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HOLY SHIT, IT'S
2011

Bad
ALBUM COVERS

123

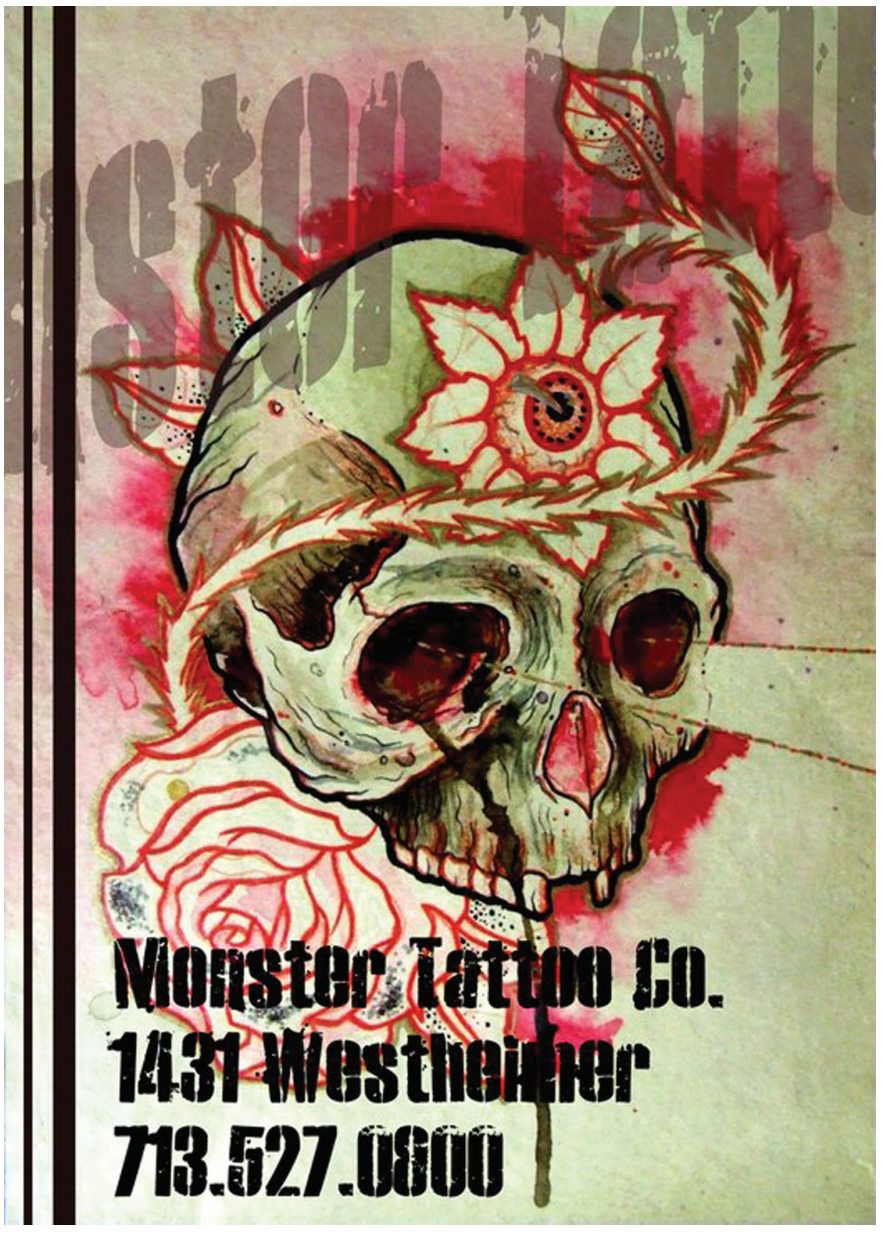
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janu



06 PERFECT TIME TO PLANT
08 DISENGAGE
10 MY SMILE IS STUCK
12 HOLY SHIT, IT'S 2011
15 WORST OF HOUSTON
26 RADIO ZION
28 OF SECRETS & MAD DOGS
30 YOU ARE RIGHT TO REMAIN SILENT
34 SERIOUSLY BAD ALBUM COVERS







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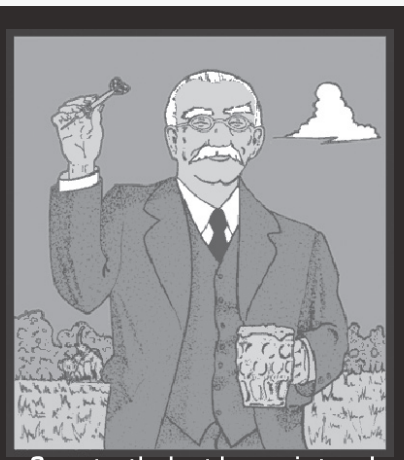
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- Sat. 4
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- Thu. 9
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- Fri. 10
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- Thu. 16
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- Fri. 17
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- Sat. 18
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- Thu. 23
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- Sat. 25
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editor's letter

"We all have our time machines. Some take us back, they're called memories. Some take us forward, they're called dreams."

Life is so short. I never truly understood what the hell that meant as a child when my father would proclaim it. But now it rings so true that it hurts. January marks the 10th anniversary of my father's death. I was only 22 when my father died yet I watched him deteriorate from the age of 13 forward as a result of diabetes. My father, born in Iraq to Lebanese parents in 1943, probably was a diabetic from childhood yet it was not caught. He came to America in 1963 and worked at Burger King on the south side of Houston. Being a fresh off the boat Iraqi in Texas can be lonely, so he soon went to Lebanon to find a wife to marry and bring back to Houston to keep him company. He did this all in less than 14 days. He eventually went to University of Houston and got himself an engineering degree. Throughout my childhood, he slowly became sicker as his diabetes progressed. During my adolescence he went blind. He slowly lost his vision until he did not know me from my brother. My dad could not bear the thought of not having a job and providing for our family so he worked until he absolutely could not see anymore and was forced to stop working as a civil engineer. I distinctly remember dropping him off at work and being worried about him making it to the front door or not or whether he could find the elevator buttons. Once he could not work anymore, he sank into depression and his health became worse. At this point, he had lost all kidney function and had to go to dialysis 3 times a week. With my mom working to support the family, it was on me to give my dad a ride to and from dialysis. Oddly enough, these were some of the best moments of my life. It seemed the sicker my father became, the closer we got. The more we knew he would be gone soon, the more we delved into each other's lives and had frank conversation. I would demand to know every detail of every story and he gladly obliged. Completely battered with illness, my father was suddenly able to let down his guard enough for him and I to get really close for the first time in our lives. In 1996, his doctor said he had 6 months to live. He died January 4th, 2001 after a day of shopping with my sister and my mom.

When you lose someone so close to you and so much a part of who you are, there is never truly 'healing' or 'getting over it.' Myself and my siblings all have children now who look just like him, who smirk just like him, yet he never got to see except for my eldest son Lukas. Bittersweet would be a massive understatement. It is hard to explain to a 5 year old that their grandfather loved them despite having not met them. But it is true. I don't know how, but it is. I miss you Baba.

Allah Yarhamo Sahban Afra

Perfect Time to Plant DEBRIS

BY BUFFALO SEAN
PHOTO BY BLACQUE JACQUES



THE INTRIGUE, back room dealing, corporate lying and backstabbing that followed the Wilshire Village's demise will soon come to a close with the construction of a new HEB grocery store in its place. Across the street from the Fiesta at the corner of Dunlavy and Alabama (the coolest grocery store around) there used to be a dilapidated mid-50s apartment complex flanked by shady Live Oak trees that leant a swampy, slow ambiance to the area. Soon there will be a monstrous new building more at home in San Antonio than here in Montrose. In between, the property owners received requests to evict the tenants of Wilshire Village and bulldoze the complex by a property investment group in order to receive refinancing, and then the owners were told that no refinancing was available. The property went into bank holding and was briefly on the market- at which time a movement to create a city park, farmers market and/or public gardens began to gain steam. Unfortunately for them and unbeknownst to the "Forever Garden" and "Montrose Land Defense Coalition" (who were campaigning to use the space for the community) HEB had already been in negotiations in secret to build a store since the tenants had been evicted months before. Just a little coincidental that the shadowy investment group played right into HEB's hands- were they the same people? Sore at being locked out of the process, the community groups organized protests that resulted in HEB agreeing to let the community vote on the store's look and shape- with one option being the placement of parking over the store, a large amount of green space and an area for a farmers market. Unfortunately that was total bullshit and now the store and parking lot are slated to pave over the entire lot.

Houston, one of the greenest cities in America, is losing its canopy with every new development, each bulldozed Live Oak and new slab of concrete slated for construction. At least at the corner of Alabama and Dunlavy, some people aren't giving up hope entirely. This is an email making the rounds in the past few weeks: "Here is the latest on the efforts of what was Forever Garden and is now Montrose Land Defense Coalition. I was given the link for boycottheb.org recently, and I'm passing this information along to all of you, because the more groups and people working on a single issue, the better. Boycott HEB are campaigning using purchasing power as a bargaining tool. In order to ensure that the site has an adequate green space, the group proposes that community members agree to shop at HEB for three years if a green space is created, otherwise commit to boycott the store completely. As the email [sent to HEB management] reads, "Somewhere around 1000 customers provide about 1.2 million dollars per year, which is enough to offset the cost [of green space] over 3 years, ballpark numbers. Plus people would more than likely continue to shop there after 3 years and provide consumer loyalty." Take a look, stay informed!"

While a well-disciplined boycott can effect change, HEB will likely ignore any effort to change their plans after the architectural drawings have already been paid for. That's 1 million dollars right there. Instead HEB should be screwed in the same way that they screwed the Montrose community- in secret. Should this store open with all its pavement and fluorescent lighting glory, consider making your own little contribution to the re-greening of their little spot in our neighborhood. Catch a fieldmouse and let him go in the produce section. Hang a birdfeeder for sparrows near the loading docks. Throw birdseed out near the entrance to encourage pigeons and grackles. Plant vegetables in their landscaping or toss marijuana seeds in the bushes. Have a truckbed picnic in the parking lot, buying your sandwiches at Fiesta. Let your dog do his business on their lawn. Dig a hole and plant a fruit tree (hell, they'll even water it for you). Email info@montroseslums.com for more ideas, and don't forget to have fun! FPH

→

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THE OBJECT REAL
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JAN. 7
Danny Barnes

JAN. 21
Bigga Starr, Drum

JAN. 23
deadBeats

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film

Dis-engage

BY MICHAEL BERGERON



HONING DOWN A LIST of the year's best films usually requires balancing a slate of movies from the obscure art films that I spend my life in the dark watching to more mainstream fare that you my dear reader are more likely to encounter at the local multiplex. For every person I've talked to who thinks Black Swan is brilliant I've also met those who hated the experience. I can relate. Whenever I tell whoever wants to listen that I think The Hangover is an unfunny comedy they just look at me with arched eyebrows. For the record, Hangover 2 opens this summer, but if you're talking director Todd Phillips I prefer his recent Due Date.

The Oscar voters have a list of 248 American films alone that are eligible this year for honors and when you add in foreign films to the mix a top ten list doesn't even add up to ten percent of the product that could be seen over 12 months.

There's a perception of foreign films, mainly perpetuated by the very people who make films, that most people don't really see foreign films (or documentaries for that matter) so much as the film du jour, the action thriller starring the hot star of the moment. Foreign films, on the other hand are usually difficult to understand, and hard to fathom. In short, the perfect recipe for a cinematic flashflood.

In the current film The Fighter the protag Mark Wahlberg takes Amy Adams to a foreign film on their first date. Not because it's some awesome film but because of exactly the fact that it's a foreign film and nobody he knows will be there. He's embarrassed for having lost a championship fight and rightly knows it's a lonely place to go in a working class suburb of Lowell, Massachusetts. The film they're seeing, since The Fighter is set in the early 90s, is Belle Epoque. This particular film played in Houston at the Worldfest Houston Film Festival with the director, Fernando Trueba, in attendance the same month he picked up the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film for the film. At first Wahlberg pronounces the film "belly ep-i-cou" while Adams incorrectly corrects him with "bell epic." Perhaps not oddly, The Fighter's director David O. Russell has previously made fringe movies and art films like I Heart Huckabees or Spanking the Monkey. A typical Russell mainstream movie would be Three Kings.

This whole foreign film ethic is something Russell is commenting on since he then shows Wahlberg asleep during Belle Epoque while Adams looks visible pissed at having to watch the movie awake. Note that Belle Epoque was one of the first films to play domestically that featured then unknowns Penelope Cruz, Arianda Gil and Maribel Verdu.

Coming out of the film Adams comments in her thick Massachusetts accent: "That's the movie you wanted me to see? There wasn't even any good sex in it. I had to read the whole fuckin' movie. Some guy from a road crew recommended it to you – a fuckin' subtitled movie?" That pretty much sums up the attitude of most people towards foreign films.

With that in mind here are some of my favorite films from the last year divided into categories.

Major studios, minor studios and studio subsidiaries: Inception, Easy A, The Ghost Writer, Fair Game, Black Swan, 127 Hours, Kick Ass, The King's Speech, Another Year, Greenberg, Four Lions, The Kids are All Right, Stone, Nowhere Boy, Never Let Me Go, Animal Kingdom and The Social Network.

Foreign Films: Enter the Void, Carlos, Dogtooth, Mother, Biutiful, the two Mesrine films, The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo, Un Prophet, Micmacs, Farewell, The Good the Bad the Weird, Lebanon, and Soul Kitchen.

Documentary: The Agony and Ecstasy of Phil Spector, Client Nine, The Tillman Story, Countdown to Zero, The Inside Job, and Exit Through the Gift Shop.

All Good Things director Andrew Jarecki

The Magnolia release All Good Things follows that company's strategy of releasing films theatrically in big cities simultaneous with their debut on VOD (a type if internet streaming on demand). Since the Angelika closed in Houston the only venue for films like this is the three-screen River Oaks as chains like the Edwards or AMC won't play theatricals that are also available via other streams. But All Good Things is a film that will resonate with Houston audiences since the plot revolves around the Robert Durst murder of his neighbor in Galveston about a decade ago.

All Good Things director Andrew Jarecki spoke about his movie by phone with Free Press Houston. Previously, Jarecki was one of the founders of Moviefone and his first film was the acclaimed docu Capturing the Friedmans. AGT also deals with a dysfunctional family but this time in a fictionalized manner. Robert Durst, a scion of New York City real estate mogul Seymour Durst, becomes David Marks in a thoughtful and frankly exciting performance by Ryan Gosling. Gosling's joined in equal measure by Kirsten Dunst and Frank Langella. The story spans from the early 1970s to the present, from NYC to Texas and a few points in between. The crux of the film is the disappearance of Marks' wife soon after their marriage and the subsequent events that found him living as a transvestite in Galveston a generation later.

"I worked with a theory that someone filled in as his wife leaving her apartment, taking a taxi after he murdered her to establish an

alibi," said Jerecki. There was no indictment and years later a friend of the couple Susan Berman (the character Deborah Lehrman in the movie) was also murdered. "There's a tendency to make a monster out of such a character that I wanted to avoid," mentioned Jarecki. Durst was suspected in both cases but never charged. However Durst was charged in the death of his neighbor Morris Black (the character Malvern Bump in the movie) after Black's dismembered body "washed up in Galveston Bay."

Durst was acquitted on grounds of self-defense although he was sentenced to several months incarceration for improper disposal of a body. Jarecki adds that before Durst was arrested he took off on a cross-country journey and was even "busted for shoplifting a sandwich at a store in Pennsylvania even though he was flush with cash." Jarecki shot the film at New York City locales with Connecticut filling in for the Gulf Coast scenes. All Good Things (the title refers to a health food store that Marks and his wife run early in the movie) was released in select theaters last month and of course is available via VOD.

DVD slight return: Music, Bombs and Bionics

There's no lack of music and concerts available on DVD to the point that the disc experience has supplanted records and CDs on the bookshelf. Current DVD releases celebrating music include Graham Parker and The Figgs: Live at the FTC on the rock side and Sondheim! The Birthday Concert on the legit side.

One disc I immediately warmed up to was LennoNYC. This two-hour doc explores the world of John Lennon in the 1970s, with particular insight into the Rock and Roll LP sessions with Phil Spector. Lots of interviews with participants and collaborators of Lennon during this time period are cut with previously unseen concert footage and unheard demo versions of Lennon/Ono songs. Obviously any footage or material that's approved through Yoko Ono will have a faint aura of hagiography, yet LennoNYC does delve into Lennon's lost weekend period in a way that reveals faults without tarnishing his overall image.

The cool thing about explosions is that they look really good on screen. But usually nowadays such effects are computer generated or controlled pyrotechnics. In Car Bomb the explosions are real.

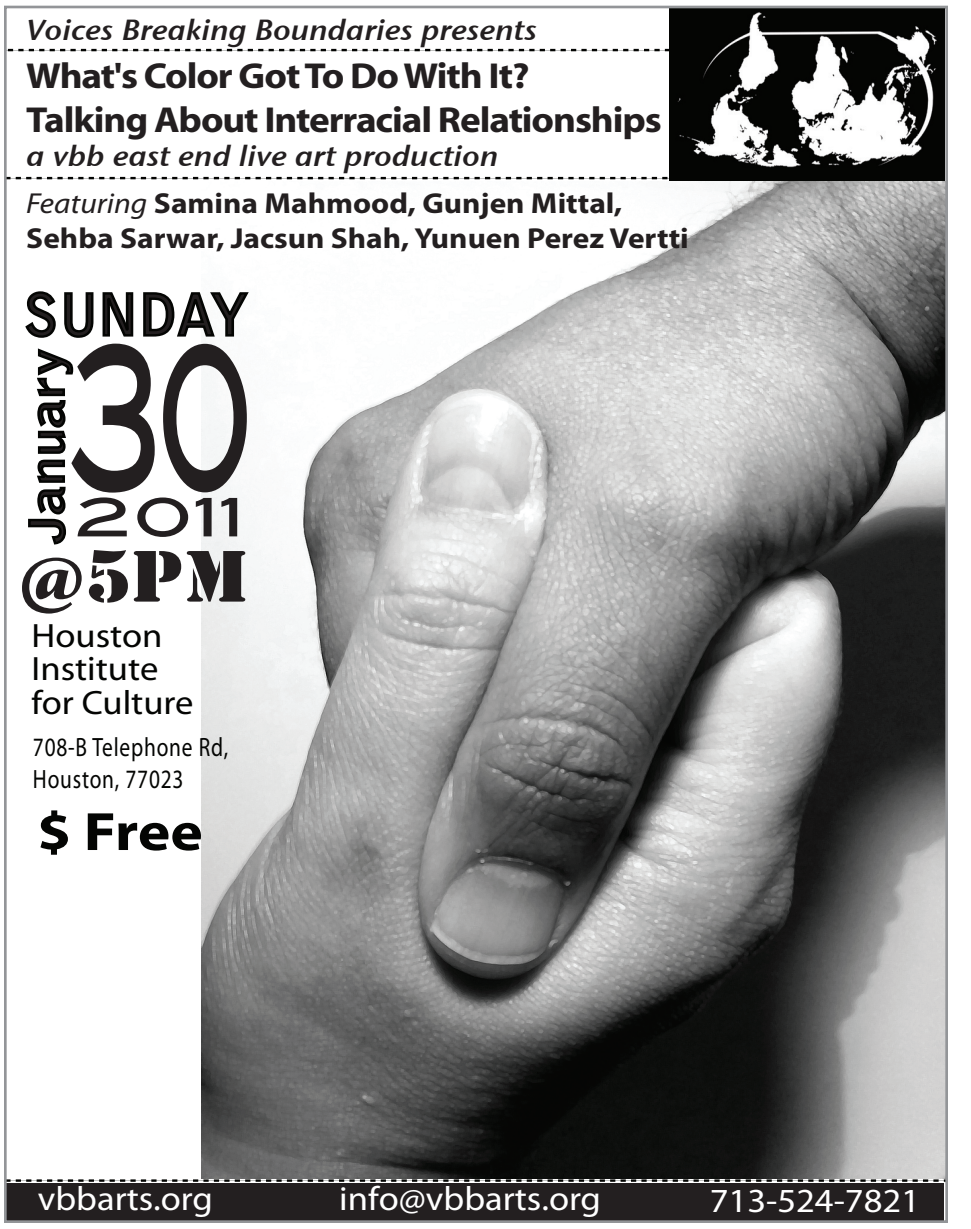
Car Bomb describes the history of vehicular explosive devices in the 20th century, and while this may seem like a modern innovation to guerilla warfare one factoid that sticks in your mind is that the first such use was a horse drawn carriage loaded with dynamite on Wall Street in 1920. The narrator, Robert Baer is an ex-CIA agent who was the role model for the George Clooney character in Syriana. This feature length doc is fast paced and intense most of the time. And there are lots of explosions,

The Six Million Dollar Man Box Set explores everything bionic on 40 DVDs that cover the entire five seasons as well as a plethora of extras and revival TV movies. It will take you the rest of your life to get through this set, which includes a cool lenticular cover that when opened activates an audio intro to Steve Austin (Lee Majors).

When the series began in 1973 as a series of three two-hour pilots the tone was serious sci-fi with shady government operatives monitoring the fate of test pilot and astronaut Austin after he's bionically rebuilt following the crash of an experimental jet. The regular show had Austin carrying out covert missions while throwing in a diet of paranormal plots. There's a shit ton of extras not the least of which is an interview with Majors that over 90-minutes where he recounts all his television roles (The Big Valley; Owen Marshall, Counselor at Law; Six Million Dollar Man; The Fall Guy).

One reoccurring character was Bigfoot, originally played by Andre the Giant although by the last season Ted Cassidy played the feral human. There's also the Seven Million Dollar Man (Monte Markham), the Bionic Woman (Lindsay Wagner), a rouge robot (John Saxon) and what may be my favorite non-Star Trek guest slot from William Shatner.

In an ep from the first season titled Burning Bright the first shots are actual Apollo space walk footage. Then we see the astronaut (Shatner) flipping out as a magnetic field increases the acuity of his brain. When he returns to Earth Austin is assigned to the now whacked-out spacemen who claims to be able to communicate with dolphins and offers a new mathematical formula to explain the Sun's relation to the cosmos. Shatner insists that NASA return him to space with dolphins as his crew. Not to be missed. **FPH**





BY KWAME M. A.

MY SMILE IS STUCK, I CANNOT GO BACK TO YOUR FROWNLAND



WELL, HERE WE ARE. When I started writing about bands I was a young dude, hopeful and optimistic, weaned on weird guitar rock, raised by hip hop and R&B, believing that if people heard Unwound and Polvo, they would realize that the music on the radio was indeed bad, and the shit taste of masses of people would be changed by my informed opinion. However, time has disproven that theory, shit music is still the bees' knees, and awesome music is still enjoyed by a minority of people who in some way have equated obscurity to a badge of honor. Without the lure or benefit of monetary reimbursement, or temporary prestige, I have waged the waters of the rock writerdom with only the recognition of those who I've praised and their complimentary plus one guest listings. But now, family in tow and life that requires more than weed money, I ponder what keeps the gas in the tank. Well, it's not really a question I can answer, or hope to, it's just one of those beginning of the year, post New Year's Eve, needs for an epiphany. But it is now a new year (not really I'm writing this in December before Christmas), which means it is time to look forward, what will happen, what does this year hold, blah, blah, blah

HERE AT NIGHT

NO AGE, FITZGERALD'S 01/12/10

No Age songs sound like the best parts of My Bloody Valentine, the poppier portions of Sonic Youth or Dinosaur Jr. Now what does that mean to someone unfamiliar with those bands? Well it's like drony background noise with good pop hooks, or something like that. Regardless, I'm sure it would make for a great show, people doing the pogo thing... No Age represents a brand of pop music that is adventurous while still being accessible. It could rock a coffee shop or be suitable as the music that plays in the background in a movie scene in a coffee shop.

PHARCYDE, GROUNDHALL 01/21/10

The Pharcyde will always hold a place in history as a group representative of a change in the guard. They have been able to maintain a bit of artistic credibility in hip hop while still being relevant. Sure, there is that faction of the audience that only wants to hear "Passing Me By" but if one is going to be remembered for one song, that's one hell of a song. I've seen the Pharcyde a few times, and their live show doesn't disappoint. Here's another thing: girls love the Pharcyde; for those of you that like to see girls at shows.

HEAR AT NIGHT

THE EX-CATCH MY SHOE, Ex Records

Guitar music is never more exciting than when executed by The Ex. The band has a way of making each movement in the song important, from something as seemingly insignificant as a finger placement on the fret to a flat out shift in the song arrangement. The clicks of a toggle switch, the rhythm of the strum and the drum, the nuance of a string, all contribute to and catapult each song. "Cold Weather Is Back" is a groove, a manifesto, celebration. I could wax the poetic about the band politically, but these things are secondary to the band. The infusion of sounds are reminiscent of African music, post punk, punk, reggae, and several other ingredients, but none are greater than the conclusion. If you don't know, now you know.

Sic Alps-Napa Asylum (Drag City)

I reviewed this album a few issues ago because I thought it came out in November. Upon further inquiry I was informed it came out in January, and it is such a beast of an album, I will preview/review it twice. Sic Alps songs are a demonstration in a) what a rock song sounds like b) how it should be recorded and c) how to make the feedback and hiss an extra instrument in the band. This album sounds as if it were recorded long ago, that these are the recovered versions. Reverb and echo are powerful here. "Jolly" comes right out of the gate, it sounds mystic like a blues or Lomax recording. It's old style rock n' roll, as are most of the songs, simple riff and groove. "Country Medicine" is Dylan, it's down home, the sound of the ghost singing in that closet. Rock is many things, Napa Asylum is all of them.

RIP Captain Beefheart FPH









LIVE MUSIC OF NOTE

ESTROGEN HIGHS
01/07
Super Happy Fun Land

NO AGE
01/12
Fitzgerald's

JAVELIN
01/15
Groundhall

THE COOL KIDS
01/23
Warehouse Live

THE CONCERT PUB - North

The Ultimate Bar & Grill

SUNDAYS
KARAOKE
Happy Hour
Open to Close!
NFL Football
on the big screen.

MONDAYS
Happy Hour
all day & night!
Monday night
Football!
KARAOKE!

TUESDAYS
STEAK NITE!
Battle
of The
Bands!

WEDNESDAYS
Ladies Night
$2 U-CALL-ITS
FEMALE
ROCK
BANDS!

THURSDAYS
BIG BEER
NIGHT!
Live
DJ

FRIDAYS
Live Bands
Inside!
Live DJ
Outside On
The Patio

SATURDAYS
Live Bands
Inside!
Live DJ
Outside On
The Patio

Tuesday Nights!
"Battle Of The Bands"
Over
$5,000 in Cash & Prizes!
$2500 - 1st Place,
$1000 - 2nd Place,
$500 - 3rd Place
Feb. 1 - Battle Finale!

JANUARY EVENTS

WEDNESDAYS
Jan. 5 - Volatil
Jan. 12 - Zolazul/ZOZ
Jan. 19 - Flicker System
Jan. 26 - Texas TNT

FRIDAYS
December 31
New Year's Eve Bash
Jan. 7 - Santana Tribute
by La Raza Connection
Jan. 14 - Radio Drama
Jan. 21 - The Dogz
with special guest
Dark Horse Rising
Jan. 28 - The Dogz
with Victim
Feb. 4 - Wattzit2ya

SATURDAYS
Jan 1 - Flicker System with
Maryjane Mayhem
Jan. 8 - 99 LBS.
(Black Crowes Tribute)
with Alice In Chains Tribute
Jan. 15 - "Live In Concert"
DILANA *with* Scars Heal In Time
Jan. 22 - Fireball
"Deep Purple Tribute"
and a very special tribute to
Cream & Jimi Hedrix
presented by Blowtorch Repair
Jan. 29 - Abbey Rode
"Beatles Tribute"
Already Gone
"Eagles Tribute"
Double Vision
"Foreigner Tribute"
Feb. 5 - Cowboys From Hellpaso
"Pantera Tribute"
with special guest

SATURDAY, JAN. 15
"Live In Concert"
from
Rockstar: Supernova
DILANA

THURSDAY, JAN. 20
Bike Night with
KAT JAMES
& TROUBLEMAKER

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Live DJ
Outside On
The Patio

SATURDAYS
Live Bands
Inside!
LIVE DJ
Outside On
The Patio

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Wednesdays
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FRIDAYS
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Jan. 14 - *"Live In Concert"*
DILANA
Jan. 21 - Sex Panthers
Jan. 28 - Radio Drama
Feb. 4 - Flicker System

SATURDAYS
Jan. 8 - Xes Whiskey
"Van Halen Tribute"
Jan. 15 - Adrenaline
Jan. 22 - "ALIVE"
National Kiss Tribute
with
GANGUS BON
"AC/DC Tribute"
Jan. 29 - "Tribute Night"
Somewhat Damaged
"Nine Inch Nails Tribute"
with
Crackerman
"Stone Temple Pilots Tribute"
Feb. 5 - Black Dog
"Led Zeppelin Tribute"

FRIDAY, JAN. 14
"Live In Concert"
from
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HOLY SHIT, IT'S 2011

You Should Go Watch Some Live Music Or Something

BY BRIGITTE B. ZABAK

IF "GOING TO SEE MORE LIVE MUSIC" wasn't one of your New Year's resolutions this year, you should probably do something about that. Houston was blessed with so many quality shows in 2010 (Jónsi, The Flaming Lips, Iron & Wine, Blonde Redhead, Phoenix, The Dead Weather, The Black Keys, and Warpaint to name a very select few) and we suspect that 2011 will be even more jam-packed with musical goodness. Perhaps we'll even expand our horizons and check out a show or two that doesn't involve some cuddly indie band comprised mostly of chubby, bearded men and "the" in their namesake.

That's one of the great things about the Houston music scene – there really is something for everyone. So, despite the ever-growing lack of parking around the few music venues we actually have left in this city, there is no excuse for you to not get out once and awhile and support a local venue, a local band, or a national band you adore and feel compelled to pay thirty extra dollars in fees for just so you can talk through their entire set.

Whichever you choose, we support you and we want to offer some suggestions for shows we think you should probably not miss.

Daniel Johnston's 50th Birthday Bash – Over the years, Daniel Johnston has written and composed a number of songs that really speak to those places inside many of us that are romantic and vulnerable and kind of silly. It's really Johnston's earnestness and transparency that makes him so interesting. His music resonates with the part of us that we work so hard to hide and that he so willingly shares. Johnston has become somewhat of a Texas icon since his move to Austin so many years ago and it's a pretty neat thing that he chose Houston to celebrate his fiftieth year of existence. In addition to Johnston's performance, several of Houston's beloved bands will also be sharing the stage (Spain Colored Orange/Roky Moon & BOLT/The Mathletes/The Bright Light Social Hour/Tax the Wolf/Electric Attitude/The Examples/Ceeplus Badknives/Fredster). Daniel Johnston's 50th Birthday Bash will be on Friday, January 14, 2011 at Fitzgerald's. All ages. $15. Day Of: $20.

Sarah Jaffe – Jaffe, another gem from Texas, is quickly making a name for herself on the folk singer/songwriter front. In 2009, Jaffe self-released her very first EP, Even Born Again, and managed to generate a little buzz from both Rolling Stone and the Dallas Observer. Not long after that, Jaffe was signed to Dallas-based Kirtland Records and by May 2010 her first full-length album was recorded and released. Her voice is lovely and ethereal and her words boast a wisdom and strength far beyond her modest 24 years. Sarah Jaffe will be performing at McGonigel's Mucky Duck on Thursday, January 20, 2011. 7:30 pm. $15.

Fired for Walking/Side Arms/ Bright Men of Learning – In the mood for a local show with some of Houston's most talented veteran rock-n-rollers? Sure you are! This local lineup will most certainly provide you with a nice mix of indie rock, classic rock and straight-up rock noise. Head out to Fitzgerald's on Friday, January 28, 2011, have a couple of beers (responsibly, of course) and watch rock done right. **FPH**

OTHER SHOWS TO CONSIDER

Omotai, Ghosttown Electric, Big Fiction, Canyons
01.07, Rudyard's (21+)

Alpha Rev
01.12, House of Blues

Girl Talk
01.13, House of Blues

Paris Falls (CD Release)
01.15, Fitzgerald's

Reel Big Fish/The Aquabats
01.15, Verizon Wireless

Hymn For Her
01.16, Walter's

Evil Spirits
01.20, Super Happy Fun Land

Keller Williams
01.21, Fitzgerald's

The Pharcyde
01.21, Groundhall

NOFX
01.22, House of Blues

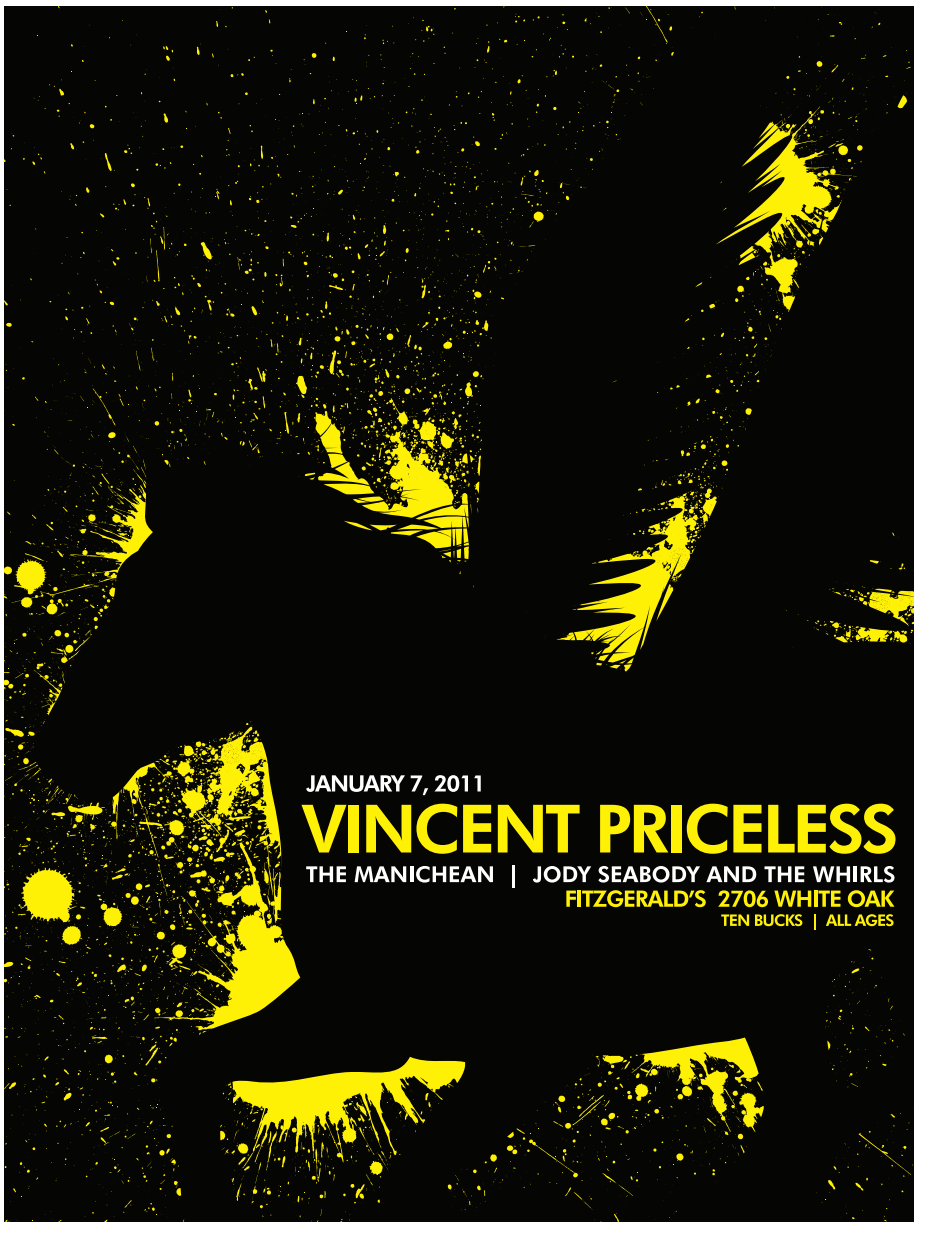
The Toasters
01.23, Walter's

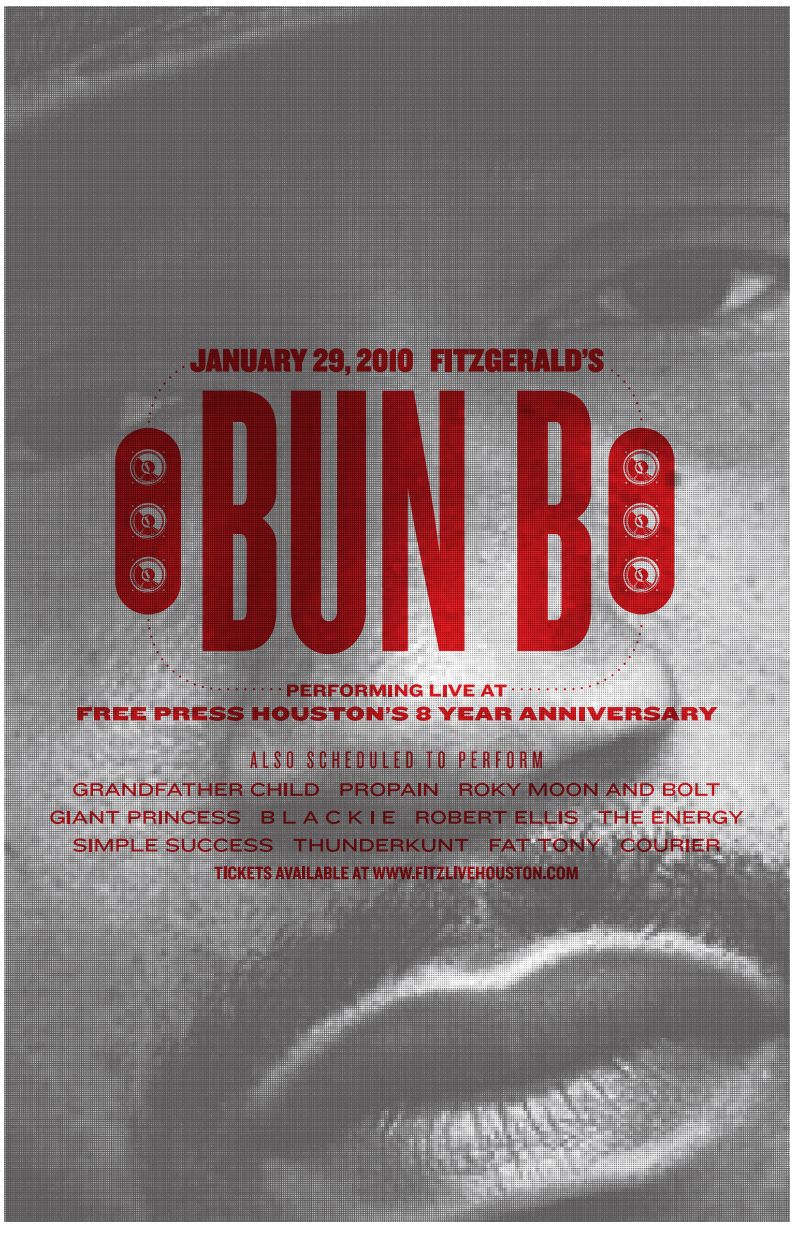
Sarah Jaffe gets all singer-y-sonwriter-y at Mucky Duck January 20th.




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2010

Gather around you fellow haters, cynics, and video game store clerks and bask in the hate that is our annual 'Worst of Houston 2010'; a collection of the worst antics of 2010 in Houston and even beyond! Be forewarned, we pull no punches here and call em' like we see them. So if you are included on this list, take it not as a stab but rather a nudge to change your actions and work towards a better tomorrow. We know we will. McCoin, you are fired!

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
MICHAEL C. RODRIGUEZ

Thanks Dennis Storemski for letting me know privacy is dead

Worst Invasion of Privacy - Red light cameras vs. DHS cameras
While Houston voters went to the polls and rejected red light cameras November 2nd, the city of Houston was quietly continuing with the installation of some 250-300 outdoor video surveillance cameras throughout the downtown area. This money for this project, costing upwards of 14 million dollars, came from The Urban Area Security Initiative funds doled out annually by Homeland Security. Is there really that much going on downtown that we need 300 cameras to watch it? Are there even 300 intersections downtown? Responding to public concerns that these cameras constitute an invasion of privacy, Dennis Storemski, the city's director of the Office of Public Safety and Homeland Security said all the cameras are in public spaces where people should be aware that their actions are not private. "We live in an age right now where there's really no expectation that there would be no video in a public space." Thanks Dennis Storemski for letting me know privacy is dead, I almost missed the memo! It's a good thing for the City of Houston that Homeland Security expenditures aren't up for public vote; I think we know how Houstonians would side on this issue. *Tish Stringer*

Worst Cocktail - Anvil
Some basil-y, gin and fruit crap one of the guys from Anvil made me drink. *Brandon Young*

Worst Display of Selfishness -
Getting married on a holiday weekend
Who do you think you are? If everyone was as selfish as you holidays wouldn't even exist. Or in the fall during football season. Nothing says romantic wedding like forcing your friends and loved ones to feign interest in something they've seen a hundred times and then to spend their time at the reception watching the game with the waiters on the ballroom kitchen TV.

Also, black tie weddings: what are we, in the Great Gatsby? Your butler called. He thinks you're a douche. *Stephen Thompson*



Worst Political Screw-up - Red Light Camera vote
The reason why this is a screw-up isn't about whether or not red light cameras do anything but raise money for HPD, nor is it about who bankrolled which campaign. It's about the fact that the vote was completely unnecessary. The contract with American Traffic Solutions was going to expire in 2014 and all Houston City Council had to do was not renew it and the cameras would have come down. Instead a proposition was placed on the ballot and now the city is involved in a lawsuit to determine whether a contract supersedes the will of the people and whether the city will have to pay money it doesn't have to get out of a contract the citizens didn't think it should have entered into in the first place. *Alex Wukman*

Worst Place to Buy Produce - Any grocer but Fiesta
I love my little Fiesta. I get 2 or 3 bunches of cilantro for a buck, beautiful Persian cucumbers for $1.89 a pound, gorgeous juicy pears at three for a dollar. The last time I went to Kroger limes were 4 for a dollar, lemons nearly a buck a pound, and they didn't even have cilantro. H-E-B laughably asks nearly double the cost for all of their produce and Central Market is for people who seek status elevation for paying more for less. *Andrea Afra*

Worst Case of Too Little, Too Late - DeLay's delayed conviction
Even though the photo in the Chron of Tom DeLay—snapped moments after being found guilty—was almost worth putting up with the man for 30 years (oh, that stricken, pissed-off look... visions of prison showers, like sugar plums, a-dance in his head), it was no where near enough, and no where soon enough. Even discounting the possibility of a pardon from Governor for Life, Secessionist, and hair model Rick Perry, the odds of "The Hammer" getting hammered up his jammer in the slammer are pretty remote—he'll likely get the minimum sentence, do token time in the Oil Executive wing of one of Texas's many fine prisons, and then begin a new career as either a televangelist or a ballroom dance instructor. And in any case, with the Citizens United Decision, the U.S. Supreme Court has made DeLay's little money laundering scheme irrelevant and unnecessary anyway. *M.Martin*

Worst Interviewee - Roy Mata
C'mon Holmes, I sent you questions like 4 months ago and you promised to send over the answers. I thought we were friends? *Omar Afra*

Worst Southern Hospitality - Chevron
As a multinational company with operations in more than 180 countries, Chevron hosted their shareholders meeting here in Houston this year. People from Ecuador, Nigeria, Colombia, Indonesia, Angola, Burma, Australia, Thailand, Kazakhstan, Canada, Texas, California, Alaska, Wyoming came to talk about the impacts that Chevron has had on their communities. Impacts like probing up dictatorships, contaminating water and air, displacing people to build pipelines and causing terrible impacts on human health. Chevron showed their hospitality by not letting any of these people in. They barred more than 30 people, many who came from other continents, from attending this shareholders meetings, where they had stock, and came from communities who are impacted by Chevron's operations. If you look at the Chevron website you might believe their public relations about how "Oil companies should support communities they are part of." But judging them by their actions makes it clear that they would be happy to grind up the bones of children if they could sell it to you to power your car. *Rob Block*



he'll likely get the minimum sentence... and then begin a new career as either a televangelist or a ballroom dance instructor.

Worst Question Asked Annually - When is it going to be winter?
Every year of my life I've heard the same questions this time of year: When is going to get cold? What is up with this weather? Clip this out and give it to a newcomer to our town, or save it before you ask yet again next year: Houston weather is fucked up because it revolves around our wardrobes. As soon as you dig out your jacket and scarves, it gets hot again. And just when you think it's safe to wear that mini-skirt on a balmy November eve, BAM! Icy cold fingers of air be stroking your thighs. Verdict: Thread smartly and carry a light cardigan. *Andrea Afra*

Worst Houston Use of Facebook Invites - Musicians Inviting Me to Vote for Their Band
I'm pretty sure it's still illegal to be a WHORE in Houston, which is why I was stunned this year to find my Invite Box on Facebook brimming with pathetic invitations from musicians beseeching me to vote for them in the wildly prestigious Houston Press Music Awards. How falsely pretentious can you be, "inviting me" to vote for you? For shame. But as much as this is intended to be a complaint, it's really a "thank you" to all of the artists and bands that carried out this atrocious act. Thank you for making it the easiest decision in the world NOT TO VOTE FOR YOU. Stop social networking your music and spend time crafting it, please. Don't choose to achieve cheap success in art. That ruins the point. *Mills-McCoin*

Worst Use of a Publication as a Facilitator of Human Trafficking and Prostitution - Houston Press
Look, I am no puritan. Also, I have some close friends at Houston Press and respect what they do. Yet, the last portion of the paper that features the 'Massage and Spa ads' is rife with young Asian girls who are here against their will and working often to pay their way. But their work ultimately involves getting raped several times a day. No one knows more than me how hard it is for print publications to make revenue these days in this digital age but there must be some code of ethics here, guys. And ignorance is no excuse. It is no secret what happens at these places and what the conditions are. HPD simply does not have all the resources to bust the endless amount of 'Massage Parlors' and the laws are not adequately set up to prosecute the pimps as opposed to the prostitutes. Two years ago, three ad reps at the Orlando Weekly were arrested and charged with Racketeering for knowingly profiting from prostitution. They have since cut such ads from the paper. Not a bad idea. *Omar Afra*

Worst Greenwashing of Dirty Food - Ruggles Green Grass Fed Beef and "Natural"
Turkey, Buffalo, Chicken and Pork may sound natural and healthy, but unfortunately for anyone who really wants to help the environment and avoid toxins, commercially produced meat and dairy can't go very far. As for the "Gulf Coast Crab," and the "Wild-Caught Shrimp," for me, the only green image that comes to mind is BP's logo. It's good that they use sustainable furnishings, but the problems caused by the meat on their menu far outweigh any benefits. Meat production, even so-called "natural" meat production, is contributing about 70% of climate destroying gases according to the latest study in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

If you want a green lunch, there are some veggie options at Ruggles Green, but as for the meat options on the menu, Ruggles is greenwashing dirty food. *Nick Cooper*

Worst Venue - House of Blues
Fuck you. You still suck. I mean, have you still not gotten the point yet? 'Worst Drink Prices 2010', 'Worst Sound Guy 2009' *Marini van Smirren*

Worst Inconvenience - Lack of Downtown Walmart
I don't know about you guys, but nothing pisses me off more than there not being a Walmart downtown. Seriously, come on. At 4:30 in the morning, when I need avocados, condoms and a hammer, I don't want to have to drive 30 minutes to the nearest Walmart to acquire my consumer needs. Yeah, they're opening one in the Heights, but why don't they just seal the deal and slap one downtown? Summer Fest would look mighty fine with the Walmart logo right there in skyline. *Anonymous*

Worst Arts Coverage - Free Press Houston
Recently, Jason Nodler of Catastrophic Theater helped me realize something critical. Our arts coverage is sorely lacking. For God's sake, we only have one page to work with in a 36 page paper! With all the great art and performance happening in this city there is now way we could fit it all on one page. That is why come our February issue we will be expanding the arts section to 2 ENTIRE PAGES! Put that in your pipe and smoke it Nodler! But seriously, thanks Jason. *Omar Afra*

Worst Houston Sports Bar -
360 Sports Lounge on Washington Ave.
If by some horrible misstep you find yourself on a date with a Kardashian and she wants to go to a sports bar then head directly to 360 Sports Lounge. While there are many giant TV's to watch the game on, the Kardashian can also enjoy one of the TV's screening the season finale of "Project Runway" or some such other travesty not pertaining to sports at all. If being a douchebag is a competition then 360 Sports Lounge is waving the championship trophy over its head like an idiot. A proper sports bar consists of gritty fans, greasy food and ungodly amounts of alcohol. Oddly colored drinks served in triangle glasses instead of a tumbler have no business in a sports bar; and neither do people afflicted with Ed Hardy. *Mills-McCoin*

Worst Bureaucracy - Texas Worforkforce Commission
I understand that there are millions of people out of work, but for it to take a month to process an unemployment claim and six weeks to receive the first payment is ridiculous. People can lose their homes and in the amount of time it takes a faceless clerk to "investigate" whether or not they lost their job for a legitimate reason. The appeal process is even worse, no documents are allowed to be presented its all done over a conference call which makes it difficult to tell if your former employer is being honest with the Commission's chosen representative. However, the worst part of the TWC isn't how they handle people who have applied for assistance but how they spin actual unemployment statistics. As the financial crisis has continued the TWC has kept putting out cheery upbeat news releases touting how many jobs were created in sectors like leisure and hospitality without stating whether those jobs pay a salary that will allow people to be able to afford to purchase anything more than the bare necessities. *Alex Wukman*

Worst product to be sold in Montrose - Boats
I don't think I really need to elaborate on this. To start, the nearest navigable body of water is at least 30 miles away and... Wait, that's it. I'm not entirely sure who exactly their target market is... Does anyone else think it's a drug cover up? Bad 'sales' ahoy. *Marini van Smirren*

Worst Reason To Get Butthurt -
A Reader Left A Nasty Comment On Your Blog
If this applies to you then you should be aware of the easiest solution in the world: don't allow readers to comment on your blog, you ridiculous pansy. I've never understood why there is always some shock and surprise when a reader vehemently disagrees with an article or blog post. Were you planning on everyone agreeing with you? Did you think having an opinion was the same as a bubblebath? You cannot possibly expect to delve into the ancient and vulnerable art of writing without encountering some friction. And you should be ashamed of yourself if you take this drama to Twitter or Facebook in an underhanded attempt to create factions. Or actually, go right ahead and do that... eat yourselves alive. *Mills-McCoin*

Worst Summer Ever (until the next one) - 2010
One of life's little ironies is that Global Climate change is pretty much an accepted scientific fact in places like San Francisco or Seattle— where the evidence of change is frequently obscured by clouds, fog, and cold drizzles of rain— but widely debated or dismissed as "liberal conspiracy" in places like Houston... where the facts of the matter are as evident as last month's exorbitant and air-conditioning fuel ransom note from CenterPoint Energy (once better known to long-time residents as "Houston Looting & Plunder"). Although the record temperature of 108 degrees (set inSeptemberof 2000) was never broken, the number of days described by the National Weather Service as "feeling like" over one hundred degrees exceeded any sane person's desire to count... and August 2010 is now officially on record as the hottest monthever. *M.Martin*

Worst Bartender - Olivia at Super Happy Fun Land
Olivia is such a bad bartender people have started to refer to her as 'Oblivia'. She is a self-proclaimed ' borderline autistic bartender' who lacks the social skills, cocktail knowledge, speed, or any desire whatsoever to perform to at least a sub-par level of bartending. But, this is the charm that makes Super Happy Fun Land the place that it is. We would have it not have it any other way. *Omar Afra*

Worst Local Band Names -
We love many of these bands but hate the names!
Tax the Wolf, Outer Heaven, Skeptycynic, The Manichean, DJ Ipod Ammo, Chase Hamblin, Thelastplaceyoulook, Caddywhompus, Juz Coz, The Ton Tons. *FPH staff*

Worst Local Food Trend: Fusion Fast Food
Have I bitched about this before? Well let me ride again. Nothing makes me more angry than when some American thinks he can trump a millennia worth of trial and error, slow perfection, and tradition by merging 2 disparate cultures in his/her own 'unique' creation. We are talking Thai Tacos, Curried Buffalo Wings, Asian Chicken



the last portion of the paper that features the 'Massage and Spa ads' is rife with young Asian girls who are here against their will



Salad, Bratwurst and Queso, Falafel Burger, you name it. Just quit trying to be original and just be good. *Omar Afra*

Worst DJ Selections - Michael Jackson

Someone explain to me why every bar and club in Houston (and every city in the world for that matter) continues to play Michael Jackson songs? Yo DJ, kick that mad pedophile's music, son! What kind of world do we live in where the Dixie Chicks say one negative comment about our President and

still can't get played in this city nearly a decade later, yet Michael Jackson can molest kids and get celebrated anytime a DJ wants bodies on the dance floor? Before anyone comes to the defense of this "white woman pork face," as Katt Williams so eloquently put it, and tells me he was never found

guilty of molesting a child, explain to me how in one case he settled out of court with a child for $20 million? I don't know about you, but if I was not guilty of something I would fight to the death to defend and protect my innocence. However, if I was guilty as sin and had the financial ends to buy my innocence….well $20 million sounds about right.

I understand that we sacrifice a lot sometimes to take the path of least resistance, and in this case playing Beat It is that path to get bodies moving. I just urge all bar owners to consider what is celebrated by playing this Freakshow's songs. He prayed on innocent children. He built an amusement park to woo them like love interests. He had a freaking "adult alarm" in his bedroom. If you really love children, you build hospitals. You pay all the medical bills for 1,000 kids with cancer. You build schools.

Let 2011 be the year we finally boycott all music recorded by pedophiles. Is that so much to ask? I would rather Macarena a thousand times over than be forced to listen to one more song by a person who took advantage of children incapable of protecting themselves. *Anonymous*

Worst Political Development of the Year - The normalization of what once were extreme right wing viewpoints

It's sickening for a candidate of any political party to suggest we need to prohibit people from voting, but this year saw Tea Party backed candidates and Tea Party organizers espouse ideas that were straight from the darkest days of Jim Crow. In February Tom Tancredo the Constitution Party candidate for the Governor of Colorado, who came in second, told audiences that he believed that people need to "pass a civics test before voting." Judson Phillips the founder of Tea Party Nation went even further when he said on his organization's radio show that "it makes a lot of sense" to limit voting only to property owners. For those who are not familiar with the history of voting rights in this country, here's a selection from the Department of Justice's website: "In the 1890s, [the former confederate states] began to amend their constitutions and to enact a series of laws intended to re-establish and entrench white political supremacy. Such disfranchising laws included poll taxes, literacy tests, vouchers of "good character," and disqualification for "crimes of moral turpitude." These laws were "color-blind" on their face, but were designed to exclude black citizens disproportionately by allowing white election officials to apply the procedures selectively." Even in the darkest days of WWII the white political elite's desire to keep everyone else down could not be stopped and led to a Supreme Courtcase,Smithv.Allwright,where Texas tried to defend the practice of a "white primary" which allowed ostensibly "private" political parties, like the Democrats and the Republicans, to conduct elections and establish qualifications for their members. The painful history of voter disenfranchisement in Texas aside, the reason why suggesting putting limits on voting rights is so heinous is that it means that the people who suffered for equality, the men, women and children who marched, were beaten and died, did so for nothing. The right for every man and woman to vote is not a right that was enshrined in the Constitution by the founding fathers, it was a right that was won in the street and in the court room. The fear that all men would be equal led reactionaries to blow up churches, kill children and execute young men. To suggest that some people aren't fit to vote because they don't own their own home or because, as one commentator on GOPUSA.com suggested, they don't know how many constitutional conventions the United States has had is disgusting. *Alex Wukman*

Houston, where the principle use for trees is to send them to a paper mill that makes dollars.



Worst Corporate Shakedown passed off as Community Involvement - H.E.B's 'Town Hall Meeting'

Company executives listened politely as their prospective future customers explained how much they had wanted H.E.B's proposed new "Montrose Location" to be turned into a park (or perhaps had been perfectly happy when the property was Wilshire Village), but were willing to settle for having part of the property turned into green space. H.E.B. had earlier leaked several possible designs for the new store, including one that featured a park, a farmer's market, an outdoor concert space… and two million dollars that local residents needed to raise if they wanted it. Pure corporate bait and switch at it's finest. Even in these troubled times, two million dollars is relative chump change for a corporation as large as H.E.B. Had the city raised concerns that raised construction costs, the money would've been found. The Montrose Land Defense Coalition did, in fact find comments for as much as 1.2 $M. Not surprisingly, it was not enough—certainly not in Houston, where the principle use for trees is to send them to a paper mill that makes dollars. *M.Martin*

Worst Driving Across Town in Traffic to use a Coupon for Something You Didn't Need Moment - METRO/Spain rail car deal

Everybody's got that friend.You know who I'm talking about.That "frugal," "thrifty," "penny pincher" who will burn half a day and a tank of gas to save fifty cents on toilet paper because it was advertised in a Sunday sale circular.

The City of Houston (METRO) received $900 million in grants this year from the Federal Transit Administration to help build the much needed light rail.So METRO shopped around for a good deal and signed a contract with a Spanish company to build the rail cars.Problem was, the grants from the FTA required METRO to buy American… so it looked like we were going to lose that federal money—and we're talking close to abilliondollars.

Just this week METRO announced that they reached a settlement with the Spanish company.They're going to let us out of the contract, and they're only going to keep $26 million of the $40 million we already paid them.That's right, the double-coupon waving geniuses at METRO are telling us we should be happy that we got $14 million back.METRO, it's going places. *Harbeer Sandhu*

Worst Act of God - Rain on Summer Fest 2 years in a row

Okay Creator, Allah, Yahweh, whatever you're tagging on dump-





SUPER HAPPY FUN LAND

UPCOMING SHOWS

Jan 5th:
E Company

Jan 7th:
Estrogen Highs

Jan 8th:
Organ Yank
Only Beast

Jan 9th:
Gimme My Moon Back
C-4 Band

Jan 20th:
Evil Spirits

Jan 21st:
Michael Claytor
Lauris Vidal
Ricky Kendall

Jan 23rd:
LOUGOW
Ramona Cordova

Jan 24th:
Athel

Jan 25th:
Roughhausen (Taiwan)
(former guitarist of Front Line Assembly)
Serum Fantis
DeadSkeleton (Dallas)
]E.G. (Harrisburg, PA)
God's Wounds

Jan 31st:
The Black Dragon Cirkus
Icarius The Owl
Lights Out Dancing
This Years Fashion

Feb 5th:
Jon Black
Jody Seabody
Killa For Nianz
Kile Hubbard
Purapharm
Nikhoo and the Bioluminaries
Bucks Super Stereo World
Illiad

Feb 8th:
World History

Feb 15th:
The Hi Tones

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sters these days... all we're trying to do is give the people of Houston TWO DAYS to separate from the monotony of their 9-5 jobs and the tide of economic desperation. TWO DAYS. Out of 365. I know we here at Free Press probably don't give you a shout out as often as some people who might ask for less but shit, you're practically handing out good weather to the White House. Sure, Wayne Coyne from the Flaming Lips LOVED the rain and volunteered with most of us in the mud to help make our job smoother last year at The Summer Fest but that was only one year, and if I remember correctly, you didn't encourage the Of Montreal folks whatsoever to even come close to the mud, much less us. I know Of Montreal wrote "Satanic Panic in the Attack" and they might lose points with you for that one, but at Summer Fest 08, they fucking covered Bowie's "Moonage Daydream" uniting a crowd of 20,000 vapid humans into a mass of positive vibrations.

I know you saw that. I guess I understand if Houston is "awash with sin" or whatever and you've still got a lot of work to do here before we get any kind of celestial kick-backs but, seriously, we have some AWESOME SHIT lined up for Summer Fest 2011 and I'm gonna go ahead and ask for your blessings early on behalf of all the future Staffers and Volunteers of the festival. Shukran Allah! *Shelby Hohl*

Worst Race - White People
For the 27th straight year of my life, white people. Did you know that Czechs don't consider themselves white? Weird, huh?

Mostly I hate the dudes I see around town at bars with Kennedy hair, usually off Washington Avenue when I am doing bar reviews, and now more than ever at Grand Prize Bar and out and about most weekends in the Montrose. John Hughes Movie Rich Kid Hair. I'm bald, so maybe it's partially jealousy. They took away the darts and the beanbag toss, so maybe they will go back to their home planet.

Also, guys that stare at my gym shorts at the Downtown YMCA get my goat. I'm flattered, but can you please get out of my shower stall? *Craig Hlavaty*

Worst New Piece of Public Art - The James A. Baker III monument
I always take visitors to Houston to see our worst piece of public art (The George Bush monument) directly across from our best piece of public art (Big Bubble by Dean Ruck) on opposite sides of the Preston Avenue bridge downtown. "The Commons" in Sesquicentennial Park also became the site of a new 1.2 million dollar piece of public art unveiled just before Halloween this year, The James A. Baker III monument. (Incidentally, North Carolina sculptor Chas Fagan created both the Bush statue and the new Baker addition. Buy local anyone?) Placed directly across Buffalo Bayou from George, the two larger than life bronze statues gaze longingly at each other across the slow moving waters. Welcome to Houston's art scene, James "The government shouldn't overreact to corporate scandals" Baker. You who watched the September 11 attacks at the Ritz-Carlton with the Bin Laden family. You who is defending the Saudi's against a trillion-dollar lawsuit brought forth by the September 11 families. You who led the campaigns of the last four Republican presidents, Bush's personal envoy in charge of restructuring Iraq's $132 billion in debt, senior counsel for the Carlyle Group, violator of the Geneva Convention by destroying the civilian infrastructure of Iraq in Gulf War I, spokesperson for the Bush administration in its successful attempt to halt the vote recount in Florida, who as Counsel for Intelligence Policy prepared all applications for electronic surveillance and physical search under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act and advised the CIA, the FBI, and the Defense and State Departments. What is the message of these works, that our children should aspire to grow up to oversee wars waged across the world against people poorer, browner and less consumer driven then ourselves? That they should grow up to fight injustice perpetrated against giant corporations by the lowly workers? Given its proximity to Allen's landing, I propose a statue in honor of José Campos Torres be erected in "The Commons". Or any number of other worthy Houstonians such as: Mickey Leland, Barbara Jordan, Carl Hampton, Lightening Hopkins, Ray Hill, The Camp Logan Rioters, or what about Beyoncé? *Tish Stringer*

Worst Restaurant and Coffee Shop: Brasil
You are like that friend everyone hates, but can't get rid of. You suck at life. See you tomorrow. *Brandon Young*

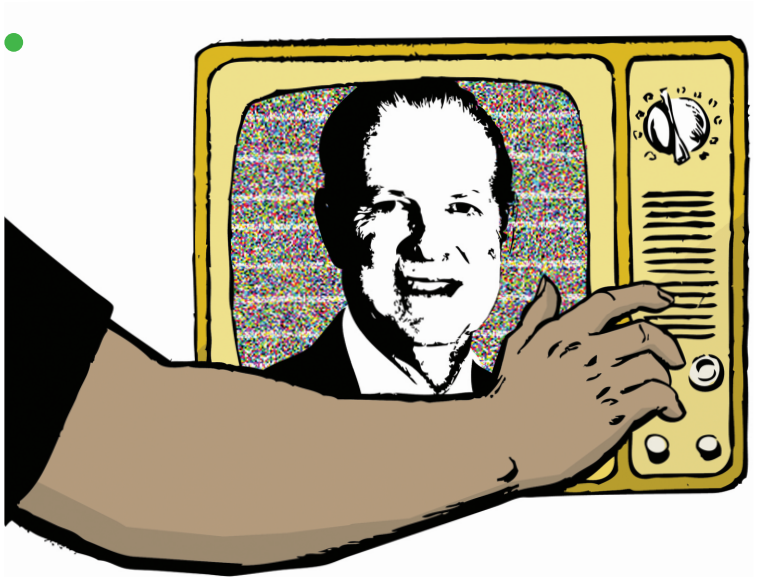
Worst Waiting in Line -
The Drive Thru at El Rey at Washington Avenue
Waking up Saturday morning at 2 pm, there is but one thing on my mind: tacos. After looking for my shoes from the night before and finding I slept in them, I putter on down to El Rey in the hopes that the cure to what ails me lies in the greasy, simple embrace of their fare. Even from a hundred yards away it's evident my hangover remedy won't be available any time soon.

The drive thru at El Rey depresses me more than Tyler Perry's career success. Expect at least seven cars to be clogging the order lane in front of you and expect all seven cars to be filled with people ordering more than Kirstie Alley with a raging case of late night munchies. Their drive thru needs a drive thru. It takes forever to move forward and by the time you realize you could have just walked inside and picked up, you're already committed. Once you're back home with your bag of goodness you'll wonder if it was really all worth it and why it's now dark outside. *Stephen Thompson*

Worst Loss of Operating Hours -
Montrose Library, now closed on Saturdays
Of all the days to close the library, Saturday makes the least sense. Due to budget shortfalls, weekly operation times were decreased by 20 hours, leaving most libraries to close 2 hours earlier each day at 6pm and all but the McGovern location to close on the weekends. This leaves working folks with little or no time to go to the library which will ultimately decrease the budget further for next year, and the next and the next, until one day when we'll be told that we no longer can afford a public library, yet look at all the pretty stadiums! *Andrea Afra*

Worst New Academic Initiative -
Random Drug Testing in High School
This month I received an email from a buddy that our old high school was going to be in the newspaper for a fairly controversial new initiative they're going to enforce on their students. I'm not going to tell you the name of the school as I am a loyal alumnae, but suffice it to say it's in Bellaire and rhymes with Shmisshmiscopal. As of next month, all students enrolled at my old high school will be given random drug tests throughout the year. That's right, a high school is drug screening its students. The person behind this initiative must either be the most naïve nerd in America or a descendant

What is the message of these works?



of some high ranking member of the Gestapo. Have they never seen Fast Times at Ridgemont High? The stoner crowd is a bedrock clique in any high school! Who else is going to make fun of the jocks while greenhousing the 3rd floor supply closet? Who else is going to stare vacantly out the window during calculus and attend pep rallies only to be ironic? And this initiative affects not only the wannabe hippies with Widespread Panic stickers in their BMWs, but also those who are just trying out new things. Whether you like it or not, high school is a time of experimentation. And that's not a bad thing, it's kinda necessary- it's much better to discover how awesome beer makes you feel while you're still at home under the protection of your parents than off at college where you can fail out and get VD. Kids mess around and screw up, it's part of life. Also, if my high school is still anything like it was 10 years ago, roughly half the students will be expelled before lunch. All this Patriot Act paranoia doesn't solve anything- let the parents test their kids if they stumble upon a connection between little Johnny's newfound love of Mom's lasagnaand the Bob Marley poster recently tacked up in his wall. John Lithgow from Footloose called. He wants his bullshit back.

And are they testing the teachers? Because we had this one guy, Mr. Wilson, who taught French History, and I'm relatively certain he ripped the bong before class. To this day I can't tell you one fact about the French but I can tell you some awesome stories of growing up in Montana in the 70s. And I'll never forget the one and only time I ever went to a rave and ran smack into my Physics teacher, Mr. Casares, only he had a tongue ring and was covered in glow paint. What followed was perhaps one of the most awkward encounters of my life, with him refusing to acknowledge me despite my repeated requests for an extension on a project due date. I think I asked more to freak him out, but then again I was kind of a dick in high school. Thank god they didn't test for that. *Stephen Thompson*

Worst Smell - Free Press Office Circa 2 months ago
There was a bad cat. He made a bad smell. Bad... bad cat. *Omar Afra*

Worst Graffiti - Writing
Quantity over quality is the culprit here and it's about high time some of our local "graffiti" artists took themselves more seriously. The "writing" craze is not new by any means but, it seems lately every one is considering themselves to be valid graffiti artists based on the fact that they scribble the equivalent to a cave drawing on the side of dumpsters and business establishments around town. The sad part about all of this is the fact that most of these kids can actually create some of the most visually stunning artwork we've never seen. It reminds me of The Simpsons episode where Bart gets the label maker and puts his name on everything in the house, even Homer's beer, thwarting Homer from not taking the last beer because "it's Bart's". I believe that if these talented artists actually wanted to be considered for opportunities that would make them large sums of money, ushering most of them out of what could probably compared to squalor, they would focus their efforts more into the quality of their work rather than the quantity. I will probably never find myself looking for someone to commission for my next project on the wall in the bathroom at Rudz. If the artists actually began focusing their efforts into the massive colorful beautifications they are perfectly capable of, the city might actually start putting funds into the art community providing these very artists with paying gigs, doing THEIR VERY OWN thing, to objectively make the city a more interesting and inspiring place to live in. There are some amazing artists however that are already "on this tip", and I would like to give them a shout out here for doing it right: Ack!, WEAH, DUAL, and Give Up (even though they write, it's actually balanced with an equal amount of content heavy related artwork that is creating a unique identity for themselves as artists). *Anonymous*

Worst Political Letdown - Sheila Jackson Lee
How come Delaware gets all the good witch candidates? What's that? Sheila Jackson Lee won again? Never mind. *Stephen Thompson*

Worst Example of a Pretentious One-Word Business Name - FLOSS
What's with this trend of naming business establishments with cheesy one-word names (usually a meaningful noun reproduced in some minimalist font)? I'm talking about overpriced diners with down-home names like "Chow." I'm talking about men's boutiques that try to obscure the fact that they're a frou-frou men's BOUTIQUE with a rough-sounding noun like "Mortar."I'm talking about goofy clubs with names like "Status" where bro's go to max out their credit cards and sniff each other's cologne.The one that takes the cake is the Midtown dentists' office called FLOSS, and I'm not just saying that because they annoy me with their DAILY, glossy, half-page cardstock mailers. (What a waste of resources... and don't they know that such desperation does not inspire confidence in their dental skills?)

When I am shopping for a dentist, I want her to have a generic, boring name with the suffix DDS, something like "Rachel Wilfred, DDS," or if she's feeling inspired, feeling poetic, I'm willing to settle for "Wilfred Dental Associates." Actually, since I am Sikh, I would probably look for a "Singh" in the name, like "Upinder Singh Chandi, DDS." Yeah, that's a plug for my brother-in-law, but he lives in Maryland. Sue me. And when you sue me, know that I will not be hiring a lawyer with a practice called "Gavel" or "Deposition" or "Brief," even if she's the best in town. I will go with somebody who works at a firm whose name is a string of WASPy blue-blood names, preferably with a "Singh" thrown in for good measure.

I don't need my dentist to be trendy; I need my dentist to be a competent professional. Maybe I'm just old-fashioned, but for some reason, I don't imagine that a dentist can be both. *Harbeer Sandhu*

Worst Local Transportation System - Sidewalks
I was driving from my office to Rudyard's for the monthly My Houston 2040 meeting where we were going to listen to Zakcq Lockrem talk about how complete streets can make Houston safer and healthier in 2040 and Houston City Council Member Stephen Costello talk about what is going to happen next with Prop 1: Renew Houston. I'm in the right lane on Waugh, a one way street with a bike lane on the right side and realized that a man on crutches was traveling half in my lane and half in the bike lane,with cars driving 35 miles an hour past him. I slowed down to a stop to let cars pass on the left, so I could get over to the next lane hoping that the four cars behind me also saw this man, so I had a little time to think about this situation. This man had chosen to travel therebecause the sidewalks along Waugh are not wide enough to accommodate his manner of walking on crutches and are inconsistent, broken, and occasionally marred with a utility pole.

How ironic to encounter this man on my way to a meeting to discuss a new funding mechanism for improvements to the pub-

There was a bad cat. He made a bad smell.





lic realm and a discussion of the failure of City of Houston code and funding priorities to account for the safety of all road users. After Zakcq's presentation, CM Costello began his discussion of how Prop 1 might be applied differently depending on the needs of the diverse neighborhoods of Houston, noting that he did not believe that the City of Houston Public Works Department had the "tools" (wide sidewalk standards) in its "toolbox" (City codes) - to begin to address these concerns. For too long the predominant question that our engineers in Houston have beenasked to solve is how to move a box truck as fast as possible over a long distance. The City needs to begin asking its engineers to answer a greater diversity of questions to fairly and efficiently meets the many needs of a diverse and growing population:

• How can we connect as many people and jobs as possible through safe and efficient transportation?

• If we redesign our streets to be safe and comfortable for the most vulnerable - those with physical disabilities as well as young children and the elderly - won't we be making them safer and more-comfortablefor all to choose walking in the process?

• In what areas of town could we most quickly and efficiently invest in wide sidewalks and ADA compliant intersections to greatly increase the walkable parts of our City?

• Where is it appropriate to take measures to slow down automobile traffic to provide priority for safe bike and pedestrian streets, like the City of Portland's hugely successful and cheap Neighborhood Greenways program?

• How many wide sidewalks and safe bikeways can we build for the price of 1 mile of new freeway? *Jay Crossley*

Worst Sports Team - Everyone Sucks

Pick one- Texans, 'Stros, Rockets, Dynamos, the fucking Aeros, Longhorns, Cougars, the Sharts (my softball team), etc. The list goes on and on. This has probably been the worst year of sports in Greater Houston's much maligned history. It's like God is paying us back for Enron and Tom Delay. At this point our emotions are more fragile than… Yao Mings foot? Drayton McLane's ego? Our nonexistent defensive secondary? Really, the fact there are so many ways to rip on our city's athletic organizations pretty much sums it up. Side note- are the Dynamos even bad? I just assumed they were because they're a Houston team in 2010 but as of press time I couldn't give two shits to look them up. *Stephen Thompson*

Worst Attack on a Vital Houston Resource - Rice University

Most high thanks and praise be to President David Leebron of Rice University, the Board of Governors, VP for Public Affairs Linda Thrane, and all the unknown little people for all their efforts to destroy the vital cultural asset that is KTRU 91.7 FM. Kudos on using secrecy and deception to educate your students on Rice's "unconventional" values. Houston has really gotten way too "interesting", what with all that non-commercial student-run locally produced eclectic radio programming available. KTRU dangerously gives a voice to local artists & bands, music venues & art spaces, helping "the scene", and playing the music of Houston's shifty ethnic minorities. I certainly wouldn't want to live in a place where the music and information I heard on the radio wasn't pre-approved by someone in Los Angeles or Washington, D.C. And heck, Rice students don't need all that responsibility and all those leadership opportunities anyway! Isn't it just as good if they tweet their mixtapes to all their Facebook friends? Also, big thanks to the University of Houston for valuing "Tier One" status so much higher than its regard by the Houston community, even though having two FM radio stations has nothing to do with attaining that status. Also, good job on reducing broadcast coverage for all those rich classical music loving donors from 100,000 watts to a mere 50,000. That should make getting $10 million of additional donations to pay off that taxpayer-backed bond easy as pie, even though apparently KUHF has had enough trouble meeting its existing targets lately. Great team effort, Rice & UH; bring on the blandness! *The Machine* savektru.org

Worst Demographic -
The Patrons at Hooters on any UFC Fight Night

I haven't seen people like that since I found that guy living under my car. If a bus ever crashed into one of their "restaurants" when an MMA bout was on primetime, Houston's median IQ level would increase 32 points.

If said bus was filled with dudes thinking their Affliction shirts make them look hard, make that 38. *Stephen Thompson*

Worst (Ab)Use of Public Airwaves - KPRC, KHOU, KTRK, KRIV

You may not know this, but you own the broadcast spectrum. You know, those frequencies that TV, radio, and cell phone signals are transmitted through. Companies like TV stations and cell phone providers lease them from you and me (i.e. the government) for a fee. In addition to the money they pay us, there is always language in the contracts that specifies that they are required to do stuff in the "public interest." This is why you get those Emergency Broadcast System alerts and those oh-so-helpful and hilarious anti-drug public service announcements that always remind you to pack a bowl before the Simpsons comes on. Recently, a group called the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM) produced a well-made, stylish ad that links heart disease to fast food (specifically McDonald's) and promotes occasional vegetarianism. It shows a dead man on a gurney, still clutching a McCrap burger. (You know that stuff won't ever even rot, don't you? That's right, even mold and bacteria are smarter than McDonald's customers.) PCRM is based in Washington, but they pitched their ad to four Houston TV station—NBC, ABC, CBS, and Fox—because Houston is a well-known market for fat asses.All four stations turned it down. Their reasoning? They say it doesn't meet their "standards and practices" guidelines—whatever that means. We all know the real reason you can't even BUY free speech is because they love that Mickey D's cheese. Incidentally, the Vancouver-based media critic non-profit ADBUSTERS produces some great ads for their annual "TV Turn Off Week" and "Buy Nothing Day" campaigns, which are, surprise!, turned down by all the major networks year after year. They produce stylish commercials and offer the going rates, but our "free press" know who their real masters are—and it ain't us or "freedom." Lenin (Vladimir, not John) said "the capitalists will sell us the rope we'll use to hang them." Lenin was wrong. Look for the PCRM ad online. It's called "Consequences." *Harbeer Sandhu*

Worst Betrayal of Public Trust by the Media - Houston Chronicle

When the administrators of Rice University and the University of Houston were plotting the conversion of a Houston institution, KTRU, into the classical music arm of Houston's NPR empire, they had a problem. They were worried that the public (and particu-

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larly the KTRU listening audience) might get wind of their plan and convince the UH Board of Trustees that closing down KTRU was a dodgy move from both a public relations or a financial management perspective. Luckily for them, they had a friend in Jeannie Kever at the Houston Chronicle. Kever agreed to "embargo" the story of KTRU's sale until the day of the Board of Regents meeting, thereby preventing the public at large (and KTRU supporters in particular) from organizing to oppose the sale before the UH Trustees granted their approval. For Rice and UH, the embargo strategy was a success. KTRU supporters were kept in the dark until the last minute, and the UH Trustees narrowly approved the purchase. Since the announcement of the sale, opposition to the demise of KTRU has been fierce and organized. But because Rice and UH were able to delay public disclosure of the deal, the two universities were able to gain an early advantage over opponents among Rice students, alumni, and the Houston community at large. So much the better for Rice and UH; so much the worse for Houston and the Chronicle's reputation. *Eric Davis*

Worst City Council Member - Mike Sullivan

Mike Sullivan, the City Council Member for District E, is the kind of guy that waits until the last minute to call his Mayor informing her that he is switching his vote on the matter of an unpaid seat on the seven-member Port of Houston Authority. He's the kind of guy that thinks preserving historic buildings violates property owner's rights. He's the kind of guy that looks out for taxicab companies because the Green Initiative reminds him of a sinus infection from his childhood. He's the kind of guy that doesn't really know what he's doing; but he knows if he votes against HPD budget cuts then people will like him... but he doesn't know that those are the stupid people. Mike Sullivan has a unique condition called Spineless Cowardism and basically his mouth is a butthole. *Mills-McCoin*

Worst thing that will happen in the 2011 State Legislature - Christian Republic of Texas Agenda

Traditionally this list looks back on the last 12 months, but with the Republicans securing a supermajority in the Texas Legislature it seems time to discuss what that means for the future of the Christian Republic of Texas. The phrase "Christian Republic of Texas" is not a joke, Texas is moving closer and closer to a theocracy each year. There is already a campaign underway by some State Republican activists to remove the current Speaker of the House, John Strauss, because he's Jewish. Texas State Republican Executive Committee member John Cook wrote in a November 30 e-mail that, "We elected a house with Christian, conservative values. We now want a true Christian, conservative running it.This is not about Straus, this is about getting what the people want." Cook's letter came out before Representatives Aaron Pena and Allan Ritter jumped ships to the GOP to give Republicans 101 votes to the Democrats 49. With over 100 votes in the Texas House, and a newly appointed Christian conservative speaker, we can expect Texas to become very hostile to viewpoints that aren't those of rich white people. Don't be surprised when the new state legislature begins mining the same vein of right wing, race baiting rhetoric that swept the GOP into power. One of the key pieces of legislation that will help solidify the nativist agenda will be the voter ID bill. This legislation was introduced in 2007 and 2009 and neither time did it have the votes to make it to the Governor's desk. However, this time it's expected to sail through committee and the House. There might be something of a fight in the State Senate, but it won't really matter. Another piece of legislation that will most likely pass will be some variation of Arizona's "show me your papers" law. Three versions of the bill have already been filed and the Republican leadership has said that they will give state and local law enforcement the tools to "combat the invasion" coming from Mexico. A third proposed bill would make English the official language of Texas. And that doesn't even deal with the proposed bills requiring drug testing for people who receive unemployment or any other financial assistance as well as the bill that would allow the display of the Ten Commandments in public school classrooms. *Alex Wukman*

Worst Display of Human Nature - Chron.com comments sections

I know I am probably wasting my time there, but after reading the news online I can't help but delve into the sordid depths of the comments left by other Houstonians in an effort to get to know my neighbors better. I find for the most part that they are racist, bloodthirsty savages with a penchance for spouting vitriol and violence. They despise Muslims, Mexicans, blacks, Obama, gays, and welfare, yet harbor great adulation for nukes, the death penalty, ICE, Walmart, the WOT, and vigilante grannies who shoot illegals in Walmart parking lots. *Andrea Afra*

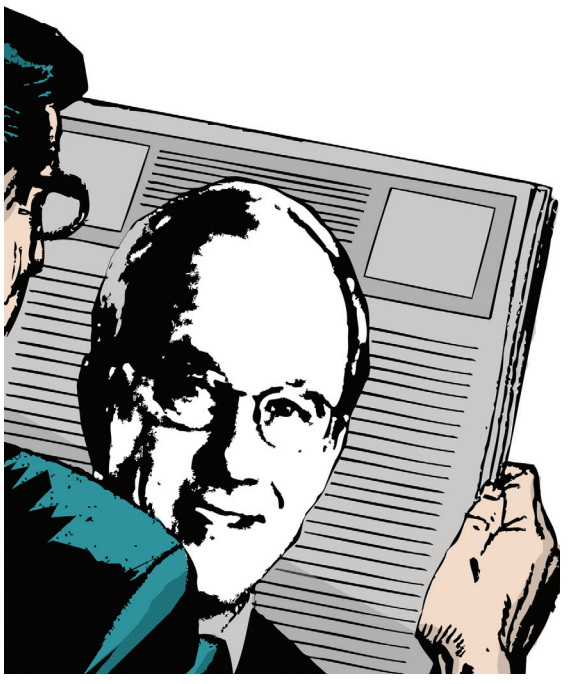
Worst Time Waster (Tie) - Angry Birds and Words With Friends

If you're one of the millions of Americans who purchased an iPhone in the last year, you're aware that the device's reputation as a time squanderer is fully warranted. Case in point- many of you are probably reading these words on one right now. But it's not incredibly witty and intellectual social commentary that wastes most of your day. Applications, or "Apps" as Webster's will soon be forced to introduce into the English lexicon, have transplanted both hangovers and supply closet masturbation as the biggest detriment to work place production. Two apps in particular, Angry Birds and Words with Friends, are the biggest culprits.

Angry Birds is a mindless game where you shoot birds out of a slingshot to kill monsters hiding in the dumb little buildings. It was rumored there once was a man who understood the plot of the game but he was killed right before he could pass his wisdom on. It's ability to drain time out of your life is legendary and a lot of that's probably due to the fact you can play it anywhere. Here's a haiku I composed about it:

Angry Birds Take Flight
Ramming Buildings Whilst I Poo
My Legs Are Asleep

Words With Friends, or Scrabble for Retards, at least requires some modicum of intelligence. Unfortunately, it's also as addictive as its avian counterpart. In the last few weeks I've played so many games of Words With Friends I'm starting to score the very words people use in conversations with me throughout the day. For example, iPhonedouche is worth at least 40 points, depending on tile placement. *Stephen Thompson* FPH







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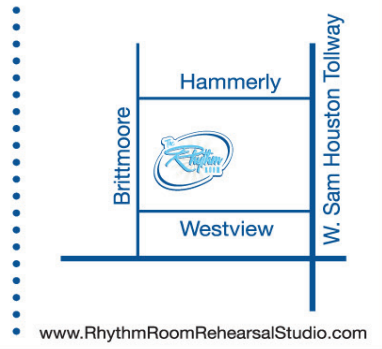
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RADIO ZION

KPFT hosting a show for the Israeli Consulate is bullshit

On December 14th KPFT's open journal program was hosted by the Israeli Consulate of the Southwest Region, in a show they have labeled "The Voice of Peace." Open Journal is a 5 day a week program that is open to the public to have their say on KPFT's airwaves. The show was hosted by program director Ernesto Aguilar, who asked consular officials softball questions, and station management has publicly declared their long term commitment to airing this program in the open journal slot. Many people in Houston have been outraged that a listener funded station with a mission to promote peace has given a program to a government guilty of war crimes and apartheid treatment of Palestinians. Nick Cooper has done a great job of summarize why it makes sense to oppose this show on our airwaves.

BY NICK COOPER

SIMPLISTIC YET BRILLIANT ARTICLE TITLE & SUB-TILE BY OMAR AFRA

ILLUSTRATION BY SHELBY HOHL

Why oppose the Israeli consulate having a show on KPFT?
As an official voice of the Israeli government, the Israeli consulate necessarily has as a mission to legitimize and propagandize acts of war. Further, during a time of an active illegal military occupation and in light of the Goldstone Report, Israeli consulates necessarily find themselves in the role of propagandizing and whitewashing war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Don't you want to talk to everyone, including those with whom you disagree?
Interviews with the Israeli consulate are important, as there are many tough questions that should be asked. However, turning over control of programming to the Israeli consulate is different. There are many other formats that are appropriate to bring in the Israeli consulate, including debates and moderated discussions.

If Obama came on air to talk about how much we are helping Pakistan and no one asked him tough questions about the illegal drone attacks, he would have gotten a free-pass. Similarly, if the Israeli consulate can come on KPFT and frame things the way they want without getting confronted on anything, we have provided a platform for military propaganda.

Who is in charge of Israeli consulates?
The far-right politician Avigdor Lieberman is the Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs (Israel's equivalent of our Secretary of State). On December 21st 2010, Lieberman told Newsweek that he wanted to take Israeli citizenship away from at least half of Israeli Arabs.

Does allowing people to hear the Israeli government's perspective on KPFT somehow go against peace building?

Giving the Israeli consulate its own show violates the call from Palestinian academics and intellectuals for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions to create a just peace in Palestine / Israel. By rejecting this tool for peace and justice, KPFT is working against its own goals and denying a "just demand" by a disenfranchised group.

Doesn't their naming it "Voice of Peace" show that their hearts are in the right place?
The original Voice of Peace pirate radio show was created by a dissident who opposed settlements and occupation, and was himself oppressed by the Israeli government. For the consulate to steal this title is to co-opt this legacy.

Vague talk of peace is actually counterproductive to lasting peace—Israel's occupation and always increasing land-grabs are a form of war, but can go on during times of so-called peace. As such, it falls on Israel's victims to bring up the uncomfortable issues, while the Israeli government would rather talk about nicer things. Giving them a show on KPFT to talk about those nice things plays into this strategy.

So you are saying Israel is trying to present itself disingenuously to Pacifica's audience?
This show exists to normalize American conceptions of Israel, to talk about Israeli society in a way where the context of it being engaged in a colonialist project is absent. Much of the outreach that Israeli consulates and supporters are making now across the U.S. is in cultural projects. Israel wants to talk about anything other than Palestine. Listening to the first Voice of Peace show, policies regarding Palestine were not mentioned.

Shouldn't KPFT balance out its "Palestinian-friendly" programming such as Arab Voices and Al Jazeera?
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If KPFT feels there is an imbalance that needs to be addressed, Arab Voices and Al Jazeera should be balanced out by equivalent counterparts, not by the Israeli consulate. There are many Jewish groups that share a similar mission with Pacifica, and deserve shows, such as Jewish Voices for Peace, Rabbis for Human Rights, The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, Anarchists Against the Wall, Women in Black, Gush Shalom, the Jewish Antizionist Network. Another possibility would be to run some content from a legitimate Israeli news partner, such as Haaretz.

If KPFT must give time to the Israeli consulate, the only legitimate balance would be to give equal time to Hamas. The Goldstone Report accused both Hamas and Israel of war crimes, and it is inappropriate to give a program to only one side of such an armed conflict. **FPH**

By Nick Cooper nickcooper.com More information at houston.indymedia.org – kpfttownhall.org and the facebook group "End Israeli Government Programing on KPFT Radio for Peace." For more on the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions movement: bdsmovement.net



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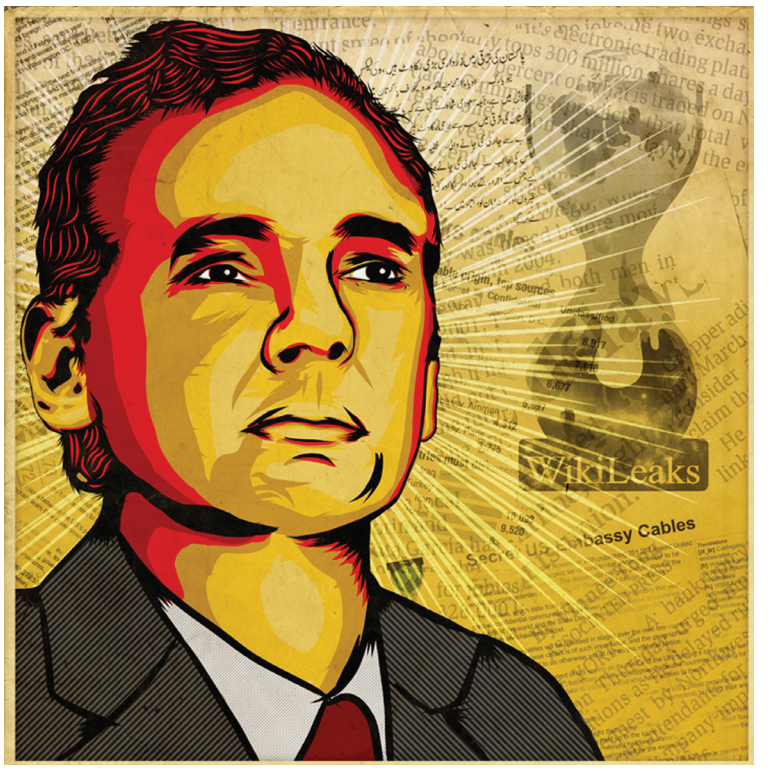
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Mad Dogs Of Secrets & the First Amendment

Wikileaks & the

BY RALPH NADER

Thomas Blanton, the esteemed director of the National Security Archive at George Washington University described Washington's hyper-reaction to Wikileaks' transmission of information to some major media in various countries as "Wikimania."



IN TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE last Thursday, Blanton urged the Justice Department to cool it. Wikileaks and newspapers like The New Yorks Times and London's Guardian, he said, are publishers protected by the First Amendment. The disclosures are the first small installment of a predicted much larger forthcoming trove of non-public information from both governments and global corporations.

The leakers inside these organizations come under different legal restrictions that those who use their freedom of speech rights to publish the leaked information.

The mad dog, homicidal demands to destroy the leaders of Wikileaks by self-styled liberal Democrat and Fox commentator, Bob Beckel, the radio and cable howlers and some members of Congress, may be creating an atmosphere of panic at the politically sensitive Justice Department. Attorney General Eric Holder has made very prejudicial comments pursuant to his assertion that his lawyers considering how they may prosecute Julian Assange, the Wikileaks leader.

Mr. Holder declared that both "the national security of the United States" and "the American people have been put at risk." This level of alarm was not shared by the public statements of defense Secretary Robert Gates and Secretary of States Hillary Clinton who downplayed the impact of these disclosures.

The Attorney General, who should be directing more of his resources to the corporate crime wave in all its financial, economic and hazardous manifestations, is putting himself in a bind.

If he goes after Wikileaks too broadly using the notorious Espionage Act of 1917 and other vague laws, how is he going to deal with The New York Times and other mass media that reported the disclosures?

Consider what Harvard Law Professor Jack Goldsmith, who was head of the Office of Legal Counsel in George W. Bush's Justice Department just wrote:

"In Obama's Wars, Bob Woodward, with the obvious assistance of many top Obama administration officials, disclosed many details about top secret programs, code names, documents, meetings, and the like. I have a hard time squaring the anger the government is directing towards Wikileaks with its top officials openly violating classification rules and opportunistically revealing without authorization top secret information."

On the other hand, if Mr. Holder goes the narrow route to obtain an indictment of Mr. Assange, he will risk a public relations debacle by vindictively displaying prosecutorial abuse (i.e. fixing the law around the enforcement bias.) Double standards have no place in the Justice Department.

Wikileaks is also creating anxiety in the corporate suites. A cover story in the December 20, 2010 issue of Forbes magazine reports that early next year a large amount of embarrassing material will be sent to the media by Wikileaks about a major U.S. bank, followed by masses of exposé material on other global corporations.

Will these releases inform the people about very bad activities by drug, oil, financial and other companies along with corruption in various countries? If so, people may find this information useful. We can only imagine what sleazy or illegal things our government has been up to that have been covered up. Soon, people may reject the those who would censor Wikileaks. Many people do want to size up what's going on inside their government in their name and with their tax dollars.

Wasn't it Jefferson who said that "information is the currency of democracy" and that, given a choice between government and a free press, he'll take the latter? Secrecy—keeping the people and Congress in the dark—is the cancer eating at the vitals of democracy.

What is remarkable about all the official hullabaloo by government officials, who leak plenty themselves, is that there never is any indictment or prosecution of government big wigs who continually suppress facts and knowledge in order to carry out very devastating actions like invading Iraq under false pretenses and covering up corporate contractors abuses. The morbid and corporate-indentured secrecy of government over the years has cost many American lives, sent Americans to illegal wars, bilked consumers of billions of dollars and harmed the safety and economic well-being of workers.

As Cong. Ron Paul said on the House floor, why is the hostility directed at Assange, the publisher, and not at our government's failure to protect classified information? He asked his colleagues which events caused more deaths, "Lying us into war, or the release of the Wikileaks papers?"

Over-reaction by the Obama administration could lead to censoring the Internet, undermining Secretary Clinton's Internet Freedom initiative, which criticized China's controls and lauded hacktivism in that country, and divert attention from the massive over classification of documents by the Executive Branch.

A full throttle attack on Wikileaks is what the government distracters want in order to take away the spotlight of the disclosures on their misdeeds, their waste and their construction of an authoritarian corporate state.

Professor and ex-Bushite Jack Goldsmith summed up his thoughts this way: "The best thing to do….would be to ignore Assange and fix the secrecy system so this does not happen again."

That presumably is some of what Peter Zatko and his crew are now trying to do at the Pentagon's famed DARPA unit. That secret initiative may ironically undermine the First Amendment should they succeed too much in hamstringing the Internet earlier advanced by that same Pentagon unit. **FPH**

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You are Right to Remain Silent

Just Shut Up!

A Criminal Defense Lawyer's Advice

BY NORM KENT
ILLUSTRATION BY SHELBY HOHL

AFTER 35 YEARS OF PRACTICING LAW in the trenches of state and federal courts, I have narrowed my advice for all my clients down to one, simple, direct sentence: "Shut Up."

No kidding. Really. Just shut up.

As of recent days, I have come to love deep-sea fishing. Enter my law office, and on my walls, above my desk, staring and glaring at my clients, is a stuffed, six-foot steel blue Marlin. Below the fish is a plaque that reads: "Behold the beautiful, majestic Marlin. He would not be here if he had not opened his mouth."

When you are a 7-year-old kid growing up, and your mom catches you with your hand in the cookie jar, you inevitably and sheepishly try to come with an excuse. Mom pushes and prods you to confess, and you do. She then hugs and kisses you, and you make up as she tells you everything is going to be all right.

It does not work that way with a cop when he pulls you over. The police are not your parents. The sheepish lie you first tell him becomes a prior inconsistent statement that is going to be used in a court of law against you. The cop does not hug you, kiss you, and make up. He searches you, arrests you, and locks you up. So what you should do is just shut up.

Do not bargain with cops, negotiate with cops, or promise deals you cannot deliver on. The promises they make on the street are not binding in the courts where prosecutors charge you. Deal with the reality that if you are caught with drugs you are now the prisoner of a drug war. In war, you are only required as a prisoner to give your name, rank, and dog tag number. Do not give consent to search your car, your person, or invite cops back to your home. Do a Nancy Reagan: just say no.

As my friend William Panzer says, an Oakland, California based criminal defense attorney, also on the NORML Board of Directors, "If everyone kept their mouth shut, half the people in jail would not be there. The cop's job is to put you in a cage and anything you say beyond identifying yourself helps them put you there." His advice too: "Shut up."

My advice is that if you are carrying drugs, prepare yourself for jail. Don't carry lots of cash that will be forfeited to the State. Instead, keep dog bones in your car. This way, when police tell you they are going to keep you sitting in handcuffs by the side of the road- in the hot sun or cold wind- while they retrieve a canine to search your vehicle, you can offer the dog some treats when he arrives. In the meantime, shut the mouth up. This is not the time to bemoan your fate in front of the officer and reflect that you were only 'doing a favor for a friend.' The cop will not give you a bone. He will transcribe your confession.

I would be a liar if I told you that 'shut the mouth up' works in every single instance. If you are carrying a loose joint in a 'decrim' state and you own up to a cop, he may let you go with a reprimand. But let's face it; if you are carrying felony weight cannabis, a couple of beans, or some crystal, you are headed to jail. The US Constitution does not say your job is to make the police and prosecution's job easier by telling them how and where you got it. The US Constitution says your right is to remain silent. Use it; don't lose it. Just Shut Up.

You may think you are already guilty. Far from it; you are not. If the state cannot prove it, it is not a crime. It is their job to prove the case above and beyond a reasonable doubt. It is not your job to tell them all the contraband is yours so their job becomes a snap while they snap handcuffs on you. So just shut the mouth up.

Show police your driver's license, insurance card, and registration. Show them your McDonald's discount Big Mac card if you must. But do not be a dope and show them your dope. Abraham Lincoln once wrote that many men are foolish but that some "speak and remove all doubt." Be one of those that leave arresting officers with doubt. You might get rewards for confessing in a church. You do not in a courtroom or on the street to a cop. Just shut up.

The most recent and recurrent law enforcement technique being employed presently is the notorious 'knock and talk' on your front doorstep at your home. They are 'trick or treating' for an admission. Armed with anonymous and non-verifiable information that you are cultivating marijuana on your premises, cops 'drop by' for a chat, seeking your permission for a search.

They like to make it seem they are coming over for coffee, investigating a zoning violation, or looking for a lost cat. They are not. They are looking for you to let a cat out of the bag that you are growing at home. Think of it this way: if they had enough information to believe you were doing something illegal, they would not be there asking for permission. They would have already secured a warrant and smashed in your door.

In these situations, the officers have no valid basis to even be on your property, let alone a warrant to enter. You have no legal obligation to answer their questions. You most certainly do not have to invite them in. They tell you though they 'know' pot is there and it will go 'so much easier on you' if you cash in your stash. No, it won't. You will go to jail when you did not have to. You will have foolishly waived a right you never should have given up. So just shut up, and show them the door.

Far too many times, and for too many years, I have watched young men and women get arrested while feeling some sort of moral obligation to simultaneously say to cops: "You got me!" I think it goes back to mom and the cookie jar. But guess what? You are not Dorothy, and we are not in Kansas anymore. So just shut up, because what you do not say cannot be used against you in a court of law. What you do not say may prevent you from being there in the first place. **FPH**



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11
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14
Riddim Tuesdays - Dubstep

17
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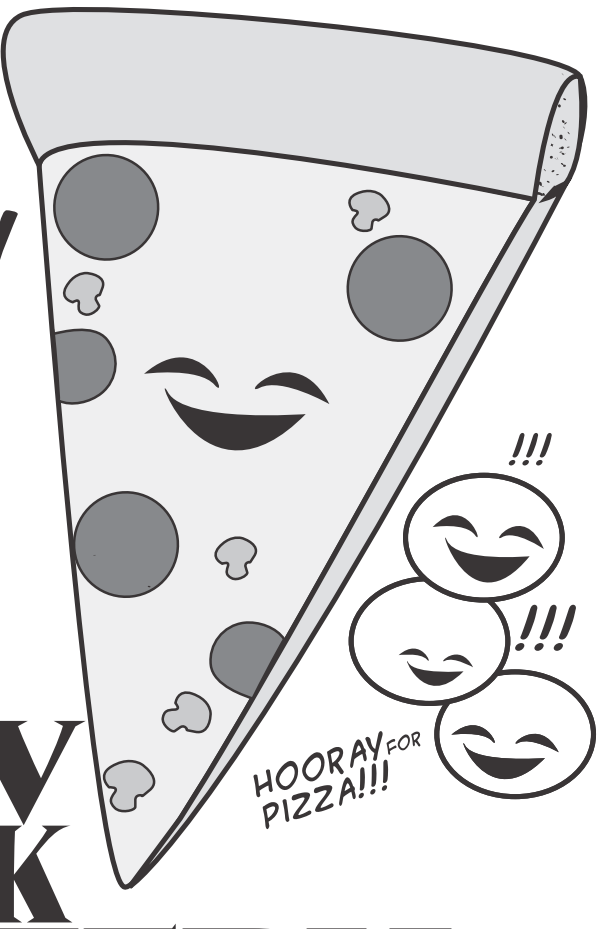
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Why oppose the Israeli consulate having a show on KPFT?

by Nick (nickcooper--at--indymedia.org)

Starting on Dec. 14, KPFT 90.1fm began airing what will be a twice a month program called "Voice of Peace" which is produced by the Israeli Consulate of Houston.

As an official voice of the Israeli government, the Israeli consulate necessarily has as a mission to legitimize and propagandize acts of war. Further, during a time of an active illegal military occupation and in light of the Goldstone Report, Israeli consulates necessarily find themselves in the role of propagandizing and whitewashing war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Don't you want to talk to everyone, including those with whom you disagree?

Interviews with the Israeli consulate are important, as there are many tough questions that should be asked. However, turning over control of programming to the Israeli consulate is different. There are many other formats that are appropriate to bring in the Israeli consulate, including debates and moderated discussions.

If Obama came on air to talk about how much we are helping Pakistan and no one asked him tough questions about the illegal drone attacks, he would have gotten a free-pass. Similarly, if the Israeli consulate can come on KPFT and frame things the way they want without getting confronted on anything, we have provided a platform for military propaganda.

Who is in charge of Israeli consulates?

The far-right politician Avigdor Lieberman is the Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs (Israel's equivalent of our Secretary of State). On December 21st 2010, Lieberman told Newsweek that he wanted to take Israeli citizenship away from at least half of Israeli Arabs.

Does allowing people to hear the Israeli government's perspective on KPFT somehow go against peace building?

Giving the Israeli consulate its own show violates the call from Palestinian academics and intellectuals for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions to create a just peace in Palestine / Israel. By rejecting this tool for peace and justice, KPFT is working against its own goals and denying a "just demand" by a disenfranchised group.

Doesn't their naming it "Voice of Peace" show that their hearts are in the right place?

The original Voice of Peace pirate radio show was created by a dissident who opposed settlements and occupation, and was himself oppressed by the Israeli government. For the consulate to steal this title is to co-opt this legacy.

Vague talk of peace is actually counterproductive to lasting peace -- Israel's occupation and always increasing land-grabs are a form of war, but can go on during times of so-called peace. As such, it falls on Israel's victims to bring up the uncomfortable issues, while the Israeli government would rather talk about nicer things. Giving them a show on KPFT to talk about those nice things plays into this strategy.

So you are saying Israel is trying to present itself disingenuously to Pacifica's audience?

This show exists to normalize American conceptions of Israel, to talk about Israeli society in a way where the context of it being engaged in a colonialist project is absent. Much of the outreach that Israeli consulates and supporters are making now across the U.S. is in cultural projects. Israel wants to talk about anything other than Palestine. Listening to the first Voice of Peace show, policies regarding Palestine were not mentioned.

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If KPFT must give time to the Israeli consulate, the only legitimate balance would be to give equal time to Hamas. The Goldstone Report accused both Hamas and Israel of war crimes, and it is inappropriate to give a program to only one side of such an armed conflict.



Nov. 29, 2010: Sarah Palin arrived in Houston to sign copies of her new book at the Borders on Kirby. She was greeted by a lively protest with drums and signs. photo by Selina Pishori

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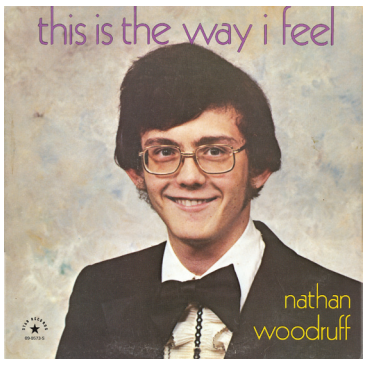
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Seriously Bad
Album Covers

One Man's Trash is Another Man's Treasure

BY MARINI VAN SMIRREN





WE'VE ALL BEEN TO THRIFT STORES and rummaged through the records, usually to be disappointed in the lack of selection. Occasionally you'll find a note worthy album of purchasing, packed tightly in the mix of old religious/ gospel music, an array of classical/ instrumental, old country and Christmas tunes. These albums that most overlook aren't overlooked by everyone. Nick DiFonzo finds humor in these.

DiFonzo compiled over 200 album covers to create 'Seriously Bad Album Covers', a book dedicated to, well, seriously bad album covers. Each album cover is accompanied by a brief caption; surely to make you giggle. "I prefer to let the records speak for themselves." DiFonzo states on his website BizzareRecords.com.

DiFonzo started "collecting" records by stealing his older brothers and sisters, as well as picking up more music in college. "In college I was into college radio and had access to the giant station record library. I would spend hours in there just going through the records letter by letter and finding cool stuff to play."

It all started with his website BizarreRecords.com. Slowly, his images of record covers started circulating the internet through chain emails. "One guy who had copied and reposted all my cover scans on his own website actually had the balls to email me to help him write a bad album cover book. Finally a publisher in London figured out where the covers actually came from and offered me a book deal. This was the start for DiFonzo. His first book was 'The Worst Album Covers in the World', following with a second volume before 'Seriously Bad Album Covers' debuted.

All the records pictured in DiFonzo's book, he owns. "The majority are from thrift stores. Some are from garage sales, estate sales, junk shops or the record store junk box. For a few, I actually broke down and bought it on eBay..." But his record collection hasn't cost him a fortune. "The vast majority of these records I paid no more than $1!"

The bulk of the album covers are of religious groups. "The simple answer is that religious records, especially bizarre religious records, are so easy to find." says DiFonzo. Other albums genres' included are Christmas, workout, music from the 60's to 90's, country, etc...

Be sure to pick up a copy at BizarreRecords.com, Amazon, or at Antidote Coffee Shop (and you can grab some delicious coffee while you're there.) It's perfect for the coffee table, makes for a great gift, and nobody can deny a good laugh. **FPH**



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