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May 2011

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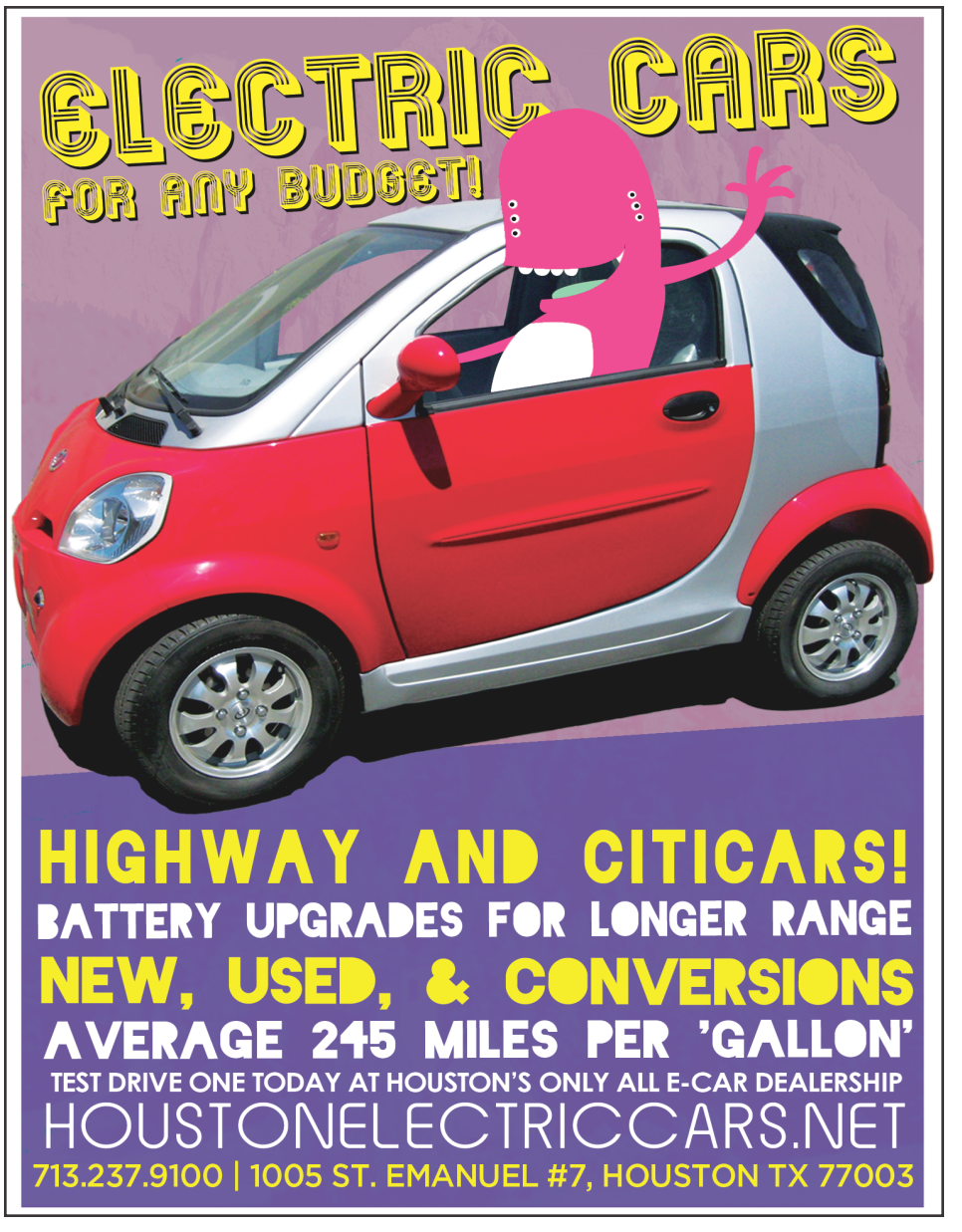
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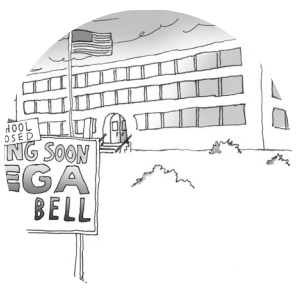
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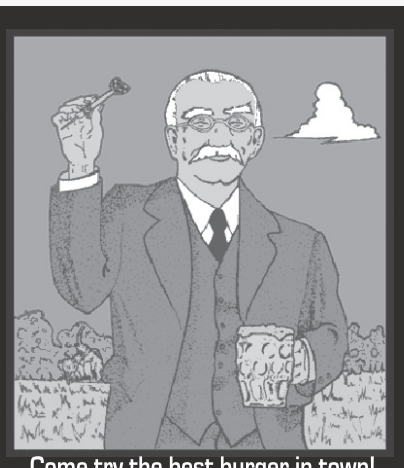
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13 August 83, Staci' s Edge, 3 Kisses, Luxurata

14 Caveman Electric, Society Of Bandits, A Hospital in Texas

15 Ivan & Alyosha

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LET'S NOT START SUCKING EACH OTHER'S DICKS JUST YET

My best buddy Bruce and I started a band early on in high school and signed up for the talent show because there was a cash prize and we wanted to show our mastery of the pentatonic scale. We were only sophmores yet my friend and I had a head start on many other kid's as we had been playing music together at that point for several years and were relatively tight compared to other kids. We played 3rd in a line of seemingly endless novices who cried as they were booed off stage. The packed high school auditorium was full of unforgiving adolescents. Bruce and I high fived each other because we knew we had this one in the bag. But just before the competition ended, a 15-year old 6 foot tall -tall gorgeous Latina walked on stage and sang 'Sabes' with a soprano voice that would make Celine Dion herself blush. She tore the roof off the place and won. People were crying. Myself included.

MORAL OF THE STORY NUMBER 1

Never prematurely congratulate yourself.

MORAL OF THE STORY NUMBER 2

Where is that girl? I should have hollered at her.



Punch the Clock

BY BUFFALO SEAN

DON'T LET THEM TELL YOU TO STOP SINGING. Even if you're working at the register of a McDonalds and there are thirty people in line. Even if the cops have you in cuffs on the side of the highway. Even if you're lying in bed at 2 am. A little sketch of Sonic the Hedgehog on the edge of an envelope, seventeen paper swans made out of receipts, witty asides posing as facebook statuses; don't let anyone get you down.

Look out at the city lights on the horizon and watch the rat race relentlessly churning. Aching for a piece of the action is a good thing; go out and find your kind. They may be down the street or across mountains and seas. Settling for the familiar will guarantee your unhappiness. That goes for lifers in small towns and BMW drivers from Sugarland. Settling in for the dirt nap is so far away that there is no way to justify limiting yourself to what you already know. Late at night, from a hovering vantage point, desires and dreams swim to the surface of the psyche.

Singing in the shower is worthwhile, even if you never sing on stage. For every moment of daydreaming, count yourself lucky to be one of those who may shift society with inventions, art, music or words. As life runs laps around you, rediscovering a sense of whimsy and wonder will buoy you along when all hell is breaking loose. Too many minds have been numbed by the relentless anxiety of the world bearing down on their creative drives. For every person who picks up a guitar, a brush or a pen there are ten setting them down. A new job, a new child, a new mortgage, a new disease. A million little things can shut down a restless mind yearning for love and life outside of the mundane.

Changing your mind is a right, changing others' minds is a challenge. You won't do the same thing forever- and today might be the day to start anew. There are good reasons to break a few eggs on your way to finding yourself. It may take weeks, months or years to figure out that something is wrong for you. Don't hesitate to carve a new path. Concrete ambition is admirable, but it is no substitute for the personal moments that swell in the memory like ripe fruit. Turn on a dime- and be willing to accept the consequences. Sometimes you may not be able to get away from it all; but if it is only a moment's rest staring out the window of a moving car looking at the strip malls and suburbs flying by with no end in sight, savor it. **FPH**

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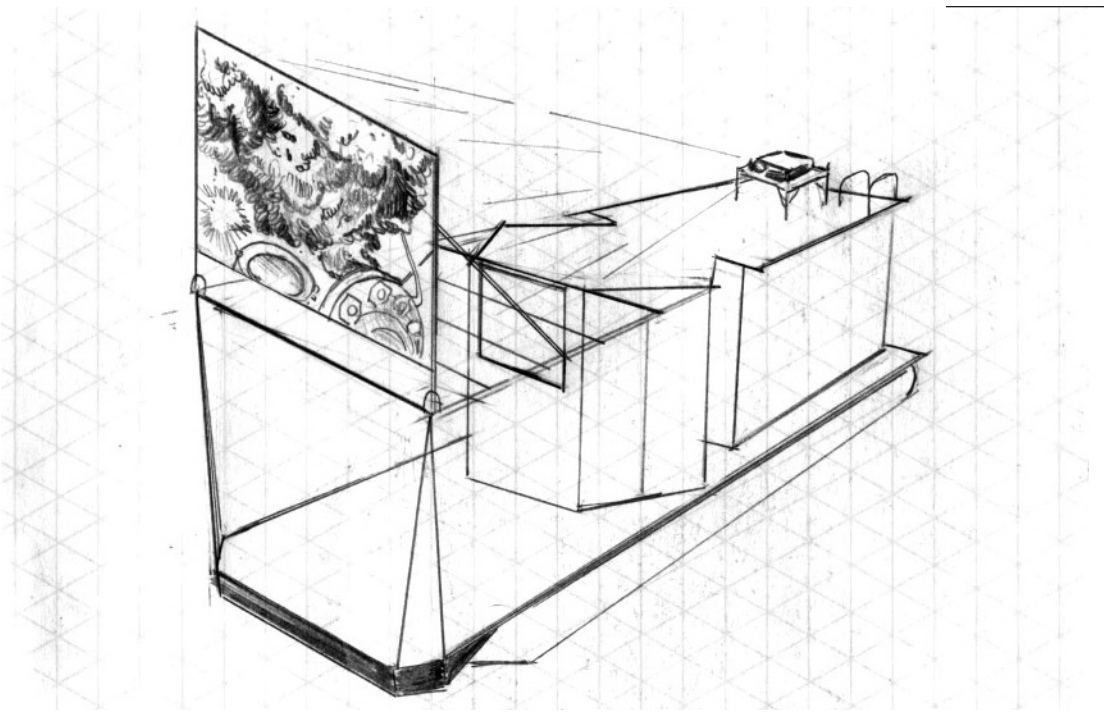
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Tex Hex



Ever dream of cruising up and down the bayou in your very own self-contained, energy-efficient, solar-powered barge? Well, starting May 21 (art car weekend) you may just catch a glimpse of TEX HEX, the floating interpretive research platform created by the sculpture collective Simparch,

IN ASSOCIATION WITH the Center for Land Use Interpretation (CLUI) and with the support of the UH Cynthia Woods Center for the Arts, the Buffalo Bayou Partnership, and the CLUI's Inland Waterways initiative. Used as a live-aboard structure to develop and refine self-contained and energy efficient living systems which include solar power and water treatment technologies, TEX HEX addresses the challenges unique to locations such as urban drainage channels.

Of course, what live-aboard, self-contained, energy-efficient, solar powered bayou cruiser would be complete without a big screen to project your favorite films and spread your eco-manifesto to the people? With an integrated folding screen and projection system which enables recorded and live video to be viewed while moving or stationary, this vessel is also a mobile public address system.

Made from a refurbished aluminum pontoon boat, TEX HEX gets its name from the hexagonal shapes that recur in the ship's design and the hexagonal molecular form of petrochemicals, linking the physical and conceptual elements of the project. No prizes for where they got the idea for the first part of the name. While it might have only enough room for a crew of 4-6 people, the projector, screen, generator, and speakers, the boat is effectively a floating cinema that comes to the audience.





On Saturday May 21, in an event billed as Tex Hex Pop Up Cinema: Past Forward, the mobile cinema will make her way along Buffalo Bayou from Tony Marron Park to downtown Houston. First stop and screening on this one night event will be Tony Marron Park, 808 North York, in the East End. While the second stop has yet to be announced, the final stop will be at 1011 Wood Street, in downtown Houston, behind the CultureMap offices, where I will be looking forward to the amphitheater style seating that will be available for the 8:30pm showing. More importantly, there will be refreshments provided by a certain local brewery. Oh, and cupcakes, and local food trucks, and art cars on display.

The films have been selected by curator and filmmaker Deborah Stratham an Artist in Residence at the University of Houston Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts. The 70-minute film program, Visionary Transport, encompasses artistic takes on car culture and features works by Kenneth Anger, Buckminster Fuller, Buster Keaton and Amanda Pope amongst others. Stratham describes the program as "all the films from a not-so-distant place in the past, when the best and the brightest produced something that was politically or technologically forward thinking, but is now obsolete, retro, or has left behind major ecological or economic baggage."

If you can't wait, sneak peek preview screenings will take place along Buffalo Bayou the week leading up to May 21. Locations will be announced via the Mitchell Center's Facebook and Twitter feeds. FPH

Tex Hex Pop Up Cinema: Past Forward – one night only, May 21 along Buffalo Bayou between Tony Marron Park (808 North York) and CultureMap (1011 Wood Street). Final Screening at 8:30pm. All shows are Free.

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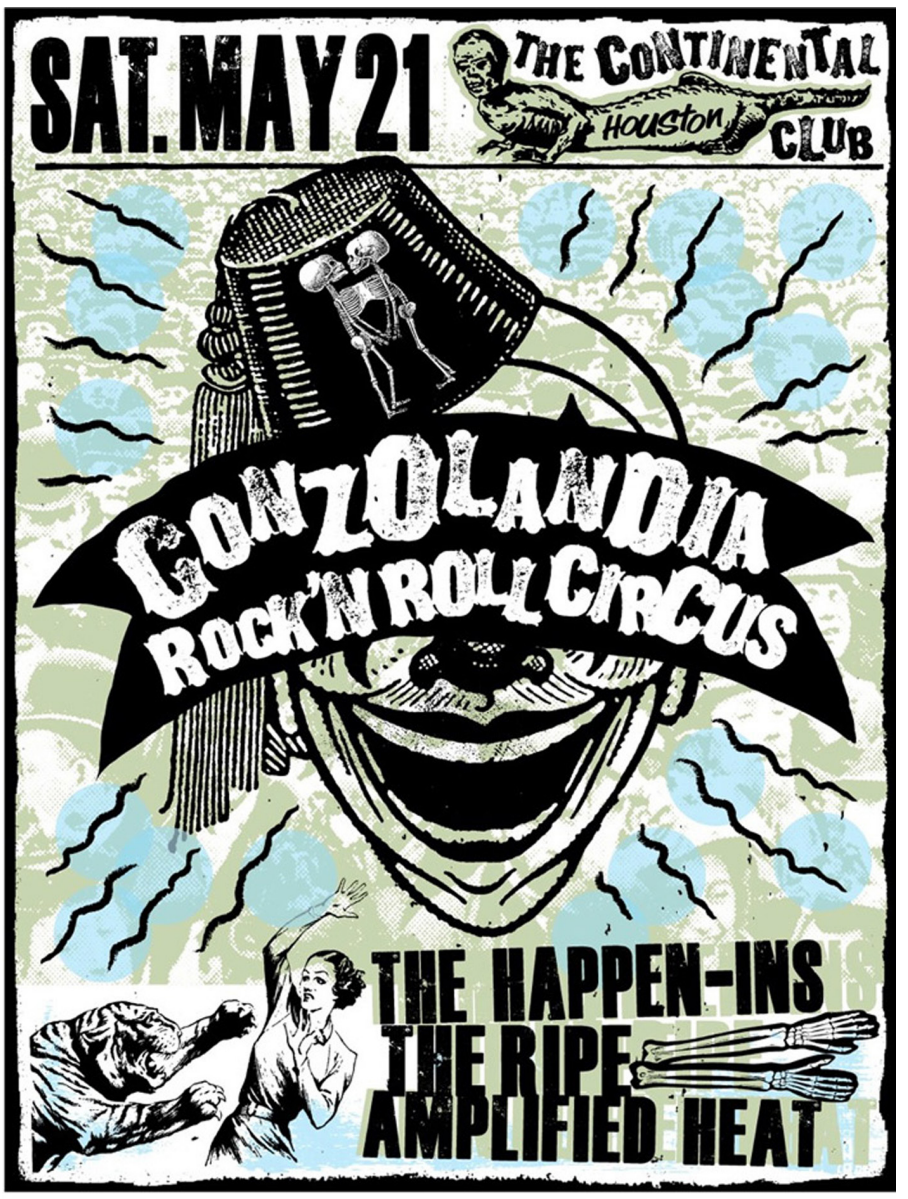
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Under the Influence

BY MICHAEL BERGERON



SQUARE GROUPER EXAMINES the social and economic impact of marijuana smuggling in Miami and Flordia in the 1970s. This documentary from director Billy Corben divides its areas of exploration into three distinct sections: the Ethiopian Zion Coptic Church; the Black Tuna smuggling gang (a name devised by the press); and a small town called Everglades City where nearly everybody who lives there is a smuggler.

Free Press Houston caught up with Corben, along with SG's producers Alfred Spellman and Lindsey Snell, as well as one of the docu's participants Robert Platshorn, at the recent SXSW Film Festival. Platshorn, one of the Black Tuna gang, just finished a 30-year prison sentence for his involvement in marijuana smuggling. Platshorn notes that one of the members of Black Tuna fled prosecution in the late 70s and recently returned to the country, and is now due to go before the same judge that presided over the original trial.

Watching the events unfold in Square Grouper it becomes obvious that up until a certain point the government wasn't concerned with the flow of drugs into Florida. "A lot of the facts came from our research when we were doing Cocaine Cowboys," says Spellman referring to their 2006 documentary that also examined the economic impact of the millions of dollars produced and laundered and reinvested in Miami during the heyday of drug importation. "Pot was too bulky and cocaine was much more lucrative. Billy and I shaped this pot-prequel to Cocaine Cowboys out of all the stories we'd heard."

If you're familiar with television newscasters (some of whom went national) from 1970s Florida you'll recognize Steve Croft or Mark Potter interspersed with a 60 Minutes segment that took on the Coptic Church. Corben points out "There's a whole generation of news footage from the ¾inch era that just disintegrating."

The Everglades City segment was an area that Corben and the film's producers had become acquainted with during CC. For the Black Tuna segment Snell had contacted Platshorn who'd just gotten released in late 2008. Regarding the Coptic Church seg, Corben states: "If you lived in South Florida during that time, Brother Love and the Zion Coptic Church are infamous characters. That's what people remember about that era."

The biggest challenge was Everglades City. "We had researched it extensively but it terms of getting access it was a long process," says Corben. Snell spent half a year making trips there trying to get the trust of the approximately 500 people who live there. A previous series by newsman Mark Potter in 1982 had closed the doors of the town to publicity of any kind. Lindsey tells me "I had a knife pulled on me once. There's no mayor, there's no city council." Actually there is a mayor, Lindsey quips, but it was going to the one local bar day after day and making friends with the older men of the town that enabled them to finally gain their acceptance.

If you look at Everglades City on Google Maps "you have to zoom all the way in just to see the land in middle of all that swamp," advises Corben. "If you want to charter an air boat ride, or get all you can eat stone crabs fresh out of the traps the people are friendly. But when you start asking questions about the extraordinary smuggling history of this town – it's not just pot, it's exotic animals, rum running during Prohibition, immigrants."

Platshorn adds how marijuana smugglers up to a certain time got a lenient maximum sentence. "We had no prior criminal activity and when we were caught we thought at worse we'd face a three to five year sentence, with some of the charges dismissed. That was the atmosphere of the time. The government had never used the Kingpin statute (US Code Section 848) for marijuana. They hadn't used Rico charges against marijuana. They were using conspiracy charges that allowed them to use hearsay.

When Platshorn first saw the name Black Tuna it was part of the prosecutions make believe scenario. "It was on the press release when we were arrested. A couple a days later my lawyer went to view evidence at DEA headquarters and they had a door with a sign that read Black Tuna War Room." Adds Platshorn "I never called my self Black Tuna and I certainly wasn't at war with anyone. You go into a surreal mode. The trial was sensationalized; there were headlines for months." Platshorn now proudly wears a gold tuna emblem on a chain around his neck; he's also a contributing writer to the magazine High Times Medical Marijuana, mostly medicinal related articles about seniors.

So what does Platshorn think of the way society has come around regarding marijuana, what with legit smoke shops and constant references in films and television shows. "Well that was going on when I went away. I used the time in prison to finish a book. I wrote it in the prison law library on a manual typewriter a couple of pages at a time. Every time the guard came by I put a legal document over it. When I got out of jail I was on a book signing tour and in San Francisco I stepped outside the bookstore for a cigarette. There was a group of over 100 people who were there in support and openly smoking pot. That freaked me out because I thought they would all be arrested. They were standing in the sunshine with the police all around enjoying their marijuana. It took me a couple days to get over that."

Square Grouper offers plentiful food for thought and more pot smoke than Pineapple Express and all the Cheech and Chong movies combined. After the film festival route and brief theatrical, Square Grouper is out on DVD. **FPH**

Also On

IN ITS FIFTH YEAR, THE HOUSTON PALESTINIAN FILM FESTIVAL UNROLLS AT THE RICE MEDIA CENTER (MAY 13-15) AND THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, HOUSTON (20-21). TUNE INTO THE FREE PRESS HOUSTON WEBSITE FOR UPDATES AND REVIEWS DURING MAY.

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Not giving a fuck is a privilege. But it is something that must take place over several years predated by a time where one gave a fuck.

THERE'S NO NARC-OTIC LIKE EXHAU-STION

IN ORDER TO NOT GIVE A FUCK, you will have to have a fuck to not give. I believe that not giving a fuck is part of being an adult. In fact, you actually become an adult, as you learn to not give a fuck, which creates that sense of calm and seeming astuteness of some adults. Years of observation, disappointment, correctly proven stereotyping, valid haste judgement, all lead to being able to effectively not give a fuck. If one were to not give a fuck in the wrong way, it could be fatal. Matafac (matter of fact, I'm trying to get that in the dictionary like jiggy), giving not a fuck incorrectly is more often than not stupidity, which is an aberration on the privilege of not giving a fuck. One can not give a fuck about certain things (fashion, places of dining, music genres, high art, sports) but one must give a fuck about other things (children, the state of the world, the environment). So to conclude, teach your children (as I will mine), there is a significant part of your life where you should give a fuck, then, at one point in your life a sort superpower will be your gift, that is the gift of not giving a fuck, but it must be earned, because it is a privilege not a right.



Man Man

05/03/11 - MAN MAN - Fitzgerald's

Man Man has a new album called "Life Fantastic" which is pretty damn good. Different from other Man Man albums in that the song craft is more realized, the structures are tighter, and the shit (term for the instruments and vocals) is mixed better. There are common type Man Man songs such as the lead track "Knuckle Down" or "Haute Tropique" (delicously dark and sinister) or "Piranhas Club" which are jaunty and irreverant, then there are songs like "Steak Knives" or "Shameless" which are the other side of the coin, softer in places, but represenentative of the band as more than holler and hoot. The album is like a great movie with a dimension: humor and hubris, romance and raunch, horror and heavy heartedness (yay alliteration!). The band will be playing these songs and others from their varied catalog at their show here May 3rd. Man Man is one of the few bands heralded (if not more) for their live show than their actual songs, because the show is great, it is physical, it is at times dangerous (more to the band than the audience), it has color (even though they may dressed in all white), it is revival, celebration, parade, jubilant. It's one of those things you think about the next day and say things like "Wow, that was good!" or "Fuck! I left my wallet there." Either way, I did two things here, I told you their album was good and that their show is equally exciting, the band would appreciate your patroneage of both. Spend money.

05/05/11 - JON SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION - Warehouse Live

Holy shit and other exlpletives the BLUES EXPLOSION!!!! I've seen JSBX a few times, and each time I left with one thought in mind, "Blue Explosion!" Possibly because it is said a lot, but also because they are one of the top five, which is a constantly changing top five, shows I've ever seen. It's a 3 piece, two guitars and drums, lean and mean, it is how music once was heard, raw, virile, unapologetic, unhinged, other words that tranlsate to not lame. It harks back to the traditon of negro music that sort typifies negroes, but only as a thing more than a people (soul, blues, etc.) I haven't seen a lot of live music recently, but that which I have seen, invloves a lot of devices, the only device they used here is raw power, sweat, and a barrage of c'mon's and alrights. Again, not lame, in fact very not lame, this will be the Derek Rose of rock shows, not really a good analogy, but fuck, Derek Rose is good!

tUnEYaRdS - W H O K I L L (4AD)

This album hit me in the way "Straight Outta Compton" struck me when I first heard it. I could not wrap my head around the awesomeness. Merril Garbus is basically tUnEyArDs,; her songs are a mix of reggae, dub, folk, and that real time loop thing popularzed by bands like Battles. It is political in the way Mississipi Goddamn or Sign O' The Times is political, it is the personal and the social struggle, society and the self, it points the finger both ways. Songs like "Gangsta," "Riotriot," or "Doorstep" address issues like police and class politics, while songs like "Powa" and "Wolly Wolly Gong" are more introspective, the self in contrast, in correspondence with. Everyone, I have recommended this album and band to, have responded with all caps praises, which means they really dig it, or they're not really sure how capitalization works or the caps lock key is broken, but I will take it as enthusiasm and/or shouting for no reason.

DEAD RIDER - Raw Dents (Tizona)

Dead Rider (formerly D. Rider) made an album called Mother Of Curses that was cracked, ragged, beautifully fractured and startling in places. So their latest album is more or less the same, but sexier. First up, the beats. This album has beats like a rap record has beats, not a hip hop record, like a DJ Quik or Ice Cube record has beats-- it bumps, you could play it loud in a car, and dudes would look at you and bob their head, and then that face might transform to fear or confusion, but initially it would be an approval of the dope beats. "Mother's Meat" and "Just A Little Something" go hard, but then there are songs like "Blue Flame" or "2 Nonfictional Lawyers" that slink and coil like a snake, hypnotizing yet dangerous, will they lick you or strike you. The music all over this album is like that, it vibrates, it falls and stumbles, it gyrates and caresses, it makes you feel dirty and uncomfortable, and then it rocks in places. It is a difficult listen in the sense it doesn't just lay there, it fucks back, and that is exciting to the not lame. "The Pointed Stick" feels like what you think that means, which is amazing for a song. This album is like a forceful french kiss, and depending on your ideas of that, this can either be welcoming, or it may cause you punk out.

R.I.P Gerard Smith **FPH**

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May 14 - Victim
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(Iron Maiden Tribute)
May 28 - Fondue Monks
with
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Shaving Susie
May 20 - Holy Hell Rod
May 27 - Sex Panthers

SATURDAYS
May 7 - Victim
with special guest Krowsif
May 14th - Gene's Additction
(KISS & Gene Simmons Tribute)
with Unchain The Night
(Dokken Tribute)
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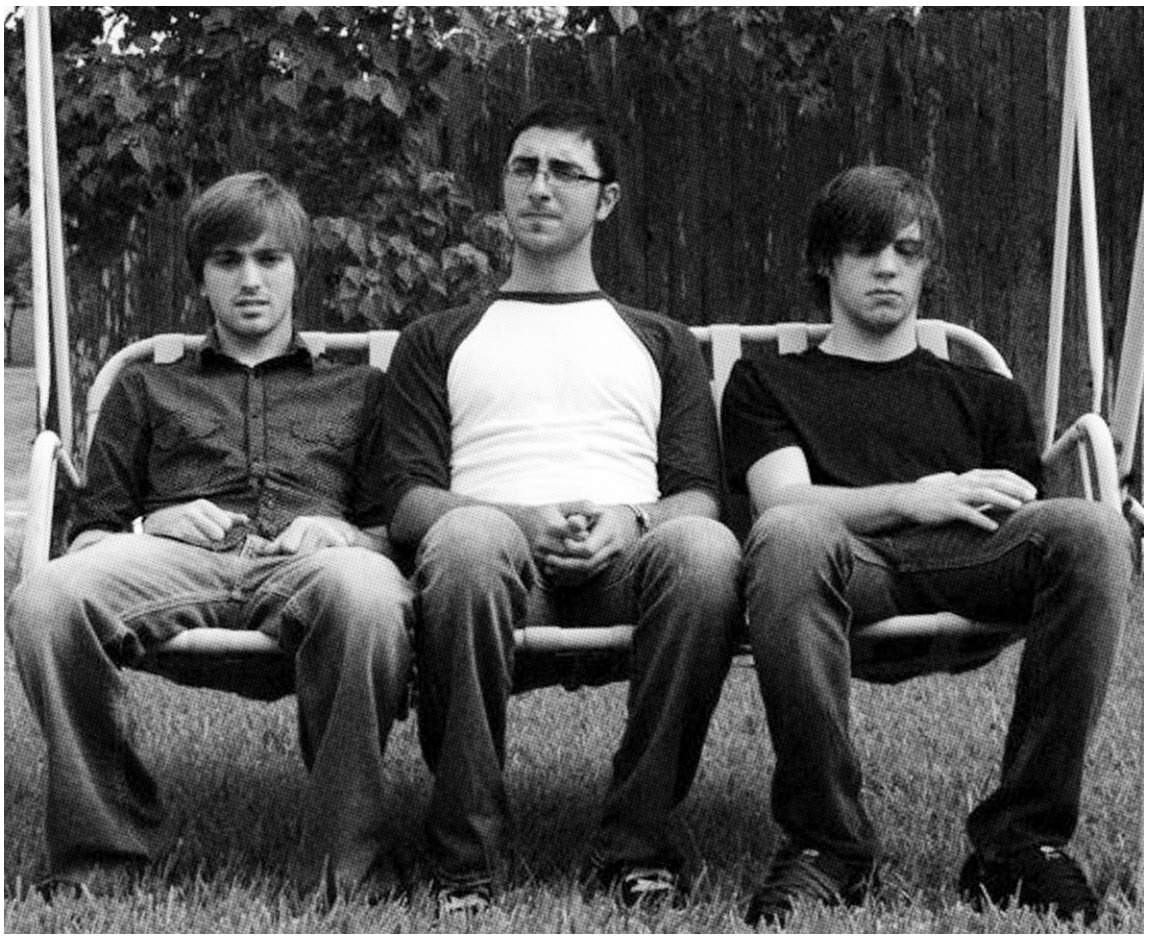
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BY JACK DANIEL BETZ

Interview: The Dead RevoIt

For over a year, local band The Dead Revolt have been playing an enthralling style of music blending chaotic drumming, guitar virtuosity, and dissonance.



THE DEAD REVOLT have had their first, self-produced record The Substance of Things not seen out for a few months now and are currently in the studio working on material for another LP. They will be playing Summer Fest June 4th 11 a.m. on the Warehouse Live stage.

I know Mars Volta is a big influence for you. Did any of you guys get to see Omar Rodriguez Lopez at Fitz?

(Spencer) I almost did but it was sold out and I couldn't get in. We heard it was basically like a secret Mars Volta show.

What would you say to people who make the accusation, "oh, you're just copying the Mars Volta"? As a disclaimer, I don't believe that.

Obviously someone who knows the Mars Volta would know that's not true. If you've just heard of the Mars Volta I'd understand why you'd say that but for people who actually know the band and have heard us, you can totally hear the distinction. I mean they're a really good influence, we listen to them all the time, especially Dylan [laughter] but we're not trying to be like them. Those who've seen us live can tell that it's not at all.

I'm a big gearhead here and it sounds like you guys use a lot of different effects to achieve your sound on The Substance of Things not seen what's some of your favorite gear?

We actually don't try to use a lot of effects and whatnot but what we use to make it sound bigger sometimes on solos I'll use delay to give it an extra dimension. Sometimes I'll use two different delays at once. I also always use a tube screamer for extra crunch. I've also got a compressor and some flanger going on sometimes. That's basically it, there's nothing too crazy going on.

What are some guilty pleasure songs that you guys have? Everyone's got one or two.

Dylan likes that Hall and Oates song. Plus every Neil Diamond song. Hold on, lemme think. Every time it comes on the radio I have to listen to it. [pause] Oh yeah, "One Week" by the Bearnaked Ladies. And Dylan likes- what's that Hall and Oates song? Something like "You make my dreams come true".

Yeah, that's the song. It's funny because I'm a huge Hall and Oates because the more I write about music the more I've learned to appreciate well-written pop music. Can you tell me about the artwork on The Substance of Things not seen?

We always wanted some cool artwork and the cover is my friend, Katie Burkitt's. I was going to ask her to paint us something but I thought that would be to cheesy so I just looked at some of the stuff she did. And then I was just like, "Can I try and use this for the cover?" and she said "yeah." It's actually not the whole painting but only a little corner of this whole painting that she did. It just looked cool because there was a skull on it and kind of reminiscent of death.
FPH

We ain't no stinkin' Volta

interview: Young Girls

BY RAMON MEDINA

SUMMER IS JUST ON THE HORIZON and no Houston band evokes the season of beach trips, free time, and cold beers more than Young Girls. The trio's reverb-drenched sound and upbeat songs like "Six Pack Back Stab" just beg for rolled-down windows, a cooler, and beach towels. Even though they have only been around for about a year, the band has made a huge splash on the scene garnering a lot of buzz from music fans, blogs, and local press. That's not surprising given the full-steam-ahead attitude of this band. Slackers they are not – this is a band with places to be and things to do. They've got one 7" under their belts already and the band will be releasing a CD on Homeskool Records as well as a second 7" shortly. If that is not enough, the band is preparing for their first tour of the EU this summer. We caught up with Luis, Pete, and Charlie on a cool night over on the Rudyard's porch last month to talk with them about their music, the band, and their plans.



How did you guys meet?

(Carlos) I've known Luis since high school and we were in The Factory Party together. Pete has Program and later Springfield Riots.

(Pete) This was originally Charlie's solo project and I was just going to record it for him but I kind of weaseled my way into writing some songs.

(Charlie) Nah, I needed some help writing the songs. Luis came along because he's always been a real good writing partner of mine; it wouldn't feel right if he weren't along.

(Pete) We asked Luis to join just as a guitar player but he turned us down.

(Charlie) Later, we were doing a Kinks cover set and we had fired our last drummer but we waited until the last week to learn the songs. When we realized that, we were thinking what are we gonna do? So, we got Luis and he became our drummer by default.

(Pete) We told him to just play a few shows with us and that became a few months and now it's permanent.

How do you guys feel about the tour?

(Charlie) We're both stoked and scared. Now that I realize it, this is Luis' first tour out of Texas and it's gonna be Europe.

(Luis) For this tour, we got a buddy in Austin from Sky Jet Black who sent us some contacts in England and we also e-mailed a bunch of promoters and they were all very responsive - they really liked the music.

(Charlie) The thing is I've book shows before and always asked for money but on this tour, I wasn't even going to try to ask for money - just let us play at your venue - but the funny thing is they would always offer us money anyhow. But we've gotten great responses on the road - Austin was probably the first place outside of Houston that really embraced us and we've made some great friends there.

How was recording at a studio?

(Pete) I generally don't like recording in studios. The sound seems dull to me and there is so much pressure. I get nervous and tend to fuck-up but recording with Bubba and Steve was the most comfortable recording experience outside of my house I've ever had.

Who brings what elements to the band?

(Pete) These guys are more minimalists but right now I'm really into girl groups – you know that Phil Spector wall-of-sound. I also bring in a lot of melodic ideas as well as the sound.

(Charlie) We [Luis and Charlie] bring in the rawness...

(Luis) (laughs) ...and the skinny jeans.

(Charlie) I also like my shit fast but Pete tends to want to slow things down. I think Luis tends to mediate between us. He can find a way to explain my ideas to Pete or Pete's ideas to me and we can move forward.

You guys have done a lot in a very short time period – things your other bands never even seemed to get close to doing. What's different with this band?

(Charlie) When we were working on the tracks for the 7" we decided right away that we weren't going to procrastinate. In every aspect of our life we were going to procrastinate but not with music. We just wanted to hit the ground running. Whatever we did wrong in the previous bands, we wanted to correct in this one.

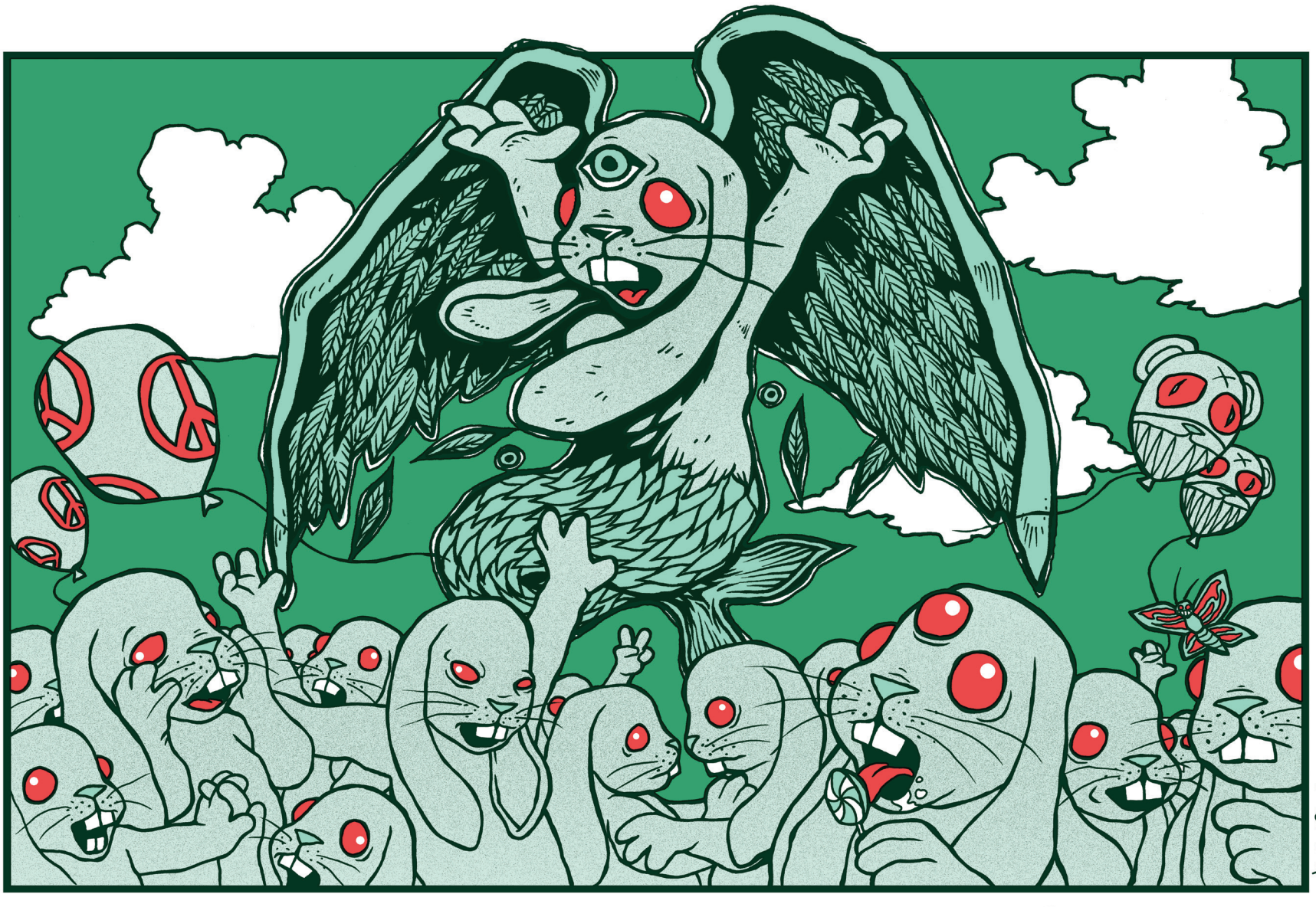
What do you mean wrong?

(Charlie) We had people who weren't pushing as hard as we were for various reasons - not wanting or able to tour, put down money... things like that – but all three of us are ready to drop everything. If I need to quit my job, I'll do it tomorrow. We've always laid it all out on the table and done whatever was needed to be done. So, when the three of us got together, we all had the same mind set that we needed to push forward no matter what. We put everything we have into this band.

(Luis) Like in Factory Party you had people who couldn't leave their job because they needed the money.

(Charlie) Now it's like I really don't have money but I'll deal with that when we get back from tour. But I say if people want to hear you in other places, why not just go out and do it?

Look, when we talk about former band members that weren't able to quit their jobs, we don't mean that as an insult. It just means that, for them, there is life outside of music and that's good. But for us there is nothing else - music all we want to do. FPH



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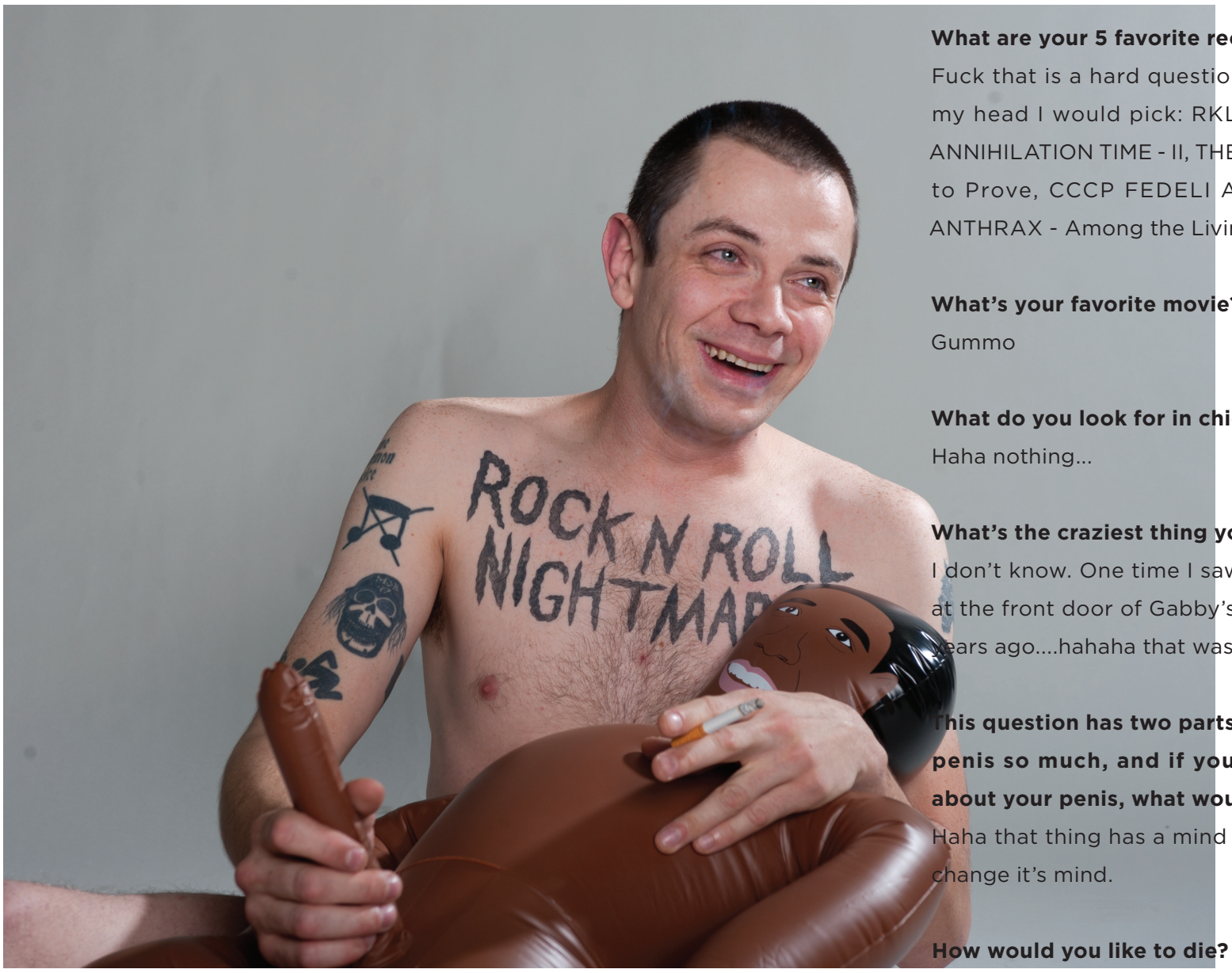
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Josh Wolf

Interview:

By Mark Armes

You may have had Josh Wolf whisper “dick-lick-titty-suck” in your ear at an Energy show, or perhaps seen him exposing himself after a few knife bumps at Walter’s. There’s certainly no doubt that this man likes to party. But, unlike many who share his enthusiasm for getting wasted, Josh Wolf also likes to do BRILLIANT, often AWE INSPIRING shit in the music scene. He’s a Multi-colored, Multi-orgasming, Multi-instrumentalist. Many have said he’s punk’s answer to Richard Bona, and after writing this interview, I’d have to agree with them.



Can you list some of the many projects you are in or have been a part of?

Ok well that’s a long list… Currently the more active bands are THE ENERGY, THE SECRET PROSTITUTES, CRIME WAVE, BLOODY HAMMER, HELL CITY KINGS, THE BORN LIARS, FUGITIVE FAMILY, HOLY POISON… I might be forgetting something.

When did you start playing music?

I started playing music in summer of ‘94.

When did you start playing music wasted?

Wasted? I guess it was summer of ‘94.

What are your 5 favorite records in the collection?

Fuck that is a hard question. Let’s see. Off the top of my head I would pick: RKL - Rock n Roll Nightmare, ANNIHILATION TIME - II, THE SPERMBIRDS - Something to Prove, CCCP FEDELI ALLA LINEA- Ortodossia, ANTHRAX - Among the Living… and a shitload more…

What’s your favorite movie?

Gummo

What do you look for in chicks?

Haha nothing…

What’s the craziest thing you have ever seen?

I don’t know. One time I saw this old lady taking a shit at the front door of Gabby’s BBQ when I worked there years ago….hahaha that was hilarious..

This question has two parts: Why do you expose your penis so much, and if you could change one thing about your penis, what would it be?

Haha that thing has a mind of it’s own. I guess I would change it’s mind.

How would you like to die?

Painless and fucking wasted.

Any last words?

A) D. L. T. S… you know who you are! **FPH**



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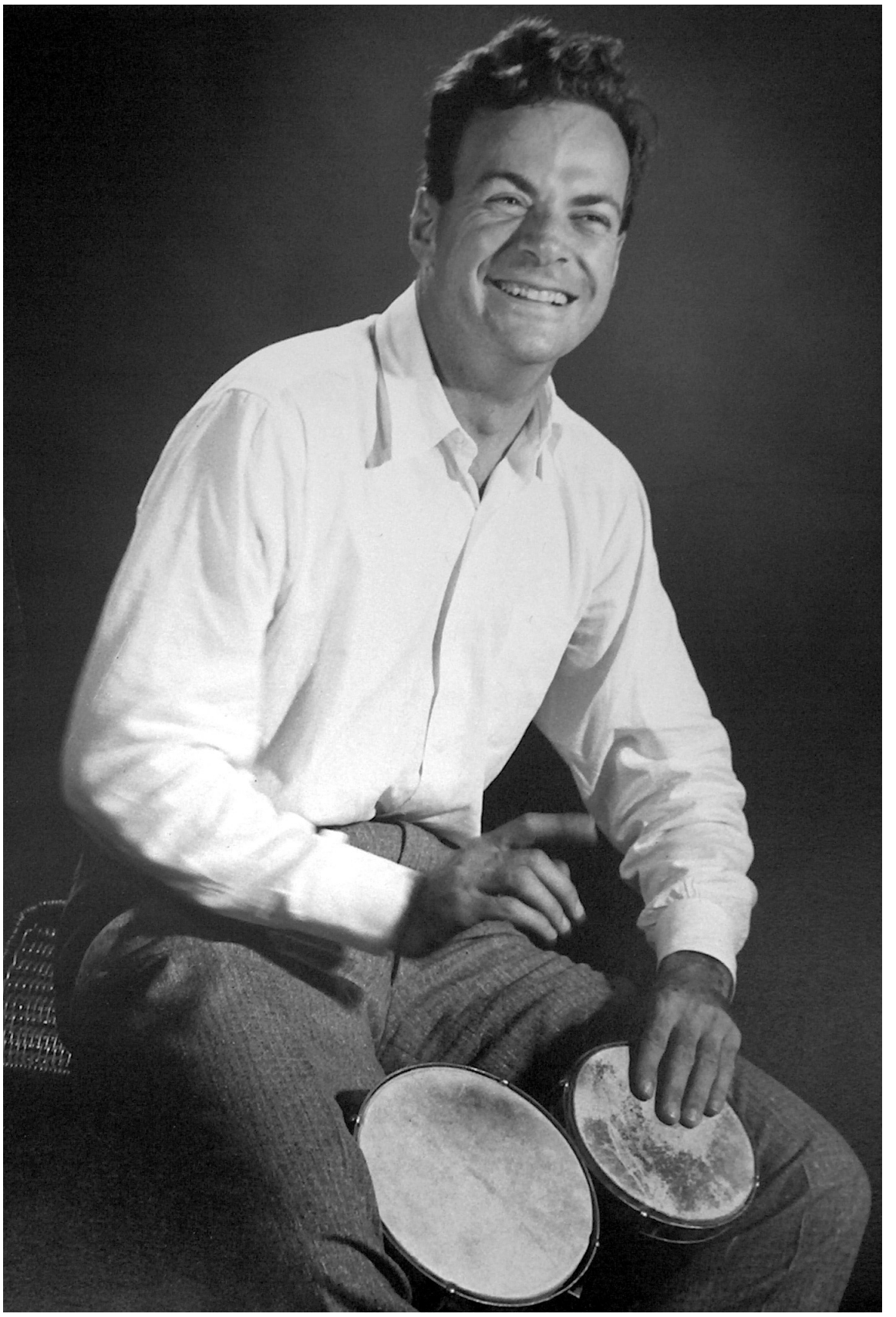
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Richard Feynman

How a Healthy Disrespect of Authority Changed the World

BY TYLER BARBER





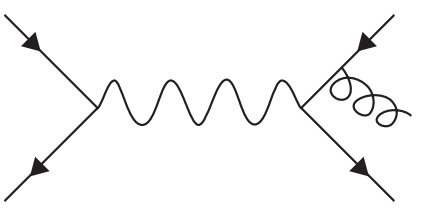
RICHARD FEYNMAN, NOBEL LAUREATE, theoretical physicist, and public intellectual, was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1918. His father, Melvile, was very influential and instilled in young Richard a healthy disrespect for authority at an early age. Melvile was a uniform tailor, and therefore understood that a man—whether of authority or privilege—is the same with or without his uniform and awards. His father's outlook planted the seed that would grow roots for Richard's future achievements as a scientist.

Even in the face of stern "scientific" advice, Richard questioned authority. His high school sweetheart, Arline Greenbaum, later became his wife despite the warnings of doctors and family. Arline had been diagnosed with tuberculosis, and there was a real threat Richard could contract the disease. They married anyway, and Arline became a great source of motivation for Feynman. The timing of her eventual passing would later play a pivotal role in changing the scientists' outlook on life.

Feynman studied physics at Princeton, giving seminars to his predecessors Albert Einstein and John Von Neumann. Feynman was quick to be singled out (at the young age of 22) as having to ability to grasp and improve upon physics problems that had troubled the most brilliant minds world-wide. Upon earning his Ph.D., Feynman was encouraged to lend his unique way of thinking to the Manhattan Project. Feynman recalled that even at that time he knew the magnitude of destruction such work would cause. Furthermore, he also realized that Germany was capable, and surely in the process of, making such a weapon too. With the incentive to fight the Nazi regime's clear intent towards total domination, Feynman felt an obligation to do what he could to help stop such a dark power.

It was over the course of three years at Los Alamos, New Mexico, that Feynman worked at various facilities doing un-crucial, but necessary, work that demanded a unique approach. Feynman's mind

A Feynman diagram



proved nimble enough for the job. However, over the course of his work, Germany was defeated and though his initial reason for starting the project was no longer valid, Richard had become enamoured with the collective challenge at hand.

Instead of Germany as the target, Little Boy and Fat Man dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Estimates vary, but approximately 160,000 Japanese were killed as a result of the attack. When the project was over, the staff at Los Alamos threw a party. They drank, danced, and listened to music through the night. But over the moment of triumph, an ominous cloud drew near.

Feynman ran head-on into problems at Princeton after the war, when trying to introduce his work. Feynman was studying quantum physics, which was largely a mystery at the time, and wanted to develop a visual system to better explain and research quantum physics.

The fruits of his labor would eventually change the field of physics, but not before facing a harsh board of tenured scientists at the Shelter Island Conference in New York. There, a somewhat-known Feynman stood before a dismayed group of the greatest physicists of the time. Some where Nobel Laureates (including Albert Einstein), and all were pessimistic as to the future understanding of quantum dynamics. Feynman thought he'd figured out a way of understanding quantum-electro dynamics (QED) visually, with simple diagrams as opposed to using complicated maths. The Feynman Diagrams, as they were later christened, look like the "barb" piece of barbed wire, but more eccentric and varied. To his contemporaries, these ideas seemed nothing short of idiotic. He was heckled: "You don't understand a thing about physics!"

Though he took a brow-beating from his colleagues, Feynman knew he was right. Luckily, he had peers working on similar methods, and together over the course of the conference, they managed to turn the entire cast to their cause. Many years later in 1965 Richard Feynman, along with Julian Schwinger and Sin-Itiro Tomonaga were awarded the Nobel Prize for their work on QED.

Though Feynman's greatest intellectual achievements would be awarded in the future, his life during the 1950s and '60s was overshadowed by the Cold War and the death of his wife to tuberculosis. With knowledge of the atomic bomb's destructive power and a waning trust in humanity, Feynman spiralled into a nihilistic despair. He recalled not seeing the point in building anything, starting any projects, making new friends. Mutually-assured-destruction was the mantra of time.

During his teaching career at Cal-Tech, though, Feynman overcame his nihilism for a newly restored love of learning. He found liberation in bongo drumming, as well as garnering a reputation as a frequent patron of strip clubs orgies. Perhaps most inspiring, Feynman took a deep interest in art late in life. He became a very skilled illustrator, often hiring his favorite strippers as models for his sketches. Richard was quick to dismiss his own artistic talent; his modesty deceives his claims when you inspect his work.

A close artist friend claimed that, as a scientist, Feynman was unable to view a flower's beauty in the same way an artist would. That scientists, at most, could only look at the cold facts of the plant, the names of its various anatomy, its classification etc. A sentiment all too familiar. However, Feynman felt such a claim couldn't be further from the truth. In what is a distillation of Feynman's genius, he recalls that in fact, knowing about the flower is in its own way beautiful. That knowing and being able to visualize the process of photosynthesis taking place inside the flower... To liken the movement of sugars up-and-down the stem of the plant as cars moving down a highway... That bees are attracted to certain flowers, and that that must mean that bees evolved to be attracted to the flower is, in Richard's view, proof that, "science and knowledge only adds to the excitement, mystery, and awe of a flower... I don't understand how it subtracts."

Feynman's healthy disrespect of authority played a crucial role in giving him the tools necessary to be an effective problem-solver in world where the solved problems usually led to more difficult problems. It's in this realm that Feynman's no-nonsense approach served him well. When tucked in the corner of the cutting-edge, surrounded by unknown and mystery, it's often a good idea to toss-out all that came before, because naturally, what came before couldn't solve the problem of today. But, in a wise aside, when discussing this threshold of ontology Feynman pointed out that while it's good to have an open mind, it's not advisable to have one that is so open that your brain falls-out. **FPH**





HIVE Houston

Taking Scupltureteture to the next level



BY ALEX WUKMAN

FOR AT LEAST ONE GENERATION of Houston artists the name Nestor Topchy is virtually meaningless. His landmark contributions to Houston's art scene, CSAW, Zocalo/TemplO, have all but faded into memory in the years since they were dismantled. For those in the arts community who came of age after the turn of the millennium Topchy, if he is known at all, is known mostly as the husband of Avant Garden owner Mariana Lemesoff.

And the fact that Topchy isn't known to many people under the age of 40 speaks volumes about the lack of permanence in Houston, for to understand where Topchy is headed it's necessary to understand where he has been and what he accomplished. When Topchy came to Houston in the mid 1980s it was a fundamentally different city. The streets of downtown were lined with shuttered businesses; the effects of the combined one-two punch of the bottom falling out of the oil market and the Savings and Loan scandal. Overlooking the, then under construction, George R. Brown Convention Center was the ill-fated Mercado del Sol, a planned commercial development on the scale of the Galleria but dedicated to the Hispanic community. The Mercado del Sol went bankrupt before construction was completed, and for many years became a monument to this city's unquenchable greed.

The recession of the '80s hit Houston harder than almost any other city in the country, personal bankruptcies reached a level that wouldn't be seen for another 20 years. The homeless population exploded at a rate faster than anyone could keep track of, and that lent itself to rumors of judges and unfunded mental institutions across the state giving people one way bus tickets to the Bayou City. Into this perfect storm of urban blight and decay walked Topchy, with a newly minted BFA in Painting from the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore.

Like all young Turks before, and after, him Topchy came to town filled with the arrogance of youth, determined to make a name for himself and show the locals just how it's done. And while he was at it he might as well pick up an MFA from UH in Sculpture. It didn't hurt that, at that time, there were quite a few likeminded individuals reshaping the Houston art scene; people like Wes Hicks, who was part of the first generation of the now mythical Lawndale Annex and who helped found what would go on to be the legendary Commerce Street Arts Warehouse; and Rick Lowe, who would, almost a decade later, create Project Row House.

Topchy quickly established himself as one of the hottest young sculptors in Houston, the fact that he was living at CSAW and created the building's iconic doors didn't hurt his reputation either. But things were stressful, Topchy was in constant conflict with the other residents of CSAW, he felt there was too much socializing and not enough serious work being done. So in 1989 he and Lowe, along with Dean Ruck and a then little known painter named Jim Pirtle, started up their own "social sculpture" project on a few acres on Feagen Street owned by then Harris County District Attorney Johnny B. Holmes, Jr.

To call the space pregnant with possibilities would be an exercise in overly-optimistic understatement, what descriptions of the space that have survived describe it as something closer to an unpaved lot filled with a cluster of debilitated tin shacks, warehouses and a 5,000 square foot barn. All of which could be had for the low, low price of $400 per month; remember it was the '80s.

Out of the remnants of a former freight depot turned chop shop Topchy and company created an alternate reality that used art, in all its myriad forms, as a cornerstone. The newly christened TemplO, the capital 'O' representing the pregnant void, came to be known as a venue that embraced the new and strange. Many experimental plays by then emerging artists, who themselves would go on to define the Houston arts scene, like Nick Cooper and Jason Nodler, were staged there. It was a place known for the Sunday brunches

and performance art pieces that have more then faded into hazy, booze filled memories that are only dimly recalled by those who were there, or claim to be, over mid-afternoon drinks at various Montrose dive bars.

As with any social experiment TemplO became too top heavy and started changing. Over the years the first wave moved on, leaving to explore their own unique visions. Ruck bought a house, Pirtle founded Notsuoh and Lowe created Project Row House. But Topchy stayed and started inviting a different, stranger crew to take up residence in whatever was available. School buses, trailers, packing crates—almost anything that could be lived in, was. Around 1993 Topchy decided to change the name, and the focus, TemplO became Zocalo, a reference to Mexico City's large public square, and start a performance company.

The first trip for the Zocalo Performance Arts Company was a 1994 trip to New York City, which was followed a year later by a much grander "Mobile Village Tour" that, in its description, sounds like an offshoot of Road Rules. The idea was to put 10 artists on a barely maintained bus, send them on a tour that takes them through New Orleans, Raleigh, Baltimore, Washington D.C., New York City and Boston so they could "incite interactive collaborations with artists from the host community."

In what some would call a miracle, especially since the brakes on the bus are rumored to have gone out in Washington D.C., all 10 managed to make it home alive. Zocalo manged to survive through the end of the Clinton Administration into the first of the Bush years before Houston's resurgence real estate market caught up with it. In 2001, 13 years after TemplO first opened its doors, Holmes sold the two acre lot on Feagan Street. However, by that time Topchy had already outgrown, or grown tired of, Zocalo and was ready to move on.

As he tells it, a few years after taking down the iconic TemplO tower the seeds of his next big idea were planted. "I was playing around with blocks as modules and made this hemisphere. I found this underlying pattern that was very counterintuitive but very simple," says Topchy. He goes on to explain that the next realization hit him when he passed a container yard and saw the abundance of abandoned shipping containers.

Topchy says that he approached some architect friends of his to create a rendering of his model. "They all said, 'No problem. This'll be easy,' but the computers couldn't do it. Finally my friend Si Dang was able to do it by manually inputting the coordinates, he said it was difficult but he loved it," says Topchy. Part of the difficulty comes from the very nature of the design.

The modules are stacked in a circular pattern with two modules supporting a module above them; and so on, until the top—where the last two modules touch. Because of the organic, almost insect like, nature of the design the project was quickly christened HIVE: Houston and because of the nature of construction, using repurposed post consumer material, it quickly attracted national attention on sustainability and green living websites and blogs.

The sustainability aspect of the project one of the key elements as HIVE: Houston Executive Director Heidi Vaughan explained in an e-mail, "We are re-using shipping containers which, due to the imbalance of international trade in the US, would otherwise be taking up space in one of the many container yards throughout the country." Vaughan goes on to write that the HIVE board is committed to the concepts of green/sustainable living and are planning on implementing solar power sources, geo-thermal HVAC systems, grey water recycling and water reclamation projects.

Vaughan goes on to detail how HIVE will be "an affordable, inhabitable work of art as a community" that is intended to "recapture an urban space using sustainable and renewable energy practices, innovative technology, and design." This first-of-its-kind project in Houston is also being created to "meet the needs of the growing population of the city with affordable, walkable, and sustainable living, working, and entertainment spaces" that will offer "a safe, urban experience, near public transportation, with great aesthetic value, low cost and convenience."

For Topchy, HIVE is primarily a work of art that has its legacy in not just his own work with TemplO/Zocalo, but in the work of sculptors like 20th Century minimalist Donald Judd and Reniassance architect Fillippo Brunelleschi. "We are trying to make a paradigm and it's going to take time, but in the long run we aren't building a cathedral for 300 years," says Topchy. **FPH**



Monkey See, Monkey Don't

Newborn Orangutan Aurora

BY JACOB CALLE



THE HOUSTON ZOO has recently announced their newborn Bornean Orangutan, Aurora. But with this news there is always the bad to follow. Her mother has rejected her and now the Houston Zoo staff has now taken the responsibility of hand rearing the baby. "We were disappointed that the baby's mother, Kelly, did not raise her baby as we had hoped," said Houston Zoo Curator of Primates and Carnivores Holly Colahan. Around a 100 volunteers around the clock act as Aurora's temporary mother. They are feeding her and monitoring her while teaching her social skills with a plush orangutan doll for her to cling on to. This enables Aurora psychologically so that she will not have emotional damage as she matures.

This was very unexpected. Just after 12 hours, Kelly abandoned the newborn which was very surprising because of how she nurtured her son, Solaris. The hardworking volunteers have immediate plans to work with Kelly in hopes for the return of her new born or handing Aurora over to a surrogate mother. Before she becomes well developed and begins to eat solid foods, as of now her diet consist of human baby formula, like a human child.

Socio-sexual development begins at birth for these apes. They will stay with their mother for up to 6 years so it is very imperative that Aurora receives the right attention to live a healthy life. With the science of a healthy touch, let's thank the hard working staff at the Houston Zoo for their intricate work. FPH

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The Legislature committed $5 billion every two years to holding down property taxes instead of spending that money on education, public safety or other priorities.

Defunding the Future

HISD faces broad cuts; parents question school closures

BY ALEX WUKMAN

Outside Love Elementary everything is prosaic; the sound of a Mariachi trumpet drifts east across Shepherd and down 13th Street from a used car lot dotted with US, Texas and Mexico flags.

TIMBERGROVE LITTLE LEAGUE'S WHITE SOX PRACTICE runs down on the school baseball fields, and in the shadows cast by the booms of TV trucks a jogger stops to kick a soccer ball with a father teaching his two young sons to pass to the inside of your teammate's feet. Inside Love Elementary things are not so pleasant.

Parents, holding signs and wearing t-shirts proudly proclaiming how much they love Love Elementary, are crammed into the school's cafetorium to hear why HISD is considering closing the school and sending its 400 plus students to two other schools. Since HISD announced in March that Love was one of the schools being looked at for closure rumors have been circulating and one of the more persistent is that the district wants to close the school and sell the land to a developer who turn it into townhomes. And when one parent, who doesn't provide her name, tells the HISD representative this he assures her that the district has no interest in selling the land.

"We simply are here to talk about consolidation because of declining enrollment," says the HISD representative. The parent, a fiery 5'2" Latina bubbling over with righteous anger, has no patience for bureaucratic reasoning. "You're lying," she says, "there are plenty of students coming to this school." As the meeting continues the anger and frustration from the crowd never ebbs.

Community members and parents provide a litany of reasons why Love should be spared the ax. They cite the school's improving test scores, the incredibly active PTO, the informal surveys that show the amount of students from the Heights entering kindergarten is expected to triple within in the next four years; but all of it seems to fall on deaf ears.

Many of the parents dispute the demographic data that HISD's highly paid consulting firm Magellan has provided the district; data that predicts Love will have a decreasing enrollment. Faculty and staff, their HISD identification badges obscured by "I heart Love" t-shirts, raise their voices as they take the mic and demand that the district make sacrifices in other areas. "We don't need cuts to schools that are working. The sacrifices need to come from unproven experimental programs," says one teacher.

For months HISD has been plagued with concerns about the Apollo 20 program, which requires students to come to start the school year a week earlier and stay an hour later every day, provides math tutoring for sixth and ninth graders at the participating schools and gives students who are considered below grade level an extra math or reading class every day. Apollo 20 has been the pet project of HISD's new Superintendent Terry Grier.

Grier, who is in the second year of a three year contract, has repeatedly promised HISD trustees and parents that the $20 million price tag for Apollo 20 will not be paid out of the district's general fund, and most of the money has come from federal grants and private donations. However, in June 2010 word leaked out that when HISD voted to renegotiate a contract with Community Education Partners, an organization that provides academic and behavior improvement programs for middle and high school students, the district decided to lower the payment to CEP by $4.5 million and transfer some of that money to Apollo 20.

The district saw it as simply transferring funds from one outside vendor to another. However, HISD volunteers and parents think that the money spent, and raised, by the district on programs like Apollo 20 could have been used to help offset the district's $171 million budget shortfall. Even the fact that most of the money for Apollo 20 is coming from organizations like the Fondren Foundation, who recently agreed to provide $750,000 to HISD over three years to support the program, doesn't sit well with some parents.

"Instead of saying 'Here's this baby of mine, here's what we need for it' why can't they say 'Here's what we need district wide,'" said Bronwyn Lauder, president of Love Elementary's PTO. The millions that HISD has to cut from spending has helped push education spending to the forefront of most state and local media. And with good reason: HISD has announced that they are eliminating over 1,000 jobs and are looking at closing 17 schools to try and balance the budget.

Among the 1,000 jobs lost are 277 positions at HISD's administration building, which district representatives like to use to show that the pain is being felt all around. However, parents don't think that the district is being completely honest about the front office cuts. "I'm waiting on an open records request to see how many of those 277 are unstaffed or unfunded positions," said Lauder. Even if the district is eliminating front office positions without actually eliminating personnel it's only a short term solution.

"It's not at all hard to look in the crystal ball and see that we'll be in the same place in 2013," said Houston political blogger Charles Kuffner. Kuffner, who writes extensively on the budget shortfalls of governmental agencies throughout Texas, explained that HISD's budget problem is just a localized symptom of the budget crisis being felt throughout the state. The problem starts with the proposed cuts to State education spending, which in the Texas House of Representatives is $8 billion and in the Texas Senate $4 billion. Then, in reverse Reaganomics, fashion the cuts trickle-down to school districts across the state.

As Kuffner explains, "all along HISD was planning a budget based on cuts to public education." It's just the size of the cuts that worries the district. HISD Trustee Harvin Moore explained that the House budget amounts to spending cuts of nearly $900 per student, or $20,000 less per classroom, which is a cut too severe for even HISD. At a recent HISD board meeting Trustee Paula Harris told the assembled students, teachers and parents that the district "can't take an $800 per student cut. We've already cut





$275 [in per student funding] and that's been devastating to our smaller schools."

Like almost every district across the state HISD has been considering its options to try and find ways to minimize the amount of layoffs; one of the options that has been promoted by Governor Rick Perry has been school districts using reserve capital, or rainy day funds, to make up their budget shortfalls. However, school districts have severe reservations about going into their savings accounts.

"Unlike the state, districts can't easily transfer money out of the rainy day fund. This is a one time thing and many districts are rightfully concerned that they'll be in the same place in two years," said Kuffner. He went on to describe the much heralded repeal of the Doggett Amendment, which prevented Texas from replacing state education dollars with federal money, as a stop gap measure. Named after Texas Democratic Congressman Lloyd Doggett the spending provision was put into place after the 2009 Texas Legislative session when lawmakers took stimulus bill money intended to supplement education spending and swapped it for state education dollars.

As part of the recent budget showdown in Washington, a showdown that narrowly averted the first government closure since 1996, the Doggett Amendment was repealed; this allowed the Texas Legislature to put $830 million of federal money into the state's education budget. The repeal of the Doggett Amendment didn't sit well with some HISD board members. "It's good for Texas to get federal money, but the Legislature has gone out of their way to make an elective choice not to fund education and that's frustrating for those of us in education," said Moore.

As HISD has continued trying to figure out which teachers to layoff and which schools to close, they have ignored one of the few options the district has for raising money, mostly because the people on the school board consider it political suicide. HISD Trustee Carol Galloway raised the issue by saying that "nobody on the board wants to talk about" raising taxes. Kuffner framed the reluctance of the district's elected leadership to consider a tax increase as an abject lesson in realpolitik.

"Even if this is the Legislature's and Governor's fault, the trustees still have to run for re-election," said Kuffner. The lack of political will to raise taxes for education funding is nothing new; it's common knowledge in education circles that the straight line of the state's budget crisis can be drawn right through the recession and falling sales tax revenue to tax cuts that went into effect in 2006. The '06 tax cuts were part of Governor Perry and the Legislature's plan to "lessen the burden on homeowners" so lawmakers passed legislation that sounds good on paper and helps win elections. They voted to reduce property taxes by $14 billion every two years, what they didn't tell voters was that the reduction would mean that the State would only be raising $9 billion.

As the Fort Worth Star-Telegram stated in February 2010, "In other words, the Legislature committed $5 billion every two years to holding down property taxes instead of spending that money on education, public safety or other priorities." The '06 budget cuts have become famous across the state for creating what Kuffner terms a "structural deficit." To put it another way, the 2006 tax cuts mean that the state is going to be perpetually facing budget shortfalls every two years and drastic spending cuts every budget by school districts, law enforcement and other governmental entities will be the new norm..

And the fact that this could be the new norm is something that worries Lauder and the other parents standing beneath the jungle mural in Love Elementary's cafetorium. In a voice painted with the faded hues of frustration and exhaustion Lauder describes how schools serve as something more than a place where children go for eight hours a day. She lays out how schools serve as a third space, somewhere beside home and work, and because of their non-religious and apolitical nature serve as an inclusive meeting place for people from backgrounds that may not feel welcomed at a holy site.

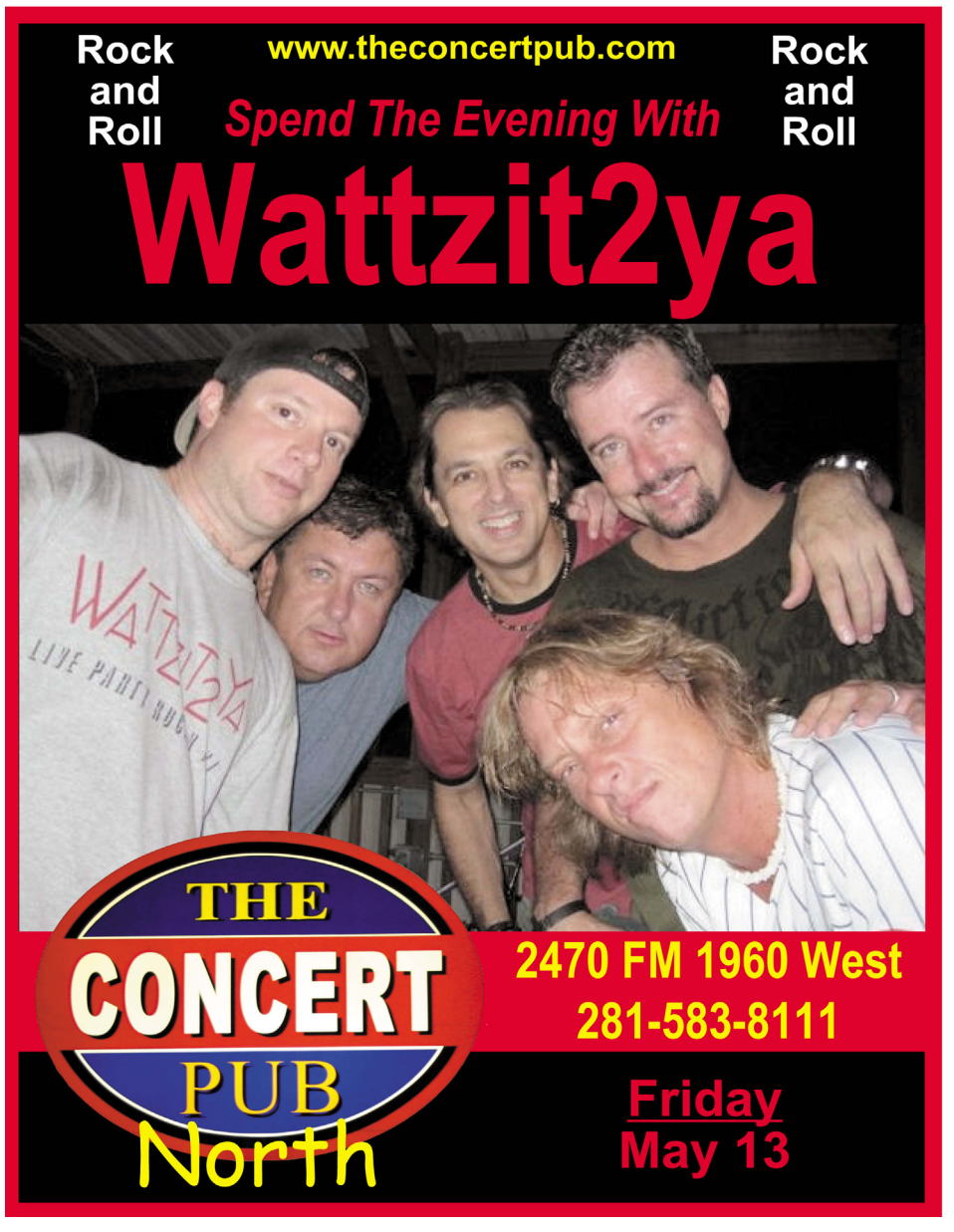
"Schools are the perfect gathering place to get together and make decisions about impacting the world around us," said Lauder. It just remains to be seen whether or not the State Legislature values the roles schools play in their communities; some on the HISD board aren't so sure that those elected to serve in Austin care about education. "At least in the [Texas] House of Representatives the voice of parents and teachers has not been heard," said HISD trustee Harvin Moore. FPH






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Only the most nave, cynical or deluded among us can subscribe to the pervasive mythology of drug police, prosecutors and judges as fearless warriors valiantly fighting a depraved horde of heartless pushers and evil dope fiends whose anti-social pursuit of self-gratification by getting high threatens to destroy the American way of life and everything it stands for.

What the Drug War has Wrought

When the Solution is (Much) Worse Than the Problem

BY JOHN SINCLAIR
ILLUSTRATION BY JOE WAPO

THE WAR ON DRUGS has served primarily to construct a police state apparatus basically unchecked in its pursuit of power and control over elements of our society deemed undesirable and detrimental to the economic and cultural forces that shape and direct our national life.

Start with this: There's nothing intrinsically wrong with getting high. People have been getting high as long as there have been people. People get high on beer, wine, whiskey, vodka and gin without criminal sanction. They get high on pills prescribed by their doctors or purchased on the black market. And people get high on marijuana or cocaine or heroin or whatever they desire for the physical and mental effects.

People get high when they want to. They obtain the drugs they crave however and wherever they can, and if they can't buy them over the counter somewhere they will find them in the drug underworld and pay whatever price is required to get what they want. People are relentless in their pursuit of the drugs they want to get high on, and they generally devise some sort of way to make it happen despite the various obstacles thrust in their way by economic circumstances, physical dislocation and the formidable forces of law and order arrayed against them wherever they turn.

Marijuana was legal in the United States until 1937. Cocaine could be purchased over drugstore counters until well into the 20th century, and heroin wasn't really demonized until the second half of the 1940s. In passing their draconian laws against use, possession and distribution of these once-tolerated recreational substances, our federal and state legislative bodies repeatedly cited ethnic and cultural minorities as the principal offenders and feared that their example would corrupt and undermine the very fabric of American life.

Marijuana and cocaine were demonized as engines of erratic and dangerous social behavior, geeking up black men and Mexicans to commit sexual assaults on white women and making the fiends unfit to function as productive members of the work force and responsible Christian citizens. Jazz and swing musicians, poets and writers, painters and other artists were tarred with the brush of illegal drug use and tormented by the narcotics police and their burgeoning consort of rat bastards and snitches.

Illicit drug use was pretty much an underground phenomenon confined to the ranks of ethnic minorities and the bohemian element until the hippie movement erupted out of suburban America in the 1960s. Legions of white, middle-class youths turned their backs on the prescribed way of life and embraced the cultural leadership of people of color and renegade Caucasians exemplified by persons like Allen Ginsberg and Timothy Leary.

Music suddenly became central to life for millions of young white Americans — not the lily-white music of their parents, but African-American music grounded in the realities experienced by the victims of a segregated social order and charged with unprecedented emotion and human feeling. At the same time, the courage and moral authority manifested in the civil rights movement inspired hippies to dream visions of social justice, nonviolent resistance, world peace and a radical new way of life.

Black people fighting for their lives and demanding their freedom, white youth rejecting the skewed reality of their parents, refusing to fight their wars and trying to construct the world of their dreams — these were new and dangerous challenges to the hegemony of the people in charge of America, and they demanded innovative new strategies and tactics in the struggle for continued supremacy.

The battle against the Red Menace that fueled the machinery of the forces of law and order had been raging since the end of World War I and the establishment of communism in the Soviet Union, reaching its peak in the early 1950s. American Reds were demonized as agents of the Communist International and persecuted for "un-American" political views. Their movement could be contained by the FBI and its sympathizers in commerce, industry and the courts, and culturally they posed little challenge to the prevailing orthodoxy.

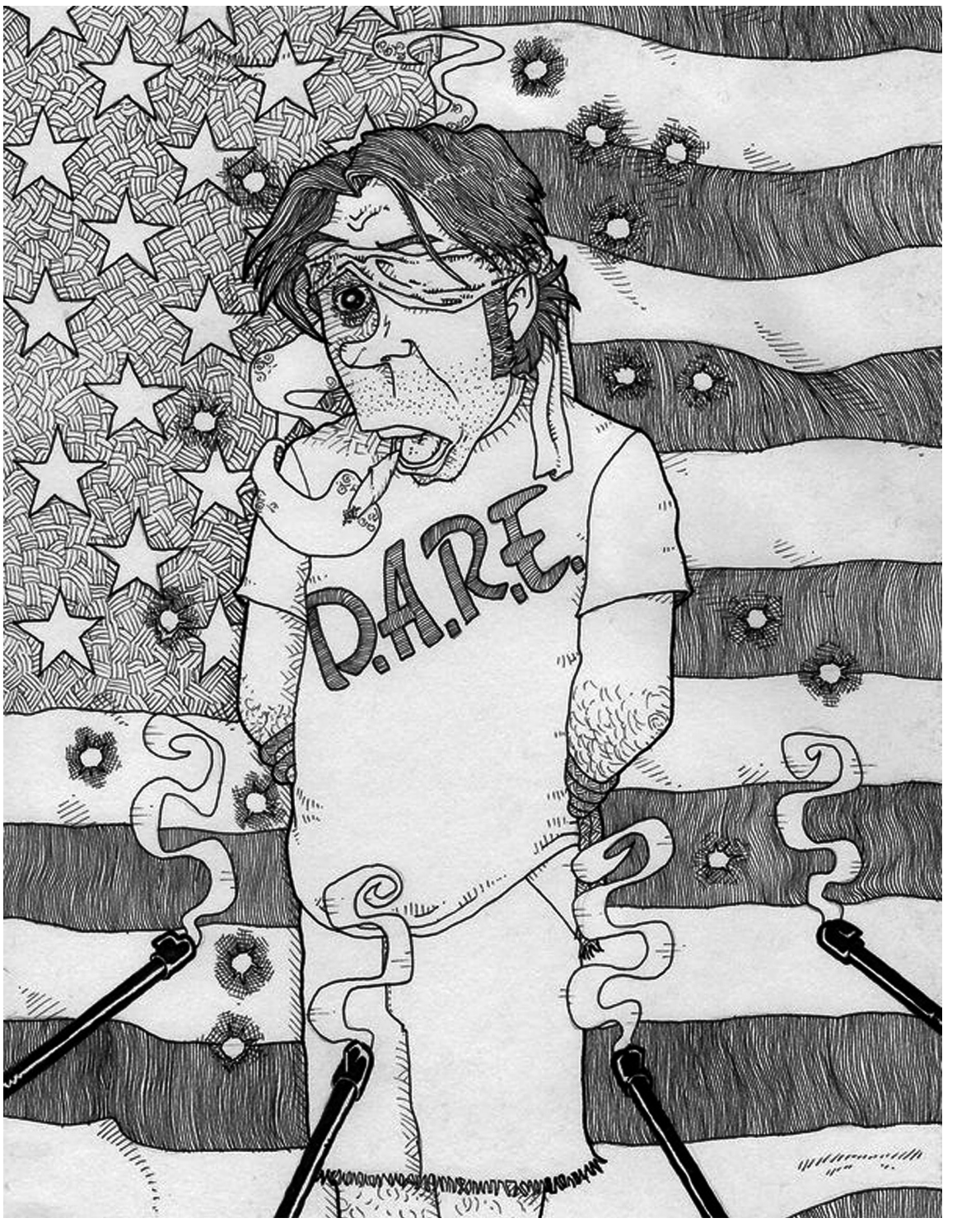
But the soul power of blacks and the flower power of hippies were radically different. Both mass movements sprang from the daily lives of people who, in the first instance, had been locked out of any opportunity to share in the vast national wealth and, in the second, had been groomed to operate the oppressive machinery of the ownership class and were now refusing to follow the program.

Both movements were fueled by passion and high ideals, yearning for a social order that would promote life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness and guarantee equal opportunity. This would never do: There would never be a place in the economic order for the masses of people of color in this segregated nation, and the white renegades had to be forced back into compliance with the iron rules of consumerism.

This is where the War on Drugs has its start. The phony rhetoric of the drug warriors served to divert public attention from the righteous social concerns of blacks and hippies and brand them instead as enemies of society who must be hounded, snitched on, dragged into court, locked away, stripped of their possessions and otherwise removed from real life. If they escaped arrest and prosecution for their illicit behaviors they would still live their lives in a state of fear and trembling that the narcotics police would find them out.

Our legal system routinely operates as a key component in maintaining the established economic, cultural and political order. This is a rotten system, and they'll do anything to keep it in place — and never forget that the War on Drugs is a really big part of the big picture.

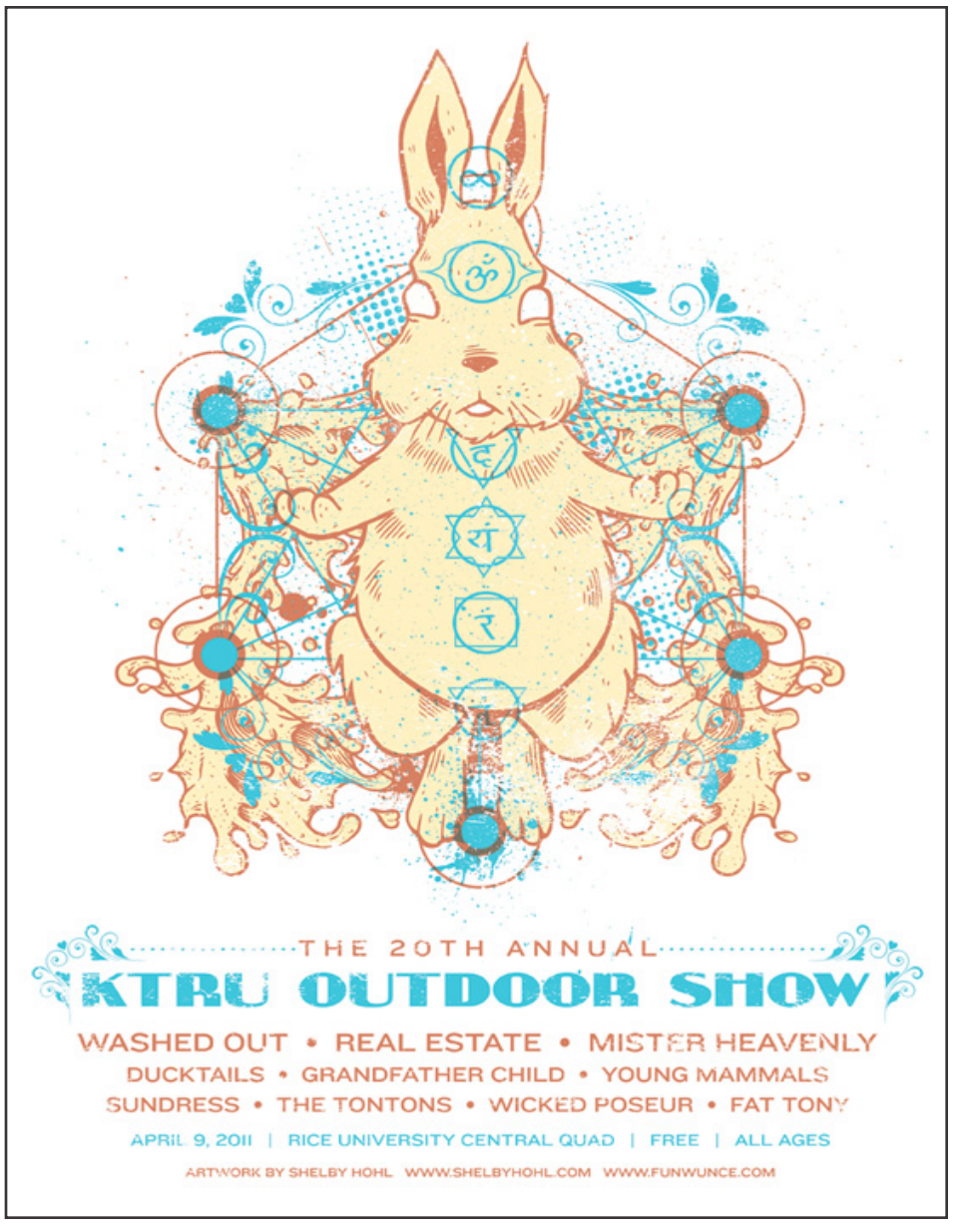
Like I've said here before, try to imagine a world without the War on Drugs. This would be a whole different place indeed. **FPH**




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Tim O'Brien ¡Presente!

Gone from this earth, but never from our hearts~
Cancer killed Tim but his struggles live on until the final victory

Timothy O'Brien, a father, husband, son, brother, and comrade / friend of so many died at home Tuesday morning with his family present. Tim was an activist, scholar, and fighter for all workers and oppressed. As much as he loved his family and friends, he hated war, racism, exploitation and executions.

Tim had cancer, the same thing that killed his father exactly two years ago, in April of 2009. It had spread–to his brain and more–and he lost this battle.

Tim realized that the end was nearing when doctors said there was no more treatments for him. But he lived life to the fullest each and every day he had left, finishing his manuscript for a book on Lightning Hopkins, spending special time with Yuna and Kyong Mi, attending one last conference on sweatshops, going to Austin to hear some good music only a few weeks before his confinement to bed, and having friends over for a last visit.

The Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement is forever indebted to Tim for so much energy, for setting our web page, and for energizing our movement. Tim attended a demonstration for Todd Willingham last winter before the Court of Inquiry that Judge Charlie Baird held that proved Todd was an innocent man executed by Gov. Rick Perry.

He attended the January hearing that Judge Kevin Fine held where attorneys presented compelling evidence that the use of the death penalty in Texas is unconstitutional.

Tim organized a protest of former Harris County D.A. Carol Vance at a book reading–which caused Murder by the Book and Vance to cancel, rather than face the truth. Then when Vance appeared at a book festival in the Heights, he was confronted!

Tim was a man with a PhD like no other! He was at home in academia and as well as in Freedman's Town. He could carry on with professors as well as with poor people with no initials behind their names, like his mentor Lenwood Johnson, who, like Tim, was educated AND a friend to the oppressed. Tim's PhD in African American History was put to good use for the community, despite the efforts of those in the ivory towers at UH to stop Tim.

Tim won many battles, inspired many young activists, and left a legacy for us all: Dare to struggle, Dare to Win!
http://abolitionmovement.org/

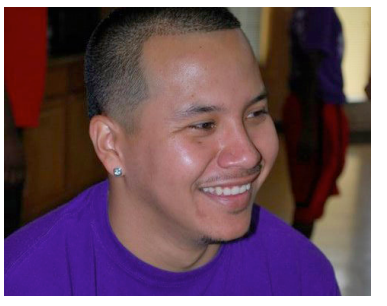
Stop the Deportation of Mario Perez

Mario Perez is a 22-year-old college student at Stephen F. Austin State University facing deportation from the U.S which has been his home since he was a small child.

Like so many others, I came to this country when I was very young, barely five years old. America is all I've ever known. Four years ago I learned of my illegal status. It's been a hard reality because I consider myself as American as a Ford Mustang.In only a matter of weeks I might be deported to Mexico, a country of which I have no recollection. I fear for my safety, I fear for my life. My future rests in the hands of ICE Houston Field Office Director Kenneth Landgrebe, who has the power to grant a Deferred Action to stop my deportation. My voice alone can't motivate that decision. Only the multitude of voices of friends, family, neighbors and the larger community can guide ICE to make the right decision.

Help me stay home and fulfill my dream of serving this country as a statistician, not another statistic.

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Wisconsin in Arizona?
Chained Ethnic Studies Students Take Over School Board in Tucson

by Jeff Biggers, AlterNet, April 26, 2011

Has Wisconsin finally come to Arizona?

In an extraordinary uprising at the Tucson Unified School District board meeting tonight, Ethnic Studies/Mexican American Studies (MAS) students chained themselves to the board members chairs and derailed the introduction of a controversial resolution that would have terminated their acclaimed program's core curriculum accreditation.

Popular Tucson blogger and activist David Abie Morales calls it a "field trip for civics and democracy in action."

"Nobody was listening to us, especially the board," said MAS high school student and UNIDOS activist Lisette Cota. "We were fed up. It may have been drastic but the only way was to chain ourselves to the boards' chairs."

While hundreds of supporters packed the district meeting room in a celebratory fashion, nine MAS students and UNIDOS activists defied security officers and literally took over the board members' places minutes before the meeting was scheduled to begin.

"I'm very moved by their passion and commitment to maintain these courses and curriculum," said MAS teacher Sally Rusk. "They're brilliant. This is not a one-time event. It looks like they're not going to stop until they have an impact on this decision."

TUSD Superintendent John Pedicone canceled the board meeting, but students have vowed to return to the district office until TUSD board president Mark Stegemen withdraws his proposed resolution, which has brought stark divisions in the community.

Over the past two years, the Ethnic Studies Program in Tucson has been subjected to a controversial and costly witch hunt by Attorney General Tom Horne.

"We'll keep coming back, with twice as many people next time, each time," added Cota. "We're not going to let this happen. We're going to make it impossible for them to vote."

Through the evening, the students and their community supporters chanted: "Our education is under attack, what do we do? Fight back!"

Just like the people of Wisconsin took a stand and said `enough is enough', the youth of Tucson are standing up and letting it be known that they are fed up with these attacks on their education and on their future. They have been under relentless assault by Tom Horne, John Huppenthal, and by the Arizona State Legislature, and they have had enough," said Sal Baldenegro, Jr., a TUSD Ethnic Studies alum and member of the Southern Arizona Unity Coalition. "As Arizonans, we absolutely must stand behind our youth and say `enough is enough' with these attacks on their education. There has never been a more critical time to stand behind our children as they fight for their rights and for their futures."

Tucson resident and education activist Mohur Sidhwa, who attended the meeting, added: "A wonderful show of civic engagement on the part of the students. It gives me hope for the next generation."

[Jeff Biggers is author of Reckoning at Eagle Creek: The Secret Legacy of Coal in the Heartland, among other books. www.jeffbiggers.com]

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Odd & the Frost Giants

BY ALEX WUKMAN
PHOTO BY BRANDON HOLLEY

***Odd and the Frost Giants** receives its world premiere at Stages Repertory Theatre 3201 Allen Parkway, Suite #101, on May 2 and runs until May 21. For more information and tickets call 713-527-8243.*

Rob Kimbro is a busy man, dressed in a white v-neck T-shirt, jeans and black blazer he bustles around the rehearsal hall at Stages Theatre getting his actors up to speed. His show, Odd and the Frost Giants, opens in two weeks, and in addition to getting his actors fitted for their costumes he's still making last minute rewrites to the script to smooth out the dialogue.

EVEN THOUGH KIMBRO IS A CONSUMMATE PROFESSIONAL, with decades of experience in theatre; he still gets preshow jitters. Over the years Kimbro has taught playwriting at the Alley and selected operas for the Moore School of Music, but Odd represents both his first children's show and his first stage adaptation to receive a full production.

Kimbro explains that the decision to adapt Odd and the Frost Giants, a little known young adult novella by famed British author Neil Gaiman, was fairly easy. "[My son and I] read it as a bed time story over a couple of nights and when we finished it I thought, 'This would make a great play,'" says Kimbro. He goes on to describe that one of the things that convinced him the book would work on stage was Gaiman's prose.

"By and large [Gaiman's] writing works both on the page and in an actor's mouth," says Kimbro. He's quick to point out that the strength of Gaiman's writing doesn't mean that the actors used a copy of Odd as the script. "We through four rewrites…there were times when I found that I had been following Gaiman too slavishly and there were times when I found that his dialogue worked better than what I had written," explains Kimbro.

Kimbro states that one of the reasons he was attracted to the story of Odd is that, at its core, it's about characters searching for a way home, "something that can be understood by everyone," even those unfamiliar with Gaiman's storied career. In the book, and in the play, Odd, a young Norseman with a lame leg, is the son of a woodcutter who drowns on a Viking raid. His mother remarries a widower who favors his own children over Odd which forces Odd to strike out into the forbidding woods on his own, in the middle of an unusually long and bitter winter. Once in the forest he meets a fox, an eagle and a bear who are actually the Norse gods Loki, Odin and Thor; all of whom have been cast out of their home Asgard and magically transformed into animals.

The fact that three of the main characters have been transformed into animals was another thing that attracted Kimbro to the story. "I knew from the beginning that they would be puppets," says Kimbro. And the fact that the project includes puppets allows him to work with a long-time friend, the legendary puppeteer Mary Robinette Kowal. According to her bio, Kowal has performed for LazyTown (CBS), the Center for Puppetry Arts and Jim Henson Pictures. She has also two Citations of Excellence from the American chapter of the Union Internationale de la Marionnette, UNIMA-USA, an international association of puppeteers and puppet theatre professionals.

He explains that his decision to use Kowal over other puppeteers was not just based on their prior relationship but also the sensibility of the project. "I met Mary years ago at McCarter Theatre in New Jersey and we've been looking for a reason to work together; she had the right aesthetic and had worked with Neil before," says Kimbro. To provide an example of Kowal's aesthetic he picks up the bear puppet, which is the size of a medium size secretary desk, and easily moves it around.

"The heads are made out of folded paper that has been painted to look like wood, wood is a huge reoccurring theme in the play, and they are attached to a spring. The bodies are fabric over foam and PVC pipe," says Kimbro as he expertly maneuvers the puppet over imaginary hills and valleys.

He goes on to describe how, on another level, he recognized what Gaiman had created with Odd and wanted to bring it to life. "Odd is a new myth involving Thor and Loki and Odin," says Kimbro. And like all good myths it tells a story that resonates across time and cultures. "It's a play about home; this character [Odd] gets thrown out of home and he meets these three guys [Thor, Loki and Odin] who have also been kicked out of their home," says Kimbro. He goes on say that another aspect that made him fall in love with the story was that "it's in the tradition of classic Nordic storytelling."

He explains how his study of the Icelandic sagas informed his decision to have Thor, Loki and Odin assume the roles of narrator throughout the story and that the most difficult part of adapting Gaiman's book was "choosing what parts each of the characters would want to tell." Kimbro goes on to say that the inclusion of traditional storytelling elements isn't something that he just decided to bring to the text; it's something that Gaiman is completely aware of.

"One of the best things about Neil is that he's very conscious of working in the storytelling tradition," says Kimbro. He also ruefully acknowledges that the opening of his play is most likely going to be overshadowed by the opening of another dramatized adaptation involving Norse gods, Marvel comics' multimillion dollar blockbuster Thor which opens a few days after Odd. When asked whether comic books influenced his take on the characters or approach to the material, Kimbro explains that, like most people, he is aware of the Marvel property. He even goes on to say that he grew up on the legendary Walt Simonson run on Thor in the 1970s and 1980s, but that other approaches to Loki, Odin and Thor didn't influence his decisions. "For me the book is the artifact; and I don't need much more than that," said Kimbro. **FPH**



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