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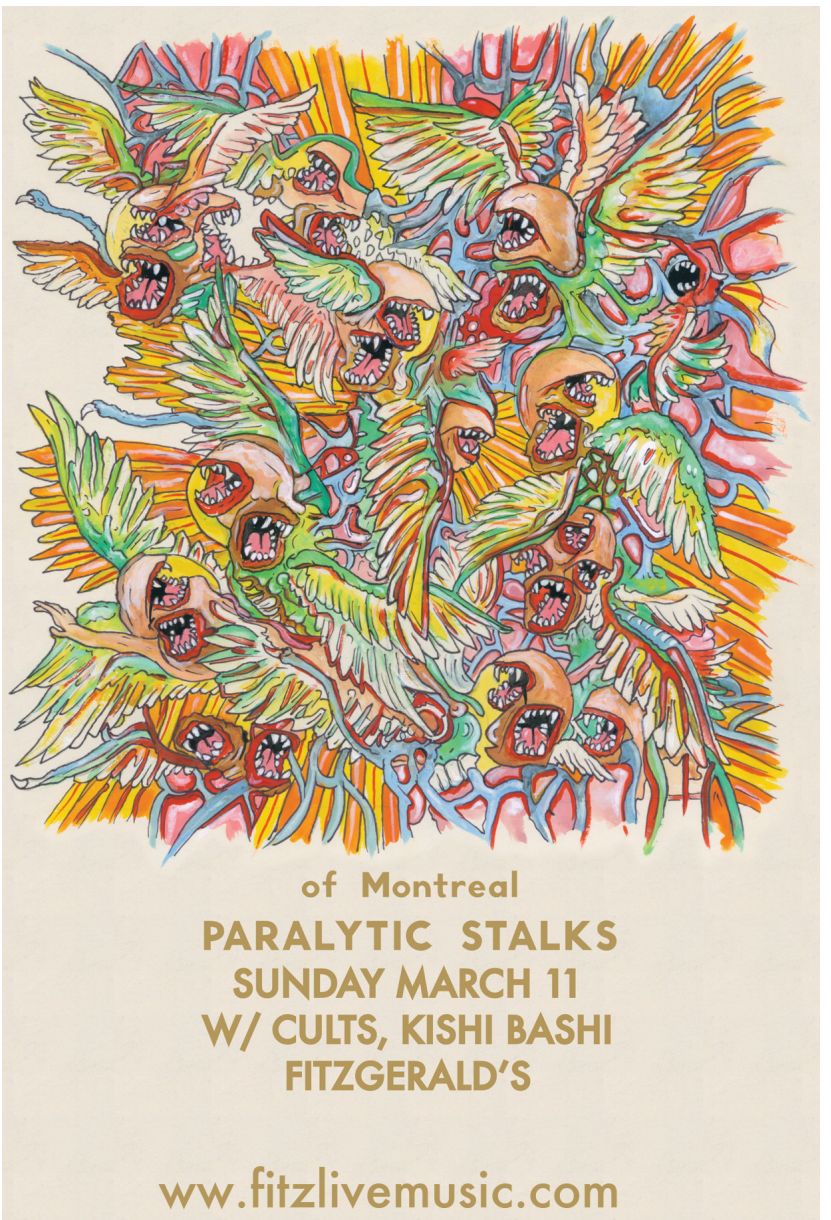


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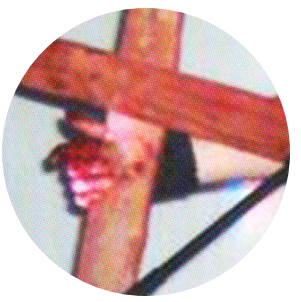
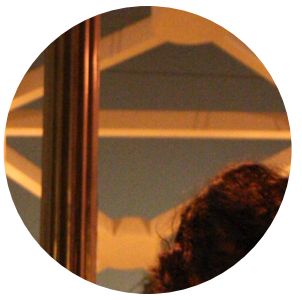

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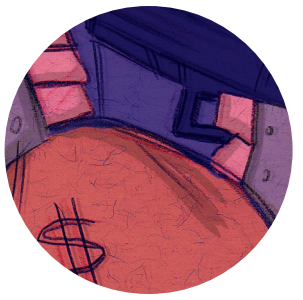

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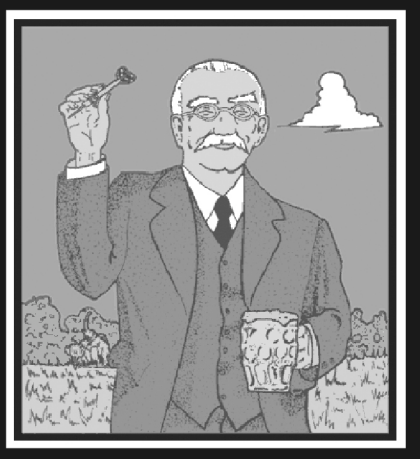
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THURS. 12TH
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EVERY ONE OF US HAS A FRIEND that is consumed with dire predictions for 2012. Some say the 'end of the world' is coming while others claim a cataclysmic event that will drastically reduce the earth's population. Most proponents of these ideas loosely reference Mayan prophecies without giving them ample investigation. First and foremost, the Mayan calendar is a circle. It is not linear. Hence there is no end and no beginning much like the concept of time. 2012 merely marks a period of renewal rather than obliteration. Secondly, relying on Mayan prophecy carries with it some baggage. For one, the return of Quetzalcoatl is a primary part of such a prophecy. This is one of those components of the 2012 prophecy that your quasi-mystic stoner buddy does not reference. Where does this fit in and why is it not popularized? Is the return of Quetzalcoatl not quite as cool as asteroids crashing into downtown Houston? And for all you folks who claim a galactic alignment is coming or that Nibiru is going to crash into Earth better reference the volumes of research on this topic by NASA scientists. The planetary alignment scheduled for 2012 happens every winter solstice and the original date for Nibiru crashing into Earth was 2003. But that does not mean we are not headed for scary shit. The world is in a spooky place but I am more afraid of man-made cataclysm like war, famine, and environmental destruction way more than a planet crashing into earth. And even if the world is ironclad scheduled for destruction on December 21st, 2012, I am still going to do my laundry and brush my teeth. Because even if that shit is coming you still have to live like it ain't. Is dying in a massive doomsday catastrophe any more tragic than being a young woman who dies of breast cancer OR an elderly man who has a heart attack en route to his Grandson's tee-ball game OR being collateral damage in a bombing? NO. CLEARLY NOT. So don't be afraid. Not because shit ain't scary but because you can't do anything about it. Let go, ponder the impermanence of everything, and realize all you can do is enjoy things now. Like me, I am about to have some blueberry oatmeal. At no time will I stop chewing to freak out about the crack in the space-time continuum that is about to create a black hole and vaporize every particle in my body .

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This Month in Art-Killing Nonsense

BY BUFFALO SEAN

MARRYING A TREE isn't a new story. The Art Guys, Jack Massing and Michael Galbreth, did it back in June 2009 in the Museum of Fine Arts' sculpture garden. The piece garnered mass disdain- for one thing it wasn't art and for another it cast a foul light on the controversy surrounding the issue of gay marriage. The pomp and circumstance of the ceremony seemed like so much gilding the lily (or covering a pile of shit in glitter) to critical and aesthetic observers that the tree dying in the CAMH's art gallery over the next month as a part of "No Zoning" went largely unnoticed. Luckily the tree was given a reprieve from its darkened existence when the exhibit ended and the tiny Live Oak was moved to outside Galbreth's home in Acres Homes for the next year and a half. The back-and-forth between artists and critics subsided and "No Zoning" was dubbed one of the best exhibits of the year based on other, stronger works in the show.

One of the toughest critics of "The Art Guys Marry a Plant" was Houston Chronicle art and society writer Douglas Britt, who took a strong line against the work's implied attack on gay marriage. Whether the Art Guys were reinforcing the slippery slope argument of conservatives that allowing gay marriage will lead to plural marriage, marrying humans and animals, et al or Galbreth and Massing were critiquing the denial of rights to gay couples with an absurd extension of their argument went unestablished. Galbreth and Massing went back to producing uncontroversial, self-referentially banal works for airports and public spaces and Britt went back to reviewing exhibitions and society ladies' soirees. Everything was hunky dory until the tree came out of hiding in November this year. Then shit just exploded.

The Menil Collection decided to buy the piece, planting the tree in their park and holding a ceremony with the artists. The background action was that Toby Kamps, the curator of "No Zoning", and the Zilkhas, collectors of Art Guys works, facilitated the purchase by the Menil- Kamps' new employer and a receiver of the Zilkhas' benefaction. Collectors gifting works to museums happens all the time. It increases the value of works by the same artists in the collectors' private holdings. They aren't usually new works, though. This validation of "the Art Guys Marry a Plant" set something off in Britt- he mounted a psychological cliff prepared for a steep descent.

First, Britt mounted a vocal protest across the street during the sculpture's dedication. Then he wrote an article for the Chron denouncing the artwork, which had all mention of the Zilkhas censored by the editor. Britt begged every woman he knew to marry him, as a conceptual artwork. While they all turned him down, he met Reese Darby on Twitter and married her in a gay bar. He posted videos about how someone could easily damage the little tree in the Menil's park that was suddenly a big deal. Britt changed his name to Devon Britt-Darby. He outed himself as a male escort, took a leave and/or was fired from the Houston Chronicle, started the blog Reliable Narratives to chronicle a trip to Miami comparing his years as a meth addict to now, and posted dozens of pictures and videos of himself in various states of undress. During the time he was out of town someone snapped "The Art Guys Marry a Plant" in half, provoking uproar from Britt and everyone else except the Art Guys. The morning of the 'attack' on the artwork a police report was filed after an altercation between Massing, Galbreth and gallerist Hiram Butler in front of his gallery. Huffington Post reports "They [The Art Guys] called him [Butler] "a coward and an evil fuck" and accused him of being "an unhappy homosexual."" Rumors are that the tree smasher could have been a sympathizer with Britt-Darby, the Art Guys, a friend of Butler or just bored teenagers. Both the art critic and the artists have been accused of mass hypocrisy and both responded with harsh vitriol. Britt-Darby is still out of town, posting pics of his abs on his blog and railing against the Art Guys. The tree has been saved for the moment, even if it is a stub of its former self.

After all this mess, the most important result is that the Chronicle has no art critic and will not get a new one for the foreseeable future. Britt and the Art Guys have equaled each other in navel-gazing, demonstrating their inability to explain themselves clearly or to make art or art criticism accessible. They have alienated many people with their callous actions and set the Houston artworld further back from recognizing conceptual artwork as valid for years to come. Accusations of homophobia, witch hunting and professional incompetence are seeping out of the controversy which will inevitably leave a stain on Houston's already soiled reputation. In the end, both Britt and the Art Guys are living out their own version of "art as life" by extending the metaphors made well-worn by Joseph Beuys and Bruce Nauman and abandoning the idea of "art for art's sake." There is no beauty to be found in the Art Guys' works or Britt's social sculpture web videos, only the pain of destroying art in a misguided run towards celebrity. As an anonymous commenter on Robert Boyd's art blog "The Great God Pan is Dead" remarks; "I recommended some time ago that someone should buy Britt a shirt and stuff it in his mouth." I'd say he should buy three.

p.s. - "The Great God Pan is Dead" is deftly reviewing the best and worst Houston exhibits of 2011, check it out. Boyd is the only art critic left in Houston. **FPH**

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On Friday evening, January 20, join us for "Corporate Personhood vs. Your Personhood: Who Has More Rights?" This panel discussion commemorates the 2nd anniversary of Citizens United v. FEC, the latest in over a century of Supreme Court decisions establishing the doctrines that corporations are people and money is speech. Panelists include politician Chris Bell, lifelong activist Arthur Shaw, and legal scholar Leslie Griffin. Location and exact time TBD.

For more information, visit our website http://occupyhouston.org/ http://occupyhouston.org

I CAN'T DANCE to save my life. Out on the dance floor, I'm the awkward guy moving around like Frankenstein's monster. Hell, I make Elaine look like Michael Jackson. So I am always fascinated to watch other people who have the body control, rhythm, and grace that great dancers are gifted with. And I don't mean the ones named Cherry, Candi, or C Monet who know their way around the champagne room, not that I would know about anything like that, of course. Anyway, back in August, DiverseWorks announced that Seattle-based choreographer, Zoe Scofield (one half of Zoe|Juniper), had been awarded a Princess Grace Choreography Fellowship for the upcoming installation and performance at DiverseWorks, *A Crack in Everything*.

Zoe|Juniper

BY MICHAEL PENNYWARK

Based on the Greek tragedy, *The Osteria*, *A Crack in Everything* promises to explore the emotional spectrum of justice and retaliation in an immersive experience that combines dance, video, photography, and installation. As with previous projects, Scofield and visual artist, Juniper Shuey (the other half of Zoe|Juniper), have collaborated together with musicians and local dancers to produce an experience that redefines the relationship between audience and performance.

I caught up with Zoe at a rehearsal with some of the local dancers involved in the project, in the hopes of learning more about the installation. On entering the studio I observed a half-dozen dancers contorting through the space to a strangely eerie music that only added to the disconnected feeling I was already experiencing watching them. I wondered if this was part of the performance, and after the rehearsal wrapped up I asked Scofield what the audience could expect. As she explained, "Even the idea of audience is being reframed with this piece. A Crack in Everything is these different discrete modalities. There is a stage performance, which is on a proscenium stage setting; then there is a video installation which has the components of a normal installation, so it runs [during] gallery hours; inside of that is a performance that is made expressly for the video installation; and then there is a series of photos in a published photography book."

According to Scofield, "with the installation at DiverseWorks and then the performance inside of it, we are actively almost deconstructing our approach to performance and what we make." From what I understand the experience will be twofold. As Scofield puts it, "the audience can either come and see that performance or they can see the after effects or the artifacts, if you will, of the performance inside of the video installation." In a way, Scofield and Shuey have created "a dance performance with the sensibilities of an installation and an installation with the sensibilities of a dance performance." **FPH**



The installation and performances will be in the Main Gallery of DiverseWorks with exclusive Zoe|Juniper performances at 7:30pm opening night, January 19, through January 21.

Local performances featuring Kristen Frankiewicz, Catalina Molnari, Kara Newton, Tina Shariffskul, and Kelly Todd are on Saturday, January 28, February 4, 11, 18, and 25 at 1pm.

Opening reception (always my favorite time) will be from 6-9pm Thursday, January 19.

The installation is on view during regular gallery hours, Tuesday-Saturday, Noon-6pm through February 25 and is free and open to the public.

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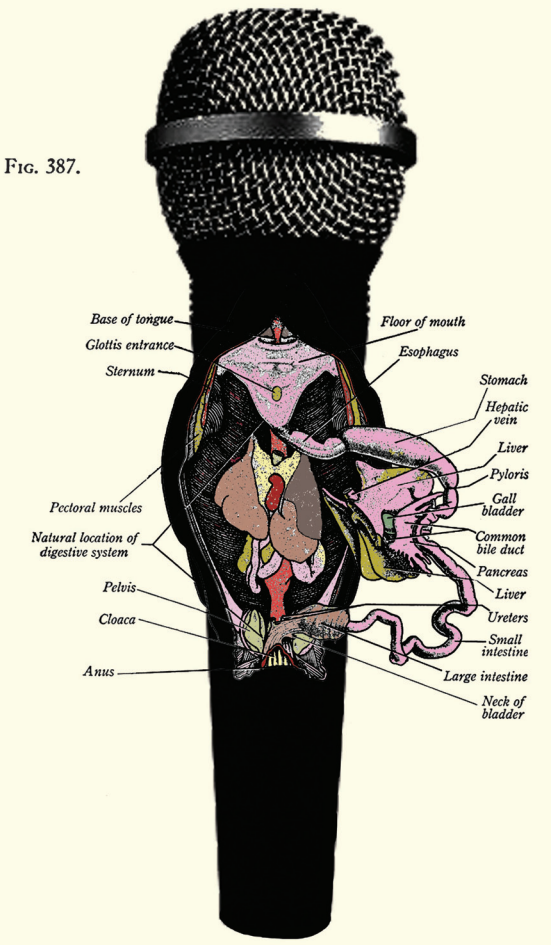
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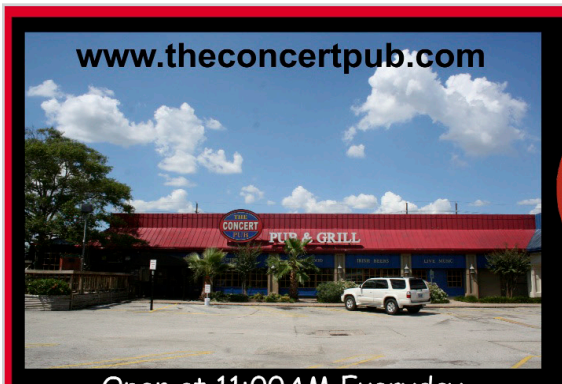
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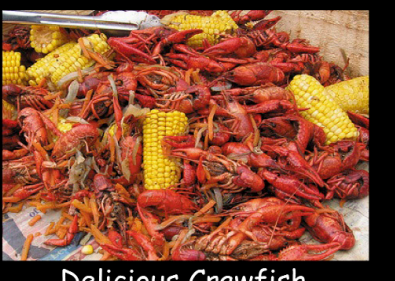
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Topper

BY MICHAEL BERGERON

LOOKING AT THE FILMS that came in 2011 a top ten list just seems to only capture half of the films that would be in the top ten percent of films released domestically. Do the math. There are about 275 to 300 film that play in theaters in any given year so to say that 25 or 30 films are absolutely essential captures some kind of curve that expresses a knowledgeable and yet committed examination of films in an annual cycle of no moons.

Before we get to my faves, let's look at individual categories. Scores ranged from the subliminal sounds of The Chemical Brothers in Hanna, to the orchestrated strains from composers like Hans Zimmer (Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows) or Alexandre Desplat whose signature is on everything from A Better Life to the last Harry Potter film to Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close. Don't forget to listen to Ludovic Bource's music for The Artist and Henry Escott's minimalist score for Shame.

Surely this is also one of the best years ever for docs and films from other countries (see below). That leads us to the depth and space of design and cinematography in films like Hugo (Robert Richardson cinematographer and the best use of 3D since Avatar) and Emmanuel Lubezki's detailed sharpness in The Tree of Life. Janusz Kaminski lights War Horse with bright studio style lighting even though the action takes place in the trenches of WWI.

Animated films are a light diversion and Happy Feet Two led the way with motion and song, followed closely by the action packed mocap of The Adventures of Tintin, and the surreal adult skewing Rango.

Screenplay highlights include Woody Allen's Midnight in Paris, Alexander Payne (and Nat Foxon and Jim Rash) for The Descendants. Supporting thespian turns include Nick Nolte in Warrior, and Albert Brooks in Drive, with a salute to Jessica Chastain in several movies (made over a period of years) including The Help, The Tree of Life, The Debt, Texas Killing Fields, Coriolanus and Take Shelter, and Janet McTeer's amazing performance in Albert Nobbs. Leading performance wise I'm leaning towards Brad Pitt in Moneyball, Michael Shannon in Take Shelter and Michael Fassbender in Shame. Distaff honors will surely be bestowed on Viola Davis (The Help), Tilda Swinton (We Need To Talk About Kevin), and Elizabeth Olsen (Martha Marcy May Marlene) and Glenn Close (Albert Nobbs).

Here are my top films of the year:

Midnight in Paris
Drive
Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy
The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo
Our Idiot Brother
The Trip
The Tree of Life
Hanna
A Better Life
Shame

That's ten films, but you have to also give accolades for various reasons to the following couple of dozen films: Win Win, War Horse, Warrior, Melancholia, The Artist, Limitless, Meek's Cutoff, The Descendants, Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close, Moneyball, Submarine, Bellflower, Margin Call, Daydream Nation, Viva Riva!, Crazy Stupid Love, The Guard, A Dangerous Method, Carnage, Another Earth, Young Adult, The Debt.

Plus there's several other films that hold interest – One Day, Sarah's Key, The Help, Higher Ground, J. Edgar, Killer Elite, Super, Rubber – if only for a little while. Throw in Human Centipede II (Full Sequence) and you've completed a crash course of cinema in 2011.

Margaret

Margaret may be the best film of 2011 that nobody has seen. This film, written and directed by Kenneth Lonergan (You Can Count On Me) has a checkered history, and while not the scope of this article, an entire book could one day be written on the behind the scenes story from the film being shot nearly six years ago to its 2008 copyright date to its practically invisible release a couple of months ago.

Two of Margaret's producers are dead (Sydney Pollack and executive producer Anthony Minghella). Another producer, Scott Rudin, has two other high profile films opening this month (The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo, Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close). Lonergan's last name suggests his state in the whole affair; he is the "loner man."

In Margaret nobody actually answers to that name, rather the title is taken from poet Gerard Manley Hopkins' 1880 composition Spring and Fall. The poem describes how a young woman cannot truly understand death the way an adult does because she's still developing emotionally. When we meet Lisa Cohen (Anna Paquin) she's the happy, carefree kind of spoiled daughter of a divorced Broadway actress. Lisa inadvertently distracts a bus driver; she wants to know where he got his cowboy hat and waves towards his head causing him to loose concentration. The bus runs a red light hitting a pedestrian (Allison Janney). The ensuing scene is very bloody but Lonergan keeps the camera in a tight close-up on businessmen trying to tie a tourniquet and Paquin holding Janney's hand as she dies.

Then Lisa tells the police the light was green, a decision that weaves a trail of lies, recantations and confrontations, each one more wrought with regret. You know Lisa keeps making bad choices, like the way she loses her virginity to the cool dude at school (who's a creep) and not the nice dude (who's a spud). Lisa finds out the bus driver's name (Mark Ruffalo, also in You Can Count On Me) and goes to his house, a visit that ends in a shouting match. Lisa seduces one of her teachers (Matt Damon) and gets caught by another (Matthew Broderick) when she's smoking a doobie in Central Park. There are bonding moments between Lisa's mother (J. Smith-Cameron) and the woman who was the pedestrian's best friend (Jeannie Berlin), but there are also loud arguments marked by acrimony. There's also a tremendously well-played scene that takes place at Lincoln Center during an opera (Tales of Hoffman). A large cast also includes Jean Reno, Olivia Thirlby, and Kieran Culkin

Throughout all of this drama Lonergan keeps us interested in Lisa despite her dull choices. We feel at any moment she might actually make a right decision. Lonergan also makes New York City a character through its atmosphere, not unlike the way Sidney Lumet portrayed New York in his procedural films (Dog Day Afternoon, Serpico). Yes Margaret is a film like other films and yet it's so in a class of its own that you can't put it on a top ten list (some have) because of the unique journey it provides and because there's no film like it. **FPH**



Top Foreign Films

A Separation
Point Blank
I Saw the Devil
13 Assassins
Certified Copy
The Double Hour
Elite Squad 2
In A Better World
The Skin I Live In
Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives

Top Documentary Films

Project Nim
Cave of Forgotten Dreams
Phil Ochs: There But For Fortune
Tabloid
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KARAOKE
Happy Hour Prices From Open To Close

MONDAYS
Monday Madness!
Industry Nite!
Cheap Drinks
Cheap Bears

TUESDAYS
STEAK NITE! and Smitchers!
TX Hold'Em Poker

WEDNESDAYS
TX Hold'Em Poker Tournament
Ladies Night!

THURSDAYS
TX Hold'Em Poker Tournament
Drink Specials!

FRIDAYS
Live Bands Inside!
Live DJ Outside On The Patio

SATURDAYS
Live Bands Inside!
Live DJ Outside On The Patio

Thursday, December 19
BIKE NIGHT
hosted by Outlaw Dave and Thunder Roads Magazine
Music by Kat James and Troublemaker

JANUARY EVENTS

FRIDAYS
Jan. 6 - Concert Pub Showcase featuring Vessel, Black Kennedy Project Dopeamine, Shadow Code, Downfall 2012
Jan. 13 - Concert Pub Showcase featuring Black 13, Series Six, Powderburn, Bayou City Outlaw Band
Jan. 20 - The Red Hot Chili Peckers (Red Hot Chili Peppers Tribute) with The Foo Fakers *(Foo Fighters Tribute)* and The Sound Of Madness *(Shinedown Tribute)*
Jan. 27 - Band TBA

SATURDAYS
Jan. 7 - Underwood with The Dogz
Jan. 14 - The Fab Five *(Beatles and 60s Tribute)*
Jan. 21 - De La Garza / Andy Vargas Presents A Tribute to Santana *featuring David De La Garza from La Mafia & Andy Vargas from Santana*
Jan. 28 - Metal Maiden *(Iron Maiden Tribute)* with Rock Till You Drop *(Def Leppard Tribute)*

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An open letter to the Houston Music Community

BY OMAR AFRA

Haters are a sign of positive growth

TO BE CLEAR, I like to 'cheerlead' for Houston's music community not just because it is some kind of self-fulfilling prophecy to say 'shit is good'. No I do so because 'shit is objectively good'. What constitutes 'good' is a measure of many things. But most importantly a connective spirit between disparate music scenes is primary. A collective growth and connectivity equals younger kids who come to see shows aspiring to something greater. Every component of this alleged music community is important. Even the haters;. People who talk shit and denigrate people's hard work are actually key to our forward progress. You see, the hater is actually a litmus test for whether people are making clutch maneuvers or not. And let me tell you, there is a lot of hate. Nobody talks down on people who are not making any waves. It is the moment you put yourself in the light of day that anyone has something to say about you. Some of Houston's best musical acts are constantly receiving hate: B L A C K I E, Robert Ellis, Black Congress, Buxton, Balaclavas, Fat Tony, etc. Who wants to be the band that elicits no response? And for every person who has some trash to talk about you, there is one that praises you. Good thing is now Houston is getting hate from outside its borders. Sheesh I find trash talk about Houston acts on New York blogs, Texas Monthly, and so on and so forth. So my message to bands that are disenchanted by the bad things people have to say about them: embrace the haters. They are a good omen and a reminder to keep on keepin' on. FPH



HATERS GONNA HATE

5 Things to be VERY happy about in 2012:

Walter's reopening

Heights Vinyl

Local labels like Dull Knife

The formation of a constituency of music lovers since passing of Sound Ordinance revisions

Rock poster art Godfather Jermaine Rogers has made Houston his '2nd home', again, traveling back and forth between NYC.







THE CONCERT PUB - Galleria

The Ultimate Bar & Grill

SUNDAYS
LIVE MUSIC WITH ROCK RADIO
Happy Hour All Day & All Night!

MONDAYS
Monday Madness!
Industry Nite!
Cheap Drinks
Cheap Bears

TUESDAYS
Steak Night and Smitchers!
Free Texas Hold'em

WEDNESDAYS
Ladies Night
$2 Specials All Day and All Night!

THURSDAYS
BIG ASS BEER NIGHT!
"DJ'S"

FRIDAYS
Live Bands Inside!
Live DJ Outside On The Patio

SATURDAYS
Live Bands Inside!
LIVE DJ Outside On The Patio

JANUARY EVENTS



January 19
Vargas/De La Garza
Presents A Tribute to Santana
featuring
David De La Garza from La Mafia & Andy Vargas from Santana

FRIDAYS
Jan. 6 - Voodoo Dolls
"Rock and Roll"
Jan. 13 - Highway To Hell
(AC/DC Tribute)
with
Special Guest
To Be Announced
Jan. 20 - Eightyplus
(Awesome Rock Band)
Jan. 27 - The ONS
(A Concert Pub Favorite)
Feb. 3 - Infinity's Twin

SATURDAYS
Jan. 7 - Santana Tribute
(Performed by La Raza Connection)
Jan. 14 - Spare Heart
(Heart Tribute)
with
Double Vision
(Foreigner Tribute)
Jan. 21 - Echoes
(The Ultimate Pink Floyd Tribute)
Jan. 28 - The Spicolis
Feb. 4 - MTA
(Metallica Tribute)

January 14
Spare Heart
(Heart Tribute)
with
Double Vision
(Foreigner Tribute)

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Interview: Featherface

INTERVIEW AND PICTURES: RAMON LP4

IT'S BEEN TWO YEARS since Featherface dropped their second EP, It Comes Electric, on an unsuspecting public. It may not have been the biggest release to have come out that year but those six tracks and the band behind it have been slowly gaining an audience of fans and admirers ever since. Listen to it and you can see why. It's an EP that bursts with youthful energy, a lush and varied sound, smart arrangements, and some damn catchy songs. But two years is a hella long time to wait for a follow up for impatient bastards like us, so we caught up with Kenny Hopkins (guitar, vocals, keyboards), Jake Harris (bass), Travis Peck (drums), and Steven Wells (keyboards, vocals, guitar) to see how the new album was coming along as well as to find out how a band from Friendswood, TX can kick so much ass.

HOW'D YOU GUYS MEET?
Kenny – We met in junior high. We were friends and music was just this thing we did. We played classic Rock covers for a while then this band started about two years ago when the three of us got together (without Travis) and recorded that first EP. Then we started playing shows and now we're taking it way too seriously. (Laughs)

YOU GUYS ARE PRETTY DIY. HOW HAVE YOU GUYS APPROACHED WRITING AND RECORDING?
Kenny - We use an 8-channel firewire interface - PreSonus FireStudio - to record. The first EP we did in Jakes' dad's house and the second one we did at Morning Star Storage unit that was just a storage facility - a 10 X 16 metal room. We ran an extension chord into the hallway where we set up my computer and we just miked and messed with things until it sounded good.

We try to keep what we do organic. Everyone writes - we'll come up with a good idea and bounce it around until we get it as polished as we can before we start recording it. By the end of December or the beginning of January, we'll be recording the album. Since we're recording everything ourselves, we've been writing as we record. We record our ideas and record over them until we're happy with our parts then, when were done, we'll go back and re-record everything. Since this time it's a full length, it's felt pretty daunting.
Jake – It's almost terrifying…

WHY SO?
Kenny – Because now we almost feel like there are some expectations. The last two things we put out, nobody knew who we were so we could do whatever we wanted. We're still doing what we want but now there's people paying attention and expecting something so now we kind of have to take this really seriously but, at the same time, we're not stressing about it; we're still having fun with it.

IS THE NEW ALBUM GOING TO BE DIFFERENT THAN THE PRIOR EPS?
Steve – I would say that it's more driving, expansive, and a little more psychedelic.
Kenny – I'm gonna go with saying it's even a little funky.
Jake – We're all big fans of funk and soul bands as well as bands like Mahavishnu [Orchestra] and King Crimson. There is a lot of music we like and we want to draw from all that but, at the same time, we don't want to rip anything off.
Steve – We just naturally developed our own little sound.
Kenny – Yeah, I think that's what I meant by our writing being organic. We're just trying to write without having something in mind and the way it's been turning out is a little more funky and soulful which is kind of interesting.
Jake – On the last album I was trying to be all over the place. This time I'm trying to kick a lot of Acid Base. We've always listened to [funk and soul] and we've become more comfortable with our instruments so those kind of strong grooves and melodies just come out.
Kenny - But I wouldn't want anyone to expect some solar Funkadelic thing with the next album. We're not writing funk songs; we just write what we want and we want it to be different than anyone else. We don't want anyone to put their finger on it and say "Oh, it sounds like this." Funk and soul is just one element of it.
Jake - We focus a lot on melody and we like to keep things concise and moving. From something like Progrock, we'll take how it flows – how a song constantly evolves - but we keep a really punchy, catchy chorus.
Steve – We've always been really focused on melody, and we really try to keep the songs fluid, but catchy.

HOW'S THE ROCK SCENE IN FRIENDSWOOD?
Kenny – Oh, there isn't one. (Laughs) So it's been really hard for us to become part of the Houston scene because we didn't know anyone in Houston. We went to shows but we weren't regulars at venues. There's definitely no culture in Friendswood as far as an arts scene goes so we have to come to Houston for that kind of thing.

WHAT DO YOU ADMIRE MOST IN BANDS?
Kenny – I like when a band tries things that could fail or go over really well. I like when a band tries to separate themselves from other bands even if it's not the trendy or popular thing to do.

HOW DO Y'ALL APPROACH LIVE SHOWS?
Steve – People want to see that you're passionate about what you're doing. I want to see bands freaking the fuck out. If people see us having a good time, hopefully they will too.
Kenny – [Playing live] is the most fun thing in the world for us and the fact that anyone is paying attention is awesome. Like when we played that Winter Social and decided to throw together an after party at House of Creeps. I didn't think anyone was going to go but we're friends with New York City Queens and they had friends and I guess word got around and then it turned out awesome. That was really fun. These are my best friends anyway so it's no different than us hanging out.

ARE THERE ANY TIMES WHERE THINGS CAN BE TRYING?
Travis – When we played Baton Rouge. We had driven up from New Orleans at 5 in the morning, we hadn't had any sleep, and it was really hot and humid. We ended up sleeping on the benches outside of LSU's library but none of us were complaining - we were all having a great time and we'd do it again.

WHERE DO YOU SEE FEATHERFACE GOING?
Kenny – (laughing) …as far as our mini-van will take us. We're getting to the point where we know this is what we want to do and if we can get to where we do this as a living, it would be mind-blowing. That may be a long-shot but we might as well go for it because nothing else seems as exciting to us. FPH

SUPER HAPPY FUN LAND

UPCOMING SHOWS

JAN 1ST:
Hangover Party
Zach Wheat

JAN 2ND:
Trio: Lucio Menegon + Eloe Omoe
Duo: Sandy Ewen Damon SMith
Solo: Joey Molinaro

JAN 7TH:
The Blackhands

JAN 13TH:
Visual Vitriol 2012 Kickoff
Molotove Latte
Mydolls
Jealous Creatures
Bisquit Bombs
Currie
The Busy Kids
Vivian Pikkles

JAN 14TH:
Visual Vitriol 2012 Kickoff
Revolt 45 (Austin)
The Drafted
Bisquit Bombs
Zipperneck
Here Holy Spain
No Love Less
Say Revenge!

JAN 15TH:
Sioux City Pete and the Beggars

JAN 19TH:
Jane Jane Pollock

JAN 20TH:
Dogfood

JAN 21ST:
Cyclea
LIMB
brightbluebeetle
Josiah Gabriel
Carlos Pozo
Chris Becker
Pulse Rifle

JAN 25TH:
The Prescription
Glominus Doon

JAN 29TH:
Point Reyes

JAN 31ST:
El Valiente

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UPCOMING LIVE MUSIC

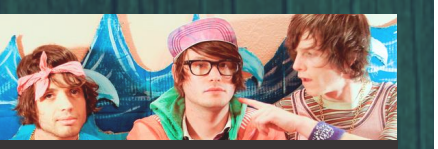
EVERY TUESDAY — FREE ALL AGES
OPEN JUKEBOX

EVERY WEDNESDAY — FREE ALL AGES
OPEN MIC NIGHT


JAN. 06 ELVIS NIGHTS WITH CRAIG KINSEY + SOUTHERN BACKTONES


JAN. 12 NEIL HAMBURGER WITH MAJOR ENTERTAINER MIKE H

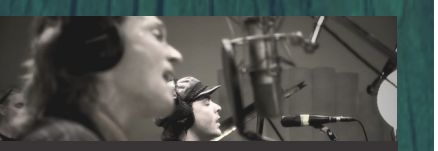

JAN. 15 CASS MCCOMBS WITH FRANK FAIRFIELD


JAN. 15 STARFUCKER WITH PAINTED PALMS • ALEXICO


JAN. 16 LADYSMITH BLACK MAMBAZO FOR MORE INFO VISIT WWW.FITZLIVEMUSIC.COM


JAN. 18 LANGHORNE SLIM WITH RAYLAND BAXTER


JAN. 20 THE MOUNTAIN GOATS WITH NURSES


JAN. 21 BURNED OUT WITH CHASE HAMBLIN


JAN. 24 GRAVEYARD WITH RADIO MOSCOW


JAN. 26 THE FEATURES WITH TBA


JAN. 27 SCALE THE SUMMIT TOUR KICK-OFF


JAN. 28 TWIN SISTER WITH AVA LUNA

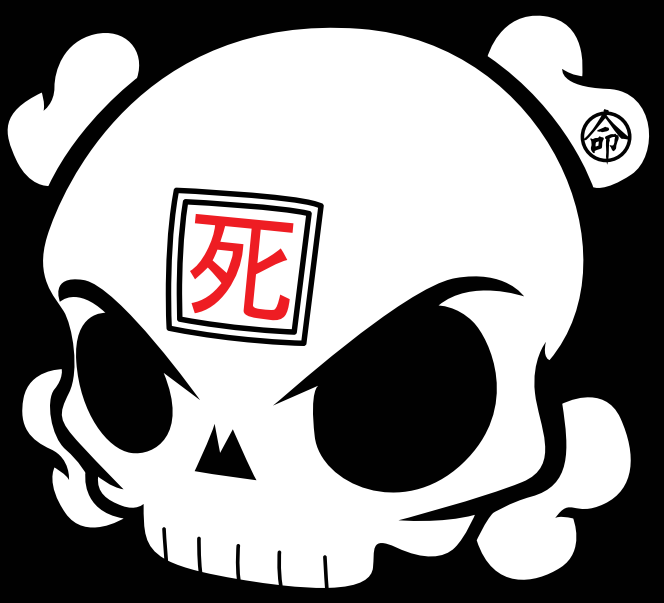
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worst of HOUSTON

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DEVIN FINCH

twenty/eleven

They say sunlight is the best antiseptic. They also say a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. Why those are relevant, I don't know. But we are proud to offer up our annual Worst of Houston list this year in our continuing efforts to make Houston a better place by exposing some of it's worst components. We can't vouch for factual accuracy, positive motivation, or anything else for that matter but we hope you use this list for the greater good. Feel free to let us know how you feel about these but do so ever so gently because we are only good at giving criticism and not receiving it. *editors@freepresshouston.com*

Worst Holiday Traffic Jam: Anything close to the Galleria, Rice Village, Highland Village, Heights, or Montrose

Yeah yeah Houston traffic is terrible, blah blah blah. Nothing original here, though I am still somehow amazed by the transformation that takes place every single year on our city's streets during the weeks before Christmas. It's like living in New Delhi; only replace rickshaws with cars driven by fat moms from the suburbs. Houston's holiday traffic has officially supplanted my grandparents' soft toilet seat as the thing on earth I find most disgusting. Who the fuck are you people? My work commute has gotten so bad I'm now listing Planned Parenthood as the sole beneficiary in my Last Will & Testament.

Side observation- I wonder if up north an actual reindeer has ever been caught humping a car with those fake little reindeer horns. *-Steve Thompson Jr.*

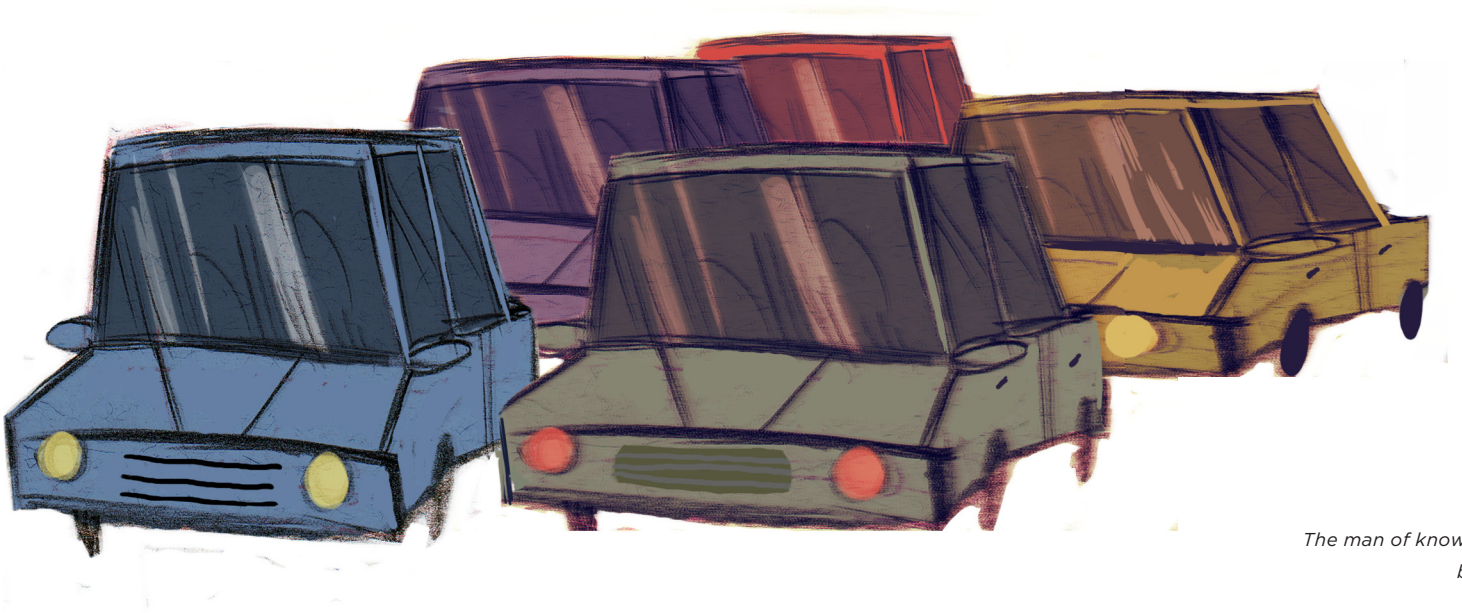
Worst Online Magazine: CultureMap

Judging by the content of its website and Twitterfeed, CultureMap wants to transform the city of Houston into the snobby whore of Dallas. Someone should check to make sure CultureMap isn't on the Houstonian's payroll because the only way a country club locker room robbery gets "breaking news" status is if the country club is paying for it. Also, when did Facebook status updates become the cornerstone to journalistic research? CultureMap, with all of its River Oaks money, could be force for good in this city but instead it's a force for wealthy landowners. Shame on you Top2%Map.com. Shame on you. *-Mills-McCoin*

Worst City Planning Action of the Year: More Parking Spaces for No Good Reason

Whether Houston just wants to remain an oversized suburb, the Planning Commission has been huffing nitrous or City Council is letting big corporations like Target and Pappas write their laws, the new off-street parking requirements proposed this year are detrimental to this city's growth, entrepreneurship, and community cohesion. Increasing minimum parking standards will negatively impact the use of mass transit and urban density, exacerbate drainage problems and possibly increase DUI-related deaths.

Parking ratios are based on pseudo-science handed down from one community to another without any consideration for market-based solutions. The Greater Houston Restaurant Association (GHRA), which represents large restaurants and chains, supports the new requirements, while independent restaurant owners have formed their own group, Organized Koalition on Restaurant Affairs (OKRA) to combat the new regulations. Help support an urbanized Houston by showing up to random City Council meetings and shouting or emailing them repeatedly at houstontx.gov/council. *-Sean Carroll*



The man of knowledge must be able not only to love his enemies but also to hate his friends. ***-Friedrich Nietzsche***

Worst Texas politician: Rick Perry
This isn't even a contest. In August Perry was the rising star of the GOP, his much ballyhooed prayer rally at Reliant Stadium attracted so many conservatives and media types that it felt like a Republican convention. Oh, to go back to the heady days of late summer when Perry was seen as the great white hope, a dyed in the wool conservative who could unite the base and the establishment. Ah, to remember when the GOP primary was seen as a race solely between Perry and Romney. Now flash forward just four months and no one seriously thinks Perry has a chance of winning any state besides Texas. The only thing that Perry's continued collapse does is show exactly why he was smart not to debate Bill White in 2010; White would have eaten him alive. And now to make matters worse, word has come out that since Perry took early "retirement" he's pulling down $200,000 a year. Apparently he gets to keep his governor's salary and gets his pension while campaigning. And to make matters worse we're stuck with him for at least another three years. Thanks Rick. -*Alex Wukman*



Worst ignoring of Houston's music community: Revisions to Houston's Sound ordinance
So the Mayor and City Council got together and formed a committee to explore revising the already ambiguous and inefficient Sound Ordinance. City officials, restaurant and resident associations, and other were invited to participate in the dialogue. Yet City officials failed to invite one musician, music venue operator, or anyone even closely related to the music community. So what we got was an ordinance that ignores the science of sound, the concerns of the music community, and common logic. -*Omar Afra*

Worst publicity for a great program: Gold Card
It is actually surprising how many people eligible for Harris County's indigent care program have no idea that it exists or that they are eligible. For those unfamiliar Harris County actually has a single payer health insurance plan for people with little to no income that takes care of things like emergency room visits and going to the doctor. It's easy and free to apply and because the County doesn't plaster the program on billboards all across town few people know about it. All the information and application forms are a simple Google search away. -*Alex Wukman*



Worst tweet: One down, 40 Million to go
When Bin Laden was allegedly killed, we tweeted 'One down, 40 million to go.' Though we thought it was hilarious and were trying to shed light on the fact that US foreign policy was killing Arab men daily, folks did not quite seem to catch the sarcasm. They also did not know we are A-rab owned and operated. We caused quite the kerfuffle. -*Omar Afra*

Worst Use of Facebook: Bragging About Your Bank Robbery
Yeah, we've prolly all done dumb stuff on Facebook—it's kind of made for that. I know I have—we've had to dedicate whole FPH podcasts to address the stupid shit I've posted. But when a teller at a bank that had recently been robbed and her boyfriend/accomplice started bragging about being rich and wiping their teeth with hundreds, they brought down themselves and two other accomplices—including another teller at the same bank. -*Harbeer Sandhu*



Worst Food Void: Sandwiches
If it were as easy to get a good turkey and Swiss on rye as it is to grab a torta or a cheeseburger, I wouldn't be writing this "Worst Of." I don't want to pay $8 for it, I don't want to buy it from a chain. I don't need fancy bread or twelve different meats. I just want it made fresh and close to home. I'm lazy. Quit making me do all the work. -*Andrea Afra*

Worst Economic Development in Houston: Annise Parker's Attack on Small Businesses
Back in 2008, I viewed my opportunity to vote for Annise Parker in the Mayoral Election as a godsend. To me, voting for Annise Parker meant I was voting progressively. Now, I must admit that the fact that Annise Parker is gay played a huge role in my decision. Was that a narrow-minded view of her sexual orientation— probably; and you can bet I'll never make the same mistake again. In her first term as mayor, Annise Parker brought the hammer of Thor down on small businesses with the fury of the entire GOP. She introduced a sound ordinance that serves mostly as fiendish money grab and

empowered police officers beyond their stated responsibility. She introduced a parking ordinance that encourages drunk driving and forces bars & restaurants to increase parking spots while alleviating the same burden on strip centers. Clearly, her mission as mayor is to send Houston back a decade in time. -*Mills-McCoin*

Worst Payola: HEB for David Robinson
President of HEB Scott McClelland is listed as one of the campaign contributors to former candidate for city council David Robinson. Mr. Robinson happens to be the president of the super-neighborhood Neartown Association, which encompasses most of the neighborhoods in Montrose, including Lancaster Place, whose residents were appalled at his blatant advocacy for the new HEB despite his fellow neighbors' protests. Robinson lost his run for the at large position, which is a win for Montrosians with a penchant for restoration, not gentrification. -*Andrea Afra*



Worst Outfit For a Bank Robber: Rub-a-Dub Robber
The lack of style and pride in their appearance displayed by many Houstonians is well known. You know what I'm talking about, and if you don't, go to any Super Walmart after 10 pm, or any time of day for that matter, and count the number of people in sweatpants, house shoes, and spaghetti-stained puffy paint unicorn t-shirts. Go ahead, I dare you. So it's no surprise, I suppose, that on October 27, a woman walked into Lonestar Bank wearing a purple shower cap and pajamas, brandishing a gun, and robbed the bank. Our bank robbers don't even have any style. Think back now to the time of Pretty Boy Floyd, and Bonnie and Clyde. The latter couple was so frickin' stylish that a flippin' Frenchman—a man held up as a paragon of style by even snooty French standards, Serge Gainsbourg—immortalized them in a song. -*Harbeer Sandhu*

Worst Beer & Wine Selection: Montrose HEB
As HEB waits for the beer and wine license for their new Montrose location, held up because of their proximity to the St. Stephens Episcopal Church and School, they have made good use of the shelf space they'd allotted for fun juice by filling it with their overstock of douche bags. Douche sales have been so brisk that they are considering making the change permanent, and are considering serving douche bags, exclusively, at their still unused in-store bar. For those who want the real stuff—check the cough syrup aisle...or walk across the street to the neighborhood Fiesta. -*Harbeer Sandhu*

Worst Austin chain to come to Houston: Torchy's Tacos
Torchy's serves 'anglo' style tacos that are composed of way too many cutesy ingredients, have silly names like 'The Dirty Sanchez', and cost upwards of 4 bux a piece. Hipsters with tattoo sleeves peddle vogue tacos with mango compotes, fried avocado, and jerk chicken. All I need is a great tortilla, good cuts of meat, fresh cilantro, and a killer salsa verde. Torchy's piles so many trendy foodie relishes on their tacos I can't tell what I am eating. A tip for Torchy's: less is more. -*Omar Afra*



Worst Houston news source: Any of them on TV
Whether it's Channel 2 identifying the intersection of Fannin and Tuam as "Southeast Houston", Channel 11 describing the Texans playoff berth as "The Run to the Super Bowl" or Channel 26 deciding to turn its 5 and 9 p.m. newscasts into conservative debates about such important issues as "is TV too gay" and the "War on Christmas", local TV news sucks. Even Channel 39's NewsFix could be fixed; more actual reporting and less TMZ voiceovers would be a good place to start. For one day, just one day, I would like to see a TV news cast focus on issues that aren't discussed on a regular basis—like the area's water shortage—instead of reporting gun crimes and traffic accidents. And yes murders, bank robberies and fatal accidents are important but isn't it also important to know when we're going to have rolling blackouts and more broken water pipes next summer? -*Alex Wukman*

Worst Bars: Those that have more flavored vodkas than decent whiskey
Don't look at me like I'm crazy when I ask you what Irish whiskey's you carry besides Jameson's or Bushmill's. I don't want your rainbow-puke inducing, eight-ingredient panty-droppers. Charge my ass more. It's a one- pour drink, neat. If you shelve it, they will come. -*Andrea Afra*

Worst trip of a municipal elected official: Annise Parker to Israel
If you think Rick Perry is the worst Texas has to offer, think again! While Perry is a fucking homophobic moron whose low IQ makes George Bush look good, it is easier to critique his ultra-conservative ass than the so-called progressive politicians in Houston. In fact, our very own Mayor is making Perry look good by working hard to make Houston the worst city not just in Texas, but in the entire United States. For starters, what the fuck was the deal with the huge creepy red tent with which the Houston Police covered the Occupy Houston protesters?! Hiding violence against the protesters behind creepy closed tents is perhaps something Parker has learned from her mentors in Israel.

Parker, the Israeli sympathizer, is using the exact method that the state of Israel has used for decades: covering up its violence against the Palestinians with lies about being "the only democracy in the Middle East." Not too long ago, Parker led a delegation of U.S. mayors on their trip to Israel. The American Jewish Committee, an Israeli propaganda machine that takes policymakers to Israel for "intensive learning and travel", sponsored her November 14th to 20th trip to Israel.

Parker, who is working on building partnerships with Israeli companies, has not only learned from the Israeli apartheid regime to "successfully" manage dissent, but is eager about the way that the Israeli state has exploited natural resources stolen from Palestinians. She is fascinated by Israel's fucking "aggressive expansion of its desalination plants" that provide Israel with most of its water. What Parker calls "reclaimed seawater" is really stolen seawater. At the same time that you are stopped at the Galleria by annoying aggressive sales people (former Israeli soldiers who have completed their military stint and had likely been murdering Palestinians) who insist on selling you stolen salt from the Dead Sea, packaged as fucking expensive skin products, the desalinated water is used to quench Israel's greed. This is when Palestinians in Gaza do not have drinking water. And when the Dead Sea is being destroyed by Israel's exploitation – yes folks, Israel is even killing the Dead Sea.

To make matters worse, Parker proudly announces that the Jerusalem Mayor, Nir Barkat, "wants to increase tourism to Israel's capital city by improving ease of access and by creating destination events, like the Jerusalem Marathon." Parker is happy to send tourists to Israel with easy access, when Palestinians' access to their homeland is blocked at the fucking checkpoints, and when the only marathon Palestinians know is to run from the fucking Israeli "Defense" Force.

In the City of Houston press release, Parker states, "This is an opportunity to learn how we might be able to apply Israel's model back in Houston."

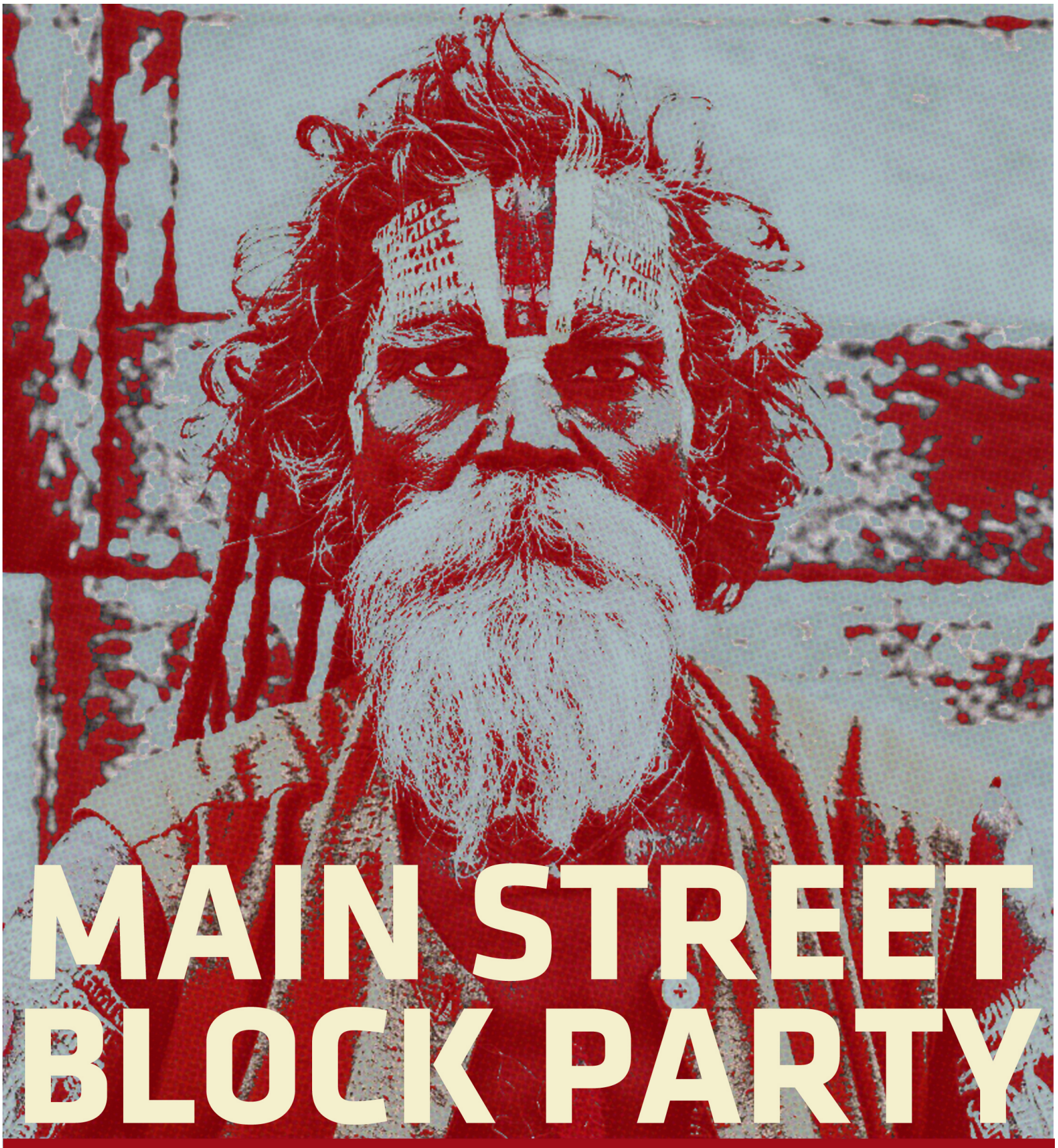
Exactly what type of Israeli model is she bringing back to Houston? What makes her think we would want anything remotely Israel-ish in our city? Did she see how Palestinian citizens of Israel are treated as third class citizens in the so-called democratic state of Israel? Did she see Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank treated like animals, caged in by a massive apartheid wall, checkpoints and roadblocks? Did she see Palestinian homes demolished, olive trees uprooted, and land continuously grabbed by Israel? Never mind the thousands of Palestinians killed and injured by Israeli air strikes, the thousands more in Israeli dungeons (many held without charge), and the racist Israeli policies that prevent millions of Palestinian refugees from returning to their rightful homes and villages, all courtesy of our tax dollars.

Of course she did not see these things. She, like any other person who tours Israel, would see a version that censors Israel's ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians. But we expected her to know better. As a progressive mayor in a city that embraces diversity and equal opportunities for all, rubbing elbows with Zionists (aka racists) in the State of Israel – the most belligerent state in the region – is an outrage.

Oh and get this: Mayor Parker refused to meet with concern Houstonians and the Palestinian community to hear our concerns. She is only willing to give her time (which is on our clock, she is our mayor, serving us) to Israel. How Shameful.

So, congratulations, Mayor Parker! You fucking win our vote for the worst of Houston! That is the only vote you will be getting from many Houstonians, Ms. Mayor! -*Sima Shakhsari, Ph.D and Hadeel Assali*

Worst mistake made by HPD: Arresting Ray Hill
In a year filled with boneheaded moves from HPD—from officers



MAIN STREET BLOCK PARTY

JAN 28TH • 2012 MAIN STREET

THE MINK • BACKROOM • BIG TOP • CONTINENTAL CLUB • NATACHES SUPPER AND PUNCH

PRE SALE $10 • DAY OF $10

WHAT MADE MILWAUKEE FAMOUS

POWER TRIP | CADDYWHOMPUS | EMPRESS HOTEL | B L A C K I E | BRAINS FOR DINNER | TAX THE WOLF | VENOMOUS MAXIMUS | FIGHT PRETTY |LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY G'z | TWENTY ELEVEN | ANOTHER RUN | WHITE CRIME | PURPLE | BENDING VILLA | VOX AND HOUND |ADREAM ASLEEP ODESSA | AMERICAN HEIST | MARCH TO THE SEA | ENGLAND IN 1819 | MILLS | ELECTRIC ATTITUDE | THE DEAD REVOLT | BUDA LOVE | THE FLAMIN' HELL-CATS | THE LITERARY GREATS | BANG BANGZ | SECOND LOVERS | THE HANDSHAKE | THE GOLD SOUNDS | NICK GAITAN & THE UMBRELLA MAN | LOLA COLA | VIVIAN PIKKLES AND THE SWEETHEART UBER ALLES |GUILT PARTY | VIPERS | MOTHS | FEATHERFACE | HAROLD BUROP | MUHAMMADALI | CASI-NOS | THE LIVE LIGHTS | SPASTIC FIT | SHADOW HOUND | PUNK ROCK PROJECT | JIM & THE TOMS | PAPAYA | DAPHNE | AMORETTE | RUN AWAY SUN | WHALES | BRETT HOLLIS | FRANK FREEMAN | ART INSTITUTE LIMITED | SCREWTAPE | WAYWORD | ABSTRACT CANNON | DANNY WATTZ | RIC ROC |SQUARE & COMPASS | PRAIRIE CADETS | PARIS FALLS |DON'T POKE THE BEAR | BLACKIE DAMMIT | UNICORN MILK | FOX & CATS | RENZO | BLVD NIGHTS

DJ's: BMC | ROB BASS | PHARMER | CEE PLUS BAD KNIVES | MR.CASTILLO | DAMON ALLEN | PANCHITRON | STEPHEN FARRELL | MORE T.B.A.

showing up to work tanked to the highly touted Blood Alcohol Content vans not working to covering up name tags and badge numbers at Occupy protests—perhaps the single stupidest move HPD could make was arresting a 71-year-old gay man. Arresting Ray Hill, one of the most outspoken and media savvy activists in Houston, on trumped up charges is a fast way to find yourself on the business end of a lawsuit. It seems like the arresting officer skipped the day at the academy when they mentioned that A: Security cameras are everywhere and B: Ray Hill is one stubborn SOB who has no problems fighting it out in court for years to come. So as a public service announcement I offer this word of advice to any of Houston's finest: unless you see Ray Hill really breaking the law, and I mean like murdering someone, don't try and arrest him it's only going to blow up in your face. *-Alex Wukman*

Worst son: You
Call your mother. She misses you. She cooked just for you. And now you let the food go bad and do not come to pick it up. Pick up the phone. Call your mother. Does she not have a son? Does she deserve this? *-Omar Afra*

Worst Enemy of 'Small Biz': City Permitting…
For the average out-of-pocket upstart business, it can take over a year of inspections and reinspections and fees and trips back and forth from the permitting office before they get their doors open to start making money and hiring employees. The city is nose deep in our business, literally. Use the wrong kind of screw, lose that round of inspections, wait for the next round, pay for another visit from an inspector. Want to put up a sign to advertise your location, at your location? Bend over and say 'ah' because that's what it feels like dealing with the petty bullshit doled out to those who are attempting to better our local economy. *-Andrea Afra*

Worst Solidarity Movement: Palestine Solidarity Movement
Across the world, movements are winning important battles to condemn the apartheid policies of Israel, which has maintains a military occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and Golan Heights, denies equal rights to Arab citizens of Israel, and denies the right for Palestinian refugees to return to their home in Israel. Houston is not one of these places where the Palestine Solidarity movement is winning much of anything. Twelve Texas House members have taken expenses paid trips to Israel including Gene Green (5 times), Sheila Jackson Lee (twice) and Pete Olson (twice), and Al Green (once). State Rep Debbie Riddle went to Israel and got a dog which she named after an elite Israel Defense Force infantry brigade. Annise Parker went to Israel and talked about how we can "apply Israel's model in Houston."

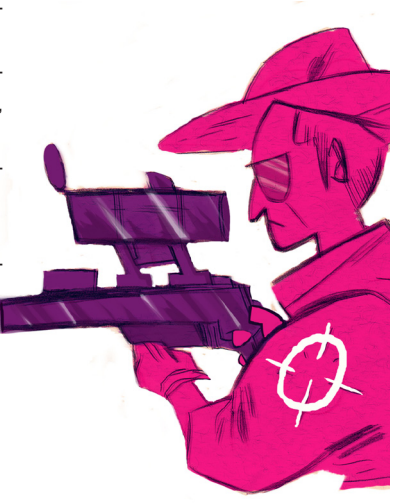
Even Radio for Peace Station KPFT gave a radio program to the Israeli consulate, and while a fight was made by many programmers, members, and community activists to get the station to condemn this decision and support the call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions made by Palestinian Civil Society, the majority of KPFT's board chose to remain 'neutral' in *time of great moral* conflict. The Palestine Solidarity Movement in Houston was unable to get a radio station founded by pacifists and run by hippies to support Palestinian rights.

While there are commendable cultural activities related to Palestine, including the award winning Houston Palestine Film Festival, the movement to politically support Palestine in Houston of late, is primarily dedicated to protesting in front of the Galleria Starbucks. *-Rob Block*

Worst frivolous lawsuit brought against a club owner: The Trial of Jim Pirtle
It doesn't take a genius to realize that someone 10 feet away from a building didn't fall out a second story window, but when Nathan Fischer's lawyer presented her case in early December she thought jurors were really far from geniuses. I mean really, really far from geniuses. Donna Roth, Fischer's attorney, tried to sue Pirtle for $12 million and 47 cents claiming that it was his fault her client 'fell out of a window' and, apparently, drifted all the way across the sidewalk. Roth didn't even try and explain how this miracle of physics could have happened; instead she beat up on Pirtle and tried to build sympathy with the jury by playing up Fischer's injuries. Perhaps the most egregious part of the lawsuit was the statement that nothing Fischer did or didn't do contributed to him 'falling out of a window,' or more likely jumping off the roof. When he was brought in to the ER Fischer tested positive for cocaine and marijuana and had a blood alcohol content over three-times-the-legal-limit. In other words, he had enough to drink to be suffering severe motor impairment and a loss of consciousness and then decided to either go hang around a glassless third-floor window or go climb up on a roof, and Roth said it wasn't his fault. That's some mighty fine lawyer work. Fortunately, the jury thought the case was bullshit and dismissed it. *-Alex Wukman*

Worst Shot: The genius that opened fire with a .40 caliber rifle at Occupy Houston
This guy shows up to Occupy Houston around 5 pm on a Monday, wearing a suit and waving a rifle, fires a couple shots into the air, fires a shot into the pond, waves the gun around at the hapless hippies occupying, points his gun at the cops who arrive on the scene, then points it at his own head before the cops take him down. He is expected to make a full recovery…in some local mental institution. (This one "Worst Of," we are happy to award—it's a good thing this fool didn't have better aim.) *-Harbeer Sandhu*

Worst case of over-promotion: Free Press Summer Fest
Trust me, you are not the only one who tires of our constant over-promotion of this festival (www.freepresssummerfest.com). After 5 months of pushing this event online, handing out hundreds of thousands of flyers, hanging posters, and telling people on the streets, we can't bear to look at our own materials. Our cars become mobile storage sheds for these materials and we often wake up in the middle of the night in cold sweats proclaiming the date and web url (www.freepresssummerfest.com). BTW, our next event is June 2nd and 3rd and is gonna be great. Get your passes now! (www.freepresssummerfest.com). *-Omar Afra*



Worst Union: Police officers union
I was told once that the difference between the police officers union and all other unions is that real unions tell their members; "We will support you in whatever you need as long as you don't break the law" while police unions exist primarily to protect police members when they commit crimes and hurt people.

Most recently the police officers union has come out refusing to endorse republican District Attorney Pat Lykos, in opposition to her policy of bringing misdemeanor charges (instead of felony) in cases where there is less than 1/100 of a gram of drug residue. To quote the blog Grits for Breakfast; "In other words, they want more tax dollars spent on police and jail staff to arrest and house more people on penny-ante paraphernalia charges. Of course they do. They are police unions."

This policy was changed from the days when Chuck Rosenthal was District Attorney, and the Harris County Jail was sanctioned for violating inmates' constitutional rights due to overcrowding, and we were paying astronomical fees to send inmates to Louisiana jails. That's the kind of justice system that the police union wants- unethical, unconstitutional, and fiscally irresponsible. - *Rob Block*



Worst Reason to Visit Houston: Getting Shot in the Head By a Teabagger
We are glad that Arizona Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords continues to recover from her gunshot wound, and we are proud that local Houston doctors have been part of her remarkable recovery, but we hope she'll come back and visit under more auspicious circumstances some time, too. *-Harbeer Sandhu*

Worst Recyclers: You?
Drive down any Houston street on recycling day and you'll see that maybe one out of five homes have utilized their green bins. Despite its downfalls of low frequency removal (twice a month doesn't suffice for a family of four when you're recycling correctly), low percentage of homes serviced, and refusal to pick up glass, all plastics, and Styrofoam, we're lucky that our city provides this service. My old street once received a notice from the city threatening to have the recycling service revoked if more homes didn't participate. Luckily people stepped up their game and no changes were made. One neighbor even puts a sign out ever other Monday to remind others that 'Tuesday' is recycling day.

Not to brag, but I have two green bins that are overflowing with recyclables bi-monthly, our main trash container is rarely more than halfway full. I plan to call 311 to ask for another. It's that easy. Just call, give your address, and they'll drop one off in a matter of days. I envy those streets that are part of the green polly-cart program, as

I'd love to have one extra large container instead of dragging two or three smaller bins out to the street, spilling over with trash, but I called in to ask if the program was expanding and the answer at the time was 'no.'

My new street has a dreadfully low participation rate in the recycling program. I plan on coming up with a creative way to encourage and inform my neighbors about taking advantage of this service. Maybe simply knowing others have noticed they aren't recycling will prompt them to add it to their list of priorities. If they cared half as much about recycling as they do about not letting one damn stray leaf fall on their lawn, we'd be in business.

I understand that people are busy and if they aren't accustomed to recycling, it's simply too easy to forget. But it's also easy if you try. *-Andrea Afra*

Worst 'There Goes the Neighborhood' Moment for SW Montrose: The impending demise of the Dunlavy Fiesta

The signage that recently appeared surrounding the shopping center containing Dunlavy Fiesta announcing that an exception was being sought to prevent the creation of cul-de-sacs at the current dead-ends of Sul Ross and Branard behind the shopping center. The same exception was required during the development of the bloated and quasi-suburban HEB that currently blights the property across the street, and this would seem to confirm recent rumors published on Swamplot.com that Fiesta will soon go the way of Wilshire village, to be replaced by a 'mixed use development' comparable to the combination of yuppie hives and generic boutiques that currently disfigure much of mid-town. Despite assurances from Fiesta store manager Barry Reichstein that the store lease extends well past the 2014 end date cited in the Swamplot piece, it seems that it is only a matter of time before most of Montrose is virtually indistinguishable from Kingwood, Pearland, or any other part of Houston's cookie-cutter exurbs... *-M. Martin*

Worst Podcast that I Love:

When on the road, I live on podcasts. The Free Press Houston podcast is a low-fi piece of shit, one-microphone in the middle of a room full of guys (well, mostly guys) talking over one another, often in silly, cynical, sarcastic tones podcast - AND I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT IT! No place else can I stick a disc in my car, or hit a button on my computer, and hear more quality news, info, opinion and insight into my home town of Houston, Texas, USA - presented with the humor and irreverence I've come to expect from these homies. *-Guy Schwartz*

Worst friend: You

I left you a message. I texted you. I even tweeted. But you did not respond. Then I see you at Grand Prize hamming it up with everybody. I felt slighted. I tried my best to join in on the conversation but still felt inadequate. I bought everyone shots and you did not even say thank you. And then you ask for a ride home? *-Omar Afra*

Worst Legal Doublespeak from a Lawyer: David Leebron

"Free Speech does not include the right to interfere with the expressions and ideas with which you disagree. You will be escorted away from this forum for not respecting the fundamental principle of free speech within the university."

— Rice President David Leebron, on November 10th, 2011, when Occupy Houston 'mic-checked' House Majority Leader Eric Cantor

As a former law professor, Leebron should aspire to correctly explain legal concepts. Instead, addressing a room full of Rice students, he used an incorrect definition of the concept of freedom of speech to justify silencing people who came to speak out.

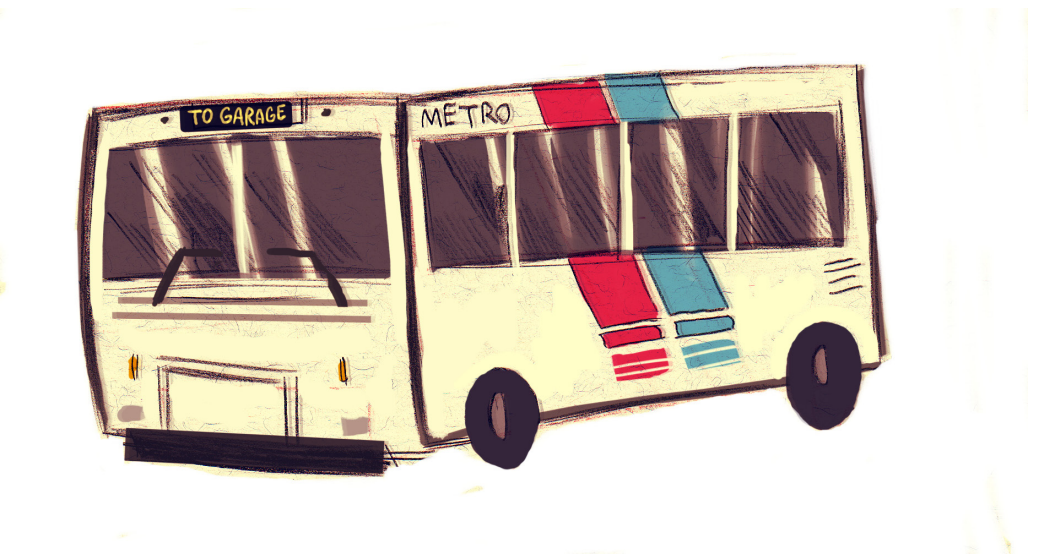
Yes, that's the same guy who silenced KTRU on the FM dial.

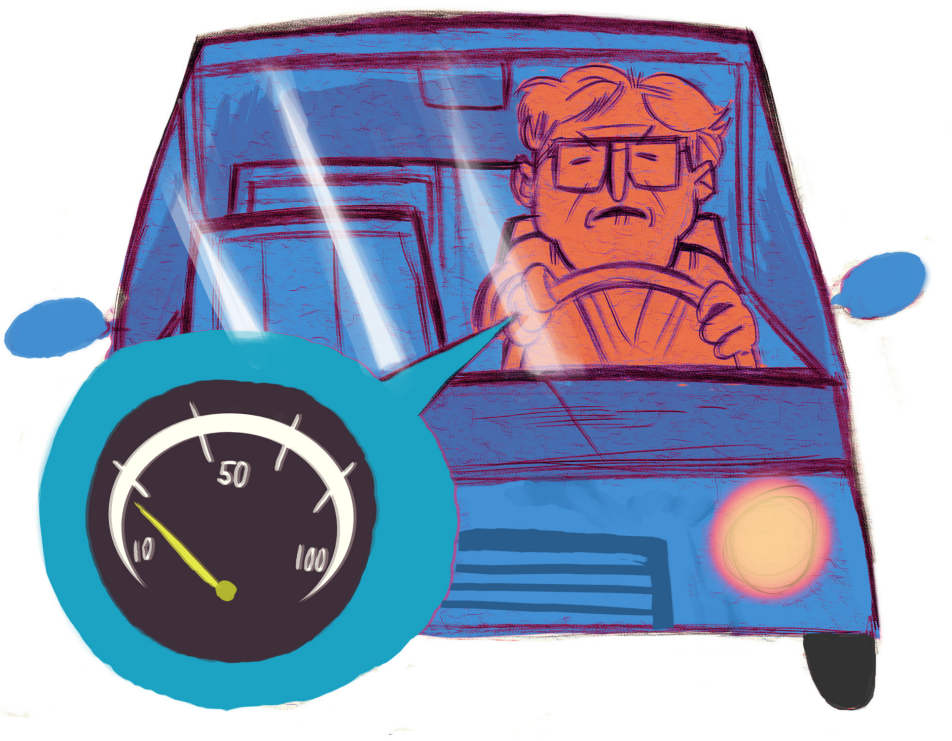
Cantor had permission to speak because the university invited him. Knowing this, the protesters could do little more, non-violently, than to use their voices to delay his speech. They bravely did so, were escorted out, and some were arrested. The whole incident was edited out of the video provided by the University and subsequently used in the Houston Chronicle blog coverage.

Leebron asserted, as the president of the university that owns the room, the privilege of deciding which speakers do and don't have rights there. This wasn't about any right to freedom of speech; it was simply about property rights. However, "we own this school and get to decide who speaks here" would have seemed a bit crude, so instead, he opted for some eloquent doublespeak.

Legally, of course, Cantor and those who interrupted him, have







the exact same rights to free speech. However, Rice's President, with a police department, and a well-funded team of lawyers at his disposal, doesn't have to worry about getting the law right. He has the power to ignore it, or even twist it around backwards if he likes.

Similarly, Eric Cantor doesn't have to worry that his positions on Israel violate international law — the United States has the power to issue exemptions. Israel's confirmed nuclear weapons won't ever be discussed in the UN Security Council, but suspicions about Iran will. Perhaps Leebron's definition of freedom of speech is being used there as well. *-Nick Cooper*

Best Pre-Protest Kick-off: Butterfingers Bandit Robs Chase Bank
At 9:30 am on October 3, a woman walked into a Chase Bank branch with her hand in her purse, claimed she had a gun, and demanded money. The teller handed her some cash, which she then dropped as she turned to walk out, so she cursed, picked it up, and went on her merry way, earning herself the moniker "Butterfinger Bandit" from the FBI. Three days later, Occupy Houston kicked off with a polite, well-mannered, hapless demonstration outside the Chase Bank building downtown. All traffic laws were obeyed, the polite bunch kept to the sidewalk and refrained from using curse words. *-Harbeer Sandhu*

Worst Restaurant Explosion: Hamburgers
Little Big's, Five Guys, SmashBurger, Beck's, Sparkle Burger, Itty Bitty Burger Barn, Bubba's, Lucky Burger, Someburger ... it goes on and on. Some of them reasonably priced and good and some of them overpriced over-hyped chains, but one thing is for sure, there is just a hell of a lot of them. Google a map of Hamburgers in Houston and it looks like a city with Chicken Pox. Honestly! I like a hamburger as much as anyone but do we really need that many places that serve ground beef on a bun? Are we really that uncreative? *-Ramon Medina*

Worst waste of screen real estate on a mobile app:
The extensive coverage on Houston Chronicle's mobile app (and website) dedicated to the flawed and farcical vanity candidacy of governor Rick 'Goodhair' Perry for the GOP presidential nomination.

There are at least three good reasons why this is nothing more than a pointless piece of suck-uppery to the benighted Teabaggers that make up a significant percentage of the Chron's readership—unfortunately, I can't currently remember what they are... *- M. Martin*

Worst trend to come to light: Houston restaurants not paying their staff
It seems like it's been going on for years. Houston restaurant owners treat their waiters and kitchen staff like little-more-than slaves and the response has always been "if you don't like it, leave." The list of alleged perpetrators includes some of the biggest names in Houston food circles. The first to make the news was Bruce Molzan, owner of Ruggles, who had his entire staff walk out because he allegedly owed them about $15,000 in back pay. Then it was Bombay Pizza, Blue Water Seafood, Hunan Chef on FM 1960 and Brasserie 19 for failing to pay overtime. And now Houston food icon, and Iron Chef contestant, Bryan Caswell has been sued. The suit alleges that Caswell and his business partners failed to pay overtime, incorrectly calculated hours worked and forced employees to participate in an invalid tip pool.

We all know it's hard being a small business owner. That making payroll is tough and you'd rather give a person some money instead of firing them, but the problem is if you're paying them by the hour and you've legally employed them you have to pay them everything they're supposed to get. We've heard it all before: waiters and bartenders work for tips, it doesn't matter how many hours they put in they are primarily paid by the customer. Sorry it doesn't work like that. Once they sign employment documents they are legally an employee, not an independent contractor. And when a non-salaried employee goes over 40 hours in a workweek they are supposed to get time-and-a-half. Why is it so hard for independent restaurant owners to understand such a simple concept: pay your employees for the time they work. Hell, McDonald's understands it. And when McDonald's makes you look bad it's time to start fixing your shit. *-Alex Wukman*

Worst missed opportunity by greedy crap-bag real estate developers:
The decision by Weingarten Realty to fill in the old inclined floor and destroy the old theater fixtures in the former Bookstop and one-time Alabama Theater on S. Shepherd, after steadfastly refusing for months to even consider the possibility of leasing to Alamo Drafthouse or anyone else who might consider using the space for a film or theatrical venue.

Given the steady decline of venue-ready properties in inner city Houston and the evident glut of conventional retail space, there's really nothing good that can be said about this. It was briefly rumored that the space might be taken over by a local installment of Pacific Northwest alt grocery institution Trader Joe's, but it now seems that suburban moms in The Woodlands will have the opportunity to pick up a bottle of Two Buck Chuck (which now cost three bucks—I know) long before the far more deserving residents of the 'Trose. *-M. Martin*

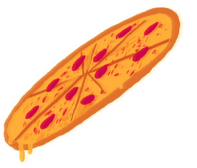
Worst news for public transportation advocates: Metro routes linked to TB outbreaks
It's already hard to try and get people in Houston to give up their cars and take the bus and it only becomes harder when the Chronicle runs a story that a recent study found riders on certain Metro bus routes—the Chron didn't say which ones—were being exposed to tuberculosis, most likely from other bus riders. TB can lead to a month long hospital stay and the need for four pills a day for six months, and it doesn't seem like Metro is going to absorb those costs. With all the talk about reducing air pollution and creating public spaces it's worth remembering that with the public comes public health risks. *-Alex Wukman*

Worst trend in music distribution: Cassettes
Moving towards vinyl made perfect sense. It is a format of high audio quality, folks still own record players, and suddenly artwork was big again. But cassettes have none of these qualities. The only thing they have is kitsch. I hate kitsch. *-Omar Afra*

Worst public reaction to what was actually a pretty good thing: Tie-The sale of KTRU and the opening of Montrose HEB
OH MY GOD, apostasy! How dare you attack local and independent music in favor of secretive deals by unhip bureaucrats? How could you defend the decision to replace decades old affordable housing with a giant mega-lo mart? When KUHF switched over to an all NPR station and sent the classical over to KUHA it became something that Houston has needed for years: a reliable, non-biased news source that broadcasts verified, and verifiable, information to people stuck in traffic. And it's become even more relevant since 740 KTRH, formerly the city's flagship news radio station, decided to become solely right wing talk. Yes we lost a station that played alternative and underground music but we gained one that covers national and international issues without sounding like World Net Daily or a liberal version of Rush Limbaugh. Also the Wilshire Village Apartments that were torn down to make way for HEB may have been cheap but they certainly didn't qualify as affordable housing primarily because they weren't available. It's hard to defend the destruction of a series of buildings that were in a constant state of disrepair and were being mismanaged by a man who clearly had psychological problems. Conversely, it's pretty easy to support the opening of a grocery store that has already forced competitors to improve their selection and shopping experience and lower their prices. Competition benefits consumers; more choices equal low prices and laws of supply and demand win out over nostalgia and fetishization of familiarity. *-Alex Wukman*

Worst Misconception About Driving in Houston: Slower is Safer
There is a simple equation that explains why it is not safer to drive slowly: less time in car = less likely to be involved in a car accident. Inversely, more time spent inside car = more likely to be involved in a car accident. I don't understand, in a city defined by sprawl, why all of you insist on driving under the posted speed limit on freeways (US 59, I-10, I-45, US 290, etc.) and on major city streets. WHY? Don't you want to arrive at your destination? Isn't that the point of driving in the first place? I don't even need to be racist about this issue because every fucking one of you is super guilty of this. Bottom line: Just go. *-Mills-McCoin*

Worst place to find out information about Montrose: Ultimate Montrose
Needless to say it's not surprising that the Chronicle doesn't really get what's important to Montrose and uses the Ultimate Montrose





blog to report about how Yates High School basketball is doing. For the record, most Montrosians don't care about high school sports and Yates is in Third Ward by TSU, not in Montrose.

It's also no surprise that the Chronicle thinks people in Montrose care about marriage announcements, charity donations or where the League of Women Voters will be holding their holiday reception. Spend a few nights in Montrose and you'll see what we care about, and it isn't the society page bullshit that makes it on Ultimate Montrose. How about reporting which bars got raided by the TABC or when city crews will be out fixing broken pipes? How about letting us know when a job fair is going to be held or what scholarships are available to people over the age of 21? Hell, how about telling us where we can find a social worker to help us navigate the complex maze of government assistance so we can see a dentist and get a Lone Star card. You know, stuff that matters on the street. *-Alex Wukman*

Worst demise of a local business: Sedition Books

Houston is a city that is fueled by individualism and entrepreneurial spirit. What this frequently means in practice is people not knowing or working with their neighbors, and an attitude that celebrates the rich and accomplished has no sympathy for the suffering of the poor.

A noble experiment, Sedition Books challenged this for a number of years in Houston. Sedition's third and most successful location on Richmond Ave. near Montrose lasted for more than 3 years as a completely volunteer run bookstore and event space for anarchist and radical politics. They hosted films, speakers, and bands from across Houston, the country, and often other countries as well. Sedition advocated a different model of organizing society; horizontal instead of hierarchical, directly democratic and attempting to be inclusive. It was a place where many people were introduced to new ideas, and saw new types of projects emerge, like the Anarchist Book Fair that took place at MECA in sixth ward in April of this year.

A variety of factors including high rent, and the lack of volunteers led to the closing of the Richmond location at the end of November. The lending library has migrated to the Dragon Valley Free School in Third Ward, and the Sedition crew continues to bring books to events and is looking for a new place. *-Rob Block*

Worst hypocrisy: City policy towards tents at Occupy Houston versus tents at Black Friday

Seriously, protestors can't have shelter but people queuing up for a discounted Xbox can? That's possibly the most egregious example of bullshit to come forward in at least the last two months. And before anyone jumps on the private property versus public property band wagon it's worth pointing out that many of the parks in Houston were donated to the city with caveats, and in at least one case the land was placed in to a situation that basically amounts to a trust and the city is simply the executor of the trust. So there is an argument that could be made that the surviving members of the families that donated or entrusted the land to the city should be consulted before policies preventing tents are enacted. Oh sure there's 'public health concerns', that could be easily addressed by allowing port-a-lets in the park, but somehow those concerns don't come up when people are camped in front of a Best Buy for a week to score a cheap TV. *-Alex Wukman*

Worst Future Moment in a Mah Jong Circle: Steve Thompson Jr.'s Aunt

I recently donated platelets for my aunt at MD Anderson. She is really sick and requires several blood transfusions a week. Luckily, she's related to a virtual vital fluid Superman, as I learned when my platelets tested as a match for hers. According to the doctors, the viability of my platelets was "off the charts," something I took to mean I possessed a sort of life saving super power, and not at all what they tell every donor so they'll come back.

My only concern is what's going to happen now that I am part of her! My cells are living and growing within her body! We are one and the same!

What's going to happen when all she wants to talk about in her Mah Jong group are boobs and college football? - *Steve Thompson Jr.*

Worst bus route: 34 Crosstown

A friend of mine said that the 34, which runs along Montrose between the Heights and the Museum District, exists in no useful dimension. When you wait it never comes and when you walk it comes right away. The idiosyncrasies of Schrodinger's bus aside, the 34 has the worst schedule of any bus route inside the loop. It only operates Monday-Friday until 7 p.m. and it doesn't run on weekends. Metro seriously doesn't think anyone in the Heights wants to come into or out of Montrose on a weeknight or that anyone in Montrose needs to go to the Heights on Saturday or Sunday? It's a classic chicken and the egg problem: Metro says there isn't enough ridership to warrant expanded hours but without expanded hours how can you estimate ridership? Hey Metro, I'm sure the cabbies running people from the Heights to Montrose and vice versa appreciate the business, it's just a shame you don't. *-Alex Wukman*

Worst Ostentatious Scarface Villa / Pretentious Wine and Coffee Bar: BACCHUS

Have you ever wondered what it's like to visit one of those ostentatious Montrose loft townhomes? Wonder no more! Now you can go to Bacchus and experience the "high life" for yourself! As if the imposing white exterior with primary color accents wasn't enough to make it stick out in this neighborhood of traditionally humbler bungalows and cottages, if you miss the views of the sky that this monstrosity has choked out, step inside for a view of "Mediterranean" cloud frescoes that look like a third grader painted them. Treat yourself to some of the Illy brand coffee that they brag about on their website—I understand it's the Nescafe of Europe. Word on the street is they're about to sign a contract with a select winery that's going to make them your only local connection for some of that fine fine Sutter Home vintage wine, too. *-Harbeer Sandhu*

Worst Summer: Right here, 2011

Holy shit it was hot this past summer! I went though 5 bottles of medicated powder! *-Omar Afra*

Worst Rain Dance: Rick Perry's "The Response: A Call to Prayer for a Nation in Crisis"

While Rick Perry and his buddy's from IHOP (no shit, they call themselves the International House of Prayer) led 30,000, yes, 30,000 clueless gun totin' Bible thumpin' diabetes patients in seven hours of fasting and prayer at the Reliant Stadium, praying for stuff like rain to help put out the wildfires that were swallowing swaths of central Texas where Perry had cut volunteer fire department budgets by 75%—at the same time that those measly 30,000 people were gathered for our collective deliverance (not counting Muslims, Jews, Sikhs, atheists, etc), no less than ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND people who've been shafted by the economy and school budget cuts showed up just a few miles away at the George R. Brown Convention Center for Houston Independent School District's first annual Back to School Fest for free backpacks, school supplies, uniforms, haircut vouchers, immunizations and fresh produce. So many people showed up to the Back to School Fest that they ran out of supplies and had to send people away by 10 am, after having opened less than two hours before. Perry's rain never came, and the drought and budget woes continue... *-Harbeer Sandhu*

Worst case of diarrhea: Mezban Indo-Pak Buffet

Mezban serves great food. This is no indictment of their food quality but rather an illustration of my over-indulgence. How much lamb curry, chicken korma, daal, and haleem can one man eat in a day? Only my colon knows. *-Omar Afra*

Worst corporate sponsorship: KBR Kids Day

This little-known event occurs at Buffalo Bayou Park every October and has, as it's title sponsor, Kellogg, Brown & Root or KBR. Apparently no one at the Buffalo Bayou Partnership thinks letting a company with as questionable a history as KBR sponsor a day for kids is a bad idea. Sure the event looks like fun for the whole family, as long you don't think about the Iraqi children who died so KBR could provide you and your kids a nice day in the park. *-Alex Wukman*

Worst copy-editing: Free Press Houston

WE have been trying to get it right for a long time. But when a small staff is faced with editing literally hundreds of thousands of words in such a short time period, we fuck up. We fuck up often. Either way, we feel we sometimes have substance and thank you for your patience with our editing. We are considering hiring someone a sophomore in high school to help us get better. *-Omar Afra* **FPH**







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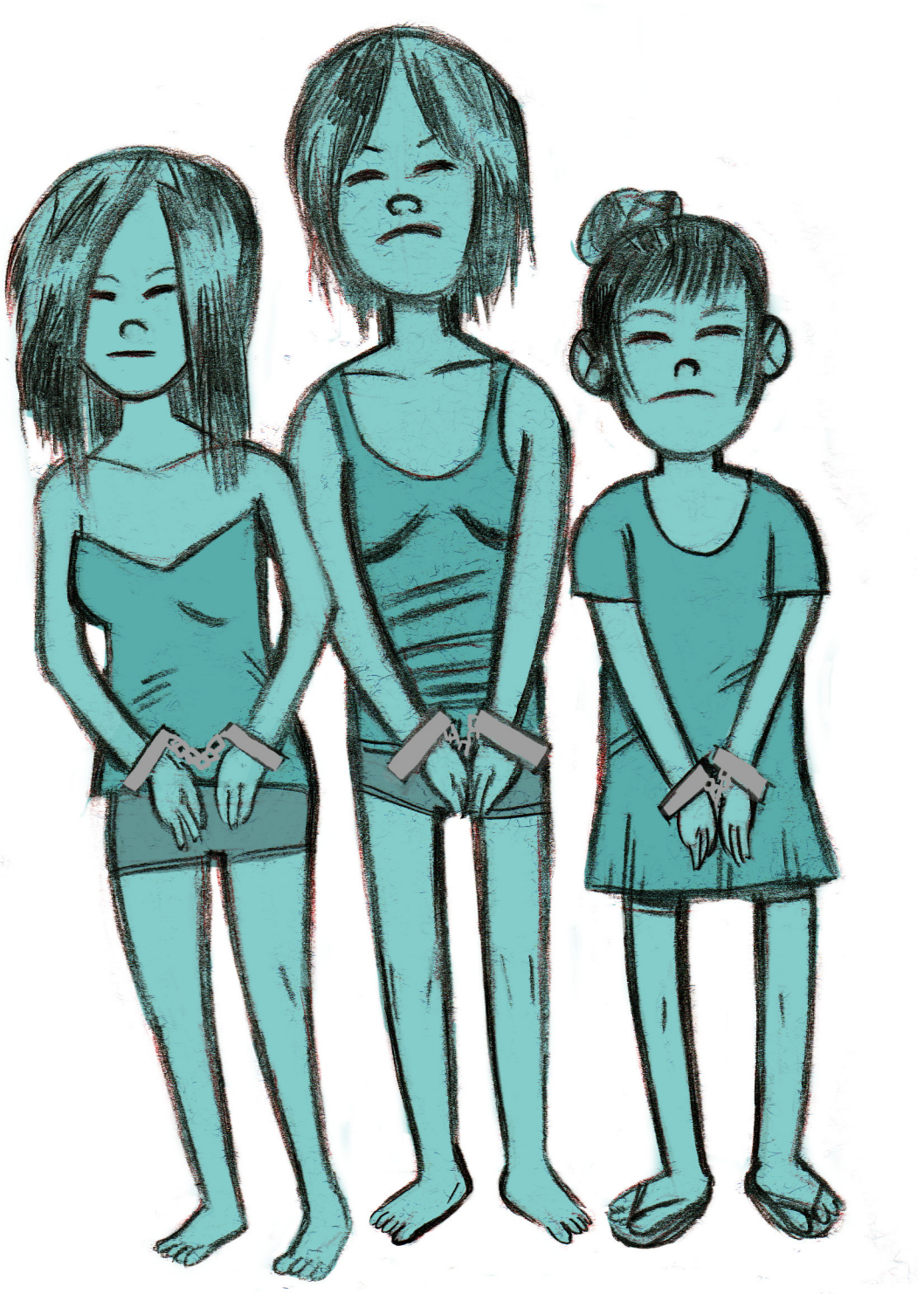
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Worst Complicity
in Houston's Worst Crime

Houston Press aids & abets human sex trafficking

BY AMANDA HART

EDITORS NOTE: *This was obviously a hard decision to make as to whether or not to go ahead with publishing this story. First and foremost, it is hard to appear objective when writing about another newspaper that folks would perceive as a 'competitor.' Secondly, I have many long-time friends who work over at Houston Press that I admire and respect and this article has no bearing on the great work they do. I am also a customer of Houston Press where I regularly advertise Fitz shows, Free Press Summer Fest, Houston Palestine Film Festival, etc. I can further illustrate my own hypocrisy by telling you that I have spent tens of thousands of dollars with them all the while having a moral qualm with the issue described here in the following article. Because in 100 years I am sure that when historians describe the worst of injustices that flourished in Houston Texas, human trafficking and its link to the sex trade will top the list. This story is the 500 pound gorilla in the room. And Houston Press and other media organizations complicity comprises but one component in this 3 dimensional clusterfuck. But we have no illusions that such complicity is based on some dark, malevolent plan orchestrated by the illuminati but rather a failure to examine the status quo for what it is. So I would ask that readers open their hearts and minds to the plight of these trafficked women.*



FOR YEARS NOW, I have ignored a rather disturbing reality that exists within our community. I, like most people, would pick up the Houston Press every Thursday and read up on what was going down that week. And every week I would do the same thing, reach a certain page in the paper and refuse to look any further for fear of having to face the reality that exist within the back pages of the Houston Press. It was as if my decision to refuse to flip any further somehow resolved me of any guilt or responsibility. So instead of browsing the pages that were lined with stock photos of women that are for sale, I would stop after I had reached the end of the music section. It was just easier this way. Then earlier this year, I attended a human trafficking education summit and was forced to analyze the ways in which my community and I perpetuate the trafficking and sale of women and their bodies. The Houston Press was brought up in the discussion and the wall I had created that separated me from reality was quickly dismantled. I went home that night and forced myself to begin the process of exploring human trafficking and how it is directly linked to Houston and specifically the Houston Press.

I started my research with the most obvious of offenses: massage parlors. Many of the women who are serving time in these facilities were brought from overseas here under false pretenses (many from poverty-stricken South Asian countries like Vietnam and Thailand) and are forced into prostitution through physical and mental abuse. Their families are threatened, their identities are stripped and they all lack vital resources that keep them perpetually held in this vicious cycle. The women accrue an inflated debt due to travel expenses and room and board that they proceed to pay off by working 12 to 24 hour days in the parlors. Their captors move them every few weeks (while adding to their debt for each move) to keep them disoriented with their surroundings and each other. After their debt is repaid and their time is served, they are "set free." If you were one of these women and at 2 AM you were locked out with no

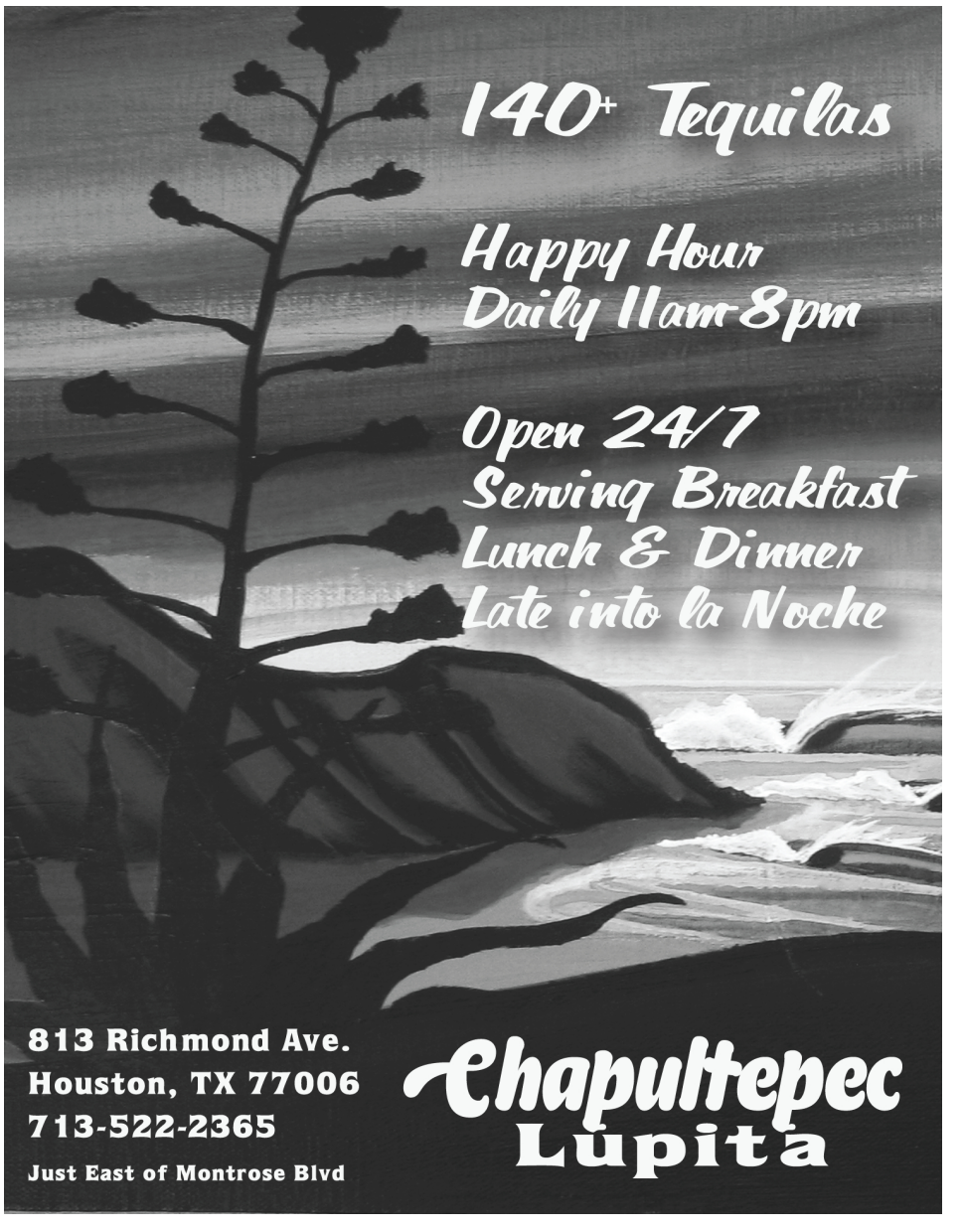
money, a limited knowledge of the native language and not even the basic knowledge of what fucking city you are in, what would you do? One could hope that they find some help or, better yet, burn the building down. But that is not how the sex industry world works, and the reality is these women end up begging their captors to let them back in. These same women are being advertised every week in the backpages of the Houston Press. While I understand that times are tough and the Houston Press and their parent company, Village Voice Media, are doing what they have to do so they can get by, I have to ask them, and myself, "Is it worth it?"

It is no secret that Village Voice Media and the Houston Press make some serious cash through ad space bought by the sex industry. Village Voice Media owns and operates the website Backpage.com and since Craigslist closed their adult service section in September of 2010, Backpage.com has picked up where they left off. According to James Rainey of the LA Times, "A Village Voice executive, who asked not to be named for revealing confidential information, said that Backpage.com, where online escort ads and the like go for about $10 each, produces at least one-seventh of the company's revenue." This is a million dollar industry that is making its earning off the backs and twats of women. Village Voice has stated that they are protected under the first amendment and while they sort of acknowledge the terrible shit their ad space is used for, their stance is that they cannot be held accountable for it. In that same LA Times article. Steven Suskin, Village Voice's Lawyer, is quoted as saying, "Criminals send drugs through Federal Express but we don't eliminate FedEx just because a few criminals do that." (Eds note: This is a bullshit defense and parallel because FedEX does not knowingly accept packages with drugs in them whereas papers like HP are very well aware of the services offered at massage parlors and the conditions the women are in.) Oh well Mr. Suskin, I totally see your logic in comparing mailing drugs through the mail and the sell of women and children on the internet. Thank you for clearing all the confusion up for me. You are safe in the eyes of the law but I have to ask, isn't there some sense of morality that you seem to be lacking? If you know that the money you are taking from massage parlors is the same money that holds those women captive, wouldn't your moral compass send a fucking bat signal telling you this is beyond fucked up? And massage parlors are just one aspect to this enigma. That does not include the "prostitutes" and "escorts" that are also being trafficked through your pages and let us not forget the underage girls that seem to be popping up periodically with accusations that you knowingly allowed their pimps to take out ads on them. And while I agree that the pimps and traffickers are really at fault for their disgusting behavior, you need to take responsibility for making money off of the sales. I mean, you can't actually think that you in no way are a part of this whole underworld. You are the link between the supply and demand. And let's just be honest with each other, you can claim you are protecting first amendment rights all you want but what it really comes down to is money. I understand that you are a business and you do need money to exist but I would hope that you would rather cease to exist than to make your millions off of ads that sell human beings.

Village Voice over the last year began their own human trafficking investigative series entitled "The Truth Behind Sex Trafficking," in which multiple lengthy articles were printed in an attempt to debunk sex trafficking. Their main concern was the trafficking of

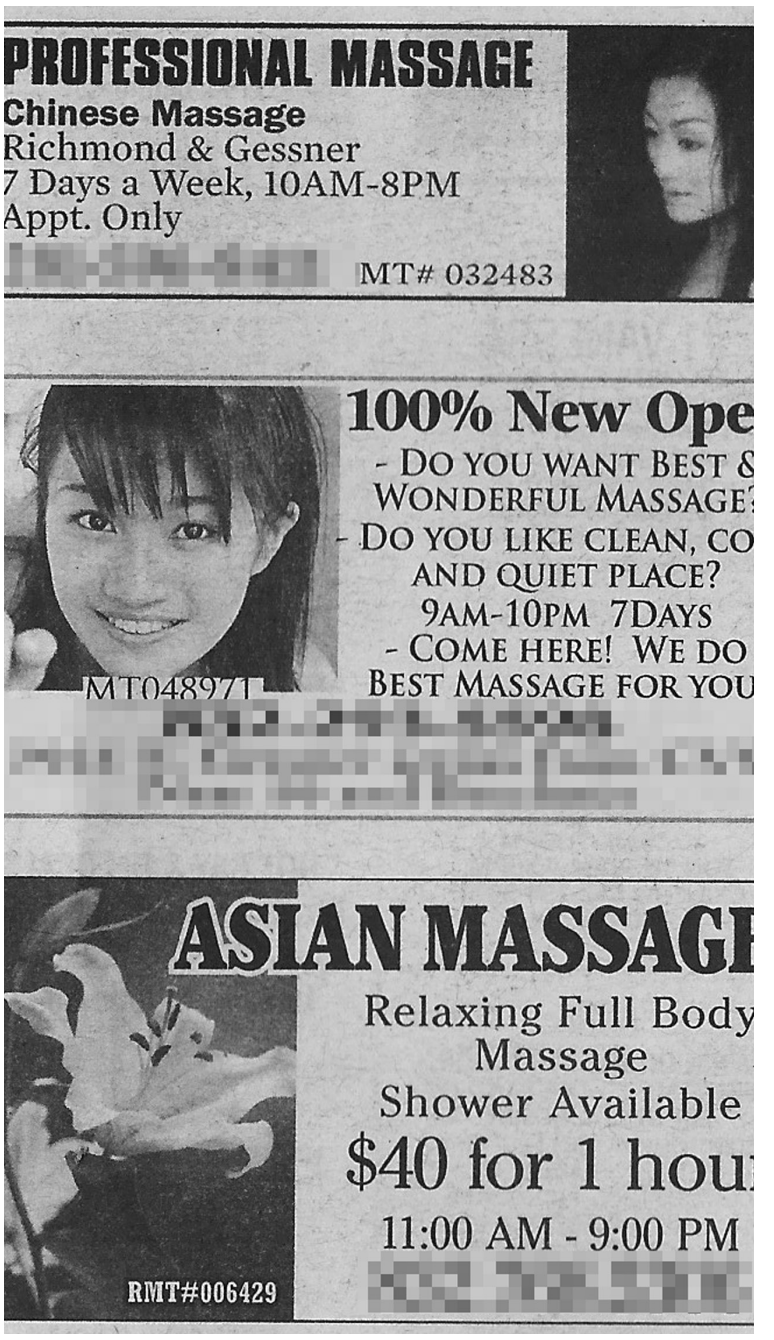
I would hope that you would rather cease to exist than to make your millions off of ads that sell human beings.





minors and they went all FOX news on our ass and even created an interactive map. But, of course, this was all an attempt to shed light on sex trafficking and had absolutely nothing to do with the money they stand to make off of convincing people that sex trafficking is not really happening. It started with a ridiculous fight between Village Voice and Ashton Kutcher. Yep, you read that right. Village Voice posted a five page article directed at fucking Ashton Kutcher. I love that this was indeed their jumping off point in regards to such an intense subject. But either way, the article proceeded to debunk a claim that Kutcher made on CNN in July. "It's between 100,000 and 300,000 child sex slaves in the United States today," Kutcher said. The only problem with their attempt to debunk Kutchers claim is that they themselves used faulty "junk science" to do so. While I agree that the numbers that Kutcher touted were misconstrued, it does not mean that a good solution is to in turn do the exact same thing in an attempt to make a point. What VVM proceeded to do was spend a few months combing through arrest records in 37 cities looking for juvenile prostitution arrest. Once they pulled their own numbers (826 arrest per year) they then compared them to the numbers Kutcher claimed and from there attempted to downplay a very real problem that exist not just within the states but particularly in Houston. There are so many things wrong with this attempt to figure out the magnitude that is under age trafficking. For starters, VVM only looked at actual arrests. I can't even begin to fathom why they would think that looking at arrests would somehow give them the magical number. As if only people who are arrested and charged with marijuana possession are the only ones smoking weed. Come on now, you have to have a better schematic than that. Not only that, but one would also have to assume the underage girls that were processed in no way lied about their age. Because we all know that if a 16 year old is picked up by the police for fucking prostitution the first thing she is going to do is tell them her real name and age. Also, it is well known that in many cases these girls are not actually charged with prostitution but with something more along the lines of drug possession, running away or petty larceny, which means they were not entered into the system under the title of teen prostitute. There is also the factor that in some cases the girls are properly identified from the beginning and are never entered into the criminal system at all and are instead taken to a facility that will help locate their parents or find other sources of help for them. Once again, not ending in an arrest that could have been cataloged by the geniuses at VVM who came up with this ridiculous calculation. In the article VVM also makes the claim that police departments seem to have the issue under control. This is beyond laughable when you understand how the system really works. In Houston there are a handful (and by "handful" I mean 5) of officers who are dedicated to human trafficking. Not only does the city not have a handle on human trafficking, they don't have the manpower or the money to even properly train officers on how to identify and handle such cases. The gist of the article claims that non profits are misleading people with these numbers (100,000 – 300,000) in an attempt to receive federal funding to keep their nonprofits going. It is interesting that the same company that stands to make millions off of this industry is calling out non profits for using misleading numbers in an attempt to gain financial security. What is that saying about a pot calling a kettle black?

I will say that I do believe that religious zealots are on a witch hunt and they want VVM dissected and on a platter. They are calling for VVM to close down the entirety of the adult advertisements. While I might have an issue with the massage parlors' sale of minors and women who have been forced into prostitution being sold on their site, I do think there has to be a better way to solve the issue without closing the ad space completely. For starters, massage parlor ads have got to go. There is no debating that this shit is just fucked up. VVM has got to do more in regards to filtering through their ads and making sure to remove and pull all ads that are soliciting the sale of minors. If you are going to make the decision to profit from it you need to also invest in the proper precautions to keep the ad space as safe as possible. Writing articles about how human trafficking is really just a "boogey man" and not a real threat or reality is not only bad journalism but just makes you shitty human beings and this is why you are at the top of my Worst of Houston list. **FPH**



Every week, ads like this are featured in Houston Press that contain subtle language which indicate sexual services are offered. Stock photos of Asian women are re-used for different 'massage parlors.'

Disturbing Facts on Houston's Sex-Trade

Since 2001, more than 20% of the total number of identified trafficking victims nationwide has been located in Texas.

The second largest trafficking bust in U.S. history occurred in Houston.

While the City of Houston collects permit operation fees for sexually oriented businesses, it has no division to oversee that the workers' are of legal age and working there voluntarily.

Houston 2009: Six people including ex-HPD officer John Butler, were arrested in the region's largest sex-trafficking ring bust that forced women as young as 16 into prostitution via 'commercialized sex businesses often disguised as modeling studios, health spas, massage parlors, and bikini bars in Houston, and employed sexually oriented publications and websites to advertise their illicit business.'

As of January 2006, of all human trafficking victims certified in the United States, 25% of them were in Texas, the majority of whom were in Houston. (From U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Rescue and Restore Campaign Results, April 2004 thru January 2006)

162,000, or 70%, of homeless youth are victims of commercial sexual exploitation in the United States. There are over 5,000 homeless children in Houston. (The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children In the U. S., Canada and Mexico, Univ. Pennsylvania/ 2010 Report Coalition for the Homeless)

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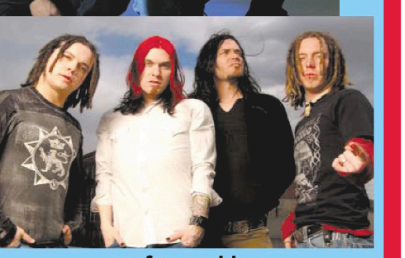
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January

Back to the grindstone

BY ALEX WUKMAN

BY THE TIME THE CHAMPAGNE TOASTS and kisses of New Year's Eve come around December seems to have worn out it's welcome, especially in Houston theatre. After the unending yuletide assault of Houston holiday programming January seems like the long-lost friend who moved to New York and comes back only once a year with fascinating stories about the all cool shit she saw and did. Admittedly that's a round about way of saying that January is probably one of the best months for Houston theatregoers.

Maybe it's the weather, or maybe it's the fact that the only thing going on in January is the traditional dueling MLK Day parades; but whatever the reason January seems to mark the point at which many theatres--both big established companies and scrappy newcomers--embark on some of their most ambitious, interesting and often risky fare. All too often that ambition seems limited to inner-loop companies; however that's not the case this year. This January finds a slew of interesting shows scattered across the city like jacks on a table--something that can make going to see the family out in the suburbs a little more tolerable.

The Addams Family
Jan. 10-15 | Hobby Center, 800 Bagby Street;
800-952-6560 | www.houston.broadway.com
There are some properties that are so ingrained in American culture that it's almost impossible to imagine life without them. When New Yorker cartoonist sat down at his easel in 1938 and created a satirical inversion of "traditional" family values no one would have predicted that 70 years later it would be a multi-million franchise with four TV shows, three movies, four video games and the best-selling pinball machine of all time. And now a musical. After 500 shows on Broadway, and right before launching an international tour, the $10 million stage adaptation of Charles Addams cartoons comes to Houston thanks to Broadway Across America. The plot is a classic fish out of water story that finds Wednesday falling for a "normal boy" and Gomez, Morticia and the rest of the family wondering where they went wrong while singing in graveyards and torture chambers, good old fashioned family fun.



Avenue Q
Jan. 13-Feb. 5 | Stage Door Inc.
284 Pasadena Town Square Mall, Pasadena
832-582-7606 | www.stagedoorinc.com
As Rent is the 1990s Avenue Q is to the 2000s. It was the off-Broadway hit that became a must-see event that helped define American theatre for most of a decade. Even though Avenue Q creators Robert Lopez and Jeff Marx were almost a full 15 years behind Peter Jackson's Meet the Feebles when it came to bringing foul-mouthed, and slightly depraved puppets, to audiences the performers inhabiting Trekkie Monster, Rod, Nicky and the rest of the misfits that inhabit the R-rated version of Sesame Street were singing about how "the internet is for porn" back when huge swaths of the population were just getting off dial-up. And audiences loved it. After nearly a decade of performing on and off B'way, in Vegas and London's West End the bawdy puppets will be telling audiences in the former home of the KKK that "Everyone's a little bit racist" and that "You Can Be as Loud as the Hell You Want (When You're Makin' Love)." If naughty puppets aren't reason enough to head down 225 to Pasadena there's also the train wreck factor. In other words it might be worth the drive just to see if anyone shows up to protest the opening.

The Coast of Utopia: Part One, Voyage
Jan. 7-Jan. 29 | Main Street Theatre-Chelsea Market, 4617 Montrose
713-524-3622 | www.mainstreettheater.com
It must be the dreary, wet, winter weeks that prompts Houston theatres to look to Russia for inspiration in their January programming. From Chekov at Talento Bilingüe to Fiddler on the Roof in Galveston and The Woodlands, Houston audiences will be tripping over stories--whether real or imagined--about life under the Tsars. One of the first of this year's crop of Russian-centric productions out the gate is Main Street Theatre's interpretation of the first installment in Tom Stoppard's Coast of Utopia trilogy. The three plays have not been seen in the US since their 2006 premiere at the Lincoln Center. The trilogy follows the lives of four giants of Russian thought and literature--anarchist Michael Bakunin, literary critic Vissarion Belinsky, literary giant Ivan Turgenev and revolutionary thinker Alexander Herzen--as they come of age under the oppressive regime of Tsar Nicholas I. MST Executive Artistic Director Rebecca Greene Udden, who is also directing the trilogy said in a press statement that the plays explore "the power of passionate discourse, the ability of fundamental philosophical ideas to re-shape one's world view and the hunger of young people eager to turn ideas into action."

Late Night Catechism
Jan. 25-Mar. 4 | Stages Repertory Theatre,
3201 Allen Parkway, Ste. 101
713-527-0123 | www.stagestheatre.com
Stages is bringing back the wildly popular, and wildly successful, Late Night Catechism. When the show first premiered at Stages in July 2007 it ran until November 2007 and gave theatre management the confidence to produce four sequels. And now the one-woman show created by Vicki Quade and Maripat Donovan that started it all is coming back to Houston, this time it's being performed in the round, which can only add to the interactive experience.

Motel Tropicana: An Adult Series of No-Tell Shorts
Jan. 19-Feb. 4 | Obsidian Arts Space, 3522 White Oak
832-889-7837 | www.obsidianartspace.org
For years it seemed if a young playwright wanted to get his or her one-act play produced he or she had to go out round up a bunch of actors, book a venue and do it his or her damn self. Sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn't--there's nothing quite as obnoxious as having a venue owner tell you he 'forgot' about you and double booked a thrash metal band. However, nowadays it seems that every other month brings another festival of short plays. Whether it's Freneticore's Fringe Festival, Mildred Umbrella's Museum of Dysfunction or Bighead Productions latest entry into the category Motel Tropicana. Motel offers patrons a chance to see a series of shorts, between 5 and 20 minutes long, set in a series of seedy motel rooms--or, depending on how you look at it, the same seedy motel room over a series of days. Each play features a completely different set of characters that will interact with the same set and getting into "adult situations."

SHOUT: The Mod Musical
Jan.19-Feb. 12 | College of the Mainland Community Theatre, 1200 Amburn Road, Texas City
409-938-1211/1-888-258-8859, Ext. 8345
www.com.edu/arts-culture/theatre
Scooters, tight clothes, hip-shaking tunes--it's either London in the 1960s or Montrose last Friday night. Either way the College of the Mainland theatre department is bringing it all to life with SHOUT: The Mod Musical which follows the lives of five women as they navigate the "Swinging Sixties" and take audiences back with renditions of period classics like "Downtown," "Goldfinger," "These Boots are Made for Walking," and "Son of a Preacher Man." As in the case of other rock musicals--like Love, Janis, Rain or Mamma Mia--SHOUT may run into criticism that it's only offering baby-boomer nostalgia mixed with hipster retro chic, but that doesn't mean that seeing "These Boots are Made for Walking" live isn't a good time. And for those who aren't able to take the Vespa out Old Galveston Rd./ Hwy 3 to Texas City, 10 days after the show closes at College of the Mainland another version opens at Theatre LaB.

Toxic Avenger: The Musical
Jan. 13-Feb. 12; Alley Theatre, 615 Texas Ave
713-220-5700; www.alleytheatre.org
Imagine the meeting: it's late 2010--maybe early 2011, Alley Theatre Artistic Director Gregory Boyd and his staff are sitting around a conference table coming up with ideas for shows to follow the annual money bomb that is Christmas Carol. Someone throws out the idea of doing another Martin McDonagh play. "Too done," says Boyd. Someone else suggests a Russian play. "Too predictable. Everyone will be doing Russian plays in January," says Boyd. Then out of nowhere a timid little voice peeps up. "What about the Toxic Avenger Musical," it asks. That has to have been the way it went because the idea that the Artistic Director of the Alley, the most famous theatre in town, would suggest a show based on a 1984 gore fest B-movie from Troma, the same company responsible for such cinema gems as A Nymphoid Barbarian in Dinosaur Hell and Blood Sisters of Lesbian Sin, is literally too much to think about. But it is happening. This is really a thing. The sentence "the Alley Theatre will be producing the regional premiere of Toxic Avenger: The Musical" has really been written. Apparently there are absolutely no distinctions between high and low culture anymore. If you don't know the plot to The Toxic Avenger shame on you. The original 1984 movie--and its myriad sequels and the bizarre children's cartoon--are available on the interwebs. The only way that a serious company like the Alley doing this show makes sense is either Boyd lost a bet or...nope that's it. That's the only way that decision makes sense. As much as this may not seem like an Alley type of show, the music is written by a founding member of Bon Jovi and the brutality of the movie is toned waaaaay down and replaced with Oprah jokes and environmental messages.

Uncle Vanya
Jan. 5-Jan. 22 | Talento Bilingue de Houston, 333 S. Jensen
713-963-9665 | www.classicaltheatre.org
For the second production of their 2011-2012 season Classical Theatre decides to take on the most well known work of the most well known Russian playwright. Anton Chekov's Uncle Vanya. The play is considered a comedy and revolves around a love triangle involving middle-aged Uncle Vanya, Yelena--the young wife of retired professor Serebryakov--and dashing young doctor Astrov--the object of Yelena's affection. The professor's daughter Sonya, who is older and less attractive than her stepmother, has also developed a crush on Astrov but worries that she won't be able to compete. The competing desires and personalities leads to a climax that, as Classical Theatre wrote in their press release, involves "gunplay, suicide attempts, and finally, in true Chekhovian fashion, more questions than resolutions." This will be the first performance of Vanya in Houston in 15 years and director John Houchin promises to get away from the "existential hopelessness" that characterizes most productions of the play. And if that's not enough plays about Russia a few weeks after Classical closes Vanya The Alley and Main Street both open two new Russia themed productions. At the rate this is going by April we'll all want overthrow the Tsar and drown ourselves in vodka. **FPH**

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BY JACK DANIEL BETZ

I MET DAVID LARRY LORRACK for the first time almost a year ago now. I was covering the tail end of the Super Happy Fun Land SXSW Overflow Fest and during that last week, the turnout wasn't great. I didn't know anyone there (which is unusual) so I paced around; biding my time while everyone else shot the shit. But then I bumped into a stern looking, red-bearded, David.

By appearances, I judged him to be a surly, longhaired, metalhead, probably an atheist with contempt for any kind of organized religion. Not so. In fact, David is a very affable, devout Christian with a unique vehicle for delivering the good news: thunderous, cacophonous, harsh noise music under the name Black Magic Marker.

Interview:
David Larry Lorrack



DON'T A LOT OF PEOPLE THINK THAT YOU'RE IN TO SATAN BECAUSE OF THE DARKNESS OF YOUR ACT AND SOME OF THE IMAGERY?
People that are too afraid to ask me might. By shows end they see the whole meaning. I represent JESUS CHRIST foremost. Welcome MATT124345 (a spooky instrumental) is the first song off 'SIDE DARK' released in 008. (Thanks JEFF) [Jeff was a former collaborator in BMM] That is also a bible verse over PA usually in the opening" I am your ADVErSARY" (the defeated foe) (the father of lies) JOHN1010 where i don a cloak and skull mask wandering through the audience screaming.

WHAT'S THE MOST NEGATIVE MOST RIDICULOUS REACTION PEOPLE HAVE TO YOUR WORK?
Hecklers that try to interrupt. There was one guy that said he didn't ask JESUS to die for him.
I've had threats till they found out my beliefs. I had a guy tell me that I was a modern day John the Baptist, which wasn't negative at all. I've had others just get up and walk out due to the feedback in the set or because they're offended.

A LOT OF YOUR PERFORMANCES ARE DONE IN MOVEMENTS OR ACTS. WHAT GOES INTO A PERFORMANCE BY BLACK MAGIC MARKER?
Lots of prayer...what I call Raw Meat the Gory Story of Love. The opening act (a spooky instrumental) is about a variety of topics. Act II mostly I just go with what comes out through my fender 100watt bass amp that night. My first noise music experience came from the sounds from the squeaky dryer in my basement at age nine. It's structured but allows anything from power chords to feedback that I try to manipulate I use different strings all on a BC Rich Warlock: piano wires, 120 pound test fishing line, banjo strings, and real bass strings for deep sound. And a contact mic and death metal pedal although I do prepare and backtrack on a 4 track cassette (don't laugh, I still use dinosaur technology) where I appear bloody and carry a 8 ft cross and wear a crown of thorns scream of THE MAN OF LOVE beaten beyond recognition ISAIAH 50:6. Act III is a graveyard setting where "blackmagicmarker" appears on a tombstone I painted. And carry around a bloody sheet representing the burial cloth for the single ONLY THE SHROUD REMAINS...

WHERE DID YOU GET THAT COOL LYRE THING?
What you seen is actually a bowed psaltery I received last Christmas from JeffVoyd. After researching it, the psaltery was used by the one who wrote psalms. I do now own a lyre that was donated to my cause by Flakey and Poopylungstuffing from SuperHappyFunLand where I did my first show in 2005 and play there quite often. PSALMS 33:2&3 sez Praise the Lord with the harp: Sing to Him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. Sing to Him a new song; play skillfully with a loud noise (i.e. a blast of joy)

EVEN THE NAME BLACK MAGIC MARKER IS KIND OF DARK SOUNDING FOR SOMETHING THAT HAS A CHRISTIAN INSPIRATION. WHERE DID THE NAME COME FROM?
As it is I always wore a blackmagicmarker around my neck as a poet (never know when a poem will come out) back in 05 MUZAK JOHN was having a birthday party asked to play I didn't have a name for the band I was signing his b-day card in of what else but a black magic marker. So kind of joking said we should call our band that. It stuck in minds...growing on people as the concepts and inspiration started flowing, making our mark so to speak. A marker is another name for a tombstone marking the death to something or someone. We have a song called "IN THE GRAVEYARD" and its inspired meaning is..... MARKING THE DEATH TO BLACK MAGIC.... an opposing force to belief in JESUS THE CHRIST.

YOU SAID YOUR PERFORMANCE ISN'T A MOCKERY OF THE CRUCIFIXION AND THE PASSION BUT INSTEAD IT'S LIKE A GLORIFICATION OF CHRIST.
Exactly. My place on the stage is to be in praise and adoration of Christ at HIS FEET not to be in HIS SEAT.

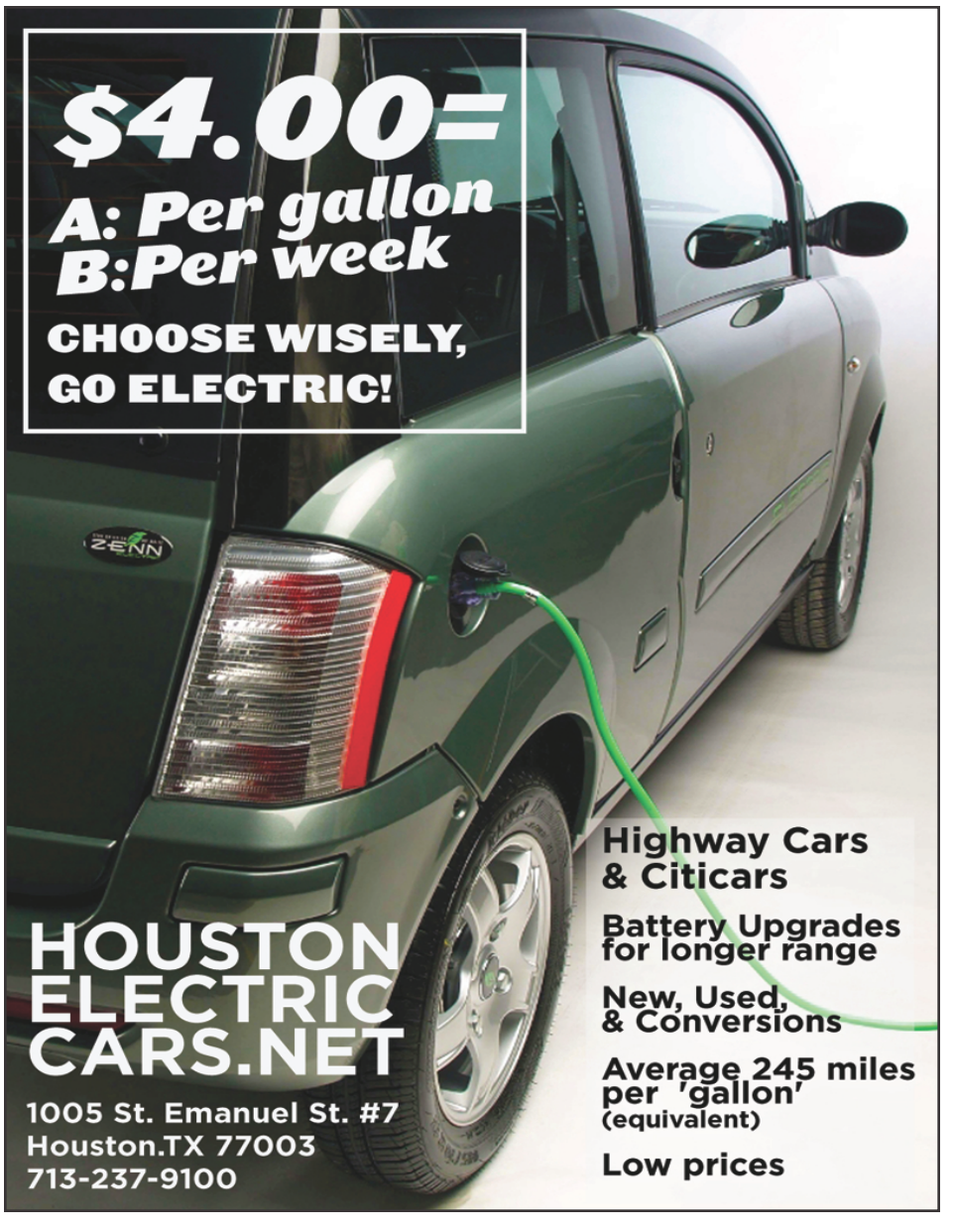
I REMEMBER DURING THE SXSW OVERFLOW FEST LAST YEAR YOU HELD UP A STONE WITH 666 ON IT. WHAT DOES THAT MEAN TO YOU?
Haha, did you not have your glasses or the stage lights blind you? It actually said ISAIAH 66 verse 6 ISAIAH 66:6 was how it appeared on the stone which is the encore and core purpose. "A VOICE OF NOISE FROM THE CITY A VOICE FROM A TEMPLE A VOICE OF LORD.... noise...is the styling of experimental music in many cities all over the world and as blackmagicmarker feel like it needs "a voice " hope mine is a sufficient one. It's been said, "pictures are worth a thousand word", hope they speak in loud volume!

ANY LAST WORDS?
The last shall be first and the first shall be last. And thank you to anyone who has given me an ear, to, whomever has an ear, let them hear. **FPH**


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Interview:

Rebecca French & Robert Thoth

BY ALEX WUKMAN
PHOTO BY ANTHONY RATHBUN



THE WEEK BEFORE CHRISTMAS and the leaves are finally turning; sub-tropic green giving way to New England orange. Specks of dried color lay scattered across the patio of Brazil as Rebecca French and Robert Thoth enjoy a late afternoon snack of coffee and cigarettes. Over the last 10 years French and Thoth have become well-known faces in the Houston underground arts scene. Much of their notoriety is derived from Freneticore, a dance/theatre company they founded in 2003, and Frenetic Theatre, the former machine shop on Navigation they purchased in 2006 to house their vision.

Even before they filed the papers to make Freneticore a legal entity, Thoth and French were known quantities at some of Houston's more esoteric locations--like Nestor Topchy's quasi-legendary Feagen Street art complex Zocalo and Jim Pirtle's social sculpture/punk rock club Notsuoh. Not only do French and Thoth cite Topchy and Pirtle as aesthetic influences, but they also draw a line between the work performed at their spaces in the late 1990s and early 2000s and the work being done at Freneticore now. The connecting line is drawn particularly strong for French, a former stripper and dominatrix who lived at Notsuoh for a while a lifetime ago.

"We come from the Richie Hubscher School," says Thoth citing underground Houston choreographer, and former member of the Houston Ballet, who left the Ballet to create Easy Credit Dance Company. French, who learned dance from Hubscher, doesn't bat an eye at the comment--probably because it's been over a decade since she and Hubscher parted ways. Even though Thoth and French run a successful non-profit when they talk about their productions their life stories start showing.

As Thoth describes the "raw and emotional" qualities of the shape singing featured in their 2004 production Sacred Harp, the light from a Mississippi childhood shines through his eyes. And the little laugh that follows French telling of renting a strip club to shoot video for their most recent show Tenderina reveals a well developed sense of irony. The reflective quality is well earned, as Thoth describes some of the difficulties the troupe faced performing their first show Owni vs. Hive in 2001 the waning light from late December provides a capstone for the pair's first 10 years.

"We had dancers in giant PVC spheres and we brought in a fight choreographer for a sword fight," says Thoth. Thoth goes on to tell about how one of the performers in the sword fight showed up for the performance "with huge pupils" and that the fight was performed in "slow motion." The anecdote ends on a bittersweet note, since the performer is now serving time in the County Jail. Like many small venue owners Thoth and French have struggled with the city. In 2007, a year after putting money down on their space, the Fire Marshal came by and closed them down. Fortunately they didn't have the same problems that other venue owners have had and they were able to reopen a few months later and stage Outside, a show they describe as "A cyberpunk dance drama..based on the concept album by David Bowie." Outside wasn't the pair's first venture into the world of adaptation. In 2005, as a reaction to the 2004 election, Freneticore staged a dance/film interpretation of George Orwell's classic 1984.

Over the last 10 years Thoth and French have let their muses take them, both physically and metaphorically, into some strange places and often those strange places are informed by experiences. In the case of Bedlam, a 2006 production about asylum inmates, Thoth explains that one of the characters came from a girl he knew in college.

"She was called 'Crazy Mary' and she dance around the fountains. She had an imaginary friend named Snowball--he was a giant white seal who played the saxophone and cried blood. How can you not make a show about that," asks Thoth. Despite the inherent oddness to some of their concepts, Thoth and French have become best known for literally taking dance to strange places. The 2009 piece Tetsujin/Exile took dancers into abandoned buildings and industrial settings and it allowed audiences to reconsider what Houston means.

"A lot of dancers use props, whether it's a bench or a bamboo spear, we just like using rubble or abandoned buildings and telling dancers 'imagine this is an insane asylum and you've just broken free. Now dance with that," says Thoth. He goes on to say that as a filmmaker he enjoys the challenge Houston, which isn't known as one of the country's most photogenic cities, presents.

"I like making ugly things pretty. Finding the beauty in urban decay, and we're never going to run out of that in Houston," said Thoth. French explains that Freneticore is positioning itself to take advantage of another plentiful resource, undereducated youth. "We offer free dance and theatre classes to kids in our neighborhood. Unfortunately we're not going to run out of kids who need arts education," says French.

One of the lessons that Thoth and French hope to pass on to the children they teach and the artists they work with is that it art is about using what you have. Thoth goes on to say, "you don't have to be rich as a company or be a genius creator as long as you use the resources you have in a clever way." Thoth and French's generally positive attitude towards their art and their supporters has helped them build a brand name and a strong audience following, something that French doesn't take for granted.

"Art is my religion and it's great to be able to worship with other people," says French. **FPH**

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