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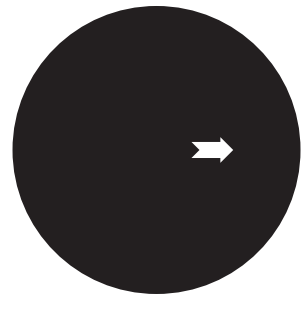
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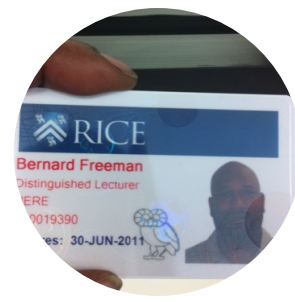


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Cover by Blake Jones and Mark Armes













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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

We have been doing this for 10 years? Whoa. Hold up.

My dad used to always tell me ' life is short' . I never knew what the heck he was talking about until now. Savor every moment, kids. Kiss your mom, love your lovers, hug your friends, give high-fives as often as possible, and never get too serious now matter how scary shit may be. All I know is that the past ten years have been fun despite all the tough work, train wrecks, clusterfucks, etc. I do not think we have ever stopped laughing nor do we plan to. We plan to keep

To every co-worker, friend, family member, and contributor. I love you folks more than you will ever know. I need to say some 'Thank You's to a bunch of people. If I left you out it is because I am an inconsiderate prick:

Andrea Afra and Omar 'Mez'
Al-Bochi , Co-Founders
Sahban and Amal Afra
Tina and Fikri Ozcelik
Kamel Afra
Lukas and Khalil
Tyler Barber Tyler Barber Tyler Barber Tyler Barber
Timmy Dorsey
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Mark and Shelby Martin
Jermaine and Jennifer Rogers
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Marini van Smirren
Blake ' Igor ' Jones www.lemon-party.org
Bobby Huegel
Ricardo Magdaleno
Johnny So
Kwame Anderson
Johnathan Jackson
Elliot Santillan
Ali Aoudi
Robert Ellis
Jason Petzold
and the countless other musicians, artists, readers, and haters who have made this happen. Thanks Houston. You have made this fun.

Publisher, Omar Afra

2013: A SPACE ODDITY

By Michael Pennywark

AS I SAT HERE and contemplated my plans to celebrate Free Press Houston's 10th anniversary, I began to wonder what the next 10 years would hold. Will we be sending people to Mars? Will a woman be elected president? Will people ever quit dancing Gangnam Style? (Let's not even get into the Harlem Shake). And most importantly, will we finally have cool laser guns like in 'Star Wars' or 'Star Trek'? While I was musing over whether I would prefer the more intimidating 'Storm Trooper' blaster or the more practical and compact standard issue-phaser, I came across an artist after my own heart.

On March 15th, the Lawndale Art Center will hold an opening for five new exhibitions, one of which will feature, you guessed it, lasers! Mike Beradino's 'Crystal Palace' will feature a custom-built green channel laser that will embed an image onto a wall that has been painted with glow-in-the-dark paint. What more could you want from art? How about robots? Yep, there will also be a flying surveillance platform that will interpret data and create a graphical representation of the space within the installation, which will be sent to the laser for its next drawing.

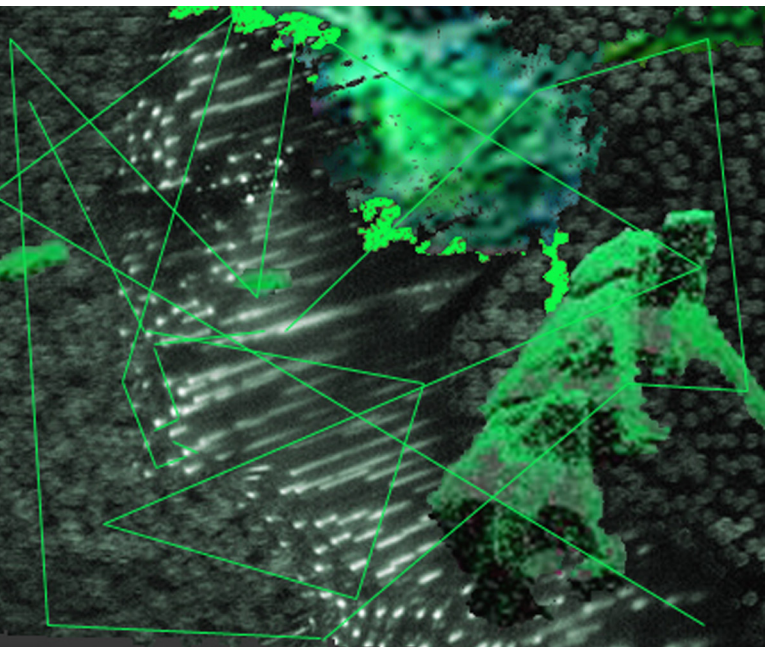
FPH tracked Beradino down and asked him a bunch of questions about the project and whether he might be creating an army of laser-wielding robots to take over the world. First of all, though, I needed to know about the title of his installation, 'Crystal Palace.' According to Beradino, Crystal Palace is a reference to the classic Matthew Broderick '80s flick, 'War Games'—it was the NORAD bunker where the supercomputer WOPR was kept.

He added that "the crystal in the title also touches on the realm of the mystical or metaphysical. Often cutting-edge technology can appear mysterious. The installation also has surveillance components embedded into it. I feel the word palace conveys a relationship of power and structure that are at play in the installation through the use of surveillance and technology."

Talking to Beradino about the relationship between his work and evolving technology, he explained, "My work deals with technology as a medium. I specifically use digital technology as a self-referential tool to explore its effects on contemporary culture." As for the laser-wielding army of robots, he agreed with me, "Lasers are cool. I built a real-life laser gun from trash as one piece—that was neat. In some of my early work, I used some lasers as dot matrices displays. However I am not really a laser guy. I am learning as I go with this project."

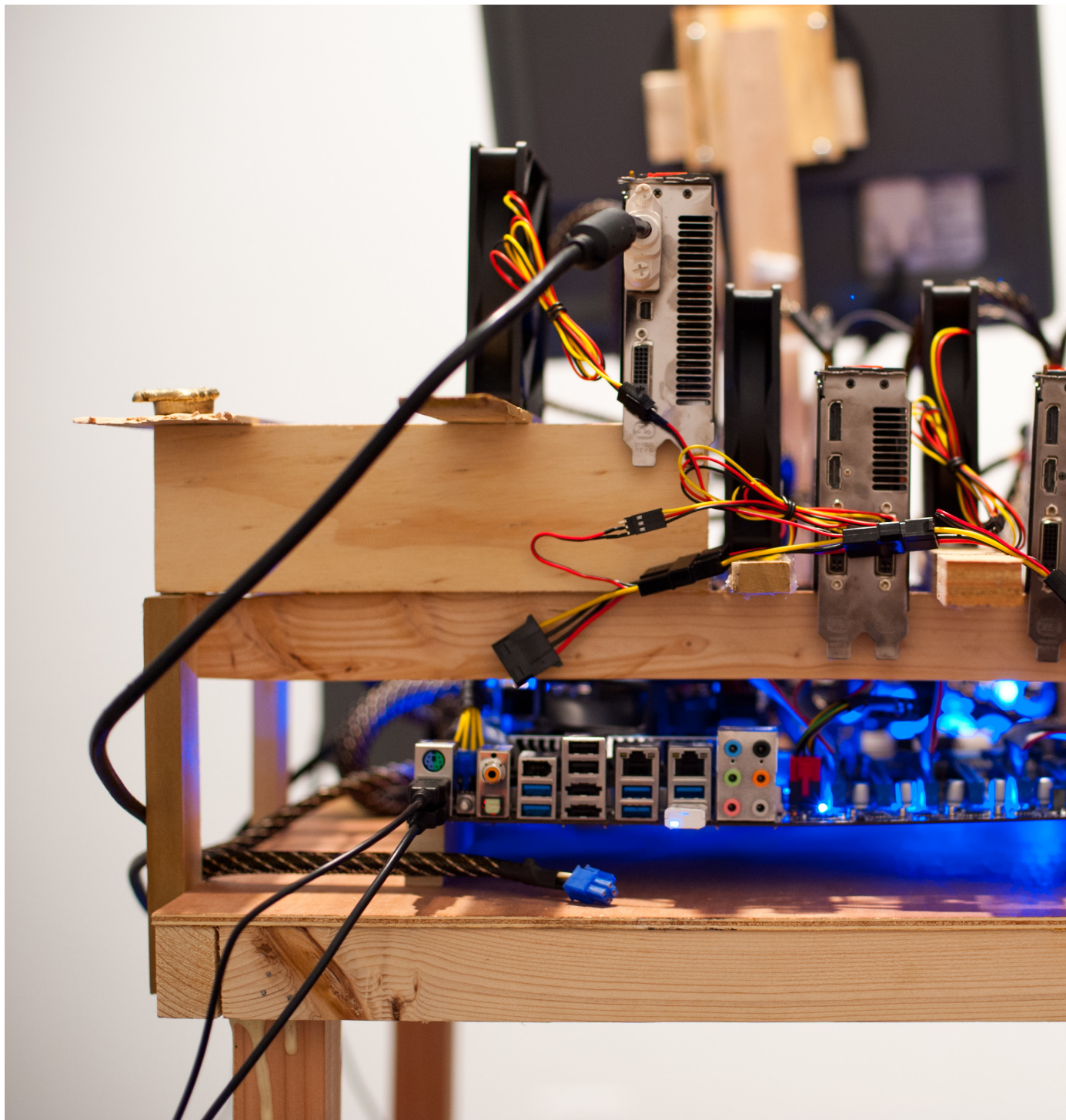
Now if lasers aren't really your thing, you have flashbacks of a bad trip you had at a rave every time you hear the word, or you're just not sure you can commit to an exhibition that will be there for a few weeks, then 'Made In Iran' might be right for you. 'Made In Iran' is a 24-hour art exhibition at Aerosol Warfare on Thursday, March 14th featuring Iranian street artists, ICY and SOT, along with Iranian post-punk band, Yellow Dogs. With new stencil works and site-specific installations, the exhibition traverses preconceived perceptions of traditional Iranian art and reflects the struggle for creative visual expression that Iranian artists still face today.

Utilizing Western street art approaches, ICY and SOT's art explores binary oppositions such as love and hate, war and peace, and hope and despair. What they lack in robots and lasers, they make up for in a style that encapsulates both the elegance of traditional Iranian art and the raw underground energy of the streets. **FPH**



Made In Iran – ICY and SOT w/ Yellow Dogs
Aerosol Warfare
March 14th-15th
Opening reception: Thursday,
March 14th at 6 p.m.
with live performance by Yellow Dogs
Friday, March 15th
viewing hours 12 p.m. - 5 p.m.

Crystal Palace – Mike Beradino
Lawndale Art Center
March 15th - April 20th
Opening reception: Friday,
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(Artist talks at 6 p.m.)



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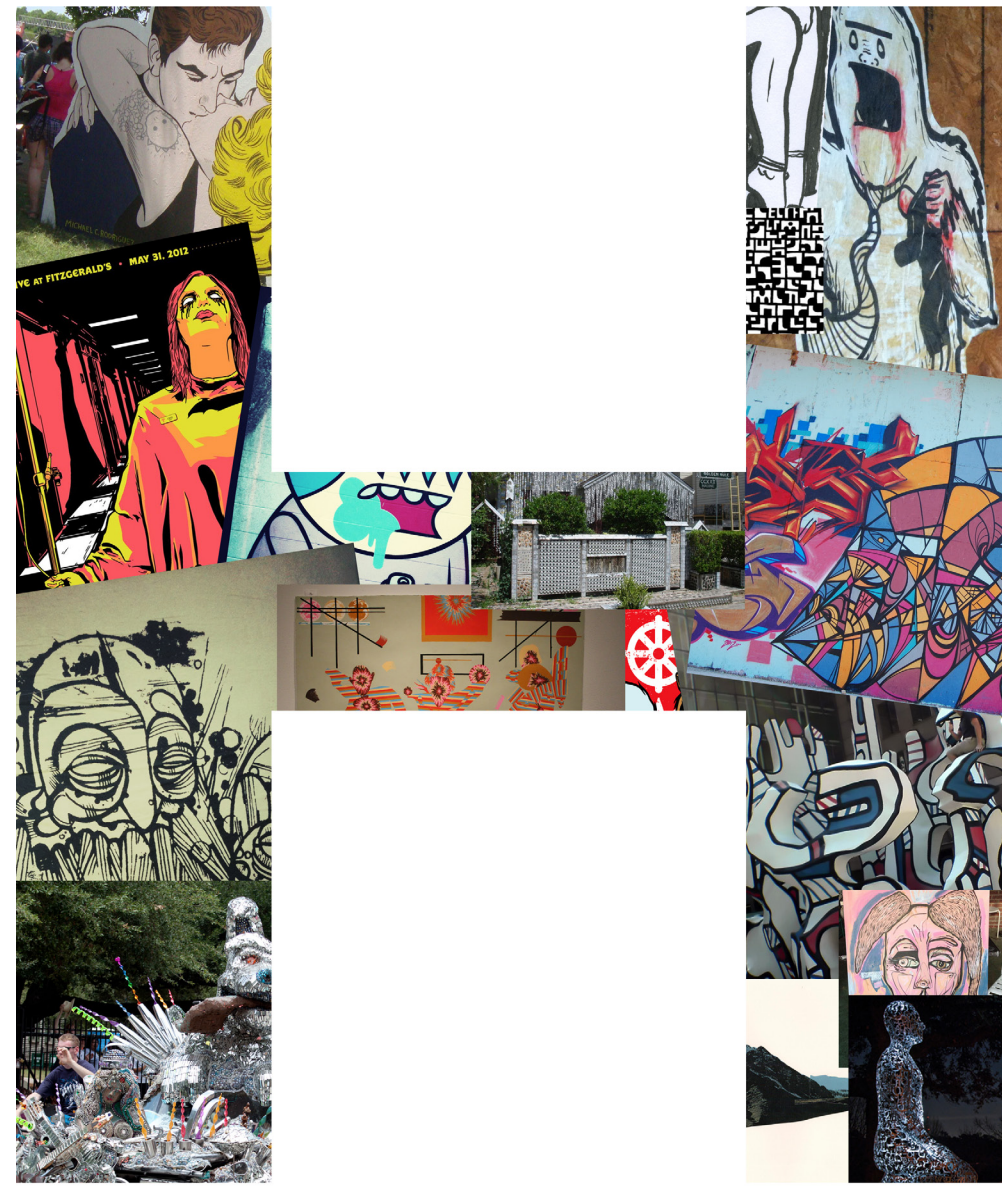
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THE BIG H

A candid editorial on Houston's art scene over the last decade

By Buffalo Sean



TEN YEARS AGO, I worked in a bookstore and thought I was a graphic designer. Today, I work at a crepe stand and I know I am a cook. In the meantime, there has been a massive amount of artwork coursing through the veins of this town and I was glad I was there to see it. Houston's art scene has matured and grown over the last decade, eating up local airtime and social media with exhibits, events, a party scene, nationally-recognized artists, and respected alternative spaces. The small clique of 'usual suspects' that dominated the gallery scene 10 years ago has grown with the expanding experimentation of Houston's museums and international attention for Texas and its status as a crossroads of cultures and intellectual memes. Beginning far before the 'oughts, the denizens of our art world have nurtured young artists and new mediums through mentorship and collaboration. Where before there was a small pie with just enough servings to satisfy the main players, today there is an accepting majority of gallerists and curators who regularly mine the homegrown talent to complement national and international artists. The grant pool has grown tenfold, allowing artists to rely on the steadiness of sponsorship while finding their critical voices in their work.

From a traditional burg to today's globetrotter class of art collectors, the vaults of Houston's elite are open to new ideas and investments. From the peanut gallery of living room exhibitions to the Mies van der Rohe halls of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, art has grown by leaps and bounds. Art journalism has been gutted but partisan academia is flowing freely in this town. The fracturing of the East End scene has destroyed the community of artists 'across the tracks' but has sparked innovation and a burgeoning new crop of Millenials coming at the art world from all angles. Interdisciplinary art is now the norm, not the exception. Houston has contributed to art in Los Angeles, New York, and across the world. At the same time, art professionals and artists from across the globe have enriched this city immeasurably.

The distinctive thing about the last decade in Houston's art scene is the loss of a certain defensiveness that goes with a regional mentality. Today's art world is more jaded, less optimistic, and fully committed to not apologizing for success. Guidebooks and boosters have long touted our art scene at every turn but instead of sneering at the notion, Houston artists today shrug off the glossy perceptions of highfalutin artístes as another blip on a bumpy trajectory that has experienced its booms and busts in rollicking bursts of expansion and contraction.

In celebrating the last 10 years of Houston art, we are merely building on the solid foundation given by the many artists and professionals who have maintained the Lawndale for over 30 years, the Contemporary Arts Museum for nearly 60 years, the Glassell School's CORE program for nearly 30 years, and innumerable institutions that have come and gone but contributed to the whole as they ran their course.

CSAW is dead, the East End has dissipated, Montrose is twice as dense, the Heights has been swept of ramshackle homes and Acres Homes has been 'discovered.' Good riddance. All good stories must come to an end, whether comic or tragic. Such experiences enhance the lives of those who were there and deliver lessons and references for those who come after them to tease into new artworks and write into historical precedent. For every decade the Free Press Houston is in publication, another generation will take over forging ahead and fretting over making it. All our lives are pressed into the pages of time- documented on the webpages of time, too. Whatever truths can be made of it make the art world of Houston that much richer.

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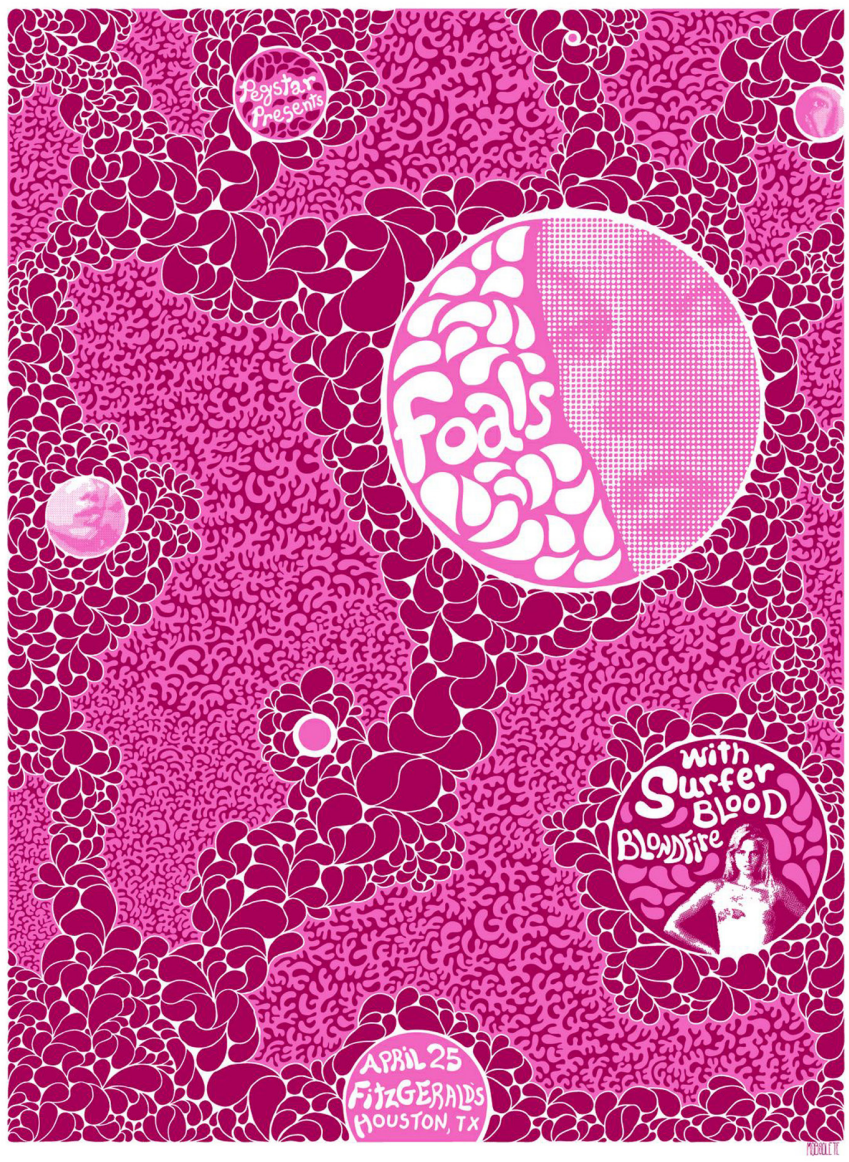
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JUST SAY NO

By Michael Bergeron

POLITICS MAKE FOR STRANGE BEDFELLOWS in the Chilean film 'No' directed by Pablo Larraín. A couple of Larraín's previous films ('Tony Manero' and 'Post Mortem') featured flawed characters caught up in the upheaval of Chilean society in the 1970s. 'Tony Manero,' in particular, saw the dichotomy of a serial killer obsessed with 'Saturday Night Fever' who seems normal when compared to corrupt people in the government.

'No' finds Larraín still exploring the ramifications of the Pinochet dictatorship. Remember that elected socialist leader Salvador Allende was overthrown by a military coup on September 11, 1973. By the end of that day, Allende was dead and Pinochet in power. In 'No,' the winds of change are in the air and a national referendum is held in 1988 to decide if Pinochet will stay in office. The people will vote on a ballot that has two choices - yes or no.

Enter young brash ad executive René (Gael Garcia Bernal), who is into marketing and selling people stuff like microwave ovens using his seductive version of advertising imagery such as mimes and happy people in bright kitchens. While René has clout at his conservative ad agency and may even be up for a big promotion, he sides with the oppressed people of Chile and agrees to work for the No campaign creating ads for their guaranteed television time. But the odds are stacked against the No movement, with the opposition outspending them 30-to-1, not to mention that members of the No campaign are being followed by the Chilean equivalent of G-men.

"It was a time when there were so many questions that demanded answers," Larraín tells Free Press Houston during a phone interview. "I make movies that try to present these ideas and answers." Amazingly, 97 percent of registered voters showed up at the polls for that 1988 plebiscite. Imagine that, especially considering we live in a country where even the presidential elections have less than a 60 percent turnout. Bernal's character is a composite of two real-life ad execs, José Manuel Salcedo and Enrique Garcia (both of whom have cameos in 'No'). "Bernal's character is a mystery as to what he's thinking," notes Larraín.

Also unique is the look of 'No.' Larraín purposely gave the film an '80s video feel by shooting the entire film with old school analog U-matic equipment originally used for shooting on -inch tape. "We hired a company that bought up 20 U-matic cameras. Out of that, they assembled four that we used to shoot the film," explains Larraín. "It gave us a retro video look that we then intercut seamlessly with actual footage and campaign commercials from 1988." Thus 'No' was shot with cameras that were sending a 480p signal into a digital drive that was then downloaded to computers for editing. "It was difficult but we made every frame connect," assures Larraín.

'No' opens in theaters in March.

Blu-ray slight return

'Sound City' rocks, plain and simple. This documentary about the Sound City Recording Studio in Los Angeles will obviously appeal to sound engineers but as the story unfolds, even the casual viewer will be drawn in like a moth to the flame of some of the greatest rock songs ever laid to vinyl (or CD or MP3 as the case may be).

Dave Grohl can add filmmaker to his list of credits. Grohl gives the film heart as he interviews many of the great artists and musicians who laid tracks there. The studio itself is a kind of stained carpet character; a bare bones warehouse converted into a studio. At the center of the studio was the Neve 8028 analog soundboard that in the early '70s cost around $75,000 or as one owner remarks, about twice as much as his house cost at the time.

Neil Young recorded 'After The Gold Rush' there and the Buckingham/Nicks duo record was also recorded and mixed there. Polygram dropped Buckingham/Nicks soon after and so they would just hang out at the studio. In came Mick Fleetwood who had heard about the Neve and how good drums sounded through it. One thing followed another and Fleetwood recruited Buckingham/Nicks into Fleetwood Mac and their biggest-selling LP was recorded there. Sound City, despite its grungy exterior, had the kind of sound that kept bands coming. In the '80s, we witnessed testimonials from REO Speedwagon and Tom Petty that spotlight the studio's uniqueness.

Eventually, Grohl joined Nirvana and they recorded 'Nevermind' at Studio City. Grohl, also this year's keynote speaker at the SXSW Music Conference, described how a particular room had a sweet spot in certain parts and how to mic that for an incredible drum sound.

In 2011, the studio went under and sold off its equipment but the story was not over by a long shot. Grohl bought the Neve console, shipped it to his own studio, and soon he, Paul McCartney, Krist Novoselic, and Pat Smear were rocking out in a thunderous anthem ("Cut Me Some Slack") that closes the film.

'Sound City' comes out on Blu-ray March 12. FPH






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MUSIC OPINIONS

OPINIONS

By K.M. Anderson
(theme music rises, curtains open)

Marnie Stern
The Chronicles of Marnia
(Kill Rock Stars)



Marnie Stern has been hailed as a guitarist of great prowess. Her albums have been awesome and, in line with tradition, she is releasing another album, sure to be awesome but less (in her words) "nutso." There are a lot of changes on this one. Kid Millions replaces Zach Hill and she sings more, or her singing is turned up louder. "Year of the Glad" is a great example of the Stern 4.7, as is "Nothing is Easy." And yet, other songs on the album such as "East Side Glory" are more gentle and funky than one might expect.

Justin Timberlake
20/20 Experience
(Sony Music)



Let me make this clear, I am not bullshitting. I really dug FutureSex/LoveSounds. So news that Timberlake was making a new album was well-received. The lead single "Suit & Tie" is eh, but whatever, I think the album will be nice. "Mirrors" is a better and longer song at eight minutes. Timbaland needs to do something good again; this album will probably be that.

The Howling Hex
The Best of The Howling Hex
(Drag City)



Neil Hagerty is one of my favorites, even the post-Royal Trux stuff. He is the embodiment of originality and REALLY not giving a fuck. The Best Of The Howling Hex continues the 'new border sound' sorta, but the drums have returned. The wonderful thing about this album is that there are eight songs and the last song "Trashcan Bahamas" may be as long as the previous seven combined (it's like 24 minutes). Hagerty is a storyteller and these songs all have a narrative. The songs follow a similar rhythmic base, which is no different than any of those Stax hits. "Highlights" is classic. "Electrico Northern" and "Green Limousine" are also faves. If you like music, this is music.

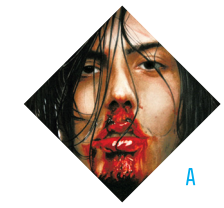
…And these have been MY MUSIC OPINIONS (theme song and fade).

MARCH MUSIC PREVIEW

PREVIEWS

By Will Guess

WELL, THAT WAS QUICK. February flew right by with some stunning shows, but March Madness is here. No, I don't mean the college basketball tournament; I'm talking about the absolutely killer shows coming this month. The king of everything party, punk legends who never stopped raging, and a band that just keeps churning out phenomenal albums. Ladies and gentleman, your shows to see for month number three.



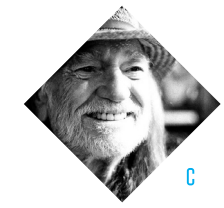
A

Sunday, March 10
(A) **Andrew W.K. at Boondocks**



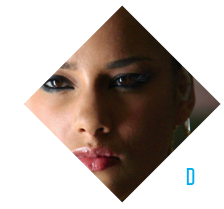
B

Even with all of the rumors and accusations that Andrew W.K. was made by a bunch of record label suits sitting around a table trying to conjure up something to bankroll their new yacht, it just doesn't matter. This guy is the definition of partying. The last time he played at Fitzgerald's for the I Get Wet 10-year anniversary, the place exploded. Not only does he put on an intense live show, but the dude is also an incredible musician, playing everything from guitar and drums to busting out some classical on a piano. He's one of a kind. I'm still in shock that this show is happening at Boondocks. It would be safe to assume that there will be a huge line outside, so get there early. It would also be safe to assume that Boondocks won't be left standing after this show. Party hard.



C

Wednesday, March 13
Bad Religion & Against Me! at House of Blues



D

Bad Religion formed in 1979. Yeah, you read that correctly. These punk pioneers have been talking shit about religion for almost 35 years. Take that, Christians. Though the band has gone through numerous lineup changes, they continue to pave the way and are seen as role models for emerging punk bands. Hell, guitar player Brett Gurewitz is the founder of Epitaph Records - the reason most of us even know any of these bands exist. Bad Religion has released an incredible 16 albums to date and with each one, they climb higher on the charts. After all these years, they continue to gain popularity and recognition. The new wave of punk opens with Against Me! and Polar Bear Club. Now, I was never an Against Me! fan until I saw them perform at Warehouse Live some months back. Seeing them in the live setting is a completely different animal. Plus, that chick lead singer they have is pretty hot.



E

Saturday, March 30
(B) **Deftones at Bayou Music Center**

Remember in the late '90s when there was an overwhelming amount of rap rock being played?? How many of those bands actually lasted? Then think, how many of those bands actually put out good albums and are still around? Yeah, there's only one. Deftones continuously and consistently make music that evolves. When Diamond Eyes was released, fans were reminded that this band could do no wrong. Then their latest album, Koi No Yokan came out and I said to myself, "Ok, these guys are fucking aliens." Top to bottom, front to back, they have one of the best catalogues of music in the rock world. They are the ONLY band from the '90s rap rock era to survive and still be respected. With the recent addition of bass player Sergio Vega, formerly of the great Quicksand, the band has pushed itself over the edge creatively. Often imitated, never duplicated - you'd be a fool to miss this show.

03.07 Bone Thugs-N-Harmony at House of Blues

03.08 FPH 10: Free Press Houston 10 Year Anniversary Celebranza, featuring STRFKR, Devin the Dude, Dann Halen, Sideshow Tramps, A Fistful of Soul, The Hates, The Wild Moccasins, & Venomous Maximus at 2727 Canal St. (5PM-2AM)

03.09 Pinback at Fitzgerald's

03.10 (C) Willie Nelson at Arena Theater

03.11 Cold War Kids/ Hanni El Khatib at Fitzgerald's

03.15 Local Natives/ Superhumanoids at Fitzgerald's

03.18 (D) Alicia Keys/ Miguel at Toyota Center

03.21 (E) Riff Raff at Fitzgerald's



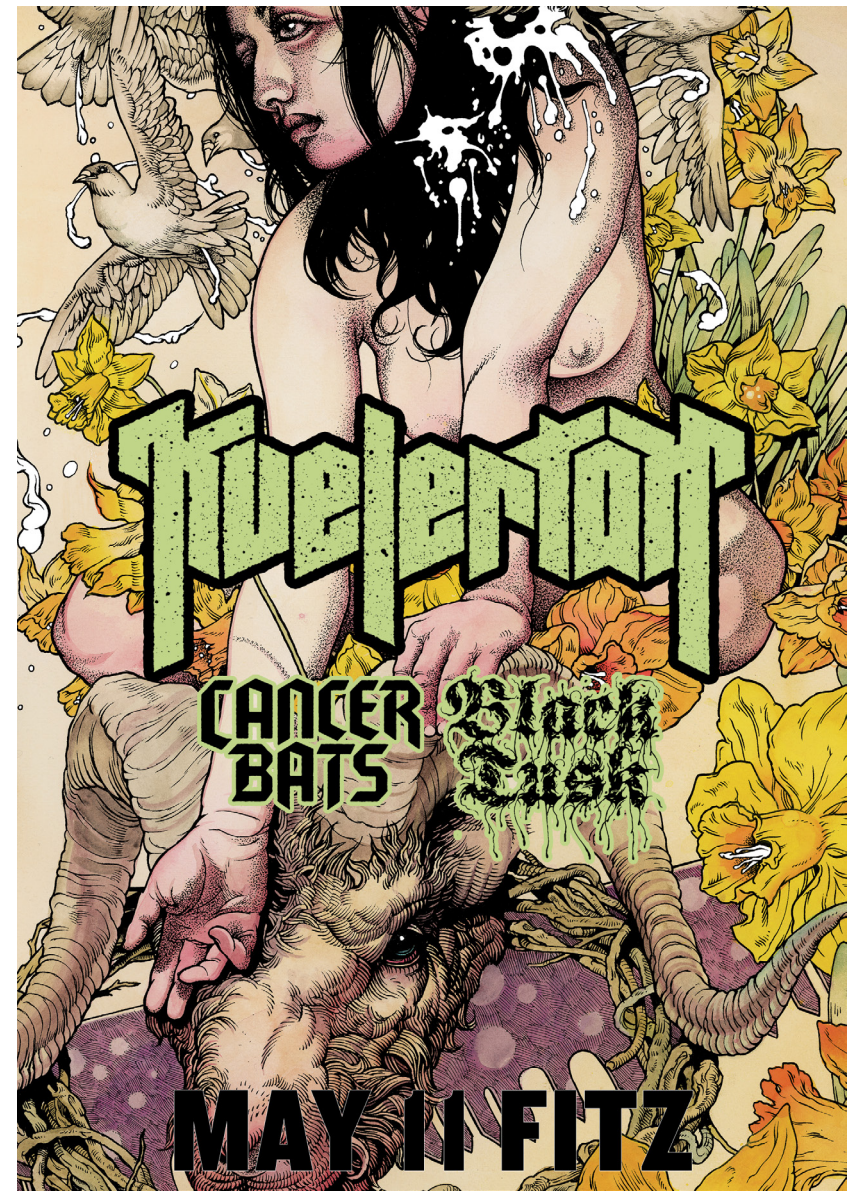


COVER ME BADD

TUESDAY EVENING KARAOKE AT FITZ

HOSTED BY OMAR AFRA, MARK ARMES, OMAR AL-BOCHI, & TIM DORSEY



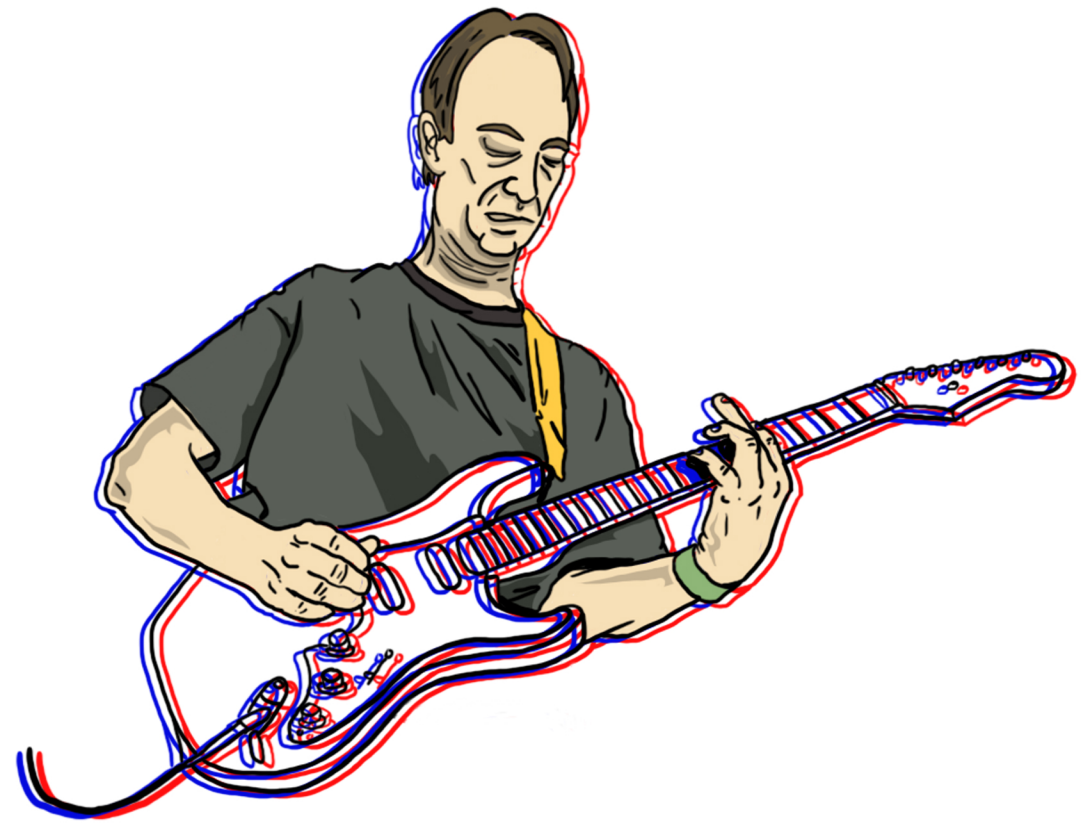


Interview:

SCOTT AYERS

Scott Ayers' musical career lives on in new band, The Dead Links

By Jack Betz
Illustration by Blake Jones



SCOTT AYERS IS, to say the least, an important figure in Houston rock history. In the late '80s and early '90s, Ayers was the driving creative force behind experimental rock act Pain Teens. The band combined the sultry singing of female vocalist Bliss Blood with Ayers' scorching math-rock guitar riffs (and his handmade tape loops). The noisy echoes of Ayers' influence are easy to hear in many contemporary local bands, like Indian Jewelry and Balaclavas.

In November, the band played their first reunion show in years -presumably their first official date since the Pain Teens' 1995 breakup. They headlined the first half of a two-night Axiom reunion extravaganza, joined by the likes of Houston veterans Toto Ehio, Poor Dumb Bastards, and Anarchitex (of which Ayers is also founding member). They followed this performance up with another date in Austin, playing with former Trance Syndicate labelmates Ed Hall and Crust; and fortunately, there have been a few dates added since, and it looks like there are more to come.

I met Scott at Antidote a few weeks ago to discuss his legacy, what he's working on now, and what the future holds for the Pain Teens and his other musical endeavors.

Really it was seeing all The Dead Links shows on Space City Rock that inspired me to interview you and ask you what you've been doing lately. Can you talk about The Dead Links a little?

It's just something that started off with this me and this singer. Basically, I'm making all these demos with no vocals. Some of them are rock songs, some of them are ambient, and some of them are noise- or whatever. But I met this guy - my ex-wife's roommate - and he had been on a major label a few years back with this band called Twenty Mondays. So I gave him some tracks and he picked the ones he liked and wrote words for some of them.

From what I've read, it appears you've only played a couple of shows so far. Where do you see it going?

I don't know exactly where it's going to go. We've been wanting to put this album out and it's really... refined. It's different than what I've done before. There's singing and harmonies and it's something that sounds kind of like Pink Floyd or something.

That's good because last time you guys played, at the Axiom reunion show, I feel like not enough people knew about it. A lot of people I spoke to said they had no idea. Do you see yourselves doing more reunion shows or is this more of a one-off thing that just happened a second time?

Well, I would like to do a few shows a year if people can come through with the money.

Yeah, because Bliss lives in another part of the country now, right?

Yeah, she has to fly in from New York and that's an extra 500 bucks.

What is it about Houston that makes it such a fertile place for bands such as Balaclavas, Indian Jewelry, and Pain Teens to write songs with so much darkness? Pain Teens wasn't all doom and gloom but there was definitely that dark depth to it. Do you think it's something about the city?

For us, it was more of a rebellion against any kind of sing-songy pop. And then later, we were doing some self-parody and stuff. But yeah, it was a rebellion against the "alternative" band where everything was all singer/songwriter. We were very independent-minded.

You did some pretty progressive stuff during Pain Teens, as far as tape manipulation and loops, without, I would imagine, a lot of computers or digital equipment. Was that a lot of work to get it to sound that way -compared to what it would be like now?

Yeah maybe, but tape is kind of forgiving in a way. We definitely didn't do anything according to any rules. Stuff would get recorded badly, like really badly, but we'd make it work.

Some of the tape stuff you did kind of reminded me of that guy from Mission of Burma, you know, Marvin Swope, with the tape effects. They came to Fitzgerald's a few months ago and they were good but that guy wasn't there and that was a little disappointing.

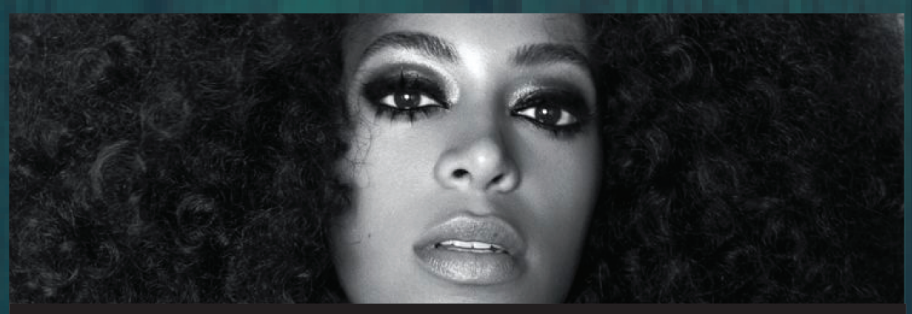
Yeah, I mean I would even tape sections of tape together to create a loop. The part where they, met you can hear it slip. **FPH**

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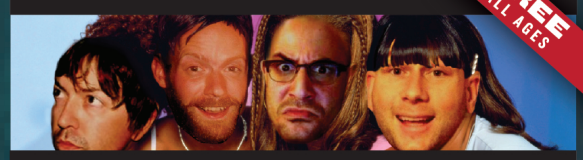


MAR. 12 **SOLANGE**
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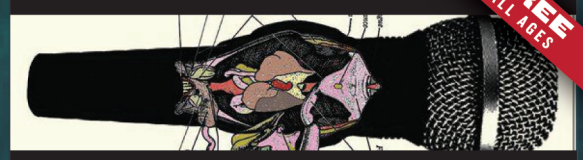
MAR. 17 **THE ZOMBIES**: COLIN BLUNSTONE & ROD ARGENT
WITH ELEPHANT STONE

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COVER ME BADD: FREE KARAOKE

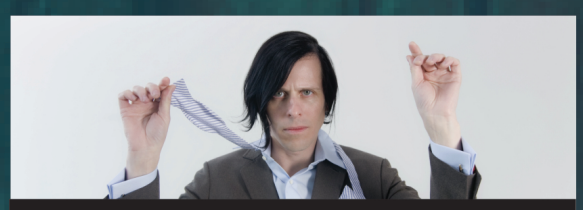
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OPEN MIC NIGHT



MAR. 01 **WHEELER BROTHERS** CD RELEASE SHOW
WITH WILD CHILD



MAR. 06 **KEN STRINGFELLOW**
(POSIES / BIG STAR / REM)



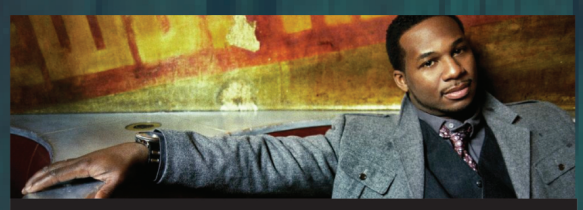
MAR. 08 **KISHI BASHI**
WITH SHUGO TOKUMARU



MAR. 09 **PINBACK**
WITH JP INCORPORATED



MAR. 11 **COLD WAR KIDS**
WITH HANNI EL KHATIB



MAR. 13 **ROBERT RANDOLPH**
AND THE FAMILY BAND



MAR. 16 **THAO** & THE GET DOWN STAY DOWN
WITH SALLIE FORD & THE SOUND OUTSIDE



MAR. 18 **THE DEAR HUNTER**
WITH NAIVE THIEVES



MAR. 24 **LYDIA**
WITH INDIAN LAKES • SWEET TALKER



MAR. 30 **EL TEN ELEVEN**
WITH SLOW MAGIC • NUDE POP

ALSO COMING **THE STORY SO FAR** MAR. 09 | **DAEDELUS • SALVA** MAR. 10 | **THE LAST BISON** MAR. 11
THE SOFT MOON • MASERATI MAR. 12 | **THE READY SET** MAR. 14 | **JONATHAN TYLER & NORTHERN LIGHTS** MAR. 17
DESSA MAR. 18 | **THE REVIVAL TOUR: CHUCK RAGAN • ROCKY VOTOLATO** MAR. 19 | **RIFF RAFF** MAR. 21


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NERD RAGE • NIT GRIT • THE POLISH AMBASSADOR
RANDALL JONES • NOAH NEIMAN • ANDREW PARSONS
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2 CHAINZ
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SOJA JAPANDROIDS CHAIRLIFT THE MAVERICKS MORD FUSTANG DEVIN THE DUDE
BARONESS LOS AMIGOS INVISIBLES VINTAGE TROUBLE SAVOY MACHINE GUN KELLY
SUPER MASH BROS MILO GREENE HALF MOON RUN THE OCTOPUS PROJECT THE MEN
UME KITTY PRYDE QUAD CITY DJ'S THE BEANS BLACK MARKET SYNDICATE DEEP
CUTS SHOWERS OTENKI FORCED FEM ORENTS STIRNER INFINITE APACHES CHIN
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ARCTIC MONKEYS



SOCIAL DISTORTION



GOGOL BORDELLO



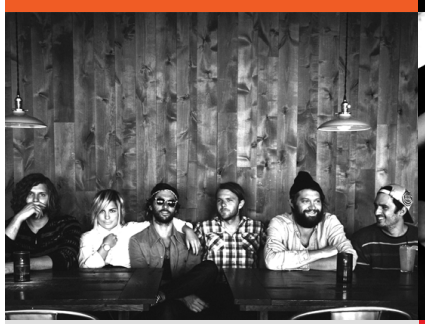
2 CHAINZ



CAT POWER



GETO BOYS



THE HEAD AND THE HEART



GRACE POTTER & THE NOCTURNALS



MATT AND KIM



BORGORE

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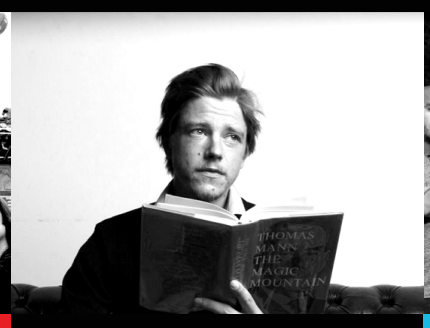
DAWES



MAVIS STAPLES



THE BRONX



PAUL BANKS (INTERPOL)



SOJA



JAPANDROIDS



CHAIRLIFT



THE MAVERICKS



MORD FUSTANG



DEVIN THE DUDE

By Joe Folladori
Illustrations by Tim Dorsey

THE UNSUNG HEROES

A music scene is a hell of a lot more than a bunch of bands bouncing off of one another in a vacuum. There are numerous individuals in this city who never set foot upon a stage yet their interest, enthusiasm, hard work, and passion have helped to create the ecosystem that exists today. We'd like to take a moment to pay tribute to a few of the scene's quiet, vital champions.

The Broker

Sound Exchange

Kurt Brennan and Kevin Bakos, two of the staunchest supporters of local music this city has ever seen, took over ownership of Sound Exchange in 1999. If you haven't been to Sound Exchange before, I really don't get you. They carry an insane amount of local music; unfortunately, the Kevin Novak cassette packaged inside a sealed block of concrete is now sold out.

What do you remember about "the state of the scene" back in 2003?
I clearly remember that everyone thought it sucked, so unlike today.

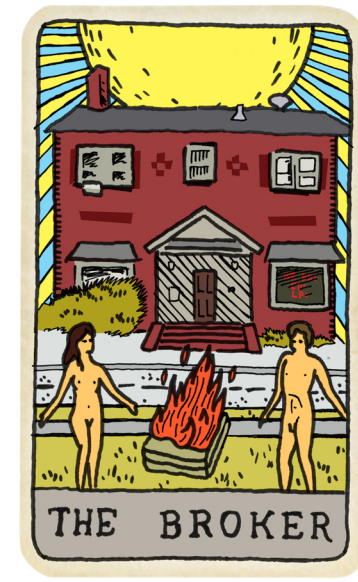
How does a record store even stay in business in 2013? I thought the music industry was dying a terrible, terrible death. Aren't brick and mortar stores crumbly old dinosaurs?
Running any small business is perilous. We have managed to make it through some tough times by being flexible and trying new things. The 'music industry' has been self-victimizing since the '70s at least. They thought video games were going to put them under then. Seems silly now, right?

Have there been any Houston bands from the past decade you don't think have received their proper due from the city/community/scene at large?
None that I can think of. I feel that this town is very supportive of its bands.

You have a very large selection of local music. Let's say my 'Promising Local Band' wants to sell our first release at your store. It's a three-song CD-R in a plastic bag. It's also terrible, but we worked really hard so we'd like to charge $12. Can we make a deal?
Sure, come on by. We will gladly consign any local band's efforts. We once had a guy drop off a cassette tape with a raw chicken part taped to it.

Do you have any favorite in-stores from the past decade?
That would be like naming a favorite child, but among the standouts, I would have to say the Pelt/Charalambides/Rotten Piece show, Man or Astro-Man?, Fatal Flying Guilloteens, Roger Nusic, Crank Sturgeon, almost ALL of our metal shows, Dosh, and more we're probably forgetting.

Where do you see Sound Exchange in 2023?
In a giant clear bubble with clerks in jet packs. You just watch! It'll happen!!



The Alchemist

Lelia Rodgers

Bars and clubs in this town come and go like Free Radicals, but Lelia Rodgers has maintained Rudyard's British Pub as one of the best spots for grown-ups to enjoy music, a hot meal, and a cold drink or five since the Houston scene's defining sound was funk-metal. Apologies to any in the under-21 set reading this - one of the most frustrating experiences of my life was getting turned away from an of Montreal show back before I knew "All Ages" wasn't a given. But sometimes you want to see some music without a bunch of goddamn kids running around, watching the band through their phones, and paying for a soda at the bar with a debit card. And sometimes you want to go out to a pub and know that the staff and bands are well taken care of, the kitchen's serving fat cheeseburgers, and the drinks are served by professionals. Lelia's firm, guiding hand and low tolerance for bullshit have made Rudyard's something of a Rock of Gibraltar – other bars will pop up and become the 'place to be' for a year or two, but Rudz will quietly outlive them all.



The Sound Girl

Lauren Oakes

Lauren Oakes runs sound at Fitzgerald's. She kind of reminds me of Starbuck from Battlestar Galactica – she's really good at what she does and you do not want to fuck with her while she's doing her job.

How'd you get into running live sound?
I got to record an album in a studio when I was a teenager and the engineer let me help mix it. I thought it was the coolest thing I'd ever seen. A few years later, I tried to go to school for studio engineering but it really wasn't for me, so I just sent emails to a bunch of venues asking if they needed an intern and only one



replied. It was Jeremy at Fitz. He threw me into mixing shows and I just learned by fucking it up.

Do you have any favorite Houston bands to work with? What makes them so goddamn special, huh?
There are a lot of really good local bands in Houston right now, which is awesome. It's nice to be able to get excited to go to work and mix a show that I would probably be at otherwise. Some of these bands absolutely blow me away. I would name some, but I can see that backfiring on me. I love all Houston bands.

What do you wish everyone you ran sound for came to the table already knowing?
Show up on time, please.

Have you ever punched anybody out (or come close) for fucking up your equipment?
I've had to yell at bands before, but I wouldn't hit anyone. I've never understood why someone would look at a monitor and decide to stand on it or throw a microphone or something. Just treat the gear like your grandma owns it and it would make her cry if you broke something.

The Nutritionist

The Tamale Guy

You've been out all night. You met up with some friends, you saw a few bands, and you've been having a good time. You've had something to drink. Earlier, there was music and dancing, or something approximating dancing. You're smiling. Your ears are ringing. You want a tamale.

You probably don't know you want a tamale, but you do. Some nights that start off like tonight started off end in grand epiphanies, or true love. Most of the time they just end so that another day can begin. It's late. You're tired. Oh man, you need a tamale.

And there is a guy, a tamale guy – The Tamale Guy – and he knows you. He knows you better than you know yourself. He knows what you need. It's in his blood. It's in his name. He weaves in and out of the crowds that form outside of concerts, through the throngs of smokers on bar patios. He offers foil-wrapped packs of tamales, unconscionably cheap; far more than one person could consume in order to foster friendship and community. He has vegetarian options and incredibly spicy tomatillo sauce. Sometimes he is not a man but rather two small ladies. He was created by your dreams, and oh are you happy to see him.

The Landlord

Francisco - Owner of Francisco's

Do bands really rehearse in garages anymore? I tried it once years ago and it was a disaster. We spent an hour thinking we were gonna die of heatstroke. Then my dad came home. It was pathetic. If your 'Promising Local Band' is even going to pretend to take yourselves seriously, you need to get a real practice space. It doesn't get much realer than Francisco's Studios, a four-story converted warehouse just east of downtown that for years has given noise terrorists of every stripe a place to make an unholy racket.

Francisco's has provided countless Houston musicians a blank slate on which to paint their dreams, to fine-tune their craft without worrying about neighbors and noise complaints. Bands share practice spaces, then ideas; friendships form, community is fostered. Francisco's has been strengthening that which we might call a scene for years now. Just remember to bring your own toilet paper.









The Medicine Man

Who are you?
You're going to print this?

Yeah.
Put "Governor Rick Perry."

What's your connection to Houston's music community?
You're talking to me about selling weed, right?

That's... Pretty much, yeah.
Then that.

Who are some Houston musicians you've sold to?
Oh man. Um, (redacted), (redacted), (redacted), (redacted). I still see (redacted) once in awhile. The guys from (redacted). I used to see (redacted), (redacted), Devin the Dude, (redacted).

Do you consider (what you do) an integral part of the music community?
Yes. I would say yes. Not as much as beer. I don't think everybody would stop making music if they couldn't buy weed anywhere. A lot of people would be really grumpy for a few months. And some people would move to California.

Why do you think musicians gravitate towards alternative medicine?
Because it gets you high? (laughs) I'm just here to help. Some people just need to calm down at the end of the day. Uhhhh, musicians probably tend to... The ones who get high tend to get high more than average, non-musicians do. I haven't done any studies.

What's the best local band to listen to high?
Don't tell a band that they're really good to listen to high. That makes it sound like "you guys were boring when I wasn't fucked up." Just tell a band they sounded good.

The Engineer

Chris Ryan

As owner and operator of Dead City Sound recording studios, Chris Ryan had a hand in some of the best albums of the past decade – everything from Jana Hunter's There's No Home to Fatal Flying Guilloteens' Quantum Fucking, not to mention literally dozens and dozens of other releases. Chris has done time in a festival's worth of bands – The Energy, Secret Prostitutes, God's Temple of Family Deliverance to name the tip of the iceberg – but it's his work behind the boards, making Houston's best bands sound as good as the limits of audio technology will allow, that really mark him as one of the biggest driving forces in making Houston's music community the pragmatically spit-shined machine it







is today. Sadly, Dead City Sound is no longer a full-time concern, as Chris explained via email.

"I moved out of the studio about a year and a half ago and have a full-time adult job. I moved all my stuff to my practice space downtown and just record on the weekends. Mostly just friends who are in bands that need a place to record, and I record my own stuff. "

The Doctor

James Love

Ah man, you broke your guitar. That sucks. What are you going to do? Get a new guitar? That's stupid. How did you break it? Did you go all Pete Townshend and smash it onstage? Please tell me you didn't do that. That's been dumb for 40 years. It's probably not that bad. You should take it to James Love and get it fixed. He's a wizard.

How long have you been at Rockin' Robin?

I have been at Rockin' Robin approximately 5 years and 7 months.

Are there any repairs that frustrate you? Like, is there a guitarist's equivalent of driving with the emergency brake on?

It's usually the people that frustrate me, not the repairs. I get lots of stupid questions (like these... haha, totally kidding!) I don't like gluing braces in acoustic guitars. It can be difficult to reach what you're trying to glue back together and you can't see what you're doing most of the time either. Repairing someone else's shitty repair job can be frustrating, as well.

What's your favorite piece of gear to fix? This is a particularly stupid question.

Nothing in particular comes to mind. I'm just happy when I'm able to help someone out. There are times when someone thinks their guitar is hopeless and when I can bring it back to life, it's a good feeling.

Has being a professional instrument doctor affected you as a musician? Do you ever get sick of even looking at a guitar, or do you feel kind of Horse Whispery when you pick one up just to play?

I still have my preferences but I'll play anything now. After dealing with so many neurotic people stressing out about stupid details that no one else is going to notice, taking all the fun out of guitar, I've developed a "who gives a shit" attitude towards most of it. I get sick of looking at other people's guitars but I could never be mad at mine.

The Superfan

Jason Shaw

He's an older gentleman, quiet, polite. He goes to a ton of shows. He is not there for the drink specials, he is not there to hang out with his friend in the opening band, he is not there to get seen. He is there for the music. He is thoughtful and appreciative. He does not talk during quiet songs, nor does he take this opportunity to yell ''woo;" he waits for the song to finish and he applauds. He does not gratuitously film the bands, forcing those standing behind him to watch the concert via his phone; if he wants to watch a show later, he uses his memory. He does not go onto the patio when a band he is unfamiliar with performs; he relishes the opportunity to make a new discovery. He is an honest-to-god fan, and he makes the world go 'round.

The Sage

Matt Brownlie

To paraphrase David Sedaris, "every generation thinks they invented rock and roll." While new blood is constantly appearing to reinvigorate the scene, yesterday's heroes find themselves spending more and more time on family and career and realize they may not be able to devote themselves to 'the lifestyle' and all that comes with it. Matt Brownlie is a bit different than most of the individuals we've chosen for this list; as the former frontman for The Groceries and Bring Back the Guns, he has spent his share of time in the spotlight.

Brownlie is a friendly, thoughtful Buddhist with a crop of curly graying hair. He's a husband and a father and would be the first to admit he doesn't get out to see much live music any longer, but before fatherhood he was knee-deep in Houston band life, booking the eclectic Down With the Scene/Houston Underground Social Hour concert series at the Rhythm Room and Rudyard's. In recent years, he's branched out into theatre, appearing in Catastrophic Theatre's 'Life is Happy and Sad' (as Daniel Johnston) and 'Bluefinger.' He and Jana Hunter started a record label, Feow!, which was not long for this world but did introduce the world to Deer Tick. And he paid his dues and made all of the right moves with a near-perfect band that, in the end, did not "make" it.

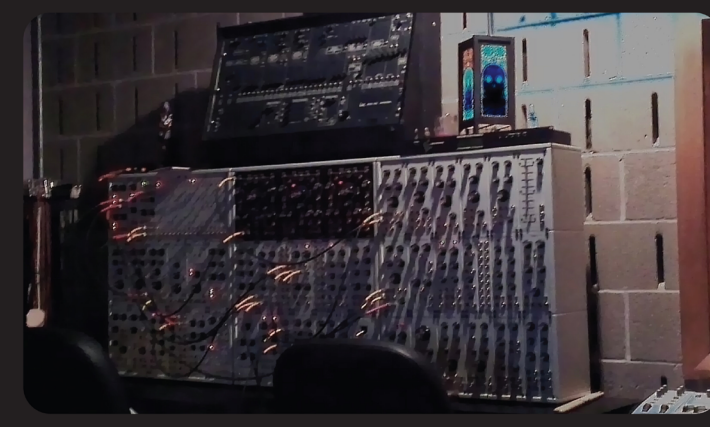
Ask Brownlie questions about the Houston scene and he'll have valuable perspective and wisdom you wouldn't get from somebody who's currently hustling, still "in the shit." Every conversation I've ever had with him makes me happy to be from Houston. **FPH**

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GREAT AND/OR SHITTY MOMENTS IN HOUSTON MUSIC HISTORY, 2003-2013

FPH
03.13

LOCAL

By Joe Folladori

TEN YEARS IS A LONG TIME. IN THE PAST 10 YEARS, THE HOUSTON SCENE HAS COME A LONG WAY - SIGNIFICANTLY, MOST PEOPLE FINALLY AGREE THAT THERE IS ONE. HERE'S A LOOK BACK AT SOME SIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN LOCAL MUSIC HISTORY. NOSTALGIA IS TOTALLY KILLING THE SCENE.



MARCH, 2003 — AUGUST, 2007

MARCH 8, 2003 – David A. Cobb's Houston Calling blog publishes its first post – a listing of the 2003 Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo concert lineup, followed by an invitation to readers who didn't give a shit about those bands to stick around and watch him shine a light on local music the larger media outlets ignore. Blogs turn out to totally be a thing; Houston Calling is still going strong.

APRIL 2003 - Fatal Flying Guilloteens release Get Knifed.

NOVEMBER 2003 – A citywide lack of enthusiasm for quality local bands kills the Houston music scene. A memorial service is held at Rudyard's.

DECEMBER 2003 - Linus Pauling Quartet releases C6H8O6.

DECEMBER 4, 2003 – With the grace of an eagle, Bucky Thuerwachter subtly steers a teenage Sound Waves customer towards purchasing Fugazi's The Argument instead of Limp Bizkit's Results May Vary.

APRIL 12, 2004 – Mike Jones' "Still Tippin' (featuring Slim Thug and Paul Wall)," the shot heard around the world, is released. For the next few years, Houston is the sound of rap music.

JUNE 2004 – The proliferation of skinny dudes wearing white belts kills the scene. A memorial service is held at the Proletariat.

DECEMBER 2004 – Houston gets its own No New York when I Hate It Here, I Never Want To Leave is released. The compilation, featuring twelve of Houston's most abrasively tuneful art-punk bands (including Bring Back the Guns, The Jonx, The Kants, and Fatal Flying Guilloteens), is not just a vital document of a scene and sound, but one of the best local albums of all time.

JANUARY 22, 2005 – Sideshow Tramps (then known as The Medicine Show) play the first verse of "You Ain't Nothin' But a Hound Dog" for five solid hours. All panties within a two-mile radius of Helios disintegrate.

FEBRUARY 6, 2005 - Local booking collective Hands Up Houston puts on their final show (MC Chris / O Pioneers!!! / By The End of Tonight) at Mary Jane's/ Fat Cat's. Before promoting indie rock concerts was remotely profitable, HUH brought countless touring bands to town that otherwise would've passed Houston by. The scene Hands Up fostered lived on for years via a thriving BBS-style message board, currently home to several dozen spambots selling Michael Kors handbags.

SEPTEMBER 2005 – Paul Wall's The People's Champ debuts at #1 on the Billboard 200. Grill sales skyrocket.

OCTOBER 15, 2005 - First Westheimer Block Party, a revamped, music-centric incarnation of the Westheimer Street Festival, is held in Montrose. The Block Party runs biannually for four years and plays host to dozens (if not hundreds) of local bands, national acts (including St. Vincent, Dead Prez, HEALTH, and plenty more), and a 2008 Cop Warmth vs. B L A C K I E guerrilla set that leveled three city blocks.

OCTOBER 2005 - Bun B releases debut solo album Trill.

NOVEMBER 5, 2005 - Danseparc presents first "Mustache Night" at Numbers.

MARCH 2006 – After over 30 years at the same location, Cactus Music closes. It reopens just down the street in November of the following year, with new ownership but much of the same staff.

MAY 2006 – MySpace kills the scene. A memorial service is held on the Hands Up Houston message boards.

JULY 22, 2006 - The first DJ Screwfest is held at the Pasadena Convention Center and Fairgrounds with performances by Slim Thug, Chingo Bling, Trae, and more. DJ Screw's legacy continues to grow; next year's event is held at Reliant Arena. DJ Screw is eventually named an official Texas Music Pioneer by the office of Governor Rick Perry, along with Blind Lemon Jefferson, Dimebag Darrell, and (for some reason) Elliot Smith.

AUGUST 2006 – The Jonbenet releases Ugly/Heartless.

SEPTEMBER 2006 – After a half-dozen releases and about as many name changes, the loose gang of art-noise oracles revolving around Erika Thrasher and Tex Kerschen release the Invasive Exotics LP under what would become their permanent name, Indian Jewelry.

OCTOBER 13, 2006 – HPD officer Gabriel Rodriguez responds to a noise complaint and tasers several people at Walter's on Washington, including a member of the band Two Gallants and a 14-year-old.

MARCH 9-10, 2007 – First Noise and Smoke festival held at Notsuoh and The Axiom. The Ka-Nives somehow manage to offer up the least coherent set in the band's history. Everyone in attendance dies.

MARCH 27, 2007 – Actor David Arquette shows up at the Proletariat to hear Black Math Experiment sing him their song "You Cannot Kill David Arquette." Arquette survives.

MARCH 2007 – Devin the Dude releases Waitin' to Inhale.

MAY 2007 – Jana Hunter releases There's No Home. Hunter promptly moves to Baltimore, eventually forming Lower Dens. Refusing to admit her departure, many Houstonians continue to stubbornly refer to her as "local musician Jana Hunter." She'll be back. They always come back. Bliss Blood is coming home any day now; we kept her room just like she left it...

AUGUST 7, 2007 - UGK's double album Underground Kingz debuts at No. 1 on the Billboard 200. The single "International Player's Anthem" goes on to earn a Grammy nomination. America's love affair with Houston rap reaches its commercial apex. White journalists across the country write sentences like "America's love affair with Houston rap reaches its commercial apex."



AUGUST, 2007 — MARCH, 2013

AUGUST 2007 - John Sears begins the "Domy Bookstore" installment of his Grey Ghost series - a string of CD-Rs by local bands (often recorded by Sears himself) - released in editions of 13 and sold exclusively at the shop for $2 apiece. Highlights include EPs by Golden Axe, Cop Warmth, Hearts of Animals, Blades, and No Talk; an album-length collection of Something Fierce demos; and the first-ever Wild Moccasins recordings.

SEPTEMBER 2007 – The urine puddles on the Number's men's bathroom floors reach critical mass; congeal into a single sentient glob of evil; rampage through Montrose; kill the scene.

OCTOBER 6, 2007 - Black Leather Jesus handpicked by Thurston Moore to open for Sonic Youth (in Marfa, but still).

OCTOBER 2007 - Bring Back the Guns release Dry Futures.

NOVEMBER 2007 - South Park Coalition founder K-Rino releases Book Number 7 (the album, not the book). S.P.C. celebrates its 20th anniversary.

DECEMBER 4, 2007 – RIP Pimp C.

JANUARY 5, 2008 – The first Hootenanny at the Mink Backroom, featuring tribute performances by The Dimes as The Pixies, Papermoons as Pedro the Lion, a reunited Panic in Detroit as Jawbox, and many more. A second event ("Twotenanny") is held in July; sadly, the Francophilic third installment ("Troistenanny") never materializes.

JANUARY 2008 – Super Happy Fun Land is forced to close down its original Heights location. The exquisitely DIY operation eventually resurfaces on Polk Street on the East side of downtown, weirder than ever.

JANUARY 2008 – The Dull Knife label releases its first record, Hearts of Animals' self-titled 7" EP. Dull Knife goes on to release a string of beautifully packaged limited-run records by the likes of Balaclavas, Rusted Shut, The Wiggins, and more.

MARCH 2008 - B L A C K I E releases Wilderness of North America.

JULY 2008 – Gchat kills the scene. No memorial service is held, as someone screws up the Evite.

SEPTEMBER 2008 - Z-RO releases Crack.

OCTOBER 2008 – Sound Exchange co-owners Kurt Brennan and Kevin Bakos celebrate the store's 10th anniversary at its current Richmond St. location by watching a crackhead set his mattress on fire across the street.

OCTOBER 16, 2008 - Two Star Symphony premieres Titus Andronicus, their collaboration with Dominic Walsh Dance Theater. The Titus Andronicus album is released in 2011.

JANUARY 2009 – Wild Moccasins release Microscopic Metronomes EP. Final Wild Moccasin enters puberty.

JANUARY 2009 – Black Congress and Muhammad Ali release split cassette. Cassette tapes are a thing for a little while there.

FEBRUARY 2009 – Music blog The Skyline ends regular updates. Maintained exclusively by Ryan "ADR" Clark, the site was just as likely to offer-up thoughtful, in-depth criticism as it was tongue-in-cheek "gossip and rumor." ADR later arrested in a Laredo, TX hotel room and charged with killing the scene.

APRIL 5, 2009 - Jandek plays first local show, a late-afternoon performance at Rudyard's fronting a funk band. It's weird.

AUGUST 8-9, 2009 - First Free Press Summer Festival held at Eleanor Tinsley Park. Headliners include Of Montreal, Explosions in the Sky, and Broken Social Scene. America's fourth-largest city finally has a proper music festival to call its own.

SEPTEMBER 2009 – Everybody remembers cassette tapes are stupid.

OCTOBER 2009 - After seven years throwing Houston's premier cool-kid dance party, DJ collective Danseparc ends its residency at Numbers, officially killing the scene once and for all.

APRIL 2010 – The Energy's first album, The Energy's First Album, releases.

AUGUST 17, 2010 - Rice University announces sale of KTRU's broadcast tower and frequency to KUHF. C.R.E.A.M.

AUGUST 2010 - Bun B releases third album in his "Trill series," Trill OG. Houston rap puns reach creative apex.

SEPTEMBER 21, 2010 - Houston-based art collective Funwunce releases video for LCD Soundsystem's "Home," starring every local music fan ever, and also a robot.

SEPTEMBER 23, 2010 - After years of decline and pay-for-play Battle of the Bands scenarios, legendary Heights institution Fitzgerald's reopens under new management. Houston's music scene is stronger than ever.

SEPTEMBER 24, 2010 - Fitzgerald's kills the scene.

OCTOBER 2010 - Fat Tony releases RABDARGAB.

OCTOBER 2010 – //TENSE// embarks on U.S. tour with EBM legends Nitzer Ebb.

NOVEMBER 2010 - Official Texas State Historical Memorial Marker for legendary bluesman Lightnin' Hopkins dedicated near his birthplace in the Third Ward.

NOVEMBER 12, 2010 - Catastrophic Theatre premiers the rock opera Bluefinger, based on the album of the same name by Frank Black/Black Francis, itself based on the life of Dutch glam rock singer Herman Brood. The play, which features lead performances by Sprawl/Middlefinger frontman Matt Kelly and Dead Horse/The Plus and Minus Show's Michael Haaga, sells out its run at Diverseworks. Theatre is briefly cool.

DECEMBER 16, 2010 – Delicious Milk make its live debut, killing the scene but saving rock and roll.

JANUARY 2011 – New West Records announces they've signed Robert Ellis, Buxton, and Wild Moccasins. Grandfather Child is snatched up later in the year. That skinny kid who rings you up at Cactus is now labelmates with Steve Earle.

JANUARY 2011 - Bun B begins teaching course on religion in hip-hop at Rice University.

JULY 2011 - Robert Ellis releases Photographs.

DECEMBER 25, 2011 – After years fighting the good fight on the increasingly Jersey Shore-like Washington Avenue, Walter's officially opens its new location on 1120 Naylor Street, just north of downtown.

JANUARY 2012 - Buxton release Nothing Here Seems Strange.

MAY 2012 – While California noise-rap carpetbaggers Death Grips become media darlings, many music fans (both locally and nationally) begin pointing out they're essentially just adding live drums to the template B L A C K I E perfected years ago. B L A C K I E – who was at one point set to open for Death Grips on a tour they subsequently cancelled - abandons said template and releases his long-rumored "acoustic" album, the harrowing, uncompromising GEN.

JUNE 2-3, 2012 - Free Press Summer Festival draws over 80,000 attendees in its fourth year at Eleanor Tinsley Park. In four years, the event has grown to the point where Willie Fucking Nelson is playing at four in the afternoon.

NOVEMBER 23, 2012 – A Pain Teens reunion is the highlight of The Axiom 25th Anniversary Show at Fitzgerald's. A buncha punk-ass kids show up and decide they're goth, which is fine I guess.

JANUARY 2013 – Linus Pauling Quartet release triple-disc greatest hits compilation/D&D module Assault on the Vault of the Ancient Bonglords.

MARCH 2013 – Free Press Houston celebrates its tenth anniversary, publishing a list of significant events in local music history. It unconscionably neglects to mention your favorite band, in a calculated effort to brutally murder the scene once and for all. **FPH**

TEN YEARS

TEN OF OUR FAVORITE FPH ARTICLES

By Alex Wukman

FPH Artwork and covers by various local artists over the last 10 years

JESUS, A DECADE. When the Free Press started most of us didn't think it would last 10 months let alone 10 years. Like all businesses, the paper struggled early on. There are legendary stories of staffers getting paid in weed. Because of the lack of resources, the early years relied on the drive and dedication of the people involved to make the paper happen.

No one was at the Free Press to get rich—people were there because they believed in it. Sadly, nothing can stay young and reckless forever. Over the years, the paper has become respectable. No longer is the Free Press written exclusively for stoners and bored twenty-somethings. Now it is the centerpiece of a multimedia empire. But no matter how big the empire gets, the heart will always be the paper, and the heart of the paper will always be the writing. The following list includes a handful of some of our favorite pieces published over the years.



(A) **Worst Complicity in Houston's Worst Crime**
by Amanda Hart, published January 2012
While this wasn't the first article the Free Press ran on human trafficking, it was the first one to get widely noticed. The article prompted FOX 26 to do a segment on the Village Voice Media's "escort" ads and was part of the tidal wave of negative publicity that prompted Village Voice Media to spin backpage.com off into its own business, for all the good that did.

Montrose Secession Declaration
by Omar Afra, published in 2007
Sometimes a joke goes too far. It started out as an off-hand comment about how Montrose doesn't feel like Houston, that it's surrounded. That comment grew into an idea, which was followed by a joke about picking a down-on-his-luck local character as 'mayor' of the fictional City of Montrose. However, that local character took the ball and ran with it. He went and lobbied Houston City Council to overturn a bike registration ordinance and even tried to legalize marijuana by fiat. Sadly it didn't work.

When No Means Yes
by Amanda Wolfe,
published November 2012
Influence isn't always measured by wins or losses, sometimes it's measured by hits and page views. While this article failed to prevent the passage of a flawed referendum, it did lead to one of the largest non-FPSF related hit counts that the Free Press website has seen.

(B) **A Tale of Two Shops**
by Andrew Burleson, published May 2010
Politics in Houston are pretty predictable: developers vs. community members, rich vs. poor, not in my backyarders vs. everything. It seems that some issues are as eternal, and eternally fouled, as the water flowing through the ship channel. Parking is one of those issues. While it has been getting a bit of attention lately, primarily because of an idea that it will make it difficult to open new businesses, the issue has been a problem in Houston for years.

(C) **A War on Homelessness, or a War on the Homeless?**
by Nick Cooper, published May 2012
While the Free Press has run many stories on the homeless and homelessness, none got quite the reaction that Nick Cooper's article on a city ordinance making it illegal to feed the homeless did. It seemed to be all anyone wanted to talk about for the weeks leading to up to FPSF.

An Open Letter to Our 'Guests' in Montrose
by Omar Afra, published April 2011
Gentrification hurts. A neighborhood 'going upscale' will always irritate the people who were there first. And when that neighborhood is Montrose it's going to cause some blowback. The letter warning the beneficiaries of gentrification to be wary of certain establishments was an expertly delivered tongue-in-cheek response to gentrification poking fun at the 'tourists wandering into the rough neighborhood," a neighborhood that looks less like Texas's version of the East Village and more like Greenwich, Connecticut every day.

(D) **Oil and Racism**
by Reza Fiyouzat, published July 2008
Some articles move readers emotionally, some articles make them aware of an issue or event, and some make them re-examine what they believe. While Fiyouzat's piece wasn't the most emotionally-stirring piece of writing, it did beg the reader to reconsider the isolationist attitude of U.S. environmental regulations.

(E) **The Electric Chair Mini**
by Gislaine Williams,
published February 2007
Over the years since this article was published, tasers have moved from a nonlethal alternative to a very questionable use of force. Williams was making the same argument back in the Bush administration.

(F) **Opiates for the Masses**
by Anonymouse, published August 2008
Prescription drug abuse is the new heroin and Houston has been the epicenter of the epidemic. The pill mill has reshaped Houston's drug culture. It's not uncommon for someone to spend hours driving from one 'clinic' to another getting prescriptions for Soma, Xanax, and Vicodin—known as the Houston cocktail. In 2010, prescription medications were present in more deaths than cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine combined.

(G) **Dark Crystals**
by Alex Wukman, published July 2005
This article forced the City of Houston to increase methamphetamine enforcement. At the time the article was published, it wasn't uncommon to see strung out street kids walking down Westheimer. Back then, in the dark days of the Bush administration, Montrose, like the rest of the country, was being flooded with meth. The only difference was people were willing to talk about and write about it in New York and L.A. That wasn't the case in Houston. Intrepid TV reporters weren't going undercover into the world of Houston's meth culture and the major papers weren't running exposes on the meth pipeline. So when the Free Press article hit, it was a bombshell. The article pushed the Chronicle to interview law enforcement about the problem and forced Mayor Bill White to convene a special multi-agency meeting at the West Gray Multi-Service Center every week for three months. The meetings brought HPD, the Harris County Hospital District, City Council Members, and the D.E.A. to Montrose to talk about the area's drug problem. **FPH**

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BIG SLICK POKER TOURNAMENT

TUESDAY
STEAK NIGHT
AND
SMITCHERS

WEDNESDAY
LADIES NIGHT
LIVE MUSIC
SEAN & STACI

THURSDAY
BIG ASS BEER NIGHT
DRINK SPECIALS
PARTY WITH DJ EDDIE

FRIDAY
LIVE BANDS INSIDE
LIVE DJ ON PATIO

SATURDAY
LIVE BANDS INSIDE
LIVE DJ ON PATIO

MARCH 17
ST PATRICKS DAY PARTY!
WITH
THE VELCRO PYGMIES
AND MORE

MARCH 21
THUNDERROADS
BIKE NIGHT
HOSTED BY OUTLAW DAVE

MARCH 24
BENEFIT FOR RAMEY
W/
OZZ, SCARS HEAL IN TIME, LOVE & WAR, SOUND OF MADNESS, VICTIM,METAL MAIDEN, SUBDIVIDED, AND MORE

• MARCH EVENTS •

FRIDAYS
MARCH 1ST
AMERICAN SWINDLE
MARCH 8TH
ARABELLA JONES
MARCH 15TH
ADEMA

MARCH 22ND
LOVE IT TO DEATH
THE GIFT REMAINS THE SAME
MARCH 29TH
THE TAKING, BLACK WATER, HEAD LIGHTS, UNDER WATER, YOKO MONO

SATURDAYS
MARCH 2ND
THE CHROMATICS
MARCH 9TH
Y&T

MARCH 16TH
LILLIAN AXE
MARCH 23RD
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TUESDAY
STEAK NIGHT
&
SMITCHERS
FREE TEXAS HOLD 'EM

WEDNESDAY
LADIES NIGHT
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ITALIAN WINE TASTING
5-7PM

THURSDAY
BIG ASS BEER NIGHT
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$4 SHOT SPECIALS
"DJ'S"

FRIDAY
LIVE BANDS INSIDE
LIVE DJ ON PATIO

SATURDAY
LIVE BANDS INSIDE
LIVE DJ ON PATIO

MARCH. 16
THINK LIZZY
W/
SUBDIVIDED

MARCH 23
THE FAB 5

COMING SOON
APRIL 5TH
RAISED ON RADIO
APRIL 18TH
PAT TRAVERS
MAY 10
LITTLE OZZY

• MARCH EVENTS •

FRIDAYS
MARCH 1ST
STAIRWAY TO ZEPPELIN
MARCH 8TH
WHISKEY BUSINESS
MARCH 15TH
BENASTAR

MARCH 29TH
NIGHTBIRD
W/ SPECIAL GUEST
APRIL 5TH
RASIED ON RADIO

SATURDAYS
MARCH 2ND
SPACEROCKERS
MARCH 9TH
ALCOHOLICA
SWALLOW THIS

MARCH 16TH
THINK LIZZY
SUBDIVIDED
MARCH 23RD
THE FAB 5
MARCH 30
MINDCRIME

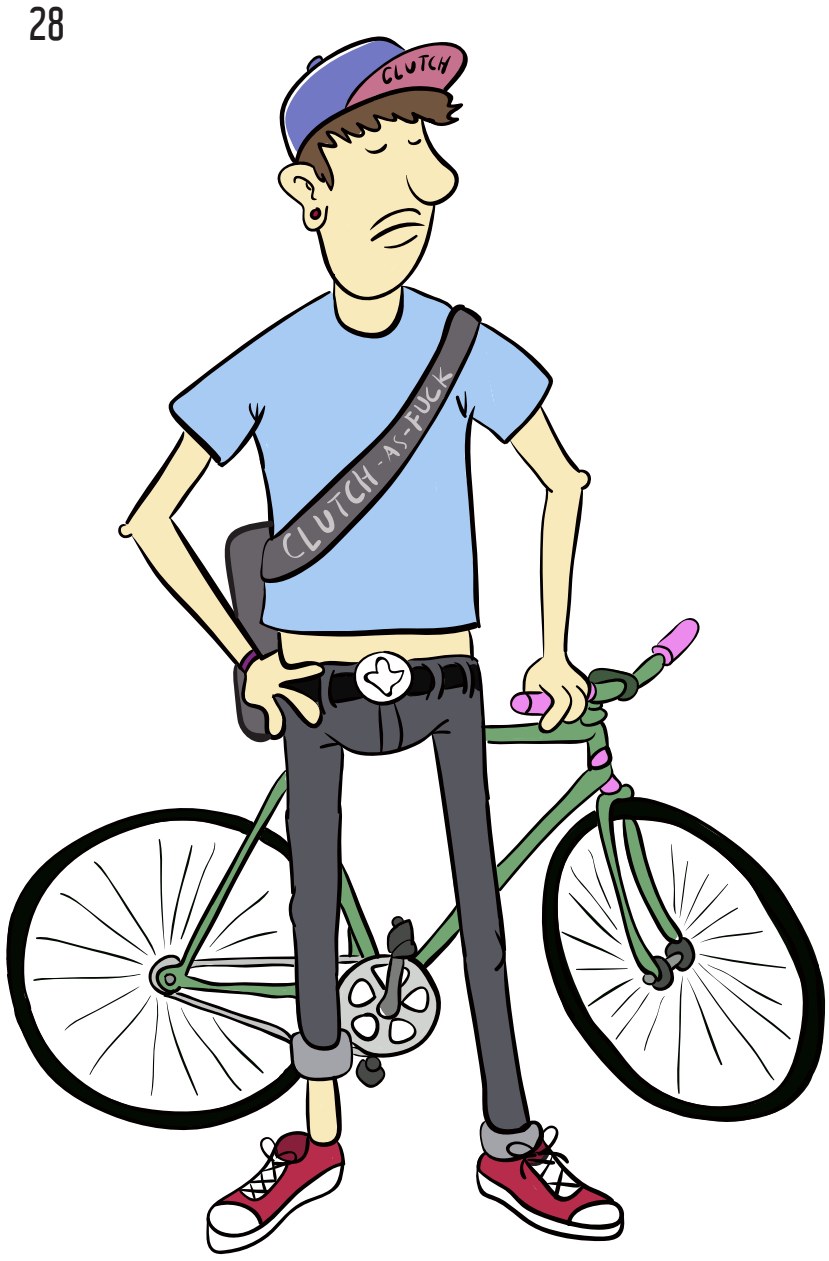
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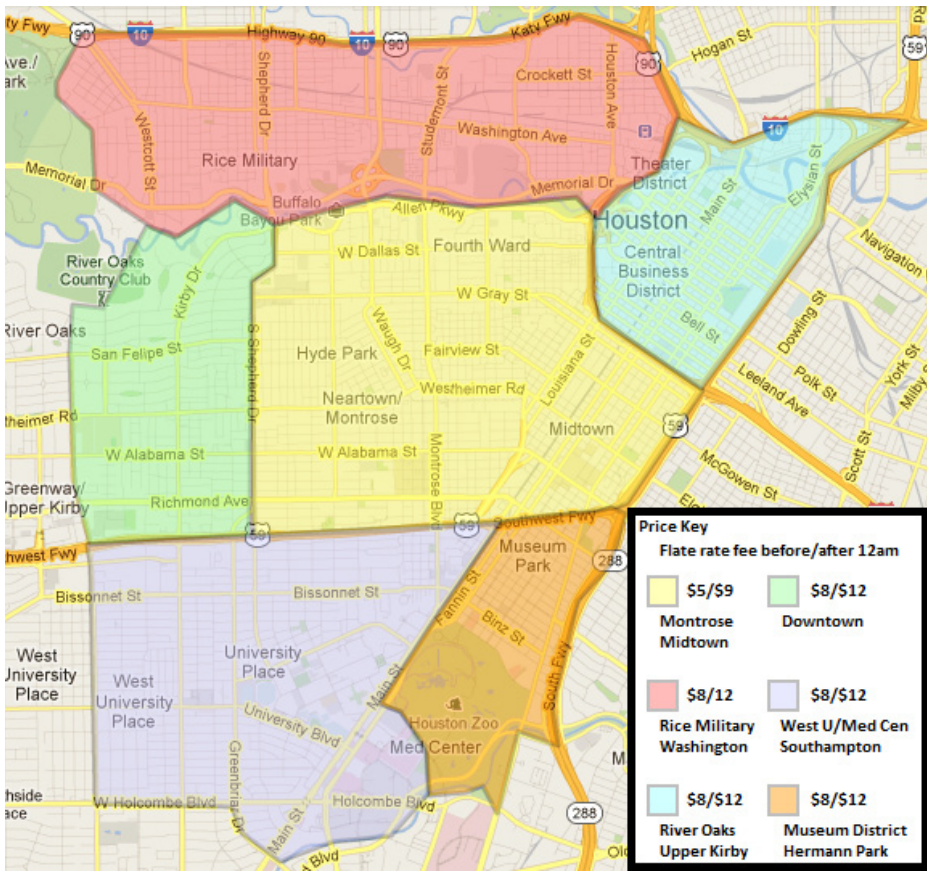
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CLUTCH DELIVERY

By Amanda Hart
Illustration by Blake Jones





HOW MANY TIMES have you been sitting around with friends sharing some beers and wished that not only was there a beer fairy to replenish your stash but also one that would bring you some food? Well, wishing is now a thing of the past. Allow me to introduce Liam Musgrove and his genius business adventure, Clutch Delivery.

What is Clutch Delivery?
Clutch Delivery is the go-between for people that want to travel less and [still get] the things that they need. Anyone can send us a shopping list and Clutch Delivery will do it all just shy of cooking what meal we gathered ingredients for.

If you're skipping the kitchen, food from one (or multiple) of 80 restaurants we list on our website can be delivered in less than an hour. We can even get prescriptions from pharmacies (grocery stores and CVS say it's a go, but Walgreens is iffy. They fear their corporate backlash, though it is perfectly legal.)

The above errands will probably be our largest market. Our last priority is traditional courier transport, which is primarily for legal documents. Transport in need calls for a sustainable deed.

What prompted you to start such a service in Houston, especially around The Montrose and Midtown areas?
Friends of mine from other U.S. metropolises have these companies supporting their sustainable lifestyles, and I thought it was time that Houston should advance to their level. In those places, there are eight to a dozen riders each day doing what they love and earning a living at it. These are homegrown, independent, rider-owned enterprises. They get so busy that some riders deliver only one week out of each month. Can we not match that paradise?

Bike cargo delivery should get huge especially with respect to feeding people that find convenience to be paramount. Our potential customers go to Grubhub.com, Eat24.com and the like all too often (these are not locally-owned mom-and-pops. They are multi-million dollar corporate conglomerates from Chicago and the Northeast) only to let some driver add five to six miles of carbon emissions to our atmosphere. It would be better to support our neighborhood's cyclists by paying them to ride.

Because Houston is the epicenter of America's energy expenditure, there are not enough possibilities to enjoy life here being car free. By getting people to earn money cycling, I can make people's days less stressful, more relaxing, and equally vibrant and luxurious. It is an added bonus that each drop we make erases those miles driven by a car.

Do you have plans to expand to the Heights anytime soon?
That is a milestone that I would love to cross. It's just that going from Aladdin in the heart of Montrose to Love Park off Herkimer and W 13th is eight miles round trip for one drop. Around here, eight miles gets three or four deliveries accomplished. Also, I am less familiar with Heights restaurants and hotspots. I might ask for another brave rider to lead that development campaign so that service around here will not slack.

Is there anything you won't deliver?
I was never inspired to offer dry cleaning delivery. Aside from the impossibility of fitting starched shirts, slacks, and whatever else they wash into a backpack, I never liked the smell. It's neither a dirty, earthy, natural smell of the outdoors, nor is it that appetizing aroma of Chapultepec's eggchiladas (cheese enchiladas covered with gravy, two sunny-side eggs, and a side of rice -- my favorite) or Mai's garlic tofu at 3 a.m. Plus, we ride to remind people how to relax, not to send them back to work.

How do people contact you to take you up on this kick ass service?
For the moment, there is one line that is open from Thursday at 5 p.m. until Sunday at 1 p.m. It will get you a delivery at any time within that range. If you wrangle a job out of us during our off days, we will add a "late-night" fee to it.

The hardest part is deciding how much food, or other items, you need and from where (we list 80 restaurants, convenience stores, grocery stores—delivery from retail and bookstores is a possibility, but no libraries).

Once you've handled that, call or text us to see when we can help you. At this point, you should know when we can make it to that restaurant or when we will be able to shop (at most 30 minutes from your call), and what that fee will be.

After lining us up, if you wanted food, you should call the restaurant with that order. Clutch Delivery handles the rest: pickup, payment, and transport in a timely manner.

What delivery potentials excite you the most?
What excites me the most:

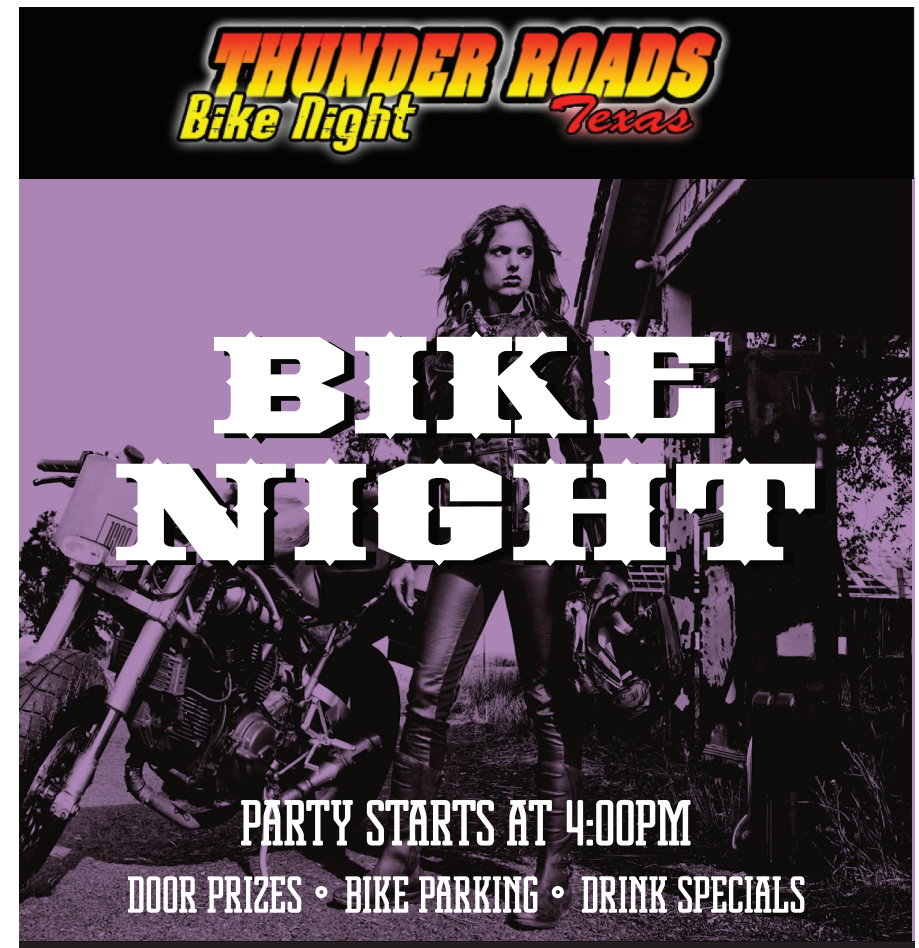
Helping people get past their crudest weekend morning with donut/kolache/mimosa combos during brunch.

Bringing Midtown's banh mi and pho to the masses and with no delivery minimum, you could get three Cali or Les Givral's sandwiches to Upper Kirby for just 15 bucks.

Getting food trucks to join up and accept call-in orders. **FPH**

Visit www.clutchdelivery.com to learn more.


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YOUR KIDS' TEACHERS ARE PISSED OFF AND DESERVE A HUG

By Nick Cooper
Illustration by Blake Jones



LOCAL

ONE IN FIVE ADULTS in Harris County are functionally illiterate. In 2011, Texas (which was already ranked 48th on education spending) hit schools with a double-whammy -- cutting the education budget by $5 billion while implementing expensive new testing. Over the past 30 years, the Texas Supreme Court has ruled against these kinds of cuts five times, but legislators keep doing it. Around Texas now, some wealthier districts get over $60,000 more per classroom than some poor districts. Though there is a budget surplus in Texas this year, it won't go to education. Instead, Republican legislators are fighting for voucher systems to pull even more money out of public schools.

Around Houston, teachers are trying to juggle what they see as the needs of their students with the limitations and requirements put on them by the system. The mainstream news is concerned with little more than the question of whether or not teachers should have guns. So this month, we wanted to give teachers an opportunity to teach the rest of us how the system works (and doesn't work). For their protection, we are using their first names only.

Jenn is an interventionist for reading, math, and students with behavioral issues in kindergarten through fourth grade. For her, low salaries, limited resources, and bossy bosses can be a problem at any job, but all of those pale in comparison to the frustrations of standardized testing.

She works at a school in a low-income community, where the parents are often working full-time, single, homeless, non-English-speaking, jailed, and/or uneducated. Many of her students live in shelters. While she does her best to help these students succeed, some students are too burned-out to excel, and the standardized tests just make matters worse.

"Unfortunately, the state doesn't look at 'extenuating circumstances.' Our students' scores are compared to those of students in River Oaks. Even though, as teachers, we might see a three- or four-year growth in our students, they still won't meet state standards, and our teachers and students feel like failures."

One of her students, who cannot speak and is permanently in a wheelchair, "must take the same test the rest of the students are taking. Dyslexic students must read their standardized tests, and we cannot assist them. I just wish that the state would come in and actually look at what is going on."

Ed, a Social Studies teacher and a mentor to troubled and at-risk kids in 7th & 8th grade agrees. "They have been doing benchmark tests [every week or two] all year long. As a teacher, I don't get to cover a lot of material in that time – especially because the reading levels for these middle schoolers are very low. If we complain, the typical response is that they are following the 'experts' on this matter."

Working in the charter school, Ed feels additional pressures.

"The teachers have no annual contracts with the school. We can be terminated at any time, and they let us know this fact almost on a daily basis."

Al, who teaches music at a local public elementary school, sees the testing being used to punish those who need the most help.

"Money goes to successful schools, not the ones that need it most. Everything has to be geared towards the tests. My performance review is heavily graded on how the kids test [though music isn't even on the tests]. One day a week, I have to teach testing strategies in reading or math. When I have children who are exceptional musicians, they can't play unless they pass their tests."

For Rachel, a public school administrator in the Houston area, it is the frequency and type of testing that is the problem. Data-driven instruction could potentially be very helpful to educators, but "there is the constant barrage of edicts and mandates that come from the central office that may or may not be in your campus' best interest."

She says the state and federal mandates that come in are even more out of touch.

Despite lack of resources, being buried in tests, paid little, and often treated poorly, these educators work tirelessly because they feel a calling to teach, as well as a love for their students and their job. However, Texas Republicans would rather congratulate themselves for cutting funding to education instead of taking the time to meet with these educators on the front line.

Erin, a middle school educator in HISD sees public education inequality in America increasing by design, with for-profit, private, and charter schools cashing in.

"It's a set-up," she says. "They're setting us up for failure so they can say we have to be fixed." FPH

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THE STATE OF THE VA

By Amanda Hart
Illustration by Blake Jones

THIS YEAR'S STATE OF THE UNION address given by Mr. Obama seemed to address the needs of our nation and supplied plenty of hope to liberals all over the country. Including the announcement that, "By the end of next year, our war in Afghanistan will be over." After 10 years at war, military families and our nation can finally rest a little easier. And according to Obama, "We will keep faith with our veterans – investing in world-class care, including mental health care for our wounded warriors; supporting our military families; and giving our veterans the benefits, education, and job opportunities they have earned." Bravo Mr. President, bravo. This is all great news if only it were the least bit true. Our troops coming home is accurate but Obama seems to be a bit confused about the "world-class" care they are sure to receive. There is nothing classy about the rates at which our service men and women experience homelessness, unemployment, mental health issues or suicide once they return from battle. And to claim that we are keeping our end of the bargain to care for our military members and their families is about as accurate as President Bush reassuring us that the weapons of mass destruction were just in a really good hiding spot.

According to statistics released by the Veterans Affairs office, an estimated 18 veterans commit suicide daily. To break it down further, every 80 minutes in this country we lose a returning vet due to the severe lack of services needed to help them transition. Annually, we lose approximately 6,500 veterans to suicide which means for every one service member we lose on the battlefield we lose another 25 once they return home. The battle that continues once service members return home is marginalized and, frankly, ignored. Evidence linking post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) to our high suicide rates is beginning to surface as studies are being conducted. PTSD is an anxiety disorder that develops after being exposed to psychological trauma. CTE is a degenerative brain condition that develops after the brain experiences physical trauma. CTE is common among veterans who lived through things such as bomb explosions. According to the Boston University School of Medicine, "CTE sufferers display such symptoms as memory impairment, emotional instability, erratic behavior, depression, and problems with impulse control. Eventually, the disease progresses to full-blown dementia." Tests are beginning to show that there might be a link between our high rates of suicide and soldiers who have experienced PTSD coupled with CTE. According to the Center for a New American Security, approximately one in five veterans from Afghanistan and Iraq will suffer from PTSD or CTE. Experts predict the worst is yet to come as more vets return home and these disorders are given time to mature.

Casey (last name omitted at his request) is a native Houstonian who served in the Army between June 2005 and November 2010, including a 15-month tour in Iraq. His decision to share his story was not an easy one. Casey, like most veterans, finds it difficult to talk about what he has experienced since returning home. Issues such as the ineptitude that seems to plague the Veterans Affairs office to the daily struggle that Casey experiences is all conversation that seems less than "appropriate" for a friends-sharing-conversation-over-coffee atmosphere. The apprehension to share their stories leaves many vets across the country to deal with the aftermath of war on their own.

Casey's story sounds all too familiar to anyone who has either served in the military or is a relative of someone who has. Halfway

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through his tour, a rocket exploded a few feet above Casey's head as he lay sleeping in his barrack. The explosion caused him to be thrown across the room. Living through this attack left Casey with a distinguished Purple Heart and a traumatic brain injury. "After the explosion, I blacked out," Casey explains as he exhales from his cigarette while we chat on the patio at Black Hole Coffee House. "After I came to, I was evaluated by a doctor who explained to me that 'if' I failed my memory test I risked the chance of losing my flight status (Casey flew unmanned aerial vehicles) and would be recycled back into the infantry."

Even though Casey did in fact fail his memory test, he agreed with the doctor that he was fine and was released that same night. Casey was unaware that he had been diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury until just a few months ago. "I didn't find out until I requested the documentation for my Purple Heart. When they sent me the documents, I was reading over them and saw my diagnosis for the first time."

It is unknown if Casey's brain did develop CTE from the blast. Currently, the only way to verify such damage to the frontal lobes is to examine the brain after death. PTSD is also difficult to verify even though science has made huge advances towards understanding it better. According to the VA, 444,551 veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan have been diagnosed with a mental health disorder, 239,174 of those with PTSD. "My chest constantly feels as though it is on fire. I feel depressed frequently. I lose track of time or days. I'm often tired, and I'm easily frustrated or angered by situations that I can't control." When asked, Casey shares with me what it's like to live with PTSD. "I'm always thinking about Iraq. Certain sounds or smells really bother me when they trigger a flashback. It's hard to explain. I can't help but replay situations and think about how if I had done something a little bit different friends of mine might still be alive," he says as he stares down at his coffee. Casey goes on to explain, "Like, I was checking the fuel sample of one of the planes and the fuel tank broke. Because of this, the plane took off behind schedule and I wasn't there to back up my infantry crew and as they entered a site, a bomb attached to a door exploded. If I had been on time maybe I could have saved some of them. I think this is one of the reasons I get really flustered and anxious about being on time now. These are the things I relive every day and in my nightmares." He concludes, "I don't get much sleep these days."

At the end of his tour, the Army enrolled Casey at the University of Houston. He was in line to become an officer. There was a mere 21 days between him flying back from Iraq and beginning his first day of classes. "Most soldiers have to take months of "Don't beat your wife" or "Don't abuse drugs or kill yourself" classes but they waived all that for me so I could start school." After a few semesters, Casey took a medical leave of absence from school and shortly after that was released from the Army. In early 2011, he went to work on an oil rig in North Dakota but Casey, like many other vets, found it difficult to hold a job. According to the most recent labor statistics, a little over 200,000 Iraq and Afghanistan vets are unemployed. It was here that Casey found himself living in his truck, homeless. "I checked myself into a VA hospital but found them to not be helpful so I came back to Houston and started looking for work."

According to the VA, more than 100,000 vets are living on the streets on any given night and that is supposed to be the conservative estimate. "Lucky" for Casey, his family is here and he hasn't found himself on the street except for that short period of time. However, he did have a second encounter with the VA hospital. A few months after returning from North Dakota, Casey checked himself into the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center here in Houston for mental health reasons. "They took away my shoe strings, put me on four or five medications, would only let me go outside for 20 minutes a day, served me food that was inedible, would only let me have visitors for a few hours every Sunday morning, and wouldn't even allow me to have an occasional smoke. And some of the nurses would smoke in front of me during the 20 minutes they were outside supervising me," Casey explains. "I felt like I was in prison. I kept telling them that the environment was highly stressful and one day they had a meeting and refused me my 20 minutes of outside time because my scheduled time coincided with their meeting. I told them I was taking my 20 minutes outside and they refused saying I knew the rules stated that I could only go outside supervised and they were too busy to go out that day. I went outside anyway and when I came back in, they told me that I was too aggressive to remain in their care." So after five weeks they kicked him out, 20 pounds lighter from a lack of food and with nothing but a newly acquired pharmaceutical cocktail. He stopped taking the mix of anxiety medication and mood stabilizers after he left because they made him feel worse than before he went into the VA facility. "I am not looking for a handout but I do feel like I deserve to be treated better than people who are in prison. Actually, people who commit violent murders in high security prisons get to spend an hour a day outside. And I serve this country and only get 20 minutes? I feel like this war was pointless but it doesn't change the fact that I did risk my life."

So now Casey, like so many other countless veterans, is left to sit around and play the waiting game. Fifteen months ago, Casey filed a disability claim for his PTSD and traumatic brain injury and has yet to receive any sort of help. His social worker is impossible to reach and whenever he does manage to get them on the phone, they never have any useful advice other than to just keep waiting. "It is so frustrating that I have days where I debate not even bothering with them anymore. It just seems like this huge bureaucratic machine that is impossible to maneuver and no one really there to help me." According to a December 2011 VA document, a few more than 860,000 veterans had pending compensation claims with the VA. As of December 2012, VA documents showed that the number of claims had risen to 900,677. This is particularly alarming when you consider that at the beginning of 2012, the VA promised to make drastic cuts to the backlog but instead only added to it. Think about how many lives are severely distressed or tragically, in some cases, come to an end due to this failing system. There is no way around it other than a complete and total overhaul of the system. 20 something years ago, the IRS was as dysfunctional as the VA disability claims are today. However, these days the IRS guarantees a refund if you have one coming within three weeks of your claim being accepted by subjecting claims to a possible audit. The same could easily be done with the VA claim system. The difference here is that this money holds the key to drastically changing a veteran's risk of being homeless, unemployed, and mentally unstable. Ultimately, in many cases, it can change a life. **FPH**


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