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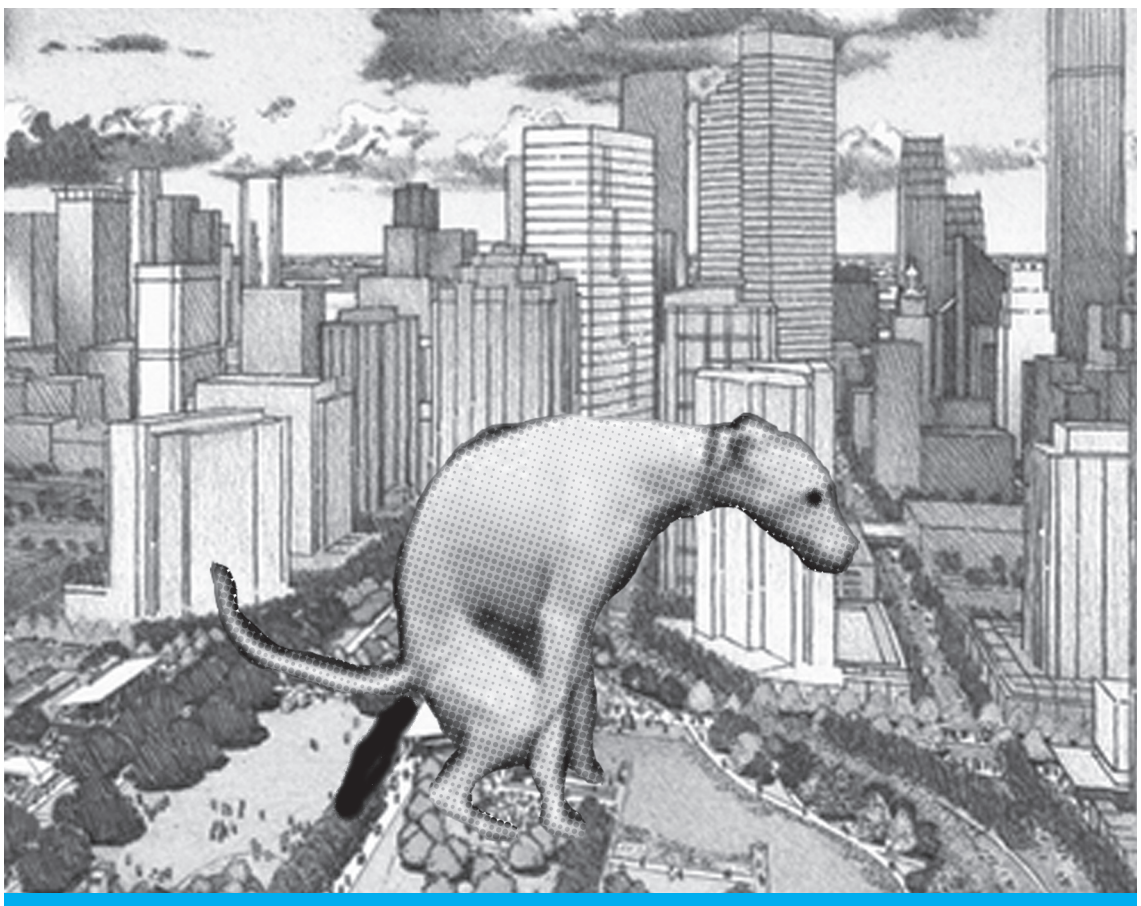
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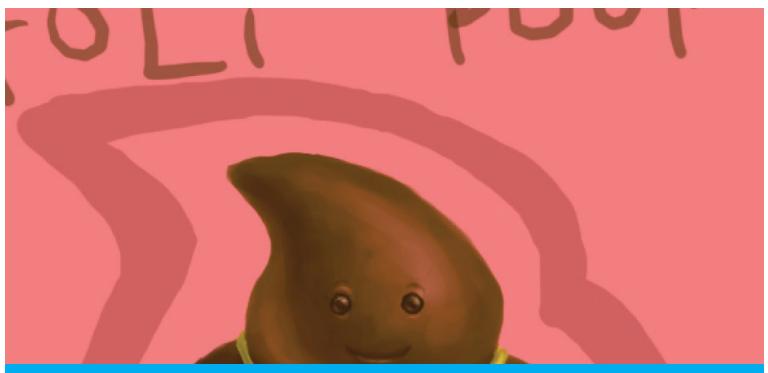
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editors

FEEL FREE

yo

"No matter how busy you may think you are, you must find time for reading, or surrender yourself to self-chosen ignorance."

Myself, as well as my comrades, have been insane busy on that super-deluxe tip. I am not nagging here. that is much better than the alternative. Nonetheless, when the shit gets thick and you find yourself too busy to ever internalise what your doing, take the time to smack someone. Don't even charge them. As a matter of fact, let's all slap the person closest in proximity to us right now.

Anyways, we here are busy like 'whoa' with several clutch-time shenanigans for the month of May: Our new local showcase Recession Thursdays at Numbers which kicks off May 8th, a canned food drive with 6 bands at Numbers on May 24th, and the whole staff are collaborating on recalibrating the Free Press Weather Manipulation Device. Expect massive hail next Monday.

Lastly, thanks to the shit-ton of people that came to the last Westheimer Block Party. It was 'cool-sauce'. We could have not made it as clutch without the following infidels:

Shelby Hohl
Brittany Bly
M.Martin
Bruce Wiggins
Hadeel Assali
Johnny from Audio in the Pregap
Tyler Barber
Tim Dorsey (me love)
Jeff Storm
MEZ
Trail of Dead
Steve Bundrick
Jacob Calle
Eli Brumbaugh
Wes Wallace
Paul Holzhauer

Oh yeah, and me, Omar Afra, I did most of the work. It was my birthday too. So make sure and tell me what a stellar human being I am next time you see me.

Thanks Houston.

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With Where Vegas Lies,
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Orange Is In, Pete Simple,
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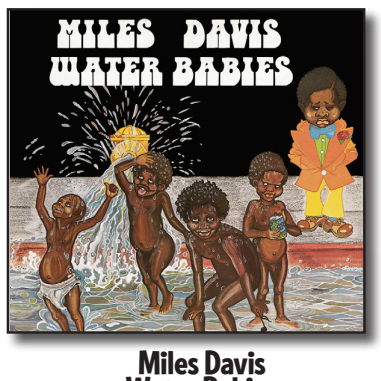
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5/16 - American Princes - 6pm
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May 16 -10:00P
Golden Brown
Sabra Laval

May 17-10:00P
Robert Pearson and Carl Smith

May 23-10:00P
HotelHotel
P for Flamingos

May 25-9:00P
Bad Ash

May 30-10:00P
Allen Cote
Great Unwashed Luminaries

May 31 - 10:00P
Laura Meyer
Chuck Wagon

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DEBRIS

Love and Rockets

| Buffalo Sean



Go downtown! They opened up a new park, just so you know. Discovery Green is 12 acres of grass, 100-year old Live Oak trees, a dog park and two restaurants. They also managed to dig up the whole site and implant an underground garage for 630 cars- just make sure you aren't trapped down there the next time it floods.

Opened one week before 420, Discovery Green will surely be the home of NORML meetings and marches in the near future. Hey Houston, did you know that 100,000 pot smokers gathered to have a ball this year in Boulder, Colorado for a certain holiday? Be prepared for similar ventures in your future!

Lamenting the death of Polaroid film? Opening May 3rd is Artstorm's new exhibit *Shoot From The Hip*, curated by Melissa Juvan and Isela Aguirre. Come by and swoon over Alicia Seale's (no relation to Bobby) sensual work, and pose for a Polaroid for the gallery's ongoing wall of visitors. Newcomers to the art scene John Hines and Kelly Ekl debut in this exhibit of technically diverse photographers, but Lisa Marie Godfrey steals the show with her modified vintage pics. Check out Daniel Hipolito's video perspectives saturated with vivid colors, as well as Jim Dillon's double exposures. Open through the end of the month.

John Alexander: A Retrospective at the Museum of Fine Arts is a beautiful hook, like a pop song. Just think- if you are interested in Houston's artistic history then you should get to know its lineage. I am listening to a disco song as I write this, but I know that it is thirty years late and by *BIS*. It's still good. Alexander's expressionism reverberates powerfully in our current world, with his political critiques at the fore of a representational body of work. Pigs are pigs, if you know what I mean. John Alexander is born and bred East Texan, and the extra coating of loam on his fingernails is a tangible part of his livelihood. Through June 22nd.

Alexander was a driving force in Houston in the late 1970s, his work was solidified by the advise if James Harithas (curator at The Station) and James Surls, who kicked off the artistic explosion that the Lawndale created in the ensuing decade. FYI- any metal lovers out there should ALSO go to the show with headphones on- and experience what it is to know the history of Houston with Slayer. Or Mastodon. Or Cannibal Corpse. Alexander deserves it.

April 9th brings Claudia Schmuckli's vision of Houston to the Blaffer Gallery at the University of Houston with NO graduates of the program; apparently the world is not ready for a U of H graduate not sucking balls. Anyway, fuck the world, the Houston Area Show includes Seth Alverson, William Betts, Sasha Dela, Jonathan Durham, Hana Hillerova, Hedwige Jacobs, Andres Janacua, Nicholas Kersulis, Mindy Kober, Jonathan Leach, Lynne McCabe, Ariane Roesch, Julie Spielman, Gabriela Trzebinski, Jeff Williams and Audry Worster. FPH

Maripol, or Andy Warhol's buddy #13, will be exhibiting her photographs of the fairytale early 80s New York scene beginning April 23rd at Deborah Colton Gallery (2500 Summer). Even if the gallerists are caught up in the Abu Dhabi art fair, it should still be a beautiful opening (try and catch the afterparty!!!) The exhibit *Perverse City* will be on view through the 4th of July.

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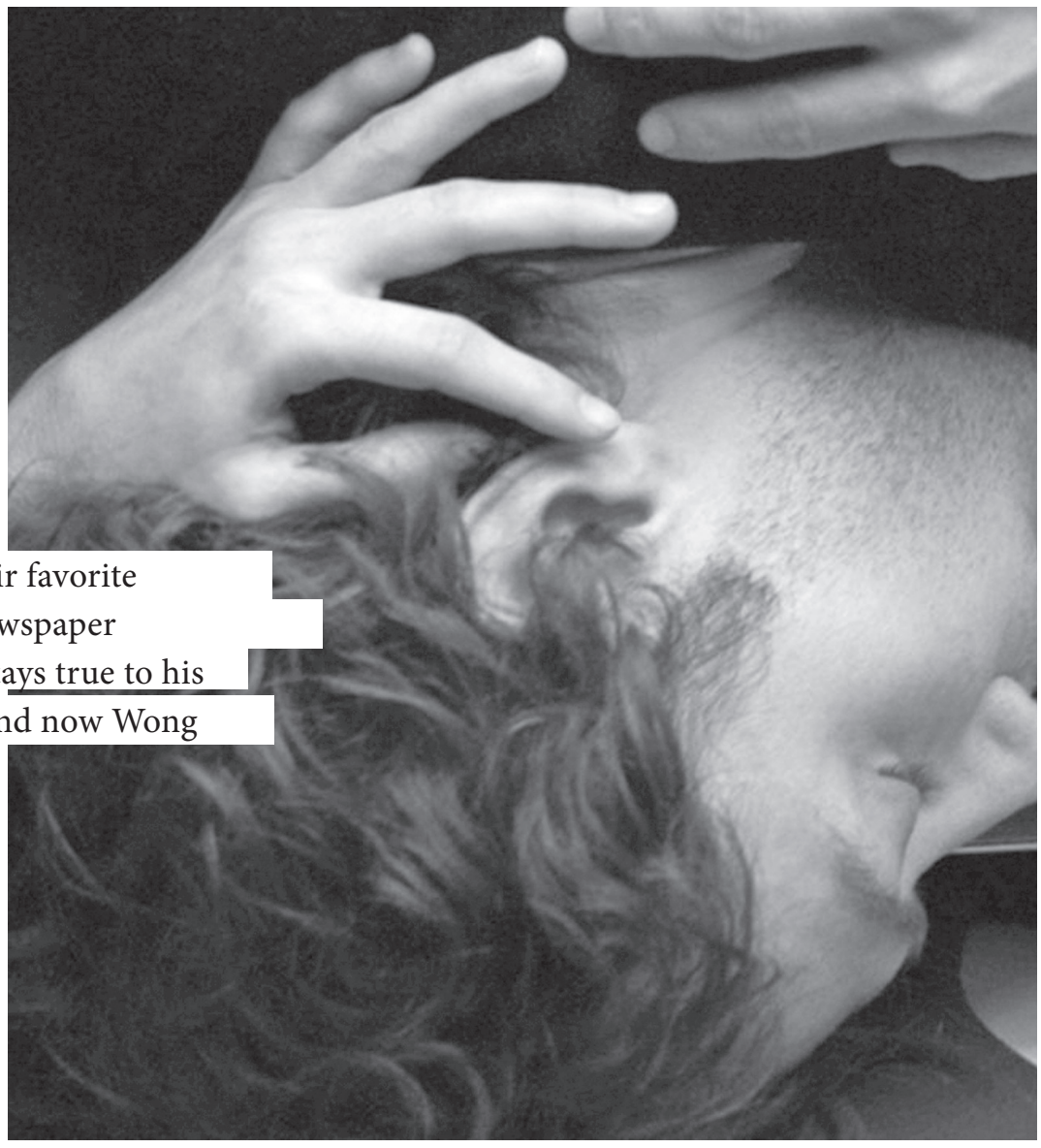
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A Day in Palestine
Slingshot HipHop
Saturday May 10th - MFAH
9 Star Hotel
Sunday May 11th - MFAH
Knowledge is the Beginning
Friday May 16th - Rice
Ya Ana Ya Haifa
Shadow of Absence

Saturday May 17th - Rice
A Collection of Iraqi and Palestinian Shorts
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Surda Checkpoint
A Candle for Shabandar Café
Be Quiet
In-Between: Artists in Exile
Sunday May 18th - Rice
The Shooter
Driving to Zigzigland

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WKW SLOWS TIME, SERVES PIE

| Michael Bergeron



Real movie fans appreciate the delicate nuances of their favorite directors while the media at large (film blogs, daily newspaper reviews) tend to negatively grade films if the helmer stays true to his form. Think Wes Anderson with Darjeeling Limited and now Wong Kar Wai with My Blueberry Nights.

INSTEAD of celebrating the cinematic glee with which such directors explore their own place within commercial movie making they complain that the person is in a creative rut or that they are not advancing as artists. Honestly I would rather watch any film from an accomplished director than a year's worth of programmers that litter the multiplexes with new titles every weekend.

Kar Wai Wong was born July 17, 1958 in China, but grew up in Hong Kong. American audiences have seen his work regularly distributed on the art house circuit since 1994's Chungking Express. Kar Wai's films lean not so much towards the non-linear as they bow in the direction of dreamy memories. Breaking up regular rhythm with slow or fast motion is a visual motif oft repeated in his films. Since early in his career Kar Wai had used Christopher Doyle as his regular DP and their collaborations are visual explorations in breaking up space and time, just see In The Mood For Love. With My Blueberry Nights, Kar Wai worked with Darius Khondji a noted cinematographer in his own right (with the atmospheric thriller Se7en to his credit).

"My communication with the DP is simple," Kar Wai told Free Press Houston in an interview. "With Doyle it was a collaboration of 15 years. We would try to surprise each other.

"Darius is different. Instead of talking we took a trip to understand the journey of the characters. We talked about how we see their space. The choice of the director is how to frame a shot, the rest I leave to the DP."

My Blueberry Nights follows Norah Jones (in her acting debut) as she walks in and out of the lives of customers at the various bars and cafes where she works. The locales include Las Vegas, Memphis and New York. In particular Jude Law works in Gotham cafeteria that serves desert late at night and keeps a bowl of keys that have been abandoned by departing lovers.

"There's nothing wrong with the Blueberry Pie, just people make other choices. You can't blame the Blueberry Pie, it's just, no one wants it," Law's character tells Jones early on. She falls asleep at the counter with a bit of crème on her lips. As Law leans over to kiss the crumbs off, Kar Wai changes angles. Law's movement in front of her casts a shadow on her face. "That first kiss is like an eclipse, a surprise," notes Kar Wai. Later in the film the shot is repeated, only on the reverse cut the camera is directly overhead looking down on the couple. "The top shot deals with the distance between the characters," explains Kar Wai.

Many of the set-ups emphasize the surroundings of the actors. For instance Law has a sequence where he fiddles with the store's security camera, seen from a high angle, while he's standing on a ladder. At the bottom of the frame we can see his security monitor, which is really one of the video replay monitors (marked with tape for the film's aspect ratio) so common on movie sets. As is his style Kar Wai shoots this scene at 4 frames-a-second resulting in a stop-and-go momentum. Other scenes were shot at 12 or 8 frames-per-second. (Regular motion is 24 f.p.s.) "With a bigger aperture you use less light, it creates a dream feeling," continues Kar Wai. Creating his shots he maintains that cinema has produced 100 years of movie rules and frankly he "doesn't care about eyelines."

My Blueberry Nights also stars Rachel Weisz, David Strathairn, Natalie Portman and Cat Power (Chan Marshall). Jones meets most of them during a 300-day journey across the country. Some of them are happy, some are sad and likewise the film weaves their tales in a passive and aggressive manner. Occasionally the widescreen image is broken up by text indicating the day (such as Day 213, like a diary) on the left side and a character on the right.

The film had secured rights to a couple of Cat Power songs and indeed in another signature motif Kar Wai keeps reintroducing one track, "The Greatest" over and over not unlike the way a Nat King Cole warbler was used repeatedly during In The Mood For Love. The film was on location in New York and Cat Power was playing in town. "I heard she was shy," remarks Kar Wai about meeting her backstage for the first time. One speaking role had yet to be cast and Kar Wai felt her understated manner would be right. The scene plays out in dark earthy hues late at night when Katya shows up at Law's place to get back her keys.

Kar Wai may have found a relation between the inner life of singers and his mode of motion. The motivation for actors seems to be a lingering reverie of love and a general sense of coolness, supported by neon bright colors and musical cues, constantly rolls over the film. A repeated shot shows a close-up of the titular blueberry pie with cream slowly running down the sides. It's that sweet.

The Visitor takes on INS

Tom McCarthy may be one of your favorite actors and you don't realize it. Take a look at his credits – Syriana, Flags of Our Fathers, Good Night and Good Luck, the reporter from season five of The Wire – and a sense of recognition awakens.

Then McCarthy blindsides you by also being the writer-director of The Station Agent and now The Visitor. The Station Agent (well reviewed in 2003) showed that McCarthy understands pacing and character and the film boosted the career of Peter Dinklage playing



the moody lead character. For The Visitor McCarthy took another veteran supporting actor, one that everyone would remember, Richard Jenkins, and put him up front, playing a moody New England professor who befriends a Syrian man about to be deported.

Jenkins plays Walter Vale. "He's worldly, a guy who's derailed in life," McCarthy tells FPH in a phone interview. "He makes no apologies and is a tough teacher."

Vale's such a prig he nearly makes one student cry and you begin to feel a kind of hatred for his character no matter what the cause of his pessimism. When Vale has to go to New York City to deliver a paper a series of events team him up with an immigrant couple. Given his previous behavior you expect Vale to have a glass of wine and forget about them, but a spark of humanity can be seen flickering in his heart. The glow of The Visitor shows people becoming true friends in a place away from borders. McCarthy spent time in the Middle East (Lebanon in particular) and researched the ramped up immigration policies in place since the end of 2001.

Vale tries to help the couple find an apartment when Tarek (Haaz Sleiman) gets picked up by INS. At this point Vale makes it a kind of mission to get Tarek a lawyer and deal with his detention. Tarek's mother Mouna (Hiam Abbass) shows up out of the blue and the sub-text seems to suggest that Vale might emerge from his self-imposed isolation.

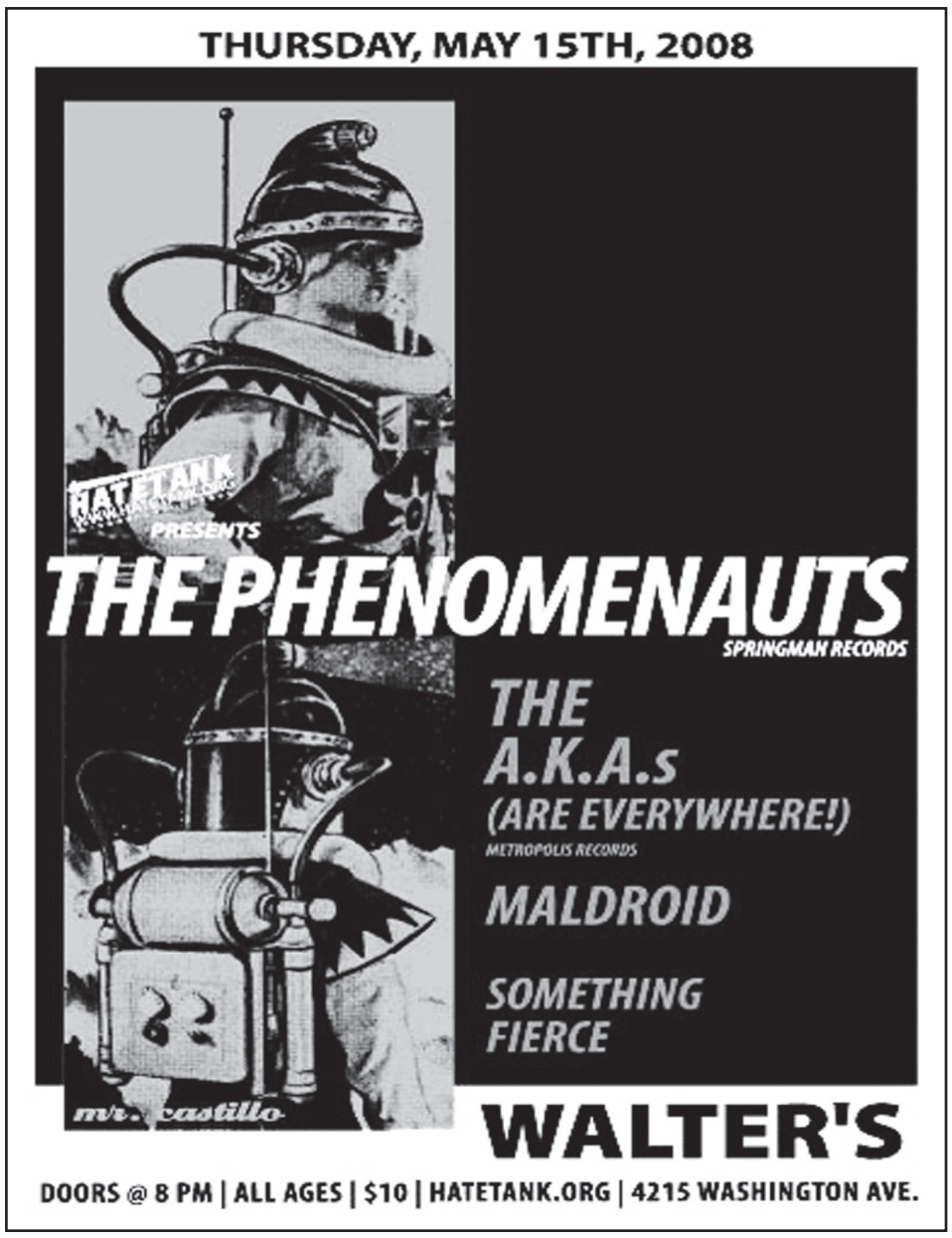
McCarthy was clear to the actors on "understanding the boundaries," between Vale and Mouna and their relation grows stronger even as Tarek's case looks bleaker.

"Being a character actor is hard work," notes McCarthy about Jenkins an actor who has constant credits in television and film going back to the 70s. Yes, trained actors know how to properly hit their cues but as McCarthy points out "they command respect from other actors."

For McCarthy the process of writing is "creating the tempo on the page." Then when shooting McCarthy intuitively knew when to "play out the scene in a two-shot." Partially shot in New York the film captures a drum circle in Central Park that plays into the story. Like the beat that Vale and Tarek pound on the djembe, The Visitor moves at its own tempo.

FPH





IT HAUNTS THE LENSES OF MY EYES, AND THE CHEMICALS IN MY BRAIN

| Kwame M. Anderson



The co-modification of lifestyle as identity has single handedly ruined the music industry. The idea (based in) socialization that a successful marketing technique has created an audience that clings to the labels rather than the music which is itself (mis) represented in order to satisfy a capital interest. It is capitalism that is ruining music, yes, I said capitalism.

Because the idea of it (music) as a product. The idea that by perpetuating the ideas a socialized flock, a created market based on emotional traits or fashion traits of a certain sect, a person who feels I am "gangsta, " or "underground," has based ways of thinking which lend one to purchases (clothes, types of cars, breeds of dogs, food choices) rather than values, making the idea of wearing tight pants to show" I am not like everyone else"(while still you purchased those pants at a store like "everybody else") a questionable your notion of independence. It "must be" the money as Deion Sanders once sang. In the first Ashlee Simpson video she wore a shirt that read "Punk." At that point I vowed to never use the term again,. The Minutemen are no longer punk rock to me, they are rock n' roll. Wait, they've fucked that one up too…

ON DISPLAY

THE BREEDERS
5/7/08 | Meridian

Do I not put addresses to clubs because I am lazy? That is not the question, nor is this a questionnaire. The Breeders are one of the best, most reliable, definitions of a rock band. The Breeders have never tried to be anything other than The Breeders. Even on their latest wonderful album, Mountain Battles (4AD), their cover of Reglalame Esta Noche still sounds like The Breeders. Albums that took 5 to 7 years to make, still, sound like The Breeders. There is much to be said about that, consistency, creating a sound, it is a lost art. This is not their "Sgt. Peppers" or their "Zeppelin IV" it is them doing what they do. Which is what they do live, and is usually why you go to a show. You want to get down, and The Breeders get down, and when you hear "Cannonball" you will yell in that way you did when you were young, and it will prove, as much as things change, they still stay the same, in a good way, not the "you should start exercising" way…

BLOOD ON THE WALL
5/11/08 | Walter's

The wheel does not always need to be re-invented, Blood On The Wall is not going to come out and have an army of sitars, their not going to sit and jam acoustic, and their not going to be joined by a local emcee on stage, hopefully. But, they will rock your shit, and this is what they came to do. Now they're sound has been said to owe something to the Pixies, I disagree, moving on… Blood On The Wall's latest Liferz was, I believe, reviewed by me before, but in the interest of selling tickets, a phenomenal 30 to 40 minute work of rock-nogstic energy. I'm not concerned about real words; I'm concerned that you get concerned. It's going down as the dude outside confirms.

CAVE SINGERS
5/14/08 | Walter's on Washington

The Cave Singers do the types of music that magnify the moments you sit outside, or in the passenger's seat of a car, staring out at a star, or a gate, or a light post. A lot of times that music is associated with the word folk, which seems to mean no drums and acoustic, so in that way, maybe, but I compare them more to an artist that would make you leave your house on this night, and see this show. And who would that artist be? Please insert their name, act like I did, re-read the preview act like I read your mind.

IN THE CASE

MAN MAN
Rabbit Habits (Anti)

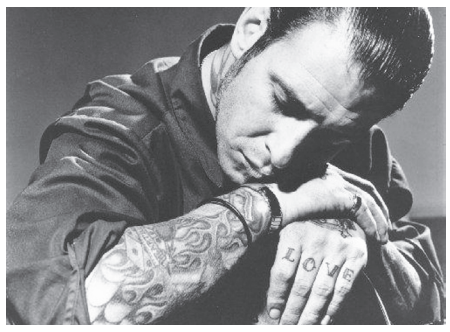
Every Man Man album has done what few albums do, it trumps the last. Man Man have continually gotten better through a profu-



O Pioneers!!
5/3 @ Walter's



The Sword
5/29 @ Rudyard's



Mike Ness
5/6 @ Meridian



The Wild Moccasins
5/24 @ Numbers



sion of touring, and with each album, a bit of that energy leaks into the recording studio. Rabbit Habits is an album that has the energy of a live performance, for as tight as the band has become, there is still the looseness, the unpredictability of a show, where are they going to go next, what is that noise, did somebody throw a bottle at me? Maybe they are not a soul band, but I would be hard pressed to say that "Doo Right" isn't a soul song. I am convinced that "Top Drawer" is a Purple Rain b-side, but apparently it isn't. If this is not one of the best albums this year, then this year was not a good year for album judgment.

EXPERIMENTAL DENTAL SCHOOL
Jane Doe Loves Me (Cochon)
XDS make songs that require all of the senses, yes, even smell. Their new album is an escapade, but un-like the Janet Jackson song and video of the same title, there is no Cab Calloway, however the energy of Cab Calloway is present. "Microscopic Lab Voices" is a boogie, a rock powerhouse, and a song! "Obscene Back Porch Floating" and "Uh Huh- Na Uh" are prettier versions of the XDS experience. "Whale Drone" limps and trips along the groove. This band is compared to DEVO, that's neither here nor there.

The Oh Sees
The Master's Bedroom Is Worth Spending A Night In (Tomlab)
If Chuck Berry invented rock n' roll, then he would say that this is a rock n' roll record. The Oh Sees last album "Sucks Blood" was a slow jam of psychedelic distortion-ery. This album is a soul record, Otis Redding doing Royal Trux, Ike Turner's version of Corpse Love (Note: if you've never heard these records, just go with it). "You Will See This Dog Before You Die" is phantasmagoric. I'm not sure that's the correct use of that word.

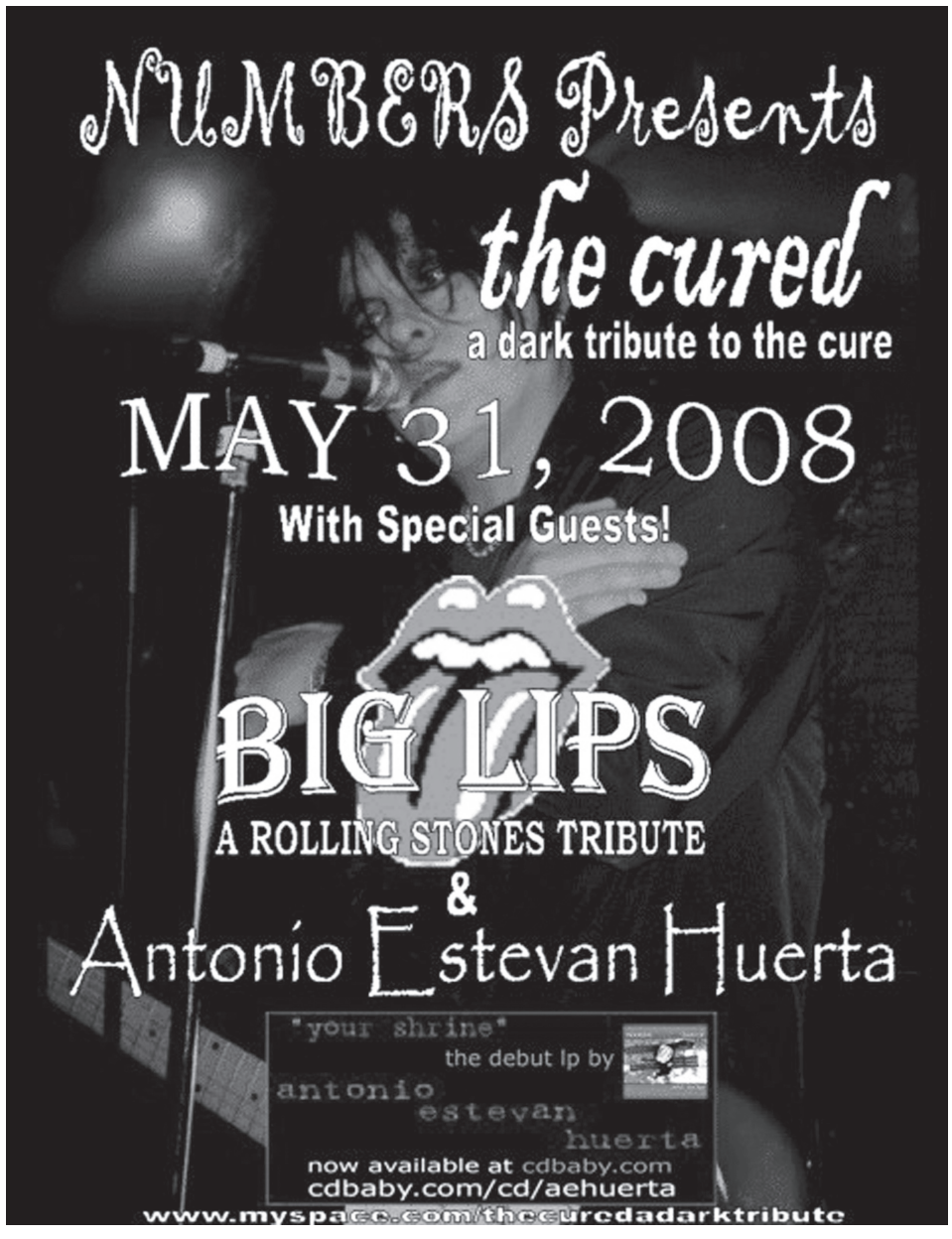
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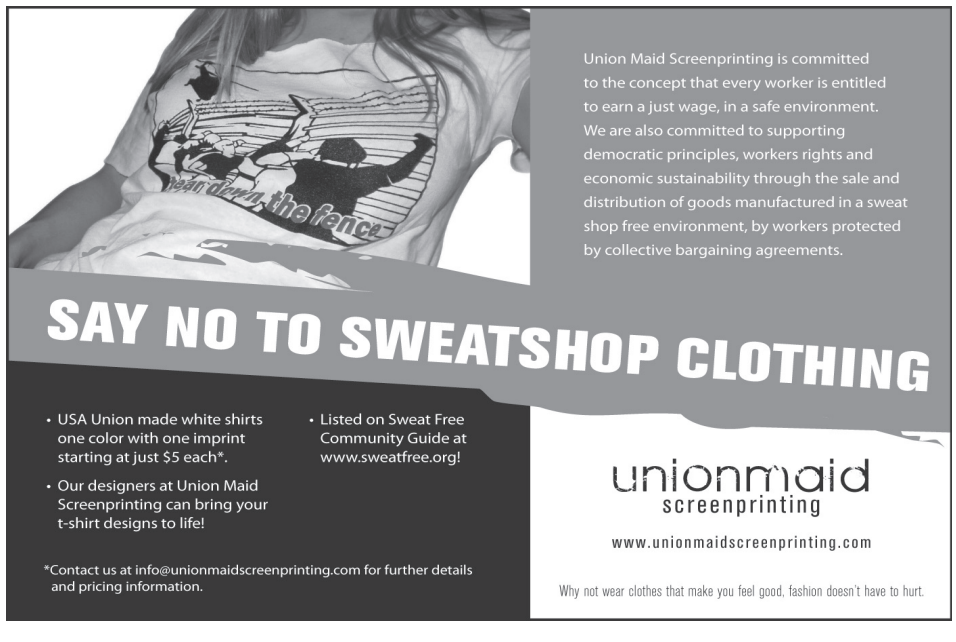
DAM
5/9 @ Warehouse Live



Shotgun Party
5/22 @ Mucky Duck







BACK IN THE SADDLE AGAIN

| Brigitte Zabak



Man. It is amazing what giving yourself a break will do. After bowing out somewhat gracefully from the musical goings-on of our fair city, I am back and ready to be blown away (in the metaphorical sense, of course). May is kind of like the calm before the storm when it comes to live music. Summer tours start picking up steam and various music festivals loom not too far in the future.

If you have the cash and the vacation time to attend one or all of these festivals, I envy you and hope you at least bring me back a commemorative t-shirt. If you'll be sticking around these parts, and don't mind driving out to the Woodlands a lot – there are actually quite a few shows that will stimulate your senses and help you momentarily forget about all the cool stuff going on in other parts of the country.

One of the great [illegible] stream summer tours is getting the chance to see a bunch of bands on one bill. Sure, the tickets are pricy but you almost always end up getting your money's worth. In fact, the month kicks off with a pretty impressive lineup of hip-hop hullabaloo. Kayne West, Rihanna, N.E.R.D. and Lupe Fiasco will be performing out at Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion on May 2nd. Each of these musicians has their own separate and distinct sound ranging from the progressive mix of rock and hip-hop that is N.E.R.D to the straight up rap flow of Kayne West. There is a little something for everyone who digs this kind of sound and if you can endure Kayne's long-windedness between songs, it will probably be a pretty memorable gig. If hip-hop isn't your thing but driving great lengths to see southern rock jam bands is, head out to the Sam Houston Raceway Park to check out Widespread Panic.

For some reason [illegible] has become the day where everyone (and by everyone – I mean all the people I know personally) decided to book gigs, throw random parties, and do neat things that I have to miss out on. Though The Raconteurs will not be gracing us with their presence during this tour and opted instead to play not one but two shows at Stubb's in Austin – the Jonbenet/Sharks and Sailors show at Walter's will totally make up for that. The best way I can think to describe The Jonbenet's sound is super intense and really freaking loud. It's a truly awesome thing to see a local band that is so driven and dedicated to their music. Sharks and Sailors are the same way and the new stuff they have been playing is pretty darn spectacular and almost ready to be unleashed to the masses in album form. This is definitely one of those shows that make you wonder why people don't pay more attention to what the indie scene in Houston has to offer.

There ar[illegible] shows playing against each other on May 7th and the choice to be made is going to be a difficult one. The Breeders recently released a new album and they are touring for a bit with Mississippi rockers Colour Revolt. In fact, Colour Revolt may just end up stealing the show at The Meridian. Their 2008 release on Fat Possum Records is proving to be one of the best albums of this year. It's a great rock album and should translate well in a live setting. Just down the way, The Whigs and Austin-based What Made Milwaukee Famous will be playing at Warehouse Live. WWMF has been getting a fair amount of buzz about their indie pop rock sound. The Whigs are a band from Athens, Georgia whose music stays true to their southern roots and has a muted rawness that keeps your ears perked and your toes tapping.

Carney is a four-piece band from Los Angeles, California that has built up quite a following in their native land. The stage seems to be the ideal place for these guys to share their blues-inspired rock noise. Although they have nothing more than a newly released EP to their credit, Carney's infectious sound will have them surpassing the likes of The Black Keys before you know it. The quartet is playing on May 10th at Warehouse Live.

The cover of mr[illegible]leased album *Deliver this Creature* is really creepy. It has Donnie Darko meets Primus kind of feel to it and misleads you a bit as to what is inside. The music of mr. Gnome is actually an eerie but unbelievably enjoyable collection of songs from two musicians from Ohio. Nicole Barille's voice is gorgeous and really reminiscent of Hope Sandoval and PJ Harvey and it plays really well against the brashness of her guitar. They will be playing at Rudyard's on May 16th.

Although there is a lot of [illegible] flavor this month, there are also quite a few big name acts touring some touring. One of the most anticipated shows of the year will most certainly be Radiohead on May 17th at Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion. Since the inception of *In Rainbows*, Radiohead has proven once again that they aren't going anywhere soon and, in fact, they are just going to get better and better. The Police are coming back around, this time with Elvis Costello in tow. They will be playing on May 20th at (yup – you guessed it) Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion. If you can't get enough of the Woodlands, make sure to head back over there on the 22nd to see Iron Maiden.

Rock onward, yo.

May 24th Numbers



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HANK SCHYMA, CALVIN STANLEY, ARTHUR YORIA

Mondays, bi-weekly at Etro Lounge

| David A. Cobb | Photo by Justin DeGuire



The singer-songwriter landscape in Houston is littered with failed attempts at eking out solo careers and those who have left Space City for supposed greener pastures. But the Bayou City is home to many talented musicians, many of which are proud to call Houston home and who are glad for the musical freedom the city allows them.

With the recent closure of The Proletariat and the up-in-the-air status of Super Happy Fun Land, other local bars such as Boondock's and Etro Lounge have started supporting live local music.

Every other Monday for the past couple of months, the front men from three popular Houston bands -- Southern Backtones' Hank Schyma, Pale's Calvin Stanley, and Arthur Yoria -- have come together at Montrose hot spot Etro Lounge to show a somewhat lighter side of their bands' material. Each member takes the stage for an acoustic set to showcase their standards, debut new material, and to cover a few cherished songs. New Jersey musician Lanky hosted a similar monthly gig at Rudyards (Listen Up Ya'll) during his Houston tenure, and Etro's Monday night shows give local music fans the chance to catch these musicians in a mostly unfamiliar, yet laid-back, solo setting.

"It's really loose," Yoria says. "A little bit of 'songwriter-in-the-round' where we're all up there, sometimes even doing some improv. A little bit of solo time and the occasional special guest...I'm using it as a tryout stage for new songs, cool covers and I like taking requests as well."

Schyma agrees: "I'm loving it...doing shit I don't get to do with the Backtones..."

Yoria is probably most at home in the solo arena, as he's played nearly everywhere in Houston over the years -- from sidewalks and coffeehouses to outdoor festivals, sports bars, and the city's best stages. Backtones vocalist/guitarist Schyma and Pale vocalist/guitarist Stanley, neither a stranger to the local bar and festival circuit, are best known for their bands' anthemic rock shows, yet both musicians are familiar and comfortable with a stripped-down sound; Schyma often pairs with local musician John Evans for acoustic gigs (including a recent art show opening at Cactus Music) and Stanley was featured on a 2007 online video strumming his tongue-in-cheek ode to Rosie O'Donnell and performs solo from time-to-time.

In any other city, it would probably be impossible to get three front men together at once, and it speaks volumes about the local music culture that egos and money don't get in the way of the music. Stanley says that the three are considering taking their bands out on tour together this summer.

Stanley organized the Monday night gigs after playing a successful series of solo shows and says he invited Yoria and Schyma because of their past experience playing acoustic sets. "We are all friends, our styles mesh, and our career goals are similar," he says. "So far the turnout has been great and we have enjoyed playing the shows."

"Our goal for the show is to give our fans the chance to listen in a classy and intimate environment while expanding our fanbase," he adds.

In April, Yoria released his new digital single, "The Libyans" -- the first in a series of monthly digital singles the musician plans to release during the next year. Yoria says he eventually plans to let fans pick the tracks they want for the album. "I may even let the fans name this thing," he says.

Similarly, Southern Backtones -- whose video for "Forever" won an Addy earlier this year -- plan to release a new single and video this month. The members of Pale recently premiered their video for "Glowing Black" and are currently working on new material for their follow-up to 2007's Mandatory Ambulance EP.

"[It's a] very cool and fun scene," Yoria says. "I think that we're onto something."

Etro Lounge is located in Montrose at 1424-A Westheimer. Showtime is 9pm every other Monday.

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Thu.1- Government Mule

Fri./Sat. 2-3- Houston Splash '08

Tue. 6- Mike Ness w/ Jesse Dayton

Wed. 7- The Breeders w/Colour Revolt

Fri. 9- nelo

Mon. 12- Ace Frehley

Tue. 13- Mindless Self Indulgence w/ The Birthday Massacre

Wed. 14- The Fall of Troy w/ The Dear Hunter

Thu. 15- Hank III

Fri. 16- Rev. Horton Heat w/ NashvillePussy

Sat. 17- She Wants Revenge, Be Your Own Pet, The Virgins

Sun. 18- Blues in "C" Hep. C Benefit w/Sonny Boy Terry, Steve Krase & Dalton Dunn & more

Fri. 23 Bob Schneider

Sat. 24 RED ROOM Benefit forAlex Arizpe w/ 30 Foot Fall, Spain Coloured Orange, The Tie That Binds, Pretty Boys & more

Sat. 24 MAIN ROOM Miser w/ Dawn Over Zero, Subversa, Pale

Sun. 25- Vital Remains w/ Malevolent Creation

Thu.29- Marshall Tucker Band

Fri.30- Old 97's w/ Hayes Carll

Sat. 31 Big Head Todd & The Monsters

Tue. Jun. 3- Augustana, w/ Wild Sweet Orange, Paddy Casey

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FRI 30
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TUE JUNE 5
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SUN: $2 Kamikazees, Tecates
MON/TUE: $1 Lone Star Draft
WED: $3 wells

BORN LIARS

| Ramon Medina | Rosa Guerrero



A Friday night at Rudyard's and the audience is being sucked into the vortex of chaos on stage that is Born Liars. Bodies are crushed at the front of the stage in an orgy of sweat and dancing. One woman is dancing and so engrossed in the music that she doesn't realize she's knocked my beer out of my hand and sent it crashing onto the floor where it is helplessly kicked around by the crowd until it's finally trampled into tragic shards of glass and beer.

Behind the microphone, guitarist Jimmy Sanchez taunts the audience as a barrage of feedback, notes, and noise surround him. Bassist Bill Fool, ass-crack exposed with his low cut jeans, eggs Jimmy on while some overzealous drunk pulls Guitarist Scott "Snot" McNeil's microphone into the audience. All the while, drummer Shane Lauder just sits back and laughs at it all. "When we walked out after that set," recalls Bill, "If I hadn't had boots, I'd been cut up; there was broken glass everywhere! I'd never seen so many broken bottles! Hell, we had girls fighting! Lemme say that again - GIRLS FIGHTING!"

Houston audiences may have a reputation for being stoic but not at a Born Liars show. "I don't want to hear [complaints] about Houston. That's all those bands that don't move [on stage]! " vents Bill who clearly thinks a band has to incite its audience out of passivity, "We're not waiting for an audience to react; a band has to give the audience permission to move otherwise they'll sit there." Yet, the band doesn't merely move on stage, as Bill explains it, they scoff in the face of failure with every performance. "Our songs aren't played the same way twice. We'll play three songs that'll crumble but then the next three will work. This isn't paint by number's stuff. We're the kid with the crayon [manically scribbling outside the lines]. It's all feel. If a band feels it, the audience will recognize it."

"There's chemistry." says Scott, "We're all friends. We hang out together. We drink together – it's an alchy band."

"It sounds cliché but we don't get on stage without drinks." says Bill "A few drinks and that's when the vulgar put down jokes start flying."

"And if we don't have anything to talk about [on stage], we make fun of Shane." laughs Scott. "Shane once said we need to be more PC and not make people uncomfortable."

"So, of course," Bill interjects " at our next show, we get up and immediately it's 'Great to be back at this fag bar!' We taunt the audience for being white and then take it out on Shane." Then he says, almost acknowledging Shane's concerns that this could all be misconstrued, "But it's all a joke – there's no hate."

"Now word's getting out and people hear rumors we're a party band and people get expectations." says Scott.

This sets Bill off on a tangent, "Shit, the hipsters get word of a good time! Fucks with beards! They're 22 and think they are alcoholics with their clothes from American Apparel talking about their stupid record collections! They're the 2K version of Preppies! Years ago they'd have been listening to Bananarama and drinking coronas!"

When I ask why Garage doesn't seem to get much respect around certain circles, Jimmy objects "Garage is a chicken-shit way of not saying Rock and Roll! Garage? That's all Rock and Roll - The Sonics, the Standells…. We're really more so punk rock – Dictators, Johnny Thunders, Ramones… real American Punk Rock."

"I'm not into music to be into art." says Bill "This is all about late nights and shitty mornings. I'm in it to rock! We're not trendy. This isn't intellectual – it's the opposite of intellectual. We don't expect to make a dent in history…but then did Richard Hell or the Ramones? It all comes down to the songs. I've seen horseshit half-assed punk bands and they have no songs to save their lives. I love what Jimmy writes and if I didn't, you'd know it. I'd be leaning by my by amp and after…I'd let Jimmy know!"

"Jimmy brings in bare bones songs and we're given free reign." says Scott, "Not once has he said 'don't do that.'"

"We add a lot." says Bill, "We're not Jimmy Fucking Sanchez's backing band! We're all individuals and what you hear on that new 7" is us."

That new Born Liars 7" on Cutthroat Records was recorded in the practice space by Jimmy and Shane then mixed my Joe Omelchuck at RBI. "Cassidy put that out." says Jimmy, "No record release, no promotion and we've already sold really well – all word of mouth. Everything we've done has been word of mouth."

Talk of the 7" leads to discussion of Low-Fi which the band abhors as an aesthetic. "It's cool and hip to be Low-Fi," says Bill "but [the bands they are trying to emulate] weren't trying to be low-fi. The New Bomb Turk's first album is one of my favorites but then Billy Childish gets his hands on them and all the energy is lost."

Before we finish our beers at Lola's, I ask if Rock is irrelevant and Bill retorts, "Rock isn't relevant because it's not relevant to the major labels and so it's dead to the public and I could give a shit. Relevant? Rock and Roll will always be relevant as long as there is booze and dive bars!"

FPH

Born Liars are recording their next album at Chris Ryan's Dead City Sound. The CD will be released on Pat Todd's Rank Outsider Records and the LP will be released on Cuthroat Records.

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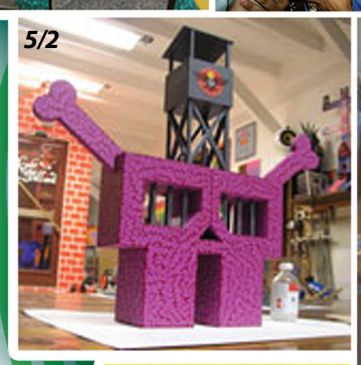
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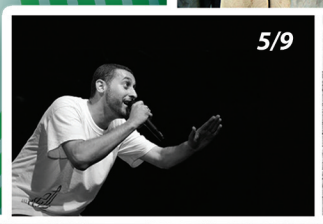








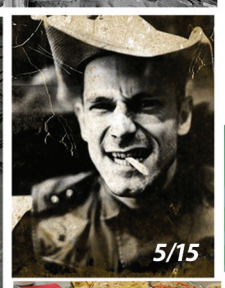






















5/1 Art and Environment

Lucy Lippard, an internationally known author, activist, and curator, will speak on this relationship. Lippard has written 18 books on art, championed feminist artists, and done performances, comics, and guerilla theater. She has curated over 50 exhibitions, most recently one in Denver dealing with the environment. 7:30 p.m. at a location TBA. For more information, call the Chapel, 713/524-9839 or visit www.rothkochapel.org

5/2 False Space and Time of the Apartment - Centraltrak

5/3 The Jonbenet w/ Closet City - Walter's

5/4 John Alexander: New Paintings and Drawings - McClain Gallery

5/7 The Breeders w/ Colour Revolt - Meridian

5/8 Stolen Labor, Stolen Promises

Heather White will speak about the high price paid by China's workers and the undocumented poor under China's "economic miracle." The talk will focus on sweatshops, forced labor practices, destruction of both the environment and China's food security because of poor regulatory oversight and corruption, as well as efforts to improve conditions. White is president of New Standards. 7:30 p.m. at the Rothko Chapel, 1409 Sul Ross. For more information, call the Chapel, 713/524-9839 or visit www.rothkochapel.org.

5/9 DAM w/ H.I.S.D. - Warehouse Live

5/11 Houston Palestine Film Festival - Museum of Fine Arts Houston

5/12 Ace Frehley - Meridian

5/15 Hank Williams III - Meridian

5/17 She Wants Revenge w/ Be Your Own Pet - Meridian

5/18 HPJC's annual Peace Potluck

Since 1998 Houston's activists have been coming together yearly to enjoy each other's company, celebrate our victories, renew our dedication, and eat well. For the first time it will be held at Bering United Methodist Church, 1440 Harold St. (that's five blocks west of Montrose Blvd. and two blocks south of Westheimer). Bring a covered dish. Come as early as 5 p.m., but be aware that most of the food will be gone by 6:30 p.m. For more information, contact Judy Hoffhien, 713/863-8708, judithhoffhien@sbcglobal.net

5/22 Iron Maiden - Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion

5/28 Murder By Death w/ Dios - Walter's

5/29 The Sword w/ Torche - Rudyards

5/30 The Dresden Dolls - Warehouse Live



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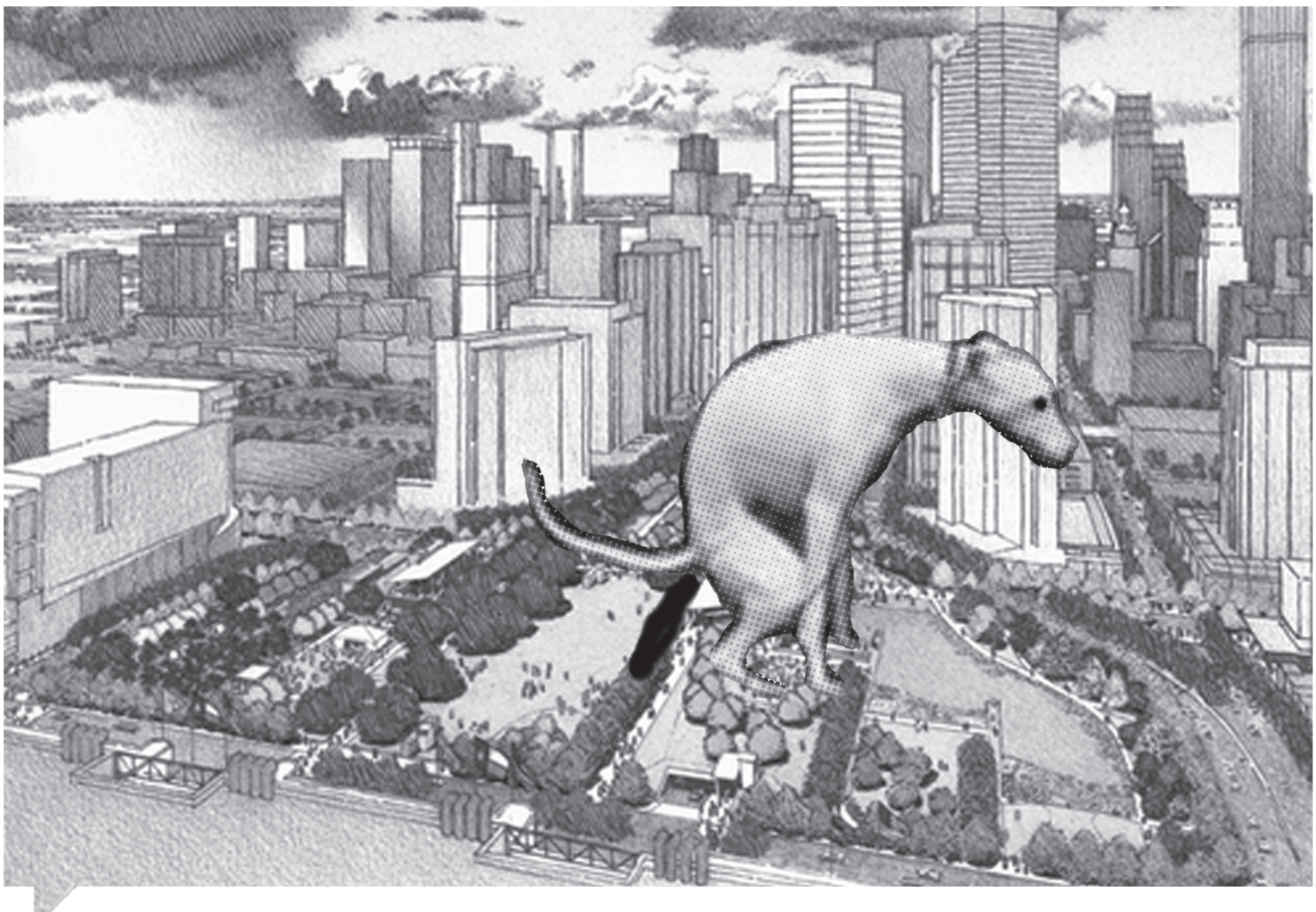

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WHAT'S SO 'GREEN' ABOUT DISCOVERY GREEN?

I poop on this park

| Omar Afra



Granted, the name for Discovery Green, Houston's new 'park' that sits just in front of the George R. Brown Convention Center, was part of a public contest and was not picked by some municipal boogie man. But, I gotta ask the question.

After hearing the non-stop hoopla about the 122 million dollar city project, I decided to check it out several days after the initial wave of inaugural attendants were left and gone. I decided to leave my cynicism behind and try to see this 'park', brought to you by the same folks that gave us the failed *Sequissentenial Park*, as objectively as possible. Nonetheless, I called a good friend to join me on my excursion. He was not available so I called 6 more friends. Neither were they so I summoned the Sith-lord that is Alex Wukman. Our trek did not start of well. First and foremost, parking is a whopping 10 dollars. That seems rather steep for a public park. After strangling a passerby and stealing his wallet, we made our way to the underground parking lot. This is undoubtedly the 1st time I parked my vehicle underground to go to a park. Hmmm.

Despite this, we carried on into the 12 acre park to be initially greeted by hordes of Kingwood children splashy-splashing their way through the glorified water hose that the city dubs 'interactive water features'. It is basically several holes in the ground in a 50-foot by 50-foot area that spray water. No shit. Just open for 6 days, the summer-tastic smell of children's urine and dog scheizzer was just pungent enough to penetrate the inviting smell of the 2 restaurants on site. Which brings me to my next complaint. Discovery Green hosts two places to eat that are ostensibly privately owned yet operate on public grounds. You got your choice of highbrow-overpriced-pretentious spot 'The Grove' or a gussied up Mickey Dees called 'The Lake House'. Why the fuck is it called the 'Lake House'? Me thinks it is the dirty, brown moat the city calls a 'lake' that is built adjacent to the eateries which hosts model boat racing rental and brave kids dipping their feet into the putrid waters. This is the kind of pond folks used to dump dookie and carcasses into a hundred years ago. (Do I sound like an asshole? I hope not because I am severely understating my case.)

The whole park is lined with children's playgrounds surrounded by smoking parents surrounded by pooping dogs. The grass in the whole facility is poorly planted and calling it a park is a stretch in itself. I did not see a glimmer of anything that either promoted or encouraged environmental responsibility. What else do you expect from a facility that essentially serves as a 'green top' to a parking garage. Precisely what the mayor and decelopers had in mind. There are few trees, no natural beauty, and the place is no very jogger, bicycler, or even walker friendly. And of course, here is the clincher, skateboards are not allowed. Way to alienate a whole shit-ton of the youth population! This place would more aptly be referred to as a 'private yet free entertainment facility that happens to be outdoors.' Now, of course with massive city projects always come celebrity corporation namings, endowments, and sponsorships. Make your way from the 'Waste Management' Gardens to the 'Anheuser Busch Amphitheater'. Also, our dear mayor and his wife even got their own 'promenade'!

Too bad, because all I ultimately saw in this park is a bonafied Temple of Impermanence and Poorly-used City Funds on a par with the Kemah Boardwalk. This 'park' belongs in Dallas. I love parks and was frankly excited at the prospect at the city having something like a Central Park of sorts. Fat chance. Well, 122 Million Bucks is a lot of money. I have this strange feeling the city could have more wisely utilized the resources. Hmm, how about the following:

1. Revamp and maintain the hundreds of smaller neighborhood parks that desperately need funds

2. Address the ever growing homelessness problem in Houston whether via expanded meal programs, housing, job training

3. Created a municipal arts endowment that funds 'street-level' artists to do public works

4. Start at 'micro-credit' bureau that gives loans to faltering mom-pop businesses in neighborhoods that are falling apart

5. At least fix that one massive-fucking pothole on Westheimer just east of Montrose in the right hand lane-heading west…

The list goes on, and on, and on, and…

FPH

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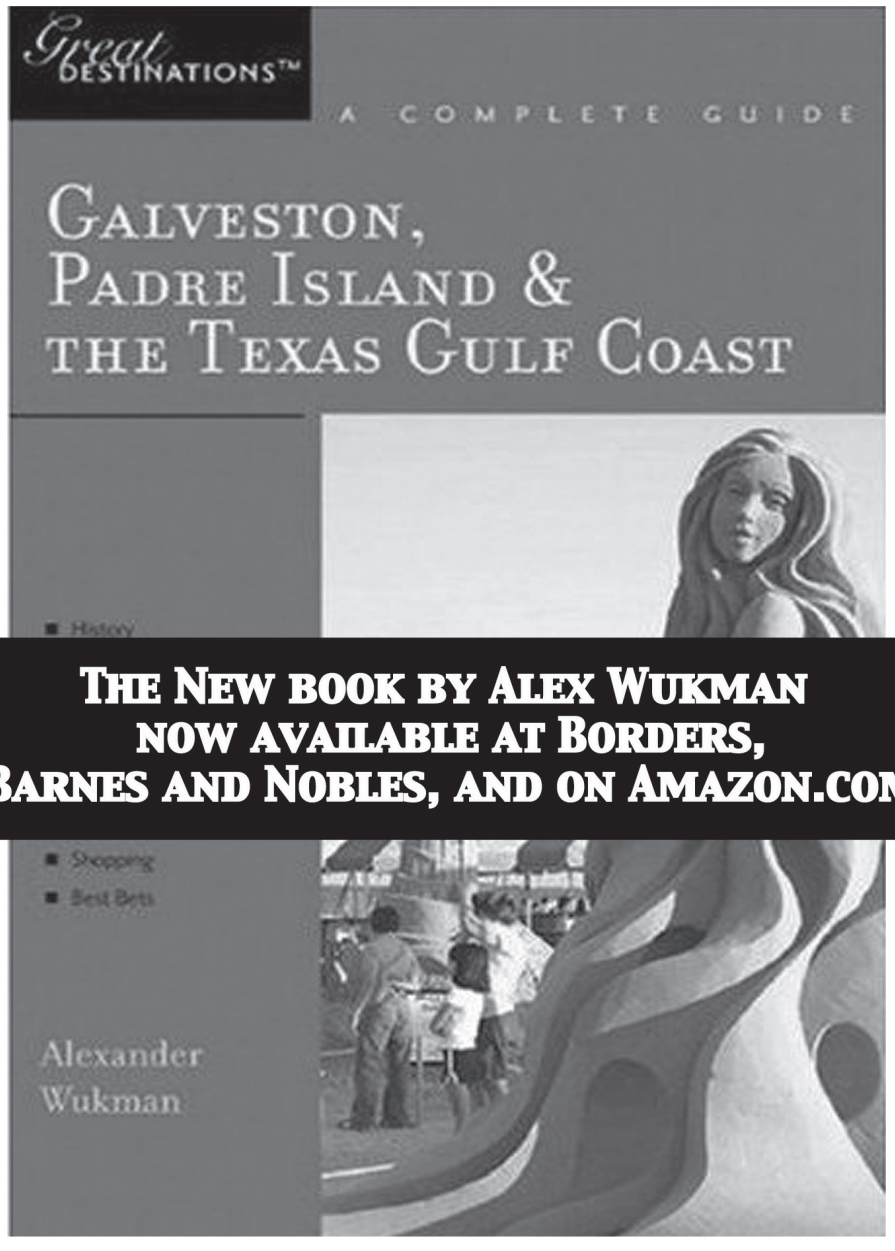
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JUST GO

How to Leave Iraq

| SAUL LANDAU



Iraq-satiated Democrats face a formidable political challenge: If they win in November, can they extricate the country from Bush's illegal war, which apparently can't be won by US military forces and has drained material and psychic resources?

Obama and Clinton promise to withdraw the troops--well, most combat forces by 2010. They don't say what they'll do with the 180,000 "contractors" the US pays to do jobs soldiers once did, or how to deal with the super-Walmart sized embassy, still under construction. Indeed, few ask the question: Why do we need such an obscene and dominating structure if we're leaving? Nor have we seen plans to meet the issue of the future of US bases in Iraq, or how to include Iraq's neighbors, those most concerned (Syria and Iran), with post occupation stabilization.

All American political aspirants use the word "peace" in the same way as people say "bless you" when you sneeze: such words mean nothing. Just recall how 13 colonies transformed themselves into an empire. It took only a century of conquest--of Indian land and Mexican and Spanish territory. That's one example of a peace loving people!

McCain is a maverick because he admits implicitly that war forms a basic thread in American culture. He says he'll keep US troops in Iraq indefinitely, until we win (whatever that means). He extols the glorious military that hasn't won a war against an enemy that fought back since World War II--and even then, thanks to the Soviet forces. The arms makers, the Halliburtons and Blackwaters of the country, love this kind of talk--as do their stockholders.

The axioms of US politics vitiate honest dialogue on war and empire. Distortion appears thanks to the media stenographers as daily news. Bush, who will say anything, praises himself for making progress in Iraq. One must translate that word as "wreaking five years of death and destruction." Wiping his usual Alfred E. Newman smirk from his turned down mouth, he praised "progress" in Iraq and challenged Democrats who call for troop withdrawals. "No matter what shortcomings these critics diagnose, their prescription is always the same: retreat," Bush said. (USA Today March 27)

His optimism clashed with facts when in late March fighting erupted in Basra and rioting in Baghdad. With US encouragement, the Iraqi government launched a military offensive in Basra to undermine Moktada al Sadr, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's political rival. The Prime Minister faction feared his would lose in the provincial elections in October because the public hates his government. They have done nothing to provide water supply, housing or jobs for poor Iraqis. Maliki's coalition did, however, line its own pockets. The attack failed. The US-trained army had to rely on US air and ground support to rescue them from Sadr's militias. So much for the success of Bush's surge! Violence in Iraq escalated.

Almost five years after he claimed to have accomplished mission (May 1, 2003), Bush still pats himself on the back. He deposed Saddam Hussein, who "killed his own people." Bush's puppet government just killed hundreds of Iraqis in Basra. Bush does not see contradictions.

If the US withdraws, he warns, a parade of horrors will ensue --the old yawner we heard about dominoes falling in Asia if we pulled out of Vietnam. We're still waiting for the sound of those tumbling chips as the City Bank building dominates the skyline of Ho Chi Minh City. Bush and Cheney repeat vague disaster scenarios. Their media outlets (Fox and CNN, for examples) reiterate the nonsense almost as often as commercials.

The public said no to this war in the 2006 congressional election, and in every poll. Dick Cheney says: "so?" His and Bush's "get-Saddam" obsession has cost 4,000+

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US soldiers' lives, plus upwards of 30,000 wounded . The final costs will run into trillions of dollars.

Incidentally, neither Hillary nor Barack refer to the colossal toll in Iraqi lives. Bush's policies have cost Washington immense prestige and credibility. Their lies and deceptions may convince a small minority, but most of the world recognizes Iraq as an unmitigated disaster. It has led to increased regional tensions, and contributed to US economic malaise as well. Can a Democrat recoup the global solidarity generated after 9/11? Or, has anti-Americanism become so ubiquitous in the world that Bush's deeds cannot be undone by a "nicer guy" regime?

Bush still claims Iraqis are better off because of his invasion. Strangely enough, most Iraqis can't yet see the benefits from ongoing death, destruction, torture, prison and exile. Bush seems to think that taking those factors into account shows a short term perspective on their part.

"The challenge before us," he wrote, "is whether we respond to al-Qaeda's barbarism by running away, as it hopes we do -- abandoning the future of Iraq, the Middle East and ultimately our own security to the very people responsible for last week's atrocities -- or whether we stand and fight. To me, there is only one choice that protects America's security -- and that is to stand, and fight, and win." (Washington Post, April 26, 2007)

Imagine, Bush still sneaks in and out of Baghdad when he visits to lecture his puppets. When Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad visited, he rode around Iraq with little protection and got the kind of warm welcome Bush must pray for.

Bush's insistence that he's fighting Al Qaeda in Iraq so he doesn't have to fight them here collides with facts uncovered by on the scene journalists Patrick Cockburn (The Independent) and Ned Parker (Los Angeles Times). They estimate Al Qaeda's presence contributes a minute part of Iraq's daily violence. (The 2006 Iraq Study Group report supports their conclusions.) Ironically, Al Qaeda didn't exist in Iraq until after Bush invaded.

Given the public skepticism about the war and the declining economy, the Democrats' November electoral task should be easy. But wait! They control both Houses and didn't cut off Iraq War funds. One agonizing anti-war Member said, "We don't have the votes to end it. The Joe Liebermans and Blue Dogs make it impossible," referring to the former Democrat--now Independent -- from Connecticut who echoes Bush by blaming the Iraqi insurgency on Al Qaeda. In 1994, conservative House Democrats formed The Blue Dog Coalition to represent more hawkish positions and stronger anti-tax stands.

In looking for ways out, why don't Democrats leaders simply repeat the Iraq Study Group's recommendation? Iraq's eastern and western neighbors, Iran and Syria, should become leading participants in helping to stabilize Iraq after US troops depart. "Given the ability of Iran and Syria to influence events within Iraq and their interest in avoiding chaos in Iraq, the United States should try to engage them constructively," said the report.

The solution is obvious, yet arm chair pundits and Solons wring their hands. If the US pulls, civil war may erupt in Iraq. Hey, civil war broke out when Shia v. Shia fought each other in Basra. The clashes there should have forever exploded the myth that Iraq suffers only from a Shiite-Sunni or Kurd-Turkuman-Christian feud.

The White House mischaracterized al Maliki's attack as aimed at criminals and terrorists. The flimsy lie was exposed and even with US military help, government forces lost. Indeed, had not Sadr called a cease fire (purportedly, thanks to Iran), Maliki's humiliation would have been worse. The Basra conflagration dramatizes the lies that Bush and Cheney tell and the media repeats about the value of the surge and progress in Iraq. It also underlined the main fact of US occupation: it has destroyed the integrity of Iraqi society. The longer we remain, the more difficult it will become to re-glue the elements of that country into some cohesive mass.

Al Qaeda has not sponsored the anti-U.S. insurgency in Iraq. The US presence has brought death, destruction and misery to Iraqis. That's why we're hated.

The Dems could use facts to show flaws in Bush argument for staying his bloody course. They could posit withdrawal afrom Iraq as a stabilizing move--a change from threatening war and demanding US-style democratization. (Recall the January 2006 Palestinian elections in Gaza; free and fair and under Israeli occupation. Hamas won. Since the wrong Party won, Bush said the elections didn't count. Such behavior doesn't auger well for the US as broker for an Israeli-Palestinian peace.)

"To leave Iraq," said my colleague, "just go." He forgot that such a bold move might require the invention of the spinal transplant.

FPH

Saul Landau is the author of A Bush and Botox World. He is an Institute for Policy Studies fellow and winner of the "best activist video" award from the San Francisco Video Fest for WE DON'T PLAY GOLF HERE (available on dvd from roundworldproductons@gmail.com

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OBAMA, BITTERNESS, FUNDAMENTALISTS AND GUNS

Media Shit Storms and Heartland Reality

| JOE BAGEANT



There seems to be no end to the media mediocrity we must suffer in this country. Now we have the Obama Guns, God and Bitterness shit storm, with the shit pouring forth from the same media scuppers (scuppers are outlet sewage blowholes on the sides of ships) as usual: The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times, The Washington Post, CNN.com, the Associated Press, Fox News, Reuters, Politico, the Lou Dobbs Show, Hardball, Olbermann's Countdown, The Atlantic.com, The DailyKos, TalkingPointsMemo

And all because Obama mentioned something we've known for at least a couple of decades now: That the government has been fucking over the nation's heartland towns and the "little guy" Americans inhabiting them.

To quote Obama:

"You go into these small towns in Pennsylvania and, like a lot of small towns in the Midwest, the jobs have been gone now for 25 years and nothing's replaced them. ... And they fell through the Clinton administration, and the Bush administration, and each successive administration has said that somehow these communities are gonna regenerate and they have not."

So what the hell else is new?

Then Obama adds:

"And it's not surprising then they get bitter, they cling to guns or religion or antipathy to people who aren't like them or anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-trade sentiment as a way to explain their frustrations."

While not precisely correct, it's a good enough generalization for an American audience not really listening anyway. Obama's remarks were not in the least controversial and just plain boring in terms of content. Certainly not newsworthy.

Yet he had no sooner closed his mouth than this media manufactured hell broke loose. "Oh my gawd," they screamed. This guy has the unmitigated gall to suggest that their might be some bitterness out here in the lily white realms of Grant Wood, grange halls and Methodist church suppers! Right here in River City!" where the combination of God rhetoric and Chamber of Commerce boosterism have managed to ban the word from public discourse. Even the mention of it can be explosive, simply because there is so much if it stuffed inside working folks, inside the lockbox of denial that comes with being the citizen of a culture in collapse.

Put more simply, the self-serving "blogger-reporters" and Hillary Clinton media machine had managed to kick Obama in the balls from behind.

Along with the bitterness charges came the guns and God stuff. Well, we Red State rubes out here in the working world do own a lot of guns, though very few of us "cling" to them in the desperate sense the speech implied. As to what Obama described as our clinging to religion, we do not so much cling

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to it as it clings to us as a vestige of our heritage. It's neither a good nor bad thing in and of itself, but mighty damned useful to fear mongering politicians and the screen writers of television crime shows. Hell, even I made a few bucks writing about its nastier side in my book Deer Hunting With Jesus.

For me, listening to politicians talk, then listening to the media talk about politicians talking, rates right up there with swapping spit with a gingivitis victim. I do not like nor trust nor much listen to Hillary, McCain or Obama. And I wouldn't vote for any of the three even if they knocked on my door bearing a bucket of smoked pork ribs and a bottle of Jack Daniels. However, after hearing Obama's March "race speech," in Philadelphia, I can understand the Obama cult a little better. Although his speech was full of national clichés and meaningless soaring rhetoric, somehow it was still a goddamned good one, and right on in my opinion. Maybe I liked it because, like the poverty victim he brought forth in typical Democratic Pity Party fashion, I too have eaten mustard and relish sandwiches growing up (or when lacking those condiments, plain sugar on white bread.) I loved the speech. But I still ain't drinking the Kool-Aid.

In any case, Obama has proven you cannot even use the innocuous word bitterness in conjunction with the national lie of white American culture. In the officially sanctioned media lexicon, Blacks can be angry, disillusioned and even bitter enough to burn down Watts. But the white race, being blessed by a Christian god and divine providence, never harbor bitterness in their hearts. The reason the word bitterness has caused such horror is because what is really going on out there is the sprouting seeds of class animosity. And no candidate or pontificating media mugwump dares touch that one because they are in the class that benefits from our classist society.

I'm from Winchester, Virginia, the very kind of place and people Obama was talking about when the rotten tomatoes started hailing down. So allow me to say this: we white members of the sweating class have been working alongside laboring immigrants, legal and illegal, for decades and have not been killing them with our personal arms in a rage of antipathy, in so far as I know. The reason, near as I can tell, is that we do not give a happy shit one way or another because most of us do not have interest or knowledge enough to fester on the topic. Nor the time. When we fester on stuff, it's about making car payments and trying not to default on our mortgages. Working two and sometimes three jobs per household does not leave much time to develop political opinions, much less informed ones. I'd be willing to bet there is not a working class person within four blocks of where I now sit who has even heard of this media manufactured Obama fracas. Yesterday Smokey, the apartment maintenance man next door, helped me haul a dead washing machine to the city dump. I asked him what he thought about the Obama thing.

"Huh?" he said.

He spoke for millions.

Nobody out here that I know particularly "hates niggers", blames Mexicans or is willing to use their personal firearms against any of those people, unless they find one of them crack crazed and coming in through a bedroom window at 2 AM, in which case there will be a loud boom, and the perp is gonna look like a pizza splattered up against the wall. Otherwise we just stand before the incompressible system that fucks us blind. And in that there is certain bitterness.

Let's get to the nub of this thing here: Obama, Hillary and McCain are farting through silk while playing out their roles in our theatrical state's false drama called presidential elections, while smug and media sanctioned pundits snark from the edge of the proscenium arc of politics, each hoping to draw enough attention to have his or her own proscenium in that national cathedral of the American consciousness -- television.

Before too long this earth shaking "incident" will be drowned out by the accumulating noise of the election year. Then even the election's hoopla will all be wiped away when Oprah Winfrey, in one of her ever grander spectacles of televised largess, gives away the city of Detroit to the sixth grade author of the most heart rending essay on black poverty.

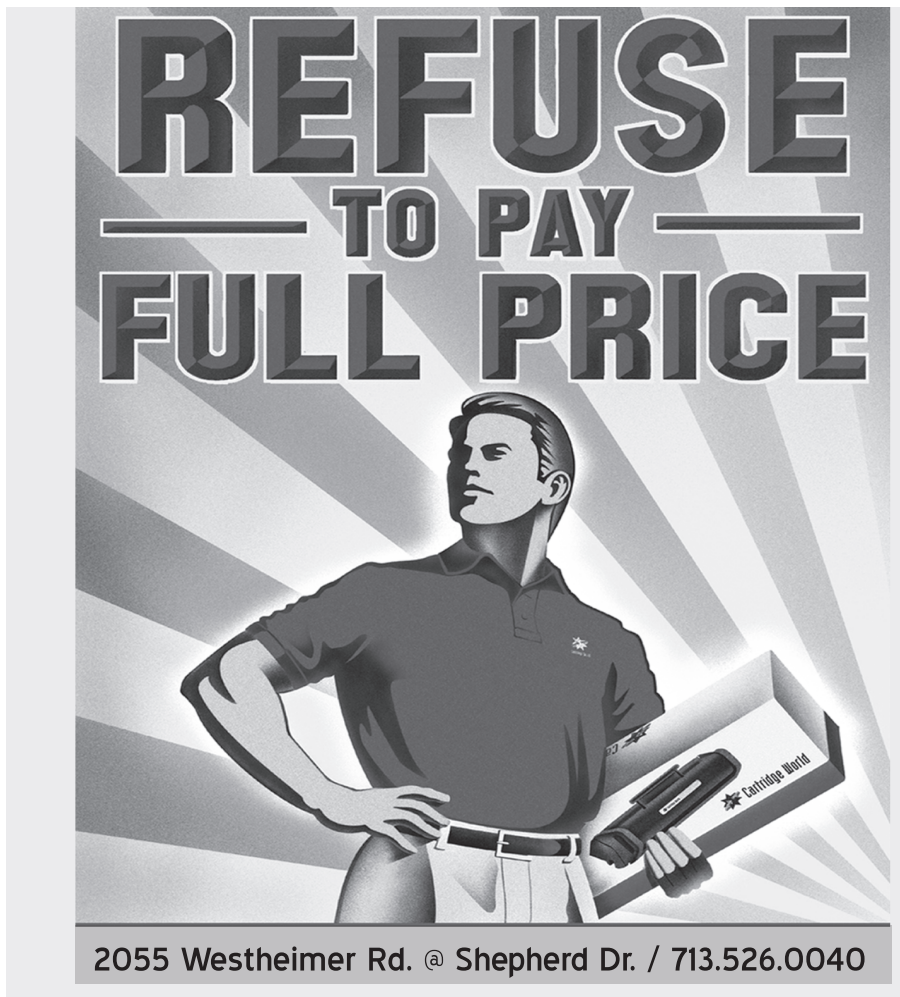
November is still seven months away. No normal person can stand, much less relish, seven more months of all this. But we will wallow in it all for the same reason a hog spends most of its life knee deep in shit. It has no other choice, it has plenty of company, and doesn't know any other way of life.

One of these days, when it comes to the thundering non-controversy of Obama's remarks, the blogosphere and the media may start asking the right kinds of questions. The kind Smokey asked me after I explained the Obama controversy to him:

"Who the fuck cares?"

FPH

Joe Bageant is the author of Deer Hunting with Jesus: Dispatches from America's Class War






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ICE Raids Shipleys Bakery one month after labor settlement

Faith and community leaders gather in front of the Houston federal building to denounce the workplace raid at Shipley Do-nuts that resulted in 20 workers' detention and likely removal from their homes and families.

There is conjecture by some activists that this raid may be related to the mid-March settlement of sexual harassment, racial threats and violations of labor law brought against Shipleys management by Shipleys workers. This lawsuit, which The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission looked into and gave the workers the right to sue, alleged that management called workers "wetbacks" threatened to deport them, did not pay workers for working overtime, and demanded payment from workers who wanted to leave work for vacation or to visit a doctor when hurt on the job.



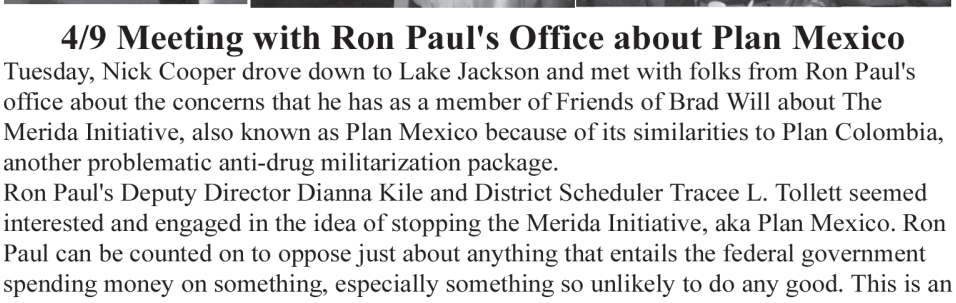
4/12 Texas Border Wall plans on the table

On April 1st Michal Chertoff filled waivers to more than 30 federal laws including things like the endangered species act, the clean water act, historical preservation laws, tribal laws etc. as well as whatever state and local laws may apply, in order to start building a US Mexico Border wall in Texas.

The Real ID act that was passes in 2005 gives the department of homeland security the 'right' to waive these laws in the interest of building emergency fences and walls. The Secure Fence act of 2006 (Which Clinton and Obama both voted for) gives him the mandate to build the border wall, is very specific about where they have to build it, and when. The whackness of the Real ID Act also limits the legal recourse of people trying to sue to stop the fence. It can only be challenged on constitutional grounds, and people only have 60 days to file suit (by June it will be to late). Appeals are only allowed to be made to the supreme court.

370 MILES ARE SUPPOSED TO BE COMPLETED BY DEC 31 2008. DHS has already filed waivers to start construction in San Diego and Yuma AZ, and the legal challenges by environmental and constitutional lawyers have been unsuccessful. Lawyers may challenge the constitutionality of the whole process, but that will take a while, and there are less than 9 months till the deadline for 370 miles of fence to get built.





4/9 Meeting with Ron Paul's Office about Plan Mexico

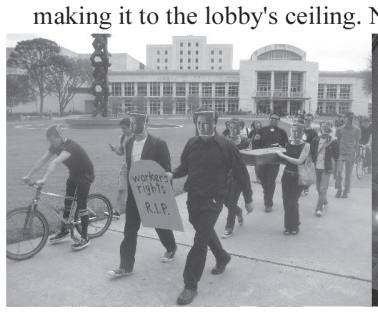
Tuesday, Nick Cooper drove down to Lake Jackson and met with folks from Ron Paul's office about the concerns that he has as a member of Friends of Brad Will about The Merida Initiative, also known as Plan Mexico because of its similarities to Plan Colombia, another problematic anti-drug militarization package.

Ron Paul's Deputy Director Dianna Kile and District Scheduler Tracee L. Tollett seemed interested and engaged in the idea of stopping the Merida Initiative, aka Plan Mexico. Ron Paul can be counted on to oppose just about anything that entails the federal government spending money on something, especially something so unlikely to do any good. This is an issue appealing to both left and right politicians for many reasons, and therefore may be the kind of thing that a small but dedicated grassroots effort can help derail.

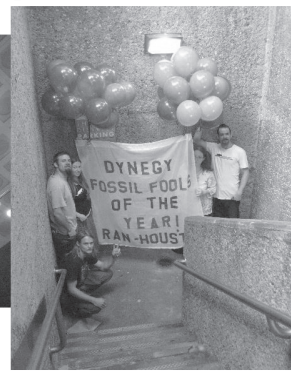
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4/1 Fossil Fools Day Houston Action Takes on Dynegy

Ten activists with Rainforest Action Network Houston showed up to take action on Dynegy's headquarters. While two activists delivered our Fossil Fool of the Year award to CEO of Dynegy, Bruce Williamson, eight others released a balloon banner in the Wells Fargo Plaza's main lobby. Everyone then proceeded to pass out literature about Dynegy, coal, and wind power in Texas to passers-by and people entering/exiting the building. The security though unaware reacted quickly however not timely enough to stop the two activists from delivering the award to Dynegy's secretary or stop the balloon banner from making it to the lobby's ceiling. No arrests were made.







3/31 Students Against Sweatshops Funeral for Worker Rights

Around a dozen protesters met in front of the library today (March 31st) and marched around the campus singing songs like "Swing Low Sweet Chariot", and "Glory Glory Halleluja" to mark the death of worker rights at the hands of the University President Renu Khator.

Khator has called for an apparel task force to look into the issue, but the task force has no labor experts or students. The University has also asked the Texas Attorney General for an opinion on whether they can withhold information from UHSAS in response to their public information request asking for documents related to the “apparel task force,”

3/31 Encuentro Highlights Environmental Justice

The Environmental Justice Encuentro March 28-29 brought together community activists from around the state to share their experiences and to talk about ways to collaborate with scientific researchers. Attendees also got a chance to take a Toxic Tour of some of the most contaminated areas in Texas – East Houston’s 5th Ward, Magnolia and Manchester community.

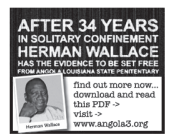
On Friday, activists from several regions shared some of the environmental dangers facing their communities and the projects they’ve taken on to hold polluters accountable. Here are a few of those stories from Corpus Christi, Port Arthur, San Antonio and Houston.

Organizer John Sullivan hopes that this Encuentro will become a regular gathering. To find out more information about the environmental justice work being done in Houston, please visit the Texas Environmental Justice and Advocacy Services website at http: //www.tejasbarrios.org/









3/29 Angola 3 Released from Solitary after 35 years

A number of developments have taken place recently with the Angola 3 including national news coverage, a visit from Michigan congressman John Conyers and their release from solitary confinement after more than 35 years of cruel and unusual punishment. We hope the struggle to free the Angola 3 continues to escalate and is able to free Herman Wallace and Albert Woodfox.

Albert Woodfox, Herman Wallace and Robert Wilkerson were members of the Black Panther Party and framed for the murder of Louisiana prison guard Brent Miller, despite evidence that proves their innocence. They are believed to have been in solitary confinement for longer than anyone else in the United States.

3/22 No Border Wall Walk Opposes Fear

The third day of the No Border Wall Walk, March 10, it became very clear that we are in a struggle with fear. As people who have decided to sacrifice spring break to walk 120 miles, all of us have had to overcome the fear of being ridiculed, the fear of sacrificing and having no impact, the fear of being ignored. We have had to overcome the fear of sacrificing time, but we have all come to agree with Cesar Chavez that, “the rich may have money, but the poor have time.” We are fighting fear with our sacrifice of time.

Flyering the community of Los Ebanos trying to give them information about free legal aid, we saw the fear on their faces and in their eyes. So many people are afraid because they have no idea of their rights, no concept of their ability to nonviolently demonstrate and change reality. The fear could be seen from the dogs to the tired houses along el rio. We are fighting fear.







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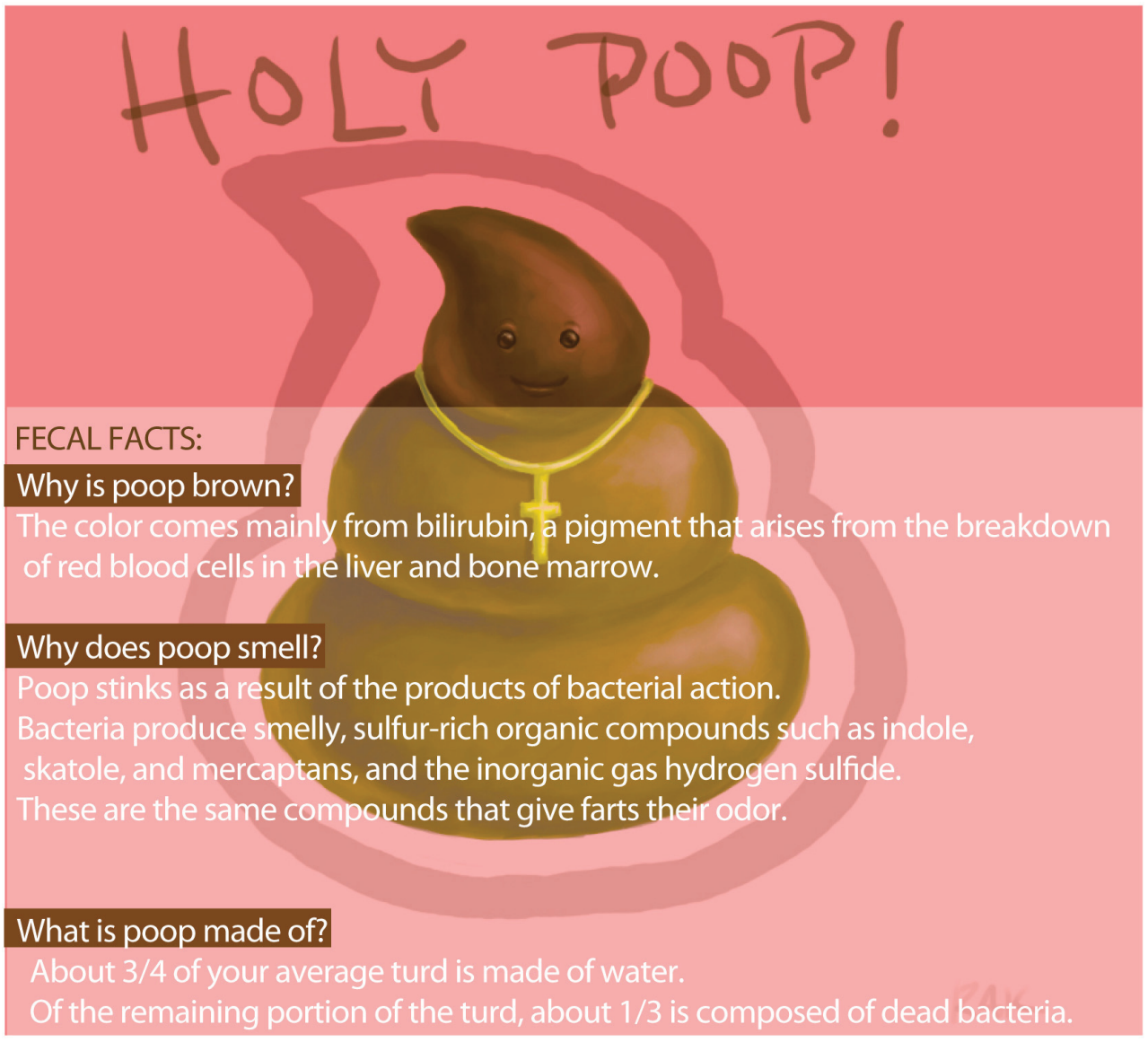
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Catholic Church can't watch its shit

By Alex Wukman Artwork by Dereku



"FECAL COLIFORMS ARE VIRULENT STRAINS OF BACTERIA FOUND IN HUMAN WASTE,"

With all the coverage of the first visit to the U.S. by Pope Benedict XVI and the grand opening of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, it seems to be a good time to be a Catholic in Houston. Surprisingly almost all the Houston media missed one of the more telling items about the Catholic Church that's come out in weeks.

At the April 16 agenda meeting the commissioners for the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) approved a deal with the Archdioceses of Galveston-Houston to pay a part of an administrative penalty for violating Texas Water Code. According to TCEQ Agenda backup documents the Catholic Church was fined $11,626 for failing to monitor fecal coliform bacteria in the wastewater at the church's Montgomery County retreat. The Church will only pay $9,300; the remainder of the fine was waived after the church made improvements to the retreat's water system which included introducing a chlorination system to eliminate the need for monitoring. Fecal coliform are virulent strains of bacteria found in human and animal waste, the most famous of which is E. coli. By law the staff of the retreat was supposed to take samples from the septic system every month, log the results and store the samples in a climate controlled container. All of this was done to ensure that the human waste had not impacted the drinking water. When the TCEQ investigators came out in July of 2007 they found that the samples had been improperly stored, the staff was putting them in a cooler with no ice, and the logs had not been updated in months. This meant that the church received a notice of violation which gave the facility 30 days to correct the problems. However they still faced steep administrative penalties.

The Church worked out a fairly standard deal with TCEQ in which they would admit no wrongdoing and pay their fee to a Supplementary Environmental Program (SEP) which could be chosen by TCEQ or the Church. The Church agreed to let TCEQ choose and $9,300 will go to litter removal. Other SEP agreements have allotted funds to help low-income rural families repair or replace their septic systems or helped fund clean-up and monitoring of polluted Texas waterways.

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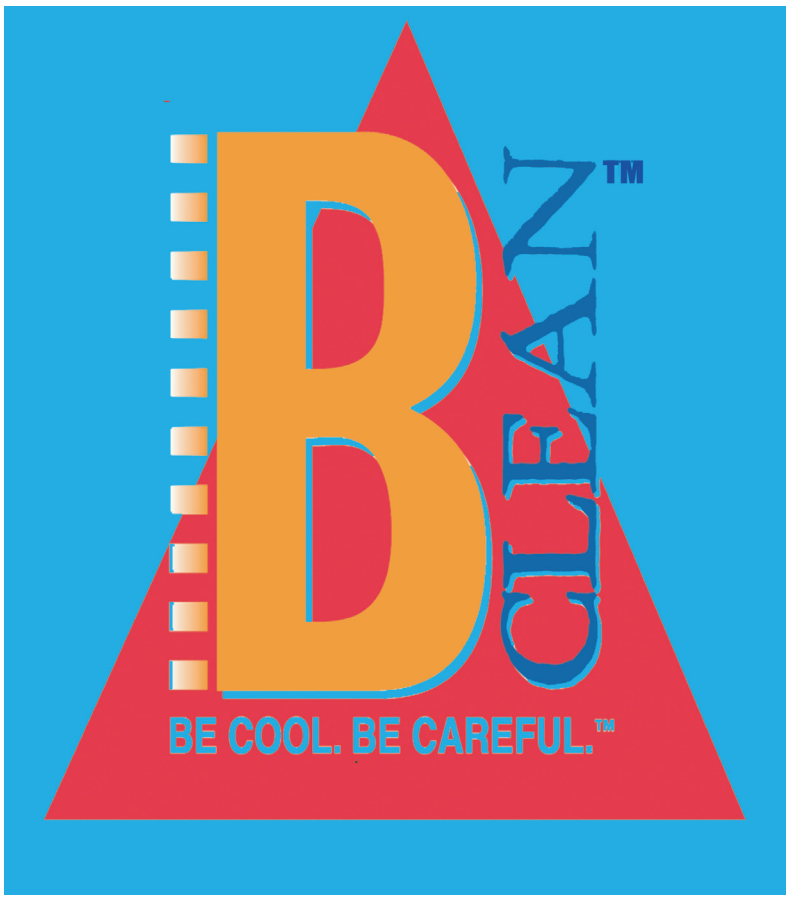
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