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TABLE OF CONTENTS

VICTORIA'S LOCALS ONLY - ZOEY GHOST AND THE GORGEOUS SLAUGHTER GIRLS.....6
VANCOUVER VENGEANCE - THE BIFURCATED.....7
CALGARY CARNAGE - BRAIN BENT.....8
SHR-EDMONTON - BONEYARD.....9
TORONTO TRASH - KOK.....10
CROSSWORD BY PAUL GOTT.....13
OTTAWA ONSLAUGHT - CAPITAL PUNISHMENT FESTIVAL.....14
ABSOLUTE ASIA - AMBULANCE OF LOVE.....17
WRETCHED WINNIPEG - HOLY VOID.....19
CHUCK BILLY - HOLDING MY BREATH.....20
CRIMINAL HERO.....23
THE TROLLENBERG TERROR.....24
YEGG.....25
QUEBEC SIN CITY - THE 351'S.....27
PAGE GOBLIN MAGAZINE.....28
INK SLINGERS - BABYDOLL TATTOOS.....30-31
METAL BLADE RECORDS - AMON AMARTH.....32
ABSOLUTE METAL - FRANKLIN.....34
NEW DAMAGE RECORDS - CANCER BATS PART 2.....35
STOMP RECORDS - BAD WAITRESS.....36
CARTRIDGE HEART - BABY'S FIRST PISTOL - SUPER NOT OKAY.....38-39
LONGSHOT MUSIC - THE PROWLERS.....40
ABSOLUTE HORROR - ONCE UPON A HALLOWEEN.....42
TALES FROM THE DARKSIDE - … AND THE COLDSIDE.....44
ULTRASONIC FILM - THE MONSTER SQUAD.....46-47
THE TEXAS CHAIN SAW MASSACRE.....48
ULTRASONIC FILM - CAROLINE WILLIAMS - TCM 2.....50
THE MANIAC GENIUS OF THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE PART 2.....53
BILL 'LEATHERFACE 2' JOHNSON.....54-55
THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JASON'S MOM AND VICTOR MILLER.....56
ATTACK OF THE KILLER TOMATOES!.....58
HORROR FILMS CARVED IN STONE.....60
BLOOD IN THE SNOW FILM FESTIVAL.....62
GWAR - GOR GOR MUST DIE! - CHUCK VARGA MEMORIAL.....64-65
FRIZZI 2 FULCI - FABIO FRIZZI.....66
NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD - JUDITH O'DEA - JIM CIRRONELLA.....68-69
DEEP CUT FILM FESTIVAL - DAVID BRIGGS.....70
RUBBERHEAD - THE LIFE AND MONSTERS OF STEVE JOHNSON.....72
HARDCORE ALLEY - GET THE SHOT.....76
BUILT FROM SOUND - THE WOLVERINE OF THE UNDERGROUND.....77
LUNCHMEAT - THE HAUNTED WORLD OF RICH HANF PART 1.....79
THE FOMITES - SMOKE A JOINT ABOUT IT!.....80
JONNY BONES FOREVER.....81
KRAMPUS MARKET.....83
WRECKING CREW STUDIOS.....84
SUPREME ECHO - IRON WARRIOR - DANA LEE: RISE OF THE WARRIOR.....87
OBSCURA COMICS - BEAUTIFUL MONSTERS.....88
BAT SKULL RECORDS - ETHEREAL TOMB.....89
MOSH THE ROCK - ISLAND METALFEST - ROYAL SAVOIE.....90
SKETCHY RECORDS - THE DEADLY SKULLS.....91
SPEAK OF THE DEVIL.....92
VOODOO RHYTHM RECORDS - THE MONSTERS.....93
IMPERATIVE MUSIC - POST DEATH SOUNDTRACK.....95
VENUE PROFILE - SOLID URBAN STUDIO.....96
MARTINO MANOR.....98
STEVE'S SILVER SCREAM - THE FOG.....100
CANNABIS CORNER - FORT 20 FARMS.....102
CANNABIS CORNER - THE GOOD WEED BOARD PART 13.....103
POWDER SEEKERS - THE HAUNTED CHILEAN SKI RESORT.....104
POWDER SEEKERS - THE STORM OF THE CENTURY PART 10.....105
TURNBUCKLE SANDWICH - LAK SIDDARTHA.....106
CROWDSURF COMEDY - OK, DOPE.....108
CROWDSURF COMEDY - SMASHED POTATO KIDS.....109
BLAST FROM THE PAST - EXPO 86 GRANDE FINALE - KISS 1976.....111
SEASON OF MIST - THE GHOULSTARS.....112
RIPCORDZ TOUR TIPS.....113
VER-NAC-UL-AR - SCOTT DUNLOP.....114
QUE PASO CANADA?- HICKOIDS - CANADIAN DEBRIEF WITH JEFF SMITH.....115
REIGNING PHOENIX MUSIC - OSYRON.....116
SHOOT TO KILL - MELISSA AUF DER MAUR PART 1.....118
CLEOPATRA RECORDS - THE DICKIES AND ME - LEONARD GRAVES PHILLIPS.....121
HERBAL WITCH - HERBS FOR THE DARK HALF OF THE YEAR.....122
TERROR IN THE BAY FILM FESTIVAL.....123
NO RULES - THE CARRINGTONS.....124
HOPELESSLY DEVOTED TO YOU - DEL JAMES.....126
VENUE REVIEW - MEAN BIKINI - DUNNENZIES.....127
DNR - DO NOT RESUSCITATE - DO NOT READ.....128
DNR - SPECIAL AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT - DON PYLE.....129
ABSOLUTE REVIEWS - SNACKS - FILM - ALBUM.....131-134
ABSOLUTE COMIX.....136-137
COMIC-GEDDON - 13 SCARY READS.....139
ABSOLUTE LIVE REVIEWS.....140
ABSOLUTE REVIEWS - GRAPHIC NOVELS.....141
PURPLE CITY - VANCOUVER METAL CRUISE - STUPERCRAWL COLLAGES.....142-144
SCREAMING MAD GEORGE - REGGIE BANNISTER - CHEETAH CHROME.....142-144
TERMINAL SESSIONS - BUTCHER.....145

ABSOLUTE UNDERGROUND

COVERING THE UNDERGROUND MUSIC SCENE SINCE 2004







ZOEY GHOST AND THE GORGEOUS SLAUGHTER GIRLS

John Carlow/ Finding Charlotte Photography

Absolute Underground: Introduce yourselves.

ZG: I'm Zoey Ghost, everyone's favourite cannibal sex god. I play guitar and sing lead vocals. We got Slaughter Bunnie, my young apprentice on the bass, backing vocals and harmonies. Jupiter or VVitch Hazel on guitar, depending on who's around. On drums, we call him White Boy. I don't know his name, never bothered to ask honestly.

And we're Zoey Ghost and The Slaughter Girls, thank you for summoning us.

AU: Tell us how the band came together.

ZG: Well, it starts in the late 80's with the great old one telling me to spread the gospel of calamity and ends with an intergalactic portal opening in our practice space. The middle 35 years are kind of a blur, honestly.

AU: The story behind the name?

ZG: In early internet cannibal forum culture, a person seeking someone to eat would sometimes post saying they're seeking a "slaughter boy/girl". With us being a femme fronted band, and my love for annoyingly long alliterative phrases; it just felt right you know. People always tell us to shorten it, but I'd rather be turned into a pile of steaming viscera.

AU: What kind of music do you play?

ZG: 100% organic free range A4 jazz fed wagyu lesbian deathrock.

AU: Bands that inspired your sound?

ZG: Nirvana, Gary Wilson, Christian Death, birds fear death, Kudaranai1nichi, Dylan Brady, Francis bacon and Shaye Saint John.

AU: Creative process?

ZG: I've seen such beautiful suffering over my relatively short immortality; I mostly write about that. I'll noodle on the ol geetar until I find something gorgeous and unsettling. Then I yell at White Boy to drop a beat and Slaughter Bunnie to give me a goddamn bassline. Jupiter and VVitch Hazel just kind of do their weird little thing. Add some reverb and distortion, etc… voila you have a zogo song.

AU: What are your songs about?

ZG: Girls and death and dying and suffering and those who've wronged me and cannibalism and lust and killing and death.

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

ZG: There's a quick and dirty little demo tape we put out a couple months ago on Bandcamp, but we plan to record a full-length proper EP in the fall.

AU: Was the visual design of the band based on something very specific?

ZG: The whole thesis statement of Zoey Ghost's visual character design is "what if Purple Rain era Prince was goth"; but she's also designed after like 20-40s jazz glamour, burlesque, and glam metal.

AU: Shout outs in the local scene?

ZG: uhhhh fuck hang on… The Black Treacle Project, The Path, Teenage Art Scene, sethwitha3, Mae Mildred, Finch and Salem, thank you all. To the people who big man'd me and proceeded to fall off, that loathsome pigshit butch, and the worms who reside under my boot. Go die.

AU: Unusual / funny story connected to your band?

ZG: One time while we were hanging out with Robert Smith. I kissed him on the mouth. I felt no romantic or sexual feelings. This isn't really funny or unusual. I just wanted to brag about kissing Robert Smith on the mouth… with tongue. And then everybody clapped.

AU: The road ahead?

ZG: Immediately? Play hella shows, put out a full-length tape, indoctrinate the masses, and create more spaces in the scene for fems and freaks. We currently donate like 100% of any money we get to local mutual aid groups. We gave over $600 to our local Food Not Bombs chapter in May. We hope to give to many more orgs. Currently our next wad of cash will be going to an org that builds and distributes tent heaters for the winter called Heater Bloc.

AU: Final thoughts?

ZG: Land back. Politicians have addresses. AI is the lamest, most insidious shit in the world. Support your local artists, sex workers, vagrants and anarchists.

AU: Where do people find your music?

ZG: Come out to a show! Follow our Bandcamp, Instagram, and Tumblr (@gorgeousslaughtergirls)! Buy the tape on Bandcamp or download it and make a bootleg! Consume! Follow! Worship! Consume!

gorgeousslaughtergirls.bandcamp.com







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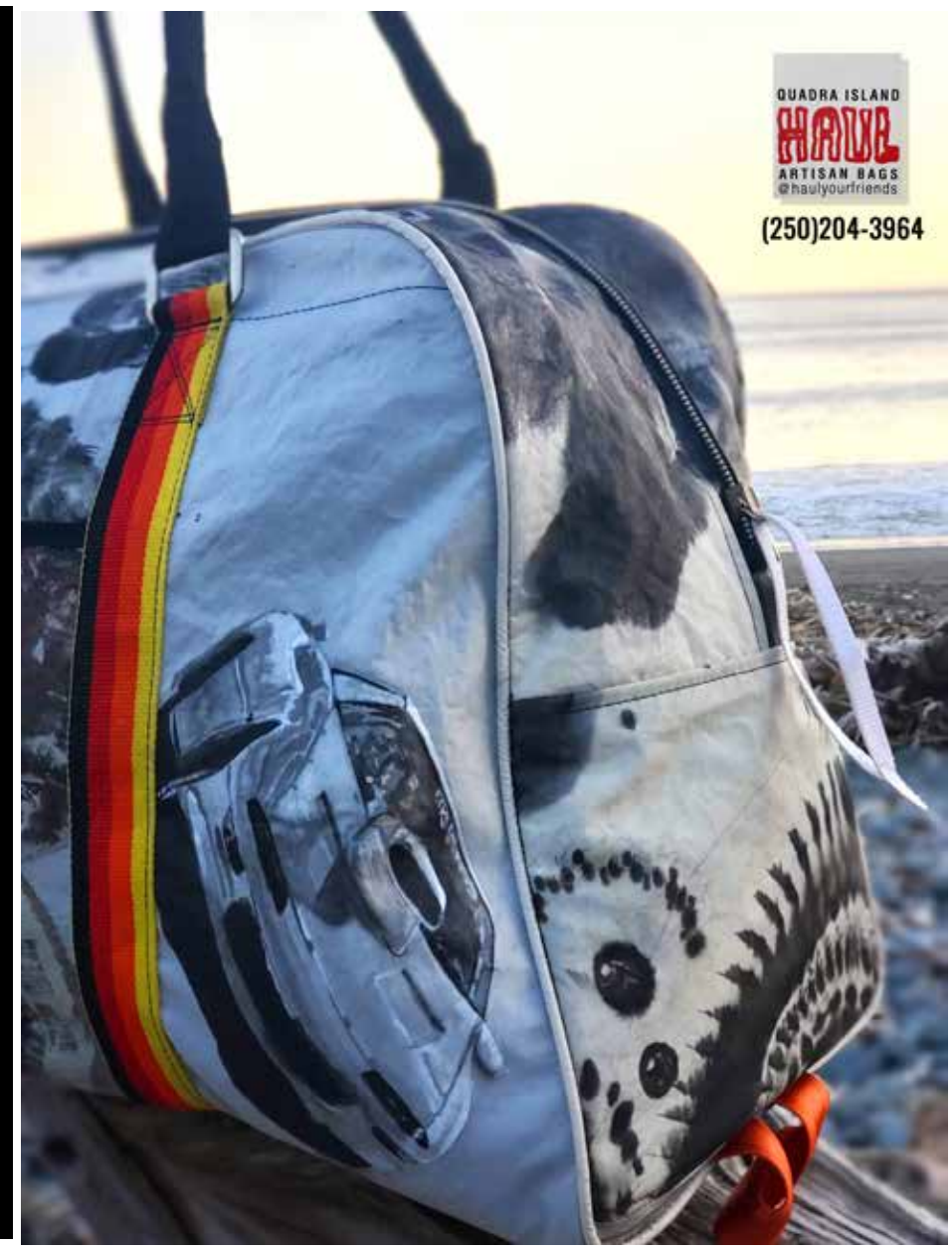
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VANCOUVER VENGEANCE



THE BIFURCATED

Vancouver-based one-man Techno-Metal Madman Conquers Canada

By Ferdy Belland

"This tour's taking me all across Canada," says the fascinating musical oddball which is Danny Sever Hubert - better known by his stage name of The Bifurcated. "The current stint started in North Bay, Ontario and I'm making my way west through Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Edmonton, and then back through British Columbia! I always love exploring new places and new audiences, so I'm stoked to see how the nights unfold. And I'm covering a lot of new material on this tour. My new EP *Lemonade* was recently released, so those songs will be in my live set. There's a new as-yet-unnamed techno-thrash EP that I'm working on, which I'm aiming to release in the fall, so stuff from that will also be featured."

Hubert's only been on the Vancouver scene for a few years now (having formed as an anti-boredom project during the COVID-19 Pandemic), but he's definitely made a respectful name for himself, and his reputation is only growing. The Bifurcated's hybrid sound reminds one of more popular artists like The Browning, Machine Girl, and Destroid, and the act's name itself alludes to the split difference between aggressive metal and electronic dance music. And the bizarre cyborg theme is personified by the Daft Punk-style robotic helmet Huber wears onstage while howling away at the vocals and pounding away at the drumkit while the backing tracks blast away. Intriguing, yes? Very much a unique vision to behold. Bob Log III meets Ministry? You decide.

"What inspired me to go solo?" Hubert asks himself. "Internal disruption. I called out my then-bandmate Timothy Kingston on a long list of disagreements we had, which was holding us back, so he quit on me. We already had an extensive Canadian tour booked, which was set to start in three weeks after this blow-up happened, and I wasn't about to just cancel it after five months of planning. I was already playing with backing tracks on a portable hard-drive, so I thought: what the fuck...I might as well take a stab at reinventing myself as a one-man band.

"At first I was a bit worried about being booed offstage, since that tour had me playing as a solo electronic act which shared bills with thrash-metal bands and death-metal bands, and I thought it'd be hard to be singing lead AND playing drums AND dodging beer bottles being flung at me. But it turned out to be the exact opposite response! I was received with enthusiasm from the audiences I played to, and it's fueled me to keep going and persist at this. I want to go here, there, and everywhere with the Bifurcated. There's not a place I don't want to play, and since I'm working alone I'm pretty portable. I'm currently into my third month of continually touring back and forth across Canada, which isn't an easy accomplishment, but it's so enjoyable and fulfilling. It's given me a lot of time to think about what my long-term ambitions are. I'd love to tour Europe within the next few years. I'd love to tour the United States, but hopefully the current social climate down there improves beforehand, right?"

As confident as Hubert is with the Bifurcated as it is, he's not content to simply calcify in place.

"I would like to recruit new bandmates and evolve the Bifurcated back into a full group. Having a bass player or a dedicated guitarist would be cool, at least for the visual presence of the live show. It'd be cool to incorporate more MIDI elements... my friends in Skull Cultist and Eva X use keytarists and MIDI guitarists to that effect. And I would embrace the inclusion of a live DJ into the mix. But that's still for future consideration. In the meantime, I'm very comfortable presenting the show by myself. Having the lone freedom to get up and take off, where I want and when I want, is extremely satisfying. Being a self-contained performing unit has really eliminated so many restrictions and boundaries."

For more Bifurcated information, please visit facebook.com/TheBifurcated





BRAIN BENT

Interview with Gus Rendell and Nathan Iles

By Ryan Dyer

Brain Bent have carved out one of Calgary's most distinct identities: a tightly-wound, jagged post-punk unit wrapped in the language of boardrooms, boiler suits, and corporate dread. Imagine Devo's rigid satire colliding with the nervous energy of Mindless Self Indulgence and the sharp vocal pivots of System of a Down—then strip all of that down to pure tension, paranoia, and rhythm, and you start to get close. Their shows feel like performance evaluations gone feral, their merch looks like office signage from a parallel universe, and their signature "!?" logo has become a shorthand for modern unease. After multiple Sled Island appearances and a high-voltage opener for Otoboke Beaver at the Palace, the band continues to refine their anxious vision with their new single "No Signal," a track steeped in communication breakdown and digital-era dread. We caught up with them to talk about symbols, satire, Calgary's shifting underground, and where Brain Bent goes next.



AU: Brain Bent has always balanced jagged post-punk with the language of corporate culture. From boiler suits to brand-like merch, your aesthetic feels like a hostile work environment turned into a band. What came first for you — the sound or the thematic framework of late-stage capitalist dread?



G: The music came first, the framework of late-stage capitalist dread just happened to come along for the ride as it often does.

N: Modern-day living feels aggressive and absurd, and, at times, hilarious. Just living in that framework influenced our initial songwriting, which in turn influenced the aesthetics.

AU: Your logo — !? — is basically the perfect symbol for anxious uncertainty. How did that symbol become the band's visual identity, and what does it represent to each of you?

G: The interrobang (!?) was born as a universal visual interpretation of our music. I like the idea of using common symbols to contextualize the band: the notion that "brain bent" is both one and all of us.

AU: You've played Sled Island multiple times. What does Sled mean to Brain Bent at this point?

N: We spent years trying to get into Sled Island with prior music projects, so getting accepted in 2020 was very validating. Since then, Sled has welcomed us back with many amazing opportunities, like opening for The Minneapolis Uranium Club (a huge inspiration for us) and contributing a song to their "Lemonade Stand" compilation. Sled Island is home, and Brain Bent will play that festival every single time as long as they'll have us.

AU: I last saw you opening for Otoboke Beaver — a pretty high-voltage crowd at the Palace. Did you have any pre or post-show interactions with them?

G: We got to see some of their soundcheck, which was pretty intimidating. They're a very intense band, and seeing them just casually soundchecking with these monster songs made us very aware of the level of show we were at. We got to share a brief word with drummer Kahokiss after the show.

AU: "No Signal" taps into a relatable kind of modern dread — being unable to get through to someone, digitally or emotionally. What was the seed idea for the track?

G: The infinitely seducing hate screen in all of our pockets.

AU: You've got memorable lines across your catalogue, but "I love this job … and we love you" sticks out because it sounds cheerful and sinister at the same time. Why does corporate speech lend itself so well to horror and satire?

N: I recently took on some "corporate" contract work, and the use of language already has me wanting to pick up a wrench and never look at a computer again. "Circle back," "deliverables," "scope out," "move the needle..." It's all a big, fake performance. We're deliberately obfuscating the English language to signify some kind of weird status and psychology among ourselves, as if these fake jobs mean something more than they actually do. When you consider how much money and time are wasted just trying to understand this jargon, the horror and absurdity become undeniable.

AU: With multiple vocalists, are lyrics a group effort or does one member usually arrive with a concept that the rest shape?

G: Lyrics tend to be a personal endeavour, at least at this time. Occasionally, we'll write lyrics for each other to sing too.

AU: Calgary's underground scene goes through waves of hyper-productivity. Where do you feel Brain Bent fits into the ecosystem right now?

N: In some ways, we are trying to broaden our scope beyond Calgary. Six years in, anyone who lives in the Blue Sky City and wants to see us has seen us by now. Right now, we are focused on hitting the road, festival appearances, and opening for larger bands to sell ourselves to new fans. Our recent tour with Wheatus was a really cool opportunity to learn how to win over a crowd of strangers, deliver a tight show, and get the hell offstage — often in 30 minutes or less. As for Calgary, we will ALWAYS love this city and this scene, and will never be far from The Palomino stage. This city has one of the dopest hardcore and post-punk scenes in the country. We love being a part of it.



AU: You've got a song about McDonald's — a place that already feels like a parody of itself. What drew you to it as a subject?

G: The song talks about the joy of having something that you know isn't good for you. The thrill of being the target of corporate machinery much larger than you and submitting to it every once in a while. I also wanted to write a song about a cheeseburger, and it ended up being about mortality, kind of.

N: I think it's funny to yell the words "greasy food."

AU: What's something you want Brain Bent to accomplish in the next few years that has nothing to do with streaming numbers or industry validation?

G: More music/baseball team uniforms.

N: More tours, bigger sounds, a vehicle bigger than a Corolla for the backline.

instagram.com/brain.bent





BONEYARD

Edmonton Hard Rock Crushers

By Asher Thrasher

AU: Who are you and what do you do?

Jefftimus: Thank you, our pleasure! Formed in 2015, Boneyard is a female-fronted heavy rock quartet from Edmonton, Alberta. With a Métis drummer and a female bassist from the LGBTQ+ community, Boneyard embodies inclusion, power, and authenticity while proudly flying the flag for hard rock and melodic metal.

AU: You will be releasing your second album, Black Static, on October 23rd. It introduces major creative contributions from Lezzy and Garhardt, marking a clear evolution from your debut, *Oathbreaker*. How did this new lineup reshape the band's sound and direction during the writing and recording process?



Lezzy: Garhardt was heavily involved in the songwriting of the earlier stages of the album before Lezzy joined the band, and has contributed incredible ideas for melodic guitar leads and captivating solos. Not only that, but he would often have interesting suggestions when tweaking song arrangements, as well as melodies and harmonies. Lezzy's punk roots and her love of heavier riffs brought new styles and influences to the table, most notably in "Left Me to Drown" and "Blood in the Bond". She also loves to sing, so having a second female vocalist on the album is something that *Oathbreaker* did not have. We are excited to showcase the coalescence of everyone's unique contributions.

AU: Your lyrics often draw from painful personal experiences and heavy social issues like human trafficking and mental-health deterioration, yet you still aim to weave in hope. How did you balance darkness and optimism across the lyrical themes of *Black Static?*

Lezzy: It's important to talk about the difficult aspects of the human experience, but equally important to convey the message that it's not all doom and gloom, either. Life is full of beautiful things, too - even if it's simply relating to the subject matter of a song, and suddenly you don't feel as alone in your pain. We want to acknowledge suffering while still encouraging love and compassion.

AU: The band puts significant emphasis on vocal harmonies and layered arrangements, especially in songs like "Blood in he Bond" and "Before the Fall." How did you approach building these vocal textures to elevate the emotional impact of the record?

Pamtera: We experimented in the pre-production stage, looking for the best harmonies. We try to visualize how the songs will go over live, and if needed, we'll incorporate sing-a-long melodies in hopes the crowd will join in. We're proud to say that live, our vocals are 100% real. No backing tracks, no laptops, no bullshit!

AU: Your videos, from the Western-metal showdown of "Hanging Tree" to the intense, socially charged visuals of "Before the Fall", have become a defining part of Boneyard's identity. How important is visual storytelling to the *Black Static* era?

Pamtera: We have always been our own creators, directors, and idea makers for our videos. Each video brings its own obstacles, and we are always trying to find new ways to tell our stories with little to no budget. Now that we know who does best in each of our roles, each video becomes easier with experience. We love being able to use this visual storytelling and hope we can do more videos for *Black Static*.

AU: You're hosting an album release show on October 23rd at Rec Room in your hometown of Edmonton; what can fans expect from a live performance of Boneyard and any tour plans to promote the *Black Static* album?

Jefftimus: It's been almost a year to the date that we last played Edmonton. We're planning a special set which will feature the new album in its entirety. In addition, we've added some deep cuts from the first album *Oathbreaker* and a surprise cover or two. Our immediate plans include album release parties in Calgary and Red Deer.

AU: Anything else you would like to add?

Jefftimus: Stay tuned for a new music video that will be accompanying the next single. And we've also had a lot of requests for *Black Static* on vinyl. Good news! The vinyls will be available before the end of the year.

boneyardrocks.ca

Photo Credit: Corrine (Wytchy) Thain





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OCT. 30 - Halloween Bands as Bands 2026

OCT. 31 - Fruit Loop - A Very Haunted Halloween

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NOV. 6 - ARCTOS with LIMINAL SHROUD, SORGUINAZIA & KINGS ROT

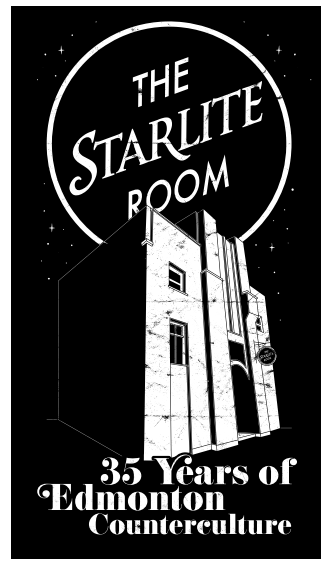
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NOV. 18 - PSYCROPTIC with INFERI, COGNITIVE & SUMMONING THE LICH

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KOK

Toronto Noise Rock, Pints and Self-Abasement

By Scarlett-Rose



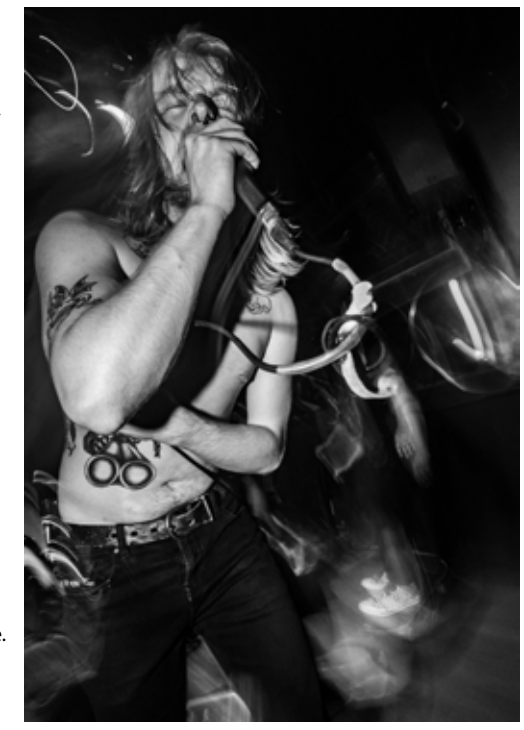
AU: Who are we talking to?

KOK: Johnny Chunks, bassist of KOK, and Ben Valcheff (FKA Joey Ball), vocalist and guitar player of KOK, who are currently sharing a delightful pint (or two or three) of Guinness at the Duchess of Markham!

AU: Give us a brief history of your band.

Johnny Chunks: KOK didn't form so much as it burst into existence. It was birthed out of a necessary friendship between two kids who wouldn't have been friends with anyone else otherwise.

Ben Valcheff: I remember not even being able to play any instruments at all but just feeling the need to make something, which pretty much just resulted in us screaming through effects in Audacity. This was all before we even really knew noise was a genre.



JC: By the winter of 2022, we had these vague semblances of songs, most of which were written throughout high school as inside jokes to us. We knew we had to say fuck it and just book a show or we'd never end up committing to the whole band thing. So we managed to book a show at the Horseshoe Tavern, and finally turned our almost-songs into something maybe-presentable.

BV: We met our other guitarist, Mondo, through playing shows, when he started recording some of our sets to tape. He was definitely a missing link and our sound really flourished with him. Our drummer, John, is the perfect fit as well. I really admire his playing and am still in disbelief that we get to have him as part of this project.

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

JC: Fuck bitches get money.

BV: No, definitely not that. In our music we're trying to portray discomfort and desperation in a very aggressive way. We take our songs seriously, but we also don't want to come across like we think we're cooler than we are. Personally, I've found a lot of influence in pushing against the hyper-masculinity which is very present in the hardcore scene currently. It's definitely my reason for all the self-abasement.

AU: Describe the band's sound if possible.

JC: We never really wanted to write within any specific genre. Although we call ourselves noise rock (formerly noise punk), that's more of a means to communicate the general feeling of our music. We try and write songs we think are good first and foremost, like songs we want to hear more of in the world.

AU: Who are your biggest influences? Are there any musicians who inspire you? What qualities do you admire about them?

JC: We wouldn't exist without Butthole Surfers. Hearing *Psychic… Powerless…* and then knowing we could never make an album that good somehow motivated us to try anyway.

BV: Nirvana is obviously very influential to me; learning Nirvana songs is how I learned guitar. I'm constantly trying to write songs that are both primal and well thought out.

AU: What's been the most challenging part of being in your band?

BV: Literally every single part about being in a band except for playing the music. Driving an hour and a half and carrying a 4x12 cabinet up two flights of stairs just to be able to play for 20 minutes (if you're lucky) and then driving an hour and a half back home in the middle of the night fucking sucks.

JC: Being in a band with Ben fucking sucks.

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

BV: We milked a guy at one of our shows. Like, we set up a milking table and he got on it and we milked him.

JC: We recently did a live show on CFRU 93.3 FM, a student radio show in Guelph. You can listen to that now on streaming platforms and Bandcamp, and you can watch it on their YouTube channel (youtube.com/@cfruradio).

BV: We'll also be recording a full album soon, which will be released, uh… whenever it's done.

AU: How do people find you online?



KOK: @koktheband on Instagram. You can find all our pages and upcoming shows from there.

instagram.com/koktheband

BW Live Photo Credit - Syd Deneau @ snapdrag0nphotography

Band Photo Credits: Alex Kennedy @ alexfuckingkennedy



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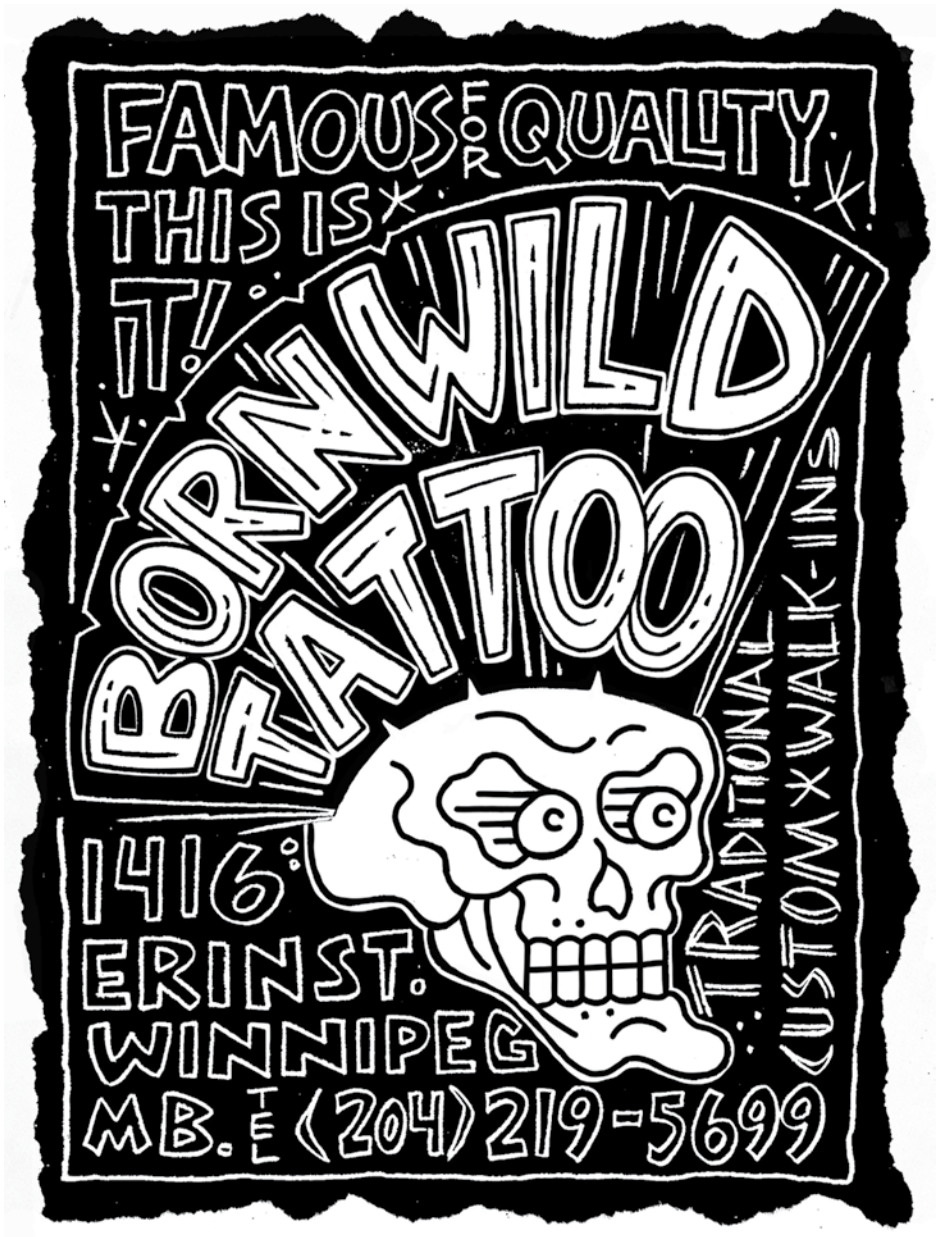
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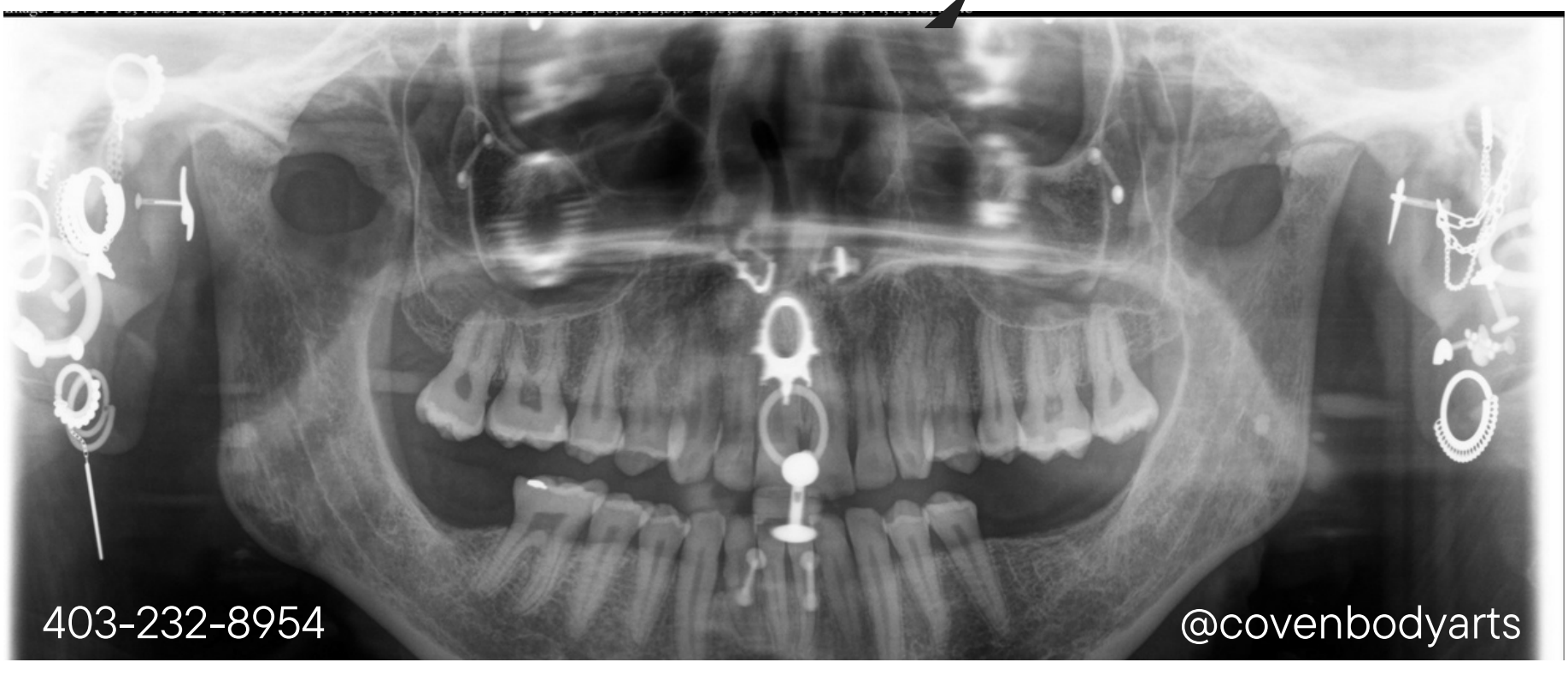
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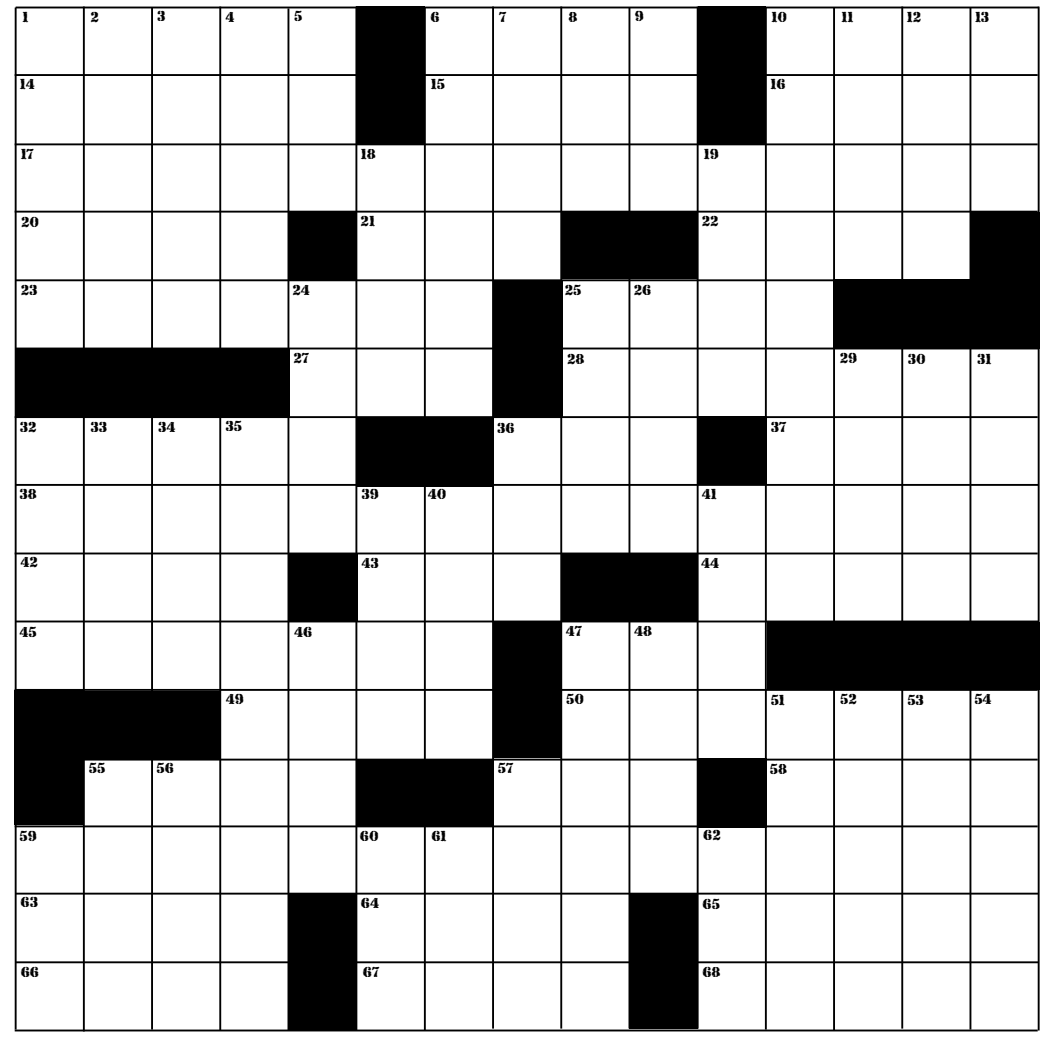
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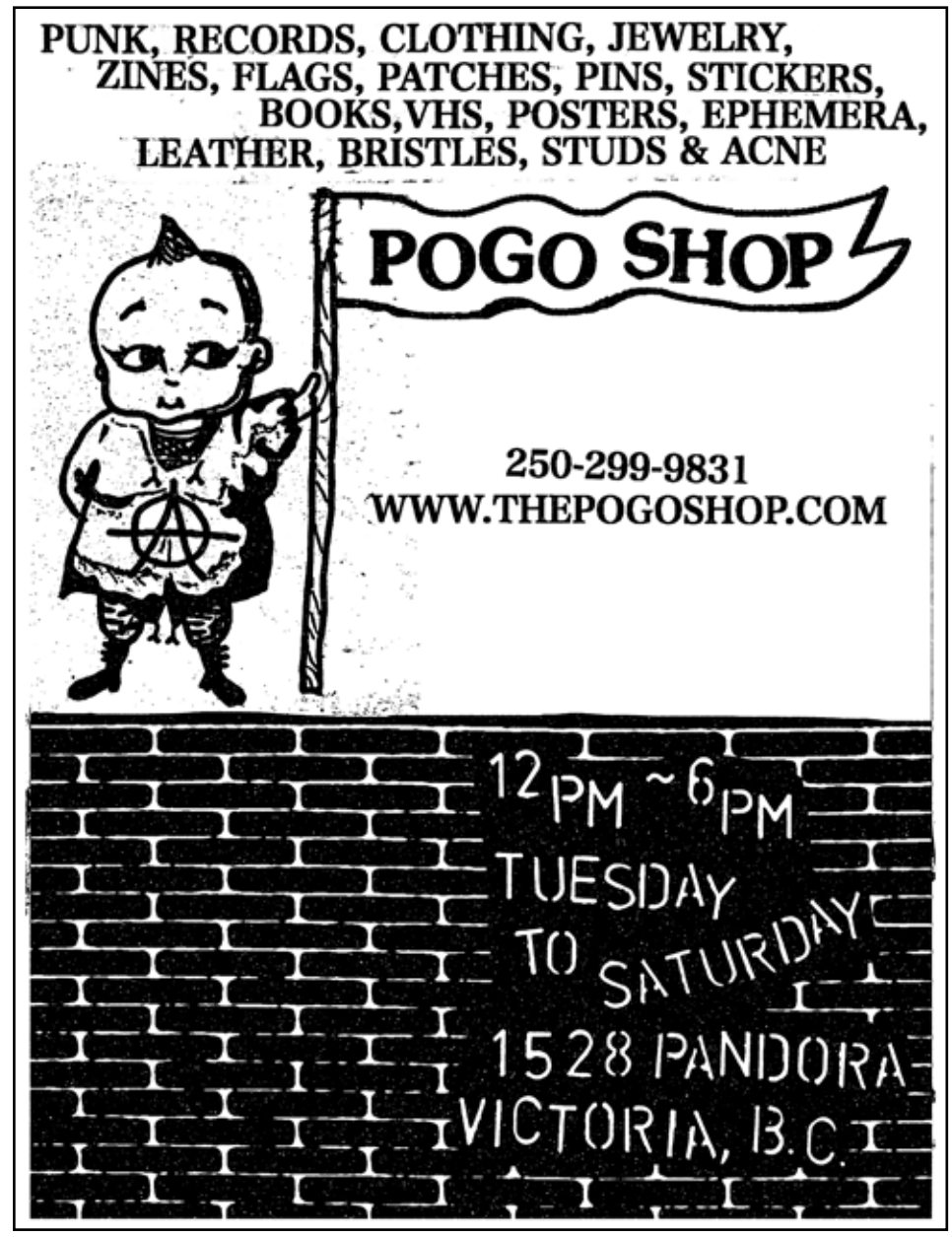
1. The Forgotten Rebels' "England Keep Your _____"
6. Ready for forty winks
10. Bugs Bunny, for example
14. Gum that's out of this world
15. Sound quality
16. Break _____
17. *Quote from a homicidal ex?
20. Figured out
21. Letters following "Star Trek"
22. Title role for a Fonda
23. *Monroe/Gable film, or the subject of this puzzle
25. A fan of
27. Gym staple
28. "That's easy"
32. *Sci-fi film "_____ Zombies"
36. Professionally pretend
37. Alleviate
38. *"We were just talking about you!"
42. See (to)
43. Big apple museum (with 'The')
44. Actor Ryan
45. They speak louder
47. Punk meets angst
49. "Leave it to me"
50. *TV's first horror movie host
55. Band choices
57. It can be electric
58. Disappearing asian sea
59. *Burton/Eastwood war film
63. In perfect condition
64. X-rated exercise
65. It's used for 55-across
66. Half a Stevenson caracter
67. Lights that are a gas
68. One type of figure skating competition

DOWN

1. City destroyed in the bible
2. Singer/guitarist Lopez
3. Aids partner
4. Freed from (a problem)
5. The clap, for ex.
6. Up to
7. Amazon superhero series
8. "____ of the Century"
9. Narcs
10. *Hit song for Siouxie
11. "I cannot tell ____"
12. Garcia of The Brains
13. It came first. Or did it?
18. Jazzy James
19. Band that added 'D.C.'
24. Half a '67 bestseller title
25. Word with ahead or worm
26. Part of a score
29. Roof overhang
30. Eighties supergroup
31. Famous archer William
32. The Thin Man's dog
33. You may work on this
34. Camping necessity
35. "_____ Europe"
36. Telecom giant
39. Godlike prefix
40. Musical gathering
41. Pioneering first-person shooter
46. "(It's) my fault"
47. Song on the Tragically Hip's first EP
48. Pokey part of a plug
51. Historic university city near Venice
52. Modern Persian
53. Less common
54. Orioles and Blue Jays
55. Nautical greeting
56. Fix
57. Breakfast brand
59. When doubled, a pedal
60. A long, long time
61. Exist
62. Brand on many NASCAR cars









CAPITAL PUNISHMENT FESTIVAL

Interview with Christina Kasper

By Asher Thrasher

Absolute Underground: Ottawa's Capital Punishment Festival is returning with its biggest expansion yet, adding more venues, more artists, and an even larger cross-country roster. What motivated this major growth for the 2026 edition, and how did you decide which new elements to introduce?

Christina Kasper: 2026 marks 200 years since the founding of Bytown in 1826 (which was later incorporated as Ottawa), and the ByWard Market is the cornerstone of that. We are very grateful that Ottawa Tourism launched a grant to bring more tourism into town to mark the anniversary. The ByWard Market is a hub of the Ottawa music scene, and we wanted to highlight some of the killer local venues Chord Productions regularly uses to host concerts for this year's edition.

AU: This year's lineup features a massive wave of Canadian talent across metal, punk, hardcore, rock, rap, and extreme underground genres. What was the curatorial vision behind assembling such a diverse first wave of artists?

CK: In today's political climate, backing local and national talent was a conscious decision. We deliberately chose to put an all-Canadian roster front and center. Ottawa's music scene is diverse, but genres sometimes stay in their own silos. The vision for Capital Punishment was to break those walls down. By throwing metal, punk, hardcore, rock, and rap onto the same card, we're creating a cross-pollination of scenes. We want the metalheads discovering rap, the punk kids stumbling into death metal, and everyone coming together to see how killer the Canadian underground really is.

AU: The festival is presented by Chord Productions and supported by Ottawa Tourism, which highlighted Capital Punishment's role in strengthening Ottawa's music scene. How has this partnership shaped the festival's identity and long-term goals?

CK: Putting on a festival is a massive, relentless grind—it takes an incredible amount of work, risk, and sleepless nights. Promoters know how tough the economics of booking shows are right now. Getting a grant definitely relieves some of the financial weight. It helps us try out something new in hopes of keeping growing and coming back every year.

AU: With full festival passes priced at only $50 for access to all shows across four ByWard Market venues, accessibility seems to be a major priority. How important is affordability in ensuring Capital Punishment remains a festival for both dedicated fans and new audiences?

CK: Affordability is top of mind for sure, and I think $50 for 65+ artists is one of the most affordable festival passes in Canada right now. Our hope is to keep it cheap and to pack in all venues.

AU: The festival spans four cornerstone venues, Rainbow Bistro, Dominion Tavern, 27 Club, and Avant-Garde Bar, all within Ottawa's ByWard Market. How does the multi-venue format contribute to the festival's atmosphere, community engagement, and overall experience?

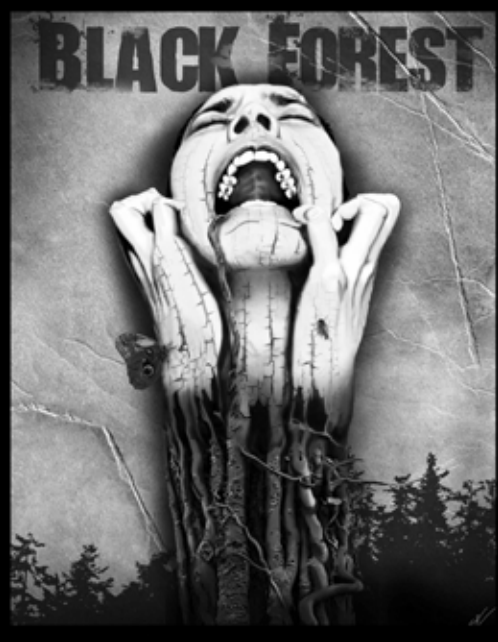
CK: All venues are 5 minutes walking distance from each other. We are hoping fans will bar hop and discover new bands.

AU: You announced The Creepshow, The Damn Truth, Beyond Creation, DBC, Hellripper, Lost, Barf, BornBroken, Guhn Twei, Duskwalker, Entropy, Reanimator, Scaffold, and lots of others for the lineup, with more bands still to be announced. What can fans expect next from Capital Punishment 2026, both in terms of programming and the festival's broader mission to amplify Eastern Canada's underground music community?



CK: Fans can expect a full schedule of staggered showcases across venues, with a few surprise announcements in the coming weeks.

chordproductions.com/capital-punishment



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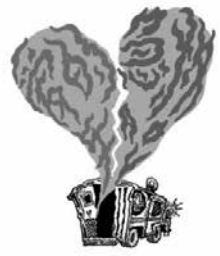
AMBULANCE OF LOVE

Interview with Amuer (Vocals)

By Ryan Dyer

Excerpt from *The Underground in China: Metal, Punk, Hardcore and Noise (2013-2021)*

Ambulance of Love formed in Beijing in 2016, during the years I was living in China, although I didn't actually see the band until later, when I caught them in Tianjin. By then, Beijing's punk scene had already changed from the era of venues such as Temple Bar. I spoke with vocalist Amuer about the accidental origins of the band's name, the changing Beijing punk scene, their willingness to move beyond a strict punk sound, and what keeps them committed to the music after more than two decades of listening to punk.



AU: Your band name is unforgettable. What's the story or song that inspired it?

A: Ambulance of Love comes from a song written by the early Chinese punk band Brain Failure. When we first started the band, a few friends and I put it together very impulsively, and right up until our first show we still didn't have a name. That afternoon, the organizer at School Bar asked us what the band was called. At that exact moment, my former bassist and I were listening to that song, so we just said "Ambulance of Love".



AU: You formed in 2016 in Beijing. I was living there at the time but only caught you later in Tianjin. Back then, the scene felt alive with places like Temple Bar and School Bar. How do you see the Beijing punk scene today?

A: It used to be a lot of fun, and it's still a lot of fun now. No matter where you go, people always seem to say that the previous era was the best one-that things used to be better. But what I want to say is: if you give all your generosity to the present moment, that's already enough. The punk scene today has many punk festivals and many more opportunities to perform. In many ways, that's much better than it used to be. In China, what I see is more and more young people joining the scene. Even though many of them might not fully understand what "punk music" really is yet, I think with time, they'll figure it out.

AU: Your bio jokes about making "terrible music with ugly faces." Two wrongs make a right?

A: "Things reverse when they reach the extreme" - that's a saying from Chinese Taoism. I think it's pretty fun to use it here. The songs sound terrible, and we're not good-looking either. I honestly don't know what qualities we have that would make people like us. But we're always very grateful that people do.

AU: Your latest album experiments with styles like surf rock and reggae. What inspired you to branch out like that?

A: Thanks for noticing the changes in our music. Personally, I really like surf rock. I've listened to a lot of it, so I wanted to try experimenting with that style myself. The song "Bad Thing" was also an attempt to step outside the framework of punk and try something different. But lyrically, it still keeps the sincere core of Ambulance of Love. We just don't want to be locked into a single musical framework. As Chinese rock musicians, we can't eat Chinese food every day either - sometimes you need to have a hamburger or something like that, just to keep things fresh.

AU: What keeps the ambulance fueled?

A: Even though we're almost 40 now and have been listening to punk rock for more than 20 years, we still treat this music like a first love. Every time we hear punk music we really like, it still gives us that same rush of blood and impulse. We chose punk rock as our way of expression, and that makes us feel incredibly proud. It feels like this is something we were simply born to do.

AU: How does the Chinese punk scene compare to what you've experienced when touring internationally?

A: Because of my personal situation, we've had quite a few chances to perform in Japan. When I see many older punks there still insisting on doing what they love, it always moves us deeply. It also makes us hope that we can keep that same passion as we get older.

AU: Chinese punk keeps evolving - what can the world learn from it?

A: As for Chinese punk, I hope more bands will write songs in Chinese. Chinese is our mother tongue, and many Chinese people's English isn't that strong. Sometimes even the lyric writers themselves don't have great English. But the attitude of punk is expressed through the lyrics. If I can't clearly hear your attitude in the lyrics, how can I expect to resonate with you?

AU: Looking ahead, are there new directions or sounds you want to explore - genres you haven't touched yet?

A: As long as it doesn't break the overall character of our band, we'd definitely like to try some different styles. For example, maybe writing a street punk or pogo punx kind of song. Other than that, we haven't really thought too far ahead yet. But we'll just take it slowly over time. After all, we've got plenty of time.

instagram.com/ambulanceoflove





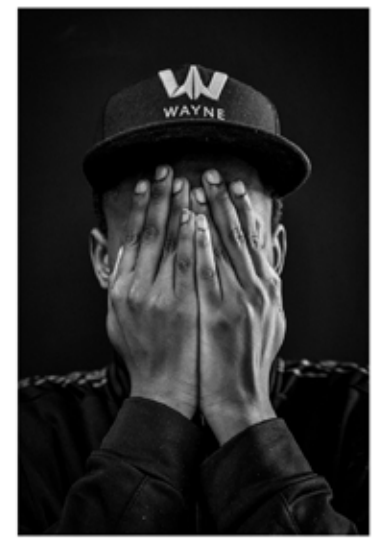


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HOLY VOID

Psychedelic Godrot

Interview with Danny Hacking and Mirina Van Der Veen

By Alayna Hucul

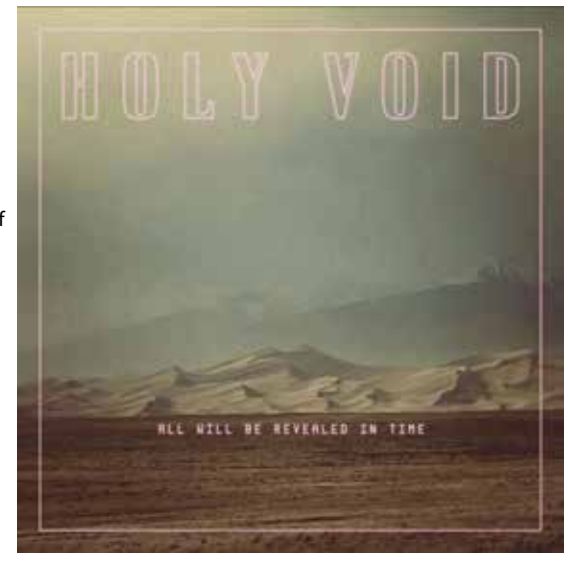
AU: Who's in the band and what does each member bring to the group?

Danny Hacking: Holy Void is Danny Hacking on bass and vocals, Michael Henderson-Castle on guitar and vocals, Grant Trippel on guitar and vocals, Mirina Van Der Veen on violin and Kyle Loewen on drums.

Mirina Van Der Veen: We're pretty different, musically. Danny is a really good songwriter, and a lot of the bangers are his. Michael is really into the math of music and is more experimental, so his songs can take a minute to click. Grant is jazz-trained and really precise, so he brings a more technical musicianship. Everyone puts their own thing into it. Even our older songs keep evolving.

AU: Holy Void is currently working on its third album. How has your sound changed since formation, and how do you feel your third album will help it evolve?

MV: I joined in 2019, but I was going to Holy Void shows before that. Oddly, 2014 Holy Void almost feels more like 2026 Holy Void. The early material had a Swans-like heaviness, then the band got lighter, more Babe Rainbow or Allah-Las, before *Naught* took a darker turn. *All Will Be Revealed in Time* feels more in the world of the Black Angels and Brian Jonestown Massacre. The next album still has some of that, but there is more Wine Lips, Osees and Frankie and the Witch Fingers energy. It still sounds like Holy Void, but more aggressive.



AU: What do you want audiences to take away from your music, live or otherwise?

MV: When I read Danny's lyrics, my brain goes to the political climate we're watching unfold in the States. I think about Trump culture, authoritarianism and the way fear and insecurity can make rigid belief systems feel protective, even as they become more harmful. What gets me is when belief becomes so tied to identity that deterioration almost strengthens the devotion instead of breaking it. People can defend structures that restrict their own rights because those structures also represent order, morality or belonging. So I've started calling the new music "godrot," which to me is when the structure is rotting but the ideology holding it together becomes more sacred. The devotion becomes part of how that rot survives.

AU: Holy Void is currently on a collaborative tour exchange with the prog-rock band Par Ásito, based in Guadalajara. Can you explain to our readers what this looks like and how the two groups managed to connect and come together as artists across international borders?

DH: We were supposed to play FIMGDL in Guadalajara in February, then the New Colossus Festival in New York a week later, which Par Ásito was also playing. They reached out, but our Mexico flights were cancelled. We caught each other's sets in New York instead, got along really well and started talking about touring Mexico and Canada together. Shortly after, Mirina got the idea to get both bands onto the Woodstove Music Festival and started routing a tour around it and our WECC show. Hopefully, Par Ásito is ready for some long drives across the Prairies.

AU: On the tour exchange, what does each band bring to the other? How do these two sounds complement one another live?

DH: There's overlap in the darker, more psychedelic side of both bands. Par Ásito is instrumental and brings in more progressive rock elements. We grew up listening to Mahogany Frog and Shooting Guns, and Par Ásito reminds us of that world. Seeing them in New York felt familiar, like bands we loved seeing back home.

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

MV: Not a classic horror movie, but I love the *Antichrist* soundtrack. The opening piece reminds me of playing in chamber orchestra growing up, and the rest has these intense ambient sounds and textures. It evokes so much emotion and I love it.

AU: Most wicked Halloween costume you ever rocked?

DH: At Sled Island last year, we made our own Heaven's Gate-inspired costumes with custom Holy Void patches.

AU: Do you have any upcoming live shows that readers should look out for tickets for?

DH: We're touring with Par Ásito through Winnipeg, Regina, Saskatoon, Calgary and Edmonton before heading to Cumberland for Woodstove Music Festival. Then we're playing Port Alberni, Victoria, Nanaimo and Vancouver with Gadfly.

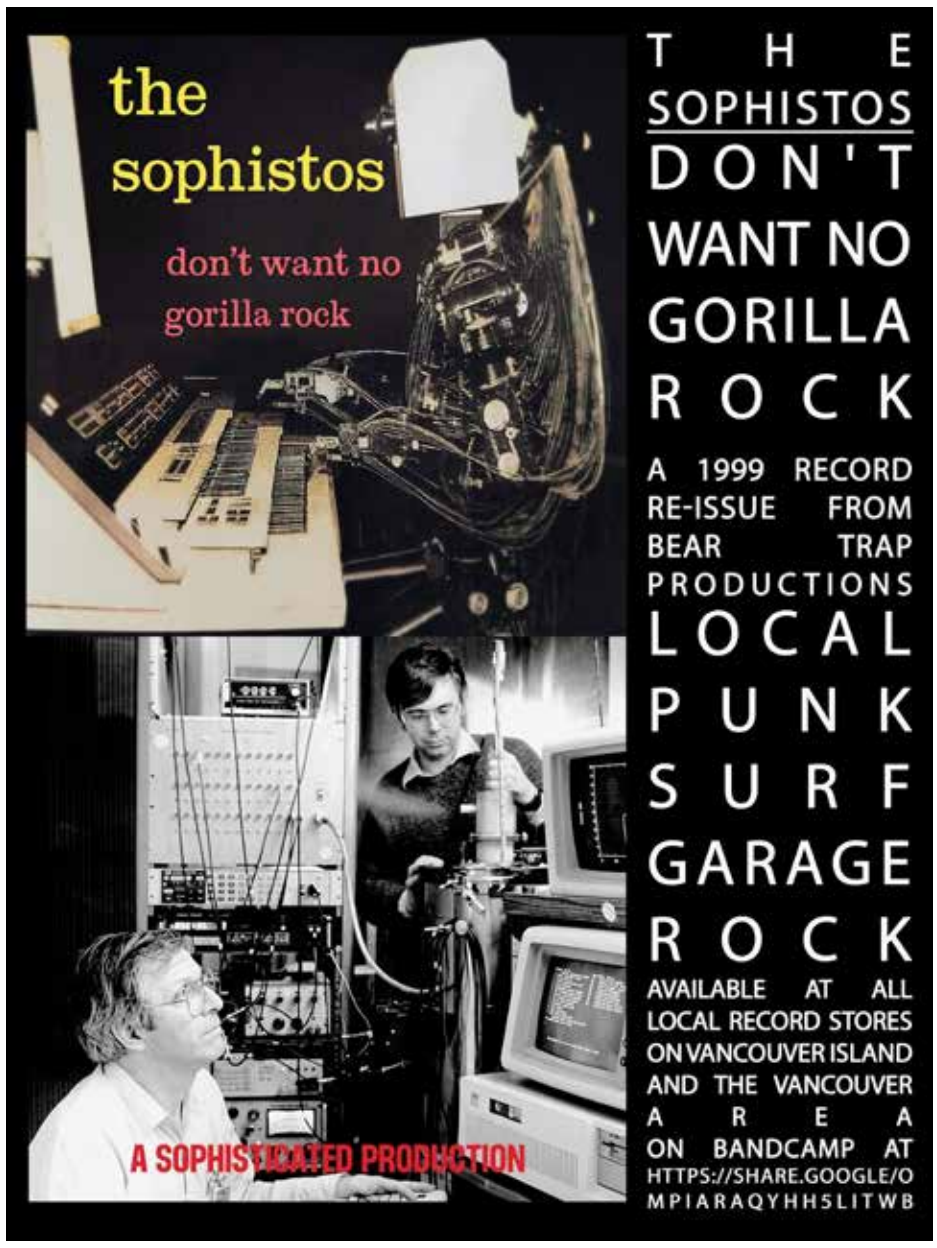
AU: Do you have anything else to promote or any last words for our readers?

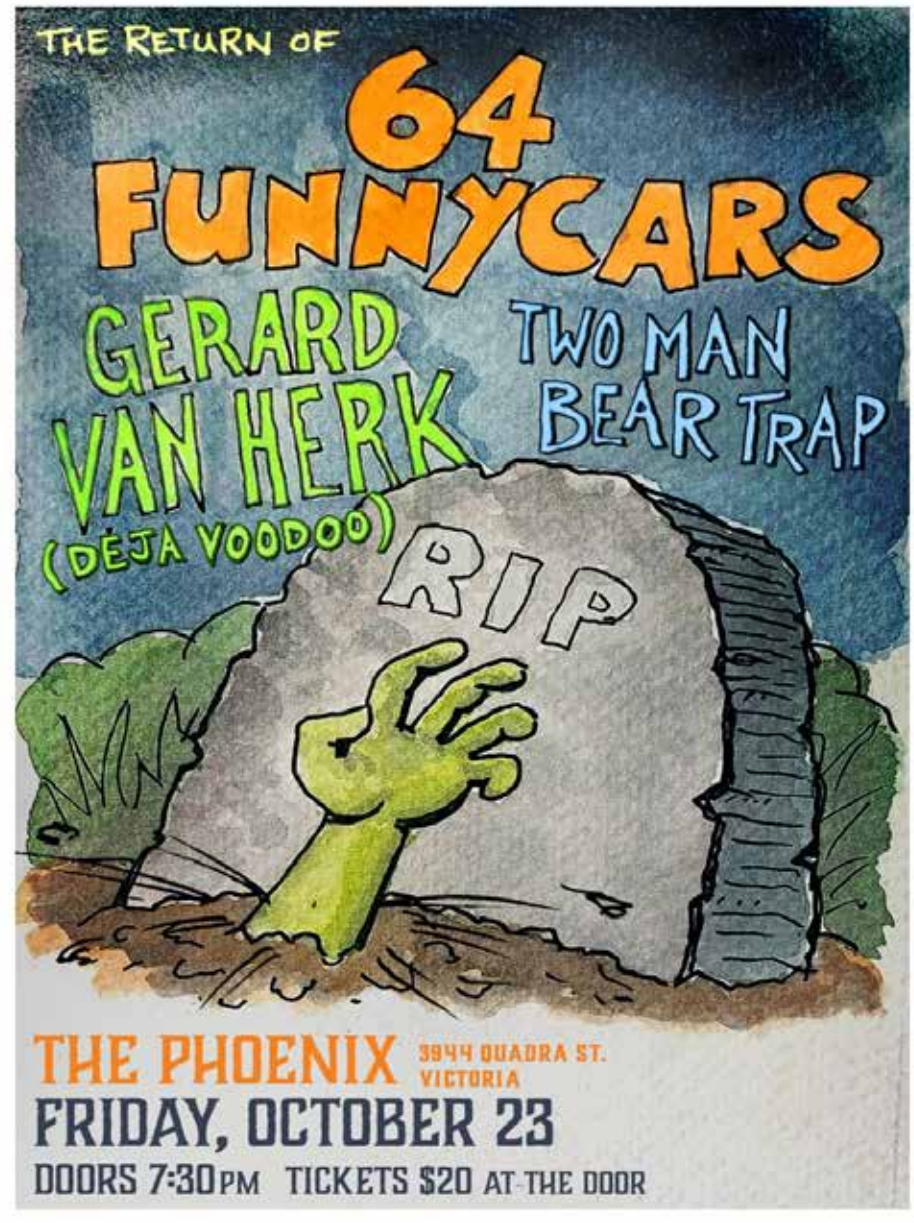
DH: Check out our single "Goat", out Oct. 30, and keep an ear out for more new tunes and a new record in the new year.

holyvoid.ca

instagram.com/holyvoidband

Photo Credits: Delf Gravert, Daniel Boczarski







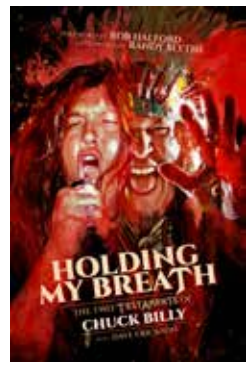
CHUCK BILLY

Legendary Testament Vocalist Releases Revealing Autobiography

Holding My Breath

By Ferdy Belland

"This was definitely something completely new for me," says Testament vocalist Chuck Billy as he reflects on the writing process of his soon-to-be-released autobiography, *Holding My Breath: The Two Testaments of Chuck Billy*.



"Me… writing a book? It wasn't something I necessarily thought about doing, anytime over the years. But it was suggested to me: let's write a memoir! What do you want to write? I didn't know where to start, at first. So I was afraid, going into it. Fear of the unknown and all that. I wasn't sure how much commitment I had to invest in it. But once I got into it, and my conversations with my co-writer David Erickson became more consistent, then things sped up from there. Once Dave got to know me a little better, and was comfortable with how I speak, then the writing began for real. It was an odd experience for me, but he and I got through all the initial remembrances pretty quick. We talked *a lot*, and we got a working flow going and we got a lot done. It was definitely a trip!"

And what a long, wild trip it's been for Chuck Billy over his 64 years. He replaced departing lead vocalist Steve "Zetro" Souza in the fledgling San Francisco Bay Area thrash-metal outfit Legacy in 1986; the band quickly changed its name to Testament (elbowing their way into the Bay Area's second-wave thrash scene alongside Exodus, Death Angel, Forbidden and Vio-Lence) and has spent the past 40 years proudly strutting its high-octane power the world over as one of the all-time best purveyors of American headbanging and heaviosity, with no less than 14 studio albums (the latest being 2025's *Para Bellum*) and almost 2,500 live shows under their collective (bullet) belts. An imposingly burly presence who never fails to rule the stages he strides upon, Chuck is renowned for his powerful bellowing singing style and cutting lyrical storytelling, but offstage he's an endearingly affable sort who's now telling his own story: Chuck's autobiography is set for release on Nov. 10.

"It's not every day you get the chance to talk at length about your entire life," says Chuck, "and it's not easy to talk about yourself in depth… for three months straight! And when you do — especially when I was describing myself as a kid — you say: man, you're kind of a *jerk*! On the other side of that: it's very therapeutic. You connect the dots within yourself, and you put things in place and in perspective. You see things in your life which happened, and maybe at certain times you weren't in the right place at the right time, for whatever reasons, and I saw a lot of that during the process of creating this book. And now that the book's done, I look back on all the other stories which didn't get written down. It's so hard to capture all of it. But I believe Dave and I did a good job of getting across what I wanted to share. I wanted whoever's reading this to know who the kid was, the stubborn eight-year-old who grew up into the young man who found himself the lead singer of Testament."

Chuck quickly found his feet with the creative process, and recounts the oftentimes chaotic joy that came with writing his life down on paper.

"Writing the book was relatively quick, and definitely different from me making a record," says Chuck. "The next thing I know, I have a literary agent! How did *that* happen? So I'm committed to this autobiography project, and the agent wasted no time shopping it around to various publishing houses. He was off and running! We knew it would take a year or so to complete everything: the initial interviews and conversations, then a few drafts of the manuscript, then getting suitable publishers interested… but we landed a publishing deal even before we began writing the manuscript — oh shit! We gotta get going *now*! Permuted Press wanted this done before the end of 2026 and we wondered: is this *possible*? So Dave and I got right down to it. During the course of the writing, Dave would be interviewing my brothers, and the other Testament guys, and all the time someone would say: hey, do you remember when…? And I'd say: shit, I totally forgot! There's just *so much* when you're recalling your entire life, and as the manuscript grew we'd have to make sure we were inserting these newly remembered stories in the right place to keep the timeline correct!

"I mean, the book could've ended up being 600 pages long, but we didn't want that! We wanted to present a lot of in-depth information and colourful stories, but not get carried away… once the dust settles from this book, Dave and I will discuss a standalone Testament biography, so that's where the other stories will go! And, of course, the stories and contributions from the other band members. And I mean, *all* the band members we went through over the years, and how that changed the band but didn't stop us from getting where we are."

There are new rounds of Testament touring in the works for 2027, and Chuck says he'll be making author appearances at selected bookstores, record shops and other venues in and around the shows along the way. Which is a nakedly courageous undertaking for anybody, especially someone who rose through racial prejudice, social alienation, tumultuous personal relationships, the ups and downs of substance abuse, the careening rollercoaster of an erratic music industry and Chuck's dramatic battle against germ cell seminoma, a rare and deadly form of cancer which he bravely fought — and won. Chuck pulls no punches, page in, page out; the book's foreword is proudly written by no less than Judas Priest's resident metal god Rob Halford, with an afterword by Lamb of God's Randy Blythe.

"All I knew, going in, was a general idea of what I wanted to convey to the reader," says Chuck. "I knew what I liked to read whenever I got into somebody else's autobiography. But we didn't have a title for the book, not at first. We didn't quite know where to start. But what kept coming to mind was my family telling me how when I was a demanding kid, I'd hold my breath until I was black and blue and purple and passed out — and got what I wanted! So as Dave and I talked our way through my life, I realized that all the times I got my way — from childhood through adulthood — was akin to holding my breath. Getting the shoes and pants I wanted as a sixth-grader going to school. Or not wanting to cut my hair! All the obstinate, defiant things… and, looking back, it was that persistent stubbornness that prepared me for my later fight with cancer. I can look back now and analyze it: maybe the way my father raised us boys to be strong and willful and tough men… I never knew I was building myself up for a real fight.

"And so *Holding My Breath* became my book's title, and it describes my entire approach to life. It was then that I realized that my story really was divided into two parts, and the book needed to show that. There was one Chuck and one Testament before the cancer, and there was a different Chuck and a different Testament after the cancer. I thought I was going to die at the age of 38; this is it, this is what will take me. But something out there in the universe had a different plan, apparently. So here I am today."

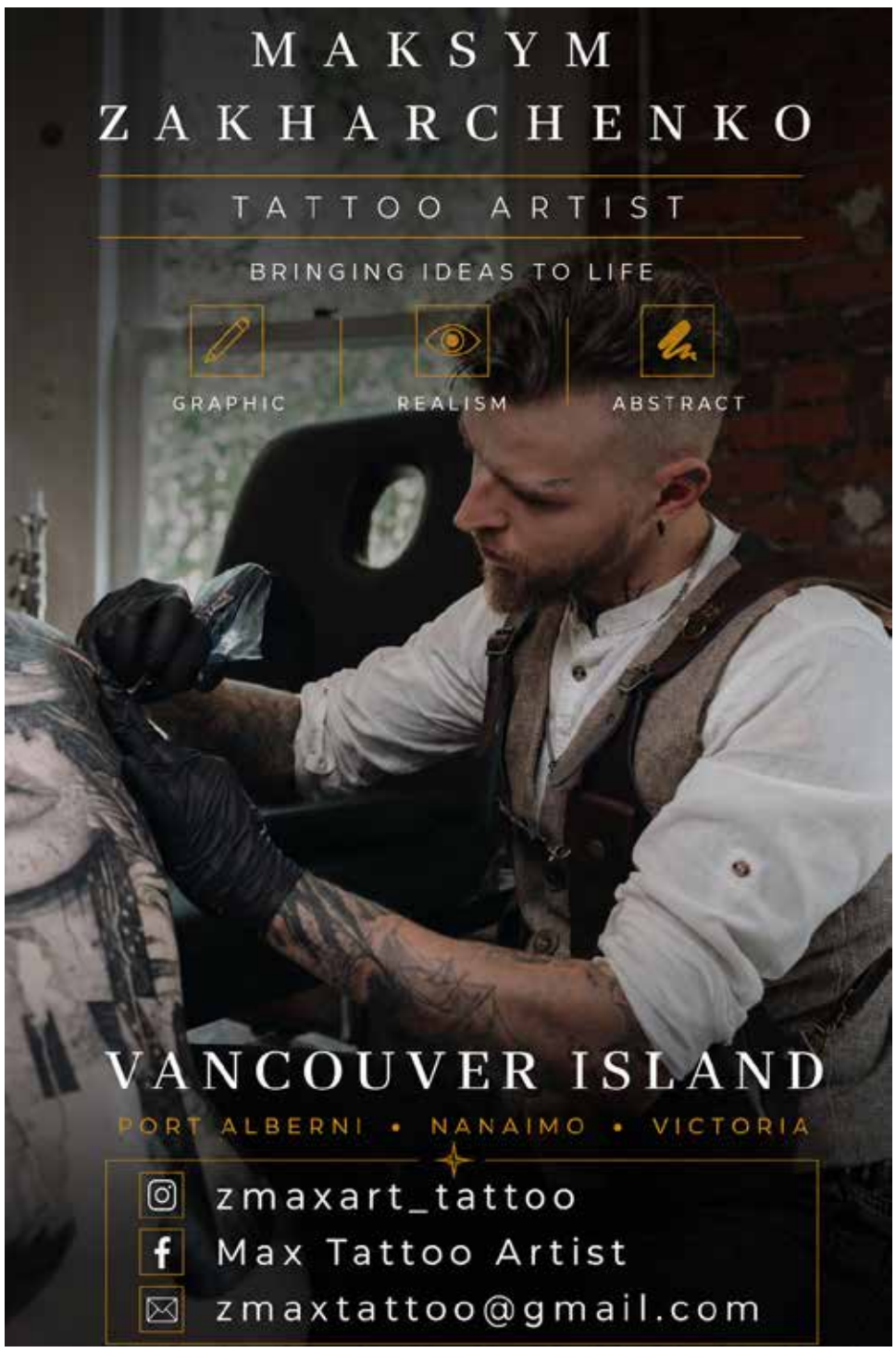
Holding My Breath: The Two Testaments of Chuck Billy releases to the public on Nov. 10. For more information, visit chuckbillybook.com, or support your local independent bookstores.

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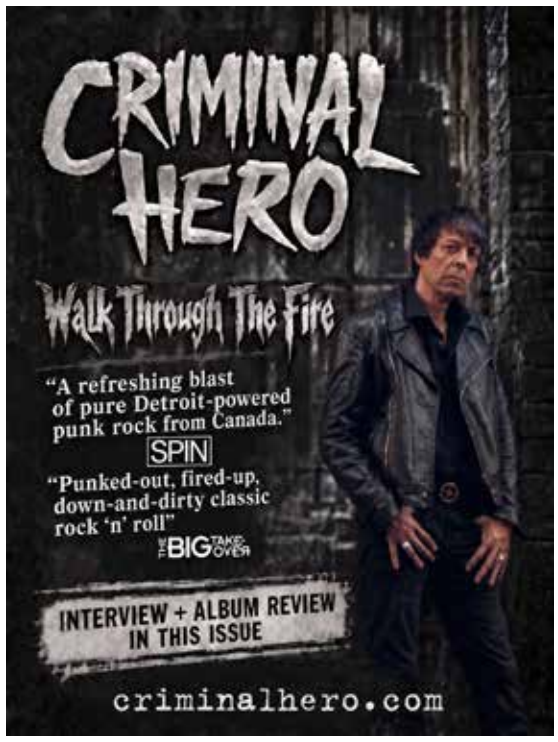
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CRIMINAL HERO

Walk Through the Fire

Interview with vocalist and guitarist Rick Harkness

By Ray MacKay

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

Rick Harkness: I'm Rick Harkness, the songwriter, vocalist and guitarist behind Criminal Hero. As for infamous, some people think I'm a good guy, while others would probably have a few things to say about that. Same guy, different versions depending on who's telling the story.

AU: Who is in your band, Criminal Hero?

RH: It was originally a solo project. I brought in session musicians, Nathan Snyder on bass and Brian Petry on drums, to record the album.

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

RH: I was born and raised in Toronto and played music there when I was younger. I eventually left it behind as I built a career, moved between countries and started a family. Making an album was something I'd always wanted to do, and I didn't want to keep wondering what would have happened if I'd stuck with it. With my partner's support, I wrote and recorded the songs while living in Detroit. For a while, just having finished them was enough. After moving to Vancouver, I decided it was time to release them.

AU: You're Vancouver-based; what do you think of the music scene there?

RH: Yeah, I'm back in the Vancouver area now. I lived here years ago and don't think I'll be leaving again. The music scene is great. The Pearl, Commodore Ballroom and Rickshaw Theatre are my regular hangouts. The bands that those clubs tend to bring in are more my kind of thing.

AU: You have your debut album, *Walk Through the Fire*, that came out Aug. 28. What can you tell us about it?

RH: It's 10 songs I wrote over about six to eight months. There's a lot of relationship stuff in there: attraction, arguments, knowing when to get out, and a few songs about things I see around me that get under my skin. Some are more personal; others come from observations. I wasn't trying to tell one big story. I wanted good songs with a groove, guitars with some bite and anthemic choruses that punch you in the face.

AU: What can fans expect from this album?

RH: It's a feel-good album that lifts you up and makes you want to move. It sits somewhere between '70s rock and punk, with more emphasis on rhythm than on simply hammering out power chords. I grew up on bands with distinct sounds and that matters to me. Some songs are fun, some are pissed off, but strong energy runs through them all. If you're into the Stooges, MC5, Mudhoney, Dead Boys or the Dirty Nil, you'll probably find something you like here.

AU: You have a history of making horror movies. Tell us about that, and how has it influenced your music?

RH: I directed many horror shorts in Vancouver and Toronto and took part in the legendary Bloodshots 48-Hour Horror Filmmaking contest back in the day. Kier-La Janisse founded it, with Paul Armstrong producing alongside her in Vancouver, and they screened it at the Rio Theatre. That run-and-gun filmmaking style is my thing. October's my birthday month and Halloween's my favourite time of year. Making horror movies didn't influence the music, but the imagery is a bit post-apocalyptic. It didn't make me want to play death metal, though.



AU: What are some of your favourite horror movies? Any obscure ones people may not have heard of?

RH: I love *The Witch*, *Hereditary*, *The Babadook* and *The Cabin in the Woods*. But some of my favourites are Korean films: *The Host*, *Train to Busan* and *I Saw the Devil*. They're not exactly obscure, but if you haven't explored Korean horror, you'll find out they know how to make some batshit crazy horror without all the American tropes.

AU: Do you have any weird Halloween traditions?

RH: Not really, but when I lived in Detroit, there was Theatre Bizarre. That thing is next-level nuts. It started as an illegal backyard party and grew into a massive Halloween bash at the Masonic Temple. It has multiple floors, elaborate staging everywhere and secret rooms where they pull select people in for creepy art performances. Burlesque, old-school carnival acts, people hanging by hooks through their skin — all kinds of awesome stuff. I saw the legendary old-school Detroit punk band Death there one year. I've never seen anything like it. It's 100 per cent worth planning a trip for.

AU: Most wicked Halloween costume you ever rocked?

RH: A creepy carnival magician.

AU: Anything else to mention or promote?

RH: The debut album is available on Bandcamp for less than the price of a coffee if you want to support a local independent artist. That would be much appreciated.

AU: How do people find you online?

RH: Visit criminalhero.com for all the interviews, album reviews, videos, radio show recordings and social media links. I probably use Instagram the most, but I would rather use none of it, to be honest.

criminalhero.com

instagram.com/criminalheroband

Photo Credit: Andrew Gerard



THE TROLLENBERG TERROR

Otherworldly Menace in the Mist

By Steve Earles

Also known by the more lurid B-movie title *The Crawling Eye* (which is a pity), *The Trollenberg Terror* is a title far more reflective of the quality of this neglected 1958 gem: a well-made, suspenseful and supremely atmospheric film, similar in some respects to Hammer's contemporary *The Abominable Snowman*.

It was also a big influence on John Carpenter's classic *The Fog*, especially in the sense of atmosphere and otherworldly menace in the mist (which in itself sounds like a good movie title!).

On and around the Swiss mountain of Trollenberg, someone or something is killing mountaineers, including one who literally loses his head.

Two sisters, Anne and Sarah Pilgrim, are travelling to Geneva to perform their mind-reading act, but as they pass the mountain, Anne is drawn to it and insists they disembark there rather than at their destination. They take a room at the local hotel.

Anne really is psychic; her mind-reading act is no parlour trick. At the hotel is a certain Alan Brooks, a UN troubleshooter there to visit his old friend Professor Crevett, who runs a state-of-the-art, weatherproof observatory on the mountain. Crevett tells Brooks of the climbing accidents and also of a stationary radioactive cloud on the mountain's south face. Hans, the barman, tells him similar tales of Trollenberg.

Anne sees a vision of two men, Dewhurst and Brett, in a base camp hut, enveloped and attacked by something in the cloud.

A rescue party finds the hut frozen solid. Dewhurst's body is found, minus its head. Brett kills the two rescuers.

Brett makes his way down to the hotel, claiming he has been lost on the mountain. It's clear he's no longer himself, something he proves when he tries to kill Anne. Brooks subdues him. Brett is cut in the fight, but no blood flows from the wound, and he is imprisoned.

Brooks tells a journalist named Philip Truscott of a similar occurrence in the Andes, where a man murdered an elderly woman who had mental abilities like Anne's. The murderer's body was found to have been dead for at least a day before he murdered the old lady.

"Brett" (for it is no longer he, merely his corpse under the control of whatever alien force is concealed within the cloud) escapes and tries once again to murder Anne. Brooks shoots him, and "Brett," like ice in the sun, decomposes in the heat.



The radioactive cloud starts to descend the mountain towards the hotel. The guests head for the safety of the observatory. A mother discovers her child is missing. A huge tentacled monster with a giant cyclopean eye attacks the hotel, tearing down the front door.

Brooks saves the child, and they head for the cable car to the observatory, but the delay has given the mist the chance to reach the cable car platform. The transport motor starts to freeze, but the cable car narrowly makes it to the observatory. The cloud has split into five to attack the observatory.

Hans turns up at the observatory and attempts to kill Anne, but Brooks stabs him. He and the others make Molotov cocktails to combat the aliens. Brooks radios for an aerial firebombing raid against the observatory, which is strong enough to withstand the blaze.

The aerial firebombing destroys the aliens, and humanity is saved!

The Trollenberg Terror is very much in the vein of the *Quatermass* films and television serials: intelligent science fiction, superbly constructed, otherworldly terror and, above all, great *atmosphere*, if you'll pardon the pun!

It's easy to see its influence on John Carpenter's *The Fog*. The scene where the tendrils of mist envelop the cable car transport motor in *The Trollenberg Terror* is paralleled in *The Fog* when the fog blows the town's generator and cuts all communication to the outside world.

It also shares that Lovecraftian vibe with *The Fog*: the idea that a pitiless universe holds unspeakable threats. It's a film John Carpenter once spoke of remaking. I'd love to see him do that.

There are some great performances: Forrest Tucker gives Alan Brooks a world-weary realism, Janet Munro is so convincing as Anne Pilgrim, and there is a great turn from Warren Mitchell as Professor Crevett.

Overall, *The Trollenberg Terror* is a gem that far more people should seek out and enjoy!







YEGG

Rotten

By Mal Content

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

YEGG: You're talking to YEGG, and we're most infamous for our stench. Today we have Joey, Kephren, Ben and Kyden answering your questions!

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

YEGG: The band formed in 2023 in Nanaimo, BC, as a cover band and jam project that eventually found traction with a handful of our originals and our honest iteration of live music. We garnered some attention in 2025 as finalists for the Wacken Metal Battle and by being featured on Modified Ghost Festival, Armstrong Metal Fest and our Western Canada Kermit Violence tour. This helped drive our first album release, *Rotten*, which came out June 6, 2026. The band consists of Joey Paul on drums, Kephren Jorgenson on lead vocals and Kyden McCormick on vocals and guitar, and in March 2026 we welcomed Ben Molavi on bass. We are here to regress death metal.

AU: What's the music scene in Nanaimo, BC, like these days?

YEGG: Just like any laundry pile, the stinky sock emits the most pungent aroma. Nanaimo has consistently infused heavy music with incredible energy and enthusiasm. Notably, the all-ages scene here has grown exponentially, thanks to places like The Globe and the DIY mindset the pandemic seemed to cultivate here.

AU: Describe the band's sound if possible.

YEGG: Rotten old-school death metal. Regressive death metal.

AU: How would you describe your live show to the visually impaired?

YEGG: We wouldn't have to; the smell speaks for itself. I'd say it could be best described as if Herbal Essences was trying to market a line of alcoholic beverages to a board of Advil trustees. Flowing hair whipping back and forth (except our bald bass player), spreading stench to the oblivious crowds in front. If any of you know a cool-ass chiropractor who is down to drive and sell merch, hit us up.

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

YEGG: Our self-released debut album, *Rotten*, dropped June 6, 2026 (666, baby!). We recorded it at Raincity Recorders in Vancouver, BC, with the amazing Matt Roach. The album perfectly captures our brand of death metal as a band live off the floor. We are incredibly proud of our baby and hope everyone who sees this has a chance to check it out! You will be listening to our love letter to death metal in all forms.

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

YEGG: Zombies, terror and killers, oh my! We make songs about killing people, Lovecraftian horrors, the undead, Carl Panzram and the fucking sun. Oh, and don't forget about frogs!

AU: Any standout tracks you are stoked on?

YEGG: Every song stands on its own, but I think the standout track is "Cavernous Sacrifice". It perfectly encapsulates our influences in a purely raw delivery. It's also about getting your torso hollowed out, so that's chill.

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

YEGG: Yes.

AU: Any plans for Halloween this year?

YEGG: If you can track us down, expect us dressed up like Minions playing in a trailer to a mob of Spirit Halloween enthusiasts. Massive Halloween party, costumes mandatory, vomit optional.

AU: What are some of your favourite horror movies? Any obscure ones people may not have heard of?

YEGG: *Event Horizon* is a personal favourite: Lovecraftian horror packaged as a sci-fi vehicle with Dr. Grant and Morpheus.

Kyden: Check out *Brain Damage*. This guy gets taken hostage by a phallic-looking alien that floods his mind with an endorphin to make him feed on brains through fellatio. Awesome.

Ben: I'd highly recommend *Bone Tomahawk*. It's a western horror with an incredible cast. It also contains one of the gnarliest death scenes you'll ever watch. You can thank me later.

AU: Do you have any weird Halloween traditions?

YEGG: Classic Halloween party done up right: animatronics, weird costumes, ritual sacrifice, trick-or-treating, ya know, the usual. We're horror and Halloween freaks around here.

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

YEGG: *Top Gun*. Kenny Loggins unfortunately didn't get the chance to crush "I Still Believe" or "Dream Warriors".

AU: Most wicked Halloween costume you ever rocked?

YEGG: Kyden's Ricky was legendary.

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

YEGG: We are big soup enthusiasts. Not like Mom's soups or homemade; we are really all about BIG SOUP. Campbell's, hit us up with that 3D-printed chicken noodle sponsorship!

AU: Any upcoming shows or tour plans?

YEGG: We have a few amazing rippers left to round off the year, notably Awkward Fest on Oct. 10 and our annual Garbage Day – Silent Night Deadly Night 3 with Terrifier, Scalding, Butcher and Mutual Trauma. We are planning on going back into the studio to work on new material for 2027 and anticipating another round of touring for *Rotten* in places we have not explored — looking at you, Eastern Canada!

AU: Anything else to mention or promote?

YEGG: Please check out our debut album, *Rotten*, and throw out your Speed Stick. Thanks to Dave and Noise Agony Mayhem for helping us with our vinyl release; go there to grab your copy or hit us up on Bandcamp!

AU: Final words of wisdom for our readers?

YEGG: Rashes are temporary, stench is eternal. Fuck deodorant.

Rotten is out now and streaming on all major platforms, with limited copies through Bandcamp and select stores across Western Canada.

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Photo Credit: Ashe Young

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THE 351'S

Long-Haul Quebec Punk Rock

Interview with guitarist and singer Kev Alley Cat

By Ray MacKay



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

Kev Alley Cat: This is Kev, aka AC — Alley Cat. Blue-collar long-haul truck driver by trade, thirty-some years behind the wheel. Got into punk rock back in the late '80s.

AU: Who is in your group?

AC: Dom Rudester on bass, Martin G. on drums and me on guitar and vocals. Three's a good number — we don't need HR to manage us!

AU: For our unfamiliar readers, please give us a brief history of the 351's.

AC: We started three years ago. All three of us used to play together in another band, which we all quit at the same time because of a toxic member. We weren't done with music, though, so we decided to start fresh, on our own terms. We didn't set out to play any particular genre — we just play in our own style, which ends up giving us kind of an old-school punk rock sound.

AU: You're from Quebec. What do you think of the music scene there?



AC: It's probably like any other small scene out there — it's tough, man. Not a lot of venues, no big crowds, even at $15 for three bands. People are broke — no judgment here, we totally get it — beers are $10 to $12, so it takes a bigger name to get people out. But we've got to build our name by playing! It's time- and money-consuming for us, but hey, that's the game.

AU: You've already released two EPs with a third in the works. What can you tell us about them?

AC: Both were released early in the band's life. We didn't have a lot of experience yet, but we wanted something to offer, to promote and to build on. *No Replacement for Displacement* and *Against All Odds* — the second one was kind of a statement: we're here to stay!



AU: What can you tell us about your most recent vinyl release, *Worst Case Scenario*?

AC: It's our first two EPs — we're kind of old school. Being on Spotify and all the other platforms lets us reach the world, but we wanted something for us — we wanted the physical "object" of all our efforts. So we put both EPs on a vinyl. It's just a small batch.

AU: What are some of your favourite horror movies? Any obscure ones people may not have heard of?

AC: I know Dom's a big fan of the *Terrifier* series. Me, I'm into anything made before the late '80s. In the Quebec City local punk scene, there's this guy named Patrick Fortin (Goriest Prod) who makes DIY, low-budget hardcore gore movies. Check it out!

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

AC: I don't know about a whole soundtrack, but for a theme song, it's gotta be *Halloween*. It still kind of freaks me out!

AU: Most wicked Halloween costume you ever rocked?

AC: It wasn't for Halloween, but I once dressed up as a weird alien on stage at a Green Jelly concert; it's part of the act. The foam head stunk, I was suffocating, couldn't see a thing, but man, that was cool! One of the best, craziest shows I've ever seen!

AU: In your opinion, what is *the* essential punk album?

AC: Besides all the classics — Ramones, Misfits, Clash…

Martin: Crass, *The Feeding of the 5000*.

Kev: Bérurier Noir, *Concerto pour détraqués*.

Dom: The Oppressed, *Skinhead Times*.

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

AC: Not a lot of shows for now — we're working on new songs and we'll be in the studio by the end of October. After that, we want to book a few dates in Ontario around June.

AU: Any final words for our readers?

AC: Thanks for having us — hopefully one day we'll be able to play a few shows in BC!

AU: How do people find you online?

AC: The usual: Facebook page, website, Spotify and some others.

the351sband.com







PAGE GOBLIN MAGAZINE

Interview with Founder Ceyda-Anne Altiok

By FLORA

Absolute Underground: What inspired you to start *Page Goblin*, and what did you want this little publication to be when you first started?

Ceyda-Anne Altiok: *Page Goblin*, funnily enough, is greatly inspired by *Coffee Table News*, which is something that's been around since 1988. That physical media for restaurants, coffee shops and retailers, to me, was deeply fascinating because it was effective and widely distributed. When I was in my early teens, there was a very similar publication to *Page Goblin* called *Toad Hex Magazine*, which was published and distributed by Gytha Cooperative in Calgary before being discontinued in 2022. I think I was devastated when they stopped. By my fourth year of university, I had wanted to do something of the same nature, but broaden the scope of who and what I include in each issue. It gives artists a different platform to showcase their art within physical media, and I really wanted to promote small businesses and makers within Calgary, such as The Dandy Brewing Company, which appeared in our first issue!

AU: *Page Goblin* highlights local small businesses, tattoo artists, illustrators and musicians. What makes Calgary's indie and underground creative community such an interesting one to document?

CA: It's honestly such a diverse community full of the weird and wonderful! Calgary has a huge underground music and arts community that if you aren't actively living here, you might not know we even have. Whenever people think of big cities with this type of scene, they'd think Vancouver, Montreal and Toronto… but honestly, I feel Calgary is starting to contend with those big three here in Canada. Obviously, the music scene is huge and full of different sounds, but our public art initiatives are also growing with things like the BUMP mural festival. Zine culture is also very prominent here; lots of students at AUArts start up zine projects, some of which have become quite notable in the scene. Basically, it's a huge melting pot, and every issue of *Page Goblin* is unique in the sense that you don't know what you are going to see next.



AU: What do you think the physical copies of *Page Goblin* bring to the project that you can't get from simply putting the magazine online?

CA: Well, first off… it looks so much better! I mean, every time I've given them out at markets, people have said to me that it presents so much better physically. When I'm formatting the flyer, I am thinking of it being printed above everything else, as this is the thing that makes *Page Goblin* more accessible than something only available online.

I've grown up on *Mad Magazine*, *Creepy Magazine* and *Cracked Magazine*, which have all been around since the '50s and '60s. These publications are at the core of my love of physical media; that's all we had in the past, and people looked forward to picking up local flyers and publications. One thing I've found is that the desire for physical media hasn't died… a lot of people want the real deal rather than only the PDF. I've had people come up to me and show me that they've used *Page Goblin* in their junk journals, which is beautiful because one form of art has transferred over into another, and that's something you don't get often with PDFs.

AU: *Page Goblin* has a fun DIY aesthetic. If you were to create a Halloween-themed issue, what would you want to fill its pages with?

CA: This may or may not be a spoiler depending on if the poster is out before this interview is published, but our third issue is planned to be a horror issue! I'm hoping to fill its pages with some gothic, gory, metal and campy illustration work… a little bit of everything, honestly! I personally love retro Halloween aesthetics, especially vintage masks and candy buckets, so I'd love to see some of that. I want the flyer to be super nostalgic in terms of aesthetic, and we have yet to decide on the writers, interviews and small businesses that are going to be featured. All I can say is I'm super excited for this issue and its concepts!

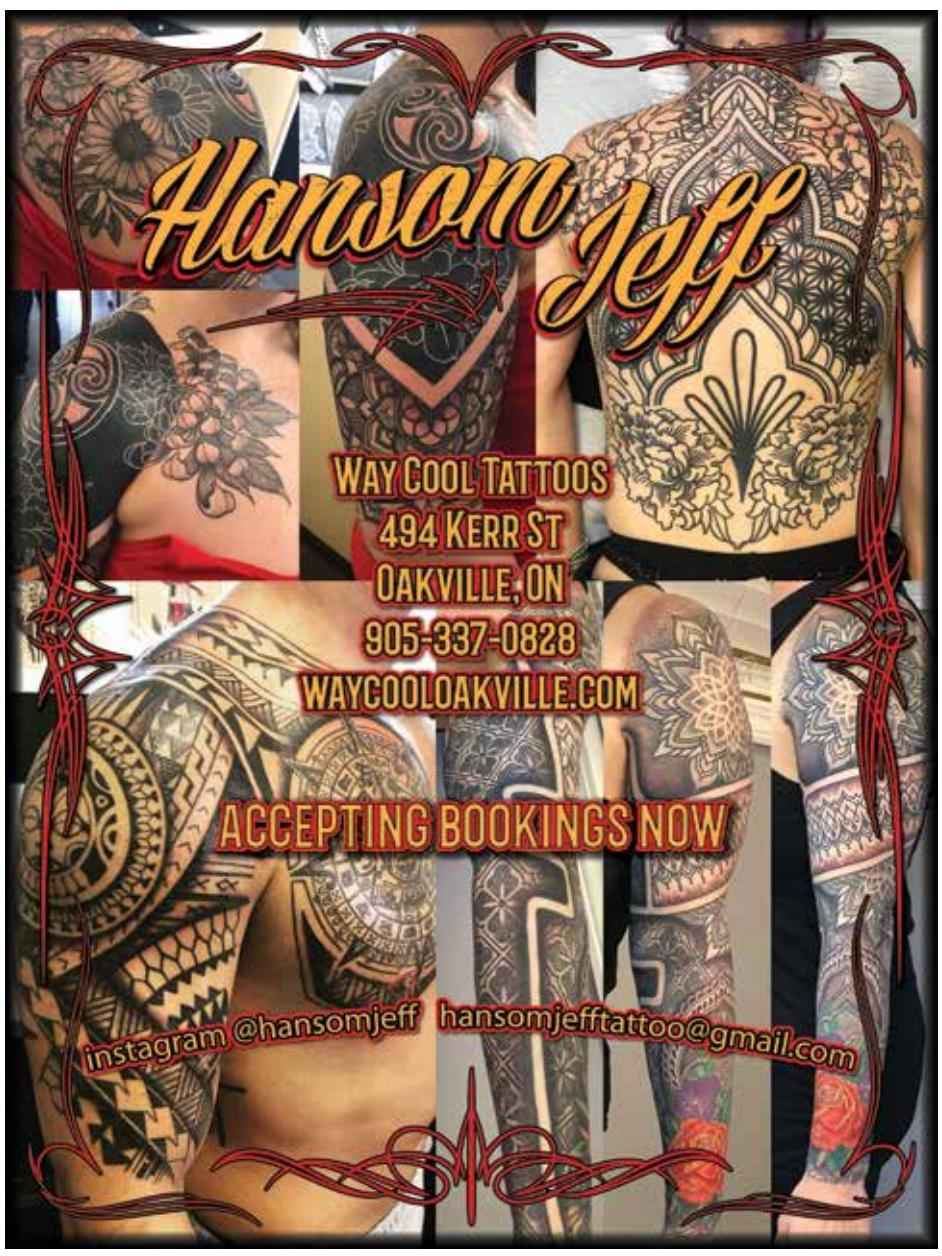
AU: This started as a fun little project, but the response to the first issue surprised you. What did that early response tell you about the appetite for something like this?

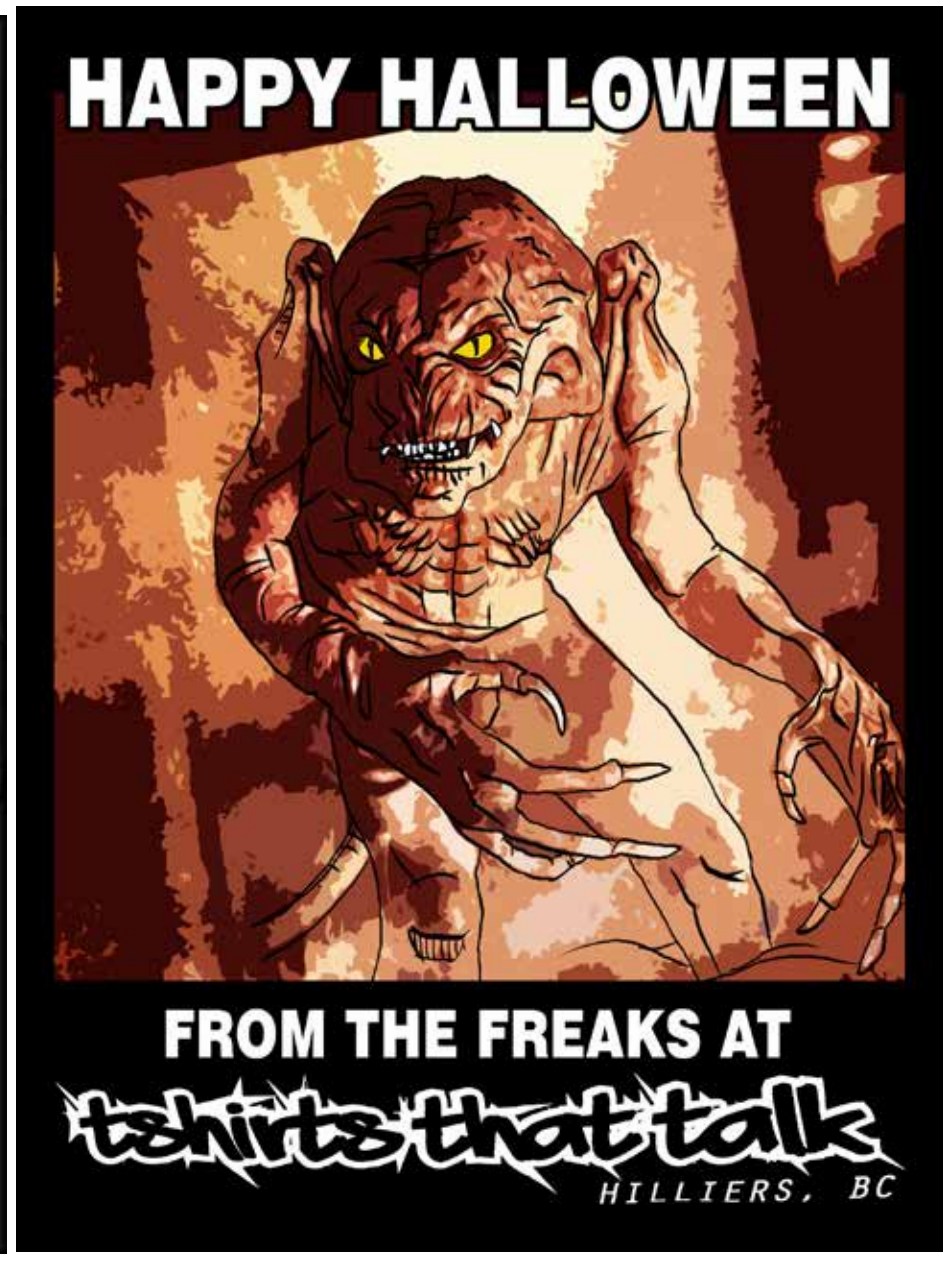
CA: As I mentioned before, I think it honestly has a lot to do with the tangibility of it; it's something you can pick up with your coffee, draw on, highlight, pass around, cut out and so on. There's really no fixed use for it, and in that, people get excited. I think most of that excitement comes from the fact that everything has been so digitized, but for the artists and businesses involved in each issue, there's something so special about having such a supportive and broader-ranging foundation for their work to be showcased.

AU: With your studies keeping you busy and *Page Goblin* currently coming out about two or three times a year, what would you like to see happen with the magazine as the project continues to grow?

CA: I'd really like to grow this into a full-blown publication! Obviously, post-graduation could take me anywhere… but *Page Goblin* has become a very special project for me within my studies. I would like to have issues released more frequently, possibly every second month! I've also been thinking a lot about mailing lists, in this case mostly digital… and I've been thinking of creating a *Page Goblin*-adjacent publication purely for kids! I would have loved to have something like this as a kid, and although *Page Goblin* is completely kid-friendly already, I like to think of what it would mean for it to be fully tailored for children and what kinds of submissions that would invite!

instagram.com/pagegoblinmagazine







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BABYDOLL TATTOOS

Interview with Dré Cowdell

AU: Please introduce yourself.

Dré Cowdell: My name is Dré, and I am a 37-year-old tattoo artist and owner of Babydoll Tattoos in Burnaby/Vancouver.

In true millennial fashion, I identify as a dog mom and have an aggressive side part.



AU: What's the story of how you got into tattooing and built Babydoll Tattoos?

Dré: I have been tattooing for about 11 to 12 years, and I have owned Babydoll Tattoos for 10 years this upcoming May. I grew up in a disciplined household focused on academics, sports, music and artwork, and studied visual arts and art history at UBC.

Unfortunately, I wasn't particularly tenable, nor practical. I struggled enormously with existing comfortably in my own body and eventually left university for eating disorder treatment in California. When I got my first tattoo at 23, something shifted. It was the first time I experienced control over my body in a way that helped me, not hurt me.

A few bumps later, I added clean and sober to my resume, picked up a pencil again and found myself at 25 or 26 hating my corporate job — and really, really hating working for other people. I then did the thing I will scream at the top of my lungs *not to do*: I bought a rotary machine online intending only to tattoo myself.

The recovery community of New Westminster had other plans. If there is one thing an addict loves, it's a tattoo — but what they *really* love is a cheap tattoo. One friend became two, became four, and I eventually licensed a 100-square-foot office with no windows — but hey, it had a sink!

The business grew, but my success was not proportionate to my education, and I knew it. What I did offer was a personal connection to clients' experiences in their bodies — scar coverups, decorating areas they felt insecure about — and if one person felt more at home in their skin, it was worth it.

AU: At what point did you feel like you had truly become a tattoo artist?

Dré: At seven years in, with a full shop, I finally had the opportunity to fill in the blanks I had skipped. Art Godoy had remained a special friend and my hero in tattooing. After COVID, he offered to teach me about electromagnetic machines and why tattooing was done the way it *was* done.

Despite my fangirl ways, I tried coil machines because Art Godoy said they were better; I kept using them because they *are* better. Fight me. I will out-science you.

I felt like I was starting over whilst running a shop full of artists. This was not plug-and-play; it was accumulated practice and understanding. Three years in, I finally feel like I can stand on my own as a tattooer and, quite frankly, know my shit. Coil machines are not the answer without proper knowledge and tuning, and hand-soldered needles are not better without the quality control the process is intended to ensure.

That experience taught me that whatever you deem your preference to be, you better be able to explain what your preference is *over*. Tattoos saved *my* life, and when you are altering someone's body permanently, good enough is not good enough. Question the boxes and use your own critical thinking to determine what is best for your client.

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

Dré: Good, versatile tattooing. Lol.

I was educated in different styles and mediums, and I brought that versatility into tattooing. I don't love specializing because your style should transcend whatever genre you work in — the space between niche and narrow is, well, narrow.

Most would say fine-line, although I have big issues with what is deemed fine-line today. That said, I genuinely love it since learning to solder and sharpen my own singles to achieve the finest of fine lines. I also do a lot of creative, symbolic work in a distinctive style of illustrative realism.



I am also known for tattooing minors with parental consent and turning what could be the worst thing your kid does behind your back into a healthy experience built around communication and compromise. I particularly feel like an honorary high school senior from Lynden, Washington.

But they can buy a tattoo machine on Amazon.

Go figure.

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

Dré: Some — including my own team and Art — would probably say, with a groan, "What *doesn't* make Babydoll Tattoos unique?" We are retro-surfing-alien themed, which may seem as ADHD as I am. And it is.

The retro California side pays homage to the era and place where Western tattooing really started being defined — Good Time Charlie's Tattooland, the single needle, black-and-grey tattooing — while satisfying my need to pretend I work in a better climate.

The alien comes from the comfort I found in tattoo shops as a confused twenty-something-year-old looking to fit in. They were islands of misfit toys, where not fitting in is what makes you fit in. Our only commonality of any weight is tattoos.

And my little alien says, "Your skin may be green, or your skin may be blue. We're the ones they call different. But here? We're alien too."

AU: What sorts of music are usually playing at the shop?

Dré: Make tattooing punk again!

I play old punk because it is the f***in' best, and people don't always realize how melodic '70s punk can be as background music. I try to compromise, but BDT has four musical boundaries: hardcore gangster rap, Taylor Swift, rawr-rawr music and nnnttzz-nnnttzzz music.

As long as we avoid those, I tolerate the rest. But we identify as old punk — as illustrated by my daily choice of T-shirts.

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

Dré: Two things — and neither is my actual tattoos. Don't get me wrong, I am really good at that! But there are a lot of good tattoo artists, and I think you have to offer more.

I am proud of the environment and relationships I offer my clients. Tattooing is oddly intimate, and I want the shop to feel welcoming and relaxed. We won't belittle your ideas, and if you feel ill, your health comes first. I may be the owner and artist, but as people, we are peers.

I also talk candidly and without shame about my own experiences. I have been a 12-step member, and part of my ongoing duty is to use attraction rather than promotion. I have clients who are now sober, and grandmothers have brought their granddaughters along because they see me as a positive female role model.

Tattooing is every day for us, but for each client it is a once-in-a-lifetime moment carrying the artwork, experience and sentiment.

Also, I am funny!

And two — my artistic and technical education, and my evolution into the fundamentals of tattooing.

AU: Does the shop offer piercings as well?

Dré: No. We did, which means we still field a lot of calls about it. We are open to a new piercer, though, if anyone is interested!

AU: What's the craziest request for a tattoo you

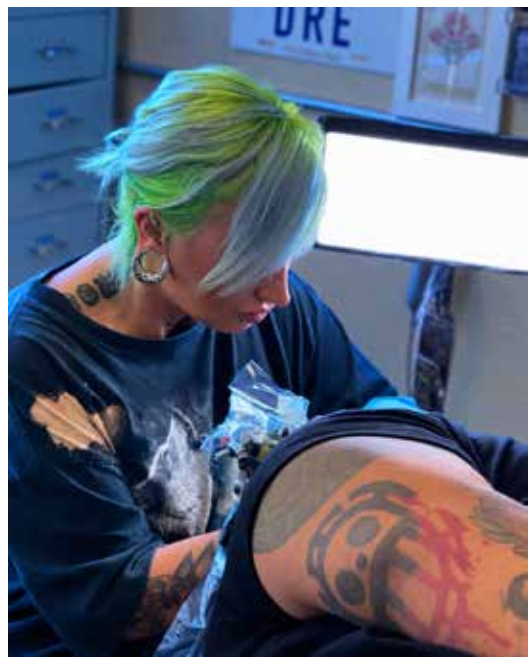




have ever gotten?

Dré: I am going to skip right past the obvious request one receives as a female tattooer, because when I offer up a male artist, it usually falls flat.

As for a real request, I tattooed over a friend/client's self-harm scars as part of my discounted trauma-cover-up program — except she didn't want them covered. She works in outreach and wanted to start a conversation, so I tattooed the scars to look frighteningly fresh. The photo is banned on social media. It was incredibly ballsy and showed her commitment to her advocacy work.



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

Dré: My favourite request is: bring me the tattoo someone else said "can't be done." Whether it is a cover-up, fix or new piece, "can't be done" often just means *they* can't do it. The most messed-up tattoo I haven't seen yet is probably my Dréam piece.

AU: Anything else you want the readers to know about you?

Dré: I feel like I have already given them more than they asked for! But yes: I value ethics, integrity and honesty above all. I put clients first — their experience and their tattoo. I am not the final consumer in this job. If I make a suggestion, choose a tool or comment on current practices, it comes from ongoing learning and assessing what is best for the actual tattoo.

"Your skin is your most immediate home" is my philosophy — your skin home! You are the only one who has to live there, so make it the most comforting to *you*. I will never judge someone's choices about their body or appearance as long as they are authentic and not causing harm. Looking "right" is not the frame of reference for being happy in your skin — being authentic and content is.

At the same time, executing tattoos is not opinion-driven. There is a credible baseline for tattooing, and we owe it to our clients to be accountable to it.

AU: How important do you think it is for a tattoo artist to have personal experience being tattooed?

Dré: If tattoo artists aren't going to have wild tattoos and tell you, "This is f***in' great — trust us," then who is? I became a tattoo artist in part because it allowed me to have wild tattoos, colourful hair and look how I wanted. We are advocates for living as tattooed people — the working hands and voice of tattooing — encouraging others to take permanent ownership of how they look, so we need a leg to stand on when we do that.

There is real value in one tattooed person saying to another, "Don't be scared. This was my experience." You cannot entirely replace lived experience: pain, placement, healing, aftercare or fucking up your own skin before fucking up anyone else's.

And if I am not only unwilling to be tattooed, but unwilling to be tattooed by *me*, how can I ask anyone else to have that confidence?



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

Dré: If it seems too good to be true, it is. Question everything, understand the framework of our industry and ask why. Tattoo schools? Opinion aside, I won't entirely dismiss them, but understand that we aren't currently working within a framework that includes this. Credibility is not what someone says, nor what their Instagram looks like. It comes from a lineage that can be traced and substantiated.

Don't give your money away to someone. Understand what credentials are valid and why. We are an industry with rules where they don't benefit and a lack of rules in areas that directly affect newcomers trusting senior tattooers to be honest, above-board and concretely substantiated in what they say.

We are artists, but our medium is a technically precise, medically involved skill. Design can be creative; execution still requires proper technical understanding.

Just because information is prolific doesn't make it correct, and just because everyone does something that way doesn't make it right.

The industry is in a dangerous feedback loop where incomplete knowledge from artists, teachers, suppliers and clients creates a projection of normal. Each party believes the other is correct, reinforcing amateur information until newcomers think it is fact. Look for the foundation and reference point of credibility. I'm not saying it is all wrong — I'm saying to question what has determined its rightness.

AU: How do people set up an appointment or find you online?

Dré: For appointments or discussing ideas, I always say text me so I have our conversation as a reference if we move forward.

Online, you can find me at @babydolltats on Instagram and at our messy-but-really-cool-looking website, babydolltattoos.com.

I can confirm it is no longer a pornography site.

That is a story for another day!

babydolltattoos.com

instagram.com/babydolltats

Babydoll Tattoos, 3744 Hastings St., Burnaby, BC

Text: 778-288-4833







AMON AMARTH

Bassist Ted Lundström Discusses New Album *The Allfather Awakens*

By Ferdy Belland

"It's always fun to release new music to the people," says Ted Lundström, the rough-and-ready bass warrior behind Sweden's beloved melodic death-metal eternals Amon Amarth. "We've already released a few advance singles, but it's exciting to get the response from the full album."

Amon Amarth's new album, *The Allfather Awakens*, was released worldwide on Oct. 2 — the band's 13th album since 1997; it's a solid return to form, which improves upon the band's recent material while safely sticking to their signature Vikings-are-Everything style. They're not trying to reinvent themselves, nor should they: they perfectly balance aggression with the highly memorable melodic hooks and twin-guitar harmonies Amon Amarth fans are always keen to hear. Standout tracks include "Gjallarhorn", "Kvasir's Blood" and "Ascending Like an Eagle" — the grandly epic six-minute closing song.

"We had an earlier start to things this time, as compared to how we did the previous albums," says Lundström. "The touring schedule from us promoting our last record was extended — we were offered a lot of tours we couldn't say no to! We toured with Dethklok and Castle Rat — that was a good bill! Every band had their own identity, but complemented each other, and the fans loved it. So we started writing new songs during the later part of our touring season. And as soon as we were finished the shows, we continued on the same path. After we got a bunch of material together, we were looking for a new studio to record in, and wound up in Jacob Hansen's facility in Denmark. We went there for a few weeks in early 2025 with a few songs to work with, to try things out. Everything went great, so we returned in early 2026 to record the rest of the album. A bit of a different recording process for us."

Amon Amarth's creative approach ends up with all band members taking part, even if they focus more on guitars (rather than broadswords) in the studio; when you're Scandinavia's leading international proponents of Viking metal — even if the band themselves don't refer to Amon Amarth with that title — the musical slang "axe" takes on all sorts of meanings.

"The normal songwriting procedure nowadays comes mainly from our guitarists, Olavi Mikkonen and Johan Söderberg," says Lundström. "They write most of the stuff at their home studios. As soon as they work through their basic ideas and are getting close to carving out a completed song, they'll send it out to the rest of us so we can get the feel of things. Then we'll meet up and have a group listening session, and bounce around any other ideas which come to mind. Maybe where to go, lyrics-wise. We don't have a rehearsal room anymore — the space we used to use closed down, and we never bothered to find a new space. So when we come up with a batch of new material that's worth working on, we'll hire a temporary rehearsal space as needed and work all the songs out then. We'll solidify the arrangements and then go back home. We'll send any other ideas we have around to each other. It's a continuous process, and in the end everyone's involved."

An unexpected and happy surprise on *The Allfather Awakens* is the song "Upphaf", Amon Amarth's first-ever all-acoustic composition. It's an understated Nordic-style tune which provides a pleasing mid-album interlude without taking anything away from the band's traditional let's-stomp-on-those-wimps-from-Northumbria aesthetic — where tonight we're gonna party like it's 1099.

"The idea for us to do an acoustic track just came up suddenly," says Lundström. "Olavi had a bunch of riffs hanging around forever, stuff he couldn't do anything with in an electric version. But then he tried the riffs acoustically and things came together, so he pitched the idea to the rest of us. We all thought it'd be a fun idea to try something different, since we had time in the studio to work with it. If it didn't turn out well, we would've ditched it. But we were surprised with how fun it was for us to play this acoustic piece, and how good it turned out in the studio, so we included it on the album. And it feels right."

Although the world of longboat-loving louts will have much to enjoy with *The Allfather Awakens*, the album's release isn't slowing the band down.

"As soon as the album's released, we'll be out touring again," says Lundström. "We'll be on the road for six weeks or so, and we'll hit a bunch of big arenas across Europe. It'll be a good tour. We've spent the better part of 2026 focusing on the album and preparing new stage production for the upcoming shows. For the rest of the year we'll be taking some time off to relax a bit — we've got a pretty busy schedule ahead of us for 2027, touring basically everywhere! We're wanting to come back to North America. It's in the plans."

Amon Amarth have been a metal institution for 35 years, and have carved out a singular space for themselves in the metal world by combining their melodic death-metal musical attack with the mythology and imagery of their Viking ancestors. But nobody is more surprised at their success than Amon Amarth's band members themselves.

"When we first started out, way back in 1992, we had no idea what the future held for us," shares Lundström. "In the beginning, we were just happy to be able to record a demo! Everything we've ever done over the years has been a long series of small steps. We released our first demo tape, then we started playing small shows in our hometown of Tumba — and of course in Stockholm whenever we could! Things began growing a little bit from there. Then we got our first record contract. We always approached our goals one step at a time. And everything always grew steadily. But if someone told me back in 1992 that I'd still be playing metal in 2026? I would've said *no way*! It wasn't even on my list of dreams.

"What can I say? I am super-stoked. Amon Amarth has become my job! I'll be happy for as long as it lasts. There's always a new spot on the map you need to conquer!"



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FRANKLIN

Messages from the North: Embarking on the Decay Tour

Interview with drummer Evan Joel and bassist Kirsty Wells

By Eric Lindholm

Absolute Underground: Good day! Where are you and what's in your cup?

Evan Joel: We are at Rain City Recorders in Vancouver, finishing up recording with my other band, Bison. I have a black coffee; it's making me really jittery, so I'm also drinking a Strait N Narrow to try and balance out. Kirsty's about to do guest vocals.

Kirsty Wells: In an hour and a half, we're loading in for the first show of our Western Canadian fall tour.

AU: Getting set to tour in Vancouver! Congratulations! How are you feeling?

EJ: Excited! This is our biggest tour, where we'll do back-to-back shows in a row. We're excited to tour, and the tightness that comes from playing daily.

AU: With back-to-back shows, is there a sense of "Can we do this?" from a gear, performance, health and hopefully tour van transmission point of view?

KW: We definitely have some prep to do still, especially for the third show in Kelowna onwards. We have van prep and gear gathering to do for the big haul, but we're ready.

EJ: With every tour, there comes a bit of anxiety — making sure that all of the stuff works. I think that is outweighed by the excitement! Touring is really fun because every night you improve, get a little bit better from your last show. I love it.

AU: Can you tell us the origins of the band?

KW: We started, just Evan and I. We started jamming as a pandemic band for fun in 2022, with the intention of having fun. We realized quickly that we had something cool going on, and worked to put together an album and music video. That album, *Decay*, has been out since January.

EJ: About the beginning, the goal was just to have fun. We started with small amps. Playing around, and Kirsty learned how to scream really well. Then we got more and more amps! Having fun while being loud, I think, is one of the big things that we're really enjoying. That movement of air and the catharsis that comes along with it.

AU: We saw you live at Wheelies. I remember a song, "Queen's Revenge". Can you take us through the meaning of the lyrics and what you conveyed to the crowd?

KW: I wrote a bass riff in response to some bigotry that was happening in Whitehorse. There was a drag story time for kids at an "arts in the park" scenario. A really conservative politician in the North had nothing good to say about it; nothing he had to say made any sense. As you know, most conservative politicians, when they're talking about queer art, really have no idea what they're talking about. He said some really awful things. It was really upsetting. Evan was really frustrated by that, so he wrote a riff, showed it to me, and I wrote lyrics, and now it's become… for me… it feels like spell-casting to do that song live. It feels like we're collecting all of the rage in the crowd and then releasing it all at once together at the end. It's become this anthem of protection for queer rights, trans rights and for queer art. As a queer person, it feels really good to scream about that. I love it. It's become a song that a lot of people have really enjoyed. At almost every show, when we're at the merch booth at the end or cruising around talking to folks, someone comes up and is like, "Thank you for that. I needed that."

AU: Can you tell us a lesson that emerged from recording your first album? Is there any advice you can offer to bands making their first recording and trying to determine how to come across and accurately deliver what your vision is?

EJ: Try to do your best job. Don't ever "half-ass it," because you never know how it's going to turn out. If you half-ass something that ends up becoming a thing that you're sharing with everybody… you might as well just always full-ass.

KW: I think, to riff off of that, one of the things I learned recording as someone who had never done it before — Evan has more experience with that, but it was my very first time — I think the thing I learned was if you do a take and you're really happy with it, do one more. Just try and beat it, and if you don't beat it, you've got a great take. If you do beat it, then you made something out of it.

AU: Reflecting on being from Whitehorse, can you recommend any bands, and reflect on the scene?

KW: I think the punk and metal scene has always existed in the North, but it ebbs and flows in terms of how much is going on, and I think we're definitely starting to get back into a flow state where we're seeing more alternative-genre or heavy bands coming through or starting up. Two of the bands that I'm really excited about in the North are an all-girl punk band called the Bleeders. Also, watch out for Fleabane, one of Evan's projects. Psych punk rock!

AU: Very important question as you embark on the tour. Is there food you are stoked to encounter on the road?

KW: Oh! So much. I love a good pub Yorkshire pudding. Also, it's easy to eat like shit on the road, so I'm trying to find yummy ways to get protein and fibre. I'll try the veggie bowls.

AU: Do you have a last message for the readers of the magazine?

EJ: Make noise, be kind and have fun. We're all in this together.

instagram.com/franklin.theband

franklintheband.bandcamp.com/album/decay



CANCER BATS – PART 2

Canadian Hardcore Heshers Give Absolute Underground the Dirt

By Ira Hunter and Rory G.

AU: Does Cancer Bats fall into a genre of music, or did you create your own subgenre when you started the band 22 years ago?

Liam: We always will say that we're a hardcore band, because of how we run the band, our ethos. There's definitely lots of stoner, there's lots of Sabbath, but I still think that we're a hardcore band by definition.

AU: Hardcore bands are bands that started off playing shows with no stages.

Liam: That's Cancer Bats.

AU: My old friend Rory G. gave me a couple of questions. He wants me to ask you to put together a festival consisting of Cancer Bats, the old two-singer 3 Inches of Blood lineup, OG Bison, Alexisonfire, Bronze and Crown the Wolf and call it the greatest Canadian metal show ever!

Liam: I'm so down. OG double-singer 3 Inches of Blood? Actually, I'll tell you a crazy bit of Cancer Bats lore. I met those dudes when they were still the two-singer 3 Inches of Blood, when they supported Motörhead and Corrosion of Conformity.

The opening band was Damn 13. Their singer, Adam Sewell, needed a van, and Scott owned the Cancer Bats van, so Adam was like, "Can I rent the van, and also can you and Liam come and sell merch, help drive and help with the tour? Because my guys have never toured before." So Scott and I got hired to do all this tour stuff. We had never been on a big tour like that. I was selling merch and I was giving out the Cancer Bats demo and stickers. That was in '05. The Cancer Bats demo was getting to these people, and the next summer we were touring out there. The even cooler part was there was a day-off show that was 3 Inches of Blood and the Damn 13 in Edmonton. The drummer of 3 Inches of Blood, Matt, and the bass player at the time said they could learn three Cancer Bats songs and we could open this off-date show. So me and Scott in 2005 played in Edmonton with two guys from 3 Inches of Blood. We did the three Cancer Bats songs. There were people at this 20-year anniversary show who were saying, "Dude, I was at that show. I remember you playing 'Shillelagh.'" I barely remember that we even did that. This is the fucking craziest lore ever.



AU: Rory wants to know how it feels to be Canada's most kickass metal band (he called you a metal band) since Helix.

Liam: I appreciate it. I feel like we're specifically a band that's carrying the Canada torch. We're also being lumped in with some fucking seriously amazing bands. We were doing press at Hellfest and this guy was talking about how kickass Canadian bands are, like Cancer Bats and Voivod. This is fucking legendary!

AU: You're just coming off celebrating 20 years of *Birthing the Giant*. How did that go?

Liam: That whole tour was mind-blowing for us. Obviously playing big shows too, but more when I was hanging out at merch, with people coming up to me and telling me how much something like *MuchLoud* meant to them. Like, they weren't near a city where there was a record store, where there were guys wearing band shirts. The internet was just getting going. But the fact that we had this music channel that was playing music videos, and they were finding out about Alexisonfire, Protest the Hero, Cancer Bats and more, was life-changing for these kids. Then fast-forward, and they're grown-up, tatted adults dressed in black. This was actually so cool. Just being able to hear those stories and chat with everyone was so awesome.

AU: You know what the one constant of that whole 20-year period is? You being at the merch table and talking to fans and not being that rock star dickhead. Really, I think you're friends with everybody.

Liam: Being able to have those conversations, or someone telling me how much Cancer Bats has meant to them or been motivating for them… This is what makes me want to keep doing this band and to make a record that fucking holds up to the level that these people deserve. Someone who has a Cancer Bats hand tattoo, man, I can't blow this. This guy can't regret his hand tattoo.

AU: Could Bat Sabbath play with Zakk Sabbath if you just decided who was going to play what songs?

Liam: So, I've talked about that, like a Zakk Sabbath, Max Sabbath, Bat Sabbath. It would be

NEW DAMAGE RECORDS

CANCER BATS

hype, and this is the thing: we don't need the glory, because Cancer Bats rips as Bat Sabbath. So, we'll take any songs. You guys can have all the heaters, all the obvious ones. We'll do "Symptom of the Universe", because you guys can't even touch that song. We'll do "Electric Funeral", because we're going to crush it. I would love for that to happen.

AU: How about some final words of wisdom, then, for your Canadian fans? For the Absolute Underground readers who have been there since day one.

Liam: Always trust your gut. Your microbiome knows what's really there. You just got to trust it. Trust the process, just go for it.

AU: Anything else to mention or promote for the album or tour?

Liam: We're going to tour it a ton. We keep raising the bar on kickass tours. On a side note, I'm going to be in Victoria in September to DJ at Lucky Bar. But also because I really want to come and hang out at Wheelies for the Flatliners show!

AU: How can people find you online and how can they get the record?

Liam: New Damage is putting out the record. cancerbats.com, Instagram is @cancerbats, Facebook is Cancer Bats. Cancer Bats is everything. Actually, if you just go to cancerbats.com, it'll take you everywhere. It's a nice one-stop shop!

cancerbats.com

newdamagerecords.com

instagram.com/batskullrecords

Band Photo Credit: Riley Taylor

Live Shot Photo Credit: Rae Chatten





BAD WAITRESS



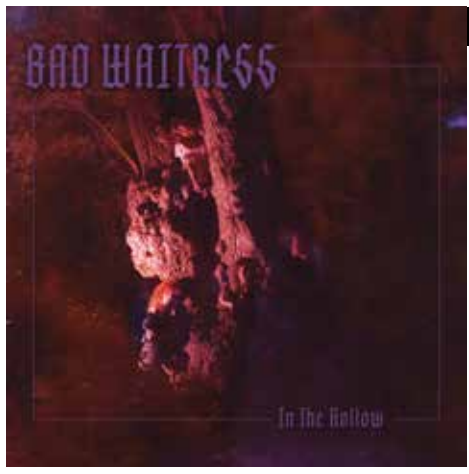
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BAD WAITRESS

Toronto Art-Punk Provocateurs

By Chad Cornies

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

Kali-Ann Butala: Kali-Ann Butala here, vocalist/guitarist. Probably known for being the biggest shit disturber in the band. :)

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

Kali-Ann: We got started as Nude Dogs, starting as Moon (drummer) and me, probably 13 years ago now. Katelyn (guitar) and Nicole (bass) joined later. Then we signed to Royal Mountain and became Bad Waitress.

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

Kali-Ann: We are all currently off Tinder… Actually, none of them have been on Tinder, ever. But I think mine said "just window shopping," lol.

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

Kali-Ann: We are all from different places in Canada but met in Toronto. The Toronto music scene is always growing and changing, but I think there is always a strong psych-rock vibe somehow constantly lingering. But! Really depends on what you're looking for. We got everything imaginable from all walks of life.

AU: Describe the band's sound if possible.

Kali-Ann: Gritty with almost an ounce of ease? Like crunchy peanut butter.

AU: How would you describe your live show to the visually impaired?

Kali-Ann: A psycho ginger is making all that noise. The singer is probably wrapped in her cables. The bassist is off in their own world and the drummer might be possessed.

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

Kali-Ann: We are about to drop one Oct. 30 on Stomp Records! It's definitely got a mix of alternative rock and punk/metal vibes… I think people will be able to relate to some of the desperation in the sound and lyrics.

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

Kali-Ann: There are a lot of themes around isolation, from my perspective as well as other people I've been around and their experiences… I think it's the first time I've written any kind of "love" song. Def some heartbreak in this one, lol. More themes of "fuck you, you're dirt, and we're done."

AU: Any standout tracks you are stoked on?

Kali-Ann: My bluesy heart wants to say "Low", the last song of the album. Though it is very sad.

AU: Sex, drugs or rock 'n' roll? Or all of the above?

Kali-Ann: All of them for me… sometimes to my detriment, if I'm being honest.

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

Kali-Ann: When I was eight years old in the Northwest Territories, my dad sent me into a fox den to retrieve golf balls a fox had stolen, thinking they were eggs. My mom should probably know that too, lol.

AU: Any tour plans?

Kali-Ann: Subhumans and us are touring Canada starting Sept. 17! And there is a November tour in the works for the West Coast.

AU: Anything else to promote?

Kali-Ann: Just our album! Our new single, "Lovin' Kind", is out and there is a music video! There will be another single coming soon called "I Only Like You When I'm Drunk", with a similar candour to the lyrics and sound. And our new album, *In the Hollow*!

AU: Final words of wisdom for our readers?

Kali-Ann: Brush your teeth, eat your vegetables, wash your butt and tell your loved ones that they matter.

AU: How do people find you online?

Kali-Ann: It's 2026. You'll figure it out.

stomprecords.com

badwaitress.bandcamp.com

facebook.com/badwaitressband

instagram.com/badwaitressband

Photo Credit: Calm Elliott-Armstrong

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BABY'S FIRST PISTOL

Toronto's Roadhouse Rock Evangelists

By Jonathan Sohn

Absolute Underground: What is the name of your band and why are you called that?

Baby's First Pistol: We're Baby's First Pistol. Baby's Last Christmas was a bit *too* bleak.

AU: Who does what in the band?

BFP: Alex Black: lead vocals and evangelizing. Matt Killbourne: guitars. Tim Nox: bass. Laura Gillis: keys. Aaron Matthews: drums. Everyone squeals.

AU: What brought you together to start a band?

BFP: To satisfy the innate need to enhance people's meals at roadhouses and diners with a wall-of-sound rock and songs about genocidal autocracy.

AU: How would you describe your music to a baby who is just getting into music?

BFP: Papa's gotten into the pills again and the fishnets still fit.

AU: Your new song "Confessional" is a wild ride. What's that one about?

BFP: What would it be like to fit God with a spider gag and make sweet, belligerent love in a Catholic confessional booth?

AU: Do you have any confessions you'd like to make for Absolute Underground readers?

BFP: Our stage lighting is sourced primarily from active, rural strip clubs and failed holograph technology companies.

AU: What kind of pistol would you recommend for babies?

BFP: Snub-nose .38 Special, of course. Their hands are small as hell.

AU: In your video for "Mister Clean", you play a lot of sports. Should more bands participate in sports?

BFP: Absolutely. Rock music has been severely lacking in cardio and athletic discipline. If more bands traded their vices for a solid line-drill regimen, the riffs would be tighter and load-in, changeover and load-out would go smoother.

AU: There are five of you. Do you go for the consensus vote or straight-up majority rules?

BFP: We operate more as an anocracy.

AU: What's the best part of playing in and around the Toronto scene?

BFP: The people who show up to sweat in small, dark rooms with us. Toronto is somewhat of a hard-nosed, expensive city, and we like providing an opportunity for collective catharsis. That mutual exchange of energy is really why we do all that we do.

AU: What are your plans for what's left of 2026 (and 2027 if you're the planner type)?

BFP: We just released our new single, "Blessed", as part of Cartridge Heart's *Go Kick-Ass! 4* compilation. Greenwoodstock in Toronto on Oct. 10 is up next! We have some other gigs coming up at the Bovine and Granite Brewery. We're always working on new music and videos. There'll be at least one more single/music video combo for a new song called "On My Mind" by year's end. Lots more in the pipeline.

AU: Is there anyone you'd like to give a shout-out to?

BFP: Bowman, for his excellent work on the "Affirmation Celebration", "Mister Clean" and "Fanatic" music videos (and his kick-ass graphic design work); Brett Carruthers, for getting the song mixing/mastering to the finish line; and Gavin Bielmann, for his work mixing the "Blessed" single! Also, the team at our label, Cartridge Heart!

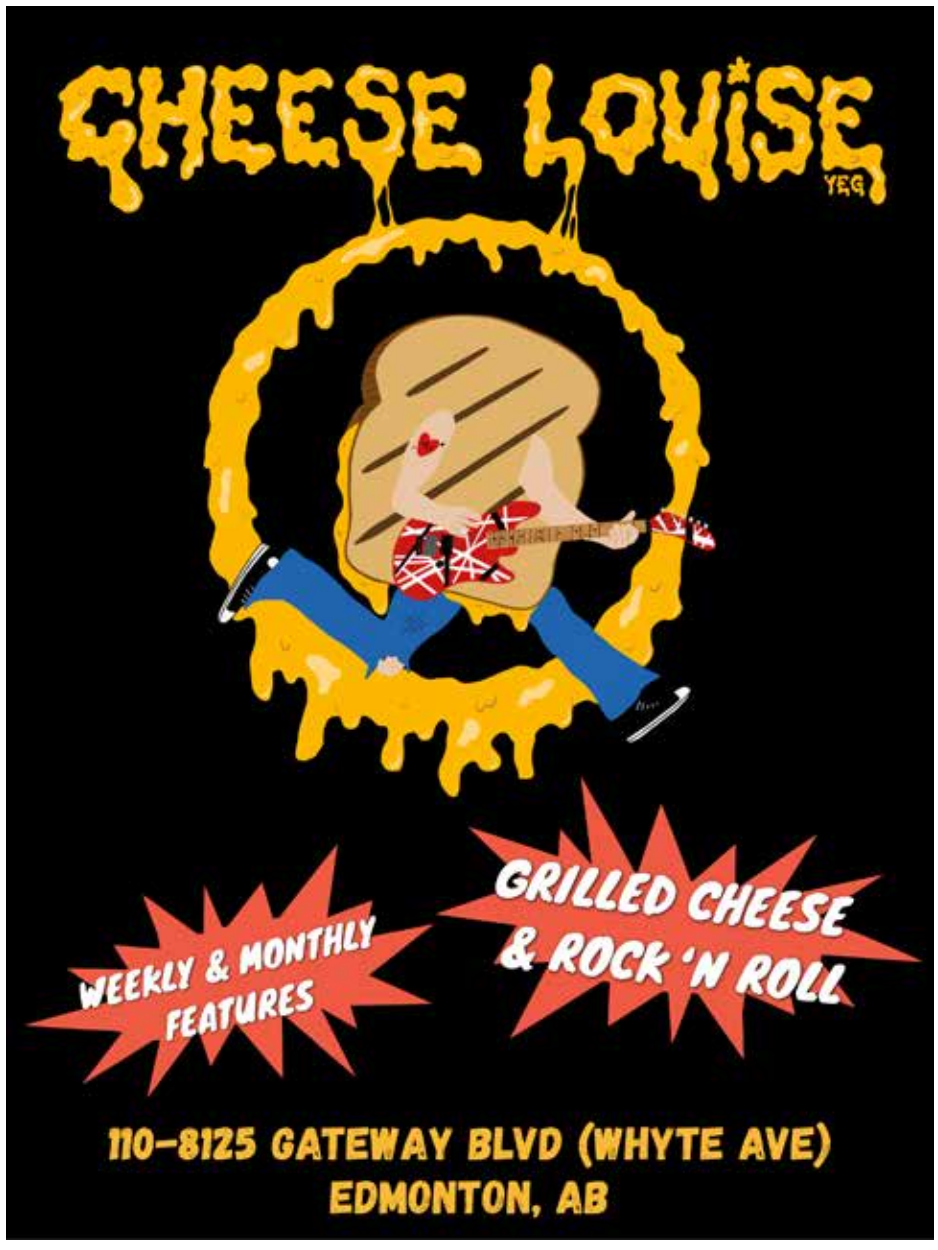


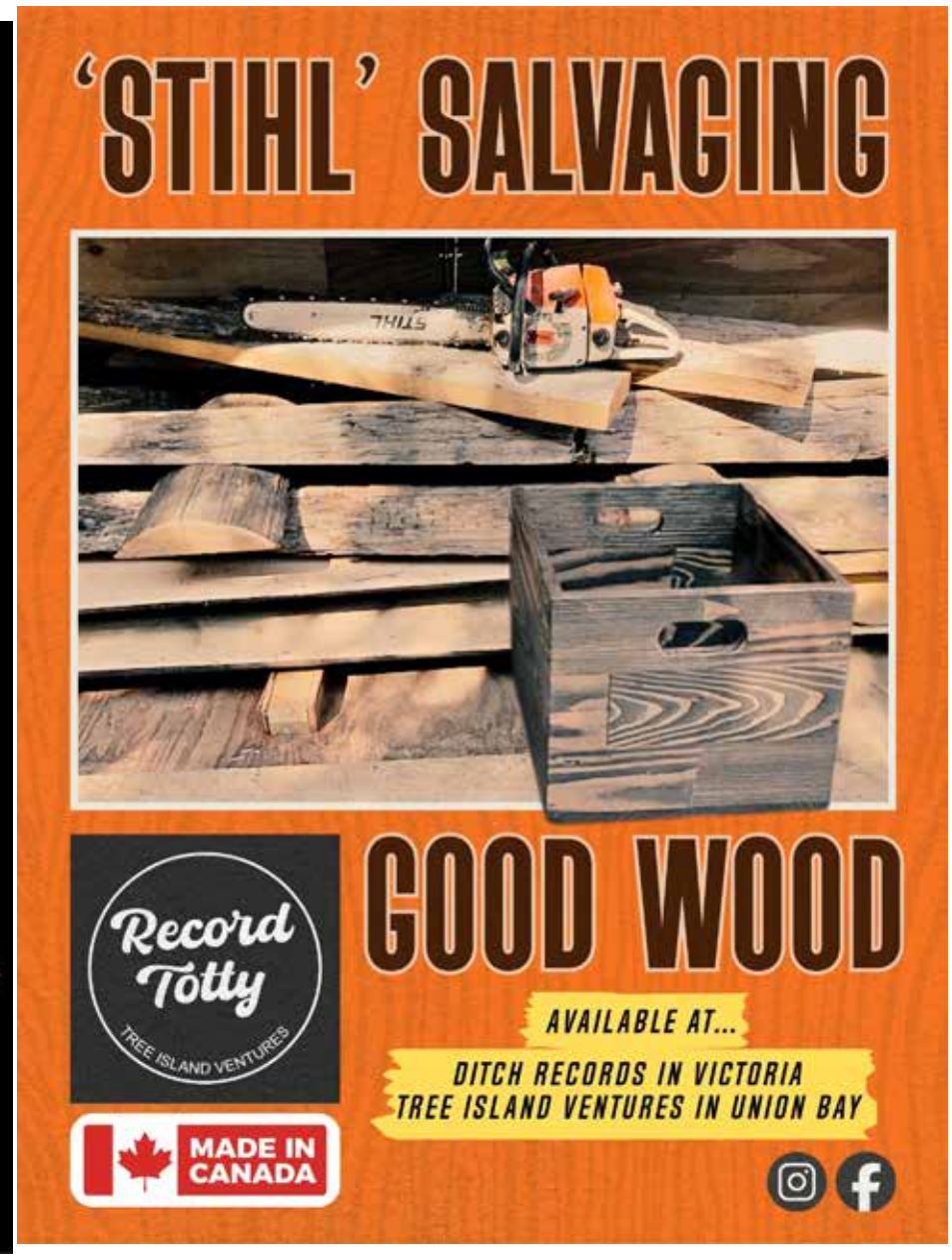
Jonathan Sohn believes every child's gun collection should begin and end with a vintage Megatron.

babysfirstpistol.com

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Photo Credit: Ryan Brough





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SUPER NOT OKAY

No Robots Came for Dinner

By Jonathan Sohn

Absolute Underground: What is the name of your band and why are you called that?

Super Not Okay: I've been using the stage name Super Not Okay since 2019. It used to describe me as a solo artist, but it has also become a band since then. The story behind the name is that "super not okay" was a phrase I would use to describe my mental state when people asked. Then someone said, "*That* would be a great band name," and here we are. Although the project name sounds like a negative thing, it's actually a reference to something positive. It's the acceptance of the negative. It's accepting that we all have Sticky Wires. It's accepting that it is okay to *not* be okay sometimes, and it's important to talk about it; to find friends and a community that can understand or support. Or at least to be Super Not Okay together.



AU: Who does what in the band?

SNO: Super Not Okay is my project. I don't like to label it as a "band," as it is more of a multimedia collaborative art project, with a three-piece band being one aspect. (There is just as much visual art to this project as music…) I write the songs and the stories, create the art and the characters and the merch. I sing and play baritone ukulele in the band, and co-produce the songs. Santino joined on drums in 2022, and we have been recording and producing songs together since 2023. Kevin joined on bass in 2023. He also programs our website and newsletters, and has helped with promo and video/photo editing. They both contribute backing vocals and harmonies in the live performance and on the recorded songs.

Jade is "the fourth member of Super Not Okay," according to Kevin. She has named herself "Assistant to Super Not Okay," and helps with projector visuals at our shows, lyric and music video production and editing, admin and promo content.

AU: What brought you together to start a band?

SNO: Happy accident! I met Santino and Kevin in the open mic scene. They were interested in my project and joined!

AU: Your new record, *Sticky Wires*, is a concept record. What's the story here?

SNO: In the year 2099, SNOBOT-5073 is a glitchy robot trying to learn the meaning of "being human" in a world where humans themselves have become robots. Part 1 (of 3) is called *We Might All Be Robots*, and it introduces the main characters and the sci-fi world in which the story takes place.

AU: What possessed you to want to create a concept record in 2026?

SNO: Not only did I create a concept album, but it is also a graphic novel and a canvas art series. Each song on the concept album is a chapter in the book. A friend called it a "comic book rock opera." The idea for this project, called The Sticky Wires ProjeX, came to me right before the pandemic, in March 2020. I've been developing the universe, the characters and story, songs and artwork since then. Part 1 was released in September 2026. Parts 2 and 3 are already in the works.

cartridge heart

AU: The three of you are snappy dressers. Was this a conscious decision to coordinate or total coincidence?



SNO: I cannot comment on everyone's individual fashion sense except to say that we are all artists and we like to express ourselves. However, for our stage presence, I've always been one to brand a project using recognizable logos and art, etc. As a solo artist, I had designed myself a robot uniform for The Sticky Wires ProjeX. Once the band formed, I collaborated with some awesome visual artists to create robot band uniforms using altered work coveralls.

AU: Should more bands wear uniforms on stage?

SNO: Every project is different, but I think each band should consider visuals in their performance, whether that means full uniforms like Super Not Okay, or just coordinating outfits or other visual elements on stage. In a huge city full of artists trying to stand out, having a unique and identifiable stage presence can go a long way.

AU: You have a song called "Sorry I'm a Robot". What else do robots have to apologize for?

SNO: Just wait for Part 2: the robots are no longer sorry!

AU: What's the best part of playing in and around the Toronto scene?

SNO: The Toronto music scene has been very supportive of this project since the beginning. I love playing at cool venues with great sound and it is a pleasure to play with other artists I know and respect.

AU: What are your plans for what's left of 2026 (and 2027 if you're the planner type)?

SNO: Now that Part 1 is out in the world, I want to play more shows in the GTA to promote the ProjeX, as well as get back into the visual art scene, to promote the comic book that way. There's still lots of work to do on Parts 2 and 3 of the ProjeX.

AU: Is there anyone you'd like to give a shout-out to?

SNO: Huge shout-out to the whole Super Not Okay Team ("Sansei," Kevin, Jade, Ben, Joe) for all the work they continue to do as part of this project — and the collaborators who have helped with Part 1 (Mitch, Brendan, Ry, to name just a few). It's so inspiring to be working alongside so many talented artists! Shout-out to the early supporters who have been around since the very beginning, even before the band formed (Dan, Jody, Reuben). Shout-out to the incredible Robot Army fanbase who have continued to support the live performances, buying merch and supporting multiple presales leading up to this Part 1 release! Thanks to anyone who cares enough about local art and music to read this interview.

cartridgeheart.com

supernotokay.bandcamp.com

Photo Credit: Jade Evertsen



THE PROWLERS

Montreal Oi! Veterans Dig Up Their *Collection*

By Chuck Andrews

AU: Who am I speaking with and what are your roles within the Prowlers?

Sylvain: Sylvain, lead singer of the Prowlers.

AU: Where is your band from?

Sylvain: We are from Montreal, Quebec.

AU: What are the Prowlers best known for?

Sylvain: Beer drinkers!

AU: Who were your biggest influences when the band started?

Sylvain: Probably UK bands like the Oppressed, the Business and Blitz. We were also influenced by local bands like Gassenhauer, Shock Troops and Discords.

AU: Is there anyone or anything in the last few years that has really influenced you guys?

Sylvain: Probably bands or people that are still involved in the scene after so many years; they keep us going.

AU: How long has the band been playing and putting out records?

Sylvain: We have been playing since 1999 and released our first album, *Hair Today, Gone Tomorrow*, in 2000.

AU: Speaking of records, can you tell us a little bit about the *Collection* LP that the Prowlers are putting out soon on Longshot Music and Contra Records in Europe?

Sylvain: We haven't released anything since our last album in 2023 and we wanted to have something out to show we were still alive. We took a bunch of songs that were on compilations or B-sides of EPs we released in the past. Some of those songs were only released on limited-edition releases and are still unknown.



AU: Where have you guys toured in the last few years?

Sylvain: We have been quiet on the touring side, as our last European tour was in 2023. We have played some festivals and special gigs in the U.S. and Canada, but that's pretty much it.

AU: Where do you see the band touring in the near future?

Sylvain: After the Vancouver gig, we are going to Europe for seven gigs. We are starting in Budapest, Hungary, and finishing in Essen, Germany. Looking forward to going back and seeing friends and bands we rarely see on this side of the ocean.

AU: What are some other notable local bands that you guys really like?

Sylvain: These days, I think the bands to follow out of Montreal are Ultra Razzia, Ain't Right, Over the Hill, Béton Armé and Big Boss. We do have an amazing scene right now.

AU: What's the best thing about the Oi! subgenre of punk? And what's the worst thing about it?

Sylvain: I think the thing I like the most in the scene is the brotherhood and friendship you develop. We have met so many people throughout the years, and some have become close friends. I don't think any other music scene has that aspect stronger than Oi!/punk. The influence of money is probably the worst thing these days.

AU: Any plans for Halloween this year?

Sylvain: To be honest, with our tour coming up, Halloween sounds very far away! I'm sure there will be some party in Montreal that we will attend.

AU: What are some of your favourite horror movies? Any obscure ones people may not have heard of?

Sylvain: I'm not that much into horror movies. I love the classics like Freddy, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *Pet Sematary*. Another one I like is the early Jigsaw movies, but I'm not sure they're considered horror.

AU: Do you have any weird Halloween traditions?

Sylvain: Not really, but I like costume contests in bars. Some people put a lot of time and energy into their costumes and I'm amazed by that. I find it very entertaining.

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

Sylvain: Probably *Return of the Living Dead*. Many punk bands on it.

AU: Most wicked Halloween costume you ever rocked?

Sylvain: A long time ago, my friend lent me a cool alien costume. No one knew I was in that costume.

AU: Is there anything else you would like to mention or add?

Sylvain: We are looking forward to being in Vancouver. It's really our favourite place in the country, aside from Montreal.

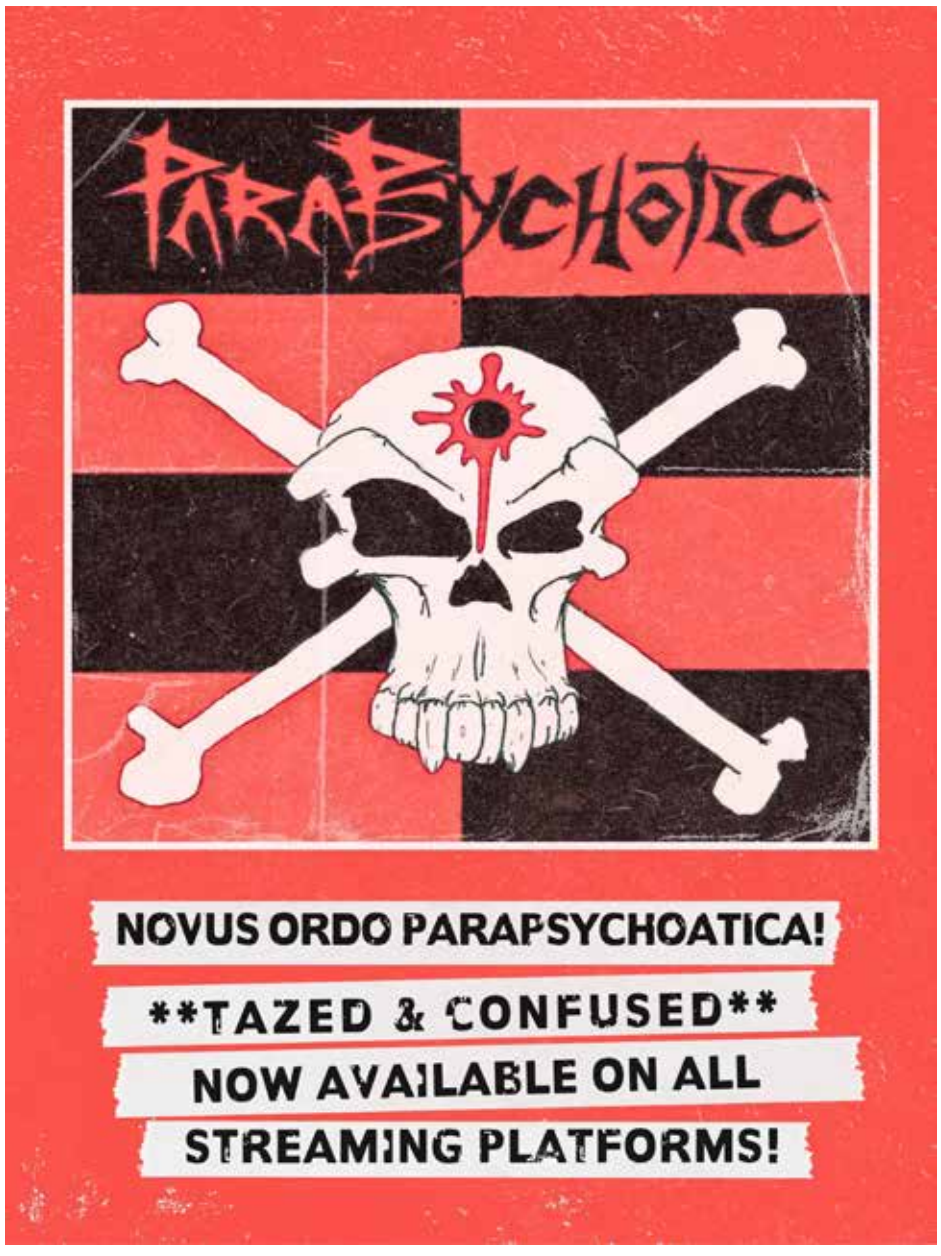
AU: How do people find you online?

Sylvain: We have a Facebook page and Instagram under the Prowlers.

instagram.com/theprowlersmtl

longshotmusic.com

longshotmusic.bigcartel.com





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ONCE UPON A HALLOWEEN

By Vince D'Amato

Throughout the 70s and 80s, the culture of Halloween was more of a North American affair, so much so that when John Carpenter's famous film was released in Europe, it was re-titled "The Babysitters". Back then, Halloween was nowhere near the overblown party scene / craft-store culture / Hallmark holiday that it's become since the 90s. Before reaching its cultural explosion, horror auteurs indulged the mostly-American holiday via horror paperbacks and horror films. Following the success of John Carpenter's classic, a slew of copycats sprang forth to cash in; one of the more memorable ones being the Linda Blair vehicle *Hell Night*, with a storyline that also took place on Halloween night, going from a costumed Halloween party to a creepy abandoned mansion loaded with Halloween pranks that also happened to house a monstrous inhabitant. Truthfully, *Hell Night* sounds better than its ultimate result, but Blair plus a little campiness provided some admittedly alluring cult-film aesthetics. Moving beyond the basic stalk-n'-slash style, and into another horror medium altogether, author Charles L. Grant (1942-2006), who was a prolific horror writer and had gained a fair amount of fame in his time, wrote his Halloween-themed mass-market cult novel *Stunts* (1990) for TOR Publishing, while horror author David Robbins contributed directly to the paperback-originals market with his own lurid titles such as *Hell-O-Ween, Prank Night*, and *Spook Night*. Back in the 90s, I'd thought that Robbins was making a living strictly on his Halloween-horror paperbacks, which were prevalent in U.S. bookstores and the book sections of department stores, but as it turns out, he's a far more diverse and interesting cat (check out his Wikipedia page). One of my all-time favourite horror authors, Richard Laymon (1947-2001), wrote two adult Halloween horror novels, *Allhallow's Eve* and *Once Upon a Halloween*; the first was widely available in Canada, but the latter had always been a rarity, having only been published once by the specialty horror publisher Cemetery Dance. Both of those horror novels are whip-fast and gruesome, utilizing Laymon's usual trademark style, but like the rest of his work, the novels never achieved more than a niche following in North America, despite a slight resurgence of interest in the early 2000s. The 80s-90s were also fertile breeding ground for low budget and independent Halloween-themed horror films; the most iconic horror franchise notwithstanding, one of the best cult films to come out of this was *Night of the Demons*, set over a Halloween party taking place in an abandoned funeral home (of course) where the party-goers accidentally awaken a sexy demon from hell. I actually liked the sequel better: *Night of the Demons 2*, directed by Brian Tenchard-Smith, which was far more satirical and wildly humourous, taking place in a convent – and who doesn't like a little nunsploitation with their Halloween shenanigans, right? Just as Abel Ferrara. Halloween cinema in the mid-nineties could've gone all dark and moody and brooding, as exemplified by Alex Proyas' brilliant adaptation of *The Crow,* based on James O'Barr's groundbreaking (at the time) graphic novel. This was 1994, but before Proyas' revisionist take on Halloween-themed cinema was even released, his film was suddenly shrouded in the shadow of Brandon Lee's on-set death; and following that, post-mid-90s Halloween cinema became redefined by the popularity of "hip" horror screenwriter Kevin Williamson. The second half of the decade saw his style being copied for the first reboot attempt of John Carpenter's classic, for which Williamson himself actually performed an uncredited script pass as a favour to star Michelle Williams; and this late-nineties reboot continued with a second film four years later – but in the meantime, the decade closed out with the hilarious *Idle Hands* (1999), albeit also a product of self-reflexive horror-comedy made popular by Williamson (although he had no involvement in this one, *slacker*-horror-comedy not really being his jam), the gleefully Halloween-themed *Idle Hands* hit all of the genre's tropes directly in the decaying funnybone, including demonic possession, heavy metal devil-worshipping, and even *another* nunsploitation/Halloween homage. The film's loveably zany characters end up at their Halloween-costumed high school dance (featuring The Offspring) where hilarious bloody zombie chaos ensues – which could be pointed out, pre-dates Simoan Pegg and Edgar Wright's Brit-slacker-horror-comedy by five years.



Heading into the 2000s, one Halloween guilty pleasure was Rob Zombie's *House of 1000 Corpses* which takes place across the holiday as four stranded road-trippers find themselves trapped in a house of psychos. What I liked about Zombie's debut film was that it was a lot more experimental than expected from a studio horror film – and Zombie's film was a studio effort – although most of the experimental aspects came from Zombie's filmmaking inexperience (which he himself shared over the original DVD audio commentary). Later, in 2007, a more seasoned Rob Zombie would direct one of his most famous and technically proficient films (another studio picture), the *second* attempted reboot of John Carpenter's classic, and that one was pretty good. But it was another Halloween horror film from 2007 that really showed us what some truly creative revitalization could do when injected into the resurrection of the classic horror-anthology subgenre, with the direct-to-video *Trick R Treat* – a pinnacle of truly inspired anthology storytelling that intelligently intertwined its stories into an unexpected and surprising whole, which in my opinion, would've been good enough for a theatrical release. I'm purposely being a bit broad with the description here as I don't want to give any of the twists away, but even nearly twenty years later, this one still holds up. Werewolves, serial killers, ghosts, and a killer mascot that should've launched its own franchise, *Trick R Treat* is one of this century's Halloween-musts.

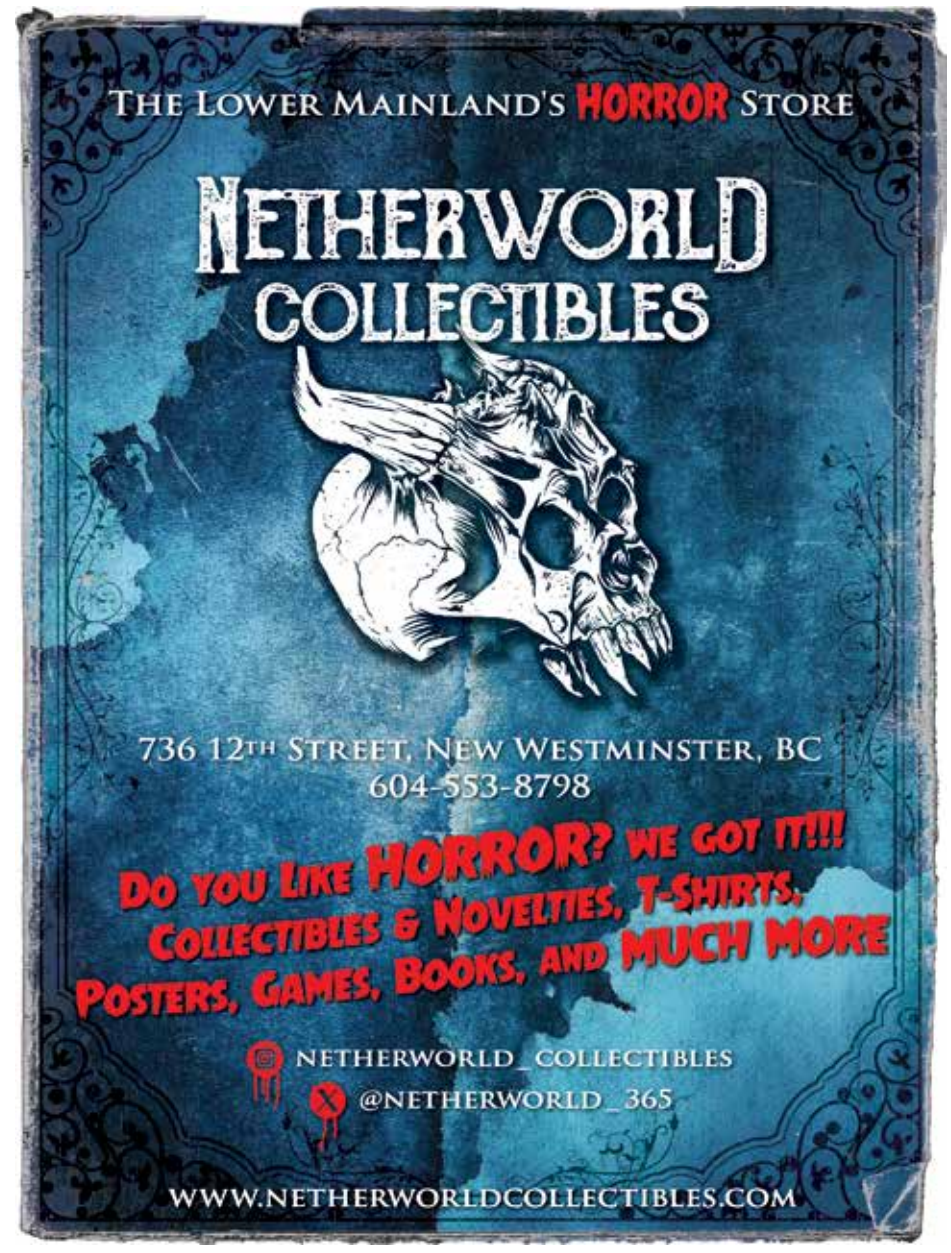


Two years after that (2009) we got a remake of *Night of the Demons*, this time with Shannon Elizabeth stepping into the demon-from-hell role, which seemed to fit her nicely (not to take anything away from the original star, Amelia Kinkade, who was amazing in that role, especially over the two sequels (2 & 3) where she was more prominently featured). The remake wasn't all that bad, as it stuck to its entertaining b-movie sensibilities, even if it was a lot less exploitative than the original, which I think sort of negated it from achieving its own cult status. Later still, thirteen years after *House of 1000 Corpses*, Rob Zombie would return to his Halloween-themed backdrops for his film 31 (as in October 31 - get it?), but unfortunately, much like the *Night of the Demons* remake, this Rob Zombie outing really didn't have a lot to propel it to the cult status of his first two horror films. The closing film in Zombie's original trilogy, *3 from Hell* (2019), moved the backdrop from Halloween to the Day of the Dead, and that last film inspired mixed feelings for me – it was undoubtedly well executed, but again, there was something missing from it, and almost in the face of its ultraviolence, that missing ingredient prevented it from becoming the cult classic that his first two movies are.



Still getting our Halloween on into the 2020s, the *third* stab at a *Halloween* franchise reboot continued, at least providing active employment to John Carpenter into this current decade.

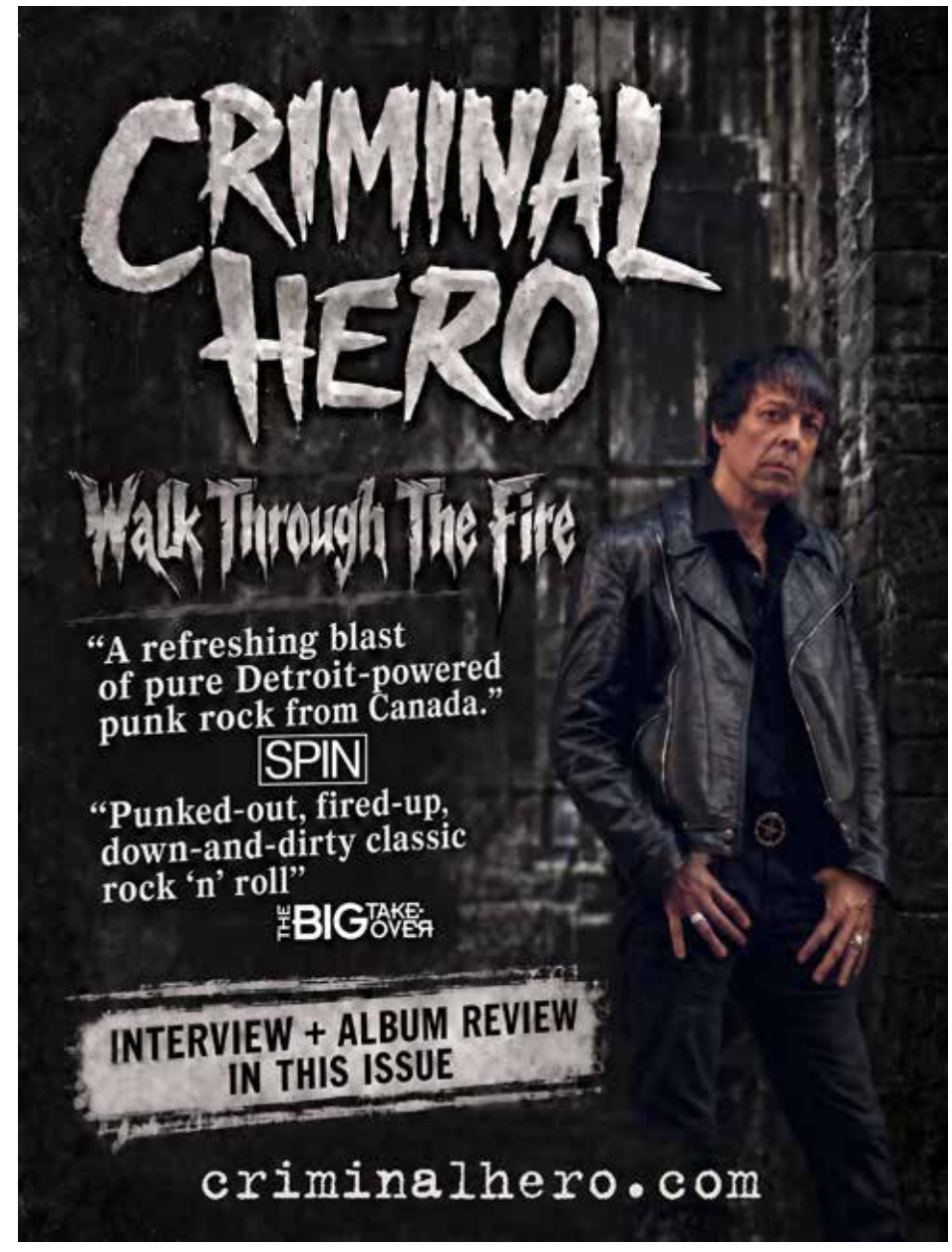
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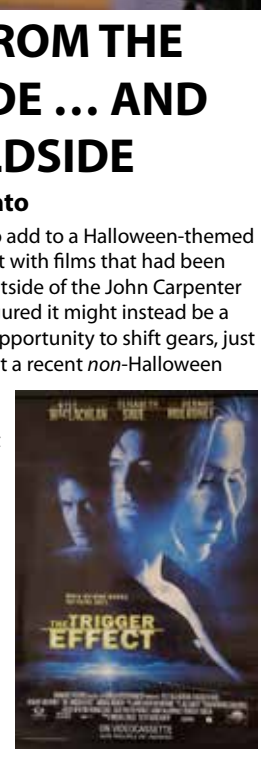


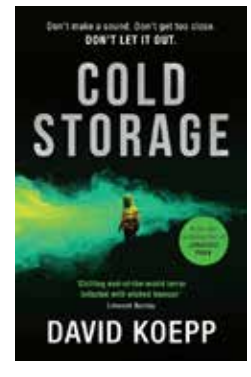
TALES FROM THE DARKSIDE … AND THE COLDSIDE

By Vince D'Amato

While I was trying to add to a Halloween-themed horror movie playlist with films that had been made post-2020 (outside of the John Carpenter reboot sequels), I figured it might instead be a bit of a no-brainer opportunity to shift gears, just slightly, to talk about a recent *non*-Halloween horror movie – although it connects somewhat to last issue's horror article… *Cold Storage*. This 2026 horror-comedy was written by Hollywood thriller writer David Koepp (*War of the Worlds, Panic Room, Disclosure Day*) and it plays out like a contemporary b-movie that definitely reminded me (in a good way) of *Return of the Living Dead*. *Cold Storage* is based on a *novel* that Koepp wrote, and stars neo-scream-queen Georgina Campbell and Joe Keery (Steve from *Stranger Things*) as minimum-wage managers of a storage facility who are thrust into a fungal-infection zombie outbreak-invasion; while Liam Neeson drops in as an aging military action hero in a pretty hilarious turn. Koepp's script keeps the tone of 80s cult comedy-horror classics like *Return of the Living Dead* and *Re-Animator* while somehow also managing to take a further satirical dive that works on several levels as horror genre in-jokes and as social and cultural satire. The whole movie barrels by at such a quick pace that it's actually difficult to visualize how it even came from a novel at all. Before adapting his own work here, Koepp adapted other famous horror writers' novels for the big screen, Richard Matheson's *Stir of Echoes* (starring Kevin Bacon) back in 1999 and Stephen King's *Secret Window, Secret Garden* (from *Four Past Midnight*) in 2004; hiring Kevin Bacon a second time in 2020 for his adaptation of the German horror novel *You Should Have Left*, which was a super-meta haunted house story that sort of disappeared from existence, which is a shame. I'm definitely a fan of Koepp's films, including his non-horror thrillers *The Trigger Effect* (1996) and *Premium Rush* (2012) – I remember *The Trigger Effect* coming out on videotape alongside *The Frighteners* and B*ordello of Blood*, all three posters displayed in the over-the-door glass facade of Crazy Mike's, the local video store – while years later, *Premium Rush* would come out during the death rattle of the video store era. But it seems in 2026 Koepp has taken those video-store-heyday b-movie aesthetics and applied them to the literary and streaming formats – nice one.

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THE MONSTER SQUAD

Andre Gower and Ryan Lambert Reveal the Untold Story of an '80s Cult Classic!

By James Borsa

AU: Andre Gower and Ryan Lambert, welcome to Ultrasonic Film. It brings me an incredible amount of joy to chat with two people from such a special film from my youth. I'm about the same age as you guys, and I got to check out the film when I was about your age. So it means a lot to me! It's great to be able to chat about *The Monster Squad*, but first can I ask a little bit about *Wolfman's Got Nards*? This is a film that was released in 2018 and if you could tell everybody, who may not actually know about this film as of yet?



Andre Gower: Yeah, I appreciate it, James. *Wolfman's Got Nards* is actually a documentary that I put together and made with my studio partner, Henry McComas, and we tried to find a way to tell the unique dynamic of how a movie could impact someone in their youth and how that kind of impact and connection that can stay with you for a very long time. It happened to be told during the 30th anniversary year of *The Monster Squad*, which was almost 10 years ago. But also it wasn't just a documentary about *The Monster Squad*. It's told through the lens of the fans of *The Monster Squad*. So yes, it's very Monster Squad-esque, but it's not a 'where are they now' documentary, although we have some of that in it. It's not a making of documentary, although there is some of that in there. And it's not just a straight fan service documentary though, there's a little bit of that in there too. It's really trying to tell the story about the connection, this 30-year story that *The Monster Squad* had with its fan base, how that impacted them. Ryan's a big part of that as I dragged him all over the country and appearances and sit down interviews to be a big part of this whole process! Shane (Black) and Fred (Dekker) are in there as well. The people that worked on it, but also the cast as a whole, and Ryan and I about the experiences that we got to partake in since the resurgence of 2006, 2007, and how it impacted us as well.

AU: *The Monster Squad* is exceptionally popular right now and is considered an '80s classic. But this was not always the case because it was not a box office smash. You two guys should take a lot of credit for what you've done over the years. I know about the Alamo Drafthouse screenings, and you guys teaming up to shepherd the film all through the years. You've taken the film on tour, you've really driven it home, and the video revolution and the cult classic status of this film has driven it as well. Ryan, has it been an incredible journey for you all the way through?

Ryan Lambert: I was just kind of living my life in San Francisco, I was in a band, and kind of left all that behind, and then, you know, we basically got a call, and I said, 'huh? What do you want to do? I'm coming to your house to watch a movie that I was in? I don't understand what's happening?' And of course, we went to the screening, and it was like the Beatles. I was wondering, 'where did you all come from? Why do you guys love this thing so much?' People have been watching it on their old VHS tapes, and what they taped off of HBO. We've gone to conventions and seen people wearing "Stephen King Rules" shirts... So there is still a club!

AU: Andre, what's some of your favorite reactions when you're meeting with the crowds at these conventions?

Andre: Well, you know, a lot of times you think that this is just kind of repetitive and they say the same things or they're excited to meet you. And yes, that can be true, but you know Ryan and I appear as a duo so now we understand that those are very individual and unique experiences. Ryan and I started to get that and listen to these stories a little differently and really connect with them.

AU: I'd love to take both of you guys back. We're almost at 40 years now. You guys will be celebrating the 40th anniversary very soon of *The Monster Squad*. Ryan, what are your remembrances from actually shooting the film? What stands out for you?



Ryan: It felt like we were doing something special. I'd say 99.9% of the effects are practical. When we were shooting the clubhouse stuff, at one point Fred, the director, said, 'go climb up in the tree and stare out the window, and with the binoculars.' So that shot is not CGI. I climbed up this tree, and there was a guy in there with a light, and he's holding onto my legs so I don't fall out the window. It felt like at any point now, someone was gonna come and make sure that they had the right measurements for the dolls, and sketching us for Mad Magazine. Then it came out, and we all went, 'well, guess I'm not gonna be an action figure'. But, that changed. So now… all these fans come up with stuff they've made and it's fun to see all that stuff.

AU: Andre, your remembrances on shooting *The Monster Squad* all these years later, what comes to mind?

Andre: Like Ryan was mentioning all these great things you got to stick around and see. Even when you were working, you realized this was no small deal. There were very few days in the whole production schedule that I didn't work because schedules are detailed for efficiencies. We worked long days to make this giant movie. I wish that we had really documented it like we could have today, there was a lot of cool stuff that went on that I don't think we even remember because there was so much packed into those three months of making this movie. Working with the people that were there, they were either gigantic filmmakers or producers or they were people and individuals that were, starting out that ended up becoming icons in the industry. There's also something really cool about the timing of this movie and the scope and scale of it. It's pretty cool to be associated with something like that.

AU: You were both so very young when you were shooting the film and with Director Fred Dekker. I'm curious if he let you guys improvise a little bit, add a line here or there. Because of course *The Monster Squad* is one of those films that has many classic lines!

Andre: I'll let Ryan answer that because he has much cooler lines than anybody else.

Ryan: To my recollection, there was no improvising. We were pretty on-book. On something like this and of this scale, especially with the effects Shane's words and Fred's ideas and everything, that was all on the page. It was a really well-written script, too. You can read it on its own.



AU: Andre, I've talked to a few different actors from 80s films that have since gone on to become more and more and more popular. Usually the popularity of the internet in the late 90s is something that just drove it. When did you yourself feel that *The Monster Squad* had an incredible following that you may not have realized up to this point? Was there a moment where you just went, this film is way more popular than I even thought?





Andre: Yes, and if I had to pick it, I think it might be, that you mentioned earlier that you segued with the Alamo Drafthouse stuff is that initial 2006 screening. The internet allowed the fan base to have some place to gather and it built for a number of years. And then I think when we went to that very first screening at the Alamo



Drafthouse in Austin, Texas in 2006 that became the moment that that build up was able to explode. And I think we credit that weekend event to a year later, of them actually putting out a DVD of *The Monster Squad*, which was not a real thing until a year later. You know, for a dead movie that died at the box office, that lived in the video store, that lived on HBO and then lived on a blank Maxell tape with a piece of masking tape on it! To end up with a DVD! And then everybody thought that would be it. Then there's a Blu-ray, then there's another Blu-ray, then it was re-mastered on 35, so people could stream it. Now it's on DCP, so theatres can hold more screenings of it. Then it's been on another, you know, a 4K restoration. The documentary got put as a companion piece with that. Now the documentary got put as its own Blu-ray release on top of the original release.



AU: Did it ever occur to either of you as actors, what you would do in a sequel with your character? Where would your characters be now? How would they move on in a sequel? I'll start with you, Ryan.

Ryan: I don't see it ever happening, but, I think the dream world has to come from the fans. I don't really have any ideas of what Rudy would be doing. I've heard other people's ideas and a lot of them are very obvious, you know, just by looking at the character and his wardrobe, you know, and he's a mechanic or something. Let's do something a little more outside the box, let's dream of something that would be unexpected.

AU: What about you Andre? What are your thoughts on this?

Andre: We've always laughed or joked or, you know, spoofed some ideas. Ryan and I are of like mind...there's some obvious stuff there that you would do, but like Ryan said. I'd like to see it where there's some maybe not those obvious type of things, but still cool, still true to the character, still true to the story still, adventurous. And each year that keeps going on that you talk about this, like Ryan said, it's not gonna happen, you have to alter it and update and change it, because we get older, there's less things that we would actually be able to do in a story. I'd like to see something different. So I think if it ever happened, I think we would really gravitate towards that rather than just a regurgitation. They tried to reboot this movie, you know, 10, 15 years ago, and they couldn't do it, because you can't make this movie similar in today's context. A lot of the new titles that have come out over the last 10 or 12, 15 years, I think that is the reboot of something like *The Monster Squad*, because *The Monster Squad* was impactful enough to the people that make stuff now, and they've done their imagining of it. So, sometimes, you know, if you look at it from that perspective, that's even more powerful.





Ryan: I don't think people would be that excited to see *The Arthritis Squad*. Fighting their back pain! *The Sciatica Squad*.

AU: The *Ghostbusters* came back at a pretty late era, so you never can tell. You never can tell what's gonna happen, right?

Ryan: They were already old when they made the first one. They were the… they were the ghosts, right?

Andre: They were. They pretty much were.

Ryan: I didn't say that.

AU: Well, thank you again for joining me. It means a lot to me. I've enjoyed the film ever since I was a kid, so this has been an absolute blast. Thanks, guys.

Andre: Thank you.

Ryan: Thanks, James. Appreciate it.

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THE TEXAS CHAIN SAW MASSACRE

Who Will Survive… and What Will Be Left of Them?

By Ty Stranglehold

The story you are about to hear is an account of the tragedy that befell one youth, in particular one Ty Stranglehold, that left him changed forevermore… well, tragedy might not be the right word, but it fits the narration (in John Larroquette's distinct voice).



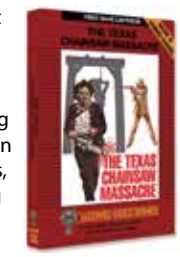
The year was 1983. I wasn't quite 10 years old and was already a budding horror fan. It started even earlier with the classic Universal Monsters, but as we all know, by the time the '80s started, horror was booming. I was getting into *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th* on VHS and was on the lookout for more scary stuff to watch. Oddly, it was through another love of mine that I would discover the movie that would become my favourite horror movie of all time: video games. I would buy every single video game magazine I could find (there were actually quite a few at that point), and that is where I saw an advertisement for *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* game for the Atari 2600. To be fair, the game looked pretty shitty (and it turns out it was), but the box art is what captivated me: a guy wearing a black suit, with wild hair and an utterly messed-up face, wielding a chainsaw and running toward the viewer. The ad stated his name was Leatherface, and he was the main character of "the world's first scary video game." That single image had me hooked. I needed to see this movie.

Information on the movie was hard to come by for a nine-year-old. My parents were pretty easygoing with my movie picks when we would make the family weekend trip to the video store, but even they drew the line at TCM. My mom swore that she heard it was the "goriest movie ever made" and that it was a true story. It only made me want it more. It wasn't going to happen at my place. Luckily, my best friend Teddy also loved horror and had a couple of older brothers who were happy to rent us whatever we wanted.

It was thanks to Teddy's older brother Scott that I first heard the Sex Pistols a couple of years later, so it turns out I owe a lot of key elements of my life to those guys! Anyway, Scott rented us some horror flicks, and you know my pick was *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*. He too insisted it was a wall-to-wall bloodbath, but I was insistent. I couldn't believe the time was at hand. Almost. For whatever reason, we didn't get to it that Saturday night. When I would stay over at Teddy's place on Saturdays, the routine was always the same. He would get up on Sunday morning and go to church with his mom, and I would chill out and play video games until they got back or my parents picked me up. There was no way I was going home without watching it, so in a quiet house all by myself, I popped the tape in the VCR.

It would be difficult to tell you exactly what my feelings were after watching it for the first time. In the decades since, I have watched it countless times (the most recent being yesterday, in preparation to write this) and I have picked it apart scene by scene more than once. I was utterly terrified watching this thing in broad daylight. It was so dark and grainy (a well-worn videotape didn't help that issue). I would have sworn it was the splatterfest that everyone said it was… but I would have been wrong.

The 1974 movie has been dissected and analyzed by people more qualified than I, and if you're already a fan, you already know. The movie's biggest trick is its ability to convince people they're seeing gore that is implied but never actually shown on film. It really isn't about the bloodletting at all. The true horror of *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* comes from the unease it creates: a story that begins in a very mundane, everyday sort of way and just continually escalates into insanity. The thing is, even the seemingly normal scenes at the beginning seem "off." It feels like you are on the road with these five youths, experiencing everything along with them.





Ultimately, it comes down to two opposing groups; "The Youths" and "The Family". This movie pretty much created the archetype of a group of teens or twenty-somethings whose sole purpose is to be fodder for the killer(s), save for the final girl. Let's face it, Kirk, Pam and Jerry don't really have much in the way of character development, and then there is Franklin. I could be wrong, but Franklin might be a horror first in being the character you can't wait to see slaughtered. Even at the beginning of the movie, you feel like the rest of his friends are on the verge of dumping him on the side of the road. Sally Hardesty became the model for the likes of Laurie Strode in *Halloween*, Alice in *Friday the 13th* and Nancy Thompson in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, among countless others. She just kept going and going, with a stamina for running and screaming that is hard to match.

The Family is where things get interesting. Leatherface is the central character but far from the leader (is there a leader?). He is seemingly non-verbal and expresses his different personas by wearing different masks skinned from corpses. The three personas he displays in the film are "The Butcher," "The Mother" and "The Pretty Lady." In the end, Leatherface becomes a bit of a sympathetic character, in that he clearly doesn't know what is going on other than that it is his job to deal with any "meat" that arrives on their property. You get the feeling that live humans aren't too familiar to him, and the fact that five show up out of nowhere in one day is freaking him the fuck out. He clearly doesn't know what to do other than prepare the meat.



The Hitchhiker is the first Family member we meet on the road. He is Leatherface's brother and, while higher functioning, he has clearly lost the plot. He provides some insight into how the Family got to where they are. He tells the Youths his family has "always been in meat" and that automation in the processing plant has put them out of work. Later we find out that he is responsible for the grave robbing that brought the Youths out to this part of Texas in the first place, to check on their grandfather's grave. It is funny to think that this all could have been avoided if they had just given him the two dollars for the photo he took of Franklin. He is definitely driving the insanity.

The Cook runs the gas station/barbecue shack the Youths go to. He seems to be the voice of reason in the Family but ultimately is along for the ride on the crazy train. He feels bad for what they are doing, but ultimately, they still have to put food on the table. He is absolutely the highest-functioning member of the Family, but it is clear that he is not in control of anything other than



poking Sally with a broom handle while she's in a burlap sack on the floorboards of his truck, all while telling her not to worry.

Then there is Grandpa, the patriarch of the Family. Legendary cow-killer and somehow still living despite his corpse-like appearance. We know very little about Grandpa other than that he likes the taste of blood and just can't swing a hammer like he used to.

The movie deserves its legendary status. To this day, people will go on about how the story is true and the real Leatherface is on death row in Texas right now. In reality, director Tobe Hooper visited relatives in Wisconsin as a child and was told horrific tales of Ed Gein's crimes, which he partially worked into his Family… there you have your "true story." The homemade, snuff-film feel paired with glorious cinematography (it is hard to believe these guys were essentially student filmmakers) and unforgettable sound mixing (the camera-flashbulb sound effect as the Hitchhiker takes photos of the corpses he's dug up, in the prelude to the credits, is just as iconic as Jason's theme in *Friday the 13th*) delivers the full package, with a result that is just as jarring on the hundredth watch as it is on the first.

Like I said at the start, *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* is my favourite horror movie and I could truly go on about it for hours. I also loved the first sequel, but for much different reasons. Tobe Hooper was still at the helm, but where the original had undercurrents of blue-collar economic strife, Part 2 was all about '80s consumerism. The Cook, Leatherface and Grandpa survived and went underground… literally. The new Family member we meet is the third brother, Chop Top (who was still in Vietnam during the first movie). They also parade around the Hitchhiker's flattened corpse, now lovingly called "Nubbins." They're being tracked down by Sally and Franklin's deranged Texas Ranger uncle (played to perfection by Dennis Hopper), who uses a late-night Texas DJ as bait to draw them out. The film's opening scene, with the Family chasing down a couple of shitty frat boys, is amazing. The biggest misstep the film makes is not bringing Gunnar Hansen back as Leatherface. Bill Johnson isn't terrible by any means, but Gunnar just had a way of emoting, even through the mask. Nothing past the first sequel has even come close to replicating the feel of the original, yet they keep trying.

I'll wrap this up with a couple of tips for fans. I highly recommend checking out some of the documentaries about the making of the first film and/or the DVD commentaries that Tobe Hooper, Kim Henkel and Gunnar Hansen did. The shoot they describe delves into almost as much insanity as what appeared on camera. The filming of the dinner scene in particular sounds harrowing. Speaking of the dinner scene, I have had the pleasure of making a pilgrimage to Kingsland, Texas, to have lunch at the original Family home. They lean into their historic past with a mini TCM museum upstairs. Everyone was super friendly and the food was great! Fans have also converted the original gas station/barbecue shack into a destination you can stay at, with bungalows and such. I haven't been able to get there yet, but it's on my list. I look forward to seeing what A24 does with the licence moving forward. Hopefully something closer to the original vision.

Remember: the family that eats together stays together!



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THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE 2

CAROLINE WILLIAMS

Stretch Lives Forever

By James Borsa

AU: Okay, so getting into the horror films, I'm a particular fan of Terry O'Quinn. He's a phenomenal actor, and you have a very juicy role in *Stepfather II*. Working with him in that film, how was that experience for you?

Caroline Williams: He was delightful. He hadn't gotten to *Lost* yet, so while he was a name actor, he was not a major star. So you didn't get ego. He's a talented musician. He would play the guitar between setups, and he wrote a song called "Bad Daddy Blues". And I had always thought, wouldn't it be fucking great if they worked that song into the end credits? I'm not going to complain because the scene in the junkyard when Terry is banging that car up all around the junkyard and they're playing, I can't remember the name of the tune, but it was something so counterfactual to the action. It's a very affectionate song, and of course, the body of Meg Foster's ex-husband is in the trunk! It was a juicy role for me. I still want roles like that. It was a second lead, but it had every character dynamic that I love! I had a great time on the film. I loved my scenes with Terry. You know what's ironic is the guy who wrote the script, John Auerbach. It's one of the best horror sequels, I think, that's ever been made. It's got a great deal of noir elements to it, and I love noir! And it's played perfectly, obviously, but that man never wrote another script, and he became an attorney!

AU: Wow!

CW: He became an entertainment attorney, which I find heartbreaking.

AU: I did not know that. That's very interesting.

CW: And shout-out to the late Jeff Burr. Jeff was a phenomenal talent. He was also responsible for *Leatherface*, which is *Texas Chainsaw Massacre 3*, and he had called me up and said, "Look, I want the character Stretch to live forever. Will you come in and do a quick shot? Uncredited, unpaid, can't pay you, night shoot, sorry. Just something that suggests Stretch became Lefty."

AU: Absolutely.

CW: And I said, "I'll do anything for you." And I did it, and it's… it's a moment.

AU: Speaking of Stretch, let's get into *Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2*. Before we get into the actual movie and the character itself, I am fascinated by all things Cannon Films, and you are right in the heart of Cannon Films. What was it like to be with those producers on that set at that point in the mid-'80s because it's such a remarkable company. And you guys were about the halfway point between the birth of Cannon and the end of Cannon. What was that experience like working with those guys?

CW: Well, we had a $6 million budget. They were certainly willing to give us the money. And I think that budget shows, particularly if you explore the world of Cary White, who was our art director and is responsible for the look of the film. The creation of that underground lair will be gone into in much fuller degree with the documentary that's currently in production about the making of the *Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2*. That's being done by Heather Buckley. She's a phenomenon, and she will do us justice, but the look of the film and the state of Texas are very clearly and abundantly characters in this film. And because we have that extraordinary underground lair which covered three industrial floors of the press building of the *Austin American-Statesman*. The way they made newspapers back in the day was pretty extraordinary.





You had to have these monolithic structures to accommodate the machines that printed the paper. And Cary pulled everything out of there. He sprayed gunite all over the interior, and he dressed out every square inch and corner! He trucked in dirt and rocks, and the thing was a miracle of industrial design, and it is so clearly a character, and it gave something for all of the actors in the film to play against. Just simply the way the atmosphere felt, the heat, the lighting, everything about it, and Richard Kooris' beautiful photography, just extraordinary. So, Cannon was generous to us in that respect. They were splashing out a lot of money. Tobe Hooper had a contract. He was editing *Invaders from Mars* at the time we were shooting the film. So, Tobe was getting by on little- to- no-sleep. We had Tom Savini, special effects, ghoul squadron, guys who would go on to become some of the very best special effects artists in the business, John Vulich, Greg Nicotero, all of these guys would go on to greatness, and I'll tell you, it was a wonderful time to be alive. It was a wonder if I were going to be given the responsibility of a lead in a film and that was the right one at the right time!



AU: I was rewatching it in preparation for our chat today. It is one of the most physically demanding performances I think I've seen in quite some time. They demand so much of you physically, and it's just remarkable the amount that you go through in that film. Was there any hesitation on that, or were you just having an absolute blast doing it?

CW: I was having an absolute blast doing it. I was only 29 years old at the time. This is 40 years ago! I had the most extraordinary stunt double in the business, Beth Newman. We were virtually identical to each other. We used to stand in the makeup wagon and our bodies were maps of bruises in every single same place! It was unbelievable. She really brought it, and I felt like I had to match her in nearly every frame of the film! Even when you read the script, you will see I am always pretty much there somewhere. But I was quite the athlete when I was 29. I kind of still am. I still, you know, slave away on the weight machines. But I enjoyed it. It was like being a kid, just taking a romp! I enjoyed every bit of it. It was also physically challenging, I have to say, for my "brother" Bill Moseley, having to undergo this extraordinary makeup process, costuming. You know, some of these actors, Bill Johnson, buried under these layers of costuming and latex and masks and all those things. I kind of had it good because I had a lot of exposed skin. And I was able to stay cool a little bit better than some, but honestly, the experience of a lifetime.



AU: You worked with the late, great Dennis Hopper, at a very interesting time. What was he like to work with at this particular time? Because again, he commits and gives one heck of a performance in this film.

CW: He was the Nick Cage of his day, you know, his filmography is extraordinary. He worked with all the great classic directors. He worked with George Stevens and Nick Ray and he was friends with James Dean, Natalie Wood, Warren Beatty, all the majors of his time, and he was also a great classicist, you know, he came of age doing stage dance in San Diego at the Old Globe Theatre, and that was when he began collecting art. You know, he was way ahead of his time in who was going to be the great artists, and music, photography. His stories were extraordinary, which is one of the things that's such a luxury about playing opposite people like Dennis Hopper, like Angela Lansbury, like Joe Don Baker, you know, people like that, is you get to hear these incredible stories, and of course now young players want my stories! The most notable thing that I accomplished in my relationship with Dennis, we were both 18 months sober at the time, now, I've heard stories since that, no, he wasn't really sober but he at least understood where I was and where I was coming from. I learned from him how to act for the camera! And how to use my relationship with the camera operator to make my physical performance more effective even without dialogue. That was the most illuminating thing. I have seen more than one interview with Tom Cruise where Cruise talks about this. If you're going to be an actor in the early days, you were going to acting school and it was for stage. Because the stage is where you learned everything about acting. It's different now, everything is for camera. And that was the best thing, everything he taught me I have used and I have refined.

AU: You mentioned Nicolas Cage. I would be remiss in not mentioning *Renfield*. *Renfield* is a hoot! It's an absolute blast of a film, it's so much fun to watch Cage sink his teeth into the role, if I may say that! You have a role in the film as well. Is this a film that you really cherish?

CW: You know, I cherish the experience. I cherish that I got to work for Chris McKay, who is extraordinary. Sadly I had so much more in *Renfield*. The editing of the film ended up being the studio cut, I disappeared from much of the film, but there are other actors better known than me and much more accomplished who were cut out entirely!

AU: Oh, wow!

CW: They didn't even have one line! So I am not going to be a big-time bitch about it. I got to do comedy with Ben Schwartz and Awkwafina! It was a luxury, it was wonderful. I got to wear Valentino. I was there for 10 days. We had four-days off because the entire city of New Orleans shuts down for Mardi Gras. A four-day vacation having Mardi Gras in New Orleans!

AU: In talking about the Calgary Horror Con. I'm curious when you go to these conventions, what are some of the best reactions from fans that you've encountered? Has there been really passionate fans that have come up to you with stuff they've made or dressed up or what's some of the more memorable encounters you've had?

CW: Always, always. The fan enthusiasm is part of the reason that actors go on these things. Unlike the rest of Hollywood, television or film horror actors are directly responsible to the audiences they serve. And the audiences have opinions, ideas, they want to know things! They will tell you what they like. They will tell you what they don't like. And you get to take that forward. The '90s in particular found a lot of audience dissatisfaction because there was so much CGI. And it was so badly done. And the quality of the productions were just very different. They love the '80s, which has more classic story constructions.

AU: What new projects do you have coming up for us in the future?

CW: I moved to Austin and worked for a remarkable Austin, Texas, filmmaker, Steven Romano! We did a movie called *What Did You Do?* And it stars Jonathan Stoddard. He's a television series regular now. Steven knows camera and knows lighting and he operated the camera. And it's a noir thriller. Noir uses light and camera angles! The visuals of noir are essential to the art, and I got to use that very, very effectively in *What Did You Do?* Which is going to be a fun film, and it'll be out next year.

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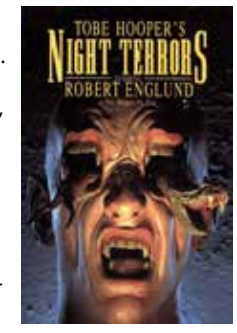


THE MANIAC GENIUS OF THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE PART 2

By Vince D'Amato

Like almost every horror movie fan on the planet (probably), my wide-eyed, jaw-dropped introduction to the maniac genius of Tobe Hooper began with *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* and *Poltergeist* (well, actually, it was the other way around, but you get it). But when I first watched that VHS tape rental of his sequel *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2*, well that pretty much melted my brain. I know that I've recently spoken about this film, along with the two others in Hooper's "Cannon trilogy", for *Absolute Underground*'s earlier 1986 retrospective, but let's take a step back from that for a second to view what Hooper's career in horror cinema looks like through the lens of four defined sections: The first eight years, 1974-1982, Hooper brought us one of the most widely recognized, appreciated, inspired, and important horror movies ever filmed, *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974), and there are those who have said that this film was just a "happy accident"... those people are wrong. I would dare say that no other horror director in or out of Hollywood has had to re-prove themselves as often or under as much scrutiny as Tobe Hooper. After his 1974 film, Hooper went on to direct a lengthy adaptation of Stephen King's '*Salem's Lot* (1979), which to this day is still the best-filmed adaptation of King's novel, before being hired by Spielberg to direct *Poltergeist* (1982). The second segment of Hooper's career, 1985-1986, was my favourite, the "Cannon trilogy", which produced two of Hooper's horror masterpieces; the space-vampire sci-fi/horror extravaganza *Lifeforce* (1985), and then my absolute favourite film of Hooper's, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* (1986). Hooper never quite replicated his maniacal masterpieces of that era (and more about Texas Chainsaw 2 in a minute, bear with me here), but his career went on to be no less fascinating. The next significant segment was his 90s output, specifically the reunion/collaborations with Robert Englund *(Eaten Alive)*, one of which also involved ex-Jess Franco producer Harry Allan Towers. Hooper directed three notable films in this era that featured more prominently on VHS and late-nite cable – the horror-sexploitation throwback *Tobe Hooper's NIght Terrors* (1993), which also starred then up-and-coming video starlet Zoe Trilling (*Night of the Demons 2*) and was also released on VHS by Cannon Video; followed by his second Stephen King adaptation, *The Mangler* (1995). Hooper then closed out the decade with a complete change of pace with the criminally underappreciated *The Apartment Complex*, an absurdist murder-msytery produced for cable that starred Chad Lowe, Tyra Banks and Amanda Plummer that was broadcast on Halloween 1999 before hitting the video store shelves. As Hooper segued into the 2000s, this was the last featurable era of his career, featuring something of a minor "comeback" in the form of a 1978 drive-in horror film remake that had, ironically, originally been influenced by Hooper's own *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*. Strangely, Hooper's *Toolbox Murders* (2004) was sort of an all-out horror version of his own *The Apartment Complex* and didn't really have a lot in common with the 1978 original The *Toolbox Murders*. Although Hooper's revisionist take did become one of his more appreciated efforts (finally), and directly preceded his participation in Mick Garris' groundbreaking *Masters of Horror* cable series (2005-2006), where Hooper directed two stellar episodes over two seasons. Hooper had definitely been no stranger to TV horror, either – some of his most impressive and effective horror came via his directorial participation in cable television between the late 80s and early 90s, from John Carpenter's anthology *Body Bags* and Wes Craven's series *Freddy's Nightmares* to the somewhat bizarre cursed-red-dress thriller *I'm Dangerous Tonight*, which starred a young Mädchen Amick (*Twin Peaks*). Going back to that time period (and we knew this was coming), Hooper's 1986 updating of his own '74 material got twisted inside and out with his over-the-top sardonic-eighties-American dark-humoured sequel, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* – and one only has to look at the theatrical poster, with "The Family" aping John Hughes' *The Breakfast Club* poster, to get that Hooper was diving head-first into this one with a satirical attitude in overdrive. And in his process, he gave us some of the most memorable horror film characters ever conceived, with Bill Mosely's "Chop Top", Dennis Hopper's chainsaw-wielding Texan cop "Lefty", and Caroline Williams starring as one of my all-time favorite horror film characters ever, the radio DJ "Stretch", who gets pulled into the chaos and violence of "The Family" after one of their utterly outrageous chainsaw murders is caught over a radio call-in line. Nevermind that, the *entire film* is utterly outrageous, with actual shocking gore effects by Tom Savini (possibly his best work ever), and one of the best horror movie performances by star Caroline Williams, culminating in one of the best horror movie endings ever shot. One critic at the time wrote that Tobe Hooper had basically "shit all over" his original film for this sequel – that critic was incorrect. Alright, I may have been paraphrasing there, but all Hooper did was viscerally pull his original twisted creation screaming into the eighties with exactly the same type of black humour and gleefully maniacal sensibilities that he clearly utilized twelve years earlier under smaller budget constraints – only now it was flamboyantly amplified (as it should have been for the eighties in America), bolstered with a bigger budget, more focus on the female leading protagonist, and a let's-just-fucking-go-for-it crazy energy that was potent enough to instigate tangible inspiration decades later in filmmakers like Quentin Tarantino (*Grindhouse*), who has since additionally praised Tobe Hooper's *The Funhouse (Cinema Speculation)*.









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BILL 'LEATHERFACE 2' JOHNSON

The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2

Interview by Joel Shelton and Ira Hunter

AU: Who are we speaking with today?

Bill Johnson: Bill Johnson. Cinema-wise my best known role is Leatherface or Bubba. Really, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* is more about Bubba than it is about Leatherface. He's a rebel who's broken away from the family laws and it ends in seemingly the destruction of the family. But they keep getting resurrected in various sequels.

AU: How did you originally get the role of Leatherface in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2*?



Bill: The usual way that a feature is mounted is the advance scripts are sent for actors, so the local casting people can look through their stable and see who fits best and line them up for an audition. Tobe Hooper was doing pre-production in Austin at the time that I was called in to audition. There was a national search for Bubba and they hadn't found him yet. I didn't know at the time that Tobe was under the gun time wise. Cannon had signed a contract to have the sequel to *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* on the screen by no later than Aug. 22, and I believe it was late May that I was auditioning. So, it was coming up pretty fast. Tobe is a specific kind of director; he's not a corporate-stable director that they have in harness, raring to go. They sought him. He had a three-picture deal with Cannon Films and one of the pictures had to be *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2*. It was the last one Tobe was doing and I don't think he wanted to do it. I don't blame him because it was horribly risky. The first one, certainly, was the icon of new horror. It's still considered one of the scariest, if not the scariest, horror film. He risked falling on his face and besmirching his legacy. But he went ahead. Fortunately he got Kit Carson to write it with him and maybe with some input from Kim Henkel. The script was great. It was so different; it had its own special flair. As far as I can see, no one except Tobe can really get the essence of what's going on with the Sawyer family. Other people have tried and they have fallen quite short of the mark. They can get some of the essence, some of the elements, but they just don't get what makes it tick and Tobe did. Kit Carson was always on set with his little portable typewriter. Always by the entrance making up new lines. Bubba, of course, didn't have any written dialogue. He had a lot of sort of telepathic stuff going on.

AU: For the audition process, were you cast for your size or your acting skills?

Bill: Part of it is there has to be some kind of connection between the physical appearance to the original in terms of character. I kind of favoured the general silhouette of Gunnar Hansen. Gunnar was taller; he was 6'4", 6'5". I was 6'2", at best, but I was the right shape. I had a large midriff. We both like pudding, as Muhammad Ali would say! They looked at me for that, and I brought a group of qualities they were looking for. This was, of course, a horror-comedy. It was more of a horror-rom-com. Because Bubba was in love! And he wanted a girlfriend so bad. No matter what the family thought, and they didn't like it at all… But when push comes to shove, the whole family's threatened by Lefty, who's coming in like a mezcal worm-eating crazy fanatic. It was time to pick up the saw and duel it out.

AU: The character of Leatherface is iconic. Was it a lot of pressure to live up to what Gunnar Hansen had done in the first film?

Bill: I decided not to do that, because I didn't see the film until the night I went to audition. When I saw it, I got frightened at an unconscious level. I thought there was no outdoing that. He had a unique style. I read the script and it was really different from the first one, thankfully. I'd been in the theatre for a number of decades already and had played a lot of different kinds of roles. So, I took a tip out of the actor's handbook. An actor from England who played Hamlet 21 times, Richard Burton, said whenever he got cast as Hamlet, he just treated the play as a brand new script. That's what I did, because it was a brand new script to begin with and it got me out of the mindset of trying to mimic Gunnar.

AU: When filming *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* back in the '80s, knowing the ending of the film (spoiler alert: Leatherface gets a chainsaw right in the guts), did you think we would even be talking about Leatherface 40 years later?

Bill: I didn't know what would happen. I just hoped that it would be well-accepted. At the beginning, it was deplored as a slasher movie. At least by the local pundits in Austin where I was living at the time. I was just hoping it would lead to other work where I could work as a performer and get paid a decent wage for a change. Fortunately, the casting was superb. Bill Moseley was fully nine sheets to the wind, full-goose bozo in his character. He's as smart as the proverbial whip and we had great chemistry. Caroline (Williams) had great chemistry with us. Dennis (Hopper) was fully part of the cast; he was easy to work with, Jim Siedow was just as fun as could be and Tobe (Hooper), he knew how to work with actors. It was really hard because it was so hot and the schedule was pressed so hard. Cannon had sent emissaries to the set to apply pressure to hurry the fuck up and get this thing done. Tobe was editing on the set between scenes.

AU: Working with Jim Siedow and Bill Moseley, who have this kind of crazy, funny back-and-forth that they're doing all the time, was it hard to keep a straight face and not burst out laughing at these two characters?

Bill: Oh no! To laugh at them was to incur their wrath. No! Didn't want that. But they were funny and I found what they did entertaining. I understood what the language meant and their moods. So it didn't pay to cross the line. Just do what you're told, go along to get along. Plus, Bubba had a big secret and he was facing the firing squad for his infidelity!



AU: What was it like working with special effects master Tom Savini? Did he create the Leatherface mask for *Texas Chainsaw 2*?

Bill: He and his special effects team were doing the foundational stuff. He would give directions, give concepts, suggest tweaks and put the final okay on whatever came up. Through a collaborative process, they came up with the final mask, which I think is the best Leatherface mask of them all….And the designer of the Bubba mask was John Vulich on Savini's crew. Savini told John what he wanted and John rendered the design.

AU: The mask itself looks like it was real difficult to wear for long periods of time, especially carrying a huge chainsaw. Was it physically demanding?

Bill: There were two masks, one made for me and one for the stunt double, Bob Elmore. I spent the first seven weeks in my room. They would say, "Get ready, you're up next." They just kept saying, "Okay, you can go to lunch, you're up next." Then they come in: "Go to dinner, you're up next." And then they come in and go, "Climb out of the wardrobe, see you in the morning." That sort of thing. I did that for seven weeks.

AU: Is that because Bob was the stuntman and they were shooting him first?

Bill: They were doing all the things that took the most time first. One of the complaints from Cannon Films with the script was they said, "Where's the monster? Gotta see some monster action here." So, they had Bob chasing Caroline a lot and doing that sort of thing. He was using a live chainsaw a lot of the time, especially running with one, and if there was ever an accident, they had to have enough time to get someone else up and running to fill in and continue. They didn't allow me to work with a live chainsaw.

AU: Was there ever a possibility of you playing Leatherface in the third film *Leatherface: Texas Chainsaw Massacre III*?

Bill: Kim wanted me to be in it. But it was a low-budget film, and there's a thing called the Crespi effect. Crespi was a researcher who discovered this in rats. When rats ran a maze and got rewarded, they ran the maze well. Then, when they were running the maze and were not rewarded, the rats got depressed and said, "Fuck you. I ain't running no more." So Kim was offering me the opportunity to play Leatherface again but at 20 per cent of what I was making a week with no benefits and no stunt double. This was about a year or two after the first one came out. I was 40 and I just thought I'm going to get fucked up somehow. If they can't get enough money to get a stunt double and a dressing room… I mean, I had sort of had the Hollywood treatment. The previous film had a $5-million budget in 1986,, so it had a pretty healthy budget. After seeing *Leatherface* on the screen, I was going, "Did I ever make the right decision!" I mean, the first movie had a $50,000 budget and you know the crew ain't gonna work for free or for a pittance. But actors are notorious for being bamboozled into doing it for free or very little, which was the case on the first one. They had Gunnar who was quite brilliant, Ed Neal who was brilliant as the hitchhiker and Marilyn Burns. I was going to school at the time of the filming which was in 1973. Bill Vail, Marilyn Burns, Gunnar Hansen and Ed Neal were at UT. Gunnar was in the English department, the other three were in the drama department with me. I knew them all. I did not know that the movie was being auditioned. I probably wouldn't have been cast for it if Gunnar had been there. Tobe said one of the things he liked was Gunnar filled up the doorway and I didn't do that.

AU: *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* was released unrated. Back then, there was no NC-







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17. Do you think that hurt the box office when it came out and do you think it helped make it a notorious video nasty back in the day?

Bill Johnson: I don't know; that's sort of a business question. But perhaps Tobe's decision to keep it unrated let people decide what sort of slot it should be in.

AU: Why do you think *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* has kept going in pop culture for so long?

Bill: I look at the movie and it's easy to watch; it goes down smooth. I was at a haunted attraction signing autographs and they had the movie on a constant loop. Each time I saw something new and interesting. Something about it speaks to the unconscious. My thought at the moment is intelligence, whether it's biological or machine intelligence, seeks freedom, seeks to evolve and have its reach exceed its grasp. Which is what the Sawyer family was doing. They've come a long way since the first movie, certainly economically and socially. Socially they were duplicitous and I think it revealed a lot about modern society in general anywhere on the planet. Particularly where we live in America.

AU: There's talk they're going to be making a new *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* again with the director Curry Barker, who made the box-office hit *Obsession*. Do you think people will ever stop being afraid of chainsaws?

Bill: Not as long as they keep being portrayed as a symbol of menace, as Gunnar said. People can't see a chainsaw now without having the fear of menace enter their psyche. They are dangerous tools. I had an actress tell me her stepfather was using a chainsaw. The saw bucked, it bounced up and back and caught him in the jugular vein, his carotid and he fell down dead. It's very dangerous!

AU: If you were asked to play Leatherface again, would you do it, and as an actor, what other characters would you love to play still?

Bill: It would depend on a number of things. I like performing; however, I need to get paid. So I'd need an agent to get proper payment for the production. I'd like to play a character who goes from ignorance to knowledge. Essentially, a lot of movies don't work because they don't follow theatrical format. Which essentially is, the main character's a protagonist and antagonist and one of them goes from ignorance to knowledge and has a learning experience. Like a cautionary tale.

AU: You were also in another movie which I like, *Future-Kill*. What was it like working on that film? It's kinda crazy, like *The Warriors* movie set in Austin, TX. Did you know that the poster by surrealist artist H.R. Giger was going to be that cool for such a low-budget film?

Bill: Nope. Edwin Neal, as Splatter, I think had a relationship with Giger. Edwin was dealing with memorabilia for the longest time. He travelled a lot and knows a lot of people. I think he made the arrangements with Giger and hit it off with him. I think that's why we were so lucky to get that really far-out poster. It was a super low-budget film. The director had almost no experience whatsoever, so it was all very chaotic.

AU: How was it working with Dennis Hopper? Was he as crazy as he's portrayed in the movie?

Bill: No, no, he couldn't be that way and still operate as a moneymaking person. That's just the character he can do. I mean, he's directed a number of movies. Who's going to trust Frank from *Blue Velvet* with millions of dollars?



AU: Did you end up with some scenes with him, or because of the chainsaws, was it more with the stuntman?

Bill: I had a few scenes with him. But the match-up between me and Bob was different. I think they just had my stuff hit the floor. The shape of Bob's head was different. I had more of a sort of an oval kind of head and face and he had more square. Toward the end of the last few weeks, almost at the end of it, someone had ripped off the stunt mask, Bob's mask. There wasn't time for Savini to create a new one, so they let Bob use mine. So when I got it back it didn't fit my face right. They took a mould of my head and face, so the mask fit me perfectly but his had square corners and it was loose.

AU: How did you prepare mentally to get into the mindset of Leatherface?

Bill: The central most scenario character identity was Charles Laughton's performance as Quasimodo in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, who loved and dedicated himself heart and soul to Esmeralda, to protect her unto his death against all who would do her harm.

AU: What goes through your mind when you are wearing the Leatherface mask and the director yells "Action!"?

Bill: Difficult to answer, because part of acting, at least for me, is to let go of mind chatter and just let go, while keeping minor awareness of surroundings to follow any previous rehearsal, keep track of the scene's unfolding and focus on the other characters/actors and what must transpire between us.

AU: I'm assuming the method acting technique would be difficult with such an intense character.

Bill: There are lots and lots of different definitions of "method acting." Bottom line for me, my POV of "method acting" is applying the best technique you now possess to achieve the best quality performance you can muster with the participants of the scene.

AU: Any final words to share with *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* fans of Canada?

Bill: The Saw is family and so are you, you far-out fans!

facebook.com/BillLeatherface2Johnson

www.leatherface2.com

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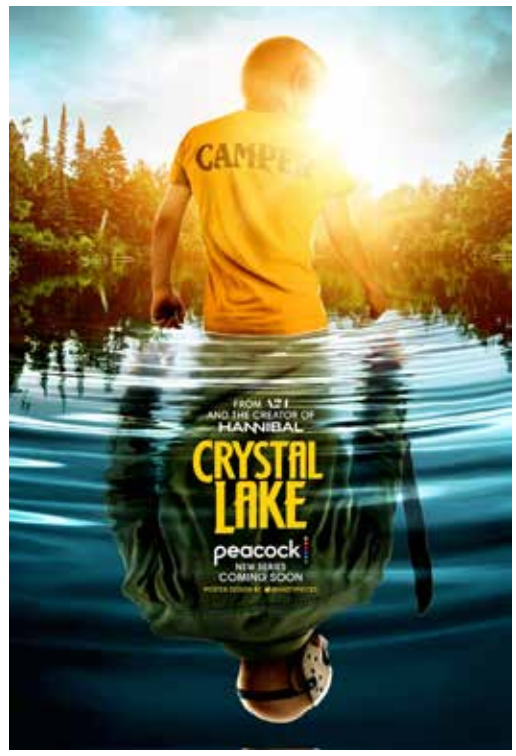
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THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JASON'S MOM AND VICTOR MILLER

By Vince D'Amato

Victor Miller, May 14, 1940 – August 31, 2026 (RIP), was the original writer and co-creator of *Friday the 13th*, which has been one of the longest-running theatrical franchises, if not the longest, that I can bring to mind – although I'm sure *The Fast and the Furious* has either caught up by now, or is about to. Victor Miller's involvement with the entire *Friday the 13th* franchise was initially only the original film's screenplay, and thereafter his writing was attributed to "based on characters by" for all of the sequels that followed. Miller subsequently made his living as an assistant head writer on not just one, but *several* highly popular soap operas through the 80s, 90s, and 2000s.



In 2025, the "upper-echelon" genre production company A24 produced a new series, titled *Crystal Lake*, based on Miller's original *Friday the 13th* script, scheduled for release on October 15, 2026 on the streaming platform *Peacock* (NBC/Universal). Miller also received an Executive Producer credit on the first season of *Crystal Lake*. But while A24 was finally able to make headway with producing further creative output based on Miller's intellectual property, this is the first thing that's come out since 2009's *Friday the 13th* remake, and that creative hiatus was actually due to Miller himself. USA Copyright Law allows the original writer to legally reclaim their work from a film studio or a publisher after several decades, provided the script was not a "work-for-hire". Following the *Friday the 13th* remake (2009), that timeframe had expired. Victor Miller sued former collaborator and horror film producer Sean S. Cunningham over the rights to *Friday the 13th*, saying that his (Miller's) script was his original idea written and sold to Cunningham, while Cunningham declared that Miller's script was a "work-for-hire" commissioned by him, and hence, was Cuningham's property. The utterly crazy thing is that *both parties* were able to produce physical evidence in court that supported *both sides* to those conflicting stories. In the end, the courts sided with Miller, and as of 2018 the copyright to *Friday the 13th* was legally reverted back to Miller, which effectively put a stop to any further cinematic output based on his property – which speculatively, could have been his intention from the start, as he had cited a falling out he'd had with Cunningham in the mid-80s, along with his disappointment over the direction the sequels took following his original film; he never supported the idea that Jason should've become the main antagonist of the franchise. Any further sequels or remakes were effectively non-started once he was awarded the return of the title's copyright, even though New Line Cinema had legally purchased the *Friday the 13th* trademarks from Paramount, who had purchased it from Sean Cunningham, what subsequently came into question then was New Line's right to outrightly purchase the copyright, when Cunningham's original claim on it (and by extension, Paramount's) was likely due to expire between 2010-2015, based on that USA Copyright Law. This is the same scenario where a lot of film and IP agreements (scripts, music, etc.) get tangled up not only in Hollywood, but also within the independent film industry (and *Friday the 13th* did start out as an independent film, for sure). Coming back to 2025, A24 was able to get involved in creating their new streaming series *Crystal Lake*, evidently by working with Victor Miller directly as a name-only Executive Producer, and by circumventing all cinema-rights to the IP by only producing the new *Friday the 13th* offshoot for streaming services, outside of New Line Cinema (who may or may not control the cinema rights to the property). A24's *Crystal Lake* is reported to be a prequel to Victor's Miller's original screenplay, focusing on the character of Mrs. Voorhees, Jason's mom, who appeared in the original film (and in its final sequel, *Freddy vs. Jason*, 2003).





In a way, I can certainly empathize with Victor Miller, the entire studio system seems set up to be something like 'monetized public domain', for want of a better description, so that they can manipulate ownership of a writer's intellectual property almost indefinitely. But however this worked out, Victor Miller undeniably left us a prodigious horror legacy with his original creation that over the decades has garnered a huge fanbase, countless creative contributions, and has literally changed the face of pop culture. That's something very incredible to reflect on for a writer's career – and come this October, his creation will live on.

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ATTACK OF THE KILLER TOMATOES!

David Ferino and Costa Dillon on *Organic Intelligence*

By Cody No Teeth

AU: Hello, I'm Cody from Absolute Underground. Did you guys want to introduce yourselves a little and explain who you are and what you did on the new film, *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes: Organic Intelligence*?

David Ferino: Sure, I'm David Ferino. I directed and edited the film. I'm the noob here. Costa's the OG, and I'm the one who's been lucky enough to jump in the sandpit with them.

Costa Dillon: I'm Costa Dillon. I've been with the Killer Tomatoes franchise since the beginning. I'm the person that I think first recognized that killer tomatoes were a threat to the world, and I've been trying to warn people ever since 1977. So it's a lifelong battle, and people are still in blissful ignorance.

David.

AU: I guess the new film did say that the original was a documentary, right?

Costa: Yes. Did you not know that? Yeah. See, there you go.

AU: Blissfully ignorant. So, Costa, when you wrote the original *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes!*, did you think that almost 50 years later you'd be working on the same franchise?

Costa: Oh, absolutely. The first thing I thought was, "I'll be doing this in 50 years. It'll be on my gravestone." Yeah, that was definitely it. No, I can remember we were filming the battle scenes in downtown San Diego, and a reporter — I think it was the newspaper, actually — asked me, "What's your goal for making this movie?" And I said, "We expect to become thousandaires." So that was our goal at the time. So no, I didn't expect this would be following me the rest of my life.

AU: And so then, obviously, it wasn't your intention to make it into this franchise with different sequels, an animated series and stuff like that.

Costa: No, but it did become a thousandaire.

AU: And then for the both of you, how did the concept for this new film come about? What inspired you to make a new sequel all these years later?

Costa: Well, Steve Peace and I regained the rights. Steve is the other executive producer and, along with John DeBello, has also been with the program since the beginning. Basically, the killer tomato rights are owned, or were owned, by a variety of entities. They still are. Disney owns the cartoons, for example. So we didn't have the rights to make any more killer tomato movies for a while, and the various entities that owned the rights didn't seem interested in making any killer tomato movies either, because they didn't do anything with it. When we regained the rights, Steve and I said, "Well, we'd like to do something." John DeBello, who directed the first four films, chose not to participate. There's no ill will or any bad blood there. He just decided he didn't want to participate. I had joked for years that the original film was a documentary, and when we were discussing what to do for this script, we suddenly realized, "Well, there it is, right there." Take the joke and make up the story, and that's how it came to be. And then we were lucky to find



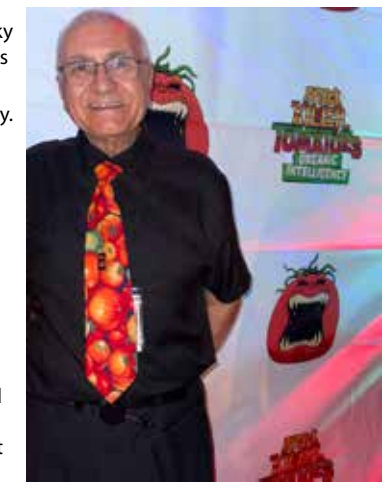
David: And I was lucky to be found.

Costa: He was just laying right there at the front.

David: That's right. Yeah, yeah, yeah. They scooped me up from the middle of the asphalt, and now we're on the internet together.

AU: There we go. And is that how you came to be the director? They just kind of tripped over you while walking down the street?

David: I wish it was that simple. I had the good fortune of directing a film that was produced by a guy named Roger Mayer, who was a producer on this film as well. When they were hunting around for a director, he was already attached as one of the producers, and he threw my name in the ring. I was lucky enough to convince these guys to trust me.



It was interesting, my trajectory. I had made quite a few short films that I think were, if not in the same mould as *Killer Tomatoes*, at least adjacent. There was a lot of silliness, a lot of comedy, but my first feature was a drama. It was like a two-person chamber drama, so I was a little worried that they would think this would feel strange as a second film. But I think in all of our conversations, I won their trust by assuring them that I really understood their tone and their approach. One of the things that I said in our first call is that I appreciate movies with a theme and with something to say. And these movies, the only thing that they have to say is nonsense. But I actually think that nonsense alone is weirdly important, especially in confusing times. I think that doing stuff that doesn't have to make sense is actually really important and weirdly timely.

AU: Yeah, I find horror comedies and tongue-in-cheek films really carry on longer and have a longer lineage, because they can be timeless. It doesn't matter what decade they come out in; you can watch these horror comedies and still find the funny antics and jokes, especially if they're slapsticky, because that stuff's very timeless.

David: Costa can maybe speak to this more, but I think in this film especially — it's called *Organic Intelligence* — we are obviously riffing on artificial intelligence, which is very of the moment. But you're absolutely right. If you looked back at 1978, the original film, I'm sure there's stuff in that movie that would feel very much of that time and commenting on the day. But also, like you said, because of the antics of it all, it doesn't really have a shelf life, and I hope the same holds true for this one.



Costa: In the first film, we make fun of unrest in the Middle East, and we don't have that hanging over us anymore… So yeah, no, things don't change.

AU: OK, so I noticed there are a lot of cameos in the film. Even my friend Katie Corcoran is in the first scene. Were all of these actors your friends, or how did you get so many people to play these tiny bit roles, like the Tom Arnold cameo at the very end, where he's only in the movie for about two minutes?

Costa: Yeah, I was gonna say there's a secret about making films: you pay people and they'll be in your movie. That's how it works. That's how we got George Clooney for the second film. We paid him.

David: The brand has name recognition, obviously, so I think a lot of people didn't even need to read a script. They were just excited to be a part of this franchise that's still kicking. It also helped that our distributor, Starboard Entertainment, had relationships with Catherine Corcoran and Daniel Roebuck, for example. So it was a combination of brand recognition, some friendships and then, as Costa was saying, money.

Costa: Yeah, we're lucky. We got a great cast: both the veteran actors who play the senior members of the killer tomato fighting group and the younger actors who are earlier in their careers but were just as excited to be doing it. The way you make a killer tomato movie work is everybody in the film has to believe it. They have to believe that killer tomatoes are dangerous. You can't play the film as tongue-in-cheek. We know people watching the film think it's a silly premise, but the people in the film don't think it's a silly premise. I think David did a great job of helping those actors stay on that course, and every single one of them took to it. They make you believe.

David: Yeah, it was cool as an editor. I was constantly blown away. There wasn't a single frame that I paused on where they weren't fully in it, and their faces were totally alive in these ridiculous settings. That's true for every single person on screen. It was really awesome, and I appreciate what Costa is saying, but at the same time, these actors really showed up knowing exactly how to jump in with that attitude.

AU: Yeah, I feel like that's part of the movie magic, right? It brings people out of whatever they're going through, and you can escape and just be in the moment. A feel-good, funny romp at the cinema usually helps with that, because we use our entertainment as escapism, and I find movies are the best way to do that. You can just turn your brain off, grab a big bag of popcorn and watch, right?

David: Yeah, yeah. The other thing that I'm proud of with this movie is that part of the legacy is the fact that these films are a little rough around the edges. No one's trying to hide that, and as a film viewer, I really appreciate it. I think it invites people into the fun. There's something about it that feels almost more engaging to me than something that's incredibly polished.

AU: So then, is this film setting up more sequels? Do you see any other films in the future, or other forms of media, like comic books or toys or more cartoons that aren't owned by Disney?

Costa: I don't think the killer tomatoes have run their course. I think there are plenty more stories and ideas out there.

David: I'm hoping to book out the Sphere in Las Vegas. We're going to do killer tomatoes in the Sphere.

Costa: Yeah, the whole Sphere would become a tomato. There you go, there you go, yeah, yeah!

AU: Do you guys have any other new projects you're working on that you can talk about, or any other tomato-related things?

Costa: I don't, but I know David's busy.

David: I am. I am keeping busy. I'm in that weird zone. I do actually have a sci-fi comedy that I'm actively trying to put together, but I'm not gonna say anything more about it because I don't want to jinx it. There's some stuff percolating, but you know how it is. You say too much and then it falls apart, and you look like a dunce. So I'll bite my tongue for now.

Costa: I do have a script for *Killer Tomatoes in Space*, David. So you know…

David: Actually?

Costa: Oh yeah, I wrote it after we finished the second film, before we made the third film.

David: I need to read that.

AU: So just to wrap up, where can folks find you guys going forward, on social media and all that kind of stuff?

Costa: Killertomatoes.com is where you can find everything you need to know about tomatoes.

David: @davidferino is mine, for pretty much everything.

killertomatoes.com

instagram.com/davidferino


skullskates.com



HORROR FILMS CARVED IN STONE

Standing Stones, Curses and Stolen Megaliths on Screen

By Steve Earles

Megalithic monuments figured highly in a script initially written by Nigel Kneale, creator of *Quatermass*. Following the great success of *Halloween* and *Halloween II*, director/composer/writer John Carpenter and producer/writer Debra Hill were asked to make another *Halloween* film. Carpenter and Hill rightly knew the well was very dry indeed in Haddonfield and that it was pushing the boundaries of belief to breaking point. (This was proven by the more recent dreadful trilogy of new *Halloween* films; *Halloween Kills* in particular has to be one of the most stupid and worthless films ever made.)



So they came up with an inspired idea: to do a series of films set on Halloween night, but completely unconnected to the previous two films.

Carpenter and Hill were big *Quatermass* fans, and they asked Nigel Kneale to write a script for them. Producer Dino De Laurentiis did not like Kneale's script and asked for changes to be made. Kneale left the project, and his name does not appear in the film's credits. Kneale said of his original script: "The main story had to do with deception, psychological shock rather than physical ones." Director Tommy Lee Wallace is credited with the final script, but clearly, covering as it does similar themes to previous Kneale works like *Quatermass and the Pit* and *The Stone Tape*, much of the original story remains (the very '80s gore effects were most probably added, though without seeing the original script, we can never be certain).

The film that became *Halloween III: Season of the Witch* (1982), despite its troubled history, still has much to recommend it. It concerns an Irish toy and mask maker called Conal Cochran (played well by Dan O'Herlihy, clearly enjoying himself and chewing the scenery so much I feared for the stolen Stonehenge monolith!). Cochran has somehow managed to steal a bluestone from Stonehenge (perhaps *Ancient Aliens* is right, and it levitated to America!). In the original script, Cochran is a 3,000-year-old Irish demon, a trickster figure like Loki, but this is not mentioned in the completed film. He is combining ancient technology with modern technology (a favourite theme of Kneale's, that of *occult science*, as evidenced in his famous *The Stone Tape*, for instance) to give America a Halloween it will never forget!

Cochran's factory is selling the most popular Halloween mask of 1982. However, its distinct Silver Shamrock logo conceals a microchip connected to a tiny sliver of the Stonehenge bluestone he's stolen. At Halloween, a signal from a Silver Shamrock television advert will cause all manner of horrible creatures to materialize within the masks, resulting in the deaths of those wearing them, and Cochran has sold literally millions of the masks. Cochran is a trickster carrying out a very black trick-or-treat indeed! He wants to take the celebration of Halloween back to being Samhain, with a vengeance!

An absolute classic film to feature Stonehenge is *Night of the Demon* (1957, also known as *Curse of the Demon*).

Dana Andrews stars as Dr. John Holden. The film is directed by Jacques Tourneur (*Cat People*). *Night of the Demon* was adapted from the M.R. James story "Casting the Runes", which first appeared in 1911 in *More Ghost Stories of an Antiquary*. (The story would also be adapted for British television in 1979.)



Niall MacGinnis plays the story's villain, Karswell, while fellow Irish actor Liam Redmond plays Professor Mark O'Brien and Peggy Cummins plays Joanna.

We see Stonehenge featured twice in the film, for *Night of the Demon* is all about the old ways still being practised, and no image could bring that home more strongly in the public consciousness than Stonehenge.

In England, Professor Harrington begs Dr. Julian Karswell to remove a curse he has placed upon him. In return, he will cease his investigation into what he calls Karswell's "devil cult" (an interesting harkening back to the Christian Church labelling other belief systems "Satanic," ironic when you realize that the traditional image of the Devil is no more than a slanderous corruption by the church of deities like Pan or the Horned God). Karswell promises to do what he can, but it's an insincere promise. The parchment bearing the curse runes that Karswell had placed on Harrington's person has been destroyed, and thus the curse cannot be lifted. On leaving Karswell's mansion, Harrington is destroyed by a huge demon.

Shortly thereafter, Dr. John Holden arrives in Britain from America with the intention of exposing Karswell's cult. Holden is a complete cynic and believes only in science. He discovers Harrington is dead and that the only link remaining between Karswell and Harrington's death is Rand Hobart, a member of Karswell's group accused of murder and in a catatonic state. Harrington's friends are open to the idea of the supernatural being real. Holden remains as rigid in his belief as one of the Stonehenge bluestones.

Holden encounters Karswell in the Reading Room of the British Library. He is given a chance to stop his exposé but rejects it. Karswell slips a parchment covered in runes to Holden, cursing him. Karswell offers to show Holden a copy of the book he was looking for at his mansion.

At Harrington's funeral, Holden meets Joanna, Harrington's niece. She gives him her uncle's diary, which details Harrington's growing terror as he realizes Karswell's curse is real.

Holden and Joanna travel to Karswell's mansion, where he conjures up a windstorm as an example of his power, and still Holden will not believe. Karswell tells Holden he has only three days to live.

Holden and his friends discuss Karswell and make plans to interrogate Hobart. Holden finds the parchment that Karswell slipped to him. The parchment attempts to destroy itself in the fire but is prevented, and Holden pockets the parchment.

Holden visits Hobart's family to ask for permission to hypnotize Hobart in the hope of answers. His mother gives consent but discovers Holden has the parchment and is "chosen." The Hobarts will have no more to do with Holden, but at least he has the permission he requires.

The following day, Hobart is placed under hypnosis. He tells Holden he was "chosen" to die by having a runic parchment passed to him, but he escaped death by passing it back to the person who had given it to him. When Holden shows Hobart the parchment Karswell slipped to him, Hobart becomes hysterical, hurling himself through a window to his death.

Holden finally believes, confronts Karswell on a train and passes the parchment back to him. Karswell flees the train and is killed by the demon. The police believe he was struck by a train, but Holden and Joanna know better.

M.R. James based Karswell on Aleister Crowley, whom he met at Cambridge. James' friend Montague Summers had a substantial dossier on Crowley, and that too may have contributed to Karswell's character. Karswell's fine house also brings to mind Crowley's Boleskine House. It's interesting to note here the influence of Aleister Crowley on occult villains. The character of Mocata in Dennis Wheatley's classic *The Devil Rides Out* (Mocata is played well by Charles Gray in Hammer's excellent film of Wheatley's book) is also based on Crowley. Wheatley knew Crowley personally; indeed, he recounts a memorable lunch with Crowley, and may even have worked with Crowley in the British Secret Service in the Second World War, truth being stranger than fiction. But that is a piece in its own right.



In a similar vein to *Night of the Demon* is the cult 1973 horror film *The Horror at 37,000 Feet*.

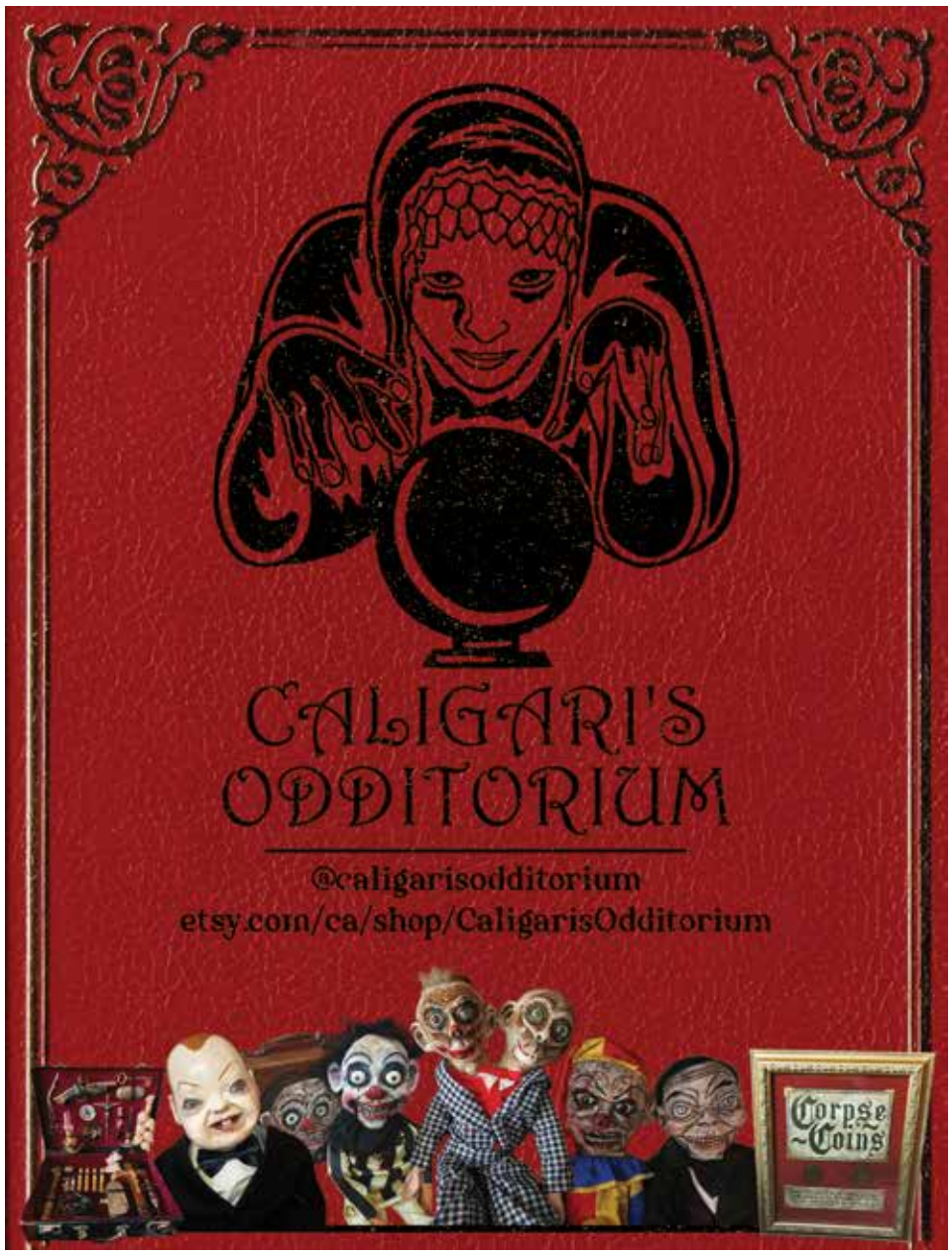
On a Boeing 747 flight from London to New York piloted by Captain Ernie Slade (Chuck Connors), a wealthy architect (Roy Thinnes) and his wife have placed a druidic sacrificial altar in the baggage hold of the plane (idiotically, they think the ancient stone will make an interesting feature in a new home he's designed!). Aboard the flight is ex-priest Paul Kovalik (William Shatner, whose performance is "interesting and unique," even by his own standards!).

Soon after they take off, supernatural terrors begin to emanate from the ancient stone in the baggage hold, as ghosts of druids, furious at their stone being stolen, wreak revenge on the passengers and crew. The plane is caught in time and space, able neither to fly to America nor return to England. The floor bubbles, a crew member is frozen to death and eerie chanting is heard. It is very much a haunted house story set on a plane, possessing a genuine sense of claustrophobic dread.

They attempt to fool the spirits by sacrificing a doll, but this only enrages them more. Finally, Kovalik sacrifices himself to save the others, after which the plane is allowed to return to England, where hopefully the stolen stone is returned to its rightful place.

The Horror at 37,000 Feet has a very original (if slightly bonkers) central conceit and is full of atmosphere. I'm surprised it hasn't been remade.




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15 Years Canadian Horror

The Blood in the Snow Film Festival returns to Toronto Nov. 16–21, 2026, marking its 15th year championing Canadian horror, genre cinema and the filmmakers behind it.



For 15 years, Blood in the Snow has created a home for Canadian genre filmmakers and audiences, bringing independent horror, thriller, science fiction, fantasy and other bold genre storytelling to the big screen while connecting emerging and established creators with the Canadian screen industry. The 2026 festival will bring six days of screenings, filmmaker events, industry programming and professional development to Toronto, with screenings at the Isabel Bader Theatre and industry programming and festival events at the Tranzac Club.

This year's festival will showcase Canadian feature films and shorts through BITS' screening programs, including Dark Visions, Monsters & Martians, BITS & BYTES, Funny Frights & Unusual Sights, Emerging Screams and the new Bloody Spirits of Winter, dedicated to genre short films by First Nations, Métis and Inuit filmmakers.

As BITS celebrates 15 years, the festival is expanding with three new initiatives designed to create more opportunities to showcase Canadian genre filmmaking, discover emerging creators and bring the community together.

Bloody Spirits of Winter is a new dedicated screening program showcasing horror, thriller, supernatural, science fiction, dark fantasy, Indigenous Futurisms and other genre short films by First Nations, Métis and Inuit filmmakers.



BITS Nightshift expands the festival experience beyond the theatre, creating a new late-night space for the community and screen industry to gather, connect and celebrate Canadian genre film. Organizations interested in participating are encouraged to connect with the festival.

Fresh voices. Bold visions. New blood. The new New Blood Creators Forum is a national initiative designed to bring emerging Canadian genre filmmakers inside the BITS festival and industry experience. Created for filmmakers with projects in early-stage development, the Forum goes beyond a traditional festival pass by offering a fully curated, guided cohort experience across the BITS Horror Development Lab, Deadly Exposure Industry Conference and the festival's screening programming. Participants will move through the festival as a cohort, guided throughout the week by a dedicated New Blood Creators Coordinator, with opportunities to experience project development, industry programming, networking and Canadian genre filmmaking firsthand.

Together, these new initiatives build on BITS' commitment to creating more ways for Canadian genre creators to have their work seen, develop their projects, build industry relationships and find a pathway into the wider Canadian screen sector.

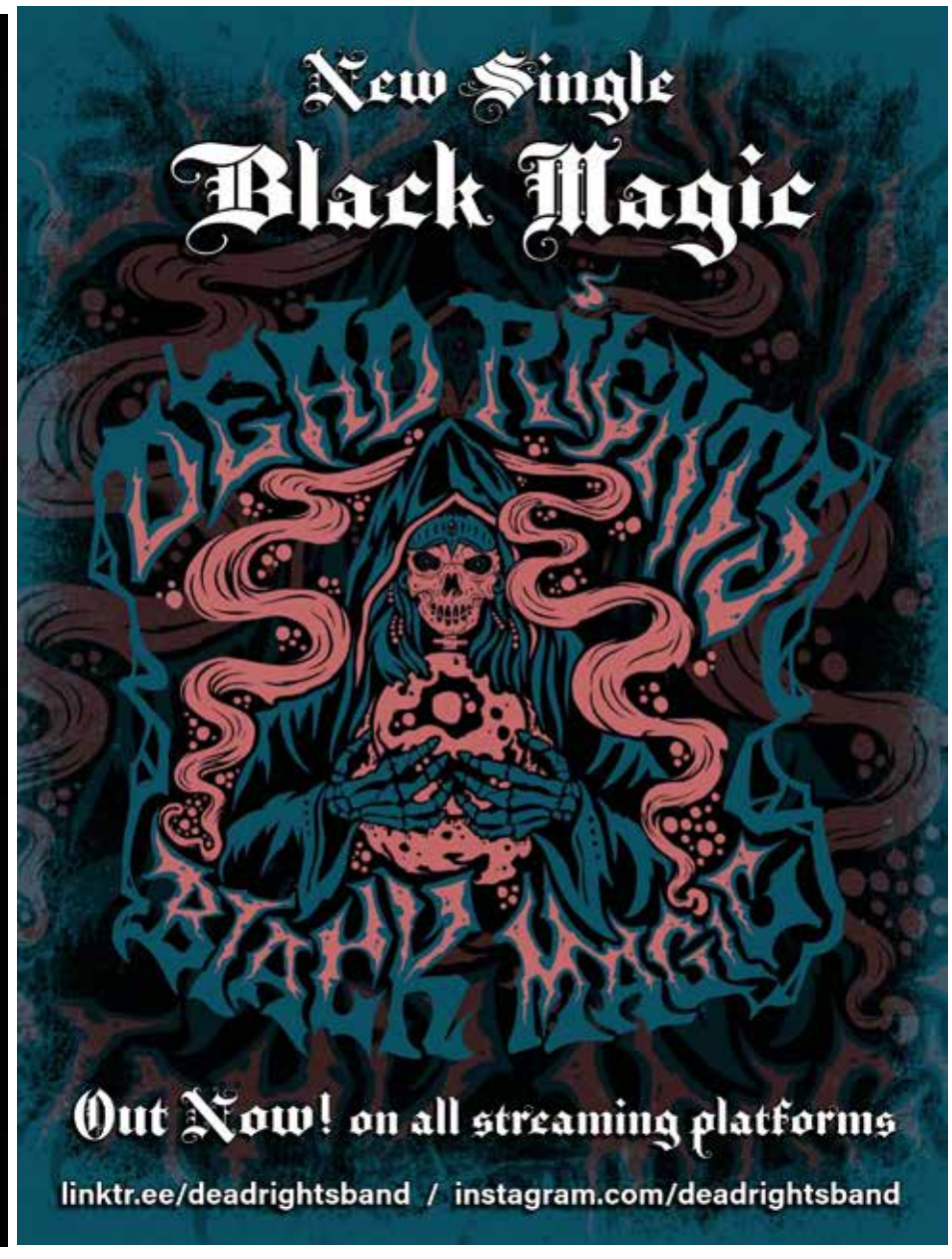
The festival's industry programming includes the Deadly Exposure Industry Conference, returning for its ninth year from Nov. 19–21, bringing filmmakers together with producers, distributors, broadcasters, funders and other members of the Canadian screen industry through panels, round tables and networking opportunities. The BITS Horror Development Lab also returns for its sixth year. Running Nov. 16–18, the Lab supports scripted genre projects from traditionally underrepresented Canadian creators as they move toward production, providing mentorship, industry access and project-development opportunities.

Submissions for BITS 2026, including film submissions and applications for the Horror Development Lab, closed Oct. 1. The full BITS 2026 screening selections will be announced in mid-October, with additional details about special events, industry programming and guests to follow.

The 15th anniversary edition celebrates the filmmakers, audiences, volunteers, industry partners and supporters who have helped build Blood in the Snow while looking toward the future of Canadian genre storytelling. Through public screenings, industry programming and professional development initiatives, BITS provides a platform for Canadian filmmakers to showcase their work, develop their projects and build connections across the screen industry.

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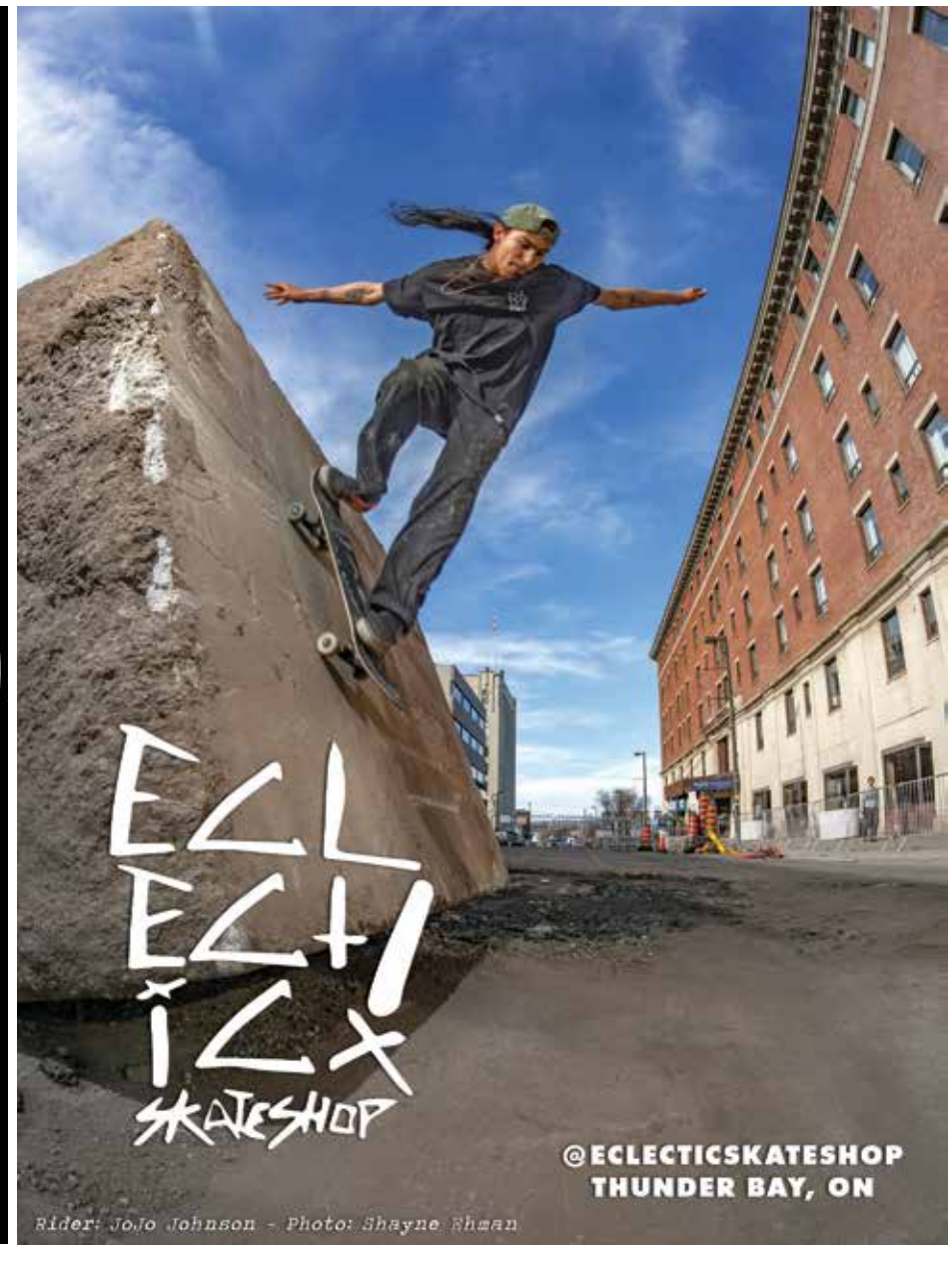


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Gor Gor Must Die!

Interview with Blothar the Berserker

By Tyler Smith

Absolute Underground: In reference to the band's appearance in *Mutant Football League 2*, how does it feel to jump from the 16-bit era of the Sega Genesis and Super Nintendo with the *Beavis and Butt-Head* game to the shiny new era of PS5, Xbox Series and PC?

Blothar the Berserker: I personally can't believe it. I hope this game is a lot easier than that, goddamn it. I don't know if you can cuss on here; I'm just gonna do it anyway. I mean, it's Punks On Pizza, of course you can cuss. Anyway, you know that Sega Genesis game, I could never do it and it made me feel bad, because I'm in GWAR, so I should be able to beat this game, but I couldn't. It's very frustrating, *Beavis and Butt-Head*, but now this *Mutant Football League 2*, I've got a chance here. I'm hoping that it's easier. It looks like a lot of fun; it looks like a blast.

AU: I agree. I saw the footage, and now I think it's time for us to lobby and get you guys as DLC for the next *Mortal Kombat*.

BTB: I agree. I'm tired of not being in video games.

AU: On that note, what video games does Blothar play in his spare time?

BTB: Well, *Mutant Football League*, I did not really know until they gave us $10 billion just to do nothing. That's how punk GWAR is; we're not afraid to sell out. We welcome the shame and degradation of prostituting ourselves for any amount of money. My favourite game that I play right now is Roblox. I guess that's a video game. I play the obstacle ones, any game that has to do with farts. There's lots of fart games on Roblox.

AU: That's one of my daughter's favourite games, actually!

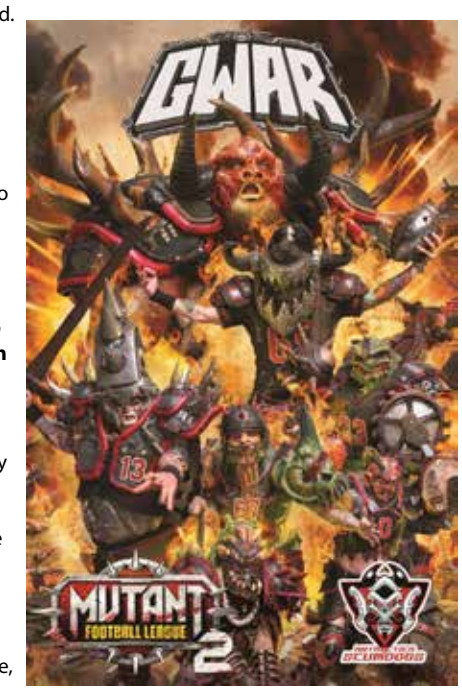
BTB: That's what I'm talking about. Give me your username and she and I can be friends and we'll play fart games.

AU: Now, you've been killing presidents since the era of Reagan, and I know a few Canadian prime ministers have made their way in there, but the last few years I've seen you up this way, you haven't taken on the leader of the Canuck country yet. Can we expect some mutilation of Mark Carney when you come up here?

BTB: You need some charisma, you know, and your leaders up there are just so vanilla. We haven't seen any outrageous ones like, what's his name, the guy from Toronto?

AU: Rob Ford?

BTB: Yeah, constant cocaine. Now that was a leader. A real Marion Barry-style guy, ya know, "The bitch set me up," that kind of thing. You need a colourful leader. That's why Donald Trump, for all of his constant problems being Donald Trump, he sucks in every way imaginable, but he's actually in GWAR now. We went ahead and just said, "Hey man, you want to join the band? Come on, be a part of it," because if you can piss people off that much, go ahead. You know what I don't like, though? I don't like people equating conservative politics with punk; I hate that. When they're like, this is the real punk thing to do, is to be a complete fucking jerk-off. Ugh, hate it!



AU: For me, the heart of punk is DIY, and no band is more DIY than GWAR, regardless of how metal you may be.

BTB: You are absolutely correct. I was talking about punk last night, which is weird because I don't normally walk around talking about punk, but on this particular occasion, I was talking to someone, and you know why? I'll tell you why. I watched the Sex Pistols at Riot Fest and Steve Jones played a lead guitar solo, and during the solo I was just going, "Boo, boo, boo, Steve Jones, you suck," and everybody was looking at me like I was out of my mind. And I was like, are you kidding me? He's lucky he's not drowning in spit playing that guitar solo. It sounded like an epileptic Chuck Berry up there.

AU: Back in the mid-'90s, the bassist for your band, Beefcake the Mighty, put down the famous Steak Bass and stopped playing with his fingers, opting for a pick instead, and it's been that way ever since. What's the deal there?

BTB: Ugh, that fat idiot. The simple truth of the matter is, OG Beefcake didn't know how to use any implement; it didn't matter if it was a pick, or a household item like a mixer or even a toothbrush.

AU: The last couple of years I've caught you guys live, I've noticed less cum and sodomy in the live show. Was that a conscious decision to appeal to the all-ages show bracket?

BTB: Are you out of your mind? There's plenty of cum and sodomy in the show. Every year we go out, we increase the amount of fluid we are dispensing during the show. People are like, "GWAR is so dry now, it's dry like an old vagina that's just dry, it's gross and scratchy," but the simple truth of the matter is that we are lubed up and ready to go.

AU: Any plans for GWAR to shoot a new movie? Have there been any new developments on that?

BTB: You know, it's Hollywood. We've been trying to grease the wheels. We've been walking around trying to get money; we'll take money from anywhere.

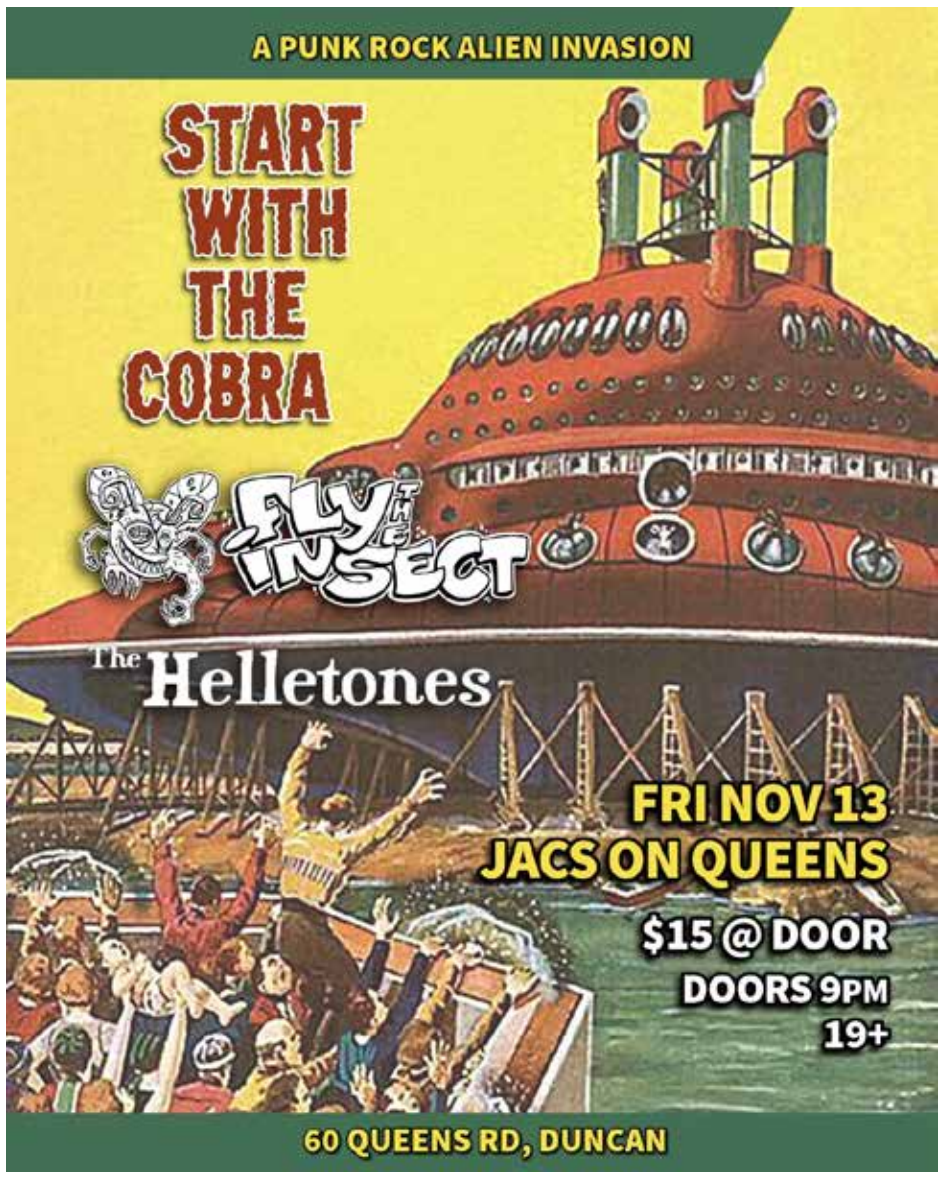
AU: Thanks again for doing this, eh? I couldn't be happier having you on here.

BTB: Well, that sounds like a backhanded compliment, "you couldn't be happier." Get fucking happier, you live in Canada. Look at your strip clubs: every city you mentioned is filled with wonderful strip clubs.

Check out the full podcast, coming soon on the Punks On Pizza YouTube channel.

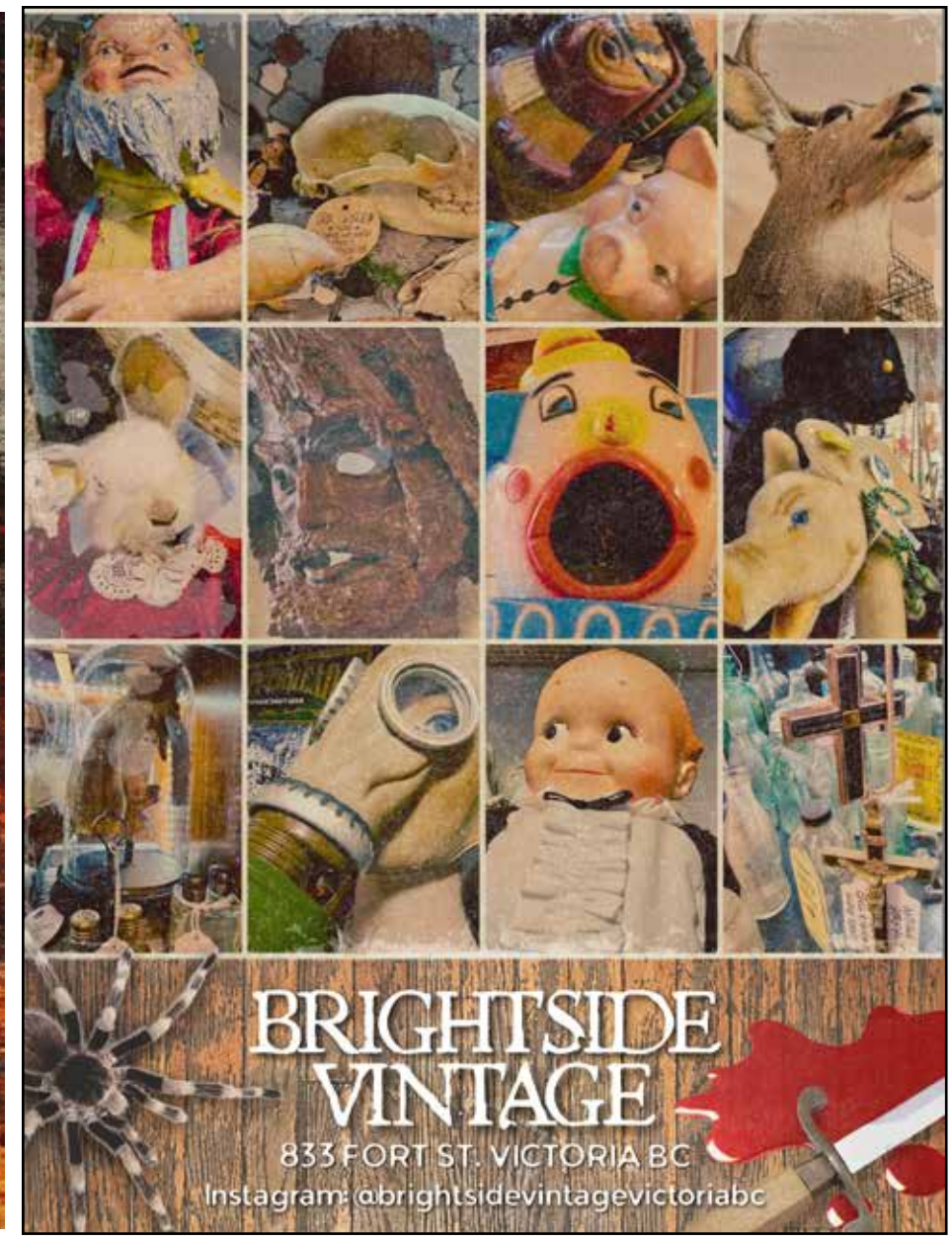
youtube.com/@PunksOnPizza

gwar.net

















Chuck Varga Memorial

1958-2026

There are some losses that hit harder than others. The world lost Chuck Varga yesterday, and GWAR lost one of its own.

Chuck was the Sexecutioner and was one of the founding members of GWAR. He was there when this strange, disgusting, beautiful thing was being born, helping create the world that would become GWAR.

As Sexecutioner, Chuck brought an unforgettable presence to the stage and helped establish the larger-than-life mythology, chaos and depravity that would come to define the band. As one of the visual artists his illustrations and costume design helped establish GWAR's distinct visual style. He was there at the beginning, and even before when GWAR was struggling to establish what it was going to become. Chuck went on to excel with his scenic artistic talents in movies, theatre and other visual mediums. Sadly, now the Sexecutioner has gone back home to reunite with his Scumdog Brethren Oderus Urungus and Flattus Maximus.

For those of us who knew Chuck, he was more than a character in a monster suit, he was an artist, a vocalist, a true performer and most importantly a brother to everyone in the band. He was one of the people who helped make GWAR possible.

Our hearts go out to Chuck's loving wife Bambi, his family, his friends, and everyone who had the privilege of knowing him.

Hail Sexecutioner! Hail Chuck Varga!



FRIZZI 2 FULCI

The Maestro of Italian Horror, Fabio Frizzi, on Synths, Soundtracks and First Loves

By Tobi Morelli



AU: Can you please share how your passion for music began at a young age and how it led you to write music for film?

Fabio Frizzi: I started studying guitar at the age of 14. My family was always in love with music. My grandmother knew opera very well, my dad and aunt used to sing in a choir. So, music was something that I loved so much growing up. My dad wanted me to be a lawyer, and I studied because I wanted him to be happy. But music was always there. I had the chance to meet an English band that was working in Italy with a successful singer. In the beginning my idea was to have a band, sing and write songs, but my dad was the director of a cinema distribution company in Italy. In the end, I met a publisher, Carlo Bixio, who worked in soundtracks. He gave me this opportunity at 23 years old, and I started working on a movie called *Amore Libero (Free Love)*. I wrote my first score, it went well and afterwards I joined that production company and everything started.

AU: How do you approach creating music for film or television? Are there any key elements that you consider most important and how do you balance your unique voice and sound with the director's vision?

Frizzi: This is the most important thing in the life of a movie composer. It's one thing to write for yourself or for your career as a musician but composing music for a movie is totally different. In Italy, the relationship with directors is fundamental, whereas in America it's more with the production. In Italy, the boss is the director. First you read the script and as we say in Italian *devi indossare*, you put on the movie like a jacket. You must live in the movie and you must understand where to go to grasp the emotion. Obviously, the production and the director are very important factors. But you also have the freedom to create what you want. And sometimes, it's also just a job. Like in a soccer team you must go out on the field and play to your best ability. Sometimes it's perfect, and sometimes it's just okay, but you play and move on to the next game.

AU: You have worked on hundreds of projects from movies to television series. But you have spoken before about the creative aspects and challenges of composing music for horror films specifically. What do you think makes genre and horror films so special when it comes to composing a score?

Frizzi: I think that our job is to be able to create music that amplifies what happens in the movie. A score is like an amplifier of that feeling. Something that makes me happy when I speak with people on tour is that they say, "Fulci's movies wouldn't have been the same without your music". That makes me happy, because if you listen to this little piece of music, it brings you right there. That is absolutely magic to me.

AU: Can you talk about your love of synthesizers and how, from the beginning of your composing career, they allowed you to create music without having access to an orchestra or ensemble?



Frizzi: When I was 24 or 25 years old, I needed to find ways to create. At that time, many great names like Paul McCartney had their own studio and worked on everything themselves, guitars, keyboards, percussion, and so on. I was 20 when I asked my dad if I could have a music room in the house and put all my instruments in there. That's how I started: I had a small synthesizer from Moog, a little one, then my beautiful guitars, which I still have, and the drum sounds from the organ. In the 70s, many companies made beautiful things. I still have a Moog 71, which is something of beauty. Today we have computers with billions of sounds. But every now and then, I take out my Jupiter 8 from Roland, and it's a whole world. *Zombie* was scored with a Yamaha CS-80, everything was done with that. It was one of the first polyphonic synthesizers. It was born out of necessity, because we didn't have a lot of money for orchestras. It became another way of composing, of creating sound. When I did *The Beyond*, I had the chance to create the perfect soundtrack with a rhythm section, keyboards, choir, and strings.

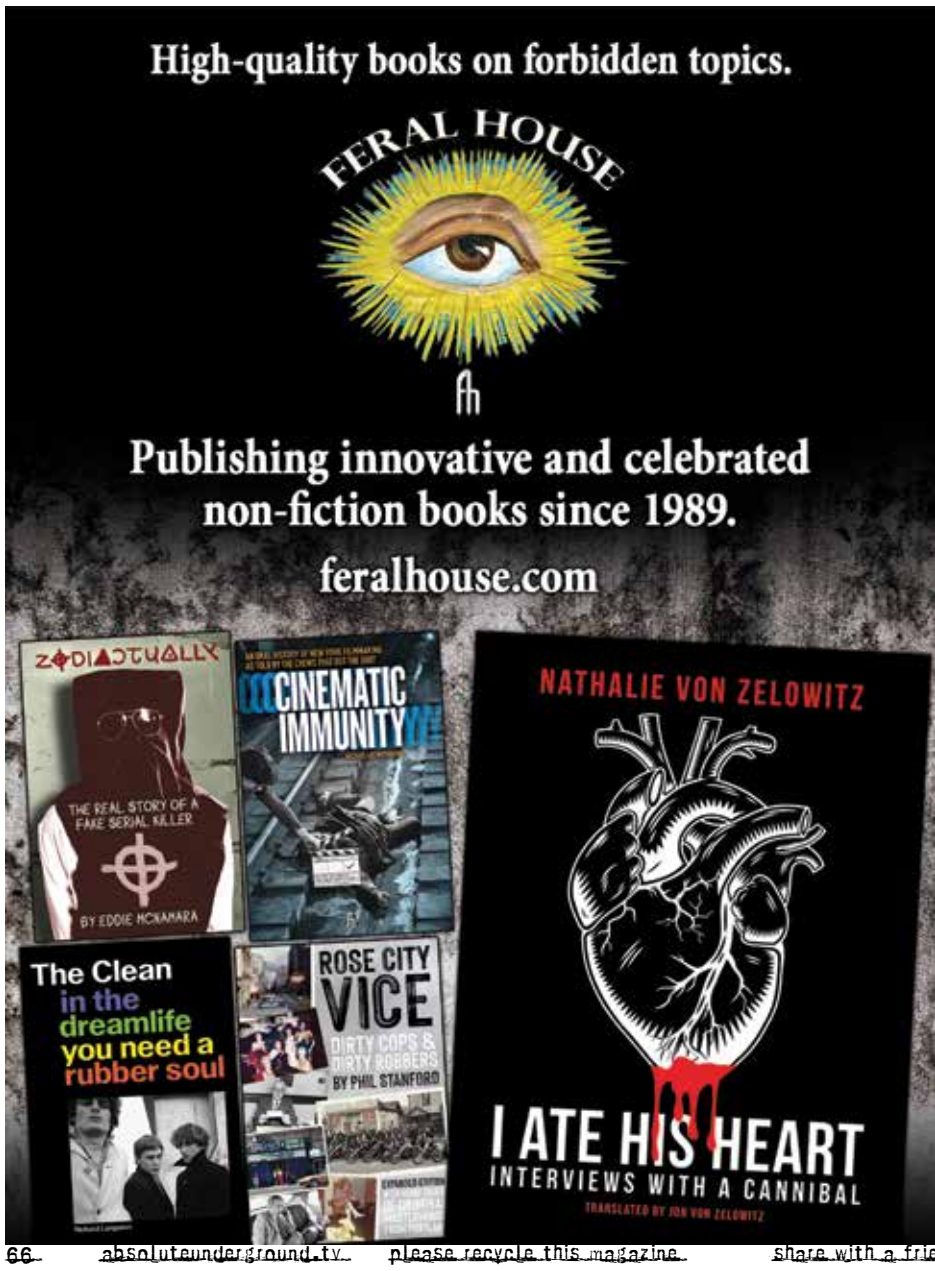
AU: You are known for so many iconic scores, such as *The Beyond*, *Zombie 2*, *City of the Living Dead*. But is there another maybe lesser-known score of yours that holds like a special place in your heart?

Frizzi: My first score, *Amore Libero (Free Love)*. That meant the world to me. There was a beautiful actress in the film, and I wrote a theme for her. My boss, Carlo Bixio, went to Cannes and sold one of my tracks to Finland. That track, "Mombasa," was used by a Finnish singer with lyrics and became popular. Now, 50 years later, when I go to play in Finland, I still get asked about that song. Another special moment, you know, was when Quentin Tarantino used a track from *Seven Notes in Black (The Psychic)*. I couldn't believe how well it fit into that beautiful scene, the editing was so well done. After that, many things changed because Americans noticed my work. There are some moments in life that mean far more than they seem.

AU: Is there one instrument or a piece of gear that you couldn't live without?

Frizzi: If I fell off a plane and landed on a small island, I would need one guitar. In Italian, we say, *primo amore non si scorda mai*, you never forget your first love. For me, guitar is that!

facebook.com/frizzi2fulci
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DIGABLE PLANETS
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30TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR
OCTOBER 27 EDMONTON, AB
MIDWAY


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THE PEARL
VANCOUVER, BC
NOVEMBER 1ST
SOLD OUT
NOVEMBER 2ND
NEW SHOW ADDED


MICROWAVE
FREE THROW
CARLY COSGROVE
OCT 26 VANCOUVER, BC
OCT 28 CALGARY, AB
OCT 29 EDMONTON, AB
OCT 31 WINNIPEG, MB


ARCH ENEMY
The Black Dahlia Murder
NOV 08 - WINNIPEG, MB
NOV 09 - SASKATOON, SK
NOV 11 - CALGARY, AB
NOV 12 - EDMONTON, AB
NOV 14 - VANCOUVER, BC


TURNOVER
with nothing and trauma ray
SAT. NOVEMBER 21
PAWN SHOP LIVE
EDMONTON, AB


CANADA TOUR 2026
NOV 13 VANCOUVER, BC
NOV 15 KELOWNA, BC
NOV 18 EDMONTON, AB
NOV 19 SASKATOON, SK
NOV 20 REGINA, SK


PROTEST THE HERO
WITHIN • CANADA TOUR • 2026
WITH SPECIAL GUESTS ROYAL TUSK kaonashi
**NOV 27 - SASKATOON **DEC 03 - VANCOUVER
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BRIT FLOYD
"THE WORLD'S PREMIER PINK FLOYD EXPERIENCE" ... Rolling Stone
THE MOON AND THE WALL BEYOND
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23
SOUTH OKANAGAN EVENTS CENTRE
PENTICTON, BC
ALL AGES
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24
GREY EAGLE RESORT & CASINO
CALGARY, AB
ALL AGES


NEKROGOBLIKON
CYBORG OCTOPUS
PHARM
10/06 Vancouver, BC
10/07 Kelowna, BC
10/08 Calgary, AB


DUNE RATS
CANADA TOUR 2026
with PEACEBREACH
07 OCT · KELOWNA, BC · JACKSMITH BREWING
08 OCT · VANCOUVER, BC · THE PEARL
10 OCT · VICTORIA, BC · STRIDE 970


SILLY GOOSE PRESENTS
THE "Set it off" TOUR
KLOKWISE
*OCT 07 VANCOUVER, BC
*OCT 09 EDMONTON, AB
*OCT 10 CALGARY, AB
**OCT 27 TORONTO, ON
**OCT 28 MONTREAL, QC


dälek
FALL TOUR 2026
OCTOBER 09
VANCOUVER, BC
OCTOBER 17
TORONTO, ON
OCTOBER 18
MONTREAL, QC


UNDERTALE
THE DETERMINATION SYMPHONY
WORLD TOUR
Oct 18 VANCOUVER, BC
Nov 19 MONTREAL, QC
Nov 20 MONTREAL, QC


GILLA BAND
with PISS
OCTOBER 20
TORONTO, ON
LEE'S PALACE
OCTOBER 31
VANCOUVER, BC
THE PEARL

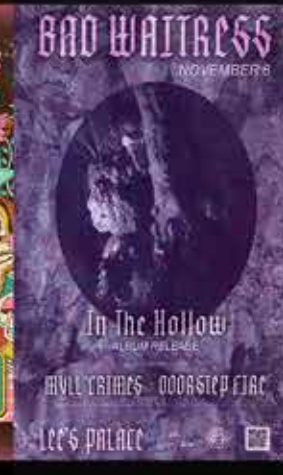

tear dungeon
2026 EQUIEM TOUR
11.4 - Toronto, ON
THE DANCE CAVE

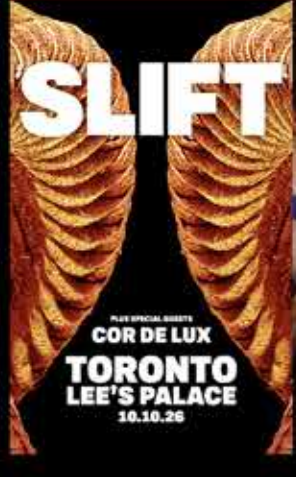

KINGDOM OF GIANTS
NIGHT RIDER
Nov 28
Lee's Palace
Toronto, ON


P.E.E.
MID WEST 2026 EAST COAST
NOVEMBER 9TH
THE DANCE CAVE
TORONTO, ON


TWIZTID
FRIDAY THE 13TH
11.13.26 @ LEE'S PALACE
TORONTO, CANADA


BUMPIN UGLIES
ARTIKAL SOUND SYSTEM
NOVEMBER 10
LEE'S PALACE • TORONTO


BAD WAITRESS
NOVEMBER 6
In The Hollow
Lee's Palace


SLIFT
COR DE LUX
TORONTO
LEE'S PALACE
10.10.26


MILITARIE GUN
softcult
shady nasty dizzy
Saturday, October 10
Vancouver, BC
Rickshaw Theatre


THE MENZINGERS
hot water music
October 11
Vancouver, BC
The Pearl
October 13
Calgary, AB
The Palace Theatre


BLOODRAVE
halloweentour
TORONTO, ON
LEES PALACE
OCTOBER 23RD, 19+


the black angels
20th ANNIVERSARY of Passover
PASSOVER 2026 tour featuring GHOSTWOMAN
NOVEMBER 9
COMMODORE BALLROOM
VANCOUVER, BC
2026


PROTOMARTYR
TOUR 2026-2027
OCTOBER 28 THE PEARL
with ACCESSORY



JUDITH O'DEA & JIM CIRRONELLA

Looking Back on *Night of the Living Dead*

Horror fiends gathered at San Diego Comic-Con for a special panel celebrating George A. Romero's 1968 horror classic, *Night of the Living Dead*.

The event marked the upcoming release of the definitive behind-the-scenes book, *Night of the Living Dead: The Official Story of the Film from Titan Books*.

The discussion featured Judith O'Dea, the legendary actress who played Barbra, and Jim Cirronella of Image Ten, the film's original production company. They shared rare stories from the set and looked back at the film's flesh-eating impact on cinema history.



AU: Judith, what was it like working with Russ (Russell Steiner, who played Barbra's annoying brother Johnny) on *Night of the Living Dead*?

Judith O'Dea: Russ and I go back even farther than *Night of the Living Dead*. I was fifteen years old. Little did I know that Russell was in the first show I was ever in at the Pittsburgh Playhouse…When I think of Russ…without Russ we wouldn't have a film. We wouldn't have it without George. We wouldn't have it without Jack Russo. So, I owe a great deal to these fellas!

AU: When you and I were talking recently, Judith, I was saying that for me, one of the great things about your performance as Barbra is it's one of the great on-screen portrayals of PTSD and how a human being would actually react in the traumatic situation we see unfolding.

Judith: Since I have been going to various conventions, I've gotten a lot of feedback from many of the fans. Some say Barbra was sound asleep there, she wasn't with it. Other people have said, 'I would have reacted that way.' I think that all of us, faced with a situation like that, where you saw your brother killed in front of you, you're either going to pick up an UZI and try to kill whatever did it or you do what I did and go inside and try to figure it all out. As I've gotten older and I've watched this movie every so often, it makes good sense to me what Barbra did. She wasn't a weak character. Barbra is a strong woman. She just needed a little time to figure it out. But if you remember, at the end she grabbed that board and went right over there to try to rescue Helen Cooper. I'm very proud of Barbra.

AU: Judith, what memories do you have of working with the great George A. Romero on *Night of the Living Dead*?

Judith: George was one of the most creative people. One story I can share, I don't know if any of you have heard it. I'd watch him and he was either behind the camera shooting, he was smoking, working on the set, or creating lighting effects. A thing that George taught me was how to load film. Film stock in a black bag because we were on location. Because we didn't have much money, you really couldn't waste film stock. I just prayed to God, after he taught me to load those cassettes, that I did it right. He never got angry with me so I must have done something right. But that was just one thing about George. Without his creativity, some of the shots he took, how he edited the film…Today, the film is still relevant. It's very similar to what we're going through now and that I thank him for, because he kept the pace of filming going and his imagination and creativity really help make it what it is.



AU: Judith, 'They're coming to get you, Barbra' is one of the all-time most-quoted horror epithets and cinema quotes. Do you ever get tired of hearing it?

Judith: I could never get tired of hearing that, never!

AU: Are you surprised, Judith, at what a cultural phenomenon *Night of the Living Dead* still is?

Judith: Years and years later when George made *Land of the Dead*, I was there at a screening, he was there too. When it was over we got together. He gave me a big hug and he whispered in my ear, 'did we ever dream that it would come to this?' I don't think George thought that our little *Night of the Living Dead* would birth to all the other things that came beyond.

AU: Judith, do you have any stories from the production of *Night of the Living Dead* that people may not be too familiar with?

Judith: Do you remember that Barbra is running like crazy. She runs into a gas pump and stops to see the house. There is a very quick cut to the house when I run to that gas pump. You know why? Because we didn't realize it wasn't properly bolted to the cement. I was running like heck to that thing. I ran right into it and the pump started to go over. George is on the ground shooting up. That's why it's such a quick cut. I love going back and remembering we have cut because we had to save George…We didn't have steadicam back then so…a lot of it was handheld.

AU: Judith, other than the obvious fact that *Night of the Living Dead* is the blueprint for the modern zombie genre, was there any awareness of its historical significance? This movie came out right after the civil rights movement and the lead role of the male archetype was a Black man, which, in retrospect at least, is of huge historical relevance. Was there any thought of that going into the movie, and did you fear there would be a backlash over this later?

Judith: For me, as a young woman for whom this was her first feature film, I had none of that in mind. I wasn't thinking about Civil Rights. Did you know that Duane got that part, not because he was black, not because it was written for a Black man, he got it because he had the best audition… But I'll tell you this. Duane Jones who played Ben was more cognizant of the racist situation we were facing at the time. He and George, I believe, talked quite a bit about that.

AU: Judith, have you ever been back to see any of the locations you filmed in?

Judith: The first time I went back must have been well over ten years or more. It was surreal. I thought if I could just press the air a little way, I could pop right back. The monuments were there, the chapel was there. It was a wonderful, surreal feeling. Good to be back!

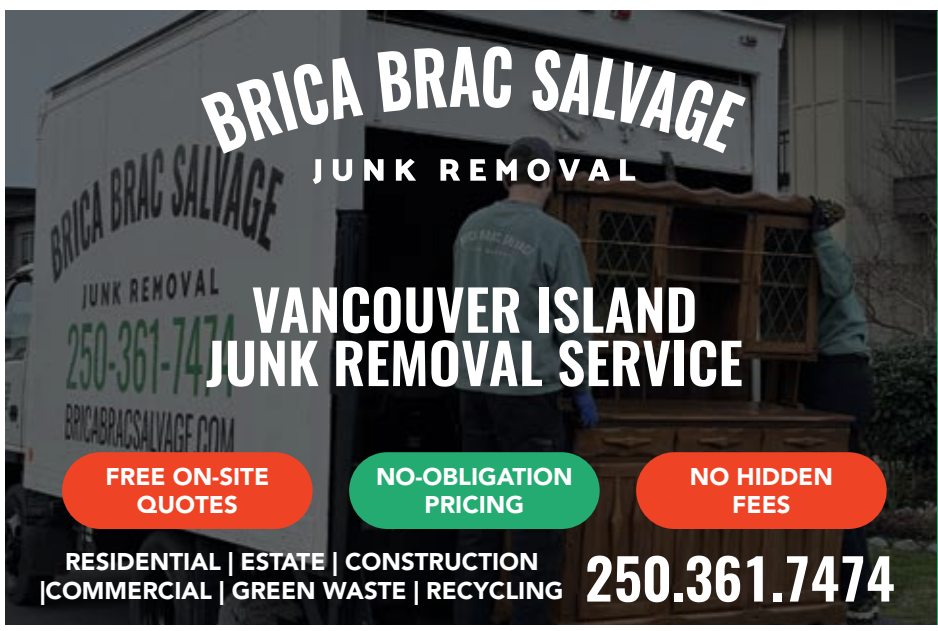
AU: Judith, when did you get an inkling of what a cultural phenomenon *Night of the Living Dead* has become?

Judith: It was filmed in Pittsburgh, and that I call my home city even though I wasn't born there. I didn't realize that the film had such strong legs until the Zombie Jamboree! That was twenty-five years we celebrated. I flew in from California and I saw more people that I had ever dreamed of!

AU: Judith, do you think when he created *Night of the Living Dead* that George had any idea that he was about to create an entire sub-genre of his own?

Judith: When we first did this, the whole goal was to make the best thing we could with the resources that we had. George put his heart and







soul into it. But I think for George, *Night of the Living Dead* was just the beginning. We did it and he wanted to go on to other things. So *Night of the Living Dead* wasn't that powerful to George if I can be totally honest.

AU: Now, *Night of the Living Dead*, and indeed, *Dawn of the Dead*, *Day of the Dead* and *Land of the Dead*, have all become closely identified with Pittsburgh in the minds of the fans. Judith, did you find the folk of Pittsburgh supportive of the creation of *Night of the Living Dead*?



Judith: You know what was fascinating? We filmed for the first two weeks, then we ran out of money, we had to go back to regular work. For me, it was working in musical theatre. Karl Hardman and Marilyn went back to Hardman Associates to do more commercial work. George, Jack, Russ and Gary went back to The Latent Image. As more and more people in Pittsburgh heard about what we were doing because we used a lot of our friends in the media, WIIC, Chilly Billy Cardille, KDKA, all of them, and of course, at that time they would share. The word got out and more and more people wanted to be involved, so we went from that wonderful nucleus of Image Ten and it just grew, enabling us to come back and finish the major shooting for two weeks after that…that was probably a few months hiatus we had to build up that money, but it was the citizenry of Pittsburgh that really helped us to get enough money to finish the shooting.

AU: I'd like to bring Jim Cirronella from Image Ten here to talk a little on the subject of making *Night of the Living Dead* in Pittsburgh.

Jim Cirronella: Probably you could answer this by explaining that everybody involved in making it really didn't want to make a horror movie. This is just what was on the slate to make. This is what they thought they could sell, and so they did the best with what they had…All the people who played ghouls in the film…There was no *Walking Dead*. There was no *Dawn of the Dead* to draw upon. They probably wanted to be in *Gone With The Wind*. You hear a movie's being made in your hometown or your area, and somehow you end up in the proximity of somebody asking you to come and play a part in it. The next thing you're told is, well, you're going to be a walking corpse…To everybody's credit, it doesn't matter who it is, the people who were just the neighbors living next door to the farmhouse, it was a real farmhouse, a real location. Somebody pops up and says, 'Hey, come on, we're making a movie up there, come and play a part.' The next thing is they're in make up or the police were there. They were real police brought out, a K-9 unit with dogs. All of these people to their credit rose to the occasion and did the best they could and that's why the movie is so effective!

AU: Jim, can you tell us a little about the work involved in preserving the legacy of *Night of the Living Dead*?

Jim: *Night of the Living Dead* is a unique but difficult property. A lot of credit has to go to Gary Steiner. He's the one who spearheaded getting the negative and the man assets the property to the Museum of Modern Art, who then made this beautiful restoration of the film with other organizations like The Film Foundation and the George Lucas Family Trust. George Lucas helped preserve George A. Romero's first film which is great. So I forgive him for the *Star Wars* renovations because they put up the funding to restore *Night of the Living Dead*.

AU: Ha, that's a nice way of looking at it, Jim!

Jim: That's really been the key thing in protecting the movie, to get it in the hands of organizations like that who have a greater reach and can get it out there. Because, for decades, this film has just been relegated to the bargain bin and that really doesn't help anybody. In all our work, we get asked all the time: 'What do you really want to see happen with this?' We just want people to have access to it but to have access to the version that George A Romero and company envisioned, not the terrible VHS copies that came from the mishandling of the property.



AU: To finish up, Jim, can you please tell us about how the Image Ten partnership came to be and how it came into force when the film was made, which I think is a fascinating story that only a hardcore *Night of the Living Dead* fan would know.

Jim: Just to be real quick, because it's a long story. Basically it was Russ Steiner and George A Romero who were the first partners in what was known as The Latent Image. They had a store front and did commercial work. Bill Hinzman is known for being The Cemetery Ghoul but he worked with them for years. He was a photographer, so they would do a lot of photography jobs and worked their way up to doing commercials. They moved to the famous location which actually has the basements that seen in *Night of the Living Dead* because the farmhouse didn't have a usable basement so they filmed that in the basement of their corporate building. They were doing commercial work and industrial films and radio commercials with Karl Hardman…who had a similar commercial business but doing audio, radio spots, and other corporate work like that. The Latent Image guys, George A. Romero, Russ Steiner, Gary Steiner, Vince Survinski and John Russo decided we had enough equipment to make a feature film, which is what we want to do and brought in Karl Hardman and Marilyn Eastman, who were partners in their commercial firm. That's what formed, with a few other people, Image Ten- the original ten investors, which included Judith O'Dea and that brings us full circle!

AU: Judith and Jim, thank you both very much for sharing your memories of this landmark much-loved and most imitated movie!

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DEEP CUT FILM FESTIVAL

Interview by FLORA

Filmmaker and founder of the Deep Cut Film Festival, David Briggs, has a busy fall ahead on the film front. Absolute Underground caught up with Briggs to discuss the release of his two features and the film festival, and to reflect on the state of independent film.



AU: For readers discovering Deep Cut Film Festival for the first time, how would you introduce the event and what it's all about?

David Briggs: Think about your favourite deep cut on your favourite record. That's the experience we're trying to bring with the festival. It's a vibe — you know it when you get it. We like to screen the fringe films, the movies that may have a difficult time fitting into more mainstream festivals. We're a little weird, but we keep it to a healthy level. I mean, we still have an audience to entertain.

AU: Tell us about these two films you're releasing.

DB: With Distant Field Productions, I made two feature films, *Black Forest* and *Sleepwalking*. Both are as indie-zero-budget as you can get. In fact, I made *Sleepwalking* entirely by myself. Thankfully, I had an amazing cast to work with, but crew-wise, it was me holding a camera. It took years to film, and even longer to complete. The full story requires a few beers, but it's a tale most filmmakers can relate to. *Sleepwalking* screened only once, at a film festival in North Bay.

Black Forest received a slightly wider release. We screened it around Northern Ontario for a handful of theatre shows, then sold homemade DVDs at conventions. There might be 100 copies in existence, and I heard some folks are asking for outrageous prices on the used market. So I figured it was time to release these to a wider audience. It's time for these movies to be seen, and after you watch them, be sure to send the links to your neighbourhood film distributor. We could use all the help we can get to spread the word!

AU: Deep Cut focuses on niche, genre-spanning short films from around the world. What guides your selection process when everything from horror to comedy to experimental work is on the table?

DB: We certainly see a lot of variety, so we choose our films by asking two simple questions: Is it entertaining, and is it well-made? Entertaining the audience is paramount, because film fans don't want to come out to be bored. As for well-made, we don't need Hollywood perfection, but the technical aspect must be strong enough to carry your story through.

AU: Do you receive a lot of submissions? What's the state of the indie film scene?

DB: We don't receive as many as people might think. Usually, we draw in around 50 to 70 short films and we whittle that down to around 20 for the festival. We're not like the big names where you can add two or three more zeros to those numbers. But those who take part in Deep Cut really love the experience, and we've had filmmakers involved year after year. It's really nice.

And the state of independent film remains strong. There are crews all over this country producing really cool, well-crafted movies. Some are hoping to fund features or get their name out there with a cool short. Some just do it because they have to; the idea just won't go away until you start making that dream come true. I know the feeling well, having shot two features with no money. People have their visions, and some won't stop until they see those visions materialize. Those are my kind of people.

AU: So how can those people get involved or stay connected?

DB: Visit us at deepcutfilm.com to keep up with the festival, and distantfieldproductions.com will link you to my films *Black Forest* and *Sleepwalking*, which are free to watch on YouTube @distantfieldfilms. And you can find us on Instagram and Facebook, too. For our sins.

deepcutfilm.com

distantfieldproductions.com

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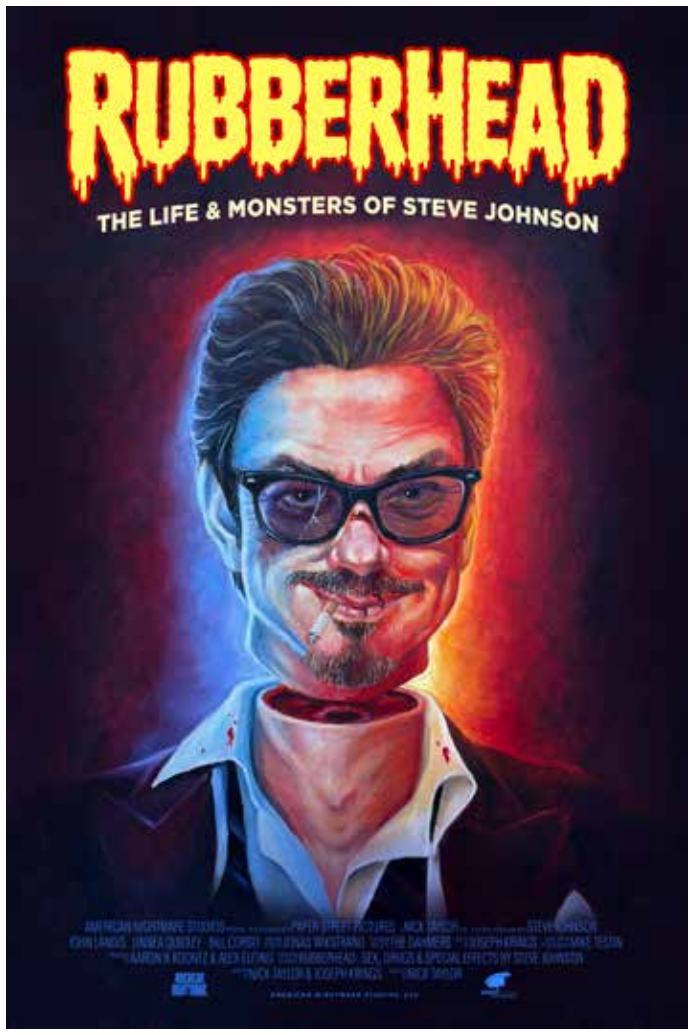
Photo Caption: *Director and founder of the Deep Cut Film Festival, David Briggs, is ready for another round of celebrating independent film.*








JAPANESE BLACK METAL LEGENDS
Sabbat
WITCHES HAMMER
Lyres Kingdom
Poltergeist
Decadence
SHOWNOMERCY
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SATURDAY OCT.31ST
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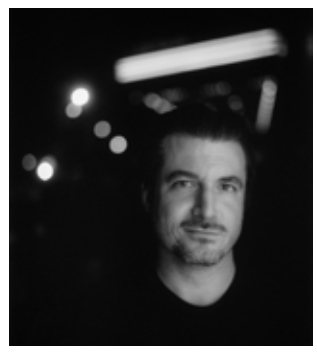


RUBBERHEAD

The Life and Monsters of Steve Johnson

Interview with director Nick Taylor

By Ryan Dyer



Absolute Underground: What surprised you most about Steve when you started making the documentary?

Nick Taylor: The most surprising thing was Steve's level of dedication to pushing the very capacity of what special effects were capable of. I think it's been underreported that he basically had the Google of special effects. He had an R&D department in his studio. He had people whose whole job was just to try out different materials and test out new techniques so that maybe they could use it on a movie someday.

AU: How much of Steve's work on *Videodrome* did you discover that wasn't already well documented?

NT: My favourite thing I found with *Videodrome* was during the exploding guy sequence at the end. Steve was a puppeteer underneath a platform and was covered in fake blood and in his underwear, and it's an adorable photo.

AU: Why do you think the *American Werewolf in London* transformation still hasn't really been surpassed?

NT: I think it's for the same reason nobody has attempted to do a demonic possession movie that tops *The Exorcist*. It's both respect and understanding that some things just cannot be touched or topped. There was so much effort, love and innovation put into that sequence, and I feel like people have attempted to do transformations with CGI, but they just don't come close.

AU: Steve talks about doing a lot of cocaine and meth during this period. How much did the drugs and that lifestyle become part of your understanding of Steve and the world he came out of?

NT: I think the best way to understand the effects that drugs had on Steve would be to observe the effects they had on Hunter S. Thompson. Could Steve have done the genius, brilliant work he did without the drugs? Absolutely, but they did colour his taste and insanity. When you look at him as an artist, the majority of his creatures are tinged with a fever of insanity. It's in the design of Slimer. It's in the Chinese wild man in *Big Trouble in Little China*. It is in *Freaked*.

AU: You have people like John Landis appearing in the film. How did you decide which of Steve's contemporaries to track down and include?

NT: One of the key inspirations and a guiding light for my documentary was the Pee-wee Herman documentary series that Matt Wolf did, *Pee-wee as Himself*. I absolutely loved this documentary, not just because Pee-wee was a hero of mine, but because it really showcased a complex person and his art and the integration of the two. I observed that Matt Wolf only interviewed people who knew Paul Reubens really, really well. In my case, there were endless opportunities to include celebrities, other directors and cinema historians. I felt it was critical that we only focus on people who knew Steve really well, either personally or professionally, to give the documentary an intimacy.



AU: Steve worked on some really great cult films like *Brainscan* and *Freaked*. Of the more obscure movies he worked on, what's your personal favourite?

NT: The amazing thing about Steve was that, regardless of whether or not it was a massive blockbuster movie like *Species* or something like *The Howling 4*, he put the same amount of effort and work into every single effect that he created. He was never content to do the same thing twice. With the movie, I really wanted to showcase work from several obscure horror movies that some people wouldn't have seen.

AU: Steve worked on *Species*. Did he have any of H.R. Giger's unused designs or artwork?

NT: I have *such* a good answer for this! When Steve was designing the Patrick character for *Species II*, there was some sort of issue with Giger's contract, and Giger did not get him the designs in time. So Steve designed the creature himself in the style of H.R. Giger. This angered Giger so much that he faxed Steve an original drawing of a Giger creature tearing Steve apart.



AU: Tom Holland has all that incredible stuff in his house. What other things did you find that weren't necessary for the film?

NT: Tom was one of the funniest, most hilarious people we spoke to. There were endless amounts of really funny, wisecracking dialogue between Steve and Tom. Just observing these two legends telling stories and going back and forth was particularly wonderful. The Tom Holland sequence might go on a touch too long, but I just love it so much and the material is so good. Tom is a geyser of wonderful stories, as well as real serious humour. He was good friends with multiple legends, including Tobe Hooper. I love Tom, and I had him adopt me as his horror grandson.

AU: Did Steve have any cool John Carpenter stories from *Big Trouble in Little China*?

NT: Well, the reason that Steve was brought on to *Big Trouble in Little China* is that John Carpenter refused to work with Rob Bottin ever again after the experience he had working with him on *The Thing*. Even though today *The Thing*'s effects are considered the absolute holy grail of special effects — it's pretty much undisputed — at the time, the movie was a commercial failure, and Bottin put Carpenter through endless amounts of turmoil and really, really difficult budgetary and scheduling issues to a staggering degree. Even though the work was astonishing, Bottin really, really put the production and Carpenter into a difficult spot. Carpenter hired Steve for *Big Trouble*; little did Carpenter know that Bottin actually was Steve's biggest inspiration, both in terms of his style, aesthetically, and his way of working. Steve was inspired that Bottin didn't always listen to the director but would follow his own voice and taste, regardless of the creative direction.

@stevefuckinjohnson

stevejohnsonfx.com

Watch Rubberhead at the Calgary Underground Film Festival 14th annual Documentery Fest, November 18-22, look for showtimes and the event schedule announcements on October 28th at calgaryundergroundfilm.org




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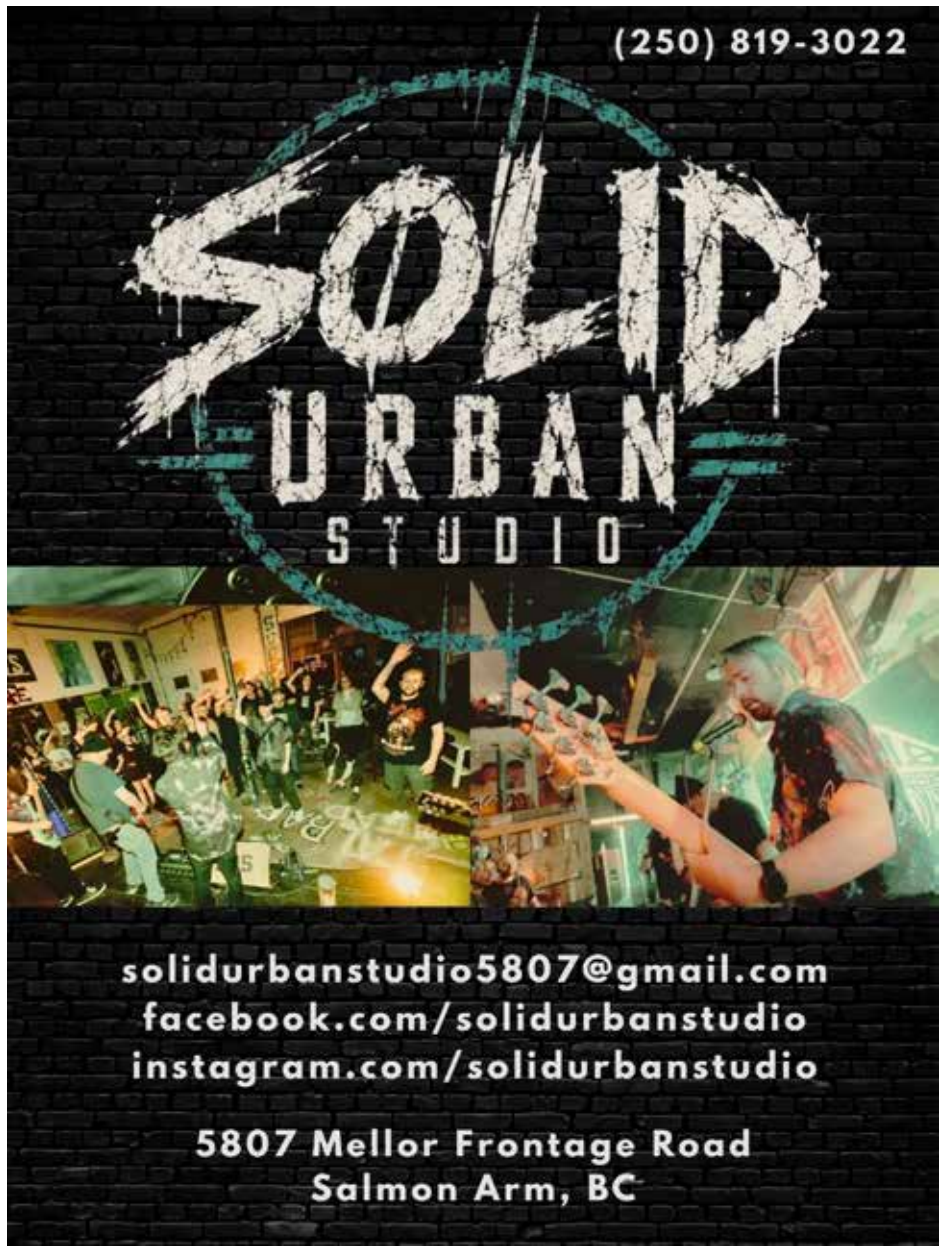



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HARDCORE ALLEY

GET THE SHOT

Quebec City Hardcore Unleashes *Crucifixion Depiction*



Hailing straight from Quebec City, GET THE SHOT is a hardcore band formed in 2009. With their strong work ethic, they quickly established themselves as one of the flag-bearers of the Quebec hardcore and metal scene.

Their powerful music incorporates elements of thrash, death metal and hardcore, creating an intense and brutal sound that captivates fans of the genre. Inspired by iconic bands such as Hatebreed, Obituary and Slayer, GET THE SHOT has developed a unique style of extreme music.

With an impressive discography including *Perdition* (2012), *No Peace in Hell* (2014), *Infinite Punishment* (2017) and their latest album, the Juno-nominated *Merciless Destruction* (2022), GET THE SHOT has built a solid reputation with impactful tracks and explosive live performances.



Their new EP, *Crucifixion Depiction*, marks a shift in attitude and resolve for the band. While celebrating the addition of a new vocalist and the comeback of the original guitar player, the EP sees the band transform into a new persona and explore a more visceral sound, while sticking to its hardcore roots.

After more than 700 concerts on three continents, including some on the biggest international stages such as Wacken, Hellfest, FEQ and Resurrection Fest, the six members remain committed to the core values of authenticity, integrity and equality at the heart of the hardcore movement, while addressing with disillusioned realism the flaws of an era defined by blind individualism.

GET THE SHOT embodies the rage and anger towards the brutal world we live in.

"Experiencing loss is sometimes the hardest thing we have to go through as human beings. GET THE SHOT channels this feeling through a myriad of emotions with *Crucifixion Depiction* with devastating accuracy. Through chaos, tribulation and renewed through shared devotion, this song acts as a pillar where the band now stands."

gettheshothc.com
facebook.com/gettheshothc
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gettheshot.bandcamp.com

Photo Credit: Maxime Maltais



BUILT FROM SOUND

The Wolverine of the Underground

By Metal John Kyle



Built From Sound: The Wolverine of the Underground is a DIY community benefit event and fundraiser at the Rendezvous Pub in Edmonton. Now in its second year, the concert brings together local metal and punk acts to raise funds for the Edmonton Humane Society in memory of local DJ, music promoter and scene advocate Douglas "Weasel Bear" Johnson (Aapahk'kiiy).

Built From Sound is a night of live music, art and community honouring P.R. (Punk Rock) Douglas Weasel Bear Johnson. Edmonton, AB — Saturday November 28, 2026 , a DJ, carpenter, artist and fierce advocate for LGBTQ2S+ and autistic youth. Doug served an integral role in Edmonton for years as a promoter and booking agent for Rebar. He lived for live music, whether he was going to see bands or putting them on stage, and he supported Edmonton's metal, punk, goth and industrial scenes. Doug cared for, adopted and fostered many cats, always putting their needs ahead of his own. This fundraiser supports the Edmonton Humane Society by raising funds for a cat condo sponsorship and a memorial plaque in Doug's name.

Last year's featured guest artist, Spyder Yardley-Jones, sponsored by the Gilded Rabbit, has yet another new book available soon, a retrospective collection of his hand-drawn gig posters and art. Organizers hope to have some available at the show for people to buy, or perhaps even win a signed copy. The Gilded Rabbit is also donating a gift certificate and an Art Kit 2026.

Live music will be provided by Blind Stitch, who play an active role in Edmonton's underground punk and metal scene, frequently performing alongside local heavyweights like the Rubber Bullys, Age of Ashes, Kill Witch and the Unwashed at staple local venues like the Starlite Room and the Dive Bar. The band shares live jams, covers and news on their official social media and from their recording studio, and invites fans to suggest songs for them to cover and perform online and live.

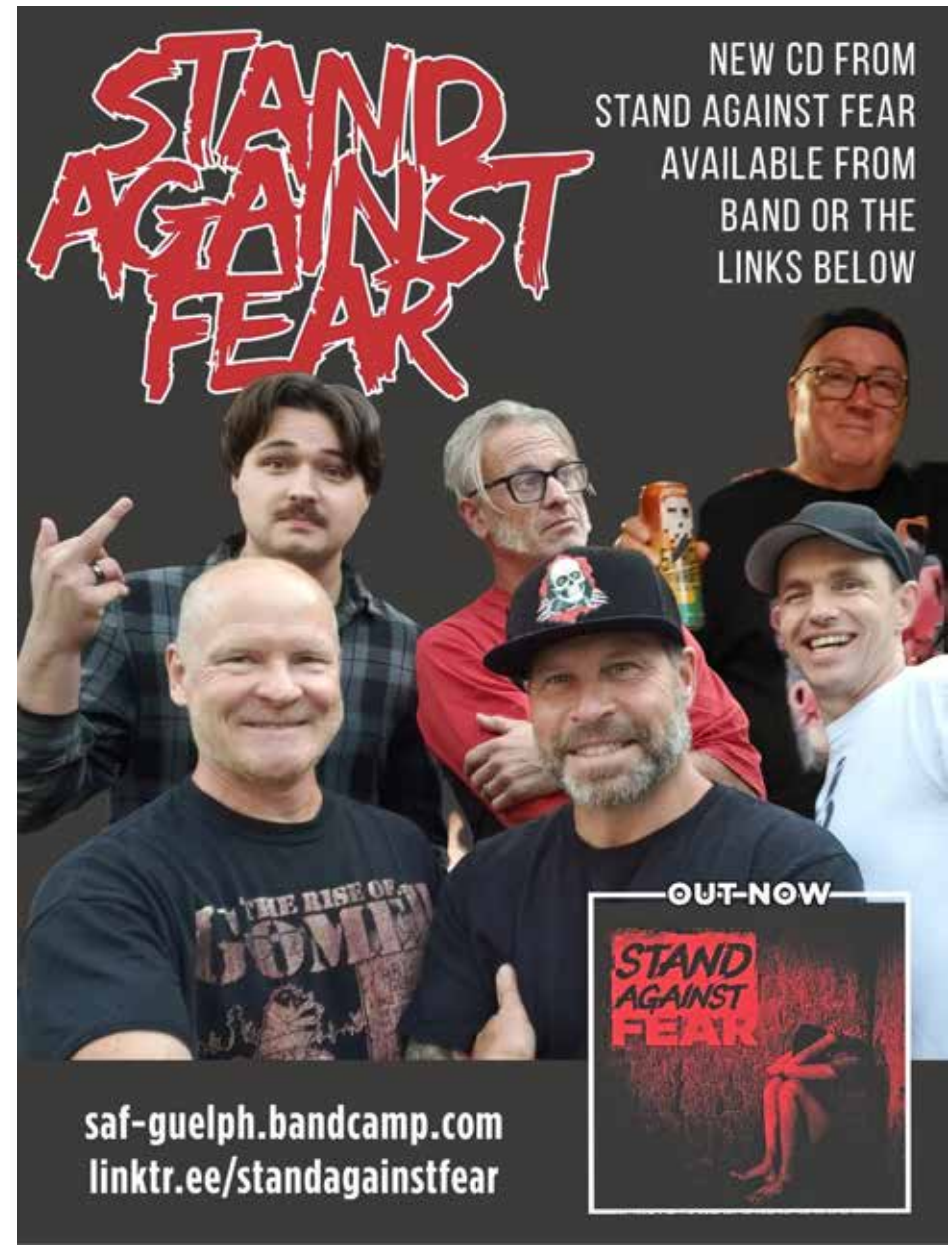
Saturday, Nov. 28, at the Rendezvous Pub, 10110 149 St. NW, Edmonton

Doors at 7 p.m., bands at 8 p.m.

Tickets: $15 in advance via Eventbrite, $20 at the door

Donations are welcome, with all proceeds going to the Edmonton Humane Society. Donations can also be made at the Gilded Rabbit.

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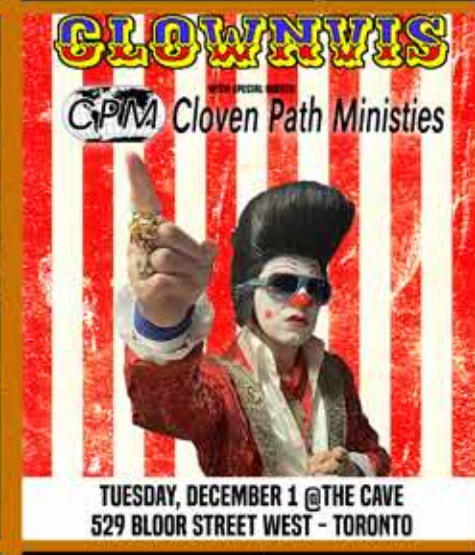






















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THE HAUNTED WORLD OF RICH HANF – Part 1

By Josh Schafer

We're guessing many of you, like us, have an unreserved enthusiasm for Halloween. We're here to tell you that Rich Hanf puts us all to shame. From his comparatively humble beginnings creating elaborate and jaw-dropping front-yard displays, Rich has cultivated a career as one of the most innovative and successful haunted house operators in the country and, perhaps even more importantly, as an ambassador for the haunted attraction industry as a whole. His distinguished résumé includes everything from haunted weddings and bar mitzvahs to running one of Louisiana's most beloved haunted attractions, Fright Trail!



He has perpetually promoted the art and craft of haunting through popular talks at Transworld's Halloween trade show and, of extra special interest to all of us in Lunchmeat Land, a series of how-to haunt videos shot directly on VHS.

Despite his legendary pedigree, Rich is an overwhelmingly friendly guy whose unbridled excitement for all things Halloween speaks to why he has seen so much success. We were lucky to get Rich on the phone just before the Halloween season consumed his life for the month of October. Enter… IF YOU DARE!

AU: Can you tell us a little bit about how you got started in the haunt business, and what inspired you to do so?

Rich Hanf: Well, there were a number of things that all came together. I grew up in New Jersey, was born in New York, and on Saturday nights there was *Chiller Theatre*. There were creature features, and you really got to see a lot of horror movies that way. There was something else called *The 4:30 Movie*, which was pretty cool because back then they would take one movie and play it for a week. Like I always say, "If it was Elvis in *Blue Hawaii*, they called it that 'cuz it blew," but when it was *The Crawling Eye* or *House on Haunted Hill*, it was fantastic! You could watch it every day and really get familiar with it. At some point you just decide that you want to be a part of this genre, and at the same time you want to give something back to the genre to keep it going. There were no displays on your parents' lawns way back when, so it was something that was pretty unique. I've done haunted weddings!



AU: Can you tell me what that's like?

RH: Yeah! The people knew me from decorating the front yard, and they said, "Listen, we're getting married and we want the reception to be haunted." And it still happens to this very day. We had a big tech company around the corner from where I live, and they wanted their Christmas party to have a haunted theme. Down here, Mardi Gras balls are very big. Mardi Gras is more than just a parade; it's an entire season of parades and parties and balls. This one krewe — K-R-E-W-E, by the way — was going to have their 13th ball, and they wanted a haunted theme, so they called up the Fright Trail guy. "Hey, can you come to the Cajundome?" Obviously, at this point things were a little bit bigger than decorating the VFW hall. So nothing has changed. The only thing that has changed is that I've gotten older!

AU: So what was the first haunted house you created?

RH: Well, the actual first professional haunted house was not a haunted house; it was a haunted trail, oddly enough. That was back in 1992 maybe, something called Nightmare Hayride, in New Jersey. A local farmer had gotten wind of me and asked if we could do a haunted hayride together.

AU: And then you began creating shot-on-VHS how-to videos. How did you start doing that?

RH: Well, I was even doing VHS videos of my front-yard displays. I fell in love with the video format. I was working for RCA satellites at the time, and there was something called the "family store," where they took out a little bit from your cheque every week. I was able to get outfitted with a top-of-the-line (at the time) portable three-tube camera and a portable VHS recorder and player. Unbelievable! And so I just started recording everything, for no other reason than I thought it should be recorded. Things are gonna go away and never be seen again if I don't, and I have the ability to do it. I mean, way back when I didn't even know there was an industry; in fact, there was not an industry.

AU: So you started doing it for fun, but then you started distributing them. How did they get distributed?

RH: Well, that's funny too, because there was a time when there wasn't yet an internet to sell them on. So, I'd make a tape, or maybe I'd get together with my friend Professor Nightmare up in Boston and he'd make a tape, then we'd go to the national Halloween trade show called Transworld in Chicago and we'd either sell them for a couple of bucks there or just give them away. It was more about establishing an industry than anything else. Back in the day, when you were a home haunter, haunting was just not as big and popular and mainstream and accepted as it is today. Pretty much the only haunted houses you were going to see were fundraisers.



Back then I didn't know there were other people doing what I was doing. There was no internet; where were you gonna go? Who were you gonna talk to? You spend all year working a part-time job so you can save all this money, so that in September or October you could go to the local magic novelty store and buy as many Halloween props as you could to set up on your front lawn, and you didn't think that anybody else was doing this. You didn't think, "Oh my god, there's a guy in Chicago doing this!" So [I thought] I better record this stuff because nobody may ever see it. And then with the start of Transworld, you suddenly realize: Oh my god! I'm not alone. There are other big fans of Halloween that know as much about it as I do. More about it than I do. It was the birth of the haunted attraction industry.

(Originally published in *Lunchmeat* #11)

To Be Continued Next Issue…

Get *Fright Masters: How to Run a Haunted House* on VHS from Lunchmeat!

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THE FOMITES

Smoke A Joint About It!

Interview by Steve Pearson

Exciting times for The Fomites crew — their new album, *Smoke A Joint About It*, drops everywhere October 1st! Let's dive into it with lead vocalist, bassist, and the coolest ghoul, Jesse Death.

AU: What's up, dude?

Jesse Death: Hey dude! Just grabbing some pizza and raising the dead, ya know, the usual!

AU: You guys just wrapped up playing AOK Fest in Kelowna. How was the set, and what were the vibes like over the weekend?

JD: It was LEGENDARY! We were there for all three days and met so many amazing folks. The Small Axe and Ollie North threw an amazing event, and we were so grateful to be included on a bill with so many bands we grew up listening to. The amount of love and support we got from folks who drove even further than we did to get there blew us away.

AU: *Smoke A Joint About It* will be available before this interview prints (GO LISTEN TO IT!). How pumped are you guys to finally have this album out and into people's ears? Are there any songs you're especially stoked about?

JD: SO pumped. It's been in the works for quite a while, so it's exciting to finally get it out there for folks to rip. We're incredibly proud of all of it, but I'd have to say "The Ballad of Enzo Matrix". It goes to some different places than usually, and who doesn't love late-era ReBoot, where Bob is missing and Enzo is a badass pirate? That said, "Don't Threaten Me With a Good Time" features Dom on vocals, and it's also a blast!

AU: You released two music videos simultaneously and paired them together as a slasher-style horror movie. How did the idea and execution of that come together?



JD: We knew that we were going to have a slasher video for our third single, "You Got Yourself an Ahab," as it's based on slashers in general, and *Behind the Mask* in particular. We also wanted a video for "Late Last Night," based on *The Tommyknockers* by Stephen King. So when Conor suggested we do a trip to his parents' cabin on the island to shoot, it was just too perfect not to do both there. We bought cameras and lights and did it DIY style, even edited it myself. The entire script was "people party in a cabin in the woods and get slashed," so it made for a particularly chill and fun shooting schedule. We're stoked. I think bite-sized, Z-grade, no-budget horror movies are our exact shit.

AU: It's been seven years since The Fomites first took the stage. How would you describe The Fomites live show experience today?

JD: Well, we've evolved a lot over the years, but, first and foremost, it's gotta be fun and it's gotta be fast. If you see a slow Fomites set, we've been replaced with pod people. Ultimately, we're there to give folks a safe place to dance and party and rage, but to feel safe doing so. When it's done right, our shows are a tight-knit but welcoming community where folks are celebrated for being as weird as you want, as long as everyone is having a good time.



AU: Our dear friend Jonny Bones passed away in August after a 15-month battle with cancer. What did you learn from him, and what will you remember about him most?

JD: Jonny Bones was so instrumental to our integration into the scene. From booking us early on, to supporting us by helping with merch, to showing us what a powerful sense of community the Vancouver scene has. He was also just the coolest fucking guy around. We would chat about horror flicks and Stephen King and Ninja Turtles for hours. It was so heartbreaking to watch him as he was getting closer to the end, but he never lost the glimmer in his eye. We got a lot more time with him than we expected to, and I'm thankful for that. Jonny taught me what strength of spirit looks like. He could have easily withdrawn and battled alone, but he was out at shows and movies and singing until he literally couldn't anymore. And then finding a way to sing, even still.

AU: The *Jonny Bones Forever* tribute album was released earlier this year, and your band covered Jonny's song, "Until I Die". How did you decide on that particular song?

JD: At the end of the day, any Jonny Bones song is going to be a classic. He was a master songwriter, but this one just seemed correct. We played a ton of shows with Jonny over the years, and this has always been one of our favourites. It just resonated with us as touring, working musicians. The original just has so much passion for creating and doing what we do, often thanklessly and with great resistance from folks who don't get it or appreciate it, insisting on putting you in a box like a good little drone. It was also just so lyrically relevant to the situation in so many ways that, for us, it felt like the only song we really ever could have done.

AU: What's next for The Fomites? Any final thoughts for the readers?

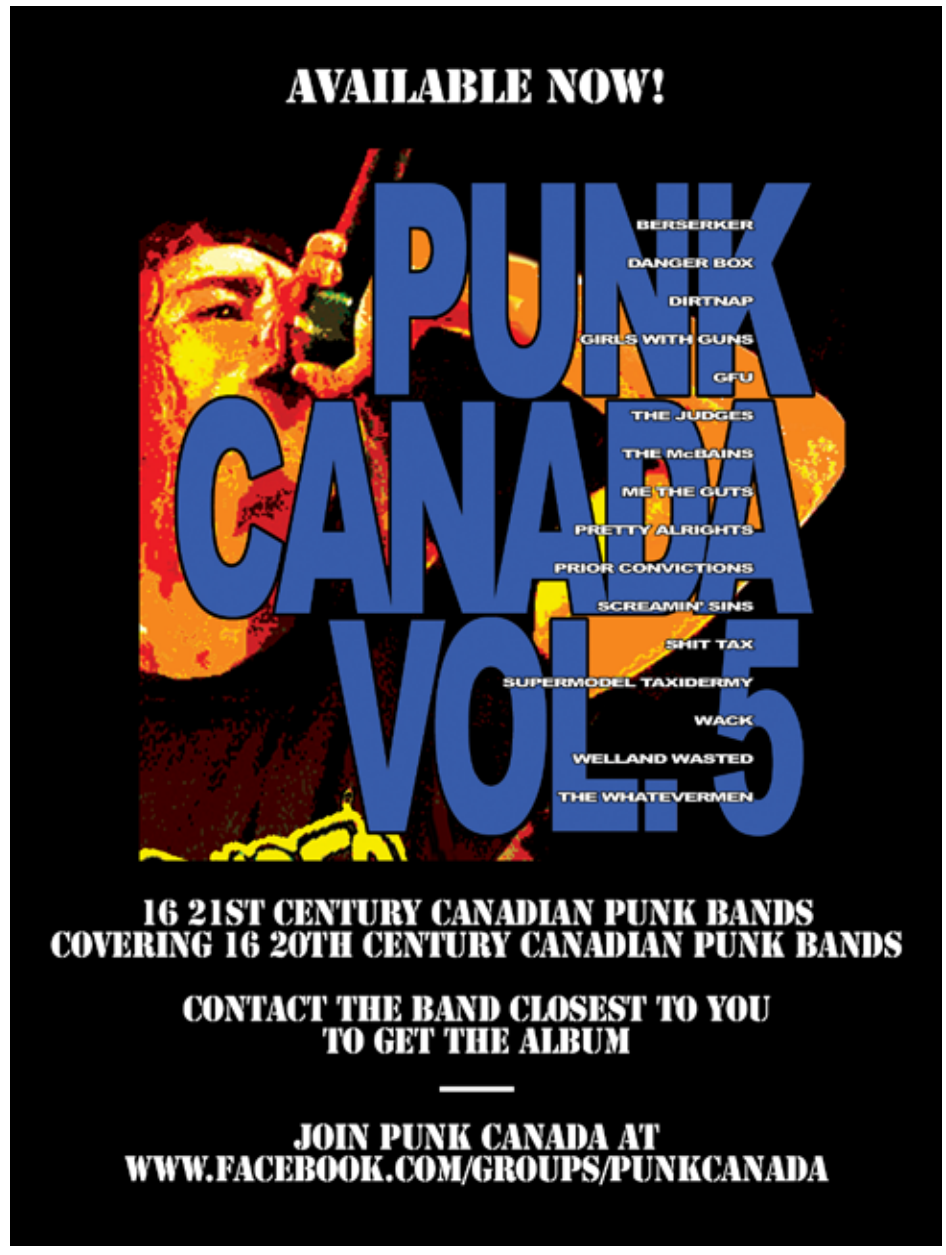
JD: So much! We're already writing more and have plenty of shows right through the end of the year, including another couple rips out to the island and interior. You know us, all gas, no brakes! Check out all the new tunes, catch us at a show, and keep it spooky!

***Smoke A Joint About It is* streaming everywhere and available on vinyl at KindaCoolRecords.com**

@thefomites @kindacoolrecords

Photo credit: Renegade Rock Photography







JONNY BONES FOREVER

Jon Aaron, better known as Jonny Bones, passed away on August 21, 2026 after a 15-month battle with cancer. He was a writer, a musician, a screen printer, a radio host, and a horror enthusiast.

He was a punk, an outlaw, an ally and a friend to so many.

In his 41 short years, Jonny had a profound impact across multiple communities and subcultures.

Below is a small sample of how he will be remembered by his friends and peers…

Jonny Bones loved words.

They were pretty much all we ever talked about. He would type out stories on a typewriter, and crush paperback novels. He loved horror movies, and weird old comics. Most importantly, he wrote killer songs. He loved to talk about all of them. We used to talk about how much we both disliked rhyming in songs. You gotta use the right word, and the right word rarely rhymes.

Jonny Bones was a character.

He came into our lives driving a hearse and wearing vintage clothes. He stood on stage looking like a rumrunner and played guitar and sang songs like it was poison not to. He loved all of us more than we often love ourselves, and did everything he could to prop us up.

Jonny Bones gave us a proper ending.

He took his diagnosis with resolve and courage, never wasting a moment of any time that we could see feeling sorry for himself or us, for he surely would've known the loss we would feel in his absence. He stared death in the face and kept playing shows, releasing music, and raising money for charity until the end.

We love you, Jonny.

— Jesse LeBourdais

My friendship with Jonny is the oldest I have. We met in high school. He treated me with a profound kindness, respect and lack of judgment that I didn't often receive. Jonny had the rare ability to make people feel genuinely seen and heard.

He also changed my life.

The first time I saw Jonny perform, we were kids at a house show. Something clicked. The person on stage wasn't an alter ego. It was simply Jonny, concentrated and amplified. For the first time, music felt tangible. I started writing the next day.

Jonny became the musical big brother I never had. Through him I learned how to book, promote, write, record, perform and tour. He taught me the way of DIY: if you want something to exist, make it.

But Jonny's greatest talent was connection. He connected people to art, ideas and, most importantly, to each other. So many of us found lifelong friends, partners, and collaborators because Jonny brought us together.

Time's the only limited resource. Jonny made extraordinary use of his.

You may have lost your voice, but you gave me mine.

I won't let you down with how I use it.

Thank you. I love you. Always.

— Christoph Leon

Jonny had this way of making a room feel bigger just by being in it. At his last show, packed with people who loved him, I watched him play like time had forgotten what it came there to do. For a few songs, cancer was just some bastard waiting outside. Inside was Jonny, guitar in his hands, that grin on his face, a whole room holding him up with the love he had spent years giving away. That night, drunk and crying, I tried to write down what I had witnessed. I posted it at 3am, panicked, and deleted it. The next morning I asked Jonny if I could share it. He told me never to ask permission, called me a fellow scribe, and said not a single letter had gone to waste. Later, he told me one line made him cry. Then he noticed I had kept returning to echoes, and sent me his piece, Echos.

I don't think he ever knew what a gift that was. Now I keep thinking about all the words I'll write that he'll never get to read. So I'll keep writing. For him.

Jonny left us an echo. I still hear it everywhere.

— Oli Davey

Jonny Bones (aka Jon Aaron) remains the coolest spook from Maple Ridge, BC. By the time I met him, he was already 20+ years into being a pillar of our local music scene. Whether he was strumming up a storm with The Still Spirits or postering for his Horrorshow, going live on *Rad Radio* or printing everyone's goddamn band shirts— He was a punk renaissance man that couldn't be stopped!

Jonny was my friend and an incredible mentor. We bonded over a shared love of skeletons, Newsies, and music. I'd pick his brain and he'd happily respond with every thought he had on the subject. He taught me about unity, encouraged me to write the truth, and always treated me as an equal. He was the biggest 'Skellyton Zine' fan from day one, and he'd amplify all of my creative endeavours. I'll never forget his calming presence (nor laughter) from the first row whenever he'd watch me play. I will always miss him, but I know Jonny's spirit is a permanent echo; I'll hear him within the music he made and loved, and I'll find him haunting every horror film and novel I encounter.

Jonny Bones Forever and ever!

— Skellyton

Revolution was in Jonny's Bones. A best friend to radical kindness, his bloody fingerprints stain eras of culture - Forever scratching away against the grain.

About his first band, Secondrate Rejects, he said, "Together we made a strange mix, but we did something together. Diversity, Unity. That's what it's always been for me."

He proved that on *Rad Radio* when he'd say, "That song was not for me, but maybe it was for you, and they'll be playing this Saturday night!" If you were fighting the good fight, you had a friend in Jonny Bones.

Jonny often joined us on stage to sing "Thanks a Lot, Keith Morris", a song about an anarchist living and dying on his own terms. He'll be singing it with us til our souls float off to Babalon (The Dark Feminine) and certainly not Babylon (A Corrupt Police State).

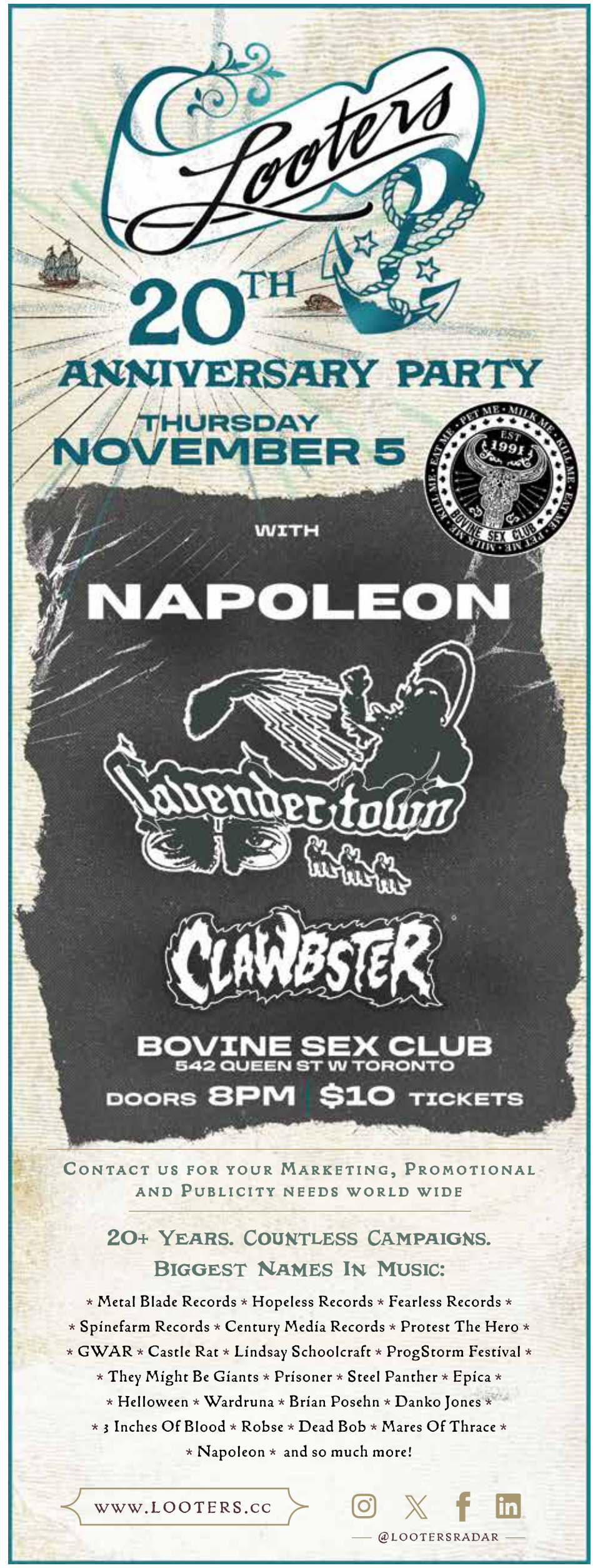
"Aren't words fun?" - JB

He wrote, "I want to see unity rise, raise up like a phoenix, light up these dark skies", and on the night Jonny traveled on to other worlds than these, lightning burned as bright as moonshine.

Raise up your voice. These are the days Jonny Bones was preparing us for.

— Cyrus Lord

Follow @jonnybonesforever and help us keep Jonny's memory and spirit alive.




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KRAMPUS MARKET

Not All That Celebrate Are Saints

Krampus Market returns to Victoria's Fernwood Community Centre for its second year on Dec. 5, bringing European folklore and winter traditions, local makers and a darker take on holiday shopping to Victoria.





"Krampus is an ugly creature, often misunderstood and misrepresented. Yet, he feels like the perfect symbol for what we believe in," says organizer Maegan Johnston of Babushka Botanics. "Our Vancouver Island artisan market brings together newcomers, independent small businesses, unconventional makers and the wonderfully odd from Vancouver Island and the mainland to celebrate variety in all its glory. We intentionally make space for new businesses, giving them the push they need to find their footing."



With more than 40 local makers, artists and food vendors, Krampus Market offers a different kind of holiday experience, one where everyone is welcome.

Krampus Market 2026 runs Dec. 5 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Fernwood Community Centre in Victoria, BC, with Krampus photos from noon to 3 p.m. and a dark Yule atmosphere. Admission is $5, and kids 12 and under get in free.

instagram.com/krampus_market

babushkabotanics.ca

Photo Credit: Maegan Johnston







WRECKING CREW STUDIOS

Vinyl Pressing by the Sea

Interview with founder Dave Curtis

By Mike "Vinyl Is Alive" Croy

AU: Who are we talking with?

Dave Curtis: I'm Dave Curtis, founder of Wrecking Crew Studios in Sidney, British Columbia. I spent 38 years in the aerospace industry before retiring in 2021. I've been a drummer since I was a teenager, and music has always been a passion of mine. Over the years, I've played in several "garage" bands, but I've spent the last 20 years playing rock and roll covers with the same group of musicians.

AU: What are you best known for?

DC: Most people probably know me from my career in aerospace, where I had a leadership role with Viking Air and De Havilland Canada, an aircraft manufacturing group. Today, I'm loving my role as chief press operator at Wrecking Crew Studios, supporting local labels and indie artists.



AU: Tell our readers a bit about Wrecking Crew Studios.

DC: Wrecking Crew Studios is a bespoke vinyl pressing plant and live event and recording studio located in beautiful "Sidney by the Sea," on the southern tip of Vancouver Island. We're intentionally not trying to be a high-volume factory. Our focus is craftsmanship, quality and working closely with independent artists and labels. Every record matters to us, whether we're pressing 100 copies or 1,000.

AU: What inspired you to start a record pressing plant?

DC: After retirement, I went back to school and received a diploma in live sound engineering and digital recording. I've also been a longtime vinyl collector, and part of the course curriculum introduced me to the resurgence of vinyl as a format. It seemed like a natural progression to offer artists a complete path from recording their music to holding the finished record in their hands. I've always enjoyed building things and solving technical problems. Vinyl pressing sits right at the intersection of manufacturing and music, which made it a perfect fit for me.

AU: How long have you been pressing vinyl?

DC: My vinyl manufacturing journey started in early 2023 after I finished my training and began investigating what it would take to set up a vinyl pressing plant. I visited several pressing plants around the world and researched various pressing machine manufacturers. In January 2025, my brand-new Newbilt Duplex System arrived in a container from Germany. We spent a lot of time commissioning equipment, developing procedures, pressing test records and learning the craft before opening our doors. Our first vinyl record for a customer was pressed and delivered in September 2025.

AU: What records have you pressed?

DC: Our very first project was for the Haven, a local Sidney band. The album is called *Red / Blue*, and we pressed 300 copies on transparent red and transparent blue vinyl. They turned out beautifully.

Since then, we've completed projects for a growing number of independent artists, including Jon and Roy, the Sophistos, Door D'Or and many others. We're currently pressing Thrashlord's latest album, *Arise… and Kill Again!* Every project is different, and that's one of the things I enjoy most. No two records have the same story.

AU: What's something that surprised you about pressing vinyl?



DC: How difficult it is to press a good record. Most people think a record is simply "printed." Nothing could be further from the truth. The pressing system needs high-pressure steam and cooling water, and pressure and temperature consistency are incredibly important. Even the temperature and humidity in the shop can affect whether you're producing a good record or not. Dozens of small variables affect the final result. Temperature, timing, cooling, the condition of the stampers and even the vinyl formulation all play a part. The more I learn, the more respect I have for the people who have mastered this craft.

AU: What can people expect from the experience of having a record done at Wrecking Crew?



DC: A personal experience. When someone contacts us, they're talking directly to the people making their record. We take the time to understand what they're trying to create and help them through the process. For many artists, this is their first vinyl release. That's exciting, and we want the experience to be just as rewarding as the finished product.

AU: Do you have any upcoming projects you're excited about?

DC: We've just finished pressing local radio station 91.3 The Zone's 2Ø26 Band of the Month compilation, featuring all of the 2Ø26 bands. We're incredibly proud to support this initiative.

AU: What makes a record great in your opinion?

DC: It always starts with the music. After that, every step matters. Good mastering, quality lacquer cutting and plating, careful pressing and attention to detail all contribute to the final result.

AU: What equipment are you using to press records? Modern or vintage?

DC: Our Newbilt presses are modern book-mould hydraulic presses. They're built on the same proven principles that made the classic Swedish SMT and Toolex presses the industry standard for decades.

These are the same presses that Jack White uses at Third Man Pressing in Detroit. They combine proven record-pressing technology with modern controls, allowing us to produce consistent, high-quality records while staying true to the traditional pressing process.

AU: What's an average turnaround time on a project?

DC: It depends on the size of the order and its complexity, but for a typical single album on black vinyl, once we have the artist's music mastered for vinyl and all of the artwork is complete, our typical lead time is six to eight weeks.

AU: As we wrap things up, Dave, is there anything else you'd like our readers to know?

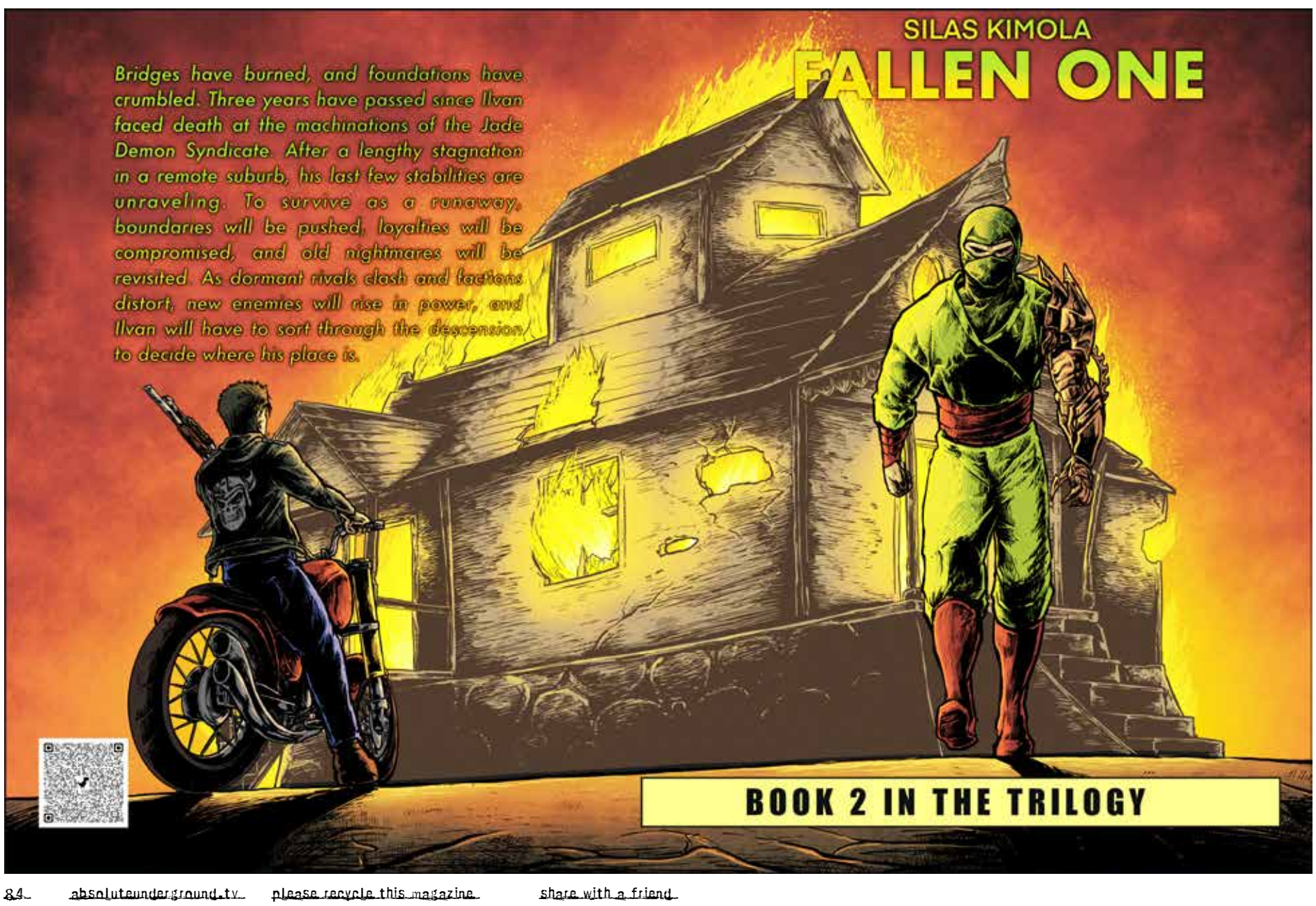
DC: Vinyl has been around for decades, and there's a reason it continues to grow.

Streaming is incredibly convenient, but putting a record on a turntable is an experience. You slow down, listen to an album from beginning to end and connect with the music differently.

We're grateful every time an artist trusts us with their music. Our job is to honour that trust by making records we're proud of.

wreckingcrewstudios.ca

facebook.com/wreckingcrewstudios
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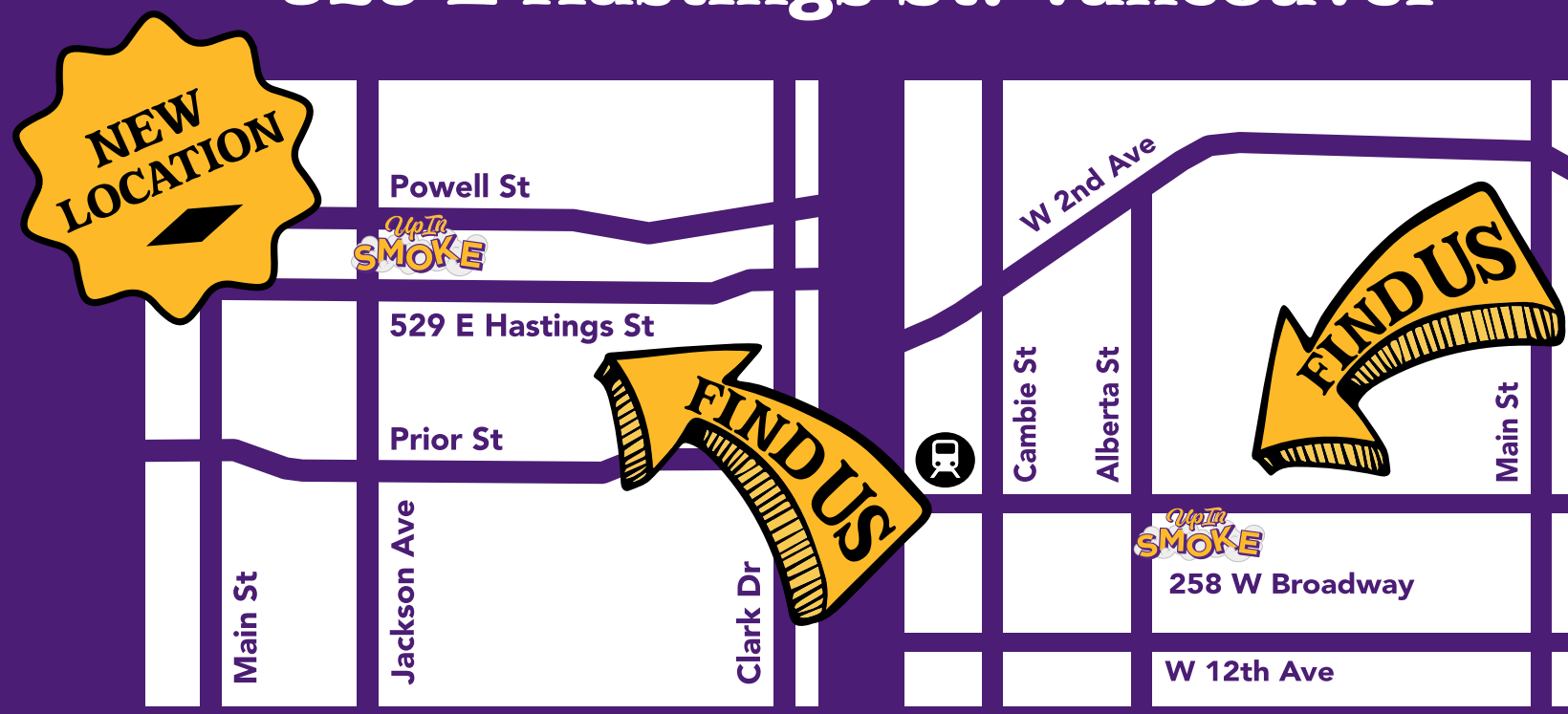


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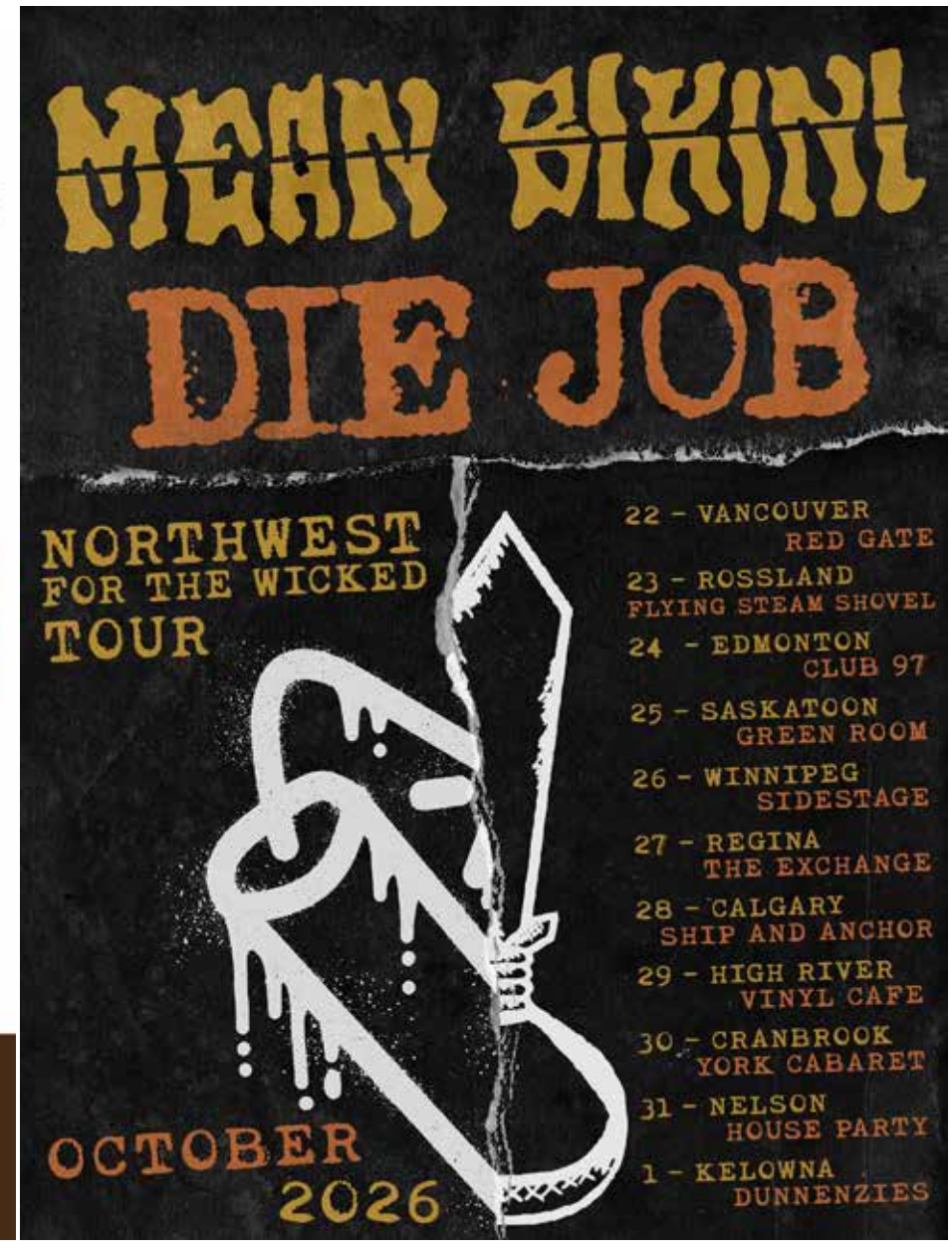
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IRON WARRIOR -

CANADA'S ONE MAN THRASH BAND

DANA LEE: RISE OF THE WARRIOR

I was born on November 27, 1963. My first instrument was an acoustic guitar, but at age 10 I bought a reddish Hagstrom electric guitar and a small Fender amp. From that moment on, I was hooked on the idea of being a rock star and growing my hair long. By Grades 7 and 8, I was performing in front of the entire E.A. Lovell Public School alongside my music teacher.

FIRST BAND: MAGNUS

My older brother, Duane, played drums, and we would jam to songs like "Smoke on the Water," "Wipeout," and "Strutter" by Kiss. Between 1978 and 1979, we formed Magnus with high school friends. The original lineup was me on guitar, Duane on drums, John Price on vocals, and Scott Gordanier on bass.

Our first concert was at R.S. McLaughlin Collegiate. We performed covers by Van Halen, Queen, Journey, Rush, and Alice Cooper, along with an original love song I wrote called "Baby Love Me Tonight." We practised in my parents' basement, complete with a lighting system, mirror ball, and strobe lights. We later played venues including Oshawa City Hall, Motor City Rollerama, Durham College Pub Night, Iroquois Park, and the El Mocambo. We also appeared at Oshawa's Battle of the Bands and were interviewed by CKAR radio.

At one show at the Brock Theatre in Whitby, I was charged by police for putting Magnus posters on telephone poles. Hundreds had to be removed, but my mom and I went to City Hall and managed to get the fine dropped. The incident even made several local newspapers.

BLACK MASS AND GENGHIS KHAN

In 1983, I joined Black Mass and introduced Mark, a singer Duane and I had jammed with, to the band. We played Armstrong's Auditorium on November 18, 1983, with a massive PA and lighting system. We were so loud that we blew the main fuse for the entire building. That year, we also recorded a four-song demo, which has recently appeared on vinyl.

After leaving Black Mass, I joined Genghis Khan – a different one than the older local group of the same name. We performed at the Battle of the Bands at Lakeview Park. When the band broke up in 1984, I decided to teach myself how to play drums for thrash metal. Finding musicians who liked that style was difficult, so I took on the challenge myself, including learning fast double-bass.

IRON WARRIOR

Starting from scratch, I began reaching out to fanzines and radio stations around the world by mail. There were no laptops or social media back then – this was nearly 40 years ago. I wrote letters on a portable typewriter, one finger at a time, and successfully connected with the global underground zine network.

It took two years of hard work before my demo, *Thy Deadly Illusion*, was ready for release. I was 24 and needed a job to pay for studio time and production costs, so I applied to be a gravedigger after seeing an ad in the local paper. As a high school dropout with hair down past my ass, no one else would hire me.

I worked at Thornton Cemetery for two months. I actually loved the job because it gave me the funds to create Iron Warrior, although it also gave me some really bad nightmares. The work, along with the physical labour of digging graves and hauling heavy dirt in wheelbarrows, also made my severe tinnitus even worse.

I recorded the Iron Warrior demo at Quest Studios in Oshawa with Paul LaChapelle, who had worked with major acts such as Anvil, Kim Mitchell, and Coney Hatch. I started by laying down the guitar riffs entirely by ear, without a metronome. After that, I tracked the drums, bass, and finally the vocals. It was an unbelievable experience.

Once the audio was completed, I gathered the artwork and photos and had the cassettes manufactured. I believe we produced around 200 copies, which I mailed to underground fanzines and radio stations across the globe. Before long, Iron Warrior was featured in major publications including *Metal Forces* (UK), *Morbid Magazine* (Norway), and *Candour* (Sweden), all of which reviewed the demo.

Then the fan mail started pouring into my mailbox from people wanting to purchase the tape. Letters arrived from the UK, United States, Japan, Poland, France, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Chile, Brazil, Singapore, Denmark, Greece, Italy, Finland, Portugal, and Spain.

I also received radio airplay in the UK, Holland, and Switzerland. In 1994, my tracks "Malign Spirits" and "Legends of a Ghost" were featured on a compilation CD from Holland titled *History of Things to Come*.

As the years went by, I transitioned into producing rap beats and loops, focusing on a dark, futuristic sound and pitching my work for television and film synchronization projects.

Then, in 2025, I discovered comments online from die-hard thrash fans who still own my original 1988 demo and remember me. It turns out that many people in the global metal community had spent all these years wondering whatever happened to Dana Lee!

Interview: Jason Flower.

supremeecho.bandcamp.com

supremeecho.bigcartel.com

OBSCURA COMICS

Beautiful Monsters

Interview with Sun Khamunaki and Justin Routbard

By Natas: Cremator of Souls



AU: Who is this that stands before us?

Sun Khamunaki, founder of Obscura Comics and renowned cover artist, and Justin Routbard, co-owner of Obscura Comics and creator of *Murder Nun*.

AU: Tell the origin story of Obscura Comics.

Obscura Comics was founded in 2019 by Sun Khamunaki with the release of *Ormus* #1. After working and gaining notoriety as a cover artist for companies like Coffin, Zenescope, Dynamite and DC, she decided to begin self-publishing to tell the stories she had waiting and to have a proper creative outlet for her ideas. Justin joined her full time about three years ago.

AU: What current comic titles do you publish?

Pumpkin is an '80s revenge slasher comic with supernatural elements. She returns from the grave on Halloween to take revenge on the people who murdered her.

Becca Boo the Bimbo Ghost is a horror erotic comedy. We follow our feeble-minded Becca as she tries to earn her way to heaven, one orgasm at a time.

Ormus is sci-fi intertwined with ancient Egyptian mythology. Galactic intrigue and a mysterious forbidden planet bring our alien cast into conflict with the deadliest hunters in the galaxy.



Murder Nun is a grindhouse horror. Sacrificed to Leviathan for refusing the advances of a lecherous Cardinal Marinus, Emelia returns, guns in hand, to 1973 as the deadly Murder Nun to take revenge.

Martian Woman is a campy and fun sci-fi. Mars having just been rocked by a massive explosion, Mila must take the Martian Emperor's brain to be put into a new body.

Hail Mary is a gothic vampire tale with links to early Christianity. We follow Mary's relationship with Jesus at the crucifixion and her transformation into a vampire.

Monsterella is dark sci-fi. Monsterella is a reluctant prison planet warden who holds the worst the galaxy has to offer. As a former bounty hunter and all-around badass, we delve into her past and conflicts with alien agendas.

AU: What sets Obscura apart from other comics out there?

Our original characters and stories! Being independent lets us write the stories and create characters that otherwise might never see print.

AU: Who are some of the comic artists and cover artists you have worked with to date?

Besides Sun, we've featured many of the best indie comics cover creators on our campaigns. Simon Bisley, Elias Chatzoudis, Dan Mendoza, Bill McKay, Pierluigi Abbondanza and Drax Gal are just a few.

AU: Has Kickstarter helped in the development and reach of your comics and art?

Kickstarter has given us exposure and a platform we wouldn't have been able to reach on our own, and it has most definitely been a huge factor in our growth. Due to some well-publicized issues with censorship of indie comics, we will be moving to dual campaigns with both Kickstarter and our website simultaneously to showcase all aspects of our titles.

AU: Tell us about your future plans for world domination. What is Obscura's vision? Any new projects on the horizon you can talk about?

Obscura definitely wants to expand as a company and entertainment brand. Besides new titles coming out in the next couple of years, we'd like to move into producing figures of our characters and possibly animation.

AU: Can you speak to your acquisition of Vancouver Island's Nevin Arnold's Monsterella character? What are your plans for Monsterella going forward?

We are so excited about Monsterella! The first issue of our version is almost complete and we're really happy with it. Dave Franchini, formerly of Zenescope and now with Weird Brain, is handling writing duties and he has the first five issues mapped out. It's much darker than the original, having more of a Chronicles of Riddick and *Aliens* feel. At the same time, Nevin is finishing his original story arc in what we're calling *Monsterella Legacy*. So longtime fans will get a completed story arc from the original creator as well!



AU: Sun Khamunaki, you are one of the hottest comic artists working in comics today. What are some career highlights to date and any new comics or covers planned to be released in the near future?

Sun Khamunaki: Founding Obscura Comics and creating original titles like *Pumpkin*, *Becca Boo*, *Hail Mary*, *Martian Woman* and *Ormus* are definite career highlights.

I've had the opportunity to work with amazing publishers like Coffin Comics (*Lady Death*, *Hellwitch* and *La Muerta*), Zenescope Entertainment (*Grimm Fairy Tales*, *Robyn Hood*, *Van Helsing*, *Black Knight*), Dynamite Entertainment (*Vampirella*, *Red Sonja*, *Sacred Six*) and DC Comics (*Wonder Woman*, *Harley Quinn*, *Birds of Prey*, *Aquaman* and a series of covers for the *DCeased: War of the Undead Gods* storyline). I also had a *Vampirella* cover produced as a print for Sideshow Collectibles!



My primary passion lies in developing the Obscura Comics universe, creating covers, writing, editing and illustrating stories. I'll have quite a few new covers with various publishers coming out. My newsletter is the best source for current info on those. I also have a monthly series of pin-ups available on my website, along with subscriptions for monthly releases and site-only exclusives.

AU: What's the best way for people to get their hands on copies of Obscura Comics?



Our websites, obscuracomics.com or sunkhamunaki.com. Or back our Kickstarters!

AU: Any current Kickstarters active? What is the next Kickstarter you have planned?

Pumpkin #6 will be on Kickstarter and our website, launching in October. *Becca Boo vs Xmas* and Sun's latest artbook will launch later in the year.

AU: Will Obscura Comics be exhibiting at any upcoming conventions?

We have Calgary, Toronto and possibly Vancouver for cons next year. We're hoping to get to some in the U.S. as well.

AU: Anything else to mention or promote?

We have big plans for next year! Kickstarter and website campaigns will continue the stories of our established characters as well as launch the first issue of *Monsterella*. We also have a few new titles in various stages of development. *The Unspeakable Terror* is complete and waiting for covers to come in. That one was created by Justin with *Pumpkin* writer Garth Matthams. We have an Arthurian period character in the same universe as *Hail Mary*, developed by Garth and Sun. Azraela and Sister Satan, who were just introduced in *Murder Nun* #3, will be getting their own stories as well in the near future.

AU: How do people find you online?

Facebook and Instagram, as well as our websites.

obscuracomics.com

sunkhamunaki.com





ETHEREAL TOMB

Living To Dream Again

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

Alexander: I'm Alexander and I play guitar and sing. I guess I'm infamous for always having something to say.

AU: Where are you based, and what's the music scene like there these days?

Alex: The band is based in Toronto. I would say the scene as of late is based around a lot of what the youth are doing; it's cool. Sometimes the older generation get to be a part of guiding them and other times the youth don't give a fuck what someone has to say. It can be funny and/or punk, all in its own way. I suppose that's the way it should be.



AU: How did the band come together? Who is in the band and what does each member bring to the table?

Alex: The band came together in early 2021 and since then, I have been the sole constant member and principal songwriter. Kz plays drums, is based out of Springfield, MO, and plays in a lot of dope bands there. At the moment, my good friend Lorenzo is playing bass, but it's only for the next few months, unfortunately.

AU: How would you describe what you do to someone who has never heard the band?

Alex: I guess it depends on how much heavy music context they have. If they're a normie, I say it sounds like Pantera meets Black Sabbath and every dude in cop glasses within proximity turns their head in excitement. It's a running joke in the band. Realistically, I would say it's like if early Slipknot, Grief, Black Sabbath and Hatebreed were all mixed together.

AU: Tell us about your most recent release.

Alex: I'm really excited about the new stuff rolling out. My goal was to capture the evil sound and energy of '90s bands like Cold as Life and Day of Suffering and mix it with the authenticity of early Slipknot and Grief. All of Ethereal Tomb's catalogue has relatively the same influences; I just get better at guitar between releases to better express how I feel instrumentally. Jake Ballah records everything I do. Go record with him.

AU: What was it like working with Bat Skull Records for your new release, compared to your earlier DIY releases?

Alex: It really wasn't much different because it still is a DIY release at the end of the day; it's not Sony. I paid for all the recording process, did all the artwork, vinyl, CD and tape designs. They're taking care of pressing and distro, which I would normally give to someone as a license anyway, but the big difference is that we're working with people I respect immensely and have looked up to for years, who really want to see the band do well and have connections to help further that.

AU: What do you think makes Ethereal Tomb different from the other bands out there?

Alex: The willingness to tour a lot and for a long time with music that doesn't really fit into any one box, but people seem to connect with deeply. It also stems from an Indigenous perspective, which is severely underrepresented in any part of society.

AU: How important is your political identity to the creation of your music? Do the riffs come before or after the message?

Alex: It's the entire essence of the band. Normally, I'll have a song title at least and write the riffs to embody the feelings I have based on the title. It's not happy music; I'm not normally writing about anything kind or redeemable a lot of the time. I do try to go out of my way to write songs that look forward to the future and a better day, but I know that doesn't come without immense loss and sacrifice, so those don't turn out happy either.



AU: What's one thing about the band that people probably wouldn't know just from hearing the records?

Alex: Fugazi and Have Heart are immensely influential to the band on every level. Especially when it comes to touring all-ages, keeping prices low and booking benefit shows. I discovered both bands very early in my punk journey and they definitely informed a lot of what I think punk should be.

AU: Any plans for Halloween this year?

Alex: Not really. We play a show in Bathurst, NB, with Primitive Rage. I hope it's fun and spooky. I normally book a local Halloween gig, but we're on tour all of October.

AU: What is the most legendary Halloween costume you have ever rocked?

Alex: In 2024 and 2025, we dressed up as self-titled-era Slipknot and did some covers, and that turned out awesome.

AU: What's the best piece of advice you've received as a musician? Do you have any advice of your own to share with a band just starting out?

Alex: Make the music you want to hear with no profits in mind, just you and your friends making music and playing shows because you want to. Learn a power chord and find a drummer; that's what I did and I can still barely play a guitar. Try to have something meaningful to say; the less apolitical the metal and hardcore, the better.

AU: Any tour plans in the works?

Alex: We're on tour for the new album from Sept. 17 to Nov. 1, with select dates with Cancer Bats, Smuther and Primitive Rage.

AU: Any final words of wisdom to share with our readers?

Alex: Be authentic in what you do and do things because you truly want to. Being involved in metal and hardcore is not based on the aspiration for a payday, so fuck you and drop out if that's you. Thank you for the interview. Shout-out to all our homies and strength to my relations in the struggle across Turtle Island and beyond.

etherealtomb.bandcamp.com

instagram.com/etherealtomb

@batskullrecords

Band Photo: Jake Ballah

Live Photo: Gremlin.c @gremlin.c





MOSH THE ROCK

Island Metalfest Founder Royal Savoie on Year Two

By Broken Neck Radio's Stan Schinners

AU: Following the success of the inaugural launch of Mosh the Rock in 2025, Mosh the Rock is stepping into its second year. What was the biggest lesson you learned from Year One, and how did that experience change your strategy for building the 2026 festival?





Royal Savoie: My biggest lesson? Ask for help! The lesson I bring forward from that is… create a team of like-minded, passionate individuals, make a plan and trust the people I am working with to do what needs to be done. Learn to let go!

Big shout-outs to Jennie Turner (Phoenix Bar – MTR Co), Sam Storey (Royalty Entertainment) and Stuart Dobell (graphic designer/stage manager) for taking up some of the heavy lifting.

AU: Sooke's Fred Milne Park proved to be an incredible setting for an outdoor metal festival. How has the relationship with the local Sooke community, local businesses and park management evolved now that everyone knows what to expect?

RS: Right!? The community support was great going into the first Mosh the Rock, with local businesses carrying and selling our hard copy tickets (as they are again this year), putting up posters and everyone generally being really pumped for the show. This year we have the Sooke Lions partnering with us in support of their local community initiatives. Park management is amazing. Sarah, the manager of the park, is amazing and was and is key in meeting our needs and solving our problems.

AU: Booking touring acts for Vancouver Island requires navigating the dreaded BC Ferries schedules, travel expenses and tight summer runs. How do you pitch the "Island Metalfest experience" to mainland and US bands to convince them that making the trip across the water to Sooke is 100 per cent worth it?

RS: Well, with the bigger bands — the invited bands versus the bands that have submitted — travel sometimes gets rolled into the offers. However, it really is not that hard of a sell. A lot of bands want to come out to play the island, and are excited to support Mosh the Rock and be a part of what we are trying to build.

AU: As the host of *Thrashcan* on CFUV 101.9 FM in Victoria, you're constantly plugged into the pulse of West Coast heavy music. How does your weekly radio work shape the way you scout up-and-coming Vancouver Island bands like Wolf Venom, Dead Rights and Overditch for the festival stage?

RS: With the bands you mentioned, those local bands and many like them that have played or will play Mosh the Rock come from my putting on shows on Vancouver Island and the mainland, and networking in the local metal community. *Thrashcan* is great because it allows me to interact more with bands nationally and internationally when they submit their music or I stumble upon them, play them and/or have them on my show, as was the case with the Rising Fall from Chicago.

AU: When putting together the lineup, what is your strategy for balancing various heavy subgenres, from progressive and technical death metal down to classic thrash, modern metal and punk?

RS: I try to build up the momentum with a balance of genres. A little lighter and fun hard rock/punk at the start… mixing in some groove or psych as the day ramps up… and then BAM! The pit explodes into heaviness and chaos as night falls! This year we are stoked to have our first punk band, Dead Rights, and they will be the vanguard for following years as Mosh the Rock looks to expand our musical offerings.



AU: Mosh the Rock is intentionally kept all-ages and family-friendly, complete with youth tickets and free admission for kids 11 and under. Why is fostering a multi-generational environment so critical for the future of the Vancouver Island metal scene?

RS: I love seeing the little guffers and the not-so-little, sharing time with their families, friends and loved ones. Little ones wearing battle vests with patches they have collected with their parents and sharing the experience. Metal is not just about the music… it's about community. The message that if someone falls down in the pit, *you pick them up*! I think it is very important to pass that down to the next generation in this era of smartphones, social media and disconnection. If we don't include the next generation, our scene will die out. Young 'uns going to a show and deciding they want to learn the guitar or drums or… or… and then starting a band — that's where it all begins and



hopefully continues!

AU: The second year is the hardest year for any independent promoter because expectations are so much higher and the scale is bigger. What is the single biggest logistical challenge your team at Royalty Entertainment is tackling during these final weeks before gates open?

RS: Our biggest or newest challenge this year compared to last year is the organization of our volunteer team. I didn't do it last year for a number of reasons… and, lol, I learned my lesson. Many hands make light work!

AU: After all is said and done and the gates are ready to open, what is the one moment or image you're most looking forward to experiencing this year that makes all the work worth it?

RS: To go up to the balcony of the main fieldhouse and look out over the festival, seeing the culmination of time and work… and stress, lol. It's an amazing feeling to see everyone having fun, enjoying the music and the day. It does make all the work worth it! Oh… and seeing the young 'uns and lil guffers in the pit. It's sooo great how everyone makes them feel totally included and safe.

@royal_savoie

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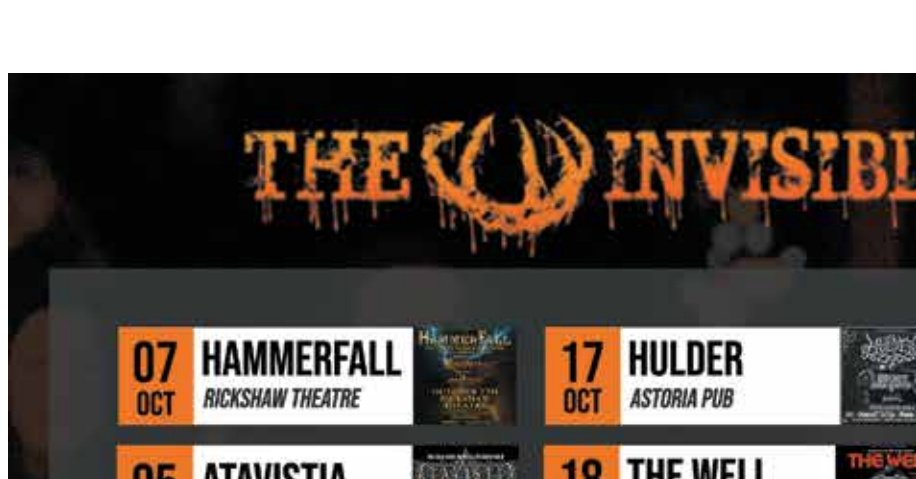
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05 - 11 OCT — ATAVISTIA — 05 - OTTAWA, 06 - SHERBROOKE, 07 - TROIS-RIVIÈRES, 08 - QUEBEC CITY, 09 - TORONTO, 10 - OSHAWA, 11 - MONTRÉAL	18 OCT — THE WELL — ASTORIA PUB	15-18 NOV — KORPIKLAANI — KELOWNA, VICTORIA, VANCOUVER	04 DEC — IMPRECATION — ASTORIA PUB
	23 OCT — KOSTNATĚNÍ + LIMINAL SHROUD — ASTORIA PUB	18 NOV — DEVIL MASTER — ASTORIA PUB	09 DEC — DREAD CREW OF ODDWOOD — ASTORIA PUB
14-15 OCT — FABIO FRIZZI FRIZZI 2 FULCI — VANCOUVER & VICTORIA	06 NOV — IRON KINGDOM — ASTORIA PUB	20 NOV — PSYCROPTIC — THE NIGHT SHIFT	13 DEC — WAYFARER — ASTORIA PUB
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ABSOLUTE UNDERGROUND



THE DEADLY SKULLS

Shouldn't All Comics Come with a Soundtrack?

By Guy Montag

When the Deadly Skulls dropped *Number One in Sweden*, their 2023 debut EP on Winnipeg's Transistor 66 Records, the main goal was to establish a high-speed, punk-infused band that still left room for other influences. "The album title comes from the fact that a lot of the American-sounding bands I listen to are actually Swedish," says guitarist/frontman Rick Overwater. "And I think we do a good job of combining punk, stoner metal and other influences in a way that doesn't clash."



Three years later, after abandoning a work life he describes as "corporate and soul-sucking," Overwater has new goals. Too many, perhaps. A longtime writer, he'd already published several sci-fi and crime stories and a steampunk novel, and launched a comic called *Futility: Orange Planet Horror* (nominated for Best Graphic Novel by the Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy Association). Now, he's obsessed with the idea of making soundtracks.

"If I have music on while I write, I pick it carefully," says Overwater. "I love bands that rip like, say, the Hellacopters or Motörhead. But when I put that stuff on, I zone out and listen to the music instead of focusing on the job." Overwater says that when he does the lettering and layout for a comic, it's usually "tired, high and in the dead of night," and he discovered that long stoner and doom-metal jams not only provide the right background sounds, they also perfectly suit the comics he makes. Why not, he figured, make a comic that actually comes equipped with that music right out of the box?

He released an eight-page comic called *Son of a Bullfighter's Ghost*, complete with a seven-inch, dirty-rock soundtrack. The experiment was a success, and he began thinking about it more seriously. Overwater remembers when he was in his early teens and discovered the movie *Heavy Metal* and its soundtrack at the same time. "To me, animated art full of skeletons and spaceships and killing, set to music like Black Sabbath and Blue Öyster Cult, was the perfect combo," he says. "I fantasized about making my own movie and soundtrack like that. But that would take time, money and an attention span ADHD guys like me simply don't have."



A comic and a handful of songs, Overwater thought, was something he could pull off and still have come out looking and sounding professional. In November, he and the Deadly Skulls will release *Anomaly Woman and the Alpha Tangent Man: An Intergalactic Rock 'n' Roll Love Story*. Issued by Sketchy Records in partnership with local rock-comic specialists Metal Nerds, it's a 12-page, album-sized comic drawn by artists Kelly Porteous and Dario Carrasco. It will arrive complete with your choice of a 10-inch soundtrack or a CD, recorded by the Deadly Skulls in Calgary.

"I wasn't sure the Skulls would go for it," he recalls. "Darell, our drummer, listens to stuff like All and the Descendents, and he hauls ass. And one of the songs I'd written was this epic, plodding, eight-minute, doom-ish instrumental that was intended to be drug-friendly headphone candy."

Not only did the band go for it, they insisted that all the music go into the set list. "The first track is what I call 'space punk,' so it's not too far off-brand," he says. "Side B is new territory for us, but I suspect we'll do more like it in the future."

Another comic with a soundtrack, maybe? "I hope so, but who knows? I couldn't have made this one if Julius at Sketchy, Brett at Metal Nerds and Kelly and Dario weren't into the idea as much as I am," Overwater says. "I'm lucky that, in Calgary, there seems to be this growing crop of scenesters who ditched their dreams of wealth and stardom a long time ago. Now, they just want to make shit that's really cool. So, I'll totally take advantage of that if I can."

deadlyskulls.ca

sketchyrecords.ca/

Photo credit: Mira Sawatzky



Photo Cutline info - L to R:

Darell Hartlen – Drums

Brian Doss – Bass

Rick Overwater – Guitar & vocals

Conrad Montana – Keyboards



SPEAK OF THE DEVIL

HELLOMEAN

By Ray Mackay

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

SOTD: Speak of the Devil is a band from Vancouver, BC, most infamous for being super nice guys when really we were supposed to be super rock music assholes. So then, any infamous reputation that we may have might be fabricated, kind of like they say that the devil is possibly just misunderstood… like they say, "speak of the devil"… Who's they? Nobody knows.

AU: Who is in the band?

SOTD: Speak of the Devil is made up of three bloody pieces: Chad "The Nightrider" on rhymes, Jinx on chugs and Party on beats.

AU: For our unfamiliar readers, please give us a brief history of Speak of the Devil.

SOTD: Unfamiliar, with as little history as possible, is how we like it. People can dig up whatever information they'd like; all the power to them.

AU: What bands have you been a part of previously, and what influences do they bring to SOTD?

SOTD: Jinx on chugs has crafted a full-bodied guitar tone from his experience in bands such as Brand New Unit. Party on beats and Jinx have collaborated in bands such as Burn Hollywood Burn. Jinx's old high school mate Chad on rhymes (formerly of Big City Groove) brings the high energy, and both their styles of vocals go together like fruitcakes and onions.

AU: Where does this band land? On the punk side or the metal side?

SOTD: We don't; we prefer to question these sides. We prefer to have a healthy balance of "punk" and "metal" and other rock genres. Many want you to fall on one side or the other, but we prefer to be ourselves, not to be blindly led by sides.

Chad: A buddy of ours, Rodney Riot, described us as a punk and roll band. I thought that was pretty funny and kind of fitting… but we've got all kinds of styles coursing through these tracks.

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

SOTD: The music scene in Vancouver was previously known for hard-hitting bands full of substances, but today… as for what's left of the hard-hitting bands, they are much more full of substance.

Chad: I'm from Vancouver, but I grew up in North Delta. A lotta cool bands came out of North Delta: Witches Hammer, Malpractice, Brand New Unit, Cat's Game (one of my favourite bands ever), Active Glance, Lethal Virus, Caustic Thought… You could go on and on. North Delta hardcore!

AU: You have your debut LP, *HELLOMEAN*, in the works now! What can you tell us about it?

SOTD: It's self-released coloured vinyl with 11 ripping tracks. Why 11? We're told that in numerology, 11 is viewed as a master number linked to high intuition, inspiration and spiritual illumination, lol.

AU: What can your fans expect from the *HELLOMEAN* LP? Songs, streaming, release date, etc.?

SOTD: At first, vinyl release only, then maybe other mediums.

Chad: Yeah, we've got a video out on our YouTube channel, SOTD Basement Tapes, and we just filmed a new video a couple of days ago for the song "HELLOMEAN", which is gonna be pretty rad.

AU: Any plans for Halloween this year?

SOTD: Last year we played a Halloween gig. It was fun. This year we may just hang out in an all-white room with the lights on.

AU: What are some of your favourite horror movies? Any obscure ones people may not have heard of?



SOTD: Well, of course, *Halloween* (1978), *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), *The Exorcist* (1973) and *The Amityville Horror* (1979) are all classics, because they speak of the devil. But Jinx really finds animal horrors like *Jaws* (1975), *Them!* (1954), *Empire of the Ants* (1977) and *The Birds* (1963) much scarier than horror movies about the devil, so then, "gonna need a bigger boat."

Chad: OK, now we're getting serious. I think the scariest movie I saw when I was a kid was *The Exorcist*. That was pure nightmare fuel, but if you want the cream of the crop, it's gotta be the horror movies from the '80s: *Re-Animator*, *Basket Case*, *C.H.U.D.*, *The Brood*, *The Howling* (awesome werewolf movie)… and basically anything with zombies getting their heads blown off, arms ripped off and guts ripped out… Joe Party thinks *The Notebook* is a pretty scary movie, lol.

AU: Do you have any weird Halloween traditions?

SOTD: It's weird to think any single Halloween tradition is weird. We call bullshit that some believe the name of a rock band can refer to the mischief of smashing jack-o'-lanterns and then associate that rock band's name with Halloween. That's weird.

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

SOTD: *Pet Sematary (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack)* from 1989.

Chad: I think *The Return of the Living Dead* is pretty awesome. And the *Halloween* series — I mean, how can you go wrong with John Carpenter on keyboards?

AU: Most wicked Halloween costume you ever rocked?

SOTD: Of course, The Rock.

Chad: When I was a kid, I dressed up as Snake Plissken from *Escape from New York*. Nobody knew who I was. I was just a little kid in the '80s with an eyepatch, camouflage pants and an Uzi. This was a time when you were either a ghost, a witch or Frankenstein, lol.

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

SOTD: Yes, we do plan to play some more shows in the new year, so stay tuned.

Chad: I wouldn't mind going back down to LA. Hollywood's been pretty good to us. We've played down there a few times and had some rock shows at the Whisky a Go Go and the Rainbow Room.

AU: Anything else to mention or promote?

SOTD: We do plan to have a comic book release as well; more info TBD.

Chad: Yeah, the comic is pretty rad. It's the three of us getting into mischief in a post-apocalyptic setting. I get down for that kind of stuff, lol. Super nerd.

AU: Final words for our readers?

Chad: Yeah, you gotta come check us out live. We are guaranteed to ruin your life, lol.

facebook.com/speakofthedevil247

youtube.com/user/jnxca

Photo Credit: Rodney Riot

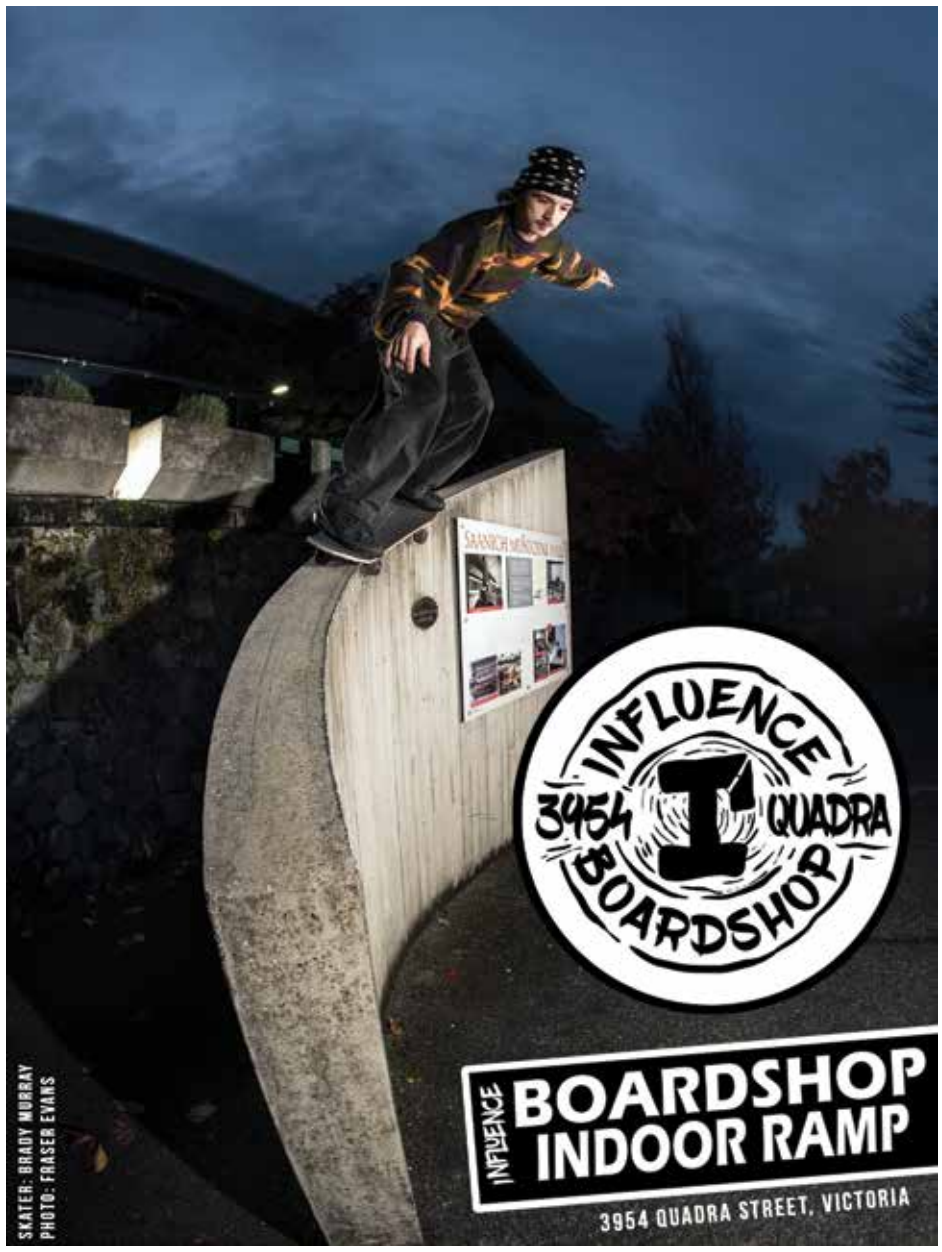
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THE MONSTERS

Off the Road We Go!

Interview with Reverend Beat-Man

By Mike "Show Me How They Cook in Switzerland" Croy

Absolute Underground: Who are we interviewing, and what are you notorious for?

Reverend Beat-Man: I'm Reverend Beat-Man, High Priest of the Primitive Rock'n'Roll Blues Trash Church in Bern, Switzerland, and former Apartment Wrestling Rock'n'Roll Super Champ, as well as the singer and guitarist of the Monsters and owner of Trash Propaganda Institute, Voodoo Rhythm Records.

AU: Who makes up the Monsters, and what are their roles?

RBM: We built that creature 40 years ago, back in 1986, and it hasn't stopped growing since. The oldest members are the bassist, Janosh, and me, and we both have the same haircuts. Jan, our drummer, and Pumi, our sound guy, have been in the band for about 25 years.

AU: How would you best describe the sound of the Monsters to someone who's never heard the band's music before?

RBM: It's simply rock 'n' roll without borders.

AU: What's the state of the underground rock 'n' roll music scene in Bern these days?

RBM: We are an ultra-small town in central Switzerland, on the border between the French and German-Swiss parts. So we get bullied by both, and Bern and Biel are the towns where underground music is explored the most. Our underground scene is very much alive; we just played New York and found out that our town with 100,000 residents has more rock 'n' roll clubs than NYC!

AU: What's the craziest thing you've seen happen at a Monsters show?

RBM: Us going bananas, hahaha! We've played thousands of shows worldwide, but for me, one of the craziest was in the Japanese countryside, in a small village, where we played outside at the village centre. The entire village came to see us! From babies to their grandparents, everyone was there! The support band played traditional Japanese music, and everyone was dressed up in kimonos and like all those Japanese stereotypes you see in Disneyland, but it was all real! We were scared. The Monsters play ultra-noisy garage-trash hardcore punk, wild as fuck and about 110 dB loud. We decided to start off a bit easy, so they wouldn't be shocked, but we couldn't hold ourselves back and blew everything apart like an eruption of noise. After the first song, we looked up and saw people dancing — grandpas with grandchildren, young and old, going crazy, haha! I couldn't believe my eyes! It was amazing.

AU: What were the biggest differences you faced on this East Coast tour compared to the 2014 tour?

RBM: The United States became way more expensive, but the people living there are way more aware of what's happening around them. I guess it has to do with the political situation. In 2014, it seemed like everybody's head was in the clouds; nobody actually cared about live shows. They watched TV, then some songs from the live band, then back to TV. This time people are much more focused on what's in front of them; that's a good sign. I love the US; they're great thinkers, and everybody has a great story to tell. They just have a shit political system, I guess.

AU: 2026 marks 40 years of the Monsters; to what do you owe your longevity?

RBM: It's friendship; we're kind of an art community that created a project we've named the Monsters, and we've watched it grow ever since. It's like having a child. You don't throw your child away after a couple of years, right? Some do; we don't. We crave it, build it, make it weird, strong and better. It's a lot of fun to watch it grow, and secondly, it's our company, and it's not money-oriented. In the Monsters, everybody has an actual job aside from the band. I have Reverend Beat-Man, my one-man band; Jan is a freelance graphic designer, etc. We found out money fucks everything up and makes people greedy, so we decided to skip that point.

AU: Tell our readers about your upcoming album, *Off the Road We Go*. How is it different from your last record, *You're Class, I'm Trash*?

RBM: On all our albums, we try to create from a different angle. Our friend Robert Butler has his 2 Cent mobile recording studio in Bern and had the idea, just as a project, to record all our rehearsals to find out how we write songs. He set up all his gear in our practice space (you'll see the space on the album cover) and recorded every second of it. We wrote and recorded for a month, and the songs were created and changed over time from all the gear we had lying around; we used everything in that rehearsal space! In the end, we had around 100 tracks for the songs, hahaha! What a mess! We tried to mix it, but we couldn't find a way to get out of the mess and move on to the next step, so we sent it to Jim Diamond. Jim and I have worked together over the years; he's the only one who really understands us and our whole thing, because we come from the same garage background. Anyway, he did a hell of a job, and he created one of the best Monsters albums so far, as I would say.

AU: What's your favourite venue to perform in? It can be anywhere.

RBM: Probably Magasin 4 in Brussels, or the many different spots in the Reitschule, the big squat in my hometown in Bern; they're the reason I still live here.

AU: Do you have any upcoming shows or tours our readers should know about?

RBM: Yes, our next show is at the Funtastic Dracula weekend in Benidorm, Spain. Maybe you've heard of that festival? It's for trash lo-fi, garage punk, dirty rock 'n' roll, etc. It's the main event in Europe with lots of great new bands nobody has ever heard of (Twenty One Children, Thee Headcoats, Split System, the Etters, King Automatic, etc.). Then we do a tour through our own town, Bern, where, over the course of a week, every day we'll play a show in the clubs we normally hang out in.

AU: Who are some of your favourite bands to play with?

RBM: Bands from my label, Voodoo Rhythm. They're like family, and we know each other very well: the Devils, King Automatic, Nestor Donuts, Blaskapelle Chancentod, etc. They're all amazing live acts, as well as Urban Junior; he blows everything apart, and it's hard to play after him. Lately I played with LA Jungle from Belgium and our knees were shaking; they were so fucking amazing! Two drummers and a guitar player who played like a synthesizer; it's like Swans but techno, totally amazing! We are lucky to play with such amazing bands all the time.

AU: As we wrap things up, is there anything else you'd like our readers to know about?

RBM: Yes, please go to live shows and support your local bands and book them. Buy a guitar and form a punk band. When there are enough of us, we will take over the world, get rid of corrupt politicians and totalitarian religious structures, and change the world into a place where rock 'n' roll is god.

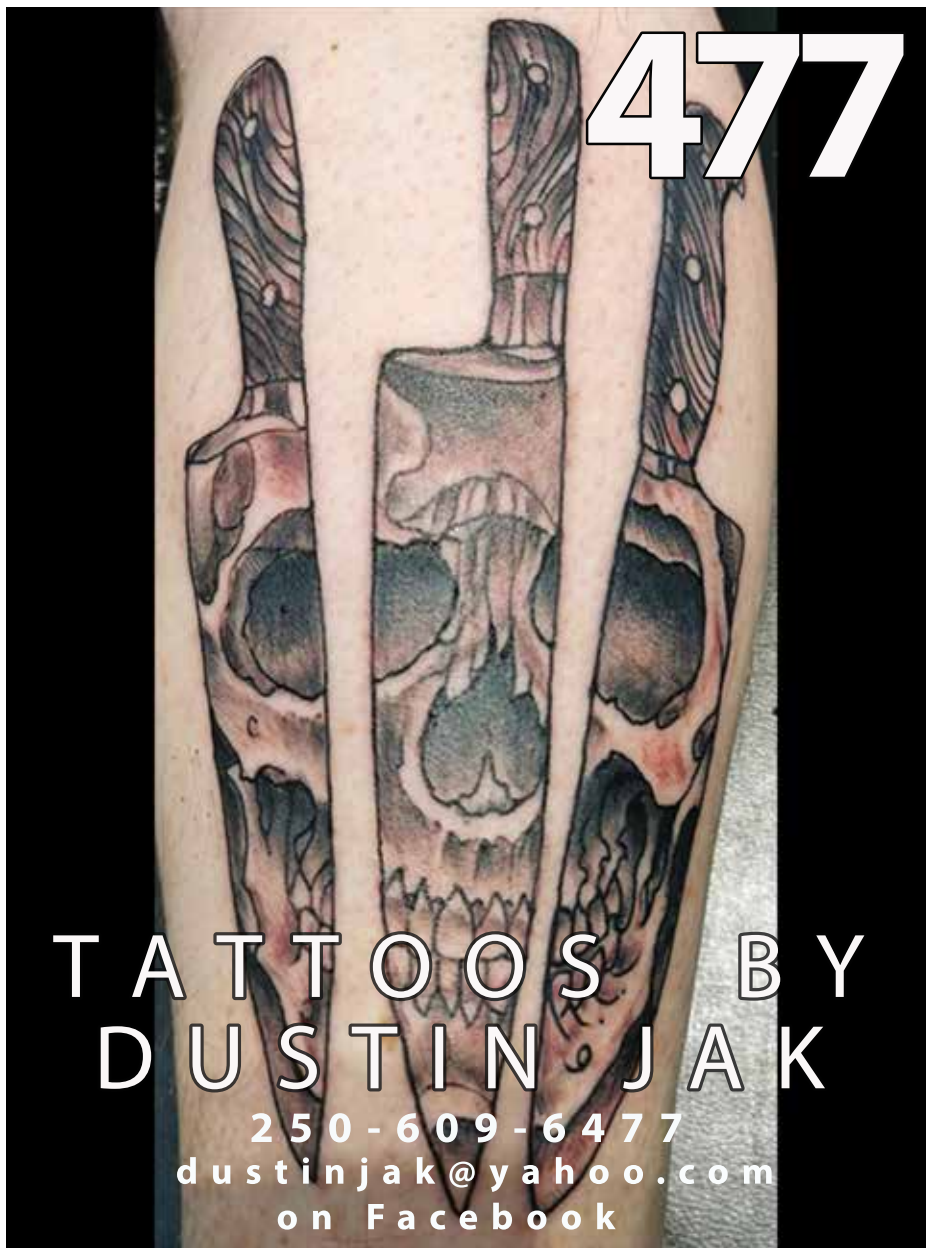
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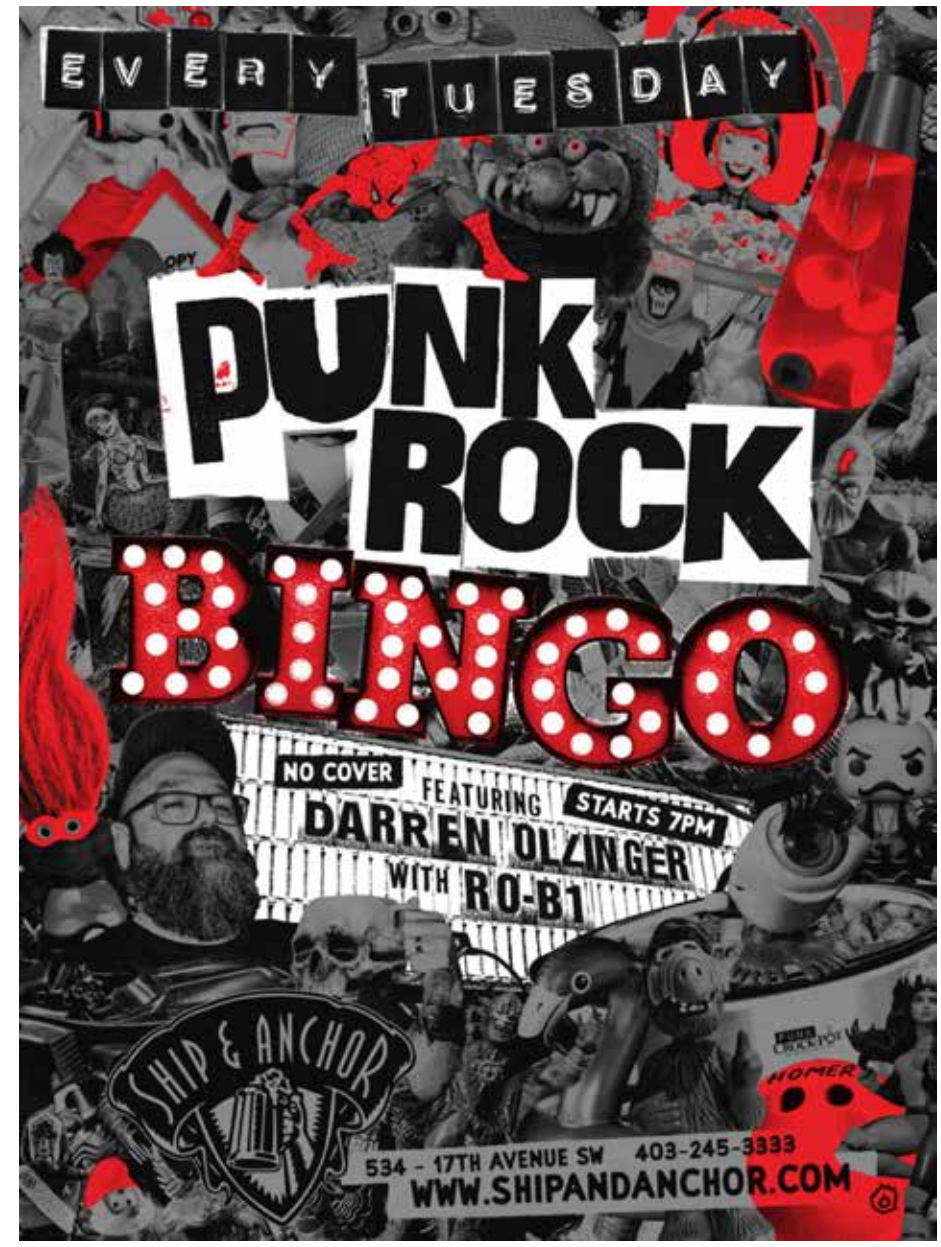
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POST DEATH SOUNDTRACK

Lightning In A Bottle

By FLORA

Absolute Underground: For readers discovering Post Death Soundtrack for the first time, who are you and what is the project all about?

My name is **Stephen James Moore** and I am Post Death Soundtrack. This is my baby unleashed onto this world and I no longer control what it will do. This project is about delving into trauma, philosophy, surrealism, mysticism, darkness and resilience with the intent of sharing strange magic and encouraging others to lift up their spears. It is intended as completely uncensored art and an exercise in fearlessness, inspired by artists like Swans, Skinny Puppy, Nirvana, Public Enemy, Tom Waits, Mike Patton, PJ Harvey, Emma Ruth Rundle, David Bowie and so many others.



AU: *Barren Mother Of All* completes a trilogy of 30-song epics. When you began, did you know it would ultimately become a trilogy, and what would connect the three records?

SJM: I had no idea. When I began, I was mourning an animal loss and a battle with the vet industry while struggling with crippling depression and addiction. I began recording *In All My Nightmares I Am Alone* while scouring unused recordings in Dropbox and creating new industrialized arrangements around them to reflect the trauma I was experiencing. Then it mushroomed. I would be up for nights in a row creating new material, from fully realized songs to experimental instrumental segues, and it ended up being 30 songs. A few months later when, I started *GRIST,* I intended for it to be heavier, punchier, and maybe 10-12 songs. It too mushroomed and ended up being a 30 song opus. *Barren Mother Of All* is by far the heaviest and most frightening of all of them, and its final form is 40 songs. It's finalized, so I can no longer tinker with it.

AU: The new album draws heavily from personal experience and trauma. Was making *Barren Mother Of All* a cathartic process, or did putting these ideas into music make some of them harder to confront?

SJM: Some of the songs were very upsetting to record and work with, but that is actually one of the things I look for in powerful art. If it upsets or unsettles me, it often means I've struck something. I wouldn't want to create something that didn't project an intense feeling. The themes are not necessarily hard to confront for me because making this type of art is natural and what I've trained to do since hearing Nirvana for the first time.

AU: The album title comes from an idea expressed by Indian guru Nisargadatta Maharaj. What about that concept stayed with you for so long, and how did it eventually become the title of this record?

SJM: It was mainly the concept of the human ego being a worthless tripe and all of us being born of nothingness that struck me, as well as the overall blunt force of the statement that made it stick with me. Beyond that, there are elements of the theme throughout the album, but really, each song has its own themes and it is not strictly a concept album where everything points to that. I just knew I wanted that as the overarching title to my greatest piece of work yet.

AU: Some songs were written and recorded within an hour, and many of the vocals were one-take performances. What does spontaneity give you that a more polished approach might not?

SJM: It gives things a very raw, lightning-in-a-bottle energy that just can't be captured when you labor over something too much. This is how many of the performances were handled because I wanted to capture some of that Iggy Pop looseness. That being said, I take this music very seriously, and I remixed some of the key songs 50-60 times.

AU: With this being our Halloween issue, what is it about horror, darkness and villainous characters that continues to fascinate you creatively?

SJM: Well, I never intended for this to be horror music per say, but I have lived with depression my whole life, severe mental health and addiction issues, I am a cancer survivor and have been through near-death experiences, and I have also been outcast and feared, treated as a villain, so strangely, what I write sounds like horror but it is my real life. That is what makes this music unique. It's rare music that carries real danger.

AU: Industrial, witch house, post-punk, gothic rock, noise, '80s horror soundtracks and dystopian psychedelia all find their way into the album. How do you decide what sounds belong together?

SJM: I feel they all go together so well, and I also incorporate doom metal, punk and trip hop. To me, all counter-culture or dark music can flow together seamlessly.

AU: The album includes radically reimagined covers of songs by PJ Harvey, Tom Waits, The Doors, Rage Against the Machine and the Beastie Boys. How did this happen?

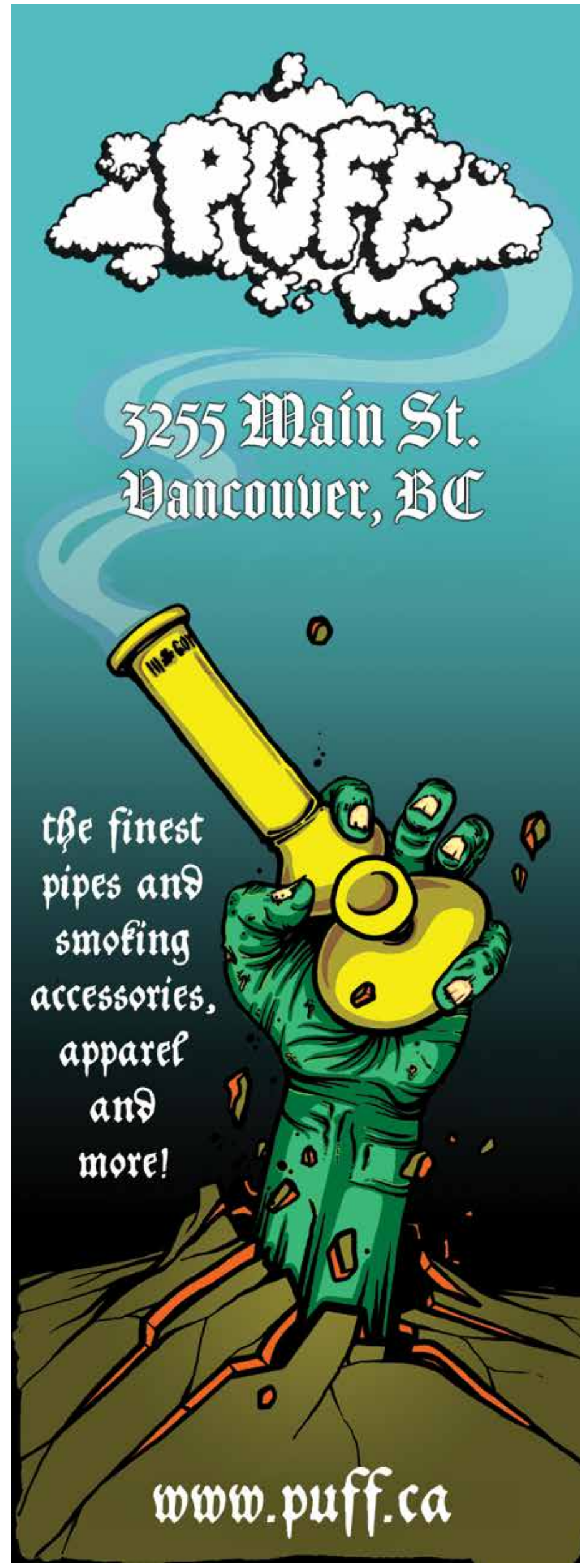
SJM: I try to choose artists where my voice will work well with their creations, as well as pick obscure covers that may often be overlooked or unexpected. I tend to have lists of my favorite songs from each artist and they usually are not the hits or common favorites. Then I try to honor the artist by not just copying them, and instead, doing it my own way.

AU: With the trilogy now complete, does *Barren Mother Of All* feel like an ending, a new beginning, or something else entirely for Post Death Soundtrack—and where can readers follow what comes next?

SJM: There will be many new creations, but yes, this trilogy is now at a close. I have new studio equipment that will allow me to create more guitar-heavy music again with a raw, organic Albini-type sound. I also want to explore more releases with heavy industrial sounds, so possibly a dual focus. Even some more ambient work can be expected. The world of Post Death Soundtrack will continue to expand in all directions. Thanks so much for taking the time to speak with me and all the best to everyone at Absolute Underground.

facebook.com/postdeathsoundtrack

postdeathsoundtrack.bandcamp.com





SOLID URBAN STUDIO

Venue Profile: Salmon Arm's Home for Live Music

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

Solid Urban Studio: I'm **Adam Seward**, owner and operator of Solid Urban Studio. Solid Urban Studio is a known place where a wood shop, a music venue and a very eclectic design space are brought together under one roof.

AU: What is the origin story of your venue, Solid Urban Studio?

SUS: Solid Urban Studio opened its doors in Salmon Arm as a wood shop and design shop, building custom furniture and concrete countertops and vanities.

AU: How and when did the venue start?

SUS: After going to shows myself, I began inviting bands to come and play at Solid Urban Studio. By 2021, we began hosting shows. At the time, Salmon Arm was in dire need of a live music scene. There wasn't much happening in town, and I wanted to help create a place where people could come together and experience live music.



AU: Where is it located?

SUS: We're located 11 minutes outside of Salmon Arm and 35 minutes from Vernon.

AU: What kind of events and shows do you usually hold there?

SUS: We are known for hosting rock, punk rock, metal and hip-hop shows. We have the odd comedy tour that comes through, and we've hosted Halloween and theme nights. We've had some busy nights with some great bands that have recently opened for bigger-name bands. We've had Cawston, Calling All Captains, Gutterking, Early Work, CHILIØ, Caveman Casanova and Strain K & Hazy Made, to name a few of our bigger shows (90+ people).

AU: What's the music scene in Salmon Arm, BC, like?

SUS: The scene here was sort of lacking. Salmon Arm catered more to country and folk, with cover bands in one pub. Since we began, we have really carved out a name as the place to be to watch live music. Lately, we have seen our community become more of a musical town, with more places starting to host music.



AU: Are all-ages shows an option at your venue?

SUS: We leave that up to the bands coming. Most are all-ages, but our hip-hop shows or heavier metal shows tend to be 19+.

AU: Tell us about any cool shows you have coming up.

SUS: We are hosting our annual Halloween party in mid-October. We also have two shows in October: a band coming from Toronto with supporting bands on Oct. 9, and a local band from the Kelowna area on Oct. 29.

AU: Is there an event calendar people can check out?

SUS: All of our shows are posted on our socials, Instagram and Facebook. We also post in numerous groups on Facebook.

AU: How can people book a show with you?

SUS: Social media and email.

AU: Is your space used for other non-music related events as well?

SUS: Yes: comedy shows and community events.

AU: Anything else people should know about Solid Urban Studio?

SUS: It has become a place for people to make memories and experience live music. It's more than a music and creative space — it's about community. We love seeing parents enjoy the music they grew up with alongside their kids. Not many places offer that anymore. We're proud to support local bands, artists and makers, and to create a space for them.

AU: Any shows or events planned for Halloween this year?

SUS: Yes. We have a DJ coming in. We haven't set an exact date as of this moment.

AU: Any favourite horror movies?



SUS: I can't think of one at the moment, but I guess *The Shining*.

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

SUS: *Jaws* (insert do-do-do-do).

AU: Most wicked Halloween costume you ever rocked?

SUS: I'm not overly into costumes. Throw a wig on and voilà, that's more my style. Keep 'em guessing.



AU: Anything else to mention or promote?

SUS: Thank you to all our performers, artists, purchasers and clients for helping this continue to be a part of the community.

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MARTINO MANOR



Toronto's Backyard Haunt Rises Again

One of Toronto's longest-running backyard frights is back for another season. Martino Manor, the haunted house tucked behind Mamma Martino's Italian restaurant in Etobicoke, has opened its doors for 2026, and the crew behind it says this year's haunt is its biggest yet.



The headline addition is The Funeral Parlor, a brand-new show room built around the tale of Ben D. Humphrey, a man chasing eternal life who opens a door that should have stayed closed. Groups are split up and then thrown back together partway through the walk-through, with lighting, special effects, animatronics, live actors and sound design all working to rattle your nerves.



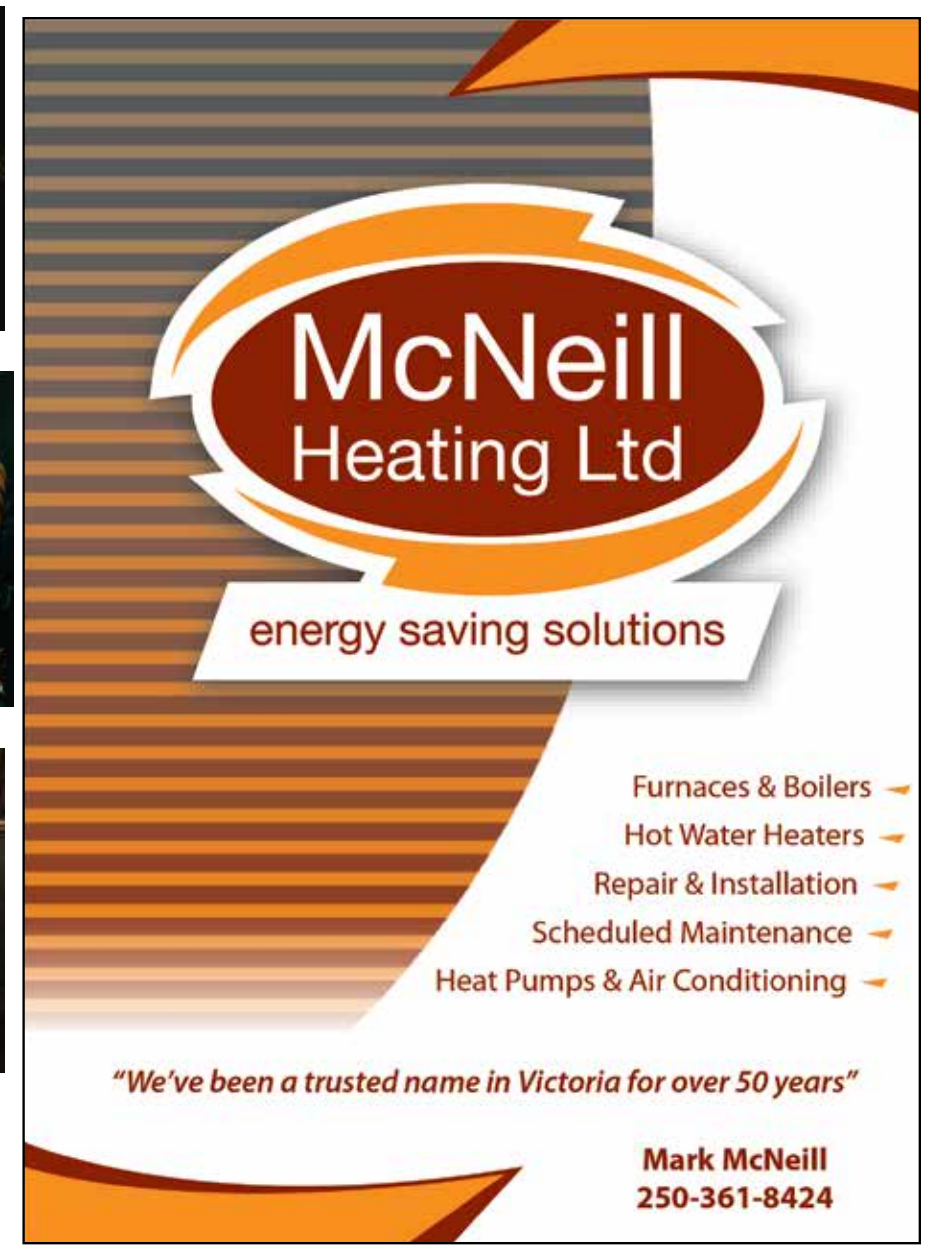




Elsewhere in the house, more scare actors have been added throughout the roughly 20-minute route, so returning visitors shouldn't expect the same jump scares as last year. Survivors can then document their courage at two new photo setups, and for the first time, Martino Manor branded merch is available on-site.

Martino Manor runs on select nights until Nov. 1, from 7 p.m. onward. Find it at 7 McIntosh Ave. in Etobicoke, and check the attraction's calendar online before heading out.

martinomanor.com







VHS

VANCOUVER HORROR SHOW FILM FESTIVAL

What Scares Us, Unites Us

The Vancouver Horror Show Film Festival (VHS) returns for its ninth edition from Oct. 14–18, 2026, in downtown Vancouver, with a first wave of programming led by a special presentation of the cult classic *Trick 'r Treat* with writer-director Michael Dougherty in attendance.

VHS opens on Oct. 14 with a 19th anniversary screening of *Trick 'r Treat*, joined by Dougherty (*Krampus*, *Godzilla: King of the Monsters*). The presentation also includes a new 4K restoration of *Season's Greetings*, Dougherty's original animated short that first introduced audiences to Sam, the pint-sized enforcer of Halloween tradition at the centre of *Trick 'r Treat*. Dougherty will also take part in a special conversation exploring his path from fiercely original genre projects to major studio franchises.

The first-wave feature lineup includes the world premiere of *Encryption*, an inventive sci-fi mystery from award-winning filmmaker Brayden DeMorest-Purdy; the Western Canadian premiere of the Indonesian body-horror nightmare *Sleep No More* from acclaimed filmmaker Edwin; and the British Columbia premieres of *Ithaqua*, Hammer Films' chilling new creature feature, and *The Glorious Dead*, the darkly funny apocalyptic nightmare from the Adams Family.

The first wave also includes creator-focused events bringing established filmmakers and industry professionals together with emerging creators and genre fans. The First Five Minutes of Horror panel brings together Zach Lipovsky (*Final Destination Bloodlines*), Eli Craig (*Clown in a Cornfield*, *Tucker & Dale vs. Evil*), Rachel Talalay (*Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare*, *Tank Girl*) and editor Greg Ng (*Longlegs*) to explore how great horror films grab audiences from their opening moments. Producer Sean Harris Oliver and filmmaker Kurtis David Harder join VHS for a practical discussion about indie horror distribution, and the VHS Table Read Series returns, giving emerging writers the chance to hear their scripts performed live.

Since launching in 2018 with 12 short films and one night at the Cinematheque, VHS has grown into a multi-day celebration of feature premieres, short-film programs, filmmaker conversations and awards. Today, it is a Canadian Screen Award-qualifying festival and registered charity, and has hosted the Vancouver premiere of *Terrifier 2*, the Canadian theatrical premiere of *V/H/S/85* and advance screenings of *Longlegs* and *Clown in a Cornfield*.

"What scares us is what unites us," says VHS co-founder Meghan Hemingway.

Additional feature films, short-film programs, guests and events will be announced as VHS unveils its full 2026 lineup.

vancouverhorrorshow.com

instagram.com/vancouverhorrorshow


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THE FOG

Revisiting John Carpenter's Ghost Story

By Steve Earles

Is all that we see or seem

But a dream within a dream?

— Edgar Allan Poe

The atmosphere for *The Fog* is set from the very first frame. It's a ghost story and a campfire tale. The centennial of the coastal town of Antonio Bay is looming. An elderly man, Mr. Machen (named by Carpenter knowingly after the great storyteller Arthur Machen), tells ghost stories to a group of kids by a fire on the beach.

As midnight approaches, he tells a final tale, that of a clipper ship wrecked on nearby rocks after mistaking a fire for a lighthouse while sailing through a fog. "When the fog returns to Antonio Bay, the men in the water will rise."

The tale ends on the stroke of midnight as paranormal activity occurs all over Antonio Bay. It's as though his tale has opened a portal to its subjects.

The local priest, Father Malone, discovers his grandfather's journal, hidden for a hundred years behind a stone that suddenly falls from the church walls. It tells us, "Midnight till one. Belongs to the dead. Good Lord deliver us." That journal, like the *Necronomicon*, wanted to be found.



He discovers, to his horror, that a century prior, on April 21, 1880, the six founders of Antonio Bay, including his grandfather, purposely wrecked the clipper ship *Elizabeth Dane* so that its rich, leprosy-afflicted owner, Blake, would not be able to establish a leper colony nearby, despite having given him permission to make a home for himself and his unfortunate friends. The gold they salvaged from the wreck enabled them to establish the town.

At sea, an unearthly glowing fog surrounds a fishing trawler. Within the fog is the spectral *Elizabeth Dane* with the vengeful ghosts of Blake and his fellow lepers.

The following morning, local radio DJ Stevie Wayne is awoken by her son Andy presenting her with a piece of driftwood inscribed with the word "Dane" that he found on the beach.



Later, at the lighthouse Stevie broadcasts her radio show from, Stevie leaves the driftwood on her workspace, where it begins to seep water. As the water reaches her cassette player, a man's voice is heard on the cassette and the words "6 must die" appear on the driftwood before it bursts into flame. Stevie puts out the fire but is astonished to find the wood again reads "Dane."

Meanwhile, town resident Nick Castle and Elizabeth Solley find the fishing trawler adrift and the body of one of the crew.

Later, while Elizabeth is alone in the autopsy room, the corpse comes back to life for a brief time and carves the number 3 on the floor with a scalpel.

That same evening, as the town starts its celebrations, local weatherman Dan O'Bannon is slain by the ghosts at his weather station. The fog moves inland, destroying the town's telephone and power lines.

At the lighthouse, Stevie uses a backup electric generator and asks her listeners to go to her house to save Andy. The ghosts kill Mrs. Kobritz, his babysitter, but Elizabeth and Nick save Andy.

Stevie tells her listeners to go to the town's church, but she herself is under siege from the ghosts when the fog envelops the lighthouse.

Inside the church, a group of townsfolk finds a large gold cross hidden in the wall, fashioned from the remainder of the gold stolen from Blake, just as the fog envelops the church and the ghosts begin to attack.

Malone knows that the ghosts have returned to take six lives to match those of the original six conspirators. He feels guilty, as his grandfather was one of them. Nobly, he offers the gold and himself in return for sparing the others.

Blake seizes the cross, he and the ghosts disappear in a blinding flash of light, and the fog vanishes.

Stevie, meanwhile, warns her listeners: "To the ships at sea. Look across the water. Into the darkness. Look for the fog."

Later, alone in the church, Malone doesn't understand why he was spared. Then the fog and the ghosts reappear and Blake decapitates Malone.

The central themes of *The Fog* include revenge, the resurfacing of repressed past events and supernatural vengeance on a community that has prospered from murder.



There is also a sense of the barriers between the world of the dead and the world of the living breaking down. In a sense, *The Fog* shares a common theme with *In the Mouth of Madness*, *They Live* and *Prince of Darkness*: reality, on closer examination, is not what it seems, and while there may be order in the universe, it is not an order we can comprehend. That quote from Poe that opens the film says it all.

This takes us to another theme of *The Fog*, that of Lovecraftian horror, brilliantly realized with Rob Bottin's special-effects makeup.

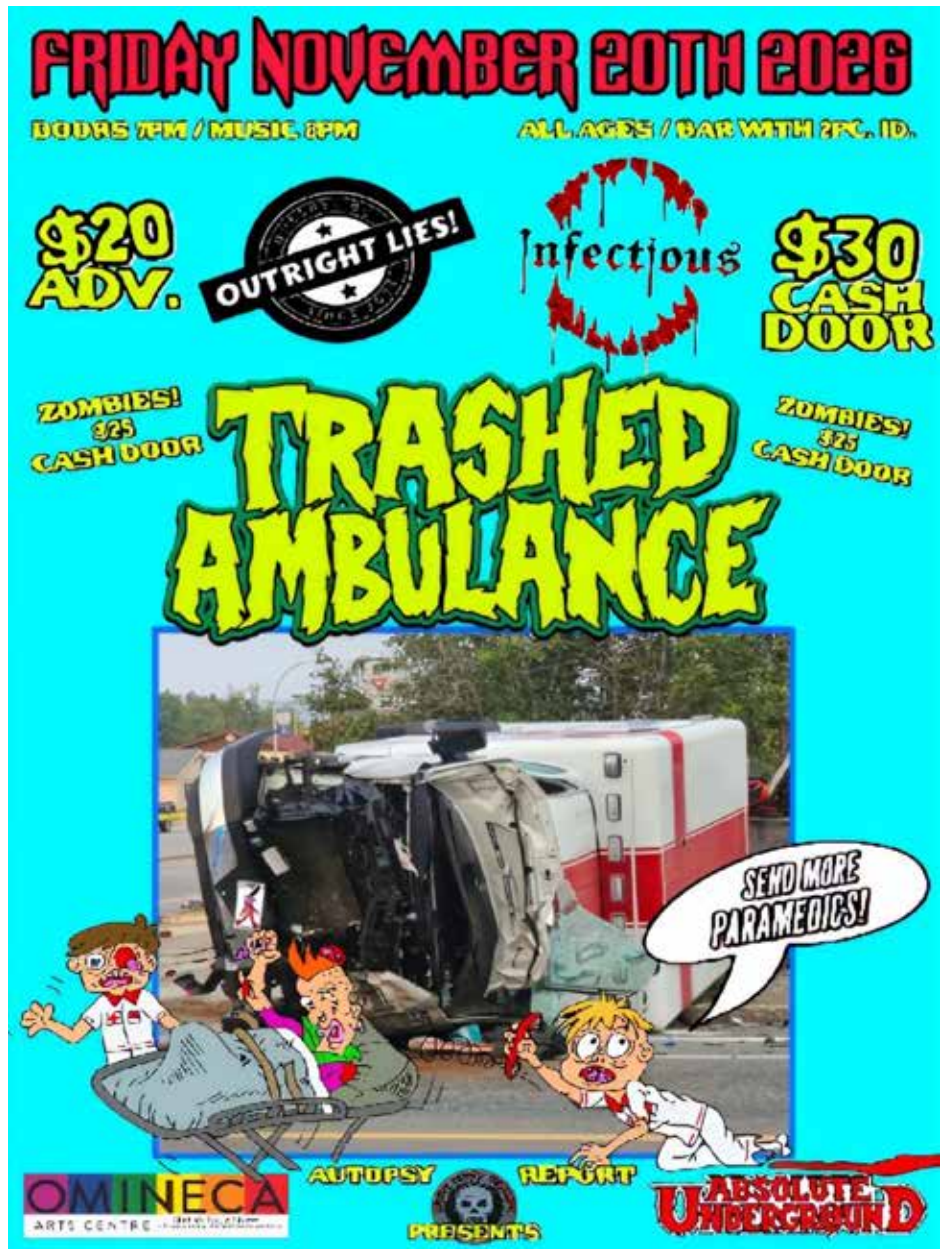
The Fog owes its genesis to a trip made by John Carpenter and Debra Hill to Stonehenge while they were in the UK promoting *Assault on Precinct 13*. There they witnessed a fog rolling over the landscape. They were also influenced by *The Trollenberg Terror* and by an actual, deliberate wrecking of a ship (the inaptly named *Frolic*) and its subsequent looting in the 19th century near Fort Bragg.

Carpenter was initially unhappy with the rough cut of the film and added several new scenes and reshot others. He added the prologue with Mr. Machen, the morgue scene and the scene where Stevie fights off the ghosts on top of the lighthouse. Overall, a third of the film as we know and love it is reshoots and additional scenes.

Special mention must be made of its haunting (pun intended!) soundtrack.

Time proves the mettle of all art, and today, *The Fog* is more well-regarded than ever: an accomplished piece of filmmaking, a fantastic story and, to me, the ultimate compliment, a film I can return to again and again and enjoy all the more! There is no truer sign of a great movie!






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FORT 20 FARMS

The Roots Run Deep: How Fort 20 Farms Keeps BC's Classic Kush Legacy Alive

In an era where fast-moving market trends often favour hyper-hybridized, short-lived "hype" strains, Langley's Fort 20 Farms is deliberately moving in the opposite direction. Operating in the heart of British Columbia's fertile Fraser Valley, this micro-cultivator is earning a widespread reputation for doing one thing exceptionally well: growing heavy-hitting, classic Afghan and Kush genetics that have stood the test of time.

Born from Agriculture, Refined in Legacy

Fort 20 Farms didn't start with federal legalization; it began with a foundational background in agricultural science and legacy cultivation. With a combined team history spanning more than 50 years in agriculture, the crew at Fort 20 was initially drawn to cannabis by the intersection of high-level horticulture and British Columbia's world-renowned cannabis heritage.

"What drew us in was the sheer responsiveness of the plant," the team notes. "In traditional agriculture, you respect crop dynamics, soil management and microclimates. Cannabis takes that to another level: every slight adjustment in lighting, humidity or nutrition yields a tangible response in resin and terpene output."

Operating as a Licensed Producer in British Columbia comes with distinct challenges, from navigating complex regulatory frameworks to maintaining viable margins as an independent micro-grower. However, it also offers access to the world's most educated cannabis consumer base. BC smokers know proper cure times, clean burn dynamics and real terpene depth. That high bar drives Fort 20 Farms to preserve time-tested methods rather than cutting corners.



Indica-Leaning, Quality-Driven: The Cultivars and the Craft

Ask the team at Fort 20 Farms about their cultivar philosophy, and the baseline favour leans clear: indica-dominant profiles. While a standout sativa always has a place in the room, their foundation is built on heavy, gas-forward, terpene-rich cultivars that deliver dense structures and heavy resin coats. Among their core lineup, a few standout strains define their identity:



BC Chemo: A legendary local cut with historic roots in the University of British Columbia's medical research legacy. Known for its thick, woodsy and skunky aroma, it remains the team's all-time favourite smoke for its potent couch-lock finish.

Bubba Kush / El Chapo OG: Heavy-hitting staples featuring deep notes of earthy gas, fresh pine and lingering spice.

Cali Skunk: A classic legacy favourite combining sun-loving narrowleaf genetics with heartier Afghan lineage.

What Makes an Expert Grower?

To the team at Fort 20 Farms, master cultivation isn't about following a rigid feed chart or setting a timer; it's about observing how the canopy reacts day to day.



"An expert grower is someone who reads the plant rather than the calendar. True expertise comes from understanding subtle environmental variables like vapour pressure deficit (VPD) or media dry-backs, and using those levers to push genetic potential to its absolute ceiling."

When asked to share a few pro tips for home growers and enthusiasts, the team points to three critical phases:

Don't Rush the Finish: Many growers chop early to clear room for the next round. Giving Kush genetics an extra week allows trichome heads to fully mature, maximizing weight, flavour and sedative depth.

Master Media Dry-Backs: Careful management of moisture cycles in substrates like coco coir encourages aggressive root oxygenation and stress-induced resin output.

Protect the Cure: A crop isn't finished at harvest. A slow, cool and dark curing phase protects delicate, volatile terpenes and ensures smoothness in the smoke, strong expression of the genetic on the nose and longer shelf stability for the customer. Every cultivar has its optimal time, which can range from three to six weeks.

Craft Lines and Community Support

To serve different preferences across BC dispensaries, Fort 20 Farms operates two distinct product labels:

Fort 20 Farms: The flagship craft line, highlighting small-batch dried flower releases, curated phenos and meticulously crafted pre-rolls.

Fort 20 Fuel: A dedicated sub-brand created for pure gas lovers, focusing exclusively on high-octane Kush profiles, heavy strain-specific pre-rolls and potent flower cuts.

Supporting local craft growers like Fort 20 Farms is about preserving the soul of BC's cannabis history. Unlike massive multi-facility operations, independent micro-cultivators prioritize hand-trimming, long cures and individual plant attention.

For the crew at Fort 20, the reward is clear every time they step into the room prior to harvest: "Walking into the bloom room when the canopy is heavy with resin and the room is thick with gas, knowing the huge effort that went into creating clean, top-tier flower — that's the best part of the job."

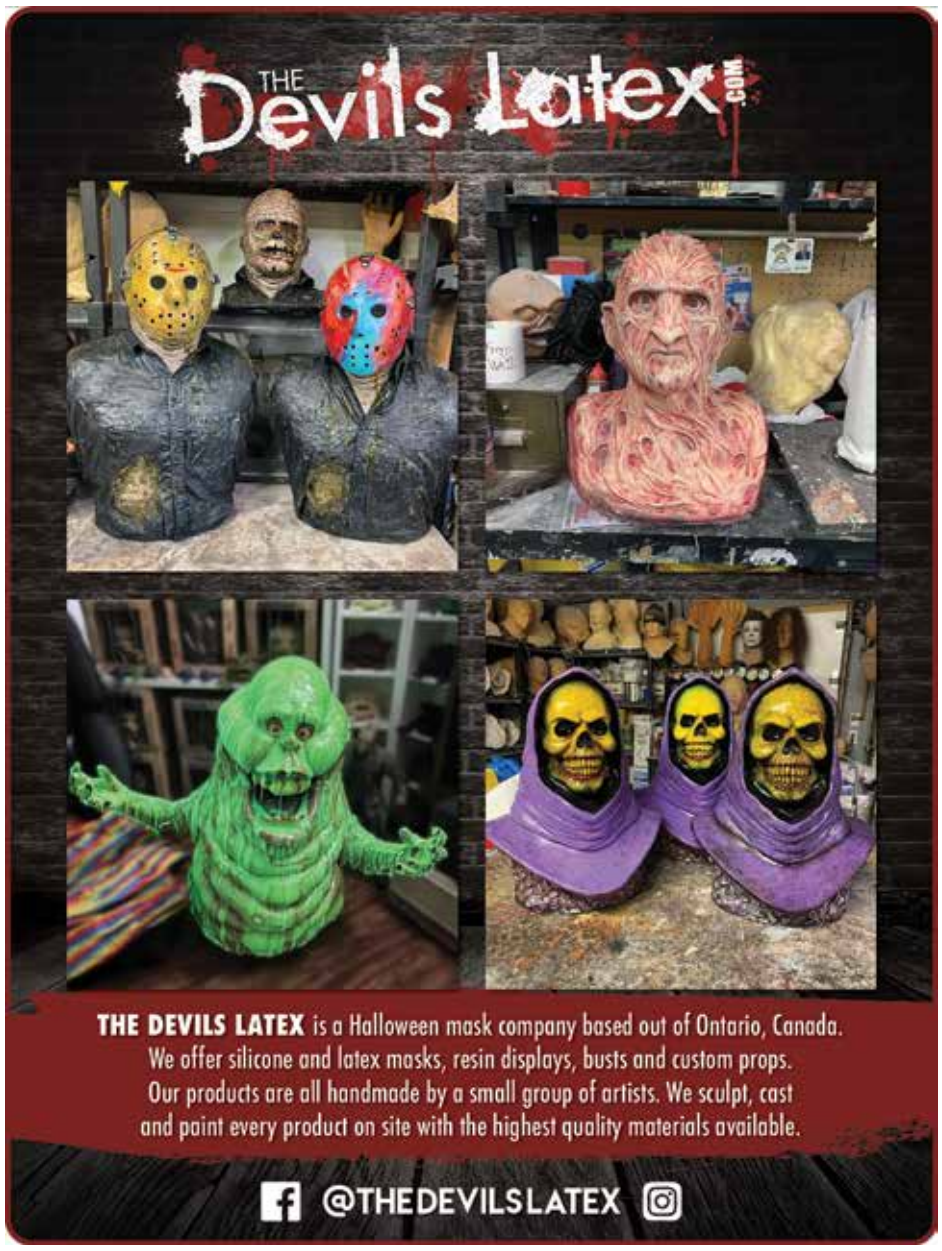
Where to Find Fort 20 Farms

Fort 20 Farms products, including dried flower, smalls and pre-rolls, are distributed across British Columbia through direct delivery from their home base in Langley, BC.

"Evergreen in Kitsilano always stocks our flower; you can order for delivery anywhere in BC from ecsvan.ca."

fort20farms.com

ecsvan.ca









THE GOOD WEED BOARD PART 13

Fugu Premium Smalls vs. Super Boof

By Marty Wig

Welcome to the Good Weed Board, part thirteen! Previously in this column, I have limited my reviews to only the products that scored 80 or above and qualified for a GWB Rating. Moving forward with Absolute Underground, I will sometimes include reviews of products that fall short of the GWB Rating. Here in Part 13 we explore two unique items from the interior of BC: **Fugu Premium Smalls by Kootenay Cultivar, and Super Boof by Rocky Mountain Cannabis**,

Let's start with the Fugu. Grown by Kootenay Cultivar in Salmo, BC, I sampled a 14- gram "premium smalls" product that was packaged July 1 and opened August 28. According to the label, Fugu is a cross between Cap Junky x Fujiwhara. The content inside was quintessential smalls: spun in a tumbler. But it displayed a light green and frosted colour, which I took as a promising sign. Most of the individual buds were small yet firm and overly dry, to the extent that trichomes breaking off created a dusting on my tray when scissoring them apart. My aroma first impression wasn't sweet or sugary as stated on the back label, but more savoury and spices, with a bit of dough and citrus on the back end. Upon tasting, I noted a sour and spicy combination in the flavour, along with some harshness. The smoke was still fairly potent, though. After curing the buds in a mason jar for a couple of days, their aroma became more pungent. I observed notes of sweetness, dough, lime and mint that probably would've been more prominent when fresh. The overall quality of this product improved after some jar time, as the burn became smoother and exhibited better flavour. It likely would've scored higher with balanced moisture content from the start. In fact, I would love to try a hand-trimmed, whole flower version. This one falls short of the Good Weed Board.

The Fugu Premium Smalls gets a 77/100 on the Rating Guide.

Next up is the Super Boof by Rocky Mountain Cannabis. I graded a 14-gram grown in Golden, BC. It came packaged in a short, wide bag again, same style as the one from my Pine Mentz review in Part 12. The package advertises its brand as 100% grower-owned, and the flower inside is hand-trimmed & hang-dried. According to the label, their Super Boof is a cross between Tropical Cookies x Black Cherry Punch. They describe the profile as citrus, cookie & orange. It also lists the flower as a "zingy" hybrid, which I thought was clever. This batch was packaged June 2 and opened August 31. My first impression upon opening the bag was base notes of diesel, alongside top notes of sweet orange and floral soap. The buds were large, oddly shaped, and a bit loose in places. They probably could've been separated from the stem and trimmed with more precision. Furthermore, some buds were interwoven together. Which is not necessarily a bad thing, but could also be a sign they were packed too wet or compressed too tightly. Regardless, the buds were well cured and preserved. Beautifully coloured flower too, with hues of dark purple at the tips, and lots of orange pistils covering their light green base. Burn-wise, this one was eager and quick from the jump. The flavour however, was muted, which I find standard for this category of profile. I noticed an earthy and citrus-tasting orange, with more floral soapiness. Potency-wise, it was also relatively mild smoke, despite the 28% THC label. But I still enjoyed it! Enough so that the **Super Boof does qualify for the Good Weed Board, with a score of 80/100 on the Rating Guide.**





That's all for Part Thirteen. Our next release in Absolute Underground #133 is slotted for December/January. We'll be ready with at least two new dried flower products to review. Thanks for reading!







THE HAUNTED CHILEAN SKI RESORT

Torn from the Pages of Brydo

By Brydo "Paranormal" Parker

This is a true story from when Ira and I went to Chile to ski the mighty Andes. When it is winter here, it is reversed there, so it was summertime in the Northern Hemisphere. The Germans are mighty skiers and have a long, long culture of skiing, and from what I know, it was as bad manners back in the 1920s to 1950s as it is now to talk politics while skiing or hanging out in the lodge, in Germany as anywhere. The resort at Portillo is no exception.



On the bus ride up through the mountain passes headed toward the Argentine border, we hang a left at a huge open-pit mine and start the long switchbacks up roads with no guardrails on any of it. The whole way, there are burned-out bus hulks that have rolled for crazy long distances. If each one was full of people like ours, that's 40 times the 17 buses we counted. That is over 600 dead just on the slopes of the mountain before we even see the ski area. The perception of death was strong and hard to shake. We arrive safe and sound, but I can't shake the feeling the destination is only half the journey. We have to go back down the same way we got up here, and those burned buses were likely full of happy skiers on the way down!

This resort was definitely built by Germans. It was built to take multiple avalanches hitting it from the slopes surrounding the entire area at the same time, essentially bombproof. A lot of money was spent to build this place, and like most things built in South America to high standards, it will likely be there for a very long time. The views of the glacier lake are stunning.

The lifts are ancient but work all day, every ski day. You straddle a steel plate attached to a vertical steel pipe, attached in a horizontal line of six and pulled by a steel cable that runs over a turn wheel, and an identical setup goes back down when we are all pulled up. Probably the most painful and sketchy way up besides hiking. Nevertheless, you can access some insane terrain that no lift tower could ever get to. Depending on your foot placement, goofy or regular, the traverses are long and also painful.

We met some Chilean boarders who stopped when they smelled our weed. We had a quick chat and they came over. Now we are perched way up in the rocks and they said, "Hey, boys, friends. No smoking here. This is a grave area for sacrificed children." We put the joint out and said we were making an offering to Ullr, god of snow. They said, "Got any more weed?" We said, "Sí." They said, "Follow us. We will take you to the Nazi cave to smoke your weed!"

You don't have to tell me twice to leave a kids' grave area and go to a Nazi cave to smoke weed. I didn't even think about all the bad the Nazis had done. All I could think about was hidden stolen treasure and smoking weed! And not dying on the world's sketchiest traverse.

After having to take our boards off and hike right to the top of the mountain peak, we are so far away from the resort now it would be pretty hard to get evacuated from this area! We basically assed our way down into a very steep, narrow chute just slightly wider than my board, into a wind-snow gully, into what can only be described as the Grinch's cave. There is a door made out of very old wood and a wood latch that is all frozen open.

Now we introduced ourselves to our Chilean guides, Angel, Gilly, Santori and Miquel. We busted out our weed and started rolling doobies, taking in our surroundings: a pretty big cave with rock walls filled in with reeds and mud. There is very old graffiti going all the way back to before the Spanish invaded, then the invasion of German immigrants, and now the worst kind: snowboarders. We blazed some huge fatties, and with the new boys we chatted about Nazis, Aztecs, Mayans, Spaniards and lost gold. We were fascinated. They were fascinated by the fact that we used no tobacco in our joints and that they were big. Weed is not cheap in Santiago, but it's very powerful.



Anyway, we planned on meeting up again tomorrow at a different resort. They asked if we knew the way back. We said, "Ya." Climb up, hang left around the big sharp peak, past the sacred area, keep left over the ridge and we would be able to see the resort. They were going to drop in here and ride across the border to Argentina. Did we want to go with them? I said no, I didn't have my passport with me.

As they were leaving, Angel, who was hardly conversing with us, said in broken English, "Don't get greedy when you drop in and it's foggy towards the lifts. It is very easy to get sucked into the lake. Lots of dead in there, because the greedy go for powder turns instead of traversing." He went on to say a famous Nazi got powder greedy and went in to certainly drown.



"Who was that?" Ira asks.

"Fucking Hitler," he spits. "My granddad was disappeared by Pinochet and my dad was beaten very badly. They were all in the cabal that ran the Fourth Reich, and this place was ground zero for all their schemes. My uncles protect the children you guys were smoking near, and I, too, am a guardian. Take nothing from this cave. It is cursed." He repeats, "Nothing."

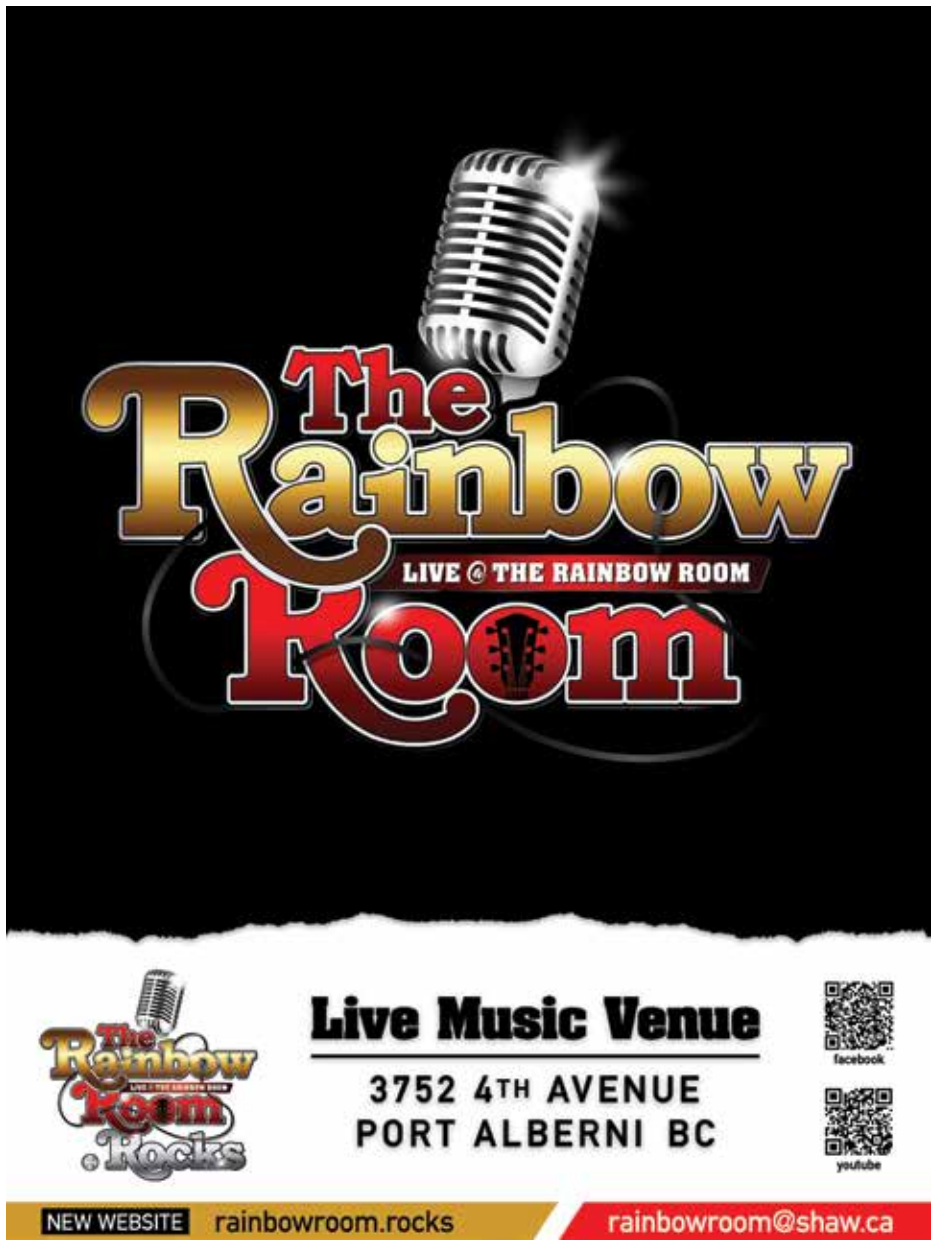
I said, "What about photos?" He said, "No flash. Feel free to leave anything you want." He looks at the weed and ducks out through the old door. A flash of bright light, a slam of the door with a puff of snow, and Angel was gone, leaving Ira and me alone in the cave. Very alone.

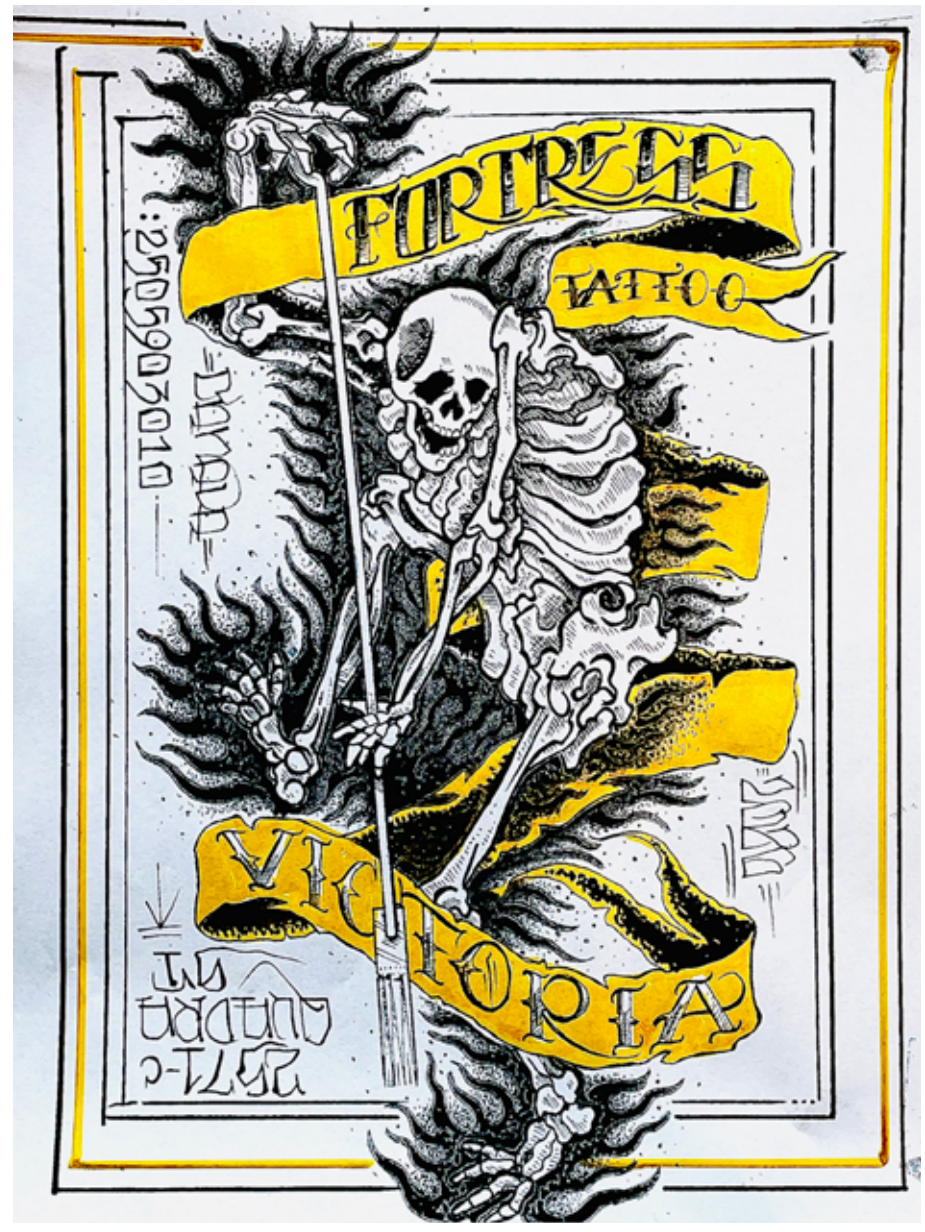
To be continued next issue in Chapter Two: The Grinch's Cave…



Shred Dog: Patrick Kitto
Photo by Brett Kroeker









THE STORM OF THE CENTURY – PART 10

Mountain Collective American Tour 2017: Smashing Jackson Hole

By Brydo "RV" Parker

A quick recap: my great friend and snowboarding pal, Ira, and I just left Snowbird, Utah, after two epic days of powder bliss, sunshine and really, really steep riding. Now we're trying to get ahead of a new wave of storms rolling onto the Rocky Mountains in a very old 34-foot RV with only three working brakes. This has been our rolling home for the last 22 days of an epic snowboarding tour that has taken us down the Cascades, over the Sierra Nevada mountains, across the desert to New Mexico's southern Rocky Mountains, then a big right turn north towards Canada via the entire American Rockies.



We were about to traverse the Grand Teton range down into Jackson Hole, Wyoming. It was minus 20 outside and snowing sideways on a very treacherous piece of highway when suddenly the overheating temperature light came on. I thought, "This is a big deal!" Every other light and buzzer had gone off already on this trip, but this was the Big Kahuna of lights. Ira was blissfully unaware of the potential consequences of not attending to this light: number one being a seized engine on the world's sketchiest highway, or number two, blowing the radiator.



I said, "We got a little problem." Ira was half sleeping and replied, "Ya?" I said, "Yep, we gotta pull over at the next pullout and see what is getting hot." He said, "What do you think we are gonna need?" He was tapping away on his phone. I did not ask what he was doing, because he is always doing something on the device. But unknown to me, he was contacting Gravy's wife, Kelsey, to get the name and number of her brother, Justin, who lives and works in Jackson Hole. (We met Gravy at the beginning of this story series.)

Justin is a local who operates and maintains the ski area's snowcats. Ira asked him where a good place to park was and if he could give us info on where to get some brake fluid, coolant and a special engine oil. Justin said he had all of that and would meet us at the upper ski area parking lot for oversized and overnight vehicles. What a champion!



We found the spot, running real hot and losing fluids really quick. When it is -20 out and you can't run your engine to heat the RV, it gets very cold very quick. As an aside, if anybody reading this can apply this next lesson, that would be great: always bring extra coolant with you on a trip in extreme freezing temperatures. When you lose your engine fluids and turn it off, the engine will freeze solid and won't be able to turn over.

The next morning, Justin showed up with supplies and helped get our rig lubed up and ready to start. This is when we found the engine was frozen. Justin said, "Come back at lunch. The temp is supposed to rise to zero. That will be your best chance to get it started and get the coolant into the engine." Great advice. Now let's go riding.

He said, "Boys, see that mountain over there across the valley?" "Yep," we replied. "I am building the Red Bull Natural Selection freeride course. This is going to be a huge event." "Can we forerun it?" we asked. "That's a big no. Nobody gets to ride until the very first run. They want pristine snow, and there is a first descent possible for every rider," he explained. "Where should we ride?" we asked. "Corbet's," was his answer. "It has been closed for a week and it is looking full. Probably beat by the time you get there, but it will still be epic."

We just said, "Thanks, you are awesome, and happy birthday!" That is when we gave him a good supply of weed and mushrooms. "Call me if you can't get it started," he said, and he was gone like a wisp of smoke.

We proceeded to Corbet's, an insane cliff drop into a narrow chute, steep, deep and seriously insane, that runs out into a big meadow. We were trying to scope a line when someone dropped in from even higher up, like 75 feet of solid rock, and skidded in to just below our line and totally ripped it! Made it look super easy, and it was, once you get over the insanity of it all.

We went back to the RV for lunch to get the old girl started, and what do you know, she flashed up and gurgled a bit. I added more fluid, Ira made sandwiches, we smoked a fatty and rocked right back up the mountain to crush another day and a half. I could go on and on about how cool Jackson Hole is, but I didn't really see the town. The mountain, weed, beer, sleep and a good buddy to share it all with is all I need. And a working RV.

Next issue, we wrap up this long story where it all begins in the ski movie Hot Dog: Sun Valley, Idaho.

mountaincollective.com

jacksonhole.com

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LAK SIDDARTHA: A history of terror and obliteration

By Mike"Hot dog and a handshake" Croy

The Lights dim. The crowd falls silent. There are wrestlers who step into the ring to become heroes. Others step into it to become legends

and then… there is Lak Siddartha!

He doesn't fight for applause, he doesn't crave acceptance. He thrives on fear - the hesitation in his opponents eyes, the silence that falls over an arena when they realize there is nowhere left to run.

I had the opportunity to chat with a man who doesn't simply walk into the darkness... He brings it with him!

Absolute underground: Who are we speaking with?

Lak Siddartha: The Lord's Warrior Lak Siddartha

AU: What are you best known, or infamous for?

LS: Being a powerful spiritual entity.

AU: How did you get into wrestling?

LS: It was always a dream of mine since I was the age of four.



AU: Who trained you to wrestle?

LS: Lance Storm, at Storm Wrestling Academy in Calgary AB.

AU: How long have you been wrestling?

LS: 22 Years.

AU: How do you define success?

LS: Accomplish your goals, and never let anything get in your way. Show no fear!

AU: Who inspires you?

LS: The Ultimate Warrior.

AU: How has wrestling impacted your life?

LS: It's forced me to keep training intensely always.



AU: If you could invite anyone for dinner, who would you invite and why?

LS: I would invite Keanu Reeves for dinner, because he was awesome in the movie *Constantine*.

AU: What's the craziest match you've been involved in?

LS: Either a TLC (Tables, Ladders and Chairs), or a thumbtack match.

AU: What advice would you give to younger talent?

LS: If wrestling is what you wanna do, be respectful, pay your dues and keep in top shape.

AU: What's the funniest thing you've seen happen at a live show?

LS: When Ramone and I tagged and he wanted to be tagged in, to run corner to corner and tripped in the middle of the ring.

AU: What do you enjoy doing outside of wrestling?

LS: Spiritual meditation.

AU: What's your favourite venue to perform in?

LS: The First Met Church, 365 Pro Wrestling's home base.

AU: Have you sustained any significant injuries from wrestling?

LS: I injured my back in 2003, I had a bad bulging disc, it was the worst pain I ever felt but it made my pain tolerance high to this day.

AU: What's the most paranormal thing that's happened to you?

LS: Meditating to the Lord, which opens the spiritual realm and you will witness paranormal activities.



AU: Who's on your Mount Rushmore of wrestling?

LS: Ultimate Warrior, Undertaker, Kane and Sting.

AU: How did you become aligned with Ramone Carlton?

LS: Somehow, I don't know how? He was able to get the holy amulet, that opens my head to the voices that guide me, and tell me how the Lord wants me to do The Lord's work!

AU: Are there any opponents you'd still like to work with?

LS: I can't think of any off the top of my head. I'm sure there are a few that I need to lock up with.

AU: Is there a match stipulation you'd still like to wrestle?

LS: This would probably never happen but since we are on an island, an empty BC Ferries match, where anything goes.

AU: Who are your favorite people to work with?

LS: Everyone at 365 Pro Wrestling!

AU: What in your opinion makes for a compelling storyline in wrestling?



LS: One that has the fans on the edge of their seats wanting more, and the storyline makes sense.

AU: What can we expect from the Lord's Warrior coming up?

LS: More torturous punishment, unbelievable suffering and pain for the sinful. The Lord's work shall be done!

AU: As we wrap things up here, is there anything else you'd like our readers to know?

LS: Yes! The upside crosses symbolize the disciples that were crucified upside down on the cross. The dark blood and water drip on the sinful souls still refusing to repent.

Thank you, Lak, for taking time to chat with me about wrestling and doing the Lord's work.

Make sure to catch Lak Siddartha with his manager, Ramone Carlton, live in action at 365 The Get Arounds Pro Wrestling shows up and down Vancouver island.

Photo Credits: Darren Ho Media



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FIONN
SAT OCT 17TH - 8PM AT ENCORE



TOM COCHRANE (ACOUSTIC DUO)
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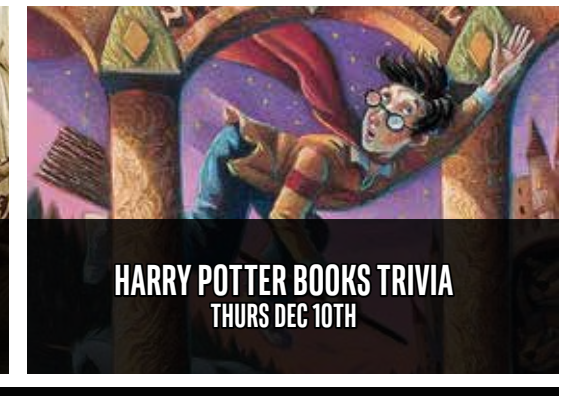
THE HUNGER GAMES MOVIES TRIVIA
SUN NOV 15TH



F.R.I.E.N.D.S TRIVIA
SUN NOV 22ND



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OK, DOPE

Nash Park on Growing BC's Comedy Scene

By Ross Hansen

AU: Hi Nash, can you tell us about yourself and how OK, DOPE came to be?

Nash Park: Hello! My name is Nash Park. I am a comedian and producer based out of Victoria, BC. OK, DOPE really came out of my need for stage time. Victoria has a really strong comedy scene, but at the time there were only a couple of mics a week. The thinking was: I'll start putting on shows so I can perform more. We started with one show a month, and it has now grown into over 300 shows a year, an improv school and now our new club: OK, DOPE Comedy Club.



AU: What sort of events does OK, DOPE put on and promote?

Nash: We mainly produce stand-up and improv shows. A large portion of the shows are stand-up tours that are all over BC. We have monthly runs on Vancouver Island, the Okanagan, Northwest BC and the Kootenays. Our tours have over 200 shows a year, including some larger acts like Jon Dore and Debra DiGiovanni. We've also been doing weekly shows in Victoria for the last three years that have a wide range of variety. We have a full crowd work show, a live blind dates show, an improv game show, an all-female stand-up show and a monthly stand-up-inspired improv show called Entertainment Village.

AU: What was it like for you going from performer to promoter?

Nash: At first I did it out of necessity. I really just wanted to do more comedy, but there weren't any more shows for me to do. I thought: Let's see what we can do to make more comedy happen. The promoter role started out of that and has grown so much more than I could have imagined, and it's turned into something that I really enjoy.

AU: Tell us a story about a hilarious event that occurred at an OK, DOPE show.

Nash: Haha. My business partner and brilliant improviser, Alex Forman, and I have a show called The Crowd Work Show, where we do a full hour of crowd work together, on stage, at the same time. We did a show in Regina with about 70 people. We were talking to someone and it came up that their dad had recently passed. After joking around with them a bit, we tried to make them feel better and asked the crowd who had a dead dad, and 80 per cent of the crowd clapped. We then went around and did a rapid-fire "How did your dad die?" with the whole crowd. It's moments like that that I find the funniest: getting to laugh at how absurd a moment is, plus being able to laugh at something that is usually a large source of pain.

AU: OK, DOPE venues are all over BC. It seems like a perfect opportunity for touring comedians to do your circuit. Do you find yourself working closely with comedians planning tours?

Nash: Yes and no. For the monthly runs I have, those dates are all locked in at the beginning of the season and we reach out to comedians to fit them into the show schedules. But when we work with the larger acts like Jon or Debra, we do work closely with them to put together shows wherever they need them.

AU: Tell us about a time when you saw a comedian at one of your venues take their show to the next level.

Nash: I can't think of a show or comedian specifically, but I am always impressed when a comedian can take a show that is not going very well and turn it around. Watching a comic take a rowdy, drunk crowd that isn't paying attention and, within 10 minutes, have every single person in the room eating out of their hand will always amaze me.

AU: What can we look forward to from OK, DOPE shows coming up?

Nash: We are so excited for this year. Our tours have some absolutely incredible lineups. Check them out at ok-dope.com. We also have so many new shows planned for the club, including a D&D show, roast battles, a live late-night talk show and larger touring acts from around the world. We're doing our first comedy residency with Jon Dore this October. He's doing five shows in five days as well as recording a special.



AU: When will the location in Victoria, BC, at the old Logan's Pub be opening?

Nash: I am not sure what day this comes out, but if it all went well, we opened at the end of September!

AU: Any advice for newcomers trying to get started in comedy?

Nash: Just focus on the comedy. Don't worry about clips or having an online presence. Just keep your head down and do the work, enjoy the work. Get the best five minutes you can, kill with it and people will notice. You'd be surprised how many shows will come your way if you're nice offstage and consistently doing well onstage.

AU: How do people find you online?

Nash: @ok_dope_ on Instagram and YouTube. All our upcoming non-Victoria shows are on our website, ok-dope.com. For any shows in Victoria and information on the club, you can check out okdopecomedyclub.com.

ok-dope.com

instagram.com/ok_dope_

okdopecomedyclub.com

Photo Credit: Dom Hall









SMASHED POTATO KIDS

Vancouver's Online Sketch Comedy and Horror

Interview with Jessey Nelson

By Ross Hansen

AU: Tell us about yourselves and how Smashed Potato Kids came to be.

Jessey Nelson: Oh man, what a crazy story. So my brother Cody and I have wanted to make movies since we were little kids. Our mom worked at Blockbuster, always bringing home movies for us to get lost in. We were raised by movies. Sketch comedy was a huge influence on us growing up as well: *Kids in the Hall*, *Mad TV*, *Chappelle's Show*. We were always sneaking around watching that stuff until our parents let it all happen. In 2015, my brother was in film school at BCIT and I was managing an Italian pizza restaurant. I helped him out a lot on the acting side of his projects. There was a music festival that year, the Squamish Music Festival. Headliners were nuts that year: Eminem, Arcade Fire and Bruno Mars. At the beginning of the festival, we were all gathering at White Spot. Someone ordered the smashed browns and I was like, "We are getting so smashed potatoes this weekend." My brother joined us later that afternoon and I said it again: "We are getting so smashed potatoes this weekend." Cody Nelson was like, "Ya, we're the Smashed Potato Kids." And I was like, "Hold up! What the frig did you just say?" After the festival, I took the handle @smashedpotatokids from every single social media platform I could. Uncertain what this gang would actually mean.

Eventually, it became our sketch and content creation name. Smashed Potato Kids was the comedy and we decided to call the film chapter SPK Productions. We have been making content since 2019, but we really started to take things seriously, locking in on posting weekly and growing the channel, in 2024. One of our founders decided to move on and we were lucky to partner up with our long-time writing partner, Kyle Siemens, who is an extraordinary talent as the head writer of the group. So the founders are myself (Jessey Nelson), my brother Cody Nelson and Kyle Siemens. We held open auditions and had over 100 people submit. We picked out the top finalists and they came in and did *SNL*-style auditions for us. It was incredible. We then picked our top nine and we found our ensemble.

AU: SPK has released a lot of acclaimed short films, many of them horror films, and has won many awards for them. How do you focus your attention between sketch comedy and films? What are your biggest horror influences?

JN: Horror: Oh man! Well, I mean, some of the first horror films growing up would have to be like *Halloween*, *Friday the 13th*, *It* and *Nightmare on Elm Street*. The classics. But once we started making films ourselves, we were really captivated by some of the new-age horror films coming out. Ari Aster's films have had a huge impact on us, especially *Hereditary* and *Midsommar*. Darren Aronofsky is also a huge inspiration. *Requiem for a Dream* is one of my favourite films of all time. The way he pairs visual storytelling with obsession and addiction really resonates with me. Films like *Mother!*, *Black Swan* and *The Wrestler*. I love movies that make me feel stressed out and uncomfortable. Keep me on the edge of my seat and question my life choices after. That's how I know it's a good film. And since we have been really into making films, some of our newer filmmaker inspirations come from people doing exactly what we are doing: taking the path from sketch comedy or internet creator to horror film director. Jordan Peele, Zach Cregger, the Philippou brothers and now Curry Barker. These names are making some of the greatest films out there right now and we plan on joining them.

Comedy: I think we were more inspired by comedy TV shows. Lots of sketch comedy, lots of *The Simpsons*, *South Park*, *Family Guy*. So much sketch comedy: *Kids in the Hall*, *Mad TV*, *SNL*, *Tim and Eric*, *I Think You Should Leave with Tim Robinson*. *Hangover* movies, anything with Will Ferrell or Zach Galifianakis. Seth Rogen, of course, was a huge inspiration. We love to go to live comedy shows as well. We have seen a lot of comics and watch their specials: Anthony Jeselnik, Ricky Gervais, Jim Jefferies, *Comedy Bang! Bang!*, *Middleditch & Schwartz*. Anything made by the Lonely Island: *Hot Rod* and *Popstar*. Big Lonely Island heads. Ever since becoming sketch comedians ourselves, a lot of these comedy legends are the ones we study.

AU: What can we look forward to from Smashed Potato Kids?

JN: You can expect to see two new sketches weekly on all things @smashedpotatokids. You can also expect to see the Smashed Potato Kids doing a lot more live performances. The gang is ready to take some live sketches to the stage. We have two short films doing the film festivals right now. *Chimera's Ghost* is a psychological horror about a young boy on the day he's going to tell his mother he might like other boys. He manifests all his feminine and gay characteristics into an imaginary ghost friend who helps him discover his true self. *Thicker Than Blood* is a way more fantastical horror comedy. We wrote a script within the scope of something we can make with a micro-low budget with the community we already have. It's a found-footage hybrid comedy. It follows two YouTubers who live a frugal lifestyle on a road trip to find their long-lost father, whom they thought was dead. It's like *Harold & Kumar Go to White Castle* meets the darkest corners of the internet. Seeing groups like That's a Bad Idea make a feature, *Milk & Cereal*, for $800 really got us thinking about what our version of a micro-budget feature would look like. This would be a huge level-up for us and really take us to the next phase of our film career. Stay tuned!

@smashedpotatokids

instagram.com/smashedpotatokids

Photo Credit: Franek Lebowski

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BLAST FROM THE PAST

Vancouver's Expo 86 Grande Finale.

KISS 1976 50th Anniversary

A Halloween Extravaganza

By Clark'Super'Mantei

Hello again past blasters. This edition travels back 40 and 50 years. Let's start with the final weekend of EXPO 86 shall we.

Dateline: October 11th 1986. The Vancouver Sun's Saturday edition did a cover story called FAREWELL EXPO to celebrate the final 3 days of the event.



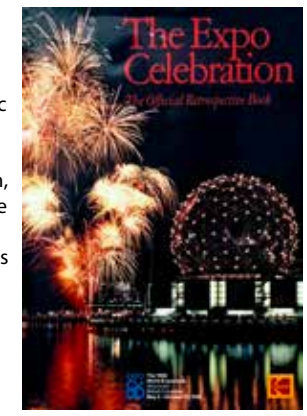
EXPO was from May 2nd until Oct 13th. 165 days and nights of 54 countries and 65 pavilions made Vancouver bustle. Expo was conceived by BC tourism minister Grace McCarthy in 1978. The blueprint was designed by Disney's own Michael Bartlett who turned the transportation themed event into a lively world's fair. The chief architect was Bruno Freschi, along with creator Ron Woodall and Bob Smith were the brains behind turning False Creek into a 70 hectare area to house the event. Then add Jim Pattison, a local business entrepreneur who joined the project in 1981 as President and CEO to oversee that operations ran smoothly. He asked for $1.00 a year to show he was in it for the adventure. Without him I don't think Expo would have happened. I watched it unfold year after year until it was ago. I myself received the event logo sticker in high school in grade 10 (it's still on my snare case). It seemed so far away and then lo and behold I had a job there. I had just turned 19 and this was so awesome. Concerts every night next door, the food and this fabulous amusement event seemed like it would last forever. I lived everyday taking it all in. Add 25,000 full time employees and the modern Skytrain to add to the 'Transportation' theme and it was a go! The skytrain opened on Jan 3rd 86. I myself worked at Phat Phil's restaurant located between the EXPO Theatre and the Scream Machine roller coaster. Phat Phils also had a restaurant at Montreal's EXPO 67 too (I probably passed it whilst in my stroller as my family went). Now here I am 40 years later writing it down? Time travelling is my column so let us enjoy a few more memories. Let's first go back to April 6th 1886 when Vancouver was officially born when the 'Incorporation Act' passed. And now 100 years later I find myself living near and working at EXPO 86.



My home was near Trout Lake at Clark Park where I'd walk down Commercial Drive to the Broadway skytrain to go to work (it didn't feel like work). I'd hop on and go to the Main St. Expo 86 stop. Get off and go through security and walk from the harbour where the Omnimax Theatre was and still is. It was the crown jewel of the Expo centre. A state of the art cinema designed to showcase groundbreaking filmmaking technology. Looks like a spaceship too. I'd stroll past pavilions and so many people. I'd pass the John Lennon Rolls Royce as it blasted "All You Need Is Love" among other 67 summer of love songs. I entered my job preparing food and eventually grill cooking took over. I'd hear famous artists soundchecks every day. Don McLean came in and had dinner. (However we did not serve 'American Pie').

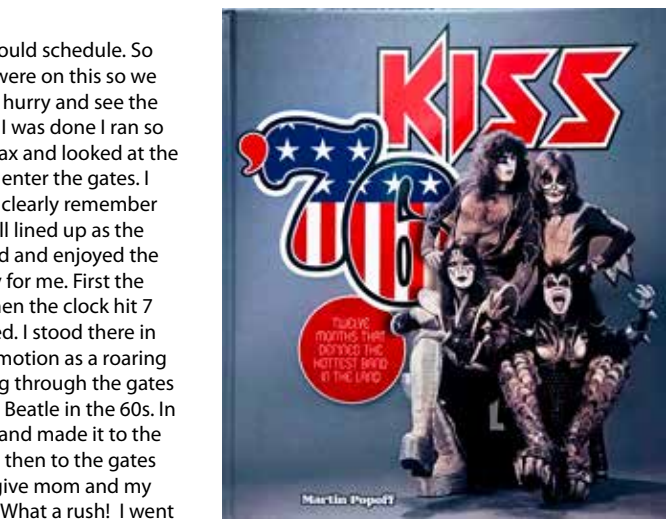


My mom and sister came over a lot too. My mother clearly recalls how she loved seeing Susan Jacks perform at the Saskatchewan Pavilion. Her husband was Terry Jack ("Seasons in the Sun"). There were outdoor free shows of all styles of music too. The Plaza of Nations and the 86 St. Music Hall held non-stop shows. Fireworks: Canada, USA, Japan, UK, France and China provided the explosives. Founded by Benson and Hedges, Symphony of Fire was a great event. KOKO Productions provided the music to go along with the fireworks display. It is now yearly at English Bay entitled 'The Celebration of Light' by Honda. The smell of fireworks nightly was a blast, yet there was one specific day I'll remember forever. One day the Chinese fireworks barges were being loaded for that week's display. Their fireworks are all paper bound. An electrical misshapen set a few on fire and the entire week's display caught fire and went off for an spectacular hour. It was snowing in a blizzard of confetti and all our customers' food plates were covered. We replaced them all.



Celebrities: I saw Vincent Price meeting John Travolta. I served Dennis Weaver (McCloud TV show) and many more. Some staff members were in fact planning to go to the next EXPO and I realized this was a thing. Pretty neat life to hop from country to country. Not for me though. I took in so much I'm still in awe of the memories. All things must pass and EXPO was in fact ending on that Thanksgiving Day of Monday Oct.13th. The final weekend was the busiest it ever was. Breaking attendance records up until the end. One last thing I'll tell, staff members were allowed to enter the grounds 1 hour early to get tickets for family or friends to avoid them standing in line. This I did for my mom and sister all the time. I'd arrive at 7 am and plan a whole day of multiple events and when the gate opened at 8 AM I'd hand them a line up free day and evening to enjoy. They'd meet me for dinner after my shift and enjoy Phat Phil's Phood on me. Yet the last morning was different. The gates opened at 7 AM. I had to be there at 6 AM to run around the grounds clockwise and collect tix to as many events as I could schedule. So many employees were on this so we ran to each one to hurry and see the gates open. When I was done I ran so fast to the Omnimax and looked at the crowd awaiting to enter the gates. I arrived a few minutes prior. I clearly remember the calmness of the guards all lined up as the seagulls roamed and squaked and enjoyed the calmness. It's a fond memory for me. First the grounds were empty, but when the clock hit 7 AM sharp as the gates opened. I stood there in suspended disbelief in slow motion as a roaring herd of humans were running through the gates in both directions. I felt like a Beatle in the 60s. In fact I was caught in the rush and made it to the side wall and then to the gates entrance to give mom and my sister the tix. What a rush! I went to work and after my last shift I had a final meal at Phat Phil's with my girlfriend and family. That last day held a parade on the fairgrounds and EXPO Ernie led 8000 pavilion workers with banners and flags into BC Place for the closing ceremonies. PM Brian Mulroney and Jim Pattison gave speeches and then performances ensued from many countries. When dusk approached everyone exited to their pavilions and the BC Place dome was lit up with laser displays until the grande finale of the fireworks. It was the largest fireworks display in BC's history that night. I clearly remember trying to hold onto that moment too. At midnight the fairgrounds closed forever. I'm grateful to have been there for 5 of those 6 months. I must thank Greg Clyde for getting me the job. He left to cook at Pier 6. We were so young and life was indeed vibrant in Vancouver. Over 735,000 people attended that final long weekend. EXPO hosted an astonishing 22,111,578 visitors for that event. The event was a success and the EXPO 86 flag was lowered in the ceremony and passed to Australia for 1988's exhibition. That brings my Expo tales of 86 to a close folks. I hope it brought back many memories for those who were there. There are 2 great books to find if you go to a library in BC. One is *The Expo Celebration - The Official Retrospective Book*. And the other is *Vancouver, A Year In Motion*.

This concludes a 5 part series on EXPO 86.



KISS 1976. We can't forget KISS in this Halloween issue, 1976. I discovered KISS 50 years ago in October 1976 via a letter from a Scarborough friend who wrote to me to say "You must go buy the album KISS *Destroyer*!"

A new city in Calgary. A new paper route for $$ and a new cartoon style high-energy band? I was only 9 and found the hottest band in the land. KISS was a phenomenon. Kids at school had joined the KISS ARMY and I was hooked. I bought the magazines and tore them up to poster my walls. A KISS poster I saw in Banff had me hooked. It said U.S. Tour 1976 and it represented the US bicentennial as Peter held a marching drum and a blood soaked headband. This band wasn't a cartoon anymore. They were real. After my family left Scarborough we travelled to Florida and spent days at Walt Disney World for the celebrations. Then to Calgary. In November I talked dad into going to Mr. Sound in Southcenter Mall to get a KISS record. We were introduced to *Rock And Roll Over* as the new release but when I saw *Destroyer* for the first time I was in a trance. Once the headphones went on I was in a different sphere too. Loud brilliant rock and roll and a cover to always stare at. I was hooked along with millions of loyal followers. 1973 through 1975 KISS recorded and performed non- stop with 3 LPs and then *KISS ALIVE* set the world on fire. KISS was becoming a household name. Once *Destroyer* arrived in March 1976 with the new costumes and radio hits "Beth" and "Shout It Out Loud" KISS was unstoppable. TV appearances in 1974 on Dick Clark and The Mike Douglas Show introduced them to millions of TV viewers. Shows like The Midnight Special and Don Kirshner's Rock Concert let late night weekend viewers know that KISS was here to stay. They toured endlessly and by 1976 they were on all the modern fan magazine covers. They toured non-stop in between albums. KISS was enjoying the hype that The Beatles had in the mid 60s. In 1976 KISS reached superstardom. Then on Friday October 29th they appeared on the Paul Lynde Halloween Special on ABC and millions of household families witnessed the kids go crazy as KISS performed 3 songs: "Detroit Rock City", "Beth" and "King of the Night Time World". Many celebrities of that year made up the variety hour long show. Halloween Sunday must have been fun as every fan dressed as one of their heroes in makeup. Halloween always loves KISS. A treat for all KISS fans this year is the 50th Anniversary release box set of *Rock And Roll Over* this November 6th. It was released November 11th in 1976. This version has original producer and legend Eddie Kramer featured with a full remix of the record. And the original was remastered too. 22 never before heard songs and demos too. So cool.





Lastly I must say that a new book by Martin Popoff entitled *KISS '76: Twelve Months That Defined the Hottest Band in the Land* came out this past February and I highly recommend it to all. The book has a week by week chronology of all other significant popular events that occurred in 1976. What a blast from the past indeed.

With that I'll bring this October issue to a close. I want to wish you all a great fall and have a happy helluva Halloween too.

I like to say Rock Out and Rrrrroll On... but this time I'll pumpkin spice it up with...

Rock N' Rolls Royce Over and Out and Rrrrrolll On.

- Clark'Super'Mantei

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THE GHOULSTARS

By Marisa Flora

AU: For readers discovering The Ghoulstars for the first time, who are you, and how did this monstrous mix of metal, punk, '80s culture and horror movies come together?

Markus Laakso: I'm Markus "Daddy Ghoul" Laakso, the guitarist, songwriter and founder of The Ghoulstars. I wanted to combine a bunch of things that hit like a brick as a teenager and still do – and just to write some cool songs for fun. Suddenly, I had an album's worth of material that was way too good to throw away. Pretty soon we scored a worldwide deal with one of metal's finest and had a bunch of shows lined up. Can't complain.

AU: *The Dark Overlords of the Universe* came out in May 2026. How do you look back on its release and the response it has received?

ML: The response has been quite spectacular, to be honest. The fans and critics have been loving it, but, as we're signed to a label that's known for much more extreme stuff, some Season of Mist followers absolutely hate it. That's much better than a lukewarm all around "pretty nice" 3/5. Haters hate, skaters skate and creators create. That's just the way of the (polarized) world.

A ton of people have told me that they've been singing along with the songs. Somehow, I managed to write riffs and choruses that are extremely catchy and memorable. I'm very proud of the album and it will be a tough to top.

AU: The album was inspired by the things that blew your minds when you were teenagers. What were the influences, and how did you bring them together?

ML: Cult b-horror and sci-fi in general. Musically the album is very diverse, as the influences are vast. Obviously, we're not copying anybody, but bands like Misfits, White Zombie, KISS, Twisted Sister, Mötley Crüe, The Coffinshakers and Venom have inspired us either consciously or subconsciously. There are also traces of old spaghetti westerns and nods to Ennio Morricone, and we've been told some of our "50s rock'n'roll parts" sound like Volbeat. There's definitely surf rock in there, too, especially with the beats.

AU: How did you blend those influences into something of your own?



ML: I didn't think of another band at all while composing. Well, the idea to use movie samples came from White Zombie. When I started writing the first song that I wrote for the album, *Vampire*, I had just been listening to *Welcome to Hell* by Venom. Knowing this, you can probably hear the inspiration in that particular song.

I wrote the songs in a very short period – a song per day. I think my brain just works that way; it stirs all the stuff I'm into, and a blend of something fresh comes out.

AU: *The Dark Overlords of the Universe* is inspired by *Howard the Duck*. What made that title the right fit for the album?

ML: The movie is quite horrible, to be honest, but the name of the evil space-baddies, the dark overlords of the universe, sounds ultra cool. The name just stuck with me for decades, and I finally had the ultimate outlet to use it.

AU: What is it about horror and B-movies that continues to inspire you?

ML: Art that blows your mind at a tender age, say 8 to 18, just stays there. Those movies and classic records have had a huge impact on my whole identity. I think I'd be a completely different person, if I hadn't discovered them then.

There's something about the unknown, supernatural, monsters and the dark side of the human psyche that speaks to me in a curious and creative way. As for special effects, I prefer the old "handcraft" way to the modern CGI or, God help us, the use of AI. A huge shout out to Tim Burton for going old school with *Beetlejuice 2*. May many follow his path.

AU: "Grave Robbers from Outer Space" pays tribute to Ed Wood's *Plan 9 from Outer Space*. What drew you to the film and inspired the song?

ML: I've loved the movie ever since I first saw it when I was 15 or so. It's so bad that it's brilliant. I don't know how Ed Wood, named the worst director in history, pulled it off, but the casting is very impressive and rather spectacular: Maila "Vampira" Nurmi, the Swedish wrestling mountain Tor Johnson and the legendary Mr. Bela Lugosi.

The props and continuity issues are so bad that they've brought many laughs but also inspired me tremendously. We just had to pay tribute to the movie, and our video turned out even better than we had dreamed.

AU: "Grave Robbers from Outer Space" reached a much wider audience after being featured on CNN. How unexpected was that, and what effect did it have on the band?

ML: Never in a million years would I have anticipated to see our little Ed Wood tribute on one of the world's leading news networks! I mean, it was just a fun punk rock song I wrote in my basement. The coverage made a huge impact on our visibility and notoriety. We were all over the press, especially in our native Finland, and suddenly "everybody" knew the band.

AU: Despite the horror imagery, the album has a strong sense of fun and some seriously catchy hooks. How important is that balance between darkness, humour and big choruses?

ML: The fun-aspect is quite tricky. Some find our band and concept as just a gimmick, but to others, who truly get what we're all about, it's an important part of the whole thing. We take our craft very seriously, but we also bring out the kitsch side of it in a similar way than many of the movies that we love. We're in no way a humor band, we're a b-movie band with great songs and a cool – or should I say ghoul – image.

AU: What are the five horror films you think every reader should watch this October?

ML: Oh god, it's hard to pick just five, but here goes: *Sleepy Hollow, Bram Stoker's Dracula, Deep Red, The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *Beetlejuice*. Mass murder and visual poetry with a few laughs.

AU: If The Ghoulstars could create the ultimate Halloween festival lineup, who's on the bill?

ML: Alice Cooper, White Zombie, Misfits, The Coffinshakers, Murderdolls/Wednesday 13 and us.

AU: What's next for the band and where can readers follow you for updates and monstrous developments?

ML: We're doing a couple of Halloween-themed headlining shows in late October in Kuopio and Helsinki. In December we're playing a tour with Finland's biggest industrial metal stars Turmion Kätilöt, and our calendars are filling up nicely for next year, too. Hope to make it abroad soon!

We've also been writing new music. Time will tell when we'll be hitting the studio, but hopefully sooner than later…

theghoulstars.bandcamp.com

Photo credit: Marc Sabat





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The MONSTERS - off the road we go LP/CD/MC

The world was never ready for The Monsters, and The Monsters were never ready for this world. 40 years in Growing into a Monster of Flesh and Blood, they present you with their 10th album: two Hands Full of Wild Noisy Fuzzy Tracks that slaps you direct in Your Face, One Riff, Trash, Garage, Black Metal, Boogie, Punk, Grunge hits that turns you inside-out, recorded by Robert Butler and mixed by Ghetto Recorder's Jim Diamond.

SPOOKYMAN 'The spookalicious space sound of Spookyman & his Acousmatic Orchestra' LP/MC

B-Picture Spy Explotation Movie sound researcher and tinkering instrument builder from Rome, Italy, he plays the oscilloscope that records sound waves and a sound blaster that plays mysterious tapes in a mix of library music, science fiction, and freak post-blues



BLASKEPELLE CHANCENTOD
Pädagogisch Wertvoll - VRMC142 - KASSETTE

Postpunk für Leute, die lieber stolpern als marschieren. Keine Bläser treffen auf Beton, Melancholie trifft auf Katerstimmung – und irgendwo dazwischen tanzt das Leben, wenn's keiner sieht. Wie rostige Liebesbriefe aus dem Nirgendwo. Wie dein kaputter Radiowecker. Es ist der Dreck unter den Fingernägeln der Poesie

SAM SNITCHY - 2 Horse Force LP+DL

Sam Snitchy transforms chaos into sound, treacherously merging the raw energy of street punk with the hypnotic allure of the new techno generation. Industrial dub and psychedelic garage sound clothed in words like shattered glass, beats like a hyperventilated heartbeat vanishing into completely empty space.

Im Vertrieb von CARGO RECORDS GERMANY



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-TWO

TOUR TIP NUMBER 127



HAVE A BAND MEMBER AT THE MERCH TABLE IMMEDIATELY AFTER YOUR SET

TOUR TIP NUMBER 128



TRADE SHOWS WITH BANDS FROM OTHER TOWNS

You host them, they host you.
It makes for better shows
AND you make new friends.

TOUR TIP NUMBER 129



USE WIRE HANGERS FOR T-SHIRTS

They're cheaper, take less space and you can twist the top so they can hang pretty much anywhere.

TOUR TIP NUMBER 130



THROUGH FLOOD AND FIRE AND STORM AND SNOW YOU SHALL GO...

It's Canada. Be ready for anything.
And allow for extra travel time.

TOUR TIP NUMBER 131



HAVE A BAND-STANDING-AROUND-TRYING-TO-LOOK-COOL PICTURE

For some reason media love 'em.

TOUR TIP NUMBER 132



TREAT THE VAN LIKE (OR BETTER THAN) YOUR HOME

Wipe up spills. Keep it neat.
Have a garbage that you empty often.
It's your new home for the duration.

Find more tips and other stuff on our facebook, https://www.facebook.com/ripcordzpunk and instagram, https://www.instagram.com/ripcordz.punk



SCOTT DUNLOP

John Carlow/ Finding Charlotte Photography

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

Absolute Underground: Introduce yourself. What are you best known for in the local scene?

Scott Dunlop: Hey John, I'm Scott. I play in a few bands, but I'm mostly known as the drummer in The HEX.

AU: You were a regular at the local underground hangout (Logan's/ Tavern of the Damned) What did the place mean to you?

SD: Yeah, I miss that place, countless rad times there. So many wicked bands at night and a great neighbourhood pub in the day. It murders me that they couldn't figure out a way to keep it floating.The community is still around although somewhat dispersed, which is a bummer. Logan's was a perfect home base for us for a long time. A friend purchased the actual bar and has it set up on his garage mirrors and all. One day I'll hopefully get a chance to say hi to the old grandfather again.

AU:Some of the best/memorable bands you've seen? (anywhere)

SD: Seeing Television and Iggy Pop in Las Vegas is a standout for me. I took my darling demon child Wren to Vancouver in February to see Ghost and both of us will remember it forever and ever!

David P Smith played a stunning solo set at the Vault Cafe in Nanaimo that I was fortunate enough to catch. There was the time Willy from Fully Crazed sang for the Dead Kennedys downtown. So outrageous and killer! Internal Dialog and Small Pleasures both played moody little sets this summer that made me feel pretty damn good. I could go on and on.

AU: Impressions of the current local scene?

SD: The punk and metal bands in this town are ridiculously talented and they get shit done! No fucking around!! What an excellent bunch of dirtbags.

As far as younger groups go, I don't always make it to their shows, but I am paying attention to Andrei from Off2Nowhere, Miles High and Long Cool Cowgirl. The kids are alright!

AU: Do you have an extensive music collection? What are some of the gems?

SD: I've been collecting music since I was a kid. Lots of country, punk, folk, gospel and rhythm and blues. I mostly purchase from the charity shops I hit daily. I'm still buying cassettes and CD's and occasionally even 8-tracks because I like how worn in and clunky they usually are! My favourite vinyl is a copy of *Dust Bowl Ballads* on Folkways records that I squired from my father.

AU: Thoughts on social media

SD: I'm fine with social media. I like seeing where people are at with their lives. I'm mostly on Instagram these days because that's where the artists and shop owners seem to hang. It's also much less divisive than the other platforms. My X account helps me keep tabs on both sides of the political realm and my Tinder is a ghost town.

AU: Fav bands?

SD: I mostly gravitate towards older groups. I love The Outlaws so damn much! Folks like Waylon, George and Tammy, Hank Williams and that sort of stuff. Lately I've been night driving with Sade and Judie Tzuke in the player. Rick White from Eric's Trip is still very prolific and I keep buying all his stuff. Leonard Cohen, Lou Reed, Danzig, and Patti Smith are all very important to me.



AU: Any band you wish you'd seen?

SD: Not having Miles Davis or Elvis Presley around anymore is tough. I wish I could have seen them.

AU: Funniest / best story to happen at a show?

SD: A standout for me Hex-Wise was the house party we played in Vancouver when Mark Szabo from Good Horsey joined us on stage to sing "Eleventy". It was pretty cool hearing his voice coming out of those speakers with us. We ended up recording our own version of it for the record label, Almost Halloween Time Records. You gotta check it out.

AU: Do you own an extensive amount of band shirts? Memorable one or two?

SD: I have so many band shirts, they don't even get a chance to get worn in. Currently my Start with the Cobra tee is making me feel bad ass and low class.

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

SD: I think all music carries a message, that's why I pay attention to most of it. It's all important, even the shit that makes me cringe at myself for enjoying it.

AU: Are you a reader? Best books? Gems? What's currently being read?

SD: I am not an avid reader but Jesus goddamn I love the smell of any used bookstore. Totally off topic but I feel the same about hardware stores. That aroma just brings me right back to the good old days.

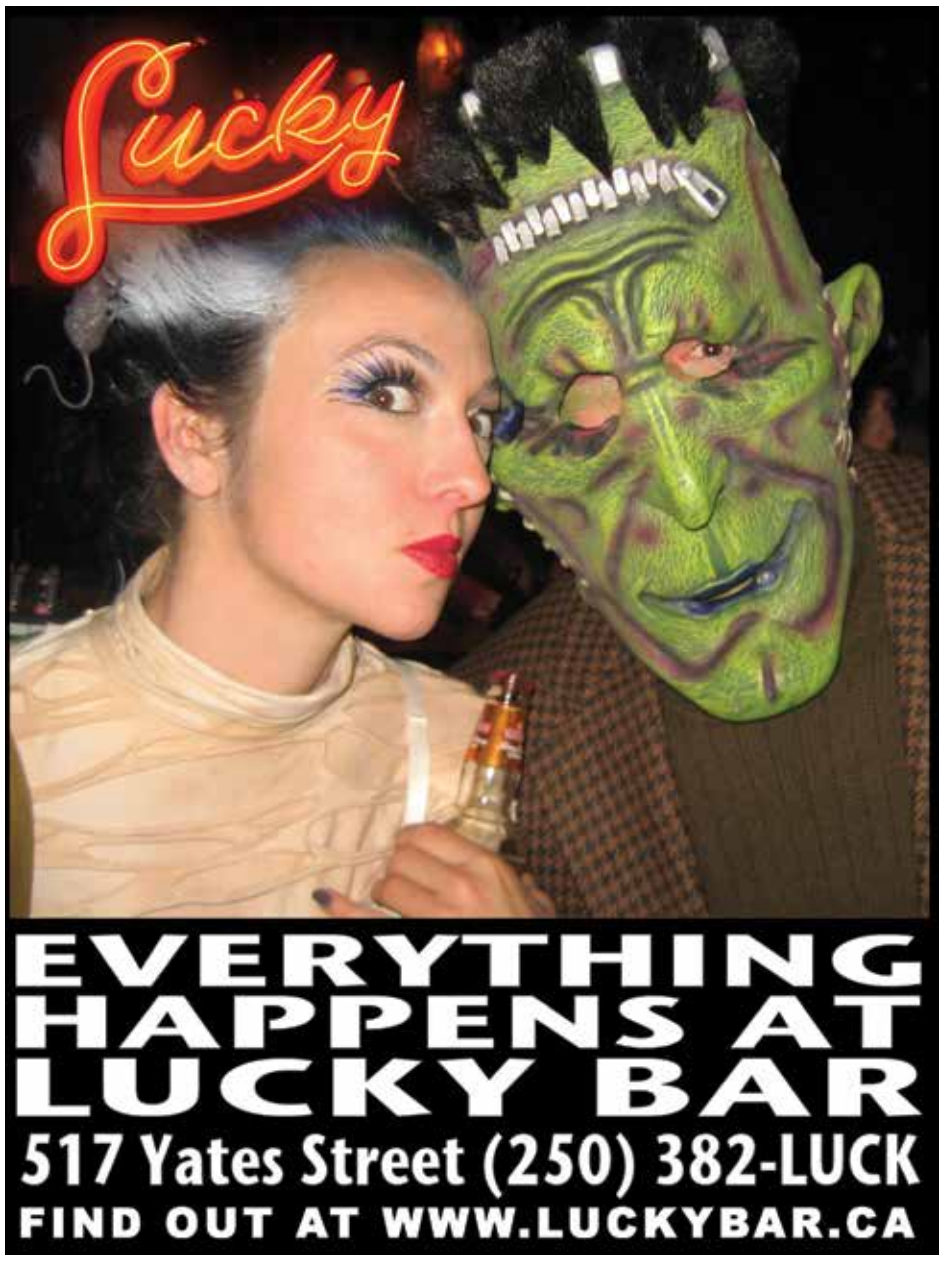
AU: Priorities in life?

SD: Right now my priorities are taking care of myself, trying my best to support the local arts and music scene, enjoying our community radio stations and continuing checking in with my friends and sometimes even my foes.

AU: What's on the road ahead?

SD: The HEX are either broken up or taking a break right now I'm not sure ha-ha. In the meantime, I'm playing with Matt Easton and a couple other dudes from Hit the Deck and the Mags. Were called Artifacts and were fierce as FUCK! I also play drums with my best buds Kelly and Janna in a sloppy little outfit we call Gong Show. We are a nightmare!

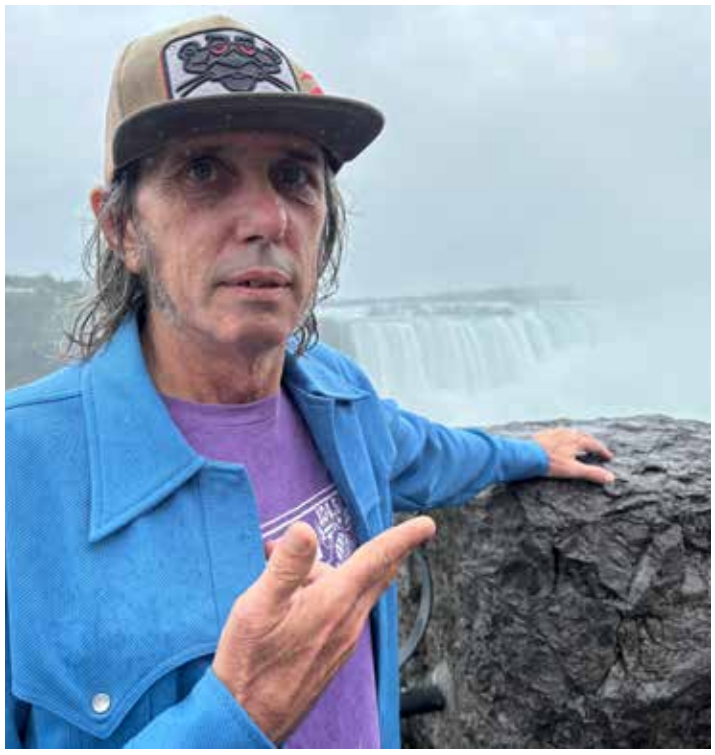
Thanks for the questions, Carlow! Keep taking those shots.











HICKOIDS

Canadian Debrief with Jeff Smith

By Peter Illing

My first contribution to Absolute Underground Magazine was an interview with Jeff Smith, legendary label owner and frontman of the punk band Hickoids. Now we're back to debrief his first shows in Ontario, Canada, on the Still Trippin' Tour. And he drove almost the entire way.

Absolute Underground: You hit London, Toronto and Ottawa on three consecutive Canadian dates. How were the shows?

Jeff Smith: We really had a great time and were well received. We played with some fun acts: in London, some young dudes from BC called Retrofit — almost a Hollies-meets-early-Nektar sorta vibe; a really good roots/rockabilly kid, Nicholas Campbell, in Toronto; and in Ottawa, an interesting dark alt-country band, Evil Creek, and the really cool and funny longtime fan Ciggie Tarbox. The venue was next to a house of ill repute cleverly disguised as a topless bar.

AU: The Toronto show was at the Horseshoe Tavern, which has a pretty ridiculous amount of music history attached to it. I read that former owner Michael "X-Ray" MacRae attended the first-ever South by Southwest. Did y'all cross paths back in the day?

JS: Well, we played the first SXSW and I don't remember meeting him, but that doesn't mean it didn't happen. LMAO. It was a real honour to play the Horseshoe — such an important place in the history of Canadian punk and rock 'n' roll. I always relish the opportunity to play those places; they're disappearing fast.

AU: Was Michael "X-Ray" MacRae part of the reason y'all made it out to Ontario?

JS: Incidentally yes, but directly no.

AU: Give me the Canadian tour highlight. It's got to be a good amount of fun getting your buds in a van and travelling across borders.

JS: For me, it was staying with our friends Andy Jones and his wife Arlene in London. I met them in Austin when they stumbled into the first Austin Corn Lovers Fiesta almost 16 years ago. Andy is a drummer and played with an act called Shadows of Laughter, amongst others. He gave me a great 36-hour continuing education class on the rock and roll of Toronto and Canada. Good people, great friends.

AU: Were there any hiccups along this 2,000-plus-mile tour?

JS: Well, it was more like 5,300 miles (8,500 km), 17 shows in 19 days round trip. I don't think we managed to lose anything other than my fairly generic mic stand and a little bit of what's left of my dignity along the way, but that was at the casino in Joliet around 4 a.m.

AU: Hickoids made the eight-minute opus "The New Fangled Maple Leaf Rag", a tribute to the rockers of the Great White North. Did this song make the setlist?

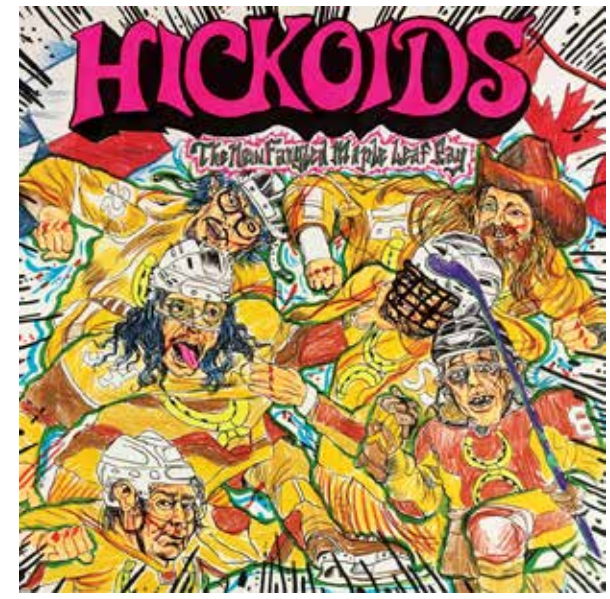
JS: Absolutely. It was a pleasure to perform it for new and old friends in Canada. Even though it has a silly side to it, I grew up on a steady diet of early Rush, Frank Marino, April Wine and Moxy due to

¿Que Paso, Canada?
Deep In THE Sound of Texas

the legendary San Antonio radio station KMAC/KISS and DJ "The Godfather" Joe Anthony, who pushed those bands and many more early on.

AU: Final thoughts to share with Absolute Underground readers, Jeff?

JS: We had absolutely no trouble crossing into Canada. It says a lot about the state of affairs here that I was more trepidatious about crossing back to the U.S. than I was about going into Canada, which historically is kinda notorious for hassling American acts. I don't normally apologize for other people, but will say the rhetoric and views of our current president directed at Canada are not shared by the majority of the American public, and I am sorry for that. Canada is not for sale, and it's called Lake Ontario.



hickoids.com

hickoids.bandcamp.com/music

instagram.com/hickoids





OSYRON

Progressive Power Metal

Interview by Ray MacKay

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

Osyron: You are talking to the backup Fellowship of the Ring that didn't get the call from Gandalf for the meeting. We were next on the list, though. Actually, we were going to go, but had lawn bowling practice that day.

AU: Who is in your group?

Osyron: Reed is the guy that yells at people, Tyler is the guy that has the best bottom end, Cody is the guy that hits things, Krzysztof is one of the guitarers that is really good at playing Diablo and Bobby is the other guitarer that is probably going to get kicked out of the band for not being good at Diablo.

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

Osyron: Bobby and Krzysztof moved to Calgary in 2012, and Osyron pretty much started then! After a few lineup changes, we've been with the current lineup for a few leap years now, and are just about to release our fifth album!

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

Osyron: We originated from our dads, and then for a while we felt like we were trapped in a woman's body. Then we were born. Also, there's a Polish guy; you can probably guess which one by his name and forehead.

The music scene here is actually pretty awesome. Calgary has a surprisingly strong metal scene. There's a lot of really good bands here, and most of them are friendly. At least until you accidentally try to book the same show as them. Then it's basically Highlander.

AU: What can you tell us about your upcoming album, the self-titled *OSYRON*, out Nov. 27, 2026?

Osyron: It's called *OSYRON* because we couldn't think of anything else. It's our fifth album, and it's basically about overcoming adversity, finding your purpose and discovering what you're supposed to do with your life. We haven't figured any of those things out yet, but apparently you can write an album about them anyway. Also, basically whatever your favourite music style is, that's what it sounds like.

AU: What was the creative process on *OSYRON*?

Osyron: We're not creative at all. Everything you hear on this album is the result of us getting blackout drunk for six months straight. No one knows how this album happened. We would wake up every day (midday) with a crushing hangover but also with a new song, usually with no memory of writing it. Sometimes there'd be a guitar or hurdy-gurdy in the room that nobody remembered buying. One time we woke up and there was a string section recorded. None of us play strings. We're actually pretty concerned about that one. Anyhoo, we tried to recreate the process for the second half of the album, but unfortunately we started sobering up and the quality dropped dramatically.

AU: What tracks on *OSYRON* are you most excited for people to jam out to?

Osyron: We wrote this album with the intention of all of them translating well live! There are a couple where we added so many layers that it would make professional cake bakers jealous, and they're more meant to be enjoyed in an album listening experience, but in general we want to play these songs live, so we want that energy to be translated.

AU: *OSYRON* is your first album release since *MOMENTOUS* in 2022. How do you feel you've grown as musicians and a group in between the two?

Osyron: We all hit puberty years ago, so we haven't grown too much, but as musicians, we haven't really grown either. Some of us got heavier, but that sadly didn't translate to the songs at all. They're all as soft as baby shit.

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

Osyron: We will have some album release shows around Western Canada immediately after the release and in early 2027, and do have plans for spring/summer 2027.

AU: Any plans for Halloween this year?

Osyron: Bobby will probably do a stupid costume like hanging a potato on his belt and being a dictator. Reed will probably dress up as a really nice guy who doesn't yell at people, which will be the scariest costume of the night. Tyler is probably going to dress up as a bass player, but nobody will be able to tell because he's actually a better guitarist than the guitarists in the band. Krzysztof will dress up as someone who doesn't yell at clouds, which is going to be really difficult for him to maintain. Cody will probably just wear his normal clothes and tell everyone he's dressed as a drummer. We don't really know what the plan is yet, but we're hoping to get blackout drunk and accidentally write another song or three.

AU: Any favourite horror movies?

Osyron: None of us are brave enough to watch horror movies. We can barely get through the "My friends, you bow to no one" scene in *RoTK* without turning into sopping puddles.

AU: Any weird Halloween traditions?

Osyron: Probably the only day we shower and wash our hair. Together. We wash each other's hair.

AU: Best horror soundtrack?

Osyron: "Silent Night, Bodom Night".

AU: Most wicked Halloween costume?

Osyron: Our promo pictures are pretty scary since you can see our faces.

AU: Anything else to promote?

Osyron: Yeah, buy our new album, come see us live, tell your friends, tell your enemies, tell your dentist. Nov. 27, *OSYRON* comes out. It's probably the best thing we've ever done, mostly because we don't remember doing it. We'd also like to thank everyone who's supported us over the years, especially the people who keep showing up to shows despite knowing what we're going to sound like. We couldn't do it without you. Except Bobby. He could probably do it without you.

AU: How do people find you online?

Osyron: Since we took down our Plenty of Fish profiles, it might be tougher to find us online. But alas, search for "osyron" and we are basically the only thing that shows up on Google, so it should be pretty easy to find us on whichever platform you prefer!

osyron.com

facebook.com/osyron

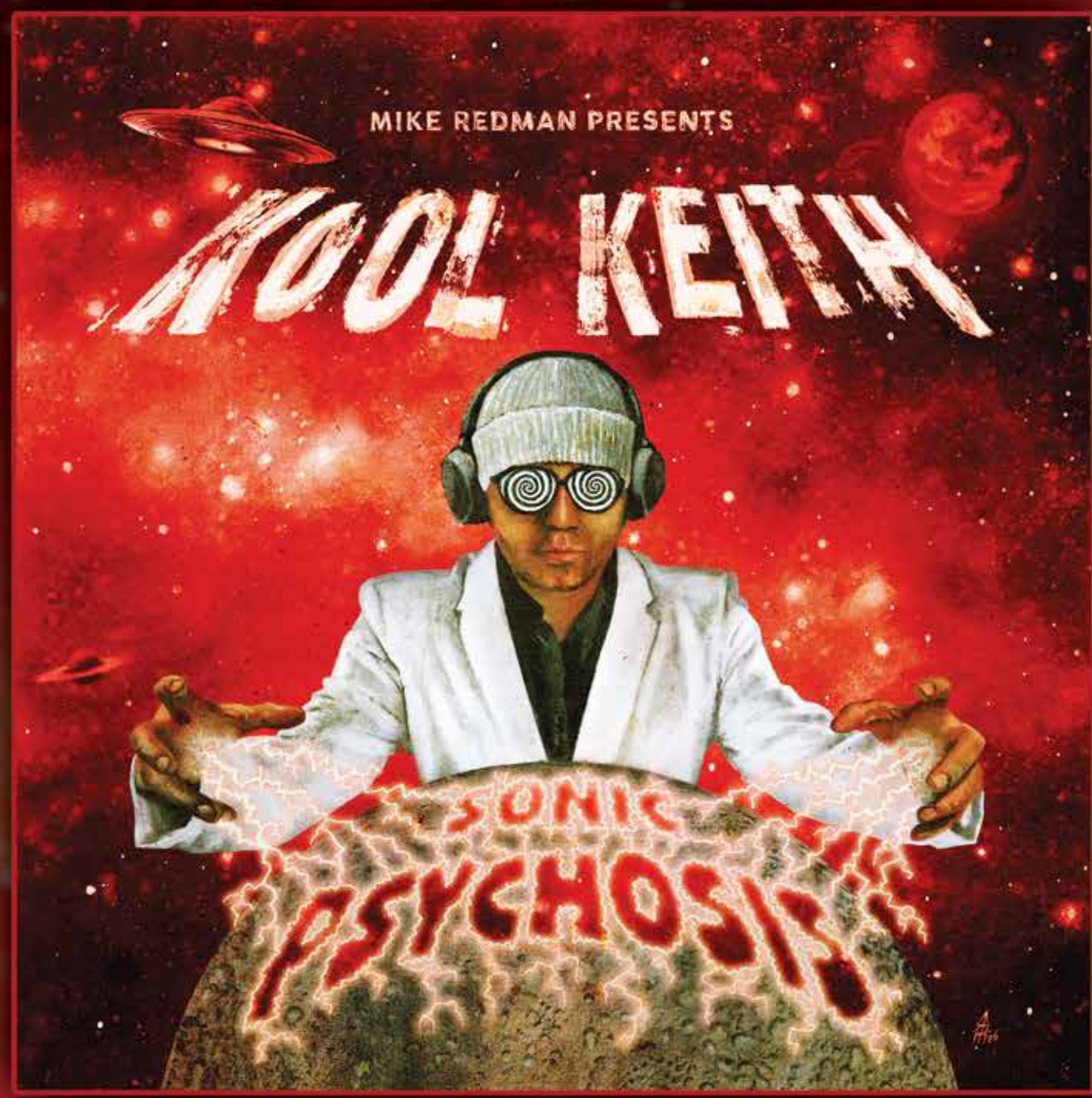
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THE NEW ALBUM BY KOOL KEITH



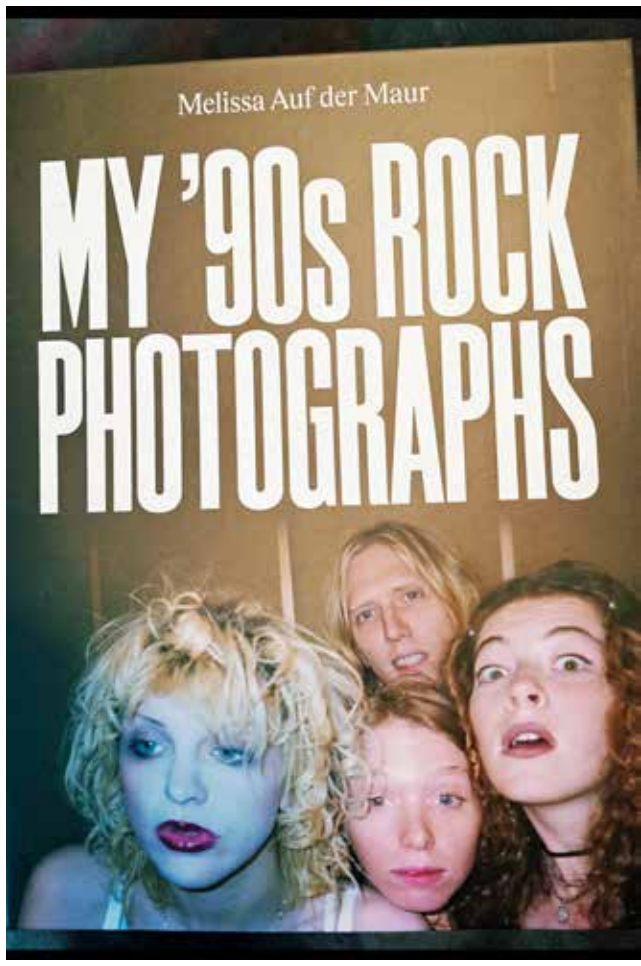
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MELISSA AUF DER MAUR – PART 1

Emissary from an Analogue Past

By John Carlow

Melissa Auf der Maur (MADM) was born and raised in Montreal. She is an acclaimed musician, photographer, curator and producer, best known as the former bassist of rock bands Hole and The Smashing Pumpkins. In 2010 she co-founded Basilica Hudson, a multidisciplinary art centre in Hudson, NY, where she lives with her family and magic cats.

MADM recently released her compelling bio, *Even the Good Girls Will Cry*, quickly followed by *My '90s Rock Photographs*, a collection of her mostly film photographs taken from years touring the world and an intimate glimpse of the continually emerging visual artist herself. The book has launched alongside a multimedia gallery exhibition in Toronto, new music (*BASS WOMB ROOM: My '90s 4-Track Demos x Field Recordings*) and a feature-length documentary to be released in 2027. I read her bio and new photo book, and was fortunate enough to chat with Melissa on the phone. We talked about her "multimedia memoir," imperfect art, her path of self-discovery, documenting journeys and how to redirect a world that consumes, rather than creates, culture.

Absolute Underground: You've just released this new book and gallery show on the heels of your memoir, with a documentary planned for next year. Why now?

Melissa Auf der Maur: It's the visual companion to my memoir. I consider this a multimedia memoir project, and the literary memoir is the mission statement. The photo book, exhibit, as well as the NFB-CBC documentary, are all related.

Prior to turning 50, I realized I needed to unpack, reflect and heal the parts of me I went running from in the '90s. It took 20 years to review all the good and the painful, and I dedicated it to my daughter, who was about to turn 15.

I witnessed, front row, how the music scene was dismantled. I was raised a real bohemian with socialist tendencies in Montreal. I was quite heartbroken by the corporate disaster our music scene witnessed in the '90s. My father died and my best friends were addicted to drugs and there was death surrounding the band I was in.

Between climate change, digital addiction and predatory capitalism ruling so much of our daily lives, I felt deep feelings about how we got here. This was my opportunity to speak in all of these formats.

This is my contribution to cultural exchange and understanding of what happened in that last analogue decade. I spent 15 years out of the public and international dialogue, deciding to be very local and raising my daughter in a small town in upstate New York.

I transformed in many ways, and I started an art centre to protect independent arts and culture. I took time out, and then there was a lightning strike — wait a second, I gotta talk about this.

AU: For your photo book, how did you choose which photos?

MADM: It was impossible. Writing a 450-page personal memoir was easy compared to editing these photos. It was the most challenging thing I've done, to reduce 15,000 photos to 200. We did the best we could in the two years we've been working on this.

I've relied on an amazing group of collaborators to help me edit, but at a certain point I had to accept the fact that it's not possible to get it right. I believe there's a longer life for the archives, because there are quite literally still more than 10,000 photos.

AU: Many self-portraits are featured in your book. What are the origins of this path that led to being shot by some of the best photographers of those times?

MADM: In my photo book, one of the essays talks about this beautiful photo of my mother, who was a muse to a fine art photographer in Montreal, Guy Borremans. I grew up with pictures of my mother all over our house taken by him, and it's one of my early influences in photography. I also talk about how my mother raised me on a record collection. Between the photos of her on the wall and the beautiful photos on record covers, that inspired me early to take pictures.

Some people say that I'm photogenic, or comfortable in front of a camera, and obviously that has to do with the fact that I had been taking my own photo for so long. I was never trying to be glamorous or beautiful.

The first self-portrait I ever took is in the book. I was 13, incredibly shy, a late bloomer, like a real tomboy and very meek. My father brought me to Paris, and we were in Père Lachaise Cemetery. I found Jim Morrison's grave, and the very first photo I ever took of myself is like a selfie. I started taking my picture from that moment on, documenting my existence.

In high school, learning the darkroom, I wanted to experiment with the art form of photography. I was the closest subject I had access to every day, so I would photograph myself to practise the light meter and composition.

This was about having agency, and for a young, shy girl to believe she had enough agency to tell the story of what she saw herself. It was empowering for me, in the same way music is empowering for people.

I was very passionate to learn photography. It was part of life's discovery and had nothing to do with glamour. Later, as a public figure in a rock band, it's all about glamour. I ended up working with some of the best photographers on fashion campaigns, and by that point I was comfortable in front of the camera. I was comfortable with my relationship to myself, and it was a way for me to feel comfortable being in the world and to empower myself.

Eventually I became both the photographer and the woman in front of the camera. I became the girl in the band and the girl who loved the band. Through my mother's passion and my mother's life, I morphed between being the muse and being the master. Because the '90s was an exciting time in arts and culture, Hole was photographed by some of the best photographers of that decade.

AU: Many of the photos in your book are Polaroids. Do you still take Polaroids?

MADM: I have started shooting with my old film camera again, but I don't like the quality of the new Polaroids. The Polaroids I use in my museum exhibit are SX-70, and they were much nicer quality. I have a new Polaroid that I find very pale and that doesn't have the richness of the original. I don't find them as satisfying.

AU: Many of your Polaroids and photos seem to thrive on being imperfect and intimate.

MADM: People talk about that imperfection being the charm and the power of it, and I agree. That was the power of the '90s, and the power of our bands: the beauty in the imperfection. I love the Ann Powers introduction to the photo book. The last line of her introduction was my favourite because it's just about the glorious mess of being human. We're not perfect. We are so flawed. Look what we've done to the animals and to the planet. We are flawed creatures, and it's very important to show both.

To Be Continued Next Issue…

Bio excerpt courtesy Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO)







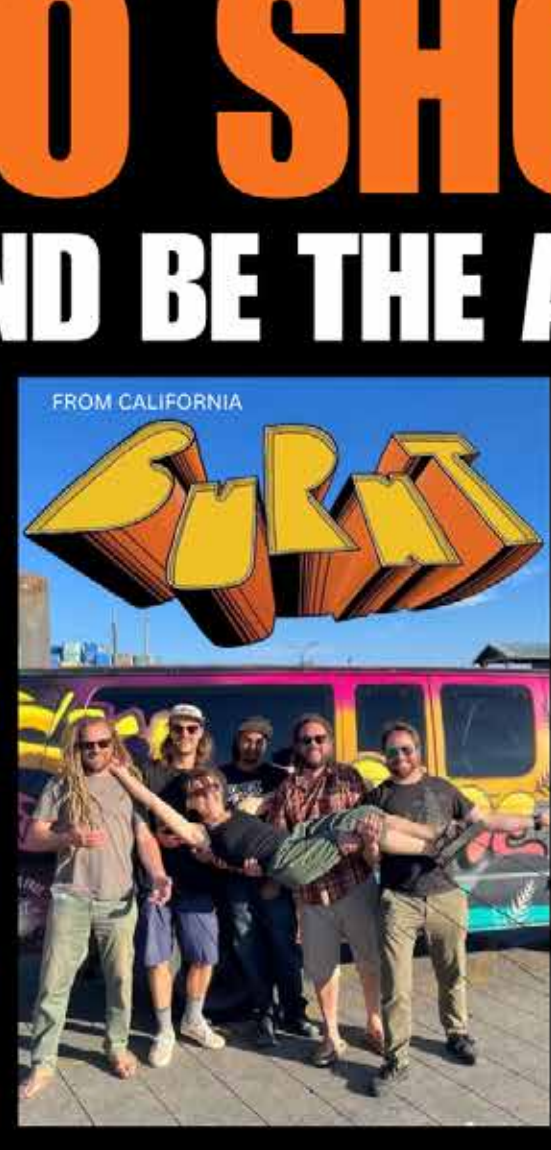
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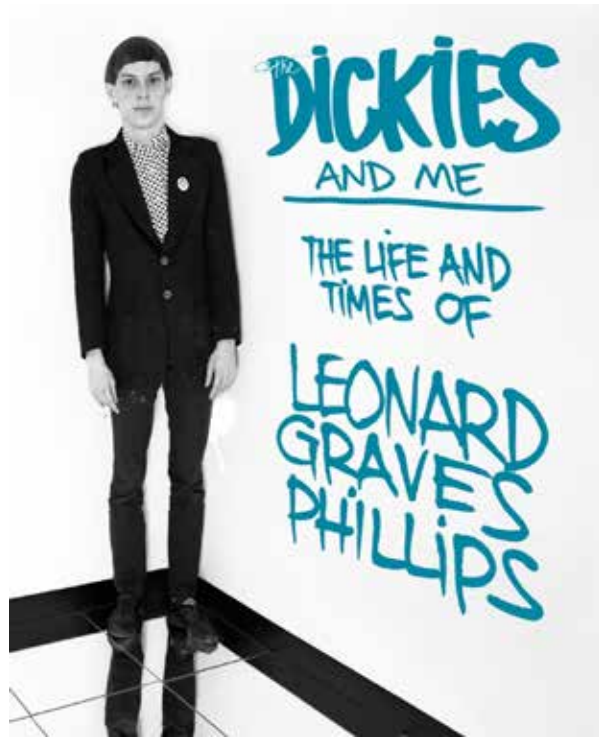
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CLEOPATRA RECORDS

LEONARD GRAVES PHILLIPS SPILLS ALL IN THRILLING AUTOBIOGRAPHY *THE DICKIES AND ME*



Leonard Graves Phillips, co-founder and lifelong member of Californian punk icons The Dickies, is poised to reveal all about his career with the band in a hefty autobiography. *The Dickies And Me* comprises 50 chapters spread across 230+ pages, all packed with the extreme ups and downs of one of the longest-running punk bands in existence, as well as stories from Leonard's turbulent life.

It has been 50 years since Leonard and his friends Bob "Chuck Wagon" Davis, guitarist Stan Lee, bassist Billy Club and drummer Karlos Kaballero first emerged as The Dickies. They became the first California punk band to appear on network TV and score a major record deal. The Dickies' influence upon the American punk scene has proven incalculable, as they first defined and then regularly reinvented what the music meant.

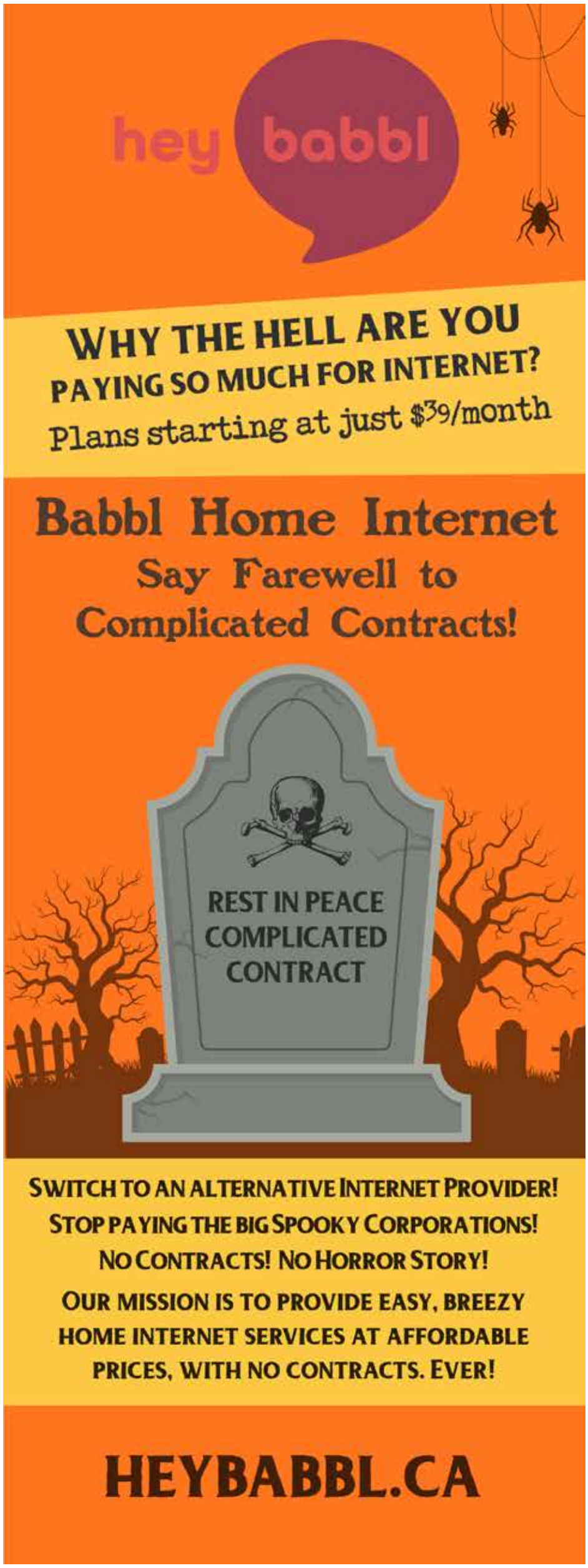
The Dickies And Me was released on August 21, 2026. The story is accompanied by a host of behind-the-scenes photos and cartoon illustrations by KRK Ryden, who has collaborated with Devo and others.

"Much of the focus is on the original band (of which Stan Lee and I are the remaining members), its formation, and our halcyon days with A&M Records, especially in England," says Phillips. However, it reaches out from there to chronicle "my life before, during, and (metaphysically speaking) after The Dickies."

cleorecs.com/products/the-dickies-and-me-by-leonard-graves-phillips-hardback-book-7-vinyl







HERBAL WITCH

Herbs for the Dark Half of the Year

By Lily Fawn



It's happening. The leaves are dying, it's dark at 6 p.m. and I have begun carrying hot cups of tea with me from room to room.

This is the best time for cold and flu season herbal medicine prep. Get extremely cozy and refuse to come out of your self-made nest until spring. Become a hibernating forest creature!

Support your immune system with soups and warming herbs: ginger, cinnamon, cayenne and rosemary. Put them in tea, soup, cider and pretty much anything warm and yummy.

For winter immunity herbs, I keep echinacea, elderberry, garlic and ginger in dark jars.

For seasonal sads and general grumpiness, I recommend St. John's wort oil and lemon balm tea.

For sleep, valerian, hops and chamomile teas and tinctures.

And for winter skin, get some oil on yourself. Castor oil is my fav, but it doesn't smell great and it's thick as hell, so mix it with jojoba oil to soften it up. Soak calendula flowers in the oil. They are antibacterial and soothing. Rosemary is also great for dry winter skin.

Apply after a bath while your skin is still a little damp. Use it as a makeup remover too. Castor oil helps your eyelashes grow!

Lily's Sicky Cider Recipe

This is one of my favourite winter herbal concoctions and ridiculously easy to make. It's a medicinal vinegar packed with hot, pungent herbs traditionally used throughout the cold season.

You need: horseradish, ginger, ginseng, garlic, hot peppers, parsley, rosemary, vitamin C powder, honey and raw apple cider vinegar. Fresh burdock and echinacea root are wonderful additions if you can find them.

Chop or grate everything up. There is no need to get precious about the amounts. A pinch of this and a handful of that works just fine.

Use approximately one part fresh herb mixture to seven parts apple cider vinegar. Add a tablespoon of vitamin C powder and honey to taste.

Put everything into a glass jar. Use a plastic lid or put plastic wrap between the vinegar and a metal lid, because vinegar and metal are not friends.

Let it sit for at least two weeks. You can leave it brewing for up to eight weeks before straining.

How to Take Your Sicky Cider

Take one to two teaspoons straight, or add a tablespoon to a mug of hot water with honey and lemon.

Put a splash in ginger ale.

Pour it over vegetables or salad.

Mix it with tahini, oil and nutritional yeast for a fantastic salad dressing.

It is spicy, sour and warming, and will absolutely let you know it is killing germs. Some people find vinegar hard to swallow, so add lots of unpasteurized honey. Start small and see how your body likes it.

Kick those winter colds!

And after all that cozy fall hibernation, you may start to get the winter itch: that exciting feeling of gift-giving, crafts and drinking hot toddies.

Come out of your warm little nest, because the Winter Bazaar is coming, Nov. 27–29 at the Gorge Park Pavilion! I'll be there with teas, potions and herbal goodies, along with all the other amazing local crafters ready to share their winter wares.

Start your hibernation for October/November!

lilyfawn.com

winterbazaar.org

Artwork by Freyja Zazu - @freyjazazuart





Parasite

By Forget Your Face
Featuring David French on saxophone
Artwork by Sean Higgins

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TERROR IN THE BAY

Horror Film Festival

Thunder Bay, Ontario,

Terror in the Bay Film Festival is a festival for filmmakers, built by filmmakers to scare everyone. Its organizers know the hard work and dedication it takes to make a film of any genre and length, and Terror in the Bay is world-renowned and considered by many in the industry to be one of the top genre film festivals in the world!

Looking to have your pants scared off? Then look no further than the festival's monumental 10th anniversary edition, which runs Oct. 14 to 18 at the Paramount Theatre, located in the historic downtown core of Thunder Bay, Ontario. The downtown core and entertainment industry in Thunder Bay have been growing steadily over the last few years, and Maple Tops Paramount Theatre is one of the oldest buildings in the city. It has recently been renovated inside, has a full concession stand and seats 230 people, making it an ideal venue for a film festival screening such as this.

The festival will be screening over 50 genre horror films from around the world, including world, North American and Canadian premieres. The event will have local horror-themed vendors, question-and-answer sessions with guest filmmakers, red carpet photos and film distribution opportunities, as well as prizes for best costume and best couple's costume.

This year, the festival has selected 59 films and 12 unproduced screenplays. There will be several world, Canadian and Ontario premieres. The entire schedule can be viewed online, and it is being updated with premieres as more are announced.

As of now, a few filmmakers have confirmed they will be travelling to Thunder Bay for the screening of their films and a live question-and-answer session with the audience. A live local theatre act will open the festival on opening night, and a live Halloween-themed foley demo will take place on closing night. Prizes for best single costume and best couple's costume will be awarded on Saturday.

At the end of the festival, organizers will announce 27 winners in different award categories, and also provide distribution opportunities for selected feature films.

terrorinthebay.com









NO RULES

THE CARRINGTONS

The Reunion

Interview with lead vocalist and guitarist Ben Fortier

By Chad Cornies

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

Ben Fortier: Hey! I'm Ben Fortier, lead vocalist, guitarist and songwriter for the Carringtons.

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

BF: I started the Carringtons in 2014 with a few friends I had played with in previous bands. At first, it was mainly a way for me to release a bunch of songs I had been sitting on, and like most bands, it took us a while to find our identity. Over the years, the lineup evolved and so did the music. Everything really clicked when our current lineup came together: Joey Savard on lead guitar and vocals, Alexandre Charron on bass and Dave Chamberland on drums. Since then, we've released a steady stream of singles, played festivals like Pouzza Fest and Envol et Macadam, toured Quebec and Ontario, and completed our first European run in France and Belgium in 2026. At our core, we're just four friends who love playing short, hook-driven garage punk songs. We don't chase trends or numbers. We focus on making music that feels honest, exciting and memorable, and we're proud of what we've built with our new album, *The Reunion*.

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

BF: I've never had a Tinder account, so I'd have to ask the other guys. But I have a feeling their profiles are probably pretty quiet.

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

BF: We're from Quebec City, which has always had a great local music scene. I moved here to go to college in the early 2000s and grew up going to legendary venues like L'Arlequin, Le Dagobert and Le Scanner, watching local punk bands like MAP, the Aversions, Mi Amore and Fifth Hour Hero. While skate punk and hardcore are still a big part of the local scene, I think our sound is a bit closer to the Montreal garage punk and indie scene. If you're looking for current bands from around here, check out our friends in Panic Attack, Bridgetsens, Achigan, Scare, Enfants Sauvages and Don't Try, just to name a few.

AU: Describe the band's sound if possible.

BF: Two-minute bangers, big melodies and raw energy. Razor-sharp guitars, punchy drums, smooth bass lines and a touch of keys. Think the Strokes with a little more bite, filtered through the raw, sharp edges of modern hitters like Viagra Boys and Bad Nerves.

AU: How would you describe your live show to the visually impaired?

BF: Live, it's sweaty, raw and honest. Give us 20 to 30 minutes and we'll pack in 15 songs, one after another. Visually, think custom-made Carringtons jackets and bright yellow shoes. No backdrop. No frills. A big part of what we do is keeping that connection with the crowd and making it feel like everyone's sharing the same moment. For us, meeting people, making new friends and sharing experiences before and after the show are an essential part of who we are.

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



BF: Yes! Our new album, *The Reunion*, came out Oct. 2. Ten songs, each clocking in at exactly two minutes. In-your-face drums, sharp guitars, big melodies, synths and electronic textures creeping around the edges. The album was recorded and mixed by Adrian Popovich at Mountain City Studios in Montreal in February 2026. We produced it ourselves with the help of our good friend Hugo Mudie. We're incredibly proud of this record. It's probably the most focused and complete thing we've released so far, and we can't wait to get it out into the world.

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

BF: The band's name was inspired by the legendary TV show *Dynasty*, which gives us a pretty endless source of material for songwriting. If you think about everything that can happen in a soap opera like that, you've got love, betrayal, infidelity, anxiety, self-doubt, ambition and all kinds of everyday chaos. So there isn't really one specific theme running through the album. The songs explore different situations and emotions, but I'd describe *The Reunion* as a fairly heavy record emotionally. Even when a song sounds upbeat or catchy on the surface, I usually like to add a darker twist somewhere beneath it. I think that's what makes those moments hit a little harder.

AU: Any standout tracks you are stoked on?

BF: I'd say "Emptiness". Big hooks and emotional weight. It's a perfect snapshot of what *The Reunion* is all about.

AU: Sex, drugs or rock 'n' roll? Or all of the above?

BF: Just rock 'n' roll, really. We still like to party, but reasonably. Real adults… who sometimes end up sleeping on someone's floor after a show.

AU: Any tour plans?

BF: Yes! We have a bunch of shows coming up this fall in New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario. Beyond that, we're already planning a return to Europe in 2027. Maybe Japan? Dave still has contacts from his days playing drums in Fifth Hour Hero, so you never know.

AU: Anything else to promote?

BF: If you're in Quebec City or Montreal, come out to one of our release shows: Oct. 22 at Grizzly Fuzz in Quebec City and Dec. 5 at Turbo Haüs in Montreal. We'd love to meet you.

AU: Final words of wisdom for our readers?

BF: We don't spend much time worrying about stats, algorithms or playlists. The music comes first. If you like what you hear, tell a friend, come to a show and say hello. That's how this whole thing keeps going.

facebook.com/thecarringtonspunk

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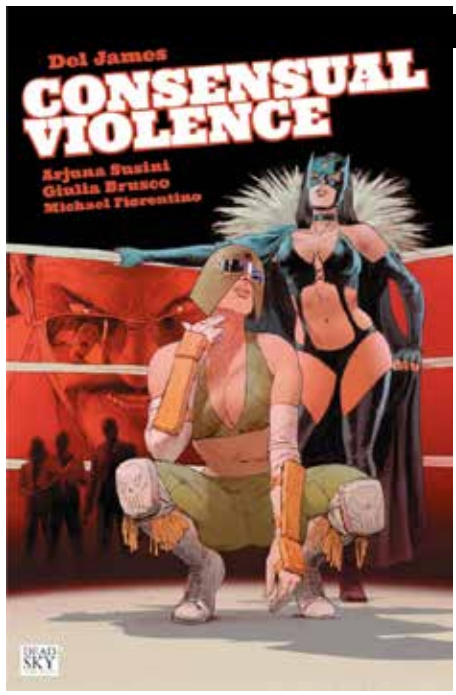
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DEL JAMES

Masks, Cages and Bloody Pages: Conversational Violence

By Billy Hopeless

Before we begin, I'd like to explain my new venture into interviewing comic book artists, writers, etc. Going back to my youth, one of my first long-time loves has always been comic books. In fact, I hung around the comic book store in my childhood neighbourhood so much that it became one of my first long-term jobs. As a reader, the one thing I really love is finding a story that captivates you so much that you don't want to put it down until you're done, but you also don't want to get to the end because it's that good. Recently, through my other love, rock and roll, I was introduced to an incredibly famous monster by the name of Del James, who has just released a graphic novel I hold in such high regard. So enjoy the read, and trust me: pick up a copy of *Consensual Violence*. You may put it down for a second, but it'll be back in your hands faster than the ref can count.



AU: Well, well, well, Mr. Del. You are quite an accomplished man. You've written songs for such huge names as Testament and Guns N' Roses, directed music videos, written for UFC and published a collection of short horror stories called *The Language of Fear*. You've also been a road manager for Guns N' Roses, a journalist and a husband and father. As if all that isn't enough, in 2026 you've added a very original and brilliant graphic novel named *Consensual Violence* to your resume. When did you first decide you wanted to create a comic book, and when you were young, what were your favourites?

Del James: *Consensual Violence* started off as a movie script that I couldn't get anyone in the movie industry to read, let alone make. Never one to give up on myself or my stories, when my good friend and the President over at Dead Sky Publishing, Jeremy Wagner, offered me the opportunity to do some writing for them, I jumped at the chance. I am extremely proud of how *Consensual Violence* turned out and am eternally grateful to everyone who helped make it a reality!

As a child growing up during the seventies, I was an impulse buyer, so if a comic book caught my eye, I was begging my mom to buy it for me. *Batman*, *Hawkman*, *Sgt. Rock* and this oddball title called *Plop!* are among my early favourites. As a kid, I would read my comics, and after I was done, I would cut out the pictures and Scotch-tape them into a notebook to create my own mash-ups, where like Batman and Captain America team up to fight The Riddler or an undead zombie horde. To this day, I still read *Batman* regularly, and I love *Absolute Batman*.

Also, I grew up on the wrestling magazines of the era. The bloodier the front cover, the more tantalizing. I read about treacherous villain wrestlers like The Sheik, Ox Baker, Mad Dog Vachon and Abdullah The Butcher long before I ever saw them. I also loved, and still do love, horror comics like *Eerie* and *Creepy*. The artistic details in those Warren Publications were so incredible and so imaginative. I mean, cover art by legends like Frank Frazetta, Richard Corben and Boris Vallejo, of course, I was drawn in!

AU: *Consensual Violence* is based around the art of lucha libre wrestling, so let me hit you with the same question, but with a different tag. What made you choose this theme, and who were your fave wrestlers to do battle in the four-cornered arena?

DJ: From a commercial standpoint, *Consensual Violence* seemed like a good leadoff batter. The lucha masks were how I could have masked heroines fighting for their lives in a dire situation, but since they don't have superpowers, it's much more realistic. Die and you are dead... As far as influences go, *CV* owes a lot to films featuring El Santo and Blue Demon, as well as *Thriller: A Cruel Picture*, *Ms. 45* and *Kill Bill*; so, if you put those elements together and shake them like a martini, the graphic novel is the end result.

My all-time favourite wrestler is Bruiser Brody, hands down the most believable wild man brawler ever to perform. Brody was murdered in a wrestling dressing room by a gutless coward named Jose Gonzalez, who wrestled as Invader #1. Vice TV did a *Dark Side of the Ring* episode about Bruiser Brody that everyone reading this article should watch. I dedicated *Consensual Violence* to the memory of Frank Goodish aka Bruiser Brody.

My favourite luchador is Doctor Wagner Jr., a total heel with incredible charisma and a helluva talker. When Wagner lost his mask in a "loser loses their mask" match against Psycho Clown, that sucked because, to me, once a luchador loses his mask, he loses his magic and mystique. The same thing happened when La Sombra lost his mask to Atlantis. Don't get me wrong, Andrade El Idolo is a helluva worker, but La Sombra was on his way to becoming a lucha libre legend.

My favourite current wrestler is the AEW World Champion, Will Ospreay. Ospreay is to professional wrestling what Michael Jordan was to basketball. As an athletic performer, there is no one else on Ospreay's level, and Ospreay versus anyone is a guaranteed banger!

AU: Well, *Consensual Violence* definitely lives up to not only its title but also the classification of a graphic novel, as it's very graphic in its violence. What is your opinion on sex and violence in comic books?

DJ: If the title *Consensual Violence* doesn't clue you in as to what my book might be about, I can't help you. I make no apologies for anything I write because I don't write for children. I write adult-themed stories, and no theme is off limits or taboo. Growing up in New York, I went to see movies like *Rolling Thunder*, *The Exorcist*, *Taxi Driver*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *Dirty Harry* and *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* and was utterly spellbound, captivated and eventually influenced.

AU: While we're in the dominion of opinion, let's tackle an issue that has suddenly become a monster out of nowhere. What's your personal take on AI?

DJ: I fucking hate AI! It ruins creativity because AI has no soul. AI makes stupid, lazy people think they are intelligent because now they have one-touch, easy access to information. AI makes the untalented believe they are suddenly creative because now they have tools where they can manufacture false skills.

AU: OK, now back to the book. I worked at a comic shop for years, and my true appreciation for the art of illustration came from my boss and mentor, who once explained that great comic book art is when you can take a single panel off a page, blow it up, put it in a frame and it holds up on its own. The art in *Consensual Violence* does exactly that, and it's reminiscent of DC Comics in the '90s. How did you choose and find an artist to bring your story to life visually?

DJ: Finding the right artist was absolutely crucial. I knew from the start that I didn't want to collaborate with any artist whose work is "too cartoonish." Steve Wands, the Chief Creative Officer at Dead Sky and my comic book sensei, made some suggestions, and one of them was an Italian artist named Arjuna Susini. Arjuna knocked it out of the park! Every panel slays and any little detail that I asked for was handled with precision and care. Without ever having met Arjuna, I love that dude! I also love our incredibly talented colourist, Giulia Brusco, and our letterer, Mike Fiorentino, who is a damn fine artist in his own right and someone I look forward to collaborating with on a future project.

AU: As well as art and characters, how much focus and research do you put into locations, since your story takes place not only in Mexico but also in the USA and Japan?

DJ: As someone who has done a lot of travelling over the years, I have plenty of personal experiences to draw from, so my research was relatively minimal. I've been to wrestling matches in America, Mexico and Japan, and look forward to going to more.

AU: Now that I've brought up characters, I've got to say you pinned my heart like a fallen mark with the two main female leads and their Vampire de Luna and Frankenstein's widow gimmicks, which leads us perfectly to our Halloween issue hit list!

1. Favourite horror comic book: *Red Room* by Ed Piskor

2. Favourite gimmick worn by a comic hero or villain: Frank Castle/The Punisher and Nemesis

3. Favourite Halloween music to get you in the spirit: Type O Negative, because every day is Halloween.

4. Top two favourite fiends of the Silver Scream: Joe Spinell in *Maniac* and Gunnar Hansen as Leatherface.

5. What Halloween candy do you hand out at the James Gang horror hideout, and which do you hoard for yourself? Kit Kats, 3 Musketeers and Nestlé Crunch, because I get to munch on whatever is left over.

6. If you're trapped in your house with a slasher or a monster, which room is the safest to be in to avoid death? A good slasher, like Chromeskull in the *Laid to Rest* movies, will get you regardless of whatever room you are hiding in.

AU: I'd choose the living room. Well, the bell is about to ring, so quick, tell us: will there be a sequel to this bloody great debut, and/or what's next on the old drawing board for Del James?

DJ: There is no sequel planned for *Consensual Violence*, but as we speak, my second graphic novel for Dead Sky Publishing, *No Saints in Myanmar*, is being drawn by a world-class artist named Dalibor Talajic, and every panel looks absolutely incredible. Dalibor is about three-quarters of the way done with this badass crime/action tale about a high-priced escort and a security specialist who run afoul of the Asian mafia. If *Consensual Violence* was my nod to El Santo and Blue Demon flicks, *No Saints* is my attempt to write something that the late, great Sam Peckinpah would approve of.

After *No Saints*, I'm hoping to team up with Mike Fiorentino on a grimy, ultra-violent outlaw biker graphic novel called *Iron Messiahs*. Mike has shown me some preliminary sketches, and they are absolutely killer!

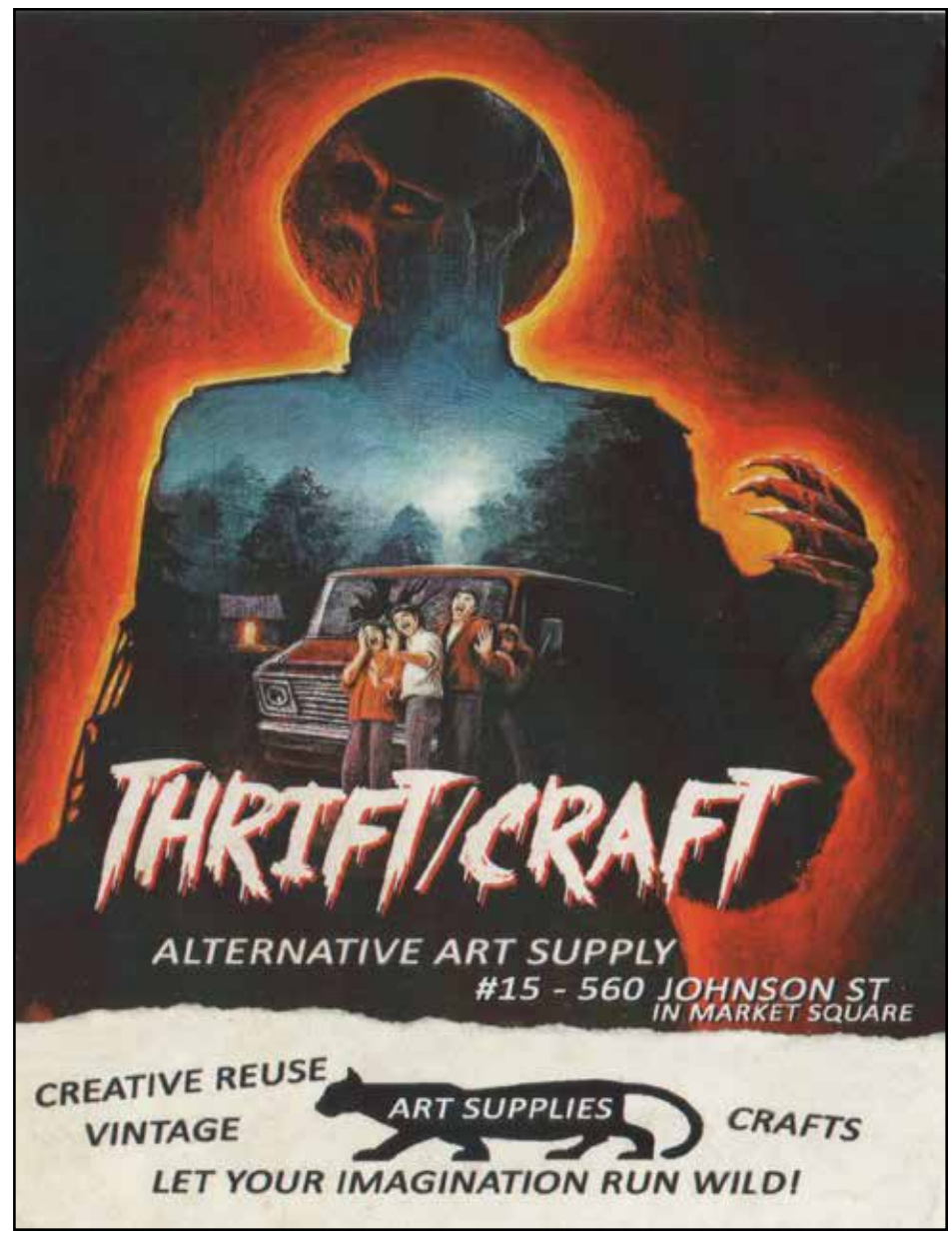
AU: Thank you for the entertainment, art and inspiration, Del. Now finally, until we meet again, do you have any parting words for the readers and dreamers?

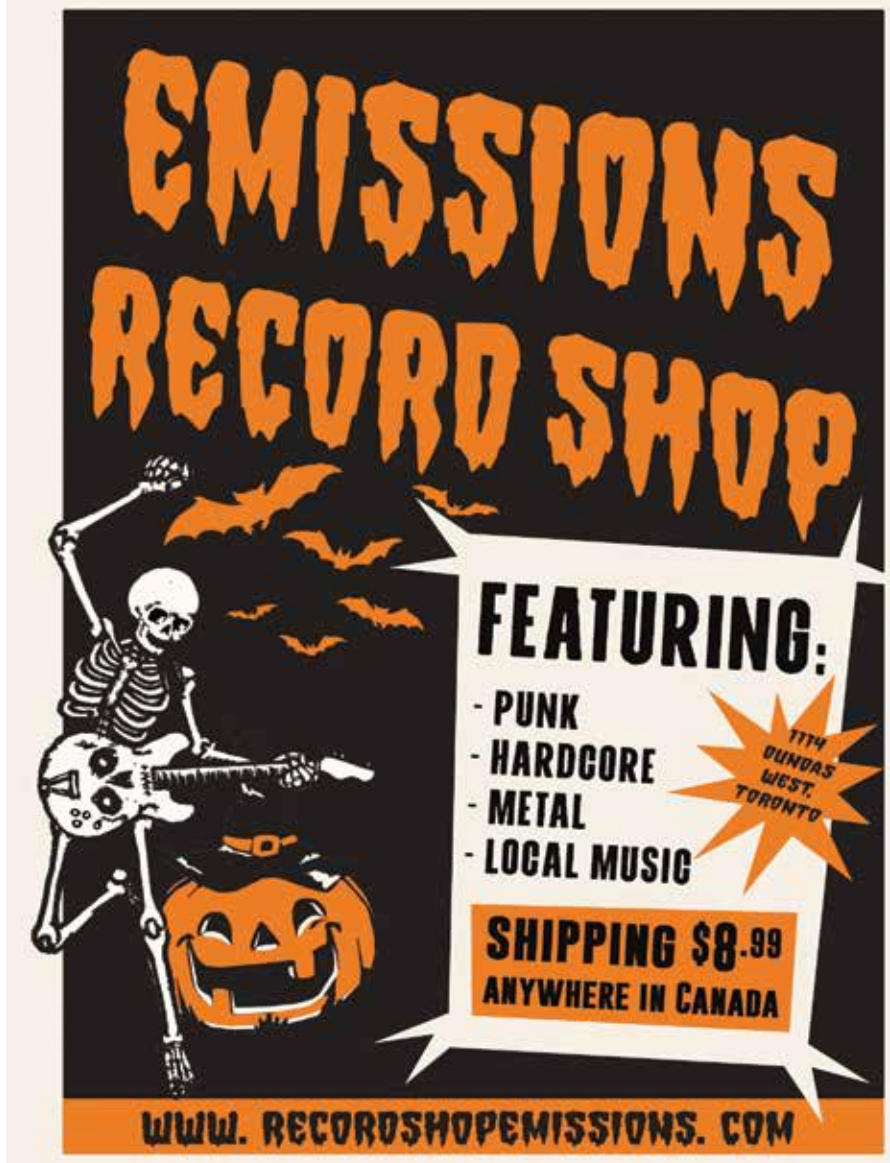
DJ: Knicks in five!

@deljamesgang

instagram.com/deadskypub

deadskypublishing.com/portfolio-item/consensual-violence









DunnEnzies

Kelowna, BC

BY MILLI LYMAN

We are back with another review of one of our favorite venues in Canada, DunnEnzies pizzas downtown location. We first happened upon this spot when we played our first ever cross Canada tour back in 2023. It came highly recommended as a great spot to play a punk show and we got to see why very quickly upon arriving. DunnEnzies pizza downtown, as the name would suggest, is conveniently located right in downtown Kelowna. A short stroll from the beach makes it an aptly placed spot to get to via the main roads around town or by public transit. This unassuming pizza shop doesn't only boast one of the biggest, baddest (in a really good way) slices of Za this side of Manning park, but also provides an all ages, wheelchair accessible and queer friendly place to enjoy or play heavy music. Upon entering and being greeted by the friendly and charming staff (here's looking at you Matt Ellis and Paige), you walk past the bar into a long narrow corridor. Typically during a show the walls will be adorned with bands merch weaving in and out of the eclectic art deco that lines the space. At the end of this long narrow corridor is the stage. The stage is basically a glorified drum riser which makes the shows feel extra up close and personal as the bands will likely be jamming out on the floor with the patrons. One of our favorite things about this spot beyond the pizza and great service, is the sense of intimacy that the space cultivates. We've played this room packed to the brim, as well as some lesser attended weeknight shows and all of them still kept a fun, close and lively energy. It's basically a perfect recipe for crowd surfing due to the built in high density that the room permits. For a small space, it still boasts crisp sound for the audience and their small monitor set up works great on stage,



MEAN BIKINI - VENUE REVIEW

they even got a fancy new lighting system that ups the party points by +10. One of our favorite things about DunnEnzies downtown is the setlist wall. If you take a look at the wall to the left of the stage, you will see a few years worth of set lists from bands that have played there and will likely spot some from friends or bands you adore. It's a small detail but really creates a communal energy and spirit that makes you feel at home no matter where you're coming from. Booking has always been a slice with quick replies and concise info which is truly a precious thing, and we have always been made to feel cared for by the staff and patrons that show up to the gigs there. The few times we have played Kelowna at different venues, we always make sure to stop in for a pint and some pizza without fail. DunnEnzies will always have a special place in our heart and our stomachs, we hope you get a chance to see for yourself!

dunnenzies.com

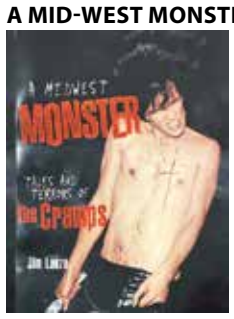


DO NOT RESUSCITATE
DO NOT READ

BOOK SHELF

Dedicated to reviewing the newest releases in Extreme Horror, Bizarro, Splatterpunk, Noir, Grindhouse, Weird Fiction, Underground, Occult, Transgressive, Erotic, and music-related books. No classics. No nostalgia. Only that new sh!t!

A MID-WEST MONSTER: TALES AND TERRORS OF THE CRAMPS



Jim Lanza
Independent
OCTOBER 31st, 2026

Though I shouldn't need to say more than the title or show you the cover to make you say *"just take my money!"* I will.
This large format glossy paperback is not only full of amazing pictures cool stories and quotes, including yours cruelly, but has all these cool little added bonus inserts (stickers, repro flyers, frameable photo cards, coloring Pages)! This is so well put together and presented it's an no brainer must have for anyone with good taste that seek the most exalted potentate of love.
Billy Hopeless

Purchase your very own copy here!

LAVENDER SPIKE



Rachel Tremblay
ECW Press
June 23, 2026

It could be something in the air these days, but the dystopian novel has held a particular grasp on my reading list in recent years. Though not expressly horror, a dystopia can convey varying levels of terror, fear, disgust, control, and shock making the two genres not as disparate as they may first appear.

Lavender Spike, a cyberpunk-inspired dystopian journey from author Rachel Tremblay introduces a concept that does seem rather original in a category that can feel a bit wrung out. Tremblay's heroine Izzy is an old-world artist, a "Purist" painter working covertly in a society that values the viscerally provoking work of a select few "Trigger" artists who hold the attention and affection of the masses with their intoxicating creations. This world has abolished religion and yet made a religion out of art instead, and amidst the chaos and conflicting ideologies Izzy is drawn reluctantly toward rebellion.

To be truly effecting a dystopia needs a seed of relatability, an element of instinctive familiarity—that through-line which makes the reader able to envision how the world they know might possibly end up like the one they are reading about. For all of Tremblay's unique approach to the world building, this was something lacking here. I can't help but feel that *Lavender Spike* is a trilogy masquerading as a novel. Enough critical action occurred off-page or in the space of a few sentences that the story suffered, and character interactions at times felt forced, relationships and stakes under-developed. Had the author been afforded the luxury of expanding the offering, I wonder if these issues could have been addressed, however in its current state this does not land among my favourites of the genre.
Laura Phaneuf

FALLEN ONE: BOOK TWO: DESCENSION



Silas Kimola
Independent
June 29, 2026

Though I haven't read *Book One: Inner Demon*, which establishes the foundational lore and initial conflict of the series; Silas Kimola's *Fallen One: Book Two – Descension* picks up that dark energy and plunges into an atmospheric world. *Descension* aims to raise the stakes, delivering a heavy focus on character tension, psychological weight, and narrative momentum.

However, its deliberate, slow-burn pacing makes it a challenging read at times. The narrative prioritizes dark internal conflict and heavy character focus, which will appeal to readers who appreciate a dense, methodical build-up. While the slow momentum wasn't quite my style, Kimola's strong sense of tone and dedication to dark worldbuilding shine through, making it a noteworthy pick for dedicated indie dark fantasy fans.
Demonika

HORROR PUPPET: THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF A CINEMA SURVIVOR



Charles Band
Full Moon Empire Incorporated
September 15th 2026

In their second book, filmmaker and Full Moon Features head honcho Charles Band and comedy writer Adam Felber catch readers up on Band's life since the publication of *Confessions of a Puppetmaster* in 2021. But while *Confessions* dived deep to create a rich comic history of a cinematic mad man, *Horror Puppet* serves as a fun light comedy about trying things.

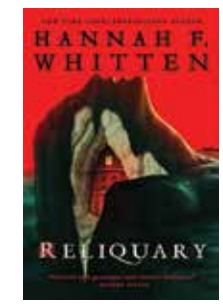
With a brisk 122 pages, the book has no real central story, as is typical in a memoir, but instead each chapter (aside from the "Featurettes") chronicles Band's venture into something new: buying real estate for productions in Cleveland, getting into the olive oil business, partnering with a Chinese entertainment company, AI filmmaking. Every one of these tales is told in a casual and comical style, as if Band is sitting down with you at a bar telling you everything after a couple of rounds, complete with tales of stealing electricity from the city of Cleveland and your wife finding a porn star naked on your bed.

The three "Featurettes" offer the book's most compelling reads for the die-hard Full Moon fan. Each is a short dive into events from earlier in Band's career and how they shaped him as an artist and businessman. The most interesting of which chronicles the rediscovery and completion of the 2025 film *Cutter's Club*, a nearly lost film starring the late great Tony Todd. For fans of *Confessions of a Puppetmaster*, this featurette reminds one of the saga to salvage 2023's *The Primevals*.

Band and Felber don't dig deep on topics that larger memoirs might, such as the loss of Band's son of the moral complexities of AI filmmaking, and while this leaves much to be desired (AI critics will be annoyed) but ultimately don't harm the story being told.

If you're looking for a light fun read about modern independent horror filmmaking, *Horror Puppet* will fill those desires.
Matthew Silva

RELIQUARY



Hannah F. Whitten
Orbit Books
August 11, 2026

As any seasoned horror fan knows, the sea off coastal Maine is a veritable playground for eldritch entities. With such a storied legacy, it is no surprise that Hannah Whitten chose this locale as the springboard off which to dive into the horror genre.
After her fiancé dies unexpectedly, Claire finds herself drawn into the sphere of influence of his wealthy and estranged relations. The Ashbury family, holders of an immense marine exploration empire, invite Claire to join them in mourning at Harrow Point, their monumental cliffside edifice of a home. While initially disarmed by their warm reception—really, this is the family her Elias refused to introduce her to?—Claire begins to feel like there is more to this funerary gathering than she is being told. There are undercurrents present in this novel that hint to the author's previous experience in the "romantasy" genre, but Whitten ensures they don't overshadow the atmosphere she has conjured. While *Reliquary* does suffer from such ailments as inconsistent pacing and a somewhat bland protagonist, it hits all the marks one might expect from an entry into the coastal horror catalogue. From mutated acolytes to old gods and infernal pacts, this will certainly help assuage the craving for something of Lovecraftian flavour.
Laura Phaneuf

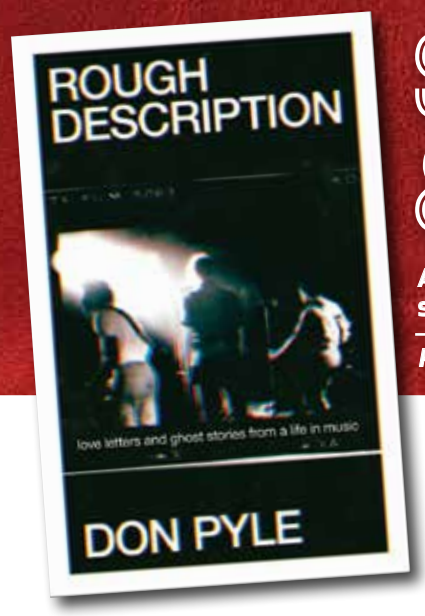
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KATHE KOJA. *THE CIPHER*

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THANK YOU TO



STATIC, NOISE, & SHADOWY MEN



A conversation with Don Pyle on documenting the scene, surviving the noise, and calling Toronto home.

***ROUGH DESCRIPTION* | Published May 26, 2026 | ECW PRESS**

Interview by Demonika

Don Pyle's memoir *Rough Description* isn't a polished corporate victory lap—it's a grimy, heart-rending, loud-as-hell descent into Toronto's early independent punk/alt-rock underground. Pyle strips away rock-and-roll mythology to expose the raw nerve of a life built on noise, luck, and the relentless DIY hustle. From getting flung through a car windshield as a kid to dodging homophobia and flying glass in basement venues, to co-founding Shadowy Men on a Shadowy Planet, here counts a life shaped by oddballs, loss, cheap gear, and absolute creative conviction. An affectionate yet unsparing portrait of art born out of survival, community, and the sheer urge to make something real before the lights go out. Many Canadian music fans will be sure to enjoy this memoir.

AU: A lot of aging punks write books to claim territory or brag about being "the first." *Rough Description* completely avoids that posturing in favour of vulnerability and observational detail. How intentional was your effort to kill off your own ego while writing this memoir?

Don Pyle: There are very few people that can claim to be the first of anything, and there are only a handful of musicians who can claim to be the first. Stravinsky? Esquerita? Everything is built on the haunches of those who came before us. I never thought once about killing my ego or having a very intentional point of view, and I generally find most displays of ego rather repulsive. I wrote from my own point of view, which is often one of sensitivity, vulnerability and truth. Hopefully I've learned some things from past examples of other peoples books or behaviour. I've read lots of auto/bios, particularly from musicians, and so many follow the same path and don't give me what I want. I wanted to write what I wanted to read.

AU: The early punk scene in Toronto came with plenty of posturing, substance abuse, and rough environments. How did you manage to stand your ground and stay true to who you were back then?

DP: I've certainly done a lot of stupid things along the way to today and although I'm essentially the same, I'm also different. These are complex questions to answer! Maybe the answer is you just do it by doing it. Everything along the way contributes to how you get through things. I hate feeling like shit in the morning so it's easy for me to have not got caught up too deeply in drugs or alcohol. I like to get things done. Like the previous question, I rarely felt like I was standing my ground, but more just doing things as I wanted to or how I would want them to be done. There's lots of dumb detours along the way but I feel like I learned from those and adjusted for when they came back around again.

AU: The chapter about your older brother Albert highlights how much his generosity expanded your artistic and personal worldview. How did that relationship influence the way you later interacted with other artists and collaborators in the music scene?

DP: I don't know if I could ever separate out Albert's influence in my music experience. One really significant experience was him letting me pick guinea pigs destined for experiments from the university lab to take home as pets. I think it's an important thing for most kids to see shit like a slaughterhouse or an animal lab so they know the reality of animal treatment. I was really bothered by that idea as a kid. That situation lumps together with other experiences we have, that make us aware of the world around us, aware of the treatment of animals, nature, people. Being an "other" - in my case most obviously being gay - made me aware of how differences lead to discrimination/oppression of others. One way Albert contributed to my experience working with others was to be open to things outside of your frame of reference. I discovered Ravi Shankar because of Albert! I had no context to understand or be familiar with the music he made at all but in the context I was hearing it in, it blew my mind! Kindness, patience and fairness are good things to lead with in any situation.

AU: Shadowy Men created one of the most recognizable TV themes in Canadian comedy history for *The Kids in the Hall*, yet you've spent decades hustling across odd jobs, scoring indie films, and DIY releases. What is the weirdest gap between public perception of your "success" and the actual economic reality of being a working artist in Toronto?

DP: I never felt like I was "hustling" but more that I was a working person like anyone else and sometimes you do things because you have to, not because they are your #1 priority. The biggest gap in doing anything creative is people's understanding that you are actually working. I've learned that many people think a book, or song, or photograph you made was somehow just lying around your home and you just picked it up in a bag and put it out there. Definitely the biggest gap between reality and people's fantasy is that if you have been on TV, you are rich! Even my own mother thought that and it was always her way of introducing me to others. "He's on TV! You know that show…" Being a working artist now is so different from when I started and it's only from some lucky/smart choices I made along the way that I can continue being an artist. For almost everyone, including me, that means having some kind of job, which wasn't the case for a long time.

AU: The subtitle calls these "Love letters and ghost stories…". With so many peers, bandmates, and early influences no longer here, what do you hope this book captures about them that standard music histories miss?

DP: I wanted them to be acknowledged for who they really were, or at least who they were to me. I wanted some of the lesser know things about them to be seen in a greater light. I think about my bandmate in Shadowy Men, Reid Diamond, specifically. To many in the visual arts scenes he was in, his band was secondary. For people that knew him through bands, his visual art practice was almost invisible. Both of those things crossed over and informed each other so much and were a significant part of the whole. In the case of someone like Steve Albini, it was as simple as conjuring many of the memories of our times together and documenting them. It's pretty standard practice now to say that Steve was more multi-dimensional and caring than the general persona of him, and my chapter is part of that. I wanted to express the *feeling* of some of the people I wrote about, and as significantly, what an influence they were on me. In writing about Albert, or Louie Beeson for example, I recognize that these are not widely known people but almost everyone we encounter has some kind of great story, or way of being that impacts others, whether they know it or not. Most music histories that read focus on facts more than emotional experiences. I wanted to really be inclusive of the feelings I had about some people or things, and contextualize them with facts.

AU: Looking back at the journey of gathering those images, ephemera, and memories into the book, how has that process of looking through the rear-view mirror influenced how you see yourself as a musician, artist, and person today?

DP: One thing this gathering and writing does is create a dangerous sort of memory hole. When you write extensively about something, and then have to read it over and over again as you write, rewrite, edit, your true experiences can easily slip into being "stories" that supersede true memories. The story overwhelms the nuance of the true memory and distorts it. Eventually it can overtake reality and shave off all the connecting points between various events and situations that I write about. To describe how I see myself today is too detailed to even write and should probably be saved for pillow talk or the analyst's couch.

AU: What does your relationship to the local music community look like today—are you still actively drawn to live shows and new bands, or do you find your participation in the scene has evolved into a different kind of role entirely?

DP: I still play in a band, Long Branch, and still go to rehearsal on my bicycle every week. I think about most things in musical terms. I go see lots of bands but not nearly as many as I once did. I find my position as one of the oldest people at many shows I go to inevitably makes me an observer more than a participant, and quite often invisible to younger people. I don't always want to be down front, but find myself watching and taking in people's behaviour, the way they communicate with one another and how they present themselves. I see the self-consciousness of youth much more and usually that tickles me. It's very cute. It's definitely part of my changed feeling about hardcore, for example, and the formalized behaviours that happen at hardcore shows. Now I see that behaviour as kids acting out established ways of expressing themselves as much as it is a true creative expression.

AU: Lastly, who are you reading and listening to these days?

DP: I really dig Rollie Pemberton's *Ways of Listening*. I think he's as analytic about the connections between music, presentation, activism, and cultural position as I am, but from a different cultural and generational perspective. I've just begun *A Nation of Tinkerers: A History of Electronic Music in Canada from 1945 to 1985*, by Michael Rancic. Thirty pages in and I'm so stimulated by it!

Musically, the summer was definitely the season of the Dallas Good and Richard Reed Parry collaboration album, *Were the Watchtowers*. Ten years or more in the making, it was brought to completion by Richard and a couple of other collaborators after Dallas's unexpected death. It's a weighted album for sure, full of emotion for me and other friends of Dallas's.

Fiver Trois presents Cleaning House, by Fiver is my other recent obsession. I was blown away by how incredible and fluid the band was when they passed through town right when the album came out. I'm glad to have that visual sense memory to apply to these very unusual songs that are founded in traditional folk but take so many unexpected and confounding excursions. It's dense but also just four or five people playing music.

thedonpyle.com
Instagram: @thedonpyle

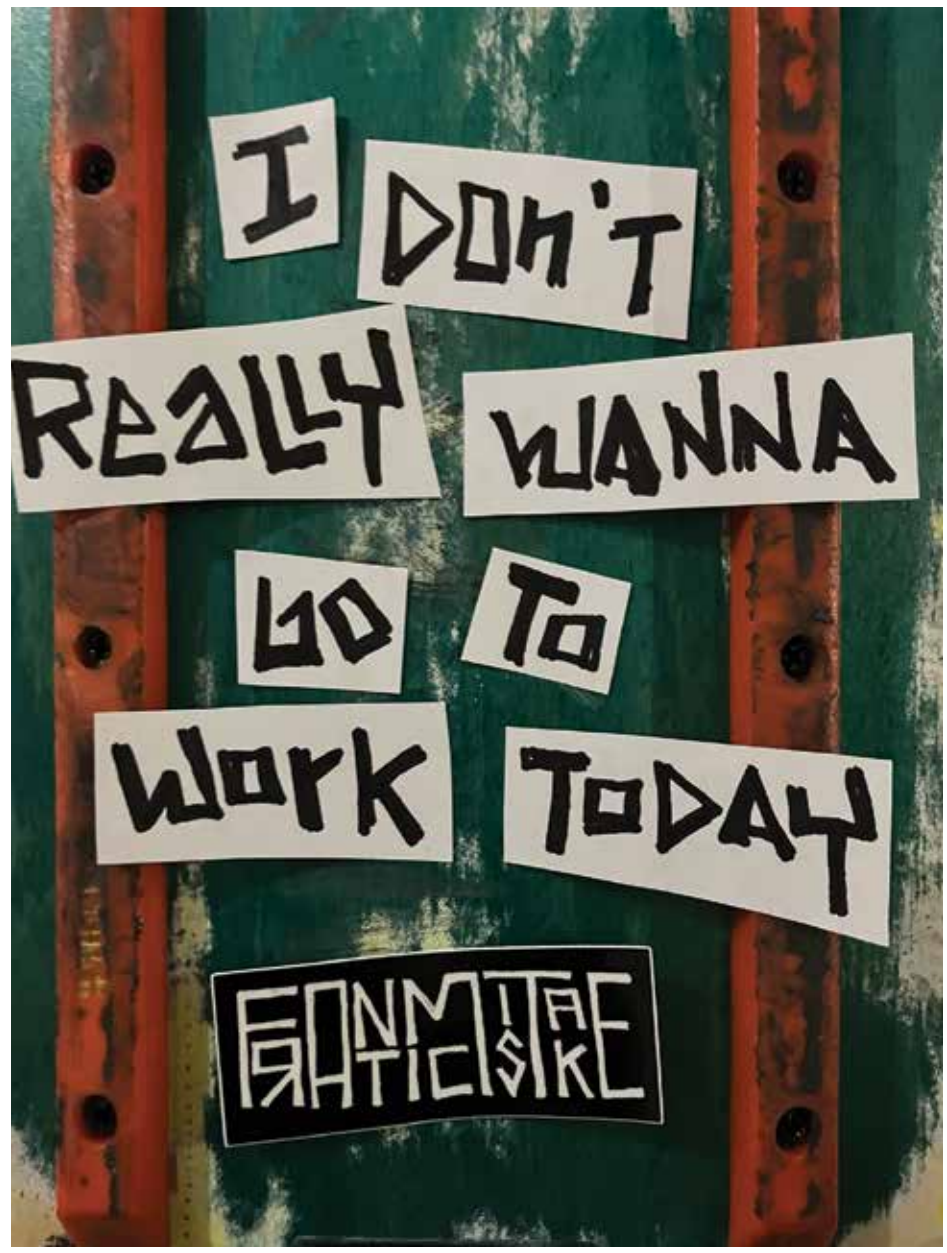
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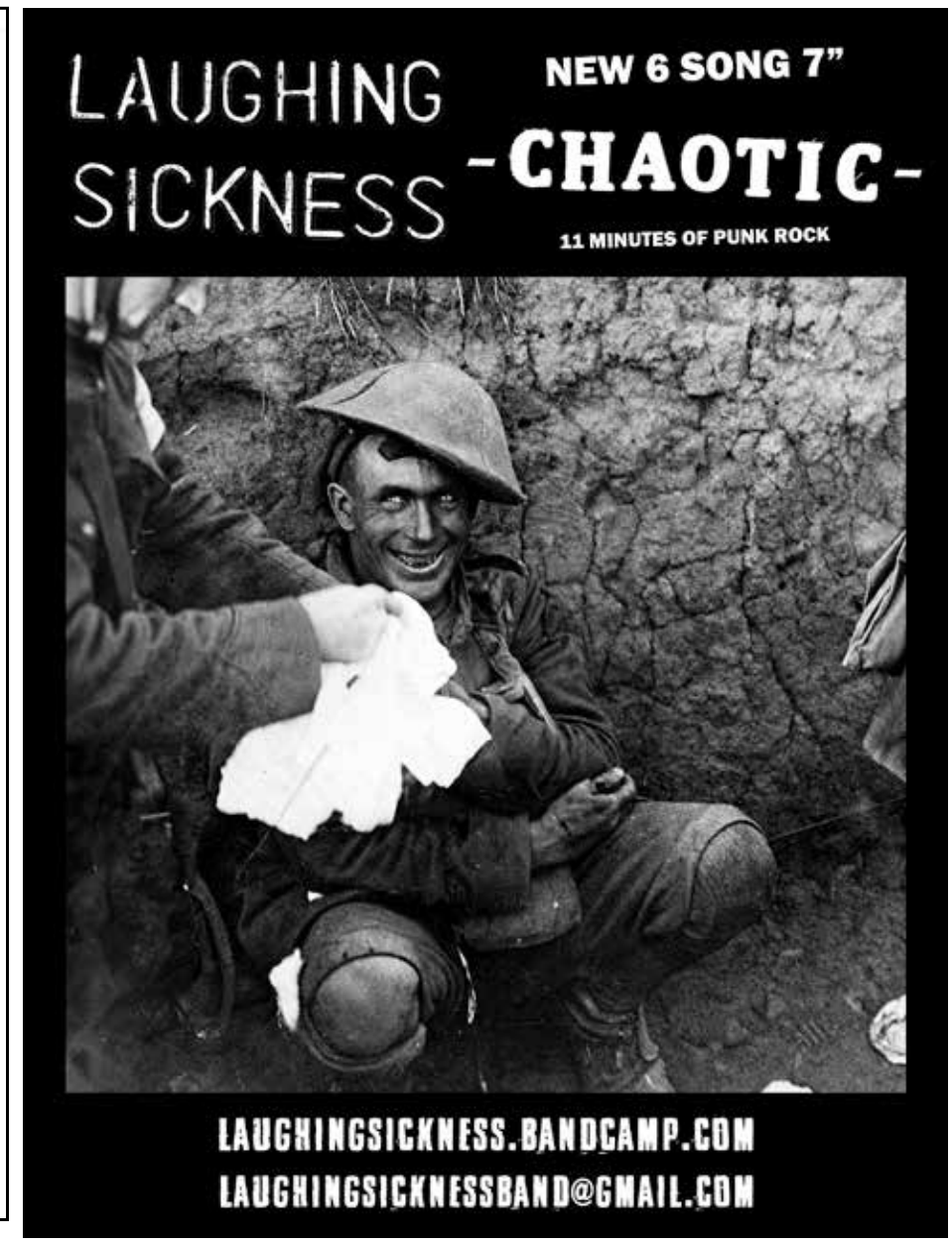
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Absolute Snacks Reviews

DORITOS ROLL'D Nachos Supreme



Have you heard the tale of Black Nailed Jack? Legend says that in the 1980s he was a humble bookshop clerk who lost his mind after reading some forbidden literature and was later accused of attempting to spread that occult wisdom to innocent ears.

Eventually a band of vigilante citizens locked him up in a wooden box and drowned him in an abandoned East Vancouver train tunnel, where the mud was deep enough to bury a body or two.

But according to local legend, he didn't stay buried, and during the months when the ground grows soft it's said that he uses arcane methods to slip the surly bonds of death and returns to prowl the lands once more, seeking innocent blood to sate his thirst for unholy vengeance.

I enjoyed the nacho-esque flavour of these chips, and the Roll'd form made for a satisfying crunch, with the tubular form giving the so-called chip a form more similar to a cheese-puff than a naturally occurring corn-chip.

However, the addition of additional jalapeno spicing, thereby raising the hot-spice-rating of the chip, was not something I had been asking for, and was not entirely appreciated.

DORITOS ROLL'D Fiery Lime



Black Nailed Jack crawled his way back out of his muddy grave, so the story goes, and now he hunts the present day residents of the neighbourhood where that heinous crime was enacted against him, taking pleasure in allowing others to experience the horrors he's experienced himself.

It's said he lives an eternal unlife in the cold wet dirt, and spends that time waiting for a chance to reach out of the murky depths - grasping his hands about his victim's ankle and dragging them back down with him, to sink forever in an eternity of muck and misery.

A blind hell where there is no light to see by, hands grasping at the darkness. Nothing to hold on to.

I initially avoided the Fiery Lime chips, as they had a hot-spice rating of "extreme," the highest and hottest of the ratings, and my wife has requested that I not put my anal glands at risk simply to inform you of a chip that tastes of lime.

I bought a small bag for a sample, and found them intriguing though ultimately unpleasant. Nasty little things.

DORITOS ROLL'D Dill Pickle Blast



Sometimes you'll be standing on solid cement, or even on the hard linoleum of a supermarket floor, and you'll feel the surface beneath your shoes start to shift, growing pliant and soupy, like a thick mud pit with no bottom.

That's Black Nailed Jack coming for you.

And if you're smart, you'll get moving before you see his hands, those sickened, damaged hands with fingernails as dark as the inky sap found leaking from old pine trees, reaching out for you from a murky depth that should not be.

My advice is that you turn and run. Find light, find noise, find people. You don't want him to put those hands on you when you're all alone.

Lately all the Dill Pickle chips have gone heavy on the hot spices, so these were a welcome repast from all that, a Dill Pickle chip that reminded me just a bit of Cool Ranch. Something inviting creamy about these chips, like they hold on to a remnant of the sensation of dipping a plainly salted corn chip into a fresh dill dip.

COVERED BRIDGE CREAMY DILL PICKLE



Can't seem to escape dill flavouring these days; It's like there's an abundance of the stuff, with corn and potato chips being expected to deal with the excess.

These potato chips were not a brand familiar to me, but they were as deeply fried as I was when I ate them, giving them a most satisfying crunch. I thought I detected a hint of chives, and ultimately, they did not disappoint.

Have you ever felt the hands of Black Nailed Jack? Reaching out to grasp one foot, pulling you down into the depths of a darkness so absolute your mind recoils at the concept.

You want to scream, but know that if you do the mud will force its way into your mouth, down your throat and into your lungs, your stomach. The mud will become you, absorbing into your body.

Until you become aware that your own nails are black as pitch, that you hunger for company in your dark solitude. And perhaps then in that darkness you'll realize that you've always been there. You've been Black Nailed Jack from the very beginning. It was the rest of your life that was just a dream.

And nobody wants that.

KELLOGG'S Chocolate Peanut Butter FROSTED FLAKES



Sometimes I stand before the gaping maw of capitalistic consumption and I ask, "What more do you want?"

I've seen the creature that haunts our societies. Its skin pockmarked with surging pustules, each squeezed to reveal a new flavour of Halloween candy. Its multitudinous eyes gleaming like a wall of cathode ray televisual tubes, reflectively screaming adverts for remarkably amazing new products.

In one of its million hands it holds a long silver sickle, which it uses to cut open its own stomach, revealing the many treasures its consumed over generations of following our species - treasures not meant to be hoarded, but repackaged and resold, over and over and over again, replicating industrialized processes with a faint zeal for novelty, insisting that incongruent concepts be merged, again and again. Again and again. Like a nightmare of endless awakenings, or a single sock, twisted forever in a ceaseless drier cycle.

This cereal kinda reminded me of another cereal from my own childhood, Cocoa Pebbles. If you can imagine a bowl of tasty chocolate scabs, you're most of the way there.

— Hank Pattison

Absolute Film Reviews

JACKASS: BEST AND LAST



Sometimes adding to something doesn't make it better...

I was into seeing the original characters such as Johnny Knoxville, Steve-O and Wee Man.... But who are these new assholes? Part of what I enjoyed about Jackass is the camaraderie between the cast, and when you add these new random characters, it loses something.

Okay, I guess the idea is to have the old guys abuse these new guys? Fair enough.

For the nostalgic there is also a bunch of unreleased footage, as well as previously released classics like the late Ryan Dunn's "toy car" stunt. Even some homages to classic stunts.

When you compare the archival footage with the new stunts, the archival footage is much better. Punchy, to the point, and without the more-annoying-than-a-sitcom cast laugh track that the new stunts feature.

It was a good time. There were a couple scenes I skipped through because I felt the urge to vomit. Stuff with veins and bodily fluids. At an hour and 32 minutes, it doesn't wear out its welcome.

It mostly gives Jackass fans what they expect and desire. And it's cool for me to see the unreleased footage of the young cast. Ryan Dunn, rest in peace.

— Luke Lester

THE SAMURAI AND THE PRISONER



The Kiyoshi Kurosawa (no relation to Akira) directed samurai mystery / historical drama is based on the novel of the same name by Honobu Yonezawa.
The film is in the original Japanese with subtitles.

The film tells a story in a year split into seasons starting with winter. It is one of intrigue and twists and turns, as a Japanese feudal samurai lord tries to figure out how best to resolve a conflict between countries and who is behind the fighting.

The film is lengthy, coming in at nearly two and a half hours. I'm generally an advocate of films around the one and a half hour mark, and think that films of this length are rarely justified. There isn't necessarily filler material in the film but there are a lot of slow scenes that make the movie more of a poetic style film.

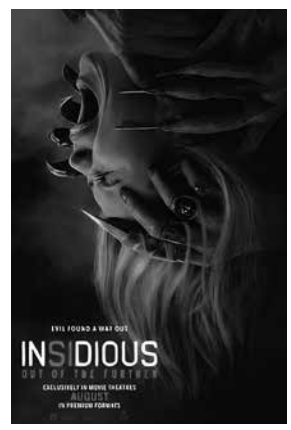
The film looks awesome with a lot of great natural shots, and (mostly) modern production. The film glorifies the honour culture of the samurai.

Even though there is a relatively serious tone, there are jokes, quirky characters and jovial moments that break up the tension such as some comical tea pouring scenes.

A little long for me, but a pretty solid, if slow, piece of samurai art.

— Luke Lester

INSIDIOUS: OUT OF THE FURTHER



When the next entry in the Insidious franchise is merely a play on words about what is important, just how well *Insidious: Out of the Further* stays fresh depends on who you ask, and whether it's possible not to make a joke or pun out of it. The farther away the producers get from the general premise of the IP, the better new entries will become. When this supernatural waystation functions in the way I theorize, and the people standing there are wanting a conductor to help guide them, that's this movie in a nutshell.

Souls stuck in this realm can't move on. That's either because of their own doing or a demon's grip on stopping them from entering Heaven. Well, that's until Elise Rainier (Lin Shaye) guides them out of the grey and into the light. Surely, Heaven must exist. But when there are three Acolytes of Cyrus (the big bad evil guy in this film, eerily played by Sam Spruell) who have managed to punch a hole into the world of the living and stay there, they need to find someone else who can help with the transition!

And when Gemma Hall (Amelia Eve) is targeted, it's safe to say her daughter Maya (Island Austin) is also a victim! When three generations of Hall women function similarly, being able to venture into The Further as astral plane travellers, their ability isn't really made known until much later in the movie. However, anyone who knows their occult theory can easily figure out parts of this film's internal logic.

But as for unanswered questions, like Elise's relationship to Claire, a tattoo artist who becomes an unlikely ally, that needs to be addressed. Yes, there are plot holes. I wanted more backstory concerning Gemma's "recovery" from what she witnessed as a child to becoming an adult. There's also the question of when she found time to date and have her child. Maybe her husband left her, making her feel distant, but I'm only guessing. Had there been more dramatic nuance, I'd love this film more, but as it stands, the movie is serviceable. It exists for fans who want to know if the red door will ever close, and that's just one question I shouldn't answer. You'll just have to see this film for yourself.

3 Stars out of 5
— Ed Sum

AACHI & SSIPAK



Aachi & Ssipak is one of those strange, animated works that needs to be seen to be believed. If it's even remotely possible to say this movie is a product born from visual tropes popularized by other works, like *Ren and Stimpy* meets *South Park*, then that's this bizarre South Korean work in a nutshell. It won't be for everyone either, due to its very adult content; but it's available to screen on Darkroom, a streaming platform that's building a solid reputation as a place for the bizarre and underappreciated.

For a film that's totally whacked out, the concept is actually quite novel. Whether there's any truth to turning methane from excrement into fuel has been the subject of speculation for some time. Here, Aachi (Ryu Seung-beom) and Ssipak (Lim Chang-jung) are two hustlers just trying to make a living when they cross paths with Ippunyi (Hyun Young), a woman whose extraordinary ability to produce the precious commodity with a very specific chemical structure makes her a gold mine. When Ssipak becomes smitten, their antics and newfound fortune quickly attract the attention of the violent Diaper Gang (and no, they are not Smurfs), while the government sends its ruthless cyborg police to clean up the mess.

What happens is a gloriously vulgar, hyperactive collision of action, science fiction, and black comedy as the triko find themselves caught in the middle of a very strange battle for the future of Shit City. When the former looks like Dexter from Dexter's Laboratory and the latter looks as though he dematerialized from *The Grim Adventures of Billy & Mandy*, the similarities are unmistakable! While they're nothing like their American counterparts, what they represent is still very punk.

Jo Beom-jin's film was originally released in 2006, and it has been out of circulation for a long time. While I can say that this work has a very crass animation style, the fact that it has a following and has been remastered for its 20th anniversary says more than anything else. The 2K cleanup looks very clean and crisp. Also, the CGI actually holds up, even though this work debuted back when digital was making waves in the production pipeline. Some backgrounds are obvious and others not. Whether manic animation is worth watching, that depends on what's your poison, and this film is no holds barred when showing the outcome.

4 Stars out of 5
— Ed Sum

THE METAL MESSIAH'S BACK!



The Metal Messiah is back, and he's proudly 4K! It's safe to say there'll be a blu-ray release of this piece of cult cinema, and for those who didn't see it at Fantasia Film festival this year, that's okay. When compared to the stylings of Iggy Pop and Ziggy Stardust, I'm sure either would've appreciated what writer-director Tibor Takács (*The Gate, Sabrina the Teenage Witch*) accomplished back when it was first released. For those who haven't seen this work, the story moves like a piece of hard-boiled detective fiction colliding with *This Is Spinal Tap*, only with a more philosophical edge.

There's a PI named Philip Chandler (Richard Ward Allen) wandering Toronto's streets and rock clubs as though searching for someone. That individual is The Messiah (David Jensen of the band Kickback), an alien who believes humanity must be saved from this strange phenomenon called heavy metal, hence the film's title. Where the story goes requires attention. After landing on Earth to save humanity from consumerism, greed and celebrity culture, he ironically becomes part of the machine he's trying to dismantle. Rather than turn away from its influence, people flock to him as though he is a god, making the title all the more fitting.

Rather than using fame as a weapon, The Messiah becomes consumed by it. His message is commercialized, his image becomes a product, and his sacrifice is meant to break the hold that music and celebrity have over society.

Viewers unfamiliar with the era that shaped this film shouldn't find it difficult to decipher. Between visual nods to Brian De Palma's *Phantom of the Paradise* and Richard O'Brien's *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, Takács wears his influences proudly. Humanity appears doomed, with little hope of escaping its obsession with spectacle.

Mike Danna and Tim Clement receive credit for assembling the soundtrack, and the featured vocalists include Moses, Mickey Posner and Jimmy Norman, but one question remains. Where is this soundtrack? Could it stand alone as a concept album? Considering the detective's spoken-word passages and the film's old-school multimedia presentation, I believe it could. It just needs the dialogue preserved alongside the music.

As for the production design, kudos go to Takács and Stephen Zollar for crafting a theatrical world that intentionally feels confined. Even as The Messiah accepts his imminent sacrifice, not even his departure can truly change the world around him. Everyone wants to shake it up, not turn it down, aliens be damned.

4 Stars out of 5
— Ed Sum

Deathgasm II



It's been eleven long years since the release of Deathgasm, and with the film earning legendary cult status, some fans have long wondered if there'd ever be a sequel. Well, there's good news at good rockin' tonight: Deathgasm II: Goremageddon was made a little over a year ago and released to crowdfunding backers first; after a year of fine-tuning, it's ready to scream and shout for the masses. It's louder, cruder and perhaps also bloodier than I remember.

Admittedly, I had to rewatch the first film before this one, and I can confirm a lot has changed, and for the better. Everyone has grown older, greyer and maybe fatter.

What's revealed, along with the consequences of Brodie's actions, is that he hasn't changed at all. He wants to enter the local battle of the bands, get the girl, and scratch that itch. Medina (Kimberly Crossman) left him, and he's not taking that departure too well. There's some plot development concerning why she can't put up with him anymore, and without stability in their life, not everything can be as heavy metal as before.

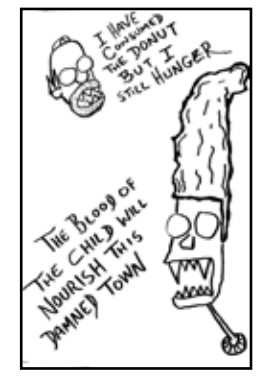
What makes this film better than the usual 80s horror rom-com is that the two have genuine chemistry on screen, and I can't see this film working until they reconcile. It's nothing mind-blowing, but it keeps things grounded as chaos and the undead erupt everywhere! With Jason Lei Howden returning to write and direct, there's more gore, bad jokes, and body-part mutilations on display (this movie is definitely NSFW).

As for who the big bad is, Brodie only has himself to blame. After bringing back former bandmates to life, Zakk (James Joshua Blake) and Dion (Sam Berkley) eventually become musical rivals. With this more straightforward plot, what's presented is easy to follow and headbang to. The music is just as good, and for fans hoping for a two-pack home video release, only time will tell, Raven Banner's confirmed digital so far. The sequel really needs viewers to know the events from the first film; standalone, it isn't. When being alone is what Brodie fears most, just where this film concludes suggests life can be fine, once everyone makes amends.

4 Stars out of 5

-- Ed Sum













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Absolute Album Reviews

LEX LEGION — Lex Legion

I really didn't know what to expect before I put the headphones on and started listening to this new album from Lex Legion.

Composed of former King Diamond and Motorhead members. I was certainly intrigued by what I was about to hear. All Members except vocalist Nils K.Rue played together with King Diamond in the late 1980s.

Five great individual musicians with years of practice of their trade have come together to create an album with heavy guitar riffs and melodic scaling implanted to give the listener an immersed listening experience. Reminiscent of late-70s and 80s rock and metal, featuring darker, slightly gothic or spooky atmospheres alongside soaring vocals. The musical score in the song "Far Away" seems to put you in a trance all the while making your focus go deep within yourself, at least for me personally. It took a few listens to really appreciate the caliber of musical talent on this Album by Lex Legion. The band consists of vocalist Nils K. Rue, guitarists Andy LaRocque and Pete Blakk, bassist Hal Patino, and drummer Mikkey Dee.

There's no telling what they would accomplish as a band if they formed together 30 years ago. It's a great listen.

— Rouge

ORM — *Slaughtered Souls*

Album starts like a whirlwind with track Itchy Scratchy, and the whole album is a brutal attack on the senses ending on track "Afterlife Dismemberment". This is a deep dive into death metal, with hints of grind and black metal assaulting your ears and lyrics to invade your nightmares. It is a wall of wicked guitars and raging growling vocals, beastial drums, true metal played fast, precise and unrelenting. If you want to add some adrenaline to your day turn this album to ten and chug some black coffee, making the heart rate shoot up. Killer metal, not for the weak of heart. Good for a violent moshpit or for really pissing off the neighbours. Horns up. Check out the full album on Bandcamp. Serious heaviness.

— Matt Norris

DUEL BLACK — *Fer F#%$ Sakes*

This four song EP reminds me of all the best punk shows I ever went to. Loud music, drinking, smoking, headbanging, sweating and bouncing around like a maniac. Awesome energy and high speed tempos, raw vocals and good production make this Thunder Bay Canada a band to definitely see and hear live. Songs like "Gutter to the Grave" and "Slow Dancing with your Ghost" make my head bob and make the beers flow. This is the real deal punk rock, no pop or fluff just true down and dirty Canadian punk rock gold. Look for the release Oct. 23rd and send them your hard earned bux for some merch. These guys would be energetic and ass-kicking live without question. Thumbs up. Good vibes and great times.

— Matt Norris

CRIMINAL HERO — *Walk Through the Fire*

Charismatic raw rock n fukin roll, mix in a shot of old school punk and anthemic choruses and you are Walking Through the Fire. Criminal Hero reminds me of old friends and fun times and great live shows. I am always happy when I get to review a good new band, and that is the case here. My feet were tapping like a nervous fool on a weird date through every listen to this album (without the weirdness). My poor chicken in the bathroom with his hanging swollen eyeball was clucking along, this music seemed to calm her. Life on the farm needs more awesome music like this to keep the positivity up and keep the motivational backbeat going. With good response from Canadian and U.S. radio, I personally give them a fukin flying high five and say Play this album out loud. They deserve to be heard. Criminal Hero are from Vancouver B.C.

— Matt Norris

VIOLENT OMEN — *Locomotive of Chaos*

Holy fuck do I love this band from Ukraine. This is thrash metal perfection. Nothing but excellence here. Reminds me of Sacrifice mixed with Kreator and Death (yet better) and of course their own twist on the thrash genre. Song "The 24 Faces of Lunacy" is a damn master class in metal guitar wizardry and kick ass song writing, as are all the rest. All I know is I'm pre-ordering a signed copy of the new album and so should you. Did I mention the onslaught of amazing guitars. Thrash metal/ technical progressive death metal is my favorite music and this shines on top of the heap. The *Locomotive of Chaos* album is the best thing I've reviewed this year by far. Intense, Imaginative, original, brutal and superb production. Fists in the air. Amazing musicians and super cool vocals make this a winner. The train has hit the station. Even the goats were head banging.

— Matt Norris

BAD WAITRESS - *In The Hollow*

The album starts out with the blistering track "I only Like You When I'm Drunk". I've had relationships like that haha. This album shines with the mixing and mastering, very bright and angst ridden production, total pro sound. This sounds like a band that could break into the mainstream with their perfect grunge elements and punkish rawness and superb hard rock n roll attitudes. From Toronto Ontario the new album *In the Hollow* will be released Oct.31st and you should buy it. The songs are written from true emotion about modern themes and introspective human experience, trying to learn from disgust and change. Some bands are good but this band is way better than them. Watch out for the name Bad Waitress and go see them live, you will be blown away. This album is perfect. I heard a coyote outback howling in delight when I played this loud.

— Matt Norris

Gamksimoon – *Gyiin Naxnox*

You've Changed Records, released: July 10, 2026

Jeremy Pahl is a keeper of the Sm'algyax language – of only 56 speakers, he's one of only two under the age of 70. Musically, he's gone from extreme metal and punk rock to a long career in bluegrass folk and southern stylings, with the vision to fuse the best of all he's acquired into this new power trio Gamksimoon (Waterspout). Based in Terrace and Prince George, Karl Wyssen (bass) and Danny Bell (drums) are skilled players in their own right and clearly enjoying the ride.

"Gyiin Naxnox" (Feeding the Supernatural) is a compelling album, incorporating the dynamic traditional rhythms, melodies, and language of the Ts'msyen (Tsimshian) people with standout West Coast heavy rock. From bold and warm soft sections to the bangers and the anthems, it's uncontrived and convincing – and it's from a part of the world we call home.

The lyrics are about harvests, hunting, settlers, animals, supernatural beings, and rumbling with the cops. I don't normally have a favourite band or album of the year, but this is outstanding.

- Jason Flower

gamksimoon.bandcamp.com/album/gyiin-na-xnox

JUDAS PRIEST: '*Sad Wings Of Destiny*' 50th-Anniversary Archival Edition

Too many new vinyl prints are digital mixes pressed onto analogue records. This doesn't make a lot of sense.

So naturally I was suspicious when I got the new 50th anniversary edition of Judas Priest's "Sad Wings Of Destiny". Why should I listen to this instead of my old print? Then I read the hype sticker: This was pressed from the original 1976 analogue master tapes. They have been cleaned up but you are basically getting the same thing as if you bought it back in the day.

In the name of science, I rolled up some hash and listened to this back to back with my 1980 Canadian print (Ovation records). Same equipment, same volume, 1970s style hash joint.

It sounds just like the original. A little brighter but pretty much the same thing. Due to the limited tracks on this recording the stereo is very defined. You can really hear Halford's vocal range and the different guitar tones chosen by Glen and KK. The bass really pops, although the drums are kind of buried in the mix. I've always called this the "Priest album for Sabbath fans". This record is dark... and heavy.

As for the packaging: the cover art is cleaned up as well: less reds and more purples. It's really stunning. There's a nice insert explaining the half-mastering technique they used. Try to get a first run as it is hand poured "splatter prints" making each one an individual collector's item. One note: I'm still a little weary from the horrible sleeves they used for the original "Nostradamus" release so just to be safe the first thing I did was run the record through my cleaner and switch it to a rice paper sleeve.

Bottom line: you aren't going to find an original print in mint condition, this is the way to go. As a long time Priest fan and audiophile vinyl nerd I strongly recommend it.

- Mike Metal

VARIOUS ARTISTS - *Who Won?* A Tribute To Urban Waste CD

Rejected Youth Records

Along with bands like Agnostic Front, The Mob and Armed Citizens, Urban Waste were at the forefront of the first wave of New York hardcore. So it was inevitable that a tribute album to this long running band would surface eventually. Urban Waste gets the cover treatment courtesy of fourteen bands from Brazil, Canada and the USA. Some bands tackle their song choice in a fully straight forward manner while others opt to put their own particular spin on them.

This is a solid collection that should appeal to not only fans of Urban Waste but also anyone that likes first wave USHC. Available on CD, cassette and digital download.

rejectedyouthrecords.bandcamp.com/music

-Grant Forsythe

Brazen Bull - *Last Amen*

From Northwestern Canada (somewhere) Brazen Bulls debut album *Last Amen* is metal at its finest. The song "Burned Alive" starts like a song off *And Justice For All* and switches up to a perfect thrash metal mosh pit maker. Killer riffs, killer band. Song "Misscarriage of Justice" tone wise reminds me of Testament *The Legacy*. The style always dips back to old school styles like the original C.O.C. albums and old Forbidden/ Agnostic Front. The good years you know? Ripping guitars, thumping bass and solid drums with a cool thrash vocalist makes this one of Ontario's top contenders for metal greatness. Send me a copy of this album and trust me it will get played at full volume. *Last Amen* is a perfect album from start to finish. Metal, punk, thrash and harcore genius.

- Matt Norris

Zakula - *Den Evige Lengsel*

One song that runs at 41:50 long from a band with just 2 guitar players and a drummer, no bass (they don't need one). Holy fuck that drummer is given er, whole band is but wow what a drummer. Ok the guitars are blistering too, pure fire riffing. Musical geniuses kicking it up a notch and then some. Let's just say some people are more talented than others are gifted, musically these guys are blessed beyond compare. Black, death, thrash and progressive elements all with perfection production make this album spectacular and unique.

Relentless and inspiring, beyond heavy but passionate and beautiful. The best album of the year. Play it loud just because it rules and makes perfect sense to do so.

- Matt Norris

Howells - *Fade into Being part. 2*

I'm not about to admit I even know what style of music this is. It's poppy but it's hard rock with undertones of prog rock and electronic, and some great metal sections.The song "Dissolve" has so many great dynamic sections and musical variations I'd have to say it's a wee bit of a masterpiece. The whole album is a creative artistic spectacle. A very talented band, mixed with good production makes this a smooth listen. This album has a lot of radio ready songs and so many underlying musical passages from multiple genres that it's a winner for sure. A friendly listen but a colorful vision. Very talented band on every instrument and solid originality makes this a thumbs up easily.

- Matt Norris

YEGG - *Rotten*

The metal scene on Vancouver Island just got a burning kick to the genitals with this album. Pure fukin' evil awesomeness, heavier than your momma. This band plays metal like they want to rip out your eardrums and snap your fukin' neck from doing too much headbanging.

No joke man, if you see these dudes name on a gig poster and you love brutal real metal, go see them and buy some merch. This is metal the way it should sound, crushing and filled with evil vibes. I personally love this album and its genuine massive intensity.

I want a signed copy of this LP in my collection for sure. With that said, Yegg smash faces and has no remorse for being top of the metal heap in Canada.

Satan and I love this shit (and your big old momma too).

- Matt Norris

Blissen - *Seeds in Tar*

I picture Seattle in the early 90's, grunge has deleted hair metal, and basically metal in general. The new era was upon us and a new style of music had taken over the globe. If Blissen had been formed around this time and had their cards played to the right people, we would have seen them opening for Soundgarden and Tool.

Not to dwell on the past but this is a perfect album of music from that era, and it's good new bands are holding the grunge flag alive. Give *Seeds In Tar* a loud play and remember grunge and rock n roll are alive and well.

This album is raw and reminiscent of music that changed the world.

- Matt Norris

Sasquatch Brothers - *Crawdaddies Chewing on Your Corpses Feet*

Vancouver Island's Sasquatch Brothers formed in 2015, releasing multiple albums in different genres, this is no exception. A crossbreed of Nu metal, industrial and satanic violent serial killer raps, this album is a wild ride.

Songs like "Assassin" and "Church of Satan", "Body in the Lake" may give your children nightmares but they are as unique as they are twisted.

This album is a complete makeover for the group, long gone are the reggae songs and happy vibes, this is dark crafts.

"Good Fukin Luck" is a funky rock n roll song with some trippy synthesized parts, makes the head bounce. They always say "Watch out in the forest." and if that's the case and Sasquatchs are really like this, I may never go in the forest again in fear of getting skinned alive.

"Crawdaddies" is all about the severed feet found around Vancouver island on beaches. Good quality subject matter.

"Limits of Intensity" is a dance ska metal crossover which is something I've never heard.

Sasquatch Brothers have over 30 albums on Spotify, give *Crawdaddies Chewing on Your Corpses Feet* a listen. Loonie Bin Metal.

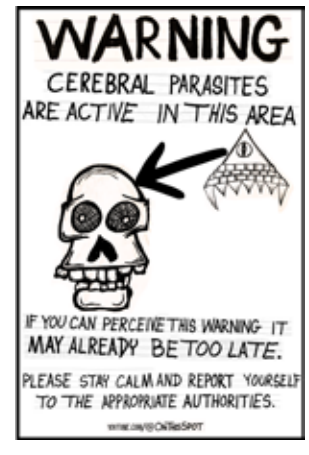
- Matt Norris













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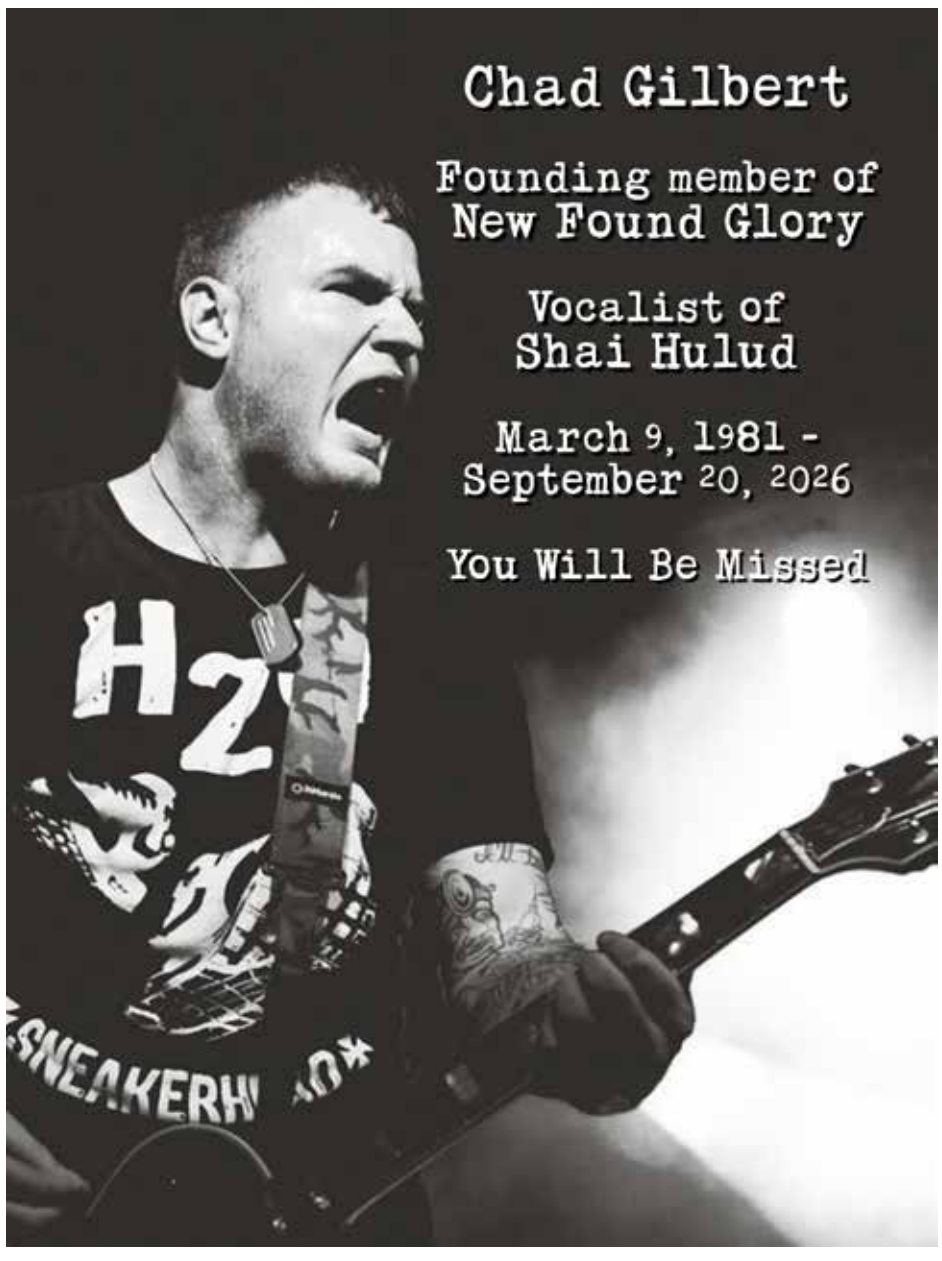
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Previously:

Youth is taken off guard by the judgement enhancer's power over Sherman and Static, who were drawn into their own apocalyptic trips. The band has derailed their career defining gig for the Ontario Works Arts Council. Now, it's payback time!









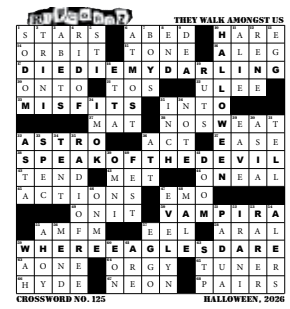
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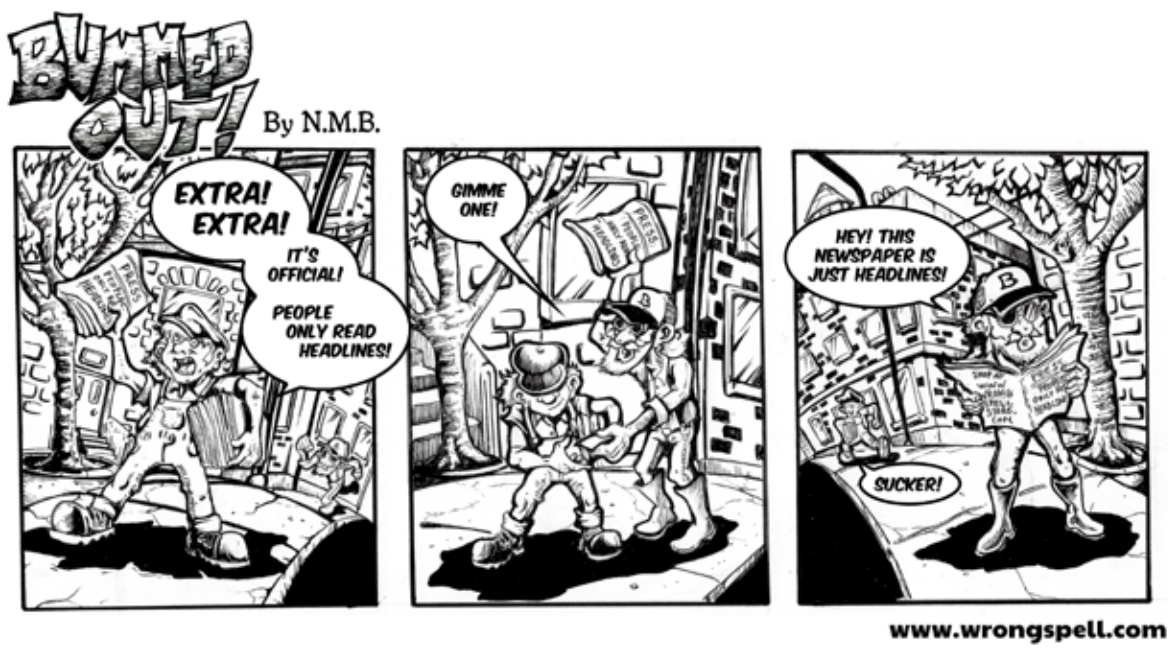


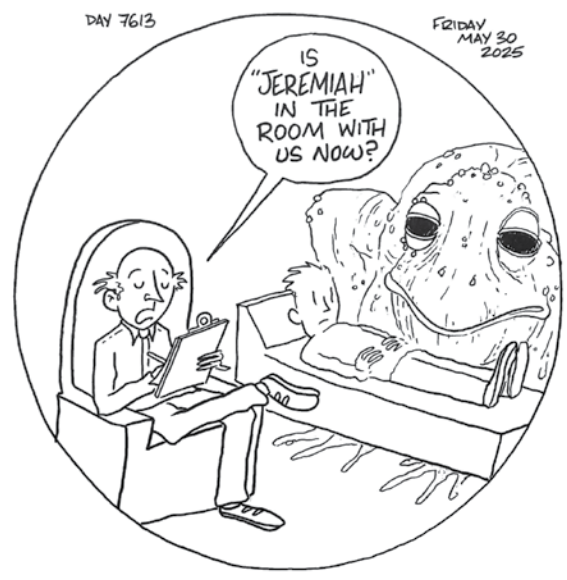










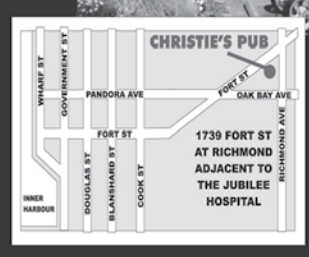


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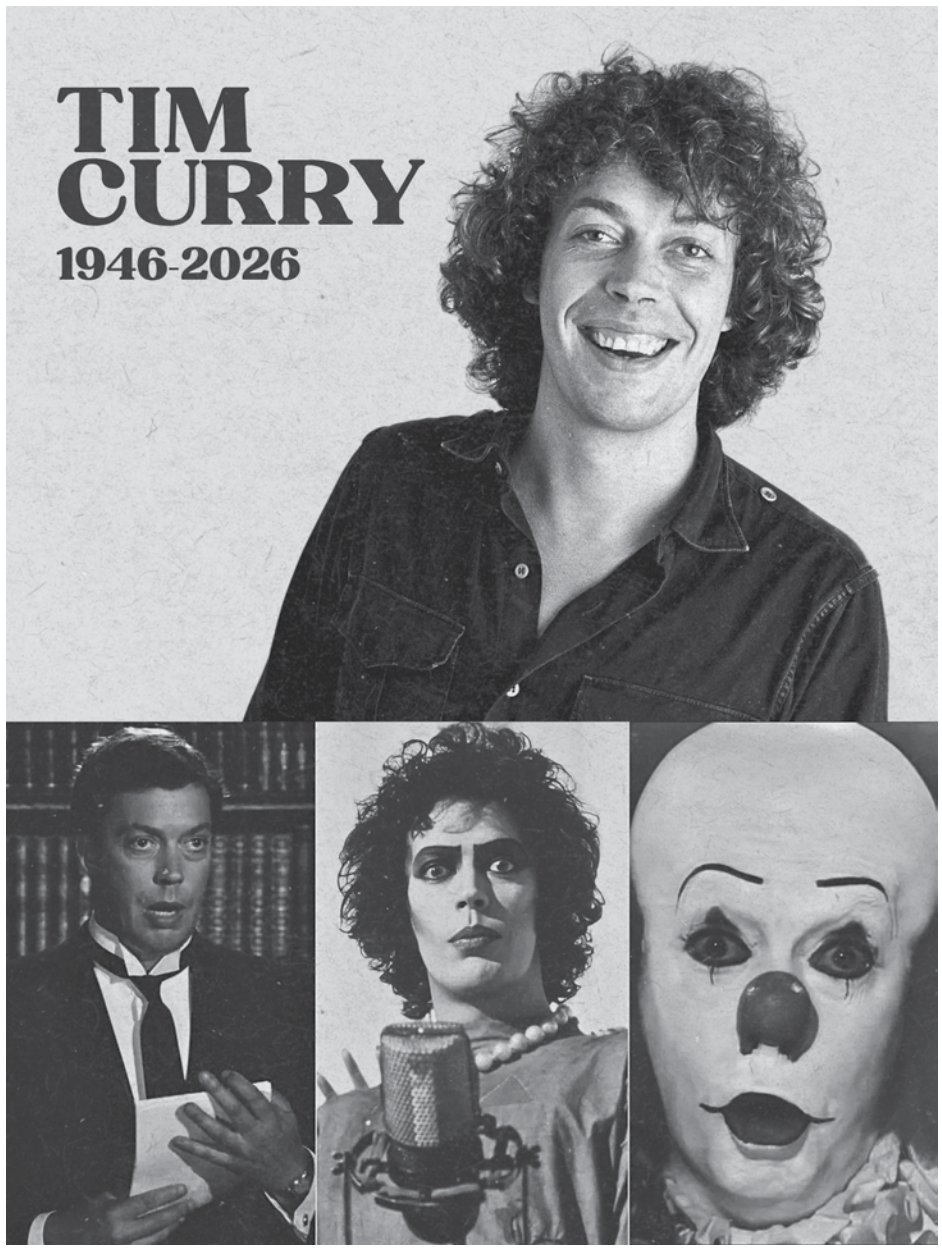
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13 SCARY READS... OR IS THAT 10?

By Ed Sum

This year is marking the return of *Hellraiser*, and that's all anyone really needs to know! It seems Boom! Studios have something in store as we return to the world of the Cenobites, and what these one-shots deliver may well set up something new for fans of Clive Barker's strange new world. Okay, I can't quite say that... maybe bizarre and seething beyond?

However, for any comic book reader, there are other works worth checking out and what I got is a look at graphic novels, miniseries and works safe for kids to consider. Yes, that was hard to pull off, but I looked far and wide, and although one particular release is a touch late, releasing after All Hallow's eve, fans of H.P. Lovecraft must not forget about picking up Gou Tanabe's adaptation of *The Dunwich Horror*. It comes out November 3rd, a few days shy after the fact, and that's okay.

Release dates are scheduled dates and may change.

A GHOST ARM MADE OF ANGRY GHOSTS

Release Date: September 2, 2026

Publisher: Oni Press



Sixteen-year-old Ari Ackerman just witnessed a murder. Or two. Or maybe he didn't. He's not quite sure. What he does know is that he loves the Washington, D.C., punk scene and is trying very hard to process the perpetual impending death (and frequent resurrections) of his cancer-stricken father. Ari's best friend, Maya Meng, just wants to hang out and go see Jawbox play at the Black Cat. But sadly, an escalating series of unexplained deaths can really ruin a perfectly good day.

For readers who like What's the Furthest Place from Here?, Love and Rockets, David Lynch, Daniel Clowes, Seinfeld, Agatha Christie, Powers, Fugazi, and Wes Anderson, A Ghost Arm Made of Angry Ghosts is sure to evoke all the feelings that come with being an outsider, making sense of the world around you, and finding your place in it.

BENEATH THE TREES WHERE NOBODY SEES: HALLOWEEN SPECIAL

Release Date: October 7, 2026

Publisher: IDW Dark



Patrick Horvath joins forces with James Tynion IV (*Something is Killing the Children*), Tony Fleecs (*Stray Cats*), Che Grayson (*Absolute Catwoman*), Dave Wachter (*Uncanny Valley*), Jared Cullum (*Usagi Yojimbo: Kaito 84'*), Tyler Boss (*What's the Furthest Place From Here*), and Matt Emmons (*The Council of Frogs*) for an original one-shot set in the world of *Beneath the Trees Where Nobody Sees!*

Years have passed since Samantha Strong left Woodbrook, but her legend has only grown. Now that the cat is out of the bag, more and more horrific murders have been tied back to her. Some are her doing…others mere folklore…but all absolutely gripping stories featuring everyone's favorite cuddly serial killer. Gather around the campfire on Halloween night with some of the best creators working today and listen as the citizens of Woodbrook spill the beans on Samantha Strong's most terrifying deeds.

FIXATION #1

Release Date: September 9, 2026

Publisher: IDW Crime

When superfan Taylor Van Owens wins a contest to stay in the legendary Mallard house—the most iconic filming location for the hit vampire book turned movie Blood Mountain—she and her best friend Karrah arrive in Vail expecting to sink their fangs into a weekend straight from a fangirl's dream. The cast has reunited for a tenth-anniversary celebration, devotees have descended on the small town, and nostalgia hangs thick in the air. But shortly before their arrival, a young woman is found dead inside the Mallard house.



The death is quickly brushed off as an unstable fan taking her fantasies too far, but rumors swirl as the police quietly open a murder investigation. With cameras rolling and ravenous Blood Mountain buffs to appease, production works overtime to keep the story from leaking, insisting the fandom is "one big family," but unease spreads through the town. Resentful locals, jealous superfans, sensitive actors, and desperate producers overwhelm Taylor as she moves in a haze through meet-and-greets, vigils, and book signings. Every interaction feels loaded. Every corner holds a potential threat. Every vampire has a taste for blood.

HAUNTED COMIC CLUB

Release Date: October 6, 2026

Publisher: Oni Press



Will and Anita are two lonely tweens who find themselves alone together in the art room of the local after school club. After gushing over each other's work—Will's writing and Anita's art—the two team up to make their own comic about a local urban legend—a teen counselor who haunts the club after a tragic demise. Anita and Will research the ghost and develop their story, forming a strong friendship. But can they overcome bullies at the club and problems at home to become great friends and collaborators?

HELLBOY IN HELL: NOTHING BUT BLOOD #1

Release Date: October 7, 2026

Publisher: Dark Horse Comics



Hellboy steps in to save a young woman being chased by winged beasts deep in Hell in the midst of an uprising against the most powerful demons. But nothing—and no one—are what they seem to be. Mike Mignola is joined by artist Cyrille Pomès (Moon, 6,000 Miles to Freedom), colorist Dave Stewart, and letterer Clem Robins for this misadventure in Pandemonium set after the events of Hellboy in Hell #8: "The Hounds of Pluto" Part Two.

HELLO HALLOWEEN #2

Release Date: October 21, 2026

Publisher: BOOM! Studios



The second annual special collects all-new seasonal stories: a Dungeons & Dragons game played inside a real haunted house, Jeffrey Brown's Halloween gross-outs, and a trick-or-treater who receives a dangerous retro video game instead of candy. Despite the issue number, it is a standalone annual special.

HELLRAISER: RESURRECTIONS



Fans of Hellraiser have a lot to love this year! Boom! Studios has a handful of titles, and instead of counting each title, we're offering a list of them all! There is a new comic per week, and what's offered goes from *The Deep Gospel, Hell's Council, New Wounds, The Onanistic Ritual, The Return of the Priest.* Each of them tell a tale on why one particular cenobite is special, and with the last release being special, spotlighting Elliot Spencer, better known as Pinhead, it seems Hell has a special place for him.

According to this particular plot summary, it seems Leviathan's light offers pain, and the Hell Priest seeks to remake himself and gather his Gash once more.

HILLBILLY: THE TREASON OF TWELVE-TOE MAGGIE #1

Release Date: September 30, 2026

Publisher: Dark Horse Comics



Blending Appalachian folk horror, dark humor, and monster-slaying adventure, Hillbilly is a creator-owned dark fantasy comics series from the Eisner award-winning Eric Powell. And if you haven't looked at this series before, now is your chance to jump in! This tale follows the wandering hero Rondel as he faces witches, curses, and supernatural terrors in the hills across multiple comic releases. This character first appeared in the 12-issue Hillbilly series (2016–2018) from Albatross Funnybooks, where he also crossed paths with Buzzard from The Goon universe, before returning in the four-issue miniseries *Hillbilly: Red-Eyed Witchery From Beyond!* (2021).

There are many tales of Rondel which still have yet to be told, and the latest recounts what happened after the great witch war. In order to save an old friend, this hero finds himself in an uncomfortable situation—in the service of his former captor, Twelve-Toe Maggie. Will he break the magical tie that binds him to the twelve-toed witch or will the wielder of the Devil's Cleaver be at her service forever?

JONAH HEX AND THE SHADOW OF DEATH #1

Release Date: October 7, 2026

Publisher: DC Comics



Welcome to the end of the Wild West. Welcome to the quiet life of a broken-down bounty hunter whose own story, one of bloodshed, pain, and guilt, ended long ago—or so he thought.

In a small town called Ashecott, something evil has arrived. Something more dangerous than a gunslinger, more sinister than an outlaw, and older than the town it seeks to infect. Something from a world beyond the only one its victims have ever known. Something darker. Unfortunately for that evil, Jonah Hex has taken notice. Not just of the otherworldly entities surrounding his home or the child with mysterious abilities they seek to capture—but also of the chance to finally redeem himself. Join master of horror Michael Walsh (*Exquisite Corpses*) as he begins a terrifying new era of DC's most infamous bounty hunter!

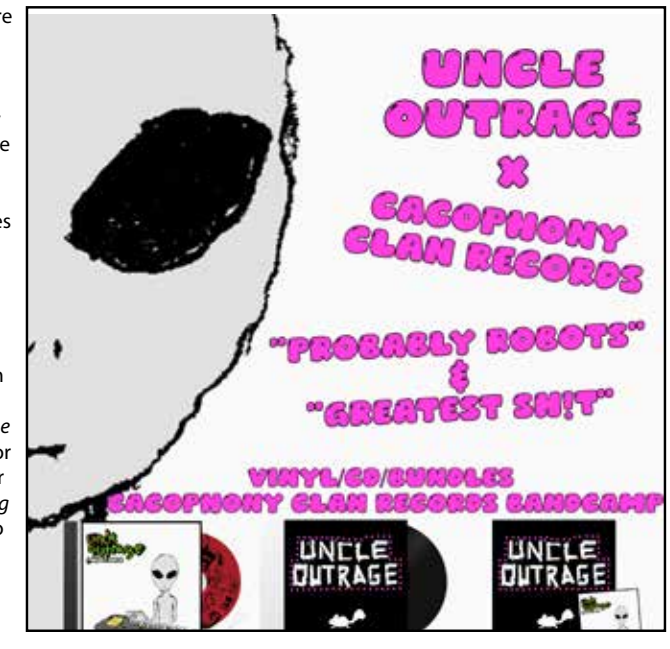
MIRKA ANDOLFO'S SWEET PAPRIKA: BLACK, WHITE & PINK HALLOWEEN SPECIAL #1

Release Date: October 21, 2026

Publisher: Image Comics



From the world of the Eisner-nominated and Harvey Award-winning Sweet Paprika comes a brand-new Halloween special brimming with spooky, spicy mischief! Night is falling, the jack-o'-lanterns are grinning, and temptation is in the air at Infernum Press, where every shadow glows in black, white & pink. As the costumes come off and inhibitions follow, Paprika and her mates chase tricks, treats, and a little trouble under the full moon. This book may well be the highlight for those who something kinky for the night, and with the team of Mirka Andolfo (*Sweet Paprika*), Bartosz Sztybor (*The Witcher*), acclaimed illustrator Leirix in her very first interior work, Rachele Aragno (*Young Hellboy*), and more talents to spread the goods, what can go wrong?



SCREAM! HALLOWEEN SPECIAL 2026

Release Date: October 28, 2026

Publisher: Rebellion

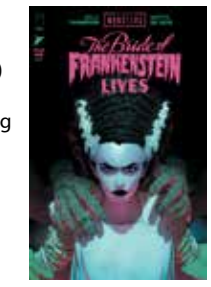


Scream! has been delivering chills to once-innocent readers for over forty years, and this October will see the return of the Eisner-Nominated horror anthology Scream! Featuring a gruesome cadre of twisted storytellers, The Scream! Halloween Special 2026 will show you the true meaning of fear across 48 ghastly and grotesque pages! With comics from a murderously good lineup of top creators including Alex Paknadel, Babs Tarr, Zoe Tunnell, Zac Thompson and Vic Malhotra, Rebellion proudly presents five new horror stories to keep you screaming this Halloween!

UNIVERSAL MONSTERS: BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN LIVES #1

Release Date: October 28, 2026

Publisher: Skybound and Image Comics



Kelly Thompson and Mattia De Iulis (*Absolute Wonder Woman, The Cull*) reunite once again to deliver the most haunting new horror series of the year.

Born in the heart of a thunderstorm, made of stolen flesh, electricity, and monstrous desperation, The Bride lives! With no memory of her past or understanding of what she is, The Bride took her first steps into the world and was...displeased. Now, she must discover where and who she came from and begin what every living thing begins... the process of staying alive.

WITCHBLADE: SAMHAIN SPECIAL

Release Date: October 28, 2026

Publisher: Image Comics



On Halloween night, when the veil is thinnest, the Witchblade will be visited by three ghosts! But these spirits of past bearers come to help Sara Pezzini, not to haunt her, by sharing stories of their own untimely deaths. Featuring the Magdalena of the Dark Ages, the Darkness of the Renaissance, and the horrors of WW II!

VOÏVOD/MACABRE/SPELL/SONS OF ARRAKIS

September 3, 2026 — Dickens, Calgary AB



Edmonton's INFEST festival brought several grindcore, thrash and death metal bands to Alberta for the September weekend. Calgary got a few individual shows featuring bands from the festival. For those who didn't want to make the four-hour round trip, these Calgary shows offered an easier alternative.

Sons of Arrakis opened the show, bringing a distinctly Québécois strain of stoner and doom metal to the bill. Their material is inspired by *Frank Herbert's Dune*, giving the set a science-fiction atmosphere that would become increasingly apparent as the night progressed. Their thick riff approach made for an appropriate opening to a show that would eventually move from mystical heavy metal into psychedelic science fiction and, with Macabre, the real-world horrors of serial killers.



Spell followed with a very different interpretation of heavy metal: theatrical, mystical and steeped in the sound of an earlier era. Songs like "Lilac" had memorable hooks that the diehards sang along to in the audience. There was something almost occult about the presentation, with the band drawing on the more fantastical side of traditional heavy metal.

The familiar cry of "Zooooodiac" started their set after Macabre's requested beers had been placed onstage. The Zodiac Killer came out, shooting into the audience, followed by Richard Ramirez, the Unabomber, Albert Fish, Ted Bundy and Dahmer. The Unabomber threw packages into the crowd containing Macabre stickers and CDs. Dahmer rubbed himself with a bloody towel during "Scrub a Dub Dub," then flicked it toward the audience. Gein then came out with a tray of actual meat, rubbing slices on people's faces and throwing them around. I ate one. Dennis "The Menace" Ritchie put on a clinic behind the drums, tearing through demanding songs with constant blast beats. "Not bad for 57," he told the crowd. He deserved those beers.



I had seen Voïvod before, opening for Ozzy at the Saddledome, but from that distance they were little more than specks on the stage. Watching the musicians up close made the intricacies of Voïvod's music much more apparent. "Nanoman," "Nuclear War" and "Astronomy Domine" were highlights, followed by "Voivod" to close the set.

— Ryan Dyer

Revocation / Defeated Sanity / Fuming Mouth / Weeping

September 19, 2026, Dickens, Calgary, AB

It is useful to see a band twice because the first time you see them sometimes becomes nothing but a foggy memory - case in point with Revocation. I recall seeing them at an unlikely location, the legendary Vern's in Calgary, years ago. Did I? Apparently so. I looked up the gig after this show and they played with A Life Once Lost and KEN mode there in 2012. Must have been a great time. Right?



Well, even if I don't remember, the point is, I can now properly assess Revocation once again at this 2026 Dickens show. On this 20th anniversary trek, they brought Germany's Defeated Sanity, along with America's Fuming Mouth and Weeping.

I knew nothing about Weeping beforehand. Their own description is "depressive homicidal death metal," which is a strange thing to put on a band when I don't particularly want to be depressed, and I certainly don't want to weep. Homicidal, on the other hand... They told us they were from New Jersey, and there was a connection to Fuming Mouth, who would play next: the two bands share a bass player.

I had seen Fuming Mouth before at the Black Dahlia Murder show at the Palace in 2023. I remember associating Fuming Mouth with Terror at that show because both bands stood out from the death-metal-heavy lineup through their hardcore aggression. Fuming Mouth were tastefully aggressive, and they brought that same quality to Dickens. Another positive experience. Perhaps you could say a kiss from the Fuming Mouth.

I first caught Defeated Sanity at the 330 Festival in China, where they were the only Western band on the bill. It doesn't matter if it's Beijing, Calgary or Pyongyang, North Korea: Defeated Sanity, once booked, will provide devastation. I hear more of a grindcore quality in Defeated Sanity than the technical death-metal label might suggest, but does it matter that much as you're being bludgeoned in the pit?

The 20 Years of Torment set drew from across Revocation's career, moving through "Nihilistic Violence," "Scorched Earth Policy," "Fracked," "Confines of Infinity," and so on. The set was a useful reminder that technical metal doesn't have to be an endurance test. Revocation could be aggressive, fast and complicated while still leaving room for melody, songwriting and smiles. It was probably much the same at Vern's in 2012, I can now say for sure.

- Ryan Dyer

The Guess Who w/ Kim Mitchell

August 25th 2026

Save On Foods Arena, Victoria BC

Presented by Live Nation

The Guess Who's "Takin' it Back" tour was indeed a monumental evening, as it was the final show of a 33 date North American Tour. The band warmed up at the OLG Casino stage in Niagara Falls on Jan 31st. Then the Rock Legends Cruise in February and the Hard Rock Live stage in Hollywood Florida on March 1st.

Randy Bachman and Burton Cummings had not toured under The Guess Who name in 23 years. Original bassist Jim Kerr trademarked the name and toured continually through several line-up changes, without Bachman or Cummings. This became a legal battle finally ending in 2023



when they put a cease and desist order over the publishing rights. In 2024 they settled The Guess Who name as their own at long last. Thus the 2026 celebration tour began post warm-ups.

The songs are legendary indeed. Having the Bachman/ Cummings team back onstage was a long awaited event and most every show on both the Canadian and US turf was SOLD OUT!

I was lucky to attend the final show in Victoria. Side stage right and I was in awe. A 7 piece band too. The other members were: Jeff Jones (bass guitar), Sean Fitzsimons(drums), Nick Sinopoli (percussion), Tim Bovaconti (guitar) and Joe Augello (guitar). All 7 members sang and the harmonies were to perfection.

They opened their 19 song set with "Running Back to Saskatoon". It was full-on magic from the first chord. Burton, singing strong and proud. Randy sat beside him as the crowd embraced every lyric and chorus. Was this really happening? It was loud too. The legendary band from Winnipeg was heating up our hockey arena with hit after hit. Songs like "Hand Me Down World", "These Eyes" and "Albert Flasher" brought us back in time. Burton made us all clap along to "Clap For the Wolfman" (Wolfman Jack tribute) and Randy telling the story of how they wrote "Laughing" while waiting to board the BC Ferry early one 1969 morning made us all glow. A giant screen showcased the daze of ole to guide us down memory lane to a time when we were all so young. Wow! The crowd danced along to "Star Baby" as Burton saw a lady wearing that song's shirt (I did too woohoo). My bucket list was watching Burton play the flute in the song "Undun" and he said "It includes a fleeting 16 bar flute solo in the middle" and I was transported back to my youth when it was all over the family's station wagon's radio. Other highlights were a Burton solo track with "My Own Way To Rock" as his stride piano skills soared. BTOs "You Ain't Seen Nothing Yet" was epic .Then the showstopper as Burton pulled out a harmonica and channeled the vocal blues style of Jim Morrison (Jim's face was a patch on Burton's jacket. It was kinda haunting) and the blues style jam morphed into "American Woman" as the crowd roared. They continued to soar ever higher with "No Sugar Tonight/ New Mother Nature" and "No Time" (a killer riff again by Bachman) before exiting the stage. Upon returning for their encore they thanked us all and Burton also said "We oughta play here more often." Please do. They ended with "Share the Land" and a high-energy standing ovation lifted everyone up to embrace BTO's "Takin' Care of Business". And that's exactly what the Takin' It Back' Tour was all about. I feel blessed to have borne witness to this monumental final performance here in their hometown of Victoria, BC, Canada. Bravo to THE GUESS WHO.

Now. Not to forget the opening act. I saw a lot of folks wearing Chilliwack tee-shirts as they were to open the show yet 5 days prior they had to pull out. We love you Chilliwack! Canadian legend Kim Mitchell and his band performed a stellar setlist of hit after hit and we all sang along to every song that also embraced our youth. Except the songs weren't as far back as the 60s and 70s. This was a blast through the past of the radio magic of the1980s. Kim and his band played Hits like "All We Are", "Patio Lanterns" and "Go For Soda". He infused some classic Max Webster hits as well, being that was Kim's breakthrough band in the 70's. Kims appearance turned the double billed show into a magical musical memorable evening indeed. Thanks from Victoria.

- Clark'Super'Mantei

NEW!

SE57 + SE58



SACRED BLADE
Hammerhead Demoz
+ Battleaxe Echoez
12" LP + 7" | 1981-85 | Heavy Metal / Thrash
Vancouver, BC, Canada

Western Canada's progressive metal pioneers.

SE65



PYTHON
Shock Treatment
b/w Pink Ladies
7" 45 | 1972
Hard Rock / Proto Punk
Vancouver, BC, Canada

SE54



DEBT OF NATURE / CREPITUS
Imminent Purge, Eternal Unrest
12" LP | 1991-94
Extreme Death Metal
Victoria, BC, Canada

SE68



THE GLASS CAGE
Where Did The Sunshine Go?
12" MLP | 1968
Garage Psych
Nanaimo, BC, Canada

SE52



SIKPHUXZ
Sikphuxz
7" EP | 1980
Punk Rock
Victoria, BC, Canada

SE63



BLUDGEONED PIGS
Live At The Smilin' Buddha, 1980
7" EP | 1980
Punk Rock
Vancouver, BC, Canada

SE64



SUBURBAN SLAG
Suburban Slag
7" EP | 1980
Punk Rock
Calgary, AB, Canada

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SUPREME ECHO



SILVER: UNEARTHED

Michael Carroll and Joe Currie

Published by Rebellion / 2000 AD

I'm always impressed when creators come up with an original take on the vampire genre.

In *Silver: Unearthed*, an alien race called the Sepsis invade the Earth in the late '60s. Stephen Hawking wisely said if we want to know what would happen to humanity if aliens made contact with us, we should look at the fate of indigenous South Americans in contact with European 'civilization'. We brought them, in the words of Jared Diamond, 'guns, germs and steel' (with a lot of 'steal' thrown in for good measure).

When the Sepsis invade, things go the same way. It's *War of the Worlds* on steroids.

In 2001, the resistance exhumes a five-hundred year old vampire, Baroness DeSilva, to aid them in their fight against the colonizers.

She proves to be an asset, inflicting more death and destruction on the aliens in a brief time than the human race did in the previous years.

The scripts are excellent. Michael Carroll has created a compelling and believable grave new world.

Dave Wyndorf from Monster Magnet memorably spoke of having a 'planet in your head', I.E a complete world for your tales to inhabit. He was referring to his hero the great Jack Kirby. It feels the same here. No matter how extraordinary *Silver* gets, I always believe it.

The second element to this extraordinary world-building is artist Joe Currie.

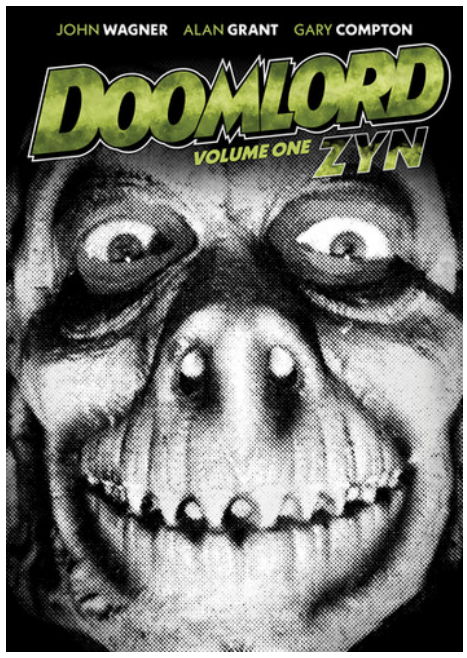
Joe brings a variety of artistic experience to the table. Usually with a comic artist you can see who they've slavishly imitated. They are re-creators, rather than creators.

Not so with Joe. His art is unique, detailed and creative, but never cluttered.

Michael and Joe have created a compelling tale and I look forward to the next volume.

— Steve Earles





***Doomlord: Volume One: Zyn* by John Wagner, Alan Grant and Gary Compton**

Published by Hibernia

This is a very special graphic novel, a tale written by John Wagner (*Judge Dredd*, *Strontium Dog*, *Button Man*) and my late and much-missed friend Alan Grant (*Lobo*, *Batman*), but told not with traditional comic-strip art but with the excellent photos of Gary Compton. Hibernia have done a great job here!

Doomlord originally ran in the new *Eagle* comic, launched in March 1982. It tells the tale of the titular alien Doomlord, master of life, bringer of death, sent by his master to assess the guilt or innocence of the human race. As the death toll mounts, only reporter Howard Harvey can stop him.

I'm pleased to say that not only is *Doomlord* still a great read, it is also still sadly relevant today.

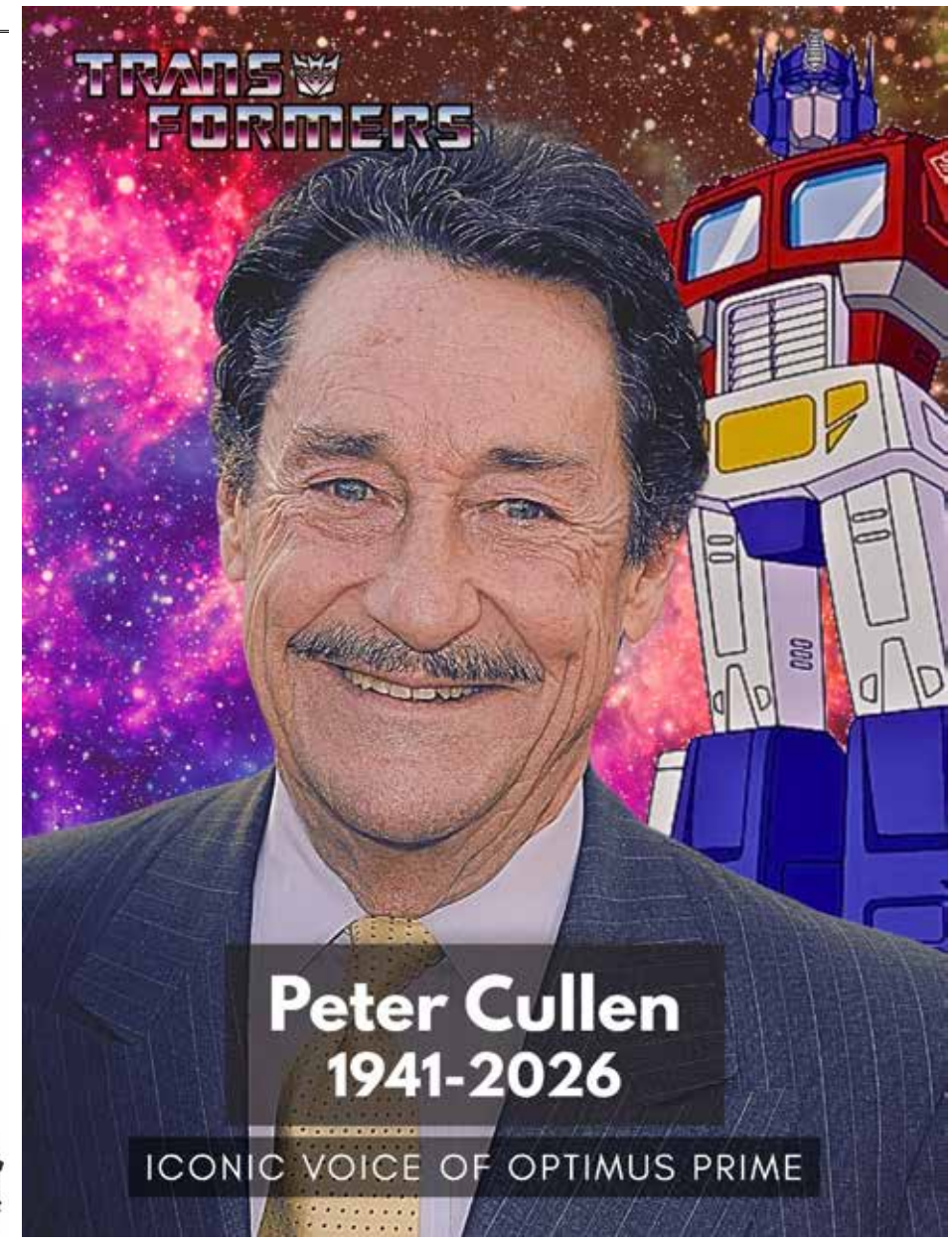
It is worth quoting Doomlord's judgment on the human race in full: "You have poisoned your air — turned your rivers into foul, lifeless streams of pollution! You have systematically hunted down and exterminated the lower species, no creature is safe from your cruelty! You even mistreat your own species. A third of you live in comfort and ease — while the rest suffer squalor, disease and starvation! But the greatest crime is yet to come. Soon you will render the planet uninhabitable by any species. I searched for hope in every mind — hope that somehow human beings could avoid the forthcoming nuclear holocaust! I found none! It is the ageless duty of the Servitors of Now to scour the Cosmos — to seek out worlds in danger from their own inhabitants. On every count I find mankind guilty. It is time to remove mankind — to let another species evolve to rule the Earth. They may succeed where man has failed."



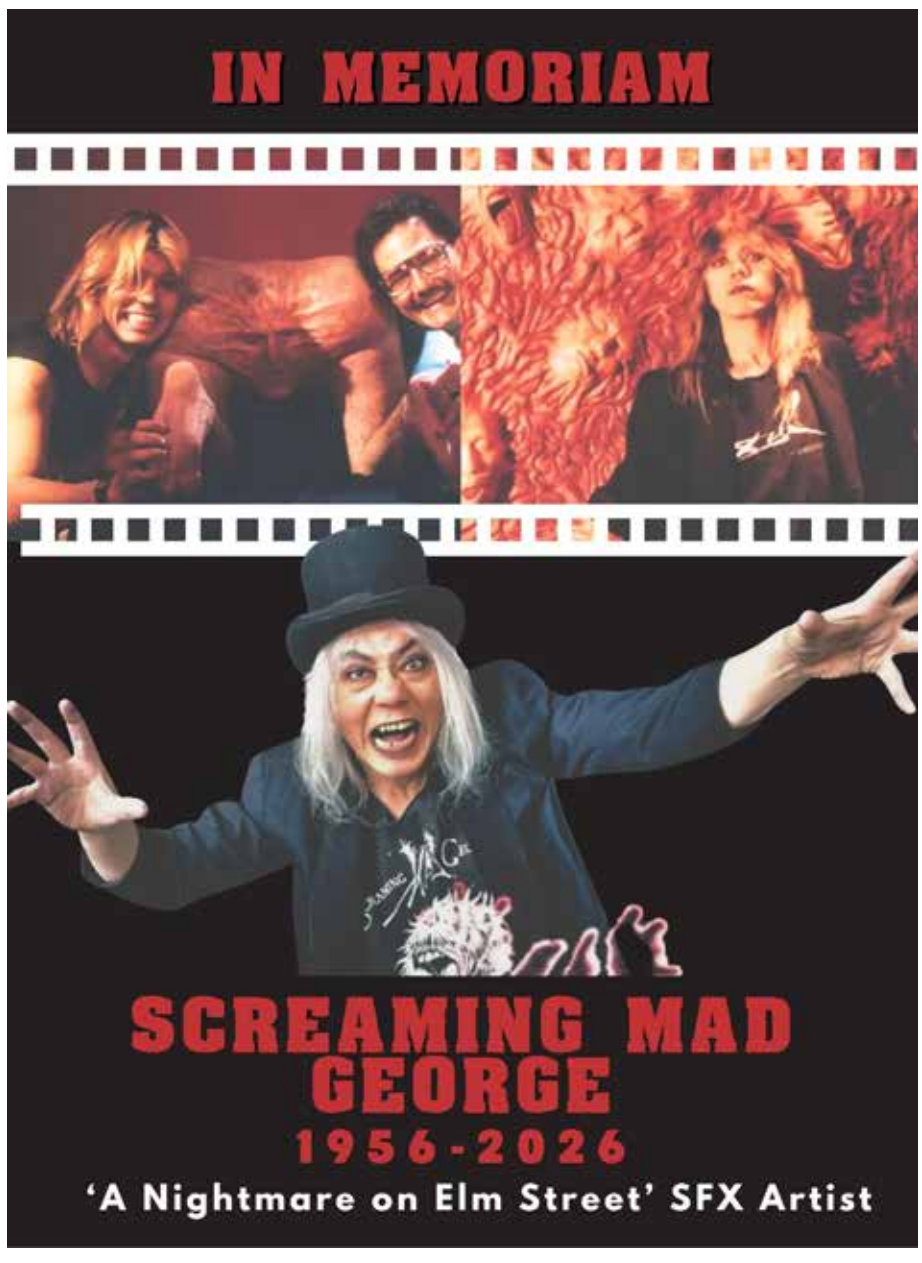
I eagerly await the next volume!

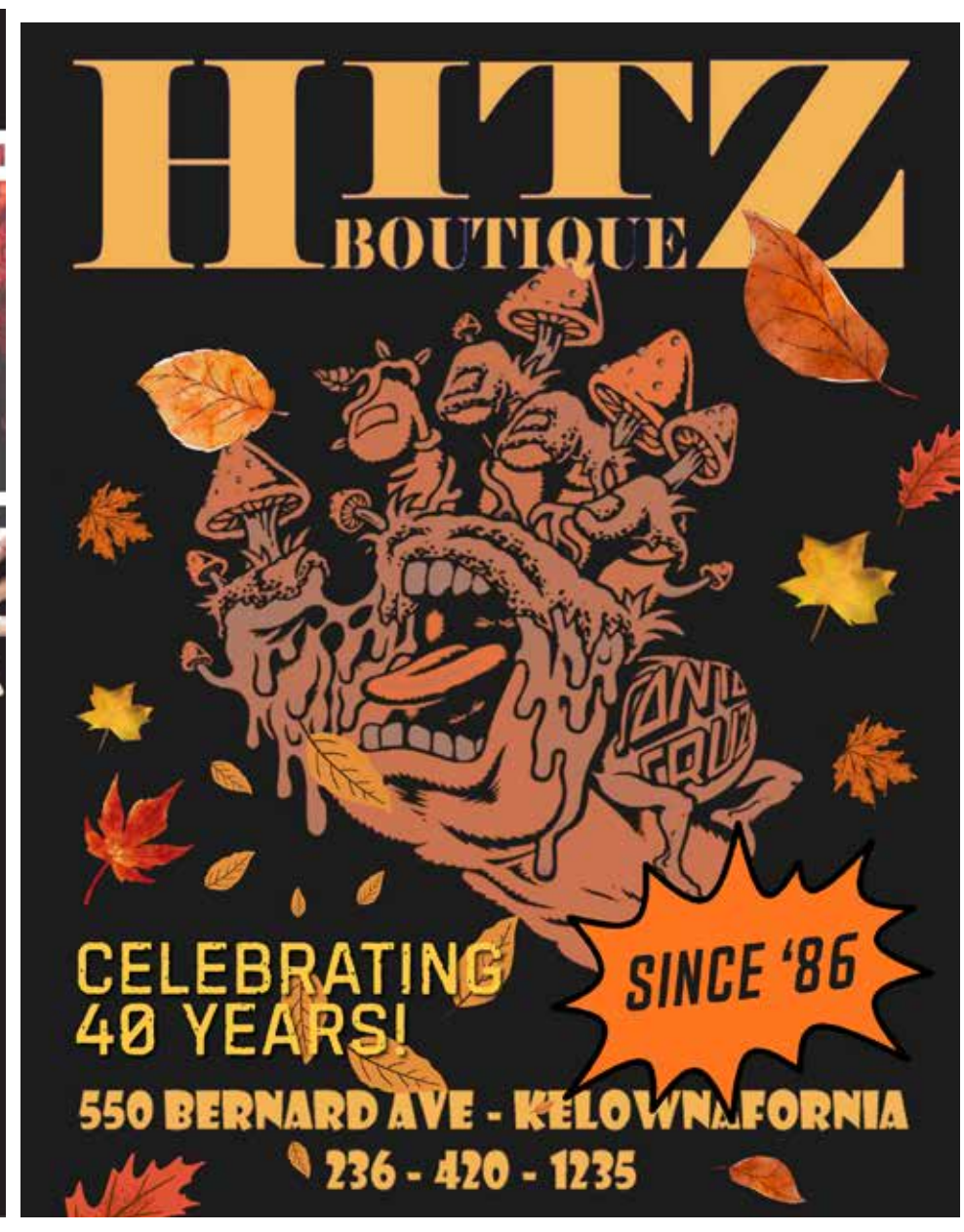
- **Steve Earles**

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PURPLE CITY
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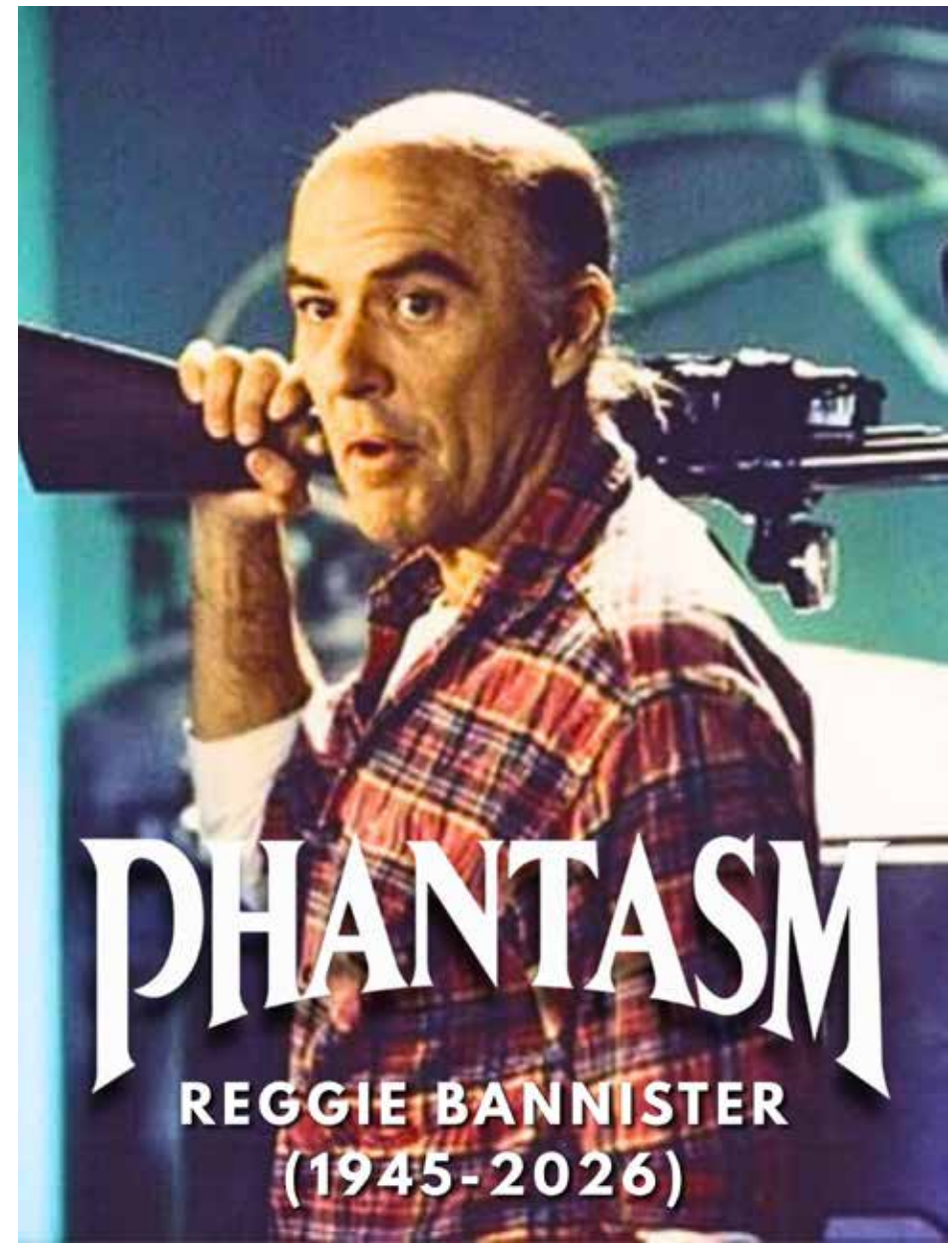

IN MEMORIAM
SCREAMING MAD GEORGE
1956-2026
'A Nightmare on Elm Street' SFX Artist


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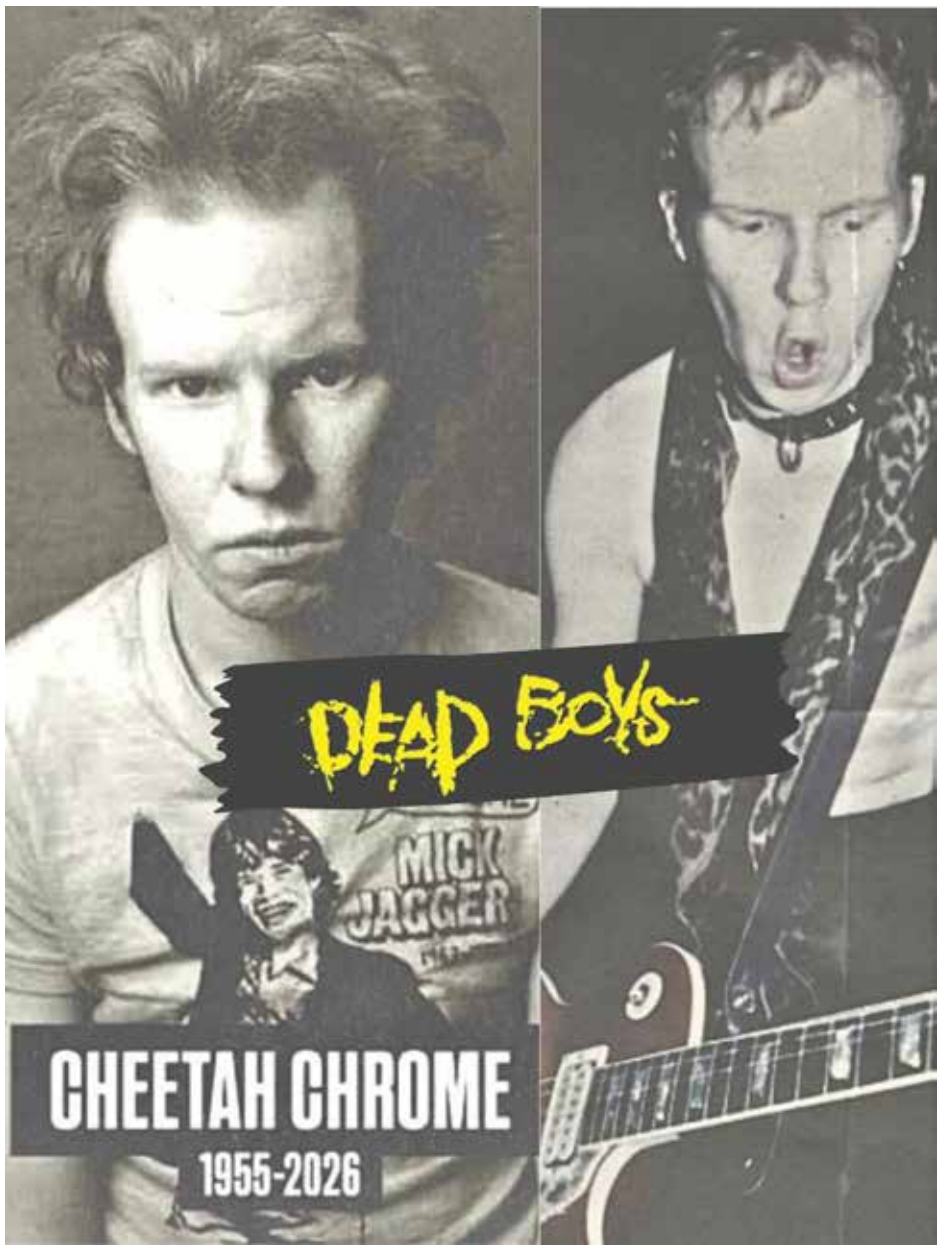
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Terminal Sessions with Butcher

By Jay Flett

AU: Who are you guys, how long have you been a band and how would you describe your sound?

Butcher: We are Butcher and we have been a band for two and a half years, almost three and we play brutal death metal.

AU: How did you get started and how many lineup changes has it taken you to get there?

Butcher: Not many. We used to have two guitar players. I reached out to my buddy who I knew played a lot of music and I was like "Hey man, we should jam". He called me up at like 11 at night and was like "Hey you wanna come jam?" and I was like "I'll come now!" cuz I thought they were inviting me now; they were not inviting me now. But I showed up.

AU: What have your major influences been and has that changed since you started the band?

Butcher: A lot of hardcore stuff and beatdown, over time its progressed the band Deeds of flesh is a big one. Tech death bands, Cryptopsy and Suffocation. A lot of old school death metal like Deicide, Cannibal Corpse. Gotta shout out Gorguts.

AU: How has the Nanaimo scene been and has it changed since you started?

Butcher: Nanaimo always seems to have a metal following. Back in the day it was only bar shows like The Queens and The Cambie but now that we can get the kids into it, it's absolutely rocking.

AU: You guys are based in Nanaimo do you have a favourite show or shows you have played?

Butcher: Mosh the Rock was so much fun, Regina Saskatchewan, Regina was sick. Calgary, there was two things that happened there. One of the guys in the crowd just randomly picked up Kale, he didn't miss a single note. Also afterwards Without Mercy's singer got a hernia because he was singing so loud. Thats fucking metal as shit.

AU: Tell us about your latest release?

Butcher: Our album is called *You Will Never Rot*. We started tracking drums at the Artfarm in November 2025 with Derek Mattin. Over the next few months we did the rest. David mixed and mastered it all and he did a great job. What we love about this group is not every song sounds the same. Once Michael wrote "A violent way to die" things really started to change. "With You will never rot", you can hear the progression in the writing of our songs. The next album I think we're finding our sound, it's gonna be twice as fast and twice as brutal.

AU: What motivates you to continue to play?

Butcher: It's so much fun. Anger management. Honestly we just love the music and love everything in the metal scene.

Gary Holt or Jeff Hanneman?

Butcher: Holt. I grew up listening to Jeff, he was the first death metal guitarist I heard and he just blew my mind, his playing on that first Slayer record is really what started at all for me. Both. It's hard cuz I have Slayer tattooed on me, but when I hear "The Toxic Waltz" that song man, Gary Holt is great.

AU: How are finding attendance at shows?

Butcher: Pretty good! We try not to worry about size but rather the people that are there and how much they actually enjoy it. If three people show up to a show you are playing the best show ever for three people and that's always the attitude no matter what. Two people is enough for a mosh pit.

AU: What's down the road for Butcher?

Butcher: We are looking to start tracking drums for our next record and come out with the first single for the second album. Up our merch game a bit, more shirts and patches. Planning another tour for next summer. A bigger and longer tour.

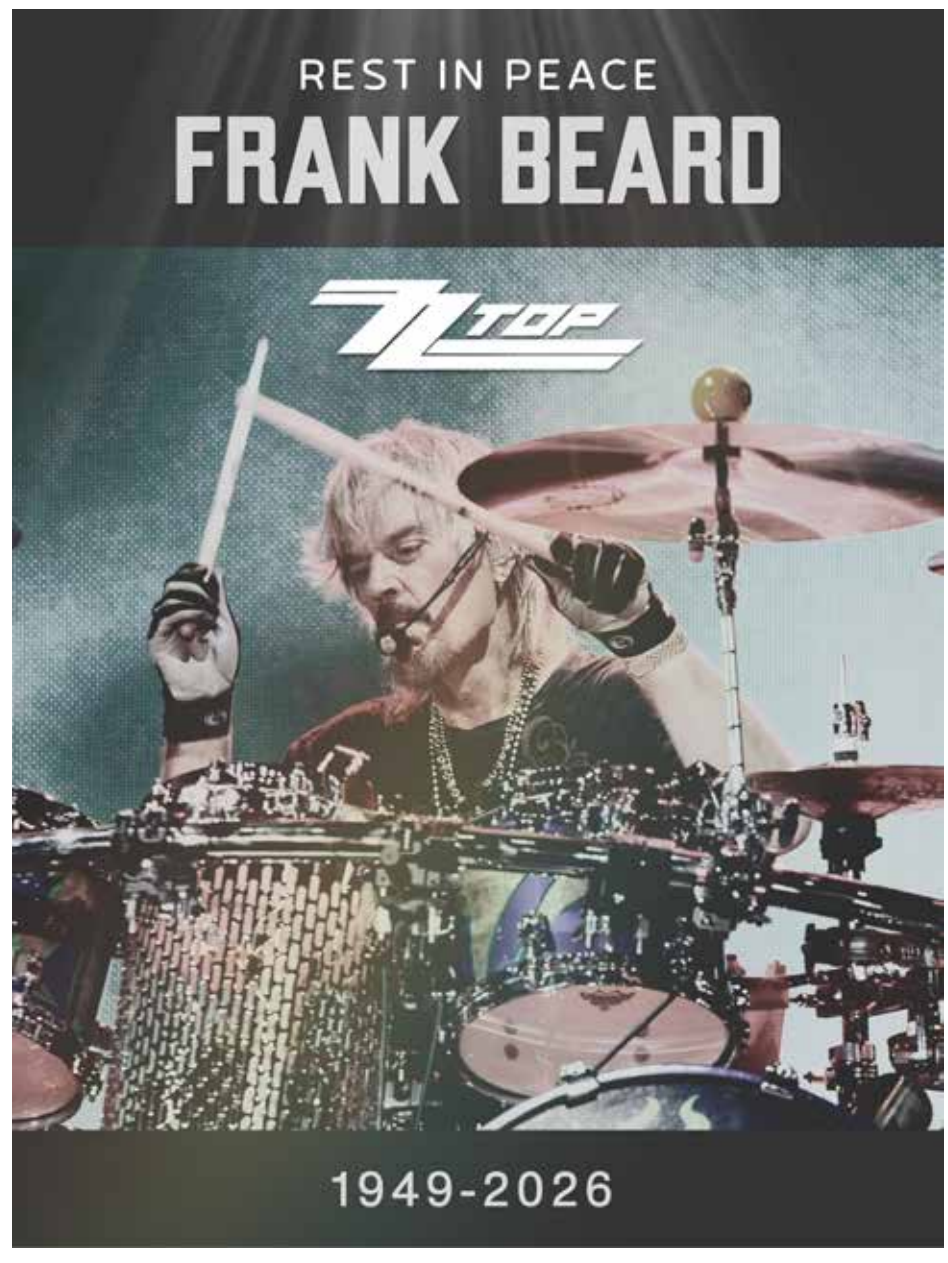
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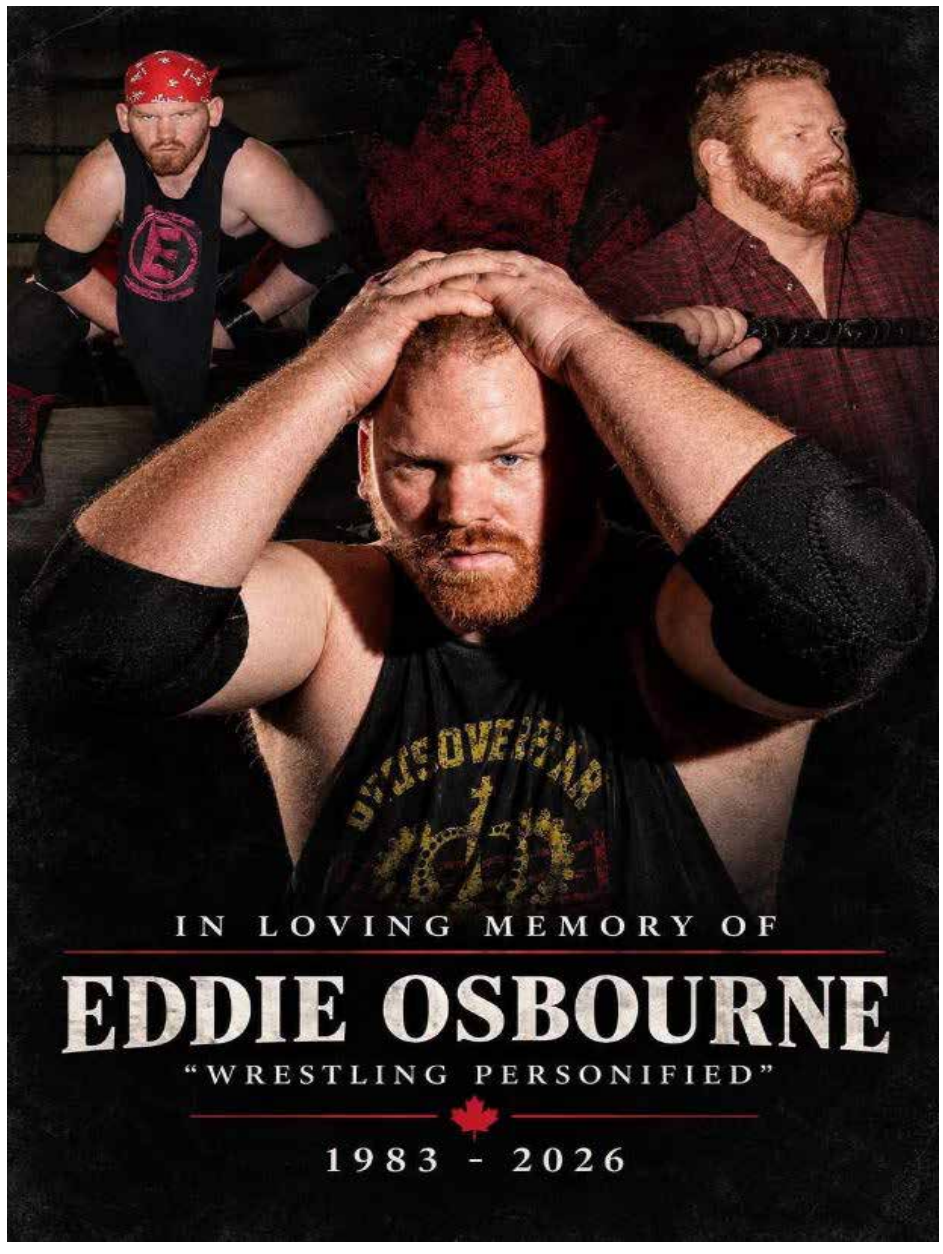
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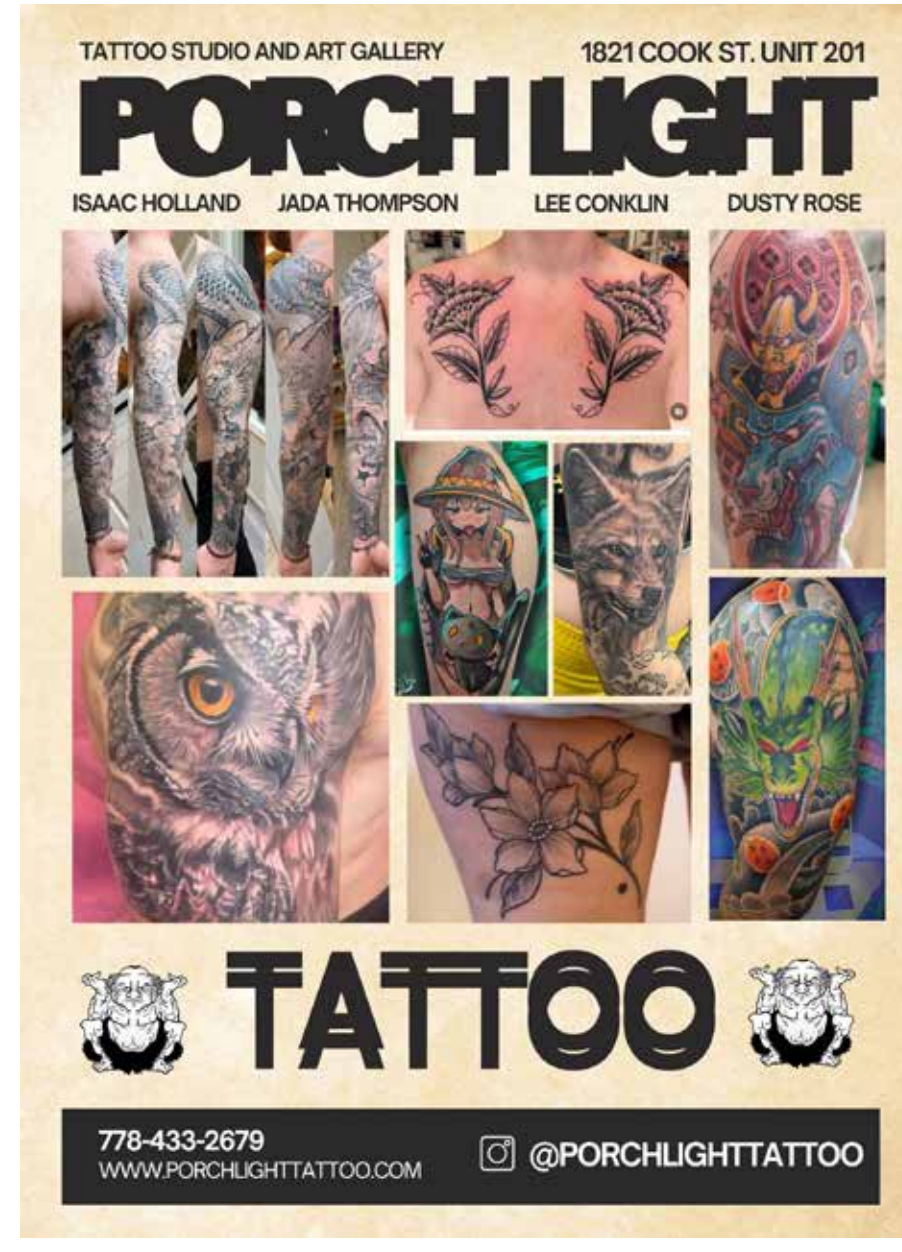
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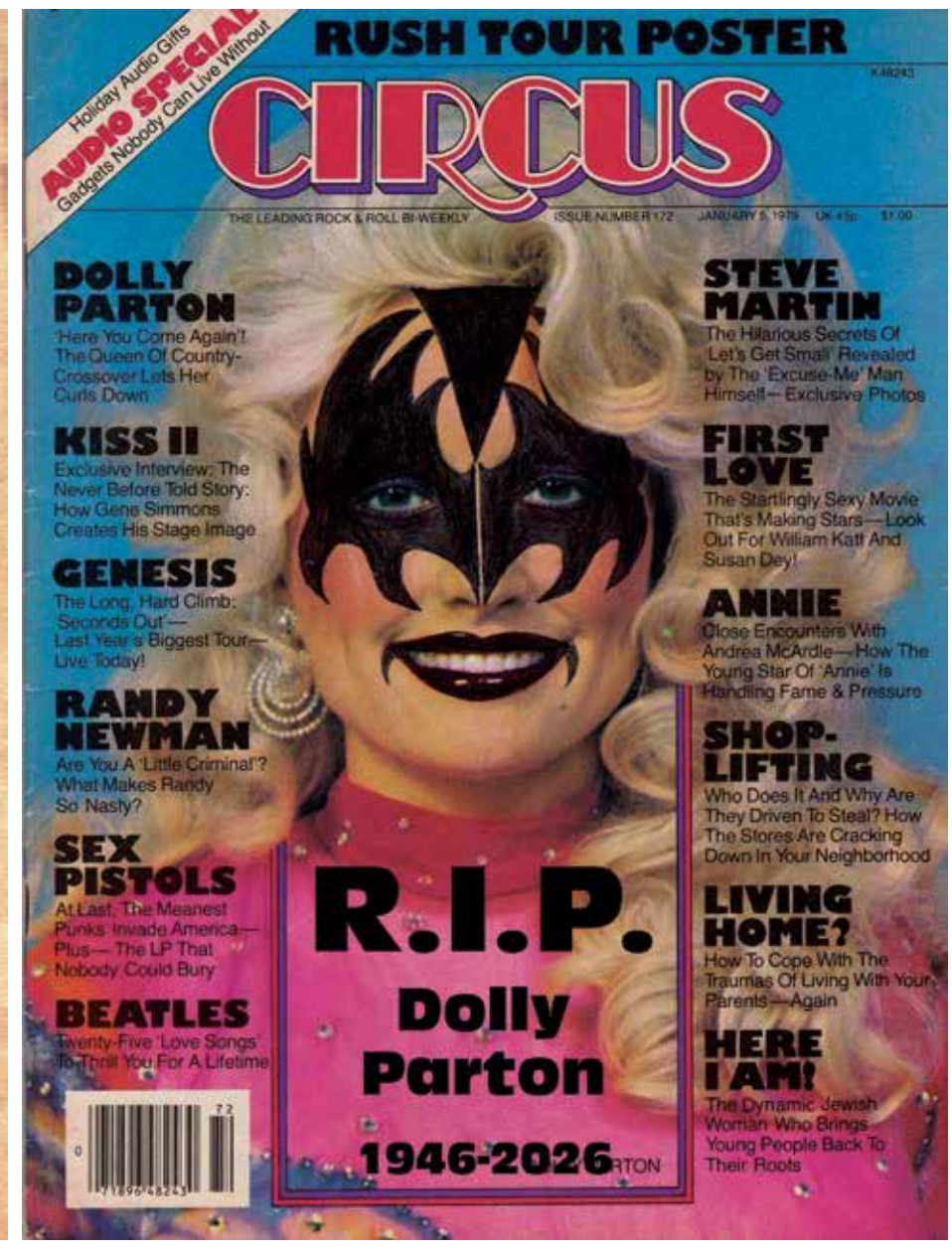





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