FREE PRESS

HOUSTON

MUSIC - NEWS - PUBLIC OPINION - ARTS - EVENTS

DRUGS USERS ARE UNCONDITIONALLY EXTERMINABLE

PAIN AT THE PUMP

LETTERS FROM PALESTINE

GAMING ARMAGEDDON



JUNE 2006
INITIAL DOSE
ISSUE #66

super happy fun land

...THIS IS ONLY A TEST...

June 7th:
We Were Born As Ghosts
Rayah
Landen Falls
The Banner Year
The One You Hate

June 8th:
Dire Wood
Arthur Yoria

June 9th:
Trip Adams

June 10th:
Animental
Poopy Lungstuffing

Sun June 11th:
Laundryroom Squelchers @4pm

June 12th:
The Child Forgives and Creates
Tranquil Echo, Margot

June 13th:
Bark Bark Bark
Chris Mcfarland
There, There
Dear and the Headlights, Morrow

June 14th:
The Western Front
Scenes From a Movie
Advent Scars
NEB

Thur June 15th:
Transmography
La Snacks
Nada Brahma
Barbie Debris
Stare Decisis

Fri June 16th:
Slow Poisoner
The Ghost Storys
Deathbed Repentance

Sat June 17th:
The Stunned (Cincinnati)
Down and Out (Texarkana)
Like Whatever!
Brains For Dinner

June 19th:
Blinking Light Productions Presents
From Postcards to Letters
Without a Face
By the Way

June 20th:
Tear the Sails
Scenic Attraction
Tastee Little Cowboys
2nd Hand Solution

June 21st
Everything, Now!
Kwirky

June 22nd
I Love You
The Mendicant Friends
Ask Mice
The Blue Letter
Tambersauro

June 23rd:
The Curbside Project
InDenmark
Hymn Six

Sat June 24th:
Extemp-O-Rama sponsored by Jam Houston
Bill Bridges (Austin) - 8:30 PM
Nuje Improv Trio - 9:30 PM
Fist of Kong - 10:30 PM
Defenestration Unit -11:30 PM

Sun June 25th:
BPM
Flat Earth
Juiceboxxx
Occasional Detroit

June 26th:
The Coma Recovery
Treasure Mammal
Fire vs. Extinguisher

June 27th:
Dogs Hit Taco
BAVAB BAVAB
Wince
Muzak John

June 28th:
Porch Crowd
Peter & the Wolf
Listen Listen
Inoculist

June 29th:
Astronautalis
Maaster Gaiden
The Generic Tribe

June 30th
Regg Solo
Jeremiah David

July 1st:
Quintron and Miss Pussycat
Harry Merry

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ThisIssue

May 2006 what you'll find

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Staff

Publishers Andrea Afra, Omar Afra, Omar Al-Bochi

Associate Editors

Arts Sean Carroll

Film Michael Bergeron

Local Alex Wukman

Music Kwame M. Anderson

Managing Editor Omar Afra

Contributors & Staff Writers Lance Walker, Brandon Montes, Tyler Barber, Devin McNulty, Jeff Storm, Alex "Asshole" Wukman, John Fergusin, Timothy O'Brien, Brittany Bly, Shelby Kelly, Nick Cooper, Eric Anthamatten

Photographers Anthony Rathbun, Mark Armes

Art Director Tyler Barber

Designers/Illustrations Jody Worthingto, Lyndia Haryanto, Omar Al-Bochi, Ryan Ottea, Shelby Kelly, Tim Dorsey

Delivery Tyler Barber, Jeff Storm, Mark Galveston, Tony Kaelin, Jerri Huston, Evan Dunivan, Ozcan Ozcelik

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| **Cover Art: Adrian Landon** Brooks

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Punch them in the neck
Deliberations on neck punching

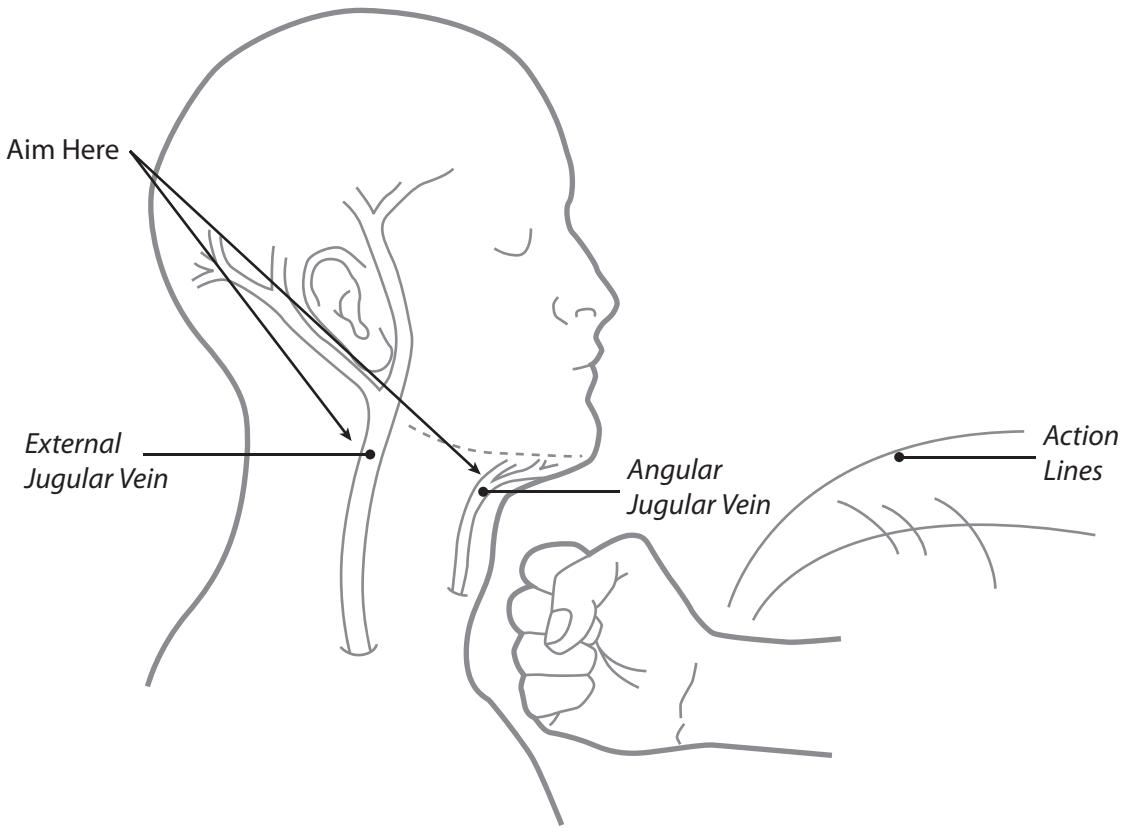
You: I still opin non-violence, regardless of how many boots are on your neck. But shit man, I dont know what I'd do.

Me: tru dat.yet again to the aushwitz model, when if ever, is there a time where physical force lacks the presence of violence and is only characterized by a desire for the cessation of violence; like pullling the class bully off of the nerd. the teacher has gotta do it...

You: Yeah, I've been embracing the idea that somtimes people need to be punched in the neck. Not the face, that's too violent and not good for the aesthetic landscape, and though being punched in the neck is more painful and twice as likely to knock someone out, its like saying, "hey, get your head on straight, or I may punch it off."

(see page 18)

–editor



West Fest Thanks!

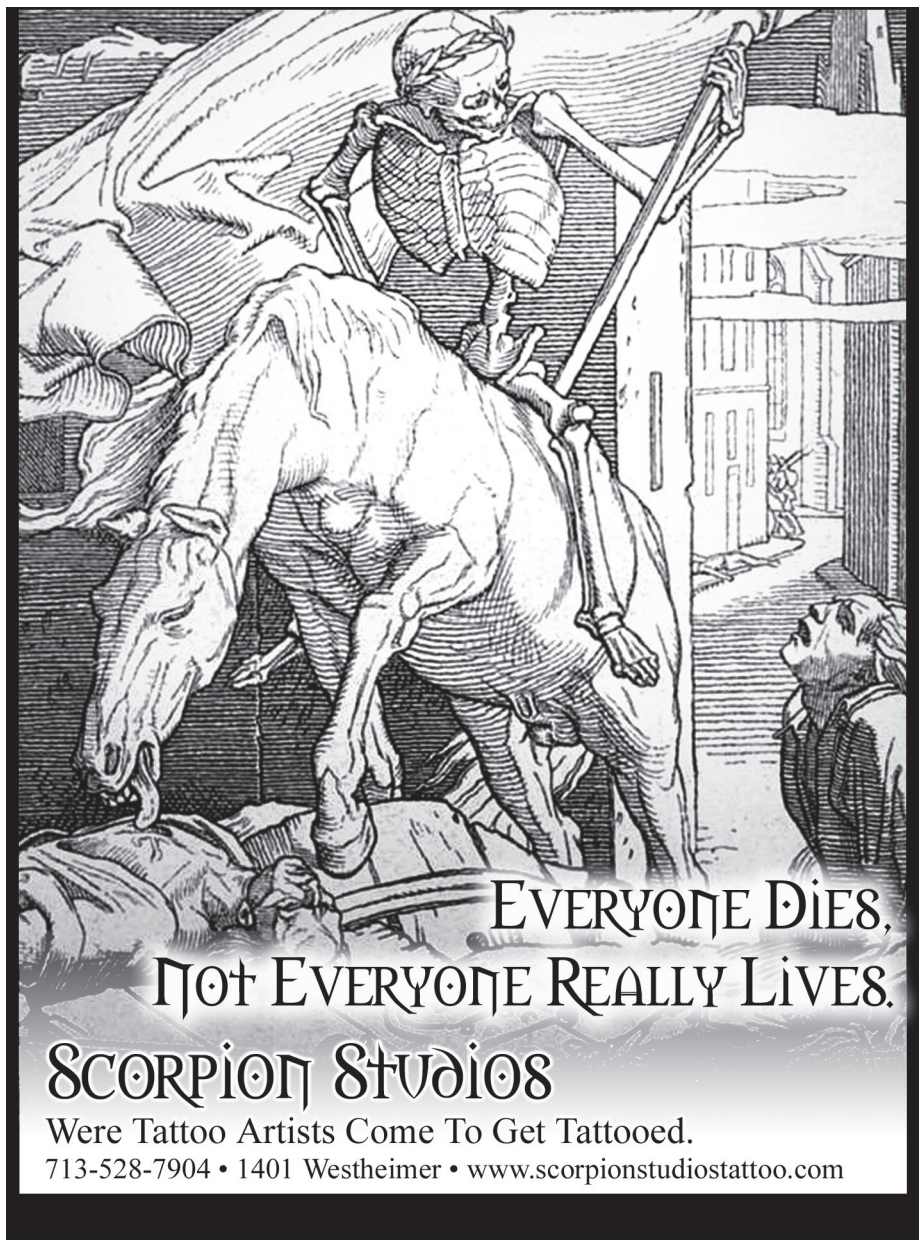
Thanks Houston.

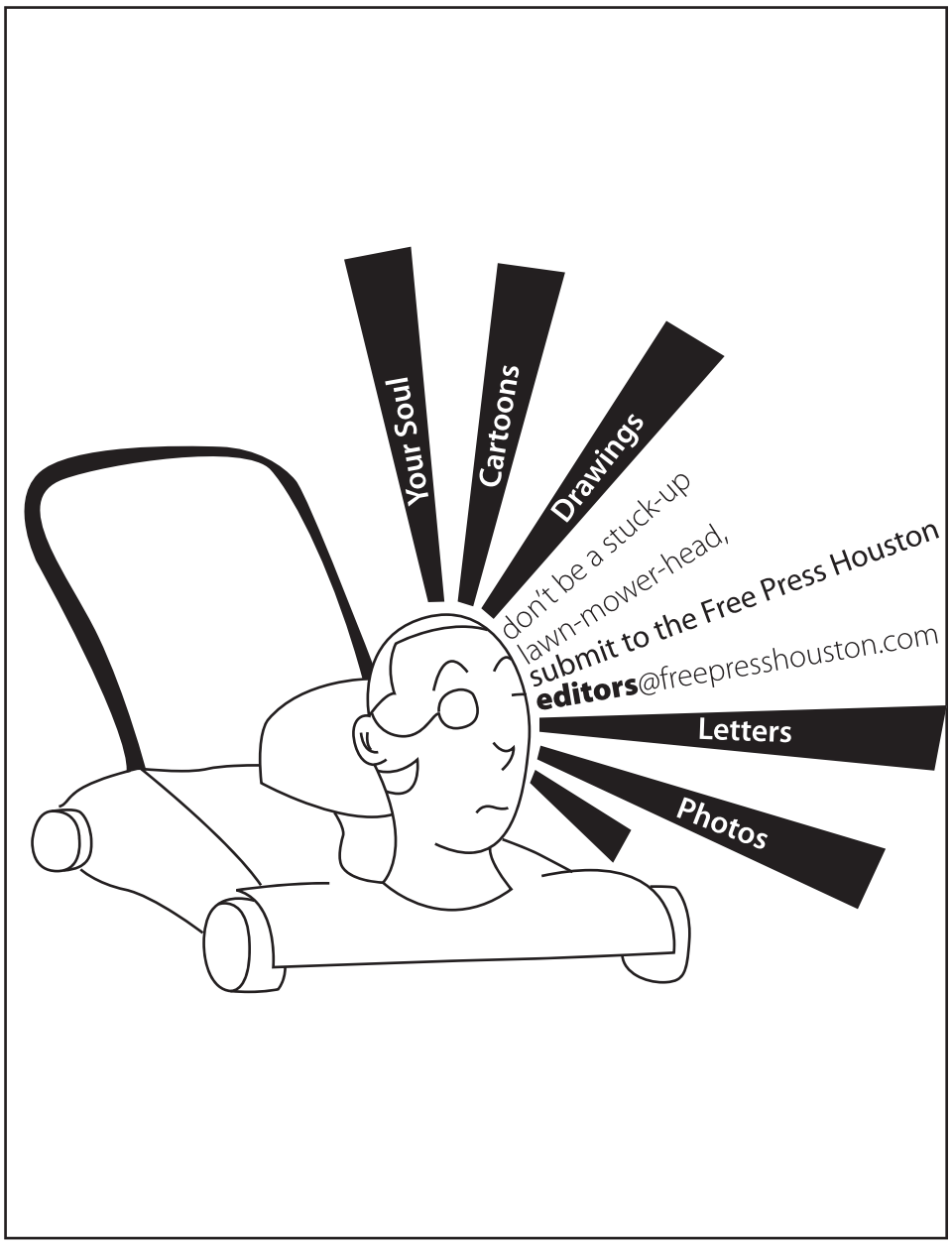
Despite all efforts by HPD and local 'civic' organizations, there is indeed a place for arts and live music in the Montrose amongst the newly emerging stucco, yuppie shacks. Judging by the looks of disgust and animosity of local yuppies driving around the block, the event was a success. That is what this event is all about folks: Afflicting the comfortable and exercising our right to assemble. Free Press Houston would like to thank the thousands of revelers and hundreds of artists and musicians who donated their talents. Expect word in the next several months as to when the fall Westheimer Block Party will be. Probably Sep/Oct.

Super!

Special Thanks:

Steve Bundrick
Eddie Vallon
Brian and Olivia from Super Happy Fun Land
Copy.com
Chemistry Records (Javier)
Eduardo Lopez
Eli Brumbaugh
Shane Hillman
Buffalo Sean
Derek Shumate
Tyler Barber
Louis and Chris Messina
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arts



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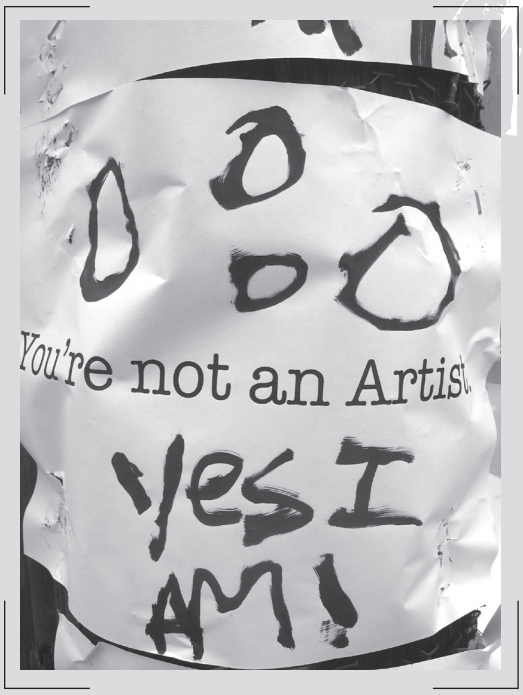
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In a Confined Silence: By Miriam Brysk
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DEBRIS: People's Champ

Buffalo Sean



Prepare to hear **Paul Wall** every day for the rest of your life. If you live in Houston, the anthemic *Sittin Sideways* will be blasting out of car stereos for at least the next decade, so get used to it.

Please, will someone working for the city put their foot down and build the rail line down **Richmond**? Take charge, ignore the detractors, and make this a real city instead of a messy suburban wasteland. Besides the whiny babies who are trying to put the construction down on **Westpark** (the perpetually weak-willed **Ted Richardson** of the Chron) does anyone even care? Besides some car crash jokes, most of the city hasn't even registered that there is rail in Houston. We need rail on Richmond to bridge the divide that has emerged between Montrose/Midtown and the Westside/Galleria and to promote a cultural identity of Downtown-Uptown synchronicity. Doing anything else is a selfish play at individual gain, we need leaders who can stand up to opposition and make Houston metropolitan.

With advertisers pulling us at all angles, Americans are having a tough time nailing down what they are supposed to be. Obesity rates, especially among children, are holding steady at a third of the population. Fear runs through our veins at this point, the fear of attack (terrorist, crime, rape, kidnapping, erectile dysfunction) is very real for most of you reading this and even more so for those not reading this. Rebellion is gone; kids trade pharmaceuticals to get high, give blowjobs and hold orgy parties not as transgression, but coming from the sense that




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23 FILM 45



Smart arse squirrels and audacious leaps

by Michael Bergeron

Can you get juiced about a sequel to Poseidon? Only this one stars Michael Caine and Sally Field and Mark Harmon and Telly Savalas. They are treasure hunters who go back to the sunken ship to retrieve a fortune. You don't have to wait to see it, it's already been made and released in 1979 – Beyond the Poseidon Adventure. One colleague told me it's "undeniably crummy." Good luck finding it on video. (If you score a copy, let me know.) The recent thrashing of Da Vinci Code reveals more about the era of publicity that we exist in now than what people really think about the film. Da Vinci release company Sony is busy on two sequels, one of which is based on Dan Brown's first novel Angels and Demons that deals with the Vatican versus the Illuminati. Sony was the company that manufactured the fake movie critic (David Manning) a few years ago. All print media has taken a hit regarding ad dollars from the major studios over the last five years. Newspapers like NY Times and the Houston Chronicle, along with all dailies across North America, have seen their movie-ad revenues drop collectively in totals of tens-of-millions. Plus, Hollywood has snapped that screening films for critics before opening day to insure said film ranks number one is way over: thus over a dozen films have not been screened for area critics to date this year. This applies to awful movies like Benchwarmers and excellent genre pieces like Silent Hill. The mauling of Da Vinci Code by a handful of reviewers can be seen as a kind of blowback for all the previous mentioned reasons as well as the fact that the same electronic and print outlets that control the majority of reportage are also the ones hissing with venom. Most reviewers see hundreds of films a year so Da Vinci Code doesn't hold up when compared to some of 2006's crop of primo flicks (V For Vendetta, Thank You For Smoking, Find Me Guilty, Cars, with the remainder of 06 reserved for movies from the likes of De Palma, Scorsese, Coppola pere and fille, Oliver Stone, David Fincher, et al.). The film goers who've en masse taken Da Vinci Code to over half a billion dollars in world wide grosses, in record time no less, are more than likely the average bear who sees five to ten films a year. And so the disconnect between the typical movie fan, who's actually more interested in finding a digital download for the latest episode of 24, and the discriminating 50 to 100 films a year fan who reads columns like this to find out why they should care about films as disparate as District B13 and Cars.

If you're a nihilistic pantheist, like your humble scribe, then you will welcome the concurrence of opinion that humans have taken Earth beyond the pale. To hear Al Gore tell it, global warming bad. Gore's stage presentation of An Inconvenient Truth at Hobby Center (tickets range from $20 to $54, with student tickets at $15) precedes the opening of the film by the same name later that week. It would be nice to think this film will play outside its constituency but as docus go it plays grim with no tarnish to the truth. Rumor has it the teaser poster showed a penguin walking across an arid desert.

For pure adrenaline infused action see District B13 (French import from 2004 Banlieue 13), a film written and produced by Luc Besson and helmed by Pierre Morel who cut his teeth as cinematographer on films like The Transporter and Danny the Dog aka Unleashed. District B13 has that similar whoosh-cut editing and knockout fight choreography with the emphasis on the parkour style of movement. The stars do their own stunts and in ways that emphasize the best of human agility with maximum use of the cinematic frame. In other words envision a Buster Keaton movie on steroids. The guy leaps gingerly through a transom for goodness sakes. Tom Cruise did some impressive stunts in Mi:3 but they're lost in the editing and spectacular pyrotechnics of that film. In District B13 the plot never overshadows the awesome nature of the movement. The movement is the movie. Many moments of parody pop up periodically, like a drug dealer who rivals Scarface for indulgence or the sheer lunacy of the hero's "impossible mission" to defuse a nuclear device set to explode in mere hours.

Cars offers a vision of America as a post WWII gas-friendly endless-highway and contrasts that with the perils of encroaching technology. The latest film from Pixar, Cars utilizes digital proliferation to recreate driving across the non-polluted red rock highways of yore. Since all the characters are automobiles there's none of the visual discomfort of computer humans so ubiquitous in most contempo animated product. The spectacle of driving over a bend in the road to see revealed a thirty-mile horizon that ends in mountain majesty is surely something to behold. Likewise the night scenes capture nocturnal driving emissions in a manner that would be impossible to shoot with film lenses. Look for stretches of landscape that resembles a silhouette of the Cadillac Ranch.

Pixar movies are memorable for their witty scripts and unique look but they knocked it out of the park with this model. Cars is worth the gas you will use to see it, and if you have tykes you'll be seeing it a lot. Dare I say it, anthromorphization has never gotten as much mileage when its cars doing the talking instead of animals. There's a fine line of action in animated films that delineates memorable from forgotten. For my money, Madagascar and Robots were dull and I can't remember what happened in Ice Age 2 or The Wild, both from a couple of months ago, to save my life. Another current cartoon release Over the Hedge showed visual smarts in two scenes that amuse and produce wonder with the way they merge satirical humor and visual panache. One moment in Hedge shows an outer space-view of Earth as we see an atomic cloud of nacho cheese dust envelope a hemisphere. Another sequence cracks wise on the various addictions to luxury and eating borne by people, as seen by animal eyes. In that scene the squirrel voiced by Bruce Willis explains: "We eat to live, humans live to eat. They call their mouth a pie-hole. This is a couch potato." Speaking about those two scenes, Hedge director (Ants, Sinbad) Tim Johnson told Free Press Houston during a recent press tour "Those are good examples of the kind of things you discover about the tone of the movie in the process of animation. We ended up calling that the food montage. The chief animator was Italian so he had started with this outside-the-box view of American food habits."



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SOUNDBYTES



AND I HATE IT BUT STRANGELY RESPECT IT LIKE GASOLINE

Kwame M. Anderson

The routine is memorized. The way things work, usually, is a band puts out an album and tours behind the album. It's the way the business is. The thing about that is, if you don't catch your favorite band during the cycle you may not ever catch them. And what if they don't came to your town, then you may never see them. Ideally the thing is to memorize the routin and fit yourself somewhere in the cycle of promotion.

But sometimes the band tires of the routine as well and then you have special moments: Like June 10th when The New Year will play with Shellac at Numbers. A special occasion because: a) The New Year don't play that much live, and b) neither does Shellac. In fact, it will be their first time in Houston or even Texas for that matter. The New Year released a brilliant album two years ago called Newness Ends. It seems peculiar that both bands would play such a major show with no album, book ,or DVD, or line of teddy bears to promote. No, they just wanted to play a show.

"It's actually been a long time in the works, it was something that Steve (Albini) and Matt (Kadane, his brother) talked about, I wanna even say maybe five years ago is when in it first came up," notes Bubba Kadane of The New Year. "And we just never really found the time to get together to do this, they (Shellac) wanted to come down to play Texas and asked us if we wanted to do it and help 'em take care of it because they'd never come down her before."

Sometimes songs or albums take awhile to sink in. It's one thing to see a song performed live, but it's different seeing one you love. It's probably the main reason you go to shows. I remember once going to see Sonic Youth and all of the songs they played were from an album they were about to release. I was kind of bummed because I wanted to hear the classics. But after hearing that album, I wished I'd paid more attention to it when I saw it a few months earlier. So, for people who may have just gotten in to The New Year, or began to appreciate they're music maybe after seeing them a few ago, here's another opportunity.

"One thing that I think is true is that when you go see a band play something that's relatively new it might not mean as much to you as, say you go see one of your favorite bands and they're playing stuff that you've heard for ten years, or five years, or whatever…I think that there is an extra level of appreciation or meaning, or however you want to look at it, because it's a little bit more absorbed, and you soak that in for a little bit longer, it means something more to you than it did possibly initially. I would always like to hear if somebody said that our records continued to mean more to them as time went on, that's want to hear, you don't really want to find out that they mean less and less s the years go by."

The New Year plays their songs to perfection. This is not just my opinion. It is a fact. Many times there can be several versions of a song. It is good to see a song presented in many ways but sometimes you are attached the arrangement. You know when the guitar does the thing or when the bridge comes. It's like eating your mother or grandmother's favorite dish. You 're not excited about the spontaneity as much as the consistency. It's good, maybe not the same exact good, but a dependable good. That is important in music as well. The New Year is dependable in that sense. They don't mess with the songs that much, but rather their ability to constantly nail them, to get them right, and to play them to precision is genius.

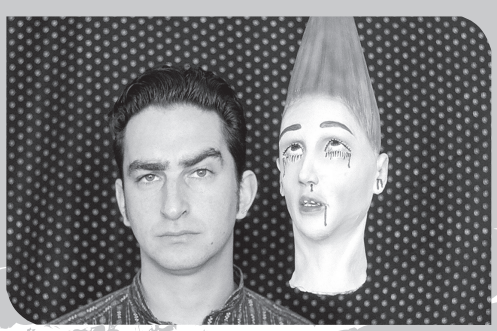
"It's one of those things where, I think the best way to explain it is that a lot of times, I think a lot of times, this isn't true about every band, but I know a lot of bands what they do is they'll have a basic idea about the things hat they are going to do, and certain things get hashed out in a band performance of them and they may record these things as they're ready to record them, and they may morph into something else in the studio, and there maybe multiple cooks in that kitchen who are coming up with certain ideas about things, and they may do it a certain way because two of the guys wanted to do it that way, and later on the other two guys want to do it a different way when they play it live, I mean there's endless scenarios… For us, it's different in the sense that Matt and I, and maybe this is just because we're obsessive, I don't know, we're constantly trying to take a song and work it towards what we feel is a natural end for it, but we record the song ourselves until we think it's basically done, we work on until it's done, until we feel like it's done, and that may take a couple of years, not a couple of years of us constantly working on it everyday…but we may sit on something for six months, and then think of a way to finish a certain part, or we may rethink something, or do it a slightly different way.. Regardless, all that stuff, all that trial and error, basically gets hashed out by the time the band even hears it, so you have so much trial and error that's been worked out at that point by the time the band plays it, then there a few things that we will continue to fine tune, and then by the time the band has played it for a little while and then we go record it, it's pretty much done, you know…regardless, they were all, basically worked out, and we felt like we got the definitive versions on tape…And this, honestly for me, goes all the way back to the first Bedhead record, I don't feel like changing the way any of those songs were done, I have certain things that I wish we would've done differently say recording or mixing or something like that, or certain little performance things here and there, nothing big really, but the basic structure of the songs I'm totally happy with."

The New Year will be playing first at the show so come early and see rock played at level future can match or even aspire to match. No tricks or inside jokes, no knowledge of the back catalog, jJust the observation of a magnificent band playing with another on a Saturday night. It's almost too perfect.

Shows



Bowel 6/6/06 @ Engine Room



The Slow Poisoner 6/16 @ Super Happy Fun Land



I-45 6/10 @ Meridian



David Nathan 6/12 @ Helios



Shellac 6/10 @ Numbers



The Coup 6/20 @ Warehouse Live

for info on venues, visit **freepresshouston.com**

…And now, as a whore once told me, let's get on with it shall we…

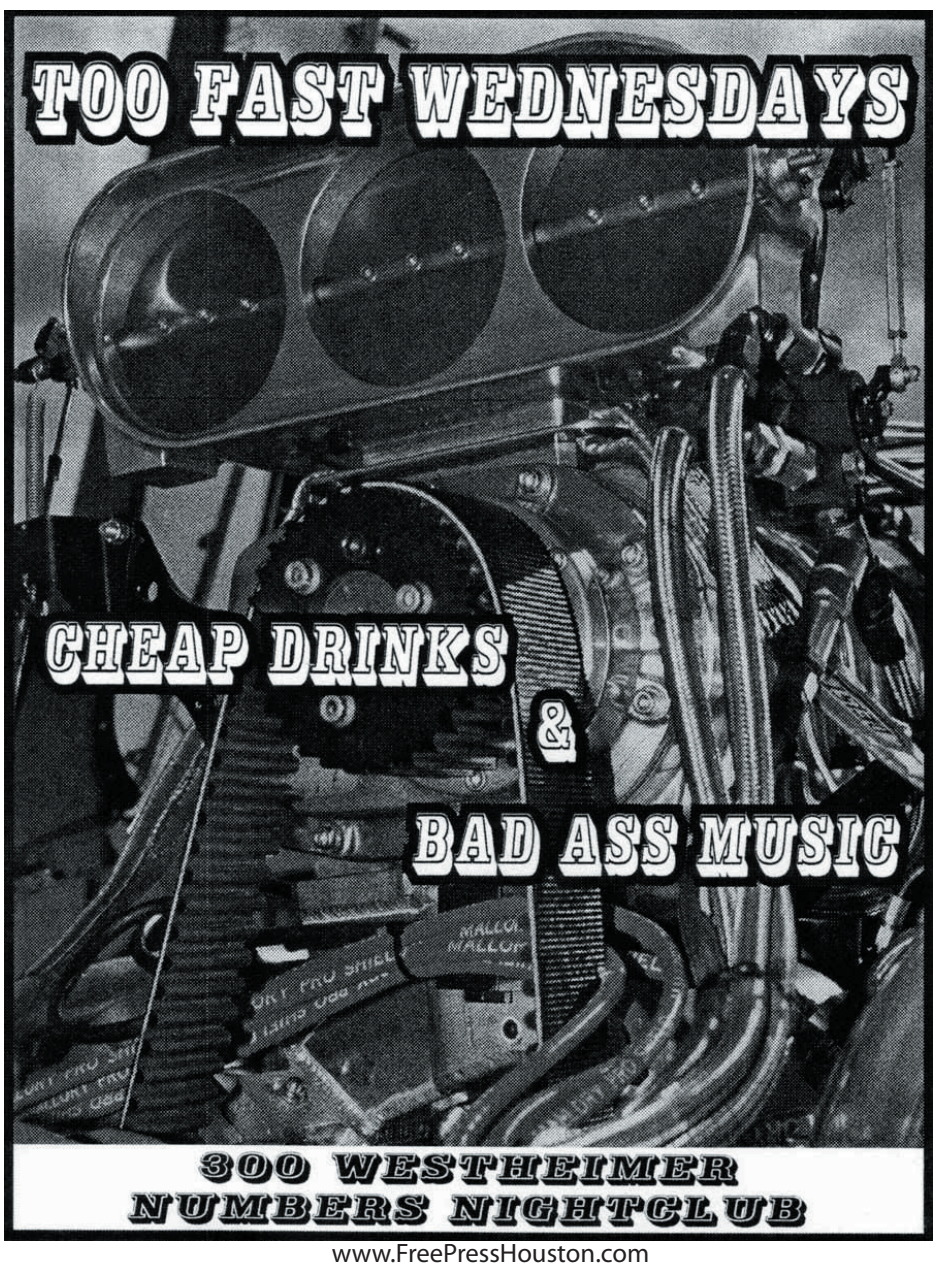
SONIC YOUTH
6/22/06 Warehouse Live

Let's say Sonic Youth is to some what Aerosmith is to others: a rock staple, royalty. Not only did they help usher in an aesthetic that colors most of my record collection. They also brought with them an appreciation for the way rock should be played and kept much of the punk rock aesthetic that Thurston Moore and Kim Deal experimented with in the "early days." They've played with everyone from Sun Ra to Neil Young, Unwound to Pavement, Wilco to The Flaming Lips. They are one of the most relevant bands playing music today, as everything from their sound to their fashion influences, inspires and permeates culture. They've been around for more than fifteen years and have always managed to stay ahead of the curve. Their new album*Rather Ripped* is stupendous and will be out by the time they play this show. The main reason to see this show isn't that they're one of the most influential and important bands of the last twenty-five years, it's that they're Sonic Fucking Youth. I'm 19 every time I see them, minus the acid and endless amounts of time of course.

BAND OF HORSES/ MT. EGYPT
6/24/06 Walter's On Washington

Band Of Horses just released their debut album *Everything All The Time* on Sub Pop. For an initial offering it's rather beautiful, filled with explosions of sound and color it often gets compared to bands like My Morning Jacket or Built To Spill. Like those two stalwarts of indie rock cool Band Of Horses believes in a sprawling guitar rock vision. Some of their songs are true gems like "The Funeral," which should be given to anyone who has to deal with Houston traffic on a regular basis. The guitar licks transport you to your cave where you find your power animal, only instead of a penguin it's a giant bubble bath. "Monsters" on the other hand takes you to the corner of the street and asks "Aint they all like monsters," unfortuantely they are. The opener Mt. Egypt is a tour veteran with one of the most impressive and diverse resumes of any songwriter. Having opened for The Flaming Lips and Willie Nelson he continually shows his greatest work is yet to come. I could say fans of Will Oldham or Alasdair Roberts would like his music, but that doesn't mean that fans of Slayer or Young Joc couldn't enjoy his music as well.





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I-45 with Taste of Garlic
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Q. U. E.
Reason2Rebel

Tue. - Jun. 13
Marc Broussard

Thur. - Jun. 15
Cracker With The Elms
Three Fantastic

Fri. - Jun. 16
Crimson Moon With Nodens
To Scale The Throne
Dagon, Abyssmal Nocturne

Sun. - Jun. 18
The Accident Experiment - Featuring Marcos Curiel of P.O.D.
element+eighty
Erase The Virus
Deus Machina

Tue. - Jun. 20
Nekromantix, w/ Shark Soup
The Chop Tops

Thur. - Jun. 29
Another Werewolf Western Showcase #1 w/The U-Joints
The Midnight Sinners
The Dead End Cowboys
Steven Reynolds & The Texas Two

Sat. - Jul. 1
Derrick Carter

Thur. - Jul. 6
Essence Festival Meltdown
Summer Love Concert & Music Fest

Sat. - Jul. 8
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.belville dot preview

By Sarah Gajkowski-Hill



You may have already inadvertently heard .belville. They are a readily downloaded myspace band among the, well, myspace.com crowd—good for 400 plus downloads a day, at least. They were on the Houston Press' nomination list in both the best new band and best vocalist categories and they have friends in the business. And while they get the press they desire, they have yet to establish a solid Houston fan base. The reason? Their influences are largely late 1990's rock and just a few oddly-strung reviews later which portrayed the lead singers' voices as grunge, even Cobain-esque, the frenzy surrounding them soon fizzled. Despite this, the male/female lead vocalists of the band .belville (yes, with the period) may be subtle but are never guttural or "grunge" as I have heard them called. The male vocalist channels vintage Michael Stipe and the airy duo between aforementioned Jay and Vikki is reminiscent of the best of the live chemistry between Kim Deal and Frank Black. On the softer ballads, they can sound downright angelic and on the edgier tracks, the unique quality of Jay's voice becomes tightly reined, as though struggling to keep from crossing over into punk. It's a narrow line and the band, while making the rounds in the Houston scene, are akin to national bands like Film School and The Spill Canvas—they leave everyone in a spacious groovy place after playing. Making them the favorites at places as low key as Diedrich's coffee shops where they tread acoustically for the most part, their singer/songwriter designation is bumped up a few notches to rock in the venues they favor, for instance, Scout's Bar in Clearlake (where, incidentally, Jada Pinkett-Smith's metal band played just an evening before) to their upcoming gig at Walter's on Washington's on June 10th. Their not-so-hard-core sound is lyrics-driven, so the repetition it tends towards is pleasing.

So now that all of America has access to their brilliant singles online all problems concerning getting an audience is about to change, hopes the four member outfit. Their upcoming show is at Walter's—the famed venue with the double bar running down its parallel walls, making it the most accessible and interesting place to both crowd surf and keep up your buzz—is being promoted heavily. After showing you their many turns and styles they even leave room for the improv they love to play around at—and remember to request "Freebird" when they ask the crowd for suggestions. During and after the show, they will be shamelessly pushing a newly cut 3 song CD. If you are tired of leaving clubs a cathartic, sweaty mess, consider leaving a concert in a contemplative and romantic state for once. Long live atmospheric, meaningful rock!

Walter's On Washington (all ages, $5 at the door) with Something Fierce, The Dimes & Carousel Shy. June 10th. Doors Open at 8 PM.





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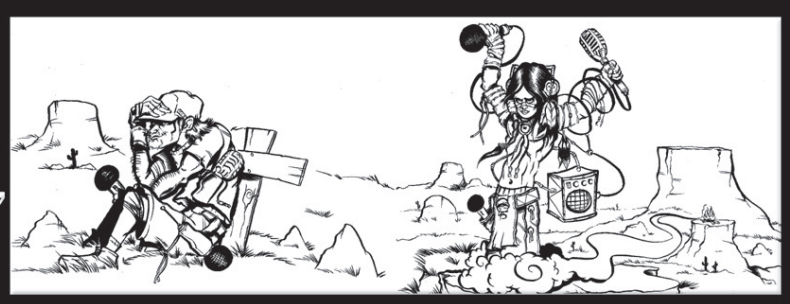
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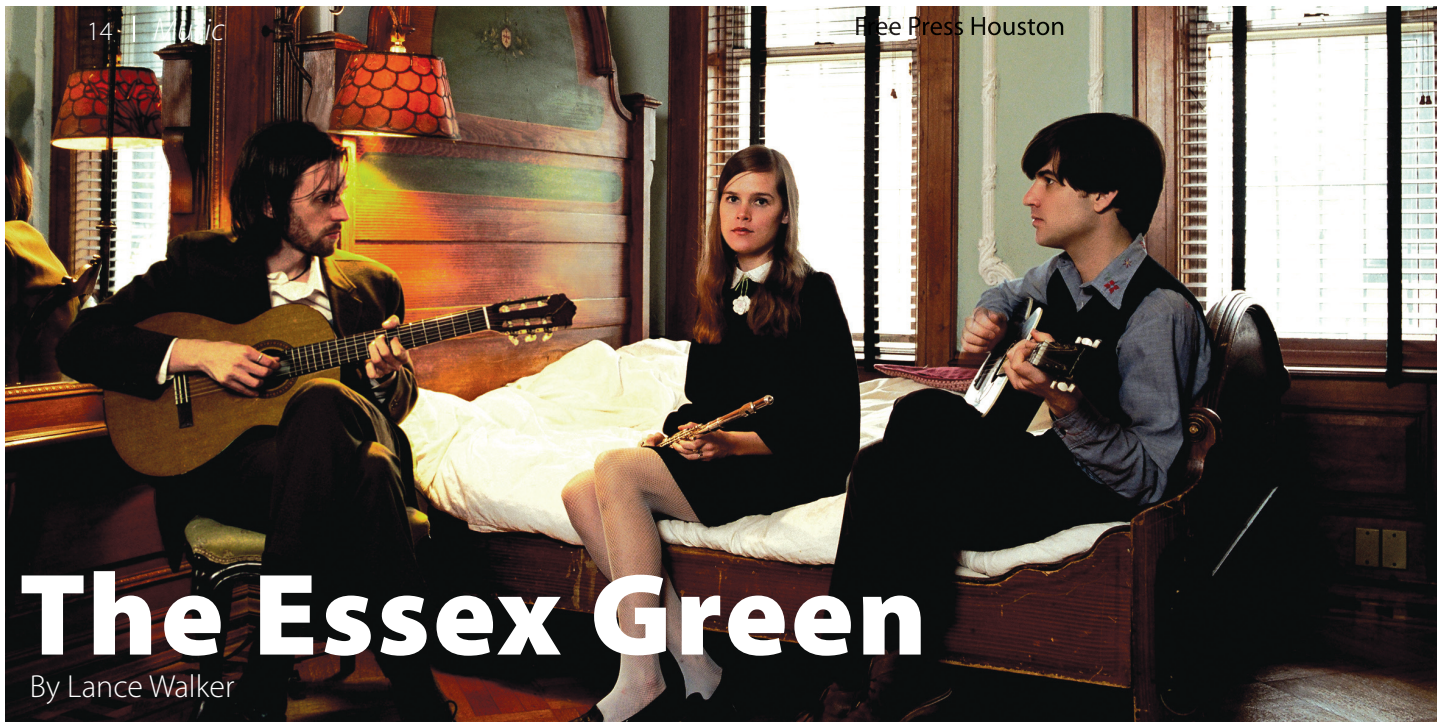
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The Essex Green

By Lance Walker

Cannibal Sea
(Merge)



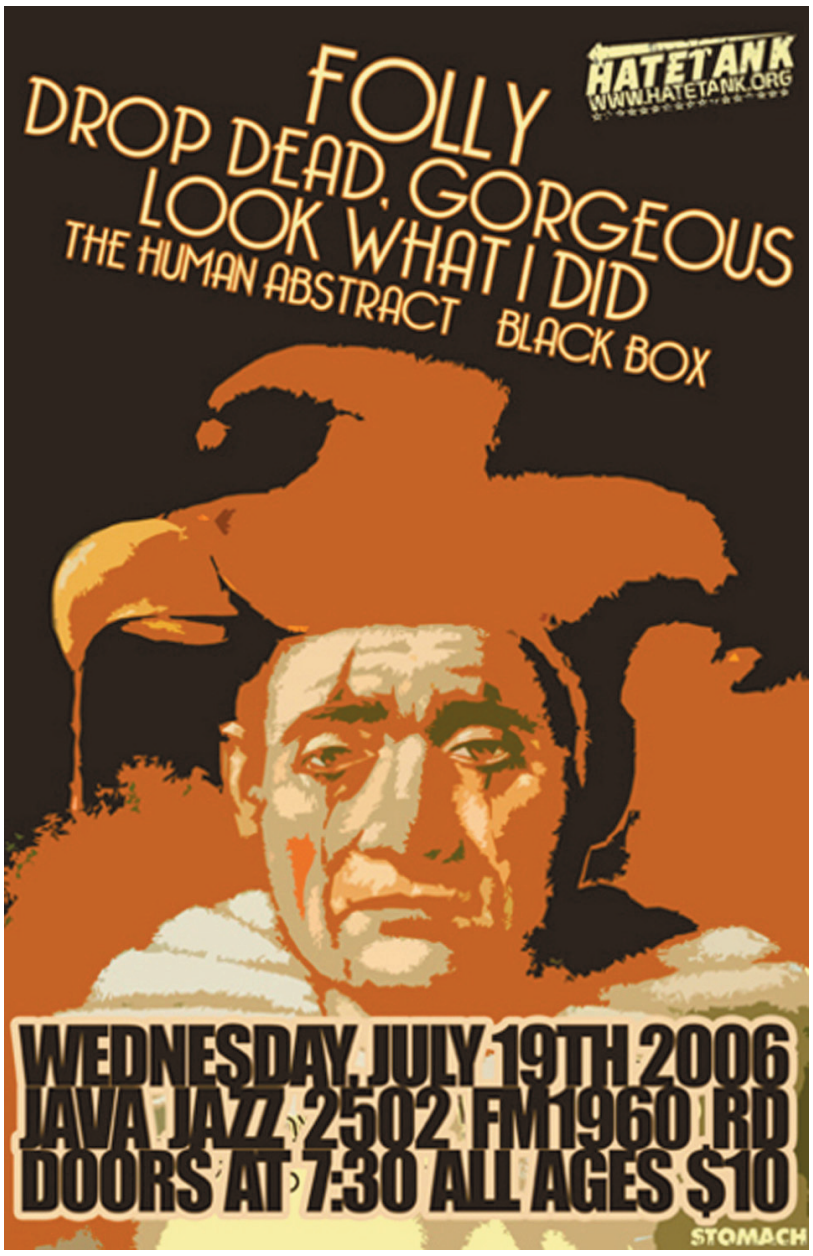
The good thing about co-songwriting teams is the element of balance that it brings to the band. The bad thing about co-songwriting teams is also the element of balance that it brings to the band. Because for all of the seamless Lennon-McCartney and MacKaye-Picciotto teams out there, we are still shouldered with countless Pollard-Sprouts, whose contributions to their records, quality as they may be on either end, can interrupt the continuity of an album and throw it into an altogether different direction.

Sometimes, that's a good thing. Such is the case with the tag team duo of Sasha Bell and Christopher Ziter, who, along with Jeff Baron, make up the Brooklyn trio The Essex Green. Bell's voice could melt ice cream. Ziter's voice could freeze it back. The innocence in Bell's candor makes everything she tells you in her lyrics just sound… matter of fact. And though Ziter's voice is equally pretty in its own right, by comparison it sounds like the kid down the block that you *just* don't want that other voice (Bell) running around with. That difference in their vocal characteristics totally works, though, and they've upped the ante on this record by stretching out of the confines of late '60s pop and even throwing in a bit of (gasp) the '80s. "Penny & Jack" sounds like something straight off the charts in a period where the bands listed on the pop charts had names like The Cars, Modern English and The Church, and their arrangements in general sound more linear than the Byrds-drenched pop on 2003's *The Long Goodbye*.

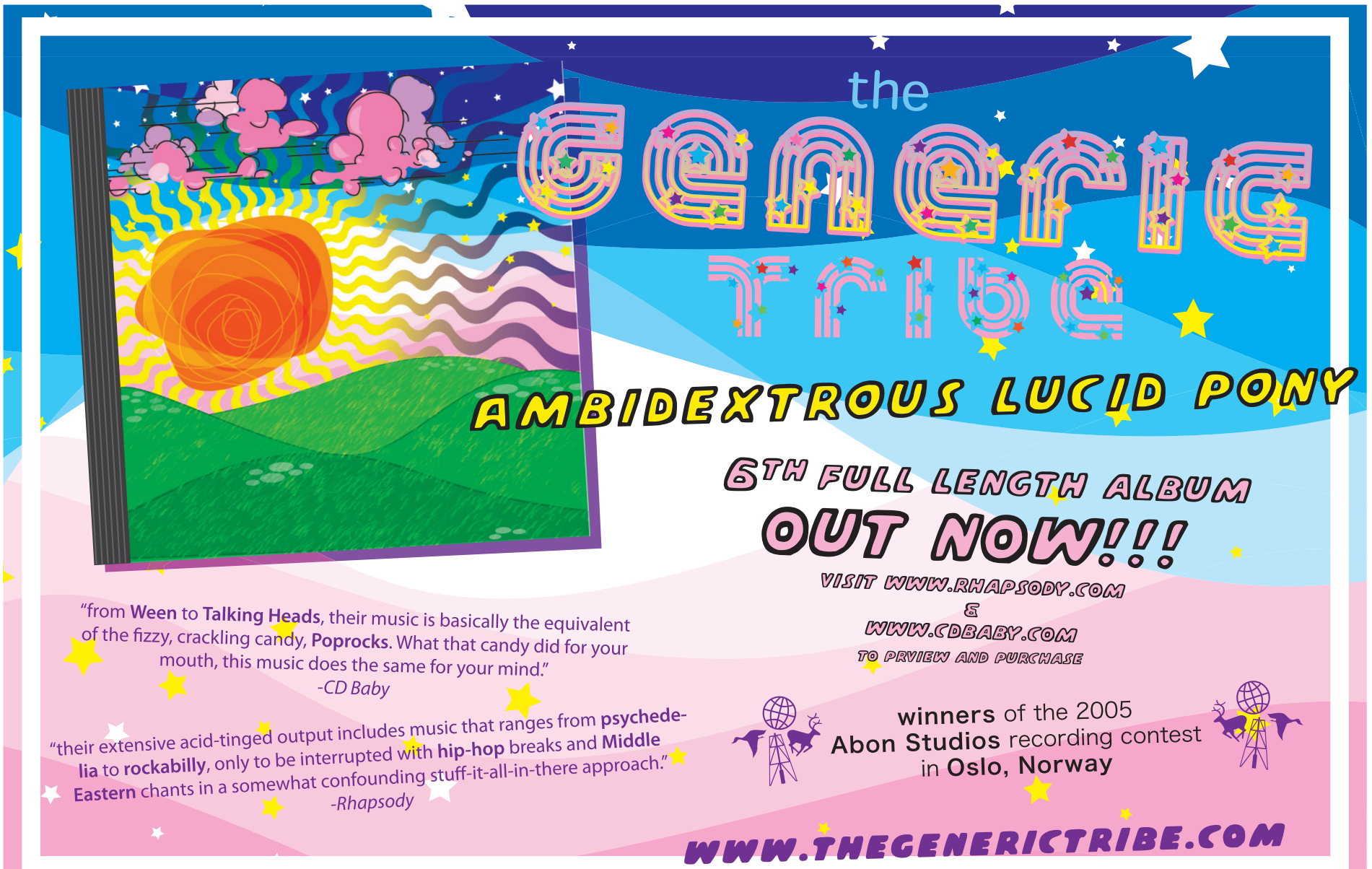
It's still as eclectic an effort as ever, though. When Ziter (or is it Baron? Shit…) serves match point with "Rue De Lis," a almost country number with brilliant guitar playing that echoes the finger-picking wizardry of the late Jim Croce (but brought up to the speed of one of the Eagles' faster numbers) it only serves as a divider to the sides of the album, not an interruption. The early half of the album, even though it is home for the sure to be hit "Don't Know Why (You Stay)," is on rubber legs, and it really isn't until the latter half of the record that you get the impression that the band has felt things out. Almost as if the first half is an experiment, and the second part is a reward for sticking with it.

Lyrically, the themes on *Cannibal Sea* visit the pressures of big city life and all that it does to light a fire under the band's wanton for greener pastures. And while that's certainly less annoying that a lot of the bubblegum that makes it to the lyric sheets of some Elephant 6 bands, it would be difficult to find legions of those sympathetic to their plight. I mean, if you don't like living in the big city… *move.*




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-Rhapsody
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JUNE MUSIC & EVENTS

MONDAY

The Medicine Show, The Trade @Helios

The Mighty Orq @The Big Easy

Open Mic Comedy @Laff Stop

Pool, Darts, Ping Pong @Fitzgerald's

The Child Forgives and Creates, Tranquil Echo, Margot @SHFL

The El Orbits @Contitnental Club

12

The Medicine Show, The Trade @ Helios

The Mighty Orq @The Big Easy

Open Mic Comedy @Laff Stop

Pool, Darts, Ping Pong @Fitzgerald's

From Postcards to Letters, Without a Face, By the Way @SHFL

The El Orbits @Contitnental Club

19

The Medicine Show, The Trade @ Helios

The Mighty Orq @The Big Easy

Open Mic Comedy @Laff Stop

Pool, Darts, Ping Pong @Fitzgerald's

The El Orbits @Contitnental Club

26

TUESDAY

Marc Broussard @The Meridian

Free Pool (all day) @Proletariat

The Sleeping Rubys @Contitnental Club

Scott Daniels Band @Last Concert Cafe

Rudyard's Comedy Werkshop @Rudyards

Jeremiah Johnson @The Big Easy

City Council Public Session

13

Rudyard's Comedy Werkshop @Rudyards

The Walkman @Numbers

Free Pool (all day) @Proletariat

Scott Daniels Band @Last Concert Cafe

Jeremiah Johnson @The Big Easy

City Council Public Session

20

The Sleeping Rubys @Contitnental Club

Rudyard's Comedy Werkshop @Rudyards

Free Pool (all day) @Proletariat

Scott Daniels Band @Last Concert Cafe

Jeremiah Johnson @The Big Easy

City Council Public Session

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WEDNESDAY

Breakfast Club @Numbers

We Were Born As Ghosts, Rayah, Landen Falls, The Banner Year, The One You Hate @SHFL

Poetry Night @Helios

Pot Roast @Last Concert Cafe

Christian Finnegan @Laff Stop

Turbojugend Humpday, The Contingency @Rudyards

7

Murder By Death, Langhorne Slim, Metal Hearts @Walters

Breakfast Club @Numbers

The Western Front, Scenes From a Movie, Advent Scars, NEB @SHFL

Poetry Night @Helios

Pot Roast @Last Concert Cafe

Turbojugend Humpday, Dirttruck @Rudyards

14

Breakfast Club @Numbers

Turbojugend Humpday, Songs of Evil @Rudyards

Everything, Now!, Kwirky @SHFL

Jimmy Pardo @Laff Stop

Poetry Night @Helios

Pot Roast @Last Concert Cafe

21

Breakfast Club @Numbers

Turbojugend Humpday, TBA @Rudyards

Joey "CoCo" Diaz @Laff Stop

Poetry Night @Helios

Pot Roast @Last Concert Cafe

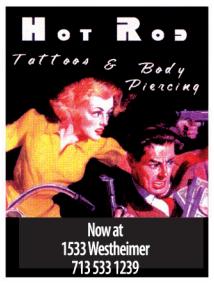
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THURSDAY

The Hightailers @Last Concert

Dire Wood, Arthur Yoria @SHFL

The Jonbenet, Bowel, Virgins, Highwater Waltz, This is the Concierge @Walters

digifunk, Open Mic @Helios

Christian Finnegan @Laff Stop

Joe Lynn Turner @Meridian

8

Palehorse, Bitter End, Shipwreck @Walters

Cracker @The Meridian

digifunk, Open Mic @Helios

Kaos @Numbers

Scott Biram @ Continental Club

Demon's Claws. BBQ @Rudyards

Transmography, La Snacks Nada Brahma, Barbie Debris, Stare Decisis @SHFL

15

The Hightailers @Last Concert

digifunk, Open Mic @Helios

Rock Box Pelvic Thrust Thursdays @Proletariat

Kaos @Numbers

Eighty Four, Something Fierce @Rudyards

Jimmy Pardo @Laff Stop

22

Astronautalis, Maaster Gaiden, The Generic Tribe @SHFL

Klusterfuck is back! @Helios

Tilly and the Wall, David Dondero, Now It's Overhead @Walters

digifunk, Open Mic @Helios

Another Werewolf Western Showcase #1 @Walters

Joey "CoCo" Diaz @Laff Stop

Kaos @Numbers

Lanky @Rudyards

29

FRIDAY

Classic Numbers @Numbers

Trip Adams, Gruk, Nada Brahma @SHFL

Living w/last and friends, Mission Control@Helios

The Jonx, Sharks & Sailors, Motion Turns On @Walters

Christian Finnegan @Laff Stop

Free Radicals @Last Concert Cafe

9

Classic Numbers @Numbers

The medicine Show @Helios

Opie Hendrix @Last Concert Cafe

Ese, Metal Showcase With Crimson Moon @The Meridian

Christopher Wilson, Sky Blue 72, PWS @Rudyards

Slow Poisoner, The Ghost Storys, Deathbed Repentance @SHFL

Harland Williams @Laff Stop

16

Classic Numbers @Numbers

Southern Backtones @Rudyards

The Curbside Project, InDenmark, Hymn Six @SHFL

Brazilian Party downstairs @Helios

Jimmy Pardo @Laff Stop

23

Classic Numbers @Numbers

Regg Solo, Jeremiah David @SHFL

Poetic house Party @Helios

Joey "CoCo" Diaz @Laff Stop

Fondue Monks @Last Concert Cafe

Bowel, The Love, Drunks, Born Liars, babel fishh @Rudyards

Molly and Ringwalds, Jon Dee Graham @Contitnental Club

30

SATURDAY

SHELLAC @Numbers

Animental, Poopy Lungstuffing Moth!Fight! @SHFL

Baclavas art opening @Helios

I-45 with Taste of Garlic @The Meridian

Raspas @Last Concert Cafe

Archer Avenue, Orange Is In, Arthur Yoria @Rudyards

10

Danseparc @Numbers

The Stunned, Down and Out, Like Whatever!, Brains For Dinner @SHFL

Dean Seltzer @Last Concert Cafe

Aves Wing, Cerebro, Saturate @Helios

Charlie Ray & The Hemphills @The Meridian

Shandon Sahm, Amplified Heat @Rudyards

Harland Williams @Laff Stop

17

Underworld's Monthly Bash @Numbers

The Drunks, Oklahomos, Donkey Punch @Rudyards

Super Summer Party (Bands, Gay pride parade drink stop) @Helios

Band of Horses, Mt. Egypt, The Can't See @Walters

'rent' 35 @The Meridian

Extemp-O-Rama sponsored by HoustonBill Bridges, Nuje Improv Trio, Fist of Kong, Defenestration Unit@SHFL

Jimmy Pardo @Laff Stop

24

SUNDAY

Big E's Rockabilly @Continental Club

Laundryroom Squelchers , Rotten Piece , Muzak (2:30 pm) @SHFL

Live Zydeco @The Big Easy

Accoustic Jam Sessions, David Fahl & Band @Last Concert

11

Live Zydeco @The Big Easy

Accoustic Jam Sessions, David Fahl & Band @Last Concert

Jesse Dayton, Chaparral @ Continental Club

Tribute to Krullenzith w. Gates of Enoch, Adumus, Ninth Kingdom, Nodens, Feretralh, Gaius Torsectomy @Walters

The Accident Experiment @The Meridian

18

Fundraiser event for: Homeless Pet Placement League @Helios

Live Zydeco @The Big Easy

Accoustic Jam Sessions, David Fahl & Band @Last Concert

Banana Blender Surprise @ Continental Club

Big E's Rockabilly @Continental Club

BPM, Flat Earth, Juiceboxxx, Occasional Detroit @SHFL

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Letters from Palestine

Houstonian Hadeel Assali on location in Palestine gives us insight to the situation 'on the ground'.



The problem is i just didn't know where to begin.

Two nights ago there were random explosions around Bethlehem. We still don't really know what they were. Last night Israeli Army jeeps roamed the streets around 2 a.m.

Bethlehem is asleep. Not a voluntary peaceful sleep, more like a drug-induced slumber. The wall and Israeli settlements are snaking around this holy city, choking it. The Israeli military can come into this and other Palestinian cities whenever they damn well please. Remember all this the next time you hear another Christmas carol about peace in Bethlehem...

The old and the new parties are beginning to take their battle to the streets. EVERYONE I have spoken to is disgusted and Palestinian prisoners have threatened a hunger strike if it doesn't end. Hamas's new "security force" continues to flex its muscles in the streets of Gaza. The other day in Dheisheh refugee camp, Fateh "troops" flexed theirs - even stopping and checking cars. As if Palestinians needed more checkpoints.

As Z said, "All the Israeli army has to do is say 'we are coming' and these guys would all go scurrying to hide."

Stayed up late listening to friends' battle tales over coffee and cigarettes; laughing and joking about the incidents in jails, during military invasions, curfews and interrogations... I should be used to it by now: the comedy of the occupation. But still I am blown away by Palestinian resilience.

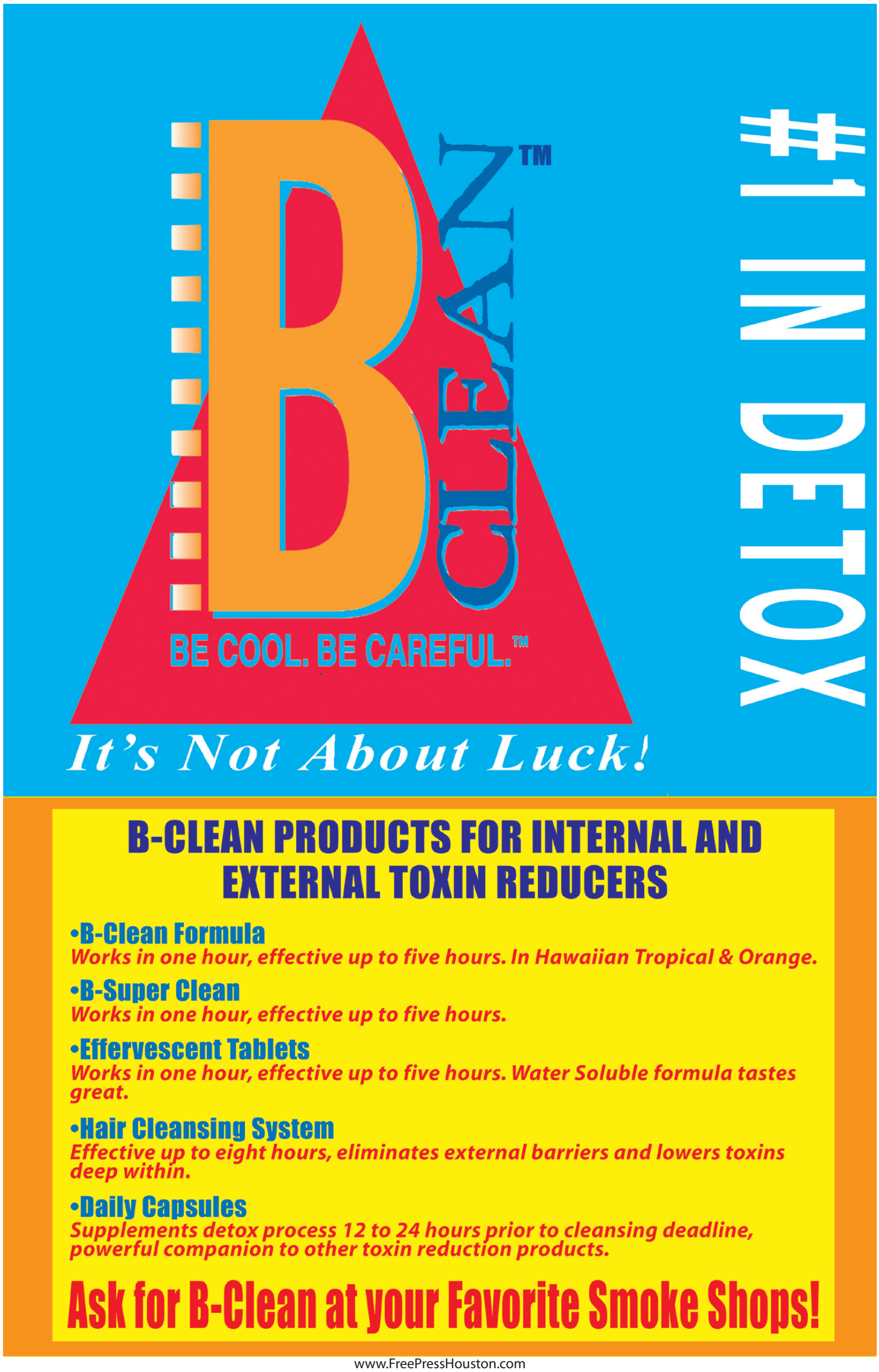
According to the news (Al-Jazeera, in particular), American soldiers mowed families down with machine gun fire in iraq, Spain sentenced an Al-Jazeera reporter of Syrian descent to 7 years in prison for interviewing bin laden although it is perfectly ok for american reporters to interview Bin Laden. Meanwhile here in Palestine, civil workers (including school teachers) STILL have not been paid for almost three months now thanks to US/European/Israeli pressure to squeeze out the democratically elected Hamas government.

Since i have been here at the Ibdaa cultural center in Dheisheh refugee camp, I have not been interacting with as many Israeli soldiers as the first couple weeks when I was in the northern West Bank. Dealing with soldiers is one challenge, but then there are so many different Palestinian reactions to "internationals". There is straight-up confusion when it comes to me. "Are you one of us? One of them? Somewhere in between? You speak Arabic well! You are palestinian! Come have dinner...have tea...spend the night...what? you are not married? you travelled alone? Born in Saudi and raised in America? Oh we Palestinians are scattered everyone...Allah ey-3eenah - God help us..." But the worst is sharing in the feeling of absolute helplessness as Israeli settlers march on Jerusalem for Jerusalem Day as Israeli bulldozers raze homes to the ground. Israeli soldiers take their sweet time letting people through (or turning people away) at checkpoints while hundreds of Palestinians wait in the hot sun for hours.

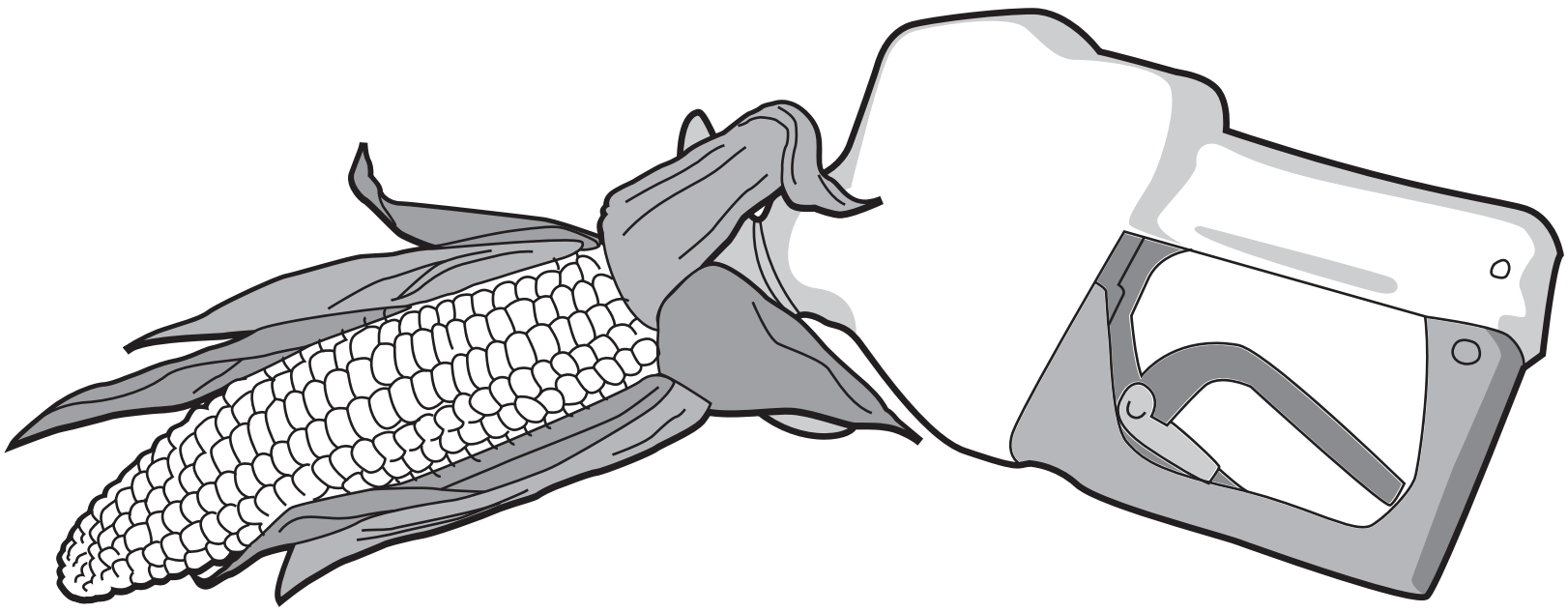
But life here is not impossible. In fact, the most inspiring thing is the way people continue to be creative and persistent to LIVE despite the slow, deliberate effort to ethnically cleanse everything Palestinian. The number of poetry nites, film collectives, theatres, dance troupes, and such popping up everywhere is incredible. This is the side of Palestine you would never see without coming here.

More and more, I am convinced that we diaspora Palestinians and supporters need to get our act together - especially my generation. More and more I yearn for our elders to have faith in us; to guide and mentor us. It is truly humbling to see people who are literally surrounded by death to continue to insist on living and laughing and dreaming and creating. We have so much to learn from them, especially if we hope to be a part of building and shaping the future of Palestine.

Love,
Hadeel


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WORLD VIEW



Pain at the Pump

Alex Wukman finally solves the planet's energy crisis

by Alex "Asshole" Wukman

If any serious headway is to be made in reforming our nation's outdated energy policy it must begin with acknowledging the role of the consumer by alleviating the pain he or she feels at the gas pump.

This can be done by either capping the price of gasoline, something the federal government is exceptionally hesitant to do, or by the creation of 'fuel banks'. In 1982 a private company called First Fuel Banks opened its doors with a remarkably simple idea, let consumers pre-buy gasoline in bulk on the commodities market and in doing so let them 'lock-in' the price of gasoline.

The idea works so well that nearly 300 of First Fuel's customers are paying less than $1 a gallon and several thousand are paying less than $2. The only problem with this business model has been distribution and expansion, First Fuel only has six filling stations and all of them are in St. Cloud and Monticello, Minn.

However there is good news, Gulf Oil LP, the oil company with the franchise rights to 1,800 Gulf stations in the Northeast, is planning to unveil a similar program within the next two years. Admittedly this is only good news for those who reside in the northeast; so far there neither Congress nor the White House has expressed any interest in creating a federal standard that would allow all Americans to drastically reduce their gasoline expenditures by participating in fuel banks.

The oil companies have blamed the rising gas prices on the federal government's ethanol regulation, which states that starting this year all gasoline sold at the pump must be 85% ethanol. According to Chevron-Texaco, Exxon-Mobil and *The Wall Street Journal* there isn't enough ethanol in the country to meet the demand.

Sadly this is probably true, U.S. refining capacity has not kept pace with demand over the last thirty-years. However, this should not prevent the required amount of ethanol from reaching our shores. Brazil is the world's leading producer of ethanol, a fact that is allowing them to declare energy independence in 2008.

While U.S. oil companies are playing catch-up with the rest of the world and our own government's standards they should be importing as much ethanol from Brazil as possible. We also should bring more than just fuel from Brazil; we should bring knowledge as well.

This is because the main difference between Brazilian ethanol and U.S. ethanol is the base crop that it's refined from. Brazil uses sugar cane and the U.S. uses corn. The differences in crops, crop yields, growing seasons and refining requirements has allowed Brazilian sugar cane based ethanol to spread throughout the country while U.S. based corn ethanol has been isolated to the mid-west.

> there isn't enough ethanol in the country to meet the demand

If the U.S. government would see fit to reinstate the practice of growing sugar cane fields along the gulf coast, something that was discontinued after the Cuban revolution, it could help diversify the distribution of ethanol throughout the county. While the reintroduction of sugar cane to the South would help curb erosion, reduce damage from hurricanes and offer a buffer to help protect the critical Gulf coast refineries, it wouldn't do much to help the people who are being seriously hurt by gas prices—those on the east coast, especially New Englanders.

To help solve the east/northeast's fuel problems the U.S. needs to look north not south. We should begin importing Canadian hay based ethanol for the northern regions of the country as well as begin the process of creating grass refineries in dense cold weather climates that don't lend themselves to crops like corn or sugar cane easily.

It seems rather ludicrous to marry U.S. energy demands, and therefore the economy, to one specific type of ethanol when there are so many different varieties all of which work equally well. True increased ethanol usage doesn't directly affect the transport of goods—since most heavy trucks run on diesel and ethanol is only used with unleaded.

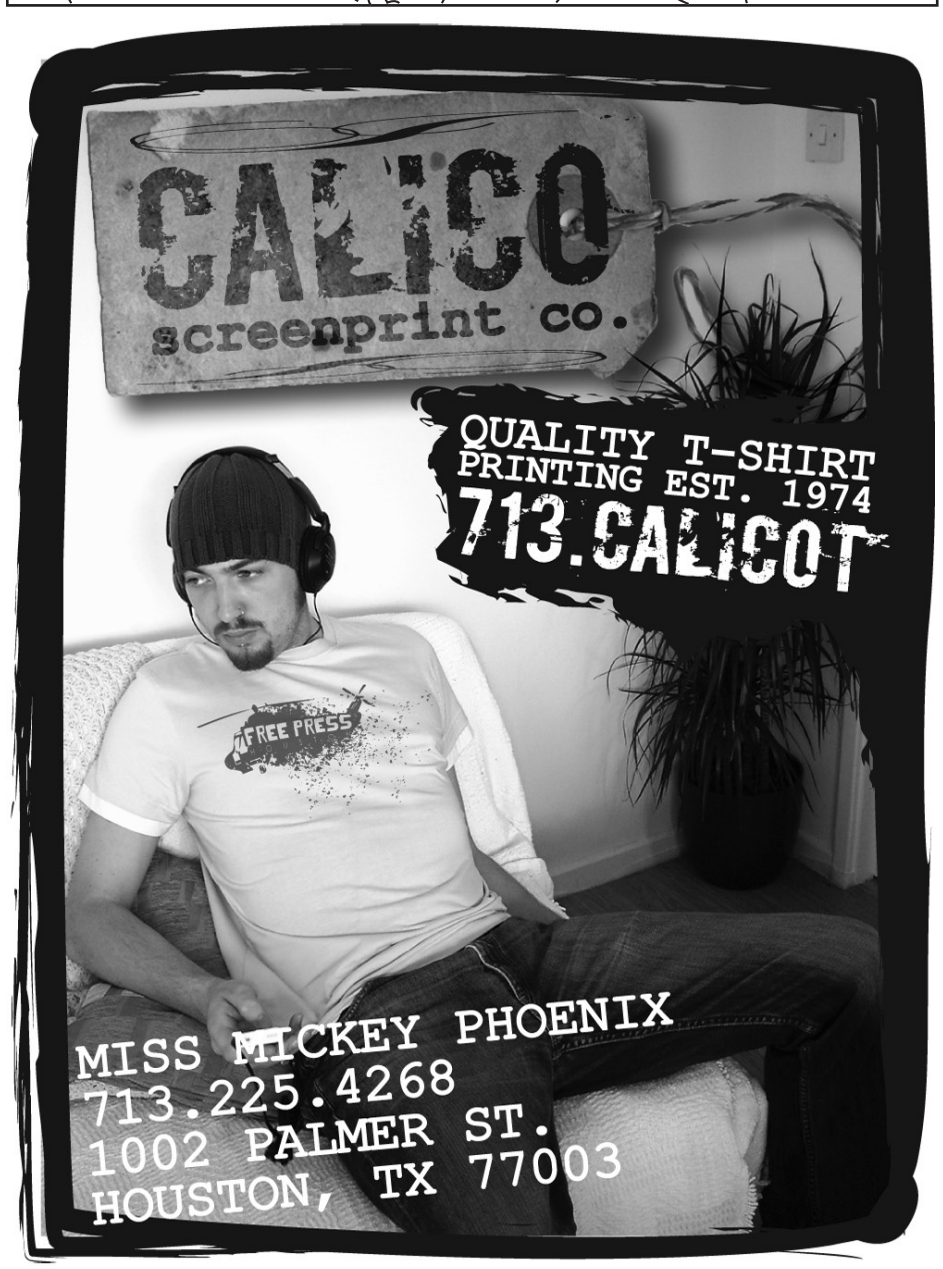
There is a diesel specific alternative though, bio-diesel. To many purists though bio-diesel, while a good step, is seen as a compromise. The reason for the dismissal of bio-diesel by some environmentalists is that it uses diesel fuel along with the bio-fuel. They feel that it only goes halfway, and to a degree they are right. With the proper conversion kit and a few modifications a diesel engine can run on straight vegetable oil.

Albeit, there are some problems that need to be worked out with the conversion of a diesel engine to a vegetable oil engine (namely the filtration process) it does work. If any of our local municipalities had foresight they would begin the process of converting all their diesel vehicles to vegetable oil in order to help reduce transportation costs, balance their respective budgets and make a great PR statement. If our federal government had any sense they would provide matching funds for local governments to make the conversions as well as subsidies for private citizens to help offset the costs of purchasing the needed materials for the conversion kits.

continued on page 22


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While the idea of government handouts is not popular in this day and age of small government the conversion of public sector vehicles to non-petroleum based fuels would prove beneficial to everyone by allowing more petroleum-based fuels to find their way to the private sector.

Sadly the private sector seems to be where all innovation on energy will have to originate. If the federal government were serious about changing America's dependence on foreign oil then they would be doing more than paying lip service to the New Apollo Project. The New Apollo Project is a coalition formed by organized labor and environmentalists with the express goals of reversing the loss of American manufacturing jobs, reforming our energy policy and ending our dependence on foreign oil. The groups involved, be they the AFL-CIO, UAW, Sierra Club or Green Peace, all believe that any discussion of energy reform must also include a discussion of economic reform, or else all the fuel will sit in the pump with no one to buy it.

The New Apollo Project helps bring to light the fact that if the U.S. switched off oil completely all we would be doing is substituting one foreign energy addiction for another. This is because we don't have the infrastructure to support the change; we don't have the refineries to process the corn, sugar cane, grass, etc. We haven't retooled factories to produce the harvesters and we get all of our hydrogen fuel cells from Canada.

While the domestic production of hydrogen fuel cells may not seem like an issue of world shattering import, it is if they are to have any hope of becoming a viable alternative to petroleum. This is because of the fact that the delicate method in which they are produced helps to make them exceptionally cost prohibitive—it took GM $3.5 million to produce a 'skateboard chassis' powered by hydrogen fuel cells.

If we want to see mass-produced hydrogen fuel cell powered vehicles we have to find a way of reducing the cost. Classically that is done with increasing supply and the introduction of competition. While the rest of the United States has dragged its feet in embracing alternatives to petroleum power there is one sector that is moving rapidly towards a freedom from oil dependency.

Shipping, specifically tankers, this may seem ironic but many of the large shipping firms are already operating significant portions of their fleets that are powered by Liquid Natural Gas, or LNG. An LNG tanker utilizes super-cooled natural gases to propel it across the ocean. If this technology were to be expanded to just 5% of the U.S. merchant fleet it would save untold barrels of oil.

One of the main attractions of using LNG, as shipping fuel is the reduced environmental hazard; simply put it is impossible to have a gas spill. Another is the relative cost of LNG versus oil; natural gas is cheaper to access and easier to process. This has led some people to talk of using LNG as an alternative to home heating oil.

Do not for a moment think that all the blame for the current oil crisis rests with the government alone. One of the glaring failures of private enterprise has been big oil's refusal to install cleaner, more efficient piece of machinery in their pre-existing refineries. Couple that with the failure to construct any refineries after the passage of the EPA and clean air acts and the drastic decreases in productivity that have been seen in the last few years can be linked to institutional failure rather than to isolated incidents like the BP plant explosions or natural disasters like Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

This production decline, while inevitable on some level, can be greatly reduced if the U.S. government were to remove the clauses which grandfather out existing oil refineries from the EPA bill. The removal of these clauses would require some of the largest and oldest oil refineries to install much newer pieces of equipment, an act that would greatly decrease the amount of oil lost during the refining process, as well as reduce the amount of greenhouse gas emissions.

The reduction of greenhouse gas emissions should be one of the key tenets of any energy policy. Aside from greenhouse gases being bad for the environment, they present an interesting question in civil liability. Since some studies have shown a connection between air pollution and cancer it would seem that the day of class action lawsuits against oil companies for causing cancer is just around the corner.

And while the oil companies do have deep pockets, we as a nation cannot have oil and energy companies declaring bankruptcy after paying off hundreds of thousands of plaintiffs. If this were to happen it would do irreparable harm to our fragile economy;0 although not nearly as much harm as a continuation of the government's failure to pass anything that resembles a comprehensive energy package does.

If we continue blindly down this road we will have stumbled into the last American century, not the next.

houston.indymedia.org

Weekend of Resistance to the Green Scare

Political Prisoner Jeff "Free" Luers writes: This June marks my 6th year in prison. From behind these walls I have strived to remain an active part of this struggle...
For the last three years, June 11th has been celebrated as an international day of solidarity with me, Jeffrey Luers... Right now there are more than a dozen people sitting in American jails (or on strict bail release) accused of Earth/Animal Liberation Front actions. Six people were originally arrested. These arrests were based almost entirely on the testimony of one police informant, Jacob Ferguson. Bill Rodgers - accused of multiple arsons - took his own life in a jail cell. Unfortunately, several of those arrested are now cooperating with the state.
This June, I ask you to show them the solidarity that you have shown me. I ask that foremost in your mind be the thought that the state is trying to break this struggle with repressive and intimidating arrests and sentences. I hope you understand that it's not just those of us in prison being punished with these sentences; they are designed to be examples to you, to frighten you into compliance. This June I'm asking you to demonstrate that you can't be intimidated.

Rally Against the Klan, Midland TX June 17th

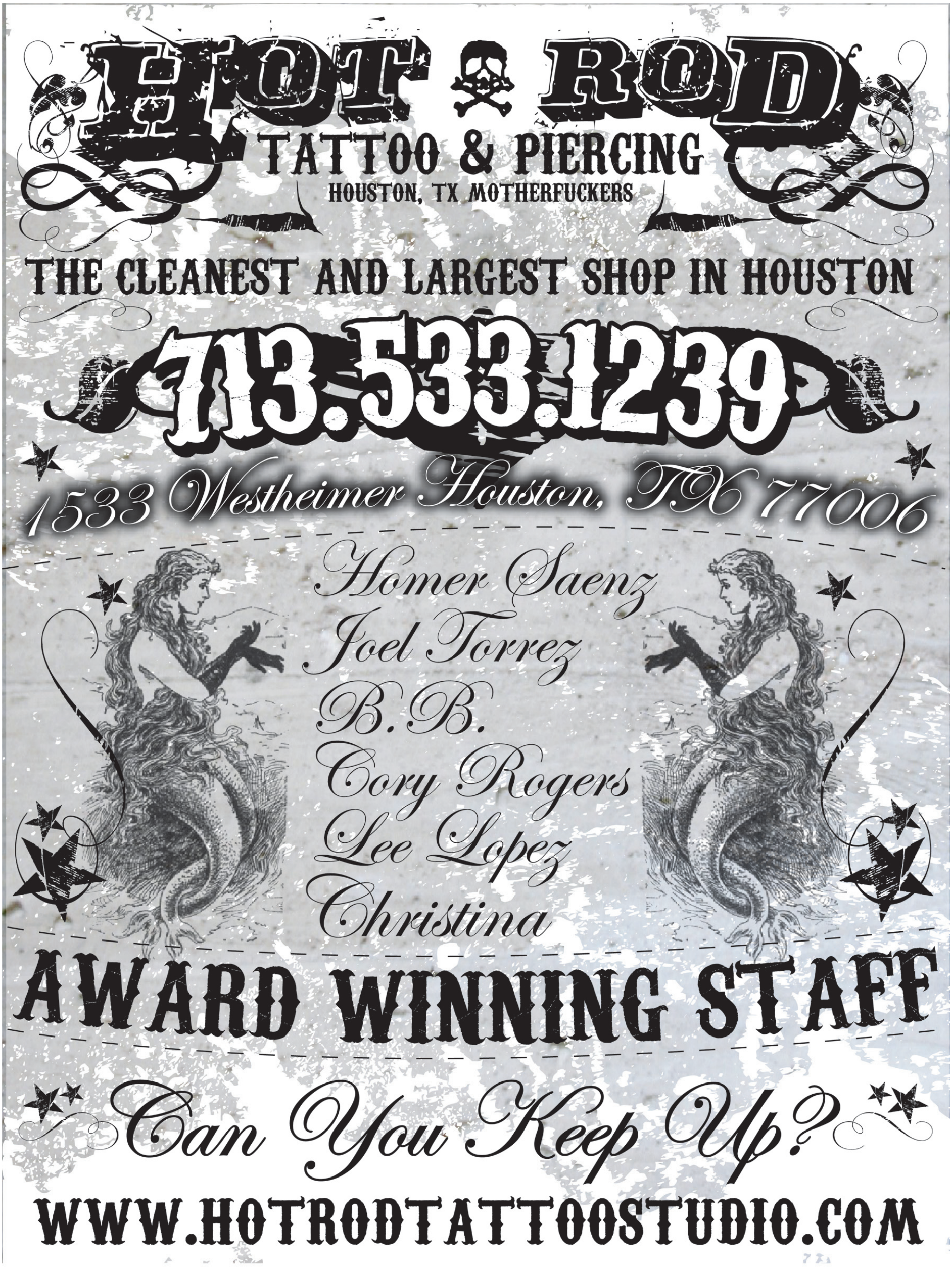
From the Open Publishing Newswire: The Empire Knights of the Ku Klux Klan have announced they are holding a rally against illegal immigration on Saturday, June 17.
ARA (Anti-Racist Action) is calling all concerned community members to attend a counter-rally in front of the downtown library, followed by a march to the courthouse.
ARA encourages people to bring airhorns, instruments and other noise-making devices in order drown out the hate of the Klan.
The Klan has a long and violent history in America. From the lynchings and murders of Southern Blacks, to the bombings of churches to hate crimes that continue to this day, the Klan has more than demonstrated its ability to leave violence and hatred in its wake.
If we allow the Klan to assemble in our streets without standing up to them, then we welcome the potential for this violence to spread into our own community.
Ignoring hate groups is ineffective, for if no one who is against the Klan shows up, then only the supporters will be there, making it that much easier for violent racists to organize in our town. We must all come together to stand up to the Klan.
Sponsored by Anti-Racist Action
For more information, email to permianbasinara@riseup.net.
Houston Anti-Racist Action will be sending a caravan to Midland for this event.
Houstonians interested in accompanying us, contact houstonara@yahoo.com

A look at the Senate immigration bill

On May 25th the US Senate passed the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2006 with a vote of 62-36. This legislation is being presented as much more reasonable and fair than the enforcement only House Bill HR 4437, which provoked some of the largest protests in the history of this country.
There are some positive aspects to this legislation; it includes the DREAM act, which would allow undocumented students to receive education benefits and possibly legal status as well. It is however an extremely complex bill, that addresses; border and interior enforcement, employment, visas, backlogs, guestworker program and a 3 tiered process for undocumented people in this country, as well as amendments tacked on at the last moment [migramatters.blogspot.com does a great job of breaking down the contents of this bill]. Many of these provisions have caused immigrant advocacy groups to balk.
The Center for Human Rights and Constitutional Law states: "The three-tier legalization program is absurdly complex, unworkable, and will likely not include even half the undocumented people residing permanently in the U.S. No more than 3 million immigrants will qualify for tier one legalization..."
They further identify the following problematic features with S2611:
-forces immigrants to abandon their right to appeal erroneous deportation decisions in order to preserve their right to "voluntary departure."
-makes it even more difficult for legitimate asylum seekers to win protection from deportation to countries where they face torture and imprisonment.
-broadens the definition of "aggravated felonies" to crimes that are neither felonies or aggravated, and then provides for mandatory detention and deportation of all such "felons" regardless of their present immigration status or length of residence in the country.
-will cause the deportation of thousands of immigrants who have United States citizen children.
-will substantially increase the militarization and criminalization of the US-Mexico border, destroying border communities and further ramping up border deaths and criminal violence.
Dozens of other organizations have expressed their opposition to S2611. Many of them have endorsed a National Statement to Support Human and Civil Rights for All Immigrants And to Oppose Compromise Immigration Reform Proposals.
S2611 will now go to a compromise committee where it will be somehow combined with HR4437 and potentially made into law.



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Drug Users are **UNCONDITIONALLY** Exterminable



The questions I pose in response to the 90 plus years of anti-drug propaganda, hysteria and vicious and ugly war are simple and yet no response has ever been received from the drug warriors the true outlaws of the drug war:

1. Is it possible to curtail our children's easy access to drugs?
2. What can we do to destroy the cartels, terrorist groups, violent gangs and the institutional corruption that thrives because of drug prohibition?
3. How can we cut back on the number of overdoses and diseases caused by drug use?

Answer: End prohibition.

The day we regulate the distribution of these "illegal drugs" to adults is the day we take away the worth of Osama bin Laden's opium stash. Osama will no longer be able to turn flowers into gold to buy bigger weapons with which to kill us. On the day of regulation, we destroy the cartels in Colombia, Kabul and Laredo. When we allow state regulated distribution, the violent gangs that sell drugs to our children will lose their market, their profits and their power when drugs sell for pennies, not dollars. We will then have lots of room in prison to house any who would dare sell drugs to our children.

In most jurisdictions, the scenario that ensures more of our children will die from drug use includes two basic facts. You cannot call for help, following a potential overdose because to do so may also entail a decade behind prison bars. Nor is it always possible to legally obtain a clean injection syringe, so needles are often re-used or even shared, which ensures a constant increase in the number of hepatitis and AIDS cases amongst our youth.

> When we allow state regulated distribution, the violent gangs that sell drugs to our children will lose their market

So, the real question becomes, why does this drug war still exist? How and why did we let it come to this point of zero tolerance for logic?

The answer of course is "Ca Ching"… money.

Let's talk about how much money is involved. In the US, we spend more than $200 billion every year, purchasing our recreational drugs: cocaine, smack, marijuana and the rest. Each year in the US, we spend $69 billion dollars for law enforcement, prisons, probation, urine testing, etc. for "waging" this drug war. A total of $269 billion dollars a year going to criminals and cops, politicians and pot growers, opium growers, traffickers and sellers and officials of every stripe who "make their bones", by being tougher, (though certainly less smart), on drugs.

269 billion, how do we envision such a number, how can we picture such a sum?

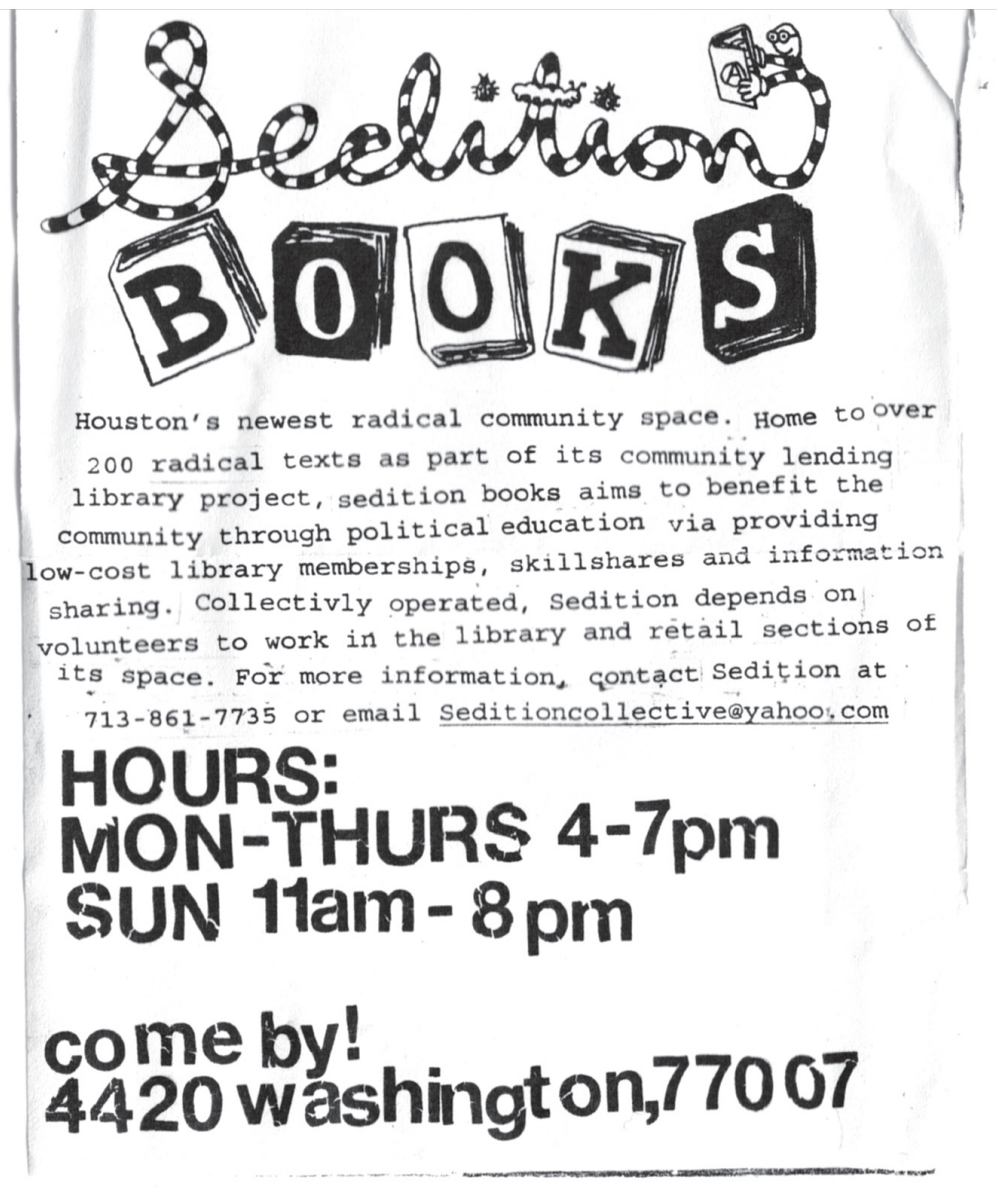
First off, a cubic foot of cash, in hundred dollar bills is $2,304,000. A railroad car is typically 62 feet long. Each year, we give 69 billion to the cops, enough cash to fill 9.6 railroad cars with hundred dollar bills. Each year, in the US, we give 200 billion to street corner vendors, gangsters, cartels and terrorist organizations; enough cash to fill 27.96 railroad cars, with $100 bills. Enough cash EVERY YEAR, to fill a train 2,331 feet long, stuffed with $100 bills. Yet drugs are in the main, cheaper, purer and more freely available to our children than ever before.

Through endless propaganda, eternal media campaigns and through the arrest of 1.6 million Americans each year for baggies of plant products, fear continues to rule over logic, common sense and reality. "But ain't that America?"

Please listen to Cultural Baggage, Century of Lies and the 4:20 Drug War News on KPFT Radio, 90.1 FM, Houston, www.kpft.org. Visit www.DrugTruth.Net (58 Broadcast Affiliates in the US and Canada.)


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Gaming Armageddon

Praise the Lord and Pass the Joystick

By JOHN ZAVESKY







Never forgoing the opportunity to wage war upon the evil empire of secular humanists and spread the "good word," the Christian Fundamentalists have taken their pitch to new heights. Not so ironically it was in a secular setting. The folks responsible for the riveting Left Behind series of books debuted their latest attempt to "win" lost souls with the new video game, Left Behind: Eternal Forces at the Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles. For those non-gamers the E3 Expo is the NASCAR championship of computer game conventions. The convention drew a record crowd eager to see and experience the next level of cyber reality. This was a smart move on the part of Tyndale House Publish-ers, owners of the Left Behind trademark. God of War, Doom and Oblivion were just a few of the secular games on exhibit. Along with companies such as Alliance Distributors, Axis Animation and Empire Interactive the fundamentalists must have felt right at home. On the other hand the convention also included Darwin Dimensions, Evolved Games and Wizards of the Coast so the "Fundies" must have taken it as their duty to show.

The object of the Left Behind video game is to "Wage a war of apocalyptic proportions. Join the ultimate fight of Good against Evil, commanding Tribulation Forces or the Global Community Peacekeepers, and uncover the truth about worldwide disappearances." This is a direct quote from the company's website.

All of those wonderfully heroic and holy characters, Rayford, Chole, Buck and Bruce from the novels are included in the game ready to do battle with nonbelievers. They lead the Tribulation Force against Nicolae Carpathia, the Anti-Christ who heads up the secular Global Community Peacekeepers [think U.N.]. Among the many levels and stratagems a gamer is able to experience include:

* Conducting physical and spiritual warfare using the power of prayer to strengthen your troops in combat can wield modern military weaponry

* Recover ancient scriptures and witness Angelic and Demonic activity as a direct consequence of your choice

* Command forces through intense battle across a breathtaking, authentic depiction of New York city

* Control more than 30 unit types including Prayer Warrior and Hellraiser to Spies, Special Forces and Battle Tanks

* Enjoy robust single player experience across dozens of NYC maps that include Chinatown, Soho, Uptown and more

* Play multiplayer games with up to eight players via the Internet.

Again, this copy is directly from the company website. No writer could come up with material like that on their own without heavy pharmaceutical assistance.

The game's trailer breaks down humans into three separate categories:

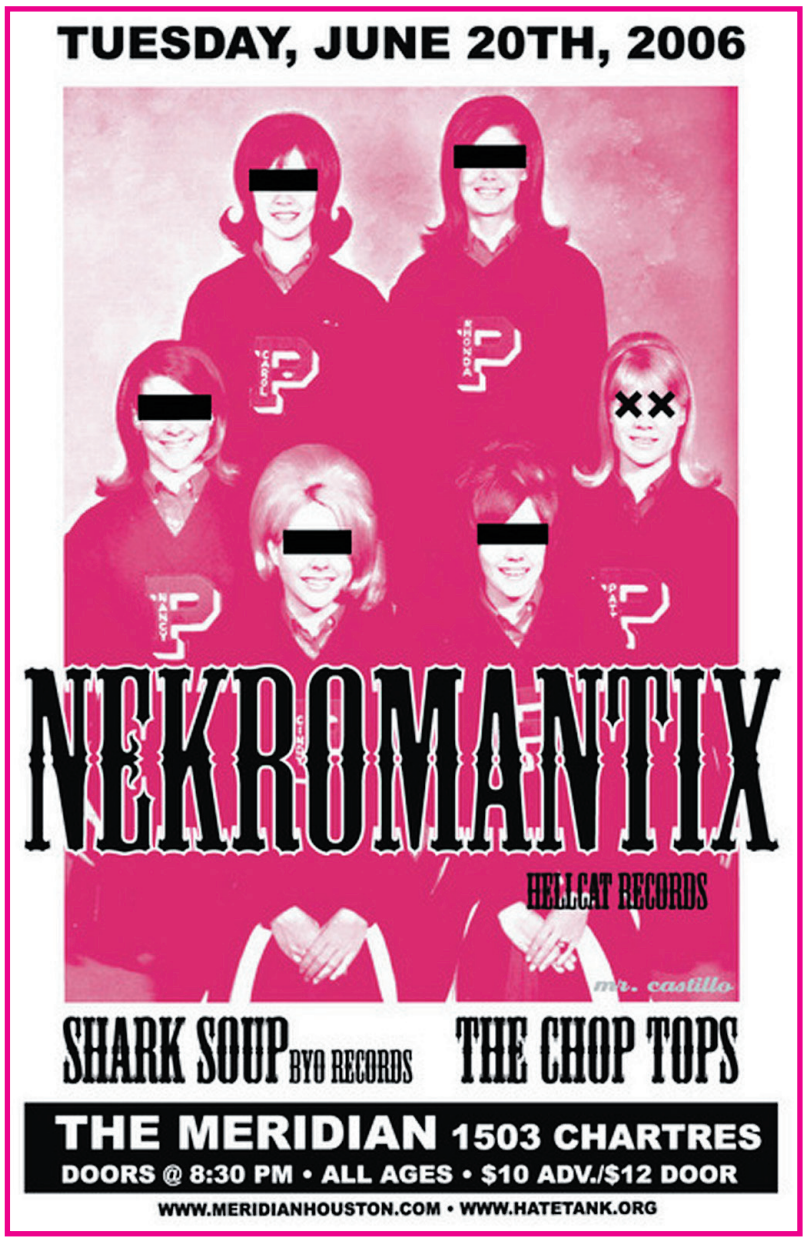
1) Believers--those who seek a personal relationship with God

2) Unbelievers and Believers--those who don't seek after God

3) Faithless - those who chose to ignore God.

The first group was depicted in the promotional video as a husband and wife praying before going to bed. The Unbelievers and Believers who don't seek after God were numerous, anonymous, unidentifiable figures bustling down a city street. The Faithless had the appearance of your average local militia group. Other than the earth shattering revelation that no one knows the exact time or place of the Apocalypse little else is to be gleaned from the pro-motional video with the exception that this is the mother of all battles and that those "left behind" are the ones who will wage it against the forces of darkness.





To say that the game's characters are confusing is to say the least. The evilest characters are the Faithless. They ironically look exactly like the militia minded folk that flock to Fundamentalist religions by the drove. This will be only serve to befuddle most secular humanists whom the Fundies have aimed the game toward as a means of conversion. The fact that the secular characters (unbelievers and believers not seeking a relationship with the big guy) are depicted as an anonymous monolithic bunch speaks volumes as well. Another vexing point of the game's characters is the fine distinction being made between "believers who don't seek after God" and "those who chose to ignore God." It may just be semantics but both groups sound like they have better things to do than sit around waiting for the Rapture just so they can leave their wardrobe behind. Using the term "Global Community Peacekeepers" is also odd when these are the evil folk the Tribulation Force is bent on defeating. The game must have been designed by Old Testament Fundies since "peace" was the main message of the New Testament. Even on the surface it is apparent that the folks behind the game and restructuring our Constitution have little interest in compassion, charity, love or peace, all basic tenants of the Christianity that the man from Galilee preached.

The hypocrisy of the self-appointed righteous continues to escalate when a closer look is given to their methods and manners. The Fundies consistently assail the entertainment industry as hedonistic and godless, yet it is exactly that very arena where they are currently waging the battle to convert all those "other" folk to their side. When it comes to all things holy and sacred nothing says it better than Nintendo. Install Left Behind on a Gameboy and it's better than a talking burning bush for spreading the "word." Taking the simplistic approach of putting all things on a "You're either with us or against us" level is dangerous at best and absolutely lethal at its worst. Just look at what it has done for Bosnia. It is exactly that type of mentality that has gotten this country into yet another unwinnable war. When it comes to matters of religion and politics, as tenuous as it may be, we still do have a separation of Church and State in the U.S.

It is impossible to debate or discuss the need for such a separation with a Fundie. God is on their side and all else is part of Satan's realm in their black and white world. Shades of gray simply don't exist in a Fundie's world. Even without all the pseudo proselytizing Left Behind is thankfully an abject failure as a video game. It is PG rated and prides itself on this fact at the company's website. Such a rating creates a game that eschews the very things that attract gamers in the first place. Grand Theft Auto is a major seller not because its storyline was ripped from the pages of Tolstoy. It is popular because it has plenty of graphic violence, celebrates the criminal and also tosses in animated sex for good measure. Video games by their very nature are not meant to be on the level of a Kant dissertation. They are designed to be relatively simple in storyline and appeal to the masses. When you are talking about an American audience that means appealing to the lowest common denominator. Mediocrity is greatly rewarded in this country when it comes to the entertainment industry, how else to explain the success of Tom Cruise, Katie Couric and Justin Timberlake?

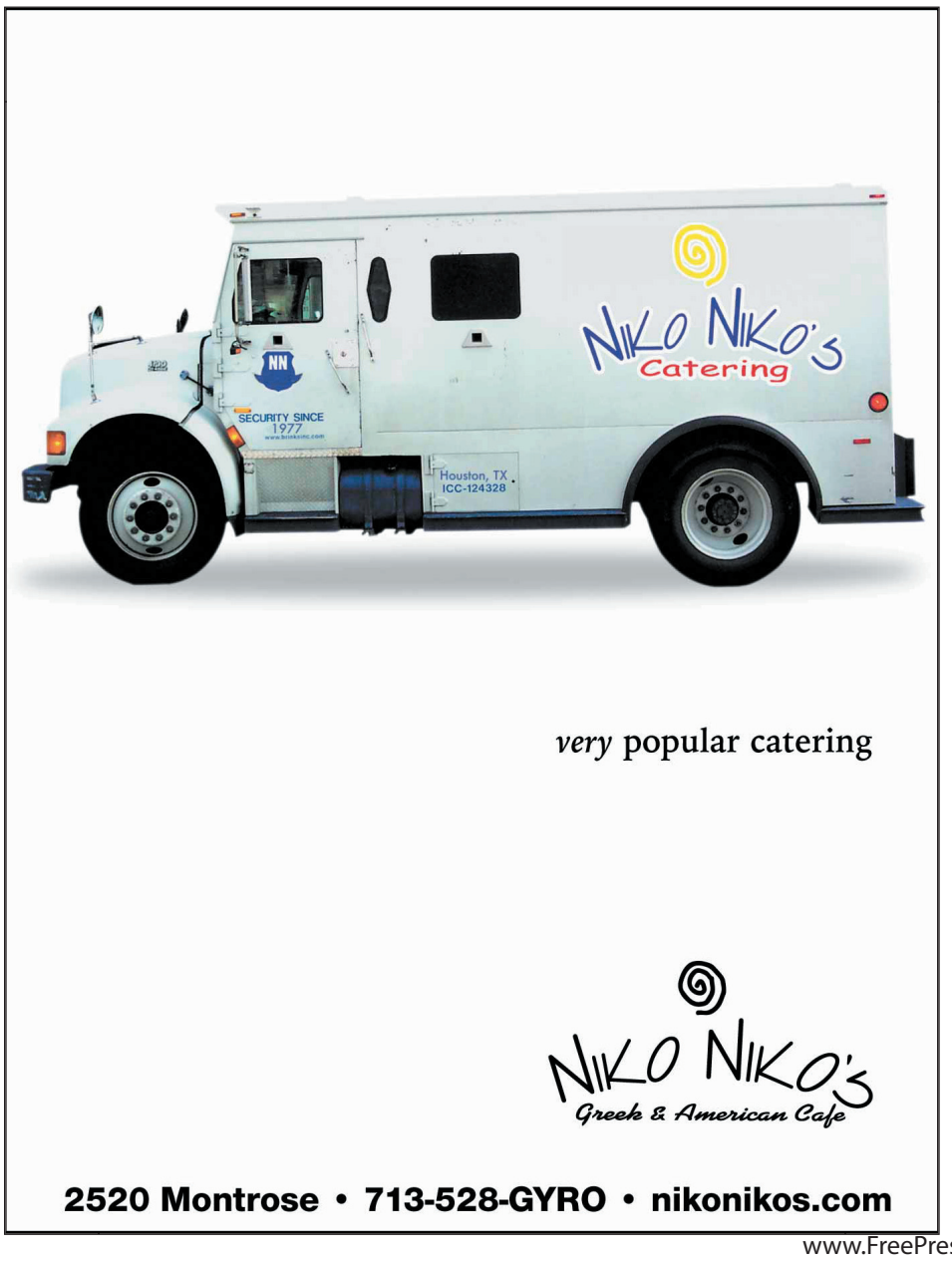
During the Middle Ages, what the Fundies like to call 'the good old days,' artists were not afraid to graphically depict the horrors of hell. Bruegel and Bosch are just two such artists who come to mind. While the first image in the game's promo is a direct rip off of the Michelangelo Sistine Chapel paintings, obviously the game's designers lacked the courage of their convictions to really allow the secular humanists a good look at what is in store for them come the Apocalypse. Possibly like Grand Theft Auto there is the "secret key" to open a "door" and get a real sense of the fiery future eternity holds for everyone except a Fundie, but that is doubtful.

As hypocritical as it is for the Fundies to criticize the entertainment industry on one hand, it is the only logical step for them to take if they expect to influence and win converts in the modern age of 3D graphics and DVDs. It also taps heavily into their extreme pro-war stance, another contradiction in the interpretation of Christian doctrine but then who is counting? The Fundies have co-opted the Republican Party and cozy up to Jewish Fundamentalist groups as well. This is understandable since all three are working overtime to see that Armageddon at least makes it to the Middle East if not the Western hemisphere.

The Fundies are probably the only group on the entire planet who actually look forward to a world wide apocalypse. It is the culmination of their belief system and for them it's like winning the Grand Lotto. Unfortunately as with any war there are all those millions affected who didn't sign on for the Rapture. By using a simple video game to set the stage for the real Armageddon the Fundies are once again lying. In a real war prayer does not miraculously restore powers to a wounded soldier whose leg has been

God is on their side and all else is part of Satan's realm in their black and white world. Shades of gray simply don't exist in a Fundie's world

blown off and allow him to reenter the battlefield. In a real war no one has the ability to bestow super powers that make a soldier invincible to the onslaught of an opposing army. This is brainwashing on the most simplistic level. In a real war one survives not by reaching for a joystick, but through cunning, craft and more than a little luck. If operating a joy stick was all it took there would be far fewer soldiers left behind on the battlefield and returning home unscathed. All that a game like Left Behind does is to further point out the hy-pocrisies of a group that breeds hate and intolerance and wraps itself in a flag while striving to undo the greatest political document ever written by modern man. In this case it is best to take the Fundies at their word and leave this game behind on the store shelf.





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