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JANUARY 2010
ISSUE 110
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AWN

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SUPERHAPPYFUNLAND

Coming to the gallery in January:
Doug Hiser

Jan 1st:
7th Annual SHFL Hangover Party
with Mimosas, Mary's, Black Eyed Peas, Cabbage & Cornbread

Jan 2nd:
Graverobber, FG & The Gunz, Lluvia Dreams, Alimanas, Anti-climax

Jan 6th:
Caleb Fraid, Smirkworthy, Forrest Fallows, Richardbenjamin,
MC Homeless, Baker, Gonzo

Jan 7th:
Punk Bunny, Black Barbie, Vicarious Me

Jan 8th:
Darwin's Finches, Jimson Jolly Vagrants, The Justin Peevey Project
GreenHouse, Satanic Punk International Conspiracy

Jan 9th:
Free Press Worst of Houston H-Town Hoedown

Jan 10th:
Giant Battle Monster, Bubonic Bear, Fiskadoro, The Manichean
Sunrise and Ammunition

Jan 11th:
Zebras, Somosuno, Cop Warmth, FG & The Gunz, Sabertooth Snatch

Jan 13th:
Boar, Swim Ignorant Fire, Richard Ramirez, Concrete Violin, Ascites

Jan 14th:
Justin Gordon, Zeb Dewar, Grizzly

Jan 15th:
Jody Seabody and the Whirls, Examples, The Cocker Spaniels,
Devour The World

Jan 19th:
Shores of the Tundra, Aseethe

Jan 20th:
Jack Toft with the Vegetables, Craig's Dragon Book Band,
B L A C K I E, Heroine Stereo

Jan 21st:
School of Liars, Steve and Steve

Jan 23rd:
Dead Frail Honesty, Steel Hook Prosthesis, Endless Blinding Sunshine,
Violence and Metaphysics, Dead Skeleton

Jan 24th:
Flashbulb Fires, Mouse Fire, Jennifer Kay

Jan 25th:
10th Grade Cutie, Muhammidali, FG and The Gunz

Jan 28th:
Blackbird Raum, U Not I, Chicken Little!, Days and Daze

Jan 29th:
Hermit Thrushes

Jan 31st:
Sugar Glyder

Feb 1st:
No Mas Bodas, The Trills

Feb 5th:
Liz King

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Jan 2
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Jan 8
Dollyrockers, Blue Flames
Trash Rockets

Jan 9
Sugarball Express

Jan 15
Wood Brothers

Jan 16
Lymbyc Systym

Jan 19
Grown-up Storytime

Jan 20
Aseethe, Shores of the Tundra,
Defending the Kingdom

Jan 22
Vanessa Peters, Matt Harlan,
Krista Vossler, MC Hansen

Jan 30
Lee Alexander, Arthur Yoria,
Pete Simple

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WEEKLY SHOWS (FREE)
Mondays
SAD GORILLA
Tuesdays
ROLLIN' ON DUB REGGAE NIGHT
Wednesdays
ROBERT ELLIS & THE BOYS

UPCOMING SHOWS
1/8
Yellow Fever, The Wiggins, Giant Princess

1/12
Some Others, The Spooks

1/15
Clockpole, Darwin's Finches, Cop Warmth, Giant Battle Monster

1/16
Giant Cloud, Chris Rehm

1/22
Nightmare River Band

1/23 Fat Tony, Guerilla Foco Clan, Krylon, Simple Success

1/28 Driving to Zigzigland (FILM)

1/29
Abbas

1/30
Caddywhompus, Female Demand, Smiley with a knife + 1 TBA -- $5/$8

2/1
Sad Gorilla w/ Stress Ape

2/12
Eastern Sea

2/13
Screaming Females, Jeff Brotherhood

2/20
Game Genies feat. Angie and Glasnost
A night devoted to video games

2/21
Idiginis, Eleven Fingered Charlie (ATX), 5 Mins Til Midnight

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

FEEL FREE TO TAKE US SERIOUSLY

I am sad to announce my withdrawal for the candidacy for Mayor of Montrose. I have received several letters and admonitions stating that I cannot hold a public office and lead a media source. This is no doubt a conflict of interest. So I formally recuse myself and withdraw myself from the ballot. However, I will offer this up: I will give the full support of this paper to the candidate who promises to go to Houston City Council open session at least one Tuesday per month on behalf of the Montrose. This job is half fun and games and the other half carries a responsibility. Mayor Hutto has made progress before with the occupying forces of Houston with his repeal of the oppressive bike laws. Maybe he will do it again. Maybe Poison Girl bartender Robin will offer a fresh approach. A few other candidates will no doubt surface in the coming weeks. Stay tuned.

OMAR AFRA



Amanda Williams patriotic tattoo. On display at Brasil.

ART SHOWS THIS MONTH

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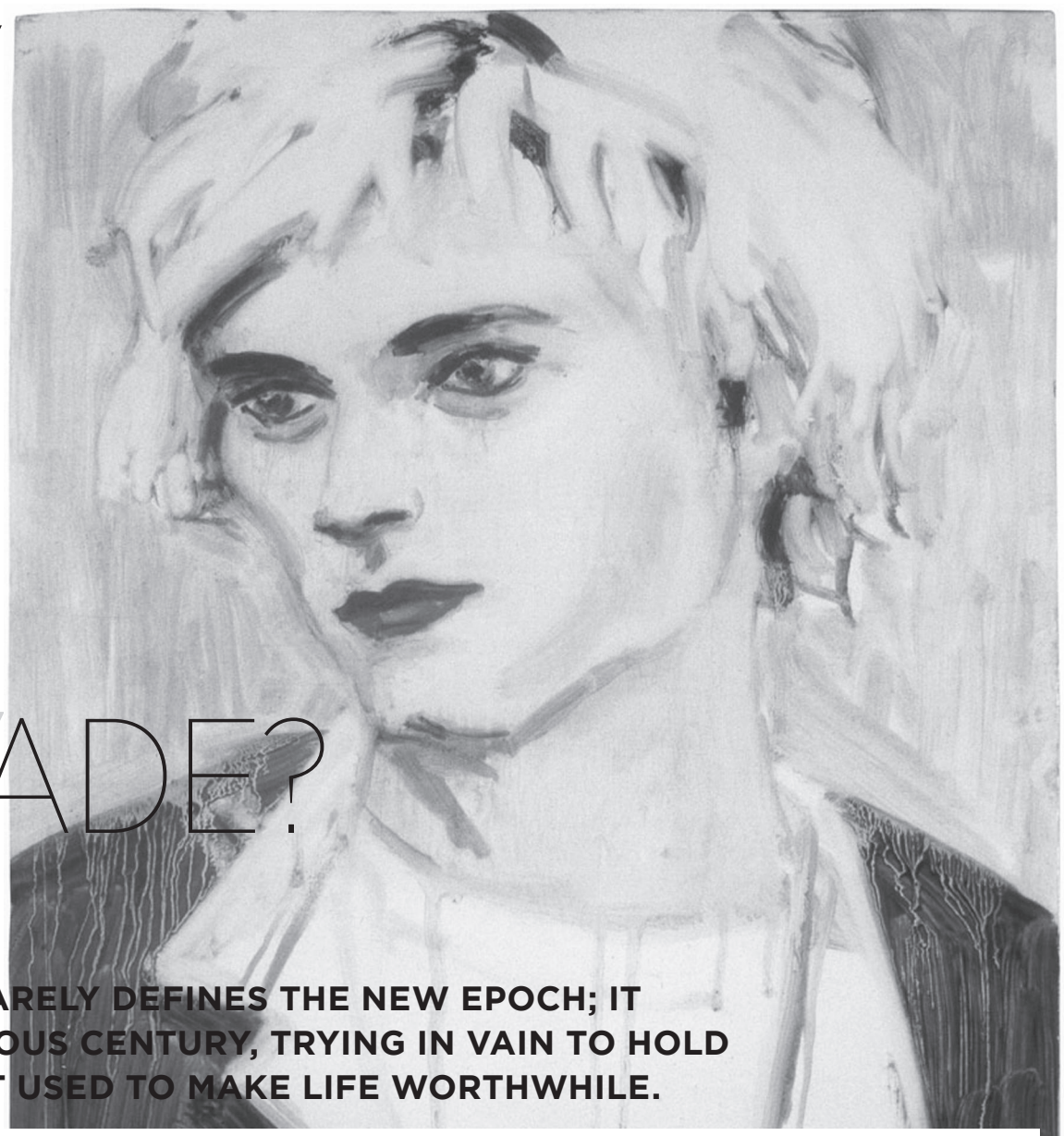


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LOST DECADE?

by BUFFALO SEAN

THE FIRST DECADE OF A CENTURY RARELY DEFINES THE NEW EPOCH; IT USUALLY LOOKS BACK TO THE PREVIOUS CENTURY, TRYING IN VAIN TO HOLD ONTO THE SIGNIFICANT THINGS THAT USED TO MAKE LIFE WORTHWHILE.

IN 1901 William McKinley was shot by an anarchist in Buffalo, and in 2001 the World Trade Center fell at the hands of terrorists. After both events a new "War on" was declared against shadowy forces and spoon-fed to the populace. Last century, entirely different forces, fascism and totalitarianism, took the reins from the declared enemies to become the premier threat to the world. What will change in this new decade that will realign our world, send us scrambling for the drawing board? 18th century art still reigned in the first decade of the 1900s, and we have struggled to maintain identity politics and painting into the 21st century. The new medium is 'life'- bringing art from the studio to the street. Is there an inevitable march toward socially significant art? Probably not. I'm not sure if anything got done in art this decade. Hopefully someone in a basement somewhere discovered something good- but popular art seems to have sputtered and died on the art fair floor. Increased exposure and communication have brought out the speculators, betting on the next big trend and the new hot artist. At the same time we have witnessed the ascension of the spectator as an integral part of the art object.

A decade ago the Millennium Bug scared many into believing that the world would end. Ten years later, the first thing that strikes me about ending the first decade of the 21st century is that it went away with a whimper. Was it that bad? At first lewd, sexual works were made prominent, and then a conservative return to painting took hold in a big way. The post-9/11 atmosphere drove gallerists back to salable work and the rise of the fair system (Miami Basel began in 2002 and many more exploded after that) promoted international supermarkets of art. Midway through the decade the artworld became polarized between high-gloss images and quirky handmade works, a juxtaposition of techno-junkie and Luddite trends that exemplified the conflicted decade. One development heralded through Documenta and filtered through globalism was a new social significance, an emphasis on artworks' impact within communities. Decentralization brought laymen into the creative process in "crowd-sourced" artworks, the expanding availability of cameras and video made artists out of anyone, and even established artists reached out to make their works part of the social fabric of the tumultuous times. As the decade draws to a close not even a near-collapse of the banking system could stop the art fairs' march toward world dominance. Decadence is still very much in the pockets of the bankers and eyes of the beholders. Despite a massive loss of wealth the super-rich are still up there, information technology robber barons for our new century. Will the continuing divide between salable art at the fairs and ephemeral social actions in the streets cause a rift in the artworld, or are they mutually beneficial partners, ripe for commodification and marketing savvy to exploit? One way or another art writing is going down the tube, a victim of direct contact between the artist and the public, with no need for enlightened intermediaries. What will define the new century of art? No one knows, but for certain it has already been crafted. Beware the manifestoes of last century- the guy on the street corner and the girl on the couch next to you know as much about creating art as anyone.

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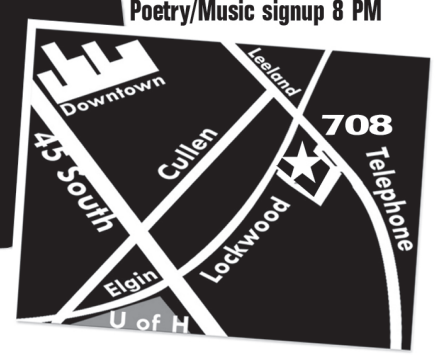
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Sun: 3pm- 9pm

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Weekly Shows unless otherwise posted

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Open Mic

Tuesday
John Hogan, Jambolism

Wednesday
Moonshine Summit, Potroast, Drum Circle

Thursday
Leslie Newman, The Hightailers

Sunday
Acoustic Jam Session 12-5:30, Fahl & Folk/ Jimmy Deen

Shows in January

Jan. 2- Plastic Fantastic Lover
Fri. 8- Shiny Ribs
Fri. 15- Suburban Warfare
Fri. 22- Flounder Without Eyes
Sat. 23- Failure To Notice
Fri. 29- Green Mountain Grass
Sat. 30- Patrick Godbey w/ WHURM



24 FRAMES A SECOND

BY MICHAEL BERGERON

ME AND ORSON WELLES

WHEN RICHARD LINKLATER purchased the rights to Robert Kaplow's Me and Orson Welles, a fictionalized novel that takes place during the 1937 Mercury Theatre production Julius Caesar, he knew he might never make the film.

"Welles was the master of balancing genius and disaster, his whole life is about that. It's extremely daunting; he's the big director. It's like a Christian making a film about Christ," Linklater told Free Press Houston during an interview last November during the film's premiere at the MFAH.

In recent films Welles has been played by Vincent D'Onofrio (Ed Wood, although Tim Burton dubbed the voice with another actor), Angus Macfadyen (Cradle Will Rock), and Liev Schrieber (RKO 281). Linklater wanted an actor that could fill the shoes of a young Welles, yet he didn't want a known commodity. "Welles made masterpieces in four different decades. That's a career," remarked Linklater.

"Kaplow sent me an email saying to go check out this guy doing a one-man show about Welles at a 50-seat theater in New York. It's a wonderful play, it starts at War of the Worlds and goes to the end of his life," recalled Linklater.

That actor is Christian McKay and to see his performance in Me and Orson Welles is to see a star in the making. Linklater admits he wouldn't have done the film if he hadn't found McKay.

"The thing about Christian is that you don't know him. With an unknown the critical antenna comes down. You are with Orson Welles hanging out at the Mercury Theater," explained Linklater. "That's the magic of cinema."

McKay hails from Manchester in the UK. "His big influences are people like Richard Burton or Winston Churchill. He helped to create the one-man show mainly as motivation for when he was an out of work actor."

Me and Orson Welles was shot in the UK, on the isle of Man for the interior of the Mercury Theatre, with exteriors and other sets shot at Pinewood Studios. In fact, expect to see some play from Me and Orson Welles at the 2010 BAFTA awards as it was primarily and English production.

"1937 New York is so long gone," noted Linklater. "This theater on the Isle of Man had the correct stage area, the same size trap doors, a similar area under the stage. There's one existing photo of the interior of the Mercury theater, and the orchestra and balcony are similar."

The Isle of Man also had a film fund that Linklater was qualified to use due to shooting there. "They became my main producers. I know all about the Isle of Mann now, they have the longest standing government, over 1000 years. They're a little jewel in the British crown; the Queen comes over ever 30 years," laughed Linklater. The film credits include CinemaNX and Isle of Man Film. (The manx cat also hails from the Isle of Man.)

"Cecil Beaton took a series of ten photos so we have those as references," said Linklater. "Some of the lighting design Welles had based on Triumph of the Will, he wanted it to look like a fascist rally."

Me and Orson Welles depicts Welles as an immovable genius that used any means necessary to accomplish his goals and Linklater captures the atmosphere of that audacity. For instance, did Welles regularly take an ambulance from rehearsal to his CBS radio gig?

"Who knows with Welles," queried Linklater. "Where does that myth meet reality? I would think with Welles he probably did that once but it's the kind of movie where you print the legend."

COLLAPSE

THERE'S A DOCUMENTARY flying under the radar called Collapse. The film is available on demand from some cable providers and also playing in limited theatrical venues. Director Chris Smith has made some of the best docs of the last 15 years including Home Movie, The Yes Men, American Movie and the brilliant but rarely seen American Job (1996). Smith certainly ranks alongside other contemporary doc makers like Michael Moore or Errol Morris and is as idiosyncratic as they are while still maintaining a signature style.

Collapse takes place in a single room with a single man speaking to the camera. Smith aids the narration of Michael Ruppert with lots of appropriate vintage news clips and images. Unlike a similar one-man doc subject, Morris' Fog of War, Collapse isn't a man admitting past political adjectives and mistakes but rather Ruppert predicting a gloom and doom future to our economy and way of life.

Ruppert covers peak oil, transportation, electricity, food and how it's all tied in to our way of life. He explains derivatives in a manner so concise as to negate a similar explanation in Moore's Capitalism: A Love Story. Collapse is as Ruppert details a story of "infinite growth versus finite energy."

You'll want to watch Collapse twice or at least take notes once through because the information being hurled is so fascinatingly apocalyptic. While you will have heard some of what Ruppert spouts in other formats he delivers his message in a succinct manner with a bow on top.

Ruppert could be the Smoking Man from the X Files he's so full of mystery, at least that's the way Smith, who's only heard off camera, presents him. One of the strengths of Collapse is the way Smith allows Ruppert the emotional freedom to break down in the middle of his rant.

UP IN THE AIR

UP IN THE AIR is a sublime meditation on life. This third film from Jason Reitman proves he has the chops of a major director but that was already apparent on his first film Thank You For Smoking. Up In the Air deals with a middle aged dude going through a life crisis with subplots revolving around his family and what few friends he has.

George Clooney (as Ryan Bingham) has played this kind of role before most notably in the far more serious Michael Clayton. There's even a shot here where Clooney gazes with the look of self-recognition right into the camera, although it's much shorter in duration than the closing shot of Michael Clayton. Bingham works for a firm that outsources its employees to other companies in order to terminate said other company's employees. His living arrangements are spartan and although he maintains a small apartment he's on the road the majority of the time.

Am I the only one that occasionally refers to this film as The Air Up There, which is a 1994 basketball film starring Kevin Bacon? Non-sequiturs aside, Up In the Air works best at the beginning and middle while the last act tends to ground itself with the resolution of Bingham's problems in a rather prosaic manner.

Rather than reveal specifics about the last act that would spoil plot twists, allow me to point out the areas of Up In the Air that really work for me. The tone of corporate indifference to the feelings of their workers are best expressed in what is for me the best scene where Clooney fires J.K. Simmons (in a cameo) and goes from being an asshole to making the guy relate to him. Clooney explains how Simmons needs to get back in touch with his true desires that he sublimated when he first entered the corporate climate. Also beautiful footage of American cities as seen from thousands of feet in the air punctuate the film from time to time. Supporting performances are fine with notable finesse coming from Vera Farmiga and Anna Kendrick. **FPH**

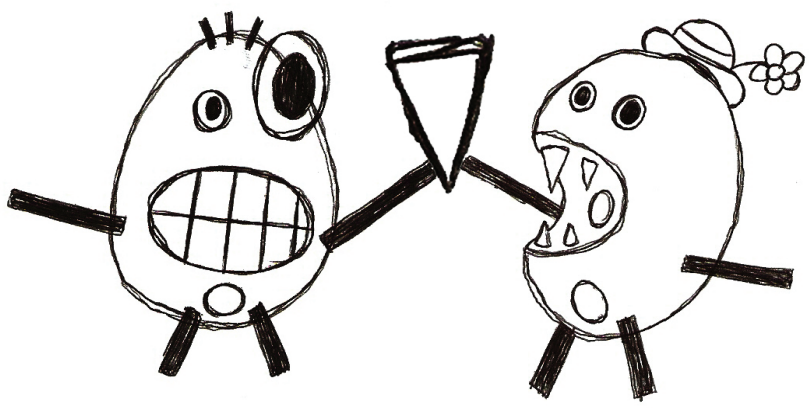


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WHO KNOWS WHERE THE TIME GOES

by ANDERSON, KWAME M.

YO LA TENGO

3…2…1! (cheers emphatically, face turns pale) and vomit. Hello, Happy New Years and whatnot, here we are, avoiding the apocalypse for two more years.

I FIGURED I MISSED THE DEADLINE, so please excuse the brevity of my wit for I do not have the time for cleverness. However, I will say, as in the words of my daughter, "Jop aww, jop, psh psh, ay!" I have no idea what that means, I think it's something about Communists or Handy Mandy (it's a strange dialect).

GOODIE MOB/ SCARFACE
01/14/10 | House OF Blues

The good die mostly over bullshit is what the Goodie Mob claim as the meaning of their name. When this show was canceled last year, many of my friends salivated at the chance of its rescheduling, well apparently your slobber did not go unnoticed. Scarface is one of the realest that ever picked up a microphone, more than a rapper, an institution. If you abhor the current state of style sans substance rap that has flooded the game in these past few years, do not drag your ass to this one. Maybe Cee Lo will show…

YO LA TENGO
01/28/10 | Warehouse Live

Yo La Tengo shows have longed carried the "best live band you will ever see" reputation. Known as one of the greatest living rock bands, a show of this magnitude rarely comes around, and it will be one of those shows where dudes who used to be cool will now show up with beards and bellies, and those who will one day be those dudes, will also show up based on the lore of the YLT greatness. Either way, Ira Kaplan is a bad son of a mother and father.

FIERY FURNACES
01/29/09 | Walter's On Washington

Fiery Furnaces are one of the bands that continue to get better with every release. I could sit here and say more about the band, but I am missing Inglorious Basterds. They are awesome, though. Google them.

RECORDS YOU SHOULD CHECK OUT IN JANUARY

Spoon - Tranference *(Merge)*
Scout Niblett - The Calcination Of Scout Niblet *(Drag City)*
Shannon Wright - Honeybee Girls *(Flight Safety)*
Beach House -Teen Dream *(Sub Pop)*

Note I will write a review/preview of all of these albums and post them on Freepresshouston.com*

SKEPTYCYNIC
01/08 | THE MINK



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01/10 | SUPER HAPPY FUN LAND



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INTERVIEW:

TYAGARAJA

BY OMAR AFRA | PHOTO BY TRISH BADGER

TYAGARAJA, KNOWN BEFORE AS JOHNATHON WELCH OF MILLION YEAR DANCE FAME, HAS DISAPPEARED FOR SOME TIME. AFTER THE DISSOLUTION OF MILLION YEAR DANCE, WELCH BECAME MORE IMMERSED IN HIS SPIRITUAL JOURNEY, CHANGED HIS NAME TO TYAGARAJA, BEGAN FOLLOWING HINDU TEACHER SRI KARUANAMAYI AMMA, TRAVELED FOR EXTENDED PERIODS TO INDIA, AND RE-EVALUATED HIS MUSICAL MISSION.

AFTER A BRIEF STINT IN AUSTIN, he has returned to Houston to re-introduce his soulful vocal style and mantra-laden songwriting to his hometown. In a short time he has done some recording, played many a show, and put together a band to accompany his songs. He tells us what the skinny is:

YOU HAVE SPENT SOME EXTENDED TIME IN INDIA RECENTLY. TELL ME HOW THIS HAS SEEPED INTO YOUR SONGWRITING. ¶ Looking back on it I can't even believe all that actually happened. I hadn't traveled outside of Texas in my early years and within the last two I've been around the world and back. Just as anyone might experience when opening up to a life changing experience, India left such an impression on me that it will be a part of my soul forever. I can literally hold my heart and feel India inside me, as if it were food that I ingested or air that I'm breathing. The strangest part about it translating to my music is that old worldly gospel songs have started coming out. In a way my experience with the orient has brought me back to my roots. The Welch bloodline is steeped in gospel music. Even still the experiences I had and the inner knowledge that shines is most present in my lyrics.

WHAT IS YOUR UTOPIAN MUSICAL SITUATION? ¶ Wow that's hard to answer because nothing ever is how you expect. My long-term goal for all my efforts in music, business, or any experience is setting up farm villages. I am studying now how to grow food. The most important thing in society to me is to localize farming. If I ever "hit it big" the focus of the funds would work toward creating an indigenous lifestyle, where people live and work together, and of course there would be lots of music. Music brings people together. This would be my form of protest against a system that has forced humans to eat manufactured food, and regulate it so to keep people unhealthy and sick, it's a vicious and violent act, and my Utopia would be a protest in action. I'm also working with a dear friend, Brett Joerger, whom I met through my American tour with my teacher on solar, wind, and water energy so as to do all this completely free of government influence. This will be a life long project.

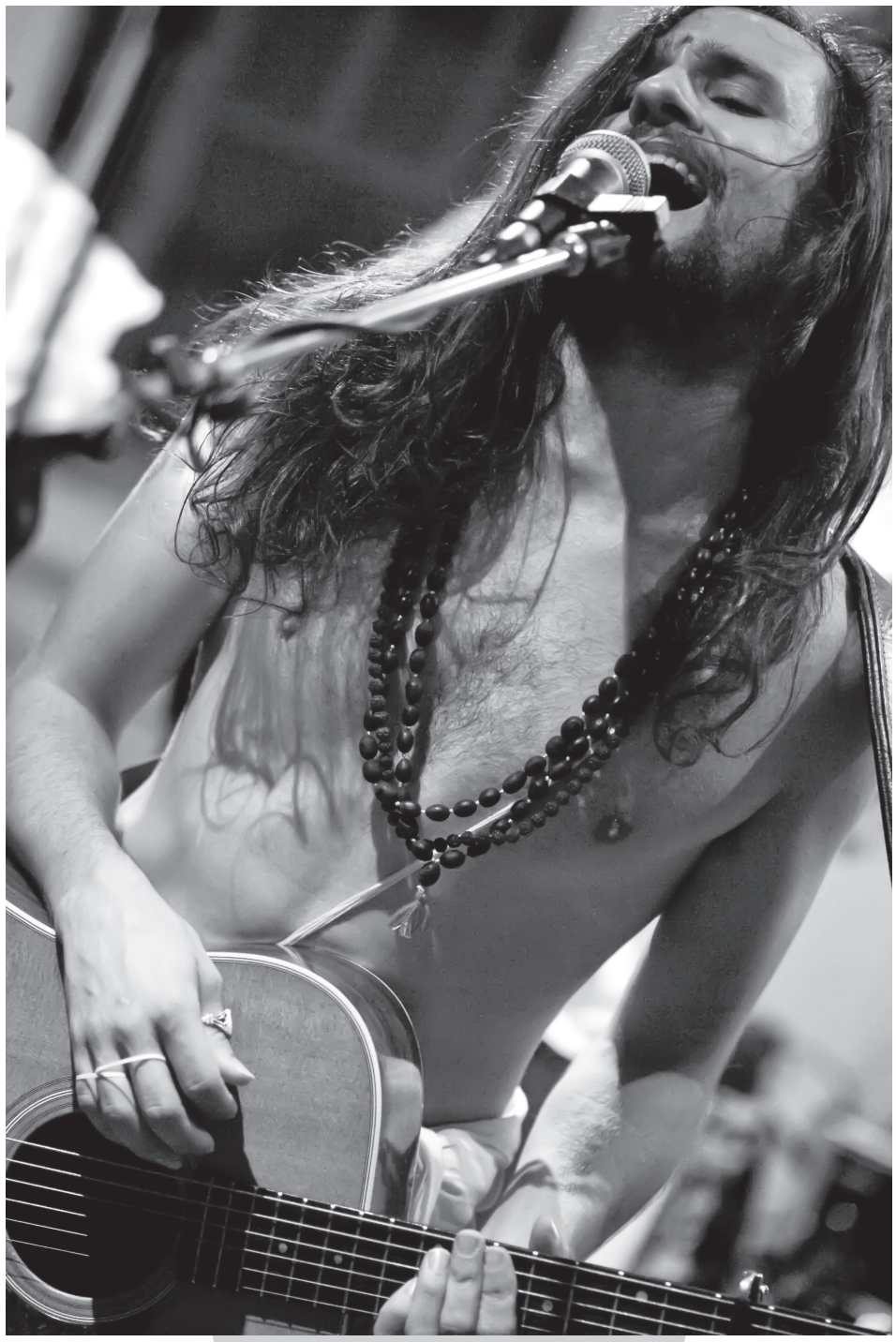
IT IS OBVIOUS THAT YOUR SPIRITUAL JOURNEY HAS MANIFESTED ITSELF IN YOUR MUSIC. BUT DESPITE YOUR INWARD GROWTH AND QUEST FOR THE IMMATERIAL, DON'T YOU EVER WANT TO DROP IT ALL AND SING AND PLAY SONGS ABOUT GETTING HAMMERED AND CHASING TITTIES? ¶ Not really.

IS IT HARD PLAYING IN A BAND WITH YOUR DAD? IS IT PROBLEMATIC KEEPING 'DAD' ACCOUNTABLE ON HIS PARTS? ¶ Actually having Dad in the band makes everything easier. Truly he is the most amazing human being on Earth and my best friend. I say this to people and more times than not I hear in response, "wow that's great I don't have a good relationship with my dad, you're lucky." And yes I know and feel very fortunate, and I let both my parents know everyday how important, loved, and appreciated they are in my life.

In the recording process I did have to modernize my pops a little bit. Basically, "play like a 50 year old 27 year old." Meaning keep the experience and wisdom, just make it a little more youthful, and for the most part dad would nail it. He has been a huge part of the new record. It sounds amazing I can't wait to show Houston what my dad has done with this music. I have always played music with him, so this album is basically what we have worked on together since I was 11 years old.

WHAT IS THE NEXT BIG 'CLUTCH MANEUVER' FOR TYAGARAJA? ¶ Well in the nearest future we are performing at Warehouse Live Jan 8th with Language Room, The Fox Derby, and a great band from Austin, Alpha Rev. My band will expand a bit for this show. I'll have some guest performers that are also recording some instrumentation on my album this week. We'll have Hillary Sloan on violin, Jeremy Nuncio on keys, and my friend Alaap Parikh on tabla. Should be an amazing show. Really all my efforts at this point are focused on releasing my new full-length album "An Open Book," sometime in late March. My main musicians have been the best group of people I've ever worked with. Mike Poulos is laying down some seriously awesome bass lines. Keegan Daleo is a young kid on rhythm guitar I found in a coffee shop. David Garcia has a wonderful musical ear in general. He's not just a great drummer. I'd also like to personally thank Josh Applebee for being such a wizard recording engineer on the record.

FILL IN THE BLANK: HOUSTON IS THE CENTER OF THE MUSICAL UNIVERSE BECAUSE... ¶ Omar Afra has a mortgage. Seriously, because there are so many amazing artists in this city, and since the center of the universe could never be discovered we might as well claim Houston as the source! Stick the musical-universe-center flag in Houston… it worked for the Americans and the moon… if that ever really happened. **FPH**




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FRIDAYS
Live Bands
Inside!
Live DJ
Outside On
The Patio

SATURDAYS
Live Bands
Inside!
DJ Jason
Outside On
The Patio

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WEDNESDAYS
Ladies Night
$2 Drink Specials
DJ Larry &
Karaoke

FRIDAYS
Jan. 1 - Rock Radio
Jan. 8 - 3 Peace
Jan. 15 - 8EPLUS
Jan. 22 - Electric Bite
Jan. 29 - Less Than Serious
Feb. 5 - Mobsters Of Rock

SATURDAYS
Jan. 2 - Red Hot Chili Pepper Tribute and Stone Temple Pilots Tribute
Jan. 9 - Thunderpants
Jan. 16 - The Fab 5
(60s & Beatles Tribute)
Jan. 23 - Xes Whiskey
(Van Halen Tribute)
Jan. 30 - Destroyer
(Kiss Tribute)
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I HAVE A BIG BONER FOR 2010

by OMAR AFRA | PHOTO BY ANTHONY RATHBUN

WE ARE IN THE MIDST OF 'BACK IN THE DAY'. AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER, PEOPLE HAVE LONGED FOR 'BACK IN THE DAY' AND COMPARED THE MUSIC COMMUNITY'S CURRENT STATUS TO THIS PERCEIVED NOTION OF BACK IN THE DAY.

WELL, I THINK WE ARE THE MIDDLE of one of these wonderful apexes and if we keep the good fight up, we can sustain this thing for a while. That is why I have a massive hard-on for the coming year. These following 'predictions' are just as much a 'wish list' as they are foresight. We gotta hustle-hustle to make them manifest, but I am damn sure we have the gusto and I am confident good things are headed our way.

TWO NEW MUSIC VENUES, ONE DIES

Recent years have seen both the death and birth of many music venues. We do not know what will happen to Walter's, maybe someone will take over the old Proletariat spot, rumors persist about new spots on Westheimer popping up, and it's hard to believe all of the BIG venues can last with the advent of House of Blues. If it don't make dollars, then it don't make sense.

WALTER'S OUTLIVES THE DOUCHEBAG SCENE ON WASHINGTON

Despite ambiguity about Walter's rumored location change, you have to take into account the fact that the douchebag is a fickle species and is bound to abandon Washington for greener pastures once the hip area is no longer predominantly white. The damn coloreds moved into Midtown, Downtown, and the Richmond Strip before that. So considering it is only a matter of time, the good folks at Walter's may consider 'hunkering down' and sitting out this problem like a bad Texas storm.

CITY GIVES CONCESSIONS TO LIVE MUSIC COMMUNITY

Let's face it: The municipal government in this City is not openly supportive of live music as they are in Austin and Dallas. There are protections and ordinances in those cities that facilitate and foster vibrant music scenes. There is zoning, there are ordinances that navigate conflicts between venues and people who move next door, and there are public dollars for festivals and events. Maybe this year the City of Houston will allow us to shut down Westheimer for the WestFest, throw some public dollars at revamping the Houston's oldest live music spot the El Dorado ballroom, and help protect venues from gentrification. Don't move next door to a railroad and complain about the noise.

ONE LOCAL GETS NATIONAL ATTENTION

The depth of talent in this city is comparable to anywhere else. But lately, I feel as if our superfluous talent has become a festering wound that needs attention. (See favorites below as to who I think needs the Golden Ticket.)

SINGULAR SCENES DISSOLVE

I am tired of going to see bands that hang out with each other, love and emulate the same bands, and often times live with each other. It gets stale and it makes shit boring. I am not a punk fan or a hip hop fan. I am a music fan. Mix that shit up kids!

EVERYONE ON HANDS UP HOUSTON MESSAGE BOARD BECOMES OBJECTIVE

I love/hate the Hands Up Houston message board. It is the perfect place in town to get torn to shreds as a devil or lauded as an angel. But fact of the matter is most of us are neither. Either way, it's a great place to disseminate info if you can avoid the pissing contest. Don't expect me to stop prostituting events there either.

SUPER HAPPY FUN LAND AND ITS STAFF ARE WHISKED AWAY IN THE RAPTURE

Blessed are the righteous who smell of patchouli and squander the day away playing with sock puppets. The Lord shall carry you away to the Kingdom of Heaven where you will feast on Turkey Loaf and Kombucha until the wicked (Hands up Houston people) have finished purgatory.

MY PERSONAL FAVORITES OF 2010

BLACKIE
Golden Axe
Robert Ellis
Perseph One
Hollywood Floss
Room 101
Anything Geoffrey Mueller does
Black Congress FPH



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WORST OF HOUSTON

THAT DREADED TIME HAS COME TO CALL OUT THE WORST OF THE WORST. WHILE 2009 WAS A GREAT YEAR IN MANY RESPECTS IT WAS ALSO A TURDFEST. BUT YOU HAVE TO CALL EM' LIKE YOU SEE EM'. THE FIRST STEP IN SOLVING A PROBLEM IS IDENTIFYING IT AND THAT'S WHAT WE ARE HERE TO DO. PROBLEM IS, WE ALL LIVE IN A GLASS HOUSE YET WE MUST THROW THESE STONES. SO WE HAVE TAKEN THE TIME TO BE INTROSPECTIVE AND CALL OURSELVES OUT JUST A LITTLE THIS YEAR. READ UP AND ENJOY.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TIM DORSEY + TOILET PHOTO BY ARIANA KATECHIS

WORST OF HOUSTON



WORST AD
ROCBAR'S FALLEN ROCK STARS
BY OMAR AFRA

LAST MARCH, quasi-Douchebag rock club the Rocbar advertised an evening comprised of music by 'Fallen Rock Stars'. Harmless idea which would pay tribute to the many rock and rollers who have gone too soon. Problem: the flyer featured depictions of Morrison, Hendrix, Dimebag, Kobain, and Bob Dylan….yup Bob Dylan. Despite sounding dead, he is clearly not dead.

WORST RENTAL LEASE TERMS
ALABAMA THEATER/
WEINGARTEN REALITY
BY TISH STRINGER

ACCORDING TO LOCAL LORE, the lease on the historic Alabama Theater on Shepard, now up for rent, drawn up by Weingarten Reality, includes a clause in which new tenants must agree to never screen a movie inside the space. You might remember Weingarten as the focus of community activism surrounding their attempt to bulldoze the River Oaks theater. Why do you hate movies so much Weingarten—why would anyone write this into a rental contract? http://www.weingarten.com/retail/property/0552-001/

WORST SUNDAY NIGHT HAPPY HOUR - *RA SUSHI*
BY JILL FORD

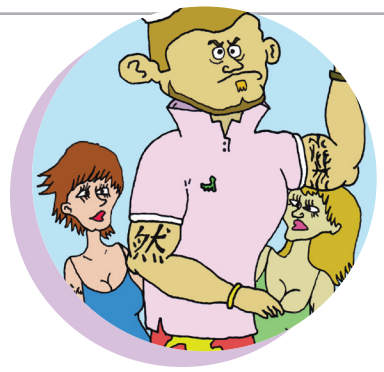
DO NOT CONSIDER RA Sushi to wrap up your Sunday Funday. Sure it sounds like a great concept, however, in reality, it is only a great if you enjoy expensive valet parking, a 2 hour wait, ridiculously loud rap and the worst people you can imagine. Their clothes alone would embarrass Ed Hardy himself. I'm not sure where said people come from; I assume they are bussing them in from a 979 area code. The music is offensively loud and I actually once witnessed two Texans-jersey-wearing grown men sharing a fishbowl-sized blue cocktail. The food is okay, but the atmosphere is crowded and these are not people you want to be touching. Follow the dragon shirts and their douche cars to another locale!

WORST NEIGHBORS
SELF-RIGHTEOUS SUBURBANITES
BY ANDREA AFRA

I KNOW IT'S A COMMON COMPLAINT, but there seems to be nothing to address this concern. There needs to be a contractual agreement for people who decide to move from the burbs to reside in the Montrose area that states:

"I understand that by relocating to the City of Montrose, I will become a resident of an area that is renown for its music and art scene, and should I decide to move to a neighborhood that borders an entertainment venue, and should my residence be within hearing range of the musical entertainment from said venue, I will refrain from harassing the business by filing daily noise complaints with the police, or impeding their customers by harassing the city to put no parking signs around the entire block.

"I also understand that there will be street festivals in which the streets will be closed down so that the thousands of attendees will be able to enjoy a safe festival, and that any petty objections to the revelries is harmful to the community as a whole. There will be trash, there will be drunk people, and there will be noise all day and late into the night. However, not only is the revenue generated by vendors and area businesses from festival patrons economically stimulating, the recognition garnered by showcasing the talent that hails from



Houston benefits not just Montrose, but our city as a whole.

"Should I be found in violation of any of these terms I will be ousted from my home by an angry mob of hipsters and shipped to Dallas."

WORST OF HAIRCUTS - *SUPERCUTS*
BY STEVEN THOMSPON

I RECENTLY DECIDED to make my annual pilgrimage to Supercuts in the hopes of lopping off my "I don't have a serious job" haircut. Instead of simply writing a few choice words on what transpired, I've instead decided to let the FPH readers in on the letter I valiantly taped to the salon's door, a la Martin Luther.

Dear Supercuts Lady,

I just wanted to take a moment and write you to let you know how much I appreciate the obvious style and grace with which you scissored, buzzed, and sculpted my head at your store earlier today. I can't afford to go to a real hair stylist and even though I was surprised to find the "discounts" Supercuts advertise actually end up costing more than a haircut at the non-mega-corporation barbershop across the street, I thought "what the hey?" and decided to give you a whirl.

Supercuts lady, to be fair, I should have known what I was getting myself into the second I walked into your store and saw you were the only "stylist" not cutting hair, even though there was a line of people waiting in the corner, all reading the dated magazines your store offers. It should have tipped me off you weren't exactly the ace of your squadron when, after I told the receptionist I'd be more than happy to use whoever, you walked up and one of the guys waiting for another stylist gave me a telltale wink. Also a tip off: your name is Karla spelled with a K.

I can just see me now, absentmindedly being ushered by you to the chopping block. Apparently when on the way you idly asked me what I'd like you heard, "Whatever floats your boat, go wild, I dare you" as opposed to "A short trim, please." The moxie with which you pushed me down in the chair was startling. I knew I was in for a treat, Supercuts lady, when you immediately whipped out your cell phone while hosing down my dome with that questionable liquid. The tales with which you began to regale your cousin Tania over your mobile were vivid and dramatic and even though I could only hear your side of the conversation through our entire exchange as you cut hair with one hand and held your cell in the other, I can only imagine Tania's excitement when you spoke about your plans this weekend.

Though I attempted to avoid eye contact with you for fear of throwing you off your mark, I knew I was in confident hands as you pushed my head this way and that while sporadically checking the ongoing results in the mirror. I trusted you, Supercuts lady, I had a job interview later on and knew you could make me look nothing but tasteful and professional.

I do admit I was a bit scared as you became increasingly heated in your conversation when your cousin Tania brought up your ex-boyfriend. After all, you were wielding razor sharp scissors centimeters from my jugular. But thankfully you were professional enough to just simply walk away to the back of the store to give Tania your full attention while I waited patiently for five minutes. When you came back still on the phone and looked surprised to find me in your chair I knew you were only being coy. As you started back in on my haircut I noticed bunches of hair below my seat increasing in size to an alarming degree, like you were shaving a grizzly bear. However, my trust for you was ebullient, who am I to question your obvious ability? I noticed your impressive degree on the wall and though the name on it was Roger, I'm sure there's an explanation. Perhaps you went to school with this person?

When you explained after the last snip that the cut would look better when dry, I have to admit I was a bit skeptical. But really, I rarely go anywhere with wet hair so what's the big deal? Apparently your creativity knows no bounds- when you asked if I wanted my sideburns trimmed and I said "mid ear," you winged it, rendering the appearance of my face lopsided and freakish.

I was a little embarrassed when everyone stared at me as I stood up to walk to the reg-

WORST WASTE OF A WRITER
ALEX WUKMAN
BY ALEX WUKMAN

EVERY YEAR we do a similar category, or a variation thereof, and almost every year it goes to a reporter at the Houston Chronicle or Wayne Dolcefino. However, this year I need to face the facts. I dropped the ball. I was so busy commuting, drinking 843 Lone Stars, and going about my life that I failed to provide you, the readers of this paper, with the information required to make informed decisions about your daily lives. I failed my audience and my art. I didn't do any articles on the mayoral race, I didn't pay close enough attention to how your tax dollars are being spent, I didn't let you know about who your elected officials are taking money from, I didn't report on what the Texas Legislature was doing in Austin and I didn't provide you information about resources you could have used to survive the worst economic climate in generations.

While I did provide interesting articles about Houston's history, electric car community and a recap of the problems at BARC, my writing this past year was not only irrelevant to the serious discussions necessary in the City of Houston and the State of Texas it was uninspired and uninspiring. None of my articles were the type of writing that you the readers expect, and deserve, from me. I will take responsibilty for turning in luke warm articles and offer the only explanation I can: I was instructed that if I do the type of journalism that you deserve I have been told that I will lose my job by my other employer. I let my fear of being unemployed compromise my integrity, and in that I failed you. I am sorry for that and I will not let it happen again.

WORST GENTRIFICATION
WASHINGTON AVENUE
BY DAVID A. COBB

FOR ALL THE DWIS, drunken brawls, and general douchebaggery, this second coming of the Richmond Strip deserves its place among Houston's Worst of 2009. Despite a decent restaurant or two, sports bars and self-important clubs have taken over what used to be an interesting, diverse part of the city. It says a lot about what people in Houston consider important when a long stretch of road littered with bars doesn't include a single live music venue--and the one that's been there since before you'd even consider walking around the area at night (Walter's On Washington) is finally succumbing to the gentrification and is planning to move. While places like Catalina Coffee and A-Front keep hope alive, the stretch from Memorial Park to Sawyer is pretty much a total wash.

WORST TREND OF THE YEAR - *USING "MAN" AS A PREFIX*
BY ALEX WUKMAN

FIRST IT WAS THE "man show" then came "man-caves," "man-tuaries," and "man-crushes." Now we have "man-tinis", "man-tea," "man-scara/ guy-liner/ guy-shadow," and the list just keeps growing. Nothing says "threatened identity and sexual insecurity" more than putting a masculine pronoun before the names of common household objects and alcoholic drinks. I'm just waiting for Madison Avenue to really get behind the idea and start marketing products to the guys whose definition of masculinity is so narrow, and their views on women so outdated, that they have to have a separate room in their house where they can drink beer and watch TV. Perhaps we'll see the resurgence of the MANtle clock or a new awareness of the plight of the MANatees, but somehow I doubt it.

WORST TABOULI - *ANGLO-TABOULI*
BY OMAR AFRA

STOP MAKING TABOULI white, people. All of you. Why do you use more cracked wheat than parsley? On that note, there is no such thing as Israeli Couscous.

WORST BATHROOM
MANGO'S/NUMBERS
BY OMAR AFRA

THE GREAT COSMIC JOKE is that these bathrooms are about 1/8th of a mile from each other meaning you can visit the 2 worst bathrooms in town in under 20 minutes. Poop at one and piss at the other? Mango's bathroom gets the nod for it's poorly done whiteboy graffiti, 'inconsistency' in toilet functionality, and a general eeriness in the cramped space. Numbers just has poop on the ceilings.

Honorable Mention - Walter's on Washington (Does anyone know anyone who has been murdered in there?)





ister. The man who had winked at me earlier was chuckling, but perhaps he was just thinking of something funny he had overheard you say to Tania. I paid the bill and acknowledged your forthrightness when you exclaimed "tips not included" while I fumbled with my wallet. Of course I'll tip you, Supercuts lady, this haircut will look much better when it's had a chance to dry.

It wasn't until I got in my car and looked in the rearview mirror that I realized you had rendered me into an abortive hybrid of a state trooper and Lloyd Christmas from Dumb and Dumber.

So I just want to thank you Supercuts lady, for the time and effort you put into making me look like a goon. Pretty sure I'm not getting a callback from my interview as I doubt the company's into the inbred pervert yokel look. Thanks again Karla!

WORST PORTENT FOR MONTROSE RESIDENTS
THE (RAPID) COMMERCIAL DECLINE OF LOWER WESTHEIMER
BY AMANDA WOLFE

IN 2009, "Lower" Westheimer truly earned its name. A domino effect of failing businesses – starting with the venerable Felix and tumbling east to La Strada – turned the street into a wasteland that makes one question whether they might actually be in Detroit.

Only a year ago, this was the storied Restaurant Row, and we were still laboring under the delusion that Ruggles really was going to be "Re-opening Soon."

In the time it took for Ruggles to finally catch fire instead of reopening, we saw the unceremonious shuttering of businesses like Austin Layne and Mary's, and even chain joints like Hollywood Video and Taco Cabana. Those of us who live near those businesses soon got a taste of what happens when Lower Westheimer can't get its groove back: shit gets broken into on an almost daily basis. Not a coincidence.

The triplex I live in had been unviolated for years, according to long-term residents. Yet, in the past month, one apartment has been successfully burglarized, with a second attempt made on it shortly thereafter. Tonight, someone walked right up my driveway and smashed the window on my shit car, only to discover that there was nothing in it to steal. (Why any moron would think they'd get something out of a 1997 Escort with a mismatched fender, I don't know.) That makes three hits in one month on one property, after decades of peace. This is no fluke – I've seen too many flashing lights on my street in the past few weeks, so I know we're not alone.

In a neighborhood where property values are insane, the neighbors are buying guns. Guns belong in the suburbs, not Montrose. This is not a good trend.

Please, support the businesses that are still alive here. Spend some cash at Mango's, Numbers, Avant Garden. Speak up for the Westheimer Street Festival. And while you're here, keep an eye out for the fucking assholes who keep busting up my house.

WORST THING TO HAPPEN TO THE GAY-BERHOOD

CLOSING OF MARY'S
BY ALEX WUKMAN

THE ICONIC MONTROSE GAY BAR closed its doors in October a victim of rising rent and unpaid taxes. The alternative lifestyle institution had been there for over 25 years and its closure came just weeks before the election of Houston's first openly gay mayor, a revolution that wouldn't have been possible if there hadn't been a bar that was Here and Queer and forced people to get used to it. During the '80s, when AIDS was a plague and not something kids learn about on South African Sesame Street, Mary's became a last resting place and living memorial for those who died from what many thought of as "the gay cancer." Houston's LGBT caucus is working to get the names of everyone who had their ashes scattered on Mary's patio and some factors in the group are working to get the bar protected as a historic building.



WORST LOCAL RESIDENT

CONRAD CURRAY- MJ'S "DOCTOR"
BY STEVEN THOMPSON

IT SORT OF HURTS your standing as a metropolis when your town's most infamous denizen is none other than that crazy doctor who gave Michael Jackson all those drugs. Jackson's cardiologist, a man named Conrad Curray who hails from our great city, was all over the covers of every newspaper and website this summer for giving Michael Jackson enough medication to put a small village in a coma. From what I can surmise from the minimal research I bothered to put into it, Dr. Curray was essentially hired by the Jackson clan from some one stop pill shop located above a Laundromat to write prescriptions for whatever Michael wanted. To say the doctor's past is checkered with some financial and personal problems is like saying Tiger Woods likes strange. This summer on the front page of the Houston Chronicle they gave a timeline of the medications administered to Michael the day he died. Unless Dr. Curray got confused and thought he was trying to put down an elephant who accidently ate 10 pounds of crystal meth, there's a pretty good chance he's one of the worst doctors ever. It was reported this winter he is actually practicing medicine again in Houston. Super.

WORST LOCAL MEDIA COVERAGE OF HOUSTON'S (CURRENTLY) MOST SUCCESSFUL SPORTS TEAM

HOUSTON DYNAMOS
BY ANNA GARZA

IF MIKE JONES' Houston Dynamo (Don't Play) is the "official" Houston Dynamo anthem then I nominate Aretha Franklin's Respect as their "unofficial" anthem. Soccer awareness is strengthening in our city but you would never know judging by the amount of TV and print coverage the Dynamo receives in comparison to our other major sports franchises. This is a particularly jagged pill for soccer fans to swallow since our team is the only team to have won trophies in this decade. What have our other teams accomplished? The Astros…please disperse, nothing to see here. The Texans…do I even need to go there? The Rockets…undeniably the second most successful sports team but is plagued by injuries and a sloppy season thus far.

Since their relocation to H-Town in 2006, the Dynamo has won two back to back MLS Cup championships, made the quarterfinals in 2008 and the semi-finals in 2009. How come the most media coverage the Dynamo can garner is when David Beckham and his perfectly sculpted coif decide to grace our presence at Robertson? Ok, we all know the answer to that question… but it still doesn't make it right. Also not right is burying front page deserving articles in the back of the Chronicle next to columns about high school sports. And who does a sister have to blow for the Dynamo to receive more than ten seconds of air time on most local TV sports segments? After the Dynamo defeated the Seattle Sounders to advance to the semi-finals, I tuned into the local news for highlights and recaps. Unfortunately for me, I blinked and missed it. Come on Houston, we have a sports team that is hard working, talented and actually wins…. YOU BETTER RECOGNIZE!

To all the haters who will, predictably, opine that no one cares about soccer because it's low scoring, boring, not a real sport, blah blah blah. Let me save you some time… here's a quarter, call someone who cares.

WORST DEAL ON A USED HATE MACHINE

GENE LOCKE
BY M. MARTIN

WE CAN NOW STOP WONDERING whether or not Gene Locke knew that his campaign finance was paying Republican Homophobe nutjobs like Steve Hotze to send out anti-gay junk mail to thousands of Houston voters. We can stop wondering because Annise Parker won anyway, in a satisfying repudiation of this city's worst political tendencies. The big question now: how Locke proposes to get a single democrat this side of the 3rd ward to ever trust his opportunistic ass again.



WORST HOUSTON THAI MASSAGE PARLOR

THE FOURSOME ON WINROCK
BY MILLS-MCCOIN

THIS MAY COME AS A SHOCK to some of you... but don't go to just ANY Thai massage parlor, my friends. Treat yourself with some sense of respect. But that's enough of me discussing morals and hygiene.

There's a lagoon of "massage parlors" at the south end of Winrock in West Houston. One of them is appropriately named "CLINIC", which I suppose would be the most sanitary of the four "massage parlors." But as a collective, these are the worst massage parlors in Houston for two reasons. One, at the north end of Winrock (which might be one mile in length) lies a monster known as Second Baptist Church. This is particularly unfortunate if you are a churchgoer, as you might feel something called "guilt" by getting a rub n' tug so close to "home." The second reason is that this specific corral of sex dispensaries is heavily trafficked by Houston's finest, HPD. My personal assumption is that these officers are simply sitting in the parking lot and waiting until no one is looking... if you know what I mean. In any case, it would be a little strange to be greeted by a cop as you're leaving a brothel. "Good evening, officer." "There's nothing to see here, sir. Please move on." "Are you kidding? That girl's face is handcuffed to your cock!"

WORST SPORTS MOMENT

ROCKET'S INJURIES
BY JACOB MUSTAFA

CALLING THE FALL of the most recent incarnation of the Houston Rockets an end seems almost insulting to all parties involved. Empires must control, and dynasties must rule. Regardless if the blame can be laid upon brazen spending, recurring back problems or the inability of a few men to "will" their teams to victory, the Rockets of the 2000's could hardly have been called anything other than a failed attempt to capitalize on a winning formula; still, the final demoralizing loss of Yao Ming for a season in which the Rockets could have progressed on a level of success that had not been seen in a decade truly signaled the death knell of the McGrady-Ming experiment.

There should have been no experiment, though. Can't miss with the big man/do-it-all perimeter player combo. The NBA and Houston alike had all just seen the juggernaut that was the early 00's Los Angeles Lakers, relying on two men with remarkable gifts and a brilliant coach to make up for an otherwise spotty lineup and seeing three consecutive titles as the outcome. Kobe Bryant and Tracy McGrady were compared endlessly in the years leading up to McGrady's move to Houston; while the seemingly svelte Chinese man may have lacked the sheer gravity and girth afforded to Shaquille O'Neal, Yao and his myriad talents around the basket would mesh more fluidly with McGrady, whose brilliance rested in his need to handle the ball. The Rockets had picked up defensive ace Jeff Van Gundy as head coach the year before McGrady's arrival. The formula had been unimaginatively matched to a T, as if conceived by under-informed sports columnists, and almost on cue, the Rockets became a trendy pick by those same sportswriters to win the conference and even NBA championships for a few years.

The rest reads like the autopsy of a NBA team. Playoff failure, broken back, broken leg, more playoff failure, broken foot, broken knee, slightly less painful playoff failure, knee surgery, shock of somewhat success, broken foot. The story's repetitive and brutal, but never unexpected. So, as Yao Ming limped off the Toyota Center floor in Game Three of the Western Conference Semifinals, the few Rockets fans possessing the wherewithal to sit through these years of carnage could not scream, but sigh at another failed run, another fractured bone. The scene was tragic, without a

WORST POLITICAL MISJUDGMENT

ROY MORALES RUNNING FOR MAYOR OF HOUSTON
BY ALEX WUKMAN

ON PAPER IT SEEMED like it could work: a pro-business, Conservative Hispanic candidate who doesn't believe in global warming forges a coalition from the Tea Party movement and the growing Hispanic voting bloc to victory. Boy was he wrong. Apparently someone forgot to tell him that most of the people who are going to vote in a Houston mayoral race aren't the ones who show up at Tea Party protests and that the ones who do show up at Tea Party events aren't the type to work with Hispanics to build a winning coalition. Instead he winds up a distant fourth and we get the first openly gay mayor for any city over 2 million people. Perhaps if Morales had tried to run for Harris County Pct. 4 Commissioner against Jerry Eversole he could have won. Hell, anyone could run against Eversole and win. For those of you who don't pay attention to politics Jerry Eversole was indicted 15 years ago by a Grand Jury for campaign spending violations and exposed two years ago by Channel 13 for getting paid by Harris County without actually going to work.

WORST HOUSTON SPORTS TEAM

THE HOUSTON ASTROS
BY MILLS MCCOIN

AFTER READING THIS entry, if you disagree with anything I've written or you're holding out your opinion until you find corroborative research- then look no further than Forbes magazine.

Drayton McLane, Jr. (the semi-proud owner of our beloved Houston Astros) actually has more money than George Steinbrenner (the retired owner of the New York Yankees). You can debate this if you like, but you'll inevitably lose the the argument. It can be said that the New York Yankees organization purchased its 2009 World Series Championship by signing all of the top free agents during the prior off-season. And I don't think a lot of baseball fans would disagree with you. As well, I think the idea of "purchasing" a World Series-winning team is distasteful and removes the quality of competition from the sport. But who cares? I'm talking about the fucking New York Yankees.

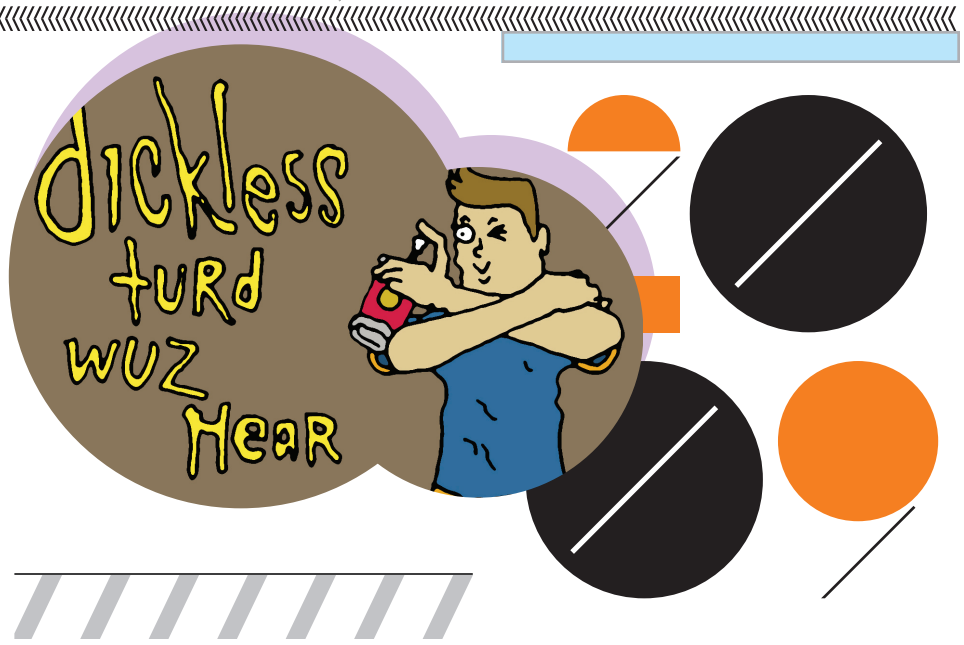
Where McLane fails constantly as the owner of the Astros is in his management of the team's farm system. McLane has developed a reputation for drafting players and NOT SIGNING THEM. He'll pay max dollars for over the hill veterans (i.e. Miguel Tejada, Roger Clemens, Andy Pettitte, etc.) but McLane refuses to open his purse for the future of HIS baseball team. What does this suggest to me? This refusal to spend money on the future tells me that Drayton McLane, Jr. is looking to SELL THE HOUSTON ASTROS. I love propaganda.

The Runner-Up award goes to the Houston Texans for raising ticket prices by 3.7% in an economic downturn just because they can.

WORST GRAFFITI FLAW

LACK OF CREATIVITY
BY 86

HOUSTON'S LOCAL GRAFF SCENE is a stagnant swamp. Seems like we have dozens of kids seeking out the Montrose as a Houston Graff mecca, only to provide it with sloppy tags plaguing the streets, just an eyesore nobody can read. Tell yall right now mayne, keep it simple, keep it straight. Who'z yalls audience? The old skool Graff heads? You aint stackin numbers in their books if yo shit aint readable. The general public? The hardest audience to obtain? They're repelled by scrawl and lack of creative display. Alot of trill-ass artists that have held down (and held together) the Houston Graff game for a long time, that have put their souls into their werk only to be thrown in the cesspool of the local Graff populous. Seems like your just waiting for the next sanarchipot by someone that has already put in madd werk. Should think bout dat fo ya hit tha streets next time, playboy. Lack of creativity leads to the city offering us nothing. Almost no legal walls, limited businesses want their walls painted, and no city provided spots to speak of, as there are in so many other cities. Mickey Phoenix at Calico T-shirts is still one of the few who's faith remains. Graff started to improve the glum outlook of the community... At the end of the line, tagger or piecer, baby it's gotta look good. Do it big or don't do it at all, mayne...



WORST CLOSED DOOR IN HOUSTON

KPFT 90.1
BY JEROD SMITH

IN HIS COSMIC COWBOY DAYS in the mid 70's, my father helped turn a 1915 house into something suitable out of which to broadcast radio. The Mighty 90 at 419 Lovett quickly became the heart of the Montrose where you could just walk right in and get anything you want. And because KPFT has given us a diversity of ideas, a wide range of music, and a sense of community, my family has given our time, energy, and money to KPFT whenever we could. When they first began broadcasting in 1970, my mother was there cold-calling for donations (as it was done then). As a teenager in the 80's, I spent a good amount of time hanging out with DJs and answering phones during fund drives. I saw all sorts of people come in off the street seeking shelter or the company of others like themselves.

Even though KPFT had dealt with violent acts perpetrated against them by nutjobs from the get-go (e.g. KKK dynamited their transmitter twice, arsonists burned their record storage, a conspiracy theorist brandished a shotgun on their property), it was not until 2007, when a bullet pierced a window and came within inches of hitting a radio host, that their open-door policy came to a close. I have encountered their new security measures first hand a couple of times in the past year. Introducing a newly arrived resident to the more culturally relevant establishments of our fair city, we were admitted entry after being screened by the intercom and camera, regulated to a 8' x 8' section of the lobby with 3 pair of eyes scanning our every movement, and interviewed as to our purpose. We left with some bumper stickers. While distributing flyers throughout the neighborhood inviting all-comers to a National Night Out event down the street, I tried to use the opportunity to show my son the radio station his grandfather helped build. As far as we got was passing a flyer through a door that would possibly be posted on a bulletin board that few eyes would ever see.

Duane Bradley, KPFT General Manager, had recognized the philosophical dilemma in instituting the closed-door policy. I would never want a hair on any of the staff members' or volunteers' heads come to any harm, but, in light of such progress as an African-American president and a lesbian mayor, I think it's high time for KPFT to let the community back in. Mr. Bradley, open that damn door!

WORST TIMING FOR A MAJOR POLITICAL ANNOUNCEMENT

BILL WHITE
BY M. MARTIN

HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE had signed up to attend departing mayor Bill White's formal announcement for a run at the Governor's Mansion when a very strange thing happened: Large white flakes of a mysterious substance later identified as frozen water--sometime referred to as "snow"-- began to fall from the sky. Perhaps as much as half an inch of this mysterious substance accumulated on the ground, paralyzing the city and setting off a wave of hysteria, as citizens everywhere attempted to create oblong snowballs and call then snow men. Even so, a few hardy souls showed up anyway to watch



WORST OF HOUSTON ANARCHISTS - *ALMOST ALL OF THEM*

BY SHELBY HOHL

IF YOU ARE STILL RETAINING your "anarchistic" and "anti-authoritarian" credo of "Fuck the system, bring it all down, destroy everything", you obviously haven't learned anything about anarchy. Being anti-authoritarian means that if "The Man" or "The Oppressor", whoever that may be, is dishing out something to you, you question their intentions and motives, and bring light to the discrepancies. Well, news flash, "Authority" these days makes a bigger mess than any Anarchist ever could or will. "The Man" is dropping all of his old techno-shit into areas of India and the rest of the world deemed environmentally hopeless. BIG FUCKING MESS. If you were truly "anti-insert here", you would be the guy helping clean up at the end of the party, you'd be the guy not encouraging the destruction of locally-owned business' by writing all over everything (POOR grafitti at that!) or throwing your beer bottles everywhere you stand. Some PERFECT examples of Anarchy (in its TRUE anti-authority form) are folks like Fernando from Cop Warmth and Tom from DISSENT. These two cats make a bigger mess, and bring more destruction to wherever they perform or just arrive, that they could be considered health and environmental hazards. However, at the end of every DISSENT or Cop Warmth show, you will see these two picking up every shard of paper, beer bottle, or wasted flyer they or their crews have dropped. ANARCHY IS ALIVE AND WELL, JUST STEP IT UP--WE'RE MOVING INTO 2010, DOESN'T ANYONE REMEMBER DEMOLITION MAN?!

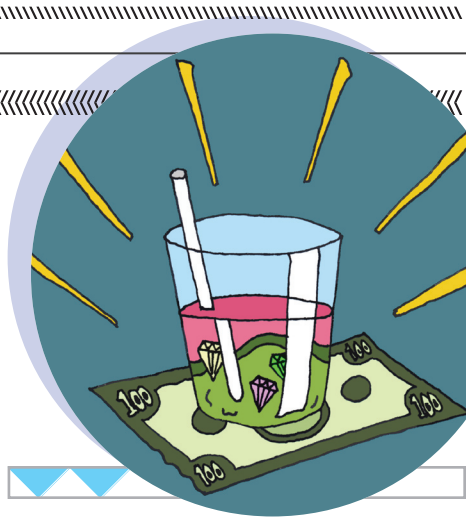


WORST EXCUSE FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

THE WASHINGTON WAVE

BY TISH STRINGER

HOUSTON HAS the worst public transportation system of any major US city. We need more bus routes, light rail routes, commuter options and most of all, safe bicycling options. Instead of the above we now have a new "Jitney" service running up and down Washington to shuttle drunk suburban socialites from one new crappy bar to another. What is this, The Philippines? If you are going to call it a Jitney, at least have the balls to decorate the thing like a proper jitney instead of a bus for special kids; then again, those douchebags infesting Washington these days are pretty "special".



WORST WAY TO SPEND YOUR DAY

WAITING IN LINE AT A HOUSTON DPS OFFICE

BY ANDREA AFRA

SHOW ME THE EFFICIENCY of your locally operated DPS facilities and I'll show you what your citizens are made of. If this is the case, then Houston is made up of a spineless people with endless spare time and patience. I think if there was a way to sell your soul instead of having to stand in line waiting for a new driver's license, Joel Osteen's congregation would triple in size. The fact that there is not a centralized DPS location is the first blatant symbol of the system's failure to meet our needs. Two of the seven local DPS offices are currently closed at the time of writing this and not one of the locations are ever fully or competently staffed to serve the population. A simple phone-in appointment hotline, much like the one the expedited passport office provides, would allow one to set a convenient time and date to show up without having to take a paper number and sit for hours, dignity slowly waning, in the institutional plastic torture devices they call 'chairs', hoping above all hopes that the Rapture takes place and numbers 18 through 184 ahead of you are all conservative Protesants.

PLEASE file a complaint about DPS: www.survey.utexas.edu/txdps/

DPS Customer Relations Representatives: Mimzie.Herklotz@txdps.state.tx.us

(512) 424-2600

WORST DRINK PRICES

HOUSE OF BLUES

BY OMAR AFRA

21 BUCKS FOR 2 DRINKS. Fuck off. I don't care who is playing.

WORST DELIVERER OF CHANGE AS PROMISED BY A HARRIS COUNTY ELECTED OFFICIAL - *ADRIAN GARCIA*

BY ROB BLOCK

ADRIAN GARCIA ran for Harris County Sheriff as a reform candidate, promising to shake up the system and end the continuing scandals and human rights abuses that had been endemic under the administration of his opponent Tommy Thomas. He promised professionalism and respect. Garcia said he would review Thomas' plan to join the 287(g) agreement with the federal government, an agreement made famous by Joe Arpaio of Phoenix Arizona, that allows local enforcement to enforce immigration law, and local taxpayers to foot the bill for a federal responsibility. Garcia's implication that he would review the program and was not excited about it lead immigrant rights advocates to volunteer heavily and block walk for his campaign. Once elected, Garcia's review of the 287(g) program resulted in his recommendation to the Harris County Commissioners to approve the program for a 3 year contract, which they did by a vote of 4 to 1. This program is such a bad idea that you don't have to look very far to find someone who will speak out against it. Care to comment Chief of Police Harold Hurtt? "Immigration enforcement by local police is counterproductive to community policing efforts. It undermines the trust and cooperation of immigrant communities, could lead to charges of racial profiling, and increases our response time to urgent calls for service," A statement Hurtt made in Washington DC while serving as Houston's chief of police.

Beyond championing racial profiling and anti-immigrant hysteria, Garcia is proposing the construction of a new jail with more than 2,000 beds at the cost of more than a quarter billion dollars (in the middle of a recession, which does not include the costs to staff it). Such a proposal was one of the propositions presented to harris county voter in 2007 and it was the only one of six to be voted down.

Tommy Thomas was clearly a terrible human being; the Harris County jails under his watch were found to be unconstitutional for systematic violations of the human rights of folks locked up there, his systematic surveillance and harassment of the Ibarra brothers resulted in a 1.7 million dollar settlement (our tax dollars) being paid out to them for unlawful arrest and destruction of property. So far, Adrian Garcia has largely avoided systematic violations of human rights and lawsuits, but it would be great if he could set the bar a little higher to include not pandering to racists and not trying to build new jails when the voters had explicitly said they don't want that.



WORST OF HOUSTON MASS TRANSIT SYSTEMS

BICYCLE LANES

BY SHELBY HOHL

THIS, TO SOME, may seem like a dead horse, however it's becoming dead or injured kids and pedestrians. In FPH July 2009, Shiraz Ahmed wrote a glorious article detailing the availability of mass transit via bicycles. In the article Ahmed states, "...1,200 cyclists commute to the Texas Medical Center everyday. Between 1998 and 2000, over a fourth of Texas's bicycle crashes occurred in and around Houston." This has not changed, as just this morning I was notified that a friend of mine had been hospitalized by a garbage truck in the Montrose area of Houston. Now, correct me if I'm wrong but, one thing we all live/move into the downtown/Montrose area for is an easier, less carbon-based commute to work or any destination, right? However, all I see happening is Mandell, near the West University area, under heavy construction for the last several months (and NO other streets). I hope they have Bike Lane paint in the back of all of those

WORST MIXED METAPHORS
CONGRESSMAN TED POE
BY HARBEER SANDHU

CONGRESSMAN TED POE likes to deny the existence of climate change by reading whole Newsweek articles (from 1974) that told of the oncoming Ice Age. He also draws specious comparisons between everybody's favorite jerk (and we're not saying he's not a jerk), Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and carbon dioxide.

"The whole world has been watching what has taken place in Copenhagen, Denmark last week and this week. All the talk is about climate change and how man is affecting the climate," Poe speechified in Congress on December 14, "but what we need in this world is a climate change in Iran. That's right. We need to change the atmosphere in Iran with what has taken place with the little man from the desert, Ahmadinejad...President Ahmedinijad is the pollution of the world, and we need change of climate in Iran." Poe actually flubbed his speech at one point--he tripped over his own innuendo and explicitly called for "regime change...in... Iran..." Don't you think we've already bitten off more than we can chew, Congressman?

WORST CELL SERVICE PROVIDER
AT&T
BY MILLS MCCOIN

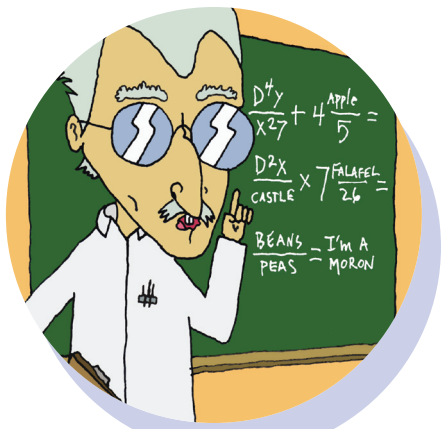
THE IPHONE MAY BE SIMPLE to use and has countless applications that do everything from counting calories to making obnoxious farting noises. However, 50% of the time in Houston, my iPhone is simply a useless, streamlined work of art sitting in the cup holder of my car. Countless times I have driven through Memorial Park, which is indeed a wooded oasis. However, it's location, smack dab in the middle of a large metro area, leads me to believe that cell service should be pristine. Yet I find myself constantly asking, "Can you hear me now?" Those 3 beeps are my answer. "Call failed." My iPhone appears to be proud of itself and now I'm just an idiot driving around talking to no one. I'd like to trap the CEO of AT&T Wireless on the 9th green of Memorial Park and stone him with golf balls and bask in his futile calls for help. Do you think there's an app for that?

WORST LAST-MINUTE-THREE-POINTER ATTEMPT
US CONGRESSMAN JOHN CULBERSON
BY HARBEER SANDHU

CONGRESSMAN JOHN CULBERSON, a long-time opponent of the Metro light rail University Line, made a last ditch effort to derail the train construction by sending a 14-page letter saying he is convinced that Metro can't afford it to the Federal Transit Authority on December 8. Fortunately, the FTA informed Metro less than a week later that plan was chugging along into the Preliminary Engineering phase. The University line will stretch from the UH/TSU area to the Galleria and connect with the Main Street line.

WORST PROFESSOR
PROFESSOR O'BRIEN IN THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON HISTORY DPT
BY WILL BARRETT

THE WORST PROFESSOR in the entire city of Houston is Thomas O'Brien in the University of Houston History department. At first glance, he might appear to be a valuable asset to the university -- a tenured Moore's professor who teaches multiple courses on topics such as Western Civilization, the History of the CIA in the Third World, and Pirates and Smugglers. He would truly be a great educator if it weren't for the fact that he uses his position to extort money from his undergraduate students. He clearly violates the code of ethics for both university faculty and Texas government employees by requiring not only that each student buy his book, but that they use that book (or pay a $40 fee) to gain access to his quizzes. Every student at UH pays a sizeable technology fee for the WebCT infastructure already, but O'Brien has been charging this surreptitious backdoor fee to guarantee astronomical royalty revenue for years now. His tenured status and closeness with those in the Liberal Arts and Social Science College has allowed him to get away with this, despite his explicit violation of numerous statutory codes. The best efforts of his students, the Student Government, and other professors have gone unheard. His unethical behaviors have reverberated throughout the university and stained the institution for all that educate and attend. For charging corrupt tribute payments for educational access, Thomas O'Brien is not only a scumbag, slimeball, and embarassment to UH, but 2009's Worst Professor in Houston.



City of Houston trucks parked all over the white, newly-paved Richmond/Mandell intersection. Looking down Westheimer near the Dunlavy intersection, you have rows of cars practically unmoved, and parked on the inbound lane of traffic spanning from Hazard all the way to Mandell. I had actually forgotten that Westheimer was four lanes! Last time a car was left unattended where the owners OBVIOUSLY had no intention of moving it, the vehicle was towed under the guise of "abandonment". Rosenkavalier, #1, and all the rest of you on that side of Westheimer that allow this are, in fact, removing the only area cyclists would potentially have to ride if they needed to take to the street. REMEMBER, it is technically illegal for cyclists to ride on the sidewalk. Richmond is what, 6 lanes?! Sounds like a great place for a bike lane if you ask me! West Alabama, a lane in the middle of the road so the Admiral Linen Co. can make comfortable 3-point turns. Nice. Don't you think that lane would serve a greater purpose being split into two opposing bike lanes? With all the changes being made to our road and transit system on our dime, one would like to think that our "progressive" city would move towards catering to a reduction of a carbon footprint. We need cyclists in our city like asthma needs an inhaler. We have a horribly polluted "skyline" as a result of our ports, we push for "BIGGER" things in Texas, including vehicles, meaning more Hummers and F350s. If you have any conscious or intelligence AT ALL, you will beg for cyclists to ensure your children and grandchildren don't come out with 3 arms, 9 eyes, and respiratory infections. We're your only hope.

WORST PAD THAI
KHUN KHAY THAI CAFÉ
BY OMAR AFRA

MAYONNAISE IN PAD THAI? No bueno. This re-invention of The Golden Room on Montrose focuses on 'fast food Thai' and they knock it out of the park on many dishes including the mock duck. But the Pad Thai is an exercise in expedience and mayonnaisey creamy mess. Think Ramen noodles with a hefty helping of Hellman's. Yuck.

WORST COLLABORATION BY A REAL ESTATE AGENCY & CORPORATE GIANT TO MAKE HOUSTON UGLY
WEINGARTEN REALTY AND BARNES & NOBEL BOOKSTORE
BY ROB BLOCK

WEINGARTEN REALTY owns approximately 51% of Houston, which makes them feel like they can be total jerks to everyone else that lives here. They own both the River Oaks Shopping Center, and the Alabama theater, both built in the 1930's and examples of Art-Deco style that was popular at the time. Despite being some of the only examples of this architectural history of the city and country, Weingarten seems to be trying pretty hard to get them both demolished and turned into strip malls. When the Alabama theater closed in the eighties, it was eventually refurbished by Book-Stop, which was bought out by Barnes and Noble. This year, Weingarten ripped down part of the river oaks shopping center to build a new Barnes and Noble store. Barnes and Noble then decided to close the Bookstop inside the Alabama theater, and open up in their new building. While the Alabama location had the problem of being a unique and creative adaptation of a historical building that preserves Houston's history, The new location at Shepherd and West Gray has the asset of looking like a every other Barnes and Noble anywhere in the world, that is, a large box. Bit by bit, Weingarten will continue in their noble mission to make the whole city look like a giant strip mall.

WORST BAG OF SHIT AWARDS PROCESS - *94.5 BUZZ AWARDS*
BY OMAR AFRA

THIS AWARDS LIST is rife with a Who's Who of shit mook rock bands. The nominations reads like the weekly schedule at Scout bar which is coincidentally the place which hosts the awards ceremony. Band names like 'Saturate', 'Negative 263', and '38 Caliber Hero' scar the ballot.

STATE OF

DISUNION

by M. MARTIN | IMAGE BY CHOON HIONG

IN JANUARY OF 2010, BARACK OBAMA WILL DELIVER HIS FIRST STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS. FOR VARIOUS REASONS IT WILL BE, FOR MUCH OF THE AUDIENCE, A SOMBER OCCASION.

IN PARTICULAR, anyone who supported Obama's candidacy in hope that he represented leadership on behalf of real change will have good reason to be bitterly disappointed. Those who supported him as the least of several evils will have less cause for disappointment, but not much. At this point, the Obama Presidency appears to be the barest minimum course correction required to prevent the worst possible disasters that could result from the unmitigated disaster of the president who preceded him.

However, those who rejected and continue to reject Obama's legitimacy out of hand should rejoice. Obama's cautious incrementalism, outright abandonment of progressives, and even more outright capitulation to conservatives have given the Republican minority party far better odds going into the mid-term elections than they have any right to expect. Poll after poll shows the reactionary Right "fired up and ready to go" while progressives and left-leaning independents doubt they'll even bother voting. This sentiment is especially strong among the first time and returning voters who — at least temporarily — swelled the ranks of the Democratic Party.

Who can blame them? They poured their hearts, their souls, and their dollars into the idea of Barack Obama....and all they got was a lousy T-shirt.

As we go into Obama's first anniversary as a sitting president dreading the possible return to power by the GOP, the temptation toward disillusioned withdrawal is great. But I believe the need is even greater to find a way past that disillusionment. Those who participated at any level in the grass-roots movement to elect Barack Obama as president have plenty of reason to feel disillusionment and remorse, but they also have much cause for ongoing pride — because they did make a difference... and they still can.

Let there be no mistake about this: the less than 1% of this country's population that controls more than 90% of it's wealth can and does influence the outcome of this country's electoral process. Let there also be no mistaken belief that these power brokers intended for Barack Obama to become President. Anyone who believes that has either conveniently forgotten the "Perils of Pauline" nature of Obama's candidacy or is willing to believe in conspiracies of supernatural scope and power. Obama became President in spite of the "Powers That Be", not because of them....in no small measure as a consequence of Internet-fueled grassroots progressive activism. But the gratitude of politicians is not much different from the gratitude of princes. Once elected, Obama was free to pursue whatever agenda he pleased. That agenda presently seems to be the pursuit of the same empty dream of empire and militarism that deluded George W. Bush.

Given the demonstrated power of the "Netroots" and given the disappointing results so far of the application of that power, what conclusions are there to be drawn... and what constitutes a logical course of action? Giving up is not an option. However skillfully Obama may've appropriated the anxieties and urgencies felt in this country, he did not invent them. This country and the civilization it leads are in a state of extraordinary peril. Anyone who plans to be alive or have children that will be alive in the mid to late 21st century— and has any care for the quality of that life— has an obligation to act. But first and foremost, they have an obligation to pick the scope and appropriate theater for their actions.

In view of this last election cycle and its results, it seems increasingly evident that "appropriate theater" is no longer national public policy. There is too much inertia and resistance to change at the national level, too little commitment to change on the part of national political figures. Even those who enter office with some thought of challenging the status quo, as Obama seemed prepared to do, are soon worn down by the immense and thankless effort of changing anything. But also, there is also too little commitment to common purposes and values in the country at large. A common trope in Obama speeches is the idea of "perfecting our union" — but in reality, after half a century of every possible social, cultural, racial, and religious difference being exploited for short-term political gain, there is neither union nor unity. Getting people to agree in opinion polls that the country is going the wrong way is easy; getting agreement on what constitutes the "right way" is almost impossible.

Perhaps it is time to stop trying.

The agrarian republic blueprinted in the U.S. Constitution has been gone a long time, although what's left of it is used as a convenient facade by the corporatist industrial oligarchy that took its place. Although this country was ethnically and culturally diverse from its inception (far more than "nativist" bigots like Lou Dobbs and Sarah Palin will ever be informed enough to admit), it at least formerly shared a common commitment to rule of law and the responsibility of citizens. That's gone now. What binds this semblance of a country together is greed, self-interest and complacency. The corporate ownership class buys off the rest of us by making sure there are just enough discounted wide-screen TVs in just enough Walmarts that just enough Americans will accept with indifference the homeless and sick and abused among us — or worse, accept the insidious notion that their misfortune is somehow their own fault. The misfortune sewn abroad by our rulers is accepted with even greater complacency, as any close examination of the lies used to justify wars of conquest becomes a de facto act of treason.

It's time to give up on the idea that America as a nation can be reformed, much less "perfected". Barack Obama was our last, best hope to halt the slide into corporate fascism that had accelerated into a freefall plunge under Bush — but he wasn't good enough, and now he's a "War President", too. The disease of empire has infected the American body politic. Whether or not the disease might've once been curable is now besides the point. All that now can be done is to let the disease runs its course... and do what can be done to limit the damage. If history teaches us anything, it is that empires inevitably overextend themselves and fail, leaving the nations and communities formerly under their dominion free to build anew. The United States is not exempt from that logic. This is not a call for the dismantlement of the United States (paradoxically, only those on the far Right even seem to believe such calls necessary), merely a recognition that our national political institutions are in a state of failure.

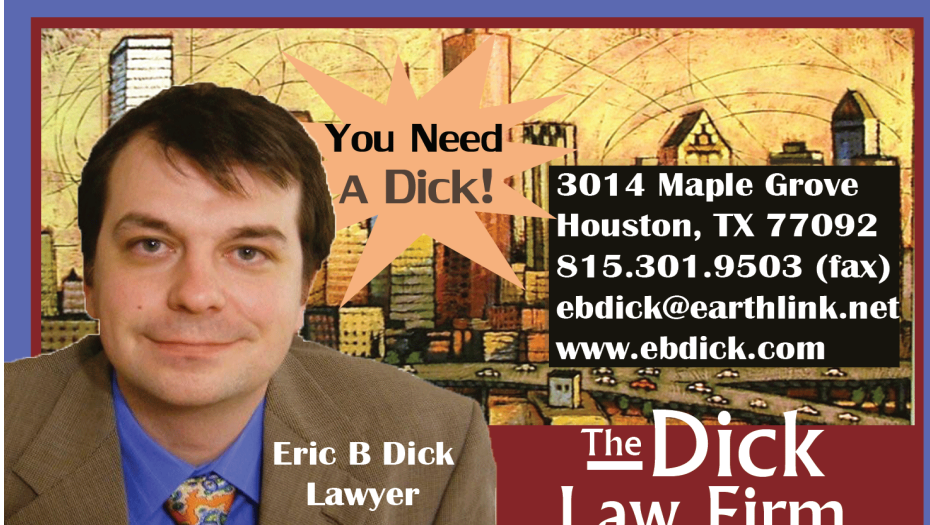
Those who believed passionately in Obama's candidacy of change should not be disheartened by this failure, nor should they give up on the idea that they can make their world a better place. What they should do, I think, is focus their energies and commitment within their own communities and their own states. Work together but work locally, and take advantage of modern communications technology to coordinate their efforts. In so doing, they should assume the failure extends to national political parties, and resist the unrealistic assumption that "third parties" (Greens, Libertarians, whatever) can be elevated into a credible alternatives without falling prey to the same shortcomings and the corruption by corporatist special interests. What is called for is not a party, but a movement.

This is work that can be begun right now, in any community that has the will and the vision to carry it out. This country is in a terrible state of disunion, distrust, and disarray. But it is no less possible than at any time since America began to build from this disunion toward a more human and humane and just society. Let me conclude by wishing to all a happy new year and a happy new decade — and, because it is certainly not too late to do so — wish to all of humankind a truly new and better millennium. **FPH**



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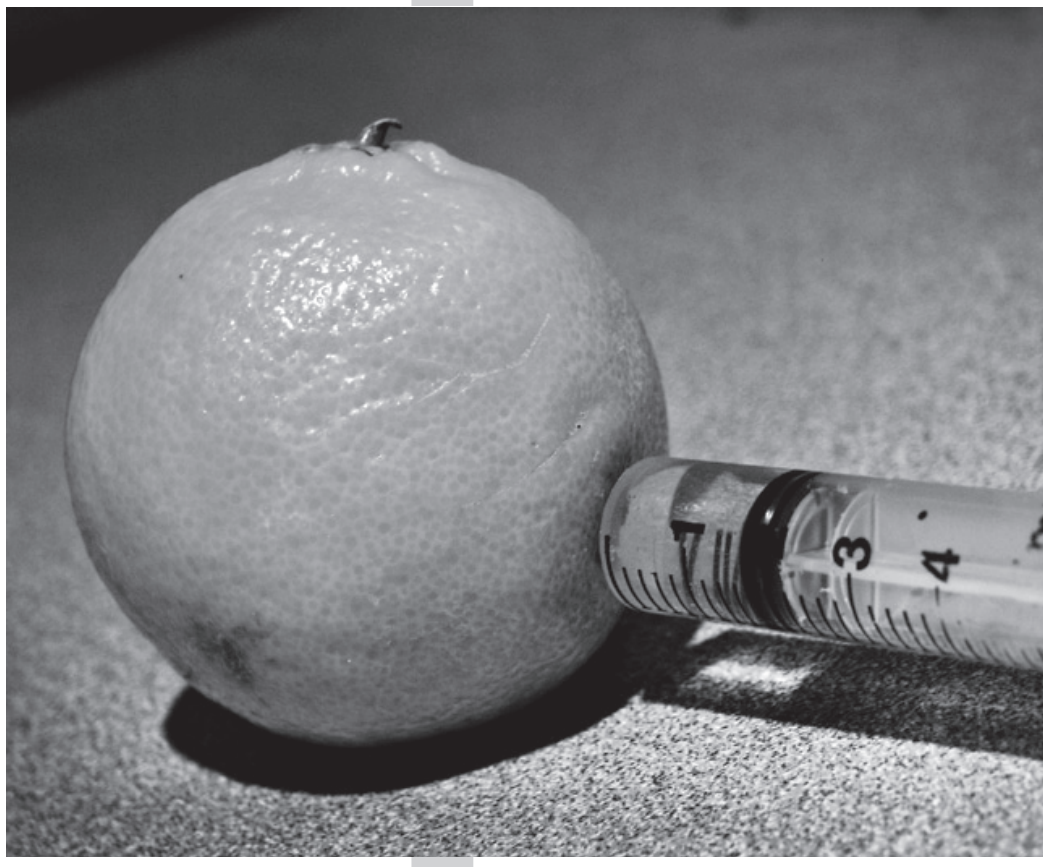
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THE ORGANIC REVOLUTION

by RONNIE CUMMINS | PHOTO BY SERGE NIKIFOROV

BEYOND THE GLOOM AND DOOM OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS, THERE LIES A POWERFUL AND REGENERATIVE GRASSROOTS SOLUTION: ORGANIC FOOD, FARMING, AND RANCHING. EVEN AS POLITICIANS AND THE POWERFUL FOSSIL FUEL LOBBY DRAG THEIR HEELS AND REFUSE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT WE HAVE ABOUT TEN YEARS LEFT OF "BUSINESS AS USUAL" BEFORE WE IRREVERSIBLY DESTROY THE CLIMATE AND OURSELVES, THERE IS A POWERFUL, THOUGH LARGELY UNRECOGNIZED, LIFE-FORCE SPREADING ITS ROOTS UNDERGROUND.



MILLIONS OF ORGANIC FARMERS, ranchers, conservationists, and backyard gardeners (supported by millions of organic consumers) are demonstrating that we can build a healthy alternative to industrial agriculture and Food Inc. Our growing organic movement is proving that we can not only feed the world with healthy food, but also reverse global warming, by capturing and sequestering billions of tons of climate-destabilizing greenhouse gases in the soil, through plant photosynthesis, composting, cover crops, rotational grazing, wetlands preservation, and reforestation.

The heretofore unpublicized "good news" on climate change, according to the Rodale Institute and other soil scientists, is that transitioning from chemical, water, and energy-intensive industrial agriculture practices to organic farming and ranching on the world's 3.5 billion acres of farmland and 8.2 billion acres of pasture or rangeland can sequester 7,000 pounds per acre of climate-destabilizing CO2 every year, while nurturing healthy soils, plants, grasses, and trees that are resistant to drought, heavy rain, pests, and disease. And of course organic farms and ranches can provide us with food that is much more nutritious than industrial farms and ranches—food filled with vitamins, anti-oxidants, and essential trace minerals, free from Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs), pesticides, antibiotics, and sewage sludge.

In 2006, U.S. carbon dioxide pollution from fossil fuels (approximately 25% of the world's total) was estimated at nearly 6.5 billion tons. If a 7,000 lb/CO2/ac/year sequestration rate were achieved on all 434 million acres of cropland in the United States, nearly 1.6 billion tons of carbon dioxide would be sequestered per year, mitigating close to one quarter of the country's total fossil fuel emissions. If pastures and rangelands were similarly converted to organic practices, we would literally be well on our way to reversing global warming.

But we need an organic revolution in ranching and livestock production, as well as farming and forestry. We need to drastically reduce meat overproduction (77% of all U.S. agriculture resources are devoted to raising animals or animal feed), and overconsumption (a leading cause of obesity, heart disease and cancer) and ban methane-belching factory farms. As the Rodale Institute points out, organic livestock raising practices, including rotational grazing, manure management, methane capture for biogas production, and improved feeds and feed additives, can drastically reduce livestock-related emissions and, because of the massive acreage currently devoted to livestock production (nearly 2.5 times greater than croplands), can safely sequester approximately 60% of the total greenhouse gases that humans, animals, cars, and industry are pumping out every year.

This Organic Revolution, or "Great Sequestering," made possible by a global grassroots movement with the power to transform the marketplace and public policy, is perhaps the only short-term strategy or solution at hand that can buy us the precious time we need to radically reduce energy use and greenhouse pollution and build a green economy. Although politicians and the coal and utilities industry claim that sequestration of massive carbon dioxide emissions from coal-fired power plants is on the horizon, there is little or no scientific evidence to back this up. Sequestration of CO2 in the soils of organic farms and ranches, on the other hand, is a proven fact.

Before carbon sequestering forests and grasslands were ravaged by chemical-intensive industrial agriculture (and industrial forestry), soil organic matter generally composed 6-10% of the soil volume, three to six times the 1-3% levels typical of today's industrial agriculture soils. In other words, taxpayer subsidized, chemical-based industrial agriculture, factory farms, and unrestricted grazing (along with industrial forestry) have turned the earth's soil (which still contains three times as much carbon as the entire amount of CO2 in the atmosphere) from being a climate-stabilizing carbon sink into a massive and dangerous source of global warming.

Given our escalating climate emergency, the burning question is how do we move organics in the U.S. from being the 4% alternative in the marketplace to being the norm, and organic acreage from being 1% of total cultivated land to the majority of farmland, pasture, and rangeland? The answer of course is that we must sound the alert, offer up our practical solutions and rapidly transform public consciousness and policy. But the *Via Organica*, the road to get there, will be long and arduous. The majority of Americans must not only stop buying chemical, GMO, globally sourced and so-called "natural" food, and switch to organic and more locally and regionally produced products, but we must also rise up as a political movement and change public policy. We must literally force the politicians and the corporations to put a halt to our "business as usual" destruction of the climate and public health, and instead move to an ethical and scientifically grounded policy and practice that promotes health, conservation, greenhouse gas reduction, and organic sequestration. Please join and support the Organic Consumers Association and the climate change movement www.350.org as we carry out this life or death campaign. FPH

***Ronnie Cummins** is director of the Organic Consumers Alliance. He can be reached at: ronnie@organicconsumers.org.*



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2010 NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS FOR ANNISE PARKER

BY OMAR AFRA AND, UM... FACEBOOK

Annise Parker has a full plate for 2010. Leading the nation's fourth largest city through a period of economic malaise and structural fallout will not be an easy task. The onus is on her to prove she is not Bill White light and that she is not a centrist wolf in progressive sheep's clothing. (See 'Obama') We all have our personal hopes for what Parker may or may not do. Here are just a few we gathered through the infinite magic of Facebook.



JONATHAN SENDEJO › Get the Dynamo stadium deal done! So many worse teams and teams that aren't even in the league yet are getting gorgeous new stadiums (NY Red Bulls, Philadelphia, Vancouver). If Houston loses the Dynamo, a proven, internationally respected team, they'll regret it!

MAIKERU BOSATSU › Who's Annise Parker?

ROBERT MEDELLIN › Agree with Alex...Bring back the Westheimer Street Festival!

NINA CULOTTA › More bicycle lanes... One over Waugh bridge to start!

ROBERT MEDELLIN › and for crap's sake stop developers!

JONATHAN PEREZ › bring back Westheimer street festival!

MOLLY PERMENTER › Shut down the brothels stop the sex slave trade going on around town.

BART BOYCE › Brand Houston (in bold pink) Houston: City of Peace

GEOFF WIDMIER › Help people create a sense of community by making easier to have events like the Westheimer Street Fest and the Summer Fest. Houston has the best festivals (when we have them). Not every form of recreation needs to profit Landry's. Landry's does nothing to contribute to a sense of community, but every time Houston tries to develop something they... Let Landry's build 5 more mediocre restaurants on the land. People want to leave their house for other reasons than to shop and eat. Sometimes people want to get out and see a show or enjoy the weather and not spend any money. Finally, make parking inside the loop a little more sane and less confusing, and stop towing all of our cars and giving us huge fines because we accidentally parked in front of a confusing sign (see Westheimer @ Taft area). Make Houston a place where people are more motivated to leave their houses and enjoy our great city.

DEBBIE ERICKSON › To volunteer all of my waking time to uncovering corruption at the HPD. There are more police officers in this city with only mischief hidden behind a badge.

SEAN CARROLL › I hope that Annise Parker's resolution for 2010 is to start spendin' cash. I hope she gets drunk with power and starts rolling in Hummers, building sewer lines, train stations and power grids, splurging on city-wide WiFi and building that dome over downtown that Buckminster Fuller designed.

ANDREA AFRA › With only 2.6% of the city's waste being recycled, Houston is flagrantly one of the trashiest metropolises in our country. For the sake of our planet, Mayor Parker needs to make it a priority to see this paltry percentage increase.

MIKE BERGERON › Free parking downtown.

ALEX WUKMAN › I hope that Annise Parker's resolutions for Houston include lobbying the Harris County Hospital District for a free clinic in Montrose, staffing the Metro board with people who realize that, until Houston has a large scale rail based mass transit system, the city still needs bus service. I hope that she resolves to continue increasing the amount of hike and bike trails in the city just like I hope that Mayor Parker resolves to work to strengthen the city's lackluster historic preservation ordinances.

However, I am wiling to defer those dreams if Parker resolves to work with county and state agencies to create the one thing that Harris County needs more than anything else, a Public Defender's Office. It is my deepest desire, my one true hope, that someone, somewhere in our local government will realize that the time has come for a public defender's office for Houston and Harris County.

The city needs an office that is equipped and staffed to handle not just felony defenses but misdeameanors as well. After all a first DWI is only a Class B Misdeameanor but it can ruin a life and cost just as much to defend as a Felony. FPH

MILLS McCOIN › Annise Parker's 2010 Resolutions for Houston should involve condemning Washington Avenue (as a street unfit for intelligent life), renaming the Houston Police Department (to Houston Tax Collector Department) and developing a strong incentive for businesses to begin recycling.

ANAISABEL CASTILLO › Keep being a baller, Don't wear make up if you don't want to. Don't give in!

CRYSTAL JACKSON › Don't participate in any more Wayne Douchefino reports.

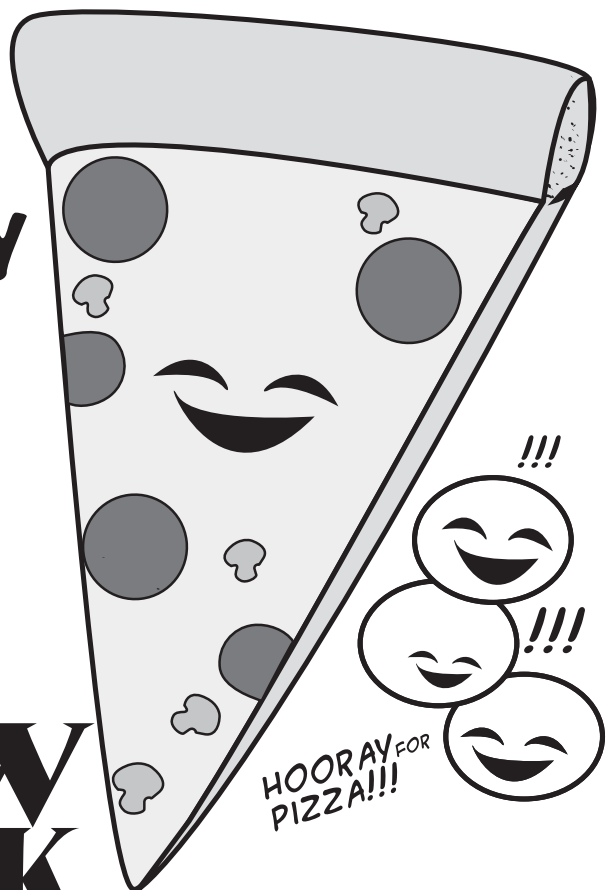
ALEX CLAVIJO › Give us back The Westheimer Street Festival

M.MARTIN › As Houston's first OPENLY gay mayor, I hope that Annise will make a resolution to frequently ask herself..... "what would Kathy Do?"

AMANDA WOLFE › Take good care of The Montrose. You know, that place where all the passionate voters showed up at the polls.

BRIGITTE ZABAK › Though cliche', my hope is to see a continued dedication to bold, progressive policies, public safety and a commitment to supporting local arts organizations. I also hope to see that declarations made in regards to the Westheimer Street Festival will be upheld - as it can be key to reviving and sustaining local business and culture in the Montrose area.

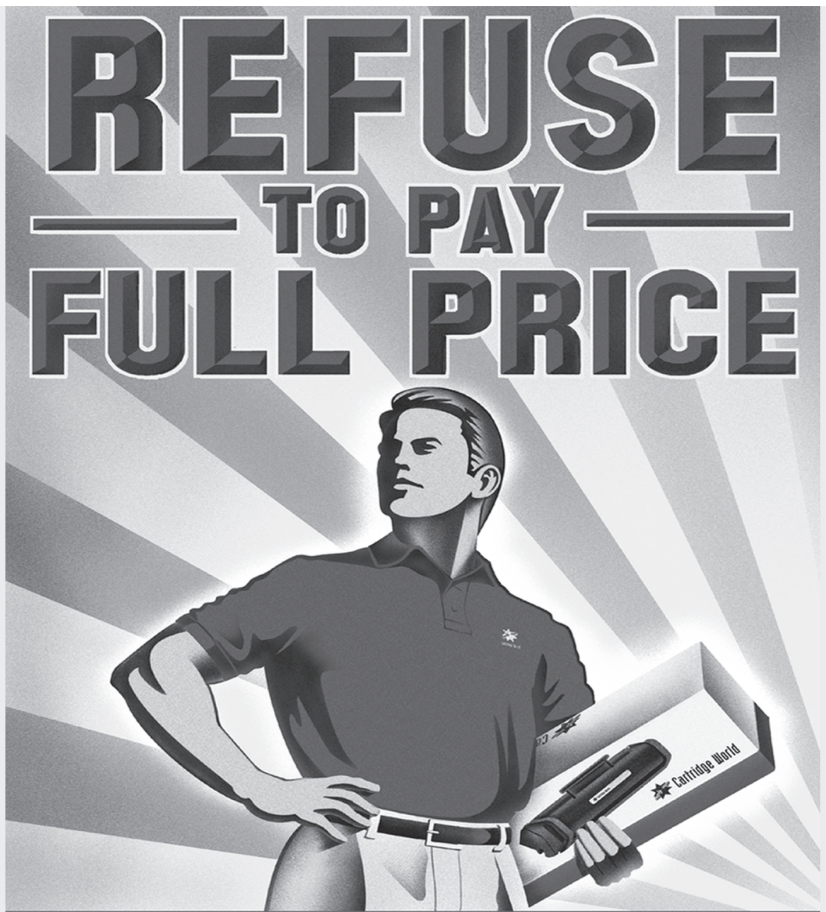
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We share free vegetarian food with the hungry every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 8:PM and Sunday 7pm on the ledge on the corner of the sidewalk in front of the Library at Smith and McKinney. Come by or contact us at: fnbhouston@riseup.net

RECESSION PUNKS

by LORENZO WOLFF

When the folks on my TV first started talking about our countries financial troubles I took a kind of guilty pleasure in it. When I see banks collapsing and retail stores dropping deeper and deeper in the red I can't help but think of the punk music that it's more than likely to cause.

THE FIRST GREAT PUNK MUSICIAN came out of our first great depression. As the stock market crashed and the jobs began to dry up Woody Guthrie picked up his trademark guitar and began a musical grassroots movement. Just like today's punk bands, he toured the country playing tiny shows for the people at the bottom of the economic food chain and built a "scene" for the dispossessed and scorned. They hadn't quite figured out the wardrobe or the hair cuts yet, but the anger and the unity was clearly there.

Three decades later, when the world economy experienced a thing called stagflation the punk movement exploded. The only lines longer than the ones at the gas pumps were the ones in front of the venues where bands like the Sex Pistols and The New York Dolls played. An entire generation of angry young people were trying to find someone who was saying what they were thinking, expressing the hopelessness that they saw around them. The lyrics had changed some and the music didn't sound too familiar, but "This Land is Our Land" and "Anarchy in The UK" have more similarities than differences. In couple years the financial world pieced itself back together and the punk movement fell apart, but not before creating a strong, believable format for the angry and confused.

It only took another six or seven years for the colossal machinery of commerce to droop and sag again. Tirelessly the lower crust picked up old guitars and leather jackets to try to articulate the way that they felt. Bands like the Dead Kennedys and Bad Brains found that the basement shows they were playing were suddenly crowded. They saw that down there underground the teenagers were grouping together. They had forgotten the words to "My Sharona"; and instead were screaming "It's time to taste/What you most fear".

Our current economic downturn hasn't generated a voice as widely recognized yet, but the anger is there. The songs are starting to rise to the surface, and the hopelessness is palpable. In the basements in Brooklyn a group of guys called The Motorcycle Industry just put out a track that could be the "Marines' Hymn" for our decades dispossessed. On "Blue Ribbon" they scream it out for us:

We got 'em right where we want 'em,
If the stocks don't rise we'll hang 'em out to dry,
I got just what I wanted,
Watch the suit and tie fall from the high-rise. **FPH**



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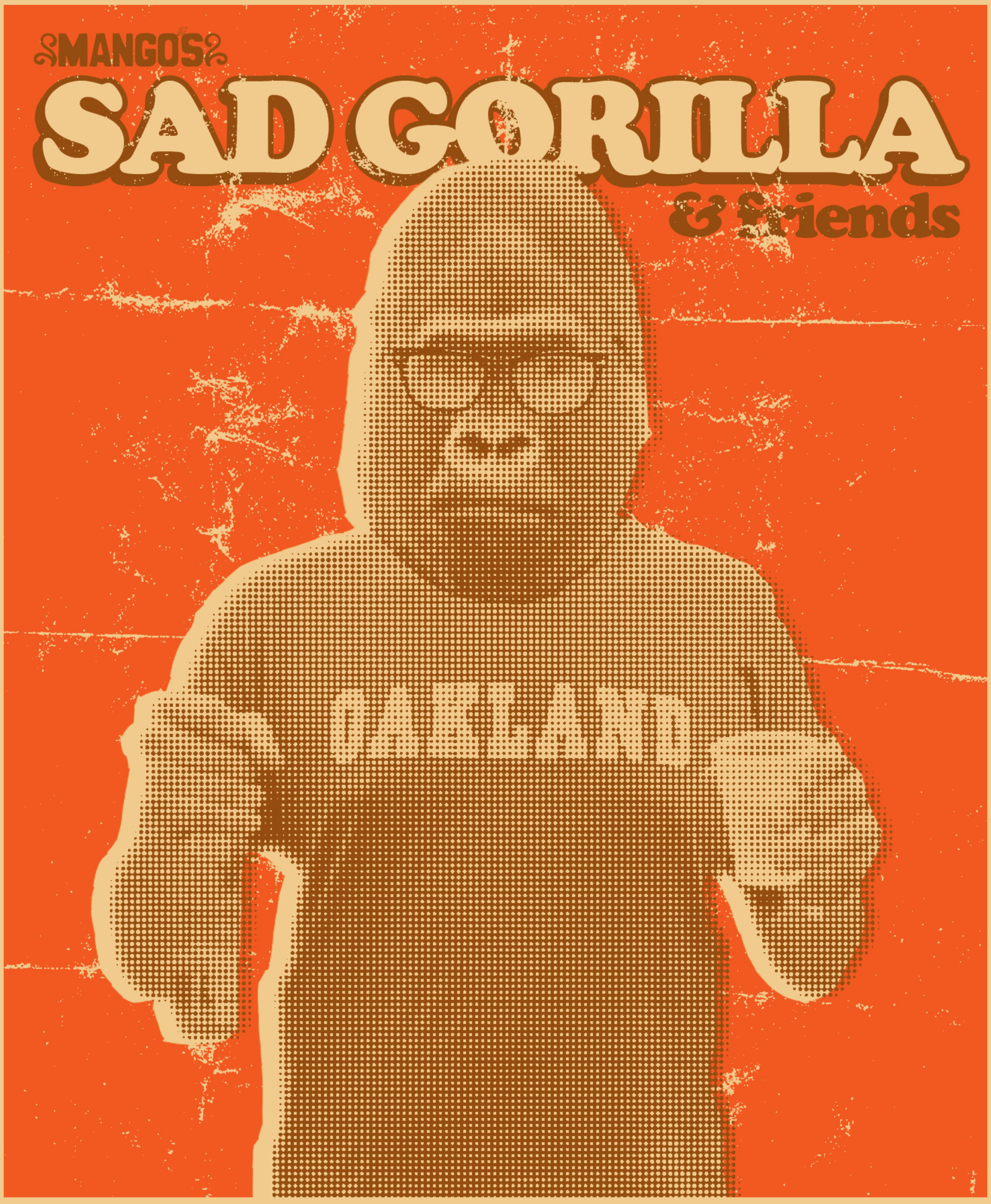
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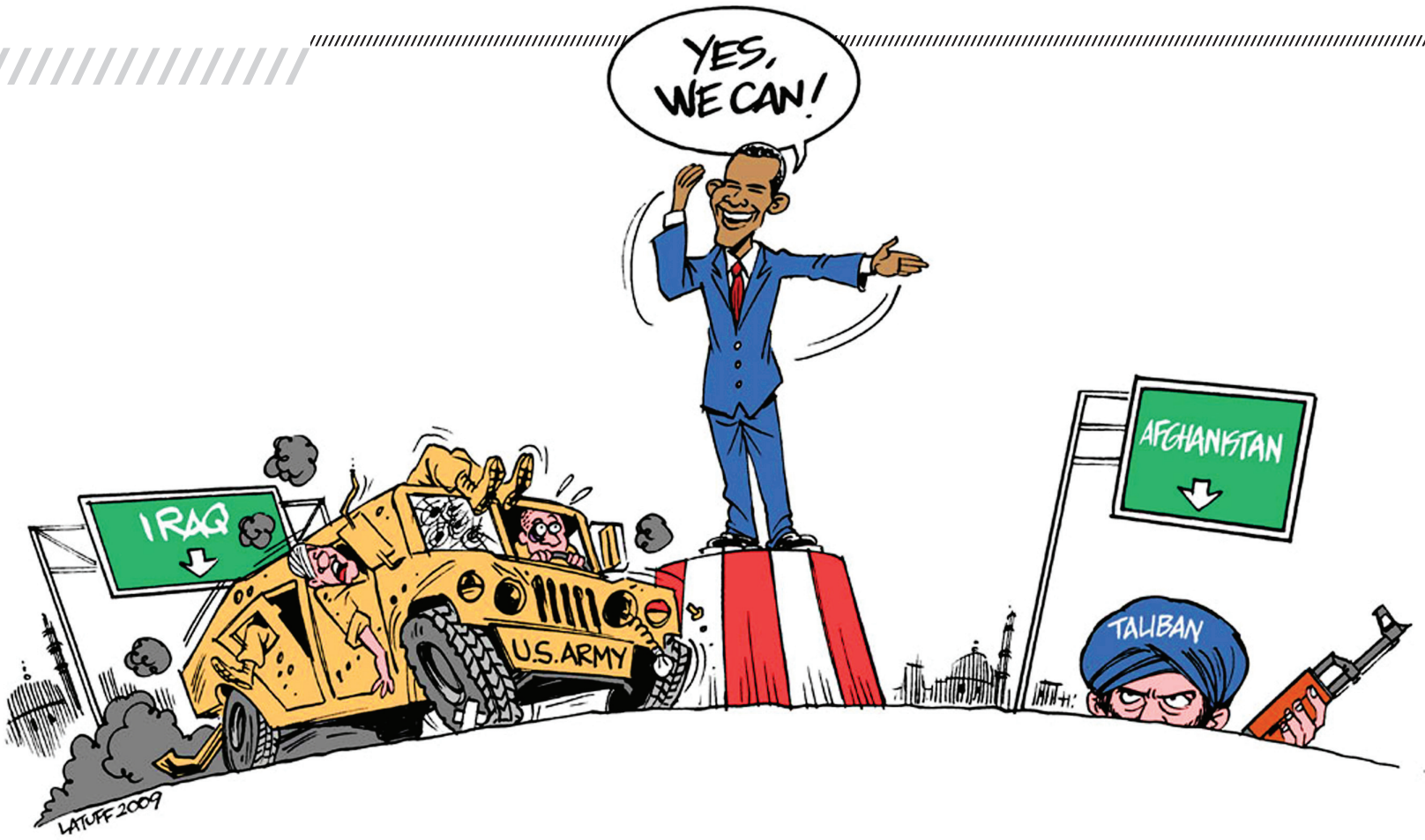
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STUNNING STATISTICS ABOUT THE WAR THAT EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW

by JEREMY SCAHILL

THE US CURRENTLY HAS 189,000 PERSONNEL IN AFGHANISTAN



A HEARING IN SEN. CLAIRE MCCASKILL'S CONTRACT OVERSIGHT SUBCOMMITTEE ON CONTRACTING IN AFGHANISTAN HAS HIGHLIGHTED SOME IMPORTANT STATISTICS THAT PROVIDE A WINDOW INTO THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION HAS PICKED UP THE BUSH-ERA WAR PRIVATIZATION BATON AND SPRINTED WITH IT.

OVERALL, CONTRACTORS NOW COMPRISE a whopping 69% of the Department of Defense's total workforce, "the highest ratio of contractors to military personnel in US history." That's not in one war zone—that's the Pentagon in its entirety.

In Afghanistan, the Obama administration blows the Bush administration out of the privatized water. According to a memo[PDF] released by McCaskill's staff,

"From June 2009 to September 2009, there was a 40% increase in Defense Department contractors in Afghanistan. During the same period, the number of armed private security contractors working for the Defense Department in Afghanistan doubled, increasing from approximately 5,000 to more than 10,000."

At present, there are 104,000 Department of Defense contractors in Afghanistan. According to a report this week from the Congressional Research Service, as a result of the coming surge of 30,000 troops in Afghanistan, there may be up to 56,000 additional contractors deployed. But here is another group of contractors that often goes unmentioned: 3,600 State Department contractors and 14,000 USAID contractors. That means that the current total US force in Afghanistan is approximately 189,000 personnel (68,000 US troops and 121,000 contractors). And remember, that's right now. And that, according to McCaskill, is a conservative estimate. A year from now, we will likely see more than 220,000 US-funded personnel on the ground in Afghanistan.

The US has spent more than $23 billion on contracts in Afghanistan since 2002. By next year, the number of contractors will have doubled since 2008 when taxpayers funded over $8 billion in Afghanistan-related contracts.

Despite the massive number of contracts and contractors in Afghanistan, oversight is utterly lacking. "The increase in Afghanistan contracts has not seen a corresponding increase in contract management and oversight," according to McCaskill's briefing paper. "In May 2009, DCMA [Defense Contract Management Agency] Director Charlie Williams told the Commission on Wartime Contracting that as many as 362 positions for Contracting Officer's Representatives (CORs) in Afghanistan were currently vacant."

A former USAID official, Michael Walsh, the former director of USAID's Office of Acquisition and Assistance and Chief Acquisition Officer, told the Commission that many USAID staff are "administering huge awards with limited knowledge of or experience with the rules and regulations." According to one USAID official, the agency is "sending too much money, too fast with too few people looking over how it is spent." As a result, the agency does not "know … where the money is going."

The Obama administration is continuing the Bush-era policy of hiring contractors to oversee contractors. According to the McCaskill memo:

In Afghanistan, USAID is relying on contractors to provide oversight of its large reconstruction and development projects. According to information provided to the Subcommittee, International Relief and Development (IRD) was awarded a five-year contract in 2006 to oversee the $1.4 billion infrastructure contract awarded to a joint venture of the Louis Berger Group and Black and Veatch Special Projects. USAID has also awarded a contract Checci and Company to provide support for contracts in Afghanistan.

The private security industry and the US government have pointed to the Synchronized Predeployment and Operational Tracker(SPOT) as evidence of greater government oversight of contractor activities. But McCaskill's subcommittee found that system utterly lacking, stating: "The Subcommittee obtained current SPOT data showing that there are currently 1,123 State Department contractors and no USAID contractors working in Afghanistan." Remember, there are officially 14,000 USAID contractors and the official monitoring and tracking system found none of these people and less than half of the State Department contractors.

As for waste and abuse, the subcommittee says that the Defense Contract Audit Agency identified more than $950 million in questioned and unsupported costs submitted by Defense Department contracts for work in Afghanistan. That's 16% of the total contract dollars reviewed. **FPH**

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