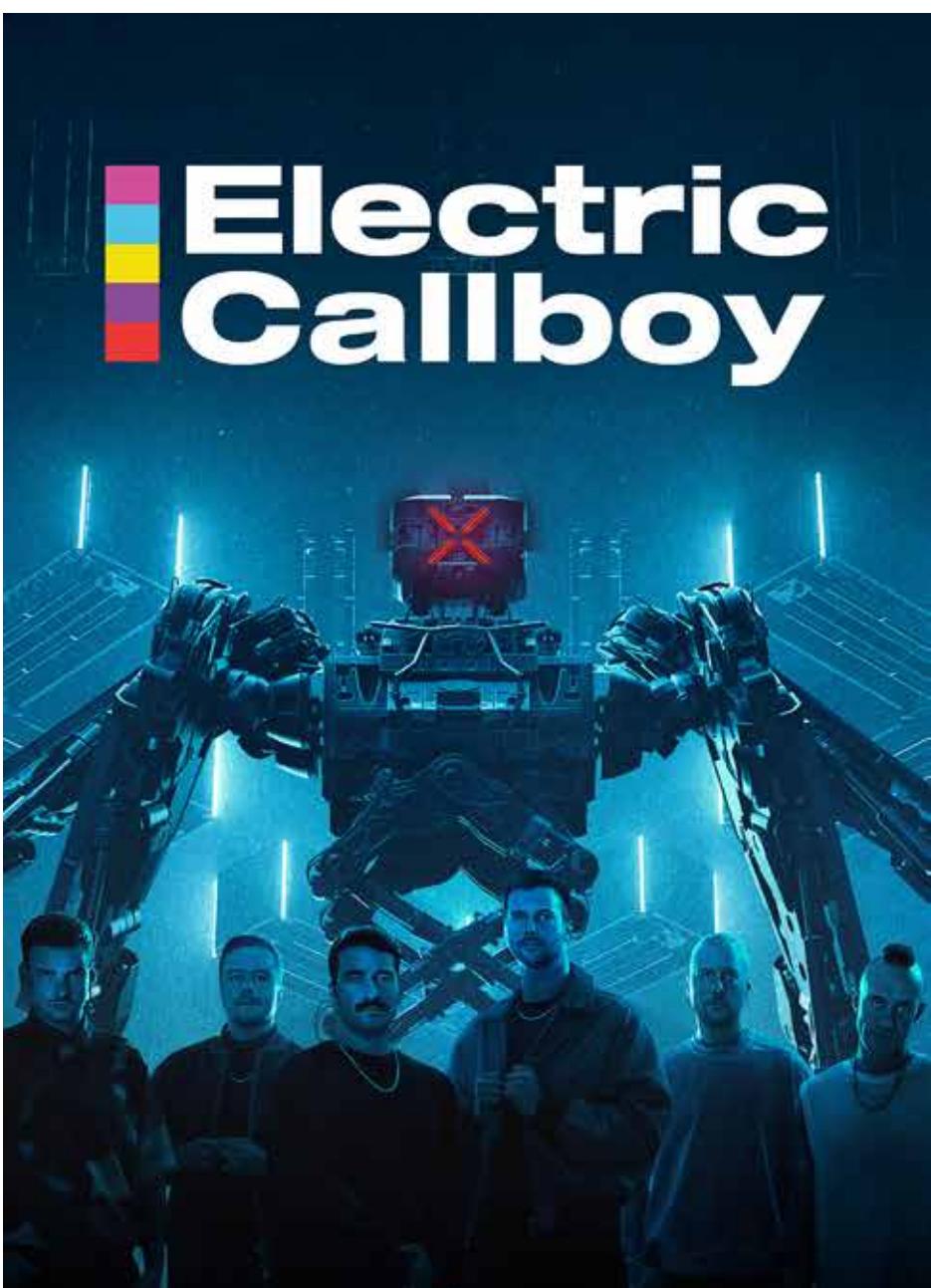
AU: Do you have anything you would like to promote?

EE: I am retired presently, enjoying life with my family. Retired early. Good investments and business. I'm 66 now and did my last stunt at 60. Got shot in a staircase and fell down steps. The camera guy said, "Wow." I said, "That's my last stunt. Give me Tylenol." Lol.

AU: Thank you for your time, Enrico. Any parting words?

EE: "COME OUT TO PLAY." Thanks, bro, for the honour.

Enrico "Ric" Esposito



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DAVID COPELAND

Electric Eliminators

By Jay Maher

Absolute Underground: I am speaking to David Copeland, who played the Electric Eliminators Leader and did some stunt work in the 1979 cult classic *The Warriors*. How are you doing these days, David?

David Copeland: Great! Thanks for asking.

AU: So David, 2026 marks the 47th anniversary since *The Warriors* was first released on Feb. 9, 1979. It's grown into one of the most popular cult films of all time and reaches legions of new fans decade after decade all over the world. Why do you think *The Warriors* keep resonating with old and new fans almost 50 years later?

DC: I think it's an Odyssey-themed film. Its storyline has a group of travelers braving obstacles during their journey back to their home. The primary reason for the success of *The Warriors*, in my opinion, was first, it was a great book and film script. Director Walter Hill and stunt

entrance. I remember producer Lawrence Gordon was always on set. Again... great teamwork all around from everyone.

AU: At the time of filming *The Warriors* in 1978, did you feel you were part of something special? Are you surprised you are still being asked questions about your involvement in a movie filmed almost half a century ago?

DC: I did feel it was special. City gangs coming together. Taking power. I've been asked about it many times over the years, and I'm not surprised people have not lost interest.

AU: Can you please give us a bit of information on your background growing up? Didn't you grow up in New York?

DC: Yes, I'm a New Yorker born and bred. I was born in Manhattan. My family lived in the Bronx, then moved to Rockville Centre on Long Island. I grew up with a lot of kids in the neighbourhood. It was a great time. We actually had a gang called the Speedy Spirits. We tied on capes and rode our bicycles around at dusk. We were harmless but had a great time. There were so many kids in the neighbourhood! We played kickball in the street,

coordinator Craig Baxley worked very well together. They kept the pace of the film moving. They created a journey: The Warriors had to travel through various gang territories to get back home to Coney Island. David Patrick Kelly and James Remar were terrific in the film, also Michael Beck and Deborah Van Valkenburgh were outstanding. Deborah is a wonderful actress; she was incredibly sexy. When she cackled like a chicken... it was great, what a film

climbed trees, and even built a clubhouse in the bushes. The password was "I scream, you scream, we all scream for ice cream." Can you dig it! LOL!

AU: What led you to audition for Walter Hill's *The Warriors* film? Were you always wanting to be an actor back then?

DC: Yes, I was very involved with my high school drama guild. I'd be running back and forth from wrestling or gymnastics to play rehearsals. I graduated from Boston University College of Fine Arts with a degree in Acting and Directing. I moved back to NYC right after graduation. I read in the NY local trade casting notice about casting for background actors for *The Warriors*. Sylvia Fay was casting. There were so many people there. I had on a T-shirt which said "To heck with dialogue, let's wreck something." I had gotten it from a screening of a film called *Stunts*, produced by Bob Shaye at New Line Cinema; it starred Robert Forster. I was in great shape, having been athletic all my life, so I guess I stood out a little. I had a mustache at the time and was asked if I would shave it. I said I would and got hired. I knew nothing about the role itself; I was just another gang member. I never auditioned; I showed up at an open call conducted by Sylvia Fay Casting. I was doing a lot of boxing at Gleason's Gym as well as martial arts. Years later I had the pleasure of meeting Bob Shaye and told him about the way I got my break into stunt work. He's a brilliant and very nice man, and we are still

in contact to this day.

AU: What do you remember about the scene where we first see the Electric Eliminators? The one in the opening montage where you jump up and touch the ceiling, that is you, correct?

DC: Yes, that was me. It was spontaneous.

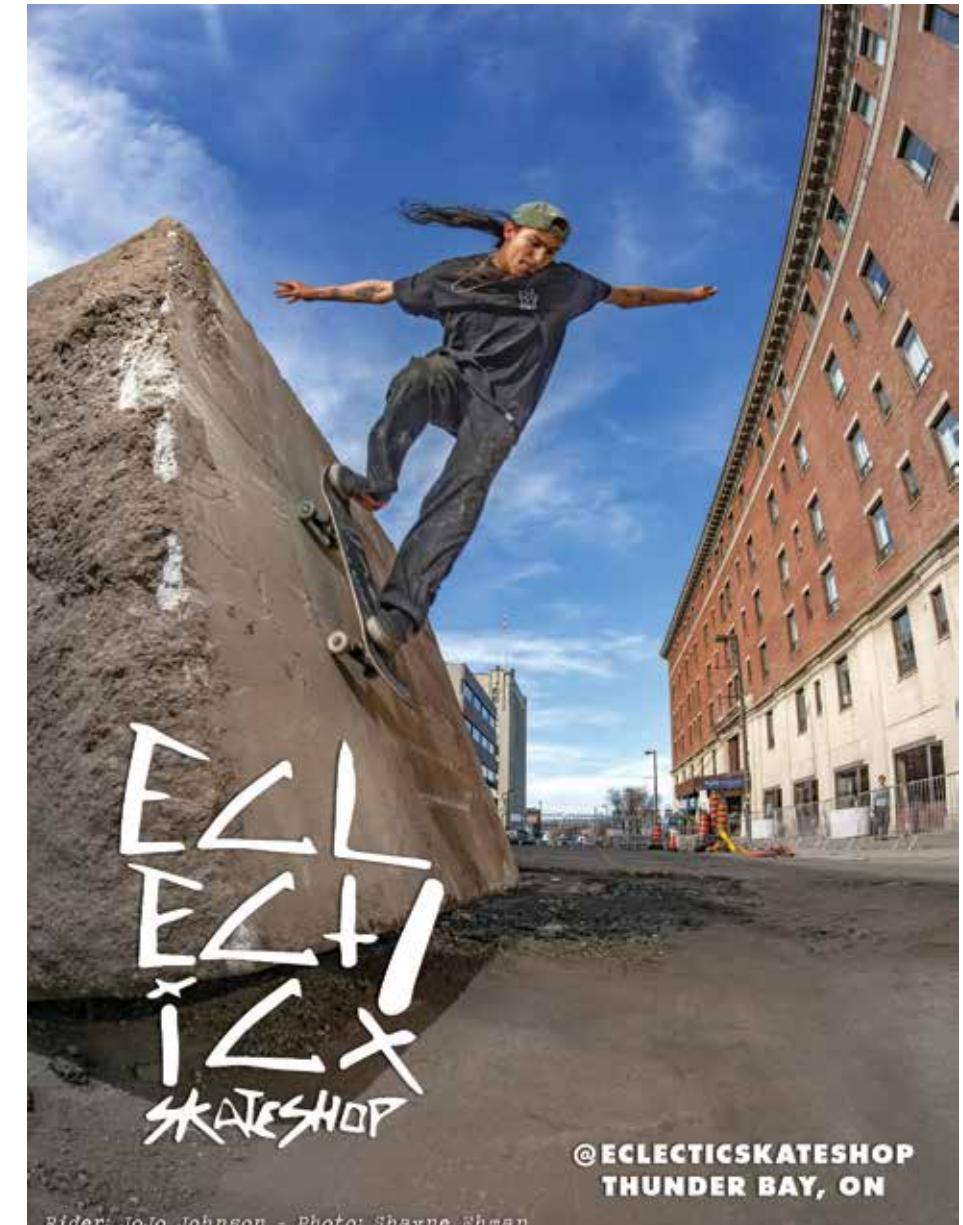
AU: What do you remember about filming the iconic Conclave scene at Riverside Park? Was it a difficult scene to film and was it shot over many nights?

DC: Yes, it was great! So many guys, so much energy! We shot it over a series of nights, and that's where my stunt career started. They had outstanding assistant directors (ADs) and production assistants (PAs). They organized about a thousand actors at the conclave into groups. It was like an army of people running around when the police moved in. *The Warriors*' success is because of the dedicated people working behind the scenes—from casting, wardrobe, lighting, etc.—and a great soundtrack! Everybody enjoyed their work. It was so exciting and filled with great energy! Roger Hill had us all spellbound with his

conclave speech. Everyone roared when he said, "CAN YOU DIG IT."

AU: One thing I would love to know: there were supposed to be nine delegates from each gang, who were chosen to attend the big meeting, but there weren't supposed to be any weapons allowed. Yet your character managed to stroll on through and be front and centre in front of Cyrus with a pair of nunchucks clearly on your shoulder. What was up with that, lol?

DC: LOL, I made those chucks. I bought the



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swivels in a martial arts store in Chinatown, then went to a hardware store and bought hickory hammer handles. Shaved down the ends, and that was that. I practiced a lot; I was very into and inspired by Bruce Lee. When I went to the set, I just brought them with me. No one stopped me. As a matter of fact, Craig Baxley, the film's stunt coordinator, saw me demonstrating and practising during a break. He asked if he could use them. I said sure... what about me?

AU: Besides your EE role as a gang leader, you also did a stunt or two in the film, correct? What else did you do in *The Warriors*?

DC: Craig Baxley was a great guy. He gave me a spot climbing up and jumping down from a scaffold when the police arrived. I did that easily. Then he gave me a fight scene with a cop; that too was easy for me. But I did come home with welts on my side from getting hit many times with a billy club. I recuperated in a hot saltwater bath, as I had done so many times after boxing at Gleason's Gym or practising martial arts at various dojos. Then he gave me a



stair fall. These were cement steps which led into Riverside Park from 96th St. I was to run up the stairs, get clobbered over the head by a cop in full riot gear, then fall back down the steps and run away. I asked Craig which step he wanted me to stop on; with a bit of disbelief he pointed to a step at the bottom and said, "This one." I took him seriously and stopped on that step, then ran away. I later got a call to stunt double Fox in a fight on a subway platform and get thrown in front of a train.

AU: Most fans, including myself, wish *The Warriors* got a chance to fight more gangs in the film, including the Electric Eliminators. Was there ever talk from Walter Hill about showcasing more of your gang in the film?

DC: I would have loved that too, but I never heard any discussion about it.

AU: What is your overall favourite scene from *The Warriors*?

DC: I liked the conclave the best. There was so much energy there and a lot of real gangs. It was terrific. I also liked the part where I'm thrown in front of the train.

AU: By any chance, do you still own your Electric Eliminators jacket? If not, do you know what happened to it?

DC: The jackets went back to wardrobe.

AU: Did you keep in contact with any other Electric Eliminators or other cast members throughout the years?

DC: I worked with David Patrick Kelly twice—once in a musical with Jerome Ragni and Jim Rado, the guys who wrote *Hair*. David has an incredible voice, and I trained him in the use of nunchucks when he was doing *Dreamscape*. I became good friends with Steve James; he and I would see each other on the street and do Kung Fu

fights. So much fun; he also came to my wedding. I've kept in touch with Eddie Earl Hatch also. We worked together on *As The World Turns*. Once in a while I run into Johnny Barnes, a very nice guy. We worked on an off-Broadway play by Mario Fratti called *The Only Good Indian*. We've also played a bit of pool together. We worked on *Raging Bull*. He played Sugar Ray Robinson, and I stunt doubled Joe Pesci boxing with Robert DeNiro.

AU: What was it like working with director Walter Hill? Do you still keep in contact with

him today?

DC: I loved working with Walter Hill. It was a terrific experience. I've never worked with him since and would love to work with him again.

AU: When was the last time you watched *The Warriors*?

Have you seen Imprint's remastered Blu-Ray from 2022? It's my personal favourite version of the film of all the formats released. The new transfer has, without a doubt, the best picture and audio restoration, with a ton of great bonus features. You should check it out if you haven't already.

DC: No, I haven't seen the remastered version. It's been a while since I've seen *The Warriors*, but I've seen it many times. Warriors... Come out and play! I've heard David Patrick came up with the clicking bottles; Walter Hill was so smart to use and keep that.

AU: Did you do much acting or stunt work after *The Warriors*? If so, what other TV or film work did you do?

DC: I've worked on a lot of movies: *Ghostbusters*, *Fort Apache: The Bronx*, *A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy*, and many others. I've also stunt coordinated many TV shows, including *Guiding Light*, *The Edge of Night*, *Search For Tomorrow*, *Loving*, and many others. I've done at least a hundred commercials and directed and performed in dozens of plays. I have a website, www.davidcopeland.co, which lists more.

AU: What did you do after your film work was over, and what are you currently up to today?

DC: I've taught martial arts, fitness, trained horses,

trained riders, and shod horses. Today I continue to act and direct, mostly theatre projects, but *The Warriors* opened the door for me as a stunt performer and stunt coordinator. At one time, I stunt coordinated five of the nine daytime soaps in New York City, and many films and TV shows, including *Raging Bull*, *Ghostbusters*, *So Fine*, *Sopranos*, and *Equalizer*. I still work out and train daily, and train others in martial arts, fitness/health, and horseback riding. I've trained and saddle-started many great horses. I believe some of my best and happiest times in life were spent out on the trail with my horses and dogs.

AU: In case you were unaware, David, there are Warriors reunions

at fan conventions that take place every year, mostly in the NJ/NYC area. There has never been an original Electric Eliminator who has made an appearance. Would this be something you would be interested in doing, meeting fans and signing autographs? Many fans, including myself, would love to see other cast members show up at a Warriors reunion.

DC: Yes, I enjoyed working on *The Warriors* and would be happy to meet fans of the film.

AU: Anything you would like to promote that you are currently working on?

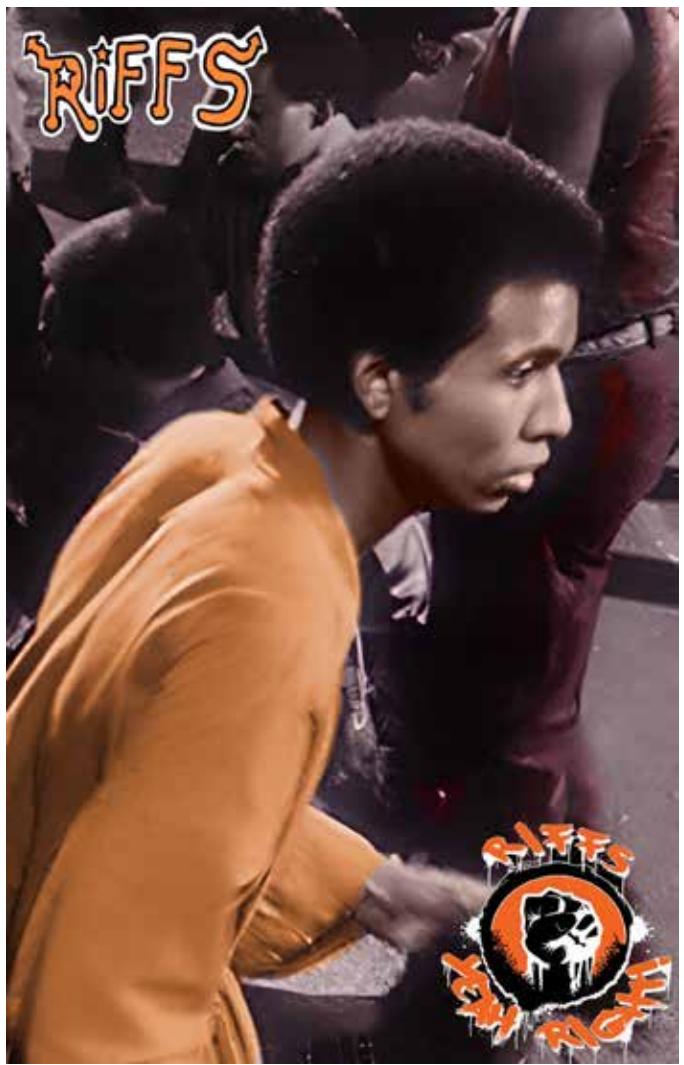
DC: I would like to promote kindness to people and all animals.

AU: Any parting words for the fans of *The Warriors* worldwide?

DC: Peace in the world. Can you dig it!

AU: Thank you for your time, David. We really appreciate it. Take care!

DC: You're welcome!



AU: I'm speaking to Eddie Prather who was a member of the Gramercy Riffs in *The Warriors*. Can you please give us a brief history of your background, did you grow up in New York?

EP: Basically I did because I went to New York when I was like 19 years old. And I was there for at least 44 years, by way of Florida. I resided mostly in the Bronx.

AU: What led to you auditioning for a role in *The Warriors*?

EP: Well, I always wanted to act and I believe at that particular instance, I was doing bits and extras on soap operas anyway. So when the opportunity came around, I jumped for it.

AU: What soaps were you in?

EP: *The Doctors*, *One Life to Live*, *All My Children*, I had done all of them. I was also just beginning to do bit pieces of stand-up comedy.

AU: Did you have any prior acting experience?

EP: Coming from a very small town in Florida. By the time I got to NY at 19,

the other 19 year olds had had acting lessons and everything, I hadn't.

AU: How did you first get involved in acting?

EP: I always did church plays. They would always come and ask my mom if it would be okay to put

me in this play or that play, even when I was a little kid. So from that point on, I guess with them calling me all the time, it just stayed in me.

AU: Do you remember anything about your audition for *The Warriors*?

EP: Very little, because I basically just walked into the audition, I read and that's what they wanted.

AU: Were you up for a certain role or did you just get cast as a Riff member?

EP: I just got cast as a Riff member.

AU: I believe you were in the famous, iconic conclave scene at the beginning, what do you remember about filming that?

EP: I definitely remember when Roger Hill, he was playing Cyrus the main leader in the beginning, when he got shot and then all the rambling that was going on after. Those very beginning scenes, I was in all of those.

AU: It looked pretty chaotic. It looked like there were hundreds, maybe even a thousand people there.

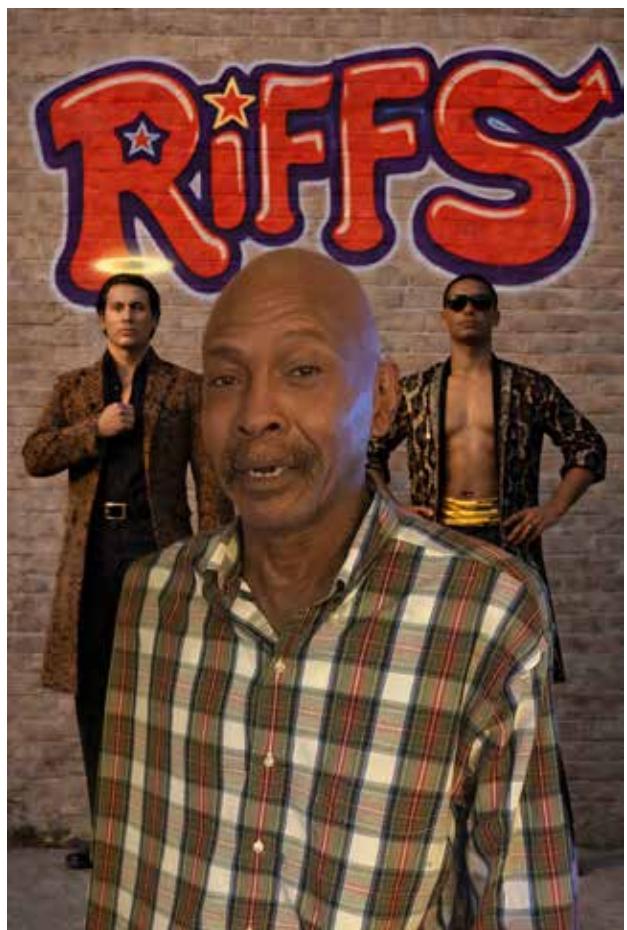
EP: I think it was thousands, man. There was so many people there. I give them credit for just keeping everything in order.

AU: Was it filmed over multiple nights or was it just one night?

EP: It was multiple nights. I think I might have been out there maybe for two weeks to just do that scene.

AU: Have you ever gone back there to reminisce?

EP: I have never gone back there. That's also an entrance to the West Side Highway so I've passed



it a million times. But I've never actually stopped and gone over there to check things out again.

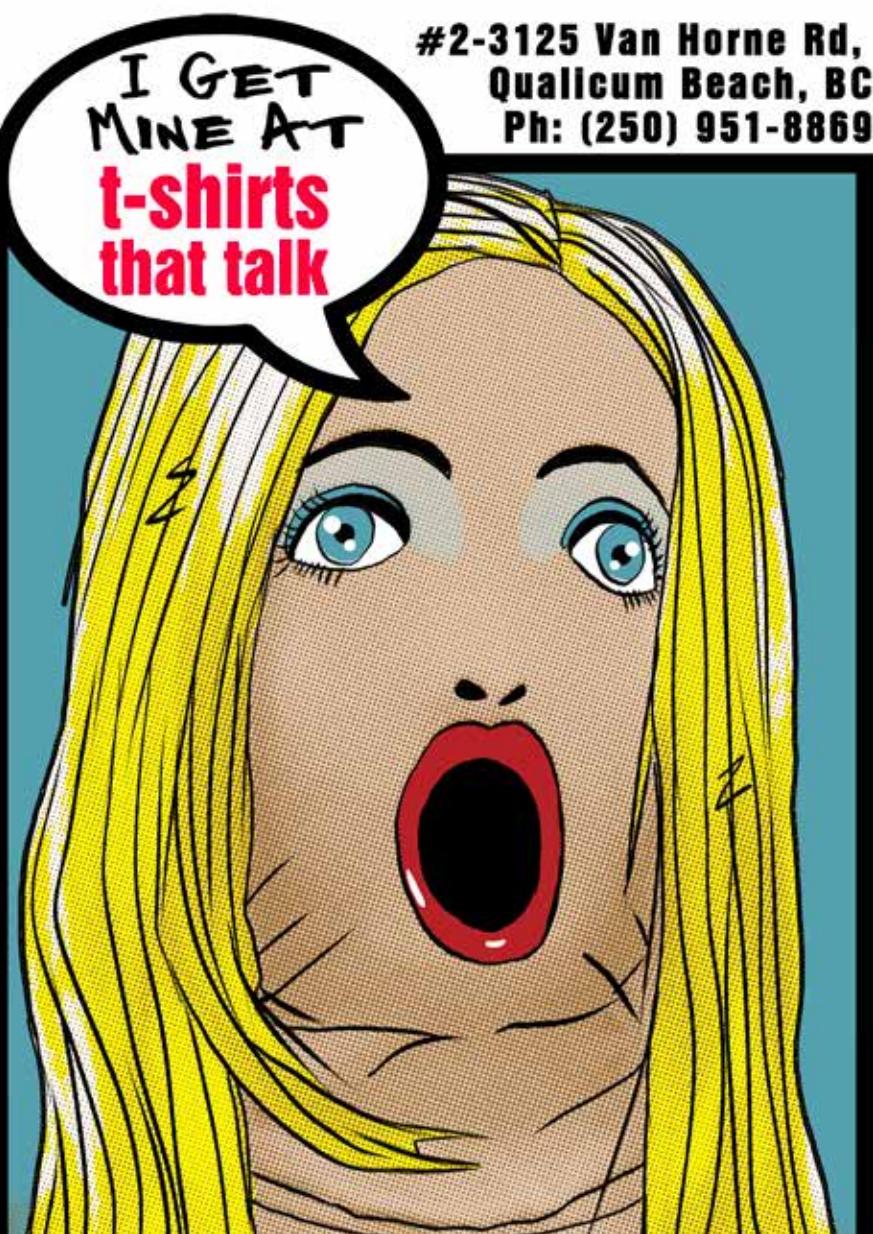
AU: Besides the conclave scene were you also featured at the Riff headquarters in the garage?

EP: Yes. You call that a garage and that's what it was. But I always called it a huge barn because that's what it looked like to me, a barn. That was an interesting scene also. In that particular scene, if my memory is correct, it was mostly Screen Actors Guild members. But that conclave scene, there were real gang members out there.

GRAMERCY RIFFS

Interview with Eddie Prather

By Jay Maher



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AU: I've interviewed quite a few people and they've talked about that, especially Larry Gordon the producer. There were a lot of real gang members who gave the production a lot of hassle for filming in their territories.

EP: I know they did.

AU: Unfortunately, that garage got demolished last year. I visited there in 2017 and got in. We were only allowed 15 minutes, but it was a real trip. It looked pretty much the same. They still had that wooden elevator where Masai comes down and the no smoking sign was still there.

EP: That was Ed Sewer in that particular scene. I didn't get to know Roger Hill that well. I know we did bump heads on a few other auditions. But Ed Sewer and me had mutual friends, I even went to Ed Sewer's funeral.

AU: His presence was really strong in the film. He passed away pretty young if I remember correctly.

EP: He was very young. He was a very nice guy and a very talented guy, I must say that.

AU: I don't know if you know but originally they had a real gangbanger that was supposed to be Cyrus and he didn't show up the night of filming. So they ended up getting Roger Hill out of the blue. He just knocked it out of the park, his speech was so iconic.

EP: That even got me, his speech did.

AU: I believe you also had a scene in the Riff's headquarters that got deleted.

EP: Right, yeah.

AU: I believe you can see that scene though in the TV version.

EP: Right, I originally had a copy of that, believe it or not, on VHS. I had a flood in my apartment and I ended up losing everything but that was one of the main things that I really wanted. I really liked that one, it still bothers me that I lost that.

AU: That deleted scene with the Riff's Masai that was cut from the theatrical release. It did make it onto the TV edit version. But unfortunately, that TV version still hasn't been officially released on DVD or Blu-ray. What are your thoughts on that?

EP: Well, my thoughts on that is that I believe it has to be released at some point on some version.

AU: Unfortunately though, Walter Hill himself says he does not have that footage. The only other people that would have it would be Paramount Pictures. And unfortunately I think they too lost the footage.

EP: My son somewhere has a copy of it.

AU: Yeah your son showed me a screen capture of you talking to Masai, with the shades, Edward Sewer. As soon as he showed me it, I remembered that scene. I haven't seen the TV version in many, many years. That's the first version I ever saw which had that deleted



scene. When the movie came out I was only 9 years old, so I was a little too young. But when it showed on TV in early '83 I was 12 and that's when I first saw *The Warriors*.

EP: I would love to see a TV version because it's not much, but I get a few residual checks a year for that.

AU: Were you also in the end scene on the beach? Which was shot at Fort Tilden Beach in Breezy Point, Queens not far from Coney Island.

EP: I was definitely there. In fact I felt like I was at Coney Island.

AU: What do you remember about that scene?



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EP: Well, I just remember confronting them and then taking them out. Just wiping the beach with them because we finally caught up with them. We opened up for *The Warriors* so they could leave and then we surrounded the other guys. I forgot their name.

AU: The Rogues.

EP: Yes, we surrounded them and just did them in.

AU: 2026 marks the 47th anniversary since *The Warriors* came out on February 9, '79. It's grown into one of the most popular cult films of all time. Why do you think *The Warriors* keeps resonating with old and new fans almost

50 years later?

EP: I think it was just one of those things. Certain things will be a cult and certain things won't. People just gravitate to certain things and certain things they just don't. It just so happened to be the state of mind of people at that particular time.

AU: At the time of filming *The Warriors* in 1978,

did you know you were part of something special?

EP: At that particular time, I really didn't even think about it. It was just a job. My son was very young at that time and I was putting food on the table. So I really didn't think about that. My thing was after this job, what's the next job I'm going to do? I think I started doing more plays and more stand-up comedy right after that.

AU: What are your overall favourite scenes from *The Warriors* and why?

EP: Of course my favourite scene is the one that they left out, the one with me in it! I also think the beginning scene was wonderful. The way that Walter Hill dealt with it. I think Walter at that time

or even now is probably one of the best directors out there.

AU: Do you still own your original Riffs costume?

EP: Yes I had it. I do not own it now because that was part of what got destroyed during the flood. I did a part in the movie *The Wiz*, and I even had my costume from then, and that was much earlier than '78.

AU: What was it like working with director Walter Hill?

EP: I thought he was very professional. That's what I remember, how professional he was.

AU: When was the last time you saw *The Warriors* yourself?

EP: I guess it's been about at least five years.

AU: Must be a trip for you every time you see it, a little nostalgia.

EP: It is. I look and I laugh and I still enjoy it just like I did the very first time.

AU: What are you up to these days?

EP: Basically I've been doing stand-up comedy in Florida for 10 years in one particular club.

AU: There are *Warriors* reunions at fan conventions that take place every year. Most of them being in the NJ/NYC area. The only Riffs who have ever made appearances are Guy Stevens, who unfortunately passed last year and Fernando Castillo. Would this be something you would ever be interested in doing, helping rep the The Riffs, meeting fans and signing autographs?

EP: Sure, why not?

AU: Any parting words for the fans of *The Warriors* worldwide?

EP: Hey, keep on looking up! Keep watching the night!

AU: Thank you for your time, Eddie. We really appreciate it.

EP: Hey, the pleasure's mine.



ORPHANS

ANDY ENGEL

The Orphans

By Jay Maher

Absolute Underground: I am speaking to Andy Engel, who was a member of The Orphans in the 1979 cult classic *The Warriors*. How could this be a big interview if Andy wasn't there, lol? Hope you liked The Orphans reference, lol, how are you doing Andy?

Andy Engel: Thanks for including me in your tribute issue. When I did the movie I was a teenager in high school. I presently run a comedy school, Manhattan Comedy School: manhattancomedyschool.com

Students in the NYC Tri-State area perform their graduation show at Gotham Comedy Club. We also have classes on Zoom.

AU: Can you please give us a bit of information on your background growing up? Did you grow up in New York?

AE: I am a hardcore New Yorker thru and thru. I worked as the longest-serving volunteer on the New York City Marathon from 1970 to 2006 (I started when I was 11). I raised \$150,000 for the NYC Village Halloween Parade by bringing a crew of comics from 1986 to 2006 to solicit donations from the crowds before the parade would start. I

worked as a licensed NYC tour guide from 1988 to 1998. I did impersonations of celebrities on Dick Clark's United Stations for a few years. My most famous one was Marv Albert.

AU: This year marks the 47th Anniversary since *The Warriors* came out on Feb. 9th, 1979 and the movie just gets bigger and bigger every year. It's grown into one of the most popular cult films of all time worldwide, reaching legions of new fans decade after decade. Why do you think it keeps resonating with old and new fans almost 50 years later?

AE: Because it has a "comic fun" vibe to it. It doesn't show the really tough things real gangs deal with. It's an escape from reality; if it showed all the real issues from gang life, it would be a very different movie.

AU: At the time of filming *The Warriors* in '78, did you know you were part of something special? Are you surprised you are still being asked questions about your involvement in a movie filmed almost a half century ago?

AE: I did NOT know I was part of something special. I worked on *Taxi Driver*, *Saturday Night Fever*, *Superman*, *Manhattan*, *Fame*, and many other movies. No one knows how the whole movie is going to turn out—nobody. But yes, I am very surprised.

AU: What led you to audition for Walter Hill's *The Warriors*? Were you always wanting to be an actor back then?

AE: I did not audition. I went to an open call and was put in the Orphan gang.

AU: Were you up for any other role than an Orphan, and what do you remember about the audition process for the film? Did you get the part right away?

AE: I was not up for any other role. I got the part right away.

AU: What do you remember about the scene where the Warriors first meet The Orphans on your territory? Was that all shot in one night?

AE: It was not filmed in one night as I recall, but I do remember it well.

AU: You were the Orphan standing next to

Apache Ramos, correct? What was it like working with Apache and Paul Greco?

AE: Yes, I was next to Apache. I met him again a few years ago at an autograph signing event—very nice guy.

AU: Most fans, including myself, wish the Orphans got a chance to fight the Warriors in the film. Who would have won had that happened, and why, lol?

AE: I think the Warriors would have won. Our gang was clearly not big on size or muscles.

AU: What is your overall favourite scene from *The Warriors* and why?

AE: Cyrus making his speech and yelling out, "Can you dig it, can you dig it?" He had a powerful voice and presence that resonated with me. And I was there for that scene.

AU: By any chance, do you still own your original Orphans shirt?

AE: No, I do not. It was a prop; the movie company kept it.

AU: Did you keep in contact with any other Orphans or cast members throughout the years?

AE: No. I was connected to Apache by a super fan who connected us. He also told me about the autograph signing event in Coney Island.

AU: What was it like working with Director Walter Hill?

AE: I actually didn't have any contact with him.

AU: When was the last time you saw *The Warriors*? Have you seen Imprint's remastered Blu-Ray? It's my personal favourite version of the film, with fantastic picture and audio restoration, plus great bonus features.

AE: I honestly don't remember. I have not seen

the Blu-Ray.

AU: Did you do much acting in TV or film after *The Warriors*?

AE: I stood in for Fisher Stevens on *Flamingo Kid*. Mostly just the impersonations I wrote about. I also did the voices for Al Frankness' book *Why Not Me?*

AU: What did you do after your acting career ended?

AE: I started the Manhattan Comedy School. I also began producing New Talent shows at Carolines on Broadway in 1993, then Comix and presently at Gotham Comedy Club, where I have been for the past 15 years.

AU: Tell us more about Gotham Comedy Club.

AE: I am the New Talent director at Gotham Comedy Club. Many comics started on my shows as New Talent, including Jim Gaffigan, Ed Helms, Greg Giraldo, Kevin Hart, Jessica Kirson, and Lisa Lampanelli. Numerous comic icons have dropped in and did guest spots on my shows: Dave Chappelle, Chris Rock, Jon Stewart, Lewis Black, Roy Wood Jr., Ronny Chieng, Jerry Seinfeld, George Wallace, and many others.

AU: There are Warriors reunions at fan conventions every year, most in the NJ/NYC area. The only Orphan who regularly appears is Apache Ramos. Would repping The Orphans with Apache, meeting fans, and signing autographs be something you'd be interested in doing?

AE: Possibly...

AU: Any parting words for the fans of *The Warriors* worldwide?

AE: Warriors come out and play! Can you dig it, can you dig it?

AU: Thank you for your time, Andy. We really appreciate it. Take care!

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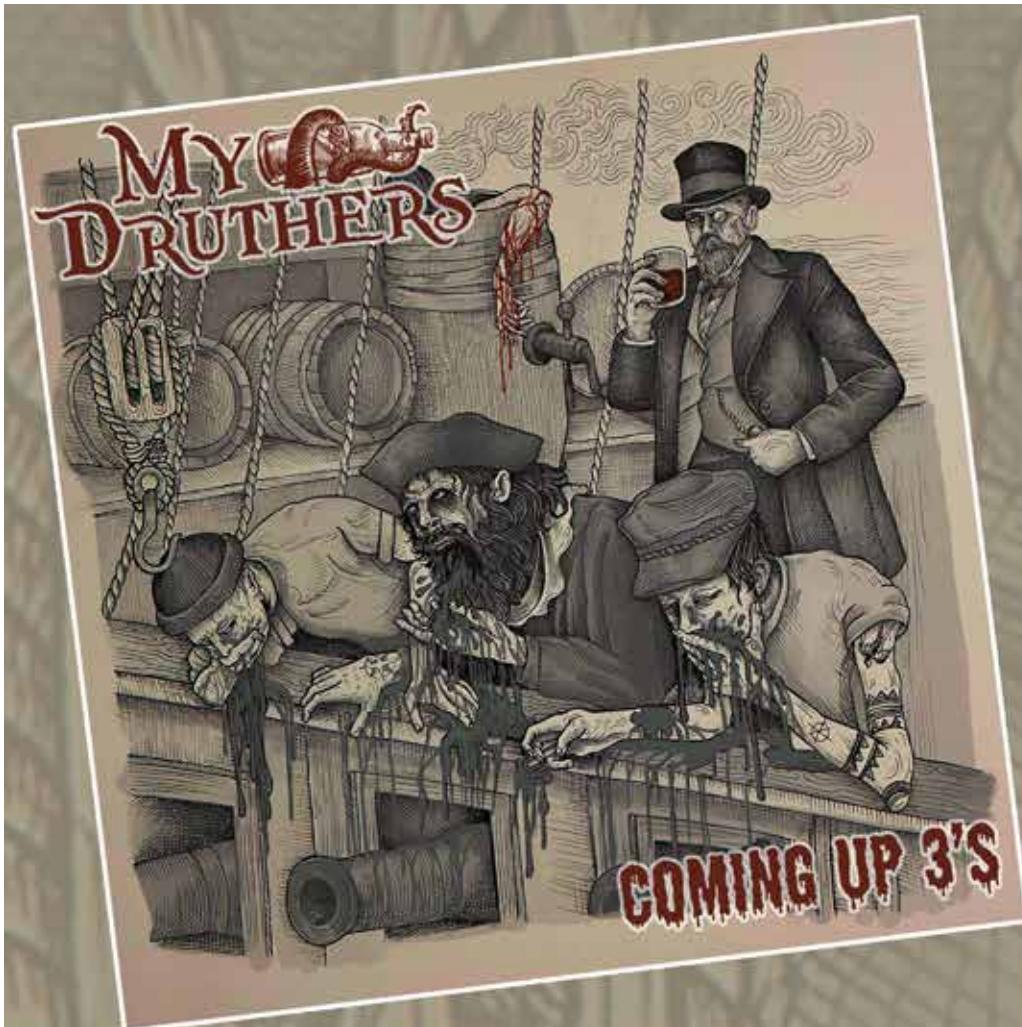


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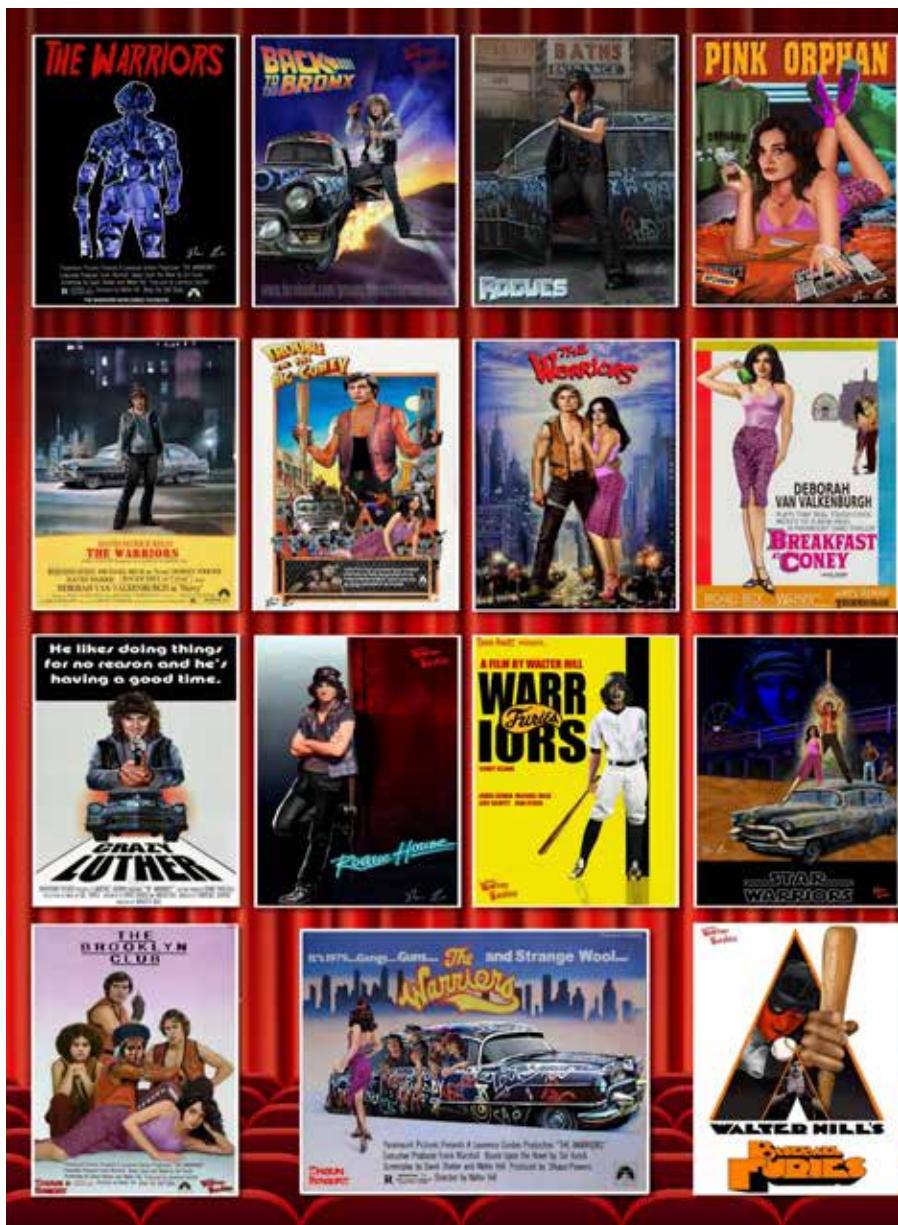
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LISA MAURER

The Lizzies

Interview by Jay Maher

Absolute Underground: I am speaking with Lisa Maurer, who famously played one of The Lizzies in the cult classic *The Warriors*.

Thank you for your time, Lisa. *The Warriors* is celebrating its 47th Anniversary this year, since its release in Feb. 1979. The film has grown into one of the biggest cult films of all time. Any thoughts on why it keeps on resonating with fans worldwide?

Lisa Maurer: It's a universal theme, getting home against all odds. Rarely, in my personal opinion, has an origin story been mined and translated into modern times as well as Walter Hill did in reinventing the *Anabasis* journey.

AU: 46 years ago, did you ever think this movie would become as big as it's become and you would still be talking about it today?

LM: Absolutely not. It was visually stunning and captivating, but while you are working as an actor, you're doing your part and then it's out of your hands. I don't think anyone could have guessed the longevity. Its cult status is remarkable.

One of the most iconic characters in the film, seen through fresh eyes, is New York City. There are generations of *Warriors* fans born in New York and the boroughs who relate deeply to the movie and the visuals of the city.

Years after the movie was made, I was in Brooklyn having dinner with friends. After dinner, it was late, and we decided to take a taxi. It was 2015, and Brooklyn was gentrified by then. Sitting

in the backseat, my friend said, "I think that's where a scene in *The Warriors* was shot." I looked, and then I noticed that the taxi driver adjusted his mirror and said, "Wow, my friends won't believe this. You were a Lizzie?" I said, "Yes," and he pointed to a building and said, "That's where my gang was based. It's abandoned now, but this was our turf. We were the real deal." I thought, what's the likelihood of us being in that exact spot and hearing about his gang? He said, "I can't

believe you're in my car," and I said, "I can't believe you recognized me." We both had a laugh, and he asked me for my autograph. Talk about a movie spanning decades.

AU: Do you ever find yourself watching *The Warriors* for nostalgia, to see your younger self? Do you remember the last time you saw the film?

LM: I haven't seen the film in years, but I have seen photos and they are definitely a wonderful walk down memory lane.

AU: Let's start at the beginning. Can you give the readers a brief history of how you got involved in acting? What led you to audition for the role as a member of the all-female gang The Lizzies?

LM: I got involved in acting in my last year of high school. That was my first acting class. I was in a very progressive school and I started a work-study program. It placed students within the fields they were interested in. Finally, after a month of putting this together for other students and watching them flourish, I got a job interning at the historic Walnut Street Theater. I then interned at The Manning Street Theater. Following that, I did the summer program at the Neighborhood Playhouse and I was hooked.

My audition came about by doing the rounds and being at the right place at the right time. Back then, some of us who did not have agents did "rounds"—we would stop by a casting director's office and drop off our 8 x 10's with a note. We also would send postcards inviting casting directors to any plays that we were in. Once in a while, if a casting director was not familiar with your work and you were not in a play at that time,

you would do a monologue in their office. That is how I met Jeremy Ritter and Howard Feuer, the casting directors for *The Warriors*. I did a monologue in between their two desks.

Around that time, I was doing a play, *The House of Ramon Iglesia* by Jose Rivera (The Motorcycle Diaries). Giancarlo Esposito was playing my boyfriend. I sent Feuer & Ritter a postcard and invited them to the play but I'm not sure if they ever came. Not long after when I was on my way to an audition, I was walking down Broadway and walking toward me were Feuer and Ritter. I stopped to say hello. Then Jeremy looked at Howard, then back at me, and Jeremy said to Howard, "What do you think?" Howard said, "Let's do it." Jeremy said, "We have an audition for you tomorrow." The next day, I went to the Paramount building and auditioned for *The Warriors*.

AU: What do you remember about the audition itself? Did you get the part right away?

LM: I remember being nervous and called an actor friend of mine from the pay phone on the street on the west side of the building. He told me to breathe and go give them a gift. It was great advice. I went upstairs to audition. I remember Walter gave me a note, and I did it again. What that note was, I have no idea, but it got the job done.

AU: To me, it definitely came across as your character being The Lizzies leader, as you seemed to be the Lizzie most prominently featured and who had the most lines, though some think it was Kate Klugman. Can you clarify who was supposed to represent The Lizzies leader? It was you, correct?

LM: That was my understanding, and one might think so since I welcomed them to our clubhouse. I recently came across the original press kit in my garage, and the Lizzies credits start with me followed by Kate. We were all listed as just Lizzies, so I guess that's, as they say, "in the eye of the beholder."

AU: Do you remember why the original Bobbie Mannix sketches of costumes for The Lizzies were changed? They were a lot more revealing, if I am not mistaken. Was that a group decision from the girls?

LM: In my recollection, that is not a decision that was up to the actors. But a change did take place. When I first saw the tie-dye sheer shirt, I asked Bobbie Mannix what goes under that, and she said, "Nothing." That was a huge surprise. That's

when I learned that the contract I signed had a nudity clause. I didn't have an agent at that time, and I guess I was so thrilled to have the job that I just missed that section in the contract. An agent clearly would have pointed that out.

After Bobbie told me about that clause, I recall that I saw a jean jacket on a nearby table, and I thought it looked cool. I asked Bobbie if I could try on the jacket. It was also a bit of self-preservation and shyness as I was about to head down the hall to the room with the powers that be. She said, "Sure, but you will also have to take it off." And off I went. Walter was there, and I'm not sure who else was in the room, most likely Larry Gordin, Frank Marshall and Mark Canton. To put a lighter spin on the moment, I barely (ha) remember it.



AU: What do you remember about the location of The Lizzies clubhouse in East Harlem? Have you ever gone back since filming was finished in 1978?

LM: I remember the restaurant well. Our clubhouse was built in the back. The set was great, and with plaster peeling on the walls, it created the perfect ambiance. When we broke for a meal, we ate in the front room of the restaurant. I haven't been there since we shot the movie.

AU: What do you remember about filming the iconic scene at the clubhouse with the Warriors?

LM: Almost everything. When it's your first movie, you tend to remember the nuance of what was happening on the set. That can happen on any set, but it is especially true when it's your first. An interesting fact regarding the shoot is we were in a neighbourhood that had a local gang. It was their territory. When we went outside to the trailers, we were escorted by a crew member and sometimes a teamster. Also, the local gang would not let anyone wear anything considered gang "colours." You couldn't wear any clothing that distinguished you as a gang member in their territory.

AU: Was the fight and shootout scene against the Warriors challenging for you?

LM: Not challenging, but there was one shot that was particularly intense when I had to shoot the gun in close range to the camera. I had to aim it perfectly and hit the mark, which was a small piece of white tape on camera left. One of my favourite still photos is the one when Walter is showing me the position he wanted for that shot, Andy Laszlo is showing us the camera angle, and Craig Baxley is viewing the shot from the camera side. After that moment, the crew all put on goggles and "action." I took the shot, hit the mark perfectly. The camera was so close that the powder blew back in my face, and you can see me react to that in the film.

AU: Who was your favourite Warrior to work with? Did you bond with any more so than the rest?

LM: Is that a trick question? That's like asking who your favourite kid is. The guys were all great and easy to work with. I had a fondness for Marcelino and his kind spirit. He was the one I stayed in touch with most often after the shoot.

AU: Besides the Lizzies scene, is there another particular scene you love in *The Warriors*?

LM: I don't think I can pick one. Some stand out more than others. I was there on one of the nights the opening conclave scene was shot with all the gangs in the park. There was a crane shot and an amazing feat of coordination. There are so many stunning visuals that stand out—from the wet streets to the vivid colours, to the sight of Konrad skating down the incline in the subway station. The list goes on...

AU: Were there more Lizzies scenes filmed that didn't make the cut? If so, do you remember what they entailed?

LM: I don't think the scene with all of the Lizzies sitting on the sofa made the cut, but there's a great still photo of that scene with all of us on the sofa. I believe that scene was the only one that was shot with and without our jackets.

AU: What was it like filming with director Walter Hill?

LM: Walter was great to work with. He set a great tone for how the set was run: easy and safe, which created a terrific atmosphere for us to do our best work. It was also extremely efficient. He knew

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what he wanted. He had hired mostly theatre actors, and like me, this was their first film. Walter was the best director one could ask for in their first film, and I would imagine the same would hold true no matter how many films you had done. I also found him to be down-to-earth and extremely kind to cast and crew alike.

AU: Do you still own your original Lizzies shirt, jacket, or belt buckle—anything from the movie?

LM: The belt, bracelet, ring and necklace were mine. My snake necklace can only be seen in one still photo when I am sitting in the subway car. I did not wear it when we started shooting. Unfortunately, I don't have any of the items. I think the belt was a great touch. That's one item I wish I still had.

AU: Tell us about the other film and TV projects you were in after *The Warriors*.

I know you acted in movies, including *Jaws 3*. How long before you decided to leave the film business?

LM: I never left the business but I've worked in various capacities. I continued acting but also moved onto producing and writing. I remained an active member of Ensemble Studio Theater, which was my first creative home in New York City. I later co-founded the Circle West Theatre Company, which was the West Coast iteration of New York's Circle Repertory. We developed and produced new American plays. Since my early days as an actor and writer, my career has revolved around storytelling in all my endeavors.

AU: At April's Chiller Expo in 2025, six Lizzies were reunited for the first time since 1978. Warriors history was made. How was that experience catching up with all your fellow Lizzies after 47 years? Did you have fun with

them and meeting all your fans as well?

LM: It was terrific seeing and spending time with the other Lizzies after all these years. I was particularly fond of the group photo shoot with all of the Lizzies. It brought out everyone's fun spirit and laughter. I was so impressed with the fans. They are amazing and devoted, which is deeply appreciated.

AU: Had you stayed in contact with anyone from the cast through all the years?

LM: I had not been in touch with most, which made the event that much more special. Prior to

the event, most recently, I had been catching up with Deborah.

AU: Hopefully you will now make more appearances in the near future, as there are a lot of fans, like myself, who couldn't make it and would love to meet you all.

LM: Although I didn't think I would do more appearances, the producers of Chiller made it a pleasure, so I'm game to do another and look

forward to meeting you.

AU: Any projects you are currently working on or anything you would like to promote?

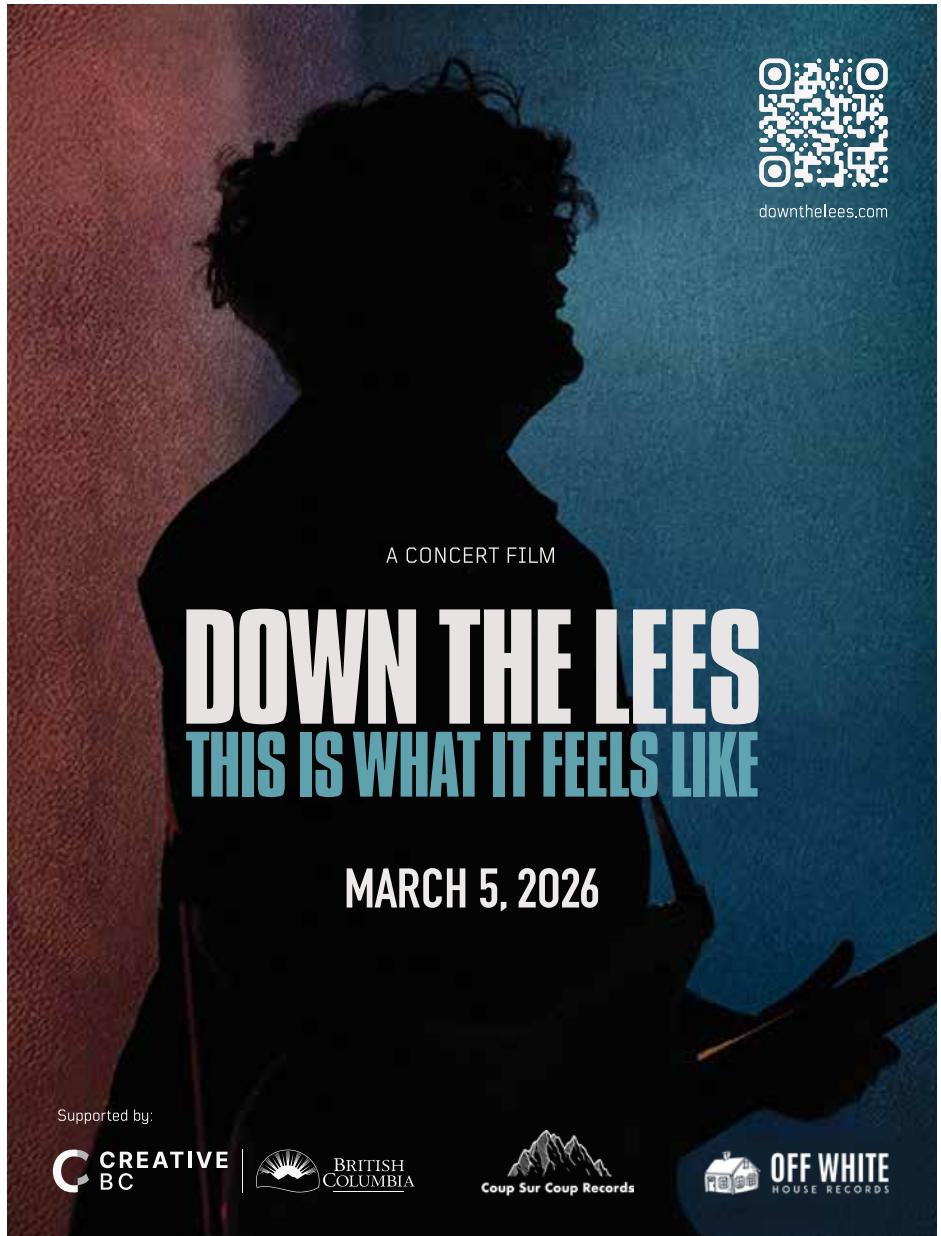
LM: Yes, there are multiple projects. Nothing to promote right now. I have a play in a Los Angeles theatre festival coming up, and there are other projects in development, including a musical (not *The Warriors*) being developed for Broadway.

AU: Any parting words for the fans of *The Warriors* worldwide?

LM: A big, huge thank you to all the amazing fans!!!

AU: Thank you for your time, Lisa. I really appreciate it, and I hope to meet you in person at the next big Lizzies and Warriors reunion. Cheers!

LM: Bravo to you, Jay, for giving us all a forum to walk down memory lane.



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KATE KLUGMAN

The Lizzies

By Jay Maher

Absolute Underground: This year marks *The Warriors*' 47th anniversary since its release on Feb. 9, 1979, and it has grown into one of the most popular cult films of all time. Any thoughts on why you think it keeps resonating with fans worldwide, decade after decade?

Kate Klugman: I think the movie is timeless because it includes timeless, mythic storytelling about heroes on a journey trying to make their way home. This is really a universal theme. Isn't everyone trying to find their home? But *The Warriors* has a dark element of myth and mood, not like Dorothy trying to find her way home in *The Wizard of Oz*. It's almost like a group of anti-heroes. It's interesting to note that none of the characters really show any facial expression. Their affect is flat. The tone of voice is also very flat and lacking expression, which only adds to the mood. I think that exemplifies the depression people feel who are underprivileged and feel like outcasts in society, especially during the time period in the film.

AU: Forty-seven years ago, did you ever think

this movie would become as big as it did and you would still be talking about it today?

KK: I had no idea. I don't think anyone did. It's quite surprising that it has this timelessness to it.

AU: Can you give the readers a brief history of your background and what ultimately led you to audition for a role in *The Warriors*?

KK: I was a singer in New York City. I sang backgrounds for numerous bands and also had a talent agent who sent me to read for *The Warriors*. I actually read for the part of Mercy, played by Deborah Van Valkenburgh, but obviously it was an honour and a distinction to be a Lizzie.

AU: What do you remember about the audition itself? Were you offered a part right away?

KK: Soon after the reading, I was offered to play my character in *The Lizzies*.

AU: A few of the girls were handling and shooting guns in the movie. Were any of *The Lizzies* put through gun training before filming started?

KK: Yes, anyone who did a stunt or carried a gun was coached and trained by the stunt crew.

AU: What do you remember about filming *The Lizzies* scene at the clubhouse with the Warriors?

KK: All *The Lizzies* became fast and furious friends. We acted as a band of friends from the very beginning. In fact, I recently attended the Chiller Theatre Expo in April 2025, where six of us were connected again for the first time in many years. I loved seeing all *The Lizzies* again. It felt like a reunion and was really fun. We reminisced and caught up. It was very interesting to hear about each other's lives. The mood on the set all those years ago was very serious. Everyone was very concentrated and very much in character and keyed into Walter Hill's cueing and direction.

AU: Was the fight and shootout scene against the Warriors challenging to film?

KK: In certain ways, of course, it was challenging. We wanted to bring Walter's vision to life. We wanted to establish the mood he was trying to convey.

AU: Who was your favorite Warrior to work with in the film?

KK: Terry Michos — his character was Vermin. In fact, he was at Chiller Theatre, and it was so much fun to see him.

AU: Besides *The Lizzies* scene, is there another particular scene you love in *The Warriors*?

KK: I love the shots of the DJ and the record drops. Her dialogue is so spot-on and so hip. In fact, the music in the score is one of my favourite parts of the movie. Everybody loves the scene where Cyrus climbs the trestle, but I also love the scene where The Furies appear from nowhere, which accentuates the dark elements behind the psyche of these individuals.

AU: What was it like filming with director Walter Hill?

KK: Have you had any contact with him over the years?

KK: It was a privilege to do a film with Walter Hill. He was extremely dedicated, a man of few words who knew exactly what he wanted. I might have seen him once a long time ago when I went out to L.A. after the film was released, but I have had no contact with him since.

AU: After the movie came out, did you ever get recognized on the street?

KK: No, but over the years I have received a lot of fan mail, a lot of requests to sign pictures, and have received personal letters. It's shocking how people have tracked me down.

AU: What opportunities came your way after being in *The Warriors*? Did you act in other projects or did you change careers entirely?

KK: I actually did change careers entirely.

AU: Did you stay in contact with any other Lizzies or cast members throughout the years?

KK: I have stayed in contact with Lisa Maurer to this day.

AU: You mentioned attending the Chiller Theatre Expo. Was it fun meeting the fans?

KK: It was fascinating to see all these fans come from all over the world. Everyone was so kind and enthusiastic. It was so much fun — I had a blast. It was truly a novel experience. I was especially moved when someone walked in the door dressed up from head to toe, looking exactly like the character I played in the movie. I never thought I would be in a situation like that. It was very special.

AU: Hopefully now more Lizzies reunions will happen in the future, as there are a lot of fans like myself, who couldn't make it to Chiller Expo but would absolutely love to meet you all.

KK: I hope to continue to participate in conventions and events like Chiller. It was such a joy to spend time with people who have been so inspired and connected to the film.

AU: Any projects you are currently working on or anything else you would like to promote?

KK: Not at this time, no. Just wishing everyone out there the best, and I am happy that people continue to enjoy *The Warriors* as time goes on. The fans are a heavy outfit.

AU: Any parting words for the fans of *The Warriors* worldwide?

KK: Thank you to all the fans who continue to fuel the energy of *The Warriors*. See you at the next convention. "Can you dig it?"



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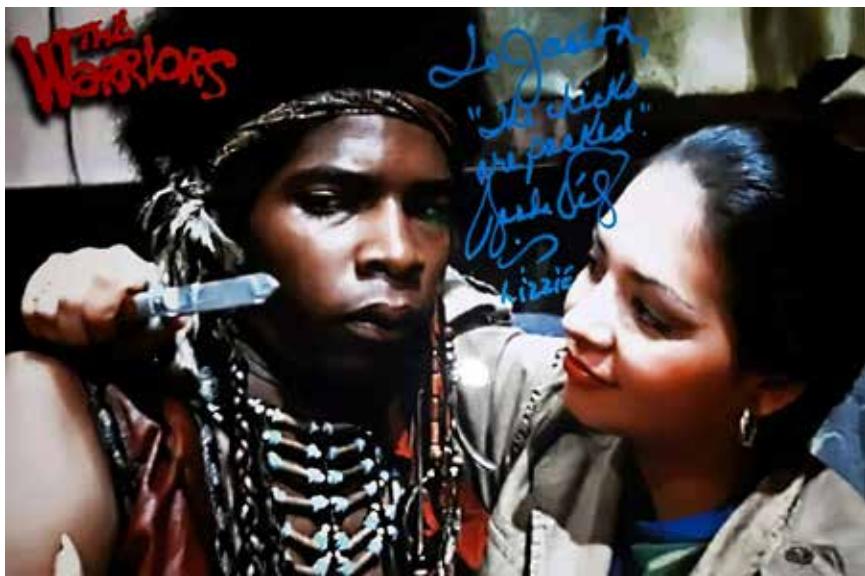
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WANDA VELEZ

The Lizzies

By Jay Maher

Absolute Underground: I am speaking with Wanda Velez, who famously played one of The Lizzies in the 1979 cult classic film *The Warriors*. Thank you for your time, Wanda — how are you doing these days?

Wanda Velez: Hello, Jay. All is going well. Enjoying the fact that *The Warriors* is still such a loved movie. **AU:** This year marks *The Warriors*' 47th anniversary since its release on Feb. 9, 1979. The movie has grown into one of the most popular cult films of all time and gets more popular with every passing decade. Any thoughts on why that is and why it keeps resonating with new fans?

WV: *The Warriors* is such a fun film. It is action-packed and realistic for the time it was released. I think it gave insight into what the reality of gangs was. The sense of fear, the uncertainty of what will happen as a result of actions taken, the sense of belonging to a group which accepted you as "family," despite all the issues to confront. It made for belonging, even through the danger of it all.

AU: Forty-seven years ago, did you ever think this movie would become as big as it did and that you would still be talking about it today?

WV: No, I thought the movie would be popular at the moment but didn't think it would grow to be the cult classic it is today. It's truly amazing. I couldn't be happier all around!

AU: Do you ever find yourself watching *The Warriors* for nostalgia's sake, to see your younger self? Do you remember the last time you sat down and watched *The Warriors*?

WV: We had an event in Manhattan with members of the cast where the movie was played — about seven or eight years ago. We had a blast!!!

AU: Can you give the readers a brief history of how you got involved in acting? And what led you to audition for the role as a member of the all-female gang, The Lizzies?

WV: I started working in commercials and did quite a few, which led to more exposure in the industry. I went for my interview and was hired.

AU: What do you remember about the audition itself — did you get the part right away?

WV: It's been so long since that whole process. Difficult to remember, but I did get the part quickly. A great feeling!! I was super happy.

AU: The first time we see The Lizzies on screen is when Cochise, Vermin, and Rembrandt

run into six of you at the subway station on a staircase. This scene was shot at Hoyt-Schermerhorn Streets station in Brooklyn. What do you remember about filming that scene?

WV: It was funny to see the Hoyt-Schermerhorn Streets station turned into the 14th Street station — a station I travelled through almost every day. I chuckled and thought how this is what movie-

making is all about, making something what and where it's not.

AU: Do you remember why the original Bobbie Mannix sketches of the costumes for The Lizzies were changed? They were a lot more revealing, if I am not mistaken. Was that a group decision from the girls to change the costumes?

WV: Well, the decision didn't come from us. We simply expressed our concern, but I guess it was the catalyst for the costume evaluation and adjustment.

AU: What do you remember about The Lizzies clubhouse location and filming the iconic scene with the

Warriors? Was it shot over multiple nights or done in just one evening?

WV: I remember being there at night. There were plenty of trailers around and props being brought in and out of the restaurant. The room itself was

not too big, but we had a great time in it! I remember where we had to get friendly with the Warriors, trying to make them feel at ease. Then, Cochise and I started kissing as I sat on his lap until Rembrandt realized what we were doing. All of a sudden, the fight erupted, and I was on the floor as the fighting began! I'm not sure how long it took to complete the scene.

AU: Was the fight and shootout scene against the Warriors challenging at all for you?

WV: The scene wasn't physically challenging. It was actually fun to see this scene evolve into the impactful moment many people remember from the movie.

AU: One of my favourite moments during The Lizzies/Warriors scene is when you flick out the switchblade. The look in the eyes of David Harris was absolutely priceless. Anything interesting about that filmed sequence that



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you remember?

WV: I remember Cochise getting up from the chair in disbelief of what we were up to. When I saw the final product, we laughed at that look in his eyes. Priceless!

AU: Who was your favourite Warrior to work with in the film?

WV: There is no favourite. We all were fortunate enough to be amongst a great and friendly group. We had a great time!

AU: Besides The Lizzies scene, is there another particular scene you love in *The Warriors*?

WV: I remember that final moment when the Warriors reached Coney Island, walking on the sand, finally feeling safe. I think it portrayed so well, especially in Coney Island — a place so many of us are familiar with and grew up knowing and spending memorable times.

AU: What was it like filming with director Walter Hill? Are you still in contact with him today?

WV: I don't keep in contact with Walter Hill, but I remember how good a director he was. It was great to work with someone who made it easy and fun to do what you were there to do. A great person, liked and respected by all.

AU: Do you still own your original Lizzies shirt, jacket, or belt buckle — anything

WV: No, I don't have any pieces of the Lizzies shirt. Those are long gone, unfortunately.

AU: What other opportunities came your way

after being in *The Warriors*? Did you act in any TV, film, or other projects?

WV: I worked on the film *Aaron Loves Angela* with Irene Cara, Kevin Hooks, and Leon Pinkney. I had a co-starring role as Carmen, Angela's best friend. I also worked in a CBS special, *Siege*, with Martin Balsam, Sylvia Sidney, and Dorian Harewood.

AU: When did you quit acting, and what did you do after you left the film business?

WV: I probably slowed down in acting in the early 1980s. It was a decision I made as a result of not that much work at the moment.

AU: At last year's April Chiller Theatre Expo in Parsippany, N.J., six Lizzies reunited for the first time since 1978. You've made plenty of appearances over the years repping *The Lizzies*, but this reunion was Warriors history made. What was it like catching up with everyone, and did the moment feel surreal?

WV: Seeing all The Lizzies at the Chiller event was truly fabulous! They are all such wonderful ladies. We were able to chat and catch up with one another and learn of all the greatness each of us has experienced since. Whether still acting or not, they're all living wonderful lives. It was truly my pleasure seeing them and spending a few wonderful days together.

AU: Hopefully there will now be more Lizzies reunion appearances in the near future, as there are a lot of fans, like myself, who couldn't make it last year and would love to meet you all.

WV: We all hope to reunite at future events for more great moments.

AU: Any parting words for the fans of *The Warriors* worldwide?

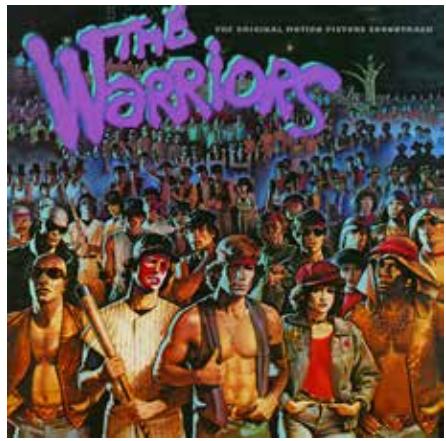
WV: Thank you all for your continued support. You, all around the world, have played a truly special role in making *The Warriors* the success it is. We are all ever so grateful. I hope to see you again soon!



from the movie?

WV: No, I don't have any pieces of the Lizzies shirt. Those are long gone, unfortunately.

AU: What other opportunities came your way



THE WARRIORS SOUNDTRACK COMPOSER

Interview with Barry De Vorzon

By Jay Maher

Absolute Underground: I'm speaking with the one and only Barry De Vorzon, soundtrack composer of *The Warriors*. *The Warriors* just wouldn't be the same without your brilliant soundtrack. How are you, Barry? It's an honour to speak with you.

Barry De Vorzon: I'm great. Thank you for your thoughts and for the fact that you think the score is exceptional.

AU: Can you please give us some information on your background and where you grew up?

BDV: I was born in New York. My dad was a nightclub entertainer. He was a big family man so we were like gypsies, we travelled all over the United States. I attended Pasadena City College. I went into the Navy, came out of the Navy and decided I wanted to follow my dream, which was music. There is where it all began in Los Angeles.

AU: Before you got into composing for film soundtracks you were a musician in the '60s yourself. For the readers who don't know, can

you tell us a little bit about those days?

BDV: Oh well, those were golden days. It was when LA was exploding as a music center. I started out as a songwriter and then I created a publishing company and I started producing and writing. Then I started a record company. I had a number of hits. "Rhythm of the Rain" with The Cascades, "I Will Love You" by Shelby Flint, I had all The Association hits "Along Comes Mary", "Cherish", "Never My Love" and "Windy". Then I sold all my companies to Warner Brothers. My publishing company became Warner-Tamerlane, which is a huge worldwide publisher. Then I went to Europe for three weeks and didn't come back for three years.

AU: Wow.

BDV: I was a young guy with nothing but money, living La Dolce Vita and I just didn't want to come back to reality. But I finally did and that's when I decided to pursue a career in scoring music for film. It was something I'd never done and if the truth were known I was really not qualified to do it but I've never let that stop me in the past. I was not very successful at first but finally a legendary producer-director Stanley Kramer decided to take a chance on me. I did a picture for him called *R.P.M.* which was about college revolution. He liked what I did so he hired me for his next picture, *Bless the Beasts and Children*. Even though the picture was not a huge hit, The Carpenters recorded the title song and it became a big hit. .

I'd never done television but a friend of mine, Aaron Spelling was a producer and he gave me a shot on a show called *S.W.A.T.* I was all excited. I went to the studio and saw the doors of the *S.W.A.T.* truck open with all these guys coming out with guns and I was just really disappointed. I had promised a hit. How the hell do you write a hit about a *S.W.A.T.* Team? So, I went to his office and he asked what do you think? I said, it's great. Because what could I say? and he says give me that hit you promised me. I went home and for a week I tried to write a hit about a *S.W.A.T.* team. I finally decided whatever I did would be much too corny. So I decided my next option was to write the most exciting theme I could come up with, hoping he'd forget that it wasn't a "hit." That's what

I did, and guess what? It went to number one in the nation.

I had a cue in *Bless the Beasts and Children* called "Cotton's Dream". It was just meant to go by once but somebody in a music library loved it and put it behind footage of Nadia Comănești winning the first perfect score in Olympic Gymnastics. The record company A&M quickly changed the name to Nadia's Theme and I had another iconic hit. It was never meant to be a theme it was just a cue. In addition to that, it's the theme for *The Young and the Restless*. You never know where these things could land. What's worked for me in life is that I only have one speed and that's my best. If you always put your best out there, you never know.

AU: Back in those days, what was your primary instrument that you used or were taught first?

BDV: Piano.

AU: Did you take lessons very early in life?

BDV: A few, but not that much. A lot of it was self-taught.

AU: You were not just a solo songwriter you were also in groups were you not?

BDV: Yeah, I wrote a song for The Cascades called "I Wonder What She's Doing Tonight".

AU: When did you decide to switch to becoming a full-time soundtrack composer, why did you make that choice? Was that an easy transition for you?

BDV: It was when I came back from my three-year European junket. No, it was not easy. In many ways, I really wasn't qualified. I had no motion picture or television experience. I wasn't a trained orchestrator, the odds were against me. But I'm a pretty determined guy and a quick study. So I learned fast the art of scoring music that contributed to what you were watching. That's an art. You just can't throw up anything.

AU: Let's switch gears and talk about *The Warriors*. Can you tell us how you first got involved in doing the soundtrack?

BDV: My friend Larry Gordon was the producer and Walter Hill was the director. I had done a movie called *Hard Times* and Walter had directed

it and Larry produced it. They liked what I did. So when *The Warriors* came up, they asked me if I would do the music. I had a contemporary background and a lot of the scores at that time were big band or orchestral. They needed something a little grittier for *The Warriors* and so they signed me to do it. I said at last someone did a movie where we can use a little rock and roll. Once again, it was a simple formula. I just sat at the piano until I could come up with something in my mind that was exciting and driving and did it for me. I recorded it and that was the main title over the montage of all the gangs going to the stadium. Between the visuals that Walter put together and the driving nature of the music, it just worked.

AU: Your unique blend of mixing rock and roll with synthesizers was pretty groundbreaking at the time. It's what really made the movie for a lot of fans like myself. It was dark, gritty and those synthesizers were really eerie.

BDV: Well, I chose to mix them because the picture was kind of surreal in a way. The synths gave it another dimension, an edge. I'll be honest with you, I never expected a piece of music to attract so much attention. To this day, there are people who just love that music. It's a very pleasant surprise. I never dreamt that it would have the life it's had.

AU: Besides the synthesizers and the rock guitars, what other instruments did you use?

BDV: I think you said it all. I used rhythm and synthesizer.

AU: Were there live drummers?

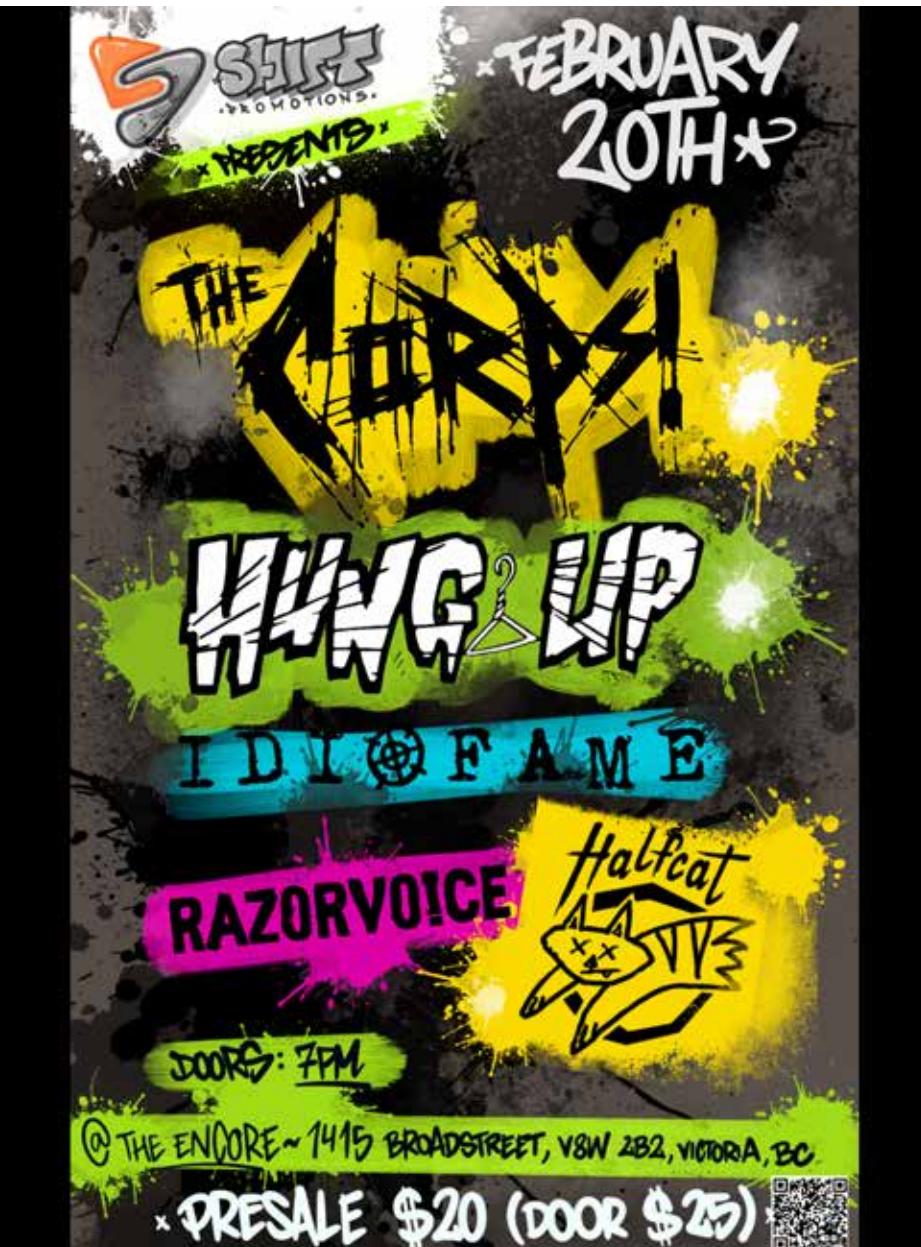
BDV: Everything was live, including the synths. I played the synths, so everything was "live" in that sense.

AU: Did you play everything yourself?

BDV: No, just the synths. Then I had the best guys come into the studio for the rest.

AU: Did Walter Hill give you an idea of what he was looking for, or did he just give you the visuals and let you go with it?

BDV: To Walter's credit, that's exactly what he did. I assume he had confidence in me because he



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just left me alone to do what I thought should be done. He didn't interfere in any way.

AU: That's cool. Do you remember how long it took you to compose the score?

BDV: It was probably around 2 months.

AU: Did you have visuals to watch while you worked?

BDV: Yes I had a videotape of the entire picture. In addition to the main title I wrote the end title with Joe Walsh. I also had to write all the musical cues in the body of the picture. While I was writing, they were doing the final edit.

AU: Most fans' favorite pieces are The Warriors Theme and the Baseball Furies Theme. They are similar in tone but slightly different. What do you remember about creating those?

BDV: Part of writing a good score is continuity. Even though the main title and the Baseball Furies chase were two different things, they really should relate. To put something completely different in there wouldn't have kept the continuity going. It could be an interesting cue but then it would be out of nowhere. This way I continued the feel in the scene. But I handled the synths differently for the Furies, it was a little weirder because of their face makeup. It was a weirder cue than the main title.

AU: We have to talk about "In the City" which you co-wrote with Joe Walsh of the Eagles. How did you get involved with Joe?

BDV: I live in a beautiful little town called Montecito, it's right on the sea about 85 miles out of LA. Joe was living here at the same time and we became friends. When I got this picture and was thinking about an end title, I thought it might be

cool to write it with Joe. I asked him if he would like to write it together and he said sure. He came over to my house with a guitar, I sat at the piano and that's how "In the City" was born. Then I went into the studio with Joe and recorded it.

AU: Did you guys write the lyrics together?

BDV: I would have to say I probably wrote most of the lyrics. We wrote the melody together but then Joe had to be out of town. We had the main idea down but there was more to write. So I wrote the rest.

AU: The song was also recorded by the Eagles for The Long Run. That must have been very gratifying.

BDV: I remember the Eagles had just come off their Hotel California album and Joe called me up and said "Barry, I think the Eagles are going to record our song, In the City." I said, "Joe, as a friend, I want you to do me a favor. Never mention this again until you can ring my

gate and play me the record." I did it out of self-defense. What happens is they record a bunch of songs and then pick the best ones and the rest don't make it. It would have killed me if I believed I was going to be on an Eagles record and it didn't happen. One day my front gate rang, in walked Joe, and he brought over the new album and I was on it.

AU: This year marks the 47th anniversary of The Warriors and it's grown into one of the biggest Cult Films of all time. That must make you feel extremely proud for your work on it.

BDV: Well, proud is an understatement. I didn't realize it had been that many years. Forty-seven years ago and people are still talking about it and playing it. I never dreamt that would happen.

AU: Why do you think The Warriors keeps

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career and I had a lot of luck. Believe me you need luck in this business.

AU: When did you retire from composing?

BDV: I've been retired for over 20 years for sure.

AU: Today you are the co-founder and CEO of the MasterWriter songwriting and Creative Writing Software. What is that software all about?

BDV: It's real simple, if you are a songwriter you should have MasterWriter. That is what I truly believe. It's an invaluable collection of tools for songwriters. It is reference, organization, rhymes, and word possibilities all at your fingertips. As a creator, inspiration doesn't happen 24/7. It kind of happens when it wants to happen. When you have that connection, the greatest enemy is distraction. If you get stuck on a word or rhyme and it takes too much time you can lose that connection. With MasterWriter, you just type a word and bang it gives you possibilities so you can get back to writing. It's also an amazing tool for any creative writer novelists, bloggers, or screenwriters.

AU: Of all your accomplishments and accolades, which one are you most proud of?

BDV: My family. Hands down. Success is great at the time but at this age and stage, family and dear friends are what hold their value.

AU: The Warriors have cast reunions at fan conventions. Would you ever consider attending one? The fans would love to meet you.

BDV: I'd love to but I don't think so. I love the fact that they do it. Tell the fans I'm really happy and gratified to know that is going on.

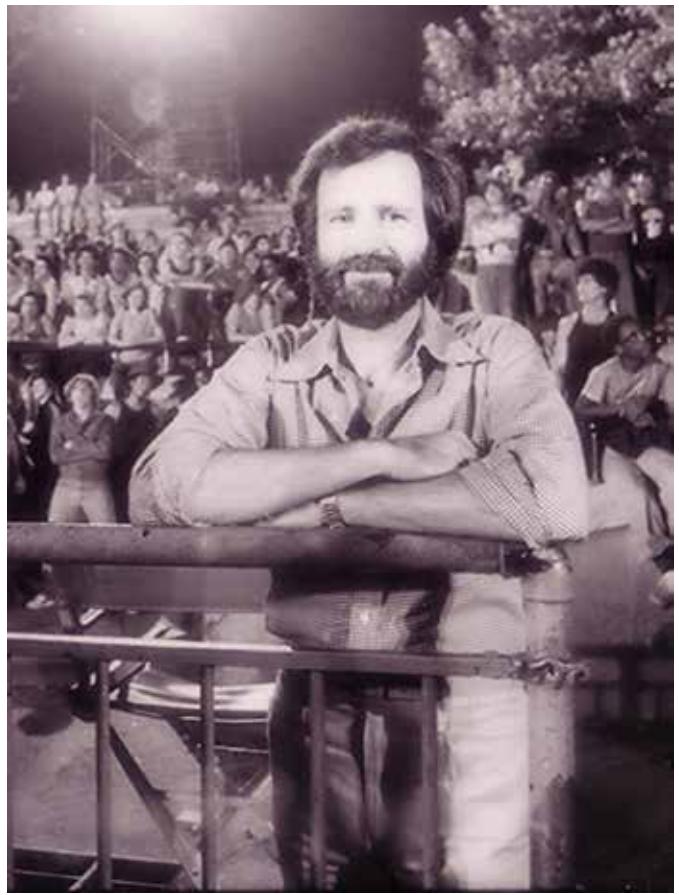
AU: Any final words?

BDV: Thank you for appreciating and keeping my music alive.

Barry De Vorzon

President of MasterWriter Inc.

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LARRY GORDON Producer, *The Warriors*

By Jay Maher

Absolute Underground: I'm speaking with Larry Gordon, the producer of *The Warriors* and so many other films. Thank you for joining us, Larry.

Larry Gordon: You're welcome.

it's because it's a very exciting movie. It's just captured every person that's seen it. Lin-Manuel Miranda is doing *The Warriors* for Broadway. It's one of the first movies he ever saw. LeBron James told me how much he loved *The Warriors*. All the major rappers have sampled the music from *The Warriors*. It's just a gift that keeps on giving.

AU: It was you who first found Sol Yurick's novel, *The Warriors*, and brought it to Walter Hill. Can you tell us how that happened?

LG: I found the book at a used bookstore. I

LG: I truly believe

AU: What's your background and where did you grow up?

LG: I grew up in a small town in Mississippi.

AU: For the readers who don't know, what all is involved with being a film and TV producer?

LG: Well, you're the first one in and the last one out. You find the material, you put the package together, you produce the movie and then you have to deal with the marketing and the distribution of the movie. So, when everybody else has gone home, you're still working.

AU: This year marks the 47th anniversary of *The Warriors* and this film just keeps getting more popular every year. It's grown into one of the biggest cult films of all time. What are your thoughts on why this film keeps resonating with old and new fans almost 50 years later?

bought it off the rack for about a dollar, and thought it was a good idea. Walter wasn't the first writer. The first writer was a gentleman named David Shaber. Then I brought Walter in to rewrite and to direct.

AU: Do you remember what it was about the book that first grabbed your attention?

LG: It was about *The Warriors*, the same thing as the movie.

AU: If I'm not mistaken, you were the one who optioned the book out of your own pocket for the rights for a possible film. Is that correct?

LG: That's correct.

AU: How difficult was it for you trying to get studios interested in making *The Warriors* in the first place?

LG: It's always very difficult, luckily we finally found a studio that was interested in developing the material. David Shaber wrote the first draft for Paramount and then Walter came in and rewrote and directed.

AU: Did it get turned down a number of times while you were trying to get it made?

LG: Yes it was.

AU: How did you finally get Paramount Pictures sold on making it?

LG: Well, I just sold it, that's what producers do. I sold the studio on the fact that it would work as a movie. I had a good track record so they believed in me. I brought Barry De Vorzon on, he and I were old friends. I introduced him to Walter and we hired him. The music is as big a star as the actual movie.

AU: I agree. I told Barry that as well and if you take away his soundtrack, it's not the same

movie. What was the audition process for finding the right actors for *The Warriors*?

LG: It was pretty intense. We went to New York and interviewed a bunch of unknowns and finally picked the right cast but we saw many people for each role.

AU: How did you go about finding so many of the great locations in the film?

LG: Well, that was just location scouting. Walter and the rest of us picked the right locations. But the script dictated what we needed and we found it in New York. That was a great thing about shooting in New York: we could find everything we needed.

AU: Was the iconic conclave scene a difficult sequence to film? How long did it take?

LG: Chaotic. I believe one night, if I'm not mistaken.

AU: How difficult was it to shoot at that specific time in New York City and how long did it take?

LG: It was very difficult. For one thing, we had very short nights. It got light earlier than we had anticipated, so there

was not enough darkness and we had a tough time. We also had some weather issues and some gang issues. We had all kinds of problems. I think the shooting schedule was around 40-something days.

AU: How challenging was it to film in some of the neighborhoods with real gang members disrupting the sets?

LG: Difficult. We had issues and various problems in New York. Some were gang-related and some



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were just New York problems.

AU: How did you work around those issues? Did you have to pay them off?

LG: Yes, a couple of times required payments. When you shoot at night in New York, it's always difficult. New York is a difficult place, period.

AU: In total, you worked on seven different films with Walter Hill. What was it about Walter that made your working relationship operate so well?

LG: We never had an argument, we never fought. I gave Walter his first directing job on a movie called *Hard Times* with Charles Bronson. We went from there, never had a problem and we're still close friends. I spoke to him yesterday as a matter of fact. We just had a great working relationship. I don't know another producer-director team that worked on more than seven movies, to tell you the truth. We both went off and made a lot of other movies on the side without each other, so it's a very successful partnership.

AU: Besides Walter, do you keep in touch with any of the other cast from *The Warriors*?

LG: Frank Marshall, the Executive Producer, and I are good friends and we hang out. As for the cast members, no—they're a lot younger than I am. Every now

and then, over the years, I've bumped into a few of them. But for the most part, I don't keep up with them, simply because I'm much older than that group.

AU: In the '80s, you became not only the president of 20th Century Fox but also Fox Entertainment? Did that last long? Was it a good experience?

LG: Absolutely. My whole 65-year career has been a good experience. I don't know how long it lasted, around two or three years.

AU: They've been talking about remaking *The Warriors* for at least two decades now, and it hasn't happened. What are your thoughts on that? Is that something you would like to see?

LG: No. I would not like to see that. I think we caught lightning in a jar and I don't think you'll do it twice.

AU: I agree. You can't recreate that time. From New York City at that time, the direction, the brilliant cinematography from Andrew Laszlo, Bobbie Mannix's

costumes...

LG: Andy Laszlo and Bobby did spectacular jobs and Walter was at his best. It was just an amazing thing. The movie was not really appreciated at first and we had some issues in the theaters and they pulled the movie. It should have been a gigantic hit, it just didn't play long enough. But I will say this—the first screening of *The Warriors* for a paying audience was the most exciting night I've ever seen in a theater. It was like a heavyweight championship fight. People went crazy. They were screaming before the movie even started and nobody even knew what the hell it was. When that Wonder Wheel started with Barry's music, people went berserk. We were shocked and pleasantly surprised.

It's an iconic movie that just keeps going. When people say to me today, "what movies have you done?" and I say "well, I did *Field of Dreams*, *Die Hard*, *The Warriors*...". "*The Warriors*?" They all go nuts.

I'll tell you one story for your magazine: I met LeBron James at somebody's house. A friend of his who is a good friend of mine introduced us and told him I produced movies. He asked if he knew any of my movies? I said I think you might know one, *The Warriors* and he put those big, gigantic hands above his head and said "Warriors, come

out to play!"

AU: You have produced many of my other favorite films, such as *48 Hrs*, *Predator*, the first two *Die Hard* movies, *Field of Dreams*, and *Boogie Nights*. Do you have a personal favorite?

LG: *Field of Dreams* is my personal favorite but I like them all. I don't take anything away from the others.

AU: Have you completely retired from the film business?

LG: I'm about 95% retired. I've got a couple of things I'm working on.

AU: With all your great accomplishments, what are you most proud of?

LG: That I survived 65 years in this ridiculous business.

AU: Any final words for the fans of *The Warriors* worldwide?

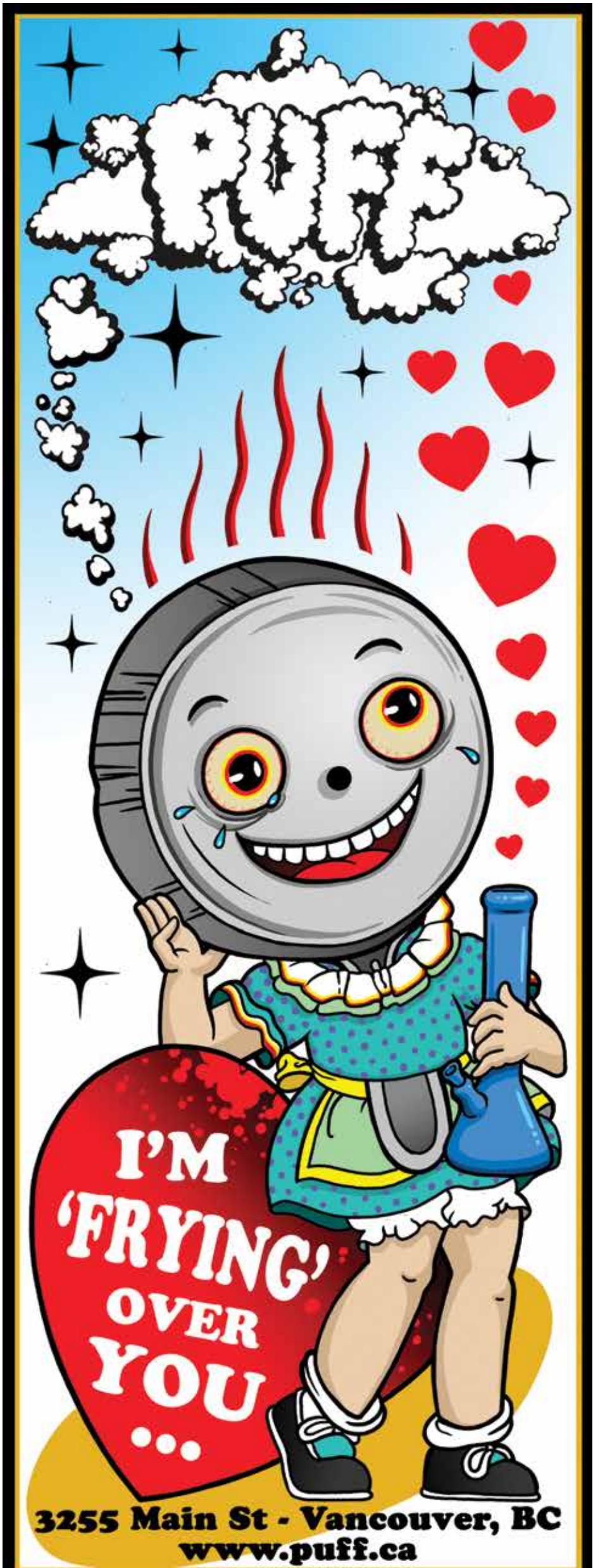
LG: Thank you. That's my story. I'll be waiting to read the magazine.

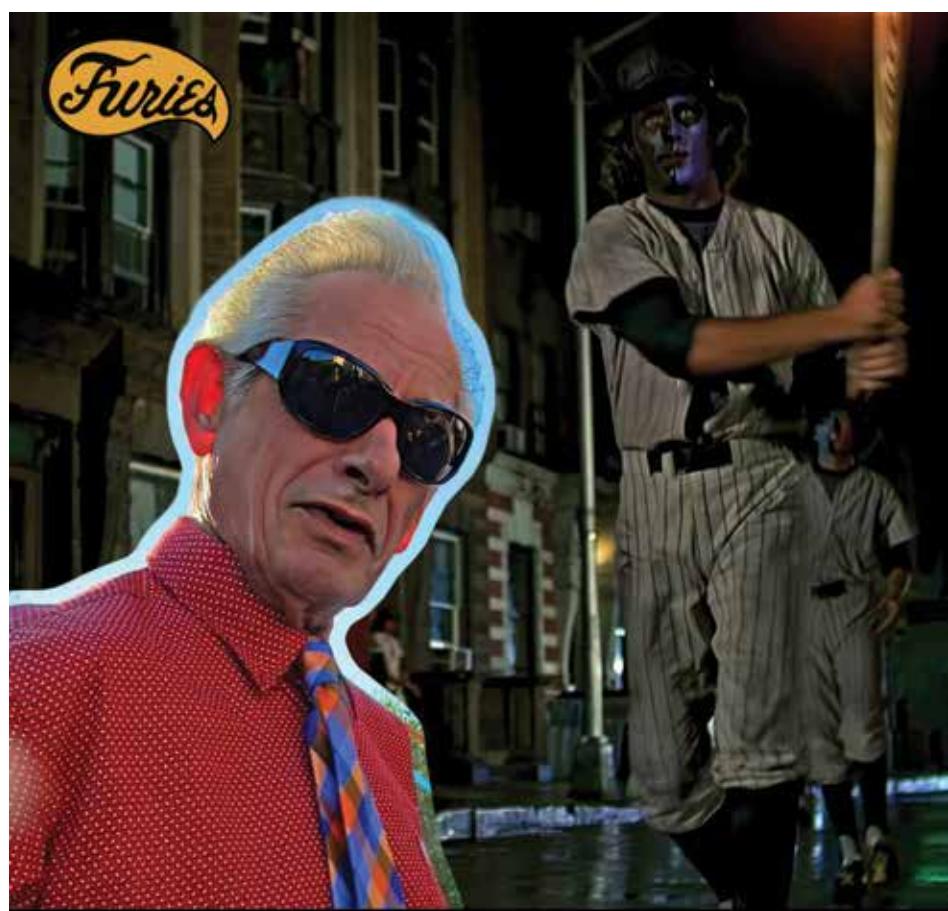


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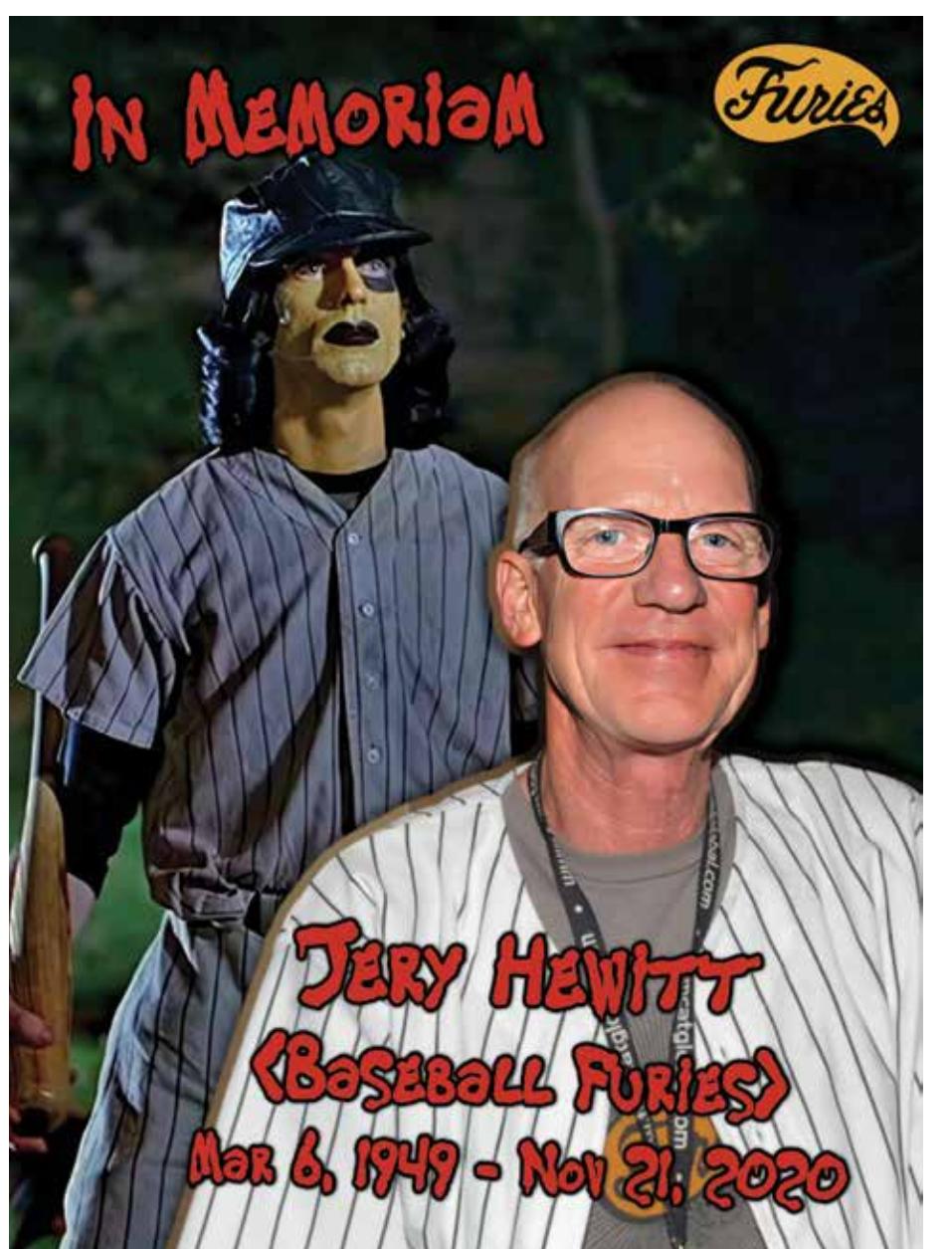
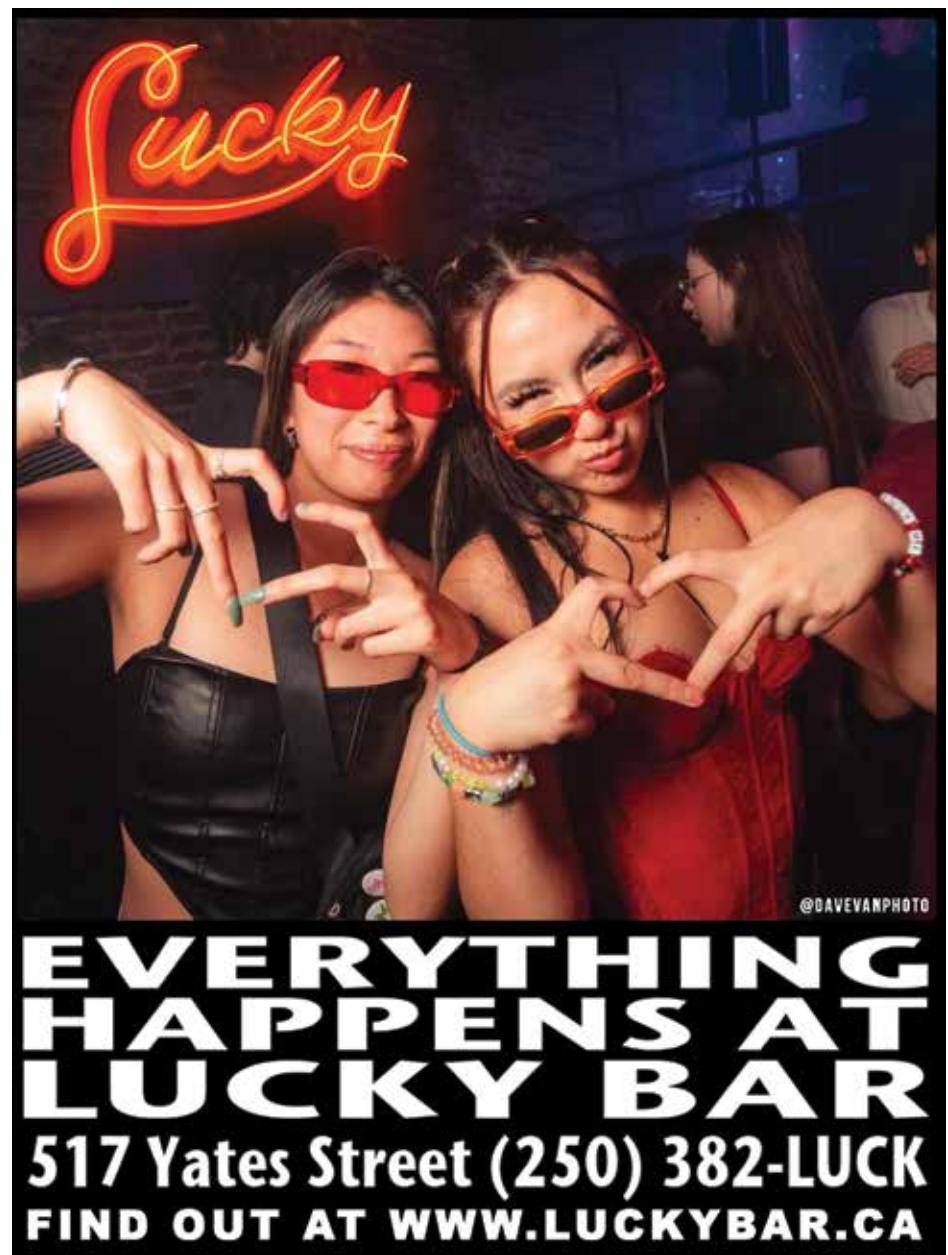
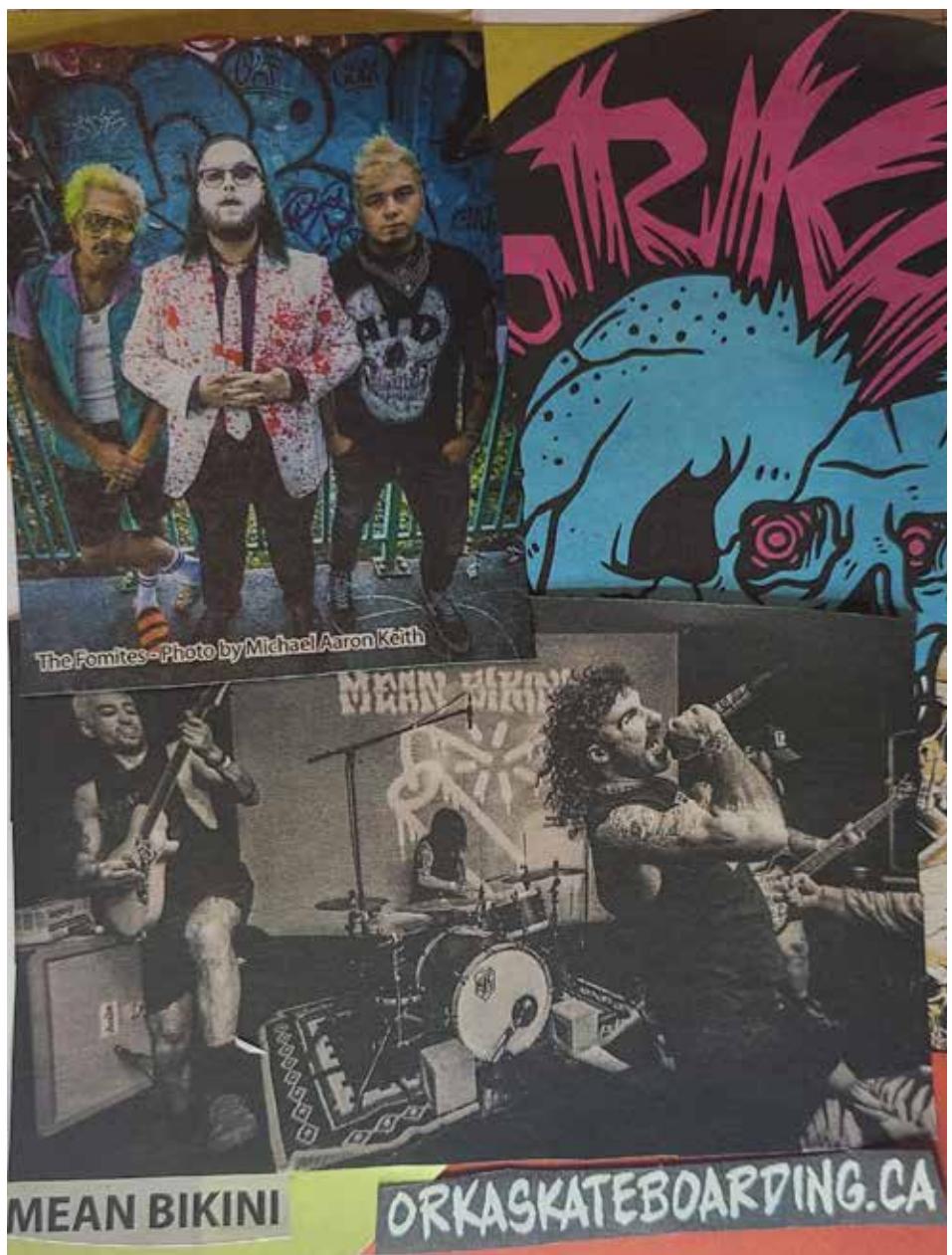
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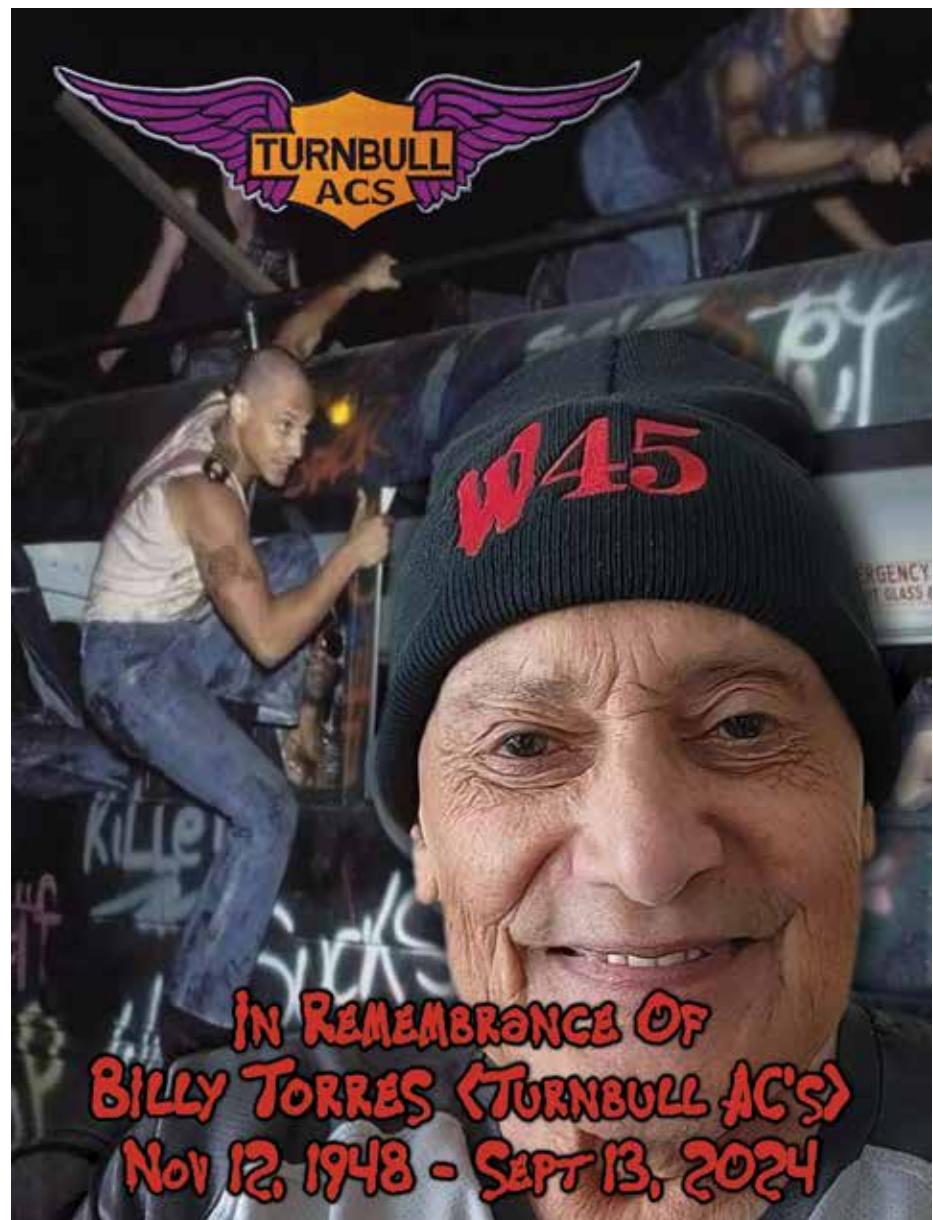
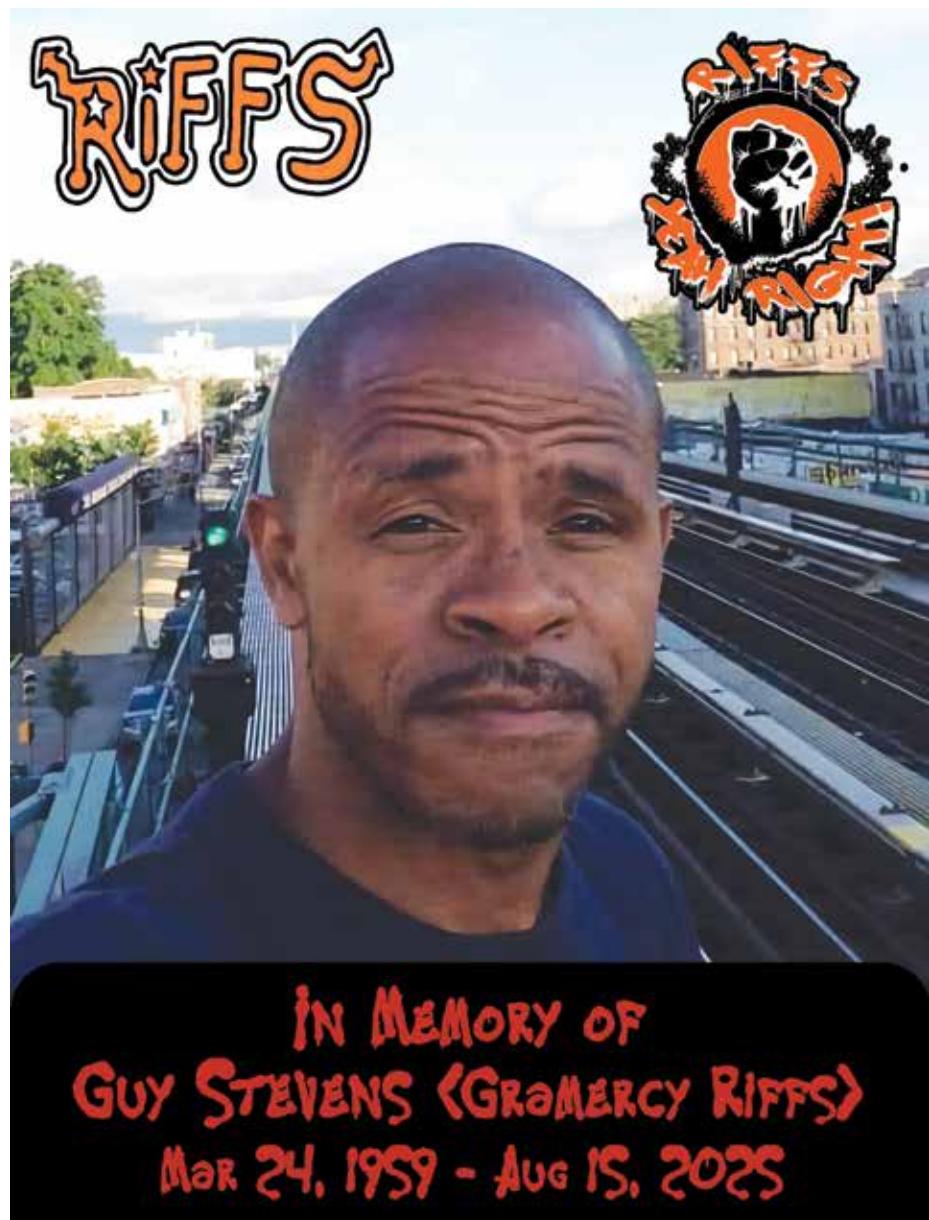
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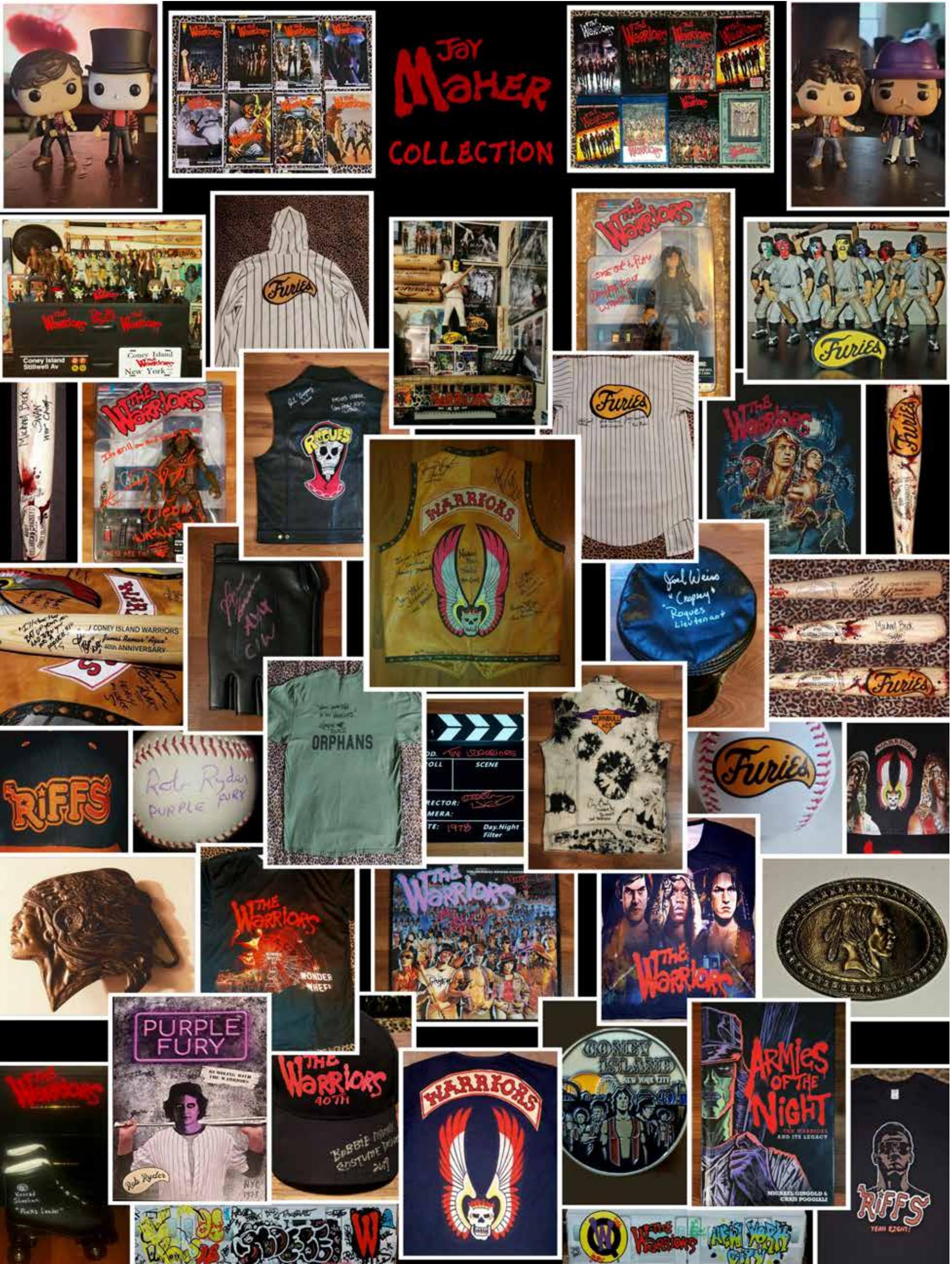


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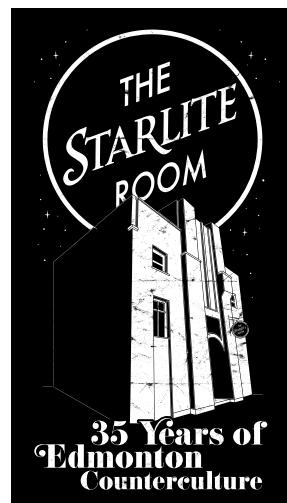
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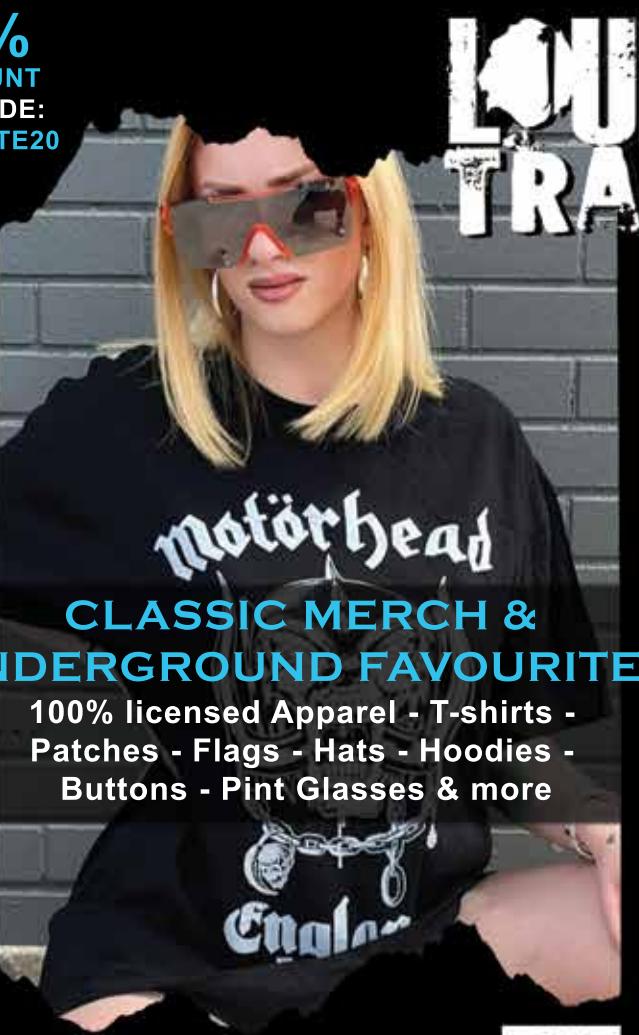
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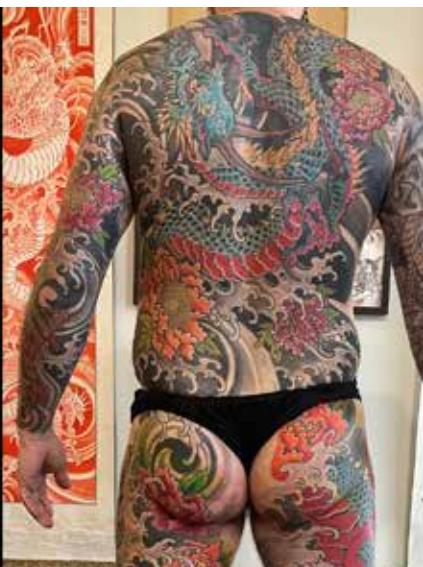
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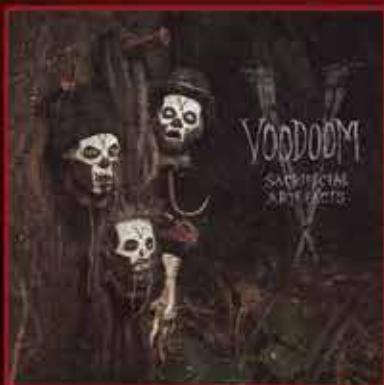
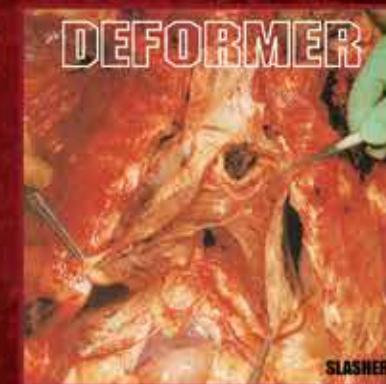
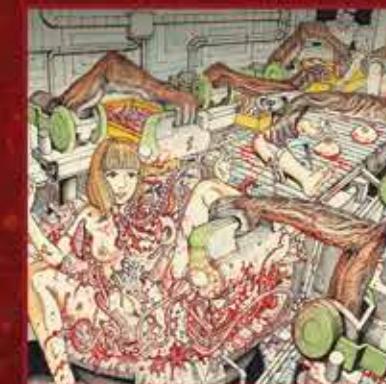
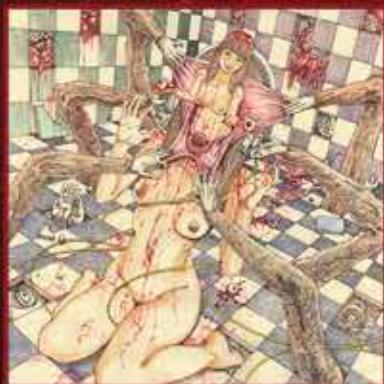
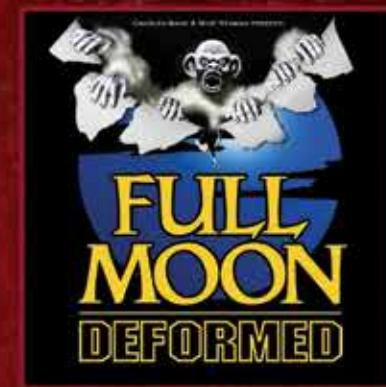
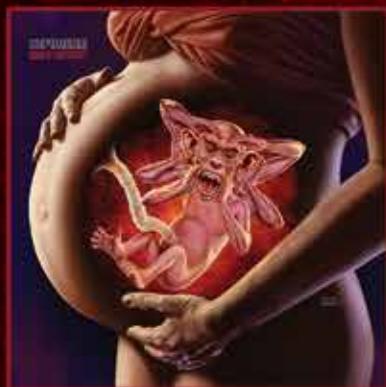
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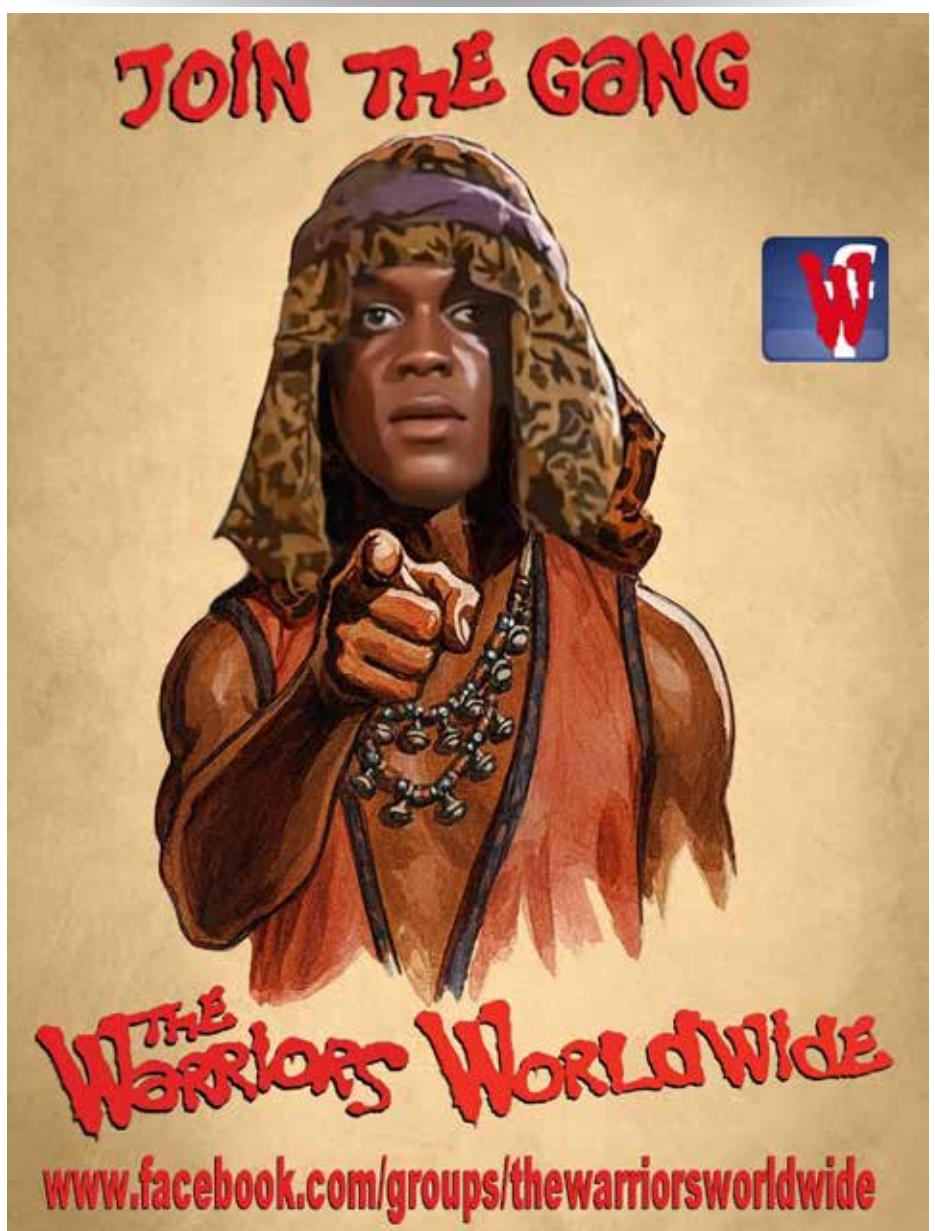
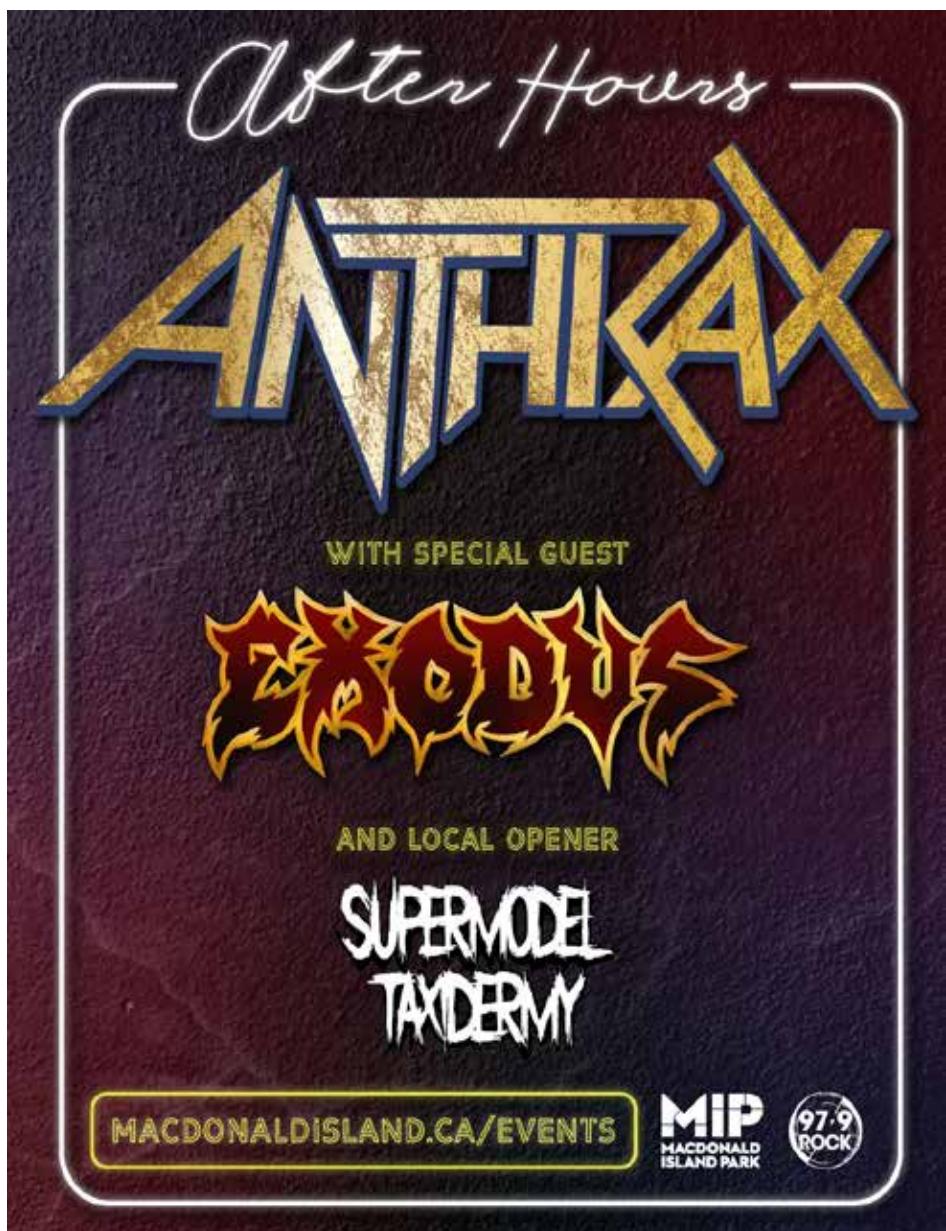
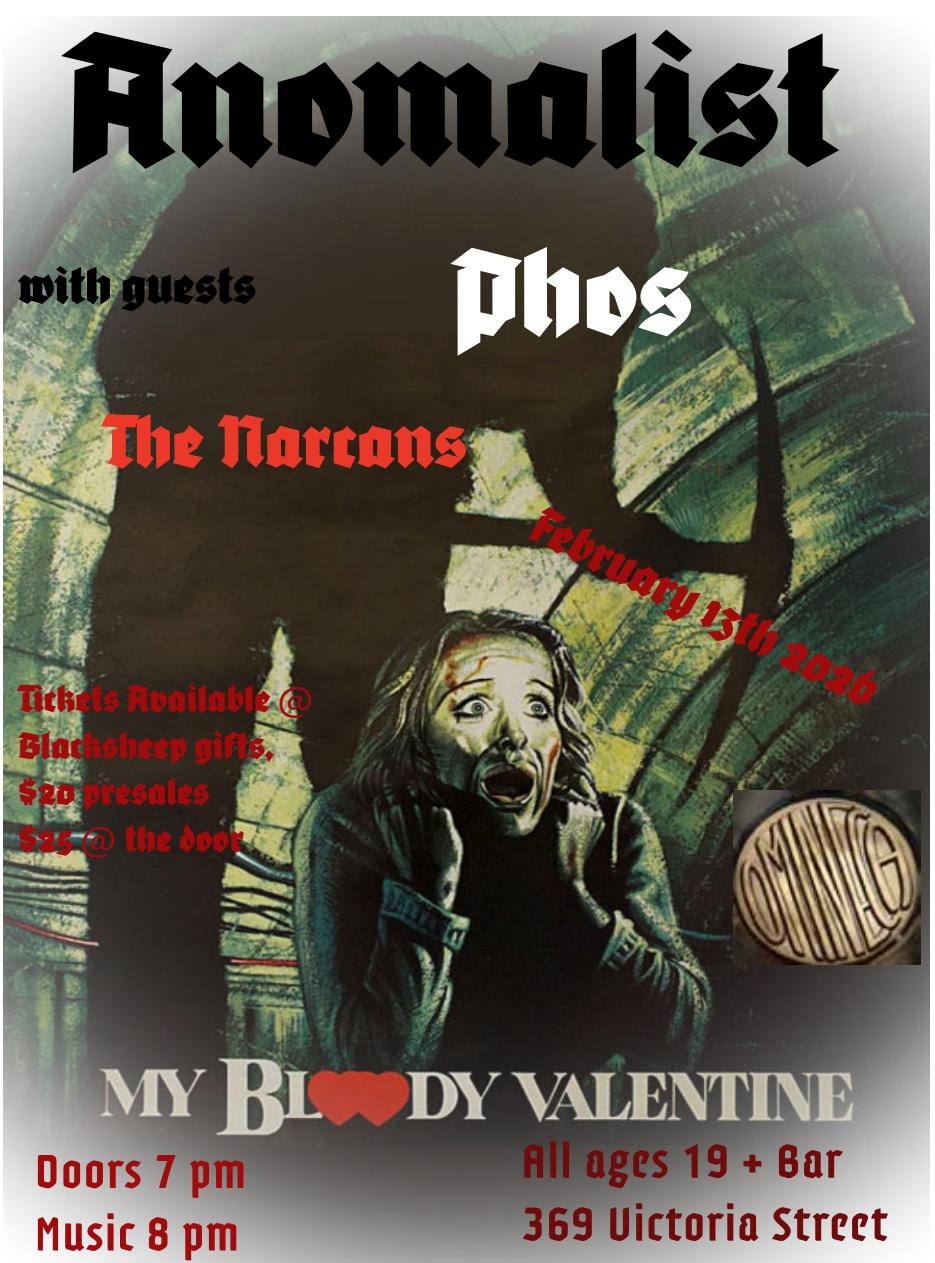
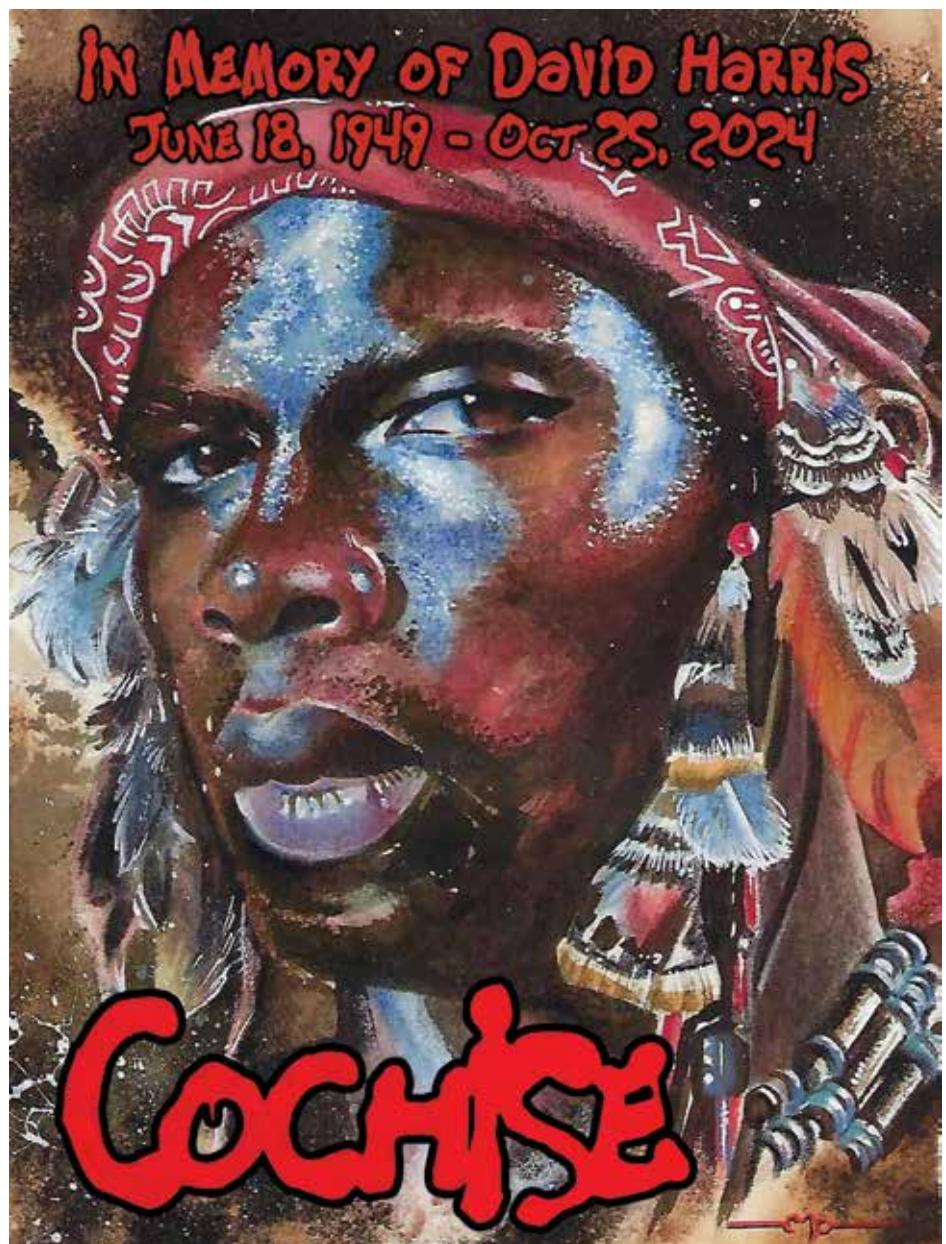
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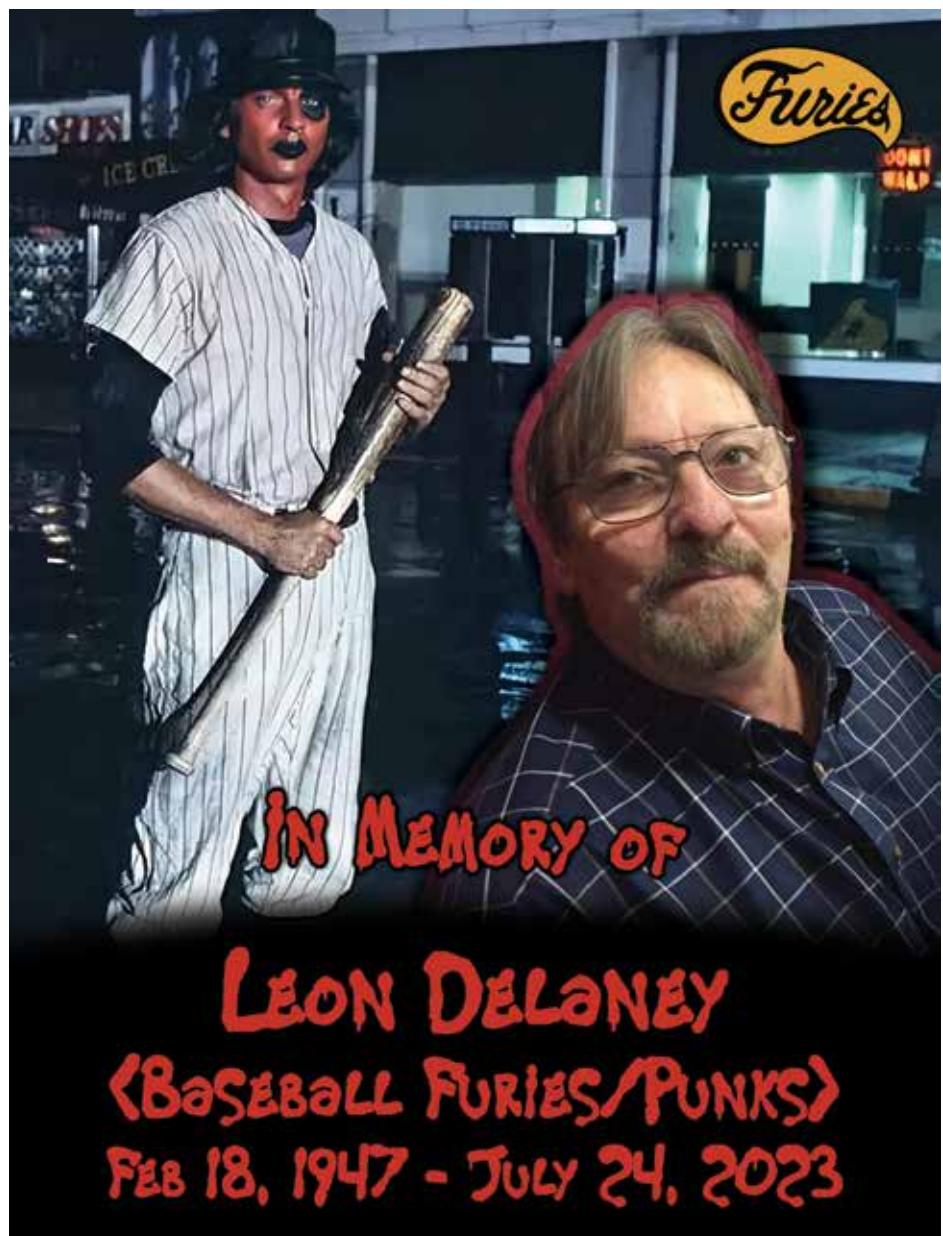
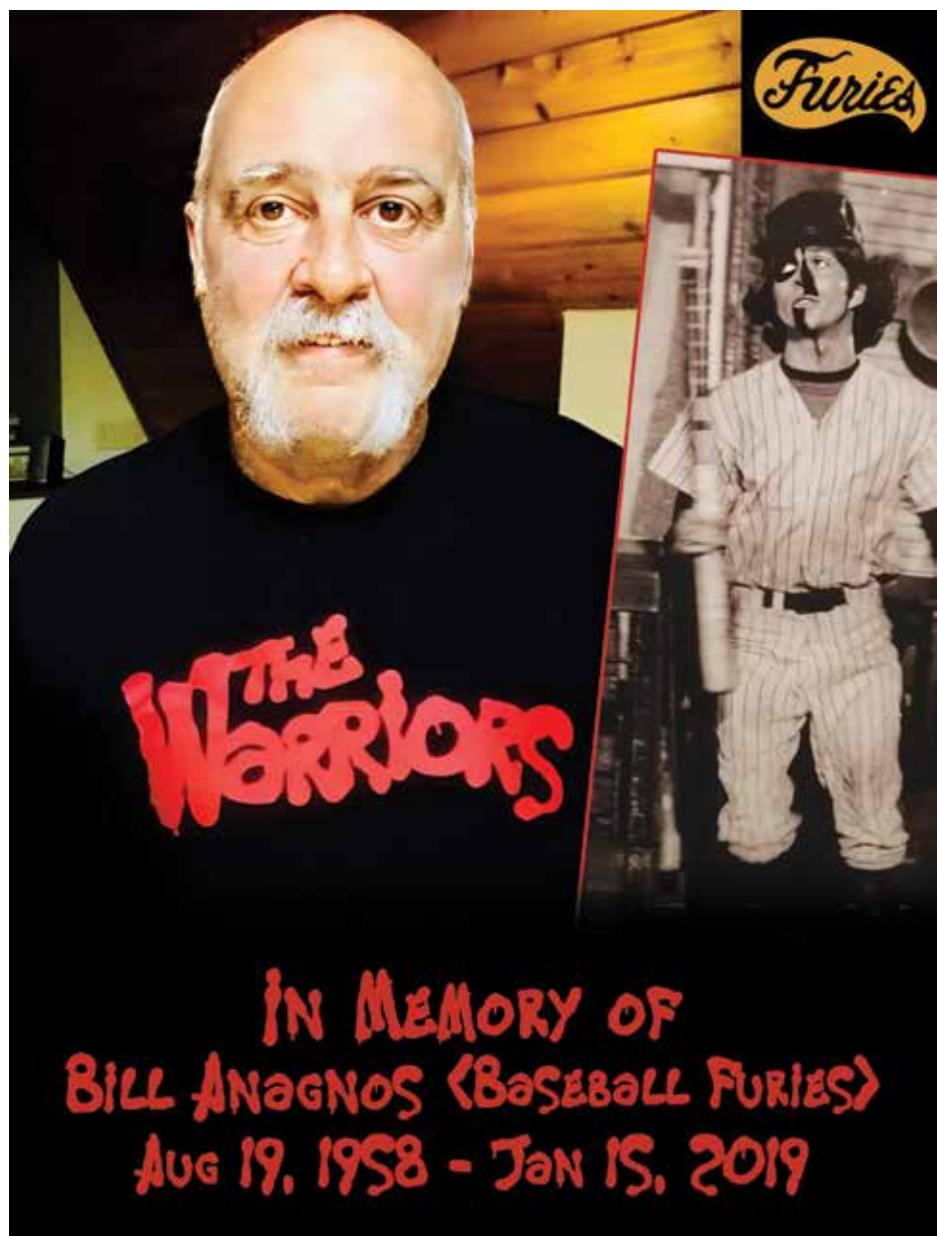


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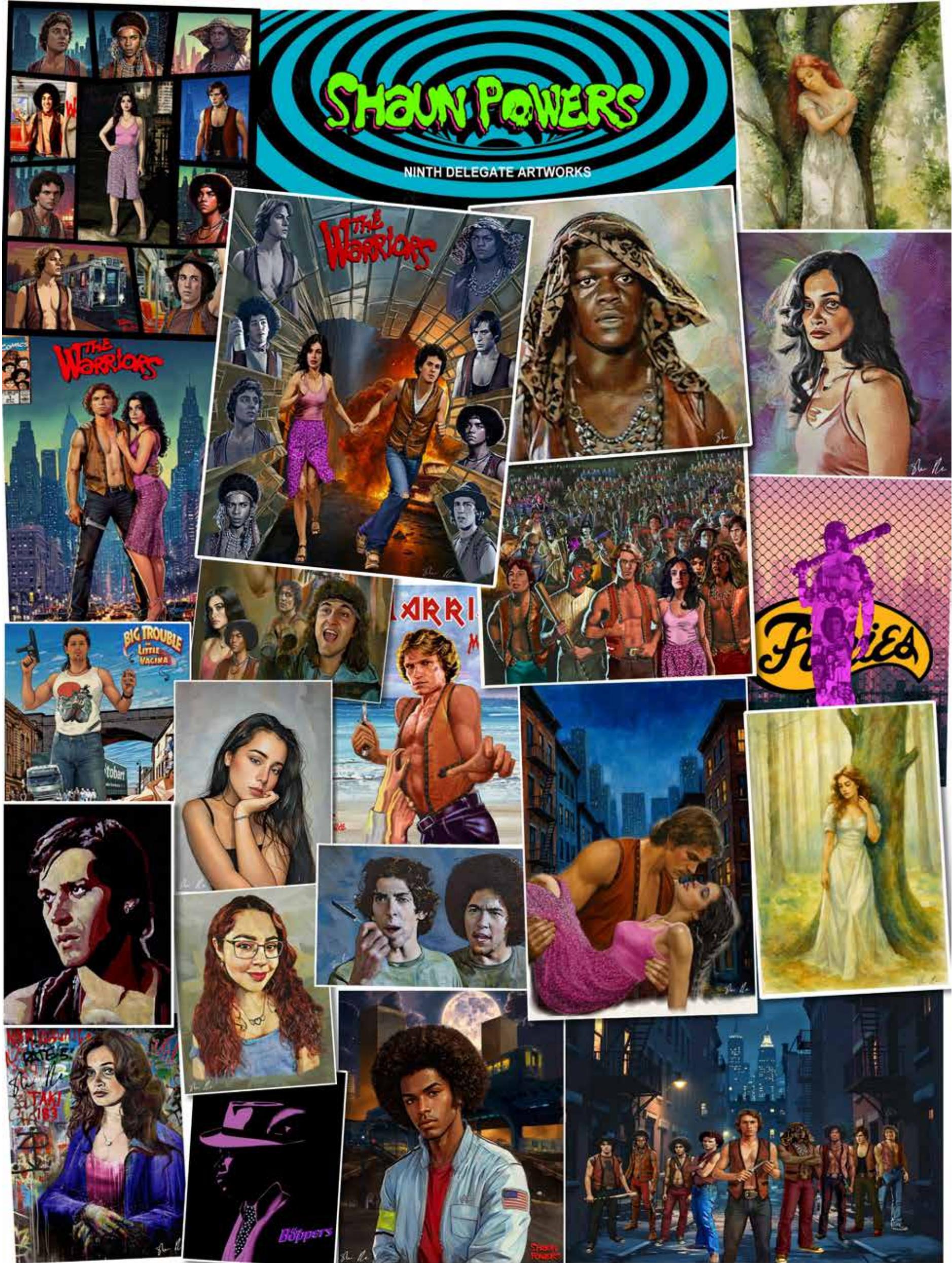


WITH
The
Warriors



SHAUN POWERS

NINTH DELEGATE ARTWORKS





SHAUN POWERS

Art of a Warrior

Interview by Jay Maher

AU: We are speaking with Shaun Powers, can you please give us a bit on your background?

SHAUN POWERS: 6 foot 3 of pure bottled grumpiness and an Olympic level procrastinator. A Black belt in the art of sarcasm and your friendly neighbourhood security. I grew up and still live on the north side of Nottinghamshire, U.K, right on the edges of the world famous Sherwood forest. Motörhead performed a gig in the middle of it (some of Lemmy's ashes reside down the road at Rock City). The city also boasts being home to the oldest pub in the country. To keep with the Robin Hood connection, one of my previous employers was the Sheriff of Nottingham. As well as dabbling with the arts, I am a practitioner of really bad Dad jokes, much to the displeasure of everyone. I'm a non typical Brit that doesn't drink tea but I still take the longest tea breaks. Also not related to Austin Powers.

AU: What got you started in artwork?

SP: We all become an artist to some degree from the moment we first pick up a drawing implement when we are children, as it's a visual form of expression. Until the release of Star Wars, I was obsessed with dinosaurs and monsters and scribbling them with wax crayons. There were more doodles in my math workbook than there was equations. We've all drawn massive cocks on frozen windscreens. Even though I took art classes through school and collage, I'm not a professional. It's something I do as a hobby and to occupy my mind when the mood takes me.

AU: Please describe the art you create.

SP: Some of it can be a fusion of classical style but in a 21st century medium. Someone smarter than me might call it post modern retro revival.

I require constant content for the online groups I run, so the majority of my work is now Warriors themed poster art. I still like to knock out a portrait every so often when I get the inspiration. My last few pieces have been a homage of Drew Struzan 80s movies work.

AU: Any influences on your artistic style?

SP: Although my art doesn't particularly resemble any of my influences, the fantasy paintings of such artists as Frank Frazetta, Christos Achilleos and Boris Vallejo had an impact on me. The ability to depict dream worlds that don't exist, takes the viewer away from the mundane. As a teen I went through the skateboard phase and dabbled with the fluorescent graffiti style, and wanted to be an artist for Viz comic by creating caricatures and stories of all the teachers we hated. Comic books were a big part of my life. I recommend *How to draw comics the Marvel way* as a good starting point for learning about perspective and composition. Along the way, artist style trends are followed and we try our hand at what is requested in assignments, so recently it has been the Grand Theft Auto art style. I'm also a admirer of Pre-Raphaelite artist John William Waterhouse paintings

AU: What kinds of art did you start doing?

SP: I was big into the comic book scene in my earlier life (shout out to Ground Zero comics) and drawing superhero fight scenes or stories about the various customers in the store. With the more serious stuff, I started with still life pencil drawings, as that is the best way to practice and develop shading. There's only so many times you can draw a bowl of fruit or cast iron tools before craving a more exciting subject matter. I spent a few years in art college, doing a wide range from life nudes to fashion design. One of my classmates worked as a barmaid in the pub next door to the college so I gravitated into there more of the time than in a studio. I did portraits for presents which

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AU: Okay let's talk about *The Warriors*, when did you first see the film? And is it your favourite movie of all time, if so why?

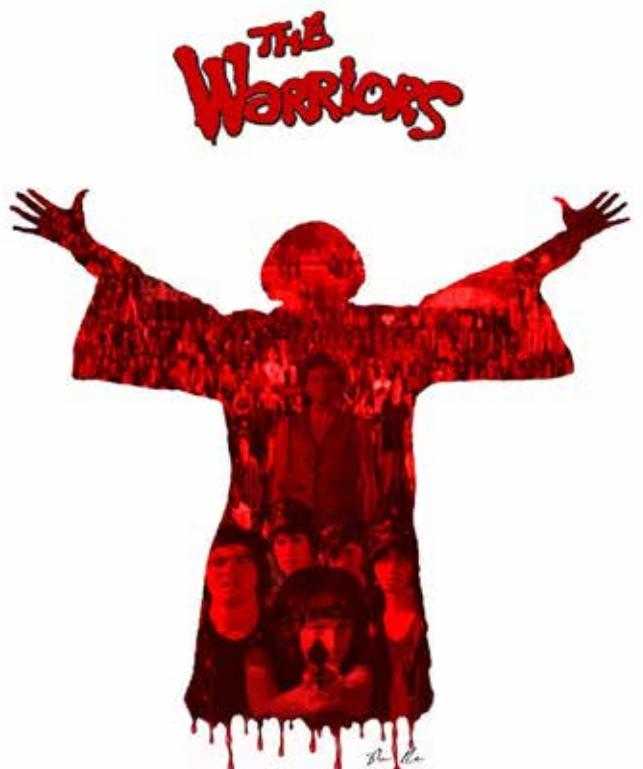
SP: We would have to go back to the early 80s, maybe 1982? My household was one of the first on the street to own a VCR. They were somewhat a luxury item in its day. A Sony Betamax. Built like a tank and still worked 20 years later. It was a random selection from the rental store. I didn't fully get the gist of the story, but I was transfixed by the varied brightly coloured gangs like some kind of elite military unit. I'd never seen anything like it before. We had the skinheads and rockers but nothing like the stylization of what I saw on screen. Like every young boy from that era, we were brought up on Bruce Lee and Star wars. But this movie seemed different; more gritty and grounded yet still had a wow factor. I remember crudely painting a fat head Han Solo figure in an attempt to create one of the characters a few days after I had watched it. It wasn't until I was a teenager that I managed to see it again. It felt like reuniting with a long lost friend and the movie has stuck with me ever since; kinda like the go to comfort film. The more I've watched it, the more I've absorbed and been submersed into it, spotting some small detail for the first time.

Watching it now, it takes me back to days in the arcade, dropping coins into Double Dragon and Final Fight, battling gangs in the subway.

AU: Ever met cast members of *The Warriors*?

SP: Yes; we were fortunate enough to have an exclusive Warriors only convention set up in the middle of the country back in 2017. I was sceptical at first and thought it was a hoax, as the convention date was the 1st of April and the announcement came not long after the cast had put out a statement saying they were taking a break from the whole convention scene, due to the shambles of the last Coney event that was set up by a snake oil salesman. I was relieved when it turned out to be legit. It was really well

organised. Rather than it just being a queue to get autographs, they made it into a 2 day event with Thomas Waites doing acting classes and an acoustic concert. There was even a tattoo parlour set up. I managed to get the private signing options, which was more chilled and got to sit around shooting the breeze with the cast and picking their brains for anecdotes and their memories of the time during filming. They're a really down to earth bunch of guys and never felt like you're sat next to movie stars. It was more like a bunch of mates sat around having a laugh.



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AU: *The Warriors* has grown into one of the most popular Cult Films of all time. Why do you think this 1979 movie keeps resonating with fans both old & new almost 50 years later?

SP: People are taken in, thinking it's a gang film, but deep down it's not. It's a classic story of finding your way home and making it to safety against increasing odds. It just happens to be dressed up in a gang theme. When you think about it, it has more in common with the Wizard of Oz than it does with gang flicks. You don't think of the characters as young criminals. They are relatable heroes to root for, rather than the larger than life Hollywood action stars. Looking past its unrealistic baroque imagery and bravado, it is moralistic, showing us that you can reach

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your goal by having each others back and not to show weakness. It's classic movie telling with vindication and the western style showdown with the weaselly villain you want to hate. Even though its been nearly 50 years since it was made, parts are still relevant today. The line that resonates with me is "The problem in the past has been the man turning us against one another". That's an eye opener for everyday politics right there. Then you can't forget the city itself drawing you in with its almost unsettling calm and neon lit glory; familiar yet almost mythical with its aesthetics and empty streets. It's 90 minutes of escapism with a variety of tried and tested movie tropes and sub themes. It may not be the best made film in the world but it has its own charm and personality with more a common man feel. It doesn't need flashy expensive special FX to get itself over. The way it is filmed, captivates its target audience and now it has become my generation's right of passage to sit with their kids to enjoy. We can even get

them action figures if we dare to open a future collectable, and legally beat the shit out of your child via the PlayStation game for that father/son bonding moment. Now with popular culture media such as Simpsons and John Wick, new audiences seek out the movie to get what the homage reference was from. The tribal essence of this movie will always appeal to a modern audience.

AU: What are some of your favourite Warriors

art projects you have created?

SP: The oil painting of Deborah Van Valkenburgh is up there. I always enjoy trying to capture her slightly pouting top lip and that smokey eye shadow. I was pleased how the impression of the light shining from behind her hair turned out. The broken glass poster was a challenge to get a semi-realistic effect and each segment was a separate art piece in its own right. It was done specifically for the anniversary and to right an injustice, as Thomas Waites was supposed to be the top billed star. I was happy with how the hearse turned out on the Back to the Future homage. Matching the graffiti and replicating it with a new perspective was a pain in the ass but the end result was worth it. I think I captured Luther's maniacal expression. And it has become an annual tradition to create a Warriors themed birthday meme for Apache Ramos (the Orphan with the big Afro). He's a great guy and always involved

online with the fans. He's like a favourite uncle.

AU: What medium/media do you work in?

SP: Currently I am fully digital, as I still haven't got full control of my hand since breaking my fingers at work. I've always started by sketching out ideas and composition in pencil first until I feel it's good to go, then transfer it over to either a canvas or better quality paper. I've used oils a few times but the drying time can sometimes be problematic. Diluted acrylics has been my foundation. Now

I'm using digital more, I can correct mistakes instantly and neatly and I don't spill anything and permanently stain my clothes.

AU: What music do you listen to doing art?

SP: 70S Black Sabbath is my staple playlist ingredient. Ozzy passing away was a big loss. 80S metal takes up a large portion of my playlist; W.A.S.P, Twisted Sister ect. Dee Snyder's solo projects are worth a replay. I still prefer the Paul Di'Anno Iron Maiden albums over Bruce's. It has that raw valve amp in the back of a pub sound to it. Sometimes it helps if the music is related to the current project subject matter.

AU: What's your latest art project?

SP: I have an ongoing project of taking iconic movie posters and duplicating the general composition so it becomes a Warriors themed art piece. The more instantly recognisable the design, the better. I'm just finishing off a poster based from the movie Gone with the Wind, switching Clark Gable for Michael Beck and painting in a subway background. The difficult part with these is working out how an existing poster could be converted to fit parts of the *Warriors* story. I've always like parodies so I guess it stems from that.

AU: Has your art been tattooed on people?

SP: Yeah, I've seen a couple of tattoos posted that is copied from art I've displayed online. Both of them were the same graffiti style gang emblem, complete with brickwork background. I kinda find it complimenting that some random person from a distant part of the world found my artwork

inspiring enough to be displayed on their body.

AU: Any dream projects you are dying to do?

SP: I would love to do an art piece that would be used for a future iconic movie; a film that would be so popular, millions of youths would have it hanging on their wall. I think that is the best accolade an artist can have. Photoshop has ruined modern day movie posters. Everything goes in cycles, so I'm looking forward to the day the trend reverts back to fully painted illustrations. For us Gen X kids, going into a video rental store and browsing those B-movie cassette covers was our modern day art gallery. As a child, seeing the

Derek Riggs artwork on the Iron Maiden records, drew me in and made me want to buy it. That's the power of art and having something like that on my resume would be a highlight. I've also got some scribbles down for a children's illustrated A-Z of Warriors learn to read book. All the characters will be in the Chibi style and the narration is all constructed with rhymes.

AU: Any words of wisdom for aspiring artists?

SP: Get out of your comfort zone. It's what I refer it as "Comfy shoe syndrome". You will barely improve yourself if you constantly stick to your safe skill set. Experiment with a media you've never tried before or a whole new style. When you do try that, don't be afraid to produce something bad or ruin a picture. The greatest discoveries stem from mistakes. The hardest part of a drawing is the very first line, as that dictates the rest of the picture. As mundane as they are, refer back to the basic exercises like light to dark and negative image. When you think you have finished your



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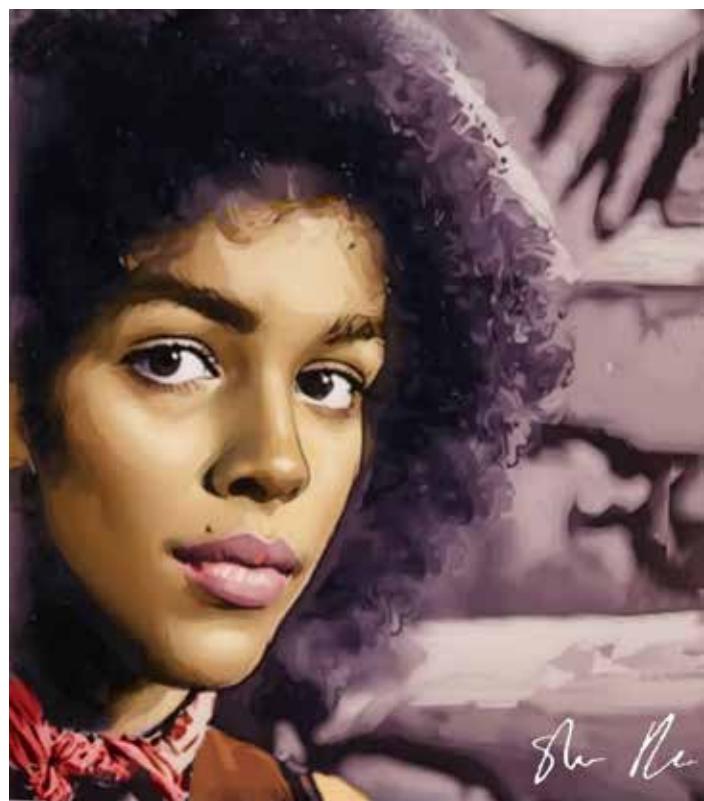
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PICTURE BY: STEVE SIEGEL



piece, put it to one side and come back to it a few weeks later. Fresh eyes will spot mistakes and they will stand out. If you are working in digital, back up each session as a fresh separate file so you have it saved in stages. Collect a scrap book of images that inspire you and styles you want to try and scribble down any idea that pops into your head while it's fresh in your mind. Trends constantly change so try to focus on the styles you enjoy the most. Keep it fun and the passion won't fade. You don't need the latest expensive equipment. Try not to get disheartened if you think you're not as good as your peers; just do it for the fun. Comparison is the theft of joy. And if you have a tight deadline, keep



off social media.

AU: Any upcoming projects to promote?

SP: I'm currently digitally restoring hundreds of unseen production photos from the filming of *The Warriors*. Each source photo is only 35mm from the original contact sheets and I'm removing scratches and mould, pixel by pixel. These will all be displayed for everyone to see on their own dedicated website. I'm aiming to have it completed and up and running in time for the 50th

anniversary. Any updates will be on my Facebook group *The Warriors Worldwide* if you want to follow.

AU: Can you please tell us about the process and inspiration for the cover of this Warriors issue of Absolute Underground?

SP: Originally the assignment brief was just simply a Warriors movie themed piece. As the publishing date changed to Valentine's, I received updated instruction to integrate a love theme into the art; "Think something like the 'I Love NY' logo". Brainstorming broke it down into 5 buzzwords; Hearts, Romance, New York, Iconic and Urban. What kiss is more iconic than the V-J Day celebration in Times Square? That ticked 2 of my boxes. Their pose and body gesture was my starting block to convert into characters from the movie. I scoured through hundreds of photos and movie frames to find as close a match to the facial expressions that I required for reference material, even though the end result lost most of the detail. Now I'm about as romantic as Jack the Ripper and the pinnacle of displaying love for someone in my neck of

the woods is having your bird's name tattooed on your body. Using cliché images, I had to combine vintage tattoo style art with urban graffiti. I took real graffiti from multiple sources and mashed them together to have it as the canvas. To avoid it looking too much like pop art, I trialed some stencil style ala Banksy. Bingo! The concoction worked. All that was missing was throwing some vibrant colours into the mix to make it pop and allowing inconsequential space for the magazine logo to sit. I wanted the colour scheme to represent the matching gang shirts that the Lizzies wear, blurring the fluorescent colours like it was tie-dye. To stop the heart image looking too flat, I gave it a veiny organic pattern effect fill. The 2 figures were digitally sprayed then softened. If you are reading this, hopefully the cover caught your eye and made you pick up this issue and have a peruse.

AU: Where can people find you?

SP: You can find me on Deviantart.com, under the name of NINTH-DELEGATE; letting everyone know that *The Warriors* were there. This is where my ongoing art projects and spoof posters end up being displayed. For all the latest Warriors related updates, you can find me at this address: facebook.com/groups/thewarriorsworldwide

There are some copycat groups that are trying to pass themselves off as me, even right down to a fake profile of myself. This address will take you to the legit one. If I'm in Nottingham city centre,

you can likely find me in the Pit & Pendulum pub. Remember boppers, be looking good out there.

AU: Thank you for your time Shaun & all the work you did for this Issue & our last Warriors 45th Anniversary Issue, we appreciate it!

SP: Thanks bud.

deviantart.com/ninth-delegate

facebook.com/groups/thewarriorsworldwide

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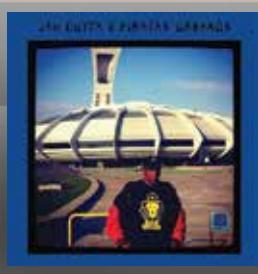
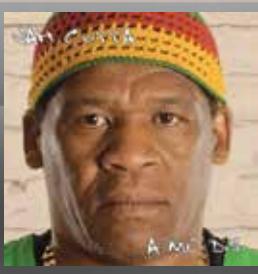
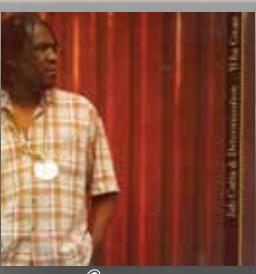


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Jah Cutta: Canada's OG King of Reggae

By Paget Williams

In the landscape of reggae music, authenticity is everything. Reggae was born as a voice for the oppressed, a rhythm of resistance, spirituality, and cultural pride. Few artists outside of Jamaica have embodied these principles as fully and consistently as Jah Cutta. Known widely as Canada's King of Reggae, Jah Cutta has built a career spanning more than 40 years, remaining fiercely loyal to the roots and message of reggae while carrying its spirit across borders. From Jamaica to Montreal and onto international stages, Jah Cutta's journey is one of cultural preservation, artistic integrity, and commanding

performance.

Originally from Jamaica, Jah Cutta's musical foundation is deeply rooted in the birthplace of reggae itself. Jamaica's musical traditions—steeped in Rastafarian philosophy, social commentary, and rhythmic innovation—shaped his sound and his worldview. When Jah Cutta relocated to Canada, settling in Montreal, he brought with him not just music, but his culture. At a time when reggae outside Jamaica was often diluted or commercialized, Jah Cutta stood firm in presenting the genre as it was meant to be heard: raw, powerful, and meaningful.

Early successes with his 1st single, "Tribute", helped pave the way for his recognition at home in Canada. International audiences quickly responded to his unmistakable voice and intense stage presence. Renowned for ferocious live performances, Jah Cutta is an artist who thrives in front of an audience. His shows are not passive

experiences; they are energetic, immersive, and emotionally charged. Whether performing in intimate venues or on large festival stages, Jah Cutta commands attention, channeling the fire of reggae legends before him while asserting his own unique style.

Over the years, Jah Cutta has shared stages with some of the most influential figures in reggae and beyond. Performing alongside icons such as Peter Tosh, The Wailers, Gregory Isaacs, Beenie Man, and Buju Banton places him firmly within reggae's living lineage. These collaborations are not just résumé highlights; they are acknowledgements of his credibility within the genre. His reach has also extended beyond reggae purists, sharing stages with genre-crossing acts like Thievery Corporation, Mix Master Mike, and Public Enemy. These moments reflect Jah Cutta's ability to connect reggae with broader musical styles while never compromising its essence.

Central to Jah Cutta's legacy is his recorded work. With six albums to his credit, his discography reflects both consistency and growth. Early releases such as *If It Wasn't Jah* and *Wha Gwan* established his voice and message, blending roots reggae rhythms with socially conscious lyrics. *A Me 'Dis* further asserted his identity, emphasizing self-expression and cultural pride. His collaborative project *Jah Cutta & Piratas Urbanos* showcased his openness to musical dialogue and cross-cultural creativity, while *Ladies & Gentlemen* demonstrated his versatility and stage-inspired energy. More recently he collaborated with both Manu Chao & Bilal Butt on the track "How did it come to this?" and DC punk legends Scream once again proving his versatility.

His most recent album, *Jah Cutta Sings Gold*, represents a significant milestone in his career. Recorded in Jamaica with the legendary sax player and producer Dean Fraser, the album reconnects Jah Cutta directly with reggae's homeland. Working with Fraser—an architect of modern roots reggae—adds both historical and musical weight to the project. The recording process itself symbolizes a full-circle moment: an artist who carried Jamaican reggae abroad returning home to reaffirm his roots while

refining his craft.

Beyond the studio, Jah Cutta's commitment to live performance has defined his career. He has completed dozens of national tours across Canada, building a loyal following through relentless touring and unforgettable shows. His music has also taken him internationally, with performances in places such as Tijuana, Mexico, and London, England. These appearances highlight reggae's global reach and Jah Cutta's role as an ambassador of the genre. Wherever he performs, his message resonates—proof that reggae's themes of justice, unity, and spiritual awareness transcend borders.

What truly sets Jah Cutta apart is his dedication to reggae as an art form. In an industry often driven by trends and commercial pressures, he has remained true to the music's roots and purpose. His lyrics reflect lived experience, cultural memory, and social consciousness, while his sound honors traditional reggae rhythms without feeling dated or stagnant. This balance between preservation and vitality has allowed him to remain relevant across generations.

In Canada, Jah Cutta's impact extends beyond his recordings and performances. As one of the country's most enduring reggae artists, he has helped shape the national reggae scene, particularly in Montreal. His presence has opened doors for younger artists and contributed to the recognition of reggae as a vital part of Canada's multicultural musical identity. Being called Canada's King of Reggae is not simply a title—it is a recognition of decades of dedication, leadership, and artistic honesty.

After more than 40 years in music, Jah Cutta continues to roar. His career is a testament to the power of staying true to one's roots while embracing the world. From Jamaican beginnings to international stages, from early overseas success to lasting recognition at home, Jah Cutta stands as a guardian of reggae's spirit. In a genre built on truth and resilience, his voice remains strong, uncompromising, and essential.

jahcutta.com

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142

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MAVRUKAS
DRUMS

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WILSON
GUITAR

Emerging from Toronto, Ontario, VALYEAR has rapidly ascended as a hard-charging force in the alternative/metal landscape, channeling the raw energy of Skid Row, the rebellious spirit of Mötley Crüe, and the intense grit of Drowning Pool into a sound that is unmistakably their own. Founded in 2014 by the dynamic frontman Chad Valyear, the band solidified its identity with REVOLUTION FEAR—a powerful statement recorded with studio collaborators that ultimately paved the way for a permanent, tightly-knit lineup featuring Geoff Wilson on guitars, Joe Petralia on bass, and Mane Ribeiro on drums. Together, they deliver not just music, but an electrifying experience defined by moody intensity, razor-sharp precision, and an undeniable on-stage camaraderie that resonates deeply with fans. VALYEAR's signature blend of groove-laden riffs and introspective, emotionally charged lyrics revives a long-missing swagger in modern rock—a bold, authentic presence that refuses to be ignored.

With every performance, they reclaim the soul of hard-hitting rock 'n' roll, forging deep connections with audiences and leaving an indelible mark on every stage they command. More than just a band,

VALYEAR represents a revival—proving that passion, power, and unity still have a dominant place in today's musical world.

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SKETCHY RECORDS

Interview with label founder

Julius Sinkevicius

By Marisa Flora

AU: For those just discovering Sketchy Records, tell us who you are.

We are based out of Calgary, and we're both a label and online record store focusing on punk rock. For the record store, we sell all kinds of punk, but try to focus on mainly Canadian punk. For the label, we are focused on Alberta punk.

AU: Every punk label exists for a reason — when did you get started and what gap in the underground scene did you set out to fill?

I moved to Calgary during the early days of the pandemic and didn't really know anyone here. Through a local record collecting club, I met somebody who was into punk just as much as I was, and he invited me out to see his son's band. When I saw them, I was blown away by the quality of the music and how hard they worked at developing their craft. When I asked about what they were doing about putting out a record, they said there were no local labels so they were trying to get the attention of labels either in Vancouver or Toronto, or in the US. Being an old punk rock guy who used to make zines and 7 inch records back in the day, I thought I would help them and put out their record. This was in May 2024. While doing that, I got to know a bunch of other bands so I wanted to do city-based compilation record, so I came up with *Calgary Calling*, which is a compilation of 15 local bands and that came out in 2025.

AU: What's the most important thing you look for when deciding to work with a band?

Besides the music, which always comes first, I look



for the passion and drive of the band. I only want to work with bands who are obsessive about their music and playing live. When the music is great, and the people are great, then I want to help them in any way I can.

AU: What one release defines your catalogue?

The *Calgary Calling* record is the definitive record right now. It is 15 bands, one of whom was the first record we put out (The Turnarounds) and includes the next two bands for the following releases (Letters to Norma and Upside Down Man). I'm in discussions with 3 other bands that were on the comp to put out their next releases.

AU: How important is community to what you do, and how do you actively support it?

Just as it was when I got into punk in the 80s, it is the same now - nothing happens without the community. We're all in this together, but it requires supporting things that are beyond yourself. I make a point of trying to get to shows before the first band gets on, and stay until the last set is over. When I see a band that impresses me, I try to approach the band and tell them how good their set was. If they have merch, I buy a record or a shirt. I follow them on the socials.

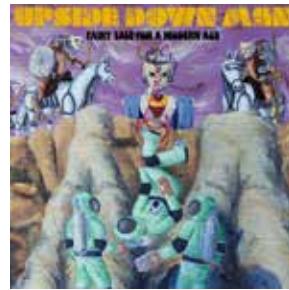
AU: What's the state of DIY punk in Alberta?

I think it is thriving. There are great bands in Edmonton, like Home Front and Midnight Peg, Calgary has its stalwarts like Chixdiggit, Territories, and Julius Sumner Miller, and there are fantastic bands in the smaller towns like Total Wolf in Medicine Hat and Astrology Girl in Lethbridge. It seems like every week I learn about a new band. There are local band shows going on almost every week. We have a great mix of 18+ and all ages venues. We have a weekly showcase of bands called Rocking For Dollar\$ where 6 bands play 15 minute sets and get a chance to win prizes,

but you get a mix of bands where they can play their first show to bands who've been around for years and years. Neon Taste also opened up a shop so there is a dedicated punk record store. Some of the other local record stores like Sloth, Melodiya, and Hot Wax are big supporters of the local music scene, which is always helpful for labels like ours.

AU: Running a label isn't always glamorous — what's the toughest lesson you've learned?

I would say that it is never glamorous! So many lessons I've had to learn the hard way, both on



the same time I want it to be authentic and real. There are all kinds of services out there that can "help" you get your band's song on different streaming playlists and such, but it is pay to play. Very similar to payola in the 70's and 80's with radio play. Instead we try to work with trusted influencers - and while I hate that word as it applies to social media - but there are a number of people out there who can really make a difference in getting a band noticed. I always reach out to CJSW, which is the local university radio station

and they have a dedicated punk show called the Loonie Bin. I reach out to some local podcasts and provide them with some music. I always submit to Maximumrocknroll to get a review - it was the punk bible when I was growing up, so I always have a soft spot for them. I always have a booth at the Calgary Punk Rock Flea Market

and showcase the most recent release. And I try to make sure I put records in the hands of local promoters so they have the bands on their radar for future shows. In general, I'd say getting the attention of new listeners is probably the hardest thing a record label has to do. When I work with bands, I'm very clear that this is a partnership - we are in this together. The band can only do so much on their own, and the label can only do so much, but together it becomes a force multiplier.

AU: What's coming up next for the label?

I have nothing to announce right now but I'm pretty optimistic that we'll do between 4 and 6 records in 2026.

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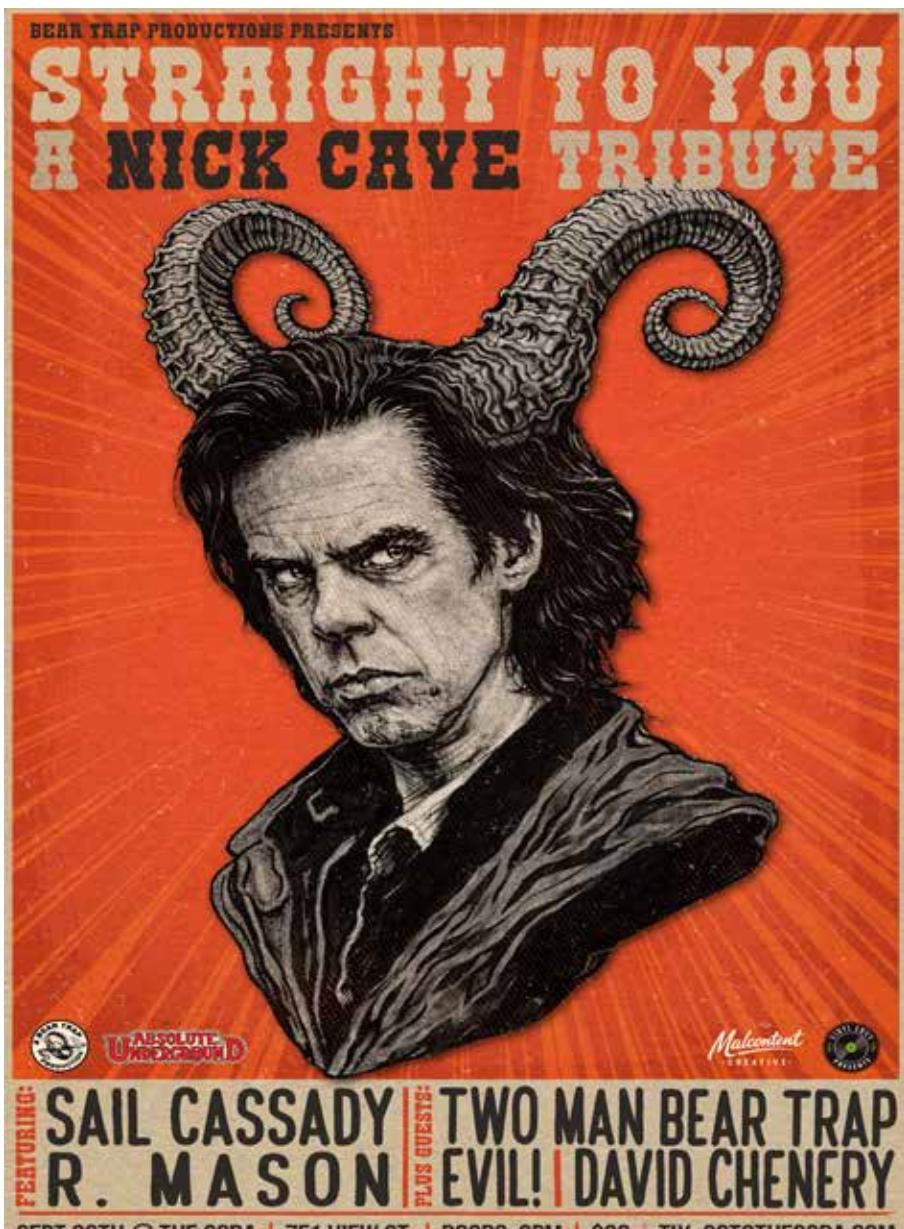
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Victoria Cannabis Buyers Club Marks 30 Years Of Illegal Compassion

Against all odds, the Victoria Cannabis Buyers Club will be celebrating 30 years of providing cannabis products to patients.

When the VCBC began in the beginning of 1996, Jean Chretien was Prime Minister of Canada. Alan Rock was the federal Minister of Justice. Glen Clarke was the Premier of B.C. Bill Clinton was the President of the U.S.A. Google did not exist yet.

The war on drugs was raging. U.S. helicopters scoured B.C. gulf islands looking for hidden crops. Police dogs patrolled airports searching for forgotten roaches.

Despite 8 rads, millions of dollars in fines, pandemics, evictions, too many deaths to want to remember, staff meltdowns and insurrections, board resignations, insurance scares, lawsuits, bylaw officers, Island Health officials, Worksafe inspections, Canada Revenue Agency investigations, and, of course, several

snowstorms, the VCBC has remained open every day possible for 30 years. Along the way, the VCBC has fought all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada, winning a unanimous decision in 2015 that made cannabis edibles and extracts legal for patients in the medical cannabis program.

The VCBC is not only the first medical compassion club to operate in Canada, but it now also appears to be the

last. The legal medical cannabis program does not allow for storefront access or high dosage edibles, and every compassion club in the country has been shut down by the government or closed out of fear. Since legalization the VCBC has been raided 3 times and faces fines of \$3.2 million.

With over 9,000 patients served over 30 years, the VCBC has become a pillar in Victoria and in the history of cannabis in Canada. Starting with a pager and a pamphlet while living in a van, founder Ted Smith has witnessed an incredible transformation in the club and in Canadian society over these three decades. With such a rich history of patient advocacy and deep connections in the industry, the VCBC anticipates the next 30 years will be even more amazing.

v-cbc.ca
[@vcbcig](http://vcbcig)

HIGH QUADZ

Interview with Steve Tapp

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you best known for? When did you first start growing cannabis?

Steve Tapp: Steve Tapp, President of Quadessence Ltd. Best known for winning the AR Cannabis Cup with High Quadz. Started growing ACMPR in 2014.

AU: What first drew you to the cannabis industry?

ST: Love of the plant, the problem-solving required to cultivate and the potential for riches... still to be attained.

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

ST: We have strains all over the world. Chatterbox is still a staple in our lineup as well as a variety of others. We are known for the size and the expression of our cannabis flower. Also, our detail for curing. A hard thing for most to achieve.

AU: Do you prefer Sativas or Indicas?

ST: Hybrids.

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

ST: Chatterbox.

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

ST: Challenging.

CANNABIS CORNER

AU: Why is it important to support local growers?

ST: Because we are extremely committed legacy growers who put everything on the line to produce amazing products for the consumer.

AU: What makes an expert grower in your opinion?

ST: Attention to detail. Amazing problem-solving skills.

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

ST: Pay attention. If you don't love what you do, or love a daily challenge, you will fail.

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

ST: I specifically deal with High Quadz and Sitka Weed Works domestically. They brand and market. I grow.

AU: Where are your products available?

ST: All throughout Canada. If you are in B.C., then our friends at Evergreen Cannabis in Kitsilano always carry our products. You can order online from ecsvan.ca

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

ST: Every day is a new challenge

AU: How can people find you online?

ST: instagram.com/quadessenceltd



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DOWN THE LEES

Beauty Inside The Chaos

By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: For readers just discovering Down The Lees, tell us about yourself, the band and what drew you to post-noise rock.

Laura Lee Schultz: I'm Laura Lee (LL) Schultz and Down The Lees has been my project for about 20 years. Started off solo, now it's a 3-piece operating out of the Okanagan. For a long time it wasn't really a band at all. It was just me trying to figure things out. Writing records, playing all the instruments. I've always been drawn to noisier music and post-rock, especially bands like Slint and Sonic Youth. The rawness and dynamics of it all. Not everything has to be loud all the time to be heavy I think. I still chase that feeling when I'm writing.

AU: You mention Down The Lees evolving from a solo project into a full band over the years.

How has that shift changed the way you write, rehearse and perform?

LL: The first records were basically recording experiments. Some were totally solo, some had guest musicians, but I wasn't playing live. That changed when I moved to Belgium in 2015. I lived in Ghent for five years with my girlfriend, and we went to excellent rock shows constantly. Sometimes multiple shows a week. Being there made me want to play live again. I started writing the songs that became "Bury The Sun" and performing them solo, but it was missing something. I wanted it louder! So I brought in Kwinten (bass) and Jonathan (drums), we rehearsed every week and played shows all over Belgium/France/Netherlands. It was great. That's when Down The Lees stopped feeling like just a recording project and started feeling like a band.

AU: Your music balances heaviness with vulnerability. How intentional is that contrast when you're writing songs?

LL: Very intentional. I'm drawn to beauty inside the chaos. Just like life. Writing is how I deal with the world, especially when it feels like everything

is so crazy right now. There's a lot of anger and grief floating around and I don't have answers for any of it. Songs give me somewhere to put those feelings. Otherwise I'd have to hold onto some other vice that would definitely not serve me well.

AU: Your live shows are intense and immersive. How do you capture that energy in your recordings?

LL: We play as much as possible and let the songs evolve that way. Also, you learn pretty quickly what works when you're standing in front of people. When we record, we play live off the floor. Recording with Steve Albini in Chicago really solidified that for me, since it was to tape and we had a short amount of time. He recorded the album *Bury The Sun*. It was stressful. You had to be prepared and fully present. There's nowhere to hide. But that's the point. You're capturing a real moment, not something pieced together later.

AU: Down The Lees is releasing a concert film in March. Tell us about it!

LL: The current lineup is with Andy Ashley (drums) and Chris Carlson (bass), and we really wanted to document what this band feels like right now. Supported by Creative BC, *This Is What It Feels Like* is a concert film that tries to capture what it feels like to be at one of our shows. We put a lot of work into it. Lighting. Song choices. We also made custom backdrop videos for each track to make it feel more immersive. It was filmed by Irisphere Entertainment and mixed by Jesse Gander (ANCIENTS, Brutus). It feels like the most honest snapshot of the band so far.

AU: You co-founded the Girls to the Front festival, a music showcase spotlighting female, 2SLGBTQIA+ and non-binary artists. When did it start, and what inspired you and co-founder Madeline Fraser (GM of the Pearl) to create this?

LL: Yes! The first GTTF happened in October 2024 at a now defunct DIY space in Vernon called BBDBs. It started with a conversation in a bathroom after a Down The Lees show. Madeline and I had just met in person and ended up talking about ageism, internalized bias and how hard it can be to exist in loud rock spaces as women, non-binary and 2SLGBTQIA+ artists. We didn't want to just talk about it. We wanted to do something about it. Madeline moved to Vancouver in 2025 and decided she wanted to host one there, so I decided to host one in Kelowna.

AU: There are two Girls to the Front editions scheduled in 2026—Vancouver and Kelowna. What can fans expect in terms of performances and atmosphere?

How can you purchase tickets?

LL: Very loud music. DIY markets. Zines. Mosh pits. Hugs. A room full of people who want to be there and support each other. Messy, in the best way. Head to girilstothefrontfest.com for all the details.

AU: Looking ahead for Down The Lees, what's next after the concert film—any plans on the horizon?

LL: We'll be playing festivals and writing new material. There's no shortage of things to write about right now. So much chaos!

AU: Where can fans find your music and connect with you online?

LL: Our website: downthelees.com and all the streaming sites - our fav of course is **Bandcamp**: downthelees.bandcamp.com

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Photo credits: Ryan Wagner



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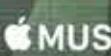
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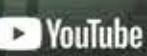
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UP IN SMOKE

GOOD PEOPLE AND GOOD WEED

Interview with owner/operator Matthew Greenwood

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

My name is Matthew Greenwood and I own and operate Up in Smoke with my wife Sarah in Vancouver, BC. We are best known for our curated menu and Direct Delivery Canada Wide exclusives and we are one of the few 100% family owned and operated independent stores left in Vancouver.

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

In 2009 I had a large bicycle accident that saw me break 13 bones and puncture a lung, Cannabis saved me from being a statistic in the Opioid Crisis. I relied on the plant for pain management and promised I would give back to it once I recovered. Since then I looked for a way to work with the plant and started as



a commercial leasing agent pre-legalization, became a partner in 2019, and ended up being an owner operator in 2022.

AU: What is the origin story of Up In Smoke?

Up in Smoke was originally known as Sunrise Wellness and has been open and operating since 2014. In 2020 we re-opened as Up in Smoke and when the Direct Delivery policy was announced in 2022 we pivoted to being a mainly Direct Delivery store and have been ever since. The name comes from a golf-pro friend of ours who turned to us one day and said "Why don't you just call it Up in Smoke?" And the rest is history.

AU: What is your mission statement?

Good People and Good Weed Only.

AU: What makes Up In Smoke different from others in your opinion?

Our menu! We were the first in Canada to have a true Retail Exclusive and we continue this trend

as we currently have *Saltspring Love Haze* exclusive to us. We set the bar for retailers across Canada, whether it's Launching New Farms (over 10!), Exclusive Drops, Package Dates on our Website, or amazing service. We love working with others to bring consumers the best products from farms they never heard of before.

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

Oh, that depends on your flavour! Our all-time hands down top seller is *Timmy's Og Shark*, named after Timmy, a local Vancouver Cannabis legend. We sell the flower in all sizes: 3.5, 7, 14,



CANNABIS RETAIL PROFILE



28 tops and smalls! All things Saltspring Magic (Magi Cannabis) are hugely popular in our store. Also Sweetgrass Cannabis, Island Genetics, Sassy Weed, Rocky Mountain, Amani Craft, Kootenay Quantum, Brindle, Slurrrm, Charlie's Pineapple Reserve, Victoria Cannabis Company, the list is

endless!

AU: Who are some of the growers, producers, and brands you are currently working with?

We love working with small family owned businesses, especially those whose facilities are located in their back yards!

AU: Any plans for Valentine's this year? Is it true Cannabis can be used as an aphrodisiac?

We have two kids so we can attest to the aphrodisiac nature of the plant. As we have already been successful, we will probably put our children to bed, role up a donut, and put some smoke in the air for our small family, business, and community.

AU: What are your favourite flower strains to enjoy? Do you prefer Sativas or Indicas?

I love terps, give me all the flavours! My go to is Hash Rosin and I enjoy Charlie's Pineapple Reserve, Slurrrm, Brindle, Sauce, and Green Amber. For flower, if it isn't loud and has flavour transfer, I don't want it! If you need a favourite, I love me a classic Timmy's but I also enjoy chasing the Zainbow via Kootenay Cultivar's OJ Zainbow, and everything Sweetgrass is a slam dunk.

AU: How have things changed over the years since legalization?

The culture has changed completely, we are no longer hiding. That being said, with government regulations comes government taxes and fees so the amount of money available has been cut by at least seventy percent. Pay-to-play agreements with large corporate growers and retailers

dominate the Canadian Cannabis scene and has made menus look the same. Glass Blowers are no longer buying Oxygen for a pack mover to buy a celebratory piece and once thriving farms are now being shuttered. That's how much it's changed.

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

The people, whether the farmer, trimmer, team member, or consumer. I love getting good weed to the people and meeting the people who created the Magic.

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

Bob Marley said it best, "If the people all smoked weed, the world would be a better place."

AU: Anything else to mention or promote?

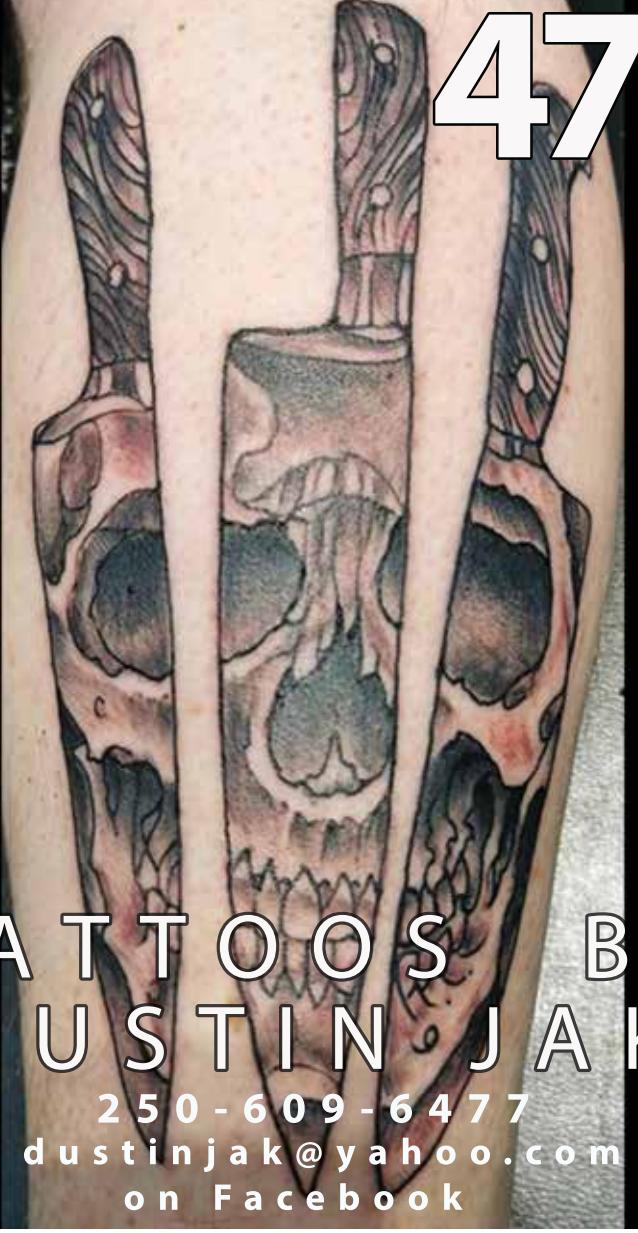
We do Mail Order across BC. It's two day shipping to any corner of this beautiful province. My wife and I are usually the people packing your box of awesome. Please try us out, your support goes a long way during the massive construction project outside of our store. If you want our Weed in a different province, write your local Member of Parliament and ask them to lift the bans on interprovincial trade. They promised they would do it in July of 2025!

AU: How do people find you online?

www.itsupinsmoke.com

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

477



TATTOOS BY
DUSTIN JAK
250-609-6477
dustinjak@yahoo.com
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59 KING STREET EAST OSHAWA, ONTARIO
905-579-5777 CONTACT@THEATRIA.CA
THEATRIA.CA



WITCHKILLER

It is with great pleasure that Witchkiller announces Kevin MacEachern as the band's new drummer. Kevin brings his wealth of experience, power, and precision to Witchkiller. He also shares a long-standing history with guitarist Kurt from their former band WARHAG —a connection that made this collaboration feel like a natural next chapter.

Kevin MacEachern:
"I'm beyond excited to be joining Witchkiller. The chemistry was immediate, and the music speaks for itself—raw, aggressive, and true to the spirit of classic heavy metal. I can't wait to get on stage and bring these songs to life with the band."

instagram.com/witchkiller_metal

WITCHKILLER ANNOUNCES NEW DRUMMER



SODOM RELEASE NEW VIDEO AND SINGLE FOR REMIXED VERSION OF 'JABBA THE HUTT'

DELUXE EXPANDED RE-ISSUE
EDITIONS OF THEIR CULT 1994
ALBUM '*GET WHAT YOU DESERVE*'
RELEASED ON NOISE/BMG ON
FEBRUARY 27th 2026

Sodom's, 1994 album *Get What You Deserve* didn't stick to any of the rules of the era. "We just wanted to sound completely nuts — full-on, in-your-face madness - it was pure Sodom just not giving a damn. Especially not about what anyone else was doing. We wanted to do what felt right to us —

raw, grimy, unpolished. Songs that would make other people cringe — that's what we were after."

The new single 'Jabba the Hutt' is one such track, and it may appear that it's named after a Star Wars character — but it's actually about a real person. When asked about it, Tom Angelripper and Andy Brings respond in unison: "We won't comment on that."

The new video is cut from archive camcorder footage of the infamous photoshoots for both the grotesque album cover of '*Get What You Deserve*' and its preceding EP, '*Aber Bitte Mit Sahne*' and provides a snapshot into the warped minds of Sodom in 1994!

Thirty-two years later, this snarling beast is being unleashed on the metal community once again. A timeless punch to the gut — or, as Maik Weichert, guitarist and mastermind of German metalcore heroes Heaven Shall Burn, puts it: "The best punk album of the nineties!"

Get What You Deserve will be released as an extensive box set, remastered and newly mixed by Andy Brings, including the remastered and remixed '*Aber Bitte Mit Sahne*' EP, plus the first concert with Atomic Steif as a bonus double LP and a DVD with additional live shows. Alongside the original hotel room cover, the package also includes the censored version with the band



photo and
the originally
planned artwork
featuring a
Knarrenheinz
painting by cult
artist Andreas
Marschall.

*Get What You
Deserve* will
be released on
February 27,
2026 via BMG
and is available
for pre-order now.

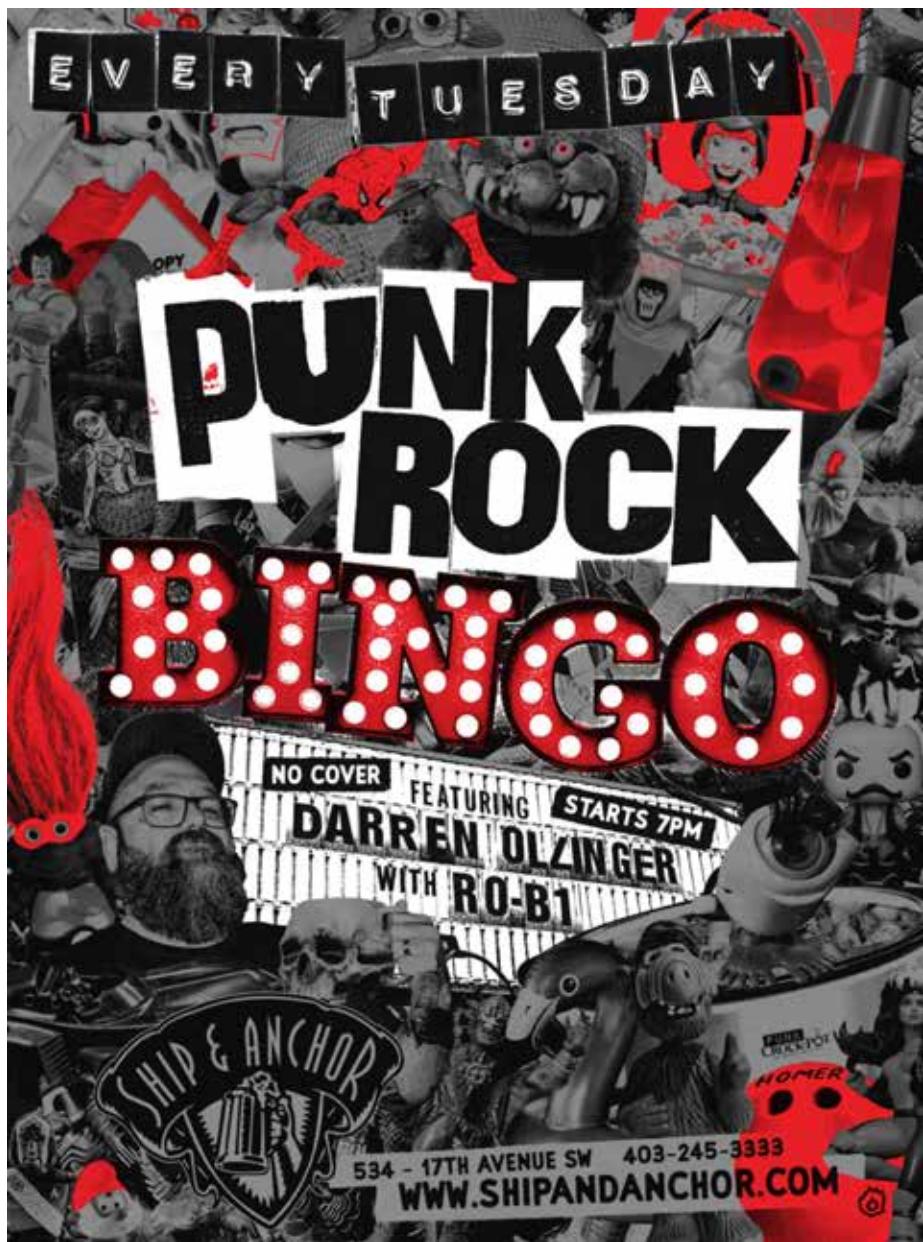
Sodom's deluxe, expanded reissue of *Get What You Deserve* will be available as a Box set including 5LP's on deluxe colour wax, book, poster and DVD. Also as a Double, gatefold milky clear vinyl.

Or grab up the Triple
CD digisleeve with 24
page booklet.

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official](https://instagram.com/sodom_band_official)

facebook.com/sodomized
YouTube: @SodomOfficial
Photo courtesy of BMG






Greyhawk – flying out of Seattle, Washington positive words with bassist/founder Darin Wall

Absolute Underground: Good afternoon! Set the scene. Where are you?

Darin Wall: At SeaTac Airport, back from Las Vegas. My plane was delayed. I had a fun weekend in Vegas. Went to fancy restaurants, saw a couple shows, good times.

AU: Vegas delivers! Let's kick it off with the origin story, how did you form, and name the band?

DW: I moved to Seattle in 2016, and met our guitar player, Jesse Berlin. At the time, I was looking to form a stoner or doom band. Because that's what I was playing before when I lived in Vancouver, BC.

But I found this kid playing Yngwie Malmsteen and Racer X covers on the internet. And I was like, "Whoa, dude, I want to see if he'll jam with me". So I hit him up, and he asked: "Can you play Malmsteen? And I said "Yeah". We started putting ideas together. We wrote a little EP. It took us until 2018 to get a full lineup together. I wound up playing in a few other bands. And some of us are old school D&D players. We looked at the name "Greyhawk" and were surprised to see that no

band had taken it.

AU: How did this album come together, what was your theme?

DW: The title is one I've had in the back of my head for a long time. I'm a big Manowar fan. I like epic. I'm a big Dio fan. I like things that are big in scope, grandiose, over the top themes.

We lost our singer in 2024, Rev Taylor, left the band to pursue his professional opera career full time. He was a deep baritone voice. We put out an ad for a singer. Our new singer, Anthony Corso, was the first one who answered the ad, and first to audition.

Let me tell you, when you hear: "It's never the first guy" – they're lying! Sometimes it's the first! He joined, and has more of a high Michael Kiske, Eric Adams, Rob Halford type singing voice.

So we had to pivot the style to suit that. We started writing a bit more grandiose, more along the lines of European power metal. And to me, this music just fit that title. The song "Warriors of Greyhawk" was right on, as the title track. It embodies the energy of the album.

This band's been through so much. We've been doing it for eight years. We've endured things that bands should never have to deal with.

And we're still here, and we're still Warriors of Greyhawk! We're still standing and we're still doing it in 2026. We've had to go through global pandemics, and shootings, and court cases, and all kinds of crazy stuff.

We still love each other. We're still doing this. It's an enduring brotherhood, that stands the test of time.

AU: We saw you at Armstrong Metal Fest in B.C. in 2023. Stellar show! It was a big breath of fresh air in that lineup. It was such a different genre that wasn't really represented at that festival. Can you tell us some stories of playing

festivals and playing with different genres and how Greyhawk has navigated that?

DW: You hit the nail on the head with Armstrong. I know Jesse Valstar, for years. And he booked us in that spot on that day very intentionally, because it's a very much a tech death festival, right?

And then at this point in the night is when people are starting to feel their day of imbibing in beverages, so to speak. And they want to party, right? So when you go from all these loud, crazy death metal bands and you put on a band that's going to bring the tempo up, lighten the mood and get everybody rocking out a little bit.

As far as playing with bands of different genres, we're a power metal band, but we like and respect all kinds of different music. We've played shows with grindcore bands, death metal, stoner rock, mainstream radio rock bands. If they're good people, it's all rock and roll at its core, we're always happy to play no matter who else is on the bill.

AU: A diverse lineup brings different fans together, to experience new things that you might not know.

DW: Your job as a band, maybe you're in front of an audience that isn't really "your audience". It's on you to win them over. We take this approach that whatever stage we're on, we're going to bring the fire, we're going to bring a party, we're going to shred really hard and blow everyone's minds.

And even if you're the grumpiest, obscure black metal guy in the world, we're still going to make you have fun whether you like it or not! (laughs)

AU: Is there a way with your writing to write about struggles of modern times? Not trying to get super political, but maybe you guys need to fight some frost giants, some ICE



ABSOLUTE METAL

warriors, if you will.

DW: We might have to, man! It might not be outright obvious, "Hey, this is a specific modern day struggle that we're dealing with". The message is there. Whatever darkness you're facing, there's a light at the end. You just gotta fight it.

AU: Cool bands from Seattle. New and old, who should we check out?

DW: Queensrÿche! Another one: Metal Church. They've done us favours and given us gigs. Newer ones, Skelator. Myself and Rob Steinway, our guitar player, are former members.

Solicitor, our fantastic label mates. Extreme side, Xoth is a cool melodic death metal band.

Shout out to Hellslaughter, Telomyras, and Rope.

AU: What's the Canadian, and touring plans, in general?

DW: Very good chance we will be playing the Commodore sometime in 2026. I can't reveal it yet!

AU: That's okay. Cast your spells wizard! Thanks for taking the time. Last words to Canadian metalheads:

DW: Canadian heavy metal has long been amazing. There's lots of musicians up there for heavy metal fans to be proud of. We love playing Canada, and we will be back there as soon as we can to play for all the amazing metal fans!

- ERIK LINDHOLM

greyhawkmetal.bandcamp.com

[instagram.com/greyhawkmetal](https://www.instagram.com/greyhawkmetal)

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

Photo Credit: Ian Phares Photography



**Mountain Collective American Tour 2017:
The Storm of the Century Part 7
Time To Ride Telluride**

By Brydo "RV" Parker

A quick recap of The Storm of the Century. This massive storm cycle has been at the RV's stern end blowing us where we want to go. We are living every precious second of this once in a lifetime tour like it is our last. This Cycle in the Storm continues to give us more and more deep drifting snow. We left off last time leaving Taos, New Mexico after some serious big big dumps of snow, greasy Gorilla Glue joints and a rockslide that nearly sent us back to Canada in body bags.

Now with our three working RV brakes in the 35 foot 40 year old RV, which we are in risking our lives every second we are on the road. We are



now heading to Telluride and then on to Aspen to ride two days at each mountain on our Mountain Collective Pass. We crossed into Colorado on highway 160 at a mere 25 miles an hour riding on rapidly disintegrating tire chains. I was keeping an eye out for a chain repair person, they hang out at highway pull outs and chain up areas. But what we found was a chain repair guy in his camper van in the parking lot of Hesperus Ski Area. What a bonus! And night skiing was in full swing. We obviously pulled in to check it out and we were really surprised the price tag was only 30 bucks each for the lift tickets and 50 bucks to totally redo the chains while we were riding, and the chain repair man did a great job on fixing our chains.

We schlepped our wet gear back on and rode this dynamite roadside mountain like out of control maniacs. A single two seat chairlift that accesses a cliff band that drops down several glades to steep slopes. We went straight to the cliff band and hucked ourselves off it into 3 feet of fresh powder, landing clean we rode down to a big bump garden. This one was a new one for Ira and I as the bumps were actually old VW Beetles with plywood in the windows. This was a super fun jib park. We rode until the last chair then got back on the road to Telluride.

We made a big mistake, that I became aware of later, when we went right at the fork to Telluride, but had we gone left we would have gone to Wolf Creek. This is the biggest ski area in Colorado. It wasn't then! But it is now.

We rolled into Telluride about 11 pm and we were



looking for anywhere to pull over and park the big rig but we were striking out as we rolled into the centre of town, the end of a box canyon that Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid pulled a big bank heist here ripping off a mining payroll and horse loads of cash and gold coins.

We found a closed down for the winter RV park so we jimmied the unlocked lock and let ourselves in. The place was deserted and it was right next to a flat ski run with just enough downhill grade to let us slide right into town and ski lift central.

We planned on riding down to the lifts first thing in the morning. We filled out a camping site form and put 8 American bucks in a little envelope and deposited it in the cash box. We knew someone must be around because it was freshly plowed and groomed.

So we grabbed the most rock star spot and settled in and got our riding gear drying out. Picture this, the interior of an old RV with every cupboard door or splinter hanging with stinky gloves, socks, jackets, pants, toques and goggles. If we got pulled over the cops would definitely take pictures. There was shit everywhere but I have got to say when you drive for 8 to 12 hrs after riding that stuff gets pretty dry, also it reeks like dope for the entire tour.

We wake up and get dressed in the very cold RV as the heater went out overnight. Grabbed our pre-packed packs and bolted. We rode right to town and got our lift tickets 200 ft away from the lift and town, could not be better parking. All the huge fat roaches we sacrifice to the Norse snow god Ullar is paying off. Telluride the ski mountain is a little like Whistler as there are two mountain base destinations. Telluride town and the mountain

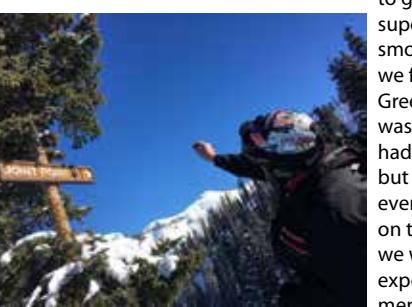


village market plaza. The old town is old. Lots to do in Telluride like the fire festival street performers and artists, cool stores and great food. There are four free gondolas that you can ride

to get anywhere around town, super cool and a great place to smoke phattys. On that subject we found a weed store called the Green Room. We found out this was a chain of grass stores that had very very expensive weed but some of the most powerful ever. We smoked a \$50 joint up on the hill that was so powerful we were both hallucinating and experienced an almost complete mental shut down. I could barely ride for a solid 29 minutes. We

found a run with the name Joint in it and we threw a very very small roach to Ullar. Being that high and that high up on a blue bird day was awesome.

Day Two: We got an early start on riding the other side of Telluride. There is a lot of terrain to cover and all of it is fantastic. The runs are steep and wide with very good grooming. You could point it off a roller and float like an Olympic ski jumper only a few feet off the ground but air forever. The trees loaded deeply with fresh powder were a blast. Telluride is a must go to ski destination.



Next issue Aspen and on to the mighty Utah.

mountaincollective.com

WITCHKILLER

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- WITCHKILLER TOUR DATES -

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LUCKY BAR - VICTORIA BC

FEB 28 WITH OPHELIA FALLING / VALLEY OF DESPAIR
GLOBE LIVE STUDIO - NANAIMO BC

APRIL 18 HYPERSPACE METAL FESTIVAL VII
RICKSHAW THEATRE - VANCOUVER BC

APRIL 24 'ECHOES FROM THE PIT'
BOOK RELEASE RAINBOW GRILL - OTTAWA ON

f

KOKANEE VALLEY RACE SERIES

By Ross Hansen

Photo by Eric Poulin

I was welcomed to Whistler/Blackcomb by Vail Resorts to report on the Kokanee Valley Race Series on Blackcomb Mountain. This race series has been going on for 25 years, and this open competition draws competitors of all skill levels which creates some interesting matchups and interesting stories. After the races were done, during the awards ceremony for that day, I met Enrico who was happy to share a bit about himself and his experiences in the races. Enrico is originally from Italy and has been living in and around Whistler since 2012. When asked of his experiences with the Kokanee Valley Race Series, he responded, "The first time I did the race, and I come from a ski racing background, I finished, and I'm checking the time and I got 2 seconds out from a 40-45 sec run from a 62 year old dude and I was like 'who the fuck is this guy?' Another old guy turns to me and says 'well... were you in the Olympics?' I was like, 'no dude', well the 62-year-old guy was." Enrico, The Italian Stallion of Ski Competition, has settled down in B.C.'s mountain life and doesn't appear ready to turn away from it any time soon. "Kokanee races are fun" he said, "[There are] lots of old men taking it

super seriously, they all wear race suits! It's crazy! Last race I met another former Olympian, Joy Fera, she's 75 years old! Apparently, she competed in the 1976 Olympics in rowing! Dude, she is 75 and she raced 2 runs that day! She has all my respect!" The Kokanee races seem like a blast for anyone heading up to Whistler/Blackcomb looking to put their skills



to the test. While up there, make sure to check out the Fire & Ice event, featuring local ski and snowboard high-flyers who shoot themselves through a ring of fire showcasing amazing tricks for everyone to enjoy. These take place in the evenings at the base of the Whistler gondola in the village. I had a lot of fun that day. If you find yourself up there, check it out, also check out the karaoke at Crystal Lounge if it's on while you're there. It's a locals (sorry locals) party, it's packed and it's a blast.



WORLD SKI & SNOWBOARD FESTIVAL

WSSF - Apr 06, 2026 - Apr 12, 2026
Whistler Blackcomb

World Ski and Snowboard Festival is here again. The most fun you can have at the most amazing ski and snowboard spectacle in all of North America.

It's that time of year again to fill your pockets with free swag. My favourite events are off the snow. The 72 Hour Filmmaker Showdown, presented by YETI, tops my list followed by the Pro Photographer Showdown, presented by Arc'teryx runs a close second, followed by the



crazy slush cup, presented by Corona. Intersection is a pro event filmed by teams of invited filmmakers and they have a couple weeks to get their film finished. This year our Absolute Underground photog on the scene was Dave Alexander, a famous Whistler local. The Saudan Couloir Race Extreme, presented by Helly Hansen is so extreme it is awesome and sketchy. What I find is that when I first came to Whistler, the Saudan Couloir Race Extreme was dominated by pro men from all over the world. Now it's soccer moms and grannies who dominate and post historically better times. New this year The Grind, produced by Canada Snowboard, a jib session of epic proportion. When I watch this event it is impressive in size and the skill level is definitely not dominated by granny, just pure pros. Outdoor Live Music Series, presented by Rockstar is off the hook with local Canadian bands Moka Only and Swollen Members making their annual

pilgrimage to the WSSF this year. We had great weather and thousands of excited skiers, mountains, and music. Fun seekers descended to the village and took in the sights and sounds of the electrified eye candy all about. This has been happening since 1997 but before that it was called The Westbeach Classic. I have competed many times in the 72 Hour Filmmaker Showdown film fest. Never won it but snagged top ten a couple times. As the years roll by and I get older the one thing that anchors me in the here and now is WSSF. If you want to feel young again the energy in Whistler is addictive and contagious. A huge thanks to the Gibbons crew who revived and blew new life into this Canadian classic event.

This year's event will be even better and bigger. I will see ya on the slopes, in the mosh pit, during slush cup, or at a show.

-Brydo Parker

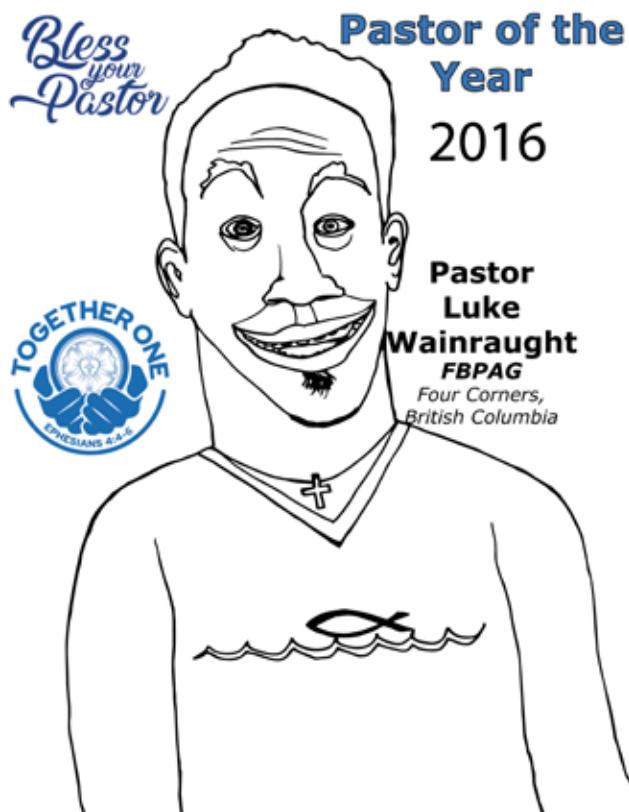
wssf.com
whistlerblackcomb.com

Photo Credit: Dave Alexander





People's Commercial Radio Podcast



Telephone Interview
with Pastor Luke of the
First Pentecostal Baptist
Assembly of God in Four
Corners, BC.

Pastor Luke is a pastor in Four Corners, BC. Other than the fact he left a message on our answering machine.

Absolute Underground: Hello Pastor Luke
Pastor Luke: Hello right back to you, fine fellow!
AU: Pastor Luke, glad to have you on. You called late last week hoping to "clear the air" and added something about advertising? Apologies, parts of the message were indecipherable.
PL: Yes, and thank you for accommodating me. As a Pastor and City Councilman in our town of Four Corners, it is my privilege and duty to protect the minds and bodies of its citizens. In keeping with this mandate, I have to share a word of warning about a podcast calling itself *People's Commercial Radio*. Some talentless scoundrels have invaded our privacy. They are broadcasting our personal affairs all over the airwaves. None of which is true, of course. They are advertising in your newspaper as we speak.
AU: Let me try to understand, is there a legal reason to prevent us printing these ads? Or something else we should be aware of?
PL: Yes! Be aware of false information! The recordings on those uploads portray our quiet corner of BC as teetering on the edge of sanity. We come across as evil-minded, savagely lusty, beyond scruples of any kind! The audio maliciously refers to us as Christian Nationalists, can you believe it?!

AU: Are you saying none of these portrayals are true? Because, we could run an ad stating such.
PL: Maybe we will run an ad. Maybe we will sue

them! Son, legality is a very grey subject. Open to interpretation. What's lust, really? Is loitering outside a change room to catch a glimpse of a firm set of nipples considered "lust" these days? Is diverting the water supply away from poor people "evil," actually? Is it fascist to want a state to follow only God's holy law, which is the only truth, it says so right there in the Bible?
AU: Yeah, I think so.
PL: See, that's why people like yourself are unable to understand the ways of God, you THINK all the time, way too much. You have to turn that curiosity switch off if you want to avoid eternal damnation. That's just basic scripture.
AU: Are you planning to elaborate, or are we able to wrap this up?
PL: Son, we weren't created to think, we were created to obey. Look what thinking brought to that daughter of Jezebel, Eve. She chose to either have blessings abundantly from Christ the Lord, or eat an apple and have to squeeze a baby through a hole the size of a nickel forever. All of that just to know the difference between good and evil? Plain dumb if you ask me.

AU: I'm beginning to think things are not alright in Four Corners. Did you say you were on the City Council?
PL: Indeed! We are prospering more than ever! Jobless rate is at zero, the brothel is under amazing new management and churches are packed. Packed to the doors with fleshy, gyrating, impressionable... hips..... lips.



People's Commercial Radio Podcast

AU: Pastor Luke? Are you still there?
PL: Hi! I'd ask you to come visit, but the bridge washed out. Act of God they say.
AU: Thanks for chatting today.
PL: Pleasure is mine! Remember, don't listen to that trash podcast, People's Commercial Radio. It's all fallacies. Would you like me to put you on the church's email list?
AU: No, I'll pass, thank you.
PL: If you change your mind I can pass along a promo code to include pictures of myself in various scenes and poses.
AU: ...
PL: Ok, buh bye!



People's Commercial Radio Podcast

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MY DRUTHERS

Debut Album *Coming Up 3's* from Punk Rock Shantymen and Rabble-Rousers

By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: For those just discovering My Druthers, tell us who you are, where you're from and what you do behind the scenes.

Stuart Fensom: Sup Marisa! We're a band (rebel collective) from New London, CT comprised of anywhere from one to six of these folks:

Stuart Fensom: boat varnisher, grape grower, drink slinger

Jon Logan: grape grower, executive chef

Dan Spurr: vineyard manager, farmer

John Grimaldi: drone pilot (photography not murder)

Jeff Butler: professional musician, jack of all trades

Charlie McShane: sensei & 5th degree black belt, Brazilian Jiu Jitsu & Krav Maga

AU: My Druthers draws on labour songs, sea shanties, rebel music and punk—what makes these old traditions feel alive and relevant today?

SF: Uh-oh, is punk rock already an old tradition?!? Actually thought I was joking when I wrote that but hell, I guess punk really is about to turn 50. Damn.

I think labour songs and rebel music are about as relevant and important today as they've ever been, there just seem to be far fewer folks participating. Organized labour has been on the ropes since the Reagan years, and man, those

motherfuckers took absolutely everything from working people...almost entirely erased the middle class in a single generation, it's really difficult to comprehend the scale. What's even harder to comprehend is that working men and women keep voting for these sons of bitches, it's like Stockholm Syndrome or something. But I think it's worth it to remind people that labour anthems & protest songs helped define generations of Americans, and we used to more or less all be on the same side keeping the bosses in check. My guess is that it will come back around again eventually, but sadly it will probably take us all being replaced by robots & AI for that to happen.

AU: Congrats on the release of your debut album, *Coming Up 3's!* (August 1, 2025). There's a strong sense of joy and defiance. Tell us more!

SF: Thank you! I like how you put that...we definitely do embrace both joy & defiance. That marriage wasn't something that was planned, I think it just grew out of necessity. I'd wager all six of us have played in punk bands over the years that channelled roughly 100% defiance, 0% joy. And that shit was awesome.

But when you bear witness to something like that which has been unraveling since 2016 — when it becomes personal in the sense that you have friends and family members who have decided that fascism is fun, kindness is weakness, morality is irrelevant—shit just got a little too real. It's so bewildering, dystopian and downright depressing that you absolutely must remind yourself to find joy in your music, your art, your life, your defiance. I know I've certainly felt myself evolving from "fuck the man, protest or no test at all!" to, "good lord just bring me an ounce of happiness or I'm gonna slit my goddamn wrists."

"We're just punks who friggin' love sea shanties."

— Stuart Fensom, via *None of Us Saints*

AU: A lot of these songs are built for collective

voices—crowds, pub rooms, fists on tables. How does that communal energy shape the way you write or arrange material?

SF: It's always at the forefront. We really try to mesh the work songs, which were typically sung functionally in order to synchronize the actions of a work crew (sailors hoisting, loggers chopping & sawing, railwaymen driving spikes, prisoners breaking rocks, etc.), with the rowdy liveliness and care-free spirit of pub songs, which were sung simply to cut loose, wrap an arm around your mate, clink glasses and just have some fun forgetting about the work day or the previous voyage.

I basically imagine trying to take a late night, grimy-ass, whiskey-soaked pub/brothel from the 1700s and put it right upon the deck of a functioning tall ship of the same era. Have the work meet the party and let the songs and the chaos ensue!

"If you're craving energetic shanties that honor the tradition without getting corny, hoist the sails for this one—it's a stormer."

— Murph, *Shite n' Onions*

AU: Punk has always borrowed from folk traditions, but shanties feel especially physical and vocal. What do these songs allow you to express that a straight punk setup doesn't?

SF: These are good questions. And yes, spot on. The physicality and vocal-driven aspect of sea shanties is 100% what drew me to this music originally back in 'bout '08. If I'm being honest, I never really enjoyed playing guitar... still don't, which is probably why every single other member of the band/collective is a much better guitarist than me. I only ever started playing in my youth so that I would have something to sing over and write lyrics around. Never sang real pretty either, but dammit I loved hollerin! Sea shanties checked all the boxes for me.

A straight punk setup gives you so much to hide behind. Your instrument & amplifier, your bandmates' instruments & amplifiers, a loud-ass PA, an even louder-ass drum kit...

The first time you strip all that stuff away and just start singing a cappella? It's absolutely fucking terrifying. This album probably would have been released about 12 years earlier if I'd simply had the courage to take it to the stage back then. All those years spent in punk bands—the transition was just too jarring & uncomfortable, took me a while.

Of course now that's what I love most about it though. And the breaking down of those barriers cuts through in other ways as well that I didn't expect. The barrier between you and the audience is tremendously diminished, and that is a truly special thing. The best shows we play are often totally unplugged with just a pub full of folks belting out the lyrics best they can.

AU: Many of the characters on the record—workers, sailors, outcasts—feel timeless. Do you see them as historical figures, or reflections of people you recognize today?

SF: Oh those guys are still around, hell we're six of 'em. But yeah, full disclosure, whether writing original songs or arranging old ones, I usually do try to put myself into the shoes of folks who existed in far earlier times—attempt to recreate the mindset that people had not just before cell phones and the internet, but before airplanes, automobiles...hell, even electricity. So much has changed so quickly during the past century. I try to tap into the brains of those who came before that, write songs & stories from their perspectives.

AU: You've taken My Druthers from Irish festivals to pubs across the U.S. and beyond. How does performing in new cities and countries shape the way you play and connect with audiences?

SF: Funny you should ask! As I am currently sitting at a coffee shop in Saigon, Vietnam. I feel



like my main goal in life for 'bout the past 15 years has been to try and find a way to get the hell out of America as often as is feasible and financially possible. Spending time in foreign countries has provided the highest form of therapy and a return to sanity that I could ever imagine. Every time I come back to the U.S. I wonder what the hell I am doing there. My Druthers have given us a way to support ourselves as we travel, share music and just get to exist in places other than this.

But shit, sorry, you asked about connecting with different audiences. Tell you what, I'll say it is something I've definitely become curious about and attuned to. Really kind of fascinating and educational for me now, and I do pay attention, whereas before I never really gave a shit. Playing in punk bands, covered in leather & spikes, we gave absolutely zero fucks what anyone thought or how anyone reacted at any given time or place. "Here we are, we're pissed, let's drink some beer and smash some things, or how 'bout this fuck you." Now though I really am interested in what the different audiences are into, what makes 'em tick, what their struggles are, which songs they identify with. That's part of the joy of touring I think, and one of the reasons I love it so much.

AU: With *Coming Up 3's* now out in the world, what do you hope listeners take away beyond the sing-alongs?

SF: Feels strange to say, but I kinda just want to remind people of what music used to be, what it can be. Doesn't even have to be good! Just feels like we've lost something, ya know? We don't need DJs & computers to make music, man. We don't even need electricity. There ain't anything necessarily wrong with all that, but by god now more than ever I think we need real community, real friends, voices, anger, happiness, energy, memory...something raw, unbridled and human. Whatever your art is, keep it fucking honest. And don't forget to find joy in your defiance.

AU: What's next for My Druthers—any upcoming tours, new songs or projects you're excited about?

SF: Pretty stoked for this run of shows we're 'bout to do in Vietnam! And in March we got an East Coast U.S. tour coming down the pike. For me personally, touring and working on new songs are what I love most about all this. The touring part speaks for itself but being in a basement with some of your best buds, drinking beer and trying to arrange some damn song that came to you in a dream or hit you in a rainstorm... I just love that shit man.

AU: Where can people buy your music and merchandise and how can they connect with My Druthers online?

SF: Come to our shows! Got tons of shwag on the sling when we play live in the U.S. and overseas we travel pretty light cuz we use buses, trains, motorbikes.

For vinyl & downloads we always encourage folks to head on over to **Bandcamp: mydruthers. bandcamp.com** but we're up and running on all the evil streamers too.

Connect with us on social media: instagram. com/mydruthers. I know it's inherently sucky, but so are most things.

Marisa, thank you, Ira and AU so much. I enjoyed answering these questions, and really appreciate what y'all do. **PEACE**

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MIKE GITTER

Frontiers Label Group Launches BLKIIIBLK Records

Interview by Ray MacKay

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

Mike Gitter: Frontiers Label Group Global Head of A&R, heading up the BLKIIIBLK label. I don't like the word "famous," to be honest. It's an ego stroke, and that was never the reason I got into this. If anything, music, the way I first got involved, really, really involved, was about broadening one's world. Putting your hands on the wheel and creating something fresh, new, and ultimately yours. Music became a vehicle for personal and artistic change. That was the lesson I learned coming out of hardcore in the early '80s and the Boston hardcore scene.

I've had a long history that dates back to my first stab at things as a fanzine writer, editor, and publisher from 1983 to 1988, largely with my own zine, xXx Fanzine. I also have a history as a music journalist for the likes of Thrasher, Kerrang!, RIP, and many, many more. It's really been the last 33 years, more or less, working on the label side as an A&R guy for the likes of Atlantic, Roadrunner, Century Media, and Razor & Tie. I've been blessed to be a passenger and occasional creative partner to the likes of Lorna Shore, Killswitch Engage, Bad

Religion, Sanguisugabogg, HIM, Starlet, Ice-T's Body Count, Opeth, Megadeth (at Roadrunner), and Cradle of Filth. The list goes on.

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

MG: Boston, Massachusetts is where I'm from, albeit I left for NYC in 1989 and I've been living in Los Angeles for the past 16 years.

Boston, historically, is a great rock town with an incredible punk and hardcore legacy. Aerosmith, Jonathan Richman, Mission of Burma, Only Living Witness, the Bosstones. I was very much right place, right time. I grew up experiencing the raw energy of our early hardcore scene, from bands like SS Decontrol, Jerry's Kids, Negative FX, and Siege, all the way to Slapshot and Blood for Blood. That's not to shortchange the Massachusetts metal scene of the '80s, which included bands like Wargasm, Slaughter Shack, and Formicide.

AU: You've recently been appointed Global Head of A&R for BLKIIIBLK Records. What can you tell us about the work you'll be doing?

MG: Frontiers is a great company with a great history in rock and a global reach. From the owner of the label on down, it really is a company of passion and one at a pivot point. With BLKIIIBLK, I feel we're going to fill a space in the label landscape that is wide open. We have the potential to become a successful, vital, and global home for metal and extreme music that spans the most modern, the grimmest, and the legends like Megadeth or Forbidden who are still making some of their best music.

AU: Who has BLKIIIBLK signed already and what can we expect from them?

MG: The foundation and steel girders were already in place when I stepped in, and on the A&R side the credit for that goes to a gent named Tom Lipsky, who, together with our ownership and staff, brought the Megadeth and Biohazard deals home. It was a very easy runway for BLKIIIBLK to begin to take off from.

AU: You work in A&R, or artists and repertoire,

the "talent scouts" of the music industry. How did you start working in A&R?

MG: In my case, it started as a journalist writing for magazines and covering bands that came out of the same world as me: Rollins Band, Helmet, and a little band called Nirvana, who in 1991 made a record called *Nevermind* that changed the musical and cultural landscape and gave a lot of us who came from the underground some very cool new jobs.

AU: Over your career, you've worked with artists such as Lorna Shore, Killswitch Engage, Bad Religion, and were involved with Ice-T's Body Count. How did you sign such artists?

MG: Each band, each situation is different. Bad Religion and Body Count were already fully formed bands with discographies, accolades, and fanbases. Lorna Shore and Killswitch were much, much earlier in their careers and trajectories when I signed them.

AU: How's it been working with Dave Mustaine and Megadeth on their final studio album?

MG: That band was signed and A&R'd by a guy named Tom Lipsky, so I don't know about that record specifically. I worked with Megadeth on two records while at Roadrunner: *United Abominations* and *Endgame*. It was great. Dave Mustaine is the real deal. Endlessly creative. Iconic. A real artist who has maintained and explored what Megadeth is for four decades. Working with Dave and Andy Sneap on those records was a great creative pairing. That's standing in the shadow of metal royalty.

AU: You must have many memorable stories from your years in the music industry.

MG: Let's just say I've had the elation of success, the agony of defeat, been to many, many places around the world, and worked alongside some great and legendary artists and professionals. The most salient point is that no two bands are the same, and every time you sign a band and work on a record, it's a new lesson in human dynamics.

AU: How do bands or musicians find you?

MG: I'm super easy to find on Instagram and Facebook, or simply come up and say hello.

AU: Anything upcoming to promote?

BLKIIIBLK RECORDS

MG: Sure. BLKIIIBLK itself. We're kicking things off with an incredible success with Megadeth and some of the highest sales and chart numbers the band has ever had in its history. Over the next year we have a run of new releases, including records from Nunslaughter and Forbidden, a Cro-Mags 40th-anniversary re-recording of their classic album *Age of Quarrel*, new music from Unto Others, and great debuts from the UK's Tortured Demon and LA's Thrown Into Exile. There's a lot coming.

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

MG: I'm a huge sci-fi, fantasy, and horror nerd. Get me talking about pre-Star Wars sci-fi flicks, the work of Frank Frazetta, Jack Kirby, or H.P. Lovecraft, and I will drag you down a deep, dark rabbit hole. I also apparently go out to gigs a lot. I still love it and I'm not one bit cynical. I love finding new bands. Seeing a great band, new or old, in the raw is the best feeling for me. It's the artistic space where the rubber meets the road. You can't lie.

AU: Anything else to mention?

MG: Yes. Fuck Trump. Smash ICE. Buy vinyl. Stream music. Go to gigs. Fight for your right to party, listen to metal, throw horns, and be kind to your neighbors while blasting BLKIIIBLK product, or anything you damn want, very, very loudly.

AU: Any final words for our readers?

MG: Uh... bang the head that doesn't bang. Make an effort. Show your hardware. C'mon nerds, where are those quotes and lifelong credos from?

instagram.com/thegitter

www.blkiiiblk.com

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CHRONIC FATIGUE

Who's Next

Chronic Fatigue is a four piece band featuring members of Vancouver-based DIY mainstays Kid Lucifer, The Khans and Bloom Shack. This project boasts a no-holds barred, no-frills, classic punk rock sound mixed with the influence of experimental hip-hop, with a wide collection of old and new influences ranging from Dead Boys and Fear to JPEGMAFIA and Death Grips. Over two years of playing live, the band has garnered

attention for their high-energy, interactive and powerful live shows. Classic punk ethos mixed with explosive youthful energy is the name of the game. "Who's Next" is the latest single from Vancouver-based DIY punk band Chronic Fatigue, the first off the band's upcoming debut full-length album due out later this year.

CHRONIC FATIGUE

"We're here to stand in

peace
against
opposition

Using all our voices to
state our position

People being snatched
off the streets, what's
the mission?

To keep us all scared, in
fear of the system

Try to lock us up but

the mind is never prisoned

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With "Who's Next", the band has a lot to say. The pulse-pounding track builds slowly from a hip-hop oriented groove, exploding into a rousing, electrifying chorus. Vocalist Sam Patterson flows earnestly and urgently about the dark times we all find ourselves in, the feeling of hopelessness that can so easily overtake us, and the way making our voices heard and standing together to fight against tyranny, racism and bigotry can not only provide a voice for the voiceless, but imbue individuals with a sense of purpose. The song offers a hopeful message about the power we have as a collective, fighting for what we believe in:

They can't scare us 'cause the mind is never
prisoned"

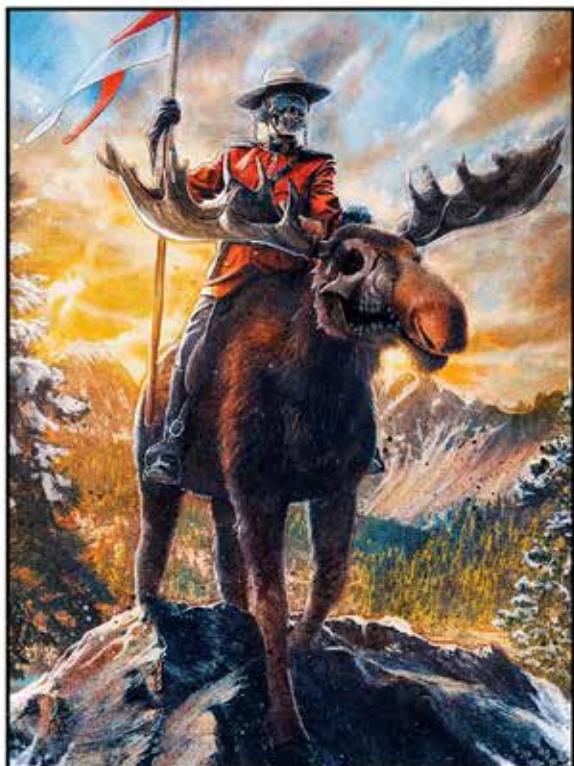
The song directly attacks the alt-right, unafraid to take a side and take a stand for truth and justice. But this isn't just a statement. It's also a headbanger. Sugar for the pill.

On this new track the band drew from the increasingly present influence of experimental hip-hop artists like JPEGMAFIA, Death Grips and Danny Brown in their sound, as well as punk, hardcore and nu-metal bands like Turnstile, Silly Goose, Rage Against The Machine and their ever-expanding group of peers in the Vancouver underground music scene that can't help but inspire and push them - Chopping Spree, Sundress, Black Pontiac, Felisha and the Jazz Rejects, Mean Bikini, just to name a few.

The track explodes with hardcore punk energy while maintaining a taut hip-hop groove throughout, building and releasing tension over the course of the sub-four-minute runtime. The track has been a fan favourite since they first started performing it live, and thanks to the work of engineer and producer Matt Roach of Rain City Recorders, the fierce energy the song commands live has been captured and translated perfectly onto the record without missing a beat or a drop of sweat.

You can listen to the new single here:
[youtube.com/watch?v=_I9IDwp_sCs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_I9IDwp_sCs)
[instagram.com/chronic.fatigue.band](https://www.instagram.com/chronic.fatigue.band)
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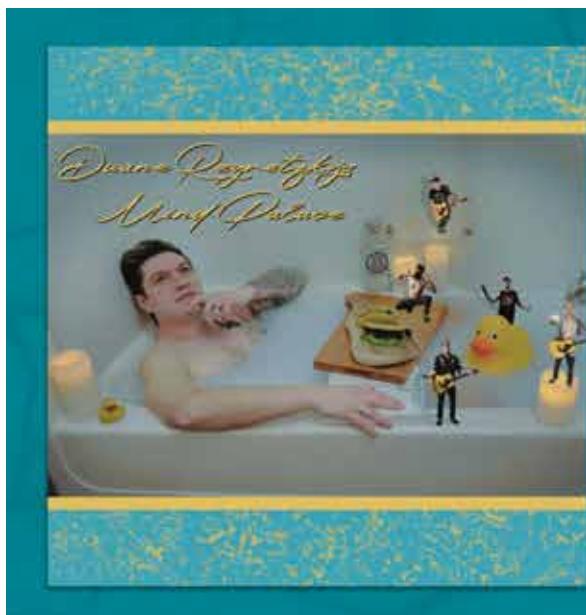
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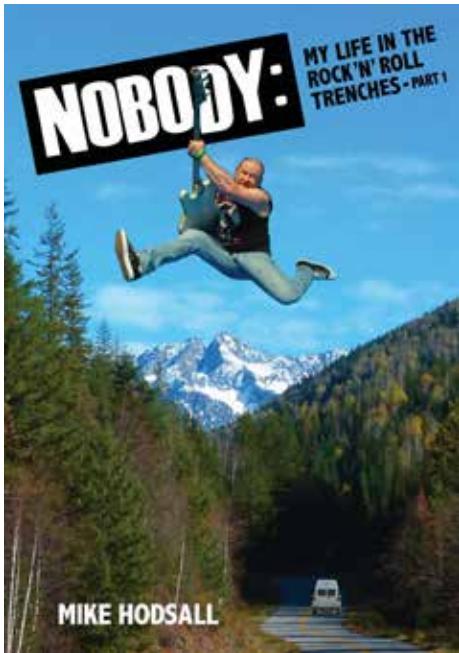
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MIKE HODSALL

'NOBODY?' THINK AGAIN! D.O.A. bassist Mike Hodsall Releases Engaging Rock 'n' Roll Memoir *Nobody*

By Ferdy Bolland

"I started writing the seeds of the book way back, maybe 15 years ago," says D.O.A.'s bassist Mike "Maggot" Hodsall of his newly-released music-career memoir *Nobody: My Life in the Rock N' Roll Trenches, Part I*.

"From my earliest gigs, when I was playing in Vancouver with Eugené's Axe, I always jotted down everything that happened into little gig diaries - which band I was in, which venue we were playing, who the other bands on the bill were. I was rummaging around in some old boxes and I came across all my old tour calendars. I'd kept all of them. Stacks of them, going back to '99. I flipped through them and it jogged my memory of where I've been and what I've done. So I just started writing, because I really enjoy writing. After a while I thought, 'I don't have enough history to my life yet!' I felt I hadn't done enough to warrant writing a book, so I shelved the idea... but I kept it in my head that one day I was going to write a book. I felt I'd already acquired a lot of stories at this point, but I wanted more to come."

Hodsall's stories are an amazing scroll of colorful and earsplitting odysseys that carried him far and away, from the West Coast to the smalltown artsy funkiness of Nelson BC, where his fellow musical-miscreant buddies recruited him into BC/DC; that band exploded into North America's most popular tribute to AC/DC (but you knew that), who became fierce road warriors trekking all across Canada, the United States, Mexico, China and Thailand. Hodsall (under his lead-guitar alias of Madcow) duckwalked and headbanged across every stage from coast to coast, adorned in a spotted cow costume. Go figure. After BC/DC was established, Hodsall carved his way into the worlds of hardcore punk with his band Circle the Wagons, who racked up manifold adventures of their own.

That would have been enough of a legend for one musician, but Hodsall and his BC/DC drummer cohort Paddy Duddy won an even bigger rock'n'roll lottery ticket when hardcore-punk demigod Joe "Shithead" Keithley came out of musical retirement and recruited them both as D.O.A.'s new rhythm section - a position they've both held since 2014: the longest-running (and possibly the all-time best) rhythm section the band has had. And so the globetrotting whirlwind ramped up tenfold. As of *Nobody*'s release, Hodsall has performed over 1,300 live concerts worldwide. Finally: there's enough gathered stories to get to work.



"And so in 2024 we were cruising down Interstate 5 in the D.O.A. van, heading south from Seattle to California, and I was bored," recalls Hodsall. "Some people sleep in the van, but I don't. As such, I've seen every fucking garbage can from British Columbia to China. I know every inch of every road because I just can't sleep while we're driving. So I was bored and I didn't have a book with me to read. Suddenly I thought, 'I'm gonna start writing that book of mine, right here, right now.' That's generally how things happen for me. An idea will pop into my head right out of nowhere, and I'll just fucking run with it. So I pulled out my smartphone and I wrote the first 8,000 words with my thumbs. And I thought, 'Hey, this is going well!'

"I picked up a laptop as soon as I could and carried on - in the van, in airports, in Green Rooms, on airplanes, in hotels, anywhere I could. Whenever I was home between tours I'd keep writing while I was sitting on the couch. I really enjoyed the experience of getting this all down. When I got to the end of the book, I didn't



consciously realize that I was finishing up. I was writing and writing and typing and typing, and talking about NOFX, since we'd just played with them on their final weekend, and that's when it came to me. "Oh - I just wrote the end of my book."

I didn't plot anything out as to how the book was going to

end, but when I considered NOFX's retirement, it struck me as the perfect analogy of how I should wrap up the story."

And it's a story that needs to be told. It has always been extremely difficult to operate as an original-songwriting musician in Canada - a sprawling, vast, empty country with only 20 big cities worth mentioning and 2,000 towns you never want to return to. It's far easier to chase your rock dreams in the United States or Europe. In Canada our homegrown musicians have to struggle three times as hard to gain half the reward. And even the lowest-common-denominator choice of hacking out Trooper and April Wine covers in dismal bar bands dried up for real almost 30 years ago. Canadian musicians do it for the love, and they certainly don't do it for the money. It's one part luck and three parts stubborn determination. So, when a heartwarming story like Hodsall's spreads across the nation, it should be embraced as the encouraging feel-good story that every metalhead, every punk, every indie rocker, every barstool folkie and every trailer-park rapper should take to heart. If Mike Hodsall can do it, then everybody else in Canada has the same chances of doing it too. And it's all spelled out in *Nobody*.

"After I finished the bulk of the text, I contacted an author friend of mine who was knowledgeable about editing, but he didn't get a chance to look at the draft for almost three months. While I was waiting, I thought, 'I'm gonna compile that master list of all the shows I've played that I've always wanted to do!' I'm always archiving things and scribbling down lists, so

I started going back through that big stack of calendars, and the gig diaries. I went online to the Wayback Machine, where there's countless mirror-versions of old defunct websites from years and years ago. I checked through all the old sites of my old bands to cross-reference my notes, so I could remember all the shows. Old news articles, gig advertisements, whatever. My list is fairly comprehensive. There's a handful of shows missing from the list that's come to mind since I published the book, but not a lot. I've got the dates, the band I was in, the venue I was playing at, the town I was in, the other bands I was playing with. It's as thorough as can be."

Hodsall was asked about the meaning of the

book's subtitle.

"I deliberately called the book 'Part I' because I really want there to be a 'Part II'. But you never know. It all depends on what sort of adventures I have in the years to come. You never know what's coming down the road. For all I know, I could have serendipitously announced the end of my touring career. You try so hard to stay on the ride. You never know when it's going to end. It's not as if I can walk into Service Canada, check the Job Bank, and ask the counterperson 'Hey, I'm looking for some rock and roll work... you have anything?' It's not that kind of industry. If you choose music as a living, you never know if something's guaranteed tomorrow. There never is."

The craft of writing is lonely and solitary by nature, oftentimes grueling and thankless, and it remains one of the most personally probing creative endeavours known to human art. *Nobody* clocks in at almost 500 pages in length, which is certainly NOT some vanity-press poetry-anthology chapbook whipped out by some insufferable preening Trustafarian wannabe. Hodsall's book stands alongside the Great Canadian Rock Memoirs published over the past 30 years: Dave Bidini's *On A Cold Road*, John "Buck Cherry" Armstrong's *Guilty of Everything*, the myriad punk biographies of Chris Walter, and even I, Shithead by Hodsall's D.O.A. bandmate Joe Keithley, among others. We stand on guard to rock.

"After I was done, I sighed in relief and self-reflected," says Hodsall. "I'm always thinking 'What's next? When's the next gig? Where are we going? When are we recording?' You're always planning



ahead, and I don't always remember to stop and think about where I've been and what I've accomplished. Writing was really helpful. D.O.A. did three weeks in Europe last summer, and it was fantastic; 18 shows over three weeks. That in itself is a pretty big event in one's life; traveling overseas and touring! I returned home and a day later I went on a camping trip with my wife for a week. Two days after we came home from that, I went on another two-week Western Canadian tour with D.O.A. You go from one experience to another. The current experience fills your mind and you forget the experience before that. I had to remind myself that I'd just toured in Europe for three weeks. Writing everything down gave me an intellectual and emotional inventory of my life.

"And I gotta say... it's fucking EXHAUSTING! There's a lot of miles in there. But it's a very GOOD exhaustion. I like to be exhausted. That means I've worked hard, I've done something and I'm always looking forward to the next thing. No matter how tired I am, give me a day or two at home to say hello to my family and go for a quick hike, and I'm stoked to go again! Writing made me look at everything and go 'Oh, here I am, 35 years into this... how did THAT happen? Where did those years go?' And I'll flip through the stories and scan the gig-list and say 'Yeah, I was there. We did a lot. We saw a lot of things. We went to a lot of places.' I'm so very thankful for every little bit of that.

And I hope the next 20 or 30 years of my life is the same."

For more information, please visit:
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TESTAMENT

Interview with lead guitarist Alex Skolnick by DJ Zang of Broken Neck Radio

AU: You're about to kick off the Thrash of the Titans tour on March 14th in Portland with Overkill and Destruction — that's a full-on thrash package. What does it mean to Testament to be sharing the stage with bands that helped define the genre from different corners of the world?

Alex Skolnick: Oh, it's a great feeling we are longtime friends of both bands and it's exciting that it's a genre of music that many thought would be written off in a decade especially in the decade it followed. It's still here and we outlasted a lot of bands from that following decade of the 90s. You know, it could be argued that we are doing some of our finest work.

AU: This is an "all killer" lineup. From a musician's point of view, does touring with bands like Overkill and Destruction push Testament to raise the bar night after night?

Skolnick: Well, I think so. Everyone is at the top of their game. I wouldn't say it's a competition, but you know we are all grateful to still be here doing it and doing it well and I don't think anyone wants to be the one to drop the ball. You see a lot of bands that are doing amazing and just carrying the flame. Judas Priest is a great example. Just firing on all cylinders, the vocals are as good as ever, musicianship is good. I am not going to name any names but there are some band clips out there with a lot of question marks and none of us want to be in that position.

AU: When you're building a setlist for a tour like this, how do you balance deep cuts, fan favorites, and newer material — especially with a crowd that's mostly die-hard thrash fans?

Skolnick: Yeah, it gets harder every year. There is no sugar coating because every year you have more songs. I mean you have to play some of the new songs and some get tossed to the wayside a little too early in my opinion and I think the others would agree with that because, you know, we have our most recent two albums but then we have albums from the last 10 years. We also know we have to do some of the earlier stuff. Every band has their essential stuff that they have to do whether they like it or not.

AU: Do you approach your guitar playing differently live now compared to earlier Testament eras, or do you still tap into that same raw aggression from the '80s and '90s?

Skolnick: I approach it very differently now. You know, I've been doing this for a longtime now and in the 80s and 90s this is the only thing I did. I went from being in high school to touring with groups like Overkill, so it's kind of full circle in a way but since then I've created an entire career around music, some of it is outside the band and outside the genre now, so I'm constantly working on music. A lot of it has been challenging and a lot of it doesn't really require the aggression in some ways. There is a balance between

you most proud of on the new album *Para Bellum* — a specific solo, riff, or overall approach that felt like a personal milestone?

Skolnick: It's hard to say. I am pretty proud of the one slow tune because I feel that was really captured in a way that I didn't think we would envision. When you are in a band where basically one person is running the band, it's different than ours, where we are a collaborative band. So, with the effort everyone has to be comfortable. And I have to admit it came out different than from when I wrote my parts to the song. It was all in 3-4 time like a waltz, some parts of it are, but Chuck wasn't comfortable singing in that time and I wasn't sure how it was going to work. But he took the part I had in 3-4 and did it in 4-4 time.

And now I can't imagine it any other way, and I think it came out great.

AU: Do you think thrash metal survives because it adapts, or because it refuses to change too much?

Skolnick: Oh wow, that is a good question. I think partially because it refuses to change too much. And there is a very fine line, as some of the bands have made some minor changes, which is a good thing but within limits.

AU: Any final words for fans heading out to the tour, especially those catching you in Portland on opening night?

Skolnick: Yeah, we are excited to start this new cycle and Portland has always been a great place. I was just there with my Jazz Trio and we had a full house, so it's going to be a great time and you aren't going to want to miss it.

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performing in a way that conveys aggression and actually feeling adrenaline in your hands as you are playing, which I think is counterproductive. At least I have found playing music outside of metal has really helped with that. Having sort of a relaxed intensity that seems to work for me.

AU: From a guitarist's perspective, what were



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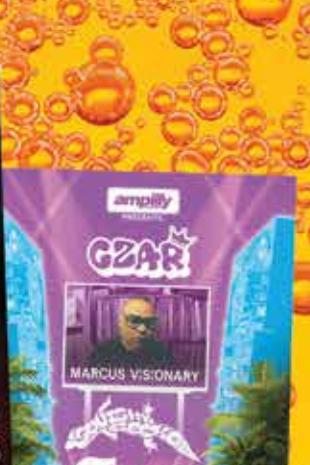


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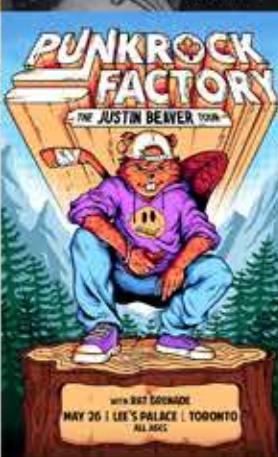
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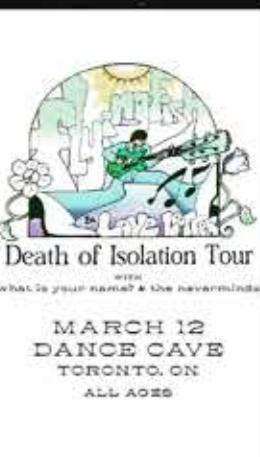
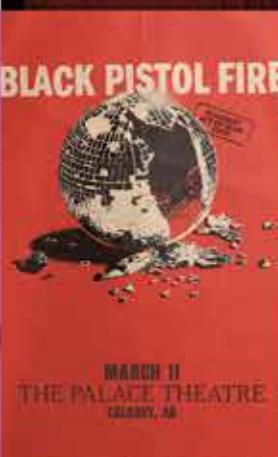
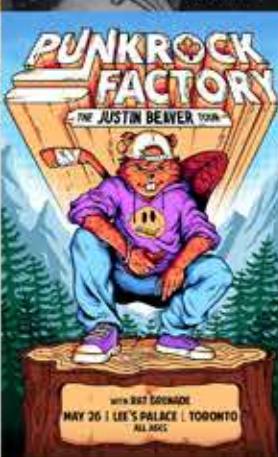
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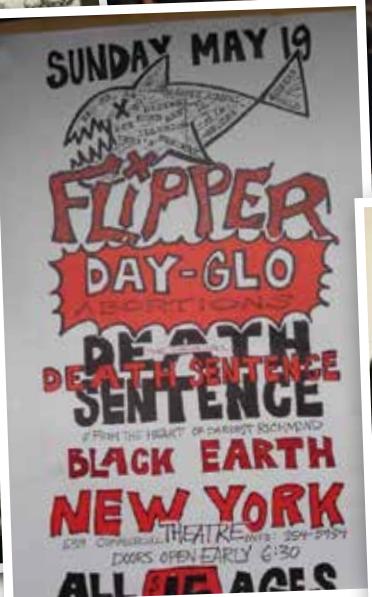
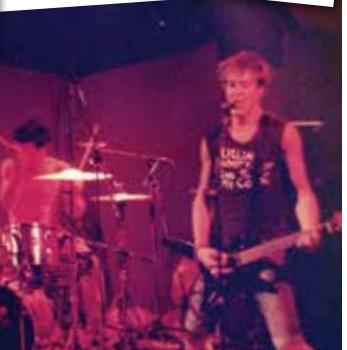
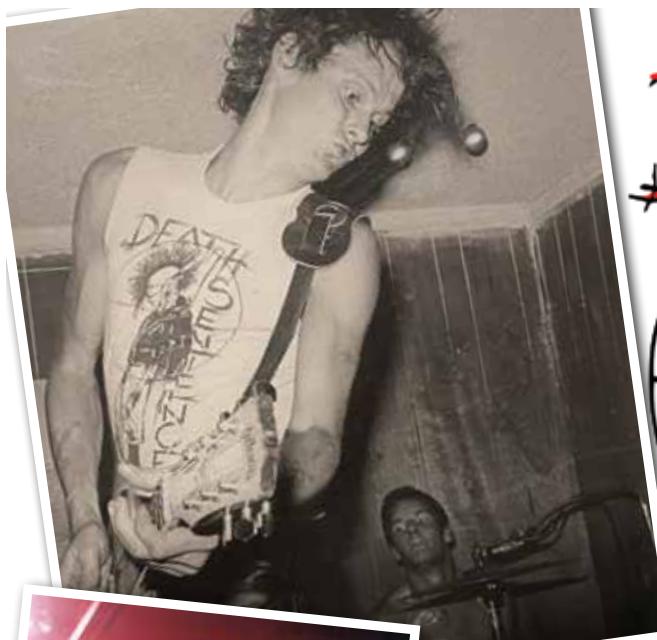


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DEATH SENTENCE IS BACK AND MADDER THAN EVER!

Interview With Canadian Hardcore Punk Legends Syd Savage (Guitar/Vox) and Jimmy Sigmund (Bass)

By Dustin "In Flames" Jak and Ira "Use Your Head" Hunter

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

Syd: Syd Savage.

Jimmy: Jimmy Sigmund.

Syd: I guess we are most famous for being in Death Sentence.

Jimmy: Probably also for still be alive to tell the story. So many of our friends from back in the day never made it... R.I.P.

AU: Give us the history of Death Sentence.

Syd: I came to Vancouver in 1982 from London and that same year hooked in with Andrew Challinor from the band House of Commons (HOC). I was living at the Plaza at the time, the most famous and well known Punk House, except for maybe Wank Manor. Anyway, I really wanted to play in a band and Andrew introduced me to Death Sentence who had a band house in Burnaby, BC. The band at the time consisted of Pete Cleaver (Vox and Guitar) Richard Magoo (Bass), who named the band, Death Sentence and Greg (drums). I joined shortly after meeting them. Jimmy played in the FITZ at the time who all were part of a group of second wave bands including H.O.C, the Spores, The Unknown Fibres, Bill of Rights and a few others. We were Vancouver's second wave and truly supported one another, played shows together, promoted each others' bands, even made shirts with all of the bands on it and called this partnership the New Alliance. The first wave consisted of DOA, Subhumans, No Exit, Bludgeoned Pigs, Pointed Sticks, K-TEIs and many other great bands. We watched and learned. DOA was a huge help and really got us off the ground running. We started touring the West Coast of the US and Canada in 1983. In 1984 Richard left so did Greg. Doug Donut (drums) joined in early 1984 along with Tim Challenger (bass). That's when the band really started to take off and after winning studio time at CiTRs Shindig (battle of the bands). The band recorded their first record *Not a Pretty Sight...* and the rest is history

Jimmy: I met Pete in 1983. The Fitz and the rest of the new alliance bands all used to hang out in the Death Sentence House in Burnaby. I liked DS from the beginning and was quickly a fan and became friends with Pete and the Fitz played on many of the early DS shows. In 1984 the Burnaby house was disbanded and Pete moved to the Vancouver West End a few blocks from where we all lived. Soon there after Pete asked me to join.

AU: Who were the bands you were inspired by in 1983 when you were starting out?

Syd: DOA, Subhumans, Dayglow Abortions, Bad Brains, GBH, Exploited, Discharge, Dead Kennedys and of course from the beginning, The Pistols, CLASH, Stiff Little Fingers, too many to mention.

Jimmy: Ya, what a great time to be alive... by '83 I

was really getting into British hardcore which heavily influenced me and of course the Ramones. DOA played my highschool in 1980. At the time I was listening to Pistols, Ian Dury, Stranglers but it was seeing DOA when I knew I needed to play in a punk band.

AU: You guys were one of the first West Coast bands to have a sound like '82 Brit punk bands. What British bands inspired you guys?

Syd: GBH, Discharge, SLF, hard to pick favourites, so many great second wave punk bands.

Jimmy: GBH's *City Baby Attacked by Rats* and The Exploited's *Punks Not Dead*. Hearing those albums was a pivotal change for me.

AU: What were the best bands you toured or played with back then?

Syd: DOA, Dead Kennedys, GBH, The Exploited, Bad Brains, The Accused, Adolescents, D.R.I.

AU: People seem to really be enjoying the live shows these days. Are you guys happy and having fun with the current line-up?

Syd: Absolutely!

Jimmy: Ya, we are currently a 3 piece and loving it. It couldn't be more fun, and I don't think it could sound any better.

Syd: The current line up is me... Syd Savage (Guitar/VOX), Jimmy Sigmund (Bass/VOX) and Kristoff Meyer (Drums/VOX) and I am extremely happy, and we all bring something special to Death Sentence. Kristoff brings so much also, as he is a new set of ears and brings fantastic ideas to old songs that makes them better than I could have imagined. Jimmy is a killer bass player and contributor. We met up one day about 2 years ago and I told him I wanted to put DS back together and couldn't do it with out him, and well here we are. For myself, I keep writing and playing, and the three of us are putting together killer songs.

Jimmy: I am loving it... couldn't be a better combination of creativity and raw punk rock!

AU: You guys have put new fire in a lot of the songs from the 2nd LP, *Stop Killing Me*, people often talk of the first record... but is it fun playing those songs again? Any chance of a re-release?

Syd: Yes, we are playing songs off our LP *Stop Killing Me* and it's great. We have basically reworked and rewritten most of the songs and have started recording some of them. I wasn't happy with the production of that record, and we are finally getting them to sound how they should have sounded years ago and yes there is a plan to release some of them.

AU: Tell us about your first new song in 30 years you released called "Statue of Misery".

Syd: It was written in 1983 and written about the state of the USA at the time. It was on our first demo though never really finished. Kristoff heard it, with his new ears and came up with a new arrangement and I rewrote some of the lyrics and I think it came out great.

Jimmy: I fucking love it. It's a fuckin onslaught!

AU: Can we maybe expect a new album as well?

Syd: Absolutely, we have been recording with Adam Payne in his great little studio. It's great as he gets us and our sound completely.

AU: How would Pete Cleaver (RIP) like the way

life is in 2026? Wonder what he would sing about? A lot of his lyrics panned out!

Syd: Pete Cleaver and I were very close (RIP). Your question really gets back to 1997, the year he passed away. He often spoke of how fucked up the world was back then... 2026? He would have been absolutely shocked, dismayed and horrified at the state of the world today, as we all are. Pete was an incredible person, I miss him everyday and have a personal memorial tattoo on my left arm.

Jimmy: Yes, Pete was a fucking amazing individual. I think he'd love what we are doing with Death Sentence, and I think of him with everything that we do. RIP.

AU: What made Pete Cleaver a unique frontman back in the day?

Syd: Pete was unique, highly intelligent and was a Punk inside and out.

Jimmy: Pete was an incredibly charismatic frontman. On stage I always thought he was cross between Alex Harvey, Alice Cooper and Joey Ramone. In his life... Pete could light up a room. He was hilarious! He was one of the funniest fuckin' people I have ever known.

AU: What do you remember about the show at ACME Pipe Co in Nanaimo when Death Sentence played with Dayglo Abortions and Sacrifice?

Jimmy: I remember it being great fun and that people were skateboarding the half pipe while we were playing. It was awesome!

Syd: I do remember it as well... It was a great show. Playing with Dayglos is always great fun!

AU: Who drew the album art for *Not A Pretty Sight*?

Syd: It was drawn by my good mate, Garnet Ash (RIP 2003), from south London. I asked him, as he was a great artist, if he could draw a logo for Death Sentence? He did and gave it to me for my birthday. It was perfect!

AU: The iconic mohawked punk character from the cover of *Not A Pretty Sight*, is he just an anonymous punk or does he have a name? What was his crime, why is he being shot?

Syd: His name is Freddy. His crime, being a Punk Rocker and that's also why he's being shot.

AU: Did the same artist do the album art for *Stop Killing Me*?

Syd: Garnet did the artwork for *Stop Killing Me*.

Jimmy: And it was fuckin amazing!

Syd: Unfortunately, our management at the time had others' ideas and wanted something more commercial. What a grave mistake. I still have the original... So, you never know.

AU: What sets Death Sentence apart from other punk bands?

Syd: We use a kind of sick humour in quite a few of our songs.

Jimmy: We kick ass old school.

AU: If the statute of limitations has past, what's the craziest tour story you can tell us without going to jail?

Syd: Great question, just can't answer this one... sorry... I am sure you understand.

Jimmy: Protect the innocent.

AU: What are some current bands you guys like, or like to play with these days?

Syd: Now this is a question I love. Since reforming we have played with a lot of great bands. In no particular order... Trenchraids, White Collar, Bootlicker, Neurospasm, Chronic Fatigue, Gorilla Flip, Out Alive, Dayglos, Ripcordz, The Scammers, The Furniture, Ten Days Late, The Get Arounds, Electric Brains, Subteraliens, Nobody, Smelters...

Jimmy: We played with so many amazing bands last year. The Canadian Punk scene is killing it!

AU: What was Vancouver like in 1986 compared to Vancouver now?? Didn't some of you live at the Plaza? And Jimmy, where did the Fitz guys live?

Syd: I came to Vancouver in early 1982. The punk rock scene was great, bands everywhere and then Expo 86 happened. The beginning of the end. At one point or another we all lived at the Plaza... it was awesome.

Jimmy: I grew up in Vancouver and agree that Expo 86 changed the city for the worst and it really started the decline of what we see now... rich get richer... gap between rich and poor getting wider and wider and the city has become unaffordable and becoming unlivable. The Fitz had a house on 49th and Fraser in Vancouver. Back in the day there were so many cool punk rock houses where you would practice, record, play, party. Like Syd said punk rock was everywhere! Great time to be alive!

AU: Do you guys think the Downtown Eastside will ever clean up? The song "Danger Zone" seemed years ahead of its time.

Syd: I'd say most of our songs are more relevant now than when they were written.

Jimmy: I think the DTES is a side effect of unfettered capitalism. Until we make some major changes in our basic ideology, we are all doomed and unless you are the chosen few, we all have a target on our backs. At this point in time Freddy represents all of us.

AU: Any words of wisdom to share?

Syd: Be part of the solution instead of the problem.

Jimmy: Agreed! Call out the fascist for who they are. The world is on fire... its time to sound the alarm... fight the power!

AU: What are your fave Canadian bands?

Jimmy: All of them! Everyone who is going out there and creating music and making this movement something that matters. Punk rock has never been more needed and in my opinion will save us all. Or we go down fighting!

AU: Any more shows or tours in the works?

Syd: It going to be a busy year. Stay tuned...

AU: Anything else to mention or promote?

Jimmy: Death Sentence is back and madder than ever!

AU: Any final words for our readers?

Jimmy: Fuck Capitalism! Fuck Fascism! Punk Rock Fucking Rules Okay! DIY!

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LAUGHING SICKNESS

Interview with guitarist/vocalist

Keith Corbett

By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: For readers meeting you for the first time, tell us who you are, where you're from and what you do behind the scenes.

Keith: My name is Keith (SK), and I play guitar and yell in Laughing Sickness. Luke (NS) plays bass and sings, Jesse (AB) plays guitar, and Kevin (SK) plays drums. We are based out of Nelson, BC. We do as much of the behind the scenes stuff ourselves as possible... recording, mixing,

going the best we can since, writing, recording, artwork, gigs, anything to keep moving forward.

AU: When you're writing new material together, what usually comes first—the riffs, the lyrics, the energy in the room, or something else?

Keith: The songs are usually 85% written before we even touch them. Luke or myself will send out a set of lyrics and music, then at rehearsal we work out the final arrangement as a band. Kevin picks his beats and Jesse adds his leads, and everyone pitches in with ideas. It works well for us, and we've written a lot of songs that way (76 and counting). We only rehearse three hours a week, so no aimless jamming on junk. There is

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always something new to learn.

AU: Your new album, *Back to Uranium City*, is out now on Bandwidth Records. What does that name represent for you, and how does it connect to the themes on the record?

Keith: *Back To Mystery City* is an album by a band from Finland called Hanoi Rocks. Uranium City is a mostly abandoned mining town in northern Saskatchewan. The title *Back To Uranium City* is a joke that isn't funny. Not a dig at the town, but at the current state of affairs. The return of the Cold War isn't so cold anymore. Turmoil is what ties the songs on the album together (all of our songs really), be it personal, societal or political.

AU: Your live shows are often described as intense and chaotic—in the best way. What do you want people to feel when they walk away from a Laughing Sickness show?

Keith: The word we usually hear is "tight." We go for the shock and awe approach, minimal talking about crap no one wants to hear, just a Punk Rock barrage, one song after another. Our music may be dark, but we have fun playing it. And like any Punk Rock band, we want to leave them sweaty and invigorated. We have been doing more all ages shows too, so if we can inspire a young band to start up and kick some ass then that would be more than welcome.

AU: You've shared stages with bands like D.O.A., Ripcordz, Random Killing and Motherfuckers. What have you learned from playing alongside these legends?

Keith: What we are hoping to learn is longevity, but we haven't been around long enough for that! They are still writing, releasing records, touring, having fun. Totally inspiring. I started listening to Ripcordz when I was 15, which was 30 years ago. I had no idea about underground Punk Rock (Canadian or otherwise) until I came across Paul Gott's magazine (*Enguard Quarterly*, No. 3, Winter 1994). Random Killing was in that issue too! D.O.A. was the first Canadian Punk Rock band I heard, on the *Faster & Louder Volume 1* compilation my older brother had. World War 3!!! (cheers Paddy!!!). Motherfuckers were on the bill when we played with Ripcordz and later with Random Killing, and



we are playing with them again this year (May). Amazing band, amazing live show, can't wait!!!

AU: Looking ahead to 2026, what does that next chapter look like for Laughing Sickness?

Keith: We backed up our good friend Roy "Mr. Awesome" Robins on a split 7" with Isolated Earthlings (Victoria) last year. That went really well, so we are hoping to record a full album with him this year, doing his songs again. We recorded two albums worth of material when we did *Back To Uranium City*, so we will do something with the extra tracks, a cassette or a 7" or a 10" maybe. Playing more out of town gigs for sure, and out of province too. More all ages shows. Another album of our own when we decide to start working on it.

AU: What's the best way for people to buy your music and stay connected?

Keith: The vinyl is available at bandwidthrecords.com

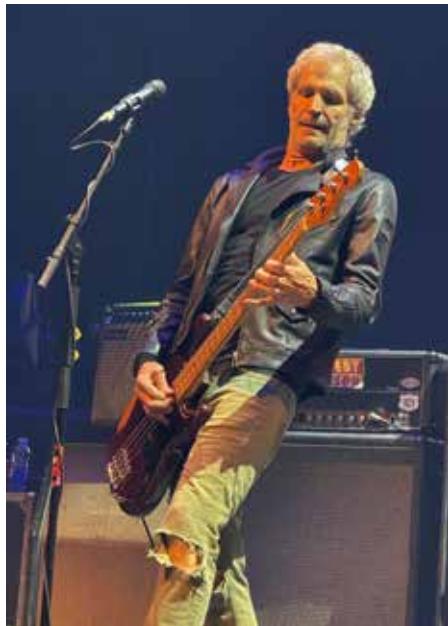
Digital is at laughingsickness.bandcamp.com and probably some streaming sites.

laughingsicknessband@gmail.com if you want to get in touch.

AU: This *Absolute Underground* issue has a theme of *The Warriors* (1979 cult classic film) and Valentine's Day. Any thoughts on either — from the romantic, to the brutal, to the brutally honest?

Keith: *The Warriors* is awesome, right up there with *The Wanderers* for gang exploitation movies. If you haven't seen it, look up the *Rubble Kings* documentary on Vimeo for the real deal on '70s New York street gangs. Cheers!!!!

Photo credit: Terry Brennan



BAD RELIGION

Interview with bassist Jay Bentley

By Ira Hunter, Mike Willisko and Jared Amos

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

Jay Bentley: My name is Jay Bentley. I'm probably most famous for playing bass guitar in Bad Religion. I have been in Bad Religion from the very start, 46 years. I might be most infamous for taking over Fat Mike's spot in Me First and the Gimme Gimmes.

AU: Bad Religion has been a band for four and a half decades and you guys are still playing live and touring full blast. You have 17 full-length albums. Not many bands have the drive and motivation to go that steady and consistent for that long. How much longer do you see Bad Religion going for and are there any plans for a new album in the near future?

JB: Well, the ongoing joke since the late '90s has been five more years. We've been saying five more years for 35 years. We have talked about recording. We've gotten together and made some demos but nothing has really materialized. We're in a great spot where we can create art when we want to, we don't have contractual obligations. So we're just sort of still trying to figure out what we want to be when we grow up.

AU: Bad Religion played in Victoria a long time ago. Remember anything about that show?

JB: Honestly, I think we played once 30-plus years ago. In my mind, I feel like we've played here twice, but that's probably wrong. It's a blur. The only thing that I remember is going to a Victoria Cougars game. It was the greatest fight that I'd ever watched for 90 minutes and we all bought

jerseys. That's what I remember.

AU: Can you tell us about this tour Bad Religion is on with The Offspring?

JB: We played four shows heading up to Canada. We played Bakersfield, Reno, Boise, and Spokane. But in concept we always talked about it as a cross-Canadian tour. So the four shows were sort of just kicking off the rust for everybody. The Offspring have a really big production so I'm sure it's a lot of work for them to get that up there. But tonight is the official first night of the Canadian tour in Victoria.

AU: Any deep cuts in the set-list planned?

JB: We have an hour. I think we can do 19 or 20 songs. I tried to write a list that was a little more fluid with what was about to happen after us. It's one of those things where you're trying to figure out who you're playing for and they're not necessarily your fans. They may know who you are but they don't know your catalogue. So you kind of always want to give people the smorgasbord of tastes of the things that you've done over the past 46 years with 17 studio albums. So there are some deep cuts and there are some of the bigger songs.

AU: That's interesting you've been around for so long but then you might be gathering new fans based on The Offspring's following.

JB: It is. But it's true for anything where if you get the opportunity to go and play with someone whose fanbase may be just a little outside of yours or playing at a festival. It is a great opportunity to introduce yourself to people, even after 46 years.

AU: When you first started out and you came up with the name, Bad Religion, was there ever religious protests outside your shows?

JB: No. Honestly we always thought there would be but I guess at the end of the day, we just figured they didn't want the headache.

AU: There is a band called Dad Religion. Have you heard of them yet?

JB: Is this the one that's coming out of Australia?

AU: These guys are from Edmonton.

JB: It's funny because I think there is more than one Dad Religions. Which is fine. People started calling us that when, I'm not going to say when we became dads because we all became dads when we were 20 and no one seemed to give a crap, but when we started looking like dads, then it was like Dad Religion. It's like yeah, that's us. That's fine.

AU: According to the internet, Dad Religion from Edmonton is a punk rock cover band that specializes in toddler mosh pits. Do you have any parenting advice for punk rockers?

JB: Yeah. Your kids are going to be what they're going to be from the second they're born, so stop trying to manipulate them. Just raise them to be good human beings.

AU: Is it true that the band considers

themselves naturalists rather than atheists? If so, what do you see as the difference between the two and how does that perspective influence your lyrics and songwriting process?

JB: Oh, man, that's a tough one. I think Greg considers himself a humanist more than anything, maybe a naturalist. He's a scientist and so he's not going to waste his time with games of what if? Unless he can quantifiably prove something time and time again, he doesn't have time for that. Brett (Gurewitz) is an atheist, but maybe more agnostic. I think being in America right now, it's a lot easier to be just a militant atheist because of the new American Christian rule of whatever the fuck it is that they're doing down there. It's just a lot easier to say no, I'm not part of that.

AU: You guys signed with Atlantic in 1993 but still stayed true to your punk roots and original style and then returned to Epitaph after 2001. Did Atlantic ever try to push you to change your sound or write music differently?

JB: No, they didn't do that. They made us spend a lot of money, though.

AU: Like making videos and stuff like that?

JB: Yeah, how we recorded, making videos... we had ways of doing things that just didn't involve that kind of production. But in their estimation anything that was less than what they thought was worthy would never get onto the radio, would never get on MTV, would never blah, blah, blah. We don't really care about that stuff but this is the devil that we got into bed with. But they never tried to make us change our sound.

AU: I was thinking about when you said Greg's a scientist and also Milo from Descendents is a molecular biologist, and Dexter Holland from The Offspring has a PhD, is there any other really smart punk rockers out there that could form a supergroup of geniuses?

JB: It seems to me that the problem is that the three that I know right off the bat are all singers. So it would have to be some sort of Beastie Boys of punk rock where it would be Dexter, Milo, and Graffin out there doing No Sleep till Brooklyn.

AU: Any plans for Valentine's Day?

JB: I'm going to be playing in Hamilton, Ontario.

AU: The world's most romantic city.

JB: Yeah, I think about the canals and being on a boat oh wait, no, that's not there.

AU: Any marriage or dating advice?

JB: Yeah, don't be an asshole.

AU: Let's say you guys were all single. What would it say on your Tinder profiles?

JB: I don't know enough about it but whichever direction it is that you swipe away from someone, that would be what it would say. Swipe away.

AU: Any fetishes or techniques to share?

JB: Those two things are very separate things, fetishes and techniques. Huh. Holy shit. No. I would like you to print that there was a long awkward pause before I said no.

AU: This issue is also focused on the 1979 New York gang movie The Warriors. Are you a fan?

JB: That's a great movie. I was a Baseball Fury for probably three Halloowens in a row.

AU: There's a lot of intelligence in BR songs. But is it sometimes fun to write a stupid song?

JB: Yes.

AU: Any stupid BR songs that you like best? I really like Fuck You.

JB: "Raise Your Voice". Any of the sort of just raise your fist in the air and punch at the clouds. But in all honesty, those songs are usually the palate cleanser. Having spent some time as Brett would put it, trying to figure out how to write 40 years of a life experience in a three-minute song.

AU: Have you been to the Punk Rock Museum yet in Vegas?

JB: I have.

AU: What's your general feeling on the museum for people that haven't been?

JB: If you go there with zero knowledge of punk rock, you will leave there knowing less. If you go there with an understanding of West Coast punk rock, you won't understand the East Coast displays. It is a great collection of things that people sent Fat Mike.

AU: I thought you could make a drinking game of every time you saw Iggy Pop's cock.

JB: Yeah. You could also have a drinking game for every time you said, "Who's that?"

AU: You've been in Bad Religion for so long and you're in Me First and the Gimme Gimmes, are there any other side projects or bands even before Bad Religion that you were in?

JB: Nothing before. But in '84 I joined the band LA's Wasted Youth. In '85 I was in Bad Religion, Wasted Youth and T.S.O.L and then I quit everything and I got a job. Then in '86 I was in the Circle Jerks and they fired me after the first show.

AU: How come?

JB: I was really drunk and it was a great show, for me. I rejoined Bad Religion in '86 and really didn't do anything else until the Gimmes thing.

AU: Is Brett Gurewitz on this current tour?

JB: He is not. He doesn't tour with us anymore. He's our Brian Wilson.

AU: But you've got a Brian Baker?

JB: We got a Brian Baker and a Mike Dimkich, that's a fantastic guitar duo and Jamie Miller on drums. People that are going to the show tonight will get to enjoy him with Bad Religion and The Offspring because their drummer had a baby. We are the Swiss Army Knife of bands.

AU: When you started in 1980, probably playing venues without stages. Did you ever foresee playing giant arena tours?

JB: No. That's not something that you can really have in your mind. We started the band before MTV existed. We started the band when being big was being Black Flag. That was as big as you could imagine being was a local punk rock band.

AU: Out of all your albums is there one that you feel is a perfect album?

JB: Maybe *No Control*. That's hard. It's funny albums to me aren't really about the music and it's just about the time. So if I think about an album, making that record and doing the things that we did with it, it's like a Polaroid for me of where we were in our lives. So albums like *Suffer* and *The Process of Belief*, I can tell you this in all honesty those two albums were made for absolutely no reason. At the time we didn't feel that we had a fanbase and that everything we had done didn't matter and no one cared. That's kind of a great place to be because you don't have any pressure on you to perform you're just making a record that you want to make. I think *No Control* might be, musically, that album. Because when we made *Suffer* the end result was people saying this is a great record and then they started responding with but you'll never make anything better. It was weird. It was very confrontational and challenging and I remember Brett saying we'll show you, it was very funny and I feel that we did.

AU: What do you do in your downtime? Do you skateboard, snowboard, play with your kids?

JB: I do all of that. I have a three-year-old, a 13-year-old and a 30-year-old. I try to just be part and present in everybody's lives.

AU: What are your thoughts on a band like NOFX calling it quits?

JB: Mike had one time said that they were going to wait until we broke up and then go on for five years because they started five years after us. I remember reading that and I laughed and then the next time I saw him I said, we'll go on for five years after you stop just so that we're 10 years longer than you.

AU: Are there any bands from the past that you wish would get back together?

JB: The Clash could get back together, but that's not going to happen. Honestly, I don't have a lot of pining for what was. I can enjoy the past in my memory. Maybe if you could create a time machine and bring the 1981 Adolescents to a stage for people to see. Everybody should see that band in 1981.

AU: Any final words of wisdom for Canadians?

JB: No, just you guys stay up there. I can't really think of any other way to put it. Things are fucking weird right now, just stay in Canada.

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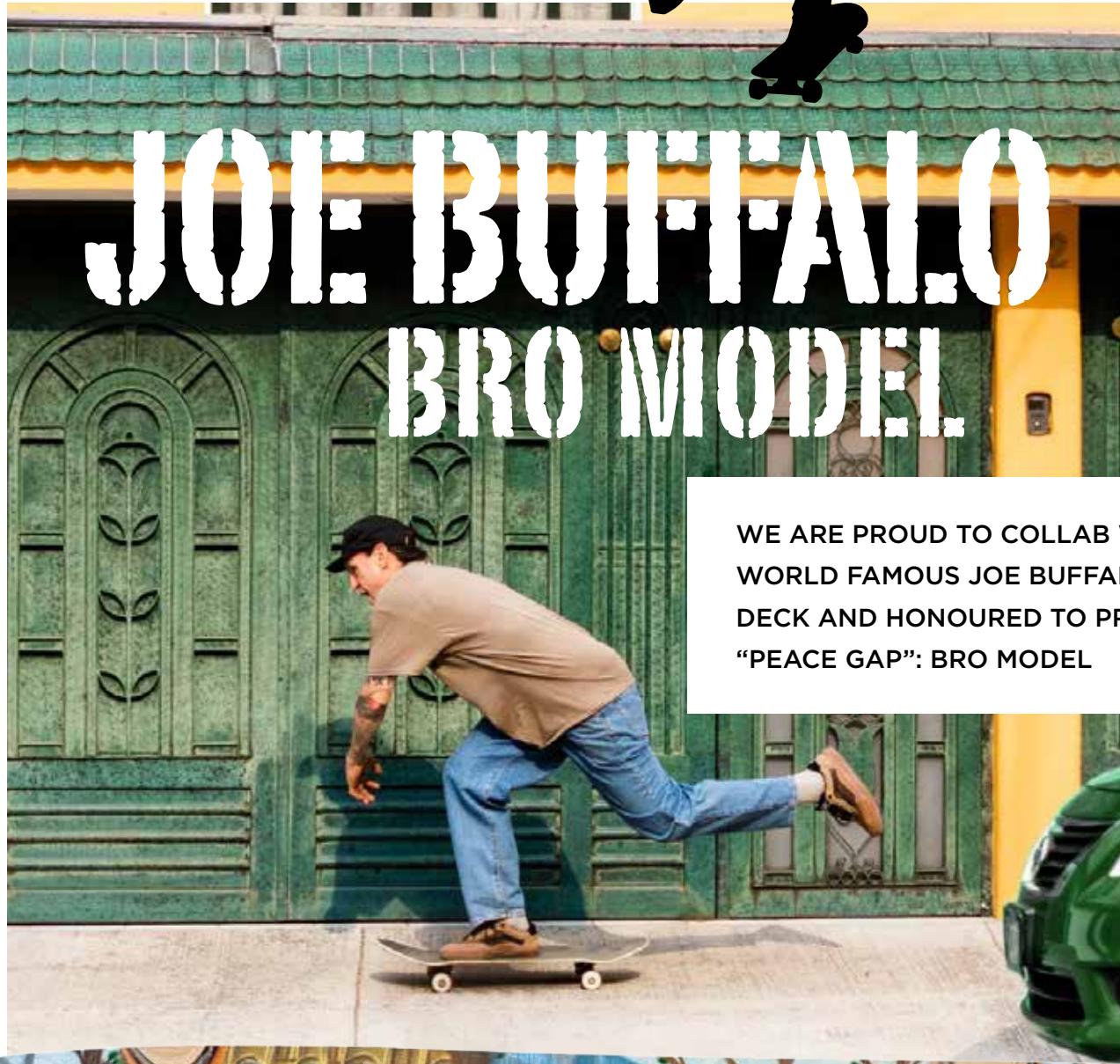
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SOURIS VALLEY WRESTLING: Interview with owner and promoter, Troy Kramm

By Ray MacKay

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking with today?

Troy Kramm: My name is Troy Kramm and I'm the owner and operator of Souris Valley Wrestling — a proudly independent wrestling promotion based out of Weyburn, Saskatchewan. I focus on promoting shows, sponsoring talent and events and helping wrestlers get booked with other promotions. My passion lies in building platforms for others to shine. I love what I do, and I'll keep doing it as long as I can.

AU: How did you get hooked on wrestling?

TK: I was hooked on wrestling from the moment I first saw it on TV. I remember being at a friend's house as a kid and his dad was watching The Undertaker vs. The Ultimate Warrior, and even though we weren't allowed to watch, I snuck a peek from around the corner. That was it, I was obsessed. The characters, the colours, the crowd, I loved it all. Thankfully, my parents were much cooler about it and let me watch wrestling. I was able to share that passion with my mom, who really got into the storylines with me.

Like many fans, I drifted away after high school in 2003, caught up in the demands of real life. I eventually found my way back through the local scene in Regina, SK where I started attending High Impact Wrestling shows. From there, I became a regular at Canadian Wrestling's Elite events, and when they skipped my hometown of Weyburn, I reached out to CWE's owner, "Hotshot" Danny Duggan. He agreed to bring shows to Weyburn if I could help secure sponsors and that's how I began promoting with CWE in 2018. That partnership continues today, alongside my ongoing efforts to grow Souris Valley Wrestling.

AU: Growing up, who was your favorite wrestler?

TK: As a kid, I was into all the usual suspects,

Macho Man, The Undertaker, Hulk Hogan, but during my teen years things shifted. I really fell in love with the luchadores I saw in WCW. To this day, my all-time favorite is Rey Mysterio. Lucha libre has always been my favorite style of wrestling. That's a big reason why I'm so passionate about supporting the wrestling scene in Mexico, even from all the way up here in Saskatchewan.

AU: What do you like best about being a promoter?

TK: As a promoter, I'm always learning. I've had the privilege of working closely with some incredibly knowledgeable people — most notably "Hotshot" Danny Duggan from Canadian Wrestling's Elite. His experience and guidance have been instrumental in helping me grow as a promoter and expand what Souris Valley Wrestling can do. Promoting definitely comes with its own stresses, especially financially, but I have endless respect for the wrestlers who literally put their bodies on the line every show. What they do is nothing short of incredible.

AU: Tell us more about Souris Valley Wrestling.

TK: Souris Valley Wrestling was founded in 2019, initially as a way for me to sponsor wrestlers and events under a unified name rather than just my own. At first, it was little more than a logo, but as more wrestlers and promotions reached out for support, the brand started gaining traction. Over time, it felt like a natural progression to take a more active role by running shows and becoming a greater part of the indie wrestling community. SVW has since collaborated with numerous amazing promotions, including Lucha Memes (Mexico), Canadian Wrestling's Elite, Canadian Deathmatch, Demand Lucha, Mat War Pro (USA), and Invoke Pro Wrestling (Canada). Our next big step is acquiring our own wrestling ring so we can host more frequent local shows. We're still on the lookout for that magical investor to help make it happen as prices have skyrocketed in recent years, but we're staying focused and doing what we can to bring that vision to life. At this time, we have been lucky enough to develop a relationship with a local promotion in Regina, called Ringside Wrestling who we are able to rent the ring from and exchange talent on shows.

AU: What is Souris Valley Wrestling best known for?

TK: Souris Valley Wrestling is proud to be recognized as the first Canadian indie promotion to host an event in Mexico. In November 2023, my sister and I produced Chaos in Coacalco — a heartfelt memorial show in honor of our parents, Les and Muriel Kramm. The event was made possible through our partnership with Daniel Ledesma of Lucha Memes. Beyond that, SVW has built a reputation for supporting and sponsoring independent wrestlers from all over the world. One of the things I'm most proud of is our growing list of collaborations with other

respected indie promotions — working together to create something truly special for both talent and fans.

AU: Do you have a favorite venue to perform in?

TK: When we run local shows, we usually set up at the Royal Canadian Legion. Honestly, indie wrestling and the Legion are a perfect match. It's a family-friendly space, the venues are always welcoming, and it feels like they were practically built for wrestling events. Personally, I love shows held in gritty old bars or historic buildings. Those venues create a raw, underground atmosphere that's completely different from the polished feel of arenas or rinks. It's a whole different vibe. They are louder, rowdier and more intimate. Of course, we use whatever space is available but when we get those unique venues, it makes the experience even more memorable.

AU: What's your dream match?

TK: My dream match would be Rey Mysterio Jr. vs. El Hijo del Vikingo. This would be a true passing of the torch in the world of lucha libre. Vikingo has been performing at an elite level for years and now that WWE has purchased AAA, he's finally getting the global attention he deserves. Seeing those two in the ring together would be incredible.

AU: Tell us about Souris Valley Wrestling's collaboration with talent from Black and Brave Wrestling Academy.

TK: This collaboration was made possible through our SVW Champion, Dante Leon. I have worked closely with Dante for several years, and he approached me with the idea of traveling to Iowa to observe how local promotions operate. During this visit, I was able to see firsthand how SCW Pro functions and how it provides graduates of the Black and Brave Wrestling Academy with opportunities to test their skills in live event settings. I had the opportunity to meet talent who have graduated and continue to work in the region, as well as individuals who are currently training. This partnership has been instrumental in helping SVW move forward and secure a show in Weyburn, Saskatchewan, on April 11, featuring several Black and Brave Academy graduates.

AU: What's the craziest match you've been involved in?

TK: I have attended many outstanding independent wrestling events over the years, some of which have been local Saskatchewan shows featuring a "fans bring the weapons" stipulation. Those events often showcase a wide range of creativity and unpredictability. You see everything from rubber chickens to dildos with spikes and barbed wire attached. A company that has done some crazy things in Canada is Canadian Deathmatch. SVW was a sponsor at their inaugural show and we would love to do more with them. A goal of mine in 2026 is to see a Canadian Deathmatch show live in person. I am a big fan of theirs.

AU: What's your favorite storyline you've been involved in so far?

TK: One of my favorite storylines to date has been the ongoing rivalry between SVW Champion Dante Leon and his protégé, Carlos Oliva. The two share exceptional in-ring chemistry and have consistently delivered high-quality matches. Over the past several years, Dante has played a key role in Carlos's development; however, Carlos has yet to defeat his mentor without an upset victory. He has been unable to capture the SVW Championship. As of our event on April 11, 2026, Dante will have held the championship for an impressive 638 days, further solidifying the significance of this rivalry. Carlos nor other individuals around Mexico, USA or Canada have been able to take this championship.

AU: What's the funniest thing you've seen happen at a show?

TK: Indie wrestling is full of unexpected moments, everything from gear malfunctions, technical issues, botched moves and so much more. That's part of what makes it so fun and real. One thing that always cracks me up is the back-and-forth between fans and wrestlers. Some fans are incredibly creative with their heckles and

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every now and then they'll hit a line so good that even the wrestler doesn't have a comeback. You can see them break character for a second, and honestly, it just adds to the experience. It's those spontaneous, unscripted moments that make indie wrestling so special.

AU: How has wrestling impacted your life?

TK: Wrestling has always been an escape for me. It is a perfect blend of storytelling, action and creativity. It's like watching a live-action movie play out right in front of you, and I never take it too seriously. I just enjoy it for what it is. Since becoming more involved behind the scenes, wrestling has literally taken me places I never thought I'd go. I've now traveled for shows in Mexico, the U.S. and across Canada. Before all this, I'd only ever been on one short flight, now I'm booking travel constantly and exploring new places to support events and talent. Wrestling has challenged me, inspired me and honestly, it's been an absolute blessing.

AU: Do you have any upcoming events to promote in 2026?

TK: In 2026, we have already successfully hosted events in Mexico and are continuing our collaboration with Lucha Memes to expand our presence there. It has been an incredibly rewarding partnership, and I remain committed to supporting and promoting lucha libre on an international level.

Equally important, however, is bringing that same level of talent and passion back home. Weyburn, Saskatchewan will host our first fully locally operated SVW event, titled Come Hell or High Water, on Saturday, April 11, at the Royal Canadian Legion. This event represents a significant milestone for us, as it allows us to showcase exceptional talent from Mexico, the United States and across Canada in my hometown. The name reflects our commitment to ensuring this event happened, regardless of the challenges, because there is an incredible amount of talent that deserves to be seen. Above all, this show is about giving the Weyburn community the opportunity to experience world-class professional wrestling firsthand.

AU: What can our readers expect from SVW in 2026?

TK: Readers can expect to see Souris Valley Wrestling continue to grow through exciting collaborations with promotions like Canadian Deathmatch, Lucha Memes, Canadian Wrestling's Elite and many more. I'm also committed to continuing our sponsorship work, whether that's supporting individual wrestlers, helping put on events or finding new ways to elevate the indie scene. The SVW brand will keep showing up in new places, and we're not slowing down anytime soon.

AU: Is there anything else you'd like our readers to know?

TK: I'd love for readers to feel welcome to reach out and talk wrestling with me, whether it's about the business, booking or just being a fan. I'm always up for a good conversation. Also, if anyone out there knows of a wrestling ring for sale or is interested in partnering to help bring one to Weyburn, Saskatchewan, let's talk! That's a major next step for us at Souris Valley Wrestling. And most importantly: continue to support indie wrestling. It's like watching your local farm sports team. You're seeing tomorrow's stars today, and sometimes even legends from the past. These shows are filled with passion, heart and hard work. Every ticket you buy and every show you attend helps keep this scene alive and thriving.

AU: Where can people find you online?

TK: You can follow Souris Valley Wrestling on **Instagram** at **@SourisWrestling**. Also check us out on **Facebook** under Souris Valley Wrestling. We post updates on shows, talent, partnerships and everything we're working on behind the scenes.

Give us a follow and stay connected, we've got a lot more coming!



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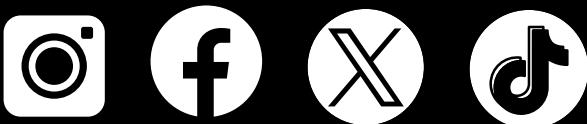
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BANFF PUNK NIGHT

Interview with Gerry Roy

By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: For readers discovering Banff Punk Night for the first time, who's behind it and how did it get started?

Gerry Roy: Banff Punk Night was started by myself, Gerry Roy. I play in a band called Regal Foul and have been active in the local Banff scene for a long time. We have a small local scene but also get some AA acts coming through on occasion. However, these things would sometimes fly under the nose of even longtime locals, so if the locals weren't coming it was even harder to get your everyday seasonal worker who was only in town for 6 months or so out to a show.

We have a booming nightlife here seven days a week, and built into that are crazy Karaoke nights, packed trivia nights, entire bars full of people singing along at open-mic nights, etc. I knew the secret to the best of those because they had been established and running with regular frequency. I believed that's what the Punk/Metal/Alt/Emo/Indy fans all needed, a regular event they could count on. So, I rolled the dice on it.

AU: Banff Punk Night runs on the first Tuesday of (almost) every month — which feels both deliberate and a little rebellious. Why that timing, and how has it shaped the event's identity?

GR: Yes, it's very deliberate. I would always have acts reaching out to my band about doing shows in Banff but it was often hard to explain that we couldn't really do shows on the weekend and we needed to space them out. The Tuesday was simply because I knew before I asked, the venue

would agree to it. It's also the perfect timing for the hospitality staff of Banff, most of them are working weekends and have mid-week off.

AU: Punk shows in resort towns aren't always a given. What does hosting a consistent punk night in Banff mean to you, especially within a place known more for tourism than underground music?

GR: I mean, really at the core, it's a selfish thing I do for myself. I bring bands here that I want to see and play with. I think what's most important is giving bands a place to play and people the opportunity to see them. Banff used to get amazing punk shows. I still reminisce with my friends about seeing bands like No Use For a Name, Big Wig and Death by Stereo here back in the early 2000s. I dunno if I lived anywhere else I would have done this same thing but I think every town with one or two local bands needs a Punk Night like what we do.

AU: The Winter Concert Series kicks off February 3rd, just as this issue hits stands. What made you want to launch a focused winter run, and how does Vol XIII set the tone for the series?

GR: Vol XIII marks a return to form in a few ways. The first is launching as a series, we did this with our first six shows and I think it helps spread the word better than promoting shows individually. The second is bringing back Upside Down Man who were a part of the very first Banff Punk Night. Upside Down Man are one of my favourite Calgary bands and they left an impression the first time around. There are people here excited to

see them return.

AU: Each night on the Winter Series lineup feels carefully curated, but not predictable. What do you look for when booking bands for Banff Punk Night — energy, sound, attitude?

GR: The first thing I actually look for is bands with connections to Banff. Sometimes it's band members that once lived in Banff like T.B.D., The Petty Larceneers or Toaster. Sometimes they have members who still work in Banff, like Crash Pad or Airplane Parade. Tel, who is playing Vol XIII, wrote a song and shot a whole music video in Banff about his sister who tragically lost her life here. I think it helps build the community by giving people these relatable stories about the bands; this guy worked at the Lake, this guy was line cook at Coyotes etc. When I'm canvassing up and down Banff Ave trying to spread the word, I like to tell these stories to the front desk workers.

After that it's really my personal taste which really does skew toward 90's fat-wreck style skate-punk. However, every once in a while, I find something that's outside my personal taste that I feel compelled to share with people. That's Lushclot in this lineup. Regal Foul played Punksgiving with them in Red Deer and watching them was almost hypnotic - I thought that was just me until I saw someone say the exact same thing about them online after seeing them play a Calgary show.

AU: Hosting free, no-cover shows is a bold commitment. Why is accessibility such a core part of Banff Punk Night's philosophy?

GR: I just want as many bodies in that small cap bar that I can pack. It's better for everyone the more people that are there. We did try a cover at one of our shows but it worked out poorly compared to the rest of them. It takes all sorts to make it work, the bar provides a little bit of money, I round up some sponsors, have a donation jar and still end up paying a hundred or so out of pocket for each event. But it's worth it.

AU: You've built something that feels welcoming to locals, seasonal workers, touring

VENUE PROFILE

bands and curious newcomers alike. When you look at the pit during a Banff Punk Night show, what about the crowd culture stands out to you most?

GR: I'm just blown away by how courteous everyone is, everyone is moshing, 2-stepping and slam-dancing but no one is being a jerk (yet!). There is so much love for what we're doing. Like I said, I do it for myself first but I never thought I'd have people coming up to me at each event and thanking me for putting these shows together. I say, "If you really love it, just keep coming back, keep supporting the bands we bring in."

AU: Looking ahead to future Volumes — and beyond winter — what excites you most about where Banff Punk Night is headed in 2026?

GR: I consider 2026 the sophomore effort. Last year I was always playing with the formula trying to figure out what worked and what didn't but I feel like we know what we are now and the word is out. I get messages from new bands almost everyday who want to come play, I'm already booking May, June and July with plans through to the end of the year.

But the big thing I wanna do this year is figure out an All-Ages show. There are a lot of youth in Banff and Canmore who are starting bands and don't have places to play or see shows. Playing DIY Punk Rock shows has been something I've been doing since High-School and I just don't see these kids having access to the same type of venues to put on events like we did when I was a kid.

AU: Finally, for someone who's never been to Banff Punk Night before, what would you say to convince them to show up on a cold Tuesday night?

GR: I usually say if you're out on that night come check it out, you might like it, you might hate it but it's free and there is no other experience like it in Banff.

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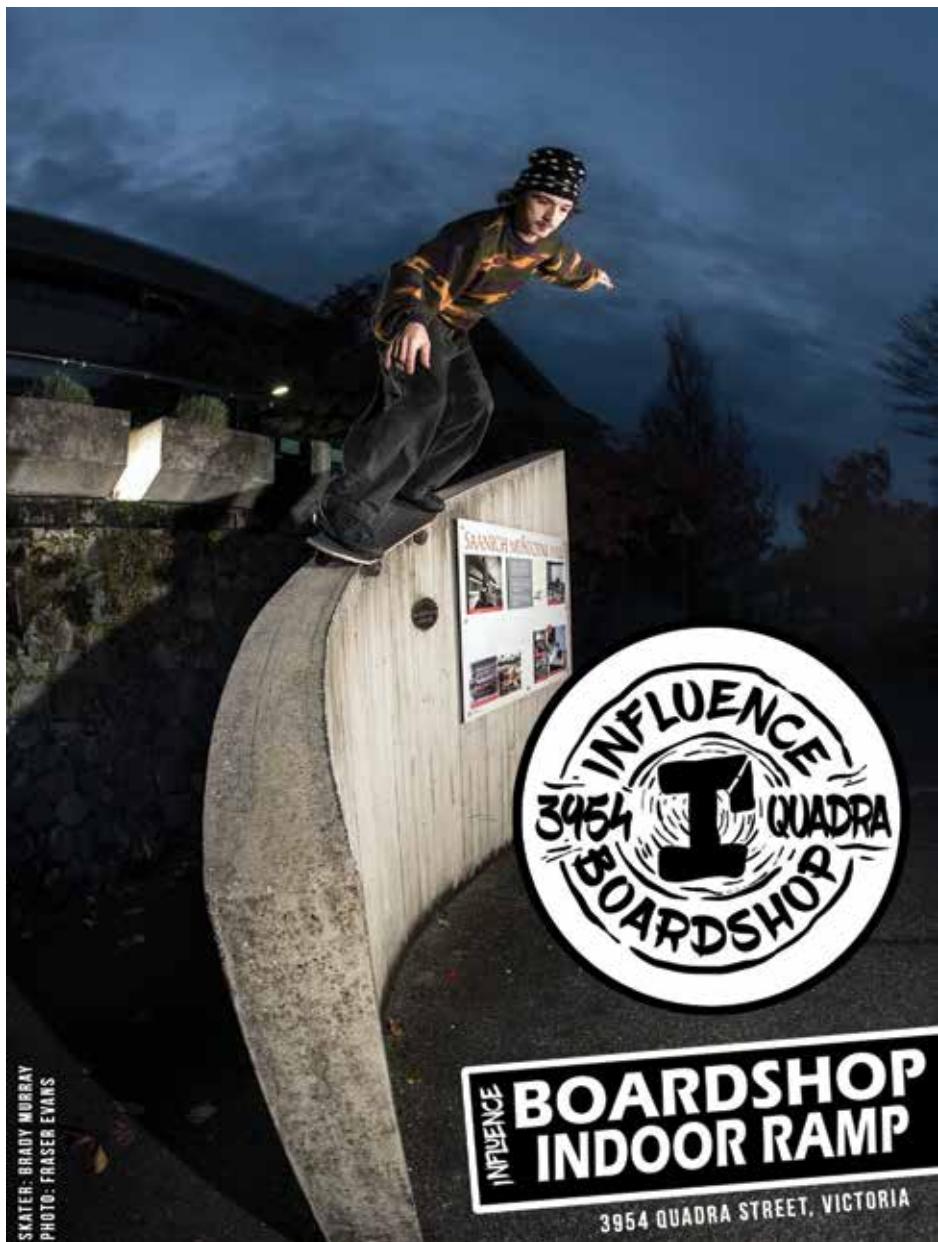
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Jonny Bones and The Still Spirits

New Album: *Small Time Crime*

By Steve Pearson

I am pleased to be joined by my friend Jon Aaron, aka Jonny Bones. Jonny is the bandleader and the heart and soul of the yard-core sextet The Still Spirits. Their new album, *Small Time Crime*, is set to be released on February 28th.

AU: How are you doing these days, Jonny?

Jonny Bones: I'm doing okay - all things considered. As some may know, I've been fighting cancer this past year. It's had its ups and downs but I'm still here and I'm really proud that we got this album across the finish line.

AU: The last few months must have been challenging. You've been undergoing rounds of chemotherapy while still leading the charge to get the record completed. How was that process for you and the band?

JB: It's been a whirlwind for sure, but it was actually a really helpful thing to keep me focused and motivated as I navigated this new landscape. Before I was diagnosed and in the hospital we had the thing about half recorded. When I got out of the hospital and regained my voice from chemo treatment, I had a sound engineer friend inquire what was up with the album. It needed a lot of editing but he offered to give it a shot and we just started plugging away at it. Our lead vocalist nailed the whole album in two sessions, and then it was me working with the rest of the boys to orchestrate all the backing vocals (which I even managed to sing on, even with vocal

cancer) and before we knew it we had a finished album! Huge thanks to our buddy Blake MacKay for picking up the reins and really having the positive attitude to keep me motivated to get this thing finished. It really sounds incredible. He was able to build and expand on the foundation we started before I got sick.

AU: The Still Spirits may not be a household name for some readers of this magazine—how would you describe your sound and style to someone who has never heard you before?

JB: The Spirits are an odd bunch. Mostly the moonshine induced ravings of our lead singer/banjo player, Skiff. It's a blend of his influences - Olde time Americans/Canadians, blues, bluegrass, folk, country, and just a Olde 1920's-40's kinda vibe. It's basically if you took old bluegrass and filtered it through punk rock. Some call it folk punk, or trash grass - we call it yardcore. It wasn't until about a decade into being a band that we found out there's a genre from way back in to day called "Skiffle" music, which is exactly what we play: a lively, folk-based music genre that mixes

American blues, jazz, country, and folk, known for using homemade or improvised instruments like washboards or jugs, and washtub basses alongside guitars, banjos and harmonicas."

AU: *Small Time Crime* consists of 10 songs - what would you say is the overall theme?

JB: The record is a collection of tunes that we crafted over the past decade. This band is always full of stops and starts. Highs and lows, existing and breaking up, Hell, we had a global pandemic in there, but in the end we always come back because it's really just an excuse to hang out with your best buddies, make some noise and have a good time together. If the album had a theme, it would be the title, *Small Time Crime*. There's songs about loss, love, songs about deals gone bad or regrets, but there's also songs about fun, and being young and dumb and dreaming. The little things, while not always exactly legal, make up this crazy adventure we call life.

AU: The album release party is taking place at Vancouver's Red Gate. What have you cooked up for this event?

JB: The event is gonna be a blast! I've gathered as many friends from Kinda Cool Records as I could and convinced them to come out and celebrate with us. It's also my 41st birthday party. Just friends, fun and good music all night - that's the plan!

AU: The turn of the calendar marks 15 years of The Still Spirits. What have been some of the standout moments as you look back at the band's history?

JB: Yeah, it's wild to think we've been doing this thing for this long - but here we are. This new album alone is a decade in the making. There's too many moments and memories to ever try to fit in the pages of this interview, and like some of the best stories, you just kind of had to be there for them to hit the same way. So the best way is to simply come out to the show and make some memories with us. That's how these things happen. That's how stories start and legends grow, just by getting off your couch and coming out to a live show, you never know what the night will bring.



AU: What's next for Jonny Bones?

JB: Just keep living, mate. That's the plan, take things day by day. I got this record out, that was a huge goal for me, as I hate seeing songs left unrecorded and lost forever. So this thing existing is huge. My friends have also started a non-profit foundation for me called 'Jonny Bones Forever' to ensure all the things I consider worthwhile in life: Music, Art, Theatre, Film, Community & All Ages Access to these things, continue to flourish and thrive in our scene, so that's very cool. Next, I'll be trying to cobble together a solo record that will be a smattering of all my songs from over the years. It's gonna be tough since I can no longer sing due to my condition, but through the help of friends, I think I can preserve these songs too, as I think music is important and songs deserve to be shared.

AU: Any final thoughts for the wonderful people out there reading this?

JB: Be Kind To Each Other. And Long Live Unity Music.

Follow The Still Spirits:

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Comics That Show How Love Hurts More Than It Heals

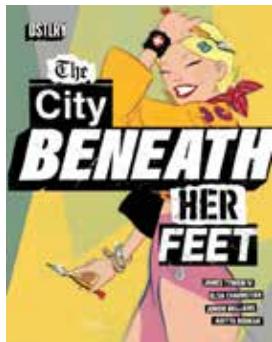
By Ed Sum

In the name of Valentine's Day, some creators prefer to explore its rougher edges. To say everything goes well is the stuff of dreams, and sometimes we need reminders of the nightmares too. In the real world, though, love comes with sacrifice, compromise, and the understanding that some romances aren't meant to last. It's not to say true love does not exist, but it must come from after the heart aches to make that bond stronger. There are also works that aim at dispelling truisms. By examining stories shaped by grief, obsession, and emotional baggage, perhaps we find our relationships better for it. For readers seeking something other than the usual Harlequin-style fare, these current and upcoming titles present an interesting alternative.

The City Beneath Her Feet (Remastered)

September 2025

The collaboration between James Tynion IV and Elsa Charretier is worth exploring for its sheer audacity. Zara is a struggling writer trying to scrape by. Jasper is an assassin who is impossible to control, emotionally unreachable, and somehow essential to her survival. The idea that these two connect is absurd on paper, yet the story never turns syrupy. Instead, it leans into something stranger and more surreal, where attraction feels unstable, and very much alive.



Bleeding Hearts #1

February 2026

DC's revival of its legendary Vertigo imprint is aimed squarely at darker, anti-establishment storytelling, the kind that once made Hellblazer and The Sandman essential reading. This new ongoing series, from Deniz Camp, Stipan Morian, Matt Hollingsworth, and Hassan Otsmane-Elhaou, centres on Poke, a young man whose heart inexplicably begins beating again in a world overrun by the undead.

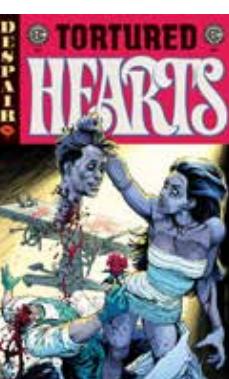
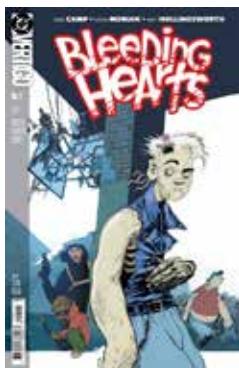
Poke is a zombie, but when he discovers love, the result isn't another high-school undead romance. It's something stranger, more unsettling, and far more interested in what it means to feel human when the world has already declared you dead.

Tortured Hearts #1

February 2026

This one-shot anthology from Oni Press proudly leans into what's grim about love and pain. Featuring horror-tinted stories from a roster of creators that includes Jordie Bellaire and Tini Howard, it's been described as a coffin-shaped bouquet delivered with soft whispers and death rattles.

The stories favour emotional wounds, brutality, and sharp edges over sentimentality, offering something closer to catharsis than comfort.



Supernatural Valentine's Day Special #1

February 2026

Sam and Dean Winchester understand love and loss better than most. Having long abandoned the idea of a normal life, the brothers hunt the things that destroyed their family, and they know all too well what grief can push someone to do. That makes them uniquely suited to confront a case where heartbreak leads someone to bargain with demonic forces to resurrect the dead.

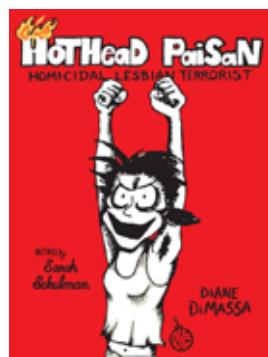
Understanding the impulse doesn't make it safe, though, and meddling with mortality rarely ends quietly. Here, an attempt to command a minor underworld entity spirals into the summoning of an ancient, uncontrollable goddess of desire. What follows is chaos on a mythic scale, a reminder that love, when weaponised or distorted, can be every bit as destructive as it is powerful.



Past Works That Set the Tone

Long before Valentine's specials tried to get ironic, indie comics were already dismantling the fantasy. Instead of offering something sweet, these creators aimed for something far more brutal, and arguably more honest.

And no, this isn't just about The Crow. James O'Barr's gothic revenge tragedy showed how love hurts. The grief. The pain.



COMIC-GEDDON

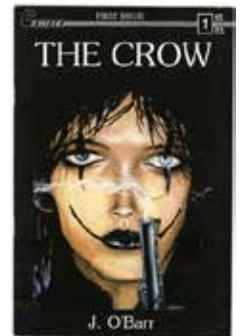
What he created became a way to process his own loss, while also reflecting how people face uncertain futures when all that remains is rage.

With Wuvable Oaf, Ed Luce's cult favourite follows a metal-loving outsider stumbling through friendship,

sex, and heartbreak. Romance here is awkward and unglamorous, but deeply sincere. It rejects idealised love in favour of emotional truth, making vulnerability its quiet rebellion.

And finally, in Diane DiMassa's Hothead PoiSon: Homicidal Lesbian Terrorist, this series channels rage as catharsis, tearing down romance as a structure tied to control and systemic violence. Love, when it exists at all, is secondary to survival. It remains one of the most uncompromising anti-romance statements comics have ever produced.

Together, these works laid the groundwork for today's anti-Valentine comics, proving there was room for stories where love is complicated, political, and sometimes downright hostile.



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THE GARY BUSEYS

Interview with D.B. McCoshen

By Marisa Flora

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

D.B.M: I'm not supposed to talk to strangers but I'm Ryan Coke. I'm the lead throat singer in the Heebie-Bee Gees. I also play the organ in my pants. My hobbies include browsing shoelaces on the Dollar Tree website and putting bugs in my mouth, and you can usually find me in the restroom down at the Greyhound station, admiring the urinal cakes. Just kidding, I made most of that up.

I also go by the alias D.B. McCoshen, and I write songs, sing and play rhythm guitar in the Gary Buseys. In my mind, we're bigger than the Beatles when they were bigger than Jesus, and probably huge in Madagascar, maybe — it's too early to tell. Our songs dive deep into political, social and personal issues with poetic satire. I give us the description of loud, fast, and sloppy. Ritchy Nails of the Nailheads and Cave Noire once described our sound as "short, sharp bursts of chaos," and I love that quote. Oh, and speaking of poetics, for any of your interested readers, I self-published a collection of my poetry called *Antisocial Scribbles*, available in paperback or e-book on Amazon.

What am I most famous or infamous for? Who

the hell wants to be famous? I'd rather be infamous, like Chi Pig or Lenny Bruce. Truth is, I'm neither, but probably most known locally for setting off a fire extinguisher at a show. The cops, firefighters and EMS showed up. People were being taken to the hospital — we had to bail fast! Or leaning my guitar up against my amp to feedback mid-song while I went to take a piss, if anybody from the scene here remembers that. Probably not, I'm not that cool.

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

D.B.M: We hail from Northern Ontario. More specifically, a place called Timmins. It's the city with the heart of gold, don't you know. But it's not what you think. Not that there aren't a lot of nice people here, but they call it that because the city's surrounding area produces a lot of gold. The music scene here is pretty diverse — there's a lot of great bands, but none of them are playing polka music, which is weird. And no, I've never met Shania. However, I did see her sitting on a folding table eating hors d'oeuvres once. I have met Jimmie Walker — he asked where the strip club was.

AU: What Canadian punk band and song did you choose to cover for *Punk Canada*, and what drew you to that band/track?

D.B.M: We discussed what band and what song to cover for a week or so and ended up choosing The Black Halos. I've loved them ever since I first heard "Some Things Never Fall." To me, they're one of those bands that put out albums that are all killer, no filler. We didn't want to cover one of their more well-known songs, so I suggested "B.S.F." off their first record. We learned it by ear but were having trouble with one of the parts — couldn't really figure out what was going on. So I reached out to Jay Millette, and he was nice enough to send me a video of himself playing the part, which was wicked cool of him. So big thanks to Jay, and big thanks to Billy Hopeless and Rich Jones for allowing us to try our attempt at doing justice to a great song.

AU: Is there another Canadian punk song you'd

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like to cover in the future?

D.B.M: Nah! We're not a cover band. That's not to say we don't ever play covers. In fact, our live set includes the song "Maybe Tomorrow," more easily recognized as *The Littlest Hobo* theme song. Since recording "B.S.F." for the *Punk Canada Vol. 4* comp, we've included that into our live set, since we're selling *Vol. 4* at our shows. There's probably a handful of others we know as a band that we can play, if we feel like it — like "Fate" by SNFU and "The Crowd" by Operation Ivy, just 'cause people recognize them.

AU: If someone is discovering your band for the first time through *Punk Canada*, what's the one song of yours they need to hear?

D.B.M: I'd have to say "Lucie in the Sky with Fugazis," which is my favourite song of ours, "Year of the Virus," or "Ever Since My Concussion." I know you only asked for one, but the concept of counting eludes me.

AU: This *Absolute Underground* issue has a theme of *The Warriors* (1979 cult classic film) and Valentine's Day. Any thoughts on either — from the romantic, to the brutal, to the brutally honest?

D.B.M: *The Warriors* is hands down a great "gang" film, but I much prefer *The Wanderers*. I don't see any of the gangs in *The Warriors* ever fucking with the Baldies or the Wongs.

I heard cases of venereal disease skyrocket the day after Valentine's Day. A little VD on VD. Would you like some antibiotics with your box of chocolates?

AU: Do you have any upcoming projects, tours, or shows planned for 2026?

D.B.M: We plan to book some studio time in February to record some songs for a couple of EPs, which we'd stagger the releases of. Or we might just put all the songs out on an LP — that's still all up in the air. We'll most likely put it out on our own "label," and by label I mean coming up with a name, design a logo and slap it on the record.

We've only got one show booked so far for this year, in August with Ripcordz and we'll probably have a few more booked by the end of February.

It's tough for us to tour, so we'll play one-offs abroad every now and then. You can only play so often in your hometown so as not to oversaturate.

Andrew Cumming (bass), Greg Paul (lead guitar/vocals)

and Kevin Anthony (drums) all have busy family lives, and we all have full-time jobs. Greg is a single dad, so it's even harder for him to get away. I'm the only one without a family at home.

AU: What's the best way for people to hear your music and find you online?

D.B.M: We don't have any records out... yet but the best way is to check out YouTube: youtube.com/@thegarybuseysband and Facebook: facebook.com/TheGaryBuseys, or get a copy of *Punk Canada Vol. 4*. Heck! Get all the copies — they're all great records with tons of great bands. Or just catch us live!

BTW, shout-out and many thanks to Paul Gott, the mastermind behind *Punk Canada*. Most likely, even if we did have a record out, I don't think we'd use Spotify or other online platforms. I say "most likely," 'cause you should never say never. I also never say Beetlejuice three times — that dude gives me the heebie bee gees.

AU: What are you listening to right now — Canadian or otherwise — that's keeping you inspired?

D.B.M: I listen to a lot of different bands, but I'll take this opportunity to mention some local to Northern ON, and some I'm friends with: Puddy, Invocate, Comma, Laforge, All the Wasted Years, the Defamed, the Nailheads, Rough Outlook, the Fixer, Ripcordz, Unfit, Spillover, Tall Pork, Ryan Problems and the Solutions, Cave Noire, Lesions, etc. Well! That's it for me, kids. Stay sexy, don't do all the drugs, and anarchy in Canada, eh...





Bonggun Kim

By Ross Hansen

Absolute Underground: Can you tell us a bit about yourself and how you got started in comedy?

Bonggun Kim: I came to Canada because I had always wanted to come here since I was young. I think it started from admiring the culture in North America after watching a lot of Western movies, especially Hollywood films. When I came here in 2017, I planned to take a journalism course at Seneca. But the language pathway program I needed to get into the course got cancelled. Around that time, I was already making funny videos, so I typed "comedy school" into Google and Humber Comedy came up. At the same time, I watched a Kevin Hart special; I still remember it vividly. The moment I watched it, I got

goosebumps. I thought, wow, a comedy form like this exists? Just yourself alone on stage, making people laugh? That's when I decided I was going to do this for the rest of my life. And that's how it all started.

AU: You post your videos regularly on socials. What's the process for making a single post?

BK: I write a batch of scripts day by day. Once the initial funny idea and core message are done, I rewrite the scripts until they're fully ready to go. After that, I assign each video to the comedian who can deliver it best. Then we film, edit and schedule the videos for social media. When filming, I schedule shoots based on everyone's availability and film two to three videos at a time so I can maximize production efficiency.

AU: Can you talk about your style of comedy?

BK: My style is reverse-interview. People expect a normal answer, but I say something completely insane—an idea that often tries to build a bridge between cultures. It fits perfectly with my comedy style. I always have something to say, but I don't want to over-interact. The simpler it is, the funnier and stronger it becomes. That's why the interview style works best: you ask me, I say what I say, and then I leave... have a nice day.

AU: What was your inspiration for starting comedy, and extending it online?

BK: My initial inspiration was a Kevin Hart special, but eventually I expanded into social media as the comedy landscape changed. In the past, if you were a stand-up comedian, you could simply be good and charming, get selected by the media, and then do whatever they thought you were good at on TV, in movies or through other media formats. Nowadays, you've got to build it yourself. Social media gives people much more flexibility; almost anyone can do it with just one phone and one idea. You create your own brand, market yourself, and make money from it. Big media and large companies are now trying their best to find creators who already have followers and a brand vibe they align with. It's also more financially efficient for them, because the brand is already built and audiences can immediately see

their products when they collaborate with us.

At the beginning of my career, I tried everything - from making videos on YouTube to TikTok. I gained quite a lot of followers on TikTok, but I eventually deleted the account because the videos I was making, although they were working and had a style, didn't fully represent who I am. I realized I was making them because they performed well, not because they were truly me, so I had to let that go. For many years after that, I pursued stand-up comedy in a traditional way, focusing on building my set and touring. But it wasn't just exhausting, it was also financially tough; I didn't want to go deeper into debt. Now I'm married, I have a wife to support, and I was sick and tired of being broke and following someone else's path. So I said, fuck it, I'll build my own brand, in my own style. And that's how it all started. I literally had nothing to lose.

"Social media gives people much more flexibility; almost anyone can do it with just one phone and one idea."

AU: You rarely work alone with these videos and feature friends of yours. How does that work for everyone?

BK: I usually work with comedians who are my friends and who I know are hard workers. Because of that, I don't need many words, I just ask, "When are you free?" and they already know we're filming. I also don't usually send scripts in advance. I like their improvisational spark. When I give them the script right before we shoot, it feels fresh, their brains light up, and we rewrite on the spot through improv. That process is how many of our videos went viral. If a script doesn't click with them, I just skip it; I have plenty of other scripts ready anyway.

Sometimes I get a fresh idea that I really want to explore with someone, so I try working with new

CROWDSURF COMEDY

comedians. Most of the time it's a one- or two-off collaboration, unless there's real chemistry and connection. People's life stories and patterns are different, you know. Shout out to my brothers: Conrad Osei, Cole Chauvin, Andrew Oporto, Noor Kidwai and Hadi Kubba.

AU: Do you have a story from a memorable live show?

BK: There was this redneck town, Pincher Creek, AB. After a show, this guy came up to me and said, "Hey, do you want a joke for Koreans? You can use it on stage if you like." I said, "Okay." He goes, "Do you know what you call a Korean walking a dog?" I said, "I don't know." He goes, "Vegetarian." There was about three seconds of silence... then we all burst out laughing. Because funny is funny—and it was funny.

AU: Do you have any advice you would give to a comedian who wants to start doing online comedy posts?

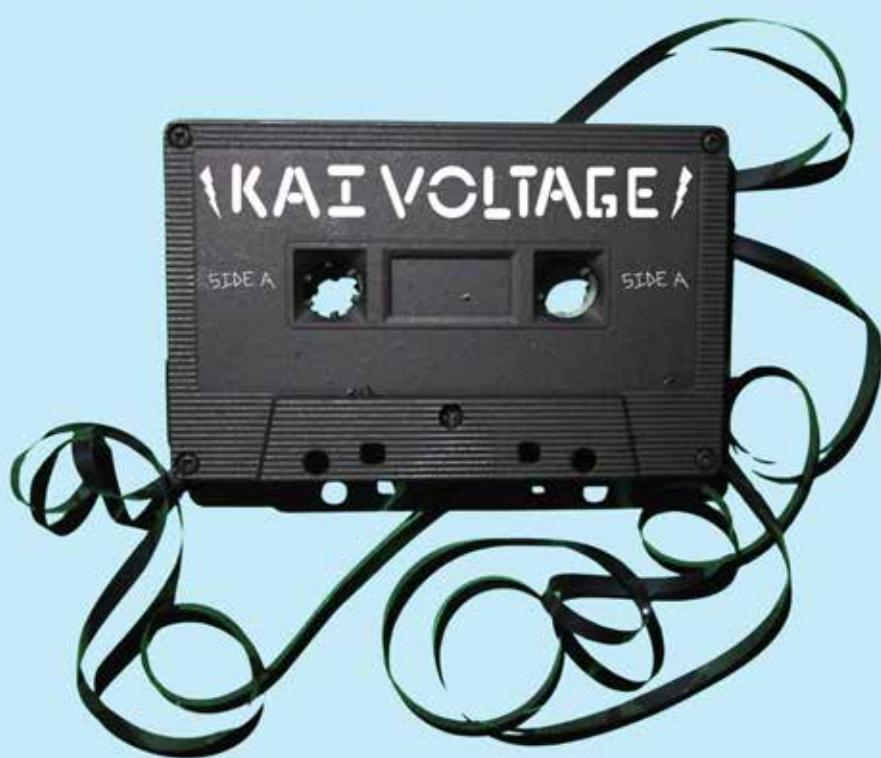
BK: Don't wait to be perfect, just start somewhere. What you're making today can be the step that leads to what you really want to create tomorrow, next week or a month from now. It's a path, not a one-hit wonder. Keep thinking, keep creating and never give up. Whoever keeps going will eventually become a winner on their own timing.

Photo Credit: Jessica Devic
instagram.com/devicfotos



REEL SHARED ON DEC 12, 2025
BY BONGUNKIMO1

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OUT FEB 28**



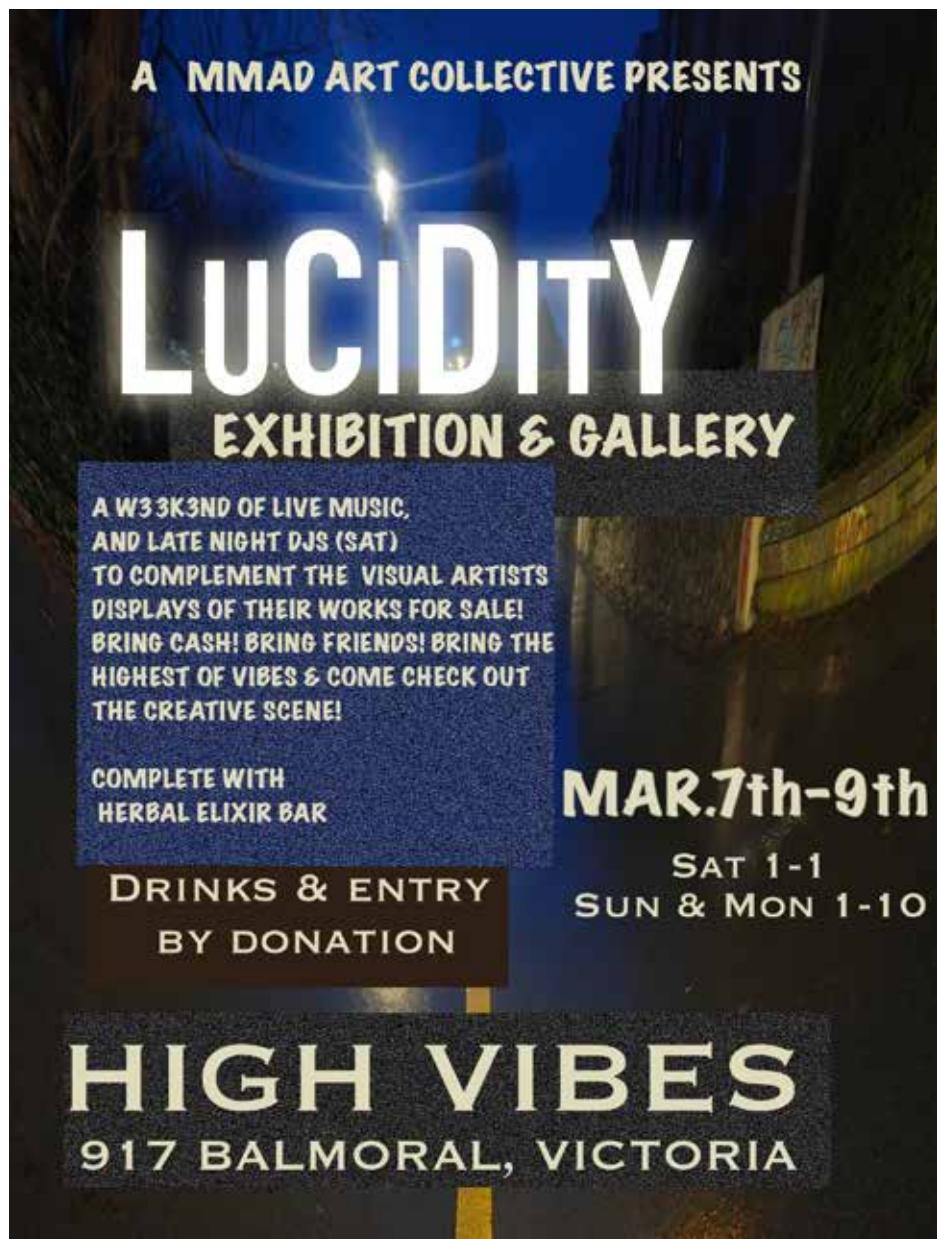
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Dan Yang

By Ross Hansen

Absolute Underground: Can you tell us a bit about yourself and how you got started in comedy?

Dan Yang: It's hard to just give an overview of myself because I'm very much just a guy. I grew up in the Bay Area but have lived in LA, Boston, and NYC (which makes me a coastal elite). My parents are from China so my home life was very Chinese but I went to American schools so I feel like I always saw what was weird about both sides of things.

I heard another comic say on a podcast or something that people think stand-up comics were the class clowns, but really they're the kids in the back of the class that are making fun of the class clown in their head. I'd say that would describe the kind of kid I was.

I started doing comedy by taking an improv class in college but I hated it. I respect it (I guess) but it just wasn't for me. I very clearly remember my instructor telling me in his office (which was just a booth at the In-N-Out next door, not a joke) that I was funny but I didn't listen.

When I moved to NYC, I lived with an actor and he suggested we go to an open mic. In retrospect it's funny I needed the confidence of an actor to get my ass to one. Once I saw how bad everyone was I was like "okay, I can't be the worst person here". And I kept going up and 11 years later I'm still doing it.

AU: In your posts you'll do commentary over funny video

CROWDSURF COMEDY

clips, how do you find these clips?

DY: Man, all I do is scroll on my phone. I will scroll til I die.

AU: You have a deadpan style, which is a style I've always loved. Can you tell us about some inspirations of yours?

DY: The deadpan style is just how I've always talked and acted. I really have no other choice of style.

Stuff I liked growing up: the first couple Chappelle specials, Norm MacDonald, Hannibal Buress, Chris Rock, John Mulaney, the movie *MacGruber*, old Conan reruns, seasons 2–9 of *The Simpsons* (just like every other millennial dude), Jackass. Something I think that was underrated was the PBS show *Arthur*. I was also a big internet kid so I was on SomethingAwful a lot back in the day along with other random forums.

AU: Do you have a story of somewhere you performed where you thought "this place is kinda fucked up"?

DY: Every comic has performed in fucked up places, you just kind of get desensitized. I remember early on doing a show at a pizza shop where they paid in 2 free slices. All the comics ate their pizza and no audience showed up so we agreed to just cancel the show and go home.

The pizza shop guy was like "no you ate the pizza you have to perform" so we just ended up doing sets for the workers and the occasional person picking up an order. It sucks but you trick yourself into thinking

this will help you be a better comic even though it probably doesn't. The pizza was good though.

AU: What was the most memorable show you performed in?

DY: They all kind of blend into one giant terrible life decision. I had a show a few months ago where some girls in the front row were talking a lot and I had to address it. They apologized and were like "sorry the guy right next to us just threw up" and I had to be like, "hmm ok, I guess it's understandable you would be talking in this situation". The club had to escort the guy out and I gave out the remaining 12 beers he had brought in.

AU: Do you have anything coming up that you'd like to promote?

DY: Man, I wish. I'm aiming to get a special of some sort recorded this year and will be posting about it nonstop when that happens on all my socials (primarily Instagram and YouTube these days) @realdanyang so just follow me there. Our followers are literally all we have as comics.

Photo credit: JT Anderson (@jtcanshoot)



REEL SHARED ON AUG 28, 2025
BY REALDANYANG



The audience revitalizes old songs for me: an interview with Ihsahn of EMPEROR

Interview by Alia Synesthesia

It was a bleak, snowy January day in Toronto when Ihsahn joined me for an interview from his studio in Norway. In a few months, on March 27, Emperor will kick off their North American tour at The Concert Hall (Toronto), supported by Blood Incantation. The snow outside my window was falling in heavy flakes, and for a mere second it felt like we could have been in the same geographical location. "My general impression is, Canadians feel more like Scandinavians, if you will," said Ihsahn thoughtfully. "There's a similar disposition, I think. So I've always felt very comfortable whenever I've visited Canada." The last time Emperor played in Toronto was in 1999, as part of the Kings of Terror tour, but Ihsahn has visited a few times with his solo projects since.

Ihsahn: '99 was the last year where we were still officially touring, you know [chuckles]? We got back together in the mid-2000s to tour on a regular basis again, and we've been playing for many years now, but our touring schedule is still quite limited. Each time it's a discussion. We play ten, maybe twelve shows a year, so we are very happy that we are finally coming back to play

there. It's about time, for sure.

Absolute Underground: Who's joining you in your live line-up this time around?

Ihsahn: It will be the regular band: Samoth, Trym, myself, Jørgen Munkeby on the keyboards and Sectemón on the bass.

AU: You are touring together with Blood Incantation. How did that pairing come about?

Ihsahn: We are fortunate they are joining us; they are very nice guys and their music has this progressive element. It's very atmospheric. I think, both personally and musically, it will blend very well and be a worthwhile package for people to watch. When it comes to how it was put together, it's our colleagues in management in America. We hit it off very well when we met them [Blood Incantation], and it just made sense both musically and touring-wise. I mean, usually this is not the stuff that we come up with [chuckles]. There are so many variables like schedules and other practical elements to it. So we were very happy for things to come together like that.

AU: Each Emperor album is iconic in its own way. How do you decide which songs to include on the live setlist?

Ihsahn: It really depends. We tend to play mostly from *Eclipse* and *Anthems* but hopefully we'll be pulling some more material from *Equilibrium* this time around. Also, I've noticed this with Emperor and in my solo career as well: some music is very album-friendly; it has this focus when you're listening to it on headphones, and other songs are more live-friendly. There's a different energy to the whole live thing, so it's another factor. When it comes to who decides, it's me and Samoth. He is more of



an overseeing eye on the whole thing because he remembers and keeps files on what songs we played in which territories to keep it interesting for whoever comes watching, and for ourselves as well. We're also fortunate; we have some songs that people expect to hear, so there's always some of those in constant rotation.

AU: Have you ever encountered a situation where you wanted to play a song live, but it just doesn't translate well in a live setting?

Ihsahn: In the beginning, I didn't really give it much thought. I just put together the set based on what kind of songs I wanted to play and what kind of energy I wanted to pursue. But at some point I was playing Sweden Rock; it wasn't very late, and it was an outside stage. I was playing one of my songs called "The Grave," which is probably one of the heaviest and darkest songs that I've ever made [laughs]. It was summer, people in the audience were having a beer, and it just did not connect, you know? Because that wasn't the right circumstance for it. That song in particular is for a club night, an autumn tour kind of show. In those conditions, it is perfect to end the night with. But for something like a summer festival,

when people are there to just grab some beers with friends, I might play something like "Until I Too Dissolve" or "My Heart is of the North," a more energetic kind of song. When I play live, I want it all to fit together; but when it's all this really dark and gloomy stuff on a sunlit stage, it's impossible to conjure up the right atmosphere. So it's better to lean on something that suits the environment better [chuckles].

AU: When it comes to performing live in front of people or composing in a studio, which do you prefer?

Ihsahn: I must admit I've always been a studio rat. That has the biggest kind of appeal for me. I think some people might see me as the guy who was in a band and then eventually went solo. But I grew up on a farm, and I think my earliest memories of creating music were of myself, my guitar, an electric organ, and a four-track recorder; I was just making stuff, tracking different parts, putting that kind of musical puzzle together. And then eventually I ended up being in bands, and then I kind of ventured back to just being in my own bubble.

For me, being in a studio and seeing how things come to life—that's the biggest appeal and reward. But then again, this changes over the years. I think I was more unhappy playing live back in the '90s because of the technology, the travelling, and everything; there were so many elements that compromised what we were doing. For me, having in-ear monitors... [was a game changer]. I mean, it's complex music, and it's also really fast. And sometimes when you play in venues with bad sound systems, it's like a snowstorm.

You're trying to perform something heartfelt and genuine, and what you're hearing is [distortion whooshing]. So I felt it was too much of a compromise. Over the years, we've been very fortunate to play in good-sounding venues, and we have an amazing crew and a rig that works very well, so now I feel the music more. And it makes me enjoy playing live more because I can actually focus on performing and not only on the technical side of things.

That being said, there's something really special about the energy of the audience. As an example, as you can probably relate to, it's never really much fun rehearsing "I am the Black Wizards". It's a song that has been with us since '92 or something like that [chuckles]. But it's never boring to play that song live because there are so many of our fans who know it by heart; people sing along, and it just takes on a life of its own. The audience kind of revitalizes old songs for me. And that, I think, is something very valuable; over the years, I've always been neck deep in my newest creation, and it takes all my attention. But being able to play from the entire catalogue, and pick out older songs and try to combine them with new songs in a live set, enables me to enjoy the songs more objectively.

AU: Interesting. I actually never thought about it like that, but I see how this gives songs a different context. You're listening to them

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anew, as you experience them through how your fans experience them.

Ihsahn: Yes. It doesn't really matter if I feel like a song that I wrote when I was 16 was not something ingenious or well thought out; when you see the appreciation, you experience it together with fans who love these songs. And I'm a music fan myself; it doesn't matter to me how any other artist feels about their own songs. If I have a strong relationship with that song, that's the meaningful part.

AU: Your career trajectory is fascinating to me because you were one of the pioneers of symphonic black metal, and gradually this made you interested in orchestral music as well. What was your gateway into symphonic music, and when did you first have the idea to fuse it with metal?

Ihsahn: Horror movie soundtracks, or even just movie soundtracks: Jerry Goldsmith, John Williams, Bernard Herrmann, but also stuff like the *Halloween* soundtrack. If you listen to old Emperor stuff, we had analog synth elements there as well. We wanted to create something that was really cinematic and larger than life; it was set in this kind of extravagant vision. And of course, there were the distorted guitars and such. I guess what I was missing in metal, I found at times in other kinds of music.

It was very controversial when Iron Maiden released *Seventh Son of a Seventh Son* and used keyboards. And people were like: "Fuck you, you can't have keyboards in Iron Maiden." But for me, it was one of my absolute top albums ever; it encompassed everything that I loved about the band, but it also had a concept. Everything fits together, there's a story behind it, and the added choirs and the keyboards made it even bigger, even more. And when it comes to metal, especially extreme metal, there is no ebb and flow just by the nature of everything being so loud (like distorted guitars). It's just this constant level of everything. In a sense, it's a very static form of expression; it leaves little room for dynamics. So by adding a bit of orchestral elements that are very dynamic, you can simulate some of that ebb and flow. A lot of people think there's such a huge divide between classical music or rock music or metal; it's like, "Oh, this doesn't go together." But in my opinion, if you listen to a lot of Black Sabbath, like "Born Again" or "Disturbing the Priest," and then you listen to something like *Alien* by Jerry Goldsmith... sure, they used different instruments, but the intent of the atmosphere and emotion they wanted to create is very much the same.

You use whatever means available to you to create something. When Goldsmith was composing *The Omen* soundtrack, he wanted to create something really dark, eerie, and satanic. And so did Tony Iommi; he didn't have an orchestra or composition tools, but he had a guitar and he had the effects. So the intention is very similar. And with both metal and orchestral music, you can make it sound really large and bombastic, so they share a lot in common. That's just my opinion anyways [chuckles].

AU: What's next for you after the Emperor tour? Are you coming back to the studio, or do you have more touring plans?

Ihsahn: For the rest of the year, I am planning to write some stuff on and off. But it is in early phases. I have some solo shows as well. From the US tour and onwards, we're doing some festival shows for Wacken and Beyond the Gates in Oslo, where we bring in Mortiis and Taake as well. That's going to be fun. Apart from that, today, for example, I've been editing drums for my son's second EP.

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THE FAKE FRIENDS: Interview with vocalist Matthew Savage

New Album: *Let's Not Overthink This*

By Chad Cornies

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

Matthew Savage: I'm Matthew Savage, and I am infamously fully vaccinated.

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

MS: The band started while François Legault was soft-launching socialism in Québec. We've got me, Luca Santilli (guitar), Felix Crawford-Legault (guitar), Mike Kamps (bass), Bradley Cooper-Graham (keys), and Michael Tomizzi (drums), and we're here to put money from our shows into New Orleans-themed dingers.

AU: What does it say on your bandmates' Tinder profiles, and on yours?

MS: I don't believe in the commodification of human connection for data farming.

AU: Where is the band from, and what's the



music scene like there?

MS: Montréal, all day every day. The scene is composed of locals that love the city and cultural tourists that tell us how we should live.

AU: Describe the bands sound, if possible.

MS: A little bit punk, a little bit new wave, a little bit fun. Six surfers trying to catch a wave in a lake.

AU: How would you describe your live show to the visually impaired?

MS: Biblically accurate Bigfoot — better than it sounds.

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

MS: We've got a record coming out in February called *Let's Not Overthink This*. It's the longest thing we've ever put out, so we explored a lot of sounds. Arena rock, greaseball jazz, real emo bangers. We all have too many opinions, and they all made it to the record, which is sick.

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

MS: What it means to be alive in a post-human theocracy. Also astrology.

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

MS: The responsible answer is our newly released singles, "Sucker Born Every Minute" and "The

Way She Goes." The real answer is a song called "5 Star Review" that answers the question: What if "Heated Rivalry" was about scumbags in a punk band?



AU: Sex, drugs, or rock 'n' roll — or all of the above?

MS: Felix is straight edge, thanks.

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

MS: My mother knows too much, and it's caused a really big strain on our relationship.

AU: Any upcoming tour plans?

MS: Nothing set in stone, but once the record's out, we're looking to play in some new cities we've never been to before. Alma, Québec — you are not prepared.

AU: Anything else to promote?

MS: Every plane of existence is dictated by a designated watershed that we have yet to understand. Space is a celestial river. Octopuses are Earthworm Jim without the suit. Subscribe to my Patreon for real free thinkers.

AU: Final words of wisdom for our readers?

MS: Your credit card isn't real. Sign up for three, max them out, take the balance, invest in the S&P 500, ignore their phone calls. Creditors can't arrest you — it's a fear-based tactic, and just like the bogeyman, if you don't believe it's real, it can't hurt you.

AU: How do people find you online?

MS: You can follow The Fake Friends on [Instagram @thefakefriendssuck](#), follow [Stomp Records on YouTube](#) for music videos and listen to us on [Bandcamp: thefakefriends.bandcamp.com](#) or whatever streaming service you decide is "more ethical."

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Tamare White-Wolf Medicine Woman

Earth and Sky Connection

Tamare White-Wolf

AU: What is the origin story and history of Earth & Sky Connection?

Tamare White-Wolf: Earth and Sky Connection created in 1996, originally opened with a few girlfriends, who decided it really wasn't their path within a few months. We had opened in a small town in Barrie, ON. We were considered on the edge and in fact there was a time when many would walk by yelling out witch, witch, witch as if it was a bad thing. I've been a single parent for most of my adult life, it was the only way I could be both mother of a little boy, (who now is a man) and shoppe owner. I have always been a little unusual, not necessarily fitting into the normal groups, which didn't really bother me since I wasn't interested in many things that regular folks enjoyed.

I didn't have a lot of money and for that reason I often looked for things I could create that didn't cost me much.

I literally started out making wreaths with grapevine. I didn't make your average ones either, I made butterflies, dragonflies and heart shapes. I use herbs and flowers that I found in fields to decorate them. At the time I started learning and reading the medicine cards and sacred path cards. I had a beautiful teepee in my backyard that people could see from the road. This attracted many curious and unusual folks, my kind of people. Eventually there were way too many people dropping by and calling. This made me realize



it was time to branch out. Once my son was 4 years old and went to school I decided to open Earth and Sky Connection in order to sell all of these cool things I was making and to offer my services to the community. This was the best idea I had ever made outside of having my son, Skylar.

AU: What inspired you to travel the shamanistic path?

Tamare White-Wolf: I recognize that I was following a shamanic path. Realizing later in life that this was part of my heritage both native and Italian. Shamanism is literally an understanding of the earth and the sky and all things natural and paranormal. My connection to nature and animals has always been strong and intense. Initially my shoppe offered all things unique and curious. After a few years I realized how many alternative belief systems there were outside the Christian community. Personally, I felt a pull towards native spirituality and witchcraft.

AU: What kind of products and services do you offer?

Tamare White-Wolf: Eventually my whole store covered as many Pagan beliefs as possible. We carry related Books, Tarot, Candles, Oils, Crystals, Gods, Goddesses and different kinds of symbols and supplies associated to each of these cultures. Our shoppe carries local artsy creators' products that are relevant to nature and paganism. We also support community members who offer services such as Astrology, Tarot Readings, Palmistry, Tea Leaf Readings, Human Design and of course alternative services such as Spiritual Counselling, Reiki, Therapeutic Touch, Weddings and End of Life Support.

AU: What is your mission as a business?

Tamare White-Wolf: Our mission is to educate those that are fence sitters in order for them to find their personal vibe, and their tribe. We

focus on helping all folks feel empowered by connecting them to beliefs that work for their soul. Therefore, providing groups, circles, gatherings and workshops that are relatable and educational will always be available at our Victoria, BC, location.

AU: You have a few locations, one in Nanaimo and one in Victoria?

Tamare White-Wolf: When COVID hit it triggered a deep desire to follow my bucket list, also my son Skylar wanted to move out here. So it was perfect timing, we packed it all up, sold everything off and came out to the Island in September 2020.

We wait a little bit because everything was still locked down but when the world began to open up we reopened our shoppe July 2022 right here on our property in Nanaimo. It didn't take long to realize that we needed a more energetic area to put our store in and one day my son and I decided to go on a trip to Victoria to see what we could find. As the gods and goddesses would have it we were guided to Market Square where there was a bank of stores empty. As we looked in this one store called us like no other so we began investigating. Little did we know that the very store we are now located in had been a metaphysical store for 40 years called Avalon. We had no idea but when we found out it was a match made in heaven. So here we are at one of the most beautiful legendary courtyards in all of Victoria, BC, living a dream. We are so happy to be in this community and apparently all the folks that watched Avalon close during COVID we're very relieved to see a new metaphysical store had taken its place. My son Skylar Pink is the face most of you will see as he manages this shoppe. He has been with me on this journey from day one. I have taught him everything I've known. He has added to these teachings as he loves the Norse traditions. He is a wonderful unique individual. This path was very

BUSINESS PROFILE

natural for Skylar to follow in. Skylar has always shown signs of psychic and healing energy. In fact it was because of him that we were able to catch his grandmother's lung cancer in 1995. Skylar was only 2 when he dreamt about her illness every day for a week. When I checked my tarot cards it confirmed that there was indeed a serious problem and the heads up was significant in saving her life.



AU: Anything else to mention?

Tamare White-Wolf: I taught tarot to groups of people, this class was beside Skylar's

bedroom from the time he was 2. One day when he was 8 years old, a student asked a question about tarot and obviously Skylar must have heard it all because within seconds he piped out the correct answer. I couldn't believe it and was so proud. That didn't stop him from taking my 4 year class when he was 16. Come see for yourself, I hope you enjoy my wonderful son.

AU: What makes your shoppe unique?

Tamare White-Wolf: You'll notice a lot of unique things in what I make. I love to work with nature, feathers, leathers, rawhide, crystals, oils, herbs and once in a while Skylar needs a break, you'll see me behind the counter having as much fun as I did the day I opened. I hope to see you there, I am Tamare White-Wolf you will find I am available online for readings, occult classes and one day soon when I move from Nanaimo to the Victoria area, you'll see me in the shoppe more often. I'll be working beside my son, enjoying life and the career I created, one that fills the soul with joy, in service to kindred ones. Hope to meet you soon.

tamarewhitewolf.com

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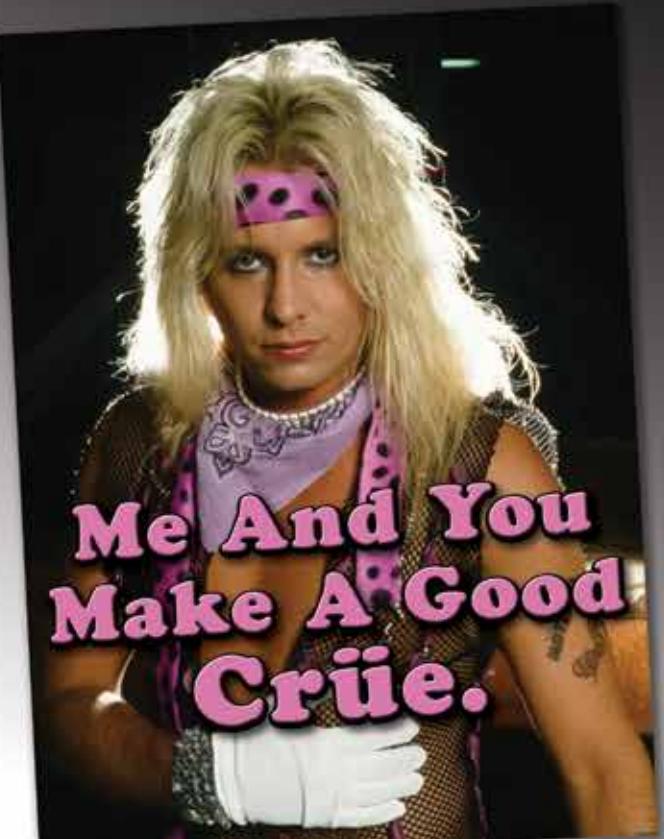
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us about it. What can we expect to hear?

BW: I released a single "Carry the Sky", in December 2025 that started out as a four-chord progression I was playing at home on an old Yamaha keyboard. I was thinking about how Jason Pierce of Spiritualized writes songs and how they build into a wall of beautiful chaotic sound. It morphed over the course of writing it but I think "Carry the Sky" retains some of that original idea. It has something of a Britpop feel and

moves in a circle adding layers and sounds. It feels like the song I've always wanted to write.

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

BW: The chorus of this song was written after an old friend of mine died suddenly and I wrote the verses soon after when my sister passed. Losing two people I cared for deeply in a short span of time was difficult to reconcile internally. That grief is the weight of empty space a person occupied and it can be crushing. I've had this song for a couple years and I took my time recording and mixing it with Jamey. There wasn't a rush to put it out — now just feels like the right time.

AU: Sex, drugs or rock n' roll? Or all of the above?

BW: That holy trinity was something I ascribed to for many years. I feel like the ones who can take all three with any longevity are few and far between. Lemmy of Motörhead did a really impressive job. I respect the hell out of that man and I'm sure he's tearing up the afterlife!

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

BW: I'm obsessed with patterns in mathematical systems and how they correlate to patterns in nature. It's fascinating to me how that connects to music and sound vibration. I think there's also a spiritual component there. I have a daily meditation practice and it's like my mantra has a distinct frequency and when I connect with that internally I also connect with something much larger than myself. Something vast and infinite. For me, music and harmony are linked intrinsically to whatever that something is. Also, I hate raisins. My mom already knows this though...

AU: Any upcoming tour plans?

BW: Not with Sunday Morning at the moment. I'm not averse to the idea though.

AU: Anything else to promote?

BW: There's a new artist called RxHx from Vancouver I'd like to shout out. Weird apocalyptic synth-driven music — check that out!

AU: Final words of wisdom for our readers?

BW: No one should ever come to me for words of wisdom. That would be a mistake.

AU: How do people find you online?

BW: So many links!

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

Facebook: [facebook.com/comsundaymorningcomes](https://www.facebook.com/comsundaymorningcomes)

YouTube: [youtube.com/@sundaymorningcomes](https://www.youtube.com/@sundaymorningcomes)

Bandcamp: sundaymorning2.bandcamp.com

Website: sundaymorning.band

Photo Credit: Joe Koonz



SUNDAY MORNING

Interview with singer/ songwriter Bruce Wilson

By Chad Cornies

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

Bruce Wilson: I'm Bruce Wilson and I sing and write songs as Sunday Morning. Years ago I sang for a band called Tankhog who certainly had their infamous qualities. These days my traits of infamy aren't as visible but maybe that's what makes them all the more effective.

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

BW: Sunday Morning started as a means to make sense of my chequered history. I'd gotten sober after many wasted years of drug addiction and wanted to figure out how to make music and perform again. The first self-titled album was

written with my dear friend and former Tankhog bandmate Stephen Hamm (Theremin Man). It follows a loose autobiographical arc. It felt like a form of redemption or at least an attempt at redeeming myself with myself.

The next EP *Consequences of Love* and the following series of singles were written with Felix Fung (Girlfriends and Boyfriends) who also acted as producer out of his Little Red Sounds studio. I'm really proud of that material and Felix was wonderful to work with. We wrote easily together and he had a solid grasp of what I was going for. This latest single, "Carry the Sky," was produced by Jamey Koch (The Tragically Hip) at The Warehouse Studio in Vancouver. We had some of the best musicians in Vancouver come in to play on it and it all felt like a very magical experience. Jamey's an old friend and we talked extensively about the song's meaning and how to present it. He intuitively understood the song's direction and how to bring it to fruition.

AU: Where is the band from and what's the music scene like there?

BW: Sunday Morning is very much a Vancouver project and is well connected with the art and music scenes. I appreciate the supportive nature of this city's scene. Vancouver musicians are often overlooked and we really try to take care of each other.

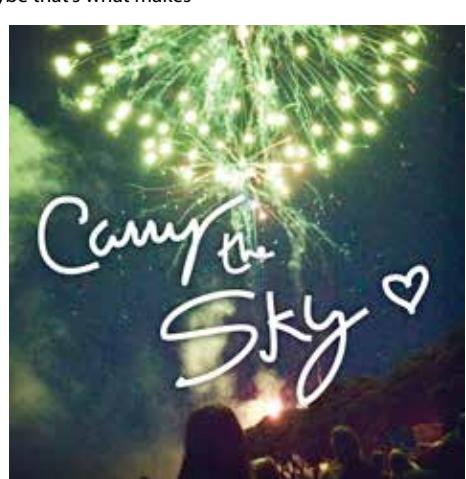
AU: Describe the band's sound if possible.

BW: Sunday Morning has never been bound to a particular genre but I feel like there's a cinematic quality to everything it's made. All the songs have some kind of narrative sketched out beneath them, whether it's obvious or not. The music is a means of expression and can jump genres.

AU: How would you describe your live show to the visually impaired?

BW: Kinetic, a current... sometimes cold, sometimes warm... sometimes a torrent.

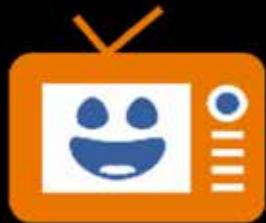
AU: Have you released an album recently? Tell



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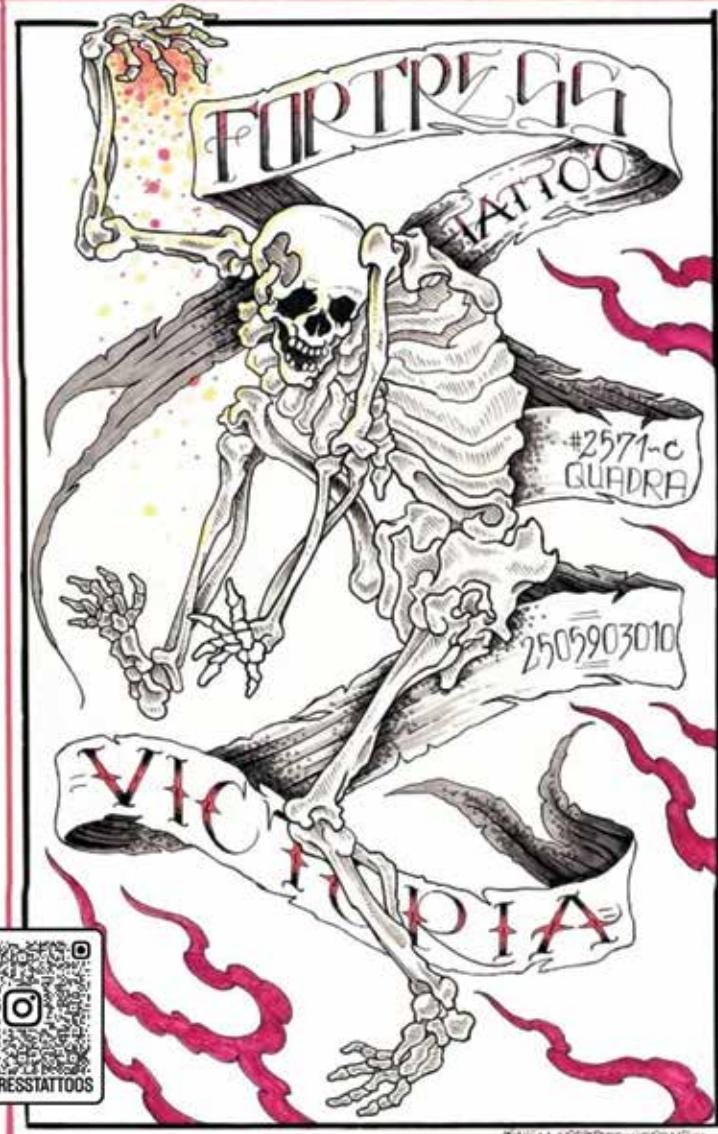
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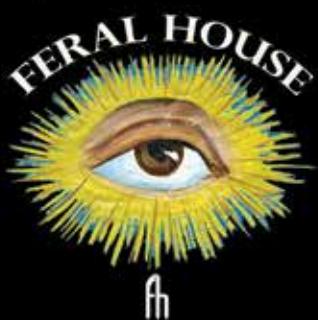
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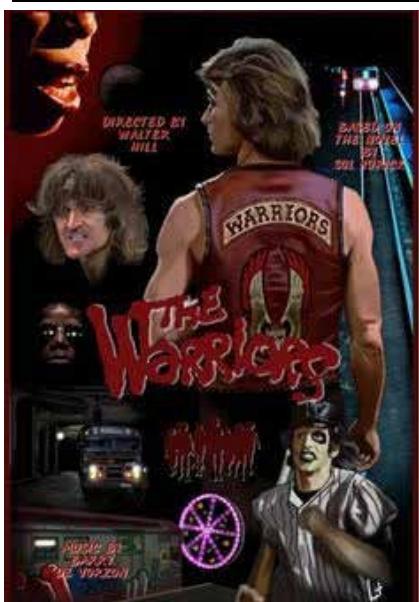
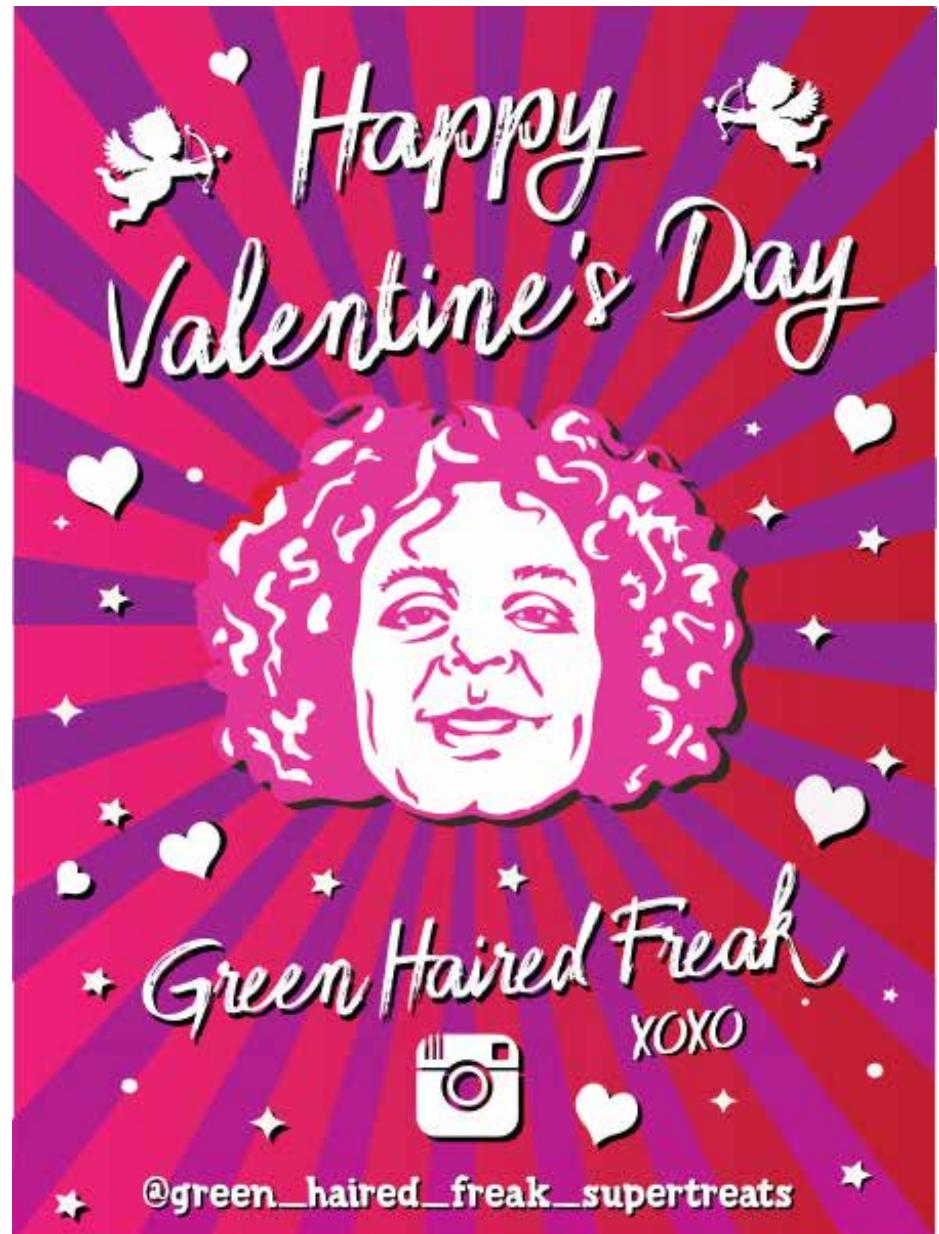
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NIGHT MEDICINE FOR URBAN SURVIVAL

By Lily Fawn

The city at night has rules. You learn them by staying out too late, or by finding yourself involved in something that started as "just one drink." If you are a night owl, like me, this is the hour of dance-offs, major turf wars and strange alliances formed from bad decisions. If the Warriors got anything right, it's that getting home is the whole game.

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All passes include access to the festival grounds and camping area for the full weekend, with vehicle and RV passes available separately.

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armstrongmetalfest.ca/tickets/

The momentum behind Armstrong MetalFest continues to build following its most successful edition to date in 2025. Last year's lineup featured heavy hitters including Born of Osiris, Havok, Glyph, Riot City, The Browning and Virvum, alongside fan favourites such as Yeti Games, the Metal Madness Market and Thrash Wrestling. For one weekend, the town of Armstrong was transformed into a full-scale metal haven.

Reflecting on the experience, *Absolute Underground Magazine* contributor Stan Schinners wrote: "Armstrong MetalFest brings together a community that truly loves heavy music. It's not just about bands and beer — it's about belonging... It's more than a music festival — it's a metal rite of passage."

Since its founding in 2009, Armstrong MetalFest has championed Canadian talent while welcoming major international acts. Past headliners have included Kataklysm, Cattle Decapitation, Archspire, Nekrogoblikon, Origin, Warbringer, Fallujah, Striker and Beyond Creation. Produced by non-profit West Metal Entertainment, the festival also supports the regional scene through year-round shows and all-ages events, helping strengthen Canada's heavy music community from the ground up.

The full 2026 lineup will be announced in March, but anticipation is already high following last year's success. With tickets now on sale and another stacked summer on the horizon, Armstrong MetalFest 2026 is shaping up to be another essential stop for metal fans looking for both crushing performances and a genuine sense of community.

For more information and updates, visit:
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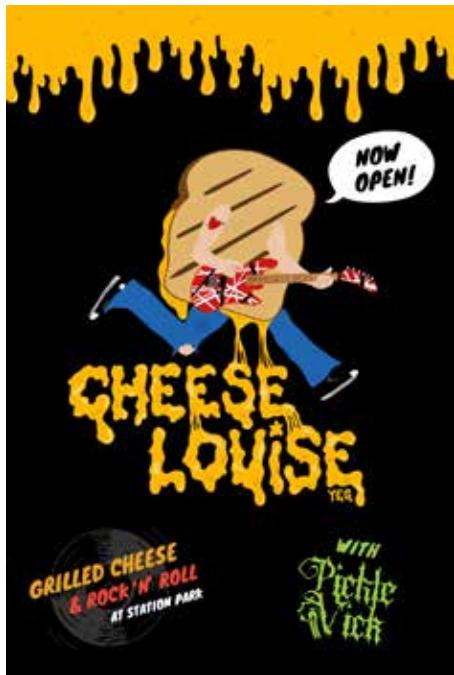
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Cheese Louise YEG

AU: Who are we talking to, and what is your role with your restaurant?

Cheese Louise YEG: My name is Shel & I am the owner of Cheese Louise YEG here in Edmonton.

AU: What was the inspiration for starting it and the story behind the name, Cheese Louise?

CL: My daughter! I'm a single dad & I want to be accessible to her any time she needs me. So I became my own boss! The story behind the name - I wanted something that stands out & doesn't take itself too serious. If I named my business "Brick & Mortar" or some shit I'd have to castrate myself.

AU: What experience did you bring to the table when deciding to start this restaurant?

CL: I've been working in bars & restaurants for years either serving or at some managerial level, seeing what works & what doesn't. All the most

successful places have staff who are treated properly & are happy to come to work. So this is a core value my experience brings to Cheese Louise.

AU: What is your mission statement?

CL: Everyone deserves to eat & ROCK ON!

AU: What is the menu inspired by?

CL: Our chef Ryan Vickers (my cousin) has cooked up some fabulous comfort classics. It's grilled cheese, we aren't reinventing the wheel but we are going to give you a kick ass grilled cheese that takes you back to simpler times.

AU: What makes eating at your restaurant a unique experience?

CL: We are the only rock n' roll restaurant in town! We are community driven & take great pride in ensuring everyone has a killer meal!

AU: What are some of your most popular menu items?

CL: We have a program called "Feed It Forward" where a customer can purchase a discounted (\$5) OG Grilled Cheese, a ticket is then added to our meal board & anyone for whatever reason (hungry, no money, etc.) can come up, take the ticket to our employee & have a hot sandwich made for them. No questions asked. At the time of writing this (11 days operating) we

have had over 150 Feed It Forwards purchased making it our top seller! That being said our Pickle Vick & Jalapeño Popper grilled cheese sandwiches have been insanely popular!

AU: Do you endeavour to source locally?

CL: We only use Canadian dairy products & meat. Our bread is made locally & we also sell by the jar & use Ryan's Pickle Vick pickles, which he brines & pickles in house. Can't get much more local than your own building!

AU: What do you look for when hiring kitchen and serving staff?

CL: We are simply a service window so basically ya



new cheeses to the roster.

AU: What are your thoughts on ketchup and pickles with grilled cheese?

CL: I mean one of our most popular sandwiches is the "Pickle Vick" so clearly we love it & the popularity speaks for itself. People can put ketchup on whatever they want, what do I look like Tony Danza, Judith Light?

AU: Is this a place for late-night drunk people or mid-afternoon hungover people?

CL: Operating hours currently are Wednesday to Sunday 11AM-9PM with extend hours of Friday & Saturday to 1AM. Bring us your drunk, your hung,

I LIKE FOOD



your sober, your kids, nieces, nephews, dogs, cats, hamsters whatever! We'll feed 'em all!

AU: Where are you located and what do you love about the neighbourhood?

CL: We are located inside Station Park (110 8125 Gateway Blvd) on Whyte Avenue. It's a "seacan park" & we are the unit facing south in the courtyard! Slightly off the beaten path, but it just makes it all the more exciting. We love Whyte Avenue & the community we have become a part of.

AU: Anything else you would like to promote?

CL: We are sponsoring The Accused A.D. from Seattle playing two shows here in Alberta May 8th at The Dive Bar in Edmonton & May 9th at Dickens in Calgary. Tickets are moving like crazy for both shows - it's a "must see". Come rock out with Cheese Louise YEG!

AU: How do people find you online?

CL: Instagram is our fav @cheeselouiseyeg or you can find us on Facebook Cheese Louise YEG. As well our Google profile, just look us up! If you'd like to get in contact DM on instagram or shoot us an email cheeselouiseyeg@gmail.com instagram.com/cheeselouiseyeg



DIX

AU: Who are we talking to, and what is your role with your restaurant, DIX Lounge in Vancouver?

Jason Antony, Co-Founder.

AU: What experience did you bring to the table when deciding to start this restaurant?

I've been a lifelong entrepreneur and business owner. I founded DV8, a late-night venue in Vancouver featuring visual artists, DJ's, and

underground creatives back in 1994. I opened MeeT on Main in 2014 and expanded that to two more locations in 2016 and 2018.

AU: What was the inspiration for starting it?

Vancouver has become really expensive. There was a time when people could afford to go out once or twice a week and that's changed dramatically. We wanted to create an affordable space for people to socialize and get together, while weaving in live bands, DJ's, and other cool artistic touches.

AU: What is the menu inspired by?

The menu is inspired by the idea that great food should feel elevated and be accessible. We're serving chef-driven comfort dishes at dive-bar prices, designed to curb any food or drink craving with sweet, salty, savoury, and sour options to fit your mood.

AU: What makes eating at your restaurant a unique experience?

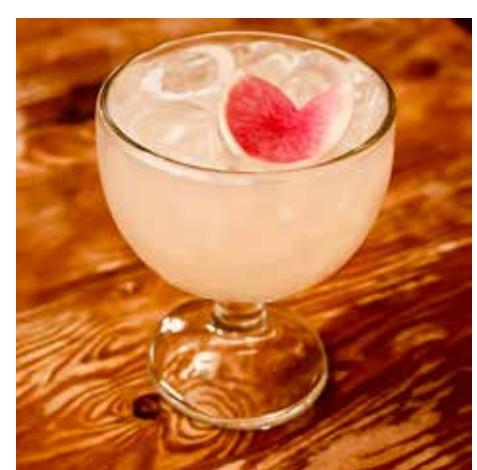
It's a vibey gastown lounge with high energy that's open late and everything, doubles, all food, everything, is just 10 bucks.

AU: What are some of your most popular menu items?

The Rustic Taco twins, The Super Smash Burger Skillet, Pillow Talk, and the Tokyo Rose.

AU: Describe some of the flavours people will experience.

Expect bold, playful comfort flavours; crispy, salty, herby and spicy, with sweet-savory touches. Flavour-forward drinks that lean floral,



fruity, tangy, or lightly bitter. It's indulgent but familiar food that's super approachable.

AU: What do you look for when hiring kitchen and serving staff?

High energy, friendly, service oriented people that really love being the host of a party.

AU: Why should people seek out your restaurant?

In a time of boring chain restaurants Dix is a refreshing, energetic, eclectic environment that also happens to be great value

AU: Where are you located and what do you love about the neighbourhood?

We are located in artistic and historic Gastown nestled in the Inner Courtyard, 12 Water St in Vancouver. Follow the loud music and you'll find us! ;)

AU: Anything else to mention or promote?

Call out for artists! Do you create, spin, sing? We want to meet you! Hit us up at: info@dixvancouver.com

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Looking Back through the 'Tinted Spectacles' of 1986

By Clark 'Super' Mantei

Hello again past blasters. This issue trips back to February 3rd, 1986 when our band 'The Tinted Spectacles' played for the last time. In January 2026 I rediscovered our stereo recordings of our magical band from Victoria B.C. We formed in 1983 and lasted until 1986. We wrote original songs and on February 3rd, 1986 we played and recorded one more time before saying goodbye and going our separate ways. Who knew we would never play together again? We didn't.

Dateline 1966, London, England: Three now renowned musicians in that year forged ahead with the 'electric church' of synergy in creating incredible rock and roll. They were Eric Clapton who formed CREAM as he had left the Yardbirds and was replaced by Jeff Beck and then the studio session master Jimmy Page joined making history eventually evolving into 'The New Yardbirds' ... soon to become known as Led Zeppelin. And lastly 'Jimmy Hendrix' began recording under his producer and engineer 'Eddie Kramer'.

These 3 events became historic. Cream played until late 1968 for 2 powerful years and the world's best power trio. Led Zeppelin shone bright until 1980 when their drummer sadly passed away and they disbanded forever. And Jimi Hendrix went strong all along whilst recording 3 incredible albums as The Jimi Hendrix Experience when he too sadly passed away in late 1970.

Yet the music remains. Soon to be performed by a local Victoria band years later: The Tinted Spectacles.

Dateline Fall 1983: I was a part-time after school telephone solicitor for Victoria Carpet Cleaning. The manager at the helm was a cool as ever guy named Joe Fall. Joe soon found out I was a drummer and he helped bring my drums to the office for a jam. He plugged in and the 2 of us hit it spot on. We played "The Rover" by Zeppelin and he taught me "Flirting With Disaster" by Molly Hatchet. Within an hour the party up the street filled up in our office and Joe found a drummer... me.

I was thrilled. I called Trevor from Lambrick Park School and we became a weekend trio of space jams and a multitude of 60s London and 70s rock and roll songs. One day Joe brings in Jamie Smart. Jamie was an incredible guitarist. Literally blew my mind. We played the music of Cream and Zepp along with many other legendary songs of the classic era. Then Jamie and Joe started to write originals. Wow.

I'm really in a cool band. We knocked Deep Purple's "Highway Star" outta the park into a cosmic sonic stratosphere. Just saying. It ripped. In 1984 Trevor left for school and Joe's buddy Steve Comeau rented a bass amp and bought a bass. We continued on. We recorded ourselves in January and November of 1985 and we were shining. Original songs and a great band.

Joe took off to ski in Switzerland I believe, as I remember dropping by to say goodbye and talk about when he returns. We looked out onto the



beach at Cordova Bay where his house was and listened to the YES song "And You And I" and said goodbye. I never saw Joe again sadly.

Dateline February 3rd, 1986: Jamie is off to England with his new girlfriend from there and there's maybe talk and hopes of recording and continued progress. Steve I remember told me whispers in the wind of a London Records connection. I was stoked.

Thus the recording of "Where's Joe" happened on that day 40 years ago.

The three of us set up at Joe's place without him as he was gone and we played and recorded our magical material one last time to say goodbye for now and hope to see what Jamie's ventures bring. The tape started to record and we had a new song untitled. We named it "Crack One" and we toasted

a trio of bottled beers. Crack and sip and off we soared playing our craft. We played "White Room" by Cream and "The Song Remains the Same" by Led Zeppelin and I even sang as we played "Sultans of Swing" by Dire Straits along with our originals and ended with a stunning version of "Little Wing" by Jimi Hendrix.

About five seconds later the tape ended. Perfect! We hugged Jamie goodbye and wished him well. I never saw Jamie again except for one quick bump in the street in 1990.

What up for Steve? He sat alone as Joe's roommate after our last play and he decided to quit UVIC and move to West Vancouver instead and work doing music reviews through 'Foster and Mulligan Enterprise' (F.A.M.E.), I believe. His mom was the banking manager of them. Music was booming in the Vancouver scene indeed. What will Joe think when he gets home? No roommate. And where did Clark go?

Dateline February 14th, 1986: I went home February 3rd as a happy drummer with a hopeful future with our band when Steve called and told me he'd already decided to move to West Vancouver and invited me to join him.

I wanted to go to music college too yet his offer seemed ok. I could move into the penthouse suite at his mom's and we could still play and I'll get a job. I told him that I must at least drive to Seattle to see KISS on Valentine's Day. How could I miss that? Jamie, Joe and Steve were not KISS fans but they didn't bug me about it. They didn't get it and I understood. Yet keeping me from a KISS show with W.A.S.P. was not going to happen. So I hit the ferry to the mainland and drove to Seattle to get my KISS fix.

My brother and his friend were sharing a hotel with a beautiful girl who they were both knowing they wanted to share the bed with (I overheard). So being a gentleman I told her of their plight and explained that if I shared the bed they would stop this nonsense. Lolol. She agreed. They shared the floor.

In the morning we said goodbye and she gifted me with a local free paper with KISS on the cover. So cool.

I ended up moving in with Steve and getting a job through my cousin Karen at Boston Pizza. I learned to make dough and prep cook and did it all. Steve's buddy Greg also worked there and he then offered me a job opportunity at EXPO 1986 working at a restaurant between the roller coaster and EXPO theatre. So epic to this day. I saw so many concerts as Steve would record them all too... amazing.

Dateline September 1997, Vancouver: I visit Steve to meet up and say goodbye to his ailing father. Sweet man. Steve gets up and hands me a box. Inside is 4 hours of our band's recording. It says 'The Tinted Spectacles' Master Tapes.

He says here. I was in awe. "I know you'll never lose them, Clark." I explain that I must go and see Steve Vai and Robert Fripp with Kenny Wayne Shepherd and Joe Satriani. Steve says wait, "I'll

BLAST FROM THE PAST

go with you." He takes me to Robson Square and suggests I get in the photo line up to meet them as the lineup was a blockbuster for autographs. He buys me a \$5 camera from London Drugs and I purchase a shoulder camera bag from a used shop and ended up reuniting with Steve Vai and meeting Joe. Steve Vai laughed so hard at my camera "That is SO ZAPPA!" I was suddenly gifted tickets to the show. Great fun. Yet all I could tell Vai was about my demos. So I showed them to him. He was excited for me. "Cool. Original songs too. Nice."

Dateline 2006: Steve Comeau wasn't banking anymore. He was single somehow and ended up losing his place. He gave me every recording he ever made and we tried to save him... but we couldn't... he drifted into the streets down on his luck after I spent a year trying to save him. I never saw him again.

Dateline January 2026, Victoria B.C.: I spent the last few months sorting through my belongings after a flood destroyed my condo and whilst doing so I came across a zipped up black box. I shivered knowing what was inside.

Inside were 3 tapes. 4 plus hours of 'The Tinted Spectacles'. I immediately found a machine to play them and man was I excited. I called Jamie Smart in England and played them to him. What a blast. Yet something was different now. I'm 58, not 18 anymore and I was in awe of how good we were but mostly Jamie. He rivaled Clapton, Page and Hendrix too.

Through my connections there's a fellow who can get Eric Clapton to hear our version of "White Room" and even interview me. And Rob Beggs at 'Marpole Studios' in Langley, B.C. is willing to transfer them. He's working now with a fellow who's friends with Jimmy Page and you just never know. That would be epic! I know our versions of "The Rover" and "The Song Remains the Same" need to be heard by the man who wrote and recorded them. Holy moly indeed!

Of course, there are also all our original songs which definitely stand the test of time.

I hope to regroup with Jamie and Joe and maybe locate Steve as well. We never broke up... we just said goodbye.

To wrap this up, here are some timelines:

February 1976: Bob Ezrin produces *KISS Destroyer* in three weeks. Happy 50th. Bob is a master producer and this June sees the release of another Deep Purple album.



March 1976: Led Zeppelin release their seventh album *Presence* and it's a gift for the listener. Happy 50th.



As for Eric Clapton he's still recording and touring and is even booking events into 2027 now. In late 2024 Eddie Kramer released over 40 demos of Jimi Hendrix's last recording on a five-album set entitled *Electric Lady Studios: A Jimi Hendrix Vision*. I highly recommend it. Check out the stories and songs on YouTube.

Lastly for my dear ole friend Jamie Smart. I must say big love and a grateful thankful appreciation for playing in a band with me. Jamie Smart is a great guy and if you ever seek *Clarity* or *Results* you can simply order both of those highly helpful books that he has written. Don't be shy. Look them up!

Last I was told about his guitar playing was that he's picked it up again and is studying jazz guitar. I hope to regroup one day in this life and for ole time sake c'mon guys let's jam!

Time to bring this article to a close. Ah the memories, like in 1984 I came home to a note on our door "Hey Clark. It's Joe. We have a P.A. We're Happening man."

With love to everyone in this issue too. God Bless Rock and Roll... and always remember...

Rock out and Rrrrroll On.

Clark 'Super' Mantei

February 3rd, 2026

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TERMINAL SESSIONS



YEGG Keeping Old School Death Metal Alive

By Jay Flett

AU: Who are you and how do you describe your sound?

Yegg: We are Yegg, old school rotten death metal. We make riffs for people who like stuff from the Florida era.

AU: How long have you been a band and who is in the lineup?

Yegg: Been a band for just about 2 years. Started jamming in 2023. April 2024 was the first gig. Jammed as Rally Hog at first. Kyden and Joey were the founders of the band.

AU: How are you finding shows post-COVID?

Yegg: You had that two-year period where all these kids didn't get to go out to the bar or go to

shows, so now we are seeing this influx of the underage or the new age coming out to shows which is super cool.

For local shows attendance can be hit or miss but if you get the right show or it's all ages then you get the craziest, nuts show of all time for no reason cuz all these kids have nothing to do. We also feel like a lot of people are eager to support bands now with lots of people buying more merch. Especially back in the day it was harder to push shirts. Now we can't keep them in stock.

AU: Chuck Schuldiner or Cliff Burton?

Yegg: Chuck! Happy anniversary to his passing.

AU: Do you guys have a favourite show/s?

Yegg: The Armstrong show that we all played together. That was the biggest crowd we played to, best response. We had an eight-minute technical difficulty and the crowd chanted our name while we dealt with it. Mosh the Rock was pretty sick too. They had a travelling peep show. It was an all-ages show with strippers in a trailer.

AU: Any big plans for 2026?

Yegg: I think the goal is to release our debut album and start touring it as much as we can, playing as many shows as we can outside the realm of what we are used to playing. We play a lot of local shows. We wanna get away from that so people can get excited to come see us.

AU: Who are your influences and how did this band form?

Yegg: We really wanted to get away from the tech death metal gold rush as it was. Every band seemed to be proving something about speed. We just wanted to get back to being fucking

heavy. Slow it down a bit, get back to some old school death metal. This album coming out is Kyden's love letter to old school death metal. We take influences from Obituary, Morbid Angel, Deicide, the good old days.

AU: Do you guys sacrifice goats before shows?

Yegg: I mean, we sacrifice brain cells and run over bicycles. Sometimes we like to hit a dude on a cycle, see if he wants a little fun. Kind of a tradition. So, no goats but...

AU: "Offal Offering" was your first single on all streaming platforms, so what's next?

Yegg: "Offal Offering" we put out just to do it and get our name out there. We have an album coming out. It's 99 percent finished. We are just in the process of finding the proper avenues to release it.

AU: Any final words?

Yegg: We are all pretty excited to see what the new year has to come, to play as many shows and meet as many new people as possible. We are going to always be a three piece and vocals, but we are lucky to have Mr. Spense McIntosh filling in on bass for us. He's been nothing but great to us. We wanna leave people begging for a Yeggin.



TOUR NEWS

Yegg is embarking on an East Coast Canadian tour in April 2026 to support their debut release *Rotten*, coming out in Spring 2026.

Photo credit: Jay Flett

Terminal Instagram: @theterminalnanaimo

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DESTROYED CINEMA

Victoria Film Festival, February 06–15, 2026

Interview with Nick Workman & JP Meldrum

By Marisa Flora

AU: For readers just discovering Destroyed Cinema, who are we talking to today, and what first sparked the idea to launch Destroyed Cinema in October 2024?

Nick Workman: You're speaking to Nick Workman and JP Meldrum. Destroyed Cinema started after I interviewed JP as part of the former Destroyed newsletter – which was solely focused on music. JP and I both had a love of underground and DIY cinema and wanted to share that love with an audience. We figured a great way to introduce people to DIY cinema was to pair it up with live music in unconventional spaces. A triple threat of DIY – space, cinema, and music.

AU: VFF is known for celebrating cult films and unconventional voices, but this year it's also expanding beyond traditional theatre spaces. Why was it important for Destroyed Cinema to bring film into places like Market Square, Little Fernwood and United Commons?

Nick: It's important for us to showcase films outside of theatres because for a lot of people, film only exists in three places – your home, a theatre, or on your phone. What we're trying to do is show people that film can exist anywhere. Those three locations don't operate as conventional theatres, but they can. You don't need a fancy setup – a laptop, projector, speaker, and a white wall will do. Victoria is full of empty store fronts, businesses, restaurants, and community halls. With a little imagination, they too can be theatres.

JP Meldrum: "The elusive third space."

AU: Each of these pop-up events pairs film screenings with live performances by local bands. What draws you to that collision of cinema and live music, and how does it change the way audiences experience a film?

Nick: One of the first things JP and I discussed was that DIY film doesn't often get the same respect as DIY music. Part of Destroyed's mission is to convince the audience that DIY film should be taken with the same seriousness as DIY music. We figured a good way to do that would be to showcase the two art forms side-by-side. This allows the audience to see that if four kids in a basement can form a band, then they can also make a film. The limit should not be on talent or resources, but on gumption. We want people of all walks of life to make films, not just the Hollywood elite.

AU: The venues themselves are very different in scale and atmosphere. How do space and setting factor into how you curate both the films and the musical lineups?

Nick: We've shown films in theatres and in storage rooms, and everything in between. The

only difference between the spaces is the amount of people we can fit and if the musical act is a full band or a solo artist. We always aim for the same atmosphere – DIY.

JP: For better or for worse, I have no time for IMAX 35mm "perfect print" essentialism. The shared experience outweighs this obsession with production value. It's all about the shared experience and curation.

AU: These nights lean heavily into community — local filmmakers, local bands, local audiences. How central is that sense of locality to the Destroyed Cinema ethos?

Nick: Though we've shown films from the States and elsewhere in Canada, locality is at the centre of Destroyed. We aren't looking at creating a streaming service or conquering Hollywood; we're looking at enriching the film culture in Victoria. We want to be a space where local filmmakers can show their films. We've successfully



shown local films to large crowds. That's the type of local investment we're making.

AU: The Microcinema Market feels like an extension of that DIY spirit, mixing free cult-classic screenings with vendors selling 'zines, DVDs, art and ephemera. What inspired the idea, and what kind of energy are you hoping it brings to Market Square?

Nick: Credit has to be given to Mark Hoyne, the program manager of VFF and the Vic Theatre, for coming up with the idea. He pitched JP and I on the idea of running a microcinema during the day that would double as an art market. JP will be running it, and he has recruited a lot of great artists who will be selling pieces and merch. In addition to the artists' tables and microcinema, we have some fun activities planned. Think of it as part flea market, part summer camp.

AU: In an era dominated by streaming and solo viewing, what do you think people are missing — or craving — that physical media and microcinema spaces help satisfy?

Nick: Ownership and shared experience. Nobody owns anything on a streaming service. You pay a subscription to watch a film, and you're lucky if it has the film you're interested in watching. A physical copy provides ownership, control and freedom. If *Deep Blue Sea* is on a streaming service, you might get a year with that movie before it is yanked. If you own a physical copy, you get to keep it as long as you take care of it, and can watch and share it till your heart is content. That's the power of physical media. Traditional theatres and microcinemas are trying to deliver the same thing – a shared experience. The difference is microcinemas can take on more risk because they operate on a smaller scale. It's easier to show a film to 15 people rather than 250. This means that a microcinema can cater to different audiences rather than always playing four-quadrant movies. You can program classic movies one night and Italian zombie films the next night. This allows you to build up multiple audiences who can come together based on what they are interested in. It's rather how a bar operates – they have trivia nights, open mic nights or happy hour. Not everyone is going to go to the same night, but they will go to the one they have the most

interest in, and hopefully either meet friends or bring their friends along for the experience.

AU: For festivalgoers who may be stepping outside a traditional theatre for the first time, what do these pop-up screenings offer that a conventional cinema experience doesn't?

JP: I often think about how deified a grungey place like CBGBs has become when I pass by a best-selling book by Patti Smith at Indigo. Maybe we're impatient, but I'd love to see the deification process for transgressive,

underground, totally new shit happen as it's happening. We're encouraging people of all walks to embrace the 'outsider' of today, rather than waiting for history to adorn a given movement, venue, style or what-have-you. Perhaps it's bold to say, but Destroyed is trying to carve the 'outsider' or 'punk' now or 'underground' now of film in Victoria and beyond, and part of embracing the underground is not having access to, and rejecting, the 'above ground', although working VFF is pretty above ground!

Nick: It's a more personal experience. You rarely interact with anyone at a theatre besides the people you go with. One of the things I'm most proud of is that we generate conversation both before and after the film. We talk to the audience and ask what they thought of the film. We've had filmmakers attend our screenings and do Q&As. We've hosted after-screening events at bars for people to get to know each other. We want it to be more than just a screening – we want it to be a social event.

AU: Without giving too much away, how would you describe the overall vibe of these events — are we talking intimate, chaotic, celebratory, confrontational, or something

else entirely?

JP: We tailor our vibe to fit the movie, but usually I'd place it somewhere in the intimate-and-chaotic camp. Usually, Nick works the door and I'm the A/V guy all while we are in charge of the whole event, so it's inevitably a bit chaotic as we wear many hats – I'm not complaining, it's how we like it! But, for our screening of Ledingham's *Search For Gold*, which is what-I-hope-to-be the *Clerks* of Victoria's microbudget cinema scene, we paired it with pretty straight-ahead alternative rock/house party jam bands alongside a hot dog eating contest. Don't tell, but at one point we had 70 people in Little Fernwood. It felt like a great house party that you maybe invited too many people to. Whereas *Pee Pee Poo Poo Man*, we bet it all on a legit theatre, painted the town with hundreds of yellow posters, and Nick dressed up like the protagonist and hyped the crowd up with the mojo of a veteran rock frontman.

Nick: We look for cohesion when pairing up films and music. If the film is transgressive, we look for transgressive music. If the film is sweet and soft, we look for a matching sound. Like a set list, you want ups and downs, with a lot of different emotions, but always a throughline. And it's always a celebration of DIY.

AU: Looking ahead, how do collaborations like this with VFF shape your vision for Destroyed Cinema's future, and for underground film culture in Victoria more broadly?

Nick: One of the benefits of working with a well-respected institution like VFF is it gives us legitimacy. It's hard to get people to take you seriously, especially when you're trying to break the mold. VFF saw something in what we're doing and said "There is something here." That goes a long way in helping us because it allows us to reach a broader audience. Though we're DIY, we aren't anti-audience. I want people to come and experience the joy of cinema and think differently about what it can and should be. VFF has the same mission. My hope is that this is the start of a great working relationship.

JP: I just hope it means we show more movies to more people and show more bands to more people!





DEAD LOVER

Victoria Film Festival, February 06–15, 2026

Interview with Ben Petrie

By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: For readers who may be discovering your work for the first time, can you introduce yourself and your role in the horror, romance film, *Dead Lover*?

Ben Petrie: My name is Ben Petrie and I am a co-writer (with Grace Glowicki), producer (with Grace and Yona Strauss) and play 7 characters (alongside Grace, Leah Doz and Lowen Morrow) in *Dead Lover*!

AU: *Dead Lover* premiered at Sundance and screened at TIFF before the Victoria Film Festival. How has its journey through these very different festivals shaped your relationship to the film?

BP: When we premiered the film at Sundance, we had worked down to the absolute wire to get the film ready - and as a consequence we were like hollowed out husks by the time we arrived... an all too typical experience premiering

a movie! Premiering the film at TIFF was a joyful homecoming - it's always so special to show a movie at home - and also felt like a second version of a World Premiere, because it was our first time playing the Stink-o-Vision edition of the movie... and in classic form, we worked on that version down to the wire of the TIFF premiere as well! I'll never forget the feeling of 1200-or-so people scratching those rancid cards at the Royal Alexandra Theatre. At long last now the film is done in every form, and we just get to watch it live its own life without any more crunches to the finish!

AU: You're co-writer and performer in the film. Does wearing multiple hats influence the way you approach your role on screen?

BP: It sure does! I adore words, and my character Lover in the movie is a poet dandyfop, so the particulars of his diction were really exciting to develop. Getting to work as a co-writer on crafting his florid and horny speeches felt indistinguishable from developing the heart of his character, and that made me feel very comfortable in his skin on set.

AU: Your on-screen relationship is the



emotional engine of the film, even as the story veers into grotesque and surreal territory.

How did you and Grace balance sincerity and absurdity without tipping too far into parody?

BP: When developing the love between Lover and Gravedigger, I think we just drew from our interiorities as people! Those feelings were blown up into wild proportions in the movie, but at their core, they were rooted in parts of ourselves that we could access authentically. Working on Lover in particular allowed me to take the more taboo corners of my romantic instincts and blow them up into a somewhat ridiculous form, in a way that was fun, free and utterly shameless. It was a very fun part of the process!

AU: Comedy, horror, romance and camp all intersect in *Dead Lover*. When you're co-writing within a genre, what rules do you like to follow—and which ones do you enjoy breaking?

BP: I always get a great kick when Grace tells me she has an idea for a movie, and it's going to be a insert 6 genres. We haven't tended to hew too closely to genre rules, and instead allow personal taste to serve as the curatorial filter for narrative and aesthetic. But Grace in particular has a great knack for the melange!

AU: Smell-O-Vision is a bold, playful choice that turns the screening into an immersive

experience. Can you tell us what that means and what excites you about expanding cinema into a more sensory, communal format?

BP: I feel like the Stink-o-Vision experience brings the audience that much closer to Gravedigger as a character. On its face it's a fun gross-out element, which elicits audible sounds of giddy disgust from the crowd. But I think that a follow-on consequence of the group-stink is a beautifully bonding one, much the way you feel closer to people who just got off the same roller coaster as you. But in this case, the bonding effects of vertiginous death-drops are filtered through a purely olfactory experience.

AU: The film has already been described as a future cult classic. Is "cult" something you consciously think about while making work, or is that something best left to audiences?

BP: Best left to audiences!

AU: At its core, *Dead Lover* is about grief, obsession and devotion taken to extremes. What do you hope audiences take away emotionally once the laughter and shock wear off?

BP: They'll be smelling the movie on their fingers for at least a few days!

DEAD LOVER

Victoria Film Festival, February 06–15, 2026

Interview with Grace Glowicki

By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: For readers who may be discovering your work for the first time, can you introduce yourself and your role in the horror, romance film, *Dead Lover*?

Grace Glowicki: My name is Grace Glowicki and I directed *Dead Lover*! I co-wrote the film with Ben Petrie, and also starred in it with Ben, Leah Doz and Lowen Morrow. This is my second feature. My first is called *Tito*!

AU: The film premiered at Sundance and TIFF before coming to Victoria. How did seeing audiences react at these festivals influence your approach to sharing the story?

GG: Showing the film around the world has been so fun. One cool thing we learned is that when paired with scratch n' sniff smell cards, the audience tends to have a lot of fun! I didn't intend to present the film in Stink-o-vision when I made it. The idea came later from a few different people... and then we tried it out at TIFF and it was a hit!! People seem to have so much fun smelling along with the film! Definitely was inspired by John Water's doing this with his film *Polyester*.

AU: *Dead Lover* has a very tactile, handmade aesthetic with 16mm cinematography and unique sets. What drew you to this physical, built-world approach and how did it shape the filmmaking process?

GG: I love black box DIY theatre! Especially if they have to portray something grand like a shipwreck but only have a few props, lights, and maybe a roll of tin foil or something. It is so honest and funny and beautiful to me. I wanted to make a movie that honored the makeshift aesthetic of these kinds of stripped down live performances that I love.

AU: You co-wrote the story with Ben Petrie. How did your collaborative writing process work, and what were some challenges or breakthroughs in blending comedy, horror, and romance?

GG: I developed the story orally and on its feet with a bunch of people in different phases over the span

of like four years. Then in the home stretch before shooting I went to Ben and was like "I need you to help me make this work in screenplay form!" Ben and I then made all those years of development fit into a really firm structured screenplay that we created together. We had many a fun late night around our kitchen table passing the laptop back and forth. Writing on top of each other's latest pass of a section. Regarding blending genres, we didn't really think about it, which is probably why it works!?

AU: *Dead Lover* is described as campy and surreal while still maintaining emotional depth. How did you balance humour, horror and heartfelt moments during production?

GG: I usually only think characters are funny if they are grounded in some kind of human vulnerability or truth. Even though these characters are outrageously big, they were created/written with care and genuine emotional logic. So I think the development/script was what kept the madness tethered in production!

AU: Finally, what excites you most about sharing *Dead Lover* with a Victoria audience, and what do you hope they experience during the screening?

GG: My family lives in Victoria!!! I am most excited about them going to see the movie in Stink-o-Vision! I love Victoria so much and am there a few times a year. My favorites: Penny Farthing Pub, The Tartan Toque, Discovery Coffee (I dream of the chocolate cruller), Beacon Hill Park petting zoo, Beadworld, Superbaba, the cemetery at Harling Point and Miniature World. Victoria rules.

AU: This *Absolute Underground* issue has a theme of *The Warriors* (1979 cult classic film) and Valentine's Day. Any thoughts?

GG: I haven't seen it! Will put it on the list!

AU: Any dating or marriage advice?

GG: Fight for each other's freedom.

AU: What does it say on your Tinder profile?

GG: Don't have one! I'm married to Ben so I'm out of the game!!



"There's more than one way to lose your heart..."



MY BLOODY VALENTINE

Interview with director George Mihalka

By James Borsa

Absolute Underground: Hello, and welcome to Ultrasonic Film. As always, I'm your host, James. I'm chatting with George Mihalka, the director of *My Bloody Valentine* from 1981. George, Did you ever think in your wildest dreams that this would be a film you'd be talking about for more than four decades?

George Mihalka: No, not at all. I mean, I was very happy with the film when we finished shooting it, and we finished editing it. Slowly, the film just would not go away. People started recognizing it, for many other things, aside from



AU: Is Moosehead your favourite beer? Or did you guys get a particular deal on featuring Moosehead in the film? Because eagle-eye folks will notice there is a lot of Moosehead beer in *My Bloody Valentine*.

GM: Moosehead was my favourite beer at the time in Nova Scotia. It was just such a great name for a beer to begin with. How that whole thing happened was simple...we are shooting in a mine, a mine that was not being used. Lamps were heavy, uh, equipment was way heavier. It took an hour, hour and a half of lugging just to put everything back into the trucks. So... Um, you know,

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the fact that it was this gory film. And yet, at the same time, people recognized it for its humanity, people recognized it for its structure. People recognized it for its humor. Interestingly enough, there's a growing appreciation of this film over the years.

AU: It was exceptionally well-timed because the film was released in the early 1980s, right when the video revolution was taking off. So I think that probably also drove the popularity of this film, people could rent it, watch it at home. And it became, of course, an incredible cult classic.

GM: Video did help the film a great deal to keep the little flame alive. More and more people got to enjoy it, and then obviously, the remake did not hurt at all.

AU: Speaking of which, have you actually seen the remake? What's your thoughts on it, if you got an opportunity to check it out?

GM: It's a hoot. It's not my cup of tea to an extent. Since filmmaking has begun as an industry, which is about 120 years ago now or so. How many films were made around the world? A million? A little more, a little less. How many have been remade? I'll take that as a compliment!

AU: Is Moosehead your favourite beer? Or did you guys get a particular deal on featuring Moosehead in the film? Because eagle-eye folks will notice there is a lot of Moosehead beer in *My Bloody Valentine*.

GM: Moosehead was my favourite beer at the time in Nova Scotia. It was just such a great name for a beer to begin with. How that whole thing happened was simple...we are shooting in a mine, a mine that was not being used. Lamps were heavy, uh, equipment was way heavier. It took an hour, hour and a half of lugging just to put everything back into the trucks. So... Um, you know,

everyone would have a beer or two while they were doing that. And our line producer, Bob Prezner made a deal with Moosehead. Where Moosehead would supply the beer. And we would then feature Moosehead. Moosehead was kind enough to also give us some of those fabulous neon moose head signs. It was a very successful symbiotic relationship.

AU: Do you think there's really an effort nowadays to kind of move away from that grisly, shocking horror? Because, even rewatching *My Bloody Valentine*, the kills are still very, very potent, very in-your-face.

GM: Yeah. Well, I think two things. One, people have seen enough of them, there's a bit of oversaturation. Two, there's only so many you can do. And, you know, audiences after a while just got tired of that. You know? I mean... all the slow-motion blood and all that nonsense and, you know. All these weird, creepy killers who can barely walk one kilometer an hour. They catch young kids who run as fast as they can, you know, so it got to the point, I think, where audiences just stopped tolerating that. Every film I've ever made, whether it's a horror or not. When it comes to violence, my violence hurts. My violence is not pretty. Which is the reality of situations, you know? My heroes don't get up after being pummeled to death.

AU: Since your film came out in 1981, was there any influence from *Halloween* (1978)? *Halloween*, of course, was a massive low-budget hit. I was curious if that was a film that you had seen at that time, that it perhaps influenced you in any way, when you were filming *My Bloody Valentine*.

GM: Obviously, I saw it. The influence was to avoid anything that has anything to do whatsoever with *Halloween*. I like *Halloween*. Carpenter did a great job. I don't have a problem with *Halloween*. But, at the same time, the whole concept was to try to avoid, as much as possible, anything that could be somewhat related to *Halloween*. Make something totally different. That was the concept.



AU: One aspect of the film which I particularly like, and I think it's a great trick for more low-budget horror films, is when you're laying out the lore and the wise bartender is trying to warn the kids, you have him talking directly into the camera. That's something that a lot of horror films move away from today, but I like it. It's eerie, it's creepy. And it still manages to hold your attention all these 45 years later. Was that a distinctive choice that you made at that time when you were making the film?

GM: Yeah, it just looked good. You know, I had a take where he didn't look into the camera. But just to make sure that our producer, John Dunning...I thought, well, you know, if John hates it, I've got a backup. He's not gonna fire me. But, it just seemed so cool at the time. Then I said, yeah, let's do it.

AU: The cast worked quite well! I'm a particular fan of Cynthia Dale. She's done some impressive TV work as well after this, but you got her at a very young age. When you were casting the film, was this sort of the luck of the draw? Or was it something you particularly focused on?

GM: I think it shines through at all times, how the cast feels like they've known each other forever. There's a chemistry, a camaraderie in that cast that is very, very difficult to fake. I tried to find people that would get along. John Dunning, in his wisdom, allowed me two weeks of rehearsal with these people. And every day, we would go out to different mining bars. We took them down to our mine. They actually got to be minors, and the young women got to be the girlfriends of minors and cashiers. I think, this is probably one of the

ULTRASONIC FILM

reasons why this film still holds so well, after all these years, is the fact that there's just such a natural chemistry. Between all the actors. They don't feel like they're acting, they feel like they're just regular guys and girls.

AU: George, what are some of your favourite horror films of all time?

GM: I would say *Possession* is probably my favourite. I'm not a big fan of slashers. Mostly because I find that most of the slashers tend to be pretty mindless. I liked *Hellraiser*. Polanski's *The Tenant* is another great one.

AU: I find it interesting that you are not really a big fan of slasher films, because of course, *My Bloody Valentine* is considered one of the greatest slasher films of all time. Do you like the term "slasher film" being associated with *My Bloody Valentine*?

GM: How would I best say this? It's... One of those where you, you know, you can call me anything you like, but don't call me late for dinner. I would beg to differ in the sense that, you know, *Valentine* is much more an Agatha Christie whodunit. As it is a slasher film, it's not a relentless drive of slashing. There's not that many kills in it.

AU: This was made in the era of tax shelter films, and I don't think a lot of people nowadays really know what a tax shelter film is. I'm curious if *My Bloody Valentine* was a tax shelter film, and your thoughts on that?

GM: Yep it is, tax shelter was probably the most enlightened piece of legislation that we had in Canadian filmmaking. The difference was with a tax shelter film, you could actually raise the money and make a film in Canada. You didn't have to wait on a tax credit, which you would get two months later or two years later. It was a more immediate way of getting cash. If you were smart enough, you could get a group of dentists, a group of lawyers, a group of doctors, or whoever, and they would all put in a certain amount of money. Those lawyers or doctors would either get their money back. Or, they would be able to deduct the money that they invested. It was almost a no-loss situation for the investors.

AU: A lot of directors will look back at their films, and sometimes they'll see flaws, sometimes they'll see things they want to fix, but do you look back after four decades on *My Bloody Valentine*, and are just honestly very proud? Because it is a film that has succeeded where so many other films have failed, and it's become a touchstone, a landmark film, not just in the horror genre, but in Canadian cinema as well. Is there a moment where you kind of kick back, look at it, and go. "I'm really, really happy and proud to have been part of this?"

GM: I was just turning 28 when I shot this film. I look back on it and say, you know, actually... quite mature filmmaking went on in this film! One of the things that have struck me over the years, especially with the new Shout Factory release, is how the film still seems very, very... contemporary. That release, especially, I watched on the big screen. It looks like a modern film that is a period piece, as opposed to a 45-year-old dated film.

AU: George, Mihalka, I want to thank you very much for joining me here on Ultrasonic Film and talking about *My Bloody Valentine* from 1981. For those of you out there that have not seen it, I highly recommend you go check it out. Thanks so much for joining us here and talking about some of your memories of the film. I really appreciate it.

GM: You're welcome. Take care!





PADDY WAGGIN'

Vancouver's Premier Celtic Rock Band

Interview with Paddy himself

by Mal Content

It's that time of the year again and we are coming up fast on Saint Patrick's day and we had a chance to talk with the lead singer/songwriter, Aidan Carroll AKA "Paddy" from East Van's very own Celtic Punk band Paddy Waggin'.

AU: So what's the Craic, Paddy?

Paddy: The Paddy Waggin' lads are busy rehearsing and preparing for our annual Paddy's Day party.

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

Paddy: Paddy Waggin' is a Celtic punk rock band that plays traditional, originals, covers, rebel and drinking songs. We are a 6 piece and we have a few players that play multiple instruments. So you can expect to hear acoustic guitar, bass, banjo, mandolin, tin whistle, accordion, bodhran, harmonica, drums and of course the PW lads singing their hearts out.

AU: Where are you playing this year? What's in store for the lucky folks at the show?

Paddy: We have a few shows in the works for this year. We are pleased to announce that we will be playing on St Patrick's day March 17th at Moose's Down Under. Which is an Australian pub/restaurant in downtown Vancouver. They have upgraded their stage, sound system and the dance floor. They have a capacity of 150-200. We are excited to play at a new venue for a larger audience and pack the dance floor.

AU: How did you book that gig?

Paddy: We are working with Bruce from Port Moody Jamz to make the night a success.

Tickets are \$25 advance \$30 at the door. Fees inc.

Ticket link:
portmoodyjamz.ca/events

Moose's Down Under
830 W. Pender St - Vancouver, BC.

Show time 6-10 pm

It's easy to get to as it's a 5 minute walk from Waterfront Skytrain station.

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

Paddy: We will be playing three sets with all our original Paddy Waggin' tunes and we will also do covers from the greats in the genre like Flogging Molly, Dropkick Murphys, The Mahones. Trad tunes and songs from The Dubliners, Christy Moore and of course the legendary Pogues. We also have an Irish dance troupe coming to break in the new dance floor so it will be a night to remember.

AU: Anything else new with the band?

Paddy: We played at the Hollywood Theatre in the summer and had a great show and raised a bunch of money for charity. It was amazing to play at such an iconic



theatre and was definitely a bucket list moment for us as a band. In our spare time we have been upgrading our rehearsal studio and working on recording our new single "Bard at the Bar".

AU: Any other shows planned?

Paddy: Yes a couple in the works and you can keep updated on shows at paddywaggin.ca Every year the crowd gets bigger and better and it's a real pleasure to see everyone dancing, singing and having fun. We hope to see you there!

Slàinte - PW

paddywaggin.ca

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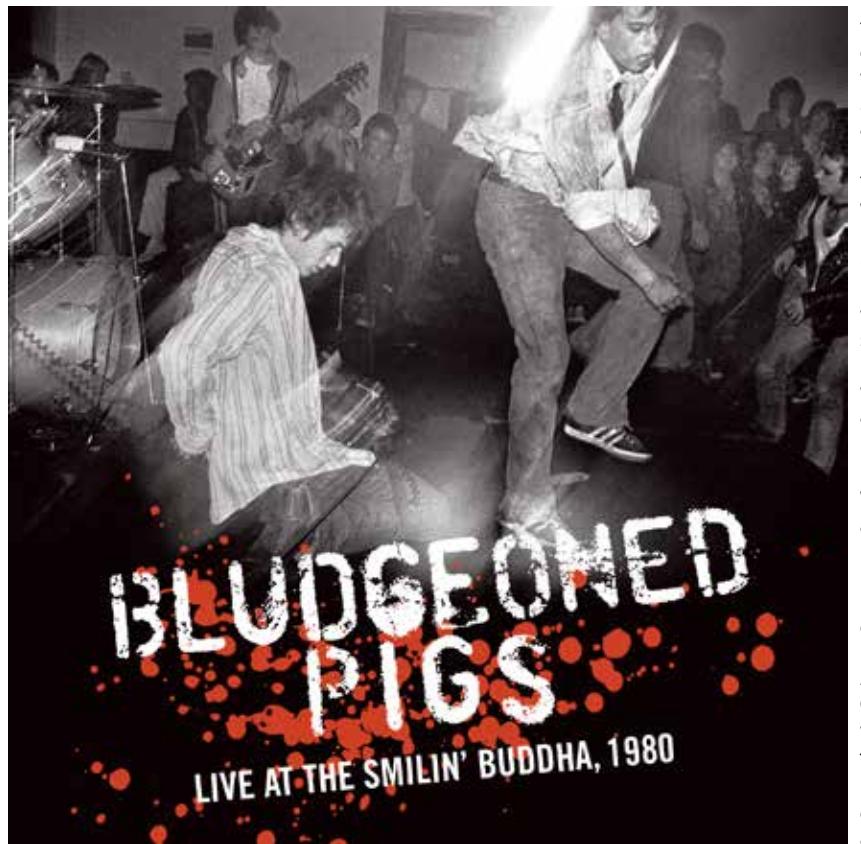
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BLUDGEONED PIGS

LIVE AT THE SMILIN' BUDDHA, 1980

BLUDGEONED PIGS

VANCOUVER PUNK, 1980

Alastair Jamieson – vocals

Gerry Graham – guitar

Anthony Walker – bass

Robert Bruce – drums

Alumni swine: Dave Coupland, Ron Reyes, Jimmy Joe Pearson, Chuck Biscuits, Jamie Koch, Mary Jo Kopechne.

In 1977, I was a 16-year-old high school dropout when a guy I worked with nicknamed me "Punk Rock." I had no idea why and figured it was a play on the "pet rock" fad back then. I was exiled in Edmonton at the time and when I turned 17 in early 1978 I decided

to move back to Vancouver. My brother gave me a hit of acid for the train ride, which was a bad idea. I bought the 1978 3D edition of *National Lampoon* at a stop along the way and suddenly there it was: Punk rock. So this is what that guy was talking about.

When I got to Vancouver I figured I'd go back to school and get my GED by signing up at Vancouver Community College's King Edward campus. I was taking a history class when I noticed a kid across from me always shuffling in late like a pile of dirty laundry. He had a page-boy, sheepdog haircut and when I saw him in the smoke pit outside I asked "What'd you get on the test?" "A-plus," he said. Alastair Jamieson was effortlessly brilliant but hid it well.

We talked about music and he told me about the Iggy Pop show he had recently been to. "Who's she?" I asked, like an idiot. He said he had a band and asked if I could play bass. "Of course," I said, figuring as a guitar player it would be easy. "We're called Bludgeon Pigs." We set up a meeting at the Aristocratic Restaurant to meet guitarist Gerry Graham, a skinny 16-year-old kid who cowrote the songs with Al.

The original Pigs lineup was Alastair, Gerry, Dave Coupland on drums and Jaime Koch on bass and they played their first show at a record store at Broadway and Main. The next show – in early '79 backing the

Subhumans – was at Odd Fellows Hall, where I replaced Jaime on bass. Dave was too busy to play for us so we started a long list of temporary drummers.

For that gig, we were billed as "Bludgeon Pigs," which was the name that later stuck and we figured we'd better make a good first impression. It was a legendary performance with the sectional stage coming apart in the mayhem and Al proving he was one of the best punk frontmen. At one point, Al ran into my bass, breaking the neck off, which caused me to play it like a bow.

Al's stage antics usually consisted of shouting down the crowd before each song and frequently singling out people who had wronged him for special verbal treatment. Like the time he called out Lucien (the unofficial Smilin' Buddha bouncer who absolutely no one liked) for abuse. Or the night Nancy Jir, the owner's wife,

wouldn't bring him a glass of water onstage so he took his shoes off in protest. Al was secretly very strong – he was a hockey player, or so I've been told, but didn't want anyone thinking he was ever a "jock nifty." On stage, he was a very flashy combination of lunging, swooping movements and spastic shaking and gyrating. One of the best frontmen local or otherwise and he had a great snarling vocal to go with it. I'll always love and miss that guy. We did a ton of shows, mostly at the Buddha and even went to Seattle with Black Flag. Ron Reyes of Black Flag was also one of our favourite drummers, along with Jimmy Joe Pearson (Toxic Reasons) and Chuck Biscuits (DOA), who sat in once.

Our last show during the "golden punk age" was at Hardcore '81 (Feb. 13-14, 1981) with DOA and a host of other bands over two nights. Mary Jo Kopechne of the Modernettes played bass that night, giving us a duo guitar attack although we forgot to rehearse properly and got loaded before the show. Al was still in all his raging glory though, so no one really noticed.

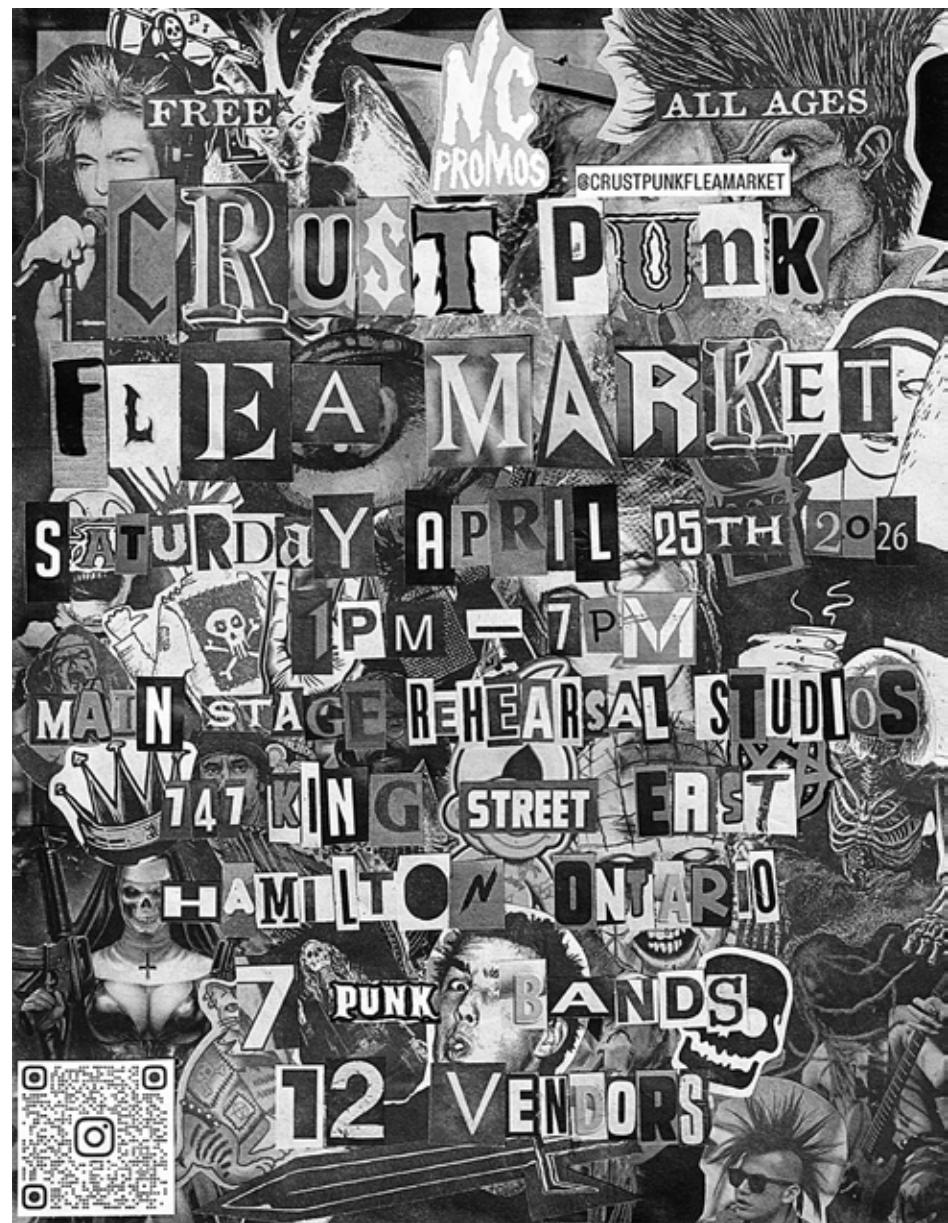
I remember doing a show the same night the Dead Kennedys were at the Commodore (July 10, 1981) and they came down and did a set at the Buddha after their gig so we always liked to say that we opened for the Dead Kennedys. We also did some shows with Black Flag at the Buddha, and they were all big fans.

I had other bands that were taking up more and more time and we all just stopped playing without actually breaking up. Gerry moved to Seattle and Al was doing different bands like Castration Anxiety. We did a reunion at Stalag 13 a few years later in around 1984. We did a few more reunions over the years ending with the Alcoholapalooza show at the Commodore, which brought back Jaime Koch on bass and Dave Coupland on drums with Al and me, while Gerry had moved to Seattle by then. We had one more gig after that and were stopped by police en route, who detained me for an unpaid ticket. We still made the show.

Sadly, Alastair Jamieson, Gerry Graham and Dave Coupland are no longer with us, but I'm sure they would all be glad to know people are listening to Bludgeon(ed) Pigs again.

– Tony "Baloney" Walker

Interview: Jason Flower
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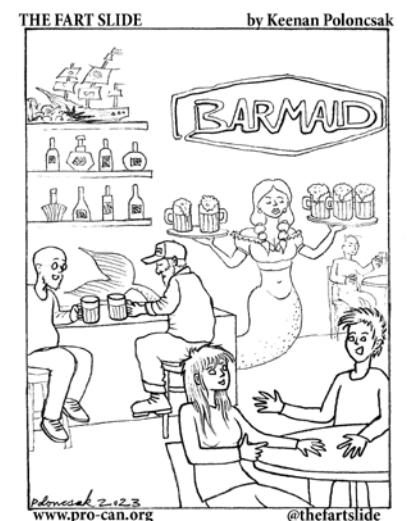
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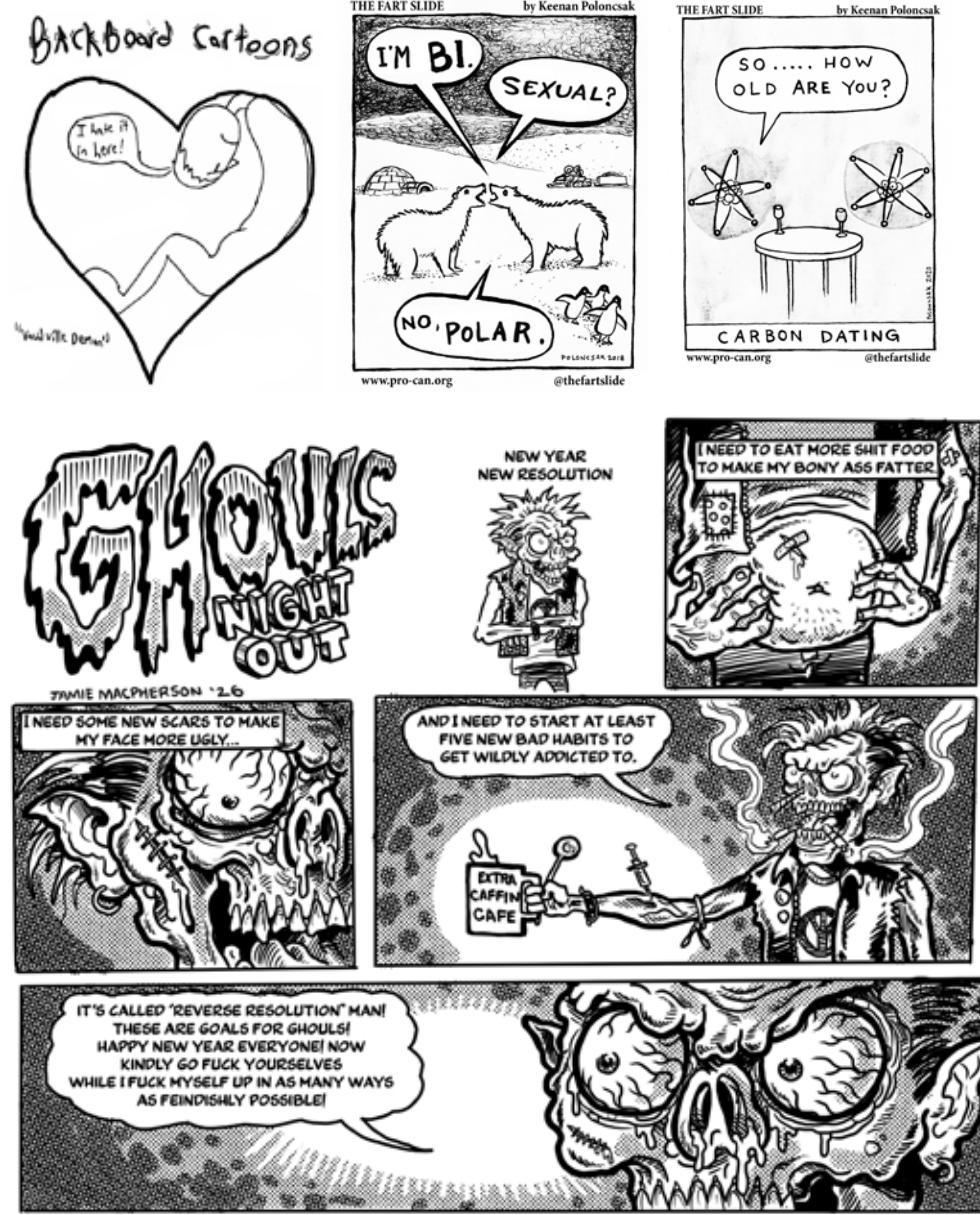
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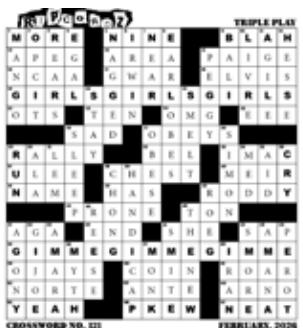
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A black and white cartoon by Keenan Poloncsak. It features a large, multi-eyed, tentacle-like character with a speech bubble that says "YOU HAVE CLAMYDIA.". A smaller, single-eyed character is holding a small container. The artist's signature "Squid-gee 2022" is in the bottom right corner, and the website "www.pro-can.org" is at the bottom left.

A political cartoon by Keenan Poloncsak. The title 'THE FART SLIDE' is at the top left, and the artist's name 'by Keenan Poloncsak' is at the top right. A large speech bubble in the center contains the text 'I THOUGHT IT WAS EIGHTIES NIGHT!..'. To the left, a sign reads 'LADIES NIGHT'. In the center, a man in a suit is gesturing towards a man on the right who is holding a video camera and has a very large, spiky afro hairstyle. The artist's signature 'Poloncsak 2-22' is at the bottom right, along with the website 'www.pro-can.org'.



Crossword Answers



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Absolute Album Reviews

MEGADETH – Megadeth

Final album from one of metal's big four, soon to be the big two. Megadeth from a metal fan perspective have always been there and it will be a sad day when they officially call it quits. I wanted it noted I believe Megadeth have always been leaps and bounds more talented than the other big three.

17 albums into their amazing career, they release *Megadeth* (self-titled) and start their so-called final tour.

1st song "Tipping Point" starts thrashy and fast with blazing solos. Have to say they released a song called "BreakPoint" years before and lyrically nothing new here. "I Don't Care" is as close to punk as the band is going to get and it's a fun song, probably poking fun at their previous bass player.

"Hey God!?" Is Dave having a late-life crisis to a mid-tempo rock track? Remember the album *Risk*? Well, this would fit on that album and is the start of the album's weak moments.

"Let There Be Shred" is a ripping song full of genius guitar solos and enough humour to make it the best on album. "Puppet Parade" is like a '90s Megadeth melodic rocker. Dave's voice on these slower ones shows his years of wear and tear.

"Another Bad Day" is also a song that has zero energy and depressing lyrics, riffs he used before on "Cryptic Writings". Nothing much exciting here.

"Made to Kill" attempts the thrash but the vocals and overproduction take away any power it may have. "Obey The Call" is another re-used riff but the vocals make it almost unlistenable and the mid-tempo doesn't work.

"I Am War" continues the same mid pace without breaking out, Dave's voice is beyond bored. It is just not fun to listen to.

"The Last Note" is his goodbye song to the world. Dave's long goodbye makes me realize we aren't getting any younger. Another mid-paced trudge along with his sad lyrics about it all being over. Not a great final song, except the acoustic guitar section.

Bonus track "Ride the Lightning" is musically perfect but vocally another let-down.

As a final album, it doesn't go out on a high note. As a fan, this album sits

with *Risk* and *Super Collider* as one of their weaker efforts. Overproduced and vocals turned too loud and clean make this album a bit of a dud. Guitar solos are gold but they can't hold Dave above water.

— Matt Norris

TESTAMENT – *Parra Bellum*

Testament's 14th album is no dud. This album sounds like a band on a creative upswing, intensity and songwriting spree running on all cylinders fluently.

Did I scream METAL yet? Well, this is true organic metal from the toenail to the spine and deep into the brain.

Since Slayer claims to have retired, I vote Testament to be in the new big four (and realistically should have knocked Anthrax out of that position long ago).

This album starts as heavy as Testament has ever been. *For the Love of Pain* is borderline black metal and it rules! Ripping!

I've always been a fan but with this album I'm back on a Fukin rant: "Testament Crush the Competition."

Shadow People is like *Souls of Black* era on steroids. This album overall is just heavier and seems more focused, as well as catchy and hook-driven, than some of their previous albums (and those albums ruled).

With *Meant to Be* we get a ballad and that's never a bad thing from this band. Chuck Billy's voice is not bored or tired, it's awesome.

Check out the video for *High Noon* and crank it!

This album is a highlight in existing old-school bands. Testament is reigning supreme and stomping the piss out of the other big four. A perfect metal album in all aspects.

METAL. Metal lives!

Easily one of, if not their best album.

— Matt Norris

MY DRUTHERS – *Coming Up 3's*

I'm not going to outright lie and say I know a lot about this genre, but. If I ever wanted to drink spoiled rum and go back in time sailing the dissolute seas I'd probably sing these songs as anthems. I've been to P.E.I and this group sounds like the old timers singing after some

drinks of that homemade hooch moonshine. Where men are proud to admit they are men, until they puke. I really enjoy this album, maybe it's because of the alcohol, that and a wallop of tequila talent. It's classic anthems and local themes and found passions and long lost dreams and pirate schemes. Musically antique, articulate outcast ska pirate folk is how I see it. Gimme a banjo and a stomping rhythm and I'll send you to listen to this authentic group of outstanding musicians.

This is a soundtrack for a movie I'm sure, if it's not it should be, either way it's perfect. Great gang vocals of ocean adventures and alcoholic endeavours put to song. This band playing at your local pub would be the greatest thing besides, the hangover in the morning. Super talented acoustic group, lively vocal pirate folk genius. Never said I knew much about this style of music, but this is a fun album to dig deep into with a good ale buzz. AWESOME. Go give them a listen and have a shot of whiskey for staying on shore.

— Matt Norris

NORTHERN RENEGADES – *FUCK, ARE WE GOOD!*

It takes a lot of gall for any band to entitle a commercial release "FUCK, ARE WE GOOD!" and that can either be repelling or intriguing, depending on the prospective listener. In this case, when you throw all caution to the wind and shrug your shoulders and give the release the benefit of the doubt – well, the results can oftentimes be surprising and thrilling and rewarding. Just like here, with just over 26 minutes of bullshitless hard-driving Gutter Power blasting out from central Alberta's rocking rascals Northern Renegades.

There's immediate comparisons to Nashville Pussy and Turbonegro and Hellacopters and Supersuckers and Zeke and Danko Jones and all the other furious power-chord / dirty-riff underground heroes of the past quarter-century-plus, and in these sorrowful times where everyone's given up on the chemical digitization of the modern mainstream music industry, it's no-nonsense streetwise (well, gravel-road-wise) artists like Northern Renegades who keep reigniting Rock and Roll as something beersloppingly dangerous and profanely emotional and hella exciting – the

way it was always supposed to be. The production on this EP is a bit basement-DAW raw, but the songs themselves (highlights: "Sidecar Rider," "Southbound," "Hello World") are fists-to-the-sky Wildrose Anthems for summertime bush parties or midnight roadtrips... or just something you throw into your old Sony cassette deck when you want to wash the shit of Harry Styles out of your ears.

— Ferdy Bellard

MORS VERUM – *Canvas*

From Ontario this Canadian progressive death metal band are super talented, relentless intense and beautifully brutal. Turn your stereo to ten and listen to the pure genius of *Serenade*. Those riffs are so sick I want to jump through a wall. Fukin heavy and darkly colourful. With compositions wrapped in originality and perfectly placed mellow moments, the dynamics are a constant exploration across the metal frontier. For fans of Gorguts, Ulcerate and Morbid Angel. The power and production and precision of this album put Mors Verum as one of Canada's top metal bands. Mosh pit makers and head banging neck breakers. Killer band, give them some plays for the good of your metal soul. If they are playing in your town or city, go see them and you won't be disappointed. Serious heaviness.

— Matt Norris

XENOVICE – *Fragments for The End of Us*

German industrial trap metal. Yes, that's what I said. It's like Skinny Puppy had sex with Rammstein, Dimmu Borgir and old Mr Bungle at a meth party. Everyone is indulging and enduring yet wondering why and how I ended up here. Oh what the hell! dance naked, life is about regrets. Shake what the good lord gave you, dance for Satan, dance for fun and for the love of weird music. This is definitely pushing boundaries and mutant music overall, but that said playing it safe is never this fun. It's like Ministry added four clowns and 3 tweaking trolls to the band and then ran off to play music for the demonic circus, changing their name obviously to Xenovice. This album will make you

question top 40 radio and basically worldly intellect as a whole. Very original, beyond creative, over some people's heads maybe, awesome most definitely. Take a bong rip and play it loud.

— Matt Norris

thing when done right. DBC holds the flag for Canadian thrash and the metal world in general. I'm a fan so you should be. Technical and fun, thunderous and tremendous.

— Matt Norris

DANIELE BRUSASCHETTO – *Dichotomous*

The best thing about reviewing bands you've never heard is awakens the ears and revitalizes the senses. This album is a genuine piece of art and my ears appreciate it deeply. Musically this is hard to make comparisons to, but it's stoner rock with let's say more talent and more melody. It's rock n roll, it's prog rock, it's sludge. It's an awesome album from start to finish. Every member of this band shines on every song, and the vocals fit perfectly without being harsh or out of place. Great mix of tempos and the slow grinding grooves are hypnotic. Stoner sludge ska sung in any language is a welcome wallop of creative genius. A multi styled soundscape for people who love music. Excellent album, great vibes and excellent musicianship makes this top tier. Stoner rock kings / experimental metal is all I need to say. Check out the video on YouTube. Daniele Brusaschetto Nosediving.

— Matt Norris

DBC – *Dead Brain Cells*

Thrash, crossover from Montreal Canada formed in 1986. This album is what I call a mosh pit mayhem maker. Watch out for this band live as they destroy the pit with flailing middle aged punk energy and thrash metal precision induced walls of death. DBC, DRI, COC (animosity era) MOD, SOD you get the point. This is technically sonic and blistering thrash played exactly the way you would hope. There's a lot of famous bands that could really use a lesson in creative awesomeness and passion from an album like this. It's called rocking the fuck out and laying it all on the line at full throttle tempos. It's called sounding enthusiastic and it's an amazing

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Absolute Game Reviews

The Call for More Cthulhu Videogames in 2026 is Strong!

By Ed Sum

Every year, it's safe to say that some video game developer has an idea to extend the Lovecraftian universe to the electronic realm. There's one product worth noting, and as for whether Howard would approve, he'd balk and say the Mi-go aren't as like-minded. They'd rather interface an actual mind to technology rather than vice versa. However, for the rest of humanity, they have the pleasure to step into the shoes of imagined characters to take on these dreaded cosmic forces, and with lots of luck, maybe survive!

Although there have not been many virtual reality games made to summon dread, you'd think there'd be more products. Part of the problem is with each tale, it's more about existentialism rather than surviving the night. Although *Dagon: by H.P. Lovecraft* by Bit Golem included a VR mode that let you stand inside the narration of the short story, the player's role is more enjoy bearing witness to than being part of a game. It nailed atmosphere and scale, but stopped short of interactivity, which kept it firmly in "experience" territory.

There's also another release that may appear this year, but with no confirmation, this game is still in development. *The Dreamlands* is an ambitious idea following *Railroads of Hysteria* released last year, and it doesn't follow Randolph Carter's wanderings. His story is not part of the game.

The following list only includes games with set release dates:

Cthulhu: The Cosmic Abyss

(April 16, 2026)

This game developed by Big Bad Wolf Studio looks designed for today's generation of consoles and uses the same approach as *Call of Cthulhu* to put the player in the driver's seat. It's the most ambitious to date because here, players assume the role of a special agent sent to investigate the many deaths occurring at sea. The reason for the extra computer power is the use of AI in this engine. Here, you'll explore the sunken city of R'lyeh with the help of machine learning to make sense of it all.

As for whether reality will cause this agent to go mad as well, that's tough to say. What makes this one stand out is its fastidious world-building and emotional stakes — it doesn't just show you monsters, it shows you how much your own choices can twist you. Watchlists are already active on storefronts like Steam and PlayStation, so you can track updates and demos ahead of launch.



24/7 HEAVY METAL INTERNET RADIO SHOWCASING THE BEST METAL ARTISTS



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The Sinking City 2 (Expected First Half of 2026)

The *Sinking City* 2 doesn't yet have an exact day, but Frogwares has confirmed it's targeting the first half of 2026. After a rocky journey



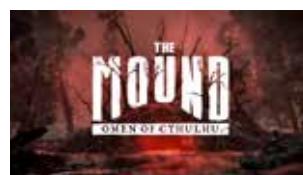
through legal issues with the original, the sequel is reimagining itself as a true survival horror game set in a flooded 1920s Arkham, with more intense exploration and combat than the detective-leaning first title.

The world looks drenched in creeping dread and murky waters, with dozens of pathos-heavy set pieces and terrifying creatures waiting under the surface. This product promises a haunting remix of survival horror tropes with Frogwares' flair for environmental storytelling, and fans can expect more gameplay drops as development rounds out. Steam wishlists and the official Frogwares site are good places to follow new trailers and updates.

The Mound: Omen of Cthulhu

(Summer 2026)

This co-op horror adventure from ACE Team is slated for summer 2026, and it reimagines



Lovecraft's novella in a first-person survival context where perception itself becomes the enemy. Up to four players band together to explore a cursed jungle looking for treasure, only to find that reality warps around them as eldritch forces blur friend and foe alike.

It layers dark humour and paranoia on top of traditional horror exploration, so it feels just as much about the psychological tension between players as the monsters lurking in the brush. For folks who love that sense of shared dread, this one's wishlist pages are already stacking up.



Absolute Live Reviews

The following live review is dedicated to the memory of MARC JOSEPH DOUCETTE.

For myself and many, this concert was the last time we spent time with Marc. His memory and spirit live here and in the numerous show reviews of the past. In the future he will be here as well - sometimes in his iconic lobster costume, always front row. RIP.

BUFFALO BUD BUSTER / LOVER / AGRICULTURE CLUB / PEPPER-BOX

December 27, 2025, Dickens, Calgary, AB

Just as Santa squeezing his fat ass down the chimney, eating your cookies, and leaving behind socks and underwear is a seasonal ritual, so too is the Buffalo Bud Buster El Diablo Locomotor rolling into Dickens. On a night when the temperature dipped to around minus 27, the girls and boys of Calgary bundled their asses up. Thick toques, scarves, coats, and long, bushy beards did what they could as people made their way through the dark toward that warm light—Dickens, the terminus of the Locomotor.

Inside, Pepper-Box's music thawed out the newcomers while smiling door staff waved them in and bartenders cracked cans. Coats came off. People settled into seats or stood as the western-gothic four-piece opened the night. Buffalo Bud Buster's rough, heavy stoner-rock jingles were the main course, but the fixings came from a few different corners, building a meal that felt familiar and satisfying—something you'd happily eat at Grandma's.

The Electric Highway crew were on hand, helping put together the night and organizing donations for the Project Warmth Society of Alberta, capped off with a giveaway

before things wrapped up.

Agriculture Club followed Pepper-Box, who mentioned it was their first time playing Dickens. Their set was a reminder of simpler pleasures: Drumheller and Pilsner beer. Joy to the world. Lover came next, a three-piece hair-metal band that poured itself over the room like thick brown gravy.

So, where's the meat? Around 11, the train finally arrived carrying the buffalo beef. The now-warm, slightly buzzed crowd was ready. They'd heard the stories: the boy on the wagon, the cheap tent. Like seeing *A Christmas Carol* every year, they knew what was coming, they just wanted to see how it was done this time.

Buffalo Bud Buster delivered a fresh telling. "Ghosts of Montreal" was pushed faster, as if a pinch of magical cocaine had fallen with the snowflakes and lit a fire under the band. And with that, to all a good night. Until next year, when the tradition continues.

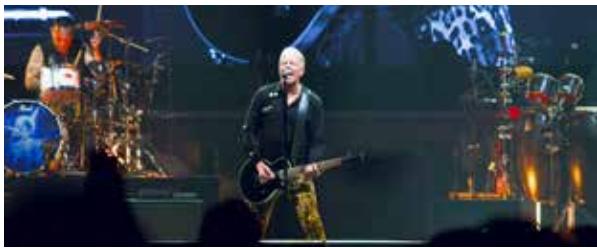
— Ryan Dyer

THE OFFSPRING / BAD RELIGION

January 22, 2026, Save-On-Food Memorial Centre, Victoria, BC

Presented by Live Nation

Bad Religion and The Offspring at the Save-On Foods Memorial Centre



was an absolute banger of a show with a sold out crowd of nearly 9000!

Right when you walked through the doors, the merch table was in full view and was jampacked, non-stop selling before the show even started. The crowd was unreal too - It was truly all ages, from teenagers all the way up to adults in their 60s, which made the whole night feel even more legendary.

Bad Religion opened with a 19 song set and kept the energy high the whole way through. They covered songs from 11 albums out of their 17 album catalog, so some got left out (Against the Grain, Generator and New Maps of Hell) But the set still had that classic Bad Religion intensity from start to finish.

The Offspring was one of the funnest shows I've ever been to. They ripped through songs from most of their albums, mixed in some unreal surprise covers (Ozzy and the Ramones) and the whole crowd was losing it! They didn't really play much from the early days though - No songs from Ignition or their self-titled album... but the set was still stacked and nonstop fun. The drum solo was absolutely insane, and Dexter doing piano songs mid-set was unexpected, but seriously entertaining.

Hilarious stories, beach balls flying and confetti explosions! The vibe was unreal.

10/10 Night!

— Mike Willisko

HEAVENSGATE / ACRES / KINGDOM OF GIANTS / LIKE MOTHERS TO FLAMES

November 26, 2025, Théâtre Fairmount, Montréal QC

Heavensgate opened the evening with a heavy and atmospheric set that immediately set the tone. Traveling from Australia, the band blended crushing riffs, massive breakdowns, and darker textures that translated with impressive force live. Their performance felt raw and unfiltered, showing a band clearly gaining momentum and confidence. Acres followed with a concise but impactful set built around emotional delivery and controlled intensity. Their mix of melodic passages and heavy, atmospheric riffs landed with clarity, allowing the material to resonate without overextension. The set felt honest and restrained, serving as a strong bridge between the opening act and the heavier material that followed. Kingdom of Giants brought a polished and energetic presence to the stage. Tight execution, sharp breakdowns, and melodic hooks kept the crowd fully engaged. Their confidence and pacing helped maintain momentum throughout their set, reinforcing their reputation as a reliable and effective live act. Closing the night, Like Moths to Flames delivered a fierce and emotionally driven headlining performance. Balancing aggression and melody with ease, the Ohio band commanded the room from start to finish. The crowd remained locked in throughout, responding to a set that felt both intense and purposeful.

— JF Gosselin
@jfgosselin.photo
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meaningful moment for the underground metal community. The venue was packed with fans who understood they were witnessing the final live chapter of a singular artistic journey. Born in August 1948, Grindmother defied expectations by carving out a place in extreme music well into her 70s. Since the release of *Age of Destruction* in 2016, recorded with her son Rain Forest and drummer Tyson Apex, her voice has travelled across Canada, Japan, Germany, and the United States. What began almost as an experiment evolved into a powerful artistic statement rooted in resilience and authenticity. Stepping away from live performance due to health issues, this final show carried genuine emotional weight. Guest appearances by Alissa White-Gluz and Brat Bad elevated the moment further, underscoring Grindmother's influence across generations and scenes. As the final notes faded, the atmosphere felt less like an ending and more like a celebration. Grindmother's legacy is defined not by novelty, but by fearlessness and sincerity.

— JF Gosselin
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TRIBAL GAZE / FROZEN SOUL / ABORTED / CATTLE DECAPITATION

December 5, 2025, Club Soda, Montréal QC



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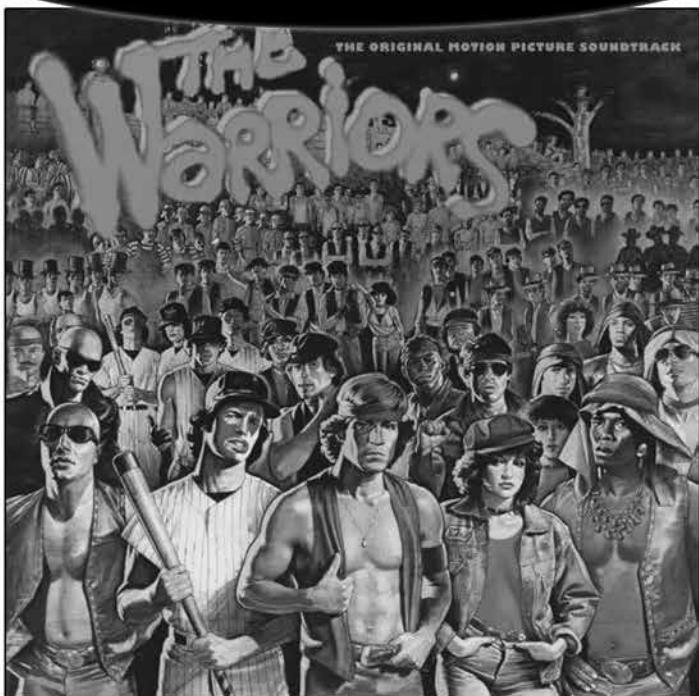
Find us in the courtyard
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Tribal Gaze opened the night with a raw and uncompromising approach to death metal. Dense, aggressive, and tightly executed, their short set established momentum immediately. Frozen Soul followed by leaning fully into sheer heaviness. Slow, crushing grooves and cavernous riffs defined their set, with an old-school aesthetic that translated powerfully in the room. The emphasis on weight and atmosphere added depth to the lineup. Aborted brought a surge of technical precision and relentless aggression. Their experience was evident in the pacing and control of the set, keeping energy levels high while maintaining sharp execution. Cattle Decapitation closed the night with a commanding and explosive performance. Balancing brutality with dynamic shifts, their set remained punishing yet engaging throughout. Tight execution and presence reaffirmed their status as one of extreme metal's most formidable live bands.

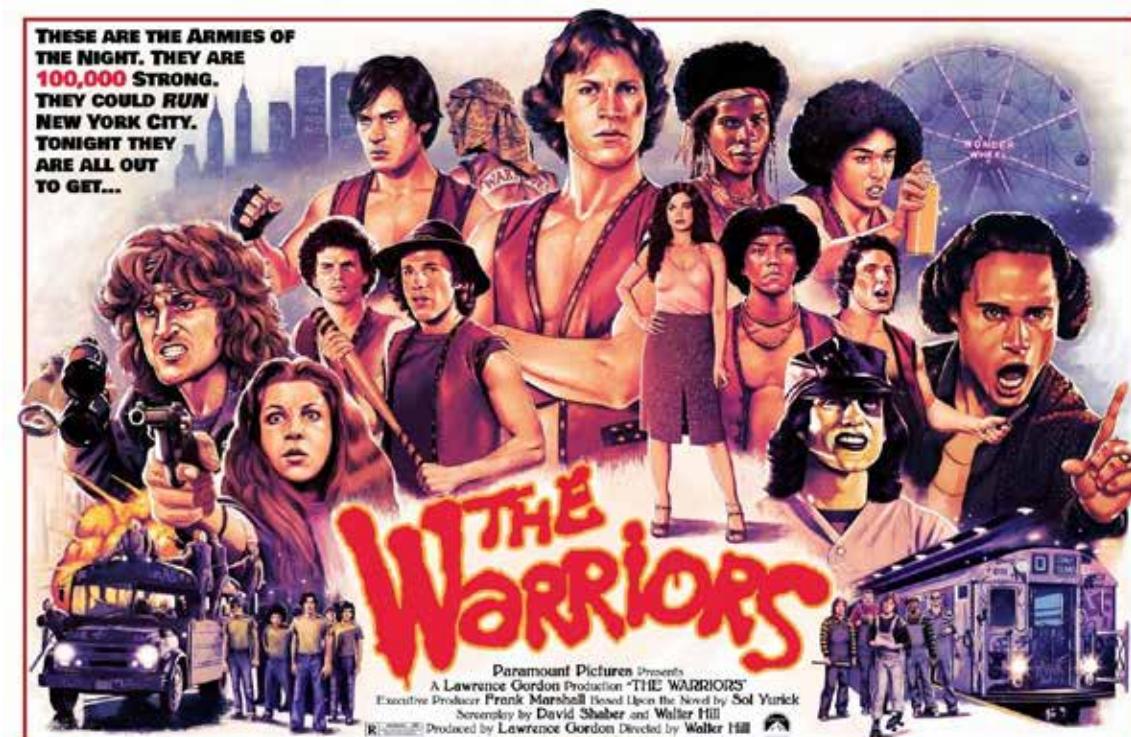
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THE WARRIOR - The World's First True Graphic Novel Movie

When I first saw *The Warriors* years after it first ran in the cinemas, several thoughts struck me. The first was it's a truly great achievement in direction. I could see that Greek mythology ran strongly through the film's narrative, the film's direction Walter Hill has spoken of, "the connection to Greek myth. The comic book setting. The slightly futuristic feel."

Indeed, *The Warriors* has a surreal amped-up neon nightmare reality that we wouldn't see in comic books for years. *The Warriors* was and is ahead of the curve, racing from its own reality from dusk-till-dawn.

Another thought that occurred to me

when I watched *The Warriors* for the first time was that it is the world's first true graphic novel movie. It seemed to me *The Warriors* had much more in common with *Watchmen* and *Judge Dredd* than *Superman* or *Spiderman*. Imagine how happy I was to discover years later that I was right when I watched Hill's Ultimate Director's Cut. Hill had originally wanted a narration by Orson Wells making the comparison between the Greek warriors of the past and the Warriors of the near future. He wanted to use comic book graphics and split the film into chapters—something he was finally able to do with the Ultimate Director's Cut. As Hill says, "this will represent my intention when I was making it better than the original version."

So, now the film opens with comic book art and is introduced by Hill himself. The narration is as follows...

Battle of Cunax 401 BC.

"Over two millennia ago, an army of Greek soldiers found themselves isolated in the middle of the Persian Empire."

"One thousand miles from safety. One thousand miles from the sea. One thousand miles with enemies on all sides."

"Theirs was a story of a desperate forced march."

"Theirs was a story of courage."

"This too is a story of courage."

"Sometime in the future."

The Warriors incorporates huge

mythological elements. I was struck by the common ground it shares with Joseph Campbell's *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*, a book on archetypes, how cultures separated in time and space have evolved similar heroes and villains to help them navigate, like the Warriors, through life's eternal wars.

For make no mistake, whatever self-serving Nazi-style dictators around the world would like you to believe, we are all one Race, the Human Race, whatever or nationality, gender... it's all the same, it's only the evil that would have people believe otherwise.

Hill was also inspirited by another genre, he states. "The Western is ultimately a stripped down universe that is, whatever the dramatic problems are, beyond the normal avenues of social control and social

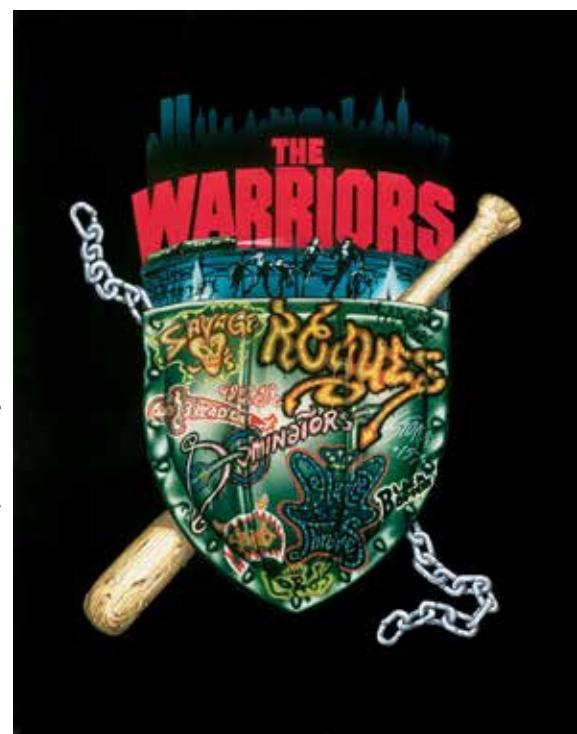
alleviation of the problem, and I like to that even within contemporary stories."

The story also owes a debt to 'Anabasis' by Xenophon. The Greek term Anabasis refers to an expedition from a coastline into the interior of a country. Hill was drawn to the "extreme narrative simplicity and stripped down quality" of the script.

There are shades of Michael Moorcock's *The Eternal Champions* here too, archetypical Warriors fighting across space and time, after all, time is but a human construction.

The scene with the Lizzies is reminiscent of Odysseus being tempted by the Sirens.

The radio DJ narrating the story also



harkens back to Greek plays, as she says, "all you street people with an ear from the action." Letting the City know that there is a bounty on The Warriors... 'dead or alive.'

The Warriors is truly the Once and Forever film! A thing of beauty and joy for all the Ages!

Steve Earles

temptress

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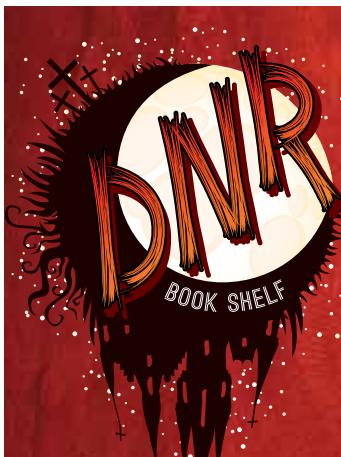
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Mackenzie Nolan

ECW Press
October 14, 2025

Well, I certainly would not call this slow-burning Canadian novel 'horror' in any sense. It's a very atmospheric, queer, misandry, Gen Z book about trauma and the complexities of friendship/relationships. The writing is well done, the style was very floral and bloomed before you, while the story thawed like the ground in March. I kept waiting for something big to happen, but it just isn't that kind of book, and for that reason, it took me much longer to get through. I do think there is a huge audience for a book like this, just not if you are hoping for a horror novel. It could also pass in the YA space, I think, as well.

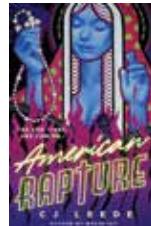
A small town with a huge secret—grizzly murders. Lawrence moves to this small town with her friend Anastasia, where they meet Franky and Pipa through work at the arcade. Lawrence discovers Franky, whose past is entangled in these murders, and is convinced there is a monster on the loose responsible. Their blossoming and complex relationships are unveiled and highlighted throughout the story. Sometimes poetic and sometimes compounded. Finally, when you are wondering if something will ever happen before the book ends, it does, and then it leaves you wondering if the whole thing is just one big symbol instead of an actual beast. That's maybe for you to decide.

Demonika

explore these films and more as a foundational oeuvre of what we now call "domestic horror," and lays a detailed case for why each of these titles fit that categorization. Eleanor Johnson reminds us that "... art takes on its fullest life once it interfaces with an audience" and ultimately transcends the vision of the artist, allowing for a wealth of interpretation and meaning beyond that which may have been intended—a concept highlighted by a chapter which focuses largely on the terrible men who inadvertently tell excellent feminist stories. While the book is limited by the targeted scope of its subject matter, I found it an informative and enjoyable read and am looking forward to the author's upcoming *Monstrous Bitch: A History of Terrifying Women* out later this year.

Laura Phaneuf

AMERICAN RAPTURE



C.J. Leede

Tor Nightfire
October 15, 2024

I was not sure I wanted to read a book about a pandemic with the BS we all just went through not too long ago, but here we are. This was definitely about survival, but I don't really think it falls into the horror genre. Thriller, sure. Captivating at times, drawn out at others. It isn't labelled YA, but certainly could be for a more advanced youngster. Mostly, I was disappointed by the ending as you had to work so hard to get there with its 370 pages and it just kind of leaves you with a sigh.

This novel is very structured and deeply tied into religion, specifically growing up in that environment where everything is wrong, sinning or the devil at work. An interesting coming-of-age story about Sophie, our main character, who is realizing the way she was raised has its flaws and is trying to battle that programming the whole way through.

A pandemic hits, sweeping quickly over the country, though instead of the flu, it's a feral lust that takes over and eventually the infected end up killing others in a sexually violent manner. It's a harrowing journey of Sophie alone, hunting down her twin brother, who had been forcefully removed from the family unit before the pandemic due to his sexual preference. There are lots of characters she comes into contact with that end up being a misfit gang of sorts, with plenty of touching and excruciating moments along the way.

If they had just wrapped up the story instead of leaving the entire undertaking of the book out, I would have appreciated it more. Though the writer has other ideas about how to wrap it up, and perhaps battling the religious construct inside and fighting through those are the story rather than the literal pursuit itself.

Hatchetface

SCREAM WITH ME: HORROR FILMS AND THE RISE OF AMERICAN FEMINISM, 1968-1980



Eleanor Johnson

Atria Books
September 30, 2025

Eleanor Johnson is a professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. While "SCREAM WITH ME" is not her first book (she has written three about the Middle Ages and released two volumes of poetry), it is her first that strikes such a strong chord in the public imagination. The book itself, after all, is the result of Johnson and her students' own horror at learning about the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in 2022 as they were studying the film *Rosemary's Baby*. The lens that coincidence of timing provided to the analysis inspired a further critical look into other horror films of the 1970s and their parallels to the currents of social change at the time of their release, as well as the resurgence of relevance today.

From the reproductive horror of *Rosemary's Baby* and *Alien* to the patriarchal control of *The Omen* and *The Stepford Wives*, the author leads us through a series of essays which

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Absolute Film Reviews

1990: THE BRONX WARRIORS

Anyone who loves *The Warriors* should check out 1990: *The Bronx Warriors*, a film that richly deserves to be far better known than it is!



A crystal-clear indication of any film's cult status is its influence on subsequent cult films. Such a film is 1982's 1990: *The Bronx Warriors* / 1990: *I guerrieri del Bronx*, a film heavily influenced not just by Walter Hill's excellent *The Warriors*, but also John Carpenter's *Escape from New York*, and George Miller's *Mad Max*.

I dub this excellent Italian picture, directed by Enzo G. Castellari, a Spaghetti Apocalypse Movie (Copyright Steve Earles 2026!), because it skillfully uses all the Sergio Leone tropes, narrative devices and operatic violence that inspired Carpenter, Miller and Hill in the first place.

As the film's opening title explains: "1990: The Bronx is officially declared 'no man's land'. The authorities give up all attempts to restore law and order. From then on the area is controlled by the Riders."

Ann, heiress to the corrupt arms manufacturer, The Manhattan Corporation, flees into the Bronx where she is attacked by a roller-skating gang called The Zombies, and is saved by the leader of the Riders, the imaginatively named Trash (Mark Gregory).

The two fall in love and it really is sweet; it's the beating heart of this post-apocalyptic serving of molten mayhem! Without a little romance, where would we be? They are star-crossed lovers in the Wasteland.

We encounter other gangs throughout the film, such as the Scavengers, all clearly inspired (to say the least!) by *The Warriors*.

Meanwhile, an agent for the Manhattan Corporation called Hammer (Vic Morrow) attempts to turn the gangs against each other as a prelude to an invasion by the Manhattan Corporation's private army. Morrow gives a great scenery-devouring performance, quoting Shakespeare as he follows his masters' plans to level the Bronx. When the army attacks the Bronx, an epic battle ensues. Ann gives her life to save Trash, who, in turn, kills Hammer.

Gregory gives his performance a great deal of emotional depth, and thus, Ann's death is genuinely moving.

Bronx Warriors is a true cult film. Enzo Castellari is a fine director (watch the original *Inglourious Basterds* film for proof). The sets have a gritty realism. I really like the quirky and eclectic cast; the Italian actors acquit themselves well alongside American actors like Vic Morrow and Fred Williamson.

I must particularly commend the musical score by Walter Rizzati; it's outstanding and deserves to be much better known. Rather than the more common synth score of the period, this score mixes orchestration with soaring heavy guitars and funky-ass bass lines!

The cinematography by Sergio Salvati is also particularly noteworthy. An enjoyable sequel, *Escape from the Bronx*, quickly followed.

I'd love to see this film remade; it's a great story!

— Steve Earles

28 YEARS LATER: THE BONE TEMPLE

Shot back-to-back with last year's astonishing 28 Years Later: *The Bone Temple* manages the impressive achievement of being both a continuation of the previous film and a fine movie in its own right. I'm going to be very careful not to spoil *The Bone Temple* for those who haven't seen it yet (see on the big screen!).



On one level, *The Bone Temple* is an outstanding horror film, but it has huge depth and much to say about the human condition. Sir Jimmy Crystal and his gang, the Fingers, are truly evil: our vapid, media mind-washed world armed with sharp blades and zero empathy. A simple scene in a farmhouse with its terrified occupants puts viewers' nerves on edge. It only gets more horrific from there.

Whereas, while the Infected rend and tear, it is not through human cruelty but through the Rage virus that infects them. Ralph Fiennes gives one of the greatest performances of all time. His Dr. Kelso is an example to us all with his courage, faith in humanity and gentle empathy.

And it features the greatest-ever use of Iron Maiden's 'Number of the Beast'!

— Steve Earles

FIVE NIGHTS AT FREDDY'S 2

Matthew Lillard's brief return as William Afton is, not surprisingly, cut short. When he is this franchise's central villain, to not have him around (despite being killed in the first film), felt odd. While *Five Nights at Freddy's* 2 begins by diving into the past, what this film represents isn't really a strong continuation as questions are raised. Set a year after the first film, the sequel shifts focus to Charlotte (Audrey Lynn Marie), whose spirit awakens years after witnessing this franchise owner prepares to kill another child. Sadly, nobody believes her crying wolf, and is dismissed.

And it's not until she perishes when heads turn, and this young girl becomes trapped in the same cycle of violence she tried to stop. Her transformation reframes the animatronics not as simple threats, but as remnants, murdered children bound to machines, their innocence steadily eroded into something lethal.

That thematic strength falters once the Withered animatronics appear. Presented as "prototypes," they muddy continuity and sever the emotional connection built with the original ghosts. Rather than exploring this dream logic, the film lets it drift. With Afton absent, the animatronics decay, both physically and narratively. Abby (Piper Rubio), one of the few surviving links to the first film, should anchor the story, yet key details are discarded to force sequel mechanics into place. The idea that adults keep her uninformed strains credibility.

At its core, the sequel is about a child longing for her lost robot friends, but the emotional fallout feels strangely absent. Mike (Josh Hutcherson) and Vanessa (Elizabeth Lail) show little trauma, and their sudden romantic pairing lacks grounding. The restaurant becomes a paranormal tourist site, investigators arrive, revelations surface, and none of it carries lasting consequence.

The film leans into dreamlike horror to compensate, sidestepping mythology rather than deepening it. Charlotte, inhabiting the Marionette, seeks revenge but lacks focus, lashing out indiscriminately. The question of control, who's pulling the strings, and why, remains unresolved. When the film leans on Lillard, it works. When it doesn't, all this offers is just another Blumhouse

flick, only teasing viewers that there's more to come rather than anything else.

3 stars out of 5
— Ed Sum

WE BURY THE DEAD

Spoiler Alert

Daisy Ridley has become selective about her roles, and that discernment shows in *We Bury the Dead*. She plays Eva, a woman suspended between grief and fragile hope, uncertain whether to mourn her husband Mitch (Matt Whelan) or believe he may still be alive. When an EMP device detonates near Tasmania, crippling communications and killing thousands, certainty vanishes. Media reports offer scale but no closure, leaving Eva stranded in not knowing.



Public outrage over military safety failures leads to a humanitarian cleanup effort. The film pointedly avoids fully condemning the responsible nation, a choice that feels deliberate, or trimmed back. Eva joins American volunteers heading to this country truly down under, only to learn that "safe zones" are provisional at best. Hobart itself sits on the edge of devastation, and stability feels temporary.

The question of whether Eva will find Mitch emotionally anchors the film. Their relationship may have already been strained, but her care remains intact. But when she meets Clay (Brenton Thwaites), whose own motivations complicate the journey, what they lead towards is not altogether surprising. And what they find is how the dead keep on living: some still move and not all of them are aggressive. In plain terms, they're zombies and will only attack if provoked.

This isn't a Romero-style zombie film. It's closer in spirit to *The Girl with All the Gifts*. Writer-director Zak Hilditch flirts with moral questions about what we owe the dead, but the film's true focus is Eva, and the quiet devastation of realizing some answers arrive too late to matter. Survival here isn't heroic. It's personal. Letting go becomes the only way forward, which makes its New Year's release feel unexpectedly fitting.

3 1/2 stars out of 5
— Ed Sum

Schwarzenegger action film to reality shows like South Korea's *Running Man* and China's *Keep Running* (the renamed version of the same format), plus competition series such as *The Amazing Race*, the idea of contestants racing against time or being hunted has become a global obsession. In Japan, *Run for the Money* even depicts "hunters" chasing down contestants who get more cash the longer they last—drawing a direct line from King's original dystopian concept.



Edgar Wright's 2025 adaptation pushes the idea even further, presenting a timely critique of media manipulation and narrative control in a spectacle-obsessed society. At the center of this world is Ben Richards, portrayed by Glen Powell, a desperate father driven into the brutal TV show to save his sick daughter.

What we realize along with Richards is that winning isn't an option unless it's penciled in by the producers. The storyline, including who succeeds and who fails, is always shaped behind the scenes based on what's considered best for ratings. Like the fabricated rivalries and scripted moments in WWE, reality TV, or viral social media spectacles, the outcome is secondary to the story the media chooses to tell. This manipulation of reality is what gives Wright's adaptation its existential edge—it's about how deeply the media can control perception in ways that undermine any real victory.

Wright's film channels the dystopian setting of *Dredd* (this could have taken place in the same setting) with a high-energy style that has echoes of the chaotic, biting satire of Terry Gilliam's work—*Brazil* and *12 Monkeys* come to mind. Like those films, *The Running Man* places us in an oppressive, surreal world, where the absurd and the darkly comedic coexist. There's a high-octane, almost manic energy in the way Wright builds his dystopian universe, much like Gilliam's feverish, UK coked-up energy that crackles through his films. For Wright, this energy serves as a platform to showcase the consequences of media manipulation.

— Ryan Dyer

SISU: ROAD TO REVENGE

I was introduced to *Sisu* via a screening at the Calgary Underground Film Festival in 2022. I knew nothing about the film — nothing more than a poster I glanced at of a rugged-looking old man, knowing it was war related and the name which I did not understand the meaning of. Needless to say, in that PACKED

cinema there was magic as we all erupted at this escalating tale of revenge. Audiences had been waiting for a new *Rambo*, or silent Clint



Eastwood-type hero to root behind as he personifies the term one-man army. It was the type of meat-and-potatoes, hairy-chested, muddy-faced, big-bearded action film that inspires getting shit done. It comes from a 1980s *Commando* sensibility. There is a certain purity to it and although it may not be the most sophisticated type of storytelling — it is on the flip side very easy to understand and gets the blood pumping, like a good thrill ride.

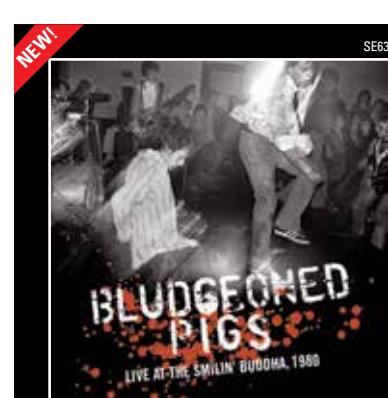
Sisu: Road to Revenge, is the 2025 action sequel written and directed by Jalmari Helander, who also directed the original *Sisu*. It brings back Jorma Tommila as Atamai Korpi and adds Stephen Lang as the new central antagonist Igor Draganov, a Soviet Red Army officer and even Richard Brake getting a slice of *Sisu* pie here to deliver a few cold lines before his character gets taken out. This time the villains flip from Nazis to Soviet forces, and we now know more about what happens to Korpi's family: they were murdered during the war by Soviet troops under Draganov's command.

After returning home and learning of their demise, Atamai Korpi dismantles the ruins of his old family home, loads the wood onto a truck, and sets out to transport the logs across Finland so he can rebuild it in their honor. But Draganov — the man responsible for those deaths — won't let him go so easily. What begins as a simple mission to carry lumber turns into a relentless, cross-country chase as Soviet forces pursue him relentlessly — the first half of *Sisu: Road to Revenge* plays like a *Mad Max*-style chase movie.

The second half, then, sees Korpi finding his way aboard a moving train where he must fight his way toward the front to confront Draganov directly, turning the climax into something that could be compared to *Snowpiercer* with a revenge-driven twist. Every set piece leans hard into over-the-top, visceral action.

Sisu: Road to Revenge expands the legend properly, using the same lean structure as the first film, switching the villains, and giving the character a real motive for revenge beyond pure survival or gold. It's not so much legendary as it is justified killing, though the "holy shit" moments are abundant in this sequel.

— Ryan Dyer

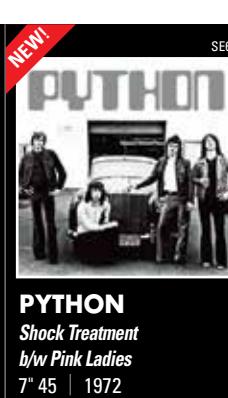


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Hard Rock / Proto Punk

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12" LP | 1991-94

Extreme Death Metal

Victoria, BC, Canada



SUBURBAN SLAG

Suburban Slag

7" EP | 1980

Punk Rock

Calgary, AB, Canada



SIKPHUXZ

Sikphuxz

7" EP | 1980 | Punk Rock

Punk Rock

Victoria, BC, Canada



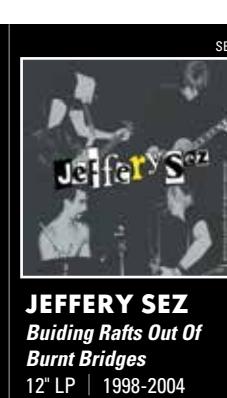
THE NERVE

Self Autopsy

12" MLP | 1978

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DEVILZ BY DEFINITION Launch Food Fight Cross-Canada Tour with New Album *Devilz Knight*

This summer, Canadian metal outfit Devilz By Definition are hitting the road with more than just volume and velocity. The band has announced the Food Fight Cross-Canada Tour, a nationwide run that pairs high-impact live shows with a hands-on commitment to fighting hunger and supporting local communities.

Stretching from the Pacific Coast to the Atlantic, the tour will see Devilz By Definition performing in major cities while collecting food donations and essential supplies at every stop. All contributions will be delivered directly to local food banks, shelters and missions, ensuring that support stays within the communities hosting each show. The band also plans to visit partner organizations in person, meeting volunteers and amplifying their work through firsthand storytelling.

"This tour isn't just about the music — it's about responsibility," says frontman Bruce "Pops" Munro. "We're using our platform to show that rock and metal can inspire more than just riffs; they can rally people around real change. Every show is a chance to make a difference."

The Food Fight Tour coincides with the release of the band's highly anticipated new album, *Devilz Knight*, arriving June 6 via SelfmadeRecords LLC with digital distribution through Earache Records. The record captures the group's raw intensity and refined songwriting, reflecting their growth as both musicians and advocates. Blending crushing riffs with sharpened production, *Devilz Knight*

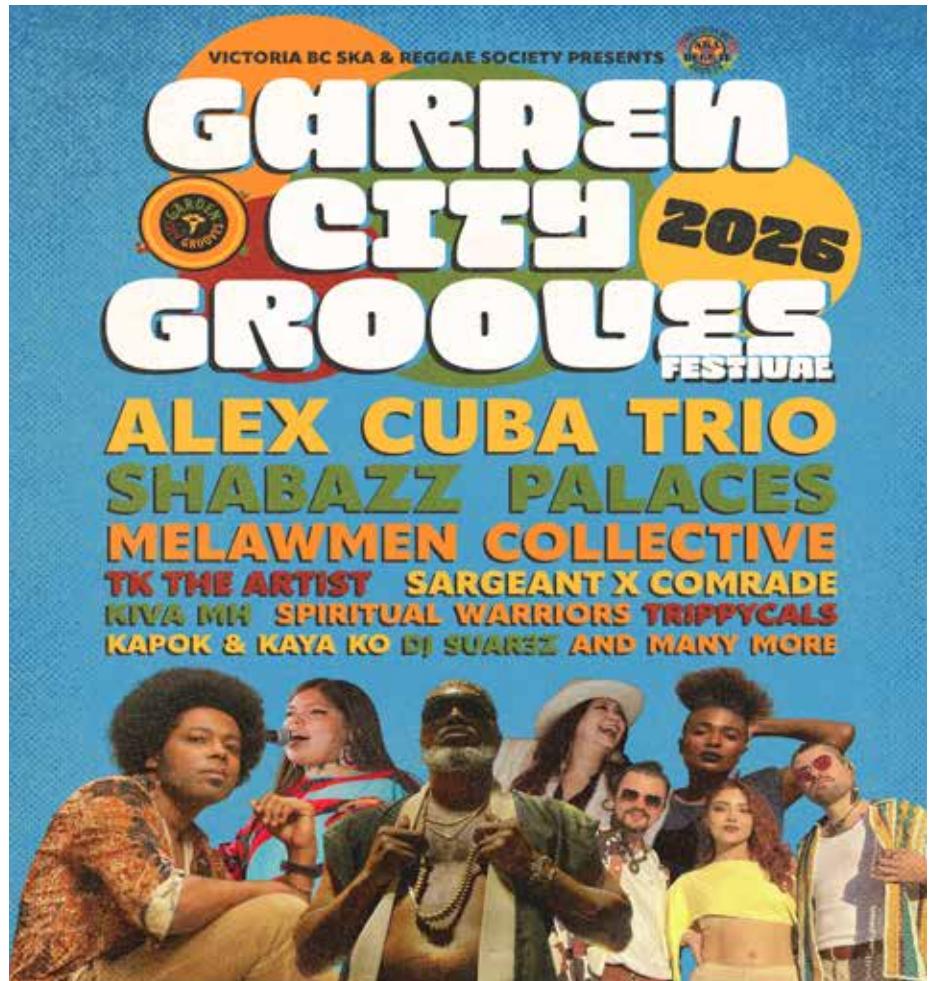


represents a new chapter for the band. More than a standard tour cycle, the Food Fight Cross-Canada Tour is positioned as a nationwide movement. With each performance, Devilz By Definition challenge the idea that heavy music exists separately from social responsibility, proving that passion for metal can also fuel community resilience and collective action.

Fans are encouraged to participate by bringing food donations or essential items to each show. Full details regarding tour dates, locations and donation guidelines will be announced through the band's official website and social media channels.

Hailing from Canada, Devilz By Definition have built a reputation for unrelenting metal that resonates with headbangers worldwide. With *Devilz Knight* and the Food Fight Cross-Canada Tour, they continue to cement their legacy as artists who refuse to sit idly by — using music as a force for unity, strength and action.

For updates, releases and community initiatives, follow Devilz By Definition: selfmaderecordsllc-business.com/devilz-by-definition-music-links



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Free Stickers with Every Order: A History of Hardcore Stickers

The first book dedicated entirely to the visual and cultural legacy of hardcore punk stickers

Iodine Recordings has announced the release of its first standalone book, *Free Stickers with Every Order: A History of Hardcore Stickers*, arriving April 17. The deluxe hardcover volume, authored by longtime collector and documentarian Thomas Rackow, is the first publication dedicated entirely to the visual and cultural legacy of hardcore punk stickers.

Spanning North America from the early 1980s to the present, the book presents a carefully curated archive of rare and often long-lost sticker designs. Once pasted on lampposts, venue walls, record bins and street signs, these small but powerful

artifacts helped spread the DIY ethos of hardcore beyond shows and into everyday life. Cheap to produce and easy to distribute, stickers became tools of identity, promotion, protest and community.

Limited to 1,000 copies, the first edition features over 250 pages of full-colour visuals alongside in-depth interviews with members of influential bands including 7 Seconds, Quicksand, Earth Crisis, Have Heart, American Nightmare, Hot Water Music, Bane, Integrity and Agnostic Front. Rather than aiming for complete documentation, the book takes a selective approach, acknowledging that many early sticker artifacts have been lost to time.



Collected over decades, Rackow's archive preserves a medium never meant to survive. His work captures hardcore's evolving visual language and the voices of those who helped shape it, offering readers both historical context and personal perspective.

Free Stickers with Every Order stands as a time capsule of underground culture, celebrating the creativity and resilience of a scene built on independence and expression.

PRE-ORDERS ARE NOW AVAILABLE THROUGH iodinerecords.com

Author Photo Credit: Jasmin Dreger



RIPCORDZ TOUR TIPS

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

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

PART EIGHTEEN

TOUR TIP NUMBER 103



DON'T LEAVE ANY VALUABLES IN THE VAN WHEN YOU'RE PLAYING

It's a prime time for van break-ins.

TOUR TIP NUMBER 104



AVOID TOURIST AREAS

Everything is more expensive there.

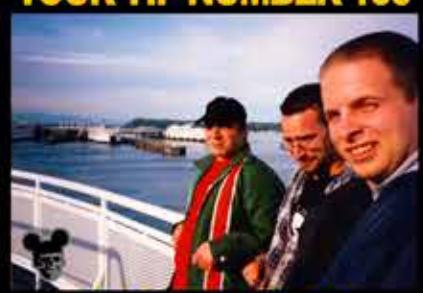
TOUR TIP NUMBER 105



STOP AT ROADSIDE INFO CENTRES

They have ideas and insights not available on Google.

TOUR TIP NUMBER 106



BOOK FERRIES IN ADVANCE

...or you might end up spending your day counting seagulls by the seashore.

TOUR TIP NUMBER 107



BEFORE YOU LEAVE SPEND SOME \$\$\$ FIXING UP THE VAN

...or you'll end up doing it on the road.

TOUR TIP NUMBER 108



MAKE MEMORIES, MAKE FRIENDS

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Marc Joseph Doucette

June 4, 1972 - January 19, 2026

-Ryan Dyer

I would like to talk about Marc Doucette — also known as Jean Guy Donair, or Rock Lobster — who recently passed away. I feel that talking about him will help a lot of us get through this.

I should say this clearly: I knew him. I wasn't his best friend, but I was a friend and talked to him at almost every concert I went to.

I have a different perspective on going out to shows than some people. I go to observe and review. It's a ritual, and it comes with a sense of responsibility. I don't usually want to drink, so I think about who I'll talk to. Often, the answer was Marc. He was a constant. He was reliable. He always had the concert first and foremost in his mind, and I knew he'd be sober and present. I don't drink much anymore when I'm out unless it's a special occasion. With him, the night was about music — so we talked about music. I believe I was drawn to him first and foremost because of his passion about music. I go to a lot of shows, so I start to notice who is really present.

Who lives and breathes for this shit? It's Marc. I'd arrive at the venue — say, The Palace — and make my way to the back of the line.

"Hey Ryan."

Okay, there's Marc. Good.

"Will you be writing about the show tonight?"

"Yes."

We'd talk about the show we were about to see, upcoming shows, shows he caught that I missed, or the rare show I saw that he didn't — usually something nu metal. Of course, we always talked about Clutch. Everyone knows they were his favorite band. How many times did he see them? I can't remember the number he told me, but it was at least 30. He'd show me photos of his poster collection on his phone, and eventually we'd make it to the door.

During the show, you could count on him being front row or close to it, taking it in properly. That was the point. Did the band deliver the goods? Dressed as a lobster or not, the music was what connected Marc to me and to so many of you.

Some people saw him as a bearded lobster god, and that's fine. Being larger than life cemented his

presence in the Western Canadian scene. But I could also see that beyond the suit and the joy he got from concerts, Marc was a single guy, and perhaps lonely in that part of his life. I didn't feel it was my place to pry. Still, it feels important to acknowledge that sometimes music becomes a confidant — even a friend — and while you can have many friends, that doesn't always fill every void.

The last time I saw Marc was about three weeks ago at the Buffalo Bud Buster show. I remember thinking: here's Marc, we're up front, BBB is playing. All is right in the world. In his notebook of gigs for 2025 — which listed a few hundred shows — this became the last one. The last time many of us saw him. All was right in the world.

Now there's another absence layered on top of



the others. Going to a show and not seeing him in line. Not hearing, "Hey Ryan."

I'm not sure there's a neat point to all of this. Maybe it's just this: everyone is carrying things they don't talk about, for many reasons. I am too. Never assume you know everything. More importantly, never assume everything is fine without asking. And if someone gives you even a small opening, try.

Bands will keep coming. Clutch will return, and it won't feel the same.

I'll scan the crowd and feel his absence. I'll think that no one here loved this band the way he did. The same will be true at countless other shows. It starts to feel hollow when the person who embodied that love for the music isn't there anymore.

RIP.

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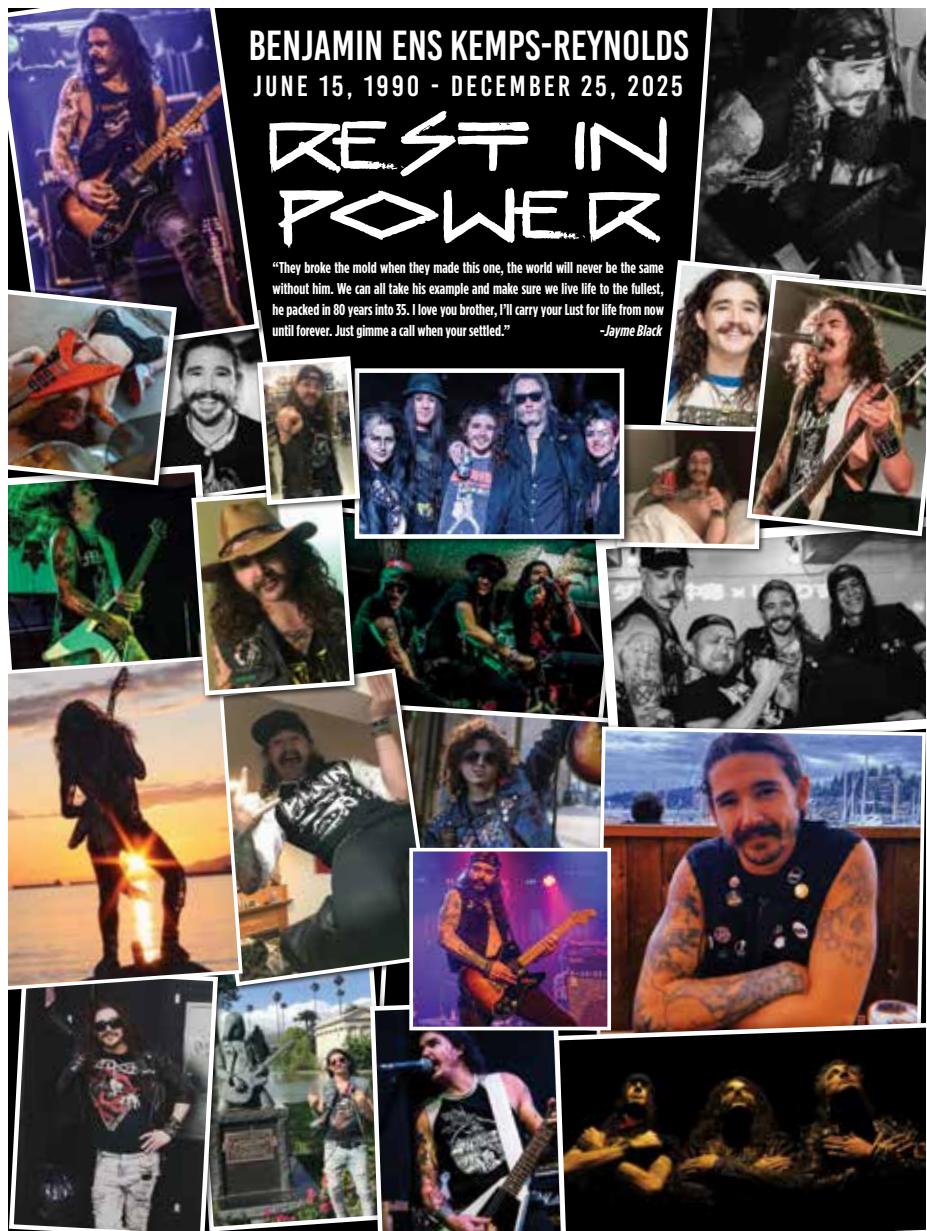
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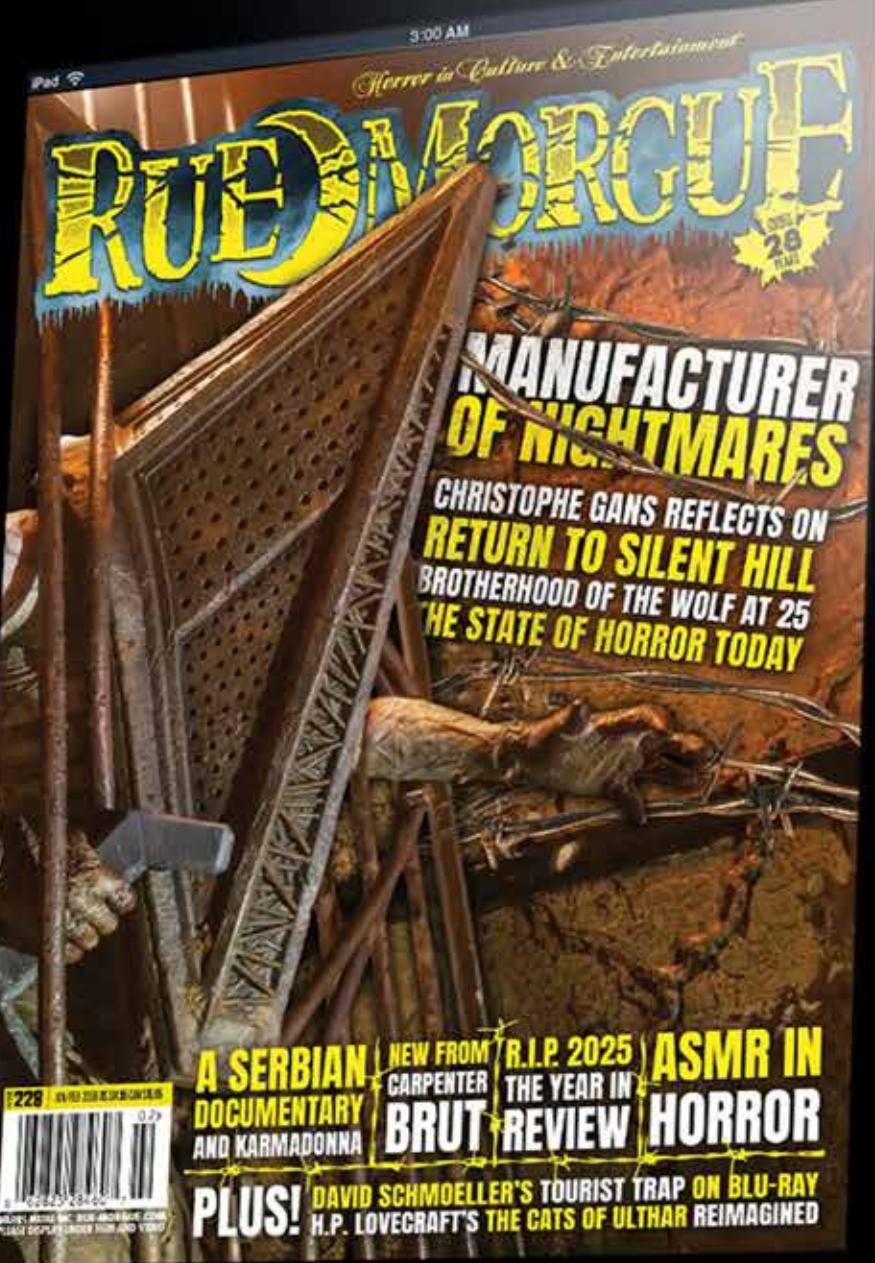
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