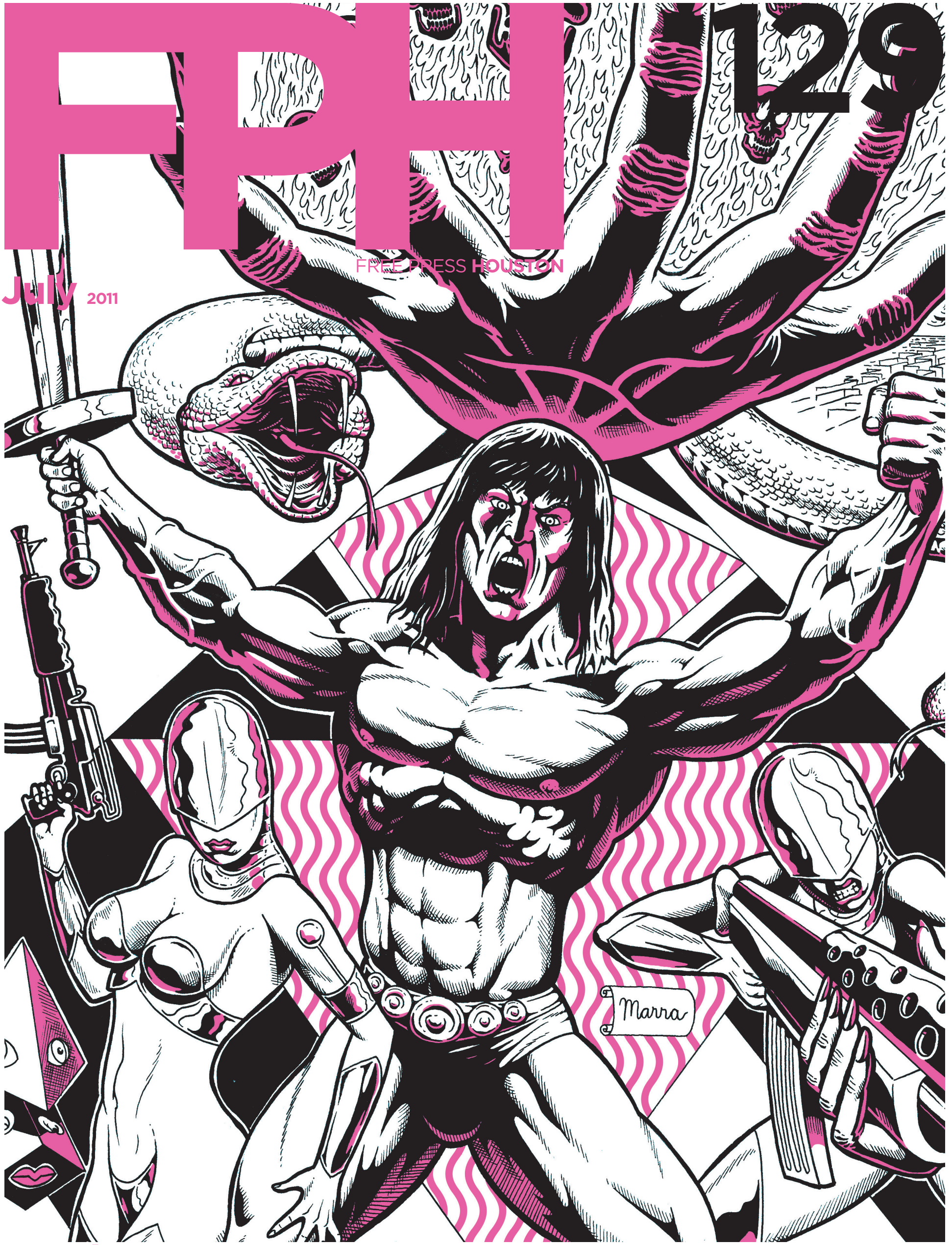
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July 2011



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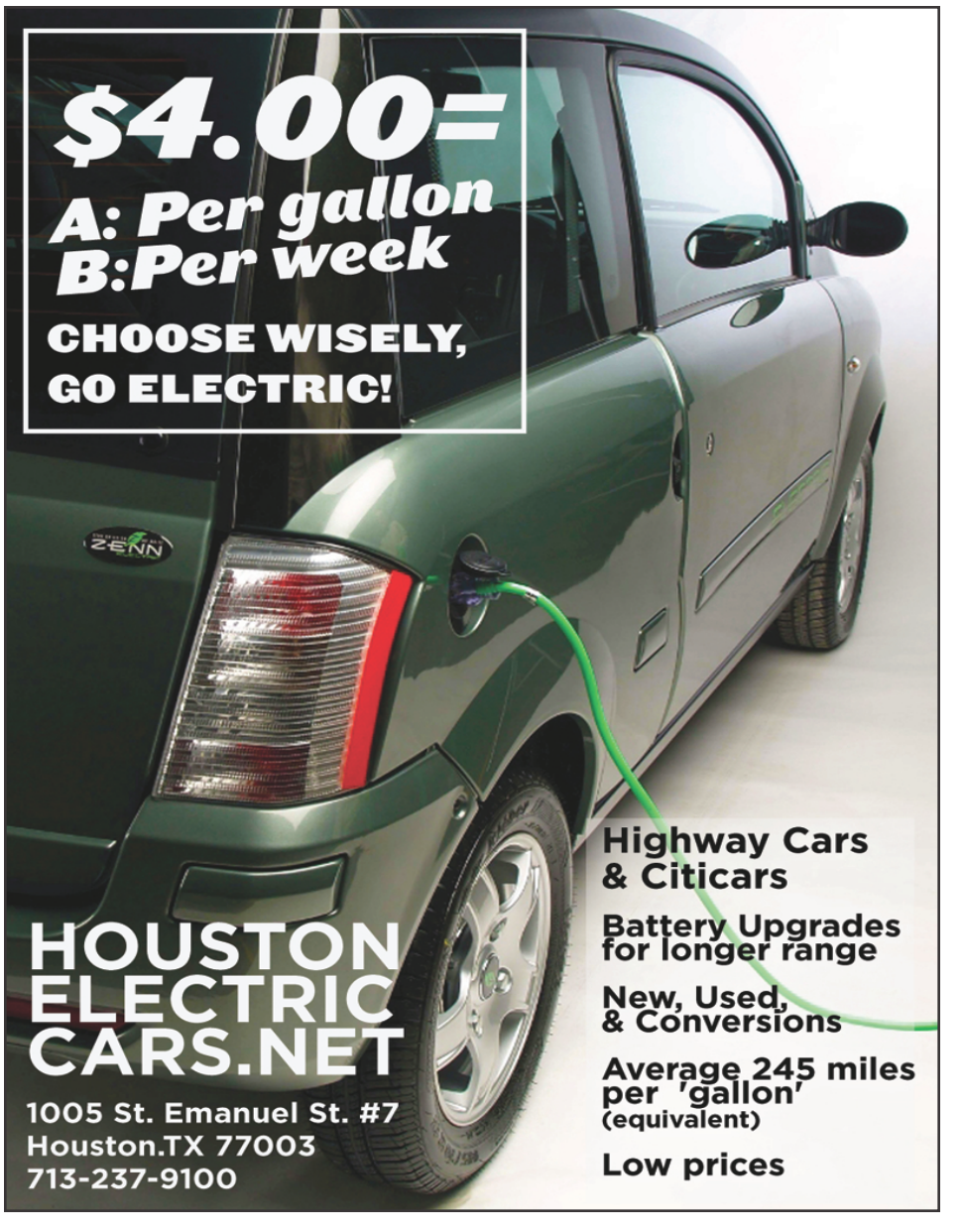
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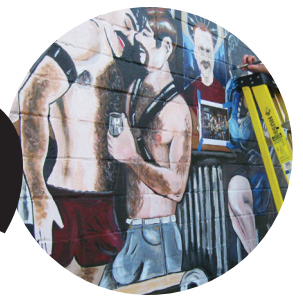








July



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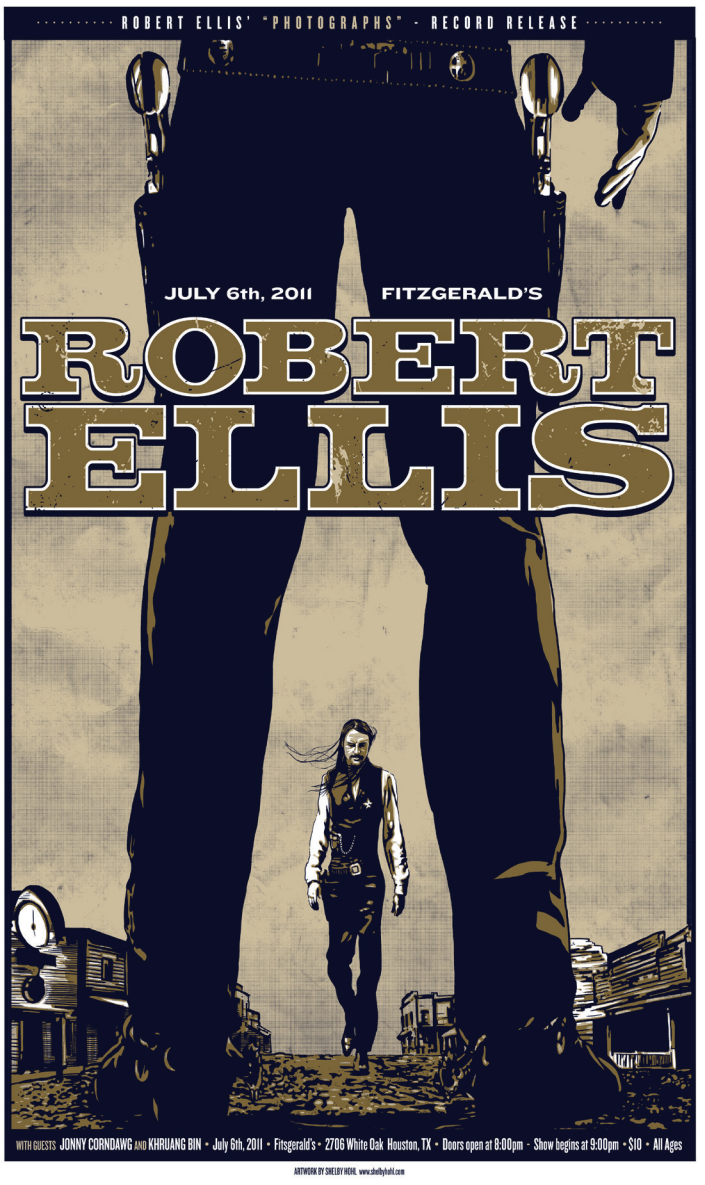
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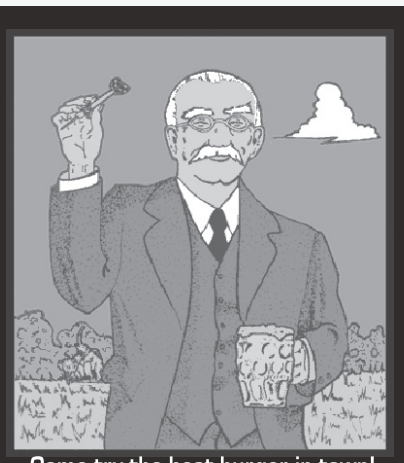
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Thu. 7
Rogue Improv (8pm), Jimmy Pizzatola, Hillary Sloan

Fri. 8
Hot Punk City, Kimonos, Jealous Creatures, Biscuit Bombs, Zipperneck

Sat. 9
Hot Punk City, No Love Loss, Here Holy Spain, Mydolls, Vivian Pickles

Tue. 12
Day Sailor, Maren Parusel, Jealous Creatures

Thu. 14
Rogue Improv (8pm), American Heist, Say Hello To Angels, Jukebox Romantics

Fri. 15
Horseshoe (Reunion Show)

Sat. 16
Fired For Walking, Rainbow Dragon

Fri. 22 TBA

Sat. 23
The Inanimate Objects, Skeleton Dick, Shiny Darks

Fri. 29
Squishees, Ghost Town Electric, Dead Mineral

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THERE IS NO “WE” IN SUMMER. ONLY ‘U’ AND ‘ME’.

Gold Bond Medicated powder. That shit is made for some summertime. Feet, balls, chest, and chode…it works on just about anything. It keeps you dry and gives you that menthol tingle. Swag for your nuts. Now that FPSF is over, I plan on using a lot of medicated powder for the remainder of the summer to facilitate lots of frolicking in the sun, tequila consumption, and maybe even pass it off as blow to make a few extra bucks. I have a good feeling about this summer. Hopefully, indie-rock is dead by end of summer and we can all go back to bangin’ Screw. God willing.



Gentlemen, Start Your Ovens

BY BUFFALO SEAN



TWO YEARS FROM NOW, on a warm spring afternoon, you can walk up to a yellow house along Hawthorne Street a block off of Westheimer and knock at the door. Waiting on the sun-dappled sidewalk, wisps of the smell of freshly baked bread waft along in the air. As the door opens the heavenly scent unfurls around a woman carrying a wicker basket of baguettes. Crispy to the touch and soft as pillows inside, the golden brown crust carries a little bit of Old World romance with it. Picking up the two loaves on top, you pay the baker and continue on your way to a friend's house where you will make awesome sandwiches.

At the same time in Garden Oaks, someone is knocking on the door of a ranch house with shutters falling off of its windows. A man calls out from the garage and waves him over to the side of the house. With a hearty handshake he beams, "It's almost ready." Three oak casks line the back wall of the garage, filled with fermenting beans in their final stage of becoming soy sauce. The two make small talk and bitch about the Astros before sampling a bit of the home-made brew. Bottles line the wall, waiting to be filled next month.

Meanwhile in the Third Ward the last of the oranges from a backyard tree sit next to the sink in a row house. Diligently washing, skinning and juicing them, an old woman tends to a boiling pot of glass jars being sterilized before canning. Last year's crop went to waste falling to the ground, shriveled and black, but this year will be different. Her daughter knocks at the door with a bag of jalapenos from her garden, ready to create a new concoction the world has never seen.

Beginning September 1st, 2011, the little guy gets to feed the masses. The Texas Cottage Food Law was passed this June and actually not vetoed by Rick Perry- despite his big business interests. The Cottage Food Law means that food can be produced in a home and sold to the public without crossing the health department authorities. This law only applies to non-hazardous foods, but it opens up a whole lot of possibilities for entrepreneurship across the state and right here in Houston.

Cakes, breads, fruit pies, cupcakes with hard icing, preserves, jams, jellies, dried herbs, spices, granola, popcorn, candy, donuts, bagels, marmalade, fruit butter, sorghum syrup, roasted nuts, peanut brittle, vegan desserts, brownies, herb vinegar, dried pasta, pickles, relish, apple sauce, fudge, dried fruit, pastries, cinnamon buns, rice Krispy treats, toffee, chocolate, salad dressing, marinades, soy sauce, ketchup, peanut butter, biscuits, crackers and muffins can all be made in home kitchens legally.

If a handmade, homegrown food revolution has begun among the food trucks and pop-up restaurants that have captivated the culinary quirks of a city as large and diverse as Houston in the past year, this next evolution will shift the focus from eateries inside the loop to homes in neighborhoods across town and out into the exurbs. Like Amway or Etsy the Cottage Food Law will provide supplemental income to thousands in Texas and may even make a few people rich. It remains to be seen if the popular imagination will be captured by an idea so simple and old school, but with the right prodding and a few good stories we could all be in for a hell of a moveable feast. **FPH**

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JULY 2
Daryl Hance

JULY 8--TBA

JULY 9
Beach Bash fundraiser featuring Vice Verse Us

JULY 15
Invincible Czars

JULY 16
Opie Hendrix, Carrie Ann & the Apocalyptics

JULY 22
Richard Cagle & the Voodoo Choir

JULY 23
Benefit for the Harmony House featuring Crown

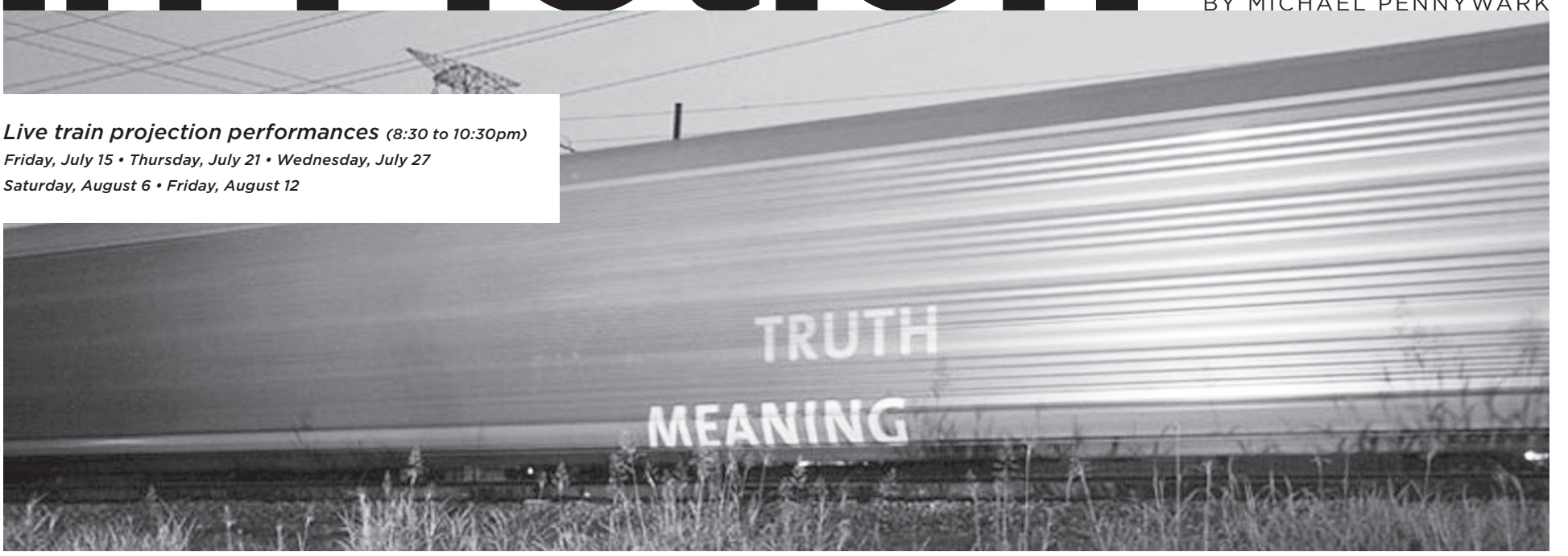
JULY 29 Reggae
Rhythm Revival featuring D.R.U.M.

JULY 30 25th Anniversary Watermelon Dance & Summer Social

SEE WEBSITE FOR MORE SHOWS

Meaning in Motion

BY MICHAEL PENNYWARK



Live train projection performances *(8:30 to 10:30pm)*
Friday, July 15 • Thursday, July 21 • Wednesday, July 27
Saturday, August 6 • Friday, August 12

I LIKE WORDS. After all, I use them every day. Of course some times the words make more sense than other times—especially after three beers, four shots of whiskey, and that always ill-advised and little-needed shot of Rumpleminze at the end of the night. Usually at such times I would make a mental note to put down on paper whatever brilliant thoughts drifted through my brain as soon as I got home, then proceed to forget all about them as I spent the rest of the night in a heated discussion about the origin of the potato. Unfortunately, there were times I had followed through on writing down those random drunken thoughts, furiously channeling the angst of the middle class white male and passing the jumbled mess of words off as poetry. Thankfully, I've so far managed to destroy all the damning evidence. Pablo Gimenez Zapiola, however, has found a much cooler and more fascinating way to capture the fleeting beauty of words, and was probably much more sober than me when he did it.

In a series of large-scale projections of words, literary passages and poems onto moving trains, and from moving cars onto the urban landscape, Gimenez Zapiola examines the effect that different environments and contexts have on the projected words and how the projected words affect the environments. Caught on video and in long-exposure photographs, these images reflect the transparency, multiplicity, and fragmentation of the words as they adapt to an ever-changing surface.

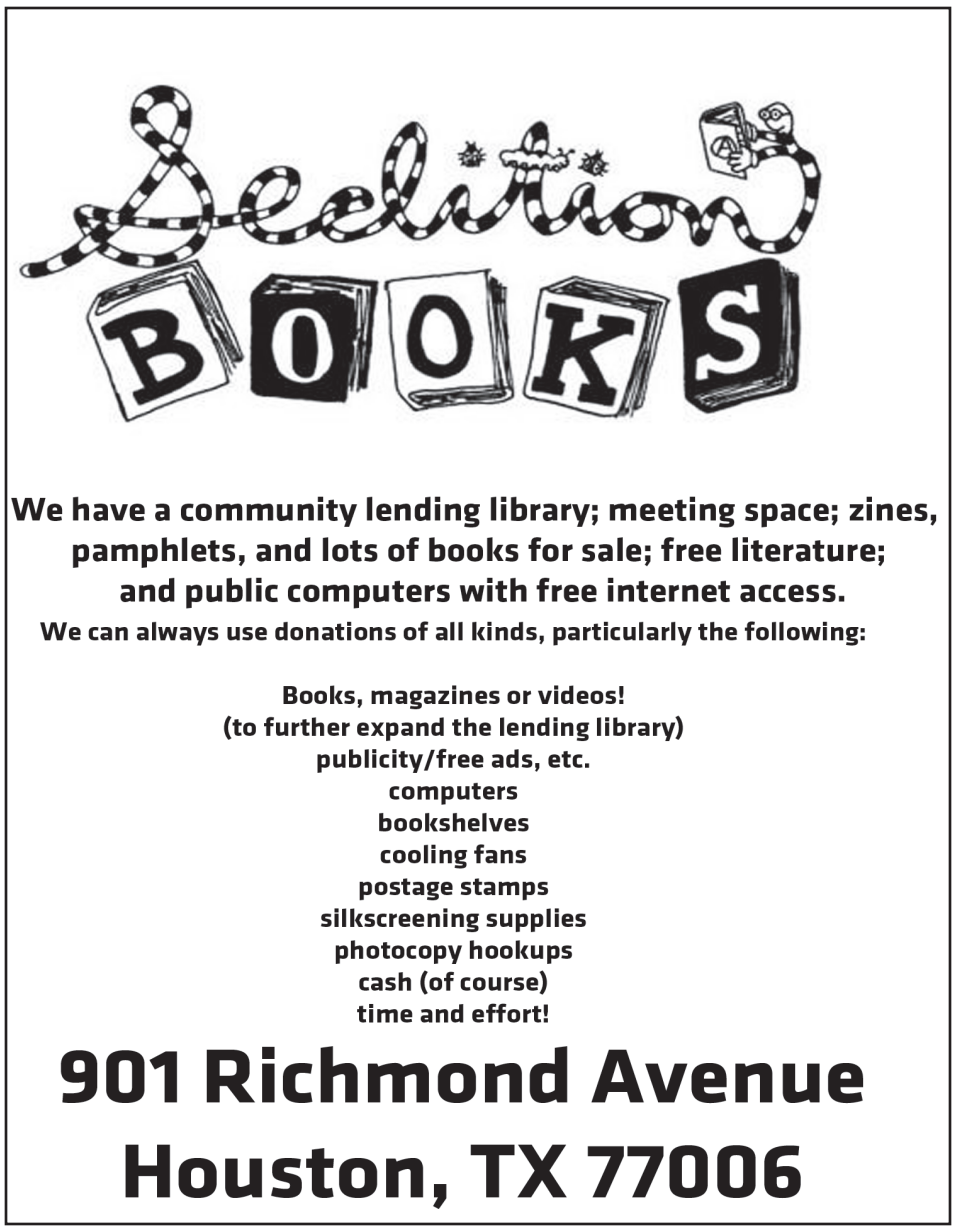
Curious about his ideas, I tracked Pablo down and (in what I can only assume was a moment of clarity for me) asked him about his exhibition, "Meaning in Motion". He explained to me that when he first came here and saw the never-ending trains for the first time, "I felt an urge to project over them. The idea of projecting onto something moving instead of still stimulated me to do it, and when I did, I just couldn't believe it. Transparencies, multiple words, breaking and re-shaping themselves according to the always changing shapes of the wagons showed me a never experienced before kind of beauty."

At this point I would like to note that I resisted the impulse to share the words I prefer to project at the trains that hold me up for twenty minutes on Shepherd when I'm already running late. Gimenez Zapiola continued, telling me that, "I like how words convey meanings that affect or relate to each viewer in many different ways, and I believe poems affect or relate to people even more. I started with trains, because when I first saw them, I liked the idea of a long moving screen, then I continued on with the urban context; houses, tress, freeways, fences, everything you see in a city, but this time projecting from a moving car. I like the contrast between still and dynamic. I see this as something extremely powerful."

The sentences and fragments used in the project come from a diverse list of writers, including his great grandfather, Paul Groussac, and poets from Argentina, the Dominican Republic, and Russia. As an added bonus at the exhibition, there will also be a series of live projection performances, hosted by the artist, where people can see his work in action as trains pass by the studio.

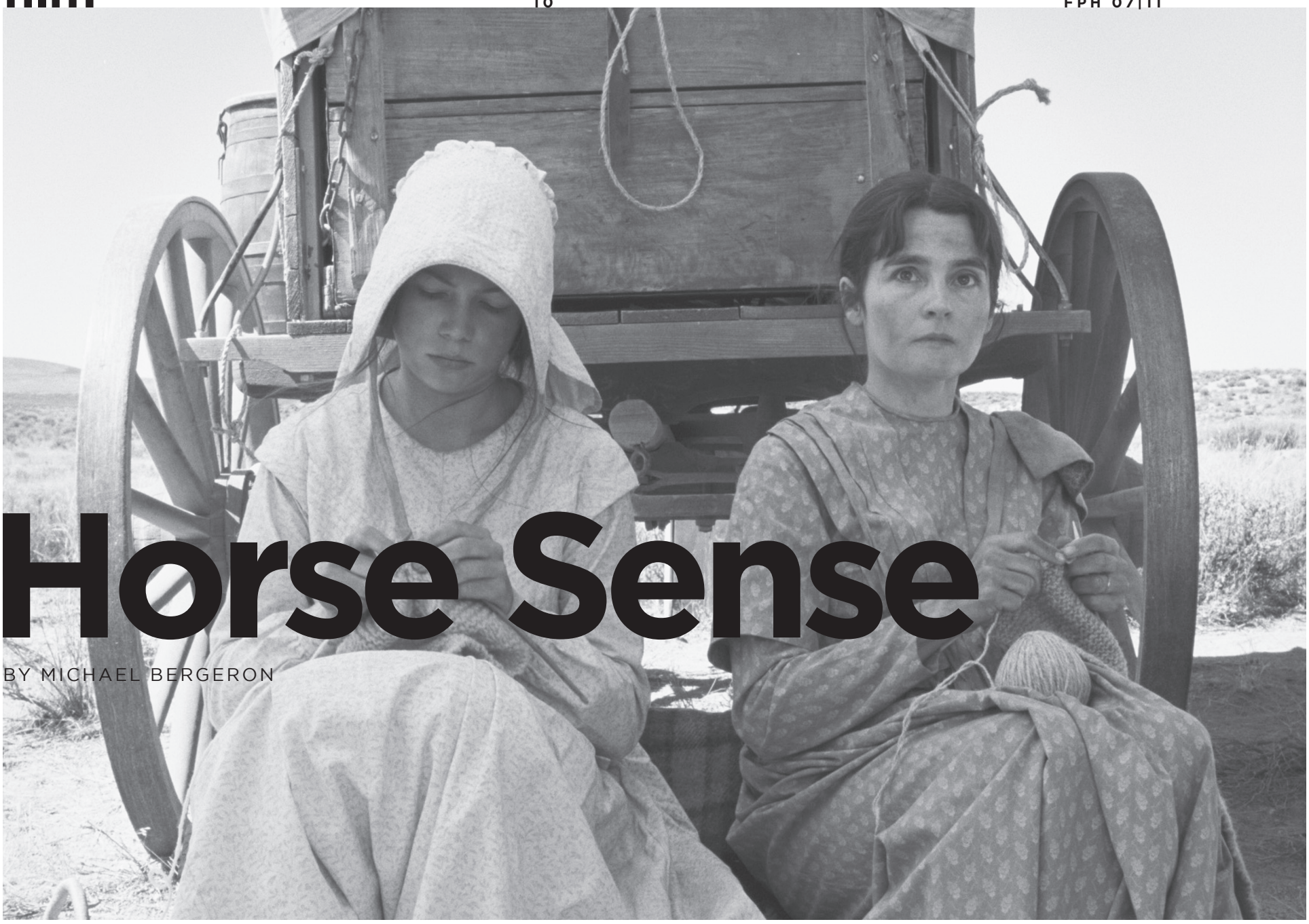
"Meaning in Motion" will be on view at Spacetaker's ARC Gallery from July 15- August 13. **FPH**


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Horse Sense

BY MICHAEL BERGERON

NOT A FEW DAYS GOES BY that your humble scribe isn't beseeched by someone to explain when there will be the return of a healthy art film/indie film scene inside the loop. Don't hold your breath. Since the Angelika closed, with its eight screens in September of 2010, Houston has only seen a smattering of the kind of single engagement release of films that adorned the city previously.

Thank the Cosmic Muffin that the local Museum of Fine Arts, Houston is unwinding two of the better small releases of this year in July: the documentary Phil Ochs: There But For Fortune and the hands-down best film I've seen all year, the prairie crossing drama Meek's Cutoff. Meek's Cutoff belongs in the category of art film pure and simple. From somebody who has watched MC as well as Certified Copy and Tree of Life twice, I can assure you this rarefied revisionist western is the real deal, shot and projected in 1.33 no less.

Otherwise the Landmark River Oaks has been toying with available titles from the major minors (Focus Features, Sony Pictures Classics), and there are dozens of them, bumping some week after week (Beginners) and bumping some week after week and then completely dumping same (Life During Wartime, In A Better World).

The Sundance Theater chain will re-open the space formerly occupied by the Angelika in November of 2011. Likewise the River Oaks Theater will likely lose its lease in 2012, as will the Alamo Drafthouse West Oaks locale (way outside the loop). The Alamo Drafthouse (or employees of same) have expressed to me that the Alamo will open a location inside the loop sometime next year, although they won't say exactly where.

The River Oaks Three is owned by Mark Cuban (he owns Landmark Theatres, Magnolia Films and the Dallas Mavericks among multiple investments). Cuban announced a few months ago that Landmark, a cash cow with over 125 theaters in North America, was for sale. Question: Dude just won the basketball championship, so maybe he can put some money into the upkeep of his theaters? Answer: Not for a property that's on the auction block.

All those people you see with "Save the Historic River Oaks Theatre" bumper stickers on their supervehicles, I guarantee you the last time they attended the River Oaks Three was in 2004 when Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind was unwinding exclusively there. It's no secret that the two upstairs screens at the RO3 are cramped, either too hot or too cold and as an added bonus the sound from the movie next door bleeds through the walls of each respective theater. Don't get me wrong, I'm not advocating bringing the River Oaks Three to the ground and grooving on the rubble like some stone cold 1960s radical contemplating the eternal beyond. I was there when the RO3 was a solo screen with a balcony and the manager used to offer complimentary free herbal tea that was obviously laced with marijuana stems. Those that knew, knew. As it is now, those that know, know.

They know that there're about eight titles a month that now - foreign movies, small indie films - bypass Houston completely. Houston, in the mind of corporate programmers on the coasts, is the equivalent of Kansas City or Pittsburgh as far as the cultural impact we have on whether important films play theatrically here before being released on DVD.

A true movie fan would acknowledge that the antics of Exit Through the Gift Shop owes a smidgen of credit to Good Neighbor Sam, a mediocre 1964 movie that nonetheless saw fit to glorify the

desecration of billboards and advertising. A true movie fan - and in a metroplex of over three-million there are about a thousand of us - would commit to seeing whatever new film is playing, even if its lifespan is a week or two and its advertising is nil. A true movie fan approached me and expressed their sincere best wishes for the new Sundance theater complex and all the joy of alternative film appreciation it will spawn. I asked them how often they attended the Angelica, the space to be occupied by the Sundance chain. "Not that much, me and my wife, we have a subscription to Hulu and for $7 a month we stream all these really cool movies."

Does anybody remember laughter? Does anybody discern high-def? With all the problems in the world, tsunamis, earthquakes, social upheaval in the Middle East, how much can a person get worked up about seeing some obscure movie that isn't supported by the Green Lantern media buy-in of $100-million? For those of us that don't consider an intellectual someone who can pontificate about the many choices on cable television, the benefits of seeing unknown cinema ranks with trips to Machu Picchu and the seldom achieved glance towards nirvana.

With no slight to the cool microcinematic venues in Houston like 13 Pews and the Aurora Picture Show and the monthly SWAMP seminar, I would like to see Houston return to the cinematic state of excellence where this city was first-running films the same or next week as their debut on the first and second coast.

Midnight in Paris

After seeing Midnight in Paris you're going to feel a touch of magic has been transferred from the screen to your heart.

Midnight in Paris stars Owen Wilson, and as in many Woody Allen films Wilson is channeling the wit and wisdom of Allen. Wilson plays a self-admitted Hollywood hack on vacation in Paris with his uptight fiancée (Rachel McAdams) and her redneck parents. Wilson wants to write a serious novel and finds the city a sort of muse. At midnight his solitary walks reveal another world – that of Paris of the 1920s.

As if by magic Wilson finds himself partying with the likes of Cole Porter, F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Salvador Dali, Luis Buñuel, Pablo Picasso, Gertrude Stein. All of these historical characters are created as if from scratch by actors you will recognize and those you won't. Adrian Brody's Dali makes you want to see him perform solo in a dedicated film, ditto for Kathy Bates' reflection of Stein.

One character Wilson meets from the past, Picasso's mistress played with curiosity by Marion Cotillard, also manipulates space and time and the pair find themselves in Paris in the 1890s. Allen is obviously saying that we belong in our own time. "They don't have antibiotics," whines Wilson about La Belle Epoque.

Midnight in Paris leans more on the side of fantasy than sci-fi; this is territory mined by Somewhere in Time, although Allen's ending is definitely more pragmatic and involves Lea Sedoux (who after Cotillard needs to be in more American films).

That thing with the Eiffel Tower, where the edifice lights flicker on and off rapidly really looks good on film. The Eiffel does that on the hour during certain evening time envelopes; saw the same shot in Femme Fatale.

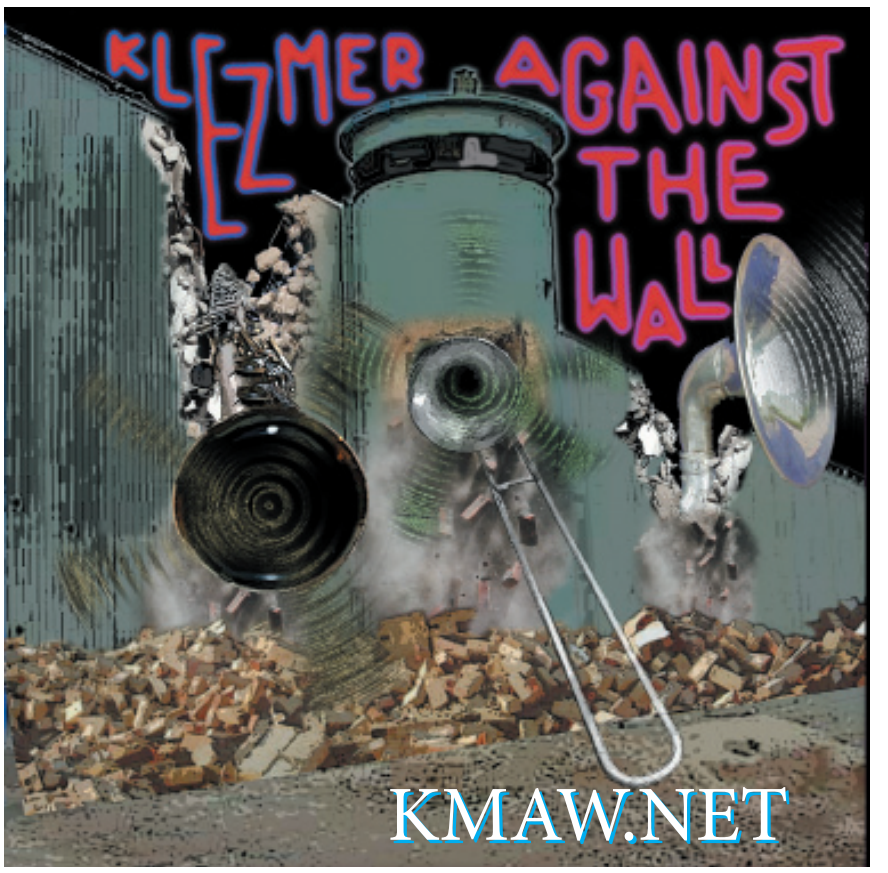
Alamo Update

A screening of Full Metal Jacket will unwind at the Alamo Drafthouse West Oaks location on July 3 at 6:30 pm. Free Press Houston doyen Michael Bergeron will introduce this Stanley Kubrick classic.

Later the same month, the Alamo Drafthouse Mason Road (Katy locale) will host a special appearance by Crispin Glover on July 9. Glover will present Crispin Hellion Glover's Big Slide Show Part 2, an hour-long presentation where Glover narrates in front of screen projections of surreal proportions; and It Is Fine! Everything Is Fine!, Glover's 2007 film that can best be described as the fantasy inside a dying hero's head. Glover will also conduct a Q&A and sign copies of his book after the screening.

All together Glover will perform five show-stopping extravaganzas at Alamo locations in Texas (one in Houston, two in San Antonio, two in Austin). His other playdates include another of his films, What Is It!, and a complete two-part version of the slide show. **FPH**

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IT'S ALWAYS THE SAME PEOPLE CALLING THE COPS

KWAME "THAT PARENT" ANDERSON

LET'S TALK REALLY QUICKLY ABOUT PRIVACY. You shouldn't text or email your privates to anyone, that's a given, but dammit, why do I really give a flying fuck? Here's the thing-- how is it no one ever resigns based on bad administrative decisions? Why is it always scandal? You know what I remember about Bill Clinton? Great economy and fucked up welfare laws. So what if he got a blowjob. But here's another thing-- Twitter and Facebook are just places to post bullshit and pump up projects, they are not places to display your privates, and really, neither is any place that is connected to a satellite unless you are a porn star. I know it's trivial, but what isn't. I've seen riots and resignations and none related to the shit state of the country and/or world.

Another thing, parents, a public park is not ANOTHER place to leave your kids unsupervised. I will fuss at your kids if they knock my daughter down, and eventually, I will teach her to beat their ass, because their motherfucking mom and/or dad/mom's boyfriend cannot tell shithead not to spray water on people, throw balls at people, or watch where they fuck they are running. Yeah, I'm THAT parent, I wanna talk on the phone too, and have a conversation, but I'm afraid of my kids getting snatched up if I'm not paying attention because I posted a photo of her on Facebook, and they Google mapped me to the park, and some dipshit is holding a grudge because I called them a dipshit in high school, or they have a fuckin' problem, or whatever, so yeah, I'm watching my kids because I saw Ransom. Here's the thing: we live in Texas motherfucker, people can carry guns.

CONCERT

07.23.11 SADE & JOHN LEGEND

If I were to go to one concert in July, it would be this one for obvious reasons. One, John Legend, is OK, but my wife looooves John Legend, so let's say, you wanted your wife to be happy, you would go to this show, because a happy wife/girlfriend/potential wifeor girlfriend is never a bad thing. Two, Sade is awesome. She has a song called Bullet Proof Soul where she compares her man leaving to hitting her like a slow bullet, a slow bullet! That is awesome imagery. Love Is Stronger Than Pride (the song, the album), I could go on forever. We've all gone through the Sade period of a breakup, it's like step 5 before attempting suicide and/or fucking an ex to feel wanted. This concert should be advertised: SADE! JOHN LEGEND! Somebody's fucking after this one...

NOT A CONCERT

BON IVER - S/T (4AD/JAGUJAWAR)

Bon Iver is a gets a lot of hype, but this record is good. Sit outside, or drive somewhere at night, and put this album on with a really good sound system, it kills. Holocene, Towers, Perth, I'm not sure those songs are even about those words, but I know they are good. I am a critic, this is acclaim, I've fallen into the trap.

SINGER - MINDREADING (DRAG CITY)

Singer's last album was called Unhistories because there was no father to its style. Well that bastard is still confused. Adventure, from the first to the last song, the stellar Bitter'd Moon, a song that writhes and slivers thanks to a wicked percussive line. This album is like staring at a picture and seeing something different each time, and every time that thing is more wondrous.

TY SEGALL - GOODBYE BREAD (DRAG CITY)

Best rock record I've heard this year. Straight to the point, it's like Marc Bolan met the Troggs and said "What would it sound like, if we met?" If you can show me a better way to spend 30 minutes, I would discredit your suggestion, and play this record again, while covering my ears and going "waa, waa, waa...".

BEYONCE - 4 (COLUMBIA)

Beyonce can sing a lyric like, "you see these tears fallin down to my ears," and even though you know that is anatomically impossible, you still accept it, because she consistenly nails it. 'I Miss You' is the most minimal song Beyonce has ever done, and yet it still evokes grandeur. You could say a lot of things about Beyonce, but she's too rich to really give a fuck. **FPH**

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& Kat James
and Troublemaker

JULY EVENTS

FRIDAYS
July 1 - YYZ
"Ultimate Rush Tribue"
July 8 - Ozz
(Ozzy Tribute)
with Unchain The Night
(Dokken Tribute)
and Fear Fed Eyes
July 15 - Fondue Monks
with Uncle Mojo
July 22 - The Sound Of Madness
(Shinedown Tribute)
with The Foo Fakers
(Foo Fighters Tribute)
and Ham & Mustard Shake
(STP Tribute)
July 29 - MODOC *with* JD's Throwdown Band
August 5 - Dimitri's Rail
with Signal Rising

SATURDAYS
July 2 - Victim *with special guest*
July 9 - Spareheart
(Heart Tribute)
with Nightbird
(Stevie Nicks Tribute)
July 16 - Rainchild *with* Lotus Effect,
and Chubbs
July 23 - Dilanna
with The Scars Heal In Time,
& Kat James & Troublemaker
July 30 - Metal Maiden
(Iron Maiden Tribute)
with Slip Of The Tongue
(Whitesnake Tribute)
August 6 - The Fab Five
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JULY EVENTS

FRIDAYS
July 1 - The Fondue Monks
July 8 - Sex Panthers
July 15 - MTA
(Metallica Tribute)
with Highway To Hell
(AC/DC Tribute)
July 22 - Dilanna
with The Scars Heal In Time,
& Kat James & Troublemaker
July 29 - Electric Soul
with Special Guest!
Aug. 5 - Rock Radio
with Rebound Guys

SATURDAYS
July 2 - YYZ
"The Ultimate Rush Tribue"
July 9 - Abbey Rode
(Beatles Tribute)
with Already Gone
(Eagles Tribute)
July 16 - Cure Tribute Band
July 23 - Sunset Strippers
with Special Guest!
July 30- Ozz
(Ozzy Tribute)
Aug. 6 - Somewhat Damaged
(NIN Tribute)

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Interview: Iceage

ELIAS RONNENFELT IS THE FRONTMAN of Danish punk band Iceage and at only 19 years old him and his bandmates have been making some serious waves, on both sides of the Atlantic. Winning acclaim from places like the New York Times and Pitchfork the band is developing a strong cult following. Their debut "New Brigade" has been out since March and is the most raw releases this year. It clocks in around 24 minutes but says more in that time than a lot of bands say in two albums. The band will be playing with Balaclavas and The Energy at The Mink on July 15.

FOR A WHILE YOU GUYS WEREN'T ON MY RADAR FOR SOME REASON AND I'M REALLY HAPPY THAT THE BAND IS COMING TO HOUSTON. ¶ Thank you.

SINCE YOU'RE MID-TOUR RIGHT NOW, HOW'S IT GOING? ¶ The tour is going great.

NOW I'M NOT ACTUALLY MUCH OLDER THAN YOU ARE BUT... ¶ Oh ok, how old are you?

I'M 21 SO I'M ONLY A COUPLE YEARS OLDER THAN YOU GUYS AND... ¶ I'm 19

YEAH, THAT'S WHAT I HEARD. THAT'S AMAZING. SO WHAT IS IT LIKE TOURING THE WORLD AT SUCH A YOUNG AGE? ¶ People are treating us really well. We met a lot of people who's been over our expectation, just treating us really well. The only thing that's annoying is that we can't drink.

[LAUGHTER] YEAH, I WAS GOING TO ASK ABOUT THAT. ¶ We manage to do it sometimes but it's hard.

YEAH, I'LL BET. YOU'LL LEARN THAT THE US IS STILL A REALLY PURITAN COUNTRY IN SOME WAYS. SORT OF IN THE SAME VEIN, DO YOU THINK PEOPLE UNDERESTIMATE YOU BECAUSE YOU'RE YOUNGER OR ARE YOU GETTING THE RESPECT YOU DESERVE? ¶ Uh- I don't know. People haven't really been- can you ask the question again?

YEAH SURE. SINCE YOU GUYS ARE YOUNGER HOW HAVE YOU TREATED BY OLDER MUSICIANS AND DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'VE BEEN GETTING CREDIT. ¶ Yeah, well a lot of the bands we've been playing with have been very nice and bought us beer and stuff. We met a lot of great people so far.

I REALLY LIKE THE RECORD, WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR INFLUENCES? WHO ARE SOME PEOPLE WHO INSPIRE YOU, MUSIC-WISE? ¶ I'm not sure because it comes from a lot of different places and I think like you unconsciously use all of the music you listen to. So I'm not sure how to address it.

THIS IS THE BAND'S FIRST LP BUT HAVE YOU RECORDED ANY SINGLES BEFORE IT? ¶ Yeah, we did a 7 inch before the record.

ARE THOSE AVAILABLE ANYWHERE? ¶ I think they're all sold out now but our Danish label might have some left.

COULD YOU TELL ME A LITTLE ABOUT "NEW BRIGADE" AND WHAT IT WAS LIKE RECORDING IT? ¶ We recorded it in like 3 or 4 days. We didn't really use overdubs. Like we played all the music together and we did vocals after that but there wasn't really any overdubs. We just played the songs a couple times till they were right. That's kind of the recording process. We didn't have a producer or anything.

3 OR 4 DAYS IS A SHORT RECORDING TIME. YOU GUYS MUST HAVE BEEN WORKING REALLY HARD TO GET THAT. ¶ Yeah, I guess it was just the method of naming the songs. We didn't need that many attempts.

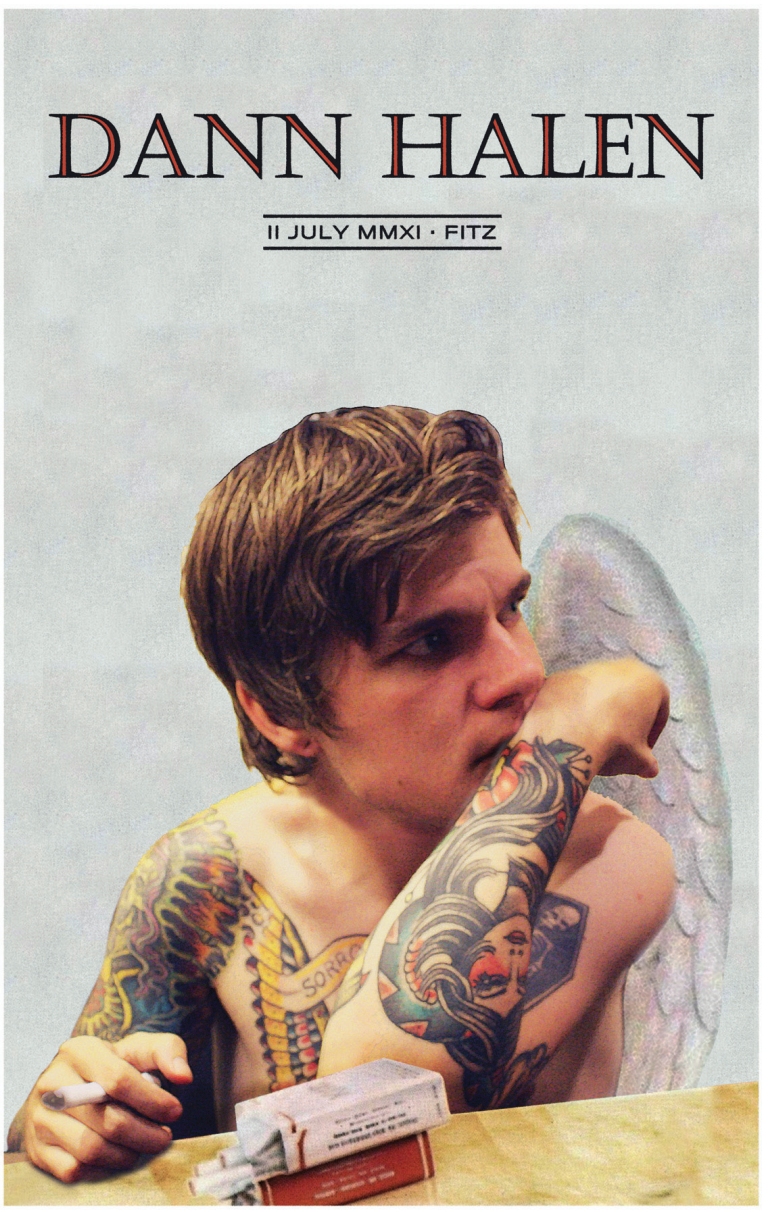
CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT THE NAME OF THE BAND, ICEAGE. THIS MIGHT JUST BE ME INTERPRETING THINGS BUT I HEAR A LOT OF JOY DIVISION IN YOUR GUYS' MUSIC AND SOME OF THE ENERGY OF IT AND THE BAND NAME HAS ALWAYS REMINDED ME OF THE JOY DIVISION SONG "ICE AGE" BUT WHERE DO YOU THINK THE BAND NAME FROM? ¶ As for the Joy Division thing, yeah I really like Joy Division -we seem to get compared to them a lot but I don't think we really sound like Joy Division. But we didn't take the name of their song. We just kind of brainstormed words and then it became that.

YOU DON'T SOUND JUST LIKE JOY DIVISION. YOU SOUND LIKE ALL SORTS OF THINGS. I APPRECIATE HOW EXPERIMENTAL THE MUSIC IS. IT'S NOT JUST STRAIGHT PUNK OR STRAIGHT ANYTHING. DID IT TAKE YOU GUYS A LONG TIME TO WRITE SONGS? ¶ Yeah it did. We can't just like- just write a song in ten minutes. We spend a lot of time like finding the right parts and melodies and stuff. They are written over time. The ideas are pretty spontaneous but -what can I say- we use a fair amount of time to get the songs right.

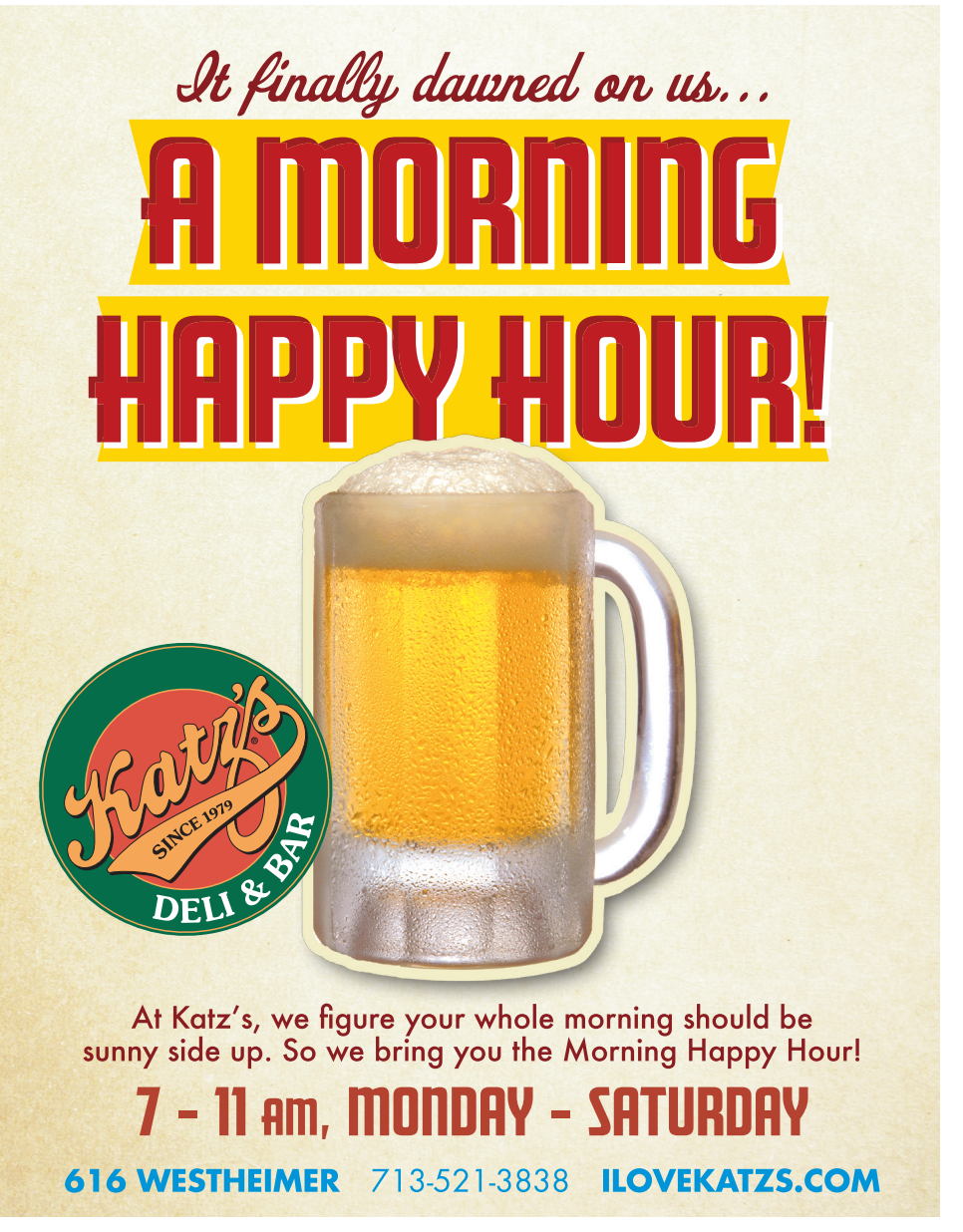
IT DEFINITELY SOUNDS LIKE THAT. WHILE I WOULD CALL ICEAGE PUNK IT SEEMS A LOT MORE THOUGHTFUL THAN A LOT OF THE PUNK I'M USED TO HEARING IN THE PAST COUPLE YEARS. IT'S A SHORTER RECORD BUT IT SEEMS LIKE EVERY NOTE IS MORE THOUGHT OUT THAN A LOT OF PUNK BANDS I KNOW CAN JUST SIT DOWN AND WRITE A SONG. AND THAT'S NOT ALWAYS GOOD [LAUGHTER]. IT'S GOOD YOU SPEND A LOT OF TIME. ¶ We don't want anything there that doesn't have to be there. **FPH**




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Interview: Sarah Cook

SARAH COOK'S YOUTUBE CHANNELS aren't what you'd call viral. Her videos sit quietly with maybe 150 views per song. Each video features nothing more than a hesitant Cook sitting in her cluttered bedroom and singing songs with unvarnished honesty; to use the phrase "production value" would be a misuse of the term. In these days of Lady GaGa excess, there is something refreshing about that. In place of all the expensive embellishments is something unpretentious, sincere, and unconcerned with fame. Her first album, Sheeps and Such, was recorded by a friend studying engineering at HCC and her follow-up, Symmetry in Motion, is being recorded this summer as she prepares to enter Southwestern University this fall (major: Philosophy. Minors: Ancient Greek and Computational Mathematics). Ask Cook of her musical ambitions and she will smile and a shrug saying, "I don't know where it will take me or even if it will take me anywhere. All of the music I've done so far has really just been for fun." Wow, people make music just for fun? Apparently, the answer is yes.

DO YOU PLAY OUT IN HOUSTON?

I've only played a couple of shows - one at the Mink and one at the Jet lounge. I don't play out often; most of what I do is at home. I'd love to play out more but I'm just really busy and this isn't the biggest part of my life right now so it has to go on the backburner a lot which is unfortunate but it's true.

I goofed around with Cari Quoyeser; she was in Suburban Warfare before they broke up and now she has a solo project. We went downtown with our guitars and played on street corners. It was incredible and so much fun! We didn't make much money but it was a great experience to sit down and play for no one and everyone at the same time. We got in trouble so we then set up outside of a Starbucks downtown and they were mad because we had our cases open for tips. They told us we could play but we couldn't get paid because it was against corporate policy or something. Sorry, Starbucks. They really didn't want us to play but there was nothing they could do about us sitting outside and playing as long as we had our cases closed.

FPH – HOW IS IT PLAYING LIVE COMPARED AFTER PLAYING AT HOME FOR SO LONG?

Playing live or in my room don't feel as different as I would have expected and I think that's because I'm not really into showmanship of playing in front of people like "All right!! How's everyone doin' tonight?!!!" I'm not into that.

HOW DID IT FEEL MAKING THOSE YOUTUBE VIDEOS?

It felt creepy because I didn't know where to look. If you notice, I avoid making any kind of eye contact. It feels egocentric to just stare at the camera. "Hey, everyone look at me!" That's not what I'm trying to market; I wanted people to hear my music and not be distracted by who was playing the music. I feel that a lot of people who do videos or performances will sell their appearance instead of their talent and that bothers me because that is not the most important thing. I know that's backwards from what the industry is saying right now but that's what I think.

IS THERE ANY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PLAYING LIVE AND YOUTUBE?

A big difference is that, when I am doing a video, you don't know who is watching. When you play a show, people have come to see you so it's a lot more positive than just putting it out there for anyone.

That's been the worst part of doing music. It's scary to put yourself out there - not just putting yourself out there, but when people are rude about it. When people tell you that you are not good, that is the hardest thing to hear but I've learned that you aren't going to please everyone ever in anything you do. Just do what you love and love what you do. If people don't like it, they can listen to something else.

There was one comment that was really funny. I got it the day after Christmas and, at that time, it was really hurtful because the album had only been around a few months and I was really self-conscious about how people were going to feel about it. I'm over it now but at the time it was "Oh my goodness." (Cook then finds the e-mail and reads it while laughing)

Subject: Awful and Shameful

This music stinks. I feel I'm in a funeral. This music makes me want to cause myself bodily harm. All the sounds sound like one big teen angsty song. It would be terrible if this was real. Was this someone's science fair project? The answer is yes. I want to crawl under a rock and cry. I wish this was upbeat and positive like Hannah Montana.

I guess, I'm sorry you wish my music was like Hanna Montana's?

WOW, THAT'S HILARIOUS - HE REALLY WENT TO EXTRA MILE. SO, SO WHY PUT YOURSELF OUT THERE IN THE FIRST PLACE? WHAT'S THE PURPOSE OF MUSIC? WHAT DOES IT ALLOW YOU TO DO?

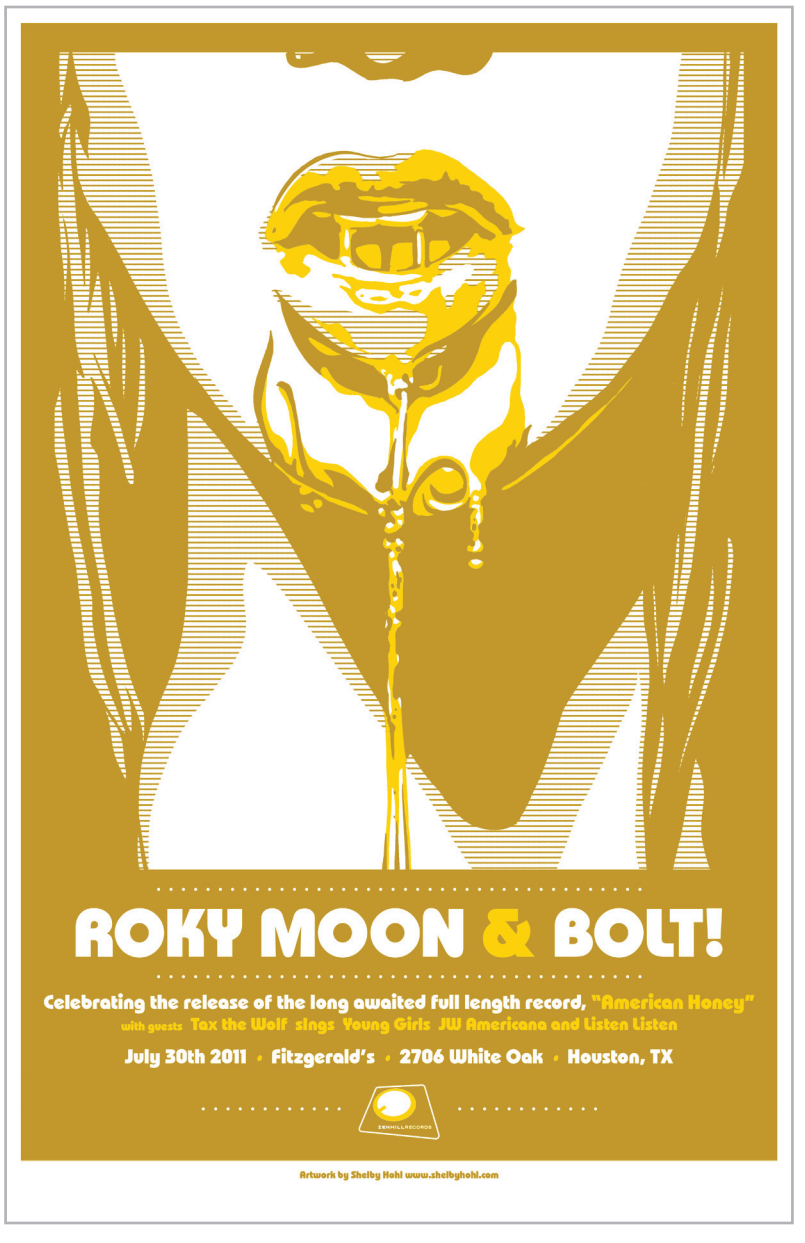
A great purpose of music is to honor God. Even if you look biblically - the entire book of psalms is music to bring glory to God. But I also think it's a way to clarify and to have an excuse to say things about life that wouldn't be socially acceptable if it wasn't in a musical context. There are lots of things in my music that I don't feel I could just stand in front of people and just talk about but because it's in the frame of being music, then people will listen. Music bends the norm of what we've been socialized to say. FPH

You can see Sarah Cook perform July 14th at Warehouse Live Studio Room, or you can watch her YouTube Channels:
youtube.com/user/SarahCooksMusic
youtube.com/user/Sairawx




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Interview: Robert Ellis

BY OMAR AFRA
PHOTO BY BRANDON HOLLEY

IT SEEMS LIKE YOU CAN'T TURN YOUR HEAD these days without hearing something about Robert Ellis. Having built a loyal fan base and strong reputation as a songwriter in just a couple of years, Ellis is lauded and coveted by many. Fresh off the heels of his new record Photographs and after months of touring, Ellis gave us a few minutes of his VERY precious time to answer a few questions. We are so fucking honored this arrogant prick answered our calls.

In terms of approach and protocol, how did the recording process of your shitty new album Photographs compare to your crappy first album The Great Rearranger?

Well I did the first record mostly by myself. It was my first try kinda thing you know, you can't always hit the mark. The second record is also a learning experience for me. This time I had the band with me on at least half of it. Our combined inexperience at making records really shines through on side B. I guess I figure if I throw enough shit (music) against the wall some of it will stick (not suck) eventually?

THERE IS SUCH A STARK DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE STRIPPED DOWN ACOUSTIC TUNES ON THIS ALBUM AND THE FULL-BAND COUNTRY NOSTALGIA. DO YOU EVER HAVE TROUBLE SHIFTING GEARS BETWEEN THE TWO?

At live shows I try and just read the room. There is a venue for the acoustic stuff and a venue for the loud. Every once in a while you get a listening audience that just wants to hear your songs and isn't so concerned with volume or aesthetics. Those are the best but unfortunately few and far between. I try and make it easy on myself now. Just get a feel for where the room wants to go and do my best to take them there.

YOU HAVE DONE QUITE A BIT OF TOURING IN RECENT MONTHS. WHAT DOES THIS DO TO THE SONGWRITING PROCESS?

It has actually been helping me out a lot. Because of the more tedious aspects of putting out a record I haven't been able to focus on the writing side for a while. Touring is giving me the time and space to do it. I also feel like all the experiences are giving me material to write about and giving me new perspectives I haven't had before on all kinds of things. The most recent song I'm working on is actually about touring, and struggling with being married and having to travel and leave home so much.

HOW MANY TIMES A DAY DO YOU RUB ONE OUT WHILE ON TOUR? GEOFFREY?

That depends on a number of variables. Usually by the end of the first week we all have our tour goggles on and the combined testosterone of the band will manifest itself in all kinds of interesting conversations and some group internet btrowsing. I can't speak for everyone but my personal requirements for a venue are:

1. Cleanliness-You don't want to have to crank one out in a Waffle House bathroom unless it's absolutely necessary.

2. Timing-when we are all sharing a van/hotel timing is everything. When everyone wakes up and goes to get coffee its usually good to stay home and "send some emails" this gives you the 30 second window you need to take care of business without anyone being the wiser.

Besides the obvious George Jones and George Michaels, which other Georges have influenced your recent compositions?

George Washington was a great American and a patriot with wooden teeth. I admire that.

BUT SERIOUSLY, IS IT A COINCIDENCE THAT THE WORD 'POSER' IS INSIDE THE WORD 'COMPOSER'?

No.

WHY DID YOU STOP DOING WHISKEY WEDNESDAYS? IS IT TRUE THAT OMAR AFRA PAID YOU IN NORTH KOREAN CURRENCY?

We stopped doing Whiskey Wednesdays because of a dispute with the management. Omar Afra (Free Press editor and Summer Fest dude) also booked us at Fitzgerald's. His constant phone calls, emails, and song requests were already wearing thin on me early this fall. But one night in December he calls me up, drunk out of his mind and in a raspy holler says he wants to meet at Fitz, now. I show up and he has cocaine. Only enough for the two of us he says. But when we get into the bathroom he produces from his shirt pocket a tiny bag of what smells like laundry detergent and an old rusty key. I was feeling adventurous so took a little toot. Next thing I know I'm naked in the Free Press office bathroom surrounded by Omar Afra, Tim Dorsey, and Shelby Hohl. Black metal is blasting from Shelby's computer and the three of them are in a heated argument about religion/politics/alien conspiracies. It was then and there that I decided to turn my life around and get my shit together. So we had to quit playing Fitz for a bit. Probably gonna pick it up again when we aren't so busy and I go into relapse.

IS IT TRUE YOU ARE BECOMING ALL SELF IMPORTANT AND BIG-HEADED?

Absolutely. I mean, I'm doing this interview from a fucking laptop on an airplane in first class drinking dirty martinis and going somewhere totally sweet. Why, are people saying that?

WHERE DO YOU SEE ROBERT ELLIS IN 5 YEARS: PLAYING BROWN EYED GIRL AT THE HOLIDAY INN OR THUNDER ROLLS AT WILD WEST?

If I make it 5 more years I see myself wasting away in Margaritaville eating a damn cheeseburger in paradise.

FILL IN THE BLANKS: ROBERT ELLIS PLAYS MUSIC BECAUSE _____.

That's how you make mad money and get them sweet chicks. FPH



'Hollywood' Ellis strikes his angriest pose.
Robert Ellis releases his new album at Fitzgerald's July 6



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The Calling

New Consoles & New Game-Experiences



From Dust



Journey

videogames

BY TYLER BARBER

SUMMER, BEING THE NOT-SO-GREAT SEASON for blockbuster videogame releases, does manage to satiate gamers' appetites with a two-pronged attack: 1) the excitement of the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3), and 2) the bevy of downloadable games released on Xbox Live Arcade and the PlayStation Network (I couldn't give a shit about anything Nintendo, so you won't hear any news on that front here).

The calm E3 before the storm

So, Nintendo announced a brand-new console. (Okay, I lied about the Nintendo part – I mention it only because this info is necessary to convey the gravity of what is actually noteworthy.) What's interesting about the Nintendo angle is that its new console, Wii U, is aimed at recapturing the "hardcore" gamer. While the Wii U's exact hardware is still a mystery, we do know that it will be comparable, in horsepower, to Sony's current console, PlayStation 3. That's all well and good, but what happens in Fall 2012, when Microsoft drops a brand-new, cutting-edge gaming machine? (My sources estimate Sony's "Playstation 4" will drop around Spring 2013.) Rumor has it that both Microsoft and Sony will announce their new line of consoles at next year's E3 (early June).

Regarding the performance of these next two big-hitters (the name "PS4" seems obvious for Sony, but the name of Microsoft's next console is anyone's guess... Xbox 720?), I'd imagine the new consoles will be just about as good, or maybe a bit better, than a current top-of-the-line PC gaming rig. That means that a stupidly-gorgeous-looking Battlefield 3 will probably run in full glory on the new line of consoles.

The biggest surprise for me out of this rumour, which is gaining more ground in gaming circles, is that Microsoft will release their next Box next year. Halo 4 was announced at this E3, and I was pretty much given an affirmative that it will be the major launch title for Microsoft's new console. But 360 owners shouldn't fret, my gut feeling is that this time around, they won't outright kill their previous console to benefit their new one – like they did with the first Xbox. Exciting news indeed.

The games you can play now, or soon at least

Previous Summers have delivered some of the most innovative, fun, addictive, and (most importantly) cheap games. Braid, Trials HD, Geometry Wars, Shadow Complex, flOwer, PixelJunk Shooter, and Limbo were all amazing, must-play games of this generation, and this Summer will surely add some titles to that list.

If you're interested in new games out now, Trenched is one that seems tailor-made to my special nerd preferences. It's got tower defense, third-person-shooting, mechs(!!!), mech-customization, an insanely deep cache of guns and turrets for your mech, and what has captured the meme-verse of the internet: analog salutes. Oh, and it's made by Tim Schafer's studio, Double-Fine, so it also has perfectly-tuned humor and creativity. A must-play if anything in the list above piqued your nerd-boner.

Summer is the perfect time of year to release arty-games, a rising trend which yields more and more downloadable games every year. This year From Dust and Journey are stepping up in this category. From Dust has a special place in my heart, as its from the creator of my favorite-game-of-all-time: Out of this World. To boot, gameplay revolves around one of my favorite subjects, geology! With creator Eric Chahi's artistic touch, players guide worshiping villagers to their holy destinations via the Earth's geologic processes. The prevailing sentiment is that this game shouldn't look as good as it does.

Journey also has a pedigree developer. From the creators of flOw and flOwer, Journey is an experimental multiplayer game where you wonder the dessert towards a far-distant mountain, and along the way you encounter unnamed and mute players from around the world. You can help each other, but you cannot communicate, so it will be interesting to see how this existential gameplay will turn out. The draw here (as always with developers thatgamecompany) is the unique touch on the art and sound of the game. While flOw's aesthetic was very basic-but-elegant, flOwer expanded on the visual real estate by adding fully realized 3D environments. With even more time, and even more of a budget, I'm sure Journey will take it a step further. **FPH**

SUPER HAPPY FUN LAND

UPCOMING SHOWS IN JULY

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4th: SHFL BBQ with Beans, "Downer"

6th: Griefhound

8th: Greg Babineaux Art Opening @ 7pm-9pm, Alps (Australia), Terrence McManus, Rapeworm

9th: Squirt Gun Warriors, Equiliberation

15th: The Illegal Wiretaps, Days n' Daze, Ghostbeard

19th: MAMMOX, The Child Forgives and Creates

20th: Alexis V.O., Duckmandu

21st: Eli James, ChangoMan, Guy Schwartz & The New Jack Hippies

22nd: The Slow Poisoner, Rob Rippa, Clockpole Muzak John, Will Schorre, GMILF Defibrillator

23rd: The Braggart Family SideCircus

24th: The Reaction, The Mydolls

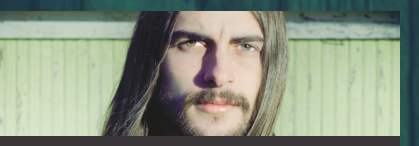
27th: Daniel Bachman & Ryley Walker, (MC)2, Veedon Fleece

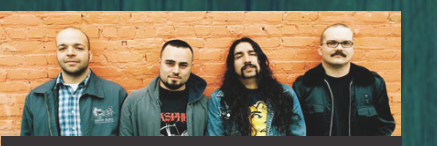
28th: JUNGLENOIZE, Peloton, Jody Seabody & the Whirls, Nikkhoo & Bioluminairies, Jon Black

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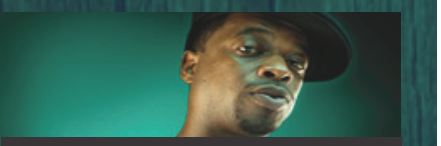
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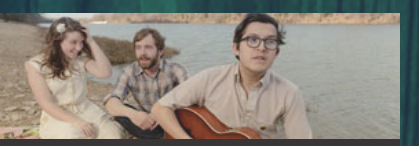
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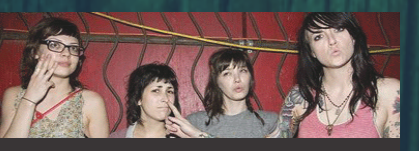

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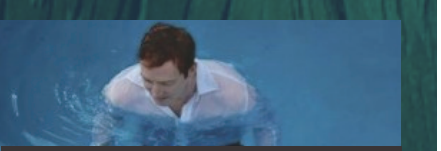

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Mary's Mural Returns

Is Montrose still the 'gay-borhood'?

BY ALEX WUKMAN

After almost two years of waiting, and a week of work, it was time to pop the champagne. Moments after the final brushstroke had been added Cody Ledvina, one of the founders of The Joana gallery, hopped up on a parking divider in front of the mural holding a bottle of champagne.



SWEAT BEADS FROM HIS MOP of curly hair as Ledvina thanks the dozens of volunteers and community members who, over the course of four days, came out to help recreate the famous mural that adorned the wall of Mary's...Naturally, Houston's iconic gay bar. Ledvina calls the original painting a masterpiece and tells the 15 to 20 friends of The Joana that helped out that a simple sign will be placed next to the mural for the upcoming pride parade to let everyone know who worked on it.

Mary's, as it was commonly known, wasn't the first gay bar in Houston but by the time it closed it's doors for the last time in 2009 it had become the most famous. Part of that fame came from the fact that Mary's opened as a gay bar in 1972 and stayed as one for nearly 40 years. Another part of Mary's fame came from the synchronicity of it's opening. From the time Montrose was first platted as a streetcar suburb in 1911 through both World Wars, the Eisenhower years and the Kennedy Administration Montrose was known more for its ease of access to downtown, master planned streets and proximity to Buffs field, later Colt Stadium and the Astrodome, than it was for rainbows and pink triangles.

Depending on what you read or who you talk to Montrose's history as a gay community either started in the 1970s or has been here since the area was founded. Ray Hill told the Houston Press earlier this year that even during the mid-to-late 1960s most of Houston's gay bars were found in Downtown, and what is now called Midtown. However, a 1973 article from Texas Monthly estimated that two-thirds of Houston's 30 or 40 gay bars were located in the Montrose and at least one of those had been open since 1967.

Hill went on to say that, in his experience, the gay community found out about Montrose by going to a 24 hour restaurant called Art Wren after the gay clubs closed. According to a post on a Waltrip High School class of 1965 forum by a user with the name Lindy Clarke Hall, Art Wren was, essentially, the House of Pie's of the mid-1960s. "Art Wren's was a melting pot of the Montrose and Heights folks...we had the gays, the bikers, the artists and ordinary semi-hippie people, like me, that just happened to be night-owls." Hall goes on to describe how the dsiparate crowds were respectful of each other and that "it was kinda sweet seeing the bikers being friendly with gays and everyone."

Trying to determine exactly when Montrose became gay is a classic chicken and the egg problem; what can be determined is the economic impact homosexuality had on the area. Hill described homosexuals as shock troops of gentrification saying that when they moved in and began rehabbing the area it started attracting others. In the same 1973 Texas Monthly article Joe Anthony, the original owner of Mary's, described the financial impact Houston's gay community was having on Montrose by stating that "the area is going to grow around the gay community and businessmen have to accept us because if they [don't], [they'll] be out of business." Despite Anthony's forward thinking comments, he wouldn't remain in the gay club business for much longer. In 1974 Mary's was purchased by Jim "Fanny" Farmer, a man who's name would become synonymous with the bar, even decades later. Farmer's purchase of Mary's was one of those right-man-at-the-right-time moments that are the stuff of legend. He gave Mary's what other gay bars in the area lacked, an identity.

The stories that survive from the surviving patrons depict the place, in it's heyday, as a home for the type of anonymous public sex that can be only found in the fantasy world of pornography today. It was common for patrons to pile into darkened bathrooms, be groped trying to cross the bar or get intimate in one of the many secluded areas in Mary's back patio, affectionately known as The Outback. As Cathy Matusow wrote in the 2002 article Zipping Up Mary's the bar was known for having it's own set of rules, one of which made it "illegal" to wear underwear. And newcomers who violated the rule would have their underwear stripped from them and thrown to the rafters, past the trapeze that was normally manned by a naked bartender or patron.

Mary's notoriety spread nationwide throughout the gay community. As San Francisco resident Jamie Rein posted on the Mary's Naturally Closed Facebook page in July 2010, "Mary's is not just Houston LGBT history, it is American LGBT history. I have good memories of dropping into Mary's on my coast-to-coast hitchhiking trips back in the early '70s and '80s. It was known from Boston to San Francisco."

With that notoriety came increased attention and as much fun as the party was, it was the business side of things that was in trouble. By 1978 TABC had revoked Mary's liquor license for, among other things, serving to minors. It's worth mentioning that five years before Mary's had their license pulled Texas had lowered the drinking age to 18, but underage drinking has never been a problem unique to gay bars. Neither has a problem with back taxes, which Mary's also faced.

To secure a second liquor license Farmer had to transfer ownership of the bar, at least on paper, to someone else. He chose Cliff Owens, a man who would go on to steer the bar for much of the next 30 years. As the public health crisis began to sweep through the gay community the role of Mary's began to change, it became a focal point for gay organizing. Hill told the Houston Press that initial organizing for the Kaposi's Sarcoma Foundation, a forerunner to the AIDS Foundation, took place at Mary's in 1980.

As Outhistory.com points out on their History in Houston, 40 years after Stonewall page, "On a Friday night [at Mary's] you could experience your favorite fetish out back, and on Monday you could attend a rally to support AIDS funding." It was the AIDS crisis perhaps more than anything else that made Mary's more somber. Members of the gay community recall that there was a time when Mary's regulars were dieing at a rate of three a month, and that it wasn't unusual for the bar to host a Celebration of Life once a week.

So many patrons were lost, interned or had their ashes scattered in The Outback that the numbers can never be known. However, the Gulf Coast Archive and Museum of GLBT History estimates that as many as 300 people may have been laid to rest at the bar. Among those who chose Mary's as their final resting place was Farmer who was interned at the bar in 1991, along with his beloved German Shepherd.

After Farmer's death he signed over his ownership of the bar to bartenders Gaye Yancey and Terry Smith. Yancey and Owens would go on to the own bar for over a decade after Farmer's passing. After seeing the bar through the bleak days of the early 1990s and the relative calm of the Clinton Administration, Yancey and Owens were hit

with the one-two punch of the post 9/11 economic downturn and the Enron collapse. Around this time Mary's ran into problems with the TABC again, this time for bouncing checks to their distributors, and were forced to close the bar.

However, in early 2003 it looked like a savior had stepped in. Michael Gates the owner of Michael's Outpost, a casual piano bar in a Richmond Ave. strip center that opened in 1993, stepped in to buy the business. Gates' purchase was not seen by everyone as a good thing for the bar.

On the Mary's Naturally Facebook page Cherre Marano wrote that under Gates' management the bar attracted more "street hustlers than "real" clients." Marano's claims about Mary's attracting hustlers are not just the complaints of an old patron dismissing the new clientele. According to a train-hopping street kid who goes by the name Dead Cat, from 2003 to about 2005 it was a fairly common tactic for self-proclaimed-artists, down-on-their-luck bohemians and other hustlers to head to Mary's to try and "score free drinks from the old queens." Dead Cat explained that it also wasn't unusual for male street kids to offer to "go gay-for-pay" with some of Mary's patrons.

It wasn't just street kids and hustlers that developed an affinity for Mary's in the early 2000s. It also came to be known as a way to keep an all-night bender going. Former Houstonian, and noise musician, Eric "Leif" Moore recounted how, in 2003 and 2004, he and the other members of the now-defunct band Locust Ghost would close down a music venue on Friday night, hit an after hours club until dawn and then head to Mary's "for a breakfast beer."

Despite finding new 'patrons' Mary's was still suffering from crippling financial problems, part of which stemmed from the fact that when Gates purchased Mary's he didn't buy the building or the land. When Mary's finally closed its doors in 2009 the Harris County Appraisal District listed the club's value at approximately $2.4 million for the land and $44,000 for the building. And former Mary's employee Janet Mayeaux stated that Gates was paying $5,000 a month in rent on the property. She went on to state that she "typed [the rent checks] until ordered not to."

Despite faltering revenues Mary's soldiered on throughout the boom and bust economy of the 2000s and at least everything remain unchanged on the outside. Until May 2006 when the iconic mural on the wall was painted over. At the time it was painted over conflicting reasons for the removal of the famed bar scene were given; from the City's adoption of a strict new anti-graffiti ordinance to a complaint that the clearly visible erections on two of the bar patrons depicted was considered obscene or vulgar.

Former patrons and employees describe how over the next three years Gates began to withdraw more and more from the bar; a move that patron Scott D. Craig characterized as "irresponsible" and described as "the final stake in the heart of a Houston gay institution." As Gates' alleged withdrawal continued the man-on-man action that went on in the club, and that original artist Scott Swoveland used to decorate the east wall of the bar, was gone. Inside it had been replaced with aging patrons buying drinks for street kids, something that occasional patron Justin Frazier described as "depressing," and outside it had been replaced with innocuous fluffy white clouds.

Frazier, who stated that he could "count on the fingers of one hand" the amount of times he went Mary's, explained that for many younger gay people the club had ceased to be the epicenter of gay culture it once was. "The only time I ever went there was for [Let Us Entertain You] because it was one of the stops and you could smell the desperation in there," said Frazier. He went on to say that the Mary's of later years had not kept pace with the changing demands of the market. "When I used to go out, before I quit drinking, I'd go to South beach for dancing," said Frazier.

Kevin Floyd, who along with Bobby Huegel and various other partners purchased Mary's in early June of this year, seconded Frazier's take on the later years of Mary's. "We're walking that line between preservation and practical application. There are people who want us to open Mary's as what it was, but Mary's didn't have the clientele to support it," said Floyd. He went on to say that, in his opinion, another reason against reopening Mary's is that "the need for that type of bar is gone."

Floyd, is quick to say that he and his partners feel that Mary's, and the mural, played an important role in the history of Montrose and that they have no plans to destroy the building. Ledvina on the other hand is just as quick to point out that the project to recreate the mural is about more than Montrose's gay past. "This mural is a public art masterpiece," says Ledvina. "It's a period piece and it's a little bit ridiculous, but it's by no means vulgar." Ledvina, who received his MFA from UH in 2009, goes on to describe how the mural represents is both a representation of a unique period of Hoston gay culture history and a reflection of values shared by much of the community. "This was a giant fuck you to conservatism," he says.

Ledvina, who went to Mayede High School in Katy ISD, says that the mural was as much as beacon to alienated suburban teenagers as it was to the gay community. "This was the first thing that most of us who moved here from the suburbs saw that let us know we were somewhere different, somewhere special," said Ledvina. Mike Smith, one of Ledvina's collaborators and a fellow refugee from the suburbs, explained that when he was in high school and venturing into Montrose from the suburbs that as "campy" as the mural was, for him at least, it served a different function.

"When you're coming in to the city from the suburbs for the first time it's hard to navigate and the mural was like a landmark. 'Ok I'm two streets past the mural I turn here,'" says Smith. Floyd explains that while the history of the mural is revered by everyone there, the future of the painting is in jeopardy. It, like so much of Montrose, could fall victim to changing tastes. Floyd explains that the building's new owners plan on painting over the mural in a month and using the wall as space for a rotating gallery of street art.

However, the street artists haven't been waiting to receive their invitations. Beneath the mural's bottom edge is a stenciled tyrannosaurous rex by Houston's hottest street artist Coolidge. Ledvina explains that the dinosaur had been painted before The Joana showed up and that they made a small thematic addition to the piece. "We painted the leather daddy hat on Coolidge's T-Rex I don't think he'll mind," said Ledvina.

While the addition to Coolidge's animal hasn't drawn much attention the destruction of an approximatley 10 foot tall wheatpaste by noted Houston artist Dual has. Ledvina explains that none of those working on the mural were responsible for ripping the art or defacing it with, what appears to be, purple house paint. "One of the girls here is friends with Dual and he told her that another one of his pieces in midtown had been damaged in the same way. Looks like there could be some kind of street art turf war brewing," says Ledvina.

As the sun slips behind the marquee of the few-months-old El Real restaurant, formerly Hollywood Video and even more formerly the Tower Theater, the talk turns to gay bars and the need for them. Ledvina, who is heterosexual, cites a recent Daily Show sketch about how the number one gay city is Minneapolis. "It's kind of like that, the new gay is just two guys or two girls. The 'in-you-face' attitude that Mary's had isn't necessary anymore," says Ledvina. He goes on to say that "the acceptance of gay that Mary's fostered has spread" and that, in his opinion, gay people can go to any club in Montrose and feel welcome. In 2002 Ray Hill commented on the death of Mary's by telling Cathy Matusow that at the time he didn't know many people in the closet anymore but "when we started organizing at Mary's in the early '70s, I didn't know any people who weren't in the closet…Mary's is no longer a vehicle for political organization."

Frazier agrees to a point. In a post Annise Parker, post Don't Ask Don't Tell world, and the night before the New York State Legislature voted to legalize gay marriage, Frazier admits that the political activism gay clubs helped create may not be necessary, but they serve another purpose. "Gay clubs are still necessary because that's where gay culture happens," says Frazier. Frazier went on to say that while Montrose is still considered to be the heart of the gay community, it's not where much of the gay community lives.

"A lot of us have been priced out by gentrification and moved to the heights or even outside the loop," says Frazier. "Montrose has become gentrified and bougie." Frazier's comments echo a sentiment expressed almost 40 years earlier by GOP State Senator, and gubernatorial candidate, Henry "Hank" Grover who in 1973 said that "the hippie image of the Montrose is changing because the land values are going up, and the low rent areas are disappearing."

On the afternoon of June 25, with the question of community identity, still fresh in my mind I wandered over to the Pride Parade to see the community response to the recently completed mural. After meandering down Westheimer, past people of all shapes and sizes, I came upon the mural. I expected something between a raging party celebrating the return of this beloved community icon and groups of men and women posing in front of it like theme park tourists. Instead the painting was completely obscured by the pick-up trucks of tailgating families selling bottled water and sodas. **FPH**

Get on your knees for Jesus

Why God Hearts Texas more than the Rest of America

BY AMANDA HART



ACTION ALERT: On August 6th our city will be invaded by religious zealots called here by God himself, Governor Rick Perry, for a day of prayer and fasting at Reliant Arena. Perry has teamed up with two homophobic Anti-Islamic hate groups in an effort to get people on their knees for Jesus. So I say, let's kick them while they're down. Perry created the event for Christians to gather together and beg for God's mercy during these days of turmoil, or in my opinion, to garner support from the religious right during his run for presidency. You see, Perry has repeatedly said he will not seek a higher form of office unless he is called on by God to do so. And I think an arena of whimpering idiots might be just the "calling" needed to toss his hat into the republican ring. I would not be shocked if he announced his candidacy that same day. And with the support of two of the largest Christian non-profits in the nation backing him the whole way, he might just win. And as much as I would love to rid our state of Perry, President is not what I had in mind.This is a political stunt put on by Perry and his goons. Perry even extended the invitation to all Governors. Good bye, separation of church and state. Hello, votes.

They have labeled their cultish meeting 'The Response' and are inviting Christians from all over the nation to join them as they call on Jesus to, "guide us through unprecedented struggles, and thank Him for the blessings of freedom we so richly enjoy according to His grace, mercy, and kindness towards us. A historic crisis facing our nation and threatening our future demands a historic response from the church." According to them God has been playing the favorites game among nations, placing the good old U S of A right at the top. One thing I don't quite understand is how they can make claims about how God has really come through for America but in the same paragraph talk about how, "America is in the midst of a historic crisis. We have been besieged by financial debt, terrorism, and a multitude of natural disasters. The youth of America are in grave peril economically, socially, and, most of all, morally." So which one is it? Are we a blessed country at the top of God's totem pole or are we a country in grave peril? Pick one, you can't have both.

The political motives in all of this are despicable but the worst part is that the event is being funded by the American Family Association (AFA) and the International House of Prayer (IHOP). The Southern Poverty Law Center has flagged both as hate groups. The AFA is well known for their anti gay and Islamic rhetoric. These nut jobs have boycotted numerous businesses and non profits based on their support of the LBGT and Islamic communities. No one is safe from their hate; everyone from Pampers to Hallmark has been targeted by the AFA. In 2005 the AFA boycotted American Girl Dolls based on donations given to the Nonprofit Girls Inc., which helps underprivileged girls and also supports a woman's right to choose and the LBGT community. The AFA also boycotted Hallmark when they began to sell same sex wedding cards. The AFA credited school shootings like the ones at Columbine and Virginia Tech to the banning of prayer in schools and rampant abortions. They even went so far as to make a movie entitled, The Day They Kicked God out of the Schools, in which a student is told by "God" that the shootings occurred because God is angry about being taken out of schools. Founder of AFA, Rev. Donald Wildmon, has publically stated that Jews control the media and that is why anti Christian messages and programming are so readily available. The AFA even took on the Children's movie Shark Tale because they believed that the movie was advocating for the acceptance of Gay lifestyles. Bryan Fischer is the AFA's director of Issue Analysis for Government and Public Policy, blogged that "Permits should not be granted to build even one more mosque in the United States of America, let alone the monstrosity planned for Ground Zero. This is for one simple reason: each Islamic mosque is dedicated to the overthrow of the American government." Paranoid much? IHOP isn't any better, they have openly denounced reproductive rights and homosexuality, supported Uganda's "kill the gays" bill and engaged in "spiritual warfare" against the Supreme Court. Oh yeah, and they are also well known for their extreme views that the Jewish community must "convert to Christianity in order to bring about the return of Jesus Christ to Earth and the End Times." The list could go on and on but I think you get the idea of who is running this show.

Acceptance and tolerance is not on these peoples' to do list. This is why 'The Response' is an open event only open to a certain kind of Christian. A local Christian group, The Houston Clergy Council, wrote an open letter to Perry stating, "As clergy leaders in the nation's fourth largest city, we take pride in Houston's vibrant and diverse religious landscape. Our religious communities include Bahais, Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, Unitarian Universalists, and many other faith traditions. Our city is also home to committed agnostics and atheists, with whom we share common cause as fellow Houstonians. It troubles us that the governor's prayer event is not open to everyone. In the publicized materials, the governor has made it clear that only Christians of a particular kind are welcome to pray in a certain way. We feel that such an exclusive event does not reflect the rich tapestry of our city." Amen.

The AFA is always issuing action alerts when they take issue with certain companies, events and groups so I say we do the same and gather outside this fear mongering event and "pray" that "God" reveal to them his teachings of love and acceptance. Or we could just give them the finger when they approach the arena. This is our city and I refuse to be ambushed by bigoted asshats who hide behind the mask of God. **FPH**

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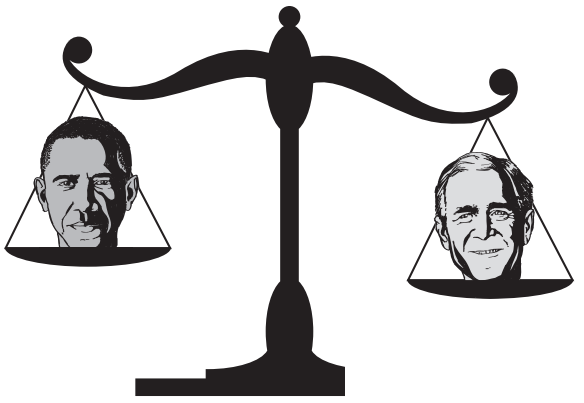
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It's Really Hard to Tell

Obama, Still Better Than Bush?

BY ANDREW LEVINE

A GULLIBLE PORTION of the electorate here in the Homeland and a gullible slice of the entire world expected a great deal from Barack Obama. But anyone who paid close attention to his run for the White House, and who managed not to succumb to the promise of hope that radiated out from the Rorschach figure Obama then was, expected nothing more than a Clintonite Restoration with cosmetic changes.

Still, even those of us with expectations as low as that thought it obvious that an Obama administration would be a vast improvement over what we had endured for the preceding eight years. And, once the Democratic field narrowed to a choice between Obama and Hillary Clinton, there was ample reason to prefer that the nomination go to him. He seemed less inclined to make fast and loose with soldiers and bombs, and less unfriendly than she would be towards what remains of the affirmative state generations of Democrats helped fashion and that her husband did so much to undo.

Still, no matter how low the expectations, it did not take long for disappointment to set in. For me, it began the day Obama made Joe Biden his running mate. It's not that Biden's politics is worse than other Democrats'; it's that this purported foreign policy wise man has no idea how clueless he is about the world or how off his enthusiasms and animosities are. Even after the election, I, along with other Obama skeptics, would still, in moments of weakness, let myself think that great things might happen yet; that Obama was only being god-fatherly with his appointments, keeping his friends close and his enemies closer. That was, after all, the conventional wisdom among liberal pundits, and the will to believe is strong.

But the illusion became harder to maintain as Inauguration Day approached – with Timothy Geithner, Lawrence Summers and other Wall Street toadies slated to manage economic policy, Hillary Clinton chosen to be Secretary of State, and George Bush's Defense Secretary, Robert Gates, kept on to run Bush's wars. It was in that period too that it became clear that, under Obama, there would be no settling of accounts with the historical crimes of the Bush era. As if that wasn't enough to cause despair, Obama's silence on Operation Cast Lead, the Israeli assault on Gaza, was deafening.

Then, for a while, it looked like the situation Bush and Cheney handed over to the fledgling President was so desperate that common sense would prevail, forcing him to act in the ways his supporters expected he would. He resisted the pressure. By the time Rahm Emanuel made it clear that the administration would scuttle the "public option" to get its milquetoast health care (actually, insurance reform) bill passed, all one could say in Obama's behalf is that, no matter how disappointing he might be, at least he was better than Bush.

How could that not be right? Anybody would be better than Bush! It is therefore telling that one rarely hears that faint praise these days – and not just because memories of Bush's awfulness have faded. It isn't said much anymore because it has come to seem less obviously true. Nowadays, what one hears instead is just that Obama is better than the loonies running for the Republican nomination.

That claim is unassailable. But it doesn't speak to the question at hand: whether Obama is still better than Bush. On election day 2012, it may become relevant – especially to voters living in states whose electoral votes are up for grabs -- that the Republican candidate is worse, probably much worse, than Obama could ever be. But that has nothing to do with what is an urgent task now: coming to a clear understanding of what the Obama presidency has been about, and what its trajectory is likely to be.

Because circumstances change and because each president is awful in his own way, comparing presidents is, as a rule, a fatuous exercise, fit only for TV pundits and pop historians. But, in this case, the time frame is narrow enough and the circumstances similar enough that a comparison can be instructive. In that spirit, I would venture that George W. Bush's first administration, from the weeks following 9/11 until the 2004 presidential campaign got underway, was exceptionally awful in every respect. If that is the point of reference, it would be hard for Obama, or anyone else, not to be better than Bush.

But if we focus instead on Bush's second term, and especially on the years after the 2006 election, it's not at all clear that Obama has been a better president. Indeed, one could make a case that, style apart, the Obama administration has continued along the lines its predecessor established. To the extent this is so, it would follow that his administration has not improved upon what came before it except, at most, in superficial ways. Lately, some erstwhile Obama supporters have even suggested that, in key respects, the Obama administration has been worse than Bush's – especially on environmental matters and on a host of issues pertaining to the rule of law.

For some diehard Obamaphiles, Libya was the last straw. This latest war of choice, in no way attributable to Bush, is a blatant imperialist venture, undertaken on a disingenuous pretext that fell apart almost from Day One. Intended, supposedly, to save civilian lives, the US/NATO bombing has unleashed a civil war. Libya also exposes what Obama's vaunted "multilateralism" amounts to: empowerment of right-wing politicians from the "old" Europe – miscreants like David Cameron and Nicolas Sarkozy -- keen on reviving the bad old days.

But the main problem with this latest war is that the way Obama launched it is in plain violation not just of the War Powers Act but also of Article 1, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution; and that he did it that way not because Congress wouldn't have gone along, but so that in the future he could claim that, as Commander-in-Chief, he has the right to launch drones and drop bombs more or less as he pleases; Congress be damned. We now know that his top lawyers told him that this was illegal, as it plainly is. He did it anyway, finding lower-level lawyers who told him what he wanted to hear.

At least Bush and Cheney did not deliberately not ask Congress to authorize their wars. If only for this reason, Obama, the peace candidate and Nobel laureate, is certainly no better than his predecessor on questions of executive power. Arguably, he is worse.

Because there is likely to be movement on this front in the near future, it is worth noting an area in which Obama's defenders can fairly say that he is is indeed better than Bush, though only slightly.

He is better on gay politics. Until recently, one could not have said that. For almost two years, Obama neglected gay issues as much as he did the concerns of the rest of his base. But then, when he and his advisors thought it expedient to shore up liberal support, he finally "nudged" Congress to repeal "don't ask, don't tell." He also declared that his administration would no longer defend the Defense of Marriage Act in the courts, though it will continue to enforce it. These are small moves in the right direction; they advance equality. But note, first, that Obama never leads, he only follows when it is plain that the public has his back; and note too that these issues are ones that "progressives" should feel ambivalent about supporting.

It is fair to say that one reason why Obama threw this sop to his base is that the radicalism that once animated the struggle for gay liberation has gone missing. Advancing equality is a good thing of course, but should progressives militate in favor of measures that aid military recruiting and retention? And shouldn't they be proposing civil unions, not marriage, for all?

The issue is not or should not be about "marriage," the word. It is about how the institution the word designates is understood by proponents of gay marriage today. Their understanding, like the understanding of their adversaries, offends the separation of church and state. That principle was important at the time of the founding of the republic and it is important now as theocratic currents swell around us. This is why progressives should fight to keep religion out of our political and civil affairs. But by seeking to advance equality in the way proponents of gay marriage do, they implicitly legitimate its presence.

Needless to say, if, for any reason, people want clerics involved in validating their relationships, that is their business and they should be free to do as they please. But the state's interest is limited to the civil aspects of marriage (or civil union). It therefore has

no business allowing clerics to confer the rights that marriage (or civil union) entails; the state alone should regulate the institution. Unfortunately, this rather obvious and far from radical point has not registered much lately in the struggle for equality. Proponents of gay marriage don't want to change the institution; they only want same-sex couples brought into it.

The comforting conservatism of gay activists, along with the fact that gay issues don't materially affect the interests of the corporations or wealthy individuals Obama courts, makes it possible for him to overcome the disabling (and largely unrequited) "bipartisanship" that usually governs his political maneuvering, especially when, as in this case, substantial majorities are on board. And so Obama has and likely will again "give" something to this part of his base, to the great approbation of his otherwise taken for granted supporters. Bush had to deal with a far more retrograde – and intolerant – base. That, more than anything else, explains why, in this respect at least, Obama is better than Bush.

However, it seems that, in general, Bush at least believed in what he did; he didn't know better. It is hard to think the same of someone of Obama's intelligence, education and experience of the world. And although there was nothing in the record, beyond "paling around with terrorists," that his enemies could use against him in 2008, there was enough to suggest to those who were determined to think well of him that Obama's views, however compromised, were at least reasonable and humane. Yet, on almost every front, he has taken up where Bush left off. Bush was a simpleton – morally and intellectually. Obama is a knave. One needn't be an old-fashioned moralist to think knavery worse.

But that is a moral reproach, and the question posed at the outset is about politics, not ethics. It does not call for passing judgment on the man so much as for reflecting on how much better or worse it is having Obama, rather than Bush, in office. To address that question properly, we need to take into account not just the effects of the Obama presidency on the interests of his core constituencies, but also on their capacity to work for "change." From that vantage point, it doesn't look good for Obama.

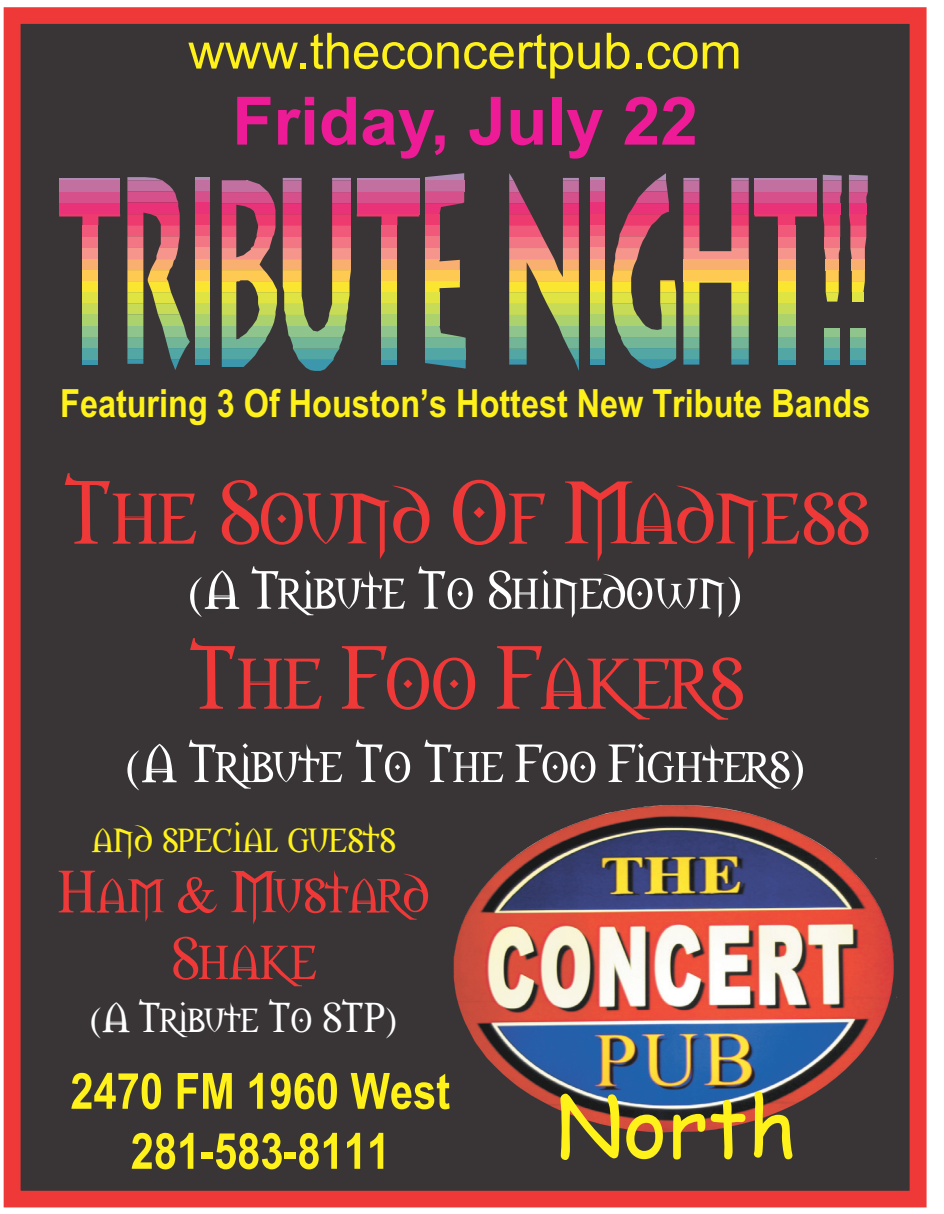
We have wars aplenty – in Iraq and Afghanistan, in Libya, and with varying degrees of openness and intensity in Yemen, Somalia and Pakistan and who knows where else. Yet we have no peace movement to speak of, not even to the extent we did in 2006. Wall street continues to bring ruin to the bottom 98 per cent of the population, but there is no opposition strong enough to stop the predators in their tracks. Our government has given the nuclear industry license to play Russian roulette with the future of the planet, and the opposition has largely acquiesced. The administration's other energy policies are outrageous too, and its heedlessness of urgent environmental concerns is staggering. Worst of all, organized labor is more on the ropes than ever, despite overwhelming popular support for unions and union rights. In these and other ways, there is, as Brecht said of pre-War Germany, only injustice and no resistance.

It would be different if Bush were still in charge. No matter how cowardly Democrats are and no matter how servile corporate media may be, there would be more resistance than there now is, just as there was before Obama became President. Obama rode liberal discontent into the White House and then, deliberately or not, he put the fire out of liberal bellies. That's what disappointment and disillusion does when the potential opposition is riddled with people determined to keep on cutting the man endless slack.

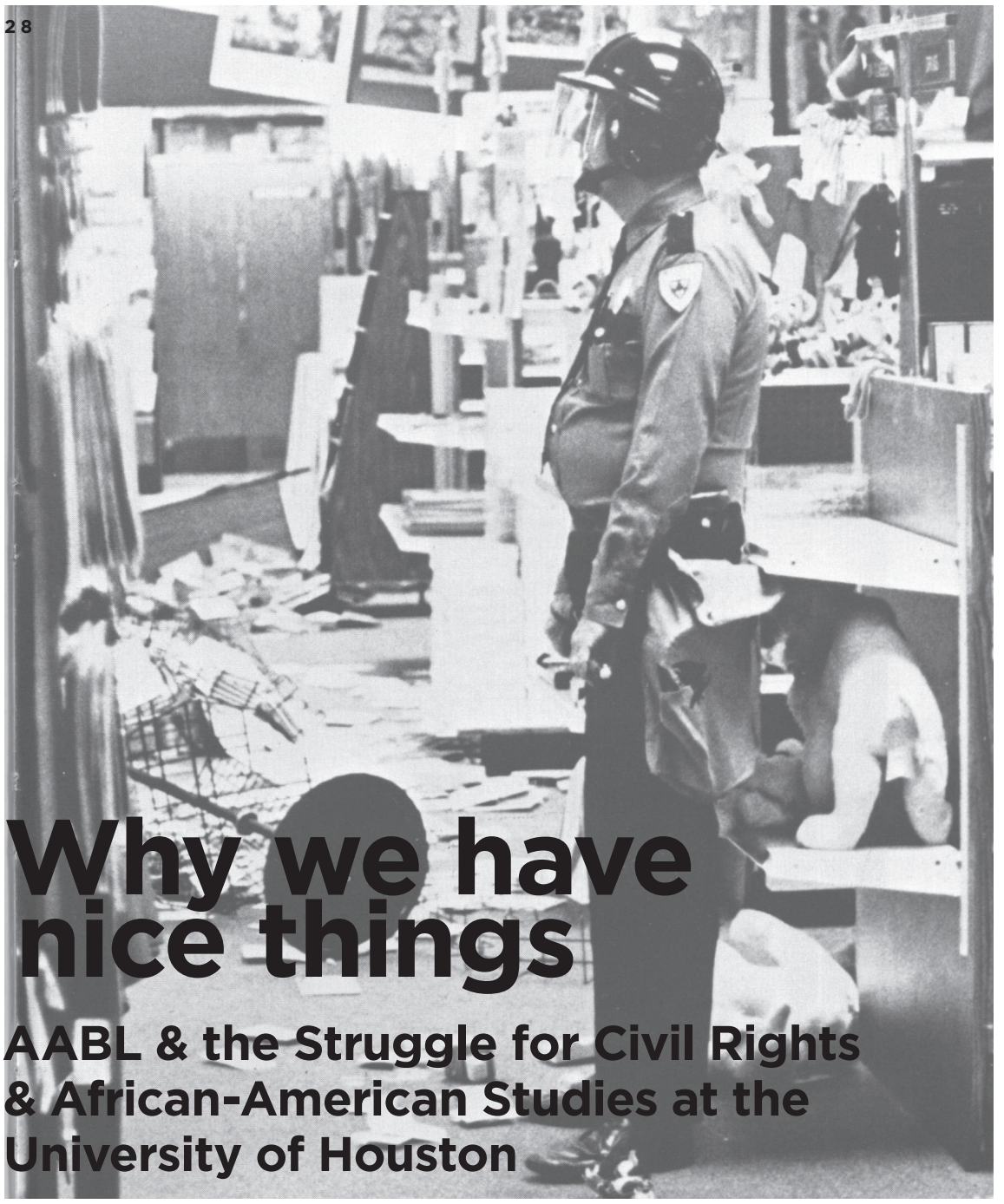
Part of the reason for their debilitating passivity is fear of the Tea Party/Republican alternative, a fear stoked relentlessly by Obama apologists and Democratic Party cheerleaders. But fear-mongering is a two-edged sword. At the same time that it encourages standing by the devil we know, it also makes plain how pitiful Obama's opposition in the 2012 election will likely be. That awareness can undo the caution that currently afflicts the political scene.

Yes, the economy is in poor shape and Obama is widely (and correctly) thought to be partly to blame. And, yes, for an incumbent, that should be a cause for concern. But perhaps not so much when, as in Margaret Thatcher's expression, there is no (remotely plausible) alternative. This is why conditions are ripe for forcing change upon the powers that be. But it isn't happening with the intensity it should. Indeed, the most fervent resistance these days is coming from the right, which opposes Obama for all the wrong reasons. How pathetic is that! And how urgent that it change!

Is Obama still better than Bush? The bar is so low that the answer may still be Yes. But it's looking increasingly like maybe not. And it is becoming plainer still that being better than Bush isn't all that it was cracked up to be. **FPH**







Why we have nice things

AABL & the Struggle for Civil Rights & African-American Studies at the University of Houston

BY ROBINSON BLOCK

THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON (UH) is celebrated today as one of the most diverse research institutions in the nation. It also has one of the oldest African American Studies programs in the country. Located at the edge of the predominantly African American Third Ward, the university's student body today is thirteen percent African American and more than fifty percent students of color. The transition the UH has made from its foundation as an exclusively white university, to becoming a diverse school with ethnic studies programs, owes a great deal of credit to the trailblazing work of the Afro-Americans for Black Liberation student organization. Know as AABL (pronounced "able"), this group of students created and organized around a list of grievances in the spring of 1969 that led to rapid and profound changes for students of color at UH.

Initially, black students had a hard time at UH where they remained a small minority throughout the 1960s. Although classes had become integrated, most student groups remained segregated, and few restaurants would seat black students. Quality student housing near campus was also very difficult to find. By the late sixties, black students began staging sit-ins against segregation at Woolworth's lunch counters in Houston.

Several national social movements of the late 1960s influenced the events at UH. The civil rights movement had mobilized youth from the North and South to oppose Jim Crow, and the Black Power movement was growing. These movements had taken root in Houston as well, and conflicts inevitably followed. Students at TSU supported Friends of SNCC. In 1967, the Houston Police Department raided the campus, culminating in the arrest of the "TSU Five," only after a firefight in which a police officer was killed, most likely by a fellow police officer's bullet. In 1968, black student activist Lee Otis Johnson was railroaded into prison, sentenced to thirty years for handing a marijuana cigarette to an undercover police officer.

Other social movements gained ground at UH, lending their support to AABL, including a chapter of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), which was extremely radical in 1969. The Mexican American Youth Organization and the League of Mexican American Students supported AABL's goals, specifically the creation of ethnic studies programs. Some voiced fears, however, that if African American students won black faculty or an African American studies program, Mexican American students might lose hope for similar advancement.2

AABL was founded initially as the Committee on Better Race Relations (COBRR) in spring 1967. Following a visit by Stokely Carmichael in 1968, COBRR changed its name to Afro Americans for Black Liberation to reflect a changing consciousness, an acceptance of Black Power politics, and participation in the national and international struggle of African and other oppressed peoples for human rights, economic rights, and self-determination.3 AABL bridged the gap between the civil rights movement and black liberation, and, in fact, maintained strong ties to established civil rights organizations in Houston and Texas.

AABL was active as a social as well as a political organization. AABL fielded an intramural football team, created and raised money for a scholarship for black students in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and tutored youth in Houston's Third Ward. The unlikely election victory of AABL leader Lynn Eusan as the first African American homecoming queen at UH in 1968 put the group on the map. Eusan and other contemporary accounts conclude that many whites voted for her in order to counter the ascendency and exclusivity of the white Greek system, and that their success was the start of AABL activities in other areas of student life. 4 Eusan made national news, was featured in Ebony magazine and several newspapers, and earned AABL a good deal of respect from the black community in Houston.

The endeavor that caused the biggest stir and has left AABL's greatest legacy came out of the creation of a list of demands they devised and, flanked by seventy-five student supporters, presented to UH President Philip Hoffman on February 7, 1969. Ester King, a student at Texas Southern University, worked closely with the leadership of AABL. He explains their twofold strategy: "Certainly you wanted to get to a point where you could get those demands met, which was gonna take some negotiation . . . but the primary reason for all that was to heighten awareness to create tension on the campuses to get attention of other students."5

AABL saw the university as reluctant to take action to eliminate racism or modify policies that had negative social impacts on black students. "Through our eyepiece, we see the university imitating the racist society at large, Black students are the victims of 'refined racism.' Plainly stated, we feel that the University of Houston is a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant institution. . . . We as Black people struggling for survival in a racist country must exercise control over political, economic, social, spiritual, and physical aspects of our lives."6

AABL demanded that the university create a Department of Afro-American Studies, hire more black university faculty and staff, recruit and admit more black students, and provide expanded financial aid and adequate housing for black students, improve conditions for black athletes, tackle racist practices in grading and instruction, establish a Black Student Union, award credit for black students doing community work, and raise the wage scale of the school's service workers.7

President Hoffman took these demands seriously. His files show that the day after receiving AABL's demands, the vice president of staff services responded with a written appraisal of the costs involved in raising the wages of service workers on campus. Staff services supported some raises but calculated that it would cost more than $100,000 to raise the wages of all employees to $2.00 per hour.

President Hoffman facilitated a good deal of research about AABL's demands, and issued a point-by-point reply on February 14, 1969.8 He read the document in its entirety at a meeting of AABL and then left the meeting without taking any questions. The statement struck a very conciliatory tone. Hoffman answered "no" to only a couple of the demands: the creation of a university funded Black Student Union, under the justification that the only government funded student organization was the existing Student Association; and a minimum admission percentage for black students or a designation of financial aid resources exclusively for black students, based on a rejection of any type of quota system.

At the same time, Hoffman did not answer "yes" to any of the demands. Hoffman offered to create a task force of students, faculty, and administrators to review several grievances, including the creation of an Afro-American Studies Department, and the predica-

ment of black athletes. He proposed that many of the demands put forth in the AABL list could be dealt with by existing or newly created institutions and bureaucracies. For example, the newly formed University Student Assistance Committee could handle faculty grading practices. Also, Hoffman agreed to ask the University Council and Academic Deans to secure more minority faculty.

Hoffman also announced plans to take action on some of the points, including filing a complaint with the Federal Housing Authority over the racist practices of landlords of properties near the university, the creation of a recruitment committee, publication of promotional materials to distribute to high schools that discuss financial aid, and possibly modifying admissions criteria with the goal of allowing more black students admission to UH. The president of UH also supported the creation of a program to give credit to students who do work in the black "ghetto" community.

President Hoffman found himself in the delicate position of trying to resolve the demands of black students on his campus with the concerns of many faculty and alumni who remained hostile to AABL and other Black Power movements of the times. Hoffman's archive contains correspondence from numerous people, some alumni, some seemingly completely unconnected to Houston in any way, who encouraged him not to surrender to the demands of "communist" and "negro" students. In particular, letters expressing concern from executive officers at the Continental Carbon Company, a continuing donor of funds to the university, must have given Hoffman pause.9

The student government system at UH had to address AABL's political demands and mobilizations, particularly as student elections happened at the same time. Independent John Sayer, campaigning for president, supported AABL and attended their demonstrations. His opponent, Bob Ulmer of the Representative Government Party, advocated "law and order," and Ulmer's election signs contained slogans such as "VOTE for RESPONSIBILITY and against DISRUPTION" with images of confrontations between police and students at other universities. Sayer, who ended up losing the election, wrote a letter to the editor of the Daily Cougar on March 20, 1969, explaining his position: "You who criticize so loudly should remember that the black people on this campus have been asking quietly through the regular channels for a long time, but they never got attention until they made a 'demand.'"10

Other white students and white organizations supported AABL's demands. In a period of four hours, a group called Students for the Eradication of Racial Injustice gathered 350 signatures of white students, and then delivered the petition to the Board of Regents, city officials, and local media.11

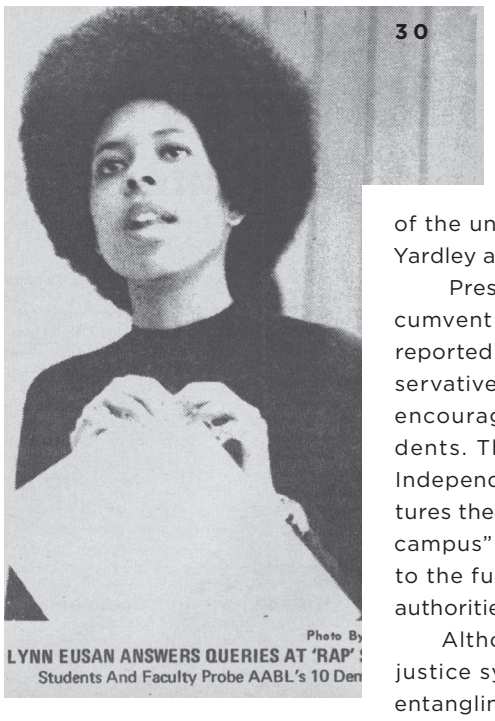
The campaign gained a new urgency and visibility as tensions at UH exploded on March 17, 1969. When Gene Locke arrived on campus that morning, three white students attacked him. By one o'clock, students rallied to protest the attack and marched to the UH Safety and Security Office to demand immediate action. According to the university's press release: "At approximately 1:40 p.m. some of the students, both white and black (estimates vary from twenty-five to forty) left the Safety and Security Office and went to the Cougar Den where a disruption took place. The students overturned tables and chairs, broke dishes, destroyed food, and broke out four glass windows. Upon dispersing from the Den at the urging of Gene Locke and Dwight Allen, a smaller number (ten to twelve) broke into the bookstore and damaged property. No one was seriously injured in the incidents and the extent of property damaged was estimated at $2,000."12

In the weeks following, the police failed to find the men who assaulted Locke. The students involved in the resulting unrest expected to face charges at the University Student Court, as prescribed by the Student Life Policy. Instead, on April 7, 1969, arrest warrants were issued for twelve UH students and three non-students at the request of the Harris County District Attorney, charging them with crimes relating to the property damage in the University Center. The students—including Gene Locke, Dwight Allen, Deloyd Parker, TSU student Ester King, and Doug Bernhardt, a white UH student and member of SDS—became known as the UH Fourteen. (The numerical discrepancy between those initially arrested and those facing charges is never made clear.)

AABL and their allies regarded the cooperation between UH administrators and the District Attorney's office as a violation of trust between the university and the student activists. Dwight Allen spoke to the Daily Cougar about the charges, "Dean Yardley told Gene Locke and myself that the matter would be within the confines






Photo By
LYNN EUSAN ANSWERS QUERIES AT 'RAP'
Students And Faculty Probe AABL's 10 Dem

of the university, and Dr. Hoffman sat right across the table from Yardley and agreed."13

President Hoffman must have felt considerable pressure to circumvent the Student Court. The March 17, 1969, events had been reported in the Houston Post, which drew much attention from conservative alumni and citizens, many of whom wrote to Hoffman to encourage him to take harsh disciplinary action against the students. The conservative student organization Young American Independents boasted of delivering a petition of over 2,000 signatures the day after the "mini-riot," in "support of non-disruption on campus" and demanding "to prosecute those rioters or disrupters to the full extent of the law and to cooperate fully with all police authorities."14

Although it was common practice across the country for the justice system to obstruct the activities of social movements by entangling its leaders in the court system, AABL used the charges against the UH Fourteen as a platform to campaign both for their acquittal and to continue building momentum for their demands on the university. AABL and its allies on campus formed a "Majority Coalition," which hosted rallies and facilitated other events. Previously hostile Student Government president Bob Ulmer spoke at a rally April 23, 1969, to condemn the lack of transparency in administration-student relations. In the community, AABL earned significant public support from the civil rights movement. On May 18, AABL held a rally in Emancipation Park in support of the UH Fourteen with speakers from the NAACP, Hope Development, and several black churches.15

Harris County D.A., Carol Vance, took the prosecutions of black activists very seriously: he personally prosecuted Charles Freeman of the TSU Five (charges were dismissed following a hung jury) and went on to prosecute Gene Locke and Dwight Allen (also failing to convict them). Eventually the D.A. accepted plea bargains and dropped charges against the other defendants.16

Through editorial and news coverage, the Daily Cougar proved to be one of the most insightful places to see multiple perspectives on the struggle over AABL's demands. The student paper published letters to the editor from white students both supporting and critical of AABL. Overall, the editorial content of the Cougar remained supportive. For example, columnist Tim Fleck, an Anglo who wrote "The Grapevine" column, concluded that AABL's demands "represent a sane, logical step towards an escape from the vicious race cycle so easily observable within our own little pearl of a city."17 The Cougar also gave Dwight Allen a weekly column called "The Black Perspective," which Allen used to explain AABL positions and discuss other issues on campus.

The Daily Cougar's news coverage frequently covered AABL press conferences and protests—generally in a neutral or positive light. At the same time, some provocative editorial choices were made, including The Cougar's February 18, 1969, report focused on Dwight Allen's statement at a student rally: "You white students had better wake up. If we can't have our black studies, you can't have your white studies."

The brisk pace of events at UH in spring 1969 may be seen as a result of the university's eagerness to defuse any possibility for campus unrest. In comparison to other public universities in the South, the university's willingness to enter negotiations and make changes can now be viewed as quite progressive. President Hoffman seems to have had sympathetic attitudes on racial justice, but he made it clear that he regarded preservation of "law and order" as a vital responsibility of his office. No doubt university administrators hoped to avoid a scenario like the 1967 police raid on TSU. Nevertheless, AABL leaders considered the institutional and bureaucratic responses too slow. They worried that the university might adopt the tactics used by other universities to stall until the end of a semester or the summer, when students would leave campus and then would have to struggle to resume their momentum the following academic year.

AABL continued to hold small "rap sessions" and informational events for students of all races almost daily throughout March, as well as press conferences and appearances on radio programs. On March 6, 1969, one of the task forces created in response to the AABL demands recommended the creation of an Afro-American Studies Program by the start of the summer term. On March 7, AABL and allies held a rally of 600 students, followed by a march of around 200 to the Cullen Building. By March 27, just ten days after the "mini-riot" and less than two months after AABL first delivered their demands, Douglas MacLean, Vice President of Staff Services, released a sixteen-page report on the status of negotiations between the university and AABL. This document addressed each of AABL's ten demands, presented commentary on AABL reasons, and spelled out the university's initial response as well as actions taken.18

The creation of the African American Studies Program became the most visible and transformative response to the AABL agitations. A task force to consider the program included students like Gene Locke and two other AABL members, faculty, and Chester Bratton, the Assistant Dean of Students, and one of the first African American administrators at UH, who enjoyed a good working relationship with AABL. They called for the creation of a degree-granting department. A second task force with more faculty and fewer students announced in April a few of the course offerings: Afro-American History, Afro-American Literature, as well as Afro-American Culture.19

In May, President Hoffman announced the appointment of white history professor Robert Haynes as acting director of the new Afro-American Studies Program. Over the summer, Haynes stated the objectives of the program: to instill the concept of black awareness and identity as well as a community orientation. The program grew so rapidly that Haynes was later quoted as saying "that pamphlets listing the courses to be offered are almost outdated by the time they come from the printer."20

Although it has never gained the status of a degree-granting department, the African American Studies Program still operates on the UH campus, as does the Center for Mexican American Studies, which was established in 1972. These programs represent important examples of the university's response to student demands for educational programs to meet their needs. AABL's leadership regarded this as the most significant victory of their campaign.

During the next school year, much of the leadership of AABL moved off of the UH campus and allowed for a new generation of black student leadership to emerge. Dwight Allen told the Daily Cougar, "We concluded that the black community is of primary importance and that UH should serve as a base for recruiting black students to return to their communities."21

They went on to build political support and raise funds for the UH Fourteen, and established service programs in the black community, primarily in Third Ward, including athletics programs for youth and black history classes. Later, AABL went on to support national liberation struggles in southern Africa, to promote the SHAPE community center, to support HOPE Development, and to campaign on behalf of blacks running for political office.

AABL's struggles at UH and in the Houston community have fundamentally transformed UH as an institution and the City of Houston as a whole. AABL alumni have gone on to participate in a variety of social movements and institutions. Gene Locke ran for mayor of Houston in 2009, and lost by a small margin to Annise Parker in a run-off election. His fellow AABL alumni continue to do progressive political work on a grassroots level: Deloyd Parker is the director of the SHAPE Community Center, which has operated for more than forty-five years and continues to offer service programs to the community of Third Ward, and Ester King continues as an activist for progressive causes.

AABL's work helped UH to evolve from a white institution to one that embraces diversity, and now celebrates itself as one of the most diverse research universities in the country. Today, students at the university continue to want their voices heard and to make changes to curriculum, to administrative policy, and to conditions for workers and students. Afro Americans for Black Liberation built a strong foundation for later generations who would desire to further transform the University of Houston. **FPH**

This article was written with the support of Professor Linda Reed, Professor Kairn Klieman, Brother Ester King, and generous editing assistance from Hank Hancock. It also appeared in the Fall 2010 issue of Houston History Magazine I would like to dedicate it to Sister Lynn Eusan and all the other organizers and militants who died too young in the struggle for the liberation of oppressed people. We stand on the shoulders of giants.


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Amnesty International Launches Global Angola 3 Campaign

by International Coalition to Free the Angola 3 Thursday, Jun. 09

This week Amnesty International launched a global campaign calling for US authorities to end the solitary confinement of Herman Wallace and Albert Woodfox, of the Angola 3. Amnesty is calling for people around the world to contact Governor Jindal.

Amnesty Internationa...
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TAKE ACTION HERE: http://www.amnesty.org/en/appeals-for-action/justice-for-albert-woodfox-and-herman-wallace

This week Amnesty International launched a global campaign calling for the authorities in the United States to end the solitary confinement of Herman Wallace and Albert Woodfox. They state that "the treatment to which the two men have been subjected was 'cruel and inhumane' and amounted to a violation of the US' obligations under international law".

Guadalupe Marengo, Amnesty's deputy director for America said "We are not aware of any other case in the USA where individuals have been subjected to such restricted human contact for such a prolonged period of time." Amnesty has also raised questions about the legal aspects of the case including the lack of any physical evidence linking Herman and Albert to Brent Miller's murder, lost DNA evidence and convictions based on questionable inmate testimony.

Amnesty is calling for people around the world to contact Governor Jindal via email or post and let their outrage regarding this injustice be heard. The spotlight on injustice which Amnesty International is now shining on the case of the Angola 3 is a monumental step of support to the campaign. We hope Albert and Herman's supporters will lead the charge in responding to Amnesty's call for action.

The US state of Louisiana must immediately remove two inmates from the solitary confinement they were placed in almost 40 years ago, Amnesty International said today.

Albert Woodfox, 64, and Herman Wallace, 69, were placed in "Closed Cell Restriction (CCR)" in Louisiana State Penitentiary - known as Angola Prison - since they were convicted of the murder of a prison guard in 1972. Apart from very brief periods, they have been held in isolation ever since.

"The treatment to which Albert Woodfox and Herman Wallace have been subjected for the past four decades is cruel and inhumane and a violation of the US's obligations under international law," said Guadalupe Marengo, Americas Deputy Director at Amnesty International.

"We are not aware of any other case in the USA where individuals have been subjected to such restricted human contact for such a prolonged period of time."

Over the course of decades there has been no meaningful review of the men's designation to CCR. The only reason given for maintaining the men under these conditions has been due to the "nature of the original reason for lockdown."

Both men were originally arrested for armed robbery.

The men are confined to their cells, which measure 2 x 3 metres, for 23 hours a day. When the weather permits, they are allowed outside three times a week for an hour of solitary recreation in a small outdoor cage.

For four hours a week, they are allowed to leave their cells to shower or walk, alone, along the cell unit corridor.

They have restricted access to books, newspapers and television. For the past four decades they have never been allowed to work or to have access to education. Social interaction has been restricted to occasional visits from friends and family and limited telephone calls.

They have also been denied any meaningful review of the reasons for their isolation.

The men's lawyers have told Amnesty International that both are suffering from serious health problems caused or exacerbated by their years of solitary confinement.

Amnesty International has also raised questions about the legal aspects of the case against the two men.

No physical evidence linking the men to the guard's murder has ever been found; potentially exculpatory DNA evidence has been lost; and the convictions were based on questionable inmate testimony.

Over the years of litigation on the cases, documents have emerged suggesting that the main eyewitness was bribed by prison officials into giving statements against the men and that the state withheld evidence about the perjured testimony of another inmate witness. A further witness later retracted his testimony.

Apart from ongoing legal challenges to their murder convictions, Albert Woodfox and Herman Wallace are suing the Louisiana authorities claiming that their prolonged isolation is "cruel and unusual punishment" and so violates the US Constitution.

"The treatment of these men by the state of Louisiana is a clear breach of US commitment to human rights," said Guadalupe Marengo.

"Their cases should be reviewed as a matter of urgency, and while that takes place authorities must ensure that their treatment complies with international standards for the humane treatment of prisoners."

For more information or to arrange an interview with an Amnesty International expert, please contact: Josefina Salomon, jsalomon@amnesty.org,, mobile: +44 7778 472 116, www.angola3.org

Texas Death Row prisoners say "¡Ya Basta!" to Inhuman Prison Conditions

By Texas Death Row Prisoners to the open publishing newswire:

Texas Death Row inmates are banning together and protesting in various ways as never before. This is because of new pseudo policies, which, as should be noted, the vast majority of staff members disagrees with and see as pointless and counterproductive. In fact, it seems that the only two people pushing this heightened level of oppression are major Smith and Assistant Warden Lester. In the history of Texas Death Row there has never been so very many Use of Force and staff assaults, in such a very short period of time. This is the result of one thing and one thing only: the sudden dramatic rise in extreme psychological and physical violence that is being forced upon us. We just wished to be left alone and allowed to peacefully exist without beings viciously attacked as the TX Death Row inmate population has been lately.

In accordance with TDCJ-CID policy, ACA standards, state & federal law the Texas Death Row inmate population would like to bring the following issues to the attention of the ranking staff members in change of the security operations of Death Row. The following list of problems can easily be resolved by on-site ranking staff members and we respectfully request that they do indeed be resolved in an expedient manner.

NLG Files Lawsuit Against Oakland Police

Tue Jun 14 2011 (Updated 06/15/11) Class Action Lawsuit Asserts Constitutional Violations at Oscar Grant Demonstrations

NLG Files Lawsuit Against Oakland Police The National Lawyers Guild (NLG) filed a major class action lawsuit against the Oakland Police Department (OPD) on Monday, June 13th, in the United States District Court. The lawsuit asserts constitutional violations stemming from the November 5, 2010, mass arrest of 150 peaceful protesters following the sentencing of Johannes Mehserle, the BART police officer who killed Oscar Grant. The lawsuit seeks injunctive relief as well as monetary damages for those 150 people who were unlawfully corralled by police and incarcerated in overcrowded holding cells for up to 28 hours.

At each Justice for Oscar Grant demonstration, the OPD has violated its own crowd control policy. This policy was obtained as part of a 2005 settlement in an earlier case of police misconduct filed by the NLG and the American Civil LIberties Union. The NLG seeks to hold the police accountable, and to obtain compliance with the crowd control policy to protect constitutional rights and freedom of speech in Oakland.





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United States of Tamarie

Catastrophic Theater latest musical

BY ALEX WUKMAN

SUMMER IN HOUSTON MEANS A FEW THINGS: shorts, mosquitoes and musicals. From the big budget musicals of Theatre Under the Stars, who close out this season with Urban Cowboy, and Broadway Across America, who bring back the world famous Lion King, to smaller companies like Stages, reviving their smash production of The Great American Trailer Park Musical, summer in Houston is a time for musicals. In fact it was five years ago this summer that Catastrophic's previous incarnation debuted what many consider to be their most well known play Speeding Motorcycle.

And this summer Catastrophic Theatre will offer the 14th installment of what has alternately been called Tamilalia and the Tamarie Cooper show. Any critic attempting to comment on this semi-annual event is faced with the question of how do you review an institution? How do you comment on something that has come to epitomize Houston's summer musical theatre season?

Cooper has become a legend in Houston theatre circles based upon the strength of her musicals. They have drawn praise from critics and audiences throughout Houston both for their high energy music and highly original subject matter. As the Catastrophic theatre website states "over the years [Cooper] has taken on everything from love to camping, speakeasies, time travel, domesticity, neuroscience, and cocktail parties"

This year's intallament, The United States of Tamarie: An All-American Revue (made in China), sees Cooper taking her unique vision and applying to the American political system. After almost a decade-and-a-half of summer shows the question of burn out is inevitable. And Cooper recognizes that which is why, after welcoming a new addition to her family in 2010, Cooper feels that balancing the demands of family and art has giver her a chance to recharge a little.

"I'd feel like I was getting pigeonholed by [the shows] if I had do to one every year," says Cooper. Another way that Cooper keeps it fresh is to bring in new collaborators. Despite being filled with names well known in the Houston alt.-theatre scene, like Sarah Jo Dunstan and Jodi Bobrovsky, the United States of Tamarie marks the first collaboration between Cooper and musical director Miriam Daly.

Daly, a Houston local, is a renowned musical director who previously worked on the off-Broadway smash Tony n' Tina's Wedding and Death: The Musical. She'll be joining Catastrophic regulars like Kirk Suddreath in the onstage band and combining her take with Cooper's, admittedly, old-school outlook.

"I used to love those old school musicals [and] all of the shows have a bit of a send up of the old style musical numbers," says Cooper. She goes to cite such icons of musical theatre as Guys and Dolls as one of her primary influences. Cooper goes on to explain that throughout the years she has been careful of 'sequel creep.' "There's always this idea that it has to be 'bigger, louder, faster and funnier;' but I have this formula that works for me," says Cooper.

Cooper explains that initially she drew heavily from her own experiences. "I used to joke that I take all the things that people pay money to tell a therapist, put them in a musical and charge people to come see it," says Cooper. Another aspect that separates The United States of Tamarie from most other shows is the length of the run.

Unlike most alt-theatre performances, which often seem to close a week after they open, Cooper's run is always at least six weeks long. She explains that the last Catastrophic show to receive such a lengthy treatment was Blue Finger. Cooper's show, which runs from July 15-August 20, often marks the end of summer in spirit if not in temperature and has been known to help culture goers prepare for the onslaught of the new fall seasons. However, the announcement of another installment of the wildly popular Tamarie Cooper franchise has been overshadowed by news of an almost monumental proportion from the fringe performance community.

Culturemap has reported that Catastrophic Theatre is one of four organizations that is planning to relocate to the new $22 million Independent Arts Collaborative in midtown. When completed the facility will not only house Catastrophic but will also be the new home of Suchu Dance, Main Street Theatre and arts hot spot Diverseworks, whose warehouse has anchored the north downtown arts scene for years even though the air conditioning has to be turned off during performances.

Liocated a few blocks from the Continental Club, the Mink and the Ensemble the IAC will allow a sort of one-stop shopping for people who don't want to risk getting their car burglarized in the mean streets of the East Downtown warehouse district; or who want to be able to grab a post performance cocktail without having to drive all the way back to midtown. However, despite the optimism in the initial announcement no projected completion date has been given which gives it at least one thing in common with the Tamarie Cooper franchise. **FPH**

The United States of Tamarie: An All-American Revue (Made in China) premieres July 15 and runs until August 20 at Diverseworks, 1117 East Freeway, For more information and tickets call 713.522.2723 or go to catastrophictheatre.com.



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