# FPH 134

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**Fear My Roar / Interview: David Yow, Vivian Pikkles & The Sweethearts Über Alles, Cley Miller / Slinging Ink / Joining the One Percent**

**December 2011** • *I'm not drunk!*

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# DECEMBER 10TH

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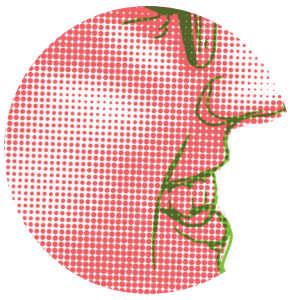

The most splendid time of the year has come again boys and girls! Christmas you ask? NO! I mean the Annual Worst of Houston issue due to be on streets early January. So this is your chance to call out our city's worst perpetrators from all aspects of our lives: politicians, musicians, businesses, local trends, friends, enemies, enemas, and anything else that may tickle thine sphincter. We ask that submissions be no longer than 400 words and that you use the word " fuck" at least once. Typos and poor grammar are encouraged.

Send your choice for Worst of Houston no later than December 18th to **editors@freepresshouston.com**

# December

THIS ISH
















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**Cover Art by Shelby Hohl**

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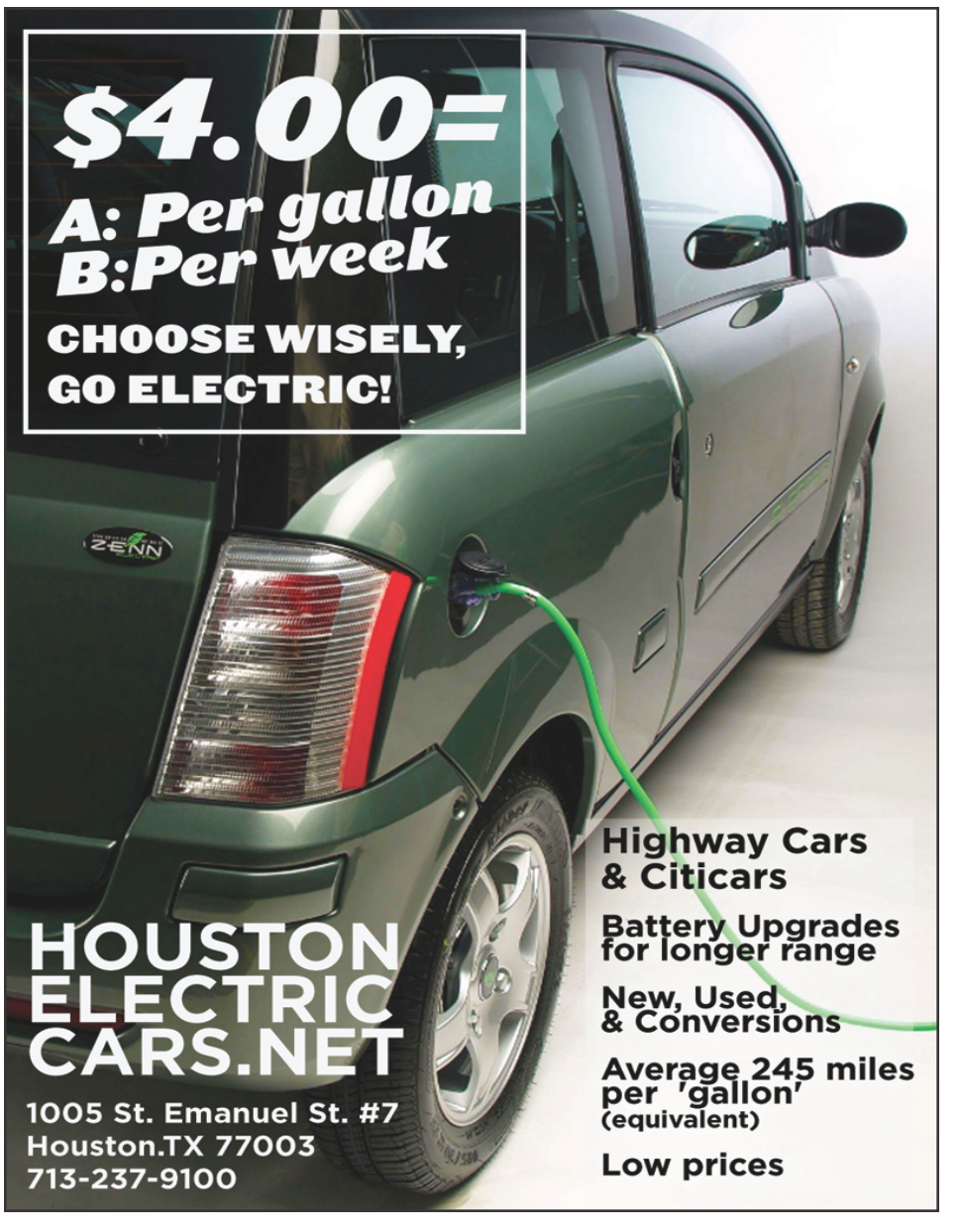
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**FRI. 2ND**
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**SAT. 3RD**
Defending The Kingdom, Linus Pauling Quartet, Dead Mineral

**THUR. 8TH**
Rogue Improv, Vertigo Blue, Morgue City, Hounds of Jezebel

**FRI. 9TH**
Mr. Gnome, The Baker Family

**SAT. 10TH**
Black Tusk, Kyng, Monstro, Burn The Boats

**MON. 12TH**
Remembrance Cabaret

**THURS. 15TH**
Rogue Improv

**FRI. 16TH**
Black Queen Speaks

**SAT. 17TH**
Project Armageddon, Venomous Maximus, Warbeast, Sactus Bellum, Las Cruces, Mr. Plow, Serpent Sun

**TUES. 20TH**
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**THURS. 22ND**
Rogue Improv, Devil Killing Moth, Smile For Diamonds, Poetic Mental Aggression

**FRI. 23RD**
Yip Deceiver, Wild Moccasins, The Tontons

**THUR. 29TH**
**Project Grimm, Clouded**

**SAT. 31ST**
Joint Chiefs, Cheek, Bowel

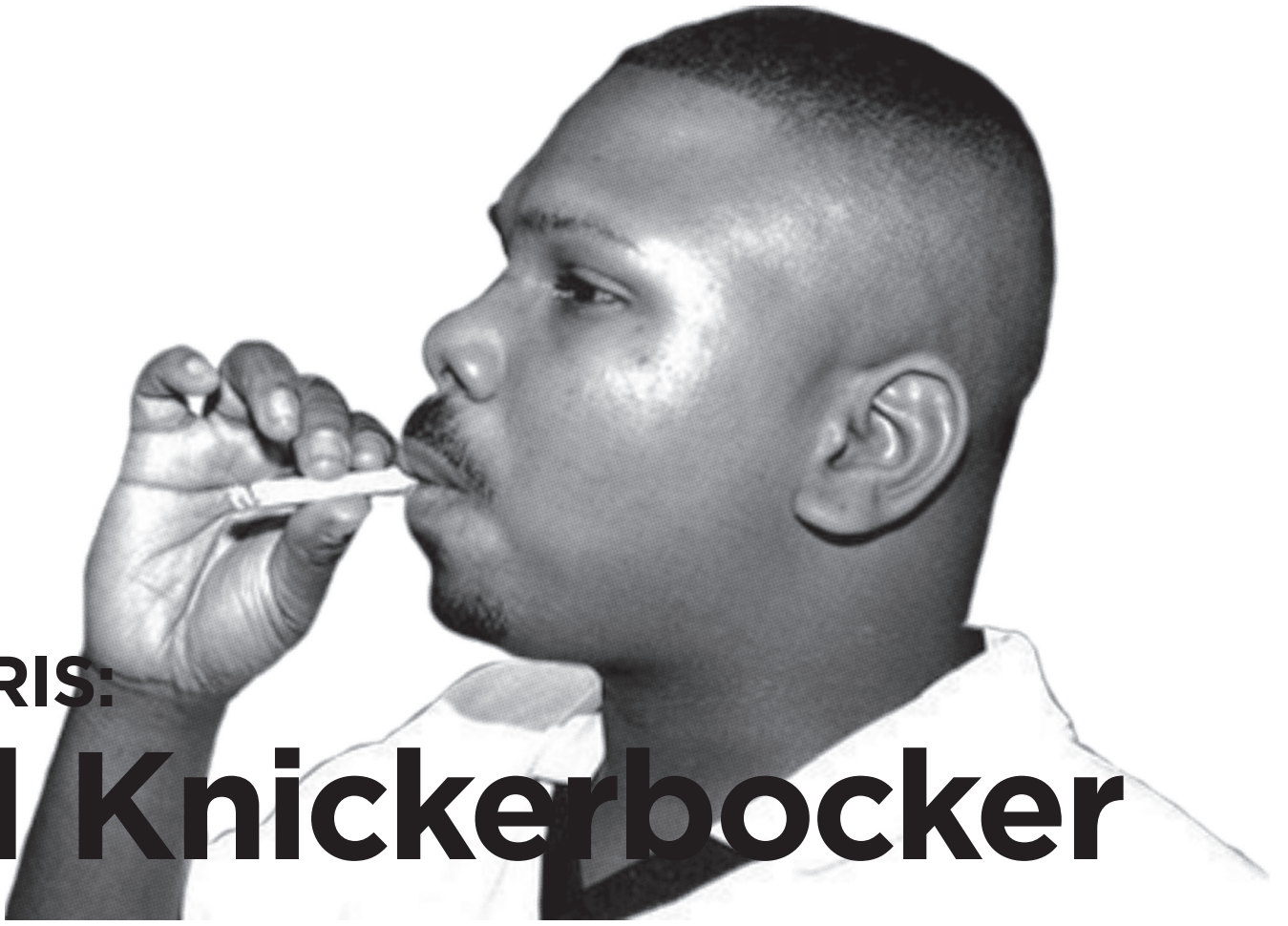
**ALL SHOWS 21 AND UP / MUSIC STARTS AT 10PM!**




**It is a sure sign** of increased political and social turmoil when conversations about these topics become unavoidable. Often times, we change our positions based upon our audience and take the devils advocate. More often, we claim certitude and purport to know shit from shinola. But less often, we listen to other people and revise our opinions. I have the most clarity when I argue with myself and can try to find truth without the hindrance of loud voices, ego, and hubris. But let's get this straight: it is all the white man's fault everything is so fucked up. Right?



BY BUFFALO SEAN



# DEBRIS:
# Needed Knickerbocker

**HOUSTON, SO LONG ASHAMED AND SLIGHTED,** had better brush that chip off its shoulder. Discounted by the rest of the country as a steaming pile and relished by its residents for being so bad that it's good, this town is on the precipice of a sea change in self-confidence. Have you noticed the exploding amount of festivals in Houston? Did you know that the city added 79,500 jobs in the last year? Urban density and transportation is coming to the inner loop through private and public initiatives. The medical center is expanding facilities and jobs exponentially. New restaurants, food trucks, local retail, entrepreneurships, urban farming and arts facilities open every week. There is buoyancy in the collective mood that is new and distinctively unique. We were worried about the city becoming really bad- like Dallas- but it is turning out good despite our whining. I'm used to making inflammatory statements and I consider this one to be as inflammatory as the rest; "Houston is actually cool."

Now all Houston needs is a Knickerbocker; a character to emote the distinctive ethos of the city. Diedrich Knickerbocker was invented by writer Washington Irving in 1809 to illuminate the "History of New York". With typical wit and long-winded whimsy Irving explains away all the mishaps and blunders of young New York as indicative of a divine plan to gift the bounty of the Americas to the Dutch and thus to New Yorkers. Irving himself was a transplant, like so many residents of New York, and had to invent a native to satirize the political and social classes of his city. Bombastic and sarcastic, Knickerbocker captured the can-do attitude of self-important New Yorkers that still permeates the city today. Irving found he had "opened a vein of pleasant associations and quaint characteristics peculiar to my native place" that took hold in the popular consciousness.

The heroes of Houston, real and imagined, are travelers. John Travolta in "Urban Cowboy" comes to the Big City from East Texas, wide-eyed and emotional. The deMenils, who created the Menil Collection, emigrated from France after World War II and adopted Houston as a blank canvas to fill with the ideas of the modern world. Kareem Olajuwon sprang from Lagos, Nigeria and electrified Houston with the Cougars and Rockets. Even when Houstonians are inspired by their environment they stare out from the bayou's banks to the great beyond. Space City is a spaced out city, from the geometric-psychedelic paintings of John Biggers to the fractured world of Donald Barthelme. Whether it is DJ Screw's eponymous musical invention or Tom Kennedy's outlandish art cars, Houston has looked to visionaries who search for purpose in escapism. Even Max from "Rushmore" is an outsider, a stranger in his own world.

Houston needs to feel comfortable in its own skin. There's nothing wrong with that. This town needs an insiders' guide as much as Istanbul or Prague. As different neighborhoods exude such diverse personalities, it is difficult to get a grip on an encompassing identity for the city. But until someone can point a finger at what makes this town unique we must be resigned to grasp at the hardened, weird stereotypes of the past century- a jumbled mix of cultures, influences and raw capitalism that rewards risk and adventurism with shortsighted fame. Only a fictional character can survive the perils of celebrity without being corrupted and exposed by it, and I do believe that we are now ready to embrace an icon of civic pride as emblematic of Houston's ethos. We may come to find that there is no one to rally around as we search for such a distillation of Houston's future in its past, but maybe we're ready to grab history by the horns. **FPH**

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**StrawberryJAM**

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**Omar & the Howlers, Cowjazz**

November 18th
**Silent Disco**

November 19th
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See site for more shows

# Merry Sketchy

## Christunnakahwanzaanewyear

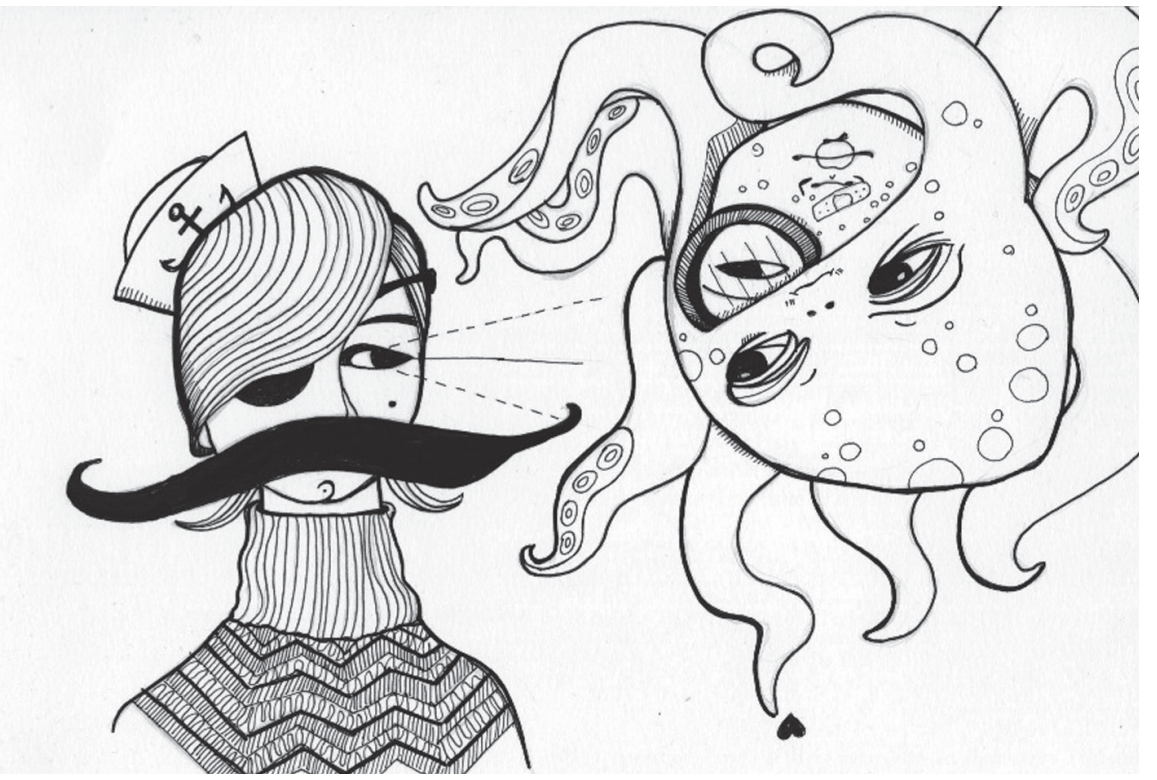
BY MICHAEL PENNYWARK

**THANKSGIVING IS OVER,** December is here, and that can mean only one thing. Time to get drunk. Yep, you've made it through another year and now the month-long drinking binge known as Christunnakahwanzaanewyear is upon us. It is a time for holiday office parties, holiday drinks with your friends, and holiday-themed movie marathons that leave you wanting to get drunk as you scream at Jimmy Stewart to just jump. Anyway, the point is, there is a lot of drinking to be done and only four weeks to do it. Now the other thing about Christunnakahwanzaanewyear is that everyone is expected to be selfless and giving and all that crap. That's all well and good but that selfish side of yours can't be bottled up forever. It has to get out; it's a part of the holidays. I mean let's face it; we like to get gifts just as much as we give them. So if you're going to be a part of the holiday spirit, or at least drinking your part, you might as well be doing something you like.

In that selfish holiday spirit, I bring you a couple of events that combine a few of my favorite things- writing, art, sketchy things, and booze. First stop is Big Star Bar where DiverseWorks is presenting the first night of their new writing series Slinging Ink on Tuesday, December 6. Writers were asked to submit a short-form work (1300-1500 words) with the theme of "I was looking for a job, and then I found a job, and Heaven knows I'm miserable now." The writers were encouraged to explore different forms including, though likely not limited to, memories, reports, notes, letters, lesson plans, proposals, complaints, and confessions. A "blind" panel of judges selected the four best submissions of this round to read their work, and the winner will be decided by audience response (yes, you get to decide the winner). The four readers will be: John Wayne Comunale, Wanda Harding, Dean Liscum, and John Pleuker. DiverseWorks will also release the three runners-up stories, plus two more, at DiverseWorks' blog, "The Real Dirt," where people can vote for another winner.

Now if you're like me and by the second week of December you have already drank away most of your paycheck waiting for the next holiday party, you might want to look for the nearest art opening to keep those spirits flowing. Which is why next on my list is the opening of Sketchy Neighbors' The Saddest Love Story Almost Never Told: Based on a True Idea at Spacetaker's ARC Gallery on Saturday, December 10. The Saddest Love Story Almost Never Told: Based on a True Idea, is an exhibition of new work based on public submissions and features drawings, paintings and sculptures via a multitude of media including black velvet, found objects, custom snow globes, and much more. I mean SNOW GLOBES! What more do you need? Well, in addition to that, the group will collaborate for the first time on a mixed-media site-specific installation entitled "Garden of Uncomfortable Truths."

The Sketchy Neighbors (aka Marisa Avelar, Anthony Butkovich, Brenda Cruz, Jordan Johnson, Katsola, Devon Moore, Melissa Perez, Chris Thompson, and Jeff Whiteley) are a sketch art group who meet every month to create art from suggestions drawn from a hat. As if this wasn't enough sketchiness, on Wednesday, December 21, local writers from flash fiction publisher NANO Fiction join in for Inky Improv, a creative slugfest, between scribes and sketchers who'll draw inspiration from audience suggestions as they match wits with their opponents in a race against the clock. **FPH**



**Slinging Ink**
*December 6, at 7:30 pm*
*Big Star Bar*
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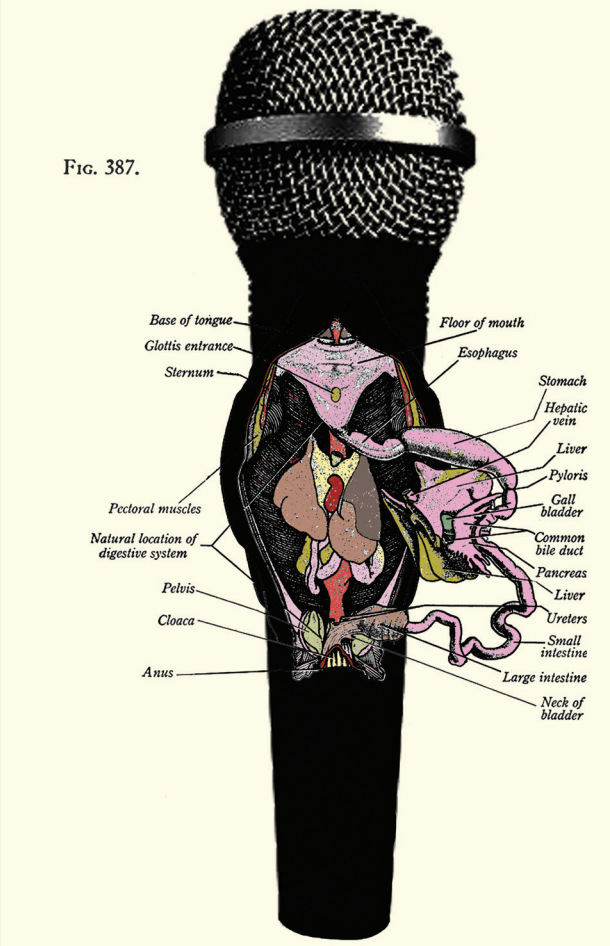
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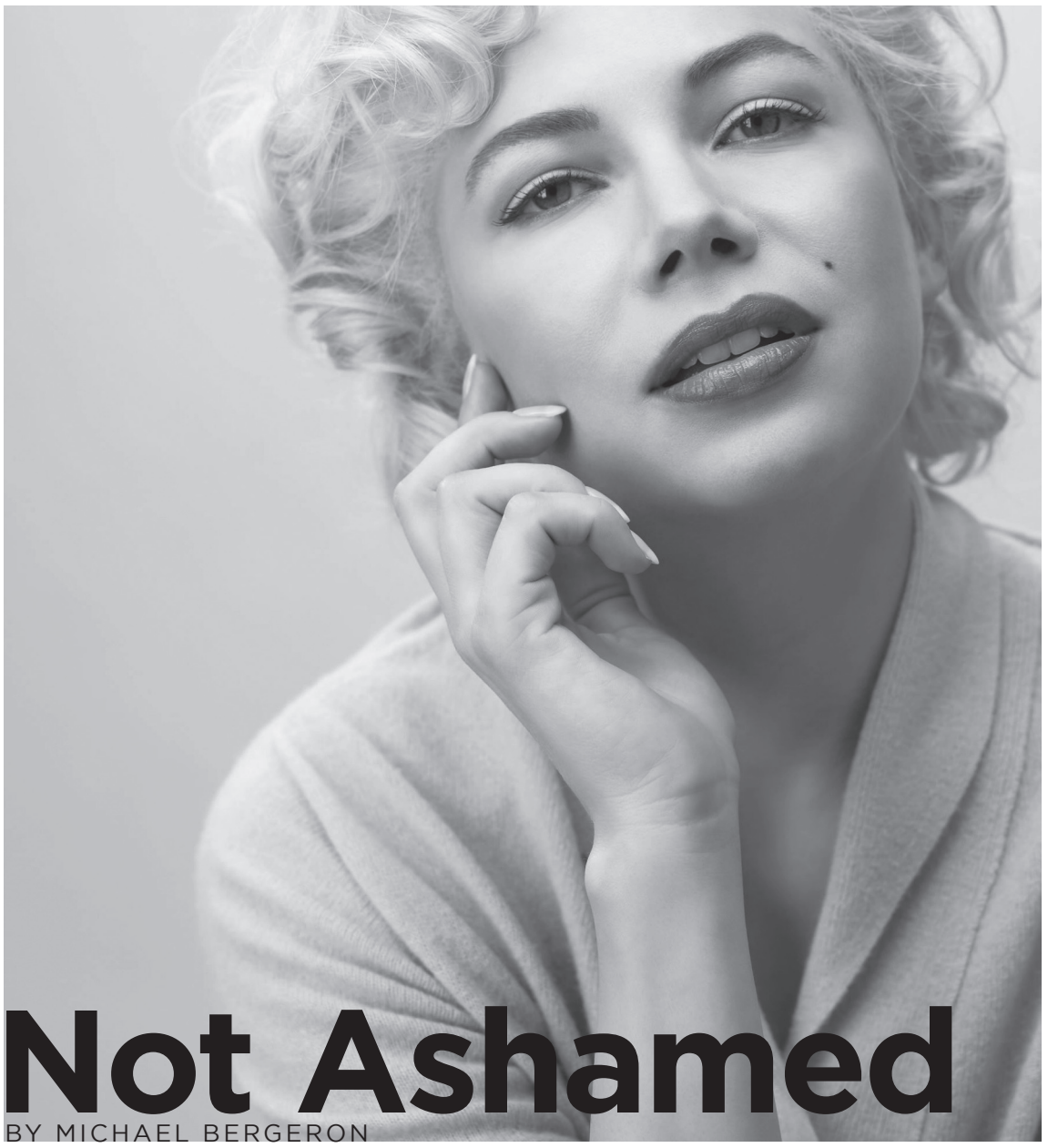
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# Not Ashamed

BY MICHAEL BERGERON

**OF THE MANY OFFERINGS ROLLING OUT THIS MONTH** the movie Shame tops the list of must see movies. From British artist turned writer/director Steve McQueen, Shame starring Michael Fassbender and Carey Mulligan charts the relationship of a brother and sister, both living in Manhattan. What makes Shame so compelling is McQueen's minimalist style and the film's adult content. Fassbender works at a high dollar ad agency, enjoys a fairly luxurious lifestyle while outside of work he's compulsively addicted to sex. Whether its internet porn or prostitutes or one night stands his life consists of meaningless gestures compounded by a stand-offish relationship with his sister (Mulligan). Fassbender's life is as empty as the nighttime streets through which he jogs. Mulligan matches him for highs and lows, herself a chanteuse with no social skills. Moody and evocative Shame will be the opposite cinematic ticket to December blockbusters like Sherlock Holmes 2 and M:I 4.

## Sundance

Sundance Cinemas Houston opened in grand style Monday, November 21, 2011. The libations, munchies and movies flowed like a perfect sine wave. No Label brewery out of Katy was serving pints of their pale ale and dark wheat brews. An open bar was serving spirits including many theme drinks taking their inspiration from current films. You can just imagine how the Breaking Dawn is concocted. Monday night's festivities raised awareness for the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston film program and the Cinema Arts Houston Film Festival. Robert Redford wasn't there in person but his video prerecorded speech (made from a movie set in Vancouver) prepared the crowd (on a big screen in the Sundance's lobby) for what's to come. The main foyer, divided by wooden beams, allows the audience to mingle and gnosh at wooden tables. In fact there's a heavy accent on wood throughout the theater's design. Spaces with comfortable sofas and chair abound. The theater's themselves are brand spanking new, the smell of paint but a faint odor of the work that's been put into the renovation on the space that was formerly occupied by another cinematic tenant. Chair space is wide with upholstered armrests, plus there are wide wooden extensions to every other seat to put a sandwich or a plate of something from the lobby restaurant. As with any new theater the projection equipment astounds with its crystal clear imagery. In more sense than one, the Sundance Cinemas Houston is providing what the Angelika chain had before: art films, foreign films, and documentaries wedged in with the current blockbuster du jour. It's up to Houstonians to step up to bat and support this theater whether it's running the latest Michael Bay film or the recent indie fave.

## My Week With Marilyn

My Week With Marilyn recounts the memoirs of a guy who worked as a gopher on one of Marilyn Monroe's movies, The Princess and The Showgirl. Actually in the film he's depicted as the third assistant director, which I guess in the States would be the 2nd second AD. Although in MWWM he seems more like a kind of producer's assistant what with procuring houses for the stars of the film and accompanying Monroe on shopping trips.

Michelle Williams captures the charms and idiosyncrasies of Monroe, just as Kenneth Branagh plays Sir Laurence Olivier to the hilt, ditto Judi Dench playing Dame Sybil Thorndike, Julia Ormond as Vivian Leigh, and Dougray Scott as Arthur Miller. There are others; in fact if you were into 50s British cinema you'd revel in depictions of cinematographer Jack Cardiff or producer Milton Greene. Trouble is there's too much syrup on display. The story is sweet but the performances are all saccharin.

Production values are solid and the film has a pleasant cloudy sky look, and that's the thing that elevates the film into more than a cable level movie biopic.

Williams has shown solid acting chops in movies like Meek's Cutoff, Wendy and Lucy, Blue Valentine, all movies where she created a credible character from scratch. We all know what Marilyn Monroe looks like, it's not like Williams is playing someone that I don't know what they look like, like Victoria Woodhull. My Week With Marilyn wants us to believe Marilyn was full-blown neurotic, talking in a Shirley Temple babyvoice, moving like a prima donna force of nature. Maybe Monroe was all that and more but here it seems plastered on for the effect of a tour de force performance rather than an interesting story.

## Melancholia

Movies by Lars von Trier always wash over me like a wave. I feel cleansed afterwards albeit with a layer of philosophical dread. Like any name director – Tarantino, Kubrick, et al. – von Trier films are instantly recognizable, only in the case of the notoriously brash Danish director that's because of their "cinema of cruelty" overtones.

I like Melancholia a lot, even though I don't think it's as good as von Trier's previous mind warping genre bender Antichrist. von Trier tells us everything we need to know in the first few minutes of Melancholia; a rogue planet previously hidden behind the Sun heads towards a collision course with Earth. These opening minutes are presented by von Trier in the manner of the tableau scenes from Breaking the Waves combined with the extreme slo-motion photography that opens Antichrist. The shots are saturated with color and depict ectoplasm, Kirsten Dunst in a wedding dress, horses and finally Melancholia destroying Earth like a big car running over a small animal.

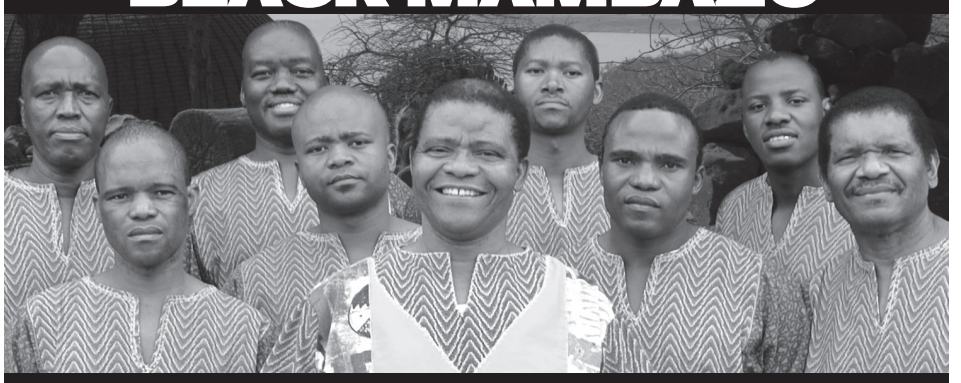
Then the film proper begins and it seems that von Trier mines areas already explored in some of his previous films, and in particular the dysfunctional family at a wedding drama of his fellow Danish filmmaker Thomas Vinterberg (The Celebration).

Throughout the course of the wedding party Dunst, getting married to Alexander Skarsgard, breaks all the rules and bonds that tie her to Skarsgard's family, including telling his father (aptly played by Stellan Skarsgard) how much she hates him. The party, set on an extravagant estate owned by Kiefer Sutherland (married to Dunst's sister Charlotte Gainsbourg) moves inside and outside, both the house's doors and metaphorically the bounds of human civility. John Hurt, Udo Kier (the wedding planner), and Charlotte Rampling also co-star.

Melancholia is cerebral sci-fi (mixed with family drama). But this thinking person's apocalypse movie has a different agenda from other types of world destruction films. And there's been plenty in the last year ranging in scope and budget including 2012, Another Earth, and Take Shelter. Melancholia indulges in clever ways to introduce the space theme, like having a telescope-viewing event scheduled during the party, or Gainsbourg's young son coming up with an ad hoc device constructed on wood and wire that can be used to gauge the size in the sky of the ever increasing oncoming planet.

What von Trier most wants to explore is the relation between the sisters, one who's exhausted her rage and calmly awaits the end of the world while the other has offered nothing but love to all around her yet sits huddling with her child and crying as the worlds collide. All who come under Melancholia's spell will hotly contest underlying themes of religion and existential musings. **FPH**

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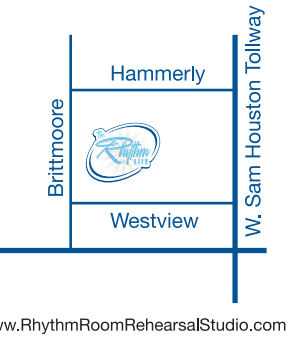
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## THEY JUST SOME CLONES
# TOSSIN THEIR OWN CONFETTI





BY KWAME M. ANDERSON

**IF I MAY IMPART SOME FINAL WORDS** in this end of the 2011th year of our world's existence, it will be to enjoy the days and nights, slow the fuck down, stop rushing in the traffic, look around, breathe the air, turn that shit off, look at people when you talk, and everything will eventually kill you so fuck it. The point is to be proven wrong, everyday! You hope that the bullshit you believe reveals itself to be just that. Optimism is sort of the hidden desire, I would paint this world as one thing, maybe it is something else, and that thing on the wall is fiction. In the uncut version, love wins, but nobody wants to see that shit, so let's keep this gloom thing going. Election season is coming, next year is all propaganda and pageantry, let's ride this one out. Wherever you're going is not going anywhere, take the long way, pick up some trash along the way, have a conversation with the last one whose spirit was broken. The point is to be proven wrong, by my children, by the world, by the future. So fuck it, but not really. RIP ANDY ROONEY. **FPH**

## 10 ALBUMS FOR 11

WATCH THE THRONE / Kanye West/Jay Z / *Black excellence decadence, opulence*
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BLACK UP / Shabazz Palaces / *The cops killed Radio Raheem*
NAPA ASYLUM / Sic Alps / *Light refracted through a prism*
WILD FLAG / Wild Flag / *Swinging guitar around the neck, jump and kick.*
CARRION CRAWLER/THE DREAM / The Oh Sees /*They're dancing and sweating, wait he's bleeding!*
GOODBYE BREAD / Ty Segall / *The repeated best 40 minutes of my life. Bliss recorded.*
SECTION 8.0 / Kendrick Lamar / *It's dark and hell is hot.*
BIOPHILIA / Bjork / *Love is majestic feeling; life is a marvelous thing, the world.*
THE WHOLE LOVE / Wilco / *More beautiful every time.*

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THE MAGIC PLACE /Julianna Barwick
CHARITY STARTS AT HOME /Phonte
BOSSYPANTS / Tina Fey
EVERYTHING IS GONNA KILL EVERYBODY / Robert Brockway
MORE BEAUTIFUL, MORE TERRIBLE / Imani Perry
THE NEW JIM CROW / Michelle Alexander
THE DEATH AND LIFE of the GREAT AMERICAN SCHOOL SYSTEM / Diane Ravitch
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# Interview: David Yow

BY RAMON MEDINA
PHOTO BY
MATTHEW GILSON

**THE 1980'S** was a time of pure unrivaled insanity in Texas. Beasts like the Butthole Surfers, Really Red, The Dicks, Culturecide, and others would roam the land with abandon. One such creature was Austin's Scratch Acid. With the primal drumming of ReyWasham, the unmistakable bass of David Wm. Sims, Brett Bradford's buzz-saw guitar, and the indomitable painful screams of frontman David Yow, their live shows resembled less a concert than a rugby match. Go back to their decades old recordings and you will find an aggression and madness that teeters on the edge of collapse, yet manages to hold together through some unexplained dark matter. If you missed them in their heyday, you are in luck because they've reunited for a tour that will take them here to Houston. We spoke with David Yow at his home in Los Angeles while he was on a short break from the tour to discuss the reunion, his art, and how an old cat like him can still pull it off.

**How did the Reunion tour come about?**
Jeff Mangum of Neutral Milk Hotel was curating All Tomorrow's Parties in England. I guess he dug Scratch Acid and asked us to play. We said sure and decided if we're going to go through the trouble of practicing and getting together to do those shows in England, we may as well do some shows in the US.

**How was it going back to that old material?**
It's been fun – much more fun than I expected. Some of the shows are paying pretty well, particularly the ATP thing, and that's relatively important because we have to leave whatever means of income we're accustomed to while we do this. The biggest factor, the biggest reason to do this is that it's gotta be fun. I figured it would be but it's just really great hanging out with those guys again. We were pretty much married to each other for a few years.

**Some people's reaction to reunion tours is that if you are looking back you aren't looking forward. How would you respond to those people?**
*Yow* - I dunno about looking back, it's not like a regression. It's not like fucking an old girlfriend or anything like that. But speaking of girlfriends, I was talking to somebody and I was saying "This is old guys doing young guys stuff" because I kind of figure that music this aggressive is intended for the young. My girlfriend jumped in and said, "Bullshit, this is old guys teaching the young guys how to do it!" I don't really pat myself on the back or anything like that but I do think that to a degree she's right because, even though I don't really keep up much with the aggressive music that goes on these days, I think we're better than the kids that do that shit these days.

**I've saw Scratch Acid when you guys played Cardi's with the Dead Kennedys and I've seen you with Jesus Lizard quite a few times. Your performance has always been very physical and aggressive. How does that play with you now that you are older.**
*Yow* - It's funny, the Jesus Lizard did a tour a couple years ago and it was pretty rough, pretty tiring and my role in the Jesus Lizard was a little bit more taxing than what I generally do with Scratch Acid. That was just two years ago but I noticed on the shows we did on the East Coast that it's really exhausting. So I've found a way - instead of just going 110% the moment we start - to kind of oscillate and try and reserve energy (laughing) so I can make it through the whole set. It's pretty hard but, for months, I've been trying to get ready for it. I've been going to the gym, doing the elliptical, working on my endurance, stamina, and reducing my fat old belly.

**You've been doing a lot of art and other pursuits other than music over the last few years. Can you elaborate a bit about that?**
*Yow* - Yeah, after the Jesus Lizard broke up in '99 or whenever that was, I got pretty good at Photoshop and I started doing freelance photo retouching. I did that for several years. I got pretty good at it, was raking in the cash, and enjoying it then, 5 or 6 years ago, it just kind of stopped. In the meantime, I've been working with fine art and my blossoming acting career.

**Acting?**
*Yow* - It's mainly film. I've done a bunch of little itty-bitty tiny movies. Like 20 or more super duper less than low-budget things. Right now, I'm supposed to be finding out about an actual major motion picture that I hope to have a role in but I can't say a whole lot more about that.

**So what about your artwork? How does that tie into your music? Is there a common thread?**
*Yow* - If you go to davidyow.net there's paintings – largely paint and collage on wood and there's also a bunch of digital pieces. Common thread? There's some kind of creative bullshit I guess.

I went to college as a fine art major for two and a half yeas and then Punk Rock kind of took over so the drawing and painting came before the music. But I've really enjoyed doing this art. I've had a show here in LA, Berlin, Bucharest, and New York and that's cool. It's a lot of fun but it doesn't pay the bills – doesn't even come close. Even if I sell pieces, I'm thinking I'm making 50 cents and hour but it's fun.

**How do you see those old recordings now?**
In order to do these shows, I had to re-familiarize myself with that stuff and the songs on Just Keep Eating aren't bad but it sounds like shit. The first EP and Berserker I think sound really good. Honest to God, I think that every song on Berserker is really good. Years ago I don't think I would have said that because what kind of asshole says his stuff is really good but I was listening to it again as objectively as possible - trying to remove myself from it as if I didn't know the people who created it - and I was pretty impressed. It's some really good stuff.

**What's the best compliment you've ever gotten and the WORST?**
The best compliment was just a couple days ago. Someone was telling me how this five or six year old kid heard some Scratch Acid and said it was better than anything he'd heard. I thought, wowie, that's really something. The worst? Well, we're friends now, but the worst was the first time Scratch Acid Played CBGB's. Jim Thirlwell of Wiseblood and Steroid Maximus, after the show said, "I like what you are trying to do." And I said thanks and he walked away. (laughs) Then I thought, wait a minute...what the fuck does that mean?!!!

**How has the reality of the tour been compared to your expectations?**
The reality is better than the expectation. I thought the practices weren't going to feel very well. Like Brett, the guitar player, who I love...I absolutely love his guts, he's one of the greatest guys in the world, he's got a heart the size of Australia... but has some memory issues so I was afraid he wasn't going to be able to hold up his end but he's been doing an amazing job. And I thought it was going to be fun but I couldn't imagine just how fun as it's been so far and we're only halfway through. **FPH**



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# Vivian Pikkles & The Sweethearts Über Alles

INTERVIEW & PHOTOS BY RAMONLP4

**PUNK ROCK WAS NEVER ABOUT INTRICATE ARPEGGIOS,** complicated chords, or symphonic length albums based on the Shastric scriptures. No, bands like the Ramones played chimpy riffs and sang about beating people with bats and sniffing glue. Punk turned a middle finger to pretense and was about being loud, obnoxious, and fun. If there is one band in Houston who understands this, it's Vivian Pikkles and The Sweethearts Über Alles. You say you are looking for a band that "that rips you out of your confusion and makes you feel like things matter, like you matter?" Fuck that! No, this band is about Booze, Burgers, and Boys! If you've ever wondered how many songs about food one band play at inhumanely loud levels while being so wasted that it's a wonder they can keep it together, you are in luck because April Brem Patrick (vocals), Matt Hall (guitar), Niki Seven (drums), and Anna Garza (bass) are four people who have made it their goal to find out.

**HOW'D PIKKLES START?**
After Guitars ended, I came back to Houston and holed up at my mom's garage apartment and started writing songs. The first year we did Girls Rock Camp, I talked to Anna, Niki, and a couple of other girls about doing a Breeders cover band. We did and it was a lot of fun but we were talking about keeping it going and I said, "Well, I've got these songs if you want to play 'em?" So, Niki moved over to drums, then Matt Hall came a long, and here we are."

**WHY VIVIAN PIKKLES?**
*April* - Vivian Pikkles was a British actress - she was the mother in Harold and Maude – and I always loved the name. It was going to be my solo project where my friends would come in and help me record songs but it's grown. Usually it's me coming up with the riffs but Matt came up with "We Never See What's Up." We just recorded a tape for Bummer Tapes. It's gonna be called Burger She Wrote and after that I'd like to see December be all new songs 'cause I'm kind of tired of playing these songs. It's time to grow up and stop writing so much about food.

**SO THE HOUSTON PRESS MUSIC AWARDS…**
*April* - We have NO idea how that happened. I mean you've got Secret Prostitutes, The Energy, The Majas, Wiggins, Something Fierce…
*Anna* – It was a surprise. We never followed the nominations. We all found out when April called us.
*April* – Niki thought I was crying.
*Niki* – I thought someone died when April called. Why would she call me at 3'o clock at work? She knows those are off limits.
*Matt* – Everyone got a scary hysterical voice mail.

**WHY WERE YOU HYSTERICAL?**
*April* – Because the day before we have a brunch club…
*Anna* – We're punks who brunch
*April* – …and we were at Ninfas passing around the phones laughing hysterically at New York City Queens' promotional video that said "Vote for us!" Really? You're gonna make a video to promote nominating you? Why do you care that much? But the next day I got an e-mail saying we'd gotten enough nominations to play the showcase.
*Anna* – A band that's never had a proper recording, never toured, and only played locally – it was kind of a shock that people would even consider us.

**WHAT MAKES FOR A GOOD BAND?**
*April* - If you are entertained by what you do that's what makes a good band.
*Anna* – Kim Gordon had a great quote saying that "people pay to see other people believe in themselves."
*April*– These are three of my best friends in the entire world and THAT is what I care about. I don't care about being the best band in town and I don't care about anybody else liking us. I care about playing music with these three awesome people.

**NIKI YOU PLAY IN SOMETHING FIERCE. WHAT DOES THIS FILL?**
*Niki* – I learned how to play drums to join this band. It was something I always wanted to do and I love playing drums. Once, we got to play with an Iron Maiden cover band. So I got to play on their drum set.

**DID YOU HAVE A GONG?**
*Niki* – I HAD A GONG!! I got to use it at the end of the show!
*Anna* – The pictures were of her and her head peeking out over this massive kit.
*Matt* – She had to reach to the end of her arms to reach the cymbals.
*April* – We thought playing with an Iron Maiden cover band would be funny. They were called Metal Maiden.

**WERE THEY AWESOME?**
*Matt* – They were good – REALLY good!
*Anna* – They were great and the guitar player was actually a huge supporter of Girls Rock Camp and gave a really huge donation.
*Matt* – I have to say they are the best Iron Maiden cover band I've seen!

**YOU GUYS AREN'T WHAT I'D CONSIDER TECHNICAL.**
*Matt* – I don't care about technique. I don't want to be a fast player, I just want to play what sound good.
*Anna* - We're all misfits and fuck-ups but we make it work – we make it happen. We drink at every frikkin show, we're sloppy-ass drunk when we play, we'll miss a note, and we'll end a song before it's supposed to end but it doesn't matter 'cause we're having fun and people see that energy.
*Niki* –That's not to say we don't give a shit how we sound. We definitely do. We work hard at what we do and we practice a lot but we're just not so wrapped up in it that if we mess up, it would ruin our entire life. As long as everyone is having fun, we're having fun.
*April* – …and if it starts falling apart we'll start taking our clothes off.

**THAT DOESN'T WORK FOR MY BAND.**
*Niki* – It helps if you have boobs.
*Matt* – We have six tits and one funny lookin' guy.
*April* – We don't have a label to impress. We have no one to impress. We're like the cool table.
*Niki* – YAY, I'm in the cool table! It took me 26 years but I'm IN!!
*April* – When we play a show, everyone is at the cool table! FPH





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**CLEY MILLER IS ONE OF THOSE** local musicians we have had the luxury of watching develop from a teenager into the far-reaching musical Renaissance man that he is. Playing in Young Mammals, Wicked Poseur, and dabbling in myriad other projects, Miller has been a ubiquitous presence it Houston's burgeoning music scene. Word on that street is that he manages the planet's largest mp3 collection and also suffered hearing loss as a child, which may explain his musical tastes at age 11. Either way, anyone who knows Miller knows he is a kind-hearted guy with a genuine smile who takes his music seriously. Read on.

# Interview:

# Cley Miller
## I do it all for the Nook

BY OMAR AFRA
ILLUSTRATION BY SHELBY HOHL

**You are 11 years old. You have 3 albums. Truthfully, what are they?**
Korn Issues
Limp Bizkit Significant Other
Beastie Boys Hello Nasty

**Do any of these pre-adolescent musical tastes bleed into your music now?**
If it does, I am not consciously aware of the influence.

Hey, what the hell? Whatcha want me to say? I won't lie, that I can't deny... I do it all for the nook.

**How hard is it to switch gears between Young Mammals and Wicked Poseur?**
It's not too difficult, kinda like switching between boxers and briefs.

**How hard is it to be the only non-Latino in Young Mammals? Do you feel like the population of your band is a metaphor for the white man in Houston?**
Why do you think I joined Wicked Poseur?

**How hard is it? ( Insert penis joke)**
Harder than Chinese arithmetic.

**True or false:**
**Contemporary western music is in a state of stagnation.**
Contemporary popular music? Maybe, big labels aren't taking any chances these days because they can't afford them. So, they stick with what works, and that inevitably becomes stagnant.

Contemporary music in general? No way, there's plenty of standout/relevant contemporary music that comes from the west. You don't even have to look that far to find examples, our local scene has plenty: The Energy, Balaclavas, B L A C K I E , Indian Jewelry, and Robert Ellis.

Final answer: FALSE.

**What is the next frontier for Cley Miller's musical journey?**
On the Mammal front: Bombs by Mail will be releasing our new 7-inch this February. Aside from that, we plan to work on recording the next LP throughout winter/spring.

On the Poseur front: Arthur and I plan on continuing to teach the art of the shred. The next class will be held at Fitz on Wednesday, 12/7, with Cave and Weird Party. **FPH**



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# Once more, with Enthusiasm videogames

BY TYLER BARBER



**ONE STRONG CORRELATION** with this Fall's best videogames is the existence of a number in the title. Sequels, in Hollywood, often mean diminishing returns, whereas with videogames, the curve of technology allows for the opposite. If you feel a cynical spell of sequel-itus coming on, don't despair, here are some games that offer a leap of gameplay improvements from their predecessors.

## Saints Row the Third

Early this year I wrote a piece dedicated to THQ publishing and its developers, namely Volition. Their work on Saints Row the Third makes me happy that I showered them with praise months ago. Much like its forebears, this open-world sandbox game has what you'd expect, but where it sets itself apart is how it facilitates the players' need to create chaos. Recent Grand Theft Auto titles can feel punishing at times, as if the developers are trying to "ground" the experience. In Saints Row, the opposite is true. The vehicle controls, for example, are much easier to handle. In GTA IV, doing 60 miles per hour and needing to make a sudden 90 degree turn always means you'll end up in the ditch. In Saints Row, it's almost comical, but more action-hero the way the cars handle hairpin turns.

Another departure from other sandbox games is vast upgrade system that allows players to customize their skills, and can even buff fellow gang members. Customization is indeed at the heart of the Saints Row experience. It's as entertaining to evolve monstrosities in the games' character creation menu as it is to pile-drive unsuspecting pedestrians. Not content to let you go it alone, Saints Row the Third allows co-op play through the entire game. So if you're playing Saints co-op, take everything good I said about the game above, and double it.

## Battlefield 3

Some people love first-person-shooter campaigns. Those people will not love Battlefield 3. Who will? Multiplayer-shooter fans (of which I am very much a part). Modern Warfare is the "three" on the tips of most peoples' tongues these days, but discerning folks like myself are more keen on Battlefield's take on virtual combat. The biggest difference that Battlefield offers is vehicle combat and larger maps to host said vehicles. The vehicle roster in Battlefield reads like my G.I. Joe collection: tanks, jeeps, Humvees, helicopters, jets, stealth-boats, amphibious personnel-carriers, explosives ordinance disposal robot, UAVs, mobile anti-air tanks, parachutes... did I mention jets? Sounds great, right? That doesn't begin to touch on the equipment you can carry when you've got boots on the ground. Simply put, Battlefield 3 is the deepest multi-player shooter out there.

Aside from its arsenal, what draws me into Battlefield is its destructible environments. I was once a loyal Call of Duty online player. But what left me wanting was a need to feel like my weapons had impact and consequence on the landscape. With Battlefield, your rockets will punch holes through walls like you'd expect. Need to breach a pesky concrete wall? Bring up the C4, detonate, and possible kill a baddy on the other side. At the end of a match, the territory is as destroyed as you and your team made it.

What can't go unsaid about Battlefield 3 is its bar-raising audio. Here is another area where no other shooter on the market can touch Battlefield 3. The sound of the battlefield is piercing. Gun sounds hammer-out with the appropriate reverb, or not, depending if you're in a building, a wide field or a dense forest; it will sound like you're there.

## The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim

If there's one game I probably don't need to "sell" you on, it's Skyrim. Since its release on November 11th it's been the second most-played game on Xbox Live, and that doesn't even count PC and PS3. The notoriety of the series is well-earned. Its predecessors paved a road that few developers followed. Not because it wasn't what gamers wanted, but because developing an open-world roleplaying game with deep fantasy, large -- and I mean holy-shit-large -- landmasses, hundreds of NPCs, hundreds of side-quests... requires an immense amount of work and investment. Bethesda however, has grown their business on the back of such a game, and with each title over the decades, the games get better and better.

Queue Skyrim, the fifth in the series. Each Elder Scrolls title takes place in a distinct state within the greater land known as Cyrodil. Skyrim is the namesake of its region, which is painted with more Nordic mythology and culture than pure-LOTR-type fantasy. Expect lots of snow and gray hills. But beautiful gray hills, oh so beautiful hills. Somehow Bethesda makes the tundra a wonderful place to visit. The game is worth the price just for a foot tour of Skyrim. Once you plunge into the game's quests you may find you paid $60 just to have months of your life removed. And that's a good thing.

A huge hurdle that Skyrim faced, and easily leaped, was that the previous Elder Scrolls game this generation, Oblivion, was run over by the ugly-truck. The developers worked on Fallout 3 after making Oblivion, and with the lessons learned from both games, improved the visuals in Skyrim greatly. Gone are the days when I'd enter a tavern only to try and get quests from a bartender that's more mare than maid. Skyrim looks great, goddamn great. Run it on a high-end PC, with some graphics tweaks off the net, and it's easily one of the best looking games out.

If you've got the time to commit, Skyrim has an equal, if not black-hole-deep void to fill. **FPH**

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**DEC 11TH:**
Bike Smut Screening:
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**DEC 12TH:**
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**DEC 19TH:**
Aotearoa

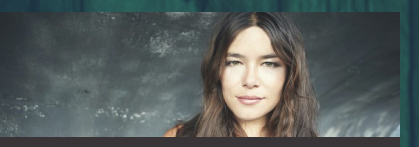
**DEC 31ST:**
NEW YEARS NOISE w/
NYN8
Bryce Eiman
The Annoysters
Gmilf Defibrillator
Illegal Wiretaps
ASCITES
THEWHITEHORSE
KNIFE OF ICE
RESPIRATOR
Muzak
Black Magic Marker
Voidstorm
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**DEC 15TH:**
Caches the Ghosts
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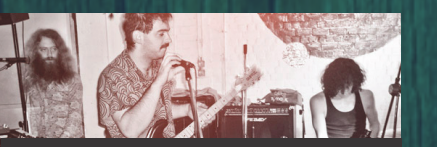

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DEC. 04 WITH CARSIE BLANTON

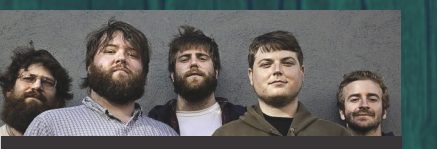

RED FANG
DEC. 04 WITH MALEVELLER

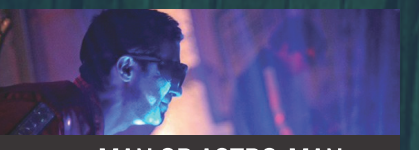

CAVE
DEC. 07 WITH BALACLAVAS • WEIRD PARTY

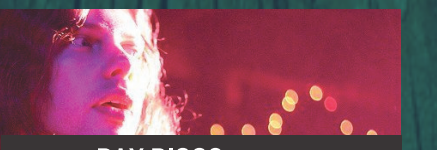

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DEC. 09 WITH BLACK CONGRESS


VERBAL ABUSE
DEC. 10 WITH SS KALIERT


THE MAINE
DEC. 11 PRESENTS THE NEW ALBUM "PIONEER"

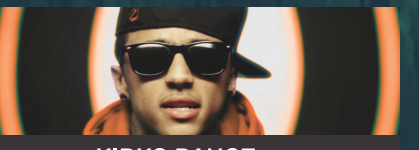

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BY ALEX WUKMAN
PHOTO BY
CHARLES COOK

# Remembering
# The Forgotten City

**AT AN INTERSECTION OF STREETS** named for saints, Energy City's fractured and fallen gather--beneath pillars rising like the arms of God, lifting the accomplishments of man to the heavens. They come in the heat and the cold; they come despite the sparks and smoke falling from the freeways. They come for food and blankets. The come to hear the Good News. They sit and stand, listening quietly--barely acknowledging stares from sedans idling nearby.

The hum of the generators and the thump-thump, thump-thump of traffic overhead compete with, and nearly drown out, the pretty young, reedy voiced, woman strumming a guitar and singing about the Holy Spirit. On an island, across the stream of traffic, a leather-faced man with too-old-eyes stands holding a hard-luck-story, pleading for sympathy. The light flips to green; engines purr as tinted windows and leather interiors pull off.

Even though the scene is repeated all across the city, from high-traffic highway-off-ramps to sketchy side streets, it's in the oft-overlooked areas and easy-to-conceal corners that the story is given flesh. In the outer ring, stuck between tony town homes of clear liquor drinking young professionals and the exurb middle class McMansions of their parents, lies the Ciudad Olvidada. The Forgotten City filled with the forgotten people. All it takes to get to the heart of the Ciudad is a quick trip on The City's southwestern artery.

It's easy to find, just head a few miles outside The Loop, The City's unintentional barricade between cultural/political elites and everyone else, and it's there. Squatting in the shadows of high tax values, good schools and private security like a mugger fondling a switchblade. Perhaps only Tolstoy would appreciate the irony that the largest neighborhood in the Ciudad--and one of the poorest in The City--Gulfton, takes it's name from a street named after a multi-million dollar oil company, Gulf Oil. And for a time the transliteration of the street's name, Gulf Town, was accurate.

Decades before the Ciudad came to be, back when Energy City was first becoming Energy City, Gulfton was home to thousands chasing a boom. Fresh-faced college kids riding high on a wave of rising oil prices. Everyone was young and beautiful, there was plenty of money to go around and the only things that came easier than credit were drugs and sex. It was a big beautiful bubble, and for a few years it seemed like the good times would go on forever. That the party would never end.

People came like a summer flood. They came so fast there wasn't anywhere to live. Dozens of mega apartment complexes, with thousands of units, were thrown up almost over night--each more elaborate than the last. All of them racing to create the perfect, isolated world for the Nouveau Riche. One complex, Napoleon Square, seemingly above all others, became the standard bearer for the absurdity of the boom.

It cost $22 million to develop Napoleon Square in 1977 and when it opened it featured, amongst other amenities, over a dozen swimming pools and it's own nightclub--the price tag for the nightclub alone was $400,000. Adjusting those figures for inflation shows that in 2010 dollars the cost of Napoleon Square would be around $120 million and the cost of nightclub would come in somewhere near $1.5 million. Not surprisingly, the excesses of Napoleon Square were the rule not the exception. So much so, that by the time Reagan took to the steps of the Capitol to swear to honor and defend the Constitution of these United States, Gulfton had over 100 swimming pools in just over three-square-miles.

If any sentiment could be said to categorize the boom years it would have to be the absurdity of excess, and it wasn't just limited to Energy City housing developers. The West Texas town of Midland was so flush with oil cash that it became home to one of the largest private yacht fleets in the country, even though it's nearly 40 miles from the nearest body of water. For almost a decade it seemed like the laws of supply and demand had been suspended--the oil kept flowing, the price kept soaring and the bubble kept expanding. But all soaring things have to come crashing down and all bubbles have to pop. And when the price fell the bubble burst with a vengeance.

It happened in '86, but it didn't come without warning. The smart money had seen for the last few years that the price was slipping, but it didn't matter to the Young Turks lounging by the pool or doing a bump in the bathroom. That is until the price dropped two-thirds and the City shed 200,000 jobs in a matter of months. Some stayed and tried to tough it out, making what analysts would later call a "mid career shift," thousands more packed up and left. Some went back to wherever they had come from. Others were off chasing the next boom, running headlong to the next bubble, but the developers who had sunk millions into turning an area of farmland just off The Loop into a yuppie enclave couldn't break a lease and head back to Cedar Rapids, Schenectady or Scranton. They had too much skin in the game, so they either had to find a way out or find a new market.

A lot of them did declare bankruptcy and cash out. Monster properties were sold for pennies on the dollar, but it didn't matter how hard anyone tried they couldn't stop the bleeding. And all-too-soon for some the mega-complexes--with their swimming pools, clubhouses, nightclubs, convenience stores and tennis courts--became money sucking white elephants. Only to be sold at a loss to someone else. Within a few years they had worked their way through the food chain to management companies who operated just this



*If any sentiment could be said to categorize the boom years it would have to be the absurdity of excess.*

die of shady and who had decided to go after a completely different clientele--immigrants. Legal or illegal, sponsored refugees from a banana republic brush war or starry eyed dreamers seeking a better life Norte del Rio Bravo, it didn't matter they were all welcome.

By the time George Bush was telling the world to read his lips, Gulfton had become known more for spatterings of Salvadoran patois, smoked cabrito and no-background-check-required apartments than pool parties and the highest per-capita ratio of wine cooler consumption in Energy City. And it's stayed that way for two decades. The faces and the languages may change, but the fear and distrust of those huddled masses yearning to breathe free still remains.

Even though it's been over-thirty-years since Harold Farb's silhouette first beckoned the city's upwardliest of upwardly mobiles to party at Bonaparte's Retreat, long faded glories can still be found lurking beneath the poverty-brown paint jobs, a color scheme that characterizes much of present day Gulfton. Past the overturned shopping cart and the pit bull chained to the stairwell, over by where Abuela Garcia sells Energy City's best tortas from her kitchen window, is one of the over 100 swimming pools that dotted the area like foam fallen from a light beer bottle. Although it, like many of them, was filled in years ago. Now instead of being used to pick up the hot babe from the other building, it's been repurposed into a vegetable garden.

Transformation to suit needs is a narrative that runs through much of Gulfton. From the abandoned department store turned Mosque--the Muezzin's Friday Adhan mixes with the sing-song cries of "paletas y helados" belted out by the white-haired old man wearing an extra-large Lady Gaga t-shirt pushing a cart in the parking lot--to the Taco Bueno cum dentista's office across from Fiesta. The neighborhood's density and diversity is just as stunning as the facts and figures that describe it are mind-boggling. A St. Luke's Episcopal Health Charities Community Health Report survey, performed in 2007, described the area as being "home to immigrants from over 60 countries" and as "having the population density of Calcutta," approximately 15,385 people per-square-mile. The same report posits the idea that Gulfton is "the primary reason" why Energy City is known as "the leading refugee resettlement city in the U.S."

If a social scientist was sitting at a computer simulator trying to create an area designed to alienate, disenfranchise and--ultimately--push someone towards a life of crime she couldn't come up with a better laboratory than Gulfton. As every service provider knows any area filled with recent immigrants, some legal and some less so, provides it's own set of problems and community needs. What sets Gulfton apart from other immigrant enclaves, and makes it the heart of the Ciudad, is that the area wasn't built to solve problems or meet any of those needs.

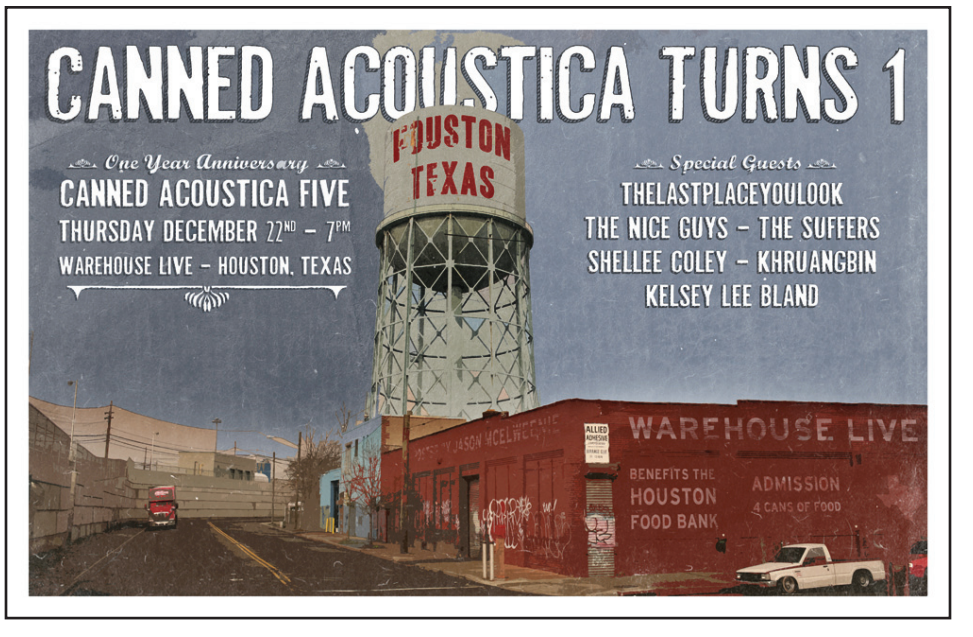
There aren't any sidewalks, public transportation is unreliable on the best days, there is only one park--and most of that is taken up with little league fields--to describe the schools as being historically bad is to be generous. And, of course, poverty.

A recent Brookings Institute survey of poverty rates throughout the nation's largest cities found that Gulfton had one of the highest concentrations in Energy City. Not surprisingly that wasn't the lead story on the evening newscast, it didn't even make the morning paper. Instead the glare of the cameras and the full color photo in the metro section went to the rapidly redeveloping area just north of downtown--Ciudad Olvidado, pueblo olvidado, olvidado una vez más. If a poster child for Gulfton was being sought, sort of a Face of the Forgotten, she would have to literally be a child--by some estimates up to a third of the area's population are juveniles--and come from a family getting by on an income of about $18,700, or a full third less than the median income of the rest of Energy City.

This Face of the Forgotten would have grown up with a soundtrack of automatic weapons fire and the siren songs of police department sirens. She'd be able to spot a gang sign at a hundred paces and know the difference between MS-13 and Southwest Cholo tags. She may not know which clubs inside The Loop sell $6,000 glasses of wine or the cost of a Cartier watch, but she probably does know which store fronts sell fake papers and the street value of an illegal cable hook up. As she ages she'd probably see more than a few of her friends go through the system. First getting sent to the giant juvenile detention facility she passed on her way to school every morning, then--when they got older--down to County. By the time she was old enough to graduate high school, if she makes it that far, she would have internalized the one immutable truth of Ciudad Olvidado: rents are cheap, life's cheaper. **FPH**







# Fear My Roar:

## A Guide to Dealing with Street Harassment

**A FEW YEARS AGO WHILE ON VACATION** with my mother in Vegas we were running to catch a bus we were about to miss. A man across the street yelled at her, "Yeah baby, make them titties move." He followed that up by gesturing with his hands at his own breasts. She came to a dead stop and turned around to look for me. I will never forget the sense of shame and humiliation that was all over her face. I threw my bags to the ground and began to walk towards him but just as the words, "Fuck you" were flying out of my mouth and before I could even make it off the sidewalk she grabbed my arm and said, "Its okay." I flipped him off and grabbed my bags. It is the only time I have ever used the word fuck in front of my mother. We missed our bus and while we were waiting for the next one to arrive I explained to her the multiple reasons for why nothing about that situation was "okay". Her stance was that this was normal in our society and that we needed to protect ourselves against "cat calling" by being careful about what we did in public in an attempt to not draw that sort of attention. I could not believe that she actually thought that this was somehow her fault or responsibility.

Street harassment is not just an issue that affects women. I have had male friends who have been harassed on the street as well. Over the last few months I have been asking men and women about their own experiences and I have noticed a few things about their responses. First off, street harassment does appear to predominately affect women and the LGBT community. Men on occasion are harassed as well but rarely by women. The most interesting thing I learned from talking about this topic was that even when men are harassed very rarely do they actually feel threatened by the harasser. Also, most of the people that I talked to stated that they normally just ignored the harassment. Most of the women that I talked to had a plethora of stories about verbal and physical harassment they had endured on the streets. And many of the women, just like my mother, bought into this concept that it was something they had done to solicit such a response. We live in a society that teaches us that this is normal male behavior and just a part of being a woman or gay. Or that secretly women like the attention. Or that it only happens to women who were asking for it or had it coming because of what they were wearing or how they were acting. Or my favorite delusional excuse for such behavior, "It was just a compliment baby stop being such a feminazi."

We do not accept this sort of behavior at home, school or work and there is plenty of legislation in place to protect us from it. If talking to me about my tits is unacceptable in the work place why the fuck would those same rules not apply on the streets? Turns out those same rules do apply they just aren't enforced. Mostly because there were very few options available to us to combat this behavior. Well not anymore, a movement has begun and has made its way to Houston. *Hollaback!* is a global movement dedicated to ending street harassment through mobile technology. According to the *Hollaback!* Web site, "We believe that everyone has a right to feel safe and confident without being objectified… The explosion of mobile technology has given us an unprecedented opportunity to end street harassment—and with it, the opportunity to take on one of the final new frontiers for women's rights around the world. By collecting women and LGBT folks' stories and pictures in a safe and share-able way with our very own mobile phone applications, *Hollaback!* is creating a crowd-sourced initiative to end street harassment. *Hollaback!* breaks the silence that has perpetuated sexual violence internationally, asserts that any and all gender-based violence is unacceptable, and creates a world where we have an option—and, more importantly—a response." *Hollaback!* created an app that allows people to take photos of their harassers and post them online with the exact location of the attack pin pointed on a map. You can also go to their website and post about your experience. What has emerged is a community that provides an outlet for women to come together and realize that they are not alone. This is a global problem that demands attention and action. *Hollaback!* is currently set up in 34 cities, 14 countries and operates in 8 languages. And their numbers are growing.

They are asking men and women everywhere to stand up and speak out against street harassment. If you see someone being harassed you could address the harasser with something as simple as, "Stop harassing women." If you are the one being harassed here are some tips on how to handle certain situations: Try and remain calm but confident when speaking directly to harassers. You never know how certain people might react to aggression and you should never put yourself in a situation that could lead to you being harmed. Look the perpetrator in the eyes and tell them exactly what they did that was inappropriate and/or made you feel dehumanized. Even if they try to engage you in conversation or if they continue to belittle you restate your initial statement and walk away. In most cases attempting to reason with these assholes will not get you anywhere and will only upset you more. You would be surprised by the impact that an assertive simple statement can make when dealing with street harassers. Together we can have an impact on our community and help create a safe environment for all on and off the streets. All you have to do is *Hollaback!* FPH

***For more info go to ihollaback.org and houston.ihollaback.org for community events.***



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## NUMBERS·MANGO'S·AVANT GARDEN·SOLE PURPOSE
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# Battle of the Bulge



BY STEVEN THOMPSON
ILLUSTRATION BY SHELBY HOHL

**SO THERE I WAS,** still sleepy-eyed from the Thanksgiving Day feast, staring at myself naked in the mirror, wondering what God hath wrought. I looked like a tub of goo stuffed into a sausage casing. What had I done to myself? After taking some personal inventory, I realized that I have spent the last four months participating in a one-man food and alcohol orgy. Starting around August, I've been treating my body as if I were Chris Farley on a season long bender. When I'm not wondering why the waitress at Hooters isn't attracted to me with wing sauce all over my face, I'm waking up in my neighbor's yard smelling like the floor of a Tijuana brothel. Naturally, I was able to blame all my exercises in delinquency on things like weekend football marathons, thirty five weddings, and, most recently, the obligation as an American to post Michael Phelps-esque caloric numbers at the Thanksgiving table (my grandmother had to remind me not to eat the cornucopia again). It also hasn't helped that the record-setting summer seems to have extended itself well into November; it's hard to motivate for any activity when the weather outside resembles the surface of Mars in *Total Recall*. I'm also recently single, something you'd think would make me want to get in tip top shape to make myself more attractive to the opposite sex, but in reality the opposite is true. Therein lies the Catch-22 of being a single dude: You want to be physically fit so you're confident going into the single scene, but you also want to be drunk enough to maintain that confidence; and those two qualities are foils of one another. I don't know about you, but I have a hard time waking up in the morning to jog before work when it feels like Kirstie Alley is sitting on my head. And as far as going out sober- that's such a stupid idea I won't even discuss it.

So I decided while staring at myself that some lifestyle changes needed to happen, and quickly. Otherwise I would be forced to start shopping for Steven Seagal's wardrobe, and black is just not my color, despite being both stealth-like and helpful in hiding man boobs. Luckily, I live with three other likeminded fellows who have shared in the revelry of the last few months and have similar desires to get back into shape.

*Note: Yes, I live in a house with three other guys. While some people might question my situation of having roommates at twenty-nine years of age, I say it is an ideal scenario and who do you think you are anyway, dickhead?*

We convened for a house meeting and came up with a full-fledged plan to start a health kick. Like the dewy buds of a flower coming to bloom under the spring sun, the sad tires of shame we carried around our waists would be transformed into six packs in no time. I could have also gone with a cocoon to butterfly metaphor there, but butterflies are effeminate and have no place in what we planned for ourselves to get in shape.

Step One was to turn our garage into a gym, but not one of those wimpy 24 Hour Fitness deals with highly advanced weight machines, dudes in spandex, and self-loathing soccer moms on ellipticals. We are talking more *Rocky 4* Siberian barn workout: pull ups on exposed ceiling beams, a heavy bag for boxing, and an old keg shell to carry up and down the driveway for maximum physical training. After we finished setting up, our garage looked like the kind of place in which juiced up ex-cons with knife wounds and tear drop tattoos would feel at home.

Our first workout was Tuesday. After some minor stretching - mostly just filling up water bottles and talking about how ripped we were about to be - we started in on a workout plan borrowed from an MMA fighter website. What proceeded was one of the saddest spectacles in all the land. Our garage and driveway look directly out onto the street. If you had driven down Glenwood Drive yesterday evening around 6:30 pm you might have witnessed the sight of four grown men doing lunges up and down the driveway, jumping rope, punching the bag… It looked like one of those 80s movie montages where the high school team has to get in top form before the big event, only instead of some young, athletic actors working out to Foreigner, it was more a bunch of lumbering dudes on the wrong side of their twenties waddling around to Rage Against the Machine, trying desperately not to puke until the pretty girl had jogged by. We had even organized our workout to have stations, wherein each person does a specific workout (sit-ups, jump rope, etc.) for two minutes, then jogs to the next station, the idea being that constant movement keeps your heart rate up to provide for maximum exercise. Unfortunately, I came from the school of showing up to the weight room, doing a few bench presses and maybe some dumbbells for a bit, taking a few minutes here and there to complain to the gym attendant about the radio channel selection, then hitting Smoothie King for a cool down. This new workout technique, called "circuit training" to those in the know, absolutely floored me. Within minutes my heart was beating like a coked up Matthew McConaughey bongo drum. I guess we didn't factor in that this workout was designed for professional athletes, not dudes who consider pub crawling a valid form of exercise. As far as our post workout jog around the block, the new running shoes I bought the day before did not bring me instant speed like advertised; instead I looked like a sweaty manchild chasing an ice cream truck down the street.

It's been a couple days now and I already feel a bit stronger, although I'm so sore I move like a geriatric. Fortunately, I'm told it gets easier. Yesterday's workout was extra tough but at least we won't be considered girly men when our muscles start showing. God knows it's extra motivation for when we all hit the showers together. Wait, what? **FPH**

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**AS THE LIGHT CAST BY THE FIRST YEAR** of the second decade of the Twenty-First Century fades into Holiday Twilight; it seems that the embers of earlier fires continue to burn. When historians write the story of this century, a story that will be filled with competing narratives about the impacts of globalization and the rise of the rest, 2011 will be a year that stands apart. From Tahrir Square to Zucotti Park, this rightfully could be called "The Second Year of the Barricade." It could also just as easily be labeled "The Year of the Business Plan Presidential Candidate" or "The Year of the Final Purchase of Democracy."

It's completely possible that 2011 won't be remembered as either the year that hundreds of thousands across the globe took to the streets or the year that a succession of candidates who seemed to be auditioning for a Fox News show ran for President. Instead the year that is marching into the annual stressor of food and family might be remembered as "the Beginning of the Second Southern Apartheid."

Domestically this was a year characterized nationwide by a coordinated and concerted effort to disenfranchise millions of people. From the all-out assault on public education funding in Texas and Wisconsin to the passage of Alabama's onerous immigration law, 2011 was the year the Regressive Right came to power. From the Appalachians to the Sierra Madres attacks on voting rights and citizenship were made and one manufactured political crisis after another, the debt ceiling being just the most obvious, derailed the process and kept us distracted. Those utterly avoidable derailments left many wondering if the freshman class, swept into Congress on a wave of anti-incumbent fervor, were simply suffering from a crisis of competence or if they actually had no intention of governing?

It's hard now–with the crunch of leaves underfoot and bathed in the relatively cool air of a Houston autumn–to bring to mind the frustration that characterized this past spring and summer. The predictable partisan gridlock over every budget battle, the apocalyptic predictions of government shutdowns blasted wall-to-wall on every cable news channel and the unrepressed glee tweeted and blogged from some "drown the government in the bathtub conservatives" that made punting to 'the super committee' feel like a touchdown pass.

Even though domestic politics is almost always portrayed in the oversimplified and easy-to-understand 'us versus them' narrative, it's rare that the pure tribal nature at play in politics is clearly defined. It seems that the last time America witnessed such openly and honestly tribalistic behavior as when–to borrow a phrase from Salon.com–"a billionaire mayor ordered police officers to evict people protesting income inequality from corporately owned property," was a generation ago when Bull Connor met the men, women and children marching in Birmingham with fire hoses and attack dogs.

While naked violence in the political process is something relatively rare in America, that's not the case in the rest of the world–as I write this word has just come in that over 1,100 demonstrators have been injured over the last two days in Tahrir Square and the Syrian government has no plans to stop attacking its own citizens. And perhaps it is because politically motivated violence is so common the world over that the images of police officers tear gassing Occupy Oakland protestors had such a worldwide emotional resonance, especially in Iran where members of 2009's Green Revolution, the movement that some say started it all, marched in solidarity with those who had been injured half-a-world away. Sadly, images of students and intellectuals marching on the Swiss Embassy–our 'ally' in Tehran–carrying 99 percent signs weren't beamed to every living room in the country.

Instead the hyper-competitive national media treated us to a detailed analysis of Rick Perry's thoroughly non-existent economic plan. While refocusing the national discourse onto every tiny up and down motion in every irrelevant poll and every attempt by politicians to effect those tiny motions, as opposed to the struggles of Sub Saharan Africa, may be the one true lasting impact of Rupert Murdoch's media empire, it certainly won't be the legacy. And Murdoch's legacy was secured when the tyrannical titan was humbled in Parliament because of accusations that his employees illegally accessed other people's voice mail.

Even though how much Murdoch knew about the phone calls that brought down the empire will always be debated his influence, and perhaps to a greater extent Roger Ailes', will not. Strangely it's not Murdoch or Ailes who emerged as the dominant forces in this year's media controversies. Instead their ideological carbon copies Andrew Breitbart and Tucker Carlson began witch-hunts that destroyed the careers of two low-level public radio employees and reopened discussions about the role of objectivity and personal opinion in the media.

It didn't matter that we, as a nation, had endured an eerily similar discussion 18-months-ago, all it took was a photo of someone who said that when she was at work she reported each side fairly expressing her own opinion on her own time for her to become unemployed. And the wheel of history turns again. The only question is in what direction does it turn? Will it move towards narrowly focused partisan bickering and endless culture war or towards cosmopolitan understanding and international engagement?

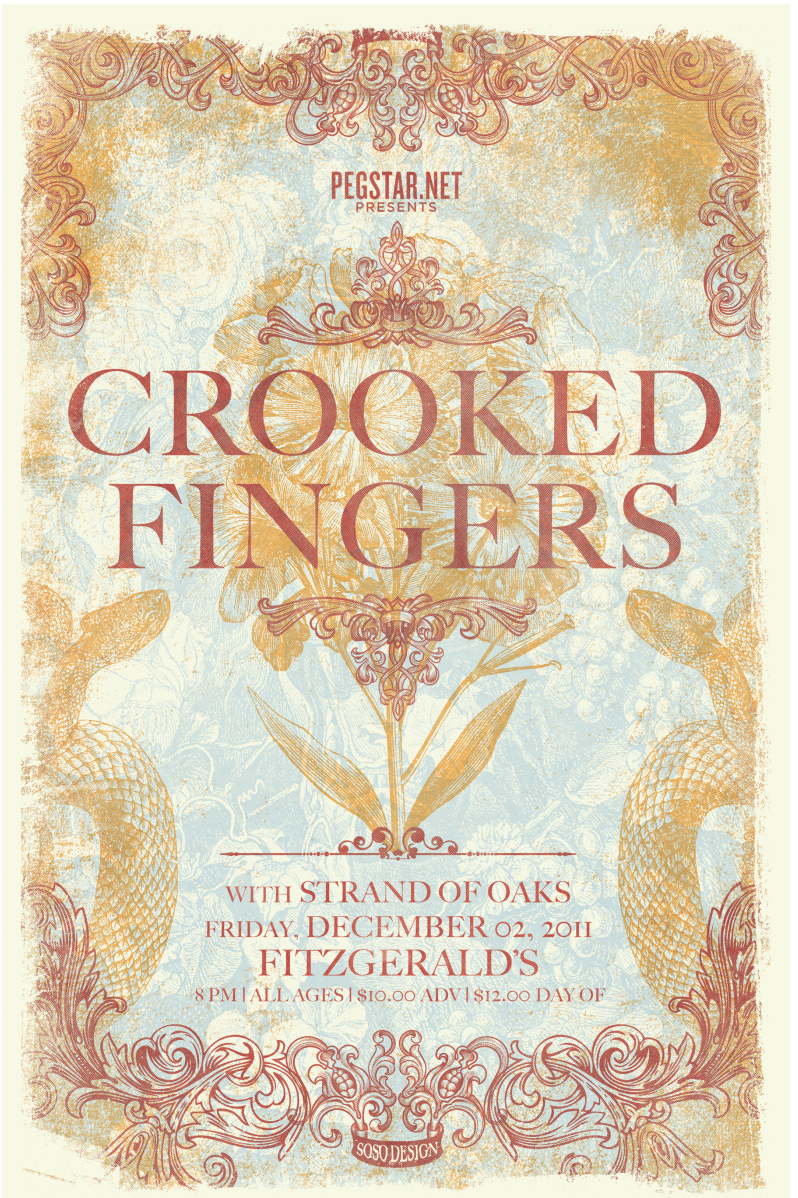
Many believe that the wheel of history is turning away from Europe and the U.S. towards China and India; even President Obama has stated that the Twenty-First Century will be an Asian Century. Perhaps that will be how 2011 is remembered as "the year the U.S. started acting like we live on a planet with other people." **FPH**

## How will we be remembered:

# A political meditation

BY ALEX WUKMAN




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# Forget the Occupy Movement, Why I'm Joining the One Percent

BY BRIAN J. FOLEY

**I MARCHED WITH OCCUPY OAKLAND LAST SATURDAY,** but I've had a change of heart. I'm joining the One Percent.

The One Percent have fun. They have jobs and money. Or just money, because when you have a lot of money, you don't need to work. They live in houses, not tents.

The One Percent have a government that actually listens to them. Lockheed needs a war to sell goods and services? Coming right up! Former Homeland Security Head Michael Chertoff wants to sell some porno-scanners? Get in (a very short) line – or no line at all if you've bought that exemption from TSA screening! Taxes too high? The One Percent's government will lower them for the rich. Too many 99 Percenters declaring bankruptcy? The One Percent's government will just make it harder for them. Bought toxic, mortgage-backed derivatives? Don't worry, your government will bail you out if you're in the One Percent. Bought a toxic mortgage? It's your "responsibility," if you're in the 99 Percent.

Another reason to join the One Percent is that the One Percent have their own media mouthpiece—more like a bullhorn. The One Percent funded those meager Tea Party protests, and the One-Percent-owned Media covered them religiously. And I mean religiously: the media proclaim stuff about the movement that defies reality, such as how The Tea Party was a really big, grass roots, populist movement, and that it wasn't racist. The Tea Party hate Obama for his "socialist" policies, not his skin color.

I also like how the One Percent-owned media have covered the Occupy movement. They treat the Occupiers as oddities, like circus animals—Cirque du So What? Paid-off pundits talk about the First Amendment with the "No way, this archaic language can't really stop OUR OMNIPOTENT GOVERNMENT from doing what it wants, can it?" To find out if the New York City Police honored Occupiers' First Amendment rights, CNN asked … a former New York City Police Commissioner, who assured viewers that the New York City Police honored those rights (ridiculous and so-pre-9/11 as those rights may seem!).

The One Percent don't have school loans or credit card debt. When they get into financial trouble, they get bailed out by the Big Government they claim to hate. They get saved and protected from The Market they claim to love. They changed the rules that kept their businesses from getting too big, and when they ended up failing, they got deemed "too big to fail." And at the same time, the One Percent get to say they are looking out for "the little guy" on Main Street! Unlike they Occupiers, they get to say that without getting their mouths, eyes, and nostrils filled with pepper spray.

And no one ever dares call the One Percent "traitors," "anti-American," etc. No, they're "patriots" who ask what their government can do for them, not what they can do for their government. No one ever says, "Bailing out Banks to save us from socialism is like f—ing to save virginity." That would be rude, and no one is rude or even slightly impolite to the One Percent.

Except the Occupiers, who get battered by police for their rudeness. In fact, the One Percent get to have police beat down Occupy protesters and pepper-spray them for no reason, and without fear of getting into trouble. Police pepper-spray defenseless students in front of hundreds of out-in-the-open cameras. Lesson: If you can't join the One Percent, you should at least work for them.

If an Occupier ever tried to defend himself and/or toted a gun, police would shoot him to death. But Tea Party guys get to bring their guns to protests and to make not-so-vague allusions to shooting President Obama. They never had to worry about copscrushing their skulls or pepper spraying them!

So I'm joining the One Percent. A friend said I'd regret joining and quoted Three Dog Night, who sang that one is the loneliest number. No, it's not, not when you've bought off the government and the news media. In the United States, 2 + 2 = 5, and 1 > 99. **FPH**


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# If You Love Montrose, Shop at Fiesta

BY M. MARTIN

**I AM, BE IT FREELY ADMITTED, OLDER THAN DIRT.**

When I first started hanging out in Montrose, Sid Vicious was still alive, Ronald Reagan was merely an embarrassment to the state of California…and Montrose had neighborhood grocery stores. Oh, there were encroachments by large corporate chains–but there was also Butera's on Bissonnet, The old Alabama Grocery at Jack Street, Richwood Market (AKA "Freaky Foods") on Richmond, and numerous small examples of what used to be called "Drive-ins", like Lankford Grocery (still there, but now just a mom and pop burger stand).

One of the biggest "chain stores" in the neighborhood was the Weingarten's at the corner of W. Alabama and Dunlavy, across from Wilshire Village… my, how things have changed.

The Weingarten family has moved on to the far more lucrative and soulless business of developing real estate, their former operation on West Alabama is now a Fiesta Mart, and the eight acres former occupied by Wilshire Village is now home to "HEB Montrose Market"–a faux Whole Foods the size of a Walmart.

It can be endlessly argued whether this is a good thing or bad thing, but it is certainly a different thing…and probably the end of Montrose as those of us who have called it home for more than a couple of years have known and loved it.

That fucking store is huge, pointless, and directly contrary to anything I have ever thought of as "Montrose Community Values"–hell, the damned thing opened without a beer and wine department. Granted, this is because they are still negotiating an onsite consumption permit from the TABC, but still–a grocery store? In Montrose? That doesn't sell booze? Where do you bitches think you are? KINGWOOD?

I further question the extent to which anyone particularly needs a store with a frozen food section the size of a squash court. Are a hundred different versions of the same bland and uninspiring frozen dinner essential to anyone's well being? Isn't the whole point of living in a community like Montrose that you don't necessarily buy into the suburban mythos of McMansions, Hummers, and consumer wretched excess?

Or is that just a bygone notion, a remnant from an earlier era when being "hip" entailed something more substantive than skinny jeans, ironic mustaches, or a a willingness to swill down crappy blue collar beer?

I have nothing but admiration for those who attempted to head this tacky behemoth off in favor of a public park, but I knew their efforts were foredoomed. If this really was "The City of Montrose", it's entirely possible that Wilshire Village apartments might've given way to public green space and a farmer's market. It's even possible that Wilshire Village might've even been saved from decades of neglect at the hands of a property owner with obvious symptoms of Hoarder's Syndrome. But alas, Montrose is firmly placed within the municipal limits and business culture of Houston, Texas–which is to say, no culture at all worth mentioning.

Which is to say that "HEB Montrose Market" was probably inevitable and probably the most favorable outcome that could be expected–let's not forget that the slimeball that demolished Wilshire Village originally planned a couple of high rise towers even more obnoxious than the "Ashby Highrise" that still threatens to appear a few blocks further down Dunlavy at Bissonnet.

Whether or not the ongoing suburbification/gentrification of Montrose is likewise inevitable remains to be seen–and has everything to do with the choices we make as a community.

I doubt that HEB's corporate management actively conspires to put their across-the-street competitors at Fiesta Mart out of business. But I am certain that they intend to take as much market share as they possibly can from the half dozen or so direct competitors within a two mile radius of their new store–and if the hardest hit competitor happens to be one directly across the street, well, that's just how the free market works (what are you–some sort of socialist?).

I rather suspect HEB's management did consider the possibility of putting the River Oaks Rice Epicurean Market out of business when they opened Central Market (again, across the street). But a decade and some change later, Rice Epicurean is still there. It's there because it's loyal customers kept it there.

Even if you don't particularly like the Dunlavy Fiesta (I know some don't, for reasons that escape me), do you really like the idea of what is likely to take it's place? Just because one developer scumbag didn't get to put up a hideous high-rise tower on the ruins of Wilshire Village doesn't mean some other scumbag isn't going to get to build one on what use to be Fiesta.

So, yeah. If you love Montrose– truly love Montrose as an alternative to the tacky, plastic, tastelessness and bourgeois complacency that makes up 90% of Houston– then you will spend every penny you possibly can at that beautiful old Fiesta Mart. You will not complain about the tiny aisles, and you will not be swayed by the corporate behemoth across the street selling your shitty hipster beer and your extra-firm tofu at loss leader pricing. What you will do is show some loyalty to a merchant that was doing business in your community decades before HEB would've even considered it. Because otherwise, this isn't really a community…and condo-owning douchebags deserve to take what's left of it. **FPH**



*Or is that just a bygone notion, a remnant from an earlier era when being "hip" entailed something more substantive than skinny jeans, ironic mustaches, or a a willingness to swill down crappy blue collar beer?*









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# December Arts Wrap
## Too much Kringle & not enough Jingle

BY ALEX WUKMAN

**EVEN THOUGH IT'S NOVEMBER** I already hear his bells, clamoring and shrieking by the side of Poe's pale-faced moon. I close my eyes and I see him, peering over his glasses, laughing. He steals into my dreams, infecting them with vision of fruits and fairies. I awaken to find him everywhere— leering from TV screens, beckoning from a booth in the mall, staring from store windows. His trappings are in every home, his totems on every bus.

His music—saccharine sweet melodies and jingle pop harmonies—haunts me, follows me, through the city. Phrases emerge from the clatter and clutter of hardware-store-Saturdays, vocal lines mix into muzak from the pharmacy. His empty, dead eyes shimmer on soda cans, his portly, red suited visage glares off windshields at car dealerships. On and on it goes, for weeks on end.

I try to get a handle on it, try to steady my nerves with liquid courage at a local dive. The door rattles on the hinges. A cold north wind follows him in. It's too much, I can't take it anymore. I know what to do, I have to stop this. I have to stop him. His back is to me, he hasn't seen me yet. I pick up a beer bottle. Stay out of his line of sight. Ease around behind him while he's bent over, looking for something in that big bag of his. Raise the bottle high overhead; it shatters on his stocking cap. The bar goes quiet as his rotund body crashes into a table. I scream the only thing I can think of, "STOP STALKING ME SANTA CLAUS."

And that's why December is a really difficult month for Houston arts. Everything and everyone seems to be about one, arbitrarily chosen, day. Trying to list every event that celebrates the season would take up the majority of this issue. And for Houston arts a patron finding something to do that isn't a retelling of Dickens or an interpretation of Tchaikovsky is difficult. Last month we offered a list of the all-too-few events that aren't glorified Christmas pageants. This month we pose a question: why aren't there more?



*The Saddest Love Story Almost Never Told*

Sure, there is Frenetic Theatre's Tenderina, a self-described "surreal story of a stripper ballerina and her journey to self-revelation," and the acerbic humor of Mark Twain's Last Stand, an imagined speech from a posthumous speaking tour. There's even Sketchy Neighbors' Saddest Love Story Never Told, which— truth be told—sounds like it might be the most fun of all. Saddest Love Story is sponsored by Spacetaker and is described as featuring "new work based on public submissions featuring drawings, paintings and sculptures via a multitude of media including black velvet, found objects, custom snow globes, and more."

The Sketchy Neighbors are even hooking up with the Nano Writing crew to do a one-off performance called Inky Improv, an interactive joint that supposedly pits artists and writers against one or another in a night of competitive improv based on audience suggestions. And no list of non-Holiday December events would be complete without mentioning Catastrophic's Anna, Bella, Eema or Mildred's Umbrella's Museum of Dysfunction—both of which we already wrote up in November.

All-in-all that's a grand total of five performance events in December that aren't about the Spirit of the Season. Of course there are gallery showings and bands that aren't lousy with Christmas cheer, but that's another part of the paper. This is about theatre productions and why December offers a dearth of non-Holiday related programming. There are a multitude of economic factors to be considered as anyone who has ever worked in the arts knows the various incarnations of Christmas Carol around town are almost a hit for the respective theatre companies and they brings in people by the thousands.

Additionally, as an first year business student knows, an organization's risk taking behavior is almost inversely proportional to the size of its budge. In other words: the more money you bring in the less you can gamble. For theatre management the math is simple: it's easy to handle a flop if the losses can be limited and are offset by strong earnings in preceding and subsequent quarters. However, the MBA outlook of most theatre management doesn't excuse the fact that there are oh-so-many holiday shows. There are of course cultural considerations to be taken into account—red state, Bible Belt and all that. And those cultural considerations led to the orthodox assumption that Houstonians have no interest in supporting an Off-Off Broadway or even an Off-Broadway theatre scene. An assumption that has routinely been proven false by the continued success of groups like Bobbindoctrin, Mildred's and Catastrophic.

So that brings us back to the question why aren't there more non-Christmassy shows in December? It's not like there isn't a glut of theatre spaces, and it's not like there aren't hundreds of talented performers who would love to do something other than find a new way to portray Christmas ghosts. Shit, it's not like there isn't a wealth of material to be adapted—there are African myths like No King but God and Latin American Myths like The Bells that would offer something different to the city. There are queer centric interpretations of the story of Jesus Christ like Terrence McNally's Corpus Christi that would bring dollars. Even if an aspiring artistic director didn't want to range too far from the "holiday stories we read in sixth grade" canon there's The Gift of the Magi by, convicted embezzler and former Houston Post columnist, O. Henry. Hell, a reworking of The Gift of the Magi to include O. Henry's legal troubles and the rumors about his sexuality and the bohemian salons held on Austin Street would make for a fantastic play and leave theatre goers with a new appreciation for the Spirits of the Season. **FPH**

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