

FREE PRESS Houston

Arts Film Music Technology World & Local News

March 07
Issue #77

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- Feminine Myth & Iconography
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- Shelby's Reviews

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cover art | **Timothy Dorsey**

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Feel free to take us seriously

-editors

This March 24th will be the Fourth Bi-Annual Westheimer Block Party. Along with over 40 bands, tons of underground arts, a cornucopia of people watching as well as the usual police repression. Last November, one graffiti artist was illegally arrested for tagging a non-permanent structure for display with the express permission of the property owner. He was charged with 'resisting arrest' without cause for being arrested in the first place. How the fuck does that work. Anyways, the charges have since been dropped and the graffiti artist has since filed a federal lawsuit against HPD. (You can see the video of the whole incident on youtube.com by searching 'Westheimer Block Party'.) Kudos to him. It seems the douche bags at Houston's 'Graffiti Task Force' have been taking things a bit too far. Several Montrose area businesses have been forced to remove private property-owner-approved murals on the basis that they were produced using aerosol paints; hence making them 'graffiti'. What a bunch of bull-scheizzer.

Anyways, we hope the law dogs will muzzle their snouts this go round and allow the patrons to enjoy a wonderful March day of art, music, and staring at each other. We promise this to be one of the best block parties yet. We have gone to great lengths to ensure a clutch time and there are even rumors that Calista Flockhart will be making a surprise appearance during Satin Hooks set. Lastly, I would like to bring to light the fact that I lost my virginity to a girl named Sarah Haney on a trampoline in a suburban park. Is that relevant? If not, I apologize but there is definitely a small sub-sect of the population that will benefit heavily from this terd of information. For the rest of you, buzz off.

-See ya at the Block Party March 24th.
Wear shoes.

look, a douche-bag!





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Arts

DEBRIS: No One's Listening Anymore

by Buffalo Sean





The two greatest tags in a long while came around in the last month and you probably didn't a chance to see either. At the corner of Montrose and Allen Parkway sat the Robinson Building, a magnet for graffiti for years. When the bulldozers finally came a last hurrah of tags went up; VERB, Pac-Man, JEW. After the last pile of concrete was hauled out it looked like the end of the spot (which will become an Islamic Center pretty soon) but lo and behold **GIVE UP** went out of his way to hit the last retaining wall with 6 foot letters about thirty feet in the air. Sweet ending. Secondly, **THE TRIO**- three morphing characters that usually appear as lushly painted wheatpastes in Midtown and Montrose- finally have a shot at permanence with their large painting on the south wall of the café Brazil. A back building was torn down to the slab and before the building went back up as a kitchen, the guys got to paint a lovely vignette. Sealed again behind sheetrock within a week of its genesis, the work follows an acceptance of impermanence recently in graffiti work exemplified with Wooster's *Spring Street* project.

Been to Austin lately? Well if not then go soon, for the next month Elaine Bradford's *Freaks of Nature* will be hanging out at **Women and their Work** (1710 Lavaca St.). These amorphous fauna writhe with awkward life, and it's pretty fucked up to follow a curving lime-green-sweatered throat around a bend only to stare into a ram's dead eye. Elaine trotted her works out at CSAW last week where she has a new studio, Andy Taylor and Whitney Riley have moved in recently as well. Her sneak preview coincided with a well-rounded swat at reality courtesy Rene Cruz, Maria Guzman and Rachelle Vasquez, and Lynn Richardson's *Remapping the Northwest Passage*. You really should try to stop by and see *the Northwest Passage* in action; a swinging, melting machine of white oil derricks, pulleys and ropes.

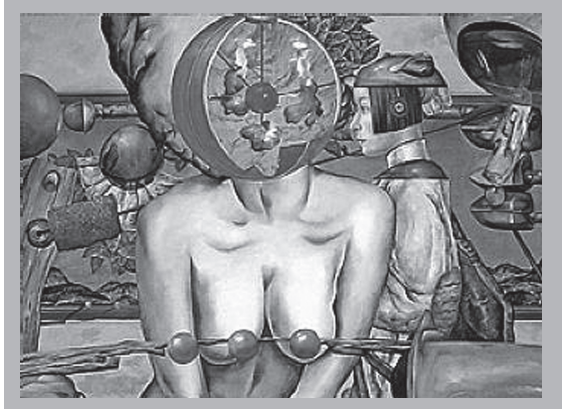
While Rauschenberg's 70s cardboards are up at the **Menil**, check out some new work over behind the River Oaks Theatre at **Texas Gallery** (2012 Peden). More benign, the work is reminiscent of the artist's 60s heyday without the political content of his famous post-combines, they reflect an aging persona drifting towards pastoral imagery.

Goodbyes and good lucks are in order for **Marti Mayo** of the **Contemporary Arts Museum**, who steps down as director this summer. Mayo has been around Houston art since James Harithas was tossed out as director of the CAM in the late 70s when she was an associate curator. After a few years at the museum and the director position at the Blaffer Gallery of University of Houston for much of the 80s Mayo has been a steady hand at the corner of Montrose and Bissonett. Good luck!

March 15th should be plastered to the back of Houston artists' skulls; it's the proposal date for the Lawndale Art Center. If you would like to submit a proposal or just want to look at the space and think about it check out lawndaleartcenter.org for more info. Crazy things welcome! The Lawndale has been the place for first shows and big breaks in Houston for almost 30 years. Opening March 9th, check out Daniel Adame's *Improving the Ground Game*, Jabari, Donna, and Stephanie coming down from the third floor, a collection of photos by Aurora Picture Show, and Janice Weeks.



Toyism
Koelsch Gallery 3202 Mercer Street
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Yang Jin Long: Pure Space
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NOISE AND SMOKE 2007



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Femininity: Myth and Iconography

Commerce Street Artist Warehouse

by Brandie Philbert



The image of a bikini·
is a social fantasy cre
·clad home keeper
ated in the mind



JANUARY 13 OPENER:

CANDY BIKINI FEMININITY SQUAD

Classic views of femininity hold images of tall, graceful women whose tailored wardrobe and predisposition to avoid everything dirty and smelly leaves them unquestioningly above the nonsense of farting. In direct contrast is the view of the feminist whose unyielding fight to remain equal leaves her with unkempt hair, no make-up, and certainly braless. Curator and artist Whitney Riley wanted to analyze some of these ides in the latest show at Commerce Street Artists Warehouse aptly titled *Femininity Myth and Iconography*.

Riley's paintings feature statuesque bikini models doing various household duties like feeding and napping with the baby, cleaning bathrooms, and in the garden "Making a House a Home." She draws her subjects from an issue of Sports Illustrated Bikini magazine she nabbed from an ex-boyfriend who kept the magazine stashed in his bathroom during their relationship. Like most women Riley found herself comparing her physical body to those of the models in the magazine and realized that things are not equal. While her paintings have a personal meaning Riley intends a deeper social meaning. The image of a bikini-clad home keeper is a social fantasy created in the mind in much the same way the bikini magazine sells a sexual fantasy that is not reality.

The show was certainly not about beating viewers over the head with angry female sentiment. The Candy Bikini Femininity Squad who served up silver platters of punch while wearing string-candy bikinis and bodysuits at the opening created a jovial atmosphere. The tongue-in-cheek humor made further evident in artist Seth Alverson's oddly vulval untitled green sketch; and in the music emanating from the pink and purple, plastic toy drum set on the floor. Doren Bernard created the six, color-named tracks specifically for the show as a movement of sound. The music begins with womblike ambient noise into cerebral chanting over drums and finally into a hyper electronic track the artist named 'pink'.

Contrasting Riley's colorful and exciting paintings is the papier-mâché installation by Sondra Mullenax that finds the artist herself reading "The Complete Book of Etiquette" alone in her black apartment complete with a full kitchen, television, and a floor lamp. The fabricated apartment and the girl, all white with platinum hair represents the very real perspective change that happened to the artist when she found herself single again after a serious engagement ended. In her 30's and living alone she was given old etiquette books to read that specified rules for women in her situation. For example, women who find themselves single again in their 30's should never fuss about the wedding that did not happen and they should not wear a wedding dress because it will make the entire wedding party look wrong. The installation captures a moment in time that no doubt every women has felt when recovering from heartbreak.

Laura Neaderhouser adds one of her crocheted pieces called *Off the Grid*. The abstract wall hanging is inspired by the breasts or curves of a woman; which Maxwell feels to be symbolic of women as a whole. Donna Lovong uses natural mediums such as large dried leaves and a bowl with water in *I am Cloudy Water* to write uplifting messages meant to remind women of their beauty in difficult times. Angela Maxwell's work was shipped to CSAW from Cairo where she says her experience with femininity and identity as a woman is frustrated in a country where men and women do not socially co-exist and sexuality has been banished. *Beware the Ghosties* features the images of women wearing traditional burka dress, but the focus of the piece is the wide open eyes of one woman who is looking alertly to the left.

This show brought a hodgepodge of images associated with femininity without creating a persuasive message as to what it should or should not be. Instead, the idea here is for the viewer to draw insight and ask what femininity is to them. Do you get excited about models as home makers? How do you feel about single women in their 30's and 40's? What about women in burka dress? These questions produce difficult answers that form the face of feminism today.

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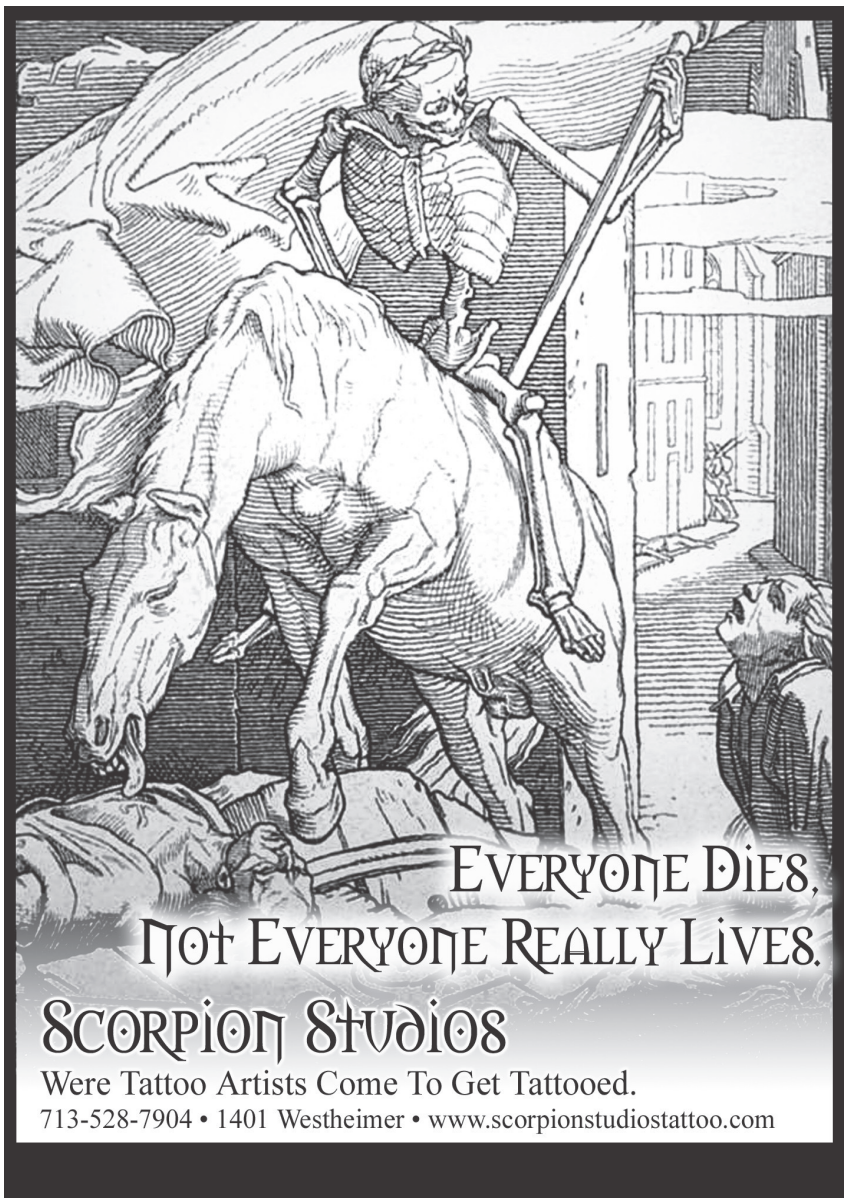
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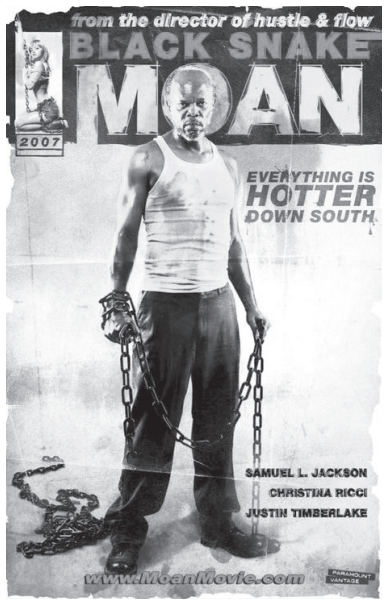


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Film

Craig Brewer pulls out stops

by Michael Bergeron



Craig Brewer plans on staying in Memphis. An Army brat, Brewer was born on a base in Virginia, and lived everywhere: Chicago, northern California, southern California. But Brewer calls Memphis home and after making three films there he's set up a base of operations similar to the kind of community that filmmakers like Richard Linklater have established in Austin.

With films to his credit like Hustle & Flo and now Black Snake Moan Brewer plays Hollywood's game but on his own terms.

"If I were leading the tour of Memphis," Brewer mused in a phoner with Free Press Houston, "I would take people to Wild Bill's." A classic juke joint that features homegrown blues in the style heard throughout Black Snake Moan, Wild Bill's is located at 1580 Vollintine Ave. "Then over to Cozy Corner for some bar-b-q," replies Brewer who proceeds to rattle off a few great eateries, adding "There's one place that has mustard slaw, you ever had mustard slaw?"

Like all filmmakers Brewer's influences are many. On one hand he was a kid "watching Benji movies and tearing up. Then my father took me to see Midnight Cowboy." It's not hard to see a link between the street characteristics of Ratso Rizzo and the denizens of Brewer's films: A pimp trying to better his life through music in Hustle & Flo and in Black Snake Moan a blues musician with marital issues Lazarus (Samuel L. Jackson) trying to cure a white trash nympho drug addict, Rae (Christina Ricci), by chaining her to his radiator.

Whether it's a Watkins sign in a small town pharmacy, a Denon record player on Lazarus' front porch, or a can of Murray's hair pomade Lazarus uses to slick his hair down before a very important gig, or the Peavy amp he jams on, Brewer captures the essence of small town Middle America. But the sexual undertone that scores the film reminds one more of Almodovar than Faulkner or Tennessee Williams.

Black Snake Moan empowers male and female viewers by showing what goes on in both Lazarus and Rae's head. "It's so great to watch an audience react to basically sex," says Brewer. One difficult to choreograph scene involves a swooping camera on a crane, and a young boy opening a door. As soon as he opens the door the chained Rae grabs him with her free leg and proceeds to have her way with him.

"I wanted it to be like a pit bull running out the door and grabbing some kid," remarks Brewer. "There's one moment where Sam is trying to wake her up, and Christina lunges up and lays a big wet kiss on Sam. I like to turn at that moment and watch the reaction of the audience. They flinch like they're watching a horror movie," notes Brewer with satisfaction.

Using a team of collaborators that includes cinematographer Amy Vincent and composer Scott Bomar, Brewer has created an instant cult classic with Black Snake Moan. But get Brewer back on the subject of Memphis and modesty takes over. "Memphis is the biggest small town in the country," wryly adds Brewer. Discussing some of the other films made in Memphis leads Brewer to mention Tupelo Teen (Bomar also wrote the music) and Starlet A.D., two films from John Michael McCarthy. A quick check on the Internet shows that neither film exists through the usual DVD or video outlets.

"Tupelo is a crazy film, but it's a Southern staple." Maybe the only way to see these films is just to move to Memphis.



DVDs still black & white after all these years

It's not like Bob Dylan has ever left the scene, and certainly since dominating his field in the 60s he's continued to record music and tour. But this month sees Dylan reinvented in a multitude of guises, including a couple that aren't even him.

Firstly, although his character name isn't Dylan, Hayden Christensen plays the lanky Village poet Billy Quinn in Factory Girl. Covering the rise and fall of Warhol created Superstar Edie Sedgwick, Factory Girl evokes hip early 60s coolness with both its content and form. I felt let down in the one scene that should've had a bigger payoff. A scene where Dylan, er, Quinn comes to the Factory in order for Warhol to film him. The iconic duo stand-off, share a reefer, make snide remarks about each other in a pivotal scene to the film that should have produced more in the way of cinematic fireworks. Likewise the character played by Adam Sandler in Mike Binder's Reign Over Me (March 23) is a virtual clone of the way Dylan looked on the cover of Blonde on Blonde.

Filmmaker D.A. Pennebacker recorded Dylan's 1965 tour of the UK. It was solo acoustic Dylan and the last time he performed non-electric. The subsequent film, Don't Look Back is considered a landmark music documentary not just for its concert footage but also for its fly on the wall observation of a rock star at the dawn of the age of rock idolatry.

Don't Look Back, the 65 Tour Deluxe Edition DVD packages Pennebacker's film along with an additional feature length companion, 65 Revisited. Basically there were so many outtakes and unused concert scenes that assembling the footage into a

TEN FOR 07

Another year, another couple hundred color, black and white and paisley movies. We're steering away from the trendy non sequiturs like Alien vs. Predator 2, Fantastic Four 2, Ocean's Thirteen, Rush Hour 3, Shrek the Third, Pirates of the Caribbean At World's End, and Spider-Man 3, the last three alone opening in May. Dates tend to change so we didn't use them, and there is no pecking or alphabetical order by which the following ten films are listed.

3:10 To Yuma – James Mangold's follow-up to Walk the Line is a remake of a 50s western with Van Heflin and Glenn Ford. Huh? If you've never seen it, check it out for a definitive psychological thriller dressed in cowboy duds. Tom Cruise was originally cast, dropped out, but you can't beat the pairing of Russell Crowe and Christian Bale. Based on an Elmore Leonard novel.

I Am Legend – This novel from Richard Matheson has already been made before as The Last Man on Earth (Vincent Price, 1964) and The Omega Man (Chuck Heston, 1971). There was an attempt to do I Am Legend over a decade ago with Ridley Scott at the helm and Arnold Schwarzenegger that fell apart do to budget concerns (the script is on the Internet). The 2007 version stars Will Smith. A disease has turned people into zombies and the last human searchers for a cure.

Grindhouse – A pastiche of B-Movie presented in the style of a retro drive-in double bill, complete with mock trailers. Quentin Tarantino and Robert Rodriguez at the helm, with Kurt Russell, Rosario Dawson, Rose McGowan.

300 – Frank Miller (Sin City) inspired tale of the battle of Thermopylae, with the titular Spartans holding off the Persian army. The premise hints at far out graphics with a gripping historical plot.

The Simpsons Movie – Yes, Matt Groening got the name for the paterfamilias of the popular television cartoon series, now turned feature

separate film works smoothly. Pennebacker and tour manager Bob Neuwirth provide commentary on both Don't Look Back and 65 Revisited.

The added wealth here comes from Dylan concert footage; it's pure, it's simple and undiluted. In DLB we see fleeting glimpses of whole songs but in 65 Revisited the power of the poet is never so apparent as when Dylan is busting a move with his complete rendition of "It's Allright Ma, I'm Only Bleeding," live in Leicester. In addition to the Albert Hall concert footage there are also long takes of Dylan performing in Liverpool, Birmingham, and Newcastle among others. The 2-DVD set includes three different versions of the Subterranean Homesick Blues flip-card sequence, a stand-alone piece opening DLB that's rightly cited as the grandfather of music videos.

Black and white television never really left, it just got colored in as the years progressed. Thankfully a stash of 1950 kinescopes (films made of shows shot directly from a television screen) were found by Johnny Carson's second wife Joanne. The Johnny Carson Show was broadcast in prime time in 1955 and the absurd humor present in this variety show format is a link between comics like Ernie Kovacs (whose first show ran in 1952-53) and the more effervescent Carson of the 1960s Tonight Show. Incidentally Joanne's liner notes mention that NBC trashed most of the first ten years of footage from the Tonight Show, which shows how typically corporations treat their own institutional memory.

The Johnny Carson Show, a 2-DVD set from Shout! Factory, combines 10 episodes from Carson's network debut show, and includes extras like an ep from the ABC quiz show he hosted, Who Do You Trust? Would you believe one contestant gets locked in the sound proof booth?

Carson excels in imitation and on his first show does a take off of Edward Murrow, whom some viewers may only be familiar with from the recent film Good Night, and Good Luck. Carson also mimics a mental wizard with a character that what will evolve into Karnac. Another ep sports robotic living in the 1980s (then 30 years in the future) and a skit where Carson's matador wife makes him put on horns and spar reeks of sexual innuendo. It was a cocktail hour, space age decade and this set captures that delicate state of mind.

film, from a Nathanael West novel about decadent 1920s Hollywood, The Day of the Locust.

No Country For Old Men – A new Coen Brothers film always deserves a look see, and the story here is mired in smuggled heroin, abandoned money, and border politics. Just like Tom Joad, I'll be there.

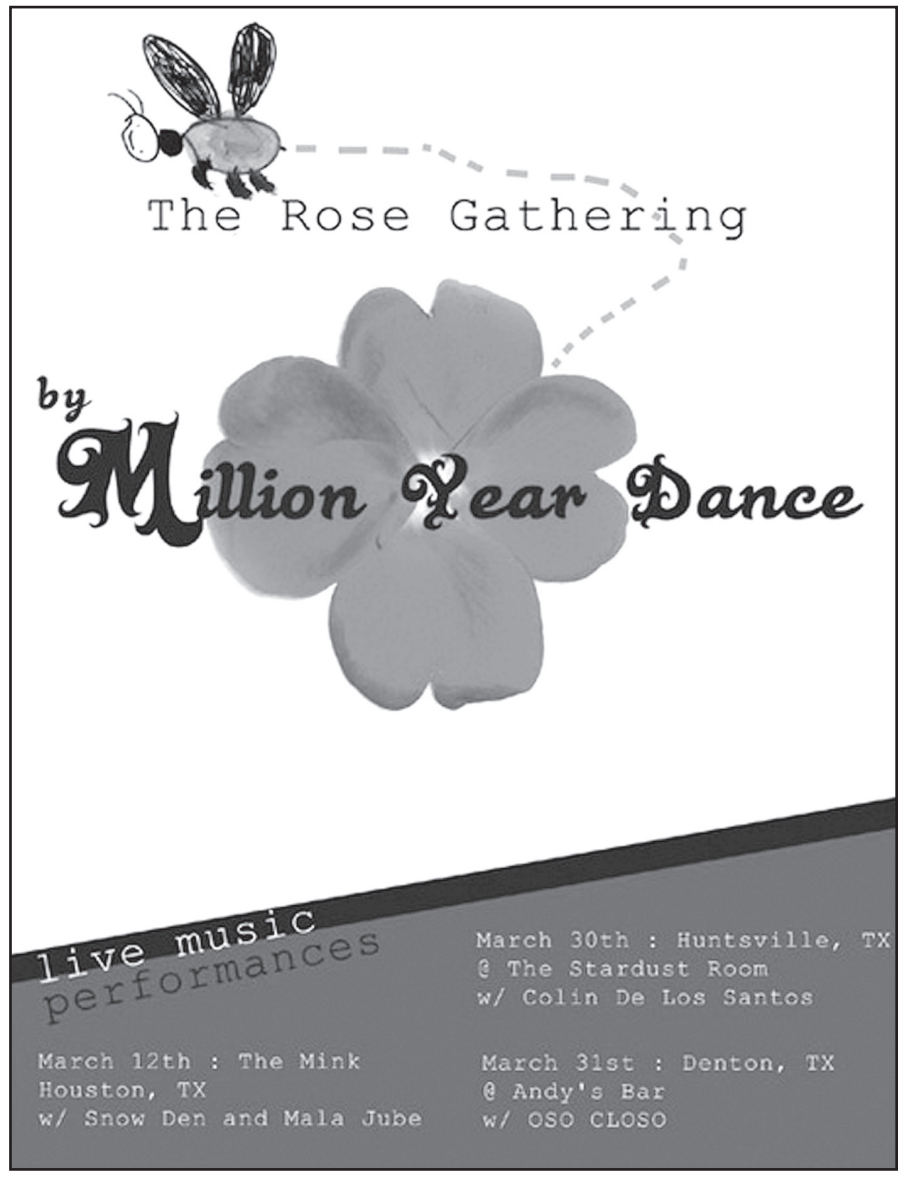
Underdog – Speed of lightning anyone? It's a live-action/CGI redeux of the cartoon with a beagle Underdog (voice of Jason Lee). Would you pass up a flick with a femme fatale named Polly Purebread (Amy Adams)?

Sicko – Michael Moore takes on the American health care system. We all know there are millions of citizens without health benefits, still it's intriguing to see what bumbling bureaucrat's mug Moore sticks his camera into.



American Gangster – This script has been floating around Hollywood for a long, long time. Finally made it stars Denzel Washington as a crime lord in 1970s Harlem. Russell Crowe co-stars, with Ridley Scott directing. At one point years back, the film was set to go into production with Denzel attached in a pay or play deal. The plug got pulled, but when it was revived Denzel was back on top getting paid twice for the same single acting gig.

There Will Be Blood – Paul Thomas Anderson has finally directed another film. (Thompson was the insurance contracted director on stand-by for Robert Altman on Prairie Home Companion.) Anderson helms a turn of the century Texas oil family tale, based on an Upton Sinclair novel.





Music

I MAINTAIN THAT CHAOS IS THE FUTURE

AND BEYOND THAT IS FREEDOM

By Guy Who Usually Writes This Article But Made Some Drug References That Could Jeopardize His Future As A Politician..

Well hello all it, is I the music scribe. Hopefully this year I can make it to SXSW, if I'm fortunate? From what I know, Thurston Moore is performing, Vashti Bunyan, and Frog Eyes will be there, and that alone has me ready to walk the streets and over pay for hotel lodging. Two very important events have happened recently for me; I got a 30 gig I Pod and I' ve been smoking some incredible bud as of late. I don't condone the use of any substance to enhance the appreciation of the arts, however, I can safely say that John Coltrane is genius, Storm and Stress is amazing, Ice Cube's Death Certificate is my "I Have A Dream" speech, and Son Of Bazerk is grossly overlooked…but hey that's neither here nor there. All I'm saying is when you're smoking good marijuana, the world is a beautiful place, except when you watch the news, or leave the house, or have a random conversation with someone. So yes, I have figured out the more insular your world is, the better it seems.

But whatever, how are all of you? What's been happening? Anything? Barak Obama is running for President. That's great, I'm extremely excited, but at this point, I'm convinced any Democratic candidate could win. Hell, Kinky Freidman or Ralph Nader could be president. Can you do worse than the last eight years? Unfortunately, the answer is probably yes. The only thing scarier than the past is the future. But I hate how all these people are talking crazy about Bush now, oh yeah, it's a mistake now. All of these Democrats are apologizing for there vote for the war in Iraq. Whoopty fucking doo. That's like the crackhead who stole my radio 5 years ago apologizing after getting shot and going to jail, "Yeah, I bet you're sorry." Hindsight is always 20/20. But I say don't apologize, just get on with it. Honestly, 3000 something American lives and countless Iraqui civilian lives, it really doesn't matter. When it mattered, you danced the jig with the rest of them.

So it's that time again for promoting the records and record promotions known as shows. Well there are some of both to talk about, and who knows maybe I'll say something nice. Anyway, I have to hurry this up, there's love to make…

LOOK AT IT

2/17/07
OF MONTREAL
Numbers

Of Montreal's newest album "Hissing Fauna, Are You The Destroyer?" is one of the finest albums of this year thus far. Rumored to be a troublespot in Kevin Barnes' relationship with his wife, which has since been reconciled. Anyhoo, tabloid angles aside, though it's a break up or want to break up record, it's surprisingly dance-y, sort of u, pbeat and catchy, and pretty strange. The album is also garnering critical acclaim which means that the hip people will shuffle to Numbers to witness the spectacle. This album will either translate well live, or be a beautiful mess, because it would be hard to ruin these songs. I say go because I'm in the media, and we control your mind.

2/25/07
BARR
The Proletariat

In the last issue, with the weird layout, I spoke about Marnie Stern, well this dude, BARR, is opening the show. BARR is said to do something along the lines of rapping although I'd put it more in line with Saul Williams or something of that ilk. His new album is more musical than its predecessors, and seemingly more personal, so the songs have more a narrative day in the life thing happening, which can go either way. I'm sure this will work out well live as the oratory nature of performances lends itself to his style.

3/4/07
JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE (w/Pink and Timbaland)
The Toyota Center

Justin Timberlake's song "My Love" was probably one of my favorite songs of last year. I thought he was OK in "Alpha Dog" and I'm sure, in concert, he is entertaining, because...um…I saw him on SNL and he really sang and played instruments, and in this day of pop music, that means a lot…So…go to this show, so that the Toyota Center can send me tickets for big shows like these, because my girlfriend isn't so hot on going to little smoky punk rock places, and I want to make her think I write about music that "regular" people like.

3/9/07
THE HOWLING HEX
Walter's On Washington

So what if I'm one of the few people who is continually supports the projects of Neil Hagerty, as Redman once stated, I'll be that. But on the really real, The Howling Hex's last album "Nightclub Version Of The Eternal" gets rocked in my box. Sure it may consist of more than one song with like 4 minute guitar solos, but, the drums remind me of African soul of the 70s with a reliance on repetition.

So it's safe to say I'll be there ready to rock, or roll, or whatever…

all of these bands will be playing on **3/24** at the **Westheimer Block Party**



Satin Hooks



Nosaprise



skyblue72



Penny Royal



Doo Doo Butter



Generic Tribe

LISTEN TO IT

HELLA
There's No 666 In Outer Space
Ipecac Records

If you've ever heard Hella, you know the sound is adventure in itself, and of all the things you cold imagine hearing on their songs, vocals are not one of them. But if you been keeping up with the band lately, you know they have been progressing in this direction. Let me first say, it's still Hella, everything you love about the band is still present. The unconsciously great drumming, the mind-blowing guitar, and the spastic structure within spazz is still present, but now there's singing on the songs. I heard it compared to Mars Volta, which is not far off, being that Jon Theodore and Zach Hill are both monsters, and the time signature changes and dramatic nature of the music is similar. BUT, this is still a Hella album, a helluva a record, and if you hate it, you can go to hell.

BOBBY CONN
King For A Day
Thrill Jockey

Bobby Conn has always had a penchant for mixing the political and absurd, and in this album is no different. In common Conn fashion it has touches of glam, pop, and experimentation. The album has high moments and other moments, like many a Bobby Conn album, it's entertaining at first listen, but after the initial magic, it loses steam. The album is compelling in bits, but repeated listens may be a stretch, but this just one writer's opinion, and a not a great writer at that, is it me, or are the type O's happening way to frequently.

TRANS AM
SEX CHANGE
Thrill Jockey

As Trans Am got all Public Enemy on your bitch as on their last release "Liberation"' it seems the band has returned to it's instrumental rock roots and decided to blast you into the future. Sex Change is the now science for the new revolution. It's rock filtered through a spectrum of tomorrow with yesterday still fresh on the brain. While TA rocked your ass and Liberation rocked your mind, this one returns to rock your logic perception interceptor. "Shining Path" is classic Trans Am, dependent upon whence you jumped on the train. The rock is in full a fizzect and all you can do is be hit by the meteor speeding into the universe you call a stereo. It is time, the time is now, Satan has had his way, the enforcers are back with news of a new regime, it's 2007, put on the weed embroidered space helmets. WHOOOSH!!!!

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and those who refuse.

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Soul Denied
Prototype 13
Last Rosarie
Necrofaith
Dead Trip
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Apoth
Deep 6
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Brutally Mutilated
Sever The Silence
Burnt Face Jack
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Lycophile
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Demuredin
Tejo Funebre
Jacknife

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The Early November w/
The Rocket Summer
Melee

Wed. - Mar. 14 -
Albert Hammond, Jr. w/
The Mooney Suzuki
Dead Trees

Thur. - Mar. 15 -
JJ Grey & Mofro w/Hobex

Fri. - Mar. 16 -
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Shelby Reviews & you listen

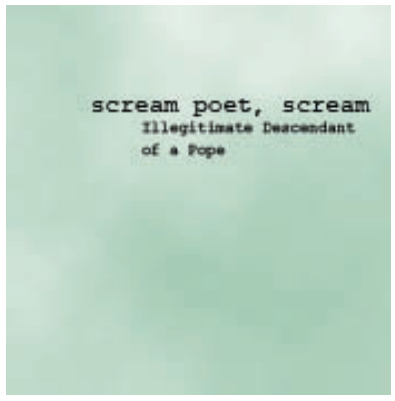
by Shelby Kelly



O Pioneers!

Black Mambas

This album, straight up, makes me want to get real drunk. Its got that loud yelling that blends well with a bar atmosphere and punk guitars that peel the labels off your beer. I definitely like the way this was recorded though, it has an analog feel that resonates and makes it easy to mistake these guys for one of those Murder City Devils/ old Modest Mouse-ish bands. Not a bad thing at fucking all. This album totally reminds me of what I used to like about underground music and going to local shows, which is a huge surprise in that I have never even seen one of their live shows. I know the guy that plays drums works the door at Walter's sometimes and always hooks my expired ID'd ass up with wristbands (Pam: give that guy a raise). The guitars rush in like Drive Like Jehu's "Yank Crime" and keep spitting spaghetti western licks into your food until you all you can do is wash it down with more beer. Hits and keeps on hitting.



Scream Poet, Scream

Illegitimate Descendent Of A Pope

Okay, when this opened off with a fucking American Psycho quote regarding Huey Lewis and The News, I was pretty much sure that anyone that knows the glory in the phrase would be playing a pivotal role in the shaping of the universe. Chicago's Scream Poet, Scream however, won't be shaping the universe anytime soon but are gearing up a sound that could have them at least 33rd degree master masons by Dec. 12. The opening track "Trainwreck" comes in with some big sounding These Arms Are Snakes-style shit but then the track veers off to standard Warped Tour staple punk. I think they should get rid of that. When they were doing the TAAS thing, shit sounded great, if the punk didn't contrast it so much then this would probably be an enjoyable song, 100%. I give it about 40% right now though. Don't get me wrong though, the singer has one of those voices that could become its own beast here in a few years and redefine what alot of people are doing in new music i.e Cedric Bixler-Zavala of The Mars Volta/ At The Drive-In. From time to time the band will drift in and out of some old Pixies sounding shit to some stumbling drunk Against Me which is not too bad for the occasional obvious influence. I'd be willing to bet that this band writes alot of letters to Gold Standard Labratories and 31G.

super happy fun land

March 4th:
Thomas Helton
I Want To Kill Every Human (Dallas)
John Edward Ross

March 7th (early show):
Adam Bricks (6pm) (Austin)
Benjamin Wesley (7pm)
The One AM Radio (8pm) (Los Angeles)

March 9th:
Poly Panic (Portland)
Bitbybat
Poopy Lungstuffing
Mirabai

March 10th:
Sat Matinee Showcase for Local Bands

March 10th:
Eugene Chadbourne (North Carolina)
Primordial Undermind (Austria)
Graustark

March 11th:
SXSW Overflow Fest
The Boxing Lesson (Austin) 8pm
Solarfed 9pm
Sputnik Monroe (Los Angeles) 10pm
Sunday Best (Nacogdoches) 11pm

March 12th:
SXSW Overflow Fest
The Human Condition (Florida) 8pm
Mermaid Police (Tennessee) 9pm
Hoots & Hellmouth (Pennsylvania) 10pm
Tacks the Boy Disaster (Austin) 11pm
Via Audio (New York) 12pm

March 13th:
SXSW Overflow Fest
Featuring Art by The Big Art Show!
Mossy Rock (Brooklyn) 9pm
Jonah Matranga (San Francisco) 10pm
Barbez (Brooklyn) 11pm
Toof (Austin) 12am

March 14th:
SXSW Overflow Fest
Cinema Bomar 7pm
City Streets (Canada) 8pm
The Headquarters (New York) 9pm
The Snakebites (Seattle) 10pm
The Mathematicians (New York) 11pm

March 15th:
SXSW Overflow Fest
Philip Gayle (New York)
The Bleeding Alarm (Canada)

March 16th:
SXSW Overflow Fest
8088 Record Collective Showcase
Transmography (Austin)
A Problem of Alarming Dimensions
(North Carolina)
*SONS (North Carolina)
Josh Abbott (North Carolina)
Orents Stirner

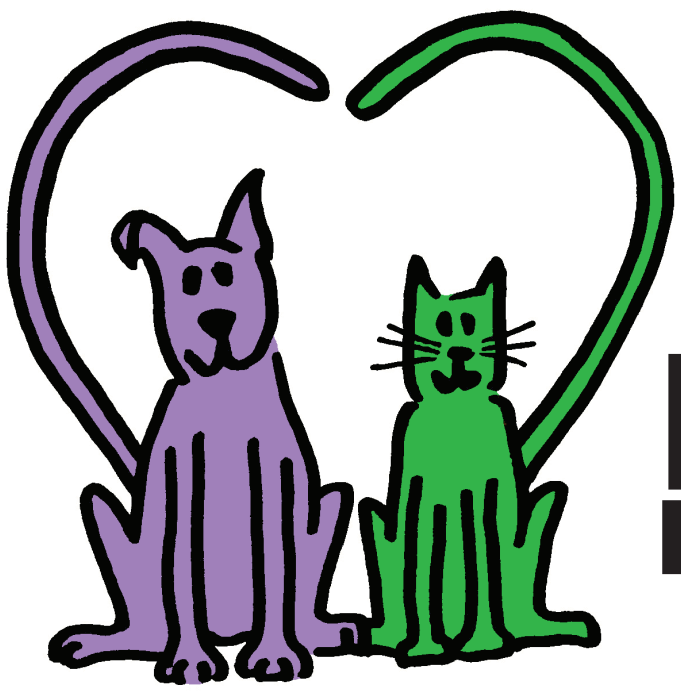
March 17th:
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Nakatomi Plaza (Brooklyn)
Ghost Lullaby (Los Angeles)
The Extraordinaires (Pennsylvania)
Iceage Cobra (Seattle)

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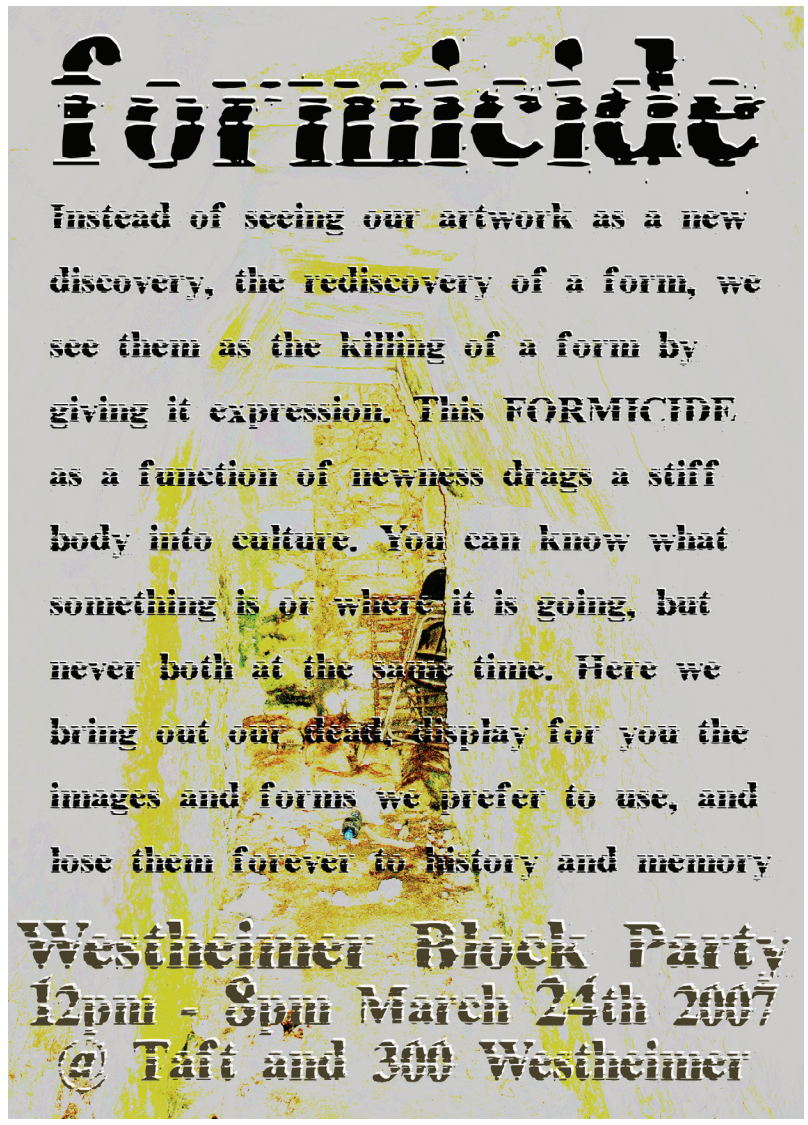
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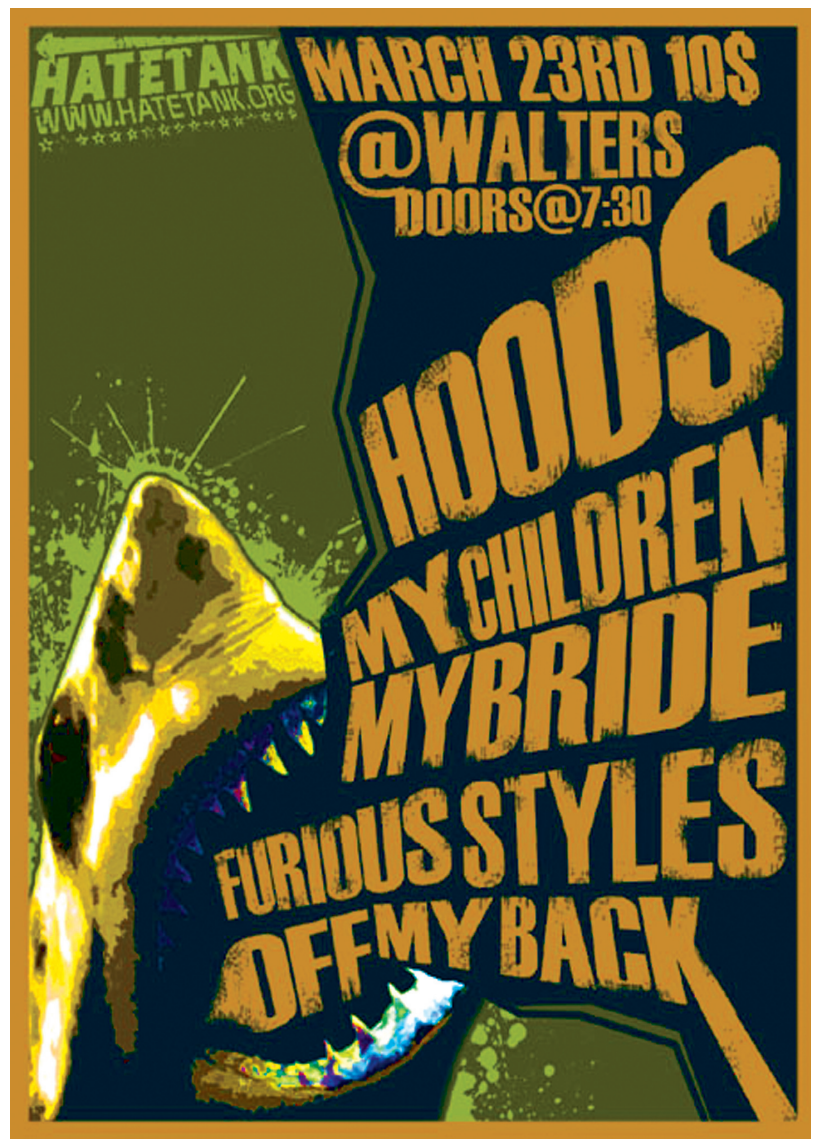
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Flower power & classic hits

by Michael Bergeron







Museums need plenty of space to put things in perspective. For example the Houston Museum of Natural Science uses the vantage point of a long row of busts of Roman emperors that seems to stretch forever. Two hundred and fifty years of select rulers lined up in a row allows one to stroll past centuries of history with light steps. Likewise, the galleries over at the Museum of Fine Art, Houston give one the space to study a painting like Claude Monet's La Grenouillere in a manner suiting its delicate technique. Seen from many yards across a typical large gallery the Monet work based on the Grenouillere spa takes on a shimmering effect like actual ripples of light in water. Walking closer and closer to the actual surface of the painting reveals broad paint strokes of aqua and green that suggests light reflecting off water. Only when you're inches away does the artifice give way to the emotion of the tableau.

Even more important is standing mere inches away from the swirling almost psychotic brushstrokes of Vincent Van Gogh's Cypresses. There are three Van Goghs on display as part of the MFA's exhibit The Masterpieces of French Painting from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1800 – 1920. This particular exhibit has the feeling of listening to a greatest hits LP of classic songs. Practically every work of art, and there are more than 130 pieces, is by a known artist that art majors and civilians alike would recognize. Stendhal syndrome anyone? The French Masterpieces show is on display in the natural light of the Audrey Jones Beck Building until May 6, 2007.

Going from a gallery filled with Gustave Courbet nudes, containing what MET curator Gary Tinterow described to the media as "lascivious abandon," and into another with Edgar Degas dancers (the French dancers themselves a front for prostitution, 19th century style) reveals that erotica is more powerful when it's an image worth a thousand words. The instantly recognizable A Sunday on La Grande Jatte, by Georges Seurat, is actually the last study of over 50 sketches he did before the final version, which is four times as big. The one at the MFA though has not suffered the color fading as the more famous final version. If you visit Cezanne's studio in France you will see many of the props that are in the paintings on display. Jules Bastien-Lepage's Joan of Arc (1879) is so photo realistic one has to do a double take to make sure it is actually oil on canvas. The Van Gogh's are in their own small gallery as are a selection of Auguste Renoir portraits. As a companion to this exhibit the MFA is screening French films in March including Jean Renoir's La Regle du Jeu (Rules of the Game), a film masterpiece that has never aged.

Also at the MFA is The Temptations of Flora: Jan van Huysum (1682 – 1749). When the MFA opened the Beck building a few years back the one painting that stuck in my mind was a van Huysum painting of flowers. Make no mistake, in van Huysum's world an actual rare flower (like two-toned tulips) would sell for more than a working person made in a lifetime. van Huysum has a very distinct style that includes a curling of the flower stalks that directs the eye, and many hidden features that take a few minutes to find. For instance, all his flower paintings have butterflies, fruit, and various bugs but you only spot them after you have stared long and hard at the composition. The series takes up three galleries, and the back section of sketches is enclosed away from natural light. Imagine my surprise on examining one piece that contains grapes among the flowers only to finally seize upon the reflection of a window on a single grape. Perhaps not surprisingly at the other end of the van Huysum show one sees the image of a church across the street from the MFA reflected on the glass in front of another painting.

Not forgotten but long gone is the age of Imperial Rome, a time warp kind of exhibit that runs at the HMNS until July 29. The previously mentioned row of Roman emperors brings to mind an apt comparison to our present time. Imperial Rome lasted approximately 250 years and to see several rulers in a row is to realize changes in style (short hair gives way to long locks and Hadrian is the first to sport a beard), not unlike the effect of looking at portraits of Americans over the last two centuries. Accompanying the busts are coins bearing the various emperor's likeness. Even though this view into the past goes back nearly 2000 years, the Romans had running water and most of the personal items you would find in your bathroom today. Looking at the (many in excellent condition) combs, hairpins, weights, terra cotta containers, game pieces, one has the feeling that we have not advanced at all since Julius Caesar was stabbed to death in the Senate. The real difference is that nowadays the assassination takes place with newspapers and Internet websites.

Further info can be found at:
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http://www.mfah.org/

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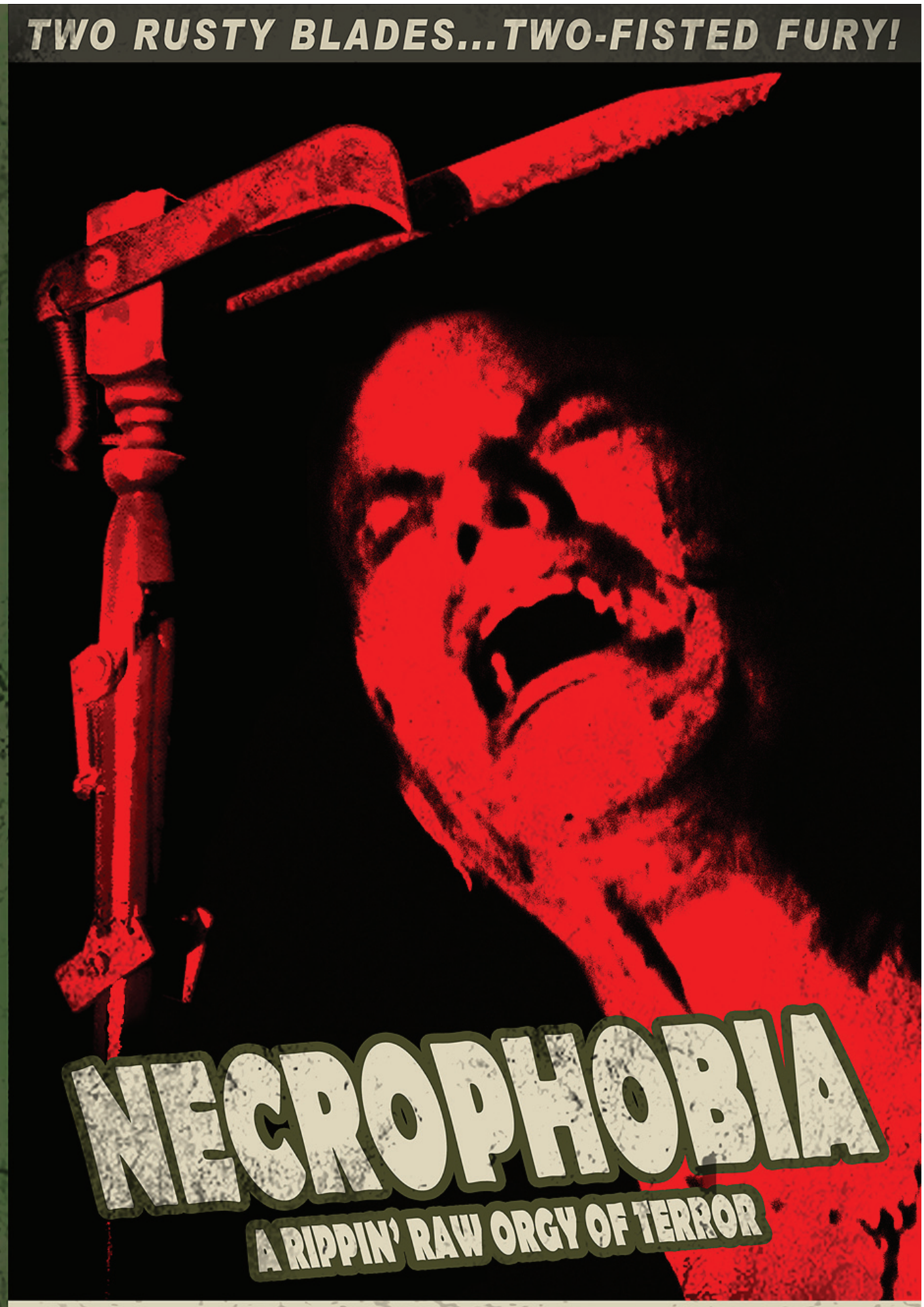
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Free Press Houston
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World

Keffiyeh Couture?

Sousan Hammad



Urban Outfitters, the nation-wide trendy clothing store, began to sell the black and white keffiyeh as an 'anti-war scarf'

Corporations that capitalize on cultural garments are now embracing the black and white keffiyeh, a headscarf that is worn by Palestinians and made famous by the late Palestinian president, Yasser Arafat. It happened with Che Guevara; his famous 'Korda' picture was plastered on t-shirts and posters and ultimately became a cultural icon. As corporations are now marketing the keffiyeh as a fashionable 'anti-war' scarf, sympathetic activists who are buying the scarves should support alternative means to capitalize on people's cultures, from which the Palestinian people can benefit from the sales and marketing of their cultural garments rather than corporations such as Urban Outfitters.

Urban Outfitters, the nation-wide trendy clothing store, began to sell the black and white keffiyeh as an 'anti-war scarf' and even designed a shirt from the keffiyeh's black and white checkered look. The keffiyeh was selling ridiculously fast for $20. Hipsters and activists adorned the scarf, wrapping it around their necks, to show their solidarity with the Palestinian people, and that is in some sense a good image for Palestinians who are commonly branded as 'terrorists' and savagely displayed on television screens around the world with a keffiyeh wrapped around their face.

Yet as sales increased and the keffiyeh became noticeable on city streets, college campuses and leftist hippie hangouts, the keffiyeh's were eventually pulled from the shelves of Urban Outfitters in response to complaints from Jewish community members who questioned whether the 'anti-war' marketing strategy was suggestive of an anti-Israel position and an expression of sympathy for terrorism.

In the 1930's, the keffiyeh became a symbol for Palestinian nationalism and the British attempted to ban it for that reason. During the first *Intifada* in 1987, it again became a nationalistic symbol for the young men who buried their faces underneath the keffiyeh as the uprising began. In other Middle Eastern countries, the headscarf is adorned but in different colors. In Jordan, the king prances around taking pictures in a red and white keffiyeh while in Iraq it is more of a tan-colored or sometimes predominately red keffiyeh. Arabs wear the keffiyeh as a practical garment and benefit from it in numerous ways. It serves a purpose in the rural lives of farmers who endure the hardships of nature as they work on their land from sunrise to sunset.

In an ironic twist, entrepreneurs in Tel Aviv are now selling keffiyehs that are adorned with miniature Stars of David and border stripes that resemble the stripes on the Israeli flag. The entrepreneurs claim that because everyone else in the region has a keffiyeh it would only be fair for Israelis to have their own patriotic keffiyeh.

In Palestine keffiyehs are sold for no more than $5. Despite Israeli control over the movement of goods and services, non-profit organizations are working to assist and alleviate poverty for Palestinians. There could be great benefit if keffiyehs were sold at a decent price and used as a measure to help the 51% of Palestinians who are unemployed due to the general closure and separation policy imposed by Israel in March 1993, which has not been lifted since.

It is common in refugee camps for women to sell hand-embroidered wallets and purses with the traditional Palestinian design. Some NGO's have even helped set up websites to assist in international sales. If internationalists adore the keffiyeh so much and claim to stand in solidarity with the struggles of Palestinians, then the idea of buying it from Palestine itself should not be an issue. In fact, it would show just how much solidarity one truly has.

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Free Press Houston
Issue 77 | 03/07

Herd in the scene

Rumors, Tumors, and Hearsay

by Alex Wukman



Don't listen to this man...

editors note: As always with anything that comes from the mind of Wukman, all statements contained within this article are purely rumor and opinion. No facts here folks.

Jim Pirtle, owner of Notsuoh's, had a very unfriendly social call paid to him by a few downtown business men. Amongst other things they threatened to "shut him down." This visit came after a fairly contentious Downtown Business District Association meeting in which everyone from the bartenders to the club owners to the mayor were pointing fingers at each other in an attempt to shift the blame about why downtown is failing. One of the main reasons for the crowds not coming might be the police presence in downtown. Case in point TABC nabbed three Suede bartenders in a sting. Seems they forgot to ask for IDs on a Friday night.

Oh before I forget, a little bird in a red dress told me that Houston Rollerderby is considering letting artists exhibit work before their bouts. Considering that Rollerderby is now at the Verizon this could be a big boost to local artists. The idea has to go before the Rollerderby events council so expect word back very soon.

Another thing, David Beebee over at the Continental is looking for used theatre curtains for the club he's building in Marfa. He's doing it with the pastor of his church so this is a religious thing. If you know where to get some curtains stop by the continental and let him know, you never know it might make the difference between heaven and hell.

Heading over to Montrose, it seems that Marianna of Mausoleum/Helios fame has said that Helios will be reopening in about three months.. It also seems that The Proletartiat is in the midst of a shake up. Shauna the long term booker has moved on to greener pastures with Diverseworks and Denise has to fill holes in the schedule herself. Plus she is in the final running for the Metro design a station contest.

The way this works is that Metro will select 20 artists and give them 3-5 stations a piece to place art in. Quick addition puts the total number of stations somewhere between 60 and 100 which means that businesses all over town will suffer the same fate that Main Street did during the construction. Can anyone say ghost town?

On a lighter trip, there's good news for people who like experimental art and don't care about surroundings; a new alternative space has opened. This one is called Refuge and it's located in an apartment at 302 W. Saulnier #4. They are only open Saturdays from one to six, but hey at least they're trying right?

While we're on the subject of alternative spaces, and this is most likely premature, Bill Hicks Resurrection labs might be reopening with a whole new crew. It will most likely have a more feminine air. Which is a good thing, the unbridled testosterone of a car smash was a bit much.

Listen up dancers: Etro has said they will have DJs very soon. They just have to get their gear in. Finally all those Boys and Girls club kids who don't want to drive into Midtown will have a place to get down.

However the crowd might have some trouble acquiring party favors. It seems that the Aryan Nation has made serious inroads into the Montrose drug trade. Even the old standby store fronts have been cleaning up their acts lately.

Rumors still circulate up and down Washingotn ave. about Mary Jane's reopening; personally I would rather see El Musico reopen. It had a better name. Also in the Washington neighborhood, Sedition Books is desperately trying to keep the revolutionary flame burning on less than twenty hours a week. It seems that a full time political bookstore has a hard time making it in Houston.

Speaking of politics, now this may just be me, but it seems that the only Houston group lining up to oppose the coal plants is Billionaires for Bush. Not that Houston activists are really necessary to the campaign; after all full page ads in the Chronicle and the Press don't come cheap.

On another note the downtown bike messengers are in the early stages of unionizing. They've chosen to go with the I.W.W. Only time will tell how things pan out for them.

It seems that the Aryan Nation has made serious inroads into the Montrose drug trade

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Mystery:
How Wealth Creates Poverty in the World

By Michael Parenti



There is a "mystery" we must explain: How is it that as corporate investments and foreign aid and international loans to poor countries have increased dramatically throughout the world over the last half century, so has poverty? The number of people living in poverty is growing at a faster rate than the world's population. What do we make of this?

Over the last half century, U.S. industries and banks (and other western corporations) have invested heavily in those poorer regions of Asia, Africa, and Latin America known as the "Third World." The transnationals are attracted by the rich natural resources, the high return that comes from low-paid labor, and the nearly complete absence of taxes, environmental regulations, worker benefits, and occupational safety costs.

The U.S. government has subsidized this flight of capital by granting corporations tax concessions on their overseas investments, and even paying some of their relocation expenses---much to the outrage of labor unions here at home who see their jobs evaporating.

The transnationals push out local businesses in the Third World and preempt their markets. American agribusiness cartels, heavily subsidized by U.S. taxpayers, dump surplus products in other countries at below cost and undersell local farmers. As Christopher Cook describes it in his Diet for a Dead Planet, they expropriate the best land in these countries for cash-crop exports, usually monoculture crops requiring large amounts of pesticides, leaving less and less acreage for the hundreds of varieties of organically grown foods that feed the local populations.

By displacing local populations from their lands and robbing them of their self-sufficiency, corporations create overcrowded labor markets of desperate people who are forced into shanty towns to toil for poverty wages (when they can get work), often in violation of the countries' own minimum wage laws.

In Haiti, for instance, workers are paid 11 cents an hour by corporate giants such as Disney, Wal-Mart, and J.C. Penny. **The United States is one of the few countries that has refused to sign an international convention for the abolition of child labor and forced labor**. This position stems from the child labor practices of U.S. corporations throughout the Third World and within the United States itself, where children as young as 12 suffer high rates of injuries and fatalities, and are often paid less than the minimum wage.

The savings that big business reaps from cheap labor abroad are not passed on in lower prices to their customers elsewhere. Corporations do not outsource to far-off regions so that U.S. consumers can save money. They outsource in order to increase their margin of profit. In 1990, shoes made by Indonesian children working twelve-hour days for 13 cents an hour, cost only $2.60 but still sold for $100 or more in the United States.

U.S. foreign aid usually works hand in hand with transnational investment. It subsidizes construction of the infrastructure needed by corporations in the Third World: ports, highways, and refineries.

The aid given to Third World governments comes with strings attached. It often must be spent on U.S. products, and the recipient nation is required to give investment preferences to U.S. companies, shifting consumption away from home produced commodities and foods in favor of imported ones, creating more dependency, hunger, and debt.

A good chunk of the aid money never sees the light of day, going directly into the personal coffers of sticky-fingered officials

A good chunk of the aid money never sees the light of day, going directly into the personal coffers of sticky-fingered officials in the recipient countries.

Aid (of a sort) also comes from other sources. In 1944, the United Nations created the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Voting power in both organizations is determined by a country's financial contribution. As the largest "donor," the United States has a dominant voice, followed by Germany, Japan, France, and Great Britain. The IMF operates in secrecy with a select group of bankers and finance ministry staffs drawn mostly from the rich nations.

The World Bank and IMF are supposed to assist nations in their development. What actually happens is another story. A poor country borrows from the World Bank to build up some aspect of its economy. Should it be unable to pay back the heavy interest because of declining export sales or some other reason, it must borrow again, this time from the IMF.

But the IMF imposes a "structural adjustment program" (SAP), requiring debtor countries to grant tax breaks to the transnational corporations, reduce wages, and make no attempt to protect local enterprises from foreign imports and foreign takeovers. The debtor nations are pressured to privatize their economies, selling at scandalously low prices their state-owned mines, railroads, and utilities to private corporations.

They are forced to open their forests to clear-cutting and their lands to strip mining, without regard to the ecological damage done. The debtor nations also must cut back on subsidies for health, education, transportation and food, spending less on their people in order to have more money to meet debt payments. Required to grow cash crops for export earnings, they become even less able to feed their own populations.

So it is that throughout the Third World, real wages have declined, and national debts have soared to the point where debt payments absorb almost all of the poorer countries' export earnings---which creates further impoverishment as it leaves the debtor country even less able to provide the things its population needs.

Here then we have explained a "mystery." It is, of course, no mystery at all if you don't

continued pg. 26

PANHANDLER publishing

The Panhandler, a poetry quarterly, is now accepting submissions for the Spring issue. While we are open to all topics and all styles, we are looking for well-crafted, cohesive poems. Whether drawn from your daily life, the daily news, or spawned by the imagination, this is your chance to show your fresh ideas & charged language.

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adhere to trickle-down mystification. Why has poverty deepened while foreign aid and loans and investments have grown? Answer: Loans, investments, and most forms of aid are designed not to fight poverty but to augment the wealth of transnational investors at the expense of local populations.

There is no trickle down, only a siphoning up from the toiling many to the moneyed few.

In their perpetual confusion, some liberal critics conclude that foreign aid and IMF and World Bank structural adjustments "do not work"; the end result is less self-sufficiency and more poverty for the recipient nations, they point out. Why then do the rich member states continue to fund the IMF and World Bank? Are their leaders just less intelligent than the critics who keep pointing out to them that their policies are having the opposite effect?

No, it is the critics who are stupid not the western leaders and investors who own so much of the world and enjoy such immense wealth and success. They pursue their aid and foreign loan programs because such programs do work. The question is, work for whom? Cui bono?

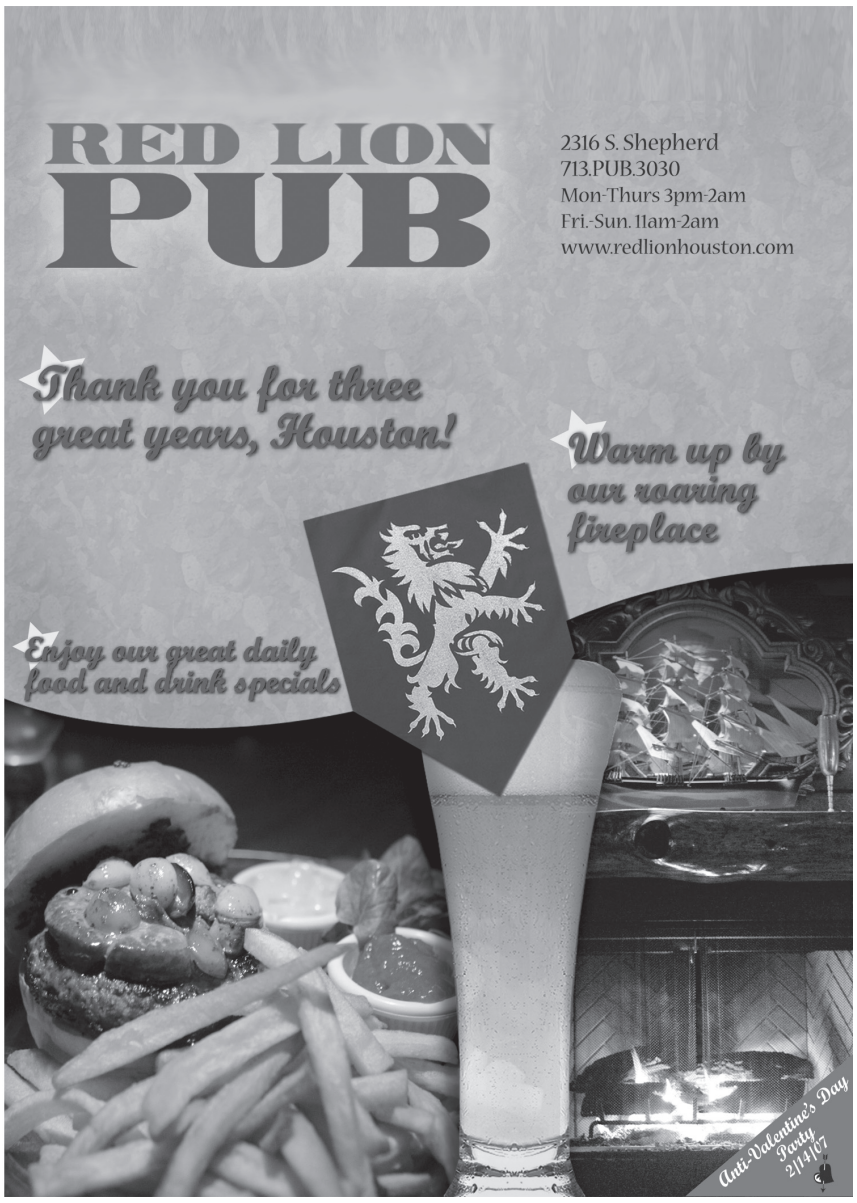
The purpose behind their investments, loans, and aid programs is not to uplift the masses in other countries.

The purpose behind their investments, loans, and aid programs is not to uplift the masses in other countries. That is certainly not the business they are in. The purpose is to serve the interests of global capital accumulation, to take over the lands and local economies of Third World peoples, monopolize their markets, depress their wages, indenture their labor with enormous debts, privatize their public service sector, and prevent these nations from emerging as trade competitors by not allowing them a normal development.

In these respects, investments, foreign loans, and structural adjustments work very well indeed.

The real mystery is: why do some people find such an analysis to be so improbable, a "conspiratorial" imagining? Why are they skeptical that U.S. rulers knowingly and deliberately pursue such ruthless policies (suppress wages, rollback environmental protections, eliminate the public sector, cut human services) in the Third World? These rulers are pursuing much the same policies right here in our own country!

Isn't it time that liberal critics stop thinking that the people who own so much of the world---and want to own it all---are "incompetent" or "misguided" or "failing to see the unintended consequences of their policies"? You are not being very smart when you think your enemies are not as smart as you. They know where their interests lie, and so should we.

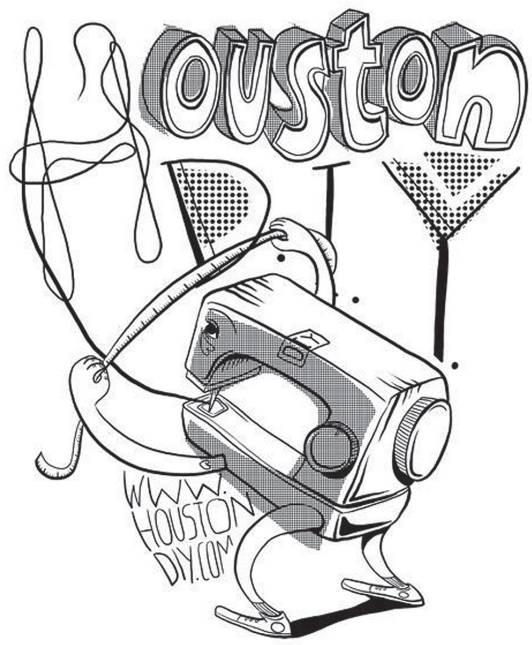




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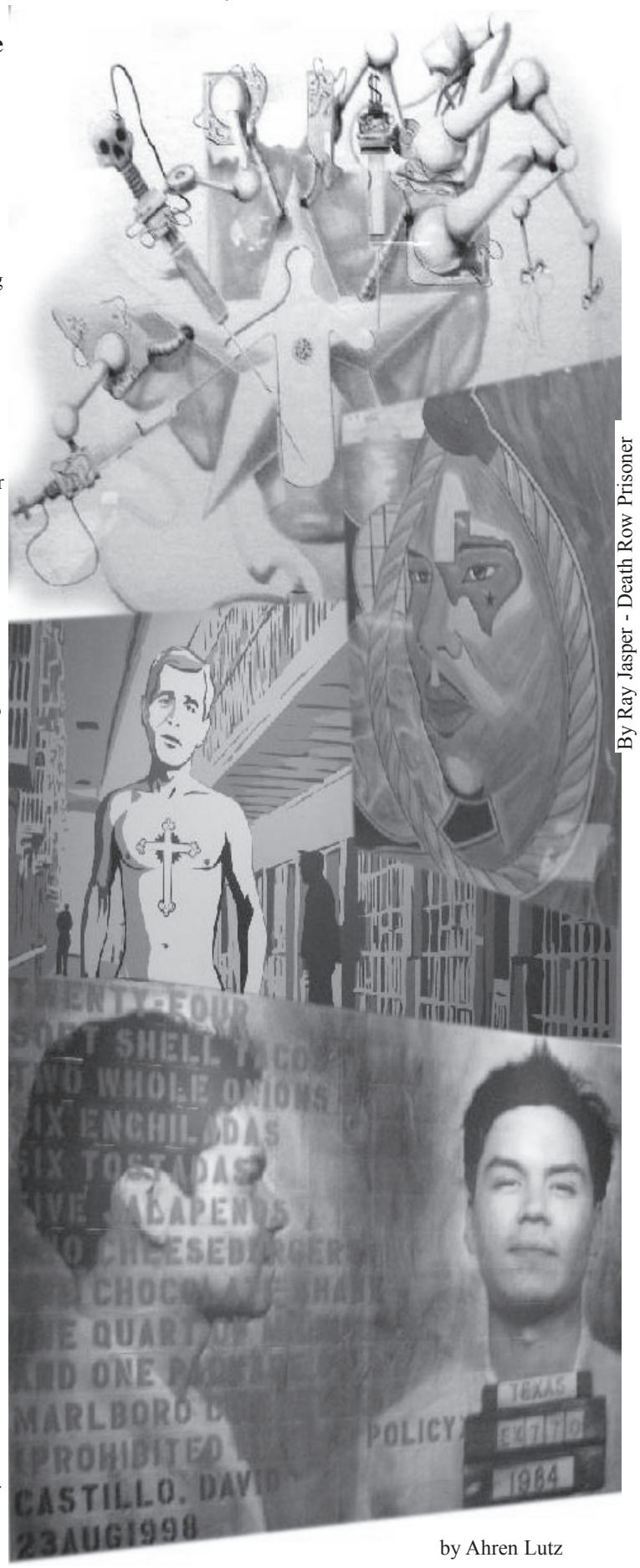
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Justice for all? Art on the death penalty Feb. 10 - 18, 2007

From the open publishing newswire: I went to the opening for the art show "Justice for All" at the M2 Gallery at 325 West 19th Street in the heights, There were a lot of folks there, very few of whom I recognized from progressive communities. Folks from the Texas death Penalty Abolition Movement were there, getting folks to sign letters for Joseph Nichols of Houston is set to be executed on March 7th. I was impressed by the quality of the whole show, with an interesting variety of types of art from death row prisoners and artists.

Texas Death Machine, By Arnold Prieto - Death Row Prisoner



By Ray Jasper - Death Row Prisoner

Radical Encuentro Camp takes on Climate Change

The Radical Encuentro Camp will set up again, outside of Austin from March 2-4, to provide a meeting space for training and discussion. Activists and organizers plan to sharpen their skills as they prepare to fight the permitting and construction of 11 new coal-fired power plants in Texas. This year's theme is Climate Change/Climate Justice. Workshops and presentations by Rainforest Action Network and SEED Coalition make up one of four tracks for workshops - environmental/climate justice and environmental racism, skills for organizing, anti-oppression and liberation activism, and spirit in action training. Workshop submissions are open until February 15. Organizers encourage folks to register early via the camp's site .

Houston Indymedia Hosts Films from Mexico's Front Lines

On February 1st and 2nd Houston Indymedia hosted Greg Berger of Gringoyo Productions and Vladamir Flores of Indymedia Oaxaca and Mal de Ojo TV(eyesore TV) for 2 nights of short films from Mexico's front lines. The event at Rice Media Center was well attended by a diverse crowd and featured films from a number of additional independent and community media projects including Big Noise Films, Canal Seis de Julio, narco news and Jill Freidburg.

From the open publishing newswire: Central to all of the documentaries was the theme of the public vs. the state, the people vs. the police, humanity vs. imperialistic economic control. The films highlighted the corruption of the Mexican government and its ties to multinational corporations. PepsiCo, Kellogg's, and General Electrics are among the 12 large corporations that fund illegal advertisements proclaiming the brilliance of President Fox. The advertisements shown on Mexican corporate television are reminiscent of the telescreens of Orwell's 1984, bombarding the viewer with sportscaster-esque narration of disturbing images.

by Ahren Lutz

Melt The ICE: Protest against immigration raids

From RoB: The protest that took place at the Greens Road ICE Detention Center in Aldine on Saturday February 3rd was something of a three way fight. The target of protest, a giant creepy building with an exterior iron bar fence and an interior fence of concertina wire loomed in the background as I joined anti-deportation and other human rights activists on the two lane Greens Road side of the building. I learned that the US Borderwatch folks were already there and were on the other side of the building, which is the entrance, but completely devoid of traffic.

Undocumented Screening at University of Houston

from the open publishing newswire: On Friday February 9th The Center for Mexican American Studies of the University of Houston, Jovenes Immigranted por un futuro Mejor and MEXA of UH hosted a screening of the documentary film Undocumented. It took place in the theater in the Hines Architecture building on the U of H campus. The theater was packed, mostly by young brown and black folks, many of them students of classes who were giving extra credit to attend and many of them subjects of the film, immigrant rights organizers.



The HIMC Mission Statement

The Houston Independent Media Center is a community based organization committed to using media production and distribution as a tool for promoting social and economic justice. It is our goal to give voice to those people under-represented in the mainstream media. With an emphasis on local issues, we will seek connections to global systems. We intend to illuminate and analyze issues that are affected by the increasing corporate domination of society and the subsequent erosion of democracy and equal protection under the law. We will strive to develop the arts, culture, entertainment, education, forums and conferences. We seek to generate alternatives to the current biases inherent in profit-based and corporate media and to contribute to the development of an equitable and sustainable society.

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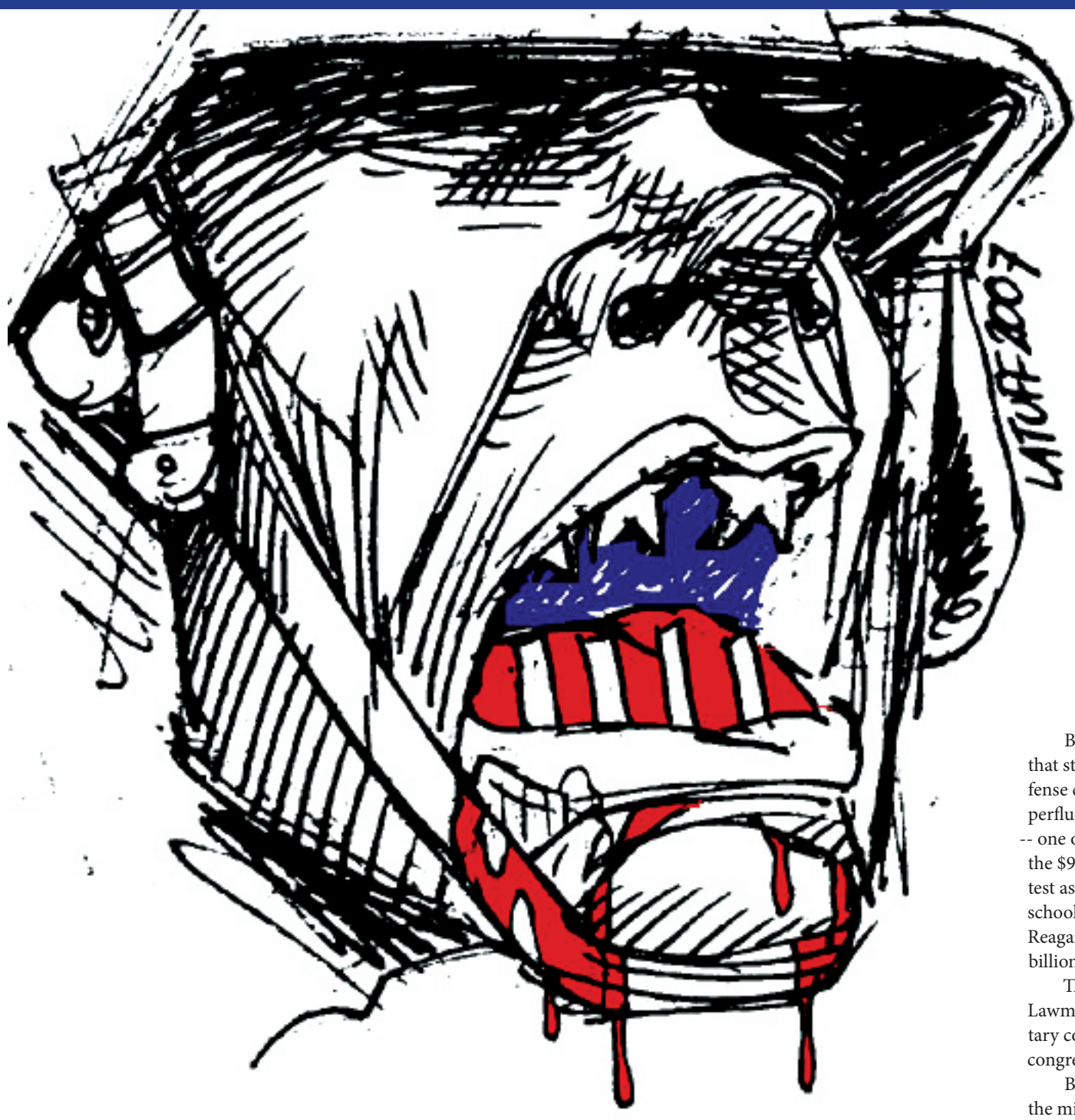
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Armed to the Teeth
America Marches Toward Military State

by Pierre Tristam



President Bush's 2008 budget includes a $625 billion request for the military, up from $295 billion the year Bush was elected—a 112 percent increase. Its about $100 billion more than all other military budgets in the world, combined. Plenty of attention is being paid the exhausted military fighting Bush's various wars. There's no denying it. It's overstretched and undermanned. It makes you think the Pentagon needs more money, not less.

But little attention is paid the flip-side of that story -- the squandering of money on defense contractors' swindles, whether it's the superfluous $66 billion F-22 fighter jet program -- one of three jet fighters in development -- or the $9 billion-a-year missile shield, which, one test aside, hasn't gotten much past its middle school science project concept since Ronald Reagan fancied it a quarter century and $160 billion ago.

The military is strapped by its own doing. Lawmakers are complicit. Job-producing military contracts are seeded throughout the land's congressional districts like above-board bribes.

But lawmakers couldn't get away with it if the military weren't the subject of a misplaced, ill-informed and dangerous public infatuation that's been changing American society for the worse since the early 1980s -- the period when Reagan built up the military into the creepy colossus it's been since. As Andrew Bacevich, author of "The New American Militarism," wrote, "The ensuing affair had and continues to have a heedless, Gatsby-like aspect, a passion pursued in utter disregard of any consequences that might ensue. Few in power have openly considered whether valuing military power for its own sake or cultivating permanent global military superiority might be at odds with American principles."

Misuse of the military abroad and its escalating burdens on taxpayers are well documented. The consequences of the infatuation on civilian society are documented less well, because the effects are more subtle than convoys of tanks down Main Street. The conse-

quences are more diffuse, more pernicious. There is, for example, the increasing role the military is playing in domestic life, secretly and not-so secretly, crumbling almost a century and a half old prohibition against military meddling in civilian business.

Five years ago the Pentagon established a "Northern Command" over the United States, the first time such a command was based on the mainland, ostensibly to coordinate responses to terrorist attacks. The Pentagon is actively engaged in domestic intelligence gathering, something that would have been thought outright illegal a generation ago. In December, the president signed a law that gave him the authority to declare martial law virtually at will.

Militarization is happening in more direct ways. Last week, the Associated Press circulated a story about the Pentagon selling surplus hardware to police agencies. The story projected a happy, fortunate circumstance. The tone was approving. The suggestion rewarding.

A picture featured a young police officer called Shane Grammer holding up a massive M-16 rifle with at least two scopes and a muffler-size barrel, a Chevrolet Blazer behind him, also military surplus, cluttered up with soldiers' helmets, camouflage and gear. The officer was a member of the Litchfield, Pa., Police Department.

The difference between police agencies and military units is becoming difficult to distinguish.

Litchfield is a minuscule township of 500 families. Who does Officer Grammer intend to use his M-16 against?

The difference between police agencies and military units is becoming difficult to distinguish. They love their helicopters, they love their night raids, their SWAT teams, their chases, their drawn guns.

We often hear about how "attitude" is in itself a trigger of violence among gang members. What we don't often hear about, but endure, because the media are too busy writing cute features about military surplus property in the hands of local police agencies, is the same attitude from police -- the very same approach: Look at an officer the wrong way and you might be in jail before the rooster crows once. All of that military hardware brings with it an attitude all its own, a sense of power and presumption that has to be exercised. At this rate, a police state would be a blessing. What we're heading toward is a military state, perpetually at war abroad, but also perpetually mobilized at home down to the tiniest mom-and-pop police agency. Uniforms are the new cult, force the presumed solution to order's challengers. The law can wait.

When a society is no longer exclusively and vigilantly civil, its claim to be a civilized society, let alone a civilizing one, is in peril. Other countries have been discovering that about the United States. We're discovering it at home, too, every time a police shield is flashed with the presumptive power of an M-16 burst.



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- **Hair Cleansing System**
  Effective up to eight hours, eliminates external barriers and lowers toxins deep within.
- **Daily Capsules**
  Supplements detox process 12 to 24 hours prior to cleansing deadline, powerful companion to other toxin reduction products.

Ask for B-Clean at your Favorite Smoke Shops!