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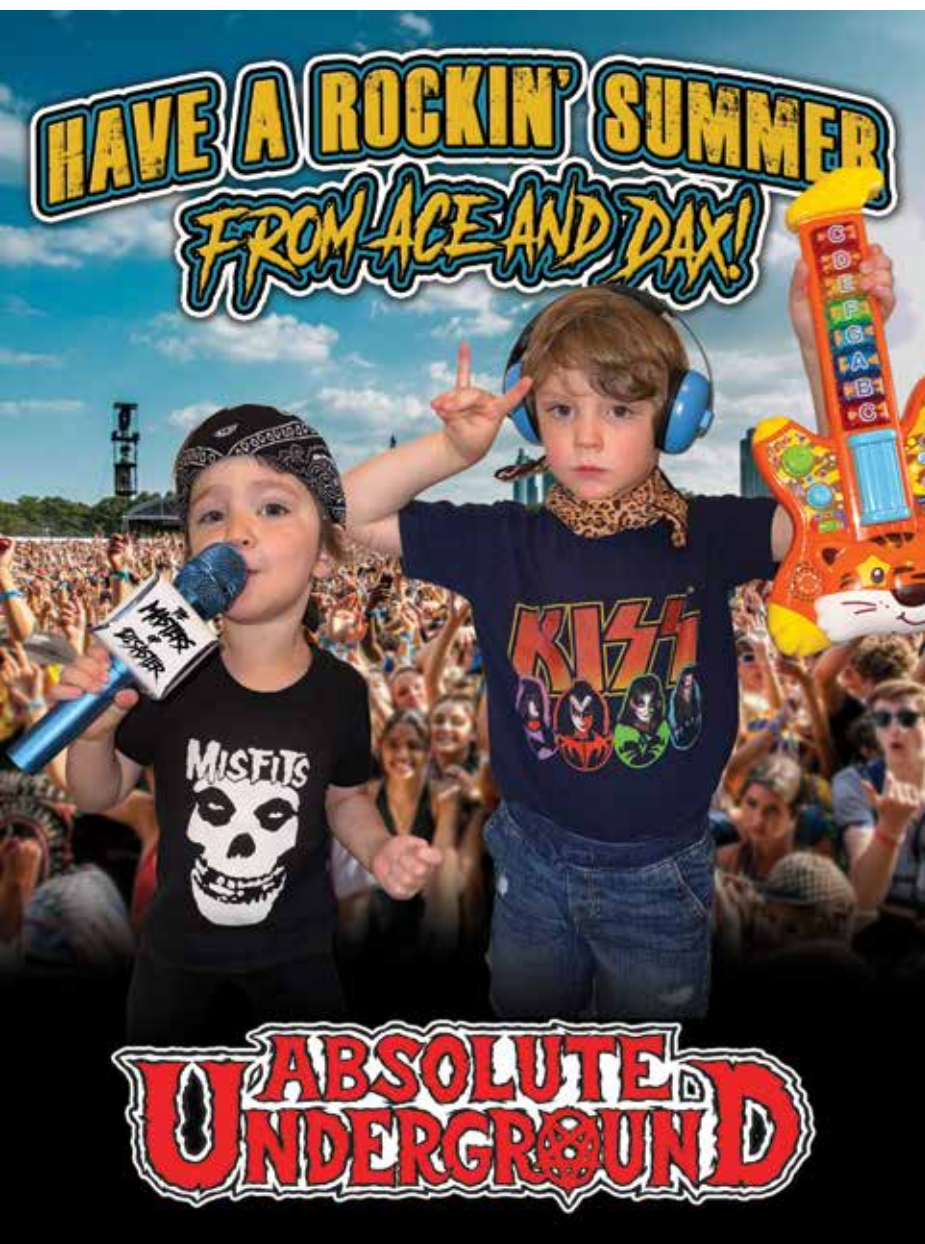


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THE OLDEST MAN I KNOW Victoria, BC

By John Carlow/Finding Charlotte Photography

Absolute Underground: Introduce yourselves.

The Oldest Man I Know: James Taylor (banjoer, mandocello enthusiast, frontman), Taylor Hart (resident bass slapper) and Natalie Jean (mandolins).

AU: Tell us how the band came together.

TOMIK: James Taylor has been playing music with friends for many years as "The Oldest Man I Know". Taylor Hart discovered them when he was hopping trains and has been a long-time listener of the band. A previous band member introduced the two when James moved to Victoria, and after getting to know each other, James inspired Taylor to pick up the double bass. Next thing he knew, he was in the band. Space opened in the band

after our fiddle player moved away, and so James turned to long-time "friend" Natalie Jean to fill the hole in the sound with the sound hole of her mandolin.

AU: The story behind the name?

TOMIK: The Oldest Man I Know is a description of frontman James Taylor. Once you get to know him, you'll understand.

AU: What kind of music do you play?

TOMIK: We play punk-inspired folk music. We're folk musicians who really like punk rock.

AU: Bands that inspired your sound?

TOMIK: Yes Ma'am, Holy Locust, Mama's Broke, Blackbird Raum, Rail Yard Ghosts, .357 String Band, Mischief Brew, Doom Scroll, Alexisonfire, NOFX, Paramore

AU: Creative process?

TOMIK: Divine inspiration coupled with iterative refinement. Brute force, stubbornness. Practice to a metronome. Prayers. Responsible drug use.

AU: What are your songs about?

TOMIK: The songs are about life. The songs are an honest attempt to find beauty in the life that we lead. Like many sad banjo-playing, train hopping folks before us, we've experienced a lot of sides of life and it all just kind of is. There are all these things that are seemingly contradictory, and yet they're all true at the same time. The songs are acceptance of how it is and laughing at the absurdity of it all whenever we're able.

AU: Have you recorded anything, and what are the plans for that?

TOMIK: We put out an EP called *Subcultural Appropriation* (we're folk musicians that dress like punks, get it?) in the summer of 2025, and we're in the process of releasing a cassette called *Di(dd)ed to Covid* that has all the songs from the Ontario iteration of the band (2018-2021). We are excited to record again once our coffers are sufficiently stuffed.

AU: Shout outs to the local scene?

TOMIK: Scout Shorefox.

AU: Unusual/Funny story from a live show?

TOMIK: James was booked for a show at The Fattal in Montreal while living in Toronto and decided to hop a train to get there. At the hop spot he ran into a couple of graffiti writers who were on day two of trying to hop a train to Montreal. They all caught a train that night and had breakfast together in the morning. Years later, when James and Natalie started hanging out, and he told her the story, Natalie had heard this already. She knew the writers from her life of petty vandalism.

VICTORIAS LOCALS ONLY

AU: The road ahead?

TOMIK: To keep having fun funning. That's what this is for us, the whole idea behind our show is to have so much fun that it's contagious to the audience. We're leaning into more upbeat major key songs and moving away from the sad songs. Isn't folk music about being as weird as possible?

AU: Final thoughts?

TOMIK: Eat your vegetables, stay weird, stay warm, ride freight, study math, veer away from



down, harsh live your dreams, touch grass, get a real job. Buy a tape player, come see us live, buy a tape. Support local, Free Palestine, 1312. And thank you so much for having us!

AU: Where can readers find your music?

TOMIK: Bandcamp, all major streaming services, and most importantly pick up CDs and cassettes from our live shows!

theoldestmaniknow.bandcamp.com

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THE VICIOUS CYCLES On Fire In The Hot Tub

By FLORA

The Vicious Cycles have been a steady presence in Vancouver's punk scene for years, known for their energetic live shows and the unfiltered sense of fun they bring to every set. AU caught up with the band to talk about music, life on the road and the summer festival season.

AU: Thanks for joining us in the *Underground!* For readers discovering The Vicious Cycles for the first time, how would you introduce the band and the wild ride that's brought you to this point?

We're a rock and roll band. We like to have a good time. We like to get a little bit loud. We like to ride our bikes into the club. Man, Tina at The Oasis in Cache Creek got mad last weekend. We're pals now. Maybe she'll ride in with me next year.

AU: Over the years, the band has built a reputation for unforgettable live shows—onstage banter, crowd interaction, minibike mayhem, low-budget pyrotechnics and the occasional flaming theremin included. How did that chaotic live energy become such a

defining part of your identity?

Thanks for saying that, we try to be what we'd like to see. I've got this core belief that being boring is a sin against the people around me. Call me any names you want, but if you call me boring, it'll cut pretty deep.

AU: The theremin adds a really unique element to both your sound and live show. What first inspired you to bring such an unconventional instrument into a garage punk setting?

That's Norman on the theremin. This band is built around him. Getting to hang out with that guy is sort of the reason the band started in the first place, and he didn't play any other instruments, so we had to come up with something. Then he started in on keys and the band would sound really thin without him, but I think we brought in theremin originally just to make it so he had to be in the band.

AU: *Get Wrecked* came out in September 2025 and really seemed to connect with people in the punk community. Looking back now, what do you feel that record captured best about where you were at creatively?

I (Billy - Guitar/Vocals) personally really like a couple of the mellow songs on there. I like "Black Boots", "Black Leather Jacket" and "Smoke 'Em If You Got 'Em". We had Kathleen Nesbitt on strings, and we were trying to do a Phil Spector wall of sound kind of thing. Jesse and Mariessa at Rain City have recorded our band so many times and they're total pros. They know what we're trying to do and they always make it sound better than it was in my head.

AU: Your songs have a real hook-heavy, singalong energy while still keeping that gritty edge. How do you balance catchy songwriting with the louder, messier side of things?

I'm a melody guy. I write most of the songs and I usually write them while riding or somewhere where I can be in my own head and write the melody and the chorus and then go find a guitar or a piano and figure out what chords work. The songs are generally based around a melody that gets stuck in my head. Nick, who plays the

fancy guitar parts always brings in songs ("Pull Start My Heart") and Rob will usually bring in a song too ("I'm Alive"). The process is a bit different when they bring songs in because I'm trying to figure out how to jump in on top of their ideas without wrecking them. Nick and I wrote "Hold On Tight" together in the back of the van on a trip, but we had it as basically a surf song. I think Ben (drums) came back with a different beat that changed the feeling of the song completely and really made it bang. Oh, but balancing catchiness with aggression, I don't know. That's what we're trying to do, so I'm glad that's what you're picking up.

AU: You've got a busy BC run lined up this spring and summer. The band seems built for the road—what keeps touring around BC and Western Canada exciting after all these years?

We really like being together. Because of the connection to motorcycles, we get invited out to some pretty cool stuff where we get to sing about our love for bikes to people who also love bikes.

AU: Summer festival season is right around the corner, which always seems to amplify the chaos and party atmosphere around punk rock bands—what changes for VC when performing in an open festival environment versus a traditional indoor venue?

My favourite is a small packed room. I prefer absolute chaos with some danger. We'll play anywhere. When we play inside we like to bring the bikes in with us.

AU: The band has always felt deeply rooted in the punk rock community and friendship. How important has that sense of camaraderie been to keeping things going over the years?

We were talking about that in the van today. Punk rock is our community and our heritage. It's what we know, and it's who knows us. I want a world where we cooperate with our common resources instead of this one where we compete for the scraps the power brokers leave us.

AU: Between the upcoming tour and inevitable

VANCOUVER VENGEANCE

onstage chaos, what's coming next for you guys, and where can readers stay connected online?

We've got plans in the works for Japan, Brazil and an Ontario/Quebec weekend. We're on social media. Please reach out and say hi. Tell us a story. Social Media is so artificial, but it rules when we get a message from someone who digs a song.

AU: The Vicious Cycles shows always seem like something unexpected is about to happen. What's one live moment that still sticks with you as perfectly capturing what the band is all about?

We try to have a moment every show where we connect with each other. I have off nights, and sometimes I'm in my head about how I'm playing, or something totally unrelated but the goal is to connect with each other every show. I also always try to make eye contact with every single person in the crowd at a show. I like to look around and fully experience the privilege that comes with playing music for people. Like when you look at a cat and try to tell it with your eyes how much you love it. I'm looking at people and trying to tell them how much I appreciate them spending this half an hour with us when it would have been so easy to just stay home and watch a little *Mork & Mindy* on Channel 37.

I also really like to climb stuff, get on top of stuff, knock stuff over, ride our minibike into the club and through the crowd while Jimmy (Driver/Regulator) plays guitar for me.

UPCOMING SHOWS:

June 13 - Victoria, BC @ Wheelies Motorcycles

July 24 - Cumberland, BC @ Masonic Hall

July 25 - Ucluelet, BC @ ANAF Hall

theviciouscycles.bandcamp.com

Photo credit: Monique Sache



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

Haiduk: I am Haiduk. Death metal solo project from Calgary. I focus on fast riffs and evil melodies.

AU: *Archdevil* revisits the nine demons first introduced in *Demonicon*. What made this the right moment to return to those entities, and how did expanding their lore influence the intensity and structure of the new songs?

Haiduk: The demons have always been the central theme. In *Demonicon*, there were nine songs for nine demon lords. Over the next two albums, two new demon lords entered the realm of Callost. One is the Archdevil himself, the Darkener – god of all demons. The other is a reincarnation of the human King Arias, turned into a sinister devil by black magic. It was the right time to strengthen the existing nine entities and introduce two new ones. Just like the demons have been battling, getting angrier and getting better at slaughtering humans, so has Haiduk gotten angrier and better at delivering relentless riffs.

angrier and better at delivering relentless riffs.

AU: You've said *Archdevil* "doubles down" on everything Haiduk stands for. What specific musical or production decisions pushed this album to be even more aggressive and hypnotic than your previous releases?

Haiduk: I tried to write faster and more energetic riffs to create a sense of constant urgency, adding more variations, fills and pattern changes in a shorter amount of time. Recording endlessly until deformed takes from the deepest pits of

hell manifest. It's non-stop speed and heaviness, which Haiduk has always stood for, packed even more densely.

AU: The world of Callost has grown across multiple albums. With tracks like "Darkener" and "Usurper" tied to major figures in the lore, how do you balance storytelling with maintaining the relentless pace your music is known for?

Haiduk: The music is the main focus and drives everything. Once a song is written, it takes on a character and starts to invoke thoughts of something like a fire or an earthquake, so a fire or earth demon becomes the theme. The demons are constantly at war, annihilating humans with relentless attacks. The music embodies that mindset of endless battle and aggression.

AU: As a one-man band performing live with pre-recorded drums and bass, how do you translate the chaotic, constantly shifting patterns of *Archdevil* into a live setting without losing the album's overwhelming intensity?

Haiduk: I get into a focused state of mind where time stops, and I become the song. Rehearsal, practice, staying in time with the drum machine and anticipating transitions. I try to play with a lot of attack and precision, so the energy and momentum of a song translates to the crowd.

AU: You've evolved from melodic death metal roots into a fusion of blackened death and



death-thrash. What aspects of your sound on *Archdevil* feel like a culmination of that evolution, and what parts hint at where Haiduk might go next?

Haiduk: Over the years, I've played and tried playing different types of riffs, drums, fills, etc. and different song structures, and now I have a lot of weapons in my arsenal when writing new music. I use my experience to make the songs more crushing and impactful. When coming up with material, I always try to conjure something darker and more sinister than before.

Check out Haiduk – *Archdevil*
haiduk.bandcamp.com
haiduk.ca

HAIDUK: Enter the Archdevil

By Asher Thrasher

Calgary's Haiduk continues to push deeper into blackened death metal territory with *Archdevil*, an album built around relentless speed, dark atmosphere and the expanding demon lore of Callost.

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LIVE MUSIC

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- Wed June 10 Me The Guts, Zerchronika, Hangxiety 7PM 18+ THE BUCKINGHAM
- Fri June 12 Fools, Shorefox, Ashton Bachman, Blake Trouper 9PM 18+ BLAKBAR
- Sun June 14 Jessikah Babe and the Hey! What's That? w/ Kip Lily 6PM ALL AGES BLAKBAR
- Fri June 26 The Knot No Howz CD release party 8PM 18+ BLAKBAR
- Sat June 27 Satans Crack Den, Danger Box, Grizzly Trail, Red Lenses 8PM ALL AGES BLAKBAR
- Sun June 28 For the Love Of Music: Featuring- Racing To Red Lights, Haunt The Stars, Pixie 8PM ALL AGES BLAKBAR
- Fri July 10 Look Out!, Molassacre, Radio Receiver 9PM 18+ BLAKBAR
- Sat July 11 No Idea w/ The Seasonal Hires, Drive Inn 5PM 18+ THE BUCKINGHAM
- Mon July 13 The Orvald Wayne Show w. Ringo & Wall & Kanopy 7PM ALL AGES AVIARY
- Sat July 18 Orchid Orchestra, Chic Chameleon, Robin Cisek 9PM 18+ BLAKBAR

FOLLOW FOR MORE INFO @Getustothetmusic

Edmonton, AB



DEATH TOLL RISING

Interview by Hatcheface

Death Toll Rising is a death metal act from Edmonton, AB dating back to 2003. After over a decade of playing and touring all over Western Canada (sharing the stage with such acts as Cryptopsy, Kataklysm, Therion, Aborted, Unleash The Archers, Obscura, The Haunted, Archspire, just to name a few), releasing an EP (*Spontaneous Decapitation* in 2008) and two full length albums (*Defecation Suffocation* in 2010, *Infection Legacy* in 2013) the band went on a hiatus/dissolved in 2016. Now slating to make an exciting return at Loud as Hell festival in Drumheller, AB this August long weekend for a full performance, DTR is ready to crush heads once again!

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to, and what is your role in Death Toll Rising?

Drew Copland: My name is Drew Copland, guitarist and one of the founding members of the band.

AU: Who is DTR currently made up of?

DC: The current lineup consists of just where we left off in 2016 with myself (Realm of Death, formerly of Culled, The Order of Chaos), vocalist and other founding member Jesse Berube, Drummer Bryan Newbury (Untimely Demise, Anomalyptic, formerly of Into Eternity, Culled, Sadistic Embodiment, many more), guitarist Tylor Dory (TDT, Quietus, Skepsis), and bassist Mike Puff (formerly of Idolatry, Sonorous Odium).

AU: How would you describe your sound to someone who has never listened to DTR before?

DC: We are quite a mix of various extreme styles, our collective influences are vast. Sonically very similar to 90s Carcass, At the Gates, Death, etc, but also very heavily influenced by all the mainstay thrash legends of the 80s. Elements of melodic death metal, OSDM, tech death, thrash, and even prog woven throughout. It has sometimes been difficult to nail down a fan base as well, not brutal enough for the slam kids, not tech enough for tech kids, not trad enough for the patch vest kids haha.

AU: Loud as Hell festival in Drumheller, AB is creeping in quickly and you guys are on the bill on Saturday. How did that happen?

DC: Reuniting for this performance at Loud As Hell was a matter of all of the pieces just falling into place.

Back in 2016, our vocalist Jesse had given us notice that he would be leaving the band. We had been going very hard since 2013 and the release of *Infection Legacy* griding around Western Canada and elevating ourselves to be a name that people recognized. The rest of us had sort of agreed to use Jesse's departure as an opportunity to take some down time, and have a few months off before searching for a replacement vocalist and working on new material. However, that small hiatus basically never ended. I like to say that we never did break up, we just never started again.

Fast forward many years later and some unrelated collaborations had a couple of us very casually

discussing the band again, no real plans in place, just conversation. Also, in 2023 Bryan had put on a show in Edmonton dubbed the 'Deadmonton Family Renunion' which featured many legacy bands in the city. His band, Sadistic Embodiment was playing, and he reached out to the rest of us to see if we wanted to have a 'surprise' performance during their set. We all agreed to it, and much to my surprise, it popped off like crazy! Just playing 1 song, it was a great reminder of what we had accomplished in the past and that people had not forgotten us. Even though that did not lead directly to anything afterwards, it was a catalyst of sorts for where we are now.

I can't remember which of us had first brought it up, but we tabled the idea of having a full reunion set for LAH 2026, and unanimously we were all on board. We had played LAH as DTR twice in the past, and most of us have played there in the subsequent years with various other projects or attended just as fans many times. We absolutely love Geoff and the festival so it was a no brainer to approach him with the idea of hosting this comeback set.

AU: Anything further you'd like to share with your fans and supporters?

When the LAH announcement livestream was happening and they got to our section, Geoff had taken some serious time to build us up and when he mentioned our name the chat literally blew up! We want to say big thanks to all our old fans and friends who are still stoked. One Edmonton local band, Santorum recently did a cover of one of our songs, which I never thought I'd ever experience haha, so shout out to those boys for being real ones.

SHR-EDMONTON

The hype has been real, the fan reaction has been humbling, and the excitement within the band has been incredibly motivating. So now exactly 10 years after our last official performance, we are ready to show everyone once again how DTR brings it!



deathtollrising.bandcamp.com/music

youtube.com/dtrmetal

Instagram: [deathtollrising](https://instagram.com/deathtollrising)

Facebook: [Death Toll Rising](https://facebook.com/DeathTollRising)



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

Paige Drobot: Hello from Winnipeg! My name is Paige Drobot and I pay my bills by teaching 40–50 guitar lessons a week.

AU: For our unfamiliar readers, please give us a brief history of yourself and your musical career to date.

PD: I started writing, performing and recording, producing/engineering music at 12 years old. I've had a lot of opportunities to play, record and travel with awesome bands but I am much happier when I am with my own band playing my own music. It's a lot less work, even though it is 100% more work because I manage everything.

AU: Who is in your band?

Paige Drobot: My best friends Adam and Derek Cherpako!

AU: If possible, describe your musical sound/style for our readers.

Paige Drobot: I write whatever I feel like writing, usually in one shot. I'm a nerd and have studied a lot of different

songwriters and music, and I'll try anything if I have something to say.

As far as the live show goes, I guess I play a lot of guitar. I am probably pushing 65% of the show

being improvised guitar depending on what songs we play the night you catch us. The songs I write are already on the therapeutic side for me, so to get to also let go and see where music needs to go, what needs to be expressed that day—without words—is an amazing bonus.

AU: The music video for "Alien Girl" came out in 2024 and blew us away! Any plans for a new music video anytime soon?

Paige Drobot: I'm glad you liked it! I'm not a great model or actress so I figured greening myself and going to an open grocery store would take the edge off. It feels weird to be on camera, unless I am playing a gig, then I don't even notice at all and it turns out cool. I'll make something when I finish the new record!

AU: Tell us about your upcoming tour—where are you going and who's coming with you?

Paige Drobot: We have been meaning to get out to BC since two records ago! BC college/community radio has been kind to me. We got sidetracked from Canadian touring on the Alien Girl / The Clog, 7" release because our friend French Class asked us to come home to Japan with them and play a bunch of gigs there last year. Turns out they like CDs there, so I have a box of records to sling across Canada.

UPCOMING SHOWS:

July 30 in Kelowna at DunnEnzie's with Suburban Alienation and Aka Daisy

July 31 in Vancouver at Green Auto with Never Plenty, WACK and Deaf Dogs

Aug 1 in Victoria at The Phoenix Bar with Wet Souls and BadState

Aug 2 in Nanaimo at The Queens with Rare Earth Magnet

paigedrobot.bandcamp.com

Photo Credit: Amilia Fehr



PAIGE DROBOT: Live, Loud and Unscripted

By Ray MacKay

PAIGE DROBOT

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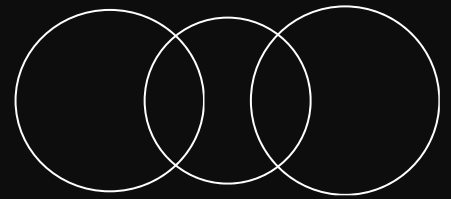
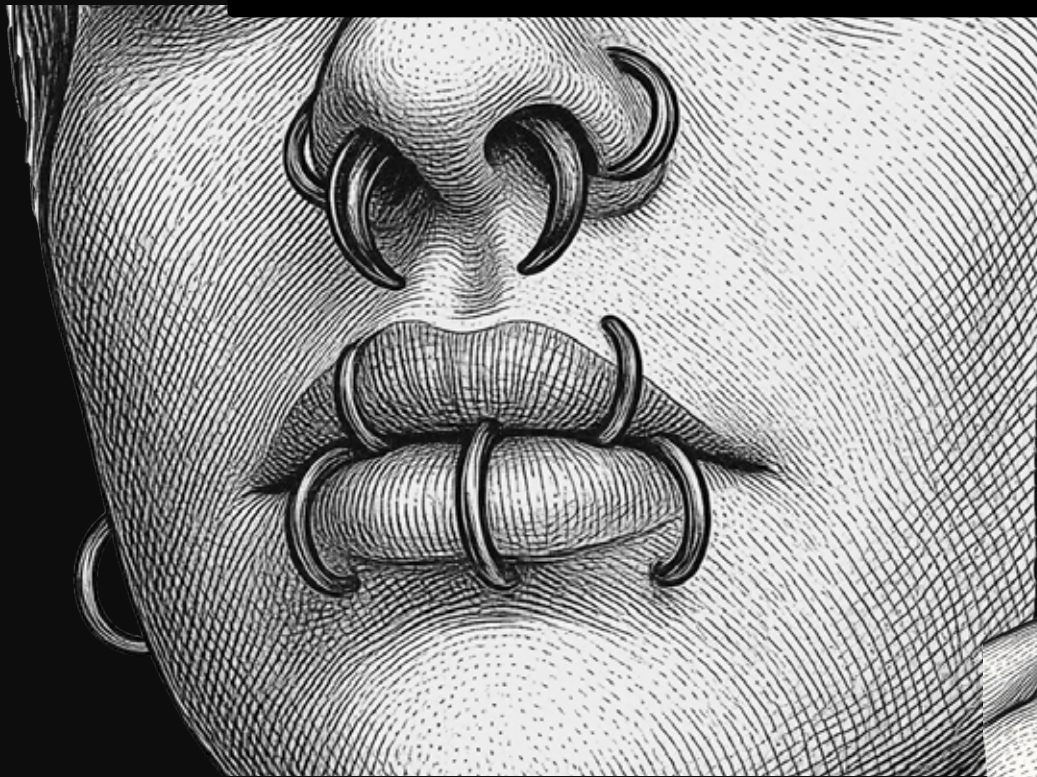


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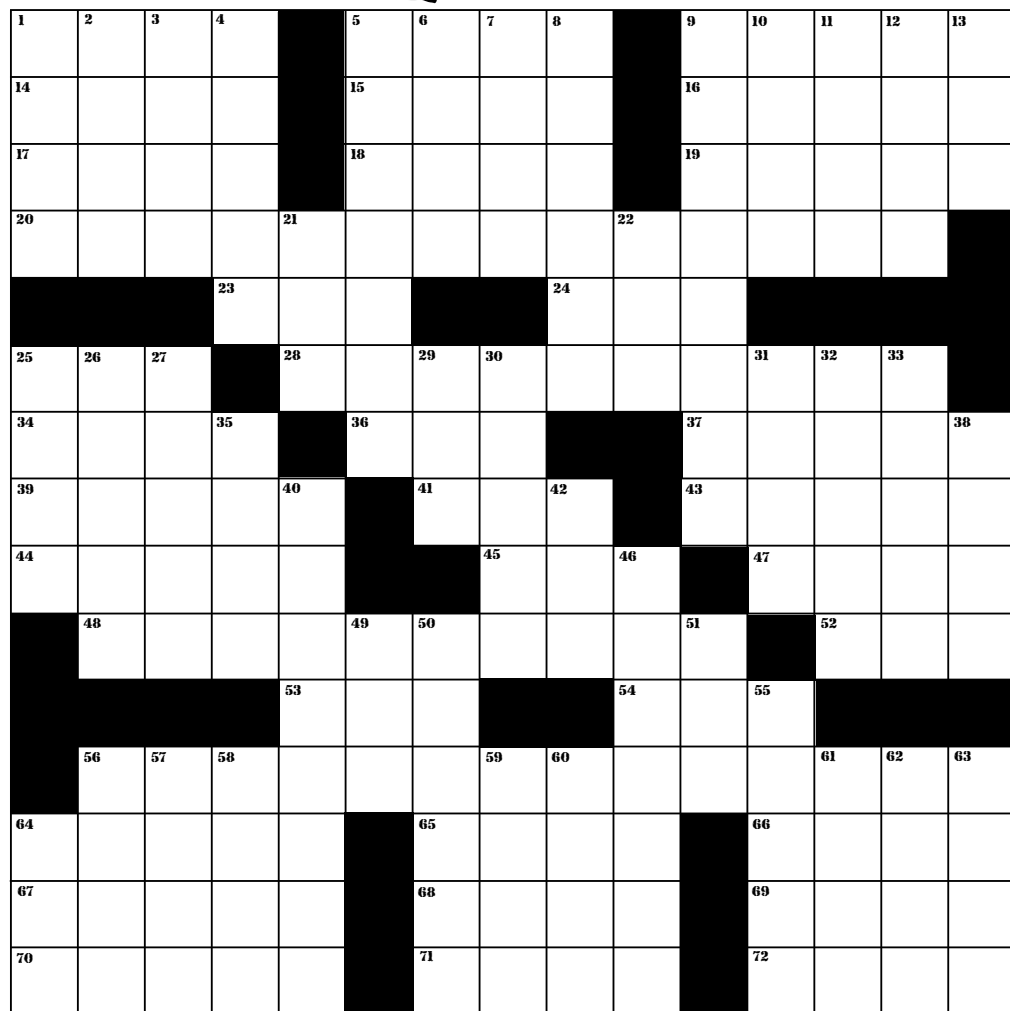
ACROSS

1. Take a ____ at
5. Some have antlers, others have funny hats
9. *With 70-across, Iggy Stooze looking for a reaction?
14. Actor Jonah
15. When tripled, a Damned song
16. Chocolatey sandwiches
17. "The Final Countdown" group
18. Eat fancy
19. Zola
20. *Misfits song about an aerie?
23. They create lineups at US airports
24. Bruce or Brandon's last name
25. Phone function
28. *How a Winnipeg band shows that Druids are welcome?
34. One way to play a bass
36. The roots of reggae
37. It was known for its catalogue
39. "Black Cauldron" bad guy
41. Staple of Nine Inch Nails shows
43. "____ Recall"
44. Book beginning
45. Popular 80's gaming platform
47. "99 Luftballons" singer
48. *UK Subs warning that your doll may be spying on you?

52. Grave initials
53. Popular web portal
54. Centre for withdrawals
56. *Ramones song about old Punks at shows?
64. Slanted
65. One way to order food
66. Angry
67. Actress Zellweger
68. Tesla boss
69. Edging
70. *See 9-across
71. Bosses
72. Sound prefix

DOWN

1. Canadian telecom giant
2. Morticia to Gomez
3. "I cannot tell ____"
4. Movie mall cop
5. Makes someone well-liked
6. Princess of Alderaan



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SPRING, 2026

7. Marvel villain
8. First name of a Belgian beer
9. Ignores the advice of Horace Greeley?
10. "____ la Douce"
11. Only female Israeli PM
12. Fantastic Four villain ____ Man
13. Compass point
21. Thinking outside the box?
22. Hosp. test
25. Italian wine region
26. Backup
27. First step of 26-down?
29. Gives the green light
30. Go to great ____
31. 1990's Chrysler compact
32. Persistent, negative person
33. Resident of Tehran
35. "The Incredibles" family name

38. Word with happy or chop
40. "Shut up and play!"
42. Homer's neighbour
46. Adds a little spice
49. Charged particle
50. Really happy
51. Absorbed a loss
55. You might find the Jolly Roger at the top of one
56. aka the Santa Monica Freeway
57. A ____ and a prayer
58. Sheltered from the wind
59. A cowboy's tie
60. One of the Ghostbusters
61. Bull in Barcelona
62. Ms. Brockovich
63. Band's musical calling card?
64. Football coach Parseghian



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★ OFFICER LUCIFER ★



Blending metal, punk, grunge, and Latin rhythmic elements, "Far From Right" continues the project's genre-defying approach while deepening its ongoing dystopian mythology. Within OFFICER LUCIFER's narrative universe, engineered hybrid beings rise up against their creators — a fictional framework that mirrors real-world cycles of control, corruption, and resistance.

Musically, the song is driven by crushing riffs, volatile rhythms, and Hamilton's unmistakable vocal delivery. His presence adds an extra layer of intensity to a track that functions

as both protest and provocation. Rather than relying on slogans, "Far From Right" delivers its message through raw aggression and sharp lyrical commentary, tackling themes of moral decay, consumer culture, and performative outrage.

The single was recorded across multiple locations in Ecuador, California, and Austin, Texas, reflecting the project's international and boundary-free identity. Production was handled by OFFICER LUCIFER, with mixing and mastering completed by Jim Kaufman, resulting in a sound that is both polished and ferocious.

At its core, OFFICER LUCIFER is more than a conventional band. Operating as a creative collective, the project is shaped by Pancho Tomaselli (bass), David Coloma (guitars), and Andrés Benavides (drums), whose combined backgrounds span diverse scenes

OFFICER LUCIFER Releases New Single "Far From Right" Featuring Page Hamilton of HELMET

OFFICER LUCIFER has returned with a powerful new single, "Far From Right," featuring Page Hamilton of legendary alt-metal band HELMET. The track is a confrontational blast of heavy sound and social critique, aimed squarely at complacency, manufactured outrage, and hollow authority.



and musical traditions. Together, they craft an aggressive and immersive sonic world that rejects easy categorization.

Since their debut single "Uncivil War," OFFICER LUCIFER has built a reputation for pairing heavy music with cinematic storytelling. Each release expands a larger mythos in which hybrid soldiers and militarized identities serve as symbols of rebellion and unity in a collapsing system.

With "Far From Right," OFFICER LUCIFER offers no comfort and no easy answers. Instead, the track

stands as a warning and a challenge — urging listeners to question systems of control and resist the culture of apathy.

Connect with OFFICER LUCIFER:

Website: officerlucifer.com

Bandcamp: officerlucifer.bandcamp.com

Instagram: [instagram.com/officer.lucifer](https://www.instagram.com/officer.lucifer)

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BENT WIND

'60s Toronto Band Mints Record Collector Gold

By Merv Buchanan

In the 1960s, Toronto was ground zero for hundreds of bands of all stripes trying to make their mark in the Canadian music business. In the crowded Yorkville village, long haired musicians in tie dyed shirts, bell bottoms and sandals, among them Joanie Mitchell and Neil Young, played folk-rock. Down on Yonge Street, Ronnie Hawkins and The Hawks, led by drummer Levon Helm, drew sellout crowds night after night to the popular Le Coq D'or tavern with their hard driving juke joint music. And across the city, in bars, school gyms and dance halls, talented bands like Roy Kenner & The Associates, The Rogues and The Checkmates, sporting matching suits and blow dried hair, filled dance floors with their funky, American style rhythm & blues. Music was everywhere, but precious little of it was original.

Meanwhile, in a smoky basement, deep in the student ghetto on Sussex Avenue, something different was happening. Four teenage musicians barely out of high school had rejected the mainstream music of the day and decided to go their own way. Instead of duplicating the sound of the popular bands of the world, they were creating their own way to rock. The music, the melodies and the subject matter were fresh, exciting, different.

At the centre of this adventure were childhood friends Martin Rosenthal, aka Marty Roth and Gerard "Gerry" Gibas, both eager to prove that their original, "outside the box" music had a place in the world. But two guitarists by themselves wouldn't cut it. To make a meaningful impact, they needed to form a band. There was no shortage of musicians in the neighborhood, so they were soon able to recruit bass player Sebastian "Sudsy" Pelia and drummer Eddie

Thomas. With help from family and friends they were able to pull together some decent equipment and soon the new un-named band was ready to rock.

Finding a suitable name had the members scratching their heads until someone noticed how the sweet smelling smoke filling the basement floated back and forth, rising toward the ceiling like a bent wind. That was it. Bent Wind became the band's name. Now the band needed enough songs to fill a show. This challenge fell to Marty and Gerry.

Marty: "Gerry and I had been writing songs together for years, so it wasn't too hard to come up with material. Once we arranged our songs for a band it was easy to teach them to Eddie and Sudsy. But getting a tight sound turned out to be tougher than we had imagined. But we managed it. More or less. Next, we had to face an even bigger challenge. Playing in public."

"Our early bookings were at university frat houses and loosely organized 'happenings'. At first, audiences used to Top 40 music were taken aback by our 'DIY' music. But word soon spread that Bent Wind, this weird band 'on its own trip', was worth a listen. Amazingly, we began to get a following. We played everywhere we could get a gig. The pay was terrible, but we didn't care. We were learning how to perform on stage and perfect our songs. Then, out of the blue, the unthinkable happened. We got an offer to record an album."

Merv Buchanan: "I started Trend Records in 1965 with the release of a single by Roy Kenner and The Associates, a popular Toronto R'n'B band. To build the label, I routinely visited dances, 'battle of the band' contests and other events, looking for talent. But bands playing their own songs were hard to find. Then, at a music festival in 1969, I came across Bent Wind, a weird band led by a skinny, red-headed guitar player wearing a cowboy hat. They were amazing. Really 'out there'. After their third song I knew they were something special. They didn't play anyone else's music. Every song was original. Every song worked. I had to record them."

Marty Roth: "After a music festival, this guy in a trench coat approached us in the parking lot. At first, we thought he was a cop. But when he introduced himself as the owner of Trend Records, a record label with its own studio in nearby West Hill, we quickly changed our tune. We were stunned when he then offered us a recording contract. And when he said that he was only interested in original music, that was all we had to hear.

The next day, he came to our rehearsal room with

a contract. Now 'Trend Recording Artists', we really had to get our act together."

For two months, the four musicians huddled in the basement preparing Marty and Gerry's songs for recording. Compared to the songs on the radio, theirs were raw and simple. That meant that every note had to be just right. In September, the studio was booked and the band was as ready as they were ever going to be.

Marty: "We had never seen the inside of a recording studio and knew nothing about the recording process. We quickly learned that playing in a recording studio was more difficult than playing onstage. The guitars and bass were connected directly to the mixing board, so we could only hear them on headphones. That was tough to get used to. Trying to synchronize our vocals while listening to our recorded tracks on headphones was worse. But we persevered and over two days, nine songs were recorded."

Gerry: "When we first heard the playback on the control room speakers, we couldn't believe it was us. We were laughing, jumping around and imagining ourselves as rock stars. After we'd had a smoke and calmed down, we decided to name the album 'Sussex' in honour of the street where we had worked so hard rehearsing it."

The *Sussex* album was soon mastered, pressed and packaged in a black and gold jacket featuring Sudsy's cool artwork. Copies were shipped to selected radio stations across Canada and the US. Trend Records followed up with dozens of promotional letters and phone calls. Radio stations were unimpressed. Programmers called *Sussex* "weird" or "too far out for radio". It did get some airplay on college radio stations and "alternative music" stations gave it a few spins. A few boxes were sold at Toronto head shops. Then the album quietly disappeared, like the smoke in the basement on Sussex Avenue.

Merv: "I wanted so much for Bent Wind to be Trend's breakthrough act. I put all of our limited resources into trying to make it happen, but it wasn't to be."

However, few Toronto bands in the '60s had an

TORONTO TRASH

album out. And because Bent Wind rarely performed in public, *Sussex* and its creators developed an unusual mystique which continues to this day.

Years later, things changed dramatically. *Sussex* by Bent Wind became a "must have" LP among serious record collectors around the world. Boutique labels in Canada, the UK and Europe negotiated deals with Trend Records to release limited pressings in their markets. To the band's dismay, bootleg versions of the album began surfacing. Excited promoters invited the now disbanded group to perform at psychedelic music festivals in the USA and Europe. Marty was keen to go, Trend Records was prepared to help with the costs. But Gerry, now living in Victoria, wasn't up to it. Eddie and Sudsy, with busy careers, homes and families, weren't interested.

However, Trend Records, in partnership with US music publisher Whirled Music, tapped into a lucrative market licensing vintage recordings for use in movies, television shows and commercials. And the recordings most in demand were by Bent Wind. Suddenly, Marty and Gerry's songs began to generate unexpected royalty income, what songwriters call "mailbox money".

Sussex is often described by the record collecting crowd as "collector gold", "the record collector's holy grail" or "the greatest psychedelic album ever". Mint copies now routinely sell for as much as \$5,000 US, making it the most collectible Canadian record in history. Long overdue validation for a band experts had written off because their music style, a precursor of grunge music, was out of sync with prevailing tastes. Perhaps Bent Wind was way ahead of its time. But for songwriters Marty Roth and the late Gerry Gibas, their creative efforts have finally paid off.

Merv Buchanan

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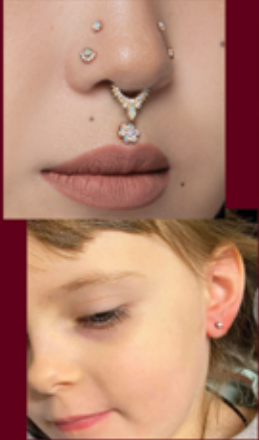
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Absolute Underground: Introduce yourself.

Scout Shorefox: I'm Scout Shorefox (they/them). Currently a solo project under my last name and previously a part of folk punk group Ferocious Timbre Mouse. I live part time on Salt Spring Island and the rest of the time I'm out on the road getting back and forth to gigs.

AU: When did you start as Shorefox?

SS: I think the first show I played as Shorefox was in 2022. It was slow going for a while and it's only been the past two years that I've been going at it mostly full time.

AU: Someone asks what kind of music you play.

SS: I usually sigh and run my fingers through my hair and stammer something about it being some sort of post punk folk rock. Recently I've been going with "punk fusion" since that seems to be broad enough to include what I'm playing. It's folky, bluesy punk.

AU: Not touring, what do you do on SSI?

SS: I am lucky enough to be getting by (scraping by really) on the music. In the past I've worked in construction, medical care, transportation, and assorted things. Right now, it's just the music. I try to treat it as a 9-5 and put in my hours scouting

new opportunities.

AU: What music did you grow up on?

SS: I grew up in a fundamental Baptist household and the music we listened to was either Canadiana Celtic traditional or southern gospel. I enjoyed both and found early that I had a good voice for gospel. I even ended up singing with some friends in a barbershop quartet in my early teens.

AU: From there?

SS: After I left home at 15 I found metal music and was fairly fixated on that genre until I ended up working for Much Music as a travelling video DJ for dance parties. Two years of that ruined any appreciation I had for music in general.

At 18, my mother bought me a Fender to help with a hand injury I had sustained years prior. I had overstrained the tendons in my left hand and couldn't open it more than an inch or two.

At 22, I ended up cutting an EP for a street band I had met in Halifax using a donated studio and became good friends with one of the members. We got on well and ended up living on Salt Spring Island the next winter. We started a band quickly. I started out playing electric bass but my hand mobility still held me back. My bandmate suggested I try a washtub bass. With a donated washtub, baling twine, a broom handle and a generous dose of LSD, I ended up finding my groove and Ferocious Timbre Mouse had a bass player.

I also started spending time daily with the guitar and by the time the band fell apart in 2016 I could play well enough to keep up with a slow jam.

It wasn't until I met that band on the street in Halifax that I had any interest in music anymore. Something about the raw reality of people strumming banjos, blowing on jugs and thumping tubs woke up that childlike appreciation for emotive art in me and I was hooked on the folk punk genre.

AU: What's on stage with you when you sit

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down to do a show?

SS: I mainly play rhythm guitar these days but I have a passable ability with most stringed instruments. My understanding of open tuning opened a lot of doors in that regard and I love picking up new instruments to tune them to something that is intuitive for me.

I upgraded my guitar and added high-quality locking guitar strap pins. My guitar is a one-of-a-kind mystery machine. At a friend's house four years ago I saw this black guitar with a strange oval hole in it and I was instantly in love. It had rusty strings and was covered in dust. I picked it up and tuned it to open D and started playing some riffs. I was hooked on its character. The prior owner says he bought it in a pawn shop in Brooklyn in the 1970's. Apparently, he offered it up to folk, but no one wanted it.

AU: What are your songs about?

SS: It's a mix of calls for social justice, personal responsibility and what happens when you live your life outside of society's strictures.

AU: Story from a live performance?

SS: The very first show my old band played, our lead singer and our guitarist had a disagreement on stage before we started. They left to work out their differences backstage, but that left me and our backup singer standing in front of some 60 people that didn't know what was going on. Our singer chose to leave too and not knowing what else to do, I sang a version of Spike Jones's "Man on the Flying Trapeze" to thunderous applause. It's not exactly suited for solo performance, but I made it work and we all had a good laugh about it. The band came back and we had a good show. One of my favourite memories is stripping multiple layers of clothing off repeatedly during a Burning Man event festival to increasingly thunderous applause.

AU: Where are you playing these days?

SS: I put on about six shows a month. This summer I'll be in Winnipeg, Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, Edmonton, Calgary, Toronto, London, Hamilton and a lot of places in between.

AU: What goes into planning a tour?

SS: The weeks I'm not out I'm spending 6-10 hours a day researching new venues, networking new contacts and leveraging the ones I already have to find ways to make shows affordable and accessible.

For the past year it has mostly been me traveling to gigs, but I just partnered with Ashton Bachman on Salt Spring Island to play about six shows a month together and split travel costs. Our plan is to carry that forward for the next eight months or so. Ashton is Randy Bachman's grandson; Tal Bachman's kid. We get on great together and have complimentary styles. He's a fantastically talented musician and puts me to shame with his guitar chops and ability to hold various beats on his traveling drum set up.

We love little towns and venues so our hope is to bring some good vibrations to communities that might not otherwise experience something like us. We are purchasing our own sound system so hopefully that opens more doors.

AU: What have you recorded?

SS: I recorded a solo album called *Some Songs* with a friend in 2022 and I'm re-releasing one song from that record on my upcoming album, *I Wanna Build a Tank* set for July 2026.

AU: Where can people find your music?

SS: Bandcamp has been a great option and I appreciate it, but you can always message me directly! Or if you do the streaming thing, *Build A Tank* will be available on everything except Spotify sometime in July.

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WAX MANNEQUIN

Interview with Hamilton's Chris Adeney
By B.A. Johnston and Ira Hunter

AU: What are you infamous for?

I write and tour heavy, strange folk & art-punk songs – many sonic stops between. I've been at it for a good while so I've gone through lots of phases. Some people know me for the candles; I sell them and sometimes I wear them. Some people bring me chains that I wear. There are plenty of other stories but mostly I'm infamous for songs.

AU: Give us a brief history of Wax Mannequin.

In about 1998 I was playing bass with a Hamilton prog rock band called Golden Lake Diner (a long-retired early Sonic Union act). We had a weekly gig at a 2nd floor dive bar called Polo's. We'd get



part because back then I looked kind of statue-esque while playing. I added the wax part because I was reading about Descartes and he had some things to say about wax. I was also in art school making things out of melted wax. I still like to make candles and stuff. Shortly after that I recorded my first album. Then my friend started booking tours for me. For about 15 years I toured in Canada pretty steadily, some in Australia and a bunch in Europe. 8 albums. These days I still keep pretty busy with family, other work and weekend gigs around Ontario, occasional festivals and hard touring most summers.

AU: Describe your sound and lyrics if possible.

The prog and metal influences from my early band days often show up in my songwriting – even a lot of quiet, acoustic stuff. These days I have a much heavier sound though – either with my band, or using my grimey 8-bit sequences pumping through

everyone jumping and the owner would come upstairs to yell at us because plaster was falling from the kitchen ceiling. Some nights I'd open the show with weird fingerstyle tunes on my classical. A bandmate of mine suggested the mannequin

my old Traynor PA. The words start as things that get stuck in my mind while doing menial tasks – washing dishes and whatnot. Sometimes the lyrics are a bit funny at first and then take darker turns as I dig in. Sometimes what I do gets called absurdism or satire; other times the subversiveness goes unnoticed.

AU: Have you released an album recently?

I put out my last record in 2023. I'll be playing a lot of the songs from it on this tour. The album is called *The Red Brain* and there are a few brain-related tunes. I'm working on a new album (a couple, actually) and will be road-testing this material as well as playing some older anti-hits from my back catalogue. I've been writing songs about glass lately. Maybe I'll have a single out by the time I hit the road, or shortly thereafter.

AU: Sex, Drugs, or Rock 'n Roll?

I'm here for a good time. Wish I could say it was just for the money.

AU: What's your favourite sub shop in town and what's your go to order?

Atlantic Subs. The one that used to be on Sherman and King a couple decades back. Fuck. Cold cuts. White cheese. Lettuce, tomatoes, onion, mustard, sub sauce, sub sauce.

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

I had a bunch of old black work pants and I cut the legs off of them. Lately I wear those with boots. Was I not supposed to do that? I can't keep up.

HAM JAMMERS



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

Time Bandits, The Reflecting Skin, The Quiet Earth, Planes, Trains and Automobiles.

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

Usually my 2012 Kia Rio – the hatch is stuck down though. Looks like The Kettle Black and I are buying a used cargo van or something for this run. I'll keep watching those gas prices with trepidation.

AU: Any upcoming shows or tours?

The Kettle Black and I will be on tour in Canada pretty much all summer. In July we're hitting the East Coast and throughout August we'll be going West and back. 35 dates... two heavy solo acts, quite a production. I'm super keen to show everyone what we've put together.

waxmannequin.com

waxmannequin.bandcamp.com

Instagram: @Wax_Mannequin

facebook.com/waxmannequin

Photo Credit: Bryan Reid

MONTREAL MASSACRE



CONFLUX COLLECTIVE

By Asher Thrasher

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

TM: I am Tommy McKinnon. I'm known for my drumming, but this time around I did a lot more than that... as the name suggests, Conflux Collective is not really a band in the typical sense of the word.

AU: Your new album *In The Wake of Saturn* was resurrected after years of setbacks and unfinished material. What was the turning point where you realized you had to finish it yourself, no matter what?

TM: It had been on my mind for years. I felt bad about it because we had all those amazing songs already written. But somehow the production never moved forward. I spent some time learning the basics of recording and editing, and after I had done the drums for *Derelect*, *Versus Entropy* (2024), I felt pretty confident about my skills, so I got a hold of Chase, who spearheaded the EP, and was able to recover the Bandcamp profile and the social media pages. Despite many attempts in the past, we could never secure a bassist. I reached out to a couple of connections, but everybody was too busy. From there, it was pretty clear: if I wanted this thing done, I would have to basically finish it on my own.

AU: Conflux Collective thrives on diverse vocalists shaping each track. How did working with so many distinct voices influence the emotional and musical direction of the album?

TM: I wrote most of the lyrics based on personal feelings and experiences I've had in the past decade. Let's just say I had some stuff I wanted to get off my chest... so when I write lyrics, I usually start with a raw text, basically just spilling my guts. It comes suddenly, and often in the Fall. Then I'll go back over it, maybe research some of the themes for which I basically have "point form" text. This was actually my first time really crafting rhythmic patterns to the music, so every tune got several rewrites. I wanted to have solid guidelines before approaching singers, because that was one of the problems we had before, waiting for lyrics and tracks that never truly materialized, and then people just sort of move on. For each song I had a singer in mind, so the patterns were made in regard to each different style. However, I did not get a couple of my first choices because of scheduling conflicts, but everybody stepped up and nailed it! Eric wrote lyrics for the closer and Jesse wrote the first song I sent out. These two guys brought around a whole other level of craftsmanship and intellectual baggage I would not have been able to come up with on my own.

AU: You've said these lyrics are far more personal than anything you wrote in the past. What internal experiences or transformations shaped the emotional core of this record?

TM: That's really deep and I have to set boundaries, so I'll keep it kind of vague. Basically, I went through a series of personal tragedies that

ended up in the hospital. I was confronted with my so-called "rock bottom," and it wasn't pretty. But then, at the lowest low, I was able to realize that I would be able to heal and come out on top, and it was a long and arduous journey, dealing with physical and mental health concerns and everything else that comes along with that. This album was kind of a reflection of that, just a monstrous task. I compare it to a difficult birth of sorts. I really think that all that anxiety and repressed anger, and regrets can be felt through the music. But in the end, all is resolved peacefully.

AU: The album blends '90s death-metal ferocity with modern tech-death precision. How do you feel your sound evolved from *The Inception EP* to *In the Wake of Saturn*?

TM: I would say that Chase's riffing is very much a continuity of the EP. My drumming has certainly changed a bit, and I was able to incorporate more contemporary concepts into the parts without sacrificing any of the intensity. Where I think it differs the most is in the lyric writing; I feel like there's a more defined song structure in the way the phrases build up. I certainly worked hard to get the right words in the right place, so to speak. So that's kind of an old-school thing in my opinion, and it creates a deep connection between the voice and the music. I also wrote three songs on the album, so my style of writing is definitely different from Chase's. I'm conscious that I don't have his chops, so I focused on what I could do well. Finally, the mix is very dynamic compared to the EP. Jeanne did a fantastic job finishing up the mix!

AU: You rebuilt songs from old hard-drive demos, rewrote entire tracks, and even recorded all the bass yourself. Which part of that reconstruction process pushed you the hardest creatively?

TM: It's hard to pinpoint exactly. I did everything in cycles. First, I did the bass, in part because I actually already had drums recorded for Chase's songs, and also because, since the guitar tone was predetermined, I wanted to make sure the music was done so I could tune the drums accordingly. That was crazy hard and I didn't have tabs, so I had to find ways to first figure out what the guitar was doing and how to get the bass to complement it. That took months. Then I wasn't happy with the old drum sound, and I wrote new stuff, so I just decided to record all new drums in my current room and know-how. That was the easiest for me, since it's my domain. The writing didn't take me so much; I can actually compose quite naturally. Then, when I recorded my guitars, that was a different story haha! Same with the lyrics, I wrote six songs in about two weeks, with

the middle. It's only when it was done and I took a look at the whole thing, that I was like: holy shit! This is kind of a concept album! Also, surprisingly, Jesse's and Eric's lyrics fell into place with the whole thematics perfectly. I got the title idea from reading my horoscope, and that Saturn



patterns and all. So to answer your question, the bass lines and also probably the whole production side of things, for which I had to do an insane amount of research. But it's the gift that keeps on giving.

AU: The album explores pain, fear, defeat, survival and rebirth. How did you approach shaping the record as a narrative journey rather than a collection of standalone songs?

TM: I didn't really think of it that way. I just kind of wrote a bunch of stuff... then I made the track listing mostly to accommodate the vinyl, with slower songs toward

was supposed to be kicking my ass to teach me something, haha. So there you have it. Could have been kind of a subconscious thing, maybe that's what I was going for all along and just didn't realize it. All I gave for directions to the other guys was: no politics, no religions, but go for it and don't hold back!

AU: You've described the album as a DIY project built

through sheer will. What were the biggest obstacles during production, and how did you overcome them?

TM: Well, first off, I didn't have Chase's DI tracks. Just his final tracks re-amped. There were a few clicks and pops from bad edits. Then I had to try to

match my guitar tone with his. Jeanne helped me out with that and I think in the end it worked out. Then, as I said, I didn't have tabs, so I basically lifted the whole thing one note at a time and analysed the harmony wherever I could to try and simplify the bass. In doing so, I realized that most of Chase's stuff was atonal, so there went my hope for quick support notes. For the rest, I think it's mostly the sheer amount of work and effort. At least a thousand hours of just grinding it and probably 200 more researching pro-audio techniques. I basically went into this thing blind and learned by trial and error night after night until it was finally done.

AU: Each track has its own emotional and musical identity, from the brutality of "The Antidote" to the layered finale of "Desperate Post-Humanist." Which song changed the most from its original idea to the final version, and why?

TM: There wasn't much change, more of a progression. Just adding layers one at a time. On my songs, I had to change a few little things that worked in Guitar Pro, but not in real life. However, the song "Blood from a Rock" was a full rewrite. I had a song from a different guy, and I had the whole arrangement ready to go. Then the guitarist in question decided to pull his riffs. So I decided to scrap my bass, keep my drums and the voice, and I re-wrote a brand new song on that. That was an awesome experience, and I'm still astonished that I could pull it off. I basically sat with my guitar and figured out what I was hearing from the drums. In the end, I like my version way more. I didn't use a single riff that I didn't write from scratch.

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

TM: I'm really proud of the end result, and I'm eternally grateful to the people who believed in the project and helped me make it possible. I think the listeners will find that it's a unique work with a lot to offer. It's not as polished as some of the new stuff that comes out, but it's got guts, and lots of it. I'm excited to hear how the audience reacts and to contribute my 12th (or 13th?) record to our amazing extreme metal culture.

The album will be available on all platforms. I'm setting up a shop on ElasticStage for physical media. Limited to 200. One way or the other, I'm just thrilled to finally let this baby go and move on to the next phase in my evolution as a musician, producer, and writer. Cheers!

confluxcollective.bandcamp.com

facebook.com/confluxcollective

instagram.com/confluxco





THE UNDERGROUND IN CHINA: GENRES AT A GLANCE

By Ryan Dyer

One major asset of *The Underground in China: Metal, Punk, Hardcore and Noise (2013-2021)* is that the book covers many genres. Looking at it as a whole, it would have been silly to only include folk metal or thrash metal bands, as those genres are only pieces of the puzzle that make up the Chinese underground music spectrum. Below is a short welcome guide to the genres found within the book, *The Underground in China: Genres at a Glance* now available via Earth Island Books.

BLACK METAL

If you go in looking for black metal, you will find an assortment of artists that can scratch the itch, including the mysterious and astonishing Zuriaake, Ritual Day, Frozen Moon along with other Pest Productions roster members like Bergrisar, Vengeful Spectre and The Illusion of Dawn (who came together at the Plague Fest put on by the label). Whether it be bestial, atmospheric or folk-inspired, the palette of black has many shades in the underground.

DEATH METAL

Like black metal, death metal also has several shades in the underground, with slamming brutal death metal being the biggest export in The Dark

Prison Massacre. Old school death metal has its place, with bands like Skyfire and Ready to Die waving the flag. Current death metal sees the infusion of mixed media elements coming in such as Dehumanizing Itatrain Worship and Horror of Pestilence.

GRINDCORE/PORNOGRIND/GOREGRIND

The biggest representative from the grindcore community is none other than Gore

Geng, the Godfather of Chinese Grind, whose Impure Injection band serves as a magnet to extreme scenes. Before his appearance, though, we have Cave Have Rod, a porno/goregrind band who put together the Gore Feast with fellow sickos Rectal Wench. Rectal Wench has the filthy spirit alive with recent shows in the same spirit with Impure Injection and new like-minded bands.

THRASH METAL

The thrash bands I encountered were all skilled but rather segregated - I saw them all at different concerts rather than a big "thrash fest." Suffocated, Ancestor, Tumour Boy, Punisher and Execution make appearances in my book. Also check out Explosicum.

PUNK/HARDCORE

I frequented punk bars quite a bit, including School Bar in Beijing and DAFA in Tianjin. The punk community is one of the strongest in the Chinese underground, with festivals routinely put on in cities showcasing the artists. Punk bands featured in *The Underground in China* include Hell City, Dummy Toys, Gum Bleed, Pizzaface, Round Eye, Shochu Legion, etc.

FOLK METAL

Folk metal has a tendency to feel powerful when seen performed live in front of a local audience as witnessed through shows by Nine Treasures and Snowsdim. Of course, folk elements

appear across other genres as well, with black metal sometimes having some. Nine Treasures is a band that appears often in the book and should

be observed in the near future, as they will be opening Mushroomhead and Fear Factory's upcoming tour.

be observed in the near future, as they will be opening Mushroomhead and Fear Factory's upcoming tour.

METALCORE/DEATHCORE

The One of Us festivals I attended were much like something akin to Summer Slaughter or Sounds of the Underground, featuring old-school bands like Suffocated and The Dark Prison Massacre, along with newcomers ready to take the throne like Armed Conflict, Leviathan and Lie to the Silence. The heavy, core-centric youth movement doesn't stop there, with visual deathcore band Scarlet Horizon and metalcore acts like The Will on Kill and Awake Mountains making their presence felt.

STONER ROCK/DOOM

The stoner rock genre isn't big in China, so if you go in looking for bands that smell like weed, the advantage is that it's easier to focus on the few bands that do exist. Of course, factors like the illegal state of marijuana contribute to the small stature of the scene, which is always interesting to think about when considering the other genres. Why does this exist more than that? Anyways, Never Before is the first band you should seek out here, and then browse the Sloomweep label for more.

INDUSTRIAL METAL

Another genre that exists less than others in *The Underground of China* is industrial metal, but there are some practitioners. Theatrics are often a big part of the bands I would consider having industrial elements, with Dr. VAgent being a Beetlejuice/Manson hybrid and Scare the Children being an assortment of unhinged characters who include keyboards in their playpen of dangerous



toys.

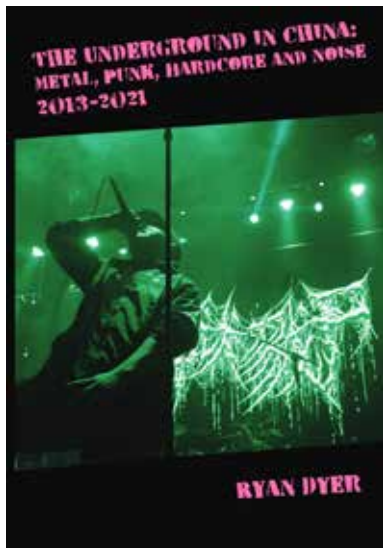
NOISE/EXPERIMENTAL/AVANT-GARDE

I knew of the nihilistic noise musician Torturing Nurse before I came to China. Based in Shanghai and thus putting on NOIShanghai shows with experimental and noise artists, I traveled there to observe just how they operate and what type of culture they have fostered. Currently, Torturing Nurse has his own venue, trigger, where live experiments happen frequently.

CONCLUSION

Of course, that's not all. Within *The Underground in China*, there are more than 100 bands to discover across all genres found within the Chinese underground music scene. You don't need a visa - crack it open, discover and thanks for reading.

earthislandbooks.com/product-page/the-underground-in-china-metal-punk-hardcore-and-noise-2013-2021-by-ryan-dyer



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SUNEATER

Large Scale Horror Tattoos — Nameless City Studio, Victoria BC

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

Irving Santana: My name is Irving Santana, the alias of my work is Suneater. I'm an horror-biomechanical specialized tattoo artist.

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

Suneater: I started tattooing 14 years ago. I was

19 when I got into the tattoo world as a mere hobby. Never thought about doing this for a living.

AU: Who did you apprentice under and what was the experience like?

Suneater: I had a short apprenticeship, if I can call it that, 2-3 months in a shop where I learned how to calibrate machines and learned some stuff about the craft. Long story short, the owner had problems with bad people so I had to leave. Never had intentions to ask someone else about an apprenticeship, so I keep working on my own.

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

Suneater: I do large scale black and grey horror and biomechanical tattoos. I basically biomorph people's bodies.

AU: What is the origin story and history of Nameless City Tattoo Studio?

Suneater: My wife and I created Nameless City as a personal space for both, focusing on comfort and a warm atmosphere. It feels like home to us and we want clients and coworkers to feel the same.

AU: What's the shop's vibe and what makes it unique in your opinion?

Suneater: The shop is chill. Artists come in and out to do their own thing. Music never stops and everyone has their turn to control the playlist. When I'm there it is always metal.

AU: What sort of music is usually playing at the shop?

Suneater: Mostly metal but we share the playlist, so all kinds of genres.

AU: Who else works with you at the shop and what special skills do they bring to the table?

Suneater: My wife **Angie (@cattt.soup)** specializes in anime and cartoon tattoos. You also can find **Pablo (@pablomoreiratattoo)** he does big projects in Blackwork and Koko (kokocraking) does flash projects and handles the walk-ins.

AU: What are you most proud of in regards to your shop and your tattoo career to date?

Suneater: I'm proud of the space. It fits us perfectly and it's like a reflection of the effort we have put in there. And for my career, doing large scale allows me to work with the same clients over and over again, creating relationships, getting to know them and being able to see how happy they are with my work.

AU: Does your tattooing lean to the side of good or evil? Butterflies or Demons?

Suneater: Evil shit always.

AU: Does the shop offer piercings as well?

Suneater: Nope.

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

Suneater: Nothing is crazy enough. At this point, I have done everything you can imagine.



AU: What tattoo are you still dying to ink in?

Suneater: I have been working on a series of full back and full front pieces. So far I started 6 of 12. I would like to do all.

AU: Any special events planned in the near future or anything else you would like to mention or promote?

Suneater: Yes, we are planning something special for an art show by the beginning of next year but I can't spoiler it yet.

AU: How do people set up an appointment?

Suneater: DM me @_suneater or call me 604-690-8522.

AU: Any final words or wisdom to share with aspiring artists?

Suneater: Draw.

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- weddings of all sizes---



“YOU’VE WATCHED ONE TOO MANY MOVIES”

The Reproduction of Horror Films in *Scream* (1996)

By Alayna Hucul, @alaynainworkshop

Wes Craven’s *Scream* (1996) is a deeply unoriginal film, which makes it all the more unique. The *Scream* cinematic universe is built upon the legacy of the horror genre and as such, employs tools of metacinema to surprise viewers who have become accustomed to the genre and its clichés (Teague 7), much like many of the characters in the film. By reflecting on its predecessors, *Scream* manages to play into classic tropes while maintaining an original narrative with the overt use of metacinema.

Many horror films reference earlier hits in the genre (Teague 2), however few do it as overtly as *Scream*. Many horror flicks are name-dropped throughout the film: Tatum insists the killer could be a woman in the vein of *Basic Instinct* (20:06), Billy tells Sidney he was watching *The Exorcist* and thought of her (14:23), Sidney fears turning into her mother like *Bad Seed* (1:10:13). Other references are discreet, such as Casey’s father telling his wife, “Drive down to the MacKenzies” (12:32) – almost exactly what Laurie Strode said to the kids she was babysitting in *Halloween*

(Ferrier). The strongest allusions are visual, such as Wes Craven making a cameo as Fred the Janitor, dressed as Freddie Kreuger (52:10) or *Halloween* playing on screen at Stu’s party. Other visual references rely on the audience’s pre-existing knowledge of the genre.

Casey’s death is rife with allusions to other horror films that could be easily missed: the slow motion chase (10:40-50) references the slow motion scenes of *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and the placement of her body, hanging from a tree (12:48), echoes a death in *Suspiria*. A few references are so clever they’re nearly hidden; the name Billy Loomis is a reference to *Halloween*’s Dr. Loomis, which, in turn, is borrowed from *Psycho*’s Sam Loomis (Ferrier); the film’s score is an adapted version of *Halloween*’s iconic score, which plays both during Casey’s death (6:22-



12:54) and the final party scene (1:22:24-1:40:56).

Scream is also a movie in a movie. Billy and Stu tell Sidney – their final girl – their plan to replicate a horror movie within their real lives (1:34:11). These intentions culminate in their desire for the perfect ending, going so far as to preserve her death for the climax. In their first interaction, when presented with an opportunity to kill Sidney, Ghostface teases her by running the knife down her chest (28:50). Inevitably, after they spare her again, seemingly only for the sake of an audience (1:33:26-1:36:36), Sidney is the one who kills them both.



he would be “a dead man” (1:13:25) in reference to the abstinence rule, and says “I’ll be right back” during the party (1:13:48). Billy plays into the tropes by having sex with Sidney (1:33:09), who

later kills him. Randy seemingly gets a pass on the technicality that he is never seen drinking, although it’s implied, as he is seen with a beer in hand at the party (1:12:35). He later declares he is a virgin (1:41:14), thus protected from the horror movie rules. The only exception to the rules is the killer, hence Sidney’s survival. Sidney is protected as she becomes Ghostface in the final face-off with Billy (1:39:55). The reversal turns her into the killer and saves her from the horror movie rules. This is why Billy and Stu succumb to them: they are now the victims in Sidney’s movie. Sidney confirms this point after shooting Billy: “Not in my movie,” (1:42:35).

Bordering on parody, *Scream* uses metanarratives to tease the horror genre lovingly, particularly through Billy and Stu’s insistence on making their own slasher film. While it plays into many popular tropes, its subversion of them turns *Scream* into something unexpected to seasoned viewers.

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Randy adds another element of metacinema when he lists the “strict rules one must abide by in order to survive a horror movie” before the final blood bath, which amounts to no drinking, no sex, and no “I’ll be right back,” (1:13:11-46). True to form, the main characters who play into these tropes, save for Randy and Sidney, die by the end of the film. Stu is shown drinking (1:13:32), claims

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STREAMING BLOOD

By Vince D'Amato

When the horror streaming platform Shudder announced itself (several years ago now), I was a little excited by the prospect of a horror-only streamer, but that excitement was lightly mixed with some trepidation – I knew Troma was also trying to launch their own B-movie streaming service, and of course these guys were

all vying to carve out their niche in the middle of an onslaught of mainstreaming streaming services, most of which boasted their own curated selection of horror titles, as well... my trepidation housed the sharply pointed thoughts of, *who exactly is going to be able to pay for endless monthly subscriptions to all of these platforms?* Well, nobody, that's who. Another issue also becomes the sheer volume of content available. Found TV is inherently limited with the horror

films it will show, as per the boundaries of its own found-footage premise while Shudder is highly curated via corporate gatekeepers (AMC) and not very easy for a new filmmaker to get a spot on. Bloodstream, however, appears to be making it their key business to do the exact opposite, aggressively seeking out any new and independent horror filmmaker and studio with a horror catalogue of any size. However, like these platforms that curate our genre films for us (with the possible exception of Bloodstream, who appear to want to ingest it all at the current moment), we can ourselves now also curate the platforms we choose to partake our content in, and *how* we choose to view our horror content. More on that in a quick sec, as I'd like to address and ask that you'll please excuse me if this all sounds like a slight echo of an earlier article (because it turns out that it is, but trust me, it's also different... well, slightly different). In the past few months, I've been turned back onto B-Stream (geared towards Cult and B-Movies), FoundTV (found footage horror), BloodStream

TALES FROM THE DARKSIDE

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(independent and gore-slanted horror), and Cranked Up TV (boasting some far edgier and aggressive horror & thriller films than other streamers might not be willing to take)... These smaller niche streamers will then offer a find-one-that-fits-for-you outlet (*i.e. "how" you want to view your horror choices*) via either Subscription (monthly) options, Ad-based (free), or Transactional (single rental) -based availability for their titles. So I guess we can all just click and enjoy the horror.

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FEAR & LOATHING IN CANNES 79

By Vince D'Amato

May 12th, 2026, 2:30 pm, a restoration of celebrated genre director Guillermo del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth* opened this famed film festival



– twenty years after it had originally *closed* the Cannes Film Festival. *Pan's Labyrinth* is a fairy tale blended with nightmarish horror, not the least of which concerns a murderous fascist military leader who also happens to be the child protagonist's new stepfather. But within the nightmarish fairytale setpieces, the film, perhaps inadvertently, recalls similar themes of misunderstood monsters that horror author Clive Barker explored in his film *Nightbreed* and the novel it was based on, *Cabal*, back in 1990 and 1988, respectively. I'm actually far more familiar with Clive Barker's work over del Toro's, which I'm sure is unusual these days, though I do find del Toro's body of work deeply and darkly fascinating. I had not seen *Pan's Labyrinth* since its first theatrical release in 2006, and not only does it hold up twenty years later, I would say it's slightly more horrifying, with what's going on in the world now. When this 2026 screening was over, the director himself, having been seated with the crowd and watching his own film, stood up from his theatre seat to say a few things... which he ended with, "Fuck A.I.!", to the cheers of the cinema crowd. It was noted, by the presenter, that this was likely the Cannes Film Festival's "First political statement this year!", again to the cheers of the crowd. And this presenter was not incorrect – A.I. was a huge topic at this year's festival & film market; as many streaming platforms adjusted their contracts for the first time to include – nay, *demand* – transparency from filmmakers

and studios who have used A.I. in any aspect of their productions – video, audio, artwork, music, *anything*... it all needs to be divulged ahead of time, lest the film in question be subject to removal from these streaming platforms. It didn't escape me that I am old enough to have first heard the term "artificial intelligence" in another movie theatre, back in Vancouver and way back in 1984 when I was just a kid, where my brother and I were watching *The Terminator* unfold intensely in front of our young, unsuspecting eyes. How in the universe did that film become so fucking prophetic?

I also continued to think about Clive Barker's work, as my thoughts about him were rekindled in a Vancouver bookstore the day after my return from Cannes, as I was perusing the horror section and noted that the only Clive Barker book on the shelf was *The Hellbound Heart*, the original basis for his endless

Hellraiser series of films. While I'm sure Clive Barker is just fine sleeping nightly on his piles of Pinhead money, I still felt somewhat melancholy over the rest of his novels which all now appear to be out of print. No longer do the bookstore horror sections house any copies of *The Great and Secret Show*, *Imajica*, *Weaveworld*, or *Cabal*. Even Barker's famous *Books of Blood* are nowhere to be found. Meanwhile, one shelf over, the Stephen King section is flourishing and overstuffed with multiple publications of the same novels; everything he's ever written still in print, even the books that were first published a dozen years before the younger Clive Barker even began his career. I suppose it's inevitable that some people's immortality will become a victim of time sooner than others.

Stephen King, in turn, was also a part of my Cannes experience this year. Before boarding my plane to France, I chose to explore the world of audiobooks for the first time. I downloaded King's *You Like it Darker*, his most recent anthology of over a dozen short stories, and I listened to the entire book, read by actor Will Patton, over two airplane rides, a three-hour stopover, and one bus ride, plus during my downtime while at the festival, listening to what was (somewhat unexpectedly) several very existential musings. *You Like it Darker* ended up having a deep affect on me during my time at this year's film festival/market. In this anthology,

King explores the "why?" questions of talent and success, starting with the first story, "Two Talented Bastards", before going even more deeply existential in some of the latter tales – and yes, some of them are outright horror. I was extremely happy to come across his Lovecraft homage, "The Dreamers"; although his mid-book story "Finn" haunted me, as King explored the state of the dream-mind of someone who may be, in reality, operating in a different bodily state than most of us who are walking around going about our daily business... and I can tell you that this is something that is constantly on my mind in the dark of night, where my dreams are consistently weird and intense. And the word that scares me most from that sentence is "consistently".

Alas, I digress (... *but, do I, though?* ...) One can come across so many other existential crises at a film festival/market, where literally thousands of hopeful filmmakers flood in from everywhere in the world to showcase their film in a nearly unfathomable sea of content. At times, this sea can appear to be coming at you like that incomprehensible wave on that water-planet in the middle of the Matthew McConaughey movie, *Interstellar*. But we don't make it to the rocket ship in time to take off and avoid that wave, we stand there and take it, because that's our job, which challenges us to ask, *but how are these filmmakers ever going to be able to make their own waves within this one gargantuan wave in a never-ending sea of content?* Yeah...

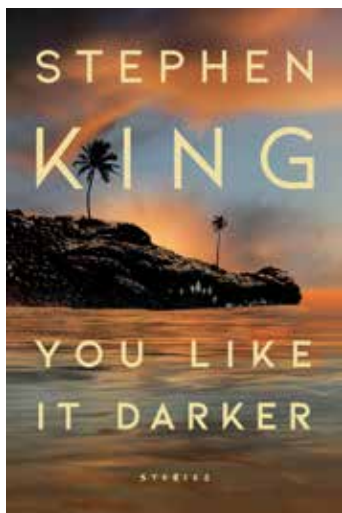
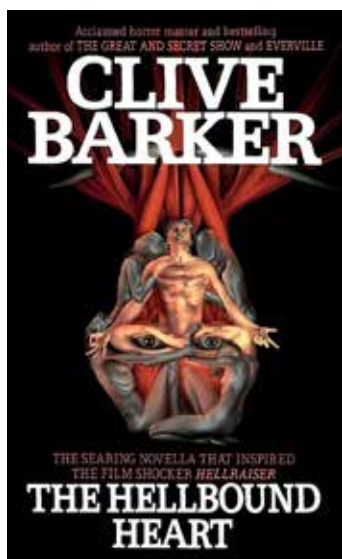
I end up reminded of an interview with the late George A. Romero that I once read so many, many years ago, where he commented on "new" films and filmmakers of the time (likely also around twenty years ago now), opining that a

big problem in horror was that there was nothing "groundbreaking" coming out, and for a long time I also believed this sentiment. Maybe Romero was on my mind in 2026, because I discovered, while at Cannes, that the famed horror film director, who extensively explored his own existentialism through nearly every one of his films, never actually directed the groundbreaking opening sequence to his masterpiece *Day of the Dead* – it had all been shot by his second unit director, Ernest Dickerson (the future director of *Demon Knight* and *The Walking Dead*), including the famed "tongue-zombie". This new information was told to me over several beers by an ex-film journalist who was now working for the horror streamer *Bloodstream*.



Only a few hours earlier, I had found myself sitting in a cinema celebrating a film that has enjoyed a wide cult and commercial following for the past two decades, and also its filmmaker, who had last October brought his awe-inspiring masterpiece to the big screen via his highly personalized revision of Mary Shelley's 1818 novel *Frankenstein*. Some people's immortality becomes a victim of time later than others', I guess.

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KOKANEE VALLEY RACE SERIES

March 26, 2026

Whistler Blackcomb

Let me tell you a story about how I cut my teeth in photography on this ski race back during the 1993/94 ski season. My roommate got me my first job as a professional photographer with a company called Mountain Sharpshooters. We would ask tourists at the top of the Whistler Blackcomb mountains' best scenic spots near the lifts if they would like a photo taken and developed for free to check out at the end of the day and for sale. They could buy it if they wanted it. That was our bread and butter. We would also shoot the race circuits when



they came to town. World Cup, Olympic qualifiers and the races for the general public that wanted to race on a closed course and go as fast as you can with nobody yelling, Slow down! The Kokanee Valley Race Series is exactly the opposite in fact, spectators cheering you on, cow bells, timing lights and medics just in case.

Way back then, and today, the gravity fed thigh burn is the same. In the '93 season, I was setting up my camera tripod and checking my f-stops on my Nikon when a snowcat rolled up with a pallet of Mountain Dew and a pallet of Kokanee in cans and proceeded to drop them at my feet. The driver asked, "Hey, you working here?" I

said, "Yes, I am setting up for the race." He said, "Can you look after this for a few minutes?" I said, "Sure." He drove

off to the newly built Glacier Creek restaurant.

I pulled a picnic table over from the restaurant and proceeded to put the top row of beer and Mountain Dew in a hastily dug hole with the table on top, complete with camera bag and tripod. The rest of the camera crew arrived and the teams



from Kokanee and Mountain Dew. They set up their tents and race equipment close to the icy beer pit.

The race was awesome and the party was off the hook. Free beer and pop! We got some great shots of serious racers really banging gates and then crushing a beer, then back up for the second run down the Jersey Cream race course. But by that time the beer was gone, or so everyone thought.



All the non-racers left when the beer ran out. As soon as they were gone I opened the reserves and the party wound right back up again!

Press fast forward to 2025/26, I find myself back in Whistler shooting the same race thinking, *Am I more*

stoked now or back then? Answer is now.

It is snowing and the racers are gathering in the corral at the top waiting to drop in to the top section of the Dave Murray downhill. This time there is way more ladies, snowboarders, and kids, as well as middle and senior age dudes in tights and beer bellies.

There is fifteen different racing categories now and the one thing people all have



in common is that they are here to win. I heard two racers talking at the awards ceremony, "Man, I would have had first place if I hadn't caught my tip in the gate. I was so close." The other racer replied, "That's racing dude!"

-Brydo Parker

whistlerblackcomb.com

Photo Credits: Craig Munch & Brydo Parker



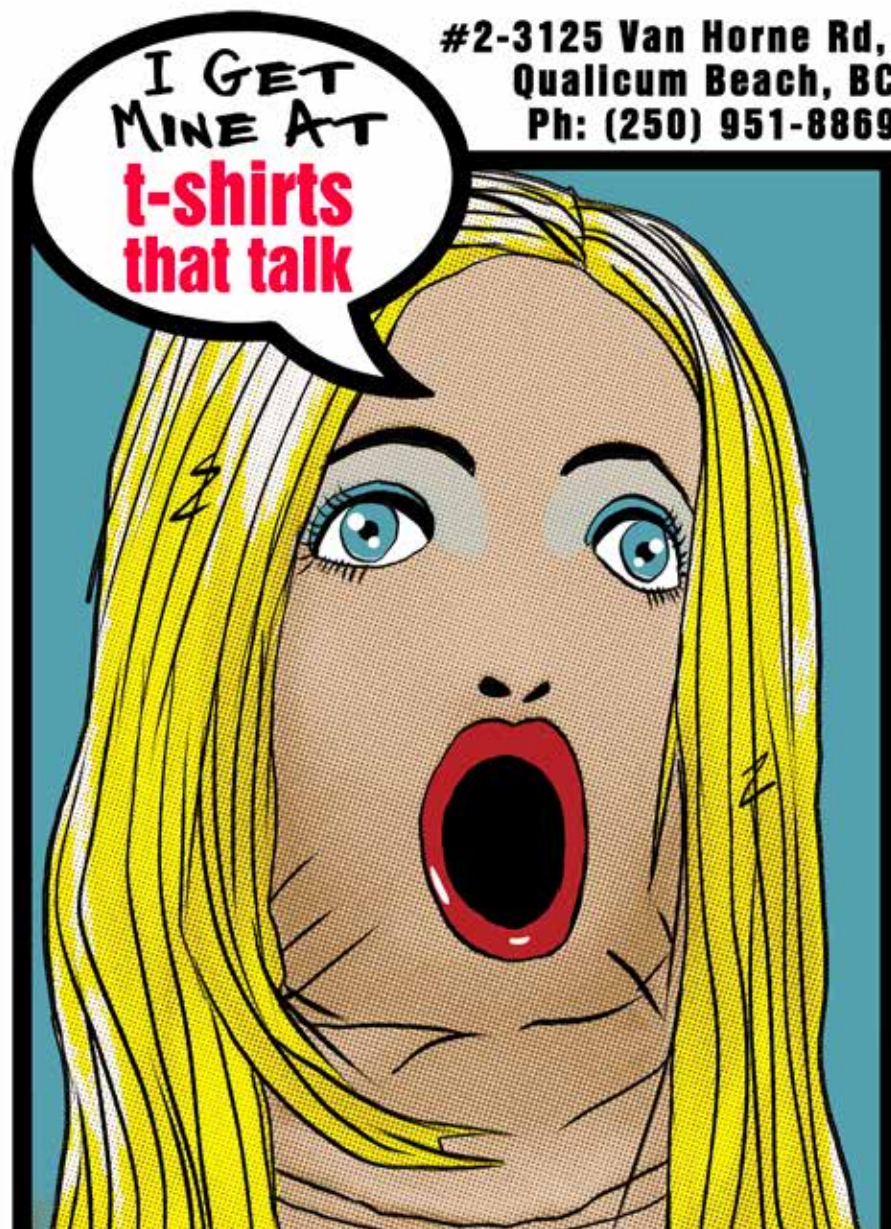
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SHRED SESSION

TONY SALADOR

By Paget Williams

Tony Salador is a key player in both Montreal's skate and punk rock scenes. He can be found shredding in most parks around town as soon as the snow is gone. His band Hood Rats play the purest form of old school skate rock you can find in the city. He has a load of "old school" spirit for someone with far fewer years to show for it.

AU: Where did you grow up and what is the skateboarding scene like there?

Tony Salador: I grew up in the West Island of Montreal. There weren't any decent parks like they have now, just a beat up quarter pipe and a pancake mini ramp by the airport. If you wanted to have any fun skating you had to bomb a hill. I'd push around town with longboard wheels on an old school deck. It felt way better than the small hard wheels

AU: When did you first jump on a skateboard and what first got you stoked on skateboarding?

TS: I'd stay up late playing Tony Hawk Pro Skater and would be late for school. If I wanted to make the bus in time I'd have to skate like the wind. I didn't start skating parks until my late 20's. I watched the *Lords of Dogtown* documentary a bunch of times and just went for it.

AU: What team do you currently skate for?

TS: I skate for the Revolution 514 skate shop team in Montreal.

AU: How did you first get on the Revolution 514 skate team?

TS: I knew a bunch of them before the shop opened. My cousins had a sick skate loft that would throw parties, I met most of them through there. We'd just be ripping a session on their ramp while bands would play in the background. After the loft closed the skate shop opened up and the party continued.

AU: Where is your favourite place to skate?

TS: My favourite park is Benny in NDG. It has a clover bowl that's about 10 ft deep with pool coping. It's my favourite park. I was lucky enough to help with the overall design along with some other locals. The Van Horne bowl is also sick

AU: How long did it take for you to realize skateboarding was naturally built into your psyche?

TS: It was always there, I just didn't realize it. I'm a high energy person that didn't have the right outlet, when I got on a board it all made sense. I'm also an introvert so team sports are not my thing.

AU: How would you describe your skateboarding style?

TS: All gas no breaks. If you're going top speed even a simple trick can be major.

AU: What are some of your favourite tricks?

TS: I like a good combo trick. Board slide revert, Nollie shove to rock revert, frontside alley top to backside 50-50. If I had to choose one trick, it's boardslide.

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

TS: I've done a lot of traveling to skate but I've never made it to that full pipe in California. It's like a drain for a dam or something. Just a big concrete hole in the middle of nowhere.

AU: Describe the sensation of skateboarding verbally if at all possible.

TS: It feels like running on air. It's the opposite of being stuck in traffic if that makes sense. It's like playing with a toy that didn't come with instructions, you get to decide what it's supposed to do. Total freedom wrapped in a puzzle.

AU: What do you think your strong suits are when it comes to skateboarding?

TS: I like to have fun. If it wasn't then we wouldn't be doing it. I enjoy park skating more than street skating most days. Sometimes street seems more fun and I'll do that instead.



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

TS: Learn to walk before you run. You have to respect yourself and you have to be willing to commit. If you're not putting in the hours you won't see results. If you're not prepared you could get hurt.

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

TS: Lance Mountain. I want to be doing inverters at 60. *The Bones Brigade Video Show* got me from day one. He's been doing it forever and with style.

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

TS: Punk rock gives me the type of energy I need to skate bowls. The *Killed by Death* compilations and lo-fi garage rock makes me happy. Joy Division's 1st album was a great record that got a lot of play last year. 90s hip hop is also fun party music when there's lots of people around.

AU: Any skateboarding superstitions?

TS: I don't skate in the rain. I've wiped out enough times to know that a wet park is a death trap. I bring a gas powered leaf blower with me everywhere I go. No joke.

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

TS: Everyone needs a healthy outlet for their problems and this is mine. I often have problems with stress and dark thoughts. Skating brings me peace. If I feel like fighting I just blow off steam in the bowl. If I'm upset then I land a trick to feel better.

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

TS: Wake up early and skate an empty park with nobody watching. Go crazy and do whatever you want, no pressure or judgment. Also, remember to bend your knees.

AU: Do you snowboard or surf as well? If so, what are the differences and similarities?

TS: I've surfed before it was a blast. The difference is skateboarding is accessible to more people worldwide. You're lucky as hell if you get to visit a mountain or the beach. If you get the opportunity, take it. Any excuse to go outside with your friends is a good one.

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GORD McCAW

Vancouver, BC

By John Carlow

Absolute Underground: Introduce yourself. What are you best known for?

GM: My name is Gord McCaw. I had two successive photo studios between 1979-2006 and I'm probably best known for music photography.

AU: When did you start photography seriously?

GM: I had zero interest in applied photography before taking a few classes in my second year of journalism studies at Mt Royal College in Calgary in 1974. I was indifferent at first, but it was a St. Paul on the road to Damascus moment when I saw the first print coming up in the tray of Dektol, it really put the hook in me.

AU: Training?

GM: The two semesters of photojournalism classes are pretty much it. The program had its own fully equipped darkroom and an unlimited supply of Tri-X, paper and chemistry. I burned through a lot of it before I started making any progress.

The course was supposed to be two years, but I dropped my gen eds and electives in second year to spend more time on it. I attended for a third year to pick those classes up and landed a job in the school's media center as a darkroom tech.



AU: Gear over the ages?

GM: About 1975 I got a used Nikon Ftn, with three Nikkor primes. I built darkrooms in both the studios I had and shot B/W pretty much exclusively for at least the first five years.

I bought the first of two Minoxes, an EL, in 1978, when I was still living in Edmonton. I wanted a camera that I could have with me all the time, and they are very easy to have at hand. The 35mm Zeiss Minotar lens is very sharp. There were some limitations, no manual settings and they are aperture-preferred automatic with range focus. I couldn't give you exact reasons why I used it

for the punk gigs. Likely because it looked like a nothing burger and people were less likely to be distracted than they would be by an SLR. One of the things I liked about the EL was its 1/30 sec. flash sync speed, which when it died on me and I had to move on to the GT model they upped the sync speed to 1/125 sec and no more ghosting. In 2015 I got my first DSLR, a Nikon Df. Since then I have acquired D3s and D4s. The great thing about Nikon is the backwards compatibility and being able to use the four Nikkor primes I have from the film days. I rarely buy any gear that isn't used.

By that time the transition to digital was in earnest and I couldn't afford to retool digitally to the degree I needed to, so I decided it was time to bail.

AU: Fav music photo?

GM: I would say my Edmonton photos of Queen (Sheer Heart Attack Tour) shot for the journalism program paper in April 1975 are my faves of my music photos because it was the first time I came close to hitting the bullseye. It's too bad I was so green when I went up to Edmonton to shoot Stevie Wonder. Best known photo is an overhead shot of Pointed Sticks in front of Baghead on a trailer flatbed on June 14, 1980. (Vancouver) This was at the northwest corner of Powell and Columbia by the old Anchor Hotel. I asked the deskman if I could go up on the fire escape for some photos. I try to get up for the high angle shots.

AU: Smaller venues or arena size shooting?

GM: Given the corporate takeover of the music biz and all the restrictions now it's hands down small to moderate venues.

AU: Photographers you admire?

GM: When I lived in Calgary I would go down to the public library every three weeks and borrow an armful of coffee table monographs of the 20th Century masters and pour over them. The people who most impressed me were the likes of Cartier-Bresson, Robert Frank, Walker Evans (whom I consider a major influence), Richard Avedon, Irving Penn, W. Eugene Smith, Margaret Bourke-White, Larry Clark,

Diane Arbus. When the work of Vivian Maier first started coming around, I was totally gob smacked at how strong her work is and I keep hoping a gallery like the Polygon will exhibit her work.

AU: Fav band to shoot?

GM: That's a tough one. Mac Sabbath were certainly mucho fun and yielded some real eye candy images. Dead Bob is always a photog's delight with all the leaping around on the part of Ford, Kristy-Lee and Byron (not to mention how great they are as a band). Back when I was first shooting shows around here D.O.A. and the Subhumans were hard to beat.

AU: What is your measure of success?

GM: I guess that would be achieving whatever level of recognition my body of work is deserving of. I know that Facebook is a handshake with Satan himself, but it has largely been a benefit to me. I have had significantly more people see my work in the past decade especially than all the roughly 40 years beforehand, that includes two solo exhibitions (Edmonton Public Library in 1979 and the Pitt Gallery in 1989 and a group show at Gallery Reflections in 1982)

AU: What's on the road ahead?

GM: Several people have asked about a book or books. I get that all the time. Self publishing and being retired have put that into closer reach. I would have to consider an on-demand thing unless I was fortunate and worthy of finding a publisher.

AU: Advice to those just starting music photography?

GM: Know your gear well. As jazz musicians like to say, "If you don't know it during the week it won't know you on the weekend". With digicams you can blast away freely but be prepared to toss a lot of dross. Learn to be a good editor.

On the tech side, shoot manual, shoot RAW and use spot metering. Get in as close as you can. Magnum Photo co-founder Robert Capa once said, "If your pictures aren't good enough you're not close enough."

AU: Biggest hurdles in photography?

GM: The expense of quality gear can certainly be an impediment, I was extremely fortunate when I was starting out that I didn't have the expense of all that film, paper and chemistry I burned through before gaining proficiency. Getting your work out there and getting it seen given the tsunami of images every day could be a hurdle

SHOOT TO KILL

so developing a style, which takes many years, is something to strive for.

AU: What else do you photograph with passion?

GM: Vintage diners are a keen interest of mine. I've shot about 100 in about 25 different cities. In the mid-80's I shot a lot of the city's vintage neon. Graffiti in Vancouver is something I first began documenting about 1980 and I still shoot a lot of it in the hard part of town. I shoot a lot of store



fronts. Over time it's surprising how many have disappeared. One of my goals is to contribute to the public visual record. I am thinking here of photographs going back many decades and how somebody had to see beyond what was then unremarkable and take the trouble of recording it for generations to follow.

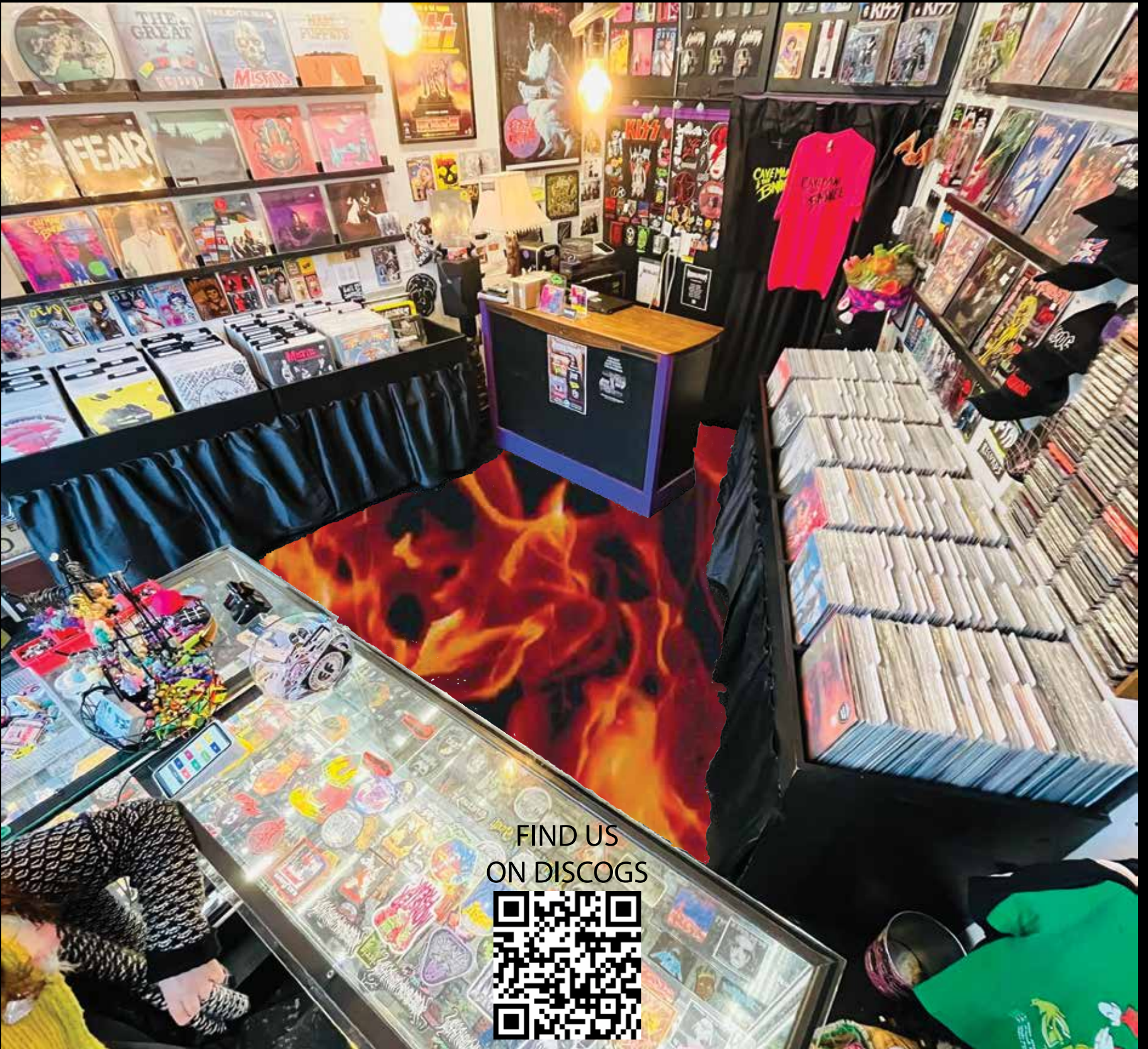
AU: Thank you for your time Gord.

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BRICA BRAC SALVAGE

By Ira "Discarded Treasure" Hunter

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today?

BBS: Hello! I'm Jordan, the owner and operator of Brica Brac Salvage.

AU: What is the origin story and history of Brica Brac Salvage and where are you located?

BBS: At age 18 I got a job working for one of the big junk removal companies. There I saw just how much reusable stuff would end up going to waste in the landfill every day. I figured there had to be a way to divert these perfectly good items from the landfill, so I would salvage a few items here and there and sell them locally for a bit of spending money. Pretty quickly I decided to take the plunge into entrepreneurship and started my own junk removal business.

Almost twenty years (and several name, location and structural changes) later, our mission remains steadfast: to keep reusable goods out of the landfill. Now, Brica Brac Salvage consists of a team of four people, two trucks and one downtown storefront located at 574 Yates St.

AU: What makes Brica Brac Salvage unique in your opinion?

BBS: Aside from our merch (designed by Ro Farmer Studio and printed by Antimatter Screen

Printing), everything for sale in our store was once considered "trash". We spend hours sorting through disposal bins for a larger junk removal company and also separate reusable goods and materials from our own junk removal service.

We come across endless antiques, vintage collectibles and sometimes even brand new goods! Generally, if it's

reusable, we salvage it. Broken items can even be salvaged and sold as "parts or repair". We love finding little bits, or Junklets as we call them, for arts and crafts. Large pieces like furniture and building supplies, we salvage those too!

There is a little bit of everything in our store and folks always seem to get a kick out of that when they come in.

AU: What is your mission statement as a business?

BBS: Maximize Reuse to Minimize Waste.

AU: So this is an alternative option to traditional junk removal where everything ends up in the landfill?

BBS: Yeah! Every company offering junk removal claims to donate everything but the reality is that it is more cost effective to simply separate recycling and dump the rest. We know some companies make an effort to donate obvious items. We also know junk removal trucks are often turned away from overwhelmed donation centres. Next stop, the dump.

We hand-sort through everything we haul away. After almost two decades of experience, quickly sorting and identifying reusables and recycling/garbage is our specialty.

AU: What was first: the junk removal/salvage company or the store?

BBS: The service came first and the store was created as a solution for diverting the reusable goods and materials. We consider ourselves a junk removal company with a salvage shop!

AU: What sort of items will people find when they come and explore your store?

BBS: Everything and anything and it's always changing! We always have tools and hardware, electronics and media, decorative goods, kitchenware, toys and games, clothing and accessories. Small pieces of furniture, art and mirrors circulate through as well.

For folks who enjoy a little surprise, we make our own Mystery Bags and stuff them with small treasures and collectible bits. Each one is unique!

AU: Do you carry VCRs? What do you think has spurred the VHS and vinyl record revival?

BBS: We do carry VCRs! They are very popular right now and never sit on the shelves for long. Over the last five years, we've noticed increasing demand for VCRs, CRT TVs and VHS. Vinyl records have always been popular, but when folks buy CDs and cassette tapes, it's clear the world is changing. VHS tapes used to get recycled by the thousands and were almost impossible to sell. Many thrift stores stopped accepting them for a while.

We think there has always been a desire to hold on to technology from the past. Trends dictate buying patterns and especially after the hyper-digital online mode of peak COVID wore off, the trend shifted to favouring physical media. Digital media is convenient and accessible, yes, and it gets points for that. But if you can get your hands on a cassette tape your mom used to play all the



time when you were a kid, that adds meaning and richness to your life. That tape is now a treasured object in your home.

Folks are so ready to cancel their big corporate subscriptions and start intentionally curating their personal media library. Buying physical media supports artists and small businesses. It's an investment in our community. It is agency, not algorithm or worse, AI.

AU: Anything else you would like to mention or promote?

BBS: Our monthly end-of-the-month sale where everything is 50% off! This sale helps us make space to reset the store with new stuff!

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OUTHOUSE RECORDS

DARKSIDE Thrift & Vintage Vancouver, BC

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

Sam: This is Sam from DARKSIDE Thrift & Vintage! We are known in our neighbourhood for being an alternative clothing store — think goth, grunge, heavy metal and much more.

AU: What is the origin story and history of Darkside Thrift & Vintage?

Sam: Growing up in the MySpace/Tumblr era, I've always been obsessed with the subculture scene and like to dress as alt as I can, without standing out too much. Unfortunately, growing up in a small town, dressing weird means getting weird looks, which eventually stopped me from dressing alt, and that became my 'darkside'.

Fast forward years later — I've graduated from fashion design and have been working in the marketing field for a couple of years. Just before I turned 30 last year, I asked myself, "What's something I absolutely want to do before the end of my 20s?" The answer was pretty clear-cut: having my own clothing store.

If I were to go back in time, I absolutely would have loved to have a safe space where I get to explore different styles freely. So I said, "fu*k it," and took the leap of faith to do exactly that.

We officially opened our store last November and have been around for almost seven months now!

AU: Where are you located and what do you like best about your neighbourhood?

Sam: We are located in East Vancouver in the Hastings-Sunrise neighbourhood. Besides having tons of amazing local shops and restaurants around, my favourite thing about this neighbourhood is definitely the people. It's rare to find such a supportive community in the city, and I'm so thankful that our neighbours have welcomed us with open arms since day one.

AU: How would you describe the vibe of the shop?

Sam: Moody, quirky.

AU: What sort of items will people find when they come and explore your store?

Sam: Band Ts, comic/anime/movie merch, common and indie alt-brand clothing and accessories (Killstar, Lip Service ... and more!).

AU: What makes Darkside Thrift & Vintage unique in your opinion?

Sam: With the lack of in-person alt stores in Vancouver, we hope we can be your new go-to if you are looking for alternative style pieces!

AU: What is your mission statement as a business?

Sam: "DARKSIDE Thrift & Vintage is a second-hand apparel store specializing in punk, grunge, goth, emo and other alternative fashion styles. We strive to be a safe space for anyone looking to be a part of the subculture community. Whether you are experimenting with a new look or searching for a one-of-a-kind piece for your

wardrobe, we encourage you to come as you are and embrace your 'dark' sides."

AU: Do you take consignments?

Sam: Yes! Our Instagram @darksidethriftvintage has all the details.



AU: What are you most proud of concerning your business?

Sam: Seeing it become a space that people look forward to visiting. We've heard stories of customers coming out to shop for their birthdays/anniversaries or making plans to stop by when they are in town. The fact that people would make time to come see us really means a lot.

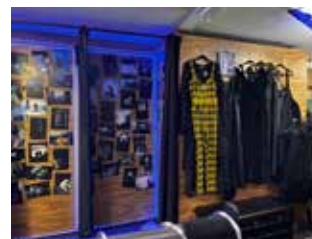
AU: What types of music do you usually play at the shop?

Sam: Heavy metal, all day, baby.

AU: Any special sales or events planned this summer?

Sam: Our SUMMER SALE EVENT is still happening in-store (up to 20% off select items!) We will also

be joining our neighbours at PLAZAPLOOZA on June 27.



AU: Any final words of wisdom for our readers?

Sam: Stay kind and be so unapologetically you. Also, drink water.

Whether you're a metalhead, a true goth or just someone who likes to wear black, come check us out if you're ever in Vancouver! Me and all the small businesses around the neighbourhood would really appreciate a visit.

DARKSIDE Thrift & Vintage

2147 E Hastings St, Vancouver, BC

Find us on TikTok and Instagram at:

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AITTALA

Interview with vocalist and guitarist Eric Aittala on the EP *Ill-Gotten Gains*

By Asher Thrasher

AU: Welcome back to *Absolute Underground Magazine*. What has Aittala been up to since we last spoke?

Eric Aittala: Greetings, *Absolute Underground Magazine*! Eric (singer/guitarist/songwriter) from Aittala here!

AU: Aittala released EP, *Ill-Gotten Gains* in November 2025, with two new videos having been released so far: "Isolation", "Ever After" and the title track "Ill-Gotten Gains."

EA: Besides this, our main focus has been on finding a new bassist. It's been a long search (almost two years) but we finally found the right person, Dane Taylor, so now we'll be busy booking and playing shows in 2026.

AU: With Dane Taylor joining the live lineup on bass, what does he bring to the stage dynamic, and how do you see his presence

shaping Aittala's live performances going forward?

EA: We're gearing up to play live with Dane and I look forward to the energy and presence he'll bring to the band. As mentioned, it took a couple of years for Dane to cross our path, but he's the perfect fit personality-wise. He's fronted a couple of other bands (check out his current band, Evill) in the Raleigh area, so I've seen how he can command the stage. I look forward to what he'll bring to the live performances!

AU: The EP, *Ill-Gotten Gains*, explores chaos, exploitation and redemption. How did you approach weaving those themes together musically across the five tracks?

EA: When I'm in 'songwriting mode', I'm not consciously trying to tie song themes together; I'm just working with lyric and music ideas independently. What usually happens when you're writing a lot in a short amount of time is that the themes tend to be related in the stream of unconsciousness. So, in the end, the unintended consequence is songs that are organically woven together.

AU: "Isolation" and "Ill-Gotten Gains" dive into consequences and exploitation, while "Blacklisted" counters those perspectives. How intentional was that narrative interplay between the songs?

EA: It didn't start out being intentional but as the songs came together as I was writing them in parallel, the organic connection evolved into intention.

AU: "Ever After" stands out as a modern metal ballad about internal conflict. What made you decide to include a more melodic,

introspective piece alongside the heavier tracks?

EA: I don't choose what songs to write; they tell me when they're ready to be created in this plane of existence and I facilitate that creation. "Ever After" was a half-completed song that didn't make the *Live to Regret* album. It just wasn't ready at that time. When I rediscovered it, I knew that its time had come to exist.

AU: "Ashes" closes the EP with a traditional heavy metal feel. Was that a deliberate nod to your roots, or more of a natural progression in the songwriting?

EA: As with all songs, they just evolve organically. I don't deliberately try to force a song to be anything in particular.

AU: Aittala has always blurred genre lines: doom, groove, thrash, progressive. How do you maintain a cohesive identity while pulling from so many influences?

EA: I'm not sure. It probably just comes from listening and absorbing so much different music over the years (metal and non-metal) and my brain just unconsciously melds those influences into a primal soup that my songwriting persona gets nourishment from.

AU: With *Ill-Gotten Gains* following *Machines* on Exitus Startagem Records, how have these two EPs complemented each other in showcasing the band's evolution in 2025?

EA: They are actually complete opposites of the Aittala sound. *Machines* is an EP of songs that I originally demoed between 1992 to 1997, when I

was only a few years into songwriting. I was more influenced by progressive metal and the songs were longer with more changes. If you listen back-to-back with *Ill-Gotten Gains*, you'll hear quite a difference with modern Aittala that has the additional influences of doom, groove and sludge infused into it.

AU: The artwork revisits your mascot, Frank, the cartoon pig head, in a pentagram first introduced in 2014. What inspired you to bring Frank back in this updated form, and how does he embody the spirit of *Ill-Gotten Gains*?

EA: It's just one of those ideas that popped up in my head. It evolved from having a character on the cover that would be able to acquire 'ill-gotten gains' with no questions asked, as long as you had the cash. The original mock-up actually had a character similar to Frank, but with a goat's head with a pentagram behind it but then it just hit me, looking at that original art of Frank, that Frank could be reborn into a new form.

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

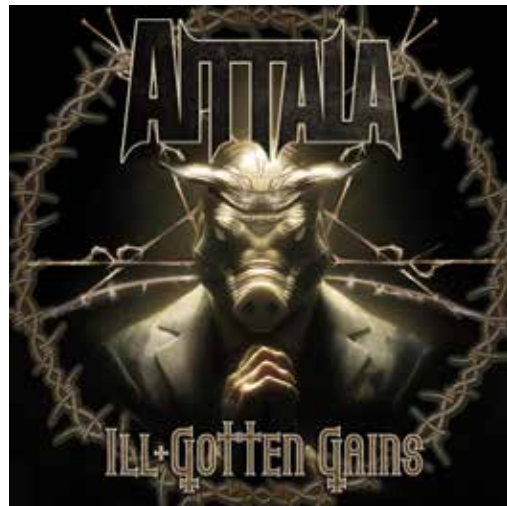
EA: Always support your favourite band anyway you can: buying merch, buying music directly

from them, liking, subscribing and sharing their social media, etc. With AI becoming prevalent and as 'real' as it can sound, it's even more important to 'know' your favourite artists and support human musicians who are passionate about their craft.

Thanks for the interview!

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song chosen as a recurring anchor, and how does it contrast with darker elements of the record?

JH: That particular song had a morose character to it that I knew would develop the environment of the nursing home, and the full lyric sheet depicts the perspective of a deity offering the listener salvation. Phillip is not aware of his past but knows he is approaching death, and his only wish is to be rewarded in the afterlife, but he is unable to repent for acts he cannot remember and thus cannot secure his own salvation. I

wanted the song to be continually referenced but in changed ways to give a cinematic feel to the record, similar to that of a movie score, and to represent that the supernatural characters, although vindictive, do offer a way out of spiritual condemnation if Phillip had the ability to truly repent.

AU: The climax in "EOLC" and the descent in "A Better Place" are musically violent and oppressive. How did you balance storytelling with sonic intensity to make listeners feel Phillip's torment?

JH: The overall sounds you hear are very deliberate in that the level of distortion in the guitar increases exponentially with each track, starting clean with opener "Admittance" and ending distorted to the point where it is difficult to discern in "A Better Place." I chose this route to develop Phillip's mental deterioration and provide a sense of menace to the music. The record sheds its familiar tonal passages as it progresses, as melody appears less consonant and the overall approach becomes more percussive as the story develops.

AU: You've described *Unwell* as "séance music," channeling spiritual passage. How does this concept differ from traditional doom or avant-

garde metal, and what do you hope listeners experience from it?

JH: One of my favourite subgenres is funeral doom, which I associate with being background music for the interment of a corpse. I wanted the style of music written under the Liminal Spirit moniker to be more suited for moving entities between spiritual planes rather than dealing with corporeal finality, so those themes will be present in some form in every release and will guide the music as needed.

AU: Having worked in nursing homes, you've seen firsthand the struggles of aging and memory loss. How did those personal experiences shape the emotional core of *Unwell*?

JH: I have seen multiple residents in these environments in various stages of mental and physical decline. Nursing homes have been the most depressing places I've visited and, culturally, we keep them in the back of our minds despite assuredly feeling collectively terrified of them. Between processing those environments and seeing relatives succumb to mental decline, I knew I had a good universe to frame the record with.

AU: Dementia, guilt, and spiritual judgment are heavy themes. What made you choose to explore these fears through Phillip's journey rather than a more abstract narrative?

JH: I wanted to make the subject matter feel personal, as most subject matter in metal today is vague, so as not to be offensive or confrontational. Growing old is something I'm sure most of us fear in ways, and I felt it would be more impactful than "nondescript notions of serial killing" or "otherworldly monster vanquishes humanity." The intimate concepts will always be more terrifying, although I understand the risk in alienating listeners looking for pure escapism.

AU: The cover art places listeners in Phillip's perspective, haunted by children's spirits.

How did you envision the artwork guiding the audience into the story before they even hear a note?

JH: It is important to absorb the record from Phillip's perspective, as he begins as a sympathetic character and grows more detestable as information develops throughout the story. I want the listener to feel the unease of both his mental and spiritual illnesses and confront the underlying fear, given that, because extreme music is mostly a younger person's preference, chances are the audience mindset still

has the youthful arrogance of "I'm invincible, it'll be forever until I'm in that situation." As someone in his mid-40s, I can attest that time moves quicker than you want as you get older, and these scenarios may happen sooner than you think.

AU: As a solo project, you handled guitars, vocals, bass, drums, and synths yourself. What freedoms and challenges come with building such a

record entirely on your own?

JH: The biggest freedom is not having to teach anyone material, which allows me to record as soon as I'm done writing. This causes the quick turnaround I have between releases. I've always been a storyteller, and I am blessed that musical composition lands pretty naturally for me. The biggest challenge is getting the music heard without performing live. People are much less interested in hearing recorded music nowadays, so I am handicapping myself by not performing this material live. Hopefully, I can get this material across through a live band someday.

Thanks for the interview!

—Jerry

liminalspirit.bandcamp.com

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LIMINAL SPIRIT

Jerry Hauppa: One Man, All Instruments

By Asher Thrasher

Absolute Underground: Welcome to the Underground! Who are you and what do you do?

Jerry Hauppa: My name is Jerry Hauppa and I write and perform everything under the moniker Liminal Spirit. The most recent release, *Unwell*, came out on October 31, 2025.

AU: Your sophomore album, *Unwell*, uses microtonal guitars to create a disjointed, alien sound. How did you decide that was the right tool to represent Phillip's unraveling mind?

JH: I had been intrigued by microtonal guitars for a while now, but they are very difficult to get. I knew that because the tones you hear with that type of instrument are not familiar to Western ears, a microtonal guitar would be great for building a confrontational musical soundscape where hopefully the listener can feel the uneasiness that Phillip does.

AU: The EP references Jim Reeves' "Welcome to My World" multiple times. Why was that

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At a time in the past, when cell phones flipped, people still believed in God and my shits were a lot more consistent, I put on an outdoor metal

festival in Port Alberni, BC.

I called it BC Metal Show.

I called it BC Metal Show because I loved metal, especially then, and fancy names were difficult. I had no idea what I was doing.

Heavy metal was cresting a rebirth at that time. Documentaries such as Sam Dunn's *Metal: A Headbanger's Journey*, and books like Ian Christie's *The Sound of the Beast*, complemented and named the phenomenon. Bands such as Lamb of God, Mastodon, The Haunted, Avenged Sevenfold and Unearth blended sounds and broke norms, causing absolute chaos for metal nerds diagramming metal genres on the walls in their basements.

I was all over it. The galloping drums had me screaming with my windows down, hoping some kind stranger would tell me I sound just like Randy Blythe, except better, and that they had an opening for a front man, a handsome front man just like me. And I'd say, "OK, how much money are we talkin', dawg? Because I'll do that shit for free."

Then I'd hop out of the car, we'd dance and he'd have two beers, two joints, in his back pocket... those were the days. My grandkids will believe that happened.

Organizing a music festival was a lot more difficult than I first realized. I thought I'd contact a band, probably

Pantera or some shit, they'd drive to Vancouver Island with their gear, set up and play for \$2,000... tops. They never responded to my MySpace message.

Surprisingly, my relentless emails and messages worked. 3 Inches of Blood agreed to headline the one-day festival. Why? My only guess was they were in the area and had nothing better to do. I secured a farmer's field outside of city limits

with the legend called Farmer Bill, a rugged and incredibly helpful human being.

Task complete. Farmer Bill and 3 Inches of Blood. All set, go to bed, get rich.

The thing with events is that there is always something else to do, or to make better, or worry about. All the promo, planning and administrative work was a tall hurdle for a broke boy with ADHD, but it was really fucking fun. Tickets, flyers, wristbands, insurance, booze, stage, sound, posters, advertising in *ABSOLUTE UNDERGROUND* (thanks Ira), the list went on, so I stopped reading the list.

One of the most eye-opening aspects of needing help for something, such as this singular event, is meeting awesome people who help for free, such as Jason and Tyrone in Port Alberni, Christine and the band Mendoza from Victoria. Events are a friend-making adventure.

The thing happened. Metal reverberated across a mowed field until the notes disappeared into the trees. From high noon until high moon, the angels sang. Metal gods smiled. 35 degrees and sunny. Maple bacon. Lucky Lager.

It was roughshod and haphazard; the lighting was two sets of yellow work lights, the stage a mound of dirt moved by tractor, the green room was a circle of lawn chairs behind the dirt mound. Two hundred sweaty, black-clad metal fans stood on the edge of a 50-acre field in front of sweatiest and blacker-clad musicians.

Just before 3 Inches of Blood took the mound, a moment that left a profound impression on me. A young fellow about my age approached me. He looked travel-ready, no metal uniform or anything.

He asked if I put the show on. I said yeah.

He said he was a huge metalhead from out east and was headed to Tofino with his girlfriend. He described, with a light in his eye, that he saw a poster in the gas station saying 3 Inches of Blood was playing right now, just down the road. He couldn't believe his luck. He said he felt like he had slipped into a dream.

I felt like I had done all that organizing just to be able to see it through his eyes. For the rest of the

night, I was him.

Moments later, Shane, guitarist of 3IOB, in mid-riff, blew a stream of daytime indulgence into the dirt below. A faucet of puke parted a sea of beard. I was lucky enough to be standing in the spray zone and some made it onto my leg and onto my Vans. It was awesome.

"We remember that show pretty well. There was a hiccup mid set but wasn't due to illness. Our bass amp got fucked up somehow and we had a delay trying to replace it so we could continue the show. Mendoza played before us so we chased them down while they were loading gear to see about borrowing their bass amp to finish the show. A certain member, ironically not their bassist, flat out said no. So we were left with no choice but to use one of our backup guitar amps as a bass amp. Not ideal but the show must go on."

— Cam, 3 Inches of Blood

This was all caught on video. The entire festival. Not a single human eye has ever watched the tapes. Six VHS-C tapes, the small ones, each labelled BC Metal Show '06.

They were last seen in Calgary, Alberta, in spring of 2012. Possible current locations include Moose Jaw, Airdrie, Calgary, Fort St. John, Langley or Pueblo, Colorado.

If you come across them, PLEASE CONTACT ABSOLUTE UNDERGROUND IMMEDIATELY.

If you have any memories, facts or other evidence that this festival actually happened, email livekootenays@gmail.com.

Happy Festival Season!!!

TimT

Poster artwork: Shara Fuller — Grim Reaper hunting in Alberni inlet



KELSEY HAMILTON: A VERY PROFESSIONAL COMEDIAN

By Ross Hansen

Absolute Underground: Can you tell us a bit about yourself

Kelsey Hamilton: I'm Kelsey Hamilton, a comedian from Vancouver. My special interests are my parents, lime scooters and a third thing that would make me sound cooler.

AU: What was starting out in comedy like for you?

KH: My first show was March 2016. I was 23. I had been to a few shows and decided I wanted to try stand-up. So I emailed YukYuks and asked to do their weekly ProAm show. I got an email saying "you're on!" which was both exciting and terrifying.

I put together my ideas to make a little five-minute set. I remember the day of the show, I did my whole set over face time to my then-boyfriend. It took me about three minutes to get through it. When I was done I said, "well hopefully

it'll be longer with laughter" and he said "I wouldn't count on that".

It ended up probably being closer to four minutes because there actually was some laughter. I think going from the expectation of zero laughs to getting some was enough to hook me into comedy. The other comics on the show were so supportive and told me where mics were and how to get into it. It was a great start!

AU: What makes a great show? From the talent to the venues and audience, what's going to be the best time for everyone

KH: A spotlight. A show without a spotlight is not a show at all. It's actually just a restaurant.

I did not know this for the first show I ran. We had no spotlight. I had no idea how crucial this is for people's attention. There's a lot that goes into running a show, I didn't realize. Spotlight, music, sound system. These things all help guide the audience into having a good time.

AU: Tell us about your favourite show you've done? Did it fit all those ideals?

KH: A recent show that stands out was this past January in Hamilton, Ontario. I was doing a weekend at their comedy club, Levity. It was my first time ever being in Ontario, so I was already so amped up.

Arriving in Hamilton, I felt like everyone I spoke to was the nicest person I had EVER spoken to.

The comedy club itself is such a cool venue covered with unique art and décor. It had a real

authentic comedy club vibe. I loved the green room, and signed the wall among all the other comics' signatures.

The shows went well and were so fun. To top it all off, someone gave me \$20 after the early show. I, of course, mentioned this at the late show and someone else gave me \$20. It just added to the magic of Levity. And yes, they have a spotlight!

AU: What's the best shitty place you've performed?

KH: The Legion in Squamish, BC is home of the best "shitty" open mic. It's in a small town so it actually gets a crowd, which is usually the main thing missing from an open mic.

It's run by two funny guys, both named Evan. They love comedy and do commentary throughout the show. There are devilled eggs? For no reason but for the love of devilled eggs!

CROWDSURF COMEDY

guess. There are \$5 beers. The TVs playing sports highlights stay on for the whole show. It's perfect!

AU: You've released on YouTube a comedy special called *Kelsey Hamilton | A Very Professional Comedian*, it's very funny. I hit like, what's next for you

KH: Thank you! I'm loving the response to my special. I check the comments every day — thanks for the like!!

It's getting played on SiriusXM, which I'm so excited about. Next up for me is to start touring! Rachel Schaefer and I are going to hit the road together late summer / early fall for a lil' co-headlining tour!

All dates and ticket links will be on my Instagram soon @kelseygramilton

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DECIMATE METALFEST RETURNS TO MILLET WITH RIOT CITY JOINING 2026 LINEUP

Decimate Metalfest returns to the Millet Agriplex Arena in Millet, Alberta on June 26–27, 2026, bringing together Western Canada's underground metal community for two days of heavy music, independent arts and all-ages festival energy. What began as a grassroots gathering has evolved into a multi-day rural festival built around connection, community, and a shared love of heavy music culture. Now in its 2026 edition, Decimate continues to expand its reach while remaining firmly rooted in the Canadian metal scene. This year's lineup update sees Calgary's RIOT

CITY stepping in as headliners following the departure of Glyph, joining an already stacked bill that includes The Convalescence, Squidhammer, Famous Strangers, Cries of Blood and a wide range of touring and regional acts.

Also newly added to the roster are Calgary youth band Pollux and Edmonton's Kill the Eclipse, further reinforcing the festival's mix of emerging talent and established underground names. In total, 26 acts will perform across the weekend, spanning metal, hardcore, punk, and experimental heavy music.

Friday, June 26 opens the festival with a full night of heavy performances co-headlined by The Convalescence and Squidhammer, setting an early tone of intensity and volume. Saturday expands into a full-day program led by Riot City, alongside a mix of Canadian and international acts, youth performers and special guests across multiple stages of sound and style.

One of the returning highlights is Kill the Eclipse, appearing as the festival's "fundraiser band," a rotating slot drawn from artists involved in Decimate's year-round community events. Organizers say the inclusion reflects the festival's ongoing commitment to supporting its scene beyond the weekend itself.

June 26 - 27, 2026 | DECIMATEMETALFEST.COM | Millet, AB, Canada (40KM South of Edmonton) | Millet Agriplex Arena | 5400 45th Avenue - Millet, Alberta

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LINEUP: RIOT CITY, FAMOUS STRANGERS, CRIES OF BLOOD, ESCOUNTERTEIL, LET IT ROT, THE CONVASCENCE, SQUIDHAMMER, KILL THE ECLIPSE, POLLUX, VALLEY OF DESPAIR, FEMMES VOYOUS, BEYOND, THOUSAND ARMS, ANOMALISTIC, DIMENSION, BLACK FRIDAY, KROON, LIGHT DRAGON, GODFALL, COLLUX, HILL THE COLLECTOR, RESIGRATES, KLEVER, BIRTHDAY GIRL, MISTRESS OF CEREMONIES, LUST DUST, HARLOT.

Alongside the music, Decimate Metalfest has become known for its broader festival experience. The weekend includes camping, vendor spaces featuring independent artists, interactive entertainment, and community-focused events such as a Saturday pancake breakfast and youth air guitar contests. The festival also maintains an all-ages format, with children under 10 admitted free, reinforcing its accessibility and family-friendly approach within an otherwise high-intensity genre space. Beyond the stage programming, Decimate has grown into a platform that reflects the scale and diversity of the global metal community. For the 2026 edition, organizers report receiving performer submissions from 15

countries, eight Canadian provinces, and 25 U.S. states—underscoring the festival's increasing international profile while remaining grounded in its Alberta roots. Built by members of the metal community, for the metal community, Decimate Metalfest continues to position itself as a space where emerging artists, touring bands, and first-time performers share the same stage and audience. **DECIMATE METALFEST - All Ages**
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decimatefestival.com
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ELUSIVE THUGS: Through Fire and Transformation

By FLORA

Based in Toronto, ELUSIVE THUGS emerged as a creative outlet for Vaya Vaya's deeply personal and spiritual *ALBUM 10*. Blending elements of rock, grunge, punk and experimental music, the project explores themes of betrayal, faith, resilience and transformation. AU spoke with Vaya about the journey behind the album, the search for truth and what comes next.

AU: Welcome to *Absolute Underground!* For readers discovering ELUSIVE THUGS for the first time, who is VAYA VAYA, and how would you introduce yourself and your music?

Vaya: That's a good question. I'm a music composer, and most of my friends and family probably call me EDGY because I'm always pushing boundaries, experimenting with music and instruments in different ways and I have a fierce way of being unique. I myself struggle to define or categorize my music, but you could say it has roots in rock, grunge, punk and experimental music. ELUSIVE

THUGS came about in my artistic journey because I didn't feel like releasing *ALBUM 10* under my own name, but rather as part of a group of people who share the same ideas, through sound, words and visuals, with support and humility. That's why you won't find any names at the end of each video, because the unique thing about this album is that each track is accompanied by a music video.

AU: Where are you based, and what's the local music scene like right now?

Vaya: I am based in Toronto, Canada, and I recently learned that it is one of the world's most renowned music cities. Having been involved in my latest project, EDGY, I don't know much about the local scene in Toronto right now, but I know it's a vibrant city that offers diverse alternative scenes for expressing all kinds of art.

AU: *ALBUM 10* was released in December 2025, but you weren't expecting to create a new album—what shifted creatively and personally to bring it to life?

Vaya: To be honest with you, I had a profound awakening through violent betrayals by closed ones, which opened my eyes to many things, and it seemed that music was the path through which I needed to express these personal and general ideas that were seeping through my heart and soul. I felt very shaken by the current of life and at the same time extremely animated by the spirit of God, which was able to keep me alive through all these struggles: I was radically shaped by fire. These personal struggles became general human ideas

and values to defend. I am sincerely filled with enormous gratitude for the difficult year I went through in 2025, particularly for having had this impulse to express it through a talent that I ultimately didn't even think I carried so strongly in my veins, but also for having met absolutely wonderful people on "this road to hell". *ALBUM 10*



truly reflects what Charles Baudelaire would say when he wrote, "You gave me your mud, and I made it into gold." And it is truly through this journey that I can confirm today that I have experienced the path of Jesus Christ. That is why I chose to release *ALBUM 10* on Christmas Day, as a tribute to Jesus Christ, whom I encountered through this experience.

AU: *ALBUM 10* sounds like a reflective chapter—what themes or questions were most present while shaping it?

Vaya: Betrayal, child abuse, restitution, unconditional love, manipulation by the music industry, the seduction of Satan's spirit, the battle against the devil, the triumph of God, letting go to embrace your future triumph—in short, a very spiritual work.

AU: Your work often speaks about truth, ego and perspective—how do those ideas shape the way you create and release music today?

Vaya: Music is a common gateway to approaching different themes that life allows us to experience. For me, the ego is a small box that stifles self-fulfillment and that must be discarded as quickly as possible in order to be free. As for truth, it's a somewhat delicate subject, since it can only be defined from the different perspectives of each individual. The search for truth is indeed something that profoundly moves me in general, because I have a great need to align myself with God's light in order to honor my own path. In short, the real energy that inspires my life and my career is simply that of the all-powerful source we call the Creator, God, or the Almighty Lord.

AU: When you look at your body of work so far, what connects it all for you underneath the



surface?

Vaya: The Human Experience

AU: Outside of music, what helps you stay grounded or creatively inspired?

Vaya: My four children.

AU: What's coming next in 2026—any tour plans?

Vaya: I've met some new people recently, and we do want to bring on stage *ALBUM 10*. I simply need to create a new band with new members for this project.

AU: Where can readers find your music online and stay connected?

vaya.am

youtube.com/@VAYA_AM12

instagram.com/vaya.vaya_am

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LEGION OF DECADENCE

20 Years Strong and Still Forging Ahead

By FLORA

Forged in 2006 in Quebec, Legion Of Decadence have spent two decades building a no-nonsense strain of heavy metal rooted in thrash and groove. With their sixth album *No Road Left To Burn* (released May 9, 2026) and a milestone anniversary behind them, the band continues to push forward with a sound shaped as much by persistence as it is by evolution.

AU spoke with drummer Michael Dupuis-Souligny about the band's 20-year journey and what is driving them into this next chapter.

AU: Hello and welcome to *Absolute Underground!* For those discovering Legion Of Decadence for the first time, who are you, where are you from, and how did the band come together?

Thank you for granting us this interview. Legion Of Decadence is a heavy metal band in the

broadest sense, since we draw from many styles and settled on that label. It all began on March 6, 2006 when my cousin and I decided to start a band. Neither of us really played properly at the time—just a few guitar strums—but we started anyway. I received a drum kit from my father that summer, and that became the foundation. We brought in other musicians, started writing songs, playing shows, recording demos and eventually released our first album *Desolation* in 2015. My cousin later left, but I continued with different musicians, including William Lafrance, who has been with us since 2015.

AU: You've officially crossed the 20-year mark as a band—what moments or milestones stand out to you most when you look back?

The biggest pride is our evolution. Our early demos were, frankly, not very good and even got us some bad press at the start. Today I'm surrounded by skilled musicians and a strong vocalist, and everyone contributes at a much higher level. We're still underground, based far north of Montreal and Toronto, but the name is starting to circulate. Being featured in *Decibel*, Imperative Music compilations, *Legacy magazine*

in Germany, and now *Absolute Underground*—that recognition means more than the previous 20 years combined.

AU: What's been the key to keeping the band together through lineup changes and everything that comes with a long-running project?

It really comes down to adaptation. I've always had a clear vision for the band, but I could have taken a more controlling approach. The reality is that finding committed musicians here is difficult, especially when everyone already has careers and obligations. So when the right people come in, we have to let them contribute fully. I guide the direction, but they bring songs and ideas too. It becomes a balance of respect and compromise, and that's what has kept the project stable.

AU: Your sound and identity have clearly evolved over the years alongside lineup changes—how would you describe that progression from early influences to where the band stands now?

The evolution really follows the musicians. Each lineup brings new influences, but we always maintain a core identity—something dark, heavy, and not tied to one strict style. Early on, our influences were bands like Alice In Chains, Kreator, Testament, and Ozzy's darker material. Later, we moved into more black metal territory with influences like Cradle Of Filth and Dissection, which shaped our early releases. Every shift in lineup has added another layer to what the band is today.

AU: Tell us about celebrating your 20th anniversary on stage—what did that moment feel like sharing it with the people who've supported you along the way?

It was emotional. We were on stage in our hometown in front of about 80 people, but they mattered. Some have been with us since the beginning, others were newer fans, and even some of my students were there. We played a two-hour set covering our full catalogue plus new material. At the end, I almost broke down. I never imagined this project would last 20 years, and it meant a lot to see people still connect with it.

AU: Your new album *No Road Left To Burn* marks your sixth release—what can listeners expect from this next chapter of the band?

This is the most complete version of the band so far. It's more complex, more progressive, and more ambitious—some songs run between five and fifteen minutes. We've already shared a preview with "The Abyss" on YouTube. It's a dense, emotional record where every musician gave everything. Some people may find the progressive direction challenging, but it represents exactly where we are right now.

AU: You're active live, including festival appearances like Sonum Fest—how does that experience compare to the way you usually build and control your own shows?

Usually we self-produce everything, so we control every technical detail. For this one, we arrived with our own gear: a mixing console, a splitter, our in-ear monitors, and my sample pad. Setup and teardown were very short, so it was a new challenge for us overall and an extraordinary experience. Especially since this year we were playing our new songs to a click track, which meant using in-ear monitors.

AU: After everything you've accomplished so far, what continues to drive Legion Of Decadence forward?

It's the pursuit of doing this at the highest level we can. We know we may always remain underground, but that's not the point. The goal is to push the project as far as possible—whether that's touring internationally or simply knowing we gave everything to it. As long as there is passion and energy, the band will continue.

AU: Where can readers find your music and follow the band online?

We're on all major platforms—YouTube, Spotify, Apple Music, Bandcamp, and more. The music is there waiting to be discovered.

legionofdecadence.bandcamp.com
facebook.com/legionofdecadence
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Spiritual Aggression

GHOST OF MY DEAD WIFE



A Message From "the Ghost":

"Four years ago my wife passed away due to cancer. She was diagnosed with small cell lung cancer, apparently with no cure.

After twenty-five years I lost the love of my life. I have never felt so empty in my entire existence. I had no idea how I would process this after her life slowly faded away in front of me. Watching her do chemo therapy, with a projected life span of two weeks, I kept her with me for nine months before she finally passed. I was so sad. There are no words to describe how terrible this experience was for me. After her passing, the first song on the record "Only In My Dreams" came to me. I put this together and my good friend of many years "The Wizzard" Rob Shallcross said to share it. It touched him so deeply, as he saw what I was going through. By releasing it I thought it may help the healing process and help others heal who may be able to relate. I was very fortunate to find someone like her and to enjoy twenty-five amazing years of partnership.

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LINDSAY SCHOOLCRAFT Fusing Metal, Classical and Electronic Sound

By Ray MacKay

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

Lindsay Schoolcraft: Howdy! I'm Lindsay Schoolcraft, a solo artist and harpist from Canada who blends Nu Metalcore with classical music.

AU: For our unfamiliar readers, please give us a brief history of yourself.

LS: It's kinda tricky to make it brief when I've been doing this for 25 years. Here is a TLDR: I hail from Canada. I'm a classically trained singer and musician. Got my start in punk bands and doing PR. Have been an active solo artist since 2010. *Harrowing* will be my 3rd full studio album. I have also worked with such bands as Motionless in

White, Myrkur and Cancer Bats.

AU: Who is in your group?

LS: It is just I, on vocals and harp, Cody Johnstone on Guitar, and Dylan Gowan on drums.

AU: Where are you from and what is the music scene like there?

LS: I mainly hail from the music scene of Oshawa, Ontario and it is AWESOME there! This is where I got my proper alternative music upbringing thanks to the local mall having a plethora of music stores and also our all ages venue The Dungeon. I was exposed to multiple harsh sub-genres and the nu-metal explosion at the time greatly influenced me. I feel lucky that I got to experience the scene and musical releases in the late '90s and early 2000s.

AU: If possible, describe your musical sound/style of Lindsay Schoolcraft for our readers.

LS: I'm a weird breed being a classical musician

who is also a singer/songwriter that does metal. So what I've been aiming to do is fuse classical, metal and electronic music all while having my voice be the anchor that keeps the songs cohesive.

AU: You have your third album, *Harrowing* out June 19, 2026 on all streaming platforms. Tell us more!

LS: Legit, I am so stoked this album is finally getting out there. We went for more metalcore-pop influences on this one and having JD who is Motionless in White's producer really helped us with that. Of course, Rocky Gray came back to help us with guitar parts and it's still heavily orchestrated thanks to Spencer Creaghan.

Harrowing became a concept album in the later development of the record. I didn't realize that in each song I was encrypting the different stages of grief that come with leaving a bad situation. It takes you through the whole journey and the feelings of coming out liberated and relieved.

AU: What were some of the inspirations that went into creating *Harrowing*?

LS: On this record we wanted to infuse more of our electronic influences so we took a lot of inspiration from Trip-Hop, Witch House and influence from such acts as Purity Ring and VAST.

AU: What can your fans expect from this new album? What song are you most excited for people to hear?

LS: So far the response has been great, especially

to the new single "Vague". I think people will really like "So Alive" too which features guest vocalist Krista Shipperbottom. What you can expect is that none of the songs sound the same. They all offer something different due to their stories lyrically.

AU: What are some of your musical inspirations?

LS: Personally, I have always been greatly influenced by the works of Evanescence and Amy Lee from their early years, all the way up to the album *The Open Door*. Bjork also reminds me daily that there are no rules and art is whatever the hell you want it to be and that is beautiful. And I'm always inspired when I listen to the works

of Jon Crosby's 'VAST', Portishead, Spiritbox and HEALTH.

AU: Any upcoming tours or future releases we should know about?

LS: We will be playing a hometown show on July 11th at BOND ST Events where we will play the album in full. We are also touring eastern Canada later this year - that is TBD though. As far as big tour plans, we're working towards that in 2027.

AU: Any final words for our readers?

LS: Thank you to anyone who reads this, who listens, who supports through grabbing merch and being on my Patreon. It means everything to me.

AU: How can people find you online?

LS: All current and active links can be found here: linktr.ee/lindsay-schoolcraft

Photo credit: Andrea Hunter Photography



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From its origins as a local radio initiative through Kootenay Co-op Radio's *Crank It to 6*, MASSiF was built to address a gap in access to heavy music in the region and to create space for younger audiences and underground artists who were often underrepresented in traditional touring circuits. Following its early editions, the festival organizers identified a lack of diversity on heavy music stages and formally shifted the festival's

MASSiF MUSIC FESTIVAL CELEBRATES 10 YEARS OF HEAVY MUSIC IN NELSON

The MASSiF Music Festival returns to Nelson, BC from September 24–26, 2026, marking its 10th anniversary with three days of underground heavy music, community-driven programming and downtown performances across multiple venues.

Founded in 2016, MASSiF has grown into a carefully curated heavy music festival rooted in the Kootenay region's DIY culture. Run as a non-profit by a volunteer board and committees, the festival is funded through attendees, local business support and grants, with all profits directed back to the artists.

Taking place on the traditional territories of the Syilx tmixw (Okanagan), Sinixt, and Ktunaxa peoples, MASSiF runs annually in downtown Nelson on the final weekend of September, bringing together punk, metal, hardcore, doom, noise, psych and experimental music in an intimate, multi-venue format.

This year's first wave of artists includes queer hardcore punk collective HIRS, cello-driven grunge project Lung, power metal outfit Balrogath, and Prairie noise rock mainstays Man Meat, with additional lineup announcements still to come.

mandate. MASSiF now prioritizes representation across gender, race and identity, with a commitment that at least half of participating bands include non-male members, alongside dedicated consideration for BIPOC artists.

The festival also emphasizes local engagement, with approximately 30 percent of acts drawn from the Kootenay region, and 10 percent of ticketing support directed toward youth access, encouraging participation both on and off stage.

Now in its tenth year, MASSiF continues to position itself as both a festival and a community platform—one designed to promote connection between artists and audiences in a setting that remains intentionally intimate despite its growth.

What began as a grassroots experiment in bringing heavier music to a small BC town has evolved into a widely respected regional festival known for its curation, inclusivity and strong sense of community ownership.

MASSiF Music Festival - 10th Anniversary

September 24–26, 2026

Downtown Nelson, BC.

festivalfmassif.com

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stretches from Victoria to the Interior, with acts including Wormwitch, Fuzz Peddler, Voltage, Mortuary Cave, Total Isolation, Minx, The Bombshells, Seconds, Gloam and Jankyeyed Jury.

Opening up the festivities will be the "Meditative Wavelengths" of Rob Gretsinger with his gong set, setting an atmospheric tone before the festival dives into a full day of live performance.

As night falls, the event closes with The Strawberry Vigil by Nightingale, a late-night acoustic and spoken-word style gathering described as a candlelit (or strawberry-lit) listening experience, complete with tea, snacks and a midnight wind-down in the meadow.

Beyond the music, the festival expands its arts focus with live painting and mixed media work.

The festival remains rooted in a DIY, community-first approach, offering free tent camping, roadside vehicle camping and low-cost trailer options, alongside

on-site water access and a deliberately relaxed rural setup. **Attendees are encouraged to camp, explore the grounds and take in both the performances and the surrounding landscape.**

Now in its second year, Mandrake Abbey continues to position itself as a space where underground music and experimental art intersect in an immersive outdoor setting, built as much around atmosphere as performance.

Check out the Line up, buy tickets and get pumped!

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August 8th, 2026, Bridge Lake, BC

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MANDRAKE ABBEY ART & MUSIC FESTIVAL Returns to Bridge Lake this August

The reckoning is back in the mountains.

The Mandrake Abbey Art & Music Festival returns to Bridge Lake, BC on August 8, 2026 for its second annual gathering of underground music, experimental art and DIY community culture, set against the backdrop of the high country.

Hosted on the grounds of Mandrake Abbey, the all-ages festival brings together a cross-section of Canada's heavier and more experimental scenes, spanning black metal, sludge, punk, noise rock and alternative sounds. **This year's lineup**



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

Bones: TAILGUNNER! A band carrying the torch for classic British heavy metal, with no apology or compromise.

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

Bones: We're from England. There are a few great bands coming up and breaking through, but they're more within the classic rock style. Our goal is to give the country a band in the style of Maiden & Priest for the modern day — it's been too long!

AU: Give us a brief history of Tailgunner.

Bones: We formed in 2022 and released our debut album *Guns For Hire* in July 2023. We've played over 100 shows all over Europe, sharing stages with Saxon, UDO, W.A.S.P., Steel Panther, Armored Saint, Riot & KK's Priest.

Most recently, we signed to Napalm Records, with the new album *Midnight Blitz* having dropped February 6!

AU: Congrats on the new album! Tell us more about *Midnight Blitz*!

Bones: This new album is a huge step up. Our

songwriting has greatly improved as a band with all the experience gained from touring with so many killer bands. We watched, learned, and put it all down on this record. We feel it's the first classic album from us.

AU: What was it like working with K.K. Downing, who produced this album?

Bones: Working with K.K. was an amazing and surreal lesson in heavy metal! He's one of the most legendary figures in music and guitar. We learned so much from working with him, day in and day out, for the six months we took to put together this album. He taught us to keep fighting until the music was really as great as it could be, and always encouraged us to believe we could do better!

AU: How has it been working with Napalm Records?

Bones: Napalm Records are the biggest and best for a reason. Their support since signing has been awesome, and it's great to work with such a cool and supportive label. Bands are sometimes at war with their label, so it makes for a nice change!

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

Bones: It changes, but a few are "Midnight Blitz", "Eulogy", "Barren Lands & Seas of Read" and "Guns For Hire!"

AU: What's a song you would want to cover for a future album?

Bones: We've done quite a few covers live, but only Metallica's "Hit the Lights" on record for a tribute album. Motörhead's "Bomber" would be a great one, and we played "Painkiller" and "Exciter"



live during the debut album, so either of these would also be cool.

AU: In your opinion, what's the best heavy metal album of all time?

Bones: Iron Maiden — *Somewhere in Time*.

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

Bones: We can count members past and present of Maiden, Priest, Megadeth and Helloween as fans — all our biggest influences. That's a dream as a band.

AU: Any upcoming tours?

Bones: We'll be touring this album heavily for the next few years. Europe is up first. We started in Switzerland in January with Hammerfall. If you're on European soil, you'll be able to catch us in 2026! Perhaps other continents too...

AU: Anything else to promote?

Bones: We just dropped a killer run of 80's-style merch — check it out! @

[tailgunnerhq](https://tailgunnerhq.com) everywhere you look!

AU: Any final words for our readers?

Bones: Heavy metal for eternity! Oh, and up the fuckin' Toffees!

tailgunner.bandcamp.com

Photo credit: Tunde Valiszka



**TAILGUNNER Releases
New Album *Midnight Blitz*
via Napalm Records**

Interview with Bassist Bones

By Ray MacKay

THE SOPHISTOS: DON'T WANT NO GORILLA ROCK

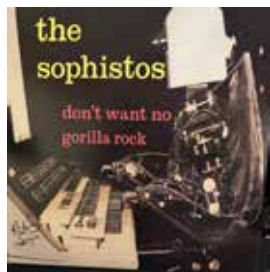
By Angie Edwards

Back by popular demand, the album that nobody asked for but can't get enough of!

Celebrating its 28th anniversary, The Sophistos re-release of *Don't Want No Gorilla Rock* is making an appearance in your local record store in the near future. Presented by Bear Trap Productions, the album was recovered from an original recording in digital audio tape (DAT format) and then pressed on vinyl at Wrecking Crew Studios, one of only three pressing plants in Western Canada. The first recording was produced in the laundry room of Dan Shortt's parents' home in October of 1998 and performed by founding



members David Barclay (vocals, guitar), Duncan Gidney (saxophone), Mike Croy (bass) and Andre Arraiz-Rivas (drums). Tony Hebert at Fresh Air Studios digitally remastered the tapes in the following year of May 1999. The songs were copied to CD and distributed in one small batch of thirty copies, but the original tapes were sealed up and stored away for nearly three decades. Upon their rediscovery, they were demanded to be pressed to vinyl.



This re-release from Bear Trap Productions encapsulates both a moment in Victoria, BC history and an influence to future generations of punk rockers who followed in suit. With their do-it-yourself attitude and lo-fi sensibility, The Sophistos' *Don't Want No Gorilla Rock* album will continue to stand the test of time as a tribute to the shenanigans of youth and as a triumph of chaos and fuckery.

You can rediscover this gem lost to time (and a linen closet!) very soon through your local record store provider and online through Bandcamp.com for digital download.

MAKSYM ZAKHARCHENKO
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 BRINGING IDEAS TO LIFE

GRAPHIC REALISM ABSTRACT

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FONDERIE 1901 SET TO OPEN IN SHAWINIGAN

By **Paget Williams**

Fonderie 1901 is a 600–1,800 scalable multipurpose venue located in the heart of Quebec in Shawinigan. It is halfway between Montreal and Quebec City. Opening date is September 10, 2026 and promises to be a night to remember.

The venue is located within Espace Shawinigan, which is Canada's oldest foundry.

The historic complex was purchased by the City of Shawinigan and renovated beautifully, transforming it into a multipurpose music and arts venue capable of hosting a wide variety of events. The main focus of the venue will be presenting international talent to the province that would normally only be available in Montreal.

Fonderie 1901 will be the largest general

admission venue in the province of Quebec outside of Montreal. Being right in the middle of the province, Fonderie 1901 is easily accessible from Quebec City (1.5 hrs), Montreal (1.5 hrs), Sherbrooke (2 hrs), and Trois-Rivières (25 mins).

VIP boxes will be available for purchase. With 650 parking spaces available on site, looking for parking will be a thing of the past.

Right on the picturesque Rivière Saint-Maurice, Fonderie 1901 is a venue built with touring musicians in mind. Little details make a big difference.

Set to open on September 10, Fonderie 1901 is poised to become one of Quebec's most exciting new entertainment destinations. Located in the heart of the province within the historic Espace Shawinigan complex, the venue combines industrial heritage, modern design, and world-class functionality to create a truly unique experience for artists and audiences alike.

BACKSTAGE PASS

Originally home to Canada's oldest foundry, the Espace Shawinigan site has undergone a remarkable transformation since being purchased and restored by the City of Shawinigan. What was once an industrial landmark has now been beautifully reimagined as a vibrant cultural hub, blending history with contemporary entertainment. The restoration preserves the architectural character of the original structure while introducing state-of-the-art amenities designed to host concerts, festivals, corporate gatherings, and artistic events on a grand scale.

Fonderie 1901 is a scalable, multipurpose venue with a capacity ranging from 600 to 1,800 guests, making it adaptable for intimate performances as well as large-scale productions. The venue's primary mission is ambitious yet clear: to bring international-calibre talent to Quebec audiences outside of Montreal. Music lovers across the province will now have the opportunity to experience major touring artists in a setting that is both accessible and immersive.

Strategically located halfway between Montreal and Quebec City, Fonderie 1901 is ideally positioned to serve audiences from across the province.

Visitors can reach the venue from Montreal in approximately 90 minutes, Quebec City in the same amount of time, Sherbrooke in just two hours, and Trois-Rivières in only 25 minutes. This central location makes Shawinigan a natural gathering point for entertainment enthusiasts from every corner of Quebec.

Once open, Fonderie 1901 will become the largest general admission venue in Quebec outside of Montreal, filling an important gap

in the province's live entertainment landscape. The venue's flexibility allows it to host a wide variety of events including concerts, comedy performances, cultural showcases, private functions, and community celebrations. VIP boxes will also be available, offering premium experiences for guests seeking elevated comfort and exclusive views of performances.

Convenience has also been placed at the forefront of the venue's design. With 650 on-site parking spaces available, attendees can avoid the common frustrations associated with large event venues. Easy access and streamlined logistics ensure guests can focus entirely on enjoying the experience.

Positioned along the picturesque Rivière Saint-Maurice, Fonderie 1901 offers more than just entertainment — it offers atmosphere. The scenic surroundings add character and charm to every event, creating a memorable backdrop for visitors and performers alike.

Designed with touring musicians in mind, the venue pays close attention to the details that matter most. From efficient backstage functionality to audience

sightlines and acoustics, every element has been thoughtfully considered. At Fonderie 1901, the philosophy is simple: little details make a big difference.

As anticipation builds toward its September 10 grand opening, Fonderie 1901 is already being recognized as a landmark addition to Quebec's cultural and entertainment scene — a venue where history, music, and community come together under one unforgettable roof.





Anvil's band leader Steven "Lips" Kudlow, doing what he does best.

ANVIL: POUNDING THE PAST

Canadian Heavy Metal Legends
Undertake Retrospective World Tour
By Ferdy Belland

"It's those early albums that shaped us, so of course it made sense to us to do this," says Steve Kudlow (a.k.a. Lips), guitarist-vocallist-bandleader of Canada's beloved metal stalwarts Anvil - who . "A lot of the songs we'll be playing have always

remained in our live repertoire, but it was a fun challenge to dust off a lot of other songs, too - so there'll be surprises galore! We're hoping all the Pounders, the young and the young at heart, all come out to see us!"

Lips originally formed Anvil in Toronto in 1978 with powerhouse drummer Robb Reiner, and their absolutely whacky career-arc comes across as a Canuck version of *This Is Spinal Tap* - but Anvil is *real*. Very real. The band quickly built a strong name for themselves as an explosive live act on the Canadian club circuit, with Lips using electric dildos to play impressive slide guitar;

Lips' considerable instrumental prowess convinced metal-god Lemmy Kilmister to invite him to replace Motorhead's then-departing lead guitarist "Fast Eddie" Clarke - an offer Lips politely declined. Anvil broke through, domestically and internationally, with the release of their first three albums (1981's *Hard N' Heavy*, 1982's *Metal On Metal*, and 1983's *Forged in Fire*), and have long been openly acknowledged as inspiring fledgling young anonymous garage bands - some of whom were named Metallica, Megadeth, Anthrax, and Slayer, among many others - to chase their own sound and chase their own dreams.

Anvil famously co-headlined the 1984 Super Rock Festival in Japan, sharing the stage with Whitesnake, Bon Jovi, the Michael Schenker Group, and Scorpions; due to numerous factors beyond their control (mostly a bad streak of record-label mismanagement), the band never reached the wider audiences of those acts, but despite all that they still wove their way through the metal heyday of the 1980s and through the choppy anti-metal waters of the grunge-ridden 1990s and into the 21st Century. Lips'

dogged determination, agonized persistence, and single-minded vision of Anvil's deafening Mission Statement has carried he and Reiner (and Chris Robertson, bassist since 2014) through over 2,000 live shows worldwide, with 20 albums to their discography. It is said that Canadian musicians need to work three times as hard as their American counterparts to receive half of the reward: Anvil is living proof of that statement. And still they rock.

"I don't really have all that much to complain about," says Lips. "I'm 70 years old and I'm still doing what I love to do." And he's telling the truth:

Anvil's 2026 Pounding the Past Tour will have the band playing no less than 85 shows across Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Scandinavia - and then it's back into the studio in Germany to get busy recording what will become their 21st album. It would appear that, in Anvil's world, Stubbornness is next to Godliness.

The trials and tribulations of the band were famously captured in the critically-acclaimed award-winning 2008 documentary *Anvil! The Story of Anvil*, directed by British filmmaker (and former Anvil roadie) Sacha Gervasi. The film moves from soul-crushing day-jobs (Lips driving catering trucks, Robb working construction), through the unintentional hilarity of a disastrous European tour, through the strain and struggle to record a comeback album, and final redemption as the band is reclaimed as metal heroes in Japan. The film exploded the band back into the mainstream eye with its heartwarmingly sympathetic Cinderella Story of the power of staying true to oneself through thick and thin, against all odds - and Anvil has been on a roll ever since.

"Put it this way," says Lips, "Ever since the movie came out, I haven't had to drive that catering truck anymore."

But even if it's been an unending uphill slog for Lips & Co., they pound along with the weary smiles of good-natured working-class craftsmen who celebrate the end of the working day with pride of accomplishment... and a windmilled power chord, blasting through an overdriven amplifier.

POUNDING THE PAST

WESTERN CANADIAN TOUR

June 26th: Chilliwack BC @ The Chill House

June 27th: Vancouver BC @ The Astoria

June 28th: Victoria BC @ The Phoenix

June 30th: Cranbrook BC @ Key City Theatre

July 1st: Calgary AB @ The Palomino

July 2nd: Edmonton AB @ Divebar

July 3rd: Saskatoon SK @ Black Cat Tavern

July 5th: Winnipeg MB @ The Park Theatre

Photo Credit: Dalila Kriheli

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SHOWING TEETH

Interview by Jean-Francois Gosselin

Nashville-based metalcore artist SHOWING TEETH is a solo project blending melodic hooks with a deathcore-inspired vocal range. Following the breakout momentum of her debut single "Labyrinth," she returned with the heavier and more confrontational "Rip." We spoke about writing alone, raw production choices, influences and what's coming next.

Absolute Underground: "Rip" feels heavier and more confrontational than "Labyrinth." Was that intentional or just where you were mentally when writing it?"

SHOWING TEETH: I'm a Nashville-based solo metalcore artist performing under the name SHOWING TEETH. "Labyrinth" was almost intentionally tip-toeing around emotion, as part of the storyline, but "Rip" was meant to be uncomfortably uncensored and raw. Many of the final vocals in the song are from the initial demo I recorded in my car in one take, and most of the lyrics were improvised, as they just felt right in the moment.

AU: SHOWING TEETH is essentially a one-person project. How does writing alone change your process compared to a band setting?"

ST: The solitary writing moments are imperative

to the project, as the lyrics and emotion are the most important part for me. The lyrics almost always come first, and I aim to mold everything around that. It just makes translating certain ideas for drums and guitar a little harder when it only exists in my mind. Absolutely no one wants to hear me play my drum ideas, trust me.

AU: What artists or records most shaped the sound you're building right now?"

ST: I am influenced by so many genres, so that's really difficult. I'd say predominantly in the heavy music space, I am influenced by Whitechapel, Periphery and Deafheaven,

but melodically I take a lot of inspiration from indie rock and pop, as well as alternative folk. The band Bad Suns makes music completely opposite from mine, but I am so inspired by every album they put out. Any artist that can create a universe with their music, really.

AU: Your tracks keep a raw edge instead of going fully polished. What does that rawness represent for you?"

ST: If it's how my voice sounded when I was writing the song, that's how I want it to stay. I leave in a lot of things I don't really like on purpose, because that's the emotion. I definitely get the itch to go in and replace lines and edit, but if I did that, none of the songs would come out. They'd sound lifeless.

AU: Are these singles leading into an EP or album, or do you prefer releasing music piece by piece?"

ST: It's definitely leading into something. There are more songs and they're all connected.

AU: What's next for SHOWING TEETH this year? Any plans to visit us in Canada?"

ST: There are a lot of festival shows planned. I'll be at Rock Fest, Upheaval, Louder Than Life and Shaky Knees, and maybe some more. I've always wanted to go to Canada, so I hope very soon.

showingteeth.com

Instagram: @showing.teeth

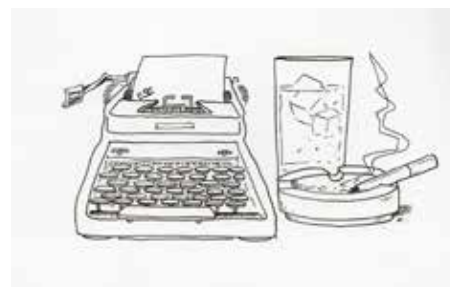


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TIPS & TALES FROM THE TYPEWRITER: Metropolis by the numbers

By david eugene everard

The truly fascinating thing about this 1927 film is how well it was able to forecast the role of technology in the twenty-first century: artificial intelligence, surveillance systems, humanoid robots, video phones, etc.

In October of 1924, director Fritz Lang, along with producer Erich Pommer, sailed into New York to purchase some new cameras for their next project. As their steamship slowly navigated the strange harbour, Lang was overwhelmed by the sheer size and scope of the skyscrapers that confronted him. Years later he recalled that "... the buildings seemed like a vertical curtain, shimmering and weightless – an opulent staged backdrop set against a sinister sky – in order to dazzle, divert, and hypnotize."

His 1927 cautionary tale, *Metropolis*, was set 100 years in the future, cost some 5,000,000 German Marks to produce, had a cast and crew of over 36,000, filled 17 reels of film, and is considered by many to be the very first big screen science fiction movie.

The cast included Brigitte Helm (doubling as Maria and The Robot) with Gustav Fröhlich (Freder) as her love interest and Rudolf Klein-Rogge as the charismatically challenged mad scientist, Rotwang. Gunter Rittau, Walter Ruttmann and Karl Freund (who later developed

the three-camera system for television) were the film's cinematographers, while visual effects wizard Eugen Schufftan introduced a new and innovative form of trick photography that came to be known as 'The Schufftan Process,' a combination of mirrors, miniature sets and elaborate camera masking techniques to produce illusions of size.

The story concerns the struggles of working-class citizens in a futuristic society, while the 'man vs machine' plotline allowed Lang's new camera plenty of cinematic space.

Dubbed the Master of Darkness by the British Film Industry, Fritz Lang had a distinguished career in both Germany and Hollywood. His filmography includes such critically acclaimed works as *M* (1931) starring Peter Lorre (in his career defining role) and *Scarlet Street* (1945) with Edward G. Robinson as an unknown, but highly talented, amateur artist who falls under the alluring spell of a young femme fatale played by Joan Bennett and Dan Duryea, as her arrogant pimp, Johnny Prince.

German expressionistic film (a term that Lang absolutely detested) was a highly influential style of cinema which relied on extremely high-contrast lighting, painted shadows, abstract architecture, and exaggerated camera angles to tell its stories. Much like film noir, some thirteen years later, it was an attempt to document our unconscious dreams, desires and fears through a Freudian lens.

James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931), along with Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1936) and Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982) all owe a huge cinematic debt to Fritz Lang and his groundbreaking film (with an obligatory tip of the old fedora to the perpetually skewed world of Expressionism in general).

Metropolis celebrates a centenary in 2027 thanks to a German filmmaker named Fritz Lang who looked up at a New York City skyline back in 1924 and saw the future.

Artwork by Gareth Gaudin



FEATURING ARTWORK BY CHAD CROTHERS A.K.A. BLUTO THE BARBARIAN

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SUNDIVER

By Alayna Hucul

AU: Who's in the band?

Sundiver is:
Tom McIsaac - Vocals, guitar
Carter Kletke - Guitar
Tristan Hawtree - Bass
Jared Bobryk - Drums

AU: Where are you from, and how does Sundiver's sound fit into the music scene there?

Jared: Having grown up in Vernon/Kelowna, there was never a huge scene of punk music that was accessible to us at a young age. Over the years & through (now-defunct) all-ages venues such as BBDB's or Local Losers in Vernon, or DunnEnzies in

Kelowna, we've been able to cultivate a following of younger people that consistently come to see us play. Despite not every member living in the Okanagan, or the difficulties the lack of venues contribute to setting up shows, we owe it to the kids and scene to keep coming back as much as we can. Recently now too, seeing kids who are often in the crowd start to form their own bands is a very cool thing for us, and hopefully a direct result of our efforts in the scene.

AU: Give us a rundown of Sundiver's history!

Tom: Jared and I met in eighth grade, at Kalamalka Secondary in Vernon BC, and started playing music together almost immediately. We were in band class together and bonded over our mutual love of Green Day, eventually starting our own band together. We played local shows sporadically throughout high school and even self recorded/released some of our own original material.

I later went on to pursue music school in Nelson, BC and on my first day of classes there I met Carter. We quickly became friends, bonding over distorted guitar, left field hip-hop and beer. We jammed together often, it was always fun but in the back of my mind I always thought it would be better if Jared was there with us. After graduation this came to fruition.

Now 2021, I had moved to Kelowna and was sitting on a batch of songs I had written while at college. Really wanting to do something with them, I rallied Jared and Carter, as well as another old friend I had known since elementary school, Weston Vanderveen. I convinced the three of them to start a new band with me. That became the lineup for our first EP, *WANNA*, which is entirely self produced and recorded in my parent's basement. We played a number of shows in and around the Okanagan and down to Vancouver,

including local support for some bands we had looked up to for a number of years at this point, such as The Dirty Nil, when they came through town.

A little over a year after the band's formation, Weston had now graduated as an engineer and had moved to Vancouver to further his career. Despite the geographical challenges, he remained in the band until we were able to smoothly transition to a new bass player, Tristan Hawtree, who I had met after starting work at the local music shop, Wentworth Music.

The vacancy left by Weston in Sundiver was a tough spot to fill, on a musical level, but also on a personal one, as to be expected with an amicable departure such as his. Not only did Tristan fill the spot, but the musicianship he brought to the band expanded our ability tremendously - not to mention he is an exceptional person, and a great hang too, the value of which cannot be understated. From our very first rehearsal together, it instantaneously felt right.

Work started on our sophomore EP almost immediately after *WANNA*, and a little over a year later, we put out *How to Live With Yourself*, and continued playing (slightly) bigger & (considerably) better shows.

In that time, Jared and myself have moved to Victoria, and Carter down to Vancouver, but thanks to our past experiences, chemistry and work ethic, we've been able to persist despite the distance.

We have since embarked on playing more and more shows, culminating into a larger tour of Western Canada last fall, from the coast to Saskatoon and back, having an unforgettable experience the entire time.

Beyond that, our newest single "Black Cloud" came out May 27th, and we've begun work on a third EP, set to be put out later this year.

AU: "Black Cloud" touches on some deeply personal themes. What inspired the song, and what were you hoping to express through it?



Tom: "Black Cloud", like a lot of the songs I write, is primarily about my experience with major depressive disorder. This song specifically is about a feeling of looming depression, how it shades subjective perception and how even when I'm not in a specific depressive episode, I know it's hovering nearby, ready to blot out the sun at a moment's notice. The song doesn't sound half as miserable as my description does though. It's more of a triumphant defiance of sorrow, than it is surrendering to it. It's about resilience and weathering the storm - brighter days & all that. I like to think it's not overly morose.

AU: What kind of stage presence does Sundiver have?

Jared: We always try to put on as entertaining/engaging of a live set as possible. We're very appreciative of the fact whoever's in the audience at any given show is not only (typically) paying to see us perform, but they're spending their free time with us too; So, we owe it to them to give 110% effort every show, even in venues such as boiling hot pizza restaurants in the summer.

UPCOMING SHOWS:

June 26th - Kamloops @ Bridgeview Theatre

June 28th - Victoria @ Little Fernwood

Instagram: @sundiver250 is the best place to keep up with everything we have going on!
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SCOTT HENDERSON

By John Carlow / Finding Charlotte Photography

In this feature, *Absolute Underground* highlights someone in the local Victoria, BC scene.

I got to know Scott as the sound guy at Logan's Pub for some years. Looked forward to seeing him there at show time or up talking to Don at the door. As I discovered, he's done so much more in his time.

Absolute Underground: Introduce yourself. What are you best known for?

Scott Henderson: I've been a strictly Victoria based musician, record producer and sound engineer since about 1980. Played hundreds of shows in 13 countries (but never the USA), recorded hundreds of bands and did live sound for thousands. I managed to put out a pile of records with my own bands, sometimes on actual record labels.

AU: You were a huge part of the hot spot for the local underground scene (Logans/Tavern of the Damned). What did the place mean to you?

SH: It started out as my local watering hole and slowly morphed into me being a full-time live sound engineer (something that I swore I would NEVER do after 20 years in the studio) at the coolest bar in town, where I was fed just enough variety in styles to hold my interest and keep me enthusiastic about it. It slowly overtook my other musical endeavors until it was my primary gig and then suddenly... it was gone. Instant retirement!

AU: Funniest/best Logans story from the years you were there?

SH: My dear friend Big Bubba Tres (Troy Cook RIP) brought a homemade compressed air powered confetti cannon that he set off at the beginning of his band's set and in less than 2 seconds every cubic inch of the live side of Logan's had confetti in it. I cried laughing. When they ran out they went into the dance floor and scooped up the stuff on the floor back into the hopper on the front and did it again and again. At the end they swept it all up and kept it; when I asked why, they told me it was special fireproof confetti and had cost \$300 or something!

AU: Some of the best/memorable bands you saw there?

SH: Atlas Strategic (in the front window), Eugene Chadbourne (in the corner stage), Varge, Juicifer (unbelievable story!), the Rita (6 minutes!), Kenji Fuse doing "In C", Bob Log (soundman's nightmare), B.A. Johnson (a million times it seems) AK 47 (loudest band ever), Acid Mothers Temple (2nd loudest), hell there's dozens out of thousands...

AU: Impressions of the current local scene?

SH: Seems to be pretty healthy but we need more grotty cheap venues for greenhorn bands to cut their teeth, like Logan's was. A few new ones popping up which is encouraging. Hope they last.

AU: You have an extensive music collection. What are some of the gems?

SH: Impossible question: I have roughly 30,000 pieces of all kinds of stuff. I have *Stravinsky Recorded Legacy* on both LP AND CD. I am that insane. Sold off roughly 1000 of my most collectable LP's awhile back and don't regret it; the music remains available other ways, usually for free.

AU: Thoughts on social media?

SH: It has its uses. I run my little You Tube channel for shits and giggles. I ignore 96% of it. I have developed a razor-sharp bullshit filter.

AU: Like all genres of music?

SH: I honestly do, which I feel makes me a good record producer. Some genres, like Dixieland or Glam metal or New Country I find mostly odious but there are gems in

every genre if you go looking for them.

AU: Fav bands?

SH: Beatles, Stones, Who, King Crimson, Miles Davis, Captain Beefheart, NoMeansNo, Kraftwerk, Ornette, James Brown, Pere Ubu.

AU: As a reader, best books? Gems?

SH: I am a voracious reader; Orwell and Spike Milligan are constants on my bedside table. I burn through music bios like a bonfire. I do reviews of them on my channel.

AU: Any band you wish you'd seen?

SH: Never saw Beefheart or Fela, though I had the chance but I was too lazy/broke to go in both cases. Oh well.

AU: What's on the road ahead?

SH: I have finally found out how to retire properly so I'm doing that, playing music and albums and working on my amble. I'm doing a lot less recording and Scotty Bennett and I are working more in video and ambisonic sound, with him taking the lead and me tagging along for the fun.

AU: Is music that carries a message the best kind of music in your opinion?

SH: Actually to be honest I seem to prefer instrumental music. A "message" is fine if I agree with it but I can pretty much guarantee that if Skrewdriver wrote lyrics about things that didn't completely offend me I would like them better. I thought GBH were pretty rockin' until I heard "Slut" and now I'm not so sure...

AU: Best place to see you without a beard are older photographs and the documentary *Somewhere to Go*. Has Hollywood been knocking on your door since that release?

SH: The closest I have come to that is a buddy who shot a very low budget 20-minute horror film in my back 40. It involved a woman screaming at about 1.00a.m., so I wisely informed all my neighbors of this which kept me out of jail, I think.

AU: Your thoughts on *Somewhere to Go* when it came out?

SH: It was great fun. Paulina is a trooper and she worked hard on it so I'm happy it all worked out and is a release. So many projects like that get stillborn which is a shame.

AU: Keep a record of all the bands you have seen over the years?

SH: Sadly no, I was always too busy. Scott Bennett has appointed himself as the official archivist of pretty much my entire life (a role that he seems to crave). There have been a LOT of bands, thousands I'm sure.

AU: Thanks for this Scott.

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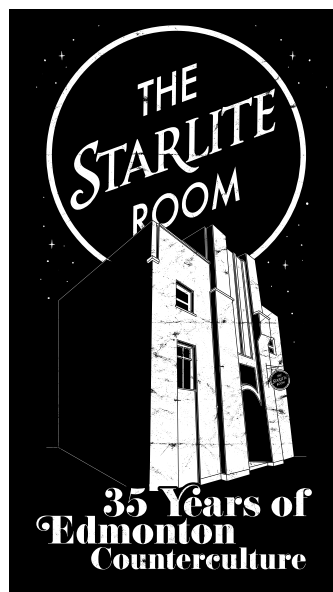
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RIPCORDZ TOUR TIPS

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

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



PART TWENTY

TOUR TIP NUMBER 115



CHECK FOR DEALS ON VAN RENTALS

If you add up repair costs on your van and better gas mileage on a rental, it can actually be cheaper to rent than to drive your own vehicle.

TOUR TIP NUMBER 116



TALK TO EVERYONE FROM FANZINES AND BLOGS TO BIG MEDIA

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TOUR TIP NUMBER 117



PREPARE TO PARTY

There is always a party, which is a good thing unless you want to sleep. You might want to have a designated party person (or two). This is why they invented bass players.

TOUR TIP NUMBER 118



DON'T SET UP MERCH CLOSE TO THE STAGE

No one's going to buy anything if they risk getting run over by the pit.

TOUR TIP NUMBER 119



DON'T BECOME YOUR OWN COVER BAND

People will want to hear the familiar. But mix in new songs for their benefit and your sanity.

TOUR TIP NUMBER 120



ALWAYS FIND OUT ABOUT PARKING

You don't want to be carrying the equipment for blocks or having to park kilometers away.

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

JN: The band consists of me (Jesse - guitarist), our lead vocalist Chelsey, drummer Pat and newly joined bassist Seamus. I started this band with our old bassist back in 2023 and we started gigging in the summer of that year. Our original drummer left in late 2024 and Pat joined the fold in early 2025. We played about 20 shows in 2025 with this lineup and started dipping our toes into smaller tours. Our OG bassist Paul left the fold earlier this year to be a family man, as he has two young kids at home. Seamus joined shortly after and we've been going pretty hard in the paint since!

AU: What does it say on your bandmates dating profiles and on yours?

JN: Well, the only single member is Seamus so I'll let him answer that.

Seamus: What it says? That's classified. But it looks the same as any other social media feed I use, probably too many

pictures of my cats and instruments. Or just enough, I don't know.

AU: Where is the band from and what's the music scene like there?

JN: We all reside in Winnipeg besides me, I live about 45 minutes west. Although I grew up and lived in Winnipeg most of my life. Winnipeg's music scene is thriving right now. So many bands and tons of venues. Even with all the venues that have popped up lately, there's still a huge waiting list to book shows at most of them, so I'd say it's in a great spot.

AU: Describe the band's sound if possible.

JN: We're kind of a mix of a few different sounds but I would say our core sound is punk rock. We blend together sounds of skate punk, pop punk, alternative rock and we're all influenced by a myriad of different flavours. We might sound like Paramore one minute then Lagwagon the next.

AU: Tell us all about the band's Summer Paranoia Tour?

JN: This will be our first time doing a full-on proper tour and we couldn't be more stoked! We start things off in Winnipeg on June 20th at Bluenote Park and make the trek out to the west coast right after that and back. Also hitting up a couple of Northwestern Ontario dates. We can't wait to play all of these new cities and make some new friends!

AU: How would you describe your live show?

JN: Energetic as fuck! We make sure to lay it all on the table every show and hopefully leave you wanting more. Chelsey likes to kick people in the face with her big boots if you're in the front row. It's all love though (JK of course).

AU: Have you released an album recently? Tell us about it! What can we expect to hear? Any stand-out tracks you are stoked on?

JN: We released our debut EP at the end of February. It's titled *Paranoia*, hence the tour name haha. We love all the tracks on it but for first listens, we would recommend "Collateral" for a balls-to-the-wall banger and "Paranoia" that shows more of our dynamic side.

AU: Sex, Drugs, or Rock N Roll? Or all of the above?

JN: We're all 30+ years old so the sex and drugs days are mostly behind us. Give us all the Rock N Roll baby!

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

JN: We are all huge cat people. Go cats! Chelsey's mom hates when she says fuck so she's got a few good "fucks" in her lyrics. "Sorry mom" she says.

AU: Anything else to promote?

JN: Besides the tour and the debut EP, not really. Be sure to check us out on streaming and follow us on our socials!

AU: Final words of wisdom for our readers?

JN: Fuck Trump! Fuck ICE! And fuck Carl!

Thanks for the interview :)

SUMMER PARANOIA TOUR

June 20 - Winnipeg, MB - Bluenote Park

June 27 - Saskatoon, SK - Blackcat Tavern

June 28 - Edmonton, AB - The Dive Bar

June 29 - Calgary, AB - PinBar

July 1 - Kelowna, BC - DunnEnzies Downtown

July 2 - Chilliwack, BC - Chillhouse

July 3 - Vancouver, BC - Red Gate

July 4 - Kamloops, BC - United

Church

July 5 - TBA

July 6 - TBA

July 8 - Lethbridge, AB - The Slice

July 9 - Regina, SK - The Exchange

July 10 - Brandon, MB - Eastside Eatery

July 18 - Winnipeg, MB - Osborne Taphouse

July 19 - Red Lake, ON - Norseman Days

July 20 - Grassy Narrow, ON - TBA

You can find us on most of the socials and all the streaming services. Our most active socials are:

Facebook: [thesoundoff_wpg](#)

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THE SOUNDOFF

Summer Paranoia Tour Hits the Road

Interview by Mal Content

Winnipeg punk outfit The Soundoff gear up for a full-tilt summer run across Western Canada on their Summer Paranoia Tour, supporting their debut EP *Paranoia*.

AU: Who are we talking to and what are you best known for?

Jesse Nabess: My name is Jesse Nabess and I play guitar for The Soundoff.



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MISERY FEEDBACK EXPLORES SOCIAL AND PERSONAL THEMES ON DEBUT EP

Vancouver musician and producer Ryan Fisher has launched a new project called Misery Feedback, drawing inspiration from alternative rock, grunge, sludge, and noise rock. The debut EP, *Pass the Wine and Hail Satan*, releases June 15, 2026.



Fisher spent nearly a decade producing electronic music before moving into heavier styles as a member of the black metal band Ashen Pall. With Misery Feedback, he combines those experiences into a project that reflects the guitar-driven music he grew up listening to while maintaining a strong focus on recording and production.

The five-song EP addresses a range of social and personal subjects, including social media culture, homelessness, economic inequality, religion in politics, international conflict, and anxiety.

Tracks such as "Fit for Fire" examine political division and online echo chambers, while "Shades of Grey" focuses on the experiences of an unhoused individual. "Fucking Choke" critiques wealth and power structures, and the title track

touches on topics including U.S. foreign policy and the role of religion in modern politics. The closing song, "Under My Skin," takes a more personal approach by addressing anxiety and mental health.



Musically, *Pass the Wine and Hail Satan* blends elements of grunge, sludge, and alternative rock. The project also reflects Fisher's background in production, with layered arrangements and a studio-focused approach to songwriting.

Currently operating as a studio project, Misery Feedback is seeking collaborators for future live performances.

miseryfeedback.bandcamp.com
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VICTORIA'S ANNUAL SKA & REGGAE FESTIVAL RETURNS THIS JUNE

Equal parts sun, sound and togetherness, Victoria's 27th Annual Ska & Reggae Festival will turn this groovin' Island city into a global block party from the morning of Wednesday, June 24 to late Sunday, June 28. Join us in celebrating the largest and longest-running ska/reggae festival in North America.

Headlining this year is the legendary California skate-punk outfit Lagwagon, who will be making their festival debut as they take over the Victoria Curling Club (VCC) stage. The signature outdoor stage at Ship Point will be home to another group of California legends, as genre-defining rappers Souls of Mischief also make their festival debut.

The main stage at Ship Point, located in the heart of Victoria's Inner Harbour, will host returning Canadian indie-rock and reggae royalty Bedouin Soundclash, sharing a bill with reggae legend Clinton Fearon — former bassist, vocalist and lyricist for the iconic Gladiators — bringing his full Boogie Brown Band to the festival. Ship Point will also welcome international dancehall superstar Charly Black (Jamaica) and renowned UK songstress Eva Lazarus throughout the festival.

In addition to Lagwagon's festival debut, the VCC will stage some of the most exciting live acts

alongside fan favourites and other debuting bands. New Zealand reggae funk-rockers The Black Seeds return to Victoria for the first time since 2017, joined by Vancouver's legendary freaks Five Alarm Funk. Florida's Against All Authority brings their ferocious ska-core to the festival for the first time, alongside debuting California punk rockers Bad Cop Bad Cop.

The evening venue will be a place for the crowd to commune and move their

bodies in synch with the groove. Things go underground at Studio 919 (formerly Wicket Hall) with an all-Island showcase featuring a trio of beloved local acts — Mindil Beach, playing their first show in a decade since 2025, as well as Apex Breaks and the New Groovement.

Island reggae star Caleb Hart has curated a special late-night program, *Dubwise & Dancehall*, featuring Nico Supreme, Marcus Visionary, Miss Diva, Skystar, and more at ENCORE.

On top of multiple nights of ticketed shows at venues across the city, the festival once again brings three FREE nights of music to the Ship Point stage. Packed with international and local bands representing a staggering array of sounds and genres, these shows will feature standout acts including Bia Ferreira (Brazil), Dr. Ring-Ding (Germany), Train to Roots (Italy), Antidoping (Mexico), Half Past Two (USA), 1876 (USA), and Canada's impressive ska/jazz orchestra The Capital Collective.

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THE SOUR PATCH MEN: From Acoustic Jams to Festival Chaos

By Ray MacKay

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

Alex: My name is Alex the banjo-guy and my day job is high-rise window washing.

AU: For our unfamiliar readers, please give us a brief history of your band.

Alex: Presumably that is 100% of your readers. Basically what happened is about a decade ago we all started hanging out on Thursdays with acoustic guitars, looking for an excuse to drink on a work night.

Eventually we realized that 6 acoustic guitars playing the same three chords didn't sound very good, so some of us started playing other instruments. To be clear, we didn't actually know how to play any of these other instruments, but after years of weekly jams we were eventually able to fool our friends and families into thinking

we knew what we were doing, so we decided to start playing some shows and try our hand at recording music. To our great surprise it started getting radio play and seemed to resonate with a lot of people in the community.

AU: Where are you from, and what is the music scene like there?

Alex: We are based in Calgary. As you might guess there is a lot of country music here, but what you might not expect is that there is a disproportionate amount of really incredible post-punk bands here. I don't really know why that is, but it's great and I'm here for it.

AU: Who is in your band?

Alex: Besides myself there is Bryce on mandolin, Matthew on upright bass, Avery on guitar, Mitchell on guitar and Derek on drums. We also have a rotating cast of fiddlers.

AU: If possible, describe your musical sound/style of The Sour Patch Men for our readers.

Alex: We are kind-of-bluegrass. Most of our members started out in punk and metal bands, but we also have one country guy and one blues guy. We basically just smash all these genres together with bluegrass instruments and just try to have as much fun as possible.

AU: You have a new album 4/4 Waltzes coming out on August 29th - tell us all about it!

Alex: It's ten brand new songs we recorded in February with experimental art-rocker Taylor Cochrane, perhaps best known for their work with the band, 36?. We basically opened the door of the studio to all our friends, so a lot of incredibly talented people from across the Calgary and Alberta music scene contributed to this album.

The result is an album that feels like a celebration of community and the local scene. There are also four songs about animals and two songs about Jesus, which believe it or not was not intentional.

AU: What does 4/4 Waltzes have in store for fans, what's the vibe?

Alex: It feels like all your best friends showed up on your doorstep unannounced with their pets and a case of beer and the kids are in the backyard playing with fire while the adults are stomping around the kitchen invoking the great god Pan.

AU: What were some of the inspirations that went into 4/4 Waltzes?

Alex: The core of the album is bluegrass/country/punk, three-chord songs played as fast as we can. Besides that we also draw on polka, gospel and blues influences; and we also get a little weird with some minimalist off-time loops a la Steve Reich and throw in a little bit of dissonant chanting and metal guitars for good measure.

AU: What song on 4/4 Waltzes are you most excited for people to hear?

Alex: I am most excited about the song "River". It is different from anything else we've ever released: a uniquely somber moment on an otherwise boisterous album. It features some incredible layered back-up vocal harmonies from some friends who are much better singers than us, and we also got our friend from a local symphony to play violin on it.

The result is surprisingly moving. Our producer said they cried while mixing it.

AU: Tell us how you came up with the name for your new album, and how you collaborated with cartoonists to promote it!

Alex: The name of the album is a playful way of indicating to listeners that we don't have a damn clue what we are doing. We are independent and self-taught musicians trying to maneuver our way through the daunting and occasionally cruel music industry, and we grind away at it for no other reason than that we love doing it!

So who says we can't write a 4/4 Waltz? We play by our own rules!

To be honest we just thought Cam Hayden's work was hilarious and we originally asked him to draw a comic about us just because we thought it would be funny. It was only after seeing how good of a job he did that we decided to embrace

the idea of using it as album promo.

AU: What are some of your musical inspirations?

Alex: I think the three artists that inspire us the most are Roger Miller, The Pogues and The Beatles. Roger for his uncanny ability to blend pathos and silliness; The Pogues for their full-hearted embrace of a traditional sound but without being nostalgic or sentimental about it; and The Beatles specifically in the way they were always willing to try anything.

AU: Any upcoming tours we should know about?

Alex: Stay tuned in that regard. We have shows booked in BC and Manitoba but we are still trying to fill in the gaps and will be announcing a fully-fleshed tour soon.

AU: What are some highlights of your career to-date?

Alex: We've had the honour of sharing the stage with some really great folk artists like Wyatt C Lewis and Amy Nelson, but personally I love the feeling of winning over a punk crowd. We've opened for heavier acts like BC/DC, K-man and the 45s, Forbidden Dimension and The Devil's Sons, and it is pure joy for me to watch the crowd go from the quizzical skepticism to dancing and singing along over the course of a 45-minute set.

Another highlight was when our first album hit the top 20 on the national learshot charts. We really had no idea anyone would want to hear our music so it was very affirming and honestly a little flabbergasting to find that strangers across the country were listening to us.

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

Alex: We are working on some music videos for the album that will be released in the months following the album release, so stay tuned for that.

Final words? If you're reading *Absolute Underground* you're probably already doing it, but just keep being weird. Boring people are destroying the planet.

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RAD DOG

By Ray Mackay

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

- Kayla Gale, bass and vocals
- Rich Gold, drums and vocals
- Tom Reimer, guitar and vocals

Our art director Aimee Philbert is also considered an appendage of Rad Dog.

AU: For our unfamiliar readers, please give us a brief history of Rad Dog.

Before Rad Dog we had all been playing in the improv rock/psyche band Rocktoid, which was a collective of 6 of us who had all met through our other projects, Rainboard, Taberfucks, Hippiecritz, Murphy Luzod to name a few.

AU: Where are you from, and what is the music scene like there?

We're from the West Kootenay region of BC, in the Salmo River Valley, not far from Nelson. The music scene is amazing around here. Lots of great bands and great people who come to the shows. There's both great all ages venues and bars to play at.

AU: Your band's sound has been described as

"cosmic grunge". What does that mean to you and can you explain it for our readers?

We haven't heard that one thrown around. We've gotten psychedelic speed punk before. Cosmic Grunge is perfect! Rad Dog definitely is somewhere between Hawkwind, DRI and No Means No with maybe a little post rock

sprinkled in there. It's hard for us to tell. We've got our own sound though. We like it.

AU: You have your debut full-length album, *Three Legged Dog*, out now! What can you tell us about it?

We recorded it with Roger Swan at Hallowed Sound here in the Kootenays. We are lucky to have such an absolute professional to record us. Seriously, check Roger out. He's a complete studio wizard. We let him have the reins on the mix and how we recorded the album. It's better than any one of us expected. It's very full and powerful. It's both hard rocking and full of emotions. It's a deep reflection of what is going on for us.

AU: What can your fans expect from this album? What song on *Three Legged Dog* are you most excited for people to hear?

That's a hard one to answer. For us a lot of the songs have different feels and meanings. "Anubis" is probably the one that we like the best both live and on the album. It changes though. "Awaken Automatron" has different elements in it and "Dig Deep" has an intense feel to it. They're all great songs from our perspective. It'll be interesting to see what people like once the album comes out.

AU: We understand this album is in part a tribute to the loss of your bandmate and friend Phil Guenther, and you have our sincerest condolences on your loss. Would you like to talk about Phil and what he means to the band?

Phil was an integral part of Rad Dog. He passed so suddenly in a tragic accident that it was very hard to deal with. We weren't sure if Rad Dog would be able to continue without him but we had such an outpouring of love and support from the people who know us and him that we knew we had to continue. He is still very much a part of our lives. He's in everything we do both in spirit and in circumstance. It's both very sad and very healing

to play the Rad Dog songs, there is still a lot of joy in it. Phil loved making music and was absolutely full of life. We really dedicate everything we've been doing since he passed to him. It's definitely very hard sometimes but we love the music like he did so we honour him and his memory through the music.

AU: Any upcoming tours or future releases we should

know about?

We are touring Vancouver Island/Sunshine Coast June 4-14th. We have some fun things coming up this summer. We are doing a three day outing

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WIDTH
RECORDS

with our close buds, Citizen Rage in the interior of BC this July. We're also doing an Alberta run in August with our friends from Costa Rica, The Altercados and Supernal. We went to Costa Rica this past March.

There's a few festivals we're playing this summer that we are looking forward to. We're hoping to get to Ontario this fall and Columbia next spring. It's in the works.

We did a recording with Jordan Koop on the island that we intend on releasing on vinyl. It's important for us because Phil is on that. So you can look for that coming up.

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

We host an annual party called the Hügkegger, it's on August 22 this year. It's an outdoor jamboree held at El Rancho Rad Dog with a couple of stages. It's a beautiful setting in the woods. So if anyone is in the Koots around that time, plan to come out. It's always been one of the funnest parties around here for summertime heavy music lovers.

We've also started a music production company called 'Big Love' that encompasses all the shows, tours and everything else we put on outside of the band. It's a recent thing that we hope to grow.

AU: How do people find you online?

Instagram and Facebook mainly. There's some live stuff on YouTube of us and we will have *Three Legged Dog* up on Bandcamp and all the platforms this July.

raddog.bandcamp.com

instagram.com/raddogband

bandwidthrecords.com



RECORD STORE PROFILE



GROOVE CAT BOOKS & RECORDS: Stay Groovy!

Interview by Reed Daily

In New Westminster, Groove Cat Books & Records is more than just a shop — it's a community hub where music, literature and local culture come together. From vinyl and rare books to live music, book clubs and community events, Groove Cat has built a space where people can gather, discover and connect. Co-owner John Hughes chats with *Absolute Underground* about the shop, the neighbourhood and the stories behind Groove Cat.



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

John Hughes: I'm John Hughes. I'm not sure that I'm best known for anything, though I've published a few books and, along with my amazing wife Cat, own and operate Groove Cat Books & Records, as well as Cosmic Cranium Press.

AU: How long has Groove Cat Books and Records been in business?

JH: Groove Cat has been operating for three and a half years; Cosmic Cranium has been going since 2024.

AU: What is the origin story and history of Groove Cat?

JH: I finished a PhD in dream theory at the height of the pandemic, but teaching gigs were scarce, limited to online sessional work with no guarantee of a new contract at the end of a semester. Cat had worked in shipping for most of her professional life but kept getting laid off because of pandemic-related supply chain problems. It was highly stressful, so we decided to do something fun and community-oriented. From the start, Groove Cat has been a community hub. Being able to work with our laid-back, mom-and-pop vibe and our shop kitties—first the O.G., Luna, and now Chester, both rescues—has been rewarding for both of us, and well received in the neighbourhood.

AU: Where is your shop located and what do you like best about the neighbourhood?

JH: We are at 775 6th Street, New Westminster. Without question, the best part about New West is the people. We have a good many loyal regulars who sustain us in body and spirit. One regular comes in every week with his little dog to flip through the new record releases; the pooch sits patiently until he grabs his vinyl. It's become a bit of a ritual, you might say.

AU: What's your record selection like and what types of books do you have?

JH: Being a used book and record shop, our inventory is a bit random. That said, we put a lot of effort into curation. We've bought some fantastic punk, metal, jazz and hip-hop collections over the last few years. Watching collectors' enthusiasm when we release those records is a ton of fun. With books, we've got a bit of everything—even a first edition of Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*. The hardest books to keep on the shelves are Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* and anything by Dostoevsky. If people aren't sure what they want, we've got a couch to get comfortable on and read to their heart's content before deciding on a purchase.

AU: Do you sell anything besides records and books?

JH: Yup. Cat is an all-star at crochet. She crochets earrings, bags, bikinis and hats that all get snapped up pretty quickly here at the shop. But it's not just about sales in that department. Last fall, Cat organized a hat drive with local crocheters and completed something like 800 yarn hats for homeless people in New West and across the Lower Mainland. One of the local non-profits helped with distribution and a good many heads stayed a bit warmer over the winter months.

AU: Do you host any kind of events with local musicians?

JH: Yes we do. We hired a blues-metal guitar player for our first gig, followed

by a couple of performances by a pop-punk musician. We've since had the good fortune to connect with New Westminster's very own Cat Murphy Band. They are incredible! They play old favourites that get people dancing, as well as some super-cool originals. They've become such a fixture at our events that we joke that they are our unofficial house band. This relationship has become so important to us that they are organizing an open mic night for musicians, which we will host here at the shop. They'll also be our musical act for Independent Bookstore Day on April 25. Consider yourself invited!

AU: Tell us about some of your best customer experiences.

JH: It's the snapshot, slice-of-life moments that are so good. We get a lot of high school kids coming in who have never heard of Thelonious Monk, Black Flag or Slayer. Playing those records for someone who has never heard them before is one of the best parts of this job. Having discussions with some of these young people about books by Margaret Atwood, Aristotle or William Burroughs is also very rewarding. Sometimes it's even groovier than that. When the Cat Murphy Band busts out the tunes, it's a party for the community and dancing is highly encouraged. Sometimes I'll dance a number or two with some of the seniors in attendance—great fun!

AU: What makes Groove Cat Books and Records unique?

JH: It's our vibe. I'm responsible for getting cool inventory; Cat makes sure it plays out with our chill aesthetic. People love Chester the kitty. We have an antique room that is a throwback to another century. All of these things have made it possible to bring people to our Local Author's Book Club, Storytelling Circle and musical events.

AU: What kinds of music do you usually have playing in the store?

JH: We play a lot of funk: James Brown, Booker T, Funkadelic, Betty Davis—not the film star—if you've never heard her music before, find it and play it today. It will change your life, I promise you. We also spin a fair bit of punk, as well as John Coltrane/Ella Fitzgerald-era jazz, along with metal and old school techno.

AU: What is your mission statement as a business?

JH: To foster community connection through stories.

AU: Any special events planned in the future?

JH: Yes indeed! I mentioned the musical open mic night on April 3 and our Independent Bookstore party on April 25. We also have our inaugural open poetry night on April 16 from 7:00–9:00.

AU: Anything else you would like to mention or promote?

JH: Our publishing arm has interesting offerings. Our first book, *Dream-Punk: A Nightscape*, takes my dissertation research on the politicization of dreams and shows how a DIY, garage-punk approach can help take the power of the dream back from establishment parasites. Our second book, *Canada Is Not the 51st F**king State*, is an anthology of essays demonstrating that while we have much to set right in this country, there is also a lot to celebrate. We will not dance to the tune of the psychotic and deranged Donald Trump. I mailed a signed copy of it to Trump at the White House.

Our next book is tied to our Paperclip Barter Challenge. Because running a bookshop in the Lower Mainland is terribly expensive, keeping our doors open is a massive challenge. One of the things we have on the go is the paperclip challenge. The idea goes back about 20 years to a

guy named Kyle MacDonald, who made a series of trades, starting with a paperclip and bartering all the way up to a house. We're not trying to buy a house—we just want to keep showing up for people in New Westminster, and we need more money than we currently have to sustain that much longer.

So far, we've traded a paperclip for a signed copy of a local author's best-selling book, which we swapped for a designer handbag and then traded for a signed first edition of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. The book is worth about \$1500 and we're still trying to trade up. Through Cosmic Cranium Press, we are documenting this process and will ultimately turn it into a book (once we've also bartered for editing and printing costs). All proceeds of those book sales will go to helping vulnerable populations here in New West.

So it's a two-fold process: make enough trades for things that will help keep us afloat while using some of those same resources to create a book that will help locals who could use a hand up. It's a community story all the way through—essentially our mission statement in action.

Back on the Groove Cat side, Cat creates book promo packages for authors, and Cosmic Cranium offers A–Z ghostwriting services.

AU: Final words of wisdom for our readers?

JH: Yes! Get out there and support your local indie book and record shop. In this age of killer rents (which we are fighting at the civic, provincial and federal levels—but that's another story), it is local customers and local customers only who can keep indie shops going and stop the corporate machine from owning everything. Small businesses are fast disappearing and being replaced by endless yoga studios, dentist's offices and high-end grocery stores. Of course those businesses have their place, but unless they are balanced with smaller, quirky shops, mainstreet indie culture will disappear; an endless yawn of beige city blocks will push them out. Support your local indie shop while you still can!!

groovecatbooks.com

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



IRON KINGDOM Shadows and Dust

Interview with Leighton Holmes [Bass Guitar]

By Asher Thrasher

AU: Welcome back to Absolute Underground Magazine. What has Iron Kingdom been up to?

Leighton Holmes: Hey! We've been hard at work with a new studio, a new album and a renewed desire to hit the ground running and tour our asses off! A lot of work has gone on behind the scenes

AU: Your new album, *Shadows and Dust*, explores themes of death, impermanence, and emotional hardship, yet you've said the music ultimately carries a sense of hope. How did you balance that darkness with the uplifting, classic heavy-metal spirit Iron Kingdom is known for?

LH: Our songs have always carried a darkness, at least in the lyrics. On the early albums, Chris wrote the majority of the riffs, and he tended to write more in major keys, so it gave the songs a sense of happiness or lightness, but my lyrics

have always played around and explored dark themes, especially death, but from a more distant view. We were still young and eager, and the world seemed open before us, so death felt like an interesting but far-off prospect. Now we've got Megan taking up a lot of the riff making and, let's be honest, the world seems to have gone to shit pretty hard, so the concept of mortality has gotten a little closer to home. The little thread of hope that runs through the entirety of the album won't be obvious at first glance. It's laced between the lines, carried on the melodies, and borne by the realization that the only thing that truly unites everyone on this

planet is death. It's the only shared experience we have as a species. Everyone is going to die, but it's your choice to not lose yourself to that despair and to go down swinging and standing shoulder to shoulder with the people you love.

AU: This album features some of your most varied songwriting to date, from the thrash-driven "Line of Fire" to the epic, melodic sweep of "Sacred Fire." How did the collaborative writing dynamic between Chris, Megan, Max, and yourself shape the final sound of the record?

LH: We've been really collaborative in our songwriting for most of the life of the band, but this is definitely the best lineup we've ever had, and I feel like we are only getting more

comfortable with each other as we've spent more time together. We've gone a lot of places together and shared a lot of experiences, and I think that shared camaraderie shows through in our ability to write awesome music together. There's a lot of trust between us, and a lot of confidence in each other's abilities. Even when someone comes in with a kind of "backbone" riff, we always jam and build out the songs together as a group, using both the lyrics and the music to tell as good a story as we can.

AU: Your album-release show at the Rickshaw Theatre on June 5th is set to kick off a summer of touring. With these new songs being so emotionally charged and musically diverse, how are you approaching bringing *Shadows and Dust* to the stage for the first time?

LH: We are absolutely stoked to bring the songs to the stage and play them for people. We've been sitting on these songs for a while, so it's going to be an absolute thrill to see how people respond to the new tunes. Some of the songs are definitely a little challenging to play while still running around and giving a proper Iron Kingdom show, so there are some nerves in the equation, but we've made some moves to up our stage show and take everything up a couple of levels. I think fans are really going to respond well to the new tracks. We've put a lot of heart and soul into the tunes, and we've all been looking forward to sharing them for well over a year! Some of these song ideas were floating around during the writing sessions for *Blood of Creation*, so to say this has been a long time coming is a bit of an understatement, haha

AU: Many tracks on the album draw from powerful historical and literary inspirations from the Battle of Gdansk to the Malazan Book of the Fallen to Tolkien. What draws Iron Kingdom to these kinds of stories, and how do they help you craft the "journey" you want listeners to experience?

LH: I am a massive nerd, haha. I read a lot, watch tons of documentaries and podcasts and basically live on the educational side of YouTube. We'd be jamming out a new song musically, and someone would play something that would trigger a feeling in me, and I'd grab my notebook and jot

some lines down or hastily explain my idea for the story I was thinking about to the band and I think because we have that level of trust and shared interests, the band was usually into it. I've been wanting to write a song about the Battle of Gdansk for probably around a decade now, ever since I went to the WWII museum in Gdansk. I love Poland, and I feel the story of how the defenders held out for so long against all odds really captures the spirit of the Polish people. Once the band agrees on the story, we work to weave them together using both strands to create something with emotion and movement. An example of how the music can pull the story out is the writing of *Starlight*. I've resisted writing a song based on Tolkien for so long. I have a deep, deep love of Tolkien's work, but it kind of seems like everyone writes songs about Middle-earth, and I didn't want to tread over the same ground as everyone else. And then Megan came in one day with a kind of doomy riff that hit the right note, so to speak, and my resistance was over, haha.

AU: You've described *Shadows and Dust* as a record that will open up your live sets with "a plethora of great new tunes." As you head into your summer tour, which new song are you most excited to unleash on audiences, and what do you think it will reveal about this new chapter of Iron Kingdom?

LH: Oh, that's a tough one! I'm so proud of what we accomplished with writing and recording this record that I'm having real trouble picking a favourite song, let alone the song I'm most excited to share live. We've grown a lot as players, me personally as a lyricist and collectively as a band. I think this album is really going to show that off, and I think I speak for everyone in saying that we are all eager to put it all out on stage for the world to see.

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

LH: Check out our new album, *Shadows and Dust*, out June 6th, and catch us at the Rickshaw on June 5th for the release show. We have a killer lineup; it won't be a show to miss! Also, catch us pretty much everywhere in Canada this summer! Keep it Steel!

www.iron-kingdom.com



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THE ETERNAL QUESTIONS

By Ray MacKay

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

Mark Kelson: I'm Mark Kelson, Singer / Guitar Player for Australian / Finnish band The Eternal, either famous for or infamous for being the Singer & Guitar player of The Eternal!

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

MK: Myself and guitarist Richie are based in Melbourne, Australia & Niclas (Bass) & Jan (Drums) are based in Helsinki Finland. The Melbourne music scene is pretty good, probably most known for ore brutal metal bands. I'm sure we know a massive list of famous bands from Helsinki, including Jans current band and Niclas' former band Amorphis.

AU : Give us a brief history of The Eternal.

MK: The Eternal formed in 2023 from the ashes of my previous gothic doom band Cryptal Darkness in Australia, I am the sole original member and have been on all 7 of our albums. Richie has been in the band for almost 10 years since our 'Waiting For The Endless Dawn' Album, Niclas and Jan have been in the band 5-6 years and have been with us since the *Skinwalker* album. We have toured internationally in various forms over the years and have played with great bands including Opeth, Cemetery Skyline, HIM, Amorphis, Anathema, Paradise Lost, Katatonia and many more.

AU: Describe The Eternal's sound if possible.

MK: We have elements of Melodic Metal, Death/Doom, Gothic & Progressive Metal all wrapped up in a dark cinematic shell. So I guess Dark Metal or Progressive gothic metal kind of works!

AU: What can you tell us about your EP, *Celestial*, released on January 16th, 2026?

MK: We are excited about *Celestial*, at the time we had been focusing of the follow up album to *Skinwalker* and had around 15 songs, our label Reigning Phoenix Music in Germany suggested we released an EP in the interim to keep some interest going, so we selected some tracks to focus on and shape into an EP. I really like the *Celestial* package, it has great contributions from the whole band and I think really shows some solidification of this lineup as a creative force. Initially it was only for digital release, but RPM

decided a limited edition marbled vinyl was a cool idea and the final product looks and sounds great. Also worth noting all music was recorded and mixed by us, so its a complete DIY approach which we love.

AU: Tell us about the creative process behind *Celestial* EP.

MK: I guess I touched on it about, but we probably started the process not long after we finished recording *Skinwalker* we were still negating the deal with RPM and started writing, initially starting with us submitting to demos, for me being the longest standing member of the band it

was great to have all members submitting demos, I worked on those demos here in Melbourne Australia with guitarist Richie and also went about adding lyrics and vocals. After basic demos were done, I went over the Helsinki and spent time with Jan & Niclas refining the arrangements, this is always challenging as you have to be open to other peoples ideas, as the primary songwriter for many years I found this hard at first but I now love it and think it adds so much dimension to the music. We all have recording studios so all of the material was tracked between Helsinki & Melbourne. When it came time to mix Jan started Drum & Bass mixes in Helsinki & I finished the mixes in Melbourne as Jan was on tour with Amorphis. It was really exciting and creative process!

AU: What song from *Celestial* are you most excited for your fans to hear?

MK: The first song that has come out, "It All Ends" is a great anthemic track, not one I initially saw as a single but I understand why it is, that was based on some demos I did back in the covid lockdowns. I really like "Celestial Veil". I think it's Proggy, dark & Cinematic and has some killer riffs from Richie. I think that is my personal favourite. "Bleeding Into

Light" is Nicu's first song writing contribution to the band and I think it's a great moody track with a killer chorus, I would say "Casting Down Shadows" is something me and Jan started to bring together in Helsinki a few years ago and really showcases his amazing percussion and cinematic soundscape abilities. So I guess the whole EP!

AU: You're currently signed to Reigning Phoenix Music. What has it been like working with them?

MK: It has been great, we have formed a great relationship with them, I think at times they have pushed and challenged us and also given us some reality checks along the way so it has been a great learning experience. As well as releasing *Celestial* we will be working with them to release the new album next year. For The Eternal, RPM is the biggest label we have worked with and although I feel like we are a small fish in a bigger pond, they seem to believe in us and have given us freedom to do what we do.

AU: Besides those mentioned above, do you have any upcoming releases, tours, or shows coming up you'd like to tell us about?

MK: We started mixing the album in January, so possibly by the time this is published the album will be off for mastering. We are really excited about the material and I think it will be our most collaborative and cohesive effort to date. Touring wise we had some shows with Swallow the Sun in January and we have just signed with German booking Agent Tasmanian Devil Agency and are

working on some more European dates for 2026, so I am expecting a busy year! No doubt we will start writing again in a few months also. No sign of slowing down just yet!

AU: What can you tell us about your 2024 album *Skinwalker*? How would you say your musical craft has changed or evolved between *Skinwalker* and *Celestial*?

MK: When Jan and Niclas joined the band most of *Skinwalker* was demoed and to be honest we had no plans for approaching bigger labels and planned more of a continuation of 'Waiting For The Endless Dawn' - dark long doom and proggy basically. We initially asked Jan to contribute as a session musician as we knew him & Niclas for touring with Amorphis on their circle tour back in 2013 I think. It very quickly turned into a band situation with Jan and Niclas joined not long after. So they contributed a great but the basic shape of the material already existed, with *Celestial* all the music was selected and created together for the start. And I think it shows, the music has more of an international flavour to it, and is very diverse, also as co-producers and engineers we know each other on a creative and personal level even more and I think it *Celestial* just sounds like a step up from *Skinwalker* don't get me wrong I love *Skinwalker* but *Celestial* is a good snap shot of where we are going.

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

MK: I am the program coordinator of audio and sound production course at a big university in Australia, so that is my day job and I have a passion for education, particularly audio

education. That's something I don't mention too much in interviews and in fact, Richie does a very similar job, so we are all about sound! I pretty much hang around in my studio at home with my girlfriend and 2 dogs and a cat, so not so much wild times over here these days to hide from my family! Lol And I'm ok with that, I'm nearly 50 and just want to be creative and make music!

AU: Anything else to promote?

MK: *Celestial* January 16th, shipping from our store in Australia or the RPM store in Germany and America, pick up a copy the Vinyl is a very limited pressing and is somewhat of a collectors item I would say!

AU: Any final words for our readers?

MK: Thanks for reading if you got this far in our modern fast paced world, we hope you check out some tunes and find something you enjoy!

And thanks for the interview much appreciated!

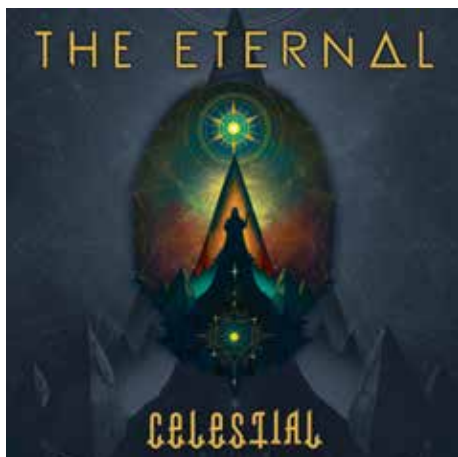
AU: Where can we find The Eternal online?

MK: the-eternal.com is a good place to start and Instagram is where most of the action happens: [instagram.com/theeternalofficial](https://www.instagram.com/theeternalofficial)

I would say the rest of the links are on our official site so pick your poison and we hope you pop by and say hello!

theeternal.bandcamp.com

Photo credit: AJ Savolainen @AJ_Savolainen





school with Ingrid Bergman and told us about a Stockholm that no longer exists.

AU: Your first single, "Nigger," immediately made a strong impression — musically and socially. How do you feel about the impact of that song now, almost 33 years later? Do you see it as both a blessing and a curse in terms of

CLAWFINGER - Part 2

Interview with Zak Tell

By Ryan Dyer

AU: You formed in 1988/89, famously at the Rosegrove Hospital. "I've had it up to here with your shit and your piss!" gives an impression of what it was like there, but do you have a particular story from that time that stands out?

ZT: It was a lovely melting pot of people from all walks of life — drag queens, struggling artists, foreigners, students — all working with elderly people, helping them hopefully have a decent old age. Helping them go to the bathroom, feeding them, changing their diapers, talking to them, helping them brush their teeth, taking them for walks, etc. I think it gave us a bit of perspective and possibly helped us keep our feet on the ground a little.

I can't think of one specific story. All I know is that without Rosegrove, Clawfinger would not exist and my life would have been very different. With that said, it was a fun time — a lot of hard work and a lot of partying, great camaraderie. We heard fantastic stories from old people who had gone to

how people perceive Clawfinger?

ZT: It was naively written. I tried to say more than I could really back up, and all these years later, I realize it was probably never really my place to address that topic as a pink person. At the time, I was too concerned and too naive to realize the impact of what I was actually saying.

It was also a very different time. We got our news from newspapers and television. There was no social media, no TikTok, and people still had reasonable attention spans. Back then, there was context, and people cared more about the big picture, so I honestly never felt like it was a problem at the time. It raised a lot of interesting discussions, and the majority of people understood the message, even if they didn't necessarily agree with the way we executed it.

Obviously, times have changed a lot since we wrote the song in late 1991, and we humbly accept that it is certainly no longer our place to be the ones standing on the barricades with that message, even if we still stand behind what we were trying to say. We haven't played the song since 2021. The fact that we "got away" with playing it that long is more than enough. Times have changed so much since then — people are

more politically aware and more woke — and it's a bigger and more complex topic than us being "allowed" to play it. We have eight albums' worth of material, so we can live without it.

AU: I first discovered Clawfinger around age 12 in 1998, watching the "Two Sides" video on MuchMusic's LOUD. At that point, I didn't know your history or that you were from Europe, so you seemed equal to all the other emerging bands on the program. Looking back, how do you feel about being pioneers of European rap-metal while not really being part of the American nu-metal "club" that blew up in 1998?

ZT: We never understood what any of it was anyway. We just made music the way we did because we were the people we were and because of the music we listened to. There was no rap-metal or nu-metal when we started — only a few bands that had done one-off songs, and they were in a much more traditional style than what we were doing.

We don't really care for any of the labels. We're just Clawfinger. We don't think about whether or not we're pioneers. Music existed way before we started the band, and crossing styles over is something musicians have done forever.

AU: I've been watching some of your major festival appearances and am always astounded by the energy, especially at Woodstock Poland. You gave it your all, and the fans there are incredible. What do you remember most about that experience?

ZT: While Woodstock was the biggest crowd — a great adrenaline experience and a wonderful festival — that feeling is something we always

try to have regardless of where we're playing. We really enjoy connecting with our audiences, and our goal is always to make it feel like the stage lowers down to the same level as the crowd.

It's an experience we're all in together in different ways, and we can't do it without each other. We like to connect with people. We're not interested in rockstar bullshit like being unavailable and wearing sunglasses at night. We're just a bunch of beer-drinking music lovers.

AU: For your video "Recipe for Hate," it's said that content was cut to make it into a straight performance video. What was the original concept?

ZT: The original concept had a bunch of young women crawling around our feet and shit like that, and it was fucking dumb. The video producer seemed to be obsessed with that kind of imagery, and it was not something we wanted. We even told him so before we went to Switzerland to record the video, but when we got there it turned out he had ignored what we had said.

We're not that kind of band. Therefore, we had to recut and edit the video.

AU: What is your current status on playing in Canada? I would love to see you at a festival here — for example, Drumheller's LOUD AS HELL.

ZT: We've NEVER played in America or Canada, and unless there is a promoter there with deep pockets who is willing to take a big risk on an unknown European band, it will probably never happen. That's just the reality. But you never know what the future has in store, so I guess we'll just have to wait and see. We're not holding our breath, though!

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WROUGHT: Hardcore From Hamilton

By FLORA

AU: Great to have you in *Absolute Underground!* For readers just discovering WROUGHT, who are we talking to today, and what's the story behind the band?

Catherine: Thank you so much! My name is Catherine and I do vocals in Wrought. The band was an idea our guitarists Nate and Layne had on the back burner for a couple of years while they were actively writing and performing in their high school alt-rock band. They wanted to make a band inspired by '90s metallic hardcore and had sent riffs and song ideas back and forth for a long time before anything concrete came out of it. Our drummer Aidan and bassist James were also members of their old band, so when it finally came around to bringing this new project to life it was pretty easy to figure out a lineup. I wasn't originally supposed to be in the band, but Nate suggested that I handle vocals since he knew it's something I've wanted to do for a while.

AU: WROUGHT comes out of Hamilton's hardcore scene with a very raw and urgent

sound—how has the city influenced the band creatively or personally?

Catherine: We take a lot of inspiration from OG Hamilton hardcore bands like The Swarm, Chokehold and Left For Dead. Nate and I had Chokehold's Content With Dying on repeat while writing our demo songs — the raw, gritty anger of the music and the overtly political, confrontational lyrical style were definitely things we wanted to

pull from for Wrought. We just really love the sound that came out of Hamilton during the '90s; even though things sound a bit different here now, we wanted to keep that tradition alive in our music.

AU: Your music carries a clear sense of purpose and conviction—how important is it for WROUGHT to speak on political or social issues through hardcore?

Catherine: Overall, we make music that addresses the many issues we observe in the world (at many scales); from the harbourage of harmful individuals in our local scenes, to the global injustices of late-stage capitalism, to the genocide in Palestine. We feel as though a lot of bands in our area don't really speak on political or divisive topics, but as a hardcore band we always felt it was important to channel our anger from a real visceral place, and there's no better way to do that than taking a look at the world around us. Despite that, our songs are hopeful — we don't want to wallow in negativity, identify problems and leave it at that, because that's not productive. We make songs about tearing these harmful structures down because we know a better world is possible — "in the end there will be justice," "soon the land will be free" — that's the message we ultimately

want to put out, and we feel it's completely fundamental to our purpose as a band.

AU: A portion of DEMO 2025 sales supported Palestinian relief efforts and mutual aid. Why was it important for the band to connect direct action to the release?

Catherine: Actions speak louder than words, and although we definitely want our lyrics to carry political weight, we feel it falls a bit flat without direct action backing it up. Especially because we make songs like "FTRTTS", we feel it's important to take it that step further and connect our band to tangible productivity. As a Palestinian woman, highlighting the genocide in Wrought's music, giving away direct action zines at our merch table and fundraising whatever we can through our art was never a question for us. We're also blessed to be in a scene that is absolutely rife with benefit shows, and we always try our best to play as many shows as possible that are connected to direct relief funds and positive fundraising. Hardcore bands, protest music, and benefit shows obviously won't solve the problem, but we try to do what we can to use our art as a force for good, and encourage others around us to do the same.

AU: Hardcore has always thrived on community and energy, and your recent live shows looked completely chaotic in the best way possible. What do you enjoy most about playing live right now?

Catherine: We love absolutely everything about playing live — you're right, that as a hardcore band it's pretty fundamental to what we do. Although we don't let it define our music necessarily, we always put together songs with the live experience in mind — we definitely want to encourage that chaos! Probably the best thing about playing live right now is the community we're in — pulling up to a show and being surrounded by friends, meeting new faces, and feeling the energy and excitement from the crowd — definitely keeps us going. The experience is always special, whether it's a little DIY show or a bigger festival, ripping a set is our favourite thing to do. It's insanely cool to see people singing along to our songs, it means a lot that people really listen and resonate with our message and the words we're saying.

AU: The recent ENDNOTE anniversary show in Toronto had a real DIY atmosphere with all-ages energy, local bands and community involvement. How important are spaces and shows like that to hardcore today?

Catherine: We're a bit biased because we also help run Endnote! Nate founded Endnote with our friend Ricky, originally as a means to release the Wrought demo on tape, but it's turned into a full operational tape/CD/booking/promo DIY label and everyone's involved. Our original goal was to provide our friends' bands with free media to help them distribute their music to the masses, but after a number of local releases and a couple shows, it's turned into its own little pocket of the DIY scene here. The goal has shifted a bit — now Endnote is focused not only on distributing music but also just giving back to our local scene by any means possible, and doing DIY all-ages events showcasing

ENDNOTE RECORDS

bands we love is a great way to do that. We were blown away by the turnout and couldn't be more thrilled with how it went — in the GTA's currently exploding youth hardcore/punk/metal/alt landscape, we feel that putting on events like that is the most vital way to keep a scene thriving and keep this thing going for the next generation to follow.

AU: You recently dropped the tracks "War" and "Here and Now." How do those songs reflect where WROUGHT is heading creatively?

Catherine: "War" is a song we've had clunking around since the early days of writing the demo, but it didn't feel right until we came back to it after a long time and totally reworked it, and



couldn't be prouder with how it turned out. We feel it's a bit different than our demo, a bit faster and gnarlier than any of the old material, and more influenced by bands like Turmoil that pushed the boundaries of '90s metallic hardcore. We got our bud Sofia from Mace (Nate and Aidan's other band) to sing a verse on the second half,

and she totally killed it. "Here and Now" is a cover song, originally by Strain from BC. Strain was another huge influence on our demo, that kind of '90s mid-tempo, heavy, sludgy hardcore style that we really pull from. In our early days we got a couple Strain comparisons from some local oldheads, which meant the world, so we've been playing "Here and Now" in our live sets for a couple months. When it came time to record "War", we had a couple extra hours and thought we might as well use that time to track our Strain cover too. Jake Ballah recorded both songs at Toronto's Concrete Smile, and we couldn't be happier with how his work complements our style. We wanted to preserve the very raw sound of our demo, but with slightly more studio clarity, and we feel like he absolutely captured the aggression and grit that we were really aiming for. We feel like those two songs together are a pretty solid mission statement for how we want to operate — pushing our creative and technical boundaries as a band, while still paying homage to the scenes and sounds that we pull our influences from.

AU: What's coming next for WROUGHT in 2026, and where can readers find your music and stay connected online?

Catherine: We're currently working on a batch of new songs that we're all really excited about, and aiming to be back in the studio later this year! No concrete timeline yet, we work best when we take our time to be deliberate and piece together songs we can all be really proud of, but we hope to have an EP out by the end of the year at latest. Otherwise we plan to keep playing shows, heading to new places and having a blast while we're doing it. We're heading to Quebec for the first time in July, which will be our first time out of province!

Our music is available on Bandcamp: wroughtfromsteel.bandcamp.com and all streaming platforms, and we're most active on our Instagram page [@wroughtfromsteel](https://www.instagram.com/wroughtfromsteel) where you can stay updated with everything we have going on and coming up!

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A-100s

By Chuck Andrews

A-100s are a brand new band featuring Skateboarding Hall of Famer and Flogging Molly accordionist Matt Hensley, along with Throw Rag singer Sean Wheeler. AU's Chuck Andrews had the chance to speak with Matt in advance of the release of their debut album, *Rude and Lovely*, on Pirates Press Records.

AU: Who am I talking with today and what is your role in the A-100s?

MH: This is Matt Hensley, the co-songwriter & co-lead singer of A-100s. In addition to co-producing, I played guitar, keys and accordion on *Rude and Lovely*.

AU: Where is the band from and what is the music scene like there?

MH: I live in Carlsbad; most of the band live in or near San Diego. We have a strong music scene, very diverse.

AU: How and when did the group come together?

MH: It started with an idea I had, creating a band rooted in 1960s & early '70s reggae & ska, but infused with some accordion textures, as this is

my main instrument. I drove to Palm Springs and asked Sean Wheeler to sing and front the band. He agreed!

AU: What is the origin of naming the band A-100s?

MH: In my small studio, I have a Hammond A-100 organ. As I was moving it around in the studio, from the side it looked like the number one. As soon as I had seen the silhouette, I knew what the name of the band would be: The A-100s!

AU: How would you describe the sound of

the A-100s?

MH: It's a bit like a sonic love letter to classic Jamaican music, with a few hints of 2-tone, soul, and Mexican accordion. We're trying to never lose sight of the classic sounds the band is rooted in.

AU: The A-100s debut album *Rude and Lovely* is coming out July 10th on Pirates Press Records. How did the band come to be on the label, and what's it like working with them?

MH: As we started to finish the recording, we were hoping our home would be with Pirates Press Records, with many bands we looked up to. It just seemed to make sense to try there first. Roger Rivas (The Aggrolites), who produced the record, is on the label. He made the call to Skippy, and we sent the record to him and crossed our fingers!

It has been amazing working with the whole team... we are very grateful!

AU: The A-100s feel like a band built on strong chemistry and personality. Who makes up the group, and do the members bring influences in from other bands or projects as well?

MH: Most of the members have been in multiple other bands and bring a diverse array of influences to the table.

In the early '90s, I was in a ska band called Spy Kids, and members of that band make up the core of A-100s, namely bassist Jason Bowen, drummer Mark Mclemore, and saxophonist John Roy, who is also known for his project Smoke & Mirrors Sound System.

Trumpeter Keith Douglas is a former member of Mad Caddies, and currently plays with Mariachi El Bronx.

AU: Monty Neysmith of Symarip fame and Ron Blair from Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers are among the guests on the album, correct? How did you come to work with them?

MH: We had sent our friend Rico Dejoie some rough songs. Rico is good friends with Monty, and sent him a track that he liked. Monty said he would be up to play some piano on it, and it was amazing to get the tracks he sent to us. I couldn't help but smile, thinking of all the time spent dancing to Symarip... and now Monty is playing piano on something we created... boss!

Ron Blair actually lives across the street from me. He has been a big inspiration to me and the band. Ron has a recording studio at his house, and I would sometimes come over and record a few tracks with the accordion for him.

He has an amazing work ethic and has inspired me to build my own studio. He helped record a lot for the new album. On one track we spent two days just getting the claps and snaps right!

AU: How about some of the other notable guests on *Rude and Lovely*, such as Joe Sib or Mike Park?

MH: Joe Sib is a great friend, singer, comedian, and was the owner of SideOneDummy Records, the label that first gave Flogging Molly a chance.

As for the A-100s, I played him a few tracks after catching up for a cup of coffee, and he loved it.

He wrote "TOO RAD TO BE SAD" on some blank tape on his wall and motivated me and Sean to push forward.

Mike Park, from The Crombies & Deals Gone Bad, is also a longtime friend.

I moved to Chicago in 1990, and Mike was also from California. We became sweet friends soon after.

[Editor's note: not to be confused with Mike Park of Asian Man Records & Skankin' Pickle]

AU: I really like the video for "Too Rad To Be Sad." Are all of you guys into the vintage scooter scene?

MH: Yes, we all have been - at one time or another - into the scooter scene. I'm currently riding a Lambretta Li 150.

AU: My favourite tracks from your album so far are "Luxury Nights," "Wires," and "Too Rad To Be Sad." What are some of your favourites?

MH: I think "They Don't Want to Know" and "Too Rad To Be Sad" are my favourites right now.

AU: With summer festival season approaching, do you have any touring or festival plans lined up for the rest of 2026?

MH: The A-100s are playing the Supernova Ska Festival... we can't wait!

We are currently working on some more tour dates, and hope to have updates soon!

AU: Where can readers find the A-100s online and stay up to date with the band?

piratespressrecords.com/a-100s-shop

[instagram.com/a100sband](https://www.instagram.com/a100sband)

a100sband.bandcamp.com

And on all major streaming platforms!

Photo credit: Grant-Brittain



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DEFORMER[®]

KEEPS THE UNDERGROUND MOIST

DEFORMER is a music project initiated by Dutch cult figure Mike Redman in the early 90's. It's considered radio-unfriendly, bold, dark and unorthodox, 'a soundtrack for audio outcasts and musical misfits'. Often banned or intentionally ignored by press and promoters, in the underground Deformer has achieved legendary status for the project's perpetual reinvention, extreme musical crossovers and the incessantly outrageous horror-themed theatrical performances and record covers.

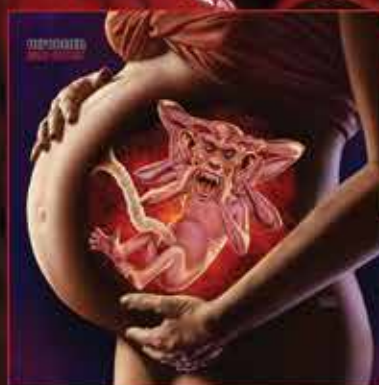
At first the 'disturbing' record sleeves were censored, sales stagnated and the records didn't find the right audience because Deformer resembled more of a death metal band than an extreme electronic act. Now people collect the physical releases and Deformer is hailed for putting the horror aesthetic into the genre, inspiring a new generation of artists and labels. Mike Redman usually designs all record covers himself, but some renowned visual artists such as Ed Repka (known for his iconic work for metalbands Death and Megadeth), Graham Humphreys (cover artist for horror milestones like The Evil Dead and A Nightmare on Elm Street) and famous Japanese Manga/ Guro artist Shintaro Kago have also contributed to the bizarre visual aesthetics of Deformer.

Deformer's fanbase is as versatile as the music: metalheads as well as lovers of bass-driven electronic music join the infamous Deformer mosh-pits at live shows. These shows, by the way, are an experience of their own as fake body parts and other bloody attributes are thrown into the audience. It's almost as if you're at a GWAR show, which is not entirely strange knowing that Mike Redman - a dedicated Horror fan who has also featured in various documentaries, such as 'In Search of Darkness' and 'Cult of VHS' - has a past in special makeup FX artistry for film, and has found a way to integrate this profession into the Deformer project.

In addition to various solo achievements, Deformer has had great success with side project VOODOOM and collaborated with many groundbreaking artists like Mike Smith (Suffocation), Public Enemy, Living Colour, Ice-T, David Vincent (ex-Morbid Angel) as well as movie legends Charles Band (Full Moon Features) and Tony 'Candyman' Todd.

After more than thirty years, Deformer remains underground, even online! The popular streaming platforms don't represent Deformer's most interesting back catalog and their social media game could definitely use some proper management. In 2022 'See, Hear, Scream!' was released, an excessive compilation of the most innovative and wildest tracks, a great chance for newcomers to catch up. Currently Deformer still performs and new material seems to be on the way, but might only be available offline, or at the better record stores. Either way, Deformer is raging on and keeps the underground moist!

Find a selection of Deformer releases at redrumrecordz.com or stay updated on Instagram @deformermusic





band Mr. Plow.

Well the whole thing started as a joke. It was supposed to be a one off show to be honest. When I started doing this in '97 no one was really doing the punk folk thing. It was a niche novelty act. I was getting offers to open shows and then offers to play between bands while they change over gear on stage. Took on all offers thrown at me to get the exposure and experience. D.O.A. took me on the road as their roadie and opening act for some of the shows. I got bit with the tour bug and continued to tour for years after that. I lucked out and toured with bands like Fishbone, Dayglo, SNFU and The 3tards. And countless solo tours as well all over the place.

AU: What does it say on your Tinder/Grindr profile?

I don't know what those are. I've been married for

16 years.

AU: What's the music scene in Portland, OR like these days?

It's a great music scene here in Portland. Lots of great venues to play here. Too bad a lot of bands skip Portland these days. They play Seattle and head straight to San Francisco. A lot of great bands came out of here like Poison Idea and Defiance.

AU: Describe your sound for the hard of hearing.

A whole lot of gargling vocals and spranging on

the guitar with a side order of a lot of swearing. If you like songs about food and sex then all signs point to Mr. Plow.

AU: How would you describe your live show to the visually impaired?

Just a guy who stands still a lot and may do a choreographed 1/4 leg kick.

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

I am currently working on my first album in 14 years. It will be like the early releases where it is just bare bones solo acoustic and vocals. I am beyond proud of the full band sound albums I did in the past but this is going back to what started it all. This album will showcase what's been floating around in my head since the last album in 2012. We've all been through a lot of shit and I want to make the funny again.

AU: Does your most recent album explore any particular themes or topics?

I sing about growing old and what I deal with at my day job and more. I don't want to spoil it all.

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

I'm stoked on all the tracks I have written so far. But based on the crowd reaction to the "Stupid Stuff" song I think people will be pleased. I won't spoil it, you will have to come and hear it for yourself.

AU: Sex, Drugs, or Rock N Roll? Or all of the above?

They all go great together like ketchup, mustard and mayo on a burger.

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

That I am still here and still playing. I took a break to focus on other responsibilities but now I have resurrected from the ashes and hopefully people will enjoy what I bring to the table.

AU: Even though you are a one man band, you have had several special guests on your albums. Please name drop a few.

Gene Hoglan (Death, Dark Angel, SYL, Testament), Norwood Fisher (Fishbone), Rocky George

(Suicidal Tendencies), Oderus Urungus (Gwar) Flattus Maximus (Gwar), Chi Pig (SNFU), Angelo Moore (Fishbone). All appear on *Apocalypse Plow*.

AU: How many albums have you put out? Tell us the names of some of the more clever ones.

7 full length albums. A whole bunch of compilations and a few limited CDR releases as well. The best album titles would be: *It's Plow Or Never*, *Apocalypse Plow*, *Mad Plow Disease*, *Plow'em All*, *Songs In The Key Of A.D.D.*

AU: Please tell us about your career as a doorman at the Cobalt and your foray into the world of porn.

Being a door guy was great. I got paid to watch rad bands on a nightly basis. And Wendy was the best boss to have, she let me disappear on tour whenever I wanted and always had a job to come back to. I eventually traded jobs with my buddy Leo. I took over his job being a porn magazine distribution service and he took my door guy job. Peddling porn was great inspiration for Plow songs.

AU: What keeps Mr. Plow busy these days?

Mainly my family is my motivation these days. Keeping the bills paid and a roof over our heads. But with the current state of the world these days I felt it was time to make people laugh again in that weird way that I can.

AU: Any tour plans?

No real plans as of yet but if the right offer landed in my lap you never know.

AU: Anything else to promote?

New Plow album coming very soon and playing for the first time in Vancouver in ten years at The Wise Hall, July 17th. Digression CD Release show, The Golars, Mr Plow + guests.

AU: Final words of wisdom for our readers?

Never trust a guy who says trust me.

AU: How do people find you online?

mrplow.bandcamp.com or on MySpace, Facebook or them other toxic sites.

MR. PLOW

Interview by Mal Content

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

My name is Mr. Plow, you may know me as the solo acoustic act that played silly songs opening for all you favorite punk bands. A guy once said he is so famous that he is infamous. I am neither of these. I'm just some guy that has out lasted your favorite bands.

AU: Give us a brief history of your one man



ANCIENTS: BEYOND THE REACH OF THE SUN

By FLORA

Vancouver's Ancients return in powerful form, reaffirming their place as one of Canada's most dynamic forces in progressive metal. Fresh off a 2025 JUNO Award win and a cross-country run with Cancer Bats, the band continue to push their sound into heavier, more expansive territory while preparing for a summer of festival stages across Canada and beyond.

AU spoke with Ancients about their return, their creative evolution and the upcoming summer festival season.

AU: Great to have you in *Absolute Underground!* Ancients have carved out a unique place in Canadian progressive metal over the years—how would you introduce the band and the path that's led you to this point in your career?

Kenny Cook: Thank you for having us! We are four dudes, originally based in and around the Vancouver area, who love a good riff and thoroughly enjoy making music together. We formed back in 2009 out of the ashes of another band. We began playing shows around 2011 and since then have had the honour and privilege to do some amazing things and share the stage with some of our heavy metal heroes.

AU: There was a long stretch between albums, and a lot of fans wondered whether Ancients would return—what ultimately brought the band back together for *Beyond the Reach of the Sun*?

KC: We had never collectively decided to take that long of a break between recordings. There was always a plan to make new music with this project, but life sometimes has a way of interfering with the process. The birth of children, family health struggles, member changes, and the pandemic all played a role in the hiatus. I moved away from the Fraser Valley shortly before we started writing songs for what would

become *Beyond the Reach of the Sun*. After nearly two decades of rehearsing in the same room together, we shifted to crafting the foundations of songs remotely. It was refreshing and a great way for everyone to work on things at their own convenience.

There is obviously no replacing the magic that happens when being in the same room with your bandmates, but I found that having a bunch of ideas compiled and documented before getting together was very beneficial to the process.

AU: Ancients have always balanced crushing heaviness with expansive, progressive elements—how has that balance shifted or expanded leading into *Beyond the Reach of the Sun* and this current era of the band?

KC: I think the main objective of this band is to compile all of our influences into one pot and try to make cohesive pieces of music out of it. This time around I feel there are a lot more sections leaning towards hard rock and grunge. We all love a crushing riff and heavy elements so that will most likely always be present.

We've added a lot more elements of keyboards and synths to this record, all of which can be contributed to our friend Justin Hagberg.

Most of the songs were demoed and we asked him if he'd be interested in adding some keys. I think I sent him "Is It Your God", within a couple hours he sent me back his ideas for the song, which is pretty much what you hear on the album recording. He then added some killer stuff to about half of the record and, in my opinion, really elevated the record as a whole.

AU: The album carries a sense of scale and reflection at the same time—what themes or ideas were driving you most during its creation?

KC: It was mainly focused on feelings of overcoming adversity. A lot had gone on in our lives between our previous recording and this one. Once we started compiling the demos, it felt like a sense of relief to have the music be close to finished. It was really enjoyable to be back on the horse, so to speak.

There were some tremendous adversities we had to overcome to get to that point, so it was only natural that the themes leaned towards

perseverance as well as rebirths in a sense, as this was the first recorded material for this project for half of the members in the current lineup.

AU: Songs like "Melt the Crown" and "Cloak of the Vast and Black" move between intricate prog passages and heavier, riff-driven moments—how do you approach writing music that stays technically detailed while still feeling emotionally immediate?

KC: Speaking for myself, most of the songs that I contribute just come from small ideas. I'm not typically one that writes songs from start to finish in one sitting. I will most of the time come up with fragments of songs and let them simmer. Sometimes ideas come immediately, but for the most part I try a few different directions from a single idea.

For me personally, the most important thing is to hear that the music, even if contrasting, flows into itself smoothly. I wish I was able to bang five songs off in a day, but I'm maybe overly critical of my choices musically, which is probably to my own detriment.

A different take would be on "Cloak of the Vast and Black"; it was a direct result of Brock and myself combining two separate ideas. He created this killer intro

and outro for another song we had in the works. We ended up scrapping the middle section, but his ideas worked really well with some heavier riffs I was working on at the time.



AU: You recently toured across Canada with Cancer Bats celebrating 20 years of *Birth of the Giant*. How did those shows feel, and what was it like sharing that run with them?

KC: All of the shows on that tour were incredible. We felt at home the moment we met all of the guys and their crew. It was an amazing experience for us. The package was full of great bands and even greater people. Definitely one to remember and something we'd do again in a heartbeat, although driving completely across Canada to start a tour is never ideal haha.

AU: With summer festival season approaching and appearances at events like Mosh the Rock and ProgStorm, what does a festival setting bring out in Ancients that's different from a regular club or theatre show?

KC: Festivals can sometimes be chaotic, but with that being said, there is nothing more fun than playing them. You're potentially playing for a lot of people that haven't seen or heard of you. It forces you to be at the top of your game and it's just a great environment to be a part of.

AU: Now that *Beyond the Reach of the Sun* has been out for some time, how has the response been from fans as they've spent more time with the record?

KC: I feel the response has been great from the fans. We've definitely had a lot of good feedback and gained a lot of new fans that hadn't heard our previous material before this release. We are certainly happy with how the record turned out, so it's been great that people outside of our circle have enjoyed it as much as we did making it.

AU: With European dates on the horizon later in 2026, what's coming next for Ancients, and where can readers stay connected with the band online?

KC: WORLD DOMINATION!!!! Haha. We've been slowly, but surely working on new music in between touring and are hoping to give ourselves a deadline for new music soon. We've also been pondering the idea of releasing an EP with stripped-down, mostly acoustic versions of a handful of previously recorded songs.

ancientribs.bandcamp.com

[instagram.com/ancients](https://www.instagram.com/ancients)

UPCOMING SHOWS

Catch ANCIENTS in August for a short run of shows around their Progstorm Festival performance this August!

August 20 - Toronto @ Garrison

August 21 - Ottawa @ Rainbow Bistro

August 22 - Montreal @ Progstorm

August 23 - Quebec City @ L'ANTI Bar & Spectacles

progstorm.com

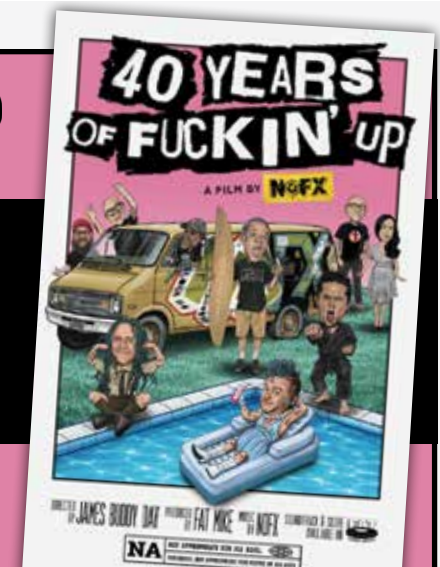


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THE REAL MCKENZIES

Interview by Chad Cornies

Vancouver's Celtic punk legends The Real McKenzies return with "I Wanna Eat Sardines (With Yer Mother)," the first single from their new album *On Yer Bike*, released May 29 on Stomp Records.

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

Kenny Lush: Hello, I am Kenneth A Lush and I play guitar for The Real McKenzies but I'm most infamously known for winning the 2013 ECCW Pacific Cup by beating El Phantasmo in the finals.

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

KL: The band has been around for like 30 years or something so I feel there's no brief history. Me and Barry and Paco joined the band when Mario was putting together a new line up. As far as what

we are all about, I'm all about hoping the hotel we stay in has a pool!

AU: What does it say on your bandmates tinder profiles and on yours?

KL: Barry doesn't believe in the internet, so he wouldn't have a Tinder ad, he would have a classified ad in the back of a local paper 1991 style. I saw Aspy's dating profile once, he's our bagpiper. He's very handsome but his pic is him playing the bagpipes. And I told him I don't think babes dig bagpipe pics. He got a little mad, but I mean it's kinda like how I like fishing, but would never use a pic of me

holding a fish. As for my Tinder profile it would probably just be something about how I like Pegging!

AU: Where is the band from and what's the music scene like there?

KL: We are all from Vancouver, except Aspy. He's from Galicia, which is a part of Spain right above Portugal. I'm not sure about Galicia's music scene, but Vancouver's scene is blowing up. Last night I went to a gig and saw a band called Make It Right. They're all like high school kids and they rock! There's a lot of hardworking bands from here right now and a lot of cool DIY venues. Tons of new kids coming out to gigs. Gives me hope!

AU: Describe the band's sound if possible.

KL: Punk Rock with bagpipes. If it's hard to imagine, put on a NOFX album and step on a cat's tail!

AU: How would you describe your live show to the visually impaired?

KL: You don't need eyes to hear the truly wonderful bantering of Paul McKenzie. But without eyes you wouldn't be able to see how truly handsome I am.

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

KL: We have a new album called *On Yer Bike*. If you're a fan of the other albums, then you will like this album. It's fun, fast and bagpipey!

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

KL: I think there's a series of songs on there that explore some cannibal or something. That's more a Mario question. He was the mastermind behind this record. But like all our albums there's songs about Scotland.

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

KL: "Fiona" is my fave on the album, probably because it's one of my songs LOL! But it's a true story about a sheep that was trapped for years on this little mountainside ledge for two years.

AU: Sex, Drugs, or Rock N Roll? or all of the above?

KL: All of the above, but done responsibly!!!

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

KL: My mother knows everything. I'm an open book and I call my momma all the time. But what most readers don't know is that I really enjoy those two pop punk albums that Machine Gun Kelly put out!

AU: Any tour plans?

KL: Ya we got all July in Europe, and then another few weeks in Europe in mid August.

AU: Anything else to promote?

KL: We got an epic Merch Store. Go to the website and buy a shirt!

AU: Final words of wisdom for our readers?

KL: You can't soar like an eagle, When you hang out with turkeys!

realmckenzie.com

therealmckenzie.bandcamp.com

Photo credit: Cat Ashbee



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SUMMER '26

Dates, venues and websites were accurate at press time but are subject to change. Check festival websites and social media for the latest updates.

FESTIVAL GUIDE

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Anarchy in the OK — September 3-5, 2026

Kelowna Events Centre, Kelowna, BC
instagram.com/anarchyintheok.fest

Armstrong MetalFest — July 17-18, 2026

Hassen Arena, Armstrong, BC
armstrongmetalfest.ca

Barnside Harvest Festival — September 11-13, 2026

Paterson Park, Ladner, BC
barnsideharvestfest.com

Chilliwack Hardcore Festival — July 18, 2026

45910 Alexander Ave, Chilliwack, BC

Khatsahlano Street Party — July 11, 2026

Kitsilano, Vancouver, BC
khatsahlano.ca

Mandrake Abbey Art & Music Festival — August 8, 2026

Bridge Lake, BC
mandrakeabbeyfoundation.ca

MASSIF Music Festival — September 24-26, 2026

Downtown Nelson, BC
festivalmassif.com

Mosh the Rock Island MetalFest — August 9, 2026

Fred Milne Park, Sooke, BC
orangetickets.ca

Phillips Backyard Weekender — July 10-12, 2026

Phillips Backyard, Victoria, BC
phillipsbackyard.com

Rifflandia Music Festival

CANCELLED
Victoria, BC
rifflandia.com

Smokin Acres (Musicians Against Cancer) — June 13, 2026

Sooke River, 2860 Sooke River Road, Sooke, BC
facebook.com/groups/1425748517780923

The Great Canadian Bash — June 27, 2026

Starlight Stadium, Langford, BC
greatcanadianbash.com

Victoria Ska & Reggae Festival — June 24-28, 2026

Victoria, BC (Various venues)
victoriaskafest.ca

Wheelies Events (Multiple dates) — Victoria, BC

June 13-14 / July 4-5 / September 3
Wheelies Motorcycles & Café, Victoria, BC
wheeliesmotorcycles.ca

Loud Qathet — August 20-22-2026

The Alley, Powell River
loudqathet.com

Jak's Reunion 2026 - V113 — July 23-26, 2026

Lucky Bar, Phoenix, Cogan's Victoria, BC



ALBERTA

Calgary Stampede Music Programming — July 3-12, 2026

Stampede Park, Calgary, AB
calgariystampede.com

Community Fest — June 14, 2026

Blox Arts Centre, Calgary, AB
eventbrite.ca

Decimate Metalfest — June 26-27, 2026

Millet Agriplex Arena, Millet, AB
decimatemetalfest.com

KDays Music Fest — July 17-26, 2026

EXPO Centre, Edmonton, AB
k-days.com/see-do/concerts

Loud As Hell Open Air Festival — July 31-August 2, 2026

Drumheller, AB
loudashell.ca

Moment(s) Fest Siksika — September 4-6, 2026

Siksika Nation, AB
facebook.com/Momentsfestsiksika

Purple City Music Festival — September 11-13, 2026

Edmonton, AB (Various venues)
purplecityfest.com

Riot in the Lot Festival — August 28, 2026

Edmonton, AB
pawnshop-live.ca

Sled Island Music & Arts Festival — June 17-21, 2026

Calgary, AB
sledisland.com

Terminus Festival — July 23-26, 2026

Dickens Pub, Calgary, AB
terminus-festival.com



QUEBEC

Festival au Lac — June 4–6, 2026

Parc Daniel-Johnson, Granby, QC
festivalaulacgranby.com

Festival Sunsation — June 5–6, 2026

Parc Lavolette, Trois-Rivières, QC
sunsationfestival.com

FestiVoix de Trois-Rivières — June 25–July 5, 2026

Trois-Rivières, QC
festivoix.com

Osheaga Music & Arts Festival — July 31–August 2, 2026

Parc Jean-Drapeau, Montréal, QC
osheaga.com

POP Montréal — September 23–27, 2026

Montréal, QC
popmontreal.com

ProgStorm Festival — August 21–23, 2026

Club Soda, Montréal, QC
progstorm.com

Rock La Cauze — August 6–8, 2026

Victoriaville, QC
musicfestivalwizard.com

Vans Warped Tour — August 21–22, 2026

Parc Jean-Drapeau, Montréal, QC
vanswarpedtourcanada.com



USA

Chicago

Lollapalooza — July 30–August 2, 2026
lollapalooza.com

Riot Fest — September 18–20, 2026

Douglass Park, Chicago, IL
riotfest.org

Cold Waves XIV — September 24–27, 2026

Chicago, IL (multiple venues)
coldwaves.net

Louder Than Life — September 17–20, 2026

Louisville, KY
louderthanlifefestival.com

Milwaukee MetalFest — June 5–7, 2026

The Rave / Eagles Club, Milwaukee, WI
milwaukeefestival.com

TentacleFest — June 27, 2026

Great American Music Hall, San Francisco, CA
wheelchairsportscamp.co

ONTARIO

Rock The Park — July 15–18, 2026

Harris Park, London, ON
rockthepark.ca

Spiderfest — July 10–12, 2026

Campbellford, ON
allevants.in

Buddies Fest 2 — August 7 - August 9, 2026

The Mill Inn + Eatery, Tillsonburg, ON
buddiesfest.com



MANITOBA

Winnipeg Punk Fest — July 10–11, 2026

Sidestage, Winnipeg, MB
instagram.com/winnipegpunkfest



EUROPE

Hellfest Open Air — June 18–21, 2026

Clisson, France
hellfest.fr

Obscene Extreme Festival — July 1–5, 2026

Trutnov, Czech Republic
obsceneextreme.cz/en

Pure Fucking Metal FestEvil — July 10–11, 2026

Laberweinting, Germany
metal-festevil.de

Rebellion Festival — August 6–9, 2026

Blackpool, UK
rebellionfestivals.com

Wacken Open Air — July 29–August 1, 2026

Wacken, Germany
wacken.com

Motocultor Festival — August 13–16, 2026

Carhaix-Plouguer, France
motocultor-festival.com

Download Festival — June 10–14, 2026

Donington Park, Leicestershire UK
downloadfestival.co.uk

Summer Breeze Open Air — August 12–15, 2026

Dinkelsbühl, Germany
summer-breeze.de/en/



OTHER LOCATIONS

Little Slaughter on the Prairie — Aug 22, 2026

RCAF Lynx Hall, Saskatoon, SK
www.facebook.com/events/rcaf-astra-hall-rental/little-slaughter-on-the-prairie/2053665978512266/

Area 506 Festival — July 30 - August 2, 2026

Waterfront Container Village Saint John, NB
area506.ca/festival

Gutterfest Open Air — July 24 - 26, 2026

Avon Valley Lanes, Windsor, NS
facebook.com/p/Gutterfest-61561348702826/

IronFest 2026 — August 6 - 8, 2026

Labrador City, Newfoundland and Labrador
labradorwest.com/town-hall/labrador-city/ironfest-2025/

SUMMER '26 FESTIVALS

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COMIC CONVENTIONS

FANCONS.CA
 YETICON — JUNE 19-21, 2026
 KW COMIC CON — JUNE 20-21, 2026
 PICTON COMICON — JUNE 21, 2026
 BRIGHTON COMICON — JUNE 27, 2026
 KELOWNA COMICON — JUNE 27-28, 2026
 MONTRÉAL COMICCON — JULY 3-5, 2026
 WASAGA BEACH COMICON — JULY 5, 2026
 CALLANDER COMICON — JULY 11, 2026
 FANATICCON OTTAWA — JULY 18, 2026
 STREETSVILLE COMICON — JULY 18, 2026
 MIDLAND COMICON — JULY 19, 2026
 SUDBURY COMICON — AUGUST 1, 2026
 FENELON FALLS COMICON — AUGUST 16, 2026
 STRATFORD COMICON — AUGUST 22, 2026
 WESTCOAST COMIC CON — AUGUST 23, 2026
 FAN EXPO CANADA — AUGUST 27-30, 2026
 ORILLIA COMICON — AUGUST 30, 2026
 BARRIE COMICON — SEPTEMBER 5, 2026
 KINGSTON COMICON — SEPTEMBER 12, 2026
 PETERBOROUGH COMICON — SEPTEMBER 13, 2026
 THUNDERCON — SEPTEMBER 19-20, 2026

COMEDY FESTIVALS

THE GREAT OUTDOORS COMEDY FESTIVAL
 EDMONTON — JULY 17-19, 2026
 WINNIPEG — JULY 17-19, 2026
 HALIFAX — AUGUST 6-9, 2026
 CALGARY — AUGUST 28-30, 2026
 VANCOUVER — AUGUST 29-30, 2026
 SPOKANE — AUGUST 28-30, 2026
 MISSISSAUGA — SEPTEMBER 11-13, 2026
 GREATOUTDOORSCOMEDYFESTIVAL.COM
 TORONTO SKETCH COMEDY FESTIVAL
 SCHITT'S RIVALRY, JUNE 4-6, 11-13
 SPRING THING, JUNE 6
 SPOTLIGHT AT THE SECOND CITY: PRIDE EDITION, JUNE 9-10
 TAWA COMEDY FESTIVAL — JUNE 12, 19, AND 26
 A QUEER COMEDY SHOW — JUNE 21
 TORONTOSKETCHFEST.COM
 JUST FOR LAUGHS MONTRÉAL — JULY 15-26
 JUST FOR LAUGHS QUEBEC — JULY 22-AUGUST 2
 HAHAAAA.COM

SKATE BOARDING

CANADASKATEBOARD.CA/EVENTS
 ACKALOPE MISSISSAUGA — JULY 10-12, MISSISSAUGA, ON
 HOE DOWN AT THE HOOF — JUNE 20, TORONTO, ON
 BEAT THE HEAT — JULY 1, MEDICINE HAT, AB
 ASH BOWL BASH — AUGUST 22, TORONTO, ON
 TOPAZ THRASH III — AUGUST 29, VICTORIA, BC

TATTOO EVENTS

CA.TATTOOFILTER.COM/TATTOO-EVENTS/CANADA
 MONTRÉAL TATTOO SHOW — JUNE 5-7, MONTRÉAL, QC
 RED DEER TATTOO SHOW — JUNE 5-7, RED DEER, AB
 TATTOO RENDEZ VOUS — JUNE 12-14, TROIS-RIVIÈRES, QC
 KAMLOOPS TATTOO SHOW — JUNE 12-14, KAMLOOPS, BC
 INKED CIRCUS TATTOO EXPO — JULY 3-5, WINDSOR, ON
 INK THE 6IX TORONTO TATTOO EXPO — JULY 10-12, TORONTO, ON
 OKANAGAN TATTOO SHOW — JULY 17-19, KELOWNA, BC
 WINNIPEG TATTOO CONVENTION — AUGUST 7-9, WINNIPEG, MB
 INKED CIRCUS TATTOO EXPO — AUGUST 7-9, LONDON, ON
 QUÉBEC TATTOO SHOW — AUGUST 21-23, QUÉBEC CITY, QC
 INKED CIRCUS TATTOO EXPO — AUGUST 21-23, SUDBURY, ON
 ART TATTOO MONTRÉAL — AUGUST 28-30, MONTRÉAL, QC

FETISH FESTIVALS

VANCOUVER FETISH WEEKEND — JULY 23-27, 2026
 VANCOUVERFETISHWEEKEND.COM
 MONTREAL FETISH WEEKEND — SEPTEMBER 3-7, 2026
 MONTREALFETISHWEEKEND.COM

ART FESTIVALS

PANEL ONE COMIC ARTS FESTIVAL — JUNE 6, 2026
 PANELONE.CA
 TORONTO COMIC ARTS FESTIVAL — JUNE 6-7, 2026
 TORONTOCOMICS.COM
 INFEST 2026 - SEPTEMBER 4-6, 2026
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 INFEST.CA



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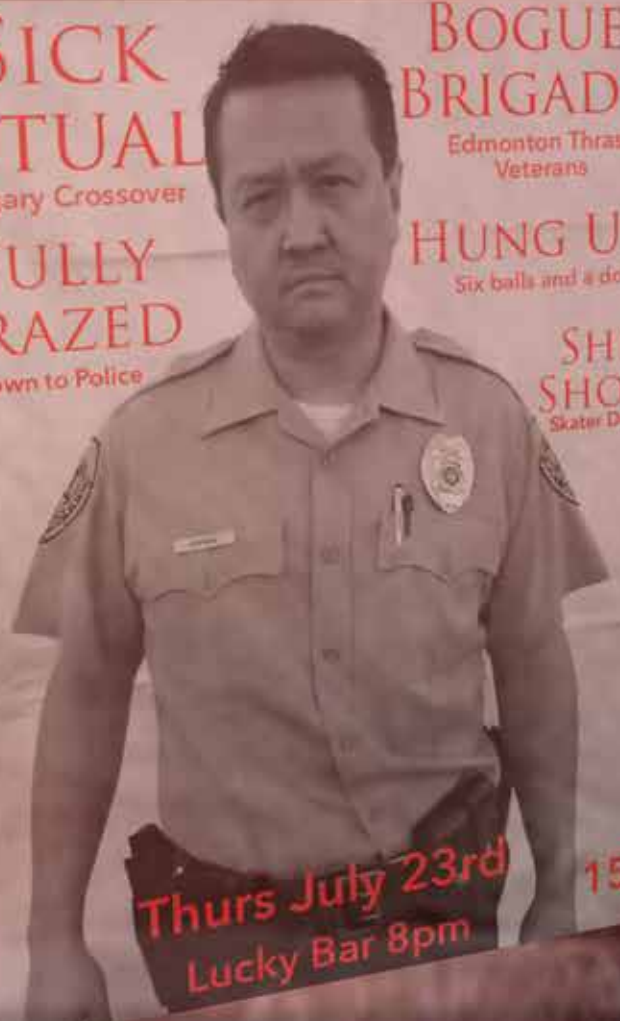
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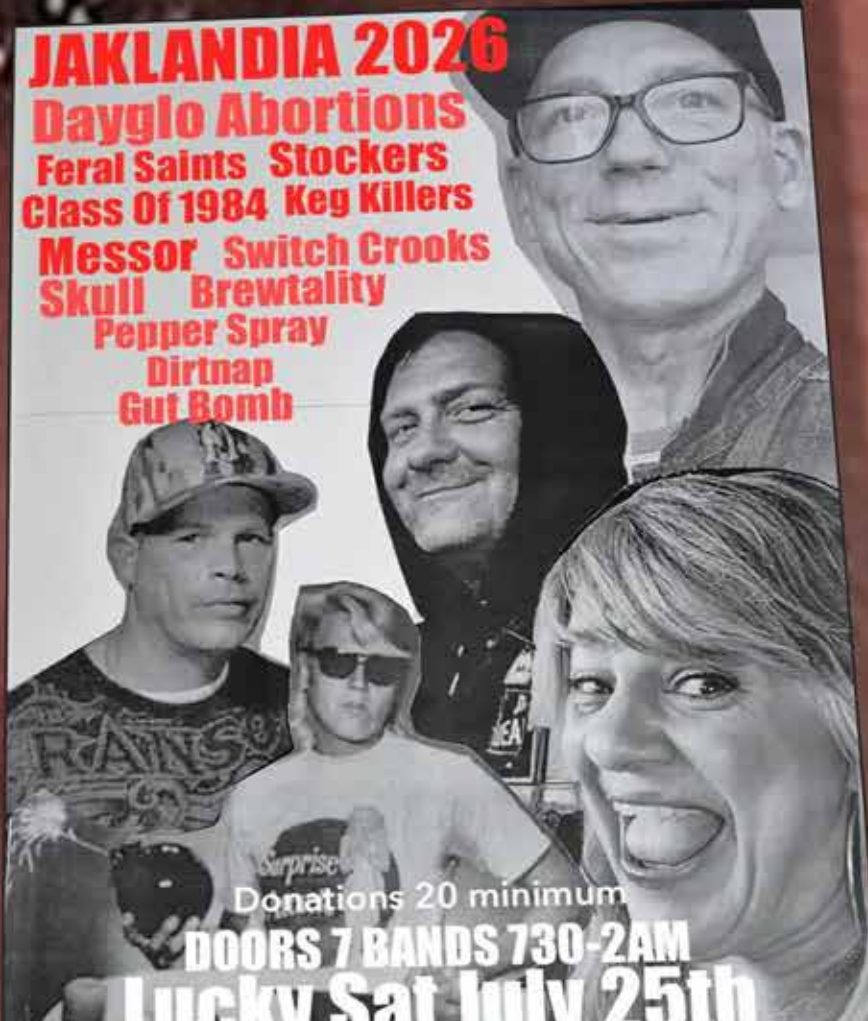
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THE KETTLE BLACK

By Dennis Lighthouse

There's a particular kind of artist who never really sits still, someone who treats genre like a suggestion, process like a dare and the stage like a workshop full of half-tamed machines. Hamilton's The Kettle Black, the long-running solo project of Nick Johannes, is exactly that creature.

What follows isn't a tidy narrative so much as a conversation with someone who has spent decades building, dismantling and rebuilding his own musical universe.

AU: You've been described as "Mr. Wrong and Neil Young jamming with Roland from Big Black in Roger Waters' living room." When you hear that stitched-together lineage pinned to The Kettle Black, do you recognize yourself in it or do you feel like you've been misfiled by other people's record collections?

Nick Johannes: You must have seen that on the Wayback Machine. I stitched that one together myself from the most common comparisons I'd hear from people. It was on the press page I had on my website at one point.

People always compare you to what they know. I remember getting compared to Big Black and Palace Brothers by different people after the same show. If I write on acoustic guitar, the folk side comes out. When I'm playing bass, it's more melodic prog/punk. Electric guitar seems to be more indie noise rock. Piano, it's all just embarrassingly dramatic cheese, kind of all over the place.

Now I just say "ProgFolkArtPunk".

AU: On *Was Wollen Sie Mehr?* and *Love Is An Absolute*, there's this tension between abrasion and vulnerability — looped machines grinding under very human melodies. What were you trying to say to your audience with those early records, and what do you hear now when you listen back to that version of The Kettle Black?

NJ: I don't really think of it as a different version of The Kettle Black, it's pretty much the same band since the beginning, there is only one person in the band. I guess? I just think of it as talking to myself or complaining about the absurdity of the reality we live in, or maybe just yelling at a cloud. I like the idea of labouring over something that really has no material value. I'm more interested in the creative process.

Don't think too much about the consumption of it; it's never been a motivating factor, at least not for the recording, maybe for the live show. Still, people get what they get out of it. Everyone has their own interpretation. What some people think is horrific, others find hilarious.

AU: You run (or at least once ran) Capital Punishment, the label that put out your own work and releases by projects like *The Ship Shapes*. How has being the person behind the label handling the unromantic logistics changed the way you think about risk, ambition and what "success" even means for The Kettle Black?

NJ: I've always been the person in my bands that

does the management stuff. Originally Capital Punishment was going to be an internet label, just downloads, PWYC kind of thing. Spending more time, less money creating things. It's all DIY, low overhead, everything is handmade by me except the vinyl. I used to burn all the CDs as well and hand-paint them, but that takes a long time and I'm getting old, so this run I'm getting the CDs pressed. I'm still making the cases though.

It's more of a production company these days. I do live sound, lighting and recording. It's my day job. It's The Capital Punishment Corporation, but I'm the only employee.

Success. What is success to anyone? Probably spending a greater amount of your time in a positive state of mind. There seems to be a lot of confusion about that on this planet.

AU: On Bandcamp you've released things with titles like "The Drain", "Digital Friends", "Robots", "Good-Bye Spotify", and "The Facts Tax". There's a clear thread of technology, alienation and resistance running through those names. What are you pushing back against, and what are you secretly afraid you might be becoming?

NJ: I like Bandcamp. People can stream the music if they want to check it out, they can download the files and they have Bandcamp Fridays. I have YouTube as well, but the sound quality isn't as good.

I think you're assuming a lot. People can listen to the songs if they want and figure it out.

AU: There are rumours of an East Coast tour with Wax Mannequin, an artist who also lives in that strange space between sincerity and the surreal. When you imagine sharing a bill and a van with him, what part of The Kettle Black do you think will be challenged or exposed in a way that wouldn't happen on a solo tour?

NJ: They're not rumours, that's why I'm doing this interview, to promote it. I've toured with Wax before. He's a pro. Always fun touring with him. Good conversation.

It's not just the East Coast either. Wax Mannequin and I are doing the East Coast in July and heading west in August. After that, Supercrawl (not to be confused with Supercrawl) here in Hamilton (I do sound for that). A bunch of dates around Ontario after that.

AU: You're a one-person engine: live acoustic and electric guitars, bass, synths, samples, loop stations, drum machines. When you're building those layers on stage, what's the moment you're chasing: control over the chaos, or the exact second it slips out of your hands and becomes something neither you nor the audience expected?

NJ: I haven't had a real train wreck in a while, but I now have the projections to deal with. It usually just takes a lot of

rehearsing. It's more about remembering all the stuff I have to do when my hands are free.

I have a new setup now: three loop pedals (none of which are synced) and a computer that I use as a drum machine and that triggers the lights and projections. I built a bunch of pedals to control the computer, but it's slightly less responsive than my old drum machine.

I used this setup for the first time a few weeks back. I haven't been doing a lot of shows lately. Besides Montreal, I haven't played out of Ontario in 15 years.

This is The Kettle Black reunion tour.

AU: You started in Saskatoon and now operate

out of Hamilton — a shift from prairie sprawl to industrial density. If *Was Wollen Sie Mehr?* is a Saskatoon record and *Love Is An Absolute* is a Hamilton record, what's the emotional weather of each city that you hear baked into those tracks?

NJ: I grew up in Saskatoon, but I lived in Vancouver for a long time. It rains too much there for me though. I played in a few bands out there: Jack Feels Fine (guitar and vocals), Askmasters (bass), and Jang Mo Jib (drums).

Was Wollen Sie Mehr? was recorded in Vancouver, and the *Bystander* EP before that one. *Love Is An Absolute* was recorded in Vancouver, Thunder Bay and Ottawa. I was on the road a lot at that point.

The *Facts Tax* was mostly recorded in Hamilton, a little in Ottawa and one song in Thunder Bay. That album, except for two songs, sat finished on my hard drive for about eight years.

I was playing guitar in Get Off The Cop and drums in Trunk Feather / Jimmy and The Jerks at that time, and doing live sound. TKB kind of sat on the back burner. I usually played a few shows a year, but no touring.

AU: A track like "All Work And No Play" feels almost prophetic now, in a culture that grinds people down while selling them distraction. When you wrote it, were you

documenting your own burnout, or warning yourself about the person you might become if you kept "marching to the beat of the obsolete"?

NJ: None of your fuckin business.

AU: Your catalogue moves from more traditional songs toward pieces that feel like dispatches — notes from the edge of some social or personal collapse. Do you see The Kettle Black as a character reporting from the ruins, or as someone still trying to prevent the collapse from happening in the first place?

NJ: Maybe you smoke too much weed, maybe a bit of both.

AU: If this upcoming tour becomes someone's



first and only encounter with The Kettle Black, and they go home and dig into *Love Is An Absolute*, *Was Wollen Sie Mehr?*, and the newer digital releases, what do you hope they piece together about you that a single live set could never fully say out loud?

NJ: I think a record and a live show are totally different.

Playing solo, even with the loop pedals and drum machine, you are limited to what you can do. Obviously with recording you can overdub stuff and I can play the drums as well.

The arrangements are different, sometimes the tempos are different, sometimes I play faster live, play the bass instead of guitar. Maybe they would focus on the lyrics??

I like to think some of my lyrics are clever, or at least interesting.

Johannes may joke about reunion tours and yelling at clouds, but The Kettle Black is entering a new chapter, one built on decades of craft, a rebuilt live rig, and a renewed appetite for the road.

This summer, he joins Wax Mannequin for a cross-Canada run that promises sincerity, surrealism and the kind of musical chaos only two lifers can conjure.

If you catch a show, expect loops, lights, projections, and a man wrestling his machines into something human.

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RACHEL SCHAEFER

Absolute Underground: Can you tell us a bit about yourself?

Rachel Schaefer: I grew up in Deep Cove in North Vancouver with lovely parents who were way too supportive for any self-respecting artist. I do not have a good story of struggle and hardship, other than being a vaguely chunky kid with a big nose. I am not fun to root for. However, I have been trying to post on TikTok more to promote my upcoming album release and a girl saw one of my videos and reached out to tell me that my first boyfriend from 13 years ago cheated on me, so that's something. What do I do with this knowledge?! I can't be mad NOW?! What am I? A LOSER?

AU: What was starting out in comedy like for you?

RS: I genuinely considered taking up smoking just to make friends. The standup world is traditionally not a super welcoming environment to new people, especially ten years ago when I started. These new kids are all so nice to each other and it equally delights and disgusts me. Barely anybody talked to me in my first year, no one saw my set because if their friends weren't on stage, they'd be outside rippin' darts, but I appreciate that time a lot now looking back. I get now that comics weren't immediately friendly because so many people come and go in standup. You had to really push through if you were going to stick with it and it gave me a chance to get funny in obscurity. I feel like I really earned it when people started noticing me. Now all my friends are comics and good lord what a mistake I have made. Not a single moment of peace for this old bag.

AU: When was the best moment of a joke or routine landing perfectly?

RS: I don't trust comics that have self esteem good enough to hold on to those memories. My most vivid recollections are of the truly catastrophic moments. I once hosted a show in a gorgeous, massive theatre and only about 12 people showed up, including my parents and my aunt and uncle who were visiting from out of town. This crowd felt so uncomfortable sitting in the front tables of an empty 300 person theatre and refused to get on board with the show. I was powering through with minor chuckles and, finally, I'm on my closer before bringing up the first guest spot and I say the last line (in this theatre where you could hear a pin drop) and my

mother unconsciously WHISPERS IT ALONG WITH ME. I was just like, "MOM!! Uggggghgh... your first comic, ladies and gentlemen..."

AU: Our theme for this issue is Festivals. Do you have a festival story you'd like to share?

RS: One time Macklemore walked past me at Rifflandia in Victoria and he told me that he liked my shoes. Do with that what you will.

AU: Pick anyone living or dead to open for you. Who would it be, why did you pick them, and where is the show?

RS: Miss Piggy. Because she's a confident host that takes no shit, she fits right in with my "more is more" aesthetic, and she's an all timer green room hang. The ideal venue would be a dive bar attached to a motel with only one room left so we're forced to have a sleepover. And the audience is all biker gangs and bachelorette parties.

AU: I understand you and Kelsey are going on tour together, what's that going to be like?

RS: Sometimes you meet someone and they just give off such a strong, capable, and resourceful vibe that you know you are so safe with them and that they'll have a solution to any unexpected roadblock or issue. Neither me or Kelsey is that person, so god forbid we get a flat tire.

AU: What do you have coming up that we'll want to check out?

RS: My debut album and special, *I've Never Told Anyone That Before* will be coming out in June through 604 Records' *Comedy Here Often*.

Follow me on Instagram and TikTok:

@RachelESchaefer for updates and for the developing situation of my pet lizard shedding her skin.

Photo credit: Luke Bentley



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SOLANUM

SOLANUM strikes with "Pain Parade", the 3rd album.

Thrashing out of Winnipeg, Manitoba – Answers with drummer Anders Land and vocalist Cam McFee

Interview by Erik Lindholm

AU: Good day out there, what's happening on your street, out the window right now? And what's in your cup? Set the scene for our faithful readers.

Anders Land: Outside my window? A bunch of stray cats. Other than that, sweet fuck all. In my cup? Coffee.

AU: When AU last heard from you, it was 2021. We were amongst the gruesome plague

of COVID-19, and shows were restricted. Tell us what is new and exciting with the band since!

AL: We released our second album *Ruled by the Cruel* during that time, and then shortly after had some member changes.

The last show we played before the world shut down was with local heavy hitters Crown of Thorns (RIP), Chernobyl Wolves (RIP) and a new local band Slushead. I recall the guys in Slushead were all

very impressive players.

Cam McFee: A couple years later Daniel and Henry from Slushead got hired at Anders work place. They remembered playing together and when asked how Slushead was going Daniel said "Henry and I are either going to look for some new members or start a new band" and Anders said "Why don't you two come jam with Solanum instead? We need a bass player and lead guitar player" and so that was that.

We then recorded the "Mad Racket" EP with Daniel (bass) and Henry (lead guitars), Anders and Lee wrote those songs during the pandemic and we released that in March of 2024.

AU: Tell us about the record release show that

went down on May 22, 2026 at Side Stage in Winnipeg. With Sabbathory, Zero Cause and Trauma Shot. How'd you come to book with those bands, and tell us about the launch night!

AL: It was a very sick show from start to finish. Showcasing some of Winnipeg's heaviest and tightest punk/ thrash / death bands.

Trauma Shot are the only other crossover band in this city. They go hard as fuck.

Negative Charge are Winnipeg's Poison Idea. Absolutely insane stuff.

Sabbathory is hands down the best death thrash band this city has ever seen. Check out their full length *Endless Asphyxiating Gloom* it's a total masterpiece. We decided as a band who would be the best fit for the show and to our surprise, everyone we had in mind was able to play.

Our friend Cory Thomas owns our newest venue Sidestage, so he set a date aside for us. We did have to replace Zero Cause with Negative Charge, but their replacement couldn't have been better. Glad it all worked out.

AU: How have you come to work with Attack With Force Records out of Saskatoon?

CM: Our drummer Anders was in Edmonton playing Infest last summer with his other band Regurgitated Guts.

At that point, we just had the cover art and rough mixes for *Pain Parade*. Whilst slamming some parking lot beers, Anders showed his bud Cody from Saskatoon (Abuse) who isn't even involved with any labels and he said "Let's show this to Tony (AWF). I'll put \$500 down to ensure I get my copy on vinyl" he actually said \$1000 at first but I told him he was crazy. Tony (AWF) said without hesitation "That has to be on vinyl. We have to put that shit out." Then he calls Mike (AWF) over and it was as easy as a "Oh fuck yeah bud, let's do it!" None of them had even heard the songs yet but once we got the masters in their hands they were just as stoked as us on the songs, and everything came together nice and easy!

It says AWF-001 on the spine of our LP. They're an awesome punk, hardcore and extreme metal label that have put out releases for lots of sick bands.

AL: After numerous years as a band this would also happen to be Solanum's first vinyl release. Thankful to be a part of the Attack With Force crew.

AU: What are the lyrical themes on the record? What are topics you are covering? We heard "Instigator" on the promo, and thought "This one creates the pit!"

AL: Lyrical themes are mostly trauma, pain, and the ugliness of humanity. We wanted to make an ugly, extremely pissed off record! Haha!

AU: Deadly cover art! The artist "Curse of Face" is bringing dark visions to the forefront. What do you see in the cover art, what is your interpretation?

CM: I see chaos, ugliness and pain. Essentially the



worst of humanity. We discussed ideas as a band, Curse of Face said "Please give me a rough idea". Anders drew almost exactly what you see in the art, except in stick figure form.

AL: If you were to compare the two drawings side by side, it's absolutely hilarious. Curse of Face is so easy to work with. Delivers satisfying results each time. Give him your money curseofface69@gmail.com

AU: Live dates and tour plans around the release? What do you have planned, what do you want to see happen with the road? Tell the people!

CM: Touring is rad but commitments at home mean we prefer short, sharp penetrations into other regions/cities. No 7 month tours for us! One-off dates in other cities are sweet too. If there's any festivals in need of fast crossover, hit us up!

AU: Last words to the metalheads across Canada, what's the message?

AL: Support your friends' bands. Support Attack With Force Records. Support Curse Of Face.

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THE SUPERSUCKERS: MUST'VE BEEN DIRTY

American underground-rock favorites smash across North America with Scott H. Biram
By Ferdy Belland

"We're bringing our best A-game to Canada, and we're going to rock your pants off!" says Edward Carlyle Daly III, known to the underground-rock fans of the world as the Supersuckers' bassist-vocalist-majordomo Eddie Spaghetti. "Even after doing the Supersuckers for so many years now, we're still finding new places to play in... like Cranbrook BC, for instance! If there's a dirty shithole in any given town, we're likely to play it. And I'm always surprised when we come across a new shithole we haven't been to yet, but they

do exist!

The Supersuckers have been confidently hacking and slashing their way through the highways and byways of the world's power-chord underground since 1988, and even though they're not exactly household names, it's always a case of If-You-Know-You-Know. Formed in Tuscon Arizona from excitable high-school chums, the band moved to Seattle after graduation since the rainy gloom of the Pacific Northwest allowed them to wear leather jackets throughout the summer.

They signed to legendary Sub Pop Records (when drinking buddies Nirvana were still on the label) and quickly built a respected name as diehard long-tour road warriors who consistently blasted out fiery performances, combining a whacky mix of AC/DC, Motorhead, the Ramones, and Steve Earle (!) into a blistering sound all their own. Across their ongoing career - which shows no sign of slowing down - the Supersuckers have played over 2,800 shows worldwide and independently sold no less than 300,000 copies of their dozen full-length albums...which includes their most recent release "Liquor, Women, Drugs & Killing," which has been critically acclaimed as a triumphant return-to-form for a so-called "cow-punk" band who never really flagged or slackened along the way.

"That's why we do the things we do," says Daly. "We're wanting a wide audience to relate to the material we painstakingly create, and hopefully they enjoy it as much as we enjoyed making it and performing it. I've gotten to the point now where I accept where the Supersuckers are in the world's rock-and-roll hierarchy. I feel we're about as popular as we ought to be. We get the fans we get because they like what we do. The fact that we're still able to do what we do at this A-game level is more of less a miracle. I feel that this new album is as good as any record we've ever put out...if not better! And who keeps doing that? We've been running this band for nearly FORTY YEARS! It's kind of insane."

After pounding the over-amplified pavement for so long, are the Supersuckers in danger of running out of things to talk about and rock about?

"I wouldn't say my creative process is constantly bubbling on a day-to-day basis," says Daly, "but it's still percolating fairly often, and I'm grateful every time something hits and sticks. I just finished a new song yesterday, as a matter of fact! And I'm thrilled that I'm still able to do that. That, to me, is the funnest part about this whole Supersuckers gig: making up new songs. That'll be my legacy. When I'm gone, I want everyone to talk about how I wrote a few hundred cool rock songs. The subject matter of the songs becomes less important over the years - as long as you're saying something you're not going to be too embarrassed singing for the rest of your life - I feel anything goes, as far as lyrics go. I'm able to write about all sorts of weird stuff and still make it sound like rock and roll music.

And the adventures never end for Eddie Spaghetti and friends.

"We just played this Underground Garage cruise-ship event," recalls Daly. "We embarked

from Miami and sailed across to Mexico. That was utterly incredible: we got to see all these great bands...Jon Spencer was unbelievable, the Mooney Suzuki was so good, the Rival Sons, Social Distortion, and Mike Monroe from Hanoi Rocks came onstage and sang a song with us! It was a great experience to hobnob with fellow musicians, which is always an awesome thing, but in the day-to-day hustle and bustle it's rare to just hang out with your peers."

And not being forefront in the paparazzi's eye has its benefits.

"Once in awhile I'll get recognized out in public," says Daly. "It doesn't happen all that often to where it's debilitating or whatever...I'm fortunate in that I'm not THAT famous! I can go and live my life as I please. I can go down to the Safeway and price out toilet paper and not be looking anxiously over my shoulder while I'm squeezing the Charmin. But the kids always get a kick out meeting me when it happens. It's a great thing."

So what's next for the Supersuckers?

"When this current tour wraps up, then it's pretty much back into the studio to get working on the next Supersuckers record," says Daly. "That's the established routine: you make up some new songs, you go out and play them, you get tired of playing them, you go home, and you make up some new songs to go out and play. There's no life like it!"

Supersuckers / Scott H Biram "Must've Been Dirty" Canadian Tour Dates:

- June 2nd: Vancouver BC - Rickshaw Theatre
- June 3rd: Kamloops BC - Blue Grotto Nightclub
- June 4th: Cranbrook BC - Shotties Nightclub
- June 5th: Calgary AB - Dickens Pub
- June 6th: Edmonton AB - Starlite Room
- June 7th: Red Deer AB - Bo's Bar & Grill

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HEAVY METAL PARKING LOT 40th Anniversary VHS

Few underground music documentaries have achieved the cult status of *Heavy Metal Parking Lot*. Originally filmed in 1986 by filmmakers Jeff Krulik and John Heyn, the short documentary has circulated for decades through bootleg VHS copies, tape trading networks and word-of-mouth recommendations, becoming a fixture of underground music and cult film culture.

Now, nearly 40 years after its original release, *Heavy Metal Parking Lot* is returning to its original format with an officially authorized VHS edition released in partnership with Krulik and Heyn.

Filmed outside a Judas Priest concert in Maryland, the documentary captures fans gathering in the parking lot before the show, offering an unscripted snapshot of heavy metal culture during the mid-1980s. Its candid interviews and observational approach

helped turn the film into a lasting underground favourite among musicians, filmmakers and collectors.

The new 40th Anniversary VHS edition expands on the original 17-minute documentary with a selection of archival and retrospective material sourced directly from the *Heavy Metal Parking Lot* archive. Bonus features



include *The Story Behind HMPL with Jeff Krulik*, *HMPL Alumni: Where Are They Now?*, *HMPL Outtakes*, and a 1990 Channel 4 News segment featuring Krulik.

The complete release runs approximately 58 minutes and marks the first pressing of the anniversary edition. Copies are housed in slipcases and presented on black videocassettes with silver foil labels.

The release also reflects the continued resurgence of VHS collecting and physical media culture, with independent distributors and boutique labels increasingly revisiting cult films, music documentaries and underground releases in their original formats.

The *Heavy Metal Parking Lot* 40th Anniversary VHS is currently available for pre-order, with shipments expected to begin in July 2026.

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MANDRAKE ABBEY ART & MUSIC FESTIVAL 26'

The Foundation's Purposes

Our mandate is to curate a yearly event showcasing B.C. based alternative artists and musicians, and to give budding creatives a place to unabashedly congregate and promote themselves among like minded individuals.

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"The Strawberry Vigil" by Nightingale

Venture into nighttide, nestled in a strawberry lit glade, and bask in the soft offerings of Nightingale; an alchemy of nature and voice, joined by incantations of acoustic journey.

Root in amongst the grass with a cup of tea and a midnight snack to crimson hymns.

The vigil will occur from 10:30pm until midnight, tea and snacks by donation.



Opening up the festivities will be the "Meditative Wavelengths" of Rob Gretzinger with his gong set!!



represent the old BC scene well, and neither are meant to knock you on your ass.

Inside is where we are still deciding. I select plants to my tastes, and I want it to make me smile, but not make me sleepy or dopey. So the two that we have chosen so far represent that.

One is a Miracle Alien Cookies #3, which is our universal favorite. Super chill and a unique earthy citrus thing going on.

The other is a Congolese, an African cultivar that was quite sought after in the illegal days. It is all energetic, and different than most of what we see in modern shops.

AU: Do you prefer Sativas or Indicas?

TL: Honestly, I don't really buy into these labels all that much. I understand why they are still used, but they don't help me find what I am looking for.

I prefer smiley weed, but I don't really care if it grows tall or short, or what leaf shape it has. If it tastes good, doesn't put me to sleep, and makes me grin, I am stoked.

In the end, that is all about the chemistry of the plant, not morphology or some regional origin from the deep past.

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

TL: That is very difficult. It has changed throughout my life. One of my all time favorites is the old East Coast Sour Diesel cut, and I love the Cherry Limeade from Aficionado in California.

These days, the MAC #3 I mentioned above is probably at the top.

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

TL: From the grower perspective, it is pretty much the same as it

used to be. It costs a bit more for testing and packaging, but I grow the same way. Good weed is good weed.

From the business side, there are definitely annoyances. Regulations add unneeded labour, and government taxes and fees are excessive, in my opinion.

That said, I signed up for this, so I don't want to bitch too much. I think the industry has been maturing, and our company is hyper-focused on regional communities, direct delivery, and growing what we like.

AU: Why is it important to support local growers?

TL: From a big picture perspective, we want people to support small businesses that care about their communities. We employ locals, and spend money at other local businesses. Unlike big pubcos and conglomerates, our profits will stay in our neighbourhoods.

From a cannabis industry point of view, the best way to have educated smokers and a real culture around cannabis is to bridge the gap from grower to retailer to smoker, and that starts locally.

AU: What makes an expert grower in your opinion?

TL: Same thing that signals expertise in most fields - you have failed a lot, you have spent way too much time building knowledge so you don't fail again, and some other group calls you an expert.

Honestly, there are lots of ways to grow cannabis. I think I grow very good weed. I care about the quality, I can read my plants, and I really know my methods, but I am not a farming expert or a PhD of plant biology (like my wife). My niche is pretty narrow.

That said, if I had to boil it down to a few select things - learn to recognize really good weed, learn to tell what the appearance of the plants indicates about their needs, learn the value of good genetics, learn not to fuck up your product in post-harvest, and find a cultivation method you enjoy learning about.

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

TL: I don't really have secrets, as I learned to grow in organic soil on old forums like Overgrow, back in the pre-reddit era.

Today, I would recommend books like One Straw Revolution or Teaming With Microbes for insight on how I do things. The KIS podcasts with Tad Hussey are solid too. It is amazing how much work good soil does for me.

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

TL: All of our products are branded as Martindale, separated by product type. Our outdoor flower gets the moniker "Martindale Farms" and our indoor "Martindale Micro".

We are launching a flagship preroll product called "Martindale Blues" too. 10 hand-rolled joints of outdoor blueberry that we cured for six months then packaged in flip-top tins.

AU: Where are your products available?

TL: We are in our launch period now!

Evergreen In Kitsilano always stocks our products, and they deliver anywhere in BC from ecsvanca.

They are old friends, we did business before legalization. As a Vancouverite myself, I feel lucky that we get to launch there. A subtle nod to the before times.

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

TL: Not having a boss.

Growing plants for a job is pretty great 90% of the time, too.

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

TL: For smokers - please don't shop by THC %. It is like buying craft beer or wine by alcohol %, but less informative. It means almost nothing in isolation. Some of the best weed in the world is 17% THC.

For home growers - add aloe to the water you give your plants every now and then.

For aspiring licensed commercial growers - the regulatory environment isn't as hard to navigate as most growers might make it sound, but the fees, wasted time, and testing

costs can be shocking if you are a small business like we are. Be ready for that.

Of course, some geekery is always good too:

God Bud is one of BC's most notorious cannabis plants. Cannabis folklore indicates that the "God" actually stands for "Grown On Denman", in reference to the gulf island.

AU: How can people find you online?

TL: I do a lot less social media than ever.

Enshittification is real. That said, I am:

@beardedgreenly on all platforms I use.

Our website is being cobbled together still, but I will eventually use that old journalism training and get a grow-focused blog up, too.



MARTINDALE FARMS

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

Travis Lane: My name is Travis Lane, and I am a cannabis grower. I am probably best known for my weed, maybe my advocacy before legalization.

AU: When did you first start growing Cannabis?

TL: I started as a teen in the '90s. My parents were hippies when they were young, so I didn't have any stigma around it. Of course, I brutally murdered my first plants. They had every problem before they died. I do it a lot better now.

AU: What first drew you to the Cannabis industry?

TL: When I was younger, it was because I liked drugs and had very little respect for authority. It also pays much better than journalism or writing, which is what I went to school for.

I think that the drug war has always been full of absurd contradictions. I never understood why smoking a joint was a crime and drinking a beer was celebrated. It became important for me to take the chance to push back against shitty drug laws. All drugs should be legal.

Now that I am older, I have this strange skillset, I get to work for myself, and there is something very satisfying about growing plants. It is a pretty good gig.

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

TL: Right now, we are still making some of those decisions, but we have a few staples that we have landed on long term.

Outdoors we are focused on classic BC varieties. We have a DJ Short Blueberry and Timewarp Dream that comes straight from Texada. Both





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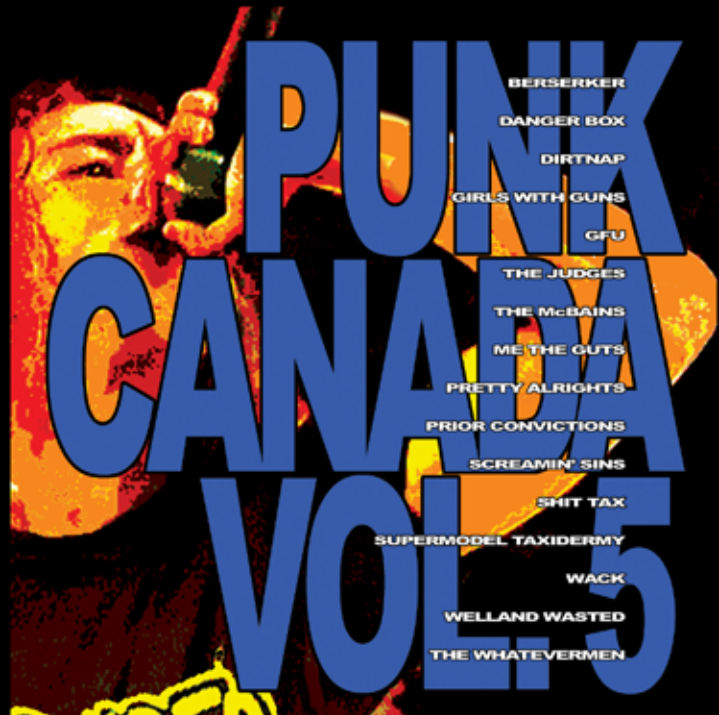
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DWARVES

Interview with the top cock of the walk—
Blag Dahlia

By Trez Jak and Ray MacKay

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

Blag Dahlia: Blag Dahlia—Rock Legend!

AU: For our unfamiliar readers, please give
us a brief history of yourself, and your band
DWARVES.

BD: We invented Rock & Roll as well as the
subgenres of punk, thrash, grunge, pop punk and
novelty records. We're why you like music!

AU: What does it take to be a Dwarf?

BD: You have to be the kind of genius that hides it
so well you seem positively retarded.

AU: The Dwarves have had multiple lineup
changes, so what do you believe to be some of
the best lineups in the band?

BD: That's like picking your favorite kids! To be
honest though, my personal favorite dwarf is the

late great Vadge Moore.
Not only is he hopelessly
demented, he's proud of
it and can justify any act
of debauchery. You gotta
love that! I even wrote "The
Ballad of Vadge Moore".

AU: In the song "The
Ballad Of Vadge Moore"
you have the best scream
ever in it. Do you find it
hard to match it now years later?

BD: Yes! My voice has dropped a few notes, that
piercing blood curdling scream is now a richer
more mahogany coated scream.

AU: For over 40 years you've been stirring the
pot and making music about sex, drugs and
rock n roll. How does it feel to still be on top of
your game for so long?

BD: It feels really fucking good! It was hard
watching our friends get fame and adulation
while we were relegated to the back of the bus of
the music industry. Then the industry exploded



and dudes lost their clout and their cash.
Meanwhile, we just keep making the best
punk records of all time and owning our
masters. Who's laughing now?

AU: With all the touring you do, do you
see another resurgence in punk rock
especially with how fucked the world has
become?

BD: I think music needs a resurgence from
young people to save it once again. Rock &
Roll and Hip/Hop are pretty well played out
by now. Something new is needed.

AU: Years ago in *Maximum Rockroll*, I
read about an after show incident where
a couple were on acid and you brought
the chick into the tour van and her
boyfriend was pounding on
the van trying to
get her out. Any more
tour stories you'd like to
share?

BD: That was a pretty
hilarious one, I managed
to orgasm in under 30
seconds. There are so
many hilarious stories,
and they all involve either
sex, drugs, violence,
misanthropy or some
combination of those
elements.

AU: Tell us about the new record.

BD: In 2023, we released *The Dwarves Concept
Album*, a sprawling frolic through all of the hard
rock genres from hardcore to pop punk to garage
rock to thrash to surf to noise, it ran the whole
gamut. For the new record *JENKEM* we flipped
the script for 2026 and did a collection of hard
fast punk songs designed to evoke the Dwarves
of yesteryear. But somehow, the single "Damned
If I Do" emerged and that one is pretty straight
forward rock, which just goes to prove, you
should never try and decide what your record is
until it's done. And this one is another classic!

PURE PUNK



AU: The Meatmen have a song called "The
Dwarves Are the Second Greatest Band in the
World". What do you have to say about being
told you're not the greatest band?

BD: The Meat who... ?

AU: Any last words?

BD: The Dwarves have done it again, hilarious
videos, killer tracks and more fun than you can
shake a stick at. Go get *JENKEM* right now!!!

BLAG the RIPPER

thedwarves.com

thedwarves.bandcamp.com

Photo Credit: Julia Lofstrand

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CJ SAYS: A RAMONES PODCAST

Interview with CJ Ramone – Part One

By Esther "Mondo Bizarro" Wurley

Hey! Ho! What is CJ Says? It's a brand new official podcast about the world-famous RAMONES!

Hosted by CJ Ramone, band member and bass player who played alongside Joey and Johnny from 1989 until the band's retirement in 1996.

Joining CJ Ramone as co-host is long-time podcaster, producer, and former Kerrang! Radio presenter, Matt Stocks.

With CJ Ramone at the helm, the podcast is set to take listeners through the history and back catalogue of the world's most iconic American punk band. Expect behind-the-scenes insights from the person who was actually there both on and off stage. CJ Ramone was not only a witness to, but a seminal part of the group's final and most prolific years.

Each podcast episode will dive deep into each Ramones album. Throw in stories from the dressing room, plus recording and writing sessions, and just about everything in between. You'll hear never-before-told stories from the Ramones camp and in-depth interviews with a revolving door of guests.

AU: Hey, it's Esther here. How are you doing?

CJ Ramone: Good. I just returned from New York, and kind of getting back in the swing of things, recording the podcast, getting ready for some upcoming Gimme Gimmes stuff. So nice and busy.

AU: That's awesome. Yeah, I've been listening to the podcast. I'm really enjoying it.

CJ: I'm a big fan of podcasts, and I've been listening to them since it became platform, but I listened to totally random, all over the place stuff, everything from the crazy UFO stuff to, you know, like the really deep philosophical podcasts. So I love all of it, but I just knew nothing about it, like I didn't know how to produce one. To tell you the truth, being from New York and having the heavy

New York accent, I can recite poetry and I sound like a goon, so I never really figured that I would be in a position where I'd be talking like I do on a podcast. I gotta say it's really a lot of fun.

AU: You guys are doing a great job. Did you and your co-host, Matt Stocks, come up with the idea together?

CJ: CJ: Thanks. So, I had met Matt a couple years back, we had done an interview, and I've been doing interviews for very long time, and some people that you sit down

with for an interview, it's more of a discussion than it is an actual interview. Sometimes interviews can be really mechanical. But when I did an interview with Matt, we hit it off pretty good. Then we did the Flogging Molly cruise two years back and Matt was the one on the boat doing his thing. We did an interview there and it was really good. I was talking about my family, and



we just went down this whole rabbit hole of being a dad and having kids and being on the road. Afterwards he said to me, "I'd really like to work with you sometime." and I said, "Hey, brother, that would be great." So Matt and my manager got together and they proposed the idea to me. The beauty of the podcast is that it's a conversation rather than an interview. It just feels so much more natural because

the conversation meanders in a natural way. You can go down a rabbit hole and dig in on the minutia of a topic.

We interviewed Duff McKagan, I was so starstruck. I was so interested in hearing his story, because it's such a good one.

AU: And what a first musician interview to have, it's fucking Duff McKagan! I loved in the description of the episode, it's like Duff McKagan of Guns N' Roses and Velvet Revolver. I was like, "Fuck that. He was in The Fartz and 10 Minute Warning." So how are you choosing your guests for the show, are you just picking names out of a hat? You've had Duff and then you just put out one with Harley Flanagan.

CJ: Well, you just named two bass players. I definitely lean heavy towards the bass players. But to tell you the truth, realistically it's something that myself and the team sit down and we talk about, like, "Who would we like to have on the show?" There's some people I just really want to talk to. We interviewed Kid Congo Powers, he was in the Gun Club and The Cramps. I loved The Cramps when I was younger, I still love them, so

to have him on the show was such a cool thing for me. I had already read his book, and I knew so much about his career. So when he came in, like, as soon as we started the chat, I like unloaded all of this stuff on him, like, you know, oh yeah, so cool, you did this, you did that, blah blah blah. For a second I think he was kind of taken aback, you know, because usually with an experienced podcaster, you would go slow, and you would bring stuff up and work your way chronologically through their career. That's what a goon I am. I couldn't even like keep my mouth shut and let the whole conversation just unfold. I would like immediately blurt all this stuff out. But that's what you get on my podcast. I'm not trying to act as a presenter. I'm not trying to be well behaved or well spoken. I'm just being myself, and I really have been lucky to have had some really cool people on the show in this first series of episodes.

AU: Yeah, that's one thing that I really love when you're doing your interviews, is that you're a fan of the music, you're interested. You're not just some clout chasing asshole, that's like, Oh, I'm gonna have this guy on because it's cool. These are people that you admire and you can tell when you're interviewing them that you're stoked. It's just so non-pretentious and it's so real.

CJ: I'm glad it comes across that way.

AU: Absolutely, it does.

CJ: When I meet another musicians, or I hang around with people who are real music fans, I always think, how cool is it? How lucky are we that we get to do this thing together, you know what I mean? Because I'm sitting down with legends. People who, in a lot of cases, their pedigree is way beyond mine. But I just always have this feeling like, how lucky are we that this is what we do. This is our lives. This is what we do for a living. And I know sometimes my exuberance seems a bit over the top but I can't help it. I'm not sitting there trying to be a proper presenter or anything. I just want to have a regular conversation, just sit down and talk as I would if we were sitting in a bar having a drink together, and that's how I treat it.

AU: Yeah, I love that. It's funny that you're calling people legends, and you were in the most iconic and legendary punk band of all times. It's like, oh, you really are that humble, that's so awesome. Were you doing guided tours at The Punk Rock Museum in Vegas?

CJ: Yeah, I'm there a couple of times a year. I'm a huge fan and supporter of the museum. Punk Rock has been around so long and it was underground for so long. Despite the record industry ignoring them, and radio ignoring them,



punk rock would just never go away. It hung in there for so long. Until the 90s, when it got really big. So, I think, for us old guys especially, to have a museum preserves the whole history of punk rock, when you bring all the history together and you put it in one place, from its beginnings to where it is now, it really just makes me feel so good that we have a place like that. I've given tours there, sometimes to straight up tourists, who are not even punk rock fans, that have said to me afterwards, "I'm really glad I took the tour with you, because I really learned a lot about the history of punk rock." and I told him, "Yeah, it's a serious cultural experience when you come here." When I give tours, I try to tell the history of punk rock from my perspective, as I was told about it, as I saw it, and as I lived it. I love The Punk Rock Museum. I hope it lives forever. I'm just happy that punk rock has a home, that the history of punk rock has a place.

AU: Who else are you going to be interviewing on the CJ Says podcast going forward?

CJ: We are lining up and already have done some interviews with some of the people that were involved with the Ramones at the very beginning of their career. There's not a whole lot of people alive that were there at the beginning, but you know, people that have worked directly for the band and worked in close contact with the band. We're really trying to make this first season a real celebration of the Ramones. This is 50 years! We launched the show on the anniversary of the release of the first Ramones record, and so we've been doing the deep dive series, where we go song for song, and go through each album in chronological order. We talk about the artwork, the producer, the tracking, the lyrics, who wrote what songs, what songs we have memories attached to, and where were we when we first heard the album. Then we're releasing the interviews in between those. So this first season really is a celebration of the Ramones, this first group of interviews. But it's 50 years since the first Ramones record, and you know, they started a revolution, they really, the Ramones started a revolution in music that is still going on now.

To Be Continued Next Issue...

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Photo Credit: George DuBose, Ramones Band






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THE CRAMPS

The Cramps Inc., a New Company to Restart Vengeance Records,

Releasing Cramps Rarities & Official Merchandise

Greetings. **Henry Rollins** here.

I am beyond stoked to announce the formation of The Cramps, Inc., that will restart The Cramps' label, Vengeance Records, create official merchandise, and venture into the vaults to unleash unheard recordings of this amazing band.

The Cramps Inc. is the artist formerly known as Poison Ivy Rorschach, Larry Hardy, owner and operator of In The Red Records, and Jimmy Maslon, a film producer responsible for some of the Cramps music videos. Both have deep ties to Lux and Ivy, forged over decades.

Ian MacKaye and I, operating as RAM Prod. (Rollins and MacKaye), are working on behalf of The Cramps Inc., coming up with release ideas, handling tape maintenance, editing, mixing, mastering and lacquer cutting responsibilities.

Working with Revolver Distribution, The Cramps Inc. will be reissuing the following titles:

Gravest Hits - Smell Of Female - A Date With Elvis - Rockin' Reelin' In Auckland New Zealand - Stay Sick! - Look Mom No Head! - Big Beat From 94

Badsville - Fiends Of Dope Island - How To Make A Monster

We have a completely mind-blowing first release to kick things off, all from source masters and previously unreleased.

Now, about this first dose of Vengeance, here are some facts:

In October 1977, the Cramps, who were at that time, Lux Interior on vocals, Poison Ivy on guitar, Bryan Gregory on guitar, and Nick Knox on drums, ventured into Ardent Studios with the extraordinarily talented musician and producer, Alex Chilton.

These sessions were responsible for the first two Vengeance Records releases, both permanently disfiguring the music world in 1978.

Surfin' Bird / The Way I Walk

Human Fly / Domino

In 1979, young British degenerates were treated to a five track 12" EP by the Cramps called *Gravest Hits*, which featured all four tracks released in the USA, along with another from the October 1977 sessions, a great channeling of Ricky Nelson's hit *Lonesome Town*. From there, the band released their first LP, *Songs The Lord Taught Us*, again working with Alex Chilton, and went onward, releasing records and touring all over until the sad passing of Lux in 2009.

What Cramps fans might not know, was at Ardent, the band had planned to record their song *TV Set* to be their first A side, along with another track or tracks. Alex told them that he liked to have a band play every song they knew and the best of the batch would be committed to vinyl. This was fantastic advice, and luckily for us, that's what the Cramps did.

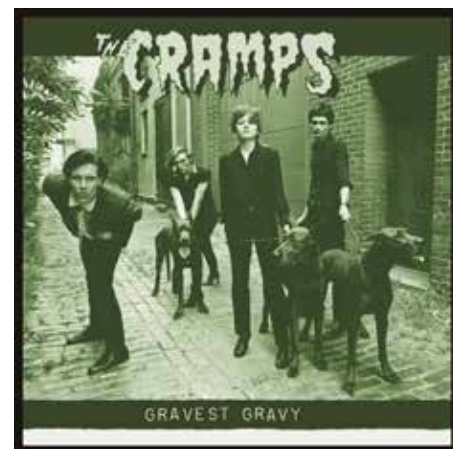
In the late 1980s, Lux and Ivy endeavored to release more recordings from the October 1977 sessions. It was to be titled *Gravest Gravy*. It was a record for the fans, a journey back to Memphis, back to the first Cramps records, that, try as it might, the world has been unable to heal from.

Lux and Ivy mixed several tracks between June 14 and 30, 1989. The album had a title, a cover by the great Stephanie Chernikowski, who passed away recently, but for reasons lost to time, *Gravest Gravy* was shelved.

In 2026, we sought to change that. It was apparent that this record absolutely needed to be with the fans. The tracks on *Gravest Gravy* were contained on seven 1/4 inch reels. Six were generated by Lux and Ivy, one by Alex. The tapes were carefully transferred by Brian Kehew. He was happy to report that all seven reels had withstood the test of time, and the tracks were in pristine condition. Many of the songs had multiple mixes. We had to determine which ones were the keepers. I sent the mixes and my notes to Ian MacKaye, whose ears I trust more than anyone I know. Days later, he reported back that he agreed with me on all of them. Days later, all the tracks were at Infrasonic Sound, an excellent studio in Nashville, Tennessee for mastering under the careful watch of engineer Pete Lyman. I sat for hours and listened as Pete coaxed the frequencies to be at their best. The results were two six song sides of the Cramps, extracted from a 1977 amber block, de-fossilized and ready to be inflicted upon the ears of those who would rather Stay Sick and Turn Blue than hope for sunny weather.

Gravest Gravy is an absolute treasure. You get a performance of *Hungry* by Paul Revere and the Raiders, released in 1966, which found itself in the band's early set lists. Another early Cramps cover, *Problem Child*, written by Sam Phillips, is on the record. The band used to do an absolutely rippin' version of the 1958 Jimmy Lloyd track, *Rocket In My Pocket* at some of their early shows. There's a great version of it on *Gravest Gravy*. Also really cool are the songs that found official release on the band's second album, *Psychedelic Jungle*, with Kid Congo Powers taking over the spot vacated by Bryan. These tracks would be *Jungle Hop* by Kip Tyler, released in 1958, *The Natives Are Restless* (with different lyrics), *Can't Find My Mind* and *Rockin' Bones* released in 1959 by the Blond Bomber himself, Ronnie Dawson. The approach to these versions is much different than on *Psychedelic*.

We were able to locate the exact photo of



Stephanie's that Lux and Ivy had envisioned for the cover. The back cover photo was taken by David Godlis at CBGB, and is easily one of the coolest Cramps photos ever.

What you have in *Gravest Gravy*, is sheer brilliance committed to tape by a band that was plugged in directly to the Rock'n Roll mainline.

This new chapter for the band is a combined effort of people whose lives were changed by the music of the Cramps. As I've said many times, I first saw the Cramps on April 20, 1979 in a small bar in Washington, DC, and I've never recovered. Ian was standing next to me. We still talk about that show. The opportunity to bring this music to fellow Cramps fans is beyond a thrill. It is an absolute honor that we feel so fortunate to be a part of.

Stay sick! Turn blue! Peace to our dear Stephanie

-Henry Rollins

thecramps.com

linktr.ee/thecramps

Photo credits:

David Godlis (Band)

Stephanie Chernikowski (Gravest Gravy Photo)

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 8/21 EDMONTON, AB 8/22 TORONTO, ON

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 Aug 22 Kelowna, BC
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 WITH AUXOLITH 12 JULY VANCOUVER THE PEARL
 WITH CONCRETE VEHICLES 13 JULY VANCOUVER THE PEARL

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 SEPTEMBER 11
 NOV 08 - WINNIPEG, MB NOV 12 - EDMONTON, AB
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 AUGUST 28 DICKENS CALGARY, AB

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 TOUR
 JULY 17 VANCOUVER, BC
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HAVE A NICE LIFE
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 JULY 13
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 10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY TOUR
 JULY 22
 TORONTO, ON
 LEE'S PALACE
 WITH MEXICAN SLUM RATS

ANTHONY GREEN
 THIS TOUR WON'T SAVE YOU
 WITH GEOFF RICKLY & KEITH GOODWIN
 JULY 25
 TORONTO, ON
 LEE'S PALACE

TEST DEPT
 WITH S-CODE
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Jamie: Happy, sad and angry while stuck in a nostalgia loop.
Lynn: I like to think of it as a DÉJÀ VU of the 90's capturing a little bit of everything we like.
AU: How would you describe your live show to the visually impaired?
Vera: Electrifying, high energy, femmes on a music rampage out to show the world what we are made of. Imagine the care bear hearts coming out of our chests, that's the kind of love and vibe we exude. Oh, and we are always wearing red lipstick and a combination of black, white and yellow, like the classic NYC taxi cabs.
Jamie: Hot!

Lynn: Lots of action happening on stage, the girls move around a lot, except for me.

Lots of faces, smiles, smirks, winks, attitude.

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

Vera: Our first full length LP *Static* will be released on June 26th! Expect the unexpected

and there is definitely something for everyone!

Jamie: I think you'll like it. It is very "us on a plate".

Lynn: A variety of music for all tastes. Hard to pick your favourite?

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

Vera: Break-ups, the messy beauty of everyday life, resilience, human rights, postpartum depression, going crazy in a car, and stepping into your power. Just to name a few.

Jamie: Exactly what Vera said!

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

Vera: All of them.

Jamie: All of them.

Lynn: "Don't Leave Me Hanging" and "Red Flag Crush". Very unique and fun songs. For me a lil challenge on "Don't Leave Me Hanging" a beat I need to focus. Both songs are very fun to play. But to be honest the whole album, I'm stoked on.

AU: Sex, Drugs, or Rock N Roll? or all of the above?

Vera: All of the above baby!

Jamie: I prefer a nice Pinot Noir.

Lynn: Bring it. All of the above.

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

Vera: Well, my mom and I are very close but I guess that I still sleep in and sometimes skip dinner and just drink beer instead.

Jamie: My mother is dead so thankfully I don't have to hide anything!

Lynn: My mom knows everything, very open at home about life.

AU: Any tour plans?

Vera: Fingers crossed for making it out to the west of Canada this fall, and Europe in 2027!

Lynn: Hoping Europe next year. And crossing fingers to go to Europe de l'Est.

AU: Anything else to promote?

Vera: Our first single "Say it!" is out wherever you get your music! Watch the video, it's awesome!

AU: Final words of wisdom for our readers?

Vera: Start a band. You won't regret it. Just find someone to keep a beat, and learn a power chord or two. Oh, and you never know when we're gonna go with the imminence of nuclear war so... carpe diem!

Jamie: Do something every day that makes you proud of yourself. Even if it's looking in the mirror and giving yourself a smile for getting through another day.

Lynn: Enjoy and crank it loud.

AU: How do people find you online?

Jamie: [taxigirlsmontreal](https://taxigirlsmontreal.com) is our thing!
taxigirls.bandcamp.com

SAY IT!



TAXI GIRLS

TAXI GIRLS

Interview by James Milligan

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

Vera: Hi! You are talking to Vera of Taxi Girls and we are most infamous for our infectious hooks and harmonies in a genre where you normally wouldn't see them as much!

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

Vera: Taxi Girls formed in 2022 as a power trio: Vera, Jamie and Lynn. We jammed one night and it was so fun that we kept going! The following year we released our EP *Coming Up Roses* and it pretty much snowballed after that. In our wildest dreams we couldn't even imagine we would be noticed by the king of punk himself, Iggy Pop, who played not one but TWO of our songs on his radio show on BBC 6. We then were joined by Gabrielle on lead guitar, and since then have another EP out *Rainy*, and an LP *Static* on the way! We love inspiring younger generations of women and gender non-conforming folks to pick up their instruments and start a band, and hopefully inspire others with our clever lyrics and bad ass tunes! Oh, and we are also quite proud of our made up genre since it's tough putting us in a box, namely, TIDY PUNK.

AU: What does it say on your bandmates Tinder profiles and on yours?

Vera: Well, none of us have Tinder but if I had to say just for fun! I love my dog, music is my life and if you aren't interesting and know how to have a good time then gtf outta here and swipe left! lol

Jamie: I have a daughter who I love to death. I am a radio DJ and if you can't deal with a well-timed "I told you so" then swipe left!

Lynn: I am constantly driving around, am super spontaneous and a lover of animals. If you have road rage or harm animals in any way then swipe left!

Gabrielle: I have no time to be on this thing so I'm not sure why I even bothered creating a profile. If you have time on September 12th at 10:15pm I'll put you on standby as a date since I am in six music projects. In short, if you aren't down with my vagabond lifestyle then swipe left!

AU: Where is the band from and what's the music scene like there?

Vera: We are from Montreal and the music scene is very alive and well. Lots of new bands seem to pop out of the woodwork on almost a monthly basis. Hard to keep track of sometimes! Good thing there are festivals year round where you can check them all out.

Jamie: I grew up in Saskatchewan but def consider myself a Montrealer after almost 20 years.

Lynn: The band is 3/4 Montrealers except for one but she's moving to the city. The scene here is very supportive and fun no matter what time or season it is. It's very alive and just happening. Many great bands here and so much going on. Lots of festivals and shows going on in the bars. More and more all ages show, which is really great.

AU: Describe the band's sound if possible.

Vera: Tidy. Punk. With a bit of roll!

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22 SEP	DELILAH BON HOLLYWOOD THEATRE	23 SEP	TYRANN ASTORIA PUB	24-26 SEP	COVENANT FESTIVAL XI RICKSHAW THEATRE
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LETHAL LIMITS

Jeff Corso on the New EP *Elevate*

Interview by Chad Cornies

Bay Area punk veteran Jeff Corso returns with *Lethal Limits*, his fiercely catchy solo project that blends raw punk energy with irresistible power-pop hooks. Following his work in hardcore bands like Coffin Party and Nightstick Justice, Corso's latest release, the *Elevate* EP, adds new grunge and Thin Lizzy-inspired textures while keeping the melodic punch that defines his sound.

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

Jeff Corso: Hey there, this is Jeff. For those who know me, I am most infamous for coming back from the dead after surviving a two-week coma and heart-stop some years ago.

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

JC: Lethal Limits is essentially my "non-hardcore" songs. I guess LL was officially born shortly before the pandemic in 2019 when I started learning how to record from home, though a lot of these songs had been closeted the last 15ish years. Initially, it was a recording project with my dude Aesop Dekker (Hickey, Ludicra) handling drum duties and me playing the rest of the instruments. All of our live shows thus far have included Austin Lannan (Freak Accident, Atomic Tide) on bass and Axell Baechle (Owl, Crystal

Logic) on second guitar.

AU: What does it say on your bandmates' Tinder profiles and on yours?

JC: We don't believe in digital love! That shit is for symp's.

AU: Where is the band from and what's the music scene like there?

JC: Oakland, CA — there is never a dull moment in the music scene here and the whole Bay Area.

AU: Describe the band's sound if possible.

JC: Lethal Limits is its own breed of infectious, melodic, catchy-as-fuck punk rock n' roll with doses of power pop.

AU: How would you describe your live show to the visually impaired?

JC: Everything is on fire yet everyone is feeling the fucking power with no worries about life or death.

AU: You released a new album recently? Tell us about it! What can we expect to hear?

JC: Yes! *ELEVATE* is the new EP. It was the most experimental home recording so far for me. Jack Shirley graced the recording with his brilliance mixing and mastering. "Love Bleed" was written in Kauai, Hawaii and Palm Springs, CA — which was a new experience writing in segments. You can expect to elevate to another universe.

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

JC: As far as themes/topics — *Elevate* resembles rocketing to a fourth dimension. Songs vary from manifestation/radical and psychedelic

transformation to heartache and grief.

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

JC: I'm content with all of them but "Along the Way" is most personal to me.

AU: Sex, Drugs, or Rock N Roll? Or all of the above?

JC: In a past life: all of the above. In my bonus rounds: Rock n' roll, baby.

AU: Any tour plans?

JC: After the *Lethal Limits* LP (currently in the works) is finished — indubitably, we will hit the road.

AU: Anything else to promote?

JC: Check out the *S/T* Lethal Limits album if you haven't. Also, I have a hardcore/punk project COFFIN PARTY.

AU: Any final words of wisdom for our readers?

JC: Thank you for the interview! Use your voice. Let shit go. Keep the PMA. Be here now. Don't quit before the miracle happens. Do the next right thing. Listen to Lethal Limits and, of course, feel the power.

composureoakland.bandcamp.com

[instagram.com/lethal_limits_official](https://www.instagram.com/lethal_limits_official)

Photo credit: Tom da bomb Corso



DRAKULAS

Interview by Chad Cornies

Austin's creepiest bad boys are back! After a few years of wandering in the wilderness, Drakulas return to their spiritual home at Dirtnap Records (and Wild Honey Records in Europe/UK!) to unleash their third album *Midnight City* upon the world! Featuring members of Riverboat Gamblers and Rise Against, AU caught up with Savage Lord Mic to discuss the band and the new record.

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

Savage Lord Mic: You are talking to Savage Lord Mic aka Mike Wiebe. I once ate 50 hard-boiled eggs in one hour while I was locked up in the deep south.

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

SLM: Drakulas started 10 years ago as a collaboration with Pink Rick aka Zach Blair, Fireman Sam and Dark Black. We take you through a world of neon-lit tales of people in a pre-digital metropolis that no longer exists.

AU: What does it say on your bandmates' Tinder profiles and on yours?

SLM: Tinder profiles are a waste of time. Just go to a public bath house or a porn theatre and show off the goods.

AU: Where is the band from and what's the music scene like there?

SLM: We are from Midnight City. We are the only band that matters in our scene.

AU: Describe the band's sound if possible.

SLM: Lo-fi garage synth punk.

AU: How would you describe your live show to the visually impaired?

SLM: A visually impaired friend of mine came to our show in Chicago and said he could tell we were moving like sharks up there. Actual quote.

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

SLM: *Midnight City* dropped May 1st. It's a further exploration into some more synth and gothy sounds while still keeping the punk edge we initially started with.

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

SLM: It's about the dissatisfaction of being poor and living in a teeming metropolis that's ridden with crime and drugs. Also the excesses in that world.

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

SLM: Each track is a banger. "Going Going Gone Gone" and "Singin' With My Tongue Cut Out" are our first two singles. I love them all. They are all my illegitimate children.

AU: Sex, Drugs, or Rock N Roll? Or all of the above?

SLM: We'll take all three. To go.

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

SLM: We have covered that we are great and our cultural significance is implied... it's important to know that you can dance to this record.

AU: Any tour plans?

SLM: Looking at late summer, early fall.

AU: Anything else to promote?

SLM: Check out our webstore over at Anxious and Angry.com. We have lots of videos coming out. We are industry plants. A psyop if you will.

AU: Final words of wisdom for our readers?

SLM: Silver spray paint is the best for huffing.

AU: How do people find you online?

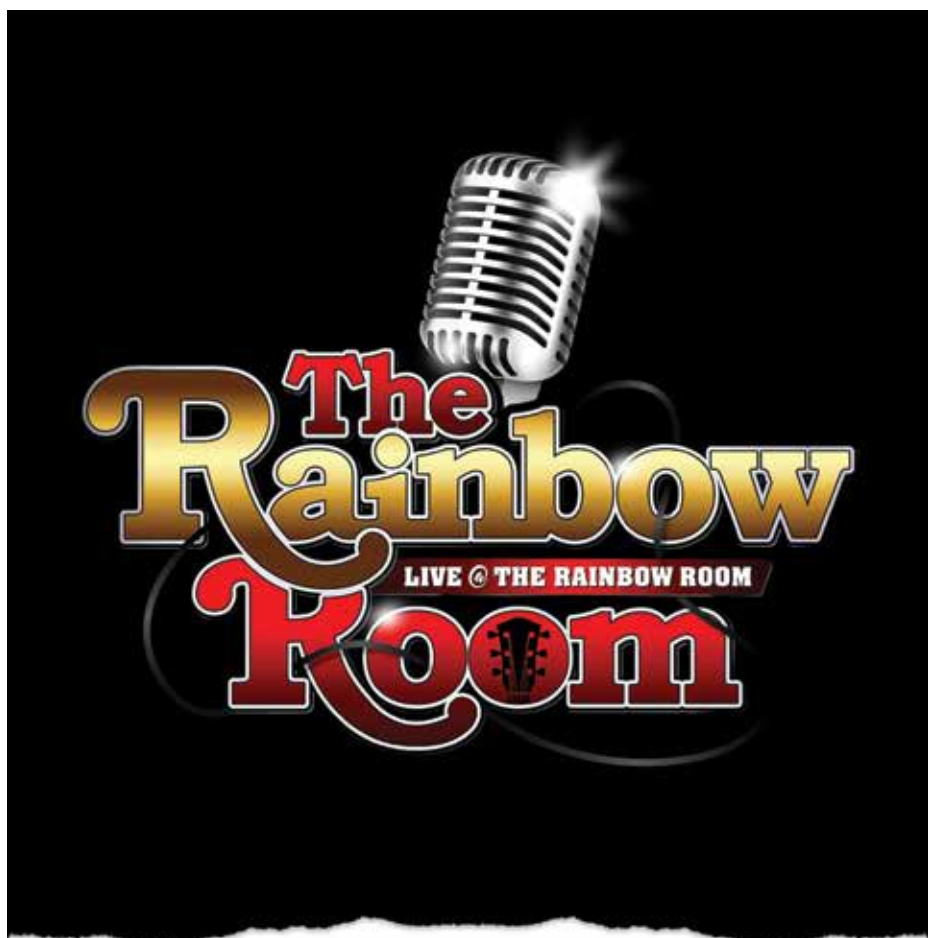
SLM: Drakulas is our YouTube channel.

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HONKY TONK PUNK ROCK HEART

J Mau & The Kiss Off: Country Soul Meets Garage Punk
By Chad Cornies

Justin Maurer has spent years in punk rock with Clorox Girls, but his new project, J Mau & The Kiss Off, explores a different side of his songwriting, blending honky tonk, garage rock, and classic punk influences. With their debut single "Poison" out now, the band mixes country storytelling with punk attitude and raw energy. In this interview Maurer talks about the new band, songwriting, touring, and why music still matters.

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

Justin Maurer: This is Justin Maurer, J Mau for short. I'm known mainly for my punk band, Clorox Girls, my work with the Deaf community as an ASL interpreter, and I cook a mean egg. Our new band is called J Mau & The Kiss Off and our debut single is called "Poison".

J MAU And The KISSOFF

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

JM: After the pandemic it was time to start something new. Going through a divorce, old country music was a massive solace and source of relief for me, so I wanted to start a band equally influenced by 60s

and 70s honky tonk and 60s and 70s punk and garage. The key to making music that is visceral and catchy and real is to not ape others but use your influences to make your voice even more prominent and distinct.

Introducing J Mau & The Kiss Off, we have the elegant Cynthia "Mickie" Herrera on bass, the suave Jairo Gabriel on lead guitar, and the unparalleled Christopher "Crux" Michael on drums. I am grateful for my bandmates and am lucky to have them. I am humble troubadour J Mau. I sing and play guitar. Our new band sounds different from anything I've ever done and retains a gold standard. These new songs sound like my true authentic self and I am very excited to share this band

and this music with the world. My goal with our music is to be a source of humanity, joy, and a necessary, rebellious act against an often unjust world. Music needs to bring lightness and joy to combat anxiety and gloom. Long live rock n' roll.

AU: Where is the band from and what's the music scene like there?

JM: The band is from our beloved hellhole of Los Angeles, California. The music scene, like the city itself, is pretty sprawling and vast, but like most

other cities, the punk scene seems to have the same rotating cast of people playing in ten bands.

AU: Describe the band's sound if possible.

JM: The punk bands who played The Masque in a bar fight with the honky tonk bands who played The Palomino.

AU: How would you describe your live show to the visually impaired?

JM: A sensory experience defined by chaotic energy, and a sea of engaged spectators. A spectacle where the visual elements amplify the raw sound of the music. A crowded stage filled with Fender amps, a C&C drum kit with a Cynthia Herrera one-of-a-kind hand-painted kick drum head. An army of mic stands, frequently with pyrotechnics—sparks and fire. The musicians are in constant, passionate motion, jumping, high-kicking, spitting fire, headbanging, and performing theatrical gestures to engage the audience. Performers are wearing fashionable attire, such as leather jackets, denim, bandanas, and sequined clothing that sparkles under the lights. Close-up views show hands on guitars, bass, or drums, with guitars often lifted in the air by a lead singer or guitarist, creating iconic moments. I did not plagiarize any of this.

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

JM: What we have just released this past March, is our debut single, called "Poison". Will let the song speak for itself rather than create expectations — we would rather surpass them.

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

JM: "Poison" is a corrido or murder ballad. Give it a listen.

AU: Sex, Drugs, or Rock N Roll? Or all of the

NO RULES

above?

JM: All good things come in threes.

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

JM: My seventy-year-old Deaf mother knows everything about my music.

AU: Any tour plans?

JM: The Bay Area, the West Coast, and Europe. Contact Jens Keller at Wild Wax in Europe to book us over there. DM us to book us in the US.

AU: Anything else to promote?

JM: That movie *The Substance* was insane. Loved it. Also loved *The Secret Agent*, with Wagner Moura, a beautiful film. The music video for "Poison" was shot and cut by Zache Davis and is on YouTube. The artwork is by Matthew "Snake" Davis, no relation to Zache Davis. The song was recorded by Ignacio "Iggy" Gonzalez at Savannah Studios in Boyle Heights, Los Angeles.

AU: Final words of wisdom for our readers?

JM: Listening to music and being kind to others without expecting anything in return elevates your frequency, amplifies your vibration, increases your awareness, and grows your consciousness. Everyone should have a self-care routine with some type of meditation, reflection, quiet time away from devices, away from stress and bad news. Music soothes the savage beast, even humans. Read more books, there's good stuff in there. Be excellent to each other.

AU: How do people find you online?

JM: This link has it all, wield it wisely:

linktr.ee/jmau_thekissoff

Photo Credit: Zache Davis



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RAW DOGGIN' GRAVITY: An Interview With Ninja Mack

By Mike "Gorilla Rock" Croy

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking with?

Ninja Mack: Yo! You are speaking with Ninja Mack of the hidden village in Texas.

AU: What are you best known for or most

infamous for?

NM: A couple of viral spots, but my Ninja Special, this year my 1st match with Robbie X at NJPW BOSJ 32, the Ninja Special was on ESPN, Pat McAfee and has passed over 300 millions views across all platforms.

AU: How did you get involved in wrestling?

NM: I've always watched and enjoyed it as a child and I had a great opportunity to try out with Booker T at his Reality Of Wrestling School.

AU: Who trained you to wrestle?

NM: 1st I started with Booker T, 2nd the road, traveling show to show teaches you the most and lastly I would have to give credit to Low-Ki who has helped me prepare for my journeys in Japan.

AU: Who inspires you?

NM: Any successful person is an inspiration to me, but Kobe Bryant has always inspired me.

AU: How do you define success?

NM: In Pro Wrestling, ticket sales or merchandise sales.

AU: What's the funniest thing you've seen happen at a live show?

NM: When you wrestle 3 or 4 times a weekend there are so many funny moments it's hard to pick just one.

AU: If you could invite anyone for dinner, who would you invite and why?

NM: Triple H, he's had a long successful run and runs the biggest Pro Wrestling business in the world.

AU: In your opinion, what makes for a compelling storyline in wrestling?

NM: Emotion, if you can draw any kind of emotion from a fan then you have won.

AU: Who's a dream opponent you'd like to work with?

NM: There's so many good wrestlers, if I had to pick one, it's Rey Mysterio.

AU: How has wrestling impacted your life?

NM: It's up and down like most jobs.

AU: What's the craziest match you've been involved in?

NM: It would have to be a GCW SCRAMBLE you never know who will be there or what's going to happen.

AU: Who's some of your favorite people to work with?

NM: The Noah Jrs were some of my favorite people. Alejandro, Hayata, Yo-Hey, Amakusa, Dragon Bane, Alpha Wolf

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

NM: The Korakuen Hall which has such a rich history there.

AU: What's the difference between wrestling in Japan vs North America?

NM: If you're experienced enough, not much. If you can control the crowd in one place you can do it in another.

AU: How long have you been wrestling?

NM: 4 years as Ninja Mack, before that I had a little break but maybe 3 years before the break when I started

AU: When you're on the road, what's your favorite thing to grab to eat?

NM: Anything that's open, sometimes we don't get on the road until after midnight.

AU: What can we expect from Ninja Mack coming up?

NM: You can always expect something to go viral at any time.

AU: Who was your favorite wrestler growing up?

NM: We do not speak his name but if we just focus on his wrestling career it was a great one.

AU: Do you have any goals in wrestling you'd like to accomplish still?

TURNBUCKLE SANDWICH

NM: I'd like to main event a sold out Korakuen Hall show.

AU: Have you sustained any significant injuries from wrestling?

NM: No, I don't try too many risky things in the ring to risk injury.

AU: What championships have you held?

NM: Noah GHC Jr. Champion, Noah Hardcore Champion, WXW Shotgun Champion

AU: As we wrap things up here, is there anything else you'd like our readers to know?

NM: If you haven't done so, go follow all online platforms to stay up to date where Ninja Mack is and maybe he might be in an area near.

Thank you Ninja Mack for taking time to answer some questions about wrestling.

Make sure to check out Ninja Mack's gravity defying assault at an upcoming show at companies such as Game Changer Wrestling, Juggalo Championship Wrestling, NOAH Pro Wrestling, Souris Valley Wrestling, Texas Wrestling Cartel and many many more!

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LAGWAGON

Lack Of Coffee Talk – Part 1 Interview with Joey Cape (Vocals)

By Ira "Hoss" Hunter and
Mike "Stokin' the Neighbors" Willisko

AU: Who are we talking to officially today?

JC: My name is Joey Cape and I play in a band. I guess the most known band that I'm in is called Lagwagon. I've got a bunch of other bands but I don't know if they're worth mentioning.

AU: This is a preview for the Victoria Ska & Reggae Festival that you are playing at.

Joey Cape: Yeah, the Victoria Ska & Reggae Festival that Lagwagon is playing at. Makes sense. Yeah.

AU: They added Reggae to the title a few years ago. It used to just be called Victoria Ska Fest.

JC: Ska has gotten such a resurgence. Sounds like it'll be fun. The only issue with festivals and if we're just jumping right in here, I can be the old man "get off my lawn" guy that I am. We've played this reggae festival in Europe for years and imagine eight different reggae acts at the same time playing throughout the site. I don't know how many stages are at this thing, but it's bad enough with rock and roll whether it's punk or indie rock or whatever. When there's a whole bunch of bands and you get that sort of, what's the word I'm looking for? Sorry, I haven't had enough coffee yet.

AU: When like the sound kind of crosses over and you're in the middle of a muddled mess?

JC: Yeah, exactly. At that reggae festival that we played in Europe, every once in a while the reggae stuff gets real weird when it's blending with several different tempos and you kind of can't get away from it. You can't escape it. But Victoria's rad, and I haven't been there in a long time. My memories of Victoria are all from the early days of the band. The real memories, the ones that stuck. Cacophony, is that the word I was looking for? Cacophony?

AU: Cacophony. That's a good word. They've been getting really good punk bands every year. They recently had Propagandhi, The Suicide Machines and Less Than Jake.

JC: So it's a mix.

AU: You guys are on a really good bill that night. It's Lagwagon, Against All Authority, Bad Cop Bad Cop and Mean Bikini. Every punk in town will be there.

JC: So, they definitely have bands that are more like what we do. Whatever, it doesn't matter. I don't know why I led with all that. Actually I know why I led with all that. The house next door to mine started a construction phase today at 7:00 a.m. I'm a musician, so I go to bed after 2:00 a.m., usually. I'm a late-night person. At 7:00 a.m. they started breaking concrete right outside my bedroom window.

AU: Oh man.

JC: So I'm working on very little sleep and coffee's not really working for me. That line-up sounds good. That'll be fun.

AU: Who else is in Lagwagon with you?

JC: Well, we've got Joe Raposo on bass. He's been in the band since 2010. Chris Flippin who we call Flip or Big Bitch, he's basically kind of a giant. He's an original member. Him and I are the only ones left of the original band. Dave Raun on drums, who's been in the band since '95. So pretty much been there since the start. I mean in like '88 or something like that we started. Then

Chris Rest, who we call Leon. Because there's two guys named Chris on guitar and it gets confusing. He's been in the band since '97. They're all great musicians. They make the songs I write sound amazing. I'm very lucky to play with those guys.

AU: What sets Lagwagon apart from other punk bands?

JC: I'd rather have somebody tell me what they think because self-analysis is something for therapy and I feel a little egotistical when I talk about things like that.

AU: Well, sometimes people start a band to be different, and sometimes people start a band to be the same. But I feel like Lagwagon's a round peg in a square hole because you weren't trying to be super aggressive hardcore, you know, it's more thoughtful.

JC: I think the first review that we got that I saw called us "emocore." This was before emo was like a standard. I mean they weren't calling bands emo yet, it was early days. I saw that and, went *Emocore, that's great! I want to be known as emocore.* I liked it because we didn't really fit with the traditional hardcore stuff. We're maybe more melodic than a lot of the bands. Melody has always been very important to me. I like the old pop music. That's probably it. We weren't for everybody. I'll say this, there's a lot of bands where the voice of the singer is kind of the gateway. How you accept the band to begin with. Then you spend the time listening to the music, it grows on you and you become a big fan of a band and the gateway's the singer. So, if you come to the gate and you hear a voice that rubs you the wrong way. I kind of feel like it's hard to say this because I don't have any idea what people actually think but I do think maybe my voice didn't make everybody happy. I definitely listened to a lot of heavy metal in the '70s and early '80s. Black Sabbath and all that stuff. So sometimes my melodies are a little bit like early Ozzy Osbourne stuff and even like Dio and I don't think punks want to hear that. It's just a theory I have.

But it doesn't matter because when you make music I don't think you should ever be calculated or think about what people want to hear or what would work. I think you just want to make music with five guys and you're probably going to come up with something that's your own. That's an interesting thing to think about because it's very hard to judge when you're in something if you've done something original. But I know what the band has done throughout its career is just kind of what we all wanted to do collectively.

AU: Would you agree that you can sometimes be a pretty metal punk band?

JC: I never thought of us as a punk band. The punk that I grew up with and listened to, whether it was from the UK or L.A. or New York none of it sounded like us. I thought of it more of a metal band with some punk influences and a lot of pop melodic influence. So, I didn't know what to call our band, but the world has just always called us punk. Then you do interviews for punk magazines and stuff there are people that are just going, "What are these fucking guys doing at my party?" The square peg in a round hole, I felt that way at times. But we were lucky, that ended pretty early. We were a part of a bit of a movement, this sort of '90s skate punk thing. We were very much a part of that from the beginning. It's embarrassing that it says '90s on it when I'm 60 now. Because my love affair with punk rock started way earlier. But I didn't think of our band as a punk band.

There was a band RKL that I was in when it started and then it became sort of a seminal band for our part of the world here in central, northern California. They're doing shows again and three of the guys in my band are in that band. Everyone

that's in my band was in that band at one time or another, it's the same DNA. They were a huge influence on like Fat Mike, NOFX, and all that.

Then there's Bad Religion, the first time I heard the album *Suffer*, the harmonies, it was like, wait a minute, why are the Beach Boys playing punk rock? This is the greatest thing I've ever heard!

AU: Lagwagon was the first band ever to be signed on Fat Wreck Chords with your debut album Duh. How does it feel to know that Lagwagon was the very start of one of the most iconic punk labels ever? What do you think Fat Mike saw in you?

JC: It's great. At this point, every record I've ever made is on the label. There's a few things that I did later on solo things and stuff that but they all ended up back on Fat. Because everything Lagwagon ever did is on Fat and now everything I've ever done is on the label. It's hard to explain how much I appreciate the fortune of being on a label where you trust the people and you know that they're honest and they let you do what you want to do from the start. Mike would pick bands based on what he heard, that he liked. He had a vision of what he wanted the label to sound like and he just did a great job at curating that. We were lucky to be a very early part of that. I know what he thought of our band because he told me. He's not a person who minces words. He pretty much says what he thinks all the time. It can be really annoying. He told me, "You guys are too metal, but there's something there. I want to get in the studio with you guys." I was like, Oh, killer. Let's see what kind of effect Mike has on us as a producer. Because that's totally different. We had three days to record and mix the record. There's no room for any change or any production. Basically we made a live record. I don't really remember specifically if Mike had any effect on what we did. I think it was more like the song choices. We were too metal for Mike and so I thought about that a little bit and I don't think I changed anything because when I listen to that early stuff, that first record anyway, some of it's pretty cringey.

AU: I think it's a classic. Were there any albums recorded under the band's original name, Section 8, or was Duh the band's first album?

JC: Well, I have the two-inch tape and the one-inch tape from the sessions for our demos. They all say Section 8 on them. They don't say Lagwagon. The album was done and we were working on the art. It was very slow in the beginning because Mike was basically just using the nickels and dimes he had beyond rent and so it took forever. He wasn't a wealthy guy then, at all. We made our record in 1990 and it came out in '92. How annoying is that? That's another thing that pisses me off. There were bands like Pennywise that put out their first record in '91 and I was like, What the fuck?! Our first record's ready, let's go! So it was a slow production.

So we were Section 8 when we made that first record. Then Mike said he didn't like the name and of course, we were like, Who cares what you think? Then this is what happened, we would go do regional shows, like play in L.A. and go play in northern California. We're doing shows like that and there was some band from Portland that was also called Section 8. They were a punk band and people kept coming up to us like asking for the single "Drunk, Fat and Stupid" or something like

that. We'd be like, uh, that's not us. That happened over and over again. Then we were playing in L.A. This was during the time that N.W.A. was really huge and all the Compton and South Central Los Angeles hardcore rap bands were really big. We saw a poster for a band and it was like they were Straight Outta Compton again or whatever and it was Section 8. On their poster one of the guys had a gun. I'm like, Oh, fuck. Maybe we should change the name? It's bad enough that people think we have a song called "Drunk, Fat and Stupid". But I don't want to go up against these dudes, you know? Mike had come down to Santa Barbara, well Goleta actually. That is the town that we rehearsed in at our little shack. We're sitting there and everybody had written up on a dry erase board their top five ideas for band names and the only one that no one hated was Lagwagon and Mike was like, "That's cool." That was what we called our van because it broke down a lot.

AU: Are you stoked to play the Victoria Ska & Reggae Festival? Your show is Friday, June 26th at the Victoria Curling Club.

JC: Yeah, is it outdoors or indoors?

AU: It's an outdoor festival usually, but the punk night is at an indoor venue.

JC: Oh, interesting. Well, that changes everything. If it's a show attached to a festival maybe we get more bodies. Yeah, that sounds great. We're playing a whole lot of festivals in Europe leading right up to that. It's the last show of that tour. I like any chance to go to Victoria. It's such a beautiful place. Yeah, I'm totally stoked. It'll be fun.

AU: Have anything special planned for the show at the Victoria Ska & Reggae Festival?

JC: There are quite a few shows where we're playing this album called *Hoss* in its entirety. We still play a lot of other songs, the old albums are short. But in Victoria I think we are just going to play whatever we play. We have a whole tour leading up to it which means a setlist for the beginning of that tour and by show six it'll be very different and by the end of the tour it'll be totally different and it'll be a really well-oiled machine.

AU: Well lubricated.

JC: It'll be well lubricated, man, by the time we get there. So, hopefully it should be good.

Continued next issue...

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THE ROYAL

Nelson, B.C.

By Ashley Gelaue

Our second installment of our Venue Review HAS to be The Royal in Nelson. We tour a lot so it's hard to find glimpses of home on the road. Nelson, BC pulled up real quick and said "welcome home stinky little punks". Maybe we are just BC kids, but leaving home, driving through the mountains and remaining in the mountains (but closer to them) leaves you feeling fresh, alive and familial. Not only is this ski town reminiscent of home for us, it also is micro, exciting and supportive. This is often one of our favourite stops on the road because the locals know how to show up, the



because the locals know how to show up, the

town is walkable and full of great food/records/books/experiences. If you are looking for a town and a venue to milk during your time on the road, this is the place!

The Royal itself is a hub for music, people and fun. The overall vibe of this venue is open, expansive, and well laid out. Want merch? Don't worry about fighting with your buddies on the floor or your friends grabbing beers! There is a convenient merch pass as you walk through the front doors before you get into the action. This provides a space where you can actually hear each other talk, as well as a 'no elbows' zone for safe band support! You can meet band members, buy merch and communicate without fighting for your life while having some merch bro vibrate your caribulum for a t-shirt price.

Stage sound is nothing short of outstanding at this venue. The sound booth is located in an appropriate spot to give audience members the best possible sound experience, and bands the appropriate support when sharing their sound! Ample bathrooms, a progressive space, accommodating and personable staff with real

personalities who make you feel like you are catching up with old buddies. Need a built in audience? Nelson SHOWS UP.

Being that it is a smaller community, when it's on, IT'S ON. Sell outs are frequent, and the support is overwhelming.

Be aware that this venue is 19+ but is sure to boast a considerate crowd that is down to throw down. Need a place to stay? Lots of options within walking distance from the venue. Tonight's gonna be a good night, and we can promise you that's true. Punk friendly, metal friendly and

human friendly. Wheelchair? Don't care! Soar on your wheels through the venue and rest assured

MEAN BIKINI VENUE REVIEW

your local crowd is gonna surf you if you will it. Parking? Ample street parking right outside the venue.

In all our time there, we haven't had but a breath of an issue loading in, out and enjoying our stay. Need a dart or just a break from inside? The easy streets of Nelson have you covered. You'll make friends, giggle and meet some bands too!

The bottom line is The Royal in Nelson is gonna



give you a great night. You're gonna love the staff, you're belongings will be safe in the green room, merch is in a hot spot, the tap list provides a flavour for anyone, fried chicken at your finger tips, a pit that will make you wanna hit the dance floor every time and a community that will have you crawling back for your next great tour experience.

theroyalnelson.com

Photo credit: Kaitie Schavoni



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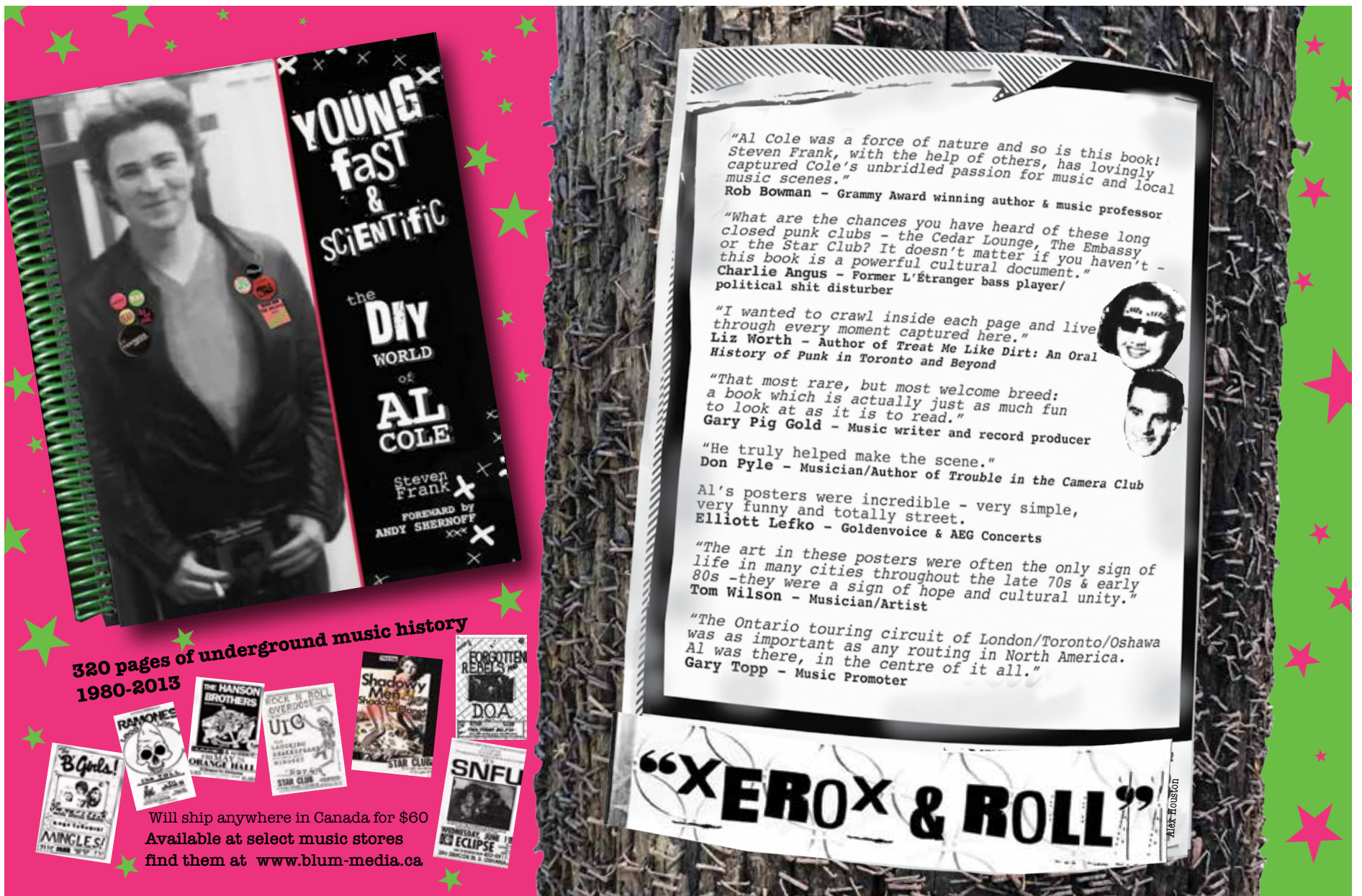
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Liz Worth - Author of Treat Me Like Dirt: An Oral History of Punk in Toronto and Beyond

"That most rare, but most welcome breed: a book which is actually just as much fun to look at as it is to read."
Gary Pig Gold - Music writer and record producer

"He truly helped make the scene."
Don Pyle - Musician/Author of Trouble in the Camera Club

Al's posters were incredible - very simple, very funny and totally street.
Elliott Lefko - Goldenvoice & AEG Concerts

"The art in these posters were often the only sign of life in many cities throughout the late 70s & early 80s - they were a sign of hope and cultural unity."
Tom Wilson - Musician/Artist

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"XEROX & ROLL"

THE GOOD WEED BOARD: PART 11

Red Congolese vs. Ukee + Rating Guide Update

By Marty Wig

Welcome to the Good Weed Board Part Eleven! Glad to be back. This is my first article with *Absolute Underground*, which I'm really excited about! For new readers interested in previous articles from the Good Weed Board series, check out StratCann Media.

To get us going with *Absolute* let's begin with two overdue reviews that have been waiting in the vault: Red Congolese by Magi Cannabis and Ukee by Victoria Cannabis Company. Plus we have an update to the rules of the Rating Guide.

RED CONGO

Let's start with the Red Congo. I sampled this almost two years ago, July 2024 to be exact. It was a 28-gram grabbed from Up In Smoke in Vancouver. My notes reminded me that this one was comparable to the Saltspring Love Haze, also by Magi. The bag was filled with big, sticky buds boasting top notes of citrus fruit and pine with an earthy, skunk base. Visual characteristics were consistent with what one would expect from good Congo, light green buds with vibrant orange hairs and lots of crystals.



A potent grease ring starting immediately with the first few pulls impressed me. Burn quality was not as nice as the Love Haze, but still long and sweet. Thinking back I remember a bubbly grapefruit flavour, with some ripe berries and a hint of floral mint sort of like champagne. Nice daytime smoke, with surprisingly long lasting and energetic effects.

As for the score, the Red Congolese received an 81/100 on the Rating Guide.

UKEE

Next up is the Ukee by Victoria Cannabis Company. I sampled a 7-gram from their farm-gate store in August 2025. The package date was Aug 1, super fresh but still decently cured. No moisture pack necessary folks. So what



is the Ukee? It's a cross between Lilac Diesel and Boogie Fruit. From my observations the Ukee was actually quite similar to the Congo, with a lilac leaning floral nose and spruce bursting from the inner layers. Very nice looking hand-trimmed buds, necessitated by their asymmetrical shape. I also want to highlight the label facts provided by VCC. This should be the industry standard.

For the THC geeks this one landed in the low to medium range with a focused, tingly buzz reminiscent of an

espresso shot. There was a little bit of tropical fruit cheese in the flavour, which I also noted for the Congo. In regard to weight, this was the proper size bag for a quarter, but I still don't love the format. Like the dreaded eighths, moisture content is deceptive at first followed by rapid decline in overall flavour and abundance. Just seem to get less from more over time. My score for the Ukee is 82/100 on the Rating Guide.



RATING GUIDE UPDATE

As for the rules of the Rating Guide, it started with twelve and now we have two more to add:

Rule #13: Batch quality varies. Each individual sample is unique and must be graded independently.

Rule #14: The best way to store samples or small quantities of dried flower is with a canning jar filled approximately 85%.

That's all for Part Eleven. My goal is to write an article for each issue of *Absolute Underground* featuring new product reviews and industry insights.

Our next release #131 is slotted for August/September. See you then!

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PINK FAIRIES

Covered in Pink

Interview with guitarist Paul Rudolph
By Ray MacKay and Ira Hunter

For a three LP-long moment there, at the start of the 70s, the Pink Fairies were arguably the most important band on earth.

They had no hits, they sold out no arenas. But as the pathetic ashes of the hippy dream were finally swept into the dustbin of history, the Fairies were the broom that not only cleared away the clutter of the past, it also opened up the pathway that would ultimately lead to punk rock.

AU: Give us a brief history of PINK FAIRIES:

Paul Rudolph: The Pink Fairies was a well known underground psychedelic rock band founded in 1971 in London, England, of which I am a founding member. The original Pink Fairies recorded two albums over two years, and subsequently recorded five more albums in other incarnations of the band. The original band was renowned for playing free festivals; it played live at the first Glastonbury free festival in 1971; in Hyde Park, Trafalgar Square, and the steps of St Paul's Cathedral to raise money for its restoration and among many others. The band was recognized by Johnny Rotten of the Sex Pistols for spearheading the punk rock movement. It was a wild and wily sound.

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

PR: I'm Paul Rudolph a guitarist from the West Coast of British Columbia, Canada. My music career began in 1967 at age 19 when I won the BC "Battle of the Bands" competition. I was playing guitar with a local psychedelic band made up of three draft dodgers from the US and two Canadians. We won the band contest after drinking a huge jug of orange juice our band manager had - unbeknownst to us - spiked with liquid LSD.

I was born in 1947 and raised in a small town called Gibsons on the Sunshine Coast, a quaint drinking town with a fishing problem, with a population of not more than 1000. My mom was a nurse and a church pianist and my dad was the personnel manager at the Port Melon pulp mill about 10 miles down the coast from Gibsons. My parents got me a guitar when I was 9 years old

as a Christmas present and I had to learn to play it flat on my knee as I am a polio survivor. From that moment onwards guitar was my total passion and I formed my first band when I was 12 years old, a band called the Midnighters, based in Gibsons, BC — it was thus named as we had to be home by

midnight. At 12-13 years old we started to get regular gigs at the Roberts Creek Hall. Members of the shishálh Nation loved our sound and would fill the hall for our gigs. When I was 17 we were invited to play on the Indigenous reserve for a wedding. At the end of our set they passed the hat around to collect money to pay us to play longer, and the hat ended up having more money in it than our original gig fee. The chief invited us to stay over on the reserve, which is a memory I to this day I consider a big honour.

The Midnighters was active until 1966 when I left for Vancouver at 19 years old.

In Vancouver I started to play jazz cover standard tunes in the strip clubs on East Hastings street and was earning \$100/week. After a year of that, a high school friend of mine who had moved to London sent me a letter. He was living with the Deviants in a flat above the Shaftesbury Theatre at the start of Drewery Lane. The Deviants were looking for a guitarist. So this is what took me to London at the age of 19. I wanted to expand in my music career and was looking for excitement and new challenges. I booked a one-way ticket.

My first gig with the Deviants was at an outdoor concert in Birmingham and our warmup band was Black Sabbath.

AU: How did the Pink Fairies form?

PR: In 1970, with the Deviants, I travelled from London back to Vancouver for two gigs at the Colonial Theatre. We arrived, and after playing the gigs, we realised the promoter had no money and had cancelled our return tickets. Mick Farren, lead singer of the Deviants, had a psychotic break after finding out we weren't going to be paid, this was compounded by the fact that our pot of chili that evening had been spiked with a handful of hash. We borrowed money to send Mick back

home to receive psychiatric care, and then we pooled all our available money to take a greyhound to San Francisco where we ended up staying for two months playing gigs and sleeping on various floors in Haight Ashbury.

The record company for the Deviants, Sire Records, forwarded us airfare to fly to Montreal and we spent the winter playing gigs there to stay alive, and eventually found the money to fly back to London.

While in Montreal an idea was tossed around to form a new band composed of myself on guitar, the drummer and bass players from the Deviants, and Twink as a second drummer who had recently left The Pretty Things.

As soon as we got back to London we got together and jammed and enjoyed playing together. We landed our first gig at the Round House in London. We entered onstage to a standing ovation - before we had even played. The Pink Fairies lasted two years and we performed hundreds of gigs and performed two albums during that time.



After leaving the Pink Fairies I joined Hawkwind playing bass, and then after a year played guitar, bass and drums on Brian Eno's first four albums between 1975-'79. Eno's music is considered the origins of ambient music. After that I went to Spain for a year with my band and guitar.

The Pink Fairies continued on for another 2-3 years with different members coming and going.

AU: What can you tell us about your recent

album, Covered In Pink?

PR: In 2008 Cleopatra Records facilitated a recording session between myself, Alan Davey and Lucas Fox (the original drummer from Motörhead). It was Cleopatra's idea to get the three of us together to see what would happen

CLEOPATRA RECORDS

creatively. We wrote the entire album called *Resident Reptiles* in the studio over the course of a week. We subsequently recorded a second album, *Screwed Up*, also composed of original songs in 2023.

Covered in Pink is a concept project from Brian Perera, owner of Cleopatra Records. It brings together myself, Alan Davey and drummer One Legged Pete, to play 12 songs in the Pink Fairies' style. The style of the original band carries through to this new album; it's a rock and roll rough edge sound.

Alan Davey did not play in the Pink Fairies but played bass in Hawkwind for 20 years and was a protege of Lemmy who founded Motörhead.

AU: Tell us about the creative process behind Covered In Pink?

PR: The creative process occurred online collaboratively between myself and Alan Davey in our respective studios - he is in Northern California and I'm in Victoria, BC, Canada. We wanted to keep the process and the sound as simple as possible.

AU: What track on Covered In Pink are you most excited for people to hear?

PR: "Rosalynd" is an original Pretty Things song, and I think we did it justice. "Right to Decide" is a song written by Alan Davey and Chops Faulkner and I really like the way it turned out. I got to use my lap steel guitar on it.

AU: What was the craziest gig you ever played?

PR: The craziest gig that comes to mind would be the Pink Fairies, Hawkwind, and The Pretty Things all on stage at the same time. Totally out of control.

AU: Anything else to promote?

PR: I promote peace, love and kindness.

AU: Any final words of wisdom for our readers?

PR: Keep on Truckin' and Don't forget to boogie.
[wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Rudolph_\(musician\)](https://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Rudolph_(musician))
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Interview compiled and photo by Mary Fowles
www.maryfowles.com
New portrait headshots in Paul's studio - available upon request!

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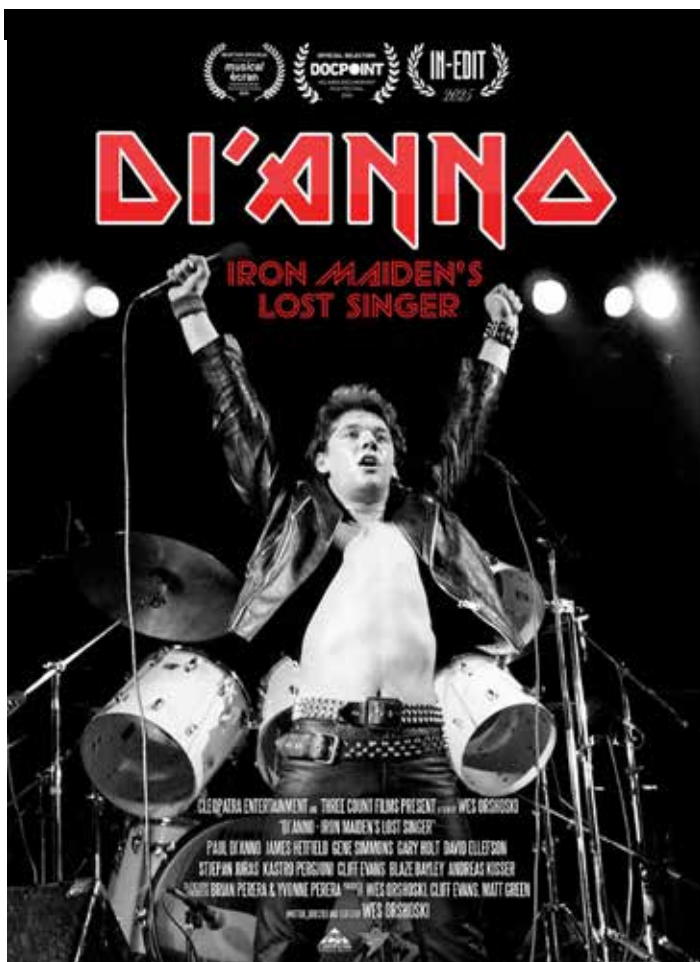
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Inside Di'Anno: Iron Maiden's Lost Singer with Director Wes Orshoski

By Ray MacKay

AU: For our unfamiliar readers, please give us a brief history of yourself, and film career prior to *Di'Anno: Iron Maiden's Lost Singer*.

Wes Orshoski: Born. Dreamed of playing for the Cleveland Indians. Warped by *Kill Em All* and *Appetite for Destruction* as a teen. Hopelessly addicted to music ever since. In between eating tacos, petting dogs and going to a lot of concerts, I write about music sometimes, take pictures of musicians sometimes, and make films about musicians sometimes.

AU: Tell us about *Di'Anno: Iron Maiden's Lost Singer* — what is it about, and where can people watch it?

WO: The film touches on Paul's entire life and career but really focuses on his final years, as he made one last push to get his life and career back on track, thanks to a group of fans determined to help him get the health care he needed.

AU: *Di'Anno: Iron Maiden's Lost Singer* is your third film,

preceded by *Lemmy* (2010) and *The Damned: Don't You Wish That We Were Dead* (2015). What techniques, ideas, or experiences did you bring from these previous films into this one?

WO: Maybe my favorite part of the *Damned* film is the scene I filmed in which two of the band's bass players, Bryn Merrick and Paul Gray recount how after having never met before they encountered one another in the same cancer

ward in Wales where they were both being treated for throat cancer. They recounted how bizarre everything about that was. It was my favorite scene because it was the most human moment in the film. Everyone watching the film could relate, no one has lived a life untouched by cancer. The Paul film treads the same ground times ten. Not by design, mind you, more by coincidence. The film follows Paul's physical and mental health struggles and all of it ten times more human and relatable than platinum records and world tours.

AU: Why did you decide to make this film concerning his life and final years? What resonated with you about Paul Di'Anno's story and life?

WO: Matt Green at Cleopatra Records and Paul's longtime bandmate Cliff Evans (from Killers) pitched me on the film in 2017. And I said yes right away... for many reasons -- most prominently the pandemic -- the film was delayed and ended up covering nearly all of his final years... Maybe the fact that Paul fucked up and shot himself in the foot more times than he could count. I think we can all relate to not being able to get out of our own way. But also, I admired his sheer madness, in a way. He was gonna do things his way, and go down with the ship if he had to. Not that I want to follow that example.

AU: What can you tell us about the process of making a musical documentary - how did you make *Di'Anno: Iron Maiden's Lost Singer*?

WO: It can be an incredibly life-affirming, beautiful process, but is more often a soul-sucking, pocketbook-draining process that requires obsession and stamina.

AU: What do you hope people take away from your film?

WO: Paul is sort of a mythical figure in the history of metal. I hope people learn about him and have some understanding of who he was and why things went the way they did for him.

AU: What's next for you? What's your next directing project?

CLEOPATRA RECORDS

WO: I'm working on a documentary about the Memphis/Stax/soul/funk group the Bar-Kays. A friend of mine learned that his deceased cousin was one of the five Bar-Kays to perish in the 1967 plane crash that killed Otis Redding. The Bar-Kays opened Otis' final tour, playing tunes from their debut album *Soulfinger* before serving as Otis' backing band. During Covid, we started filming a documentary meant to tell the incredible story of that original band and the story of those who have kept the group together (lone plane crash survivor trumpeter Ben Cauley) and bassist James Alexander (the last living member of the original group who in 1967 was forced to take a commercial flight due to a lack of seats on the doomed plane). The Bar-Kays are one of the most unsung groups in history, having been sampled hundreds of times (on such tracks as "Hey Ladies" and "Get Jiggy Wit It").

AU: What's your favorite Iron Maiden Album and song?

WO: *Seventh Son of a Seventh Son*. Fight me.

AU: What're some highlights of your career to-date?

WO: These films are so hard to make, finishing each is the equivalent of climbing a mountain. Each one is certainly a highlight.

AU: Anything else to promote?

WO: Kindness? Understanding? Tenderness? All the above.

AU: Any final words for our readers?

WO: Buy the tickets and go to that show. It might be their last. It might be your last.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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JUNE

- 3rd - Just Amsterdam, I♥My UJT, The Pressures, Canaries in the Coal Mines
- 4th - What's Your Beef Acoustic Show- Pay No Mind, Fast Eddie, Tim Hole House, The Washout
- 5th - Droning, Wanda, Deer Fang, Black Headed Gull
- 6th - Big Cat Band, Chapel of Ease, Roadkill
- 7th - Zero End, Mickey Moore, Stand Against Fear
- 9th - MAVIS w/ guests
- 11th - Dying Ritual, Kylee Phillipa, Mia Romantica, Amarelle Hall, Dorian Abyss
- 12th - Wax Mannequin, World Provider, Theremin Man
- 13th - Hey Turtiel, Bad Science
- 14th - Daphne's Demise, Closeout
- 16th - Prisoner, Lewd Antics, Faulty Rivals
- 17th - Crust Punk Sewing Circle
- 18th - Dyke Takeover
- 19th - Lovebolt, Sixteen Scandals, Loser Pawz, Lost Astronaut
- 20th - Eyleyn, Dartboard, Frankie Teardrop, Hive Maker
- 21st - MOTHER
- 24th - The Saints of Radio
- 25th - Jade Green, Sundried Whales, Sullen, Small Orbit
- 26th - Kruemones w/ guests
- 27th - The Approximators
- 28th - Drag Show TBA

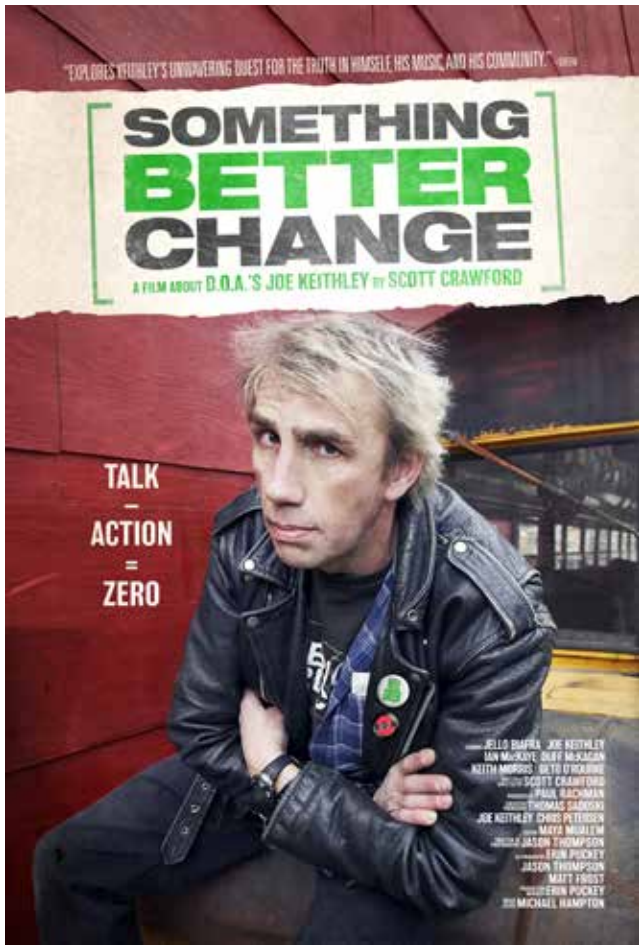
JULY

- 3rd - Polluted w/ guests
- 4th - Deadly Romantics w/ guests
- 10th - Rolodex Darko w/ guests
- 16th - Cult Heroes w/ guests
- 17th - Chasing Pigeons w/ guests
- 18th - Jordan Dean, Johnny & The Man Kids
- 19th - MOTHER- monthly drag night
- 22nd - Knitting, Sunsetter and Sullen
- 23rd - Alex Gages Flagship w/ guests
- 25th - The Approximators
- 26th - Cat Punch w/ guests
- 30th - Dyke Takeover
- 31st - Fuzz Vultures w/ The 45 Selector



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a modest campaign budget and little conventional political backing, he won a council seat and became part of a broader shift in Burnaby's municipal government in BC.

The film also considers a question that has followed punk culture for generations: can ideas that begin in music create change in the wider world? Through campaign footage, interviews, and archival material, *Something Better Change* documents one example of an artist attempting to move from commentary to direct participation.

Alongside Keithley, the documentary features perspectives from musicians, activists, and public figures including Ian MacKaye, Jello Biafra, Duff McKagan, Flea, Beto O'Rourke, Krist Novoselic, and Keith Morris. Their contributions help place Keithley's story within a larger conversation about music, community organizing and political engagement.

Directed by Scott Crawford and produced by Paul Rachman and Keithley, the documentary takes its title

JOE KEITHLEY: SOMETHING BETTER CHANGE

Joe Keithley has spent decades challenging authority through punk rock, activism, and political engagement. As the longtime frontman of D.O.A., Keithley helped shape the development of hardcore punk while using music as a platform to address issues ranging from war and inequality to environmental concerns and corporate influence.

Filled with great music and amazing historical footage of D.O.A.'s extended career, the documentary *Something Better Change* follows Keithley's journey from musician and activist to elected municipal politician, examining how the principles often associated with punk's DIY culture can be applied beyond the stage.

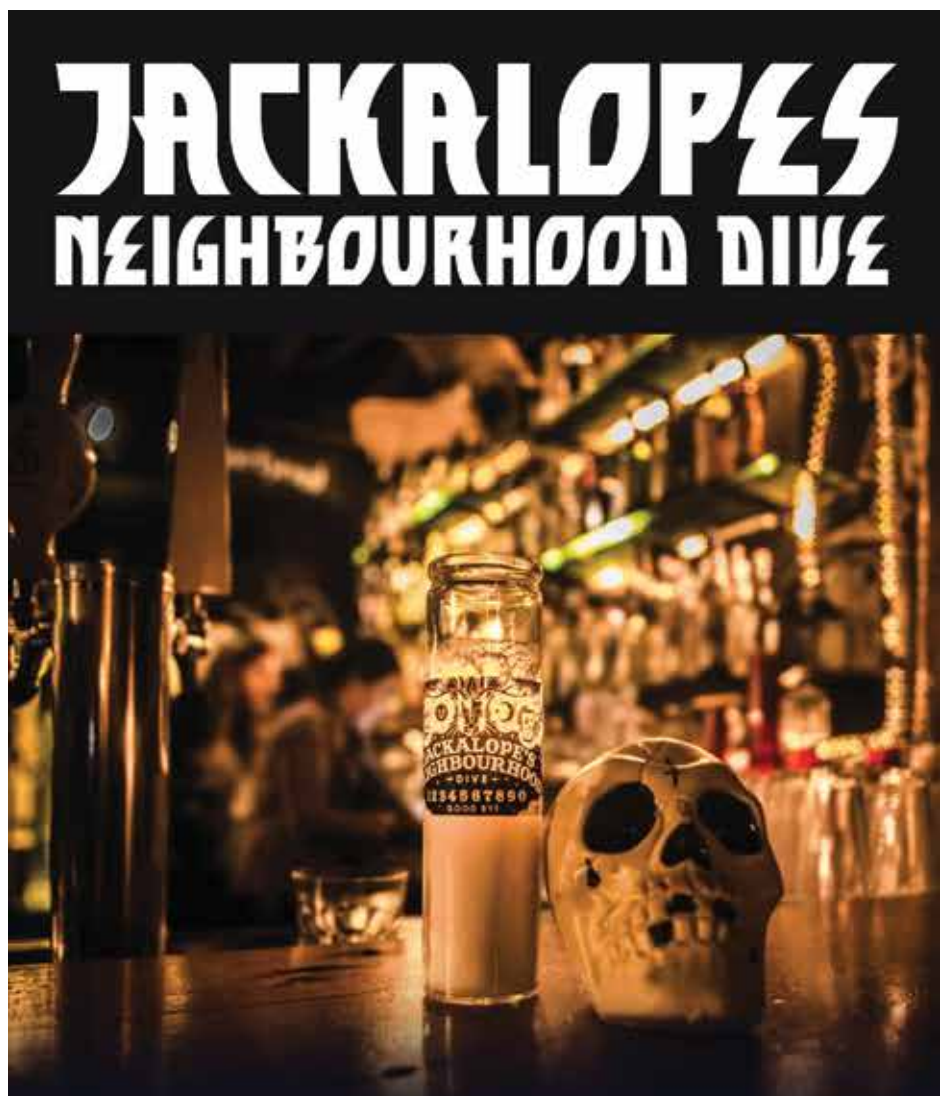
Rather than focusing solely on D.O.A.'s musical legacy, the documentary examines the relationship between culture, activism, and civic engagement. Keithley's decision to run for office grew out of decades spent advocating for social and political causes through music. With

from D.O.A.'s 1980 debut album and reflects a philosophy that has remained consistent throughout Keithley's career: ideas alone are not enough without action. Whether through touring, activism or elected office, the film presents a portrait of someone who has spent decades attempting to put those beliefs into practice.

Something Better Change premiered on streaming platforms on April 7, 2026 and is also available on DVD. The film arrives as Keithley continues serving on Burnaby City Council and remains active with D.O.A., demonstrating that the connection between punk rock and civic engagement remains an ongoing part of his story.

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BORN BROKEN: Road to Wacken Open Air

By Asher Thrasher

After years grinding through the Canadian underground metal scene, Montreal's BornBroken are heading to Germany after winning Wacken Metal Battle Canada 2026, earning a spot at one of the world's largest metal festivals. AU caught up with the band to discuss perseverance, representing Canada on an international stage and what lies ahead at Wacken Open Air.

AU: Welcome back to *Absolute Underground*! Last time we spoke was in 2024 for your album *Am I Invisible*.

Mike Decker: It's crazy how much has changed since then. Back in 2024, we were coming out swinging with *Am I Invisible*, trying to prove that BornBroken still had something important to say, with me taking on vocal duties again and after all the lineup changes and everything life threw at us, we are now heading to Wacken — older, meaner, tighter and way more hungry!

AU: BornBroken has been grinding in the Canadian metal scene for years. Looking back, what part of your early journey feels the most connected to this win at Wacken Metal Battle Canada

2026?

MD: Honestly, it's the years where nobody cared. Playing half-empty rooms, hauling gear through snowstorms — anybody can celebrate when things go well, but the real test is who keeps showing up when nothing is happening. We survived member changes, personal struggles and life in general. Winning this feels like proof that persistence matters.

AU: What was the most challenging part of preparing for the WMBC national finals, and how did you push through it as a unit?

MD: Everybody says "just go have fun," but when

you know what's on the line, your brain doesn't exactly relax. We pushed ourselves really hard musically and mentally. My health was not good over the winter, and it took a toll on my voice, which I pushed through at every jam and round of this battle. Peter got hurt, which added some challenges. At the same time, though, we kept things loose between us. Lots of jokes, lots of making fun of each other. That balance kept us grounded. We went in as four guys trusting each other completely.

AU: Was there a specific moment during the competition where you felt, "We've got this"?

MD: I don't think any of us ever fully thought that because there were so many amazing bands in this battle across the country, but during the finals, there was a moment I remember thinking, "Alright... this is our moment. Don't waste it."

AU: Canada has a diverse metal landscape. What part of your sound or attitude feels distinctly Canadian to you?

MD: Canadian metal has this honesty to it. It's heavy without pretending. There's grit to it because most Canadian bands have to work twice as hard just to get noticed. I think BornBroken carries that mentality. No fake image. No rockstar fantasy stuff. We're regular guys with jobs, families, responsibilities and scars. Then we step on stage and let everything explode. That feels very Canadian to me. Survival mixed with aggression.

AU: Now that you're carrying the Canadian flag to 35th edition of Wacken Open Air, what does that responsibility mean to you personally and as a band?

MD: It means everything. We know we're not just representing ourselves anymore. We're representing our city, our scene, our friends, the bands that came before us, and every underground Canadian metal band loading gear into a van right now, hoping their moment comes too. Personally, as a husband, father and somebody who's been sober since 2004, it hits even harder. There were points in life where I could have easily gone down a different road. Standing here now feels bigger than music.

AU: Wacken is the biggest metal festival on the planet. What are you most excited or nervous about stepping onto that stage?

MD: What excites us most is definitely the crowd and playing our first time with this band overseas. Seeing thousands of metalheads from all over the world together in one place is going to be insane. As for nerves, it's probably those few seconds before we hit the stage. But once that first riff kicks in, everything settles. Then it's just BornBroken doing what we've always done — giving everything we've got.

AU: How do you think performing at Wacken will change the trajectory of BornBroken moving forward?

MD: I think it opens doors, but more importantly, it validates the years of work. Wacken puts you in front of an international audience that might never have discovered your band otherwise. We plan to use that momentum hard — new music, touring and hopefully bigger opportunities. But mentally, I think it changes you, too. Once you stand on a stage like that, your standards go up permanently.

AU: Competitions can test a band's internal dynamics. How did this experience strengthen or reshape your chemistry?

MD: It made us tighter because everybody had to



pull equal weight. Nobody hid behind anybody else. We all had moments where one guy picked the others up mentally. That's what a real band is. This lineup feels special because there's mutual respect everywhere. No egos. Just four guys trying to destroy every stage we step on.

AU: Your fans have been loud and loyal. What message do you want to send them now that you're heading to Germany?

MD: Thank you for believing in us even during the quieter years. A lot of people only show up when things get big. Our supporters, some of whom have become great friends now, stayed when things were uncertain. We saw every share, every message, every person buying merch, every friend dragging somebody out to a show. This win belongs to all of us.



AU: After Wacken, what's the next mountain you want to climb, musically or personally?

MD: Musically, we want to evolve without losing the aggression that defines BornBroken. We already have ideas brewing that feel darker, heavier but more honest.

Personally, I just want balance. Being present for my family while still chasing these insane dreams. At this stage of life, success means being able to do both.

bornbroken.bandcamp.com/music
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WACKEN METAL BATTLE is an international band contest established in 2004, that aims at discovering new talent and supporting the scene worldwide. With this, the Wacken Open Air supports up & coming artists on a global scale, offering its resources and stages.

metal-battle.com

The Metal Battle has grown to include 62 countries that hold national heats and are eligible to send the winners to Wacken. An international jury votes on the performances, the best groups receive financial support from the Wacken Foundation as well as instruments and equipment provided by Metal Battle's partners. Last but not least, the contest offers the possibility to get in touch with people from the music business worldwide. The contest has supported several bands throughout the years and has been a pivotal career launchpad for bands like Drone, Torture Squad, Battle Beast and Hammercult, to name a few.

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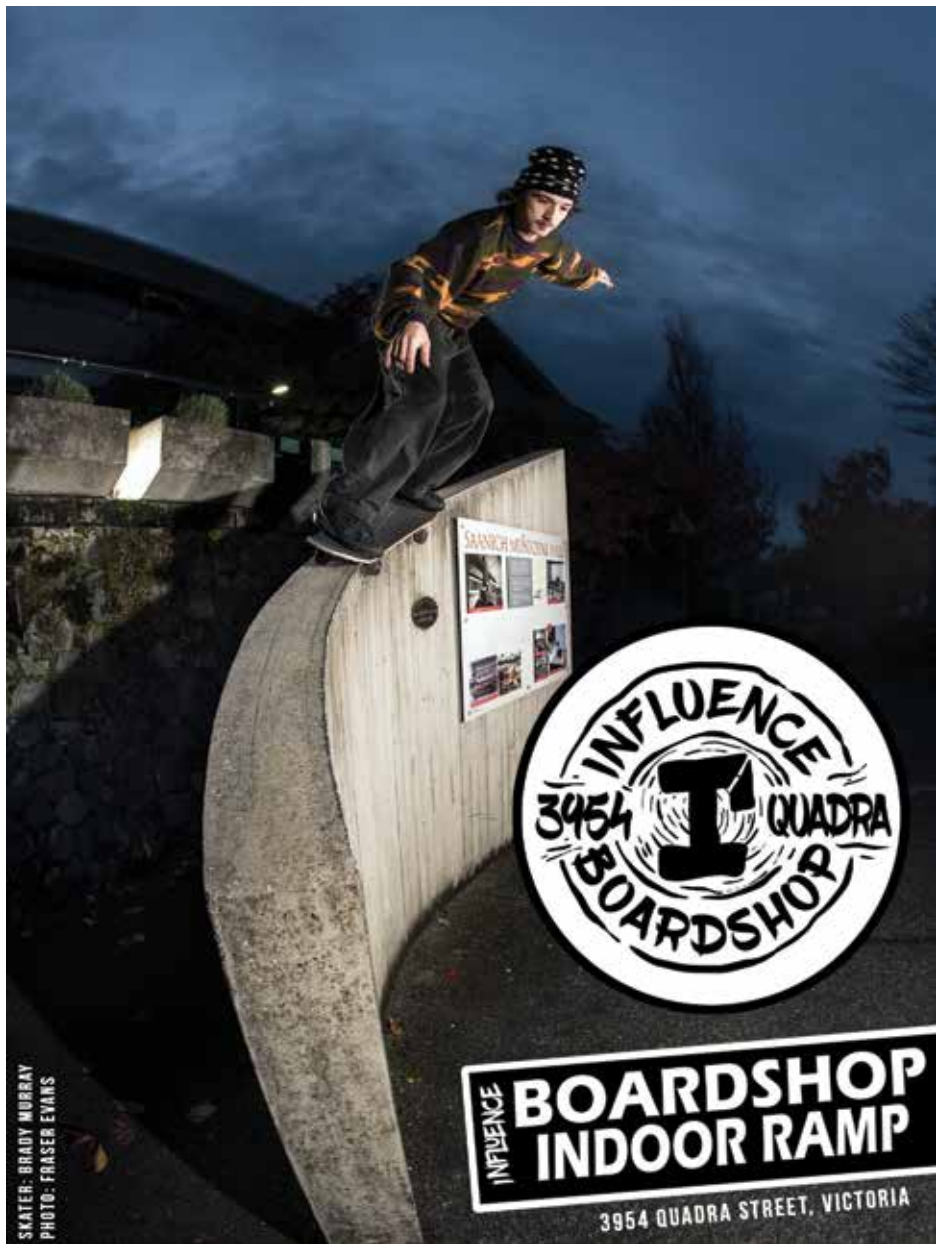
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OUT ALIVE

Interview Jay Flett

Absolute Underground: Who are you, how long have you been a band and how would you describe your sound?

We are Out Alive... we are fucking Out Alive. We have been a band officially for about a year and a half. Jesse, Clint and Jesse got together first and we wanted to add another guitar so we knew Dave from the past 20 years of playing in Unlabelled. So it was kind of a perfect fit as we have all known each other for years.

Our sound is... too fucking fast. Fucking fast. If we have to play a short set we don't cut songs we just play faster.

AU: How did you get started?

Jesse and Clint started jamming and contacted Jesse Bergunder. Jesse had a bunch of crazy basslines written and when Bergunder started singing to it we were like holy fuck this is going to work.

AU: What have your major influences been?

We all have the common punk rock bond, we all listen to different types of music. Dave likes hippy music, classic rock but punk is fun to play that's why Dave puts up with these fuckers.

The state of the world. Nothing too deep, life, death. Soundtrack to a society on fire.

AU: How's the Nanaimo scene been and has it changed since you started?

The scene was dead 20 years ago, venues closed up, especially punk rock music. There was a time you basically couldn't play here if you were punk rock. Now the kids have come back in a surprising way. They are into music and they are into awesome shit. There are still a lot of kids too young to play at The Terminal but in a couple years shows are going to be off the hook. We sell tons of merch at shows now too.

AU: You guys are based out of Nanaimo. Do you have a favourite show or shows you've played?

We played a show in Duncan and I've never seen anything like it, we are talking straight up anuses. There was a huge black dick being used as a beer bong, Brewtality and Dead Rights played. They party hard in Duncan.

AU: Tell us about the record that just came out?

It's called *Fortune for the Forgotten*. It's a straight up punk rock album. A lot of it is about things we have seen and how people are broken and how there is no answer to any of this and no help. Cuz no one has the answer as we are watching society collapse around us. Half of society is blinded by living in the golden dome while the rest of us are living in the reality of this shit hole.

We say it the way we see it. Just like a mirror. We are not right, we are not left, we just don't know what the answer is. We are just trying to figure this out together.

AU: What motivates you to continue to play?

Just the love of music and playing live shows. Recording and writing and collaborating. Dave's an animal who likes anuses. The constant

challenge of trying to be better.

AU: Vinnie Stigma or Harley Flanagan?

Stigma. Agnostic Front was always in the background and we related to what they were saying.

AU: How are finding attendance at shows?

Hit and miss. Have had some great shows basically sold out and then shows where no one shows up. We don't like social media that much so promoting that way is difficult. We aren't about being online content creators and that may play

TERMINAL SESSIONS

into being hit and miss.

AU: What's down the road for you guys?

We have four or five new songs half written so get those done. Big shout out to Paul Cimolini. We've been recording with him for a couple years now.

You can find all our merch and the full records on: outaliveband.com

Photo credit: Jay Flett

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Thrift Shopping and True Crime: Interview with Jack Owen of SIX FEET UNDER

Interview by: Alia Synesthesia

It was a lovely evening in late May when Jack Owen (Six Feet Under, Cannibal Corpse, Deicide) dialed in from Chicago for an interview. In July and August 2026, the band will play their first Canadian dates in decades, as their last appearance in the country dates all the way back to 2003.

AU: Six Feet Under hasn't played in Canada since 2003. What are you looking forward to the most when it comes to touring Canada?

Jack Owen: I love the whole country. Going across it is really cool 'cause you get some desolate areas. I was there in 2016 with Carach Angren opening for Kataklysm of all bands [laughs]. We did Prince George and Kitchener and Thunder Bay and all these weird places in between the big cities, but I like it all. I'm a thrift store junkie, so I'll hit all the thrift stores in Edmonton and Calgary and get all the hockey swag. [laughs] That'll be cool, the nice people,

the food and yeah, I love it.

AU: Do you have any interesting stories from touring Canada?

Jack Owen: The famous story, I think it was on the Cannibal Corpse DVD, of when we were in Montreal, we were about to leave the city, and we were sharing a van with Gorguts, [laughs] so two bands in one van. Somebody slammed the door and broke

the window, and it was like negative 10 degrees Fahrenheit. So we had to ride like that back to New York, and we had to play New York City, and for some reason our trailer fell off on the George Washington Bridge on the way to NYC. That's probably the most memorable thing besides the whole thing of two bands in one van, so one guy would be sleeping on a seat, and one guy would sleep on the floor, one after the other. I chose the floor 'cause it was a little more comfortable. [laughs]

AU: That does sound a bit brutal. Outside of touring misadventures, how do you spend your downtime on the road in between the shows?

Jack Owen: Thrift stores, pawn shops for guitar gear, music stores. And I'm the guy who usually has a mountain bike, so I'm hitting the supermarket for things I might need. And yeah, I'm the kind of guy who's never at the club. I'm there for the soundcheck and the show, and then I'm hitting the town. [laughs]

AU: Are there any songs from the band's catalogue that you find especially fun to play live?

Jack Owen: I do like the older albums. Even though I've been writing the newer stuff. "Anthropy" from the first album, "War is Coming" from the second album. Yeah, the first two or three albums are classics, and then anything that we can put in from the last three albums that I've been writing, like "Know-Nothing Ingrate," or "Mr. Blood and Guts." So it's tough to make a setlist. [laughs]

AU: True crime is one of your major inspirations for new music. In connection to your most recent album, *Next to Die*, are there any particular true crime cases that made an impression?

Jack Owen: Yeah, I think "Mutilated Corpse in the Woods". It was inspired by a story of a woman who was abducted and taken to the woods, and she survived her attack. She was telling her story and she had a scar across her entire throat. That was interesting. Sometimes it's like I put on true crime and just jot down phrases that I'll hear in the show, and then if I just have a phrase that's good enough for a title, that's good enough to just write the whole lyrical idea for the song. So yeah, back in the day it was horror movies. Now if you turn on any of the true crime networks, you'll eventually see something messed up. And everybody's got a fascination with death, I think.

AU: Do you have any favorite podcasts or true crime shows?

Jack Owen: The one I'm watching now is *Murder by Numbers*. It's really well-written. They don't hold back on any details of the crimes that they are investigating. [laughs] You get a lot of ideas and inspiration from that. *Fear Thy Neighbor* is a cool show. When it comes to movies, the latest stuff like *Terrifier*, all three of those are great.

AU: What do you enjoy more, laying out riffs for new music or performing live, and why?

Jack Owen: Man, a little bit of both. I do like being home with my wife and our cats and everything in our little quiet town. But then going out is always cool too. It's about fifty-fifty. You get out and see what you can of the city and collect some thrift store finds here and there. And

INERTIA ENTERTAINMENT

hopefully... Yeah, we're doing festivals in June, so we'll see some friends' bands play. It'll be cool to hang out with them, get some merchandise from them. And yeah, I split right down the middle.

AU: Given that you and your bandmates collaborate on music remotely and are scattered all over the country, do you miss any aspect of playing together in the same room?

Jack Owen: Kinda. I am set up to jam by myself in the basement, and I can be as loud as I want playing along with albums and such. But yeah, nothing beats everybody in a room jamming and writing. I think that would help us be a little more cohesive 'cause we just get to where we're going, and we haven't rehearsed or anything. We just get right on stage. Just do a quick rehearsal backstage before we go on for the first show.

AU: What's coming next after the tour? Are you planning to come back to writing?

Jack Owen: Yeah, I think we'll have time to write music in September and November and December. And we'll probably wanna do a proper European headline tour at some point. Nothing is set yet, so maybe in the new year. I had a little writing spurt. I've got about eight songs now and I have time to put 'em all together. Maybe I'll take everything on the road with me and have Chris demo the vocals for it.

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ALMIGHTY TRIGGER HAPPY: BACK IN THE SADDLE!

Toronto's Hardcore Punk Veterans Re-Erupt with a Vengeance

By **Ferdy Belland**

"We just released a Double-A-sided single," says Al Nolan of newly-resurrected hardcore veterans Almighty Trigger Happy (ATH). "One song's called 'The Ghost of Jim Cherry,' which is about my friend — one of the main songwriters for Strung Out, who passed away in the early 2000s. It was strange — I used to dream about him. He'd whisper in my ear: 'I want this to kill me.' I don't know if that meant the music itself or whatever, but it became the song's chorus...a track I truly believe in. The other song's a cover of Chronic Submission's 'Cops Ain't Tops' — when ISN'T that appropriate for the times? Our longtime drummer Ruston Baldwin wrote that song when he was a teenager, and it was a favourite of mine when I was a kid!"

Youthful energy whipcracks again with ATH, who've cast off a quarter-century hiatus and are back in the downstroke-riffing saddle. Formed in 1991, ATH immediately bashed their way into the forefront of the Toronto scene with breakneck speed and amped-up energy, evolving from melodic pop-punk through aggressive hardcore; sharing stages with punk giants like NOFX, Bad Brains and Pennywise — keeping the skate-

punks kickflipping all through the 1990s before screeching to a halt after four albums, numerous blown tour-van transmissions, and enough cheap beer to fill Lake Ontario. But you can't keep a good band down, and a new dawn arises on Canadian punk as ATH buckles on the gunbelts again and leaps back into the studio with none other than the great Ian Blurton himself.

"We have strong intent for this band," says Nolan. "We've had many different lineups, unfortunately...it's hard to keep people that angry for 35 years! This is the closest we've had to an original lineup, so to speak. We lost our main songwriter Mark Gibson in 2013; it was very sad when he left us. I really wish he was around to enjoy the band's rejuvenation and rebirth. Mark wanted to rerecord our songs before he passed, so we've added his son as a co-songwriter to these new recordings so his legacy will maintain. We've all had some interesting struggles. We're happy to be alive and still doing the band."

Nolan's musical reinvigoration also sees him helming Cursed Blessings Records, a rising independent label specializing in punk, hardcore and metal releases. And sifting through ATH's dusty old documents uncovered a few nasty surprises.

"I found out that we didn't really own any of our songs!" exclaims Nolan. "We were fools when we started out. We were too punk and too cool for school. We never bothered registering any of our songs for publishing. The labels we've been on

CURSED BLESSINGS RECORDS

have been collecting for us, and I have no beef with any of them, but it'd be nice to actually collect on some stuff we did for ourselves. Not that it's all about money, but it puts a little bit of gas in the tank."

And so Nolan devised a crafty solution for the fiscal dilemma.

"We took a nod from Taylor Swift," quips Nolan, "and we re-recorded eleven ATH classics with this lineup — me, Ruston, Jason King and Steve Brown on guitar, and Nick Gosso on bass. In fact, back in the mid-2000s I had a band with Steve and Nick called Hell Yeah Fuck Yeah, so if you were drinking at the Bovine Club on Queen Street in those days then you probably saw us! That's where 'The Ghost of Jim Cherry' comes from. We actually wrote it for that band, and I didn't want it to go to waste. Unless you're the Misfits or Black Flag or Minor Threat, it's really hard to shove a 27-year-old song down some modern kid's throat if you don't have that legendary status behind you... maybe I'm just insecure. But we're in control of our music — until a better label comes and gets us!"

ATH's newfound activity was a welcome jolt to all involved.

"We did the impossible," says Nolan. "We had three rehearsals back in October 2025 and then played three nights in a row — Quebec City, Trois-Rivières, Montreal. It was like the 1990s all over again! Everybody felt great. There's not as much tomfoolery happening in the band anymore. In the old days, I was a very, very bad bandmember. It's nice now to be in towns where I have all the time in the world to do stuff, and not roam the sidestreets, buying sketchy drugs off dangerous bikers. I'm not jeopardizing my safety, or anyone else's. It's nice to have all this time to hang out in record stores and be cool, and actually enjoy your hard work, and embrace the reason why you're doing this...and not be thinking: fuck, I'd rather be on Queen Street snorting coke!"

And ATH is not satisfied with remaining cooped

up inside the GTA.

"We're coming out west," says Nolan. "There's talk of doing shows with Fully Crazed. Just to let everybody know: we're not that expensive to hire! We're quite the productive and creative team now. If you've seen us before, we're even better now than ever. I'm wanting to dive right back into it. Certain days I think: what the fuck — I'm 56! But then the desire rises to be as busy as Belvedere or the Flatliners. It's very doable! It's expensive to tour, sure — gas isn't getting any cheaper — but you have to want it. It's the only way to gain the privilege of someone saying: I remember seeing you guys in Calgary back in '96! I remember you in Sudbury in '94! That stuff always matters. It gets into people's veins that you made the effort to go to their town."

"Unfortunately, I had some relationships crumble with Cursed Blessings because I told a few of the bands: hey man, you gotta go on tour, otherwise it's pointless for me to release your record! I wouldn't ask any labelmate to do something I haven't done myself. We weren't touring endlessly, like the Descendants or Black Flag, but we did some long stretches and went into territories where underground bands hadn't gone before. In a way, any band who's come before us, or any band who's done the hard work — they've done the hard work for you. It was easier for Band X because Band W already broke trail, but Band V already did it, and Band U almost got killed by what they were doing! Touring may be hard to understand now, but as a label it's the best way to sell records. And playing live is the only way you get under people's skin, or get into their hearts, or get into their ears."

Visit cursedblessingsrecords.bandcamp.com for Almighty Trigger Happy's comeback single "The Ghost of Jim Cherry", and keep your eyes and ears peeled for ATH's next full-length album *Everything Evil is Good Again* — to be released later in 2026!

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Music, Sweat & Sensible Shoes

Wild Remedies for Surviving Music Festival Season

By Lily Fawn

Rock n' roll music festival season is upon us. It is a magical time when you don't question why ice cream costs \$18 a scoop, or why you fall in love with the cutie who's waiting in line for a dirty porta potty. Do not attempt to survive three days on vibes alone. Luckily, I have some experience and a few herbal tricks that can help.

First, find out if the festival allows you to bring your own water. If not, come prepared with homemade herbal tea bags, two clear empty canteens, and a belt holster that holds your thermos hands free while you dance and party.

HYDRATE OR DIE! Before you even buy your first drink ticket or wander toward the indie stage, start with hydration. **Nettles** make a brilliant mineral rich tea that helps replenish the body after sun, sweat and all those questionable decisions. Make a couple litres at home beforehand and pack it with you. Brew it strong, chill it and add lemon.

If outside drinks are banned, pack your herbs into drawstring muslin tea bags small enough to fit in the mouth of your canteen. Buy two big bottles of water at the concession. Stuff your nettles into one, your energy tea into the other, and let them soak all day in your \$20 purchased water.

FESTIVAL BEAUTY TIPS = BEAUTIFUL CHAOS: No mirrors... no problem. I love a dishevelled after party look. Go with it. Use an oil based eyeliner that is "as black as midnight on a moonless night". The oil base liners look better after a few days of sweat and tears. Just let it smudge into a smokey-eye. Or rave out with other colours. The trick is that it is oil based.

Greasy hair from sweaty dancing and sleeping where you fall? Make your own dry shampoo using arrowroot powder. Mix in a couple drops of rosemary essential oil, lightly powder your roots, then shake it out. You'll feel as fresh as a daisy as long as you have a clean face and brush your teeth. **Angel Water Waterless Face Cleanser** from EarthsHerbal.com is a must have after a long car ride and even longer nights.

For your bandmate or bunk buddy who has stinky feet, make **Peppermint Foot Spray:**

- 1 part witch hazel
 - 1 part aloe vera gel
 - 1 part distilled water
 - A splash of rubbing alcohol
 - A few drops peppermint essential oil
- Cooling relief for hot, tired feet.

ALL NIGHT ENERGY: You are going to need dancing stamina without feeling like a bear trying to balance on a tiny circus ball. Try **Gotu Kola** for energy, circulation, and clear headed stamina. Even better is my **Study Buddy** Energy Tea Blend from Earth's Herbal Products. Make it into iced tea and keep it cold in your thermos all weekend.

LOVE, LUST & BAD DECISIONS: Festivals are wildly romantic. Try this **Heart Opening Tea Blend** equal parts of rose, damiana, lemon balm and skullcap for flirtation, nerves and emotional resilience. It also never hurts to bring along some **Stroke It** personal lubricant from Earth's Herbal. No lube? So rude.

PREVENT GETTING PICKLED IN YR PANTIES: Wear breathable cotton undergarments, stay hydrated and bring along a small face cloth for gentle cleansing with water. Do not perfume the situation into confusion.

CAMPGROUND MUST HAVES:

Bug Spray:

- 1 part witch hazel
 - 1 part water
 - 10 drops each citronella, lavender, peppermint
- Shake and spray.

Did you eat too many campfire hot dogs?

Activated Charcoal

is useful after greasy food disasters or digestive mutiny. Vomiting or toxic overload.

Bring a **Laxative Tea Blend** of senna pods, fennel and peppermint in case your system goes on strike. Tell yourself the porta potty is a safe place.

Pack protein snacks. I make chocolate power balls with ground pumpkin seeds, nuts, coconut, cacao powder, peanut butter, honey and dried fruit. Be the campsite healthy snack mama.

HEY YOU! THEY CALL IT BEAUTY SLEEP FOR A REASON: That was the best advice my bestie Bettina May ever gave me. Bring a sleep mask and ear plugs cuz you know the party never stops in Festival Season. Also pack a tincture made of chamomile, valerian and passionflower to help you sleep and keep the nervous system in check... keep another one on hand for anxiety: lemon

HERBAL WITCH

balm, skullcap, oat tops. You never know how your night is going to go.

You are going to get pooped at some point. Pay attention to that. Eat breakfast for fuck sake.

ARE YOU IN THE BAND & WORKING BACKSTAGE? Here is some hard earned wisdom from a punk who has been touring for over 20 years. If you are performing, wear a fucking watch so you show up to your own gig on time. Festivals are worm holes and time becomes an abstract

notion. You do not want the lead festival booker chasing you down in a golf cart screaming that you are supposed to be on stage.

Backstage prep:

Bring a pocket mirror
Bring your singer's tea

Bring a tablespoon of olive oil for a dry throat

Know where all your cables are

Do not get burnt out or high before your set

You are there to work

My **Yum Yum Tea** sore throat blend is lovely for singers.

Make use of your backstage pass privilege. That is how I ended up being called on stage to dance with M.I.A. at Osheaga Festival.

May your shoes be both comfortable and adorable, your porta potty crush be charming, and may your tent stay dry. Happy Festival Season. Godspeed, herbal warriors.

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AGAINST ALL AUTHORITY SET FOR VICTORIA SKA & REGGAE FESTIVAL

Interview by Ira Hunter

AU: Who are we talking to and what are best known for or most infamous for?

Danny Lore: Danny Lore from the band Against All Authority.

AU: What was your first introduction to punk rock and ska punk?

DL: In 1985 my world revolved around skateboarding. *Thrasher Magazine* had a section called Strange Notes where they would feature punk bands. My sister borrowed a few records from a girl that just moved to town from San Francisco. The Dead Kennedys and a compilation called Let Them Eat Jellybeans. A few months later I saw Bad Brains at the Cameo Theater. HR started the set with backflip. I was hooked after that show. I found ska by collecting punk records. The Clash pointed me in the right direction.

AU: Where is Against All Authority from and what's the music scene like there?

DL: We're from Miami. South Florida has always had an amazing local scene with great bands. Because we're so geographically isolated, we couldn't just rely on outside tours coming through. It takes a tight, dedicated core group of people to step up and keep things alive down there—and thankfully, Miami has always had people willing to do the heavy lifting to keep shows happening.

AU: When starting the band did you set out to be different from other bands? I always felt like the aggressive lyrics built to a crescendo, and then there was a release of built up pressure when the ska horns would kick in.

DL: Exactly. The bands that really connected with me were the ones that had something to say — the ones that challenged me to think differently. I loved the raw aggression and intensity of punk, but I also loved how ska could completely grab hold of you and make you move. Bringing those two elements together — using punk to build tension and the ska sections as a release — was the whole idea from the beginning.

AU: Your band is well known for your songs tackling social/political issues. How/Why did you decide to address these issues through your music?

DL: I think music can be a vehicle for change. I wouldn't be the person I am today if I hadn't found punk rock. The bands I fell in love with opened my eyes and challenged me to see things from a different perspective. That made a huge impact on me, and it inspired me to use our music in the same way — not just to entertain people, but to make them think and hopefully spark conversations about the world around us.

AU: What are some of the issues you have tackled with your songs?

DL: Racism, fascism, and the ongoing destruction of the environment have all been subjects we've tackled in our songs. We've always tried to strike a balance between writing about the things that make us angry and shining a light on the darker realities happening around us, while also writing about personal struggles and experiences we've lived through ourselves.

AU: Back in the day, I first discovered your band through punk compilation CDs. How important were compilation albums in bringing awareness to people about your band in the early days?

DL: Before streaming existed, compilation albums were one of the best ways to discover new bands.

Records weren't cheap, and not every town had a cool record shop with a punk section, so comps were huge for us and for the scene in general. A lot of the music I found came through those compilations, and I bought most of my records directly from bands at shows. That whole DIY network was how people connected with new music back then.

AU: Why is maintaining a DIY ethic so important to Against All Authority?

DL: For us, maintaining a DIY ethic is about absolute control over our own direction. It's never just been a slogan; it's how we live. Three of us have literally owned and run record labels. We've spent our lives creating spaces for shows from scratch, writing for zines and playing in bands. To be honest, I don't even know how a punk band functions any other way. If you let outside forces dictate how you operate, you lose the essence of what you're trying to say.

AU: Any career highlights or lowlights to share?

DL: A definitive highlight was having a former Nazi skinhead show me his tattoos in the process of being covered up. He told me our song "No Reason" showed him how he'd been indoctrinated into hate, and he thanked me for writing it. Hearing that made me realize we'd accomplished everything I ever wanted to with this band. It doesn't get bigger than saving a life from hate.

AU: Any plans to release new music in the future?

DL: Yes. We've been slowly working towards a new full length. It's coming.

AU: Are you guys stoked to be playing at the Victoria Ska & Reggae Festival this year?

DL: Beyond stoked. We've played all over Eastern Canada but we've never made it out west—we've never even been north of Seattle. Victoria has been on our bucket list for a long time, so finally heading up there for this festival is a massive milestone for us.

AU: What drew you to the festival? Who else are you playing with on Friday, June 26th at the Victoria Curling Club?

DL: It's a festival we've wanted to do for a long time. We've had friends play it in the past, and they always came back talking about how amazing the energy is. So when the opportunity came up, we jumped on it. Sharing the stage on Friday, June 26th with Vic City Skins Soundsystem, Bad Cop/Bad Cop and Mean Bikini. It is going to be a wild night.

AU: You played at the Punk Rock Bowling Music Festival a few years ago. How was that show?

DL: Amazing. We played



a late night club show and the energy in the room was great.

AU: Who does your album art?

DL: That would be the amazing Omar Angulo. He's an incredible Miami-based artist who has been handling our artwork since our very first 7-inch, Above the Law, back in the early '90s. He's basically the visual architect of the band. Having that kind of long-term creative partnership is rare, and we love that he's been a part of the AAA family since day one.

AU: Any final words to share with us Canadians up here in our igloos?

DL: Things are heating up on our side of the border, so a Canadian igloo actually looks pretty good compared to the options this administration is handing us. Political madness aside, Western Canada has always bred incredible music. Bands like SNFU and D.O.A. are legendary to us. We're ready to bring the noise up north.

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Image of Mickey Moore on a skateboard wearing a skull t-shirt and purple shorts.

Image of a CD/DVD cover for 'Behind the Stars' by Mickey Moore, featuring a disco ball and the word 'SKATE'.



In the months that followed the team returned to the footage with a renewed sense of purpose to complete what we had started with Marvin.

This single is in support of the upcoming album *Weapons Of Mass Creation* dropping June 21st on Mo Gravy Records.

Weapons Of Mass Creation is a legacy album honouring the legendary Marvin "The Fly" Kee and his music as well as his contribution to funk and the local music community. This record is a collection of recordings from across

7 different studios that Marvin was working with. Although he did not get a chance to finish this record since his passing in 2023, his musical family has come together to finalize the project in his honour. This record means a lot to many people and showcases over 20 top-tier musicians, 5 amazing singers (known as the "Fly Girls"), a feature from legendary New York rapper Kool Keith, all put together around Marvin's personal brand of funk

which features "The Fly" on both guitar and bass.

Spearheaded by Linda Kee (Marvin's sister) and producer Evgeniy Bykovets (Sargeant X Comrade) the record is 3 years in the making and we are very excited to be finally releasing this project on Mo Gravy Records on June 21st, 2026

FLYTRAP BIO:

If there was a 'refresh' button for the Funk, it would be Flytrap.

Flytrap is the brainchild of Calgary, AB, Canada musician/songwriter The Fly (Marvin Kee). The Flytrap sound is a cunning combination of neo-soul, acid jazz, old school rap, all laid on a bed of groove, garnished with a dash of metal and a fistful of punk funk. 'The Fly', a seventies child, has drawn from the world of 'blaxploitation', erotica cinema, Bond films, and kung fu flicks, seamlessly fused to create a new and unique brand of Funk.

mogravymrecords.com

FLYTRAP RELEASES NEW SINGLE "STRAIGHT TO THE MOON"

A Funk Driven Cosmic Journey Honouring the Vision of Marvin "The Fly" Kee

Following renewed global excitement around lunar exploration sparked by NASA's Artemis II mission, Flytrap releases their new single and music video "Straight to the Moon" a smooth funk driven outer space experience rooted in the creative vision of Marvin "The Fly" Kee

The track features silky lunar vocals from Yolanda Sargeant of Sargeant X Comrade a super vibey trumpet solo from longtime Flytrap collaborator Ravi Poliah and live string recordings from Jonathan Lewis. Together the collaborators create a rich layered atmospheric soundscape that blends soul funk and cinematic textures into a single immersive cosmic journey

The idea for the video began in January 2023 when River at Notion Pictures approached the team with an opportunity to shoot using a VR camera. Without hesitation we decided to bring "Straight to the Moon" to life visually, beginning production just days after the New Year.

On March 13, 2023 just two days after a standout weekend in Edmonton during the JUNO Festival, Marvin lost his battle with cancer and passed away unexpectedly. His loss was deeply felt both personally and artistically.



LOUD QATHET RETURNS TO POWELL RIVER FOR THREE DAYS OF PUNK, METAL AND COMMUNITY

The qathet region will once again host one of British Columbia's most unique independent music festivals when loud qathet returns from August 20-22, 2026.

Now entering its latest edition, the three-day festival has developed a reputation for bringing together punk and metal artists whose music explores social, political and personal themes. At the same time, loud qathet remains firmly rooted in community, showcasing both touring acts and local musicians who have helped shape the

region's underground music scene.

One of the festival's most distinctive features is its location. Rather than taking place in a traditional concert venue, loud qathet is held at The Alley (Powered by Persephone Brewing Co.) on the main drag of the city currently known as Powell River in the qathet Region.

The unconventional setting has become part of the festival's identity, offering an intimate and memorable experience for performers and attendees alike.

This year's lineup features a diverse mix of established and emerging acts from across Western Canada, including Vancouver heavyweights BISON, punk favourites NEEDLES//PINS, hardcore outfit PUNITIVE DAMAGE, Cumberland's MEAN BIKINI, Victoria metal band HEDONIST, Franklin, Emma Goldman, Perra, Down The Lees, Pure Love Eternal Peace, Spring Breaks, and several local qathet bands including Little Pharmed, Electric Brains, Potential Union, Equals and DJ Full Bug.

Festival organizers continue to emphasize community involvement and local representation while bringing artists from across the province and beyond to the qathet region. The result is a weekend that blends touring talent

with the area's growing independent music scene.

Doors open at 5:00 p.m. each night, with performances taking place Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Organizers note be forewarned, they sold out quick last year and once the passes are gone, they're gone!

**loud qathet - All Ages
20-22 August
The Alley, Powell River
loudqathet.com**

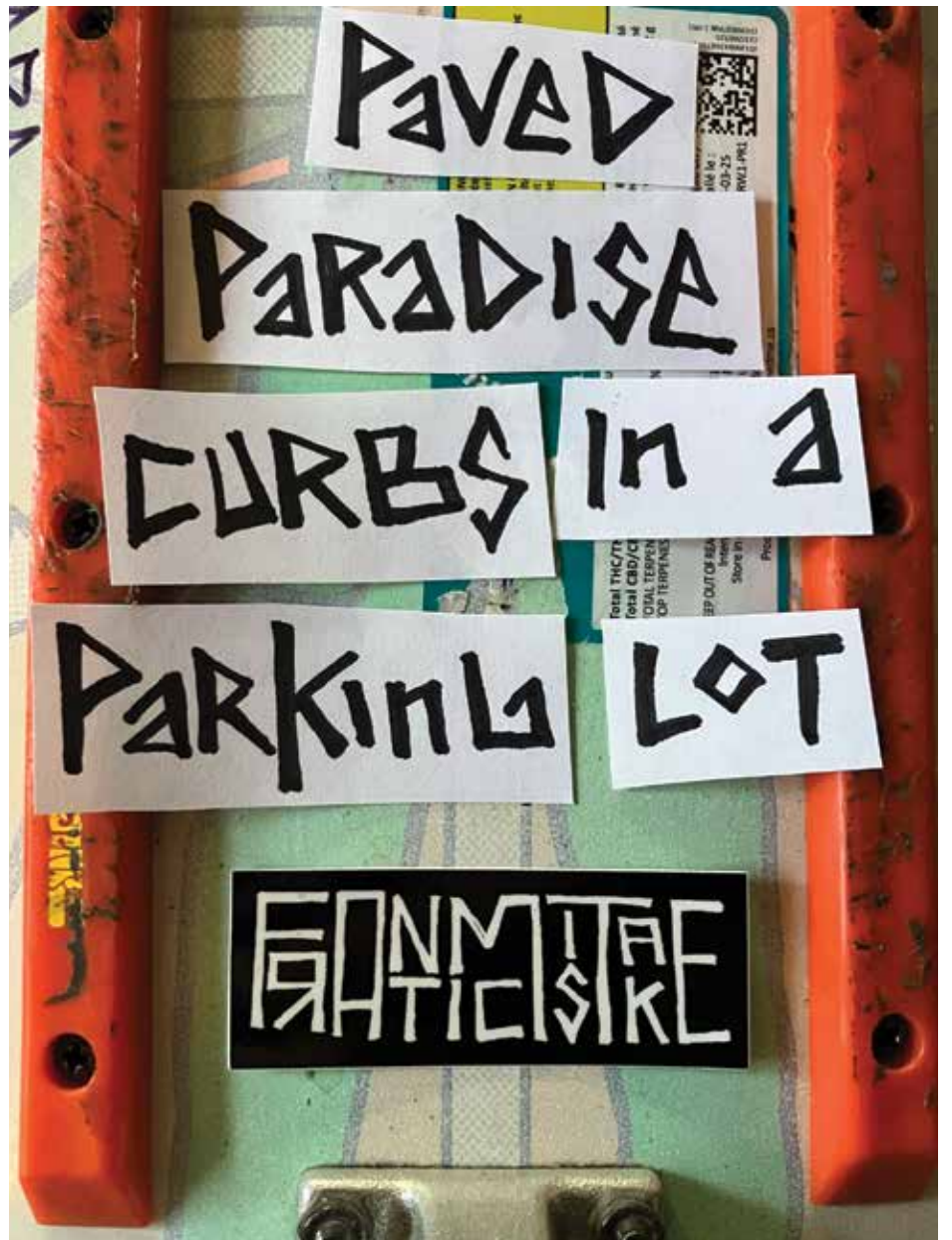

Stay tuned to *Absolute Underground* for post-festival coverage from loud qathet 2026.

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CN TOWER 50TH CELEBRATION

The CN Tower's grand opening in 1976 still standing tall today!

By Clark 'Super' Mantei

Hello, back to Toronto 1976 when the Canadian National Tower became the world's largest standing tower on Earth, 1815.5 feet tall, and I was there!

Dateline June 25, 1976 Toronto: My family lived in Scarborough and my parents took the kids to experience the grand opening of the legendary CN Tower.

It was exciting. We'd seen the buildup on the news for the entire time leading up to the final piece went into place at the very top using the legendary 'Olga' helicopter. Earlier in spring, my mom and I drove to a parking lot below and we witnessed the final piece secured at last. I was in awe. It was all over the news.

When the June 25th weekend issue in the *Toronto Star* hit the dining room table, I viewed it over and over and of course I kept it.

At the grand opening our family entered and we took the glass elevator to the Sky Pod. The glass elevator went 20 feet per second I still recall. The



floor on level one was all glass. Very unique. Big trucks worked on it, it was cool. The Sky Pod has many levels including a revolving restaurant.

The 'Space Deck' elevator has no viewing. We exited the capsule and upon entering the Space Deck for viewing, my mom's arms spread, clinging to the wall in nail scratching fear, as one could feel the swaying in the winds. This was a calm cloudy afternoon. Not to instill a height fear on her 37th birthday.

"Mom. Don't be scared. You're a stewardess" she eased off. This too was wild for a 9 year old spaced out kid like me. During the observation, it was cool to look down at the C.N.E where our family spent many days and nights. The view from above was incredible, which includes Lake Ontario.

We ate and then gift shopped. One moment I collected was a collectors program of the event. Once enjoyed, the two covers opened up and you could pop it up into a mini triangle CN Tower to display, standing about

18 inches tall. I still have it somewhere. I even searched (unsuccessfully) for it for this issue.

Fifty years later, on June 25th, my momma turns 87 and I am glad she is still here on Earth with us. Happy Birthday Mother Marilyn. I love you. <3 Lastly of all it was a wonderous time until we soared back down to Earth on the glass elevator capsule! Landed safely. A happy day. Thanks mom and dad for taking us three kids.

Dateline November 2023: I flew from west to back east across Canada to see KISS. (who canceled at the last moment sadly) It became 'The greatest concert that never happened', while that same day in Toronto I went back to the CN Tower.

I entered the zone of the tower and upon entering the elevator doors and once encapsulated I soared

back up to the viewing deck. It was everything I'd remembered. A

portion of the bottom viewing deck was closed. So I, being a reporter, found a 'no admittance employees only' door to the glass floor below. I looked around while looming to the silent sound of my sole surroundings. I enjoyed the entire experience and of course I recalled the family day way back when, in 1976. So wondrous it is for a 59 year old kid like me.

High times indeed.

Dateline May thru October 1986: Vancouver, BC hosted the world's fair and I was there as well working at the fair.

There was a cool grounds poster and well... I unearthed it for all to see.

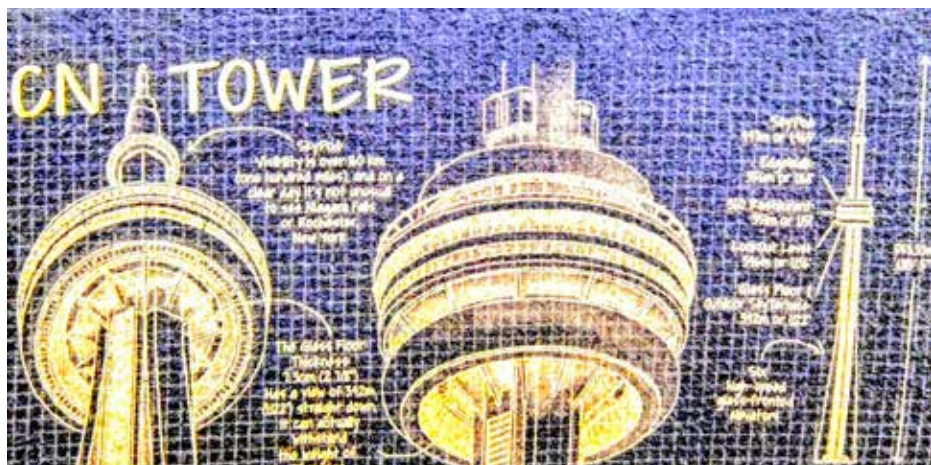
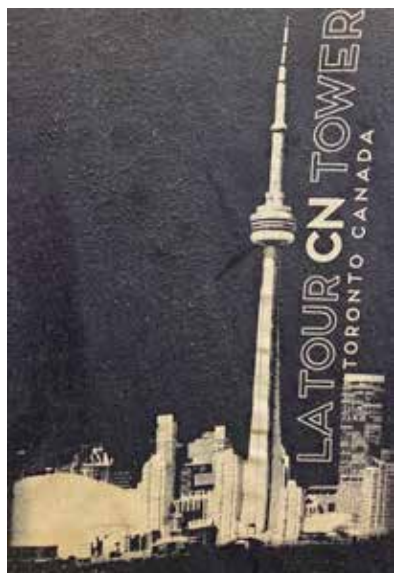
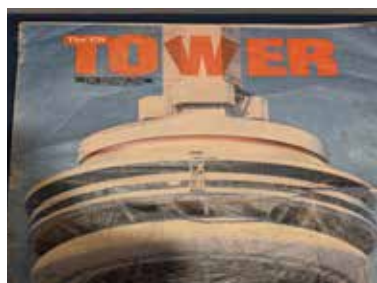


The next issue will be a full story of Expos entertainment. Concerts a plenty as I also worked at Phat Phil's restaurant just next door and the roller coaster on the other side. I will delve back into the moment.

Until then have a fun 2026 to one and all.

And remember... Rock out and Rrrroll on Peace and smile to a happy spring and summer to one and all.

Yours truly Clark 'Super' Mantei.



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BUDDIES FEST RETURNS TO TILLSONBURG FOR SECOND YEAR

Following its inaugural event in 2025, Buddies Fest 2 is scheduled in Tillsonburg, Ontario, from August 7-9, 2026. The independent music festival will once again take over several venues in the community, bringing together artists from across the punk, alternative, roots, country, and rock spectrums.

Hosted at The Mill Inn & Eatery and Paddy's Underground, Buddies Fest has carved out a niche by pairing a diverse lineup of established and emerging artists with the atmosphere of a small-town gathering. This year's festival features an eclectic roster that includes ALL (featuring members of Descendents), Wheatus, Ben Nichols, Cory Branan, Chixdiggit!, Tommy Stinson of The Replacements, Drag The River, The OBGMs, Rusty, The Anti-Queens, Kepi Ghoulie, Fuzzed Out (featuring Patrick Pentland of Sloan) and Ultrabomb, whose lineup includes members associated with Hüsker Dü and Soul Asylum.

The festival's main outdoor stage will be located behind

The Mill Inn & Eatery, while Paddy's Underground will host a secondary club stage throughout the weekend. Organizers have also scheduled late-night aftershows at The Copper Mug, providing additional opportunities for attendees to experience live music beyond the main festival programming.

While the lineup is a significant draw, Buddies Fest has also become known for its emphasis on community and accessibility. The event offers music fans the chance to experience performances in relatively intimate settings

while exploring the restaurants, businesses and hospitality that have made Tillsonburg a destination for visitors from across Southwestern Ontario.

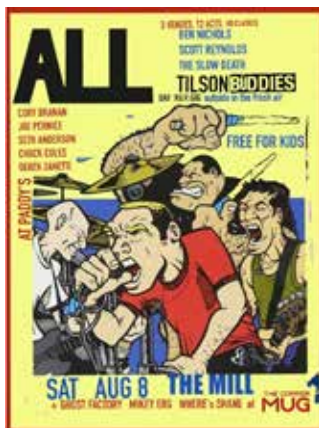
Festival organizers describe the event as an opportunity to bring people together through music while highlighting the character of the local community. That combination of live entertainment and small-town atmosphere has helped Buddies Fest establish itself as a growing fixture on Ontario's summer festival calendar.

Buddies Fest 2 is an all-ages, licensed event. Children under 10 years of age will be admitted free when accompanied by an adult.

BUDDIES FEST 2 - ALL AGES
August 7-9, 2026

The Mill Inn & Eatery & Paddy's Underground, Tillsonburg, ON
Aftershows: The Copper Mug

For tickets, accommodation information, lineup updates, and additional festival details, visit buddiesfest.com



LOUD AS HELL OPEN AIR FESTIVAL 2026 ANNOUNCES MASSIVE LINEUP

Get ready, Alberta: Canada's most punishing metal festival returns this summer with three days of camping, chaos and carnage.

From July 31 to August 2, 2026, the Loud As Hell Open Air Festival will erupt in Drumheller, AB, at the Dinosaurs Down Stampede, delivering its 14th edition of extreme music, freak shows, burlesque acts, clinics, vendors—and yes, dinosaurs. Set against the rugged beauty of Alberta's badlands,

where towering hoodoos and sweeping canyons dominate the horizon, the festival promises a weekend of unrelenting sonic assault.

This year's 2026 lineup features some of the most electrifying names in progressive and technical death metal, including Fallujah, Allegaeon, Summoning the Lich, Gravemass, Crimson Shadows, Edge of Paradise, Starkill, Super Monster Party, Mourning High, Hog Meets Frog, and many more.

Headlining opening night, Summoning the Lich leads the first wave of performances, bringing their fantasy-driven technical death metal to the stage from St. Louis, MO.

Headlining night two, Allegaeon delivers a blend of technical precision and melodic structure, anchored by the return of original vocalist Ezra Haynes.

Headlining the closing night of the festival, Fallujah closes the weekend with material drawn from their sixth studio album Xenotaph (2025, Nuclear Blast Records), expanding their sci-fi-driven progressive death metal direction.

With its mix of Canadian and international extreme acts, scenic camping, and full-throttle festival chaos, Loud As Hell Open Air Festival 2026 continues its run as a major gathering for metal fans in Western Canada.

Weekend Passes (July 31–Aug 2) Grant Full Access To All Headbanging, Moshing and Festival Mayhem, available at: loudashell.ca/shop

LoudAsHell.ca

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SMOKIN' ACRES 2026 - MUSICIANS AGAINST CANCER!

By Duane Chaos

The Southern Vancouver Island Event features great bands, good food and a ton of fun for a cause.

For those of you who love a multigenerational and multi-genre music experience, you must consider Smokin' Acres 2026 events. *Absolute Underground* caught up with event-organizer Joe Liberatore to get the dirt on music to mess with cancer.

AU: Hi Joe and thank you for your time today. For our readers who are not familiar with Smokin' Acres Music Events, can you give us the skinny?

Joe: Thank you for having me and "yes". Smokin' Acres is a "twice-yearly" event featuring the best local bands and artists on an outdoor stage right on the Sooke River. The event has grown substantially in recent years and offers a full, outdoor-concert feel with a light show, lasers, great food, beverages, a bar and of course the amazing talent of local bands.

The 2026 events are June 13 at 2860 Sooke River road on Vancouver Island and the second one (September) will be announced shortly.

AU: Joe, having been to past events, we were amazed at the musical mashups and diversity of attendees. Can you please tell us what the inspiration for the event was?

Joe: I've been involved with Western Speedway since 1989 and prior, my family has been involved with telethon fundraising since I was an early

child. It just seemed like an easy fit for me to try to see if I could raise money and make a difference. The money raised goes directly to Cops for Cancer, which also does cycling events. Since not everyone rides a bike long distances, we offer an amazing event for those who live for rock and roll and BBQs in a party environment.

AU: At previous events, you've had music ranging from many genres. What are the lineups for the June 13th show and why is diversity important?

Joe: We bring both cover acts and original artists covering many genres. For the June, 2026 event, the lighter side is a "Trilogy of Crows" who perform acoustic covers and we also have Heavy Metal bands like Rock City Riot doing a Judas Priest tribute show. The diversity offers a contrast that amplifies the opposite senses (hard vs soft, loud vs quiet, distortion vs acoustic etc). It brings out the highs and lows in energy waves.

AU: How much money have you raised for cancer in the previous events and what does it get used for?

Joe: At least six figures have been raised in the past and each show seems to raise more. The money is used for research into new cancer treatment technologies. What I love is it offers people

a chance to eat, drink, dance, be entertained, camp (by advanced permission) on the property and all the profits go to a great cause.

AU: We interview many bands/artists and many have a direct connection losing somebody they love to cancer. Is this why they play and donate all of the proceeds towards the cause?

Joe: Some of our artists have cancer survivors in their immediate family and they feel strongly about the desire to give more to help. People

who survive the scourge of cancer tend to be very humble when they emerge on the other side. Things that were important to them before, like clothes, jewelry etc., all take a second place to the joy of being alive. I believe the musicians see and recognize the significance of this. Not one musician has asked for money and it is the event they unanimously support.

AU: For any readers interested in attending in 2026, what is the process?

Joe: On Facebook, search for group: "SMOKIN 2026 Good Times For A Good Cause" (no "G" on

smokin) and follow the directions to join. Those interested in supporting the event financially can find donation information there as well.

AU: Thank you very much for your time today, Joe! We wish you and your events the best of luck in the future.

SMOKIN' ACRES - MUSICIANS AGAINST CANCER!

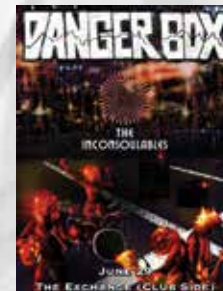
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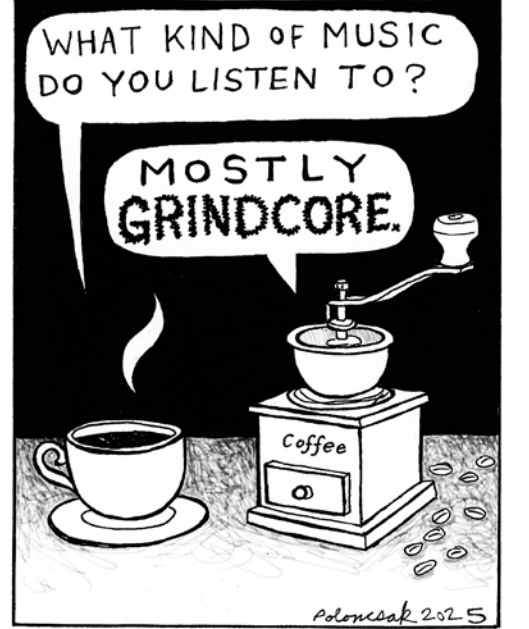


-DICK KAUFF '26

Later in June and somewhere out of cell range...



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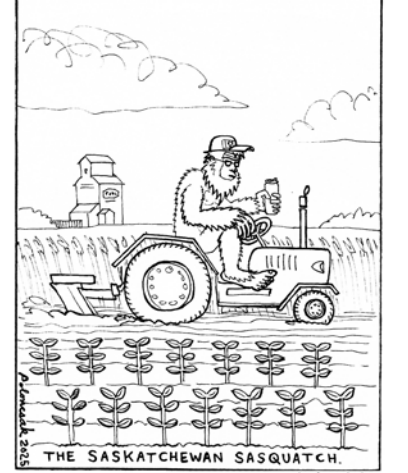
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Absolute Album Reviews

ARCHSPIRE – Too Fast to Die

Release Date: April 10, 2026
Self-Released

The Apex of Vancouver Extreme Metal

Hailing from Vancouver, B.C., Archspire has pursued a singular mission since 2009: to define the word "extreme." With their latest offering, *Too Fast to Die*, they have once again raised the bar for the technical death metal genre.

Vocalist Oliver Rae Aleron famously describes the band's unhinged energy as being "like a bit of meth in your cigarette." It's an apt comparison; the sheer velocity of their sound often leaves listeners struggling to find the words to describe what they've just experienced.

LINEUP: Oliver Rae Aleron – Vocals
Dean Lamb – Guitars
Tobi Morelli – Guitars
Jared Smith – Bass
Spencer Moore – Drums

TRACK-BY-TRACK BREAKDOWN: As a longtime fan who has seen Archspire live numerous times (and proudly wears the merch), I went into this record with high expectations. Here is how the chaos unfolds:

"Liminal Cypher" - The opening track begins with an unusually slow tempo before "punching you in the face" with the trademark speed boost the band is known for. Every instrument is played at a lightning-fast pace, yet unlike many of their contemporaries, Archspire manages to keep the carnage genuinely enjoyable.

"Red Goliath" - Track two maintains that initial intensity but finds a groove, blending extreme vocal delivery with a tempo that makes headbanging unavoidable.

"Carrion Ladder" - This track starts with a technical shift so bizarre I

actually checked my player to see if something was wrong. However, once the drums kicked in and the tempo stabilized, it became clear: this is a masterclass in the "Stay Tech" philosophy.

"Anomalous Descent", "The Vessel", and "Limb of Leviticus" - This mid-album trio keeps the momentum surging. The songwriting is remarkably tight, and the intensity remains off the charts throughout.

"Deadbolt the Backward" and "Too Fast to Die" - The final two tracks provide a thunderous conclusion to the release, cementing the band's status as titans of the technical death metal scene.

Final Verdict: I might be slightly biased as a fan, but I genuinely struggled to find a single flaw in this release. It is a relentless, well-crafted, and technically flawless journey. If you have a taste for high-velocity extreme music, this is an essential addition to your playlist.

Rating: 10/10

— Stan Schinners, Broken Neck Radio. brokenneckradio.com

WARRIOR SOUL – Chill Pill

Kory Clarke still carries the damn flag for being the true rebel, the shunned outcast of hair metal and grunge, but a true fuckin icon to the fans. *Chill Pill* was a direct Middle finger to the record industry resulting in the band being dropped from Geffen records. The album could have been their answer to the new styles of hard rock and metal, instead Kory Clarke fought the system that he needed so badly to become the rockstar he could have been. The *Chill Pill* album is perfect and if the label had marketed it beside albums like FNM'S *Angel Dust*, it would have become famous. They didn't want to sound like poison or Winger or Nirvana so

they got booted. This album is hard rock, punk and psychedelic sleaze. It's alternative and political and it's on my list of bands you need to check out from the past that just missed the mark. With three albums released in three years this was a band on a roll, they still exist but are now basically a small time bar band, not getting their deserved credit. Their new albums are good but the first three warrior Soul albums rule. Kory Clarke Still carries the flag and rocks hard. Check them out.

— Matt Norris

MISERY FEEDBACK – Pass the Wine and Hail Satan

From Vancouver, musician/producer Ryan Fisher plays every instrument and handles all the recordings for this flashback to 90s alternative vibes and protest art punk. Picture me at Lollapalooza 1998 giving away LSD. I did that so we could watch bands like this rock out, and we could trip hard enjoying the hell out of it. Fuzzy guitars and simple solid drum beats on "Shades of Grey" are a perfect backdrop to the world today regardless of having vibes from the past. I tell you if I turned on the radio and heard this I wouldn't shut it off, I'd turn it up super loud. To be a solo artist and to play every instrument is no small task, and I want to say he did a splendid job, everything is exactly where it should be. Just enough noise, just enough melody, just enough rock drumming, and just enough anger along with layered bass and guitars it's brilliant. Please take the time and give Misery Feedback a listen and if you are in the Vancouver area, he's looking for a band to bring this vision to the stage. So with that said, I hope to see them LIVE soon.

— Matt Norris

LEGION OF DECADENCE – No Road left to Burn

From Quebec, this is the 6th incredible album since forming in 2006. Album opener, "At The Dusk Of Time" is progressive metal at its finest. It's immediate that the musicians involved are bursting with energy and heartfelt talent. 7:14 of just brilliant artistry and endless riffs, perfect solos. Singer Karine Gagnon gives the band an extra awesome element with powerful female vocals and inspirational emotion. The song "Stranger/Danger" (track 2) is another super long, super dynamic musical masterpiece. Every musician is seriously oozing with awesome talent. It's metal and it's jazz, it's creative and it's brilliant. The bass on this is fuckin killer. This song and band seriously must make other bands jealous, Wow. It's like Rush mixed with Dream Theatre but with better vocals. Did I mention musically next level? Yeah, the drummer rules and has chops forever. This is complex music yet listenable and head bangle as well as trippy. Every song is unique and every song shows dedication to their individual instruments. I'm not kissing ass, this is reality. If you want to hear a band that has integrity and passion, listen to Legion Of Decadence - *No Road Left To Burn*. Buy it. I'm going to for sure. Great great band.

— Matt Norris

CRONOS – Dancing In The Fire

Cherry Red Records

Now this is an important re-release! *Dancing In The Fire* would have been the 6th (66) Venom studio album, and, indeed, demos of these songs were recorded with Abaddon on drums.

However, while guitarist Mantas was absent from the underrated *Calm Before The Storm* album, Mantas and Abaddon then got back together as Venom for the *Prime Evil* album. So *Dancing In The Fire* came out under the Cronos banner, which is a shame because had it gone out under the Venom moniker, it would have gotten the attention it richly deserves. For *Dancing In The Fire* is an excellent album. The title track, "Fantasia", "Vampyr", "Hell To The Unknown" and "Painkiller", are easily the equal of anything Venom produced in their classic line-up era, albeit with superior production. Cover versions of Thin Lizzy's "Bad Reputation" and Venom's "At War With Satan", while competently done, are pointless and the band would have been better served with two original songs. But overall, it's a fine album, and testament to what Venom could have achieved, but due to endless line-up changes and infighting, didn't. But their influence remains eternal.

— Steve Earles

VOIVOD – Symphonique

Century Media



Over the years there have been several examples of heavy metal bands performing with a live orchestra, often with dire results. Deep Purple's turgid and uninspiring 'Concerto For Group And Orchestra' is a good case in point, here, the orchestra and band clearly have no empathy for each other and what you have is the worst of both worlds. Whereas, with Voivod's outstanding 'Symphonique', the integration of group and orchestra is harmonious and complete, creating a strange and beautiful new dimension in Voivod's music. This is a wonderful innovative performance, just what the world needs right now!

Oh my goodness, the Quebec Symphony Orchestra are the perfect foil to Voivod's cosmic space metal, bringing a spiritual bright dimension to Voivod's songs, creating a sonic alchemy, a once-and future sound, timeless, endless, always full of hope, mystery and joy!

Voivod were always light years ahead of everyone else in predicting the future. 'Tribal Convictions' is about blind faith in technology, in tech becoming our god and master, even though we don't understand it. "Have no idea... what it is. But have no fear... we trust it."

This is the soundtrack album to a better future!

— Steve Earles

TIL THE END - Dark Kings EP



TIL THE END EU/USA launch *Dark Kings* EP with a sharp introductory tone "Higher And Beyond" — a call into some battle territory between rock's pulse and metal's shadow. The riff circles, rough-edged and restless, until the whole band steps in and the ground begins to shake.

The vocals are stormy gritty, offering a raw contrast to the polished melodic solo that arrives midway through. These musicians sound like they lived many musical lives.

Then comes "Sip Of Sadness" which erupts like a sudden wind, wild and merciless, before shifting into a slower, more atmospheric section featuring clean guitars, steady kick drum and whispered vocals. The distortion returns, heavy as dusk, dragging the tempo into deeper lyrics. This song deserves another listen before the journey continues.

If this is the band's first EP, then we'd better get ready — because what's coming next could be enormous!

The playing is razor-sharp, the songwriting hits hard with confidence and the production is top-tier. Their future looks bright open! And imagine how these tracks must sound live! The energy alone would probably level the room. One last thing... the band's logo reads like "TIL THE END". Obviously, it's a clever touch and we will listen to them... Til The End!

Three years a band and already have conquered the stages in Europe and USA!

Get ready for their 3rd tour ... this time around Europe!

— Ulysses

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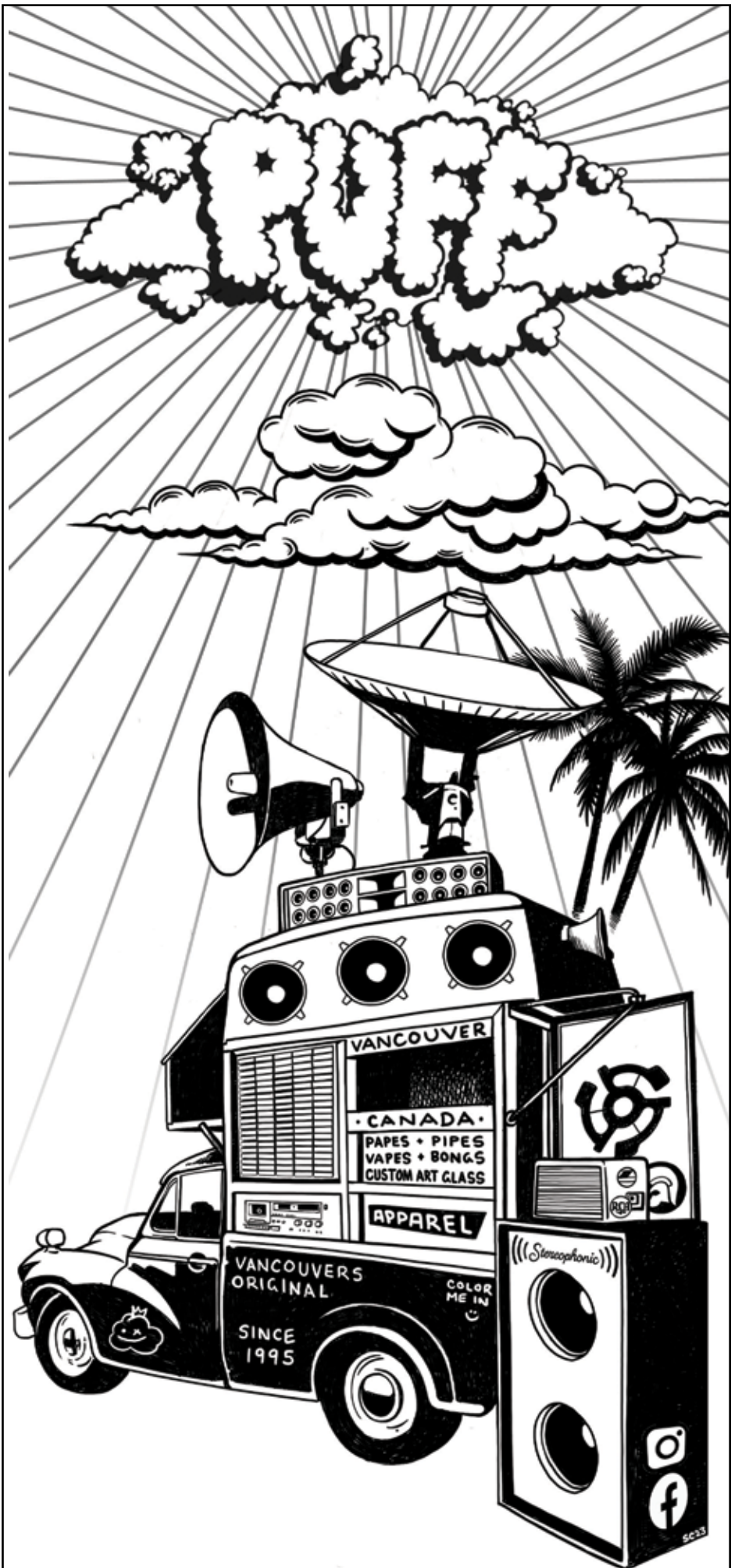
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Absolute Film Reviews



MOCKBUSTER

Everybody knows *Sharknado* but the rest of The Asylum's films haven't quite made a cultural impact and whenever I see the cover and title for one, I generally avoid watching it. They are usually Z-grade copies of much bigger



films and compared to other smaller horror or sci fi studios, there isn't much appealing to me. Less gore. Less sex. For rethinks, if it's *War of the Worlds*, for example, it's just a shittier version of *War of the Worlds*. Essentially, there are no groundbreaking ideas to keep the content really interesting as compared to similar studios like Troma or Full Moon.

This brings us to *Mockbuster*, in which Anthony Frith, a wannabe director from Adelaide, Australia

(who seems to be a genre fan judging by his *Toxic Avenger* shirt) emails Asylum asking to direct a film and they immediately agree. This allows the director, and the audience, to see firsthand what it's like making an Asylum feature. The twist is, he only has six days to make it (not counting special effects, which would be added in post production). It seems like an impossible task,

but that's just how Asylum rolls, showing that yes, indeed, you can direct an adaptation of *The Land That Time Forgot* (which is currently at 2.5/10 on IMDB) in just a few days if you have the drive and the balls. The Asylum certainly does, being efficient in making the impossible possible, like Ed Wood level resilience as a film studio itself.

With Frith, Asylum got a double deal - the first feature of theirs directed by an Australian, and a behind the scenes documentary on the making of an Asylum film. Perhaps more would-be directors will be future Asylum collaborators based on how easy it seems to be to work with them. Maybe that was their goal all along with this.

— Ryan Dyer

versions of the self running amok, with the original version trying to make sense of the madness and hope that all can be solved before too much goes wrong. Who is the real imposter if we are all the same entity? An existential mindfuck if there ever was one.

— Ryan Dyer



BLACK ZOMBIE

The zombie arrived in cinema through *White Zombie*, where the undead were depicted not as flesh-eating monsters, but as enslaved bodies under supernatural control. The documentary *Black Zombie*, directed by Maya Annik Bedward, examines this origin story and unpacks it, tracing the literature that inspired such films, the evolution into flesh-eating zombies through *Night of the Living Dead*, and the misunderstandings surrounding Haiti and Vodou that these early depictions helped cultivate.

Blame much of it on sensationalism. *The Magic Island* by William Seabrook (which the film presents as featuring the first use of the word "zombie") helped popularize the concept in American culture and inspired *White Zombie* after Seabrook claimed he had seen zombies laboring in a sugar field. Whether they were literal zombies or not was of little concern to filmmakers. Likewise, *The Serpent and the Rainbow* by Wade Davis, later adapted into film by Wes Craven, contributed to depicting Haiti as a cinematic nightmare.

Black Zombie features interviews with scholars such as Tananarive Due and Haitian Vodou priests, even taking aim at popular distortions

like Baron Samedi. The result functions as both a compelling history of zombie cinema and Black representation within it, while also setting the record straight about Vodou and Haiti, making a fitting double feature with *Horror Noire*.

— Ryan Dyer

EPIC: ELVIS PRESLEY IN CONCERT

In this Elvis biopic the King is played by Austin Butler. Butler seems to capture the King's essence well enough. I guess I would have preferred a straight documentary though Butler is up there with the great Elvis impersonators.

One of the curiosities of the film is trying to figure out where Elvis ends and Butler begins as the film takes a blended approach. Mixing actual Elvis footage and singing with Butler's canny acting. Truthfully, as I'm not the biggest Elvis fan, the actor pulls off the illusion for me, but someone who is a hardcore fan of Elvis may feel different.

The movie is half narrative, half Elvis musical. A couple of reflections here. A couple shots of "concert footage" from a great performer there.

It's an interesting concept that, in my view, needed an editor to give it a clearer direction. When you're getting into the storyline, songs start to interrupt... When you're getting into the songs another snippet of song comes along or some unconnected narrative.

Random.

Apparently, the director, Baz Luhrmann, follows this style to create interesting sensory experiences. It's reminiscent of 70's experimental Dennis Miller. If you're looking for a storyline, you will be all shook up. If you're looking for an avant-garde Elvis Presley slice of life: thank you, thank you very much.

— Luke Lester

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Absolute Film & Graphic Novel Reviews

ERASERHEADS COMBO ON THE RUN



Now playing at select theaters across North America

For a band often called the Beatles of the Philippines, the *Eraserheads* have cemented a legacy few will forget. Director Maria Diane Ventura's *Eraserheads Combo on the Run* gives them a rare chance to set the record straight in their own words, tracing the arc from university kids at UP Diliman in 1989 to the defining voice of a Filipino generation. The details that she tracks shows their rise to fame, where they stood as artists, and their legacy, leading up to their reunion concert back in 2022. And the look back is quiet, following the EDSA People Power Revolution back when they formed and had something to say.

But instead of calling for change, they turned into writing songs about love, friendship, and student life. Any messages they would publicly make, however hidden they were, were ultimately questioned when called to parliament, and thankfully that has its place too in this documentary. Producer Raymond Mangune puts it plainly: "It's about being a Filipino. There are people like me in the Philippines, and the Philippines is in everyone's heart."

One of the smarter threads the film pulls on is how deliberately the band pushed against creative stagnation. Tracks like "Pare Ko" weren't accidents. Adoro is clear on screen that disappointing their audience was never an option, and songs like "Para sa Masa" carry a real point of view even if not every listener caught it.

There's also an honest stretch about commercialization. Management pushed product placements, movies, tie-ins. The group resisted. Ventura, who has real personal history with this story, knows exactly which threads to pull without unravelling the whole thing.

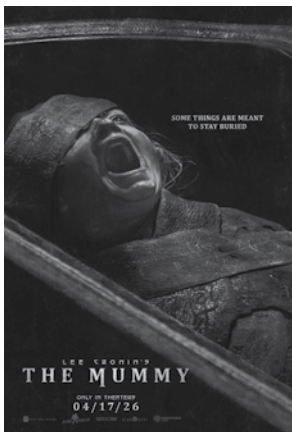
Part of what makes the music hold up is how widely it travels. Actor Alden Richards speaks to it directly, and theatre performer Jamie Wilson goes further: "It speaks to you no matter what social class you are, what kind of upbringing you had, what kind of life you're having." As a casual fan, I couldn't help but want to learn more, and this documentary delivers. But *Combo on the Run* isn't sentimental. It's a recognition of who Ely Buendia, Raymund Marasigan, Marcus Adoro, and Buddy Zabala are and why their legacy endures.

— Ed Sum

LEE CRONIN'S THE MUMMY

Lee Cronin's *The Mummy* sits in an unusual place. It isn't wholly inspired by Ancient Egyptian mythology, and it's not really a continuation of the *Evil Dead* franchise either. When the spirit possessing Katie (Natalie Grace) doesn't even hail from this world, you have to wonder why Cronin called this film *The Mummy* at all. And the entity known as the Nasmaranian? That name sounds like it belongs in a Sam Raimi picture, not one rooted in the Two Lands.

Strip away the cosmology and the terrors feel more Arabic than truly Kemet. We're not given enough time to feel the weight of the parents' love for Katie before the horror kicks in, so her kidnapping



never lands the way it should. Years pass, the family relocates to New Mexico, resigned to never finding their youngest daughter, only to discover she's alive. What they bring home is a terror waiting to tear the Cannon family apart.

What remains is a half-told story about cultists desperate to stop an entity from gaining power. The Magician (Hayat Kamille) leads a group convinced that mummifying young souls is the only way to contain it. I initially assumed the kidnapping was connected to something larger, namely the drought conditions near the Nile that reporter Charlie Cannon (Jack Reynor) keeps flagging. Sacrificing a soul to incite Sobek to raise the Nile's waters would have been a welcome angle. But this film is more interested in torture than in resolving its own hints.

When the embalming ritual is finally explained, it has no connective tissue to anything familiar. Those bandages traditionally carry protection spells to guide a soul into the Afterlife. Reversing that idea entirely will have Egyptologists crying foul, and honestly, I'm ready to smack my head.

What Cronin gets most right is treating the curse like a disease. Open the coffin and the plague corrupts everyone nearby, with no way to put the demons back. The

creature reads more like an Ifrit than a Mummy, and if that's the case, this film would have been better served by owning that identity rather than raising expectations it can't meet.

At least the director understood one uncomfortable truth. After the Arab conquest of 641 CE, nothing in Egypt was ever the same. Unleashing what was locked away is exactly like opening Pandora's box, and no one here seems equipped to close it.

3 Stars out of 5
— Ed Sum

KING COBRA

Illustrated by Ron Smith
Published by Hibernia/Red Dagger



Hibernia Books have established a well-deserved reputation for republishing excellent British comics of yesteryear with their *Fleetway Files*. Now, with their new *Red Dagger* imprint, they break new ground, beginning to republish work from the significant archives of D.C. Thomsen, a long established British comics publisher of over many decades.

King Cobra began publication in the weekly comic *The Hotspur* in 1976, and it is significant on two levels. Firstly, it was one of the first

attempts in British comics to do a superhero story set in the UK. Thus, *King Cobra* ticks off many superhero tropes, secret identity, powers derived from a special suit, character driven by the death of a parent. Secondly, Ron Smith's art is unique. He is a fabulous storyteller, one of the all-time greats. Sadly, the identity of the writer of *King Cobra* is not known as it was not customary to give creator credits on UK comics in those days, this practice changed thanks to Kevin O'Neill.

Great credit is due to publisher David McDonald. I look forward to future *Red Dagger* releases showcasing the work of such greats as Dave Gibbons and Carlos Esquerra.

— Steve Earles

THE ONLY FAN



What does early sexual trauma actually produce? Not a single outcome, but often a pattern. Cycles of damage, control, and attempted reclamation. When it originates within the family, those cycles become harder to break and are often even harder to even recognize. C. Lupin doesn't answer this question, though does show us the result of such trauma in *The Only Fan*. Inspired by real life instances, though not an autobiographical novel, it depicts a protagonist named Nikita who goes in and

out of acceptance stages of sexual abuse by older men (some familial members) which leads to her taking control of her autonomy, changing her name to Mystique, only to be manipulated some more in a very Requiem for a Dream type scenario. It all comes to a breaking point where enough is enough and it's time for violence.

Throughout the book there are chapters devoted to nightmares the character is having, which to me represent this trauma being unresolved and festering subconsciously, beneath the surface. A house full of spiders, for example, was a very vivid example of something you feel is your home, but can never feel comfortable in.

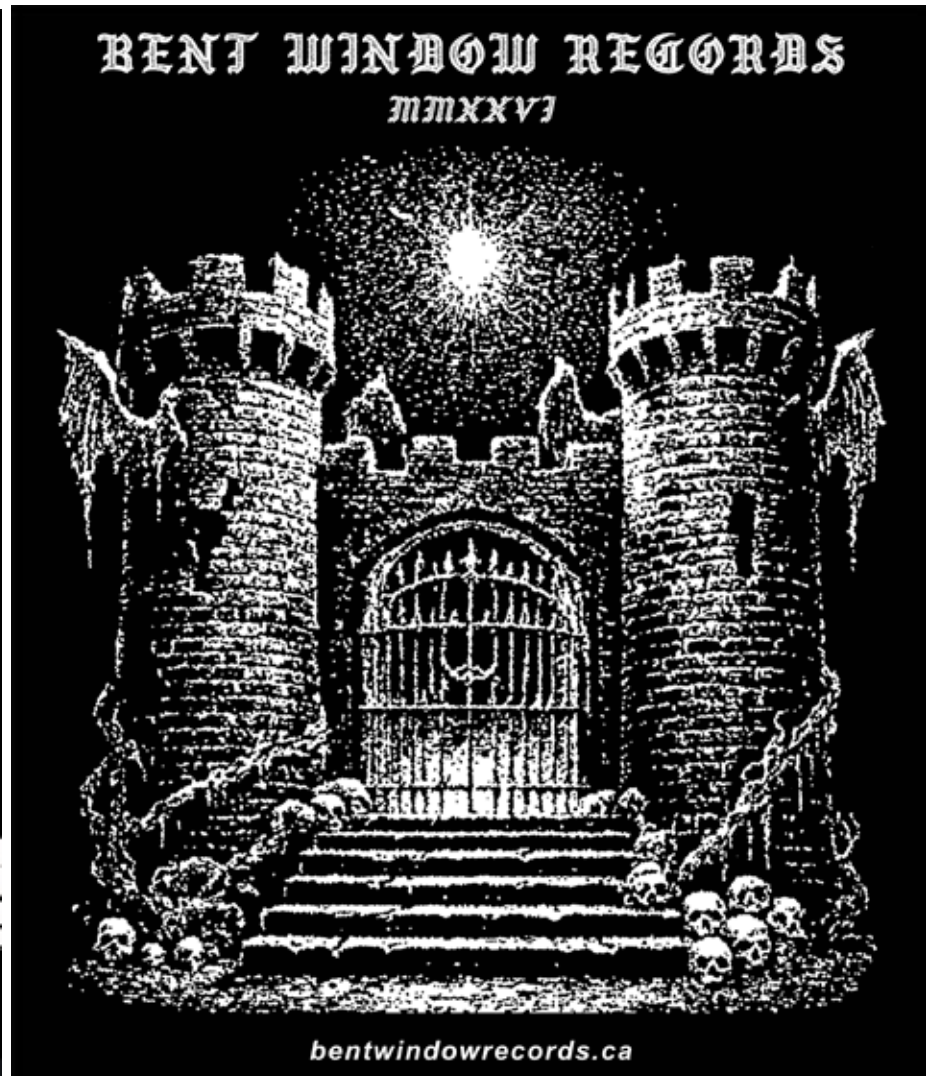
Lupin does not shy away from graphic sexual content, including taboo situations that bring the moral compasses of the characters deeper into the drain, such as scenes of rape and bestiality. This is all forewarned in the beginning of the book. This type of content may turn off some readers, but *The Only Fan* wouldn't be the same without it. Don't say she didn't warn you. A daring first novel from Lupin that treats trauma and victimhood through contradiction rather than resolution.

— Ryan Dyer

JUNJI ITO - THE LIMINAL ZONE (VOL. 2)

In the second edition of *The Liminal Zone*, we have the coolly named "Village of Ether" depicting coldly mechanical perpetual motion machines (as shown on the cover) which make things come to life in an unlively way akin to *GYO*. The Bizarre Hikizuri Siblings make an appearance as well, resurrecting their weirdo uncle who likes to say "Karma." "Demon King of Dust" and "The Shells of Manjunuma" are unnerving enough but somewhat forgettable in the grand scheme of Junji Ito stories. Ito even admits in the ending blurb of this book that he's running out of ideas, however, like all horror greats, there is always something mucky and unnerving on the bottom of the thought-to-be-dry well.

— Ryan Dyer



Absolute Snacks Reviews

QUAKER Crispy Minis Magic Masala Rice Cakes

I've noticed that Masala is the "it" flavour this season. I've seen it showing up on both potato and corn chips, as well as crackers, and now rice cakes.



I opened up my bag of these and in the other room my wife exclaimed "Oh god, one of the dogs just farted!"

Normally I get 200 words for each of these reviews, but in this case, I think her single sentence really does my job. They don't taste bad, but they do smell like a dog's fart.

SWEETHEARTS Conversations Hearts



We've seen these around since we were children. They smell like chalk and taste even worse. However, if you're lucky, the wisdom found inscribed into these odd little semi-edible rocks can change your life and open your mind to enticing new possibilities.

Like the one that I got most recently was a piece of pale pink gravel which read "LOOK OUT BEHIND YOURSELF, SOMEBODY HAS BEEN WATCHING YOU FOR SEVERAL DAYS NOW."

When I turned about, sure enough, there she was. Seven feet tall, clad entirely in matte black battlegear, nostrils angrily snorting steam like a packhorse in deep snow. My backward glance gave me just enough time to evade her attack, ducking swiftly beneath the crystalline sword she brandished like a conductor's baton. She took the tip of my foremost mohawk spike, while the majority of my mind and soul escaped unscathed.

These are terrible candies, and nobody really wants them, but if

they can spare you some psychic and physical damage, maybe they're still worth it. I got mine from the downtown Dollarama, the one with the handsome security guard who never seems to relax around me.

DORITOS Ultimate Garlic Parm

Who asked for this? Seriously, raise your hand, or send in an email, if you asked for Ultimate Garlic Parm Doritos.



These plain yellow bags just showed up on the shelves with the words "New Flavour" emblazoned across the top right corner of the bag. That's where I get caught up. Not "temporary flavour," not "limited time flavour". New Flavour. That implies these are here to stay.

Doritos has this library of previous and temporary flavours that are constantly being asked for, from traditional Taco to the newer Taco Supreme, or some of the funkier entries like Guacamole, and Cheeseburger. Do you know how badly I'd love to be able to get Guac Doritos as regularly as Cool Ranch? Can you even imagine such a world?

Instead, we get Ultimate Garlic Parm. I don't even know what the hell a Parm is. Short for Parmesan? Well then why not just say that? And what the hell is a Parmesan? Some kind of rodent?

In terms of taste, I thought these were actually pretty good, in that they're a more subtle flavour, not the agonizingly over-spiced tongue-blasters forced on us so often these days.

But I still don't understand why they're here.

OLD DUTCH Popcorn Twists Salted Toffee

I don't know who bought these. They just showed up in my house.



I ate one. A single one. In the moment I thought it was sweet; maybe too sweet. A sort of tart aftertaste.

But the next thing I knew I was standing there in the kitchen, throwing literal fistfuls of the things down my throat, bypassing my teeth as they melted into liquid goo across the surface of my tongue, sliding down my throat like a slippery, oil-coated eel.

Back when weed was illegal and I still had a "drug-dealer" named Sal, I recall that upon a request he could acquire cocaine, but he preferred to not keep a selling supply of the stuff in his house, as the risk was just too great that he'd wind up getting into it.

That's how I feel about these goddamn things.

They taste fine, but something about that specific chemical combination has me gulping them down like my dog gobbling up fresh goose poop.

It's a predilection that verges on addiction. Some special blend of flavours and textures coming together to create a substance you don't even like, but can't stop eating.

Keep them the hell away from me.

THE IRON BOWL OF CHIPS from The Faceless Mother

She finds you.

She takes you by your hand. You follow.

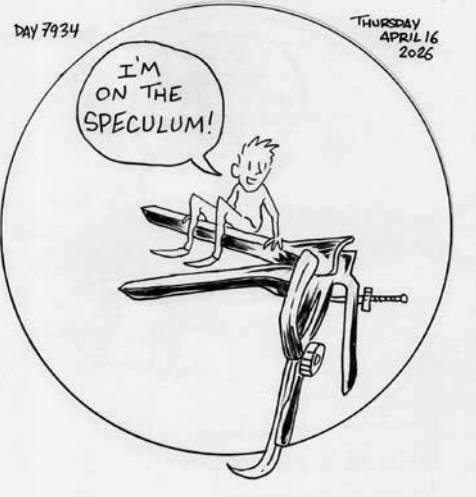
She is like your mother, but she is not your mother. Her skin does not sit right upon her bones.

You look at her face, but you cannot see her face. But that's good, you think. You don't want to see her face, you think.

You are in her home. This is not the home you grew up in. This is a quiet space, so quiet it makes your ears ring and your head feel heavy.

She gives you chips in a heavy iron bowl. The metal is rough against your hands. The chips taste like nothing. But that's okay. You don't want them to taste like anything. You prefer them to not taste like anything.

You do not want to eat these chips, but you know that when they are



done, this woman who is not your mother will take you downstairs, where it is dark and the ground is soft. Down below, where the soft dark soil reaches up for you.

You don't want to go down there.

You don't want to eat these chips.

They taste like nothing at all.

Down below, the darkness waits.

— Hank Pattison

THE FART SLIDE by Keenan Poloncsak

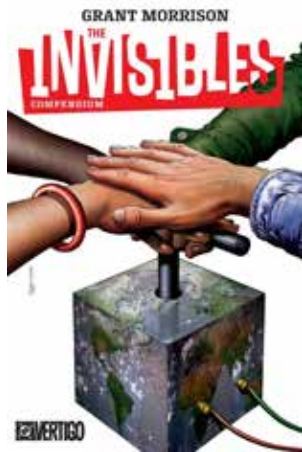


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Absolute Comics Reviews

THE INVISIBLES COMPENDIUM – By Grant Morrison & Various



The *Invisibles* is an occultist action-adventure series written by Grant Morrison, and drawn by a plethora of talented artists, all of whom bring something unique to the story. The comic series has been described by Morrison as a hyper-sigil, a complex arrangement of symbols meant to have a magical impact on the micro and macro cosmology of the universe, simultaneously functioning as an act of ontological terrorism.

The series was heavily influenced by a personal experience when Morrison smoked a nugget of hash while in Kathmandu, and was then contacted by extra-dimensional beings who took Morrison outside of all space/time where they learned the secrets of the universe and received the instruction to stick it all into their writing, so as to share the knowledge with the rest of us.

For me, *The Invisibles* has been one of the most interesting and impactful works of art I've ever encountered, and it has as strong a hold on me today as it did back when I first read it almost 30 years ago. It's too weird to ever be mainstream entertainment, but if you're in the right mindset, it's the kinda story that just might change your life.

BIG BANG ADVENTURES #35 – By Ray MacKay & Ron Williams

This issue of Big Bang Adventures features a story written by Ray MacKay, a former editor here at Absolute Underground! In this tale, Ray takes some classic silver-age comic tropes and slams them into a direct conflict with one of the big guys from the realms of old-school cosmic horror. If Jack Kirby and HP Lovecraft had worked on a project together, it might've come out a bit like this!

There's a simple, almost hokey quality to the prose, but that's clearly intentional, and kind of the point when you're trying to



capture the vibe of silver age comics, the antiquated cadence to the vernacular telling you what era of storytelling you're in. Ray is giving us a classic action story, with the great old one Cthulhu forced into a bright-coloured adventure, a world where ancient gods dress and behave like superheroes; the antithesis of all those stories where fun-loving superheroes get pulled into cosmic nightmares of futility and dread.

This story functions as an interesting experiment, with Ray feeling like a young chef experimenting with incongruent flavours, and it makes me curious to see what he'll be cooking up down the road.

WET MOON 20TH ANNIVERSARY OMNIBUS COLLECTION VOL. 1-3 – By Sophie Campbell



Wet Moon recently celebrated its 20th anniversary with new editions, giving me an excuse to talk about it now!

Wet Moon is... sticky. It's not a conventional narrative, with the most obvious comparison being the surreally eerie town of *Twin Peaks*, though in this case we've traded the Pacific Northwest for the deep south, and replaced all the friendly locals with moody goth kids. Or maybe they're emo, it can be hard to tell sometimes.

Wet Moon is a series that takes its time soaking in its own atmosphere,

with a story driven more by characters than plot, exploring themes of gender, sexuality, anger, violence, loss... all the stuff that makes life feel good and bad and complicated, often at the same time.

Wet Moon is one of those books that's so good, so beautifully painful, I have to be careful where I read it, because it brings out some strong emotional responses. The characters can feel so real, so human, so relatable, that they can reach right out from the pages and twist their fingers into your chest, squeezing your heart until you're bleeding your own black blood back down into their panels.

WRESTLE HEIST #1 – By Kyle Starks



Kyle Starks has worked with some real talented artists over the years, but there's something special about the stories he writes and draws entirely by himself. Previously there was *SEXCASTLE, KILL THEM ALL*, and *ROCK CANDY MOUNTAIN*, and now... there's *WRESTLE HEIST*. Starks is back in his wheelhouse, giving us a tale with 1980s tough guys, protagonists past their prime, and so much grit that these pages might drop an elbow on you from the top rope!

This tale takes the Kafab Wrestling World into a high-stakes heist motivated by necessity and revenge. This isn't grounded real-world material, this is the Big Show, larger than life, with giant characters spouting bone-crushing catchphrases and lethal schtick!

These are wrestlers of the old school; sure it's a performance, but that doesn't mean they ain't hard as nails and able to lay on a real hurting on anybody foolish enough to cross them. And of course the most dangerous of them aren't just large and violent, they're smart too.

That's the kinda comic this is. Large and violent, and smart too. Plus it's funny as hell.

BENEATH THE TREES WHERE NOBODY SEES – By Patrick Horvath



Start with the art of a kid-friendly anthropomorphic animal-people children's book, and then add a character straight out of a modern true-crime horror story. Think Richard Scarry meets Bret Easton Ellis. What you wind up with might be one of the best books I've read all year.

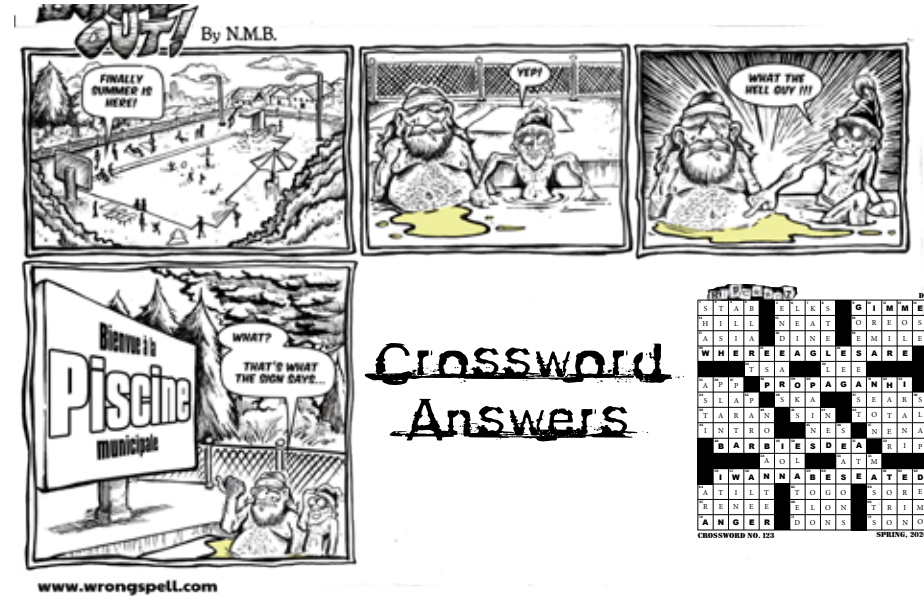
This tale takes place in a small town full of simple folk who are also cute creatures. It's the sorta quaint small town where everybody knows each other and everybody feels safe.

Then the bodies start showing up.

A single act of murder can tear a small town apart, so how much damage will be done by a serial killer? Somebody is going to have to step up and do something, but perhaps the only individual with the mindset and skills to do anything about it is another killer.

BtTWNS is a standalone story, complete in one volume, though its success has allowed the creator to do a follow-up, and I'm looking forward to learning more about how wild animal life can be. Still, on its own, this book is as satisfying as feeling the knife's blade sinking into fresh meat.

—Hank At Golden Age Collectables



Crossword Answers

1	S	T	A	B	7	E	L	K	S	G	I	M	E
2	H	I	L	L	N	E	A	T	O	R	E	O	S
3	A	S	T	A	D	I	N	E	F	E	M	I	L
4	W	H	E	R	E	A	G	L	E	S	A	R	E
5	S	T	P	P	R	O	P	A	G	A	N	H	I
6	T	A	X	A	N	S	I	N	T	O	T	A	L
7	N	T	R	O	N	E	S	E	N	E	N	A	
8	B	A	R	R	I	E	S	D	E	A	R	I	P
9	A	O	L	L	A	T	M						
10	I	W	A	N	N	A	B	E	S	E	A	T	E
11	A	T	I	L	T	T	O	G	O	S	O	R	E
12	S	E	N	E	E	L	O	N	S	T	R	I	M
13	A	N	G	E	R	D	O	N	S	O	N	O	

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Absolute Live Reviews

EMPEROR

March 28, 2026, — MTELUS, Montréal

Emperor's return to Montréal felt less like a reunion and more like a reaffirmation of why the band remains one of black metal's most influential forces.

Opening with "Into the Infinity of Thoughts," the band delivered a performance built entirely on precision and control. The setlist focused heavily on classic material, including "Thus Spake the Nightspirit," "With Strength I Burn," "Curse You All Men!," and "I Am the



Black Wizards," all performed with remarkable clarity and intensity.

Despite the complexity of the material, every element remained locked in throughout the night. The guitars cut through sharply, the keyboards expanded the atmosphere without overwhelming the mix, and the drumming drove the performance with relentless force.

The crowd responded with complete focus, creating an atmosphere that felt immersive rather than chaotic.

Emperor didn't return to celebrate nostalgia. They returned to prove

their music still carries the same weight decades later.

— Jean-François Gosselin
Photo by @jfgosselin.photo

BLOOD INCANTATION

March 28, 2026 — MTELUS, Montréal

Blood Incantation opened the night by leaning fully into the cosmic and progressive side of their sound. Rather than relying on nonstop aggression, the band built atmosphere through slow-moving compositions and deliberate pacing. Tracks like "The Stargate,"



"The Message," and "Verification of Blood (Part One)" unfolded more like movements than traditional songs, gradually pulling the audience deeper into an immersive and layered soundscape.

What stood out most was the band's control. Every shift in tempo and texture felt intentional, allowing tension to build naturally instead of collapsing into chaos. The mix remained remarkably clear throughout the set, giving

space to the band's dense arrangements while preserving their heaviness.

The audience responded with focused attention rather than explosive movement, creating an atmosphere that felt almost meditative at times.

As an opener, Blood Incantation didn't try to overpower the room.

They built the environment for the rest of the night.

— Jean-François Gosselin
Photo by @jfgosselin.photo

RUBY WATERS

March 22, 2026 — MTELUS, Montréal

Ruby Waters opened the night with a performance that felt raw, loose, and completely unfiltered in the best possible way. Pulling from tracks like "Rabbit Hole," "Sour Patch," "Adult Swim," and "6 Feet," she blended indie rock, blues, and alternative grit into a set that felt immediate and natural.

What made the performance work was its refusal to feel overproduced. Waters leaned into the rough edges of the material, balancing swagger, vulnerability, and attitude without forcing any moment beyond what the songs required.

Tracks like "Good Recipe," "Blinders," and "Sweet" added variety without slowing the momentum, while "Quantum" closed the set confidently.

Her stage presence remained relaxed and direct throughout the performance, allowing the songs themselves to carry the emotional weight.

It was never about technical perfection. It was about honesty, atmosphere, and feel, and Ruby Waters delivered all three from start to finish.

— Jean-François Gosselin
Photo by @jfgosselin.photo



UNDEATH

May 1, 2026 — Théâtre Beanfield, Montréal



Undeath turned Théâtre Beanfield into complete chaos on May 1st, delivering a savage display of old-school death metal from the moment they hit the stage.

The Rochester band wasted no time igniting the pit, unleashing crushing riffs, cavernous vocals, and nonstop energy that kept the crowd moving throughout the set. Tracks like "Necrobionics" landed especially hard live, immediately triggering waves of bodies across the floor while the band maintained razor-tight execution.

Despite the overwhelming heaviness, Undeath never lost control, balancing filthy aggression with sharp musicianship and relentless momentum.

The set was short, violent, and completely uncompromising, leaving Beanfield fully demolished by the end of the night.

— Jean-François Gosselin
Photo by @jfgosselin.photo

CROWN MAGNETAR

May 1, 2026 — Théâtre Beanfield, Montréal

Crown Magnetar delivered one of the most punishing sets of the night at Théâtre Beanfield, tearing through Montréal with nonstop blast beats, devastating breakdowns, and machine-tight precision.

From the opening moments, the pit erupted into constant motion as the band unleashed wave after wave of controlled chaos. The live debut of "Impaled Genesis" fit perfectly into the set's violent atmosphere before the band closed with the crushing weight of "Black Lotus."

Every transition felt deliberate, every breakdown hit with maximum force, and the energy in the room never dropped for a second.

Short, vicious, and completely unforgiving, Crown Magnetar proved exactly why they've become one of the most intense modern deathcore bands touring today.

— Jean-François Gosselin
Photo by @jfgosselin.photo



MUTILATION BARBECUE

May 1, 2026 — Théâtre Beanfield, Montréal



Mutilation Barbecue didn't ease into their set at Théâtre Beanfield, they detonated it.

Opening with "Skin Display" and "Necro," the band immediately launched into a relentless assault built on dense riffing, raw vocals, and nonstop intensity. By the time "Grave Implosion" hit, the crowd was already fully committed, with bodies flying across the pit without hesitation.

Tracks like "Flesh Sample," "Hivemind," and "Acid Tub" pushed the set even deeper into violent territory while maintaining a surprisingly tight and controlled execution throughout.

Closing on "Decorticate" and "Realm of the Ossified," Mutilation Barbecue avoided theatrics entirely, relying purely on overwhelming heaviness and precision.

No filler, no wasted moments, just pure death metal punishment from start to finish.

— Jean-François Gosselin
Photo by @jfgosselin.photo

THE WITCHES OF DYSTOPIA TOUR

MMXXVI - UADA, Mortiiis, Jerome Reuter's Rome, Wraith Knight
April 13, 2026, Dickens Pub, Calgary AB



It was just about a year ago that I was anticipating seeing Mortiiis opening up for Mayhem at the Palace. What I was not expecting was a set full of his instrumental dungeon synth tracks, which, honestly, divided the audience. So when Mortiiis returned to town, this time at the more intimate Dickens Pub, it felt worth another look. Portland's shadowed black metal outfit UADA headlining only added to the intrigue.

Upon entering Dickens, Wraith Knight was already performing in the corner of the stage - shrouded as the brethren in UADA would be later. Audience members proclaimed they were in a trance after his performance. The spellbound mood was set.

Next up, an acoustic guitar appeared

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on stage. It was in the hands of Jerome Reuter, who performed what would be considered black country. The crowd, already primed for something off-axis, was fully on board. His set stretched comfortably, maybe even beyond its expected limits, but never wore out its welcome. The set times then felt loose, with the bands operating on a different spectrum of space and time.

Out of the space and time wormhole emerged the legend, Mortis, sans synthesizer and carrying a microphone. That's right, this set wasn't the same tempo as the Mayhem one. The dreadlocked, Jesus Christ shirt wearing, witch-nosed one brought us all back to 2001, with Dickens turning into a witchy dance party. Tracks that are very synth-based sounded beefed up in person with the live guitarist and drummer. "Parasite God," "You Put a Hex on Me" and "Smell the Witch" went off like club anthems and the entire set felt like a treat to those who were expecting the same last year with Mayhem.

UADA's shrouded black metal assault quickly started to feel like John Carpenter's *The Fog*, as the band's smoke machines pumped out relentless clouds which enveloped both the band and audience. The band, cloaked and ambiguous, with minimal white lighting illuminating the smoke and shrouds, made them look like literal shadow people on stage. UADA manipulated the space/time spectrum themselves, playing for quite a long time. The extended set, featuring a distinct second part featuring Wraith Knight and performing a Ceremonial Castings 30th anniversary set began to feel excessive, the atmosphere blurring into itself. On a Monday night, it was a little too much for some audience members who didn't stay for the whole set. I put a hex on them!

— Ryan Dyer

THE CASUALTIES, THE DROWNS, RUMKICKS, NO BRAINER
April 21, 2026, Dickens Pub, Calgary AB



Together we survive. Divided we die. The slogan revealed itself to be the theme of this night of united punx. From New York, Seattle, South Korea. United on the fourth stop of the Canadian tour. Calgary. Together, the bands brought a takeaway of inclusiveness and unity not to mention circle pits, and a wall of death for good measure (The Casualties' David Rodriguez stated that it was invented in Calgary, though this is probably said at every date of the tour).

The show intrigued me mostly for Rumkicks, who I had learned about while in China and had featured them in my Korean Punk bands listicle. To me, they were South Korea's equivalent to China's Dummy Toys, whom I found to be riveting and interesting. They played second, after a quite brilliant opening set by No Brainer, despite the playbill having them as direct support on the sheet near the sound board. The band was met with an extreme interest from the crowd, who were receptive to their style of rather catchy, sincere punk from a Korean lens. "A guy said to me, why don't you want to look like k-pop stars," said Rumkicks' Jeong Yeawon, "I said fuck you." The Dickens crowd roared. "Fuck Trump!" "Fuck Danielle Smith" a crowd member shouted, "more close to home!"

The Drowns kept the energy going with Aaron Rev Peters practically

already a sweaty mess as soon as the set started. Rumkicks' symbolic presence was mentioned with a song dedicated to them and hard working women in general as men would never understand what it's like to be them. I felt it was quite truthful. The Casualties then took the stage with a detonation. They teased the crowd, saying it usually takes them four songs to get going, which got them going more. The 30-year veterans are like a detonation live, with Rodriguez usually introducing a song with a trash-like scream. He then stated that it was great to see more brown faces at shows, before letting No More Moments' Carlin Black Rabbit sing a few bars. Rumkicks then joined the band on stage before the finale starting with another song that exemplified the evening. The gathering of punx. Surviving until tomorrow, because "Tomorrow Belongs to Us."

— Ryan Dyer

EXTENSIVE SLAUGHTER/DAYGLO ABORTIONS/BOOT LICKER/ THE EXPLOITED

April 7, 2026 Rickshaw Theatre, Vancouver BC

This fine April evening I found myself at another sold out show from a string of sold out shows for the legendary band, The Exploited. They hadn't played Vancouver in over 20 years and with all the health problems of lead singer and founding member Wattie Buchan it was no surprise that the crowd would turn up, which they did.

Extensive Slaughter opened the show with a hard hitting set, setting the tone for the night. It seemed not many knew who they were at the show and people tended to stick it out at the merch lines. No slight to them, I think the rest of the bands playing had such loyal fan bases already it was going to be an uphill battle to stand out.

In a move shocking everyone (I spoke with at least) Bootlicker did play second on the bill, Dayglo Abortions did. The Victoria based band has been playing shows since Christ rode a bicycle down Granville St. Delivering what seemed to be a 25 minute set at best the crowd was demanding an encore, the loudest of the night to which Murray "Cretin" Acton said "Hey now let's give the other bands a chance to play". After the crowd gave up on the encore Bassist Matt approached the mic with a very humble "but thank you though"

Bootlicker is another Island based band I had heard lots about previously after a show they recently played in Nanaimo at The Terminal so I was excited to cross them off the list. The band didn't disappoint, boasting more of an old school hardcore sound, complete with a frontman who A) Isn't stuck behind a guitar and B) Gets around the stage,

jumping, diving and connecting with the front rows, seemingly a dwindling art. The Bass tone was heavy and hard, the Guitarist is a total babe that absolutely shreds between gobbling the audience and throwing high kicks all over. I'm looking forward to what's to come from this relatively new band whose output is already quite commendable judging by the multiple vinyl selections at their merch table.

Last and certainly not least, the band everyone there had been waiting decades to make their return, The Exploited. Wattie comes out, shirtless to thunderous applause and what unfolded was a balls to the wall, old school, 80's hardcore set that they themselves helped define the genre of so many moons ago. With the current political climate it was inevitable the crowd would be requesting, no...RALLYING for. "Fuck the U.S.A.! Fuck The U.S.A."

Wattie playfully waving off the request until nearing the set's end and when those red blue and white lights lit up and the opening chords struck the room exploded. The last highlight would've been during the encore when Wattie invited what seemed like half the floor up for a pass the mic around sing a long to the soundtrack topping Sex And Violence. After 6 heart attacks and a flurry of other health problems it's good to see such a prominent figure pulling through, and not just that, but still kicking fucking ass while doing it.

— Tyler Smith
Punks On Pizza

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H.P. LOVECRAFT ON TRIAL

By Ed Sum

The news is real. Gou Tanabe is adapting *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* and the first chapter is out in print! Although a translated release is likely years away, fans can either seek out the original or wait. The current release is seeing print via Kadokawa's *Comic Beam* magazine. Fan translations may exist, but for now that's all readers are going to get. And considering this is one of Lovecraft's longer works, don't expect the story to wrap up for at least two years.

Tanabe tends to expand source material with sweeping vistas and densely detailed art. Like other artists who are highly invested in world building, like Mamoru Nagano and Gothicmade (formerly *The Five Star Stories*), readers living abroad are at a disadvantage. By the time it reaches tankobon format, there may be two volumes.

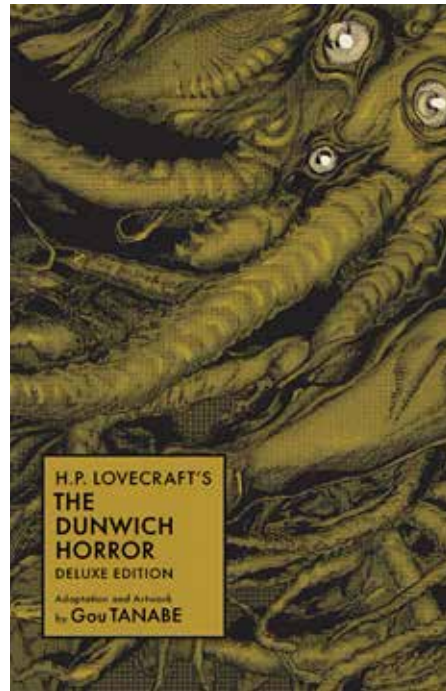
While fans wait, the following are due out soon:

The Dunwich Horror

Dark Horse Comics, September 2026

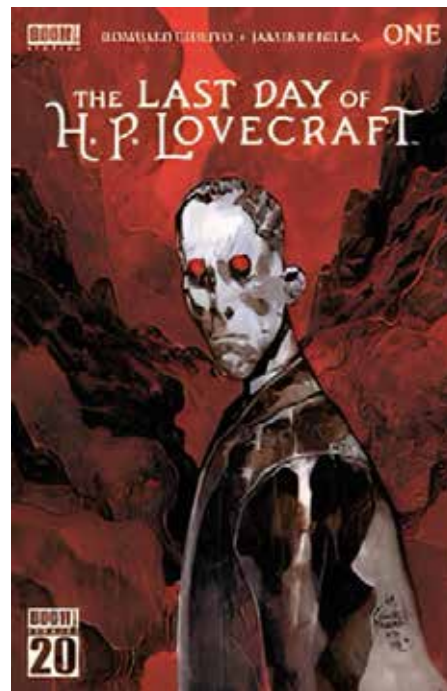
Arriving just before Halloween, the deluxe edition is being offered over the traditional softcover. That's a good thing for those who feel a normal edition is doing the seminal tale about the coming of Yog Sothoth! This tale originally ran in the October issue of *Comic Beam* back in 2021, and that time frame can help readers gauge when Dexter Ward is likely to see print.

From the official press release: The horror was born before dawn on February 2, 1913, the feast of Candlemas, although the people of Dunwich call that ancient festival by a different name. Of unknown father, Wilbur Whateley was not christened, yet he descended still from a once-proud Puritan family that left Salem in 1692 to found Dunwich, Massachusetts. And the descent of the Whateleys and their old town has



been deep indeed, its now crumbling houses overlooked by bare hills topped by stone circles, where unhallowed rituals were held before the first settlers ever came.

Yet, it was none other than ten-year-old Wilbur Whateley that led Dr. Henry Armitage, head librarian at Miskatonic University, to drive the dusty, rutted roads out to Dunwich and meet the child prodigy who had been corresponding with him on the most abstruse and disturbing lore. Dr. Armitage could hardly believe the sight of the priceless hoard of occult books rotting away in the Whateley farmhouse, nor that of the dark, goatish Wilbur, for whom those books had been his only education.



The Last Day of H.P. Lovecraft

BOOM! Studios, August 2026

After a successful monthly run, this tale by Romuald Giulivo and Jakub Rebelka fictionalises Lovecraft's final day on Earth and folds in imagery and themes from the Cthulhu Mythos. What's presented is surreal, and it's a must for readers who've ever wondered what was going on in that man's head. The story essentially shows his xenophobia manifesting into eldritch life, so some readers who followed along monthly may already feel ahead of the curve. But collected, those who missed it won't feel left behind.



The Thing on the Doorstep

Image Comics, September 2026

When the collected version of Daniel Upton and Edward Derby's fateful story will arrive is still uncertain. The series began publishing in February and runs five issues. Upton swears he never did the crime, and newcomers will have to either collect the single issues or wait for the trade to find out what really happened that night at Arkham Sanitarium. Those who've read the original Lovecraft story already know, of course.

The series is written by Simon Birks (*Antarctica, The Shadow Over Innsmouth*) with art by Willi Roberts (*Antarctica, The Dark*), and it should be a good time.

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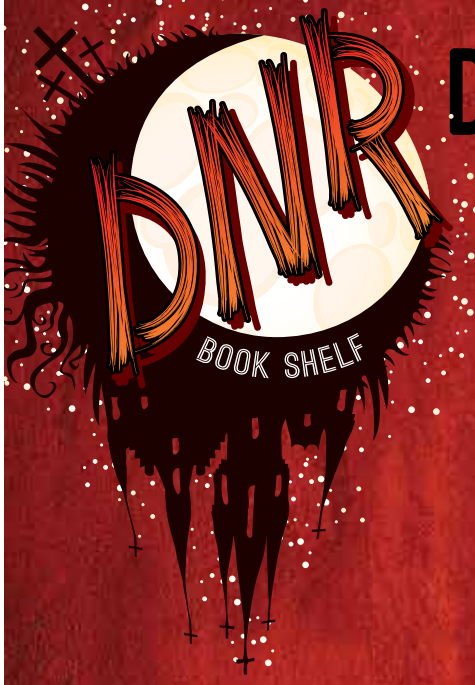
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A GAME IN YELLOW



Hailey Piper
S&S/Saga Press
August 12, 2025
Hailey Piper's *A Game In Yellow* opens with Carmen counting down the moments to the end of a tedious workday, nervous about heading back to her apartment to face...

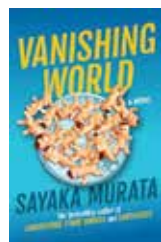
what exactly? The reader is enticed already, curiosity awakening as Carmen winds her way home through the streets and turnstiles of New York City. Even the opening pages of the story feel cat-and-mouse, a set up for some high tension, high stakes game. As we discover, Carmen is involved in a passionate BDSM relationship with a woman named Blanca. Deeply in love, Blanca is doing everything she can to shake Carmen from a recent onset of severe ennui, including slowly ratcheting up the risk in their play. As Carmen seemingly needs to draw ever closer to mortal danger in order to spark her arousal, Blanca becomes ever more determined to find another answer—finally landing on an unconventional option presented by an attractive acquaintance.

Piper's novel is directly inspired by Robert W. Chamber's 1895 short story collection *The King in Yellow*, which revolves around a play of the same name that is known to drive those who read it insane. *A Game In Yellow* introduces this play to Carmen who finds that micro-dosing madness a few lines

at a time reawakens her in ways she didn't think possible. As the play begins to invade Carmen's dreams and waking thoughts alike, she must determine what is real and what is madness in order to keep a grasp on her own identity and the woman she loves.

I am always sceptical about a re-interpretation of a classic, but in this case it works perfectly. Piper's prose manages to evoke the lyricism of Chamber's original work while avoiding the temptation toward mimicry. Paired with a deeply flawed cast of characters and their inherently modern problems, *A Game In Yellow* was a bizarre and surprisingly fun read.
Laura Phaneuf

VANISHING WORLD



Sayaka Murata, Ginny Tapley Takemori (Translator)
Grove Press
April 15, 2025

Sayaka Murata is quickly becoming one of my favorite authors. The topics she chooses speak to me on a certain level, involving a constant stepping outside the box of human routines and behaviors - remixed and re-examined in fiction.

Her *Convenience Store Woman*, about a woman where you don't really know where the store ends and she begins, has become a modern favorite. *Earthlings* takes social alienation and pushes it into something darker and more bodily, framed through the same detached, observational voice. *Life Ceremony* takes the idea of funerals and mixes it with the idea of "why not just eat people when they die?" - making each death a segue into a ceremony of food and drink.

Vanishing World provides another thought-provoking experiment in the nature of what-ifs, this time about sexual intercourse in couples being obsolete and artificial insemination. As authors continue through their careers, their interests become more visible with each release. Murata, in this case, brings to mind Chuck Palahniuk's

method: pick a topic (in this case, the erasure of intercourse) and examine the idea's possibilities through the characters. Is the futuristic idea plausible? Sure. Is it readable and amusing? Yeah. Is it a bold, new idea to be celebrated along with her previous novels? I'd say, not as much, though it does have its place at the table with the others.
Ryan Dyer

YOUNG FAST & SCIENTIFIC: THE DIY WORLD OF AL COLE



Steven Frank
Blüm Media
October 19, 2025

Young Fast Scientific, besides being a song by New York band the Dictators, also inspired the name of a college radio show by one Al Cole, who over three decades used every form of media at hand to promote live music at clubs throughout southern Ontario. *Young Fast Scientific: the DIY World of Al Cole* is a tribute to Al and the unsung heroes of rock 'n' roll who work tirelessly behind the scenes. From London, Ontario venues like the Cedar Lounge, Fryfogles and the Embassy to the Horseshoe Tavern and the Silver Dollar in Toronto, to the Star Club and Moon Room in Oshawa, Al hijacked Xerox machines, often where he worked, to create his distinctive flyer/posters. After Al passed in 2020, his wife and partner Dana gave access to his archive, which included approximately 1,000 posters, to writer/designer Steven Frank. Steven had worked at the same college station CHRW at the University of Western Ontario in the early 1980s and later collaborated with Al organizing live music for art festivals in Oshawa. It was here that Al was instrumental in promoting what were known as Star Clubs, an offshoot of the independent retail store and record label Star Records. Star was home to the Forgotten Rebels, Durango 95 and the Purple Toads. Al also helped spread the word for the international acts that Star distributed including Boston's Lyres, the Cynics from Pittsburgh, along with the Sweden's Creeps

and England's Dr. Feelgood. Like his mentor Mike Star, Al knew how to create scenes which gave an untold number of young bands a chance to play live.

There are many contributing writers, including Dave O'Halloran, who, along with his wife Rena took over the *What Wave* zine that Al started. *What Wave* played a big part in the revival of garage rock. Other writers include Lou Molinaro, Craig Laskey and Brian Lambert, all major contributors to their music scenes in Hamilton, Toronto and London respectively.

Between the zine, his radio show, writing for newspapers and poster every telephone pole he could, Al was the definition of analog media convergence. But most of all, Al loved creating posters for the clubs bringing members of the Velvet Underground, Sex Pistols, New York Dolls and Magazine to stages in the 1980s. He designed posters for the Stranglers, Simple Minds, Bauhaus, 999, Vice Squad, Angelic Upstarts and the Ramones. Canadian acts include Teenage Head, the Diodes, the Demics, The Zellots and Nash the Slash and even west coasters D.O.A., Los Popularos, B-Sides and B-Girls. Depending on the club he was working for, there were posters for every genre including ska, reggae, rockabilly, blues legends Bo Diddley and Buddy Guy and '80s and '90s bands including 54-40, the Headstones and Sloan.

The book is garnering many positive reviews - a testament to what a force Al Cole was on not just Southern Ontario, but music scenes far and wide.

Rob Faucher

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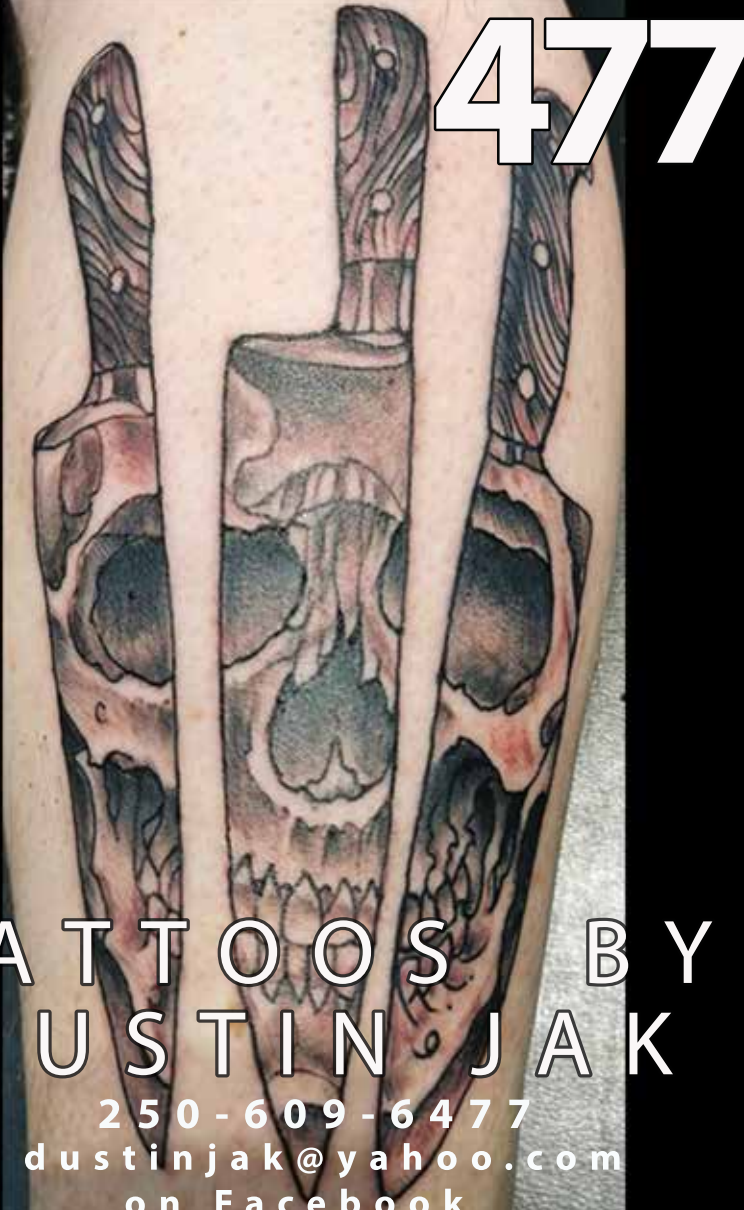
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group through their second album before departing due to personal conflicts within the shared living situation. Despite the turbulence, Shooting Blanks kept pushing forward, anchored by Jonny's writing and the band's relentless DIY ethic.

The next era saw a rotating cast of players as the band relocated toward Toronto. Brian, an older vocalist who loved the band's material, stepped in for a time, joined by guitarist Mr. Proudfoote. After a year of grinding, Brian was dismissed for timing issues and lack of commitment, prompting Jonny to take over lead vocals himself becoming the last remaining original member. A final East Coast tour with Brian closed that chapter, and the band brought in drummer Marc St. Pierre, a talented player whose personal struggles eventually led to his departure shortly after the band recorded material released in 2019 on YouTube.

Today, Shooting Blanks continues under Jonny's direction, rebuilt with a new lineup featuring

Mario on guitar and Chata on drums. What began as a four piece Ottawa punk outfit has evolved into a Toronto-based project defined by resilience, reinvention and the stubborn refusal to die. Through lineup changes, relocations and the chaos that comes with decades in punk rock, Shooting Blanks remains exactly what Jonny kept it alive to be: loud, honest and impossible to shake.



Photo credits: Jonny Kalinka

SHOOTING BLANKS: Ottawa-Born, Toronto-Sharpened Punk Survivors

Written by - New Music Showcase

Shooting Blanks began in the Ottawa punk scene with an original lineup of vocalist Frank MacDonald, bassist/vocalist and songwriter Jonny Kalinka, guitarist Mark (now Marissa) and drummer Kate (now Taylor). The band quickly built a reputation for raw, melodic punk driven by Jonny's songwriting and the tight chemistry of the early lineup. When Frank left, the band brought in Kieran Legacy, who fronted the

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GREAT OUTDOORS COMEDY FESTIVAL CONFIRMS 2026 TOUR DATES

The Great Outdoors Comedy Festival returns in 2026 with a multi-city schedule across Canada and select U.S. stops.

The 2026 edition continues the touring format with scheduled events in Edmonton, Winnipeg, Halifax, Calgary, Vancouver, Spokane and Mississauga. The lineup consists of stand-up performances and supporting festival activity presented in outdoor venues.

Newly announced additions for the 2026 season include Lars Callieou, Todd Ness, and Alex Svarez, who will share hosting duties across selected dates. Leo Martinez Project will open shows during the Vancouver weekend. DJ O Show is playing between-set performances throughout the Vancouver schedule. These additions join previously announced performers including Bill Burr, Anthony Jeselnik, Pete

Davidson, Pete Holmes, Jordan Jensen, Matt Rife & Friends, Adam Ray is Dr. Phil Live featuring Steph Tolev and Bruce Bruce, and Jeff Arcuri with Pete Lee.

During the Vancouver weekend, the Great Outdoors Community Fund will partner with The Improv Centre for an on-site 50/50 fundraiser. Proceeds will support community initiatives


including training opportunities, scholarship support, and accessibility programs for emerging performers.

THE GREAT OUTDOORS COMEDY FESTIVAL

- Edmonton - July 17 - 19
- Winnipeg - July 17 - 19
- Halifax - August 6 - 9
- Calgary - August 28 - 30
- Vancouver - August 28-30
- Spokane - August 29 - 30
- Mississauga, September 11 - 13

greatoutdoorscomedyfestival.com






Christopher Peregrine Williams

Chris was an avid concert goer and music fan with a taste for obscure acts in the Vancouver music scene. with a habit of collecting the nights set list from roadies or stage hands and would be seen lurking around hours after a show to get whatever merch he got his hands on signed by musicians and artists to add to his hoard, a habit that began with a train ride to Seattle to catch The Rolling Stones play the Kingdome back in 1981. Over the years amassing a collection of thousands of albums, concert tee's, poster's and other merch from top acts around Vancouver

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HARLEY ROBINSON

MAY 22, 1973 - MAY 16, 2026

The punk rock community lost another true one in Harley. He was a Nor-Cal legend punishing his drums in bands such as The Cadavers, The Bodies, Modern Action, Roadside Bombs, Crook\$, Scraps and surely a bunch of others. He was dedicated to his 5 children & 2 grandchildren, his bands and his motorcycle club. He will be missed in Sonoma and beyond. *-Ty Stranglehold*

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