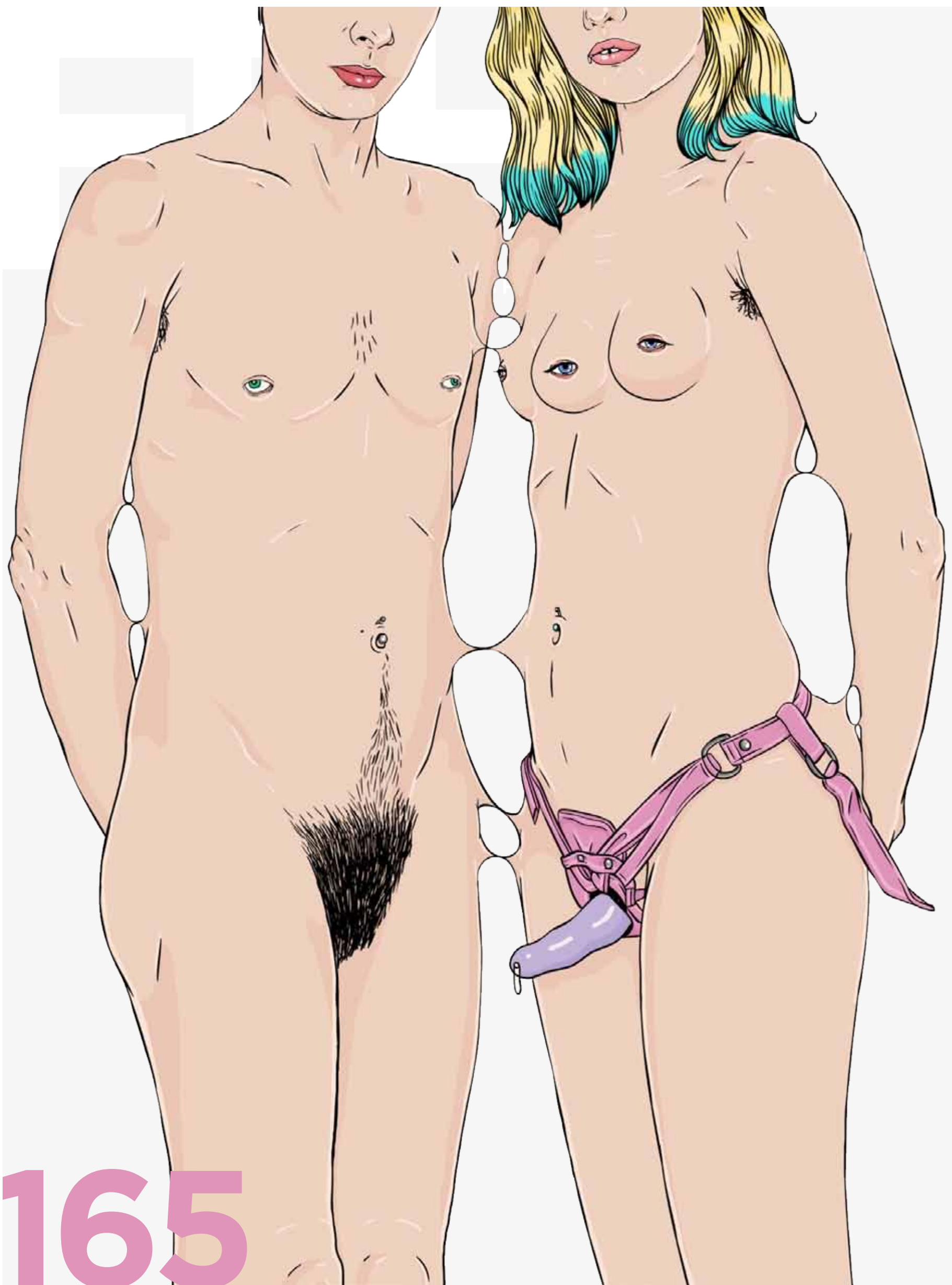




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INTERVIEW EVA MARIA LOURDES

BY MICHAEL MCFADDEN

COUNTERACTING ITS OWN SENSE of immobility, a sculpture can temporarily expand the mind, allowing us a space in which to foster a new understanding - of ourselves or an idea. In her work, Eva Maria Lourdes seeks to create this space. Using her work to enact change in her own life, she provides a platform from which the viewer can reflect upon his or her own capacity for expansion, movement, and transition.

In your bio, you state that you graduated with an MA in psychology from Stanford and soon joined a startup in Silicon Valley. This mindset of following the typical path of “graduate and get a job, any job” has been pretty commonplace for a while. What led to you stray from it and into an artistic career?

It wasn’t exactly that way for me. I didn’t want to get just any job—instead I felt an obligation to start a career ‘worthy’ of the credentials that I had earned with a lot of hard work. Basically, I was seeking a particular earning potential right out of college; I wanted the privileges and status of a Stanford-educated young professional. After a few years of committed effort, I landed a job at an exceptionally attractive and promising tech startup in the Bay Area. I should have been really excited. Instead, I was miserable! And the disparity between what I had supposedly achieved and my actual feelings about my job forced me to confront how deeply unfulfilled I was. At some point, I could no longer forego pursuing art as my main priority. Very simply, it was no longer a choice I could make.

You moved to New York to pursue art, which while bold some also might find naïve. Why did you choose New York?

Well, I guess it was naïve—in a way. But I moved to New York and worked in online media for a short while longer before finally quitting. Quitting my career, and admitting to myself that I wanted to be an artist, is what finally served as a strict point of divergence. So, yes, I knew it was ridiculous. But I also knew that it was the beginning of a willingness to take extreme risks and even to fail. That was hard—you know? But actually spending the time in New York turned my willingness to take a risk into a deep-seated motivation and creative resilience that I hope will see me through.

Going back to your Psychology background, can you speak to why you chose to study Psychology and whether/how it impacts your work now?

I can’t say enough about how crucial my training in psychology has been; it has informed my conceptualization of everything. This is not to say that my learning, questioning, and seeking ended when I graduated from college. I’m still a very curious person, and I continue to read widely and a lot. But while at Stanford, I was able to build a foundation that, in retrospect, I can see gives me the courage to express myself artistically within the public realm.

In May, you spoke at a Diverse Works on Wednesdays event. In lieu of speaking, you played a segment of

Herman Hesse’s “Siddhartha.” How is this representative of your work?

Well, the work I was presenting was work that I had completed about six months prior to the event. Having moved away from some of the motivations and ideas behind the work, I felt strongly that I wasn’t going to be able to speak authentically about them. This is not to say that I don’t remember those ideas, or that they aren’t still valuable or real—they are. But I thought that the excerpt from ‘Siddhartha’ was a more telling, a more articulate and authentic representation of the motivations and ideas that I am working through presently. I thought perhaps that it would be more interesting, given the limitations of the talk and the limitations of my work, to offer old work paired with new ideas versus old work paired with old ideas.

In our last conversation, you suggested that a lot of artists working with textiles have something hurting them or holding them back, and you gave the example of Louise Bourgeois dealing with relationships in her family. For you, fabric, and the sculpting of fabric, acts as a process of healing or nurturing. Can you expand on this idea?

For me, art is about expressing oneself authentically. I know this sounds clichéd, but it’s true! In addition, art for me is about playing—pretending, letting go of my seriousness, testing out ideas, living in the imagination, even just amusing myself. Once I began to intentionally create art, I started to think about children as a source of inspiration. I thought especially about my own childhood—that place where my own schemas are rooted. Once I finished making them, I realized that my soft sculptures expressed the way that I, as a small and vulnerable child, had projected my too-difficult-to-deal-with emotions onto toy-like objects. Creating my own toy-like objects in adulthood gave me a way to actively mold and strengthen my emotional maturity in real time. Louise Bourgeois’ example, her history and her work, opened the door for me in countless ways. She continues to be my most formative inspiration.

Specifically, this idea of healing made me think of your piece “A Self Divided” - fabric bodies trapped inside mesh stairs. You mentioned that it had more to do with stepping over yourself or not letting yourself get in your own way. Did you find that sculpting this piece helped you accomplish that?

I did! But this particular piece is speaking to a generational issue. Many people of my generation—the Millennials—grew up being coddled by our parents. As a cohort, I think we were petted and encouraged and told that we were all winners; our teachers and parents alike tried hard to avoid hurting our self-esteem. The amount of positive feedback we received throughout our schooling meant that sometimes we didn’t really face disappointment until after we had graduated from college and had to make our way in the real world. And of course we’re the generation that had to try to find gainful employment during the height of a serious recession! But, the thing is, we hadn’t had very much practice at failing. As a consequence, we have had to collectively learn to ‘get over ourselves.’ A Self Divided, was about me literally stepping over my past selves—which were ruled by a fear of failure—and refusing to let them get in my way. It was about growing up and moving forward in an intentional and creative way. But beyond the specifics of this piece, I think creating any work at this early stage in my career always helps me move forward. **FPH**

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THE IMPENETRABLE GENIUS OF JESUS-RAFAEL SOTO'S LAST WORK

BY LUNA OLIVEIRA
PHOTO BY LUNA OLIVEIRA



IT WAS WITH A HEAVY HEART that Houston waved goodbye to the Architects of Air's "Miracoco" installation at the Discovery Green at the end of March. Houstonians found themselves with contrasting emotions of both gratitude in having had access to such an enormous project, and sorrow—for it might be long before the general public will get the chance to interact physically with art of this caliber.

Mourning through the month of April, our city received great news: Houston was about to be gifted a penetrable by Jesus-Rafael Soto. This penetrable was to be brought on by the same venue that presented the wonderful James Turrell exhibit "The Light Inside" (2013) and Carlos Cruz-Diez's interactive pieces during "Color in Space and Time" (2011): the Museum of Fine Arts.

Imagining what the "Houston Penetrable" would look or feel like, it is inevitable to draw a comparison to Soto's piece housed in the Los Angeles Contemporary Museum of Arts. The LACMA's penetrable's thick, long strands of yellow plastic tubes hang down from the ceiling from metal plates. From the outside, both children and adults lying on the ground or hanging from the plastic tubes are not visible, but once inside, their unique exchanges with the piece become a part of the exhibit. However, the experience of LACMA's penetrable gave one no preparation for the plastic rain that was about to hit Houston this summer.

The MFAH received the project from Jesus-Rafael Soto in 2004. Soto passed away in 2005, long before completion of his project, leaving Houston with the responsibility of installing Soto's

masterpiece of a lifetime. Filling two thousand and six-hundred square feet of the museum's main entrance exhibit hall (Cullinan Hall) and hanging 28 feet high, the 24,000 PVC tubes represents the most ambitious project by Jesus-Rafael Soto.

The first penetrable of its kind in both size and dichromatic design, our MFAH had to go to great length to honor Soto's legacy. As recounted in the MFAH's video on the penetrable, there were countless man-hours spent on this project. Ten years in the making, the penetrable has touched many in the museum staff, but the bulk of the work was done by two artists from Atelier Soto who tied knots (both literally and not) for two years to complete the piece.

Exposed on the walls leading to the penetrable, the MFAH presents seven clues that compose the answer to Soto's arrival at this masterpiece. The seven works on display talk to the viewer about perception, symmetry, movement and, most importantly, space. They start in the year of 1956, with a simple black and white tone and a small piece of metal sticking out of it, much like a whisper of the calm before the storm. The clues then end with a work from the year 1997 that demonstrates clearly the artist's progression to a bolder piece that still holds all of the original intent of his earlier works. Drawn by foreshadow from his earlier works, and inspired by the development of his creative intellect, the penetrable is the great finale to his artistic life, which ended too short.

The penetrable then, placed at the end of the hall, up in the podium of Cullinan Hall, falling above our heads as what it represents to Houston: rain after a drought personified in plastic. The

simplicity and lightheartedness of the piece elicit enjoyment from small and big kids alike. Much like the penetrable installation in Los Angeles, the true art is in people's reactions to the piece.

With a sun-colored oval floating in the middle of the sea of plastic, the piece gains even more movement than it would otherwise. When a kid (or adult) runs through the piece, the movement is not contained to where the child stands, but to all the strands in proximity, causing the big sun to lose its shape for a split second and regain it soon after, just to be lost again by the next person who decides to twirl inside the piece. From the inside, however, there is a different perception: The sun stands still while the transparent tubes move below. And this change of perception in space is exactly what Soto envisioned—along with the strange wish to "cover the whole world" with penetrables.

Saying the "Houston Penetrable" is a piece of art is an understatement. It is Soto's gift to our city, by our city. It is an iconic piece connecting Soto and Houston, representing all of the things our city inspires. There is no doubt the "Houston Penetrable" has helped demonstrate that, truly, for Houston, the sky is the limit (and NASA will contest you on that). **FPH**

The Museum of Fine Arts Houston is open Tuesday through Sunday and free every THURSDAY from 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Do not forget to post a picture on Instagram and have it printed at the exhibit by using the hashtag: #SotoSummer. For more information access: <http://www.mfah.org>.



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"A NIGHT IN OLD MEXICO" represents a film that got shuffled and lost in the deck of the new paradigm of film distribution. "A Night in Old Mexico" is available on video on demand (VOD), which means it can be streamed or downloaded via local cable providers or businesses like Amazon. The movie will come out on disc in July.

That's a shame, because "A Night in Old Mexico" deserves its time on the big screen. "We've been trying to make this film for years. At one point, Dennis Hopper was going to direct," Robert Duvall told Free Press Houston in an interview before the film's world premiere last March at SXSW. "This went on for years. At one point, I thought it was cursed, and then Emilio came along and it was a reality."

Bill Wittliff who'd also written scripts for "Lonesome Dove," "Legends of the Fall," and "The Perfect Storm" among others wrote the script for "A Night in Old Mexico". Literally decades passed before the production got a green light.

Director Emilio Aragón met Duvall after an L.A. screening of Aragón's previous film "Paper Birds," a film from Spain set during the Spanish Civil War. "Bobby always wanted to do this script," said Aragón, "It was a lot of work, a lot of energy. You have to understand, we shot the film in 23 days. You're always moving."

Duvall added that Wittliff had been honing the script for over 30 years and that it was as good as it could possibly be. In the movie, Duvall plays a rancher who is ousted from his home and about to be moved to a nursing home. A fortuitous visit from his estranged grandson changes things and the pair take off for what seems like a last road trip to Mexico. They pick up some hitchhikers only to dump them by the side of

the road when the passengers start to act unruly. Only the hitchhikers have left a large sum of money in the car. Arriving in Mexico, Duvall and his grandson commence to party in bars and whorehouses, all the while avoiding the men looking for their money, as well as drug cartels thugs also looking for the loot. The Variety review stated: "Scripter Wittliff and Spanish helmer Emilio Aragón hit the sweet spot between galloping and sauntering while unfolding the movie's plot, an interlocking chain of coincidences, encounters and colorful supporting characters that often recalls the twisty storylines of Elmore Leonard."

"Initially we were going to shoot in New Mexico, they have better rebates for shooting films than Texas," explained Duvall. Aragón added, "It was such a low budget that we ended up saving money by shooting the entire film in Brownsville, the town had our back and opened up to us. We shot in and around a 15-block area. We would just move from street to street. You can imagine shooting in Brownsville in August. It was so hot at times that a couple of the crew members fainted from the heat."

Duvall also wants to direct and star in a film about the Texas Rangers that he's been developing. "We have a couple of ranches outside of San Antonio that we would use as locations, but it's easier to raise 100-million than it is 5 million," laughed Duvall. In addition to being an Academy Award winning actor, Duvall has directed the documentary "We're Not the Jet Set" (1977), and the narrative features "Angelo My Love" (1983), "The Apostle" (1997), and "Assassination Tango" (2002). The latter film also starred Duvall's wife Luciana Pedraza. "My wife would play one of the Texas Rangers," Duvall said. "There have only ever been

LOCAL P.10FPH0614

DUVALL ON MOVIES

BY MICHAEL BERGERON

three female Rangers. She grew up horse-back riding. We went shooting the other day and she got six bullseyes at 100-yards, and five out of six at 300-yards."

Duvall has worked with some of the greatest directors around including Sam Peckinpah, Francis Coppola, Tony Scott, George Lucas, Robert Altman, Ron Howard, and Sidney Lumet just to name a few. Duvall has won four Golden Globes and won the Oscar as Best Actor for "Tender Mercies."

Talking about Peckinpah and Scott, Duvall said, "They weren't geared so much for performance as they were for action." About Altman, Duvall noted: "Altman was another guy who was willing to turn it around. Some of the old directors were like dictators, but modern day directors want to turn it around and not be like that. That's how Altman was back in the '60s. He wanted to see what you could do." About Lucas and "THX 1138" Duvall recalled, "It was his first film, he did something with the film stock. I was doing 'The Rain People' with Coppola, and Lucas shot a documentary about the making of it. He was a very innovative guy; more of a mogul now."

Duvall has also worked extensively with Billy Bob Thornton who he calls "the hillbilly Orson Welles. He put Tennessee Williams in the backseat; he's a very talented guy. His mother was a seer, a clairvoyant. Billy's a character. I said to his six-year-old daughter 'Tell your Daddy not to get anymore tattoos, he's got tattoos all over the place.'"

Duvall's next appearance is in "The Judge" alongside Robert Downey, Jr., Vera Farmiga and Thornton. "We had 60 days to shoot on that one—all the money in the world. But you know, I prefer the smaller films a lot of the time because you can focus on the performance." **FPH**



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COMEDY & SPORTS LINEUP
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Deadbeat Summer
By Jack Betz

Now that the festival is over--yes, THAT festival--I'm feeling a little empty. Don't get me wrong, this city always has good music on the docket, especially as of the last few years, but there's no obvious mindblowers in July. There's no one scheduled who would cause me to charge the barricades like a screaming, teenage fangirl (pardon the patriarchal music trope).

We have lots of returning Top-40, big-hitters this month, but not much else that would be obvious to the casual observer just keeping his or her ear to the ground. But I have my sources, and I have assembled a handful of shows that are sure to please.

Thursday, July 24th - Natural Child / Pujol / Cool Piss @ Walter's

Natural Child are an oasis of authenticity in a desert full of roots-rock wannabes. They truly sound like a mix of the Rolling Stones and Grateful Dead, with bawdy, soul-drenched lyrics, and down-home, slide guitar savvy. Yeah, I know that seems like a really hard-to-imagine combo, but if it's one that sounds appealing to you know, look up "Don't Pass the Time Quickly" on YouTube or Spotify. They put on a fantastic live show.

Saturday, July 19th - Cop Warmth / RU-486 / Funeral Parlor (and more) @ Mango's

Cop Warmth always plays a different show each time, and no I don't mean in that you-never-step-into-the-same-river-twice bullshit. These local noise-rockers have so much energy to get out, and maybe so much steam blow off, that the entire set sort of blends together seamlessly, like panic attack that inspires you to put your fist through a stained-glass picture window. Well worth revisiting these shows, time after time. Can you precisely duplicate an explosion? I rest my case.

Monday, July 21st - The Antlers @ Fitzgerald's

There's music you rock out to and there's music that you rock into, and The Antlers would be an example of the latter. These guys play a washed-out, sometimes gloomy, navel-rock that does a good job of taking you out of the particular section of space and time you're inhabiting, at least for the duration of their set. While their latest album, "Familiar", is a little more cheery than past efforts (such as the morbidly-named "Hospice" from 2009), it still has that kernel of sad psychedelia that makes for waking dreamscapes, painted with dulcimer-like guitars and cavernous reverb.

Sunday, July 6th - American Sharks / We Were Wolves @ Boondocks

Friday, July 11th - Hearts of Animals, Young Mammals, LIMB @ Rudyards (free show)

Saturday, July 12th - Black Joe Lewis @ Saengerfest Park (Galveston)

Thursday, July 17th - Los Lonely Boys @ House of Blues

JU-LYING (No, I am Telling The Truth) by KM Anderson

MADLIB - "Rock Konducta Vol. 2" (Madlib Invazion)

Madlib is probably one of the greatest beat-makers in hip hop music. His name is synonymous with excellence, whether it be the legendary Loot Pack albums, Jaylib's Champion Sound, or Madvillian's Madvilliany, or even recent classics like Freddie Gibb's latest opus Pinata. While being one of the few producers that still samples (though there is an integration of looped live instrumentation, kinda like Battles, but not really) his music maintains the crate digger, boom-bap appeal of classic hip hop while still remaining new and exciting. His vinyl only instrumental series Beat Konducta gave way to the Rock Konducta version, where he uses classic rock, psychedelic and prog rock as his muse. "Rock Konducta Vol. 2" (also vinyl only) is the second installment of this series. This music is revered in the way that one might view jazz or math rock. It is exalted technique: sample choices, triggering, drum sounds, bass line filtering, etc. For those who appreciate the more artistic craft-ish elements of hip hop, this album will make you test and/or ruin your car stereo.

SHABAZZ PALACES - "Lese Majesty" (Sub Pop)

Shabazz Palaces' "Black Up" was one of the most amazing things to ooze from my computer since the time my speakers began to leak pecan and praline ice cream (which didn't happen). Psychedelic, crunky or trappy, or whatever adjective best describes authentically street, PRO-black—maybe racist—it made something like Yeezus either suck or surprise you. It opened up the doors, pushed the wall wider, it redefined or solidified faith in _____. Well now the album has a follow up: "Lese Majesty". No less weird (possibly weirder), separated into suites, it will rest comfortably in many record-of-the-year slots, as I am sure that it will be what all great albums are: unique, singular in sound and statement. It will be "the" more than "another." Rap music at this point has gotten more interesting whether it's Young Thug or the other extreme of maybe Death Grips. The colors are allowed to be more striking, but how much is spectacle versus genuine? This is not a concern with Shabazz Palaces, as the single "They Come In Gold" is sincere to the vision, representative of the aesthetic. It is appealing more than trying to appeal to, and this is refreshing in these tumultuous times. Get down with the get down, and get down *Barry White voice*.

COMMON - "Nobody's Smiling" (Def Jam)

"Return to Form" is an idea of rebranding. Recapturing the lost, it is a thing that Common has questionably been doing for his last three albums. He is going to be the "classic" Common on a new album—it is a peculiar idea—but July is a slow month for music releases, so let's entertain it.

This album reunites Com with No I.D. who, in addition to being the main producer on his seminal albums, is now a major music executive responsible for the likes of Jhene Aiko and Vince Staples (not at all a bad thing). Common is also no longer an integral part of the G.O.O.D. music collective of Kanye Kardashian West, so this is sort of a way to see whether he can maintain/sustain relevance. "War" (the first single) features rapper Vince Staples and is an impressive statement on religion. Despite my seeming reluctance, I am excited to hear the album. Common is a great rapper and I expect more great rapping than reminiscence of past glories, but what is a rapper without self reference (and self reverence).

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RIO

RAMPING UP TO THE WORLD CUP

BY NICK COOPER
ART BY BLAKE JONES

ANDREW LENZ IS A HOUSTONIAN who has lived in Rio since 1998 and has spent the last 10 years helping develop and run a variety of community projects in different favelas (densely populated urban informal settlements of poor people) around the city.

Could you let a gringo audience know about what the Pacification Police Units (UPPs) are doing as Rio gets ready for the World Cup this June, and the Olympics in 2016?

The UPP program that Rio's police have been implementing in several favelas since 2008 is the state's attempt to re-occupy parts of the city that, for the past several decades, have been dominated by drug gangs. The overall goal is admirable, but unfortunately it has failed in its implementation.

Although the state has more than doubled the police force in the past 10 years, they have done little to curb corruption and police brutality. There have been many well-documented cases of UPP forces committing theft, torture and murder. I know people that have had their children's percussion classes prohibited, as well as birthdays and samba parties being shut down at the whim of the commanding officer in charge of the favela.

These sorts of issues have severely hurt the public support of a program that in its early phases was unanimously well received.

So, it's really inconsistent and not based on one standardized policy?

The attitude and relationship with the community varies from favela to favela depending both on the policing style of the particular commanding offi-

cer and on the resistance of the drug gangs to give up turf. Some "sheriffs" are more oppressive and unreasonable, while others are genuinely trying to make a difference.

Has some Brazilian "funk" (electronic dance music) been criminalized?

In Brazil it is against the law to promote or support criminal activity in any way. As a result, certain songs that were produced by the drug gangs or explicitly promote violence, organized crime and other illegal activities are censored and are known as "Proibidão" (strongly prohibited).

Other than that, funk is completely legal and is very in-fashion all over the country. A couple years ago here in Rio, the state legislature even made it an official cultural heritage for the state along with samba. There is still obviously a lot of prejudice and fear of both poor people and of popular culture amongst the elite and governing powers (as it is all over the world).

In some ways, the government and corporations are trying harness it for their own interests. I know for example that Coca-Cola, together with the UPPs, put on a funk competition a few months back that took place in all the pacified neighborhoods.

So, realistically, is this going to help protect tourists and sports fans during the World Cup? Could it somehow create a backlash?

I think the UPP program and the general safety of tourists are two different things. Some people feel that drug dealers that have lost income due to the police presence in the favelas will turn to theft and other street crime. This might affect Rio's residents during other parts of the year, but I tend to think that there will be such a strong police presence in the touristy neighborhoods during the World Cup that it won't be an issue.

How has this affected you so far? How do you imagine your life will be affected during the World Cup?

At the moment, most people in Rio are not very positive about the changes that the city is going through. The cost of living has gone up dramatically, while the generally quality of life has not improved at all or in many cases has gotten worse (the traffic and pollution here for example are worse than ever). Many people are being driven out of the neighborhoods they grew up in, either due to rising property prices, or in more dramatic cases by direct government relocation. This all obviously causes a lot of frustration and was the spark of the large protests that happened last year. People are getting tired of hearing empty promises from the government while feeling like they are always just getting stuck with the bill.

We'll see if this sentiment will last during the World Cup though. That will probably depend on how far the national team gets in the competition.

What is the messaging from popular movements? Do they essentially see the cure as worse than the disease (drugs and street violence)? Are they calling for drug legalization or some other response?

Whether one occupying force is better than the other will always be dependent on whom you are asking, where they live and what their life stories have been. In general though, there is a strong cry for the demilitarization of the police force. Most people agree that Rio's police are poorly trained for the job they are being asked to do (whether that be occupying the favelas, preventing street crime against tourists, or dealing with protests). This, combined with rampant corruption throughout the police force, means it's doubtful they will ever completely be successful in "pacifying" the favelas or winning the trust of the population. **FPH**



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FITZGERALD'S

AN EPITAPH TO LUCKY BURGER (AND WHAT IT SIGNIFIED)

BY ABOUBACAR N'DIAYE
ART BY SHELBY HOHL

LUCKY BURGER, A SOUTH MONTROSE/LOWER RICHMOND INSTITUTION, died last month from gentrification-related causes. It was an unassuming establishment, despite its ostentatious design, jutting out from the corner of Mandell and Richmond shaped like a 1,000-gallon hat, that served standard issue greasy burgers and fries on paper plates. It was empty most of the time, with its gingham-patterned tablecloths, its noisy window air-conditioners, its barely passable service, hosting a rotating cast of working-class Hispanic workers, drunk hipsters, and neighborhood residents who had given up on cooking that night.

It wasn't much, this burger joint. "To be honest with you, the burgers weren't that good," said Ben Clark, a Montrose resident who once lived close to Lucky Burger, "but it was close and it was cheap, you know?" Those who frequented the establishment knew it as a place by which to keep time. While the rest of Montrose galloped ahead, tearing down the old apartment complexes that once housed the neighborhood's workforce, closing the gay and lesbian hangouts that had once defined lower Westheimer, Lucky Burger stayed, seemingly undisturbed, not even updating its menu, not so much as updating its website.

But just as gentrification came for Chance's, and Cafe Artiste, and Mary's, and 1301 Richmond, and Dirk's, and EJ's, and the Old Fiesta, it came for Lucky Burger. The immediate cause of closing was redevelopment. Braun Development, a Houston-based company, recently purchased the lot that contains Lucky Burger, The Harp, Maria Selma, and the now-closed Orange Bar. They plan to bring in new tenants and make extensive investments in the aesthetics of that corner of Montrose. They have already locked down a new tenant, The Revelry on Richmond, which will "cater to the crowd around the neighborhood," the people who have moved to the gleaming new apartment complexes that have sprung up in the past two years. The new bar will serve "craft beer" and "gourmet burgers" to its new clientele.

Lucky Burger first opened its doors in 1975, going through a number of hands, the last time in 1998. For as long as I've known the place, it has been in the hands of an East Asian family (the Tse's) who ran it like a family business. When you came in to order your burger and crinkle cut fries with the red soda, you could hang back and watch the older man in the kitchen throw the patties on the grill, the younger son at the standing bar flipping through the Greensheet or the Houston Press. The prices rarely budged (I remember paying roughly the same amount of money when I graduated high school in 2005 as I did five years later) and that price, along with the pedestrian-like quality of the food, sort of fooled me into thinking that this place, like Chupultapec

and Alladin's would be able to earn a reprieve from the wrecking ball. But it didn't. Braun Development, in interviews about the deal, emphasized that all parties were ok with the decision. The Tse's would not try to re-open elsewhere. They will retire.

The restaurant is survived in closing by the janky establishments in the neighborhood that still remain, including the C store, La Tapatia, and Ruthie's. It is preceded in death by the places I mentioned above, and by a whole generation of Montrosians who grew up going not just to Lucky Burger, but to the old Dietrich's on Westheimer, to the Cafe Adobe on Shepherd—to all of the people who can no longer afford to live in Montrose, having made beelines for Third Ward and the East End, but still trek back on Friday night to drink in the darkness of Poison Girl and Grand Prize.

I don't want to be sanguine about this. I understand that as more and more people with good incomes move into the city, a homogenizing process will take place. I know that before long, every establishment will offer hand-cut fries, burgers with fried eggs, and local brews. But, in honor of the dearly departed Lucky Burger, I want to remember the Montrose that flourished when it first opened. I want to remember that the neighborhood once was the refuge of the outcast, the freak, the rejected. That Montrose, before it became the playground of engineers and Bikram yoga enthusiasts, once was the place where you could live cheap, make art, be gay, be weird and drift—just drift. To paraphrase Daniel Webster, Lucky Burger was, as I have said, a small burger joint, where the food wasn't even that great, but there were those who loved it—me among them. **FPH**



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HURRICANE DOOM

HURRICANES WITH DAINTY NAMES AREN'T ACTUALLY DAINTY, SAYS STUDY

BY KATHRYN MCGRANAHAN
ART BY AUSTIN SMITH

AS ANYONE LIVING IN HOUSTON KNOWS, we're a popular target for hurricanes. And why wouldn't we be? We're perfectly situated on the Gulf, we're flat like a Ken doll's not-so-naughty bits, and we're a trendy new place to be. Fuck you, Houston's awesome.

But no matter how many online top 10 lists we grace, hurricanes take up a lot of room in our negative column. And big nasties like Ike and overhyped ones like Rita (which can be just as damaging, we learned) have really brought hurricane preparedness into sharp focus. Highlighting safe routes, FEMA's hurricane kits and The Annual Houston Healthcare Hurricane & Emergency Preparedness Summit are the results of Houston's hurricane problems.

Unless the hurricane has a girly name.

A new study from researchers at the University of Illinois and Arizona State University, published in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences for the United States of America (PNAS), says we take storms with female names less seriously. Consequently, they have higher death rates.

The authors compared death rates for six decades of storms (minus Katrina and Audrey, due to their being less hurricane and more shitstorm). They found an average of 45 deaths for so-called female hurricanes and an average of 15 deaths for so-called male hurricanes. And the interns quipped, "Way to lean in, ladies!"

Then, co-author Kiju Yung ran six experiments on six different groups of volunteers. When presented with just gendered hurricane names (Victor vs. Victoria, Danny vs. Kate, etc.), each group took the male name more seriously. For example, when asked how likely they were to evacuate from Hurricane Alexander versus Alexandra, Alexander was the winner.

From the study: "Using names such as Eloise or Charlie for referencing hurricanes has been thought by meteorologists to enhance the clarity and recall of storm information. We show that this practice also taps into well-developed and widely held gender stereotypes, with potentially deadly consequences."

The results don't show blatant sexism, with people consciously choosing to ignore hurricanes with female names. Instead, says co-author Sharon Shavitt, "This suggests that the effects in the main experiments are implicit in nature." When the volunteers were directly asked whether a male hurricane was more dangerous, answers were split.

But faster than you could say "sneaky sexism", other academics and researchers pointed out the flaws in their evidence. And they made some excellent points.

For example, hurricanes were given exclusively female names until 1978 and 1979. On top of that, National Geographic points out, hurricanes have decreased in deadliness over time.

The authors analyzed pre and post-1979 data and argued there was a connection with the femininity of the name—Hurricane Fern was less likely to kill than Hurricane

Belle, says Shavitt. However, the authors also argued they didn't have enough usable data when splitting the storms by 1979 too. So, which is it? Not enough data, or definite connection?

The authors addressed this in a published response to the study's critics. "Although it is true that if we model the data using only hurricanes since 1979, this is too small a sample to obtain a significant interaction. When we model the fatalities of all hurricanes since 1950 using their names' degree of femininity, the interaction between name-femininity and damage is statistically significant. That is a key result."

When the authors analyzed post-1979 storms, they still found a ... well I guess we'll call it a death gap, even though it bums me out to type it. They found an average of 23 deaths for male storms compared to an average of 29 deaths for female storms.

They add, "Specifically, for storms that did a lot of damage, the femininity of their names significantly predicted their death toll."

Critics point out other factors that could skew the results, like where the respondents lived (e.g. someone on the coast may have a different response than someone in the Midwest). Jeff Lazo, economist at the National Center for Atmospheric Research, said, "Trying to suggest that a major factor in this is the gender name of the event, with a very small sample of real events, is a very big stretch."

In the aforementioned response, the authors point out their findings were consistent across the board from a volunteer base of 18 to 81. So regardless of where or how they lived, the respondents consistently were more threatened by male hurricanes. Which is sexism, unintentional or no.

However, more in-depth research will be needed before any naming policies change. As several critics have pointed out, the study did not control for a variety of other social variables that affect preparedness. I doubt one study could. As the authors have said, this is a good place to begin the conversation about gender bias in hurricanes, not a definitive source.

And finally, one last gem from Jason Samenow at Washington Post: "An interesting aside: in reading press accounts and critiques of this study, I've anecdotally found criticism from men about this study much harsher than from women. Gender bias on a study about gender bias?"

Let's just get some water bottles, find our evacuation routes and pack some feminist literature into our hurricane kits. And to show we really mean business, let's change hurricane names into something really memorable, like Hurricane Doom or Hurricane Ruination—or name them after really scary men and women, like Hurricane Medusa or Hurricane Slender Man. (Too soon?) **FPH**

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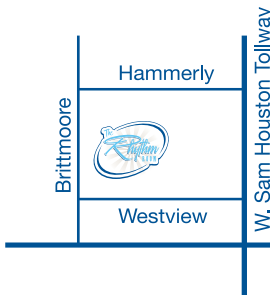


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LOCAL

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HOUSTON'S TAXIS UBER-CONCERNED ABOUT RIDE-SHARING APPS

BY KYLE NAZARIO
ART BY BLAKE JONES



WHAT MAKES A TAXI COMPANY a taxi company? Is it ferrying riders for money? Is it dispatching vehicles all over the city? Is it having a fleet of cars bearing the same fetching shade of yellow?

You would think this question would be easy to answer. Watching the Houston City Council convinced me otherwise.

They were debating the fate of Uber and Lyft: the ride-sharing apps that spread from the streets of San Francisco to 38 countries. The two have taken smartphone-powered ride-sharing to every major city in America, save one. Houston.

"It is true, the industry is changing," Council Member Mike Laseter said at a June meeting. "It is true we need to be responsive to that change... This has significant financial impact on the citizens of Houston, not to mention the transportation needs across the city of Houston."

In other words, the city can't make up its mind. It doesn't know whether to embrace Uber and Lyft with open arms or return to the comforting familiarity of entrenched interests like Yellow Cab. Houston's government has come to a split road and left the car idling.

Will Uber come to Houston?

THE UBER EXPERIENCE

Uber strongly resembles a taxi company. You use the app to call Uber drivers to your location. They drive you around the city for a comparable cost to a taxi, depending on the trip. Just don't call it a taxi company.

"We're a transportation technology company," said Chris Nakutis, general man-

ager of Uber Houston. "We're a technology that connects rider and driver."

I signed up for Uber the morning before Houston's city council met to fruitlessly debate the company's fate. Joining was painless. Name. Email. Credit card. Good to go.

The service uses dark, sleekly elegant stylings. Uber is cool, and it wants you to know that it's cool. This is a service for transporting people who do important things.

I used Uber to get from the Free Press Houston offices to City Hall. The irony of using the service being debated was too inviting to pass up. I pushed a button in the app, and a driver came to my location within 15 minutes. He seemed like a nice guy, albeit one who was still working on English as his second language.

I sat in the back seat of his silver two-door and watched him struggle with an ancient TomTom GPS. He didn't know where City Hall was. I had already pulled up the address, so I gave it to him. We were off.

My final bill came out to \$7.51 for an 8-minute drive over 2.08 miles. Not bad. Definitely cheaper than parking downtown for a four-hour meeting. The app paid the bill automatically, and I got out of the car.

Easy.

THE FLAMBOYANT YOUNGER BROTHER

Lyft was the other company under fire at city council. It feels like bizarro-world version of Uber.

Lyft operates the same way: Download app, input credit card, push button to call ride.



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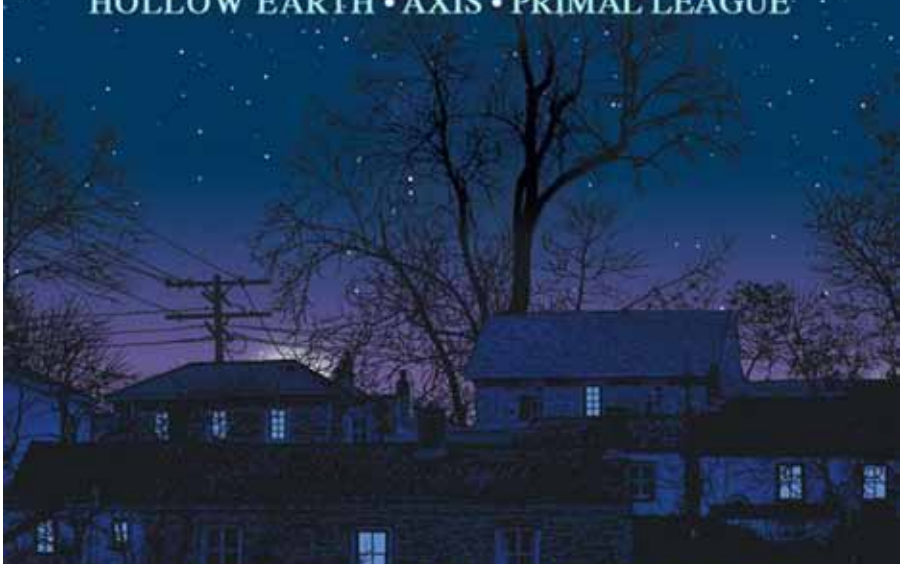


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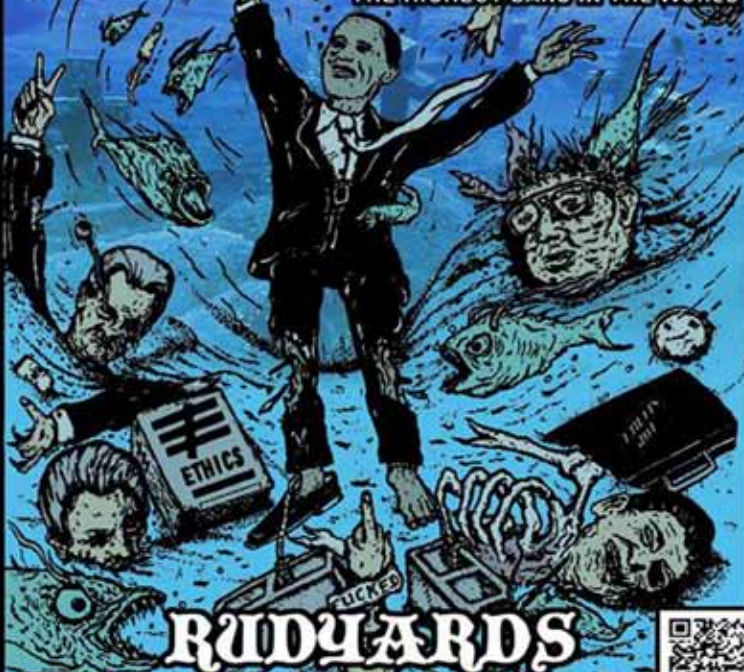
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The difference is customer relations. Lyft is bright and friendly. It puts pink mustaches on its cars. The service's website cheerfully recommends you greet drivers with a fist bump.

Drivers undergo a background check and interviews with the company—a step farther than Uber.

Like Uber, Lyft also does not consider itself a taxi service.

“There are many key differences between Lyft and a taxi, which is why Lyft should not be regulated as [such] and does not fit into existing regulations for taxis,” Lyft representative Katie Dally told me over email.

It bills itself as a way to connect you with “a friend with a car.” A friend who you give a “donation” at the end of the ride. A donation that's calculated automatically by distance or time. You know, exactly like a taxi.

PROTESTING IN YELLOW

The protesters gathered at the city council meeting also took a less generous view of ride-sharing apps like Uber and Lyft.

“They feel like they are not a cab company, but they are picking up people for fares,” said Yellow Cab driver Karl Brown. Brown called Uber's self-definition a “smokescreen.”

“Really they're a cab company,” he said. “What they're trying to do is circumvent the system.”

I got a lot of similar responses from the other cab drivers in the council chambers. Many cab drivers who spoke to me referenced a deep sense of unfairness, like Uber had personally wronged them.

“This law has been here for many years, and we have been abiding by it,” driver Stella Frank told me. “They want to do business, they have to follow the law and do exactly what we do here.”

This isn't the first time Uber (oddly few people mentioned Lyft) has run into reactions like Frank's. European cab drivers staged protests in London, Paris, Madrid and Berlin against the San Francisco company. They brought up many of the same concerns Houstonians did, calling it remote and harder to hold accountable.

The Uber version of accountability is a system where drivers and riders rate each other on a 5-star system. To cab drivers used to heavy city oversight, this is unthinkable.

“I don't have no felony, but they still check me to get my cab license,” Frank said. “With Uber, there is no serious background check like we do with the city.”

Uber drivers undergo a background check before starting. The company also checks their cars to make sure they're in working order. Compared to a cab driver's litany of drug tests and background checks, driving for Uber or Lyft is a breeze.

IN UBER'S WORDS

Uber considers itself a technology company, not a taxi company.

“We don't own any vehicles,” Nakutis said, comparing the company to PayPal and

eBay in terms of connecting customers and sellers. “I think we are a technology company more than a transportation company.”

Because Uber doesn't believe that it is a taxi company, it went ahead and launched UberX in Houston with no permits from the city council. As of this writing, you can pick up the app and request a ride from an UberX driver.

A vocal section of the city council sees that as illegal. Council Member Michael Kubosh began a discussion with one Uber driver by asking, “Are you aware that you're operating illegally right now?”

Nakutis explained that Uber is simply technology too new and different to fit into existing regulations.

“It's not illegal, it's an undefined gray area that the city is working to define,” he said. “Current city codes just don't account for transportation network companies because Uber's so new.”

Nakutis applauded Mayor Parker for working with Uber to set out specific rules for Uber and other transportation network companies.

The city currently has a page of proposed rule changes to legalize Uber and Lyft while adding some regulations to their operation. The latest one would add requirements like a city inspection and Houston-specific permit for Uber drivers. You wouldn't be able to use a car that's seven or more years old or has more than 150,000 miles on it. Basic stuff.

Nakutis said Uber could help Houston. He claims other Uber-ified cities like Seattle have seen lower drunk driving rates.

WHY IT ALL MATTERS

The critical difference between Uber and Lyft and the cab companies they want to compete against is regulation.

Taxis have had a century in America to accumulate rules for operation. Cities know how to handle them. Uber and Lyft are different enough that they can make a good case for not following the old regulations. Houston is still working out whether to lump them in with the old guard (and those rules) or set up something new. Cab companies want the former, while Uber prefers the latter.

What should be a simple case of classification or adding regulation becomes more complicated when you factor in taxi companies' animosity toward ride-sharing newcomers.

The taxi business hasn't changed in years. Even with smartphones and the internet, Yellow Cab offers a poorly made app. It works only in Houston and uses dated layouts. Compared to Uber's elegant one-app-for-every-city design, Yellow Cab looks positively archaic.

Uber and Lyft's move into Houston sparks existential resentment from cab drivers. Sure, they dislike that the ride-sharing companies break the law, but they also reject their vision of travel.

“They're not doing it right,” Brown told me. “They're trying to say this is a computer age, everything is internet-based. Which it is, a lot of things. But when you talk about something like this, no, it's not internet-

based like that.”

SOLVE THIS, DAMN IT

The city council has let this debate drag on for months. They're not scheduled to vote on the proposed rules until July 30 (or sooner if the city reaches an agreement). We need a solution.

Uber driver Mario Villarreal hopes the council will resolve the issue, though he has reservations.

“Seems like there's a lot of politics,” Villarreal said. “It's gonna come down to who has the better lobbyist, really.”

He sees the contest between Uber and Lyft and the city as one driven by other factors than the businesses themselves.

“I think it's really about the money,” Villarreal said. “If it was about the people, Uber would be passed.” **FPH**

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LOCAL
P. 26PPH0614

BY ROB BLOCK
ART COURTESY OF ROB BLOCK

IF YOU WERE GOING TO WRITE A STORY about a neighborhood and why it is a great place to live, would you:

- A) Talk to someone who lives there
- B) Talk to a consultant for a real estate company that has an expertise in relocating people from other cities to Houston
- C) Create a cute nickname for the neighborhood based on a sofa for sale on craigslist (without running it by any residents)
- D) Use lots of language talking about “urban pioneers” and “to the valiant go the spoils”

If you are Houstonia Magazine, you picked B, C and D, and show no interest in doing any of A.

Houstonia Magazine’s April 2014 issue had the feature “Where to live now: The 25 Hottest Neighborhoods of 2014: An exclusive guide to the city’s 25 neighborhoods of the moment.” It includes neighborhoods in many parts of Houston, as well as developments in suburbs of Katy and Missouri City and other cities themselves like Seabrook and West University.

One of the neighborhoods discussed was “Northside Village,” by which they mean the Near Northside or Northside, where I’ve worked since 2011 and owned a home for just over a year. In three short paragraphs, it got a number of things wrong: from what Northside Village is, to where it is, to what people call it. Worse than not being very accurate, the entire feature, particularly the entry about Northside, promotes the language of gentrification: that there is a wild urban frontier that needs to be tamed by urban pioneers.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE NEAR NORTHSIDE

The Northside is one of the oldest neighborhoods in Houston; its first plat is called AC Allen, after Augustus Chapman Allen, one of the two Yankee brothers who invented Houston in this swamp on the bayou. There was very limited development in the neighborhood until the Southern Pacific Railroad Company established the Hardy Rail Yards in the southernmost part of the neighborhood in the 1880s. The neighborhood was settled primarily by railway workers, most of whom were new immigrants, from Central and Southern Europe, Bohemian, German and Italian. Up until the ward system was abolished in the early 1900s, Near Northside was part of the Fifth Ward, as was everything North of Buffalo Bayou and East of Little White Oak Bayou.

Starting in the 1940s Mexican and Mexican-American immigrants came to the neighborhood, and after world war two it became a Hispanic enclave, as most Anglo families left for the new suburbs and other parts of town. Despite its close proximity to downtown it has been largely ignored by both private and public development. To be a neighborhood that immediately borders downtown on the other side of Buffalo Bayou, it is remarkably poorly known by residents of Houston. When I tell people from other parts of Houston where I live, I try to tell them it’s the neighborhood that contains Davis High School, Moody Park, Poppa Burger and Taconazo. If none of those ring a bell, I give up and tell people it’s between The Heights and Fifth Ward.

While this neglect has had a lot of negative consequences for Northside residents, many of whom are working class and poor, it has meant that large amounts of historic housing still stand, and that many families have been able to stay in the neighborhood for multiple generations. With the new light rail line entering the neighborhood along North Main and Fulton, the explosive growth of Houston’s population and the lack of available housing, people are starting



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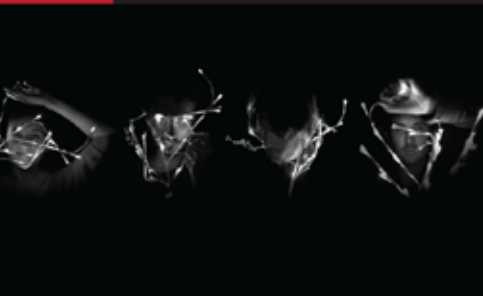
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to notice the neighborhood. If many of them adopt the same attitude as Houstonia Magazine, this is bad news for that neighborhood.

WHAT IS NORTHSIDE VILLAGE?

Northside Village is the name of the Super Neighborhood Council #51 (SNC #51). Super neighborhood councils were created by Mayor Lee Brown as a way to try and centralize communication between civic groups and the city by forming rough neighborhood areas as an officially sanctioned body for civic clubs and residents to interact with the city. SNC #51 includes the Near Northside, Ryon, North Central, Silverdale, Lindale Park and North Central civic club areas. The original name for the SNC was Near Northside, and the change in name was promoted by residents from Lindale Park, the most affluent area of the neighborhood, who wanted people to think about Highland Village or Rice Village. While this became the name of the SNC, most residents have not heard and

1980s frontier vocabulary of gentrification is rarely as explicit, it treats the inner-city population in much the same way.”

While this framework may seem far-fetched, the language that Houstonia uses to introduce this article is straight out of this textbook. “Let Houstonia be your Sacajawea, expertly guiding you through the thicket...” The iconography of the Lewis and Clark expedition, the first trip of Anglo pioneers through the west to the Pacific Coast is how they frame their expertise in the “thicket” of Houston.

TAMPICO HEIGHTS

As the Lewis and Clark Expedition travelled through the Pacific northwest, they took the liberty of naming the rivers and mountains that the encountered in the wilderness as they traveled through the land of Shoshone, Cheyenne, Lakota, Nez Perce and dozens of other indigenous nations. They named rivers after president Jefferson, members of his cabinet,

and is creeping further east. Slapping “Heights” on something has a particular history of rapid gentrification. Terms like Washington Heights and Memorial Height are being used to sell townhomes in Rice Military and along Washington Avenue, and Sawyer Heights is being used to sell a new version of First Ward that is devoid of historic houses and poor people. This is part of the marketing strategy of the real estate industry all over the country. Neil Smith talks in detail about the real estate industry using East Village instead of Lower East Side was crucial in the gentrification of this neighborhood of Manhattan that had been abandoned by the city and private capital, and had a high population of Puerto Rican and Black residents.

In the case of Houstonia Magazine, it seems to be more of a case of journalistic sloth than a conscious real estate marketing ploy. However the whole framework of the article that opens with “WITH GENTRIFICATION now having leapt beyond the Heights and into Lindale Park and Brooke Smith, the next play for urban pioneers is Northside Village.” And ending with “And to the valiant go the spoils: two and three-bedroom houses, minutes from the heart of Houston for under \$200,000.” It is clear that this article is being written from a perspective that sees this neighborhood as an open frontier and makes no space for the perspectives of the current residents.

Neil Smith talks about this framework: “The frontier imagery is neither merely decorative nor innocent, therefore, but carries considerable ideological weight. Insofar as gentrification infects working-class communities, displaces poor households, and converts whole neighborhoods into bourgeois enclaves, the frontier ideology rationalizes social differentiation and exclusion as natural, inevitable. The poor and working class are all too easily defined as ‘uncivil,’ on the wrong side of a heroic dividing line, as savages and communists. The substance and consequence of the frontier imagery is to tame the wild city, to socialize a wholly new and therefore challenging set of processes into safe ideological focus. As such, the frontier ideology justifies monstrous incivility in the heart of the city. ”

Should we expect better from real estate reporting? Probably not. The way real estate is discussed in America, particularly in a city without zoning or much interest in its history, the media is not going to talk about a sense of a neighborhood social fabric, economic justice, collective well being or the idea that housing is a human right.

Should we expect better from John Nova Lomax and Katherine Shillcutt? (maybe just say Houstonia?) Yes, they both have a lot of knowledge about Houston, and a track record of writing very interesting stories about this city and the cast of characters that call it home. That they feel the need to defend the use of a Craigslist sofa to apply a name to a neighborhood without talking to a resident about it, and then cheer on the creation of Tampico Heights bumper stickers and label people who have a problem with this enemies is beyond disappointing, and I hope they are embarrassed. Hopefully this attempt to set the record straight and attempting to hold them accountable may influence how they talk about my neighborhood and other neighborhoods like it in the future.

Rob Block is a resident of the North Central area of the Northside, and worked for 2 years on the GO Neighborhoods program, which organizes residents around quality of life improvements. He is currently a student in the University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work.

A longer version of this article will be available on the FPH website. **FPH**

THE TERM 'URBAN PIONEER' IS THEREFORE AS ARROGANT AS THE ORIGINAL NOTION OF 'PIONEERS' IN THAT IT SUGGESTS A CITY NOT YET SOCIALLY INHABITED

don’t use this name. Much in the same way that most residents of Rice Village area don’t call it University Place, most resident of the Galleria area don’t call it Greater Uptown, and most Montrosians don’t call their neighborhood Neartown/Montrose.

While Houstonia uses Northside Village to describe the neighborhood, they include the area between Elysian and 59, which is actually part of Greater Fifth Ward and they exclude the Lindale Park and North Lindale areas north of Cavalcade. What they did was redraw the borders to suit their interests. And their interests are to paint a picture of a neighborhood that is ready for “urban pioneers”

NEAR NORTHSIDE AS THE URBAN FRONTIER

Think about this: The Northside has about 30,000 residents. How does it make sense to say talk about “urban pioneers” when tens of thousands of people live here? The only way it makes any sense is if you don’t acknowledge that the current residents of the neighborhood are people with a right to inhabit the neighborhood.

Neil Smith’s book “The New Urban Frontier” explores the dynamics of gentrification, and in particular the parallel between the conceptual framework of the (Anglo) pioneers who settled the West (displacing the indigenous people), with that of the (affluent, mostly white) urban Pioneers, who are engaged in a similar project to “civilize” the urban frontier.

“Just as [19th century Historian Fredrick Jackson] Turner recognized the existence of Native Americans but included them as part of his savage wilderness, contemporary urban frontier imagery treats the present inner-city population as a natural element of their physical surroundings. The term “urban pioneer” is therefore as arrogant as the original notion of “pioneers” in that it suggests a city not yet socially inhabited; like Native Americans, the urban working class is seen as less than social, a part of the physical environment. Turner was explicit about this when called the frontier ‘the meeting point between savagery and civilization,’ and although the 1970s and

members of their party, girls back east that they hoped to marry, pets on the expedition, and they named a creek hungry creek during a period where they were hungry. Houstonia Magazine has taken similar liberties as our guides through the urban thicket by creating the name Tampico Heights for the Northside.

According to Houstonia “Thanks to the taquerias and shaded, walkable streets some locals call the area ‘Tampico Heights.’” As someone working with many residents of the neighborhood over the last 3 years, I have never heard this name used. After talking with dozens of people, many of whom have been in the neighborhood for generations, no one has heard this name used. When pressed, Houstonia writer John Nova Lomax has commented on the Houstonia website that the claim that the term has casually been used on Craigslist and on Reddit. The only reference on Reddit before Houstonia’s article is by a user named Mendokusai_yo, who describes his location as in between Cavalcade and North Main, which happens to be near the Tampico Refresqueria on North Main near Airline—notable for being part of the Heights. The Craigslist reference was someone selling a couch and the listing has been removed from their site, making it hard to verify where this actually is. When pressed on twitter if he had another Reddit source John Lomax acknowledges that “I honestly don’t remember where I first read it or heard it. I do know the difference between Beach Park and near Northside.” Still, he believes that this constitutes two sources, and that two sources justifies saying that some locals call it Tampico Heights. Editor Katharine Shilcutt in the same thread says that she stands by what John Lomax wrote.

The fight over neighborhood names is a familiar issue for people who live in urban parts of Houston and are concerned about gentrification. This thing called midtown has expanded to push out poor black residents from Fourth Ward/Freedman’s Town and eastern parts of Third Ward. EaDo is being used to redevelop a large section of Second and Third Wards



“DO YOU KNOW HOW X-RAYS were invented?” asks a man with thick glasses.

It is a Thursday night, and he’s taking a break from studying for his medical boards. The test is in three weeks. He’s going either into pediatric psychiatry or pediatric neurology. He tells me about a baby he saw who was born without a cranium. The team of doctors, who knew of the unborn child’s condition, recommended a cesarean, but the mother insisted that the child be naturally born, baptized, and allowed to live as long as it would. It lived three days with its brain exposed to the air.

Another customer is in the midst of studying for the legal bar exam. I fail to note what he purchased, but this place seems to attract intelligent people under a lot of stress.

Glass syringes. Creepy-ass, old-school gas masks. Resin paperweights containing mummified bats. A monkey head mannequin glaring and baring its fangs with an antique military pillbox hat—tilted. Clowns—lots of clowns—dolls, figurines, puppets, paintings, jack-in-the-box...sinister clown dolls arranged in an antique brass crib—clown prison.

A pelican skull on top of a glass case, beside a giant scabbard made of pig bone,

SPACE [CITY] ODDITIES

BY HARBEER SANDHU
PHOTOS BY HARBEER SANDHU



shaped and carved to look like an ivory scabbard which contains a tiny dagger that is deceptively, disproportionately small for its sheath. A plastic CPR mannequin with holes where its nose and mouth should be, perched atop a glittery, red vinyl chair beside a window framing the downtown skyline, lit up, at night, but with an aura of otherworldliness behind a foggy haze.

Vintage prosthetic limbs. Pickled lizards in a jar. Various skeletons—including a full human skeleton—in various states of taxidermy.

Accordions and kazoos and assorted musical instruments. Wheeled hospital trays laden with medical instruments that resemble implements of torture more than tools of healing—lobotomy picks, saws, scalpels, probes, specula. Wheeled contraptions with knobs and dials and colored glass lamps, tubes, and diodes, looking like a 19th-century Scientologist’s e-meter...for electro-shock treatment.

A motorized toy puppy stripped of all its fur—its mechanized plastic skeleton exposed—looking grotesquely pathetic, yet somehow still endearing (in a steampunk kind of way).

A glass case lined with red fabric, containing a gem collection, a deck of vintage

nudie playing cards, and a withered pig fetus.

A Prince’s Hamburgers uniform from 1949. Bats, mounted in frames like butterfly specimens. A mummified opossum wearing an abandoned insect colony. A satin pillowcase with a gold lace border and blue fringe, bearing images of roses alongside missiles and uniformed men in trenches with bazookas and anti-aircraft artillery, and a poem to an anonymous “sweetheart” stationed at Fort Bliss.

Loads of pretty dresses from the 1950s and earlier, and cases upon cases of brilliant, colorful baubles strung together in luxuriant jewelry designs. This is The PLACE Upstairs.

When retail space became available above the Continental Club last fall, antique dealers Laura Levine and Mike Hildebrand jumped at the chance to cash in their 401ks. These vintage shop owners—or ‘pickers’, as they call themselves—put their private collection, their own prized possessions, up for sale.

“If you want to be good at this business,” Mike said, “you’re never going to have any money—you’re going to have great stuff in your shop. Our wealth is in antiques.” **FPH**



NEWS FROM THE FRONT LINES OF THE SERVICE INDUSTRY WHAT'S SERVICE?

BY ALICE NARANJO
ART BY BLAKE JONES

IN THE FOODSERVICE INDUSTRY, one will have many bosses. That is what a customer is: a boss. Some you will like immensely, and some you will not like at all, however, it does not change the fact that they are your boss. That does not give a customer the right to treat someone else's employee disrespectfully, nor does it give the employee the right to mistreat someone they do not care for. Are you working in the service industry because you have a gift of service, and know how to do your job, or are you just looking for a cool place to look pretty, collect a paycheck, and treat others poorly?

In my 12 years in the industry, I've observed all kinds of interesting things, but I will save those juicy gems of stories for a later date, because I've realized that some workers and customers alike, don't really know how to treat each other. Respect is earned, and hard to come by when the barista is hitting on your wife, or the waitress keeps bending over because she needs a lot of attention today. Simultaneously, it's difficult to earn respect from the worker when the customer is telling you to pluck your eyebrows, dress sexier, and do something with your hair when you are required to wear a paper hat. I'm beginning to wonder whether I actually enjoy shame and humiliation, but I will take that up with my therapist, or someone in the S&M community. All kindergarten etiquette skills aside, what is service? I won't bore you with a definition, but I will give examples.

Service is when your boss loses his mother on his birthday, but he's still at work because the store needs to be run. Service is when your boss is going through a divorce and battling personal problems, while simultaneously treating customers with respect and putting out kitchen fires and calming down employee panic attacks. Service is the woman who shows up for eight years just to make you and your entire office your favorite tacos. It's exemplified in the boss who gets held up at gunpoint on the way home from the bank—while dealing with employees' personal problems—even though she's scared to the point of shaking. The show must go on.

Every man and woman in the business has been there and will understand what I am talking about. These people who have dedicated their lives in the front of the house, in the back of the house, washing dishes if they have to, scrubbing floors because it needs to be done, getting trash juice all over their aprons, and water inside their shoes—they understand service. Despite the sometimes messy nature of the job, these are the dependable folk who are there so you can show up and "be seen" at that hot new restaurant, or that adorable little coffee shop, and Yelp and complain over sometimes mediocre things.

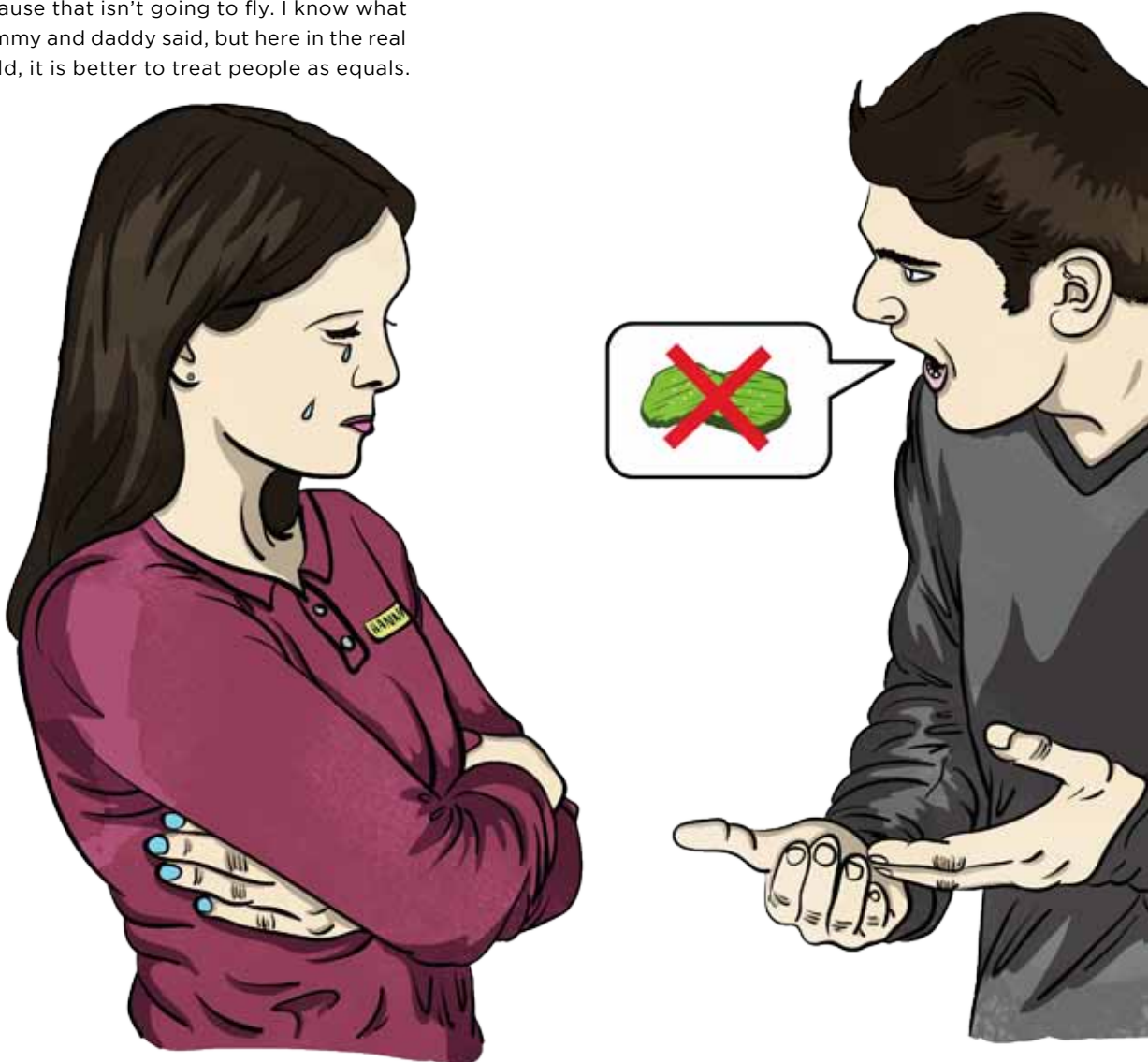
Was your food late to the table? If you had taken the time to ask, maybe it was because there was a new cook and he's a little overwhelmed. It happens. Then, there are times when the service sucks because your boss refuses to hire two extra people, or the employees aren't actually allowed

bathroom breaks, making it extremely difficult for anyone to want to smile. Get the whole story, because a few facts go a long way.

Then there are places that really get the whole customer service thing right, thankfully. I don't need a hipster barista making shapes on my latte, and giving me that, "you're not cool enough to be here," attitude. As a customer, I don't need your temper or your blatant disregard that I'm there with money to buy something. It amazes me sometimes when workers forget why they are actually there in the first place. "Hello, I'm a customer. I understand you're really jaded because you've been in the industry for five years and are a little worn out, but if you just acknowledge that I'm here instead of flirting with your coworker, I'd like to give you a little business."

Remember, you have many bosses, and we all have eyes. Then there are those loyal customers who treat you like a human being, and not a slave. Don't come into a service area and act like a prince or princess, honey, because that isn't going to fly. I know what mommy and daddy said, but here in the real world, it is better to treat people as equals.

FPH





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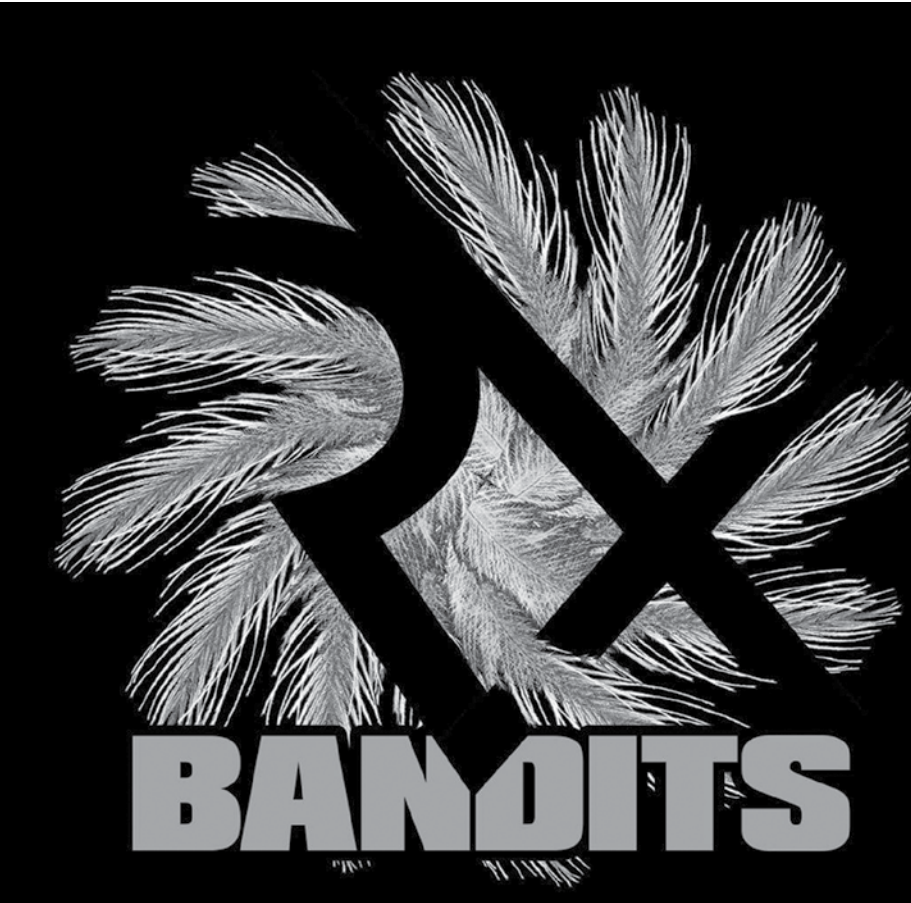
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others think about them. At the time, I don't know; maybe I was feeling needy. But now having a job I'm not ashamed about in my 30s, I feel different. I'm pretty sure that no matter what, the attitude of "other people don't think I'm good enough," will always plague me.

You told me that you had expected your life to change after you won Beta, with better shows and what not; yet that didn't happen. What advice would you give to anyone who wins any comedy contest in the future?

I expected it or at least, I hoped for it to happen immediately. It's since happened to get better, but advice? It was rough after winning. I didn't trust people at first. So if I had to give advice, I'd say that you should keep doing what you do and know that the struggle has just begun. For me, winning so early in all of this, it gives me hope that the struggle is all worth it.

You seem to have a very loose style to how you perform. I heard Stephen Malkmus of Pavement fame tell Marc Maron that loose is the only way he knows. Do you feel you echo that sentiment?

I think that what I strive hardest for is a connection with the audience. So to not be a robot who's saying the same things the same way no matter where the audience is—I try to keep it loose. I attempt to loosely identify what works in the joke to make it more relatable no matter where I am.

What's your idea of a successful career in comedy?

Making a living at it. If that doesn't happen, going up four or five times a week and earning the respect from my peers. If I can enjoy doing it 10 years into doing it, then it's a success. **FPH**

When I first started, I'd do these long-winded stories where the punchline didn't come for two minutes. When you have two minutes with no laughter while you're onstage, it's tough. For me, I think constantly writing on Twitter has helped me self-edit my stuff. By constantly going up and trying new stuff, I've tried to find what works and tie it to other things that work—so it feels more seamless. At least that's my goal.

Who are your favorite comics?

Past, Richard Lewis for sure. Presently, Chris Trew from New Orleans because he seems so effortless on stage, and Doug Benson for the same reason.

You're openly gay, and you reference that in your act. Have you received any flack or praise from anyone in the Houston GLBT community?

I'm probably not on their radar. I like subverting people's expectations of what someone thinks a gay person should look like, act like, and what they would talk about. Most of my comedy comes out of our relationship. We constantly try new material out on each other. People don't care if I'm gay or not, no matter what part of town I'm in; they just want to laugh. But, that being said, I'm trying to start steering away from jokes about graphic gay sex. I do think it's important for some audience members, because they may not actually know a gay person prior to seeing me.

I spoke to you last year in the middle of the Beta Bracket Competition, and you said that winning was important because you "wanted the respect from your fellow comics." Did you get that respect you were hoping for after you won the competition?

I assumed it would all happen. People get their feelings hurt by caring what



STAND UP & DELIVER

LOOSE IS THE ONLY WAY I KNOW

BY DAVID H.
PHOTO BY JEROMY BARBER

IN CELEBRATION OF THE ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY of the Beta Bracket Comedy Competition, it only made sense to catch up with the guy who won the inaugural year: Houston's Bob Morrissey. Anyone who's seen Bob on stage knows that he's loose. That's not a bad thing, as comedy is all about finding your voice. One of Houston's only openly gay comics, Morrissey's seven-year relationship with Houston comic Greg Deal is one that we should all revel in. Free Press Houston had the chance to sit down with him and discuss life after winning a comedy competition.

You aren't from here, you're from Chicago, right? Where in Chicago are you from?
I'm from outside of Chicago, Park Ridge, Illinois. It's a northwest suburb of the city; it's where Hillary Clinton is from. I was the youngest of seven kids.

You've had a varying array of jobs prior to stand up, right?

Yeah. I was in the Army. I enlisted in June 2001. When 9/11 happened, I was in basic training. The way that works is you're not really allowed to have contact with the outside world. You can make a five-minute phone call to a close relative once a week, but no watching the news or anything. So when they told us about it, we thought the drill sergeants were using it as a training tactic and it was fake. I did one six-month tour of duty in Iraq in 2003, and I was out by October of the same year. After the Army, I caught up with a friend I knew who got kicked out of the military, and he got me a job driving a cab in Pasadena. I did that for five years, and then I worked at Half Price Books for a while, then at Black Hole. Now I help kids with SAT prep.

Why Comedy?

I had wanted to be a comedian my whole life, but I was too scared to go up and actually do it. I took a stand-up class at Zanies in Chicago and then did one open mic after, but that was it. Then I did the Houston Laugh Stop open mic in an Army uniform once, but since I didn't reference the uniform in my set; no one got it so I quit. Then in 2012 me and Greg (Deal) went up on the same night after we had gone to the Moontower Comedy Festival, and I've been doing it ever since.

Roger Ebert once said, "No good movie is long enough, and no bad movie is short enough." How do you decide what's too long and what needs more in a bit?

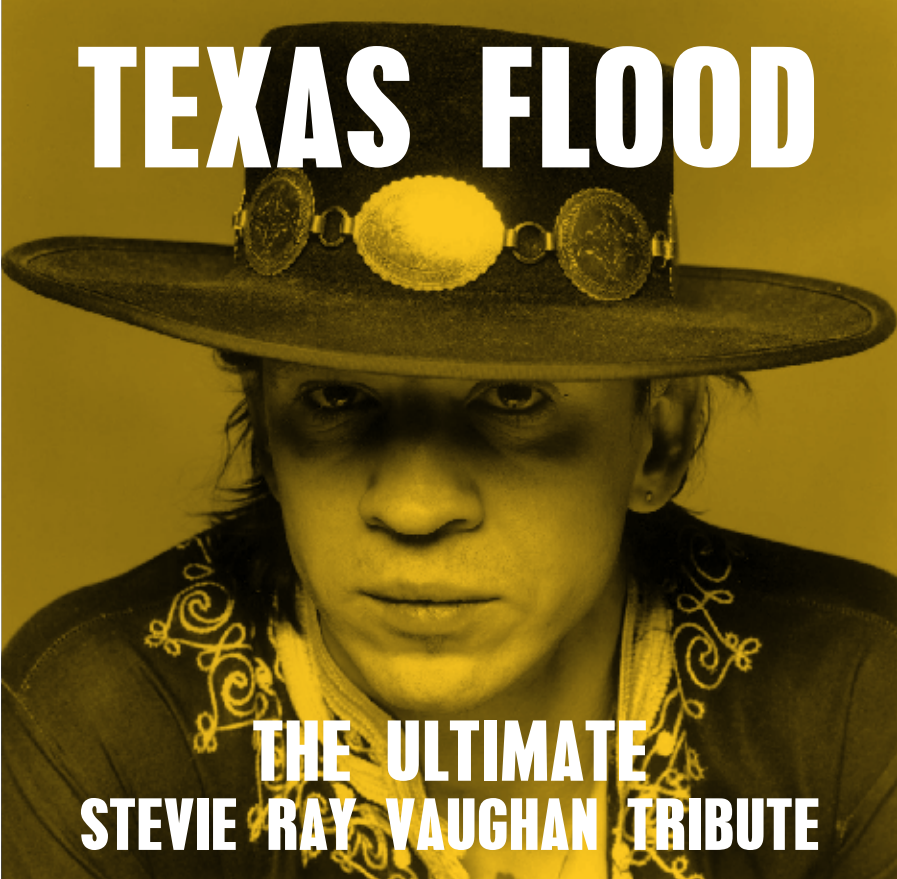


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FIVE THINGS THAT SUCCESSFUL OVERLORDS DO EVERY DAY

BY NICK COOPER
ART BY AUSTIN SMITH

DURING SLAVERY, a slave owner could check in on his slaves and see how they were living (or he could rape them for that matter). Nowadays, consumers employ countless sweatshop workers in the global South and Asia, but have never seen them. These workers could be treated better or worse than slaves, but consumers wouldn't know. Highly successful consumers are like overlords who have no idea what their minions do, how much they are paid, or how they are treated.

These overlords don't delight in their power. If they think about their role at all, they see themselves as contributing to positive change, creating wealth, liberating women, and otherwise making things better for their minions. Corporations provide imagery to help form this narrative. If any reports of misery among the minions manage to reach the overlords, they have ready some comforting rhetoric, such as, "that's the fault of their own governments, which are less democratic than ours."

You may not feel you have yet reached the level of overlord, but any consumer can improve their lot, or at least imagine they can. Many join churches, sign up for multi-level marketing schemes, buy books, and read articles that advocate philosophies for being successful. Consumers are particularly attracted to enumerated lists. Chances are you're already doing several of the things successful overlords all around you do every day.

1) Wear Clothes

There are people in Haiti and Bangladesh making your underpants. It's an intimate, yet distant and anonymous relationship. In case consumers begin to have concerns about those making their clothes, certain words are written on labels to let them off the hook. Clothes made in a sweatshop might offer a consolation, such as "made in a zero-landfill facility," "we contribute 1% of profits to charity," "45% hemp," or "certified organic cotton".

2) Using Gas and Coal

Fuel consumption is part of every consumer's life. Fuel is required to bring products to stores and parts to manufacturers, to power manufacturing, to grow food, to create pesticides, to build and power houses, to fly, etcetera. If the cost of fuel suddenly shot up, people would starve. Fuel usage powers climate change, which seems to be on track to destroy civilization. Also, fuel and crude oil leak, poisoning ecosystems and indigenous people who live near extraction sites.

Successful overlords have many options at their disposal for not feeling so guilty about fuel consumption, such as buying a hybrid car. They tell themselves that using less gas than other drivers is a big enough step in the right direction. Some ride a bus, or even a bike to work. Consumers generally ignore the other ways in which they depend on fuel use every day, and some even deny climate change.

3) Wipe Your Butt

80 million trees a year, and 30 billion pounds of greenhouse gases help con-

sumers put off transitioning to cleaner and more ecologically friendly butthole water-jets. Everyone can agree that a hose would do a better job than paper at cleaning up pudding on the sidewalk, but when it comes to butts, overlords demand paper. Though it costs more, recycled toilet paper is popular because it has images of trees on the package.

4) Eat

Successful overlords shop at fancy grocery stores that feature products with elaborate labels that bring their attention towards positive attributes. Our food usually is prepared in sweatshops, uses extremely wasteful packaging, contains unhealthy quantities of sugar and salt, employs unsustainable farming practices, etc., but fancy brands can tout being made with "100% organic cane sugar," or "label printed with 100% soy ink". Overlords like things that are "100%". These consolations help overlords imagine they are part of the solution.

50 billion pounds of meat each year goes through the intestines of Americans. With a diet flown and shipped in from around the world, successful overlords enjoy a diversity of tastes that no king of the ancient world could afford or imagine. Unfair treatment of workers, climate change, unsustainable use of water, and animal suffering are just the costs of doing business. Overlords don't like to think about these things. They watch widescreen TVs during their meals to help focus their attention on entertainment and new products.

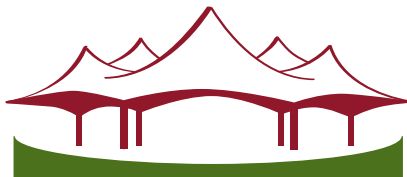
5) Use Widescreen HD TVs, Cell Phones, Tablets and Computers

Electronics are made by workers in terrible conditions. No electronics manufacturer even pretends that its devices are "fair trade". Many also contain conflict minerals, which fund wars across Africa which kidnap and forcibly conscript child soldiers. Old electronics are dumped on whatever country will take them for the cheapest. The toxins can pollute the water and land of whoever lives nearby, and children are employed to pull them apart to harvest toxic valuable substances.

Since there is really nothing that can mitigate this messy impact, consumers elevate electronics beyond luxuries or even necessities. They become like spiritual objects. New product announcements become the topic of mystery and speculation. Sweatshop employer Steve Jobs becomes a visionary, an inspiration, a prophet who said:

The only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it. And, like any great relationship, it just gets better and better as the years roll on. So keep looking until you find it. Don't settle.

This is his suggestion for overlords. In his Foxconn sweatshops, his minions receive a different set of instructions. **FPH**



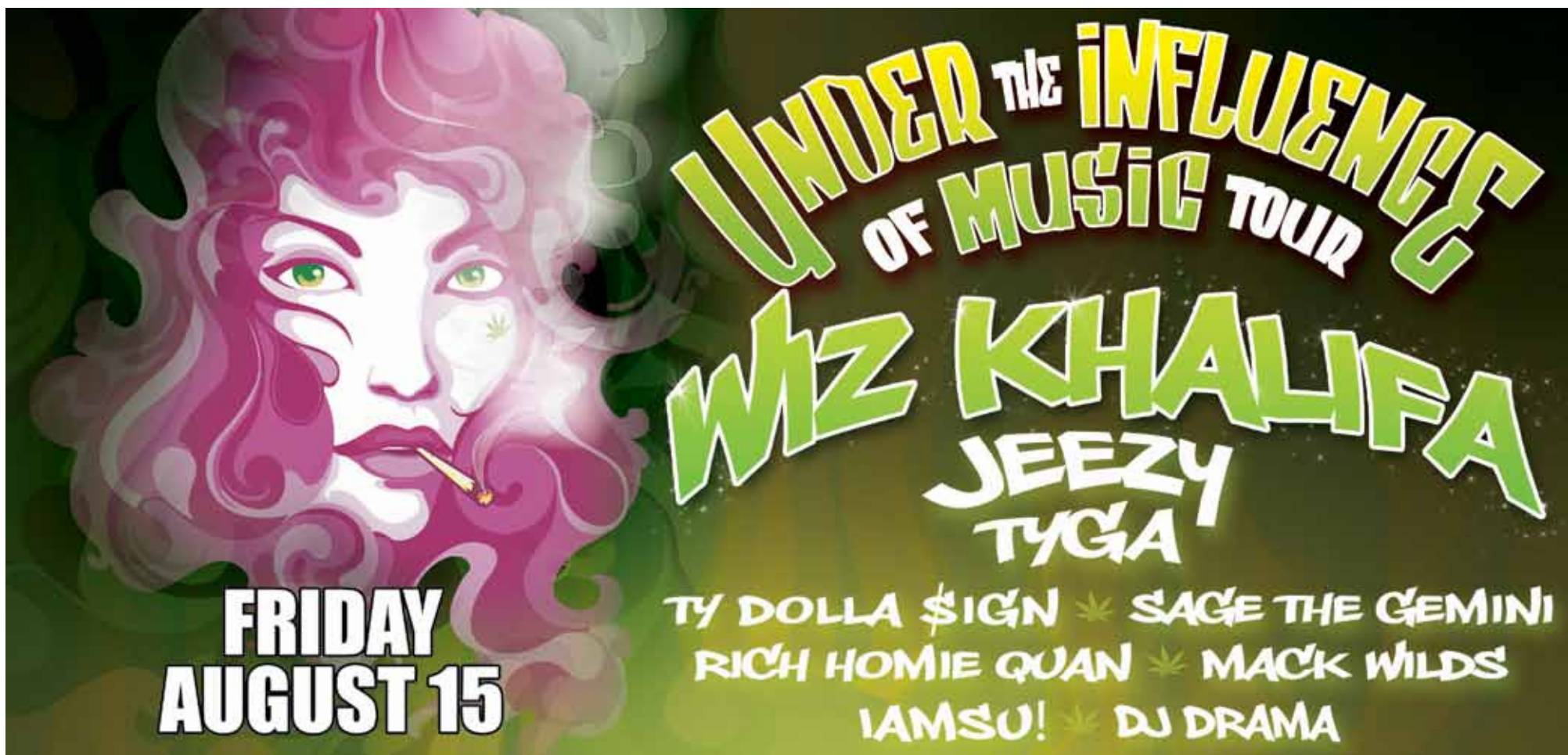
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EDITOR'S NOTE: Alice sent me this piece in May, but with the flurry of things going on, it got lost in the shuffle and went unpublished. I never had the pleasure of meeting or chatting with Alice, but from the outpouring of love I witnessed when she passed, I have to assume that she was a pretty awesome person. Our condolences to her friends and family. I thought that even though the review itself is now a bit out of date, you all might appreciate reading it in this month's print edition as another way to remember Alice. To respect its integrity, this article has been minimally edited. -Jack Betz

BY ALISON ALSUP

MIXTAPE REVIEW **MAKE (A.K.A. NOAH CLOUGH)**

NOAH CLOUGH HAS BEEN MAKING MUSIC for a few years, and earning respect along the way. You will see him on stage at Free Press Summer Fest 2014, for instance. He has fans and credibility, and he's making a huge point of keeping both however he can.

Clough releases tracks on SoundCloud, for a long time as Josiah Gabriel and now as Make (mkabeats.soundcloud.com). They sound like this one. But sometimes not at all like that one. What Noah tells me he enjoys is "to see a large amount of people lose themselves" to the music he makes.

That could be why he's so focused on being a talent, rather than an all-in-one act. "It's what he want's to stay, an artist," says Kelly Townsend, his new manager. Kelly is fresh to this talent management stuff, but he's been running an audio production venture called Lynchpin for three years. He's got the full faith of Noah and FLCON FCKER, his other signed act. Between these two artists and Townsend's work in audio, they've put in years to creating this moment and now, Kelly assures us, "everything we've done will feed everything we do."

Part of why this style of music—which is not just future bass, or even trap, because "that's a catch-all," says Kelly—is picking up is the convergence of new technology. These guys believe that they are "challenging what it means to be an original artist: as Townsend describes their work. They have a few reasons to support that assertion.

What Clough does to make tracks and then perform them live isn't easy to explain. But there is an MPD 18 with a third-party MIDI shift he uses to hack the controller. What he does is essentially to "hijack" equipment fully-suited to one task, but weren't

designed to do "momentary effects."

And it's all about the momentary effects in what Noah does, as in "how do I get this shit to be expressive in general? Whereas one, zero, zero, one is unexpressive." It's a point in music-making where new tech is converging. What Make does, say Townsend, "synthesizers do it, but digital advent is not audible, but adds to the physical sensation of being at a concert. [Noah's] sub-base stuff is just at another level."

That's why, says Kelly, "this is the new frontier of what it means to be original."

Make's tracks use synth samples, bass patterns, all original content often from bizarre sources—kind of standard fair for modern sampling. But Clough does it well, and gets as weird as he wants to. In terms of sample types, Noah says, "what I like are more... they're strange stuff I see on the internet. Groupings of words with energy behind them. They're really just moments."

He cites "The Color of Pomegranates", a visual biography of Armenian poet Sayat-Nova, as a source. It is one of the strangest, most beautiful movies I've ever watched clips of on YouTube. He's got threads of reggaeton, isolated vocals from theme songs, and what he does with them is interesting.

But keep in mind that Clough isn't ready to define his sounds. "The only narratives that you should draw from what he likes," says Noah, "are yet to be seen."

But "it's OG," says Kelly.

On the horizon for Noah Clough is the Make mix tape (out May 5th).

This release coupled with Make's performance at FPSF will mark the official launch of the Josiah Gabriel artist's new incarnation. **FPH**



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IN THE WORLD OF HOUSTON COMEDY, there are some comics who if you saw them on the street, you'd have no idea that they were the heavy hitters that they are. One of Houston's most accomplished is comedian Bob Biggerstaff. In the vein of this series of pieces, where the comedians give us a list of comics to choose from, everyone prior mentioned Bob Biggerstaff. For almost 15 years, he's travelled around the country. He's had appearances at Austin's Moontower Comedy Festival and Just For Laughs Chicago. He's been on HBO, Comedy Central and was a contestant on the "Last Comic Standing" competition on NBC. He has a self-effacing comedic style that's almost universal, alongside the ability to find humor in almost anything he experiences. Even in a candid conversation, you'd find that he can make you laugh off the top of his head. After seeing Bob around town for several months and catching him open for comedian Todd Barry, FPH sat down with him for a chat.

I know you attended UH, but are you also from Houston, or are you from somewhere else?

I was born in Tampa, Florida, hence my affinity for 2003 Super Bowl champion, Tampa Bay Buccaneers. I grew up in upstate New York, and we moved to The Woodlands after the 10th grade. So I've lived in Houston most of my life.

There are several dates out there, 1991, 1997, 1999—how long have you been doing stand up?

I first went on stage in 1991 at University of Houston. I did a few open mics and then I stopped until '97, when I got a job at the Laff Stop as a doorman. It was around 2000 when I would say I really started. It was around then when I started doing open mics consistently and getting my first paid gig.

You have a self-deprecating style that feels like it comes almost 100% naturally to you. Have you been down on yourself your whole life, or is that style that comes with age?

I can say I was never down on myself. I'm sure growing up with the last name Biggerstaff contributed to my style. I liked being the funny guy, and I never minded making fun of myself. I was a little chubby as a kid, so I was made fun of too, so that helped. Although let me say, I played sports, so I wasn't a complete nerd.

Louis C.K. recently admitted that he writes episodes for "Louis" by bouncing ideas off someone as he writes; most recently he used the great Steven Wright. Do you have a person you bounce your act off of, or do you just use the audience for that?

Everyone has their own style for writing. I'm kind of a loner in that respect. I figure the best person to know what I think is funny for my act is me. I've done writing sessions with other comics, but not very often. Sometimes comics will offer

advice on a bit, as I may to them. I'm not saying my way is better than anyone else's; that's just what I do.

Why Comedy? Like, what made you decide to do comedy as a career?

I was always funny, so I figured I'd try standup. It wasn't until I won Houston's Funniest Person contest in 2003 that I thought I could get paid. Not make it a career, but at least be able to do some shows opening and get paid. When I got to do Live at Gotham on Comedy Central and Last Comic Standing in 2008, I felt I could make a career out of it. That and getting fired from my day job at the Laff Stop helped.

You've had quite a bit of success with appearances on HBO, NBC, various radio shows and Comedy Central. what's your idea of a successful comedy career?

People think you're either a huge success or a nobody. If you're not on a sitcom or in movies or selling out theaters, regular people think you're nobody. I know plenty of comedians who make over one hundred grand a year and people have never heard of them. If you enjoy what you're doing and can take care of yourself and your family (if you have one), to me that's a success. That being said, if I don't get a sitcom I'll look at myself as a failure.

I noticed that you've got plenty of upcoming dates all over the place this year. Is this a constant thing or do you typically only tour every couple of years?

I try and book as much work as I can. I'll go wherever they'll pay me to perform. It's a constant struggle to find work. I do all my own booking and I'm kinda lazy. I'm not the guy to be in charge of my career.

Your podcast, "Enjoy Guys! with Bob Biggerstaff" has an interesting mix of actors, comedians, and people from the sports world. How do you decide who you have on as a guest and how do you get the guests you've had?

If I work with someone, then I'll have them on. I also try and get comics who play the Houston Improv if I'm in town. Believe it or not, Twitter has been huge as far as helping me get guests. I got radio personality Phil Hendrie and character actor Fred Stoller from asking them on twitter. Dave Attell, Doug Stanhope, Brody Stevens, Jon Reep and Frank Caliendo I got from being friends with them and running into them.

Favorite comedians—past? present?

Abbott & Costello, The Three Stooges, Red Skelton, Bill Cosby, Eddie Murphy, Dave Attell, Pablo Francisco, Mitch Hedberg, Tom Rhodes, Patton Oswalt, Todd Barry, Maria Bamford

You host a podcast called "Chillitime: with Bob Biggerstaff," how did you come up with that title?

My Twitter name is @Chilitime. Why? Because I didn't think twitter was going

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WHAT'S IN A NAME

LOCAL
P. 38FPH0614

BY DAVID H.

anywhere when I picked my name 4 years ago. The name of the show I just thought was a funny name for a comedy show. It's a different show. I'll get three other comics to do sets, but I'll show funny videos between comics that my friends have made. I also do a side show with pics of my adventures that I make fun of. I've done two shows so far and they've both been great. The next one should be in June. The Improv is very supportive of local comics. They let comics like myself, John Wessling, and Ali Siddiq put together our own shows on off nights at the club.

The last name Biggerstaff sounds like there's a story behind it. Was your family in the staff making business or is the name just a declaration for the ladies?

On that note, I'll just say I never disappoint. With the ladies or with my comedy.

If you haven't had the chance to make it out to Houston's IMPROV, you definitely should put it on your to-do list. Biggerstaff makes a great point about the insane amount of talented Houston comics who put on shows there. If you make it out to any of the open mics inside the loop, don't be shocked if you see Biggerstaff there, honing his craft. While Bob chases down a sitcom deal, you can catch him June 13th and 14th at the Hard Rock Cafe. **FPH**



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