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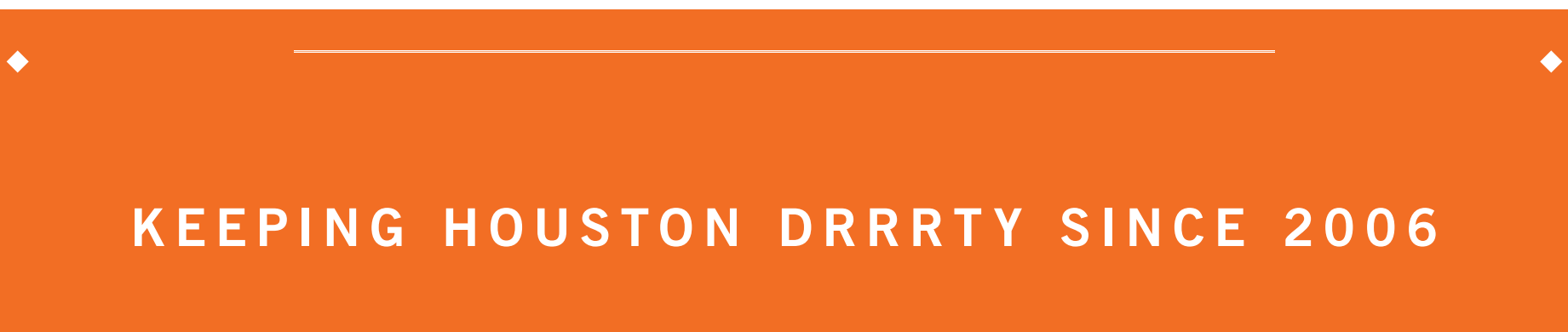
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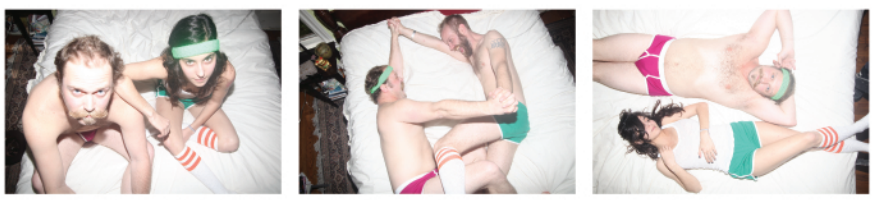
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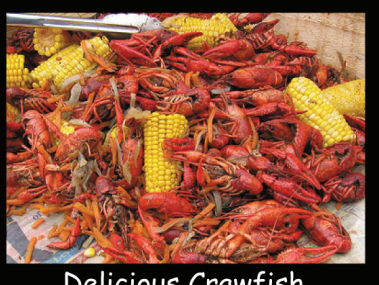
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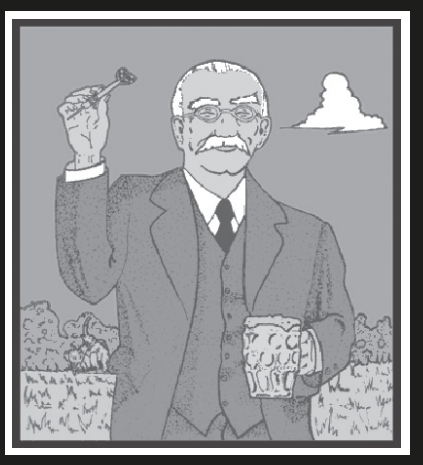
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I love to state the fucking obvious.

We always need to tell people nice things: what they mean to you, how much you love them, and what a good job they are doing. We have been told so much from the time that we are children to always say nice things that the narrative gets lost and we suddenly believe we are here to be mean spirited and call people out. But a few nice words go long way. Small gestures of affection can disarm a tense relationship be it work or love or family. There are so many things to lose your cool over and be ugly about but there are tons more reasons to tell people nice things. All I am saying is be aware of this, take small steps to spread a little bit more joy, and remind folks exactly how great they are. Like you. Thanks for reading this paper. Very kind of you. Enjoy your day. You look nice.

DEBRIS
Clover Honey

BY BUFFALO SEAN



I LOVE A GREAT MANY THINGS about this city. The beets at farmers' markets in spring, the roar of the crowd at Saint Arnold's brewery, the relief that evening brings on a scorching August day. Smiling at peeling paint, sneering at bad graffiti. Staring at sunflower patches, rusted steel tanks, trucks overloaded with furniture. Wondering at photofluorescent plankton or pink anvil clouds. Feeling cool breezes. Smelling hickory smoke in parking lots. Delighting in the purple glow of dusk.

I've lived here for fourteen years and I don't regret a day of it. From the first hot August day, impressed with the forthright friendliness of people on the city bus, the 3rd Ward and the University of Houston, this town has been nothing but brilliantly real. First I was a student, then a waiter, ticket taker, sign painter, gallery guard, rag picker, warehouse worker, art assistant, bookseller, barista, phone operator, cook and crepe maker. I tried and failed to be a tattoo artist, guitarist, DJ, promoter, fashion designer, philosopher and therapist. Throughout it all I thought I could be a graphic designer, a painter, a curator, a writer or an entrepreneur. Hanging out in bars, parking lots, cars, flophouses, collectives, backstages, parks, porches, dorm rooms, recording studios, alleyways, Vietnamese sandwich shops, 24 hour Mexican restaurants, street corners, artist warehouses, convenience stores, suburban backyards, urban gardens and row houses has taught me more than I ever dreamt I would know. The breadth of human existence is impossible to take in but the glimpse of the whole that is available in the seething mass of diversity, power and poverty that is Houston is incredible.

Watching the interplay of high culture and low, black and white, rich and poor without being able to articulate the everyday stories that make up tragedy and comedy used to leave me at a loss. Trying to paint how a moment of one day in one life looks from the inside used to frustrate me with its perishability. Leading, following, helping, driving- the fickle world rewards hard work and luck in unequal measure. Last week that changed, the scales fell from my eyes, and I now know that doing anything perfectly, magically, is not for me. A week ago my wife and I had a little girl, Clover. She is delicate and beautiful. My ambition is unbowed but its focus has been narrowed to a camera obscura. All this time tilting at windmills has been for a good cause- because now I have enough dirt under my fingernails to know how to teach humility and patience to someone I care about deeply.

Whatever in the world of art compels people to search for beauty (and yes, the Art Guys' works are beautiful too) is lit by the sunlight of a pinprick in the fabric of life. The innumerable methods of expression that compose our artworld reach for a reproduction of the wide world beyond the veil. For every recognized artist in a gallery there are thousands upon thousands of 'artists' living their lives searching for the same truths without seeking the approval of the white-walled filter that frames modern notions of artistic brilliance. I have no illusions that anything I have done previously in my life is as great as my daughter. She'll make art, I know it. She will be frustrated by trying to get across her vision. There will be tears, broken pencils, splashed paint, hurt feelings, disappointed teachers, failed auditions, and anger. It's all worth it. The only thing I have to impart to her is this: Live like you mean it and no one can tell you you're not an artist. **FPH**

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Pliable

BY MICHAEL PENNYWARK

TREES ARE EVIL. Yep, you heard me. I hate trees. Every year about this time they shed their sinister little pollen and make my life a living hell until I wash down those antihistamines with a shot of whiskey. Unfortunately, my conscience prevents me from taking my revenge on those most villainous of lifeforms. But it does allow me to appreciate the one thing trees are good for, and that's wood. Okay maybe two things if you count peaches...and apples, and oranges, okay well you get the point. Anyway, there's nothing like a beautifully shaped piece of hard wood. And I'm not talking about the early morning kind. Wood, it's one of the most useful, functional, and aesthetically pleasing things in the world. We surround ourselves with it. We build houses with it, and fill those houses with furniture made from it. We like to burn it and make smores over it, or smoke our meat with it. And when we die, we like to be buried in it. Wood is everywhere and used for everything. You might say we have an appreciation for wood ingrained in us.

It's surprising then that you don't see more artists working with wood these days. Perhaps the varnish has worn off fir artists because it is so ubiquitous and utilitarian. Perhaps they cedar other mediums as more interesting. Or perhaps I'm barking up the wrong tree. Whatever the reason, I was still pining away for the days when I could breathe when I heard about Chris Hedrick's upcoming exhibition, Implied Utility at Houston Center for Contemporary Craft. Opening April 14, Implied Utility takes the humble and functional medium to a whole new level with incredibly realistic and witty illusions.

I tracked down Hedrick to ask him about the show and why work with wood? He told me that "the work in this particular show was motivated by a couple of things. First, I wanted to make a series of objects that were illusions of objects under draped cloth - yet have the draped cloth be an illusion as well. And second, in some cases I was responding to the specific material at hand. For example, the draped drill. I had a piece of extremely yellow Osage orange that reminded me of DeWalt tools, so the idea for that piece started there." As for why, he answered: "the idea of taking a downed tree and making something that makes people smile is why I work in wood."

As might be expected, people tend to do a double-take at first, reacting to objects they recognize before realizing the illusion- that the "sense of softness, flimsiness or draping is not real. So there's a 'woah' moment," Hedrick explained. "Even then, some people can't totally wrap their head around what is going on, then they realize the shirt or the hammer is actually made of wood. I like that confusion."

If you were wondering what sort of wood he likes to use, he remarked that, "I have favorite woods for different things. Since I don't stain the wood, a lot of it is based on color or texture. Sometimes I choose a piece of wood for a project and sometimes I create a project around a piece of wood.

If you can't wait for this show to open, more of his work is on display at D. M. Allison Art, 2709 Colquitt March 24-April 14. FPH



Chris Hedrick: Implied Utility
April 14 – June 10
In the Artist Hall at HCCC

Hedrick—Dewalt Drill
Chris Hedrick, Dewalt Drill. Osage Orange, Rosewood, Ebony, Cherry. 2009. Photo by Chris Hedrick.

Hedrick—Draped Pipewrench
Chris Hedrick: Draped Pipewrench. Curley Maple, Mahogany. 2009. Photo by Chris Hedrick.

Hedrick—Folded Saw
Chris Hedrick, Folded Saw. Yellowheart, Claro Walnut. 2010. Photo by Chris Hedrick.

Hedrick—Knotted Hammer
Chris Hedrick, Knotted Hammer. Mahogany, Rosewood. 2010. Photo by Chris Hedrick.

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Deluge of film

THE RAINS FELL HARD at the beginning of the SXSW 2012 Film Festival. I'm hard pressed to remember a similar couple of water soaked days in the history of this cool event. When I got to the screening of Cabin in the Woods my pants were soaked, at least up to the knee. By the second day I thought I would bypass the entire festival and drive to Georgetown several miles up the usually crowded interstate corridor. The deluge of rain was practically of apocryphal standards. Yet as the sun burst through the clouds on Sunday morning I knew it was a festival to remember.

Most of the films caught were exceptional. Even films I didn't cotton to, like 21 Jump Street and the Audience Award winner for Narrative Feature Eden, were embraced by the crowds. The latter film tells a compelling story of human trafficking and offers a strong lead perf from Jamie Chung as Eden. Kidnapped she awakens at a remote ranch where she's forced into the sex trade. After a while it seems Eden almost begins to side with her captors but maybe it's her strategy to escape. My problems with Eden revolve around the verisimilitude the filmmakers bestow to various set pieces and action. Beau Bridges co-stars. A travelogue of Italy called Italy Love It Or Leave It provided a whirlwind education of that country from its politics to its morays, all told with abundant humor by its filmmakers Gustav Hofer and Luca Ragazzi. A well produced doc Wikileaks: Secrets and Lies, originally made for UK television presented interviews with reporters for key newspapers as well as Julian Assange. By the end of the story it's hard to determine where the truth actually ends and the Rashomon aspect of the story begins. Amor Cronico follows a tour of Cuban raised singer CuCu Dianmentes, and blended images from that country's history with concert footage from her recent trip to Cuba giving the film a fantasy flow. The film was followed by a live performance by Dianmentes, who currently resides in New York City.

On Friday March 9 the festival opener, the world premiere of Cabin in the Woods was greeted with ovations. An above average horror comedy produced by Joss Whedon and directed by Drew Goddard, Cabin starts off in a high tech scientific lab before an intriguing switch to monsters in the woods. Both Whedon and Goddard wrote the script. In a roundtable interview the duo spoke about how they "wrote a script of a movie we wanted to see." Cabin sends up its respective genre and incorporates elements from a bevy of horror sources. Whedon, who also has The Avengers coming out in a month, readily admitted they "like the absurdity of directors who work in the same genre like Joe Dante." Lionsgate picked up the film from MGM when they went belly up and couldn't afford to release the film. Friday night also saw the American premiere of Bobcat Goldthwaite's Gold Bless America, a scathing satire of the cult of reality programming. Joel Murray plays the lead and had some searing speeches that reminded one of films like Network. Goldthwaite has a great knack for social observation with God Bless America as well as his previous film World's Greatest Dad. Tara Lynne Barr gives a breakthrough performance as a teenager who joins forces with Murray when he goes on a killing spree to rid the world of annoying people and reality television stars. All three were present for the screening and provided the audience a great Q&A. Goldthwaite has a very serious side to his artistry that doesn't include his Zed persona from his standup act. God Bless America opens in April in select theaters and also Video On Demand.

While my focus is on films at SXSW 2012 its also easy enough to breathe in information from the interactive and music elements that go hand in hand with one of the world's largest conventions. And it wouldn't be a trip to Austin with a least one or two diversions, like a trip to Uncommon Objects on Congress about a mile from the heart of SXSW, or maybe a jaunt to Torchy's Trailer Park down on South First Street, also the same distance as the bee bummbles. At the former I found a handful of vintage original release photos of movies from the 1940s, all for $5 each. At the latter I realized that while the tacos taste the same whether in Austin or Houston, there's no denying the ambiance is superior in the capitol city.

There was no stopping the audience enthusiasm for Safety Not Guaranteed, which was more romantic and funny than pure science fiction despite its time travel ending. Killer Joe may well turn out to be the Drive of 2012. Even though he was in Vienna directing the opera Tales of Hoffman, director William Friedkin joined the Q&A by phone. A bizarre tale of murder and revenge filled with low-lifes, Killer Joe contains sizzling performances from Juno Temple and Matthew McConaughey. The trailer trash script is by Joe Letts adapted from his own play, which marks the second collaboration between him and Friedkin after Bug. Paul Williams Still Alive starts out as a documentary about the singer/songwriter but rapidly turns into an in your face examination of the friendship between the director Stephen Kessler and Williams; a friendship that takes the route of stalker director to actual buddy-buddy bonding. Williams who was in attendance at this the American premiere charmed the audience at the end when the music ended with still about half a minute left on the credit roll. All of a sudden in the darkness you could hear Williams' inimitable voice singing "Like a Bridge Over Troubled Water." There's a moment in the film where someone mentions both Williams and Paul Simon in relation to the 70s.

The Raid: Redemption, scheduled to open this month, has to be one of the most action packed movies ever made. The choreography of death gets transferred from guns to machetes to martial arts fisticuffs. Director Gareth Evans hails from Wales, however the film was made in Indonesia and includes a great score composed by Mike Shinoda (Linkin Park) and Joe Trapanese (music arranger for Tron: Legacy). Blue Like Jazz takes place at Reed College in Portland, contains a great ending that ties up lots of loose ends and has a lead character that's a charitable kind of Christian dude who likes to get really drunk. BLJ also opens in limited engagements in April. Some of the films I saw are even now available online, like Re: Generation Music Project a music documentary currently streaming on Hulu.com. Re: Generation pairs current hip DJs with classic rock and soul artists to produce new songs. So we get Skrillex and The Doors or Crystal Method joining forces with Martha Reeves (of the Vandellas). That's just the tip of the iceberg of Amir Bar-Lev's film. Speaking to the director during the festival he mentioned how he used prime lenses that required him to make sure everybody was on their mark, which didn't always jive with their studio habits. Bar-Lev moves between controversial docs like The Tillman Story and enjoyable yet light subjects as in Re: Generation, which itself seems to be mostly about musicians wanting to create music that has substance.

There's also name branding like where CNN takes over Max's café and puts up electric signs and banners. In fact, on Monday afternoon I sprawled out in front of the CNN Café where they had dual large screen televisions playing Game Change on a continuous loop. While not a part of the festival per se this HBO movie that examines the McCain presidential campaign with Ed Harris and Julianne Moore as Sarah Palin was a great diversion and energy pit stop. Likewise a block away from the convention center Fed Ex has a free food line serving everything from pasta or falafels to shrimp po-boys out of a food truck painted with the FE logo colors. But the Fed Ex spine is about providing energy to festival goers as every picnic table around their area has multiple recharging outlets. If that's not enough Fed Ex uniformed people walk around with recharging outlets all over their branded jackets. I ask the lady if she follows people around while they're recharging their phones and she replies yes that is what she is there for.

Duplass Brothers interview

The Duplass Brothers, Jay and Mark, are not the only pair of siblings who direct movies but they are the go-to brothers when it comes

to getting films made and more importantly seen by the public. At SXSW they had a big footprint with the world premiere of Do-Decca Pentathlon, and Mark Duplass starring in another indie film Safety Not Guaranteed, plus outside the film festival circuit the brother's newest film Jeff Who Lives at Home opened that week in theaters nationwide. Safety, a romantic time travel fable was executive produced by the Duplass's when they read the charming script and realized its possibilities. SNG had been in a state of limbo for a year and Mark and Jay were the key to that film being made on a low budget with expedience. The only film missing was Black Rock, a film produced by Mark and starring and directed by his wife Katie Aselton that premiered earlier this year at Sundance. Given their current track record that rock will roll soon.

The title Do-Deca Pentathlon "is a purposeful misnomer," Mark tells Free Press Houston in an interview following the world premiere. DDP follows the rivalry between two adult brothers when they take each other on in a free form athletic competition composed of 25 events. "Do is two, Deca is ten and Pentathlon is five, so we're thinking Two-Ten-Five, Twenty-Five, and we love that feeling that that's how kids come up with shit," says Mark. "In the mind of 16 year-olds who've just dabbled in Latin for the first time," adds Jay, not exactly finishing his brother's statement so much as adding color to the conversation. The various sports events cover activities ranging from one-on-one hoop dreams to running marathon style.

"The action takes place at the mother's house which is in Anywhere USA," notes Mark. Jay adds, "We grew up in a suburb that has that feel to it." The film was shot in their native New Orleans. The Duplass Brothers attended University of Texas from 1991-95 for Jay, and 95-98 for Mark, and any time they return to Austin it's like reunion time. "We went to school here and stuck around getting caught up in the local film scene," says Jay.

"There's a community of filmmakers that we've grown up with. People ask us 'you guys know people at the studio, can you help us out'? and we're always going to be a part of that," maintains Mark.

Do-Deca Pentathlon was originally sought after by one of the studios the brothers have worked with. As Mark describes it, "there was a moment when it felt like the film would be a big broad sports comedy. But we felt that might be a detriment to the intimacy and realism that we wanted." While DDP was conceived before Cyrus and Jeff Who Lives At Home it will be released later this year by Red Flag Releasing. Jeff Who Lives At Home is distributed by Paramount.

As far as how they collaborate artistically Jay explains "It starts with what we call a giant bowl of soup of ideas. We're obsessed with weird, private personal things that people do with their families and their friends that are at the same time cringeworthy and hilarious, interesting and riveting, and real most importantly. We always swimming in that pool and developing character motivations. Mark usually writes the first draft, he passes it to me and we pass it back and forth."

"Every good sports film has a good sports montage, and this was our version of the montage," Mark chimes in about a middle sequence in DDP that is athletic action heavy.

Jeff Who Lives At Home unwinds in a single day and covers another brother rivalry, this time between Jason Segel and Ed Helms, both of whom are playing different characters than what they're known for. Susan Sarandon, Judy Greer, Rae Dawn Chong and DDP star Steve Zissus co-star.

But the unity of time and space that Jeff adheres to was not what was on the Duplass's mind. "It's an exploration of destiny versus chance," Mark says about Jeff's structure. There's definitely the part of Jeff that's about a master plan to events as opposed to random chaos. "We were making a story that would move well and allow us to explore those moments that we find fascinating."

To sum up Mark concludes "We're lucky enough to be in the position where we're not young filmmakers who're desperately attached to our movie. We're looking to do something different and innovative." Do the Duplass Brother know how the system works and as such manipulate same? "I don't think it's working the system so much as it is being careful about how we work on films. We try to construct films in a way we feel is practical. If you're 22 years-old and you want to make a movie then don't write a $150-million project," muses Mark. Jay adds, "And don't spend two years trying to attach a name actor, and then after that time you're tired of the movie. Our ethic is only make what you can pay for." **FPH**

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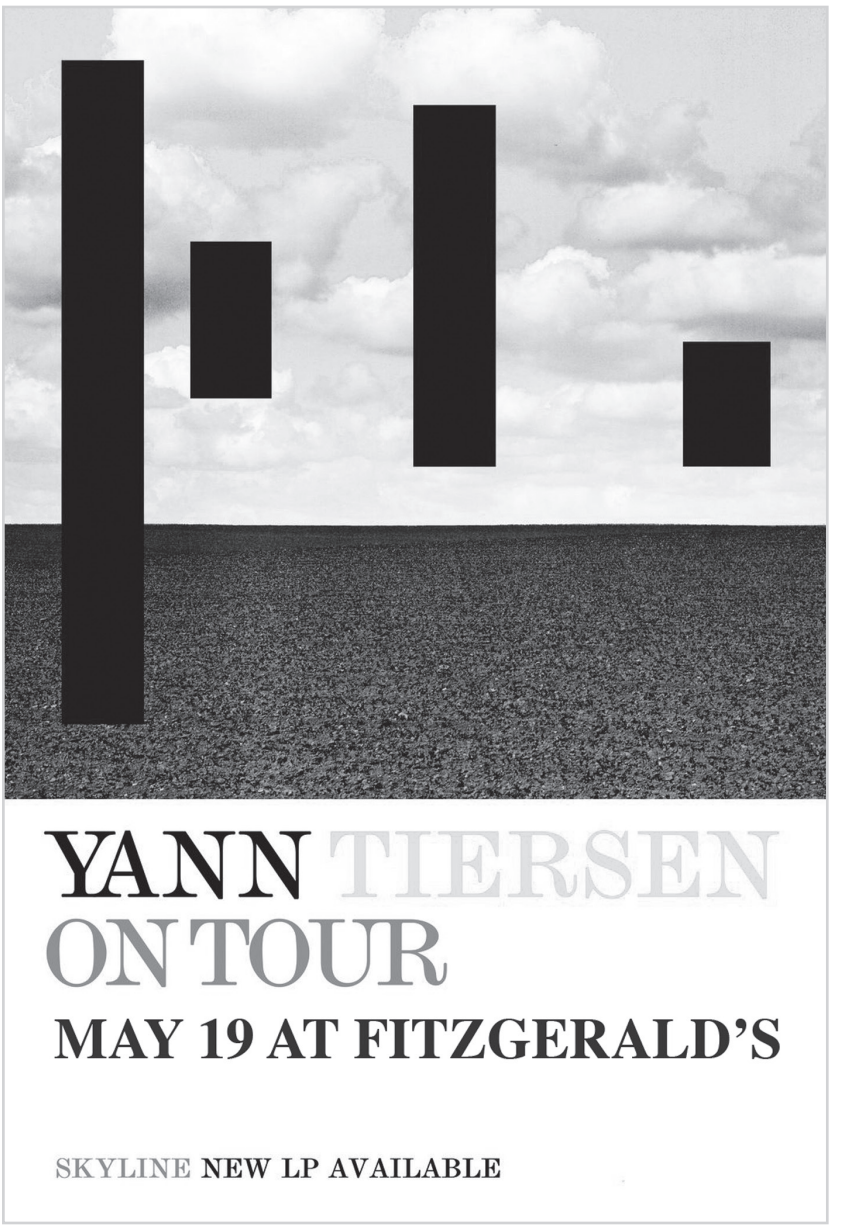
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THE KNEE BONE CONNECTED TO THE HARDY HAR HAR



New Edition is to me what The Temptations were to my father. Can I convince a Free Press reader to go to this show?

BY K.M. ANDERSON

SO YEAH, DEVICES OF DISTRACTION, my daughter went left at the airport, disrupted the distracted, I mean really people, the iPads and the phones and the laptops, we are in the same place in a separate space, connected but not, walking around talking to ourselves in public, in touch but out of touch, rude as fuck, bumping into each other without excuse me, only excuses, excused from having to be civil, because we are busy, so fucking busy, gotta get there, and talk to whatshisname about the thing and the deadline, and I'm late trying to be early, because, you know, the shit and the stuff, and Monday morning or Thursday evening or today at 5 or whatever the fuck, we just collide, and talk about the humane way, to eat an animal, cause hey, at least they could walk around free, before I devoured them and their babies, but whatever, I got shit to do, shit that doesn't involve simple kindness or courtesy, but you understand, I got people to do and things to see, or something, I downloaded an app it's supposed to keep me connected, while I'm constantly looking at this screen, to, you know, feel connected, wait, I lost my connection, OK, it's back, the satellite was jammed, too many people connected, but disconnected, and man how long is this flight, doesn't matter, kids look at the screen, now go to sleep, go to sleep, please go to sleep…

04/01/12_NEW EDITION_RELIANT PARK_ New Edition is to me what The Temptations were to my father. One of my first records (and I mean vinyl records) was New Edition (s/t), moments in my youth were accentuated by New Edition songs, first kisses, girlfriends, realizations of first kisses never materializing into girlfriends…Bobby Brown is a revelation, Ralph Tresvant is an institution. Can I convince a Free Press reader to go to this show? Forget what you think, New Edition may be the last great r and be group, and that is to be admired and exalted, and BBD may do Poison, which alone is worth the price of admission.

04/13/12_SPOON_HOUSE OF BLUES_ To say Spoon is a Texas treasure is like debating the symbolism of the pork rind, you do not believe in Spoon, you don't believe in 100 degree heat and the right of every man in wait for hours in traffic. Spoon played these streets, they slummed in these streets. They also transcended the "local band" thing by actually being an amazing band. Transcendence was a good record, Cvantez is as good as anything written by the Pixies, and Spoon will always be good live, because they can play five songs you will wait all night for and be psyched to hear (Turn My Camera On). So don't front, you know they got you open.

04/18/12_SLEIGH BELLS_ I don't really get Sleigh Bells, their songs are OK, but I like what they do in theory. Arena rock box or something like that, the singer is doing r&b, the guitar player is doing Def Leppard, and the drummer is a huge row of speakers. It's like Big Black, but it's really not, but anyway, I think it may be an all right show, it will be loud, it's very now-ish, metal kids and girls in the same place, an anomaly sort of. Of course, if girls don't go, it will just be a metal show.

BBU_BELL HOOKS_(MAD DECENT DOWNLOAD-FREE!)_BBU's latest Bell Hooks is possibly racist against white people, but white people don't seem to mind being called racist, so it's fine. One of the songs is a booty song called "What's Your Major." Chorus: Hey girl, I ain't no player, I just really wanna know what's your major? They namedrop Audre Lorde and Elaine Brown. But it has vision and purpose, and I am totally down with it, and I like white people, even though they are imperialist honkey pale faced devils.

JON PORRAS_BLACK MESA_(THRILL JOCKEY)_ Music is supposed to…and at times it does. Jon Porras' album Black Mesa is emotional, mystic, it is like water, it flows and fills space, the movements are subtle but grand, what is the musical equivalent of wind through mountains, not really sure, but it's like that. I could use a word like psychedelic or free form (two words) or I could use words like hip hop trance and totally fuck you up, because you would be like, "This ain't hip hop!" And then we would have a conversation about what IS hip hop, and that would totally be off topic.

LEE RANALDO_BETWEEN THE TIMES & THE TIDES_(MATADOR)_ Lee Ranaldo has been promising a proper solo album for years. If you, like me, were fans of songs such as "Mote" or "Wish Fulfillment" or "Hoarfrost" or "Antenna" or any of the countless "Lee songs" in the Sonic Youth compendium, then you were psyched at the possibility of an album of gems. Well, unfortunate circumstances have given us this gift, like when you parents separate but they buy you a Porsche (hypothetically). Between The Times and The Tides hits that weird hippy, free verse thing Ranaldo does well-- the guitar work is not what you would think, it's pretty centered, and having Steve Shelley on drums maintains the familiarity. It's a record to sit with and digest. I mean dude it's 50 plus, it's wonderful album, from a wonderful guitarist. Get off the bullshit and get on the bus.
FPH

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A boy and his drum

GLENN SORVISTO OF THE HATES PASSES ON

BY ALEX WUKMAN

IT'S NO UNDERSTATEMENT TO SAY punk rock came to the Gulf Coast a little late. By the time Houston club owners were willing to take a chance on the angry British import The Clash had signed to CBS and The Sex Pistols had already broken up. As influential and important as The Clash are it was the Pistols who started punk rock in Houston, by way of San Antonio. In January 1978 a long haired army brat turned valve fitter/college radio DJ named Christian Arnheiter road tripped to the Alamo City to see a punk show, and from all accounts it was an epic show.

The official biography states that Sid Vicious, suffering from heroin withdrawal, had finally found the audience he wanted--a group of people who were genuinely shocked and appalled at his antics. And he rose to the challenge, calling everyone present "a bunch of faggots" and hitting an audience member with his bass. Despite the negative reaction from most of the audience Arnheiter was inspired, he knew that this fledgling thing called punk rock was to be his life's calling. He went home bought a guitar and started learning some chords, but he knew that a punk band wasn't just a guitar. That he needed a rhythm section, even with his radio show co-host Robert Kainer on bass they still needed a drummer. So they did what any band struggling to get started does: they put up an ad.

It was a 17-year-old high school student named Glenn Sorvisito who called the number on Arnheiter's "Drummer Wanted" postcard. "Up until that time, he'd played the snare drum in the school band and had recently acquired a trap set, but had no real experience in playing in any kind of rock band," writes Arnheiter. "I still remember that first phone call; he was so nervous. During our conversation, and countless times after, I wondered about why he chose my ad."

Sorvisito's quickly convinced Arnheiter and Kainer to overlook his youth and relative inexperience by showing his off-stage qualities. "Glenn was always positive, energetic, and completely open to whatever I wanted to try," states Arnheiter. Sorvisito's energy also translated into the break-neck beats that first debuted on April Fool's Day 1979 at Paradise Island. Located at 4700 Main, underneath US 59, Paradise Island was the only punk club in Houston at the time. Throughout the end of the 1970s and the beginnings of the 1980s Paradise Island--later known as Rock Island and finally, simply, The Island--would host bands that would go on to be legends. Black Flag, Husker Du, The Misfits and Flipper may have all held court at Paradise Island, but it was local boys The Hates who were the kings.

At the stroke of midnight on December 31, 1979 the band let loose one of, if not the, first punk records to be recorded in Houston, "No Talk in the Eighties." The limited edition four song EP--only 1,500 were ever pressed--firmly cemented The Hates as the standard bearers for punk rock in Houston. Arnheiter's buzzsaw guitar dueted with Kainer's bouncy bass over Sorvisito's flawless foundation on songs like "New Spartans" and "All the Whites are Going Negro."

It's a fair guess to say the freedom Sorvisito found in Houston's punk rock scene was a breath of fresh air from the plasticity of oil boom Houston. Arnheiter writes that during those early years Sorvisito had a habit of showing up to gigs in yellow pants wearing one blue and one red Chuck Taylor, and that he loved his "newfound form of self expression as much simply playing the music." Over the next year the founding line-up would release one more EP, feature in a comic entitled The Hates in Iran--published by Houston alt weekly the Montrose Star--and be the subjects of an award winning documentary.

Despite all the attention the band was receiving Sorvisito decided to call it quits after graduating high school and move to a fairer climate. After trading in the sweaty summers of Houston for the perpetual cool of San Francisco Sorvisito did what any musician does--find someone to start playing with. Within a few months Sorvisito helped put together Arkansas Man, a band that would go on to become critics' darlings in the San Francisco scene and provide tour support for Public Image Limited, Johnny Lydon's post-Sex Pistol project. After leaving San Francisco for New York Sorvisito went on to tour nationally and internationally with bands like WOO and Happy New Year and play on albums from the Molecules as well as The Three Tenors and Rev. 99.

After relocating to the Washington D.C. area with longtime partner Jody Kurash, a well respected photojournalist for the Associated Press turned part owner of a Georgetown area business, Sorvisito started collaborating with Baltimore-based Pleasant Lives, an arrangement that prompted Baltimore City Paper to name the group "the Best Band to See Live."

All the success, goodwill and acclaim that Sorvisito built up over his three decades in the music industry wasn't enough to prevent health problems. And in April 2010 he was diagnosed with a particularly virulent strain of tongue cancer. Chemo beat back the tumors on his tongue and in his mouth, but it was too late. The cancer had already spread to his lymph nodes. Shortly after the doctor found that the cancer had spread in December, Sorvisito underwent surgery to remove all the lymph nodes in his neck. A few months later, April 2011, the tumors resurfaced forcing the removal of half of Sorvisito's tongue. The doctors were able to replace it with muscle from his forearm.

Unfortunately there were complications from the surgery that required multiple skin grafts and an extended hospital stay last summer. During the holidays word spread to family and friends that the cancer had spread even further--throat, lungs and liver--and that Sorvisito was back in the hospital. Arnheiter writes that the tumors in Sorvisito's throat were "extremely aggressive, cutting off his airway" which lead to multiple surgeries to try and improve his breathing. But it was too much. Kurash, writing in The Georgetowner, described how even when they were on other sides of the globe Sorvisito's joy was never too far from her.

"I remember my solo travels, when Glenn would hide notes and gifts in my bag. I would venture with a basket, collecting experiences, photos and stories we could share together when I came home. I would eagerly anticipate Glenn waiting for me at the airport, wearing a goofy outfit, holding a funny sign or bearing a silly gift," states Kurash. Arnheiter offered up his memories on The Hates website by writing that during Sorvisito's time in the band "he never said an unkind word. It was simply not in his nature to do so." **FPH**



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Interview:
Marcel Khalife

BY OMAR AFRA
ILLUSTRATION BY SHELBY HOHL



MOST ARTISTS OFFER COMMENTARY ON THE WORLD that surrounds them as a spectator. They are mirrors of their environment yet abstain from jumping head first into participation. However, there is a rare few artists who both serve as a mouthpiece for their environment and actually perform as active participants in their world. Few embody this direct engagement like world-renowned Lebanese artist Marcel Khalife. Despite Khalife's own assertions that comparisons are 'ludicrous', by simplistic Western standards he can be summed up as the 'Hendrix' of the Oud, the 'Bob Dylan' of Middle Eastern social commentary, the Duke Ellington of composition, the Public Enemy of dissent, and the Willie Nelson of affection from his culture. His powerful song craft has captured more than 3 decades of joy and turmoil in the world's most delicately complex region and he has done so at his own personal risk. He has been indicted in his home country on blasphemy charges, performed in bomb shelters during the perils of war, and stirred the pot every chance he has had. He has been a stalwart advocate of Palestinian rights all the while pushing his musical game to the furthest limits. A master Oud (comparable to a Lute) player, composer, and vocalist, Khalife has dedicated much of his work to setting to music the prolific poetry of Mahmoud Darwish. Darwish, who coincidentally died in Houston in 2008, was a great friend of Khalife's and inspired a great deal of his work. On April 20th, Khalife will perform at Jones Hall in Houston for the first time since his dear friend passed. To say the least, this will be a massive benchmark of an event. In anticipation of this show, he was kind of enough to answer some of our questions.

WITH SO MUCH OF YOUR WORK BEING CENTERED ON MAHMOUD DARWISH'S POETRY, I WONDER WHAT THE DISCOVERY AND INITIAL IMPACT OF HIS WORK DID TO YOU. HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?

I am an avid and passionate reader of Arabic poetry in general and contemporary Arabic poetry in particular. Throughout the long years of my artistic career I have put to music and song the poetry of several prominent contemporary Arab poets. At the beginning, I never had the idea of putting contemporary Arab poetry to music and song. This was more dictated by circumstances and coincidences. I never thought of myself as a singer nor did I aspire to be one. I am first and foremost a composer and a musician. I realize myself in music more than in song. In 1976 during the Lebanese civil war, I was confined to my home in Amchit, Lebanon, because my leftist political views leanings were not to the liking of the dominant political party in my hometown. I was reading a new published poetry book by Darwish, when I wanted to try to put to music and song some of his poems that touched me deeply.

Eventually, living in my hometown Amchit and confined between four walls became unbearable. I left Amchit and drove all the way to Paris carrying with me little of what I need in clothing and my oud (Arabic lute) and music notes. I arrived in Paris to a friend's house who when he listened to the songs that I have composed music to took me to a now defunct record label called "Songs of the World". This was my first lyrical release based on Mahmoud Darwish's poetry titled "Promises of the Storm". Never in my widest dreams did I think that it will spread like wild fire throughout the Arab world, from the Middle East to North Africa. Within a year I found myself with my ensemble performing in front of ten of thousands of audiences across the Arab world in sold out Roman Amphitheaters and football (soccer) stadiums, and the rest is history.

Even before we got to know each other personally, I felt as though Darwish's poetry, with its divine assertiveness and prophetic cadences, had been revealed to me and for me. I could nearly savor his "mother's bread" that has become iconic to his readers. I could feel the eyes of his "Rita" as deeply as I could feel the pain that his "Joseph" suffered at the hands of his treacherous siblings, and I could identify with his passport, which I fancied carried my picture, just as personally as I could identify with his olive grove, his sand, and his sparrows. I felt that they were all, at a personal level, mine. Our respective corpora have grown to be reminiscent of each other, so that the name of each of the twain, instantly and without reflection, would evoke the name of the other. How very appropriate, for all of my musical milestones that punctuate my more than thirty five-year career, beginning with "Promises of the Storm" and culminating with



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"The Doves Fly," are graced with the lyricism and poignancy that are uniquely Darwishian.

More than 35 years has passed since the release of "Promises of the Storm". On April 20, I will kick off an 8 city tour of the US from the city of Houston, where my dear friend Mahmoud Darwish sighed his last breath, with the release of a new work, a double CD titles "Fall of the Moon" that is based on his poetry. It is in tribute to his legacy, humanism and prophetic poetry.

"And I adore my life because if I die I will be ashamed of my mother's tears"- Darwish

Perhaps, this is the only time that Mahmoud Darwish felt ashamed and it is because he departed before his mother. He left her the tears to shed but not a poem to eulogize him with. Would you believe me when I say that poets do not die, but only pretend to?

AS BOTH AN OBSERVER AND PERFORMER OF MUSIC, WHAT HAS YOU MOST EXCITED AND INSPIRED LATELY?

The popular Arab revolutions or the "Arab Spring", as it is often referred to outside the Arab world. It is the revolution of the youth and the future. It is an idea, a vision of change and yearning for dignity and freedom whose time has come. It is music to my ears and soul. Yet, it comes at a high price in innocent human sufferings and casualties. Old dictators and despots fall hard and do not care if they sweep away their people whom they have oppressed and subjugated for the past tens of years.

I am confident of the final outcome, in spite of the ups and downs of the popular revolutions.

I stand in solidarity with those millions who cry out as they protest against suppression and death. I am one of them, inseparably. My blood is their blood, my voice is their voice, and my destiny is their destiny.

I sang for them, and they gave me the feeling that they were my kin from whom we derive strength to bring about the impossible. I am one of them, and I confront those who shed their blood. I cannot betray their cause. What is happening Arab, is both an epic and a tragedy – an epic that shall triumph in all Arab countries, and a bloody tragedy that desperately seeks to arrest history.

VENUES IN THE US HAVE ATTEMPTED TO FORCE YOU OUT AND PUT OBSTACLES IN YOUR PATH TO PERFORMANCE AS A RESULT OF YOUR ADVOCACY THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE, RIGHT OF RETURN, ETC. YOU HAVE OFTEN FACED HARASSMENT BY US AUTHORITIES UPON ENTRY TO THIS COUNTRY. HOW DOES ONE INTERPRET SUCH 'DE FACTO CENSORSHIP' FROM WITHIN A COUNTRY WHO LAUDS ITSELF AS FREE AND DEMOCRATIC?

Power and authority on any level, whether on the level of states or institutions, private or public are inherently oppressive. Any modicum of freedom and democracy that any power structure lauds itself with, where not granted but were hard fought and won by long struggles of common people yeaning for a better life and a place under the sun. The powers that be will always attempt to roll back hard fought rights and freedoms, using all forms of manipulations and tools of media misinformation and censorship to distort reality to regain what they perceive as loss of power, authority and ability to dictate and govern by virtue of their political, social and economic prowess. This is why as common people we need to be always alert and vigilant and not resign ourselves to what has been achieved. We have to be always weary of authority and place them in check by exercising people's right and power. I want to take this opportunity on the eve of my US tour to salute the popular grass root "Occupy Wall Street" movement that have drawn some inspiration from the achievements of the "Arab Spring", but it is in itself and independently a legitimate popular grass root response to the economic meltdown caused by vulture capitalism, warmongering and invasions that has been pillaging and running amok worldwide.

WHEN PERFORMING WITH YOUR SONS, IS IT EVER HARD TO TURN THE 'DAD SWITCH' OFF AND ON?

Yes, of course. I am sure it was also hard for them to switch off and on. It was harder for all of us when they started touring with me at ages 19 & 20, back in around 2000. Now, it is no longer the case, they have their own projects independent and different of mine. They have matured musically and artistically and as human beings. They are my equals on stage, as all musicians who perform with me. You will experience all of that onstage at Jones Hall on April 20. We have a line up of 13 soloists and virtuosos who will each bring their musicianship and musicality to the program and the performance.

HOW HAS RECENT TURMOIL IN THE ARAB WORLD AFFECTED YOUR COMPOSITION? DOES IT SERVE AS A CATALYST OR RATHER INHIBIT YOUR WORK?

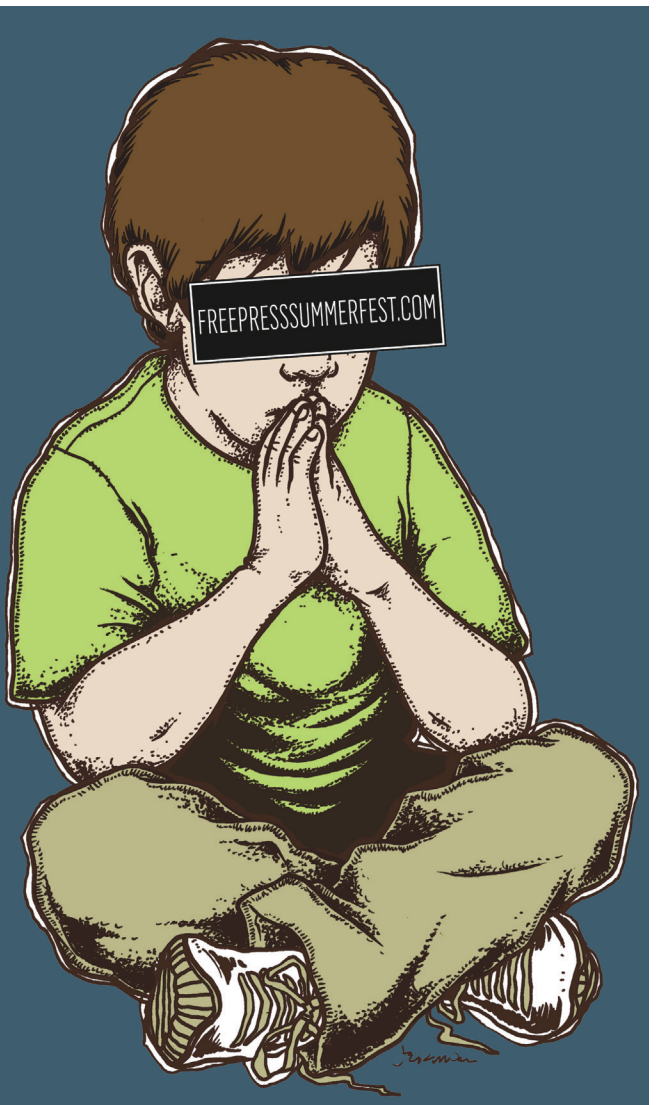
What happened in the Arab world is not "turmoil". It is a genuine revolution for freedom in all its forms, dignity, human, political rights. No, it has not affected my composition. My lyrical works throughout the past 35 years expressed those aspirations. This is why I was banned in several Arab countries and continue to be banned in some. My songs have been chanted by protestors across the Arab world, because they are still very much relevant to the current conditions in the Arab world. The Arab revolutions has also giving rise to new young artists some of whom have paid with their lives expressing their dreams and hope for the future of their homelands and their countries. Thus, the Arab revolutions are neither an inhibition nor a catalyst. It is an inspiration and a motivation. It is also gives pride and meaning to my art and that all my hard work and perseverance all those years was not in vein.

I would like to close with a reflection by Mahmoud Darwish on my work, "In Marcel Khalife's song, lyrics are like bread: there is clear utilitarian aestheticism. For example, when I used to declare my love for my mother from prison neither she nor I realized the effectiveness of this confession until the song of Marcel Khalife revealed this love to be more than just a personal relationship in a time of confinement. Marcel eliminated the gap created by the poets between poem and song. He restored to exiled emotion its rescuing power to reconcile poetry, which glorified its distance from people and was thus abandoned by them. Poetry, therefore, developed the song of Marcel Khalife, while Khalife's song mended the relationship of poetry with people. With this, the people on the street started to sing, and lyrics need not a podium, as bread need not announce itself to the hungry."

I would like to thank Free Press Houston for the opportunity to address its audience in this interview and hope to see you all at Jones hall on April 20.FPH

I stand in solidarity with those millions who cry out as they protest against suppression and death. I am one of them, inseparably.

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From this great height

BY TYLER BARBER

Mass Effect 3

Five years ago I sat in one of the fanciest hotels in Santa Monica with my heart wound tightly in a knot. I had just seen a major story event from the very first Mass Effect game unfold with extreme consequences. I saw a choice play-out that dictated weather a major character in the game will live, thereby appearing in the two sequels to follow. This was new. This was major. I devoured the Mass Effect novel the PR folks gave me, and waited for the first game to launch.

Mass Effect would go on to deliver some of gaming's most compelling science fiction of the decade. Dealing with themes of xenophobia, organic vs. synthetic life, and consequences of choice made for great fiction and was breaking ground with interactive media. I loved it.

The concluding chapter is now out, and if you've played the other two games, you're probably familiar with this one. Mass Effect 3 is almost perfect from a gameplay perspective. The gunplay, powers, mobility and combat environments are the best they've ever been. Going in and out of cover could use a little work, and sometimes the auto-aim is a little too generous, but on the whole, the gameplay is sublime.

Even the missions throughout the game are great. You get more variation in mission types and locations, more weapons and armor types, access to more powers from your squadmates... I could go on and on.

Now, about that "most compelling science fiction this decade" part... I won't spoil the ending, but I would be remiss not to point out the controversy surrounding it. The Mass Effect community is outraged by the game's ending, so much so, that they've raised over $50,000 for a cancer charity in the "Take Mass Effect Back" campaign. It's been messy. The developer, Bioware, has communicated that they're listening to fans, and everyone's worried they'll change the ending to fans' demands. Like I said, it's messy.

I think the ending is terrible. It's a shame that anyone criticizing the ending gets thrown into the camp that wants a new ending – that's just not my bag. I don't want a new ending any more than I want George Lucas to remake the Star Wars 1-3. I watched LOST as it aired on television, and when we got that crappy ending, I moved on. I feel the same way about ME3.

Interestingly, ME3 got almost all-perfect scores from critics, and hardly any reviewers critiqued the ending. It appears that the best measure for whether or not you'll like ME3's ending is whether or not you work in the game industry. I've seen the most vocal critics of videogame stories give ME3 the thumbs up, then proceed to declare those who disagree as "entitled."

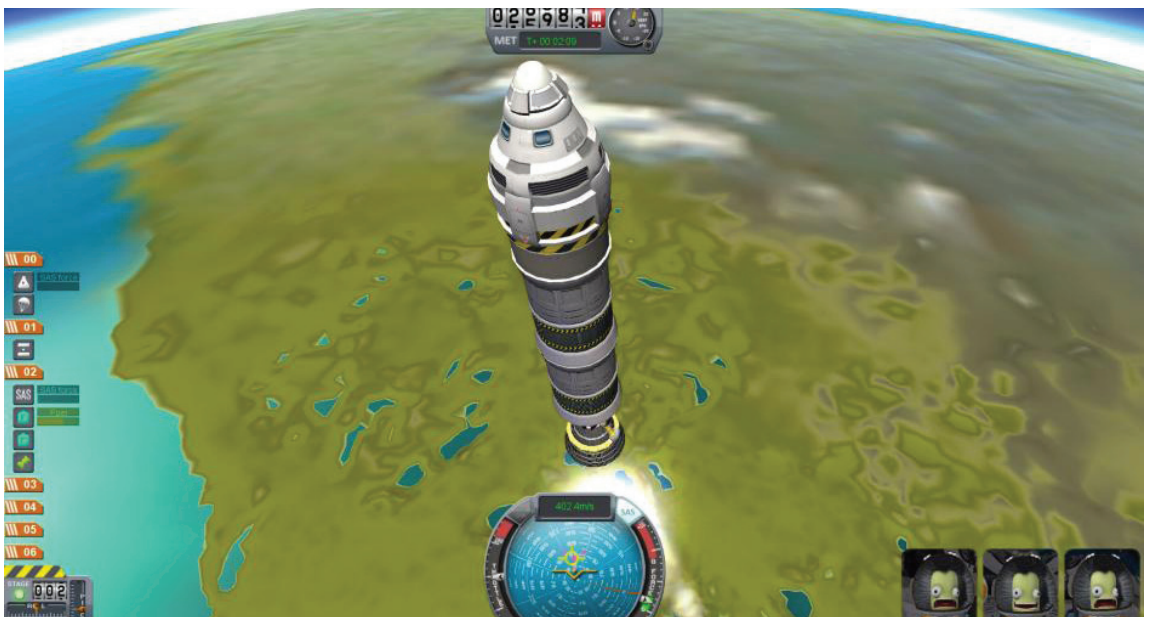
I will say that mechanically, ME3 is wonderful. However, the ending is so poor that it soured my opinion of the entire series. I won't be playing any of the downloadable content, and I probably won't play any other Mass Effect games moving forward. Bioware proved to me that they can't deliver, and there's no need for me to repeat the misjudgement.

Kerbal Space Program

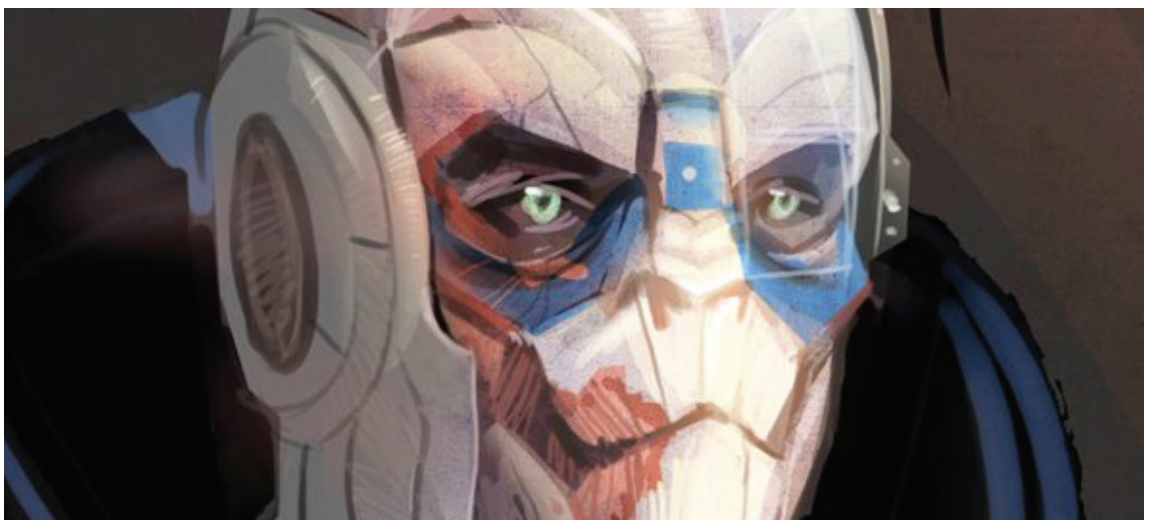
NASA's budget is getting slashed this year, but for star-gazers like myself, space won't be too lonely; virtual space at least. Kerbal Space Program is the game for anyone who's built a toy rocket. KSP is a rocket-launching sim that perfectly balances serious simulation with humor and approachability. You will have to learn a bit of rocket science in the tutorial, so new players may be intimidated – but don't be disheartened. The biggest appeal of KSP is spending twenty minutes carefully constructing your rocket, only to have it die in a fiery explosion upon hitting the "launch" button. Failure in KSP is hilarious, and that's the brilliance of this sim. Yes, you will have to familiarize yourself with the details of atmospheric pressure, orbital navigation and decoupling operations, but this serious science is softened with a layer of humor. Your astronauts, first off, aren't human – they're Kerbals: little green dudes with big heads. They just sit in their cockpit and freak out while you master the controls. So, you don't REALLY feel bad when a mission ends in tragedy... you can just queue up more unsuspecting Kerbals.

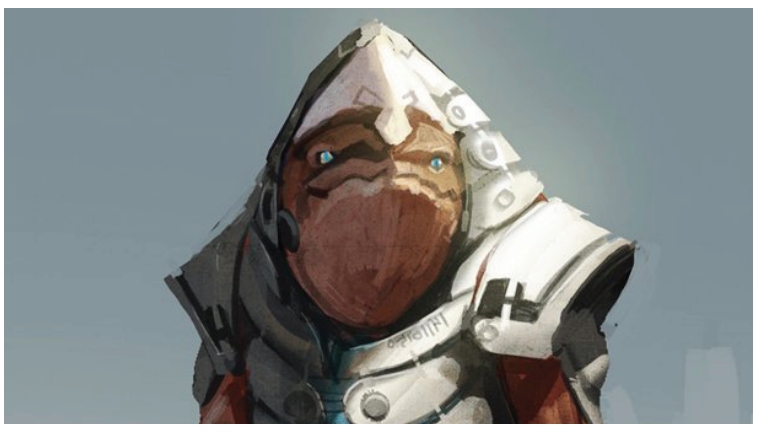
The KSP community is another reason to check out the game. You can easily install mod kits that add parts to basic game. Space-lovers have already made several kits based off real-life rockets, from The Discovery Shuttle to the Gemini, and even the Soyuz Soviet-era rocket.

The game is still in development, but you can download the beta versions. For the moment, there aren't too many goals in the game, aside from landing on the Mun (Kerbal's moon), which is actually a huge accomplishment. I've been playing for over a week, and I haven't gotten close to a successful Mun landing, let alone getting safely BACK to the Kerbals' planet. KSP isn't for everyone, but if you like games that allow players to discover their own fun and solve problems in their own way, this is for you. **FPH**



Kerbal Space Program (top)
Mass Effect (bottom)





How Texas Is Turning Women Into Second Class Citizens

(or) Free My Vagina
(or) Occupy My Ovaries
(or) The Only Bush I Trust Is My Own

BY AMANDA HART
ILLUSTRATIONS BY SARAH WELCH



DOES ANYONE ELSE FEEL AS THOUGH we've had far too many "What the fuck" moments lately? We all said it when Rush Limbaugh ran his mouth about how if he had to pay for women to have birth control than he deserved sex tapes. Or when Rick Santorum said that a woman who was raped and impregnated should accept her gift from God and make the best of a bad situation. Or when New Hampshire passed a bill that states that abortion doctors must tell all women that abortion causes breast cancer (lies). Or when Georgia passed the 'fetal pain' bill that requires doctors to not perform abortions after 20 weeks (which means women would have to carry a dead or dying fetus to term and any doctor who made the decision to terminate could face up to 10 years in prison). Or Arizona (I think more 'what the fuck' moments crawl out of their ass than ours) passing a bill allowing doctors the right to legally lie to women about birth defects to avoid abortion or giving employers the right not only to ask if a woman is taking birth control but to fire her if she is (Seriously, WTF?).

In the past when talking about the war on women many people would roll their eyes and pass it off as women just being dramatic. Not anymore. The outrage has begun. Unfortunately, it was brushed aside for so long that now the penises and self hating vaginas that run this country think they can get away with anything. So far it would appear they're right.

So when I got the news last week that Rick Perry had rejected the $35 million in federal funds that would have gone to help low income women have access to family planning, I didn't exactly faint. Sure I was disgusted, outraged, and worried about what this means for Texas women and families, myself included, and even dumbfounded that in the year 2011 we are still debating this shit. Something as simple and necessary as birth control and wellness exams are being denied simply because Republicans couldn't restrict where women choose to get their pap smears or breast exams.

The Texas Women's Health Program had been in place since 2007 and since its inception it has helped countless women and families all over Texas. The program has gone unopposed with no changes since 2007. Well, until recently that is. Perry and the gang decided that they would reject the program if they could not restrict women from choosing Planned Parenthood as their service provider. Obviously the federal government, which pays for 90% of the program, rejected this ridiculous demand. When Perry refused to allow the program to remain as is the $35 million was stripped from our budget and the 130,000 women all across Texas (17,000 of which live in or near Houston) that rely on this program paid the price. And I'll keep paying for it every month when my access to birth control is cut off and my uterus sheds its lining every fucking month. This is not just personal because I, like many women, want to be able to control when I choose to have a family but it is also personal

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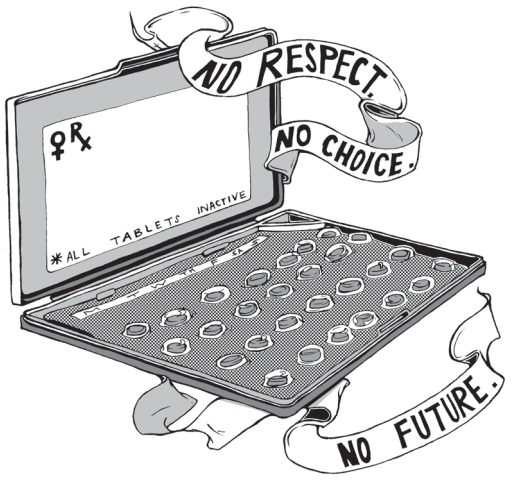
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because my body depends on birth control to regulate my periods and my health. I have a female specific health disorder called Endometriosis (look it up if you really want to know the details) and besides having surgery again, access to birth control helps to manage the pain and severity of my disorder. So when Perry decided to cut off my access to the one thing in my life that keeps my body from shutting down I took it a little bit personally. And my disorder is just one of many that birth control regulates on a monthly basis. But if the men who run the Texas Legislation took the time to understand birth control and all the positive roles it plays in our society I would not be writing this article right now.

The Texas Women's Health Program (TWHP) was about prevention and making sure that women not only had access to birth control but to wellness exams every year as well. And when we live in a state where 1 in 4 women is uninsured already, stripping them of their access to an annual wellness exam is going to be devastating. Not just on women's bodies but on our budget as well. In fact, the 2011 Texas Legislative Budget Board (TLBB) report stated that the TWHP was the most cost effective program in the state. According to the TLBB the program saved the state $41 million a year and in their opinion should be expanded to include more women. The TLBB also estimated that Medicaid births would go up by $231 million if the program was cut. And Medicaid was already under funded this past legislation by $4 billion dollars. I think all the fiscally conservative legislators that allowed this to happen and the people who voted for them should reexamine their so called values.

I recently heard Perry state in an interview that Texas women should not be worried because the state of Texas will come up with the $35 million in federal funds that are now lacking. Which would be laughable if the Texas Legislation had not cut family planning from $111 million to $38 million effectively leaving 300,000 women without access to services. Which means that this year 430,000 women will be left without birth control, cervical exams, breast exams, STD testing, and other basic healthcare. Do I have your attention now?

These cuts took effect in September 2011 and already over 20 family planning facilities in Texas were forced to close their doors. Not just Planned Parenthood but non Planned Parenthood providers as well. Many of which were located in small towns and were the only family planning facilities available. And when we live in a state that has the 3rd highest rate of cervical cancer in the country these services should be considered priceless and not used as political pawns.

This war on women and Planned Parenthood has gone far enough. One in five women in their lifetime will choose Planned Parenthood as their family planning facility. Over the last 95 years, Planned Parenthood has provided more preventative care than any other organization in the states. Neither federal nor state money has ever gone to fund abortions. I feel that this should be a well known by now but just for the sake of argument I thought I would clarify. Pure and simple, this politically motivated attack was an attempt to control women's decisions, and when they realized they couldn't they took our health and livelihoods as well. Turns out women know more about their bodies and family planning than all the Legislators combined. We don't need you to choose our healthcare providers for us. We are quite capable and highly informed.

So what now? Help Defend Women's rights on April 28th, 2012. I ask you to join us for the National Protest Against the War on Women in Austin at 4pm. This goes beyond party lines and has an impact on our entire community. We need to stand together and demand equal rights and equal representation for all. For more information visit www.unitewomen.org **FPH**

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A PUBLIC LETTER TO THE LOST BABIES OF MONTROSE

BY CONCERNED CITIZEN
ILLUSTRATION BY SHELBY HOHL

EDITORS NOTE:

Early last month, we received this letter as an anonymous public submission. I am usually wary of anything anonymous and would rather have people voice their opinions with their name on the line and accountability to be an option. Yet this 'public letter' has some poignant insights into the 'scene' that is often a parasite on the arts and music community. Now, I do not advocate calling anyone a ' coke-head', 'slut', or any other mean name but the facts remain. There are probably nicer and more diplomatic ways to say what this person is saying yet sometimes such diplomatic efforts are fruitless and it takes vitriol to break through. Take it for what it is.

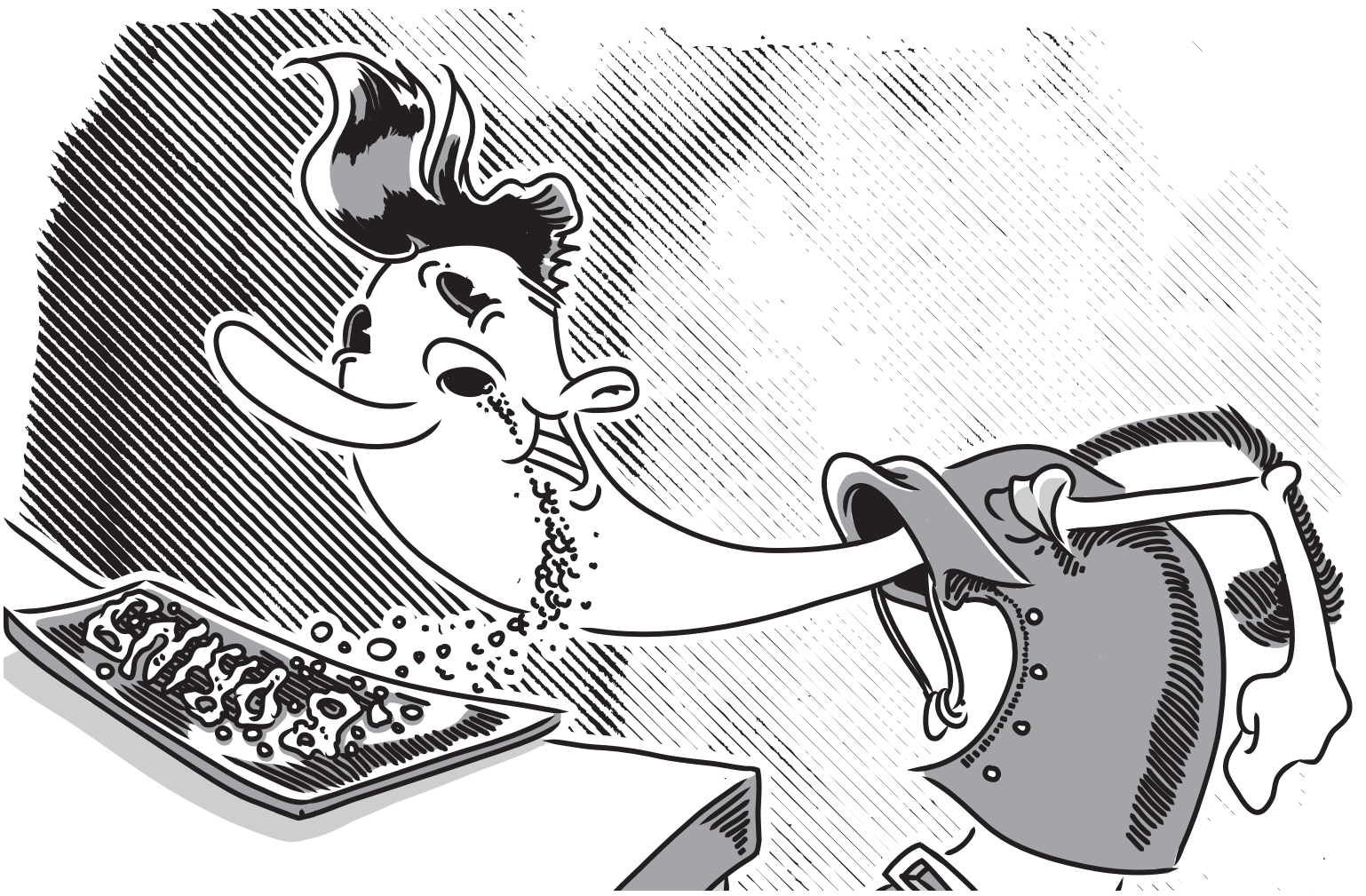
YOU ARE SCARING ME. How can you not be scaring yourselves? Some of you are barely out of high school, sneaking into bars, doing coke in the bathrooms, forming pseudo-friendships based on drug and alcohol use. Is this really who you are? Or when people call you a slut or a coke head or warn some person about you, do you defend your honor, claiming "that's not who I am!" Well, this is who you've become. So before you make excuses for the things people say about you, look in the mirror and ask yourself why they're saying it. Girls, if people think you're a slut, it's probably because you are one. Sure, maybe you have daddy issues. Maybe you had a traumatic sexual encounter that has left you with little self-worth. But baby, if you really want to gain that back and fall in love with someone who really respects the inner you, then you need to make some serious changes. It's easy to get caught up in Montrose. A lot of us have been there, and some will probably be stuck in this black hole for a really long time. Maybe you moved here from the suburbs like many of us. Maybe your parents pay everything for you. Maybe you had a lot of horrible shit happen to you when you were a kid. Maybe you are just trying to find your way. Maybe, but you guys are living a life you are not meant to be living. The coke, the sex, the drinking. The girls are killing themselves trying to be what the boys want them to be, and the boys just keep playing cool like they've done nothing wrong.

When you got your license and started driving to Montrose on the weekend from X suburb of Houston, is this what you loved this area for? Did you love the cokeheads and sluts and people who seemingly had all the wrong ideas about life? Or did you love the arts, the music, the thrift stores, and the freedom of expression? Have we forgotten that? When did living in Montrose become about doing as many drugs as possible, drinking as much as possible, fucking as much as possible, and waking up and doing it all over again the next day? Wake up to a new reality. The shit you're doing now you think is cool at 21 will be pathetic at 41. Have you ever seen those middle-aged men and women at bars still partying, with dogfaces and faded tattoos? That's you, soon. And you know those cracked-out homeless guys on Montrose who ask you for money? The ones you laugh at and make fun of and deny money to? You're one drug overdose away from that. You're one more lost friend or family member away from that. You're one more broken relationship and rumor and drink away from that.

We are all lost and confused. We're all looking for that something or someone or even the somewhere that will make us happier. We move to Austin because we think Houston sucks. Houston doesn't suck. You suck. Houston is full of opportunity and culture and things to do, things to learn, places to go. But instead, we choose to go to the same bars and pretend to like the same people, talk shit about everyone we encounter, and then turn around to others as though we are owed excuses for our behavior. Montrose can be a great place to live if you do it right. You're not doing it right. You are tragic. We are tragic. Call your mom and tell her you love her. And go get an STD test. Fuck.

Sincerely,
A concerned former tragedy

FPH



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Interview Ken Jones

BY ALEX WUKMAN

IT WAS THE DEFINING IMAGE of the early 1990s, five white LAPD officers beating a black man. The clip—a grainy image of blows raining down accompanied by a cameraman's frightened narration—was played so often on CNN that it became burned into the memory of all who watched, it became iconic. As the Los Angeles County District Attorney presented its case against the officers the clip became a fuse and when the jury—10 whites, one Hispanic and one Asian—returned a not guilty verdict the fuse was lit.

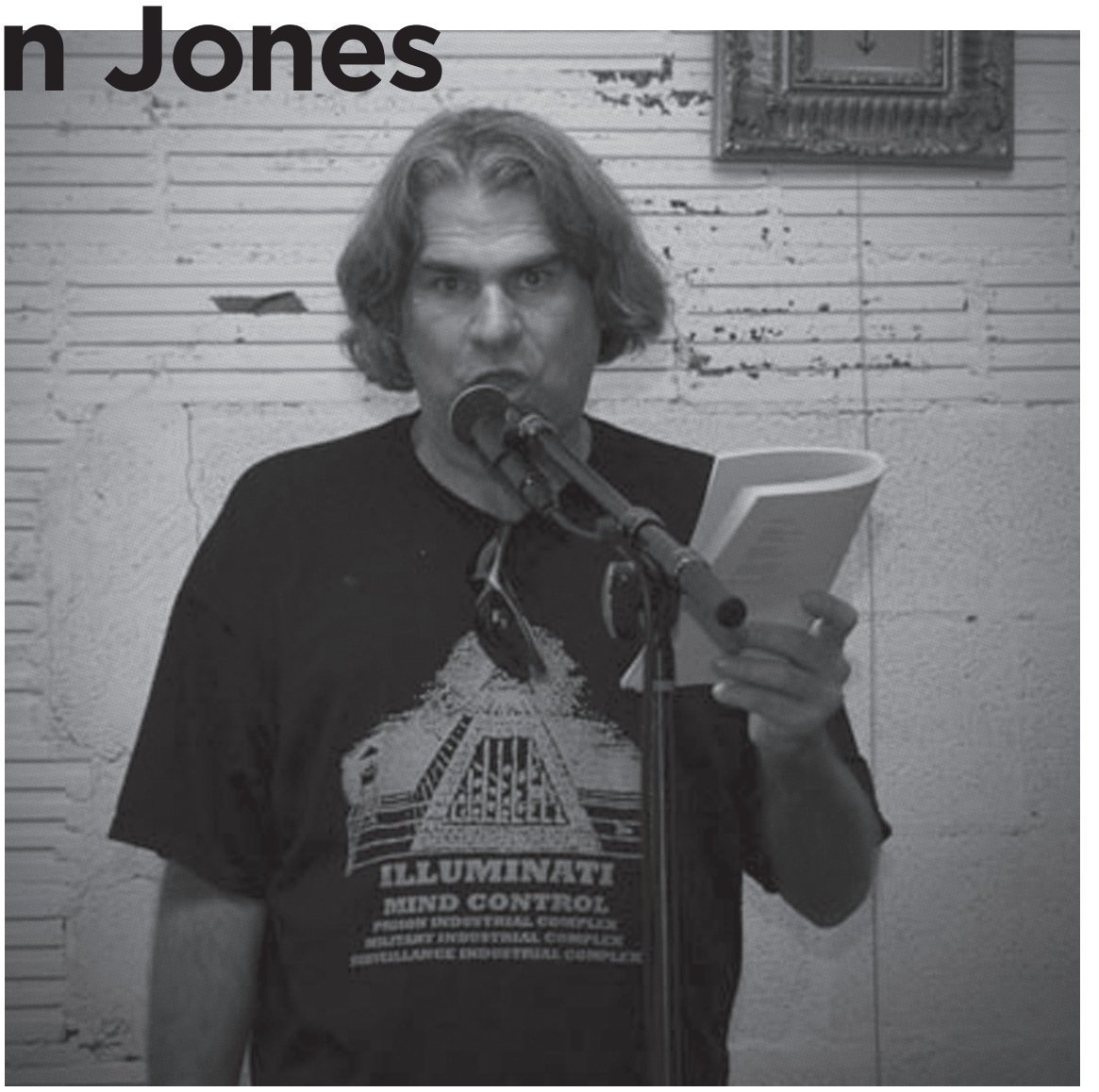
"It didn't take a genius to see that things were going to explode," says Ken Jones. Jones, a professor at the Art Institute of Houston, was living in LA at the time of the riots. Mere weeks before the jury recited the words that would compel a fractured city to take to the streets in search of justice, revenge or a free big screen TV—Jones released an album that seemed to predict the riots. Published in 1992 by LA micro-label Mansion on the Hill, Jones' cassette Witness An Empire's Decay is eight tracks of pure punk rage. At the time of release LA fanzine Smash called the music "a chilling rock and roll salvo aimed at America's twisted social values," values that were later found to be a root cause for the riots.

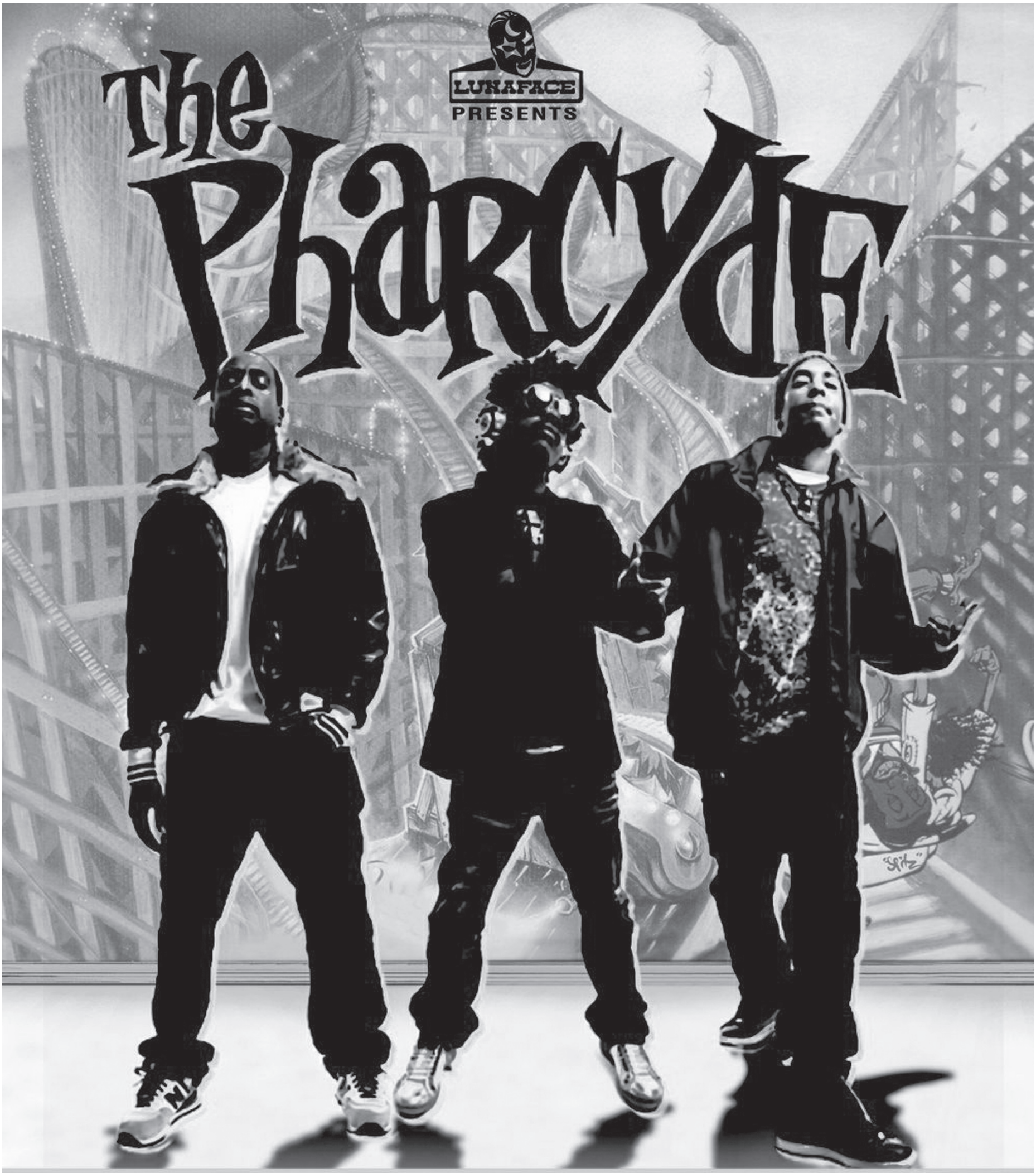
After the nearly 4,000 fires had been extinguished, the 53 dead bodies buried and the 2,000 injuries treated a special committee of the California Legislature issued a report which found that poverty, a lack of educational and employment opportunities and unequal access to consumer services "created the underlying causes of the riots." It's a report that reads like it could be written today, and the striking similarities between today's national conditions and those in pre-riot LA are not lost on Jones.

"The same things that sent people into the streets in '92 are the same things sending people to Occupy today," says Jones as he sips a beer. "The rebellion," Jones is unable to shake himself of the LA subculture habit of calling the Rodney King Riots the LA Rebellion, "changed some things and didn't change others. Look at the wealth gap—yeah it was bad back then, but it's nothing like it is today."

For Jones—as for most people—the sight of a city torn apart by its residents was life altering. He says that "watching gray, grit filled smoke" waft over his neighborhood of Silver Lake for three days made him realize "there wasn't anything to believe in," that "the social contract had been ripped to shreds." Jones says he spent the summer after the riots living in a storage unit. At the time of the riots PTSD wasn't a recognized diagnosis so there wasn't any government agency telling everyone about free counseling and the only support groups to join were the ones that met up over drinks or at shows. And in these circles Jones quickly got a reputation—not as a Texas transplant or an underground musician—as "the guy who predicted the riots."

Now as the riots approach their 20th anniversary, Jones has decided to reissue the album that inadvertently predicted them. The remixed and extended version of Witness An Empire's Decay will be reissued with new cover art from Chris Thompson of Sketchy Neighbors, and for the first time the album will be available on CD and as MP3s available through iTunes. To support the independent re-release, Jones will be doing a series of shows in Austin, Houston, LA and Massachusetts. He'll be performing selections from Witness on April 15—tax day—at Avant Garden. **FPH**





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The Smear is On



The Second Killing of Trayvon Martin

BY JOHN ESKOW

THE COWARDLY POLICE in Sanford, Florida, who sanctioned the murder of an unarmed black teenager by a racist vigilante named George Zimmerman, have now assassinated Trayvon Martin a second time, by leaking scurrilous and irrelevant "news" about him. This age-old dirty-trick of cops—compounded by a blitzkrieg of propaganda from Zimmerman's lawyer, The Orlando Sentinel, and one apparently unhinged black "friend"–has been, so far, fairly successful in muddying the narrative on the public airwaves. So let's take a moment to sift through the cops' slurs and innuendoes and see where, if anyplace, they take us.

About the salient facts there is no dispute. Zimmerman, a cop wanna-be who was also probably a small-time informant, a pathetic, chubby, Chaz-Bono-lookalike who'd twice been arrested for hitting a woman; Zimmerman, son of a judge, safe from reprisals; George Zimmerman, who calls black kids "coons" and "assholes," who was strictly warned not to pursue Trayvon Martin, refused this direct order over the phone and instead grabbed his 9-millimeter gun and waddled off to blow a hole in the chest of a kid who had committed no wrong.

From the start, I was edgy about certain elements of the outrage. Too much emphasis on the presumed childishness and vulnerability of Trayvon Martin, about the Skittles and ski-vacations and his undeniable cuteness. My own son is only six months younger than Trayvon, and he is of mixed racial background, with a tawny complexion; he always wears a hoodie with the hood up, along with other clothes some would perceive as "ghetto"; he is 6'1" and very well-muscled; and he loves Skittles. He is also, by objective account, adorable and kind-hearted. But if some oafish vigilante were to challenge his right to walk down the street, he might well become angry, and he might defend himself with a punch.

Thus today's biggest, police-leaked "reveleation": that, gee, perhaps Trayvon Martin was not Mahatma Ghandi with a sweet-tooth. According to the cops—parroting Zimmerman's own account, since of course they did absolutely no forensic work of their own (CSI Sanfordwould be the worst and shortest program on TV)—Martin punched Zimmerman in the face, breaking his nose…thus, of course, provoking his own murder.

Let's take this face-punching story at face value, though few of the details ring true (Zimmerman refused medical attention at the scene, which will confuse anyone who's ever suffered a broken nose). Though it is not noble or Christian of me to admit it, I hope Trayvon got a few good shots in. The big irony here is the much-cited "Stand Your Ground Law," quoted as a defense for Zimmerman's actions; but if the phrase and the concept have any meaning at all, they would, rather, go to justify Trayvon Martin's punches!

So let's assume a scenario where George Zimmerman, with the "fucking coon" still fresh out of his mouth, stomps off to play tough-guy with the "asshole" in the hoodie, and winds up getting punked in a fight he picked but can't finish. Any man who lived through public high school knows George Zimmerman, and may well have had occasion to kick his ass. But, until fairly recently, the George Zimmermans of the world did not carry nine-millimeter guns.

And so hateful, dopey, clumsy George Zimmerman pulled his trump card, his one and only answer to a world that scares and overwhelms him, and shot a hole in Trayvon Martin's chest.

The other piece of the cop/Zimmerman leak-strategy today was to drop the supposedly Perry Mason revelation that…this supposedly "good" kid, Trayvon Martin…had been suspended from high school…for possessing an empty bag that had once held marijuana!

Yeah…so, America, how do you like your Trayvon Martin now? He may have smoked weed!

The assumption being, in Sanford, Florida, that possession of an empty bag that once held marijuana is reasonable grounds for murder.

Let us not impose a false and un-necessary innocence on Trayvon Martin in order to pump up our outrage. Let's allow Trayvon Martin to be a real young man—my son, your son–with anger as well as innocence, perhaps even with marijuana as well as Skittles.

George Zimmerman did not murder some idealized vision of Innocent Black Childhood, or any other idealized vision. No, worse—much worse. He murdered a real 17-year-old. And now, with the help of the local newspaper and a shyster lawyer, the cops are killing that 17-year-old a second time. FPH

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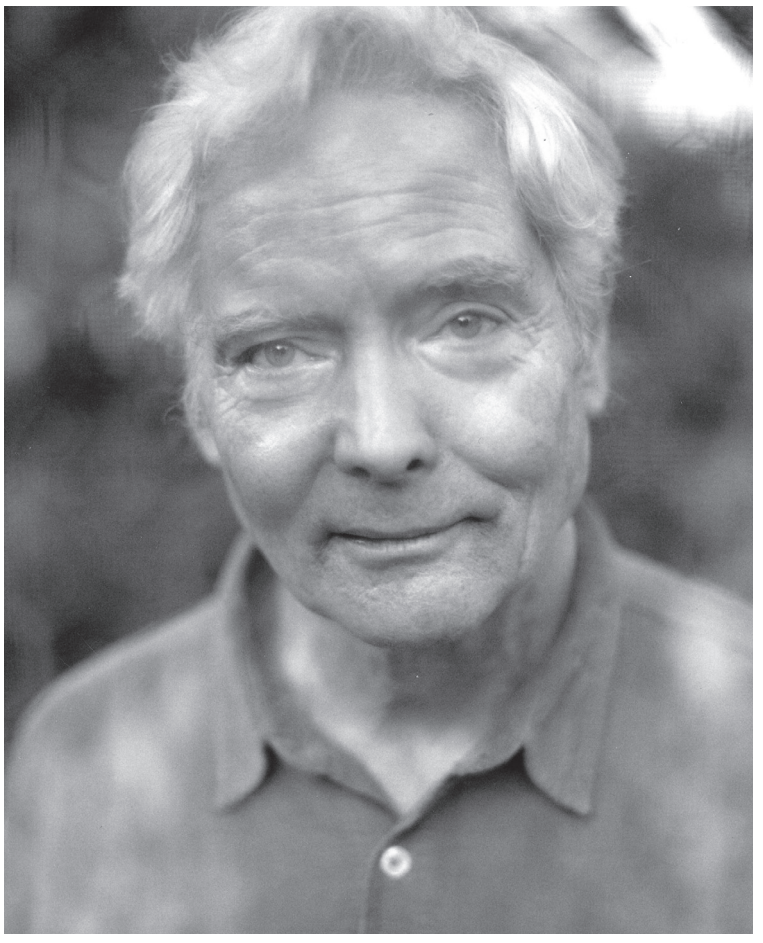
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April Arts in preview

Sprang Thangs



BY ALEX WUKMAN

APRIL IN HOUSTON is a time known more for Easter hats and discount baseball tickets than theatre or art, and this month's line-up explains why. Most of the alt theatre companies are taking the month off and the big companies are putting up uninspiring or uninteresting fare. The lack of intriguing theatre in April makes it hard to put together a calendar so I've had to make this month's slightly more well-rounded by including poetry and dance events.

The Tempest
April 12-April 29
Classical Theatre Company at Obsidian Arts Space, 3522 White Oak
Venue: 832.889.7837 Company: 713.963.9665
www.obsidianartspace.org, www.classicaltheatre.org

The third resident company of Studio 101 is taking their interpretation of Shakespeare's last play to the beloved Obsidian Art Space. For those who only cliff-noted the play, The Tempest is one of Shakespeare's romances and it tells the tale of the Duke of Milan Prospero—who also happens to be a wizard—and his daughter Miranda who are exiled and Prospero's attempt to get revenge on his political enemies and help his daughter get married. So, yea everyone doesn't die at the end.

The Cripple of Inishmaan
April 20-April 29
University of Houston School of Theatre Jose Quintero Theatre, 133 Wortham
713.743.5548, www.uh.edu/class/theatre-and-dance

Martin McDonagh's 1996 debut play brought his unique brand of pitch black humor to audiences and cemented him as a powerful voice in modern theatre. The Cripple of Inishmaan is the first play in McDonagh's Aran Island trilogy and tells the story of a crippled boy who desperately wants to be in a movie, if only, to escape the boredom of his daily life. McDonagh is probably best known for profoundly bizarre, and bizarrely profound, plays like The Pillowman and A Beheading in Spokane and the cult film In Bruges.

Dance Salad
April 5-April 7
Wortham Theater Center - Cullen Theater
501 Texas Avenue
713.250.3600, www.houstonfirsttheaters.com/WorthamCenter

Now celebrating 17 seasons in Houston, the Dance Salad Festival brings some of the best dance troupes from all over the world to town. This year's festival features performances from the Stuttgart Ballet and the SemperOper Ballet, both from Germany as well as the English National Ballet. The Compagnie Pal Frenak, which hails from France and Hungary, will be performing alongside Italy's Spellbound Dance Company and Pontus Lidberg from New York and Sweden and the National Ballet of Canada.

W.S. Merwin
April 23
Alley Theatre, 615 Texas St.
713.521.2026, www.inprinthouston.org

W.S. Merwin is a Pulitzer Prize winning poet, the 17th Poet Laureate of the United State and the author of over 20 collections of poetry. His poems have been anthologized literally hundreds of times. To call him a living legend is to an engage in an exercise in understatement. And he's reading at the Alley on April 23 and tickets are only $5.

Poetry for the Occupation
April 15, 7:30 p.m.
Avant Garden, 411 Westheimer
832.519.1429, www.avantgardenhouston.com

The War on Women, the increasing criminalization of speech, the murder of US citizens without due process, the ridiculous levels of income inequality, the continued attacks on voting rights and education are some of the reasons why a varied group of Houston poets are holding a reading on April 15—Tax Day—as a fundraiser for Occupy Houston. FPH

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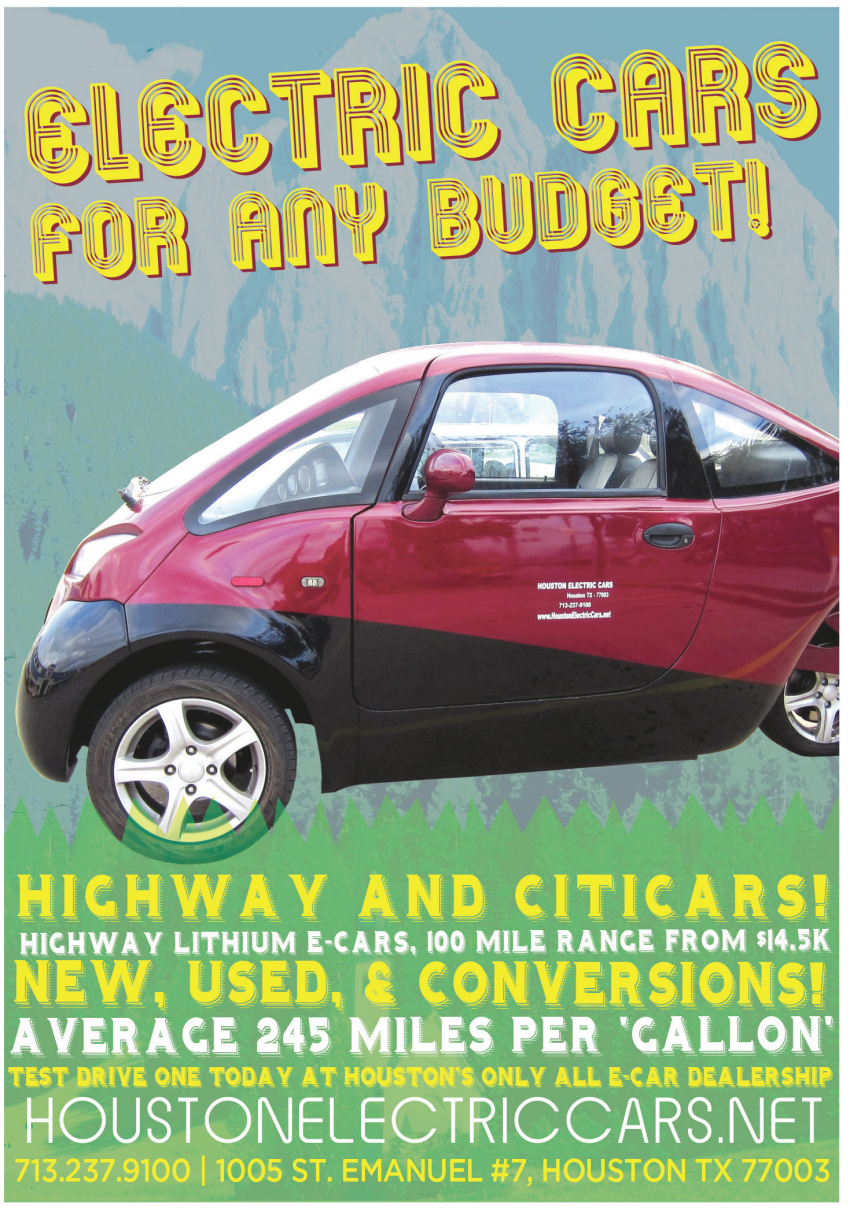
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Spring Break What I Did For

BY HARBEER SANDHU

FROM MARCH 12-18, I joined a group of 30 students, and teachers on a caravan from Houston to Tucson to call attention to Arizona's ban on ethnic studies in public schools. Organized by the Houston-based non-profit Nuestra Palabra, we called ourselves the Librotrificantes, or "book smugglers." These are some of my reflections on the trip.

It is the Sunday after SXSW, but I am nowhere near Austin—I am on a bus back to Houston from Tucson. I have spent the past week sleeping on floors, couches, and motel beds. I haven't eaten a fresh vegetable in days. I am spent—running on caffeine fumes. My teeth are fuzzy. My body hurts. I want to take a shower, eat a salad, kiss my baby, and sleep for days...but I can't, not yet.

So here I sit, bouncing along I-10, staring off into the distance through droopy eyelids. I see what look like hiking trails—light-colored veins crisscrossing the dark brush on the hillsides—trails that could be used by migrants crossing man-made borders...but more likely they are dry creeks, stone channels ground down by rainwater seeking reunion with the sea. We're somewhere between Ft. Stockton and San Antonio and the limestone hills reflect the colors of the sunset—purple mountain majesties above the desert plain. In some places the road winds around the hills, seeking the easiest route; in other places it blasts right through, revealing layers of sediment which remind me that this land was not always desert—this desert was once a seabed. What is the meaning of "time" in this landscape?

"They teach you to think that...we don't belong here," Dr. Cintli Rodriguez explains to a roomful of captivated high school students in the documentary film Precious Knowledge, "that we're part of a new culture, that we just got here. Well I'm here to tell you that your culture is at least 7,000 years old."

Let that settle in for a moment. The people of the Chihuauhan Desert have been freely moving across this land—following the seasons, hunting and gathering—for at least 7,000 years. What's Jesus's DOB, again? (Yeah, I mean that Jesus.) Show me your birth certificate, fool, welcome to "Arizona."

Arizona...Aztlan...Spain...Mexico...the Gadsden Purchase...it's all just ancient seabed turned desert to me.

Columbus mistakenly named the diverse people he encountered in this hemisphere "Indians," and the name stuck. My family is "the other kind" of Indian—from South Asia—but we choose to identify as "Punjabi" and "Sikh" before "Indian." Like the indigenous peoples of the SW United States, our homeland, Punjab, is divided by an artificial post-colonial border—we've been cleaved between India and Pakistan. The border crossed us, too, and the similarities don't end there.

Sikh immigrants first arrived on the West Coast of North America by water, via Hong Kong and Singapore, in the late 19th century. This primary wave of Sikhs was composed almost entirely of single, young men who came to work on farms and railroads. Just as they poured their sweat into the furrowed fields of California's Central Valley and the timber groves of the Pacific Northwest, the local earth seeped into their pores and claimed them for itself. They mingled with Chicanos, Chinese and children of slaves, married their coworkers' sisters and daughters. They joked about being "American Indians" with Native Americans, saved money to buy their own farms, took up the local customs, and within two generations, all that remained of their homeland was their names. It's not uncommon to meet brown-skinned folks in California who identify as Latino but bear Punjabi last names.

I am reminded of this as I bounce along this interstate, fighting sleep, each time a train blows past on the train tracks running parallel to I-10. This interstate and the railroad running beside it, the arteries pumping the lifeblood of this nation (i.e. Chinese-made goods headed to Wal*Marts across the continent) were built on the backs of people some of us would deign to call "foreigners," though the goods they carry are not taxed or even asked for papers.

I am reminded, too, that these same railroad tracks, these "arteries pumping the lifeblood of the nation," long ago choked migrating herds of native buffalo. But there is hope, yet, that we might grow up as a country and learn to honor and celebrate our diverse histories and contributions to the Melting Pot, rather than use an infantile version of bleached and whitewashed history to beat us into submission.

On this trip I have seen and met:

European Hari Krishnas serving vegetarian Indian food in a Chicano art gallery;
the mother of a Latina dating an Indian man who asked me for advice on what to expect from his family;
a Kashmiri/Tucsconan student of Mexican American Studies at Tucson High in a "Free Syria" t-shirt;
a Muslim-American social studies teacher in full hijab who'd come to meet and support our caravan from Los Angeles with 17 of her colleagues in a caravan of their own;
the Bengali-American publisher of BorderSenses Literary Magazine in El Paso's historic Chinatown;
students who participated in a ceremonial, 165-mile run from Tucson to Phoenix to demand that the "Discovery Doctrine" be included in their history curriculum;
myself, a camel-jockey dressed in an Uncle Sam outfit singing a song containing the words "Johnny Cash helped me get out of prison/Long before Rodriguez stole that goat" with a Jewish wetback schoolteacher from Baytown in a rural Dairy Queen among diverse local families, soldiers from nearby bases in fatigues, mustachioed cowboys, and stubbly musicians in sunglasses headed west from SXSW;
and tons of literature written and performed in the English language by Americans of every hue.

This is not a Chicano issue. This is a struggle to live up to the words (if not the deeds) of our Founding Fathers. "In order to eliminate racism," says banned author Lorna Dee Cervantes, "we must illuminate racism."

I'll leave you with the poem a Tucson High School teacher opens and closes each class with:

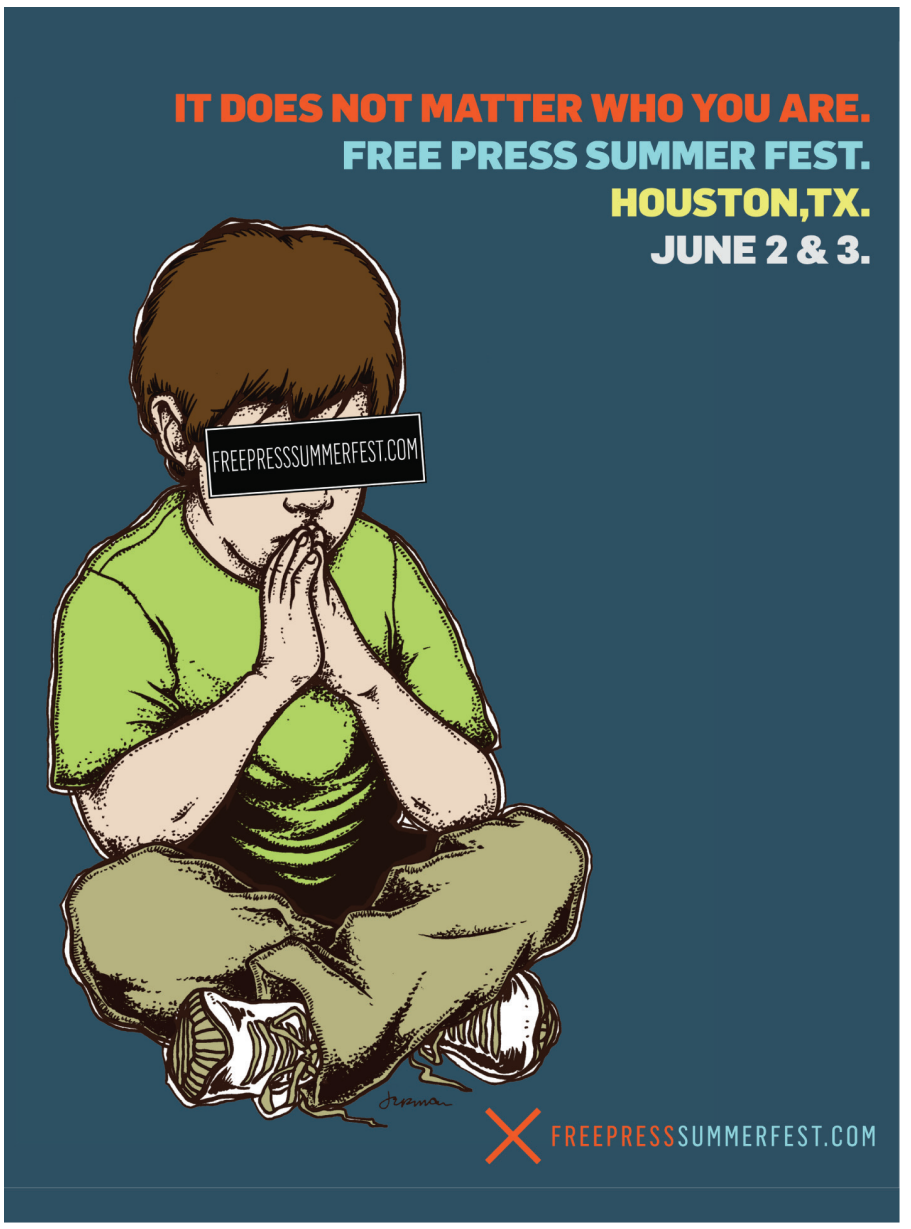
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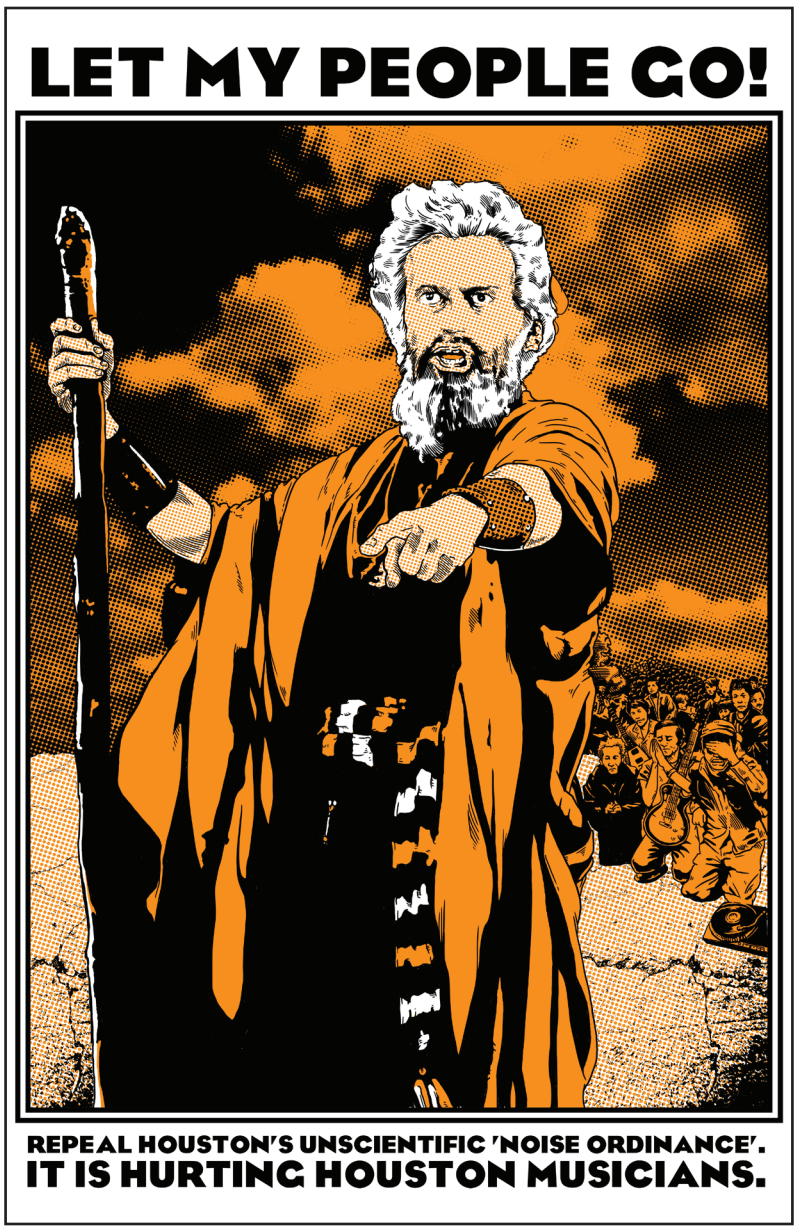
Tu eres me otro yo.
You are my other me.
Si te hago daño a ti
If I do harm to you
Me hago daño a mi mismo
I do harm to myself.
Si te me y respeto
If I love and respect you,
Me amo y respeto yo,
I love and respect myself.

- from "Pensamiento Serpentino" by Luis Valdez

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