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ZABAK TO THE FUTURE

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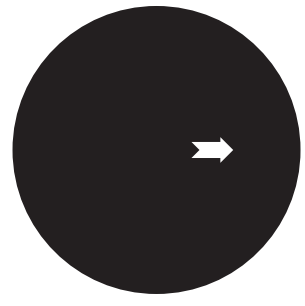
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COVER ART BY
Jermaine Rogers
As a huge Bill Hicks fan and partner in our quest to place a statue of him in Houston, Rogers was ecstatic to create this piece of art.

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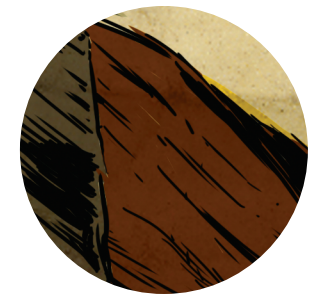
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BLACK STAGE

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Just when you thought it was good, it got gooder.

Welcome to the new, gooder FPH. As we approach our 10 year anniversary in early 2013, we decided we are ready-spaghetti to try some new things around here. As stated in last issue, Ms. Brigitte Zabak has taken over as our new Managing Editor. It is with a heavy heart that I relinquish this position but I am confident Brigitte will do better than I ever could have to bring you the news, arts, music coverage that I always wished I could have. Also, FPH is now gloriously in full color throughout the paper. In related news, the entire internet is now available in black and white.

But all in all, we are trying to renew our commitment to bring you the most important news, music, arts, culture in Houston to the forefront. WE have always tried to be that local soapbox that anyone can jump on to speak power to issues which are being ignored by other media. Remember, we take local submissions. editorb@freepresshouston.com

Also, in our efforts to make our community better, even outside the scope of 'media', we are launching our valiant campaign to raise the funds to build a statue of the late Bill Hicks here in his hometown. Famed sculptor David Addicks has agreed to build the statute, poster artist Jermaine Rogers has joined forces with us on this project with creative direction, and tons of community leaders and business folks have come through with support. But this is a big project and a figure like Hicks deserves only the best. So in short, give us your money. Because as long as the capitalist system of fiat money persists, we are forced to pay for things in dollars as opposed to bushels of corn. Not that I have ever laid eyes on a bushel of corn in my life. I don't really like it either other than tortilla chips every now and then. For more info on supporting the Bill Hicks statue effort, go to www.billhicksstatue.com

-Omar Afra
Publisher



A Scandinavian Summer

BY MICHAEL PENNYWARK

Scandinavian Design
Aug 26, 2012 - Jan 27, 2013
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
1001 Bissonnet, Houston, TX 77005

It's August in Houston again and you'd never guess, but it's hot as hell. It's so hot that I'm sure, like me, you can only dream of escaping to somewhere nice and cool—somewhere like Scandinavia. Sure, it's half a world away and they have those pesky reindeer everywhere, but being so close to the North Pole, it has to be cooler, right? Besides, I hear reindeer sausage is pretty tasty, and they certainly know how to make vodka if you can't stomach the aquavit. Unfortunately, if you're on a budget of Lone Star and Ramen noodles, like me, you probably can't afford to chase your childhood dream of searching for Santa Claus's secret summer hideout to demand that Millennium Falcon play-set you asked him for.

But fear not, for the wonderful people at the Museum of Fine Arts Houston are bringing Scandinavia to you. Well, at least some of the best examples of Scandinavian decorative arts from the 1920s to the 1970s that the museum has collected over the years. And, last time I checked, their air conditioning works pretty well. Yep, if you didn't know better you'd swear you could taste the cloudberries and herring salad right there.

Like many people, the limit of my experience with Scandinavian design can be summed up in my journeys through IKEA where I'd chuckle to myself as I try to pronounce the name of the bookcase I just bought. Often characterized by the same minimalism and clean lines, the Scandinavian design movement, which includes designers from Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden, embodies the distinctive aesthetic that is typified by an emphasis on high-quality design and mass production.

The MFAH has a long history with Scandinavian designers, as Cindi Strauss, curator of Modern and Contemporary Decorative Arts and Design at MFAH explained to me. "In the 1940s a men's smoking room was outfitted with bentwood furniture including chairs, tables, and a folding screen by the now legendary Finnish architect and designer Alvar Aalto. In 1956, the traveling exhibition Design in Scandinavia, organized by industrial design societies in the participating countries, came to the MFAH for a month and featured objects by leading designers in glass, ceramics, metalwork, furniture, and fiber. At the end of each stop on the exhibition tour, an ambassador from one of the countries presented each museum with objects from the exhibition for inclusion in the museum's permanent collection. The MFAH received four glass pieces: a sculpture and three vases, one of which, Sculpture Lansetti (1955) by Timo Sarpaneva, is included in the current exhibition."

According to Strauss, "The exhibition offers the opportunity to see outstanding designs by some of the most important Nordic architects and designers of the 1920s-70s: early glass by Alvar Aalto, furniture by Finn Juhl and Bruno Mathsson, textiles by Josef Frank and Marimekko, glass by Orrefors, and silver by Georg Jensen to name a few. The MFAH's examples are early in date and demonstrate the leading edge of technological and aesthetic innovations by Scandinavian designers."

Entrance to the exhibition is included with your museum admission so you can afford to buy yourself some Swedish Fish to snack on as you dream about holding Rudolph and his friends for ransom until Santa coughs up that Millennium Falcon. FPH



Kaj Franck, Finnish, 1911–1989
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Decanter, model 1500 "Kremlin Bells"
Designed c. 1957, made 1962
Glass
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SATURDAY, AUGUST 11, 2012
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VERY FEW PEOPLE KNEW JUST HOW MUCH ART AND CREATIVITY FLOWED OUT OF ARIC MCDANIEL. HE HAS MANY PIECES ON CANVAS, IN SCULPTURE, AND IN OTHER MEDIUMS THAT CAN HARDLY BE DESCRIBED.

PLEASE JOIN US IN REMEMBERING HIS LIFE THROUGH HIS ART.

4715 MAIN STREET, HOUSTON, TX 77002

Modern Movement: Artist Mason Rankin

BY MEGHAN HENDLEY, PHOTOS BY MASON RANKIN

LIVING IN A CONCRETE JUNGLE MEANS one is always scaling miles of gray highways, constantly soaring over sky high ramps, and as usual tapping our fingers on the steering wheel while we are stuck in bumper to bumper traffic. Glazed over from these perpetual sites, drivers may not notice the subtle shadows and lines that mimic contemporary art that can be found from freeways and major interstate intersections.

ARTIST MASON RANKIN, born and raised in Baytown Texas, was struck by the curves and twists of these massive road structures and decided to develop bodies of work around them. "When I was young these forms were monumental and overwhelming," says Rankin. "As I learned to drive I saw them as the trusted pathways around town similar to trails in a forest. Without knowing who created them, they are accepted as the way to where you may be going."

This freeway fascination stuck with him and eventually led him to receive a BFA in photography from Sam Houston State University and his MFA in Studio Art from Florida State University. He has taken these forms and turned them into works in photography, sculpture, and video. Today he sees them as an indelible mark on the Americana landscape, constructed to stand for ages. FPH asked him some questions about what makes these modern landscapes so appealing:

TELL US ABOUT THE CONCEPT OF USING HIGHWAYS AND ROADS IN MAJOR CITIES AS A FOCAL POINT FOR YOUR ARTWORK.

I see the freeways, especially the intersections, as monuments of contemporary culture and technological progress. I think they are underappreciated, especially by those who see them every day while passing by at 80MPH. I want my work to provide an opportunity for the viewer to pause and have a moment with them in a way they don't normally get to.





(top) Interstate 45 at HOV Lane

(bottom) Interstate 6-10 at Highway 288

WHY CAPTURE THESE STRUCTURES?

It started when I moved away for graduate school. Having grown up around Houston the freeways and industry were always part of the landscape. But, when I moved away I missed them greatly. Without those details the landscape felt empty. Because of this, I approached these urban and industrial details in my work so I could present them to viewers who were less familiar with them or don't normally take the time to observe them.

YOU HAVE VARIOUS SERIES IN BLACK AND WHITE AND IN COLOR. WHAT IS IT LIKE WITH EACH AND HOW DO YOU PROCESS THE FILM?

My Black and White work provides a gritty visual of the landscape. I think it fits what more people, who may not be from urban centers, feel about major metropolitan areas. I hand process and print my B&W photographs using traditional chemical processes. I think the freeways are quite beautiful and amazing in many ways. By creating the newer work in accurate natural color, I feel it gives the images the same respect that I have toward the structures. The color work is captured with a large format camera. The negatives are then scanned and printed using current digital technologies.

HOW HAVE YOU TRANSLATED PHOTOGRAPHY INTO SCULPTURES?

I am very interested in the possibilities of using photography as more than just print media. I think it has great potential to be used in three dimensions. Photography is primarily the image capture of 3D objects and sculpture is the creation of 3D objects. The blocks were a way for me to create a sculptural object while using the stereographs to start combining the two. The stereo photography itself makes small sculptural forms by the way our eyes and brains interpret them. That makes this series a set of visual sculptures within physical sculptures.

YOU CURRENTLY USE YOUR BACKGROUND AND SKILLS IN THE TEACHING ARENA. WHAT IT'S LIKE TO TEACH? NEXT PROJECT?

I am really excited to be teaching at the college level. I enjoy the exchange of ideas and the ability to get the students to learn their own ability to express, while at the same time I can continue learning new perspectives from them. I am constantly trying to find new ways to present art to artists and non-artists not only in the classroom but also through other modes. Along with continuing to teach, I would like to engage with art non-profits to help encourage more people to connect with and learn from the arts.

As for my own work, I am working on new ideas that are abstracting both the photographs and their sculptural presentations. My previous work has been a lot about the realistic presentation of the industrial and infrastructural elements. I am back to focusing on the creation of sculptural forms and the possibilities of how photography can become a part of that in an abstracted way. **FPH**

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Tubular

BY MICHAEL BERGERON

In "The Do-Deca-Pentathlon" the Duplass Brothers continue to excel in drama that elicits as many laughs as it does the shock of everyday recognition. The Duplass Brothers shot this small indie effort a few years ago before they rose to prominence with "Cyrus" (2010) and this year's "Jeff Who Lives At Home", but "Do-Deca" fits into the same auteur groove Jay and Mark Duplass have etched for themselves as filmmakers.

"Do-Deca" chronicles a rivalry between two brothers who challenge each other to a series of 25 sports related contests, with do-deca being Latin for twenty-five. But the brothers aren't biographical twists on Jay and Mark.

"It's based on brothers who lived down the street when Mark and I were growing up in New Orleans," Jay tells Free Press Houston by phone. "In our movie the brothers reignite their childhood games and ruin their family reunion."

Steve Zissis, who plays one of Do-Deca's brothers and who's appeared in four of the five Duplass Brothers films, also grew up in New Orleans. While "Do-Deca" was shot in NOLA, the movie takes place in Anytown USA.

Jay talks about how many of their films revolve around "family affairs" and how the house as a character pops up in their films. Think of the cabin in the woods from "Baghead", or even the cabin from "My Sister's Sister," which, while not directed by the Duplass Brothers, does star Mark and was helmed by Lynn Shelton in the improvisational manner used by Mark and Jay.

"Most things go down in private rooms," admits Jay. "Although in "Jeff" we opened that and had the characters roaming around the city."

As to the improvised nature of their films Jay explained: "All of our films are scripted, in fact very thoroughly. But once on the set, all the lines may be improvised. But even if the dialogue changes the intent stays the same."

Another element that distinguishes a Duplass Brothers film is the way the focal length of the lens constantly zooms in on action. Jay acts as camera operator on all their films to date and has a specific way of capturing the scene. "I try not to repeat angles. I'm constantly shifting over the character's shoulders. It's me wanting to see what the eye of the character sees." On their more recent films, "Jeff" and "Cyrus," which were shot under stricter union regulations, Jay still operated the camera. "The producers made a deal with the camera guild, and I'll join the union at a future point." Specifically the zoom technique came to Mark and Jay out of the blue one day, like an epiphany of cinematic skill. "For so long we were trying to be the Coen Brothers, and it so wasn't working," laughs Jay. "Then one day we were shooting and the zoom method just dropped in our lap."

"The Do-Deca Pentathlon" opens on August 3 at the downtown Sundance Cinemas Houston.

Blu-ray Slight Return

Whit Stillman's "The Last Days of Disco" comes out in a Criterion Collection Blu-ray that includes commentary with Stillman and stars Chloe Sevigny and Chris Eigeman, a short featurette, and an audio clip (about 20 minutes) of Stillman reading from his own satiric novelization of the film. Seeing this film after about 14 years, as well as seeing Stillman's first film since 1998 earlier this year ("Damsels in Distress"), brings to the fore his singular penchant to entertain with sharp dialogue. It's the kind of text that advances the narrative as opposed to expository dialogue that brings the viewer up to date. The transfer preserves DP John Thomas' colorful photography. The night scenes, the walking and talking, the denunciations are presented so naturally that you accept this early '80s milieu of privilege at face value even while grasping the bigger story in retrospect. Stillman's debut "Metropolitan," also shot by Thomas, gets the Criterion Blu-ray treatment in addition.

"ATM" has a screenplay by "Buried" writer Chris Sparling, and if that's not enough to warrant a view of this claustrophobic thriller that takes place entirely in a small building in the middle of the night, then consider the excellent three person cast that includes Alice Eve, Josh Peck, and Brian Geraghty. The trio find themselves trapped inside a glass walled ATM center with a stalker preventing them leaving. The stalker keeps out of range of security cameras while his prey keep making mistake after mistake. "ATM" has both tact and balls and should've been a theatrical release rather than a DVD direct.

When Ewan McGregor and Eva Green meet cute it happens to coincide with a worldwide epidemic that robs people of their various senses. Under David McKenzie's direction "Perfect Sense" touches on topical issues and imagines a disease of smell and sound, although the film avoids the larger tragedy of such a malady as suggested by Fernando Meirelles' "Blindness" (2008). Equal amounts of romance, sex, comedy and drama ensure "Perfect Sense" finds a welcome reception.

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RARE PATENT
MELISSA DAVIS

The Stateliest of All the Months

BY BRIGITTE B. ZABAK, PHOTO BY MITCHELL CANTU

THERE WAS A TIME, back when I didn't act like a little old lady who wanted you to stop playing your hippie music so gosh darn loud, when a majority of my evenings were spent hopping from music venue to music venue in search of good music. And though I now opt to spend a majority of my free time asleep, the fact that, despite a ridiculous sound ordinance and a decrease in venues where musicians can do their thing, the live music game in this town has raised the bar substantially. These days, in my humble opinion, it seems to be a lot more about quality versus quantity. And, let me tell you what, the shows coming to Houston in the next couple of months are enough to make this curmudgeonly gal seriously consider skipping her Friday night nap.

When We Ruled H-Town
DVD Release

featuring: 30footFALL, Monster Soup, Spunk, Dinosaur Salad, & more
August 3rd & 4th at Fitzgerald's

I was an angsty teenager without a car when many of these bands were playing now-defunct venues around Houston. I don't know that I ever got the chance to hear any of them perform, but seeing their names on the back page of the Public News made me believe that I was at least moderately aware of the local music I should have known about. Now everyone in Houston has the opportunity to revisit the "old days" thanks to three very dedicated guys (Brent Himes, Robbie Conley & J. Schneider) who took the time to research, interview and document a significant time in Houston's local music scene. Many of the bands in the documentary will be performing August 3 and 4 to celebrate the DVD release of When We Ruled H-Town at a venue that helped shape many a musician in H-Town – Fitzgerald's.

Girls Rock Camp Showcase

Sunday, August 5th at Warehouse Live

Music is a transformational force. For some, simply listening to their favorite band is enough to turn a bad day right around. For others, picking up a guitar and playing "Stairway to Heaven" is the ultimate catharsis. Music is therapeutic; it's literally life-changing. The organizers and volunteers of Girls Rock Camp – Houston recognize the potential music has in helping to empower the lives of young girls. So, for a week during the summer, girls between the ages of 8-18 can apply to participate in GRCH. In that week, these girls are given the chance to participate in a variety of workshops that include everything from learning how to play music to community building. In addition to the workshops, GRCH participants are able to put their new-found skills into action by working together with fellow bandmates to write and perform an original song. The Girls Rock Camp Showcase is the culmination of their hard work and will take place on Sunday, August 5 at Warehouse live. Doors open at 5pm.

Folk Family Revival/Shellee Coley

Saturday, August 25th at Main Street Crossing in Tomball, Show at 8pm

Yes. I am asking you to travel outside the Greater Houston area to listen to music. I wouldn't recommend such a thing if I didn't sincerely believe the music was worth the drive. The first time I really listened and absorbed the band's debut album Unfolding was several months ago during a road trip to Virginia. I had seen them perform live a couple of times before hearing the album in its entirety and was simply blown away by Mason Lankford's voice and the overall talent of every member of this band. The quartet is comprised of brothers Mason, Barrett and Lincoln Lankford and good friend Caleb Pace. They started playing music together when they were basically still kids and the intensity of their collective skills and talents have grown with them over the years. Their lyrics are filled with the kind of heart, honesty and emotion that you rarely see in a band's freshman album. It's worth traveling pretty much anywhere to hear – especially when singer/songwriter Shellee Coley is opening for them. Coley's gorgeous voice and thought-provoking songs make her the perfect complement for the music of Folk Family Revival. FPH

More shows to see/hear

Caddywhompus
Thursday, August 2nd at Fitzgerald's

Lindsey Buckingham
Monday, August 20th at Fitzgerald's

Ottmar Liebert & Luna Negra
August 25th & 26th at Dosey Doe: The Big Barn (Woodlands)

Lightning Bolt
Monday, August 27th at Fitzgerald's

Chris Isaak
Tuesday, August 28th at the Arena Theater

Girls Rock Camp Houston staff and volunteers




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Demonic Hen

INTERVIEW & PHOTO BY RAMONLP4



SOME BANDS NEED a long elaborate introduction while others like the "vegcore" band Demonic Hen are like "Snakes on a Plane" where all you need to know is that the band consists of Beet, Eggplant, Carrot, Avocado, Potato, Asparagus and Pizza; they are from the future; and they have had enough of this motherfuckin' Demonic Hen that we humans have unleashed on... well, I'll let them explain.

Tell us about how you came together?
Asparagus – We don't want to scare you but we're from the future and we've seen what the future is like. It's pretty bleak so we've come back to give people a warning. In the future, the human race is half chicken from eating so much chicken.

Eggplant – Males with huge beautiful...big...lush... voluptuous...breasts.

Avocado - ...and delicious. Don't forget delicious. I'm vegan but even I'm tempted to try some!

Potato – The decades of polluted runoff and barren soil have also created mutant vegetables.

Avocado – We don't want to be mutants, we just want to be fruits and vegetables so we joined the resistance.

Who are you fighting?
All – THE DEMONIC HEN!!!!

Eggplant (dramatically) – The Demonic Hen is an evil, vicious creature. It's waiting to hatch and grab you in its clutches. Beware Humanity!!! We are here to warn you!

I thought you worked for the Demonic Hen.
Asparagus – No, we just want to get that name across so that when it comes in the future, people can remember. The Demonic Hen is a government experiment in cooperation with giant mega farm groups - Dow, DuPont, Monsanto, etc.

Potato – They were trying to create the perfect chicken – all meat, no filler – but instead they created a beast.

Avocado – [They opened] the gate to this horrible energy from the souls of all the chickens that have been slaughtered and tortured in hen houses. They were sucked into this creature, the Demonic Hen, so it's full of rage and wants nothing more than to enslave us, chop off our limbs, and put us in cages.

What I don't understand is that you have all these vegetables but then you have a sentient pizza here...
Eggplant (with an accusatory gaze) – Pizza claims that pepperoni is soy but I don't trust him at all.

Potato – I think he's a spy and he reports on us but I think he's going to double cross them.

Asparagus – Half of us trust him, half of us don't. He's trying to convince us he's a vegetable but...

Why don't we have Pizza explain himself?
Pizza (nervously) – Hey, c'mon now, pizza is a vegetable by law. In fact, I'm a super pizza with super sauce! One ounce of pizza sauce counts as four times the amount of vegetable according to the law of school lunches.

Asparagus – Well, I think he's just a human in a pizza costume but he made some videos for us so I guess that's cool.

Eggplant (contemptuously) – Well, I know you're in league with the Demonic Hen! I don't trust you!

(to Eggplant) How do we know we humans can trust you? How do I know you don't have an ulterior motive?
Eggplant – Houston humans, you get it all twisted. Everyone thinks it's about this and that but we're all Earthlings here. I came from Earth and you came from Earth; if we don't learn to grow together, then all that will be left is going to be a wasteland.

Carrot – I've come back because I look back at all the beautiful animals, plants, and flowers and I wish so much that we could be back in this beautiful time instead of this hellhole I've come from. We've come to oppose things like not being able to feed people without it being illegal. Don't go that direction! Don't let that happen to your world!

But if we allowed this to happen, wouldn't it be easier to go all Terminator on us and just get rid of all these humans who are destroying the world?
Eggplant – No, we need you guys! Years of living in the industrial ages has weaned you off our symbiotic lifestyle.

Carrot – That's the whole thing: we like humans. Humans aren't bad; they've just been manipulated with propaganda and lies. You guys have gotten way out of control. Coming back and saving you is not what we choose but just what it has come to. [Humans] were once hunter-gatherers and it was way nicer before all these lies and propaganda turned them into Earth killers. That's not what humans are and we can help change you guys.

Eggplant – Oh, I don't think you can change.

Carrots – Oh c'mon man, we can help them. That's why they are here.

Eggplant – I don't know, I still feel like I'm on a losing mission. There are many people who have been on this earth that set great examples for what humanity could be but humans tend to shut those people down and laugh at them. In the future we look at people like Jack LaLanne as great historical figures. "The power is in the juice! If you can believe it, you can achieve it! Get your workout on! Live long and live happy!"

All (reverently) – JACK LALANNE!

How can people help?
Potato – Bike or walk as much as you can. Don't just get in your car because you can. I know it's hot out and you're going to get to your destination all sweaty and gross but when you show up, you can be all "Yeah, I'm hardcore. THAT's why I'm sweating!"

Beet – Eat a Rainbow every day.

Carrot – Yes, eating more fruits and vegetables and cutting down on processed foods and meats. The costs associated with producing a meat diet are not an efficient use of resources.

Beet – Unplug and go outside!

Asparagus – Eat local and support local community gardens like Last Organic Outpost, Marcus Garvey Liberation Garden, Urban Harvest and various others around the city.

Avocado – If you have a front or back yard, you have a community garden right there and if you don't, you can plant a container garden.

Potato – And be aware. Meat and dairy lobbies are huge political players and they lobby government to get what they want and it's not about what's best for you.

Avocado - It's the basics of life – food, shelter, transportation, things like that. Make those simple things in life, like food, become something you do with your community where it's not just going out and buying things but growing it together and building those connections that really help your mental health and help people care about each other. FPH

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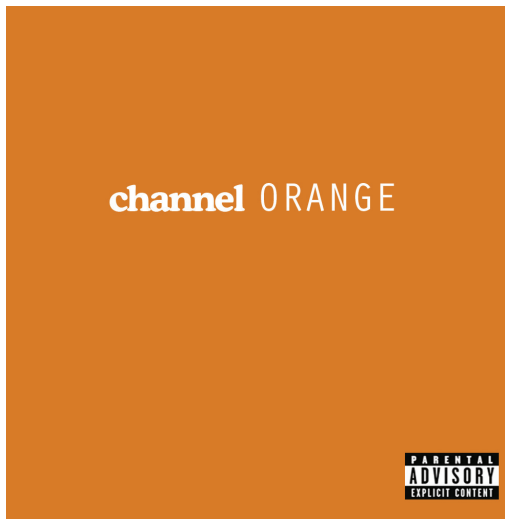
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For the record

ALBUM REVIEWS BY KWAME ANDERSON







Frank Ocean

CHANNEL ORANGE (DEF JAM)

Frank Ocean has made an amazing album. The best albums are just that because they encompass all that is the human experience. We love, we laugh, we cry, we are our sins and sanctities. Channel Orange succeeds at being a well-decorated portrait. “Thinking Bout You” is honest (I don’t like you, I just thought you were cool of enough to kick it), maybe its game, the enduring quality, is the doubt. “Sweet Life” is the excess and the logic-- why see the world when you got the beach-- the characters are deified by their flaws. “Pyramids” is every angle: the exultation of the woman, the exploitation of the woman, the man who endures the path his woman has chosen but cannot offer her better. “Forrest Gump” is the celebration of the love in reflection, though you hurt me, I am your biggest advocate. Musically, conceptually, lyrically this is the album that disproves the cynical critic.

Purity Ring

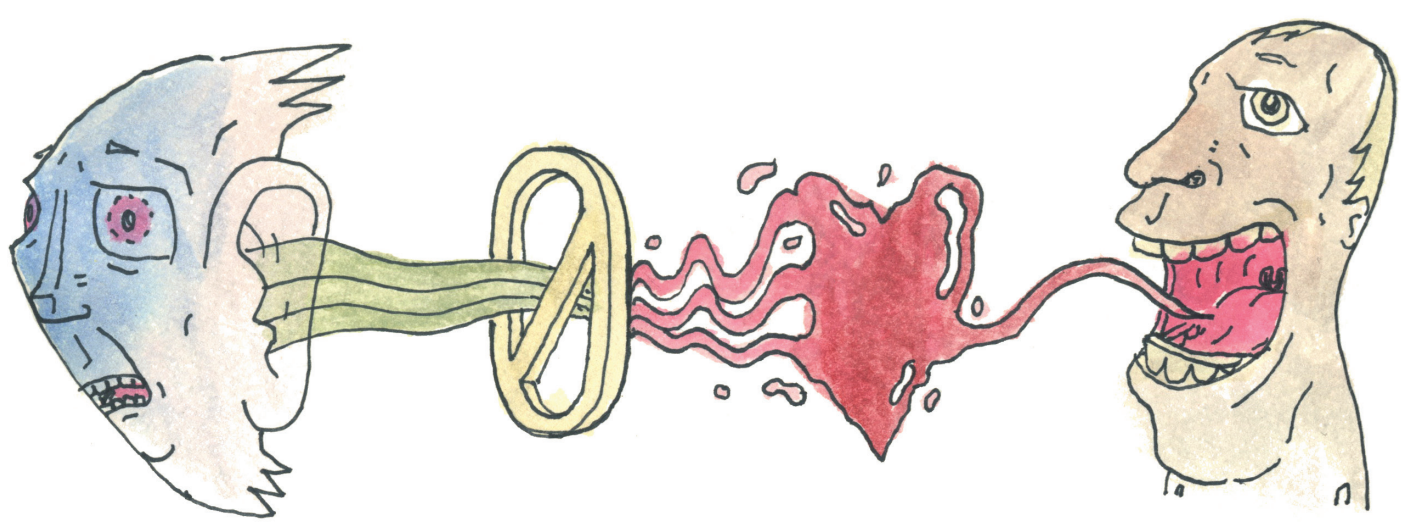
SHRINES (4AD)

A conversation had recently revolved around the idea that music as is understood now is comprised of completely different stuff than genre-mixing. It is not unlikely for a person to naturally be as up on Schoolboy Q as St. Vincent; the spectrum is wide and multihued. Take Purity Ring, whose music owes as much to the future pop of Braids and Bell as it does Clams Casino and DJ Screw. The beats would not be out of place on a Z-Ro album, the lyrics are the mysticism of Bjork. “Grandloves” works for the same reason Usher’s “Climax” works. “Lofticries” is basically a weirder Aaliyah song. This album could be screwed and chopped easily. Shrines is like thowed fairy music.

Twin Shadow

CONFESS (4AD)

Twin Shadow‘s Confess is genius in that it took every sound, melody, and arrangement from every song you loved in the ‘80s and matched it with a dude who is sort of an asshole. Confess is filled with songs you’ve probably slow danced or won a karate or breakdance championship to, but in a good way. “You Called Me” is a song where the character admits that he doesn’t give a damn about your dreams and beckons that she “give it up”, but I feel like she would if she heard the song. You might hear “The One” and think The Cure made a new song. “I Don’t Care” is majestic and grand, and yet when he exclaims how he doesn’t care as long as you dance around the room while he lies, you feel a bit of the romance. Twin Shadow is not about love or commitment, but he is about the moment, and this album is full of songs that are great for the moment when one might say, “Don’t say anything else girl, what time is your roommate coming home?” **FPH**

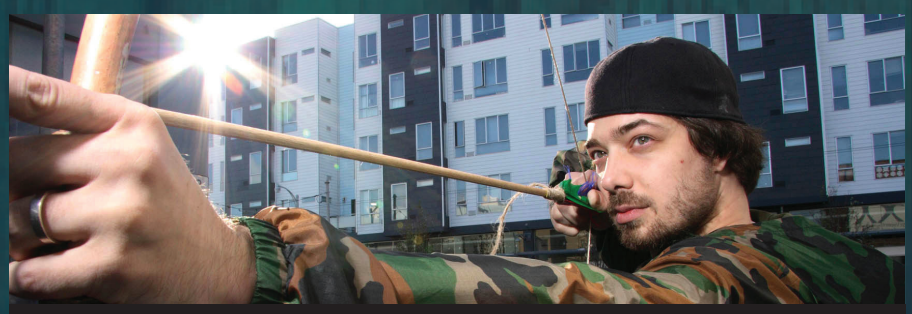


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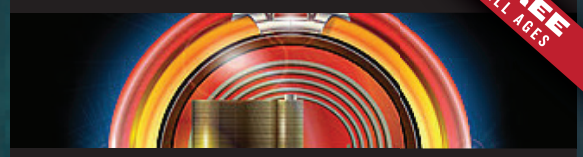
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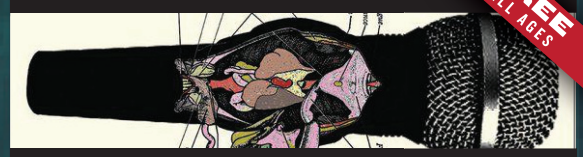
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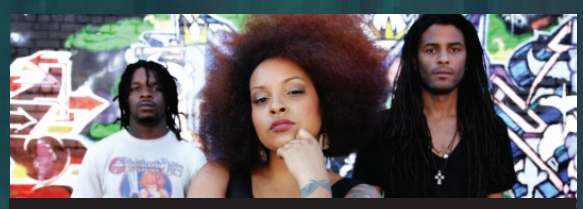
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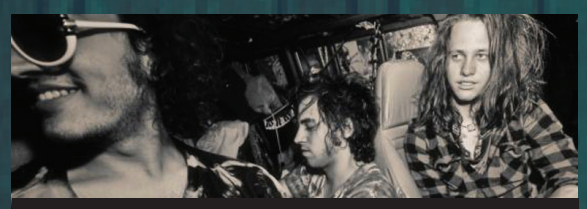
AUG 04 WHEN WE RULED H-TOWN
WITH 30 FT FALL + MANY MORE



AUG 07 THE MEMORIALS
WITH OUTERNATIONAL + MORE



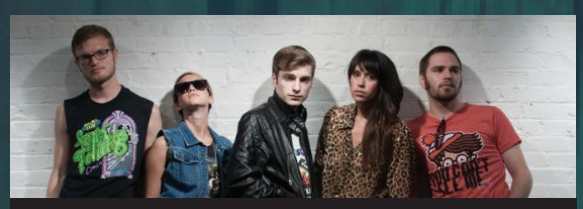
AUG 09 THE PROTOMEN
WITH URIZEN



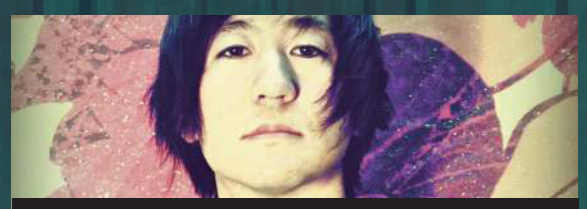
AUG 13 NIGHT BEATS
WITH TBA



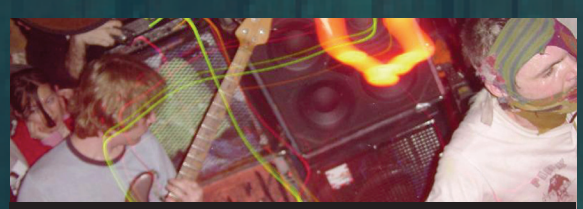
AUG 16 ELIOT LIPP
WITH CEEPLUS BADKNIVES



AUG 17 NEW YORK CITY QUEENS
WITH FEATHERFACE + MORE



AUG 25 KISHI BASHI
WITH THE LAST BISON



AUG 27 LIGHTNING BOLT
WITH TBA



SEP 08 TYCHO
WITH THE ALBUM LEAF



JUL 07 TWO GALLANTS
WITH PAPA

ALSO COMING **MISSION OF BURMA** SEP. 13 | **THE HEAVY** SEP. 14 | **SWANS** SEP. 15
TWIN SHADOW SEP. 16 | **AMANDA PALMER** SEP. 18 | **ETERNAL SUMMERS** SEP. 22
SAUL WILLIAMS SEP. 26 | **YELAWOLF** SEP. 28 | **MENOMENA** OCT. 04

Stephen Bee of Weird Party

PUNK ROCK, PERCUSSION, AND PENIS
BY OMAR AFRA



Stephen Bee on drums
by Marc Brubaker

Since the advent of rock music, heterosexuality has been celebrated and served as subject matter on song after song after song. Whether odes to love or tributes of lust, desire for the opposite sex has been the dominant paradigm. But beneath the surface have always existed gay and lesbian musicians both in (Kirk Hammett) and out of the closet. Despite notable 'out' performers such as Rob Halford, Freddie Mercury, and a legion of lesbians that play Lillith Fair, gay and lesbian contributions have generally gone under the radar and are under appreciated. But alas, here in our lovely city resides Stephen Bee, the unabashedly gay drummer of Weird Party who has recently become engaged to his partner of many years. Bee defies most gay stereotypes, as inaccurate as those may be, and plays drums with the ferocity of three straight males combined. He also looks like the wrong motherfucker to mess with.

What is your earliest childhood musical memory?
Getting Skid Row and Motley Crue CDs for my 9th birthday, and standing out in front of my house pretending to wail along to "Dr. Feelgood" on an electric guitar from Toys "R" Us. My first parent-free-concert was Suicidal Tendencies with Megadeath in '91, and it was all downhill from there.

As silly as this sounds, why do we not know of any other openly gay, masculine as fuck garage rock drummers?
You most likely do, and don't even realize it. Gay isn't an external attribute, and drummers are not typically the focal point of the band anyways. Queer musicians have been a part of the garage/punk music scene since the get-go. From Texas alone, we've had great queer musicians from bands such as The Dicks, Big Boys, and Houston's own Sugar Shack and MyDolls. Outside of Texas, you've got members from the Buzzcocks, The Gun Club, The Cramps, Hüsker Dü, Go!, and so on.

How old were you when you first came out and did you have any fellow musicians that were 'dismayed'?
I came out when I was 21. I wasn't in a band at the time, so no dismayed musicians, but it did shock pretty much everyone that knew me. Most of my friends were amazing and very supportive, which was quite the opposite of what I expected. Being one of the only queer punks (that I knew of) from the local hardcore punk scene at the time made the leap a scary one. Looking back, it was the best thing I ever did, and I honestly don't know what the fuck I was waiting for. Shortly afterwards, I discovered that I wasn't so alone after all. I had met a couple of other queer musicians, and was starting up a local queer punk band, which later evolved into These Borders Were Drawn In Blood.

Have you found any popularly held yet inaccurate conventions about homosexuals and rock music? Do people expect you to be an Erasure fan?
Actually, I am a fan of Erasure, Pet Shop Boys, etc. Most people expect gay musicians to be pretty boys playing pop, or in some sort of leather/denim/shock drag for punk/rock. There's nothing wrong with any of these things, but it's seldom the case.

Has your recent engagement put the kibosh on any recording or touring plans?
Nope. My partner is amazing, and is completely supportive of my musical endeavors.

Weird Party has made some transitions as of recently. What is that all about?
Shelby moved to LA, and we brought Manie from Titan Blood/Hamamatsu Tom on to replace him. It didn't take long for Manie to get up to speed, and we're already churning out new stuff with him. We have a new 7" EP, The Secret Lives of Men out now on Twistworthy records, and a full length LP Hussy due out on Sex & Death in early September.

Okay, back to this whole gay thing. Are you telling me you really don't like boobies? Weren't you breast-fed?
I can appreciate the female form, but they don't do anything for me sexually. Do you mean to tell me you don't like dick?
Editor's Note: Omar loves the penis. He is merely afraid to touch.

But seriously, as we discuss this, I ask myself "Does the fact that this dude is gay have any consequence musically at all? In 20 years will I look at this article and realize I am just picking apart something as trivial as someone's hair color or is this actually cut to the core of who you are?" So, is your sexuality of no consequence at all or is it everything?
My sexuality is a big part of me, and while I may draw influence from it, it doesn't define the music I play. Having to deal with the politics of being queer in today's world definitely does fuel my fire though. I'm hopeful that in 20 years the bigotry of the older generations will fade, and sexual orientation will be a non-issue.

Lastly, is it hard to play in a band that has pretty-ass Dann Miller in it all the while being attracted to men?
It's hard. Real hard... **FPH**



Sexy Dann

In 1994, the trailblazing career of Bill Hicks
was tragically cut short by cancer.
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of it's own legends...



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The Survivor's Dilemma

BY TYLER BARBER

Friendly? Think you would be in a zombie apocolypse? Most people seem to start off well-intentioned, but the world of Day Z has a way of changing people. I went from upstanding citizen of the overturned world—offering bandages, food, water to any fellow survivor in need—to a paranoid, calculating murderer. How can a game alter your playing-style so dramatically? In one made-up term: permadeath. Die in Day Z, and all of your accomplishments are lost forever.

Day Z is a free mod for the military simulation PC game ARMA 2. It's set on Chenarus, one of ARMA's giant maps based off the real-world location. The map itself is nearly 100-square-miles (you read that right), and is sprinkled with small, decaying Russian villages, a few large cities, and an often-sought (ie., very dangerous) military airfield. This is a simulation game, so expect to brush up on your cyrillic alphabet if you plan on navigating the terrain by map.

But before you can actually navigate by map, you need to find one. The first of the three deadly elements in Day Z is the fight for survival. Your character will need to stay fed, hydrated, and kept otherwise healthy. Injuries will bleed-out if left untreated, you can get the shakes from getting too cold, and can be forced to crawl around Chenarus if your legs are broken. Luckily, there are remedies for all these impediments; the only drawback is wherever there's loot, there's zombies, and probably other players.

Zombies, or "zeds" as the rest of the world calls them, are mostly benign in Day Z. They are the second pillar of Day Z's tri-part kill-you-fest, but are the least worrisome. This seems nonsensical at first. Why should a zombie survival game feature non-threatening undead? But a quick reminder of the brilliance of George Romero's Night of the Living Dead is that the undead do not have a monopoly on the horror; the atrocities humans commit against each other echo further in our nightmares than the rotting flesh do. And this is brilliantly present in Day Z.

The third, and by far most dangerous element in Day Z, are other players. Servers host around 30-60 players at a time. Not a huge amount, but just-right for the landmass. You'll welcome the elbow room too, as you'll quickly learn the scariest sight in Day Z isn't a gurgling undead walker, it's a heart-beating human. The most common reaction is to fumble to direct-chat (allows you to talk with other players within earshot), and hurriedly type, "Friendly?". If you're lucky, the reply won't be a bullet in the face, and you've found a fellow survivor with whom to roam.

But it's here, in the human interaction, that the sheer genius of Day Z lies. Game theorists (the maths, not those bullshitting about videogames), would salivate over Day Z's take on the Prisoners Dilemma, the Game of Chicken, or the many other social situations that players can get into. Youtube offers a trove of hilarious-to-insane encounters in Day Z. Robbery from patrolling bandit groups are commonplace, almost trite at this point. More inventive clans have corralled unwitting players into Gladiator-like duels of survival, wherein the winner is allowed in their selective group. Rival clans, revenge killings, thievery, deceit and all manner of deviance is there waiting for players to invent.

Myself, I'm a lone wolf, hardened by many heartless murders by the hands of trigger-happy gamers. Now, when I see other players my response is always the same: "I'm friendly, but my gun is aimed at your head, turn around and walk the other way." I'm a changed man. FPH





Madness & Humanity

The open-ended nature of Day Z practically begs players to organize and create unique gaming experiences. Below are a few examples of breakout gameplay.

The Reddit Rescue Force

Supplies can be hard to come by in Day Z, particularly if you've suffered a broken leg, and are out of morphine (oddly, the fix for fractures). One resource available is the Reddit Rescue Force. I can attest: post your injury, server and game location, and you'll soon have a do-gooder on the way.

Reddit Murder Squad & DayZ Bandit Force

These communities are home to mercenary work and organized crime, respectively. Although I've never made a deal with these devils, I've been tempted to acquire their services for some wanted payback.

Last Church of Elektrozavodsk

30 minutes before each service a server location is posted for the faithful to gather at the Church of Elektro for some Sunday saving. The first service was interrupted ten minutes into the ceremony by bandit fire, killing the priest and organizers of the event.

Kidnapped & Forced to Fight

One of the most bizarre YouTube videos I've seen features a player lured onto a bus by strangers at the promise of a refuge ahead. The player and another random survivor are brought to a camp populated with several players toting really big guns. They're unloaded into an arena of barbed-wire, given hatchets, and are forced to fight to death for survival/the entertainment of those watching.



A group of survivors brandishing their loot.

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Bill Hicks

FAMILY TIES: INTERVIEWS WITH MARY AND STEVE HICKS
BY WILL GUESS, PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE HICKS FAMILY

Few comedians in this world have ever had the status 'legendary' attached to their name. When you left a Bill Hicks show, it wasn't just another night out - he flipped your worldview on its head, made you question your ideals, and left you thinking about your life for days after.

BILL WAS A RARE BREED of human, a guy that comes along once in a lifetime to challenge us to be better. He made you think, he kept you on the edge of your seat, and he was completely fearless. He's one of the few comedians still relevant almost 20 years after being taken from the world too soon and his legacy grows every day. I had the overwhelming pleasure of being able to talk to Bill's mother, Mary, and his brother, Steve, about Bill's life. What follows is a conversation that gives a little more personal insight into the man many of us admire and sincerely miss.

DID YOU NOTICE ANYTHING DIFFERENT ABOUT BILL AS A CHILD?

Steve Hicks: He didn't like to be told what to do. We both used to play baseball and since I was older I tried to tell him how to pitch better. We were both pitchers. I remember being out in our front yard in Nottingham Forest in Houston and I'm teaching (yelling at) Bill to do it this way, try it like that, etc. He threw his glove at me and walked away. I never tried to teach him again. He was always very aware of himself and wanted to do things his way. I think that individuality in his work comes from that trait that always showed up in him.

He was always a nice guy. His whole life he was that way and that was evident from an early age.

WHEN BILL WAS GROWING UP, WHAT KIND OF MUSIC DID HE LISTEN TO?

SH: I remember Kiss and Elvis Presley! When he was 9 or 10, he wanted Elvis records for Christmas.

Mary Hicks: Bill liked Elvis and his music. I'm sure he listened to other artists who were popular then but soon he was playing his own music. He had musical talent, was a good guitar player and he could play the piano.

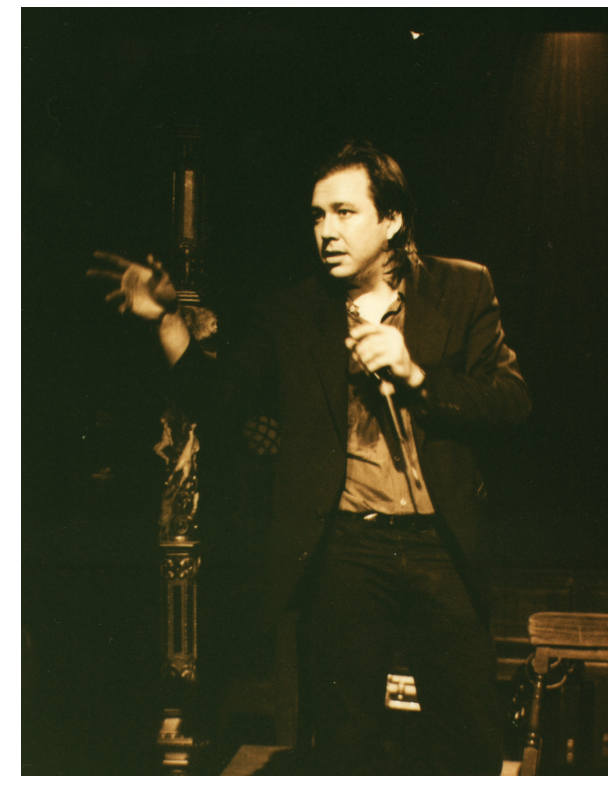
WHAT WERE SOME OF BILL'S FAVORITE PLACES TO HANG OUT IN HOUSTON?

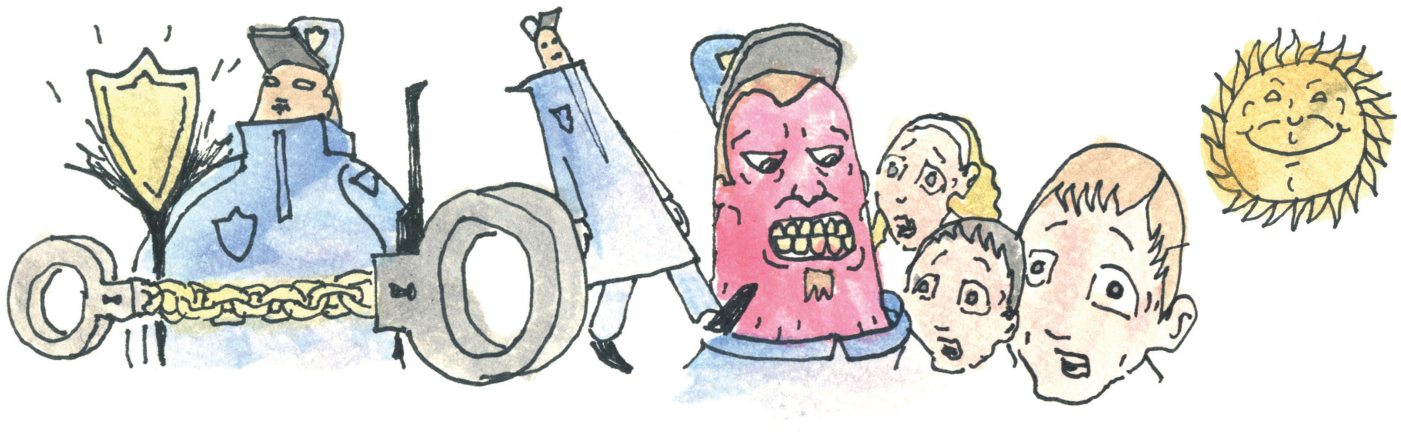
SH: The Comedy Workshop for sure. Also, I know they loved Birraporetti's and I think a lot of his time was hanging with his good friends at his apartment in the Houston House, a high rise apartment building downtown. I don't know if that is still there or not.

WHAT MOMENT DID YOU REALIZE THAT BILL WAS GOING TO BE A CAREER COMEDIAN?

SH: This is a story that's been told often but it is true. When he was maybe 13 or 14 years old, possibly even younger, he would slide jokes under my bedroom door. I would write notes on them about if I thought they were funny or not. Although I had no concept at that time of what it meant to be a comedian, he had clearly found something at that early age that he was passionate about. It wasn't much longer before he was sneaking out of his bedroom window and getting rides with his friend Kevin Booth down to the Comedy Annex in downtown Houston. I think the first time I went and saw him perform there it seemed obvious he was doing "his thing" even in his teenage years.

MH: Since Bill's performance at church camp when he was 13 years old, I have known this was his interest. It didn't make me think this would be his life work.





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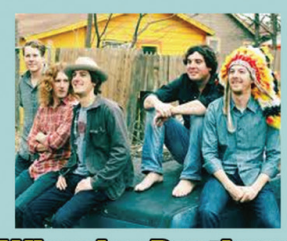
Charles Bradley
and His Extraordinaires



Bomba Estéreo



Toubab Krewe



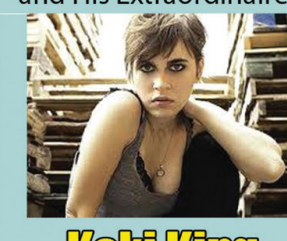
Wheeler Brothers



The Werks



White Denim



Kaki King



Ray Wylie Hubbard



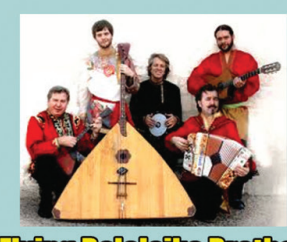
Dana Falconberry



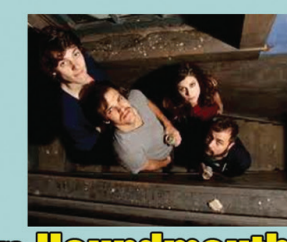
Jitterbug Vipers



Plastics Revolution



Flying Balalaika Brothers



Houndmouth



Sorne



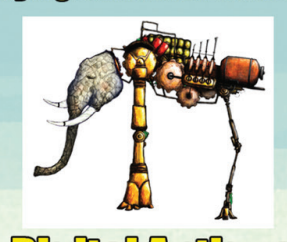
The Dalles



Hard Proof



Sid Fly



Digital Antique



A Live One



Sour Bridges







At this age, if you asked Bill what he wanted to do after high school, he would tell you he wanted to go to Texas A&M and be a veterinarian. As Bill grew older and began performing at the Comedy Workshop in Houston, I still didn't think he was preparing to be a professional comedian. When Bill performed in Houston, he asked us not to come to the club so we didn't go. Maybe not having seen him perform kept the thought of comedy as a career out of mind.

After graduating high school, he and a few comedians put a show together hoping to make enough money for them to move to Los Angeles. They had invited Argus Hamilton, a comedian and Mitzi Shores' right hand man, to be their headliner. Argus was impressed with Bill's performance and called Mitzi on his behalf. Mitzi told Argus to get him to LA. So, one day I found myself at the airport in Houston with Bill waiting for the plane that would take him to LA. I cried; Bill paced. Finally, he asked me to quit crying. He said it was hard for him too but he had to try it and if it didn't work out he would come back to Houston and go to college.

STEVE, I KNOW THAT YOU TRAVELED WITH BILL ON THE ROAD SOMETIMES. DO YOU HAVE ANY GOOD STORIES FROM THOSE TIMES THAT YOU'D BE WILLING TO SHARE?

SH: I went to Chicago to see Bill when he filmed his HBO One Night Stand. Bill wanted to go out shopping and he bought himself a $30 pair of socks. I said, "Man, what are you doing - 30 bucks for socks?" Neither of us had any money to speak of back then, so that seemed very exorbitant to me. He just said, "Hey, if I'm going to perform well, I've got to feel good. Good socks feel good!" So, he bought them. Now when you watch that show again, think of those damn $30 socks!!

WITH ALL OF THE INFORMATION ABOUT BILL CURRENTLY AVAILABLE, THERE IS ALMOST NO MENTION OF HIS LOVE LIFE. WAS THERE EVER A SPECIAL WOMAN IN HIS LIFE OR DID HE REMAIN SINGLE FOR THE MAJORITY OF IT?

SH: Bill had significant relationships in his life. It is not my story to tell. None of the women have decided to talk about that for whatever their reasons are. I have total respect for that and will leave it there.

DESPITE SOME OF THE PUBLIC'S PERCEPTION THAT BILL HAD A GOOD AMOUNT OF "NEGATIVE MATERIAL," DO YOU THINK HIS MESSAGE WAS ULTIMATELY POSITIVE?

SH: Without a doubt. The name of his book is "Love All the People". I think that although there were negative elements to some of the material, the overall message was always positive. If it was negative, there would not be such a connection and growth in his legacy all these years later.

MH: The more I listen to Bill's material, the more I can see his intent was to be positive. He may have taken a circuitous route occasionally, but he came back to hope.

WHAT DO YOU THINK BILL'S LEGACY IS?

SH: You know, it seems to have gone beyond comedy at this point. We have so many people that want to tell us not how funny Bill was, but how much Bill changed their lives, or how he changed the way they look at the world now. He definitely had a way to tap into the bigger picture, bigger issues and that coupled with his warmth and heart is what people connect with in my opinion.

So, I think Bill's talent for conveying these thoughts to others plus the connection with these strong, humanistic traits have made his work transcend the comedy stage. Bill deserves that and we are very proud to be a part of his legacy.

MH: Bill has been called many things- a prophet, a Shaman, a poet and a truthsayer. I have heard him called a humanitarian. I like that because I think it speaks to the fact that Bill was a very caring person. He tried to jolt us awake to see how we are manipulated and hoped we would do something to change things around to a more even society.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE IDEA OF A MONUMENT FOR BILL IN HOUSTON?

SH: I think it would be great. Thanks for trying to get something started there.

MH: I think a monument to Bill in Houston would be amazing.

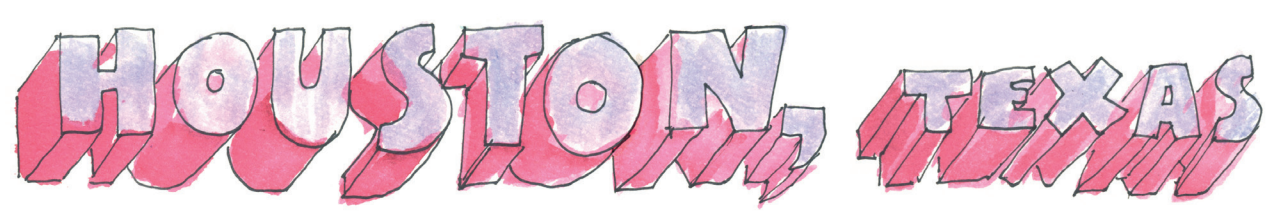
TELL ME ABOUT THE BILL HICKS WILDLIFE FOUNDATION AND WHAT PEOPLE CAN DO TO SUPPORT IT.

MH: The Bill Hicks Foundation for Wildlife was established after Bill's death. It is run by sisters Teri and Lynn Raridon. They do a great job. I am in awe of all they do, which is to take in injured animals and nurse them until they can be returned to their natural habitat. There is a website where people can make donations to help offset the cost of food and medicine and others needs until the animals are ready to be returned to the wild.

ARE THERE ANY GOOD STORIES ABOUT BILL THAT YOU HAVEN'T SHARED BEFORE THAT YOU'D BE WILLING TO SHARE?

MH: When Bill came back to Houston for a visit after being in LA, we met him at the airport. In the car he leaned on the front seat and handed me some newspaper clippings and said "Here is my report card." - Some of his first reviews from LA. **FPH**

You can read the full interview with Mary and Steve Hicks online at freepresshouston.com



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LIVE DJ ON PATIO

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AUGUST 11

METAL MAIDEN
(IRON MAIDEN TRIBUTE)

ROCK TIL YOU DROP
(DEF LEPPARD TRIBUTE)
WITH
ROCKA ROLLA BAND

AUGUST 11

THE FAB 5

"A TRIBUTE TO THE BEATLES AND THE 60S"

• AUGUST EVENTS •

FRIDAYS

AUGUST 3- COUNTRY NIGHT

AUGUST 10- METAL MAIDEN

ROCK TIL YOU DROP, ROCKA ROLLA BAND

AUGUST 17TH- BLUES NIGHT

AUGUST 24- ADEMA, FIVE EYES WIDE, INNER IMAGE

AUGUST- CHROME 44

SATURDAYS

AUGUST 4- SPARE HART WITH BENASTAR

AUGUST 11 THE FAB 5

AUGUST 18- VICTIM

AUGUST 25- BAND TBA

SEPTEMBER

SEP 15- VALLEJO
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"DJ'S"

FRIDAY

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LIVE DJ ON PATIO

SATURDAY

LIVE BANDS INSIDE

LIVE DJ ON PATIO

AUGUST 24

SANTANA TRIBUTE

WITH LA RAZA CONNECTION AND SPECIAL GUEST

AUGUST 25

ALREADY GONE
(IEAGLES TRIBUTE)

ABBEY RODE
(BEATLES TRIBUTE)

DOUBLE VISION
(FOREIGNER TRIBUTE)

YOUR TEXANS FOOTBALL HEAD QUARTERS

• AUGUST EVENTS •

FRIDAYS

AUGUST 3
THE ONS W/ JONAS PURL

AUGUST 10-
ROCK RADIO

AUGUST 17TH- PICTURE BOOK & SHRIMP BOAT

AUGUST 24-
SANTANA TRIBUTE
(LA RAZA CONNECTION)

AUGUST 31- THE REMIX

SATURDAYS

AUGUST 4
BAND TBA

AUGUST 11
ACDC TRIBUTE / POISON TRIBUTE

AUGUST 18
BAND TBA

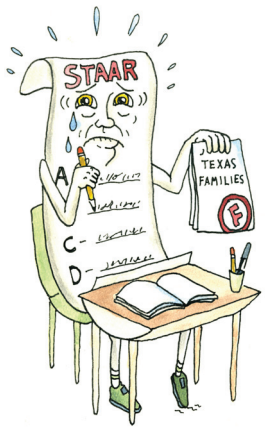
AUGUST 25
ALREADY GONE
ABBEY RODE
DOUBLE VISION

SEPTEMBER
BAND TBA

THE CONCERT PUB Galleria

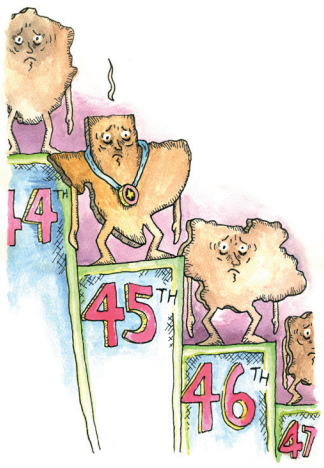
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Texas Education Report Card F-

WHY TEXAS AND RICK PERRY ARE MAKING TEXAS EDUCATION EVEN WORSE
BY AMANDA HART, ILLUSTRATIONS BY TIM DORSEY

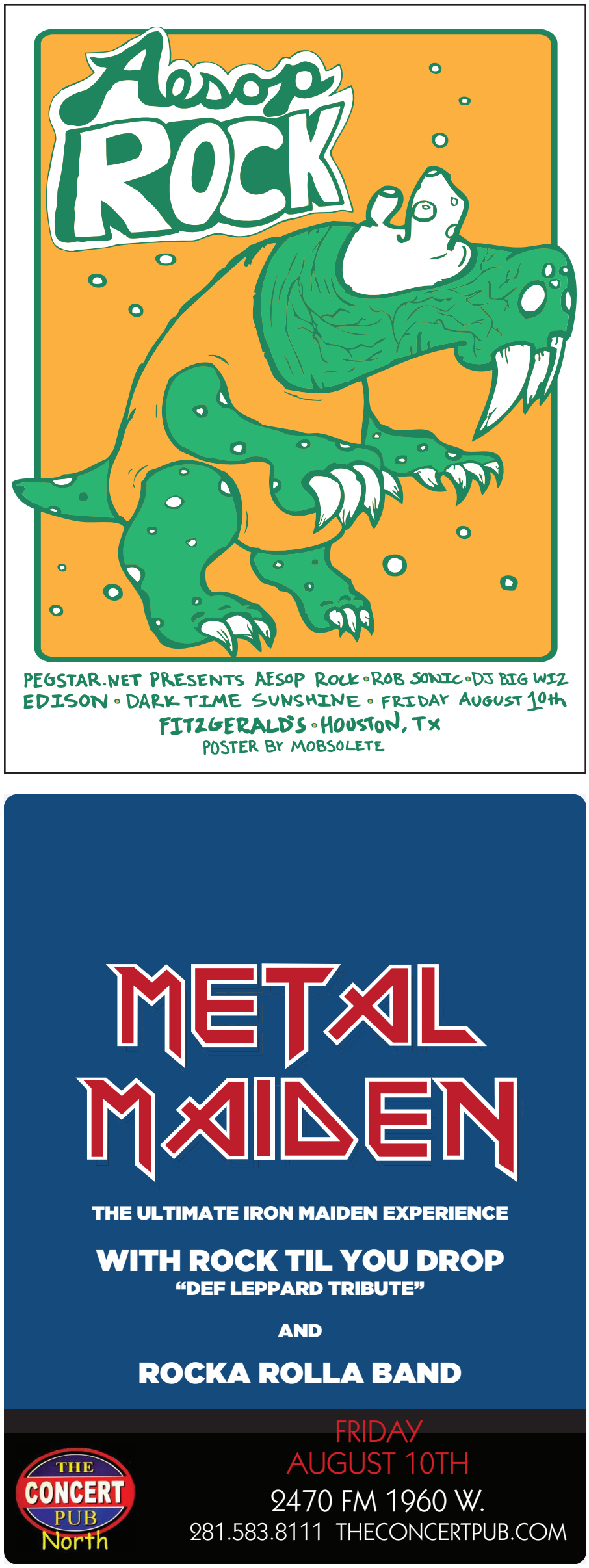
AUGUST IS HERE, and that means that the first day of school for the children of Texas, as well as many of us, is right around the corner. Normally this time of year is accompanied by a sense of excitement and optimism from students and teachers. But just like everything else in Texas, our legislators and their heartless bastard of a leader, Prick Perry, have even managed to take away the enthusiasm that many of us experienced as children as we prepared for that first day of classes. From over crowded classrooms to new nonsensical standardized tests this school year is shaping up to be one massive calamity.

Our school system has been fighting to stay afloat for many years now. Our legislators this past year, however, went all mob style on education and made sure they anchored a couple of cinder blocks to the ankles of the whole system before they dumped it overboard. The effects of cutting 5.4 billion dollars from the education budget is already being felt by our schools and the school year has not even begun. Texas is currently ranked 45th in the nation in regards to funding for our schools, and that was prior to the 5.4 billion dollars in cuts. Maybe this explains why we are also ranked 47th in SAT scores and 43rd in high school graduation rates. The budget cuts that took place have already lead to the loss of over 25,000 jobs including almost 11,000 teaching positions. And when it comes to eliminating teachers and classes, Art and Music classes are the first to begin disappearing. Schools are being forced to implement a charge for students who ride the bus, a fee that ranges between 200 -400 dollars per student per year. Many school districts have been forced to stop offering bus services altogether for students who live within a 2 mile radius of the school. Schools are also beginning to charge parents for students who participate in athletics or other after-school activities. According to Rick Perry and Republican lawmakers, our schools are receiving an adequate amount of money and, “how the money is spent is the bigger issue,” according to Perry. Which would almost be laughable if the following statistic from the National Education Association didn’t make me want to cry: The national average spent per student per year is $11,463. This school year, Texas public schools will spend $8,908 per student, a $538 decrease from the previous year.

Overcrowded classrooms are one of the major issues teachers and students are facing this coming school year. The loss of 11,000 teachers combined with the influx of an estimated 100,000 new students is a recipe for disaster. Just in grades K thru 4th there is a reported 8,479 classrooms that will exceed the 22 student cap per class. This is extremely alarming when you consider the jump from 2,238 overcrowded classrooms from the previous year. Our teachers are having a hard enough time adequately preparing a classroom of 22 students for success. For teachers, this means longer days and nights grading assignments and preparing lesson plans for more and more students. It is common knowledge that a life of teaching is not a well-funded one. We pay them peanuts and expect the world in return. We drop our children off to them on a daily basis and expect them to help us create well-educated, productive members of society. All the while at every turn making their jobs difficult by slashing funding and funneling more and more students into their classrooms.

Besides the under-funding and overcrowding, our teachers and administrations are also being faced with a new high-stakes mandatory standardized test, State of Texas Assesments of Academic Readiness (STAAR), that is set to replace the Texas Assessment of Knowledge Skills (TAKS) for all current students. As if the TAKS test was not already a drain on our students and resources, the new STAAR test requires a brand new testing structure with 12 end-of-course assessments. Students will now have to pass 15 standardized tests as opposed to the four that the TAKS test used to require for graduation. And as an added bonus, the new test will account for 15 percent of a student’s final grade which will have a direct impact on a students GPA and ultimately their admission into college. And if a student fails just one of the 15 exit exams, they will not be allowed to graduate until the test is passed. Standardized tests in the past did not have a time limit for students but just to add to an already stressful situation, students will now have only 4 hours to complete each exam. And the real kicker? Texas spent $400 million in taxpayers’ money to develop the new test. 9th grade students were given the new test right before summer this past school year and the results were disastrous. The passing rate for biology was 41%, algebra 39%, writing 34%, reading 46% , and 40% for world geography. As a result, all students who failed the test were required to attend summer school- a move that caused a sizeable fraction of funds to be spent by school districts that are already strapped for cash. Ultimately, the new test will disproportionately affect economically disadvantaged students resulting in an even higher amount of high school dropout rates. The STAAR exam is, for lack of a better term, one giant bowl of shit stew that is being force fed to our students.Texas legislators seem to have a hard on for standardized testing and as a result are depleting valuable classroom instruction time and needed resources. Creating a herd of test takers will not generate productive members of our society or prepare them for the real world. Theoretically, state tests should be used to identify areas that need improvement, not as a weapon to be wielded against our children and already burdened school system.

It is essential to our future as a community that we produce highly educated and well- round students capable of carrying us forward. But that will never happen if we keep allowing our legislators to hold them back. We need to come together and stand up with our educators and demand better for Texas children and families all across this state. For things to change we need new leaders in Austin that have our best interests at heart. We need to demand that our legislators make education a top priority or we are doomed to fail as a state. You can start by writing a letter in support of Texas teachers and students and mailing it directly to Prick Perry. I’ve conveniently placed his address at the end of this article in big bold letters so you can cut it out and laminate it for future use. Make that shit into a magnet for your fridge and buy some stamps, because there are a million things wrong with this state that need to be brought to the attention of the morons responsible for creating our current chaotic climate. **FPH**


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Dan Sharber

BY RAMON LP4. PHOTO BY JOHN VAN

MOST PEOPLE WHO KNOW ME know that Black Hole Coffee House is my FPH office. The coffee and food is solid, the staff is wonderful, and there are always interesting people hanging around. One of those interesting people is Dan Sharber – the bearded, tattooed, Marxist activist. Yes, as a local member of the International Socialist Organization, he's every hardcore right-winger's personification of evil. Yet, unlike the manner in which the left is often portrayed in right-wing media, Sharber isn't someone who mindlessly spouts off ideology. He has carefully thought through his views, is thoughtful and never arrogant in his responses when challenged, can be critical of the left where he sees it failing, puts his beliefs into action, and, to get away from politics for a second, is just an overall nice guy. When I heard that he and Laura Taylor were moving to Austin, I thought it would be a good opportunity to capture some of his views while he was still in town. Here is a much abbreviated version of our discussion. The full interview will appear online.

WHAT DO YOU SEE WORKING BOTH ON THE NATIONAL SCENE AND IN THE HOUSTON AREA?

Occupy has been very positive in the way it has changed the terms of the debate. The concept of the 99% vs. the 1% is a very powerful one and something that politicians have tried to blur or ignore for a long time. Before Occupy, saying anything about the rich and everyone else got you labeled as a class warrior.

Locally, I think the real positives are coming out of ongoing organizing. Specifically Good Jobs = Great Houston and the Texas Organizing Project (TOP) have been doing some great work recently. Getting more and more people involved from communities of color and other underrepresented groups in the fight for a better and more livable Houston. This excitement has bled over into the fight among Houston janitors for better wages and conditions. These fights by and for the working poor are very important and it's striking how positively they are being covered locally.

WHY DO WE FIND PEOPLE PUTTING ENERGY INTO ISSUES THAT SHOULD NOT BE ISSUES OR IN WHICH THEY ARE BEING MANIPULATED BY FORCES THAT DO NOT HAVE THEIR BEST INTERESTS IN MIND?

[That] has more to do with ideology. A commonly quoted phrase from Marx is that the ruling ideas of any epoch are the ideas of the ruling class. I think you see that play out pretty clearly in society in a general way. For example, you see truck drivers who complain about inheritance tax - people with nothing to pass-on who believe this is an important issue in our country. Or the idea that rich people create jobs and thus tax breaks for them are something everyone who cares about employment should support. These are ideology, not facts.

HOW WOULD YOU ADDRESS THE TEA PARTIER'S CONCERN ABOUT PASSING THE DEBT ON TO FUTURE GENERATIONS?

End the wars and slash the Pentagon budget. There's the money. Further, we can tax the rich at the rates we used to under Reagan (preferably to the tax rates of Roosevelt). Further, this debt stuff is a red herring. We needed MORE deficit spending early in this recession to provide real jobs. Once you buy into the argument [of] "the debt is too high" as the problem, you are halfway to accepting austerity - slashing living standards for working people who didn't cause this problem and massive bonuses for the people who did.

HOW CAN WORKERS FROM THE STATES COMPETE? IT SEEMS THAT GLOBAL CAPITALISM DRIVES DOWN THE WAGES OF THE WORKERS IN THE RICHER COUNTRIES AS COMPANIES MOVE TO LOWER WAGE COUNTRIES IN ORDER TO COMPETE? HOW CAN UNIONS FUNCTION IN A GLOBAL MARKET PLACE?

When there is another class of worker who can be hyper-exploited at a lower rate, it brings down the value of labor everywhere. This has been common throughout history when black workers were pitted against white workers and immigrant workers were pitted against native workers and women workers were pitted against men workers. In all cases, the rates of the less exploited group fell rather than the other way around. Part of the reason the gender wage gap is smaller now (though still obscenely big) is partially because men's wages have dropped, not just that women's wages have risen.

Unions need to be internationalists and the old IWW slogan of an injury to one is an injury to all needs to have real meaning again. I don't have the space to get into this but the unions are in bad shape and desperately need to be rebuilt. There are some bright spots (the Chicago teachers union is one of them) where union reformers are organizing the rank and file but it is going to be a long row to hoe.

HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE YOUR POLITICAL CONVICTIONS, WHAT SHAPED THEM, AND WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE THIS COUNTRY GO?

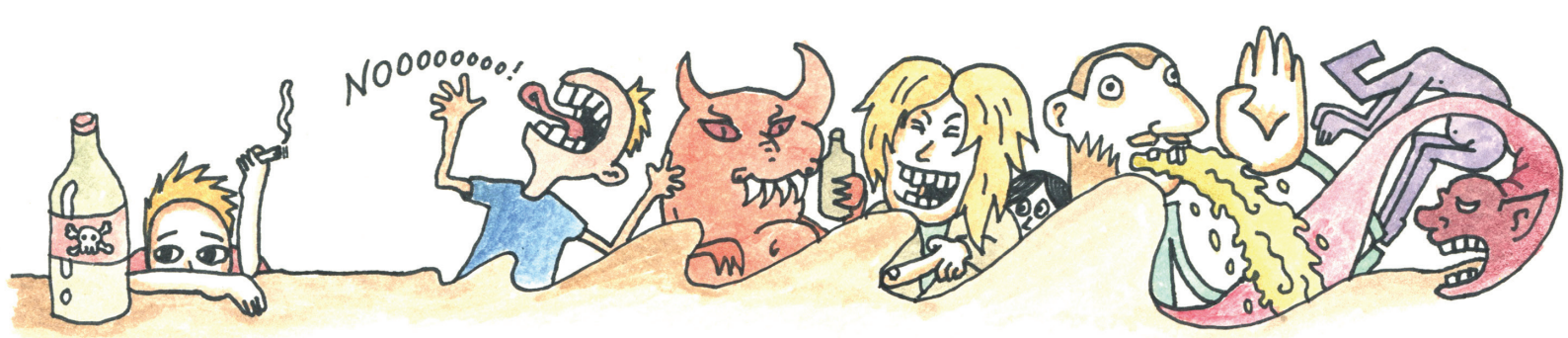
I'm a Marxist. I used to be a solid liberal democrat. I thought if we just elect the right people, things would get better. It never made sense why Dems caved all the time. Likewise, I thought socialism sounded good in theory but that it would never work, that people were too selfish, self-interested, or lazy to make some truly collective society work. [Then] someone made a compelling case to the contrary and I started reading. It became very clear from reading everything from anthropological accounts of pre-class societies to everyday accounts of people in crisis situations that what I believed to be fact was again ideology. There are cases we read about people working together to accomplish a goal or to survive some natural disaster (read eyewitness accounts from the earthquake in Haiti and Hurricane Katrina to see what I mean).

The point is not that people are free-loving hippies all the time but rather that there is no specific human nature. We have the capacity for behaving collectively in an altruistic manner as well as behaving like an asshole who steals from old people. Neither of these defines us. But it is easy to predict how people will behave when compelled to by the economic system we live within. Capitalism as a system encourages people to be self-interested, to be looking out for themselves and their family at the expense of others. We compete for jobs in a country that provides no social safety net. We work or starve. This rewards selfishness and corrodes community. I want to see a true democracy in this country - a democracy where normal people get to make decisions about every aspect of our lives. … Nothing is predetermined but, as a Marxist, I have faith in ordinary people to at some point stand up and say enough is enough. **FPH**

More information about the International Socialist Organization (ISO): www.internationalsocialist.org

For books on all these topics and more: www.haymarketbooks.org

For information on getting involved locally: houstoniso.blogspot.com or email houston.iso@gmail.com



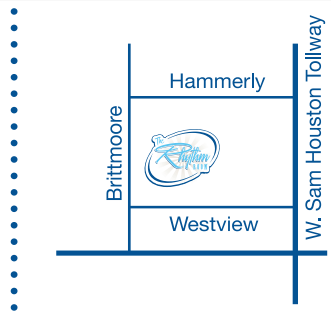




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Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement

BY NICK COOPER, ILLUSTRATION BY SHELBY HOHL, PHOTO BY ERIN DYER

Sometimes, the atheists in the group find themselves quoting the Bible to Christians.



THE MEMBERS OF THE ABOLITION MOVEMENT have been at it for almost 30 years. Since Texas restarted the machinery of execution in 1982, Gloria Rubac, Joanne Gavin, and others have been leading the struggle, and waiting for the rest of Texas to wake up. Gloria is about to become a great-grandmother, and Joanne turns 80 this month, but the younger members of the movement might find it tough to keep up. The group goes to Huntsville several times per month to protest executions, writes letters, lobbies the legislature, organizes with families of convicts, and speaks out at churches, high schools, community centers, prison board meetings, college classes, and civic clubs.

For Norah, who has been with the group for six years, her opposition to the death penalty started in 6th grade when she went to court to see the sentencing phase of Peter Cantu's trial. She remembers the people snickering when Cantu stumbled walking in the room, and the anger all around her. She thought about how many lives were affected, and despite being only twelve, something changed in her — "I was like, this is wrong."

Since then, she has had a friend executed, and has another on death row. She doesn't agree with killing anyone under any circumstance, and sees life without parole as a better choice. As a Mexican-American atheist, she is disappointed by the support for the death penalty widespread among Texas' mostly Catholic Hispanic population for whom the prevailing attitude seems to be "In Texas, we're tough." Sometimes, the atheists in the group find themselves quoting the Bible to Christians.

"For religious people," says Gloria, "it's important to know that most major religions have come out against the death penalty, and there are different passages and leaders you can quote."

Other people are only concerned by the cost factor, and it's important to demonstrate how life in prison is much cheaper than death row. Some people are most affected when they learn how the death penalty is unfair to poor people, about all the former death-row prisoners that have been exonerated and freed, or the racism involved.

"Lynchings are now legal," says Gloria. "The racism that goes on from the cops, to the DA's, to the judge, to the prison guards, to the wardens is just overwhelming."

She speaks of her own turning point, "In 1968 when Dr. King was assassinated, I was so upset I walked to a bar to have a drink. When I got to the bar, people I thought were my friends were celebrating. I walked out, went back to my dorm and thought a long time, and I figured out there's a line in the sand and sure wasn't going to be on the side with those people."

For Joanne too, the struggle is part and parcel with anti-racism. "It's the new slavery," she says. "The thirteenth amendment moved slavery from the private to public sector. Texas alone pays not one cent for prison labor."

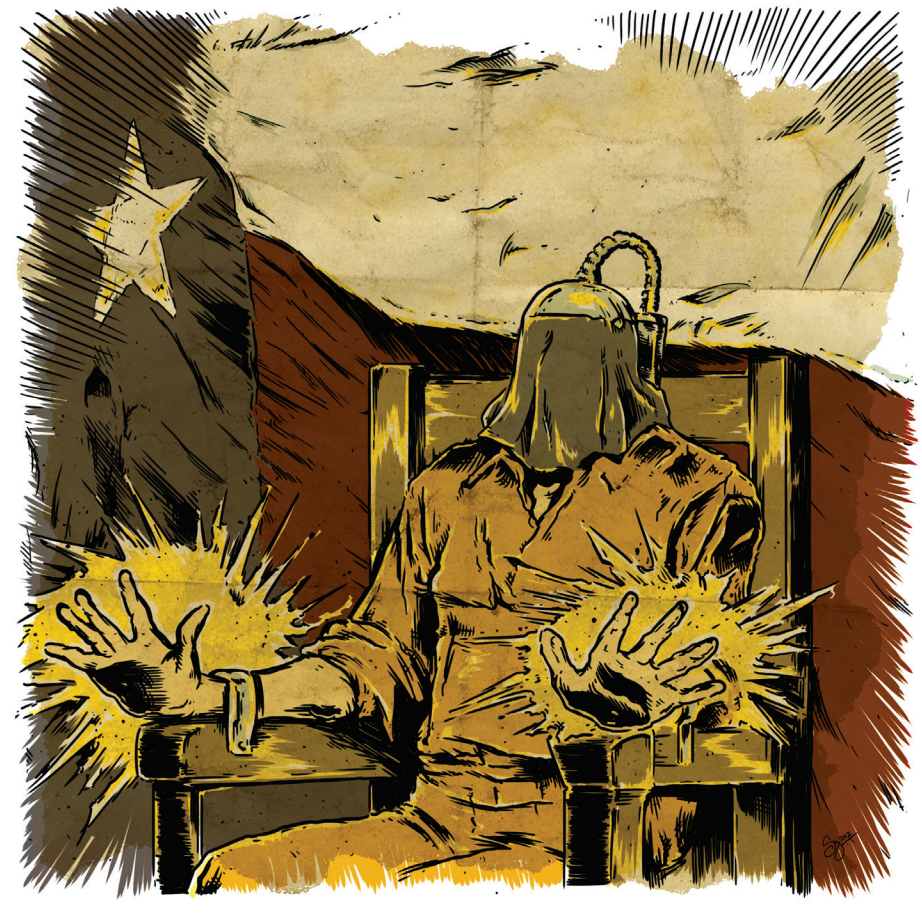
Recommending the book 'Worse Than Slavery' by David M. Oshinsky, she continues, "when people owned slaves, they at least had a stake in the lives of their slaves, but those who were leasing prisoners would just work them until they died … Take a look at the fields of any Texas prison and you see the 21st century version."

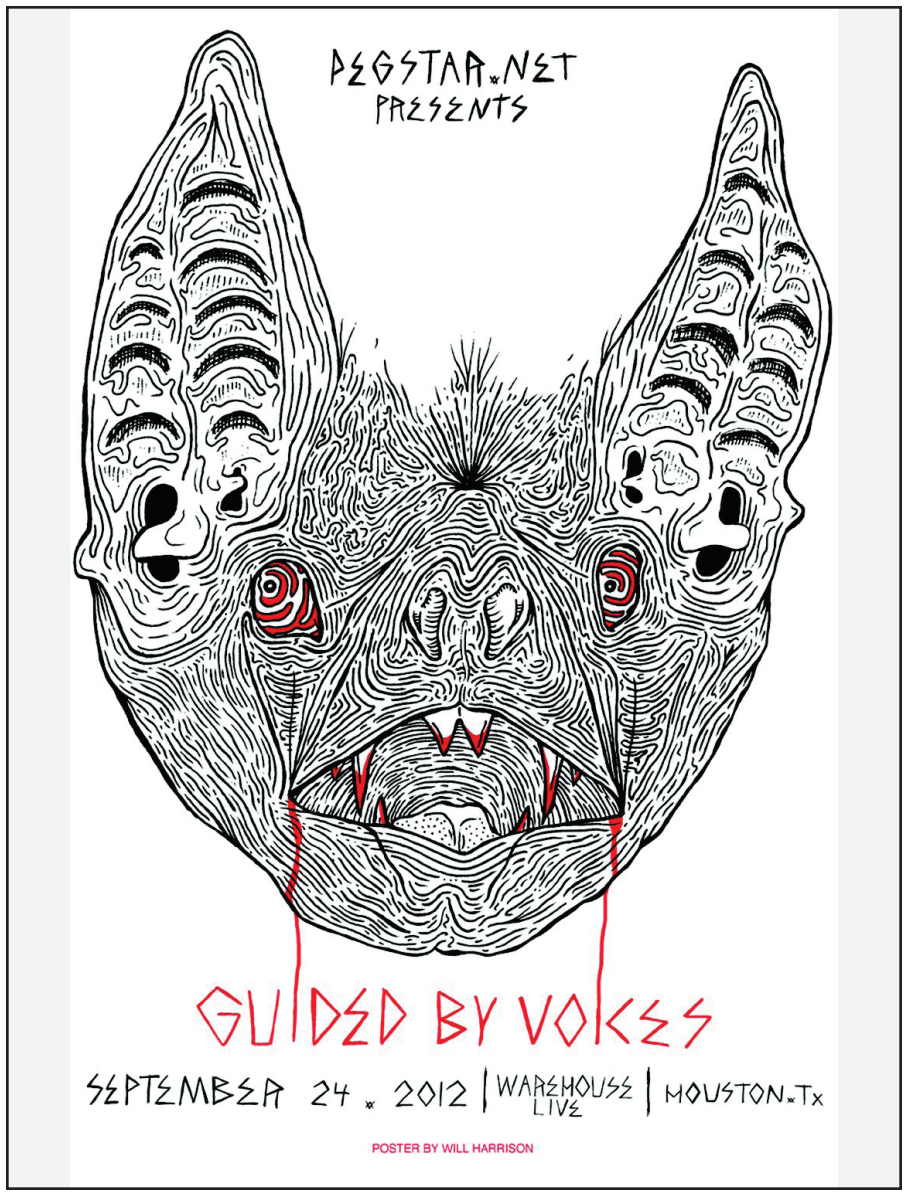
At the July meeting, a group of ten met at the Shape Community Center. Gloria began speaking about correspondence and news she had received. She talked about the problems of a prisoner named Jamie McCoskey who, due to the policy of not allowing wheelchairs on death row, is forced to crawl around his cell or to his meetings with visitors. His knees are red with large sores in the middle.

Next, long-time activist Sensei and his friend Massai arrived. Massai is the son of Carl Hampton, a Black Panther Party affiliate who was shot and killed without provocation by a police sniper in 1970. Massai had spent many years in prison, and spoke about his years in "administrative segregation" (aka solitary confinement), where prisoners were often offered a way back into the general population: snitching on other prisoners. The others in the room listened carefully, respectfully. This man had experienced something most of them couldn't imagine.

Then came the practical part of the meeting – "Who can go to the next executions in Huntsville?" "Who can go to a protest in support of a prisoner in Bastrop?" "Who can go to the Texas Prison Board meeting in Austin?" "Does anyone know any doctors, professors, ministers, or any other 'respectable' people that can write letters to the parole board about this wheelchair policy and other matters? Because they're not listening to us." **FPH**

For more info, contact: gloriarubac@yahoo.com




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Keep Calm & Carry On?

NO THANKS. I'D RATHER RAISE HELL AND CHANGE THE WORLD.
BY AMANDA HART, PHOTOS BY SEIU

WE'VE ALL HAD THOSE DAYS driving down I-45 when we happen to look over and catch a majestic sunset framing our city skyline. Those soaring buildings, on some level, validate our incredible human ingenuity. However, a recent dispute between the property managers and the workers who clean those same buildings reminds us that every step we've taken forward as a species always seems to be followed by several steps backwards.

A six hour work day in the life of Maria Teresa Lopez, a janitor who works at Greenway Plaza One here in Houston, consists of cleaning approximately 100 toilets/urinals, 55 sinks, 22 large mirrors and taking out the trash for an entire floor. She works 30 hours a week at $8.35 an hour which equates to barely $9,000 a year after taxes. That's not a living wage; it's a bargain buy of human labor at twenty-two cents per bathroom fixture. Conceivably, multibillion dollar corporations such as Chevron, Hines, Exxon Mobil, Brookfield, Shell Oil and JPMorgan Chase likely spend more money on the toilet paper they use to stock their bathrooms than the wages they pay their janitors.

Hundreds of Houston janitors were forced to go on strike after employers punished them for fighting for a living wage in an attempt to raise their families out of poverty. The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) currently represents approximately 3,200 Houston area janitors. The janitors' union contract was set to expire on May 31st and negotiations leading up to that date were not well received by the building owners and their contractors. Houston janitors asked for a well-deserved and yet modest raise to just $10 an hour that would be phased in over a four year period. However, the building owners and their contractors responded with just a fifty cent raise over the next five years. The unionized janitors refused the counter offer and were immediately greeted with intimidation and harassment at the hands of their employers. Almost as soon as bargaining broke down, contractors began to punish, threaten, and even fire workers believed to be union activists. This instigated the janitors to authorize a city-wide unfair labor practice strike. According to janitor Lidia Aguillon, "We're striking because we have no other option. We can't make ends meet on what we are paid, and when we stand up for ourselves, we're punished and harassed." Aguillon and her coworkers from Williams Tower joined the strike in its third day and have been on strike ever since.

In Houston almost 500 janitors from 43 different buildings are on strike, and every day their numbers continue to propagate.

Smart Start!

Legacy Montrose Clinic
"Back to School Bash"



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9:00 am to 2:00 pm

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Immunizations Cards

Photo ID

Birth Certificates for Each Child

Copy of 1 Month Income

Copy of Electric Bill

A Healthy Head Start!

Mark your calendar for a day of healthy family fun. We can help you start the new school year off right. Here's what to expect:

- Free immunizations for first 300 youth
- Free back packs and school supplies for first 300 youth
- Free haircuts for first 100 youth, compliments of Satori Salons
- Free Food! Enjoy a warm meal, compliments of Hughes Hangar AND take home groceries, courtesy of The Houston Food Bank
- Schedule your school or sports physicals at a reduced rate
- Assistance with signing-up for Medicaid, CHIP, WIC, and Lone Star cards (food stamps)
- Free vision and dental screenings for youth
- Free glucose and blood pressure screenings
- Fun activities for kids
- Additional social service agencies
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MANGO'S

MON.13TH - THE ENERGY, WYMYN'S PRYSYN, EXTERMINATING ANGELS

EARLY WARNINGS

AUGUST 26TH - Something Fierce 10" Record Release Show and Tour Kickoff w/ The Occult Detective Club and more @ Mango's
SEPTEMBER 28TH - American Sharks, Cartright and The Flesh Lights + more @ Mango's
SEPTEMBER 28TH - Indian Jewelry w/ The Wiggins + more @ Walter's
OCTOBER 13TH - Co-Pilot and Alaskan East Coast Tour Kickoff @ Mango's
OCTOBER 31ST - The Front Bottoms and Cheap Girls + more @ Mango's

However, the scope of this fight is no longer only centralized to Houston or even Texas for that matter. Currently the strike has spread from the Gulf coast to both the East and West coasts along with multiple cities in-between. Janitorial picket lines have been established in Oakland, Seattle, Minneapolis, Washington, San Ramon, Boston, Denver and Los Angeles. And seeing as the SEIU represents more than 150,000 janitors nationwide, solidarity seems to be their powerhouse. Strategic solidarity is one of those magical tools that the working class can wield as a scalpel and the effects feel more like a sledgehammer. This might explain why here in Texas, corporations have so ruthlessly fought to not just keep unions from forming but likening the term "union" to that of a dirty unspeakable word.

After almost three weeks of building managers refusing to even come to the table for another round of negotiations, civil disobedience came knocking on their door. In 1963, while confined to a jail cell in Birmingham, Alabama, the godfather of civil disobedience Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. poetically identified why civil disobedience is a necessity when he wrote, "Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored." And this is exactly what occurred on the streets of Houston in the early afternoon of July 18th when 15 people, myself included, strategically blocked the intersection at Smith and Bell. This particular intersection happens to be directly in front of the Chevron Building and around the corner from the Exxon Mobil and Brookfield owned buildings. Yes it was planned and 15 of the 16 people arrested that day arrived with the intentions of leaving in the back of a police car. One of the arrestees, who had no intentions of being arrested that day, was specifically targeted by the police due to her direct involvement with SEIU.

The protest began at 1100 Louisiana where over 250 janitors, their families, and community members marched their way towards the very buildings that insist on perpetuating poverty in our city. As we approached our designated intersection nervous and excited glances were exchanged between us all. Simultaneously, as the light turned red and the crosswalk man blinked "yes" in our direction, someone shouted, "Go!" The 14 of us darted for the middle of the intersection, linked arms, created a perfect circle, and began singing the old hymn, "We Shall Not Be Moved."

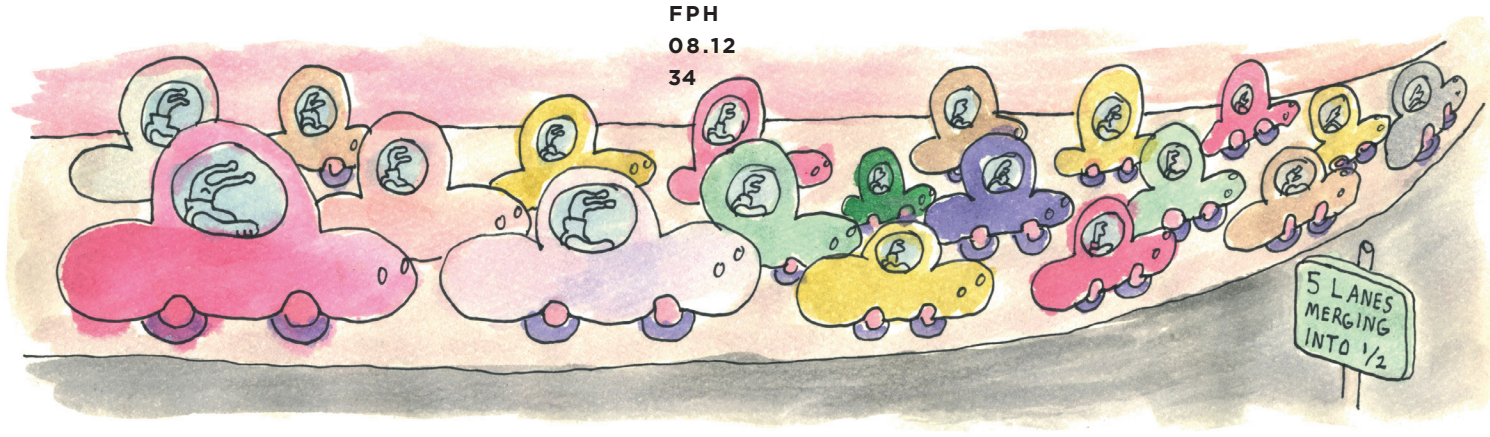
The crowd erupted with chants and cheers as the police scattered in all directions to try and regain some amount of the control they so obviously felt they had lost. For over 30 minutes we sat strongly linked together singing to the buildings, the workers, their employers, each other, and the sky. As the police gathered their zip ties and paperwork and prepared to arrest us, a sense of solidarity and strength was etched on each and every face around me.

I, personally, cannot recall a time in my life where I felt more connected and inspired by so many people that I didn't know. It became apparent that this action, while specifically linked to the plight of our local janitors, was something far larger and more significant to humanity as a whole. If one of us is suffering and we sit back and allow it or wait for someone else to do something about it nothing will ever change.

One by one, we were arrested and loaded into cop cars and a paddy wagon and transported first to city jail and later to county. Being in an environment that is specifically created to dehumanize and punish people fostered a highly personal experience for each and everyone one of us. One general consensus that did emerge after we were released and reunited was that our prison system is extremely broken - so broken, that it warrants its own article or five. Being in jail, for me, was life altering in ways that I am just now beginning to explore and process. It is a societal system that is failing and targeting very specific communities. Currently I feel as though the issues regarding our prison system are bigger than language, and any attempt on my part to put it into words would not do it justice. I think this is in part because this particular societal injustice does not have a clear cut solution. It is one of those problems that imprint a sense of helplessness on your soul and is not what this particular article is about. This article is about solidarity and proving to Houston, our nation, and the world that change is possible. It is only when we stand together and make sacrifices for the benefit of others that we will truly begin to have a better quality of life. **FPH**







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