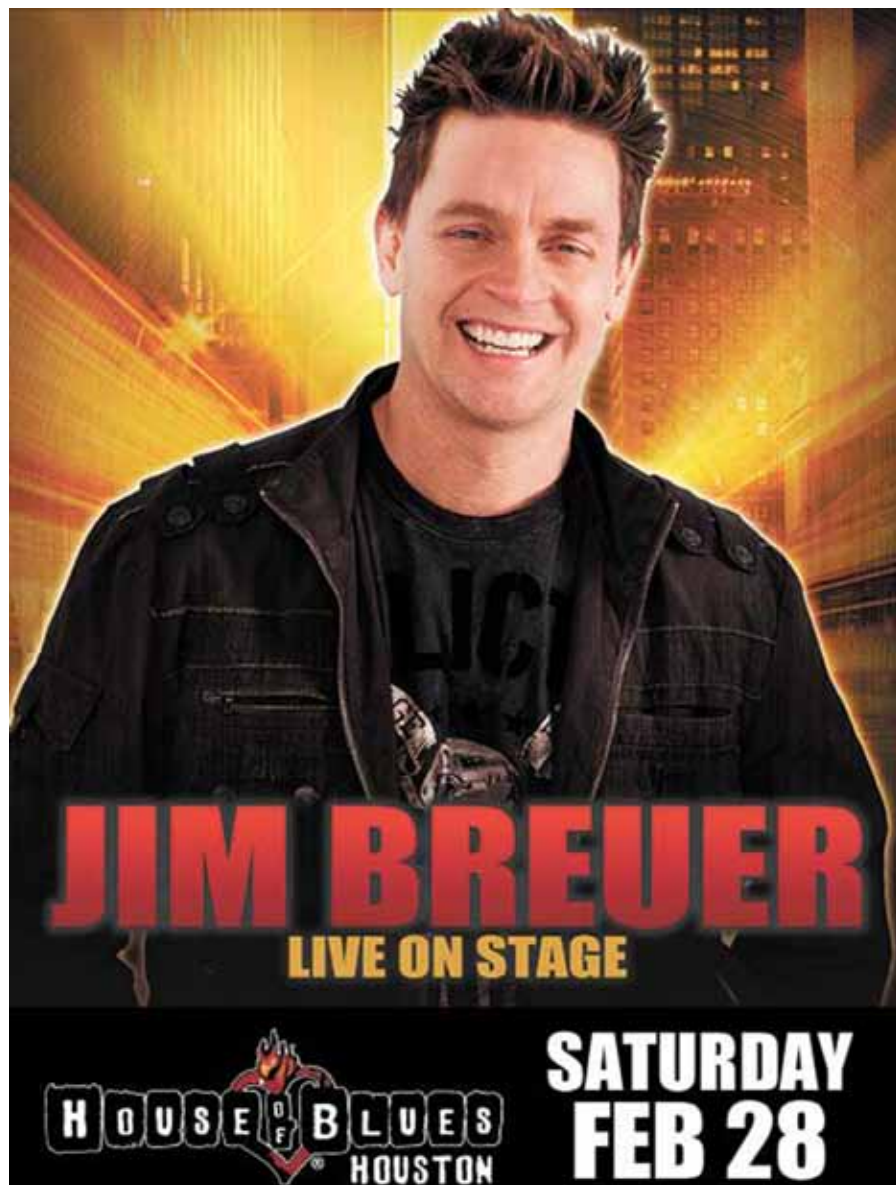


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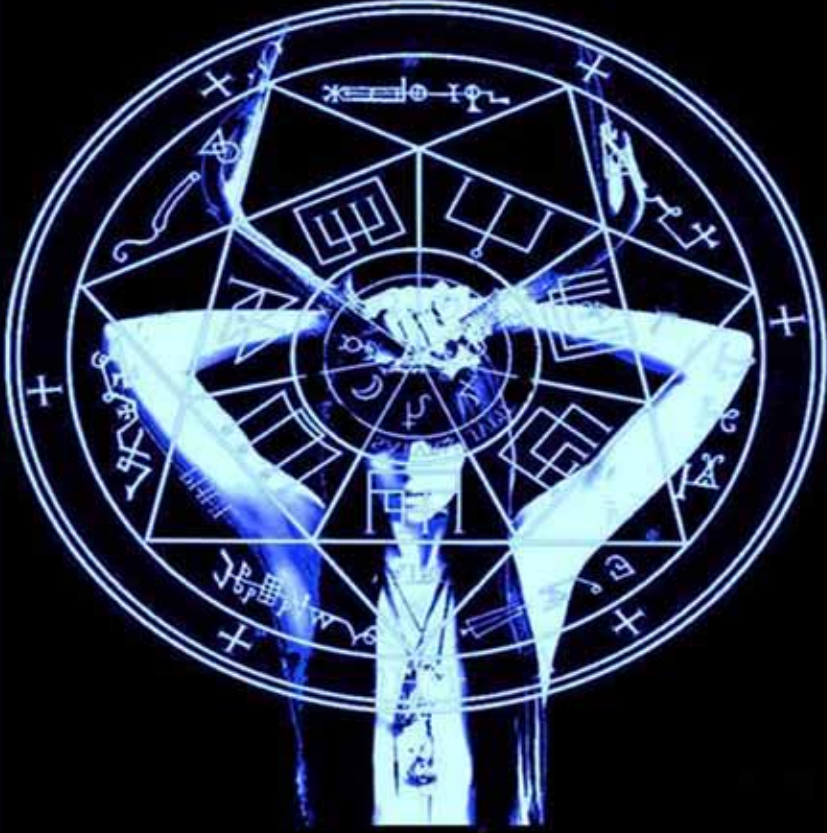


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COALITION UNVEILS CAMPAIGN FOR REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH IN TEXAS

TEXT AND PHOTO BY LAILA KHALILI

YESTERDAY MORNING, a diverse group of Texans converged on the Capitol to promote a new campaign urging lawmakers to: 1) support comprehensive sex education, 2) increase access to contraception, and 3) repeal legislation that interferes with the doctor-patient relationship and severely limits access to abortion.

The multi-year “Trust. Respect. Access.” campaign promotes policies that would restore trust in Texans to make their own reproductive health care choices, respect for physicians’ medical and ethical judgments about the needs of their patients, and access to safe, timely abortion care.

Organizations behind the campaign include the ACLU of Texas, the Texas Freedom Network, NARAL Pro-Choice Texas, the Texas Research Institute, Whole Woman’s Health, and the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health.

Following a morning of lobbying, activists gathered on the south steps of the Capitol for a rally alongside coalition leaders and legislators. Kicking off the rally, Amy Hagstrom-Miller, president of Whole Woman’s Health, explained that this initiative is both a response to attacks on Texans’ rights and a movement to improve the future of Texas.

“Texans have endured tremendous political interference that has eroded access to quality healthcare across the state, all based on the lies of extremist politicians,” she said. “Today, we commit to change the conversation around abortion, reverse some of the most restrictive policies on reproductive healthcare, and push for more proactive legislation that protects and preserves reproductive rights.”

During the last decade Texas has seen the passage of many bills designed to make access to abortion disappear, putting thousands of Texans at risk. Since 2013, more than half of the state’s abortion clinics have been forced to close, leaving Texans without family planning resources and legal abortion services.

“The reality in the state is that too many people do die when they cannot access a safe abortion,” said Adriano Pérez, a transgender student organizer from UT El Paso. “The decision in this state isn’t between having an abortion and not having an abortion. The difference in Texas is between having access to a safe abortion or having to resort to an unsafe abortion.”

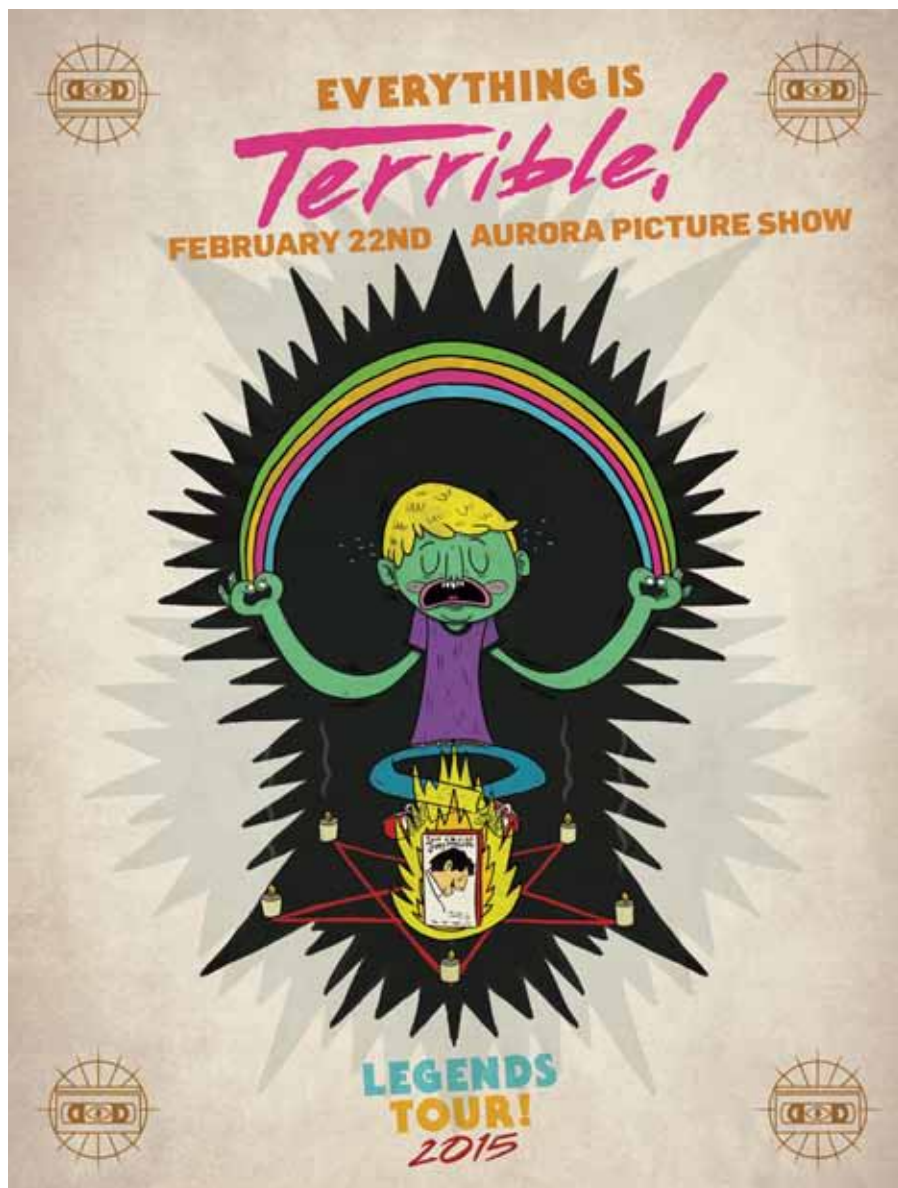
State Senator Jose Rodriguez (D – El Paso) spoke at the rally, stating that he has filed legislation along with his colleagues to repeal aspects of the 2013 anti-abortion bill, HB 2, that forces abortion providers to have admitting privileges at nearby hospitals and abortion clinics to meet ambulatory surgical center requirements. If HB 2 is fully implemented Texas will have only eight abortion clinics, leaving 750,000 Texans of reproductive age more than 200 miles from the nearest clinic.

Candice Russell shared her personal abortion story with the crowd, emphasizing the need for this campaign and how restrictive policies hurt Texans.

“I spent a lot of time fighting against HB 2’s restrictions – restrictions that I never thought were going to personally impact me. After realizing I was pregnant last year, I needed to travel to California to undergo my surgical abortion,” Russell said. “I haven’t decided yet if I ever want to have children in my lifetime. Right now I’m pretty sure I’m leaning towards no. But I can assure that if I do it won’t be because it is legislated.”

“The Trust. Respect. Access.” campaign is about more than just the legislation (both good and bad) that lawmakers will present this session. This campaign is about continuing a movement for reproductive freedom that will have a positive impact for years to come.

As Kathy Miller, president of the Texas Freedom Network, put it, “Today, we are all committing to a long, sustained effort to rollback the reckless attacks on reproductive health care and restore trust in Texans to make our own decisions about whether and when to have children without the interference of meddling politicians.” **FPH**



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NICOLAS WINDING REFN wanted his family with him while he spent months in Thailand making “Only God Forgives.” So off they went, sharing a luxury condo in a Bangkok high-rise. Along the way, Liv Corfixen, Refn’s wife, starting making a “behind the scenes” style documentary about the entire excursion.

The result is “My Life Directed by Nicolas Winding Refn” a one-hour documentary that takes viewers behind the scenes while Refn makes “Only God Forgives,” helmed by Corfixen.

Refn was born in Denmark but lived much of his youth in New York City, returning to Copenhagen in his late teens. Both of his parents were filmmakers. Refn’s impressive filmography includes “The Pusher Trilogy,” “Bronson,” “Valhalla Rising,” “Drive” and “Only God Forgives.”

There are times when the creative ego wants to wrap itself in a comfortable bed and not confront various critics. “My Life Directed” depicts the ups and downs an artist grapples with, shown through a detached glance. Whether it’s dealing with nuclear family unit issues, or deciding to film another take that involves replacing a prop window, or even reading a scathing review of the finished project, “My Life Directed” flows with a very objective attitude.

Free Press spoke to Refn and Corfixen by phone about the experience.

As the film opens up you are having your fortune read by Alejandro Jodorowsky using Tarot cards. Did his predictions come true?

REFN: Yes, they did. When I stopped worrying about the perception and just gave into the film being made, I was much more relaxed.

Jodorowsky is such an iconoclastic director, much like yourself. He refuses to talk about a film he made called “The Rainbow Thief,” evidently having to do with a bad relation with the film’s lead actor Peter O’Toole. Did he ever talk about that film with you?

REFN: I know very little about that movie, but that sounds about right.

We see your production board posted on the wall in the living room. As a Danish director, do you find methods of making your films different in America, where you made “Drive?”

REFN: Not really. I grew up in New York, so I was always working with a kind of Americanization of what I do. I am always worrying about the financial situation because, in the end, that is what makes you capable of making more movies.

Liv, what is your approach to directing a film?

CORFIXEN: I am very intuitive. I didn’t plan when I started shooting. The thought came to me when we moved to Bangkok that I would film the process, the making of “Only God Forgives.” Then it became clear that the film would really be about the ups and downs of being an artist.

There’s a scene where you and Ryan Gosling go to a film festival, where you receive money that you use to complete shooting “Only God Forgives.”

REFN: I needed money to pay for police for the set. The organizers offered to pay us if we showed up at their film festival.

CORFIXEN: They didn’t know we needed completion money, they had just asked us to appear at their festival.

REFN: Lucky for everyone.

When do you decide on your set-ups and when you are going to move the camera?

REFN: Mostly on the set, on the day of shooting, when I see how things are playing out. Sometimes those things are planned in advance. Sometimes the shots are out of necessity.

There’s another scene where your daughter goes out on the ledge of the high rise apartment where your family is living, and you explain to her how dangerous that was and ask her not to do it again. Did she do it again?

CORFIXEN: No, she didn’t do it again, thank God. Nothing was planned in the film, what you see is what happened.

Some really strong actors head your films, whether it’s Tom Hardy or Mads Mikkelsen. When did you first meet Ryan Gosling?

REFN: He invited me to a very strange dinner that lead to this idea I had that became “Drive.” He had seen my movies; I hadn’t seen any of his except “The Believer.” It was a perfect match.

Your next film is The Neon Demon with Keanu Reeves. Is there anything you can tell us about that project?

REFN: It’s going to be really good and exciting and funny and scary. It’s mostly a female cast. **FPH**

“My Life Directed by Nicolas Winding Refn,” after a brief, limited release last month, is available via video-on-demand.

REFN DOC DOESN’T MOCK

BY MICHAEL BERGERON



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LONG PLAYERS & SUCH

BY KM ANDERSON

NATALIE PRASS - S/T (SPACEBOMB)

I have always disliked the term “Blue Eyed Soul” because not all white people have blue eyes and it seems kind of reductive, but that is neither here nor there. Natalie Prass will get a Dusty Springfield comparison because it is easy, and it gives an idea, it is a go-to. I like Dusty Springfield, but anyway, Prass’s second album is a fine set of tunes that range from the rhythm and blues (actual blues in the sense the songs are sad, the blues by definition) of “Bird Of Prey” or “My Baby Don’t Understand Me,” to the almost baroque pop of “Christy” or “Is it You.” There is a song called “Violently” that is absolutely dynamic. I endorse this record wholeheartedly, it is inarguably wonderful.



SIX ORGANS OF ADMITTANCE - HEXADIC (DRAG CITY)

There are albums that floor you upon first listen, and I would place this album in that category. The beast screech of “Wax Chance” captures the orange and blue flames of a fire and serves them up as a song. “Hollow River” is the rise and collapse of a wounded dragon—it should’ve been the soundtrack to the final scene of Godzilla when it descends into the water. “Future Verbs” is the ballad, it is beautiful like the tears of the lover looking longingly out the window at the departure of the beloved. There is a system, too complex for me to detail, that determined the shape and feel of this record; without that knowledge, this album still illuminates like the moon over the top of a backlit mountain.



LIGHTNING BOLT - FANTASY EMPIRE (THRILL JOCKEY)

This album marks the most professionally recorded Lightning Bolt album, which gives a tightness and sheen to it, but does not take away from the assault. It is to be punched in the face with brand new gloves, to be kicked in the face with a freshly showered foot, no less pain, but less dirt in the toenails. “Mythmaster” is a funk voyage, it is as if a buffalo is walking on your face while “The Chronic “ plays in the background; “Horsepower” is new power Sabbath, it is the march song. Perhaps your life constitution needs to be shaken at its core—raise the volume on these songs and get your life back.



FATHER JOHN MISTY - I LOVE YOU, HONEYBEAR (SUB POP)

An alter ego, a character, who gives a shit, this album will not be the album of the year, it is the album of an era—it is classic. First, as an album which is ultimately a love letter to his spouse, it details the infatuation, the abandonment of the old self, the surrender to love amidst chaos, drugs and age, the sheer futility of existence. The opener, “I Love You, Honeybear,” is a paean unlike any other, a proclamation and a fight song, “As death fills the streets with garden variety oblivious. You grab your hand and say in an ‘I told you so’ voice,” It’s just how we expected” is as romantic a lyric as any I ever heard. Meanwhile, “The Night Josh Tillman Came To Our Apartment” gives you an idea of the life that is being left—a tale of a one night stand with a woman “petty vogue ideas” who does drugs and sings “in the soul affectation white girls put on.” The lyrics are picturesque; “Strange Encounter” about a lover who almost dies in his bathroom; it is a world, an environment that still renders endearing the weird love that recurs throughout the album.



SARAH BETH NELSON - FAST MOVING CLOUDS (BURGER RECORDS)

Sarah Beth Nelson has a voice that is always good to hear—laid back and easy, tinged with pain but mostly resilient—and she has composed a group of songs that amplify her vocal qualities. The song that best represents all of these qualities is “Paying,” a song that leaves a lover with the line “This is the last time I’ll be marking your drinks on the house, cause you’ll be paying starting right now.” Nelson was a bartender and this is the perfect last call slow jam; it is FM radio ballad rock, like Fleetwood Mac. Then there is the The Oh Sees soul of “Black Telephone;” it incorporates the simple guitar riff, ‘50s soul with psychedelic shades, reminiscent of something Kim Fowley might have done. The album is full of gems, all decorated and beautifully assisted by Nelson’s stellar voice, which is the real center and height of this album.



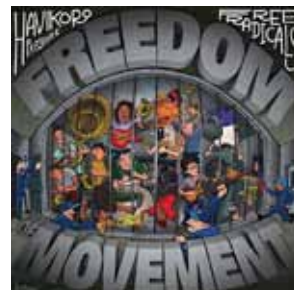
SIR RICHARD BISHOP - TANGIER SESSIONS (DRAG CITY)

Sir Richard Bishop continues to conjure and traverse new musical territories with only one guitar. Each strum, each pause, each change in tempo punctuates the story, shades the picture; the ringing of the strings is an instrumental accompaniment. “Let It Come Down” is sheer beauty, “Safe House” is an action sequence. Sir Richard Bishop has and continues to make music that extends beyond the Sun City Girls point of reference usually associated with his name. This album is vital as anything he has ever recorded, a great footnote in a rich history.



FREE RADICALS - FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT (KILLEM COLLECTIVE)

For those of us old enough to remember the early days of b-boying, there is the memory of the soundtrack, the songs that brought the crews to the floor. Whether that was Afrika Bambatta and the Soulsonic Force or The Shadows “Apache,” there were songs that were purposefully put into a set to call out to the breakers. Havikoro is a legendary b-boy crew in Houston, and in line with the Free Radicals, a legendary Houston music collective, they have collaborated on album to act as the soundtrack for uproking, popping, locking, etc. The great thing about this is that breakbeat music dabs in all forms of music—from jazz to funk to soul—meaning that Free Radicals had free reign to dabble in many styles as well. “Stop and Frisk” has hints of afro and Latin jazz; “Coyote” is rock soul, it would not be out of place on the blaxploitation crime soundtracks of the 70s. **FPH**

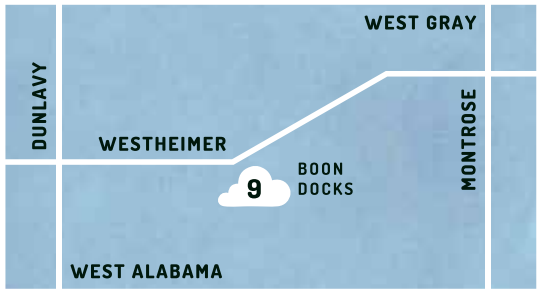


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UNION MADE

SAFETY IN NUMBERS
BY DANNY KERSCHEN
ART BY AUSTIN SMITH



DRIVING EAST ON 225, colossal, pearly spheres squat near stout, gargantuan cylinders. These mammoth forms are interrupted by slim towers adorned with glowing bulbs and wafting white plumes. At the perimeters, a large greeting party has gathered—indigo fire-retardant coveralls are the fashion. Their over-sized greeting cards are held on sticks slung upon their shoulders, and one bold word is repeated on each card: STRIKE.

On February 1, 2015, the United Steelworkers Union (USW) launched the largest strike by refinery workers since 1980. 6,500 union members are striking at 15 petrochemical sites across the country, including 5 facilities in the Houston area. In the negotiations, the USW leaders are representing 30,000 union members, while Shell Oil Company is representing a bloc of petrochemical companies.

USW Vice President and leader of the bargaining team, Gary Beevers, stated that “[t]his work stoppage is about onerous overtime, unsafe staffing levels, and dangerous conditions that the industry continues to ignore, including daily fires, emissions, leaks and explosions.” According to USW local 13-227 President Gene Oliver, USW leadership are prioritizing safety, extended work shifts, fatigue, and under-qualified contractors.

Safety-related issues overlap with extended work shifts and fatigue. Fatigue can lead to impaired judgment in workers, higher risk of hazards, and a general deterioration of safe work conditions. The Occupational Safety and Hazard Administration has no standard about extended or unusual work shifts, but offers guidance to “[m]ake efforts, whenever feasible, to ensure that unavoidable extended work shifts and shift changes allow affected employees time for adequate rest and recovery.”

This begs the question: why are United Steelworkers working long, extended hours resulting in fatigue? The USW grievances imply that these conditions are the consequence of a shortage of qualified employees working at many of these facilities.

It is common practice for oil companies to hire contractors. At many of these sites nationwide,

contract workers compose a significant percentage of the craft worker population. USW feels this as an imbalance. “...qualified and experienced union workers are replaced by contractors when they leave or retire” says Beevers, conjuring images of industrial musical chairs with the ratio of inexperienced workers steadily rising. Would you want a bunch of under-qualified “temps” operating chemical plants the could potentially poison a small town with a gas leak?

Over the long-term, this common practice of utilizing contracting firms often leads to high turnover of contractors among the many petrochemical plants and companies. Shell Oil Company states that the industry needs the flexibility that this provides—demand for workers rises and falls with oil prices, and contract workers ensure that the company isn’t stuck with a bunch of workers sitting idle when demand falls. The major petrochemical companies require do specific minimum training standards for workers from contracting firms, yet the USW does not find these safeguards adequate.

In an effort to clarify their attitude about contractors at petrochemical worksites, USW President Leo Gerard and North America Building Trade Unions’ President Sean McGarvey released a joint statement asserting that the “California Refinery Contractors Association undermine the standards of the USW and the Building Trades in the industry.” Basically, they are saying that non-union workers don’t meet their minimum standards for safety, thus putting other workers, the plant, and the surrounding communities at risk just so these highly-profitable oil companies can make a little more money.

Along with this criticism of non-union contractors, Gerard and McGarvey praise the quality of union contractors adding that “USW officials acknowledge the safety qualifications of NABTU contractors and acknowledge [that North America’s Building Trades Unions] utilize the best trained, most skilled and safest craft workers in the world.”

In these negotiations with USW, Shell Oil Company has accepted the unenviable task of representing the sprawling array of petrochemical companies. Concurrently, all these companies are also entangled in separate negotiations with corresponding United Steelworkers local chapters. What a tangled mess this must be!

Shell posted an internal statement to employees on their website which charges that “[t]he central issue of the USW’s national leaders is their continued demand that Shell replace routine maintenance contractors with USW-represented employees.” Shell hopes to present a united front, yet with so many players, this seems like a precarious undertaking.

It should not come as a shock that on Saturday, February 21 the negotiations came to an impasse. According to USW local 13-227 president Gene Oliver, Shell’s representatives left the talks and stated that they will not return until there is a mediator from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. Currently, there are no new meetings scheduled for negotiation.

In addition, tensions at the picket line have increased. On Monday, February 23, USW members were picketing in front of Shell facilities in Deer Park. The sidewalks in front of the facilities are owned by Shell, so the picketers walked into a conundrum—without a clear space where USW members can legally picket, picketing workers moved onto the road. A little before 6:00 PM, representatives of Harris County Sheriff’s department arrived at the Deer Park refinery. Three USW members were arrested on the charges of “obstructing highway or other passageway.”

When I spoke with the Harris County Sheriffs Office, I was told that the plaintiff, a Shell employee, had alleged that there were numerous attempts by the union members’ picket to stop vehicles coming and going into the Shell facilities. As of press time, Shell has not returned my calls for comment.

With negotiations unraveling alongside pressures at the picket, this work stoppage is likely to carry on. **FPH**



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PHOTO BY MAGEE MILLER



HOUSTON HAS A STORIED PAST when it comes to stand-up comedy. At one point we had eleven comedy clubs (...then six...and now two). When there were six clubs, Houston had a renaissance of new comics, many of whom are still touring the world doing comedy today. One of those comics is the free-spirited and “as real as it gets” Slim Bloodworth. A professional comic who might be the most approachable person in town, Slim has spent a good portion of her career performing around the world, and she’s a great example of natural talent. Just as funny offstage as on, Slim granted FPH a moment of her time while she prepared for a European tour.

You were born in Louisiana, but you’re a native Texan? How long have you been doing stand-up?

I was born in Louisiana and my dad is from Louisiana, so I spent all of my summers there, but the rest of the time I was raised here. I’m a Texan, through and through, and I’ve been a professional comic for sixteen years.

You got started at Houston’s famed The Laff Stop. Does the Houston comedy scene feel better or worse than when you started? Who was in your comedy class?

Well, when I got started there were six clubs; this was in the nineties, around the time when that big comedy boom from the eighties was coming to an end. Because of the way that Houston is laid out, each of

those six clubs had a different demographic, so if a joke worked in all six, it was worth taking on the road. Back then, you’d have to tailor your set to what each club owner liked style-wise, which helped you hone your craft. But it’s not better now or then, it’s just different. We didn’t have the overexposure of the internet, but there’s still plenty of places to get stage time now. Kristen Lindner, Bob Biggerstaff, Danny Rios, and Sean Rouse were in my class when I started.

You have a very free-spirited form of delivery that looks like it’s second nature for you. Is it a natural way of performing, or was it a skill that you developed over time? Until you’re comfortable with yourself, any new comic will try to add structure to themselves and their act. I come across comfortable, because that’s who I am already. Danny Martinez once told me, “Comedy is being yourself on purpose.” I’m just myself when I’m onstage, which is someone who’s easygoing and laid back. That’s why I can tease and be mean sometimes, because the audience knows me and they get that I’m joking.

Your style reminds me of how “real” Roseanne was on stage. She recently said about performing again, “I don’t know if people want to hear what I have to say, and if they do, they couldn’t handle it once I start going.” Do you feel like people can’t handle how real you get onstage sometimes?

I don’t care. I can’t handle how real I get sometimes, which is why I’ll pull back sometimes. A joke might not be where I want it yet, so I pull back. A good example would be talking about religion in the Bible Belt. Sometimes, though, I drop a couple of taboo topic based jokes to see if the audience will bite. If they take the bait and I feel them turn on me, then I love the challenge of getting them back on my side.

Who are your favorite comics of the past and present?

From the past: Flip Wilson, Moms Mabley, and Minnie Pearl. Current stand-ups: Tom Rhodes, Eddie Izzard, and Paul Mooney. If I can add locals, locally I like Ashton Womack.

You’ve been a touring headliner for a little over a decade; will we see an album sometime in the near future?

The reason that there hasn’t been one is that I’m debating between doing an album or a DVD. So much of my act is my facial expressions, and I want that to come across; which I don’t think it will on an album. After that, it’s just deciding what material I want to burn and what I don’t; but I think I’ve settled on a DVD in the future.

You’ve performed everywhere from tiny towns to performing for the troops in Iraq; do you ever have to change your act based on where you’re performing, or is it always full steam ahead?

I always try to go full steam, but you just adjust your act depending on the audience. If you have enough material, then it should always be full steam ahead; and dependent on what you will and will not do material wise.

I heard that you went to college in Utah? Was that the most repressive place to attend school, or are we all way off on what we think about Utah?

I have no nice words about Utah, though I miss friends from there. But, unless they leave that place...I won’t even take a plane over that state. What you think about Utah being polarizing is 100% true.

What’s the worst place you’ve ever performed?

Whenever I play a small town, I pick up a local paper because you can learn a lot about where you’re at from those papers. I used to play three small towns in West Virginia, so I grabbed a local paper in one of the three, and it was written on a third grade level. I wrote the paper’s editor to address it, and he said that it was done on purpose because the majority of the town reads on a third grade level. I don’t have enough dick jokes to entertain an audience like that, so I haven’t played that state since.

What’s your definition of a successful comedy career?

Being able to live comfortably by doing solely what I love, just living off of my creativity. Whether it be stand-up, or writing, or whatever. **FPH**

You can learn a lot about comedy from talking to those who live it everyday, and Bloodworth is full of insight from the world of stand-up. While she gets closer to living off of her creativity, you can catch her at a mic in town when she returns from a tour in Europe. In the last half of March, she’ll be touring throughout London, Ireland, Belgium, Scotland, and France.



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BADVICE

BY MARINI VAN SMIRREN

ART BY SHELBY HOHL



FUCK SOBER, THOUGHTFUL, LEVEL-HEADED ADVICE. HERE'S THE TRUTH: BADVICE

Disclaimer: You don't have to fucking read this if you don't like it. I know I sound like an asshole. The title states: "BADVICE" which therefore constitutes an awareness that one reading should anticipate the nature of said bad advice.

HOW LONG SHOULD YOU BE AT A NEW JOB BEFORE YOU MASTURBATE IN THE BATHROOM AT WORK?

You should have scoped out the scene during your interview. Honestly, you can masturbate anywhere at anytime if you have a phone and a data plan. Just be smart about it and do it in the bathroom – people will just assume you're a shy-shitter if they come in and you suddenly get quiet – assuming you get quiet because you don't want to get caught.

PLAY ON? I HAVE A COUPLE MEN WHO FREQUENT MY LOVE LIFE. THEY USUALLY TAKE TURNS. . TURNS OUT, THAT ADVICE ABOUT HAVING ONE TOO MANY IS TRUE. I'M NOT SURE IF I SHOULD KEEP JUGGLING OR DECIDE ON ONE. OR SHOULD I JUST CLEAR OUT THE BARN AND START OVER? – BECAUSE OBVIOUSLY NO ONE HAS TAKEN IT TO THE HOUSE WHERE I WOULD ACTUALLY WANT TO COMMIT. PS. THIS WAS KINDA A HUMBLEBRAG, BUT THAT WASN'T THE ORIGINAL INTENTION. XO

Do not, I REPEAT, do not give that up. You can make having more than one work. You need to maintain your situation. It sounds like you're about having some fun right now. So, wear that shit out until you're just exhausted from it and then think about finding one to settle with. Until then, make sure the dick is wrapped and use your better judgment, but don't give it up.

I'VE BEEN DROPPING HINTS TO MY BF THAT I NEED MORE RANDOM ORAL SEX WITH NO IMMEDIATE RETURNS. LIKE AN UNEXPECTED BLOWIE IN THE KITCHEN, START TO FINISH. I HAVE DROPPED A FEW HINTS BUT HE'S NOT GETTING IT. MY QUESTION IS, HOW DO I TELL THAT IT'S PART OF A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP TO HAVE REGULAR BLOW JOBS AND PASSIONATE SEX SEPARATELY, WITHOUT BEING OFFENSIVE OR UNAPPRECIATIVE?

Are you randomly blowing him in the kitchen from start to finish? I think that's a good place to start. You've gotta give a little, to getta little.

AFTER DATING THIS GIRL FOR 8 MONTHS SHE HAD A MELTDOWN AND STARTED READING SELF HELP BOOKS AND WATCHING MOTIVATIONAL VIDEOS. SHE LIKES TO TALK ABOUT HOW ITS HELPED HER, ITS CHANGED HER LIFE, AND I GUESS SHE IS A BETTER PERSON, BUT I JUST DONT BELIEVE IN ANY OF THAT SHIT. SHOULD I JUST TELL HER TO SHUT UP ABOUT IT OR DUMP HER COMPLETELY, COUNT MY LOSSES AND START OVER?

Who cares if you don't believe in it? If she's not trying to make you do it, then fuck off. If everyone believed what just you believed, this place would be fucking boring. The fact that your girlfriend is trying to better herself speaks way more volume than you being annoyed about something fucking stupid.

PS – the idiom is cut your losses, not count them. You count your blessings. Maybe you should be doing that instead of bitching because your girlfriend is trying to do something positive for herself.

I WANT TO BE ABLE TO GO DOWN ON MY GIRLFRIEND AND PUT IT IN HER BUTT AT THE SAME TIME? IS THERE A SURGERY I CAN GET TO BE ABLE TO DO THIS?

There is not, but don't you worry! It's not the end of the world. Just do a little back and forth. Eat her out. Put it in. Go down again. Stick it back in her. You can also get your thumb really wet and then rub her clit with it while you're fucking her. Duh. But you know this already.

I WAS RECENTLY DUMPED BY MY GIRLFRIEND. WE HAD BEEN TOGETHER FOR A YEAR. EVERYTHING WAS PEACHES AND CREAM, I MEAN SHIT HAPPENED BUT WE ALWAYS LOVED ONE ANOTHER, AND THEN SUDDENLY IT WAS AS IF SOME KIND OF SWITCH WAS FLIPPED. ONE DAY WE'RE HAVING A GREAT TIME, THINGS ARE THEIR NORMAL PEACHY SELVES, ETC ETC. THEN THE NEXT DAY SHE SAYS SHE DOESN'T FEEL ANYTHING FOR ME ANYMORE. GRANTED, THE DAYS WERE NOT ACTUALLY CONSECUTIVE, APPARENTLY SHE HAD BEEN "TAKING TIME OFF" (WE HADN'T SEEN EACH OTHER FOR A WEEK) BETWEEN EACH CHECKPOINT, THOUGH I WAS UNDER THE IMPRESSION SHE WAS JUST BUSY WITH WORK. ANYWAYS, SHE SAYS THINGS BETWEEN US HAD GOTTEN TOO FRIEND-Y. THE NEXT WEEK I ACCIDENTALLY-ON-PURPOSE FIND OUT SHE'S HOOKING UP WITH THIS GUY I INTRODUCED HER TO, WHOM I HAD CONSIDERED A PART-TIME FRIEND (AND WHO IS NOW A FULL-TIME PRICK). THIS HAS LED ME TO QUESTION THE EXTENT TO WHICH SHE VALUED OUR RELATIONSHIP (WHO MOVES ON THAT QUICKLY??), AND THE TRUST I PLACED IN HER. YES, SHE IS A GOOD HUMAN OVERALL, AND SHE DIDN'T INTEND TO HURT ME BECAUSE SHIT, IF THE HEART WANTS WHAT IT WANTS I CAN'T CONTROL THAT. HOWEVER, I FEEL I HAVE BEEN MANIPULATED IN A WAY BY BOTH PARTIES, PARTLY BECAUSE I'VE BEEN USED IN THE PAST, BUT MOSTLY BECAUSE I'M VERY UPSET ABOUT THE WAY SHIT WENT DOWN AND! SNOWBALLED. BUT ME AND HER WERE BEST FRIENDS, SOMETHING I VALUE HIGHLY IN A RELATIONSHIP, AND SHE WANTS TO CONTINUE TO BE FRIENDS. WHICH BRINGS ME TO MY QUESTION. SHOULD I CAUTIOUSLY PURSUE A FRIENDSHIP OR NOT? AND IF I DID PURSUE ONE WOULD I BE DISRESPECTING MYSELF? ALSO, IF HIS FACE WERE TO COME WITHIN REASONABLE STRIKING DISTANCE, SHOULD I PUNCH IT?

You want to be best friends with a girl that cheated on you, you gross bowl of unflavored oatmeal? Grow a dick and be friends with someone who fucking respects you, you wet blanket. Self respect. Have a little.

DOES LIKING PEGGING MAKE ME GAY?

Are you thinking about getting fucked by a dude when it's happening, because I'm pretty sure that's what makes you gay; not just being in touch with your body and knowing that you like getting your prostate poked. Unless, of course, you mean gay, as in lighthearted and carefree because that's how you feel when getting pegged, then yes. Pegging makes you gay. **FPH**

FPSF 2015 PERFORMER GUIDE

BY JD BETZ

[PHOTOS BY _____?]

You may have heard of this festival we throw with Pegstar every year called Free Press Summer Festival. Us and tens of thousands of our closest friends get together and basically chill, listen to some great music, and have a next-level shindig. Some of us even dance. Well, the time has come where the lineup gets released so we thought we would put together this handy guide to all the musical performers. We have worked long and hard on this lineup and have to say out loud that we are pretty proud. The child in me has only two words: Tears for Fears. Obviously the child in me is bad at math but so is the adult. Anyways, buy your pass now because we have sold out the last two years. Holler at us.



SKRILLEX Sonny Moore, former leader of post-hardcore band From First to Last, found a new audience in 2008 when he started performing high-energy dubstep under the alias Skrillex. The music is comparable to that of EDM heavyweights like Deadmau5 and Rusko and has so far earned him a whopping seven Grammy awards. “Recess”, his latest album, was released in March 2014.

R. KELLY Known as the ‘King of R&B’, with songs like “Bump n’ Grind” and “I Believe I Can Fly”, Kelly started his career in 1989 busking under Chicago’s El track. In the beginning, he had help from backing band Public Announcement, before embarking on a highly-successful solo career in 1993 which has so far earned him three Grammys, two American music awards and one BET award.

WEEZER Mixing emo, power-pop and alternative rock, Weezer formed in 1993 Los Angeles helping to fill a sonic void left by the dwindling of grunge. Their self-titled ‘94 debut, affectionately known by fans as “The Blue Album”, set a quirky, oddball precedent for their careers with songs like “Undone – The Sweater Song” and “Buddy Holly”. Their latest record “Everything will be alright in the End” was released in the fall of 2014.

STEVE ANGELLO Angello is probably best-known as a founding member of the now-defunct Swedish House Mafia, who are most popular for progressive house ballad “Don’t You Worry Child” which took American radio by storm in 2012. He is also active as a producer and solo artist. His latest record “Wild Youth” was released in April.

MAJOR LAZER Major Lazer is an electro-dancehall duo formed in 2008, featuring world-renown DJs Diplo (US) and Switch (UK). They are known for their outrageous music videos and a star-studded list of collaborators which includes Bruno Mars, Wycleff Jean, Peaches, Ezra Koenig (Vampire Weekend) and many more.

BEN HARPER AND THE INNOCENT CRIMINALS Signed to Virgin Records in 1992, Ben Harper has made his name as a purveyor of beautifully crafted, acoustic guitar tunes incorporating funk, soul and reggae. On his latest record “Childhood Home” he teamed up with his mother, Ellen Harper, for a series of nostalgic folk duets which should remind listeners of The Everly Brothers and Pete Seeger. He holds three Grammys.

ST. VINCENT Winner of the 2015 Grammy for Best Alternative Music Album, St. Vincent is the stage name of Anne Erin Clark, who got her start as a member of Texas’s Polyphonic Spree and also as a member of Steven Sufjan’s touring ensemble. Since going solo in 2006, Clark has released four art-rock solo albums, in addition to “Love this Giant”, an acclaimed brass-heavy collaboration with Talking Heads ex-frontman David Byrne.

THE DECEMBERISTS Started in Portland, Oregon, by vocalist Colin Meloy in 2000, The Decemberists have grown to become arguably the most popular and influential indie folk band of their time. After releasing their first full-length record in 2002, “Castaways and Cutouts”, the band went on to be signed by notable indie label Kill Rock Stars and are now on Capitol Records. Their latest record “What a Terrible World, What a Beautiful World” was released in January 2015.

FLUME Flume is the stage name of Australian electronic musician and producer, Harley Streten. He released his self-titled debut full-length in 2012, which ended up going double platinum in his home country. Streten’s main influences are house and U.K. garage music. He has collaborated with the likes of Chet Faker, Moon Holiday and Jezzabell Doran.

BELLE AND SEBASTIAN Scottish indie-pop duo Belle and Sebastian were formed in Glasgow in 1995 and released their long-anticipated 9th studio album “Girls in Peacetime Want to Dance” in January after a five year hiatus. Their whimsical pop songs are known for flourishes such as strings, wind instruments and wonky synths.

MASTODON These Georgia-based kings of contemporary sludge created a stir in 2014 year for combining twerking and metal for the first time ever in their music video “The Motherload” supporting their sixth album “Once More ‘Round the Sun” which was released last October.

CHANCE THE RAPPER Chicago's Chancelor Bennett, a.k.a. Chance the Rapper, made his name known on the international hip-hop scene in 2013 with his second mixtape "Acid Rap". In 2012 he toured with Childish Gambino and has worked with Action Bronson, Justin Bieber, and Madonna.

TEARS FOR FEARS This Bath-based synth-pop duo is one of those special bands that defined the '80s for many people. With timeless pop songs like "Shout", "Everybody Wants to Rule the World" and "Mad World" these gentlemen have approximately 257 times the shelf-life of most pop produced today.

BAND OF HORSES This Seattle-based received a grammy nomination for its 2010 record "Infinite Arms" and employs a light-hearted yet atmospheric indie-folk style not unlike Rogue Wave or Marching Band. They've received recognition from NPR, Rolling Stone, Paste Magazine and Filter for their music.

WELCOME TO HOUSTON *featuring Bun-B, Slim Thug, Devin The Dude, Z-Ro, Paul Wall, Mike Jones, Scarface, Lil Flip, Lil Keke, and The Suffers.* 'Nuff said.

GARY CLARK JR. Since starting his career in 1996, Austin, Texas's Gary Clark Jr. has become a well-known face of modern Texas blues while paying tribute with his playing and singing to fallen legends like Jimi Hendrix and Stevie Ray Vaughan. Clark's music has appeared in major Hollywood movies such as Clint Eastwood's "Trouble with the Curb" and he even appeared on stage as a performer the recent Sophia Vergara flick "Chef". In 2014, he won a Blues Music Award for best contemporary male blues artist of the year.

CHARLIE XCX Based out of the UK, lovely, raven-haired pop siren Charli XCX began her career in 2008, playing her first gigs at illegal warehouse raves in London. Since then, she's come a long way, contributing vocals to Iggy Azalea's international smash hit "Fancy" and writing and performing the equally successful "I Love it" with Swedish pop duo Icona Pop. She has also released three full-length albums, the latest being "Sucker", which was released in December 2014 to extremely positive reviews.

FLOGGING MOLLY Highly regarded for their high energy live shows, this seven piece Irish punk bands hails from Los Angeles. The band gets their inspiration from traditional Irish folk groups like The Dubliners, classic Celtic punks The Pogues and even Johnny Cash (only in America). The band plans to release their sixth album sometime in 2015.

STURGILL SIMPSON Simpson got his start in 2004 as the leader of Kentucky bluegrass group Sunday Valley. After a few years, he took a break from music to work in a freight yard before growing disillusioned with that job too, going back to his former band and then onto a solo country career in 2012. Simpson has two albums, the latest of which ("Metamodern Sounds in Country Music") may be the first-ever country record to feature lyrics about being dismembered by reptilian aliens.

G-EAZY Oakland hip-hop artist and producer G-Eazy started producing music in 2006, during his sophomore year at Loyola University in New Orleans. He has collaborated with artists like Lil B and The Cataracs. His most recent album "These Things Happen" came out in June 2014.

RL GRIME Grime is an NYC-based trap musician who started producing music under the alias in 2012 with EP Grapes. His November 2014 full-length debut "Void" features collaborations with an eclectic group of artists including Big Sean, Boys Noize and How to Dress Well.

BRANDI CARLILE Brandi Carlile is a singer-songwriter from Ravensdale, Washington, who started her music career in 2004 and was almost immediately signed by Columbia records. In 2010, Carile won a Seattle City of Music Award and "Outstanding Music Artist" for her album "Give Up the Ghost", at the 21st GLAAD Media Awards. Her fifth studio album "The Firewatcher's Daughter" will be released in March.

ODESZA Since 2012, Seattle-based electronic duo ODESZA have combined heavy, danceable beats with ambient psychedelia. Harrison Mills and Clayton Knight started the project during their senior year at Western Washington University and have two full length albums and one extended play under their belts. ODESZA have also created remixes for Beat Connection, Sia and Pretty Lights.

FUTURE ISLANDS Frontman Samuel T. Herring started the new wave-inspired electro-pop outfit Future Islands in 2006 while attending East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina. Their latest record "Singles" came out on 4AD in March 2014 to near-universal acclaim, achieving an impressive 82% Metacritic score. David Letterman was deeply impressed by Herring's dancing when they played a set supporting the album in March.

TOVE LO Singer and songwriter Tove Lo is based in Stockholm, Sweden and began a solo career in March 2014 with the release of electro-pop debut "Queen of Clouds". Prior to this, she wrote songs for Cher Lloyd, Icona Pop, and The Saturdays.

ROCKET FROM THE CRYPT This San Diego punk band got its start in 1989, earning critical acclaim and a large following before breaking



up in 2005. In 2011, they reunited on the acid-inspired children's program Yo Gabba Gabba! and began touring again in 2013. Members have played with legendary post-hardcore bands like Drive Like Jehu and Hot Snakes.

LECRAE Lecrae (born Lecrae Devaughn Moore) is a Christian rap artist from Houston and founder/owner of independent hip-hop label Reach Records. Despite his love for Jesus, Moore's brand of music is no soft serve affair. He incorporates gangsta rap, party-oriented crunk music and even hardcore hip-hop, a subgenre which places an emphasis on anger and confrontation. He holds two Grammy awards.

PORTUGAL.THE MAN Portugal.The Man may well be the most famous band to ever make it out of Wasilla, Alaska. Currently based out of Portland, Oregon, this slick indie-psych band made their major label debut in 2010 and their latest record "Evil Friends" was produced by Danger Mouse.

TYCHO San Francisco's Scott Hansen has been dabbling in and producing dreamy electronic music since 2002, years before chillwave enjoyed its current level of mainstream popularity. Hansen's latest record, "Awake" was released in March 2014 to positive reviews. He sometimes brings a full band to gigs for a more authentically live sound, which is notable in a world of button-pushers and knob-turners.

GTA GTA is an electronic duo from Miami, Florida who has worked with musicians like DJ Funk, Afrojack and Major Lazer.

GLASS ANIMALS Oxfordshire university buddies Glass Animals formed a band in 2012 which blends electronic and indie-rock. Their

music caught the attention of producer Paul Epworth (whose resume includes Bloc Party, Florence + the Machine and U2) who signed them to his label Wolf Tone in 2013. Their debut full-length “Zaba” was released in June 2014.

PALLBEARER Hailing from Littlerock, Arkansas, doom metal outfit Pallbearer were formed in 2008 and made a dynamite debut with their 2012 record “Sorrow and Extinction” which earned a coveted Best New Music distinction from Pitchfork and plaudits from Spin and National Public Radio. With 8-plus-minute-long songs and a rumbling, sludgy low end, Pallbearer are on par with genre superstars like Earth and Electric Wizard.

ILOVEMAKONNEN Atlanta-based rap artist Makonnen Sheran came to prominence in August 2014 when Drake released a remix of his song “Tuesday”. He has yet to release a formal full-length record but has put out five mixtapes. Miley Cyrus is a self-professed fan of Makonnen’s work.

CHARLES BRADLEY AND HIS EXTRAORDINAIRES Charles Bradley, who once made a living as a James Brown impersonator, is a Brooklyn-based soul musician who has been active since 1965. Bradley is the



subject of the documentary, *Soul of America*, which premiered at SXSW in 2012. His latest record “Victim of Love” came out in 2013.

BENJAMIN BOOKER Combining blues with punk and contemporary indie rock, New Orleans’s Benjamin Booker creates a soulful stew that is more than the sum of its parts. Booker has a hard-to-forget ragged whisper of a voice and has toured with Jack White. His self-titled debut was released in April 2014.

THE RIVERBOAT GAMBLERS This Austin-based punk band got their start in 1997 and earned a place on Volcom Entertainment’s roster after a rousing SXSW performance in 2003. They have played the Vans Warped Tour numerous time and have had their music featured in video game franchises like Tony Hawk, Need for Speed and Madden NFL.

YUNG LEAN AND SADBOYS Yung Lean is an 18-year-old wunderkind rapper from Stockholm, Sweden. His music has been described as “cloud rap”, with dreamy, chillwave-like beats and textures. Debut “Unknown Memory” came out in September 2014.

BRIGHT LIGHT SOCIAL HOUR The Bright Light Social Hour is a psychedelic southern-rock band from Austin, Texas, with a smart modern sound on par with bands like Heartless Bastards and J Roddy Walston and The Business. In 2013, after the famous filibuster of Texas Bill 5, they released a song commending the actions of former Texas senator Wendy Davis. Their latest album “Space is Still the Place” was released in 2015.

MOON TAXI Moon Taxi, formed in Nashville, Tennessee, play a blend of modern, electronically-textured indie-rock not unlike Grouplove

or Walk the Moon. They have appeared on Conan and The Late Show with David Letterman.

THE MOUNTAIN GOATS Formed in 1991, Calremont, California’s Mount Goats are indie-folk royalty and known for their acoustic-centric, lo-fi sound and humorous lyrics, such as those on “Fall of the Star High School Star Running Back” chronicling one boy’s journey from jock to drug dealer. Their latest record “Beat the Champ” will be released in April 2015 on Merge Records.

DIARRHEA PLANET Despite their name, Nashville’s Diarrhea Plant is very serious—about guitars that is. Their electrified emo power-pop is fueled by four of them. They’ve opened up for bands like JEFF the Brotherhood, Wavves and Fucked Up.

HOUNDMOUTH Indiana-based alternative country band Houndmouth formed in 2011 and were signed in 2012 after Rough Trade Records president Geoff Travis was impressed by their set at SXSW. Other endorsements include Esquire, SPIN and even Garden & Gun. Debut full-length record “From the Hills Below the City” was released in 2013.

THE BAND OF HEATHENS This Austin Americana band was started in 2005 when frontman Colin Brooks decided to collaborate with two other gentlemen he met at local club Momo’s, where each of them regularly played separate sets. In addition to four studio albums, the band also offers a service where fans can purchase live recordings via subscription or a la carte.

GRIZFOLK Grizfolk is a five-piece with members from Los Angeles, Florida and Sweden. The group produces dreamy indie pop songs with throaty vocals and dancefloor savviness. They released debut extended play “From the Spark” in 2014 and also have one live album.

ICEAGE This pack of Copenhagen punks first made waves internationally with their 2010 debut full length “New Brigade”. Receiving rave reviews from Drowned in Sound and Pitchfork, they were touring the world before they were old enough to enjoy a legal beer, stateside. Frontman Elias Bender Rønnenfelt combines tortured post-hardcore cries with an icy post-punk rhythm section, resulting in a Joy-Division-meets-Rites-of-Spring kind of sound.

PENTAGRAM Formed in 1971, in Alexandria, Virginia, hot on the heels of other doom acts like Black Sabbath, Pentagram are a deep cut essential for anyone into sludge, metal and/or headbanging. Vocalist Bobby Leiling has been with the band’s been only constant member from the beginning, involving a rotating cast of facemelters to aid him in his dark ministry.

BEN KWELLER Former frontman of Texas “sugar metal” band Radish, Ben Kwellner got his musical career started early. In fact he was writing songs by age eight and even played Letterman with Radish in his teens, who would sign to Mercury Records, despite a later fizzling out in 1999. Since then, he has navigated a successful solo career recording pop and rock songs.

FREEMAN One half of the legendary experimental rock project Ween, Aaron Freeman is now doing his own thing, and it’s just as colorful and bright. He walked away from Ween in 2012, after more than 20 years making music with Dean Ween. His solo debut was released in 2014 to positive reviews.

SARAH JAFFE Singer Songwriter Sarah Jaffe hit the international music scene when her first EP “Even Born Again” was given a nod by Rolling Stone and Dallas Observer in 2009. Jaffe is memorable for her haunting voice and use of silence/quiet within her songs. And while uncredited, she provided vocals to Eminem’s 2013 song “Bad Guy.”

THE SUFFERS Fueled by the soulful singing of vocalist Kam Franklin, Houston’s Suffers offer a brand of rich, Motown R&B that’s hard to come by these days. Their latest release “Make Some Room” came out in January 2015.

TUNJI IGE The music of 19-year-old Philadelphia rap artist and producer Tunji Ige is viscous and sticky like the work of the late DJ Screw.





BUXTON The Americana meets bluegrass folk sound that Houston's Buxton has always been known for has been retired for a more focused and modern approach. On 2015's "Half A Native" the band sheds its skin for a new sound and a more energetic, rock-ified execution, like Delta Spirit or The War on Drugs.

ROBERT ELLIS A native son of Houston, singer-songwriter Robert Ellis has been on the lips of some pretty important people these days, including Rolling Stone magazine and The New York Times. His latest album "The Lights from the Chemical Plant" was released in 2014 on New West Records and combines his country-western heritage with a more contemporary rock sound.

FUTUREBIRDS The Futurebirds formed in 2008 in the small college town of Athens, Georgia, and play a smoky brand of psychedelic folk not unlike Athens neighbor Phosphorescent. The band has played shows with Drive-By Truckers, Widespread Panic and Blitzen Trapper. They have two full-length records and one live album called "Seney-Stovall".

TWIN PEAKS This Chicago band, formed in 2009, combines power pop and rusty garage rock to great effect. Peaks alternates between the two for a constant battle between sweet and sour, calm and tempestuous-Mick Jagger and Mark Knopfler. If Ty Segall cared about making his music beautiful, it would sound like this.

GOATWHORE Blackened death metal act Goatwhore was born in New Orleans in 1997 and is fronted by vocalist Louis Benjamin Falgoust II of Soilent Green. For all its ferocity, Goatwhore's music still reflects its surroundings i.e. it contains a detectable sliver of southern charm. Their latest record "Constricting Rage of the Merciless" was released in July 2014.

CON BRIO San Francisco's Con Brio deals in lush, horn-filled grooves that will remind listeners of The Bar Kays, D'Angelo, and John Legend, all in one. They are fronted by 21-year-old frontman Ziek McCarter.

SLAPTOP Starting little more than a year ago, Slaptop is a San Francisco-based dance music project that combines the suaveness of Chromeo with the cred and club horns of the Petshop Boys. iTunes named his single "Sunrise" Best New Artist Track of 2014.

THE TONTONS Easily the hardest-touring band in the city of Houston, The Tontons have a sultry indie sound driven by the airy vocals of Asli Omar. Their latest album, "The Make Out King and Other Stories of Love" was released in February 2014.

DPAT Dpat is downtempo experimental hip-hop with warped, syrupy vocals from a young Houston artist who has been nominated for a Grammy for his work with Wiz Khalifa on his song "Remember You."

SCALE THE SUMMIT Houston's Scale the Summit is a highly-technical progressive rock band combining atmospheric emo guitar tapping techniques with Yes-like virtuosity and post-rock. Having achieved a reputation as young mavericks, the average age of band members 22 years old.

HIRAM [Information forthcoming.]

THE LAST PLACE YOU LOOK Fronted by Justin Nava, this Houston alternative rock band was formed in 2006 and still receive heavy rotation on Houston's 94.5 The Buzz. They have shared the stage with Cake, Bush, The Toadies and Staind, and have taken home Houston Press awards for Best Rock Band and Best Male Vocals.

DJ FREDSTER As a of the founder of Boys & Girls Club DeeJays, DJ Fredster was one of the pioneers of Houston's indie-dance scene of the early 2000s.

GIO CHAMBA Gio Chamba is a Houston-based Cumbia artist and producer whose live shows frequently turn into huge parties and always feel like it even when they don't. He works across genres to combine the music of many other cultures with his unique brand of pumping, tropical bacchanalia.



BOAN BOAN is an Austin/Houston electronic dance duo which sounds like a collaboration between a resurrected John Hughes and Pictureplane. It will slake your thirst for smart electronica and '80s synth-pop, all in one.

POPE New Orleans band Pope produces a sad brand of '90s-inspired alternative rock with hints of emo and noise. Think a combination of Austin's Bedhead with the Pixies.

NIGHT DRIVE Houston/Austin duo Night Drive have pioneered their own brand of dark, synth-heavy electro pop, releasing their first single "Drones" in June of 2013, followed by their 5-song EP, "Position I". Their debut full length is planned for release sometime in 2015.

WE WERE WOLVES Houston's We Were Wolves plays blistering hard rock which sounds like a mix of Foo Fighters, Queens of the Stoneage and Austin's The Sword.

THE VANITY Barely one year old, this Austin-based is already turning heads, having recently scored a series of opening slots for indie rock royalty Cold War Kids. They play a brand of accessible rock and roll informed by equal parts U2 and Tom Petty.

DEEP CUTS This Latin-influenced, mostly Gringo-run Houston indie-rock group was formed in 2011 and shares the vibrant, worldbeat sounds of acts like Vampire Weekend and Fool's Gold. Their latest EP "Love Grows" was released in 2014 to overwhelmingly positive reviews.

GEORGE WEST [Information forthcoming.]

GUILLA Houston rapper, producer and songwriter Timothy Russell produces an eclectic style of hip-hop influenced by his well-traveled childhood, his love for anime and videogames, and Bjork.

KULT DIZNEY [Information forthcoming.]

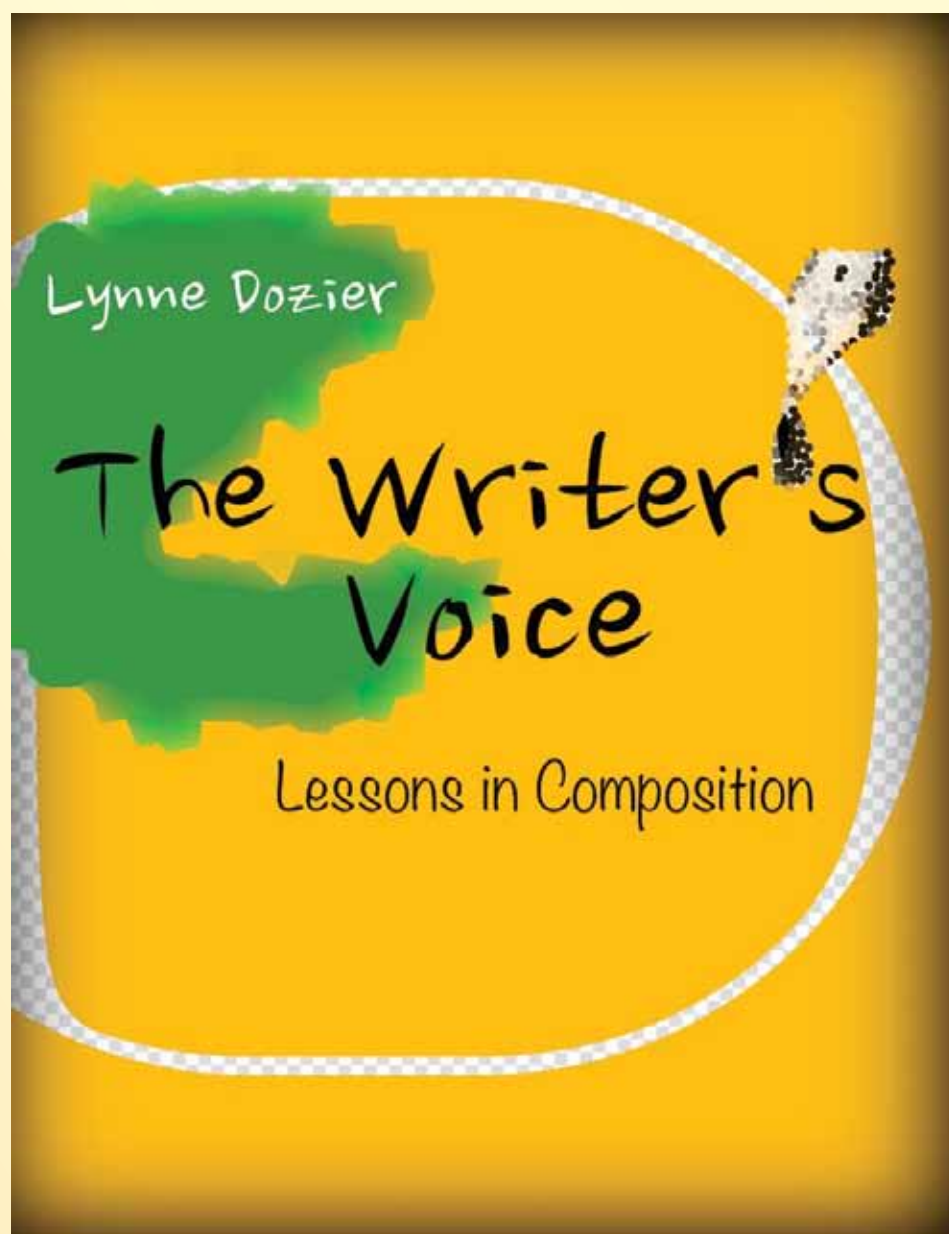
MOJI Hailing from three different hometowns, this Houston trio has crafted a rock sound rooted in jazz and blues, peppered with R&B.

CATCH FEVER Compelling indie pop with atmosphere, Houston's Catch Fever sound like Jimmy Eat World had a baby with Two Door Cinema Club. Their latest album "Shiny Eyes" came out in February 2014.

SECOND LOVERS Houston folk-rock band Second Lovers formed in the summer of 2010 and are fronted by guitar player and vocalist Nicolas Morales. Their playful Americana anthems should remind listeners of acts like The Lumineers and The Avett Brothers They have one studio album "Wishers, Dreamers & Liars" which is available on BandCamp.

PRISMO Prismo seamlessly jumps between electronic genres including electro, trap, and dubstep. Despite being just 18 years old, he keeps the party going late despite having a curfew. **FPH**

The Writer's Voice



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MOST POPULAR MUSIC ON THE RADIO SUCKS, and always has. When I was ten, I remember hearing “Dust in the Wind” by Kansas dozens of times more than I would have liked. I may not have had the words to explain that it was mopey schlocky soft-rock garbage, but it annoyed and depressed me. One night, I was dialing my radio and came across this same song, except played on kazoos. This turned it into a musical dis, a joke I got immediately. I suddenly felt connected to some unknown band that shared my taste. It was brought into my room by the Dr. Demento Show, which changed my life.

Growing up around Houston, kids have little to no experience with non-commercial music. Whether they get exposed to music from radio, the internet, tv, movies, or video games, it is unlikely that they will stumble upon any music that was recorded and released on a shoestring budget. From 1991 to 2011, Rice University’s student-run FM radio station, KTRU, had the reach to change this for people across the Houston metropolitan area.

During this golden era, hiding on the dial just below 92 (where commercial stations begin), KTRU played weird stuff—underground, local, recently released, independent, diverse, international, and experimental music—free from profit margins. Anyone who turned their radio dial to 91.7 FM was challenged to step outside of the familiar realm of overproduced music. Hearing weird sounds inspired kids to start bands. It opened people’s minds. It stoked the flames of its listeners’ imagination. It changed and improved culture of Houston.

In 2010, Rice announced it was selling its frequency and transmitter to the University of Houston for \$9.5 million. The deal to sell the station was made in secret, without input from the current students or alumni. UH would move its classical music programming to KUHA 91.7, and would use its existing frequency, 88.7 FM, for talk/news/NPR.

The University of Houston offers undergraduates a BA in communication, and even a “Media Production Track.” However, though it now owns two radio stations, students are not involved in station programming and they don’t even get to even speak on the air (except, perhaps, as callers on the Diane Rehm Show). Their interaction with the public on behalf of the station consists of things like staffing a table to hand out bumper stickers.

In contrast, Rice University offers no degrees in communications or radio production, but nonetheless, the students created and built up a viable, vibrant, and internationally-respected radio station that they programmed themselves. The hands-on experience at KTRU had been invaluable, but Rice President David Leebron didn’t care. Rice, like most universities, is a big business, and the idea of students representing it to the community was not in line with its business model.

Classical music listeners were also blindsided by the switch. The new signal was a drop from 100,000 watts to 50,000, which is too low for the wide dynamic range found in classical music. Also, with the transmitter situated north of the city, up near Humble, listeners in areas south of Houston couldn’t tune in at all. Subsequently, KUHA did so badly at meeting fundraising goals that it fired its programmers and switched to robot djs.

Rice students were hurt as well. They had started KTRU, and over a 40 year period, created something meaningful. The only truly diverse music on Houston airwaves was gone.

Now, Rice is attempting to placate students, and the listening public, with a new transmitter. Broadcasting from Rice Stadium at 41 watts, the less powerful signal could reach hundreds of thousands of listeners, but the effective broadcast area will be less than 1% of what KTRU had in 2010. The permit, which came through the FCC’s Low Power FM (LPFM) program, was viewed by some as a long-awaited return to the regular FM dial since the valiant Save KTRU struggle had failed to stop the sale.

Ian Wells from The Local Show gives credit to Will Robedee and others for their hard work. Station Manager Sal Tijerina has pure optimism and good-will towards the future working with the administration. However, others think of it as a weak substitute. It is hard to overstate how much resentment remains from some KTRU alums towards the administration over the secretive 2011 deal. When asked for quotes, several indicated that their feelings were so hostile that they were reluctant even to try to translate them into words. Andy Campbell, KTRU’s Station Manager from 1995 to 1997, warns against ever trusting The Board and President who, “have a history of undermining student organizations and nearly silenced one of Rice’s most unique voices.”

RICE RADIO IS BACK, 99% WEAKER

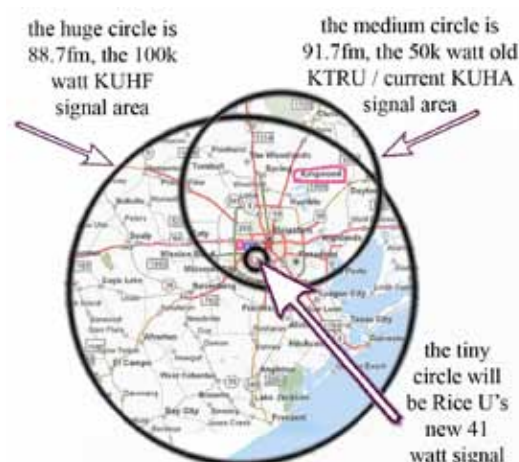
BY NICK COOPER



Today there are, of course, self-recorded tunes that become YouTube phenomena, so it would be an exaggeration to say that non-commercial radio stations are the only route for escaping the corporate music lock-down, but KTRU is one of the best there is in Houston. Much of the groundbreaking music they play is annoying or even intolerable, but at least it’s the Iggy Pop—not the Iggy Azalea—kind of intolerable. Tune in online, or soon on your radio if you are within a couple miles of the Rice stadium. **FPH**

A BRIEF HISTORY OF RICE RADIO / KTRU

- Rice University Radio started in 1967 as a hard-wired, then low power radio station.
- In 1991, through a deal with commercial station and at no additional cost to Rice, KTRU was upgraded to 50,000 watts.
- In 2011, the frequency and transmitter were sold to U of H, and currently KTRU exists only on HD radio and internet streaming.
- The FCC recently approved KTRU to return to the FM dial at 96.1FM at a low-power (41 watts).
- Rice may not be able to negotiate back use of the “KTRU” call sign, as a station in La Harpe, Kansas has acquired it.



MICHAEL C RODRIGUEZ

ART & DESIGN BLOG

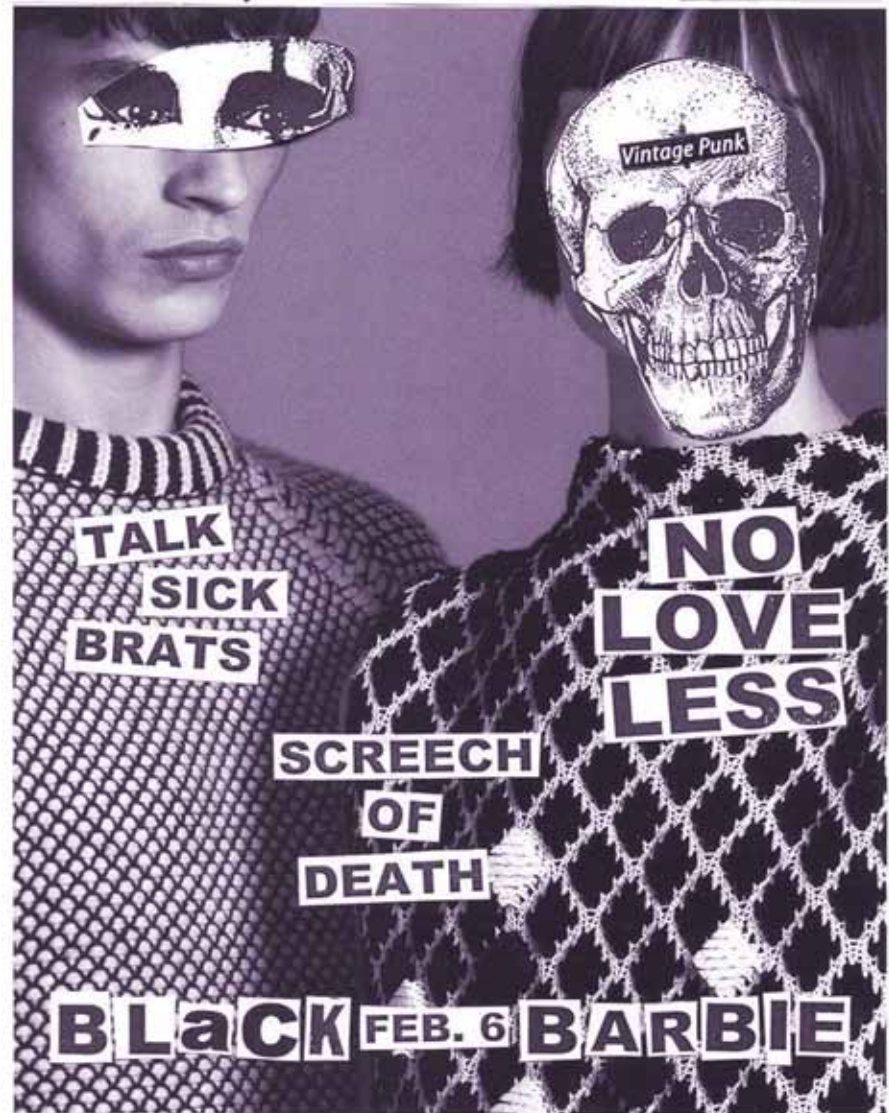


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I GREW UP IN THE SUBURBS with no shortage of green space to romp around and wildlife to observe. I was also lucky that my grandparents had a farm in Brenham, where my lonely only-child self was free to roam the creek beds and stalk snakes and dragonflies until the fireflies came out. But after we moved to Montrose ten years ago, I had to find my nature fix in new places. To my surprise, I'm still discovering the hidden and not-so-hidden sanctuaries of flora and fauna, and I'm grateful for the respite they offer so close to home.

I look forward to when my youngest son and I can pack a bag with water and snacks and take off for a few hours to find some green pocket to explore. He's a city-boy and I want him to appreciate the life that lives alongside us. His interest in being a biologist tells me our adventures are working.

Therefore, dear reader, I invite you not only to follow this column as my adventure buddy and I explore our city beyond its concrete shell, but to remember that you, too, can disappear into nature any moment you choose.

"The earth has music for those who listen." - George Santayana

Even in Houston.



WILD IN HOUSTON

OFF THE GRID AND INTO THE GREEN

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY ANDREA AFRA

MONARCH CATASTROPHE

I'd planned on debuting this column with a review of a specific place, but something more pressing needs our attention. I spent much of last summer rescuing monarch caterpillars from getting chewed alive by wasps and relocating them to locations with more abundant milkweed. Interfering with nature is usually taboo in my book, but the monarch has become an urgent exception since the ubiquitous orange, black, and white species that most Americans can name on sight has seen a 90% decline in its population over the last two decades, with a slight rebound in this winter's count.

Tierra Curry, Senior Scientist at the Center for Biological Diversity, sent a blunt warning in an August 2014 press release announcing a petition to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS): "The 90 percent drop in the monarch's population is a loss so staggering that in human-population terms, it would be like losing every living person in the United States except those in Florida and Ohio." In late December 2014, the FWS responded that the monarch would immediately undergo a year-long status review to determine if the species qualifies to be protected under the Endangered Species Act. As of this February, the federal government has already approved \$3 million for restoration of habitats and grants to incentivize landowners and farmers to join the conservation efforts. This is good news, as monarchs need all of the help they can get.

For such peaceful and nearly weightless creatures, monarchs have a lot of big and powerful enemies. As it is, only 1% of monarchs reach adulthood. The eggs and caterpillars are readily incorporated into the diets of birds and other insects. That remaining 1% has to survive the increase of freak weather in the form of floods, droughts, and record winters, while seeking out a dwindling supply of milkweed. They lay eggs only on milkweed, as their caterpillars eat only milkweed leaves, but the adults will eat nectar from a variety of other flowers. While there are over 70 native species of *Asclepias* (milkweed) in the States, and monarchs are down with about 30 of those, we're not leaving space for enough native milkweed to grow to support their population's needs. Deforestation and urbanization along their migratory routes, along with aggressive agricultural practices, have effectively decimated their main food source.

The Midwest's Corn Belt is the main breeding ground for monarchs in the U.S., and the decrease in their populations has coincided with a rapid increase in genetically modified biofuel crops like Monsanto's

Roundup Ready corn, where only Roundup Ready seeds will grow. So, where milkweed once grew wild and rampant between cornrows and alongside fields, not even the leftover bits of ground between a modified crop and the roads will support milkweed. And with no light on at the inn, monarchs have no choice but to relocate to more accommodating locations.

We're losing them, but it's not too late and you really can help. According to most of the experts, all hope isn't lost, but it's on us—the small gardeners—to source the right native milkweed plants that the monarchs in our region need. If you can buy a plant and give it water and sun, then you're now knighted a gardner. Go forth and seek the proper plants and make them multiply. Houstonians should opt for these varieties when available: Butterfly Weed (*A. Tuberosa*), Swamp Milkweed (*A. Incarnata*), and Common Milkweed (*A. Syriaca*). It's important to source plants that haven't been treated with pesticides, which means bypassing the big-box stores for smaller, locally owned nurseries, and plant sales at the Museum of Natural Science, the Houston Arboretum, and area community gardens — all reputable and affordable sources for healthy native milkweed. Tropical Milkweed (*A. curassavica*) is non-native and produces year round, which some argue may throw off the monarchs' instinct to migrate. Cutting back this variety during the winter months is a simple and temporary solution in a time when milkweed is already in short supply.

Monarchs produce four generations per year. Each lives only two to six weeks as adults, except for the final generation, born between September and October, which lives between six and eight months. These are the monarchs we still see flitting by on a sunny winter day. Most have traveled thousands of miles to overwinter in massive clusters on oyamel fir trees in Mexico and eucalyptus in Southern California. The last generation will soon emerge from hibernation to mate, and a new first generation will be born. When you next see a monarch, give a moment's pause to reflect on the tenacity of such a delicate life-form's struggle to survive. Know that it's simple and within your power to help, which means you probably should, right? **FPH**

For ideas, tips, and sources about how you can attract and help 'free-raise' monarchs, please continuing reading this article at [Freepresshouston.com](http://freepresshouston.com)

Andrea Afra handles the web stuff, but really just wants to write. AndreaAfra.com for the intrepid.



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I PRESSED MY FACE AGAINST THE GLASS, scanning the coastline for a marker, a monument, or hell, I didn't know what exactly, anything to show me where the Granma landed or the Bay of Pigs invasion occurred. I had been in the air a couple of hours since leaving Mexico City when the island of Cuba came into view. I was about to arrive in a land I really only knew about through the oral myths gringos tell one another.

Let me start by saying this: I'm not a communist, a socialist, or a capitalist, so I don't have a dog in the fight. But the fact of the matter is, both for the left and the right in the U.S.A., it is near impossible to obtain accurate, non-politicized, information about Cuba.

First, the normalizing of relations with Cuba will not help sustain the Cuban government, as most Republicans, such as Chris Christie, like to claim. Historically, the need for constant vigilance against invasion, attack, and counter-revolution by the United States has strengthened the Cuban state, while the embargo provides a convenient excuse used by Cuba's politicians to explain government failures. So normalizing relations will, if anything, eliminate some of the ideological rhetoric that has supported the Cuban government.

Secondly, the nightly news talk of Cuba's tourism industry not being able to handle U.S. tourism is bullshit. Three million foreign tourists visited Cuba just in the final week of last year, so I think the infrastructure can handle it. And at the end of the day, Cuba is like any other government—they can limit the amount of visitors they receive.

Obama announced the new relationship with Cuba on December 17th, the day I arrived in Havana. On the way into the city from the airport, the lack of advertising was like a breath of fresh air. There was maybe one billboard, with a state slogan, "Gracias, Che, por tu ejemplo," and nothing else for miles and miles. The cab driver was excited to hear I was a gringo, and was the first to tell me what happened between the governments of our countries. He was clear that more than anything, he was overjoyed for the release of the Cuban Five.

I spent 17 days in Cuba, and traveled many places, including Havana and Santiago. It's true I didn't see too much luxury, but I also didn't see any desperation. I didn't see what I had become accustomed to seeing in this country, in Mexico, and everywhere else in this hemisphere: people just left to fend for themselves on the streets without anything. To my knowledge, that doesn't exist in Cuba.

All Cubans have some things, such as education, food, tobacco and their health. For example, the life expectancy for a Cuban is only a few months lower than a yankee's, and the literacy rate there is higher than in the U.S.A. And this despite the fact that at the time of the Cuban revolution more than 20% of the country was illiterate.

It's true Cuba is not rich like the United States is rich, but this does not denote a failure by the Cuban government. If you travel south, and you really travel, then you know how common it is to take showers from a bucket, or get by on just a meal a day in Mexico, or Bolivia, or pretty much anywhere else in this hemisphere. The average Cuban may not be eating steaks, but neither is the average yankee. All Cubans, however, are eating...and receiving health care. And for the most part, they seem genuinely supportive of their government, and believe in the revolution and its gains. Cubans have the ability to buy luxury items, just like we do, if they have the extra money, but their basics are covered by the state. These basics include cheap electricity, telephone and running water for almost everyone.

Cubans also vote in elections, and are just as skeptical about the validity of our elections as we are of theirs. Really though, how many of us here are



A GRINGO GOES TO CUBA

TRAVEL ADVICE AND COMMENTARY FROM ONE OF CUBA'S LAST ILLEGAL GRINGOS

BY ANONYMOUS

PHOTO BY LAURA GONZALEZ

actually voting? How many of us here feel like our system is just a process of elimination between the highest bidders and not real democracy? There are lots of countries in the hemisphere that have less than us yankees. But in Cuba it appears that what is had is shared more equitably than most places I've been, and seeing that was worth the trip.

Supposedly, United Airlines is waiting for government approval to start Houston to Havana flights. So if you go it is a good idea to learn as much Spanish as you can before leaving, but knowing Spanish is not a prerequisite for enjoying yourself in Cuba. If you want to leave Havana by bus, buy your ticket at the bus station a few days in advance. While you are in Cuba, try to stay at Casa Particulares (homestay, bed & breakfast style), not in hotels, and, once you get settled, ask about how to change some of your tourist money for national money. And if you get the chance to wade through the shallows squid fishing, keep your dominant hand free; then, after you hit them with the light, take a breath and make a quick, controlled grab for your dinner. **FPH**

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THE SUFFERS

BECOME TO THE FIRST LOCAL BAND TO SELL-OUT FITZGERALD'S IN A DECADE

BY JEF WITH ONE F

ART BY BLAKE JONES

THOUGH IT SLIGHTLY TRAILS Numbers in terms of size and longevity as a music venue, Fitzgerald's remains the big boy stage for local Houston acts as well as successful national artists. And yet, over the last decade, very few local bands have unlocked the notable achievement of selling out the upstairs. 30 Foot Fall still does it with their annual Christmas show, but just a regular gig? It appears that The Suffers is the first band in many years to do it, and do it in pre-sale, no less.

This one band selling out the upstairs room at Fitzgerald's says some interesting things about how the music scene has and has not changed over the last 20 years. Back in the day, it was fairly common for bands to pull off a sold out show. Dead Horse did it, of course, but then again, Dead Horse did everything. The Pain Teens pulled it off, as did Sprawl, lower, Taste of Garlic, and other acts from the '90s. But around 2005, the crowds started to taper off. Part of it was that many of those iconic bands simply weren't doing their thing anymore, or they weren't doing it in Houston.

Los Skarnales still pull in a respectable 650 people when they hit Fitzgeralds, and The Tontons are good for at least 500. Many other local acts would cheerfully kill for those numbers, but sold out it ain't.

Brian Smith, Production Manager at Fitzgerald's, named several factors why local acts do do and do not do well in Houston. The first of which is that he feels Houston is in many ways just another market for these acts. Basically, if the Wild Moccasins can do well in venues outside of Houston they will do well in venues inside of Houston. There is essentially no home field advantage, was his point.

He also credited Mark C. Austin of The Convoy Group as a big part of the success of The Suffers.

"To do something in Houston you need someone like Mark," said Smith. "Someone who can make things happen."

There is no one in Houston like Austin. For several years now he has been a tireless, full-time advocate of creating pushes for Houston bands.

"Houston is a city of amazing talent," says Austin. "I wish there were ten more of me."

Austin has sent The Suffers off on tour to build their momentum. He rejects Smith's "national act" theory. The Tontons, for instance, will do half the numbers in Austin that they'll do in Houston, according to Austin.

It's still all about street teams. Getting the posters out, getting in touch with social media, making sure that someone is doing the legwork. He's in charge of that for the few acts under his umbrella, but there is not a lot of him to go around.

"There just isn't time for me to take on every act," he says.

Austin spoke highly of The Suffers. They hadn't played a club gig for two years prior to selling out Fitz, something that Pat Kelly and Adam Castaneda think have contributed to their band's success, significantly.

"A lot of bands play too much," said Kelly. "It's tempting because you want to get out and do it as much as possible, but then you just get five little shows instead of one big show. Rationing it out has really shown us the way."

Austin attributes their recent success to good old

fashioned exposure. They were part of the Red Bull Select event at Warehouse Live that went over-capacity and had a great showing at SXSW. With ten members in the band, spreading the word is a little easier.

It's also a sincere belief of Austin's that it's the presale aspect of The Suffers that has the greatest possibility of improving the Houston music scene.

"Houston is a fickle city, a walk up city," he says. "No show ever has a guarantee that it will be worth it, and so artists keep putting on the same, safe, mediocre shows because there's no promise. If we get a good pre-sale, we can put on a much bigger performance. If you want something special to grow in Houston, buy in advance." **FPH**





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FEB.
13



ROCK & ROLL OVER

FEB.
14



VALENTINE'S DAY PARTY

FEB. 6

BIG RICHARD

FEB. 7

THE FAB 5

FEB. 13

ROCK & ROLL OVER
VHT

FEB. 14

TNT
IRON HORSE

FEB. 20

ALTER EGO

FEB. 21

BREAKFAST AT
TIFFANY'S

FEB. 27

THE SPICOLIS

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THE TRICK WAS TO SURRENDER TO THE FLOW

A TRIBUTE TO HARRIS WITTELS
TEXT AND PHOTOS BY MATT MARCUS

Ed. Note: Harris Wittels, Houstonian and co-executive producer of Parks and Recreation, was found dead of a suspected drug overdose at his home in Los Angeles on February 19th. He is survived by a legion of friends and fans who are devastated by his untimely loss, to whom Free Press Houston extends our deepest condolences. This tribute is by his dear friend, Chef Matt Marcus of Eatsie Boys and 8th Wonder Brewery.



HARRIS IS THE FUNNIEST PERSON I KNOW. Harris is the funniest person most people know. He had comedy running through his veins. I used to think I was pretty funny. But then I met Harris. He just had this way about him.

Harris has been my best friend since high school, and have I admired and respected him since then. I look up to him even though he's about 5 inches shorter than me.

If the outpouring of love in the past week has taught me anything, it's that Harris had more friends than he or anyone else could ever imagine. His heart was full of love. He wasn't necessarily open with his feelings, but he always had an ear for me to talk to and a shoulder to lean on. He made me feel special. He made me feel like he wanted me around.

Although Harris was deep in the LA comedy scene, he IS Houston. Born and raised in Meyerland, he loved all things Houston and defended it when anyone tried to talk shit about it. He got his start here. I'll never forget countless open mic nights at the Laff Stop where we first got a taste for classic Harris jokes or trips to House of Pies after going to weird raves at FunPlex and Astroworld. We'd just talk about dumb shit.

Our relationship grew closer with our love of the band Phish. Everyone else hated on them, but not Harris and me. We toured the country chasing that perfect Phish show. People didn't understand, but Harris was set on explaining how awesome this band truly is to anyone and everyone who would listen. Harris was the ultimate phan. He created a podcast about them and wore Phish shirts in all of his Parks and Rec cameos. Harris phucking met Mike Gordon who then told him he loved Harris' work! We all do.

On those Phish trips, Harris always had my back. He was known as a voracious consumer of garbage food – his favorite restaurants are Chili's and McDonald's and his idea of a delicious lunch involved microwaving four sticks of string cheese and eating it with a fork. But Harris knew how much I loved food and indulged me by letting me pick the best restaurant wherever we were. And in true Harris baller fashion, he'd always pick up the tab.

I wish I could get you back. You meant so much to so many people. That was obvious and apparent at your funeral yesterday. It was so surreal putting you in the ground. Your addiction took hold of you in the last two years and I didn't know how to tell you to stop in a way that actually got through to you. It was always "it's no big deal, man" or "I'm not going anywhere." You were so stubborn.

I am not a writer, a comedian, or an actor, I'm just your friend and will be forever. I love you brother. #humblebrag. **FPH**



Valentine's Day Party



ESCAPE

TNT
IRON HORSE

February 14th



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