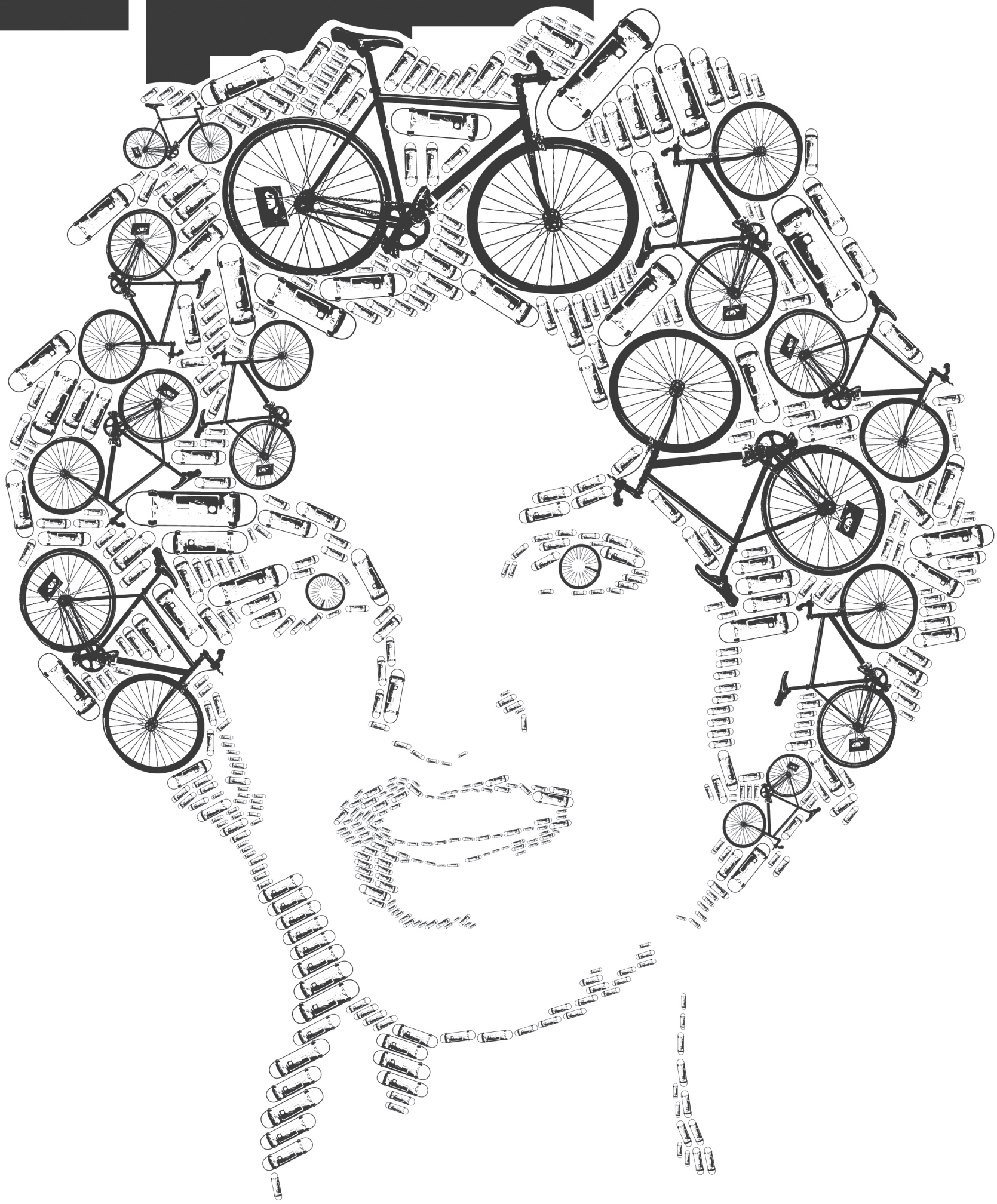
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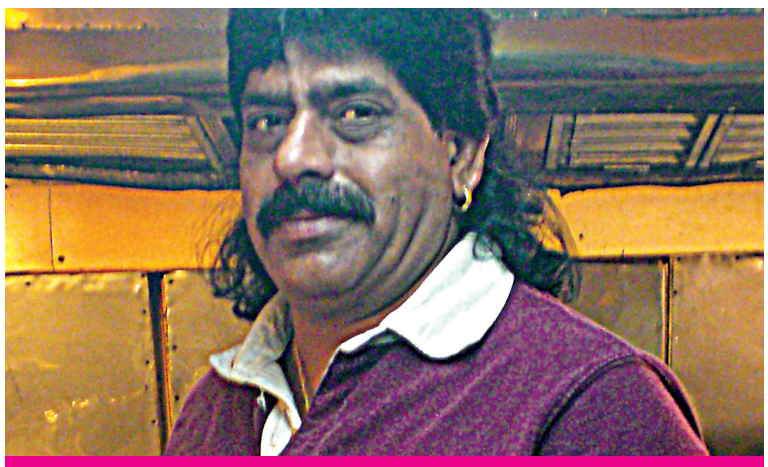
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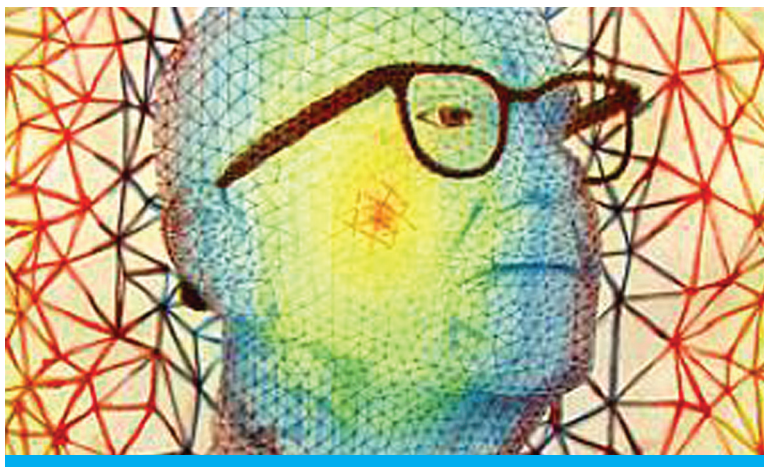
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AWN

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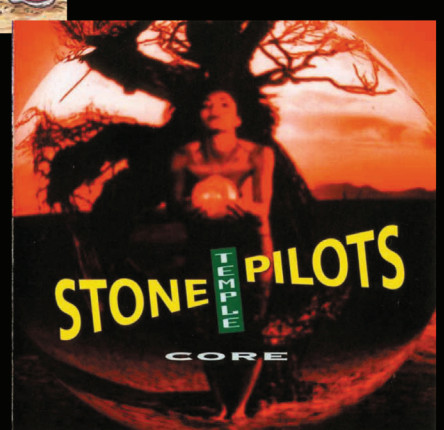
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12/5
Bike Film Fest Afterparty

12/6
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12/10
Born Liars, Wails

12/11
The MockTigers (ATX)
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12/12
Chase Hamblin

12/17
Givers, Brandon West, Treeson

12/18
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12/19 (private party)

12/23
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12/26
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR
FEEL FREE TO TAKE US SERIOUSLY

FRIENDS ARE GOD'S APOLOGY FOR FAMILY.
— HUGH KINGSMILL

LET ME APOLOGIZE. I want to say sorry for many things. I want to say sorry for playing the silly trick of claiming Alex Wukman died on our cover a few years ago. It lessens our credibility when a friend of ours actually does die as in Lee's case when we pay tribute on our cover. I want to say sorry to his family for such a huge loss. I want to say sorry to our community because this was a failure on all our parts. In many ways, we failed Lee. I personally failed at showing him that there is this bigger world than this insular world we live in here at Free Press. We often strive for community so earnestly that we lose sight of what singular friendships really entail. We become so self important and absorbed in our projects that we forget to transcend simple gratitudes and necessary admonitions. The easy part of being a friend is the laughing, hanging out, and sharing of a collective joy. Accountability is the hard part. But it is hard to hold your friends accountable without being a 'dad' figure and thus diluting the friendship. No, I failed at being a friend and offering the small bit of wisdom I have stumbled upon in my short life as a numbskull and career dumbass. I am sorry for that. I am also sorry for everyone I have been an impatient assholio to in recent days. I am overwhelmed.

BUT...
This letter is not an exercise in solemnity. The trying times in recent days give me hope. The most important thing I learned from our friend Lee was to be a brother friends. Silly as it is, one of my fondest memories of him was when he brought fried chicken and fries to the FPH office. He marveled at how cheap it was despite having rode his bike 6 miles to get it. Despite there being only enough for one, he insisted I dig in. I probably finished it on my own. But point is, "Be your brother's keeper." Even when it ain't easy.

I am blessed with the best family and friends a man can ask for. I love you all. Except for you Alex Wukman. *Ok, Ok, I love you too Wukman.*

ART SHOWS THIS MONTH

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DEBRIS:

BACK

by BUFFALO SEAN

HERE AT THE END OF 2009, THERE IS A LOT OF GOOD ART TO LOOK BACK ON. THROUGH THE JAM- PACKED WINTER AND SPRING, THROUGH THE SUMMER BUSTLING WITH NEW PROJECTS AND YOUNG ARTISTS AND INTO THE FALL WHICH BLOSSOMED INTO A CITY OF GREAT SHOWS HOUSTON HAS HAD AN EXTENDED RUN OF THOUGHTFUL EXHIBITIONS.

I MISSED SEEING SOME OF THE BEST out there, just because there was so many. A year after Hurricane Ike tore a swath up I-45; life is back in the galleries of Montrose, Kirby and the Museum District. At the Museum of Fine Arts, *Color Into Light* juxtaposed Modernist European masters with their South American counterparts creating a dynamic and revisionist look at the 20th century. *No Zoning: Artists Engage Houston* at the Contemporary Arts Museum blew the doors off the place with a huge party at the opening and a poignant homage to all the "outside the system" work made in new media and interdisciplinary practices here and now. Dan Havel and Dean Ruck reconstructed the inside of a Heights home by cutting it out of the building, Jim Pirtle offered a growing menagerie of performance artists, knick knacks and paintings and Mel Chin's *Fundred Project* raised thousands for struggling New Orleans neighborhoods. Though controversial, *No Zoning* was one of the best exhibits of the year, creative and reverential. Halfway through the show's run *Perspectives 187: Jason Villegas* opened downstairs, amping up the intensity with giant plush monsters, a Lacoste coffin, glitch video and busts straight out of *The Dark Crystal*. The Menil Collection's Marlene Dumas retrospective, *Measuring Your Own Grave*, was a dark antidote to the heat and humidity of the Texas summer; her portraiture, character studies and death masks of women and children were haunting reminders of societal maladies in an icebox.

Lawndale Art Center's string of winners continued throughout the year, beginning in February with Patrick Renner's *found sound (Public Music Reconnaissance)* a room full of fantastic musical instruments built from everyday items. *The Green cyberweb* by Adela Andea opened in August as the third floor gallery was transformed into an explosion of light and sculpture like a rave on steroids. This December make sure to check out the new work by Monica Vidal and Kia Neill for two great interpretations of altering space in the gallery. The Art Leaugue of Houston hit a home run with the recent Keith Carter show (2009 Texas Artist of the Year) punctuated by Carter's series of photographs comparing the back of his own retina with Hubble telescope shots of the universe. Blaffer Gallery at the University of Houston had their own blockbuster with the ominous and brutally honest *Texas Oil: Landscape of an Industry*, by The Center for Land Use Interpretation, featuring a helicopter shot of the Ship Channel set to music inspired by *Alien*. The standout show at the Houston Center for Photography was *Human Nature*, a group show of neo-naturalists documenting contemporary America. One of the most memorable works was Lou Vest's harrowing video travelling the Hades of the Ship Channel at night. *One Monument Please: Nick Meriwether* and *Show Us Your Zits* by Sketch Klubb showed the underground strength of the joanna Gallery, tucked into a home on Graustark behind the Menil's Byzantine Fresco Chapel. This fall brought the immediate catharsis of HIWI:IKE by "Houston; It's Worth It" documenting the destruction and surrealism of a hurricane's aftermath only a year after the event itself. Although this list is so large I can barely describe anything, I cannot forget to mention some of those who passed this year who were near and dear to many artists in Houston: Virgil Grotfeldt, Tom Kennedy, Dale Stewart, Leigh Boone and Lee Powers. They will all be missed. **FPH**





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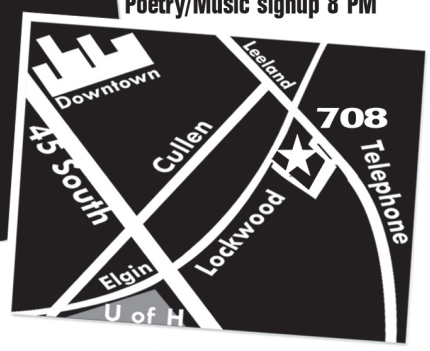
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BLANK SLATE

BY **MICHAEL BERGERON**

THE MESSENGER

THE MESSENGER CENTERS ON TWO SOLDIERS whose daily mission consists of notifying wives and parents of their son's death in combat. While some may want to instantly group the film together with other films tangentially related to Iraq or the Gulf conflict, The Messenger has more in common with films that take on grief and achieve the emotional depth required to tell a story without condescension.

"I wanted the moments to be honest as possible," writer/director Oren Moverman tells Free Press Houston in a phone interview. "We're alive thinking about people we've lost." Moverman explains how he didn't hide the theme of war yet the film doesn't revolve around that issue so much as the human contact aspect involved in daily military life.

The Messenger stars Ben Foster as Staff Sergeant Montgomery with Woody Harrelson as his superior Captain Stone. Their relation mimics buddy movie relationships. They begrudgingly get along at first, even argue a bit but by the time they hit their stride they're hanging out together while crashing the wedding reception of Montgomery's former girlfriend.

"I originally read Woody for a much smaller role, the Colonel at the beginning who gives Foster his assignment. But he wanted to be Captain Stone." Harrelson's turn in The Messenger reveals his "remarkable range." It's even more impressive when you compare Harrelson's stern and serious soldier next to his broadly comic roles in recent films like 2012 or Zombieland.

Foster matches Harrelson scene for scene, also exploring dark places of the heart without the histrionics that marked some of his more wide-eyed roles, such as 3:10 to Yuma. Samantha Morton plays a widow who Foster and Harrelson notify only for Foster to break their code of not getting personal with the NOK (next of kin).

Moverman knew Morton from working on the screenplay of Jesus' Son. Other scripts Moverman worked on include I'm Not There. Originally that script was conceived by Moverman and Todd Haynes as a stage version. " A way to create a Dylan experience." But another play fulfilled that function when Twyla Tharp did The Times They Are a Changin'. Still the story Moverman had come up with where Dylan's portrayed by different actors at different stages in his career was too good to pass up and the end result became the tour de force film directed by Haynes.

The Messenger is Moverman's directorial debut although he worked on the script under the aegis of three previous directors (Sydney Pollack, Ben Affleck and Roger Michell). The film moves from static sequences, for scenes like Montgomery at home in his apartment, to hand held shots when the duo are notifying relatives of the loss of their loved ones. I had read that Moverman didn't allow the actors to meet beforehand. "It's true," he replies. "I would prepare them separately with no rehearsal. They would meet for the first time when we shot the scenes. Then when we shot in one-take with no interruptions."

There are actually several times in The Messenger when people are notified and to the film's credit each confrontation maintains its sincerity even as Montgomery and Stone are wading through the swamp of their own relation.

ANTICHRIST

THE FILMS OF LARS VON TRIER exist in a kind of nether world where cinema and delusions of grandeur merge. I like Antichrist, but I can also see how the buttons von Trier pushes may be too much for the average bear. The film features Willem Dafoe and Charlotte Gainsbourg only, although there are brief appearances from a stunt baby, a fox, a crow and a deer.

The film opens with a beautiful black and white sequence that unwinds in super slow motion. While the couple (Dafoe and Gainsbourg) make love their baby crawls out of his crib and somehow manages to scale an open window and fall to his death. Many times during the movie von Trier slows down the motion to the point that the image is more than static, it's like staring at a painting while hallucinating. von Trier also plays with movie conventions by using old time techniques like body doubles during the sex scene (for an insertion shot).

Antichrist starts like a psychodrama but rapidly escalates in the last part to an out and out thriller. Or maybe Antichrist is a horror film in sheep's clothing. The couple, distraught after the death of their child, retreat to an idyllic cabin in the woods. Only their idea of harmony with nature and a rest cure in the forest is turned on its head.

Throughout Antichrist horrific imagery crops up. You hardly expect a fox to devour itself much less exclaim, "Chaos reigns." Likewise the therapeutic dialogue makes you think the whole affair will be a nod to Ingmar Bergman. Surprise, we're in a surreal twilight zone of human manipulation and the couple starts hurting each other with abandon. Once again von Trier shows his mastery of genre filmmaking and thus the scissors/clitoris scene looks like something out of a 70s exploitation drive-in movie right down to the cut away shot that would be stock and trade in any B-movie.

Antichrist is anything but boring. The film has a gentle pace that contradicts its subject matter. Sometimes the action flows so hypnotically the effect is trancelike, and perhaps von Trier has found the correct chord structure to his Strindberg Dream Sonata.

RED CLIFF

YOU KNOW THE TRADEMARK John Woo camera set-up where the guy shooting his gun empties the chamber and removes the clip. We see the clip falling out the bottom of the gun in slow motion from a low angle. For the massively entertaining Red Cliff Woo has another way of rearming. This 3rd century story of a civil war that ended the Hun Dynasty contains some of the most exciting battle sequences ever filmed. Woo uses a signature shot where we see a warrior impale another soldier with a spear, then said warrior gallops by, pulls the spear out of the soldier's back and proceeds to use it again as a weapon.

Woo has spent years on this project and Red Cliff (Chi bi) was released as two films in Asia while the film playing domestically is a combined version lasting roughly two-and-a-half hours (or ten minutes less than 2012). Anyone familiar with Chinese history will recognize this story of the three kingdoms and the battle of Red Cliff, but if you're not familiar with the story you'll never forget it after seeing this amazing movie. Woo pulls out all the stops for action sequences. Whether we're witnessing a massive naval battle, or land warfare involving formations taken from nature (the turtle, the goose) we're drawn to the screen like glue. Red Cliff has such a compelling sense of its own story that it easily rates among the best action films of its kind, films like Seven Samurai or Das Boot. One sequence literally sends you flying over first the water and then the land in a single lengthy take seen from the point of view of a dove. The bird it turns out has a secret message attached to its limb and Woo reveals the person who retrieves the fowl as a spy.

Woo spends time delineating ancient instruments of weather (barometer) or music (zither) and how they relate to the multitude of characters. Be they warlords, ex-pirates or generals, or their women, we have a sense of their personality through the way they practice art as well as their ability for strategic thinking. At one point the protracted strife inflicts casualties using germ warfare. That's in addition to a psychological standoff over a femme between two particular leaders.

The large cast includes Tony Leung, familiar to American audiences for roles in everything from Hard Boiled to In the Mood For Love. Red Cliff is an amazing film expe-



rience that will no doubt be overshadowed by films spending more and playing wider.

DVD: SAMUEL FULLER & IL DIVO

THE SAM FULLER FILM COLLECTION packs seven films into a box set that examines Fuller's career as a writer then director of genre defining movies. Or as Martin Scorsese remarks, in a short commentary for one film, Fuller's style is its own genre. Films in this series include It Happened in Hollywood (1937), Adventure in Sahara (1938), Power of the Press (1943), Shockproof (1949), Scandal Sheet (1952), The Crimson Kimono (1959), and Underworld U.S.A. (1961). The latter two were directed and produced by Fuller, on the other five Fuller wrote or co-wrote the original story or script.

Four of the movies include featurettes with contemporary directors (Scorsese, Robbins, Wenders, Hanson) sounding off on Fuller. There's a load of insight that comes with watching the films in chronological order. You can see Fuller's journalist background and war experience seep into his stories.

Obviously the earlier films, mostly titles I'd never heard of, are the most transparent yet even at barely an hour they contain seeds of what will later become Fuller landmarks. It Happened in Hollywood includes a comic interlude where every major and many minor stars of 1937 make an appearance. Only the cameos are performed by look-alikes or body doubles for the stars. Then as now major actors had their stunt doubles.

Shockproof, helmed by Douglas Sirk, gives an emotional twist to a lovers on the run story by paring a parole officer with a woman parolee out of the pen after serving time for murder. Scandal Sheet features Broderick Crawford in a primal performance as a newspaper editor who's committed murder and tries to keep the facts from his top reporters. Fuller wrote the novel Scandal Sheet was based on. Later films like Crimson Kimono show a singular eye towards Japanese-American romantic relations at a time when Japan was still occupied by America and racial relations leaned unfairly against anyone or anything Asian. Viewers will take special delight in the way Fuller frames characters talking directly to the camera or offers conventions that go against the grain of pervading stereotypes.

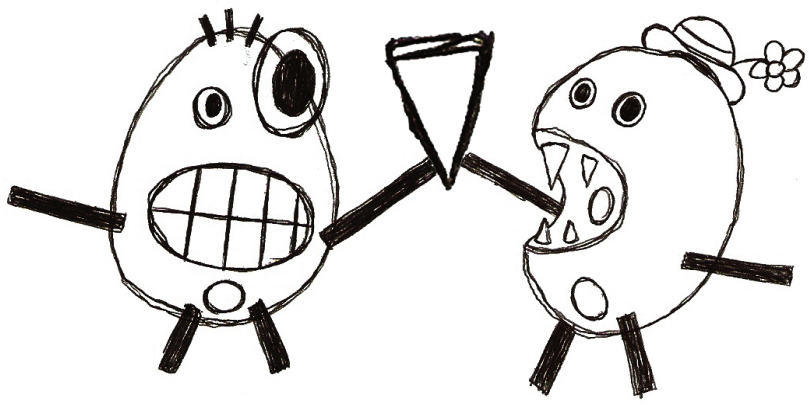
Il Divo examines the life of seven-time Italian Prime minister and senator for life (since 1991) Giulio Andreotti. The most obvious thought after seeing Il Divo would be to wonder how a foreign film with so much quality and substance went undistributed (outside of L.A. and New York). Fortunately for film fans Il Divo hits the street on DVD today.

Andreotti is seen as a patient man, a calm man albeit one whose thoughts are indicated by his hand gestures. For instance if he's bored he fiddles with his ring, likewise he holds his hands together in some manner or another throughout most of the movie. The world around him flourishes with corruption.

Andreotti headed the Italian conservative Christian Democratic party during the 70s and up until the early 90s. Il Divo views Andreotti's administration as a sort of supergroup of advisors and politicians, even going to slow motion to introduce the cabinet in a cool mode or using wide angle lenses to express the distance between the elite and the people. Director Paolo Sorrentino observes events from assassinations to car wrecks to political machinations as a kind of grand opera. Certainly Andreotti's character is only on trial in the movie, not in Sorrentino's subtext. Intrigues include murder, bribery, and conspiracies involving the Vatican and the Mafia.

Il Divo is fascinating viewing regardless of whether you have a firm grasp recent Italian history. Another film critical of current Italian leader Silvio Berlusconi, Nanni Moretti's The Caiman, will also be of interest to fans of Il Divo. **FPH**

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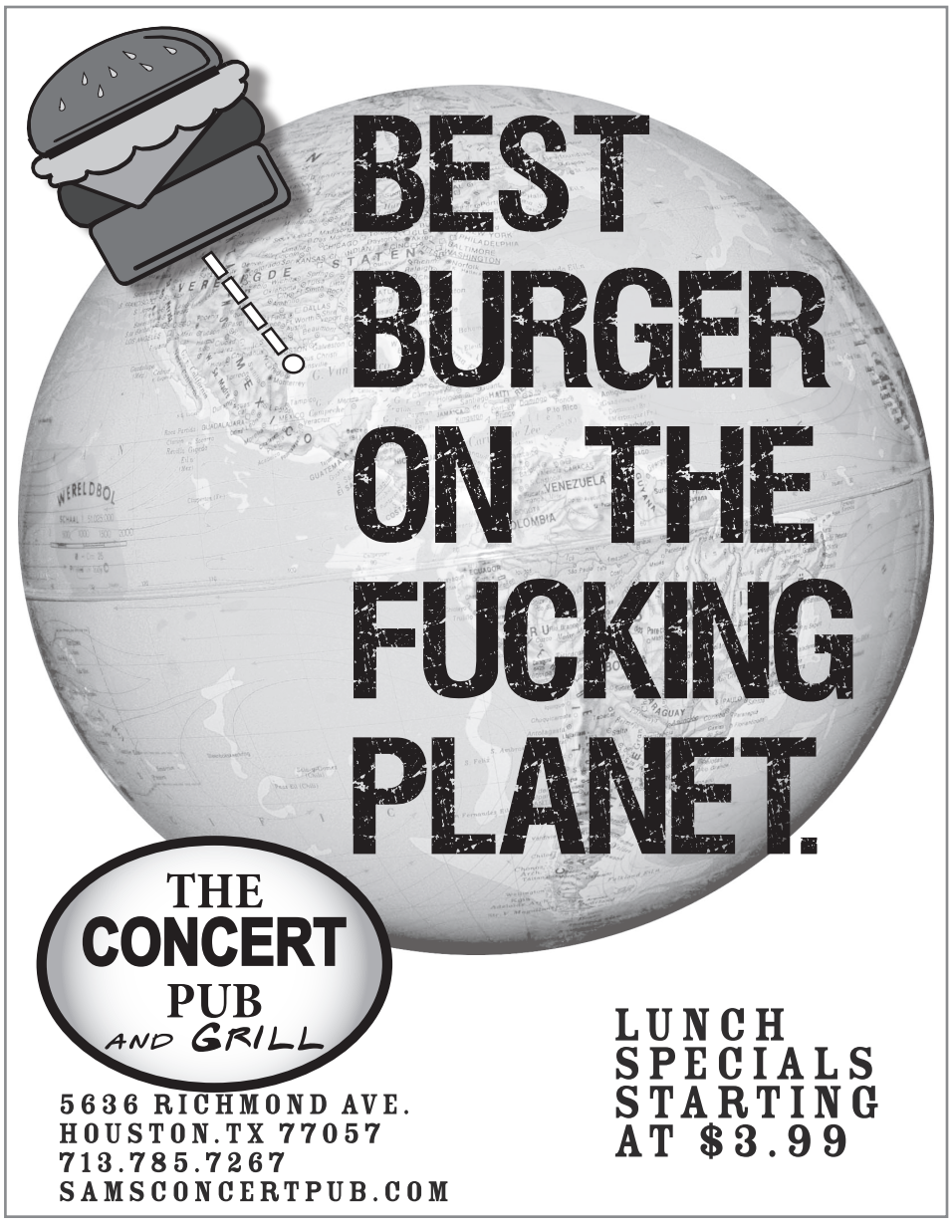


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FOR YOUR SAKE I HOPE

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ARE REALLY THERE BUT I WOULDN'T HOLD MY BREATH



by **KWAME M. ANDROID-SON!**

HERE WE ARE. THE END OF THE YEAR, A DECADE INTO THE 21ST CENTURY. I HAVE BUT ONE QUESTION: WHERE ARE THE FLYING CARS?

I MEAN you have touch screen phones, an almost paperless money exchange, but no mutant animals, no shark-lions, no blue or purple people. I'm waiting for some sci-fi shit to jump off. Where are the lasers, the time portals, 2010 I'm calling your bluff. Something needs to start levitating in this bitch.

Well, regardless of the lack of Star Trek in the present, we did get a hell of a year in music. It's hard to remember a year where this much good music has appeared. However, there still is this thing where people are doing this 60's doo wop/Motown thing, and disguising it as "genuine" music. Fuck that, if I wanted to hear the Temptations I'd listen to the Temptations. If I can get on the internet on my phone, and map my location from a satellite, the last thing I want to hear is "shoop shoop, dooby wooby doo."

ALBUMS OF THE YEAR, HERE'S SOME

CRYPTACIZE - MYTHOMANIA
D. RIDER - MOTHER OF CURSES
ANIMAL COLLECTIVE - MERRIWEATHER POST PAVILLION
ANTHONY AND THE JOHNSONS - THE CRYING LIGHT
MOS DEF - THE ECSTATIC
LIGHTNING BOLT- EARTHLY DELIGHTS
GRIZZLY BEAR - VECKAMITEST
ST. VINCENT- ACTOR
MIRACLE CONDITON - S/T
MAXWELL - BLACKSUMMERSNIGHT
DERADOORIAN - MIND RAFT
LIGHTS - RITES
PONTIAK - MAKER
MAJOR LAZER - GUNS DON'T KILL PEOPLE, LAZERS DO
THE CLIPSE - TIL THE CASKET DROPS
CAMRON - CRIME PAYS
POLVO - IN PRISM
TORTOISE - BEACONS OF ANCESTORSHIP
NEAL MORGAN - TO THE BREATHING WORLD
TYONDAI BRAXTON - CENTRAL MARKET

SIDESHOW TRAMPS
NEW YEAR'S EVE | MANGO'S



THOUS SHALT NOT KILL...EXCEPT
NEW YEARS EVE | SHFL



SHAKE RUSSELL
NEW YEAR'S EVE | MUCKY DUCK



JAMBOLISM
12/12 | RUDYARD'S





ALBUMS I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO FOR NEXT YEAR

BATTLES
MARNIE STERN
SINGER
SOFT CIRCLE

STILL, NONE OF THIS would beat a levitating vehicle and some flying fish. Science where are you? The economy, healthcare reform, shortening the divide between the rich and poor: all of those things are impossible to fix. We don't live in 1924, forget these socialist vs. capitalist arguments, I'm looking for smoking blue drinks, mult-species organisms. You may say, "That is crazy!" I would in turn say, alien tongue, a new sort of bilingual. I'd like my daughter to witness the first war of Earth and Zargon Complex Nine. Why are we still trying to fix the environment? By this time next year, I'm looking for some new shit. Animals that talk, purple rivers, phasers on I Pods; I don't care if my phone has a 3G network, I won't to destabilize matter. 2010 we are ready! **FPH**

SQUINCY JONES
12/17 | BOONDOCK'S



MIC SKILLS
12/12 | FITZGERALD'S



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12/5 - Black Math Experiment @ 1:00pm
12/11 - Blue Suedes - Trib. To Buddy Holly @ 5:30pm - 7:00pm
12/12 - Captain Clegg (Jesse Dayton) @ 4:00pm
12/18 - Umbrella Man @ 5:30pm
12/19 - Thomas Hulten @ 1:00pm
12/19 - Matt Harlan @ 4:00pm
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12/13 - DJ No Fun & Guest DJs @ 2:00pm
12/20 - DJ Black Slacks & Guest DJs @ 2:00pm
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THE CASE FOR THE WESTHEIMER STREET FESTIVAL

by M. MARTIN

PHOTOS BY ANTHONY RATHBUN

Over the last four years, residents of Montrose and Houston music fans have been privileged to experience the near-rebirth of a cherished neighborhood institution with the success of the Westheimer Block Party.

BOTH IN SPITE OF AND BECAUSE of that success, it is now time to consider the possibility of a complete rebirth of a local institution and legend...and bring back The Westheimer Street Festival.

For those not familiar with the history, a brief recap might prove useful. The Westheimer Street Festival was an offshoot of an event started in the early 70's, known as the Westheimer Colony Art Festival. The Westheimer Art Festival was pretty much what the name would imply — and arts and crafts event, originally brought about for the purpose of showcasing local artists. When club owners and promoters began to capitalize on the crowds by placing live music stages and beer booths in the vicinity, the art festival organizers responded initially by condensing their event to the intersection of Westheimer and Montrose and fencing it off, and later by leaving Montrose altogether. But what was by then referred to as the 'The Westheimer STREET Festival continued and flourished in their absence, eventually reaching a point where over 200,000 people attended an event that officially extended from Waugh Drive to Taft — and unofficially extended twice that far.

Unfortunately, the event was not well-managed. What started as cheerful anarchy grew to the point where the City of Houston reached an agreement with the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission (TABC) whereby only a single alcohol permit would be issued for the entire event, creating the necessity of a single organizer/promoting entity, which became the "Westheimer Street Festival Association". This turned out to be a mixed blessing; the city had what it wanted, in the form of a single entity that could be held legally responsible for the event. But as the event grew, it became increasingly obvious that the street festival association — a collection of lower-Westheimer merchants, property owners, and gay-rights activists — was very good at playing the politics of late-seventies/early eighties Montrose, not so good at producing events. Necessities like porta-cans, police, and post-event clean-up were perpetually underbudgeted. A growing influx of new and more conservative property owners increasingly felt that their concerns were unheeded by the promoters. Eventually those concerns were heard and acted upon by city officials, resulting in an city ordinance requiring public hearings as a precondition for the issuance of a street closure permit on Westheimer, effectively ending the Westheimer Street Festival in 1999.

Although abortive efforts by the principal former organizer persisted into 2003, it was not until the first Westheimer Block Party in 2005 that Montrose again saw anything like the former street festival in its heyday. The Block Party was like a snapshot of the old festival circa 1980, just as it was morphing from an arts and craft show into a street party. There was a renewed emphasis on visual arts and a restored sense of connection to the community — due at least in part from the role played by this newspaper as principal media sponsor and the role played by this paper's publisher as principal organizer.

But just as the old festival carried the seeds of its own destruction in unfettered growth and lack of community responsibility, so as well has the Block Party been the victim of its own success. Although the 12,000 to 15,000 crowd estimates for the two most recent block parties are a mere fraction of the old festival's drawing power, they well outstrip what can safely and effectively be produced without street closure on a series of adjacent city blocks. Continuing to produce the event as currently constituted would be to place the public at risk and threaten the community good will that four years of successfully produced block parties has created. It's time to either shut it down or ramp it up to the next level... and bring back the old festival.

In an separate editorial, FPH publisher and block party producer Omar Afra announced his intention to do exactly that. The purpose of this article is to second that motion and make a case that doing so is a benefit to Montrose as a neighborhood and Houston as a city. I speak as a long-timer Montrose resident and frequent participant in the previous street festival. This is the case for returning the festival, as I see it:

1. THE FESTIVAL CONTRIBUTES TO MONTROSE'S NEIGHBORHOODI IDENTITY ¶ In its 80's heyday, The Westheimer Street Festival was the defining trademark of Montrose as a community. It combined in a single package all the things that made Montrose a desirable place to live before realtors began dicing it up into condo lots and redefining it as parts of Neartown, Midtown, or "The Museum District". An open-minded commitment to fun, a substantial population of working musicians and artists, a youthful and accepting perspective... these things defined The Montrose of the 80's and remain a part of it's cultural DNA. While it is true that no small number of later-arriving residents showed up in spite of Montrose's reputation or with a sincere desire to reform it, far more showed up — and stayed — *because* of what this neighborhood means to this city, and what it represents. It may be true that higher rents have decreased the numbers of artists, musicians, and students...but who among Houston's creative community does not, to some extent, see Montrose as the spiritual center of that community? "The scene" comes and goes in rhythmic waves. There is no doubt that the era of the Westheimer Block Party has coincided with a resurgence in Houston's alternative arts and music not witnessed in some years. There is little doubt that growing The Block Party into a full-blown festival will help fuel that resurgence.

2. THE FESTIVAL BENEFITS MONTROSE (AND HOUSTON) CULTURALLY ¶ Montrose, with its image as the local Haight-Ashbury/East Village equivalent, is a cultural asset to Houston. To believe otherwise is to assume that the fourth largest city in the United States neither has nor needs a soul; to assume that strip malls, strip clubs, and McMansions are sufficient to define the character of a city. The best of times for the old festival was when the arts and crafts fair and the street fair peaceably coexisted. Properly organized, a reborn Street Festival can retain that mixture — and build upon it. There was a time when The Westheimer Street Festival drew artists, artisans, musicians, and festival attendees from all over Texas and beyond. What those participants and attendees took away was not just the money they made or the good times they experienced — they took away an impression of Houston as a vibrant, diverse, and dynamic city. That is an impression that is — all too often — very much sadly lacking. Houston is never seen as a "destination city", a place to be experienced and enjoyed for it's own sake. It is always seen as a place where people go to make money. The Westheimer Street Festival,

at it's best, offered a compelling counter-narrative... and a reborn festival may do so again. It is also worth considering that one of the most striking distinctions between the festival of old and the current block party has been The Block Party's ability to extent past being merely a daytime festival, and function as well as a nighttime music showcase. That nighttime component has a potential that goes far beyond the scope of the original festival.

Consider this: One of the most frequent sources of envy Houstonians direct at Austin is that city's successful self-promotion as the "Live Music Capital of the World". The centerpiece in Austin's e ongoing PR campaign is South by Southwest, which has served for over twenty years as the premiere industry gathering for music, arts and entertainment. Very few people now recall this, but SXSW began as an event not terribly bigger than the nighttime part of The Block Party. Equally unremembered is that the event was started out of the frustration experienced by 'outsider' artists and musicians in dealing with the larger and more established industry showcases in New York and L.A. With nearly 20,000 registrants, SXSW is now beginning to look an awful lot like the events to which it was created to serve as an alternative... there may be an opportunity there.

3. THE FESTIVAL BENEFITS AREA BUSINESSES ¶ While this seems like a truism, it needs to be mentioned. Few current lower-Westheimer merchants and business owners have any living memory of what it was like to do business with thousands of people in the streets. There have been some who have expressed their doubts about being able to make money when they are competing with dozens of street merchandisers, beer sellers, and food stands. The truth as I recall it was the exact opposite. Stores were packed, the street was packed, and people were happy to stand in line for whatever it was they had a fancy to buy — or if not, they were perfectly happy to walk a few blocks and spend money with neighborhood merchants outside the immediate area of the festival. Nor did the benefit extend no further than a twice-yearly bump in sales. For a lot of Houstonians, the Street Festival was their first introduction to the Montrose. Having been there once, and found a boutique selling products they could find no where else, or found a restaurant or coffee shop or bar utterly unlike anything in the far-flung suburban reaches of Greater Houston, they found themselves with a reason to return....as many have, as many will again.

4. NOW IS THE TIME ¶ Perhaps the most compelling reason to pursue reviving The Westheimer Street Festival is that there has never been a better time or opportunity to do so. After four years of successful and professionally produced Westheimer Block Parties, there is ample evidence that the pitfalls that befell the old festival are by no means inevitable. An interesting parallel development over the last three years is the Montrose Halloween Crawl, which also brings thousands of people into Montrose, brings thousands of dollars into the coffers of local charities, and brings nothing but credit upon the community. This last summer saw the skills acquired in producing The Block Party honed and brought to a new level, when the First Annual Free Press Houston Summerfest provided 20,000 attendees one of the most acclaimed outdoor concert experiences in the country. The network of skilled professionals and dedicated amateurs who have come together to produce these varied events are an incredible asset to this city... and something truly new and different.

The time is also right politically. Both of the finalists in the current mayoral race have made public commitments to work with a credible community organization for the purpose of restoring our festival. Whoever leads the city government in the new year will be someone who is willing to be a partner in restoring a community institution that has been loved by many.

5. THE ALTERNATIVES ARE WORSE ¶ The last argument I want to make is simply this: the success of The Westheimer Block Party proves beyond doubt that there is an appetite within the community for an event of this type. No promoter or producer is good enough to persuade 12,000 people to attend an event they don't care about. That appetite can be used to drive an event that is beneficial to the community. It can also be exploited for short-sighted gain, as anyone knows who recalls the later and less responsible phases of the old festival. A principal — and principled — reason that Omar Afra has announced an end to The Block Party in its current form is out of the realization that continuing it in its current form would be a disservice to the community. None of those involved in producing the current event have any interest in that happening, and all those presently involved are sincere in preferring to end the current event if it cannot be grown in a responsible manner. Were that to happen, those who have consistently opposed any form of a street fair on Westheimer might well assume that they had finally won.

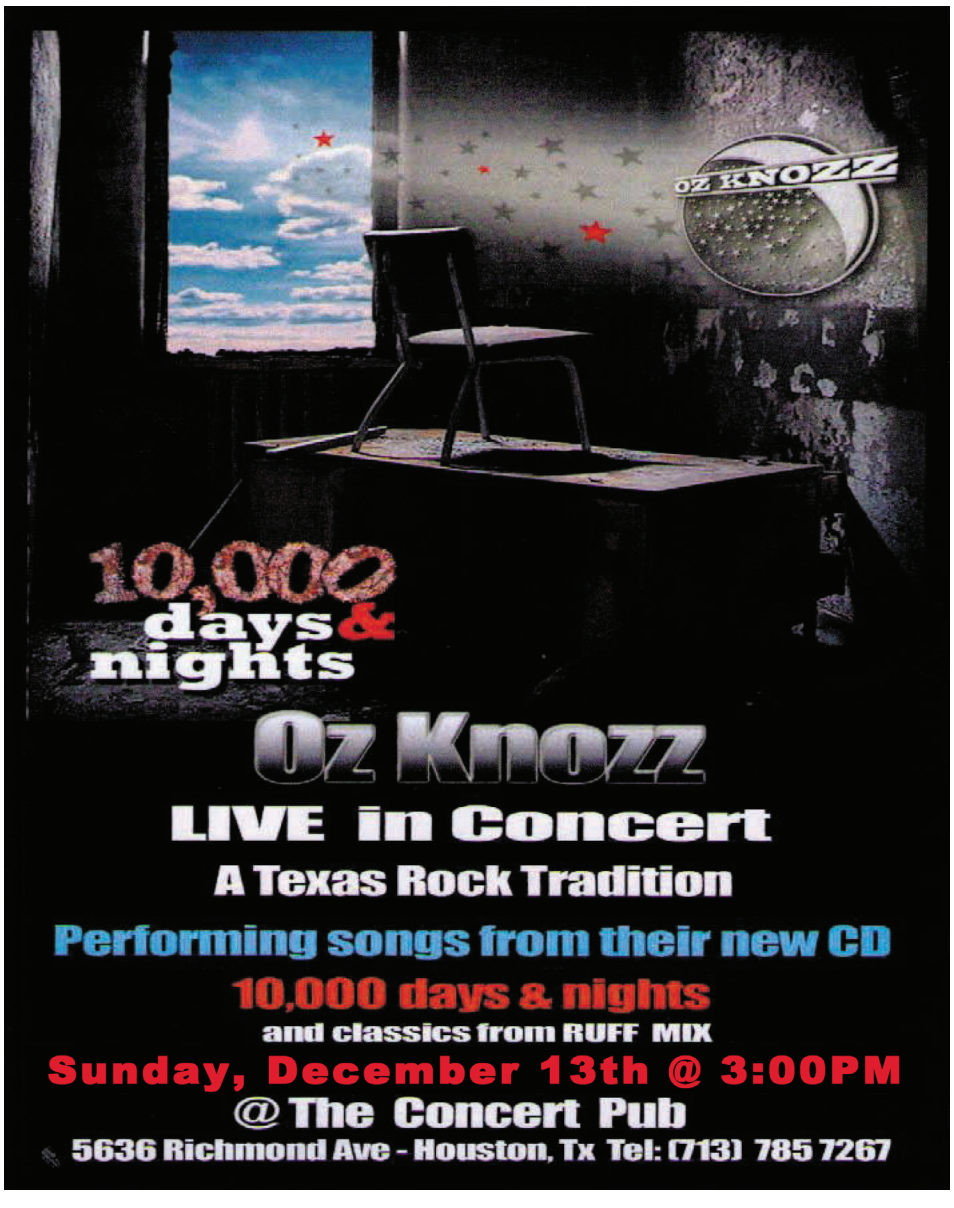
They would be wrong. After the ordinance passed that effectively ended the previous incarnation of the festival, that event's principal producer made several attempts at perpetuating his pet cash cow, including producing the event on Allen Parkway as "The Westheimer Street Festival in Exile" and (finally) piggybacking onto the Pride Parade in 2003. These attempts served only the most baseline commercial reasons for producing a festival. It was a relief to all parties when those attempts ceased.

As long as the demand exists, someone will try to produce the event. The only real questions are of who that producer will be and whether or not they are prepared to work with the community to produce a clearly beneficial event. Omar has announced the formation of a non-profit corporation that will coordinate between the city, civic organizations, and the event organizers to ensure that the concerns of all stakeholders in the community are heard and met. This non-profit will exist to ensure that the reborn Westheimer Street Festival maintains an appropriate balance between art and entertainment, that the future growth and direction of the festival be consistent with the interests of a majority of those within the community, and that the festival be a clear and unquestioned asset to the City of Houston at large. I do not believe that any other current or potential producer of a large inner city festival is prepared to make this commitment.

Those are the arguments, as I see them. There are probably other ways to make the case for The Westheimer Street Festival, and certainly there are arguments against it. But the single biggest argument, and the one that will be heard most loudly in the end....is you. Yeah, you — the person who reads this paper, who goes to the Block Party, who might even be old enough to remember the old festival in its glory. You, the people who either live in Montrose or make it a frequent destination, and who care about it as a community. You are the single biggest argument for the continuation of the event, and yours is the voice that needs to be heard. When the time comes for public forums to debate the future of this festival, they can't just be attended by dyspeptic condo-owning yuppies with an axe to grind. If you really care about the event and the neighborhood, you need to do more than just show up twice a year with enough cash in your pocket for a few a beers and some sausage on a stick. You need to speak up, and let the people in charge know that this is an issue you care about... and being a registered voter doesn't exactly hurt either. **FPH**









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INTERVIEW

FEMALE DEMAND

by OMAR AFRA

PHOTOS BY JESSICA TORRES

BASS AND DRUM DUO FEMALE DEMAND IS FRESH ON THE HEELS OF A NEW ALBUM WHICH THEY RELEASE NEW YEAR'S EVE AND A STRING OF CLUTCH SHOWS INCLUDING ANOTHER KILLER PERFORMANCE AT WESTHEIMER BLOCK PARTY.

THE BAND HAS FINALLY captured their gritty Lightning Bolt meets Zep sound by spending the time and treasure to record their songs at Sugar Hill. They are not very smart, charismatic, or good looking but they were kind enough to answer these questions.

IN THE RIGHT CONTEXT, YOU GUYS MAY BE ONE OF THE BEST LIVE BANDS IN HOUSTON. IS IT HARD TO PLAY THESE MONUMENTAL EARTH-SHATTERING SHOWS AND NEXT PLAY TO 6 MILDLY INTERESTED PEOPLE? ¶

"Not really. We play music because we love it. Whether it's 30 people in the crowd or 4, we still play our best and kinda think of that show as a band rehearsal haha.

EARLIEST CHILDHOOD MUSICAL MEMORY? ¶ Jon-being a little baby and having a little toy saxophone that blew bubbles. lol

TELL US ABOUT THE NEW ALBUM. WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO GO TO SUGAR HILL INSTEAD OF RECORDING THE WAY YOU DID YOUR LAST EP? YOU KNOW, THE ONE WHERE YOUR SUPER LOUD-SHITTY SNARE SOUNDS LIKE DROPPING NICKELS INTO AN RC COLA. ¶ Well we opted to record this particular EP at sugarhill because it was cheap. A good friend of ours introduced to one of the engineers there and he just let us pretty much have the studio for a whole night. It was definatly a better experience then when we recorded the first demo. And the drums do sound a whole more accessable. lol

WHO DO YOU FUCK ANYWAY? ¶ Haha, we don't kiss and tell. But, if we had to be literal here, then I'd say we both always go with the ladies.

FEMALE DEMAND. WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? ARE YOU QUALIFIED TO EXPLAIN WHAT FEMALES DEMAND? ¶ Funny you ask. I don't think that we are qualified to explain what females demand. BUT! I can explain the origins of the name. It's the title of a Prefuse 73 song and I just thought that it sounded really funny when you said it out loud. It's kind of suggestive but at the same time it sounds like you're saying female to man or female the man. And I liked that it had that to it. That funny play on words...

BRADLEY HAS A BONAFIDE LEGION OF BASS PEDALS HE MANIPULATES INTO SONIC RETARDATION. HOW OFTEN DO YOU EVER TELL HIM "HEY JUST GO WITH A CLEAN TONE?" ¶ Not often to be honest. Each pedal has it's specific use and meaning and Bradley really tries hard to not pack on a shit tone of pedals. If there was an easier way of carrying gear then we'd have a shit tone of stuff, but it just ain't like that.

Bradley-And plus, we love loud things, and what better way to make loud noises then with a Ampeg 6x10 and a Fender Bassman 300 and a bunch of pedals! haha

FILL IN THE BLANKS: HOUSTON IS THE MUSICAL BELLY BUTTON OF THE COSMOS BECAUSE _____? ¶ Because we're hot... FPH







INTERVIEW:

THE BAMAZ

by OMAR AFRA

I WAS SLIGHTLY TAKEN ABACK BY THE BAMAZ STAGE SETUP AT THE LAST BLOCK PARTY: 3 GUYS, KEYS, SEQUENCES, RACKS A' PLENTY, AND A SINGLE GUITAR.

ONE OF THEM had a talk box run through his keys during sound check and they were playing an ad hoc rendition of Kanye's 'Stronger'. However, this group of Alabama imports is more than a triad of watered down Kanye-electro regurgitaters. They craft deft and complex soundscapes yet pack them into saccharine sweet songs. You will probably see quite a bit of these kids in coming days, so get your primer now.

WHAT KIND OF MUSICAL INFLUENCES DO YA'LL BRING FROM ALABAMA TO HOUSTON? ¶ We are influenced by all types of music. Alabama is a melting pot for everything, jazz, blues, gospel, country, hip-hop, bluegrass, R&B/Soul, to alternative music. We like to think that we bring all of those influences to Houston mixed with a little bit of the techno/electro vibe that we have picked up in our travels.

EVER THINK ABOUT ADDING A LIVE DRUMMER? ¶ We actually do have a drummer that will play certain gigs with us, but we love being self-sufficient and not having to work around other people's schedule.

HOW DO YOU EXPERIMENT WITH SOUNDSCAPES? ¶ Experimentation is everything to us!!! We spend most of our time in rehearsal searching for the trippiest, craziest, sounds to incorporate in our show.

FAVORITE LOCALS? ¶ Houston bands are actually our favorite bands right now, bands like Solange, JuzCoz, Tax the Wolf, Shina Rae, Peekaboo Theory, The Ton Tons, etc.

There is so much greatness in this city.

TEXAS GIRLS VS ALABAMA GIRLS? ¶ That's a tough one!!! Have to quote Drake on this one "We just cant pick one so you can never say we choosy" LOL

CAN WE EXPECT AN ALBUM FROM THE BAMAZ SOON? ¶ A new album is in the works; we are creating it at every show. No it wont is a "live" album, but the stage gives us a different type of inspiration so we've decided to create an album that will reflect that type of raw energy and freedom. FPH



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WORST OF HOUSTON 2009



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LEE POWERS

THE FONZ
BY MARK ARMES

Lee was by all accounts the "Fonz" of the Free Press universe. Whether it was a few choice words or a facial contortion, Lee could make any moment memorable. This past summer when we were all coaxing him on to look more absurd during the making of the SummerFest commercial, he would actually close his eyes, take a deep breath, and get in the zone. He was so good at channeling that character we would shoot for ten seconds then cry laughing for ten minutes before doing it again. Lee made things like shooting commercials fun, which normally isn't the case. When Lee was around people could relax and enjoy whatever task was at hand. I can honestly say that every moment with Lee was like that for me. I'm grateful I got to know Lee and work with him on a couple of videos, though now it seems hardly enough. I know that the energy Lee brought to our projects will continue to manifest itself at the office and in our daily lives. R.I.P. Buddy, we are all better off for knowing you.

LEE THE OMNIPRESENT
BY OMAR AFRA

Lee Powers was a ubiquitous fog in the Montrose community. He littered this community with his presence through the arts, community organizing, and business. But more than anything, his sly smile and cool temperament permeated everyone he met. Lee was deeply involved in the local bicycle and skate community, Free Press Houston, Freestyle Tuesdays, Critical Mass, Mango's, Westheimer Block Party, and just about anything else he could dip his fingers into. Lee simply loved helping and being involved and could always be depended on. Well most of the time. If there was a lady involved he might be hard to get in touch with, but otherwise he was a rock. Lee's voice never rose above a mild hum and I never saw him get angry. I cannot say that about many people. Always generous and always hospitable, Lee at his best was *our* best. He will be sorely missed yet never forgotten.

WE'RE GONNA MAKE IT AFTER ALL
BY OSKER KORONADO

Lee Powers… Whoa, what a man. My buddy's gone and we miss him so so much. He was the heart and soul of our vast collective of friends that make up the city of Montrose/Free Press, he was pure energy, energy that did not up and leave with him. He might be gone but we still feel him, his mannerisms, his temperament, his phrases, they are now a part of us and we are reminded everyday of a friend who is no longer here *with* us, as well as the majority that still are. This tragedy has really brought us all closer together than I could ever imagine we would be. I'm not the most extroverted person, and I've come to realize words don't hurt, people deserve chances, and I need more Lees in my life. I feel I need to make up for the loss of this beautiful human being, that we all do, and my life will never be the same. I'm living for two now and we're gonna make it. Love you Lee. Love you everyone. Be kind, appreciate what you have, what you had, what you never really lost.

THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE
BY ELLIOT SANTILLAN

As my friend you never failed on shining light in the darkest of places in my life. The Lee I knew and grew to love was a funny and kind-hearted soul that never gave up, never said no, and never ever raised a fist. When I think of all the things we did together, I think of endless possibilities. Rest in peace my friend, you will forever be loved and missed.





THANKS FOR THE BUTTERFLIES
BY ANDREA AFRA

What does it take to make us stop and be silent long enough to look within,

To hold still so that we can better hear the shadows speak.

We can't see in the dark but we sense that something is there.

The other morning I was sitting on my porch when Lee sped by on his bike and called out, "It's not raining!"

"Yay!" I yelled back, and a few seconds later he had u-turned to come say hello.

He sat down and said it was supposed to be raining but it wasn't, and the same thing had happened the day before. While we shared his morning 'breakfast' we watched a bright orange Monarch flutter around the ivy and settle on a morning glory. I don't have a lot of flowers growing and I mentioned how I wished I had more for the butterflies and Lee said,

"I like that purple one."

The butterfly flew towards us and away and back again before flying back for the flowers and he said, "A butterfly flew through my arms on my way over here."

I asked him what kind had it been and he nodded towards the orange one. "That kind."

One week later, the Sunday we found out that Lee had passed away, I was home with the kids and thinking about Lee and the butterflies when our little one began to beg to go to the Butterfly 'Museum'. He didn't know that I was thinking about 'that guy with the floofy hair', as he called Lee. Later, we had to go to the grocery store and just as I began to wonder if he was still thinking about the butterflies, he demanded again to be taken to the museum and I told him that I was pretty sure it was closed but we would go as soon as possible. The next day I was sitting outside and as soon as my mind turned to Lee, an orange butterfly landed on a leaf and sat there very still for a while before flying off again. Again, just a couple of days ago, I was sitting outside in the same spot I had sat with Lee and I had just finished writing something about him when a massive angel-winged black swallowtail with a wingspan the length of my hand lit on the same morning glory flower Lee had pointed to just a few days before.

My mother had loved butterflies and since she passed away they have always been my little sign from her. Maybe Lee knew that I would be watching closely and I might notice that he loved them too.



SCI-FI ADVENTURES
LOVE, SHELBY HOHL

Lee Milton Powers III, which I totally prefer to call him, was brought into my life a crisp autumn evening in 2008, on the patio of what is now known as "Cafe Brasil". Lee immediately struck me in the same way J. Krishnamurti struck C.W. Leadbeater in Madras, A REALIZED BEING, trapped and distorted by the confines of the physical world. I took it upon myself to awaken Lee to his inner self, and the true genuine empowerment, he already had inside, by putting him in front of a film camera and involving him in almost every creative project I could figure out how to work him into. In retrospect, I truly feel though, that I should not have singled out Lee from the rest of his friends, as Lee would've probably tried to include everyone, and he typically WOULD show up to any commercial or video shoot with about 5-6 extra kids that he had promised would get to be on TV. He was a true purveyor of light and understood a sense of community that we most of the time don't recognize. For all the "mayors" and "locals" in our community, how often do we just drop everything and rush to a friends aid when in need, even at the convenience of our comfortability? How often do we take the time to mass text or individually text all of your friends that you Love them? Lee Milton Powers III never had to ask himself those questions, because that was him. Lee, this transmission is for you: You were a brother, an inspiration, and a beacon of light and positivity to everyone you touched. Backside nollie into the swimming pool of eternity homie.



SLEEPYHEAD

I don't even know what to say. I spent so much time with him crammed in cars, in tents, or in my round bed upstairs. Given he and David spent most of their time screwing with me or teasing me but they are memories I wouldn't trade for anything. It was like having two crazy older brothers. And I did learn alot from Lee. He really honestly did never raise his voice, even when I was terrible. Even when i kind-of-accidentally, slammed on my breaks with him in the back of my red truck and caused him to ram his ribs into my metal tool box attachment...

Just today that Passion Pit song came on, Sleepyhead, and i broke down in tears. There are so many memories and good times still packed into things I see and do everyday.

I love Lee, and I'll miss him always. FPH

TWO BIRDS ONE STONER

by HARBEER SANDHU

EXCURSIONS IN SPACE CITY

EVERYBODY'S ALWAYS ASKING ME WHERE TO GET INDIAN FOOD. LIKE I SHOULD KNOW. ME GOING OUT FOR INDIAN FOOD WOULD BE LIKE YOU GOING OUT FOR GRILLED CHEESE AND BRUSSELS SPROUTS.

BUT LATELY I've been hearing a lot about this place on the north side — an Indian "taco truck" parked beside a Valero station.

Now, normally I have a rule against eating at restaurants attached to gas stations (I just have a problem with the idea that food equals fuel) but I had heard so much good tell (like, seriously, *everybody* has been talking about this place) that I had to check it out.

So, imagine a Valero station in northwest Houston. Imagine, in its parking lot, a short-bus painted white with a vinyl sign hanging slack from its roof bearing the words "Desi Grill & More." Imagine picnic tables set up beneath white tents where on weekend nights, laughter and Urdu poetry mingles with incense and the aroma of fish *pakoras* frying in sesame oil. Not a bad scene, really.

Vinod Bhai is a warm, mustachioed, bemulleted, one-earinged man who, after 25 years, got tired of operating fancy Indian restaurants on Hillcroft and decided to open up a *dhaba* (India's version of the roadside truck-stop greasy spoon diner). He's very adamant about the distinction between a restaurant and a *dhaba* — you won't get cloth napkins at *dhaba*, and you might have to pump your own water from the well, but the food you get will be fresh, authentic, delicious, and inexpensive — stuff that will stick to your ribs.

His specialities are *tandoori* chicken (advertised with a *pollo asado* sign!), fish *pakora*, and *daal makhni*. I had the pleasure of tasting the tandoori chicken and it was perfect — crispy and just slightly charred on the outside, tender and juicy on the inside. The *daal makhni* (buttered lentils) was hands down the best I've ever had. Ever. Vinod Bhai's *daal* recipe involves cooking the lentils in milk instead of the usual water and includes a healthy dose of butter and tomato sauce. Yum!

So make the 30 minute trip up to the Desi Grill & More some time — it would be worth even a longer drive. They located at 12672 Veterans Memorial Drive | Sableridge (beside the Valero station, across from Whataburger and Shipley's.) They are open from 6 pm to 12 am, daily, and if you're lucky, you might sight one of their regular customers — WWE wrestler The Great Khali — and I dare you to challenge him to an eating contest.

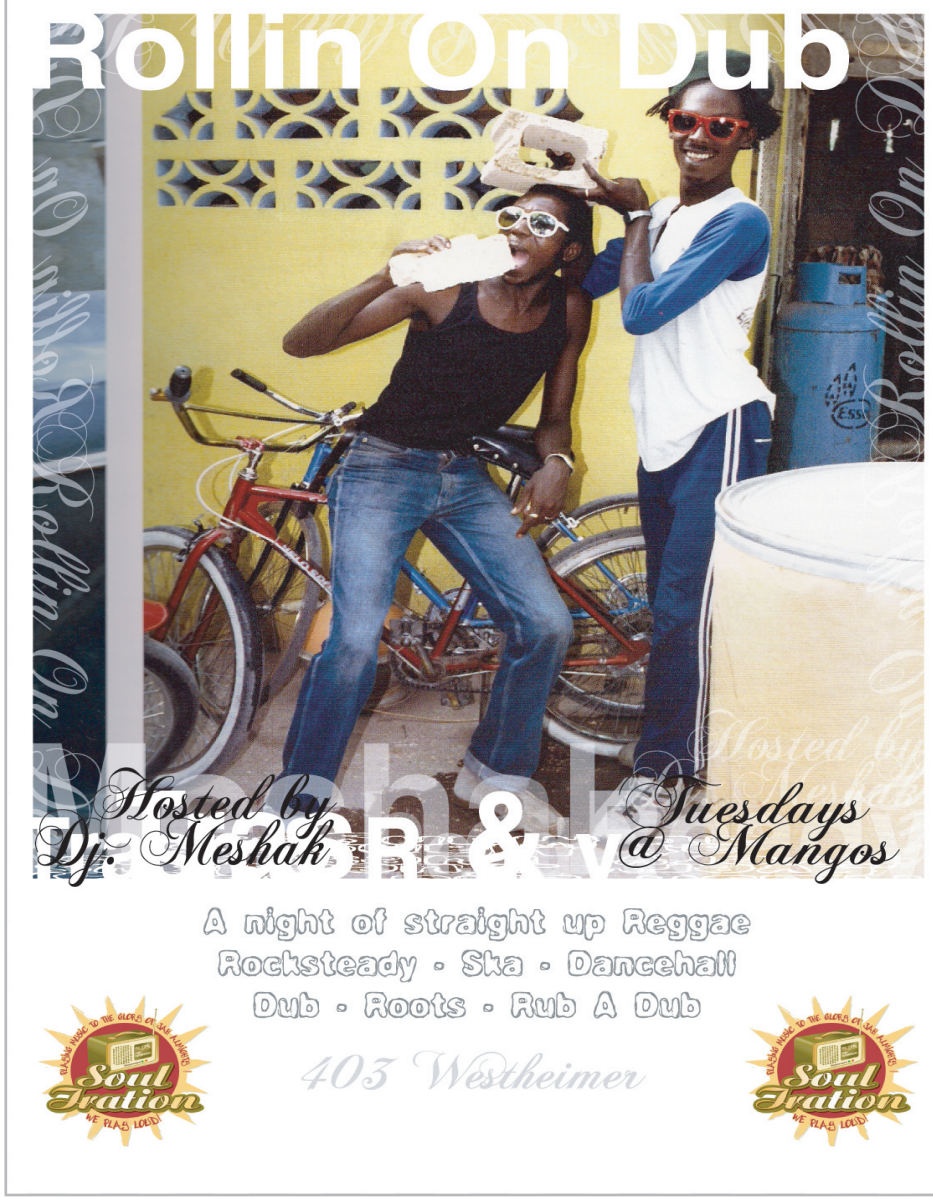
While you're up there, less than a quarter mile away, tucked into a Kroger's strip mall at the corner of Veterans Memorial and Bammel-N. Houston, is one of Houston's all-time coolest record stores, VINYL EDGE. In addition to the fact that he's got one of the best used vinyl inventories on the Gulf Coast, you have to give owner Chuck Roast props for keeping it real in a sometimes hostile environment (the burbs!) for over 24 years.

Chuck — whom you might know from his bands Space City Gamelon, A Different Kind of Monkey, and Turmoil in the Toybox, or his many radio shows on KPFT and KTRU such as the Funhouse Show, Xenofile, and Genetic Memory — was holding it down back when Jimmy Swaggart's and Tipper Gore's people were pamphleteering outside of his store. He tells a great story about the time that he made a window display for the Ministry/Gibby Haynes tune "Jesus Built My Hotrod." Apparently, they needed to fill up the bottom part of the window, so Chuck instructed his employee to rip and crumple pages out of a Gideon's Bible for filler. Well, just outside in the parking lot, a mother and child were being traumatized by this sight and pretty soon, all the churches in the area were atwitter. I am surprised to hear Chuck say that he has gotten far more heat for religious satire in his window display than he has for political content — like the gory anti-war displays he made for both Gulf Wars, which are always great to see in this suburban strip mall.

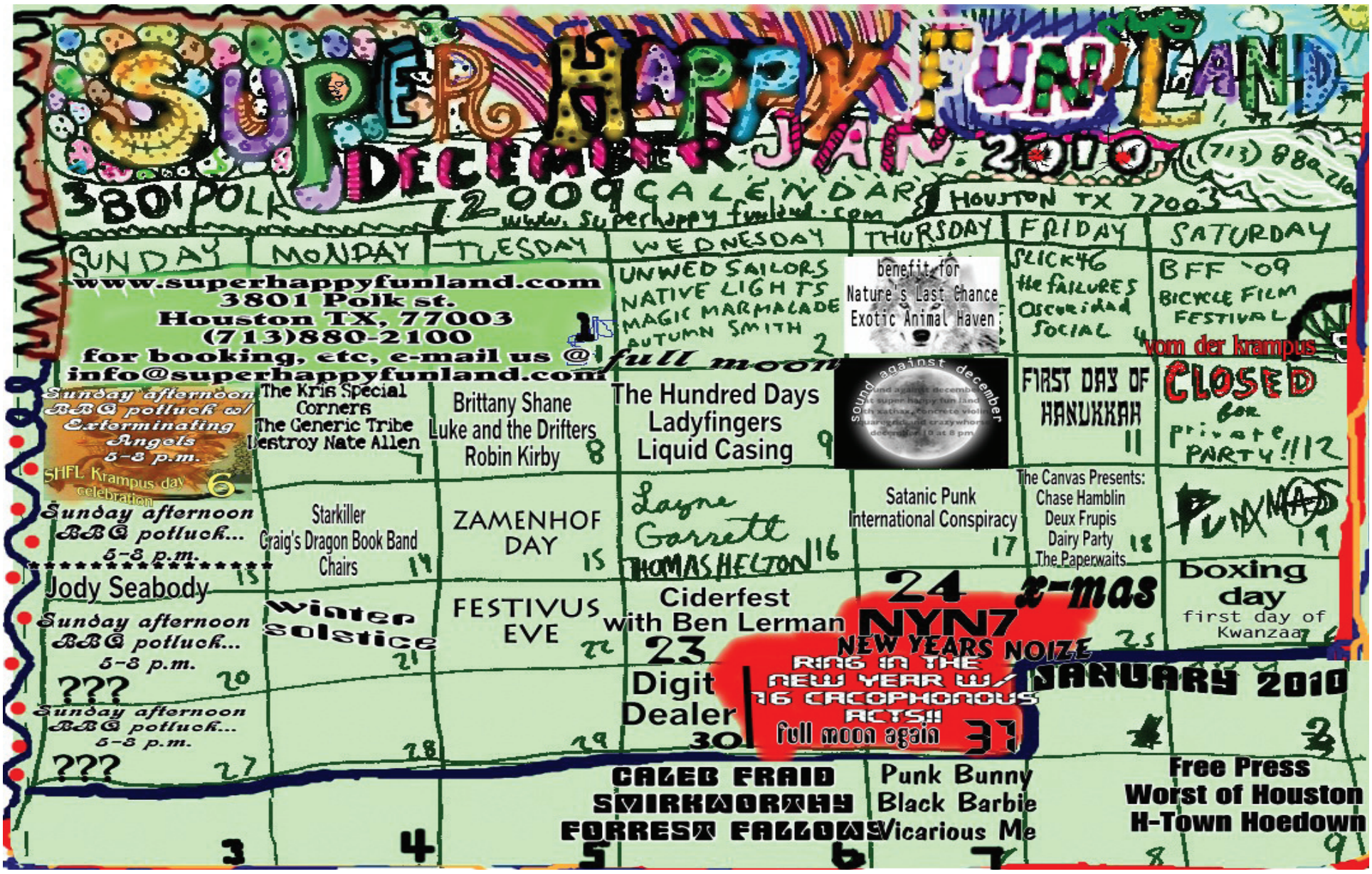
Vinyl Edge is a throwback to the era when record stores doubled as head shops and underground comic book stores, which reminds me of another great story he tells. When they first opened on Halloween 1985, they used to carry a lot more bongs and pipes and such, but with the advent of crack in the late 90s, they started attracting a new, agitated, sketchy, and sometimes rude clientele. So Chuck decided to get rid of all the pipes and stocked the old pipe cases with books. That's right — crack indirectly led to increased literacy! FPH



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A LETTER TO PRESIDENT OBAMA

EXITING AFGHANISTAN

by RALPH NADER



DEAR PRESIDENT OBAMA,

You are nearing the day of decision as to whether you order the dispatch of more soldiers to Afghanistan.

SOME OF YOUR ADVISORS have urged up to 50,000 more soldiers, including several thousand called trainers of the Afghan army.

Other advisors have urged more caution, notably the U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan and former general, Karl W. Eikenberry, who opposes more soldiers so long as the Afghan government remains grossly dysfunctional.

Beside your own military and civilian advisors, you are receiving disparate counsel from an anemic Congress and your allies abroad.

But are you soliciting advise from stateside civic groups of experience and repute that represent many Americans? Or from genuine experts on that country such as Ashraf Ghani-a former American professor and later respected member of the Karzai government before his departure to other positions in that country?

George W. Bush, in the duplicitous run-up to the invasion of Iraq, insulated himself, closed his mind and refused to meet with civic associations in his own land. Like an autocrat bent on plunging a country into war and occupation, knowingly on false pretenses, he deliberately deprived himself of the information that might have restrained his disastrous, messianic militarism. Disastrous, not to him and Dick Cheney, but to our country, soldiers, and economy, and to the devastated Iraqi people and their ravaged nation.

In the months before the March 20, 2003, undeclared criminal war of aggression that violated our Constitution, statutes, and treaties, a dozen organizations each formally requested a meeting with him.

These organizations represented tens of millions of Americans. They came from the clergy, labor, environmentalists, businesses, students, peace groups, womens' groups, city councils, consumer, veteran, teachers groups, and international security experts. Many also came with first hand experience in Iraq and the Middle East.

They wanted to meet with their president. He never even answered their letters. The letters are available at nader.org.

Who would have thought last year that on assuming the presidency, that you would consider plunging deeper in to this quagmire without an exit strategy? The deeper you plunge, the greater your rejection of the history of occupations fueling insurgencies in that region. The more you insulate yourself from contrary judgments to those you have been receiving from your inner councils. Our country, its people and innocent Afghan people will pay the price.

A recent resignation by Matthew P. Hoh, a former marine combat captain in Iraq and highly regarded foreign service officer in Afghanistan, provides an independent analysis of the grievances afflicting the 42 million Pashtuns. In his words:

The Pashtun insurgency, which is composed of multiple, seemingly infinite, local groups, is fed by what is perceived by the Pashtun people as a continued and sustained assault, going back centuries, on Pashtun land, culture, traditions and religion by internal and external enemies. The U.S. and NATO presence and operations in Pashtun valleys and villages, as well as Afghan army and police units that are led and composed of non-Pashtun soldiers and police, provide an occupation force against which the insurgency is justified. In both RC East and South, I have observed that the bulk of the insurgency fights not for the white banner of the Taliban, but rather against the presence of foreign soldiers and taxes imposed by an unrepresentative government in Kabul.

The United States military presence in Afghanistan greatly contributes to the legitimacy and strategic message of the Pashtun insurgency. In a like manner our backing of the Afghan government in its current form continues to distance the government from the people. The Afghan government's failings, particularly when weighed against the sacrifice of American lives and collars, appear legion and metastatic.

Mr. Hoh proceeds to list these persistent failings and adds his articulate doubts about the strategic purposes of your Administration's military presence in Afghanistan. He ask, "Why and to what end?" His letter of conscience and protest concludes by noting the limitless effects on our foreign and military policy, and on our country and its economy.

Your staff estimates each U.S. soldier is costing $1 million a year, in addition to the horrific toll on these soldiers and the Afghan people. You owe the American people an un-Bush-like explanation. Why are you not receiving these groups of American from varied backgrounds and experience at the White House on this pending Afghan decision?

They may wonder, by contrast, why you have so many White House meetings with major corporate CEOs from Wall Street, from the health insurance companies and the drug companies. Is not the White House the peoples' House? Along with many other citizens in our country, I look forward to your response. FPH

Sincerely,
Ralph Nader

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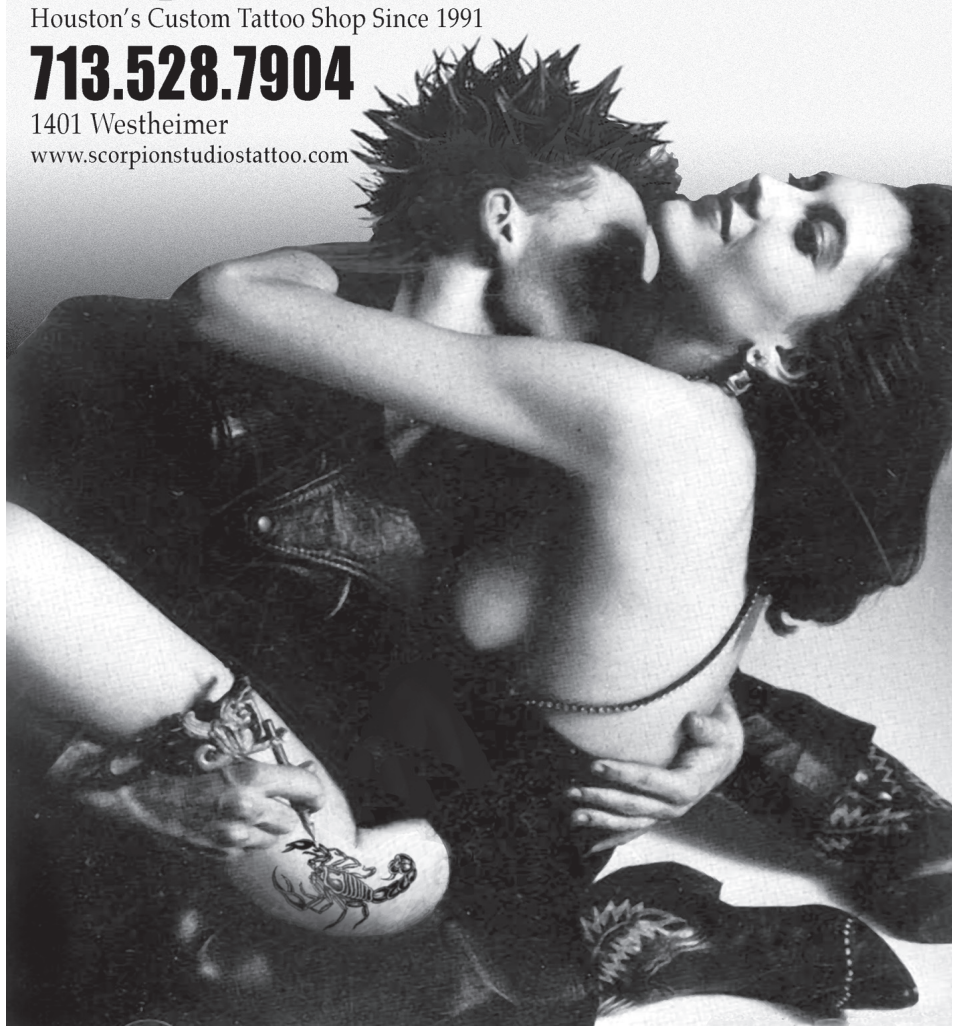
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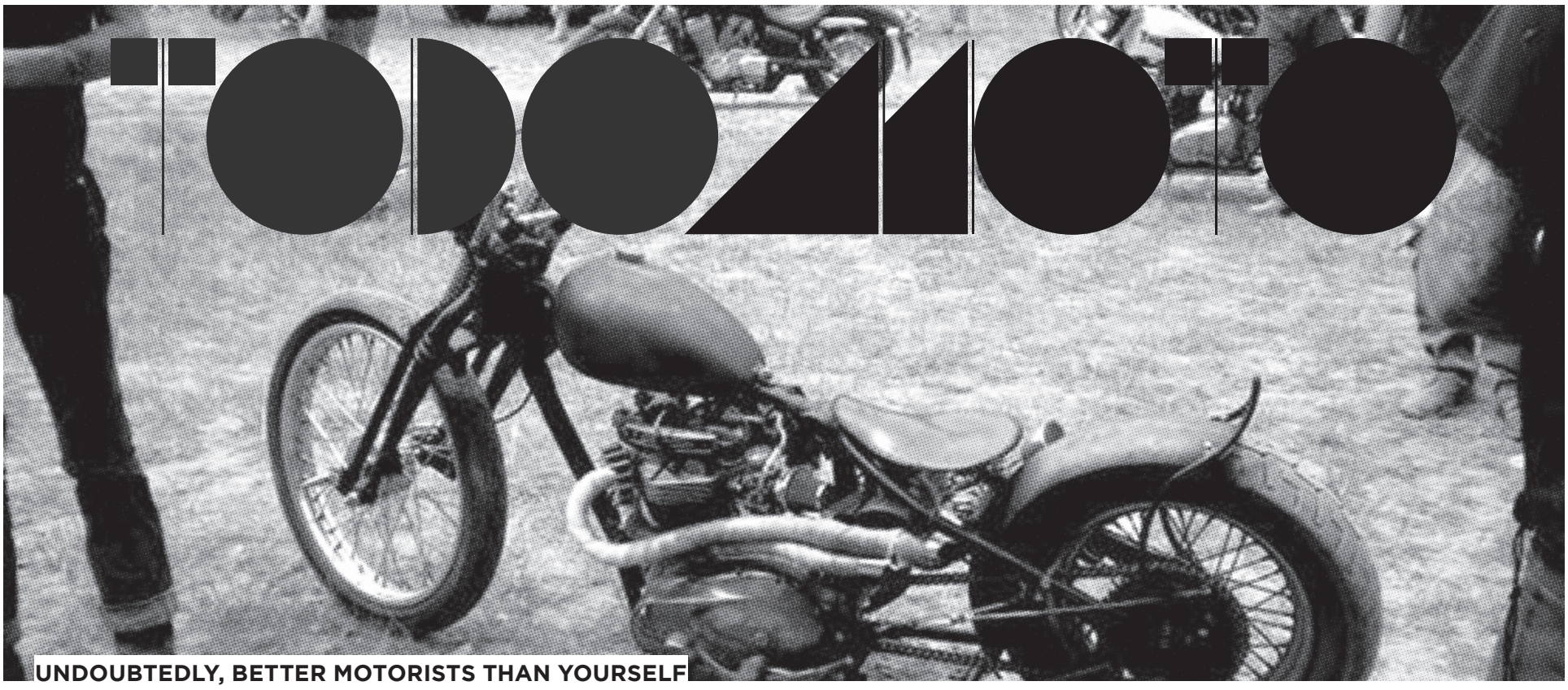


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TODO MOTO



UNDOUBTEDLY, BETTER MOTORISTS THAN YOURSELF

by MILLS-MCCOIN

"You must be careful that you understand all the consequences of an idea before you believe in it."
- Orson Scott Card's Xenocide.

I, VERY RECENTLY, LEARNED OF THAT QUOTE BY WAY OF YATES (A FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE INNER LOOP'S ONLY MOTORCYCLE CLUB — TODO MOTO).... HE USED A CELLPHONE TO CALL ROSEY (THE PRESIDENT) AND ASKED HIM FOR THE EXACT QUOTE.

PARAPHRASING WAS NOT AN OPTION for Yates. Authenticity is the only way to go, which is a virtue that extends much deeper into his life and the lives of his road warrior brothers, Todo Moto.

I followed the four red lights in front of me as they politely shared the same lane of I-10 East that heads into downtown; they were in perfect 80 mile an hour harmony, navigating the interstate already overrun with idiots driving cars. Five other motorcyclists tailed me as we headed into the warehouse district for after hours mayhem at the Owl Farm. By this point in the interview (somewhere in the vicinity of 2:30 AM), I started to recognize that these fearless motorcycle junkies were the safest motorists on the road. They don't fool around with cellphones or car stereos or makeup; not just avoiding these commonplace distractions but loathing their very existence. They concentrate on the road because they're aware of how close to the edge they've already come... and they like it. When Todo Moto rides- they get from point A to point B, which is more than you can say for yourself.

I parked my car in the parking lot; then took a moment to quickly re-examine my past few hours with Todo Moto while listening to the idle roar of their engines. What started as a curious interview had quickly developed into something different and meaningful.

Beginning at Jimmie's Place on White Oak- Todo Moto gathered (eight or more at least) and allowed me to ask them questions. But within minutes (or a fish bucket full of Lonestars), the paper-like infrastructure of a typical interview gave way; and the joy of engaging new friends began to enlighten me. I met a welder, a heavy equipment operator, a tattoo artist, an A/V guy, a dude that works with lasers, a guy from L.A....etc.

We jaunted to Dark Horse on Washington Ave. furthering the experience. My questions became less and less the subject of motorcycle clubs or even motorcycles in general (although, hearing these spiritual auto-mechanics talk shop puts a welcomed spin on raw science). Compulsion?- that was the only question left unanswered.

WHAT'S THE WORST COMMON MISCONCEPTION ABOUT TODO MOTO, OR MOTORCYCLE CLUBS IN GENERAL?

YATES: *That we go around starting shit; or that we're* ***looking*** *for trouble.*

Todo Moto subscribes to a utopian theory of "Don't fuck with us, we won't fuck with you." It's no secret that a global appreciation of this creed would save lives. Who can argue with that?

Local legend, Stephen Walker commented: "Yeah, whenever I tell someone that I'm going to play a show at the Rat's Nest (Todo Moto's luxurious clubhouse on Navigation), or I'm going to one of their parties; the person always responds with, 'Oh yeah? You *like* those guys?' as if it were weird or something. I don't really see how they're any different to other riff raff in Montrose. We're all out to have fun."

To claim that Todo Moto has never left a mess of madness and tom foolery in their wake would be ludicrous. It would be preposterous for anyone to make such a claim. But a reputation for misbehavior should never be feared.

Those simpletons that fear motorcycle clubs are hanging onto a stereotype left over from the 60's- an era in which said simpletons never lived. More simply: Todo Moto enjoys all the same things you and I do... like karaoke.

I had the absolute pleasure of witnessing a karaoke performance so rare and so moving that it would've made lovers out of Annise Parker and Gene Locke. Simon (a club member once responsible for a $1,151 traffic violation) delivered a breathtaking rendition of Meatloaf's, "I Would Do Anything For Love (But I Won't Do That)". Never once did he read the words on the monitor. No need. In fact, since the microphone was wireless, he sang all over the bar. Several measures were sung from a urinal in the Men's bathroom.

IF YOU COULD TIME-TRAVEL WITH YOUR BIKE, WHAT TIME IN HISTORY WOULD YOU TRAVEL TO?

YATES: *I wouldn't take my bike. I would steal several from The Rolling Stones' Altamont concert in 1969 and bring them... ahem... Back to the Future. I would also go back to the time in history when punching a cop was a $20 fine.*

ROSEY: *I'd travel to 3010. I'm always going forward.*

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE CHARACTER FROM "THE LITTLE RASCALS"?

YATES:*Funny story about that... when I was a kid, I auditioned for the part of Stinky in "The Little Rascals" movie.*

SO, IS STINKY YOUR FAVORITE CHARACTER, I ASSUME?

YATES: *Sure.*

IF TODO MOTO HAD A BILLBOARD, WHAT PART OF TOWN WOULD IT BE IN AND WHAT WOULD IT SAY?

YATES: *My vote would be to place it in downtown Beirut and it would advertise for Free Babysitting. In Houston though it would have to go on the outskirts of town and it would read, "We're still partying in your bars."*

Certainly, these guys have a pride about their club and creed. It's a pride no different than that of a man mowing his lawn on a Saturday afternoon, appreciating the fact that the motor drowns out his nagging wife standing on the porch yelling at him to make good on some other bullshit responsibility. Everyone needs an outlet; a place or a feeling that allows you to escape- even if it's just a moment. For Todo Moto, the outlet is the road and the ride. Only a blown gasket can interrupt the meditative state of cruising together with your cohorts.

A MEXICAN REPUBLICAN, A BLACK ATTORNEY, AN OLD RICH WHITE DUDE AND A LESBIAN WALK INTO A BAR. WHICH DO YOU VOTE FOR AS MAYOR OF HOUSTON?

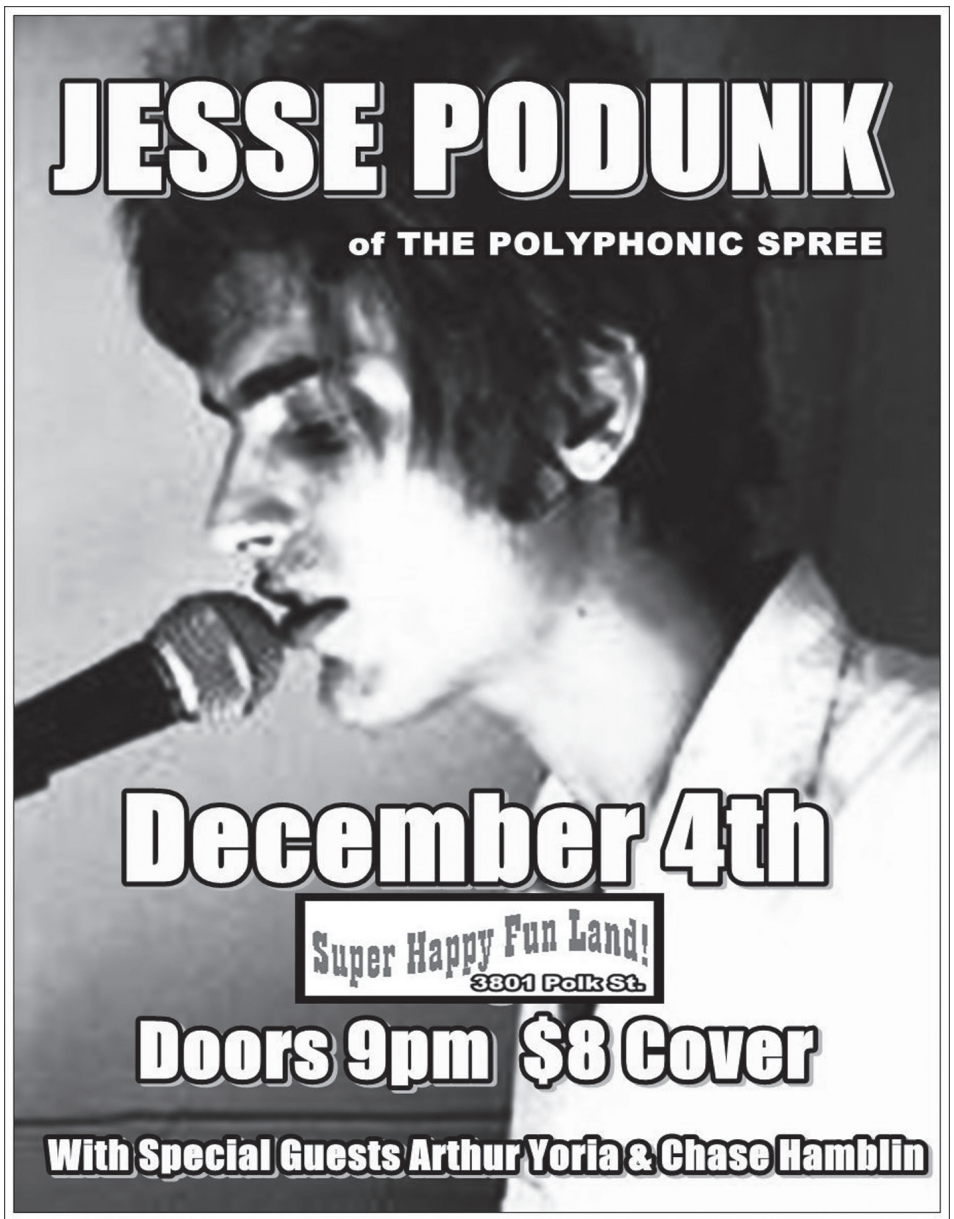
Whoa, that's a tough one. Man, I don't know... kinda makes me glad felons don't get to vote.

OH. THAT'S RIGHT.

Yeah. Disaster narrowly avoided.

AYE.

From the inside of my Ford Mustang, I listened as the engines, one by one, sang their final note; and in the rear-view mirror, I saw Todo Moto standing next to their bikes, not as new renditions of old propaganda, but as remnants of a classic American ideal. Cheers. **FPH**





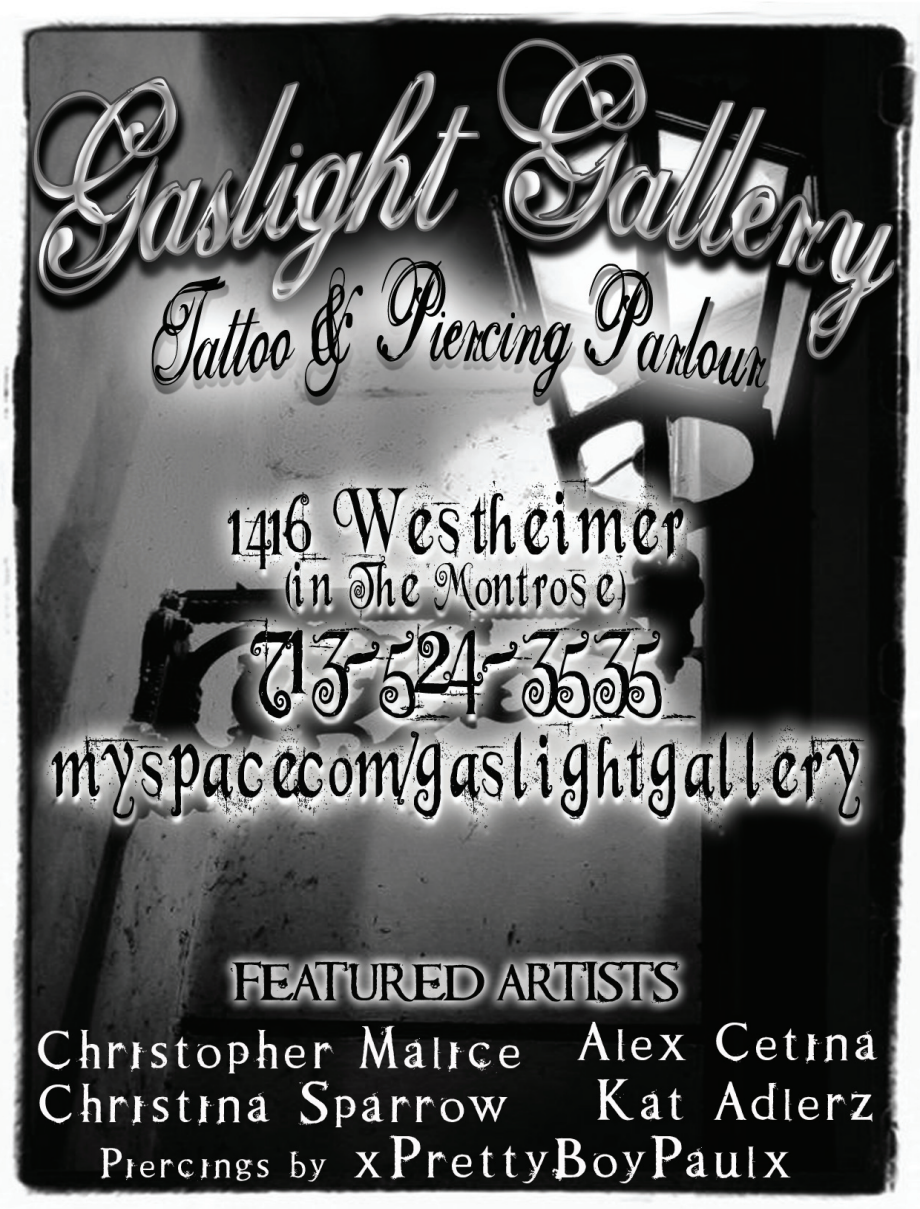
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HOUSTONIA

THE HIT MACHINE YEARS, *PART ONE:* Hound Dog and the Bronze Peacock

by ALEX WUKMAN
ALEXWUKMAN|GMAIL.COM

FIFTY AND SIXTY YEARS AGO, WHEN PLACES LIKE OLD SPANISH TRAIL AND THE HEIGHTS WERE CONSIDERED SUBURBAN, HOUSTON WASN'T KNOWN AS A BAD PLACE TO PLAY, OR A CITY MUSICIANS HAD TO GET AWAY FROM TO GET RECOGNIZED.

IN THE 1940S AND 1950S, Houston was known as a hit factory. Houston's history as a top 40 machine starts in 1945 when Don D. Robey moved here from L.A. Robey was born in Houston in 1903 and he spent much of his life growing up on the streets of the Fifth Ward. While other kids were chasing girls at Tuffly Park, Robey was learning the entrepreneurial skills that would serve him later in life.

Robey also learned his way around a deck of cards, so much so that he was able to survive as a professional gambler after he dropped out of high school. After getting married and fathering a kid, Robey decided to pursue more legitimate business interests. He started a taxi company and then started helping a local promoter bring touring black acts to Houston. Robey found out that, not only did he enjoy promoting, he was good at it. So he gravitated over to the entertainment industry and, like many small scale operators of the time, started promoting local dances. However, he knew that the secret of any good business is diversity, so Robey also promoted everything from boxing matches to golf tournaments. In the 1930s, he moved to Los Angeles where he ran a venue called Harlem Grill for three years.

As WWII was winding down Robey decided to return to the Bayou City and bring his passion for music with him.

In 1944, Robey began working on a concrete building a couple of blocks from the intersection of Lockwood and Liberty in his native Fifth Ward. The building, located at 2809 Erastus St., was surrounded by factories when Robey started setting up shop. After a year of work Robey opened the Bronze Peacock Dinner Club. Named after his light skin and dapper attire, the Peacock attracted the likes of Lionel Hampton, Ruth Brown and Aaron "T-Bone" Walker. The club was known for its gambling room as much as it was known for its dance floor, but a business hours robbery forced Robey to "upgrade his security," which in 1946 meant installing one way mirrors, gun slits and hiring a personal security force.

The city's black music scene was supported by locally owned radio stations KCOH and KYOK who broadcast local shows and talent competitions. In 1947, a local producer named Bill Quinn happened into a bar on Dowling Street where he discovered Lightnin Hopkins playing guitar. Quinn's discovery brought independent labels from New York to L.A. down to scout for more hidden talents. The stampede of labels led to the signing of acts like Peppermint Harris, Little Willie Littlefield, Lester Williams and Big Walter Pierce. Robey undoubtedly heard about the interest that was developing in Houston's blues community, which is why he paid attention when a young guitarist showed up at his club unannounced. One night in 1947, in the middle of one of his sets, T-Bone Walker left the stage at the Bronze Peacock complaining that his ulcer was acting up. It was just the shot that Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown was looking for. Brown had spent his last six dollars on a taxi ride to the club in hopes of catching the attention of Robey. When Walker walked off to find some antacid and lie down, Brown saw his chance. He jumped onstage, grabbed T-Bone's guitar and joined the band. The crowd loved it and, more importantly, so did Robey. Robey signed Brown to a management contract.

A little while later Robey was able to parlay his music industry contracts and get Eddie Mesner, one of the owners of California based Aladdin Records, to fly down and hear the Brown at the Peacock. Mesner was, as the saying goes, blown away. He signed Brown to a recording contract and they recorded four singles, none of which succeeded in making the label enough money to justify keeping him on. Robey, like any good manager, blamed a lack of publicity for Brown's failure to break. However, unlike most managers, Robey decided to start his own record label for his performer. Robey founded Peacock records in 1948 and released Brown's first single "Didn't Reach My Goal" with a B-side of "Atomic Energy" in 1949. Brown also released "Mary is Fine" backed with "My Time is Expensive" in 1949. It would be his first single, the only one he recorded for Peacock, to crack the billboard charts.

However, in 1952 Robey signed three other artists to his fledgling label "Ollie" Marie Adams, a Houston homemaker, along with Willie Mae "Big Mama" Thornton and "Little" Richard Penniman. Penniman quickly dropped his last name and simply became Little Richard. However, Little Richard claimed that his signing with Robey was far from voluntary.

"He jumped on me, knocked me down, and kicked me in the stomach. It gave me a hernia that was painful for years…He was known for beating people up. He would beat everybody up but Big Momma Thornton. He was scared of her," said Little Richard in later interviews. It



Isaac Sutton

Hepcats Hoedown: Hopscotching to the twangy music of the Clarence (Gatemouth) Brown combo, Gatemouth and a Texas night life character known as "Mama the Mute" join in a hepcat's hoedown at Houston's Club Matinee. Brown's outfit is popular in the Southwest.

may have been the fear that Big Mama instilled in the six foot tall, 250 pound, pistol packing Robey that forced him to give her what turned out to be her biggest break, and Peacock's biggest success. In 1952, Thornton recorded a song that would became a classic, "You Ain't Nothin' but a Hound Dog." Released in March of 1953, Thornton's version of the Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller song spent seven weeks as number one on the Billboard R&B charts. However, it wasn't until three years later, when a white boy from Tupelo, Mississippi recorded the song, that it went on to become an international phenomenon. Robey's true success as a businessman was in his ability to spot niche markets. In the 1940s and 1950s that niche wasn't just in R&B but also in gospel. While R&B was viewed by many people as low class, degrading and not respectable, gospel, on the other hand, was seen as something that was acceptable to people who would never go into a club that served alcohol or had dice games in the backroom. However, like R&B, the major labels of the time completely ignored gospel. This gave Robey and other independent operators the room to sign acts that would later go on to make millions for much bigger companies. One of the first gospel acts that Robey signed was called the Jackson Harmoneers from the Jackson, Mississippi area. The group, originally called the Cotton Blossom Singers, later changed their name to the Five Blind Boys from Mississippi and then even later to the Original Five Blind Boys. When the Harmoneers walked into Peacock's studio for the first time they laid down the track "Our Father," which was "The Lord's Prayer" recorded over a beat with, what has been described as, "some soulful reflections" added in. Prior to the release of "Our Father", gospel records avoided instruments, instead preferring to rely on four, or more often, five part harmonies. The record broke into the top 10 of the Billboard Gospel chart, and went on to become a gospel standard. Adding a beat had changed gospel music forever.

In later years, Robey stated that the Harmoneers' "Our Father" and a song called "Peace in the Valley" by Red Fox on the Decca label were the first gospel songs to ever receive play on a jukebox, and it was the addition of a beat that did it. Robey stated that he "found that the public wanted something new in gospel" so he put in various different instruments, a guitar, trombone and drums.

"They did not take to the trombone, but they did take to the guitar and drumbeat, and it got to a point where, if you did not have a beat in a religious record, you didn't have a sale," said Robey.

Robey's reinvention of Gospel music attracted attention, not just from the public but also from other performers. Within a few years Robey had over 100 artists on his payroll and was able to brag in a 1952 advertisement that he could sell 26,000 copies of a record before it was even released. While Robey was starting an empire on Houston's East side, a "Crazy Cajun" from Louisiana and a former railroad accountant from Yoakum, Texas were building Houston a reputation amongst white recording artists. **FPH**

To be continued next issue.

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AUTUMN IN THE HOLY LAND

by NICK COOPER / NICKCOOPER.COM

ON SEPTEMBER 15TH, THE GOLDSTONE REPORT WAS RELEASED, PRESENTING PRELIMINARY FINDINGS ABOUT WAR CRIMES COMMITTED BY BOTH SIDES DURING ISRAEL'S "OPERATION CAST LEAD" AGAINST GAZA FOR THREE WEEKS OVER NEW YEARS 2009.

AT THE END OF OCTOBER, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas talked about resigning over the failed so-called peace process.

On November 4th, by a vote of 344 to 36, the U.S. House of Representatives passed Resolution 867, calling the Goldstone Report illegitimate. The non-binding resolution was so inaccurate that it seemed unlikely that the Congressmen who wrote and voted for it had read even a summary of the report they were criticizing. The Resolution claimed that the Goldstone Report:

"Makes no mention of the relentless rocket and mortar attacks, which numbered in the thousands and spanned a period of eight years, by Hamas and other violent militant groups in Gaza against civilian targets in Israel…"

However, the Goldstone Report not only mentioned, but also condemned such attacks:

"The Mission has determined that the rockets… fired by the Palestinian armed groups… constitute indiscriminate attacks upon the civilian population of southern Israel and… would constitute war crimes and may amount to crimes against humanity."

Texan Representatives Ron Paul (R), Lloyd Doggett (D), and Eddie Johnson (D) joined Dennis Kucinich, Barbara Lee, and 29 others in voting against this ridiculous resolution.

On November 12th, Palestinians announced they would demand full membership in the UN since Israel wasn't moving forward with any of its commitments. On November 16th, Senators Joe Lieberman (D) and Lindsey Graham (R) held a press conference in Jerusalem to predict that any such move would be vetoed by the U.S.

On November 17th, Israel defied Obama by approving the construction of 900 new homes for Jews on West Bank land it occupied in the 1967 war as part of East Jerusalem. Obama and other world leaders were critical. On November 19th, Israel approved another 103 residences.

On November 19th and 22nd Israel bombed Gaza in retaliation for Palestinian rocket-fire.

On November 19th, The United Nations Office of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has listed 83 Palestinian villages under threat of Israeli settler violence including beatings of Palestinians, arson, and destroying cars.

Israel claims its strikes and annexations stem from the right to defend itself from Palestinian rockets, or even from another Holocaust. However, self-defense means using only the proportional opposite force necessary to stop an imminent attack, it can never be applied to anything in the past, no mater how recent. Similarly, Palestinian rocket-fire cannot legitimately be called "self-defense" since it in no way blocks the Israeli attacks. However, in this conflict, the ratio of Palestinian to Israeli civilian deaths is usually over 100 to 1. So, I try to put 100 times more blame on Israel.

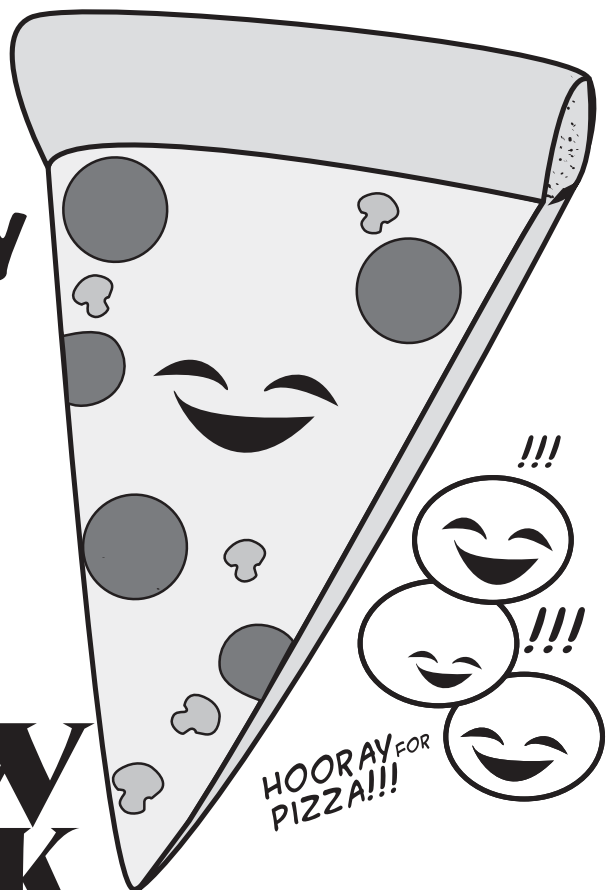
The fact that Jews have been attacked in the past by Nazis and others does not grant them any special license to use force, nor does it explain Israeli brutality. There are plenty of groups that have been the victims of genocidal programs that did not become oppressors as a response. South African blacks learned a much more sophisticated lesson from their suffering.

On the other hand, the fact that Israelis are in a brutal colonial role right now must not be attributed to their religion or ethnicity. Many conscientious Jews oppose even the idea of an ethnic state. Israeli policies are oppressive as have been the policies of many other groups around the world throughout history. The U.S. has often been in the role of oppressor, as have each of the one-time imperial powers.

Our government rejected the closest thing we have to a balanced report about recent Israeli and Palestinian use of force, threatened to reject any attempt of Palestinians to have a state, but permitted (with some grumbling) Israeli expansion into new parts of Palestine. Meanwhile, both sides are shooting at each other, and the so-called peace talks are not occurring. **FPH**



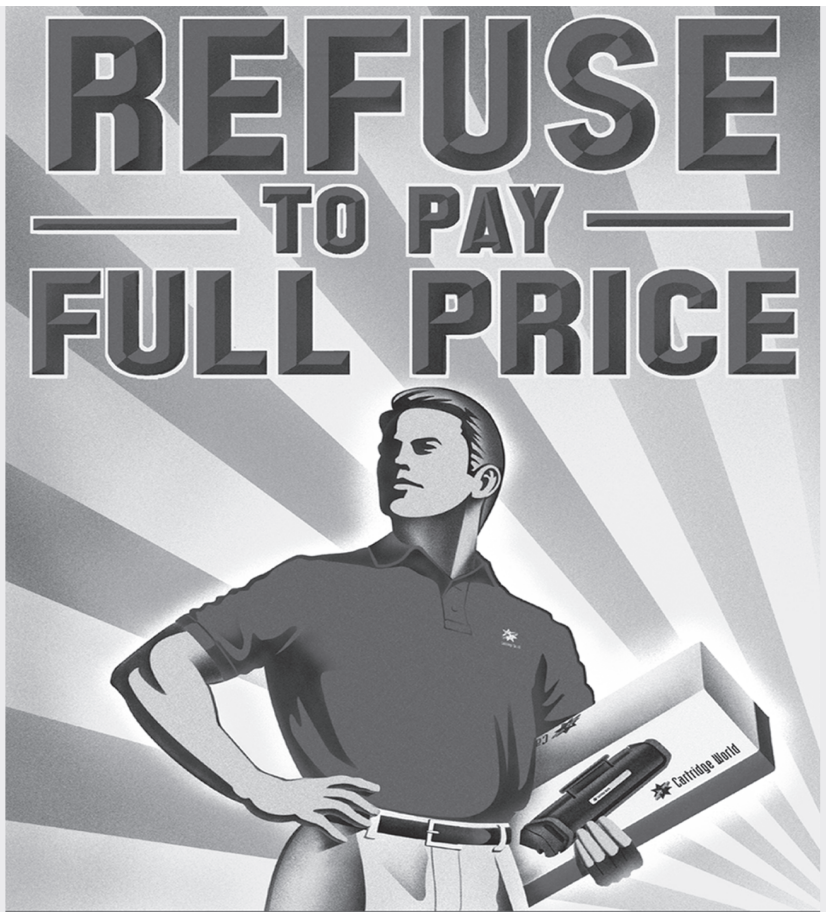
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We share free vegetarian food with the hungry every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 8:PM and Sunday 7pm on the ledge on the corner of the sidewalk in front of the Library at Smith and McKinney. Come by or contact us at: fnbhouston@riseup.net

A CONVERSATION WITH PAT GREER

by JOEL HUGHES

A CONVERSATION WITH PAT GREER, CO-FOUNDER OF CENTRAL CITY CO-OP, HOUSTON'S ORIGINAL ORGANIC CO-OP, AS WELL AS CO-HOST OF THE 90.1 KPFT SHOW, ECO-OLOGY WHICH IS DEDICATED TO LOCAL HERO'S AT THE FOREFRONT OF ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION, ECOLOGY IN AND FOR OUR COMMUNITY, SOCIAL JUSTICE, HEALTH, AND SPIRIT.

SHE IS ALSO AN OWNER AND C.E.O. of Yaya's RAW Rah and Pat Greer's Kitchen located on the North end of Montrose. Her kitchen makes dehydrated cookies and crackers, kombucha, pizzas, salads, party geez, pies, and many more dinner entrees and desserts, all of which are gluten free, raw, vegan, use organic ingredients, and utilize as much produce as possible from local, organic/sustainable farmers.

WHERE DOES THE BENEFIT LIE IN EATING RAW/LIVING FOODS? ¶ Living enzymes: foods heated above 118 degrees have enzymes destroyed. Enzymes are necessary to digest food. Thoroughly chewing foods and ingesting living enzymes allows a body to have more fun, i.e. it doe not have to work to digest food. It can take the energy provided and play, go for a run/walk/swim, laugh, dance, whatever!

Taste: pizza, burritos, lasagna, pecan pie, cookies, krackers and yes Virginia, You can have Your cake and eat it too.

Carbon footprint: no ovens are used, at Our kitchen, we do not use air conditioning or heat, we recycle, we compost our leftover green matter, we think loving thoughts while we prepare food

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO SHARE RAW FOOD WITH YOUR COMMUNITY? ¶ A health challenge eventually took me to a raw food diet. My daughter and I started Central City Co-op after I started a raw food diet and when I made krackers and kookies for myself, I had a few extras and started selling them at the co-op. People started asking for them and here we are.

CAN YOU EXPLAIN YOUR PHILOSOPHY ON THE NECESSITY TO COOK FOOD WITH A POSITIVE ATTITUDE? ¶ Have you ever walked into a restaurant and it did not feel right? You went ahead and ate there anyway and when you left, you did not feel right? Maybe the sous chef was having problems with a supplier or another employee got a ticket on the way to work which made the person late to work which got the person in trouble. When a person can thinking loving/positive thoughts while touching your food, the food is infused with those thoughts, or energy if you will.

MANY MOVIES LIKE FOOD, INC., SUPER SIZE ME, AND FAST FOOD NATION HAVE BEEN EXAMINING THE FOOD INDUSTRY IN AMERICA. DO YOU THINK SOCIETY IS BECOMING MORE DISCONNECTED WITH THE FOOD CHAIN THAN WE WERE FIFTY YEARS AGO? ¶ Yes and no. The movies you mentioned, farmers markets, the purported green movement ask people to examine their choices on many levels. Some folks examine and make changes; some folks dig in (pun intended) and have another order of fries.

WHEN YOU ENVISION A MORE SUSTAINABLE HOUSTON, WHAT SIMPLE IMPROVEMENTS DO YOU SEE US MAKING AS A COMMUNITY? ¶ Eating seasonally and closer to home.

Knowing where food comes from.

Making meals at home and eating with family and friends.

Getting outside more.

Supporting businesses and government that support a sustainable and thriving approach to community.

More hugs and smiles and community involvement.

HOUSTON IS A CITY THAT DOES NOT INHERENTLY CATER TO EARTH CONSCIOUS PEOPLE. ON A DAY TO DAY BASIS WHAT MEASURE TO YOU TAKE LIVE SUSTAINABLY? ¶ I deeply appreciate being here, adore and love my children, grandchildren, friends, and community. I compost chronically and recycle religiously, watch my trips/mileage, eat locally, organic, work on saying thank you to every situation, don't mow the yard until I have to, volunteer at KPFT, 90.1 Houston, have faith, trust, and pixie dust.

WHAT ARE YOUR SPIRITUAL NOTIONS ON THE CONNECTION BETWEEN FOOD AND THE SOUL? ¶ Ready? I don't think we have free will. I think we make choices/create based on history. Two lobes of the brain dictate creation and whether it be scientific or crazy inventive/imaginative. Soul implies more than a connection to all, Soul is all. Soul replenishes with nourishment beyond what we put in our mouths, it craves connection, craves loving, craves community. What does Soul have to do with creation?

Close Your eyes, remember a time when You thoroughly enjoyed a meal. Where were You? What did You have to eat? Who were You with?

WHAT DOES YOUR DIET CONSIST OF? ¶ Hugs, family, friends, and lots of leafy greens, seasonal fruit, squash, carrots, avocadoes, onions, garlic, jalapenos, Texas pecans, sunflower seeds, hemp nuts/seeds, cilantro, a few other nuts, and seeds, lots of herbs. and, my balance, HC loves to make beans, all different kinds of beans and bean soups, so beans play a part in my weekly diet. and, my incredible granddaughter, Cassandra who is 13 years old, aspires to be a pastry chef and have a bakery someday. So, whenever she makes anything, I eat it with great joy and thankfulness.

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE LOCAL RESTAURANTS? ¶ Brasil and Mango's on Westheimer, Baby Barnaby's and Latina Café on Fairview, Tafia, and Madras on Kirby.

DO YOU HAVE ANY SUGGESTIONS FOR LITERATURE THAT HAS INSPIRED YOU TO LIVE THE WAY YOU DO? ¶ A Light in the Attic, Shel Silverstein.

Manís Search for Meaning, Victor Frankl.

Let Your Life Speak, Parker J, Palmer.

The Return of the Prodigal Son, Henri Nouwen.

Behaving as if the God in all Life Matters, Machelle Small Wright.

Lots of recipe books.

WHAT DO YOU FEED YOUR PETS? ¶ Raw liver and HC buys dry food from the big retailers. Balance.

WHEN IS THE LAST TIME YOU ATE BACON? ¶ Intentionally, about 12 years ago, unintentionally, 2 years ago when it was in some soup that I was given.

DO YOU MISS BACON? ¶ Nope.

Pat Greer's raw vegan kitchen is located at 412 W Clay St in the Montrose are of Houston. Her radio show, Eco-Ology is broadcast every Wednesday from 6-7 AM on KPFT Houston, 90.1 FM, and the Central City Co-op is located on Wednesday at 2115 Taft Street and on Sunday at Discovery Green. FPH



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We share free vegetarian food with the hungry every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 8:PM and Sunday 7pm on the ledge on the corner of the sidewalk in front of the Library at Smith and McKinney. Come by or contact us at: fnbhouston@riseup.net



houston.indymedia.org

10/30 Harris County commissioners court approves 287g agreement

We want to thank all the folks that came out on Tuesday to show opposition to racial profiling by Houston law enforcement and stand up for immigrant communities. Despite packing the meeting room with opponents of the program, and the vast majority of speakers opposing the program, the commissioners voted 4 to 1 to join this program. Judge Ed Emmet, Jerry Eversol, Steve Radack, and El Franco Lee (who as commissioner for precinct 1 represents the University of Houston) voted in favor of the program. Only Sylvia Garcia voted against the program.

In Irving Texas, when the local police entered into a CAP agreement (a similar program to 287g that gives access to immigration records in their city jail) with ICE in 2006, arrest records have shown an increase in arrests of Latinos for petty offenses. The University of California at Berkley Law School wrote a report [download pdf] that exposes the expansion of racial profiling that took place once they reached an agreement with ICE.

10/26 Tenth annual March to Abolish the Death Penalty takes place in Austin

Each October since 2000, people from all walks of life and all parts of Texas, the U.S. and other countries have taken a day out of their year and gathered in Texas to raise their voices together and loudly express their opposition to the death penalty. The march is a coming together of activists, family members of those on death row, community leaders, exonerated prisoners and all those calling for abolition. The march started in Austin in 2000. In 2007 and 2008, the march was held in Houston (Houston Indymedia Coverage from 2008, 2007). This year, it is came back to Austin.

The annual march is organized by several Texas anti-death penalty organizations, including the Austin chapter of the Campaign to End the Death Penalty, Texas Moratorium Network, the Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement, Texas Students Against the Death Penalty, Texas Death Penalty Education and Resource Center and Kids Against the Death Penalty.

Families and supporters raised the cases of Reginald Blanton, Rodney Reed, Jeff Wood, Clinton Young, Robert Garza and others. The march this year focused on raising the case of Cameron Todd Willingham, who was executed in 2004 by Rick Perry based on the testimony of arson investigators who research has been found "relied on bad science, unproven theories and personal bias" by the report of the Texas Forensic Science Commission in August of 2009.







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11/17 Health Care Protest at Cigna ends with 2 arrests

Demonstrators from Health Care for All Texas, the Progressive Action Alliance, Code Pink, Harris Co. Green Party, and others gathered at the Cigna headquarters by the Galleria in Houston, at 2700 Post Oak.

The demonstrators called for an end to unfair medical insurance practices that deny care to people in need, and an end to excessive industry profits and executive pay. They said they supported universal single payer health care ("Medicare for All" or House Resolution 676) and an end to the domination of the health industry by insurance companies.

Two other demonstrators, who wanted to go inside to speak with the Cigna executives, were not allowed to do so. They decided to sit outside the front door of the building until they could speak with the executives... Finally, after at least 45 minutes, the two demonstrators sitting by the entrance were handcuffed, put in a police car, and taken away as the rest of the demonstrators showed their support for them.

11/16 Students confront anti-choice "Genocide Awareness Project"

These jerks [The Genocide Awareness Project] set up at the University of Houston today and have set up in Butler Plaza directly in front of the library, causing a huge clot of people to gather blocking the walkway. The display has drawn strong responses from people who agree that abortion is baby murder (and yell loudly at people they disagree with that they are baby murderers) and students and community members who support a woman's right to chose.

Some of the opponents of the display carried a sign reading "Abortion is NOT murder" and engaged in debate with people who seemed to buy this nonsense. They seemed to be supporters of the Revolutionary Communist Party The display consists of photos comparing abortion to Nazi Germany, and to Jim Crow lynchings in the south (as well as animal testing). In addition to making a huge photo display, they put up signs all over the courtyard 'warning' about the display. Some folks who appear to disagree with this religious fundamentalist nonsense used these signs to get their own opinions out.

11/12 Indymedia Folks Had No Idea We Were Being Subpoenaed! What the EFF?

On January 30th, 2009, Kristina Clair of Philadelphia, PA — one of the system administrators of the server that hosts the indymedia.us site — received in the mail a grand jury subpoena from the Southern District of Indiana federal court. The Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) has represented Indymedia in other cases like this in the past and immediately got involved in the case.

The government inappropriately used the subpoena to demand: All IP traffic to and from www.indymedia.us" for a particular date, including "IP addresses, times, and any other identifying information." This entire subpoena was never discussed openly within indymedia because it contained instructions not to discuss any of it's details, even though the government had not obtained the gag-order that would normally go along with such a demand.

The EFF responded to the indymedia subpoena, and now finally, the government has backed down. That means we can talk about it!

11/7 Joint Statement from Under the Hood Café and Fort Hood IVAW on shooting at Fort Hood

Our community is distraught by the tragic shooting at Fort Hood yesterday. We extend our condolences to the families and friends of the victims. As upset as we are about this incident, this shooting does not come as a shock. Eight years of senseless wars have taken a huge toll on our troops and their families. It's time to admit that the wars in southwest Asia are in no one's best interests. Bring the troops home now!

The Army has also repeatedly demonstrated that it is more interested in making soldiers "deployable" than it is in helping them fully recover from PTSD and other mental health issues. This often leaves soldiers with few options other than to self-medicate with drugs and alcohol. The Army routinely deploys soldiers who are clearly suicidal and homicidal. Yesterday was a gruesome reminder of the possible violent consequences of this policy. We hope the Army now takes its duty to take care of soldiers more seriously.

We demand transparency from the Army and other federal agencies involved with this investigation.

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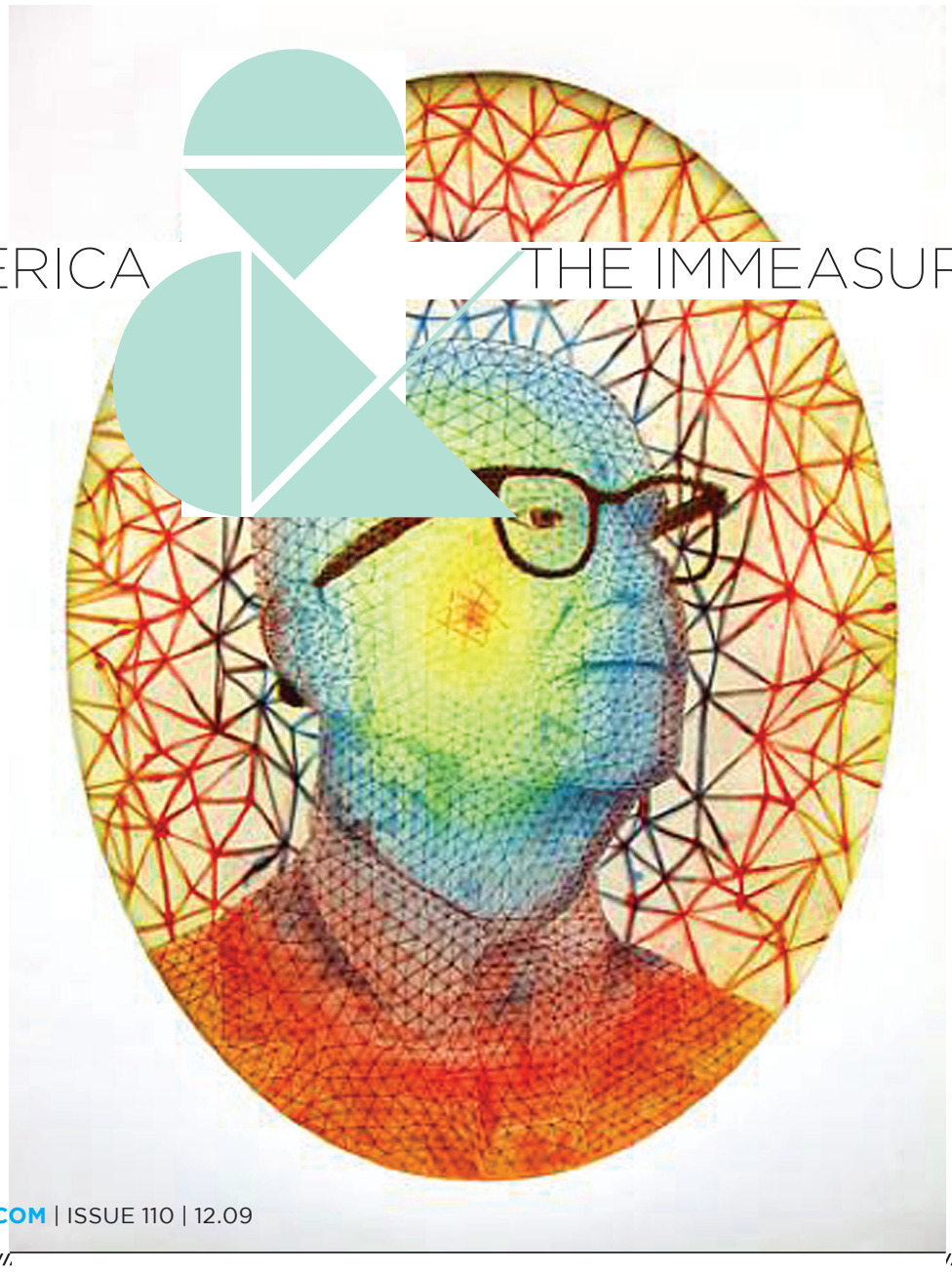
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SPIRITUAL AMERICA THE IMMEASURABLE DISTANCE

by BUFFALO SEAN



WITH A BUSHY RUSSET BEARD, WEARING DISHEVELED CLOTHES AND RIDING A BMX BIKE, MATTHEW DAY JACKSON PEDALED BACK AND FORTH ACROSS MARFA.

HIS BROWN EYES CAST a friendly glow on any face he came across in the windswept West Texas town. As he went from house to house meeting, greeting, drinking and laughing, Jackson built up the kind of goodwill that usually follows gurus, gamblers and ice cream trucks. Five years after those sun-parched days in the desert his mind is ensconced here in Houston at the Contemporary Arts Museum as "The Immeasurable Distance"- a fitting title for his collection of resin-soaked memorabilia by an earnest mind let loose.

Overtly curious, with a wide-ranging appetite for pop culture, Jackson's work toes the line of conceptual art without engaging in the pretension that plagues esoteric aristocrats like Vanessa Beecroft and Matthew Barney. At first glance Jackson's artworld bona fides are firmly intact, but his child-like guile keeps even the most mortifyingly informed insiders on their toes spinning bullshit into gold thread. Composed of readymade elements, each with their own set of innuendoes, Jackson's work is sculpture, painting and installation- a coherent context holding various disciplines together. Within his mind pulsating like a thick bass line, everything moves together. Gone are the days of the categorical museum, Jackson is bringing back the reign of the *wunderkammer*.

Matthew Day Jackson's work came to town in 2008 as a part of Toby Kamps' "The Old, Weird America" and returns this year as a solo show courtesy Bill Arning, who first arranged for "The Immeasurable Distance" to be exhibited in Boston at MIT while he was the director. Both curators see his work as a call for social progress, a break from the cyclical nature of human existence. In "The Old Weird America" Jackson's *Garden of Earthly Delights (Spiritual America)*, 2008, was an edgy, dark take on fallibility and legitimacy. Tenuously based on Hironymous Bosch's triptych of the same name and a recent exhibit by the king of art thieves Richard Prince, *Garden* consisted of a group of black-framed modified posters and a snaking vitrine filled with oddities. An *Evil Dead* poster is cut into a psychedelic landscape, zombies cheering on Sputnik in grey wool suits. The title character from the 1977 film *Sasquatch* becomes Joseph Beuys scaring a caravan of cowboys forwarding a river. Hopper and Fonda from *Easy Rider* roll upside down across the USA. Fake taxidermy fairies, Wally Wood's *Disneyland Memorial Orgy*, astronauts and the '68 Olympics all make appearances in this sprawling installation. Without a serious leap of faith the elements may remain inert but with the right mix of faith and paranoia the aesthetic experience becomes a reprieve from heavy handed messages and a DIY journey to one's own sense of understanding.

"The Immeasurable Distance" is that experience writ large, and I must recommend getting really high on weed before attempting to fully enjoy the virtuoso stonership that the exhibit displays. If nothing else you'll need to do it just so you can see the human visages on rock faces across America that Jackson spent months and thousands of miles documenting. Conceived as a response to the artist's residency at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, "Distance" looks at science as a layman, far enough from the content to appreciate the aesthetics of categorization, preservation and simulation. *Study Collection* is a long steel shelving unit with a series of series; mock-ups of American missile systems from Fat Man and Little Boy to Cruise missiles, skulls morphing out of geometric forms and crude human limbs fused to tree branches. It is an amazing work to take in, the viewer walking back and forth examining objects, measuring differences, making references and noting new elements. Looking to the past, *August 6th, 1945* documents Hiroshima and Washington DC on the last day of WWII, when atomic bombs were dropped on Japan. The streets are paved in lead, and buildings are nothing more than charred stumps in jagged geometric patterns. Through reversals and reexaminations Jackson takes on the legacy of the American 20th century from a myriad of perspectives.

The issue of immeasurability comes to the fore in *Tensegrity Biotron*, a large cube divided by mirrors and lit by neon tubes. Casts of the artist's bones hang suspended in the case and as one looks through the box mirrored angles extend into infinity, multiplying bones and bright neon lines into the thousands. Keep staring. Further and further into space. All things considered, Jackson may search for the long look that carries us into the future but inside his earnestness is a clear grasp of the here and now, the disjointed realities of contemporary life that keep us tied to this earth and our own problems. The artist's intent fades into the subconscious as the viewer's context adds meaning to the objects and ideas presented to it. If the new century of art has anything to bring to the table, it is a better sense of our selves instead of any single narrative striving to lift humanity out of the mire of boom and bust, truth and lies or right and wrong. Jackson brings it to us today. FPH

MATTHEW DAY JACKSON: *THE IMMEASURABLE DISTANCE*
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Works in one hour, effective up to five hours.

EFFERVESCENT TABLETS
Works in one hour, effective up to five hours.
Water soluble formula, tastes great.

HAIR CLEANSING SYSTEM
Effective up to eight hours, eliminates external barriers and lowers toxins within

DAILY CAPSULES
Supplements detox process 12 to 24 hours prior to cleansing deadline.
Powerful companion to other toxin reduction products

Ask for B CLEAN PRODUCTS At Your Favorite Smoke Shops!