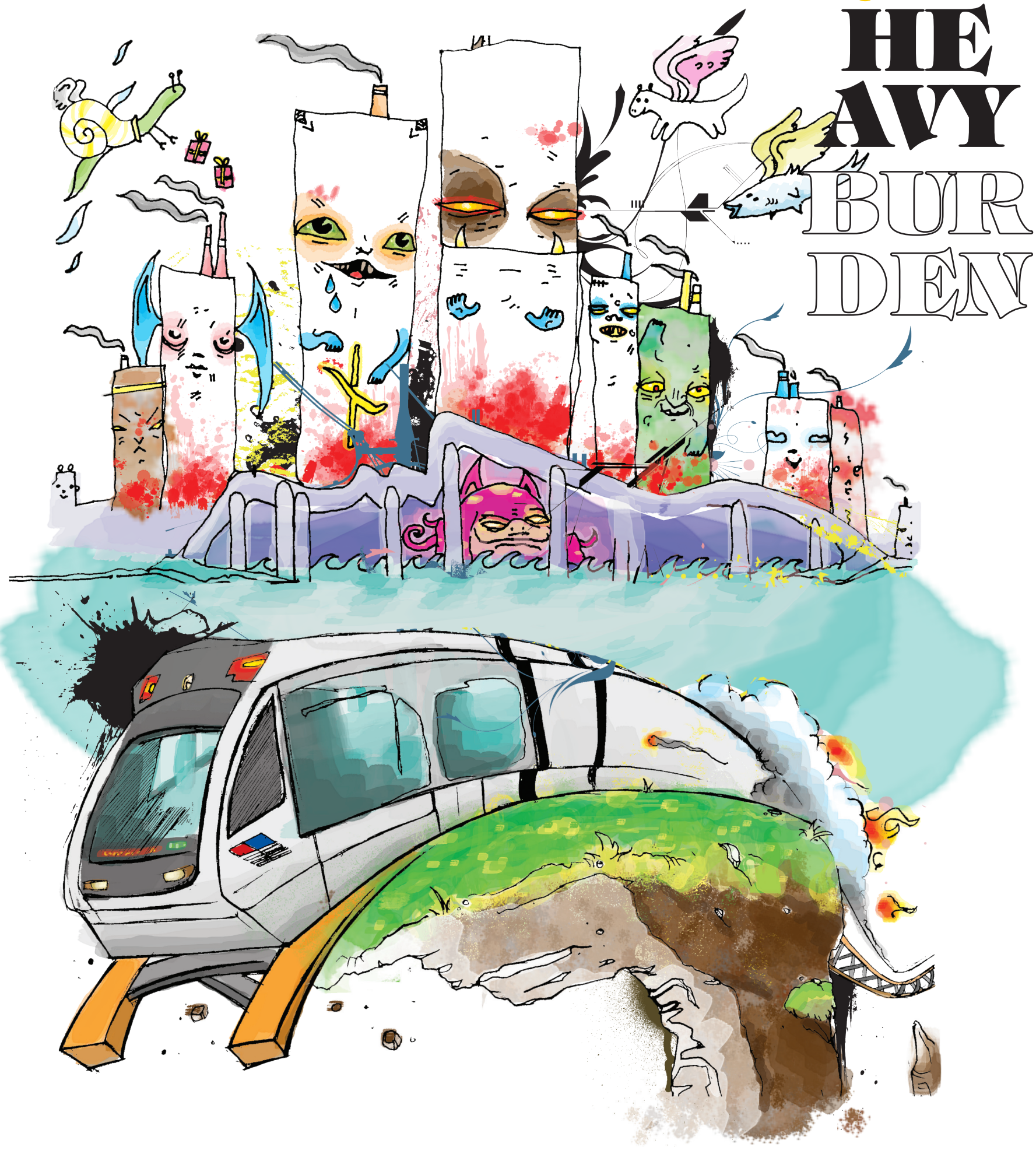


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The Come Latelys
Nov. 16th:
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Nov. 17th:
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Nov. 19th:
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Nov. 22nd:
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Nov. 24th:
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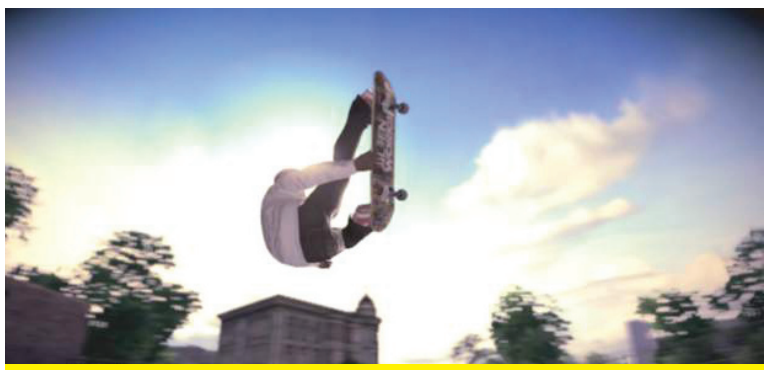
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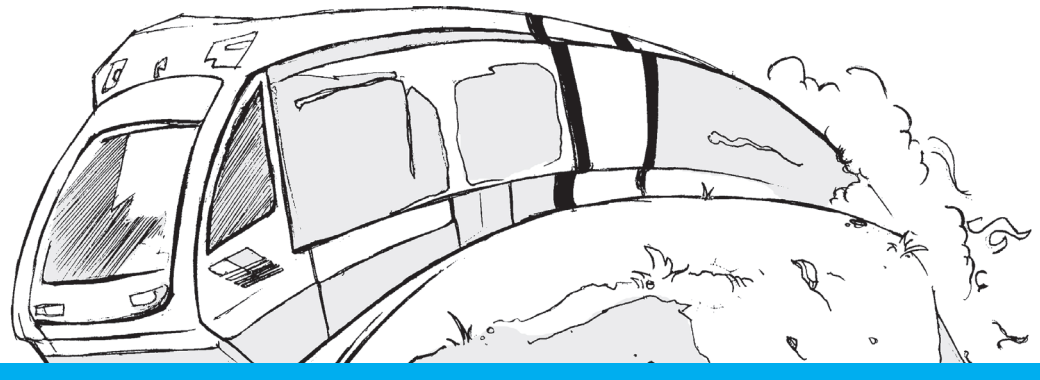
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Feel Free to Take Us Seriously

AN OPEN LETTER TO DOMY BOOKS.

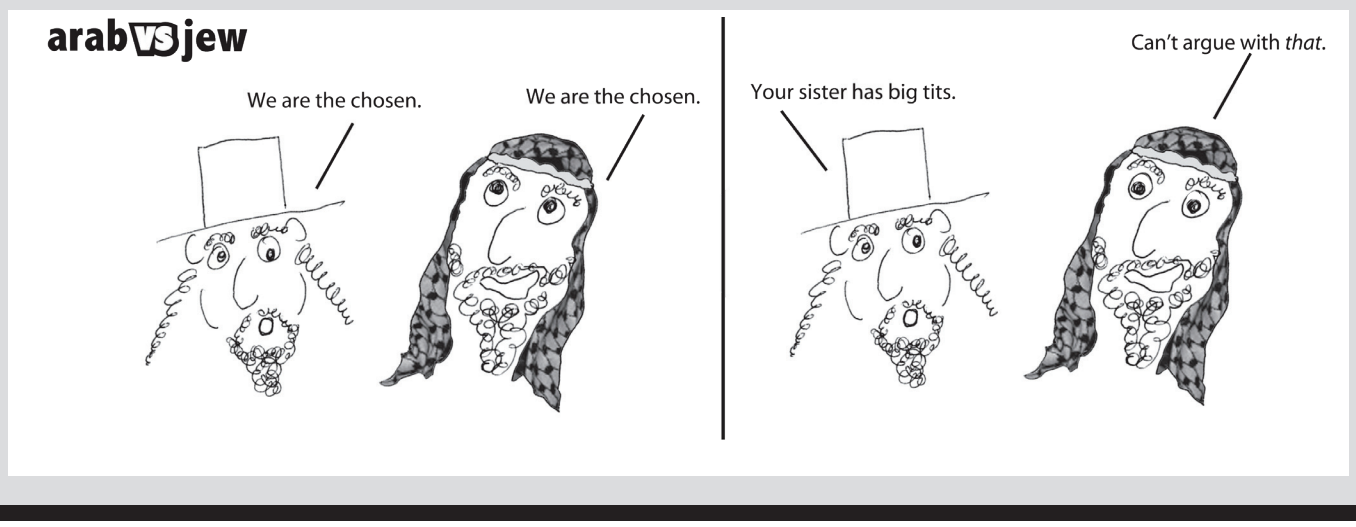
DEAR DOMY,

FIRST AND FOREMOST, WE LOVE YOUR STORE. It is few and far between in this town and deserves much kudos. That said, why the fuck am I picking up socialite mags like Tribeza and 002 in your place all the while you prohibit us from leaving a few copies of our paper there? Look, we understand your cutesy ambitions of being 'selective' but you are 'selectively' enforcing this rule. Your stated policy of not allowing local publications is antithetical to the inclusivity that is promoted by artists featured in your store. The shame is, we are just about the only regular publication in town that whole-heartedly gets behind all the local artists ya'll feature. Many of them have graced our covers and they are often featured in our editorials. We understand that Cafe Brasil is next door, yet not everyone that frequents your book store stops there for an iced coffee. I know you may find that astronomically hard to believe, but it's true. So let me simplify what I am saying into a tripartite terd of knowledge:

1. We love Domy. Keep up the great work.
2. There is a moral imperative that you carry our paper in your store.
3. Café Brasil, despite the phenomenal iced cof fee, is not the artistic nexus of the universe.

If you don't wise up and meet our demands, we will be forced to talk bad about you behind your back using words like 'abecedarian', 'pretentious', 'vainglorious', and even 'white people'. Let's hope we don't have to pull the race card. Cracker.

— Omar Afra, Editor in Chief



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DEBRIS:
MASHED POTATOES
By Buffalo Sean



Houston Center for Photography (1441 Alabama) has been active and upbeat lately; they had a rare mention in Artforum in an ad associated with their Anne Sensted's *Light Always Writes in Plural*. This November Michele Grinstead and Nancy O´Connor hit hard at Texas' role in national politics with their installation *Immigrant Memorial Site*, composed of photographs and video capturing a truck stop in Victoria, Texas where 13 illegal immigrants asphyxiated while trapped in the back of a truck bound for Houston.

The other half of the show doesn't keep up with the vibe though, as Carlos and Jason Sanchez deliver photoshop-happy compositions lacking just enough space to be not considered accidentally bad. Delivered in oversize gigantic format the images reference back to advertising language- from whence they came.

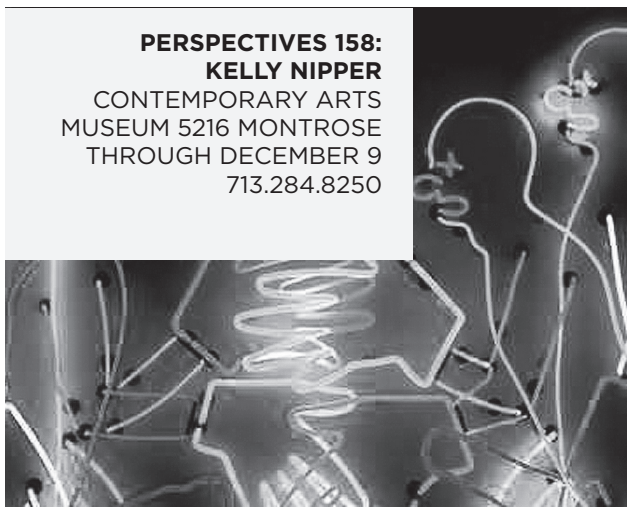
Anyone out there like porn? Well I guess I should rephrase that, anyone out there like gay porn? Well y'all can get your fill of the enigmatic Tom of Finland (he really was from Finland) and his scandalous subject at Inman Gallery (3901 Main) any day of the week. One part Disney, two parts sadistic sodomy, the place for his work- in the gallery or in the porn store- has never solidified. From softcore submitted to magazines to Nazis fucking, you should be guaranteed to get a rise in an art gallery for once.

Spend a day wandering the warehouse district this November 17th for the 15th Artcrawl in Houston. There is a myriad of artists participating, and no definition or denunciation can really hold true. Really, there are over 150 artists- it's impossible to pigeonhole this bunch. I'm sure you'll see the American Consumer Consortium riding the busses between warehouses; Natali and her performance pieces have ended in "Louis Vuitacos" and black pepper taste tests before. Poets from all over town will be out at Atelier Jacquinet, the represented include Houston Community College, University of Houston Downtown, Art Institute of Houston, Women in the Visual and Literary Arts, and poetry magazine Panhandler Quarterly. It may be impossible to get out of CSAW and not be impressed with Whitney Riley, Elaine Bradford or Kathy Kelly, three new residents who have taken to the old hulk of a building. Elder Street Lofts sic The Jefferson Davis Hospital is opening up for studio visits and exhibits for Artcrawl, after the drubbing at the hands of the Houston Press a few months ago Derek Shumate, Doomsday Wrestling, Iskra Ivanova and Shu Latif have more than just their tiny corner of the world to overcome. Here's something though, have you seen the Jefferson Davis Hospital since they cleaned it up? Wouldn't it be a trip to go there for the first time since Brad saw a ghost and you heard gunshots in the woods? During the daytime? Besides, the perfect view of downtown from the front steps in worth the extra mile. Lisa Marie Godfrey and Ellen Orseck are up north at the Foundry now, Leila Dallal will be across the street from CSAW at Kap & Suzie's Place, and stalwart gearhead and art car builder WT Burge is heading up the new fabrication workshop and studio space M.A.N. Visit artcrawlhouston.com or call 713.229.9760 for more information. There's too many new people and new places to say you've seen it before. You haven't.

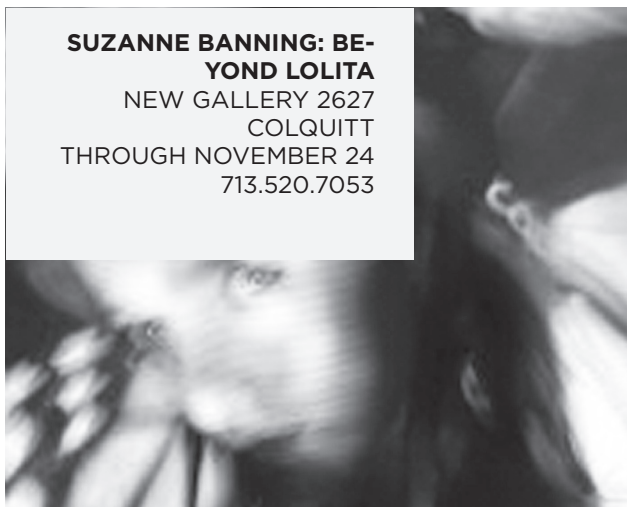
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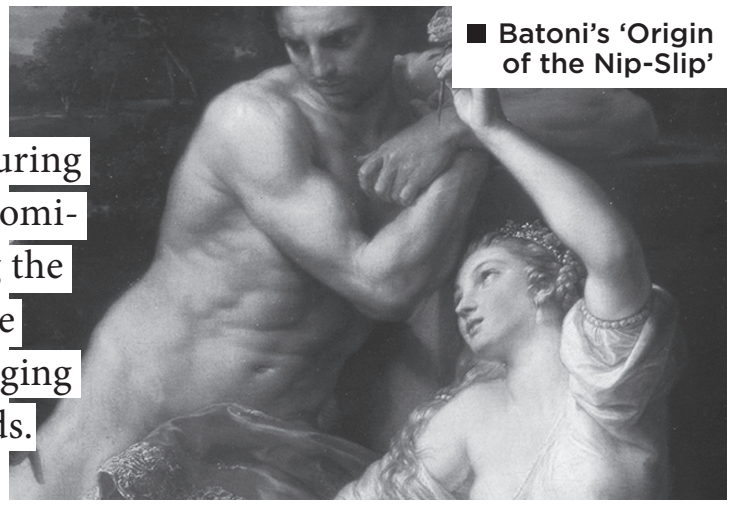
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BONES, PORTRAITS, BRACELETS

By Michael Bergeron

The skeleton known as Lucy, a 3.2-million years old specimen of the creature Australopitheus afarensis, was found during late November 1974 in Ethiopia. This hominid was so named because after finding the initial bones the scientists stayed up late that night celebrating and evidently singing the song Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds.



■ Batoni's 'Origin of the Nip-Slip'

Lucy's Ethiopian name is Dinkenesh, which means several things in Amharic including She who is great.

Right now Lucy is on the first stop of a six-year tour of the United States at the Houston Museum of Natural Science, the exhibit is open and remains in Houston until next April. Both the replica and the real Lucy are on view in a room that presents the bones encased behind glass. Considering that Lucy is only a 40-percent skeleton there's also a recreation figurine of what she looked like in the hirsute flesh. For instance, as one gazes at the bones there are only 6 small pieces of skull and a mandible that makes up the head area. There are bits of rib and partial pieces of the arm, a pelvis and some leg bones. A cyclorama depicting a time line of apes older than Lucy and up to primitive man surrounds the glass cases. The cyc has been rendered in such a way that one end starts at dawn, the center is high noon, while the opposite end concludes at dusk.

In the future there are plans for Lucy to be taken to University of Texas in Austin for a CAT Scan, a procedure that hasn't yet been performed on the bones. Some critics say the real Lucy should never have been moved at all because of the possibility of damage. At a press conference the Tuesday morning before the opening HMNS curator of anthropology Dirk Van Tuerenhout answered one such question by claiming that a previous exhibit more fragile than bone fragments, the Dead Sea Scrolls, had been on a museum tour without harm.

The real focus of Lucy's Legacy: The Hidden Treasures of Ethiopia focuses on that country's contribution to world culture. A separate gallery houses various Ethiopian artifacts but more importantly graphic and textual information about Ethiopia's variety of religions and depth of history. One church in the city of Aksum claims to have the Arc of the Covenant. This is after all the cradle of civilization with incidents that date back thousands of years B.C. In more modern times emperor Haile Salassie was a role model for the Rastafarian movement.

The HMNS also hosts Treasures From Shanghai: 5000 Years of Art and Culture, with objects on view on loan from the Shanghai Museum. Again this is an exhibit that reminds of a culture that extends back 7000 years, that has had a continuous written language in use for the last 4000 years.

The gallery has most of the items under glass and divided by Dynasties. Whether elaborate tapestries or ornate figurines like jade dragons, these items would look great in most people coffee tables or living rooms. What musician wouldn't play a zhong, a series of nine chime bells.

One item that puts vanity in perspective is a transparent metal mirror from the Western Han Dynasty (200 B.C. to 8 A.D.). To quote from the program notes: "With its slightly convex surface, it can cast a magnified image of its decorative pattern onto a wall. When a beam of strong light hits it, this mirror is also capable of projecting the inscription on its reverse side. This is due to the contraction of the metal during the cooling and grinding processes, which causes the front of the mirror to have a slightly uneven surface."

The Treasures of Shanghai remains on display until next January. Be sure and bury your iPod in a time capsule, then in 2000 years it too can be presented under glass in a future museum.

Even when you see the title of the exhibit Ornament as Art: Avant-Garde Jewelry From the Helen Williams Druitt Collection you have no idea of the wealth of brooches and necklaces upon which you are about to gaze. This exhibit runs at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston until next January.

Druitt, who mentioned at the preview that she owns over 500 snow globes, explained how that the various body and clothes decorations were made since the process of electroforming was applied to jewelry. The materials include everything from paper and metal to PVC and lace. One necklace, safely under glass lest it slit your throat, was made from broken pieces of a German Coke bottle, silver wire, TV bulbs and antique crystal balls. Several artists with work on display were also present and wearing brooches that looked so cool on their chests although the oblique shapes and sleek materials were unlike anything sold as conventional jewelry.

Equally exciting if not also heart stoppingly beautiful are 65 paintings by Pompeo Batoni (1708 – 1787): Prince of Painters in Eighteenth-Century Rome, over half of which have never been displayed in America, an exhibit also on display at the MFAH until late January.

Batoni is considered the premier Italian painter of his era. One look at his reds, which bleed into your soul, or his royal blues that seem to affect your throat chakra and you can see why his top ranking is undisputed. There's something about the shimmering of fabric, the details of faces and the delicacy of toes or shoes that completes the Batoni experience.

Curator Edgar Bowron describes the after effect of viewing Batoni as art "seeping into your conscious." Many of the paintings feature Salvator Rosa style frames. Several of the items are portraits including one of David Garrick considered the foremost Shakespeare actor of his day. His wry countenance shows the at once clever and perhaps condescending glare of an actor.

Another highlight is The Choice of Hercules, which posits the man of strength between two women, one virtue and one vice. Closer inspection reveals the dog at the gate of Hell barking in the background while a baby cherub holds a thick wooden club at Hercules' feet. It's easy to see why Batoni was official court painter for many a prince, his pictures tell bold stories.

Internet resource:
MFAH: mfah.org
HMNS: hmns.org

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19 ***Paramore,*** The Starting Line, The Almost

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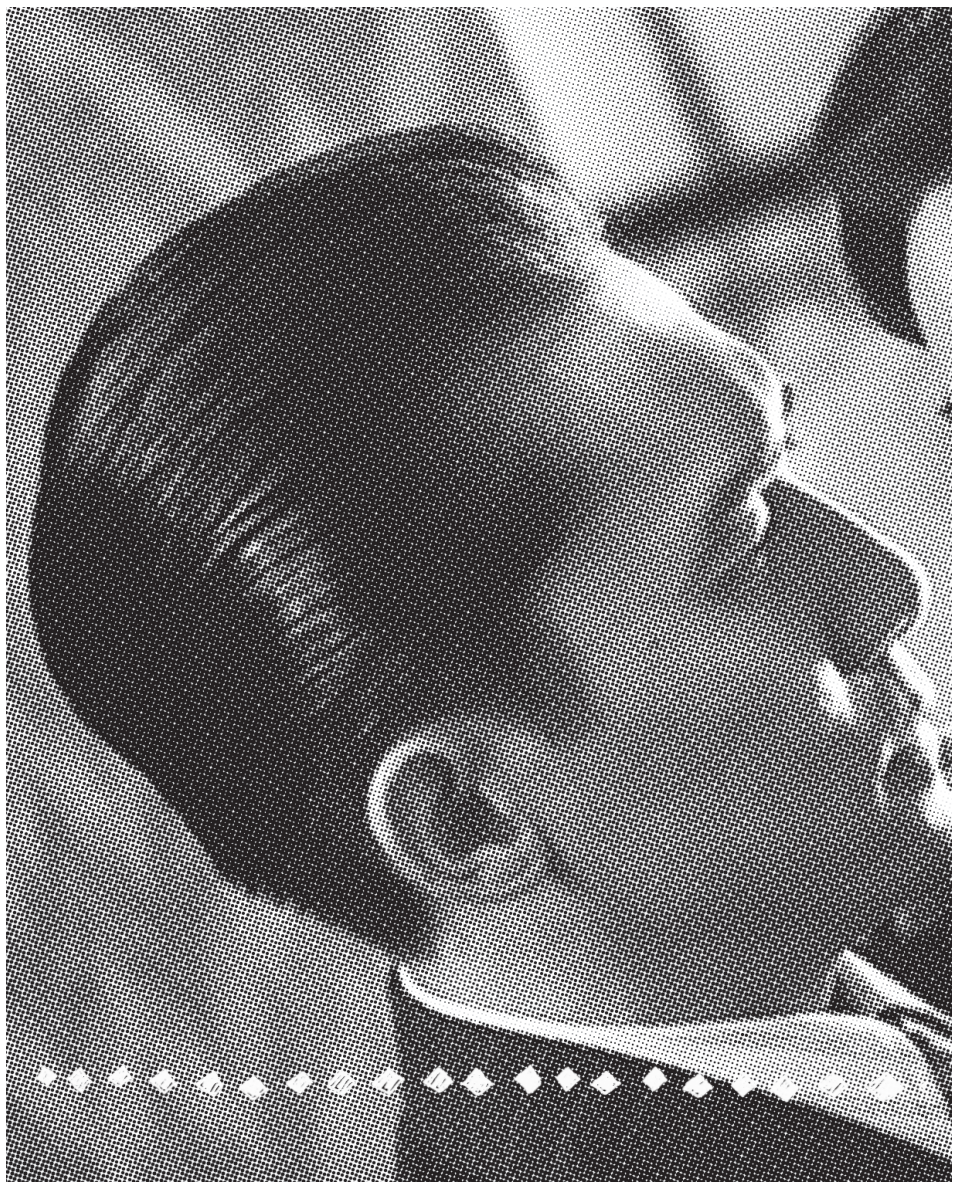
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THE ASSASSINATION OF CINEMA

By Michael Bergeron



There have always been longish films that were dumped only to be discovered years later. What better example than the silent classic by Abel Gance, Napoleon, whose triple screen threat was resized by its domestic distributor MGM to a single screen and dumped in a few theaters on its way to potential obscurity.

Napoleon was subsequently restored in the late 1970s, restoring Gance's reputation in America anyway, and even again as late as 2000 with a five-hour plus running time and with the original tinted scenes as the original Pathe release.

If you claim to be a movie maven don't wait to see *The Assassination of Jesse James By the Coward Robert Ford* at some future time. At a mere 160 minutes this revisionist western runs less than half the time it took to gaze upon Napoleon.

Trade press stories concentrate on how TAOJJBTCRF has been dumped by Warner Brothers in a few theaters with no promotion. Well, how many commercials have you seen for Dan in Real Life or Saw IV and how many for Jesse? The writer/director is Aussie Andrew Dominik on a sophomore outing after the astonishing (and violent) Chopper, a film that made Eric Bana a star in Australia. Perhaps ironically none of Bana's American film work provokes the response of Chopper.

Bana's career moves aside, get ready to welcome Casey Affleck into the fold as a thespian to watch. Affleck toplines Jesse James with Brad Pitt and he displays a unique screen charisma that's not apparent in the second banana roles he's usually offered (think Oceans 11 and its ilk).

The Assassination of Jesse James By the Coward Robert Ford will be compared by some to films like Days of Heaven, McCabe and Mrs. Miller, Wyatt Earp and even Heaven's Gate. Yes, like those films Jesse James attempts (and succeeds) in breaking the mold, filming outside the box, but loose comparisons can also be an infirm grasping at straws. TAOJJBTCRF is a film that makes you float through idyllic imagery like you're experience a fever dream. Surely cinematographer Roger Deakins deserves to be as household a name as Brad Pitt. The footage includes many scenes set in stark white winter. It's one thing to create fantasy vistas with blue screen technology on a stage and it's another kettle of fish to make a movie while you're freezing your ass off. No amount of warm clothing takes the sting out of the kind of bitter cold on display here. It's an apt metaphor for the soulless cruelty at times manifested by Pitt whether he's bullying a hostage or shooting sturgeon though the ice of a frozen lake. In addition to Jesse James, Deakins has three films in current release including In the Valley of Elah and the new Coen Brothers thriller No Country For Old Men.

Affleck as Robert Ford carries the film every bit as much as Pitt. Usually Pitt plays the star in films like The Mexican or Ocean's Thirteen, but in Jesse James he plays the role with a possessed intensity that he only hinted at in Babel. Affleck at first seems to be a Boswell to James' Johnson but as the story progresses there's more of an Iago and Othello vibe between these two men.

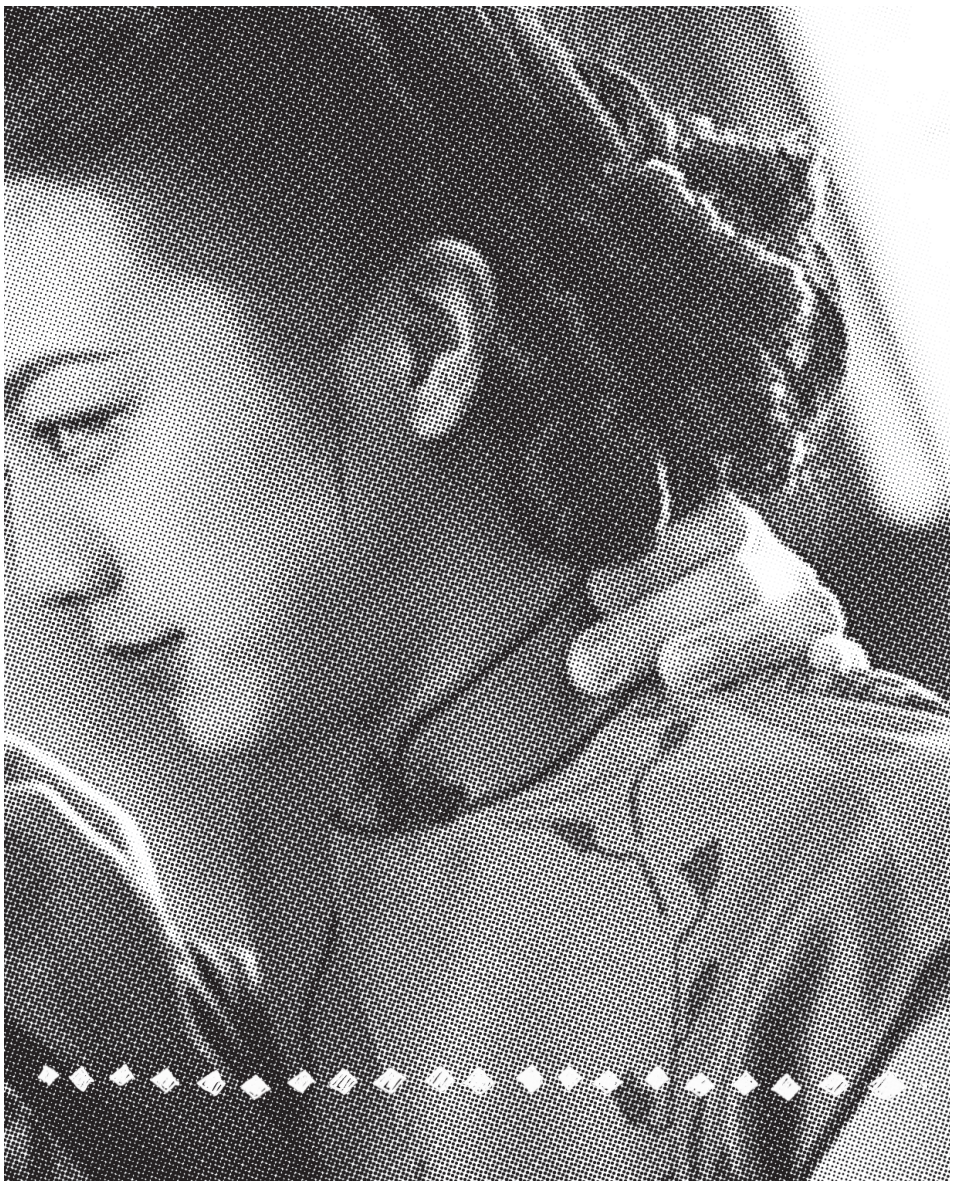
After James lies dead the story continues for a couple more reels as Robert Ford takes the tale to the New York stage, recreating it every night and waltzing into drunkenness and slight madness at his own temerity.

The legend this film would print has James as the second most famous American of his day (after Mark Twain). Only James lives in obscurity, in a 19th century version of the witness protection program, moving at night, protected by in-laws and friends. The film itself likewise will play in obscurity and be nurtured by positive word-of-mouth with its reputation protected by cinephiles.

Ang Lee's Lust, Caution thrusts its sex related themes right into the audience's face. This is more or less Lee's way saying **give me a break by making a truly adult erotic war adventure** after being spurned by Hollywood. (Shades of Verhoeven and Black Book.) Lee gave us the most intellectual comic book movie yet with the 2003 Hulk (which is already being remade, set for next summer starring Ed Norton), a genre that abhors too much mental fervor; and he got gypped for an Oscar when the Academy leaned on Crash rather than Brokeback Mountain. Lust, Caution is smashing B.O. in Asian territories and playing the art house circuit domestically.

The sex in Lust Caution feels like the steamy atmosphere of In the Realm of the Senses or Last Tango. There's a moment where you're not going to believe what you're seeing. Besides that there were two elderly ladies on the row in front of me, and even in the dark I could see them winking at each other and turning red.

Tony Leung Chiu Wai and Wei Tang play Chinese lovers who are also enemies in Japanese occupied Shanghai during WW II. A cat and mouse game with spies and amateurs gives way to Mahjong and bouts of rough sex. Leung has always been one of



the most compelling actors on any screen over the last 20 years and he's matched in his portrayal as a cruel collaborationist with a heart of soft romance by newcomer Tang as a drama student who only wanted to make a difference for her country. There's a profound loss of love that occurs in the finale. Its provocative trail only confirms that all wars are secondary to the battles of our hearts.

No Country For Old Men effortlessly vaults to the top of the Coen Brothers film oeuvre. The film is embedded with imagery from the entire work of Joel and Ethan Coen. For instance, there's a dog chase that copies motifs from the canine chase in Raising Arizona. There's the deadly aim of a stone faced killer that echoes events in Blood Simple and Fargo.

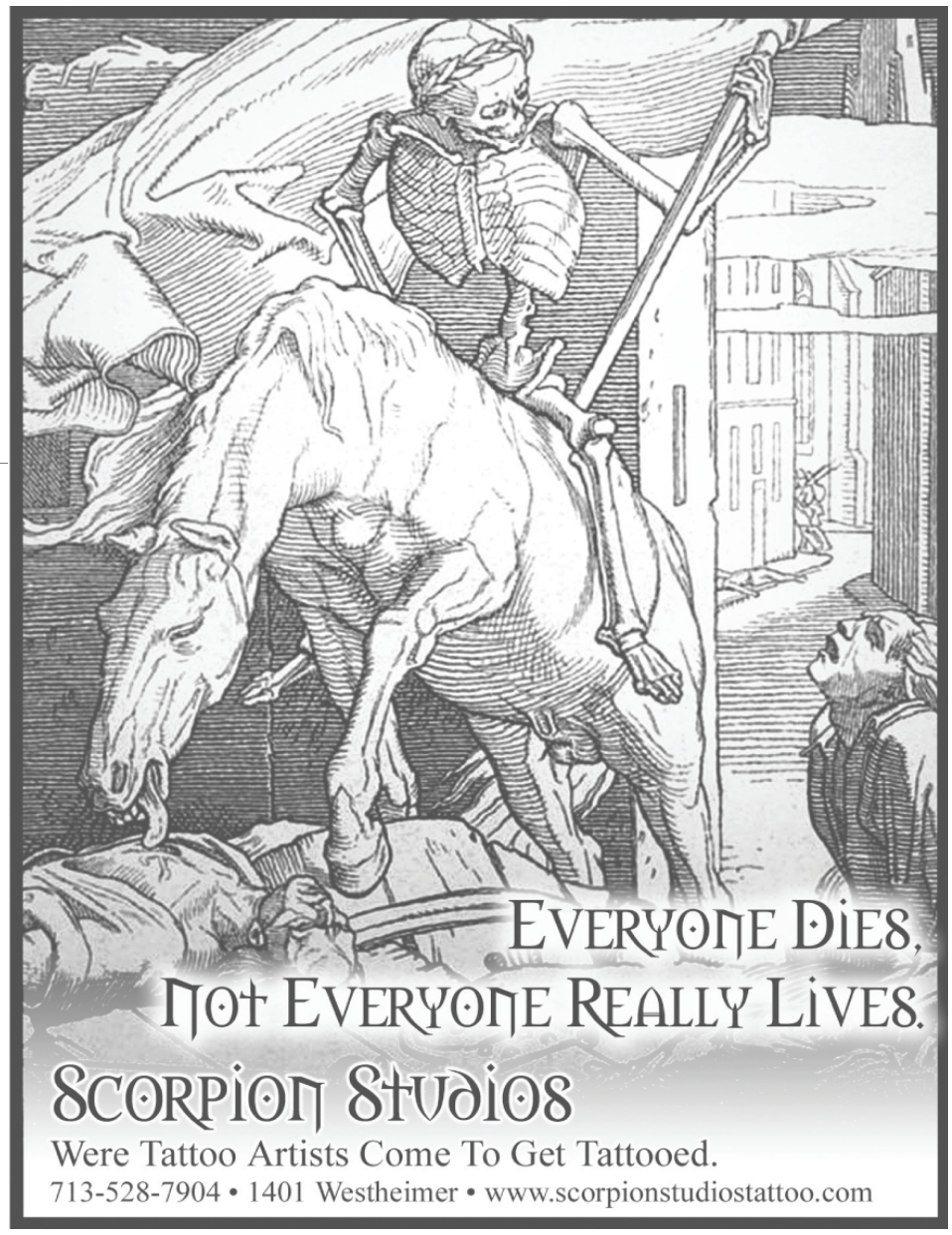
That dog chase is also like the hat that blows in the wind from Miller's Crossing in that it's hard imagery to shake from your head, even days after viewing. Javier Bardem and Josh Brolin own this film. A chase across the Marfa/Big Bend region of Texas (the film was lensed there and in New Mexico) pits Bardem against Brolin. Stolen drug money propels the greed factor in Brolin's case, however Bardem just likes to kill people. Solid support from Tommy Lee Jones, Woody Harrelson and Kelly MacDonald give sub plots a high standard.

Then there's that dog that chases Brolin across the scrub brush desert, then dives after him into a river and starts swimming like Jaws. The Coen Brothers films always remind me of Hitchcock because like that master's films their stories always have these great cinematic sequences that will last forever.

"Voted best music store in Houston."

Soundwaves

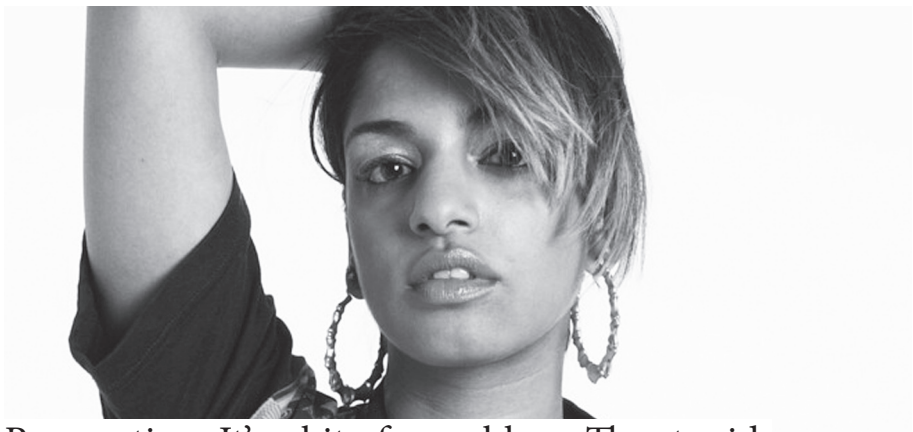
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TODAY HASN'T HAPPENED YET,

AND IT DOESN'T FRIGHTEN ME

By Frito Pendejo



Procreation. It's a bit of a problem. The stupid are populating this country at an alarming rate, while those of logical reasoning and rational thinking are shrinking rapidly. Why?

Well, nothing goes with poverty and a lack of education like booty, beer, and irresponsibility. I mean, I know if I could barely afford to feed myself, or had trouble gaining stable employment, the first thing I would is have unprotected sex and bring two, three, maybe four children in the world, but maybe that's just me. I don't know how you get down. There is talk of a war with Iran, nothing says Thanksgiving like war talk, so when I'm eating my meal on that wondrous day dedicated to armed robbery in the name of civility and religion, I can be humbled by thought of another 3 or 4 thousand Americans killed in a war, after having to fight and unjust war based on imaginary reasoning and bogeyman theories. America, America God shed his grace on thee.

But hey let us not get all political and shit, let's keep this conversation simple and focused. Nightlife, you got to have one. Consumerism, it begins with a C like Christmas. There are shows and CDs to take our minds off of World War III, and I say why not discuss them. As a scribe of the local press, it is my job to hip you to the happenings, and hip you I will.

LIVE AND IN PERSON

SPOON w/ THE NEW PORNOGRAPGHERS
11/01/07 | Warehouse Live
Spoon is a wonderful band who released the wonderful album Ga Ga Ga, this year, and what more way to celebrate the occasion than to mosey on down the Warehouse Live and watch one of the great Texas bands. I remember as a youth seeing Spoon play Austin and thinking, "I really liked that last song," and I'm sure that feeling will be repeated on this night. Brit Daniel is always fun to watch, and the show I saw the band perform earlier this year was rather stunning. The New Pornographers are a band that everyone says I should hear, and when I heard them, I guess I got it. Good indie pop, and whatnot, but nothing to soil your pants about. Regardless, as far as a solid show, this is probably a safe bet.

M.I.A w/ THE COOL KIDS
11/02/07 | Verizon Wireless Theater
Alright I was bit disappointed in M.I.A latest album KALA, but after the raga-world-bali-Miami bass-big beat funk of her first album, topping Arular is a hard feat to accomplish. Still "Bamboo Banger," "Paper Planes" and "Down River" still rock the party, so everything is still copasetic. Besides, live, the party should be in full effect, as any of those songs blasted from concert speakers screams "PART-TAY!!!!" M.I.A. is the type of artist that should be witnessed live as the whole audience turns into a jam led by M.I.A.'s chant-sung raps. The Cool Kids open, and any fan of old school, beat machine, hip hop MUST see The Cool Kids, I froth at the mouth imagining a proper release from the duo. This show will off the chizzain for rizzeal…do people still talk like that? My vernacular suffers from being a bit out of touch with the lingo of the day.

REGINA SPEKTOR
11/07/07 | Warehouse Live
"Singer-songwriter" is usually a term used to describe confessional truths of "high school journal keepers" as Lee Ranaldo once sang. Regina Spektor somewhat fits this description, but mainly as the most accurate description of craft, she sings and writes, but in reference to how she fits into the genre, or rather how the persons in this genre fit Spektor, well, no justice is done. Her music is observational, humorous, disturbing, romantic, depressing, and a plethora of other synonyms. Her last album, the fabulous "Begin To Hope" is one of the great albums of this decade. Though she has one of those rabid followings associated with artists such as Cat Power or Stevie Knicks, one listen to her songs, and it easy to see how people can identify and latch onto her as an artist, for even as I am not a young white woman, something about her music makes me understand the plight of the soy latte sect. One thing I have in common with Kanye West, is that we both discovered Spektor from VH-1, well, that and I also tend to be outspoken and perceived as arrogant. There is no opening act, which means a longer show by the artist, and that they are good enough to fill a two, three hour set; a rare trait in these times of Fergilicious-ness.

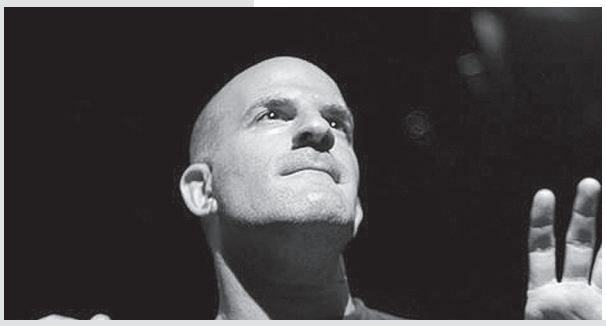
Also appearing…
FOG + The Proletariat + 11/04/07
ENON w/ LOVE OF DIAGRAMS + The Proletariat + 11/07/07
AESOP ROCK w/ BLACK MOTH SUPER RAINBOW + Warehouse Live + 11/17/07

NOT IN PERSON BUT AUDIBLE

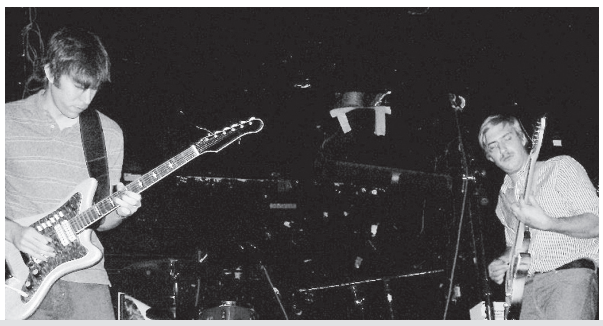
PJ HARVEY
WHITE CHALK (Island)
PJ Harvey is one of my favorite artist. Her albums tend to range from dark to dark-ish and sometimes pretty and dark, with the exception of Stories From The Sea which was more pop-ish and dark. White Chalk has her abandoning the guitar completely for piano driven song forms, and it is mostly a success. The qualities of good Polly Jean are present, seemingly confessional songs, interesting rhythms, haunting vocals, "The Devil," "When Under Ether"and "Dear Darkness," would fit very comfortably into that which appreciate from her as an artist. The problem lies in the dependency on piano, the absence of the squeal and skronk of some of earlier works is much needed. As the album plays there is a need for a jolt a break from the somberness that becomes a bit of a chore, though the album probably maxes at 30 minutes or a little more. In doses the album is great, a song here or there, but as a collection, a shrill of feedback or drum hit really hard, though Jim White does a fabulous job as the pulse of the album, wouldn't hurt. But all in all, I would recommend the album, the songs are solid as part of a mix, or when they pop up in a shuffle.

AKRON/ FAMILY
LOVE IS SIMPLE (Young God)
Akron Family have always been a band that blazes their own trail. Sometimes abrasive, sometimes, sometimes psychedelic, sometime classic rock, and even a bit drum circle-ish, one never knows what to expect from this band. While a lot of music can be attributed to a time or an era, Akron Family

shows in Houston



Kid Beyond
11/10 Meridian



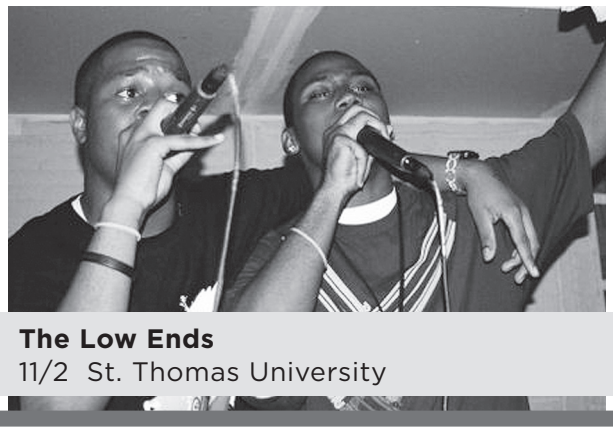
Wicked Poseur
11/24 Rudyard's



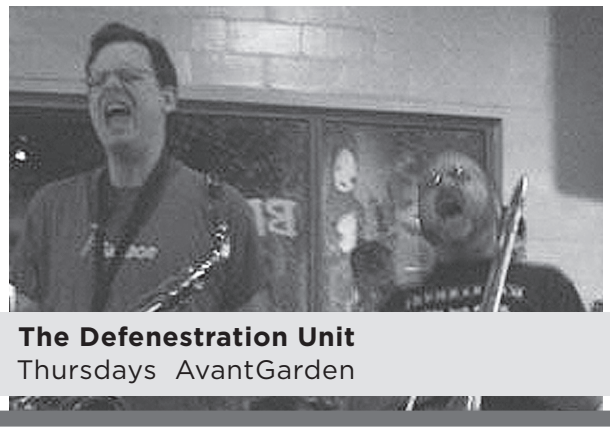
Winks
11/28 Super Happy Fun Land

seem revel in their own space, driving in their own lane, making each album a continuance of an idea, but their rather than trying to compete or parallel the sound of the day. To say that this album is one of the best of the year would be an understatement, it is epic in sound and vision. It is if you are something large, beyond grasp, but yet intimate and welcoming. "Lake Song/New Ceremonial Music for Moms" begins almost something as a folk funk jam only to dissolve into a tribal séance. "Pony's O.G." is a song that is beautiful and gracdeful, and stands as clam shimmering water, majestic and fascinating. There are tinges of Neil Young and Crazy Horse, there are tinges of weird Parliament soul, there are many colors, hence the lyric "There's so many colors without the dirty windows" form the song "There's So Many Colors." This album is magnificent, and should be heard and experienced.

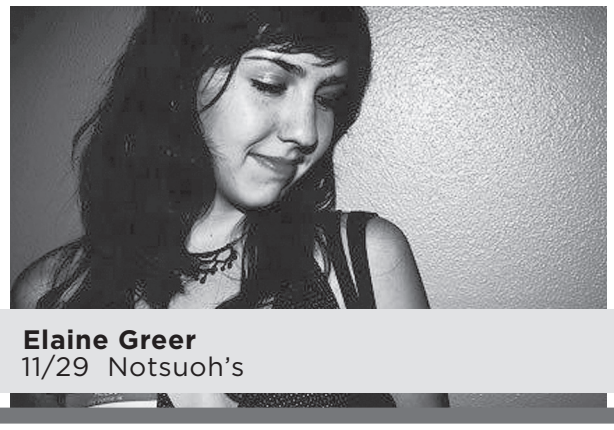
SIR RICHARD BISHOP
POLYTHEISTIC FRAGMENTS
(Drag City)
Sir Richard Bishop is a member of the great majestic Sun City Girls. This album is reminiscent of that band's work, but more a testament to Bishop's ability as a guitar player and instrumentalist. There is the almost Spanish-Fahey-like work of "Cross My Palms With Silver" which is somewhat flamenco, but also a little the trova style of music popularized in some Cuban music. "Canned Goods and Firearms" takes a start/stop approach inside a guitar line that I some ways cartoonish like a chase scene in Bugs Bunny, only to meander in Blues-guitar riffage within the structure. "Hecate's Dream" is a desert dream committed to music, mysterious and distant, guitar lines tied guitar and released, flowing like a band of kites yet attached to one string. I don't know, this album is difficult to describe, but fans of Sun City Girls will not be disappointed, and fans of that which does not suck will also be impressed.



The Low Ends
11/2 St. Thomas University



The Defenestration Unit
Thursdays AvantGarden



Elaine Greer
11/29 Notsuoh's





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The Gospel According to

MISS BLY

By Brittany Bly



I remember the first time I heard the word "emo" thrown around. My friend called me that to make fun of me for liking the Descendents, which was in his opinion bad music because it was a synonym for "emotional punk" — pussy.

A few years later it blossomed into the sensitive sing-along subculture. Bands like Braid and Jawbreaker became more than popular but only slightly less than obsessed over. But for the last couple of months I've been wondering what the hell happened to emo? It's like it got stuck in a blender with Goth and became Morrissey's little bitch sister. Emo kids' wearing nothing but black, black asymmetrical hair, and lots of piercings doesn't take after its predecessor. It's totally alien to the emo of yesteryears.

Recently, I was talking to this cutesy emo teenager. I figured she had good taste in music so I was asking her about the bands she liked. "I like classic rock," she answered. I got really excited. "Me too!! I love Led Zeppelin, Sabbath. . ." She made a sour face and replied, "I meant The Smiths and The Cure and stuff." It scared me.

America, Home of the Blas'e

In other news, in all the truly sick ways we can waste our time, thehills.mtv.com has a virtual world where you can be your own Hills character. For all those who had been able to avoid trash TV and celebrities before reading my "culture" column (ha ha – the joke's on you), The Hills is an MTV scripted/reality Laguna Beach spin-off show about rich 20-somethings in Beverly Hills. Online you can build you own avatar, change its looks, go shopping, and talk shit about your friends at the cybermall. Quotes from the ad say you can "make your body smoking hot at the spa," and, yes, they are talking about your avatar's body. "You can do it all — like that guy the other day." Because, as they remind you it's safer to do it online than in real life.



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HANDS IN THE FUCKING AIR, ASSHOLE

Bring back the guns unload with their new album

By Ramon Medina | Photos Courtesy of Rosa Guerrero



It's a Monday night at Francisco's on the east end of downtown. Inside Bring Back the Guns are rehearsing as a German cockroach overlooks the proceedings from an electrical conduit over the door.

It's a week before their record release at Numbers for the new album Dry Futures on Feow Records and guitarist, singer, and principal songwriter Matt Brownlie is busy playing conductor with some new material he's written. As Matt and the band bounce ideas, drummer Thomas Clemmons sneaks potato chips from a bag between runs, bassist Ryan Hull fiddles with his ubiquitous baseball cap, and a yawning Erik Bogle tries to extract some insect from a guitar pedal only to crush it inside for all his effort. It's a pretty brutal process and my notes read as such; "8:15 same riff. 8:23 same fucking riff 8:35 Oh god just kill me they are still at it." Then something happens a bit over an hour from when they started and around the same time that I start thinking of a way to politely excuse myself – the pieces falls together, the song works, and it's incredible. Suddenly the room is alive and even the formerly fatigued Erik Bogle is grinning ear to ear. It's a perfect example of what people never see when they go see a show or buy an album. To a fan, it's as if the previous hour of work didn't happen but the fact of the matter is this painstaking chiseling of marble happens all the time in music.

Bring Back the Guns know all about chiseling; it's taken three and a half years to release Dry Futures - one year to record and another two and a half in the dubious limbo of record label shopping. You'd think after such a long incubation period, not to mention a decade long career, they'd be tired and dreading an upcoming tour yet, when we meet at Rudyard's, Ryan is actually excited. "As much as we've done it, I never have a bad time on the road. At times on the road, yeah, it gets rough but then I think, here I am with my friends on the road having a good time…I'm not at work. Oh wait, this rules!"

Erik expands on the typical band hardships, "You deal with the crap because there's no other option. You deal with it because the music is worth doing. It all starts as a 20 year-old's dream of being a rock star…"

Matt interrupts, "The idea of a rock star was more plausible when we started than it is in 2007. The game's changed so much. When we started-off, a weird and singular band like the Pixies could get national exposure but now the national scene is so flooded that the playing field has leveled."

"Well,' says Thomas, "I don't think we knew what we were doing back then. We had a five year learning curve."

"If I could go back," says Erik as he sips on a beer, "I would tell myself to do two things - tour and hire a publicist. If you are gonna be a band that sits in the armpit of America you need someone who knows what they're doing."

Matt sighs, "It's unfortunate that any band worth its salt has to buy publicity – it's a goddamn shame. You'd hope that a band making awesome music wouldn't need to but if a tree falls in the forest…"

"…if a band plays in Houston!" exclaims Ryan to great laughter.

Erik elucidates, "Any band working through a real label has PR. A label not only has to facilitate production and distribution but also has to coordinate with people to get them heard above the fray." All right fine, but what about the punk rock kid who says having a publicist ain't DIY or punk?

Brownlie responds, "First, we are doing it ourselves it's our money being put into this album. Secondly, [in response to why a band needs a publicist these days] years ago there were like 50 touring bands touring the country…hell, I know 50 Houston bands alone."

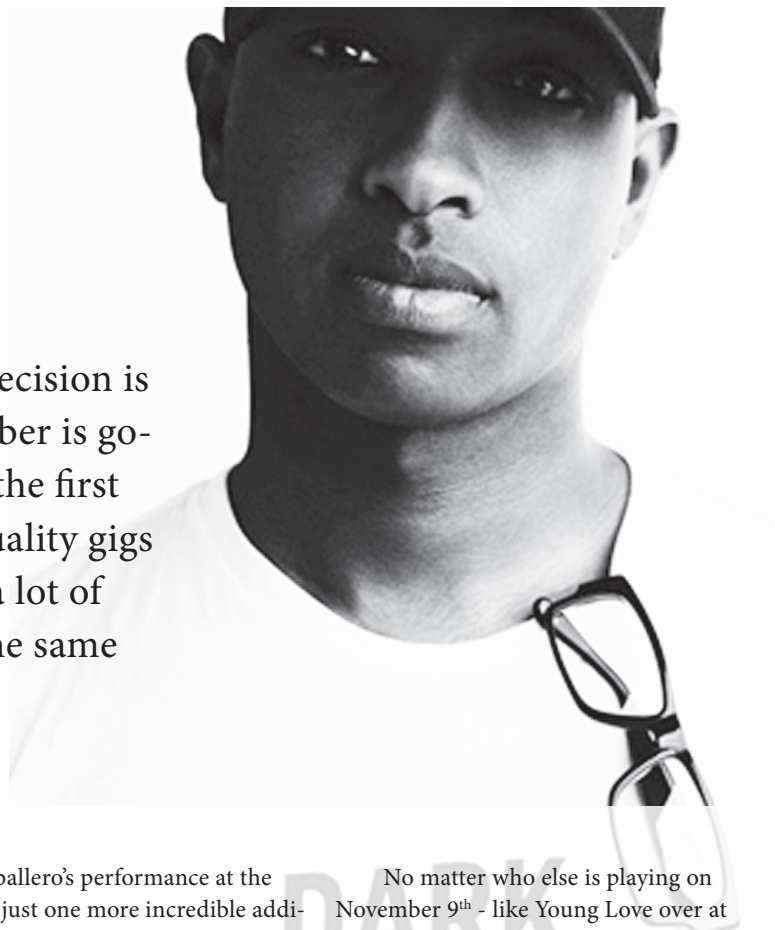
Meanwhile, Erik isn't standing for any claims of punk purity, "Hey, the Sex Pistols were a put together boy-band assembled to make money from dissent."

So if you are doing it for yourself, why not just stay in the garage and what do you want from listeners? Erik expounds, "It's just natural…if you love something you want to share it. The reaction I want from people is the reaction you get when you listen to an album and you can't let it go or the reaction of that guy sitting at the bar, turning his head slowly, and saying 'Wow!' Some of my most exciting times of my life have been attending concerts. Get drunk with me and I'll tell you all about it!" As Erik says this, I sense Charles Bukowski nodding and nothing more needs to be said on the matter.



NOVEMBER SPAWNED A MONSTER

Brigitte Zabak



If live music is your passion and indecision is one of your many vices then November is going to be a hell of a month. Though the first half of the month is teeming with quality gigs there is one unfortunate downside: a lot of those shows have been booked on the same night – just at different venues.

It's an inevitable and unpleasant side effect of choice. Relax though. No matter what you choose, (unless you go and choose something silly like Avenged Sevenfold) you will be in for a treat.

Thankfully, the 1st of November comes baring gifts for indie rock lovers. Austin natives

Spoon will be lighting up the stage at Warehouse Live with The New Pornographers. Spoon's latest release, *Ga Ga Ga Ga Ga,* has garnered some rave reviews and has the potential to be really interesting to watch live. Though there are a few other shows that evening, Spoon is the one that shouldn't be passed up.

One of the hardest decisions of the month comes nice and early on November 2 with a battle of choice between two pretty spectacular musicians. British hip-hop diva M.I.A. will be performing at the Verizon Wireless Theater with Paul Wall. Her infectious voice and fresh perspective plays magically against her dynamic stage presence. Her energy and vivaciousness is unrelenting and she really knows how to woo an audience. But, if alternative hip-hop isn't your thing, maybe American goth rock is! Check out She Wants Revenge with Kenna at The Merdian. Honestly – even if goth rock isn't your thing – go check out the show for the chance to see Kenna's performance. Kenna came onto the scene in 2003 with his debut release *New Sacred Cow*. **His music has a quiet and melancholy power that makes you want to dance and weep all at the same time.**

Don Caballero's performance at the Proletariat is just one more incredible addition to a mix of already stellar shows. Don Caballero's instrumental sound is mathy, jagged, and unsuspecting. Each note speaks its own story and the band's dexterity and intensity keeps listeners anticipating every chord progression. They will be playing on November 3rd with Blades. If emotional pop rock is more your style, Blue October can quench your emo thirst. Front man Justin Furstenfeld got his start right here in Houston as the lead vocalist for the local band The Last Wish back in the early 90's. He developed quite a following and Blue October seems to be a matured version of Furstenfeld's natural aptitude for performance and sound.

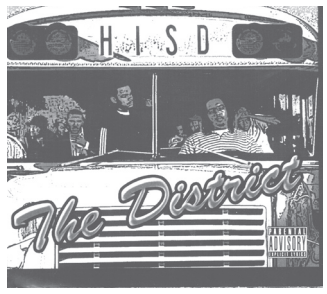
Sometimes, it's nice just to sit back and enjoy music at its most uncomplicated stage. Regina Spektor is a singer/songwriter who was born with music in her blood. Her ability to create thought-provoking and sincere lyrics is on par with other female musicians like Hope Sandoval and P.J. Harvey. Her voice is gentle but bold and all she needs is a piano to accompany her vocals and Spektor can overwhelm any audience with harmony. She will be bringing her lyrical prowess and impressive vocal range to Warehouse Live on November 7th. Calm but powerful music isn't for everyone. No worries. Enon will also be in town that night. Enon's experimental din is a sort of spastic blend of indie rock chords and serrated lyrics. The music has the kind of oomph that resonates well on stage. Enon will be playing with Love of Diagrams and Pretty and Nice at the Proletariat.

No matter who else is playing on November 9th - like Young Love over at Verizon Wireless – there is only one show that anybody and everybody needs to mark on their calendars and that is the Ghostland Observatory gig at Warehouse Live. Ghostland Observatory is a two piece band from Austin, Texas. Though only comprised of two members, Ghostland has the kind charisma and talent that even large bands can't rival. Their sound is heavy on the electronica, but in an oh-so-good way. Aaron Behrens larger-than-life voice and presence onstage is never disappointing. It's actually pretty unbelievable how much energy this duo has. Every performance, whether in a small hole-in-the-wall club or outside at some massive music festival, is as exhilarating and fun as the last. If you're lucky, they'll bust out the laser light extravaganza that adds one more layer of funkified flavor to their sets.

The rest of November provides much more noteworthy acts. November 10th seems to be *the* night for local bands around town. Choices include Spain Colored Orange at Rudyard's, Tody Castillo at Warehouse Live, or The Linus Pauling Quartet CD Release at The Proletariat. The 16th hosts Tool at the Toyota Center or go a little less intense with New Orleans funk/jam band the Rebirth Brass Band at The Meridian. Be sure to catch Peter Bjorn and John at Warehouse live on November 23rd or the Electric Six show featuring The Willowz and Ladyheat may prove to be an interesting night's worth of sound. Electric Six are performing at the Engine Room on November 28th.

Homegrown Reviews

By Omar and Shelby



HISD

(Hueston Independent Spit District)

The District

This debut album by the crew of 8 local emcees and producers is a diamond in the rough that effectively dodges H-Town hip-hop clichés while maintaining a solid southern flair. This 19-track project is a versatile blend of clever lyricism and soulful production rife with strong word play, local references, and reverb drenched beats. HISD is comprised of a veritable who's who list of greats including Soul One, Flash, Scottie Spitten, King Midas, E Classic, Savvi, and my favorite- Equality. Equality has been performing his spoken word/emcee hybrid the H-Town circuit for years at festivals, protests, and concerts alike. Subject matter deftly jumps between issues like ingrained local racism to staking girls at the Galleria. Bright spots: Paper Bag Rap, 3 Story House, and The City.

Myspace.com/hisd

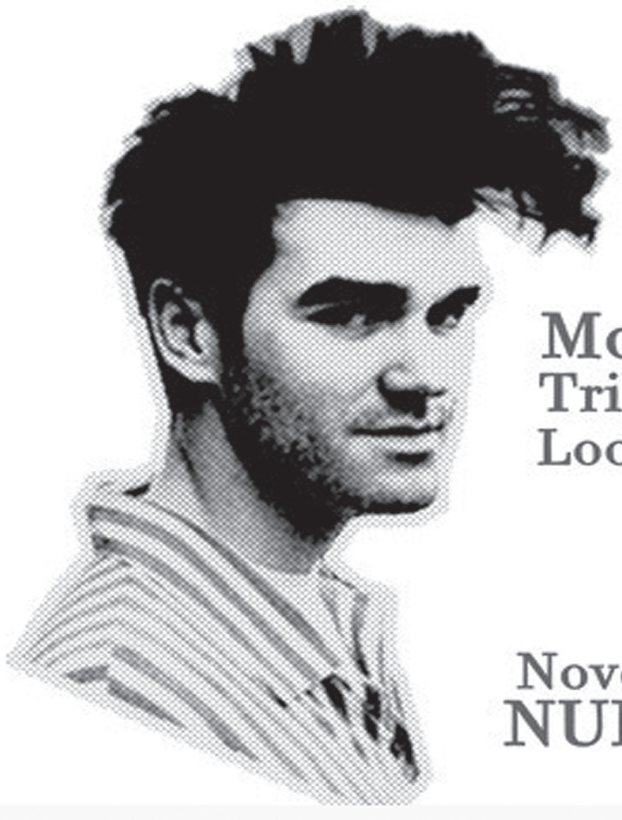


The Gold Sounds

If you weren't at the recent Westheimer Block Party then you missed out on having Deer Park, TX's The Gold Sounds, slay your face into melt. These dudes came with some rock-ass-Tom Petty-fuck you-fury. Sean Donnelly (vocals/bass) and brother Dee(drums) did the right thing with their youth in learning to play rock because the gods have blessed these kids. Guitarist Chris Fuentes rounds out the group with raw Fender energy. Their songs are as easy and fun as your old man in '76, drivin' "El Diablo". For fans of Television, Tom Petty, and a really good time. This is all exemplified on their solid 4 song EP that opens with the great Blow my Soul to the Floor.

Myspace.com/TheGoldSounds

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"November Spawned A Monster"



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NOVEMBER CALENDAR

By Shelby Kelly

11/01. Girl Talk w/ Busdriver - Engine Room
As I Lay Dying w/ Through the Eyes of the Dead - Meridian
Spoon w/ Emma Pollock - Warehouse Live

11/02. She Wants Revenge w/ Kenna - Meridian
This show is going to be aces. The fine china in this dinner set will be Newport Beach,Virginia's, Kenna. Kenna's debut album "New Sacred Cow (2003)" is probably one of the best albums no one has ever heard. From what we know, he also has a new album dropping soon called *I hope they can see my face*. We're hoping he just plays the whole New Sacred Cow album and leaves it at that. This dude's got talent for days, and has been known to get it real hype a la Tricky in his live sets. For fans of Depeche Mode, The Beatles, and Neptunes beats.
Of Montreal w/ MGMT - Numbers

11/03. The Avett Bros. w/ Will Hoge - Meridian
The Orange Show Gala - The Orange Show

11/05. Horseman of the Apocalypse: Columbus' Later Writings and the Theological Advent of the Modern - Rice University

11/06. Bayside w/ The Sleeping - Numbers

11/07. IAMX w/ The Watermarks - Engine Room
Regina Spektor - Warehouse Live

11/08. Thrift Store Cowboys w/ The Rising - SHFL

11/09. Ghostland Observatory - Warehouse Live
Devendra Banhart: Some Drawings - DiverseWorks

11/10. Kid Beyond w/ DJ Logic - Meridian
Jack of all trades Kid Beyond makes his way to the Meridian this month to display his ambidextrous confluence of live-looping, beat boxing, and singing. This Frisco native is a virtual one-man band who deftly blends soulful vocals and busy electronics into the informality of a live show; all the while beatboxing and personally manipulating sounds and sequences. DJ Logic shares the stage with him on this tour.
Tody Castillo w/ The Small Sounds - Warehouse Live

11/11. Mute Math w/ Eisley - Warehouse Live

11/13. Down - Meridian

11/14. Aesop Rock w/ Black Moth Super Rainbow - Warehouse Live



11/30. Aristotle's Pleasures - Rice University
What is 'pleasure'? For me, it is listening to condescending douche-bag professors speak at University campuses and explore concepts that have no practical application. If you like that kind shit as well, make sure and check out University of Texas professor Stephen White speaks on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics and how they relate to humans perceptions on pleasure.

11/29. The Black Angels w/ The Strange Boys - Warehouse Live

11/28. Electric Six w/ The Willowz - Engine Room

11/27. Charalambides w/ Alasdair Roberts - The Orange Show

11/26. Streetlight Manifesto w/ Suburban Legends - Meridian

11/25. Arizona w/ Giant Battle Monster - SHFL

11/22. 5th Annual Veggie Thanksgiving Potluck - SHFL
Super Happy Fun Land hosts their ever joyful 5th Annual Thanksgiving Potluck. Just make sure not to bring that Turkey or Honey ham as this is a vegetarian event. Music by Austin Psychedelic pioneer Douglas Ferguson.

11/21. HIM w/ The Bleeding Through - Warehouse Live

11/20. Circle Takes the Square w/ Faithealer - Walter's on Washington
Dude!! If you are anyone at all you will make it out to this show. Always Summer earned the title of Master Slayer for the month of November for bringing us Georgia shredfest, Circle Takes the Square. Thats right. SHREDFEST. 'CTTS' play a cacophonic medley of searing metal riffs against thrashing drums, with male and female howls weaving in and out of each other to eventually find their way back to loving arms. No solos. Just owning.

11/17. Artcrawl - see pg. 19 for map
The 15th Annual Houston Art Crawl hits the downtown warehouse district with the full splendor of what is the city's only artist run, all volunteer art crawl. As always, admission is free and shuttle transport is free as well. For more info visit artcrawlhouston.com
Brand New w/ Mewithoutyou - Warehouse Live

11/16. Contortionist Jean Baptiste Andre: Comme En Plein Jour - Diverseworks

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ARTCRAWL MAP

Saturday November 17, 2007 2-9 pm

www.artcrawl.org



1. American Consumer Consortium
341 North Hutcheson
2. Atelier Jacquinet
913 Mckee

Artists
Blue, Bonnie
Davis, Carrie
Jacquinet, Frances
Jones, Ken
Madera, Tammi M.
Pascual, Jenny
Roberts, Shawnna
Stinson, Melanie
Traughber, Glenn
Trevino, Patricia
X, Mark

3.Bienville Furniture Company Building
1355 Sterrett Street

Artists
Cooper, Betsy
Kapalski, Kelsey

4. Bootleg Studios
2301 Commerce

Artists
Perales II, Valentin

5. CSAW
2315 Commerce

Artists
Adelman, John
Battalino, Maggi
Bihl, Berit

Bradford, Elaine
Fielder, Garland
Henderson, Michael
Kelley, Kathy
Riley, Whitney
Sherman, Howard
Wagner, Cory
Watson, Carol

6. Dakota Lofts Gallery
711 William

Artists
Keeline, Karen

7. Elder Street Artist Lofts
1101 Elder St

Artists
Atlas, John
Boutte', Lolet
Groves, Brent
Guerra, Monia
Ivanova, Ludmila
Ivanova, Iskra
Kressman, Monica
Latif, Shu
Lucas, Jim
Shumate, Derek
Smith, Kaneem
Wrestling, Doomsday

8. Eller Wagon Works
101 Crawford

Artists
Royal Graphics, Alvin Roy Groups
FMG Design, Inc.

9. Erie City Iron Works
1311 Sterrett

Artists
Dwight, Joyce
Gordon, Ron
Hand, Kay
Knott, John
Olive, Bill
Phillips, Ray
Ramu, Sed
Rodewald, Allan

10. Fifth Ward Hotel
1206 Nance

Groups
m ARCHITECTS

11. Fransisco Studios
2300 McKinney

Artists
182, CHAPA
Cotto, Mike
Deleon, Laura
Felton, Johnathan
Gonzales, Rene
Howell, Andy
Jackson, E.
Kalie II, John C.
Koho, Char
Mendoza de Mendiok, Michael Lee
Moreno, Rigo
Navarrete, Christian Jesus
Trigueros, Carlos "Big C"
Water
Cutthroat

12. Gribble Stamp Building
202 St. Emanuel

Artists
Olivia, Lovie

13. Houston Foundry
1712 Burnet

Artists
Bou Chebi, Fadi
Cullier, Renedia B.
Elkins, Zach
Garrett, Haden
Gijsbers Van Wijk, Helena
Godfrey, Lisa Marie
Graeve, David
McConnell, Judy Lee
Miron, Michael
O' Michael, Michelle
Orseck, Ellen
Peden, John
Wilhelm, David
Williams, Tangerine

14. Kap & Suzy's Place
2220 Commerce

Artists
Dallal, Leila
Kap

15. M.A.N.
1702 Rothwell

Artists
Burge, William T.
Closek, James
Fereday, Aissa
Glidden, Jerrie
Goettsche, Susan
Huggins, Michael W.
Kane, Solomon
Lucas, MaryAnn
McFarland, Van
Noblique, Nic
Parente, Nicola
Powell, Heidy
Santos, Sergio
Shanks, Shelley
Snider, Tim Dean
Varela, Richard

16. Monks Corner Tearoom
1320 Nance St

17. Mother Dog Studios
720 Walnut St

Artists
Bennet, Tanna
Bright, Deborah
Burgess, Theresa
Douglas, Chris
Fleischhauer, Jo Ann
Graham, William Cody
Harmon, Brenda
Mazzu, Ken
Murray, Beth
Runnels, John
Samuels Grystar, Mitch
Schlachter, Louise
Sisemore, Nathan
Spencer, Liz Conces
Swartz, Stephanie

18. Nance Street Studios
1707 Nance

Artists
Cunningham, Meredith
Tucker, Donald R.
Ulcak, Kelly

19. PrestonWood Gallery
1116 Naylor

Artists
Hilliard, Mario
Mercer, Jo El

20. Ron Gordon Studio
913A Mckee

Artists
Gordon, Ron

21. Studio Twenty Twenty
2020 Commerce

Artists
Flowers, Lance
Hodge, Robert

22. Superstitions Studio
2121 Congress St

Artists
Balli, Leticia Anne
Degeyter, Sarah
Rey, Rosemary

23. The Docks
1000 Walnut St

Artists
Angeli, Sylvia
Caire, Lucy
Cooper, Selma
Hohenberger, Rose
Port, Peggy
Rathe Fine Art, Laura
Sanchez, Karen
Seeba, Maureen
White, Frank
Group
DiverseWorks ArtSpace

24. Vine Street Studios
1113 Vine St

Groups
Carnes Ely LLP
Fotofest Inc.

25. Visker Studios
910 Hardy St

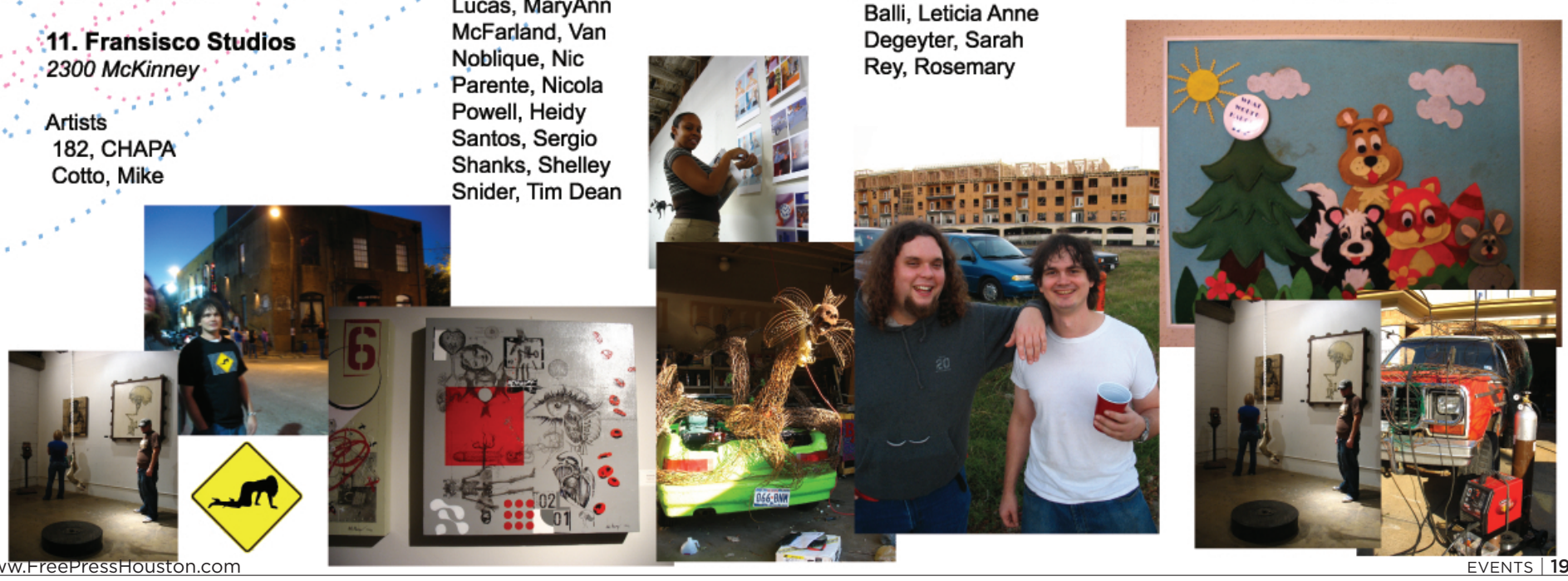
Artists
Havuk, Rex
Visker

26. Waterhill Homes on Commerce
2322 Commerce St

Artists
Godoy, Alberto
Groups
Waterhill Homes

27. Western Electric Warehouse
100 Jackson St

Artists
Bruce, Charla
Bruno, Lauren
Coker, Maurice
Collier Hudson, Colby
Eisenhut, Kermit
Gant, Kirk
Little, Cameron
Lopez, Mary Elena
Lopez, Sara
Pastore, Clea
Queenan, Ronnie
Sprohge, Erik
Zambrano, Victor



Review: THE ORANGE BOX

Valve shows the industry how to step it up

By Tyler Barber







■ The Hunters (below) are creepy. smart, and they run in packs.

■ My digital-crush, Alyx Vance, is on a short list of co-stars that don't annoy.

Valve's maverick digital distribution service, Steam, is trailblazing the PC scene offering a centralized community, free matchmaking and convenient downloading. Sharing the love with console owners, the Orange Box is continuing Valve's generous offerings with five games packed onto one disc for $60. For gamers used to stupidly-priced hard-drives, blood-sucking micro-transactions and retro-robberies, the Orange Box is a savior. A game free of bureaucratic restrictions. A free man.



■ Portal: by-far the most memorable game this year.



■ In the Pixar-esque Team Fortress 2, the Heavy (above) is a good beginner class as his job is to spray and soak-up bullets.

Consoles: PlayStation 3, Xbox 360 | **Rating:** T-M | **Developer:** Valve

HALF-LIFE 2, EPISODE ONE & EPISODE 2

Life gives you a crowbar

Half-Life 2 and HL2: Episode One are amazing games, but they're showing their age (more like Madonna than Keith Richards). Their transparent set-pieces, clumsy weapon selection (mapped to the D-pad) and linear battles feel ancient. But the brand new Episode Two takes the gameplay off-rails, and provides new, larger environments for non-linear skirmishes. The devious Hunters debut with AI programmed to flank and smoke you out of hiding, all while remaining strangely emotive. Episode Two perfects Valve's oscillation between combat and puzzle-solving with what is described as the biggest physics-based puzzle in the series. But what pushed me through the total 20+ hours of HL and its episodes is my digital crush, Alex Vance. About twenty-minutes into Episode 2, there's a development with Alex that will leave you clung to her, and this adventure until its conclusion. Which is good, because with all the console-centric games that are ending in disappointment, Valve delivers a fresh and satisfying conclusion to the HL epic, thus far.

PORTAL

Let them eat cake

An hour-and-a-half into Portal has me unnerved. The corrugated windows that feed into empty observation rooms, sterile walls and the hum of the fluorescent lighting escalates to an insanity-inducing silence. Even more distressing, GLaDOS (Genetic Lifeform and Disc Operating System), the disembodied monitor of the "experiment," is starting to sound a few ingredients short of a fruit-cake. Armed with a portal gun, you can shoot two openings onto any flat surface, creating a two-way warp. As the meat of the Zelda-esque puzzles, this mechanic is used in labyrinthine variations coated with a Dharma Initiative vibe. The musings of your over-seer provide the backdrop for the story—yes, a plot in a puzzle game you'll actually care about! But, if you don't care about the story, you don't have to. The writing and presentation of the story coalesce, leaving the discovery of the story completely on your own. However, neglecting the plot, or how Portal fits into the HL universe, is a big mistake as half-way through there's a twist that took me to a place emotionally that I've never been to in a videogame. What's on average a three-hour tour, Portal might be the shortest contender ever for Game of the Year. Seriously, if you only play one game this fall, make it Portal.

TEAM FORTRESS 2

A shooter for everyone?

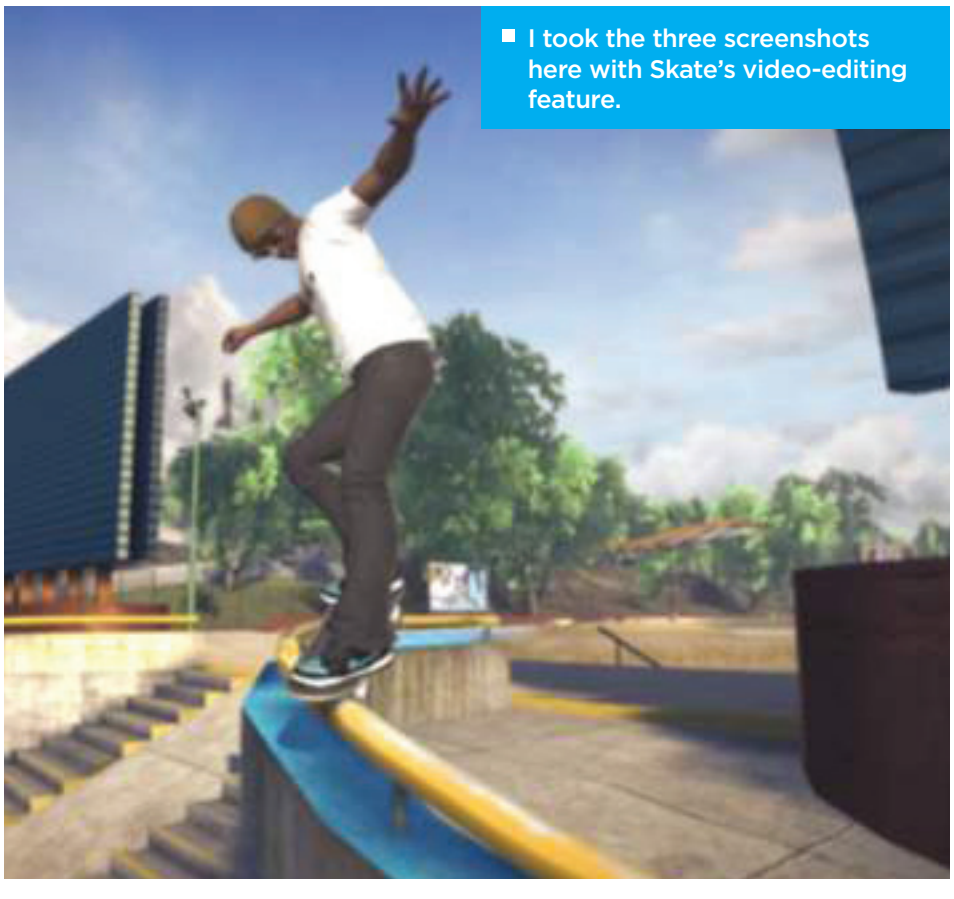
In the nine years leading up to Team Fortress 2, Valve chiseled-away at four versions before fixating on the current Incredibles-meets-Norman Rockwell aesthetic. Pretty and functional, the cartoony look sets the tone for the exaggerated action, and helps distinguish each of the nine classes. Along with what weapon they carry, each class varies in speed, health and damage. For example, the Heavy walks slow and has more health, whereas the Scout is extremely fast, but only takes a few rounds to drop. Other classes bring a layer of depth to the online shooter genre. The Spy and the Engineer, for example, have an Itchy and Scratchy relationship—the Engineer builds a machine-gun and the Spy, disguised as the opposition, disables the turret incognito. What's most promising about TF2 is its allure to those intimidated by online shooters. Classes like the Medic, Pyro and—to some extent—the Engineer, rely on skill-sets other than twitch shooting. But, with a holiday season full of online-shooters, it's yet to be determined if console gamers can open-up to Valve's online masterpiece.

Final Grade: **A**

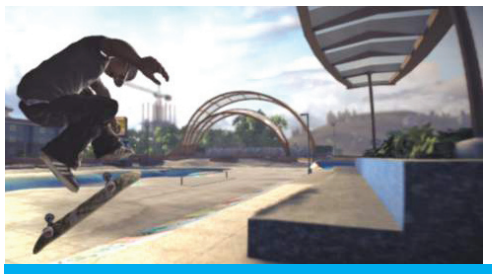
Review: **SKATE**

Love it, or Hate it, or Both

By Tyler Barber



I took the three screenshots here with Skate's video-editing feature.





Above all, Skate captures the artistic nature of skateboarding.

Consoles: PlayStation 3, Xbox 360 | **Rating:** T | **Developer:** EA

I want to love Skate, and in many ways, I do.

The gameplay harbors depth and personal expression while offering genuine satisfaction at its mastery. And even though a few game design decisions make me want to smash my controller on the ground (like grumpy skater-tikes do with their boards), Skate is the game I didn't know I wanted Tony Hawk to be.

With your board's movement on the right analog stick, and your body's on the left, Skate almost plays like a fighting-game—with intuitive, kinetic controls. Climbing the wallet-chain of skater nobility in the career mode, you'll attempt specific challenges that illuminate the control's nuances. I also love how Skate captures the personal expression inherent in skateboarding—not only with what brands you sport, but *how* you skate. And you can show the world your skater identity with Skate's slick video-editing system. It automatically saves the last minute of your game, allowing you to go back and add effects, camera angles and even slow-motion.

While the skate-video camera is key to Skate's style, but it comes at the cost of your peripheral vision (if you wanna look before crossing the street, you can't). Being glued to the board only further frustrates, as scouting spots becomes needlessly difficult. Is walking an out-of-reach feature in next-gen games? Trying tricks over and over is also botched by poor load times and a superfluous menu system with Windows Vista's OCD confirmation habits (i.e., "Are you sure you want to retry?" and "How 'bout now, still want to play?").

Until now, I wasn't aware that I wanted an unflinching skateboard sim. I enjoy the difficulty, and how the innovative flick-stick controls mimic their real-life counterparts. But when Skate bails, its a real buzz-kill.

Final Grade: **B+**





LIGHT RAIL, HEAVY BURDEN

By Alex Wukman | Illustration by Tim Dorsey & Shelby Kelly



The ballroom at the Greenway Holiday Inn is packed with engineers, business owners and community members. The occasion? An "Open House". The board of Greater Houston's Metropolitan Transit Authority has just released the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for it's controversial University Corridor light-rail project, and it's time to start selling it to the public.

The DEIS is a federally required survey of the effect the construction of light rail will have on Richmond and the surrounding area. Weighing in at over 300 very dense pages, hardly anyone is actually going to read the thing....a fact that Metro is counting on.

The crowd here, in contrast to the early and contentious public meetings, is pretty solidly pro-rail. Two middle aged men in suits flip through the DEIS. Nearby, a couple of Galleria area business owners trace their fingers over a table long map showing proposed light rail routes. An elderly man who identifies himself as a Memorial area home owner studies the poster size charts showing the summaries of which properties might need to be acquired for right of way when an engineer from Turner, Collie and Braden walks up and asks if he needs any help.

The din of conversation is all about how the construction of light rail will benefit the surrounding area and how light rail needs to go on Richmond, because that's where people want to go... until Daphne Scarbrough walks through the door sporting red cowboy boots, tan pants and an armful of anti rail on Richmond flyers. She starts explaining that the anti-rail groups weren't allowed to put up any signs in front of the hotel. As word spreads throughout the room that she's here the conversation around the room changes to whispers and the glances become side-long as people find out. "That's right....that lady over there--she's the one suing Metro."

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"We're suing Metro because they violated a contract with the voters by moving the line off Westpark where the 2003 referendum said it was going to go," Daphne explains a few days later at her shop, The Brass Maiden, which has been designated a Backyard Wildlife Habitat by the National Wildlife Federation. She mutes the Gene Autry western on TV, opens the door on the cast iron stove to check the biscuits she's baking and sits down at her kitchen table to talk about the University Corridor DEIS.

"We turned in almost 5,000 letters disagreeing with the project, and only one was mentioned in the statement," she says as she takes a sip from her glass of water, "it reads like there was only one person who had problems with the fact that voters approved Metro constructing light rail on Westpark, not BRT on Richmond."

BRT is Bus Rapid Transit, which can be described as buses running in a walled off lane along Richmond. Metro believes that a small-print disclaimer in the ballot language provides the flexibility for moving the line off Westpark and changing it from light rail to BRT. The paragraph reads "Note: Final Scope, length of rail segments or lines and other details, together with implementation schedule, will be based upon demand and completion of the project development process, including community input."

No one at Metro was available to explain how where a train goes and whether or not it actually is a train qualify as "details". However, the Houston Chronicle reported in 2005 that "Metro President and CEO Frank Wilson said the route can not run solely on Westpark, an area he described as a "desert." The Chronicle then went on to state that "Wilson also told residents Metro could put a station in their neighborhood [Afton Oaks]…and buy any homes that have to be razed or lose access to Richmond because of the rails."

Metro has since decided to avoid putting the line through Afton Oaks altogether and has switched back to light rail from BRT. On October 18th, the Metro Board of directors formalized what has for some time been a foregone conclusion: the University Line will run on Richmond Avenue from Wheeler Station to Greenway Plaza. This segment of the corridor will include seven proposed stations, each of which will grant Metro the right of eminent domain for 1,500 feet around that station.

This "right" is the consequence of state legislation passed in the early 1970s that specifically targets rail stations built by municipal transit authorities and gives Metro the legal authority to condemn anything for approximately 4.5 city blocks around any of it's rail stations. This means that 50 percent of downtown property can, in theory, be seized by Metro any time it wants. Multiple Metro employees have gone on record saying that they take their power of eminent domain very seriously and they have repeatedly stated that it won't be used carelessly. Case in point: a February 2007 board meeting where Metro Spokeswoman Sandra Salazar assured reporters that properties acquired for what were then going to be BRT lines would be for "transit use only" and that they would be "friendly acquisitions."

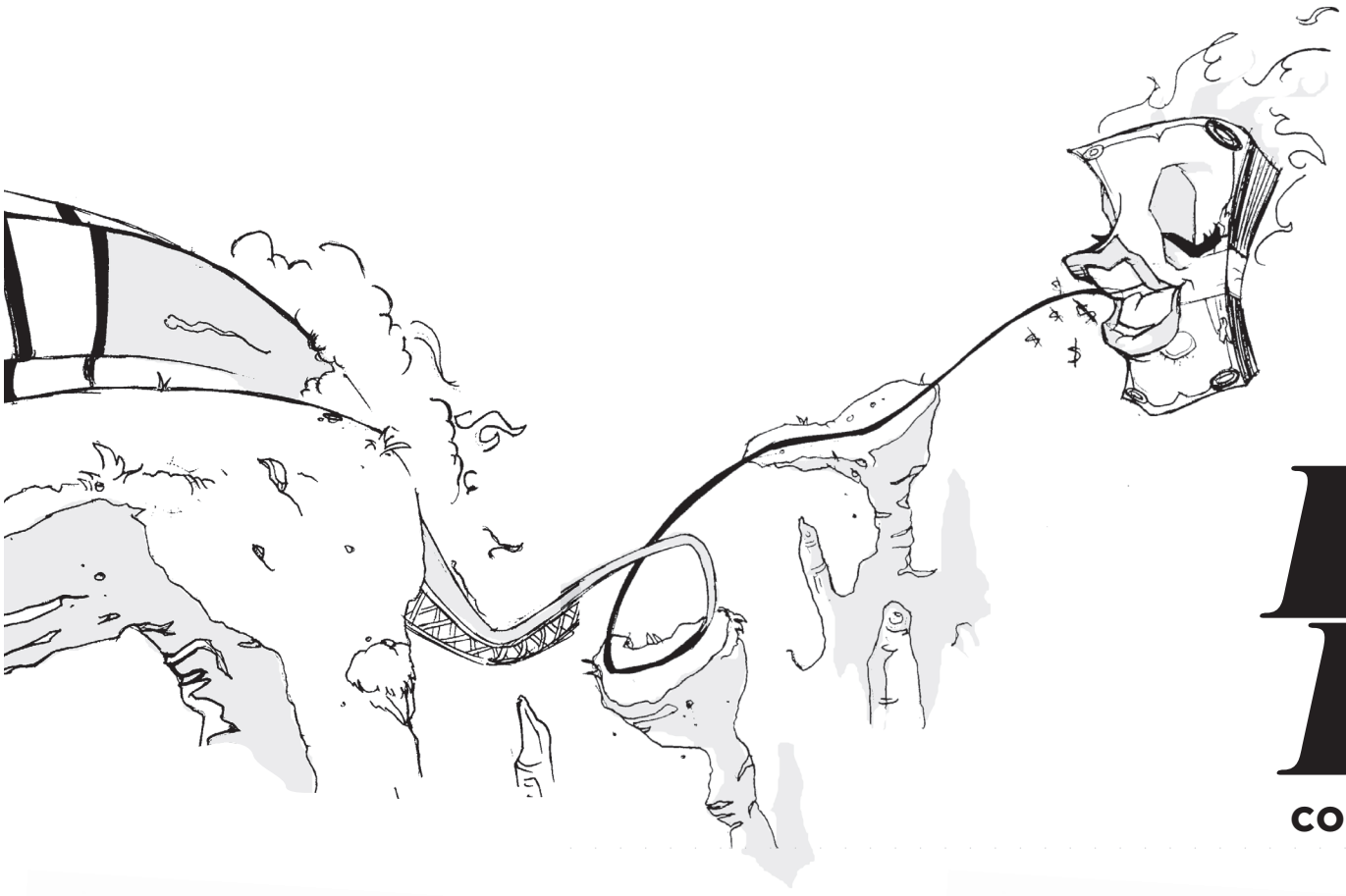
In contrast to this community-oriented official stance are numerous rumored and substantiated instances of intimidation by Metro. In one instance Metro agents were rumored to have approached tenants at an apartment complex on Wheeler and told them that if they break their lease and move to another apartment in a different area of town Metro will pay their rent for three years. Unfortunately no one at Metro would corroborate this and no one in the community would talk out of fear of reprisal.

A better-documented instance of Metro intimidation can be found in the case of one Sam Akers. Mr. Akers is the proprietor of ametal finishing business on Richmond Avenue who spoke out against Metro's plans for the University Line at a meeting sponsored by city councilor Anne Clutterbuck. "Shortly after I spoke at Anne Clutterbuck's meeting, city inspectors showed up at my shop checking for occupancy permits. I felt that it as an extreme coincidence they came right then."

Mr. Akers has operated his business on Richmond Avenue for 28 years. Metro's current plans will result in the seizure of three-quarters of his parking lot and essentially make his property commercially unusable.

He shows the painted stripes in front of his door, "All this is what Metro will need for easement." He walks back inside and explains that "the City of Houston City Council is rewriting the Setback Ordinance for Metro." The setback ordinance defines the distance a building can be set back from the street. Mr. Akers then explains that "Under the current setback ordinance if Metro took that much of my property they would have to pay for the whole property because I couldn't use what's left. Under the new ordinance they would only have to pay for what they take, even though I won't have any parking when they done."

Metro's real estate desires frighten residents and business owners along the University line more than anything else,



PEOPLE

confuse rail with transit.

and they should. In 2004 Metro hired Todd Mason, a real estate consultant, to put together possible real estate deals. Since his hiring, Metro has partnered on a few real estate deals including a shopping center on U.S. 290 and a mixed use development in the Medical Center. It is also rumored that Metro has their eye on the Audi dealership at the corner of Kirby and Richmond, because of the parking garage.

As much interest as Metro has in real estate they don't seem to have any desire to know about what's inside, outside or under the buildings. Chapter 4 of the University Corridor DEIS is entitled "Environmental Effect"-- yet it contains not one data point on buildings that will be affected by construction that contain asbestos. Possibly there are none.....but it seems unlikely, given the number of aging commercial structures along the route.

There is, however, data on the amount of hazardous and regulated material sites that will be affected by the construction. The picture it paints is more than a little disturbing: in the five miles between Hillcroft and the University of Houston there are 540 different Hazmat sites that Metro's construction will possibly affect.

Those sites range from gas stations with leaky petroleum storage tanks to landfills to at least one "Brownfield"— the EPA's term for former industrial sites that can't be used for anything. Except for legally-mandated mentions in the DEIS, Metro has been reluctant to these hazardous material sites under wraps-- even in discussions with property owners who live and work near them.

"I had no idea about those sites," claims Robert McClain, founder and director of the McClain Gallery, "which drives home the whole fact that everyone has underestimated the negative impact this will have on the community and that Metro has engaged in a stealth campaign to keep people uninformed." Mr. McClain's is obviously worn out from last night's opening when interviewed early one Saturday afternoon. He's sitting across the street from his Richmond Avenue gallery, which was designed by award winning architect Marshall Reid and brings internationally recognized artists to the city of Houston-- most recently Alejandro Garmendia, a Basque artist whose work has been described as having the effect of looking at the first stage of a crisis.

"Due to Metro's deficit they are cutting bus service to areas that need it. In fact, the original understanding was that this train was going to go to the East End to serve the Hispanic community and to the North Side to serve the African American community. But the developers don't want it to go there, they want to go where the affluent live the west and the southwest."

The reality of bus routes being cut hits hard in Third Ward where there aren't too many people with a car. In January of this year Metro devastated the residents of the Cuney Homes public housing complex by cutting the 68 line. This forced many elderly riders to have to make two if not three transfers to get to their doctor appointments at the Medical Center, before all they used to do was hop on the 68 and go straight there.

"Metro is always making adjustments to the schedule or the routes in order to force people to ride the light rail," Eddy Moreno a resident of the near north side said via e-mail. Metro said routes are cut because of cost and rescheduled to provide better service; they also said the same thing about three lines they cut in 2004.

When Metro cut the 55, 284 and 210 line they claimed they were too expensive to operate. Riders of the 55 line felt that Metro hadn't given it a chance; the route had only been operational six months before it got the ax. Metro's response was that it was the third highest subsidized line in the city. According to Metro's own figures, the 55 required $22.55 taxpayer subsidy per passenger per day and it had 541 daily boardings. Conversely the 284 had 236 daily boardings and required $18.03 per passenger per day and the 210 had 238 boardings and required $14.77 per passenger per day.

How Metro defines a "boarding" is an interesting enough process in and of itself. The simple idea is that when a person gets on a bus or train that is a "boarding". If you have to transfer, that is another boarding. This is what makes things difficult; even if the trip takes longer and is less convenient, it is counted as "increased" service.

Self described "transit wonk" Barry Klein sees things differently. "Metro's losing $1 million a day due to forced transfers," Mr. Klein says sitting in the cluttered office of his north side home. A home that is filled with the remnants of 25 years of municipal activism, he coughs a little and continues. "Metro's market share is down 3 percent since the start of light rail," he says. "They picked up some ridership briefly due to the Katrina refugees but overall it's been down for the last three years. Metro keeps wanting more money because people confuse rail with transit."

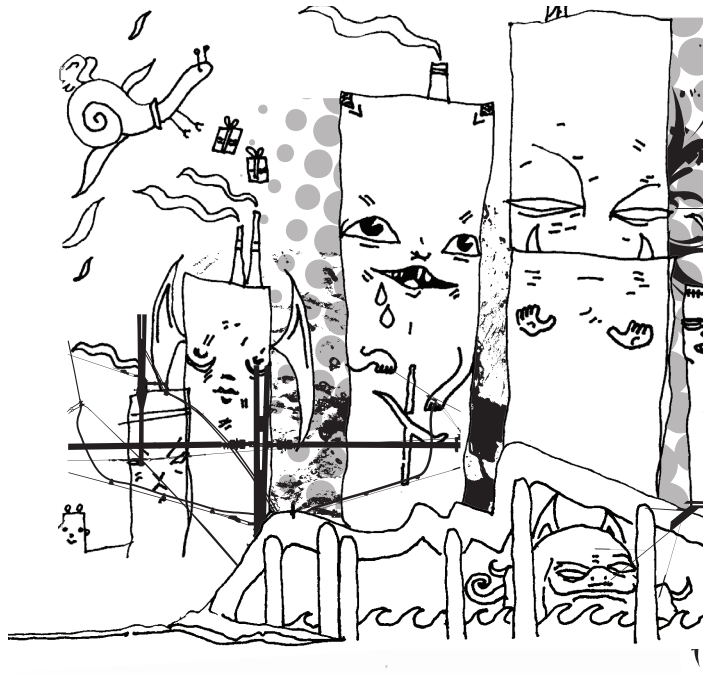
Mr. Klein reaches into a box and pulls out a copy of a heavily Xeroxed flyer that shows Metro's condemnation zone for the area. "My house is right in the middle of the Inter-Modal Terminal," he says, referring to a massive facility planned for Houston's Near North Side. "None of the people who live here want it; it'll destroy the neighborhood."

Miles to the south, on the other side of downtown, this sentiment is echoed by residents of Houston's Third Ward. The University Line does not ends at Wheeler Station. It continues onward along Wheeler Avenue toward University of Houston, thus earning its name.

Particularly concerned is Lizette Cobb. Ms. Cobb is a portrait of old third ward. She's a third generation Houstonian who has lived her whole life in the same house. Before she was born it was her grandfather's house, then it was her father's and now it's hers. Understandably she doesn't want to leave. Especially since her father was Arnette Cobb, a jazz tenor saxophonist

...WHY

coffee and IPOD downloads were greater necessities than bus routes from the projects to the Med Center.



who was Houston jazz royalty.

"This is a family heirloom we're talking about," she says sitting in her neighbor James Chastanet's living room, "how do you put a dollar sign on that?" It's a fair question considering that 1950s and 60s soul and R&B singer Jackie Wilson gave Ms. Cobb her first swing set. Or that Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie and Redd Foxx all hung out at her dad's house.

"Increased property value only works if you are selling, otherwise it's just a tax," Mr. Chastanet says, "and we don't want to sell." Ms. Cobb goes on to explain that she has already seen her family's property become a victim of development once.

"You know that song Take Paradise and make it into a parking lot," Ms. Cobb asks, "well that was about The Ebony Café which was my dad's club. And they bulldozed it." She stops and thinks for a moment and then says, "I guess it's kind of ironic. My dad started the Texas Jazz Archives in 1986. He gave the city some of his records, photos and oral histories for the sesquicentennial and twenty years later the city wants to tear down his house."

Ms. Cobb has to hold back a tear as she says, "This is…is government dollars. Money from the people they are talking about here. What are they going to use it for?"

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According to Metro's website they are using at least part of the money for IPOD downloads and coffee service. Study of Metro's procurement contracts reveal that this past June, six months after they cut the 68 bus line through third ward because it was too costly, Metro spent $60,000 to convert the entire system map for an IPOD download. We were unable to reach anyone at Metro before press time to discuss what percentage of Metro riders own or regularly use an IPOD. Further study of the procurement contracts revealed that in August Metro spent $96, 677.40 on "coffee services." Again we could not reach anyone at Metro to determine just how much coffee Metro purchased and why coffee and IPOD downloads were greater necessities than bus routes from the projects to the Med Center.

Perhaps the strangest line item on Metro's budget occurred in March of this year. Metro spent $448,344 for "bus shelter cleaning in downtown". What is truly surprising about this contract, aside from the astronomically high amount of money spent on cleaning bus shelters in a very small area, is who the money was paid to.

$136, 305.00 of the expenditure went to a company called "BJ's Enterprise", located in Webster, Texas. Several attempts were made to contact anyone from BJ's Enterprise to discuss the terms of the contract; however the company is not listed in the city of Webster phone book or any phone book in the Houston-Galveston area. They have no website, their only address is a post office box and all mail sent was returned.

The remaining $312,039 of the cleaning bill was paid out to the Houston Downtown Management District. The Houston Downtown Management District, or HDMD, is a taxing entity whose services are, according to the their website, "financed by assessing all downtown property owners, based upon their value determined by the 2005 certified tax rolls of the Harris County Appraisal District, and by a rate determined annually by the Board." Also on the HDMD website is a statement that their "primary focus is to leverage public funds with private resources to improve facilities and services." Taken at face value, these statements would seem to indicate that Metro is paying out over $300,000 for services to an organization that is already collecting public money for performing the same services.

Perhaps the best explanation for why Metro would pay almost half a million dollars for the cleaning of bus shelters can be found on the boards of HDMD and Metro.

Burt Ballanfant, a Metro board member, works for Shell Oil as does Jeri A. Ballard, the Chair of Operations for Houston Downtown Management District. Another Houston Downtown Management District board member, George Gonzalez, works for Bracewell-Giuliani (yes, that Giuliani) which, in turn, is the law firm representing Metro in the suit brought against it by Daphne Scarbrough.

The Metro board is rife with real and apparent conflicts of interest. Metro Chairman David S. Wolff heavily contributed to Bill White's first mayoral campaign and was thereafter appointed by the mayor to the Metro board. Another board member, Rafael Ortega, was a senior member of Turner, Collie and Braden, which was the engineering firm hired by Metro to conduct the study that produced the University Corridor Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Nothing about this sort of cronyism is particularly surprising to anyone who has watched Houston politics for any length of time. Things start to kick up a notch, though, when scrutiny passes from Metro's board to the senior management team—specifically, Metro CEO and President Frank Wilson.

A recent immigrant from the land of Tony Soprano, Frank Wilson was hired in 1996 by the New Jersey Department of Transportation, NJDOT, to create a public/private partnership, (something he specializes in) to finance the state of New Jersey's E-Z Pass system. It was later revealed that Frank Wilson was receiving at the time job offers from some of the vendors who were involved in the bidding process.

Mr. Wilson resigned his position with NJDOT in November of 1996 to take a job with the design, technology and management firm Daniel, Mann, Johnson and Mendenhall, DMJM. DMJM is a member of the AECOM corporate family. So is the previously-mentioned engineering firm of Turner, Collie and Braden. Yet another AECOM company, Frederic R. Harris Inc., was part of the team that eventually won the New Jersey E-Z Pass contract.

According to the New York Times, In 1997 Mr. Wilson agreed to pay the State of New Jersey a $1,200 fine for possible violations of NJDOT's ethics code and the state's conflict of interest laws. An audit released that year indicated that one of the firms offering Mr. Wilson a job had received a consulting contract in violation of state purchasing rules, to the end result (as reported in the New York Times) of New Jersey taxpayers being overbilled by some $300,000-- if that figure sounds familiar, it should. It's about how much Metro is paying the Downtown Management District for apparently redundant cleaning services.

§



Afterword by M.Martin

At the board meeting that formalized the University Line routing on Richmond, the board also voted to implement light rail instead of BRT on the North, Southeast, East End and Uptown corridors. By 2012, Greater Houston can expect to have a light rail network—whether it particularly wants one or not, whether it fully serves the needs of the community or not (if you want to take a train from the airport to downtown, you'll still need to first fly to St. Louis).

In the inevitable press conference following the meeting, Frank Wilson spoke glowing, stating that "the time to build our future is now" and referred, without apparent irony, to building "the light rail that voters approved and were promised."

It's a heady vision of the future, one that—given a projected budget in excess of 2 billion dollars-- undoubtedly offers numerous opportunities for overbilling, misbilling, and the chance to shop one's resume in other potential markets (Mr. Wilson's own resume includes stints in San Francisco, Philadelphia, and Chicago....as well as New Jersey).

It's a vision of the future that Mayor Bill White is widely rumored to intend to use as the basis for a run at the governorship of Texas. That will certainly take money if it happens—but whether or not Metro board chairman David Wolff sees a potential return on his investment..... someone will.

No one credibly doubts the need for public transportation in Houston, or even the need to exercise imminent domain in some cases for the greater public good. What is very much at doubt, though, is the mechanism whereby this need is fulfilled and such power is exercised.

The problem isn't a few hundred thousand dollars of suspected malfeasance here or there-- the problem is the hand-in-glove system of cronyism that makes such transactions possible. The notion that a board consisting entirely of political appointees can condemn properties and spend public tax money without oversight is an offense to democracy.

Worse than that, it simply doesn't work. If the past seven years of the Bush Administration has taught us anything, it's that decisions taken in private by interested parties usually sound a lot better when the decision is taken then when it gets announced to the people footing the bill and living with the consequences. Whether its a national energy policy decided in private by the heads of energy companies or a regional transportation policy hatched in private by real estate speculators and engineering firms, the only real difference to the public is the number of zeros that wind up on the bill.

Metro's current board has proven remarkably disinterested in the voice of the voters they allegedly serve—but let's not forget that it was the voters who created Metro in the first place in 1978 and more recently authorized light rail on Westpark. The business and home owners who feel that they've received the short end on Richmond aren't going away—to the contrary, it looks like there's about to be a lot more of them, scattered across Greater Houston. One way or the other, Metro's track record at "mobilizing" people can be counted on to improve....dramatically.

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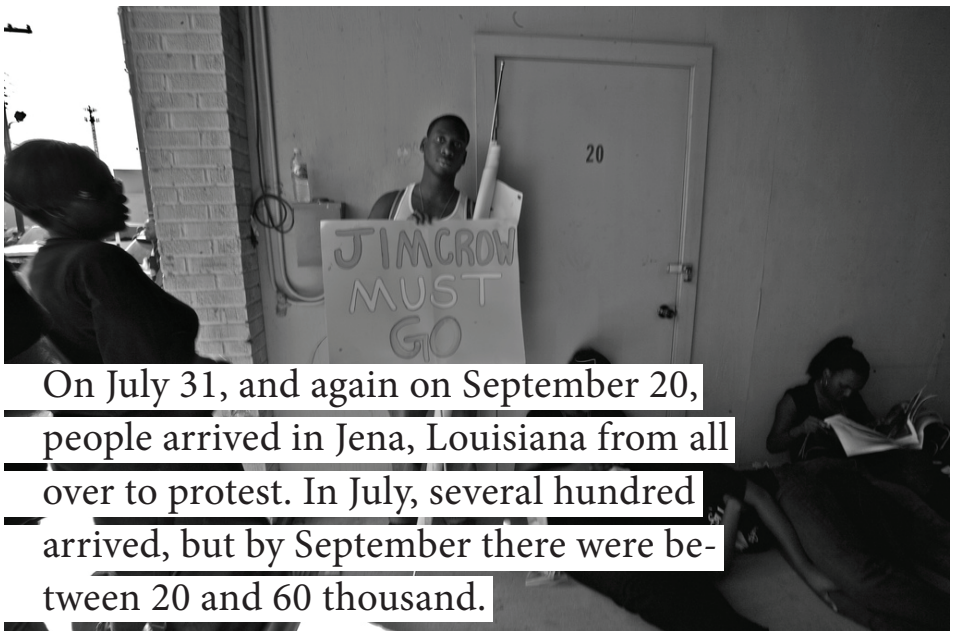
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LACK OF DIVERSITY IN JENA PROTEST

By Nick Cooper | nickcooper.com



On July 31, and again on September 20, people arrived in Jena, Louisiana from all over to protest. In July, several hundred arrived, but by September there were between 20 and 60 thousand.

WITHIN THOSE WEEKS, mainstream America had heard of this small town. The case caught the public imagination because of many factors, especially the indelible image of the nooses.

When I attended the rally in July, I was impressed by the racial diversity, but in September, I was depressed by its absence. While the protesters and alternative media focused on the not so shocking statistic that Jena is 85% white, the movement for justice in Jena had become close to 99% black. A more racially diverse protest in Jena could have shown Jena, the media, and the protesters themselves a vision of what an alternative to racial separation looks like.

The lack of diversity at the protest in Jena is not unique. At least in my experience in Houston, I saw few whites at that the pro-immigrant rallies of 2006, and I read a report about a lack of whites at the Muslim protests against the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. The same Southern white activists who complain that there aren't more people of color at anti-war protests failed to come to Jena. The whites that arrived weren't ostracized by the black protesters, but the failure of big numbers to show up had its own isolating effect.

It seems that the networks of interpersonal and informal communication through the internet are largely segregated. The word that Sept. 20 was not to be missed might not have reached many whites. The lack of coverage before and after the protest in the liberal white blogosphere shows an awkwardness about engaging the issue of racial violence. Many whites can agree that there was a disparity between the treatment of the black kids and the white kids who attacked one of the Jena 6 earlier, but the deeper injustices elude them.

Guilt and responsibility is not limited to those who attacked. It extends to the teachers and parents who allowed a segregated tree to exist in their school without doing anything about it for years. It extends to the repeated actions of the DA and others in the criminal justice system. Our culture doesn't punish these actions and inactions. Our system is not even set up to deal with adults who don't do the bare minimum to raise conscientious children. This is not a crime, but the results can be more serious than some crimes. If a teacher graduates a whole class that thinks it is ok to have segregated trees, it will cause future problems for them and society even greater than a concussion.

Whatever the reasons whites failed to show up in great numbers, that failure has caused more problems. Blacks there were not made to feel that white activists cared about the things that matter to them. We indeed have a long way to go in struggles against racism if we can't even consensually integrate our causes. But to fix any root problem means that this extra work must be done. I believe that once activists start to experience anti-racism and learn how it works, causes like the Jena 6 can become part of a movement, instead of just isolated events.

Anti-racism is a powerful force that many are afraid to use. It can't be tamed, or co-opted, but it can re-shape society. Politicians who use it don't win elections. People who fight for it often face brutality. Activists who engage it often find things they don't want to see in themselves. Groups that practice it often find themselves far outside their comfort zones. But Americans have already sacrificed more than enough for comfort and we can no longer ignore the tools we need to transform our nasty culture.

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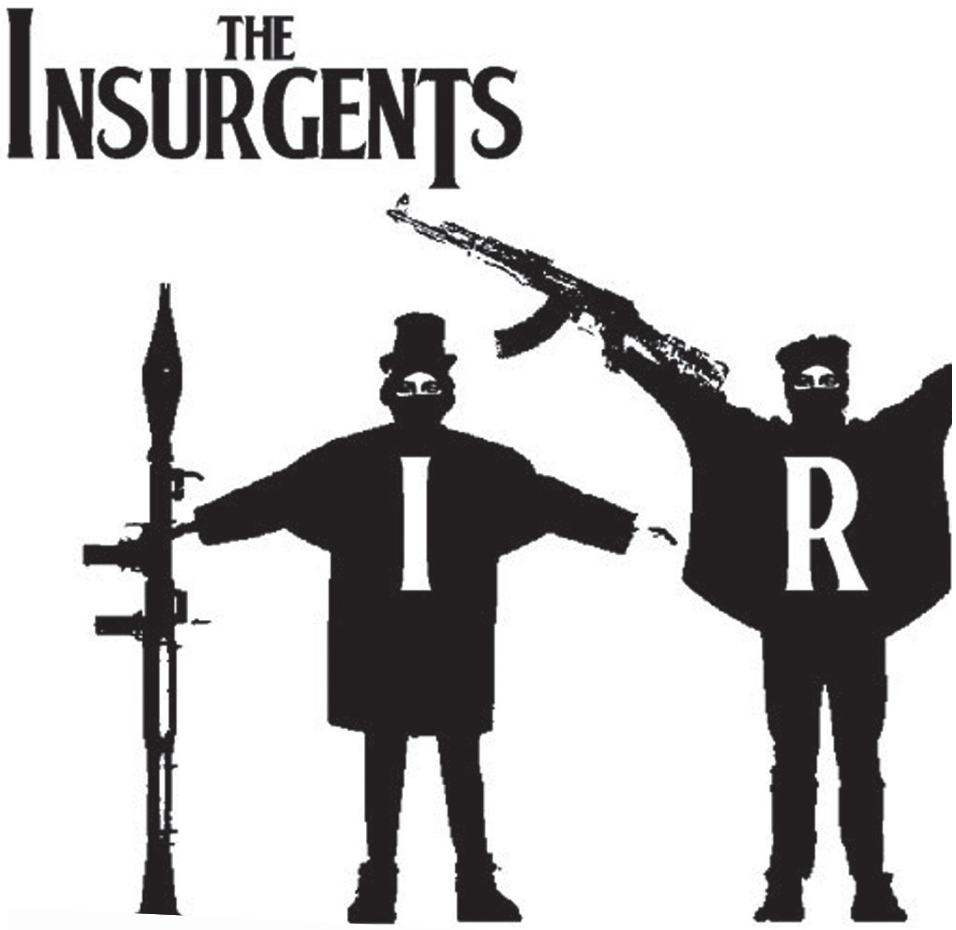
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IT'S THE RESISTANCE, STUPID

By Pepe Escobar



The ultimate nightmare for White House/Pentagon designs on Middle East energy resources is not Iran after all: it's a unified Iraqi resistance, comprising not only Sunnis but also Shi'ites.

"It's the resistance, stupid" - along with "it's the oil, stupid". The intimate connection means there's no way for Washington to control Iraq's oil without protecting it with a string of sprawling military "super-bases".

The ultimate, unspoken taboo of the Iraq tragedy is that the US will never leave Iraq, unless, of course, it is kicked out. And that's exactly what the makings of a unified Sunni-Shi'ite resistance is set to accomplish.

Papa's got a brand new bag At this critical juncture, it's as if the overwhelming majority of Sunnis and Shi'ites are uttering a collective cry of "we're mad as hell, and we won't take it anymore". The US Senate "suggests" that the solution is to break up the country. Blackw ater and assorted mercenaries kill Iraqi civilians with impunity. Iraqi oil is being privatized via shady deals - like Hunt Oil with the Kurdistan regional government; Ray Hunt is a close pal of George W Bush.

Political deals in the Green Zone are just a detail in the big picture. On the surface the new configuration spells that the US-supported Shi'ite/Kurdish coalition in power is now challenged by an Iraqi nationalist bloc. This new bloc groups the Sadrists, the (Shi'ite) Fadhila party, all Sunni parties, the partisans of former interim prime minister Iyad Allawi, and the partisans of former prime minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari. This bloc might even summon enough votes to dethrone the current, wobbly Maliki government.

But what's more important is that a true Iraqi national pact is in the making - coordinated by VicePresident Tariq al-Hashimi, a Sunni, and blessed by Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani himself. The key points of this pact are, no more sectarianism (thus undermining US strategy of divide and rule); no foreign interference (thus no following of US, Iran, or Saudi agendas); no support for al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers; and the right to armed resistance against the occupation.

Last Friday Grand Ayatollah Sistani finally confronted the occupation in no uncertain terms. Via Abdul Mahdi al-Karbala'i, his representative in the holy city of Karbala, Sistani called for the Iraqi parliament to rein in Blackwater et al, and most of all the "occupation forces". He has never spoken out in such blunt language before.

For his part Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, the leader of the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council (SIIC), one of the two key, US-supported Shi'ite parties in government, is back in Baghdad after four months of chemotherapy in Tehran. But it's his son, the affable Ammar al-Hakim - who was the acting SIIC leader while his father was away - who's been stealing the limelight, promising that the party will do everything in its power to prevent those US superbases being set up in Iraq. Up to now SIIC's official position has been to support the US military presence.

Ammar al-Hakim even went to Ramadi on Sunday to talk to Sheikh Ahmed Abu Risha, brother of the late Abdul Sattar Abu Risha, the former leader of the tribal coalition Anbar Awakening Council who was killed by a bomb last month. It was the first time since the invasion and occupation that a SIIC leader went to hardcore Sunni Anbar province. Ammar al-Hakim glowingly described the dead sheikh as "a national hero".

Most interesting is that Ammar al-Hakim was flanked by none other than feared Hadi al-Amri, the leader of the Badr Brigades - the SIIC militia trained by Iran's Revolutionary Guards, that in fact comprises the bulk of death squads involved in the avalanche of sectarian killings.

Ammar al-Hakim may now be against permanent US bases and in favor of Sunni-Shi'ite union. But although he now says he is against federalism, he's actually in favor of "self-governing regions". That makes him for many Iraqis a partisan of "soft partition" –- just like US congressmen. He qualifies the central government in Baghdad as "tyrannical".

For their part the Sunni Arab sheikhs in Anbar are totally against what would be a Western Iraq provincial government - possibly encompassing three, majority-Sunni provinces, Anbar, Salahuddin and Nineveh.

If on one Shi'ite side we have Ammar al-Hakim from SIIC, on the other side - literally - we have Muqtada al-Sadr. The same day Ammar al-Hakim was courting the tribal sheikhs, pan-Islamic Muqtada was saying he was against any soft partition or provincial governments. That's exactly what the sheikhs like to hear.

So now, in theory, everyone in the Shi'ite galaxy seems to want (more or less) the same thing. Tehran worked very hard to forge the recent peace pact between the al-Hakim family and the Sadrists. SIIC and Sistani are now explicitly saying that a unified Iraq must rein in the Pentagon and throw out the occupation - that's what Muqtada had been saying all along. Tehran and Tehran-supported SIIC must obviously have seen which way the Shi'ite street wind was blowing, so now we have a new, anti-sectarian, anti-occupation SIIC.

But it will require concentric halos of forgiveness for Sunnis to forget that the Badr Brigades have been responsible for a great deal of the ethnic cleansing of Baghdad, have cynically collaborated in synch with both the US and Iran, and have been focused on building a virtually independent "Shi'iteistan" in southern Iraq.

'We want you out'

Away from the Anbar sheikhs, the Sunni front is also moving fast. Last week six key, non-Salafi jihadist resistance groups, on a video on al-Jazeera, officially announced their union under the "Political Council of the Iraqi Resistance". They are the Islamic Army in Iraq, the al-Mujahideen Army, Ansar al-Sunna, al-Fatiheen Army, the Islamic Front for the Iraqi Resistance (JAMI), and Iraqi Hamas.

The whole process has been on the move since early summer. The council has



a 14-point program. The key point is of course guerrilla warfare as the means to throw the occupiers out. A very important point - deriding the usual Pentagon rhetoric - is that the council is fiercely against al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers. The council also rejects all laws and the constitution passed under the occupation; calls for an interim government; defends Iraq's territorial integrity and rejects sectarianism.

It has been the Sunni Arab guerrillas that have virtually defeated the US in Iraq. And what's even more remarkable is that, unlike Vietnam, this has not been a unified resistance of Sunnis and Shi'ites.

A very important issue concerns a group that decided not to be part of the council: the 1920 Revolution Brigades. The brigades are basically Iraqi nationalist, anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist. They totally reject any sort of collaboration with the US.

But they may join the council in the near future. In a statement released in early September, the brigades stressed what an overwhelming majority of Sunnis agree on: "The democrats have a chance to end this conflict in a face-saving solution for the US, by first declaring that they recognize the factions of the Iraqi resistance as the representatives of the Iraqi people and the Iraqi Republic. After which a negotiating team would be arranged to negotiate your troop withdrawal, compensation for Iraq, and matters of future interest. It is only through the Iraqi resistance that a solution may be born."

Or else, it's "variable, adaptable and reversible asymmetric warfare that will set the standard for years and years to come".

And there's still more - the coordinated, "new Ba'ath" front: 22 resistance groups, under the command of former Saddam star Izaat al-Douri, already seriously talking with the Iyad Allawi bloc - thus part of the nationalist front - and dictating their conditions, which include a resistance ceasefire in exchange for a precise US timetable for withdrawal.

As far as all the key Sunni and Shi'ite factions in Iraq are concerned, they all agree on the basics. Iraq won't be occupied. Iraq won't hold permanent US military bases. Iraq won't give up its oil wealth. And Iraq won't be a toothless pro-Israel puppet regime.

As far as a concerted Iraqi resistance is concerned, the only way is up. What a historic irony that would be - before the Bush administration is finally tempted to attack Iran, it may have to face a true benchmark imposed on it in Iraq.

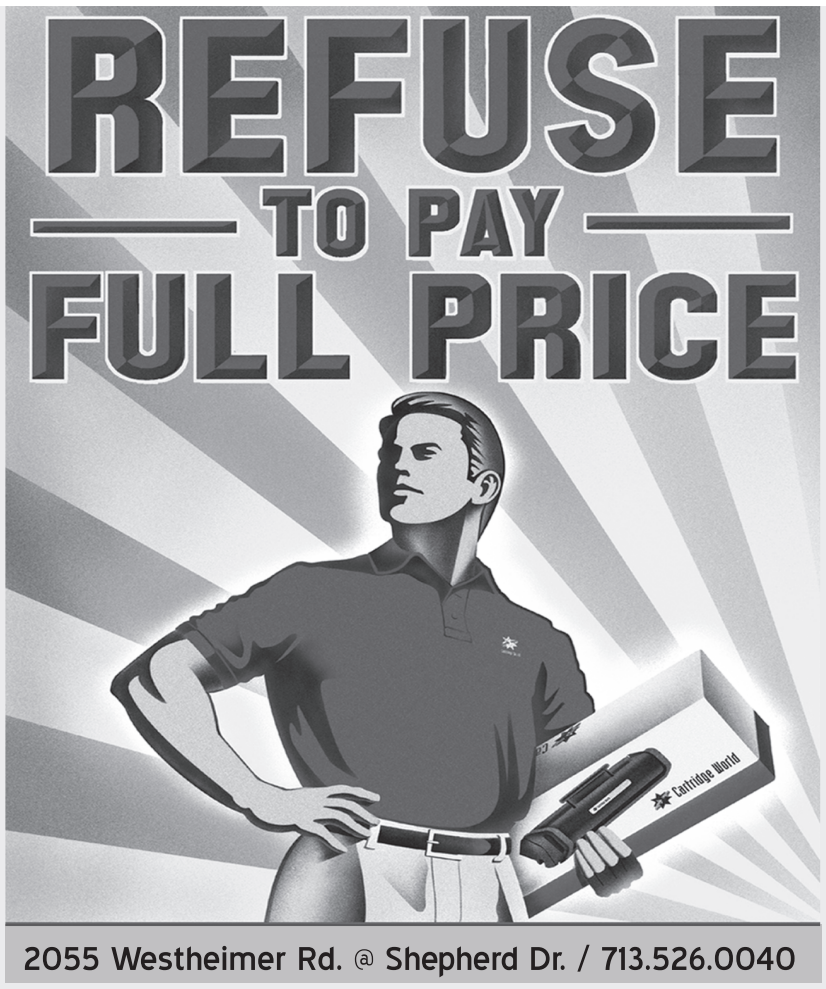
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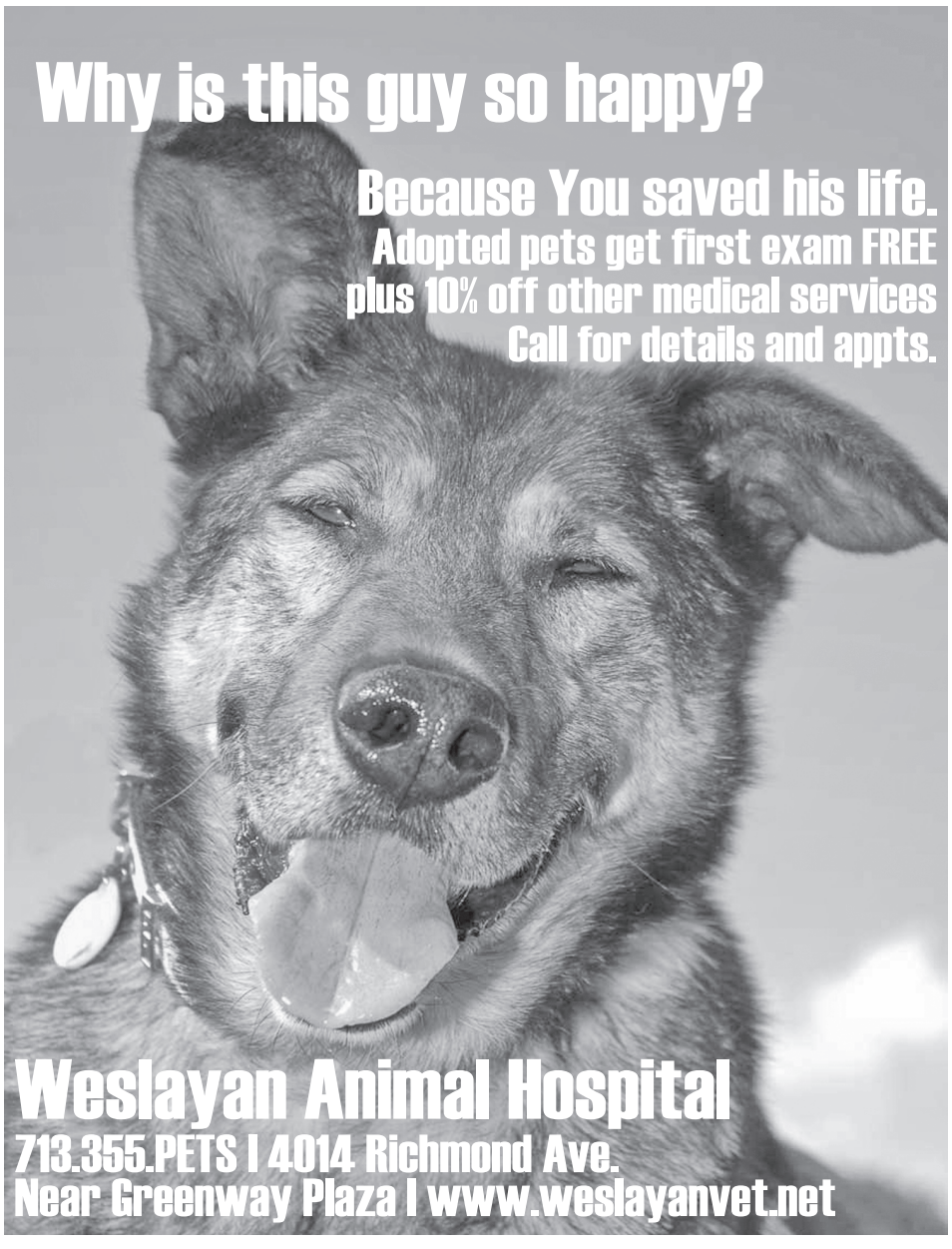
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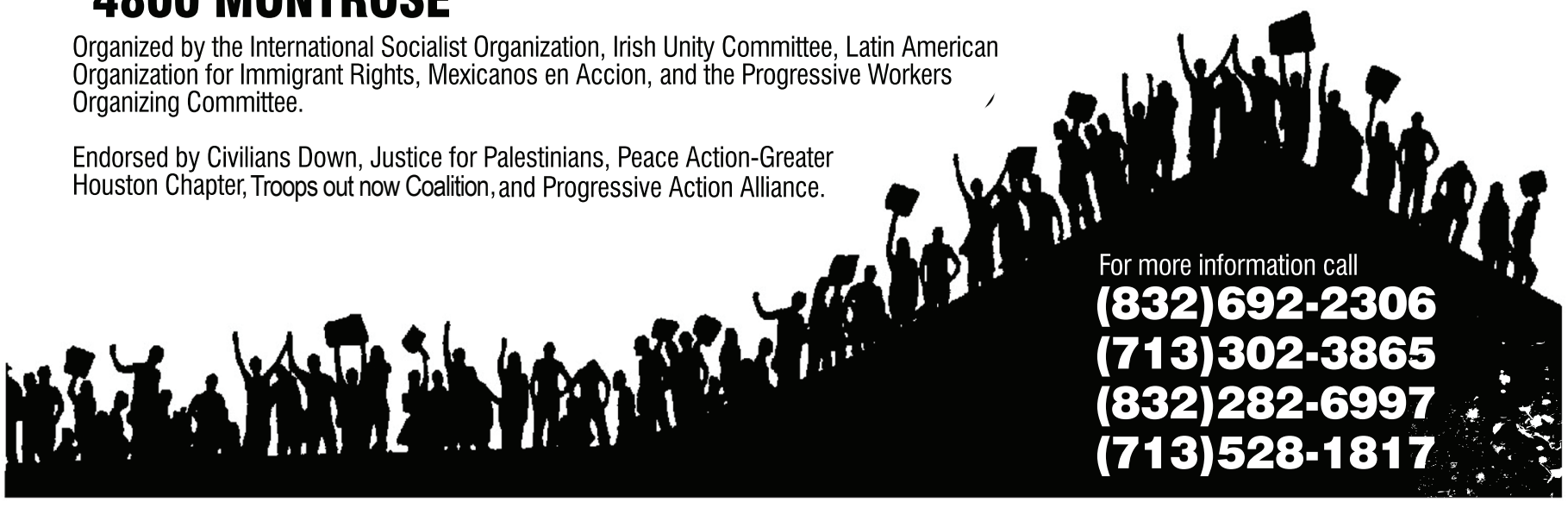
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10/20 Journey of Hope Calls for Abolition

On the last stop of their Houston speaking tour, members of Journey of Hope spoke at Rice University on October 16th to share their powerful stories of healing and forgiveness. The event, hosted by Rice for Peace & Justice and Amnesty International, featured two fathers of murder victims, a father of a death row inmate, and anti-death penalty activists who spoke (and sang) about their experiences and opposition to capital punishment.

Bud Welch, a Journey member from Oklahoma, told stories about his daughter Julie, who was one of 167 people who died in the Oklahoma City bombings. Although he had always been against the death penalty, the months after his daughterís death he struggled over his feelings on the issue.

The Journey members are travelling to San Antonio, Austin, and Dallas before coming back to Houston for the March to End Executions on October 27th. They will join a number of state and local organizations to participate in the 8th annual state march.



Journey of Hope

10/13 TSU students Hunger Strike for Immigrant Rights

from the open publishing newswire: On Friday October 12th, the near dozen students who have been hunger striking and camping out on the side of the Thurgood Marshal School of Law concluded their protest, speaking to around 40 or 50 community members and activists who came to show their support.

People from ACORN, the Coalition in Defense of the Community, CRECEN, FIEL, Students from the University of Houston and TSU, and the board of the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, who happened to be in town for a meeting all gathered at the small campsite, roped off by yellow caution tape. We were observing the conclusion of the weeklong hunger strike for immigrant rights, which was undertaken by these students.

While I had to leave early and was not able to see the full event, it seemed very positive, the hunger strike had gone well, everyone was healthy and it was well received by students and faculty at TSU and some sectors of the media. The students, many of who seemed to have limited experience with formal activism were overwhelmed by the amount of support (and possible the lack of food).



Burmese Protest

10/1 Burmese Community: China stop supporting the Myanmar dictatorship

From the Open Publishing Newswire: There was a large (80+), well-organized and energetic crowd of Burmese folks protesting the silent support of China for the human rights abuses and killings of dissidents taking place right now in Burma. The crowd was 95%+ Burmese, with a couple students from Rice university and passersby lending support as well. The protesters maintained picket lines on both sides of Montrose Blvd, in front of the consulate. Many of the protesters had T-shirts, Headbands and flags of the National League for Democracy, the political party whose General Secretary is Aung San Suu Kyi. Many protesters wore headbands with the number "88" on them, in reference to the August 8, 1988 pro-democracy uprising.

Spirits were kept very high by picketing in a circle and constant chanting lead by older Burmese men in Burmese and English.

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10/1 Fear and Hate Mongering Continues by Vigilantes in North Houston

From the Open Publishing Newswire: Tuesday, September 25, 2007 a meeting of a newly formed organization, The Cypress Creek Interfaith Coalition for Economic Development, was held at Cypress Creek Christian Church and Community Center. The goal was to brainstorm ideas for creating a humanitarian way of dealing with a day laborer site in the community. Unfortunately, it was turned into a forum for those with anything but humanitarian goals, a group called Border Watch.

After the meeting they posted videos and comments on You Tube promoting their hateful views. Since it was an interfaith event, a prayer closed with the recognition of the prophets of all three Abrahamic faiths. What follows are some of the comments from around the nation about those videos from people who lack the understanding, compassion, and intelligence to discern the real issues about what was trying to be accomplished and about the lessons of unconditional love taught by Jesus Christ.

9/29 Texas plans to execute Honduran national as talks of temporary moratorium spread

Update: On October 2nd The Texas Court of Criminal Appeals Stayed Heliberto's Execution

from the open publishing newswire: Executions in Texas and around the country may be stopped until next year when the Supreme Court reaches a decision on a lethal injection case. The Supreme Court is currently looking at a case to decide whether certain methods of lethal injection are inhumane. Although death penalty analysts say that a temporary moratorium is likely, Texas Governor Rick Perry is saying he does not have the authority to call for a moratorium (he does) and that executions will go on as planned.

Death penalty activists are calling on the state of Texas to stop the execution of Heliberto Chi, a Honduran national, who is set to die on October 3. Chi's attorney says that his client's rights under the Vienna Convention are being violated. In 2004, the International Court of Justice ruled against the United States for violations of Article 36 of the Vienna Convention for putting Mexican nationals on death row. Following the ruling, President Bush asked states to review the cases of the Mexican nationals and no Mexican national has been executed since that time. Activists are urged to call the Governor's Office: (512) 463-1782 to stop Chi's execution.



TSU Hunger Strike

9/25 UH Students for Fair Trade stop University President's speech

University of Houston Students for Fair Trade members Ross Barnard and Timothy O'Brien shut down president John Rudley's speech to the faculty senate on Wednesday afternoon September 20. Barnard and O'Brien rolled in to the room with a large banner that read "Rudley ignores student concerns," "Students for Fair Trade." The Students for Fair Trade were angered by the administration's actions ignoring the bill the Student Government had passed last spring. The bill required an all fair trade coffee vendor to be installed in the 24 hour study lounge in the M.D. Anderson library [download pdf of bill]. Rudley and his v.p. for finance and administration refused to meet with the Students for Fair Trade. Public information requests revealed that the administration and the food service provider Aramark rushed to sign a contract with Starbucks to be the coffee vendor before the student legislation made it's way to the faculty senate and staff council. Starbucks does not sell only fair trade coffee (only 3.7% is fair trade according to the Organic Consumers Association). Prior to the action the SFT members passed out information flyers to all faculty members in attendance explaining the situation.



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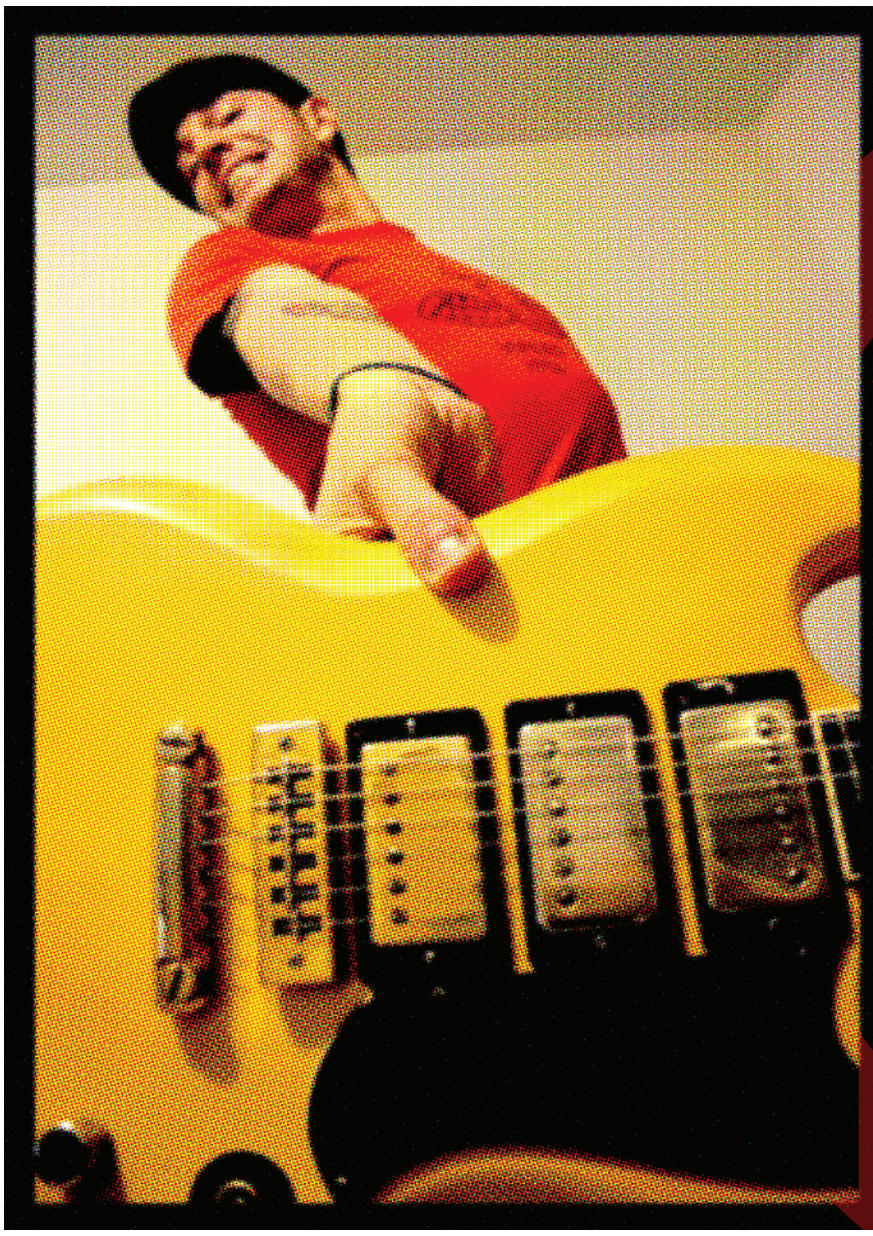
"...a worthy showcase for Malaysian food.
The beautiful, understated décor of Malay Bistro shimmers with sheer bronze curtains, separating three private rooms from the spacious dining room."
Dai Huynh- Houston Chronicle

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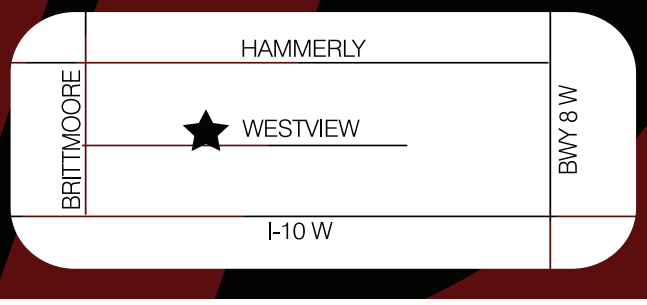


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