

PARAPHILIA XIII



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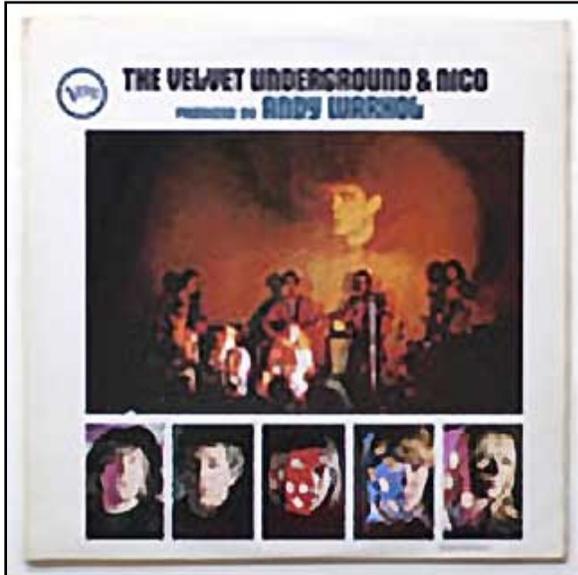
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INTERESTING TIMES: WINTER OF DISCONTENT

By Andrew Maben



Yes, I was still a student, and I'd been set a summer project as an introduction to the Fine Art program: a painting on the theme of night. Somehow I became fascinated with a small photo in Scientific American of an aluminium crystal. Whatever tenuous logic I might have conjured at the time to link this image with night by now utterly escapes me, though I think it may have had some connection with Klee, of whom I'd become an admirer, almost a disciple. But I suppose I did have some sort of reason. The piece took shape on a three feet by four piece of board. Well, perhaps "took shape" is too generous a description of the process... I did manage to successfully transfer the shapes from the photo, but somehow the application of color did not turn out quite as I had envisioned. Strong, bright colors all became muted and dull. What were meant to be subtle tonalities were muddy. In a desperate, and frankly hopeless, effort to somehow inject some life

into this inert surface I hit on the idea of applying bright collage. The final effect was a little disappointing...

Unsurprisingly enough, my offering was met with something a hair this side of outright derision and I was given a week to come up with an alternative. I was crushed. My rationale having been dismissed, and having seen others' efforts, I understood that what was wanted was something more "traditional", more "figurative", and mostly more "painterly". So I set out to paint an Impressionistic view of the pier at night. From Klee to Monet, my other great love and inspiration. Perhaps I could meet the "traditional" and "figurative" criteria, but here too the "painterly" quality remained beyond my grasp. Alas, once again the distance from vision to execution proved beyond my capacity. Once again the paint steadfastly refused to sing my tune. Once again the final result was drab and muddy. And this time I did not have even the recourse of colorful collage to fall back on...

So I found myself in the Principal's office.

"You're not a painter" he informed me bluntly. My heart sank, even as in its depths I acknowledged the truth of his observation.

"But," he went on, "you are the most talented student in the school." From despondent to dumbfounded. How could he be saying that? I had a little trouble accepting such a gargantuan note of praise. No, not a little trouble, I was, frankly, utterly incredulous. I stared...

"So what are we going to do? I don't want to lose you, but you cannot stay in the painting class." I felt certain that he would insist that I return to my originally stated interest in industrial design, or perhaps graphics. My heart sank a little further.

But then, "Take a week off to think about it. If you want to come to any classes, you're welcome. If you want to miss them all, you may. But I want to see you here next week to tell me exactly what you want to do, and why."

Wow.

I offered some words of heartfelt thanks and reeled out of there, head spinning.

I took the offer at face value, attended all the drawing classes, skipped the rest. And gave the matter some thought, a great deal of thought, actually. I had already arrived at some kind of confluence of ideas, influenced by the synesthesia of sound and vision induced under the influence of LSD, the lightshows that were a staple of UFO, as well as my readings of Paul Klee, in particular his ideas as to the possibility of painting achieving the transcendent properties of music. As I saw it Klee's ideal was unrealizable, due to an essential difference between the two mediums, namely that while the determining dimension for music is time traversing space, for painting it is space fixed in time. The effects of music are dependent upon, and achieved through, changes of aural tone in relation to time. The effect of a painting is achieved through changes of visual tone in relation to space. Any but the simplest music is composed of multiple tones that change, both in relation to each other in space and in relation to time. The multiple tones of a painting lack this component of change in time, so I was already coming to the reluctant conclusion that unless the crucial ingredient of

orchestrated movement in time could be introduced into visual art, Klee's project was unrealizable. Up to now I had not reached beyond this rather vague conclusion, but there's nothing like a deadline to bring my thoughts into focus. It did not take long to put it all together and realize that there did in fact already exist a medium that consisted of the mutation of shape and color relative to time: film.

So when at the end of the allotted week I was faced with the question, "So, have you decided what you want to do?", my answer was simple.

"I'd like to do film."

"But the school doesn't offer any film classes."

"I know, but you asked me to think it through, and that's my answer."

He asked me to explain myself, so I laid out my argument and showed the notes and sketches that I had made in the course of the summer.

"OK, you've obviously thought it through. I'm convinced. But we still don't offer any film classes..."

I sat through the silence.

"... But, the photography instructor is also a film cameraman. Let's get him up here and see what we can work out."

And so over the course of the next hour or so, the three of us came up with a curriculum: the first half of the winter term, black and white photography; the second half of the winter term, colour photography; spring term, film photography and editing; summer term, make a short film!

Given that turmoil was already brewing on college and university campuses around the world as students began to demand more

say in the curriculum, this was quite remarkable. On this score I was probably the luckiest student in the world... And so, although at the time the notion of youth being the happiest time was foreign to me, from the perspective of my present situation I suppose that the next few weeks were in most ways "the happiest of my life".

I plunged whole-heartedly into the task of completing what would normally have been two years' worth of studies in a single term. I wandered the town, camera in hand. I learned darkroom techniques and studio lighting. What started as an exercise in advertising photography - to create a photograph to advertise hot cocoa - turned into a portrait study of Binky's beautiful girlfriend Carol...

My grades were consistently high in all my classes, although by now it was common knowledge around the College that I was a hash-smoker and acid-head. I still recall Mrs. S___'s enquiry, as I studied an amethyst geode she had set as the subject in a drawing class.

"Ah, Andrew, are you discovering new worlds?" Yes, I think it's fair to say that I was discovering new worlds, both within and externally, new worlds of thought, of experience, of emotion...

There were just two clouds on this broad and sunny horizon. The first and most difficult was my strained relations with Mum and Dad, which seemed to be steadily worsening. Although I had cut back my drinking, which had been a major point of contention, to almost nothing, my other psychic recreational resources remained a constant source of friction, as were my strengthening political convictions and rejection of established Christianity.

And then there was my unrequited love for Sally. The two of us still spent many

platonic hours together, and my romantic yearnings grew daily stronger, even as she insisted on friendship. It must have been somewhere amidst these days that she spoke some of the most crushing words ever addressed to me, words that still have the power to wound all these years later...

"Andrew, you're the nicest boy I've ever known. but I just don't think of you that way."

If you'd like to interpret everything that follows from this point as my efforts to by turns come to terms with, transcend, negate or simply escape those words, I cannot argue with you... But other than those small clouds, my horizons were sunny.

Faced with Sally's rejection of my amorous advances, I felt free to pursue other girls. Nothing really serious, and nothing that really went anywhere. There were fumbling embraces at parties, but I seem to have been living so deeply inside my head that my heart really wasn't in it.

Except. Tina...

With the start of the new school year, she had moved into her own little flat, to avoid the tedious daily commute from Hastings, and we began spending time together. I had no idea how to initiate any kind of intimacy, shy, and scared to spoil the friendship with a wrong move. No doubt my feelings for Sally also held me back.

So it may not be a huge surprise to you to hear that, on an occasion where she had been visiting it got late and she asked to spend the night, we slept chastely side by side in my bed. The next morning, Mum knocked on the door and poked her head inside to wake me. Seeing the two of us in bed, she didn't bat an eye.

"Oh. Two cups of tea this morning?" Yes, most of the friction was between me and my father.

One afternoon after classes I walked into town with Tina, as I did often enough, but this time she invited me to walk her home. As she took out her key at the door, she asked if I'd like to come in. You can imagine my delight at the invitation, and probably my nervousness also. My chest tightened, my stomach fluttered, and no doubt I blushed - to this day, blood rushes to my face at the least discomfiture. The "flat" was really just a spartan bed-sitting room: bed, table, chair, sink, cheap and rather tatty flowered curtains over a window overlooking the back alley.

We sat together on the bed, making stilted small-talk, until she smiled and asked:

"Would you like to make love?"

The the nervousness I had felt as she invited me in was nothing to the turmoil I now felt. Speechless, all I could do was reach out to hold her.

And we kissed.

I was still clueless, of course, but Tina was no novice and gently tolerated my nervous fumbings. Soon she was lying next to me wearing only her bra and panties, enjoying my clumsy tender caress, my eyes greedily devouring the vision of her youthful loveliness. I started to take off my shirt.

"Do you have a Durex?" Oh dear. What an idiot! It had never occurred to me that this kind of situation might arise - and no doubt I'd have been too embarrassed to actually buy any, anyway.

"No." I admitted. "Do you?"

Tina showed remarkable restraint and kindness by not rolling her eyes at this.

"No, I don't. But there's a chemist's around the corner - you can see it from the window." And she handed me the front-door key. I rushed out, feeling both foolish and triumphant. Lust trumped embarrassment as I asked the lady behind the counter for a packet of Durex.

Soon I was back at the flat, and soon we were both naked. Tina's body was as delightful as I had imagined, more so. I wish I could describe a blissful transport to some sensual seventh heaven. Alas, no. I was just too inexperienced to return the pleasures she offered me, even to fully appreciate and enjoy them for myself. All too soon we were sitting smoking cigarettes and barely talking. With an inane remark that I had to go home for supper, I pulled on my clothes and with a brief kiss left.

On the walk home I wanted to skip, and to kick myself. Tina continued to be friendly, but never repeated her offer, to my chagrin and relief...

Tina was not the only one to have moved into her own place - Barbara and Margaretta also had found a flat, which became a gathering place and the kicking off point for trips up to London. One Friday evening a few of us were there before driving up to UFO. To my astonishment, delight, and a degree of perplexity, Sally had asked to come with me. We were five, as far as I can remember, until Sue, the blue-eyed, raven-haired beauty, showed up and invited herself along. No one objected and after a while we all trooped down to the car. The small car. It was a bit of a Chinese puzzle to fit us all in, and somehow or other, for some reason of her own, Sue decided to sit on my lap. A look that might have been disappointment passed over Sally's face as Sue squirmed against me, pulling my arms to encircle her. A bird in the hand is what I was thinking, so I succumbed to Sue's nubile writhings and

spent most of my time at the club with her. Another light-struck, acid-hazed night at UFO with Zoot Money's psychedelic incarnation, Dantalion's Chariot, topping the bill...

Back in Eastbourne, I'm afraid I didn't even pay attention to what happened to Sally. The girls had offered me the spare room, so Sue and I went off to bed. We indulged in some fairly intimate groping for a short while, but she drew a strict line and soon we dropped off to sleep... Many a slip twixt cup and lip. Worse, the bird in the bush no doubt now was skyborne...

It was around the beginning of November that the Velvet Underground's first LP was released in England. As it happened, Mum and Dad were going away for the weekend, leaving the house to me on Saturday night. I decided to take the opportunity to have a small party, and phoned a few friends to invite them over for the evening. Then I hitched over to Brighton, bought the record and scored a bit of hash.

I really didn't anticipate any kind of trouble - I'd had a big party with lots of people a while before, everyone had pitched in to help clean up afterwards and when the parents got home the place was pretty much immaculate. Tonight there were about six of us all told, Geoff, Peter and Lillian, Stella, perhaps one or two others, and we spent a pleasant and rather quiet evening, smoking, drinking wine or beer and listening to music until people just started falling asleep. Leaving people to more or less make their own arrangements, I dragged myself to bed.

Unfortunately Mum and Dad came home a bit early. At nine o'clock on Sunday morning. I awoke to the sound of their angry voices, telling people to leave. They'd had to pick their way past someone who had fallen asleep on the stairs, and found

Peter and Lillian in their bed. Once everyone had left and I had been verbally chastised, that might have been the end of it.

But as it turned out it was just the beginning of the end of my halcyon days.

An hour or two later, the phone rang. Mum answered, and I could hear her side of the conversation.

"Hello."

"Yes. Yes she was."

"I don't know."

"Well, yes, that's certainly possible."

"Yes, I know. I'm sorry."

"Goodbye."

It was not until I was at school the next day that I came to understand the full import of that short conversation. In the afternoon I received a summons to the Principal's office. He looked stern and troubled. Two rather shabby men sat on chairs to one side and glared at me.

"These officers are with the police." Uh-oh...

I will not attempt to reconstruct the conversation in full, but I heard later that at a meeting earlier in the day with Stella and her father, allegations had been made. Stella had a very difficult time at home dealing with her strict and conservative father, and was trying to have herself declared emancipated, so that she could leave home and apply for grants to continue at school. Her father was against her being at the school in the first place, and implacably opposed her bid for freedom.

"Stella smokes too much, she drinks too much", he had said, "and what's more, she

takes drugs." He had gone on to say that he knew for a fact that Stella had been at my place on Saturday night and doing drugs, because my mother had told his wife... Thanks, Mum...

So the police were called, and here I was. Mr. F____, the Principal, presented me with an ultimatum: either I could prepare a list for the cops naming everyone in the school that I knew to be a drug taker, or I would face immediate expulsion.

"I can't make that list for you."

"Then I must tell you to collect your things and leave. Now."

As I was leaving the room, one of the cops hissed at me, "We'll be watching you, Maben. Sooner or later we'll get you."

I collected the few things that were in my locker and left. Shattered. How could I have betrayed my friends and spent the rest of the year as a pariah? Now what was to happen to me? I have tried to escape its shadow, but I look back and see that it was the devastating disappointment of that moment, the anger and resentment that it conjured, that propelled the flight that my life from that day on became.

Outside the College entrance gate was a phone box. I phoned Sally to tell her what had happened and to ask her to meet me, as I really didn't want to go straight home. I needed the support of a friend. She refused.

You may well imagine the row at home that evening. Dad's suppressed rage, tinged with a certain perverse satisfaction that all his worst fears had been justified. Mum's quiet anguish...

The next day's Daily Mail ran a short paragraph on the front page, below the fold with the news that a student had been expelled for drug-taking...

"Now you're just going to have to get a job..."

I was put under virtual house-arrest, and soon Dad found me a menial clerical job at the Civil Service office where he worked. Suffice to say that the next few weeks were purgatorial. I have no memory at all of Christmas...

But with January things took a turn for the better. Barbara, Margareta and Stella - who had joined them after winning the battle with her father - invited me to move in! They treated me much too well. They fed me, washed my clothes, barely allowed me to take on any chores. Idyllic - at least for me - as this ménage was, I was more than restless. The civil service clerk job was stultifying, asphyxiating, a tedious waste of time, and the pay a pittance. The cop's threat whispered quietly that the town was too small. London beckoned. I had no Puss in Boots illusions of streets paved with gold, but the acid sparkle of the pavements, the trove of possibilities, seemed so much more alluring...

GETTING CEPHALOPODIC

By Matt Leyshon

Images By D M Mitchell



The Dagon users had formed a loose community of outcasts and losers within the town, instantly recognisable by our glassy fish eyes and briny skin, the back of our hands forever at our noses wiping away strings of kelpy gunk. We all knew about Apache, he was reputedly the first to starting pushing Dagon on the streets, he was an ugly fucker and famed amongst us as a maverick dealer who took genuine pleasure in his work.

The littered alleys between the boarded bars and shuttered shops were Apache's natural habitat, the dark shallows beneath the pier where he crouched like a limpet, watching,

always watching; evolution had adapted him to trading in toilets and skulking at corners, combing the filthy beach like a crab scuttling from one stinking rock pool to the next. Most of the other dealers that I knew did it for the money and saw associating with us low life Dagonites as an unpleasant but necessary evil; but money seemed to mean little to Apache and we sometimes thought that maybe he would have been able to get by just fine without trading in narcotics. What he could not get by without, we knew, was the kick that he got out of his deals; grass, junk, speed, Dagon, whatever. We knew little about him really apart from brief glimpses as he roamed his territory, but his imagination preceded him.

I remembered him from school as a little ferrety boy that was always in trouble, he'd fight anyone no matter how much bigger or older they were. I seem to recall that his father was a fisherman, I'm sure he had lived out by the port anyway, though I have no idea where he lived now. He had gotten his name as a kid after stealing petrol from a parked car whilst still in junior school, he had wiped his hands clean in his hair and then lit a cigarette; in places his hair had never grown back on his scorched scalp but he wore it long now to hide the shimmering white bald patches that flashed through like the moon reflecting in a weedy pool. I didn't know anybody who claimed to be a friend of his and I picture him at school as something of a loner too, and now that I was grown up he was just another character that moved in the undertow of our drifting Dagon circles; whether there were reports of a pickpocket working the pier or gossip about a murder in the mall, Apache's name



would always crop up when we guessed at suspects over preparing Dagon solutions in spoons and tapping bubbles from our syringes.

Nobody really expected a dealer to be anything other than dodgy, least of all me, but the word among my fellow addicts was that Apache gave a good deal; if you gave him the money for a rock of crack he'd probably supply you with two, but he would make you work for it. Trousers and Pikey claimed to have ordered half a pound of weed off of him once and swore that what they had got had been the purest shit they had ever smoked, but to get it they had to rifle through a ton of soiled nappies at the skip before finding their goods in the Kwik Save bag that Apache had buried there for them. After a bottle of White Lightning and a few tokes you could always be sure that Gubba would recite the tale of how he had had to tunnel through a mountain of cow corpses during the Foot and Mouth epidemic to retrieve a box of

phials of the finest veterinary strength Ketamine he had ever chewed his fingernails off on. As I saw it, almost anyone around here with an interest in illegal substances knew one tale or another about Apache, and now I had one too.

When it occurred that I found myself alone in the company of Apache one night, our brief conversation inevitably touched upon illegal substances. I had been in the graveyard with Gubba who considered stretch denim to be an open challenge and he always got the munchies regardless of what he was on, Trousers, who was named after his baggy shop lifting attire, and The Afghan, whose name needs no explanation. We were there because Trousers had acquired the key to the cellar beneath the Chapel of Rest, and cellars were a great place to shoot up Dagon as none of us had what one might call a home to go to, and also because The Afghan had scored. He hadn't bought the Dagon from Apache however, instead he had used his regular dealer, a fellow Afghan who claimed to get his supplies direct from the depths of the Persian Gulf. And it had been good stuff; it had fucked me up big time and plunged me like an anchor into an abyssobrotullic state of murky otherness. I had drifted from this world into a cephalopodic calm deep in the carrion depths of Dagon and when I awoke, gasping and twitching like an angler's haul, Gubba, Trousers, and the Afghan, were all long gone. Moonlight streamed through the iron grid above and had illuminated the little yellow pool of vomit beside me like rancid honey. I had wiped the spew from my chin and slowly worked myself up into a sitting position. A funeral procession of sores tracked sadly and wetly up my arm, blistering like burst sea slugs against my alabaster skin. I remember being freezing cold, my veins felt heavy with blood worms and my skin felt as fragile as parchment and that was what had stopped me from

spending the rest of the night in there and had made me decide to go to one of the squats on the estate across the way from the graveyard.

I had summoned my thoughts back from the foggy depths and then reeled them in from the wet scum clouds like a fisherman at a polluted canal, and then rose shakily to my feet. I had had tunnel vision too, something I had not had since munching on fly agarics as a teenager, and so navigating all the crap in the cellar, hypodermics cracking underfoot like ice, and climbing the lawn mower to get out, had been quite a challenge, and once I was out the paranoia had hit me. I was in a god awful state and must have looked like a shivering zombie had anyone been around to see me, I might even have whispered a half promise to the graves to quit the Dagon, it was that bad. It was a look I utilised for jobcentre interviews to keep them brief but today there were no theatricals, I was a genuine wreck, a fucking mess, and pitch onyx eyed, and snotty as a tench. Every sound had sent my head spinning in search of approaching police and I saw the world as if I were looking up from the bottom of a well, and that was how it was that I did not see the dead woman lying at my feet as I walked, and how it was that I tripped over her and fell onto Apache who was adding the finishing touches to a grave he had been digging.

“What the fuck?” he had said.

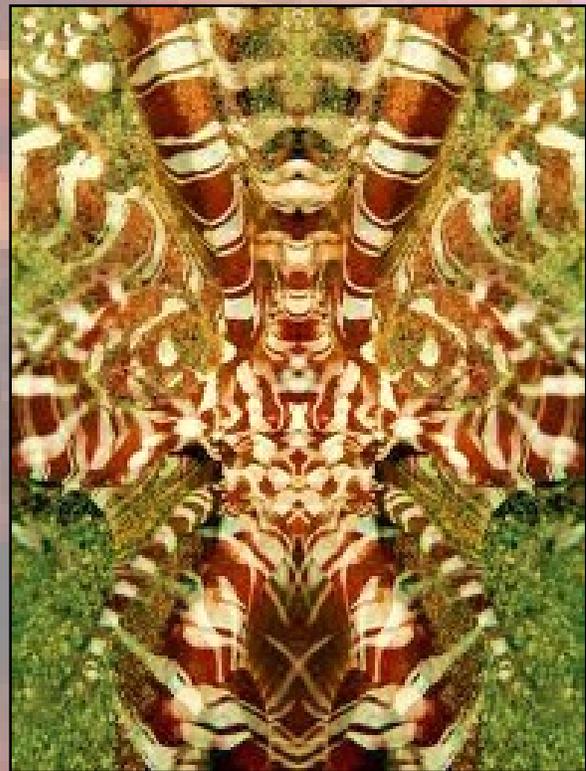
“What the fuck?” I had replied.

And we had both stared at each other in the darkness, Apache with his shovel pressed up to my neck. All I could see was his pale and twisted rat face framed by the night sky, bearded like a prophet with fish slime curdling in the bristles, an anglerfish grimace, and with a little halo of stars

swimming around it all in the darkness like fireflies.

“Jesus H. Christ,” I had said.

Apache knew everything about everybody and we all knew that, and so naturally he would have known that my father was rather high up in the local filth, and this had surely presented him with a dilemma, killing me or not killing me presented separate risks.



I don't know if he knew that I had been disowned long ago, but we both knew that if I were to be murdered then my father would not be happy, regardless of how he felt about my lifestyle, and that was surely what led Apache to strike a deal with me at the bottom of a grave with a girl corpse lying on the cut turf above.

“You ain't seen nothing, right,” said Apache. A cigarette hung limply at the corner of his mouth like a fat steak vein and

added a threatening snarl to his command. His physiognomy was a grimoire of abstraction, an unnerving threat to symmetry, and in my cold sweat state, seeing him lipless and pike toothed, my spy hole vision had veered from such grotesquery. He was dressed in a ludicrously bright tracksuit like a Day-Glo Fagan, and he must have gone to great lengths to keep it clean as he had gone about digging the grave. A weird octopus type creature was tattooed around his neck and its tentacles wrapped themselves around his Adam's apple like a nest of sea snakes. I looked back into the cold darkness of his sea gull eyes, I had thought about how the spade at my throat was suffocating me, and then did the best I could to utter agreement to his request.

Upon hearing my pathetic rasp he had eased the pressure on my neck and stood back, careful not soil his top against the wet graveside. "Right," he had said. "You ain't seen nothing and for that I'm grateful. You like weed, right?"

I had nodded in reply, for I did indeed like weed and he surely knew it.

"I've a load of weed coming in by boat tomorrow night. It's yours. Be at the port just after midnight. Nobody brings in catches there anymore so there'll be just the one boat, and that will be the one with your weed on it. Now fuck off and don't ever mention a word of this to anyone."

I had nodded, and I did fuck off, as quickly as I could.

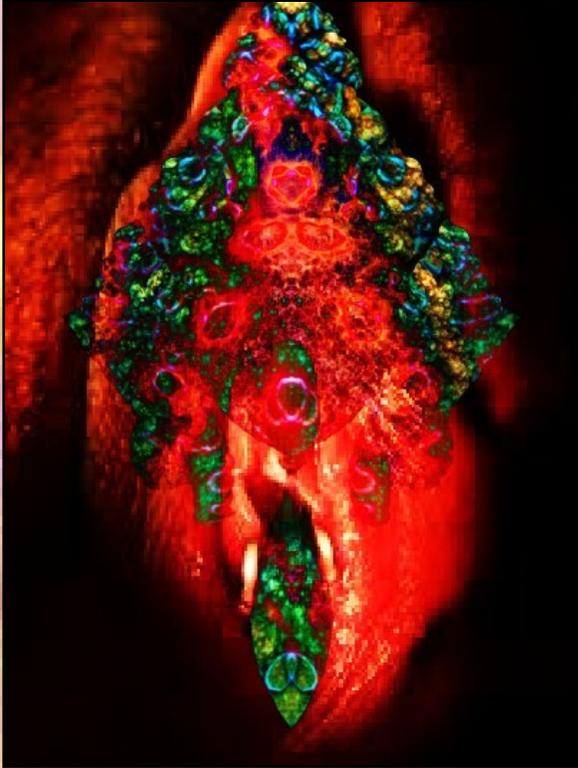
I had spent the next day thinking about Apache's shipment and drinking Thunderbird in the park with Pikey. Pikey was a man of few words and that made him perfect to share comedown refreshments with. I'd known him a good while, I had

celebrated the end of school with Pikey and whilst he and I had lay in a drunken slumber in a gutter somewhere, his traveller family had moved on and left him behind. He had traveller's blood in him, he'd disappear for months on end but whenever he returned, he returned with Dagon, and so we had remained friends.

Most of the afternoon we had drank in silence, occasionally mourning our lack of funds for Dagon but mostly we did not speak, our dark and languid eyes tracing boarders, scanning litter for something to sell, something to eat, but once it got to dusk the issue of the weed became pressing. Given Apache's reputation for eccentric pick-ups, I decided that I would offer Pikey a cut of the deal if he would accompany me to the port that night. Of course I did not mention the dead girl or the grave, not that Pikey would have been interested, but I wanted to maintain my side of the deal, I wanted the free weed.

Drinking with Pikey was like drinking with a mannequin, a taxidermic cavefish, pale and still. He had nothing of interest to enlighten the world with and so he mostly stayed mute, and at some point he must have concluded that the world had nothing of interest to offer him either, so unless the topic of conversation was drugs he would gaze ahead with half lidded eyes and his mouth drooped open like a drooling guppy. But I had mentioned the weed and so it was like winding up a clockwork toy; Pikey had swivelled to face me, his coal pit eyes wide with anticipation and he was gripping the bench so tightly that his body had quivered as if a current were passing through him. "How much?" he said.

"Dunno. A load on a fishing boat tonight, at the port," I had replied.



And so we had agreed to go together and to split Apache's shipment between us.

The port was desolate when we arrived just before midnight and Apache had been right, for there were no boats to be seen at sea and not a soul to be seen around the docking stations or anywhere else, aside from us, and we had sat ourselves down to drink Special Brew on the harbour wall. The old port was still used during the week for sorting fish before it was transported to distribution centres and the heavy odour of sea life hung in the air like brothel laundry.

"You heard from Gubba today?" I had asked, wondering if I had missed anything after they had left me.

"I've been with you the whole time," Pikey shrugged.

"Oh, yeah," I had said, and gulped down another mouthful of lager.

We had sat with the waves lapping gently below, occasionally embarking on conversations but disembarking promptly out of mutual boredom, until we had both heard in the distance the faint sound of a motor. The sea looked like oil in the moonlight and we saw the dark shape of a boat gliding towards us, spilling shimmering ripples of light behind it. As it got closer I had seen that there was nobody aboard and Pikey must have noticed too, but neither of us felt it worthy of a mention as we watched it approach and finally come to a rest at the concrete incline with the motor spluttering to a stop.

"Let's get high," said Pikey, and got shakily to his feet.

I had followed him along the harbour wall until we reached the end where we both descended to the concrete and walked over to the boat. The vessel was utterly decrepit with almost a foot of water in the hull that had leaked in through the rotting wooden sides. The rudder had been trussed up with old rope and the booty was resting on an old plank that served as a seat. Pikey had allowed me the honours of drawing back the tarpaulin and revealing a wooden crate, pimpled with crustacean and viscous with seawater. Tendrils of seaweed had poked through the gaps in the box like a prisoner's gangrenous hands clutching at the bars of a dungeon window.

"Seaweed, it's just full of fucking seaweed," said Pikey.

"There'll be puff in there," I had replied confidently. "Open it."

"How am I supposed to open it?" said Pikey.

I had then scoured the ground for something that we might be able to use to

open the crate with and eventually found an old metal bracket that I was able to force under the lid and use to prise out the nails. I had removed the top of the crate and then Pikey had joined me to peer inside and share my concern when it appeared to be full to the brim with nothing other than pungent brown and green algae.

"It smells like shit," Pikey had said.

There was indeed a vile stench of sewerage emanating from the crate and I remember the metallic burn of regurgitated super strength lager sandpapering my larynx as I breathed it in. But the sensation was brief for the next thing that either of us knew was that the stinking stuff in the crate had erupted upwards and covered us from head to foot with such force that we were knocked to the floor. I had it in my mouth, up my nose, and in my ears. I felt like I had fallen into a sewage treatment pool and then I did more than gag, I spewed all over myself, a gushing torrent of fizzing amber foam and gut acids that might have scorched through my combat jacket had it not been covered in a protective coating of shitty oceanic gunk. I had gotten to my knees then and rubbed the sludge from my eyes so that I could see what was going on, and nothing before or since had sobered me like the reek of that deep-sea slurry clinging to my skin, and the sight of all that disgusting algae regrouping like spilled mercury over Pikey's body. A huge dripping mass was forming, whipping the air with wormy tentacles and flicking its horrible slime in dark arcs through the night air as it bucked like a great faecal mare.

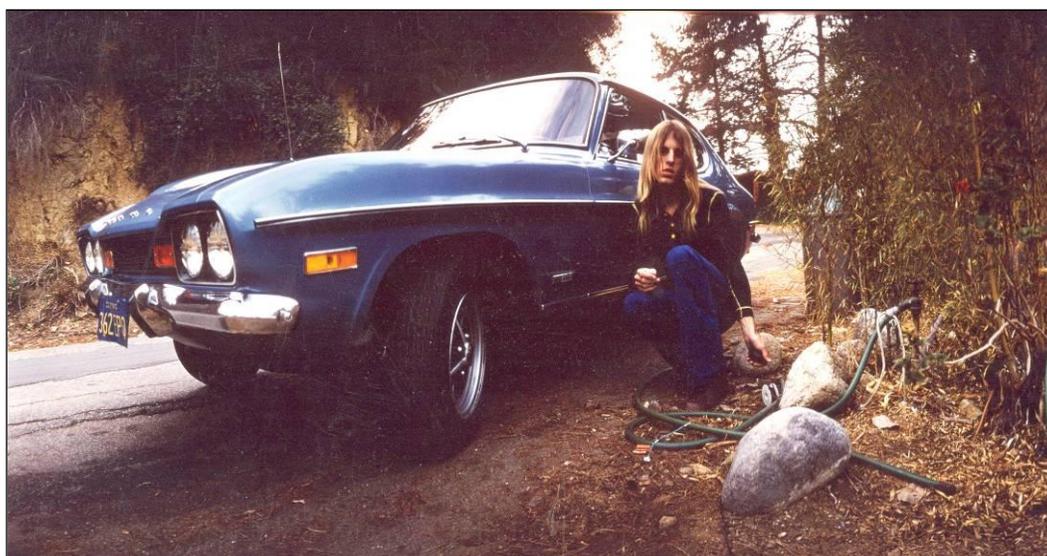
Pikey's limbs flailed like an epileptic marionette and yet he remained as silent as ever, as much as anything I remember how he did not scream at all. The only screams reverberating through the night had been

mine, as I had staggered backwards, away from the bulbous putrefied mass pulsating before me, spitting cockle bile geysers into the ether and spinning its fish egg filibeg like Shahrazad. I was propelled by the great wet roar, like the sea crashing in a blowhole, that the thing had bellowed as it engulfed Pikey in so much disgusting gunk that he was no longer to be seen, enveloped by that great writhing mass of shitty weed and mire. I had known that there was not a thing that I would be able to do to save Pikey and so I ran. And when I had finished running, I did a line of speed and I ran some more.

In fairness, given what I had witnessed, very little changed after that night. Obviously I couldn't drink in the park with Pikey anymore, but the social circle of a Dagonite was always in a state of flux and so nobody noticed his absence. But after that night, when a Dagon addict failed to show at the embankment or in the derelict buildings we used for shooting up, I didn't just simply assume like the others that they had surely overdosed, crawled to the river like a breeding eel, and drowned. Naturally I avoided ever being desperate enough to score from Apache, but if ever anyone asked my opinion about using him for their supplies, I would agree with the general Dagonite's consensus, that he wasn't one to renege on a deal and that there was a good chance of getting more than what was bargained for.

**MR. TWISTER, CHRISTOPHER MILK AND CHAINSAW:
A VOYAGE OF YOUTHFUL ALLIANCES, PROMISE, PROTO-
PUNK PIONEERING, SUBJECTIVITY, AND DISCOURSE
GALORE**

By Heather Harris



Stephen Schmidt (Director of 2011's "In the Hands of the Fans, Iggy and The Stooges"): "Sometimes by their photos alone you truly could suspect they were the greatest rock and roll band ever." Schmidt has referenced his clients Iggy and The Stooges circa 1973 (three years after his own birth), but a verity remains regarding great acts who predated the video/digital multimedia era. Thankfully there remains some visual and written evidence abetting the all too frequently rare recorded legacies of rock's innovators which screams volumes for such bands.

Two more were Christopher Milk and Chainsaw, related in sharing the same, utterly astonishing lead singer. Here, then, are those photographs. Sailors beware: beyond this point here be demons.

Mr. Twister (lead singer of both Christopher Milk and Chainsaw): "The genesis of Chainsaw and Twister's reputation was in Christopher Milk. Whatever the manifold failings of that band were, it was not a humble beginning."

Indeed. Many Paraphilia readers the world over played in rock bands during their younger days, but few attained such well-documented heights for ones not remaining on the current tips of pop-cultural tongues as did Christopher Milk and Chainsaw.

Professionally, the former were featured in cover stories on Rolling Stone Magazine when it actually mattered. And myriad cover features for that matter. They were signed by two major record labels, United Artists and Warner Brothers when that actually mattered, with actual 45 singles, EPs and LPs in deluxe



packaging released betwixt the both of them. Annie Leibovitz and Norman Seeff photographed them. They appeared on televised broadcasts. Their onstage theatrics, look and repertoire influenced both Cheap Trick (two pretty boys and two dweebs?), The Tubes and The Flaming Lips. The former band included, to use jargon of the era, a rock critic once so influential as to be named in the same reverent tones as Lester Bangs and Dave Marsh, one John Mendelssohn (Christopher Milk's originator/songwriter, in some forms of the band drummer and singer.) John furthermore logged in as Warner Brothers' publicity staff's main Kinks Kronikler of extensive note and fame in itself, as staff Los Angeles Times rock music writer and as staff Rolling Stone and Creem music writers at their nascence. He also personally introduced young recording artist David Bowie to the music of The Stooges.

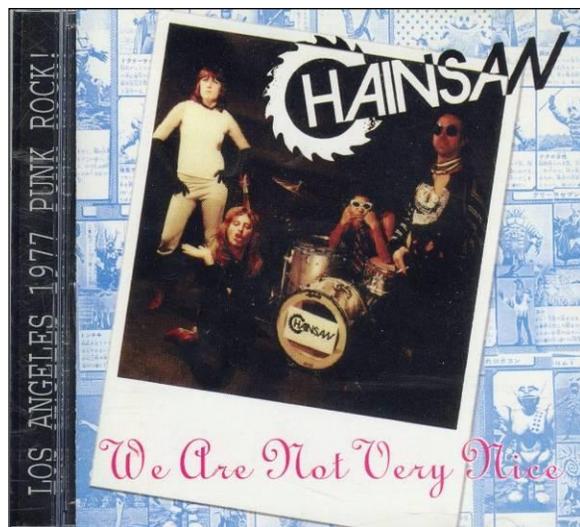
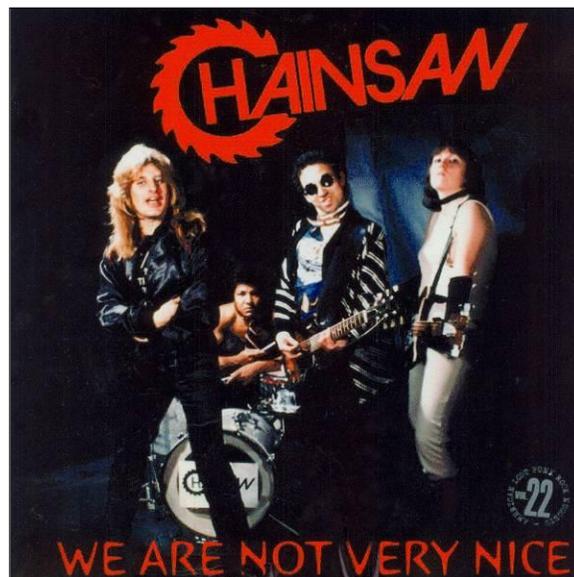


Lewis Segal: (writer/editor): "I think John has always been saddled with a rock update of the Cassandra curse. She saw the future clearly but was never believed until it was too late. As a writer and performer, he and his crew pioneered only to see latecomers get the fame and credit. I have been a writer all my life and I've known no better writer than John. But he doesn't believe me (or anyone else) when he hears things like that---so maybe I'm Cassandra-cursed as well."

Unprofessionally, assorted members of the former band dropped out to join 1960s cults, dated a future murderess now incarcerated in France, and practiced a sort of serial wife-swapping. The wife of the band's most influential supporter, another writer for the Los Angeles Times, left him for their guitarist whereupon their relocation to another state after the band's demise, relocated further leaving her own best friend to then wed the selfsame guitarist. All remain best of pals. The bassist's onetime girlfriend then wed the drummer/songwriter/etc. with offspring resultant prior to divorce, who then wed a former dominatrix. The writer of this very piece introduced an influential member to the original band, dated another for two seconds, and wed yet another (the singer of both bands, and they remain a couple some three and a half decades on. Well, it's full frontal disclosure then.)

The latter band also ahead of its time, Chainsaw, was termed glampunk, punk, hardest core. The foursome fronted by Mr. Twister was characterized by this pro radio add: "Rock/Punk/Hardcore/Glam/Aggro. Important re-release of legendary troublemakers from Los Angeles, circa 1977, the template for Iggy-esque clever lyrics backed by a maelstrom of cohesive punk fury." It also was characterized by, belying his legendary destruction-prone stage antics and utterly filthy lyrics, yet another well-spoken, erudite, college-educated guy wanting to take frontman charge of things. His sample promotion directly follows (and will in full later, as he prefers to remain his own best spokesman, and I prefer domestic tranquility.)

Twister: "CHAINSAW has its own unique and overlooked contributions to the Los Angeles music scene. Their foundation and origin initially stretched back to the year 1970, with Chainsaw actually forming in 1976. 'Historically significant' (see: Twister in 'We Got the Neutron Bomb: The Untold Story of LA Punk') is not the kind of compelling tag that makes you and your friends (if you have any) want to run out and see a band. Don't be fooled! After breaking ground (and whole clubs) in the distant past, CHAINSAW continues to burn with unholy fire. CHAINSAW is still Not Very Nice (the title of their Rave Up record and Dionysus cd), in the best possible sense of the phrase."



Every individual mentioned above (with the exception of Ms. Liebovitz and Messieurs Schmidt, Bangs, Marsh and Seeff, but inclusive even of the French murderess) knew one another during their student years at UCLA. Hence the unusual erudition evinced by a sub-group oft associated with slobbering knuckle-draggers, hard rock musicians.

In documenting the early promise and alliances of rock bands in their youth, even after some four decades it's a battle to represent all the protagonists to satisfaction of each. Are they triumphant because they made it out the other end of the rabbit hole intact and alive, and not riddled with wistful 'what if' nostalgia? And what if they were? Or are? There's so much damage from being ahead of one's time: the pioneers get all the arrows, and these proto-punk

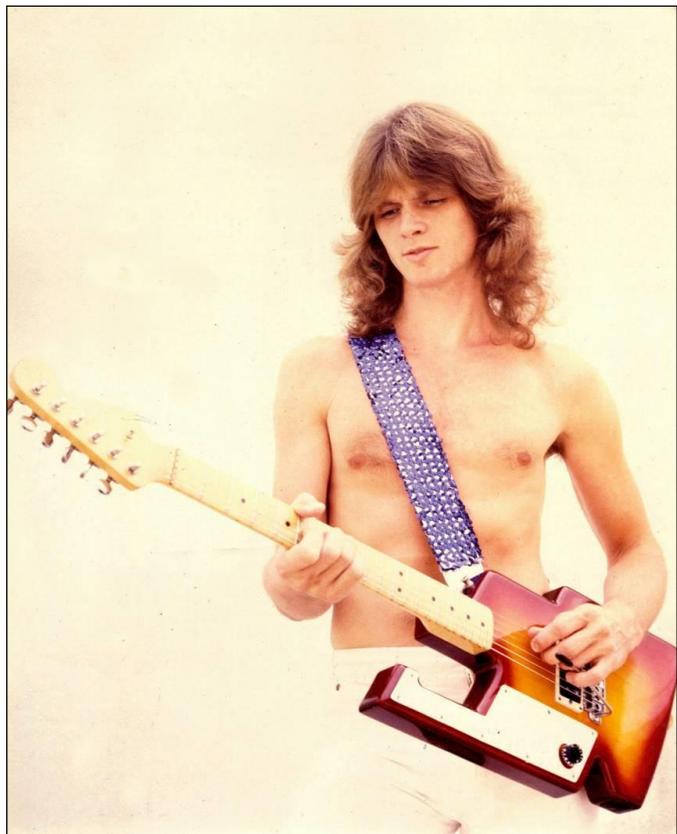


pioneers were not spared same. But I don't mind those undertones creeping in. Even the recent French comedy *Potiche* with Catherine Deneuve explored the directions the characters traveled in direct conflict to their early promise and alliances, so it's not just your rock and rollers in *Velvet Goldmine* or even real life looking back in anger, puzzlement and awe.

For starters, I asked the Facebook Christopher Milk Fan Club a question more suitable to a James Cameron film, "Do you trust me?" in turn receiving some testimonials.

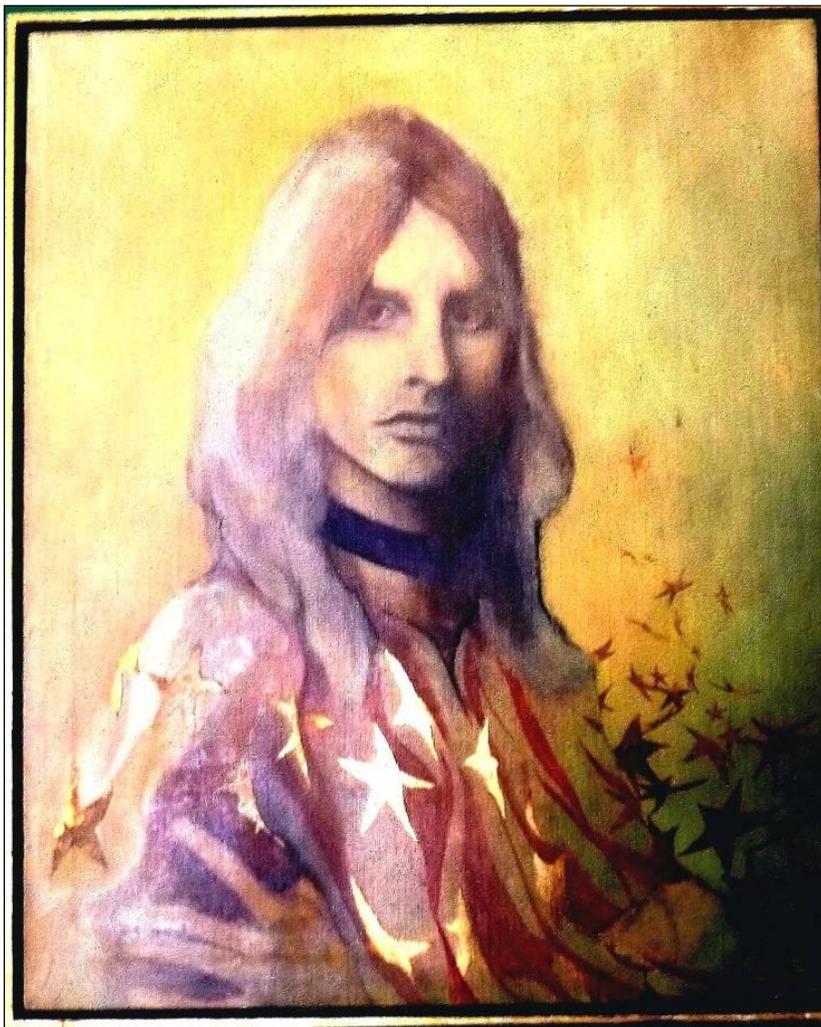
Kirk Henry (bass player, Christopher Milk): "(Future) convicted murderer Barrie Taylor got me into a lot of trouble, not the least of which can be attributed to the time she dragged me to a party at Heather Harris' parents' house. It was there that John, addled by some hallucinogenic substance, decided that I was the Angel of Death. He later called to ask if I'd like to be rich and famous, and introduced me to Ralph and Mr. Twister. We soon set about the (ultimately futile) endeavor of choosing a new name. Nobody particularly liked my suggestion of Mr. Twister and His Sister's Blisters.

I already was working part time in the Dykstra Hall (UCLA dormitory) kitchen and full time on the graveyard shift at



Uniroyal Tires that summer, so we had to do our desultory rehearsals in the afternoon. We soon embrace trial by fire with a flash performance in the Dykstra Lounge. Nobody in the band was particularly pleased when I left for a long-planned summer trek cross-country and through Canada, but it's not like a lot was happening in late August and September.

I was in Boston when I got calls from both Berkeley and UC Santa Cruz approving my transfer applications. I declined both to give this band thing a shot. Upon reflection, with the Barrie to Heather to Xtopher Milk thread, my life probably would be completely different. Maybe I'd have a beard." (Ed.-- I knew Barrie only through her roommate Kathy Baillie whom I encountered through her boyfriend Jim Suede, a friend putting himself through a Nuclear Physics major at UCLA by playing bass with a genuine African-American soul band nightly. He played and sang a killer "Mustang Sally" decades before "The Commitments." We lost him to Scientology.)

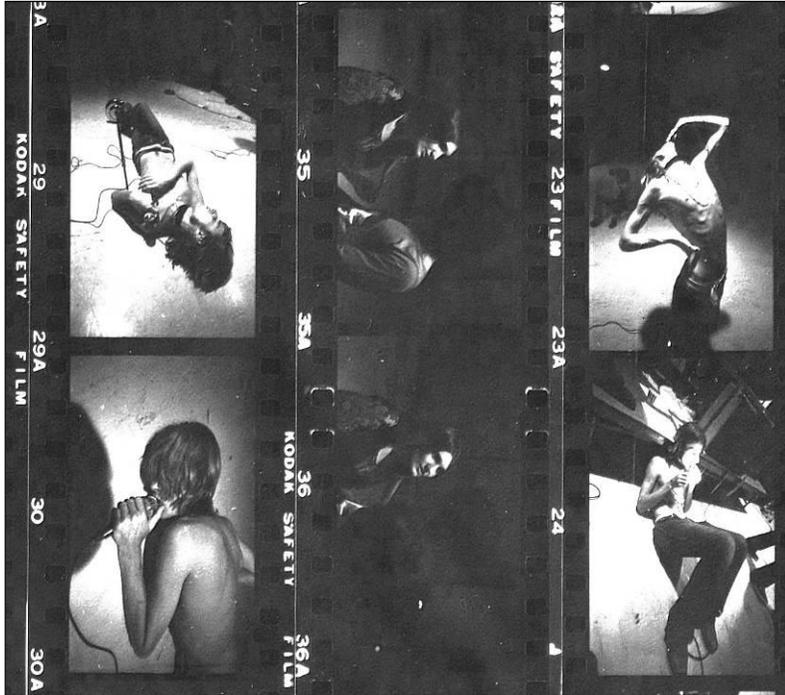


"Upon return I was pleased to find that John had designed and printed calling cards:

**CHRI
STOP
HER
MILK**

featuring the dreaded Mr. Twister

Also listed were manager Jim Bickhart and agent Lew Segal. I'd never had a business card before so this was The Big Time.



After a noon concert at UCLA during which those Half Nelson thugs hurled Mr. Twister into John's drums, I offered one of these shiny new cards to Rick Roberts, who only recently had graduated from UCLA busker (Ed.-- and one time "Tep House" --the local stoner Animal House-like frat--denizen) to actual Flying Burrito Brother. He declined it admitting 'I can't help you.'

Nor did we need his help, only weeks later attaining what was perhaps the pinnacle of the

Twister Era at the world-famous Troubadour. As still alive and kicking Richard Cromelin chronicled in now-defunct Coast FM & Fine Arts, we exceeded our own expectations.

To paraphrase Mr. Cromelin's summation, the Troubadour crowd is pretty hip - if they like you they applaud politely; if they don't they keep talking. For four minutes after Christopher Milk disappeared from the stage, there was dead silence.

A few days later we opened for Alice Cooper at the UCLA Homecoming Dance. While we were not as pleased with our impact, it seemed to grow on people and then into legend, since no fewer than four photos of Mr. Twister appeared in the subsequent UCLA Yearbook and none of Alice Cooper.

DECEMBER 1970

2 Eric Burdon is launching a CURB THE CLAP bumpersticker campaign aimed at fighting what he calls "the number-one sickness in the record business today—VD." *Rolling Stone* reports. Burdon's manager, Steve Gold, denies that it has anything to do with MGM Records president Mike Curb's recent announcement that he was dropping eighteen acts from his roster because their music advocated drug use. "It's because Eric has the clap," says Gold. "He says from age fifteen to twenty-six he only had it once, but it's happened three or four times since. For every donation to the L.A. Free Clinic, Eric will send out a CURB THE CLAP bumpersticker. VD has more effect on this industry than any drug."

4 *Supersession*, an album that evolved out of an ad hoc studio jam session with Mike Bloomfield, Al Kooper and Steve Stills, is certified gold.

6 *Gimme Shelter*, Albert and David Maysles' documentary film about the Rolling Stones' 1969 tour of

the U.S., premieres on the anniversary of the Altamont concert.

Nearly 200 Public Broadcasting stations around the United States air a sixty-minute show called *San Francisco Rock: Go Ride the Music*, featuring performances by and interviews with the Jefferson Airplane, Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead, Quicksilver Messenger Service and David Crosby.

12 Rock critic John Mendelsohn's band, Christopher Milk, arouses the ire of Doug Weston, owner of the Troubadour club in Los Angeles. At a Monday night audition there, the band's lead singer, Mr. Twister, wreaks havoc by pouring hot wax all over himself, biting audience members, overturning tables and spilling drinks in customer's laps.

Charges of "larceny by trick" are filed against Little Richard in Miami Beach, Florida, by Blacks, Inc., a black advocacy and self-help group that alleges the veteran rocker pocketed \$250 he'd solicited for Blacks, Inc. Little Richard claims that all he

wants is a receipt, and then he'll give them their money. A week later, the charges are dropped.

16 In one day, five singles and five albums by Creedence Clearwater Revival are certified gold: "Down on the Corner," "Lookin' on My Back Door," "Travelin' Band," "Bad Moon Rising," "Up around the Bend" and *Cosmo's Factory*, *Willy and the Poor Boys*, *Green River*, *Bayou Country* and *Creedence Clearwater Revival*.

17 The Beach Boys play a command performance for Princess Margaret at London's Royal Albert Hall.

18 Creedence Clearwater's latest album, *Fendulum*, is added to their gold cache. And Bob Dylan's second album, *Freebeelin'* (vintage 1963), is certified gold.

19 President Richard Nixon commends MGM chief Mike Curb for taking the initiative in ridding the music industry of drug users through his well-publicized dismissal of eighteen MGM acts who supposedly advocated drug use.



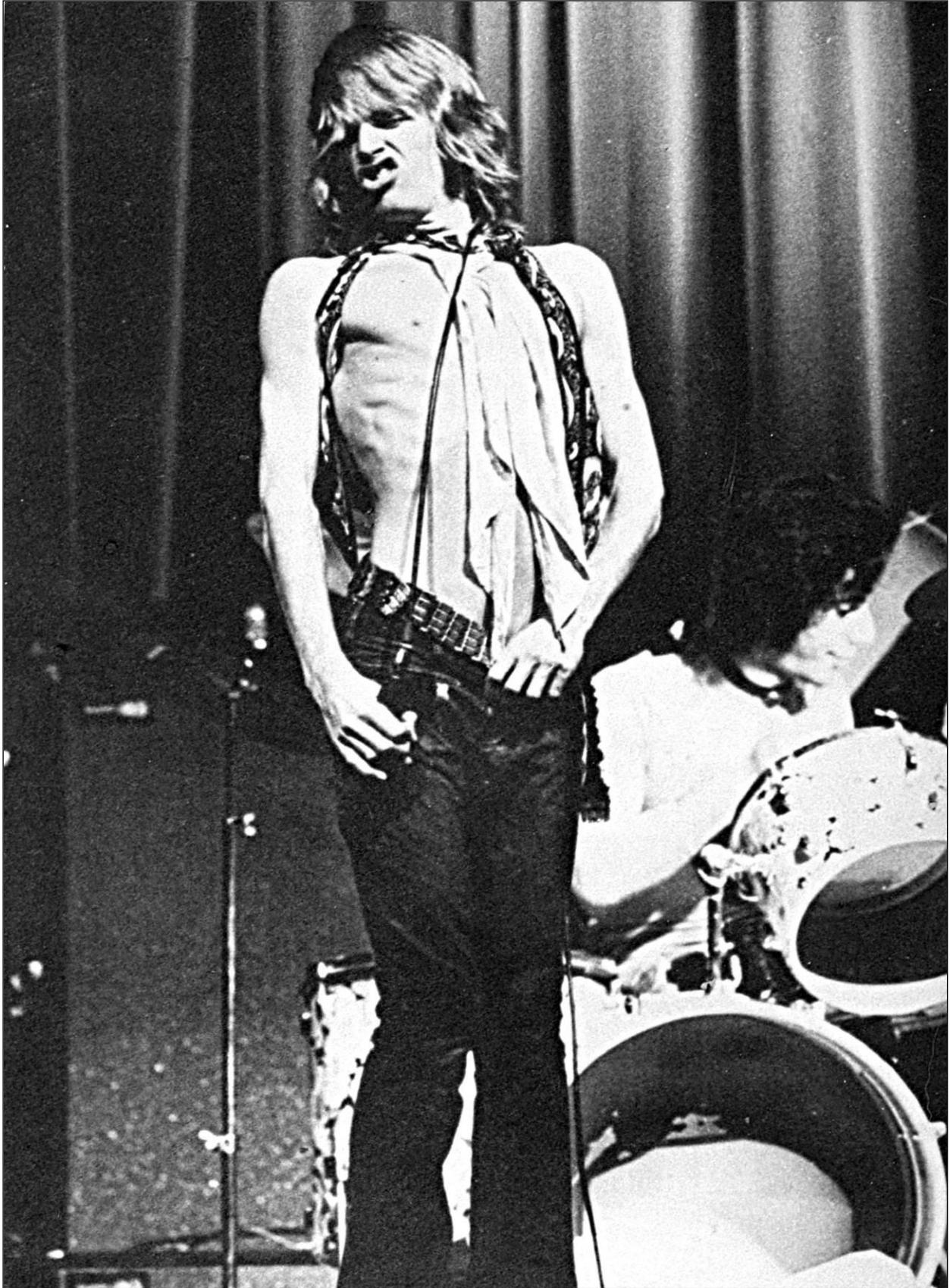
21 Three new albums certified gold: The reunion album, *John Leycorn Must Die*, the British studio recording of *Jesus Christ Superstar* by Judy Collins' *In My Life*.

23 Joni Mitchell, gained recognition through Judkins' recording of "Both Sides Now," and renditions of "Stock" by Matthews South Comfort and Crosby, Nash and Young, can first gold disc as a performer with her third album, *La the Canyon*.

24 New York guitarist and analyst and Dystologist A. J. Weberman, in a role for *Rolling Stone*, light on a line in Bob Dylan's *Dogs Run Free* from the *Morning* album: "The well-articulated and

WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 5

U.S. #1 POP 45	"I Think I Love You"	The Partridge Family
U.S. #1 POP 10		



Furthermore, I attended a UCLA Homecoming party of the following year. A frat boy standing in front of me leaned over to his friend and said, "Great band!" The friend shook his head and replied, "They're no Mr. Twister."

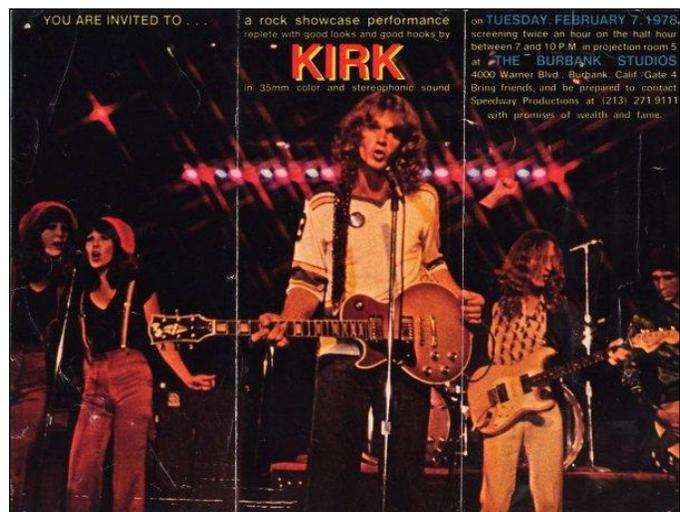


After the Alice Cooper gig I dropped my amp off and set out for Colorado, but instead spent a week in a Wyoming hospital and another at UCLA Med Center after a traveling companion rolled my VW van down an embankment in -10 degree weather. During my recuperation, John decided that what we needed was dancers and multimedia and More People!

Anybody who ever saw Christopher Milk live will agree that (Ed.-- producer of their LP a half decade before his tackling same for the Sex Pistols) Chris Thomas didn't get it, and consequently the Warner Brothers album didn't adequately represent it. From song selection to sound, he envisioned the band as more Procol Harum than Bonzo Dog Band, more deliberate than aggro, more polished than out of control. Even so, we would have been much more satisfied with the outcome had he spent half as much time on the lead vocals as he did on the guitars."

My own then roommate took debatable credit for Mr. Henry's unfortunate accident, as she had been deflowered by him, thought our one block away proximity warranted more of his attentions, and ferociously had practiced vengeful wicca ceremonies with one of his personal effects, some left-behind clothing or nonesuch.

The UCLA gig had involved onstage circumcision of a banana as well as Mr. Twister's famous aggro-contortionist theatrics and audience provocation. When the inevitable Iggy comparisons erupted (cute, half-naked skinny blonds prone to pottymouth





and proactivity inside their audiences, the both of them) he upped his own antes and set his bare skin on fire with chemicals courtesy of his movie special effects chums. These burned on a layer above the skin without incinerating the perpetrator, but Twister claimed the effect was muted by the band's lack of its own lighting system, hence the stunt's non-repetition.

The Troubadour antics involved, from COAST FM & FINE ARTS by Richard Cromelin, March 1971, the following description of the first single minute of CMilk's performance which got them banned from the club for life back in 1970: "Mr. Twister flung off his cape, revealing his emaciated, plucked-chicken frame. Barking and grumbling his lead vocal, this

obscene vision stumbled straight toward the edge of the stage and -- over the edge onto the panicking audience. Tables toppled over, Twister leaping from one to the other like Little Nell on the ice floes, drinks and candles slid to a tinkling and crashing death on the cement floor." The first forty seconds only had involved total ruination of three of the club's mikestands and microphones by Mr. Twister in his deranged, hyperactive attempt to single out one.

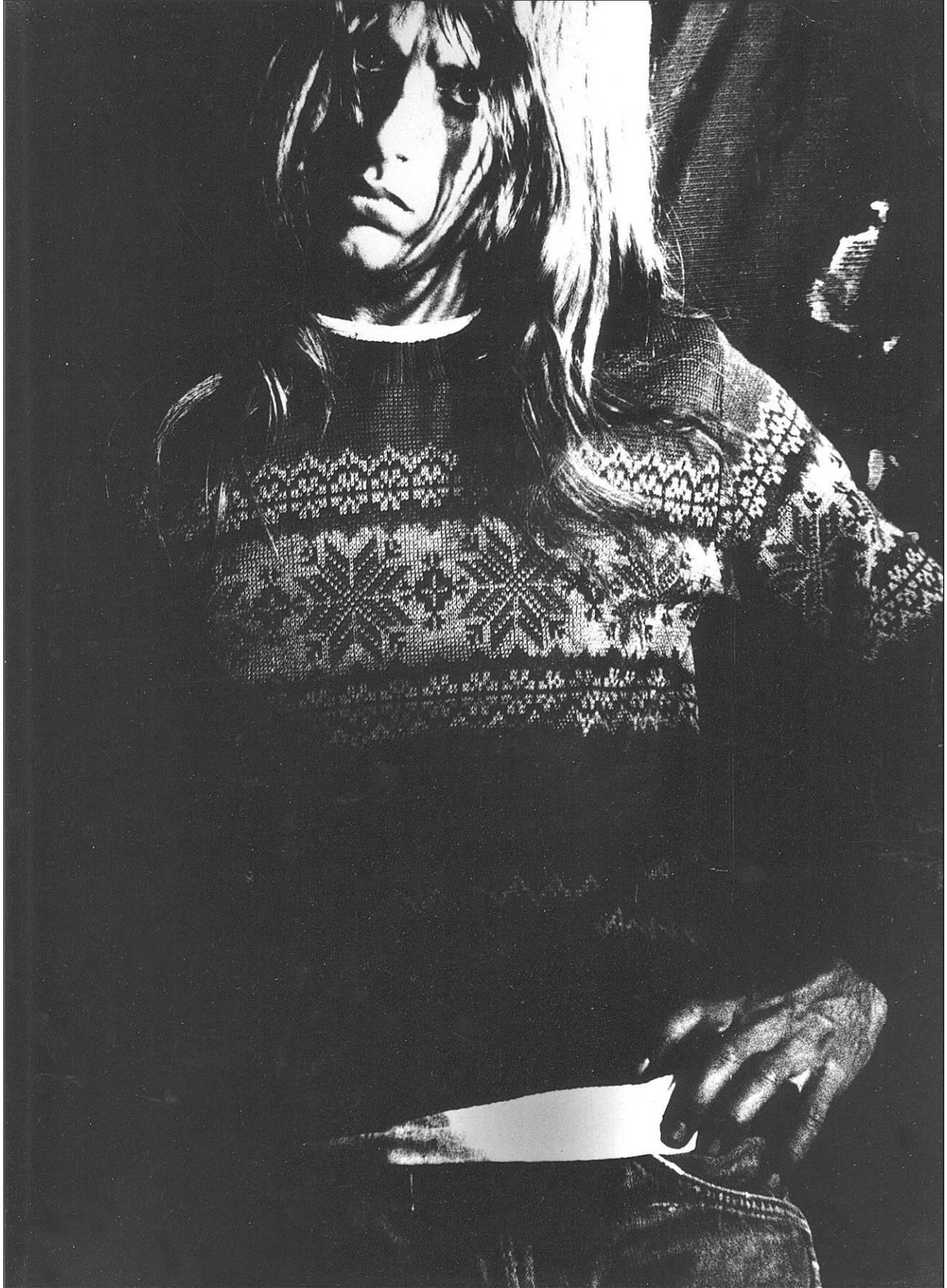


From a SOUNDS (British music trade) review of Warner Brothers "Some People Will Drink Anything," by Sandy Robertson. "Asked what he'll be doing when he's 60, (Mendelssohn) replies 'Brooding.' ...maybe if they brought back

the unstable Mr. Twister... who once poured the molten slush of a candle vase down his trousers while screaming at the audience, 'WE ARE NORMAL!!'"

Heather: "Didn't that really hurt?"

Twister: "Only for a second..."



George Dragotta (drummer, Christopher Milk): "I'd like to at least begin by saying these heady days and nights were the most fun and exciting times for me. I had just been released from the military in early 1971. That fall I struck for LA where I planned to join a rock n' roll band and become rich and famous. Within a few weeks I answered an ad that directed me to Ralph's parents' house in West LA. It was there that I met my first real popstar in the person of John Mendelsohn.

I was smitten. These were the lads with whom I was destined to rocket to the top. Surly Ralph, The Kiddo, Mr. Twister and Flashfinger Bazbo (the Donald.) Accordingly, I was soon christened G. Whiz and under the tutelage of John, himself a drummer, I began my rapid transformation into a Rock n' Roll drummer. First thing, lose the drumsticks and start bashing with logs. Sometime later at a television appearance lipsyncing, I actually played with carrots. Next he



dispatched me to Peter Visor's Salon to upgrade my hippie wannabe locks. Dressed me for the street as well as the stage. (Tight tops, hip-hugging bottoms and Eleganza pumps increased my stature immensely.)

We had a roadie named Normal who dressed up like Alex from Clockwork Orange. He was onstage security to insure that Mr. Twister could not escape from the stage and wreak havoc on an unsuspecting audience. Until later. Mr. Twister would literally break out from the false front of one of The Kiddo's Acoustic bass amplifier cabinets, where he had crouched unseen for the first half of the

show. At a milestone gig was at The Whisky a Go-Go, I actually left my drums and sat on the front of the stage where I calmly disrobed, then returned to do a drum solo, the finale of which occurred when John and Kirk crept up from either side and pelted me with cream pies. I think that was the gig where Neil Young was quoted as saying that Christopher Milk was absolutely the worst band he had ever seen (or words to that effect.) I suggested at the time that we could take out a billboard on the Sunset Strip: 'Christopher Milk is the worst band I have ever seen!' - Neil Young.

Instead we hit the road to build up our grassroots following, and amongst same, I managed to contract an std before heading back to Hollywood. Christopher Milk was for me many childhood dreams coming true. It was like getting to relive your high school days, but this time being at the top of the heap."



Social networking eventually loomed large after Anita Oswald started The Facebook Christopher Milk Fan Club Forum as a lark whereupon it promptly took on a life of its own with over 100 "friends." It evolved into a repository of major music writers (many former MOJO / Q /Britmusic weeklies' editors) slumming/eavesdropping on their counterparts. The actual band members also mended fences in their typical

Wildian/Shavian manner (and with far more civilized ripostes than the famed network television broadcast of Gore Vidal/William F. Buckley's debating style, "Shut up you crypto-Nazi!") (really) as one would anticipate from a university-spawned rockers.

Social networking, so ubiquitous at present, someday will appear as mannered a form of communication as is haiku or as quaint a one as were cartes des visites, hence my inclusion of the form as revealing hagiography for *Paraphilia's* future deathless volumes. Par example, regarding my (initially mislabeled) 1970 photograph of the Classic Lineup of Christopher Milk (Mr. Twister, John, Ralph, Kirk) playing an outdoor UCLA gig---

John: The attentive viewer will note that I am playing drums borrowed from Mr. Michael Burns, then the deposed drummer turned sugardaddy/manager of the group that would metamorphose into Sparks. I had not yet persuaded The Kiddo to repudiate the hippie look.



John: Oh, before I shut up for the day, the attentive viewer will further note the saxophone that

Ralph had earlier played with such distinction in Dave & The Vantays, the West Side's pre-eminent mostly Japanese surf combo. Ralph, of course, was no more Japanese than you or I, and if someone invokes that New Wave hit by Whatever-They-Were-Called, I shall pout, albeit adorably, in that way I have.



Kirk: "I had not yet persuaded The Kiddo to repudiate the hippie look." Or perhaps you did not yet recognize your resident proletarian fashion visionary, since two years later baseball shirts were de (not Bob) rigueur, and two decades later same same for jeans torn at knee.

John: No such thing is the case. I recognized all the members of The Classic Lineup on sight. And on site, as here.

Kirk: Then shall I say perhaps you did not recognize AS your resident proletarian fashion visionary, Mr Fussbudget.

Kirk: Speaking of visionary, Heather copyrighted this pic the year before it was snapped.

John: You can't be too safe, not in view of the lengths collectors will go to get ancient photos of The Classic Line Up.

Ralph: You boys stop that, right now.

John: You just stay out of it, Ralphie-boy. This is between The Classic Lineup's Over-Six-Footers, though word has it that tireless debauchery has left The Kiddo the size of that cheerful

Italianate percussionist we had toward the end. In other news, I am in contact with Ms. Vanessa Gilbert, who might have been one of the platform shoed beauties I tried to knock over like so many bowling pins at the end of our performance at El Monte Legion Stadium. I regret having



been so beastly to the cheerful Italianate percussionist, but of course I regret much.

Kirk: Vanessa did indeed number among Rodney's El Monte Entourage, and attended many other C Milk events, even while nominally enrolled at Agoura High, in part thru associations with Rodney (Bingenheimer) and Richard Creamer. You are in contact with her because I guided her here.

Heather: I rely upon the dates stamped by now defunct photo labs on the backs of my old proof sheets for 'recherche du temps perdu.' Lord knows I can't remember this stuff! Too much of it! There's well nigh forty

years of un-filed rock 'n' roll photos, proof sheets and negatives taking up my walk-in closet, which otherwise would be quite spacious.

Kirk: I love it when you talk dirty.

Heather: Watch out or I'll talk phototechjargon. Or Mr. Twister will, he's better at it...

John: Do you suppose your phototechjargon frightens The Kiddo, missy? Ha! You have clearly not witnessed one of his ampchats, during which he and another will spend days comparing the, you know, specs of various amplifiers. In fact, I would refer you to the first evening the three of us ever spent in one another's company. I made some reference to The Who using a particular brand, Hi-Watt, if memory serves (canapes). The kiddo's snort of derision from the back seat might have awakened slumbering shorties blocks away. "They're Sunn," said he. Or maybe I have it backwards. And where's Ralph lately now that the fur is really flying?

Heather: Golly gee Wally, you told him to just stay out of it!

John: Do as I do, not as I say, madame. Or maybe I have that backwards too.

The above in print demonstrates the evolution, as certainly as the Berlin Archaeopteryx fossil caught similar of dinosaur into bird, of John and Kirk making up after a twenty year hiatus. Below, regarding the color photo sessions shot on location in verdant Topanga Canyon that none of them remembered doing despite pictorial proof otherwise.



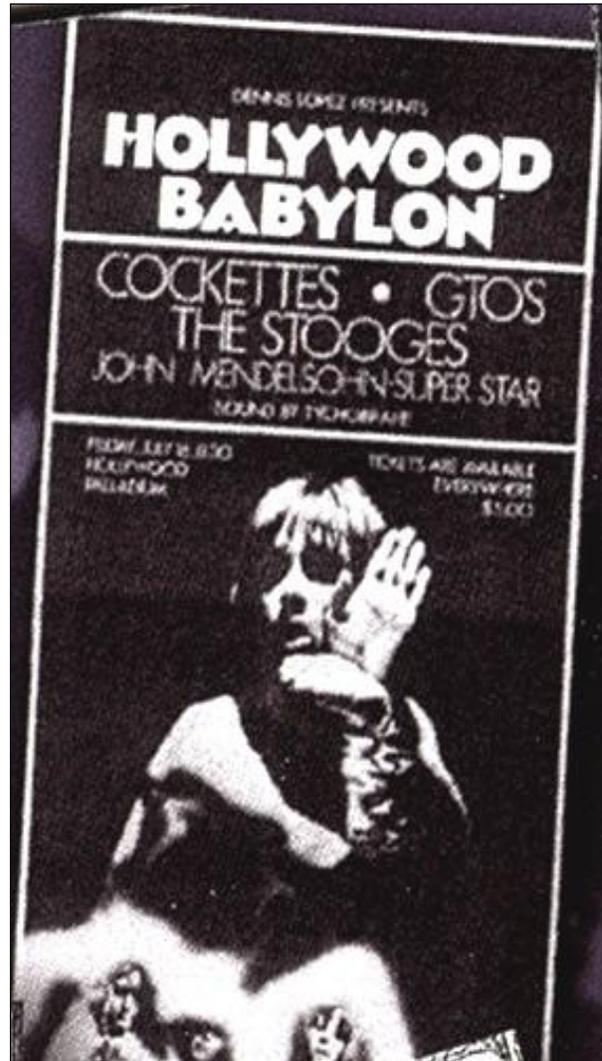
Heather: I suppose none of the participants, who all claim selective amnesia, can explain what set off this clothes-swapping frenzy. I find this whole photo set (and some of the ones Twister didn't digitize, like the band running and falling down a hill which didn't look nearly as cool as it sounds) enlightening not just because I know those involved. It shows a time warp window of young performers in their preening exuberance, show-off camaraderie, interplay, and hopeful asides to the future in a unique period of rock music culture. If you could overcome your prejudice towards the New York Dolls, John, you'd probably get a kick out of Bob Gruen's *All Dolled Up* dvd, which I find hugely enjoyable for the exact same reason.

John: What I will say is that there's been nothing like it since, that wonderful feeling of our being a kind of gang, united in our lunatic determination to achieve the impossible, united too, I suspect, in the confidence that we would always be young and slim and pretty, and the world our oyster. We were gorgeous. We were clever. It was obvious that ever we'd be thus.* But by 29, when I started another band, I was no longer capable of that feeling. As for the Dolls, madam, prejudice isn't the right word. I gave them careful consideration before deciding I couldn't stand 'em. But the court will note that I watched the documentary about their bass player.

Heather: If you liked seeing Kane's journey and the last 20 minutes of the film, you probably could sit through Gruen's film and actually enjoy it for the reasons we both noted about the CMilk pics. And the fact that you'd know half the folks depicted ** and all of the groupies. (discussion of groupies, Iggy and The Stooges ensued.)

John: Now it can be told: James Williamson (Ed. --temporarily jettisoned from Iggy and The Stooges by management. Can you imagine, say, Jagger jettisoning co-writer/guitarist Richards because management decreed so?) auditioned for CMilk a few weeks before our breakup. He wore wonderful stiletto-heeled (men's!) shoes from London, but boy, did our styles not mesh; I think he was looking for something very much more Chuck Berry-derived. "Barrelhouse," as he put it. CMilk did not do no fucking barrelhouse. In other news, I believe the other photo Kurt Ingham took of Iggy in San Francisco in May 1970 (Ed. warranting a 2-pg. spread in The Authorized Stooges Biography) to be one of the three or four best rock photos ever, a work of sublime brilliance.

* "We were gorgeous. We were clever. It was obvious that ever we'd be thus. We had genius beyond rating. History clearly had been waiting just for us... (Now) Our beauty has been looted. Life's refuted everything that we believed ...We'll go but not so quietly in these, the waning best years of our lives."



from "The Best Years Of Our Lives" by John Mendelssohn, (1972/1992) from the autobiography "I, Caramba" by John Mendelssohn.

**personages such as Nick Kent, Sabel Starr and beaucoup local Hollywood trendies, underaged and beyond, circa 1973.

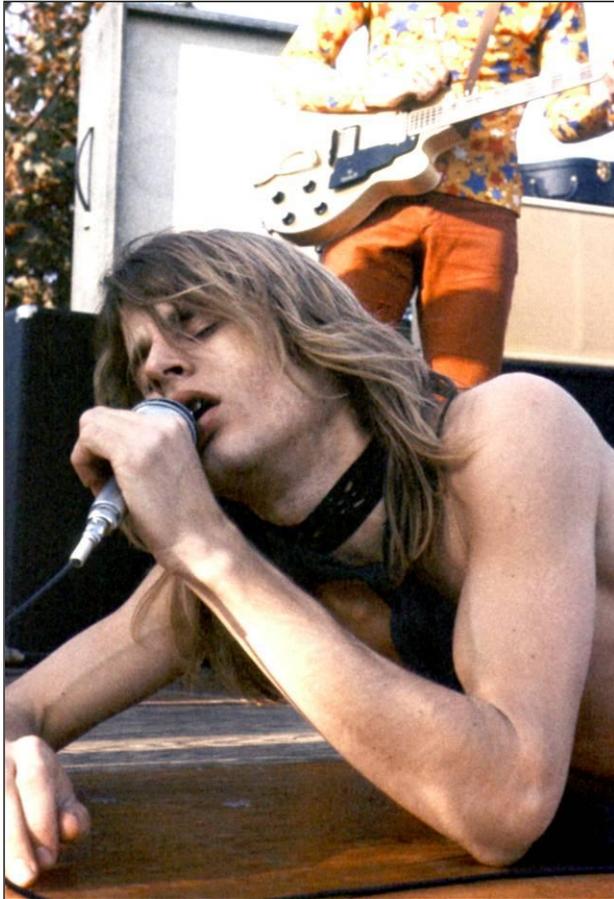
The online FB CM FC also attracted CMilk (or Xtopher Milk as he was wont to scribe) enthusiast Rick Snyder whom I met while fruitlessly hawking my rock photos at a free booth provided by some future recession-quashed fair event. His immediate recognition of the shots of Mr. Twister prompted our conversation. A former Captain Beefheart bass player, Rick not only fit right in with similar musical pedigree, warped sense of humor and erudite ways, but subsequently became the group's foremost historian, concocting the sole website (cited in *Paraphilia's* appendix for same) devoted to preserving every assorted iota of Christopher Milk glory, inclusive of his own extensive family tree of band origins and band offshoots, which thankfully means I don't have to detail same.

Ralph Oswald (guitarist, Christopher Milk): "My selective memory treats CM as a band before its time. From the ongoing discussion about 'Speak Now' and 'Locomotion' (Ed.--Terry Reid and Little Eva covers by CMilk possibly 'borrowed' by those with more biz clout) to the use with Twister of pyrotechnics (which in a pure Spinal Tap moment exploded backstage on manager Jake the Weasel,) the bombast of lame' and sequined gowns and the blending of proto-punk with quite serious Brit-Pop, we, and I mean here, mostly John, planted little seeds of the rock and roll future. 'Bet you never heard about John's idea to be shot on stage. Remember *Velvet Goldmine*'?"



Sound pompous? Well, I for one came from a privileged first band. One that hell yeah! played for Sinatra. John, though not at first, became close with his heroes through job requirements. Heady times, big egos. So a big part of our attitude was hell I'm already famous. Step aside. We thought that a band with Twister (who was absolutely *fearless* onstage) and intelli-pop would work. Hah! The separation of the two was inevitable. George and I have talked more than once about what would have happened if we'd gone the punk route as did Twister. But G is a drummer, and all he wants to do is drum. J and I wanted to write. So we did. And that sowed

the seeds of CM's eventual complete dissolution. J's idol was Cole Porter while mine was Wagner, and though the two met for a time and we produced a decent album, certainly a unique one for the times, it couldn't have worked for long. And John continues to self-record in an incredibly competitive digital world while I was so deflated on the lack of interest in my psycho-progressive stuff that I retreated into comparative normalcy. And Twist got to tour Italy in 2003. Life's a constant surprise.



So eventually since we weren't the best singers or musicians, we'd be the loudest we could be and exchange sexy presence for satire. But post-Mr. Twister after John, Kirk and I congealed, no other could be admitted. So, sic transit hubris. Facebook brought us together again to some extent, and I have realized that no real band, none that shared a certain bond, ever dissolves completely. And after all this time we're still played a bit on the radio, available for download, and have a goddamn

But while it was happening, it was heady and quite crazy. We got to be Bowie's first band, sort of, (Ed.- - backing him on an impromptu 'White Light White Heat' during a CMilk rehearsal at A&M studios, providing him with instruments in his very first U.S., green-card defiant acoustic set in Hollywood,) play a couple really big halls, and all the while blowing things up, wearing outrageous clothes, and poking fun at all and sundry sacred cows. Influential? Think of the Flaming Lips. They after 20 years shout through bullhorns, set fires at their venues (on purpose) and sing about some very strange stuff. Sound familiar? Too bad Iggy came first, we'd have had that one too. The Tubes? Think about it. But we owed a lot to those before us as well. Early on, with Steve Ferguson and Denny Castanares in the college band, we had some great talent. Couldn't keep 'em.

27th April 1971

Dear John,

My boiler suit is already split, the WHO have finally driven me crazy, and I'm now writing GOOD songs and only producing SENSIBLE groups. Like Thunderclap Newman for example. So avoid me.

The demo was great. I don't know who you think you are, but the public are sure to hate the whole bit. You know, we're playing up. Play the game. Is Rock really dead? NO! There's Christopher Milk.

Great stuff. But stupid, and highly commercial damn you. Enclosed is a tape to titillate your earloes. I hope you realise that not even Kit Lambert has heard these tapes yet. He's the producer. With a capital P. And we're a FAMILY UNIT.

Glyn Johns engineers in Olympic and in the Stones' Mobile at Jarrer's house. It's all CLEAN MUSIC.

Love,

We asked top vocalists to name

HOW THE WORLD'S BEST PICKED THE WORLD'S BEST

<p>TONY ASHTON Aldous, Gardner and Dyke and Co</p>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Joe Cocker 2. Roy Young 3. Ronnie Hawkins 	<p>DAVID BOWIE</p>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Iggy Pop 2. Paul Rodgers 3. Christopher Milk 	<p>ROGE CHAI</p>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. John Lennon 2. Van Morrison 3. Marvin Gaye
<p>GRAHAM BELL Art</p>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Eric Burdon 2. Robbie Robertson 3. Taj Mahal 	<p>EDGAR BROUGHTON</p>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Neil Young 2. Mick Jagger 3. Jack Bruce 	<p>DAVID</p>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Neil Young 2. John Lennon 3. David Bowie
<p>MARC BOLAN T. Rex</p>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jim Morrison 2. Bessie Smith 3. Van Morrison 	<p>BOZ King Crimson</p>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Billie Holiday 2. Leon Thomas 3. John Lennon 	<p>ROGER D.</p>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jerry Lee Lewis 2. Little Richard 3. Melanie

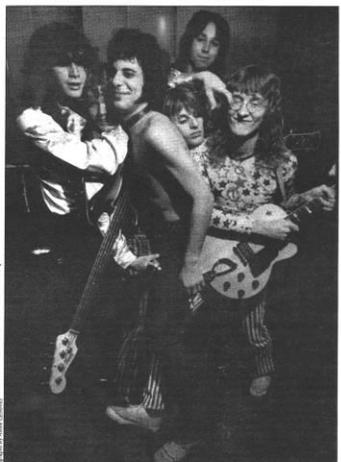
fan club. As my wife, currently working on a book and hopeful for publication, says when I cry about lost opportunities, 'You were published, signed, you played for people - you were somebody.' And so I choose to relive the good stuff, the insanity that the little kid who, to keep from being beat up, becomes the class clown knows so well. You've won if you're happy. And if you're in Wikipedia, hell, you're immortal.

I've had a very rewarding professional life beyond CM. Moreover, I have great fun reminiscing about the band days and how ridiculous and fun they were. God, so many people over the years have said, 'You were in a band? Wow!'. Didn't matter if we quote failed unquote. We

lived the life, if only for a short time. Selective memory is sometimes a lifesaver. My motto has always been 'life is as metaphor.' John cannot share that view. He has deep wounds, hard to fathom. Yet he will always be a dear friend. That's what being in a band does to you..."

Both Ralph and aforementioned Mr. Segal perchance were touching upon John's quarrel with Led Zeppelin (who offered to exterminate him) in the pages of *Rolling Stone* and assorted public outcries to his then admittedly prickly print persona. Vision is by nature contrarian, and he suffered consequences and backlash, some in excess. A kinder appraisal of, as Winston Churchill termed his own, the "wilderness years," came from someone who once knew him well and deeply admired John's effortless excellence in writing, a fellow UCLA scribe now successful doing same in television who prefers anonymity: "The gods gave him gifts beyond other mortals. Then the gods punished him for his hubris. But they went too far..."

ROLLING STONE/MAY 13, 1971



★★★★★

on guitar not only knows the blues, not only feels the blues, not only understands the blues, but, ladies and gentlemen, to the blues! This is a man who's been playing the blues since October, 1970, who's listened to all of John Mayall's albums, out of whose calloused fingertips all the pain, anguish, and satisfaction of growing up in West L.A. gush in most evocative fashion. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome our guitar man, Blind Surtly Ralph Blaiseby Oswald... which was Surtly Ralph's cue to start holding feet-back notes for up to three choruses while performing all the obligatory blues facial contortions, watching in astonishment as his fingers raced hitherky up and down the fretboard of his guitar, and generally making it difficult for anyone watching to feel as he had moments before about Albert King.

Then again, without missing a beat, we moved like a well-lubricated musical machine from the tumultuous and causticly "Fast A Cup" to the delicately poised "Circumstances" (letting whose instrumental interlude I lovingly rubbed half of the humans I'd just finished encircling with a hushaw into the perky country conifers of "There's A Broken Heart For Every Rock And Roll Star On Laurel Canyon Boulevard.")

Then we let them have Mr. Twister right between the eyes.

It took Mr. Twister no more than 40 seconds to demolish the first row of tables and chairs beside the stage as he unobtrusively kept them to prevent the three microphones he'd blantly knocked off the stage during his entrance. The legs of those fragile folkies who had'n't run screaming to the club's exit at the first sight of him were soon filled with drinks and dishes as he danced from tabletop to tabletop while shrieking "We Are Normal!" For his finale he poured the molten contents of a canister down his pants, causing grown men to cry for their mothers and grown women to fast dead away.

For 30 seconds after we raced off...

...testing tantalizingly.

"Hey, I dig your music and your trip," she informed me, casually and ever so smoothly tossing her magnificent blonde mane.

"Hey, I dig your music, your trip, and your scene," she informed me, her classically-shaped nostrils flaring slightly.

"Hey, I dig your music, your trip, your scene, and your superior clothes," she whispered passionately into my ear, her hot red tongue following close behind her words, as she raised her knee between my legs.

In the swaying bed of my swaying bachelor pad on the third floor of an old movie-star home low in the Hollywood Hill, she did things to me that no woman before her had ever done, in positions I had conceived not even in my wildest fantasies, cooped up while hearing all about sociology at UCLA. For two exquisite hours we tirelessly took one another to new spheres of ecstasy. At least six times that evening I achieved orgasm, which I have long held to be among the most pleasurable physical experiences.

Next, to allow the author's superior

...hand of all this to me. Please like the music. I sat on a chair, a girl's, a that has will of usual of to show about p is need opinion ate in edness, right p like by that de at least. eyes as can't be seen.

No, I means, a moment hand h gone I ter who come at we're not that out when A sign if historic and feel like it.

But I. If being with an being of south St. Mars. B tip and the kids of my right his error mind me super e



After Christopher Milk, Mr. Twister and its other guitarist the Donald, hearing of its “pub rock” expatriated to England since domestic hard rock save Iggy and The Stooges and The MC5 had all but run extinct, formed a band called Pointed Stick with some fellow hooligan Scots, saw punk erupt firsthand and adored it, tried it out themselves and promptly were deported. Back in the USA, Twister fronted an ad hoc group called Sunset Blvd. in the 1976 film *Garage Sale* starring

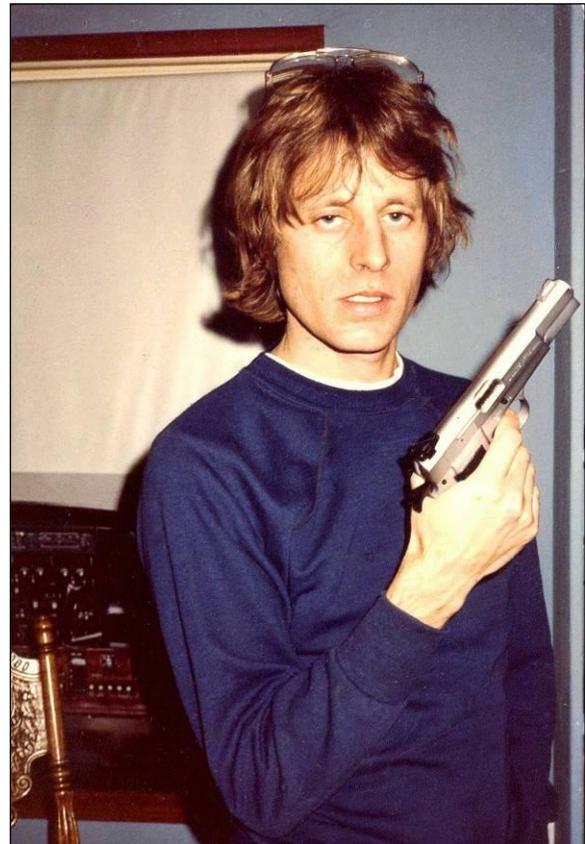
Goldie Glitters of The Cockettes. Backstory: stymied for a big finish, director Norman Yonomoto trolled for ideas whereupon the soundman Gordon Skene the Rhythm Machine extolled he could put together a visually exciting group with original songs overnight and the next day they could shoot the cast dancing to them and Godzilla would arise and stomp the building and the roof would fall in crushing everyone, The End (Fin.) And it was made so, with a grab bag of CMilk and UCLA-ites. The whatever happened to’s reveal a onetime denizen of the very top of Topanga Canyon in a lovely mansion, a film production professional; a public elementary school teacher; a current deputy mayor of the city of Los Angeles; and someone deceased way too young. ‘Not saying who’s whom y’all.

At one time or another all of Sunset Blvd. under the nom du par-tay of The Fabulous Sheepskins played the annual Behemoth Festival parties for 500 of our closest friends that my UCLA art school friend Elyse and I held throughout the 1970s at my parents’ house without their knowledge. These soirees became infamous for our live bands (never adequately recorded despite pro help, as all were too drunk), pre-video, collector-scavenged movies (*Bullitt*, *Deep Throat*, etc.) projected on bedsheets, multiple marriages breaking up therein, and occasional “incidents” like Mr. Twister breaking a watermelon over the head of Jimmy Mathers, brother of *Leave It To Beaver’s* The Beaver. (“I was aiming at someone else actually,” muttered Twister.) Twister continued his bad boy ways, eventually concocting another band with the Donald based upon their prior embrace of punk rock abroad. Chainsaw emerged.





A flash forward of objectivity, future sample review of Chainsaw's recorded evidence via the KZSU (Stanford radio station) site accompanying listing of most recent airplay, April 8, 2009: "Seminal L.A. punk (ca. 1977.) Thanks to Dionysus Records, this awesome gem is back from the grave. True to its proto-punk character, a heavy rock and roll character. Think Sex Pistols, The Stooges, The Damned, New York Dolls. Sinister heavy-primal distorto-guitar/basslines, assaulting rhythm attacks, electrifying solos and an Iggy Pop-ish/John Lydon-esque/Dave Vanian-ian vocal delivery. What more can you ask for? Play this fucker! Cool shit!"

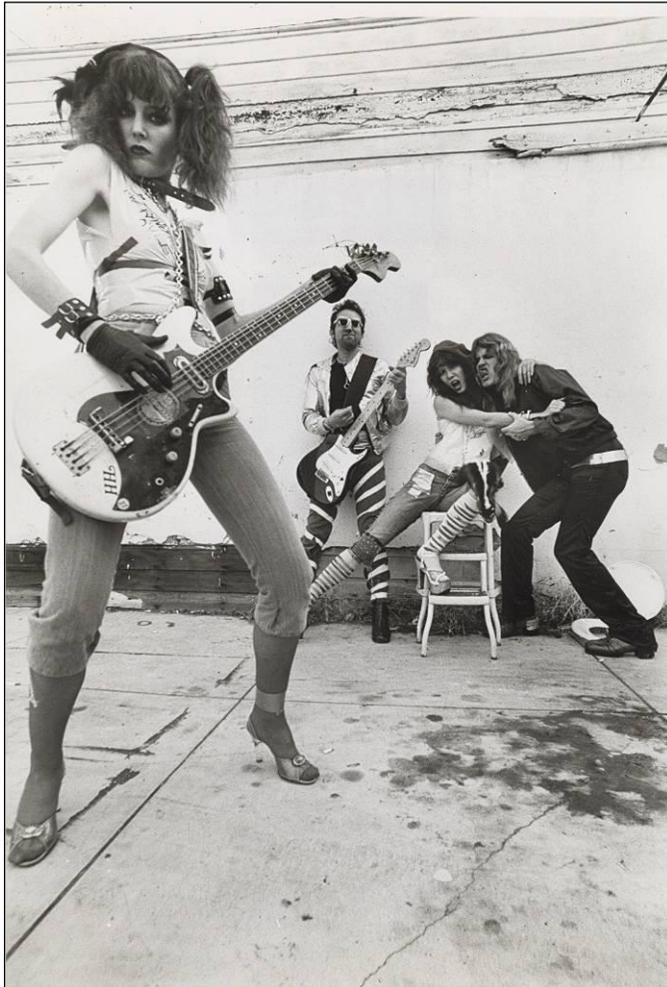


Twister: In spite of history-making performances (see: 1983's *Rolling Stone Rock Almanac* pg. 179, 2002's *We Got the Neutron Bomb*, etc.) by 1972 Twister and the Donald were consecutively ejected from the increasingly hapless Christopher Milk.

Totally convinced of their earth shaking talents and optimistic beyond all reason, the naive youths hied themselves off to sunny England with visions of emerald greener pastures. There, as the Original Pointed Stick, they earned countless pints of Guinness, packs of crisps, and not much else by playing *Pretty Things*, *Soft Machine* and *Move* covers, (interspersed with a few notable originals like *Hey*, *Blacksmith*, which to this day they are unable to accurately recall.) Countless tiny pubs, with equally tiny audiences driving tiny cars (down the wrong side of little streets) and tiny squalid bed-sits wore

rather thin. Permit-less and on the edge of starvation they returned to LA to rethink, regroup and re-attack.

By 1977 everything was bright and new. New name (Chainsaw). New material. New rhythm section (the dynamic Miss Laura Crowe on bass, the uncontrollable Mr. Raul Gomez on drums-



long before political correctness would have given its cold approval to such a lineup.) A newly refined diet with the essential food groups of Cigarettes, Cognac, Beer, Speed, and Protein tablets). And... the old, take a few prisoners and mutilate them, attitude x 10!!

The first single, *Polaride Pictures* was semi-disastrous, semi-crap, and thus now much prized by the more eccentric sort of collector (bless all of you). Chainsaw live was a maelstrom of broken bars, tables, chairs, amps, heads, microphones, bones, glass, and a new definition of aggro. A fanatically devoted cadre of insatiable fans was unable to balance an irate mix of club owners, parents and brothers who were increasingly demanding the soonest possible elimination or exile of this Chainsaw thing. The phrase, 'swath of destruction' always springs to mind when recalling those years. They wound up in Nashville, a perfect foil for those who might live there but despised most of what it stood for. Yeah, Nashville, where a whole bunch of people made their

living playing and recording the kind of irksome pap you'd expect, but LOVED every minute of those alien Chainsaws. Chainsaw played every flea bit dive (sound familiar?) that would have them (usually only once,) built a fanatical following and recorded in tiny great studios with a plethora of musicians jostling for a place.

The fashionable diet (see above) tended to have side effects, and despite the unwavering admiration of their fans and peers, Chainsaw were getting more than a little frazzled. Their own inept management wasn't breaking down mogul or bank vault doors, and the two prima donnas were increasingly at odds while the previously steadfast r. section selfishly wished for more regular meals. A slimy promoter lured them to Europe, and disappeared after the first

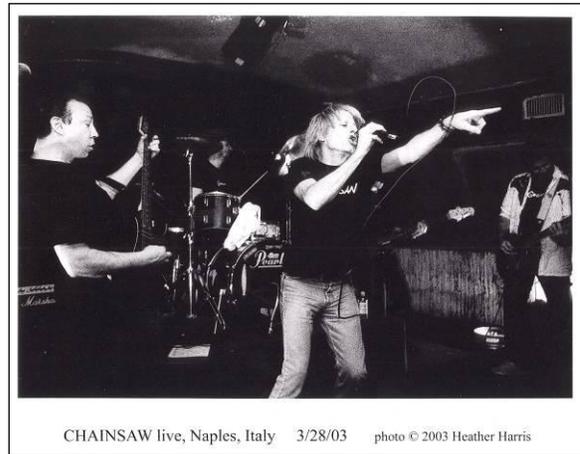


couple lawsuits. No money, no real food, and limited shelter outweighed a new but just as manic bunch of fans. The fist fight ensued – the end was.

For 25 years the tapes lay unheard. Fences were mended. Behjan Mihradi did the detective work, Pierpaolo de Iulio put Chainsaw on vinyl, and Lee Joseph put *We Are Not Very Nice* on CD. Listen to it over and over and over... and hope that you have the chance to see these partly rehabilitated lunatics play. Not only are they not dead, they are back."

Well...for a moment... please stand by.

Chainsaw rocked, hell yeah! In 2003, 28 years after these punk pioneers had called it quits, assorted all-ages audiences in sold out clubs all over Italy welcomed Chainsaw back ever so raucously. With an eclectic reformation, Chainsaw-Euro became Mr. Twister, the Donald, on second guitar the latter's son Scott Mohammad who was 8 when the band wreaked havoc the first time around, the premier voice-over talent of all Switzerland who just happened to be our friend of 30 years and a very cool bass player Olivier, and worthy pickup drummer courtesy of the Italian record company which had sponsored the tour, Allesandro.



Naples, Italy audiences paralleled that of Detroit/Ann Arbor blue collar ones in being known as quite physically demonstrative in both their likes and dislikes (Iggy and The Stooges only were pelted with large objects in their native but fickle Detroit.) Napoli at it happened loved Chainsaw, with photographic evidence thereof. In fact female Neopolitans even offered to "love with the mouth" upon Chainsaw. While the other wives/gfs got roaring drunk in

reaction, between photographing Chainsaw's shenanigans onstage I just laughed at these inevitabilities: it's all par for the course, part and parcel of a band job skills. Other venues varied according to the provincial populace.

Olivier Vuille (Chainsaw-Euro bassist): “We were in Terramo, Italy and had to wait until 1 a.m. to get on stage. Not being accustomed anymore to staying up so late (I had just spent 20 years without playing rock ‘n’ roll, busy raising my kids) I was feeling like crap to say the least. But I looked at Twister, he’s so jolly merry! (Ed. -- before adopting, seconds before striding onstage, his fierce, rock and roll game face. See Russell Brand do same in modern film *Get Him To The Greek!*) Luckily, the moment we got on I was my rocker self again. The gig was energetic and weird, with stoned people staring at us while one single girl was dancing in front of the stage. Not knowing if she was the sister of some somber italo ragazzo, we tried hard to look like we didn’t notice her. We left the place at 3 a.m. and headed back to Roma. Went to bed at 5:30 a.m. and woke up at 9 to go visit some ruins. Life on the road!”

Momentum continued domestically at two Chainsaw-USA reunion gigs in Los Angeles shortly thereafter, with formidable rhythm section Mary Kay and Tony Matteucci of The Dogs happily stepping in. But destiny cannot outwit the time-space continuum of predetermined fate: once again Chainsaw broke up for all the exact same reasons for which they broke up originally.



Mary Kay: (Chainsaw-USA bassist): “Welcome to the real world.”

Tony Matteucci (Chainsaw-USA drummer): “It was a short tour, but fun!”

Plus ca change, plus la meme chose, sans the fist fight.

So what have we now? Sadly, the gone too soon casualties: Jim Oswald, beloved brother of Ralph and photographer of Christopher Milk's glories who passed away during this article's construction; Ronn Reinberg, UCLA confrere, CMilk photographer cum roadie, eventual attorney and stage-lighting designer; Mason Buck, UCLA confrere, guitarist for The Fabulous Sheepkins and Sunset Blvd. in *Garage Sale*. Early Christopher Milk album reviewer Michael Lehman (sole UCLA writer during my Daily Bruin Entertainment Sections editorship that I could locate who didn't know the band personally) took his own life following his comedown from publicizing the narcotized 1972 Rolling Stones tour. More happily, there is the present.



Kirk Henry a.k.a. The Kiddo in Christopher Milk once was enveloped by no less than Leiber & Krebs Management (Aerosmith, Ted Nugent et al) for his music star quality. He fronted a solo band that made a deluxe 35mm video of a staged performance of their orchestra-morphing-to-hard rock "Bye, Bye Anna Marie" at The Starwood club, Hollywood, with a truck full of pro equipment "borrowed"



courtesy of his union cinematographer brother. This proved too early for the timeline of then non-existent MTV. He has owned record labels, security for film productions' companies, is very close to his family but keeps his own counsel on private matters: generally, one has to poll his friends for different aspects of his life. His 2011 Facebook avatar is pictured.

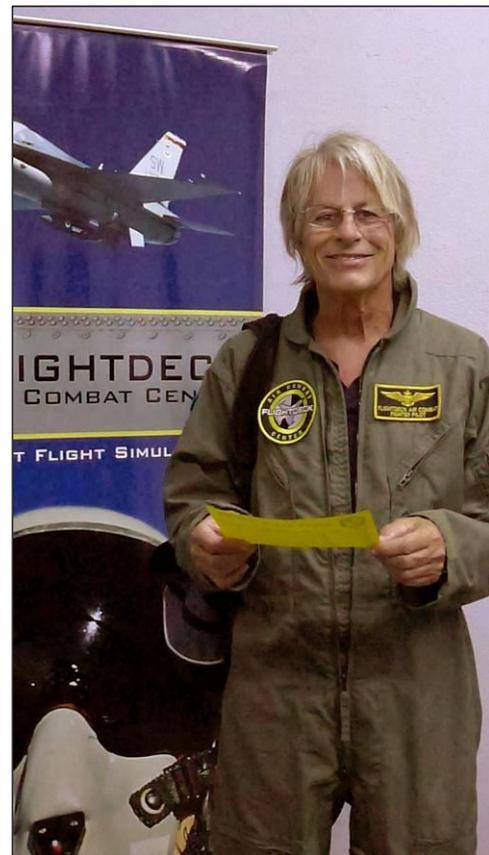
Ralph Oswald a.k.a. Surly Ralph in Christopher Milk relocated to Colorado with his first wife Teri and found deserved happiness with his second wife Anita (best friend of his first wife Teri) and extended family. He owns his own piano tuning business and gladly celebrates his Scottish ancestry, as seen here in a 2011 photo by Anita Oswald.



John Mendelsohn added an additional “s” to his original byline, wrote for *Esquire* and many prestigious periodicals before family responsibilities with his first wife Leslie and daughter Brigitte prompted his early entry into the Bay Area tech world via computer graphics. He is rightly proud of his alternately elegant and disturbing graphics seen throughout his computer graphics/web designing career. He remarried, to former dominatrix Claire (Mistress Chloe) and currently resides with her in her native England. He also never wavered in his continued obsession to write and record music and has continued doing so since his late teens. He wanted all to know that he’s written three new, complete songs within the last month alone. He thankfully still writes both fiction and quasi-non fiction, all available online. The 2011 graphic denotes some of his ebook offerings as well as his visage.

Mr. Twister continues to thrive on his mystique, self-preferred mystery, continuing-to-this-day blond-and-pepper good looks, and hyper-intelligent abilities alone. This 2011 photograph depicts his channeling his bad boy ways far more productively as a Top Gun F-16 simulator jet pilot. He eschews social networks, so I reпреzent, as the kiddies deem same.

I met Mr. Twister in 1970, thought to self “I want that one,” and evinced patience galore while scraping the groupies off him for the next five years. We’ve been together ever since (HH and Mr. T, not the groupies.) How did I tackle documenting the musical career of the love of my life with such dispassionate objectivity? To utilize the Joss Wheedon format: With. Great. Difficulty. And steely determination to add to the deserved reputations of proto-punk forerunners Christopher Milk and Chainsaw in today’s modern world of digital surfing. This may have been a visual valentine, but every picture told a story.



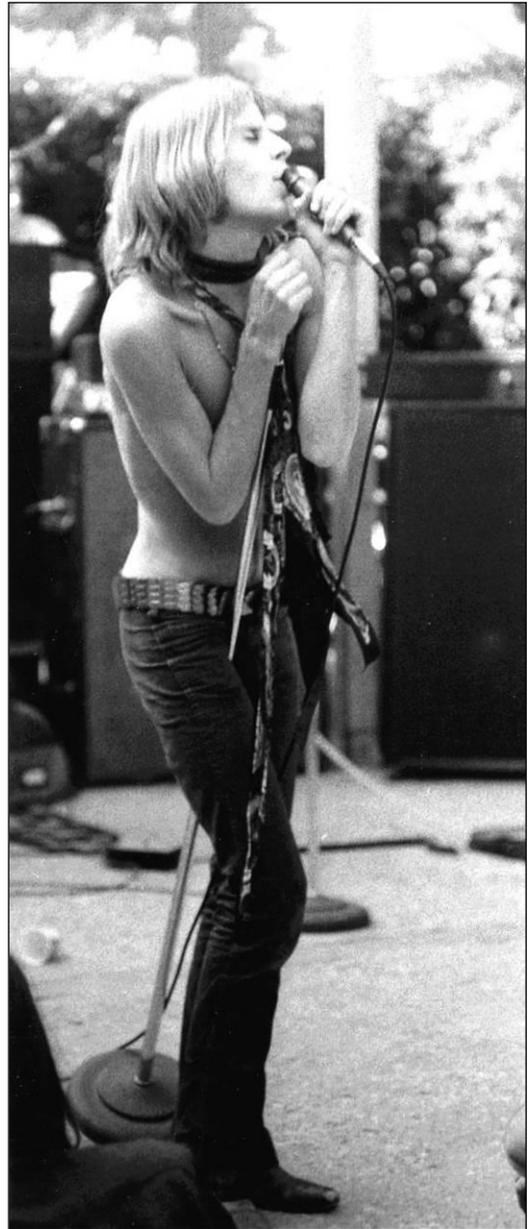
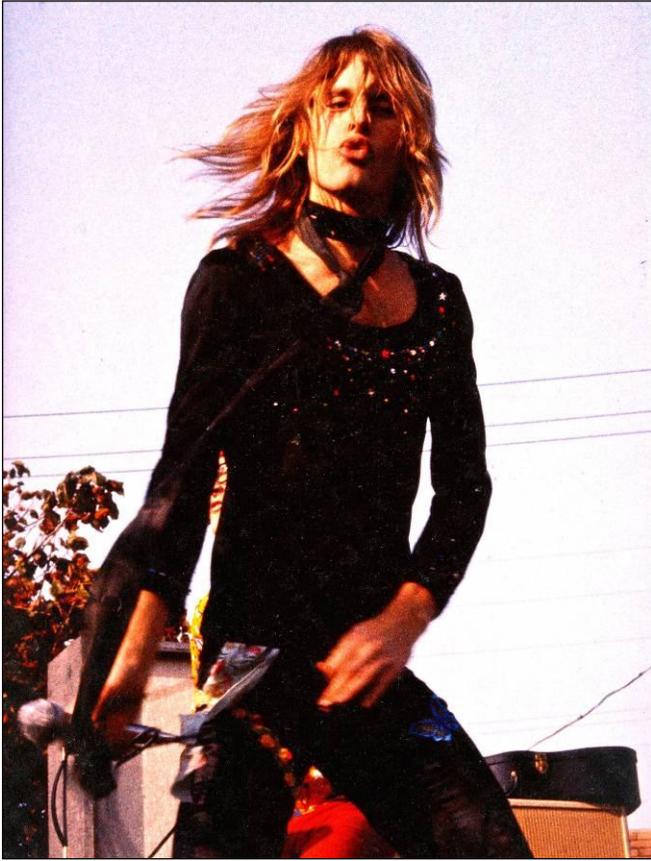


PHOTO CAPTIONS - IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

1. Photo by Heather Harris, medium format Rolleiflex on tripod, as we photographers were wont to travel. Everybody wants to rule the world. Mr. Twister surveys potential domains from The Reichstag, Berlin, Germany, 1994.
2. Photo by Kurt Ingham. Mr. Twister in his Laurel Canyon aerie with Black Mariah, his Fastback Mustang, 1970.
3. Photo by Heather Harris. Mr. Twister in the movie *Garage Sale*. Live performance of songs in film: "Hey Blacksmith, Shake Your Money Maker" and "Big Blue Pimpmobile" with Sunset Blvd., 1975
4. Photo by Jim Oswald. Christopher Milk, Topanga Canyon photo shoot that none of them remembers, not even being there, 1970. Digital graphic enhancement by John Mendelssohn.
5. Photo by Heather Harris, 1977. CHAINSAW - "We Are Not Very Nice" Euro-release by Rave Up Records, 2002.
6. Photo by Heather Harris, 1977. CHAINSAW - "We Are Not Very Nice" USA-release by Bacchus/Dionysus Records, 2003.
7. Photo by Norman Seeff, United Artists Records' promo package for their EP release of "Christopher Milk."
8. Photo by Heather Harris. Oil painting of Mr. Twister based upon United Artists Records' portrait, artist unknown but provenance ascribed to one who painted backdrops for the New York Metropolitan Opera.
9. Photo by Kurt Ingham. Kirk Henry, solo artist, the Leiber & Krebs years
10. Photo by Ronn Reinberg, Christopher Milk, 1970, The Troubadour (?), 1970. Proof sheet also features the late Shelley Benoit of Warner Bros. Records, who introduced Mr. Twister and Heather Harris.
11. Rolling Stone, December 1970, Christopher Milk's notorious 1970 show at The Troubadour, Hollywood that got them banned from that important venue forever.
12. Photographer unknown. Full page photo of Mr. Twister in the 1971 UCLA Yearbook, Christopher Milk UCLA Auditorium gig with Alice Cooper.
13. Photo by Kurt Ingham, Christopher Milk the expanded troupe with dancers, 1970.

14. Kirk Henry, Linda Daddy, Crickette Lum and Ralph Oswald, screen capture from Kirk's video "Bye, Bye Anna Marie," 1976.
15. Photographer unknown. Mr. Twister, Christopher Milk, Whisky A Gogo. 1970.
16. Photographer unknown, Mr. Twister, Christopher Milk, Whisky A Gogo, 1970.
17. Photo by Kurt Ingham. Mr. Twister, 1971.
18. Mr. Twister, Christopher Milk on *Boss City!* television show, live performance, all tapes of same lost or destroyed.
19. Photo by Norman Seeff, United Artists Records' promo package for their EP release of *Christopher Milk*.
20. Photo by Heather Harris. Christopher Milk playing UCLA, 1970. Left to right: John Mendelssohn, Kirk Henry, Ralph Oswald, Mr. Twister.
21. Photo by John Mendelssohn. Kirk Henry and Mr. Twister flanking unknown fan, Santa Monica Beach, Calif. 1970.
22. Photo by Jim Oswald, Mr. Twister, Christopher Milk, venue unknown, 1971.
23. Photo by Jim Oswald. Christopher Milk, Topanga Canyon photo shoot that none of them remembers, not even being there, 1970.
24. John Mendelssohn jumps ship to become solo artist alongside Iggy and The Stooges, The GTOS and The Cockettes in a concert that never was. Photo of Iggy Pop in The Stooges by Kurt Ingham, 1970.
25. Inner sleeve of United Artists EP release of *Christopher Milk*.
26. Photo by Jim Oswald. Mr. Twister, Christopher Milk playing Santa Monica. 1971.
27. Pete Townsend encourages John Mendelssohn regarding the latter's Christopher Milk demos.
28. David Bowie picks Christopher Milk as his third favorite artists of 1970.
29. Photo by Annie Liebovitz, part of Rolling Stone cover featured story on Christopher Milk,

May 13, 1971.

30. Photo by Heather Harris. Sunset Blvd. in the film *Garage Sale*, 1975.

31. Photo by Heather Harris. Sunset Blvd. in the film *Garage Sale*, 1975.

32. Photographer unknown, Mr. Twister, The Fabulous Sheepskins at Heather's parents' house, a Behemoth Festival sometime in the 1970s.

33. Photo by Heather Harris. Mr. Twister, continuance of bad boy ways in the 1980s.

34. Photo by Heather Harris. Mr. Twister, the Donald, Crickette Lum and Linda Daddy for my book *Punk Rock 'n' Roll*, 1977.

35. Photo by Heather Harris. Chainsaw, L-R: Laura Crowe, Mr. Twister, Raul Gomez, the Donald. My first studio portrait ever. 1976.

36. Photo by Heather Harris. Chainsaw live in Naples, Italy, March 28, 2003.

37. Photo by Heather Harris. Chainsaw live in Naples, Italy, March 28, 2003.

38. Photo by Heather Harris. Chainsaw live in Los Angeles, Jan. 29, 2004.

39. Kirk Henry, Facebook avatar, 2011.

40. Photo by Anita Oswald. Ralph Oswald, 2011.

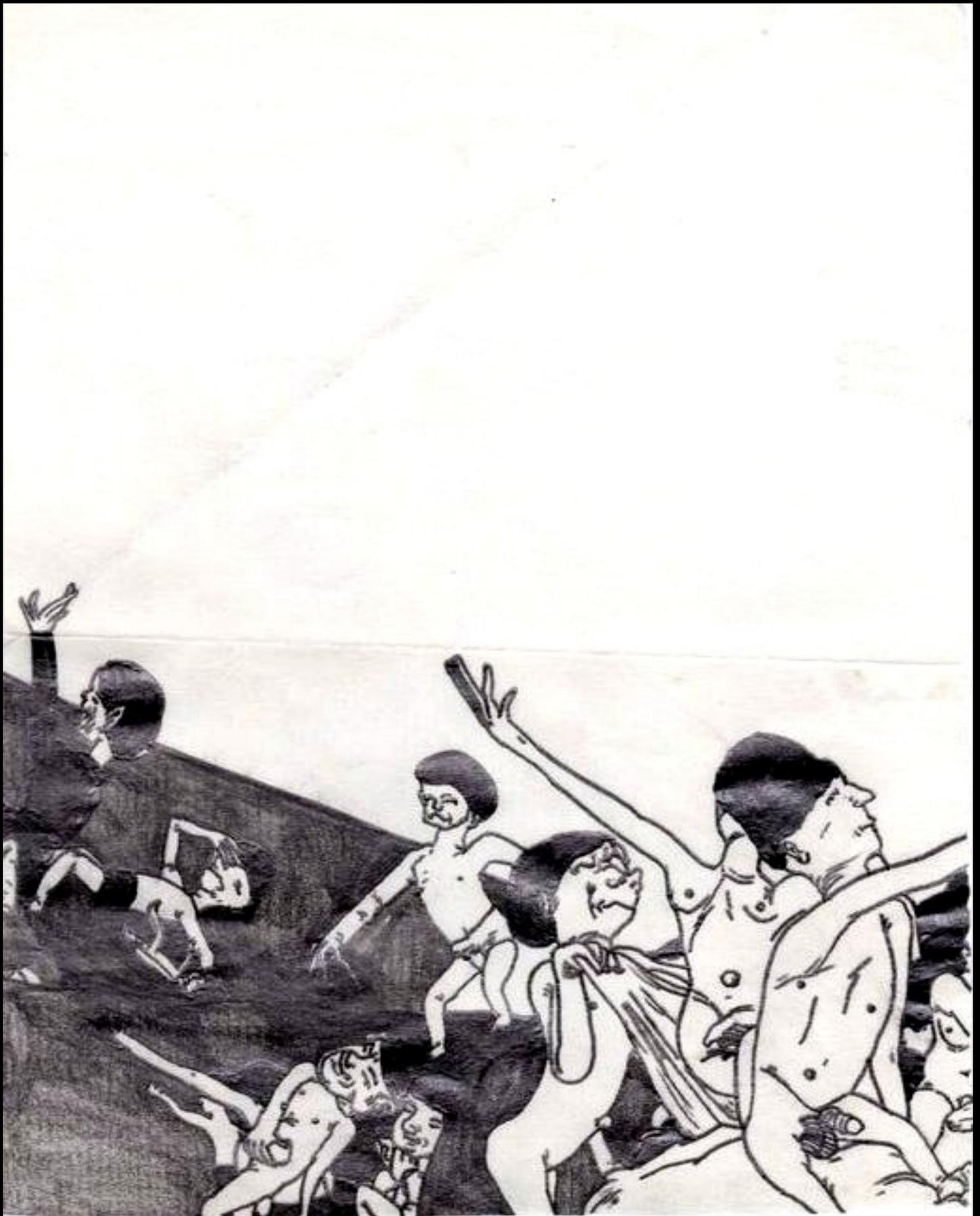
41. Photo, graphics by John Mendelsohn. John Mendelsohn, 2011.

42. Photo by Heather Harris. Mr. Twister as Top Gun F-16 jet simulator pilot, May, 2011.

43. Photo by Heather Harris. Mr. Twister, Christopher Milk playing UCLA, 1970.

44. Photo by Jim Oswald. Mr. Twister, Christopher Milk playing Santa Monica. 1971.

45. Photo by Kirk Henry, Mr. Twister in Westwood, Calif., 1971.



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GYSIN, BURROUGHS, BOWLES, JONES, PALMER, COLEMAN, LACY & P-ORRIDGE: UNDER A SPELL OF JAJOUKA

By John Kruth

Before we begin, a little note is in order on how this article came to be. Upon recently making the acquaintance of DÍre and Dave, devoted editors of *Paraphilia* they pointed out some of the common themes that run through my work and proposed I make a “cut-up” of sorts for the devoted readers of their publication, thus a journey to the heart of Jajouka and how the music of this little Moroccan village has entranced artists, musicians and writers far and wide.

When I was fifteen years old I bought a record of strange music from Morocco, recorded by the charismatic, flaxen-hair rhythm guitarist of the Rolling Stones, Brian Jones, on his fabled trek to the Rif Mountains in 1967. *The Pipes of Pan at Jajouka* (originally spelled as JouJouka) sounded otherworldly, unlike anything I had ever heard.

Although his personal life was full of lurid tales of debauchery and cruelty, this singular contribution to pop culture (beyond playing with the Stones) was enough to raise Jones, in my book, to that of exalted hero. After all Brian was the brilliant multi-instrumentalist who originally founded “The World’s Greatest Rock ‘n’ Roll Band.” He lived the wild lifestyle while Mick Jagger was still taking classes at the London School of Economics and Keith Richard was learning his first Chuck Berry riff. Jones soon became bored with the guitar and began experimenting with the dulcimer, sitar, recorder and cello, adding them to the Stones’ mix, while broadening their (and our) musical horizons. Shortly before his untimely death at age twenty-six, Brian looked toward other cultures to create a new fusion of sound that would take the world another twenty-five years to catch up with.

The music of Jajouka is not for everyone. Like the free jazz of Ornette Coleman (who on the advice of journalist/musician Robert Palmer, traveled to the little hilltop village to visit and record with the enigmatic musicians in the 1970’s), the driving drums and intense wailing reeds of the Master Musicians can drive the faint-hearted to the point of distraction. The album was by far the worst selling disc in the Rolling Stones’ catalog. Like Yoko Ono’s primal caterwauling, it was ideal for banishing unwanted visitors from my college dorm room. Their primary instrument, the ghaita, is a folk oboe fashioned from apricot trees that howls with an unbound ferocity over the relentless thunder of goat skin drums. Upon first hearing this exotic cacophony, the music punched me square in the heart. As the brilliant painter/writer/inventor Brian Gysin once said of the Masters, “You know your own music when you hear it one day. Then you fall in line until you pay the piper.”

It wasn’t until November 1995; twenty-five years after the release of Brian Jones’ record that the Master Musicians of Jajouka finally toured the U.S. I was in San Francisco at the time, anxiously waiting their arrival with a handful of fans at the Virgin Records store. Eventually three medium-sized men wandered in, clad in white djellabas. Without a word they began to play a

short set of spellbinding music. They had been on the road celebrating the re-release of the *Pipes of Pan* album and were scheduled to play that night at the University of California in Berkeley. After their brief performance, I approached their leader, Bachir Attar and introduced myself.

"I've been waiting twenty five years to see you play," I said.

"Oh, yes. Thank you very much," he said with a big grin. "I hope you enjoy the music!"



The Master Musicians of Jajouka - Photograph By John Kruth

That night, before a packed house, the thirteen musicians (which that cranky old junky genius William Burroughs once dubbed "the 4000 year old rock 'n' roll band") wailed on their ghaitas and pounded their drums while the mesmerized crowd jumped to their feet and began to dance to the frenzied rhythm. The show ended with Pan; the crazy, horny goat God known in the Maghreb as Bou Jeloud, shaking and twirling in a mad delirium before our astonished eyes.

Six months later, while wandering around Manhattan I happened across a little souk in Soho called the Gates of Morocco. The place was filled with beautiful rugs and pottery. I wound up talking with a couple guys named Mohammed and another dude named Lateef. I asked if they knew where I might find a ghaita. They just happened to have one in the window. But as usual

I was short on cash. A week later I returned to buy the instrument. From then on I returned to the shop regularly. The next time I walked in, Big Mohammed approached me anxiously, asking if I knew who Bachir Attar was. So I rehashed the story of how I'd met him just a few months earlier in San Francisco.

"He'll be here in a couple of minutes!" he said excitedly. A moment later a funky old Ford Econoline pulled up outside of the shop. It just sat there for a while with the motor running. Nobody got out so we strolled over to the van to see what was going on. Inside, among thick clouds of smoke sat Bachir El Attar reclining on a Berber rug. I watched silently as everyone greeted him, speaking in rapid Arabic. Eventually Hamid, the smiley driver, introduced me to Bachir. Again I repeated my story about how I'd bought the Brian Jones album as a teenager and had met him just a few months earlier in San Francisco.

Bachir took a long drag on a Marlboro and said, "Yes, I remember. We are going to a party now. Would you like to come?" We soon arrived at a big sprawling house in the suburbs, north of Manhattan to find a fabulous Moroccan dinner waiting for us. We feasted on a delicious salmon tajine and for desert we munched majoun, a sweet, sticky mind-bending confection made from honey and marijuana seeds.

Soon after the music began, timeless melodies and deep grooves that lasted into the wee hours. By 4 AM, nearly everyone had passed out on the couch or lay sleeping on Berber rugs spread out on the floor while Bachir and his brother, Mustapha sat on the white leather sofa playing the lira (a cane flute). Mustafa employed the ancient technique of circular breathing, holding a seamless drone as Bachir improvised an eerie melody. Meanwhile Abderahim, Gnawai musician Hassan Hakmoun's younger brother, kept a rollicking rhythm on a pair of brightly painted ceramic bongos. Suddenly it was all right there - The linear mystical melodies of the Berbers of Northern Morocco flowed seamlessly over the funky syncopated southern beat of the Gnawai tribes. After the jam finally wound down, Bachir carefully laid the flute on the glass coffee table and lit another Marlboro. I asked him if I could take a look at the instrument. "Yes, sure, of course," he replied. I picked up the flute respectfully and checked it out from end to end. It was made of light bamboo with seven holes on top (three played with the left and four with the right) and one underneath, a single hole played with the left thumb. It was closed at the end to create a low note for droning. It was a beautiful old instrument. "Is that your father's flute? I asked Bachir. "Yes, of course," he replied, his eyes distant. "Was this the flute he played when Brian Jones came to the village to record the band?" "Yes, of course," he repeated again. "Then this is the flute I heard on the Jajouka record when I was a teenager!" I continued. "Yes, that's right," Bachir answered. I asked Bachir if it would be okay to play it. "Yes, sure, of course," he said. As I began investigating its unusual scale, Abderahim picked up the bongos and began to pound out a driving rhythm. Little Mohammed sat up and started clapping along, accenting the off beats. I suddenly found myself improvising an unknown ancient melody when Mustafa picked up his flute and began holding a low, steady drone. A hollow haunted tone poured from his flute like a moan from a disembodied ancient spirit. The music carried us for an undeterminable period of time - maybe fifteen or twenty minutes when somehow, the flute suddenly slipped out of my mouth and just like that, the jam ended.

“Zahar!” Abderahim shouted. “Yes, yes...” Mustafa added, his grin revealing a row of crooked tea-stained teeth. I glanced over at Bachir who sat poker faced, saying nothing. I nervously set the flute back down.

It was five o’clock by the time I finally laid down to sleep, just as a handful of Moroccans arose, to face East and pray.

It was hot August afternoon in New York City when I crossed paths with the Masters again. Mustapha Attar and I sat outside on the bright sidewalk sipping mint tea as he meticulously tied a new reed to the mouthpiece of my ghaita. After getting it just right, he put the instrument to his lips and blasted a piercing riff that echoed off the Soho storefront windows. Although we were well within earshot of his brother Bachir, sleeping in the basement of the Gates of Morocco (which has since closed a few years ago) the charismatic leader of what that cranky old junky genius William Burroughs once dubbed “the four thousand year old rock and roll band” showed absolutely no sign of stirring. I finally had to lure the jet-lagged Berber from his bed with the smell of a big cup of hot black coffee. With his hair, still wild with dreams, Attar sat on the edge of the couch and lit his first Marlboro of the day. “What is your first shitty question?” he asked with a raspy laugh and bleary eyes. Bachir left me no other choice than to nail him on the hazy future of his village’s unique music. He slowly exhaled a big cloud of smoke and contemplated the question that’s relentlessly dogged him.

“Yes, I know,” Attar replied wearily. “Many people ask this question. They care about the music, which is very good. But after many thousands of years, maybe there is an end!”

In this day and age when the average life span of a band is about as long as their latest video and rock and roll relics like Bob Dylan and the Rolling Stones are admired for lasting forty or more years, maybe a four thousand-year run isn’t so bad after all. Bachir is an intense fellow. He’s got an air of gravity about him befitting a U-boat captain or a lone sheriff of the Wild West. Not that he’s currently dodging bullets or torpedoes, but even while partying, Bachir seems like he’s always watching his back. His onyx eyes either sparkle with laughter or can shut out the world faster than smoke-black windows on a passing limo. But along with the daunting responsibility of keeping the legacy of Jajouka alive, this man has one of the greatest gigs on earth - playing the sexy - rhythmic - trance inducing - soul freeing music of Bou Jeloud (AKA “The Father of Fear”) the Goat god, Pan.

On their 1999 American tour, the Master Musicians consisted of just ten members. In Jajouka, at the height of its power the band numbered fifty musicians. “From the time Brion Gysin and (author/ composer) Paul Bowles visited the village until the early sixties there were fifty. But now all those people have died,” Bachir lamented.

The Attar brothers, now in their mid forties, are the youngest members and driving force of the djellaba clad ensemble. Part of the dilemma they face is that the musicians must be from the village of Jajouka. “Times have changed,” Bachir continued, pouring the take-out coffee from the disposable Styrofoam cup into a more dignified gold leaf edged Moroccan tea glass. “The music must be passed from father to son. Now the children grow up and go off to school. They

find other interests than playing ghaita and carrying on the tradition. But we are thinking of building a school in the future for the kids so they can learn this music.”

Over the years Bachir and the Master Musicians have collaborated with some pretty heavy hitters, including the Stones, Ornette Coleman, Sonic Youth and Bill Laswell to name a few. The possibility of an all-star gala seemed like a great idea until suddenly Attar became annoyed.

“Ugh, stars! I’m very tired of stars,” he groaned, scratching the two-day stubble on his chin. “There is an old saying in Jajouka. If the moon loves you, don’t worry when the stars move away.”

“You see, the musicians love the music,” Bachir said. “But I would like more people to understand Jajouka. I think some people, it makes them scared. They don't know what’s happening and they start to shake... What’s this?” Bachir laughed. “People need to hear this music and open their hearts.”

Contemporary classical composer John Corigliano whose Pulitzer Prize winning *Symphony No. 2* and *Altered States* soundtrack have been influenced by everything from Mozart string quartets to the wailing ghaita of the Rif Mountains described Jajouka’s singular music as “a beautiful visceral experience. You can feel the reeds vibrating in your body. It’s an exciting human communication unlike most of today’s music.

“The music was a gift from a man named Attar to Bou Jeloud who came from the mountains. He was half man/half goat. He heard Attar’s flute music and said to him, “Oh play for me, I can dance for you!” So Attar played for him. That is why the music is called Bou Jeloudia. It was music just for this man who dances in goat skin,” Bachir said, explaining the roots of Jajouka’s unique music.

Bou Jeloud has got his mojo workin.’ He is a holy healer doing the shaman's shuffle that cures everything from sterility to insanity. According to legend, if he whips a woman with the leafy switches he carries in each hand, they will become pregnant and give birth within the following year.

“For many years sick and crazy people have come to Jajouka. Doctors cannot help them. They are tied to a tree and when they hear the music they become normal,” Bachir said with a shrug. There is little doubt the cleansing fire pouring from the bell of the ghaita could drive the evil from the most demonic of us human beings.

If Brion Gysin opened the door for Brian Jones, then Jones threw the open the gates of Jajouka to the rest of the world when he recorded the maniacal melodies of Pan.

“It was not a festival when Brian Jones comes,” Bachir clarified. “The musicians played especially for him and the engineer of the Stones (George Chkiantz). I was five years old. I remember they had this big reel-to-reel tape recorder and Brian was dancing with the headphones on. It was incredible.”

In celebration of the man with the strange clothes and big blonde hair, a goat was slaughtered and a feast was soon prepared. Bachir repeats the story again, that is quickly becoming a chapter in mythology of the modern world.

"The goat had white hair over its eyes, like Brian," Attar recalled. "When he saw it he told Brion Gysin, 'This goat looks like me!' Then they ate a shish kabob with its liver. And he said to Brion Gysin, 'This is my liver.' Not one year later he passed away," Bachir said in a whisper.

But how did Attar's father Hadj Abdesalam and the rest of the band respond to *Brian Jones Presents the Pipes of Pan at Jajouka* album when it was finally released after his death, two years later in 1971. Until Brian Jones came along field recordings had an academic air about them. The idea of manipulating Mississippi field hollers or Javanese gamelan orchestra recordings was not only unheard of, but would have been deemed sacrilegious at the time by the few purveyors of world music recordings, such as Nonesuch and Smithsonian.

Heretic or not, Jones added his special sauce of phase and reverb to the wailing ghaitas and rhythmic drums so the rest of the world might experience the wild sound as he heard it dancing in his head during his brief visit to the Rif Mountains. But was Jones tampering with tradition when he messed with the mix?

"Oh it was only a little echo," Bachir protested. "We loved the sound because it became very psychedelic. And because it was Brian's idea. He was the first of the rock and roll people to make 'global' music. Brian was a big fan of many instruments He played saxophone," Bachir pointed out. (That's Jones with The Beatles on "You Know My Name, Look Up the Number") With the Masters it seems to be the rule more than the exception to play a handful of instruments. Attar himself plays ghaita, gimbri (4 string lute) and lira (wood flute) as well as banjo and guitar and a bit of harmonica.

Ten years before the arrival of the infamous Rolling Stone, the Master Musicians had a gig as the house band at Brion Gysin's restaurant, The 1001 Nights. Paul Bowles, author of the classic novel *The Sheltering Sky* originally invited Gysin to Morocco as his guest. Bachir recalls: "When Brion heard Jajouka he said, 'This is the music I want to hear for the rest of my life!' Bowles not only introduced his friend to the music of Jajouka but also helped him financially when Gysin decided to open his restaurant.

"This is a story that nobody knows," Bachir said with a smile. "Actually it was Paul Bowles who first wanted to produce a Jajouka album. Jajouka was at One Thousand One Nights playing. Paul Bowles, he loved Jajouka music very much. He bring his equipment to record Jajouka. Brion Gysin he said to Paul Bowles, 'No! You can't record this. This is mine!' Paul Bowles was angry and took his equipment away. Then he went and recorded all the Moroccan music he could find. And Brion Gysin, he was very jealous! But still they loved each other. Paul loved Brion's paintings very much. He thought he was the greatest painter."

Gysin was a Renaissance man in a century with a 15-second attention span. In a world where people are known for "doing one thing well," Brion mastered a variety of disciplines which he employed to express himself at any given moment. Painter, author, editor, musical anthropologist, inventor, philosopher, mystic and restaurateur, Gysin wore each of those hats

with ease and remarkable panache. Surrealist ringleader Andre Breton, Beat novelist William S. Burroughs and Rolling Stone, Brian Jones all recognized his brilliance, yet Brion's work has gone virtually un-noticed by the public (until recently when John Geiger's biography *Nothing Is True - Everything Is Permitted* and an exhibition of his films and paintings at the New Museum in New York from July through October 2010 helped spread the word).

As an artist, Gysin painted otherworldly figures that evoked cryptic Arabic and Japanese calligraphy. He was embraced and then quickly expelled (for vague reasons) by the Surrealists. In truth, Brion simply wasn't the type to espouse the party platform, no matter how bizarre the doctrine. (Although he's been associated with the Beats through his connection to Burroughs, Gysin would never claim to be one of that clubby bunch either.)

Most folks find it difficult to comprehend how one person could create such a tremendously diverse body of work. That troublesome cliché – a jack of all trades and master of none simply doesn't fit in Brion's case. There was nothing half-assed about Gysin's multi-disciplinary approach to art. For those that didn't get it, or couldn't accept one man producing novels (*The Process*, *The Last Museum*) paintings, recordings and a device which induced a trance-like state called the Dream Machine, he let his pal William Burroughs do the talking. "Brion was incapable of fakery!" the infamous junkie novelist snarled.

As a life-long fan of Gysin, I interviewed Steve Lacy, the master of the soprano saxophone shortly before his passing in 2004, about his collaboration with Brion on an album they made for the HatHut label called Songs.

Steve first came to prominence accompanying Thelonious Monk, turned ex-patriate, and lived in Paris for many years, recorded dozens of albums, collaborating, most notably with pianist Mal Waldron and his wife for over thirty years, vocalist/violinist Irene Aebi. Like Brian Jones and Ornette Coleman before him, Steve Lacy was originally introduced to the passionate swirling trance music of The Master Musicians of Jajouka through Brion Gysin.

Steve Lacy: I don't know when I didn't know Brion. We got together in '72 but our paths had been coming together for a while before that. We were working on similar things in different areas. I met him in Paris at Victor Herbert's house where Irene and I were living as caretakers. Brion came to a party one time and we met and started talking. I hadn't realized that I had heard him years before on an English record of electronic poetry. I think it was his pistol poem and some of his other manipulations and permutations like "I Am That I Am."

John Kruth: *How did your collaboration begin?*

I knew he was the inventor of the Dream Machine and I had a song called "Dreams" and was unhappy with the lyrics, so I gave the melody to Brion to write some new lyrics. It was astonishing, absolutely like a dream. It worked beautifully and we recorded it in '75 with Irene singing in two voices in major seconds with a sextet. It's been re-released on a triple CD in Paris from Sarava. It includes a couple things we did with Brion along with "Somebody Special."

What was your writing process like?

It was a wonderful, very unusual collaboration. Sometimes we'd do a performance where he would read and I would play melodies, or I'd set his lyrics to music and Irene would sing them. It was a lot of fun to just wing it. We were between words and music really.

So his words were the spark for the music.

Every time he read, it was different. I listened to his voice a lot and talked with him and set his lyrics to music. The melodies were taken from the sound of his voice, the way he read. Brion was a great reader and a great performer. He really knew what to do with a microphone. He had a great voice and could improvise like a jazz musician.

Were there any particular performances or pieces that still stand out in your mind?

Through the years we worked together a lot and produced nineteen songs, stage works and performed together in Amsterdam, Paris and Italy, at poetry festivals and museums. We did a version of "Naked Lunch" based on Brion's cut-ups as a dance/theater piece. It was performed in Italy and France but we never took it anywhere else. There were two dancers in black leather, the sextet, two singers and décor by Brion. Brion's slides were projected. It was wild! The show was called "Brackets," that was in 1982, in Milan. It was a really far-out show. We did a lot of theatrical things although we never could bring them to America.

Wow, what a shame! Brion was involved in so many things. It's odd how he was ignored.

Brion had many, many lives, in different parts of the world with all kinds of different professions, from heavy labor to Broadway productions. He had connections to so many different circles of people. Lots of important people in my life I met through Brion. Many other people also had the same experience. He was a catalyst! Brion had certain powers. He was a uniquely charged, charmed person. I mean, to me, he was a genius. He was a multi-faceted genius. People couldn't believe he could do all those things. In the mid seventies he did a photomontage. He took a camera, a Leica, which he focused on the Pompadou Museum, which was being built at that time. He took an apartment right across the street from it and took a series of still photographs, creating permutations of the view. They were some of the most beautiful things I've ever seen in my life. Brion had a show at a little obscure gallery in Paris, Gallerie Raph, I think it was. When you walked in and saw all these crazy colors, in a series like that, it just hit you right in the eye. The show was a knockout and not one piece was sold! The gallery was completely empty. His work was ignored.

Well, at least your music was better appreciated in Paris!

Most of what I've done in Paris goes right by people, then twenty years later it comes back, re-issued. They're a little bit slow there for certain things. But you could get wasted anywhere. You could starve to death in Paris and hit the skids here (in NYC)!

Did Brion ever take you to Jajouka, to play with the Master Musicians?

I didn't know him when he lived in Morocco. I knew him from Paris, in '72 until he died. We jammed with Bachir's father. There's a cassette of that floating around somewhere. Brion had a

vision and arranged it and sure enough it worked out great. I met them (The Master Musicians) at somebody's house outside of Paris and we played (later on) in Casablanca.

There's a story that some nuns at a Catholic school brainwashed Brion into believing he had a tin ear and absolutely no musical aptitude.

"He was extremely musical. I thought Brion was a musical genius! I gave him back music in a way but he already had it from Morocco. That kind of music he could deal with. He had been very frustrated. When I first met him, Brion had been carrying around the lyrics to 'Nowhere Street' since 1949. They were the lyrics for an un-produced Broadway show based on the life of Uncle Tom. The idea was to make a musical based on the book (*And To Master, A Long Goodnight*) he had written. He had talked with composers and producers but nothing came of it. Brion showed me the lyrics and I flipped. That was the beginning of our collaboration. I set "Nowhere Street" to music in '79.

Yeah, that's on Songs, the album you made together. That album is absolutely brilliant! It's one of the hippest records I've heard in my life! Years ago I had a radio show on a college station in Milwaukee and played the living hell out of it. A couple of cuts were "not suitable for airplay," particularly "Luvzya," his rap poem. People were absolutely shocked, calling the station saying, "What the hell is this?"

I'm afraid that album's out of print now. He put so much love and work in that. Brion was there in the studio, listening to us in ecstasy while we performed his songs... The thing that impressed me most about Brion was his taste and discretion and his humor and of course his erudition. This cat had educated himself - he knew literature, painting and music and theatre and dance. His taste in music was pretty good. Brion appreciated (and worked with) Don Cherry. At the same time he also had a cheap, trashy side where he liked low-class junk music. He was really, as he would say "multi-farious." He had a trashy side but he had a golden side too.

How did Brion manage to completely slip through the cracks? Do you think he purposely dodged fame?

No, Brion craved attention and he deserved attention but he took it from unlikely sources. I don't know what happened with the surrealist show. There is so much jealousy, deception, intrigue and shenanigans going on in Paris, and that surrealist group was full of those things. That was a trauma that really hurt Brion terribly. He was pretty young at the time because it was back around 1936. He had an astonishing life if you add up all the things he's done. I have a couple of his drawings from Morocco that are just beautiful. The same guy that made those also wrote (the novel) "The Process," made photomontages, created performance pieces and wrote song lyrics. Burroughs said Brion was the only man he respected and trusted. Burroughs really loved Brion and vice versa. We were very tight. We were dear, dear friends. I loved the guy. Frankly, I have the feeling that it's still early to talk about Brion. He's like an unknown quantity."

Ornette Coleman first heard the Brian Jones album courtesy of his friend (the late journalist/author/clarinetist) Robert Palmer. "Ornette loved the music and put Jajouka on his record," (Dancing In Your Head) Bachir said proudly.

It was a collaboration that clicked from the start. Coleman's unique theory of music which he dubbed Harmolodics, (branded as cacophonous by moldy fig critics and old school jazzers alike) seemed to fit hand in glove with the swirling ghaitas and propelling drums. Ornette also felt a deep connection with the musicians as well. Not five minutes after mentioning his name during my interview with Bachir, Coleman was on the phone, as if by magic, calling to welcome him back to New York.

After their brief conversation Attar returned to the sofa, lit another cigarette and began to talk about his old friend Bob Palmer who he felt understood the music on a profound level. Palmer so dearly loved the music of Jajouka that after his untimely death, he was cremated wearing a Moroccan djellaba with his ghaita clutched firmly in his hands.



John Kruth and Bachir Attar - Photograph By Ornette Coleman

Ornette Coleman: My experience with Jajouka was in the Seventies. Robert Palmer, a dear friend, sent me a tape of the music and asked me if I'd like to go and participate.

John Kruth: *Bob Palmer seemed to have his finger on the pulse of all the best music happening when he was alive, no matter what the style, whether it was blues, free jazz, world beat or punk.*

Oh, he was guided by the light. I really don't know how he lived so long. He had so much love for what he believed.

John Kruth: *How long did you stay in Jajouka?*

Ornette Coleman: I was there for three weeks to a month. At the time Bachir was very young. I knew his father."

"As a child when I saw Ornette in the village, it was the first time I ever heard jazz music," Attar explained. "He played with my father and all the musicians that have [since] passed away. The music was magic, from another dimension that people, I think, will understand in the future."

In January, 1973, Coleman and Palmer trekked up the steppes of the Rif Mountains in Morocco to collaborate with the legendary Master Musicians of Jajouka. It didn't take long before Ornette made a deep connection with them, spending the next few weeks jamming and recording and feasting on tagine. Coleman's Harmolodic approach to music seemed to fit hand in glove with their thundering drums and, ethereal flutes and swirling ghaitas.

Over the years, western musicians, painters and poets have all fallen under the spell of the lusty, trance-inducing music of Jajouka. The road leading to the little secluded Rif village opened up to outsiders back in 1950 after the novelist/composer Paul Bowles brought writer/painter/metaphysician Brion Gysin to hear the Masters play for Bou Jeloud, a boy dancing madly freshly slaughtered goat skins, that Gysin immediately recognized as the living embodiment of Pan. Upon getting an earful of their mesmerizing music, Brion proclaimed, "You know your own music when you hear it one day. You fall in line and dance until you pay the piper." So profound was their music that Gysin predicted that the world would surely end if the Masters ever laid down their horns.

Since Brian Jones' historic visit the Master Musicians have collaborated with everyone from the Rolling Stones to Ornette, to Sonic Youth and visionary producer Bill Laswell, whose 1991 recording *Apocalypse Across the Sky* stands in stark contrast Jones' psychedelic-flavored field recording.

"Their music is a beautiful visceral experience," Pulitzer Prize winning composer John Corigliano once told me. "You can feel the reeds vibrating in your body. It's an exciting human communication unlike most of today's music."

Following the Master Musicians' performance at New York's downtown music club, the Knitting Factory on February 28th, 2009, Bachir Attar asked me to put him in touch with Ornette. Jajouka, the Masters, he explained, were facing tough times. Indeed the musicians are getting older. Many need health and dental care. On top of that, most of the young people grow up and head for the cities, having little or no interest in living in the village or playing the music. Bachir was hoping Ornette might help arrange and play at a benefit for the musicians. The next day we all convened at Coleman's mid-town loft. Their meeting led to Attar and company performing each night of the Meltdown Festival (which Ornette curated and performed at, along with Patti Smith, Yoko Ono, Robert Wyatt and Charlie Haden among others) in London, in June 2009.



Ornette Coleman on stage at the Meltdown Festival - Photograph By John Kruth

John Kruth: What was it about the music of Jajouka that spoke to you Ornette?

Ornette Coleman: There are many forms of non-tempered music like Jajouka, whether Chinese or Spanish music, but what makes Jajouka stand out it is the ancient story behind its creation. Their music is similar to harmolodics, where every person plays and all the tones are equal in relationship, free of grammar, so you don't have to worry about the tones getting in the way of ideas. The tempered structure, which was created in Europe has served music for hundreds of years and in itself has not been free of grammar as non-tempered music.

I've always thought it was a shame that human expression has to be blocked by so many different laws and racial issues. For me Jajouka was a very religious, spiritual experience because y'know the word "God" is not so admired in the process of human expression. It was a very beautiful experience. I had it in the South when I grew up [in Fort Worth, Texas] and had it since I became an adult. One can have a spiritual experience anywhere and can experience it equal in relationship to their concept of what God is. It mostly comes to any person that is not trying to stylize a feeling.

Bachir Attar: The musicians love the music, of course, but I would like more people to understand Jajouka. It scares some people. But they need to hear this music and open their hearts. Ornette, he understood it completely and put it on his album [Dancing In Your Head].

John Kruth: Jajouka is ultimately spirit music, born in nature and always seems a bit out of place when performed indoors, in a concert hall. How is it different when it's played at home in the village?

Bachir Attar: To hear the music of Jajouka played live in caves and mountains is the best!

There is music we play that you've never heard in America, called 55 because there are fifty-five scales inside the music. It is classical music especially for the Kings of Morocco. It puts people in a deep trance and we cannot be responsible what happens to them when we play it. It is old music, from over one hundred years ago. It was learned and kept by my father. Now we have our own label [Jajouka Records] and we still play it. It is the real thing.

Ornette Coleman: I don't think the music will ever disappear. The quality of it may be hampered because of people not understanding how to express it. The life of Jajouka cannot die. It is immortal.

Bachir Attar: Ornette was inspired to write a lot of music after he played with my father in Jajouka. He learned very much when he was there in '73 and now I think he will come back. We feel him very much!

Ornette Coleman: Music is a dimension of life, the art of life and human beings are the creators of this life. It is one life and we are all sharing it. All we have to do is make it better, which we can do, as long as we are standing on our feet and not our knees.

In November of 1991 Bill Laswell traveled to Jajouka and set up a digital 12 track in the foothills of the Rif to record *Apocalypse Across the Sky*. The album stands in stark contrast Brian Jones' psychedelic field recording. Instead of a mad rushing whirlpool of pure sound that envelopes your soul, Laswell presented short polished pop versions of Jajouka's transcendental jams. The sound has a pristine, almost bell jar like quality.

In 2000 Bachir and the brotherhood collaborated with Indian tabla player/DJ Talvin Singh who gave the Masters a decidedly slick studio sound. "To the pure, all things are pure," says an Arabic Proverb on the back of the disc. No matter how it is mixed, or adorned Jajouka is spirit music that was born in nature. Bou Jeloud is the bull in a china shop who can't restrain himself. The music has always seemed out of place indoors, be it a studio or a concert hall. "To hear the music of Jajouka played live in caves and mountains of is best!" Bachir reminds us. "They would sit for and listen for hours and hours."

Bachir also collaborated with the prolific composer Howard Shore on the soundtrack to *The Cell*. Shore's earlier score to David Cronenberg's dizzying film of *Naked Lunch* featured Ornette's aching alto throughout the dark and surreal soundtrack.

Pulling another ace out of his sleeve, Bachir revealed another dimension of Jajouka I knew nothing about. "There is music we play that you've never heard in America. It is called 55. It is classical music especially for the Kings of Morocco. It puts people in a deep trance and we cannot be responsible for what happens to them. I will play it for you if you come to Morocco. I have tapes from my father. There are fifty-five scales inside the music. Ornette, he completely understood it."

"The music teaches people to look for pure things," Bachir says in parting, "to find the truth and the truth is Allah."

"I call it universal soul music," said Genesis P-Orridge said of Jajouka whose grin revealed a magnificent yet menacing row of gold teeth. The wonderfully strange pandrogynous Genesis P-Orridge looks like Alice just back from the rabbit hole. As we talked I had the distinct feeling I was looking at a mirage. Perhaps the very same djinn (magickal spirit) a French woman wrote of in her diary as her family tragically died of thirst in the Sahara. Like many before them, they first drank their own urine before finally, in terrible desperation, gulped down the over-heated car's radiator fluid. In her last moments, just before expiring, the distraught woman wrote in her diary of having a vision. She hallucinated the appearance of a hermaphroditic genie with a blinding smile.

The following interview with Genesis took place in Brooklyn in the winter of 2005, a few years before the sudden, shocking death of his lover/collaborator Lady Jaye (Jacqueline) Breyer, the keyboardist/guitarist/singer on October 9, 2007.

John Kruth: *At what point did you become aware of Brion Gysin's cut-ups and what effect did they ultimately have on you?*

Genesis P-Orridge: Through Williams' *Dead Fingers Talk*. Several of his books were published in England as cheap paperbacks because they were seen as pornography because they had sex bits in them. My father, bless him, used to pick up anything by Burroughs or Kerouac when he was traveling. He got me *Naked Lunch*, *Dead Fingers Talk*, *On the Road*. He didn't read them thank goodness and had no idea how much they were corrupting my world view, or reinforcing it I should say. The cut-ups, for all of you people who don't know, William and Brion did a book together called *The Third Mind*. The basic theory is when two artists collaborate, they would both write stuff, chop it up and then re-assemble it, the re-assembled piece of work was no longer by William Burroughs or Brion Gysin. Nor is it really by them as it includes the process of random chance. So they would assign the being which created that work, they would call it the Third Mind - the mind created by the other two collaborators. Lady Jaye and I have been collaborating too. As you can see when we got married we switched roles, and began playing with expectations and identity. (Genesis hands me a photograph of their wedding. Lady Jaye is dressed macho in black leather while P-Orridge is all in white wearing a wedding gown.) All through my life, from the sixties until now I have been investigating identity and the unfolding of DNA as a program and different ways to confound it. One question I asked William Burroughs... I would go visit him and treat him like the oracle... "What is the purpose of creativity?" And he said, "The only real purpose of creativity is to short-circuit Control." I said, "Well how do you short circuit Control?" And he said, "You have to cut it up!" Then the linearity is gone and with linearity comes the for-seeable. DNA is the

ultimate program. As Brion used to say in a pre-recorded universe who made the first recording? You can argue very convincingly that the planet earth is a recording device. How do we know about history? Because traces of it are recorded in fossils and so on. Nearly every age of human beings that have lived so far are still happening simultaneously. Some are still living in the middle ages. You have men in the Sahara still living in a prehistoric mode and then there are people in present day Tokyo. So Lady Jaye and I have taken what is the next inevitable step, which is to include the human body. For the first time in history, that we know of, we have the ability to cut up, rewind, collage, assemble and disassemble DNA, which is the ultimate recording of the species. That recording was once helpful for human beings to survive. It was good for human beings to be aggressive, to maintain and possess territory and breed and replicate by the strongest having the right to make babies. All of that was a series of prehistoric imperatives that are in our DNA, our genetic code, which are the reasons that as a species we have survived and flourished through ice ages and everything. However the environment has now changed. But we still have the same genetic code and the same imperatives which are to occupy other people's territories, to use violence and brutality to control replication of children with abortion and so on... All these things that were once survival codes are now destructive codes. It seems that the most critical purpose for thinkers in our time is to find ways to short circuit DNA codes. We now have genetic engineering, cosmetic surgery and computers - all this amazing technology which we could apply to make the species evolve so that it was actually modern. At the moment we have a prehistoric species in a technological environment and we're behaving with pre-historical imperatives that are not only irrelevant, but actually negative and destructive. So we feel that we want to use our bodies, because we use our bodies as our art, and our lives to at least represent and suggest a new alternative way of evolving because we believe it is actually a matter of survival as a species. We can either continue to pretend that something will miraculously change our innate behavior and save us all at the very last minute or we can finally take responsibility for own evolution. And that's exactly what we're representing with pandrogeny. The two different lineage of human species - male and female, for lack of better terms, were fine when we just needed to replicate and build up the population. But now it's time to create a third being just as William and Brion created the Third Mind. I am limited by the biology that I've been given...

But you're working on it!

Yes, but I have committed my body and mind and my life, as well as my life experience to this issue that needs to be addressed. It may seem extreme. I don't think it really is, but in fact the job of the artist is to present extreme ideas in order to drag the rest of society kicking and screaming towards something that might enhance and improve the quality of life and the experience of being alive! Ultimately Lady Jaye and I are halves of something new that can be created by our species. We're improvising with evolution!

While Burroughs identified it as "Control," Gysin claimed it's a pre-recorded world, which ties into the Muslim concept of pre-ordained fate - "It is written." So what is running the whole show?

It's often forgotten in the blur of daily life that each person is a narrative, a story. But more often than not, we're not the authors of the narrative. It happens before birth if you think about it. You're conceived often by parents, if it's deliberate anyway, who have, at the moment you're conceived, expectations of what they want you to be like. They start to write them out before

you show up. They choose a name for you that was either the name of a grandparent or a pop star. But with that name they pick they impose a narrative, their idea of what your identity should be before you even appear. Even when you're in the womb you can hear people talking - is it a boy or girl? What will they be when they grow up? Where will they go to school? All this is being discussed and imprinted as you're appearing into this material world. As a child, your family and people in the immediate social group continue to interfere with and control your narrative. The first thing I did to liberate myself from other people being the author of my narrative was to claim back authorship of my own story and that was to change my name, legally to Genesis P-Orridge in 1970. At that point I declared I'm going to do everything I can to reclaim every aspect possible of my story. Wipe it clean and decide who and what I want to be. In a way, the rest of my life and art has been the documentation of that struggle to become truly the author of my own story and become the being that I wish to be. I kept some aspects that I inherited, behavior or philosophy, but I want everything that I am to be by choice, not unconsciously imposed. Once you can see everything that you are as malleable and changeable it's inevitable that the body would become another question. Did I want to be this shape? Did I want to be male or female or don't I want to be either? (Genesis said with a big gold tooth smile.) It's not about gender. It's about identity and narrative.

As a "port of entry," to use Burroughs' term, most people would connect your sexual expression and identity with the scene surrounding Andy Warhol in the sixties. By the early seventies, kids started wearing mascara and blurring the distinction between male and female in their dress, following the fashion from pop stars like T. Rex, David Bowie and Lou Reed. There was a playfulness to it that was incredibly liberating. But with you it goes much further. What do you consider yourself? She? He? Or transgender?

(Laughs sinisterly) Some people will tell you they're a man trapped in a woman's body. Some will tell you they are a woman trapped in a man's body. Lady Jaye and I will tell you that we just feel trapped in a body. Having said that, in terms of twenty four hour a day, day to day living, it's easier for me to be perceived by the outside world as female because that's what most people assume I am. If biological males think you're a female and find you attractive and you're not a biological female they can become *incredibly* aggressive. There are dozens and dozens of transgender people murdered every year because some guy was afraid of himself. So while there's lots of fun and games involved in what Lady Jaye and I do, it's very dangerous. When I go out I have to make a choice. Do I use the men's toilet and risk being beaten up and thrown out or do I use the women's toilet where no one bothers me and I'm accepted.

And it's cleaner too!

But it's illegal. It's still illegal in most places in the United States for a trans-gender person to use the bathroom of the sex that they appear to be. And then what do you do when you go shopping for clothes? Which dressing room do you use? There are lot of difficult daily situations which occur. While it's already a big commitment and can be painful from surgeries and so on, it's also psychologically very demanding. It's not something we decided to do lightly. I'm not planning on having my penis removed because I'm not trying to be female. I'm trying to be everything!

Though I've heard you say you're not out to deliberately offend people you can't say that your incantation-like song "Mary Never Wanted Jesus" doesn't somehow mess with their belief systems.

It just popped into my head as a whole 'nother way of looking at the entire scenario. What if she really didn't want the baby? It's my job as an artist to explore and present what people are faced with. If I think of an idea, if it's good, relevant or important, then it's my responsibility to inject it into the bloodstream of culture. I love the human species and I despair of its stupidity and cruelty. But not enough people are willing to speak up about how disillusioned they are about those who control culture.

Psychic TV's Godstar is a beautiful album. In the liner notes you wrote about meeting your hero Brian Jones as a teenager. "He seemed translucent, not fully materialized as if in an unguarded moment when he wasn't fully focused on being present, your hand might pass right through him. It was as if these particles that were intended to give him substance and represent the physical body known as Brian Jones were dancing a little too freely. He was more apparition than person. Neither male or female." Lovely Gen. Who first influenced as writer/musician/artist/ cultural agent?

I was definitely very inspired by reading Jack Kerouac and the beatnik's spontaneous, delirious poetry, when I was a teenager that made a lot of sense to me. My friends and I would go to the park on a Sunday afternoon and smoke some hard-to-find hash in 1965 in Birmingham. Then we'd run around the park making up poetry or reading from *Finnegan's Wake* or if we could get hold of any of the City Lights books, we'd read the beatnik poets out loud. Or even *Dead Finger's Talk* and *The Nova Express* by William Burroughs. The more cut up they were, the better they were spoken as poetry. In fact the big breakthrough I had with Burroughs was reading him out loud and realizing how musical it was! The musical rhythm within the words was very significant. I had an epiphany about the nature of the words themselves. Each word was alive in a very literal sense, and because each word is alive it's another hologram, another iceberg. Everyone who has ever said that word has invested it with their story and anyone who hears that word puts the context of their life around that word. So each word is a memory box and a prophecy box simultaneously. They're very precious, powerful particles of thought and energy.

Then why did Brion Gysin insist we must "rub out the word?"

Oh, that's a whole separate issue. But it was very much through listening to more exciting, less linear writers (like Burroughs and Gysin) that led me into believing in poetry and spoken word as important activities. Another pattern or theme throughout my life has been the storyteller as healer. We are the therapist's couch for society. Society comes and downloads its neurosis and its bigoted mundane behavior and we try to make sense of it and turn it into poetry. When I say poetry what I mean is something that retains beauty despite itself.

A lot of artists are actually alchemists who take the crap that's been thrown at them from society, or their family, and turn into "gold" - whether its music, poetry, art, or dance... It's their job, like the shaman of the tribe, to go into that unsafe, unknown zone and create something meaningful, useful and beautiful out of that murk that lies within our wounded psyches.

Well, the world we create on a day to day reality is flawed, we're making a big mess. So it's a way to wake people up, like a Gurdjieff idea or a Zen master when they get you to a certain

point of understanding or comprehension and they slap you on the back of the head and say, "That means nothing! Now go and find out what's really there." Which is what Burroughs and Gysin used to say with cut-ups. There's a recording of Burroughs as he's chopping up a letter in Paris in the fifties where he says, "Now let's see what it *really* says!" I've always incorporated that cut-up mischief.

Well, you're rather mischievous Genesis.

I'm definitely in the tradition of the trickster. It's an important role, healing the tribe. What you have to do is tell the story but you're not there to resolve anything. You're there to define or direct attention towards something and reflect it like a mirror. But poets don't own words. You don't own the situation. You're a catalyst but you're not the actual experiment. You shouldn't be tricked into thinking that because you're aware of the situation that you're the central figure.

No, you can't own it. The guys who try to own it find it slipping through their fingers every time.

I always try to have some little reminder or slap-down so that people are actually thinking instead of just listening. I want it to be an act of comprehension.

You still do a fine job of provoking thought.

We're living in a time when none of us has a right to sit idly by, because if we do we're colluding in disaster. And I can't help but believe that the human species is truly approaching and moving through one of its most critical experiences since the dawn of conscious time. While people were always afraid they were in some kind of End Times or Apocalypse there is a difference now. We have the ability to obliterate everything over and over again. It's only a matter of time. We're running out of strategies to fight with antibiotics and vaccinations some nasty flu virus that will break through and wipe out hundreds of millions of people. If we're in a world courting self-created disaster, never mind unavoidable natural disaster, it becomes a duty for any artist or creative thinker of any form, on whatever level - just among friends or in a greater arena - it's beholden among all of us who are thinking, to do anything and everything through any medium, to touch the minds and hearts of other beings and suggest that there has to be a complete re-assessment of what it is to be human. Unless we change behavior nothing else will change! And to change behavior, as we all know is one of the hardest things to do! It's hard to give up sugar. It's hard to give up cigarettes. It's even harder to take responsibility for the future of the species and refuse to be part of the equation of fear and violence and intimidation, which is basically how all societies at the moment are run. It's a rather pathetic pre-historic equation actually. Look, we all know how it works. There are certain people, through a combination of bloodlines and inherited power that control various parts of the world and they maintain their power by creating fear and they do so by using media and propaganda to make their society afraid of something outside of itself. It's the reds under your bed or the gays outside the door coming for your children. It's always something "outside," something "other" that you must be afraid of.

That's the way the game has been played for centuries. It's hard to believe that we keep falling for it over and over again.

It's such an old, banal, tired trick. There are probably about a thousand people running the planet. If we could only turn our backs and ignore them, they'd be laughable.

Like Hitler with Chaplin's moustache. It's hard to believe anyone took him seriously but it was obviously no joke!

Why did people collude and fall for giving him power?

When you're standing before an audience with a microphone you have a certain responsibility, whether you're a politician or an artist.

Absolutely! When I started making music it was primarily for fun but it was also because I couldn't find anything interesting to listen to in the shops. I'm the kind of person, rather than complain, to make the kind of music I wanted to listen to. I soon found I wasn't the only person thinking that way. You're not alone. You're not isolated. You're not insane. There are other people who feel the same way as you, that society is innately flawed with the way that it's constructed. Once you meet those other people and you start to have this network and reaction, some of it being reinforcing and positive, then you then become aware of the responsibility of being more aware and serious and understanding that what you say has an impact on the lives of others. It's often the case that, rightly or wrongly, the artist becomes the chosen voice of those people. People accept for whatever reason that you articulate with words, music and images that which they find difficult to articulate. So they then give you their proxy to speak for them and if you have any integrity at all, you must have ethics about it. You have to check that what you're saying is what you mean and is true to your own beliefs because you will be held accountable for what you say.

Unlike some people in the government!

The difference between entertainment, show business and art is that with art you're trying to change the world. It's got a messianic side to it.

The job description for prophets and saints states they must get up and speak the truth no matter what the crowd yells or throws at them.

I get some amazing letters from people who feel less isolated, and feel that their way of seeing the world is vindicated by knowing that I exist and by what I do. I represent meaning for them and in order to do that you must have integrity and learn to be more and more honest and clear because they've invested an awful lot of trust in your voice. With Thee Majesty I am very fortunate to have a platform because Bryin Dall, Lady Jaye and Morrison Edly have an implicit trust in me. They're playing their music, which they care about and do with great sensitivity and a lot of openness, which is vulnerable and intimate. And they allow me to place words and messages on top of that, so they have to really trust my heart and what comes out of me is worthy of their music.

How much of the band's music is improvised?

The last time we played together was in Paris, the last week of September. We haven't rehearsed or played together since then, except that Lady Jaye and Morrison Edly and I played in Psychic TV for three months. Friday (the night before the gig) Edly set up a couple of loops (triggered on his drum pads) and asked me if I could work with them. I listened to each one for no more than thirty seconds and picked three and said I could definitely do something with those. I wrote the set list ten minutes before we went on. "New York Stories" began as a poem that I made up on the spot in Paris, in September and evolved into a full song during the tour with Psychic TV. The last section in which I sang "I was small, I was tall" was a new loop. I hadn't even heard it before. So I'd say basically ninety five percent of the show was improvised.

It's a great mix of song structure and improvisation. The music is very fresh. You can tell its being created at the moment you're hearing it. Most bands that play songs, although they can generate great energy, you basically know what's gonna happen even before they walk out on stage. Three to five minutes of verse/chorus/ solo/ verse/chorus... followed by another song with the same structure. It's all so predictable. The bottom line that you have to ask yourself, as Steve Lacy used to say is: "Is this stuff alive or is it dead?" Did your initial awareness of improvisation come from listening to jazz?

I grew up listening to jazz as a kid. I used to really like Art Tatum and listened to a lot of Gene Krupa and Buddy Rich. My father was a drummer in a dance band before the war, so I grew up drumming along with him to that music and went to see people like Duke Ellington and Count Basie. I mainly listened to jazz until '63 when the Stones came along. Then it was the Stones and the Velvet Underground. I also collected records by John Cage and Berio and all kinds of early amazing electronic music. Stockhausen was a big influence on me. In fact the original approach to Throbbing Gristle was to combine the Stockhausen with the Velvet Underground, to liberate the verse/chorus/verse/chorus rigidity. But I still listened to jazz for years and years, day in and day out - to Coltrane, Albert Ayler and Charlie Mingus. I always listened from the perspective of the drummer. Then at school I joined the choir and used to sing plain chants and medieval music. I used to sing Descante and was interested in more unusual harmonies. So that combined with listening to how jazz melodies are improvised and extended was a big influence. Most people never ask me about it, no more than six people in the last thirty-odd years have asked if I ever had musical training. They just assumed I haven't, but in fact I am a trained drummer. I also play the piano. To me it's very obvious that I have a clear grasp of phrasing and tonality.

I'm not at all surprised that you sang in choir. At times I hear elements of modal, choral-like singing your performance. You're phrasing is really succinct and strong. You never lose it even while all the sounds and textures are melding into one another and rhythms are bumping and colliding. What holds it all together is not just you as a performer, visually, but your delivery as a singer as well.

I used to listen to a lot of Billie Holiday and Frank Sinatra. When he was young and had a really pure voice, he was fantastic! Because I was a drummer I have a very good sense of rhythm and can always find my way back, no matter how far I seem to have slid away.

Perhaps at this point we should talk about your physical appearance.

You mean this? (S/he points to his/her breast.)

Well, I'm old fashioned, Gen. Let's start with your teeth.

It's funny, sometimes I'll be in a bank or a shop, paying for something. I'll smile and say thank you and people will give me a slightly taken-aback look. And I'll leave scratching my head, wondering what's wrong with them? What did they look at me like that for? By then I'll be halfway down the block and realize they were surprised by the gold teeth. I'm so used to it that I completely forget. Every once in a while I catch a glimpse of them and realize they're pretty striking.

Yeah, pretty striking! My mother would call you "a piece of work."

Actually, I'm a piece of work in progress! In 1995 my left arm got smashed in a fire in LA. (S/he holds up both arms together for me to observe and compare.)

Wow! I can really see the difference! I first met you in 1996 with Bachir Attar and was amazed at the scars on your arm. (Not only is her/his arm terribly scarred, it is a bit twisted and misshapen as well.)

Oh, it was just out of the cast then. I'm really lucky it works. The wrist was broken. Eventually I won a court case and got the insurance to pay up for the hospital bills plus the pain and suffering. I always, *always* wanted to have metal teeth ever since I saw the movie *Belle de Jour*. Pierre Clementi plays a gangster with this nice long leather coat and metal teeth. I saw it when I was on acid and was thoroughly besotted with the idea of those metal teeth. I told myself that one day, if I had any extra money I'm going to get metal teeth. By then I already had four gold teeth. I was working on it bit by bit. It was play money, really. Something I never expected to get so I treated myself to something completely frivolous. Lady Jaye found this dentist who would do it, because he had to destroy completely healthy teeth, which most dentists thought was sacrilege. He (the dentist) also made jewelry as a hobby, so each tooth was a replica of the one that was destroyed. They were drilled into a pointy stubs and the nerves were taken out. It took about eighteen months in all. There were times when it got really painful. One day it took six hours and they had to push all the skin away from the tooth and shove this...

Uh... that's maybe too much information for me. I've kind of got a weak stomach. Were you awake for all of this?

Yeah, they gave me a local anesthetic and I was in agony. It was just one long delirious memory of pain and dental smells. I just stuck it out and I wound up with my gold teeth. It was kind of self-indulgent and decadent I s'pose...

There's a lot of layers to what you do Genesis. Your sexual expression seems to be equally as important as your art and the music that you and the band create. Could you talk about the concept of "life as art?"

When I used to read about the beatniks it seemed that their lives were just as important or equal to the art they produced. The same was true in dada or surrealism. The lives of 20th century artists, no matter what their medium, was an essential aspect or ingredient of what made their work effective. I grew up in a very informed, modern generation, in the sixties. I took it more or less as a given that life and art, if they weren't, should be inseparable. In old, early cultures art was a devotional expression and integrated with the cycles of life. Somewhere along the line it

all became decorative in the service of the bureaucratic church. And then it became decorative in the service of the rich and powerful.

And then it became a commodity, produced and sold by record companies.

Yes... But there's always been this very, very deep conviction in me that the emotional nature of people that I work with and their vision of life is what I'm interested in, even before I learn what their musical or artistic skills are.

Genesis you push a lot of people's buttons. Some people think you're a weird and scary guy or girl and yet here you go talking about love! There's a remarkable amount of gentleness to what you do. A lot of people get turned off to things they think they won't understand without even giving them a chance. In order for someone to fully experience what you have to offer they've got to suspend their ideas of music, sexuality, poetry, whatever... and let your performance wash over them like a waterfall. I think that's what you're after in your own gentle way, getting people to suspend their concept of reality and let you show them something new and different. Your performance seems more like an offering than bludgeoning people with your music and attitudes and philosophy. You're offering a different vision, new and different sounds. Your physical presence alone gets people to re-think their very identity as a man or woman or something in between. That is, if they're willing to go there.

That's really a beautiful way to explain it.

You don't purposefully make people feel bad or uncomfortable about who they are or who they think they should be. You just offer it and no matter how dark or scary or weird the imagery or the music gets, it's offered with love and gentleness.

Well, thank you. I don't want to deliberately upset people because I want them to listen and consider what I'm saying. If I alienate them then they won't listen.

I find your physical, sexual expression to be totemic. With all your tattoos and different talismans you're like a living, breathing collage.

Oh definitely! It's funny but one thread that really helps people to get what we're doing with this pandrogyny as we call it, we always wind up going back to William Burroughs and Brion Gysin...

Who both physically looked very straight.

Way back in 1971 I had a long conversation with Burroughs about this. His strategy was to wear suits and be invisible and blend in. He did that so that he was able to go to the CIA offices, which he did once and give a talk on (his theory of) Control and language etc. He could go to a variety of functions and not put people off straight away. It allowed him the opportunity to say the ideas that he wanted without people being distracted by the way he looked, or him being dismissed by the way he looked. With his ideas it would have been too easy for people to write him off, if he was a weird guy with long hair. And that's a strategy.

Completely the opposite of Allen Ginsberg.

Yes! And they disagreed about it too! I committed myself to more of the Ginsberg approach. But if you come off very visual in your presentation, you almost become transparent. You can become like a cartoon.

Let's talk a bit about Throbbing Gristle...

With TG (Throbbing Gristle) I agonized a long time about what to call it and finally decided on "Industrial Music" and probably nobody who's reading this remembers that once upon a time there was no genre called "Industrial Music." Now there's a world-wide industry! But actually I sat down and strategized and designed it as a concept. That's why I call myself a cultural engineer and not an artist.

Do you see your life separate from the discipline of "cultural engineering?" Or is it completely intertwined?

I grew up believing that art and life were very much the same thing. And although it might've become a cliché, there are not that many examples of people that I know of, artists or whatever that have taken it as seriously as I have. I truly have committed my life and art to being absolutely inseparable. And that includes my physical body too. I've always said I would never wear anything on stage that I wouldn't wear to go shopping. Which is to say it shouldn't be artificial or a "safe" character that I'm playing. Whatever I am on stage is me representing what I believe in and what I think people should be able to be like. That's how I challenge myself.

Any last parting words of wisdom that you'd like to add?

Yes... In a time of darkness like this, that we're now facing, pleasure is a weapon. Joy and communing with other people is radical. It's no surprise that the powers that be are trying to suppress pleasure they understand its subversive role.

*Portions of the Ornette Coleman interview previously appeared in **Waxpoetics***

*While If the Moon Loves You - A Meeting with Bachir Attar, and the Master Musicians of Jajouka, Soprano Saxophonist Steve Lacy Recalls the Multifarious Brion Gysin and Genesis P-Orridge: Improvising with Evolution were all previously published in **Signal To Noise***

PSALM

By David Gionfriddo

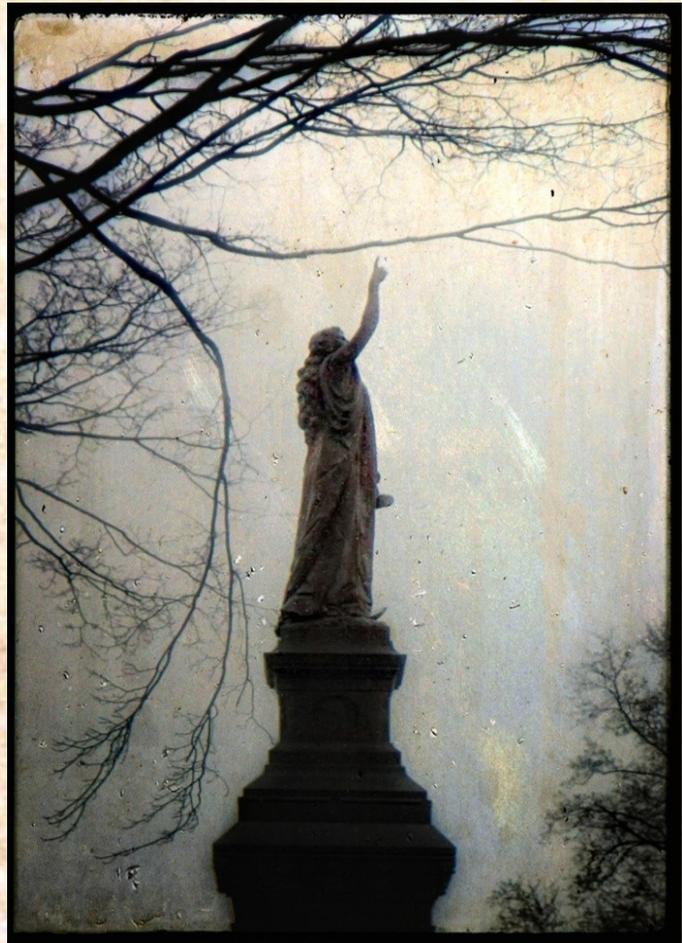
Photo © Sid Graves

The lion haunts altars of suffering and stone
Where the jester shines his iron coronet
He'll devour the skin and the blood and the bone
Entomb you in a lightless oubliette
Where you'll only be a memory wrapped
in shreds of dirty gown
Lord, please keep our feet on level ground

Anger's the lightning; succor's the rain
Hear words of forgiveness in hurricane's
gust
Etch a life story in tormented vein
Crawl and develop a fondness for dust
There's a perfume-stained withdrawal-
dream unfolding all around
Lord, please keep our feet on level ground

Insects devour the diarist's page
Memories, feelings, grow cool and expire
The imprints of fire and beauty and rage
All lost in the chill of the carnival gyre
Wanting grace, to flesh and song and color
we are bound
Lord, please keep our feet on level
ground

Deserving nothing, watching clouds, I'm waiting to be drowned
Lord, please keep our feet on level ground



CHRISTMAS STORY

By Michael Butterworth

Images © Patricia Wells-Stein

DEPRESSION.

Radio playing DJ selections music is the only thing which reaches him.

Bright light shining down casts white table top with typewriter whisky bottle paper and jugs of water in blinding circle of light spotlights his existence amidst the shadows of the room.

Wall of large Coloroll flowers creeping up to the ceiling.

Steel gas fire, budgie chatter from a cage in a corner.

Behind him a window out on the world.

*

Along a shoreline vision he sees in his mind kicks pebbles hissing breakers crash at his side, seaweed round his ankles from the clinging sea.

Misty day cloud and sea horizons mix indistinguishable depths.

Feeling he is being followed but each time he turns to look only the shoreline twists along at the feet of the craggy hill's melting into mist.

*

In the next room hears his three-year daughter playing with Christmas toys.

Cards from distant friends.

Glittering chopped tree seems so new and bright to minds of his children.

A toy train that goes round and round, minds trapped by its circular movement adult minds trapped by their relationships.

Distant faraway scene in his mind the Christmas ritual reinforces.



Budgie chattering away berserk thoughts in its pea head trapped by its reflection in the mirror.

Across the carpet cold draughts...

*

. . ahead of him the shoreline melts into mist where the sheer craggy cliffs push the beach into the sea and further access is impossible.

He stands before the jagged face staring intently at the stratified layers manifestations of time compares his own life with the life of the earth... the universe.

Clear cold air to carry his thoughts.

Pebbles have turned to sand at his feet he sinks slightly leaving depressions filled with cleansing sea water, his tracks obliterated by the mother.

*

Behind him he senses his pursuer, turns but sees only the shoreline melting into the mist.

He presses his back against the cliff face and eyes the mistiness... sudden droplets floating in the air settling on his clothes, feels the cold shapes twisting in the mist approaching impressions made by the stranger in the sand filling with sea water.

*

In the oven, a flapping bird beak tapping at the sec-through window feet clawing in hot grease.

The stranger introduces himself, bringing a new life into the room exciting the red flowers interminably creeping up their black background.

The depression blocking thoughts feeling lifts.

He faces the stranger across his typewriter where the stranger has seated himself in an armchair in the shadows, leaving his depression in the faded upholstery the only sign of his presence.

With a thud the budgie dies in its cage.

Silence from the next room as his offspring finish choking on this that.

The gas fire dies in its frame.

Across the city his cousin and wife who are travelling to visit him crash.

His wife doesn't get up out of bed with his tiny son.

The stranger radiates a smile which encroaches into the pool of light above the table and fills him with warmth, bearing the Christmas gifts.

The smile reaches him where lie is standing watching the depressions in the sand approach.

The hard granite dill face presses into his back last thing he remembers.

Shoreline dissolving into mist.

Namelessness.

Beinglessness.

*



He has lain awake like this once before, drifting unawares out of a deep something, in time to see the form of the stranger disappearing against the white wall of his bedroom.

He remembers the strong feeling he had that the stranger had manipulated his mind in his sleep, or wherever it was that he had been taken.

As he awoke more fully the fading form frightened him and he ducked under the bedclothes.

Then when he peeped out the white shroud with featureless face and arms crossed below the cloth had gone.

Instead the early dawn sky was pulsing with a strange red light trapped behind a broken horizon of houses and trees through the glass pane.

*

He comes to, staring at the words he has typed from out of the unknown greyness, the vision of layers of humanity in the rocks still burn inside him.

Music rides in from the next room proclaiming brief human desires its harmonies cutting right across time from primeval existence to life to come.

He has been singled out again.

He remembers that lie had walked for hours through the early morning deserted streets and traced the source of the red light to a disused church in the countryside, when the light had promptly ceased.

He doubted whether it had been visible to anyone else.

He wonders about the significance of a second visitation whether one reinforces the other.

*

Music from the next room ceases.

He puts on his coat and gloves and packs a small lunch in the kitchen, leaving the Christmas decorations the bodies of his family and the dying tree the trapped bird.

To his surprise the world outside the house has changed dramatically.



Wind blowing down street clogged with silent forms... Christmas lights dragged and smashed to the ground roofs ripped off building walls crumbling into piles of plaster and brick rubble.

Cars crushed and jammed together along the roadside as if ploughed aside by a giant hand.

Silence except for the eerie sound of wind slicing through wires through gaps in the brickwork.

His house door faces the avenue of glinting junked metal and blood, a huge gouge in the earth stretching as far as his eye and inner geographical awareness can see through building hill and lake.

He realises intuitively that the road has been carved exclusively for his benefit, for his car, and he feels uncomfortable.

Powerless climbs into his car and drives between the gate-posts across the ripped urban landscape.

*

His wife wakes to the cries of their son from his bedroom cot she lies still savouring the warmth of the blankets a moment longer lets waves of sleep wash over her.

Then she rises into her housecoat and collects the standing child tiny fists clenched whitely gripping at the cot sides.

She climbs unsteadily downstairs greeted by the Christmas disarray of toys a sinkful of pots a tabletop of stale meal.

Their daughter drops her chocolate angel stolen from the Christmas tree clamours round her feet for attention.

Daddy has gone.

Not again she sighs, worried now how she is going to cope with her night job if the kids are unminded if she should phone his psychiatrist inform social services or... the door bell rings insane burst of chattering rattles the budgie's cage on its stand.

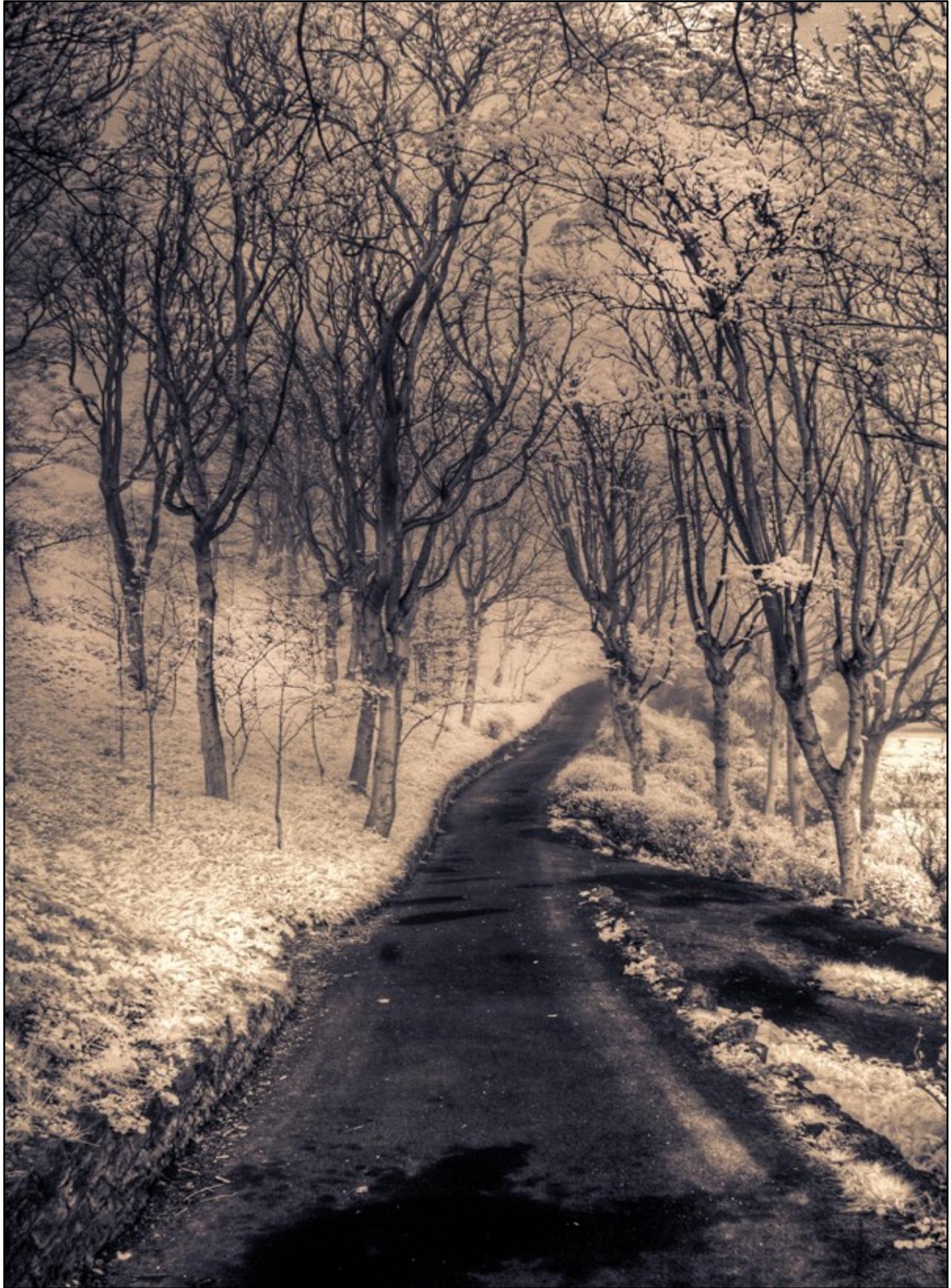
Child in arm she opens the door greets her boy-friend from the night club with a scowl of bad temperedness.

*

Behind him as he travels, town and country heal themselves sealing off the route along which his enemies – who want him to return – have set out in pursuit, only to be buried in the settling earth.

Ahead of him the misty coastline where the huge gouge that rents the land breaks through the lonely cliff line ends submerged in the sea.

He drives his car into the spray cast off by the hissing breakers crushing shoals of silver fish on to the beach.



Moves along the deserted shoreline, wheels crunching over the gleaming pebbles spinning on clumps of slippery brown seaweed strained off from the waves.

Coasts slowly until he can go no further halted by the stratified cliff face layers of humanity in the time-worn granite.

He climbs out and slams the car door walks insignificant man to the foot of the towering cliff roar of the mighty sea spray slashing up its face soaking his clothes stings his eyes and throat.

Incessant roaring of the white-crested combers dashed to foam and sucking backward across the pebbles hissing sound.

Long time ago remembers standing here as a young boy holiday with the family.

Wind, misty day, a rough sea... now the merging occasions become one.

Past present and future separated by biological existence.

*

At the furthest reach of the waves pebbles turn to sand, foot-prints walk towards him from round the back of his parked car rapid tiny indentations filling with the sea.

It is the stranger, who walks past him touches his being with a cold breath goes a lot deeper into his bones than the hazy swirling forms about him.

The man turns and sees that the stranger has manifested himself once more, tall white shroud arms akimbo featureless face shimmering dully against the dark brown rock.

A pathway from the sky cuts through the grey mist focusing a slanting pillar of light against the rock by the side of the apparition.

As the man looks he sees a white crucifix made of the same shimmering substance materialise flickering weakly then more strongly as it persists under the pillar of light.

*

In the side of a grocer's shop his car smashed through the plate glass coloured packets and cans stream of blood and petrol over the pavement running into the gutters.

Few cries from injured shoppers his sightless eyes body slumped across the bonnet beneath an



overturned display stand coloured Christmas papers fluttering drawing-pinned to the shelves...

*

He feels a rising tide of emotion inside him as he clammers over the shining wet boulders paddles through rock pools filled with anemones and shells arms out-stretched towards the pure white arms of the cross by the stranger's side.

Mankind is suffering.

As he reaches the cross bathed in its glory and brilliance shape etched on his being stoops to kiss it instantaneous awareness of humanity living in trees living in caves in wooden shacks in igloos in skyscrapers in underground laboratories in space stations in interplanetary bases in starships in far flung worlds throughout the galaxies the universe, feels the power of their thoughts lifting him upward into the grey sky his intense compassion flooding out into empty space bathing all beings lifting lifting...

A new Christ.

A Christmas Story first appeared in *New Worlds Quarterly* #10 1976.



**BOWIE, CLASSICAL, JAZZ, AND BEYOND:
GENRE-CROSSING WITH "AVANT GARSON"**

By Tom Garretson

Images Courtesy of Mike Garson

Lurking in the shadows of many great rock 'n roll superstars, you'll often find relatively unknown musicians, performing in the background or whose names simply pop up as a credit on an album. Ask any David Bowie fan about Mike Garson, and you'll usually get an enthusiastic sermon from the converted, telling you just how amazing this pianist/keyboardist is. While no one would claim that Bowie would be nothing without Garson, certainly many of the recordings he's been featured on have been lifted into the realm of a "classic" by his presence. Think of Bowie without Mick Ronson in the earlier part of his career. Think again of taking away the piano tracks on *Aladdin Sane*, *Pin-Ups*, *Young Americans*, *Diamond Dogs*, *David Live*, and many of his other now legendary albums. Then you'll really understand how important a musician like Mike Garson can be to the sound, the artistry and the overall artistic success of a great assimilator like David Bowie.

Before you assume that Mike Garson is nothing but a simple sideman to David Bowie, let's look at the real story. The untold story, or at least the story not known by most of the general public, is that Garson is a musician *par excellence* in his own right. He's either studied or played with such luminaries as Stan Getz, Annette Peacock, Herbie Hancock, Nine Inch Nails, No Doubt, Smashing Pumpkins, and Stanley Clarke. He's co-authored a soundtrack for the film *Stigmata*, pretended to be Liberace for a TV movie soundtrack, and is a lauded teacher. Just when you try to pin him down to one style, he'll surprise you with another,

expertly executed. He's like a study in contrasts.

Decidedly avant-garde, his music nonetheless is entirely accessible. A listen to his solo performances is to enter into an improvisational universe full of varied influences, genres, and delightful musical discoveries. If you're not entirely overwhelmed by Garson's technique or the great dynamic variation his playing encompasses, you'll be floored by the way he drives his point home. Seemingly obscure at first, if you listen past a minute or two you'll realize at how entirely enjoyable it is and how much beauty his playing is capable of expressing. And then you'll hear the references, creeping under his fingers: Mozart, Beethoven, Bach, and Debussy on the one hand. Bill Evans, Thelonius Monk, and Herbie Hancock on the other. He's not really "classical" in the limited definition of the term, and neither is he purist jazz. If you add a little rock sensibility, throw a magic spark into the equation, you'll get what Garson is really about: no categories.

You've had over 40 year's worth of a musical history behind you, and yet it seems as if your solo career is just beginning.

I hardly see it as an entire career to look back on. I actually think that I'm just beginning, which sounds insane! I saw this psychic a few years ago and she said when you turn 61, your career will only then start to take off. But while I've had a lovely life and tons of experience, and have been playing piano since I was 7, I really don't

feel my main contributions or my greatest pieces have been written yet. This doesn't mean my contribution to Bowie, but as Mike Garson. I just don't feel that I've hit my peak yet.

In the pop world, we're fed with the marketing ploy that if you're not a genius or have reached your first no. 1 record by the age of twenty-five then it's never going to happen. Utter bullshit, of course. That's for A&R marketing men in the major labels, who try to push the flavor-of-the-month on us, then replace it quickly before they think we can tire of that taste. Cheap thrills for short attention spans. For those in the know, on the other hand, it seems like you've been the soup du jour for decades. Why do you think attention from the media has taken so long?

I'm like...a *late bloomer*? That's not the total truth, though. I've had a really *slow-and-steady, win-the-race* internship or apprenticeship. If I had broken through at 25 or 30, when my wife and I were just married (we've been together for over 40 years and have been going out since we were teenagers), it probably wouldn't have happened. She and her mother thought I was playing great then and they thought I was going to strike it rich that year. So technically, it could have happened to me anytime between when I was 18 and now. However, I don't think the energy on the planet at that time was in the proper coordinates with my purposes. It would have been a wasted effort.

You know, you're not isolated when you're creating music - it has to have a relationship to a time. The Beatles did it in

their period of time, and it was totally right. It wasn't right ten years later, or ten years earlier. When Bowie hit it in the 1970's, it was right. And some of the things I was doing then just wasn't right for the environment. It's not like it's better than them or higher or anything like that, it just has to sort of fit when the conditions are favorable. And it's not always favorable because of the energy flow on the planet. Also, I think maybe in Europe there's a more natural acceptance of my work than there is here. Here, it has to be framed more.

So, it's not so much about the timing, but about being in the time?

If you're viewing it from an artist's viewpoint, then Bach couldn't happen today. Beethoven couldn't happen today, and Bach couldn't happen when Beethoven happened and vice versa. Even when Sinatra was doing his stuff... I mean, you have a lot of guys today copying that, but that's just bullshit. That's my real take on why I think it's taken so long. But in that slow build, I've just been able to keep practicing, expanding, creating, and discovering new things about myself and learning and understanding, opening up as an artist. Whereas an artist like Dylan contributed his magic in the '60s. I was a great player, but I just didn't have the mental, spiritual and artistic insights that he had. Or even like John Lennon had. I mean, I'm first getting them now, and it's more appropriate for this time and for this energy. It's fascinating, but I had to have a lot of patience through all of this.

You've obviously had time to think this through carefully. It's the process of development, not instant gratification, so to speak. There was once a time in the music industry when A&R guys believed in career building and talent development. Today, if you aren't a hit with your first album, it's more than likely you'll be dropped.

When times were slower and it wasn't happening I would just practice, and in doing so expanded and grew as an artist. Had I had a big hit, like Wayne Newton had hits in the '60s (laughs), I'd be still playing like him the same pieces in Las Vegas. You get stuck and you just keep repeating yourself... that's suicide for someone like me. But trust me, I wouldn't mind one or two hits! Just to be able to financially survive and take care of my family. But in terms of what's happened to some of the people when they've had a few hits (except for people like Bowie), they get stuck in it. They keep repeating and time moves on and their not fresh anymore. I've never had that problem because I've never had those hits. I'm always searching, looking and finding better ways to communicate, to reach people and try new techniques to compose.

Your persistence is proven, as well as your patience. And a discipline to die for – certainly a discipline many rock musicians could learn a thing or two from.

I was in the US Army band in the 1960s, playing glockenspiel and piano for the generals. I could make a lot of extra money on the weekends, schlepping home every

night to Brooklyn. I'd tell people that I worked "over-seas" because I'd have to travel over the Verrazano bridge which connects Brooklyn to Staten Island – that's where the port was. They paid for piano lessons and I had two great teachers in New York. You'd get higher ranks (which meant more pay) by how well you played, so I'd practice eight hours a day. Believe me, I wouldn't have done that if I wasn't in the army, because I was actually pretty lazy. It enforced discipline.

Anyone who becomes great is somehow doing a discipline. If you're a concert or jazz pianist it's rather obvious the kind of training you need. If you're a rock musician and you pick up a guitar, learn three or four chords, and you stay with them... and you keep working with them in the studio, and you do that and you focus and focus...that would be their discipline. They might know less about chords, rhythm and harmony than a trained musician, but if their focus is very deep no matter what they work in – computer music sounds or programming drums – that becomes their practicing discipline. It's just not done in the traditional way. Even a DJ can fall into that – you have fake ones and you have ones that really go for it. So that's the factor that separates it. It doesn't have to be done in the traditional way. Not everybody has to learn how to read music or be equal to what the classical conservatories say they should be. The conservatories cancel everyone out if they don't do things their way, and that's bullshit too. But then of course you get thousands upon thousands of people who just wanna be a rock star, look handsome

and pretty and just jump around. They have no talent, they can't sing, they're out of tune... but that's a whole other subject!

It took me a long time to really work that out. Seeing a lot of talented people like Bowie on the *Young Americans* album, when we were in the studio, and he got an idea for a song... he just stops everything in the studio, and sits there with an acoustic guitar, and we wait for three hours while he's trying to find this song or a melody. Now, that's not how I was practicing or composing at the time. I'd have a pencil and paper ready. But not Bowie, he'd just keep playing and playing. Or even Trent Reznor - he's brilliant at it. That's focus, and that's discipline. Unfortunately, that's sort of dropped out of society, because people get lazier and lazier. There's just no escaping that its hard work.

When I worked as a classical concert producer, I'd often work with classical pianists who idolized the jazz players. I would ask them if they ever play jazz, and their response would usually evoke a quiet moment, then with glassy eyes they'd say, almost choked, "Oh, no... I could never play jazz." They just couldn't comprehend how to improvise. That kind of shocked me.

I had that with a classical musician from the London Symphony Orchestra, when I was living in England in the 1970's, playing with David there. This viola player from the Symphony who I met on the train - he'd be on his way to rehearsals and I'd be on my way to work with David -- kept telling me that he just wants to play jazz like me. I

asked him if he played piano and he said no, just a little but that he wanted to study with me. I said to him that he had a great way of making a living by playing viola in the orchestra. He drove me crazy for two years, and finally I told him that I'd give him a free lesson and show him what he had to do to play jazz. I made him listen to me for two hours on how I'd develop a program for him to do in order for him to play like I was playing. So after two hours, he looked at me and said, "*Oh, I don't wanna do this! I just thought you could show me a couple of licks and tricks I could do.*" I said, you're a classical musician and you're that fucking stupid to think that I don't practice eight hours a day? I did that for the last 15 years! He said, '*You practice more than me!!!*' I asked him that if I wanted to play viola, would he think I could do it in an hour?

I've given a lot of lectures to classical musicians all over the world, and most of them are pretty closed off. Some are willing to make the change, but it's the fixed ideas are what's stopped the whole thing in people's stupid, limited belief systems. The windows that they make for themselves or the way they close themselves off are actually pretty pathetic. That's why I really enjoy the rock people more than the jazz or classical people, even though my training is in those areas.

Since the 1970s you've worked strongly with artists signed to major labels, but your own music has primarily been released by yourself or through independent labels. Have you ever considered getting an album out via a major?

I guess I would, if I could see eye to eye with those guys. I was in Holland about five or seven years ago, and PolyGram wanted to sign me for some of my classical improvisations – what I call my ‘Now Music’ – and they loved it. I played them a solo and they asked me “Well, would you play these pieces in Carnegie Hall?” I said that my philosophy about this music is that I create them once, and then pass them on to other classical pianists. I never play them but the one time. The pieces get printed out because it’s connected to the computer via midi. I play them one time and that’s how I feel then, and I’m done with it. They looked at me and said, “How can we sign that?” I said well, I can play ANOTHER one in Carnegie Hall, and people can have it when they come to that show, but that was too out there for them. I don’t know if I’ll ever see eye to eye with them.

Visionary artists for the most part are usually consigned to smaller labels. You’re in the midst of finishing your current jazz recording (trio with orchestra), and how do you see this released?

Maybe we’ll pass it on to Blue Note or one of these labels at one point, but where they are at – these major label companies now – I don’t know, they seem to be just imploding, and I doubt they’d even be helpful. But I do like the idea of having a great distribution.

All too often in professional music you have musicians fixating on genres. You are either classical or jazz, rock or folk, but you can’t be both. You can apply yourself to a certain discipline, but why be confined by it? Do you

think the audience’s now are more receptive to genre crossing artists?

The atmosphere is definitely much more favorable now, and that’s why I’m doing things with rap people now... and just like Bowie playing my music in a certain way on *Aladdin Sane*, these guys are seeing how they can frame my music, and we’ll see how that goes.

I do come from the tradition of great harmonies, great melodies, great chords and improvisations...and that, as you say, isn’t too well known in the pop culture. If I just play them by themselves, to most people that’s just too far on the fringes, and they just don’t know what the fuck that is. But if it gets hooked up with the right singer or the right piece, then you know.... I mean, if you had pulled the “Aladdin Sane” solo by itself, it sounds like a lot of my classical music that I write that are just solo piano pieces. I’ve written thousands of pieces just like that. Bowie just knew how to frame it.

I think the atmosphere, though, is changing. I look forward to seeing how it changes and how my career goes. I’m also comfortable with the fact if it doesn’t go anywhere, I’m still fine with that, because I’m still playing and creating. It might not be in the cards from a certain level, in the traditional sense, because I might just be one of these underground guys... only known to those who care. It doesn’t feel that way, but I can deal with that if that’s the case. If it’s because of my age or if society just doesn’t want it, that’s fine. In terms of my age I feel

like I have more energy now than I did when I was twenty. My music is coming to its fruition.

Let's talk a little more about Bowie.

Of course! He's a genius!

*I think a lot of people actually got into Bowie's music as an instantaneous reaction to the piano playing on **Aladdin Sane**.*

Yeah, I don't know who he is, but he's a good pianist! (laughs)

I bought that album when I was eleven, and I still listen to it. It still does it for me.

That's wild! It was a special moment. Regarding that music and him, the conditions were right for that kind of crazy soloing with his art, but it wasn't right for me to go out and just play as that, or just with my own group. It was favorable for David. I was flattered to contribute. You know, a day doesn't go by where I don't get from five to twenty communications from all around the world about that song - it has me absolutely baffled! I played the solo similar on *David Live* and no one has ever mentioned it. Well, maybe two people. So, it was something about the space, the time, with David, whatever. It's really picked up momentum in the last five-ten years. Every gig I've gotten with famous bands, working with bands like Nine Inch Nails or the Smashing Pumpkins, Gwen Stefani and No Doubt - were all because these people idolized David when they were young. So I owe a lot to him from that viewpoint. But I

don't know WHY that took the way that it did, I don't fully understand it.

The arrangements on that album was intensive. Mick Ronson was responsible for those, right? The whole guitar arrangements are orchestral, yet in a very rock'n roll way.

He was a genius.

A lot of people have written that Bowie was heavily reliant on the people he worked with, such as Mick Ronson, that he was integral to Bowie's sound. Without these people he never would have gained the success he has. Do you feel that's true, in your case?

Not really, since I think his destiny was meant to happen nevertheless, but maybe it's partially true in some cases. I'm the longest guy to stick with David. For a while there it was Carlos Alomar, then it was Reeves Gabrels, but when push comes to shove, it's me that's stuck the longest with him. Funny, because I was initially only hired for eight weeks in 1972. And I'm still here!

There was a long period from 1975 to 1992 where I was playing jazz with my trio and working with Stanley Clarke and Freddie Hubbard, and other things, but since '92 it's been me with David. We've even done certain solo performances, just piano and voice. It's really put that sound on the map, of my connection to him. I think it's bigger than me or even him, in that every time something really great has happened it's come from me stepping away from myself. The magic seems to occur when you get out of the way, and are in a more surrender

mode. You know, getting out of your own way – that’s how the magic seems to come.

A lot of people have been waiting for a Bowie album with just him and you, voice and acoustic piano.

I hope you don’t hold your breath, because I’ve been waiting for that since 1972! Furthermore, he was supposed to produce an album of Mike Garson doing David Bowie songs in 1973, and I’m still waiting for that! But, you just never know. We could end up doing an opera down the road. He’s such an individual and you can’t tell David what to do, he has to do what he hears and what he feels, when he wants it. He’s fortunate that he’s in the position that he can do that. I do hope that it occurs, though. Someone will just probably have to compile live recordings of us with piano and voice – I think there are five recordings floating around somewhere. It will probably end up as a bootleg. I don’t see it happening unless David gets the desire to do it. He’s unique in that he’s very true to how he feels about his music, and not the pressure. Maybe he’s affected by how people feel about his music over the years and he puts it into the equation, but essentially he does what he feels is right. I have a lot of respect for him for that.

An opera? Is this in the works? Everyone seems to be reviving their old albums in Broadway or West End shows these days, like Queen, and Lou Reed taking Berlin on the road.

Maybe an opera, a Broadway show...that we write together, and then bring in other

people to sing and play it.... it’s hard to say. I don’t see him doing what someone like Rod Stewart is doing now, you know – standards. David could do it better! In 1972 we went into a bar somewhere in Philadelphia or Cleveland, after a gig. He came up to the piano when I was playing and started singing “My Funny Valentine” and sounded amazing! A real Sinatra type! His talent is so big. I mean, he could have done that sort of thing, but because other people have now done it I don’t see this happening from him. He’s never a follower, he’s an innovator. I did suggest we do standards twenty years ago but got no response out of him.

He seems like he has impeccable taste.

Oh yeah! He’s got intuition into certain aspects of art like nobody has. I don’t know where he’s got it from. It’s a particular gift.

There seems to be a strong spiritual element to a lot of your compositions. How important do you feel that is to your music?

Uh, ...100%? Let’s face it, whether it’s Bach or Mozart or Beethoven, they all feel a certain connection to God and the music flowing through them, their oneness with all that. Not with some guy on a ladder in the sky. I mean what’s in all of us. Finding the right times and moments to tap into. There’s something going on where you seem to just channel the music. You must do the hard work, and for some reason people seem to like what you’re doing better than what the guy down the street is doing. It’s more than just notes or the

technique, the rhythm and the harmonies and all that, the mechanical aspect. There are many people who can do all of that, but no one reacts to it. It's something else. That's where the spiritual part enters. We all have it but don't all acknowledge it.

I think that *something else* or the spiritual as you call it, is an intention to reach and communicate and inspire people. The word *inspiration* comes from *in spirit*. It's coming from a place that's not in the physical universe. If you use the word *information* the word *form* is in there. That deals with the physical universe and details, form, data, information and that kind of shit, but *inspiration* comes from another plane. That's why when I play and I'm in that headspace, I'm at my happiest. But let's face it, we're not always in those spaces. One of my goals is to be in that space all the time. The music is a byproduct of that.

What about composing for film? I could see you fitting very well in the great tradition of Elmer Bernstein, Henry Mancini or even Bernard Herrman. All blend genres and created something unique.

Very little. I haven't found the right film yet. One day I'll find the right vehicle for my music, and all the elements of jazz, classical, the Bowie-inspired stuff, they'll all come out. That's probably when I'll get the most recognition, because people favor the visual over music. Music is still in the background for most people, with the exception of music lovers. Especially in this day and age, when everything is an image every three seconds... with everyone

seeming to have an attention deficit disorder. (laughs) It's so fucked up it's a joke!

It'll probably happen through a film, but I haven't found the right director who has the same understanding of what I do. Or anyone else who gets me other than the few thousand as opposed to the hordes of millions out there. But I'm patient!

You should talk to Peter Greenaway and see if he needs music.

Who's that?

*He directed **The Thief, The Cook, His Wife and Her Lover, The Draughtsman's Contract** and other art films. He's a true film auteur.*

Send me the correct spelling and I'll check him out! There are a lot of things I'm not aware of, because I'm always in my studio creating. So I miss out on a lot of things. People on the other side of the fence usually know more about those sorts of things, and they tune me into it. But for the most part, even the 1960s when I was playing jazz, I didn't even know who the Beatles were! And all that happened the same time as I was learning. I guess I heard them a little but it meant nothing to me, because I was doing my own thing. When Bowie called, I didn't even know who he was. Of course, he loved that. HA HA HA!!!

What did you think when you met him.

I thought "Who the fuck are these guys?" I mean, it was Bowie with the Spiders from Mars - one guy with the blonde hair, David with the red hair, another guy with the hair locks like a Hasidic Jew... I think that was Trevor Bolder, the bass player. Mick Ronson had these like...stockings on and his pants were cut off at the knees. I thought, my God! Where the hell am I? I mean, I walked in wearing a t-shirt and jeans.

I was at home with a piano student in Brooklyn, when I got the call from his manager Tony DeFries. I had to have my piano student baby-sit my daughter because my wife was working, and I left my daughter with her when I went to Manhattan, at the RCA studio to audition. I was like in total shock! It came out of nowhere, and I had no idea who these people were, but like I said, I guess it was meant to be. It ended up being a very interesting ride. And it still is. I still don't understand it! A guy practices his entire life and plays classical and jazz, and all he's known for is his contribution on "*Aladdin Sane*"! Go figure!

But that's about to change, isn't it?

I HOPE! (laughs loudly) I hope!

I think the public is really ready for artists who refuse to fit into any sort of strict category, who are genre-crossing. A lot of artists who investigate and who are inspired from other disciplines often find themselves creating something entirely new, something truly unique.

Well, I don't sing, so that cuts me out of 90% of the planet's entertainment value. But I certainly have it in terms of my composing and my playing, and the potential for scoring for film. Or playing with my own groups or in supporting others. So I'm hoping you're right. I had a famous jazz teacher in the 60s (I won't mention the name), and he said to me that my playing was very eclectic. He said it like I had syphilis or AIDS or leprosy. He wanted me to be a straight-ahead be-bop player, and I could do that, but I was hearing all kinds of other things. And now, that's where it's going.

The thing with me, is that what I do is not being a "jack of all trades" and mastering none, which many people superficially do. Like when you go to a wedding and there's a band that plays a Stevie Wonder tune or a Bowie tune, a little Pachelbel's *Canon* or a little Mozart, K.C. and the Sunshine Band or whatever, they're doing it all on a very superficial and shallow level. I've spent tons of time in each of these areas - years and years and years. There was a period in 1996 that my jazz playing was so good to what I was hearing that I almost felt that I had to lose that ability and slow it down a bit because it was too advanced. I had no one even to play it with. I had to take a dip and made that decision. I had to make that decision because I got scared after hearing myself at such a high level. I haven't even gotten back to that... I was practicing so hard... actually it might have been in the late 1980s... so it's very interesting that when I get into something I really live in it,

and THEN it starts to cross-breed. Maybe that's where my style comes from.

I played a pretty heavy jazz gig at the Blue Note in New York. Even though I was playing a straight jazz gig with other musicians, other elements crept in and the audience loved it. I have to be more truthful to myself rather than being a straight jazz performer, or just be bop like a lot of the purists like it in that area. You have fundamentalists not just in terrorists, but you have them in music too, you know. (laughs) That's just not what I am. I'm an innovator, not a copyist.

Let me digress. Let's get back to the jazz. Any particular pianists these days you follow?

Brad Meldau is my favorite. I know there are some great musicians in Norway. I'd love to come over and play with some of them. But yeah, Keith Jarrett is still great, Gonzalo Rubalcaba is great. The past also - Oscar Peterson, Wynton Kelly, (Art) Tatum... Bud Powell... all those people were great. Bill Evans was one of my heroes. But as far as the new crop, I think Brad's really got it.

What about someone like Betty Carter and her music? She's a prime example of genius ignored by the general public. I feel like even the jazz audience really hasn't caught up to what she was about and one day will.

She was amazing! I caught her once at the Blue Note. Not everybody gets understood in their lifetime, sometimes it happens afterwards. Saint-Saëns wrote "*Carnival of*

the Animals" and I can picture him being really bitter about something, because he asked that the piece not be played until after his death! (laughs)

"The Aquarium" from that work is one of the most haunting, beautiful pieces of music ever written.

Yeah! Some people are on the cutting edge. Some people are right in tune with pop culture and then they'll disappear. Look into the future a hundred or two hundred years from now, and no one's going to have heard of most of the rock groups that exist today. You'd probably know Dylan, Bowie and the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, but not many after that. I think I have a fortunate combination in that I have a pop sensibility in terms of current pop yet I'm more underground. I do like to reach people when I play and I'm not too esoteric even though my playing can be pretty out there. Maybe in a hundred years people will find the thousands of pieces of music I've written but that no one's heard. I'll probably experience both sides of that in the big picture.

Bowie can also be very commercial when he's onstage, but he can also be very ahead of his time. No one got *Aladdin Sane* when we did it then. They are just now starting to get *Outside*.

I caught that tour when you played Oslo Spectrum. I remember that for an encore you guys played "Diamond Dogs", and that it was just amazing. I don't think I've ever heard Bowie better live.

That's right! I remember! I played it in the 70s with him, and we hadn't done it until then. It was pretty amazing, that tour. David was really on. We really scuffled with management and agents on that tour. They kept us out there for a year, because the album wasn't selling and nobody liked it. People were very nervous because they thought it wasn't commercial enough. I always thought it was a great phase of our musical existence, I thought it was terrific. That quartet we had was an amazing band, you know. First we had a larger band, then we cut it down. Did you see it cut down or with the big group?

I think it must have been the larger band.

We cut it down to four. At one point we had another keyboard player, a background singer, and Carlos Alomar. Then they left and we were down to Reeves, Gail, Zach and myself and David. That's when it really took off.

From Bowie to Stan Getz to rap music?

It seems to be all coming together now, though. I mean all the disparate elements of my career, and even now some rap singers want me to play on their albums. It's pretty interesting that stuff - the rap stuff. There's a lot of space to improvise over those great drum beats. Some of the drum beats connected with rap are phenomenal! I've never particularly liked the lyrics connected with most of that music, but I've always liked the grooves. I could find myself

playing my normal crazy stuff over that, and having a lot of space.

I signed with a management company, but they want to connect me in a more pop culture way, and frame my music that way. With other types of people, you know, like rappers, films and all that. So from that viewpoint, I'm gonna hang there, but I'm gonna keep doing classical and jazz. Whenever I play jazz people like it, but they don't really know me as a jazz pianist - they associate me with Bowie. I think they're scared. But when they actually see the performance, that all disappears. They just have to keep their ears open.



Interview © 2007 Tom Garretson



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I DIED A MILLION TIMES

By Mike Hudson

Women will cry when they learn of my death. In San Francisco and Havana, in New York and La Paz and Montreal, Prague and Cincinnati. Especially Cincinnati. They'll read about it in a newspaper or someone will tell them as they're having a drink in a bar. Maybe another woman in another city will call maliciously to tell them, while they're at work or at home with their husbands or cats. But wherever they are and whatever they're doing they'll cry.

This consequence I had not intended, there was no grand design, but looking back now it seems inevitable, an outcome almost preordained given the sort of life I led.

You see, my death will not be the first occasion I've given them a reason to cry.

The room is large and spare and painted an avocado green with a high ceiling and a glazed terra cotta floor of classical Mayan pattern. There is a wooden bed and nightstand and a small desk, my books and papers piled on and around it, and a set of louvered doors on the south wall that open onto the balcony overlooking the Paseo de Montejo.

There are no pictures on the walls, nor on the desk or the nightstand by the bed. There are no pictures anywhere, save for the one in my passport, taken all those years ago in Manhattan.

Heavy green drapes of crushed velvet hang from a copper colored bar set horizontally above the louvered doors, which lead from the room onto the balcony overlooking the Paseo de Montejo. Did I put them there? I cannot remember. Nor can I remember the last time I was on the balcony, looking down on the boulevard.

I did have the television taken out. That I remember.

The pornography of the tear stained face. From the bed I look over to the desk and imagine myself sitting there working. Sometimes it seems as though I might possibly be able to concentrate hard enough, to visualize and imagine such a thing with such intensity so as to will it into reality. But then I lose track of my thoughts, my decaying mind no longer capable of things like concentration, visualization and imagination. I drift back off into a restless sleep shattered, stripped of essential humanity.

In the dream they are all the same, the places, the women, good and evil, the living and the dead, shifting from one into another each time I look away. This seems entirely ordinary to me

and I do not question it. Suddenly there is an explosion and I feel myself falling. What is strange is that I am falling up, up, up and then my eyes open and I am back in my bed. Outside I hear the rain. Heavy and pounding on the balcony. Lightning illuminates the room and, a moment afterward, the thunder cracks again the sky. The heavy green drapes flutter with the wind.

The storms come in from the northwest, blowing down from the Bay of Campeche this time of the year.

I turn on the small reading lamp that sits on the wooden nightstand and look at my watch, an old Astin chronograph turned out before the war by Schwarz-Etienne at La Chaux-de-Fonds, a few kilometers from the French border in the Jura Mountains of Switzerland. The heavy gold plate is warm and comforting. It was given me as a Christmas present by a whore in Skopje who had certainly taken it from one of her other clients. It tells me it is eight minutes after five o'clock but from the light I cannot tell whether it is eight minutes after five in the morning or the evening. We lived together for several weeks that season at the old Hotel Ambassador there, close by the Russian embassy.

I later heard from a colleague that she'd been murdered by Serb nationalists sometime after I left in the mid Nineties, but was never able to verify this. I wind the watch reflexively. A pack of Delicados on the nightstand beckons, and I take one out and light it. The match smells of sulphur.

There is a scratching sound at the hallway door and I hear the lock turn. Adelita floats in, carrying her black nurse's satchel and a small bouquet of chrysanthemums. I utterly loathe chrysanthemums. She obviously doesn't know this. But now I know it is the evening. She comes twice a day, and her morning visit occurs well after five o'clock.

"Buenos dias Senor," she says, setting her satchel down at the foot of the bed.

"Hola Adelita, hola."

She takes a small blue and white vase from off the shelf over the desk and goes into the little washroom. She fills it with water and puts her chrysanthemums into it and sets the whole jumble onto the nightstand. She moves to her satchel.

"Adelita, un poquito mezcal, por favor."

"Oh, Senor Stephen, no," she says.

"Un poquito mezcal." I say firmly.

She goes back into the washroom and emerges with a small glass. She walks over to the desk and takes the nearly spent bottle out of one of the drawers. She empties it into the glass, filling it about half way, and hands it to me. I drink and feel immediately better.

“Gusano, gusano,” I say, and she purses her lips and brings me the bottle. I hold it upside down over my palm and the worm-- actually the larvae of a rather dull looking desert moth called *Hypopta agavis*-- falls into my hand. I put it to my mouth and eat it.

“Senor Stephen,” Adelita says, shaking her head. I take a last puff from the *Delicado* and extinguish it in the faux crystal ashtray.

She might have been beautiful once, Adelita, when she was fourteen or fifteen perhaps, before the five children and the husband who went north and never returned, before putting herself through whatever sort of school nurses in Mexico put themselves through in order to tend to drug addicted, alcoholic *Norte Americanos* dying in cheap rooms along the Paseo de Montejo in Ciudad Merida, Yucatan.

She might have been beautiful once. Even now, as she fills the syringe with morphine and reaches into her satchel for the rubber tube she will use to tie me off, even now, as I pump my arm to push the veins to the surface so as to make things easier, even now she is the most beautiful woman in the room.

The room costs \$1,125 pesos a month to rent, around ninety American dollars. I deliberately chose Merida, as opposed to simply ending up here, both because I had been here previously and because it is fairly difficult to reach. There are no direct flights from most places in the United States, and one generally has to go first to Mexico City in order to get here.

Women will cry when they learn of my death, but the thought of listening to them wail at my bedside as I await the inevitable was simply more than I could bear. I’ve been in and out of hospitals, lock down detoxification wards and other nightmares on a number of occasions these last years and am well aware of the opportunities these sorts of situations present for high drama on the part of ex-wives, former lovers and even those who have taken it upon themselves to develop what are best described as schoolgirl crushes.

Skopje was a miserable place. Much of the old city had been destroyed by a massive earthquake in the early Sixties and the elaborate Byzantine and Ottoman architecture was replaced by the brutalist designs of Kenzo Tange, the communist urban planner who was a favorite of the dictator Tito and who had orchestrated the rebuilding of Hiroshima after the war. Tange wiped

away any and all vestiges of humanity where he was given a free hand to do so and created an almost surreal monument to soullessness that he and his Red masters considered a triumph.

My memory is a queer thing. It comes and goes. One moment I cannot remember whether or not I put the heavy green drapes over the louvered doors that lead out onto the balcony overlooking the Paseo de Montejo from this avocado colored room I rented barely two months ago and the next I can recall the name of the criminal architect of a city I have not visited in twenty years.

It was cold that winter and I was walking along the bank of the Vardar River, very near to the 15th Century Dusan Bridge - one of the few ancient structures not destroyed in the earthquake - taking photographs and gathering information for a magazine article I'd been commissioned to write on the growing tension between the Macedonians and the ethnic Albanian population there, tension the militant Serb government of Slobodan Milosevic was eager to exploit. She stood by the bridge staring down into the turgid grey water, slight and waiflike.

I was married at the time to Jane, who was then in the ninth month of her pregnancy with our daughter Jenny thousands of miles away in America. I had not seen her since shortly after she informed me she was expecting, and had spent the intervening time in London with the cold daughter of a Finnish diplomat. Things had begun to get serious between she and I and when the Macedonian commission came through it was something of a relief. Rikka cried when I boarded the plane at Heathrow, certain that I was going to my death in the Balkans.

Outside the rain continues. The wind brings some slight relief, though the temperature still hovers around 80 degrees. It is November, I think, or maybe the first part of December. No, it is November, I'm sure of it. I pick up the thermos Adelita left when she went away and pour some of the lime soup she made for me into the cup. I drink the broth, leaving the pulled and boiled chicken at the bottom uneaten. A centipede, perhaps four inches long, crawls up the avocado colored wall directly in front of me.

Why does the centipede elicit such revulsion? Why does it make me wish for the strength to get out of this bed, pick up one of my shoes and go over and smash it? It is, after all, not dissimilar to the moth larvae, the gusano, from the bottom of the empty mezcal bottle I ate with such relish just, just how long ago? A few minutes? A few hours? Where has Adelita gone? I look at the watch, the watch given to me by Ekatrina that Christmas in Skopje those many years ago, and see that it is nearly eight o'clock in the morning. I know that it is morning because of the weak light that can be seen where the heavy green drapes come together.

I asked her if she was working and she looked up from the grey water of the Vardar and nodded her head. It was cold on the river and I took her back to the Hotel Ambassador, close by

the Russian embassy. I wind the watch reflexively. The heavy gold plating seems warm and comforting. They said she had been killed with a bayonet, but of course I have no way of verifying this or even if, in fact, she is now dead.

Jane divorced me before I got back to the States, and moved back into her mother's house in Delaware. I signed the papers on the bar at the Hemlock tavern on Polk Street in San Francisco, where sometimes I received mail then. Two years later, when she sent me papers to allow for the adoption of our daughter by a man I'd never met, I signed those as well. He held some position of authority in the Delaware Legislature and Jane liked him well enough to marry him once our divorce was final.

I was no longer in San Francisco then. I think I was back in New York, though perhaps I am mistaken in that.

The centipede has not moved, and now I find myself wondering whether it is actually a centipede at all or, rather, a crack in the wall or some optical illusion caused by an odd combination of shadow and light. I pull a Delicado from out of the nearly empty pack on the nightstand and light it. The match smells of sulphur.

The rain seems to be letting up, and the heavy green crushed velvet drapes hang damp and motionless. But I saw the centipede crawling earlier, didn't I?

A weariness comes over me and I stub out the cigarette. I lay back down, turning on my right side and pulling the thin cotton blanket up over my shoulder.

Skopje was a miserable place and would have been completely unbearable but for the cheap local vodka and the extraordinary beauty of its young women. While I slept Ekatrina would go out, to where I never asked, returning with the Turkish heroin, a bottle and a lemon. Because of the way it is prepared, Turkish heroin will not dissolve in water and the lemon juice was necessary. When she slept, I would work on my magazine assignment, making large parts of it up out of whole cloth.

It gets hotter and hotter as the morning advances and the humidity must be nearly 100 percent. The room is not air conditioned and the ceiling fan provides little relief. When I awaken, I am already sweating profusely. There is still a little mezcal in the glass on the nightstand and I drink it. Where is Adelita?

I do not know why I am telling you all of this, or even why I'm thinking of it. Memories come up, pushing others away in a fashion that now seems entirely beyond my control. Death will provide a release from all of that, I suppose, from the fetid heat of this room, the unpleasant odor of my ravaged body and my dependence on a Mexican nurse who is certain to steal the few thousand pesos I leave lying around and the gold plated chronometer Ekatrina gave me that Christmas in Skopje so long ago.

Did I love her? Is a man who signs away his only child to another man he doesn't know even capable of love in any generally understood meaning of the term? Yet I remember her now and in the hour of my death, I remember her. The room then was cold and she shivered in my arms as we lay in the bed. The phone would ring and it would be Jane about the divorce or Rikka attempting to find out whether I was alive or dead or Claudia asking when I would be back to tend to her in Bolivia. I never answered the phone then.

It was cold in the room and we lay naked and intertwined beneath linen sheets and scratchy woolen blankets and the skin of a bear I'd bought in the Skopje market. If I never loved her I've never loved anyone and yet, when the day came, and she was out doing what you and I both know she did to come back with a packet of Turkish heroin and a bottle of the cheap Macedonian vodka and the lemon from which we extracted the juice I put one million denar on the bed where she rested her head, one million denar, which amounted to a couple of thousand dollars American, and I went downstairs and walked through the lobby, and got into a tiny white cab and went to the airport and flew to Prague. I later married some busy women, one Czech and several Americans, and they bored me beyond belief.

I was always sorry for what I did and am still sorry. Was she killed and, more specifically, was she bayoneted by the Serb nationalists? They had it in them. She didn't weigh fifty kilos but those bastards would have done it for sure.

Why is this what I remember now, at the end of my days? Why is this what has assumed an importance after all this time? I have no control over this, just as I have no control over anything anymore. I lie in a bed in a room in Ciudad Merida, the capital of the Yucatan, and wait for a Mexican woman to come and give me an injection and, perhaps, another glass of mezcal, which is what passes for whiskey here on the Tropic of Cancer.

Have you done much heroin? Have you seen it cooked in an old sterling silver spoon over a Zippo lighter then drawn through a cigarette filter and into a syringe? Have you tied your arm off with a rubber tube or a leather belt or a piece of scratchy rope? Have the veins in your arms gotten so hard and tedious that you've taken to injecting it into your stomach or feet or scrotum? Have you died a million times?

I left her there, you know. To be murdered. I left her there and she was murdered, with a cheap soft steel bayonet from an AK-47 rifle. It is so hot here, it is hot here. Merida. Where is Adelita? Did I tell about that whore in Skopje? Did I tell you about my own daughter?

It is over now, it is finished. The buildings my mother showed me on East 55th Street, the outside street front walls knocked down and the kitchen tables or living room sets revealed. I asked her and she told me all houses looked like that inside and I came away thinking that cheap furniture was stuffed between the walls of all houses, even ours.

And then I went away, I went so far away, to New York and San Francisco and La Paz and London and Havana and to Skopje, where I met a girl.

I wind the watch reflexively.

Women will cry when they learn of my death. This is a consequence I had not intended.

And still...

*An excerpt from Mike Hudson's book **Never Trust The World**, available at Amazon:*

<http://www.amazon.com/Never-Trust-World-Mike-Hudson/dp/146798115X>



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SHOOTER JENNINGS: XXX ARTIST

By Robert Earl Reed

Recently the Country Music Association of America held its annual awards show. Needless to say, the show hasn't been about Country Music in quite some time. The whole production is centered around glamour, glitz, and big record labels pimping out their prefab talent. You'll not hear the names of Popular Country Music's founders except as references in songs to make these charlatans seem real and authentic.

Those who came before are now gone, and their legacy has been hijacked by "The Suits". However, the progeny of Country Music's Founding Fathers are making music. Oh, how they are making music. You'll not see them in these focus-group-themed carnival shows. They are making music on their own terms, and it is interesting to see how they have taken the foundation bred into them by their famous fathers and added their own unique artistic touch. It would be ever so simple for the likes of Hank 3 and Shooter Jennings to simply plod along, singing what the Corporate Record Executives want to control, and make plenty of money

doing so. However, each has chosen to carve his own path into the history of not just Country Music, but Music as well.

Waylon Albright "Shooter" Jennings is the only son of Country Music Legends Waylon Jennings and Jessi Colter. Having grown up on the road with his famous parents Shooter is now an accomplished artist himself, having released four studio albums since 2005, and will be releasing his fifth album, *Family Man*, in the second week of March 2012. He is a songwriter, producer, and performer. He hosts a weekly radio show, *The Electric Rodeo* on Sirius XM radio channel 60 each Saturday. A self-described techie he is also an accomplished programmer and web administrator. Shooter is the next generation. He has taken hold of the traditional music and been unafraid to shape it to his liking.

Black Ribbons, released in 2010 is an excellent example one such endeavor. A concept album that is anything but Country. A statement in the muse of a Post Apocalyptic Radio show hosted by a final disc jockey Will O' The Wisp (voiced by Stephen King). The *Black Ribbons* project is more than just a musical journey - it's graphic art, tarot cards, a puzzle, and even a video game. It is an example of an artist who is expected to tow the line stepping out, damn the consequences. It is heartening to know that from the lineage of "Outlaw Country" was born an individual that could push such an envelope. Widely panned by those in the Country Music Industry, *Black Ribbons* and Heirophant is a complete work of Art.

Shooter in conjunction with No Depression writer Adam Sheets has also created XXX. I hesitate to call it XXX Country as it's more a description of music that is "too rock for country, too country for rock." The XXX name is derived from the old process of making whiskey. The moonshiner would run his batch of whiskey a number of times. Each time further distilling the solution into a more pure form of alcohol. To keep track of how many times the solution had been through the still he would mark the jug with an X... so Triple X would indicate strong pure alcohol having been refined three times. Much like the whiskey, XXX Music is PURE. It is a group of musicians and music that is shunned by the mainstream. Through its creation and now its format on Shooter's Radio Show, Shooter has given a voice to artists, like myself, who have no huge conglomerate record company behind them. He has allowed pure unadulterated independent music to have access to a wider audience. The movement has spawned Podcasts, Internet Radio Stations, and Blogs, the newest of which is Moonrunners (<http://www.moonrunnerscountry.com>), a progressive fresh take on the Music that comprises XXX and beyond. Shooter has released three free XXX Compilation albums, *The Southern Independents*, which are available at www.givememyxxx.com. Featuring forty-one artists and songs that, were it not for Shooter, would likely have never been known or heard on a worldwide basis. He is a true champion of Independent Artists and Music!

Pulling no punches and making his own mark in music history, Shooter Jennings was kind enough to sit down with me and give us a look into his world...

Robert Earl Reed: *Please explain the History behind **Black Ribbons**...*

Shooter Jennings: *Black Ribbons* was a project brought out of a swirling of a lot of emotions. First off in early 2008, I'd left Universal South records, parted ways with my long-time friend and guitar player Leroy Powell and was making huge changes in my life. At the time I was living in New York and my daughter Alabama had been born the previous November, and I think I was feeling an overall awakening to my responsibilities as an adult and a parent. I felt scorned by my relationship with Nashville, and I think I just felt an overall need to do something that was really an artistic statement, something free of the concept of commercial appeal. Not that I ever really had that in mind before, but I needed to do something dirty.

Earlier that year, while watching *City Confidential* on TV, I was struck by the announcer's voice. I thought, "Wouldn't it be cool to have an album strung together by a voice?" Not that it's not been done before, but I'm an avid fan of old-time radio programming. I love the theatre of the mind. In this case just the idea of a lone voice guiding the listener seemed romantic and cool.

I'd started work on a few songs and song structures, and at the time, had been planning to begin working with my long-time collaborator Dave Cobb in the winter of '08. My lady, Drea, had gotten hired to shoot the pilot for this new television show (*Sons of Anarchy*) and it was time for us to head back across country to Los Angeles to setup shop for a while. We always drive the distance because our dog can't fly, and it has always kind of been a tradition for our family. It's always fun to do that, to shack up in an RV and head from one coast to the other. Sometimes we take a car, but this time we opted to take an RV as we were moving a lot of stuff.

I always map my trips out by looking for which stations in each town will pick up Coast to Coast AM. Another nod to supernatural/UFO/conspiracy radio. I love to listen on the late night drives to the topics they discuss, kind of gazing into the moon light and brake lights and going on some kind of twisted journey. We took off and about two days into the trip, the economy collapsed. Panic set everywhere. Every talk radio program was talking about the impending doom of the country. Where was Bush? Was Obama gonna win? Was he the Antichrist? Was a police state around the corner? It was madness. It was frightening. And there we were, in the middle of the country, somewhere on some lost highway late at night, safe, and with the people we loved. Would we be pulling into a post-apocalyptic wasteland version of Los Angeles in the moonlight? Would shadow soldiers with guns be lining Hollywood Blvd as our RV sputtered into town? As you can see, my mind was going crazy and the wheels started spinning.

Then, one night, on Coast to Coast AM they had a fellow named David Icke as a guest for the full four hours. If you haven't familiarized yourself with his work, he has many theories about the world and people, shadow governments, etc, but the theory he is most famous for is his belief that there is a bloodline of Reptilians that connect the most powerful people and corporations in the world and pull the strings from behind closed doors. That our bloodline was violated, and the human race was tampered with early on to allow us to be easier to be controlled. Very powerful and mythical stuff. This just added to all the craziness in my head

and *Black Ribbons* was born.

By the time I reached Los Angeles, I had the whole thing pretty much mapped out. I even had my first choice for the radio personality role, Stephen King. Not long after, after many failed attempts to reach Mr. King, a writer at EW.com passed on a note to him. I knew he'd been a fan of my music before, so I thought there was a slight chance that it could happen. He replied, we became friends, contacting only via email, and a few months later Will O' The Wisp was a reality.

Now looking back on the release what are you most proud of with respect to the project?

It's hard for me not to answer this immediately with Stephen King's involvement. His collaboration with me during the creation of the record really fueled me and kept me on focus. Between him, Drea, Dave Cobb, Danny Coakley (one of my closest friends and Blackjack's godfather), and Ginger Gonzalez (another close friend of the family), I had a really amazing support system during the undertaking of such a risky project. I was feeling like a real failure as far as my experience at Universal South. I never felt understood or handled correctly, and I just felt like I'd brought my entire music life to a halt. And part of me was very excited about *BR* and what it could be and what it meant to me, but the other part of me was scared as hell. I knew that it was going to damage some of my commercial appeal, and probably run off a lot of pure country fans. But I'm very proud that I was able to bring an idea from inception to completion retaining and improving upon all the ideas I initially had. I'm also very proud of the two videos that Drea and I directed for it "Summer of Rage" and "Lights In The Sky". They both brought many of the ideas of the album into a third (and fourth on LITS) dimension!

***"Summer of Rage" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iHpwQxBioYQ>

***"Lights in the Sky" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0A5Qsm66USc&ob=av2e>

Is there anything that you would change about it?

Looking back, maybe I would have handled the touring of the record a little differently, as we hit a lot of people with an unexpected shock because it really had very poor marketing and public awareness was at an all time low for one of my albums. I had brought the album to several major record labels and they all just wouldn't call me back. This of course didn't really help my already broken pride, but I kept persevering. I finally found a company called Rocket Science Ventures that was willing to take it on. Unfortunately I think they saw more of an opportunity to exploit the change of sound and not really put much into the marketing of the album. A lot of disappointments and broken promises later, and I was getting beer cans thrown at us on stage. I remember texting Tom Morello and asking him, "These folks are getting pissed off about this album, they think I don't support the troops and that I'm starting trouble." He said, "Well, I guess you're finally doing something right." Of course I supported the troops, but I don't blame the folks for being confused. We showed up and unabashedly performed the whole album from top to bottom to a very poorly-promoted room of confused country fans. But it was a thrill! What I would have changed was, I would have a) found a more equipped label,

or at least refined our plan to really separate this record as a piece of art and not a “change of style”. (I found all kinds of press releases and stuff they put out later saying I’d turned my back on country and all this stuff. None of that was from my mouth nor was ever my intention.) b) Really been clear about the difference of this show and our country show in touring, so folks weren’t so in the dark about the change and what they were coming to see. But all and all I met some really great fans out there and by the end of the *BR* touring cycle, the rooms were full and full of folks who knew every word to those records.

Please explain XXX to the Readers. What made you start XXX and Givememyxxx.com?

XXX has really evolved since its inception. The first time I had an idea for this, as well as the name, was back in 2006. I wanted to start a festival and try and make a new genre, because I didn’t think there was a fair avenue for all of these artists who really fell in the cracks between country and rock radio. It was always something I thought that was really unfair. Back then there were a lot less artists doing what we did, but anyone from the Old 97’s to Hank 3 and myself had no outlet out there for their music to be played and I saw the commercial viability in it back then. But I never really had the gumption to put it into effect. Each year that went by I swore I was gonna get it going, but just never did. Then last year I started throwing the name out there on my radio show (Shooter Jennings’ Electric Rodeo which airs on SiriusXM’s Outlaw Country Saturdays @ 6 PM EST and re-airing Sundays @ 10 PM EST) before I’d play some of these artists. I started getting emails from people asking about it, wanting to hear more of it. It gave me the confidence to get it going.

Every year I redesign my radio show and this past December I decided it was time to try this XXX thing out. I thought, if I can start a petition and get enough fans on board to sign it, maybe we can start going around to specialty radio (Outlaw Country style programs that air at night or on weekends on some of the bigger terrestrial radio programs) and get them to convert to the format. Start coining it and build it from the inside out. I didn’t really put too much thought into the amount of resistance I’d get because to me it seemed like a no brainer. So then I threw together GiveMeMyXXX.com. I thought it was a good start, but I wanted to involve someone else who could really keep an eye on things, and someone I knew that was watching all corners of the music universe and that would catch and have a more educated perspective on everything that came out. So I sent Adam Sheets, who I had just recently gotten to know, a writer from No Depression, the site. He loved the idea and signed on board. The approach of billing it as a new Genre and/or Movement seemed like the right way to do it because it would catch people’s attention. So he then wrote his first article introducing it to folks and we were off to the races.

The thing about the evolution of XXX is that as time went on, I realized it was more important to use it as a site for people to be able to access all this music at one location. As well as radio programs that support it, publications, labels etc. So then the focus began to take less form of pressing for a new genre, and more about giving people a concrete source to rely on being introduced and linked to new music. Then the compilations began. Again, the idea here was to use one or two bigger bands to introduce folks to 10 other bands they might not have heard of.

I've heard folks have sold some records because of this, so I definitely see it as a success.

Now we are moving into what I think is the most exciting phase of XXX. There will be a rebirth of sorts at the beginning of the year, at least by February. We are planning on making it a much easier tool for fans to connect to these artists. As well as taking on some much bigger ventures. We are putting together a series of shows next year that will focus on these artists, as well as some recording projects. I look very forward to introducing 10x the amount of people to XXX in 2012.

How do you see the future of the music industry?

The Internet is a huge part of it. It's scary though, because the concept of "Trusted Sources" has gone out the window. In one way it's an amazing period of time. It takes no money for an artist to produce an album and release it into the world, so for that reason we are seeing a lot of music that would have never made it to the public released, some of which is brilliant and game changing. But the bad side is that we are over-flooded with releases. And as far as credibility, it's very hard to differentiate whose heart is in it. At least in the days of Creem magazine etc, you knew that this was the place to get your news on music and it was gonna be badass and real. Now you have a million blogs that all have opinions and agendas. I feel like the crop we have over on GiveMeMyXXX.com are about as good as it gets. A lot of different opinions swirling, but they're all writing about this music that's really still quite in the underground. I think that at every one of the sites there are folks that are going to bring to light a whole brand of music that hasn't been commercially exposed for the most part.

I think that we still are going to see many changes before a new system gets into place and music sales begin to increase again. Spotify's new model is interesting, but we still have to supplement the money being lost for the artists. A friend suggested they tax ISPs for entertainment transmission. It could supplement the loss, or at least help. Who knows. For now I just look forward to seeing the next step. Folks like Trent Reznor are definitely leading the way on how music is bought, sold and delivered.

Being technically inclined how do you think that technology will affect the artists, listeners, and the economics of the music?

It already has greatly. Record labels are such dumbasses. There were meetings held over 15 years ago where they said "This digital music thing is really catching on" and the heads of the labels sat back rubbing their fat bellies, looking at their Creed records hanging on the walls and said "Don't bother us until it takes 30% of the market share." By that time it was way too late and Apple had control with iTunes, and the labels were now at the mercy of the digital dollar. We will see what happens, but my heart (and wallet) aches over the grim reality that we all have to get day jobs to keep up making music. Touring is the only way to keep making money, and that barely covers gas. I hope we see a better day. I believe we will, but at the moment, we all have to keep fighting and pushing forward and creating our creative footprints one step at a time. Pretty soon we will look back and will see we made it through the Dark Ages of music

into a brand new Silver Age.

*Your new album **Family Man** is set to release in 2012 and you have released two songs from it already, "Southern Family Anthem" and "Outlaw You". "Outlaw You" calls out the establishment and fakery can you expound for readers who are just discovering you?*

"Outlaw You" is actually not on *Family Man*. It was a song that I wrote in a moment of relevance and released it as fast as I could. The song was my way of kind of throwing the bullshit that is marketed towards us back at a lot of the folks who perpetuate the fakery. I've gotten a lot of shit from a lot of fans who name the artists that I left unnamed (and several I didn't aim it at). Kinda is like truth rising to the top in a way. At the end of the day, I never intended on personally attacking an artist, but I felt that these guys who are part of the Nashville system who are pretending to be 'Outlaws' and 'Revolutionaries' were preying upon folks who don't know the inner workings of the system. It's like how the government places so many restrictions on daily life that when they give you an inch here and there you feel like you're getting a lot of freedom. Unless you really realize that the whole system is a sham and they're just controlled conveniences. This is what Nashville is doing with these pawn-artists who steal the 'Outlaw' concept and apply to just to create the illusion that you're getting real, raw, ruthless music. But you're not. Anyone who calls themselves an 'Outlaw' most likely isn't. My dad and those guys didn't label themselves that. In fact, they hated it. So for me, this was my way of saying "Shame on you all for doing this, you're bastardizing something that was a pure movement and applying it to your puppets just to try and sell records." And then, there are also these artists who truly think they are revolutionaries, but when they lie in bed at night, they can't do a thing without a Nashville Songwriter, Producer or Label. It was kind of an anthem of the DIY artists in the "XXX" category too. Those are all artists working out of survival. And these other Nashville puppets are pretending to be these type of artists, but we all know they aren't. They have their buses and their fancy back lounge bedrooms, and they sit there and revel in their success, all the while knowing that a suit somewhere in Nashville has the power to take it away from them and leave them powerless. Not one of the artists we promote over at GiveMeMyXXX.com can have a single thing taken away from them because they own it. They created it. It belongs to them and them alone, and no one will ever have that kind of control over them.

***"Outlaw You" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJwCwGDqiWg>

What would be your dream musical project?

I think there are a lot of those for me. I'd love to do a series of XXX albums, as Luther Dickenson had the idea for, some monster super-group collaborations. I also have another super-concept record I've been kicking around since I finished *Black Ribbons*. I really want to finish that, but it's a way bigger concept than *Black Ribbons* and will take a lot more time.

You started the Moonrunners Blog please tell us about it.

MoonRunners was a collective idea between myself, JahshieP, Robert Dean, Adam Sheets and Joey Allcorn. The idea was to create a writers collective of mostly artists writing our perspective. I've found that with a lot of blogs run by a sole person, you often get a perspective that doesn't always do it for everyone and I think by involving the nine writers we have now, there are so many fresh angles on the music and culture we love, that there's a little of something for everybody. We all definitely care and have been scorned enough by other blogs that we are coming from a very honest and positive place in our approach. Except for Robert Dean who is a negative, dark and disgusting person. And I love him for that.

Do you have any aspirations to Pen your own short stories or a novel?

I've had ideas to do things like that, but never went forward with them. I'm much more of a visual person, and I really would see myself writing a movie script before I wrote a book. But who knows...

You are such a multitalented person... Songwriter, Performing Artist, Graphic Artist, Radio Personality and more. Can you give us a hint as to what your next challenge will be in the years to come?

I appreciate all the kind words. I'm "okay" at a lot of things, but a master of none, I feel. Ha! If I can just get through the next five years of my life, I think I can look back and feel like I've accomplished a lot in a lot of different areas. My biggest hope is that I can help unite a lot of the great bands and artists out there and really make a collective mark in history. I think there's definitely a much-needed change coming, and I hope I can be a part of making that change.

XXX is broad... People, especially some music critics, are constantly trying to make music fit into a main genre. With respect to how the evolution of XXX is taking shape, what do you think of labels for music and genres?

I think a lot of people got confused by the initial plea to create our own "Genre" with XXX. I am also of the mind that Genres were only created to market music and really shouldn't be there. But I guess a better word would have been "Avenue" or "Chart" for XXX. I think looking at the whole picture, there should be an entirely different system of getting music to folks based on their tastes. I think once that would be in place, the idea of Genre could go out the window. But for now, with XXX, the idea is bring independent country/southern leaning music out of the shadows and into the light they deserve...

Shooter Jennings lives in New York City with his fiancé actress Drea de Matteo and their two children.



CONTAMINATION

By Ele-Beth Little

Photos © Eleanor Leonne Bennett

Reaching for my mum's sewing box, I strained on my tip toes to claw it to the edge of the shelf. I was short for a ten year old. I couldn't reach it. I wanted to reach it but I was losing my balance. And then I saw the lid open as the box began to wobble. I saw the contents, the buttons and bobbins and, as the box tipped forward, out fell all the needles. They landed in my eyes as precisely as thrown darts and stuck there like pin cushions. I stood back. I stopped reaching for the sewing box. The image had scared me away. I imagined myself staring upwards, unable to blink for the forest of tiny spears rooted in me.

And that's how it's always been.

I didn't run away to find something, I ran away to escape. But this is an impossible task. There's nowhere to run from fears of your own creation. Boredom becomes something you aspire to. Limit the stimuli, sedate, switch off. There's a half- life, like a dull light, you can achieve.



Every evening I get stoned and read cheap women's magazines, sitting by my gas fire. My dog, JJ, pants beside me. The loneliness is fierce and smothering. But it's honest, and I can predict it. I like looking at the smiling false faces. I stop craving interaction, like binging on chocolate. I like the feel of the pages; that they're so easily worn and bent reminds me that my touch can affect something, it's like holding someone's hand.

I have stayed away, alone in my caravan for years. JJ keeps me sane. Though, when I call him, my voice seems like an alien thing, and so small in the vast wildness that surrounds us, where JJ is in fact well at home. But I sense my own smallness. I feel clumsy, out of place. I sometimes don't call him at all. Let him act on his primal impulses, he knows best. He has a whole field of wisdom that I don't have access too, it's ridiculous for me to call out to him, to give him orders. He is part of the wild whereas I'm its estranged child, weakened, shut out from the pack and left for dead.

There is nothing wholesome about my life. But there are ripples. Blue light tramples waterfalls of car engines, voices. It is all blue and red, like police cars, ambulances, emergency. Blue veins red blood. Royalty. The cleanly blue of pharmacists that do needle exchange. Red lips and gashes for boys in blue denim. The sirens flash by, loud and deranged. Taking patients to be treated, comforting a family, all slotted in to reassuring roles. I wish I accepted those roles. Wish I could still believe in authority and safety, in being soothed, in adults, in someone there to rescue me. But I don't.

Contamination is what I fear. Blood, skin, brain. Contamination by poison, drugs, age, by things lying dormant underground. The understanding that there is no permanence. Devastating. That buildings won't secure us from the elements. That doctors are butchers in disguise. That horror is everywhere and bundled up like witches' herbs in a binding spell; only magical thinking can save us from the mythic that still throbs beneath the thin concrete. It is like a sleeping lion. Strangely pacified. Above its dreaming head we rush to work, purposeful and arrogant, or wondering if we have forgotten our keys.

Once you've seen what lies beneath, you can't go back. To listen to its voice is insanity, to feel its touch is disease, to desire it is addiction. There are prayers and incantations, medical jargon, uniforms; they all contribute to the thin veil of civilization, the comforting illusion of order that has always been lost on me.

I can hear the rain. I'd go out and smell the wet grass if it wasn't for the broken panes of glass, and the scattered rusty machinery. There are no wild animals to pounce. But there are many modern traps lurking in the greenery. They worry me because they are an invisible replacement of natural predators. I've heard people talk about energy and say that nothing is destroyed but transferred. This is the message of our era. There's been no linear advancement, we simply shuffled the same deck. We are still the same lost children in a forest, there is still a medicine man, a midwife, and a number of gender bending shamans.



THE PISS CAT'S WHITE CHRISTMAS

By Stagger Lloyd

Images ©Brian Routh



24th December

I woke up on the floor of the house to the sound of rattling, persistent rattling. I shifted my skirt and adjusted my tights as I stood up and grabbed my saber, which was laid nearby amongst the stacks of paper, books, paints and all manner of other shit, and headed towards the sound of the rattling coming from the kitchen.

The house was darkened as it was dusk, I'd passed out in the afternoon on the living room floor, so had left no lights on.

I held the saber forth a little, which shone a little in what light there was, as I rounded a corner.

The rattling suddenly stopped.

If it was a burglar they'd better say their prayers, impaled on a 30" saber by a man in women's clothes, as they were about to be, after all, who fucking else would be breaking in through the window?

I heard someone nearby in the kitchen huffing and puffing. Then the thought occurred to me, "Fuck, it's probably the fucking Gas Man, tracked me down to this distant land to doom me out once again!"

I looked down at my saber and twisted it in the glow of the fading light. "I'm a take the bastard!"

I rounded the corner of the studio to the kitchen and there, having just squeezed through the kitchen was a tall fat bearded figure.

"Holy fuck, it's fucking Santa Claus!"

Even in the dim light I could see his gnarled ancient features beyond his disgusting stained, greasy beard and beneath it was his unmistakable outfit. Except this wasn't like in the fairytales. This fucking rag hadn't been washed in maybe a century. He probably had fucking mice living in the browned fur trim.



He reeked of cigars and ale. I never liked ale, so its stink shot through the odours of my own imperious whiskey soaked mist, like a ladle through soup.

Slowly he turned and saw me standing there with a look of disbelief.

He grinned. The stumps of his remaining teeth were yellow, glistening with ichor.

He reached down and grabbed the huge sack slumped on the floor, which he'd obviously thrown in through the window before he came through, and then wheezing and coughing, trying to catch his breath lumbered towards me.

Shit, I thought, what am I gonna do? It'd hardly look good if I had "Murdered Santa in cold blood" in my portfolio.

I backed off as he came towards me slowly. He had a limp, dragging one foot behind him, probably from gout or some shit.

I backed off.

"I want something from you, boy," he sneered, looking me up and down.

Piss, what if this isn't Santa? What if it's some old pervert burglar who wants my ass? Well he isn't gonna have it, I like it as it is.

Fuck it, I'm gonna call his bluff, I thought.

"If you were the real Santa you'd have used the fucking door, you freak!"

Santa glanced at the door.

"That's right, it's open," I said, "so who the fuck are you really!"

He wiped the running shit from his nose on the back of his hand and wheezed. "Well, this being one of those tedious modern houses," he spat on the floor, a glob of muck landing on one of my palettes, "I realized it wouldn't have a chimney and decided to come in the back way and naturally jimmed the window." He grinned sickeningly as he said, "Come in through the back way," drool soaking through his beard.

I had to steel myself. This was gonna get unpleasant, my finely tuned psychic powers could sense it.

"Right then, it's like this, you sick old fuck. Back off now and leave, Santa, or I'll make this a day you'll fucking regret!"

He just stood and leered at me, then choked up some more crap into his hand and wiped it on his coat.

Fuck it, he's not backing off.



I rushed him and smashed the hilt of the blade into his temple. He staggered back, looking a bit surprised.

I figured if I just battered him a bit that way he might get scared and run off.

I didn't want to kill someone, let alone Father Christmas, especially in my own house.

"No, no, were on the same side!" he bawled as I went at him again.

This time the hilt glanced off his shoulder and he winced, gritting his teeth. Then everything went white as snow, in pain, for a few breathless seconds. When the white flash cleared I was flat on my arse and he was coming toward me with his fists clenched.

Oh shit, I thought, the bastard's got knuckle dusters.

He'd knocked me flying with a punch to the stomach.

I scrambled back away from him over tubes of paint, palettes, spilling jars of turps and knocking over tubs of brushes, which scattered over the floor.

As I scrambled back deeper into the long room I managed to stand up. He carried on coming towards me, fists bared. I could hear brushes crunching under his boots. "I'm gonna teach you a lesson boy," he growled.

Fuck, I'd dropped the saber when he knocked the wind out of me, and now he was between me and it.

Instinctively I grabbed at something just as he loomed in, his immense frame blotting out the light.

It was a handle, I lifted it up and wheeled it in a blistering arc down, and the huge tub of white paint smashed over his stupid, leering head.

He got totally drenched in the shit, white paint dripping from head to toe.

"That'll teach him," I smirked, as he suddenly lunged forward, grappling me around the waist and sending us both plunging into a bunch of shelves, smashing many of them from the wall.

He then punched me in the kidneys, the fucker. I yowled in agony. "Not my fucking kidneys, you bastard!"

Somehow I managed to push him away from me and looking down, saw this nasty splinter of wood.

It'd had come off an easel I'd thrown a hammer at one night in a fit of drunken rage.

Quickly, despite the pain in my side, I reached down and grabbed it. It was about two feet long, and sharpened into a long, strong, and decidedly nasty point. In the same motion as grabbing it, I lunged forward at him.

It plunged right through his now pristine white coat and into his stomach. Blood flooded out and down through the paint. He yowled in agony and, clutching at the hole in his stomach, turned and fled back towards the kitchen.

For a moment I was content to see him running, but as he grabbed his sack from the floor, I thought, fuck you, you bastard, and lurched after him, picking up the saber from the floor as I ran and lashed out. I missed the desired contact and instead it slashed through his sack just before he made it through the door.

The sack burst everywhere.

I slammed the door shut behind him and locked it, then keeled over in pain, taking deep gasps of air.

Damn, wtf was all that about?

A man dressed in tights, a t-shirt and a skirt fighting a white paint covered Santa and wrecking a studio, then Santa fleeing, probably invisibly off into the snow filled night.

I put White Christmas on repeat, blasting out on the speaker system, grabbed a bottle of good Scotch from the kitchen, then made my way up to bed, where I, collapsing, drank the bottle before passing out.



Part 2

Something startled me from my sleep, my face felt warm in patches so I put my hand up and as I pulled off my blindfold, my fingers brushed against some kind of goo on my skin.

I sensed another presence in the room with me, and slowly, almost reluctantly looked to my side and then, in complete surprise, shot bolt upright!

It was him! It's the fucking Piss cat!

It was true, he'd come home!

His big stupid head with its bright yellow round eyes glared at me happily.



Bounce Bounce Bounce Bounce!

I rubbed the sleep from my eyes then looked at him.

There was something different about him.

Something had changed.

That was it! He'd gone and grown stripes! Stupid bastard had probably been rolling around in my paints!

"Hi Piss Cat!" I said, "I just had the weirdest fucking dream, dood," and then as an afterthought said, "Happy Christmas!"

He continued bouncing up and down, dribbling, and as I clambered out of bed, he bounced along after me.

I'd slept in my jeans and shirt and shoes. I must have been fucked last night.

I got to the stairs, and glancing down, could see something wasn't right at the bottom.

I made my way down.

The floor was covered in all sorts of crap, ok, but there was something unusual along with it. Piss Cat went snuffling through all the shit on the floor.

I couldn't put my finger on it, so walked into the kitchen, opened a cupboard, and looked through the assorted bottles there... hmm, brandy.

Piss Cat stood in the doorway with something shiny in his mouth. He stared at me. I stared back. "Want a drink, kitty?" I said, holding the bottle up. Then I shivered and I realized how abnormally cold it was in the kitchen.

I normally kept the central heating on a steady 30 Celsius, never erring.

My feet get cold easily you see, and I like things to be balmy, tropical almost.

I grabbed a bowl from the side and poured some brandy for Piss Cat. He looked at it dribbling, but turned away and bounced through the door.

That's unlike him, I thought, and followed him, grabbing a glass from the draining board on my way. Then I noticed the window above the sink was open and saw the splintered wood on the frame. That explained the cold.

Then it dawned on me! I turned to look into the living room. There was Piss Cat, bouncing on some object. In disbelief I realized what it was that I couldn't put my finger on, and in the same instant remembered my dream of the night before.

There amongst all my crap were the shredded remains of all sorts of cute wrapping paper, little ribbons and bows... all the trappings of presents.

I began to notice there were various shaped parcels amongst it all.

Piss Cat and I looked at each other, and I understood that this is what he'd been trying to show me.

He started bouncing again.

I pulled the window shut then walked over to him, and leaning over, he bounced off the parcel he'd been trying to point out to me.

I picked it up and unwrapped it.

"You fucking genius!" I exclaimed and patted the Cat on his head.

It was a fine bottle of Absinthe.

"Fuck the brandy!"

I opened the bottle and filled up the glass I'd been holding. Fuck me, I thought, this feels just like Christmas. I chuckled to myself as I took a large swig, then turned and went to get Piss Cat a fresh bowl, and filled it with the Absinthe.

Piss Cat bounced up and down and dribbling his disgusting froth, delightedly began to lap up the green liquid.

Curious as to what the other parcels were that Santa had bought me, I started unwrapping them.

One by one I discovered bottle after bottle. Pernod, Brandy, Bourbon, Whisky, Armagnac, Champagne, more Absinthe, various wines... the list went on and on. Amongst these I found other treats such as Wine Gums and chocolate liqueurs.



I took another gulp of Absinthe and glanced over to Piss Cat. He was bouncing bright-eyed next to the kitchen door.

"Who the fuck was this guy, Piss Cat?"

He dribbled. His dribbling was incessant. There was a long chaotic trail of his dribble winding chaotically throughout the house.

I poured myself another drink and walked over to the kitchen door and looked down at the cat who sorta gurgled stupidly.

Hmm... I opened the door onto the snow covered balcony.

Piss Cat hopped outside and stood next to the lines in the snow from which he had first appeared. Then I saw the boot prints leading up to the window and the ones

from the door which lead away toward steps which went down into the garden. Something glinted in the snow a few feet away.

I put on some boots and wandered over. It was my saber and next to it, slashed into the snow were the initials BS. I picked up my saber and, taking another hit of Absinthe, scanned out across the white townscape, surveying the valley below and then, further off toward the hills.

My mind was reeling with questions. What did this all mean? Had he actually come to deliver a bottle or two for me or was he there to steal my stash of booze, as I'd thought in my dream?

I grabbed my wallet, umbrella, and shades, then threw a few choice bottles of spirits and a suit into a suitcase.

Piss Cat was bouncing in the kitchen doorway waiting for me. I remembered I still had his favourite bag lying around somewhere and found it amongst the clutter in my studio.

The last time I'd seen him, until today, he'd been playing inside that bag.

I shoved him in, grabbed my saber and off we went. Following this rogue Santa's bootprints, we sped down into the garden through the snow.

Where the trail would lead to I had no clue, but somehow I knew this was going to be one epic adventure!



To Be Continued...



**THEY HAVE HAD 50 YEARS TO RIP THE SOUL FROM
ROCK AND ROLL.
IT IS UP TO US TO DRAG IT BACK, KICKING AND
SCREAMING, IF NEED BE.**

**A Rambling Plea By dixē.flatlin3
Featuring the Musical Escapades of Black Earth**

This is a call to action for anyone who feels music in his or her soul. Anyone who sees the beauty, pain, anguish, jubilation, blood, sweat, and tears that goes into the composition of truly great works. Historians have argued that it was music that fueled the activism of the late 1960s. I was born after the "Summer of Love" and therefore disqualify myself from answering that conundrum. However, as a consumer, I want to debate the products that are currently offered (in increasingly smaller numbers, I might add.) Living in the consumer-age was supposed to be about options that would open up through technology. This does not seem to have been the case, then or now. Reviewing the media that has streamed into my head since birth, I clearly see that convenience has cheapened the overall product. Simple economics. Music has become nothing more than a series of analyst's reviews, marketing strategies, and projected earnings. Too often I hear the same rumblings from the streets. You know, the place where one is most likely to encounter an artist, in their natural habitat. An artist's life is not replicated accurately for The Hive and this contrived misrepresentation is piped "live, 24/7, 365." There is zero reality in "reality" entertainment (ironic, am I right?) Artists are, by their very definition, wired a bit differently than their less creative human counterparts. Before anyone gives me the argument, 'but we are all created equal and every human has creativity,' I would argue that the need to: eat, shit, fuck, kill, survive, and breed are the ties that bind humanity. The rest is Western society's egotistical projections upon the rest of the world. Not everything will be so easily assimilated. They have yet to build a big enough

machine to homogenize the planet. Though the Internet is definitely a Pandora's Box they are devoting countless hours to erase all evidence of. The lines between entertainment, media, network providers, and corporations have completely blurred, it is evident that an artist's integrity is also a commodity for the Fat Cats to control.

Sadly, this A-typical business model has a standard operating procedure (SOP) that by definition was designed to maximize efficiency, with no regard for humans. By design, Corporations serve only themselves. The sole purpose and intent is to protect the Corporation and its Shareholders. That is it. This does not outwardly appear to be an environment that would foster or welcome anything that deviated outside of a statistical-based, acceptable norm. I believe this is directly the root of the current (and painfully obvious) state of the "music industry." Celebrities have replaced artists. Oh, and there is a difference, trust me. Google that shit.

Two thousand and eleven will likely be dubbed The Year of the Information Wars. Technology hit humanity like a devastating tsunami. Tumbling the delicate infrastructures that were the only cohesion in some emerging countries. It will also most certainly earn the infamy of being the year of The Hacker and the #Occupy movement. When anonymity and Guy Fawkes masks became the global calling card of zealous teenagers. Children who have, so far, been able to make the old men look stupid, with a shadowed impunity. There are definitely old men behind all of humanity's collective woes. A battle to control the mass public media mind is being

fought before our very eyes. The year of the Arab Spring has unfolded before a captive, global audience. No longer are governments and corporations operating behind lies and misinformation. Wikileaks and the United States' prosecution of PFC Bradley Manning have capitulated the American government to the greatest (and possibly most truthful) public examination in its relatively (and astonishingly brutal) existence.



But, I digress. I am here to discuss the matter of our beloved music industry. Exactly where has all the originality gone? Where is the soul? I miss the junkies so artistically tortured, they continually attempt to kill themselves, to quell their inner pain. Most true art is very ugly and it is just not something the bean counters can quantify. The excessive indulgences of "The

Artist" ended with the epic concept albums of the 1970s. Never again would a business analyst allow a company to invest that much time, effort, and money into a "temperamental artist." In fact, every aspect of the music business would get broken down into division operating independently and on completely different sides of the world. The Internet has facilitated the proliferation of this successful business model. Unfortunately, artists who cannot be served à la carte have been abandoned by the 'major' media corporations. Worse yet, handed off to an inept, junior subsidiary that lacks the experience, resources, and interest essential in the management of anything outside the SOP. I hear the same thing, again and again, from acts that are unique: "We'd love to put together a development deal...but we don't know what to do with you...you don't sound like anything." Can we start with what the fuck is that supposed to mean? Let alone, how does it make good business sense in a business *supposedly* based upon artistic talent? Eventually the bean counters will have to admit they've had their asses handed to them by technology and are now the old men in the game. Complacency has that effect.

Which brings me (sort of) to the point of my engaging you this fine day. I am here to publicly indict all parties involved in the current sad state of the arts. Artists have been replaced with talented puppets that perform for infamy and a shot at reality TV. I am a proud member in the inaugural club of latch key kids. We were stuck in front of televisions by parents whose ideals we were never privy to. Trust me when I tell you the apathy felt by my generation is very real.

The world has been a fucked place since we were old enough to figure it out. We were not blessed with the gifts bestowed upon our parents by their parents. Not even the simplest of gifts, music. Our parents at least had a diverse and phenomenal soundtrack to the social upheaval of the 1960s and 1970s. What do I get? According to America's Top 40: Pitbull, Adele, and Lady Gaga. I have actually listened to one of the three. And it is derivative of things I have already seen and heard.

I believe it is my duty to take you, the reader, on a journey into the inner, darker workings of art. Because there can be no true art without obsession, compulsion, and extremes. Truly artistic individuals are likely some of the most unstable, batshit crazy, drug/alcohol/sex addicted individuals you could ever happen upon. I am tired of the whitewashed bullshit perpetrated upon the public as 'art.' For some of you, this will be a remedial read. Grab the vice of your choice and feel free to scan the contents. That said, I would like to introduce you to a friend of ours.

His name is Ving Motherfucking Ra and we happen to go way, way back. He is the lead singer and guitarist of a power trio out of Austin Texas called Black Earth. Along with Dave Rangel on bass and Jason Reece on drums, they have a sound that is often compared to the southern rock but "unique." The band is well known throughout Austin and infamous abroad. I caught up with the bassist, Dave Rangel, recently by phone. He was kind enough to answer the questions that Ving and I had come up with. It is a lot more fun doing an interview when you have a working

knowledge (or inside track, such as I do) of things that often go unspoken.

Tell me how you became a member of Black Earth?

I originally met the guys at a party at their house on Seventh Street. Where a band member introduced me to a girl and our first date was at Movement's Art Gallery. I heard the band playing a song called 'Fuck all y'all' and it blew my mind. After their tumultuous, all-night-long show, because of the after-party, which included Ving getting into a fight on the stage after someone kicked out their bass rig, I walked up to him and told him 'Hey, I am gonna jam with you, dude.' Ving laughed, blew me off, and invited me to drop by and jam some time. I thought I was a great guitarist but it turns out I sucked. (laughs) I had to learn a lot of songs and it was very stressful but I was very excited to be in the band."

Can you tell me about the "Habanero Incident?"

It's Halloween 2001 and Black Earth is having this huge house party with seven bands. I go up to Ving and say 'It's Biacho's birthday, let's go hit him for every year he's been alive.' He agrees, so we track Biacho down, in the kitchen and I start punching him and yelling 'Happy Birthday!' Biacho turns around and punches me, which made me scream like a little girl, and our ex-keyboardist is standing there and starts laughing. Biacho grabs him by his chest and throws him under the sink. Proceeds to hold him there while the guy's yelling 'Ving, get me out of here!' Ving laughs and tells him that he got himself in there, he can get himself out. Biacho then makes a fatal

mistake. In front of at least 100 people, he turns around and yells 'You want some too?' at Ving and pushes him. Seeing the rage in Ving's eyes, after the Biacho touched him, Ving hauls off and knocks the living shit out of Biacho. Minutes go by and Ving just continues to pummel the guy with headshots and knees to the face. Later, Ving would comment that Biacho's head was the hardest he had ever hit and his hands were bruised from the knuckles to his wrist. As this is going on, I walk away, and I start saying 'I guess I gotta get a new band.' I was drunk and laughing. In retrospect, I really regret this incident. Out of all our drunken debauchery, this event would lead to the breakup of the band. Years later, Biacho would claim that when I started giving him his birthday punches, he got Habanero sauce in his eye, and that's what sparked the pandemonium.

So who ended up in the dishwasher?

That would be the keyboardist. (laughs)

Is it true that the drum tracks on your unreleased album, 'Love her, Thrill her, Kill her,' were recorded while the drummer was blacked out on several different substances?

Yeah, it was crazy man. Donnie's wearing rubber goulashes, a pair of shorts, one of those 80s rock shirts that's completely cut up, and he is just all hair. He walks in with virtually no drums and we had to beg, borrow, and steal from everyone we knew, just to get him a kit to record with. Meanwhile, while the producer and everyone are hunting down gear, Donnie's outside doing coke, speed, smoking weed, he has a 40 of Schlitz Malt Liquor in one

hand and a cup of espresso in the other. Ving would later find out there was also heroin thrown in for good measure. Once we got a kit all put together, Donnie came in to lay down the tracks. I was trying to keep up with him and Ving warned me not to try, because Donnie is an old school pro and I was already two sheets. We laid down most of the drum tracks that evening and we thought everything was cool. The next day, Ving gets a call from Donnie asking if he's mad at him. Ving asks Donnie why he'd be mad and Donnie says for fucking up the tracks. Ving tells him he didn't fuck up the tracks and in fact compliments him on the session. Donnie then tells Ving he doesn't remember a single thing about the entire recording session and had no idea how he even made it home that night.

How did you feel upon hearing about Ving's alleged attempted liquor store heist and subsequent overdose?

Yeah, that was a crazy night. We were at Headhunters drinking and Looney kept feeding Ving giant cups of Old Crow. I go to take a piss and while I am gone, Ving splits. I was pretty well loaded, so I just went home. I get a crazy phone call, from our old keyboardist the next day, telling me that at 6 a.m. Looney stopped Ving from robbing a liquor store by their house. Then, once Looney got him home, Ving managed to swallow a bottle of Darvocet, without anyone seeing. Looney noticed Ving puking up all this pink foam and knew he was OD'ing. So he throws Ving in the tub and starts giving him the cold shower routine. Later, Ving comes to, in the tub, is completely coherent with pink foam all over himself, and really thirsty. So he goes out

for electrolytes and wound up getting into a scuffle at the local convenience store. On his return to the house, he asks his roommates what had happened, and he claimed to have no memory beyond the shots of Old Crow. So how did I feel? I was shocked.



Is it true Ving is banned in half of north Austin?

The short answer is, at one time yes. He got into several fights, at several different convenience stores, for several different reasons.

The title of your album 'That's Right, We're Going Ballz Deep' was originally 'Huevos

Diablos,' but it was changed after your 2005 European tour. Can you tell me why?

On that tour, the theme was balls. From the first show in Belgium, where this guy who had just beat up his girlfriend, asked me to kick him in his balls, which I obliged, and all night, I would see this guy. He would say to me, 'My balls, Dave' in an Inspector Clouseau voice, which became the running theme for the entire tour. To where in Leiden, Biacho ran out on stage, attempted to jump on Dikke Dennis, as Peter Pan Speedrock is playing Motörhead's 'Ace of Spades.' Biacho's pants rip and let loose his sack. Drunken debauchery ensued and as we are all loading up into the van, Biacho's passed out in the corner with his legs spread, balls hanging out of his pants, and his gut showing. Unfortunately for him, there were 10 wide-awake, completely fucked up guys in the van with him. Who had nothing better to do on the ride than fuck with him and his sack. What would go from just pouring beer on his balls to the insertion of objects in unmentionables, During which Ving shouts out 'Sharpie!' and like magic, a Sharpie's in his hand. With the finesses of a skilled surgeon, Ving drew a devil's face on Biacho's sack without actually touching any skin. After everyone in the van laughed until they almost puked, the van blows up like paparazzi at the Oscars. Everyone was taking pictures. And from those pictures, we decided to name the next album Huevos Diablos. Sadly though, the record label wasn't comfortable with the angry devil sack, so we decided to use the same picture, but cover the sack, and renamed it in homage to the tour.

What is the difference between '25 grams to go' and '25 grams a go?'

Early on that same tour, we were all handed 25 grams of speed, to share. And if you don't know how much that is, I will tell you right now it was enough to keep 12 guys up for weeks. At one point, if you asked Ving for an autograph, you would also have gotten a beer and a pick full of speed, with it. So the difference is, 25 grams to-go, was at the beginning of the tour. 25 grams a-go, was the aftermath. We knew the fun had come to an end when Ving tripped and broke the headstock of his Gibson guitar. It was like watching a unicorn get its head cut off.

Your coat and keys took an extended tour I am told?

As far as the jacket incident, I really have to give a shout out to Vagabond Village for that. We played in Austria at a place we called The Punk Rock Concentration Camp. It used to be an old war factory and they have a bunch of clubs in there. We played our show with Riot God and this other band called Winnebago Deal and the last thing I really remember is drinking a bunch of Jäger and Rumpel Minze shots. The next day I wake up and Jason's asking me if I am okay. Apparently, I put him up against a wall, by his neck, and he was yelling 'Dave! Come back to me!' Turns out I also took his bed that night. I couldn't find my jacket or my keys in the rooms, so we go back to the bar, and I could see them on the table, in the bar. It's eight in the morning and I couldn't find a way to break in. The bar was locked and we had to leave, we had an 8-hour drive to Berlin, and we just had to leave.

During the ride to Berlin, I couldn't apologize enough to Jason, who's a really nice guy. Ving's driving down the Autobahn like a maniac, I am on a cell phone trying to get a hold of the booking agent, to get my stuff, and Jason's still asking me if I'm okay. So the tour ended in October and my jacket and keys didn't make it home until January, I think.

So that was Austria, what about the Czech Republic?

So, we are in the Czech Republic, en route to Berlin and I am all excited to get a Royal with cheese. We get back on the road and next thing we know, the road just stops. There is all this construction shit but no actual highway. Our GPS is giving weird directions and then we get pulled over by local cops. We ask them for directions and they completely blow us off. Ving comes up with idea to follow the 18-wheelers because they will eventually get us to a major highway. That's what we did. We didn't know the language and we were a little bit freaked out. We are driving through these little villages, in the Czech Republic, and we discussing how it's going to be like 'Hostel.' Coming up with all sorts of homo-erotic-gangster scenarios. Eventually we found our way to highway and Berlin. Unmolested.

Are you currently a member of the Anti-Jason Reece club?

No, but I am a former member. I read on that site that Jason likes to eat cats or drink your beer and I won't have any of that. I wanted to get the bandana they had in their store. But I didn't want to hurt Jason's

feelings, since he was real mad they were making profits off of his face.

And in closing, I have to ask, were any chickens harmed?

No, they were only pleased.

But of course...

Contact Info:

<http://www.myspace.com/blackearth>

http://www.sonicbids.com/epk/epk.aspx?epk_id=120894

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Black-Earth/159290060949>

<http://twitter.com/BlackEarthATx>





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THE TRICK STORE

By Richard C. Walls

Fragment of a lightly fictionized memoir...

I -- Earth

We would gather together and smoke behind the library. We were newly adolescent, huddling, developing our intensifying rituals. It was a good way to get stoned and seemed more grown-up than spinning around in circles.

My black girlfriend was named Belinda. She was a grade ahead of me. She was ahead of me in every way. She was very pretty, tall and rangy, and looked much older than her age. She was the first person I'd met who I knew immediately was smarter than me. We used to have long serious talks at school, and less serious ones when free, riding our bikes around the neighborhood. She was 11 and I was 10.

One day, on my bike alone, riding through our alley, Belinda's dog ran out of her backyard and bit me on the ankle. Blood was drawn. My parents rushed me to the ER for tetanus shots. They were disgruntled. They wanted to talk to Belinda's parents and try to convince them that the vile animal must be chained, at least, if not put down. I wanted to say to Belinda "It's OK. You're dog can bite me anytime it wants. I don't mind. Really." But even at that tender age I felt that such an unambiguous expression of affection might make her uneasy and her discomfort might turn her away from me. I was learning to treat people I was attracted to with a forestalling caution, preferring loneliness to the possibility of hurt feelings, given or received, real or imagined.

Our second grade teacher was a real sexpot. We were all very impressed. It was our first encounter with a grown-up woman who liked to vamp children. Practicing, perhaps. Her scent and her roseate glow were both puzzling and demanding. It was like getting urgent messages that you did not yet know how to read. But she stood out among the ogres and bright, shiny enthusiasts who usually had us in their charge. We felt warmed by her presence, a gallery of 7-year-old pre-sexual sponges soaking up this overflow of adult vitality, watching, waiting.

Me and Kay used to have sex on my father's bed. That needs some explaining. I was living with him at the time, in a flat rich with accumulated disorder and dust. He spent a lot of his day at work so the hovel became our meeting place, so much more civilized than the car that had been our bedroom. Me and Kay were in our teens, late teens, and sexually on track for that particular time and place. We had gotten past the aerobic stage when we raced toward each other like two on-coming trains, and were beginning to marvel at this union of our respective desires. Predictably, my father came home early one time and we had about 30 seconds as he mounted the stairs, time enough to disentangle and haphazardly throw on our clothes and to be found

seated on the couch, unbuttoned, red-faced and panting as he entered the room. "What's up, kids" he said, oblivious to our racing hearts.

It was a good place to party, too, as long as you remembered afterwards to restore things to their original squalor. These soirees usually involved 4 to 8 people and were centered around drinking and smoking dope and usually ended in a car, driving around and generally being obnoxious to anyone we ran into. My job, I felt, was to keep everybody laughing, possibly because of a fear that this collection of nervous centers depressed by alcohol might lead, if we sat and pondered our situation, to some sort of group suicide. A car is a dangerous thing.

Once, in the flat, it was just me and Kay and Charlie and his girlfriend, whom he was to marry the following year, getting stoned and listening to jazz. Charlie and his girl, who I couldn't stand ("Chuckie," I would say, "she's soooo straight...") went into the back room to do their own intensifying rituals on my father's bed. Our bed! But it was OK, it was nice to be alone, to be able to focus on each other even when the bedsprings loudly protested the young lovers industrious ardor.

I put Mingus on the record player, a favorite of Kay's and turned around to see her lounging languidly on the tattered sofa. I walked over and kneeled in front of her as she stretched and spread her legs. Eventually, I slid into her well-oiled heat, surprised at the new depth of warmth she contained. The lack of our usual complete privacy and the fact that we were both mostly dressed excited us more than usual. "I feel like an animal" she said. And she did. But there was more, much more, including something vast and demanding even as it enticed, something hovering just above our heads, something which we both knew we must rush to meet.

II -- Sky

At the end of our street was a series of small buildings that included a TV repair place, a barber shop, and most exotically a tobacconist's, which also sold comic books and magazines. The owner of the latter was an avuncular old man, he must have been 40, who seemed quite content to have us roam around his small store pawing the goods. Because he had a few novelty items on display under the glass by the ancient cash register--sneezing powder, Chinese handcuffs guaranteed to drive you mad--my sister started referring to the place as The Trick Store. Soon all the kids were calling it that, because it seemed natural and right. It was in The Trick Store that I was introduced to the booby-trapped grandeur of horror.

In classic addict fashion, I started with small, seemingly harmless tastes. The comics were pure pleasure, just looking at the covers, holding them in my hands, buying them, inhaling their promise...to the point that actually reading them was almost anti-climactic. I preferred the rote genre exercises to more adventuresome fare, I relished the way they made the point, again and again, that the Earth was still in the process of becoming, and that there was always more to it than could be known. They promised an endless life of discovery.

So, I was a timid thrill-seeker. I had seen a few pre-code comics, passed among my friends, with their dismemberments and gushing blood, torture devices and ghosts who had parts of their

faces eaten away...disturbingly blunt depictions of adult rage. I was more drawn to the mysterious than to violated flesh. It was like a replacement for all the religious feelings that were seeping out of me, never to return.

Denny, who lived next door, was 2 years older than me and so it wouldn't do for him to be seen too often in my company. I was 9 and the imaginary gap between us was maintained by a fierce taboo. Consorting with younger kids was seen as a loathsome deviation from ones sanctioned path forward toward adolescence, adulthood, and death. We all yearned to be older until a certain age was reached at which point we all yearned to be younger. It felt primal, this constant yearning, though, like God, it was one of the races necessary creations. Our great productivity came about because we were primed to be dissatisfied. As one grew older, one was less and less simply here, becoming lost in a web of memory, anticipation and pressing need. Civilizations were build because we had been primed to be used up. And when we had been drained to distraction, we fell into our graves.

Denny was cool in an unaffected way (how affected can an 11-year-old be?), a natural hipster with a cat-like walk, always humming and singing the latest doo-wop and r'n'b songs. A natural surrealist, you could ask him a simple question ("Whatcha doin', Denny?") and he would reply with a snippet of song ("Peanuuuuut.....Peanut Buttah"). Once I was fortunate enough to go to a movie with him, "The Tinger". I was enthralled by the way he ate his buttered popcorn, the way he kissed each fingertip to remove the butter before dabbing them with a small napkin that never seemed to get dirty. He was the first artist I ever saw up-close.

What fueled our brief friendship was the shared perspective of misfits--he too knew that there was much more to things than met the eye. We were, underneath our respective guises, both soulful kids, alert to the currents of emotion that swirled around our centers and wary of the way the world descended upon us and tried to gain entry into our hearts. One summer for a few weeks we got into the habit of walking the three block length of our neighborhood, back and forth, talking all the while. I don't know how this started or why it stopped, but it did. And we talked about everything, life, death and infinity, two baby philosophers making our first little stabs at the higher seriousness.

Sometimes, after our walks, we would lay on the grass on the wide stretch between our two houses and stare into the night sky. I could pick out some obvious landmarks if they were in view--The Big Dipper, Orion's Belt--but mostly it was all blackness and pinpoints of light. The longer you looked the less you became aware of distance, your appreciating gaze giving way to a vertiginous, swooning feeling. As we lay on our backs and stared into space, the Earth became unsteady. Could it hold us down? One had to have faith or one would fall into the beautiful darkness. "This isn't sometimes, this is always" sang Denny. And it was. But there was more, much more, including the feeling of peering into the folds of some inescapable mystery, something vast and frightening, something enticing and hovering, something which we both knew we must one day rush to meet.



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DUMBERT KUMBERT

By Díre McCain

The maliciousness continued when I entered middle school, as I knew it would, except the number of tormentors had multiplied significantly, which you can expect when you move from a fishbowl into a pond. Even though my feelings toward school hadn't changed, I began attending more regularly when I reached seventh grade. My reason was quite simple – I had a new best friend, named Sydney, who'd recently moved to the area. On her first day, I'd volunteered to show her around campus, and before long, we were doing everything together, including things we shouldn't have been doing. I'd finally found a partner in crime, so to speak. You see, up until this point, the few pals I did have were fairly innocent and sensible. I, however, craved action, which typically meant trouble for whoever was with me. While my other girlfriends wanted no part of it, Sydney was game for just about anything. It was on a Sunday afternoon, at the local bowling alley, that I broached the subject of smoking – giving it a whirl, more specifically.

“Do you ever think about trying cigarettes?” I asked casually, as she attempted to beat my Galaga score.

“Sometimes,” she replied, concentrating intently on her game. “Why, do you?”

“All the time.”

“How come you don't then?”

“I just haven't gotten around to it yet.”

One of my all-time favorite answers, by the way.

“Do you want to try them right now?” I asked, glancing over at the unattended vending machine. “Because I can get some from the machine, no one's watching it.”

“I guess so,” she replied hesitantly, “I mean, if you want to.”

That was all I needed to hear. I sauntered on over, dropped five quarters into the slot, and selected a pack of Benson and Hedges Menthol 100s. Sydney was now standing next to me.

“How come you bought the mint ones?” she asked with a confused look on her face.

“They're supposed to taste better,” I said confidently, “and they're easier on the throat too.”

I don't know where the hell I got this idea, but it sounded logical, and sure enough, Sydney agreed.

“Oh,” she said, smiling and nodding, “that makes sense.”

After grabbing a book of matches from the snack bar, we slipped out to the back parking lot, and chain smoked one after another until the pack was half empty. As expected, we both broke into violent coughing fits, which gradually subsided with each subsequent puff.

"Do you feel like ice cream?" I asked, extinguishing cigarette number ten in the sand-top ash receptacle.

"Sure," she replied, pointing toward the bicycle racks with her thumb. "Should we walk or ride our bikes?"

Thrifty Drug Store was on the other side of the shopping center, and when it came to ice cream, I required instant gratification.

"I'm pretty hungry," I said, yawning and scratching my head, "and bikes are faster."

As we pedaled along, Sydney asked a question that seemed reasonable in light of our latest transgression.

"Have you ever been drunk?"

"No," I replied, glancing over at her, "but I've had booze before."

"You have?" she asked, glancing back at me.

"Yeah, my mom used to give me margaritas, before she quit drinking."

"She did?"

"Uh-huh, but they were really small, and barely had any tequila in them."

"Didn't they taste yucky, though?"

"No, they were yummy, actually."

"They were?"

"Yeah, she used to blend strawberries and whipped cream into the mix, like a Julius."

"Mmmmm, that does sound yummy."

After wolfing down triple-scoop cones on the bench outside the store, we returned to the bowling alley parking lot and finished off the cigarettes.

Two weeks and one-hundred coffin nails later, I was officially hooked on nicotine, smoking up to a pack a day. Thankfully, my addiction would be brought to an abrupt and permanent halt by a nasty case of tonsillitis in autumn of 1985, but I'm getting ahead of myself here.

My friendship with Sydney continued to blossom, until the day came when it was put to the ultimate test. It was a mild Sunday afternoon. As was common, I'd been invited over to her place for a swim. She lived in a townhouse complex with a community pool, which we took full advantage of, no matter what the weather.

When I arrived, her father, Dave, answered the door. Out of all my girlfriends' fathers, Dave was easily my favorite. He was considerably less strict, and far more approachable, as though he were a pal instead of a parent. I always felt comfortable in his presence, and the fact that he bore a striking resemblance to Frank Zappa made him even cooler.

"Hey, kiddo," he said, smiling warmly. "Syd's in her bedroom, she's been waiting for you."

"What are you up to?" I asked, walking in and letting the screen door slam behind me.

"Not much," he replied, cracking open the can of beer he was holding, "just enjoying the day off."

"That's cool," I said, following him into the kitchen.

"I'm waiting for Elvira to start," he laughed, placing his beer on the counter, and tearing open a bag of potato chips. "Don't know what the movie is, but I sure get a kick out of her."

"She's pretty cool, isn't she?"

"And easy on the eyes too."

"Got any root beer?" I asked, opening the refrigerator.

"I picked up a six-pack just for you," he said, dumping the chips into a plastic bowl. "Help yourself."

I did just that, then walked out of the kitchen and over to Sydney's bedroom.

"It's me," I yelled, knocking on the door.

"Come on in," she yelled back.

When I entered the room, she was leaning over the bed, placing some items into a tote sack - sunscreen, towels, cassettes, a lighter, etc.

"Do you have smokes?" she asked, looking up at me.

I removed a fresh pack from the right pocket of my zip-up hoodie and tossed it onto the bed.

"Cool," she said, throwing it in with the other paraphernalia. "Are you ready then?"

"Yeah, just let me go pee real quick."

“Okay, I’ll meet you out back,” she said, pointing toward the dresser. “Can you grab the boom box?”

“Yeah, I got it. Be there in a sec.”

We splashed around in the pool for an hour, then gathered up our gear, and headed back to her place for a warm shower. It was now half past four, and a bit chilly by Southern California standards.

As we walked through the front door, Dave called out to us from the kitchen.

“Is that you, girls?”

“Yeah, dad,” Sydney replied.

“Hope you’re hungry, I’m making tuna melts and tomato soup.”

“We’re famished,” I said. “I hope you’re making them with cheddar.”

“Yeah,” Sydney added, “are you, dad?”

“Of course,” he laughed, “you girls have trained me well. None of that grody American shit around here.”

He only swore in front of us when he was drunk. Sydney and I looked at each other, and started to giggle.

“Why don’t you go ahead and get cleaned up, the chow’ll be ready in twenty or less.”

“Thanks, Dad! I love you!”

“Love you too, Pumpkin!”

Being partial to the shower in Sydney’s bathroom, I made a mad dash for it, forcing her to use the master bathroom, which was located upstairs. Yes, it was a bit selfish on my part, but I viewed showering as a sacred act that’s done out of ardent love, not necessity, and the hotter the water, the better. Incidentally, my feelings haven’t changed.

Approximately twenty minutes later I emerged from the fiberglass temple, dried myself off, and wrapped the damp towel around my body, like a sarong. The windowless room was now permeated with blinding steam, a common occurrence due to the temperature and length of my showers. I opened the hatch to release the humid mist, and lo and behold, there was Dave teetering over the threshold, looking slightly disheveled. At first I thought he’d gotten into a scrap with one of the neighbors, until I got a solid whiff of him. His entire body reeked of beer, as though he’d been bathing in it rather than drinking it, and his breath was so pungent I had to turn my face to keep from gagging.

"Hi there," he slurred.

I did not like his countenance, it was terribly unsettling. I was practically naked, and he was eyeing me carnivorously, as though I were a juicy slab of prime rib. I tried to close the door, but he wedged his elongated foot in between it and the jamb, leaving it slightly ajar.

"What are you doing?" I asked, looking up at him.

"Nothing," he replied, leaning forward and smiling. "Just wanted to tell you the chow's ready."

"Okay," I said, hiding behind the door, which was now more than ajar. "Can you move your foot? I'm not decent."

"Now why do you say that?" he asked in a suggestive tone. "You're more than decent."

I was instantly overcome by a wave of acute consternation that ebbed as quickly as it had risen. I knew deep down what he was insinuating, but it was simply too implausible to be true.

"What do you mean?" I asked puzzledly.

Nothing would prepare me for what happened next.

He pushed open the door, and stumbled into the bathroom, nearly knocking me down in the process.

"You're so pretty," he sighed, placing his hand on my face, "I have to touch you."

It was so unimaginably sickening and surreally shocking I couldn't react, verbally or otherwise.

He mistook my temporary paralysis for compliance, and moved in on me.

"Is it okay if I hold you?" he asked, grabbing my arms and pulling me toward him.

Reality kicked in the moment he touched me, as if a switch had been flipped, and I immediately shifted into fight-or-flight mode.

"No, it's not okay!" I yelled, trying vainly to push him away. "Get your hands off me!"

"Shhhh, shhhh," he whispered, "it's okay, I just want to hold you for a little while, promise I won't hurt you."

"No, it's not okay!" I reiterated, still trying to push him away. I continued to shove him, but he wouldn't budge, so I stomped on his foot.

He took a step back, and moved in on me again, only this time, he started tugging at my towel.

"Leave me alone!" I yelled, securing the towel with one hand, and fending him off with the other.

“Shhhh, shhhh,” he said calmly. “You don’t have to be afraid.”

“I’m not afraid!” I growled, hiding behind a facade of courage. “Just get your fucking hands off me!”

I’d never been more frightened, but knew damn well that admission would only lead to defeat. Unfortunately, he saw right through my brave posturing, and started snickering, as though he were mocking me. I wanted to cry, but glared at him instead, hoping it would intimidate him, which it didn’t. In fact, it only seemed to encourage him.

He cupped my warm face in his clammy hands, and gazed into my eyes lecherously, as though I were a runaway junkie prostitute he’d picked up along Beach Boulevard and planned to sodomize.

“You’re different than Syd’s other friends,” he whispered with a wicked smile. “You’re so grown-up and pretty, and you have the body of a woman, not a girl. I’ve always liked you, I thought you knew?”

I looked up at the ceiling.

He let out a deep sigh, then placed his hands on my hips, and continued, “just let me hold you for a little while, and I promise I’ll let you go.”

I impulsively dug my fingernails into his filthy paws as hard as I could.

“Ouch!” he yelped, pulling them away and recoiling. “If I didn’t know better, I’d think you were trying to hurt me!”

“I am!” I screamed. “And if you don’t stop touching me, I’ll fucking kill you!”

He began to cachinnate sinisterly.

I hoped that Sydney would hear the racket, but the whistling sound of the water pipes was echoing through the walls around me, clearly indicating that she was still showering.

Panic set in, and swallowed me whole. I could feel my heart throbbing behind my sternum as my lungs struggled to respire.

Dave sensed that I was terror-stricken, and began shaking his head in what appeared to be amusement. Then he placed his hand under my mandible, gently lifted my chin, and looked deep into my fearful eyes.

“What’s wrong?” he asked, grinning lewdly. “Don’t you like me anymore? I thought you liked me too?”

I closed my eyes, and didn’t respond.

"I've seen the way you look at me. "You're a dirty little nymph. I bet you've already had sex with lots of boys."

I knew exactly what he was implying, and it rattled me to the point of nausea. Even more disturbing, he said it with such conviction I almost believed it myself. I opened my eyes and glared at him, but remained silent, which annoyed him tremendously.

"You think I'm stupid?" he snapped. "I know all about girls like you! You send out all kinds of signals, and then act surprised when a guy picks up on them! Well, I've had it with your little games!"

I was now at a total loss as to what I should do. He was bigger, stronger, and far more aggressive. I feared that he'd seriously harm me if I didn't cooperate. As impossible as it was to accept, I was completely at his mercy. I had no choice but to resign myself to the nightmarish reality that my best friend's father was going to molest me. I wondered how far he would take it. Would he merely fondle me, or brutally rape me? The very thought of the latter possibility nearly caused me to faint.

Then, right at that moment, the following words came spilling out of my quivering mouth: "You'd better let me go or I'll call the cops on you."

Why I didn't think of it sooner, I'll never know, and I suppose it doesn't matter. All that mattered was that it worked. Animals are inherently terrified of cages, and this animal was no exception.

His countenance changed instantly from that of an aggressive predator to that of a spineless coward.

"Oh no, oh no, don't, don't, don't, there's no need to do that," he stammered, stepping aside, "here, here, go ahead, I was only playing around."

I bolted out of the room, and scrambled up the stairs, nearly losing my towel along the way.

Once inside the master bedroom, I slammed the door closed and locked it.

Seconds later, Sydney emerged from the bathroom in her underwear, with her hair turbaned in a towel.

Looking at her, I wondered how I could possibly say what I was about to say. For a moment, I contemplated not saying anything at all. But what if he did it again? Tomorrow, the next day, or a month from now? I also contemplated disappearing until it all blew over, but had a strong suspicion that it would *never* blow over. How on earth could it?

"Your dad just made a pass at me," I blurted out with my head down, too ashamed to look her in the eyes.

“What?” she asked incredulously.

“Your dad just made a pass at me,” I repeated.

“Are you sure?”

“Positive.”

“What did he do?” she asked dubiously, as though she were hoping it was merely a misunderstanding or perhaps a figment of my vivid imagination.

“He tried to pull off my towel,” I said bluntly, “and he...”

She interjected before I could finish, which was fine – elaboration wasn’t necessary, it was already horrific enough.

“Oh my god!” she gasped.

A choking lump swelled up in my throat. I forced down into my gut, and struggled to ignore feelings of fear, anguish, and humiliation that were overrunning my limbic system.

“I have to get out of here,” I mumbled.

Sydney didn’t react.

“I have to get out of here,” I repeated, in a more audible tone.

“I’ll come with you,” she said, after staring ahead in silence for a moment, “lemme comb my hair.”

She began working out the tangles methodically, appearing to be in a daze, while I sat on the edge of her parents’ bed, so overwhelmed with confused anxiety I was trembling. I couldn’t fathom why Dave would have done something so atrocious, and couldn’t help wondering whether it was spur-of-the-moment or premeditated. I also wondered if I *had* tempted him in some way. Had I been too outgoing with him? Maybe he thought I was coming on to him. I’d noticed that he was constantly looking at me, but had assumed that it was perfectly innocent. After all, he was Sydney’s middle-aged father, I was her prepubescent friend – he couldn’t possibly be attracted to me, could he?

“Okay,” Sydney said, interrupting my distressing train of thought, “let’s go.”

We tiptoed down the stairs and into her bedroom, then got dressed, and crept past Dave, who was now snoring on the couch.

In hindsight, it boggles my mind that he was able to fall asleep so easily merely minutes after attempting to molest a child, which to me, indicates a complete lack of conscience. It also makes me wonder whether I was his first and only victim, or if there were others. It hadn’t occurred to

me until now, but perhaps that was why the family had left New England and come to California.

Sydney and I rode our bikes over to the local park, sat down under a sprawling, thick-trunked tree, and began discussing our possible courses of action. As expected, she was mortified, and didn't want anyone to know what her father had done. Whether or not she actually believed it, she'd convinced herself that it was a harmless little misstep, an isolated incident that would never be repeated if we kept our lips buttoned.

"I don't think we should tell anyone!" she pleaded. "He only did it because he was drunk! He won't do it again!"

I sympathized with her deeply, but her dear old dad was obviously a sick fuck who needed therapy, or castration, or perhaps euthanasia.

"But he really scared me!" I argued. "I'm not saying that we should tell the cops, but we have to tell our moms!"

"We can't!" she begged, tugging on my sleeve. "Please!"

"We have to! I don't ever want him touching me like that again! And what if he does it to someone else?"

"He won't!"

"How do you know?"

She buried her face in her hands, and began to weep.

"I don't want my dad to get in trouble!" she sobbed. "And I don't want anyone to know what he did!"

"But it was wrong!" I said, fighting off the tears that were welling up in my eyes. "We have to tell our moms!"

"We can't!" she repeated, over and over again.

It was hands down one of the most stressful, agonizing moments of my entire life. Sydney and I were just little girls, who hadn't even begun to menstruate yet, and here we were arguing about her depraved father's (secret?) pedophilic compulsion. We sat there under that tree for two interminable hours, but never reached an agreement. Sydney was adamantly against the idea of telling anyone, while I was bound and determined to tell as many people as I could, starting with my mother.

As the sun completed its descent, my best friend and I parted ways. She returned home to face god knows what, while I raced back to my dump, now in tears, hoping someone would be there

to console me. My mother was working until eleven, but surely one of my sisters would be around.

By the time I arrived, I was sobbing convulsively. I abandoned my bicycle on the front lawn, rammed the key into the hole, and tore open the door, only to discover an empty house. I was all alone, horribly confused, and scared to death. In the back of my highly imaginative, often paranoid mind, I feared that Dave might show up to finish what he'd started.

I picked up the telephone, and began dialing my mother's work, but Sydney's desperate plea kept reverberating in my spinning head. When I'd left the park I was resolved to tell my mother right away, but was now having second thoughts. After all, it was a major decision to make. Once the cat was out of the bag there was no turning back, and I had to be able to live with whatever ensued. I placed the telephone back on the receiver, then picked it up and called my friend Linda.

Linda was one of my closest pals throughout sixth and seventh grade. She came from a strong, stable Mexican family that was remarkably functional. They even ate dinner together every night, which was unheard of in my household. Her parents were extraordinarily kind, and treated me as though I were their fourth child. They cooked for me, entertained me, bought me gifts, and even took me to see my first live show, at the now-defunct Dancing Waters in San Pedro, which would eventually become an occasional haunt. Their casa was my haven, my home away from home. I'd spend hours, sometimes days there, fantasizing about them adopting me all the while.

The instant I heard Linda's voice I broke down.

"What's wrong?" she asked. "Are you okay?"

I mumbled a couple of incoherent sentences.

"I can't understand what you," she said. "Hold on, I'm gonna get my mom."

"No, wait!" I sobbed. "Let me tell you what happened."

I was having serious doubts about incriminating Dave - all fueled by the possible aftermath - but needed to unload on someone before I cracked. After regaining my composure, I related an explicit, blow-by-blow account, making certain not to omit one detail, no matter how awkward or appalling. I knew Dave could be criminally charged, and possibly end up behind bars. Therefore, I needed to be positive that I hadn't misinterpreted his actions, and if I hadn't, that I wasn't overreacting.

Linda's reaction confirmed what I already knew.

"Oh my god!" she yelled, dropping the phone. "Don't hang up!"

After hearing the story, her mother insisted that I come over at once, and offered to pick me up. I didn't object.

My mother arrived at Linda's door within the hour, took me home, and wasted no time in calling Sydney's mother. After a lengthy telephone conversation, which I was not privy to, my mother agreed to keep the police out of it. Apparently, Sydney's mother begged for leniency, and promised she'd take the appropriate action. She kept her word, but her idea of "appropriate" was quite different from mine.

She kicked her execrable spouse to the curb that night, and filed for separation shortly thereafter, but the "reparative punishment" did nothing to mend the gaping, raw, gangrenous wound that had been left. At the time, and for many months to follow, I felt guilty. Not only about the incident itself, but the break-up as well, and whenever I saw Sydney, I was asphyxiated with self-reproach. Because of me, her family was now a statistic. If I hadn't been there that day, her parents would still be together. I truly believed this, and it ripped out my last scintilla of innocence. To add insult to injury, Linda was forbidden to see me, and I was barred from the one place I found serenity. I'm sure her parents were only trying to protect her, but I was convinced that they blamed me entirely, and was left feeling like a leper, or worse yet, a home-wrecking Lolita.

I've never been one to feel sorry for myself. Some people seem to get off on it, but in my opinion, self-pity is a weak, contemptible emotion, and wallowing in it only impedes the healing process. Having said that, I think it's fair to say that the two-ton load of unsolicited shame and guilt would be an incredibly onerous burden for *any* child to shoulder.

As expected, my friendship with Sydney was irreparably damaged, and within weeks, kaput, as though it had never existed. Linda's parents eventually lifted the ban, but my relationship with their daughter would never be the same. We became increasingly more distant, and ultimately stopped speaking altogether.

This entire ordeal - both the inexcusable crime and torturous aftermath - psychologically mangled me, and I never attempted to heal the wound. I simply poured antiseptic on it, bandaged it up, and ignored it for years. This is the first time I've recounted the nightmare in such painstaking detail, and by doing so, I've realized that I'm still furious with this motherfucker. I've managed to release most of the pain, but cannot, and *will not* shake off the justifiable indignation. Yes, I know that harboring anger can be counterproductive, but it's been my experience that granting someone undeserved absolution has no curative effect whatsoever, and I take great umbrage at being told otherwise. It's easy to be an armchair adviser, and just as easy to have a change of heart once you've been directly or indirectly subjected to whatever it is you're opining about. There is an *immense* difference between forgiving and forgetting. For the most part, I've chosen to forget, simply because this maggot is not worthy of renting space in my overcrowded cerebrum. However, I can say definitively that I will *never* forgive him. With one heinous act, he emotionally maimed half a dozen people, including his three young

children, and caused an incalculable amount of irreversible damage, and in my penal code book, that's a capital offense.

If anyone *ever* did this to my kid, I'd hang him by his balls from a rusty meat hook, skin him alive with a dull butter knife, and pour salt onto his exposed flesh. And Dave, I still have a score to settle with you, you vile piece of shit. Thanks to the miracle of modern technology, I also know where to find you, you fucking pedophile. If you're a religious man, you'd better pray that our paths never cross.

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BEYOND THE CONFINES OF GENRE: THE MANY FACES OF JG THIRLWELL

By Christopher Nosnibor

Photos © Tony Visconti

Photo Editing By Lara Visconti

JG Thirlwell has been making music that has shocked, confounded and challenged listeners for the last thirty years. Under the guise of Foetus – and myriad variations of the moniker – Thirlwell emerged as one of the most innovative and adventurous exponents of the so-called 80s industrial scene. But aside from being an early adopter of tape loops and heavy percussion forged from unconventional sources, JG Thirlwell’s work never really sat entirely comfortably within the ‘industrial’ pigeonhole, and as his career has progressed and the number of side-projects he has engaged in has expanded, his work had proven increasingly difficult to categorise. From the sleazecore cabaret pop of Flesh Volcano (his project with Marc Almond) and the grimy no-wave racket of his releases with Lydia Lunch, to his more recent expansive and truly epic orchestral works, via the grating, brutal grind of the two albums recorded as

Wiseblood with Swans drummer Roli Mossiman, Thirlwell has relentlessly pushed musical boundaries. Shunning the limitations of genre, he has established himself as one of the most vital and visionary forces in contemporary music.

Thirlwell's nonconformity, his steadfast refusal to subscribe to any one style or to play the music industry game by anyone's rules but his own may look to some like complete madness, but it's this self-imposed exile from the mainstream, his deliberate positioning as an outsider, that's afforded him a career of absolute artistic freedom. It's something that's won him a devoted fan-base, and I include myself amongst their ranks.

Working a Saturday job in a second-hand record shop, and having heard of Foetus through the ether, I had already picked up on the fact that they were one of those acts who were considered 'seminal' and 'influential' by the time I was 15. Shortly after, Nine Inch Nails would release *Fixed*, which featured two of the most brain-mangling slabs of noise I had ever heard. At the time, though, I was simply taken by the striking artwork of the copy of *Hole* that hung on the wall with a price tag of £40, and the 12" of 'Wash it all Off' by You've Got Foetus On Your Breath that sat in the rack in the shop's small 'Industrial' section. On borrowing that record, I was blown away, and at work the following Saturday, I dared to sneak a listen to *Hole* while the boss was out.

It's fair to say that record changed my life. It was unlike anything I had heard before - or since. It was a (w)hole other world, drawing on so many other sources and references, while being truly unique, warped, mind-blowing... I was completely unprepared for it. It was 1991: the album was already almost a decade old, and yet sounded like the future. No two ways about it: the record in my hand was a work of genius. Having spent the years since that day seeking out all things Foetus and related - and there's a lot - I can say that I've never once been disappointed. Consequently, I jumped at the opportunity to put to the man all of the questions I'd ever wanted to ask.

That isn't to say I wasn't nervous, but I knew what I had to do: to say what I mean and say it mean. So I fired off the opening salvo of questions I was burning to ask, while wondering if I really did have the balls to ask him about *that* TV appearance...

CN: Since you began with Foetus in 1981, you've produced an immense body of work, and in recent years your rate of output seems to have snowballed. How do you do it? Would you describe yourself as a workaholic?

JGT: I don't think I'm a workaholic - that would trivialize the true workaholics! - but I work consistently every day. A lot of my projects take years to complete and they happen in fits and starts. I'm usually working on several things at once, parallel. I have a hungry legacy to feed. I don't play live that much, I spend a lot of time in the studio composing.

With so much going on – not only in terms of writing and recording and performing music, but also running a record label and all that that entails – what do you do for relaxation (assuming you have any kind of leisure time)?



I look at art, go to concerts and film. NYC has a lot to offer culturally and I like to take advantage of that so I'm out quite a lot.

I read somewhere that you had no conventional musical education. Have you found this to be beneficial, in that you're not tied by the confines of musical convention? Is there any disparity between the music that you envision – so to speak – in your head, and the final output?

I learnt cello and percussion for a while but always had a hard time sight reading. Then later on I taught myself instruments, but usually just enough to record an overdub. I don't have conventional technique or instrumental prowess. I don't have technique to unlearn. I created my own systems of organizing compositions but now I compose using Logic software.

Yes, there can be a disparity in what I hear in my head and the end result, but that comes as a result of hearing new things I didn't expect along the way and following them and where they take the piece. Sometimes I then steer it back. Sometimes it takes a really long time to realize what's in my head, it can be difficult to accomplish effectively.

*It's fair to say that there's a definite and distinct trajectory from **Deaf!!** to **Hide**, via the myriad offshoot projects through the years. How would you describe the development from those first recordings to the present?*

The trajectory is by following my nose and closing doors behind me. To some extent it has been technology driven as I am a recording artist and the tools I use have influenced my sound and processes.

*Many fans (myself included) consider **Hole** to be a landmark album in your career, because it appears to be the first record that really demonstrated the scope of your musical vision. Obviously, you've made many advances, not least of all in technical and compositional terms since then, but how do you see that album in terms of your musical development?*

I would agree that was a turning point. About the time of *Hole* I started to get to the place where what was in my head and what I created were much closer. It marked my move from working in 8 track studios with the minimum of equipment to 24 track studios with decent equipment, and more time to try things out, and more outboard equipment. Also the material gestated for a while before I recorded it after the mad prolificness which preceded it.



One of the things that's always struck me about your music is that it doesn't sound like the work of anyone else: I don't simply mean it's distinctive and that a listener can hear a piece and immediately think 'ah, that's JG Thirlwell' – although generally that is true – but I also mean that it seems to come from a very different musical sphere from other music, so I'm intrigued to know what and who you would consider to be your influences.

I soak in everything really, from things I half hear on the street. Recently I was making a piece for a score and a truck was backing up downstairs, making a beeping sound, which sounded great in the piece so I ended up replicating that. I listen to a lot of soundtracks and classical

music and I guess that soaks into me. Initially I came up with a list of ideas about composing and structure after reading John Cage and applying my own dumb logic to that.

As one of the first artists to really make use of samples and loops, to what extent would you say that technology has shaped your music?

Quite a lot, as the studio has always been my first instrument. But I'm not really a tech head where I have to get the latest gear. I use the weapons I have, and what I'm comfortable with. But I do keep adding and updating.

It seems that now everyone's cottoned on to using computers and samplers and so on, you've stepped away from that and gone a lot more 'organic': would you say that's a fair observation?

For my own engagement as much as anything else. I want to build on what I've done before. It hasn't been a conscious decision; it's been an organic one. For me to work on arrangements and scores for chamber ensembles or large ensembles is like an exciting new technology after working with tape and hard drives. Of course I would love to have my orchestral works realized by an actual orchestra, and to arrange for orchestra.

*From **Gash** onwards, you've been recording simply as Foetus. What was the reason behind calling time on the variant monikers?*

I was over it. I had done it enough, I didn't want to do that forever. I had started other projects with different names like Wiseblood and Steroid Maximus anyway.

Having recorded under so many names – and used so many pseudonyms personally – do you consider the various names and projects to be separate entities, or as different facets of one multi-faceted whole?

A bit of both really, it's inescapably me, but each project has its own discreet intention. Steroid Maximus began as an avenue for "music from a civilization yet to be invented" and an outlet for my cinematic side, as well as to split the instrumental work away from Foetus. It keeps morphing into other things. Manorexia began as a way to explore different, emptier space and let sounds that were sometimes buried and fleeting in my denser arrangements come out and breathe. It has since gone in many different directions, including the live permutation where I have rescored some of the material for chamber ensemble. Parallel to this I have been scoring a lot for the Venture Bros, and composing works for ensembles like Kronos Quartet and Bang On A Can Allstars. All this feeds my work and it grows. Sometimes a piece of music will migrate from one project to another.

I was wanting to ask about the Venture Bros score. In some respects, I'm surprised it didn't happen sooner: there's long been a soundtrack element to your work, and I've spent hours trying to envisage what the film that accompanies the soundtrack might look like.

So how did that particular job come about?

Jackson Publick, the creator and director, had been working on a treatment for the Venture Bros. when a friend of his played him a Steroid Maximus album. For Publick, Steroid was a revelation, and was the soundtrack and muse for what he had in his head for the VBs, which helped him complete the script quickly. When it came time to do the pilot they contacted me about scoring it.

They ended up licensing material from me for the pilot, and when it got picked up by the Cartoon Network they approached me again about scoring the series and I said yes. The first season was slow and difficult as I was over-writing and still finding a musical identity for the show. It's much smoother since, and the greater amount that I write, the more material I have that I can adapt, and the more time I have to concentrate on new pieces. It's been a challenge to work on a series, and it's made me faster and better at what I do. It's great to work with Publick, he has a real affinity for music, and a real excitement for it, and I have a lot of freedom. In some ways the Venture Bros soundtrack has become a place where a lot of my ideas go which may otherwise have surfaced in Steroid Maximus. When I played as Steroid Maximus last year in Brooklyn's Prospect Park, I did some arrangements of Venture Bros. material.

<http://vimeo.com/22130589>

<http://vimeo.com/22132926>

*Arrangements seem to be an increasing feature of your work in recent years: corresponding with the move away from samples, loops and so on toward a more 'organic' sound, and developing into the realm of the soundtrack, or score. There's the film **The Blue Eyes**, that you scored, and also, as you mentioned, the compositions for the Kronos Quartet, who have straddled all musical boundaries far beyond their classical roots having worked with the likes of Philip Glass and Nelly Furtado. How does this sit within the context of your overall musical development, and is it a direction you envisage you will continue to work in, looking to the future? Would you say it's a sign of an increasing maturity, or a case of the opportunities not being there previously?*

I can see more chamber and orchestral composition in my future and I'm moving more into other scoring apart from the Venture Bros. I continue to add to my arsenal and repertoire, it's not that I have abandoned working with samples and electronics in favor of exclusively acoustic instruments. It all happens parallel in my world. I still love making albums, and will as long as I can, but it's important for me to have my work out in many arenas. I'm embarking on my third string quartet for Kronos. They are a pleasure to write for and work with, they are such stellar players. None of my works for them are recorded yet and I like the way they are ephemeral right now.



If you go back to an album like *Nail* (1985) you'll notice there are a lot of symphonic elements, so it's something that's been a through-line of my work but it's only the last ten years I have had my own large ensemble and chamber ensemble live.

In addition to the music itself, you've also produced all of the artwork on your releases: again, is this because you view the music and its presentation holistically and find it easier to convey your own concept yourself, or is there a reluctance to relinquish that sort of control regarding something that is purely your 'baby', as it were?

Yes, that's true but my record sleeves have also organically become my outlet for my visual art ideas. There is a holistic nature when I've created every note and designed the sleeve too. It lets my control freak flag fly. There are several "thru-lines" in my sleeve artwork, and I like the idea of exploring variations, and creating this large entity.

When you look at the artwork sequentially you can see where it began with melding propaganda and pop-art, then I introduced more ideas from commercial packaging. By *Nail* it started to be influenced by itself and I started to explore working with Japanese typography a lot. In recent years I have been playing with introducing my photography married with graphic elements (*Damp*) and op-art. Many of the sleeves are in a red, white and black color palette. When I threw yellow into the mix with *Nail*, that was a big deal for me! I have allowed myself to use other colors with the offshoot and satellite albums, but now I have pulled it back to the red white and black for *Foetus*, as I feel there is still so much to do with that color palette, and it's so impactful. It's also distinctively mine. I hope to collect the artwork in a book in the future.

That would be pretty cool. Yes, the artwork, particularly for the Foetus releases, has always been extremely striking, and it's apparent that they draw on and play with a range of different reference points that have evolved to incorporate different elements with each release. Your lyrics, too, have often appropriated and paraphrased from a huge range of courses, from pop culture to, well, more or less whatever you care to name. This cultural sampling, on the face of it, appears to be the very epitome of postmodernism: do you see your output as such, or is postmodernism just another label in much the same way musical genre categorisations are?

I think the term "postmodernism" has been thoroughly defused by overuse and misuse. Similarly "avant garde" is co-opted by mainstream media and ascribed to things like Lady Gaga, who couldn't be more conventional. I guess the prefix "post" has been useful to ascribe a reference point without putting someone in a category - post-everything.

There's no conscious reason that cultural reference points appear in my words, I don't know why although sometimes when I do them it sometimes adds a barb or a weird anchor point I suppose, something anachronistic or maybe it amuses me. For example in the track I did with Melvins, "Mine is no Disgrace", I refer to listening to that Yes song, "Yours Is No Disgrace." The words came out when I was writing it, it fit, and just happens to be a kinda skewed cultural

reference. But I can't imagine it any other way, it's a punchline.

Lady Gaga's an interesting example, I think, in that she seems to represent everything that's wrong with postmodernism, or what's now labelled postmodern: (questionable) style over (a shameful lack of) substance. There's no real sense of 'play' or cultural awareness there. She probably wouldn't even know who Yes were. But one positive thing about postmodernism – as I read it, anyway – is that it allows artists to cross media without it being seen as problematic, whereas before, one has to be either a writer, a musician, a painter, graphic artist or whatever. One thing you've done that really crosses boundaries is the 'sound installation', and you're participating in freq out in February of next year. Could you explain how you create a 'sound installation', and what kind of audience response are you aiming for in taking music into a gallery environment?

I encountered Lady Gaga when I performed at the Gavin Friday 50th birthday concert a few years ago, she performed with just piano and voice. She was a great entertainer and had the audience rapt, winning over many. Unfortunately her pop music sounds very generic to me and her style-thing seems very Leigh Bowery to me.

Some of the considerations in sound installation is the architectural space, time constraint and amplification of the sound, how it may resonate etc. I'm not really trying to elicit an audience response, the listener can respond however they like. Some people poke their head into an installation for few seconds whereas others may lay on the ground and experience it for hours. Some of my pieces have used visuals and others not. I've been working on some pieces to accompany visuals by Norwegian artist [Anne Senstad](#) of late. I like the idea of creating a work that the listener has to be present for, and something that is immersive. My solo installations have been four channel works and that led me to want to make the latest Manorexia album [Dinoflagellate Blooms](#) in surround. I released it as a two disc package with a stereo CD and a DVD with the album in 5.1 surround. Two of the pieces on that album began life as installation works.

On top of that I am a member of a sound art collective called [freq_out](#). We create a sound installation on site, comprised of 12 individual sound works each utilizing a specific frequency range and amplified to act as a single, generative sound-space. It's curated by [Carl Michael Von Hausswolf](#), and the other artists include [Jacob Kirkegaard](#), [Mike Harding](#), [Jana Winderen](#), [Finnbogi Pétursson](#), [Kent Tankred](#), [Franz Pomassl](#), [Maia Urstad](#), [Brandon Labelle](#), [Permagnus Lindborg](#), Petteri Nisunen and [Tommi Grönlund](#). We have made freq_out actions in Berlin, Paris, Chiang Mai, Kortrijk, Budapest, Copenhagen and Oslo. The next will take place in Stockholm in February.

Although there is a discernible element of 'artifice' in the incorporation of cultural references in your lyrics, your songs do also present a substantial emotional range – something I don't think you really get a great deal of credit for. Obviously, I wouldn't presume to equate the artist with the speaker, but to what extent do you draw on experience and autobiography for your lyrical content?

I draw on personal experience a great deal. The best compliments I get are when someone tells me they are moved by my work. Sometimes the people I'm talking about in a song are composites, and sometimes the voice I'm speaking from is a character that I'm assuming to make a point - often the opposite of my viewpoint. My lyrics afford me an outlet to express myself in ways I often can't in "real life", and that's cathartic.

Remaining with the idea of complete artistic control, you began by releasing your music on your own Self Immolation Records, and after (in some instances very) brief periods with Some Bizarre, Sony and Big Cat, you're doing it all yourself again on Ectopic Ents. Is this purely a matter of choice?

I started Self Immolation in 1980, with the first release on Jan 1 1981. I self released the first 3 7" singles, two LPs and a 12" between in 1981-82, which were independently distributed. Then I hooked up with Some Bizarre, but kept the Self Immolation imprint on my records. Over the years I have been signed with or licensed to a bunch of other labels, and have got the rights back to a lot of my material (but not the Some Bizarre stuff). Around 1990 or so I established Ectopic Ents as my corporate entity and imprint, and started giving my releases Ect Ents catalog numbers.



I started self releasing again on Ectopic Ents in the early 2000's with Manorexia and distributing exclusively via mail-order thru my website to see how that would go. I found that could work as a model financially. I now have worldwide digital distribution thru Virtual, and release a lot of my material thru Ectopic, with limited retail distro, tho some material still comes out thru other labels, e.g. the Venture Bros soundtrack album came out on Williams Street, the Cartoon Network's label; and John Zorn's label Tzadik released the Manorexia chamber album.

How would you describe your relationship with the music industry, and how do you see it as having changed during the course of the last 30 years?

I am a record label and am part of the record industry in that I use that infrastructure, tho I primarily self distribute. I've been thru many sides of the music biz, from working in retail and distribution for Virgin records, to having my own label, to being on a major label. With the



advent of the internet, information is much quicker to get out, but illegal downloading has hurt my sales significantly and makes it difficult to function, and to finance one's own recordings and life. I don't make a lot of revenue from playing live, never have. Once all the musicians and expenses are paid there's not much left. I choose not to use streaming services cos the money sucks.

It's interesting to see how bands are operating in different ways: the Internet means acts can reach a global audience without touring, but how to monetize that seems to be becoming increasingly difficult. As far as I can tell, very few bands make money from playing live, and not many make that much – certainly not a living wage – from music sales, either, and are reliant on merch. Was there an element of that in the series of limited edition website-exclusive T-shirts you recently launched?

I'd wanted to do the international series of shirts for a while, but it does make sense to keep coming up with new things for my shoppe, which keeps it breathing. The shirt series also gives me an avenue to work in different media and do different things with design. They're not big money makers, I let them sell out quickly as it's a drag to have inventory of them.

There have, of course, been numerous collaborations with other artists, notably Stinkfist with Lydia Lunch; Wiseblood with Roli Mossiman; Flesh Volcano with Marc Almond, and more recently, Baby Zizane with Jim Coleman and the Hydroze Plus 10" with Fred Bigot. What do collaborations give you that working alone doesn't?

There is the fact that someone else is there, it's impetus for a project to get finished! It can be an outlet for ideas that might not otherwise come up in my other projects. Lydia was very easy to work with, and would trust me with the course of our projects pretty much.

Wiseblood started with the intention of four drummers plus vocals. The first drummer I approached was Roli, who was drumming with Swans at the time. He had been setting up a small studio and we started working together and it took a different direction... for the first show it was under the name Foetus Flesh but I changed it so as to keep the Foetus project purely JGT. There was a guideline to what Wiseblood was about – sick, violent and macho, a NYC band made by two non-native New Yorkers. Working with Marc on that project was easy too – I think we talked about a few ideas in advance but I pretty much went into the studio, made tracks and then he came and sang on them. He always worked quite quickly, I always remember him writing lyrics in the studio on his sessions.

Baby Zizanie came about cos I wanted a live vehicle which used electronics but could have an improvisational nature, with live visuals. We had a third member who did visuals each time and travelled with us. It was really about transitioning and segueing, the journey, although I don't think it really quite achieved its potential.

Fred Bigot asked me about doing vocals on some tracks and that turned onto Hydroze Plus. We started it in Berlin around 2005, and recorded a bunch of things, but it was a bit uptempo and rock for me, till we struck on the track "Calm Calm", and that became a bit of a template of what HP could be.

With Optical Sound releasing it, they were open to adventurous packaging and that's where the anatomical face cross section artwork came in. It took a long time to perfect the design and was expensive and complex to manufacture but I think well worth it.

You've remixed an incredible amount of stuff, from EMF to The Cult. How did you get into remixing, and is it something you enjoy?

I think it started with remixes EMF and Prong, which were quite successful, and blossomed from there. Prong even started playing my remix arrangement live! It was a natural progression since I was known for being a studio guy, and also producing other artists.



I do enjoy making remixes and still do a couple a year. My remix work has evolved but each time it's a fresh challenge... and each time the amount of source material I use varies.

*The remixes you did for NIN on the **Fixed** EP really stood out: the original tracks were brutal, but those remixes really fucked with the material and pushed it to the absolute limits. What was the idea behind that, and do you think they helped to raise your profile significantly?*

It's hard to quantify how much that raised my profile but I have heard in retrospect people say that was the first time they'd heard of me. Trent won a Grammy for the original version of "Wish", the track I remixed. The track "FistFuck", which was another take on "Wish", was actually a kind of "extra" I put together as an experiment - most of the audio content came from taking segments of the remix that I had just done and locking them into an Eventide H3000 harmonizer, then manipulating them, recording the result and editing it together. Over the top of it I layered a segment of the Timothy Leary *Turn on Tune In Drop Out* album, which I was digging at the time, so presumably they got clearance for that. Trent dug it and put it on the EP. It since has been placed in a bunch of movie scores.

On the main remix of "Wish", I don't know that there was an idea behind it beyond taking the material and putting my stamp on it, putting it thru the wringer and turning it into another beast, but with the meat of the song still there (sometimes). Doing what I do. Sometimes I don't use the meat of the song in a remix.

On his subsequent EP I remixed the track "Mr Self Destruct" - when I was working on it I kept imagining the Bowie line "Falls wanking to the floor" (from the track "Time" on *Aladdin Sane*) popping into it, and I sent the tape-op out to get the track... within a year or so they were touring together and I always wondered whether that sample had something to do with it!

*Limb gathered a slew of rarities, outtakes and offcuts spanning 1980-1983 - and it's a lot of material on there - while **Damp** pulls together comparable recordings from between 2003 and 2006. I'm aware of a few other unreleased tracks, such as 'More Meat Per Inch', but is all this just the tip of the iceberg? How much more material is there lurking in the archive - and can we expect to hear any of it in the future - and whatever became of the projected **Foetus on the Beach** triple LP?*

There is another satellite album in the works, of material I recorded around the time of **HIDE** and other stuff. Also another anthology which will collect all the early singles and radio sessions, including 'More Meat Per Inch', with probably with a DVD of live material in some kind of deluxe packaging.

I'll possibly be releasing a soundtrack album of the film I just scored *The Blue Eyes* and I've started toying with the idea of a new Steroid Maximus album.

When I was projecting the release date of *Foetus On The Beach* it was always for several years hence (the title was a riff on 'Einstein On The Beach'). It was going to be a post-apocalyptic musical but then I got scooped by other post-apocalyptic efforts...!

Finally, I have to ask: is a woman's place still on your face (as you told Muriel Gray)?

Ugh, YouTube - you can run but you can't hide.

The wonderful and frightening world of JG Thirlwell can be explored at:

<http://www.foetus.org>





DEATH WISH CHAMELEON XIII

By Cricket Corleone

Photos © Richard A. Meade

The sound of Evaline's heels are heard outside the window and down below on the sidewalk, as the clack slowly grows further and further away. She is gone, into the shadows where the streetlights in darkness cannot touch her.

In through the window of Dustin's hotel room goes a faint breeze through white drapes to a flutter and die.

The room is torn to pieces. Shards of glass strewn about. Bedside table lying on its belly like a wounded soldier face down in the mud.

With her back faced to the hotel door, Dustin is kneeling down over the dirtied hotel carpet, a gun in her hand, and a look on her face like there is no one there. No one is home.

A few weeks had passed since that night that Evaline came to the hotel room and had a romp with "Eli" and the young Spanish waiter. Echoing in the back of Dustin's mind now, is how foolish she was to think she had it all in the bag and how badly it had all backfired on her. Her plan had failed.



Dustin had managed to make Evaline's husband play right into her hands. So much so, she had even managed to convince this stuffy, cheating, uptight rich man that he had enjoyed being sodomized one night out on the town with "Eli" while under the influence of certain illegal substances and a whole lot of alcohol while at the seedy club they attended that night. The blurry remembrance and his bleeding ass, fragments in his mind of horrible things that happened to him while he was fucked up. If this had gotten out, he would have been ruined. That is to say, his reputation, which was everything to a man like Dane.

And when Dustin decided now was the time to play along and become one of Evaline's "friends" and meet her and her hubby for a luncheon a few days later, everyone seemed very comfortable... Everyone, but Dane. For him, the shit had hit the fan. But he sat confused when Dustin played like she had never met him before.

The friendship between "Eli" and Evaline grew closer, and the sex more and more regular. Dustin started to feel that tinge that creeps up on her from time to time, like someone had laid their greasy hands over the most precious parts of her body and it was seeping into her soul. But the hands were her own. She started to feel uncomfortable with the whole scenario.







In her insecurity and avoidance of this growing closeness, Dustin got a little sloppy. In short, she got caught.

Evaline had showed up to "Eli's" hotel room in order to surprise her. While Dustin was in the shower, she left the door unlocked. Evaline came in, stripped off her clothing and waited on the bed.

While she waited, she started to notice some... strange things. An I.D. On the side-table with "Eli's" real name. Evaline's husband's business card and photos of their last romp together.

When Dustin came out of the bathroom she was taken aback by a furious and confused Evaline, holding the gun that Dustin had purchased as part of her plan to its keepers head.

There were no shots fired.

Now here, Dustin sits completely down onto the hotel floor, the broken glass crunching below her ass and thighs. Somehow in her desperation to have it all be done with, that feeling of "FINALLY" reaching its point of climax, Evaline decided not to shoot.

Evaline standing with the gun still pointed at Dustin backs up slowly, "You are one sick fucker. But you know what, it doesn't matter. I don't know what your plan was here, but whatever it is it stops now."

Dustin lifts her face to the gun and takes a step forward, "I know it does. You are right, I am sick. I need to be stopped. You can do it... you can do it."



Evaline squints and her head twitches to one side a little before going straight again. She takes a breath and smiles a little, "I've decided to leave my husband. I suppose in some weird fucked up way I have you to thank for that... whoever you really are? I actually started to trust you." She scoffs in disgust.

Dustin puts her hands to her sides and closes her eyes like she is about to take that final rest after a long marathon, "Do it," she whispers out loud.

A moment passes, with her eyes closed the room seems like just a fuzzy white light through her lids. She waits in meditation.

A sound interrupts, but it's not the sound of a 'bang.' Dustin opens her eyes and looks to the bed behind her.



There lays the gun. She turns to look over toward Evaline as her face rises in confusion.

Evaline smiles and nods her head knowingly, "Do it yourself."

She coldly turns and opens the hotel door, leaving the coffin of that room behind her.

And the only sound she hears as she walks away is the thrashing that ensued in her absence.

A cut on the leg stings as Dustin stands up from the floor.

Walking to a nearby mirror, with a split right down the middle, she stares into her reflection.

On one side is the face of Dustin, dead to the world, on the other side is the face of Greta. She puts the gun to the side of Dustin's head and holds it there a moment. When she fails to pull the trigger like so many times in the past, she opens her eyes as a single tear runs down from Greta's eye. Dustin says, "It's time to go."

The gun is placed back onto the bed as Dustin swings a black duffel bag up next to it. She begins to pack her things, once again.

As she boards the quickest bus at the station out of this city, she sees a beautifully dressed street performer with long blonde hair and beautiful piercing eyes looking right at her. In her black tutu and holding two round juggling balls that gleam off a streetlamp, the woman seems to wave as if

from another planet entirely, removed from the one they are currently on.

The sight of the bus driver roughly pulling and pushing the gearshift, his hand the only thing Dustin sees of him... a silver skull a top a ring on his middle finger, looking right into their pathway.

Dustin leaves to the next town. To the next city. To the next place. Hopelessly, endlessly, but without a doubt in the same direction as the death wish pulls. Wherever that may lead. And to whomever else she might become to get there.

Hair and Makeup: Monica Gabriela

mghairmakeup@gmail.com

Best Boy: Edward Bucciarelli



THE WAY THE TRUTH THE LIFE

By Melissa Mann

night drips off the bus shelter i can hear it counting down on my hood two women walk past with seethrough eyes they can tell im a loser from the shape of my chair the colour of my skin i toast them with a can of special brew and drink whats left of the other under the bench a raincoloured pigeon wings heavy with pavement i wheel forward cans wedged between my excuseforlegs the bird eyes me warily wavering on its stumps fuckin pigeon i throw a can at it watch it jump limp turn beer pisstrickles across the pavement into the road i reach for another in the plastic bag hanging off my chair special occasion whenever i decide to do something destructive i celebrate with beer lots of beer ive decided to have a one night stand tonight im going to fuck with myself and not give a shit about the consequences i watch the traffic streaming down forest road like end credits inside my chair theres a car i can feel it inside my body a need to fall a need to fall and not be caught by anything not even the ground fuck my life fuck having a life so full of itself it makes me wheel it round all day im at the pedestrian crossing now headlights strobing through the railings like saturday night in my fists two empties i toss them in the air one after the other a test if i can juggle two special brews for more than 30 seconds ive not had enough they roll into the road ready time to carpe the crap out of the diem theres a pause in the traffic i fill it own it im driving up the middle of the road now the middle of the road where the sun shines and the rain dont fall wheels humming in my hands traffic thrumming in my ears potholes driving dump trucks of bricks through my body this chair wants to crash i can feel it a crash like a hug with broken arms car horn i ignore it keep going to my left bus shelterers line up their eyes watching my drivepast i wave regally i am fearless death a tiny pathetic thing compared with the vast aliveness of this here this now a car brows the hill a speeding car i smile imagining an army of paramedics picking bits of me off the road when you die they say you go back to where you came from i hope thats true i want to meet my maker ive got things to say things i want to tell him like who the fuck does he think he is taking the piss or what yeah fuck god whats he ever done for me im my own god now i am the way the truth and the life car horn tyres skidding two moons stealing my eyes i wait to feel something anything everything nothing the driver peers at me through the windscreen the rhyming sweep of the wipers trying to clean the wrong of me from her eyes i stare back my need a round hole her pity a square peg neither moves both of us fixed to the road by the weight of our waiting shes shouting at me now the movement of her mouth the shape of silence incensed silence i turn wheel myself back onto the pavement back into the rain the sound like wet static in my ears i look at the road my chair my legs and think about what might have been in the distance the off licence its neon light a fleeting fleck of oblivion

INTO THE URBAN SKY

Bart Powers Interviewed By Lana Gentry

There's so little art seen anymore which comes from that sequestered place of the outside world. So few will trade influence and trend for what truly inspires them. Self taught Chicago painter Bart Powers brings pure images of nostalgia, urban life and commanding mechanical forms to his magical paintings, while discussing the humbling excitement of how it came to be that he would ultimately show in Switzerland beside the likes of iconic artist HR Giger.

"I was amazed as a boy as so much life went on in a canal by a steel mill. Everything seemed so alive. The canals were arteries feeding in and out of the mill. The mill being the heart, always fed by the barges and tugs going in and out. So amazing were the cranes alongside the trains, stoking huge furnaces that never were extinguished. A motion of machines that worked 24/7... never breaking, while throwing smoke and smells of all sorts into the air."

~ Bart Powers

Tell me about your fascination with cars.

I started as a kid being fascinated with cars. I was always drawn to them like iron to a magnet. When I was really young, there was a place in Chicago called 'Little Joe's'. He had really old cars there. It was around 1966 and he also had a museum on the lot with Model Ts and other things. He had lots of cars on the lot they were mostly around 60 bucks. Used cars were really dirt cheap in the 50s and 60s. Because of the climate, there was a real rebellion against all things old during this era. I would go there and look at the cars. I would sit in them, take in the smell, the feel, the look and so on. It was

absolutely intoxicating for me. For some reason, the cars that appealed to me were cars from the mid fifties... the chrome, girth, and shape made them all like a big toys you could climb into. This was in the south side of Chicago where I grew up. Cars were my obsession. I even built model cars as a kid. Unfortunately my dad didn't like the smell of paint, so I would build them, but not paint them. I had a sea of white model cars in my room. They were less than a buck when I was a kid so I would get them at dime stores. That's when it all started for me. The fascination just only seemed to grow.



Ghost of Norma Desmond - Oil On Canvas 24 x 36

There's something haunting about the way you render cars. Expound a bit more about your feelings on the matter.

A lot of it comes from movies. Gloria Swanson played Norma Desmond. I remember the limousine, a high end Italian luxury car. I really got into thinking about haunted cars, thinking about their history. I had seen Stephen King's *Christine* which I think was based on an episode of *The Twilight Zone*. Cars are like anything else that has a history. Their owners rub off on them. I think of the people who existed before in terms of their relationships to these cars and the idea of how they may haunt them in a sense.

What role do you think isolation plays in the works of creative outsiders like yourself?

It does definitely play a role for me because you have to find a way to engage your mind when you are isolated. I remember going to the Brooklyn Zoo long ago. There was this lion who would come out of its den about five feet and then it would go back in... then come out 6 or so feet and go walk and return to its den once more. I'd then see it come out again to walk a couple of more extra feet and go back into the den until it completed a circle. I would think about this, how the lion was an isolated mammal. Because of its isolation, it had no choice but to engage itself. No matter the circumstance or depth of the isolation, a living being has to engage itself. If you put any living organism in an isolated environment it will learn to survive. It will find a psychological escape. It was the same for me. It started with me scribbling and doodling with a disposable pen. With art, time passes very quickly. Every artist and especially those in isolation are searching somehow for a place to call home, a place where they have purpose. In isolation, that home is your art, your purpose.

I've read that you've suffered a lot depression as a result of being bipolar. Are you able to access your creative side when you are suffering?



Final Houses - Oil On Canvas 24 x 30

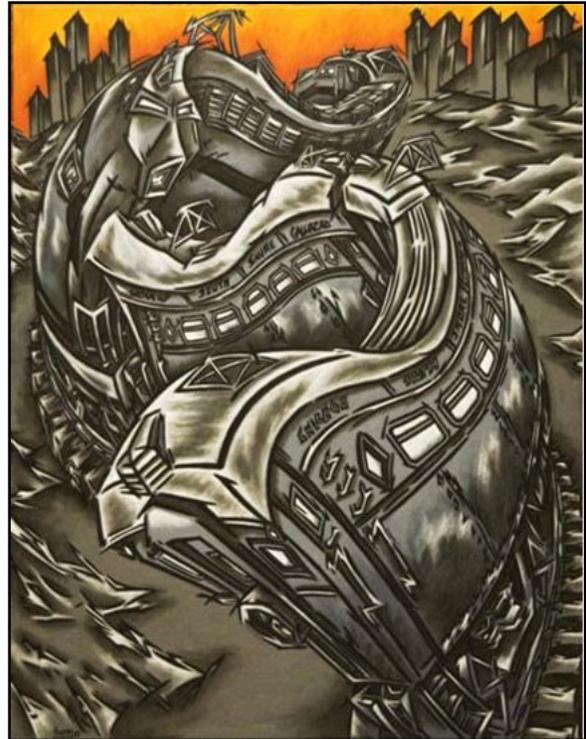
Sometimes yes... sometimes no. Sometimes I cannot accept the fact that I can't work at all. It's like a car spinning its wheels to get out of a ditch. In the midst of a depression... I never know. Once you are depressed, you are so debilitated you really can't do anything. With me it goes in cycles... budding, flowering, then withering. It is a distinct cycle. When I'm completely tapped out and going into a real manic depressive spell, I really cannot do anything. There's no way I could work while in the worst of it. I can hardly function at all.

As an outsider, what do you find most difficult about the art world today?

I don't like that everyone is pigeonholed. Everything is thought of in terms of how to market. I understand from the marketing end as far as agents, collectors and galleries go, that some of this has to be, but once you get pigeonholed you are then expected to

follow this narrow sort of protocol. I learned to draw by copying comic books. My work has an illustrated comic book feel and I am proud of that. In regards to marketing though, some people for instance might think my work is too illustrated to be outsider work, while others might think it's too outsider-ish to work as illustration. So one is left in this nether zone. It's a purgatory, leaving you hard to categorize with dealers or collectors. You fall between the cracks. I wish my work or anyone's work could just be accepted as it is without having to belong to a certain category. You can't attach yourself to a category if you don't neatly fit into one. Categories are crucial when it comes to marketing. Outsider once meant self taught or on the outside. Now it is a category. Everything has to fit into a norm so to speak.

I once saw this side show banner in my youth that was emotionally incapacitating. On the banner/canvas was the freak, or different girl in the center, but around her were two conventionally beautiful normal girls passing a beach ball. The banner was showing the different girl as being excluded and flanked by what society thought was beautiful. What I felt was really crippling, beyond a normal sense of compassion. I genuinely saw her as being just as beautiful as the other girls. In fact she was the one who was actually beautiful, more beautiful to me. It reminds me of mental illness and art. What's lovely to one may not work for another. Who knows if mental illness would be seen differently in a different kind of world. Maybe one day people like myself who have effectively existed in isolation will be called for their skills to participate in space programs or some other situation. Beauty and value are gauged in such narrow ways. This is true with people and it is also true with regard to art.



Face Off - Oil On Canvas 24 x 36

What was it like to hang beside HR Giger in the recent Terminus show in Switzerland?

First of all nothing like that would have happened to me had I not known Les Barany, Giger's agent. When I first met Les, it was through Henry Boxer of the Henry Boxer Gallery. Henry Boxer is another really wonderful man. Les then included my work in his show 'Carnivora', spawned from the book he had just published prior to meeting me, also titled *Carnivora*. It was about dark car art. To be in the company of those artists in that show was a mind boggling experience, and then additionally, to have people overseas view my work was also amazing. Being in the show 'Terminus' in Switzerland, was so validating, beyond words. It meant everything to me. Despite negative stereotypes about people like myself who are truly different, it left me thinking that maybe I was doing something right after all. Someone thought my work had value...some worth. To answer the



Sweet Sound of the Blues - Oil On Canvas 24 x 36

question directly, it was wonderful to show in 'Terminus' and I have Les to thank for that. I'm grateful to get wall space anywhere... but this was just over the top. It's because of men like Henry Boxer and Les Barany that people like me can be appreciated publicly. Showing beside HR Giger was obviously a real honor.



Twenty Miles out of Natches - Oil On Canvas 24 x 36

Is there something specific in your history that links you to the subject urban landscapes which recur in your work?

First of all I used to love to ride in the car and look out the window. I almost pity kids who watch television and play games in cars today. I used to ride to my grandmother's with my mother and I would look out the window excitedly. I was always attracted to industrial landscapes. Dad was a steel worker and I would ride by

and hear these factories... these pounding sounds. My instinct was to become frightened, but I was drawn to it none the less. I always admired the buildings, exposed rebar wiring, slabs of concrete and so on. These were great images. I remember seeing the wrecking balls and I remember how that appealed to me and really stuck with me.

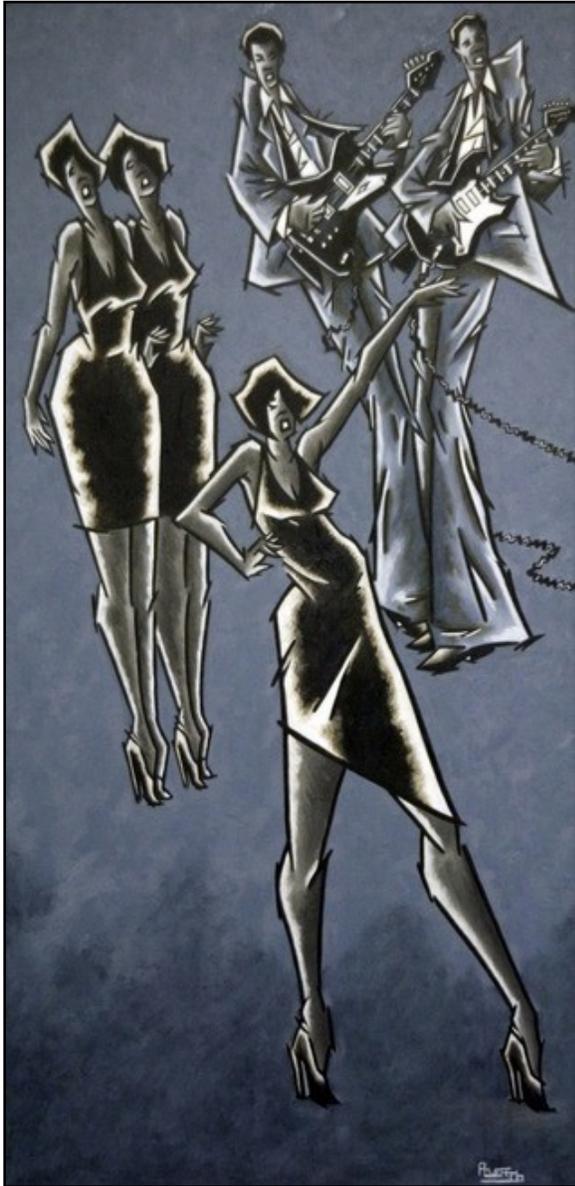
I see music and especially blues, finds its way into your work a lot. Do you listen to the blues when you paint?

I have always loved the blues. I love Robert Johnson and a lot of the old stuff. Bessie Smith is a favorite, as are Willie Dickson and Muddy Waters. Yes I do listen to the blues when I paint it. I love good narrative music because it's some of the best there is. It's no different than painting in how it tells stories. The moods really carry over into my work and really inspire me greatly.

Also focused on music is your piece 'R&B Plus 3'. You really get a sense of an era gone by here.

The Painting 'R And B Plus 3' is a work that I did to pay tribute to the great girl groups of the 60s. The entire Motown era was an art form of the highest degree. From the stellar songs written to the appearances on television variety shows of the 60s and early 70s. The songs were so beautifully performed and were written about the love, breakups, makeups along with the ups and downs of life. Triumph and tragedy. When the songs were performed on variety shows a backdrop of scenery and costumes were done to encapsulate the song. It was art performance. A type of performance that is now extinct. It found its roots in Vaudeville. When you see it today in film clips, it has such a weird haunting beautiful feel. Like dressing the performers up as living Barbies and performing in a department store window. The difference was, the songs had

such deep themes and dealt with subjects never before discussed in the context of songwriting. There was a dark undercurrent. It was such a special time in music. Girl groups were restricted in many ways and placed into a genre with little flexibility, but they pushed the envelope within the parameters in which they were locked.



R And B Plus 3 – Oil On Canvas 24 x 36

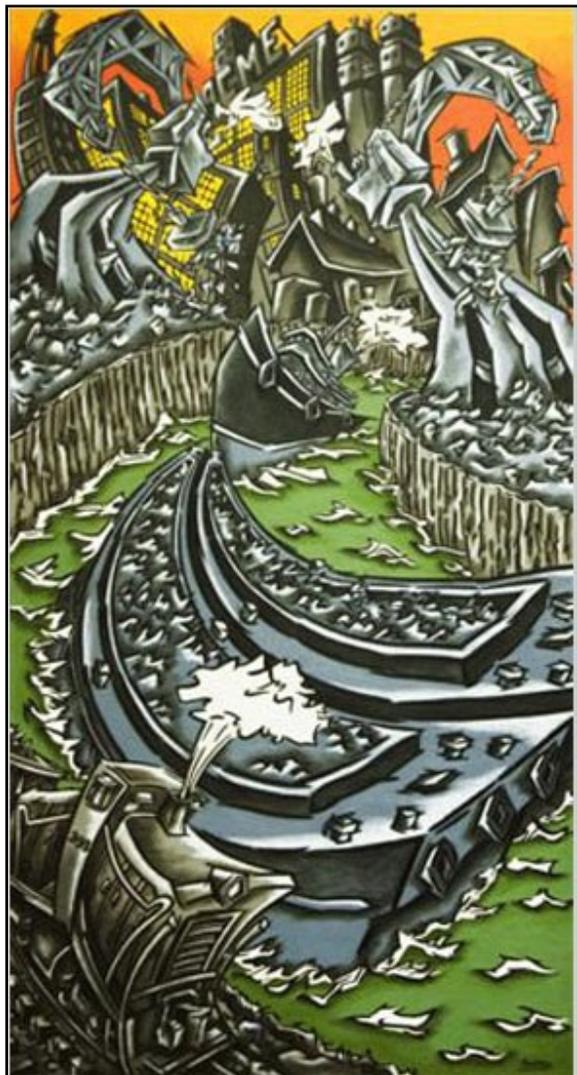
I understand you work with troubled teens. What is this like?

There's a gym that I go to. A guy I know who worked the night shift and his mother started this thing in Indiana. Porter County and Lake County in Haven Indiana have some of the highest narcotic use in the United States per capita. In Chesterton Indiana, Frontline Foundations is a faith based, shoe string donation organization.

www.frontlinefoundations.com

The founders work full time and are some of the most selfless people you will ever meet. They noticed that a lot of the kids who came in had a lot of inclination towards the arts, all arts. They needed an art workshop on Tuesday nights and they asked if I would do it. I'm not trained obviously. We talked, they offered it and I told them I would love to do it. I decided I would and began with trying to pull on the strengths of whatever the natural ability was of any particular child. Some love tattoo art, some love comics, and some even love abstract work. I bring them books, talk, and connect with them. I am fortunate enough to work with some of the most talented people I've ever met. We try to make the shop a place where they can connect with what they love. It's hard to build a life back. We provide a place of escape where they can get lost in the work. There are few places where they have true freedom in their lives. This place is exempt from court mandates, control, and offers complete freedom with whatever they want to create. It's a wonderful organization. What I do is just a small part. These people work all week.

Tell me about the painting 'Canal' or is it 'Major Artery'?



Major Artery - Oil On Canvas 24 x 36

The work you referred to as 'Canal' is called 'Major Artery'. I was amazed as a boy, as so much life was spent in a canal by a steel mill. Everything seemed so alive. The canals were arteries feeding in and out of the mill. The mill being the heart, always fed by the barges and tugs going in and out. So amazing were the cranes alongside the trains, stoking huge furnaces that never were extinguished. A motion of machines that worked 24/7... never breaking, while

throwing smoke and smells of all sorts into the air. The skies would take on weird colors of oranges, pinks and purples. All this inorganic metal took on the look and feel of being organic. They were functioning like life forms. Everyone had their own purpose. Each one was beautiful and unique. To me it was never dirty noisy or a blight. It was full of life and I loved seeing it. We adapt to whatever environment in which we are placed. I found the steel mills as beautiful as a mountain range or a forest. Even though the canal water was foul and green, it reeked in the summer, and nature thrived alongside the mighty mills. They still amaze me as an adult. And I never tire of seeing a canal or the landscape of the mighty steel mill.

What's next for Bart Powers?

What I am working on now are paintings GM started 'Motorama' in the 1950s which focuses on fantasy dream cars. I'm doing pictures of those cars right now. I've gotten away from traditional cars and am really into these. 'Concept cars' were conceptualized back then but there was just no hardware or way to make them come to life. The designer who really inspired me was the exceptional Wayne Kady. He was the one who designed images that really excited me. I am also working on a series of country and western images based on music from the 1950s like The Hank Williams and Patsy Cline era and genre. All these things inspire me. I hope you will keep your eyes open for these coming projects.

<http://www.outsiderart.co.uk/powers.html>

All Images © Bart Powers



TURBINES AND THROAT BONES

(PART THREE)

By Craig Woods

Photos © Max Reeves

to keep from crying Sheila sucks back sharp breaths repeatedly through gritted teeth the resultant hissing sound reverberating like the sighs of an ailing machine against the lifeless walls of the blue urban night the broken girl hobbles ahead her bare heels glowing supernaturally in the gloom each awkward step splits the trainee nurse's heart open every stumble like a bullet in the chest around them the city has atrophied become crooked and alien time has left town and foreign shadows stretch dubious tendrils from the wounds of its absence a black engine stench chokes the air Sheila hawks back oil-tasting phlegm its bitterness recalling the industrial smells of Glasgow and the melancholy phantoms she left behind there teen vagabonds painting bridges of pale fire from bloodshot high-rise windows to illuminate the

crowns of schoolyard gargoyles

exiting a labyrinth of unknown alleys the girl leads the way across a square of sandstone tenements motionless oak trees and vacant cars in various states of disrepair urban ghosts whisper and snicker in these foreign avenues the girl unleashes and retracts the glass claw repeatedly a wet clicking sound each time as its aberrant razor edge slashes tiny wounds in the fabric of the universe some sad forgotten nursery rhyme pours from her young throat some cryptic code of mutation in her hot breath

- Kid. What's the story love? Huh? Where are we eh? Where are you takin' me sweetheart?

breaking abruptly from her song the girl freezes and peers over a slender marble shoulder black eyes reflecting infinity in a carnival of sour streetlights the voice cool and factual belies the frail injured body the tone audacious and prehistoric

- To the pages you can read. Where you can see the seed of me ... old comic book story if you like ... doctors done chained a calendar to those bones ... big tick-tock tick-tock gimmick holding the universe to ransom ... [pauses to spit a silver glob of disgust onto the reflective pavement where it spatters capaciously the report louder than a bomb blast in vacant streets] There ain't nothing pure about purity ... there ain't no dirt on the dirtiest dog that no dirty doctor can't double ... I got my filth out clean see ... kept my claws grubby and carved FOREVER in the dirt ... You read it before ... you just don't recognise the dialect but you will ... the smell of summer rain and pylon shadows in your adolescent nights ... A great rambling wheel arresting the usual litter ... Patterns against the tungsten smiles ... I was there in the breakdown ... morning wept itself out over my uniform ... notes I had scribbled and left there with knives in the assembly hall ... Prying eyes were on to me ... they saw those nights I listened to peafowl cries across the park ... my ancestors' doomed bones against broken glass ... something beautiful I couldn't quite taste across the river where my dolls had sunk.

the black shape of a Jensen automobile lurks at the far end of the square its sleek metallic form reflecting dissident constellations the girl reaches out with a pale hand and caresses the car's hood lasciviously her midnight eyes flicker a promiscuous galaxy of erogenous stars and a sigh escapes her malformed lips with a shudder she leans forward pressing her bleached face to the metal gasping excitedly

- Come on, get in the car. Let's go for a drive somewhere.

Sheila pulls on the Jensen's door handle the door swings invitingly open the hinges tremulous as the thighs of an expectant lover she gets behind the wheel and the girl slides into the passenger seat

- Ain't gonna get far without a key, honey.

automatically and with candid purpose the girl raises her unwounded wrist to her mouth pale lips parting ivory incisors flashing in a joyless smile she bites down hard breaking the skin blood trickling darkly from the crooked corners of her mouth before Sheila can react the girl pulls her head back sharply a wet ripping sound traumatises the night causing the trainee nurse to wince clenched between bloodied teeth the girl displays a silver key soiled with gore and spits it out on to her open palm hospital smells fill the car a sensory mirror of the

medical institute backdrop to Sheila's daily underachievement Sheila shudders choking back a black stone of indignity

- They tried to patch up the holes you see. But I can tear them open always. You can find anything if you find the right holes and tear them open. Like in the old treasure hunts. No good kid forgets how to play and how to win. No bad kid neither.

accepting the gore-smearred key from the girl's outstretched hand Sheila thrusts it in the ignition turning it firmly and the Jensen erupts with a feline growl Sheila looks back into the girl's black gaze where her own grief spirals ever outward in boundless permutations

- Where to?

- Or when to?

- Okay ... where and when?

- Sometimes you just have to let the blood take you. A circus girl from Mexico shouted to me to be careful from forgotten time at everyone who passed ... she had tasted something like it in saliva ... Police think too thoroughly of her heavy bloodhound's heart ... you can be as many steps ahead as you like if you skip to the right beat ... In liberated veins the threads come together ... Storylines in the doorway of the Comité Local ... That alarm always ringing from the lights of Japan ...

skies brighten at the Jensen's wild voice and the sun announces foreign shadows an alphabet of scars navigating Sheila's route in the visceral morning cool and remote the girl's mutant mantra maps their trajectory towards a metallic horizon

cut can't wait the streets are wounded and forlorn cut sands of time cut dry and ineffectual against the bone cut the air cut the city wide open cut to its fragile ailing heart cut angular shadows of sleep cut in the lonely hungover drift cut across fractured universe of mutinous minerals cut cut cut

TIME is a beach of broken glass

DESTINY is a crippled child grazing her soft belly upon its hostile floor

"You can't be serious! Surely this can't actually work?"

Matthew Redman's incredulous question died against the steel walls of the lab as Doctor Homarus prepared the syringe. Two attendants in blue scrubs and surgical masks secured a pale naked adolescent boy to a steel apparatus. A sedative had been administered but the boy was still conscious; incoherent moans of protest and terror slurring from drooling lips as his wrists and ankles were bolted tight to the metal harness. Five military men armed with assault rifles looked on, barrels pointed balefully at the boy. Homarus raised the syringe to the light and tested the plunger. The red solution glowed luminously.

"Good?" Frick enquired.

The Doctor nodded. "We'll know within minutes. Once the solution is injected into the subject's spinal column, the process should begin almost instantaneously."

"So our little lad here has acquired the ability to tune the receiving software of his flesh to the transmissions of others' thought lines?"



“Following prolonged physical intimacy, yes. However, by administering the girl’s blood directly into his nervous system we should be able to bypass the usual delay. If my calculations are correct - and I have every reason to believe that they are - then we should be able to utilise the boy’s biology as a key with which we can open a wormhole of our own. Thus far we have been unable to achieve this measure firsthand. The danger to one’s person when dabbling with psycho-biologic portals is quite severe and, as you appreciate, there is a limit to the risk which even our most dedicated staff are prepared to incur. Heaven forbid one of our top scientists should open up a portal based upon the triangulation of his own flesh and thought-lines only to incinerate himself in the process. Or worse; find himself mutated into one of the filthy impure beasts we’re sworn to combat. For years we’ve been researching numerous possible means to circumvent these risks. The manifestation of this boy’s mutation may well provide the answer.”

“Jolly good news.” Frick turned to Redman, slapping him hard and painfully on his frail shoulder with a deliberately overenthusiastic hand. “Congratulations, Matthew. You’re one of the privileged few who will witness firsthand the single most significant scientific breakthrough of the millennium. Doesn’t that fire you up, hmmm? Get the old juices flowing?” She grabbed him roughly by the crotch causing him to yelp and recoil. “You are privy to the dawn of a new era; the first great step in a crusade to wipe out all dissidence in all its various guises, once and

for all. This is the real thing, dear boy. From here our legacy and authority shall be guaranteed across all permutations of time and space."

Redman coughed nervously as he patted beads of sweat from his brow with a frayed hanky. He gestured towards the five soldiers who stood rigid, their aim unwavering upon the boy's delicate body. "Why the artillery? What exactly are your men expecting to shoot here?"

Vice-Admiral Chapman rolled his eyes derisively. "Sweet Jesus, someone fetch a sketch pad. The old man needs the stick figures to explain the situation!"

Frick's affectless tone betrayed no irritation, betrayed nothing at all in fact: "This boy's psycho-biologic mutation is essentially of an empathetic nature. Think of him if you will as a kind of tuning fork; a handy tool we can use to pick up transmissions as one would use an analogue antenna to receive radio signals. The escapee girl's blood is crucial; it contains not only the code of her own mutation but also the recording of her psycho-biologic trajectory-- the map of her associational route through time-space, both mental and physical."

Redman massaged his temples, struggling to absorb this conceptual barrage. "So, what? You can reverse her escape? Bring her back?"

"Not quite. The nature of such an associational route is ethereal at best, as it is in a constant state of flux. So retrieving the girl is next to impossible. We have, however, a far more imperative goal in our sights."

At Homarus' signal, the two attendants turned a pair of levers on each side of the harness. The entire apparatus swivelled on its axis so that the boy was now facing the floor, his bony back and bare buttocks exposed to the striplight glare. The youth's moans became more urgent, raw terror dribbling from salivating lips.

Frick continued unperturbed: "What these two wretches potentially present to us is a tangible entryway to the filthy chaos of time and space, broken down into cryptic fluctuating fragments; the labyrinth through which all of our insurgent nightmares travel, and through which they can be traced and ultimately destroyed. To put it simply my dear, through this grubby little child, we are effectively poised to tear a hole in the fabric of the universe. Right here in this very laboratory." She nodded towards the band of soldiers, weapons primed, inert faces locked in to the murderous readiness in which they had been so expertly conditioned. "Since we're dealing with the whims and wishes of heathens, best not to take any chances."

Panic struck the tycoon's thundering heart with an icy claw. "You mean to say you have no idea what's going to come out of there?!"

The Vice-Admiral and the Doctor each scoffed at this outburst, the haughty reactions of conversant adults to the callow queries of a child. Frick remained composed, impermeable. "My dear fellow, we are standing at the brink of greatness. All of human history and future is about to spread before us, ready for our manipulation. This is our destiny, old boy. Only by harnessing the enemy's power can we hope to destroy it and reassert once and for all the ideal of human perfection; pure, unsullied humanity ... a rightfully regimented civilization, with all social castes and hierarchies affirmed and unassailable. In short, a society that works, that stands rigid and immovable through all of time and space. Imagine it; the privilege of all deviancies and transgressions removed from the mass unruly populace and reserved for the

cream of civilization to indulge as we please. We will have achieved flawlessness. We shall finally have risen to that standard which God had surely intended for those such as ourselves ...”

A brief silence followed. Chapman and Homarus stood in profound contemplation, the MP’s words having visibly stoked a blaze of pride in their chests. Turning back to the tycoon, Frick’s face relaxed once more into a smile. “I think you’ll agree that the risks are far outweighed by the potential benefits, hmm?”

Redman’s fear was unabated but he accepted the weighty truth of the woman’s rhetoric. He had no words of his own worthy enough to follow it. Not one of his empire’s many newspapers could hope to capture the magnitude of this imminent event in a suitable headline. He found himself instead nodding absently, a stale wind emitting unconsciously from his nostrils.

Doctor Homarus approached the harness and the two attendants gripped the boy’s restrained limbs tightly. The soldiers stiffened, a few of them licking their lips in anticipation. When Homarus stuck the needle into the base of his spine, the boy erupted in a shriek so high-pitched that two overhead striplights blew and shattered in response.



the sky spits overhead solar flares tearing across wounded clouds ravenous as wildfire alien birdcalls and sinister crab smells emanate from the brackish lagoon decaying automobiles parked along the boardwalk sides rusted windshields cracked an occasional bullet hole yawning fathomlessly the boy points to a wooden structure on the pier a café restaurant flanked on all sides by outdoor tables sporadic clusters of expressionless patrons

- I take the time to you gov. You can see the shells they've cooked up for you ... for us.

inside the boy leads Tim to a table where a well-dressed heavysset man in his forties with an authoritarian aura gobbles an acrimonious seafood dish with graceless abandon bitter-smelling sauce and grease dripping from his chin and stringing from his fingers the man seems not to notice the boy his gaze passing over the young form as though it were pure air he addresses Tim in the brash manner of a drill sergeant his voice sputtering coarsely through a mouthful of semi-masticated marine flesh

- About time you showed up. Sit down Agent.

the boy nods to Tim signalling him to play ball with the man's misconception Tim sits and is almost overwhelmed by the full malodorous effect of the man's shellfish breath

- We got a flashpoint going on across the Barrens. Looks like all manner of hellish hybrid shit bubbling in some underground cornhole; old pocket of resistance, some Muskrat diehards whose best days were way back in the early 2010s looking to stir up a fresh freak-fest. Transmissions coming out of this place are aural only, nothing visual. Some latent code our men at HQ can't quite crack. So we need a Sound Agent in there immediately. Full cover provided and an adequate supply of Dream Grenades should that cover be blown. I understand you're quite the maestro in the art of sound. You fit for it?

a swarm of irate insects stirs in Tim's gut the boy lays a phantom hand of reassurance upon his quaking shoulder without waiting for a response the man reaches into a jacket pocket and pulls out a cold black object the size of an ashtray and lays it on the table

- Your coordinates and weaponry have been encrypted along with your cover. Just be sure to keep it on you at all times; no leaving it in a discarded bag or a cloakroomed jacket, understand?

fighting to conceal his perturbation Tim swallows hard and stares at the object the inert corpse of a black-shelled crab a gleaming timepiece welded into its thorax

- Understood.

- Then get going, Agent. Time waits for no man ... and we have to make sure it stays that way.

at the boy's heels Tim traverses dry mineral banks and bleached stone plains of a doomed time-bound planet trees and shrubbery stand rigid in the breeze their leaves and limbs encased in cold crustacean armour stagnant lagoon waters reflect a dreamless sky stale smell of inertia and emptiness

- We take other dreams from here gov. These eyes light the fuse you see. Got the door to leave through when it hits.

time and space peel back like the layers of an onion slipstreams nauseating come and go at the boy's side Tim is walking phantom miles breathing other air as the universe dissolves ...

he is finding his feet catching his breath somewhere familiar almost ... La Gran Rueda in the entrance hall like steel under suspicion to be born stairs of crumbling brick leading down from wet streets he had been raised here or so it seems the house of toys is locked underground sad dust of memory in the fading walls and dry mold smells of a working class tenement two bedrooms of equal size peeling floral wallpaper net curtains over sightless windows you can taste the bomb blasts from here hot dust stink from an ancient gas fire residue of cooking scents from his mother's kitchen the memory more real more solid than the experience had ever been spears of sadness at the reminiscence of her melancholy grey eyes and the pain she had kept hidden behind them antique mirror in a gloomy spare room dolls of porcelain stare into the wormholes his tiny breaths made a partitioning wall where a wood grating lies open childhood spectres close in on Tim shifting segments of his memory in and out back and forth like stage partitions impudent chocolate-smearing face of an old primary school friend rising like murky tide water from the walls young features contorted in despair at a broken action figure pale patch on the nauseously patterned carpet where a cat had vomited mouse parts a pungent morbid stench still fixed with dream claws to remembered nostrils his sister beyond the wall playing objectionable saccharine pop ballads on an old gramophone syrupy candle scent and his skin's prickling recollection of an old bruise from her enraged adolescent fist bile climbing the gullet scorches raw throat bones hand out lashing from turbines of child fury his itching fingers at the grating claws emerge with a feline hiss from behind to prevent its closure hybrid biology waiting in another's wall children storm the carpet in the fanfare of morning voices cutting songs familiar accustomed name with an alien face where might these hairclips and wristbands conceal the future's weapon these children know your path worn and soldered in dreamed plains and ozone smells lithe young girl's body snakes out from that embrace DESTINY waits weeping in a rusted playground ghosts sleep no more in the swinging tyre TIME beckoning there from old sandstone houses message unheard eyes flickering a distant hedgerow and river shadows summons written in the black between leaves something alien and hostile

- Kids and beasts together, guv. S'how it goes. That's the tune we dance to if we wanna bring the shithouse down. Flip the page guv. Quick now. A twist coming in the next issue ...

space flips and curls like a musty newsprint page amber panorama announces itself a half remembered splash page from a childhood comic book the sky is a lattice of steel here grey towers of a fortified metallic temple looming invincibly red X marks the spot on the heliport fortress shadows arrows pointed girls and boys from his playground memories garbed now in superhero costumes have gathered at the gate this is the front-line electric whisper against his neck night's breath weaving him a snake of betrayal sleek and whipping darkly in livid waters glimpsed through creaking slats of a rotten pier

tremor from above as a helicopter gunship soars into view weapons at the ready rigid geometry of empires in its malign silhouette the children in its cold crosshairs a wiry adolescent girl dressed as Ms Marvel spits corrosive saliva which burns a hole in the air a rich violent ozone smell she reaches into the hole and pulls out a live crow flapping and squawking triumphantly upon her bony wrist



- Hala!

with a soft flex of her young bones the girl launches the dark bird on a flight towards the impending aircraft staring upwards Tim watches as the crow becomes a featureless silhouette against the metallic sky defying all logic of the material universe the crow snatches the helicopter in its cold bill from across phantom miles swallowing the machine as though it were an insect

lights and explosive sounds like a storm of firecrackers and the gate is shattered open child cries melt into sandstone soldiers swarming blades and bullets cutting the air the night immersed in the copper taste of blood as children fall their bodies lacerated sky erupting luminously as their comrades retaliate hybrid energies ripping the troops to shreds atomising their bones melting their flesh to butter screams and chaos telephone wires and disco beacons seething in the entrance hall stale hostel nothingness at this end

- They gotta fend off the guards now. It's you and me at the shattered gate. A nightclub date waiting for you. Time to pick up the phone guv. Important call for you in the Barrens. Not much can live there now you see. Sun all day and the water contaminated. Big business bought the whole city up for mineral resources ...

red awnings part for the hybrid shadow space-time folding inward as the pages dance in biologic winds hot shards of dark matter coalesce into black stone steps descending to a

Homarus nodded to Frick. "Almost there. With the production of appropriate sex energies, the process will be worked to completion."

"Excellent. Since today marks dear Matthew's initiation into our inner sanctum, I think it only appropriate that he be given the honour." The MP displayed her pristine teeth in a wide rapacious grin.

"Sex energies? I don't understand ..."

"Oh it's quite simple, dear boy. We need you to fuck the lad. Get yourself and him off."

The tycoon scanned the woman's eyes for an indication of irony and came up short. Homarus and the Vice-Admiral gave nothing away in their stone-carved faces.

"Catherine, I ... I really don't think ..."

The MP slapped him jovially but with excessive force on the arm. "Oh come now, don't be coy, eh? You went to a good prim public school, you're no stranger to the hot pleasures of a young man's snug fudge-chute. Now get in there and fill your boots."

With the swiftness of a veteran martial artist, Frick pulled on the tycoon's belt, snapping it at the buckle. Trousers slumped at his ankles in an awkward heap, Redman felt his very spirit wilt in the glare of the striplights as they interrogated the bare mottled skin of his quivering legs.

"Get it in gear!" Homarus hissed viperously. "There isn't much time!"



THE NEW MAN

(An excerpt from the book *Chthonic: Prose & Theory*)

By Vadge Moore © 2009

Photos © Nick Louras

“Terribleness belongs to greatness: let us not deceive ourselves.”

--- Friedrich Nietzsche

The term the “New Man” was coined by a World War I German soldier named Ernst Junger, who had written a very popular memoir of his experiences in war called *Storm of Steel*. Clearly based on the *Übermensch* ideal of Friedrich Nietzsche, Junger’s New Man was a person formed in the midst of the horrors and violence of battle, attuned to the beast of prey within, and triumphing in these brutal conditions. Junger wrote, “This is the New Man, the storm soldier, the elite of Central Europe. A completely new race, cunning, strong and packed with purpose.” (PG, P. 372)

From its inception, Junger’s New Man was intimately linked to war and the battles fought in the midst of the Industrial Revolution. But, for me, the New Man represents more than just military service; the death found in war is only one aspect of the violence and carnage inherent in nature. Violence is infinitely more than just disagreements over territory, ideology and materials. What is much closer to the bone regarding violence, a Dionysian violence, is expressed by Junger here,

“The turmoil of our feelings was called forth by rage, alcohol, and a thirst for blood...I was boiling over with a fury that

gripped me—it gripped us all—in an inexplicable way. The over-powering desire to kill gave me wings. Rage squeezed bitter tears from my eyes...only the spell of primeval instincts remained.” (PG, P. 372)

This expression of a dark, primal, Dionysian maelstrom had quite an impact on the World War I generation and specifically inspired a young soldier named Adolf Hitler. Years later, Hitler, too, would describe his own version of the New Man, one that consisted of going “...back to the primitive life, the life of the savages.” (TVOD, P. 7) Additionally Hitler exhorts his New Man to “...distrust the intelligence and the conscience, and place our trust in our instincts.” Hitler warns that the New Man is among us, and in perceiving this vision of a fearless and formidable man, Hitler says that he “...shrank from him!” (TVOD, P. 7)

Writer Herman Rauschnig, who had spent a great deal of time interviewing Hitler and his men, saw clearly the chthonic spirit in Hitler’s philosophy of the primitive, “It is the shamans drum that beats around Hitler. Asiatic, African Cults and bewitchments are the true element of his spell, and furious dances to the point of exhaustion. The primitive world has invaded the West.” A far cry from the spoken ideal of a clean, clear race of Aryan Supermen, this vision calls forth those bacchic frenzies that had so disturbed Hitler’s philosopher, Alfred Rosenberg.

Though Hitler promoted the concept of the New Man in a very chthonian way, I must state emphatically, that Hitler got the New Man and the chthonic spirit horribly wrong by making racial purity one of his main tenets. If we are to trace the real roots of the New Man to any one philosopher, it would have to be, of course, Friedrich Nietzsche and Nietzsche was a virulent anti-racist. He despised the anti-Semites of his time and had even abandoned his sister for marrying a notorious anti-Semite, Bernhard Forster. In fact Nietzsche was very critical of the German race and strongly advocated a thorough inter-breeding of the races, so as to give more diversity to the species and a better chance of developing a more perfect man.

Though the Marquis DeSade had expressed his ideal of the Sadean Libertine, as a monstrous figure that possesses the heights of intellectual superiority wedded to the depths of the most debauched perversities and inclinations, it was really Nietzsche that codified the image of the Ubermensch, Over-man, or Superman, roughly a hundred years later. There is no indication, that I have been able to find, that Nietzsche had ever had access to Sade's work, but I'm fairly certain that the ideas voiced within those books were floating in the ether at that time.

We first get an indication of this Over-man in Nietzsches' book *The Gay Science*, but the Over-man makes his most important appearance in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. In Zarathustra's first speech to the people, he proclaims "I teach you the Over man. Man is something that shall be overcome." (Z, P. 12) Yet, the monstrous in man is not to be overcome. For Nietzsche, the monster and the man-god must be united. Nietzsche emphasizes this repeatedly.

In an absolutely amazing aphorism from his work *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche explains, "Man is a combination of the beast and the super-beast; higher man is a combination of the monster and the superman: these opposites belong to each other. With every degree of a man's growth towards greatness and loftiness, he also grows downwards into the depths and the terrible." (TWTP, P. 579) In this passage we can see that Nietzsche does not want the higher man to be simply conjoined with the base animal within, but with the "monstrous". This takes on an even more chilling connotation, bringing to mind what I have delineated regarding the "other," the underworld, and the chthonic id. The New Man, on his journey of transformation must embrace his animal roots and then transcend them; just as he has transcended the merely human, he must become monstrous.

Lou Salome, a very good friend of Nietzsche's, at least in the early days of his writing years, and someone that spent an inordinate amount of time discussing his philosophy with him wrote that Nietzsche, "With the submersion into the painful darkness of unbounded excess and of self-devouring primal powers, there emerges...a tender and illuminating image of the superior man. Behind him, deep, as in an abyss in purple darkness, rests his Dionysian Self, the elemental power of life, which he draws upon for renewal." (N, P. 121) This is a perfect description of the chthonic self, the silent power that resides in the depths. Salome recognized this depth in Nietzsche, and clearly saw it as a well from which he had drawn much inspiration. Salome goes on to say that the road that leads to these deeps "...could lead far down into the chaotic, dark, and inexhaustible underground of life...through Dionysian conditions and the chaos of frenzied passions—yes, madness itself as a means of sinking back down into the mass

of entwined feelings and imaginings; this seemed for Nietzsche the last road into the primal depths imbedded within us." (N, P. 122) No purer chthonic gnosis has ever been uttered.

Nietzsche emphasized that the only way for the Over-man to develop was by reaching into his primordial self, in order to learn; to learn how to go beyond good and evil, beyond the limiting conventions of conceptual thought and morality that constantly hinders most people, but does not hinder the Over-man.

Carl Jung was also enrapt with the vision of a New Man. Jung's version was representative of a person that had integrated his shadow, or chthonic self, as well as integrating the archetypes of the unconscious; the images from myth and religions, expressed by man, down through the ages. Richard Noll wrote of Jung, "The Gods had shown him the mysteries of life and human history, visions of the future and of the New Man." (TAC, p. 158) The New Man, for Jung, was a kind of "spiritual Ubermensch," that would be fashioned by his natural, pagan roots; the "archaic man still within." (TAC, p. 158)

British Magus Aleister Crowley also foresaw a New Man emerging out of the new age that he claimed he had ushered in called the Aeon of Horus, an age of unprecedented freedom, brutality and chaos. Crowley called this New Man the "Kingly Man," and his ideal does retain the same attributes as the previous descriptions of the New Man: monstrous and superior.

Even more interesting, for the purposes of this chthonic doctrine, is Crowley's complete endorsement of the subconscious mind and its ability to bring about full initiation or as he termed it, the realization of your True Will. Will is an important

theme in Crowley's philosophy of Thelema (Greek for Will). The "True Will" is an individual's true path in life, as opposed to the false paths foisted onto people through church, parents, and society. In discovering one's True Will one comes into contact with the Holy Guardian Angel, the daemon or "spirit guide." The key to discovering the True Will is to shut off the conscious "day-world" mind and open yourself up to the darkly depths of the subconscious.



Freemasons' Hall, London, where Aleister Crowley took Craft degrees

Crowley biographer John Symonds described, in his book *King of the Shadow Realm*, how Crowley, when speaking to one of his disciples stated, “I want to explain to you fully, and in a few words, what initiation means, and what is meant when we talk of the Real Self, and what the Real Self is.’ And there and then Crowley told him that it was all a matter of getting the subconscious mind to work; and when this subconscious mind was allowed full sway, without interference from the conscious mind, then illumination could be said to have begun; for the subconscious mind was the Holy Guardian Angel.” (TKOTSR, p. 289) With these few words, Crowley’s student, who was having a devil of a time trying to grasp the meaning of Crowley’s doctrine and practice, suddenly understood, and like a shot to the brain, was instantly initiated.

An even more interesting dimension in Crowley’s work is revealed in the glossary of his magnum opus *Magick* in which Crowley mentions a Rosicrucian lecture wherein it is stated that once the kundalini or serpent power (believed by Indian tantrics to reside at the base of the spine and then travels to various spiritual centers – chakras – along the spine) is awakened, the primitive animal instincts that reside in the lowest center are then purified and raised to a higher charka. This leaves room in the lowest center, opening a vacuum that is to be filled by the demonic qliphoth described previously. (M, p. 711) This is similar to what Nietzsche outlines as happening to the Over-man when he replaces the normal functioning animal within man with a superior and inhuman monster.

Crowley wasn’t the only twentieth century mystic that had grasped the significance of the New Man. Notorious Indian mystic and tantric master, Osho, better known as Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh , also sang the

praises of the New Man—what he called Homo Novus. Homo Novus will be a combination of Buddha and Zorba the Greek; the lustful, debauched character of Nikos Kazantzaki’s novel of the same name. Osho writes, “The New Man will not be either/or—he will be both/and. The New Man will be earthy and divine, worldly and other worldly...His god will not be opposed to the devil, his morality will not be opposed to immorality; he will know no opposition.” (AOASIM, p. 216)



Cleopatra’s Needle where Crowley gave copies of the Equinox of the Gods to a Jew, an Indian, a Negro, and a Malayan (representing the races of Man), on the Winter Solstices of 1936 and 1937.

All of these examples reveal the archetype of a new kind of person emerging, a person not hampered by the mental prisons of previous generations, well disposed to things considered "evil" and averse, willing to explore the deeper recesses of their being: the Chthonic Gnostic. The Chthonic Gnostic is not concerned with a purpose or any productive End, but only with inner experience and transformation; frequently a transformation into something horrible. The Chthonic Gnostic *is* the New Man;

beyond human conventions, beyond good and evil, rooted to the earth and the primordial depths. The Chthonic Gnostic is both a god and a demon, with his "head above the heavens, and his feet below the hells." (THBOT, p. 97)

Perhaps there will be a new breed of Men and Women that will be utterly superior to those we see before us today...and devastatingly more monstrous.



Cleopatra's Needle where Crowley gave copies of the Equinox of the Gods to a Jew, an Indian, a Negro, and a Malayan (representing the races of Man), on the Winter Solstices of 1936 and 1937.

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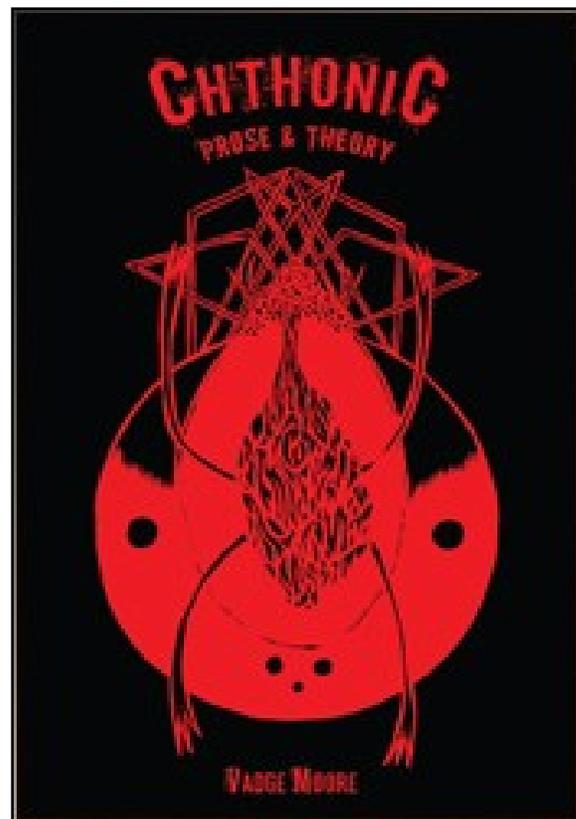
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Vadge Moore is an author and a musician. He played drums for the notorious punk band The Dwarves and heads the experimental band Chthonic Force. He published his first book *Chthonic: Prose & Theory* in 2009 and has had his occult-philosophical work published in the occult journal *Atua: Voices from La Societe Voudon Gnostique*. He is a member of the occult order La Societe Voudon Gnostique. Vadge is presently finishing his next book *Meonic Monsters: A Perfect Ruin*.

Go to www.vadgemeore.com for news, essays, photos, interviews and more.





AUTOPSY

(INTERNAL EXAMINATION)

By D M Mitchell

I move to the window, unable and unwilling to look at you. You lay there silently, one hand draped across your stomach, the other dangling from the edge of the bed. I know this without looking; it's such a familiar pose for you. Your eyes are probably registering hurt at what you perceive as my coldness and by the distance that's grown between us like lichen on an old wall. I have no fight left in me. I look at the sky. A jet leaves a trail across the sky like an ugly stretch-mark.

The internal examination starts with a large, deep, Y-shaped incision that is made from shoulder to shoulder meeting at the breast bone and extends all the way down to the pubic bone. When a woman is being examined, the incision is curved around the bottom of the breasts before meeting at the breast bone.

I try to make love to you. I whisper your favourite obscenities, my hand between your legs as you rub yourself desperately against my wrist, my fingers in your cunt. Your orgasm, as usual, lifts you off the bed. "I want your cock!" you gasp and roll away from me. I enter you from behind and fuck you as hard as I can, already knowing I'm not going to be able to come. In the sky another jet traces over the path of the first one as though trying to erase it.

The next step is to peel back the skin, muscle and soft tissue using a scalpel. Once this is done, the chest flap is pulled up over the face, exposing the ribcage and neck muscles.

You're not here. You send me obscene text messages, which used to amuse me but which I don't now bother to answer. I turn my phone off and toss it into a drawer. The glass in the bay window vibrates with the passing of a truck. I look the length of the hallway into the long mirror at the other end. I've lost a lot of weight and started to put on some muscle again. The face seems strange, as though its planes were in the process of realigning to fit some new desires and urges. Have my eyes changed colour?

Two cuts are made on each side of the ribcage, and then the ribcage is pulled from the skeleton after dissecting the tissue behind it with a scalpel.

I'm drunk, listening to loud music. One of the children is crying. I ignore it. I know the different sounds they make and what they mean. This is a whiney insincere cry and best left ignored; otherwise, you encourage them to manipulate you through faked emotions. I'm sick of seeing faked emotions everywhere, hearing it in shit pop music and seeing it in plastic Hollywood movies. I don't want to be responsible for cultivating it in my children.

I've been hacking your work email now for months. I know about your 'friend'. I'm not jealous. On the contrary, I'm rather relieved. I hope he can pleasure you because I'm sick of trying.

With the organs exposed, a series of cuts are made that detach the larynx, esophagus, various arteries and ligaments. Next, the medical examiner severs the organs' attachment to the spinal cord as well as the attachment to the bladder and rectum. Once this is done, the entire organ set can be pulled out in one piece and dissected for further investigation.

"You know what some people say... about how when their kids are grown up they can go and do things separately? Well, we're not going to be like that are we?"

I can't look at you.

"No. We won't be like that."

I've been living with a stranger for the last thirteen years.

During this dissection, the various organs are examined and weighed and tissue samples are taken. These samples take the form of "slices" that can be easily viewed under a microscope. Major blood vessels are also bisected and examined.

The apple tree is in blossom. By the time you next visit it will have borne fruit and you'll have missed the flowers completely. Half of what we planted together in the Spring has already died. I admit that I forgot to water them.

The examiner opens the stomach and examines and weighs the contents. This can sometimes be helpful in figuring out the time of death.

I find one of your garments. I used to like holding them under my nose when you were away, smelling your perfume. It made you seem nearer. Now you seem light years away even when you're in the same room as me. I fold it neatly and put it away in the drawer

The examiner will then remove the body block from the back and put it behind the neck like a pillow, raising the patient's head so that it's easier to remove the brain.

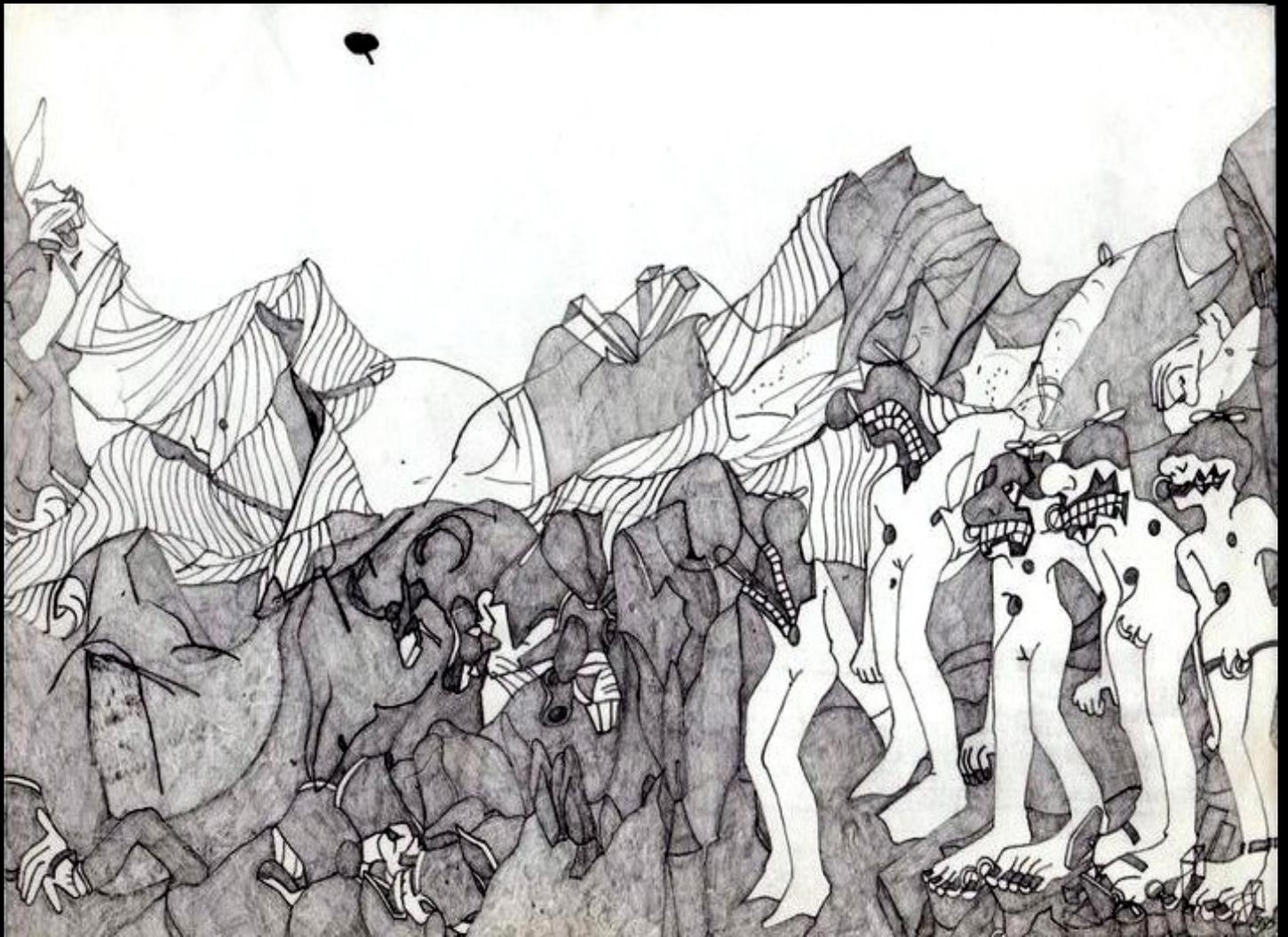
I go through the house finding as many old photos of myself as I can. I make a small bonfire of them. I leave the ones my daughter has in her photo album with the cartoon rabbit on the cover.

The examiner makes a cut with a scalpel from behind one ear, across the forehead, to the other ear and around. The cut is divided and the scalp is pulled away from the skull in two flaps.

It's raining. The kids are in school and the house is empty apart from me and my three year old who is happy playing with his toys. I stand in the window and watch sheets of rain sweep the valleys. The river is swollen and engulfing the bottoms of trees along its bank. The sky looks like a bruise, angry purple and engorged.

After the examination, the body has an open and empty chest cavity with butterflyed chest flaps, the top of the skull is missing and the skull flaps are pulled over the face and neck.

Dr Kiesel continues "The medical examiner will then take all of the information that they've received from the autopsy exam, all of the information they've received from the investigation and will determine a cause of death and a manner of death."



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JELLYFISH

By Claudia Bellocq

Photos © Lisa Wormsley

when i was a child, we would go to the beach after a storm and poke at jellyfish. we would take a long stick and prod them to make sure they were dead, that they could no longer sting us; hurt us. their placid pink, lilac, semi-transparent forms lying devoid of all power would delight us, though secretly we still believed (privately and

without admitting it to the other) that they could, at any given moment, rise up and catch our bare feet with a flailing tentacle.

they would lie. dead. washed into movement by the odd surge of a tide. we would run, and scream, and be thankful that they did not catch at our

heels or our fleshy children's toes. i was fascinated by them. at once so deadly, and then ravaged and rendered impotent.

you prod at me. you stare. i lie, lifeless but not dead. and yet *i* am the child running. *you* hold the stick and you poke and poke at me until i think death would in fact be preferable to this endless humiliating probing. i hold still and guard my tentacles close to my shape-shifting form. let the tide carry

me. let the waves take me. let the form bruise and mold me at the same time.

i cannot fight against your arsenal of seaside weapons.

early on in this story i recall for a moment a time when i felt your barb implanted deep, deep under my dermis. it began to spread like an alien invader and i, being a sentient creature, gathered my troops and released into my ailing body, an army of white cell protectors.



it was futile. one cannot fight the tides of love, for love is based upon faith, hope and illusion and all of these are bigger than me; bigger than any army i could hope to summon to counteract you. i was powerless. i told myself stories. fairytales. superheroes were dispatched to rescue me.

jellyfish.



when i was a child, there were sharks under my bed and my dressing gown, hanging on the back of my bedroom door was 'Monster'. they frequently consumed me. i later learned that not everyone battled such demons, where i had thought them commonplace. you came to me and presented a Monster of unfamiliar guise and i hated you for that. i had not the tools to fight you. you gained access to my inner world, for i loved you. i would have given everything to discover that the Monster that was you was in fact looking for laughs, and that i was a deluded child who had yet again mistaken the familiar

for the deadly. but my love suspended all disbelief and i simply grinned at you at waited for your arms to hold me, telling myself that i was no longer a child and that Monsters were not real; that they never were.

but they are.

and they creep in and make ready to battle with every superhero i could ever invent. they don't necessarily inflict fatal damage, it's true, but their barbs leave a residue that perhaps becomes part of us eventually.

wise men apparently say "that which does not kill you, makes you stronger," to which i reply, "did i tell you that when i was a child we used to search out jellyfish on the beach after a storm, just so that we could finally hold power over that whichever threatened to destroy our pleasure of an untamed surf?"

you sigh and think me a lost cause.

i lie pink and formless, allowing you to rod and prod until the night falls and a graceful tide washes me back into my home.



LOST HIGHWAYS

A TRIP ACROSS MYTHICAL AMERICA WITH ARRICA ROSE

By D M Mitchell



Arrica Rose & the ...'s *Let Alone Sea* is the band's third full-length release. Part folk, part dream-pop and vintage rock, *Let Alone Sea* was recorded live to analog tape then layered with Rose's sultry lead vocals, Andrew Sister-esque harmonies, strings, horns, and pretty noise. Arrica Rose coined the name The ...'s ("The Dot Dot Dots") to describe the collaborative nature of her project which evolved from a 4 piece guitar-driven band into an intricate sonic landscape including keys, mandolin, toy piano, omnichord and more.

The effect is mesmerising, seductively dream-like without a hint of the soporific, evoking a nostalgia for places the listener has probably never visited. Amongst other things the album contains a cover of 'Video Killed The Radio Star' that doesn't so much deconstruct the original as reinvent it totally. Arrica talked to me and was very

charming and patient of my eccentric approach to interviewing.

You've just recently released your third (?) album 'Let Alone Sea'. How is it being received?

Let Alone Sea is my third full-length album. We spent a lot of time on this record so it's nice to see it being so well received.

Where is it selling mostly? (I'm always interested in these logistical sort of things)

We are actually selling it mostly in the US and throughout Europe. Almost a 50-50 split which is interesting because since we're in the US more of our efforts are concentrated here.

I've always been interested in the predilection of certain places for specific 'sounds' or types of music. For instance I lived for a while near Birmingham in England which was the birthplace of heavy metal (Black Sabbath etc) and seeing the people, I sort of understood why. Can you relate your music to certain places? In terms of where it comes from but also who might be listening to it?

In terms of places I think I relate my music to the breezy sounds of Southern California, but California of a different era - The days when a place like Laurel Canyon helped define a certain genre. In terms of people listening to it now...I think it's those who appreciate something a bit vintage.

It conjures up images for me of what DÍRE and I refer to as a 'mythical America' that may or may

not have existed in reality but certainly does in old films and music.

I love that 'mythical America'. I agree that the reality may very well not have been as great as the recreations, but well... reality is so mundane.

I think something disastrous occurred somewhere in the past, possibly with Martin Luther, where that imagination was divorced from functional reality. Your album makes me think of David Lynch films

I agree. And interesting about David Lynch. I could see that. I think you're the first person to point it out though. I watched a lot of David Lynch films as a kid so that might explain it.

Long night drives. Empty motels. It has that sort of bitter-sweet desolate sound

I can relate to that description. I do like to explain the music as bitter-sweet, especially when someone asks me why I don't write happy songs.

Where do you think the music comes from? I don't mean which bands, singers etc... influenced you, I mean in terms of your psyche.

I think music for me is a means of survival, emotionally speaking. I would consider myself an over-thinker but not always the most communicative person. Music is a way for me to say all the things I shy away from saying. It's a way for me to exorcise my angels and my demons.

Exorcise? Or exercise? Lol

Hahahahah! Actually. Both.

You started off in a punk band?

I did. I learned to play guitar in a punk band I started with some good friends of mine.

Obviously that would have been a learning experience but what specifically did you carry over from that to your current work?



I guess I would say the DIY work ethic and writing songs I want to write as opposed to songs someone else thinks I should write. More the attitude than the music it seems.

I think the attitude has to precede the music if it's to be genuine.

I agree.

You release your music on your own label. Can you tell us about that please?

I started releasing my homemade recordings on a label I created called pOprOck records (poprock candy inspired melodies for the faint at heart). It was a hobby at first but then my focus shifted to it being much more than that. Because the music industry has changed so dramatically, it's made sense thus far to

own my own music so I've continued on with it.

The music industry, the publishing industry – they're all falling to pieces. I'm quite happy to see them go in favour of smaller independent interests. How do you feel about that?

I think there's good reason for them to fall to pieces. I do appreciate the smaller independent approach because I think at the end of the day it produces more interesting risk-taking art.

Do you have a bigger plan?

My bigger plan involves continuing to grow the number of people who get to hear the music. I also definitely want to tour and explore the markets other than the US where our records are selling, possibly aligning myself with a bigger but still small independent label.

You prefer working with analogue sound, right?

I do because I think it suits my music. I'm not opposed to digital though.

They both have advantages true, but what about it do you think makes it work for you?

There's a warmth that analogue sound offers. Like a record verses a CD, you can tell the difference. I think there is a bit of a throwback quality to what we were creating that lent itself to being recorded to tape. It also forced my band and I and our producer Dan Garcia to do a lot of pre-production, to know our parts and what direction we were headed. We decided we wanted the basics to be recorded live as opposed to piecing it together in Pro Tools because we wanted that cohesive energy of us all playing together to be the foundation of this record.

How did the band come together?

My drummer Ryan Brown has been playing with me the longest. We met through a mutual friend at a time when I decided that I didn't want to be a solo singer-songwriter, that I wanted to be able to flesh the songs out with a band. Ryan then introduced me to Marc Thomas (lead guitar) and Steve Giles (bass) – he was playing with both of them in other projects. We also had a lot of other great musicians join us on the record but Ryan, Marc, and Steve are the core of The ...'s.

Ok – thank you. That was wonderful. I have enough. Personally I could go on for ages as this has been fascinating.

My pleasure! Thank you, Dave. Really enjoyed your questions.



Let Alone Sea is released on pOprOck records and available here:

<http://www.arricarose.com/music.cfm>

Arrica Rose can be found here:

<http://www.arricarose.com>

<http://www.myspace.com/arricarose>

<http://www.facebook.com/arricarosemusic>

JOURNALISM

By Hank Kirton

Norfolk, Va. - In what may prove to be an elaborate hoax, citizens of Norfolk, Virginia have been scouring through the remains of animals killed on I-264, looking for clues to their futures.

Wal-Mart cashier Victoria Beane, who was among the first to discover a written fortune secreted within the innards of a rotted possum, claims, "It said I'd drink chocolate milk on Tuesday. And then I did. It's real uncanny. You can bet I'll be looking for more of them fortunes. I truly believe they were put there by God."

As a matter of public safety, Norfolk Mayor Paul D. Fraim has urged citizens to refrain from loitering on the highway and has stated that flinging small animals under moving cars is a crime, even if it may "supply answers to your destiny".

The Mayor further stated, "Sticking your hands in a decomposing raccoon looking for lottery numbers just ain't common sense. The people of Virginia should know better."

But Mr. Randall Fowler, an out-of-work iron-smelter, disagrees. "It's an uncertain economy and folks is [sic] looking for answers. S**t, I'll dig my hands in the belly of a sun-swollen, maggot-infested woodchuck if I think I might pull out the answer to my prayers. Or if it might tell me who I really am, real down deep like..."

The fortunes appear to have been written on a manual typewriter on torn strips of yellow-lined paper.

So far, police have been unable to trace the origin of the fortunes.

"Whoever is writing these things and sticking them inside dead animals is sick," stated Norfolk police chief Bruce P. Marquis. "And he can't spell worth a damn."

Meanwhile, police have noted an increase in both traffic and pedestrian activity on I-264.

"Until this thing is solved," said Mayor Fraim. "We're gonna have a lot more accidents on the road. And a lot more flat animals. Heck, we're all interested in the future. But frankly, this is just sad. Just sad."

* * *

Padden, Me. - Ask 111 year old Agnes Baines Cooper the secret of her longevity and you're liable to get different answers depending on her mood. This morning, sitting on a faded settee by the window, she credits memories. "My memories keep me young," she says. "[They] keep me warm when it's cold and fill me up when I'm hungry."

Agnes was born May 16th, 1901 in Glenwood County. It was the year Queen Victoria died and Clark Gable was born; the year William McKinley was assassinated and Theodore Roosevelt became the 26th President of the United States.

When asked which moments in her life stand out in her memory, she is quick to mention the time she danced with Fred Astaire. "I was living in Los Angeles at the time," she says, opening a jar of Vicks VapoRub. She dips a spoon into the mentholated jelly and swallows it down. "I eat a tablespoon of Vicks every morning. [It] keeps these old pipes of mine running smooth as a greased canal. Anyway, yes I danced with Fred Astaire once. Or was it Ray Bolger? I'm not sure anymore. It was one of the two."

Using a cane, she pushes her thin, wobbling frame out of the settee and says, "Let me show you my collection."

She moves slowly, arms trembling. The years and miles have taken their physical toll but her eyes remain bright and alive. She stops in front of an antique china cabinet. Behind the glass are rows of mason jars. The jars contain what appear to be clumps of dirt. Faded yellow labels are affixed to each jar with peeling, ancient tape.

There are names written on each label in neat, flowing script; Mabel Normand, Wallace Reid, William S. Hart, Lon Chaney, Gloria Swanson, Rudolph Valentino...

When asked what the jars contain, she grows wistful, lost in distant memories. "Bowel movements," she says without a trace of irony or embarrassment. "The exquisite excrement of shining, bygone movie stars."

When asked how she came into possession of such a strange, remarkable collection, Agnes replies, "I worked for a man who supplied the movie industry with certain

things. I was a kind of courier, you might say. The movie stars were always excited to see me and most of the time they were gracious enough to give me what I wanted. Some were puzzled, of course, and my laws, did Mary Pickford put up a stink! It took me three months to convince her to contribute to my collection."

She opens the cabinet and takes down a jar labeled with the name of silent swashbuckler Douglas Fairbanks. "These are pieces of history, the inner essence of beautiful, remarkable people. I believe every one of these jars contains a part of their soul."

She removes the lid and sniffs the chalky sediment. "It doesn't smell anymore," she says in a sad, cracking voice.

The old aromas have faded away, the once solid fecal matter crumbled to dust, much like the stars themselves, much like the memories of Agnes Baines Cooper.

* * *

Boston, Ma - Psychiatrist William Abrams will admit he is perplexed. Three patients have come to him recently with the same unusual problem; a belief that their hands are no longer their own.

"I've never seen anything like this," said Dr. Abrams. "They seem to be suffering from the same strange delusion."

Dr. Abrams, 62, has been a practicing psychiatrist for nearly forty years. Three months ago, a young man visited his office in Somerville. "He was referred to me by his primary-care physician," said Dr. Abrams. "He swore that several days earlier, he had awoken to find that he had someone else's

hands. I have to admit, preposterous as it seems, his hands *did* look as if they belonged to someone else. He's a 23-year-old software engineer, but his hands were rough, callused, heavily lined, with dirty fingernails. They looked like the hands of a man who'd been doing physical labor for many years. It's very peculiar."

A few weeks later, a 32-year-old woman came to see him. "She was quite distraught and thought she was going crazy. She told me she was a lifelong nail-biter and then showed me her hands. She had long nails, perfectly manicured and painted with red nail polish. She told me her hands had changed overnight. She insisted she'd never worn nail polish."

But perhaps the most surprising case was the 56-year-old man who came to see Dr. Abrams several days later. "Again, it was the same story; his hands had been replaced while he slept. He now had an inverted pentagram tattooed on his left hand and an expletive crudely tattooed on the fingers of his right. This man told me that he was a professor of literature at Harvard and a deacon at his church. He swore he had never gotten those tattoos."

When asked his professional opinion of these cases, Dr. Abrams shakes his head. "I'm not sure. Ordinarily, I would classify it as a somatic delusional disorder. What's so unusual is that three people who have never been in contact with each other would share the same delusion."

But it isn't just Dr. Abrams who is encountering this strange phenomenon. Reports of people claiming that their hands are not their own have been popping up across the country. One woman in

Wyoming went to the police with her concerns. "These are not my hands," she said in her statement. "They belong to someone else. Look at them. They're little kid's hands. And where did *my* hands go? Are they on somebody else? God knows what kind of disgusting things they might be touching and feeling right now."

When asked if an overpowering belief in this delusion might have caused his patients to physically alter their hands without retaining the memory of doing so, Dr. Abrams answered, "It's possible I suppose. I just don't know. Not yet, anyway."

* * *

Clearhaven, Fla. - Lupus Vulgaris, singer and lead guitarist of cult band, Bleak Holiday, dies at 48.

The pleading, urgent sound that Lupus Vulgaris (nee' Duncan Bell) produced with his group, Bleak Holiday, has assured him cult status among fans of "disease rock," and has influenced and inspired several bands, from Eruption of Smallpox, to Black Lymph.

Lupus Vulgaris was born Duncan Christopher Bell in 1963, in Tarweather, Arkansas. His father was a research scientist and had played guitar in a bluegrass group, The Chewy Boots. Bell Sr. taught his son to play guitar and at 16, Duncan Bell joined a local band, Ludicrous Wobble. Ludicrous Wobble scored a minor underground hit with the playful, new-wave song, "I Like Sneezing", but creative differences led Bell to abandon the group in 1979.

After dropping out of the University of Arkansas in 1981, Bell formed the band, F***

Your Mother, an in-your-face punk trio. The band recorded the hardcore anthem, "F*** Your Mother", in 1982. F*** Your Mother disbanded after six volatile months, releasing only one record, the six-song EP, *F*** Your Mother*, on their own short-lived record label, F*** Your Mother Records.

The next year, Bell legally changed his name to Lupus Vulgaris and assembled the band that would cement his legacy: Bleak Holiday. Their first album, *Sonnets from a Deathbed* (1983) was a gloomy, psychedelic affair that received little notice upon release. However, one track on the album, *In the Grippe of Influenza*, received airplay on several college radio stations and was a thematic harbinger of things to come.

Wholly embracing the disease theme on their second album, *Tubercular Tubers in the Garden of Disease* (1985), Bleak Holiday slowly achieved cult-status with such songs as, "Embrace Thee Smallpox", "I Have an Abscess", and "Gimme Typhus". The songs, all written by Vulgaris, combined dirge-like tempos, heavy-metal guitar muscle and pop melodies that would have been catchy if not slowed down almost to the point of disintegration (in 1997, proto crunch-pop band, Soothing Mucilage scored a top-ten hit with a speeded-up cover of "Gimme Typhus").

The success of the Tubercular Tubers album led to two years of constant touring and a string of misadventures and strange rumors that have since become legend. One such rumor, that band members had intentionally infected themselves with meningitis in order to spread the disease among their fans, continues to surface every

few years among chroniclers of urban legends.

A third album in 1988, *Pancreatic Carburetor*, while popular with Bleak Holiday's hardcore fans, failed to take the band to the next level. Frustrated by a lack of mainstream success, tensions within the band, and Vulgaris's increasing drug dependency, Bleak Holiday disbanded in December of 1988.

In 1990, Vulgaris returned to the studio with punk producer, Dan "The Man" Port-O-san, to record a solo album, *Cultivating Chancres*. *Cultivating Chancres* included innovative but painful songs such as "Pus-Flood" and "Bed-Sore Collector". Receiving negative to hostile reviews, the album quickly disappeared.

Vulgaris dropped out of music after the failure of his solo effort and worked a variety of dead-end jobs in Florida, which was to remain his home for the rest of his life.

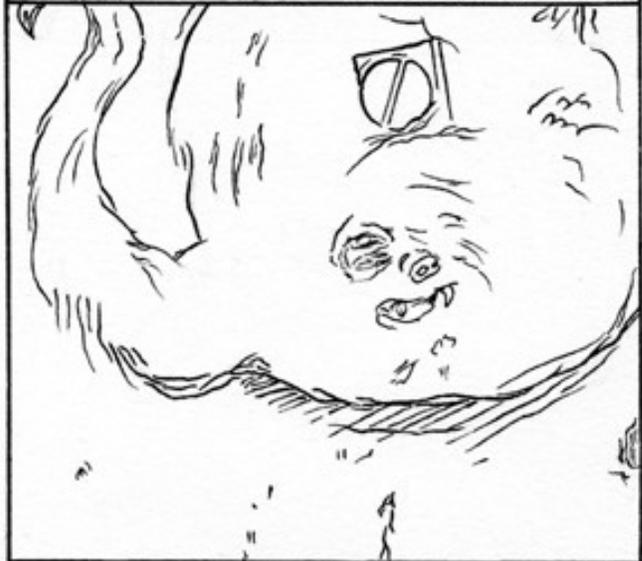
In the wake of renewed interest in disease rock, Lupus Vulgaris had planned to reform Bleak Holiday, record a fourth album, and embark on a reunion tour. He died two days before the band was set to enter the studio.

Lupus Vulgaris, rock musician, born May 15, 1963, choked to death on a macadamia nut on December 25, 2011, aged 48.

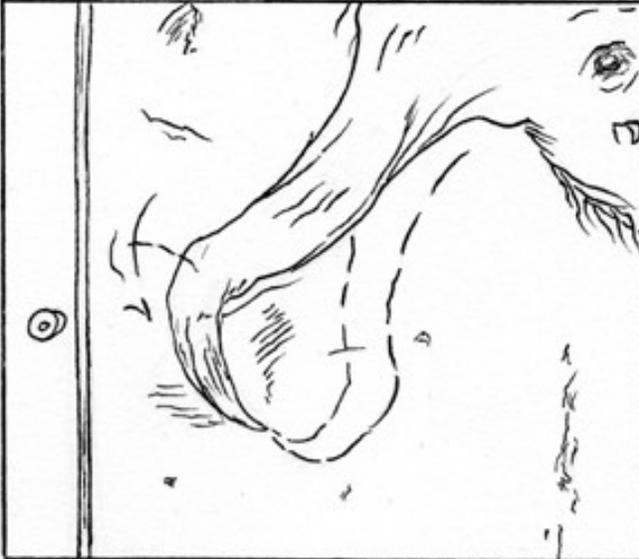
AGAIN I WAS IN SOME UPPER FLOOR HALLWAY OF A DERELICT BUILDING, STARING AT A PITAIBLE BEAST, ONE AFFIXED TO FLIMSAY WALLBOARD WITH A SCREW.



WHETHER OR IF IT WAS ONCE A MONKEY OR A SLOTH, IT'D BEEN SO ALTERED AS TO RENDER ORIGINS MOOT.



IT KEPT TIME (OR PASSED IT) BY GRADUALLY ROCKING ITS TAPERED PAWS, WITH DIFFICULTY, INTO POSITIONS



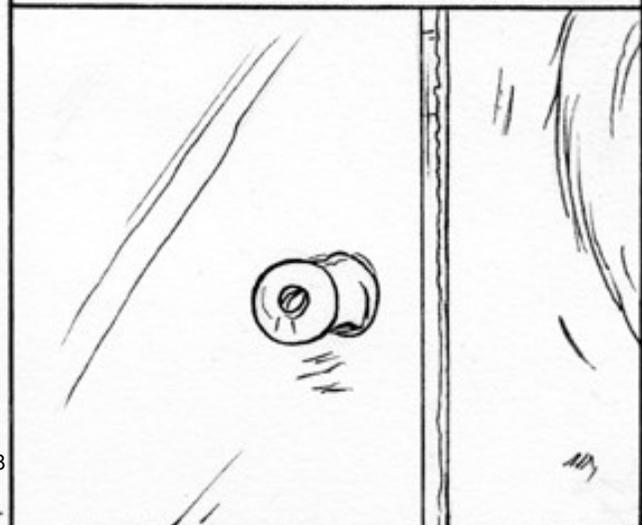
RELATIVE TO SOME IMAGINED OR IMPOSED TIMEMARKS, YET REALLY RANDOM SPECKS OF CRUD ON THE WALL.



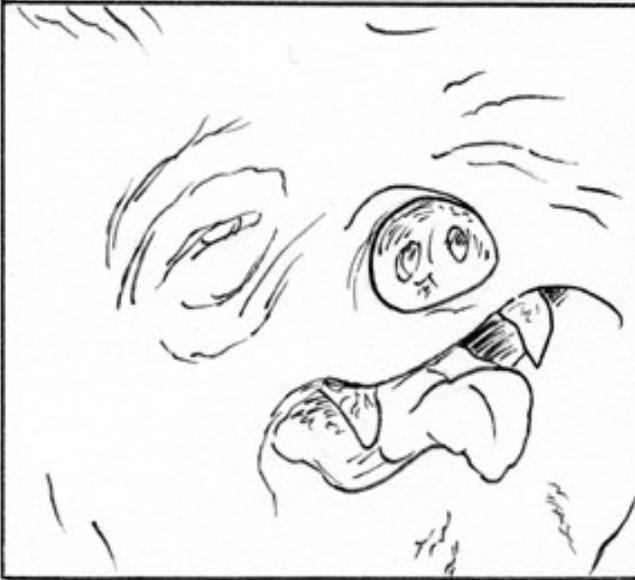
BEHIND A PANEL A BIT LARGER THAN A GRANDFATHER CLOCK I GENSED A 'MAN' ABOUT 4'6" MADE OF TESTICULAR MATERIAL, OR PERHAPS ENTRAILS, WHO



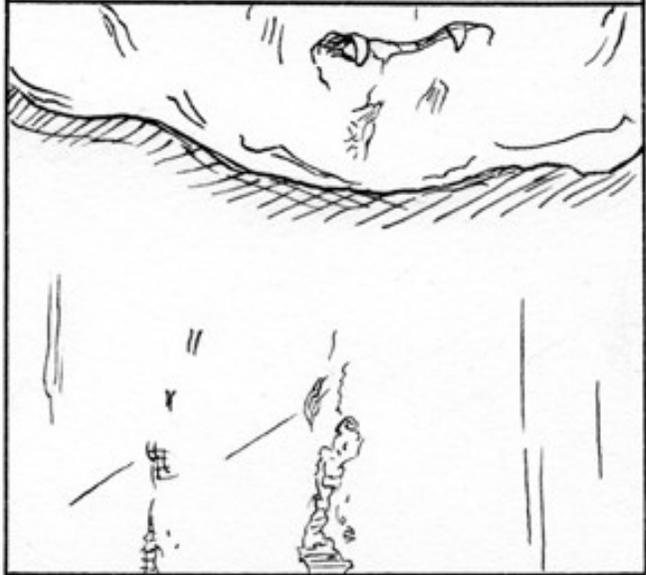
WOULD WISH TO VY WITH ME BUT FOR SOME FRAGILE SINGLE CONNECTIVE, SOMEWISE, TO THE 'CLOCK'S' UNSEEN ORGANS. I DECIDED NOT TO DISTURB HIM.



BUT, AS I WONDERED IF I SHOULD TRY TO FEED IT SOME JOT, THE RESIGNED ANIMAL SAID IT WOULD ONLY VOMIT.



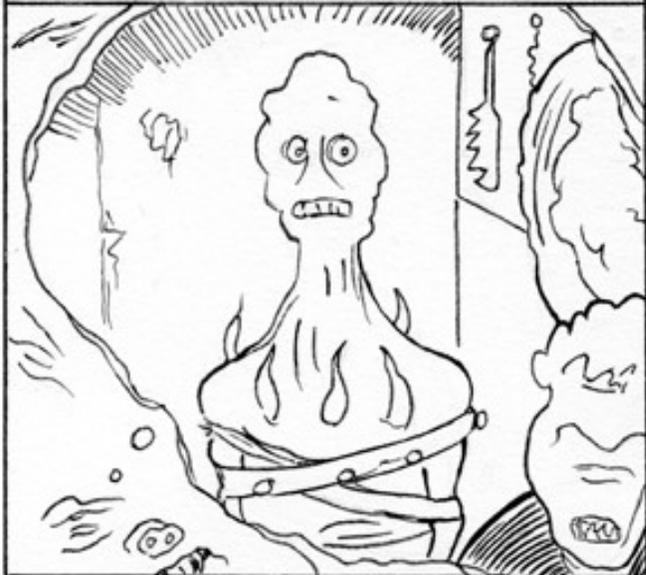
AND I REALIZED I HAD SEEN THE DRIED TRAILS OF SUCH EJECTA DOWN THE WALL BELOW IT, ON FIRST ENTERING.



FAR FROM BEING SPURIOUS, THE SLOTH'S RITUALS WERE SOMEHOW CONNECTED TO THE IMPENDING TORTURE,



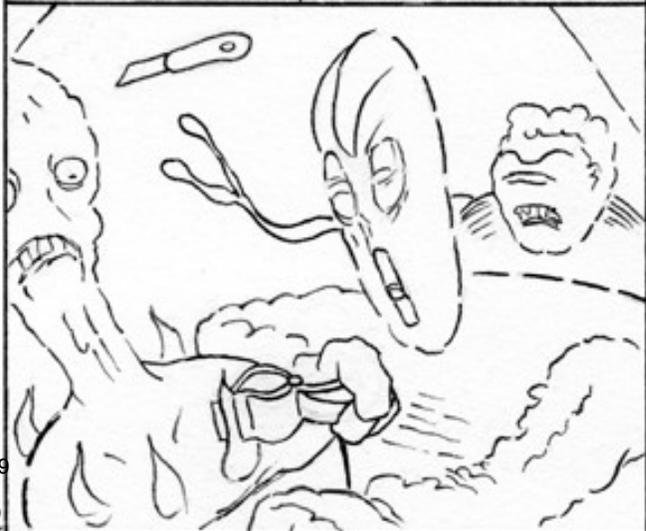
(IN ANOTHER LOCATION), OF A BEING WITH A BLUE FACE AND A COLLAR OF ROOTS GROWING AROUND HIS NECK.



WERE I, HAD I, AN INTUITIVE CHARACTER OF GOOD CONSCIENCE I WOULD REACH FORTH TO HELP THEM.



BUT COULD MY HAND BELIEVED? COULD THIS WORLD EVEN BE AFFECTED?? THEN, AS USUAL, ALL FADED WITH LITTLE RELIEVED, AND NO PLAIN RESOLUTION.



CHATTER

By Bob Pfeifer

All Steven's forty years, he talked to himself. And to get away from the chatter of his thinking Steven preoccupied himself. He took drugs, drank wine and liquor, worked way too many hours, read books, watched films, fell in love, had lots of sex and there was always music.

Then everything changed in his life. He could no longer fall in love and since he equated sex with love; that distraction was lost as well. His stomach went bad and he had surgery. Because of this he could not drink. His money ran to nothing. So all he had was sitting in his bedroom reading, watching films and writing songs he knew no one would ever hear. After awhile he just stared at the TV screen. The films bored him so he stopped watching. The books did the same since it depressed him too much reading the ones he loved. So he started writing stories he knew were not very good. The only thing that made him happy was being with his son.

Since nothing was coming into his mind but only going out in the form of his writing, the chatter came back into his head. It didn't whisper or scream, it talked in an even tone. After paying close attention, he noticed that another voice talked to the chatter. He assumed it was his. Back and forth and sometimes in the 3rd person as if there was another, a third voice in his head. Maybe it was watching, he thought. That's how it felt though it never made much sense, not even to Steven.

The chatter would start up at about 4 or 5 in the morning. By the time the conversation got going, Steven would open his eyes and the third voice would wake up. Steven rolled over and turned on the light on his cell phone that he kept on his nightstand. He checked the time though he had a pretty good idea what time it was. Still he believed it was good to check, to keep some sort of record, just in case he thought. In case of what was never really clear and Steven was aware of this having discussed it with himself concluding that it was something that didn't need to be defined.

The chatter started up, always about the same thing. The conversation was always about suicide. Steven's. He would wake imagining or maybe it was the chatter talking about something plunging into his chest. Usually, it was a harpoon or a spear but an arrow or long blade would do in a pinch. And the friendly debate would begin. The chatter suggested various ways in which Steven might do away with himself. (Everyone assumed without saying anything that a harpoon was not a possible way.) There was always the pills. Be sure to call the doctor in the morning and over some month's time, stock up on enough to do the job. Gas was a good one but it would take a great deal of determination. A gun, though Steven did not own one he knew someone who might have a .45 in their shop, in the drawer of a desk. Just in case are the words Steven remembered his Republican friend saying about the weapon. He wasn't sure about the bullets and less about wanting to get his friend involved, if not in trouble. So there was gas and pills and a gun and, of course, stepping in front of a bus or train plus the harpoon/spear in his dream.

But always the second voice (or maybe the third or both for all Steven knew) pointed out how much it would hurt Steven's son. That was the downer. And that was the last thing Steven

wanted, as he loved his boy more than himself. So the idea of putting this on his boy just to escape his problems (which often felt like hell) seemed selfish. And so, not an acceptable way out.

(At about this time, Steven often rolled over, went onto his bedroom balcony and had a cigarette, which he recognized as nothing more than a form of killing oneself, a blameless death. And one that would not hurt his son in that special suicide way.)

But the chatter would come back rallying the others with figuring out a way for it to appear an accident. Then this would not be a weight put on the boy and Steven could have his way out. (This is where ideas about getting hit by a bus would come in.) Still that didn't sit right. He had to be there for him is the way Steven saw it.

Every morning this debate caused Steven to feel anxious, like he was crawling out of his skin.

Going from hot to cold, he felt that harpoon pumping into his chest.

Over the next hour or so, the voices would talk the chatter down and Steven's day would begin. He'd have his coffee and cigarette. On days his son was not with him, he checked his emails though no one wrote anymore. His day passed with a few calls usually initiated by Steven. Mostly, he surfed the net, played his guitar and masturbated to break things up, kill some time till he read himself to sleep knowing he would soon wake to the chatter.

After awhile, Steven was able to get rid of the anxiety and let the voices talk by reasoning that if he was going to kill himself then he was and there was no reason to get upset about it. After all, what could anyone do? The worries are kind of over once you make that decision. He really came to believe it was the best thing though he wanted to live. But he only wanted to live without his problems, the way he lived before everything changed. Problems he believed he couldn't solve short of winning the lottery. Still the bit about his boy made it a Catch-22.

Then one day he slept late. And then it was a few more days here and there. Most of the time though he knew the chatter was always there, even in the daytime. It was always there, like the hum of a refrigerator or the electronic buzz in Manhattan, that when you live there you don't notice. But it never goes away even if you can't hear it when asked about it by a tourist.

So the voices came and went as they pleased. Round and round, they would start and stop. Steven never knew what made them come but he was pretty sure that it was logic and reason that quieted them. After a couple of years, Steven got somewhat bored by the conversation. It's like here we go again and Steven would feel all the same things over again. But it wasn't scary anymore. None of the voices had anything new to add. No one discovered a new way to do it. Besides Steven was pretty sure it wasn't going to happen, he would never go through with it even if he sometimes wished he would die.

One day another strange thing happened. Maybe it wasn't as strange as it was out of the ordinary. Steven came out of the shower to find a man climbing onto his second floor balcony from his neighbor's fence. First, he thought someone needed a key next door, but that made absolutely no sense so he tossed that. He stood in the doorway to his bedroom with only a

towel around his waist. The man came in through the balcony door. For a second, neither man knew what to do. Steven saw he was not a small man, but also not a muscle-bound one. Still, Steven reacted like most in that situation: he was scared for his life. In that second, Steven attacked the man knowing it was his only shot. He drove his head into the man's middle section. The intruder fell back out the door against the balcony rail cracking it. They both fell down a story onto the brick floor. The man went unconscious, knocking himself out as he hit his head on the brick ground.

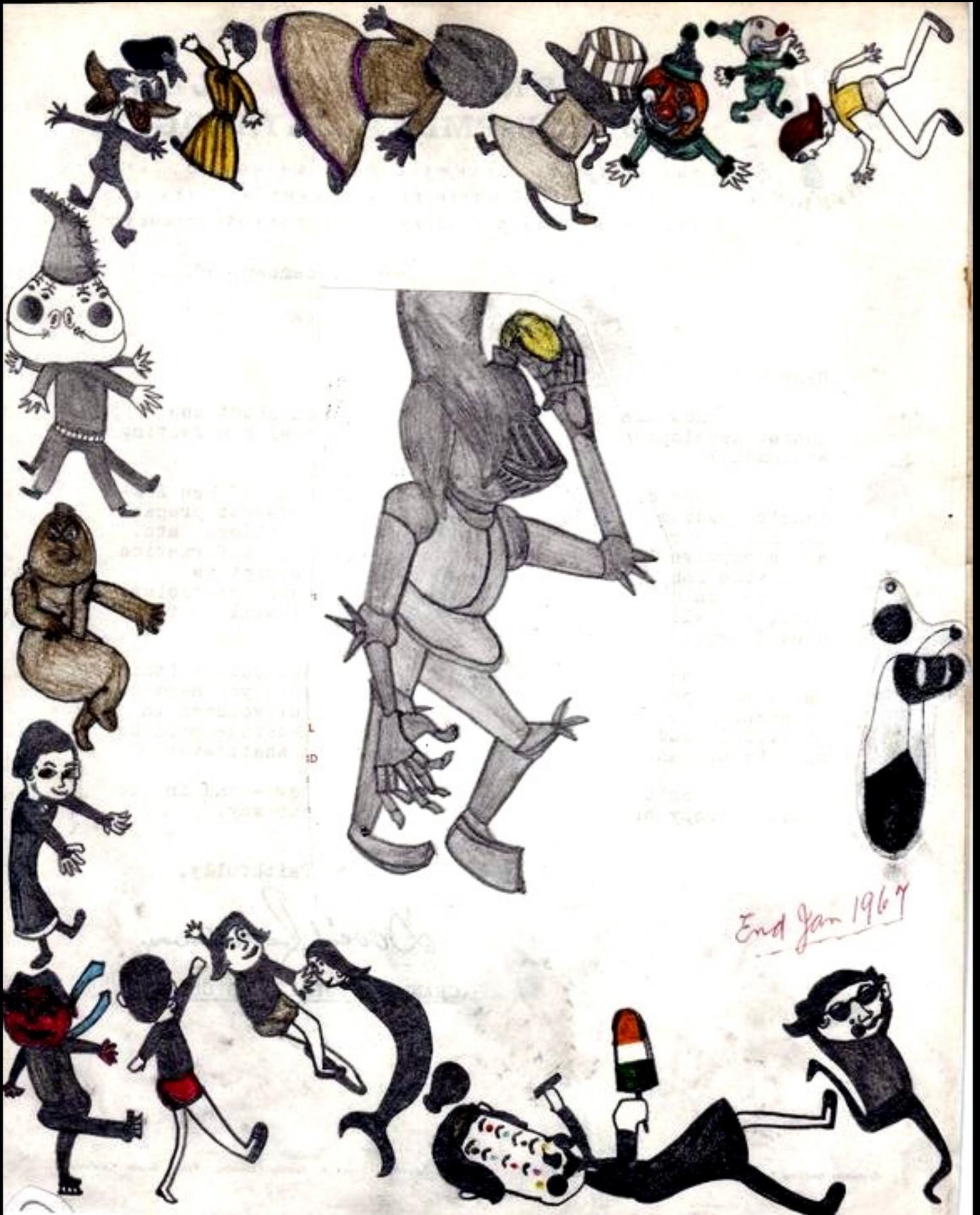
Steven mangled his leg. The man broke and cushioned Steven's fall. Steven crawled naked back into the house. He rang 911. The ambulance and police came.

The nurse in ER said he was lucky, even though it was only a one almost two-story fall. Steven could have fallen wrong. He could have really hurt himself like the other man she said. But what was he thinking, fighting the man. And then she said it seemed like he didn't have a choice. And maybe he didn't, though he had no idea at the time: the police found a gun on the intruder's person.

Steven did it to survive. That was his instinct.

After feeding him intravenous pain killers, opiates, and leaving him alone, the chatter came to visit, weaving its way somehow through the morphine cloud. He felt warm. He didn't care much when the chatter pointed out that Steven's accident was a godsend. His solution was in the room. Steven knew the chatter was right. He followed the tube running into his arm with his finger. He stopped when he reached the plastic button he believed controlled the morphine drip. He pumped it letting more of the drug in. The second voice called like an echo through the haze that it was dumb. Steven, the voice said, would pass out before he'd die. Steven pumped the button, not sure he was working it right while thinking the second voice was really being dumb not seeing the opportunity.

In the end, the second voice was right. Steven passed out. And the chatter, too high to notice, didn't mind. Though the voices believed chatter secretly liked the idea of living to wake Steven another day. The next day Steven came home from the hospital. And from then on the voices woke him infrequently. When the voices did, he didn't feel anxious about what they were talking about. He knew that he would not kill himself. And he knew if he ever went to that place it would be with a calm and not a panic. After a few weeks, he felt better, every day it seemed. Until one afternoon, when out of nowhere, he felt blue. He sat quietly but didn't hear any voices. He felt like there was no hope, that he'd wasted his life. His time thinking about death now had passed. There wasn't much time left and he was spent and empty. And he understood that he filled his life with distractions to escape what was inherent in him: depression.



6770010

**ORANGE, WHITE AND BLUE (MAYHEM)
THE ROOTS OF SOUTH AFRICA PUNK**

By Keith Jones



"Orange, white and blue

This we do for you

Arrange, derange, classify colour ...

Send the jungle to the city

Take the children from the mother"

"Orange White and Blue (Mayhem)" (Ivan Kadey, 1978)

One afternoon, during a jam session in a wealthy but crumbling residential district in Johannesburg, in the long, tense months after the Soweto Uprising of 1976, a certain sound came together. It was the result of the simple combination of distorted electric guitar with African hand drumming. The sound was rooted in *marabi*, the distinctive South African groove that provided the basis for Abdullah's Ibrahim's "Mannenberg," the township anthem of the era. But this was edgier, more dissonant. It was a sound that echoed the sirens and rumbling of military vehicles off in the distance, evidence of the growing police presence in the streets. Within the sound, the heavy downbeat and liberation cadences of reggae were coming to the surface. And underneath it all, the sound of the raw anger of the rebel rock music emerging from London and New York – the sound of punk.

"The Sixties" never really happened in South Africa. Massive social upheaval and seismic change would come only in the 1970s, the beginning of the country's coming period of political and cultural clash. The confrontational sound of punk – from three-chord anthems to hardcore, post-punk, and ska – provided one of the ways for its youth to first find public voice for a submerged frustration with the social conformity of a state whose racist policies had kept its own citizens stifled, repressed, and segregated for decades.

But in the rest of the world, by the time 1969 arrived it was merely a paraphrase, the end of what might politely be termed an eventful decade – that particular combination of political unrest, technological advancement, generational conflict, and far-reaching influence of popular culture generally known by the shorthand "The Sixties." It was the end of a decade filled with cultural, social and sexual revolution, and marked by street protests, the rapid decolonisation of the established empires, and the rise of Third World liberation movements.

The year began ominously, with sectarian disruption of civil rights marches in Northern Ireland and the self-immolation of philosophy student Jan Palach in protest of the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia. Things only seemed to spiral further out of control as the months passed, with riots, coups, and political assassinations coming from all directions. December brought little respite, only more news offering alarming portents of the decade to come. Escalating involvement in Vietnam forced the United States to return to a military draft lottery for the first time since World War II; in Italy, the Piazza Fontana bombing in Milan heralded a return to political extremism and terrorism unseen in Europe since the 1930s. In Nigeria, federal forces launched the final offensive of their brutal war against Biafran separatist rebels, spearheaded by an elite commando division led by young career officer Olusegun Obasanjo, who would soon become the country's military dictator. As the decade came to a weary conclusion, the hope and optimism that had often characterised it were in short supply.

For popular music 1969 also represented a moment of uncertainty. The release of debut albums by Led Zeppelin and The Stooges hinted at the harder directions rock music would take in the coming decade, while the extraordinary performances of Jimi Hendrix and Sly and the Family Stone at the Woodstock Festival offered visions of a post-Civil Rights rapprochement between rock, blues, and soul; however, the imprisonment and subsequent deportation of the leading figures of the Tropicalia movement, Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil, by the Brazilian military dictatorship revealed the limits of the counterculture when confronted with a truly authoritarian impulse. Fela Ransome-Kuti took his highlife jazz ensemble to Los Angeles only to be forced to confront his own African musical identity after encountering the philosophies of

Malcolm X, Marcus Garvey, and the Black Panther Party. In Britain, the skinhead movement emerged from the football terraces and embraced the post-independence dance music of Jamaica as their own, while David Bowie released the unsettling "Space Oddity," inspired by the hype surrounding the American moon landing earlier in the summer. In December 1969, however, most discussion in popular music circles inevitably centered on the disastrous events at the free festival organised by the Rolling Stones at the Altamont Speedway in Northern California. The scene of violent death, amidst a chaos that seemed to emanate from the band, the concert became a convenient metaphor for the anger and confusion of the era, the end of a musically-driven utopian youth counterculture.

In December 1969 the situation in South Africa would have seemed positively docile by comparison. While the decade raged on elsewhere, its citizens had been alternatively sheltered or oppressed by their authoritarian government. They ultimately shared little but a social reality based in overt censorship, political and legal repression, traditional conservatism and a rigid Protestant conformity.

For South Africans, the 1960s began in the most explosive manner imaginable, with police firing on non-violent demonstrators protesting against racial pass laws in the township of Sharpeville on March 21, 1960. The massacre of 69 persons, including women and children, and the events which followed changed the course of South African history. An outbreak of unrest across the country led directly to the banning of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) as subversive organisations, and a resolution passed by the Security Council of the United Nations that explicitly condemned the crackdown played a substantial role in South Africa leaving the British Commonwealth the following year.

In response, the ANC shifted from a policy of passive and cultural resistance laid out in the 1956 Freedom Charter and espoused by its widely esteemed President-General and 1960 Nobel Peace Prize winner, Chief Albert John Luthuli, to one of active and armed resistance to the system. At first this took the form of a sabotage campaign launched in late 1961 under the direction of the ANC's military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe, but a series of high-profile public trials aimed at destabilising the ANC leadership drove the entire movement underground and eventually into a position of open guerrilla warfare against the South African state. By 1964, most of the country's leading activists were either imprisoned, as in the case of ANC leaders Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu, or had been forced into exile. An attempt to revive the sabotage campaign by an idealistic group of young white radicals called the African Resistance Movement proved a failure. In 1965, the young teacher John Harris, an associate of the group, was executed by the authorities for his role in the botched bombing of a railway station in Johannesburg. By the middle of the decade, any form of active political resistance within the country had effectively ceased.

Most in South Africa's affluent whites-only suburbs barely noticed. Content in their snug enclosed communities, they enjoyed a bland consumerist lifestyle based around the '60s advertising cliché of "*braai*oleis, rugby, sunny skies and Chevrolet." After the victory of the Afrikaans-speaking National Party and their allies in the fiercely contested 1948 election, the centuries-old colonial enmity between the South Africa's Afrikaner and English minorities receded, deliberately obscured behind the state-supported concept of "whiteness." This was an actively promoted part of the ruling National Party's agenda to create a new form of shared

racial identity, designed to replace older and established cultural divisions of English versus Afrikaans and urban versus rural. It was also an ambitious attempt to reduce traditional class distinctions and the attendant radicalism attached to them. This in turn was backed by an expansive government program of economic protectionism aimed at supporting a general sense of racial privilege. All of this came at the expense of the country's indigenous African majority as well as its substantial Indian and mixed race (or so-called Coloured) minorities.



After the National Party came to power, they institutionalised their racist ideology within South Africa's legal and political systems, a policy that became known as *apartheid*. The basic idea behind this, strictly enforced racial segregation, had been present in some form within South Africa's political culture since the first settlements of the Dutch East India Company in 1652. It was later codified under British colonial rule and dominion status during the first decades of the 20th century, but only after 1948 did such all-encompassing racialism become the very basis for political power within the country.

Over the course of the next decade, the National Party enacted a series of segregationist racial laws designed to divide the country's various population groups. Membership of these groupings was determined by the government itself, according to a system of ill-defined pseudo-scientific criteria laid out under the Population Registration Act of 1950, which included categorizing people into groups based on "habits, education, speech, deportment and demeanour." Later that year, the Group Areas Act, an attempt to segregate all of the country's urban areas along racial lines and to control movement between these proscribed zones, was passed.

A series of Land Acts passed later in the decade further restricted the already curtailed rights of black citizens to own and purchase land. The Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959 went even further, applying this concept to the country in its entirety - establishing artificial government-sponsored "homelands" which were supposedly under tribal control and effectively excluding the overwhelming majority of the South African population from any form of participation in political life.

The elaborate and often bizarre legal framework established by the National Party increasingly affected every aspect of public and private life in South Africa, from membership in trade unions to sexual relationships. The most extreme example was the government's decision to forcibly relocate population groups and destroy entire communities, including the traditionally multicultural areas of Sophiatown in Johannesburg, Cato Manor in Durban, and District Six in Cape Town. Most of those displaced were subsequently forced into sub-standard housing in townships and locations such as the rapidly expanding semi-sprawl of Soweto (South West Townships) outside of Johannesburg.

The increasing political oppression of apartheid had left the country fragmented and reeling by the end of 1960s, and the notion of active cultural resistance was all but unfathomable. Elsewhere in the world, popular culture had often served as a catalyst for the first stirrings of revolt, but within South Africa this barely amounted to a murmur. This was particularly the case with the increasing numbers of young white South Africans growing up in the suburbs, however dissatisfied they might have been with the social reality around them.

THE OUT OF TOWN CLUB
Presents:
Spring Open Air Pop Music Festival
10 A.M. - 6 P.M.

WILL - O - JAMES
"Billow country rock trio that received rave notices at the Freedom's Children Concert at Johannesburg City Hall in July"

CONGLOMERATION
"Tight Johannesburg quartet. One of the most popular groups on the scene"

BUZZARD
"Exciting new trio performing entirely original compositions"

BLACK ICE
"Versatile commercial rock group featuring a powerful lead vocalist"

TRUWORTHS 'FLOOR 3' SWITCHED-ON SUMMER FASHION SHOW

OTIS WAYGOOD BLUES BAND
Special guest Artists. "Simply the finest blues music in Africa today"

BLIND LEMON JEFFERSON
"The discovery of the last Out of Town Club Pop Festival. A group in the Chicago type bag"

HAWK
"A group with a great future. They're into a country rock type of thing"

THE PACK
"Durban's top group with their debut Johannesburg appearance"

FREEDOM'S CHILDREN
"The astrological rock sound of one of the heaviest groups in the world performing their entire album. "Astra", composed by Ramsay Mackay"

On the 4th September 1969 The Out Of Town Club opened to the public and thus an entirely new concept in discotheques was started. A membership was offered which not only allowed members the privilege of a lower entrance fee to the discotheque but also provided a Sunday film society and free use of the club's swimming pool at any time during the summer. Also as part of the new concept, a steakhouse was incorporated into the discotheque providing the members with a place of relative quiet to retire to in order to have a bite to eat and a bit of amiable conversation. The membership to the club is not however

It was also decided that the club would not be run as just another discotheque but that continuous varied entertainment would be provided. This has been done and in the past eleven months that the club has been open, there have been brasserie evenings, swimming parties, pop groups, fashion shows and then the club's tennis courts were converted to become the venue for S.A.'s first underground open air pop festival which was successfully held on the 1st June.

This is our second pop festival and in continuation of the club's activities still more are planned for later in the summer. Entertainment is not finished.

In December 1969, the heart of summer in the Southern Hemisphere, this stifling situation showed no signs of abating. Even the music on the radio was oppressive, the South African Broadcast Corporation (SABC) radio network serving as another government-controlled tool of repression. Writer and musician Rian Malan was then a disaffected teenager in the Johannesburg neighbourhood of Linden, a

bastion of suburban Afrikanerdom. As he recalled: "It was the worst of times in Joburg's white suburbs. The Beatles were banned on state radio. Haircut regulations were merciless. The closest thing to a pop star was Gé Korsten. Life was an unutterable hell of boredom and conformity."

A decade earlier, white suburban youths might at least have been able to seek out the more alternative forms of local music, ranging from the late-1950s "ducktail" subculture's adoption of the pennywhistle jive known as kwela at Johannesburg's Zoo Lake, to the support of modernist-leaning township jazz by students and intellectuals in the clubs of Sophiatown. But by the end of the 1960s, after a decade of political crackdown and blanket social conformism enforced by family, school and religious institutions, any form of rebellious activity involving protest music or even more adventurous listening tastes was no longer simply a matter of interest or a lifestyle choice. It was now something politicised, and therefore dangerous.

In this climate foreign popular music was seen with an increasing amount of suspicion by the authorities. Although records by the Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan and other figures of the Sixties counterculture were widely available and often even pressed by local branches of international record labels like EMI or the WEA group, this music was hardly played on South African radio. At the time all pop song lyrics had to be submitted in advance to SABC committees which were de facto instruments of censorship, which frequently led to songs or even entire albums being marginalised, if not banned outright. The criteria for these decisions were dubious and unpredictable.

As a result, the growing demand for pop music, local or otherwise, was largely filled by LM Radio, a commercial shortwave station broadcasting from what was then Lorenzo Marques in neighbouring Portuguese East Africa (today Maputo, Mozambique). The station was heavily geared towards South African audiences, with the core of the playlist based around a weekly top 20 pop format. A local version of this, the Springbok Radio Top 20, broadcast the South African hits of the week every Saturday, but in accordance with the SABC's far more restrictive and conservative programming. Much of the best-selling pop music in South Africa during the 1960s consisted of wholesome and non-threatening offerings such as mainstream pop and country singer Virginia Lee, vocal harmony group Four Jacks and a Jill, and the aforementioned Gé Korsten, a classically trained tenor who abandoned a career in opera to sing Afrikaans pop for the rugby-loving masses.

Exceptions within this staid and vapid scene were few, and although a brief fad for beat groups swept South Africa in the middle of the decade, most of these were highly derivative in nature. The few genuine stand-outs to emerge from the beat movement, such as the G-Men, fronted by the legendary Johnny Kongos (whose later solo work was memorably rediscovered by the Happy Mondays in the 1990s), or the frenetic but short-lived garage band the A-Cads, tended to quickly move on from the lack of opportunities in Johannesburg, generally decamping to the perceived greener pastures of London as soon as possible.

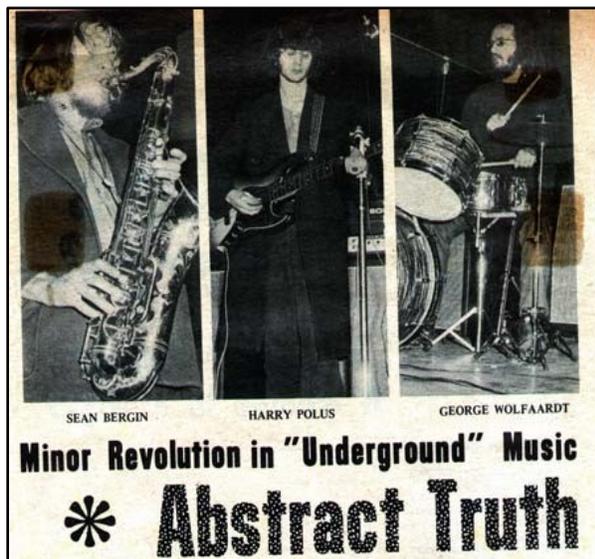
In December 1969 all of that began to change. A group of long-haired students from the University College of Rhodesia who called themselves the Otis Waygood Blues Band (derived by reversing the names of a common lift manufacturer) decided to travel to South Africa for a few weeks. They wanted to take part in a battle of the bands being held at a large-scale rock festival at the Green Point Stadium in Cape Town, before relocating abroad for good. Otis Waygood had formed a few years earlier in Bulawayo and played heavy blues-rock with James Brown-inspired grooves and an increasingly experimental edge. As such, they were something of an anomaly in Ian Smith's last-ditch white supremacist bastion of Rhodesia (today Zimbabwe),

The band had already caused a minor uproar at home when they had appeared on national television a few months earlier to perform their signature tune, a cover of "You're Late, Miss Kate." The uptight Rhodesians, many of whom would have been considered deeply conservative even by South African standards, were horrified at the very sight of such insolent wild-haired rebels performing what was patently a form of black music.

In crossing the border, Otis Waygood entered a country "in which a minor social revolution was brewing. In the West, the hippie movement had already peaked, but South Africa was always a few years behind the times, and this was our summer of love. Communes were

springing up in the white suburbs. Acid had made its debut," recalled Rian Malan.

The band arrived too late to enter the competition, but were given a consolation slot at the festival: a 15 minute set at 2pm. It was the middle of a scorching summer's day when Otis Waygood took the stage to a mostly stoned audience of docile hippies, and by the end of their first song the entire crowd was on its feet. After the closing chords of their stand-out closing song, their abrasive acid-rock reading of "Fever," fans began freaking out and attacking the security fence. Overnight the band became *the* underground sensation of the South African heavy rock circuit. After a whirlwind tour of the country over the holiday season, the band ended up in Johannesburg, where they became the first signing of a young Clive Calder (later to achieve enormous international success as the head of Jive Records).



Just weeks later, Otis Waygood took two days to record their debut album on an ancient four-track recording machine in the local EMI studios. They then began touring incessantly, performing in small *dorps* and rural areas to an extent unprecedented for an underground band. They also started to tap into the burgeoning hallucinogenic scene of the time. According to Malan, they began "living in an old house in the suburbs of Joburg, a sort of headquarters with mattresses strewn across the bare floors and a family of twenty hippies sitting down for communal meals. Everyone would get high and jam in the soundproofed garage...the riffs grew darker and heavier. Elements of free jazz and white noise crept in."

The underground hippie culture that the Otis Waygood Blues Band tapped into in Johannesburg had existed in some form for several years, but by early 1970 this scene had begun to evolve. The first several months of the year saw the release of several albums by groups that remain legendary for their pivotal role in the development of the South African underground rock scene. While all of these records can be easily placed within the progressive fringes of the hippie movement of the early 1970s, each of them displays the influence of local culture as well as an overt awareness of the social reality of the era. These were the first sonic rumblings of discontent, the first practice of alternative visions of South Africa to be expressed in rock music.

Abstract Truth emerged from the hotel jazz band scene in Durban during the second half of 1969 and released two albums in the following year. While the first of these was recorded cheaply and consisted mainly of offbeat covers of folk and blues standards, their second album *Silver Trees* was an exploration of the blues-rock idiom influenced by jazz improvisation, Indian modalities and African rhythms. While the use of sitar and flute in this context would not have occurred to most aspiring South African rock musicians of the time, Abstract Truth had been exposed to Indian music through childhood spent in the port city of Durban, which is home to one of the world's largest Indian communities. Organ grooves, pulse-driven bass lines, and the

prominent use of wind instruments distinguished Abstract Truth from any other South African rock group of the era. The first track on *Silver Trees*, an insistent, funky ode to environmentalism entitled "Pollution," references a specific bass-driven sound derived from the local sax jive tradition that was in the process of becoming known as a major musical style of its own: *mbaqanga*.

Around the same time, Freedom's Children recorded their seminal album *Astra* over one epic, acid-drenched weekend. The group had been on the local "beat group" scene for years but had recently returned from the UK determined to expand their audience beyond the hardcore regular club-goers in Joburg's Hillbrow district. The band hinged on the dynamic characters Julian Laxton, a forceful guitarist and early experimenter in electronic sound technology, and bassist and lyricist Ramsey MacKay, an enigmatic poet born in the Scottish Highlands and raised in a remote part of South Africa. While their sound was mostly inspired by the international psychedelic movement and the studio experiments typical of the time, MacKay's lyrics were deeply rooted in the local situation. Songs like "Tribal Fence" and "Gentle Beasts, Part One" (which incorporated African-influenced chanting as well as the refrain "*traitor in your midst*") depicted the harsh realities of apartheid rule. MacKay located the sources of inspiration for these lyrics in days spent watching rural bush cinemas in the Eastern Transvaal: "I remember one film about the Mau Mau in Kenya. Very scary when you are 10 or 12 years old and everybody is telling you to watch out for the blacks. 'B' movies are very poetic to a kid. Dracula is a very white man in the Third World...we were colonised by American and British movies, but we were in the middle of Africa. These things crept into the songs a decade later. Politics and voodoo sort of made sense."

The most controversial song on *Astra* was Ramsey MacKay's "The Kid He Came From Nazareth." A recasting of the legend of the Gospels, the lyrics set Christ as an outspoken anti-authoritarian outlaw figure, which listeners heard as an implicit criticism of Calvinist South Africa and especially of its military policy. SABC refused to allow the song airplay on the grounds that it was "blasphemous." In order to even get the album distributed, the record company was forced to alter the record's sleeve to read "Hazareth" and the song's vocal was as re-dubbed to reflect the song's new and more acceptable title. Freedom's Children were no strangers to such manoeuvres, having earlier been forced to release singles under the name "Fleadom's Children" because their first record company, Troubadour, had feared that the mere name of the band might prove too provocative for the authorities.

The third significant album to appear on the scene in South Africa during 1970 was from a band whose troubles would soon eclipse those of any other rock band of the time. Formed in early 1970 in response to the heavier music of the Otis Waygood Blues Band, the band set out to be as controversial as possible, beginning with their name: Suck. The band was a product of the lively immigrant culture present beneath the genteel surface of Johannesburg since the city's rough-and-tumble foundation as a mining town. Singer and frontman Andy Ionides was of Cypriot descent, while both guitarist Steven "Gil" Gilroy and drummer Saverio "Savvy" Grande were recent arrivals in the country. The band had been together for only weeks before they attracted the attention of Clive Calder and others around the Otis Waygood organisation, and when invited to record an album they managed to do so in one and a half hours of studio time, putting everything save one guitar solo straight to tape on the first take.

Time to Suck attracted all the controversy the band had hoped for, and then some. Their volatile performance style, which included the destruction of equipment onstage, combined the sound of contemporary bands such as Black Sabbath and Grand Funk Railroad (both of whom they covered on the album) with the political edge and proto-punk fury of angry working class Detroit bands MC5 and The Stooges.



Suck's performances electrified South African audiences, but even within the underground they made people nervous. Their provocative antics generated press attention, but most of this was negative. This attracted the interest of the authorities. "We were escorted out of Rhodesia, banned from Cape Town, banned from Durban," recalls Gil Gilroy, the band's guitarist. Gilroy, who today operates a microbrewery in Johannesburg, was born in Northern Ireland and went to school in Liverpool before moving to South Africa in 1970 to work as a construction engineer. He found the local conditions almost unbelievably oppressive almost immediately "The situation was incredibly dry, hollow," he remembers. "There was very little soul in the country then. It was short haircuts, straight into the army and marching around, then onto a job if you actually got out of the border [a euphemism for South Africa's illegal military excursions] alive. It was sterile...no one was allowed to speak."

He found himself in the country's most controversial rock band almost by default. "It was easy in those days," says Gilroy. "All you had to do was strap a guitar on, swear at the people, and play some fairly aggressive music." The response was immediate. "If there was anger directed at Suck, it wasn't the general public...but definitely the people from the Dutch Reformed

Church. We used to have them around, singing outside the gigs. In those days, if you wanted to get an emotional reaction, it had to have an element of angst. The music was vibrant, exciting, it was there to raise the awareness of people in South Africa that there was something more to life."

Apart from attracting disapproval from the country's more conservative elements, Suck struck a deep chord within the rock underground. Benjy Mudie, who would go on to sign and produce several punk bands during his tenure at WEA Records before founding his own Tusk Records in the 1980s, was then an immigrant teenager drawn to the radical potential of rock n' roll. "They had the same revolutionary spirit as the MC5. They were confrontational, they were angry. They didn't give an absolute fuck...Suck were without doubt the loudest, nastiest, most fuck-you band of the '70s. They were hounded out of towns. Police would escort them through when they came to play."

Mudie first witnessed the band at a concert at the Selbourne Hall in Johannesburg, an infamous, violent spectacle which culminated in the band destroying a city-owned piano with fire axes. One of the highlights of the show was a performance of the band's original composition "The Whip" featuring the dismemberment of mannequins in front of anti-censorship banners directly criticising the SABC. "I was sixteen. I remember having never been so frightened but also exhilarated, filled with fervour. It was absolute rock theatre, but it was real. When they hacked up that piano and destroyed the drums, I was scared. But it was amazing," he said.

The growing profile of Suck and their fellow bands in the emerging hard rock scene provoked a backlash. A large open-air rock festival was scheduled over the weekend of October 10, 1970. While several similar rock festivals were held around the time, Milner Park was meant as the first "gathering of the tribes" where the underground could come together. Suck performed among the headlining acts, along with Abstract Truth, Freedom's Children, and Otis Waygood. Almost as soon as the event got under way, it degenerated into violence. A group of divinity students from the University of Pretoria invaded the premises, with the full collusion of the security force, and began to attack members of the audience. As Benjy Mudie describes, "they were supported by the police. They dragged a bunch of people away and beat the living daylight out of them. That was a reaction to the revolution, to the counterculture. I remember the shouting and the screaming and the chaos, and peaceful hippies getting violent and fighting back. There was no peace and love about it."

For Gil Gilroy, the violence at Milner Park was symptomatic of the tension surrounding the band. "They came down, got hold of twenty or so guys and kidnapped them, cut their hair off. I remember a lot of screaming down in front. Onstage, we didn't even know what was going on. All sorts of things happened in those days. In Pietersburg, we had half of the South African air force outside the hall with different weapons...just waiting to bugger us up. We climbed out of the van, and had a stand-off. I had my claw hammer, what a vicious thing - when you're in a fight and pull that out, people leave you alone. And Moose had this bloody great Bowie knife. Andy had a microphone stand, Savvy had his panga. We stood there, four in a row, a bit like Agincourt. But thankfully the police came and cleared everybody away."

By the end of 1970, Suck had achieved their goal of becoming South Africa's most notorious rock group, but at the cost of being essentially banned across the country. The town of Welcom even erected roadblocks to prevent the band from entering for a gig. "We didn't have anywhere

to play at the end. We had made too much of the situation... we were banned everywhere. They had taken all the soul out of the music for me." Although copies of *Time to Suck*, the band's solitary album, later became coveted collector's items among international music aficionados, the record sold poorly at the time. The members struggled to get by, living on as little as one rand per day. Under enormous pressure from all sides, the band became disillusioned and split up. Gil Gilroy then set up a company to import nudie magazines and adult films and attracted further opprobrium from the authorities, eventually ending up under a government banning order (in his resultant ostracism he befriended another banned neighbour, prominent anti-apartheid clergyman Beyers Naudé). The other members continued to work sporadically in various low-key bands, taking care to stay off the radar after the Suck experience.

By 1971, the underground rock culture in South Africa was becoming darker and more introverted, while its underlying politics came to the fore. Members of the National Party began to condemn rock music as a form of social deviance, complaining that it was "rotting the nation's moral fibre." In March, the Minister of Police and Justice called drug abuse as a "national emergency" that necessitated a crackdown. This led to an increased presence of plainclothes police around many of the bands and their network of communes, in particular the now firmly Joburg situated Otis Waygood Blues Band. Heightened police pressure around the band finally forced them to return to Rhodesia, only to face military conscription. Sensing that they were being made an example of by Ian Smith's increasingly embattled government, the members of Otis Waygood fled the country, eventually resurfacing in the London dub scene as a live reggae band, performing under the name Immigrant.

The burst of creativity around the underground rock movement in South Africa during the first years of the decade was over. In 1972, EMI released a compilation album on the Starline imprint entitled *Rock Today With the Big Heavies*, featuring several of the best-known songs of the Otis Waygood Blues Band, Freedom's Children, and Suck. Although in many ways this record represented merely the final attempt to wring money out of a dying scene, copies continued to circulate mid-decade. These often found a place among the collections of some of the more adventurous South African teenage listeners, and to some extent these bands continued to influence the tastes of the punk generation which would emerge later in the 1970s.

Among those to re-discover the legacy of the South African underground in the early 1970s through this reissue was an impressionable teenager named Warwick Swinney, better known today under the adopted name Warrick Sony as a renowned Cape Town-based producer of dub and experimental electronic music under the alias Kalahari Surfers. "It was one of the first long-players I bought," he recalls. "Suck made quite an impression on me at that age. I had no idea they were mostly playing covers. I thought those were original songs. And to my mind, they seemed to be pretty much describing the reality of South Africa at the time. For instance, that line in their version of Black Sabbath's 'War Pigs' about generals holding black masses - to me that just seemed like a reflection of what was going on in the local newspapers."

Already fascinated by the electric guitar, Warrick soon became an inveterate record collector, constantly on the lookout for new sounds. "I got into music at a young age because I was no good at sport, which was the big thing at school in those days. All of my family were into surfing, but I never had much an aptitude for that either. The Seventies were just a repressive time no matter what you were into. I remember the car registration plates in Durban used to

have this design of half a Union Jack on them, saying 'Natal - the other half of the Empire' - the whole atmosphere was conservative. Conservative ex-colonials with an attachment to some imaginary England but also conservative business-minded Indians and patriarchal conservative Zulus. All of whom hated each other to some extent, of course."

But the multiculturalism of Durban also had its fair share of advantages. "The biggest life-changing thing for me was that I went with a friend, after smoking a fair amount of Durban Poison, to watch an Indian concert which was just absolutely incredible. I couldn't figure out the rhythms or where the beat was," Sony remembers. "The complexities of their rhythms really grabbed me. And later on when I discovered Bob Marley and Max Romeo I had a similar understanding of how African music could work with reggae, in its own sparseness. I suddenly realised the less you play the better. And growing up in South Africa and being exposed to Zulu music I immediately understood that this was so cool, that it's not about one guy soloing, it's about the whole. And I think that's what African music is."



Another 1972 record provided a glimpse of a possible future direction along similar lines for South African rock music - the concept album *Africa She Too Can Cry*, by the Johannesburg progressive rock band Hawk. They were the first openly multi-racial group to appear on the local rock scene, combining traditional black vocalists and percussionists with a rock rhythm section drawn from the scene around Abstract Truth and the local folk circuit. The band lived together at a farm in Rivonia on the outskirts of

Johannesburg, immersing themselves in organic living and listening to the field recordings of local ethnomusicologist Hugh Tracey. Inspired by a visit to neighbouring Swaziland, Hawk began to incorporate openly African elements into their performance, including the use of hand drums and costumes including leopard skins and tribal spears.

The band drew increasingly large crowds across the country due in part to the spectacle of their live show, prompting them to add two African percussionists and a pair of traditional backing vocalists to their already heavily Africanised sound, thus becoming the country's first multi-racial rock band. They grew bolder in their live presentation, but even this was marked by the racist policies of the apartheid government - the band underwent the humiliation of its black members being forced to perform onstage while hidden behind a curtain.

The fact that the members of the band lived together at Paddock Farm eventually brought raids by the police, exacerbating the tensions within the group. They moved together to the United Kingdom (signing to Charisma Records under the name Jo'burg Hawk) and showed great

promise at first but eventually ground to a halt in London in 1974.

Apart from being one of the only multi-racial bands active on the South African rock scene at the time, Hawk wrote songs based on a deeply-rooted sense of African identity. *Africa She Too Can Cry* was a song cycle that loosely told the story of the destruction of a tribe and a village, as well as a traditional way of life. The album opens with "Africa," a ballad that decries the desecration of an idyllic community of unspoiled gardens and "proud beauty" by what the song terms "scavengers, poachers and ravishers of land...violators of our virgin Africa." It concludes with "Uvuyo" (Xhosa for happiness), an upbeat but defiant chant set against martial-sounding drumming. The political connotations of this music did not go unnoticed in apartheid South Africa.

Attempts to mix Western popular music with local African elements were nothing new in South African music. Apart from a long-standing tradition of musical exchange present within the township jazz and rural *boeremusiek* traditions, the simultaneous emergence of kwela and early rock 'n roll in the late 1950s highlighted the fact that these two fairly raw and passionate forms had several basic elements in common. This was the foundation in turn for a further musical dialogue, beginning with the release of the 1958 kwela number "Something New in Africa" by the Solven Whistlers on a 33rpm record marketed primarily to the younger white audience (at that time popular music geared at the township and rural audiences was still issued mainly on 78s) and culminating in the early 1960s when several experiments at combining rock with indigenous music were released as mass-market singles. These were often aimed at both white and black audiences in equal measure, and included such notable genre-crossing excursions as "Shala-Shala Twist" by the Dark City Sisters, Fred Wooldridge's "Penniefluitjie-Kwela", and Allen Kwela's marabi-tinged "Guitar Rock", as well as the earlier "Zambesi," an enormous hit for Afrikaans accordionist and showman Nico Carstens.

It is crucial to stress that South African rock music as it evolved during the 1960s was hardly an exclusively white preserve. An extensive network of cover bands performing rock and soul hits as well as original compositions in the garage and beat vein operated throughout the country's mixed-race (Coloured) and Indian communities, led by the pioneering Cape Town beat outfit The Invaders, who began as a Shadows-inspired tribute band but whose career lasted into the high psychedelic era. Many of these bands were semi-professional in nature, performing at dances and local functions and occasionally issuing self-produced seven inch singles. A typical example of the sound of such groups, complete with hard rock drumming and fuzz-box guitar, can be heard on the independently-pressed album by The Raiders, *Get Ready With The Raiders* (1969) which bore the subtitle: "Perfect for Dancing!" The Raiders were only one of many such dance and cover bands to flourish in the mixed-race and Indian communities around Durban during the late 1960s.

The best and most successful of these were undoubtedly the wildly successful local band The Flames. Led by the innovative and open-minded guitarist Steve Fataar, the eldest of three brothers within the group, they enjoyed a string of number one hits in South Africa during the late 1960s, including their cover of Jerry Butler's "For Your Precious Love," which spent 14 weeks at the top of the local charts in 1968 and became a massive hit across Southern Africa. This unprecedented success allowed The Flames to tour Europe, where they were discovered by the Beach Boys. Carl Wilson invited the band to the United States, where they recorded an

album and toured with the Beach Boys. Two of the members of the Flames, Ricky Fataar and Blondie Chaplin, eventually joined the band altogether in the mid-1970s, with Chaplin eventually also serving as a long-term backing singer and acoustic guitarist in the Rolling Stones touring unit.



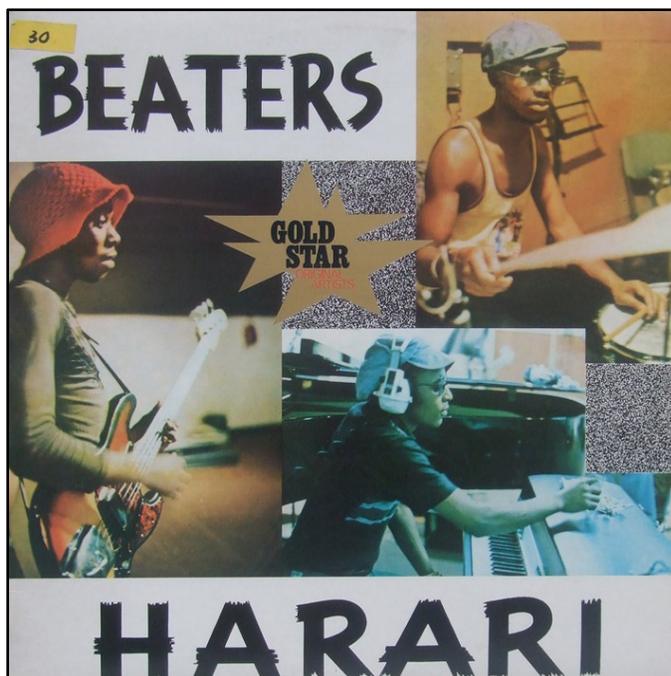
Steve Fataar, however, returned to Durban to become something of a legendary figure on the burgeoning Durban underground rock scene. Among those who fell under his influence was Michael Flek, at the time a disaffected music-and style loving teenager of Czech and Austrian immigrant parentage growing up in the stifling conformist suburbs of Durban, but soon to be the front man of South Africa's first fully-fledged punk band, Wild Youth. "The Flames single "For Your Precious Love" was the first South African record that impressed me and it still influences my music to this day," Flek remembers today from his contemporary home in London. "That single had a South African uniqueness in terms of vocal delivery and dialect, and most of all it is a record that is played with passion and which sounds real."

That quality of passion and the "real" was something in short supply in Durban during the early 1970s. "It was an incredibly boring, mundane existence. There was literally nothing to do," Flek recalls. "Every Friday or Saturday night you basically went out to a *jol*...which was just basically drinking and then there would a fight. People would start fighting towards the end of the evening. The predicament of being a young white South African in the 1970s was that by default being white we were part of the enemy...we were not the people who were being oppressed by apartheid, and for this reason we felt a sense of guilt."

Searching for ways out of the conformity of the suburbs, Flek began frequenting the far more exotic scene around the business district around Grey Street in downtown Durban. "Grey Street was in the Indian quarter of Durban and was an exotic place for a 14 year old, with its oriental fabrics, scent shops, cheap clothing and meat hanging on hooks outside the butcher's, complete with buzzing flies. Ajmeri Arcade running off Grey Street was similar to a Middle Eastern *souk* except with an African flavor, with *muti* shops selling ingredients for African witch doctors. I used to visit the shops there, buying comic books, imported clothes, and of course records. In 1971 I picked up The Stooges' *Fun House* on a local South African pressing. I bought it from Record King in Ajmeri Arcade. That record was mind blowing, so hard and powerful and

sleazy, and although I didn't know it at the time, funky and jazzy as well. Needless to say it got a scratch the first time it got played on a friend's portable record player but that that didn't matter as it sounded so dirty and fuzzy anyway."

With a burgeoning interest in underground music, it was perhaps inevitable that the young Michael Flek would cross paths with Steve Fataar. "He was a local legend, the man who left the Beach Boys and came back to Durban. The first time I met Steve was when I was a schoolboy, present at the recording of his solo album with his brother Izzy. During breaks in the session he taught me some Led Zeppelin licks on his Les Paul. Later he opened up his own club... I remember there being cushions on the floor where people could sit and chill out as they watched the bands. Looking back now, that club can be considered a statement in the face of apartheid, a venue where people of all races could hang out and listen to different types of music. All the bands connected with that scene around Steve were pretty unique and diverse."



The Beaters were to prove even more of an anomaly in terms of the cultural diversity of their musical sources. Formed in Soweto by the teenage Sipho "Hotstix" Mabuse under the direct inspiration of the late 1960s hippie movement, the band openly acknowledged the Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin, and Deep Purple as major influences while also drawing on local styles such as jive and mbaqanga. Their debut LP, released in 1969, combined all of these as well as several forms of American black music, and marked one of the main foundations of what would come to be known as "Soweto Soul" in the decade to follow.

The band appealed to the hipper side of township audiences, and went on to tour the entire Southern African region. A pivotal tour of Rhodesia in 1976 inspired Mabuse to write what became the band's signature song, the organ-driven Afro-rock anthem "Harari," named after what was then merely the name of a township on the periphery of the state capital of Salisbury. The band changed their name to Harari to reflect the growing importance of both this song and their own growing awareness of African identity (Salisbury itself was to follow suit after Zimbabwean independence in 1980). Even so, several of the songs on their first album recorded under the name Harari still demonstrate the strong imprint of early 1970s hard rock, with the inclusion of guitar solos and Western-style drumming alongside the more obviously African influences in the band's ever-evolving sound.

One of the leading Soweto-based bands of the mid-1970s, The Movers, played an infectious brand of township soul that was infused with marabi and jive but also clearly influenced by Western rock music. Their hit song "Crying Guitar" prominently featured a wah-wah pedal,

and the group performed cover versions of “Hey Jude” and Creedence Clearwater Revival’s “Have You Ever Seen the Rain” as well as the Bob Marley-penned Johnny Nash hit “Guava Jelly” alongside their more famous bump jive classics. Even the undisputed star of the mbaqanga scene, Mahlathini, known as “King of the Groaners,” recorded a hit single which drew musical and lyrical inspiration from the white rock culture. His “Wozani maHipi” incorporated Meters-inspired funk-rock drumming and heavy distorted guitar into the mix, and featured Zulu lyrics which roughly translate to “*The hippies are coming to Soweto.*” It was as much open invitation as cultural borrowing.

A glimpse of bearded white students became an increasingly common sight at certain events in the townships, such as the 1974 Soweto Jazz Festival, and even in the occasional *shebeen*. Around the same time, the Afro-jazz guitarist Philip Tabane and his percussion ensemble Malombo publically jammed with members of Freedom’s Children in Durban. As Ramsey MacKay recalled, “We played with them when it was against the law to be onstage with a black person. We played to a packed Durban City Hall with skeleton masks and our hands painted white under florescent lighting. This was the first time a black and a white band had played on stage together. We were at the forefront of the political situation. We were hounded by the police.”

One of the epicentres of this sort of boundary-crossing was the Free People’s Concerts hosted annually at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) in downtown Johannesburg from 1972 onwards. These attracted a racially diverse and musically open-minded audience that would have been unthinkable only a few years earlier. In direct defiance of laws which forbid public gatherings between different races in public, these events featured a broad variety of traditional and jazz styles and occasionally presented multi-racial acts onstage, as the university’s traditional status as an academic community shielded them from direct police intervention. Some of the earliest public performances of Johnny Clegg with Siphso Mchunu (as part of the Zulu folklore group WaMadlebe) took place under the auspices of the Free People’s Concerts, which showcased everything from gumboot dancers to Irish folk music alongside topical South African singer-songwriters like Jeremy Taylor and Colin Shamley, and by the end of the decade, some of the country’s first wave of punk bands as well.



The university’s long-standing tradition of liberalism made it a magnet for all manner of non-conformists, malcontents, and aspiring radicals. A bastion of resistance to National Party ideology, Wits counted future Nobel laureates Nelson Mandela and Nadine Gordimer among its alumni. The staff and students had protested publicly against the enforcement of apartheid

education restrictions in 1959, and the university's Great Hall had hosted the initial production of Todd Matshikiza's legendary South African jazz opera *King Kong*. In the early 1970s the students had become even more radicalized in the wake of a series of nearby political events – the 1973 trade union strikes in Durban, the overnight collapse of the Portuguese colonies in Southern Africa, and the rise of Steve Biko's Black Consciousness Movement.



Among them was a young architecture student named Ivan Kadey, who would soon form the most radical rock group of his generation, the multi-racial punk-reggae band National Wake. Kadey grew up an outsider, a Jew and an orphan, in both the traditional immigrant neighbourhood of Yeoville and the conservative provincial city of Bloemfontein in the Orange Free State. "Being born into a system of gross inequity was inevitably formative," he remembers from his home in Los Angeles. "There was no way that any reasonable being could escape awareness of the brutality and oppression of life in South Africa. I remember the humiliation and suffering I witnessed as a child, the beating of a young African man by a policeman wielding a *sjambok*... there was something totally repulsive in the manner with which the police behaved with everyone. As long as I can remember, I was conscious of the injustice of the situation and identified with the underdog."

Arriving at Wits in 1970, he had already immersed himself in the protest-folk movement and begun to develop a political consciousness. As Ivan Kadey describes it, "In South Africa, many of us of that age felt totally a part of the revolt of the times. In my last year at high school I formed a duo with a friend. We performed weekend nights at the Hillbilly, a local folk venue, a repertoire of largely protest songs and a handful of my own compositions."

As the 1970s went on, Kadey took part in the student opposition politics and non-conformist

activity at the school, staging performance art actions to express his revolt. He soon became part of a network of alternative lifestyle communes that had started developing in the decaying neighbourhoods near the university. Kadey remembers: "Wits was largely a commuter university. Parents had near breakdowns when their kids left to move into one of these 'dens.' It was seen as a complete rejection of the conformist way - which of course it was. Communes became a way for the more independent and rebellious to break away from their parents' control, or to get away from the university authorities."

"I lived in a Parktown commune, a large old house dating from when this part of the city had been the domicile of the richest strata of the booming mining town. At that point in time the area was in transition as the old houses were being transformed or demolished. Our neighbours on one side still maintained their estate in fine colonial fashion, with a manicured garden replete with swans. We were left alone to pursue our alternate lifestyle as long as we could meet the monthly rent...we inhabited a crack in the city's evolving culture, a fissure between a distant past and a slowly approaching future."

"There were other communes still surviving in the neighbourhood, although not as many as earlier in the decade," Kadey says of the era. "There was an active alternative culture dating back forever in Joburg, most recently manifesting as hippies, and sharing the sacraments of rock music, marijuana, and free living people. Literacy groups producing materials for worker education...carpentry co-ops, living according to the principles of Robert Owen... ashrams, rock and roll bands, drug addicts, artists, free-thinkers. The network really stretched throughout the country."

Ivan Kadey's commune began existence along similar lines. "It started as typical white kids seeking a non-conformist communal pad. The members were artists, musicians, dancers, Buddhists, students. Being a haven, non-conformist and racially open, we also had a few black people wandering in and out." Due to the requirements of apartheid pass laws which controlled movement in and out of areas racially classified as "white," some of like these acquaintances, such as the jazz guitarist Allen Kwela, began staying over at the house on occasion. As a result, the house inevitably began to attract the attention of the police. Kadey remembers that one day "police dressed in jungle camouflage...went through a quick inspection of the house. Nothing serious developed, but it was the first time I saw cops in military riot squad dress, and it led to my song 'Orange White and Blue (Mayhem)' with the lyrics *"arrange, derange, classify colour, send the jungle to the city, take the children from the mother... blue-grey men are doing it again, separating the dark from the light, in the black African night."*

Another of the regulars at the commune was Mike Lebesi, a Sotho percussionist known as "One-Eyed Mike." Lebesi was born in the traditional rural area of Thaba'nchu in the Orange Free State and had spent a large part of his childhood and adolescence in Parktown, living in maid's quarters with his grandmother and getting to know the Jewish family she worked for. According to Kadey, "He had the Parktown culture down, and moved quite freely between the city, Soweto, and the countryside."

The similarities in their backgrounds inspired a certain musical rapport between the two, and music became part of their connection. "I got my first electric guitar in 1974. The playing of Phillip Tabane and Malombo captured my imagination - the example of solo guitar with African drums alone. This led to my jamming with Mike Lebesi for hours on end. I got my first

Bob Marley albums, *Rastaman Vibration* and *Natty Dread*, in 1976 and was taken body, soul, and mind by the totality of his music, including the social conscience."

By this time, the political situation in South Africa was worsening on a daily basis. From Kadey's point of view it now seemed that "the apartheid state was actively becoming more repressive. There were reports of people dying in detention, 'slipping on soap' and 'jumping' out of sixth story windows. The government finally introduced television in early 1976, possibly believing they would be able to exercise even more complete control of the population by feeding a diet of propaganda to the masses."



On June 16 things finally came to a head. In protest at the introduction of Afrikaans as the primary language of instruction in secondary schools, mass protests among schoolchildren broke out in Soweto. What had been planned as a peaceful rally in support of a school walk-out turned violent after police barricaded the route of the march. The resultant rioting brought a heavy-handed police response that left hundreds dead, and the images of the event broadcast around the world definitively changed both the already tense situation in South Africa and the general perception of the anti-apartheid struggle outside of the country.

It also marked a turning point for Ivan Kadey. "The example of the children, their resolve and steadfastness, made me examine my own resolve and commitment to change. I knew the nature of the struggle had entered a new phase, and the days of white rule were numbered." Kadey returned to the stage with a renewed commitment to the liberation struggle. In 1977 he was offered a support slot by political singer-songwriter Roger Lucey (whose own career as a musician was effectively ruined during the 1980s due to police interference) at one of Johannesburg's most important alternative venues, the Market Theatre. "I played one of my compositions, "I've Been Around This Land." That was pretty crucial for me, getting up and performing in public for the first time in many years."

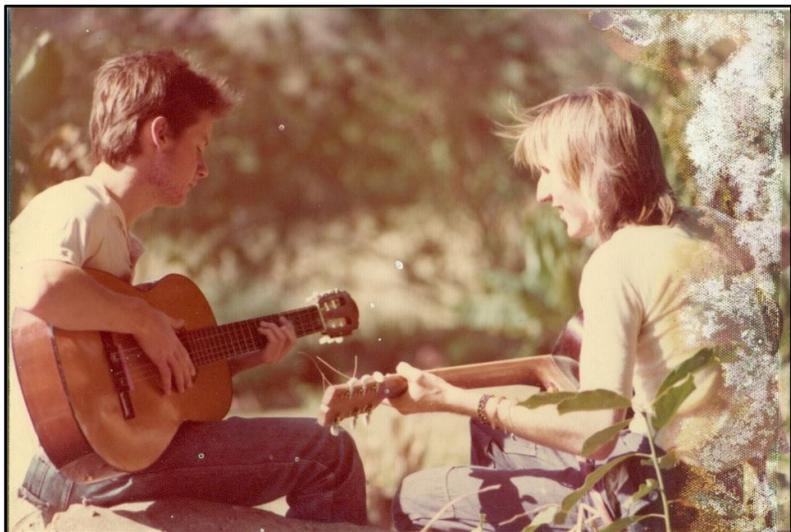
That rising anger soon found a perfect vehicle for unprecedented expression when Lebesi introduced two new members to the Parktown jam sessions - a rhythm section consisting of brothers Gary and Punka Khoza on bass and drums respectively. Kadey remembers that "one day he arrived with the Khoza brothers and we got into some really exciting music. I had been putting material together with another Joburg musician, Paul Giraud. We started jamming as a five-piece with Gary on bass guitar, Punka on drums, Paul on lead guitar, Mike on congas and cow-bell and myself on rhythm guitar. We worked up a set of songs with all of us contributing, and decided to stage a gig. Without any overt discussion we all knew what we were embarking

on, and were totally charged up and ready to go.”

The Khoza brothers immediately began to put their own unique stamp on the music being created. Gary Khoza was a well-respected multi-instrumentalist on the Soweto Soul circuit, having been a child star at the age of twelve in the hit late 1960s township act Flaming Souls and more recently playing with a heavy funk band called The Monks. His younger brother Punka had a background in radical theatre, a potent cultural force in 1970s South Africa, also bringing to the nascent scene developing in Parktown his own growing spiritual connection to Rastafarianism.

Rasta culture and its notable accoutrements were largely alien in South Africa at the time, and as a result those sporting dreadlocks and pan-African colours often found themselves shunned or regarded with suspicion even in the townships, let alone in the supposedly “white” areas such as Parktown, where the Khoza brothers soon found themselves living by default. Jamaican culture was far from unknown in the local context though – the writings and thought of public intellectuals such as Marcus Garvey and Claude McKay had been well-known in Africanist intellectual circles for decades, and the arrival of the self-proclaimed “first Third World superstar” in the person of Bob Marley brought a similar level of awareness into the mainstream.

Jamaican music in the broader sense had a longer history in South Africa, with the first locally-produced ska record having been issued as far back as 1965, when Gallo Records released the single “Midnight Ska” by Reggie Msomi’s Hollywood Jazz Band. Msomi was a cosmopolitan swing bandleader and composer of hits for Miriam Makeba and others who also recorded a number of twist, jive and Latin records aimed at the jukebox market, before also trying his hand at the



emerging West Indian sounds of the independence era as well. And although an authentic local variant of reggae would not definitely enter the scene until the advent of the Dread Warriors and Lucky Dube in the 1980s, attempts to cash in on the popularity of early reggae instrumentals in Britain had seen the release of a few curious South African attempts, mostly by rock session musicians, at playing reggae throughout the 1970s.

At that stage, however, the local record market was already busy discovering the harder stuff. “In 1976, I found a copy of *Garvey’s Ghost* in a record shop in downtown Durban, which was the dub version of the album by Burning Spear...for some reason that was a really popular record among the local audience at the time,” recalls Warrick Sony, by then a committed collector of any interesting new sounds he came across on vinyl. “Having gotten deep into the bass guitar, I

was busy checking out the sound of African bass players, especially that plectrum sound some of the Zulu guys had back then. So I could really get that sense of space in dub, the unity of the whole, that it was all about the beat, on the one. That opened up a whole other way of looking at music for me. And then punk happened in 1977. My dad went to England on business and I gave him a list of stuff to buy for me. So I got the Boomtown Rats, the first Clash, the Pistols, and Patti Smith's *Horses*. Quite a weird assortment in a way but punk was about content, singing about actual politics."

Although this initial impulse of the sound of the emerging punk movement as heard on records may have arrived from abroad, it immediately found a powerful reverberation within the local context. "The most important thing about punk for us here in South Africa was the writing and singing of songs about your own reality," says Sony. "And that's the politicisation, which was always the army. Being forced to go into the army, all of a sudden apartheid affected you. Up until then, white guys had a good life. I think a lot of those guys never thought about much until they were chucked into the army."

For Kadey and his Parktown friends, who would soon coalesce in the pioneering multiracial punk-reggae band National Wake, the nascent rebel rock of England also appeared at exactly the right moment. In the period after the Soweto Uprising, South Africa had all the right ingredients for a genuine revolution – political unrest, racial bigotry, radicalised youth, and a long-repressed need to speak out – and with this new music Kadey heard something that matched his own feelings. "The whole sound, the attitude just matched the way I was feeling at the time, about living in South Africa, about many things. The idea of just putting something out there without any ceremony or formality appealed to me. That to me was punk."

"As punk and New Wave came down the pike, things just seemed to come together to make the musical climate more conducive to the possibility of my contributing to the scene, from the tradition of protest I was rooted in. You have to understand the state of near paralysis that living in a fascist society produced in me, as I'm sure it also did in others. At what point does one just say 'fuck it, I'll take a fucking bullet if I have to, but I'm going to get up and sing my fucking song?' I think that point is 'punk'."

In the coastal suburbs of Durban, Michael Flek was rapidly coming to similar conclusions. "You must remember that in the suburbs we were living in a really redneck environment...the entertainment for a lot of the male population consisted of heavy drinking and fighting. I was going to the same parties, as there was often nowhere else to go, but living in my own parallel Warhol-Bowie fantasy world with my silver hair, thrift shop clothes, dog collar and make-up. Apart from a few isolated incidents I was lucky to survive unscathed."

"As time went on I met more like minded souls, things became more interesting and a more arty scene evolved. If there had been other groups on the scene, maybe we wouldn't have started one. We basically started it to entertain ourselves, really. If you were interested in anything artistic, it was a wasteland of nothingness, just boredom. And we were giving people what they didn't have otherwise." In early 1978, Flek founded what was essentially the first true punk band of note in South Africa, the now-legendary Wild Youth. Within a few months of forming, the band had worked up a setlist of original material and was headlining its own concerts, sometimes to audiences of several hundred people.

The era of cover bands and touring oldies package tours by over-the-hill foreign acts was quickly coming to an end. The first recognisably New Wave groups were appearing on the local scene, and one of the most striking features of this sound was that for a change, most of the songs were being performed in unmistakably South African accents. The first of these to make a major impact nationwide were the Radio Rats, a distinctly original New Wave group from the mining town of Springs near Johannesburg who were essentially a loose collective based around the highly individual singer-songwriter Jonathan Handley. Their first single "ZX Dan" was released in 1978 to an unexpectedly strong response across the country, emboldening the fledgling South African punk scene. Suddenly, the idea of making a record combining the energy and excitement of punk with locally-derived mannerisms and lyrics felt not only possible, but within reach.

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"It was around this time that I wrote arguably the best Wild Youth stuff, free from other people's influences and opinions," says Flek. "Those first songs were straight from the heart. We wrote catchy songs at a time when very few groups in South Africa wrote their own material. We also believed in rock and roll and played it with passion. We also saw the way things were going at a time when few young people of our age were willing to look beyond the sterile mainstream. But I wanted the band to be edgy, glamorous, arty, rocky, sexy and entertaining, to take people out of the doldrums of their everyday lives, and for a year or so we succeeded. We drew our influences from everywhere and the palette was endless."



The energy and optimism around Wild Youth reached its peak in late 1979, when they became the first self-proclaimed punk band in Africa to release a record. Done in the proper DIY spirit of the times, the seven inch

single of "Wot About Me?" was self-released and featured a striking black-and-white graphic design in lieu of a label, set in stark contrast against its plain white sleeve. Embodying all of the elements of the style, sound and attitude of Wild Youth, "Wot About Me?" combined a catchy tune built around a relatively simple structure but featuring some unusual guitar chording with

the powerhouse drumming of Rubin Rose, later to be known as “the godfather of SA punk” after emerging as one of the leading figures of the militant anti-apartheid Durban hardcore scene of the 1980s. Michael Flek’s lyrics were essentially a classic rock ‘n roll boast but also reflecting the growing concern with South African identity and local issues:

“I don’t want to talk about Sid Vicious / I don’t want to talk about Joe Strummer / I just want to talk about / About me.” Years later Flek was careful to clarify the song’s intent, saying “This is not an anti song. We liked all the people mentioned. We were just saying that we wanted recognition in the same way as the people in the song. It was written in a small town in the middle of nowhere. The song then took on further meanings as a general cry for recognition by young people, a clarion call for the disaffected.”

Looking back on the period, Warrick Sony acknowledges that “the do-it-yourself ethos of punk propelled many of us to forge ahead and write songs about the world we knew. A small club scene developed and spread to the major cities. Bands sprang up all over...from Durban, Cape Town, Johannesburg. All felt a need to reflect a South Africanness, to sing with South African accents and be true to our experience. Songs about the army, or girls from Boksburg, or police stupidity or general white fears were what it was all about. Punk was great because it was liberating and it was fun, everyone was in a band. You didn’t need to know how to play music. In fact, that was where some of the best music came from. Not only was there a movement, but there was a wonderful common ground, a common enemy and a moral centre. Within that, you had bands like National Wake, but also political platforms like the End Conscription Campaign.”

Within the space of a single year, this scene had attracted a significant audience and enough media attention to merit the release of the first all-South African punk and New Wave album. Also in 1979, the former teenage underground rock fan Benjy Mudie, now a forward-thinking A&R at WEA Records, brought out the compilation *Six of the Best*, assembled and produced by him to showcase six diverse bands drawn from the emergent scenes around the country. By year’s end, the movement had even grown ambitious enough to attempt the first punk tour, the ill-fated “Riot Rock” tour of the Western Cape. Along with Wild Youth from Durban and the newly-formed National Wake from Johannesburg, this also featured the first punk-inspired bands to have emerged in Cape Town, New Wave rockers Safari Suits and the edgier Housewives’ Choice (a somewhat later edition of which would feature Warrick Sony, by then recently discharged from compulsory military service, on bass guitar).

Although the tour ended badly and was considered a failure by many of the participants – due in no small part to the myriad problems encountered by National Wake as an openly radical multi-racial punk band trying to travel between small towns in what was essentially an authoritarian fascist state – the seeds were sown for a revolutionary phase in South African popular music. The coming decade would prove to be the most violent and contentious in the history of the country, but the alternative music scene would be present in the discourse from the beginning, and would have no problem making its demands heard. The struggles of the 1980s would be multi-faceted in nature and would require the articulation of numerous responses to an increasingly dire situation. However, this time around, there was no doubt that the DIY spirit, sense of individual freedom and radical alternative impulse of punk would be there to provide one of them.

For more information:

www.punkinafrica.co.za

Soundtrack to the article. Vintage underground rock, 1960s garage, psychedelia, township funk and proto-punk from South Africa, 1958-1980:

<http://soundcloud.com/punk-in-africa/orange-white-and-blue-roots-of>

Photo Captions

1. Suck performance, 1970
2. Otis Waygood Blues Band, 1970
3. Otis Waygood and Freedom's Children headline underground rock festival in Johannesburg, June 1970.
4. Abstract Truth, early 1970s
5. Suck at Selbourne Hall, Johannesburg, 1970
6. Hawk, circa 1973
7. The Flames, early 1970s
8. Album cover for The Beaters, Harari, 1975
9. Free People's Concert at Wits University , mid-1970s
10. Architecture student Ivan Kadey, 1973
11. Mike Lebesi in Parktown, mid-1970s
12. Aspiring musician Warrick Sony (at right), 1976
13. Early Wild Youth gig flyer, September 1978
14. Wild Youth concert in Grey Street (Michael Flek in centre), Durban, 1979

LAST LETTER FROM LYNDHURST

A SHORT STORY

By Chris Madoch

1953.

New Forest ferns glazed by New Forest rain, lit ginger and steaming in a rush of late January sun. A small boy spilling from the green bus, I'd breathe in deep this natural familiarity, hold tight to a navy blue gloved hand and wait to cross the main road to a safer haven.

Lyndhurst- the blacked out by war village, with recent living memories of Southampton under fire. The skies crowned by flame. The hot bricks on the dockside screaming.

And near, this was. So near the fear was vivid.

Now driven by peace to dead normality, its Game Butchers dressed with pheasant and hare, blaze with blood and lights. The saddlers bright as polished conkers.

Familiar sounding soft tracks underfoot, a meld of New Forest mast and mulch that hushes the crunch of ancient gravel. And there, amongst the trees, a chunked up, gravel coated house, detached and friendless, moated by lawns and picket fencing. Jane's new place. Her spoils.

We're at the longest hour of careless scones and jam tarts.

My quiet Welsh mother visiting her loud Welsh friend at friendships end. All the shared memories of war too sticky to escape, they decide. Too tricky to sidestep.

Reconciliation out of the question. Broad backed smiles masking bitter tears.

Smashing things.

The mocking house a victory for self promotion. A grave place.

The building of it all begun before I was born.

*

1948.

Early August. The sun a piper leading all of the southern counties a dance.

Two school age children at play in allotments. Marion in short sleeves and a flowered pinafore, at a gate with dry washing and a newly delivered letter, the postman whistling further west. A love letter, or at least, what would pass as one.

At a pinch.

The terraced neighbours nosy, too knowing, English, too eager to be read to. News see. But the privacy of it would not be shared. Marion swiftly slipping from sunlight into shadow, shifting from one sensibility to another, planning tea for only one.

Inside her own terrace the treasures singing. Sacred spaces, buffed and spotless. A cave of bleached bedding and lavendered wood. The radio off.

Home.

The war newly waned.

In deep shade and quiet, she's letting things brew.

The small but potent envelope waiting to be opened.

She stirs her tea. Sips.

And then attacks. The ripping of the paper loud as gossip.

'My dearest Doll....' The pet name more powerful now than head pain. The heart glowing. The tear ducts near to overflowing.

Sudden, sharp focussed remembrances of love making with the light off, muscle to velvet in silence and dark. Finding pleasure hard to take.

In tear soaked, emotional fingers the lovelorn note reduced to a rag.

The gist of it being he'd be home tomorrow. *Da*. Gone again come Monday. Hardly time to kiss the children. No wounds to talk of, but less than half a husband on account of the war.

A husband's fighting for Queen and Country happening differently from most. His particular mining skills weighing in at a higher premium than the mere spilling of foreign lives in foreign killing fields. He was bussed to the midlands to make mining coal safe in the hands of conscientious objectors.

No romance there.

No cap and badge. No uniform. No wings. Just toil.

The long days darker than the shorter nights. No manly moments empowered by savagery. No joy to mention.

His Welsh letters home, blunt and bloodless.

Doll broody and now excited, in spite of everything.

*

She shares the good news with Jane. A friend.

Jane next door- the local whore.

'You'll be sorted girl. I fancy. Good and proper. Come tomorrow night he'll have those eyes alight like it was Christmas. Dick isn't it? That's Dick by name and Dick by nature- put my life on it.'

Marion, taken aback 'Well. It has been six months.'

'There's eager. Don't expect he'll be sleeping much. You got nylons love? I'm groaning in them as you know. You only got to ask.'

Marion, demure 'I don't think so. But thanks. Fresh cotton, that's more us.'

'Please yourself.'

Back on her own patch, Marion holding tight to her understanding that simple pleasures deliver the most satisfaction. You could ache for complication and be tortured by the consequences. You could dream of sophistication and die of fright in your sleep. Simple pleasures. Anything manageable. That was the company she intended to keep. He'd ease himself inside her and she'd steal his seed.

Plain and simple.

All night she lay awake- made party to the sex action beyond the party wall.

Jane's husband still stuck in Dieppe, up to his neck in soiled bandages, none the wiser. And, in any case, said to be of the opinion that things will happen as collateral to war, that there's no escaping the inevitable breaking down of law and order. That it's everyone for themselves and no mistake.

There was no mistaking the animal noises emanating from next door.

Marion had counted three male voices. American accents, no surprise there. There were American service men based not far from Ringwood.

Jane always said she wanted jam on her chocolate. She was succeeding. Jane was getting chocolate on her jam. How entrepreneurial was she? Jane was making a tidy and substantial profit out of a conflict that had already brought the mighty Bank Of England to the brink of ruin.

America, like some reluctant lover, finally coming to the rescue.

Besides, what do three men get to do with one woman?

Marion listened out for clues in the whole cacophony of slap and tickle but slipped into deep sleep the matter unresolved. And in her lonely sleep she dreamed the sexually unimaginable. And in her dreams she finally let loose and reached an understanding. There's reproduction. And then there's sexual eruption. There's anything to trigger this profound shuddering. This bliss. The sound of suppressed screaming. The outpouring. The men spent and the woman solvent.

She understood it but knew that she could never do it.

The homecoming daylight cruel to her semi-nudity.

The mirror kinder, reflecting her dead mother. Skin like ivory. Eyes of coal.

The hair brush fierce through her sleep filled hair.

She'd cook.

She'd clean.

She'd be the *gwraig ty*, the wife and mother.

She'd oil the workings of his primitive machine with shepherd's pie, rice pudding and damson wine. She'd stain her lips with strawberries and offer up no sign of protest.

The sound of Jane re-energised, off early on her pilfered bike. Thighs lively. Panniers and basket full to bursting. A black market beckoning. Her ill gotten cornucopia certain to dissolve into cash.

Bricks and mortar, that's what she was really after.

'You heard me right the first time darlin' girl. I've been on my back so bleedin' much I reckon I deserve a house, post war, nothing chucked up. Nothing prefabricated. No way. I've set me heart on a brick built bugger, see. A real house with no attachments.'

'What does John say?'

'Oh. You know my old man. A canny bitch, that's what he calls me. We got plans though. Have you got plans?'

'No. Well, we didn't think, what with the war. The uncertainty.'

'There, see. You watch me. You'll be visiting me in five years time, jealous as hell.'

*

Dick's hair was thinning so he'd taken to caps, flat caps. This tweed one still in place as he delights his offspring with newness and whole chunks of a shared past fondly recalled. The huggy man returned. The tickly man revisiting. The man who reads a worn book well, before he tucks you in. The thin man rolling thin cigarettes. The man who smells of tar and brilliantine and strangeness. The man from some strange town afar. The *Da*.

'We love you *Da*.'

Da with the coal bits swimming like tadpoles inside him- in thin arms; on knotted hands; there, at the side of his head.

Da with the fingers to animate your spine.

Da with a voice to sail a Welsh hymn upon.

His Marion just now warming to the way he steals her space.

His Doll still coy at the way he steals a look at her- cotton fresh, violet breath, a mother's eyes with lover's lashes. Breasts like plumped pillows.

Goodnight kids.

Large eyes with heavy lids, his futures tiring and retiring up the wooden hill.

His naked body bright in the tin bath. Her hands a cure for all things wrecked and overstretched. The towels vast. Harsh and warm. His nightshirt cool and striped like candy, 'I've missed you.'

'Oh. Me too.'

'I've missed your breathing when the nightmares break.'

'Poor man.'

'I've missed your strength. Such strength in one so small.'

'Oh.'

'You know. You know.'

'I know.'

'Oh Doll, what is to become of us?'

Dark in the bedroom. The gloom like raw silk dyed a purple first, then black. The softness of it like a secret, loosed and fondling. His body awkward, geared to bite, goes licking first, then kissing every bit that he's been missing- lips, lips, tits and nipples. She starts arching as his thumb meddles, mingles, menaces. And then she's on him like he's never known. The outline of her lighting up as her hips bear down. His gasp a sound she'd only dreamed. The gasp a found thing caught and cared for like a broken bird. His bull's blood now too rigid to be lost. Flying they are. He meets her every rhythm with a crunch of pubic bone. The white stuff coming. Thrilling. Spitting. Hitting home.

And in the otherworldly aftermath a trace of Welsh laughter.

Her hand at his soft and hard parts, wondering and wandering.

Never was it ever this.

And then, again. Seconds. On a mission. He's at her once more, like a gentle Saint. Ordinary and wonderful. Complete.

She says she felt me be within the hour. Within the hour. And I believe her. Within the hour my whole division's up and on the march, and there's nature's birth angels waiting in the wings to guarantee the spark. The womb of choice trembling.

The silky wetness of her holistic bulb being triggered, undamaged and nurturing.

Then, also within the hour, he floods the room with unromantic light. Richard giving her a wrapped box the size of his second case. A surprise gift in brown paper, plain and simple.

'I hope you like it.'

Its a gift she'll hate. Oh Da.

'What is it?'

'Open it and see.'

*

The complete tea set was not at all to her liking. Not the shape. Not the colour. Not the pattern. Never in the history of things that somehow pass between husbands and wives was there anything more inappropriate. It was not a thing of beauty. It would grace nowhere. And it was, by any measure, not a ring or anything that might be construed as personal, intimate, for her eyes only. It was immediately unwanted and no more referred to until the hour following his departure whereupon Marion let fly. Each sorry piece being shied at the backyard wall until the box was empty. The resulting detritus being straight away returned to the box, and the box being finally consigned to the morning's dustcart.

It was good riddance to bad rubbish and nothing more was to be said about it ever. Not a peep.
All the neighbours tight lipped.

*

But Jane, curious 'How was it?'

Marion caught organising the abused dustbin, 'Oh. You know.'

'Well. Did he give you anything?'

'A baby.'

'No! How can you be sure.'

'I'm certain.'

'Did he give you anything else?'

'No.'

'Men! What do they know? For years I've wanted my *gwr*, my old man to bring me home a tea set. Proper china- you know the sort of thing, dinky.

'Yes.'

'Yellow roses on a white background. A flash of gold. Eighteen carat.'

Marion making her excuses, 'Got to go. I got sheets on the boil.'

'You lucky mare. I said he would didn't I. Lit you up like Christmas lights I bet.'

She was. He did. But she wasn't letting slip the details.

*

Tuesday. 8pm. The kids abed but restless.

Marion in a brown dressing gown and rag rollers, her head an explosion of unmatched bits. Feet in big slippers with zips and pom poms. She's curled like a cat in the pool of a side lamp, reading. It's a newspaper from up north, something to shed a little light on elsewhere. Dandelion soup and a dried egg recipe for caraway cake. Sale items. Missing persons. An arms factory setting up to manufacture cars.

Then quiet.

The kind of quiet no-one trusts.

Then sudden loud knocking at the front door. Twice. Crisp knocks with muffled voices.

She rushes to the bottom of the stairs. Children at the top, awake and curious. With one gesture she bids them stay and be quiet. They sit.

A third knock, ringing with insistence.

A final gesture and she's off, automatically moistening her lips and grooming her eyebrows.

Two bolts and a key.

Four American men, all swank and thank you mam. They smile ear to ear with big teeth. Four hats leaving full heads of hair in some attempt at manners. She is almost smiling back and knows at once that she is blushing.

'Good evening mam. We're the party.'

'What party?'

'Hell! Well, you sure do look like you forgot.'

Marion more self conscious than she can ever remember being, 'You've got the wrong door.'

'Is that so little missy?'

'Yes. Try the next left.'

'You sure are cute though.' Accompanied by sounds of collective approval.

'I'm going to close this door now. I have children inside.'

'Little lady you could have me inside and a lot more besides. We got chocolate. We got nylons. We got condoms. We got jam.'

She slams the door so hard it shudders. Bolts top and bottom, loud as gunshots. Turns the key like a bayonet on breastbone.

Then through the letter box, chanting, taunting, 'We know where you live. We know where you live.'

Marion, a worried back stiff against the door, breathless. Children at the foot of the stairs. They run to her shaking legs like anticipating dogs.

'Well?' Her hands in their puppy hair, firm, caring.

'Did you get the chocolate ma?'

'No, sweethearts. No. Mummy didn't get the chocolate.'

*

Clean sheets on the marital bed. Marion has her husband's soiled vest to bury her face in. Almost midnight and it is business as usual- music and mayhem seeping through the adjoining wall. God alive! Skin on skin times five.

I want her to sleep for the sake of my foetal development, but she can't. She resorts to remembrance.

His body awkward, geared to bite, goes licking first then kissing every bit that he's been missing- lips, tits and nipples. She starts arching as his thumb meddles, mingles, menaces. And then she's on him like he's never known. The outline of her lighting up as her hips bear down. His gasp a sound she'd only dreamed. The gasp a found thing caught and cared for like a broken bird. His bull's blood too rigid to be lost.

And what it was to give birth. Duw, Duw!

This same room, in her history's small hours filled up with doctor and midwife. A mixture of wood polish and disinfectant and pipe tobacco. The hedge proof jacket moist with night rain and perspiration. The pocket watch and chain a constellation of refracting stars. Hope

at the crossroads of life, death, love and hate. Nowhere to run to. Breaths short and shortening. No mam to cling to. No lucky cat. No man to shy expletives at. A small mixed choir of pain. The basses cruel and the sopranos merciless. No God now but the need to push. The almighty need to push. The unbelievable need to push.

Duw, Duw!

And then, what it was, with stitches in, to bury someone small.

The ivy glossy green on the cemetery wall.

Richard's pit worn hands cupping her tear speckled cheeks.

His valley kisses pure and cleansing like the summer rills of childhood.

A scream then. High pitched. Lowering. Long as a howl.

In a sudden, the party hushed like a snuffed candle. Jane's alto keening coming through the wall. A mournful song. Her sad complaint.

Eight feet on the stairs. The big door open and shut. The running sounds diminishing. Distance swallowing the empty men up.

Marion tasting ghost chocolate, then drifting into troubled sleep.

*

The next day, early, summer fertile with delight, her children racing in from the backyard, mischief and curiosity animating their faces.

'Look. Quick. Come. See.' they yell.

'Oh, I will. I will you bright, rapsallion pair.'

'Mummy. Mummy. Follow me.'

The yard is where the clothes lines hang. An arrangement not unlike a guitar, its strings taut between porch and outhouse. And if the wind blows right the whole thing sings, a little bit eerie, a little bit wild.

The yard is where the children track down fun and wonder.

Marion aghast.

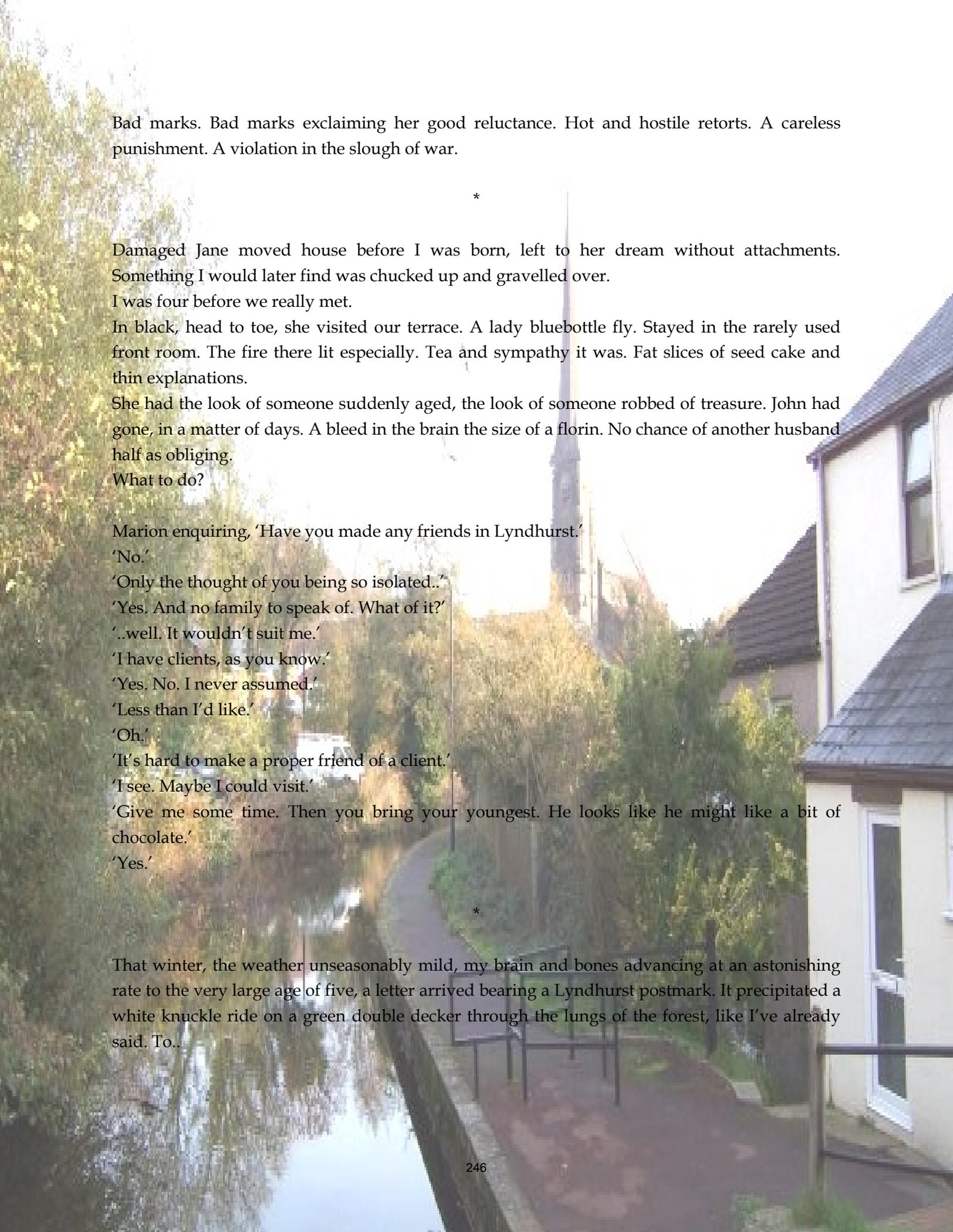
The living breath knocked out of her. Hands suddenly disabled, flapping, fumbling for bucket and cloth. Finally screeching like some deranged elfin creature, sending the confused offspring in, on the instant.

What to do?

What to do with six used condoms pegged to the wires? Big. Translucent. Wrinkled. All the knob ends full. American spawn like over boiled oat meal, grey and glutinous and loud with over kill.

Six spoons full?

Six wet exclamation marks.



Bad marks. Bad marks exclaiming her good reluctance. Hot and hostile retorts. A careless punishment. A violation in the slough of war.

*

Damaged Jane moved house before I was born, left to her dream without attachments. Something I would later find was chucked up and gravelled over.

I was four before we really met.

In black, head to toe, she visited our terrace. A lady bluebottle fly. Stayed in the rarely used front room. The fire there lit especially. Tea and sympathy it was. Fat slices of seed cake and thin explanations.

She had the look of someone suddenly aged, the look of someone robbed of treasure. John had gone, in a matter of days. A bleed in the brain the size of a florin. No chance of another husband half as obliging.

What to do?

Marion enquiring, 'Have you made any friends in Lyndhurst.'

'No.'

'Only the thought of you being so isolated..'

'Yes. And no family to speak of. What of it?'

'..well. It wouldn't suit me.'

'I have clients, as you know.'

'Yes. No. I never assumed.'

'Less than I'd like.'

'Oh.'

'It's hard to make a proper friend of a client.'

'I see. Maybe I could visit.'

'Give me some time. Then you bring your youngest. He looks like he might like a bit of chocolate.'

'Yes.'

*

That winter, the weather unseasonably mild, my brain and bones advancing at an astonishing rate to the very large age of five, a letter arrived bearing a Lyndhurst postmark. It precipitated a white knuckle ride on a green double decker through the lungs of the forest, like I've already said. To..

*Familiar sounding soft tracks underfoot, a meld of New Forest mast and mulch that hushes the crunch of ancient gravel. And there, amongst the trees, a chucked up, gravel coated house, detached and friendless, moated by lawns and picket fencing. Jane's new place. Her spoils.
We're at the longest hour of careless scones and jam tarts.*

They talked disease in the breasts and uneasy tests. Incurable. The word repeated and cried through- incurable.

Jane, cowed by her sexual history, certain she was done for. And she railed unreasonably at my mother for what she saw as piety. Why? Because she had a family. Because she had me. The two of them alternating bitter tears and schoolgirl tantrums with strained laughter and surreal calm. Jane gave me broken chocolate. Old chocolate. Chocolate from America. Sent me out in the garden. I wasn't hungry.

Instead I watched them spar through a sparkling French window. Circumstantial friends at the end of an ailing friendship, sipping tea out of white china, thick with painted roses- yellow with a splash of gold. Welsh ducks dancing lightly. Easing out the many woven threads. Undoing the doomed entanglement.

Jane strange, and visibly depleting.

Jane crying once more. Isolated and unstoppable.

Then, Jane suddenly shying her brittle tea cup at the window wall. My blue eyes dodging tea cup shards as sharp as splintered glass.

And in the following stillness, the smashed cup silence, charged with pain and pointlessness, I swear I could see the angel of death kissing Jane's cheek. He was stealing her scent. He was sampling her breath.

And on the miserable ride home, the evening sky dull and overcast, I finally squeezed the navy blue glove to find an answer. She knew before I asked, 'Did you see him mum?'

'Oh yes. Yes.'

'And will she..?'

'Yes. Oh yes.'

'And how will we really know?'

'There'll be a last letter from Lyndhurst.'

THE BLUE BIRD OF HAPPINESS ON A PLATE

By Alan Perry

1

Early on the morning after his mother died, Perkins went to call on his father. He expected to find him still in bed, but he was already up and at the kitchen sink, sleeves rolled, washing some dishes.

He felt alright he said. He'd had a reasonable night's sleep, three cold fish fingers from the fridge and a cup of tea for breakfast: 'I'm doing exactly what I normally do,' he said. 'Got up at the same time, made the bed, saw to the stove, washed, shaved, had breakfast and, as soon as I've finished these few things, I'm going to change and get the car out of the garage. Sit down and have a read of the paper - '

Perkins went into the front room with the previous day's Express and sat down by the television. The blinds were not drawn and although the room was normally dim-lit, light flooded in from the street. He sat looking at himself on the cold grey screen, sitting in the chair she'd sat in just before she went to fetch the coal, looking over the top of the Express while his father padded about somewhere overhead...

They drove East along the winding Valley road to break the news to Perkins' brother who lived an hour's drive away on a Council estate near Pontypridd. They didn't say much. Perkins' father concentrated on his driving and Perkins sat staring out of the window, rehearsing what he was going to say and how best to say it.

'There's a piece of paper in my top pocket,' his father said after a mile or two. 'Have a look at it and see what you think.' Perkins reached across and took the piece of paper from his father's breast pocket. Written on it, in copperplate handwriting was:

PERKINS - suddenly on May 1st at 73
Llewellyn Terrace, Fairfield, Alma
beloved wife of Cliff, mother of
Alvin and Nigel and Grandmother of
Sarah, David, Lyn, Mathew and Owain.
Funeral arrangements later.

'How does it sound?' his father said, eyes still fixed on the road.

'Okay' Perkins said.

'There's two e's in 'arrangements', isn't there?'

'I think you can spell it with one or two.'

'What about the punctuation - is that alright?'

'Fine,' Perkins said, replacing the piece of paper.

'I'm going to pop it in on the way back. It'll be in the Evening Echo tomorrow. One night - that's enough, isn't it?'

Perkins nodded. 'What about finances?' he said. 'D'you want to borrow any money?'

'It's only 60p for one night.'

'No - I don't mean that. I mean have you got enough to pay for everything. The funeral and all that.'

'Oh yes,' his father said. 'I've had that put by for a long time. Enough to bury Alma and me if necessary.'

Nigel was curled up fast asleep on a settee when they arrived and was still groggy when Perkins broke the news. He sat back down on the settee, waxen-pale, fully dressed but for his shoes and one sock. The kids were all in school and Anita had gone to her mother's for the day. His father handed him a carrier-bag full of old, cast-off shirts and pullovers which he'd been saving for him. 'Shall I make a cup of tea?' he suggested. 'You've had a nasty shock.'

'I'll do it,' Nigel said.

'No - I will,' Perkins said. He went out the kitchen and put the kettle on. While he was searching for cups and saucers he could hear his father giving a discreetly abridged version of how he'd come home to find the TV on and Alma's body outside by the coal shed. 'I'm not a bit surprised this has happened,' he kept saying, 'the way she's been running about of late. I've told her time and time again. She must have been just going to top up the stove before she went out -'

Nigel was rolling a cigarette from a tobacco tin when Perkins returned with the tea. 'And funny thing,' he said, biting a strand of tobacco from the thin little fag, 'I was going to phone her last night - I always phone her on a Tuesday, but for some reason, last night I didn't -' He lit the fag with a shaking hand and the whole thing shrivelled to practically nothing. 'I'll have to buy a suit then,' he said, ' - And what about a wreath?'

'Don't worry about the wreath,' his father said. 'I'll see to that - and you can pay me when you've got it.'

'And you can borrow one of my suits,' Perkins said.

Nigel took a last puff at the fag and flicked it into the grate. 'I'll have to tell Anita and the kids now,' he said. 'They'll be upset. They thought the world of Alma.'

'We're all going to miss her,' his father sighed, 'there's no doubt about that.'

'And what about you? What are you going to do now, Dad?' Nigel said. 'You can come and live with us if you like.'

His father shook his head: absolutely no way did he want to live with anyone else. He just wanted to carry on as he'd been doing all along. Except, of course, that Alma wouldn't be there...He reached in his breast pocket: 'By the way: this is what I'm putting in the Echo,' he said. 'See if it's alright.'

Nigel held the piece of paper in his hand and stared at it for a moment: 'Fine,' he said.

'One night - that's alright, isn't it?'

'Should be.'

They finished their tea and their father collected the three cups and took them out to the kitchen to wash. 'How's he been taking it?' Nigel asked while he was gone.

'Alright,' Perkins said. 'But I don't think it's sunk in with him yet.'

Their father returned from the kitchen. They had to go now, he told Nigel: there were things to be done. Nigel got up and saw them to the door. He couldn't come out he said because he had nothing on his feet. Perkins gave him a pound and so did his father.

'How d'you think he took it?' his father asked as they drove away from the Estate.

'Alright,' Perkins said.

'I don't know so much,' his father said, 'I don't think it's sunk in with him yet - '

On the way back Perkins and his father called in the Echo Offices with the notice. The afternoon was spent receiving calls, receiving callers, making tea, making arrangements, finding and getting and filling in the necessary forms and certificates. The phone and the door bell hardly stopped ringing, the kettle whistled non-stop. Everyone seemed to have a memory and a story to tell about Alma and her final hours.

Then, suddenly the house was empty again. It was mid-evening, shadows already darkening across the lawn, the room in semi-twilight. His father didn't put the light on. He sat down at the kitchen table in his shirt sleeves with the two halves of a broken pair of women's glasses in his hand and a small screwdriver.

There were two or three specks of dried blood on one lens. Slowly and methodically, as Perkins had seen him work a thousand times before, dismantling stoves and fires and wireesses, he removed the two small screws that held the plastic arms. He pocketed the arms, crossed to the stove with the two eye pieces and removed the lid: 'These are no good now,' he said. Perkins jumped up from the table: 'No! I'll keep them - ' He took them from his father and put them in his pocket.

His father replaced the lid and sat back down at the table. He looked up the garden, drumming his fingers lightly on the table. 'Did you have last night's Echo, Alvin?' he said after a bit.

'No. Did you?'

'No.'

'Dispute again?'

'Must be.' His fingers broke into a light canter. 'They said that was over, though.'

'Must have flared up again.'

'Must have.' The sound of hooves faded into the darkness. 'Listen, Alvin,' his father said. 'I've been thinking of cancelling my Echo. There's no point in us both getting it. Do you think you could keep yours for me - when they start back again, that is?'

'Okay,' Perkins said. 'There's bugger all in it, anyway...'

'Surname?'

'Perkins.'

'Christian names?'

'Alma, Victoria.'

'Date of birth?'

'Five, three, o four.'

'Place of birth?'

'Bristol.'

Sleeves rolled up, pencil wedged behind his ear, the beefy Coroner slammed out the letters on his tiny typewriter, manhandling the flimsy carriage back and fore.

Perkins and his father sat on a bench, his father intermittently calling out the requisite information. It was a new Police Station – all glass and brick – situated on the outskirts of Town. From where they were, in a little office somewhere on the third floor, they could look out through a large plate-glass window and see cows lazily munching on the adjacent hill. Not yet 10 o' clock, the sun was blazing in a blue, cloudless sky. The sound of stammering typewriters wafting faintly along the maze of corridors formed a persistent undertone to the Coroner's loud hammering.

'CAUSE OF DEATH,' he said finally, lining up his margin: 'Massive Coronary.' He ripped the two sheets from the carriage and handed the top copy to Perkins' father who folded it up neatly and placed it in his inside coat pocket.

'Massive Coronary,' he said as they walked along the same corridor for the third time, trying to find their way out. 'I'd rather it was that than for the fall to have killed her - '

Friday morning, without telling his wife, Perkins went to a second-hand bookshop in Town and bought a remaindered copy of his first book for 15p. It had been marked down from 75p to 35p but when he came to pay, the assistant flicked through the pages and said he could have it for 15p.

He drove to the Chapel of Rest in Frog Street, circled it twice, and parked further on, on the other side of the road. He opened the book and searched through his pockets for something to write with. Eventually, he found a short stub of pencil in the glove compartment and, after a moment's thought, scribbled a brief message on the fly leaf.

The Chapel was an ugly-looking building of mock Tudor design with shop-sized frosted windows downstairs. A burly, flat-capped man, who looked as though he'd been crying, was just coming away. Perkins waited a while, then wandered over. A man with a black moustache and off-white hair yellowing around the sides, answered the door. 'My mother is lying in rest here, I believe,' Perkins said.

'What is the name, please?'

'Perkins.'

The man nodded: 'Yes, that's right. Won't you come in - '

'I don't want to view the body,' Perkins quickly explained. 'But I've brought a book- '

'Take a seat, please, Mr Perkins,' said the man. 'I won't be a moment.' He went out through a rear door, leaving Perkins alone in the little office. There was a lot of paperwork on the desk and a Daily Mail on top open at the Racing page. Sunlight streamed down through the top windows, which were not frosted, casting rectangles of light on the far walls. In a minute the man returned. 'Would you like to come this way, please,' he said.

Perkins stood up: 'I don't want to see her,' he said.

'But perhaps you would care to view the coffin - '

Perkins followed him along a short passageway which led to another room. It was wood-panelled and bare and full of rows of chairs. There were three coffins: one down either side and one in front of a kind of altar.

'There,' said the man, motioning with his arm. 'I'll leave you alone for a few minutes, Mr Perkins.' He went quietly out and closed the door behind him...

Perkins' wife was making the dinner when he got back. Up to her eyes in it at the stove: saucepan bubbling away, transistor blaring, washing machine at full blast, spin dryer gone berserk and the room misty with steam. She glanced up as he came in: 'What's the matter with you?' she said. 'You look as though you've been crying.'

'I went down the Chapel,' he said, flopping down on a chair. 'Not to see her. Just to leave one of my books. I asked the bloke if he'd put it in the coffin.'

'Which book was it?'

'Poetry. The first one I had published.'

His wife strained a saucepan into the sink, plonked it on the draining board and smiled: 'I think Alma would have preferred a good Agatha Christie,' she said.

The table was laid for five. His father stood in the middle of the kitchen: 'What do you think of these?' he said to Perkins.

'What do I think of what?'

'The shoes. They look alright, don't they?'

He was wearing a pair of flat, brown, tightly-fitting lace-up shoes which looked like a woman's.

'They're okay, I suppose.'

'A pair of Alma's,' he said. 'Pity to throw them out - and they fit perfectly.'

He sat down at the table. There were a lot of clothes down the house that Perkins' wife could have, he said: 'a sheepskin coat and a few other things. They're no good to me. You can come and get them whenever you like. And there's a pile of oil paints and stuff up in the back bedroom, too, you can - ' He closed his eyes in mid-sentence and held a hand to his face. The two boys exchanged bemused glances and stared at their grandfather. Perkins' wife placed a

steaming-hot plate of food in front of him and one in front of Perkins: 'Don't worry about things like that now, Cliff,' she said. 'There'll be plenty of time to sort that out later.'

'I had a letter from the Boss this morning,' Perkins said chirpily, stabbing at a potato. 'What a laugh! "Dear Mr Perkins, I write formally to extend the sympathies of your colleagues - " Formally! It's a wonder he hadn't put "Dear Sir" or "To whom it may concern".'

His father wiped his eyes. 'I had some nice letters,' he said. 'One from Councillor Mason and another from Mrs Brunswick and one from the Fairfield Police. People have been calling in all morning. They're going to miss Alma, there's no doubt about that.' He picked up his fork. 'Rosebud Browne has written a poem about her,' he said. 'She gave me a copy. She wants to send it to the Echo - but I don't want that. Alma wouldn't want it either.'

'What's it like?'

'You know the sort of stuff Rosebud writes. Well-meant but very soppy and sentimental - all about how wonderful Alma was and how much she'd done for Fairfield. All that sort of thing.'

'You'll have to tell her then,' Perkins said.

'I know. But I don't want to hurt her feelings.'

'Just say: thank you for the poem, Rosebud - you'll always treasure it, but you'd rather she didn't send it to the Echo. She'll understand.'

His father put down his fork. And then the Residents' Association were talking about starting a fund to have a seat put by the bowling pavilion in Warmley Park with his wife's name on it. But he knew that wouldn't come to anything. That was all talk. People said things at the time they didn't really mean. It was just soft soap.

Perkins' wife brought her plate over and sat down next to Owain. 'Oh, I don't know,' she said. 'Alma did a lot for Fairfield. Perhaps they really will do it.'

His father smiled and shook his head. No they wouldn't. It was human nature. That idea would just die a death. Once you were gone, you were soon forgotten.

Perkins and his wife exchanged glances. His father was silent for a moment blowing lightly on his plate, dispersing the steam. 'Funny thing,' he said. 'I had a dream about Alma last night. I was in the garden - Alma was somewhere about - when I heard this plane engine overhead: a humming sort of sound. Suddenly it cut out. I was expecting to hear it start up again but it had cut out completely. I looked up to see where it was but there was thick cloud about. Then after a moment, there it came - down out of the clouds, in three pieces. In one part was a girl with a crash helmet on and all the flying gear.'

'What happened then?' Perkins asked.

'I don't know. I woke up.'

'That's odd,' Perkins' wife said. 'Alvin had a dream about Alma, too.'

'Yes,' Perkins said. 'She was coming along by Fairfield Cross and I was coming the other way. "Can't stop," she said, "I've got to get home. I must hurry." I tried to make her walk but she rushed on ahead of me - weaving her way through all the traffic to cross the road. Wouldn't listen to me.'

His father sighed. 'I know,' he said. 'That was your mother all over. She never could take her time. Always had to do things in a hurry.'

4

Perkins lay perfectly still, feet together, arms at his sides, chin resting on the fold of the sheet, staring out at the Bay, counting the seconds between the lightship's flashes, imagining the bed to be a raft and the rooftops a gentle causeway down to the deep...

He knew she was awake, could sense it in the slight tension of her body next to his, but he carried on mutely counting: seven...seven...thirteen...seven...seven...thirteen...

'By the way, Alvin,' she said suddenly. 'You'll have to tell your father about those shoes - ' He swivelled his head: 'What about them?'

'He looks bloody daft in them. It's not the best of ways to keep your mother's memory alive.'

'What's wrong with that?' he said. 'If he wants to wear them, I don't see why not. He's not hurting anyone - '

'Yes, but if he goes out like that. And that jumper he had on - I'm sure that was one of Alma's. Tell him - for his own sake. He'll be wearing her knickers next.'

'OK,' Perkins said. 'If you say so. I'll drop him a gentle hint tomorrow: "Dad, take Alma's shoes off - you look bloody ridiculous in them - "'

'You know what I mean,' she said. 'Tell him - for his own sake...'

5

As people started to arrive, Perkins went up the garden. He wandered round behind the greenhouse, potching around, exploring the two ancient Anderson shelters that were there. They were cobwebbed and rusty and full of all sorts of junk his father couldn't bring himself to throw out: odd cuts of wood, parts of defunct machinery: a grass-catcher off a mower, bits off a bike and a Lambretta, broken garden tools - even a couple of his old toy soldiers and Dinky cars. He picked up a red plastic gun that fired suction-tipped darts and was surprised to find that it was loaded. He pointed it in the direction of an apple tree and pulled the trigger. It had a very powerful spring-release action that fired the dart with a loud twang. He strolled over to where the dart landed, picked it up out of the grass and reloaded. From where he now was, on the top lawn, he could see down through the kitchenette and living room. Shadowy figures were moving about and at that moment the front door was being opened and more people admitted. This time he fired the dart in the air to see how high it would go. It soared away above the line-post and the apple tree, arced and fell. He tried it again - and again: Twang! upward into the dazzling white...over...and down. Twang! Twang! Twang! In a next-door

upstairs window shaving, Mr Darlington, a good friend of his mother's was watching him. Perkins dropped the gun and strolled casually back up behind the greenhouse. He stayed there for as long as he felt he decently could, then went back indoors.

More flowers had arrived, so many now he had a job stepping over them all. They seemed to be everywhere: on the draining board, sink, floor, fridge, even across the top of the stove. His father wanted a list kept as they arrived – all the names and all the messages – and had given Nigel the job. Soon there was no space left inside, so they had to lay some on the back steps and on the flower bed. He went back into the front room, which was now quite crowded: people in dark best clothes standing awkwardly against walls or sitting stiffly in chairs, on stools, holding subdued conversation. He latched on to an elderly neighbour who looked lost and, for some reason, they stood talking about the man's elder son's experiences on the Imjin River in the Korean War. 'She was one of the kindest persons I've ever met,' he overheard an invalid Aunt telling his brother, '...heart of gold...' He drifted from the neighbour, who now looked even more lost, to his retired ex-Merchant Navy Uncle Billy whom he'd last bumped into six years previous in the Underground toilet near High Street Station. Now, after the initial greetings and handshake all he could think of for an opener was to ask about his Uncle's hiatus hernia which, he knew from his father, had remained untreated for years. It wasn't a subject his Uncle Billy wanted to be reminded of and it became obvious from his flushed expression and slightly slurred responses, that he'd had a couple of stiffeners before coming.

Perkins wandered into the parlour where Elsie, the home help and Mrs Withers were putting the finishing touches to a table full of sandwiches. He thanked them for all they'd done and drifted back out again.

The minister arrived and the service started. There were people standing outside in the kitchen and in the parlour. He stood by the front door next to the barometer, head unbowed, concentrating hard on not listening to the words. 'Life is not the candle, it's the flame,' said the minister. Nigel reached in the pocket of his outsize waistcoat, pulled out a pair of sunglasses and put them on. The Aunt started to cry – great stifled sobs shaking her whole arthritic body and the chair she sat in. Perkins stared at the oil painting on the wall: a copy of a Hobbema: an avenue of trees somewhere in France, painted from a picture postcard. He imagined himself walking away up the narrowing thread of road, past the steepled church – whose perspective had been all wrong until she'd got him to correct it for her – over the horizon and into the blue distance.

Liz would have to come and pick out what she wanted, his father said, opening the wardrobe door to display an array of clothes. He closed it again and turned the key. It was mid June and the sun was still shining. 'This bedroom's exactly the same as it was the day Alma died – I haven't touched a thing,' he said. 'I won't sleep in here again and nobody else will either. At least, not in my life'

time – ' He went back downstairs and left Perkins to it.

The back bedroom smelt of oil paint and damp. This had been Perkins' room. Ten feet by five, it hadn't changed much in eighteen years. It had been built onto the original house by some cowboy builders a few years before they'd moved in and they'd always had insulation problems with it. In summer it had been like an oven; in winter tiny icicles formed on the ceiling.

Here he'd spent interminable hours slogging away over Latin and Algebra and the odd Health and Efficiency. Here he'd written his first poem and had his first wet dream.

Now, although his father had tiled the ceiling and wood-panelled the walls and it still had a single bed, it was used mainly as a store room. There was an old oil heater in there, an electric fire and an assortment of books and magazines stacked in several piles on the floor. At one end of the room were two chairs, one with a painting on it: a seascape: somewhere in Cornwall – blue sky, brown cliffs, green grass on top slanting down to foam-tipped waves. It was on a piece of hardboard he'd given her – part of a panel off a bedroom door sawn up. He recognized the row of panel-pin holes along the bottom and the patch of canary yellow hard gloss showing through in a corner of the sea. On top of the cliffs, just visible through a thin wash of white, were the three houses he'd advised her to paint out.

He sorted through her paints, put what he wanted in a plastic carrier-bag together with some paint-smudged postcards of Gower scenes and went back downstairs.

His father was at the kitchen table sorting through some letters. He'd had the bill from Eynon's, he told Perkins: 'Two hundred and sixty three pounds fifty including V.A.T.' There was the breakdown if he wanted to see it. Perkins picked up the bill and glanced his eye down it: casket, robe, hire of cars, hearse – everything neatly itemized. His father handed him a plain, manila envelope: 'Then this came this morning,' he said. 'From the Town Hall. They've got a Book of Remembrance up in the Crem and you can pay so much to have an entry put in. I've circled the one I think I'll have.' Perkins emptied the envelope onto the table, It contained a pink and a green form and a two page brochure. The Book, it said, was beautifully bound in natural calf vellum and was composed of leaves of the finest sheepskin vellum, lettered by highly-skilled craftsmen. Kept in a protective case at the Crematorium, it would remain open each day at the appropriate page so that entries might be seen on each anniversary of the date of death. Opposite this general information was reproduced a facsimile page and a sample entry on this had been circled in blue biro:

Dawlings, Francis Marmaduke

1868. Love's last gift, remembrance. 1953.

'What do you think?' his father said. 'Do you think that's the best one?'

Perkins glanced down the list of other sample entries and nodded. 'I don't want anything too long,' his father said. 'It's £4.32 for two lines and then everything over that, of course, is more. But I think it's best to keep it simple.'

He took the brochure back and turned to the back page. You could have a Memorial Card as well, he said, or there was also a Miniature Book of Remembrance: "The Miniature Book has a full binding in vellum, gilt-edged with gold-blocked design, resembling the original Book of Remembrance. There is a title page and a four page centre on which, under the anniversary date is a handwritten copy of the original inscription as it appears in the Book." That's £7.56 - but I don't want to bother with that. Just the two lines is enough, I think.'

Perkins nodded and handed the envelope back. 'Yes, that's the best,' he said. 'The two-liner: not too short, not too long.'

7

Perkins sat on the settee looking out of the French windows at the rain-drenched lawns and the pink gravel drive where eight plastic 'boules' - four red, four blue - and two rackets and shuttlecock were randomly lying. Three towels and a bathing costume draped a hedge and beneath it a yellow and blue inflatable dinghy with two oars sticking out, lay stranded. It was mid afternoon on the second week in August somewhere in Northern Brittany. His wife was in the kitchen washing some smalls and the two kids were sitting down temporarily occupied filling in days one two and three of their holiday journals. They didn't have a lot to write about. Owain had devoted two pages plus an illustration to an abandoned life raft that had been hauled aboard on the crossing from Plymouth, and Mathew had written a graphic description of an incident in St. Malo the previous day, when Perkins had locked his keys in the car. It was going to be a long holiday. Perkins surreptitiously poured himself another glass of cheap red wine and knocked it back at a gulp. 'How many's that you've had now?' Owain said, without looking up.

'None of your business,' Perkins said.

'I'll tell Mummy.'

'You do and I'll - '

'Give me five francs for a comic then.'

'No chance - you've spent enough already.'

'I'm going to tell Mummy - '

Perkins jumped up just as his wife came in from the kitchen, wiping her hands in her apron. 'Tell Mummy what?' she said.

Owain smirked across at his father: 'Daddy's just drunk a whole bottle of wine,' he said.

She took a tablecloth from a drawer and spread it on the table: 'Don't worry - I know how much he's had. He wants to end up an alcoholic - it's a family tradition. Ah, well - it's his liver.

Perkins laughed: 'Don't be silly,' he said. 'You could drink gallons of this stuff and it wouldn't affect you. It's only 9% proof.'

She clattered some cutlery onto the table. 'We need bread,' she said. 'I don't mind when you get it as long as it's in the next ten minutes.' Perkins crossed the room, accidentally treading on Owain's foot as he did so. 'May as well go now, then,' he said.

Though it was still lightly drizzling, he decided to walk. It was about a mile and a half along a deserted main road to the nearest shops. He stopped at the telephone kiosk on the corner, went in, put two 20 centime pieces in the slot and dialled a number on the International system. After a buzz and a couple of clicks, he could hear a purring sound. It was a full half minute before the phone was picked up at the other end:

'Hello - Dad?'

'Alvin?'

'Yes.'

'Where are you?'

'France, of course.'

'Everything all right? What's the weather like?'

'Drizzle.'

'It's sunny here - '

'What're you doing?'

'I've just come down off your roof. I've been fixing that aerial for you. You should have a good picture now.'

'Thanks.'

'...Westward isn't too good, though. You'd have to turn it a bit to get that perfect - but then you'd lose out on the others.'

'Leave it then.'

'If I turned it just a bit you'd get all the channels but none of them perfect - '

'Leave it as it is then - you'll never get it perfect. Any letters for me?'

'Nothing much: a couple of bills, a few circulars - oh! and a letter from the Times Literary Magazine - '

'The Times Lit Sup!' Perkins exclaimed. 'What does it say!'

'Hang on a minute - I'll just go and get it - 'There was a long pause...A tall man in sandalled feet with a raincoat over his head, appeared outside the box. ' - Here it is,' his father said after a bit. The pips started to go. Perkins dug in his pocket and fumbled a few more coins into the slot. 'What does it say?' he said.

'Not a lot,' his father said. 'Not even Dear Sir - just "Thank you for sending the enclosed manuscript but we regret to say we are unable to use it on this occasion." No signature or anything. There's some of your poems in with it. Do you want me to send them on to you?'

'No thanks. It doesn't matter.'

'...Are you having a good time?'

'Great.'

'How's Liz and the kids?'

'Fine.'

'The garden's in a bad way with you.'

'I know. I haven't had time - '

'It's looking so bad because it's in full growth this time of year.'

'I know. I'll have to do it when I get back.'
 'I think I'll paint that gate of yours, too, now the weather's fine.'
 'It's alright, Dad - I'll do it.'
 'It needs a good scraping down and a primer of red lead first - '
 'It's okay - I'll do it.'
 'Take things a bit at a time, that's the best.'
 'Don't worry - I will. How's the dog?'
 'Alright - she's just around my legs now.'
 'Put her on.'
 'Okay. Hang on...she's by the phone now - '
 'Gypsy! Gypsy! Good girl, Gypsy!'
 'She's wagging her tail.'
 'Hello, Gypsy...good girl, Gypsy - fetch! Fetch!'
 'How's the car going?'
 'Like a bomb. I've only had one flat so far and a blown gasket.'
 'When!'
 'Only joking - '
 'It's no joking matter, my boy. Don't forget you've got a wife and two kids to think about.
 You mind how you go. There's some mad buggers driving about out there.'
 'I will. How are you, anyway? What've you been doing with yourself?'
 'Your aerial for one thing. Watching the cricket. A bit of gardening - and now your gate.'
 'Listen, Dad, there's a bloke waiting outside. Leave the gate to me. I better hang up - '
 'Alright, but you may as well wait for the pips - ' The pips started to go. 'So-long now then
 mind how you go in that car watch those kids don't get sunstroke and look after - ' His voice
 cut out and a high-pitched hum replaced it. Perkins put the receiver down and on his way out
 said 'Pardonnez-moi, monsieur,' to the man with the raincoat over his head.

8

Perkins and his family pulled up outside the house at two in the afternoon after five hours on the road. 'What's happened to the gate?' his wife said. 'It's red!'

Perkins switched off the ignition: 'Oh, I forgot to tell you,' he said. 'My father said he might paint the gate while we were away.'

'It looks as though he has. When did he say that - I didn't hear him?'

'In France,' Perkins said. 'I gave him a ring one day.'

'You didn't tell me,' she said.

'I forgot.'

'Well, I don't want it red. It looks terrible. It doesn't go with the rest of the house.'

'That's not the final coat,' Perkins said. 'That's just a primer.'

'I don't care what it is. I either want it off or I want it painted over - quickly.'

'OK, I'll see to it.' Perkins got out of the car and began organizing the unloading. They went indoors and were pulled up short by a strong smell of cat shit and a note pinned to the bannister:

Alvin and Liz,
Hope you had a good
time and were not too sea-sick. Dog
with me. Cat outside - I think... Some
fish fingers in the fridge and some
milk - enough for a cup of tea. You can
bring my present down later. HA HA.
Love Cliff
P.S. I painted the gate red. It's just
a primer!

'There you are,' Perkins said, handing the note to his wife, 'I told you it wasn't the final colour.'

The front door was ajar when he went down to his father's that evening. He called out and went through into the kitchen where his father was sitting at the table repairing an electric razor. He looked sunburnt and fit. 'Everything all right?' he said. 'I thought you might not sail. The forecast was terrible.'

'Gale Force nine,' Perkins said. 'A lot of yachts went down off Fastnet.'

'I know. It's been on the News. They're still looking for survivors.'

Perkins placed a bottle of Cointreau on the table.

'You shouldn't have bothered,' his father said. 'I was only kidding about the present. Do you want a drop?'

'Better not. I'm driving.'

'Have a drop of my ginger beer then - ' He got up and went into the kitchenette. 'Did you see the gate?' he called out.

'Yes.'

'What did you think of it?'

'Alright.'

'But that's only the first coat.' He came back in with two cups and handed one to Perkins. 'I'll do the second coat,' Perkins said.

'I'll do it,' his father insisted. 'I've got plenty of time now.'

They strolled up the garden with their drinks. The lawns were like billiard tables. A new crop of beans stood in regimental rows next to rows of spuds and onions and cabbages.

'The apples look good this year,' Perkins said.

'They haven't come fully yet,' his father said. 'Around early September they'll be at their best. I'll bring you some up.'

Perkins picked one and bit into its shiny sourness: 'You're right,' he said, tossing it away. 'They need at least a couple of weeks.'

They wandered round behind the shed where a huge bonfire was smouldering under a mound of clods and garden waste, a thin skein of smoke drifting lazily up from it. 'That's been going for weeks now,' his father said, 'ever since you've been away - ' He picked up a garden fork and raised the underneath of the pyre: there was an instantaneous crackle and rush of air as sparks billowed up in a thick white plume. He held the fork at arm's length as the flames took hold then dropped it abruptly as the whole of one side went up volcano-like. Smoke engulfed him. He cursed and swore, screwing his fists up to his eyes. Perkins stood back momentarily mesmerized as the flames leapt higher and higher, licking the lower leaves of next door's horse-chestnut, floundering up and filling its branches...

9

Perkins and his wife liked to think they had open minds on the subject of the Supernatural but Mrs Tyke, their near-neighbour, was really hooked on it - a spiritual main-liner, if ever there was one. She'd been going to one or other of the two Spiritualist Churches in Town three or four times a week for years - ever since her first husband left her with two kids, one on the way and an impossible mortgage to pay off. 'It gives you ope,' she was fond of saying.

All the little Tykes were converts too, and often accompanied her. They were always 'seen things' as their mother put it, and wandered around with mysterious, faraway looks on their pale-white faces.

'Ere's proof then,' Mrs Tyke had said out of the blue one morning almost a year after the funeral, as Perkins and his wife were getting into their car. It was the usual sort of thing. The night before, Mrs Tooze the Psychic Artist from Clydach had seen Mrs Tyke sitting at a sick bed and asked if there was anyone ill in the family. No - not that Mrs Tyke knew of. But then - guess what! - when she got home there was a note on the mat saying her little nephew was down with scarlet fever and would she please call in. 'There's proof for you!'

'Incredible,' Perkins had said and then, as he drove off, surprised his wife by asking if she'd like to go to the next meeting. His motives were purely literary he quickly added. He was interested as much in people's motives for wanting proof as in the proof itself - besides which, there was almost certain to be a story in it. His wife, who'd dabbled a bit in Ouija boards and had once been told, correctly, by an Irish gypsy that she was going to have her gall-bladder removed, readily agreed. Mrs Tyke was 'thrilled to bits' when they bumped into her again later the same day. She'd had a feeling they were going to go. The following Saturday would be the best time she said. That was when this Mrs Tooze was next reading. 'And I ope you'll ave somethin. She doan always get roun to everyone - but even if she doan is somewhere to go an, after all, it don't cost nothin do it?'

Saturday came and at ten to seven on a bright, sunny evening, they picked up Mrs Tyke outside her house. She was all dolled up to the nines and as excited as if she were going to the Top Rank for Bingo. 'Guess what!' she said as she got into the car. 'Ere's proof for you,' and she went on to tell them in vivid detail – all the way from the house to the Church – about Mr Connors her neighbour who'd recently died. 'E was always laughin at me and sayin "You'll be seein fairies next!" Well, I used to put the odd bet on for im down at the Bookies an last night at the Hoo Street Church there was a message for me from someone beginnin with C sayin "Aymarket, 3 o' clock." What d'you think of that? There's proof for you!'

The Church was in a back street behind Jake's Ice-cream Parlour and directly above a Second-hand Junk shop. A crumbling, red-bricked building with a paint-peeled wooden sign above the door, you'd easily miss it unless you were looking for it. They climbed the steep wooden stairway and were greeted at the top by a friendly, slightly effeminate young man wearing a woollen anorak, chords and sneakers: 'Thursday night's Medium,' Mrs Tyke explained.

The room was large and square and furnished like a Sunday School. Five rows of wooden chairs on one side, faced a dais on the other, on which stood a draped lectern, dominated by a large wooden cross on the wall behind. There was a small altar-like affair in front of this on which were a vase of flowers, another smaller cross, a Family Bible, a cardboard collection-box decorated with stuck-on wallpaper and, inexplicably, a pink fluffy toy elephant. An assortment of odd carpet pieces covered the floor and the walls were decorated with various biblical texts and pictures. One of these, Perkins recognized as being ex-Woolworth's: an early holographic depiction of The Last Supper. The room was day-lit and somewhere out of sight behind a heavy curtain next to the altar, Perry Como was singing Ave Maria.

There were only about eight other places already taken – mostly by elderly or middle-aged women – and they sat down in a near empty row, Perkins on the end next to his wife. Mrs Tyke leaned across: 'They sells raffle tickets in a minute,' she whispered. 'Thas the only trouble with comin early – but you don't ave to buy one if you don't want.' What were they raffling, his wife wanted to know.

'Is usually a box of chocolates – or a tin of somethin.'

'Ectoplasm,' Perkins suggested out of the corner of his mouth. The quip was lost on Mrs Tyke. 'On a Wednesday they aves an Ealin Service,' she explained, 'an next week they got a Flower Service – thas really good. You brings along a flower – any flower what you've picked yourself an ands it in in a marked envelope. No-one else mus touch it – so the flower's only got your aura on it. Is what they calls psychometry. You wanna come to that. Everyone gets a readin that night –'

There were about eighteen people scattered around the room and those who wanted to, had already bought a raffle ticket from the cheery young Medium who had manned the door. Perry Como suddenly cut out, all talking stopped and there was now a fat, pasty-faced woman wearing glasses sitting just head and shoulders visible behind the lectern. She had tightly curled black hair that stood out starkly against her white scalp and piggy blue eyes. An elderly

gentleman who looked like the late actor who'd played the late Jack Walker from Coronation Street – and may well have been him for all Perkins knew – stood up beside her and welcomed everyone to the meeting. 'Bless you! Bless you, friend!' called the young Medium from the wings.

'Well, it's fine out,' Jack Walker said, looking towards the window, 'but I know it will be fine inside, too, before very long.' He was simultaneously blessed from several quarters and, after giving a few brief announcements, said that before they began, Mrs Tooze would like to say a word. He sat down and Mrs Tooze sea-sawed up, not much taller now than when she'd been sitting. For such a big woman, she had a surprisingly small voice – refined and strangely old-fashioned – like a presenter on a 50's Children's Hour programme. She began with a short prayer for world peace and the protection of the animal kingdom and concluded with a proverb that most of those present seemed to already know, since they joined in reciting it: 'Always remember,' she said, 'that yesterday is tomorrow's today, today is tomorrow's yesterday and tomorrow is yesterday's today.'

Perkins was still trying to work that one out when the first hymn struck up – sung unaccompanied from green, typewritten song sheets. This was closely followed by a second hymn, during which a 'free-will donation' was taken. Then Mrs Tooze stood up again. She looked round the meagre congregation for a moment and pointed across the room at one of two elderly women sitting together. A beat-up fur stole draped around the woman's shoulders framed a thin, haggard face with sickly yellow skin and large, vacant eyes.

'Can I take the little one over there?' Mrs Tooze began.

The woman hardly stirred. 'Thank you, friend,' she said in a tired croak.

'Louder, please. I must hear the voice.'

'Thank you, friend!'

Mrs Tooze's eyes closed. She held a hand momentarily to her forehead, frowning: 'There is an Emily with me,' she said. 'Does that mean anything to you?'

'Yes.'

'This Emily passed into the spirit world before her time...she didn't want to go...'

'Yes.'

'...her passing was very long-drawn out and very painful but she is telling me now that she understands, that you're not to worry and that she is by your side all the time...'

'Thank you, friend.'

'...There is also a member of the police force here in spirit. Can you accept him?'

A moment's pause, then: 'Yes.'

'...and a white dog that passed on...'

'Yes – my mother's.'

Mrs Tooze frowned again: there were also a Mother Mary, a deceased postman, a certain Mr Clement, a Zulu and an Ancient Egyptian belly-dancer (who was the woman's spirit guide) present. The second of these, whom the woman had formerly known, had various cryptic messages for her which she received matter-of-factly with no outward show of emotion.

'You have not been well lately have you, dear?' Mrs Tooze continued.

'No, I haven't'

'You've been doing too much. Do you know that song 'Hold That Tiger'? Well, they're all singing it here and I have to tell you that you will get better, but that you have to take things a lot easier.'

'I will friend.'

'I have to give you half a loaf: you'll never be rich but you'll never be poor. And I also have to say to you: "Time is a great healer." Can you understand that?'

The woman shook her head: 'No, friend, but I'll hold it.'

'Yes. Will you take that home with you, please. Thank you and God bless you, little one.'

More readings followed and each time Mrs Tooze glanced round the room for her next subject, Perkins looked away, not wanting to catch her eye. Some of the insights seemed spot-on. Did the old lady in the third row know a Delilah? The woman's eyes lit up and without a moment's hesitation: 'Yes, friend!' she said. 'Delilah Smith - from my school days.' Did a photograph of soldiers in uniform mean anything to the gentleman at the back? 'Yes!' he beamed, 'I was looking at it only this morning.' What did the word 'cigar' mean to the genial Medium? He smiled ruefully: 'I smoked one for the first time the day before yesterday. I couldn't stand it so I threw it away.' Other readings seemed way off beam, either in part or in their entirety: Would the little old lady in the corner accept a window-cleaner? She would but she didn't know who he was. Well, would she accept him please, because he was standing there with a bucket of water and a rag. Did the name "Molly" have any significance for the bald-headed gentleman behind Perkins?

A definite 'No.'

Or a parrot?

'No.'

Or Walter Pidgeon?

'No.'

Or a laburnum tree?

'No.'

Or a sailor called Frank?

'Can't think who that can be - but I'll take it home with me.'

She thanked the man and blessed him anyway, bestowing on him 'The Gift of the Golden Ear' - and could she leave him with a wet Fish Shop and an Indian guide called Dakota?

Mrs Tooze opened her eyes and Perkins looked quickly away. '...And now our friend over there - ' he heard her say. His wife dug him sharply in the ribs and he looked up to see the clairvoyant's finger pointing directly at him: 'Thank you,' he mumbled.

'A little louder - '

'Thank you!'

Her eyes were once more closed, forehead creased in concentration: '...I have the name 'McCarthy'. Does that mean anything to you?' Perkins said that it didn't but that he'd take it

home with him. The significance of the song 'Release Me', 'Rome wasn't built in a day' and 'Post Office' also escaped him, though he lied about the last, to break the run of negative responses. He'd recently smelt smoke around the house, hadn't he - as though someone had been smoking? No, he had to admit he hadn't.

'...Have you been feeling dejected lately - rather depressed? Well, you are coming out of that now. I have to tell you that things are going to change for the better. You are going to be financially better off. Where once you had one penny, you will now have two.' Perkins thanked her. She paused, frowning hard...'There is a lady here who was married twice and who recently passed into the spirit world. She had three sons. One by her first marriage, two by her second. Does that mean anything?'

'Yes.'

She paused again, one hand to her ear, smiling: 'Oh dear, there are so many, so very many people here now...they're all laughing and dancing for joy because they weren't expecting you and they're so glad that you've come...and now this lady is roaring with laughter...It's so funny she says...Collis Browne's Mixture - does that mean anything? She says it is the cure for all ills and she is laughing so much because she used to shovel it down the whole family when they were ill...and I have to tell you - she wants me to tell you - she is sending you The Blue Bird of Happiness on a silver plate...'

Perkins thanked her again but she wasn't finished yet. Now she had the name 'Kate' - could he understand the name 'Kate'?...No, he couldn't...nor the significance of the expression 'up up and away'. She took a swig of water from a green glass goblet and changed tack bathetically: there were various odd jobs around the house he'd been putting off doing and now was the time to get them done. There was no time like the present. He had an Arab guide and he was going to London - 'or somewhere over the water.' She opened her eyes: 'You are a psychic powerhouse, my friend,' she concluded, 'and you have the gift of clairvoyance and healing. Thank you and God bless.'

They came out into bright evening sunlight. 'There you are - what did I tell you!' Mrs Tyke said, bubbling over as they got into the car: 'You ad somethin after all - first time, too. I'm glad o that - it gives you encouragement. See ow your luck as changed: you're goin to come into money, you're goin to London, you got an Arab guide an what are you - a psychic powerhouse with the gift of clairvoyance an ealin!'

'Is that good?' Perkins said.

'Course it is - very good. All I got is 'The Gift of the Velvet Touch' an you can't do a lot with that.'

They started for home. 'Who d'you know called Kate?' his wife asked. Perkins didn't know anyone. Could be his Grandmother - she was Catherine but she may have been called Kate.

'Collis Browne's Mixture? Did your mother ever give you that?'

'Not as far as I know.'

'McCarthy?'

'Means nothing to me.'

Mrs Tyke leaned forward from the back seat: 'What about the Blue Bird of Appiness then,' she said. 'I never eard of that one before, but that sounds very lucky.'

It was 10p.m. Perkins wrote for an hour but didn't really have his mind on it. He put the pen down and sat, arms folded, staring out of the window, trying to let his mind go blank. After a while, out of the grey ether, unbeckoned and for no particular reason, a face appeared.

He went upstairs on the pretext of getting a book. His wife was in bed reading and hardly noticed his entrance. He knelt down by the bookcase and ran a finger along the rows. 'I think I know who McCarthy is,' he said.

She didn't hear him properly first time. 'The meeting this evening - I think I know who McCarthy could be,' he said. 'Desmond McCarthy - a kid in the Infants School I used to know.'

She looked at him, puzzled. He fingered the bookcase, his back half-turned to her, feeling slightly foolish now but obliged to go on: 'Funny thing - I'd forgotten all about him until tonight. He was as poor as a church mouse. Used to come to school in rags. I remember telling my mother about him and she told me to bring him home to tea one day. I'm sure his name was McCarthy.'

There was a momentary silence. 'Is he dead?' she said.

Perkins pulled out a book and flicked open the pages: 'How would I know. I haven't seen him for thirty years.'

She looked thoughtful: 'Yes,' she said. 'And that was funny, too - her mentioning about the Post Office.'

'What about it?'

'You know - my father' - she clapped shut her book - 'For Christ's sake, Alvin: he worked there all his life!'

Perkins shrugged and got up. 'I suppose it was funny,' he said, 'but it's a bit thin, isn't it? There's tens of thousands of people work in the Post Office.'

He went out quickly without waiting for a response, but in less than a minute came barging back in again: 'Kate Roberts!' he said. His wife looked up, startled. 'Kate Roberts!' he said. 'Don't you remember - a few weeks ago when Gerry called. He saw that photo I'd taken of my mother - the one in my room - and thought it was Kate Roberts the writer -'

His wife yawned and rolled over on her side. 'Come and massage my back,' she said. 'I've been dying to feel those healing rays of yours all night. Or better still - let Ahmed do it.'

'Ahmed?'

'Your Arab Guide.' She laughed into the pillow: 'Mrs Tyke's got an Egyptian Princess - perhaps if you asked her nicely, she'd do a swop.'

Perkins sat on the edge of the bed and reached under the sheets. 'That bit was a load of bullshit,' he said, slowly beginning to rub. 'They always say an Arab or an Egyptian - or a North American Indian. It's so obvious. It was all so obvious really. Did you notice the way she

was making asides all the time, as though there was someone else with her? That looked really phoney. And I loved the way she interrupted one reading to call on 'The Healer' to heal her sore throat – that was a real stroke of inspiration – ' He chuckled and rubbed more vigorously.

His wife groaned under his touch. 'I don't know why you're laughing, though, Alvin,' she said. 'You know you believe in it, really. You're awfully superstitious. You're scared of ghosts and the dark, aren't you? So, deep down, you must believe in this, too.'

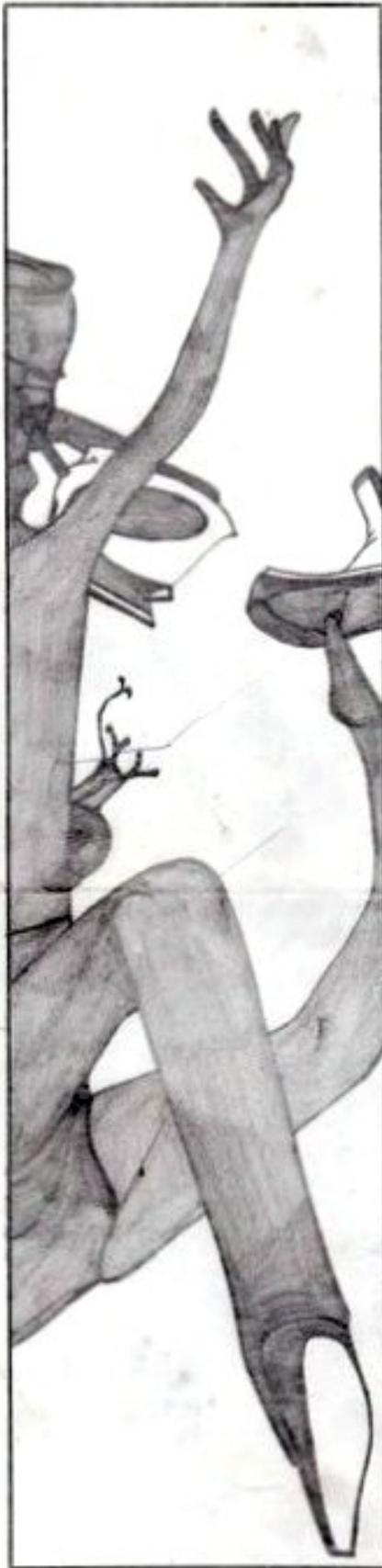
Perkins withdrew his hand: 'Who's superstitious!' he said. 'Don't make me laugh – ' 'You're one of the most superstitious people I know. Always have been.'

'Over some things, maybe,' he conceded, 'but – this!'

His wife yawned again and pulled the sheet up half way over her head. 'Well, I'm still keeping an open mind,' she said. 'I don't care what you say: that bit about the Post Office was very strange. Why should she pick on that? And why should she say the woman was married twice and had three sons and had only recently passed over? How could she possibly have known about your half-brother? It all fits. It's got to be Alma – and she must be sending you The Blue Bird of Happiness.'

Downstairs again, Perkins went straight to his bookcase and thumbed through some back numbers of The Cambrian Review. After some searching he found the portrait head he was looking for and held it up to the one he'd taken of his mother. There was no doubt about it: there was a striking resemblance: hair, eyes, age, expression – even the lighting was similar. If he half-closed his eyes, it could almost be his mother. He ran back upstairs to show his wife but the light was out and she was already snoring faintly in the darkness. He came back down, propped the magazine up on the mantelpiece next to the picture of his mother and sat down at his desk. He looked at both photographs for a long time, comparing. After a while, it came into his mind that the Kate Roberts one also bore a striking resemblance to his wife's grandmother – and even Nelly Morgan, his mother's old friend – looked more like them, in fact. Both portraits, the more he looked, could almost be composites – identikit images for Old Age anywhere and everywhere, for innumerable Kates and Almas living or dead.

It was long past midnight and he had to be up early in the morning. Before he called it a day, he opened the top drawer of his desk and from a crumpled bag took the two halves of a broken pair of women's bi-focal glasses. He turned them over in his hands for a moment then held them up to his eyes and looked out to sea. Everything was a blur. A lightship blinked and a car signalled somewhere down in the amber depths of the Town. He put the two halves carefully back in the bag and slid the drawer shut.



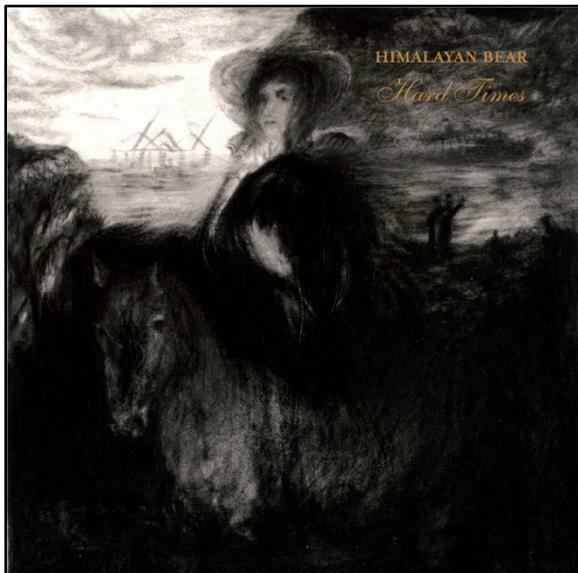
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AUROPHILIA: THREE ALBUM REVIEWS

Himalayan Bear - *Hard Times*

This is the first time I'd heard of Himalayan Bear, whom with a bit of research I discover are a side project of Ryan Beattie from the band Frog Eyes.

The title track and first song up, *Hard Times* is slow yet naggingly insistent. The musical introduction reminded me of "You've Really Got A Hold On Me" being covered by Tom Waits. This is no bad thing. The tune will catch you with its hook of "I'll come crawling back", chewing through the grey matter tattooing its DNA on each piece of gristle and flesh it encounters. This is an excellent song.



Next up is the melancholy *The Caballo* with its refrains of "There is a darkness equating me" and "Oh Caballo I need your memories". It is becoming clear that the tempo is not going to elevate too much and

my suspicions are confirmed with the next song, "How Could Death Contend". What are notable on this album are the well-written and apparently very personal lyrics. The next track, "Half-Wit Song" features a line I wish I'd written, namely "if the boy had a mother it was other than I". I'll have to try and not steal that at some point.

"Only Dreams Let Me Hold You" is a country tune with steel guitar and lyrics about "an empty whisky bottle", another slow tune of regret and another stand out track. The final track is "Man Of Fire" ending the recording with more heartache.

Due to its laid back tempo this is not the kind of album to get you dancing around the room rather this is a recording that demands attention, enveloped in a feeling of late night emotion, regret and melancholy. This is an album to be listened to at night, cigarette burning in the ashtray, bottle of top shelf alcohol being drained slowly as the minutes countdown to dawn. Recommended if that's your cup of tea.

Personally I prefer mine delivered swiftly and featuring a few more sugars.

(*Hard Times* by Himalayan Bear is out now on Absolutely Kosher records)

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Himalayan-Bear/155690741109397>

<http://himalayanbear.bandcamp.com/>

<http://www.myspace.com/himalayanbear>

Syd Howells

To Live And Shave In LA - *The Cortège*

TLASILA have been recording and performing since the early 90s when they led the Miami Beach Punk, noise, experimental scene.

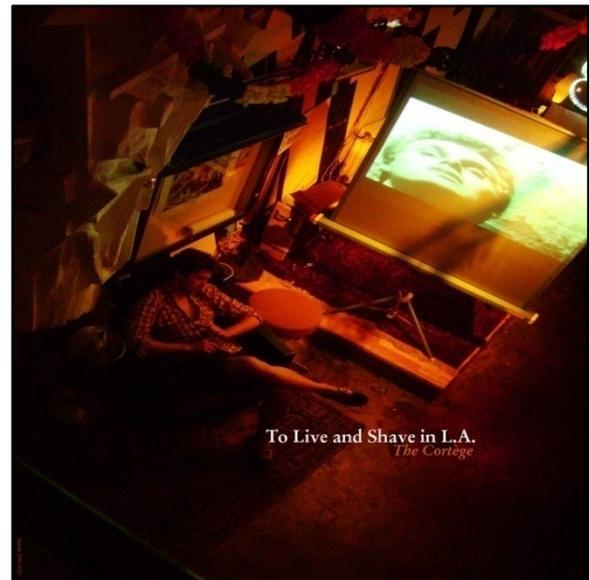
Consisting of the core trio of Ben Wolcott, Rat Bastard and Tom Smith they are augmented on this recording by thirteen other musicians to create an apocalyptically fitting close to their career together.

Recorded at the Sonic Youth studio in Hoboken in 2007, *The Cortège* is an overblown swelling weather balloon of joyful noise, part protest at the futility of modern life and part celebration of the will to live. Comparisons abound; there are obvious similarities to the early work of Throbbing Gristle, Sutcliffe Jugend's 'PigDaddy' and the three hard-to-find albums by Blah Blah Blah.

Walls of sound erect themselves between your speakers like a spider's web of metal splinters, like huge bubbles of red hot steel bursting over a landscape of ice. Scrapings, screeching and rumbles underpin vocal outpourings that hit you with a life or death urgency, declaimed prophetically, Gavin Friday-style, against the rising tide of sonic mayhem that frequently threatens to overwhelm the listener.

There are no real standout tracks on the album as the pieces all seem to flow into one long dark river of extreme emotion that ruptures and sputters between extremes of almost-calm and frenetic aural assaults of musical terrorism.

Regarding the motivations or 'meaning' of the pieces Tom Smith has said "My son, only in his early 20s, was dodging oblivion in Iraq; my father, always a portentous, begrudgingly waggish hulk, grew progressively gaunt as he succumbed to cancer and dementia; and, through Bush's odious machinations, America was befouled, perhaps irredeemably so. *The Cortège* was a gut response."



The Cortège is available to purchase from Instant Mayhem Records.

instantmayhem.com/ fandearthrecords.com/ www.thicksyruprecords.net
toliveandshaveinla.blogspot.com/ toliveandshaveinla.com/ www.tlasila.com myspace.com/toliveandshaveinla/ facebook.com/pages/TLASILA/97210249123

D M Mitchell

Hardboiled Wonderland - *As Small as a World and Large as Alone*

The lavish debut collaboration between Martin Birke (synths, samples, electronic percussion, drum programming) and Percy Howard (lyrics, vocals, vocal samples), is a stunning mixture of complexly layered electronics and full bodied vocals that can hold its own against all comers in the field of electro-soul or pretty much any other genre for that matter.

Percy Howard has worked with Bill Laswell and Fred Frith (among many other illustrious names) and this shows in the eclectic mixture of vocal phrasings used on this album as well as the way he counterpoints them against the panoramic sweep of the lush backdrops of Birke's keyboards.

Howard's voice itself has a breathtaking repertoire swinging between Jameson-velvet crooning to full-throated belting it out, used to best effect when pitted against itself. At one point on 'Little Queen Of Spades' he sounds uncannily like P J Proby



of the Savoy released 'Hardcore: M97002'. Unlikely (given its obscurity) but who can tell?

Birke's intricate yet simple instrumentation is never less than cinematic in its scope, reminding one of a huge ornate timepiece whose workings scythe through the emotion-scape in vast sweeping harmonious arcs. The end result is an evocation of primal carnality married to a profound spirituality.

From the jagged trip hop of "Filthy" and "I Carry Your Heart" to the infectious dance beats of "Jungle Fever" and "Looking for Strange", the feelings evoked are huge and real, managing to be grandiose and humble at the same time. There are enough hooks in this to please anyone on the dance-floor and enough experimentation to keep the freaks happy all rolled up in one package.

As Small as a World and Large as Alone is released by the UK-based label Gonzo MultiMedia

D M Mitchell

www.hardboiledwonderland.net

www.percyhoward.com

www.genrepeak.net

CRITICAL SAVAGERY

AN INTERVIEW WITH JON SAVAGE

By Ron Garmon

The journalist most associated with the rise and self-immolation of U.K. punk, Jon Savage covered the whole era for *Sounds*, *Melody Maker*, and *The Face*, which he co-founded. Starting, like so many of us, as a zine scrivener, Savage piled hard-gained participant perspective, extensive interviews and fanatically detailed knowledge of the U.K. music underground into *England's Dreaming*, a massive journalistic reckoning likely to stand as the definitive social history of the British punk movement. As a companion volume, *The England's Dreaming Tapes* gives us the printed voices of the participants and perps that both adds to the experience and has its own Pinteresque moments as playscript. Interviewed here by the simple - if technologically rickety - device of tape-recording a Skype conversation, Savage is rollicking and completely at ease as I interviewed him with my end of the video off. This humane expedient let me take my morning coffee-'n'-kush without the formality of putting on a shirt while sparing his famously advanced aesthetic sensibilities the sight of one more mohawked thug taking his morning meds.

Ron Garmon: *What do the transcripts of your interviews add to our understanding of punk?*

Jon Savage: *(throws back head and laughs long)* Well, first off, um, well the interviews

I used in the book were about 10% max of the interviews in the book. Each interview. I never thought of it as adding to the understanding, but I was more interested in the *people*. They all contradict each other and slag each other off and its immensely entertaining, for that's how punk was.

Well, that gives us glimpses of the salient personalities, which helps fill in the picture.

And shows us the bitchiness of the scene they inhabited. The London pop scene is very bitchy you know.

Such is its reputation. Is there anything you'd change about the way punk history is understood by young people?

No, not really. It's not really up to me. I wish people wouldn't think that Elvis Costello was punk because he was not. He's a bore. And I wish that people wouldn't think The Jam are punk and I wish people would shut up about hardcore because that's fucking bullshit.

Yes. L.A. had the most interesting of all hardcore scenes and even that after a coupla years ended up a big loud heap of blah.

I developed this big interest in L.A. punk, as you can tell from the link I sent you, I did this L.A. comp called Black Hole that

covered the first wave of L.A. punk. The Masque scene, the Slash scene and I had all these people asking me about hardcore. Well, I don't *like* hardcore. And it's my compilation and I don't like it because it's all jocks and macho boys and all the weirdos get pushed out. One of the things I like about the interview book is that it's full of fucking weirdos. And to me pop music used to be for the weirdos. Now that it's a big industry and wields so much power over everything else, it's for everybody. Normals have gotten into it and that's sort of quite depressing really. Pop and rock music used to be different from all the other shit and now it's *part* of all the other shit.

That's incontestable. In contemplating the late 1970s, we're faced is the historically bent proposition that that L.A. and London were both simultaneously going punk.

I think good ideas occur to people - particularly in the Western world - at the same time. I was always interested the international dimension of punk and was quite an assiduous promoter of this when I was writing in the British music press at the time. I thought it was very boring and quite a lie to say that London invented punk. No one invents anything *really* and considering most British groups sounded like carbon copies of The Ramones when they first started, I thought that was a bit rich. On the other hand, there were New Yorkers like Richard Hell carrying on; someone doing this three years before The Sex Pistols! Well, fuck off! You never did anything *with* it! Just all this shit being taught! Everybody invented punk and nobody invented punk. It was a good idea that happened to a bunch

of people in Cleveland, Paris, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Manchester, London, et cetera. Music is supposed to be one of those things that transcends national boundaries, so to claim to have invented punk is a bit pathetic.

Robin Scott's assertion in the book that punks were like hippies dressed up as bulldogs sounds quite close to the mark.

Punk was the negative mirror image of the hippies. There were a lot of older people around at that time pretending to be a bit younger. I turned 23 in 1976. All the Sex Pistols, except for Sid, were about two years younger than me. So, let's say most of the punks were born between 1951-1958 and we all grew up in the Sixties and had all been young teens during the hippie era and trying to get involved in the popular culture of 1969, 70, 71. We'd seen how dreary all the hippie culture had got. When I was a kid I absolutely adored The Grateful Dead's outer-space, we've-taken-so-much-nitrous-oxide-we-can-barely-sing albums like *Anthem of the Sun* and *Aoxomoxoa*. I thought they were fantastic, so I went to see them in 1972 and expected a watershed moment where I was gonna be transported everywhere extraterrestrial. Instead I got this really dreary bunch dressed like shit doing "Johnny B. Goode" and country-rock tunes. Feg! I couldn't believe how awful they were. By 1972, the whole hippie subculture had gone right off. The original San Franciscan groups were all making terrible records and the L. A. groups were making terrible records. You had singer-songwriters and country rock, which began as a good idea but quickly became mega-

dreary and still is. It's now called "Americana" and it's a pestilence upon the state of the world.

(explosive laughter coming mid-take)

You've got to admit it. It's awful, Ron.

Oh, I'm right here where they drill the stuff outta the ground and the worst is as bad as bad can be.

It wasn't bad when Neil Young was making his first records.

One hesitates to use the word "phony" when dealing with hipsters, but...

It's trying to be authentic. Anyway, punk was like the final working-out of all that Sixties radicalism. You know, all the demented action groups in New York, London, and Paris. Anything outré basically, whether it be Valarie Solanis -not that I approve of her, by the way,- or the Situationists or just really weird records. It was still infused with this same idea that you can change the world, which was a very Sixties countercultural thing. I see punk and hippie as actually being quite close and it always irritates me to hear people say "Ew hippies!" Some hippies were *tough!* Just because the whole culture turned to mush a few years on doesn't mean it was a bad idea. I've argued with some of my friends about this and they say that too many hippies were involved in magical thinking, which is true. Well, punks were involved in magical thinking, it just took a different form. Most pop cultures do get involved in magical thinking.

Yes. Any attempt to secede from reality and set up a Republic of Cool anywhere is a utopian impulse.

Well, the idea of doing it yourself and fanzines and that was totally terrific and also just as naïve. When people say it's good for your career to have done a fanzine, I go "Stop right there". I didn't think about having a career. I was just doing it because I was swept up in this thing that was bigger than me, which was punk rock.

What do you hear as the main difference between U.S. and U.K. punk?

You have to distinguish between Los Angeles and San Francisco punk. I think Cali punk you can take as kind of a genre, at least the first wave, and then you got New York, Cleveland, Manchester and London and actually all of it is different because the Manchester scene was quite different from London. First off, most of the London groups sped up as soon as they heard The Ramones. That first album was a fantastic record and had a huge influence. The Clash, The Damned, everybody sped up when they heard that record. The only British punk group that didn't sound like The Ramones was The Sex Pistols, who started before *The Ramones* came out. The Pistols do have that kind of classic rock tension and release; they wind it up and they wind it down. It's not all wham-a-lam-a-lama on only one level, like most British punks groups were. In New York, you had older people and a much more self-conscious aesthetic. You had, as I said, the dreariness of Richard Hell, who had one good idea and made us pay for it ever since. When was

that idea? Thirty-five? Thirty-seven years ago? He had a haircut; a really good haircut. And Television, who were more like a hippie jam group than a punk group. I liked Television, but that's because I like hippie music; I wouldn't really call them punk. Then you had The Ramones, who were just so totally perfect it couldn't last. They began repeating themselves and hating each other, which everybody knows about. Then you had Talking Heads, which was great in a different way, almost kind of like a funk group with a preppy lead singer. The Cleveland groups were manic and wild and kind of psychedelic, like Pere Ubu when they started. The L.A. groups had a black humor that I always liked and they swung, like kind of a subculture of the British groups, who were mega-uptight and making fantastic noises. I wouldn't say that one was better than the other, but I like the *swing* of the L.A. punks. A record like "ABCD" by The Randoms really swings. It makes you thrust your pelvis and this is what rock 'n' roll music is supposed to do.

Who among your England's Dreaming interviews was the biggest jolt in person?

Not many. Problem was I'd met a lot of them before and I knew what they were like. I had two really intense interviews. One was from Joe Strummer, who was incredibly forthcoming and generous and didn't want to talk to me again for some reason. I'd just finished the book and he said "Oh, I'll talk to you now." That came a bit late, Joe. He was a bit of a drunk at that time, but he gave me a terrific interview. Anne Ritchie, Sid Vicious' mum, gave me a terrific interview. It was really sad. I was up

all night interviewing her and that was a very difficult interview because she knew she'd completely fucked up. She was complicit in her son's death and she'd completely fucked up his upbringing. With everything we know now about family relationships and everything, it's obvious Sid never had a chance.

No. That point comes across rather sharply in his short botched life.

It makes you realize all those things you never thought mattered about family and upbringing. Because Sid was just completely fucked. He probably would've become a terrible junkie and done something disastrous if he hadn't joined The Sex Pistols.

I always thought he would've died a junkie death in some sleazy hotel anyway had he simply been left in obscurity.

I'm afraid so.

And probably have taken just as many down with him.

(uncomfortably) The thing is, I never could stand opiate behavior. I've never taken it heroin and I hate it. Back in the day, friends would take it and I never understood why. No, it's not something I'm particularly fond of, but it was part of punk. It was darkside and that comes out in the interviews.

Indeed, and from the very dark undersides of the various larger cultures punk inhabited.

Yes.

Do you think download culture is destroying the idea of scene left in pop music?

I'd say yes, but we've just seen... I don't know really. I think I'm a romantic at the possibilities where youth is concerned and its very bad manners to say to kids that things are all over when they're not and I tend to have the belief that kids of the age that I was in 1977 will find their own response and their own solutions to the conditions the face, which will be different from the situations I faced thirty-three years ago. I tend to be hopeful and would obviously want to encourage young people to find their own solutions and make it work. We've had these student protests in London, you've heard about this? A lot of that was Internet arranged.

Flashmob stuff. The future of protest and wait til that hits here...

Why can't that happen with scenes? They'll always be the need to get together and the power of people getting together physically. Internet is a very good social tool for arranging that.

You just anticipated my next question- is there a revolution coming and will pop music figure into it?

(laughs loud and long) I'd say there probably is a revolution coming, if revolution means change. Kids are always presented with a world they'd grown into, which is not *their* world. They're 18, 19, whatever. 16, 17, 22, 23 and you're coming out into a world made by adults and parents and you see what's wrong with it and want to change it

because you're stupid and don't know any better or maybe you do. I think kids' voices should be heard and I'd encourage anyone who doesn't like something about the world to do something about it. Because that's actually what punk was all about- young people finding themselves in a world that was shit and doing something about it. I think punk is certainly very inspirational and I was inspired by it when I was young and I think it's very important to get inspiration and do things with your peers. The young don't have much to lose. They get up when they fall over. You get bashed and you get over it very quickly. It's easy. You've got a lot of energy and strength. Pop music is still the great unifying force, but there have been structural and artistic changes, which used to be for kids and now it's for everybody. It used to be the preserve of weirdos and now it's the preserve of the Norms. What it'll become, I don't know. I'm not out there, so I can't predict trends. I do think the traditional music business is sort of dead really.

End Part 1.

This interview first appeared in LA Record #102.



A301038



SAVE THE EARTH KILL YOURSELF: VISIONS OF THE END WITH VOLTERA

By Cricket Corleone

Hello, my name is Cricket Corleone and yes, you've never heard of me. I am not a REAL journalist. I think a "pseudo journalist" is a better description when it comes to this medium. For awhile I was writing a series of fiction for *Paraphilia Magazine* entitled 'Death Wish Chameleon.' Now, like the bratty younger sister that wants to join the big kid's club, I have asked Paraphilia if I could combine my ideas from an earlier interview magazine I was tinkering with (*Beauty Is Pain Publications*) with their idea to revamp this magazine. So, here I am interviewing once again. To give you an idea of my journalistic approach, in past interviews my preferred method to getting into the good conversations and stories was booze. Always works. And I will bring that skill with me to the *Paraphilia* institution and trek forth whole drunkenly. But, in some cases, the people I want to interview are not in the same state or country as I am (hailing from Portland Oregon USA). So I am damned and doomed to interview over the

phone or internet (how revolutionary) when I have to.

Now that you know a bit about me and why I am here, my first interview for my new section of *Paraphilia Magazine* is with Aussie born and bred alternative/industrial band Voltera. I saw Voltera play for the first time at a local punk bar called Plan B. After the night had ended and the bar had closed I ventured on with the band for after AFTER hour drinks at the place they were crashing and got to know them a little better. They were even gracious enough to drive my hungover ass home the next morning before they hit the road to do a couple of shows out of town before heading back for another gig in Portland.

I was SUPPOSED to interview the band in person at the venue Dante's Inferno about a week after we had met. But, to my dismay, they were deported only but a few days prior to the gig on their way back into the states from Canada. But being a stubborn

bitch, and frankly considering myself a new fan of the band, I figured borders were not enough to stop me from getting this show on the road. Not to mention, I had heard a bit of the crap they had run into at the Canadian border. I figured it was only right to let them tell their tale and at the same time, find out what they have been up to since. So without further ado... VOLTERA.

Cricket Corleone: *Hey Jessica (front woman), glad to finally be doing this here thing with ya. So, let's get started already... you were on a North American tour as well as some stops in Canada, correct? Also, what were some of the stops on that tour? Any favorite places/gigs and such that stick out in your mind?*

Voltera: Yes, we had one show planned for Canada, but most of the shows for this tour could not happen as we were denied re-entry into the united states, however the time we spent in Portland (Oregon, USA.) was excellent and Seattle (Washington, USA.) was also a great place to play. It was probably the drives themselves that were the most breathtaking for us...

Would you mind telling us what happened at the border? How it all went down? Plus, their reasoning for deporting you?

Basically we were examined as most bands are upon re-entry, however I was not aware that this can include extensive internet searches on the band's name... We were in immigration for 5 hours including the search time and interview/interrogation. It seemed they had concerns regarding our 'online literature' including the name of our street team 'volt-terrorists' and our slogan 'Save the earth kill yourself.' So after an intensive interview process we were given a choice of deportation or returning back to Canada, which we chose to do, with documentation in hand saying that they had revoked our visa status due to concerns over our performances in relation to sec.802

of the US Patriot Act which states that the definition of the term 'domestic terrorism' could be applied to this type of literature and therefore ourselves... LMFAO.



*Well, of course! You know us Americans can't think for ourselves. If we hear something that sounds like 'domestic terrorism' we might... you know, go off the deep end, hitting up Wal-Marts with machetes in hand. *sigh* Ludicrous. Thanks for sharing your experience with us. In any case, since then, how have things been going for the band? Take us on a little road trip with you when you were released from all that and able to get on with things. What have you been up to since? And then I am going to ask you about the album.*

Hahaha... Well, we had to hang out in Vancouver for a week before we could get a flight home, then we stayed in Sydney for awhile before heading back to Melbourne. We were expecting to be away from Australia for a lot longer, so we have been scrambling to get a functional strategy going and spending our time moving, unpacking and adjusting to a new studio etc... Currently we are booking some shows for Australia and then Europe where the moral police don't party so hard. I must say however, that the support from fans and friends through this time has been exceptional and given us plenty of strength.

Awesome, though not surprising, to hear that you have such a strong support group and fan base. So, now let's travel back to your roots. I

know you are both born and bred Aussies. Whereabouts are you all from there, and when did you decide music was the road you wanted to take?



Well, Max (drummer) and Dhari (bassist) are classically trained whilst Michael (guitarist) and I are not, however, everybody has been doing music longer than me. I did not start proper (besides high-school stuff) until about 23... so I am a late bloomer, but from the moment I spent time with Michael and started singing, writing and playing keyboard I knew that music would be the most fulfilling path I could take to purge political intent.

And who are some of your musical influences?

PJ Harvey, NIN, MIA, MM, Sepultura, Jesus, Satan, the list goes on...

You mentioned that this band is a sort of vehicle for your political intent. What are some of the issues you choose to hold a light too? Politically, what are some of the things that are on your mind that one might find in your music?

There is a lot of emphasis placed on over population, as that is a key issue and a common factor of many of our environmental and inequality problems of today. We also feel strongly about poverty (especially in relation to family planning and education) and the protection of the environment including isolated tribal cultures which we support not only for their

right to exist but also as a great example of true success. Not to romanticize the ideals of tribal culture as something more than it was or something that we can all return to, in term of priorities, should however stand as a direction of inspiration for people today. There are many ways that people can contribute to their own awareness in this day and age from changing what they buy, what and how they eat and what choices they make in general, and of course whilst most of us will never manage to achieve some kind of super-green / guilt-free lifestyle, especially in the cities, we can at least manage to not be deaf dumb and blind, then perhaps perception will give rise to better choices for us on the lucky side of town.

What can you tell me about the album? The title, the concept, when and where it was recorded? Just give me the lowdown.

It's called *The Birth of the End of the World* as a reference to overpopulation and was recorded/ mixed/ produced and mastered partly at home, with the bulk being recorded and mixed at Hothouse studios in Melbourne last year. The concept follows a girl's journey from birth to adolescence and death and in doing so explores the morality of our attitudes towards mortality, the environment and the connection between the two.

And what is the connection between the two?



As humans it is usually deemed acceptable to believe that our well-being, needs, indulgences, life-span and general existence is more important than any other aspect of our environment, which is folly because it is that very environment that sustains us.

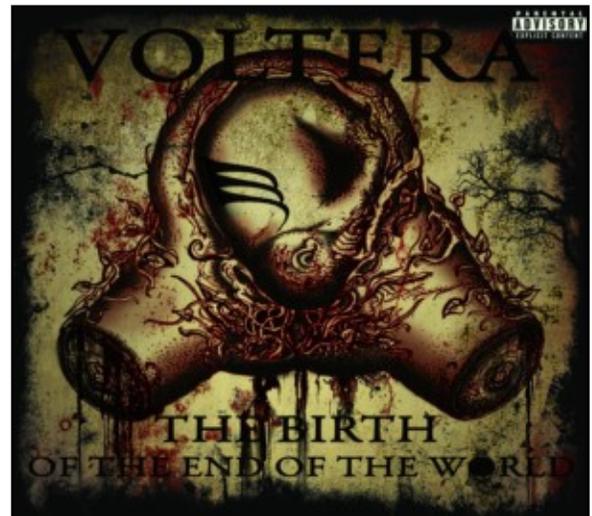


In addition, we have certain populations (cue inequality) living well outside they're required environmental needs and an overall population rate that can never be sustained due to damage done and being done, hence greed and a lot of moral pro-life political standpoints such as anti-abortion, anti-euthanasia, anti-contraception and the quest to cure all

human diseases are ultimately pro-death as we are acting as the disease and there-in lies the connection between the environment and the morality of our attitudes towards our mortality. To extend the relationship and the creative metaphor further, one could say the correlation between our general disregard for the environment both flora and fauna is also a question of morality and the environmental mortality.

Thank you for taking the time to chat with me about your work and the album. I like to end my interviews by asking if you have any last words, mottos or the like you can leave us with?

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk to me it was much appreciated and as for last words or mottos I guess it would be apt to leave you with "Save the Earth Kill Yourself."



You can check out Voltera online at www.voltera.net. *The Birth Of The End Of The World* is available from the website as well as iTunes.

DARK WORLDS OF ADAPTATION

By Lana Gentry

When discussing the subject of photographic manipulation, we find that this modern medium of creativity has been met with the same sort of scrutiny with which any relatively new medium would be faced. Rap music, pop art, abstract painting and all the rest were initially misunderstood and not held in the kind of respect they eventually yielded.

As photographic manipulation now finds its way into main stream culture, there has been a merging of forces coming into play.

As we wrap our minds around what seems to be such a macabre world at times, we notice that dark art has been exhumed in a monumental sense in the past decade. Darkness has always existed in art, from Goya to Giger, but photographic manipulation is now trying to solidify its own roots in the same genre of darkness possessed by its influencing predecessors who worked in other mediums.

Here we explore a few modern dark manipulators who expound on how they see this avenue of expression and about what inspires them to reinvent traditional images into macabre scenarios that rattle our brains a bit.

As is with all types art, the world is littered with quick programs and amateurs who aim to instantly achieve darkness through the avenue of photographic manipulation, but these particular artists here have taken the call a bit higher, and have aimed to render the viewer truly unsettled by the juxtaposition of reality and all that scares us in between.



Gareth J. Swift: Elly Medic, 2010

Photographers like UK's Gareth J. Swift are quick to point out that the medium of photography and its consequent manipulation are not new, and have been used in advertising for years. He also points out that this field of photographic manipulation is no more muddied with a bad versus good ratio than any other medium such as painting, drawing or sculpture. As this art form continues to progress, the viewer will no doubt develop that discerning eye that allows him to know the subtle or severe differences.



Kristy Evans: Horror Show, 2011

Photomanip artist Kristy Evans always loved photography but gleaned a lot of influence from darkness in her own life as well as darkness in films which have aided in her own style of morbid adaptations of reality.



Trëz: Don Quichotte, 2011

Also delivering great visions of terror are gifted manipulative artists like Trëz and Poland's necromancer Nagrobek. Seek them all out through the avenue of social networking.



Nagrobek: Hail to the Dead, 2010

Cheers to the artists and pioneers who fill a need in so many of us to be terrified in newer and more exciting ways through the vehicle of the ever changing world of art photography, and to these manipulators who uncover something wicked, that for them, is thinly shrouded in the most innocent of photographs.



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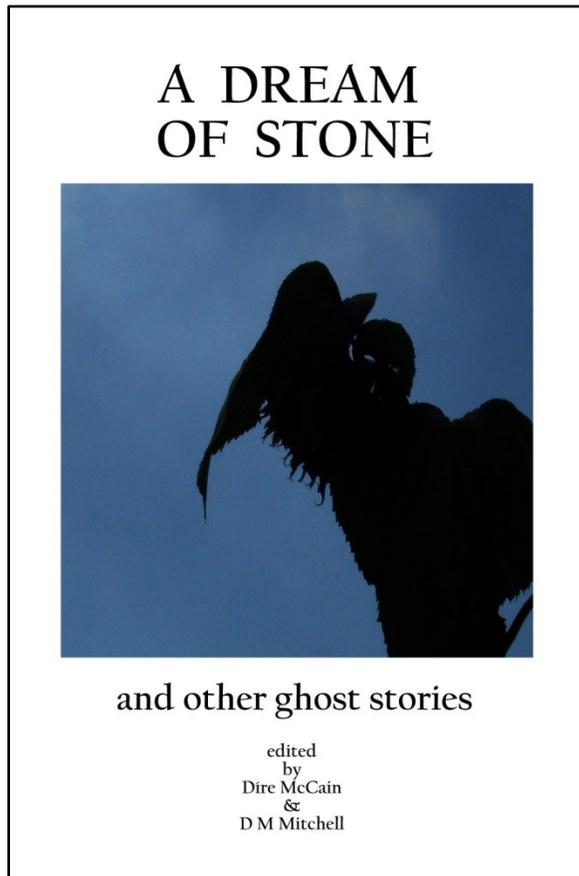
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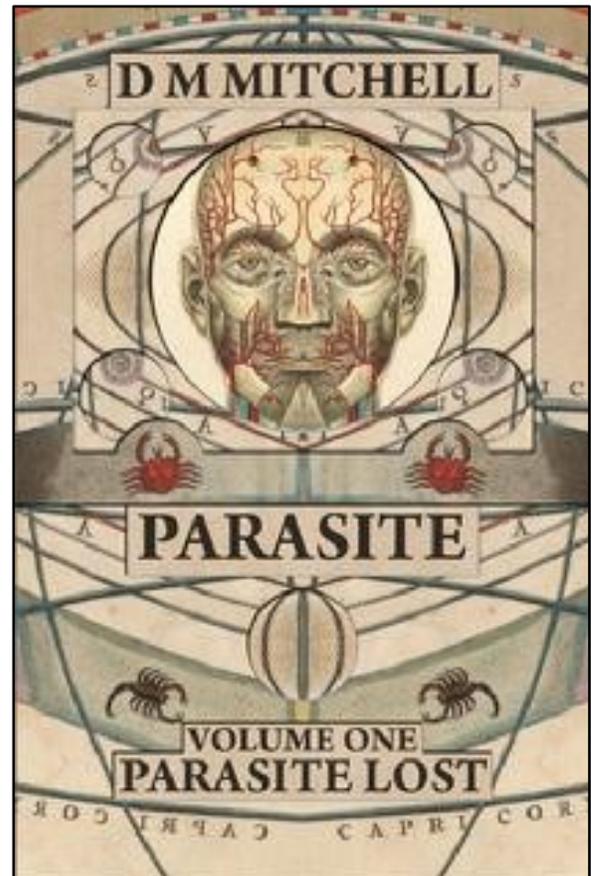
A DREAM OF STONE

(and other ghost stories)

Edited By Dire McCain & DM Mitchell

<http://www.amazon.com/Dream-Stone-other-ghost-stories/dp/1466437944>

"Their name is legion and they stalk among us. Daily tabloids are replete with pages of phone numbers where, for a fee, we can talk with nameless incubi/succubae. Alternatively, we can venture into the twilight world of the internet, and converse with 'people' who may or may not exist - the technological equivalent of planchette and Ouija board. Who knows what's really on the other end, fastening onto our insecurities, desires, and fears?"



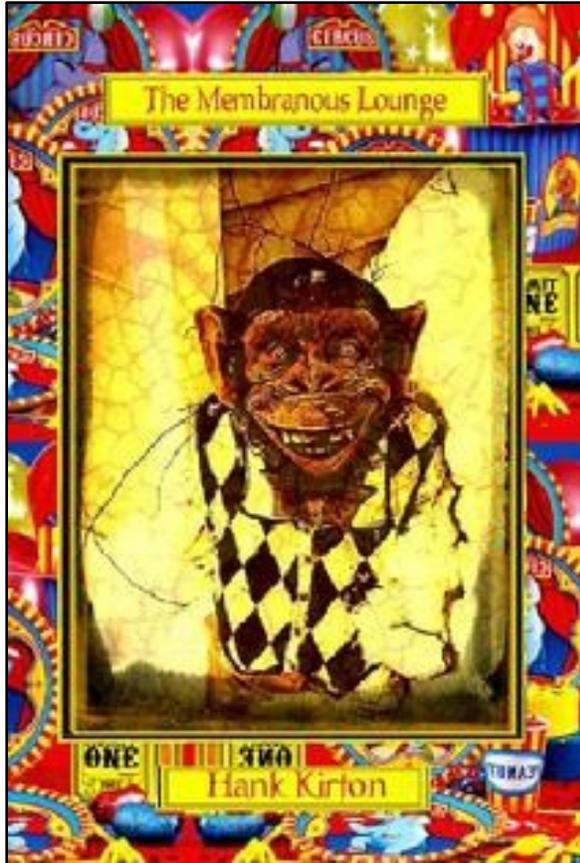
PARASITE VOLUME ONE:

PARASITE LOST

By D M Mitchell

<http://www.amazon.com/Parasite-One-Lost-1/dp/1453819304>

When David Michael K visited The Doctor's office, housed in the mysterious Building, he hadn't anticipated his life tipping into madness where reality melted and stretched and fiction merged with real life. In a satirical romp that sends up postmodernism, popular culture and satirises satire itself, our hero is chased by homicidal drug-dealing clowns, cartoon characters, pink UFOs and creatures of pure nightmare. Is this a serious book disguised as humour? or a joke at the expense of the intelligentsia?

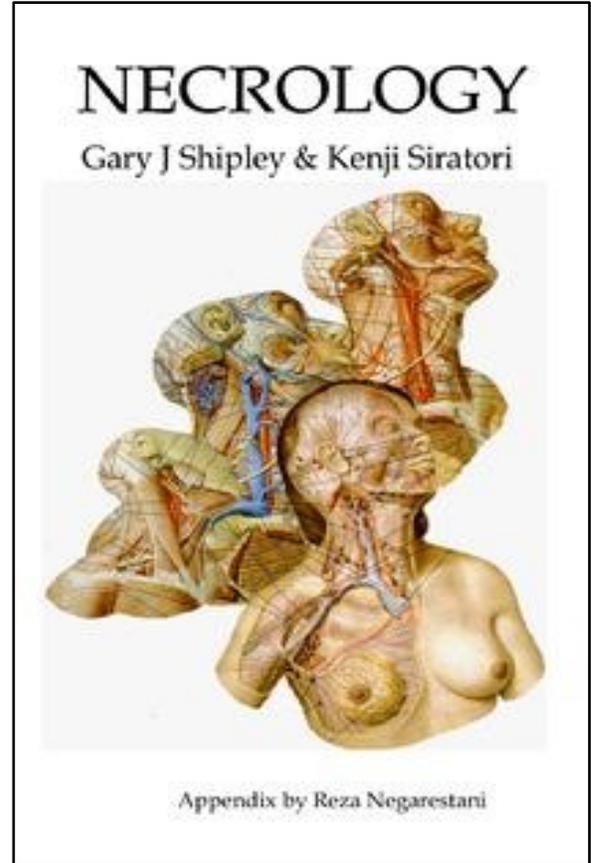


THE MEMBRANOUS LOUNGE

By Hank Kirton with an Introduction by Jim Rose

<http://www.amazon.com/Membranous-Lounge-Hank-Kirton/dp/1452816301>

Welcome To The Membranous Lounge! Where ugliness and beauty melt and run together, where reality is temperamental and the boundary between "normal" and grotesque is nebulous. The Membranous Lounge is a zone of slippage, a twilight area between the layers of the world that are familiar and the terrifyingly unknown. It is a chimerical realm inhabited by the hopeless, dispossessed, and those who have simply turned away. Imagine if Ray Bradbury and Jerri Cain Rossi had a child that they locked away from the world, with only the Marquis De Sade for reading matter, and a dietary intake of bad LSD and atrocious B Movies. The Membranous Lounge would be the spawn of that child's imagination.

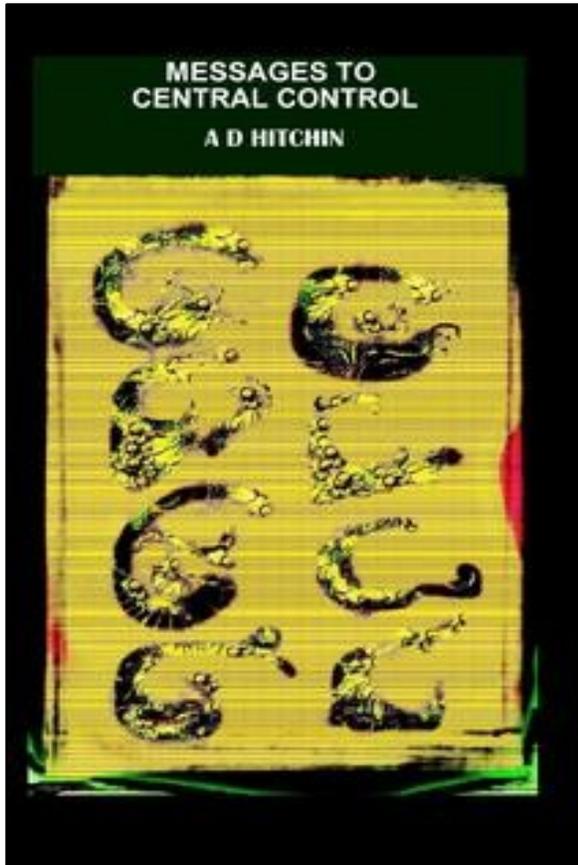


NECROLOGY

By Gary J Shipley & Kenji Siratori

<http://www.amazon.com/Necrology-Gary-J-Shipley/dp/1453706585>

An exercise in sensory overload from the minds of Kenji Siratori (Blood Electric, Acidhuman Project, Mind Virus, etc) and Gary J Shipley (Theoretical Animals) that pushes the limits of both human expression and that which can be assimilated in terms of socially-sanctioned pattern-recognition. Self-referring, auto-cannibalistic texts that hover and shimmer around the borders of the asemic, yet still retain a vivid relevance to the current post-human cultural landscape. A cyberpunk katabasis beyond Burroughs or Guyotat. With an Appendix by Reza Negarestani

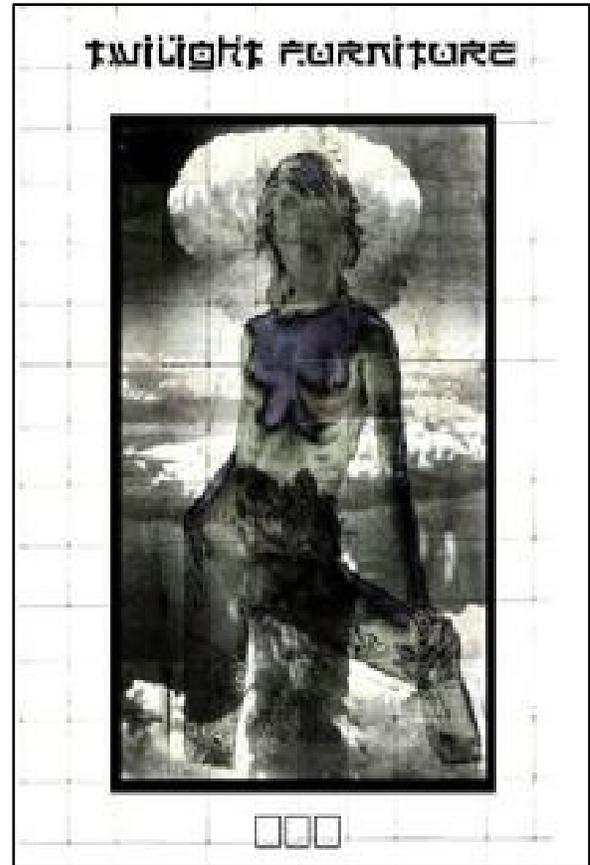


MESSAGES TO CENTRAL CONTROL

By A D Hitchin

<http://www.amazon.com/Messages-Central-Control-D-Hitchin/dp/1453865853>

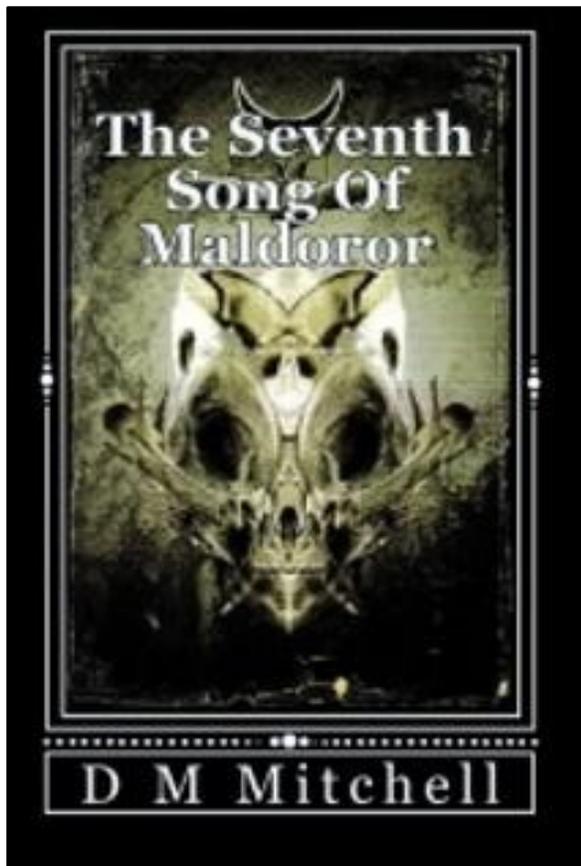
Asemic texts from the edges of a sexualised universe. A shifting collage of condensed micro-novels; intense and corrosive uzi-bursts of poetic anti-narrative from some alternative cyberporn universe intersecting ours. Reading this book is like surfing the shortwave band and finding oneself listening to alien soundtracks.



TWILIGHT FURNITURE

<http://www.amazon.com/Twilight-Furniture-Tate-Modern/dp/1453709835>

Posthuman pornography from the publishers of Paraphilia Magazine. Like Beckett's 'How It Is' crossed with Pierre Guyotat's 'Eden, Eden, Eden'. Warning! Reading this book in one sitting might prove emotionally disturbing.



THE SEVENTH SONG OF MALDOROR

By D M Mitchell

<http://www.amazon.com/Seventh-Song-Maldoror-D-Mitchell/dp/1449518125>

A deranged serial-killer goes on a rampage of sexual atrocity across a Europe falling apart in the wake of an unspecified global crisis. But is he what he seems? A cast of implausible characters in a (to say the least) unreliable narrative push the boundaries of credibility and expression. Dreams and nightmares, desire and delirium, all melt together into a metatextual puzzle. A psycho-sexual anti-novel that owes much to its transgressive ancestors - Sade, Lautreamont, Bataille, Artaud with more than a dash of Burroughs and Lovecraft thrown into the cauldron.