

## **The Uncivil Society Presents: "Inland Empire"**

The Uncivil Society in conjunction with Suburban Utopia Projects, presents their thirteenth project "Inland Empire". Having years of distance both physically and mentally from living in the suburbs of Southern California, Gorilla X shifts gears to acoustically to explore and express a personal narrative that is intertwined with the sociological critique offered by Mike Davis in his book "City of Quartz".

The sonic templates used to inspire this project are all drawn from music that deeply resonated with Gorilla X during these formative years. Starting from the folk rock records and musical soundtracks his mother played in his home, to top 40 AM radio, the radio friendly AOR 70's rock and roll and eventually retreating left on the dial to discover college radio. Through this progressive discovery of genres of music and the bands became a kind of freedom, from the safety of the suburbs, and ultimately from boredom that is inexorably bound to the notion of security.

### **Songs:**

- 1) So Cal . . . So Cool
- 2) Sunshine or Noir?
- 3) Power lines
- 4) Home Grown Revolution
- 5) Fortress Upland
- 6) The Hammer and the Rock
- 7) Confession
- 8) Junkyard of Dreams
- 9) Counter Argument #4
- 10) Cover - "Days of Wine and Roses"

*"Instead of cities of light soaring toward heaven, much of the twenty-first-century urban world squats in squalor, surrounded by pollution, excrement, and decay."*

-Mike Davis

<https://theuncivilsociety.com>

***Suburban Utopia Project: #13***

## So Cal . . . So Cool

I am inland air tainted with smog  
From a land where once arid brush  
Through the alchemy of technology  
has transformed into golden artificial abundance

Now devoured by relentless  
Development of the tacky little boxes  
made by Lewis and their clan

I am driving in and out (*at least an hour each way*)  
on endless freeways  
that lead to a beach bonfire at dusk  
Where the faint scent of peroxide mingles  
with valley girl twang "fur shure dude" . . .

I am a Dodger dog  
being digested by the disappointment  
Of another title-less season  
in the center field bleachers  
Of a stolen Elysian field

One of twenty four million insignificant locusts  
Adrift in a sea of plastic that defines  
the aesthetics of this place

yet we don't mind one bit because we find solace  
In the warmth embrace of a year round sun  
and are distracted by the illusions  
that come to fruition in this faulty space

I am the suburbs, a fortified buttress  
Designed To defend the strata of class  
Where freedom is defined by consumption  
in this artificial state

## **Sunshine or Noir?**

Standing on the ruins  
Of an alternative future  
In the shadow the creosote and burro brush  
And occasional yucca tree

I can feel the Earth Move Under My Feet

Suburban wave crests and breaks  
In a relentless approach  
Ready to encroach  
And engulf all inside

I can feel the Earth Move Under My Feet

Surrounded by groves upon arrival  
Land redacted and reshaped  
Playing in the skeletal frames  
As instant community takes shape

I can feel the Earth Move Under My Feet

City as commodity  
Surface as exchange  
Artificial Industry  
Perusing a fever dream

## **Power Lines**

Streets marks strata  
Strata makes class  
Class makes lines  
Meant to last

Street and Address  
Will define  
Where you live  
Within the lines

North is rich  
South is poor  
Wealth resides  
along the shore

Lines run through us  
And divides  
Opaque yet transparent  
You can't run or hide

When Lines are Centralized  
Power becomes Militarized

## **Home Grown Revolution**

There was no apocalypse  
or encounter of a third kind  
In fact not a single person  
had even died

Shops were still open  
And pollution no worse  
than in any other part  
of this cursed

Smog-choked Valley 4x

You see life in Los Angeles  
Where equality is valued  
Through property  
of single-family homes

Self worth is appraised  
Through designation  
Of the tract you occupy

What would make a  
NIMBY revolt?

Anger and outrage  
is channeled  
through relentless defense  
of the distance between  
A white picket fence

## **Fortress Upland**

From careful lawns  
sprout signs that warn  
Of trespass and harm

In our sweet suburban home

Where Personal insulation  
Creates transmutation

The defense  
of this place  
Has created divided space

In the master plan  
income equals access  
and Security creates demand

Welcome to Fortress Upland  
Our sweet Suburban home

## **The Hammer and the Rock**

When the jack booted  
commandoes storm  
Chalk another  
victory for the norm

We fight wars  
we love to lose  
So we can  
Fund the blue

I can hear  
The choir  
Of fear

The establishment  
is made of scowling faces  
by your incredulous neighbors

Who hide behind tract barriers  
And Echo the great Nay-sayers

For Every Red Hat Boomer  
And Becky who unite  
To condemns  
those out of sight  
and mind

They declare  
These people  
Need a teacher  
Or a preacher  
Or be put away  
To be reformed

## **Confession**

Dear father  
I must confess  
The religion  
And beliefs  
you tried to  
Stress  
Never once did  
Impress

Even though  
You made me  
And bow down  
In ritual force  
to Absorb guilt  
And learn  
to appease

Your  
repeated dogma  
Your  
murmured prayer  
Your  
stupid customs  
I learned  
not to care

Sunday battle  
For heart and mind  
gnostic tension  
Freed my mind  
Your poisons  
From toxic thoughts  
Has been left  
Far behind



## **Junkyard of Dreams**

As you travel east  
Towards San Berdo'  
Traversing the I-10

windows are sealed tight  
to protect from smog and dust  
And any incidental  
Contact with the Empire

lemon groves  
Once Heated  
by Schue's pot  
Have given way  
To an endless sea  
Of Bedroom dreams

The stones  
Thrown out by  
Joat's demise  
Mask her  
Unheard cries

geological and  
social detritus  
Makes a land  
Of trespass

Once scarred  
by blasting furnace  
is now both  
junkyard and utopia  
Of the California dream

## Liner Notes

Sometimes the simplest acts inspire me to create. For this project two things happened in the same week. The first, I bought a new bass. I had been listening to the Ian MacKaye and Amy Farina's acoustic duo the Evens record "The Odds" all summer. While initially listening to their record, it reminded me of a Wilhelm DeKooning Retrospective I saw many years ago. The show had art from the spanned his entire career - drawings for magazine ads in the 1950's, the warm and fuzzy abstractions of the 1970s and ended with a series of white 8'x10' canvases with a single blue line on them. Initially when I encountered them I scoffed thinking it was yet another example of lazy contemporary art. Yet after several viewings of the show I learned that near the end of DeKooning's life he had developed full blown Alzheimer's, but kept painting, literally to the day he died. Armed with that understanding, I examined the single lines only to discover he had captured the entirety of his experience as a painter. Almost like making a map of his art and mind. Amazing . . . What was most exciting to me about The Evens, is that I could hear the sonic elements that could trace the entire span of a seminal artists creative expression, all there, yet transmuted into a new form. The deeper I dug into the aural experience, I kept hearing things that I struggled to make sense of what was being played. The sound was not quite a bass, and not really a guitar the tone was rich and winsome at the same time and made a great counterpoint to the vocal harmonies. I discovered there is such a thing as a baritone guitar, I tried to play one and realized it had too many strings - yet that led me to purchase an acoustic bass.

The other influence came from a training at work to help me expand my own cultural competence through understanding of where we come from. The poem I wrote and shared with my co-workers turned out to be the title track "So Cal . . . So Cool". Last year I re-read Mike Davis' "City of Quartz", and using his sociological critique, I fused the ideas to form the lyrics for this project. The original edition essentially pinpointed the epicenter of the riots that rippled through the region in response to the acquittal of the officers who beat Rodney King. The newer version focused more on the lens on land acquisition and how property ownership in this region creates intentional class based segregation. Having over 30 years of distance from my experience of living in the suburbs of Southern California I am at a point in my life where I feel comfortable and confident enough to explore my personal narrative and infuse critique through music.

The sonic templates I chose to inspire this project are all drawn from songs that deeply resonated with me while growing up. The earlier songs were drawn from the softer folk rock records and musical soundtracks my mother played in our home. My tastes started to individuate as my exposure to top 40 AM radio and my near compulsive devotion to charting the weekly countdown developed. As my consciousness of music grew I shifted my aural allegiances to FM and the radio friendly AOR 70's rock and roll. In middle school, I discovered the left side of frequencies and college radio. As adolescence started to rise and rage I connected my experience to not only listening but going to shows in the burgeoning alternative music scene of Los Angeles. In many

ways discovering music and the bands was my freedom, from the safety of the suburbs, and ultimately from boredom that is inexorably bound to the notion of security.

During recording I strove to use a live mic setup to capture as much acoustic ambience as possible and worked to play and perform an entire song rather than record segments of songs and edit together in post. What I didn't anticipate was by adding a new piece of equipment into the process, I had to test, and discover what worked and what didn't. While I was running one morning I realized that I was not able to capture the rich acoustic sound I was hearing because I needed to record acoustically. Drawing deeply from the wisdom and guidance of Al Schmitt, I experimented to find the right tool with the correct mic placement to get the richest warmest sound I could. I ended up using three mics - Rode NT-1, SM57 and Beta 98 at the same time, all pointed in relative distances to the resonator in the acoustic bass to capture the richest sound possible. It is funny to me that I feel like I forget everything before I start a new project. Perhaps that is why creating is so exciting for me - I get to refresh, reinvent and recreate each session. For this project I learned about the difference between passive and active pickups and how to use a DI to boost the signal from the acoustic bass. Each new realization helps me understand how much gear you need, is required to capture vibrations in time and space.



**STEALING INSTRUMENTS  
FROM CHILDREN**

While recording I realized that if I am capturing the room, I could easily add percussive elements, so I went to my kid's toy chests and took the instruments that I have bought for them over the years (that they have never touched!) and used them throughout the project. It's funny, as a parent you unconsciously influence your kids only to have them spite you by having their personal rebellion manifest through becoming Republican hedge fund managers. We have always loved Mike Baiardi's Rock a Bye Baby Series, I channeled his inspiration and creativity into the recordings. I also stumbled into the 40th year anniversary of the Beach Boy's Pet Sounds, which included the out takes and tracking sessions which focused on the lush instrumentation which contributed to making it such a seminal recording. Not that I got anywhere close on this project, but it was fun to open up my mind to include other rhythmic elements into the mix.

## **Thank You**

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KFI 640 AM

KOLA 99.9 FM

KSPC 88.7 FM

Mike Davis

Carole Kaye

Al Schmitt

**Mike Baiardi**

Ian MacKaye

Amy Farina

John Geek

Michael T. Fournier

Hillary Binder

Chris Rankin

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Anne Lee

Pam Kray

Carol Gronner

Joe Helmsley

Bryan Erhardt

Disciples of Ken

Greg Nelson

Sara Tips

Sara's Daughter

Holly Senn

Amy Ryken

Sean Griffey