

TCH

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SEPTEMBER 2009 | ISSUE 107

JUST ANOTHER TAPEWORM

SUMMER FEST RE-CAP

ELECTRIC CARS IN HOUSTON

INTERVIEW: MIKE HARDIN

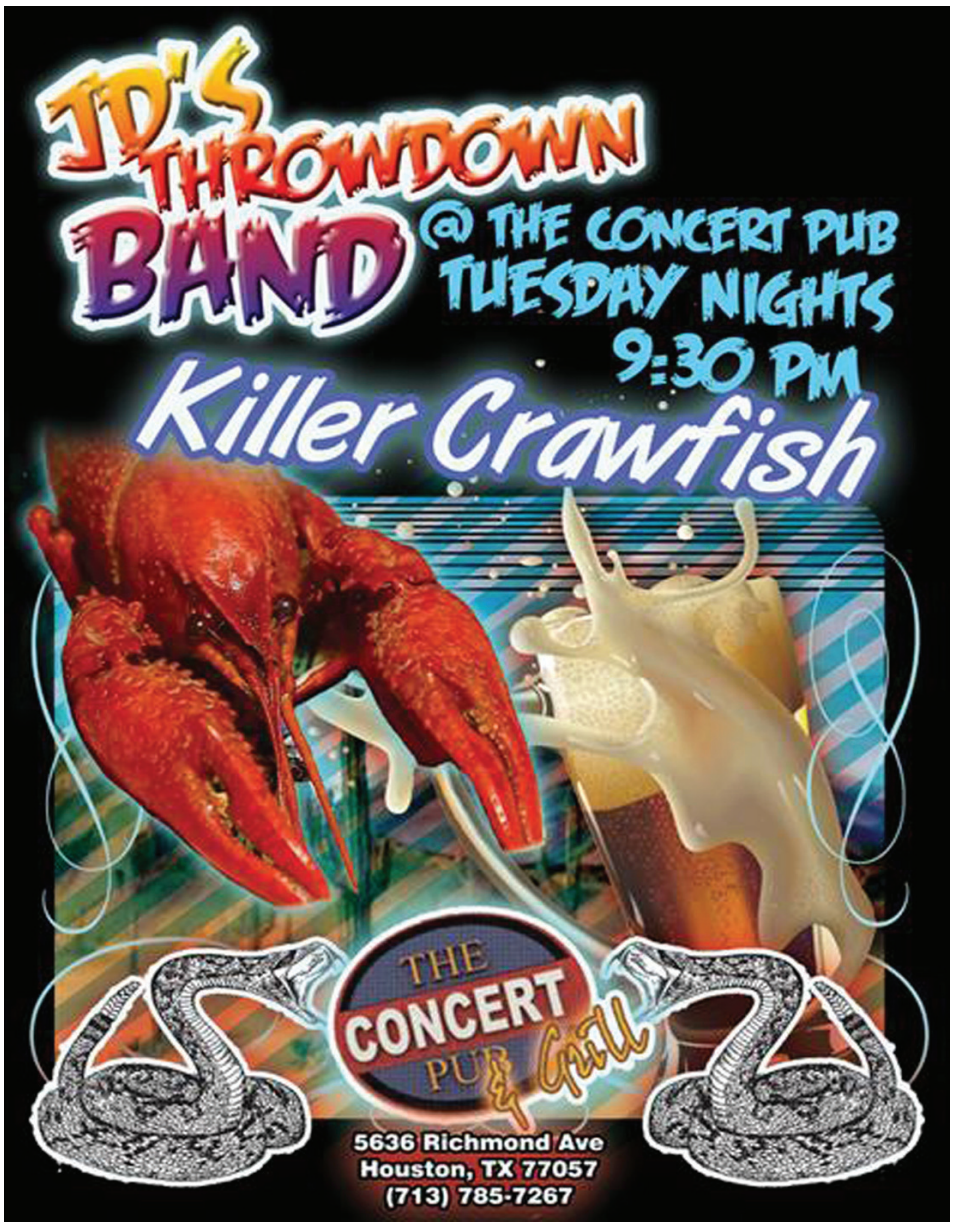
9/11 REASONABLE DOUBTS REVISITED

HELL CITY KINGS

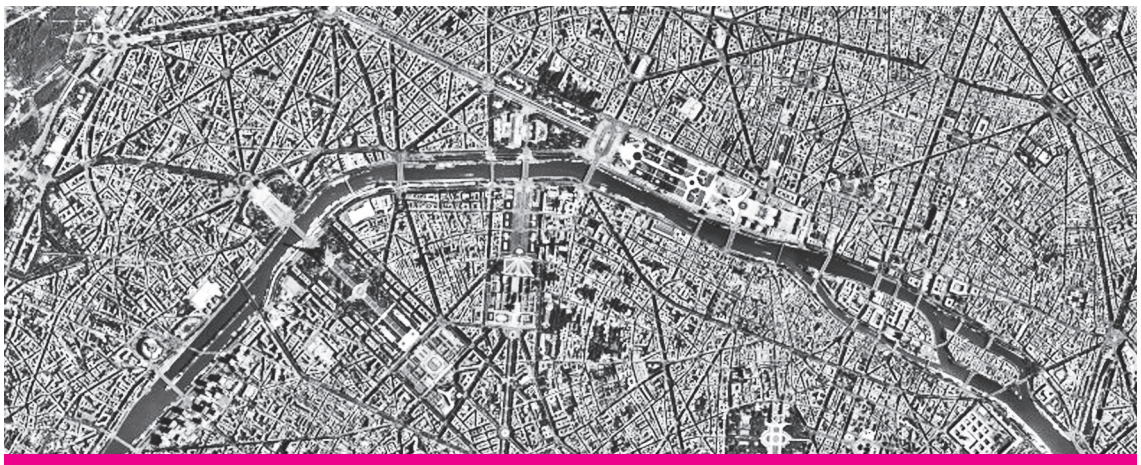

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9/5
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9/11
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9/14
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

FEEL FREE TO TAKE US SERIOUSLY

THANKS EVERYBODY. SUMMER FEST WAS INCREDIBLE. PEOPLE KEEP THANKING ME BUT THE LIST IS LONG ON WHOM I WANT TO THANK:

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GOD BLESS YOU ALL.

IF I FORGOT ANYONE, IT'S BECAUSE I AM UNGRATEFUL. AND LAZY.

WORD ON THE NEXT FESTIVAL SOON...

ART SHOWS THIS MONTH

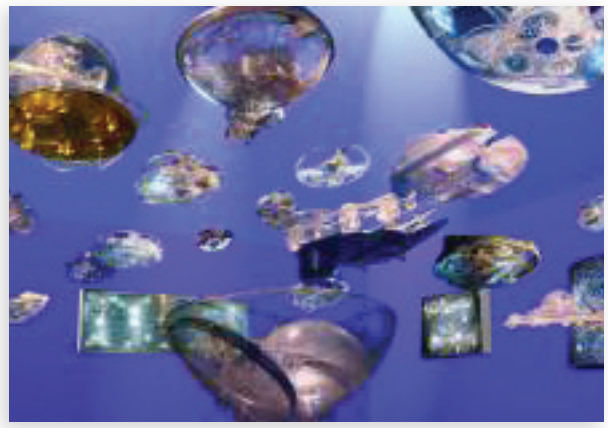
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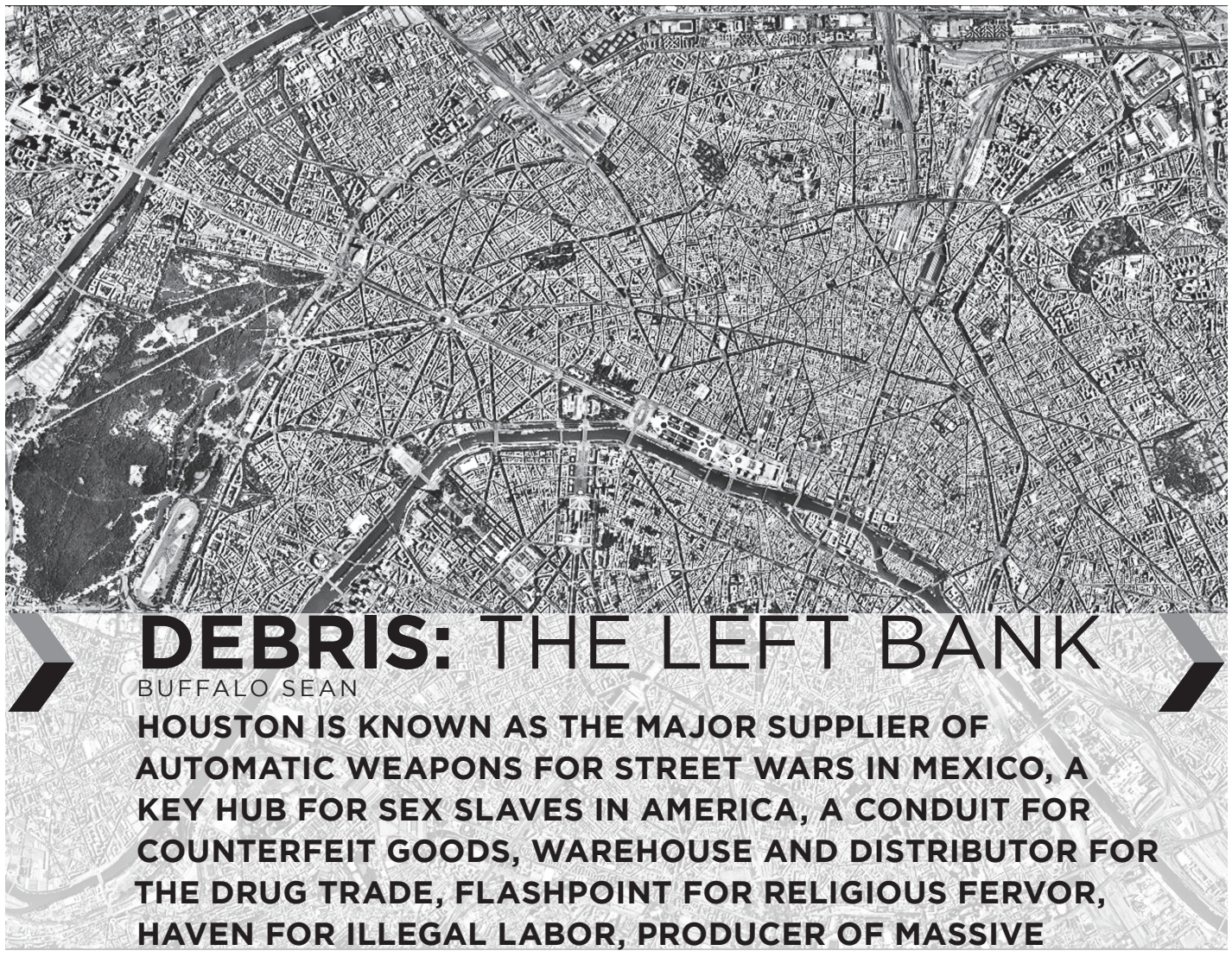


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DEBRIS: THE LEFT BANK

BUFFALO SEAN

HOUSTON IS KNOWN AS THE MAJOR SUPPLIER OF AUTOMATIC WEAPONS FOR STREET WARS IN MEXICO, A KEY HUB FOR SEX SLAVES IN AMERICA, A CONDUIT FOR COUNTERFEIT GOODS, WAREHOUSE AND DISTRIBUTOR FOR THE DRUG TRADE, FLASHPOINT FOR RELIGIOUS FERVOR, HAVEN FOR ILLEGAL LABOR, PRODUCER OF MASSIVE AMOUNTS OF POLLUTION, CENTER OF OVERCROWDED AND DISCRIMINATORY JAIL PRACTICES, CESSPOOL OF THE UNWASHED MASSES AND PURVEYOR OF "SCREW"- A WHOLLY DEVIANT AND DANGEROUS SUBCULTURE.

THROW IN A SERIAL KILLER WITH A COLORFUL NICKNAME and you're in London in 1888. Swap Codeine syrup in a styrofoam cup for absinthe in a sugared glass and we're in Paris in 1849. These metastasizing burgs were known as unholy hells in their salad days, and Houston has nearly reached the heights of disreputable notoriety each of these cities experienced before blossoming into icons of the modern age.

We've always had an identity problem, mostly stemming from the fact that Houston is simply new; only a little over 50 years ago that the population climbed above a million people. We're nearly a century behind New York City, Paris housed a million people on the day the Allen Brothers landed in Buffalo Bayou and London had a million people before they even got around to taking a census during the American Revolution. We share a lot with these forbearers, but one thing has to change- every great city has had a model to aspire to, a paradigm to create.

Built with a set of freeways like the spokes of a monstrous concrete wheel, dappled with parks and green spaces, fiercely liberal in the center and rabidly conservative at the fringes, Houston has a lot more to do with Paris than you may think. We have a bayou running west through the center of town, they have a river running east. There is a boisterous self-identity that comes with living on the north or south side of this boundary in both cities. Prussians gave Parisians the bistro, they gave us the kolache.

A lot of the lore of Paris is centered in the Left Bank, packed with cafes and parks near the river and housing a cluster of universities. It is known as the seat of intellectual life for the city, attracting scholars, painters, writers, daydreamers and hustlers. On the south side of Buffalo Bayou sits Houston's left bank, with Montrose as the heart of its intellectual life. The bars, galleries, bookstores and garden parks draw students from the University of Houston, Texas Southern University, St. Thomas and Rice. In the 18th century the universities of Paris served different communities from all over the country, seasoned with a dash of foreigners all too eager to embrace the shaping of their adopted city. Today Houston's universities served different communities in the same way, but they collide in the streets along Westheimer every weekend at night. There are no cobblestones to tear up in revolt against the world, but nonetheless form follows function in the exploration of any cultural analogies. More than Napoleon III's deputy Haussmann could tame the populace of the urban world with grand boulevards, Houston's centralized freeway system, triumphantly efficient in its ability to move massive amounts of people and goods into or out of t he city, has blunted the effects of radical thought- but has not prohibited the organic growth of a culture that proves Houston, in the midst of derision, is something to be proud of. FPH





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wanted for houstonightlife.com, Houston's new nightlife, fashion and style guide.

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WEEKENDS IN AUGUST:

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Sep 11- Jacob Meador and Friends
Sep 12- Otis Jones
Sep 18- Staci's Edge
Sep 19- J. Price Birthday Bash
Sep 25- Buffalo Bayou
Sep 26 - Festival
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Oct 2 - Spoonfed Tribe
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Oct 9- Plump

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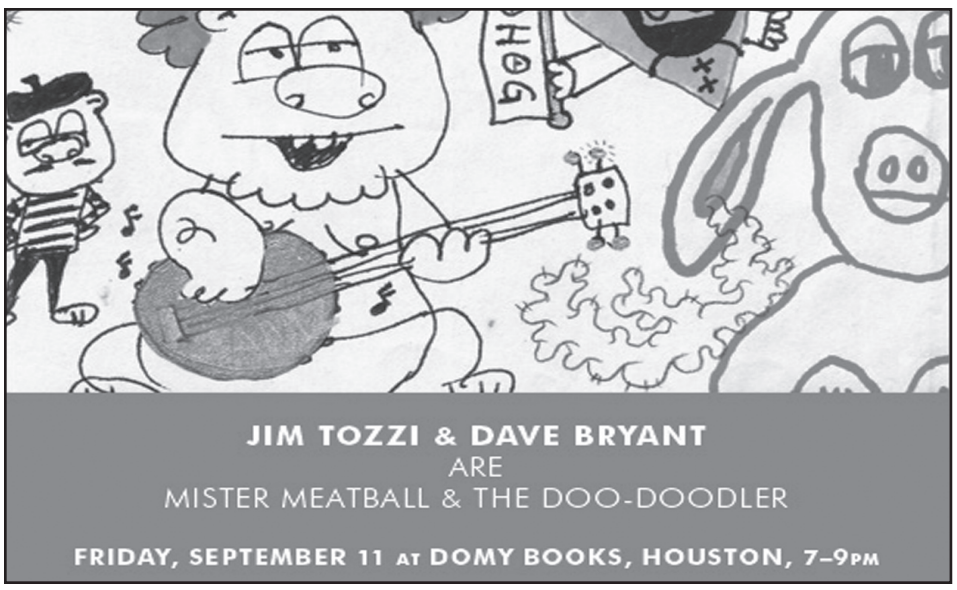
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LINKAGE

BY MICHAEL BERGERON

WORLD'S GREATEST DAD DIRECTOR, BOBCAT GOLDTHWAIT

YOU PROBABLY KNOW THE KIND OF TEENAGER the movie World's Greatest Dad concerns. Totally spoiled, totally rude with no friends except for the friendless. "R-rated films are really made for 13-year olds," the film's director Bobcat Goldthwait tells Free Press Houston in a phone interview. He's not kidding.

Goldthwait besides making a name for himself as a stand-up comedian in the '80s and directing several comedy television shows has written and directed a handful of feature films that excel in black humor and uncomfortable subjects. Anyone who's seen Shakes the Clown or Sleeping Dogs Lie will agree his sense of humor is as sharp as it is sardonic. I ask Goldthwait if he considers himself an auteur. "Only in the sense that you'd consider Ed Wood or Bob Clark an auteur," Goldthwait laughs.

World's Greatest Dad starts off normal enough with a frustrated single father Robin Williams trying to reason with his son, Daryl Sabara (Spy Kids) after he catches him jacking off before school. Rather than have a regular conversation the kid rejects any attempt at advice. When dad buys him an expensive new computer monitor the kid scoffs because he wants a bigger one. Williams comes home one day to find his son has accidentally died while masturbating to internet porn with a tie choking his neck. Despite his grief Williams manages to restage the death making it look like his son hung himself in the closet.

"There's humor in everything, no topic is off limits," Goldthwait responds to a question as to how far you can push the envelope. Goldthwait and Williams occasionally worked stand-up together before and as their respective careers took off, often billing themselves as Jack Cheese and Marty Fromage. Williams shot to stardom first as Mork of Mork and Mindy and then as a popular movie comedian. Goldthwait followed suit although with a lower profile starting with the second Police Academy movie. "I had someone recently ask me to sign the DVD for the first Police Academy movie and I didn't have the heart to tell them I'm not actually in that one." Another '80s film that starred Goldthwait was the talking horse laugher Hot To Trot. "I want to do an invisible dog movie," relates Goldthwait. "A two-dog cast."

The look of World's Greatest Dad harkens back to '70s Disney films (only with a subversive underbelly). When I mention this to Goldthwait he concurs adding that the normalcy of films like Million Dollar Duck and The Computer Wore Tennis Shoes were part of his inspiration.

While his previous movies were ultra low budget productions having Williams aboard allowed a greater budget for World's Greatest Dad in the $10-million range. "In other words I didn't have to hire my crew using Craiglist," says Goldthwait.

World's Greatest Dad takes everyday family life and turns it on its head. The more Williams tries to make his son out to be literate and sensitive, first by penning a suicide note and then a journal, the more his plans backfire. Williams proves himself in rare form as he grapples with the morality of his actions all the while maintaining his facade of the world's best father. World's Greatest Dad opens in September.

IT MIGHT GET LOUD

A DOCUMENTARY THAT BRINGS TOGETHER three generations of guitarists, It Might Get Loud plays like a cool guitar solo, with a beginning, middle and ending. The spotlight shines on Jimmy Page (Led Zeppelin), The Edge (David Evans of U2), and Jack White (White Stripes) showing them in their home studios and then bringing them together to talk and jam at various locales.

The straight-faced approach of director David Guggenheim (An Inconvenient Truth) hones in on technique and how sounds are developed and quite successfully steers It Might Get Loud away from merely being a hagiography. Nobody would suggest that The Edge or White are the virtuosos that Page is and rightly so Guggenheim doesn't try to make such comparisons. What he gives us are fascinating facts about the craft of rocking out on an electric axe.

We observe White making an electronic string device out of raw materials. White also had his luthier trick out his classic hollowbody and attach an extendable microphone into the guitar. We learn that Page was a teenage guitar wizard who could read music and worked as a studio musician on songs like "Goldfinger." A trip to the country mansion where Led Zep recorded the most classic rock imaginable reveals how the sound quality of the front room's incredibly high ceiling gave the songs depth. The Edge's various effects devices and racks are shown up close and personal and he takes the filmmakers to the school where he and Bono formed their first band.

This is the kind of film that jump-starts your rock-n-roll batteries only with guitar strings instead of cables. It Might Be Loud opens September 4 at the Angelika.

INGLOURIOUS BASTERDS

TAKE AN ART HOUSE TALKY FILM and mix in raw exploitation devices and you have the new Quentin Tarantino film, purposefully misspelled, Inglourious Basterds. If you notice more than usual press surrounding this film that's because QT always gives people something to talk about. A WWII story that rewrites history, the film also offers some of the most righteous acting seen in a film this year, not to mention QT's penchant for rediscovering forgotten actors (look for



'60s action star Rod Taylor in a brief cameo as Winston Churchill).

Divided into five different chapters IB weaves the story over a multitude of characters converging in Nazi-occupied France. The script was posted on the internet last year so those who want to know the full details have no doubt had that chance. For the uninformed the less you know about the convoluted narrative the more fun and explosive it will actually be. I had read the script and was still blown away by QT's stylistic decisions at every turn.

The color red, whether on drapes in Nazi or Allied offices, the thickly lacquered fingernail polish of the day or the seductive tone of a dress, or just the sight of blood, flashes in strong contrast to the stiff grays of uniforms or the verdant green of farm fields. For a war film there's very little actual gunplay or violence, but when it erupts the lasting memory is of the carnage and not the clever dialogue.

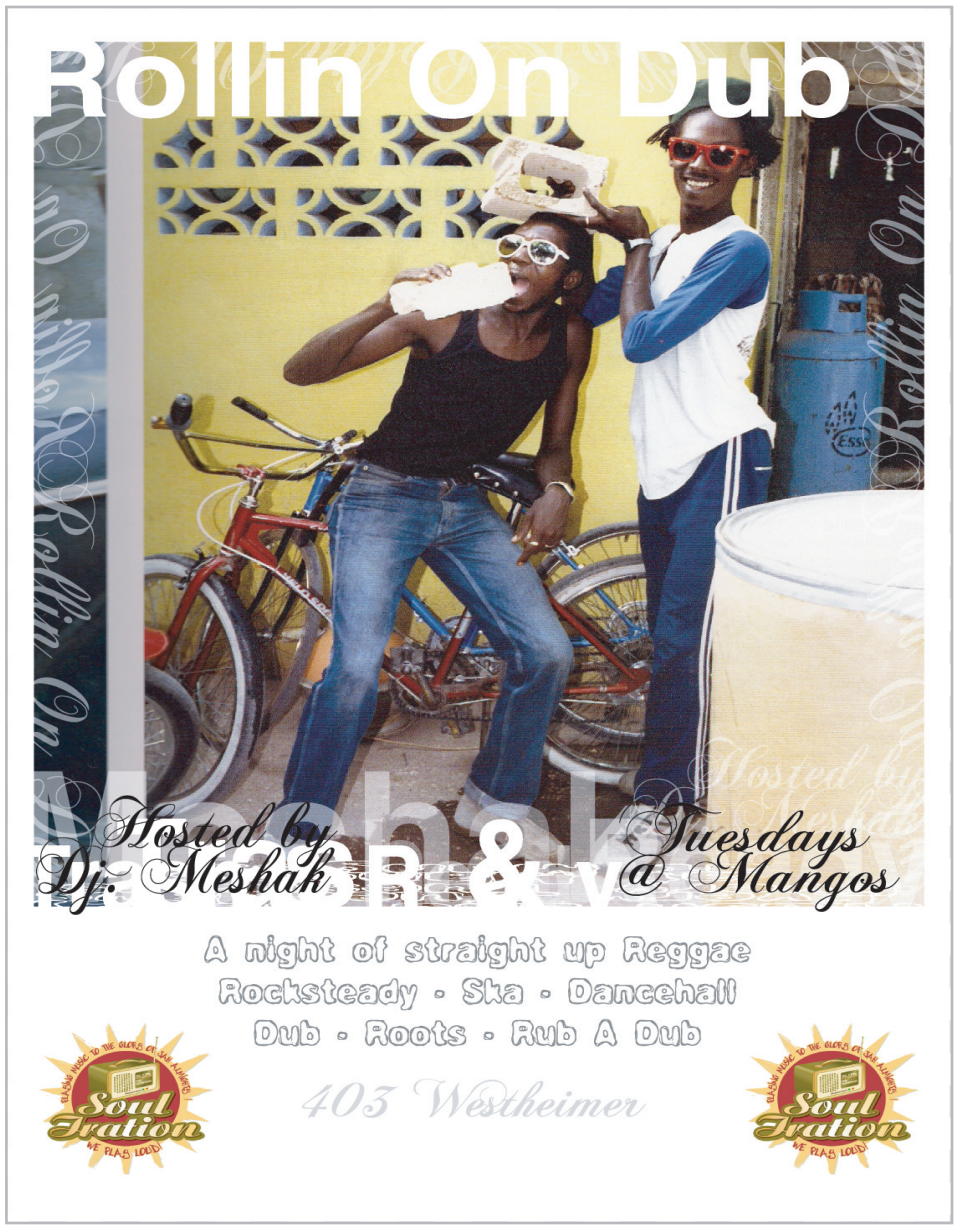
Some of the best parts of IB have to do with 19th century literary references that suggest that Tarantino shares an allegiance with Karl May (his novels have been made into over 20 films, most of them German or French) and his fictional Apache chief Winnetou. Another conceit that provides a main plot point concerns German propaganda cinema under the Reich as well as the mountain climbing genre of German silent films.

If the film is being sold as a Brad Pitt film fine, but he's just part of the spaghetti recipe. Exceptional performances from Mélanie Laurent as the films heroine and Christoph Waltz as a Gestapo badass will provide most of the post-screening conversation. QT holds an exalted place in film history and with every new film he further cements his reputation as one of the most idiosyncratic and iconic figures the current cinema has to offer.

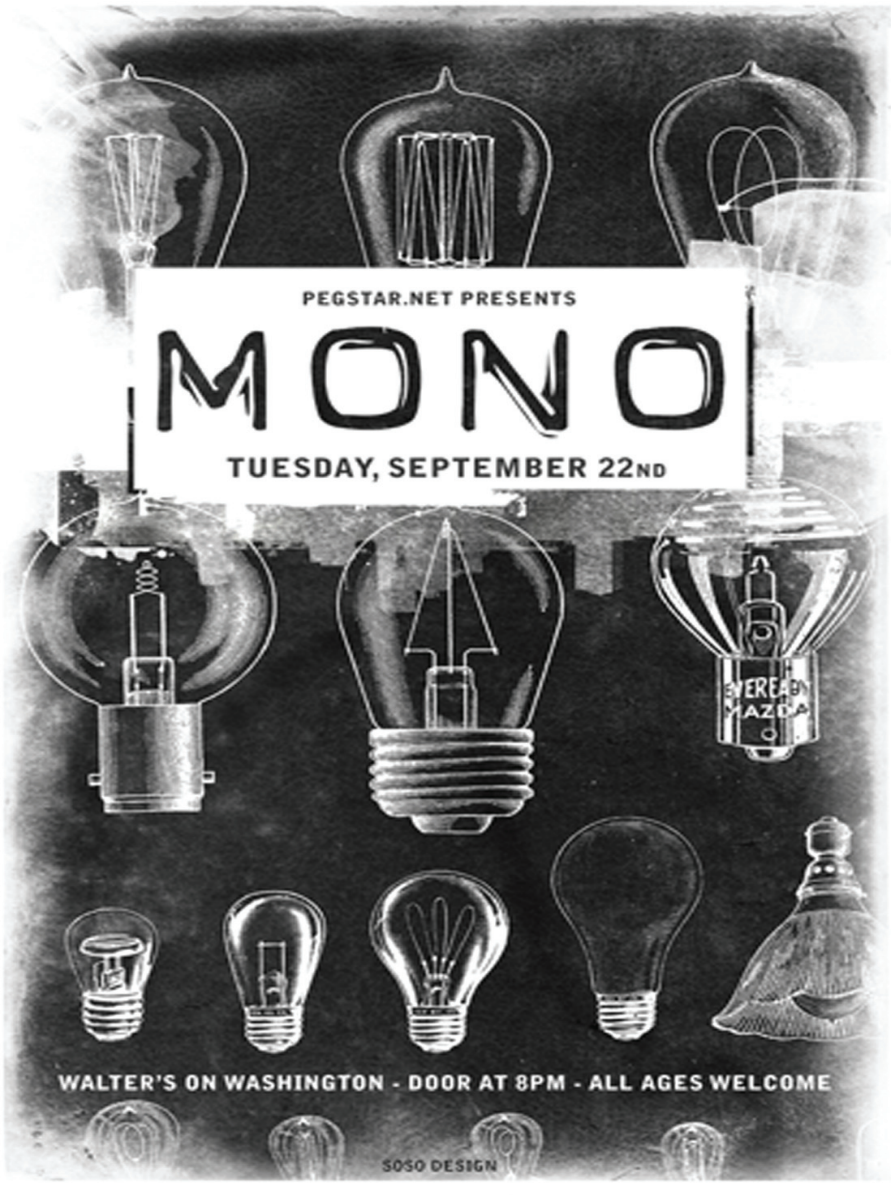
FANTASTIC FEST

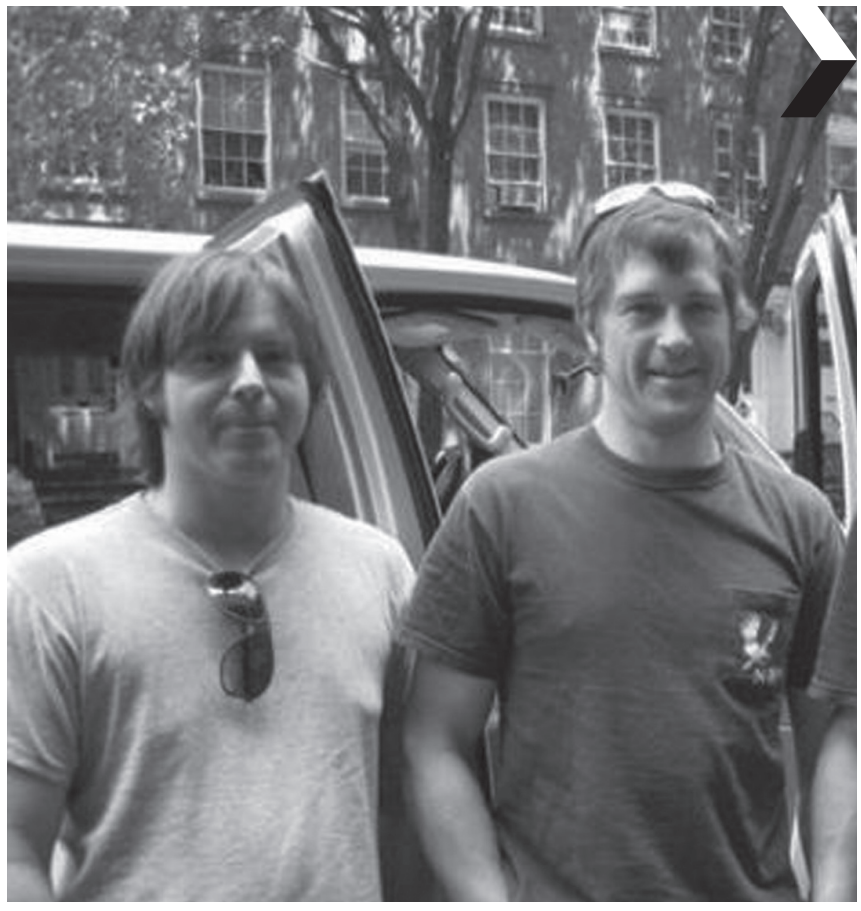
FANTASTIC FEST 2009 UNWINDS with its fifth annual edition in Austin from September 24 through October 1. The founders of the festival are Tim Leauge, the owner of the Alamo Drafthouse chain, and Harry Knowles of Ain't It Cool fame. The lineup features premieres and one-of-a-kind screenings of macabre films from all over the world. Actually one of the films is titled Macabre, and another is titled Vampire Girl versus Frankenstein Girl.

Special guests include George Romero who'll be screening his newest Survival of the Dead and participating in a Q&A about his career. Events include karaoke contests, and one post premiere party where the attendee will be able to create popcorn sculptures. Check out the festival's website for film schedules, synopsis and ticket info. (www.fantasticfest.com) FPH









POLVO:
TO KNOW THEM IS TO LOVE THEM

KWAME M. ANDERSON

A PRISM HAS THE ABILITY TO SPLIT A SINGLE RAY OF LIGHT INTO A SPECTRUM OF COLOR. POLVO'S LATEST ALBUM IS CALLED IN PRISM (MERGE).

WHILE THERE MAY BE NO CONNECTION between the two, one could imagine a single charge of electricity, sent through a cord into a guitar which creates, transforms, and reflects many sounds, sounds as colors, multi-patterned colors. It works for me.

Polvo is known as a seminal post rock band from the great guitar period in the mid-late 90's. While Polvo were associated with math rock, they were more traditional than they probably are given credit for. (For example, Black Sabbath's "War Pigs" is as math rock as anything Polvo ever did.)

In Prism is their first album since they disbanded after releasing *Shapes* (Touch And Go, 1997). The band members went in different directions (playing in groups as varied as Libraness, Black Taj, and Idyll Swords), but then Explosions in the Sky invited them to play the 2008 All Tomorrow's Parties festival. Polvo decided not necessarily to "reunite," but maybe revise themselves. As members of the band had continued jamming together over the years and had maintained their friendships, they came to the "reunion" shows with new songs.

"We had about two [new songs] ready by the time we played our first show; we had worked them into the set," recalls Ash Bowie. "We were playing this long thing that had like four songs, we had different versions of it, but it incorporated new songs."

Those songs were sketches of what would become their new album, and after finalizing the songs in the winter and spring of this year, *In Prism* is the result. The dilemma, when listening to an album by a band with a pretty defined legacy, is always, "Will it be better than the old music? Or will the band try something new?" In the case of Polvo, I believe the answer is both A and B.

"I think that the new stuff in some ways is a continuation, stylistically, of the stuff that we had been doing. With Black Taj, Dave [Brylawski] was the primary songwriter there. His songwriting and his guitar playing has gotten a lot more bluesy in the last few years, in Black Taj, and he's not gonna change his songwriting, so I think you hear some of that on this new Polvo stuff. My songwriting and guitar playing probably hasn't changed a whole lot. I have things that I like to do; I like to figure how I can make new material sound different somehow, not be playing the same song over and over, but there's definitely sort of personal… idiosyncrasies. I try not to over-think it—if I like the way it sounds I'm gonna go with it."

Polvo was the band that taught me to appreciate a whole band—how each member's contribution plays an integral part in the composition as a whole. Primarily, the duel guitar of Brylawski and Bowie made beautiful memories. It is something as easy as a vamp on a guitar line, an accented tremolo, a counter-rhythm or melody, it is as if, eventually, each member's habits and styles became second nature, the melody, the repetition, the inflection, the response to the inflections, all

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08/15 | MANGO'S





forming these patterns that catapulted a simple riff, to a road with rests and crescendos.

"I think we tried to give more instructions (as to how or what to play) a little bit in the past, but now we are sort of getting back to jamming, and letting everyone find their way a little bit, and then seeing how we can make it better. But it's pretty instinctive, it feels very natural at this point because we've been playing this way for so long. A lot of times, Dave will come up with something that will make [a song] better, I don't have to tell him to pick notes or sit out or play more. We communicate pretty well at this point."

In Prism is the album that Polvo would inevitably make at this point. It acknowledges the past without trying to re-create it; it is traditional without being predictable; it is familiar but still surprising, and it is one of the few times a band has laid off for a while and come back with the same inventiveness and fervor that initially made them exciting.

"We don't want to be a relic, trying to recreate stuff. I think we've done a pretty good job of trying to reinvent the old songs. The old songs have changed some [in the live show]. We try to keep it fresh, and [rearranging the old material] is mostly for our own amusement, but also because it seems like the right thing to do. And writing the new stuff's been a lot of fun. I think we got back to form a little bit. I don't think about trying to keep it the same, and I don't over-think about trying to make it too different either…"FPH

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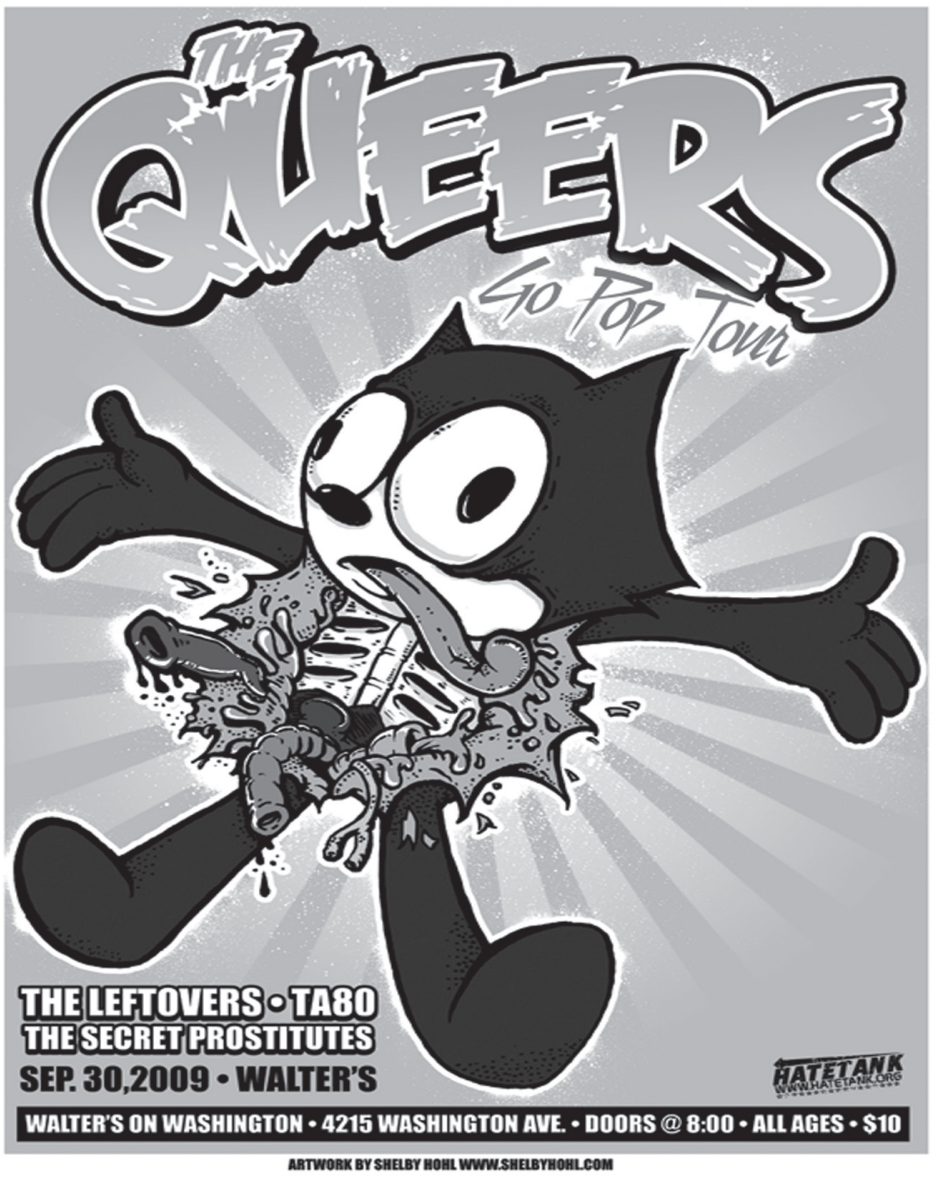
BY SHIRAZ AHMED

THE STORY FALLS IN THE SAME SAD SEQUENCE AS IT ALWAYS DOES FOR ME: IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS I HAVE FALLEN IN LOVE WITH HOUSTON'S MUSIC SCENE, ONE I PREVIOUSLY DOUBTED, AND NOW I AM SET TO LEAVE FOR CHICAGO IN THREE WEEKS.

TEARS AND TANTRUMS AND ALL THAT, but I do intend to spend September hitting as many shows as I can.

Unfortunately, it looks like a slow month for concert goers in Houston. On the national circuit, we do have Mars Volta making an appearance on the 17th at Verizon Wireless, and Umphrey's McGee will be coming to House of Blues on the 12th. The good folks at Warehouse Live are hosting the bulk of September's national talent, with ...And You Will Know Us By the Trail of Dead showing on the 12th, Motorhead on the 18th, Living Colour on the 20th, and the lighter touch of Ingrid Michaelson on the 26th. Speaking of swinging melodies, Jason Mraz will be playing at The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion on the 16th.

Local line-ups prove infinitely more exciting. The Continental Club is hosting some fabulous local shows this month with Wild Moccasins on the 3rd, D.R.U.M. on the 12th, and The Small Sounds coming through on the 18th. The Small Sounds also have a show on the 26th at the Jet Lounge. Listen Listen will have a CD release party at Mango's on the 18th, and the next night Muhammadali will be playing a show with Leg Sweeper and Electric Courage Machine. Monotonix will be roaring in to Super Happy Fun Land on the 26th, a venue which will also be playing host to several other creatively named bands I have never heard of throughout the month. Some of them may in fact be worth a gander, so I suggest swinging by SHFL any night to see what's happening. For a different type of venue, Dean's Credit Clothing will have News on the March, Ha Ha Tonka and Buxton playing on the 18th. The highlight of September comes early with The Festival at the Mink happening on the 12th, so be sure to catch that with artists Elaine Greer, Benjamin Wesley, the Manichean and several other fantastic groups from throughout the Bayou City. And if you happen to come and see a skinny, somewhat quiet middle-eastern kid with hair that looks like it's been electrified, well, that would be me. Say hi, why dontcha? Also at the Mink on the 23rd will be Portland-based synthgroup Experimental Dental School. **FPH**



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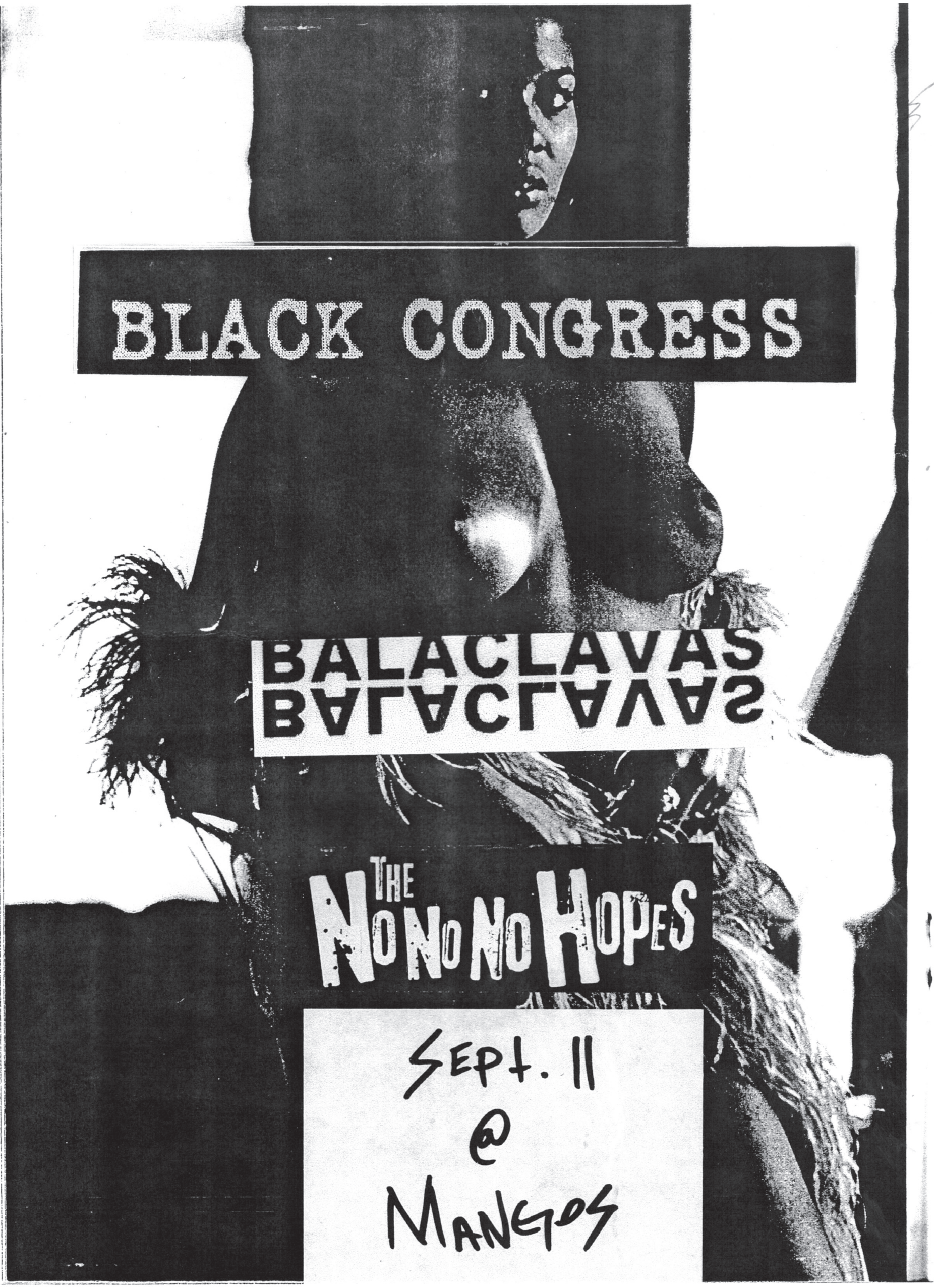
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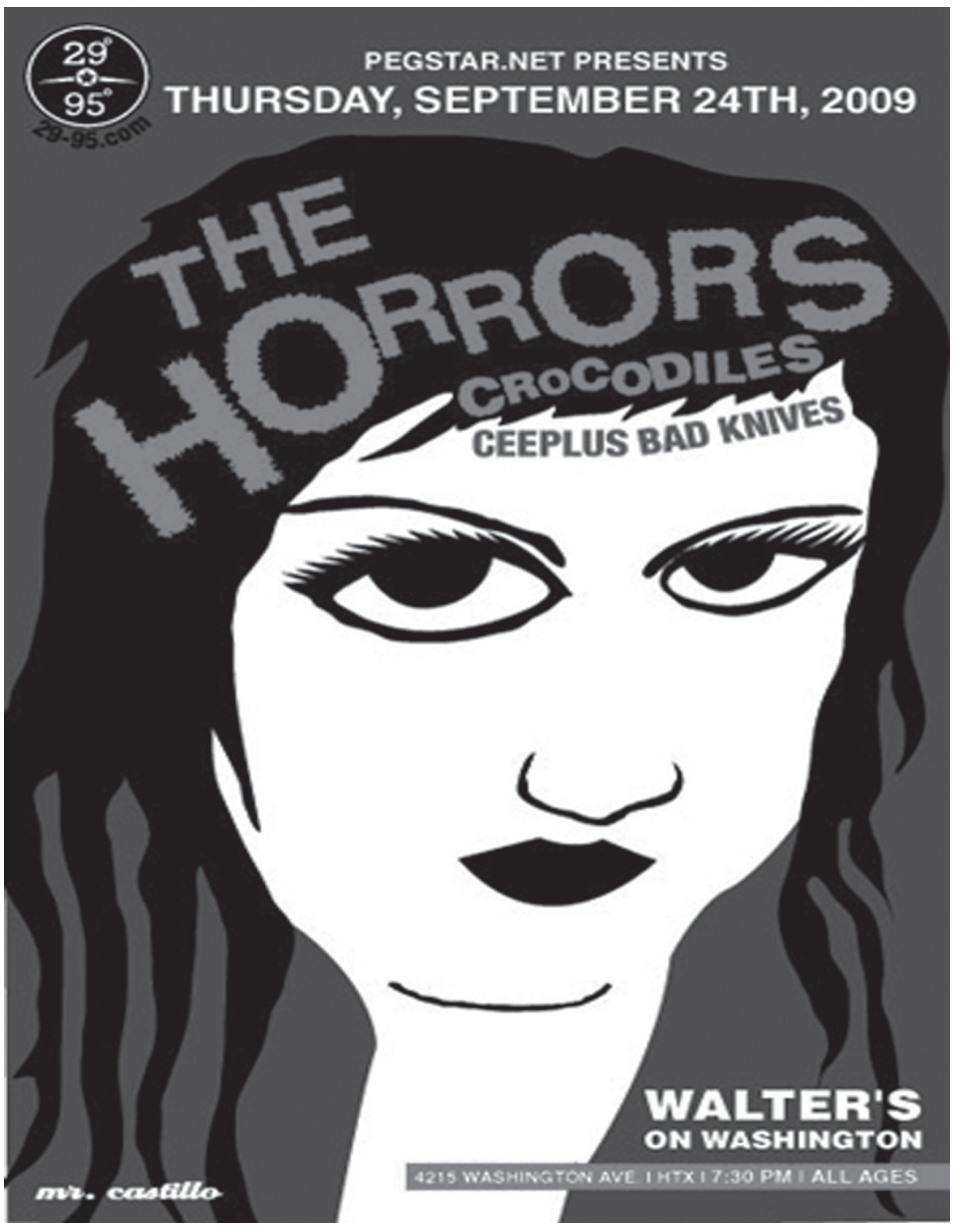
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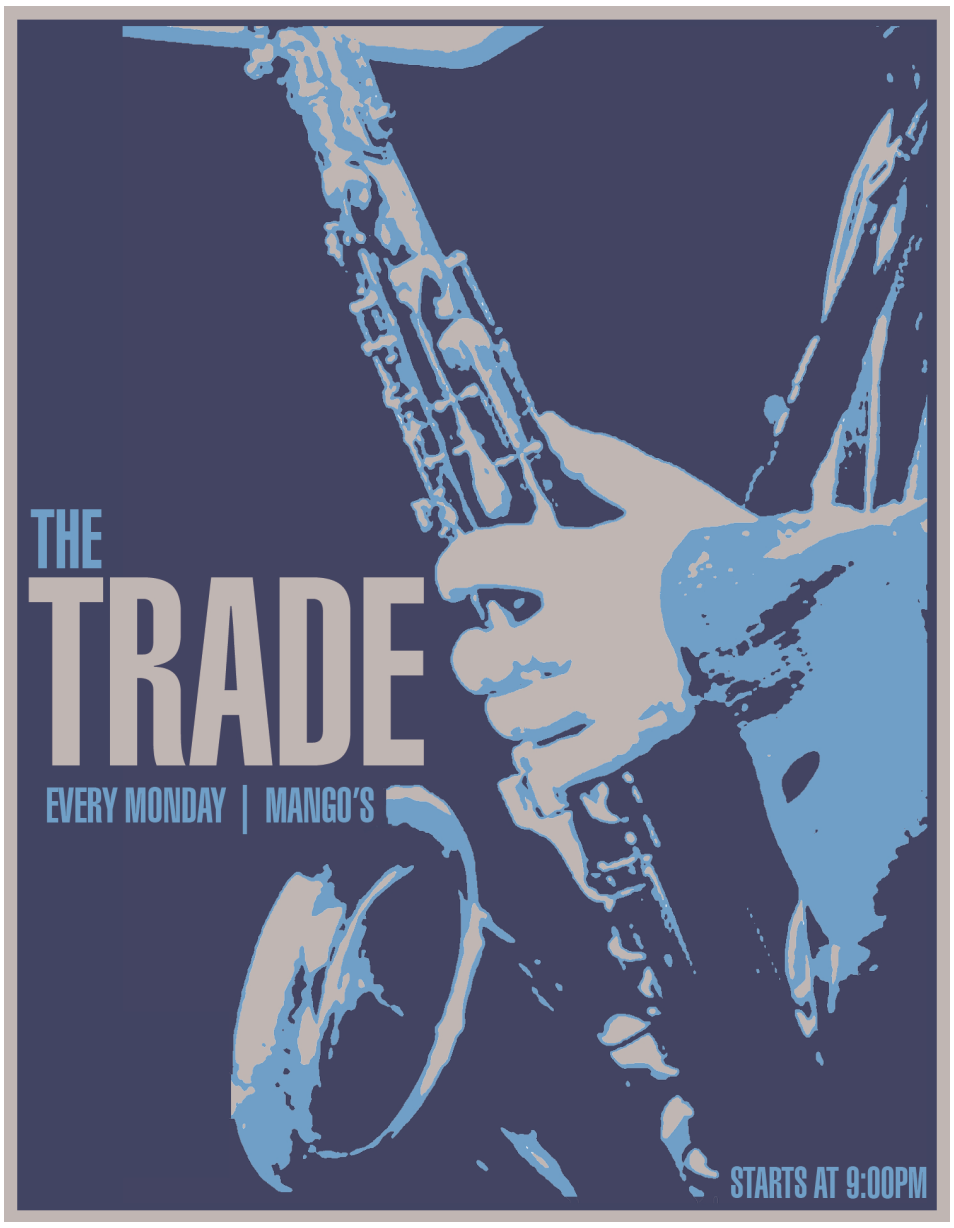

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- August 15th - The Indian Residency Ft: Navdeep w/ Mandip
- August 16th - Los Campesinos + Girls
- August 16th - Quintron and Miss Pussycat
- August 22nd - The Warlocks + The Morning After Girls + The Vandelles
- September 3rd - Fruit Bats + Death Vessel
- September 8th - She Wants Revenge + Kill Hannah
- September 10th - Throw Me The Statue + The Brunettes
- September 12th - Trail of Dead + The Secret Machines + The Watermarks
- September 22nd - Mono
- September 24th - Datarock
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HELL CITY KINGS

BY OMAR AFRA
PHOTO BY AUBREY MCCOY

IT'S BEEN A MINUTE OR 2 since I last saw the Hell City Kings perform their personal blend of scumfuck-garage-punk-rock. Last time was at Westheimer Block Party at about 2PP with sun blazing over their heads outside Numbers. Turns out their lead singer woke up mere minutes before their performance with a stiff hangover and subsequently puked immediately after playing. Definitely bad scheduling on our part. Anyways, HCK have recently put out a new record, have some great shows slated, and are drinking more cheap Lone Star than ever. Christian and Bill tell us all about the Garage-y goodness.

HELL CITY KINGS GO HARD LIVE. WERE YOU EVER AFRAID YOU WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO CAPTURE THIS ENERGY ON A RECORD? ¶ CHRISTIAN BAKKA: We figured the best way to capture the energy was to DO IT LIVE!!! We actually knocked out 17 songs in one day.

BILL FOOL: Recording for us is easy. We do the same things we do at a live show. We drink, bring something just in case we get a little tired, turn up loud and just fucking go for it. I think we pulled it off as best as we possibly could.

WHO RECORDED AND PRODUCED THE RECORD? ¶ CB: We recorded with Chris Ryan at Dead City Sound. Chris was really easy to work with and we are going into the studio with him again soon. As far as producers go, we don't need anyone to fuck with the songs we write.

BF: Nobody really uses a producer you know. I don't think most Houston bands need one. Just play the the song the way you wrote and hope you have someone like Chris to record it. He knows exactly what most bands here in Houston are going for. He can pretty much set a band up to sound great without all the fancy shit some knownothing producer would want to use. Producers are for pussy bands like Blue October. Fuck that shit.

NOW THAT YOU HAVE CAPTURED YOUR SEMINAL GARAGE SOUND, WILL HCK MOVE ON TO EXPLORATORY JAZZ OR CUTESY INDIE-POP? ¶ BF: Those sound like fun ideas but I think we will leave that for the rich Indie bands here in town. We are a typical drunk rock n roll band. No use changing up the formula. Maybe tweak it up a bit but nothing too extreme. Look at the Ramones or AC/DC, those bands stuck with the same sound for their whole careers just adding a little bit here and there. They are/were the best and I love them even more for it.

CB: Maybe one day we will have to restort to cutesy pop to get laid, but I dont see it happening anytime soon. Besides who ever heard of the cutesy indie pop band that was wasted on Lonestar and Jager. We would have better luck trying folk/reggae/gospel.

YOU HAVE THE SCARIEST VOCALIST IN TOWN. TELL US A FUN STORY ABOUT HIM. ¶ BF: I've got tons but I guess 1 should suffice. So one time in L.A. we went to see The Dictators at the Troubadour. GFN had a shit load of drinks and was in a great mood. We leave the show and start heading to some chicks place so the boys in our band can maybe get lucky with some of the girls we just met and add some more booze to the liver. Well on the way to the house GFN starts taking is clothes off. We get to a light and he thinks it's time for Chinese fire drill, you know when you get out of the car and run around it real quick and jump back in just before the light turns green, well he does this with nothing on except his sock on a very busy Hollywood blvd. We are all laughing our asses off when someone notices that right behind our car was a cop car. The cop just shook his head in amazement. I mean you need to ask yourself what the fuck would you do if you saw a 6'-2" naked bald guy covered head-to-toe with tattoos, drunk and running circles around a car? Just look the other way is the advice I would give.

WILL YA'LL PLEASE PLAY THE NOVEMBER BLOCK PARTY? ¶ BF: Only if we can get a non hangover time slot. It's hard for 5 guys who don't go to bed until the wee hours to actually wake up before noon on the weekend. Just sayin'.

CB: Hell Yeah, just let us play in Mangos again so we don't have to burn to death in the Numbers parking lot again. FPH

Hell City Kings play Rudyard's with Birds of Avalon September 25th.



INTERVIEW: MIKE HARDIN

BY OMAR AFRA | PHOTO BY MITCH CANTU

EVERY CITY SHOULD HAVE A MIKE HARDIN. THE FRONTMAN FOR ROKY MOON AND BOLT AND MEMBER OF AMERICAN SHARKS DABBLES IN EVERYTHING AND CONSTANTLY FINDS WAYS TO PUSH HIS PERSONAL ENVELOPE.

HIS GLAM-LADEN SONGWRITING for Roky Moon and Bolt draws from the likes of Bowie and T Rex yet is unmistakably Houston. What that means, I am not sure, but they have being playing many a show to much acclaim and played a jaw dropping set at Summer Fest. Hardin has a cornacopia of clutchness planned for the near future including a rock opera, a split 7 inch, and a rumored performance on the rooftop of the Mink. Hardin honored us with an interview and gave us the scoop on it all.

WAS THIS A COLLECTIVE SONGWRITING PROCESS OR ARE YOU THE JOSEPH STALIN OF BOLT? ¶ Well I write all of the songs but BOLT arranges their own parts. They basically take the shell of song that I present to them and help me make it not not suck! We make a hell of a team!

IS FIVE DOLLAR FAME ABOUT SOMEONE IN PARTICULAR? CAN I HAVE HER NUMBER? ¶ Five Dollar Fame is about a character I call the lioness. She is a beautiful but trashy celebrity model that is hopelessly addicted to drugs and fame. Oh, and sex and money of course. She is one of the main characters in the rock opera I am working on. You may not have her number because she is mine.

I HEARD RUMORS THAT YA'LL AND CHASE HAMBLIN MAY RELEASE A 7 INCH TOGETHER. IS THIS TRUE AND IS IT POSSIBLE TO HAVE A MORE EFFEMINATE COMBINATION? ¶ I would absolutely love to do a Chase Hamblin split. I just want to find someone to put it out because I don't have any money...BUT I also see many more amazing things that we can do together. Maybe he would be down with the idea of a split where I write the song he plays and he writes the song I play. Maybe just to man it up a little we will hold an arm wrestling competition to win free copies of the record!

***STANDARD REGURGITATED QUESTION:* WHO ARE YOUR FAVORITE HOUSTON BANDS?** ¶ BENJAMIN WESLEY! Love him, he rules. Chase Hamblin, for sure. Elaine Greer, Passengers, Ghost Town Electric, anything Bryan Jackson is doing! Springfield Riots, News on the March and Grandfather Child! Muhhamidali and Guitars, Tha Fucking Transmissions.

SO YOU SOUND GLAM BUT YOU DON'T LOOK GLAM. WHEN CAN WE EXPECT SOME MASCARA AND EYE SHADOW? ¶ I think we have decided not to go the makeup route but I would expect a little something special coming soon...Chad is cookin' up some ideas.

***FILL IN THE BLANKS:* HOUSTON IS THE MUSIC CAPITAL OF THE UNIVERSE BECAUSE _____HAS MORE _____THAN A _____HAS _____.** ¶ Aaron Echegaray has more soul than a KFC has grease!

TELL US ABOUT THE ROCK OPERA YOU'RE WORKING ON. ¶ The rock opera I am working on is going to be a sci-fi love story adventure. We are doing a couple of different splits but we also want to do our own record and I wanted to do something special. I feel like I am writing the some of the best music of my life and I felt just doing a regular album was something I had already done before and I want this to stand out and be an experience that sticks in peoples' minds for a long time. The piece that I am arranging right now is the beginning of a what I think will be a three part series. I don't want to go too much into the story right now but it will be all about the lioness and this man Avery and how they find each other and how they help each other to grow by relying on the love they share. Meanwhile there are space battles, sex, plenty of drugs and of course rock n' roll all around them and they are met with a series of challenges and they must rely on one another to get through it all. This will not however be soft and lofty. This, as any good rock opera should be, will be littered with screaming guitar solos and huge riffs, thank you Aaron Echegaray, and Jeoaf's signature beat the shit out of the drums thump. Then I want to do an actual stage show when it is complete. With costumes and set designs and stuff, get extra musician to help. Maybe even a string section! I was thinking of trying to convince the guys at the Mink to let us do it on the roof. Maybe clear the back parking lot and have the stage on the edge of the roof...we'll see...

DOES IT INVOLVE BOOBIES? ¶ Yes it involves boobies. TONS of boobies!

WHAT IS NEXT FOR ROKY MOON AND BOLT: SLOW DEMISE, BLAZE OF GLORY, OR PUBLIC SHAME? ¶ BLAZE OF GLORY!!!! Had I picked anything else Cassie would have quit the band I'm sure (believe it or not she is the wild one of us!). FPH



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SCENES FROM A SUMMER OF FREEDOM

BY SHIRAZ AHMED

Editor's note: *Despite spending a mere 18 years on this planet, our summer intern Shiraz Ahmed has wisdom beyond his years. The success of the Summer Fest is largely his doing. The kid is brilliant, has a militant work ethic, and probably is the most mature person to ever set foot in our office. After doing such a swell job on the fest, people have asked me what kind of recommendation letter would do him justice. I often half joking reply that I should just use a copy of the lyrics of "How Can I Live Without You?" as his recommendation letter. This 'journal' on his work at FPH and on the Summer Fest is his final assignment before he leaves us mid-September to go to attend Northwestern University in Chicago. He will be sorely missed.*

WHAT IS IT LIKE?

THE UNANSWERABLE QUERY I had to endure so many times this summer. "What is it like interning at Free Press Houston?" Alas, I could only come out with, "Oh. It's great," or, "Absolutely wonderful." I would then feel the insuppressible guilt of not regaling them with every detail, of not bringing them in to this fantastic world. As an intern, I have had the unique opportunity of at once being a part of, and being an outside spectator to, the many eccentricities and day-to-day activities of FPH.

What is it like?

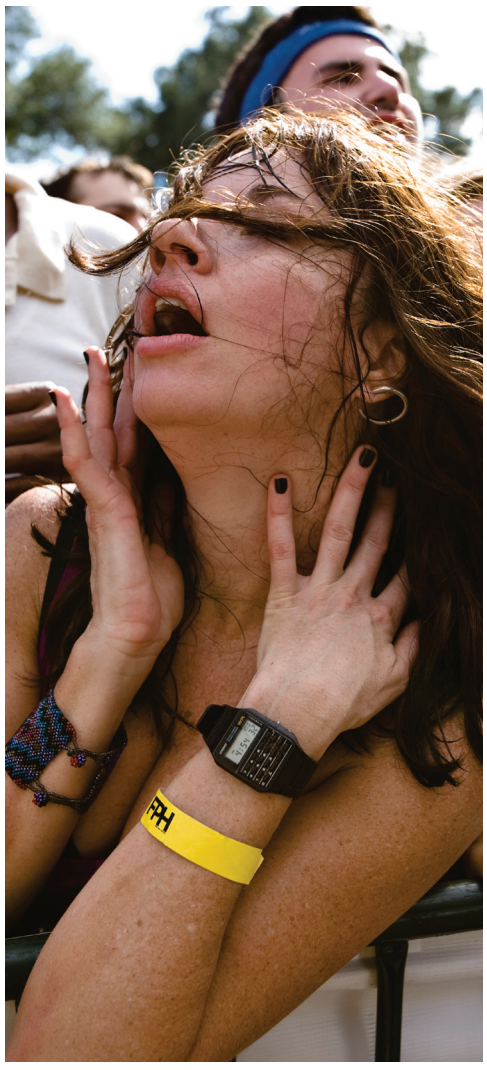
Sometimes I feel involved in an elaborate chapter of Montrose history. Shelby and Omar are the constants in this tale. Shelby Hohl, illustrator and animator, drops wisdom like a leaky faucet; ranging in variety from Emerson to his own brand of off-the-wall advice, like how to use MySpace to discover the most obscure underground musicians. Omar Afra, a name synonymous with FPH and Westheimer Block Party, is similar in spontaneity, often regaling me with tales of past exploits and diatribes on the print industry, family, and life in general. New characters are introduced everyday: ex-girlfriends, rebel leaders, old friends from elementary. When someone new enters the scene, I mentally add them to the interconnecting network existing in my head.

Sometimes it feels like the busiest of workplaces. People constantly in and out, new artwork and press releases worked on every day, animations galore. Other times it's hanging out with friends, browsing the internet, stalkbooking, watching YouTube videos. When I first came in to be interviewed I was, in my eyes, a picture-perfect, cookie-cutter candidate. I had gotten a haircut, assembled a rough portfolio, fashioned a resume, and drilled myself to not say "like" in my speech. Fortunately, the atmosphere of the FPH offices broke barriers and put me at ease, enabling me to work more naturally. It is quite possibly the most relaxed yet efficient business environment I have witnessed thus far in my short life.

But even that doesn't do justice. I had a ring-side seat to the creation of Free Press Summer Fest, watching it grow from seed to

» ALL PHOTOS BY ANTHONY RATHBUN





spectacle in a few short months. The following are excerpts from my summer; moments that I believe truly defined the festival as well as my three months with FPH. For everyone who wants to see the inner-workings of Summer Fest, here is my thesis. For everyone who asked me "What is it like?" Here is my answer.

The Beginning is the End is the Beginning

The stages have been pulled down, the feathers cleaned up, the paint slide is no more, and the last vibrations from Of Montreal's set have found a home deep in the bayou's mutagenic waters. Eleanor Tinsley Park is, once again, just another city park. At the time of this writing, the inaugural Free Press Summer Fest is only a fortnight past, yet in the FPH office headliners for next spring's festival are already being brainstormed.

I wasn't around the first time for this process, but I imagine many resemblances can be made. The same methodical maneuvering to get the greatest variety of talent, the same desire to have something for every type of person. This, I believe, will come to be one of the main reasons Summer Fest will grow in to a festival celebrated by all of Houston. It reflects the diverse mesh of people that call this city home. I've learned that it's also important not to use the line up as a personal mp3 player. It is not the organizers preferences that make the decisions (though they do play a factor). I hate to break out some utilitarianism philosophy, but the acts are chosen by whatever will bring about the greatest happiest for the greatest number.

MIXTAPE FOR THE REVOLUTION

I AM NEVER FOREWARNED when a vital piece of advice is related to me. Because of this, I must be constantly at attention, whether in the office, at lunch, or weaving through traffic the day before the festival with Shelby sitting shotgun in a mad haste to get ice for the coolers. "You see man," says Shelby, "this festival is more than just the music. It acts as a vehicle for some really good causes. Take Texas Campaign for the Environment. That's an organization that we really believe in and support, but there are some people who won't even bother with them unless, say, Explosions in the Sky in playing in the background."

It's strange how true this rings with me. I think back on the previous night with my sister who, glancing at the Texas Campaign for the Environment ad in the Free Press, related a story of how the organization cornered her walking down the street and pestered her until she donated $15. She then told me how she added them to her call-block list on her cell, so that she wouldn't have to hear from them ever again. This from a girl who brings Explosions in the Sky albums to play for her fourth grade class. I tell this to Shelby.

Exactly! We all know someone like that. Whether it's your sister, or your friend, or your landlord. That's why Summer Fest is so impor-











tant to some of these organizations; it gets people to care about what they're saying, even though people should care anyway.» I reflect on just how many ways FPSF benefits the community as a whole. Like the Live 8 concerts held around the world years ago, Summer Fest, in its own small way, is using music to help spread awareness, something that sets it apart from other festivals like ACL or Coachella.

KEEPING THE FREEDOM IN THE FESTIVAL

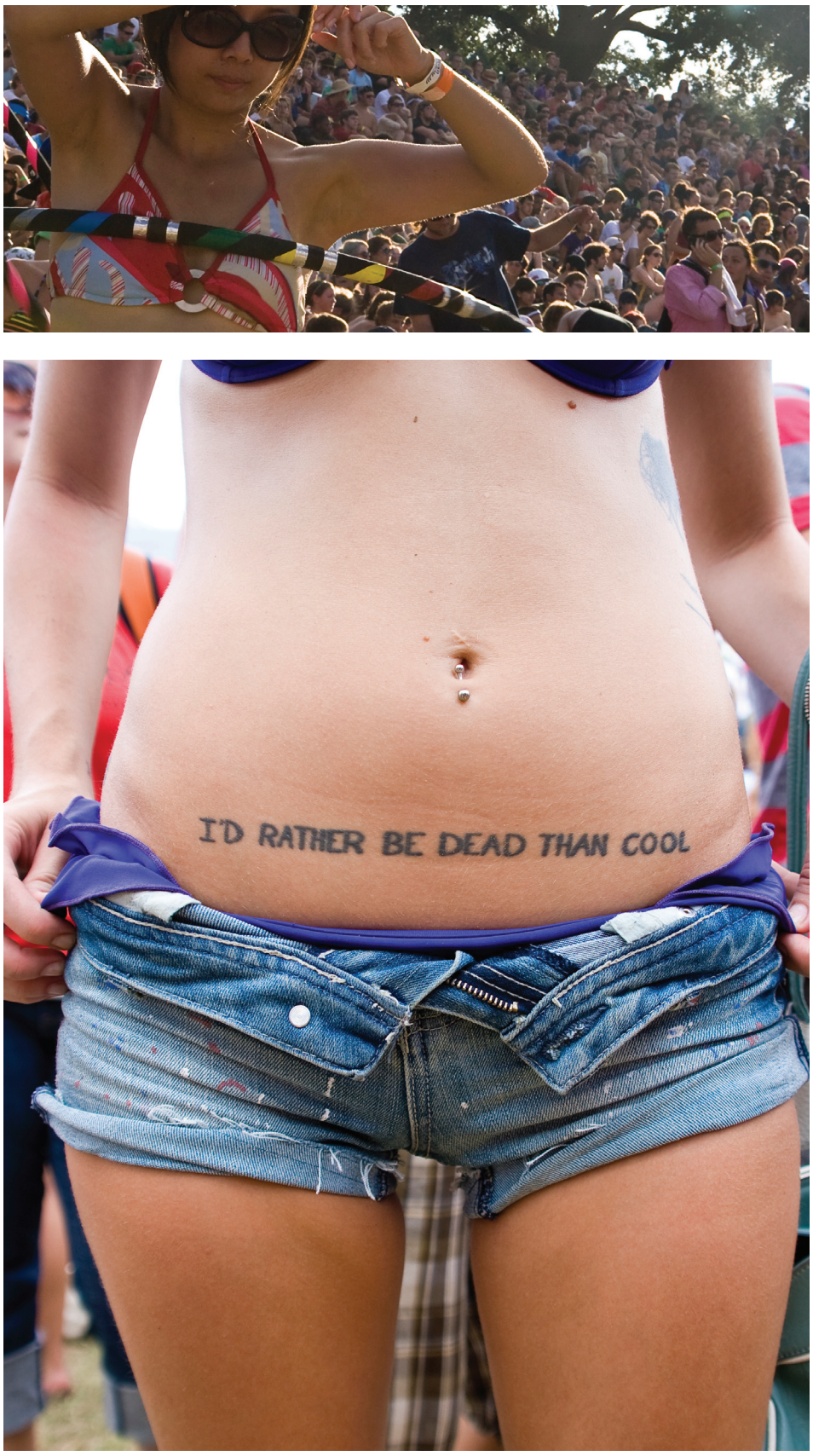
I CAN'T RESIST a small burst of glee when bearded and turbaned concert promoter of Pegstar.net Presents Jagi Katial drops by. It's that same surge of satisfaction when your favorite show's theme song begins, or when you start a book you know you'll love. This is mainly because Jagi's exchanges with Omar are some of the most humorous of my time in the office. I credit this to his refrain of "All right, that's cool" followed by a shuffle of the feet anytime Omar says something odd to him.

OMAR: You know, you kind of have girlish upper body, but I can tell you run because you have strong legs.
JAGI: ... Are you saying I have a girlish torso?
OMAR: Yeah, but you have strong legs.
JAGI: ... All right, that's cool. (shuffle of feet)

And so it goes as Jagi stops by in the dying days of June. He takes a seat and a discussion regarding the standard festival topics begins: passes, prices, and production. After much meandering discussion, Jagi throws out the option of selling special ring-side passes to those who want to get right up in front of the band. At this Shelby pipes up, "Well... we really could if we wanted to. No one can say we're overpricing things; the passes are already really cheap. But I feel that doing that would intrude on the feeling of summer freedom and openness." This isn't just Shelby speaking; numerous times this summer it has been drilled in to me how profit shouldn't be the priority of any festival organizer. What pleases the organizers more is when people come up to them and tell them, "Hey, that was the most fun I've had in Houston all year. Thanks." It is these small but important moments that keeps the heart of Summer Fest alive.

MEET THE FREE PRESS

AS MENTIONED BEFORE, I have met a whole ensemble of characters worthy of any prime time sitcom. My favorites of these are the writers and illustrators of FPH. During my downtime at the office I would consume back issues of the paper. I spent hours upon hours reading every word from front to back, looking at the tiniest details of the cover art. Meeting the men and women behind the ink has become a great thrill for me. That sole factor is what turned the otherwise dull job of managing the Artist/ Staff booth in the beginning hours of Summer Fest in to fun game. Would the writers' words and artists' lines show through on their faces? Would I recognize it? Basically, it made the heat slightly bearable.











I met Tyler Barber, the man who lays out the paper, the reason I first noticed FPH. I met Mills-McCoin, who so humorously covers city issues. He said he liked my last article, which made me forget I was dying of thirst. I met Brigette Zabak, Ramone Medina, Buffalo Sean and countless others. Soon the paper had grown a new dimension for me.

What really struck me was how much of a community effort Summer Fest is. Being in an office with just two guys and a computer made me forget how huge an event this is. It is a community's way of reaching out to the world. And Summer Fest is just one avenue to pursue. For such a large group of ambitious, intelligent, young people, the world is there to take. This year a music festival, next year, who knows?

A protest?
A revolution?
A pyramid scheme?

ON THE EVE OF A FESTIVAL

AT 9:30 PM the night before the festival I pull up in front of the Double Tree we're staying in downtown. 40+ rooms for Summer Fest's main staff and head lining artists. There is only valet parking available, but Omar's car is right in front, in a space he has fashioned for himself. When I park behind it, I tell the valets that it is my boss's car, and I am supposed to meet him inside, if I could only park there for a second.

"Oh, Omar! Yes, yes," they say, "He's up in room 525, go right ahead, sir." It's moments like these that I remember to thank the Powers-That-Be for finding me a position with the Free Press. After checking-in and talking to Omar on the phone, I go back down to grab my hastily packed backpack of essentials for the weekend. I find Andrea, Omar's wife, sitting on the curb with a cigarette dangling lazily between two fingers. I say hi.

"Hey Shiraz!" She smiles slyly. "You ready for this?"

I'm not sure why, but those four words strike me particularly deep. "Who knows? Maybe."

She laughs. "I bet you're thinking, 'Oh, man, what have I gotten myself in to!"

Maybe it's because I have had a hectic 24 hours. Maybe it's because I'm unshaved, tired, and unsure if I packed everything, but for the smallest sliver of a second, I'm overwhelmed. I lean against my car, and move things around in my back pack. I run my hands through my hair the way I'm told I always do when I'm exhausted. I think forwards, towards the next 48 hours. I try and imagine what they will feel like, what it will feel like afterwards. I have spent months and months helping out with the festival, but now that it's here, I'm unsure what to think, how to feel. It is that glorious moment on your birthday, just before you open the presents, when you are all hesitancy and excitement.

After saying goodbye, I head towards the elevator, the sound of down town Houston at night in the distance growing softer. I enter the lift and push for the fifth floor. The doors close. Silence.

You ready for this? FPH

» ALL PHOTOS BY ANTHONY RATHBUN











ELECTRIC LAZY LAND

BY ALEX WUKMAN | PHOTO BY ANTHONY CHAPMAN



ERIK IBARRA WALKS INTO COFFEE GROUNDZ ON A SATURDAY MORNING IN HIS CUSTOMARY BLACK POLO EMBROIDERED WITH THE REV HOUSTON LOGO AND A BALL CAP.

IBARRA AND HIS BROTHER, Justin Jones, started Rev Houston in April 2008 — the same month that Ibarra and his brother Sean Ibarra accepted a settlement from Harris County.

In 2004 the brothers sued the county and the sheriff's department, stating that their civil rights were violated when sheriff's deputies stormed their home, arrested them and seized film after they photographed a deputy during a drug raid at a neighbor's home. The suit was settled for $1.7 million.

Ibarra says that he was attending a sports event when he saw electric shuttles (they look like stretch golf carts) and became inspired, so he and Jones decided to start a company transporting people through downtown and midtown for tips. They went before Mayor Bill White and City Council to explain what they were doing.

"The mayor said 'We look forward to permitting you. We think that plug in electric cars are the wave of the future,'" says Ibarra.

Six weeks after Rev Houston started, though, they received a ticket for operating a taxi without a license. Ibarra feels that the city has cowed to pressure from the taxi companies.

"Taxi companies feel that that we are such a threat that we have to be ticketed," says Ibarra as he takes a sip from his coffee, "but the last thing we wanted to do when we started this company was compete with cabs."

Raymond Turner, president of Yellow Cab Houston, states that he and his company have not put undue pressure on the city to ticket Ibarra.

"All we've done is ask the city to enforce existing ordinance, these vehicles are clearly vehicles for hire," says Turner. Since Ibarra is running a company that hires out vehicles, he should be held to the same standard as any other taxi company. "The ordinance requires things like a sign on the top, a meter and doors," says Turner.

None of Ibarra's electric cars have signs marking them as taxis; nor do they have meters, or even doors. Ibarra feels that they don't need meters because they don't charge their riders a fare — they only accept tips. Not everybody agrees with him, though. Tina Paez, the city's Deputy Director of Administration and Regulatory Affairs told the Houston Chronicle that since Rev Houston's drivers accept tips, they are taxis and fall under the taxi ordinance.

The ordinance also requires that taxi cabs have fire extinguishers, something Ibarra finds ridiculous.

"We don't even have any flammable fuel onboard," says Ibarra.

Turner isn't concerned with the fact that Ibarra's drivers use electric cars, he just wants them to follow the rules.

"We're not out trying to make life difficult for people, [but] the Rev Houston vehicles look like taxi cabs to us and to the city," says Turner. Since the city has decided to regulate the taxi cab industry they need to regulate every taxi vehicle—electric or not. To Turner, the issue isn't about the city favoring big businesses over small or not encouraging green vehicles; it's about being equal under the law. "If the city is going to take this position that they are going to regulate this industry they have to regulate the entire industry."

Ibarra counters that being equal under the law isn't possible when the system is set against you. Ibarra stated that getting a taxi permit in Houston is difficult, because the permit price isn't sent by the city, it is set by the cab companies. The barriers to entry are too high to start a cab company,.

Turner is unconvinced.

"Without a permit," he says, "Rev Houston is flagrantly breaking the law without getting punished. It's like not ticketing every third person that runs a red light, just because."

The thing is, Rev Houston's drivers are getting ticketed.

Ibarra and his drivers have been ticketed over 15 times this year, with citations ranging from $150 to $200. Paez also told the Chronicle that the city's regulatory investigators have been instructed to ticket Rev Houston's vehicles on sight. An attempt was made to contact Paez, but she had not responded by press time.

For Rick Ehrlich and Dale Brooks of the Houston Electric Automobile Association (HEAA) the lack of interest from the city is nothing new. Ehrlich runs an electric car dealership a block behind Warehouse Live and has lobbied the city to embrace 100 percent electric vehicles for some time.

"Every city that's worth a shit has some electric cars in their fleet," said Ehrlich.

According to James Tillman, an employee in the city's General Services Division, the city does have 550 gasoline electric hybrids in its fleet, which is the third largest hybrid fleet in the nation. A July 2008 press release from the mayor's office stated that the city aims to have 1,500 hybrid vehicles in its fleet by 2010. While 550 hybrid vehicles in the city's fleet is impressive, for Ehrlich it's nothing to crow about.

The hesitation comes from the fact that there are over 12,000 vehicles in the city's fleet, approximately 2,000 of which are passenger cars. According to Ehrlich, the city has a written policy to replace 10 to 15 percent of their passenger car fleet every year.

"They are supposed to get most economic car to operate, and for the past several years, the most economic car to operate have been hybrids," Ehrlich wrote in an e-mail. He added that if the city had not bought hybrids, it "would have been a clear violation of long time policy."

However, according to a description of a program posted by Tillman on the Project Get Ready website, the city is finally joining the electric car revolution. Tillman wrote that the City of Houston "will commit to purchasing over 300 all-electric vehicles for delivery in late 2010."

Currently, the city has a pilot-program in partnership with Reliant Energy in which 15 Toyota hybrids will be converted to plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles. The converted vehicles will then be used as vehicles in the city's fleet.

Project Get Ready is a different program, run by the Rocky Mountain Institute, that partners cities throughout the country with private companies to create the infrastructure needed for plug in electric vehicles. Tillman's description states that while studying the converted Toyotas, the city will build "a 1:1 charging infrastructure for these vehicles and two home charging stations," and that the vehicles will be equipped with monitoring devices and "multiple charge station vendors will contribute to city owned facilities." Tillman goes on to state that after the initial roll out of the pilot program, the city will begin installation of 100 charging stations around the area, in city-owned facilities such as libraries and parks. The city's plan also relies on persuading other governmental agencies and municipalities—as well as non-governmental organizations like the Greater Houston Partnership, private businesses, and real estate developer—to install charging stations and commit to purchasing electric vehicles.

"The city will also explore creating level-three charging station infrastructure on the interstate highways between major cities in Texas," wrote Tillman. Tillman's description stated that the City of Houston plans on working with major cities to ensure residents can "drive their electric vehicles from town to town and have places to charge."

Tillman recognizes the inherent difficulty of convincing the population of the petrochemical capital of the country that electric cars are the way to go.

"The challenge of bringing electric vehicles to the city [of Houston] is more than just creating an infrastructure of charging stations," he writes on the website, "it is overcoming a mindset."

Unfortunately Tillman's program description has no timetable for implementation or budget attached to it. FPH

AMOUNT OF ELECTRIC VEHICLES, PLUG IN AND HYBRID, IN THE MUNICIPAL FLEET	
Houston	550
New York	308
Chicago	215
Denver	124
Portland, OR	40
New Orleans	0

AMOUNT OF VEHICLES IN MUNICIPAL FLEET	
New York	24,000
Houston	12,000
Chicago	11,000
Denver	11,000
New Orleans	2,700
Portland	200

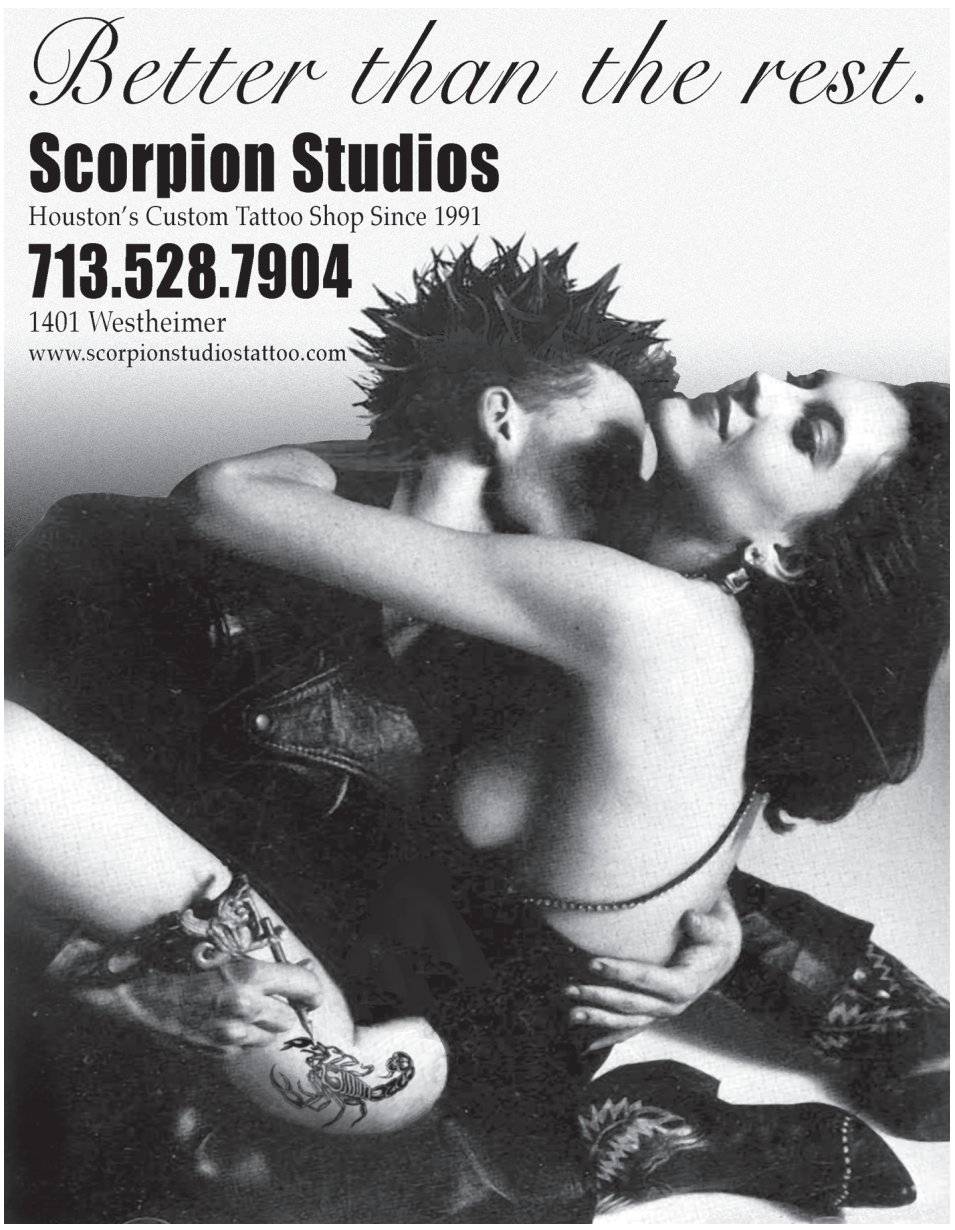
AMOUNT OF BIO-MASS, ETHANOL AND BIO DIESEL, FUELED VEHICLES IN MUNICIPAL FLEET	
New Orleans	2,700
Las Vegas	368
Chicago	309
Denver	242
Houston	0

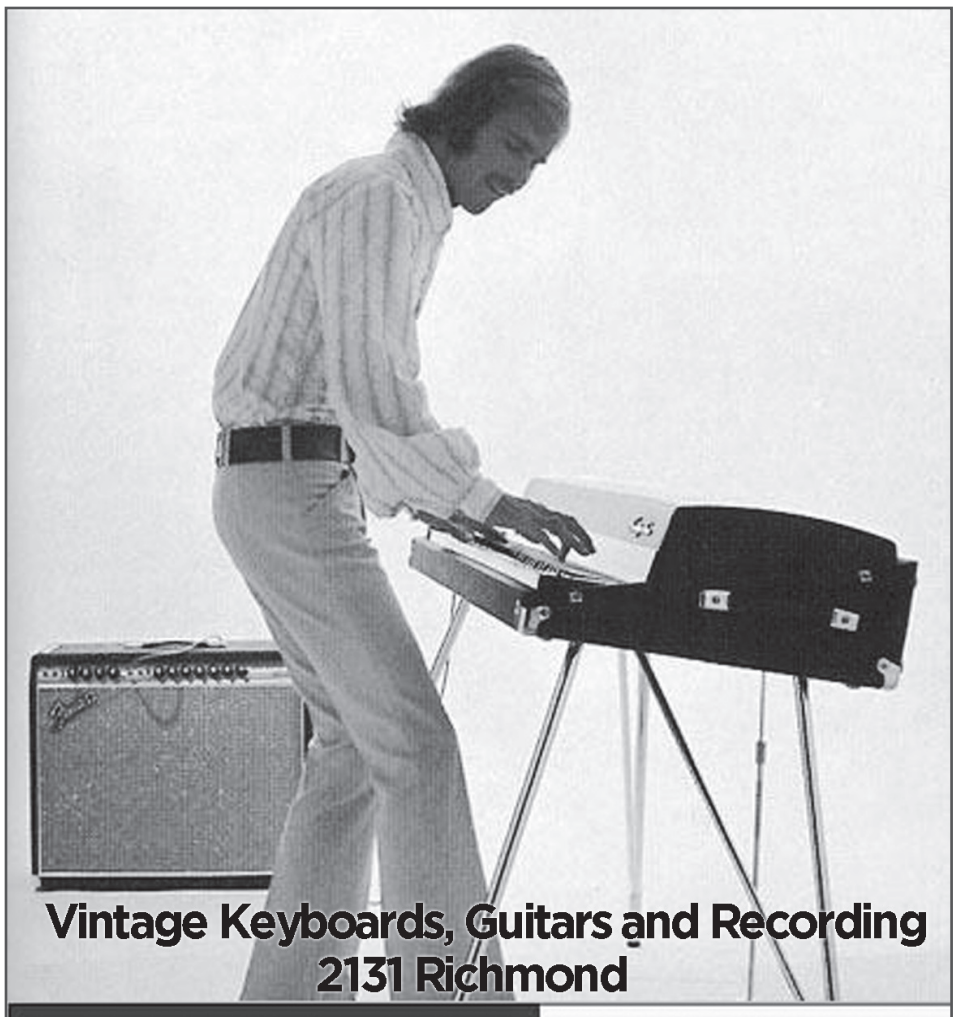
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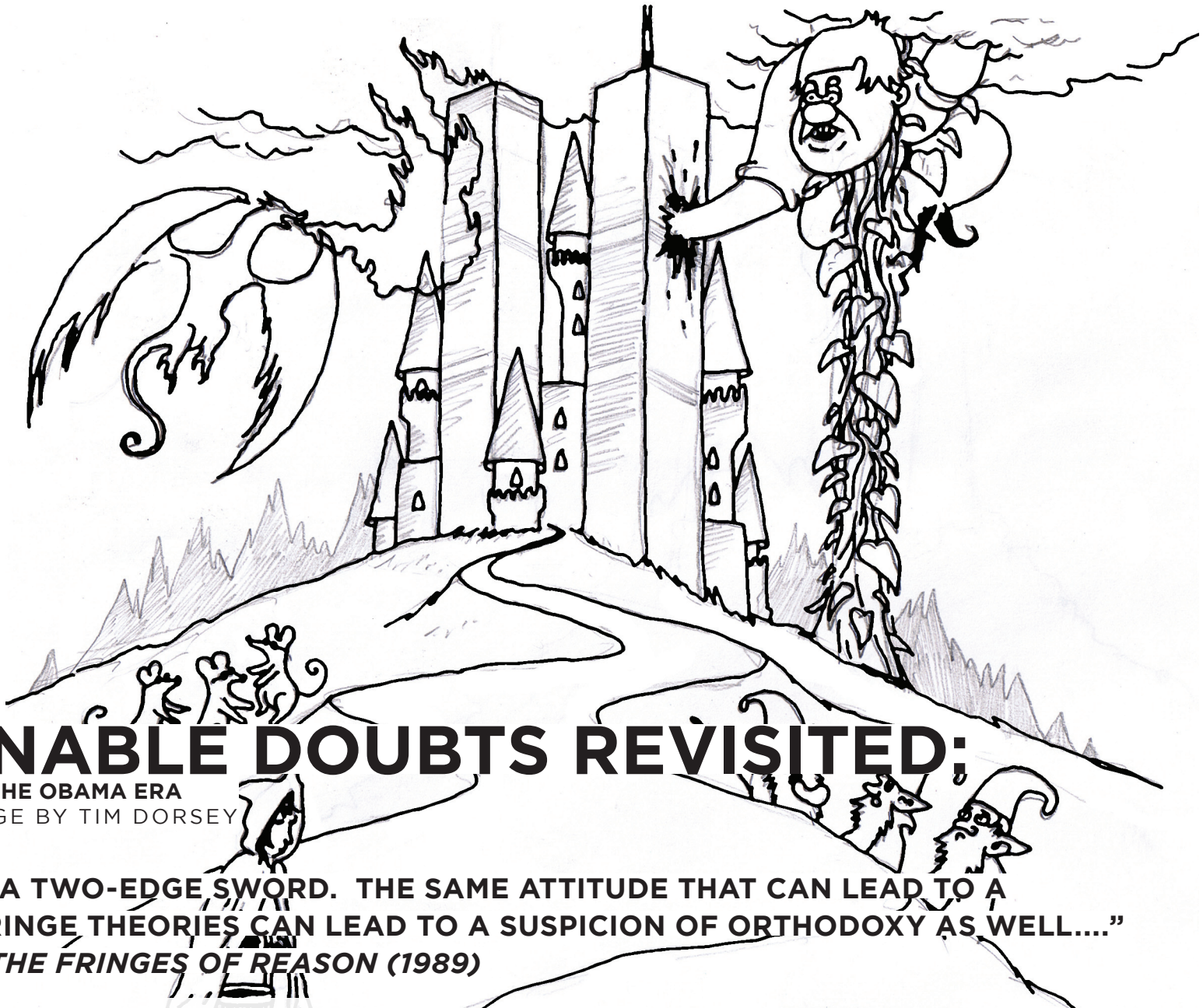
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REASONABLE DOUBTS REVISITED:

REASSESSING 9/11 IN THE OBAMA ERA

BY M. MARTIN | IMAGE BY TIM DORSEY

"...SKEPTICISM IS A TWO-EDGE SWORD. THE SAME ATTITUDE THAT CAN LEAD TO A SUSPICION OF FRINGE THEORIES CAN LEAD TO A SUSPICION OF ORTHODOXY AS WELL...."
— TED SCHULTZ, THE FRINGES OF REASON (1989)

TWO YEARS AGO, I used that quote as the lead paragraph of an article entitled «Reasonable Doubts About The Demon in the Basement: A Skeptic's Assessment of 9/11». Two years further away from the actual event and almost a year into the first post-9/11 U.S. presidency, I felt it appropriate to re-examine my words and thoughts...and see what, if anything, had changed. I continue to approach this subject as both a skeptic and as an agnostic. This is an approach guaranteed to generate scorn from virtually all camps that have a perceived stake in the matter, as well as a certain awkwardness with those, who like our current president, would vastly prefer to simply «move on». Move on... and let all of the incredibly unlikely events of the Bush Era recede into history.

The only problem with that is that in many ways we haven't left the Bush Era. Some of the worst changes wrought upon our society over the last eight years have essentially become permanent and institutionalized. The hope that our current president would bring us back from the brink of absolute corporatist fascism has not yet been proven entirely vain— but any prospect that candidate Barack Obama's rhetoric on the subject of «change» might be matched by President Obama's policies now seems distant and futile. The disturbingly Teutonic notion of the American «Homeland» is apparently as firmly entrenched in our language as The Department of Homeland Security is within our government. Ideas like warrantless and unsupervised domestic government spying or the indefinite detention of people who are somehow «too dangerous» to receive fair trial have become as familiar as they are contemptible. And at the heart of it all: the atrocity used to justify all the atrocities inflicted upon themselves by a once-free people — unexamined and too sacred to think about — remains 9/11

Two years ago, my thesis was fairly simple: that there were too many coincidences, too little untampered evidence, and too much convenience to take the official narrative of the events of September 11 2001 at face value. Further, I felt that any actual criminal investigation acting on the classic formula of «means, motive, and opportunity» would find it very difficult to exclude elements within our then-government from suspicion. Nothing that has occurred in the last two years has particularly invalidated the thesis or the suspicions. To the contrary, there is a slow and steady accumulation of evidence and informed analysis that makes the official narrative ever more difficult to accept. At the same time, there is a troubling lack of evidence regarding key pieces of the official narrative, evidence that should have emerged in the last eight years and has not.

Writing about the inconsistencies in evidence either for or against the official 9/11 narrative is beyond the scope of this article. The information is out there; anyone who wants to can google it in a heartbeat. The problem is that no one wants to. The purpose of this piece is to suggest that maybe you should.

What troubles me the most is how very little has actually changed. We are six months into a transfer of administrations and change of majority parties... and not a single Bush-Era official secrets act of substance has been overturned. To the contrary, there is growing evidence that the current administration is willing to keep the secrets of their predecessors at almost any cost. Among those detainees who President Obama regards as «too dangerous» to ever be tried or released are alleged 9/11 conspirators, many of whom supplied torture-extracted testimony (which, of course, remains secret) to the 9/11 Commission. These people are not comic book super-villains; they are as mortal as you or I and (apparently) permanently sequestered in the most secure prison system in the world. Is the supposed «danger» they pose what they might do... or what they might say in a fair and public trial?

And what of The President's unwillingness to consider the possibility of investigating far less speculative misdeeds on the part of the Bush Administration? More evidence mounts daily that there were indeed war crimes committed. Under both International Law and the U.S. Constitution, the current administration has a legal obligation (never mind the blazingly obvious moral obligation) to investigate what happened, if only to make sure that it cannot happen again. It is not enough for Barack Obama to merely say that «we do not torture» and express a willingness to move on. To do so is to implicitly acknowledge the concept of an Imperial Presidency in which— like any other monarchy — laws proceed from the man who holds the office and may change at whim with the man.

A very real argument could at one time been made that Obama had decided to bargain away accountability for the previous administration in return for the minority party's cooperation in an agenda of social reform. If that was ever the case, it was a poor bargain and certainly one that is null and void at this point—now that Obama is all but burned in effigy by ranting mobs encouraged and endorsed by that minority party. If Obama continues to push back on investigation of Bush-Era abuses, it is only because he has decided, for whatever reason, to become an accomplish after the fact to those abuses.

For anyone who remains skeptical on the previous administration's role in 9/11, it is all to easy to imagine that the ultimate reason for Obama's stonewalling is a clear understanding of just how far even a superficial investigation of Bush-Era criminality might go. Obama ran on the promise of being a reformer on the level of an FDR and a transformative figure on the level of Reagan. While he has certainly been a disappointment to progressives so far, it remains obvious that he intends to pursue a fairly sweeping agenda—one that would only be sidetracked by a full accounting of the Bush Era and that would likely be stopped cold by any sort of wide-scale re-assessment of 9/11. The fracture lines in this country have been made very obvious by the heated debate over healthcare. Wide-scale revelations of complicity in the 9/11 attacks by actors in the previous administration could set into motion acrimony that would make the current disputes look like a lover's spat.

Of course, it's not gonna happen. Even as The President is doing everything he can to kick this particular can of worms as far down the road as possible, American mass-media-driven culture is making sure that within another two years, it pretty much won't matter. It won't matter that ongoing analysis of what little evidence remains of the World Trade Center collapse shows signs of thermite combustion, or that there remains no conclusive photographic evidence of the plane that apparently struck the Pentagon, or that the 9/11 commission itself cannot explain the picture-perfect controlled-demolition collapse of WTC Building 7. It won't matter because none of this is ever going to make it onto a major network newscast or

website, except possibly to be taken out of context, marginalized, or mocked.

It won't matter because every break room on every floor of the office building where I carry out my day-job activities sports a wide-screen TV, almost all of which are tuned to Fox News or CNN... and such has been the case with every major corporation I've worked for in the last ten years. It won't matter, because we've already been informed that progressives who suspect Bush of war crimes are exactly equal to rednecks who think Obama was born in Kenya—and we don't want to look foolish now, do we? This country is held together by hypnosis and consumerism, and the only reason John Carpenter's They Live qualifies as science fiction is that (as far as I know) the people responsible for the hypnosis aren't skull-headed aliens...but they might as well be. It doesn't matter what really happened on 9/11 or who was responsible...because knowing those things isn't going to pay for a new game console or a new car or the cool new smart phone we've all been told we have to have.

So....why does it even matter to me, at least enough to write this article? Why should it matter to you, the hypothetical reader? I guess in my case it's because I take it personally when people assume I'm a moron. Perhaps also because I'm just barely old enough to remember when this country was a better place... and probably too old to live long enough to see any real change for the better. If you're reading this and you're part of this paper's core demographic, you should care because you're being handed a shit sandwich called your future... and because—just maybe—if enough of you wake up and get pissed off, you might have some slim hope of living long enough to be something other than a very small part in a very large machine of worldwide corporate feudalism.

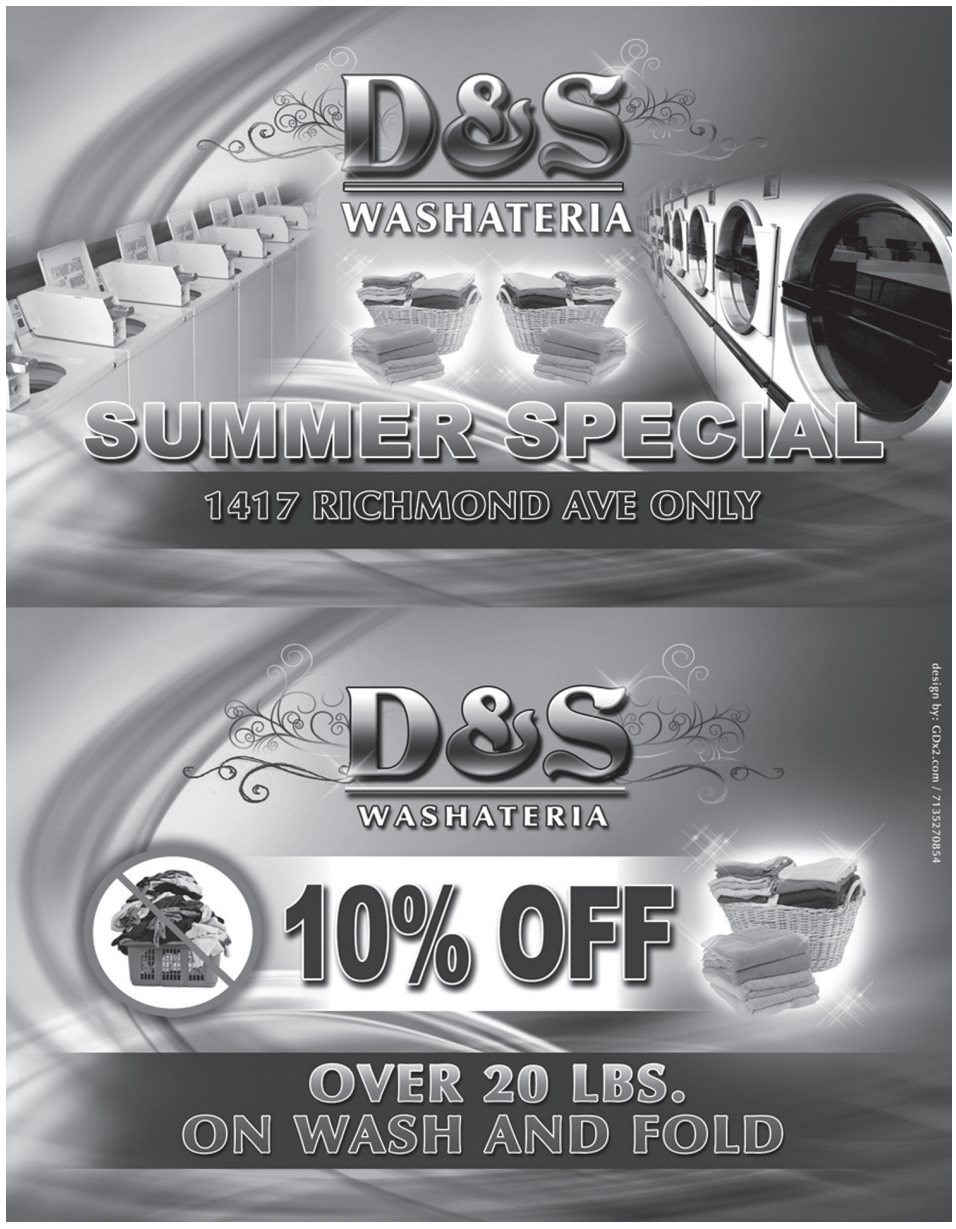
Also, writing this piece is, for me, something in the way of debt repayment...or maybe paying forward. You see, for years I didn't think about any of this. The Enron collapse, subsequent recession, and correspondent erosion in the IT job sector gave me plenty to think about in the years following 9/11. I fully understood that the Bush Administration was exploiting the living hell out of a national tragedy, but it never occurred to me that they might've engineered the damn thing in the first place — at least, not until I read a 9/11 skeptic piece in this paper...and had something of an epiphany.

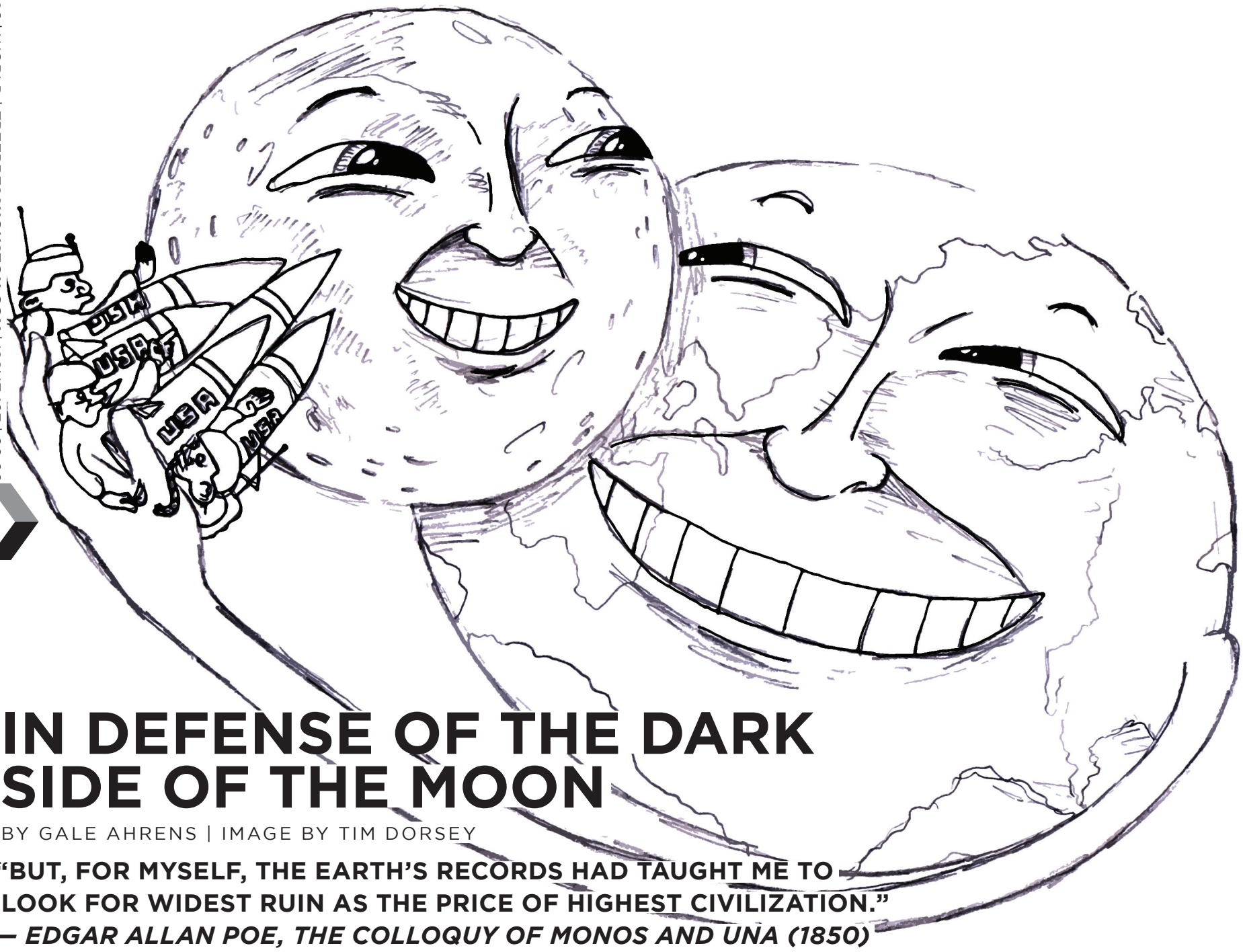
That epiphany was that I had been lied, had not realized it, and had not even considered the possibility. And I am very far from being some starry-eyed defender of the status quo. I watched the Watergate hearings on TV after school, watched Ollie North peddle bullshit under oath in his country's uniform, and watched Bill Clinton lie about trivial sexual escapades and get crucified for it. I didn't buy the excuses for Gulf War 1 or 2, much less the lies trotted out as excuses. Yet somehow, this particular lie had managed to stay below my personal radar. I don't even remember the article or who wrote it, but I am very grateful to them — and to Free Press Houston.

I have no pet theory of «what really happened» I'm trying to advance. I just know that what I'm being told by government and mainstream media seems very much like a lie. All I am asking of you, the reader, is to consider the possibility that you are being lied to... and not just about 9/11.

Then ask yourself if you're OK with that.







IN DEFENSE OF THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON

BY GALE AHRENS | IMAGE BY TIM DORSEY

"BUT, FOR MYSELF, THE EARTH'S RECORDS HAD TAUGHT ME TO LOOK FOR WIDEST RUIN AS THE PRICE OF HIGHEST CIVILIZATION."
— EDGAR ALLAN POE, THE COLLOQUY OF MONOS AND UNA (1850)

TWENTY YEARS BEFORE A POWERFUL SYNDICATE of military-industrial criminals conspired to plant a US flag on the Moon, a similar clique of madmen plotted to fire a nuclear warhead-tipped intercontinental ballistic missile at the lunar face. Code-named "Project A119," this plan devised by Cold War-era Air Force and weapons manufacturers called for a massive nuclear explosion that would be clearly visible from anywhere on Earth. Researchers struggled in vain to find any pretext, any shred of legitimate scientific value, to glean from this sickening display of militarist impunity. But the sole objective of Project A119 was to terrorize into submission every human on the planet (especially those who had never heard of Hiroshima or Nagasaki) with a demonstration of how the US ruling class was technologically adept and morally bankrupt enough to commit such an unimaginable poetic atrocity. [The scheme was fronted by Dr Leonard Reiffel at the Pentagon-backed Armour Foundation. The latr Carl Sagan did mathematical modeling for the project, which was eventually abandoned. AC/JSC.]

And now, once again, there are plans to bomb the Moon. This time the unilateral strike is aimed at the Moon's South Pole and the payload will be delivered by the LCROSS (Lunar Crater Observation and Sensing Satellite) spacecraft; the excuse given is that this is an effort to find water deep under lunar surface. The craft was launched in late June and is currently orbiting the Earth until it finds its target; if all goes according to plan, the M-Day bombing will be October 8, 2009.

The plan is this: the LCROSS first shoots off its 2,300-pound spent booster-rocket at the lunar target zone. Four minutes later, in a scheme apparently inspired by fanatical terrorist airline hijackers, the rest of the robotic LCROSS craft slams into the same area. Like crazed kamikaze paparazzi, the craft will snap photos and transmit data on the first strike back to NASA's mad bombers before immolating itself in a second explosion. This violent hi-tech sci-fi spectacle will cost anywhere up to $600 million, a price tag that is an outrageous insult to the millions of working people unable to feed, house, or medically treat their families. (As Gil Scott-Heron lamented in 1974: "How come there ain't no money here? Hmm! Whitey's on the Moon…")

Of course, there is much more behind this attack than casual scientific curiosity on whether or not there is water on the Moon. First of all, since the long-range accuracy of intercontinental ballistic missiles has never been proven to work, the LCROSS suicide mission serves as a live-fire test exercise for US war strategists with an interest in the precision of orbiting satellite weapons—in other words, the southern hemisphere of the Moon will be turned into a firing range, making this mission one giant leap for the global reach of space warfare. Secondly, LCROSS has been promoted as "the vanguard" for the US military-industrial-entertainment complex's return to the Moon—according to NASA, finding water is a necessary first step for "building a long-term and sustainable human presence" there. Historically, the purpose of exploration has always been the exploitation of resources and the colonization of territory without regard for ecosystems or indigenous peoples, and clearly the Moon is the next territory coveted by imperialists.

Only people with colonized minds believe these things are positive, or that this type of "progress" can be beneficial to anyone beyond a small circle of exploiter-elites. And, as to be expected, there is no end to the number of those who seek to compensate for their own personal impotence by over-identifying with these grotesque displays of obscene state-corporate power. You can hear them chattering on the Internet: "Flying a rocket booster into the Moon at 5,600 mph to trigger a massive explosion is just flat-out cool," says one, while another sneers "Public discussion? Why should there be a 'public discussion' about a NASA experiment?" Such remarks challenge our contempt. There should be a discussion, not only by the public, but also by oceans, weather patterns, plants, and all sorts of other living things—even the most uninformed know enough about the "butterfly effect" to realize that changing one part of any system is going to have a cascading effect on all those things dependent upon that system.

This so-called "NASA experiment" is a hostile act of aggression and a violent intrusion upon our closest and dearest celestial neighbor. Does any love song or poem or fairy tale worth its salt not mention the Moon? Who can take a walk in the Moonlight with a lover and not feel the romance to your very soul? At night, when the Moon rules, we sleep, and we can visit the Moon in our sleep with ease. The Moon is our night light, our blanket, our grandmother, our mother—it is woman, child, domestic life, tides, bodies of water, liquids, circulation, comfort, nurturing, paintings by Remedios Varo, stories by Jules Verne, and so much more.

Let us assume that ignorance will rule the day and plans go forward. What can we as surrealists or lunatics or astrologers or naturalists or anarcho-primitivists or Greens or werewolves or pagans or psychics or UFO groupies or other concerned members of the general public do? We must soothe the Moon, we bandage her. We implore other celestial bodies and entities to aid her. We will not let her endure this crime or its grim aftermath alone.

We need to communicate to the Moon. Talk to her in our dreams, trances, or meditations, and prepare her for this shock and wound as best we can. Hold her, send out imaginative protection to her, and put our dream bodies out there in front of the bomb. Collectively, we can sabotage the bombing or by imagining all manner of things going wrong, or encouraging the Moon to increase her own magnetic shields. Sing to her. Give her back just a tiny portion of all that she has done for us. We are all created from Moon dust.

We pledge solidarity with the Moon and promise we will do everything that we can to help heal her and to prevent any further such stupid, short-sighted, self-serving, man-made acts of obscene violence against her. **FPH**

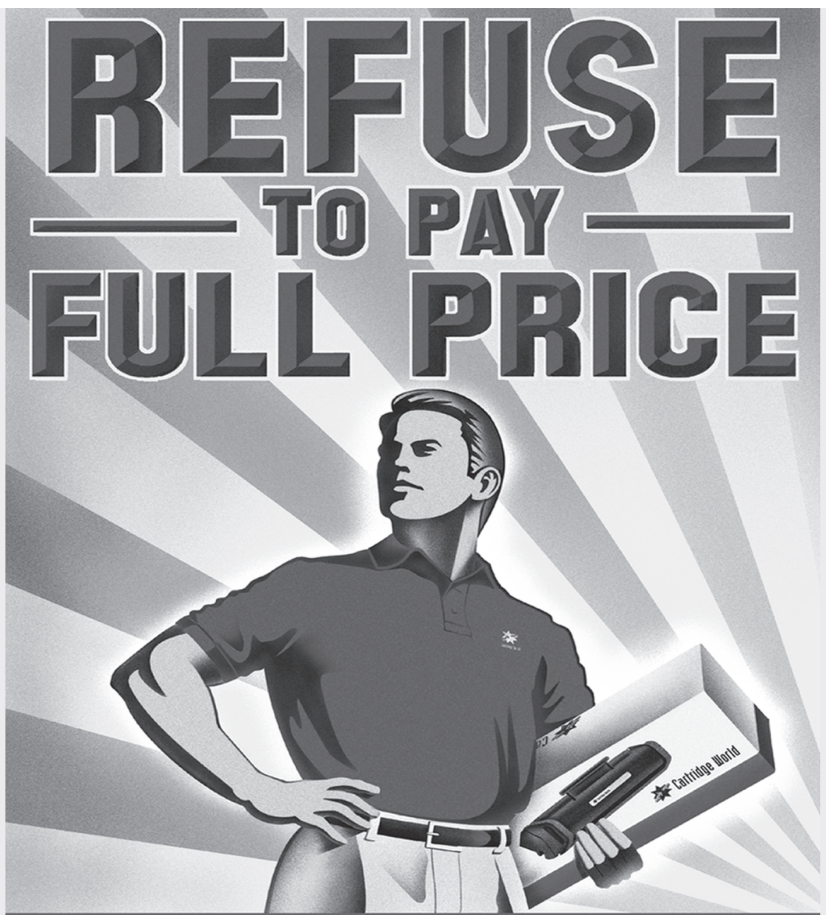
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TOO BIG TO FAIL:

INDO-PAKI SLIGHT RETURN

BY JOE THE COLUMNIST | ILLUSTRATION BY NICK HOFF

MY DAD IS ALWAYS PITCHING GET RICH QUICK SCHEMES TO ME. IN MY DAD'S LIFELONG STRUGGLE BETWEEN INERTIA AND AMBITION — I AM THE ONE WHO GETS ASSIGNED THE MOTIVATIONAL BOOK REPORT.

"READ THIS." He handed me a paperback copy of Iacocca when I was 10. "My English is not so good. Tell me what it is."

Over the years, he's passed me Tony Robbins, Deepak Chopra, and The Road Less Traveled, just to name the well-known. If it's self-help for the self-employed, you can bet he's solicited a Cliff's Notes version from me. Lately, with me being unemployed, he's been sending me every last piece of "earn thousands from the comforts of your home" spam. I usually manage to blow him off, but when he pitched the Shoppingnet.com free dinner "Internet Marketing Conference," my ears perked up. Free dinner? Of course we should go!

We sign up for it, and then the day arrives. It's at a fancy hotel near Greenspoint. I walk into a white marble atrium that must be twenty stories high and not one single plant growing in it. Nor a sign telling me where to go.

I feel totally out of place — sporting motorcycle gear in this fancy hotel — so I go wandering. I spot a stairwell heading down and decide to see where it leads. The next thing I know, my boot heel catches on the plush carpet and I'm falling, but I don't want to smash my expensive fragile helmet so I take two stairs in a step to catch my balance, but that doesn't work so I take four steps and crash into the landing with a boom that reverberates throughout the atrium.

My ankle is sprained. The concierge rushes over to help me but I tell him that I'm fine. I could sue their pants off, I think to myself, if I didn't mind giving sworn depositions that I'm the dumb ass who tumbled down the padded staircase because he tripped on his tough-guy motorcycle boots and didn't want to smash his delicate helmet.

I limp away and see a sign for the conference. Fortunately, none of the conference people saw me. Unfortunately, I know they heard me.

"Nice day to ride, eh Joe?" The grinning jackass who mans the registration desk, hands me a name tag and asks me a series of inane questions to establish rapport, which, apparently, means repeating my name. "What kind of bike do you ride, Joe?"

I wish my father would hurry up and get here. Inside the conference room, there's four rows of folding tables with chairs all facing a screen. I take a seat in the second-to-last row and read PowerPoint slides that ask multiple choice and true/false questions about the internet, like, "LOL stands for 'lots of love.' True or False?"

By the time my dad arrives, there's 25 people in the room. They are all in man/woman couples, except my dad and me and one solo guy who's got a Yosemite Sam mustache and hat. (My dad is in his standard issue ZZ Top beard and turban.) There is a black couple in matching lime green outfits near the front, and a white couple in matching red t-shirts sits behind them.

A thin blond woman wearing a black pantsuit and a headset comes barreling down the center aisle. She walks with a real sense of purpose and takes her place at the podium. She talks super fast, makes vague statements like "I have been working as a presenter at Shoppingnet.com for several years," and, "According to internet research company Forrester, while eCommerce sales only represented a little over ½ of one percent of all retail sales seven years ago, they now account for more than three percent of the total retail sales in the U.S." She has fancy charts and graphs to prove the accuracy of her statistics. One guy, a know-it-all Dungeons and Dragons master with long, greasy hair, keeps interrupting with dumbcracks.

My dad has left his hearing aid at home, as usual, so he just doodles on the notepad they've provided and passes me notes about dinner. Another couple walks in, late, and takes the seats behind us. They are Indian, like us, and they appear to be in their 60s.

Shoppingnet.com sells a web-design program for people who want to open online stores, and the woman up front is telling us that anybody can sell anything on the internet. It's always open, you can work from wherever, (you can even work naked, she winks and whispers), there is no discrimination...

"Because, let's face it, ladies and gentlemen, is there discrimination in the workplace?"

The roomful of middle-aged, out of work, dream entrepreneurs nods.

"Is there discrimination based on age? Race? Gender?"

They nod yes, secure in the knowledge that Shoppingnet.com will not discriminate against them.

Then comes the pitch. Not dinner, the pitch.

This "Internet Marketing Seminar" is just the beginning, as it turns out. The software is worth $199, she says, but if you act now, you can have it for just $48 because "We reward people who take action."

And then I see what she's up to. She's trying to make people feel like losers for not buying the crap she's selling. She's attacking our egos. Another chart pops up on the screen. It's titled "Four Characteristics of Success." The four characteristics are:

1. Desire to change.
2. Willingness to learn.
3. Make no excuses.
4. Make smart business decisions.

So, clearly, if you have a desire to change and you're willing to learn, you better stop making excuses and make the smart business decision to buy the Shoppingnet.com software and open an online store. Isn't that why you're here, anyway? Because you're a sad, broke chump? Take action, loser!

With the formal presentation over, hotel staff sets up dinner as the grinning jackass from the reception desk hands out software purchase forms. Since they offer a day-long training seminar if you buy the software (which sounds, to me, like another great people-watching opportunity), and since my dad's been bugging me for years to build him a website for his real estate brokerage, I tell him to sign us up.

The Indian (actually Pakistani) man behind us asks my dad, in Urdu, what the heck this is, but my dad doesn't hear him because he's drawing pictures of sandwiches. I chat the man up. It turns out he works at a convenience store in Conroe and he was sent here by his boss. His wife just smiles and nods. They're not really sure why they're here. Free dinner?

I tap my dad on the shoulder and his ears miraculously heal when he finds out the Pakistani man is in the convenience store business. My dad whips out his business card and starts pitching the man about buying his own convenience store. I've got some great leads, yaar.

We're all sitting in the back rows, carrying on and making fun of the silly presentation in Punjabi and Urdu when the fierce blonde woman walks up and asks us what's going on. She snatches my dad's business card from the other guy's hand, holds it up to her face, squints, turns her nose up, and flings it back down on the table.

"This is useless," she says. "You don't have a web site on there. Nobody is going to take you seriously."

He tells her that's exactly why he's signing up, so she backs down from him and starts badgering the other man. He's politic about it, too--says he's going out of town and won't be around on the day of the follow-up seminar. She won't take no for an answer.

"Where are you going, Irfan?" she asks. "Irfan, when are you going? When, Irfan, are you coming back? Don't you want to succeed, Irfan?"

Dinner is finally served — chicken salad on croissants, bright yellow potato salad, and a pickled okra. Irfan's wife is so offended by the croissant that she doesn't just leave it lying on her plate, she actually walks across the room and gives it back to the server before sitting back down to eat her potato salad.

We chat some more as we eat and the blonde woman fills everybody in on details about the upcoming day-long seminar. The main thing she wants to impart to us is that there's going to be another pitch at that seminar — a one-time offer that we'd be foolish to pass up — so we better get our assets in order (take out loans, transfer funds, do whatever it takes) and be ready to succeed when that golden opportunity arrives.

I limp out of there with a software package, and shitty mp3 player, and a pass to another seminar in two weeks. [To be continued.] FPH









CRIME:

THREE OUT OF THREE CANDIDATES THINK IT'S A BAD IDEA

BY MILLS-MCCOIN

WITH TWO MONTHS TO GO UNTIL THE ELECTION, THE HOUSTON MAYORAL RACE IS... BEGINNING TO LOOK LIKE A REAL ELECTION, COMPLETE WITH ENDORSEMENTS, REPUBLICANS AND PROPOSALS ON HOW EACH CANDIDATE PLANS TO MAKE HOUSTON A BETTER PLACE.

AND THUS FAR, three candidates have already released a "plan" to make Houston "safer."

Gene Locke, who has been pandering to the conservative/Republican vote in the last few weeks, has released "Locke's Seven Point Plan to Keep Houston Safe." Annise Parker, who has come on strong recently in the polls, has released her plan entitled "Safe Streets, Tough Choices: 21st Century Policing in Houston." Back in June, Peter Brown released his plan, which is called "Get Tough, Get Smart: A Plan to Cut Crime in Houston."

LOCKE'S SEVEN POINT PLAN TO KEEP HOUSTON SAFE

SAFE STREETS, TOUGH CHOICES: 21ST CENTURY POLICING IN HOUSTON

GET TOUGH, GET SMART: A PLAN TO CUT CRIME IN HOUSTON

I hope you don't plan on voting for somebody with original ideas because amongst this lot there aren't any. As you can read above, two of the candidates are just ripping rhetoric from those Jim Adler commercials. You know Jim Adler, "The tough, smart lawyer." I would love for Annise Parker to claim that she's "The Texas Hammer" at one of her rallies.

The fact remains that most (to be honest it's more like "All") of these plans have the exact same bullet points. But let's take a look at their plans anyway and see if we can make some sense of this part of the protocol for running for mayor.

Let's use Gene Locke's plan as an overall blueprint since it's the most vague and reflects all of the points the other two candidates have made. In no particular order, here are Gene Locke's seven points:

MORE POLICE ON OUR STREETS - All of the candidates lead off with this as the most important facet of their "plan." My first question is: how are they going to pay for that?

MAKING NEIGHBORHOODS SAFER - You might think that this has something to do with the first point. But, nope. When the candidates reference "neighborhood safety", they are discussing a popular metropolitan program called CompStat. This "management philosophy" program tracks crime trends in neighborhoods and aids law enforcement through things like statistical... blah blah blah- It's racial profiling and makes little difference if any. But it's very expensive so all the COOL cities have it.

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING - This does not refer (as I had hoped) to" vigilantism". Community Oriented Policing is a term that describes communities and cops being friends. Extremely boring and unrealistic stuff. Let's move on.

UTILIZE 21ST CENTURY TECHNOLOGY - WHAT'S THE OTHER %#$@-ING OPTION? Seriously, it's bullet points and statements like this that tell me, "It's doesn't matter what you say. You just have to say obvious things and people will vote for stuff."

REGIONAL CRIME LAB - All of the candidates spend a lot of time discussing the next two points. They all want an independent crime lab. Anise Parker, who served on the 2007 stakeholders committee that dealt with the embarrassment of our city crime lab, cites "that separation, entirely, from the Police Department is the best way to achieve the layer of independence the crime lab needs to function effectively and efficiently." I couldn't agree with her more. Scientists talented enough to handle a crime lab shouldn't be working for the city because we can't pay them enough money to do a quality job.

PARTNERING WITH HARRIS COUNTY ON JAILS - This another point that all of the candidates stress... and I agree with them again. Gene Locke puts it plainly when he states: "The city needs to get out of the jail business." The three candidates all want to make a long-term vision happen: construct a joint jail/booking facility in contract with the Sheriff's department to process and house city prisoners. This novel idea that's long been in the works will free up police officers to continue their patrol duties, instead of forcing them to deal with the useless duty of processing scumbags.

HOMELAND SECURITY - Annise Parker and Peter Brown do not list this in their respected plans because most of us hate the airport now and look at Homeland Security as one of the many macabre disasters left over from the Bush Administration. I told you Gene Locke was pandering to Republicans.

Now if you really want to be an informed voter, I would recommend calling these candidates at home or perhaps stopping by for a visit because honestly, they all say the same thing when it comes to crime in Houston. At times, they literally use the same words. So, don't concern yourself with their plans to cut crime. Instead, concern yourself with their policies on transportation, education, energy and how they will work to make my apartment a more sanitary domicile.

Seriously, don't rely on the Mayor to cut crime. If you want to be safe in Houston, the onus is really on you. Lock your doors. Buy a gun and shoot people as soon as they walk through your door. Stay home at night. Don't hang out in a part of town known for crime. And most importantly, NEVER talk to police officers- THEY WILL TASE YOU and then lecture you about various traffic violations while you're flopping around on the ground. Cheers. **FPH**









Houston Food Not Bombs has been sharing vegetarian food with the hungry for over a decade four nights a week. Your donation of time, food, or a 10 -18 qt cooking pot can help feed people! For more information, check out fnbhouston.org and fnbhouston@riseup.net or come out and visit 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.



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WAYNE WHITE:

BIG LECTRIC FAN TO KEEP ME COOL WHILE I SLEEP

BY SHIRAZ AHMED

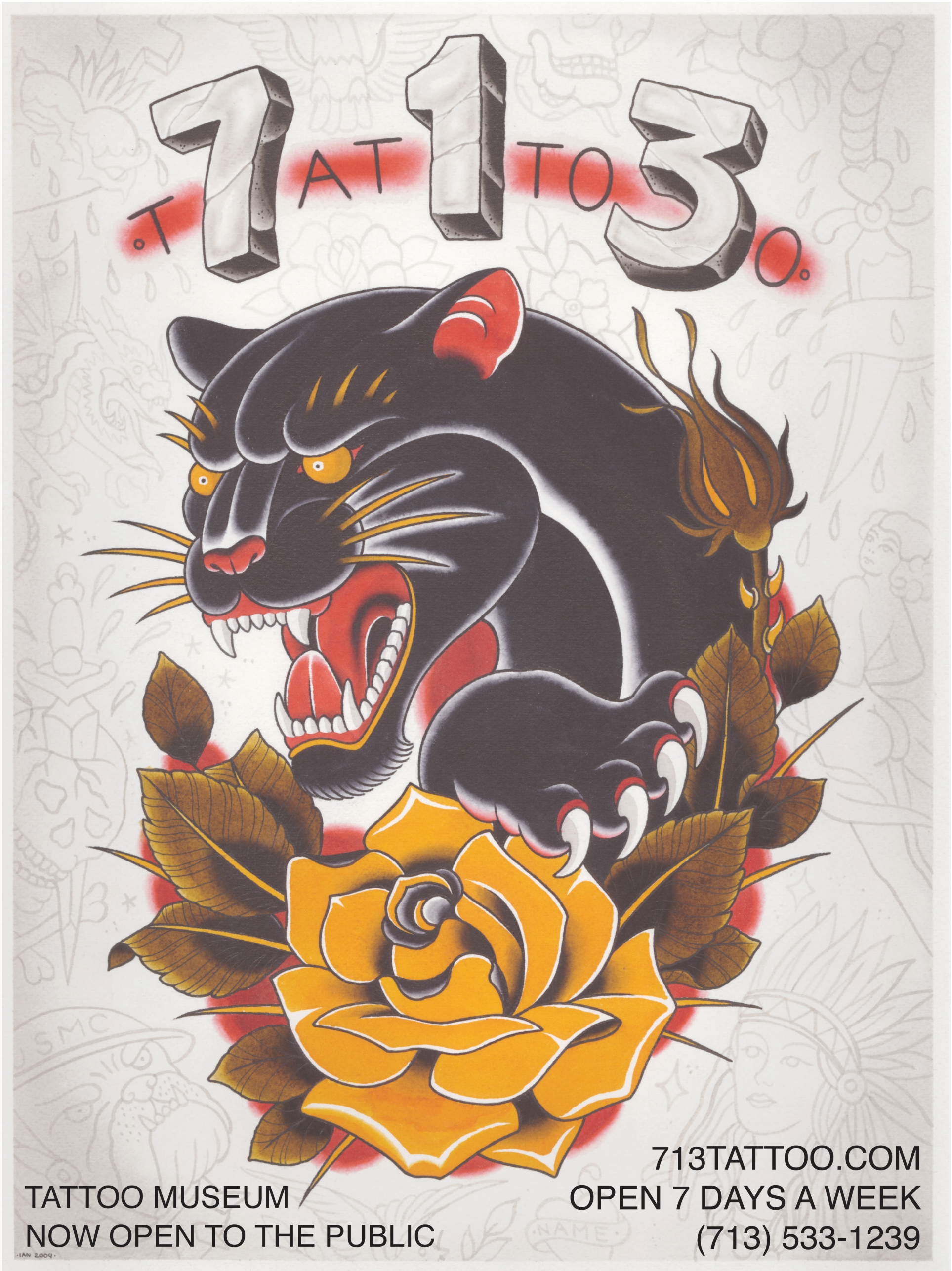
EVEN IF YOU DON'T KNOW THE NAME Wayne Wright, you probably know his work. Wright was the creative mind behind Emmy-awars winning puppet design in *Pee-Wee's Play House*, set design for music videos such as Smashing Pumpkins "Tonight" and Peter Gaberials "Big Time," and numerous other television shows and advertisments. He is an artist of all mediums- from set design to puppetry, cartooning to illustration, oil paintings to bronze sculptures. His work of painting humourous phrases on top of thrift-store lithographs has gained him the auspicious title of "wierdest landscape painter in America."

This September, Wright's intends to call up his history in puppetry, painting, and sculpture, and create an installation at Rice Gallery. The title of the piece, *Big Lectric Fan To Keep Me Cool While I Sleep,* is a homage to country singer George Jones's song, "Ragged but Right." "I was thinking of hot Houston nights before air conditioning and the young Geoge Jones in this city- full of crazy artistic passion and making music history," says Wright. The installation will be a fifteen-foot puppet head resembling a young, flat-topped Jones. It will be sleeping on its side, surrounded by floor-to-ceiling lettering. "It's a roadside attraction, a museum relic of a lost word, and a big wierd toy still in its box." **FPH**

The installation will be available for viewing from Sept 8 - Oct 18 at Rice Gallery.






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