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WED. 2ND

LEVEL UP FT: JOHNNY PEMBERTON, JOSH FADEM, BOB MORRISSEY

THURS. 3RD

CORY'S B-DAY BASH W/ MANNEQUIN MISHAP, TICKLE,
DONKEY PUNCH

FRI. 4TH

KRULLER, H.R.A., TEXAS MASSACRE,
JODY SEABODY AND THE WHIRLS, SATANNIBIS

SAT. 5TH

SPACEWASTER, ANNIHILIST, DEATHRAZOR

MON. 7TH

A COUPLE OF STAND UP GUYS OPEN MIC

THURS. 10TH

GLASSING, THE ELECTRIC KNIVES,
THE GRASSHOPPER LIES HEAVY, FUNERAL HORSE

FRI. 11TH

HEARTS OF ANIMALS, YOUNG MAMMALS, LIMB

SAT. 12TH

PONG, THE LINUS PAULING QUARTET

SUN. 13TH

STAND ALONES, UNION BOYS, THE SWAMPS, SUPERGRAVE

TUES. 15TH

BOOTOWN PRESENTS: GROWN UP STORY TIME

THURS. 17TH

CHARITY GIG: ONLY BEAST, A SUNDAE DRIVE, FIRE MOTH,
BRAND NEW HEARTS

FRI. 18TH

OTIS THE DESTROYER, SICK/SEA, SUNRISE AND AMMUNITION

SAT. 19TH

DISFRUTALO, DEVIL KILLTING MOTH, MARCH OF THE SEA,
THE SNOW INDIAN

MON. 21ST

OPEN MIC COMEDY NIGHT

WED. 23RD

PONCILLI CREACION FROM PUERTO RICO-A PUPPET SHOW,
BOOTOWN-PLATAHONTAS

THURS. 24TH

BEER TASTING _ODELL BREWING COMPANY

FRI. 25TH

BOB LOG III, DEAD RIDER, IRON SKILLET

SAT. 26TH

DAI KAJU, ROUND EYE, TALK SICK BRATS, BASTARD CULT

MON. 28TH

OPEN MIC COMEDY NIGHT

THURS. 31ST

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TRAVELS & TALES

ARTIST WILLIAM H. MILLER’S JOURNEY ACROSS TEXAS IN PURSUIT OF SOUTHERN INSPIRATION & LOCAL COMMUNICATION

BY MEGHAN HENDLEY LOPEZ



AN ESCAPIST ARTIST who captures many aspects of tradition in contemporary art, Winter Street Studios artist William H. Miller is currently on a tour of Texas cities and towns that started June 30th and runs through September 2nd. In pursuit to find out what makes various cities and places unique and special in Texas, this summer tour started and will end with Houston, his favorite place to make art. While on tour, Miller took the time to answer a couple of questions about his intriguing work and his nomadic travels.

How have you incorporated your art on this tour?

One of the ways is that I am forcing myself to get out of my comfort zone and meet people. In meeting people and asking “What makes your town great? Or unique?” I am able to get information that I can use as inspiration to incorporate into my art. I have had the opportunity to meet mayors, businessmen, artists, people on the street and even an astronaut. Many times the people that I have met have referred me to another person in the town or they have shared a story about another place in Texas that then I have had the chance to explore as I travel.

The threads of stories that have weaved together are making my creative juices churn as to how to best

connect these stories. In Victoria, TX I met a chef (Chef Sean Fanelli of Huvar’s) who was not only an artist in the kitchen, but as a photographer he shared that he was a personal chef for Lady Bird Johnson the last five years of her life. Then in Stonewall, TX I was able to visit the LBJ Ranch and see where Lady Bird Johnson lived as first lady and where she wrote a book based on her experience, followed up by chance to visit Karnack, TX seeing a historical marker denoting that this was the town in East Texas that she was born in, then Marshall High School where she graduated in 1928 and then tying that in with the wildflowers that she spread throughout Texas as part of her environmental conservation and beautification efforts as first lady. It is wonderful the common connections that are made, the more I travel this large state.

Being a visual person, taking of photographs is the easy part of creating art that I will incorporate or use as visual reference for painting and drawing. Some photos are art in themselves and others serve as notes of history, places and events as a visual journey to check back on when I start creating the pieces.

So far the art is based on thoughts, photos and items collected on my journey. I plan on creating a new body of work that which will be created based on

these photos and items. Some pieces will be paintings while some will be works on paper using multi-media and collage to incorporate items I have collected. I am hopeful that the art I create will illustrate the connections of places, people and history with the visuals and items collaged that I draw and paint over.

I hope to create 30 works of art based on these travels, although I already have enough ideas to far exceed that and will display these works in September at a to-be-determined location in Houston and then maybe other parts of the state. Two upcoming trips in which I will create art on the road: one in Marfa, TX where I will create 10 paintings in front of the art installation of the Prada Store front, and another at Cadillac Ranch where I will create addition works on the cars themselves and photograph them. Funders of my campaign for the tour are getting handmade post-cards mailed from the road.

What have been some of the most interesting experiences that have happened on your tour so far?

Some of the interesting thoughts that I am having on this journey have been also colliding with current events. I am hopeful that I can bring some of these thoughts to my art. While traveling the border towns, the media, the governor and the president were talking about the influx of illegal aliens into the USA via Texas. It was ironic to also learn the history that much of this land used to be Mexico until the battle for independence. A correlation that I like to consider is what the Indians or Mexicans must of thought of those who crossed into their territory 200 years ago looking for a better life and some land.

While visiting east and southern Texas, I passed many a large field. I stopped and took photos. When I visited the National Grasslands up near Bonham, TX and Caddo Lake, TX shortly after the crash of Flight 17 in the Ukraine, I tried to imagine that the horror would be in a field similar or just the horror of the many battles that were fought in the name of independence of Texas (like Palo Alto Battlefield in Harlingen, TX, where I met an art teacher who was interning as a state park ranger, using her experience to develop project assignments for students to combine art with history).

When visiting with artists in many of the cities I was inspired by what they used as inspiration in their own creations - from cowboys, longhorns, horses, flowers and birds; from to landscapes and seascapes and cityscapes; and unique visions of the abstract (Dorothy Hood - Art Museum of South Texas) and the collaged (Karin Broker - Art Museum of Southeast Texas).

Where this project will go is still uncertain (Uncertain, TX) but I am up for the challenge to communicate this adventure about Texas’ people, places and parables. I am inspired not only by the interactions with the people I meet but also those following along via social media, adding interesting details and must-see items. **FPH**



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WITH LUCAS EASON AND THE PANHANDLERS
AUGUST EIGHTH TWENTY FOURTEEN FITZGERALDS
TWENTY SEVEN ZERO SIX WHITE OAK HOUSTON TX

TRANSITIONAL ARTIFACTS

BY MICHAEL MCFADDEN

HOUSTON'S RATE OF URBAN GROWTH

ranks among the highest in the nation, and as it continues to top numerous charts, becoming the best place to find work as well as the most diverse city in the United States, this rate is sure to increase. In turn, this growth has attracted a wide array of social, cultural, and economic interests. With each of these diverse interests trying to stake a claim in the city's future, Houston is undergoing a very dramatic transformation. Currently on display at Fresh Arts, Transitional Artifacts is a six-week performative exhibition by The Center for Imaginative Cartography & Research that explores the by-products left in the wake of this change: the tearing down of buildings, piling up of waste, mashing together of historical and contemporary buildings, and public conflicts between opposing interests. As each of these fights to attain or retain influence on the identity of the city, The Center - a collaboration between artists Emily Halbardier and Erik Sultzer - offers a space for reflection on this transformation.

Local residents have had their own experiences with this transformation, and it's something these artists have witnessed themselves.

"In the area we live in," said Halbardier, "older houses are being torn down, and the newly constructed home will often go right to the edges of the property."

The areas you could once walk around to enjoy the subtle differences between houses and their owners' individual tastes in landscaping, architecture, and decorating, are now interrupted by construction sites and large concrete

walls that "protect" the property from outside influence. It can be seen across the country: Cities renew, tear down, and rebuild with an apparent disinterest in maintaining the historic as people and families are displaced. It's cold, logical, and fully natural for any growing city. Those being displaced refer to it as gentrification; the developers raising these new homes call it revitalizing the city's urban core. Personal views aside, there's no denying how much waste is produced. Within this transformation, the artists from The Center have found a goldmine. Equal parts installation and performance, Transitional Artifacts is an exhibition that changes with each visit.

"The impetus for this project wasn't so much the actual change, growth, and transformations of Houston, but rather the vast amount of excess and waste," said Halbardier. "Every new construction [site] has a dumpster in front of it filled with wood and concrete and cardboard and other usable materials. We document the way these materials are piled up because they motivate and inform our work. The piles become sculptural objects for us to revisit and possibly recreate."

As the artists explore these sites and collect detritus from around the city, they reorganize the space to create new visuals. Some elements of the show are worked by the artists; some are raw; and some pass between states as the exhibition continues.

"When a viewer enters the space [and we aren't there working], she is confronted by a collection of objects and images. These visuals have been taken from the local area and placed into the gallery space," said Sultzer.

This performative facet of the installation challenges visitors to rethink the idea of an art show in its most basic principles (What is an art show? What can an art show be?) and discover the various ways in which space can be used. Throughout the run of the exhibition, the artists invite the Houston community to visit the space and engage it alongside the artists. They have provided (and plan to have more) opportunities for people to visit and engage with the space while they are there.

"We want people to come in and have a seat," said Halbardier. "Take their shoes off and lay on a quilt. Have the gallery be a space where women can get together and craft and talk. Where movies can be screened, a dinner party take place, a yard sale can happen."

As visitors move through the space, taking in the objects, they find themselves asking the same questions the artists asked. What are these objects? How do they relate to another? How do they communicate with each other? Without a narrative in place, it's difficult to determine how satisfying the installation is to anyone walking in blind, and Sultzer acknowledges this.

"The installation does not offer straightforward consumption, or easy summarization, or a position where the viewer can 'take it all in.' The performative aspect is neither entertaining nor dramatic."

Still, while the exhibition lacks a distinct narrative, it becomes oddly comforting. Visitors are surrounded by objects that were discarded by displaced individuals and families, and these objects give the space a homey feel. Yet, the next visitor might have a completely different experience once the artists have added to, subtracted from, or simply rearranged the space. Transitional Artifacts doesn't offer easy answers.

"While we might be upset at the kind of change and growth that is taking place, the art that we make does not directly reflect this," Halbardier said.

She explained further that this exhibition is not meant to teach, convince, or rally viewers into sharing their perspective. It provides a reflection on observations made during a dramatic transformation in Houston's landscape and the continued production of waste and excess. By physically engaging the waste and excess, the seed for this installation was planted and has produced a space that affords visitors the opportunity to engage the excess and waste. Although the exhibition does not offer a stance or argument for either side of this issue, it gives visitors the opportunity to join the artists in their creative inquiry.

"We are asking questions," they said. "We are asking viewers, also, to ask questions." **FPH**



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WISH FULFILLMENT

BY MICHAEL BERGERON

ZACH BRAFF RETURNS TO MOVIES with his sophomore directorial feature. “Wish I Was Here” revolves around Aidan (Braff), a struggling actor, and his relation to his family, his wife, his estranged brother, his fellow thespians competing for roles and finally his dying father. Braff doesn’t do anything that hasn’t been done before, but he does it with an assured style that gives the audience insight to the character’s personalities.

“Wish I Was Here” starts out with cool songs and snappy family patter. Unable to land a gig, Aidan now has to procure funds to keep his kids in private school after his dying paterfamilias (Mandy Patinkin) has informed him that he has to pull funding for the kid’s schooling. Yet “Wish I Was Here” is edited and designed to keep you spirited and happy, because this is really about people who adapt and survive.

“Don’t we all have father issues?” Braff asks Free Press Houston in an interview. Braff was in Austin for a fan screening. For “Wish I Was Here,” Braff used a Kickstarter campaign to raise funds for the movie when he failed to get a studio or investor interested in the project.

“Kickstarter allowed us to stay in L.A., because a normal financial backer would make you leave L.A.,” says Braff. “Because there are no tax incentives. We would have to shoot in Vancouver. It curled my stomach, because all those locations in L.A. are like a character in the film. So when we were able to shoot there, I wanted to show a wide range, whether it be the desert, or the beach, whether it be the Hollywood hillside, or the Deep Valley.” Locations include the Hollywood Hills in the Sunset Plaza area, and a trailer park on a cliff in Malibu. Braff was also able to shoot exteriors at Comic Con in San Diego and match the interiors later, which they recreated in L.A.

“Wish I Was Here” also co-stars Kate Hudson, Joey King, Josh Gad, and Ashley Greene and is distributed by Focus Features. Additional cameos by actors like Donald Faison, who starred opposite Braff in “Scrubs,” give the film an informal vibe.

Braff was roommates with Donald Faison in 2002 when he was playing Sebastian in “Twelfth Night” at the Delacorte Theatre in Central Park. Faison was working on the film “Uptown Girls.” “We rented an apartment together downtown, it was a pretty crazy summer,” recalled Braff.

It was during this time that Braff was writing what would be his directorial debut. “I had ‘Garden State’ almost done,

but I was really working on getting the financing. I was at the stage in filmmaking where everyone was passing on it. I wrote Natalie Portman a letter from the Delacorte because she had done ‘The Seagull’ there. I’m sitting in the same dressing room that you once sat in, will you please read this?”

While at first Braff’s Kickstarter efforts were covered in the media with a sense of false outrage, now he’s considered a fore-runner in using the internet technique to raise funds. “Part of the Kickstarter process was promising early screenings of the film with Q&As in major cities across the country,” explains Braff. “I didn’t know when I promised that that I would be doing a Broadway show or that Focus would choose to distribute the movie in July. So we developed the whole calendar around that. I leave after my Sunday matinee, fly to whatever city it is, do press during the day on Monday, then at night do a screening with the backers.”

“And then fly back first thing Tuesday morning and do the show Tuesday night. In

September, I have a couple of weeks off and I’m doing the same thing in Europe: Paris, Rome, London, Berlin, there’s another city,” said Braff, who is currently starring in the musical “Bullets Over Broadway.”

Braff wrote the film with his brother Adam: “We sat together at my house for about three weeks and hammered out the skeleton of the story. We had the spine of the story with a rough outline and then we collaborated back and forth. He lives in Hawaii, and I commute between New York and L.A. He might tackle scene X and then we would swap and each make a pass at that scene. We were constantly swapping and giving each other notes. Because I’m the director, we eventually had to be 51/49. If you disagree on something, someone has to make the decision where to go from there.”

The “Garden State” soundtrack was a big seller. The soundtrack to “Wish I Was Here” includes three original songs and artists like Coldplay, Cat Power, The Shins, and Bon Iver. “I had a secret weapon,” says Braff. “I showed them the movie.” **FPH**





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The Sour Notes
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COMEDY & SPORTS LINEUP
COMING SOON



SUMMERTIME BLUES

BY WILL GUESS

Welcome to the end of summer. Don't be sad. That doesn't mean the great shows in Houston are on their way out. There's so much more on the horizon. A brand new festival, future hall of famers, and a local band that will make you question your abilities if you're a musician. We've got the month of August covered for you.

SATURDAY & SUNDAY, AUGUST 9-10
HOUSTON WHATEVER FEST AT EADO PARTY PARK

With the success of FPSF, more and more acts and festivals are coming to Houston. Now, another very new festival has reared its head in our city, and the announced lineup is quite impressive. Mute Math, Blonde Redhead, Filter, Helmet, and Krayshawns are just a few of the artists playing this brand new weekend of festivities. It seems as if Houston has put itself back on the map as a place for musicians to come to. I, for one, welcome all of the people trying to bring new entertainment to this city.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 16
NINE INCH NAILS, SOUNDGARDEN, & DILLINGER ESCAPE PLAN AT CYNTHIA WOODS MITCHELL PAVILION

This lineup is absolutely incredible. Trent Reznor has been a prolific character since his beginnings with NIN. He has solidified himself as a true rock star. A guy who pushes boundaries musically, as well as business wise. And he's the only one with a catalogue to back it up. Every album Reznor has put out has been almost flawless. I've started to question whether he's not even human even more. With Nine Inch Nails' live show, there is no stone left unturned. Everything is meticulously choreographed to the point of perfection. Everyone knows who NIN are as a band on record, but no one really knows the band until they see it live. And you never know when you'll get the opportunity to see them again. That, combined with Soundgarden as direct support, and the legendary live show of the Dillinger Escape Plan? This is on the "absolutely can't miss" list.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 21
SCALE THE SUMMIT AT FITZGERALD'S

Scale The Summit have been around for years. They're one of those bands that slowly and quietly creep up on the level of popularity. They own the unique aspect of being amazing musicians with no need for a vocalist. That's right, there's no singer. Usually, I'm totally against instrumental bands, but I make exceptions for very, VERY few. Scale The Summit are one of those exceptions. Outstanding guitar work, exceptional drumming, and technical bass lines to back it up—this band is one that you can't take your eyes off of once they hit their first note. This show is the finale to a long tour they just embarked on. Welcome home, boys.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 29
CASSETTE TAPE AT FITZGERALD'S

SUNDAY, AUGUST 31
FEED ME WITH TEETH AT HOUSE OF BLUES



MUSIC RELEASES CRITIQUED

BY KM ANDERSON

CONNECTIONS - "INTO SIXES" (ANYWAY)

Rock music is great for Saturday nights. Top down, riding fast, knocking back a brew or two and enjoying (or lamenting) a moment, or at least that is part of the romance in that thinking. It is an anthem for life and living, the ups and the downs, the clouds and the stars. Connections' music fits into this frame, with that sort Replacements/Guided By Voices/Dinosaur Jr. thing of anthemic rock, subtly brilliant musings of love and loss and moving on or going back. The album opener "Ayliah" is everything that an album opener should be: driving and triumphant, great guitar lead, big chorus. It is a method employed on other songs ("Beat The Sky," "Extremely Boss"). Then, there are the slow burners like "Calm Down," which purports the need to drink in the car and get high by yourself and "chill out." "Angie" is a ballad, a slow jam, the one about that girl, the dangerous times and the good times, and the awesome guitar solo, again. This is rock at its best and simplest, not simple, but its most basic: guitar, drums, backbeat, and something you can chant while doing that repetitive activity you do as you daydream or plan the next the activity to one day daydream about.

SPOON - "THEY WANT MY SOUL" (LOMA VISTA)

It is possible that Spoon is a soul band—like Sam and Dave—it is possible. Since maybe around the time of "Girls Can Tell," little shades of soul have sprinkled and spread throughout the band's sound. So it is inevitable that they might one day make a full soul album, not saying that is what this album is, but shades of Stax soul, Prince, Motown soul all over this thing. However, it is not blatant, but more in spirit. "Do You" is brilliant, everything, the handclaps, the chorus, the background vocals: it is a song to chase a lover to, to play on that first date as an implication of intent. "Rent I Pay" is that foot-stomping, pop-rock anthem, with that kind of Otis Redding spice, but also sort ELO. I don't know. Spoon is always been good to me, they have a catalogue. Spoon is unique in sound and aesthetic—the proverbial "Spoon" song—signature in a day when everyone sounds like everything but themselves. Cop this shit yo!

JHENE AIKO - "SOULED OUT" (DEF JAM)

I would say that Jhene Aiko has done it right. For this to be a debut album (sort of), for this to be her major release, she hasn't made it a big deal, letting songs and EPs (the wonderful "Sailing Souls" EP) and guest appearances with everyone (Drake, Kendrick Lamar. Ab Soul, Vince Staples) flow sporadically. She is allowing you to get to know her, build a relationship. So the album, "Souled Out," while being a play on words and perhaps anticipatory of the tired critique of success, is the consummation of this relationship. Aiko's music is of a vulnerable place. It is not afraid of pain, but unlike a lot of songs, there is the examination of both sides— you AND I. It is not huge in sound, it is that mellow roll music. She gets stoned, and the music has that vibe. Ultimately, because she is a songwriter, these are her words, her emotions, and the songs mirror what seems to be her truth. Those who are hyped (myself) have bought into her campaign, have listened to her stories and championed her success—this album will illuminate that for the world, but regardless, she has her fans, who love her hippie/ west side homegirl chic. They love her voice as a conversation, more than a yell. They love her trunk music ideal. Aiko has built the relationship, before shelling out the product. This album is more communication than commerce, buying more into her soul, than what is being sold.

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NATURE OF THE BEATS

BY KM ANDERSON



THROUGHOUT ITS RIDDLED HISTORY, rock and soul music have both suffered criticism for their libidinous influences. The biggest perceived threat to the purity of the people was the suggestiveness of the lyrics, the inhibition of the players, striking notes evoking rhythms that caused pelvises to thrust, bodies to throw themselves to and fro, presenting something representative of a seance or a sexual act. And this in some ways is what attracts one to music—this raw energy, this loss of control, this absorption is part of the magic. It is not all of it of course, but it is a connection, a feeling, because that is what we strive for in life, connection and feeling, act and response: the idea of creating, being part of something bigger. Dead Rider is a band that embodies this: the will and desire to be moved, to move. It is the nature of the beast or should I say the beats.

“All of our songs start with the grooves, and we are really focused on this idea of syncopation, and seeing how far we can go with this idea of syncopation,” notes Todd Rittman, guitarist (of this band and once US MOTHERFUCKING MAPLE), lead vocalist, primary conspirator, interviewee. “For me, it’s that syncopated groove that makes my body respond. Some people can dance to all down beats or four on the floor and no surprises and no syncopation, I am not one of those people.”

Dead Rider (once D. Rider, always awesome) makes music that is active, fluid. It reacts, it strikes and slithers, it has color and suspense. Songs begin, seem-

ingly establish a chordal structure to be maintained, only to suddenly drop, or alter—never in a way that outside of the rhythm or without respect to a rhythmic base. There is an unintentional but implied sensuality to it. It is alluring, it draws you in, it is like making out, hot and clumsy. As sex is always a possible metaphor, it is sort of like that: dangerous and passionate, possibly romantic, but also lascivious (writer’s note: I made this suggestion to Todd).

“That foundation of just making the fundamental and original part of our music be something that inspires movement goes a long way, to that idea that you talked about. Also with music, I like it a little rough, but I don’t only like it rough: I like contrast. So it’s really not a stretch at all to draw an analogy between that (the music) and sex. We get that a lot, and I never cringe at that comparison.”

But also maybe, it is just not boring. It is not a dedication to an aesthetic other than one established by the band. Throughout the band’s four albums, culminating with their weirdest but also greatest album, “Chills On Glass,” Dead Rider has presented music that uses rhythm and blues, rock, electricity, tension, release, in ways that make each song an adventure. One could imagine improvisation as a technique of composition, implying a lack of structure, or a relaxed attitude towards structure, but that is not actually the case.

“We play around with metric, time, and the grid, counting to four over and over again. We also play around with rhythms that are more organic and don’t

dovetail into the grid, but still work within the context of a piece of music. A lot of people fall off the band wagon at that moment, they wanna hear this tic toc, this heartbeat, they wanna hear this machine, and anything that isn’t a part of a machine is dealt with by their brains as ‘it’s trying to be willfully weird’ or something like that, which I shy away from that idea that we’re just trying to be upsetting,” said Rittman. “I think that’s a very shallow, superficial, sort of view of what it is we’re doing, but we’re also interested in exploring our own little language. So as players, we have things that we do, that we’re trying to develop that are just coming from us.”

Dead Rider are purposely challenging themselves—establishing and experimenting with their definitions of instrumentation and sonics. And it is not in the way of testing boundaries, it is more an idea of not being bound.

“The way we’re making this music, it really invites a lot of different approaches and therefore a lot of different types of corruption from a lot different kind of sound sources, or a lot of different kinds of sound manipulating techniques, as long as it stays true to our goal. And as long as it keeps things focused on the song, I wanna use it,” mused Rittman. “I wanna explore it, I want to do something that I haven’t heard with it before...I got a piece of wood with some strings on it over here, and I got an iPad over there. I’m not making choices on anything other than what’s making the most awesome sound at any given moment.” **FPH**



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FISKADORO ON THE POLITICS OF HEROIN IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

BY JACK DANIEL BETZ | PHOTO COURTESY OF FISKADORO

LOTS OF BANDS LIKE TO TAKE ON the mantle of preserving their favorite sub-genre or specific musical aesthetic, but more often than not, that noble attempt to keep a style alive—even an idea alive—is merely a bad impersonation. It lacks all of the spontaneity and life of original works in the genre and feels merely like a paint-by-numbers affair.

However, Houston's Fiskadoro blends all sorts of dark, post-punk influences together, and yet the music does not end up sounding derivative at all. It's probably because frontman Richard Kimball—unlike a lot of millennial post-punks starting revivalist bands these days—was old enough to be buying records and going to shows in the 80s, despite not really looking his age today. He is incorporating inspiration from actual memories, not streaming them, playing catch-up using the adware time machine of Spotify.

Talk to us about your vocal style. In all of Fiskadoro's music, you have a very scratchy, almost whisper when you sing. Where did you get that from? I can't think of very many people who you probably call influences who do that.

I think it has everything to do with trying to record quietly in various New Jersey apartments in the 1990s, so as not to disturb anyone else. I struggle to sound good when singing. The guitar tuning I use is specifically so I can sing along and not sound too bad. Sometimes I'll just give up and scream for awhile. I learned my punk rock lessons well.

I don't think I've ever really been influenced by singers. Guitar players or bass players sure, but not singers. I've been enjoying NOT singing in Dirty Christmas & Helicopter Manouevres. It's nice to pretend to be Rowland S. Howard.

And the singing is a key thing in Distant Worker, even more than Fiskadoro..Distant Worker is our pop band. I can't wait to play our new songs live.

Bass lines are extremely important in your music and in the history of post-punk in general. Do you like dub music? Are you influenced by it?

I am a massive fan of dub. Of course it all started with hearing The Clash and Bad Brains doing reggae, which lead me down the path of listening to The Reggae Schoolroom on WFMU every Sunday morning for years and hearing a ton of dub—buying bootleg Mikey Dread cassettes from rasta guys in New York who sold them on St. Mark's Place out of their duffel bags, and then

all the Adrian Sherwood stuff with the On-U Sound label: Creation Rebel, Dub Syndicate, New Age Steppers, the first Mark Stewart & Maffia record and the Blood & Fire reissues of all that great 1970s dub: King Tubby, Prince Jammy, Scientist, Keith Hudson, Lee Perry and on and on. K. Martin's 'Macro Dub Infection' CDs, the Wordsound thing—certified dope! These days I'm really into the dub crazy stuff out of Bristol UK like Young Echo, Vessel, Killing Sound—and also the Hyperdub label with Kode9 and the Spaceape, Burial, Zomby. Fiskadoro covered Zomby's cover of 'Spliff Dub' a few years ago. It's much easier to cover a cover. If you dare to cover at all.

One day I want to have a band where all the song titles are named after 1970s Jamaican record labels.

Dub influences every move Fiskadoro makes. All the drop-outs and echoes, the lyrical choices, dealing in themes of dread and being mad at the man. The artwork on the CD-R covers was about dub. Dub is a proven way to break down the space-time continuum.

And dub has everything to do with Distant Worker as well. Three of the 7 songs we've released have been dub mixes. And it's not like we're lacking for material. Every recording we make I try to make a dub mix. It's a great way to understand the song better. And to show us what we need to do to make it better.

Dub is the most important thing to happen to music in the past 40 years or so. It's constantly shifting and constantly changing and I doubt it will go away anytime soon.

Who would you open for in a perfect world?

Twisted Wires.

You probably expected me to say Beyonce or Nicki Minaj or New Order. Those would be cool, but Twisted Wires is one of my favorite bands and they almost never play. I saw them play the first month Jen and I started going to shows in Houston. We saw Future Blondes play in front of an abandoned grocery store during a Westheimer Street Festival and that was the day we met Domokos. Everyone I met in Houston I met because of Dom. Around this same time period we saw Balaclavas play at The Artery, we saw Dead Roses play at Rudyards the night they did an amazing cover of the Roxy Music song 'In every dream home a heartache' which Jen brings up almost weekly. It was epic. And we played the first couple Fiskadoro shows in this time period as well.

It was months later before we got

to see Indian Jewelry play. That was just incredible. And then we saw //TENSE//, which blew us away again. And it was inspiring just how nice everyone was.. everyone was borrowing amps and percussion instruments from each other. Everyone was friends. Long before I ever met Kirston, I actually borrowed a bass amp from him so Fiskadoro could play a show at the AvantGarden. And that was that same street fest where we saw Future Blondes play that first time.

Following on that perfect-world theme, if you guys made it huge, who would you have open for you?

The Wiggins. But then we'd step aside and let The Wiggins headline.

Of course if it was a perfect world we probably wouldn't be in a band.

What are your plans for Fiskadoro? Are you going to keep making music as that group or continue your efforts through other side projects, like Dirty Christmas?

Fiskadoro lost a lot of momentum last year when we weren't able to play shows for such a long period of time. And then we played three great shows in a row at the end of 2013 when Joel Reed Parker joined. We haven't even practiced since the Winter Wonder Glam show on December 27th last year. There are a lot of new tracks in various stages of completion on hard drives scattered across

Texas. One way or another, we need to figure that stuff out.

Joel and I did that Dirty Christmas show at Super Happy Fun Land a few months ago which was so much fun. It was completely improvised—it's great to be in a band that never practices. As opposed to all our other bands, which hardly practice.

Helicopter Manouevres played our first show on July 5th at Vinal Edge. Shawn Rameshwar put this group together with Kirston and I. It doesn't sound like any band I've ever been in. Kirston has posted some practice tapes on Bandcamp.

Do you have any shows planned for the fall?

Distant Worker, Dirty Christmas and Helicopter Manouevres will all be playing shows again soon.

Helicopter Manouevres will be playing with this great new band called Holy Money. We just need to get that set up.

And Distant Worker is really busy. Jen and I are recording a bunch of new songs with Kevin Hirth and we've released an EP and a couple dub mixes on Bandcamp in the past couple months. And there should be a video soon.

I doubt we've heard the last of Fiskadoro. **FPH**



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A CATASTROPHIC CHRISTMAS

BY LUNA OLIVEIRA

DRIVING ACROSS DOWNTOWN in any direction of I-10, the city's skyline appears like the rough edge of the shell that holds one of Houston's most valuable pearls: the Catastrophic Theatre. Funded by locally-owned tattoo shops, restaurants and even the city's symphony, The Catastrophic theatre is one of a kind. With Houston's theatre district now standing as the number two in the United States, only behind New York City with Broadway, The Catastrophic theatre has been providing entertainment without targeting the masses by producing a number of original works. A total of 12 out of the 25 productions have been written by in-house playwrights. In an age overrun by copycats and imitations, Catastrophic Theatre stands out as a bastion of Houstonian creativity.

The average theatregoer, who has never seen any of the previous showings of Tamarie's soul, might expect a simple Christmas show in the middle of July—a not so uncommon phenomena in theatre. With stores barely a month away from placing Christmas decorations in storefront windows, the festivities of the holiday could be extended through the middle of the year—and how great would that be?

However, the Tamarie Cooper Christmas show is not your average Christmas show, nor is it your average musical. When entering the warehouse-turned-theatre space, you find an enormous picture-frame-like structure with the band sitting behind it. The band is a part of the show, decorated as the performance goes along. The Christmas

The audience is taken on a quick costume-changing, rapid choreographic dancing and impeccable note-hitting journey through all major and smaller holidays. They find the ups and the downs about each time of the year: Easter, Thanksgiving, Fourth of July and Presidents' Day have been sold out to consumerism in an attempt to reach larger audiences. The sales targeting the holidays and events being sponsored by big corporations marketing their image around people's beliefs have become a part of modern life in the United States and abroad.

"A Very Tamarie Christmas" is an awakening to everything society has recently defined as problematic or inappropriate. It draws the line between customs and values—at one moment the family is sitting



The Catastrophic Theatre, formed in 2007 by Jason Nodler and Tamarie Cooper, is a breath of fresh air in the theatre scene and, like any respectable theatre that gathers followers, has its own traditions. Every summer, when Houston becomes an oven and everyone gives in to central air-conditioning, the Catastrophic Theatre presents Tamarie Cooper's very own musicals. With herself as the main character, Tamarie brings the audience a relatable snapshot of her life—illustrating the pains, happiness and randomness of being human.

The summer of 2014 is nothing different. Titled "A Very Tamarie Christmas," this summer's Tamarie Cooper musical can be expected by long-time followers to be just as crazy and loud as last year's Tamarie ventures. The first thing that went through my head when I heard about the show was "Wait, so Tamarie Cooper is talking about Christmas? Tamarie Cooper? The inappropriately genius, dick-joke delivering Tamarie Cooper?"

theme is unified in the set: with a Christmas tree, giant presents and Christmas stockings hanging from the fireplace.

When the show starts, the stage is flooded with the cast dressed appropriately for Christmas time. Ugly sweaters, Santa Claus, and even Jesus dance together until Tamarie comes out to speak about her long-time desire to make a Christmas musical. She is interrupted by several members of the cast who stop her from speaking about Christmas. Their complaints are many: I am Jewish, I am Buddhist, I am atheist—and in the politically correct world, you don't want to piss them off (or make them feel excluded).

Tamarie and the cast end the number celebrating a non-denominational fest—politically correct and gluten-free: a secular commemoration of an unspecified event. Due to being continuously rejected, Christmas gives up and decides to not be a holiday anymore. Tamarie then goes on to find another holiday that will satisfy the joys of Christmas.

around the table celebrating Thanksgiving, but when dinner is over, everybody runs to catch Black Friday sales. Tamarie Cooper has been able to write a politically correct show that is as offensive as flags on boobs, as inappropriate as twerking Easter bunnies and as educational as Arbor Day.

The show illustrates how we keep holidays alive out of habit and, as we find out throughout the show: there is nothing wrong with that. Maybe, even as we decry all of the consumerism and discrimination in Christmas, we still cannot deny that it is the best holiday of them all.

As guaranteed by The Catastrophic Theatre themselves, this will be the first Christmas special we will see all year (beating even the holiday rush). "A Very Tamarie Christmas" will be playing Thursday, Friday and Saturdays from July 18 through August 30 for the price of pay-what-you-can (\$25 suggested). **FPH**

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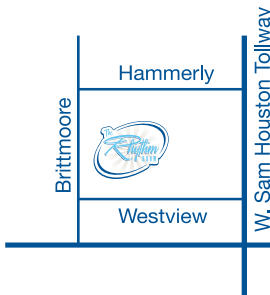
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AUGUST 2014 | WHAT I

FPH's guide to Augst, a calendar of events featuring choice picks from our delightful staff of heathens. We encourage you to get off your ass & go enjoy your city.



3
CLOSING: TRENTON DOYLE HANCOCK
CONTEMPORARY ARTS MUSEUM HOUSTON

"THE FIRST IN-DEPTH EXAMINATION OF HANCOCK'S EXTENSIVE BODY OF DRAWINGS, COLLAGES AND WORKS ON PAPER, FEATURING MORE THAN 70 WORKS OF ART, AS WELL AS A COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST'S EPHEMERA CREATED BETWEEN 1993-2014." - B. JONES



4
ANTEMASQUE
FITZGERALD'S

"CEDRIC AND OMAR OF MARS VOLTA'S NEW PROJECT IS ALMOST BETTER THAN ATOL, AND WAY BETTER THAN THAT LAST MARS VOLTA ALBUM." - D. GARRICK



5
YES
BAYOU MUSIC CENTER

"YES HAS HAD A ROTATING SELECTION OF NEW VOCALISTS OVER THE PAST DECADE, BUT AT LEAST THEY HAVE THE SAME DRUMMER, BASSIST AND GUITARIST FROM THEIR CLASSIC '70S LINEUP. IF YOU'VE NEVER SEEN STEVE HOWE (GUITARIST) SHRED, YOU HAVEN'T LIVED. HE LOOKS LIKE THE CRYPT KEEPER, BUT WILL STILL MELT YOUR FACE." - J. BETZ



6
MORE REAL THAN REALITY
CONTEMPORARY ARTS MUSEUM HOUSTON

"I LIKE GOING TO THE MUSEUM AND TRIPPED OUT VIDEOS. PEOPLE WILL THERE AND ACT LIKE THEY GET IT, BUT ARE TRIPPED OUT TOO. DON'T LET THEM. YOU, DROOL, FART AND YELL WHILE THE VIDEOS. US IDIOTS NEED TO TAKE THE HACKS AND SNOBS. DO YOUR PA



10
HAWTHORNE HEIGHTS
RED JUMPSUIT APPARATUS | MORE (CRAP) WALTER'S

"IF YOU'RE INTO THIS KIND OF SHIT, YOU'RE PROBABLY REALLY EXCITED RIGHT NOW. PERSONALLY, THIS IS THE KINDA SHIT THAT MAKES ME WISH THROWING TOMATOES AT PERFORMERS AND GIANT VAUDEVILLE HOOKS WERE STILL A THING." - B. BETZ



11
HOUSTON RESTAURANT WEEKS
EVERYWHERE (MOSTLY)

"EAT THE FOOD YOU CAN'T NORMALLY AFFORD WHILE YOUR MONEY GOES STRAIGHT TO THE HOUSTON FOOD BANK. SINCE HOUSTON'S KNOWN FOR OUR CULINARY PROWESS, SHIT SHOULD BE GOOD. CHECK THE WEBSITE FOR PARTICIPATING RESTAURANTS. LASTS ALL MONTH, NOM." - FPH



12
CLAP YOUR HANDS SAY YEAH
FITZGERALD'S

"NOT NEWS: SUPER INDIE BAND PLAYING UPSTAIRS. NEWS: BOWIE'S ALLEGEDLY BEEN SPOTTED AT THEIR SHOWS. YOU NEVER KNOW." - K. MCGRANAHAN



13
BE.WITCHED WEDNESDAYS
BARBARELLA

"A PRETTY DECENT GOTH/NEW WAVE NIGHT AT BARBARELLA HAPPENS EVERY WEDNESDAY. WHILE THEIR DRINKS ARE THE CHEAPEST, THE MUSIC AND CROWD ARE FUCKING BADASS." - J. HOLL



17
2014 ARCH FILM FESTIVAL
ARCHITECTURE CENTER HOUSTON

"IF YOU'RE UP FOR SOMETHING HIGH-BROW, CHECK OUT ALL THREE DAYS OF ARCH FILM FESTIVAL. EXPLORE THE WAY BUILDINGS MAKE A CONTEXT AND CONTEXT MAKES A STORY THROUGH FILMS LIKE 'BATTLE FOR BROOKLYN' AND 'THE HUMAN SCALE.'" - K. MCGRANAHAN



18
WRITE HATE MAIL TO JACK BETZ AT FPH
COMPUTER | SMARTPHONE (JBBETZ@GMAIL.COM)

"I JUST READ WHAT JACK SAID ABOUT MARILYN MANSON, AND I DON'T LIKE HIS FUCKING ATTITUDE. LET'S THREATEN HIM TO THE POINT HE NEVER MAKES A BACKHANDED COMMENT LIKE THAT AGAIN. I'M WATCHING YOU, JACK." - K. ARMES



19
PANIC! AT THE DISCO
CYNTHIA WOODS MITCHELL PAVILLION

"FPH GRAPHIC DESIGNER BLAKE JONES HAS BEEN TALKING ABOUT THIS FOR MONTHS. THIS EVENT WILL BE THE FOUNTAIN FROM WHICH BLAKE ABSORBS HIS YEARLY DESIGN TECHNIQUES AND FASHION TIPS. BLAKE WILL ACHIEVE 'FINAL FORM' AND THE TRANSFORMATION WILL BE COMPLETE." - FPH



20
SPACEBALLS
MILLER OUTDOOR THEATRE

"RECENTLY I FOUND OUT THAT THERE TO DO OUTSIDE OF GRAND PRIZE, POPPY QUEEN. DUDE, YOU CAN DRINK (NO GLASS). FOR MORE INFO, CALL 214-214-2141. MEAN, WITH A PHONE NUMBER LIKE THAT, IT'S FUN. PLUS, RICK MORANIS YOU GUYS



24
CLOSING: TGIF'S ENDLESS APPETIZERS
ANY PARTICIPATING TGIF

"TODAY IS THE LAST DAY OF THE ENDLESS \$10 APPETIZERS AT TGIF. BETTER GO IN NOW AND ENJOY ONE OF THEIR DELICIOUS APPS. SHED A TEAR FOR THE ENDLESS CHEESE STICKS THAT END TODAY." - B. SMITH



25
CROSBY, STILLS & NASH
BAYOU MUSIC CENTER

"AGAIN, KIND OF LIKE THE BEACH BOYS. YES, THEY'RE OLD, BUT THIS IS MANDATORY AMERICANA MUSIC HOMEWORK. GO, OR YOU'LL BE SAD WHEN THEY'RE IN THE DIRT." - J. BETZ



26
STARDEATH AND WHITE DWARFS
FITZGERALD'S

"PREPARE TO BE WEIRDED OUT BY PEOPLE RELATED TO WAYNE COYNE." - B. JONES



27
CRUNK WITCH
SUPER HAPPY FUN LAND

"POPPY, THRASHY, DANCE-Y QUEEN. FUN. REFER TO ME AS CRUNK WITCH FORTH." - K. MCGRANAHAN
(ed. 'Crunk Witch' is a really good b

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1
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2
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- M. VAN SHIRREN



3
BY ITSELF
HOUSTON
AND WATCHING
ALL STAND
BUT THEY
THEM INTIMIDATE
LE YOU'RE WATCHING
TAKE ART BACK FROM
PART."
- M. ARMS



7
**THE 17TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL
MARS SOCIETY CONVENTION**
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- A. ATKIN



8
TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES
IN THEATRES EVERYWHERE

"LIVE-ACTION MOVIE WITH CGI TURTLES."
- M. BERGERON



9
HOUSTON WHATEVER FEST

ALL OVER THE PLACE BY WAREHOUSE LIVE

"I THINK KREAYSHAWN IS HOT, SO I WILL PROBABLY GO MORE TO TRY AND HIT ON HER THAN ACTUALLY ENJOY THE SHOW. ALSO SOME OF THE DUDES FROM SILICON VALLEY ARE GONNA BE THERE. PROBABLY BE SUPER CHILL."
- T. HOGAN



10
PS
VE/DANCE
EVERY
AREN'T
ROWD ART



14
TED NUGENT
HOUSE OF BLUES

"NO, WE CAN'T REALLY SING ANYMORE, AND HE'S A WEE BIT CREEPY, BUT UNCLE TED BECKONS. WILL YOU ANSWER THE CALL?"
- J. WITT



15
JERRY SEINFELD
JONES HALL

"ONE OF THE BEST STAND-UP COMEDIANS AROUND WILL PERFORM HIS LATEST ROUTINES LIVE FROM SPACE CITY."
- M. BERGERON



16
NINE INCH NAILS & SOUNDGARDEN
CYNTHIA WOODS MITCHELL PAVILLION

"WELL, NOW THAT DEATH GRIPS IS OUT, MAYBE OL' TRENT CAN CALL HIS BUDDY MARILYN MANSON TO OPEN UP. SURE IT WILL BE SHITTY, BUT AT LEAST WE KNOW HE'LL BE THERE. HE NEEDS THAT PAPER."
- A. BEITZ



17
ERE ARE THINGS
POISON GIRL AND
HINK AT THE PARK
L 281-FREE-FUN. I
E THAT IT HAS TO BE
OYS. RICK FUCKING MORANIS."
- M. VAN SHIRREN



21
GROWN-UP STORYTIME
RUDYARD'S

"EVERY THIRD THURSDAY OF THE MONTH, BOO-TOWN PRESENTS TWO SHOWS (8:00 AND 10:00 P.M.) FEATURING STORIES SUBMITTED FROM ALL OVER HOUSTON. CRACK EXPERTS READ THEM ALOUD WHILE YOU ENJOY THE TIME-HONORED TRADITION OF STORY-TELLING WITH BOOZE. \$5 EACH."
- K. MCGRANAHAN



22
ROGER SELLERS
CHILDREN OF POP | BLSHS
FITZGERALD'S

"ROGER SELLERS IS A GENIUS THAT EVERYONE SHOULD SEE ONCE, WHILE BLSHS AND CHILDREN OF POP ARE BONUSES."
- D. GARRICK



23
GET DRUNK WITH YOUR FRIENDS
EVERYWHERE

"THAT IS A PICTURE OF FPH ALUMNI, OMAR AL-BOCHI DOING A KEG STAND. HE IS A BEACON OF ALL THAT IS PARTY. DOMOXOS FROM RUSTED SHOT USED TO CALL HIM 'WHITE SHOES-BAD NEWS'. FIND A KEG TODAY AND PARTY. BE 'WHITE SHOES-BAD NEWS'."
- S. HOGAN



24
N-TASTIC
CH HENCE
(band name)



28
KAYAK ON A LAKE DOWNTOWN
DISCOVERY GREEN

"JUMP ON A GUIDED KAYAK RIDE ON KINDER LAKE DOWNTOWN, AND MAYBE YOU'LL MUSTER UP THE NERVE TO BOOK A TANDEM OR SOLO TOUR DOWN THE BAYOU IN THE NEAR FUTURE, THROUGH BAYOU CITY ADVENTURES."
- A. ATKIN



29
BOB BIGGERSTAFF
HOUSE OF BLUES

"ONE OF THE FUNNIEST COMICS IN NORTH AMERICA LIVES HERE IN HOUSTON. CATCH HIM HERE WHILE YOU STILL CAN."
- D. GARRICK



30
YOUNG WRITERS' WORKSHOP
DISCOVERY GREEN

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EAST OF DOWNTOWN

BY KATHRYN MCGRANAHAN & DL HAYDON | ART BY BLAKE JONES

SUNDOWN ON THE COLUMBIA TAP TRAIL found Andre Rend between Lamar and McKinney Streets. Rend, originally from Los Angeles, moved to East Downtown in 2004 and when his rent increased by 40%, Rend saw not trouble but opportunity. He now owns two properties and is thinking of purchasing another, just a couple blocks from the trail. Rend watched East Downtown go from a forgotten and neglected corner of the city to one of the most booming parts of the Inner Loop (but his wife still wants a decent grocery store).

East Downtown (also contentiously called EaDo) is a trendy district built on the bones of our first Chinatown. It borders Third Ward, East End and the George R. Brown Convention Center. The triangle-shaped district was an all-but-abandoned area that is now bursting with townhomes, bars, restaurants and businesses.

CHINATOWN & EADO “PROPER”

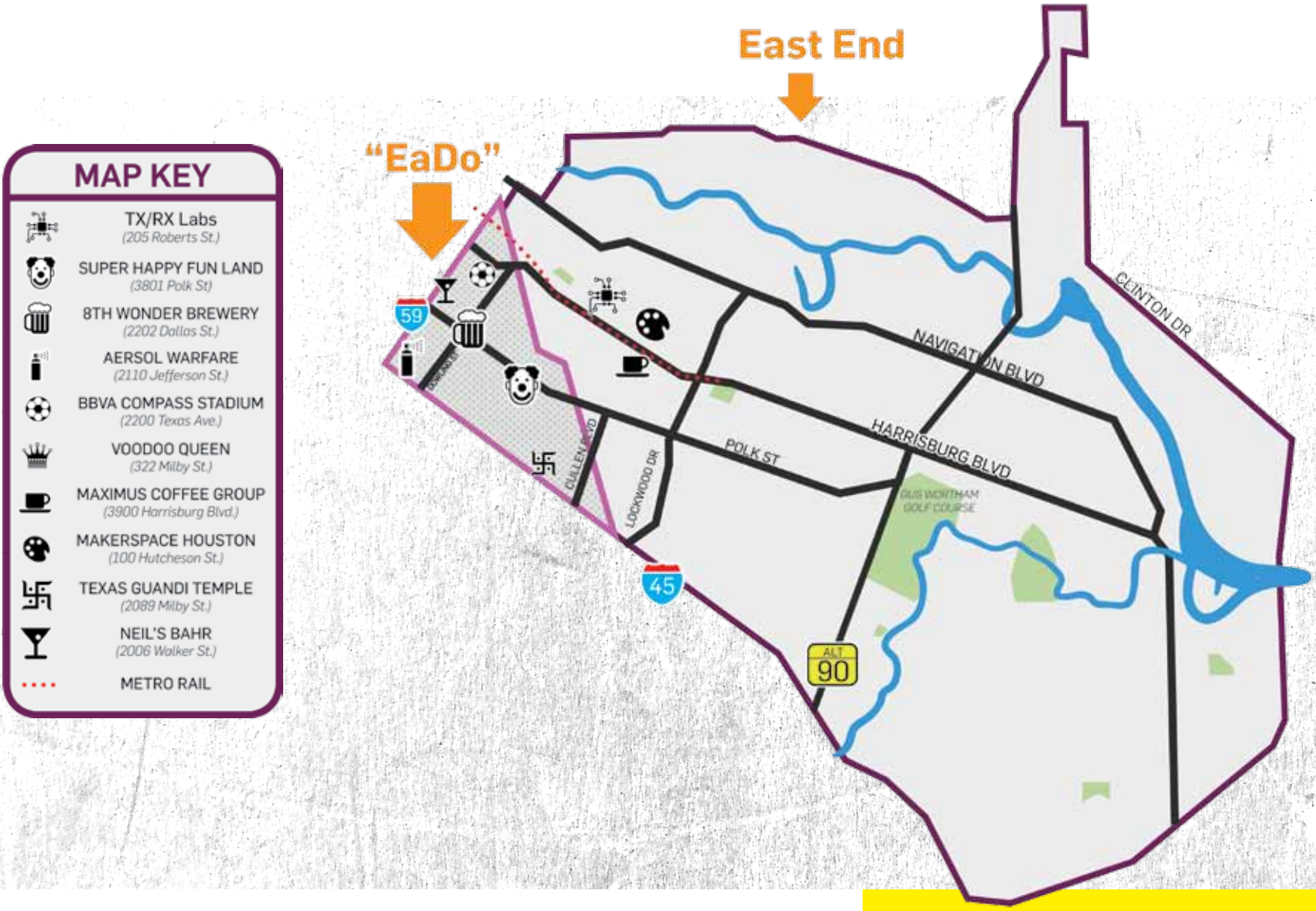
About thirty years ago, the area’s East Asian population began to move their businesses to Southwest Houston. Kim Son’s headquarters, the elegant golden Vietnamese restaurant at the corner of Highways 59 and 45, is a reminder of EaDo before EaDo. Other remaining Chinatown landmarks are the Texas Guandi Temple and several operating businesses, many with faded Chinese characters on the walls and asian clay-roof tiles on the rooftops.

A street artist named Zen, who works in and out of the nearby Aerosol Warfare gallery, frequently places his dark and sultry calavera images in downtown, EaDo and East End’s Denver Harbor. When asked about the infamous “EaDo” nickname, he said he heard it first from Aerosol Warfare’s owner, Gonzo247.

“Some people don’t like it, some people do like it. It’s just a name,” Zen said. “Just a nickname.”

Ryan Soroka of the 8th Wonder brewery, located in the heart of EaDo, says the push between urban redevelopment and heritage is “the cost of urban living.”

“The city is going to develop beyond the one you grew up in,” he said, “but if you want to live in the city, if you want to have places to walk to and restaurants and an urban atmosphere, [this is] the cost of that.”





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EAST END

East End, unlike EaDo, is not a warehouse wasteland waiting for new condos and bars. It has been predominantly Hispanic and working class in recent memory, but it wasn't always that way. Before the current crop of residents arrived, the area was populated by Italian and Greek families, and before that, in 1913, the Houston Daily Post called it a "model suburb." Howard Hughes even lived in Eastwood as child.

Today, East Enders are divided between those who accept gentrification as a passing fact, others who are excited by it, and still others who would like to see it retain its affordable, working class character.

Hayley and Atticus, 21-year-old students who didn't want to give their last names, were drinking from the Moontower Inn's famous list of microbrews. They said even after moving to New Orleans, Houston still feels like their city.

"It makes me happy to see new stuff coming up, that's always fun, but it's a certain crowd that it attracts, I guess," said Hayley, who once lived in a nearby warehouse off of Commerce St. "And that's not a bad thing, it's just a thing."

"I get the perspective of coming back after six months and seeing what's changed, said Atticus. "It's crazy."

Precinct 6 Constable Victor Trevino, a native East Ender, is optimistic. "The East End has always been diversified. We have not just a historical Hispanic community, but Chinatown, an Italian community and the Polish community

Barrio Dogs founder Gloria Medina Zenteno is part of a different transformation. Zenteno started Barrio Dogs to promote animal education in a part of town known for stray packs and neglect. They often host fundraisers at Bohemio's.

"I see strays everywhere, and not like in other neighborhoods," she said. "I thought, 'Why isn't anyone doing or saying something about this? Why isn't the city focusing on our community?'"

Activists like Zenteno, it goes without saying, will develop the East End their own way long after it stops being trendy.

UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

Meanwhile, back in the triangle, the East Downtown Management District maintains a vision for a "well-planned, high quality community." This includes commercial development and a residential neighborhood. Another high-rise hotel to feed the convention center is rumored to be in development. The Management District website features buzzwords like safety, security, well-maintained streets and pedestrian areas.

"Throughout this effort," eadohouston.com reads, "the bottom line will be our commitment to enhancement of the District for our constituents."

Who those "constituents" are is what's changing.

David L. Davis of Continuum Performance Art, along with his colleague Caitlin Scott, moved out of Montrose

IT MAKES ME HAPPY TO SEE NEW STUFF COMING UP, THAT'S ALWAYS FUN, BUT IT'S A CERTAIN CROWD THAT IT ATTRACTS

that surrounded Denver Harbor. I see it in the new residents wherever they come from, whether its West coast or East coast."

Joseph Mandola's father, Frank began the eponymous restaurant on Cullen Boulevard in 1978.

"In the '40's to '60's, this area was mainly Italians," he said. "Lots of Mandolas. There's a lot of pride that comes in [the deli], from old people who have withstood all the changes to the new young professionals coming in."

He still lives in the East End himself, "because it is of its own. No Best Buys, no corporate stamp."

Though East End is overdue for a revitalization that brings money, swagger and city improvements to the neighborhood, tensions rise when that "revitalization" blends in with EaDo's—which is known for its "corporate stamp". And many of East End's trendy new spots, such as Voodoo Queen and Moontower Inn, are in sight of EaDo's vague border.

Nearby Bohemio's began as a haven for art and music, but by the time Keith Adkins and Jessica Soller got to it, it had become a neighborhood hangout with a community focus.

"There's no place really like it," Soller said. "The original owners are big proponents of the East End. They were proactive about reaching out to community groups, and now we're established and accessible. We've hosted everybody, from Communists to campaigning officials. There's nothing else like this here, in the East End, that can accommodate everybody."

after their respective city blocks had been purchased and their apartments set for demolition. While Scott found rent in East End, Davis ended up in Third Ward, though he noted that Second Ward (another name for part of East End) is alive and well.

"When I go out there and talk to people who have lived there," Davis said. "They're like 'Second Ward.' They identify with that. They're proud of being Second Ward. It's a strong neighborhood."

To hasten this collision, \$250,000 townhomes, most of which look like metallic LEGOs, have spread like fairy rings all the way from EaDo to neighboring East End. Simultaneously, continuing a decades-old trend, artists and makers keep transforming the area's warehouses from industrial use to artistic purposes or living space. Creative organizations, from TX/RX Labs and Makerspace Houston to Sharespace, have set up in the area over the years. They signal another kind of resident in the old-school East End: a blend of eager new Houstonians and Heights/Montrose refugees who just want a cool place with cheap rent.

"The best thing you can do is get to know your neighbors and get involved in your community," Scott said. "There's also the issue that we live in a society where segregation is a problem. It's not just a segregation of ethnicity, there's also a segregation of economics. Because of the economic system behind gentrification, it intentionally displaces people. It's not just the hardship of having to find a new home, but the hardship of finding a new community."

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IN THE OLD DAYS, a Klansman would order his slaves to iron his white hood and robe the night before a cross burning. Today's racist orders his undocumented maids to iron his camouflage pants and shirt the night before picketing on an overpass.

It would take an entire semester of ethnic studies to explain all the ironies of this Texas minute in immigration. Maybe that's why Mexican-American studies is under attack as well.

But don't worry. We as border crossers have seen this all before and can tell you how to survive this oppression. When I say we, I mean the Librotraficantes. And when I say "crossed borders," I mean the Texas state line, the New Mexico state line, and the Arizona state line.

Back in 2012, when Arizona fanatics prohibited Mexican-American studies, we organized the Librotraficante Caravan to smuggle the books banned in Arizona back into Tucson, all the way from Houston. Now, it looks as if we'll need folks from other states to lend us a hand as Texas oppression season gets hotter, and hotter, and hotter.

And if you're not certain of what's going down, let me make it crystal clear. We are experiencing a Texas-sized version of the Arizona Plan.

In 2010, Republican Arizona governor Jan Brewer signed two laws that will haunt the Republican Party for generations. First, she signed what has come to be known as the "show me your papers law," the harshest immigration law in the nation, Arizona's SB1070. That same year, she also signed Arizona House Bill 2281, which was used to prohibit Mexican-American studies.

Arizona wasn't always this rabidly racist. It only took a few sane people to sit out a few elections while far-right politicians tested political campaign platforms based on fear and hate. Their tactics worked, and crazy people won small office after small office,

then more and more offices and posts, until one day all the sensible people were surrounded. That was the political climate that culminated in SB1070 and HB2281.

The cast of characters who rose to power during that tyrannical wave will come to be known as either the Republican dream team or the GOP Nightmare, with Jan Brewer at the helm, and, to her far right, fellows like Sheriff Joe Arpaio.

Think it can't happen in Texas? Think again. Texas Republicans want to adopt the Arizona template, so here is the Arizona recipe, step by step:

AZ REPUBLICAN TACTICS

1. Blame Immigration for every single thing that is wrong with the state.
2. Make Latinos the bad guys—without ever directly talking about them, just kinda hinting at them by say... talking about the border... or implying there's an invasion... from someplace... nearby, to the south...
3. Get older Anglos to fear brown children. In Tucson, high school students were villainized. Texas has one-upped Arizona by fearing even younger kids.
4. Fear books. In Arizona, they banned Mexican American Studies. Texas has used trickier means to sabotage ethnic studies.
5. Always say that you are acting to save money or to curb illegal activity, even as you waste tax money and break the law.
6. Quietly intimidate. So maybe walk around with a rifle when you can.
7. Keep people scared. Keep people in a constant state of anger. Wear down people's nerve and pocket books until you get your way.

And, as if to kick the Texas Freedom Summer into full throttle, Governor Rick Perry has handed me a perfect example of this as I type.

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**AUG
12**

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WITH STAGNANT POOLS



**AUG
14**

THE BOTH

(AIMEE MANN & TED LEO)



**JUL
02**

STREETS OF LAREDO

WITH SHY BOYS



**JUL
03**

PENTAGRAM

WITH VENEMOUS MAXIMUS



**JUL
09**

THE POLYPHONIC SPREE

WITH SARAH JAFFE



**JUL
10**

THE BAND OF HEATHENS

AND LUKAS NELSON & P.O.T.R.



**JUL
21**

THE ANTLERS

WITH THUS OWLS



**JUL
25**

ALPHA REV

WITH THE ROCKETBOYS



**AUG
02**

BEN KWELLER

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**AUG
13**

THAO & THE GET DOWN STAY DOWN

WITH THE WHEEL WORKERS



**AUG
14**

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**AUG
27**

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Just a few days ago, Governor Rick Perry was pictured dressed from head to toe in camouflage. He's not fat like Joe Arpaio, but the outfit was thrown off because it looked like he was wearing two or three bulletproof vests. I guess he was scared. He was also holding a rifle as he took selfies of him and an Army guy driving a boat around a lake. Refer to number six above, under intimidation tactics.

And then today, Perry announced he's sending the National Guard to the Rio Grande Valley to deal with the children abandoned at the border. Refer to AZ move number three above, cultivating an unhealthy fear of brown children.

Of course, Perry cited AZ move number five to justify this, and claimed he would send troops to curb illegal activity. Perhaps, the National Guard can help identify the immigrants who are good candidates to fill the labor shortage for trades and big business in Texas.

The Perry Day Care Plan will cost the National Guard \$12 million a month. Reports claim Perry will bill the federal government for this. (Now that is a phone call to President Obama that I'd love to listen in on.) In the mean time, that's \$12 million of Texans' tax money subsidizing Perry's pre-presidential propaganda campaign.

The cost ties into AZ Move number four: fear of books and Ethnic Studies. The Republican-led Texas State Board of Education just sabotaged Proclamation 2016 which would have led to textbooks for Mexican American, African American, Asian American and Native American Studies. In order to thwart Ethnic Studies SBOE members cited, you guessed it, costs.

\$12 million per month for textbooks could lead to a revolution in education. However, that's not where Perry's small-minded, short-term, mean and petty interest lies. Sabotaging ethnic studies and instilling a fear of books undermines people's understanding of each other, so that cheap tricks like those listed above can keep working generation after generation after generation.

Until now.

Texans have a chance to correct this wave of hate sneaking in from Arizona. This Texas-sized version of the Arizona plan could lead to the America that Nixon dreamed of, or this could lead to a Texas-sized Freedom Summer such as MLK, Cesar Chavez, and Dolores Huerta imagined. It can happen because we've studied the Arizona playbook.

Texas is not a red state. Even during the last presidential election, Romney won only 57% of seven million voters. There were 15 million registered voters, but eight million voters stayed home. We have got to get them off their asses. Again, it takes only a few people to stay home on Election Day for crazy people to win elections, sometimes by as few as 25 votes.

There are a lot of reasons to be optimistic. There are way more cool and chill open minded people in Texas than haters. This was evident by the spontaneous outpouring of pro-immigrant demonstrations across the state.

I am honored to be part of a new collective of artists, writers, and activists who organized The Women

and Children Welcoming Committee. We spent an all-nighter creating pro-immigrant banners and signs, and the following morning convened on a bridge over Interstate 10, in the heart of Houston, an hour before haters were scheduled to arrive.

And we blew people's minds.

Reporters who covered our bridge blogging were shocked to hear the Anglo members of our rainbow coalition say that they welcome the refugees. Shocked! By humanity!

And our crew was not intimidated when a fellow showed up to protest against immigrants and promote open carry laws with a rifle slung over his shoulder, muzzle pointed down, and wearing a kilt (perhaps in an homage to previous waves of immigrants).

There were more of us, we made more news, and we opened more minds.

That's what the Texas Freedom Summer has to keep doing.

We have to thrill the American Imagination, and we have to excite those eight million voters who stayed home during the last presidential election.

There are so many more positive signs. Every day, another Latino or Latina turns 18. And every week, we see more and more of how a red state sees only red, even as it sends the budget into the red with money for troops but not for textbooks.

And we see more clearly how we must work together to thrill the American Imagination to counter the culture that would scare us back into the 1930s, back to white hoods and robes.

After all, it was here deep in the heart of Texas where the underground railroad rumbled through to Mexico, where slavery was long ago abolished, crossing borders to unite children and families who were torn apart because of unfair, cruel laws.

It was Texas where our merry band of Librotraficantes boarded a magic bus to traffic contraband prose across state lines. This Texas rainbow is going to update the American Dream for everyone.

So, Texas, are you ready to redefine the American Imagination?

"V" for victory "vatats."

Novelist Tony Diaz, El Librotraficante, is the author of The Aztec Love God, founder of Nuestra Palabra: Latino Writers Having Their Say, and Director of Intercultural Initiatives at Lone Star College-North Harris. He co-hosts the Nuestra Palabra Radio Show on 90.1 FM KPFT. **FPH**

A LITTLE HELP?

TRYING TO STOP A WAR HERE...

BY NICK COOPER | ART BY NICK COOPER



THE US IS INVOLVED IN THE MILITARY CONFLICTS in Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel/Palestine, Syria and elsewhere, and folks in war zones (a.k.a. collateral damage) rely on activists in the US to bring pressure for peace. Whenever we step up to organize, someone seems ready to discourage us. If you've ever spent any time trying to stop the US or its allies from bombing, arming, incarcerating, torturing, or otherwise oppressing others, you have probably had someone tell you that you're wasting your time. Of course when you are truly wasting your time, watching TV for example, no one seems to mind. However, when it comes to political action, you'll find friends, family members, or even complete strangers suddenly concerned about your time management.

"Nothing You Do will To Change Anything"

This general discouragement is easily disproven. Activists helped abolish slavery, dismantle segregation, end wars, and win all kinds of victories for workers and groups lacking access. Even the seemingly intractable, long-term conflicts in Northern Ireland and South Africa were de-escalated.

Our government gives massive financial and military support to many nations and rebel groups. When someone suggests that nothing we can do will change things, you can respond, "Doing nothing would be a big improvement!"

"That Area Will Always Be a Mess," "It's Religious Conflict," & "It's Really Complicated" Conflicts are not caused by being in an unlucky region, or passages in holy books. Wars are generally fought over territory, control, resources, and injustice. From the

American Indian wars to Iraq, religion and race are used to whip the population into a patriotic frenzy. However, the real reasons for war are revealed when you follow the money/real estate; and that's not so complicated after all.

Oppressive policies are what foment rebellion. Shifting the blame to religion lets the guilty regimes off the hook. Israel continues illegally expanding into Palestinian territory, blocking Palestine from becoming a state, treating Palestinians as prisoners, illegally demolishing homes and enacting other forms of collective punishment, illegally denying the right of return, etc. These are real world injustices, not theological disputes. They can't be written off simply because religious differences also exist.

"They've Been Fighting Each Other for Thousands of Years"

You'll hear this one a lot when it comes to two particular conflicts—Israel/Palestine and Shia/Sunni. However, there is no such thousand years of fighting in either of these conflicts. Palestinians and Jews have been fighting each other only since the beginning of Israel, which was less than 70 years ago. Shia/Sunni relations is a long and varied history, but from WWI until the Iran Iraq War in the 1980s, Shias and Sunnis were significantly more friendly, intermarried, integrated, and peaceful with each other than Blacks and whites were in the US.

So then...imagine if in the US in the 1980s, some extremely more rich and powerful outside force had come in—one whose GDP was 100 times ours (of course, no such entity exists on the planet, so it could be from outer space). Imagine that it funded,

with trillions of dollars, the most extremist, violent white and Black prison gangs it could find, giving both sides weapons as powerful or more powerful than those of the US military. Now imagine that those groups started a several-decades-long race war in the US with millions of casualties. Someone reading about it in Europe all these years later might respond, "Well, Blacks and whites in the US have been fighting for hundreds of years." Anyone who knew their history would respond, "No. There were indeed long-standing racial conflicts, but the conflict upgraded to a war as a direct result of outside intervention."

"You're Siding With/Defending the Terrorists"

Terrorism is an aspect of all modern war. Instead of thinking of any conflict in terms of terrorists vs. civilized soldiers, it makes more sense to think of all modern combatants using some level of terrorism. They're not all equal: Some parties engage more terror than others in collective punishment, mass executions, etc. Israel and the US categorize Hamas as a terrorist organization, but using any set of objective criteria, Israel is also a terrorist organization. Collective punishment, home demolitions, so-called administrative detention, assassination—all of these things are embraced openly by Israeli politicians and they are terrorism. Regardless of how terroristic the groups "in control" are, siding with the innocent people on either side is never the same as defending "the terrorists."

"What You're Doing Isn't As Important As This Other Thing You Could Be Doing"

This is a common one, for some reason. You can always respond, "Ok, you go do that, I'm gonna do this."

"All That Matters Is That We Vote"

This is really annoying because it encourages folks to limit themselves to allocating a total of one hour every other year to changing things for the better. Politicians have stopped wars in the past, but rarely without public pressure.

"Get a Job"

This is an oldie but a goodie. Nowadays most activists can respond, "I got several jobs!"

"Move To Russia/Cuba"

You don't really hear this one anymore, but perhaps it packed a punch during McCarthyism. If it comes up, most local activists can respond, "I don't even have enough money to move to Austin!"

We can respond straightforwardly to all these common complaints, but activists often find themselves spending too much time justifying themselves to the naysayers. Sometimes it's best to say, "I'm trying to do something here, and if you don't want to join me fine, but please don't waste my time. Help out or get out of the way."

Why do people want to discourage us when we are working for change? It's often that they feel bad about not doing more themselves. If they can portray activism as useless, they can more easily justify their own lack of involvement. **FPH**

THE EUPHEMISM OF HOUSTON

UH SELLS NEW STADIUM NAMING RIGHTS TO FRONT GROUP FOR SPONTANEOUS-MASS-ABORTION PROVIDER

BY HARBEER SANDHU | ART BY AUSTIN SMITH

WHEN DOW CHEMICAL (then Union Carbide) leaked a cloud of pesticide gas in Bhopal, India, around midnight on December 2-3, 1984, more than 500,000 people were exposed to the toxic chemical. Like little bugs in their sleep.

And they ran like bugs fleeing bug spray. They grabbed their children and ran. Pregnant women birthed stillborn babies as they ran. They fell in heaps, gasping for air, their lungs and their eyes on fire. Almost 4,000 people—more people than were killed in the attacks of September 11, 2001—were dead before sunrise.

In the thirty years since, more than 15,000 additional people have died from ongoing effects of the poison. Thousands more will pass the remainder of their lives blind, sick, and suffering from chronic pain. Every single moment for the remainder of their wretched lives.

In the thirty years since, Dow/Union Carbide has continued to draw in billions of dollars in profits (\$4.8 billion in 2013 alone), but they have yet to admit responsibility, properly compensate victims and survivors, or even clean up the abandoned plant (which continues to contaminate the groundwater). Their then-CEO, Warren Anderson, fled criminal prosecution in India, and is living a cushy life on easy street in the Hamptons.

The Bhopal Disaster—the worst industrial disaster in the history of the world—was not the result of an accident or a mistake, it was the result of criminal negligence. Dow (then Union Carbide) was fully aware of faulty safety equipment, but the billion-dollar corporation could not be bothered to spend a few bucks ensuring the safety of its workers and the surrounding community.

In 2002, they paid out a \$470 million settlement, which amounts to about \$500 per victim. When asked about that paltry sum, Dow spokesperson Kathy Hunt said that \$500 is “plenty good for an Indian.”

But what does this have to do with the University of Houston, its new stadium,



and UH's (Indian-American) President? Well, last month, the University of Houston announced that it had sold the naming rights to its new sports stadium to the Texas Dow Employees Credit Union for 10 years, for \$15 million. Check out this passage from the press release:

“‘With TDECU, we have a great friend of the University that shares our philosophy, values and mission. When two winning teams come together, great things happen,’ said University of Houston President Renu Khator...‘We cannot thank TDECU enough for helping us to make this gift possible.’...”

‘We wanted an entity that aligned with our core values, cared about its workforce and its clients, invested in the community and the University. We’ve found that and more with TDECU,’ said University of

Houston Vice President for Intercollegiate Athletics Mack Rhoades.” [Emphasis added.]

Now, don’t get me wrong, I think it’s great that the Texas Dow Employees Credit Union, which has \$2 billion in assets, is so generously supporting UH athletics even though so many Dow employees (and Dow’s neighbors) are sick from various cancers due to chemical exposure. I also think it’s great that UH has built a new stadium costing \$120 million at a time when it has raised tuition 25% since 2008, and that they sold naming rights for a paltry 12.5% of the construction cost. Shame on UH President Renu Khator for giving Dow Chemical this opportunity to greenwash their image after they said that \$500 for a lifetime of suffering is “plenty good for an Indian.”

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The subject of naming stadiums and public monuments has been on my mind ever since Enron Field became Minute Maid Park. This is a status update that I shared on Facebook just a few days before the UH announcement while I was on a road trip through the Midwest:

Louisville, KY has one stadium named for Kentucky Fried Chicken and another named for Papa John's pizza. My hometown has a stadium named for a soft drink (Minute Maid Park) that was originally named for a corporation (Enron) that turned off grandmas' lights (rolling blackouts in CA in 2001) even as it looted grandmas in an unregulated utilities environment (fabricating power plant catastrophes to jack up prices, por ejemplo). Papa John is a dickhead (net worth: \$600m) who says he can't afford to buy his workers health insurance because it will cost him \$0.14 per pizza. (Forbes has calculated that number closer to a nickel a pizza.)

Many years ago, when I first learned of the name change from Enron Field

Wilson about the UH/TDECU announcement. "It's like the world is upside down."

I propose renaming the Cougars' new stadium the Diane Wilson Memorial Stadium. Now there's a heroine we should all be proud to claim! I recommend you head down to that great local socialist institution, the public library, and check out Wilson's autobiography, "An Unreasonable Woman." It reads like a cloak-and-dagger thriller, with leaks from whistle-blowers too scared to lose their jobs, leaks from executives wracked by guilt because their grandchildren were born with birth-defects due to their own chemical waste, corrupt politicians, corrupt regulators, small-town elites making deals with notorious, internationally-known polluting scofflaws, scores of dead dolphins washing up on the beach, and of course, attempts to buy off Wilson.

That last bit—her refusal to sell out, is really what earns Wilson my eternal gold star. Too many people I know are willing to compromise, to make a

up by industry. She is constantly given leaked information (as I mentioned) by employees who fear losing their jobs in the short-term more than their health in the long-term, by low-level government inspectors whose attempts to enforce existing laws are derailed by their superiors, by higher-ups in the company who are wracked by guilt. She is betrayed by family members, scorned by her town, rebuffed by her "elected representatives," yet she persists, against all odds.

I cannot emphasize this enough, especially for those who insist on "working within the system"—Wilson has no such delusions.

"Hard core civil disobedience is the only way to go," says Wilson. "I tried talking to the politicians. I wrote letters to my representatives—local, state, federal. I gathered signatures on petitions. I tracked down evidence and took it to the regulators. All I learned is that they were all in cahoots with one another."

"Even Ann Richards," Wilson adds, "even Ann Richards wouldn't talk to me.

IT'S LIKE A BLOW TO THE STOMACH," SAYS WILSON ABOUT THE UH/TDECU ANNOUNCEMENT. "IT'S LIKE THE WORLD IS UPSIDE DOWN

to Minute Maid Park, I asked my friend, "Remember when we used to name big public buildings and monuments after people we admired? What happened?"

"We ran out of them," he said.

But not really. There are tons of people I admire, who inspire me to better myself. Most of them are not famous, but there's still a lot of them.

So, a few days later, after the UH/TDECU announcement, I tracked down one of my heroes: Diane Wilson. Wilson is a fourth-generation shrimper and a political organizer/activist who has been fighting Formosa Plastics, Union Carbide, and Dow Chemical (since their merger with Union Carbide) in her hometown of Seadrift, Texas, since 1989. She is a grandmother and a real, down-to-earth, rural, blue-collar bad ass whose very existence debunks the stereotype of environmentalists being out-of-touch, urban elitists with lots of book-learning but lacking in real-world experience. She has been arrested more times and done more time in prison than all the corrupt executives and managers at chemical plants and the politicians who help them cover up their crimes put together.

"It's like a blow to the stomach," says

deal with the devil as long as they get their own cushy position. Early on in the memoir, Wilson tells how the Boss Hogg looking local banker came down to the fish house where she worked in his three-piece-suit, asking why she had called for a town meeting. All Wilson was doing at that point was attempting to discuss their county being listed as the worst for pollution in the entire US. That's all she did—call for a meeting—and that was enough to raise the ire of the town's elite.

A few days later, she went to the bank on an errand and he cornered her again. Said he'd talked to the people at Formosa Plastics and they were willing to create a "community group" with her as the chairperson. She could provide the illusion of oversight, call herself chairperson, rubber stamp whatever the company wanted, and draw a generous salary for herself. In a town where she was quickly becoming a pariah, he offered her "respectability."

But Wilson refused to be their pawn, and in the 25 years since, she's learned just how corrupt the whole system really is. She talks about the alphabet soup of regulatory agencies which do nothing but rubber stamp plans drawn

And she was supposed to be one of the good ones."

Wilson fought back. She fought back against Formosa Plastics, who came to Seadrift because they had been forced out of their home (Taiwan) for consistent, repeated pollution violations. She fought back against Union Carbide, whose Seadrift plant blew up in 1991, seven years after the Bhopal disaster. She fought back against President Bush in his rush to war and against the treatment of detainees at Guantanamo Bay. She hasn't yet managed to close Guantanamo or end the Iraq war (her most recent arrest was at a Close Guantanamo demonstration at the White House in August 2013), but she has won zero-discharge victories from Dow and Formosa in Seadrift. And despite this, like a true hero, Wilson remains humble.

"When people ask me how I did it," she says, "I tell them all they have to do is pick up the phone...Just take the first step, and the road will rise up to meet you." **FPH**

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RIGGING THE GAME

UNDERGROUND BOARD GAMING IN HOUSTON BY KYLE NAZARIO

I STARED AT THE CARD. There were words, but damned if I could understand them. It was telling me to “meld” and “achieve,” like I knew what the hell that meant.

“OK, learn as you go!” said the woman across the table. “Let’s play!”

Shit. I was not ready. Can’t be a holdup on the group though. It was time to play.

THE NEW GAME

I had joined a group of other Houstonians in a cafe off 59. More than a dozen people had met there to share their love of board games.

Now, when I say board games, I don’t mean Monopoly. That’s kiddy shit. This group plays European games.

“About 20-odd years ago, the U.S. got an influx of games coming over from Europe, mostly Germany,” said Kevin Nunn, a Houston-based board game designer. “They’ve taken a completely different tack.”

The big breakthrough in European games was the way they embraced different types of mechanics.

“Euro games tend to emphasize indirect conflict,” said Rex Baker, a board game designer who moved from Houston. “The conflict that comes from the game typically arises from different choices that the players can make, as opposed to direct conflict between the players.”

European and American board games are different like NASCAR and a demolition derby are different. At the end of most European games, everyone is still playing.

Some don’t even crown a winner. Baker cited one, Pandemic, in which up to five players work together to defeat a game-controlled virus. Everyone wins or loses together.

“If you win, it feels like a real achievement,” he said.

The most well-known Euro game is The Settlers of Catan. It’s an odd title that drops players on to an island filled with hexagons. They compete with each other for resources to build roads and castles. It’s more fun than it sounds.

“Settlers was the first one to really make a big breakthrough,” Nunn said. “There’s a wave of great games that follows right behind Settlers.”

RISING POPULARITY IN HOUSTON

That wave has created fans everywhere, including Houston. There are Meetup groups, private collections of friends, gatherings at comic book stores, and everything in between. People love playing these games.

Nunn attributes the popularity of designer games in part to players’ desire to meet new people and spend time with friends.

“Board games give an opportunity to be competitive and social at the same time,” Nunn said.

Jeremy Bulloch, owner of comic store 8th Dimension, guessed Houston has “thousands” of casual players and a few-hundred dedicated fans.

“It’s a huge town, but a lot of us know each other,” Bulloch said. “A lot of us have known each other for a very long time.”

The sense of community is strong among tabletop players, who are almost sickeningly nice to each other. They go out of their way to make sure new players aren’t lost and everybody is having fun.

In the game I played, one guy patiently explained the rules and answered every dumb question we asked. Even the ones we asked multiple times. Tabletop is as much about the other players as it is the game.

“People want to connect in more personal ways with each other,” Baker said.

KICKSTARTING THE NEXT GENERATION

Despite board games’ strictly analog nature, the internet has helped the community grow immensely in the last few years. Websites like BoardGameGeek let people with similar niche interests congregate. They share what they’re playing: hidden gems and new titles on Kickstarter.

“Kickstarter is probably single-handedly responsible for all this,” Baker told me.

Kickstarter.com lets users give money to projects they want to fund (like a board game). If the project collects enough money within the given time period, the creators use the money to send the product to backers.

The website allows ordinary people who might never have the resources to produce a board game to do exactly that. They can reach hundreds of other geeks who will gladly fund them to get a new board game in return.

“Before Kickstarter, I just designed games and played them with my family,” said Houston game designer Christian Strain. “It never went past basic stuff because I never even thought I would be able to afford producing [them].”

When Strain saw Kickstarter, he knew there was an opportunity there to release his own board game.

Evil Intent premiered on Kickstarter and asked backers for \$40,000 over 30 days.

“We didn’t get close to that,” Strain told me.

After negotiating with their printing company, they got the price down to \$25,000. This time the game made its goal in just over a week. Ironically, they ended the Kickstarter with \$39,643—a few hundred dollars short of their original goal.

“People do like to back a winner,” Strain said. “Success sells.”

STAR POWER

The internet has given tabletop gaming one other gift—endorsements from a guy who used to be on “Star Trek.”

“The biggest thing that’s happened in the last couple years has been the rise of the web series by Wil Wheaton, ‘Tabletop,’” Bulloch told me. “Every episode it’s Wil and his friends getting together and playing card games or board games.”

Wheaton’s name recognition and massive social media presence have helped spread tabletop gaming to new fans.

“The videos are great because they’re funny, they’re entertaining,” Bulloch said. “They’re also great as demos for these games.”

Bulloch told me 8th Dimension keeps a stack of games featured on “Tabletop” at the front of the store. Whenever a game appears on the show, it sells out at the distribution level.

“It’s a great way to introduce people to games they’ve never heard of before,” he said.

Noah Stewart, one of Bulloch’s employees, testified to the effective-

ness of “Tabletop.” Stewart said the show got one of his friends interested in board games.

“Whenever a new episode of ‘Tabletop’ comes out, he will always go out to the store and buy whatever was on that episode,” Stewart said. “If it’s on Tabletop, he is there.”

WOULD RECOMMEND

Even though the rules didn’t make sense until a quarter-way into the game, I had fun with my board game experience. Tabletop gaming can be enjoyable, and if you’re interested in trying a game, there are a million groups all over the city.

“Much like everything in Houston, it’s highly decentralized,” Nunn said. “There’s no one big group; there’s lots and lots and lots of small groups.”

Try Meetup. Or you can check out any comic shop near you. Chances are it has a gaming night. Stewart said 8th Dimension keeps its back room open to anybody who wants to come in and try a game for free.

Play a game. They’re fun. “[Board games] create a huge opportunity for people of different cultures to interact in a common space and meet each other,” Nunn said. “I think that’s a huge benefit to a lot of people.”

FPH





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STAND UP & DELIVER FUNNY IS FUNNY

BY DAVID H.



THE WORLD OF STAND-UP COMEDY is a male-dominated world. When you ask comics to list their favorites, even then, it's usually male names that you hear. When FPH asked Houston comics who they admired, Nia De-Bose was a name that came up more often than not. A transplant to Houston, De-Bose has been doing stand-up close for to a decade, and her relatable jokes on weight gain and everyday life make her a killer on the mic. Recently, FPH had a chance to catch up with Nia, and discuss being a female comic and more.

You're from St. Louis, right? What made you move to Houston and how long have you been down here?

I moved to Houston in 2005. Few people are aware how crazy St. Louis is. I was between jobs working for my dad when I witnessed a kidnapping attempt in broad daylight, and I thought to myself 'Man, I really need to get out of here.' My best friend was living in Houston at the time and invited me to 'try it out for a few weeks' and I never left.

What's the craziest job you've ever had?

The craziest job I've ever had was working in the marketing department of a casino. You see it ALL. Senior citizens getting into fist fights over slot machines, people winning a jackpot then gambling it all away in one night—or even worse—people bringing their disabled adult children in to sign over their disability checks. There's nothing more hilariously sad than a fistfight between elderly people.

What made you choose to get into stand-up?

I chose stand-up because it's raw. It was something

that kind of gnawed at me and drove me to try it. I like the fact that you get all the glory if you kill and you take the loss if you bomb, but either way, it's all you.

How long have you been doing stand-up?

I did stand-up for the first time February 15, 2006, at the Houston Improv. I told myself if I could audibly hear ONE person laugh, I would keep doing it—if not, I would never tell a soul and take it to my grave. Thankfully, more than one person laughed. I think it was three.

Being a female in a male-dominated profession, do you feel as if female comics are treated fairly in the world of stand-up comedy? Or do you feel like you have to work twice as hard as a male comic to earn respect as a performer?

No I don't feel women are treated fairly in comedy and yeah, you have to work a little harder. I once had a club owner tell me he couldn't book me because he already had a black chick. Like, he actually said that. Verbatim. You'll be told they can't put you on a show because they already have their girl. No matter the age difference or ethnicity they'll have their one 'girl' for the show. I think it's pretty silly and outdated, but you have to roll with the punches and play the cards you're dealt.

Recently, Joan Rivers was quoted as saying, "When I started, you didn't want to stand on stage and make a fool of yourself; women had to be very strong and unattractive to be funny. Now, Tina Fey and Sarah Silverman have changed all of that, and the crowd will accept

a gorgeous funny woman." Do you hold any stock in that sentiment, or do you feel like funny is funny, and it doesn't matter how you look?

I think funny is funny, but it doesn't matter what I think: What matters is what the booker/club owner thinks. A few years ago, I would go on stage in a T-shirt jeans and sneakers. I mean, I still do that, but one time I decided to get dolled up and put on heels and makeup and a member of the staff at the comedy club pulled me aside and said "See? You look so nice. Keep it up, because the owner likes his girls to look nice." He likes his girls to look nice? Like he was some kind of pimp!! I did the same jokes I would do in casual clothes, but because I dressed up to the nines I got booked.

Who are your favorite comedians of the past and present?

My favorite comedians of the past are Paul Mooney and Joan Rivers, and my favorite comedians of the present are Louis C.K., Patton Oswalt and Dave Chappelle. Chappelle was the first black comedian I ever saw that made me think I stood a chance at comedy. And Bill Burr, he's so intense and angry. I love it.

Do you think that people who've never seen you before are shocked when you perform and you have a very everyday type of 'voice' to your act—that maybe you change their perception of what jokes a female comic can do?

There are more men that do stand-up than women, so while there may be more awful, hacky male comics there are less women comics, so it seems like most female comics aren't funny. Or at least, that's MY theory. As an audience member, you have a preconceived notion that women aren't funny and black comics are going to talk about...I don't know, fried chicken and watermelon? So I guess when you see a black woman with locs, you'd think you have nothing in common with me. That I would say nothing you can relate to, so yes, I think people are shocked when they realize we share the same struggle with trying not to order extra large milkshakes at fast food restaurants. All comics can do whatever jokes they want as long as they can make it relatable (and funny).

Almost every comic in Houston speaks massive amounts of respect for you as a comic, as a performer, and as someone integral to the Houston Comedy Scene. Does it feel like with this recent birth of places to do stand up, that's it's easier now to get on shows? Or is it harder because there's so many new people doing stand-up?

I think it's great that there are so many places to go up now. There are only two comedy clubs in town, so it's great that so many comics are taking the reigns and starting their own rooms. Steven Padilla has multiple rooms around town, and there are now a few places that let you do feature sets (20-30 minutes), which was unheard of a few years ago. It seems easier to get on because there are so many new places for every-level: from open micer to headliner.

What's your idea of a successful comedy career?

My idea of a successful career is nationwide touring, hosting a late night talk show, and voice acting in cartoons, then retiring with my money from my chain of Apocalypse-themed specialty stores called "Nia's Dystopian Pickle Shoppe™"

De-Bose might have one of the sharpest comedy minds I've ever witnessed. Just watching her calmly and hilariously destroy a heckler once, was enough to sell me on her strengths on stage. While she chases her dream of owning that pickle shop, you can catch her on stage at most the rooms around town. **FPH**



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THE DUDE ABIDES

JEFFREY CLYDE HUNTER – DECEMBER 15, 1964-JULY 3, 2014

BY AMANDA WOLFE

FATE PUT MY FRIEND Jeff Hunter into my life. My friends and I had formed a nonprofit—WOMAN (Women of Montrose Action Network)—and we'd been seeking our first local organization to help. Jeff was one of the first to connect with us, as he was working with the Houston Hound Dog Rescue Alliance. We were all about animals and kids, and others who couldn't speak up for their own needs. His presence struck me, mainly because he wasn't trying to strike anyone with his presence. He had this gentle way about him—soft-spoken, just there to help us as much as we were there to help him.

Jeff was a master of reciprocity. He let no kindness go without being repaid, and gave so much more in return.

Our paths would end up crossing multiple times, not only as fellow volunteers supporting the same causes, but as radio cohorts on Local Live Houston. A couple of years ago, we were "lineup buddies" on the station, with his popular Rock Revel Radio scheduled just before The After Nine News: the show that my fellow comics and I would perform each week. I used to joke with him that since Rock Revel Radio was a star of Local Live, we were the show that gained listeners from his coattails—that he was "Seinfeld" and we were "Friends." Our crew would arrive early just to hear the local bands and to enjoy Jeff's impeccable interviewing skills.

Eventually, he organized a series of live stage shows—the Montrose Rock Revel—and made us open the very first one doing our schtick onstage. He was a big fan. No matter who you were, Jeff was always your biggest fan, and genuinely so. We were terrified and honored, and made sure we pulled it off...after all, it was for Jeff.

Jeff was the kind of guy who'd turned his own birthday bowling celebration into a memorial for a friend we'd lost last year, the "frontman" of The After Nine News. He'd also devoted two hours of air time to a tribute to that show last year. He'd present plans to city government for keeping Houston cyclists safe as fatal accidents were increasing. He'd get involved with any cause he could, create brilliant art, be there to lift up his friends, and somehow do all of this with a day job. He was a true Renaissance Man.

It seems appropriate that he was a huge fan of The Big Lebowski, and he'd finally had the chance to meet Jeff Bridges at Lebowski Fest last year. (This was one of the great thrills of his life.) He often dressed as The Stranger, which seemed an appropriate choice of costume—sitting back, observing, and trying to be of assistance, full of encouragement and wisdom.

Like a quiet comet, he flew through so much of Houston, burning brightly and quickly, leaving bits of light in our hearts that will last forever. When he walked into a room, it was like he had a golden glow about him, as if the whole cosmos had just quietly managed to sneak into the room, making everything around him beautiful and right and better.



Jeff was a gentle and unassuming soul who hopefully knew what an enormous presence and impact he had within our community. It's going to take many, many Houstonians to fill the void this one man has left with his passing. If you knew him and loved him, or even if you didn't, I'd like to call you to action. Get involved with his causes. Help out a dog rescue, fight for the rights of cyclists, promote and support your local musicians, even just visit a local art gallery or reach out to a lonely friend.

Whenever you make someone's day just a little better, you're carrying on Jeff Hunter's legacy. Houston has lost a treasure. Be a part of that treasure in any way you can. **FPH**

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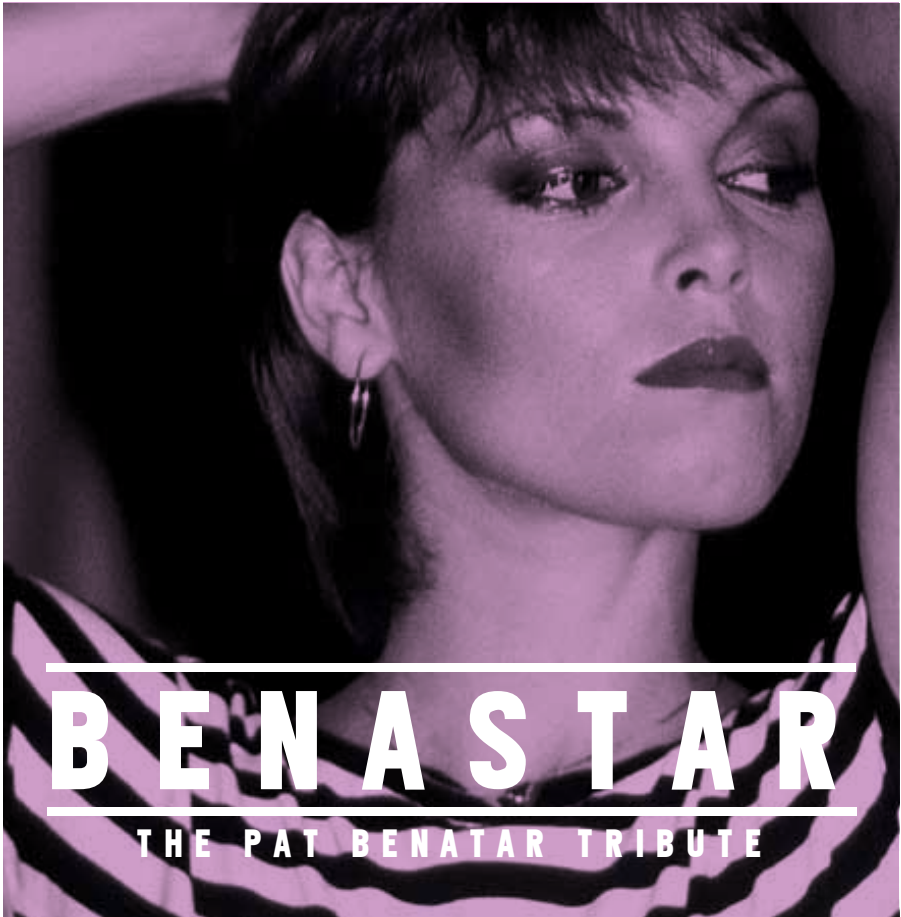


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