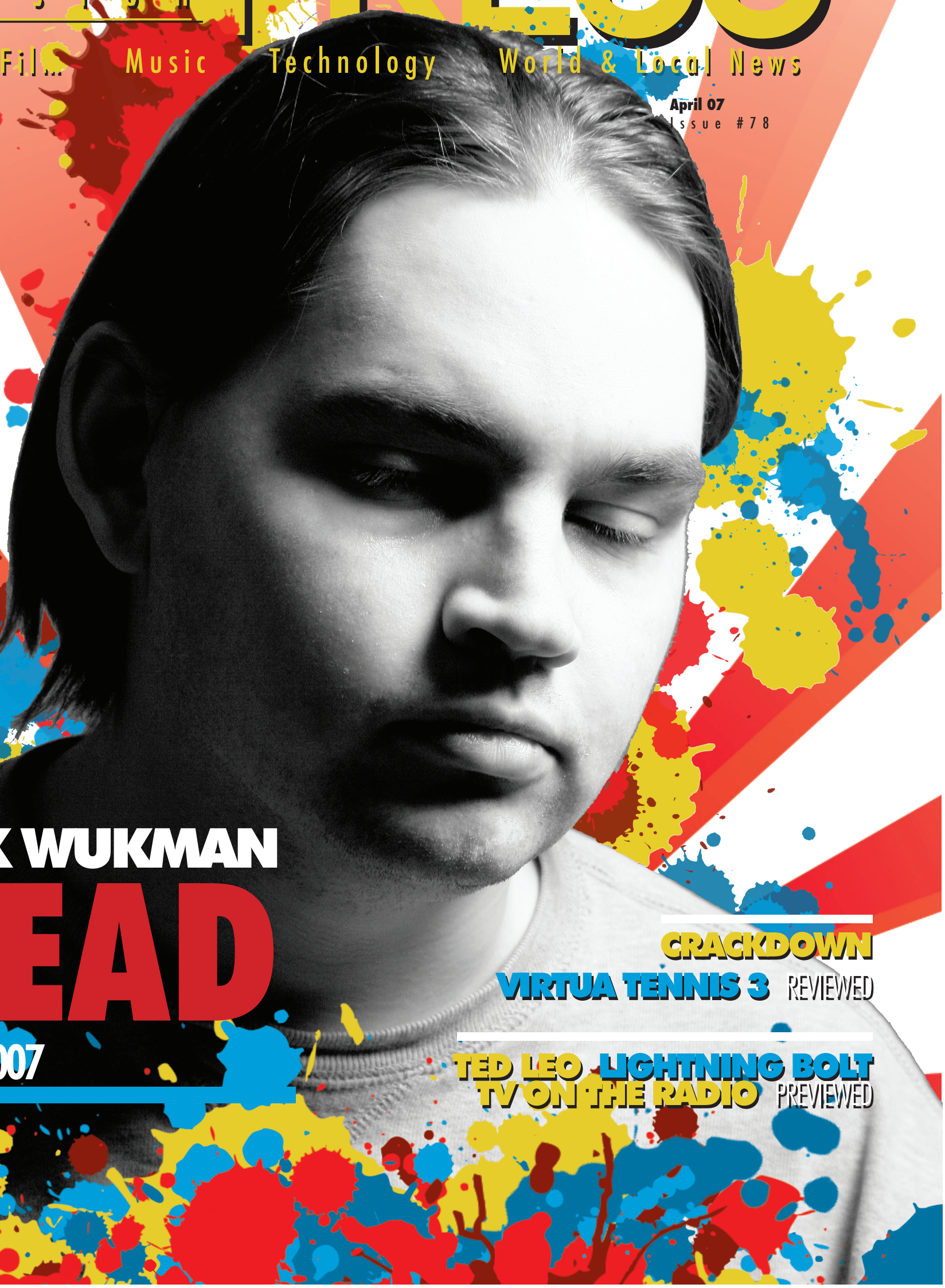
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Houston

Arts Film Music Technology World & Local News

April 07
Issue #78



ALEX WUKMAN

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1980 -2007

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on the cover:
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art | **Tyler Barber**

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editors

Epitaph of Alex *"the asshole,"* Wukman

Dear Readers:

This letter is not to praise Alex, but to bury him. Alex was found dead Sunday night in a one bedroom apartment close to the Houston Avenue and North Main intersection in the heights. No one knows exactly what happened and the police are still investigating. But we feel that since Alex was family we needed to clear the record about who he was before the cops start dragging his name through the mud.

Alex was a creature of Montrose. Like so many of the people who made and continue to make Montrose what it is Alex arrived here a disillusioned and cynical refugee from the suburbs. By the time of his passing he was a disillusioned and cynical member of the arts community. Alex wasn't quiet about himself. He was the type of guy who wanted you to know everything about him, his failures and successes. He wouldn't shy away from telling you what he was doing, and he always had some new project in the works, or what was going on. Usually what was going on was some problem with his family.

No epitaph of Alex would be complete without a mention of the complicated and often frightening relationship he had with his family. Alex spent the majority of his life trying to find some way to have a healthy relationship with his father. It was something he craved more than anything else.

Sadly it never happened. Out of respect for the surviving members of Alex's family we won't disclose the reasons why his relationship with his father was so difficult. We will say that if you knew Alex you knew what he went through with his family.

In a lot of ways Alex was a classic performer; onstage he could call down fire from the gods and ask forgiveness for the sins of man. Offstage he couldn't even ask a girl for her number. He was the type of guy who was more comfortable sitting at a bar with a book and a beer than a group of people.

Oh he liked people--if he saw you out he would come over to say hello, he just didn't know how to connect. He was the type of guy who wouldn't call you, wouldn't come over to your house, wouldn't want to do anything with you and still say you were his best friend. This led many people to think he was an arrogant asshole, and in some sense he was. But he was also shy because he felt like he never truly fit in. That was partly do to the fact he never could shake the feeling that he was a kid from the suburbs.

He was always insecure about his status in the community; this became even more apparent over the last year. After the success of Superwoman vs. The League of Evil and the book deal Alex was very unsure of himself. He had achieved the level of notoriety that he always wanted; he was up for a Diverseworks fellowship and was scheduled to do his first gallery show at M2 in August; but this success was mirrored by a decline in his interpersonal relationships. He began withdrawing deeper into himself. He stopped discussing his writing, he began performing very infrequently and the performances he did give were half-assed.

We all though it was simply depression; after all it had been almost a year since he had a girlfriend. Sadly we never will know exactly what he was suffering from when he passed. We do know how Alex would want to be remembered, with one kick ass party. Alex's memorial service will be held April 20th, because we all know how much he liked to get high, at his favorite bar Dan Electros.

Sincerely,
Editors



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Arts

DEBRIS: Now I've Got Helicopters

by Buffalo Sean



If you want to know who sits on the boards of the most powerful oil companies in the world (or in town) check out **Anthony Thomas Shumate** at the Art League Houston this month; if you want to know where he stole the idea for his Illustrator illustrations stop by **theyrule.net**. Their Inversion coffee shop down on Montrose is doing very well; I see yuppies outside there every day.

The engineer of some of the strangest paper maché creations ever made, **Jesse Lott** has had his distinctive creatures and people exhibited in Houston for the last twenty years. This April 7th he opens his newest exhibit at G Gallery in the Heights. If you google him you get a Republican somewhere in California running for minor office. Call 503-659-1704 and tell him you like his art! Stop off next door to G at Redbud and peruse Bernd Baumgard's new German paintings while you're north of Washington Avenue.

Zeitgeist Collective, a study in vernacular dissonance, is hopping into the curator business with an exhibit at **Notsuoh** (314 Main) April 13th featuring Adrian Landon Brooks, Julia Sinelkova, Travis Gorman, Eli Sebastian Brumbaugh, Shawna Mouser and Matt Messinger among others. Whether the Zeitgeist or the Collective show up, you'll have to go see to find out. Next door to **Dean's** in downtown where they have been running exhibits for a couple of years, the reopening of Notsuoh bodes well for the reemergence of art outfits in downtown just as the rest of the city is giving up on it. Maybe all those empty remodeled spaces could be put to some light work?

Free film this April outside **the Menil** on Saturday, April 14th at 8:30pm! The **Aurora Picture Show** will be screening two rare Warhol films guaranteed to put you to sleep unless you hit the syrup real hard. Bring a bottle. Exhibiting "Andy Warhol Paints Mao" and "Andy Warhol Mops Hammer and Sickle".

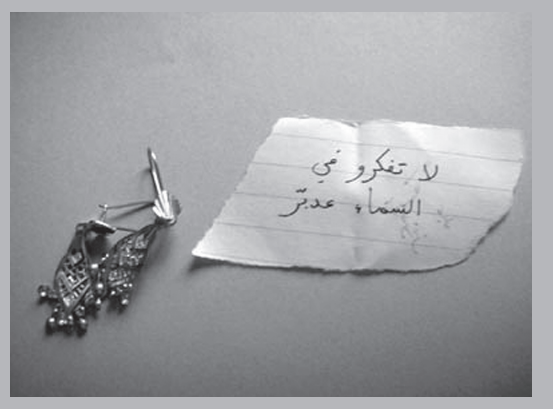
Hop on down to **Commerce Street Artists Warehouse** on April 14th for the last opening in the hulking warehouse before the summer oppression sets in, this month CSAW presents *Goin' Mobile* featuring Austin, Beijing, New York and San Antonio artists curated by Kimberly Aubuchon. Those kids have been throwing some killer openings in the past few months; expect this one to be out of hand as well!

Speaking of San Antone, I wonder how Houston artists **Robert Pruitt** and **Hana Hillerova** have been doing in their recent work down the block from the Alamo. Check out Pruitt's latest at artpace.org, to see Hana's work you may have to drive to the desert since Sala Diaz's content is a little harder to find- just like the seeking of universal religiosity that her show is based on.

Congratulations to artist **Frank Rose** for being able to put his balls on the line! Frank recently bought Artshouston magazine, reputed for being filled with news about the opera and the Alley that no one wanted to read. Starting May 2007 look for some subtle changes (don't want to upset the advertisers) that may lead to a magazine with real content on Houston newsstands. Extra congrats to Frank and Kara Duval on their recent wedding down in Galveston!

Hint next time you go by **Diverseworks**: Don't drink the Kool-Aid.

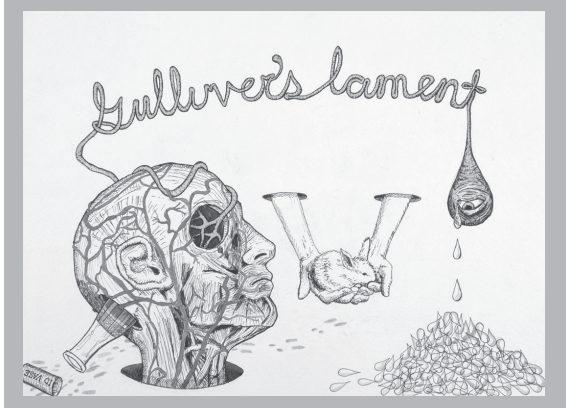
Call 503. 659. 1704 and tell him you like his art!



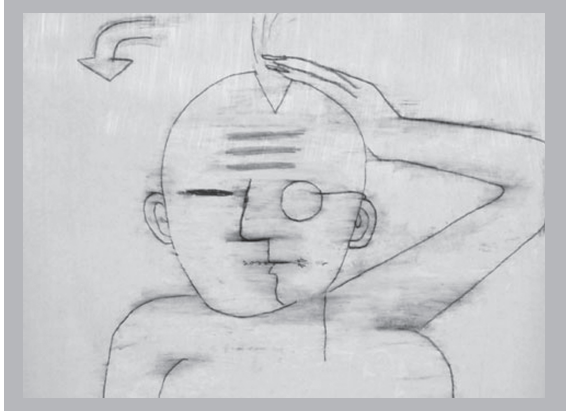
Guantanamo: *Picture from Home. Questions of Justice*
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It's Art Fool by Jaime
Super Happy Fun Land 2610 Ashland
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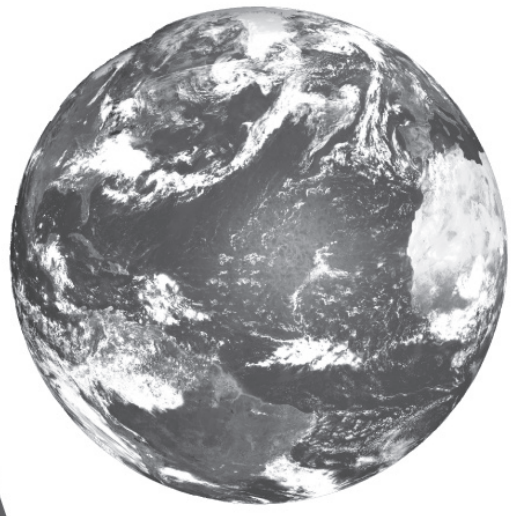


Jonathan Davies: *Gullivers Lament*
Poissant Gallery 5102 Center Street
Through April 14. 713-868-9337



Going Mobile
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Velvet Goldmine

by Evan J. Garza



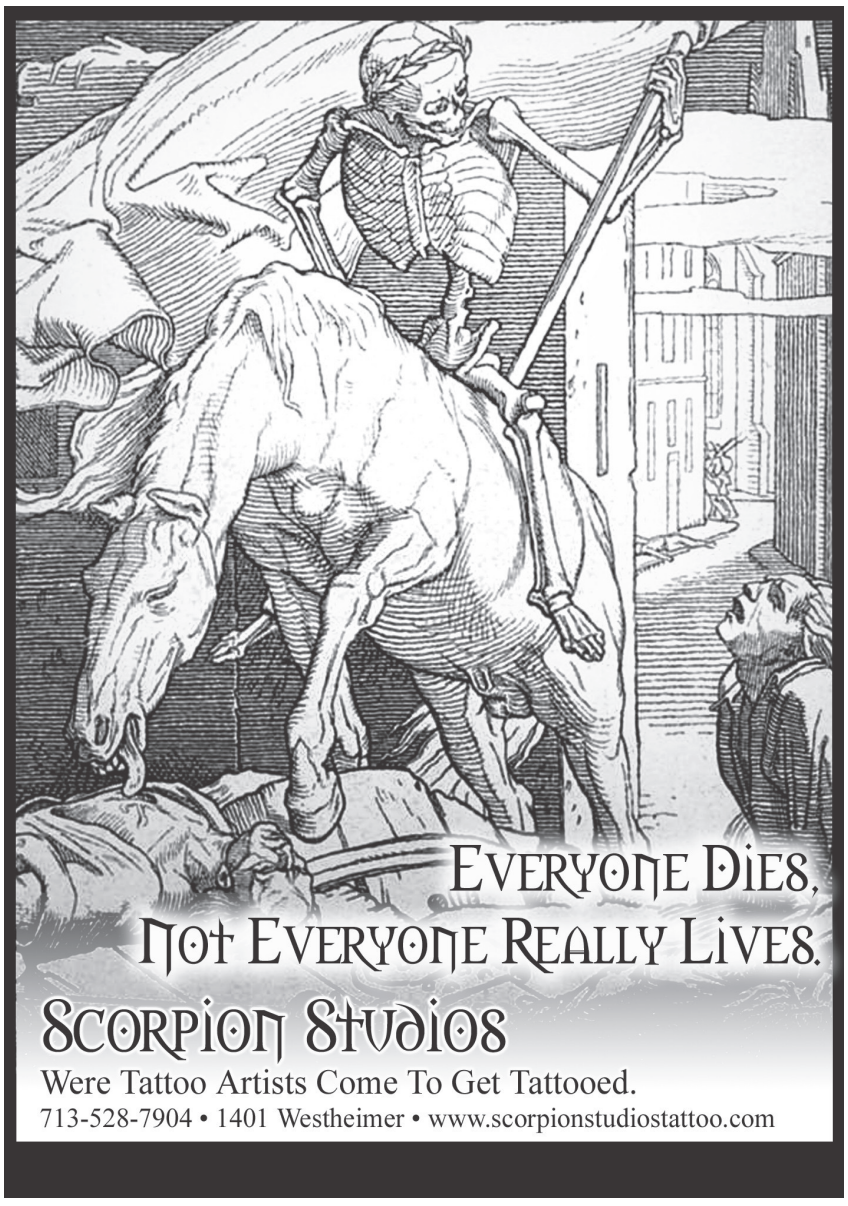
On the third floor of the Lawndale Arts Center, a collision exists between tactile ornamental design, hyperfemininity, and anatomical science. It is *in our garden*, an exhibition of new work by Janice Weeks.

You are first met by a heart frequency pattern traversing the hall, made of blood red velvet, the material of which the entire exhibition is made. Installed on an adjacent wall are large and intricately cut human hearts that hang like giant cardiac berries from the willowed branches of what we can only imagine is a tree. The trunk is made only of thick arteries that stand tall and tight like thick red harp strings begging to be plucked. It's a good thing the artist wants you to touch everything here.

But it is the works on paper in this exhibition that are at the helm of the soft and silent confrontation. Using symmetrical botanical imagery, the digitally conceived *Ornate Specimens series* are velvet cutouts that take their origin from traditional Chinese paper cutting and are inspired by Rorschach inkblots. Seemingly uterine petals and stems of leaves bend and curve like velvet fallopian tubes, ultimately blooming into tight ovarian buds. In another, braided veins fork into two identical and elaborate lung-like bushes of dead branches. The works are paired against adjacent negatives that more literally suggest the anatomical representations.

The brilliant choice of red velvet conjures impressions of luxury and religious settings while simultaneously referencing flesh and blood. "I wanted to make a place that contained life and death in both the selection and utilization of the material," Weeks says. "In creating a seductive and dramatic, stage-like atmosphere, I attempt to engage the viewer to examine their surroundings and challenge them to find meaning, not just in the imagery on display, but in their relationship to it." And she means it with all her heart[s]. Through April 14th. 4912 Main, 713-528-5858.





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Film

Time hopping rabbits and SXSW Wrap

Michael Bergeron

SXSW 07

Even though the time spent was ephemeral the lasting memories of this year's installment of the SXSW Film Festival are copious.

Over the opening weekend I viewed The Prisoner: Or How I Planned To Kill Tony Blair; The Lookout; Call of the Hummingbird; Third Ward TX; Scott Walker: 30 Century Man; Cat Dancers; Manufacturing Dissent; Monkey Warfare; Greensboro: Closer to the Truth; and the latest Hal Hartley film Fay Grim. There was also a Sunday morning music rights clearance seminar that included Donovan on the panel. Among other things Donovan mentioned that he traded rights with D. A. Pennebaker for the DVD release of Don't Look Back because he wants some of that Dylan and Donovan footage for his own documentary. At times the noise from the Grindhouse seminar next door comically interrupted the proceedings. While quite a stew it hardly covered the entirety of over 100 titles that unspooled through the week.

Movies I missed, some sought after because of their cool titles, included Itty Bitty Titty Committee, Crazy Sexy Cancer, a remake of Sisters, docus like James Blunt: Return to Kosovo and The King of Kong, a new Chan-wook Park film, a restored print of Eagle Pennell's The Whole Shootin'Match, Twisted: A Balloonamentary, and classic music films like Monterrey Pop and the Chet Baker story Let's Get Lost. In short, you can't be in two places at once and I'm just glad I was somewhere at all.

Third Ward TX details through pictorial history the background of Project Row and the current gentrifying of that Houston neighborhood. Not always great, but of special interest to Houstonians interested in institutional memory. More global was the Canadian docu Call of the Hummingbird that goes into the jungles of Brazil to observe a kind of eco-retreat. Imagine a commune style environment in the middle of a rain forest. Most interesting is the info on how the Mayan calendar really works. Not surprisingly the retreat immediately runs into trouble as waste management subverts the mostly middle class adventurers' spiritual goals.

Cat Dancers traces the career of big cat performance artists, and they are artistes in the truest sense, Ron and Joy Holiday from the 50s to the present day. Some awesome footage, although mostly home-style video that limits the distribution possibilities, includes their pet leopard leaping 20 feet through the air and comfortably into Ron's arms. When an inbred white tiger goes apeshit and kills



In "The Prisoner: O r How I Planned to Kill Tony Blair," which played at SXSW, graphic novel style animation punctuates moments that depict torture, giving the film a self-described Kafkaesque mood.

both Joy and their male lover/trainer Chuck, Cat Dancers delivers powerful emotion in a raw manner. It's a beautiful moment where Ron, nearing 80, talks about moving to an obscure Thailand monastery where the monks live with wild animals.

A three-way relation of a different nature emerges in Monkey Warfare, with Don McKellar, Tracy Wright, and Nadia Litz. Are they urban bike riding hipsters living on the edge of a counter culture precipice or rejects under the economic radar hiding from their radical past? Monkey Warfare was a lot of fun to watch and goes down easy with a dose of 60s idealism. The Monkey publicity staff avidly put up posters all over SXSW that simply stated I Fuck The Man.

Not as much fun as controversial was another Canadian docu Manufacturing Dissent. This film attempts to open a can of whoop ass on Michael Moore by exposing all the half-truths and lies that pepper his films. Guess what? Moore uses the same methods so popular with Fox News and before them the Third Reich. It's called agitprop (and for the most part it works).

Scott Walker: 30 Century Man was one of those amazing musical documentaries that, for Americans at least, introduce a previously unknown artist. Once you realize that you've heard Walker, say spinning on Golden Oldies stations, or in the movie Pola X conducting a metal symphony, his cool factor only increases. 30 Century Man includes a candid Walker, obviously not a recluse, as well as several movers and shakers of British music over the last couple of generations.

An important film in terms of the unasked questions it answers, expect The Prisoner: Or How I Planned To Kill Tony Blair to roll out in limited engagements over the next few months. Hitchcock made a film, The Wrong Man, that told the true-life tale on an innocent man accused of a crime. Even the master of suspense couldn't improve on the story of Yunis Khatayer Abbas.

Michael Tucker and Petra Epperlein who previously made the Iraqi war docu Gunner Palace directed The Prisoner: Or How I Planned To Kill Tony Blair. One of the moments in GP shows a terrorist suspect being apprehended by American troops. That person was Yunis. "The horrible thing is that anywhere along the way if someone had just made a phone call they could've confirmed he was a legit journalist," Tucker said speaking in the SXSW pressroom.

Yunis was jailed by order of Uday Hussein in 1998 for a poem critical of Iraqi policy. After a few months he was personally driven to Uday's palace, offered an apology and told to be careful what he published. In September of 2003 Yunis found himself in Abu Ghraib. He had been on a list of suspects who planned to assassinate the UK Prime Minister. Eventually Yunis is released and he's offered a sincere apology by the Americans. "When did we become such bad guys?" I ask Tucker as Epperlein just rolls her eyes.

The Prisoner: Or How I Planned To Kill Tony Blair includes home movies shot by Yunis, and interviews with him and soldiers that take the viewer behind the scenes at Abu Ghraib. Some graphic novel style animation punctuates moments that depict torture (electrodes to the fingertips, beatings), giving the film a self-described Kafkaesque mood.

Mimzy saves humanity

What is the Last Mimzy? Simple, this mimzy is a future robotic bunny rabbit doll (or bunny action figure if you don't play with dolls) that's arrived at the present day to save humanity. Think of Children of Men only for kids, and without all that messy dystopian subtext. Better still, imagine the wonderment of E.T. transformed into a parable for the new millennium. LM has its work well defined, and marks its territory by playing the family movie card and mixing time travel with social commentary.

The Last Mimzy starts in the future as a scientist in a non-specific yet laser intensive setting labors over a problem. What may be aliens, or perhaps humans in protective suits, hover in the background. We quickly move to current day Seattle, which is awash with every person you see bogged down with a cellular phone, PDA, electronic toy, or device of some kind. The story settles on the pre-teen children of the Wilder family, Noah and Emma, to actually start the story. While on a weekend vacation they find a mysterious box washed up from the ocean. Suffice it to say that the contents, including the aforementioned bunny rabbit, a flat handheld computer and minerals that spin to create force fields, lead them into an adventure beyond kin.

SXSW Wrap cont.



This ain't just any ol' stuffed bunny. The Last Mimsy is out to capture DNA and save the planet.

Basically the environment of the future has become so polluted that the DNA of a pure subject (the tears of a young child) are needed to jumpstart the human race. The youngsters (especially Rhiannon Leigh Wryn looking like a little miss sunshine clone) propel the story and are supported with fine adult turns by Timothy Hutton and Joely Richardson as the disbelieving parents, Rainn Wilson and Kathryn Hahn as a new age couple (Wilson[1]s the kid[1]s science teacher). A subplot involving the NSA (the kid[1]s new toys cause a coast wide power failure) gives Michael Clarke Duncan a chance to play a more serious character that the Green Mile type he[1]s usually stuck with.

Perhaps oddly enough the film works as a consummate family film (adults will dig it) in more than one way. The film comes from New Line Cinema and is an in-house project in the truest sense. The helmer Bob Shaye owns New Line Cinema, and one of the screenwriters is Toby Emmerich, a New Line executive. Shaye may be the only billionaire currently directing films, but New Line[1]s humble beginnings in Shaye[1]s apartment (in the 1960s) as a distributor handling stoner midnight films like Reefer Madness or Magical Mystery Tour are evident in the altruistic nature of Last Mimzy. The story itself is adapted from the 1943 short story Mimsy Were the Borogoves by the writing team of Henry Kuttner and Catherine Moore under the pseudonym Lewis Padgett.

There[1]s even an original song, [3]Hello, I Love You[2] by Roger Waters that suggest archetype Pink Floyd images with every verse.

Flannel saves pajamas

Flannel Pajamas unreels in an exclusive engagement at the downtown Angelika. This bittersweet love affair is a win-win date movie: If you[1]re in love you can tell your date you would never act that way, and if you[1]re looking for a way out of a bad pairing, you[1]ll both shake hands and depart along separate paths at Flannel Pajamas[1] end, and everyone will understand.

The combination of a firm director[1]s vision (Jeff Lipsky, head of October Films in their heyday) and some emotive thesping from Justin Kirk and Julianne Nicholson give Flannel Pajamas[1] talky script a solid foundation. There[1]s something about Nicholson[1]s light skin tone nudeness against a peach colored wall that engulfs your comfort zone. The characters and their relatives don[1]t always do what you want them to, and that[1]s a good thing.

FP shows New York City the way people who live there see it, and to good advantage. And there[1]s a cool song over the end credits. A few reviews I read of this film conjured up comparisons to foreign film directors but they[1]re grasping at straws. Lipsky is an American original.



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Music

Sometimes Good Times are Stuck Inside of You…

and then they're gone

Kwame M. Anderson

Well, it's all behind me now; spring break, SXSW, hundreds of dollars. It's an exhilarating experience that of loss. But what was gained is much greater than that what was lost, or so I've told myself. But let's stick with the topic: SXSW. South By southwest is the Disneyland of music journalists. For days you are pampered and made to feel as if you are important to the world of music. For even as downloading, low CD sells, and waning interest in music remains, we can still gather eat BBQ and drink beer and indulge SOMETIMES GOOD TIMES ARE STUCK INSIDE OF YOU…and then they're gone.

Well, it's all behind me now; spring break, SXSW, hundreds of dollars. It's an exhilarating experience that of loss. But what was gained is much greater than that what was lost, or so I've told myself. But let's stick with the topic: SXSW. South By southwest is the Disneyland of music journalists. For days you are pampered and made to feel as if you are important to the world of music. For even as downloading, low CD sells, and waning interest in music remains, we can still gather eat BBQ and drink beer and indulge the fanboy/fangirl land of the music festival. So, with my lady in tow, I ventured to the land of bandits (that's the term my lady and I used to describe the hopefuls wandering the Austin streets). Enjoy, but remember folks, it's always important to have an occupation, I know this sound very conservative, but you don't know how many times my girlfriend asked, "So when this is over, what do most of these people do," and I responded, "This."

3-15-07

I arrived in the sweet city of Austin to acquire my wristband. In the past being a music writer almost guaranteed you a badge, but this year things done changed, and while the Free Press is a glimmer of light in the dim world of local newspapers, apparently the light doth not shine bright enough. Oh well, after obtaining my credentials I hit the hotel for a little r and r, and to schedule my night of rocking. First up, **La Gusana Ciega** from Mexico City. They are a band like Snow Patrol or All American Rejects, at first look they are indie rock-ish looking dudes, but then they start playing, and the Top 40 blasts from the speakers. I must admit that my lady wanted to see this, and knowing I was going to drag her to art rockers for most of the festival I figured I'd give her this one. It was decent, and as the band introduced one song where they told a tale of how women can never be faithful as evidenced by the fact the guitarist's girlfriend came to the festival with him only to skip out with his best friend, I thought. "Hey, for that reason alone I'll watch this song." Then we headed out to see Spoon. Being as I had not seen Spoon live for sometime I thought this would be good and remind of a time past, when I too hoped to play stages. Upon our arrival at Antone's, we heard the sound of two other Merge bands **Broken West** and **Rosebuds,** and both bands managed to discourage me while also making Spoon five times better by default. My friend Darin, said of the last Spoon album, "The first few songs are good, but the rest of the album is crap." Well they played the first few songs, I guess, because they were really good and the bass lines pretty much made the song. I was entertained and prepared, and my lady liked it, and as the week went on this was my real criteria for how good a band was. See, my lady isn't so into a lot of shit I listen to, and she's also not that big into bands, so the whole "let's go see the cool band" thing was not in the equation, which meant she liked the music if it sounded good, and sometimes I forget that's part of the whole liking a band thing, over who recorded it, or what band they used to be in, or you know, geek boy rock shit.

3-16-07

Today would be the day I saw **Marnie Stern**, and after having to miss her due to sickness when she was supposed to play Houston, this would be my first chance to see her do her thing live. Well, when we got there to see her, she wasn't there. But it gave me a chance to chop it up with my friend Thane, who used to live in Houston, and played in bands like Sad Like Crazy and Judas Bear. He was also there to see Stern, and while we talked outside, sure enough Marnie Stern pulled up in a cab, with a guitar, a pedal, and a publicist, yeah rock n'roll. As her gear had been left in Wyoming, she borrowed the guitar and the pedal, and with no preparation, she plugged her I Pod in, and played to instrumental versions of her album While the method was strange, I was psyched still to see her ,and her guitar technique is superbly awesome. Next, we left to the **Devin The Dude** listening party, and met up with my homey Matt Sonsala. I was able to chat with Devin The Dude, and check out some local hip hop. I also saw my home Phil from **Lower Life Form** and he told me the show the previous night went really well. Then, I went next door to see **Hella**, it would be my first time to see them as a quintet. It was interesting, my lady was kind of into it, but that the singing and music were not the greatest match, I would have to concur. After a stint back to the room, my lady informed she was not feeling well, and her rocking would stop. So, alone and dejected, I traveled to

shows in the Houston area



Jacuzzi Suicide
4/10 | Super Happy Fun Land



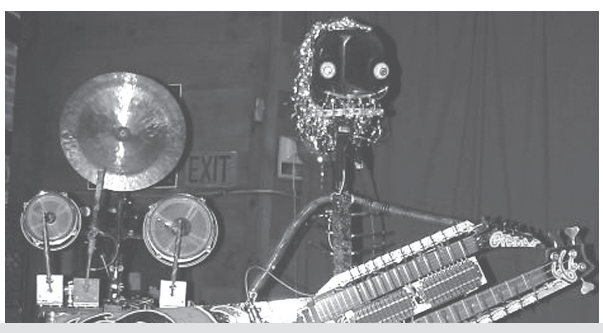
Nickel Creek
4/20 | Meridian



The Hates
4/6 | Walter's



The Low Ends
4/7 | Super Happy Fun Land



Captured!By Robots
4/15 | Numbers



Yo La Tengo
4/6 | Warehouse Live

Sometimes Good Times are Stuck Inside of You…
cont.

see Brooklyn, New York's **Dragons Of Zynth**. Every year I've been to the festival I've seen a band I knew nothing about that floored me. In the past it was bands such as Frog Eyes, Battles, and Man Man, but this year it would be Dragons Of Zynth. All I knew upon entering the venue was that the band's soon to be released album was produced by Kyp Malone and Dave Sitek of TV On The Radio, and they had a song on my space that was awesome. When the band took the stage I knew not what to expect, but what I got was intense, passionate, and far beyond my idea of what I might see. As much Sly Stone as Jodeci, as much Prince as Parliament, it was kind of like Hendrix and kind of like The Upsetters. But more than stylistically, it was just parts of songs, this part was like this, but this part was like this, and by the end of the song we had gone hither and tither. When the band climaxed with the song "RIZE Above" it was full on revival meets tribal war chant. Impressive, was an understatement, and then I knew, I must chase them down and bug them into giving me a CD. Later, I walked to The Central Presbyterian Church to see **Nina Nastasia and Jim White**, and legendary folk singer **Vashti Bunyan**. Nina Nastasia and Jim White were OK, but White's splashes of percussion over Nastasia's finger picked style wore then on me and the duo seemed better idealistically than realistically. Vashti Bunyan, on the other hand, was a revelation. Playing songs from her last album Lookaaftering and her classic Just Another Diamond Day, her voice was as gentle and haunting as on record. The atmosphere of the church made the songs even more cryptic, and the sparse arrangements only helped to magnify Bunyan's most beautiful instrument, her voice.

3-16-07

Today my lady rejoined me on my travels and we again went to see **Marnie Stern** in hopes that a different show and set of circumstances would merit a better show, this is also when I hooked with my boy Kerry of **Satin Hooks**. Stern was incredibly better the next time, though still playing with the I Pod, she promised that this would be her last tour playing with it as a musical companion. Still, it translated much better, and when she makes up for Houston's missed date, it will most likely be with Zach Hill of Hella, and a full band, if we are so lucky. From there we set off to see **Arbouretum, who play here at The Mink April 12th.** There sound mixes the slow burn of blues rock with the heaviness of say a Mountain, or maybe Comets On Fire. The show was in a small record store, but that kind of added to the aural haze that was their music. Guitar solos and songs about science and stuff, I was way into it. Later that evening we braved a 15 block hike to see **Frog Eyes**. As I am a huge fan of the band, this was to be a highlight, I met the band and their publicist so expect a story to accompany their show here in May. Frog Eyes was stellar and compelling and as beautiful as the day was, even that couldn't take some of the bite out of the band's sordid tales. That night, we went to Antone's to see the 12 members Afrobeat collective **Antibalas**. The band did what I'd expected them to do which was raise the roof. Executing their Fela Kutiesque romps, the band rocked for 45 or 50 minutes playing about, maybe, four songs. Of all the things we saw, this probably entertained my lady the most, as the full band is more her preference when it comes to live music. It was refreshing that in a land of cool, the inclusive vibe associated with Antibalas meant that for those 50 minutes everybody in the room was one nation under a groove. Next, we saw the Dap Kings w/ Sharon Jones who played the soul James Brown and Stax, but in a way that felt real (for the most part). Kerry, my lady, and I danced and whooped and shouted, and it reminded of the loss of James Brown, for even as bad as we try to appropriate his style, the man still was untouchable, and none of this would exist without him.

3-17-07

By this time I am usually beaten down and tired from three days of walking and drinking and sun, and today was no different. But, I thought of the less fortunate, who could not be in the position to walk around Austin with access, and I trudged on, for it is they that make my journey worthy. I am the scribe, and this is the scribe's duty. I also saw the movie Blood Diamond and it made me want to attach a false importance to everything else I did. But I did get up late, and my rocking did not officially begin until about four o clock. I went to see **Cee Plus and The House Of Bad Knives,** but instead I saw Cee Plus sitting at a table on a computer, but I did see the members of **Spain Colored Orange**, and had I stayed I would've seen them play, but I had to walk on to see **Dirty Projectors**. The result of David Longstreth's musical vision, this band has taken on many incarnations, from full orchestras to Longstreth and a laptop, but in this configuration he played in the traditional two guitars-bass-drums set up. However, that's probably the most "conventional" thing about the band. Songs jerked and jammed, quiet at times, explosive at others, a little bit r and b, harmonies, Storm and Stress like melodies, the band was one thing to me and something completely different 5 minutes later, but always interesting. I came to this show because the drummer from Dragons Of Zynth told me they would have some homemade CDs, and after playing a technically difficult but riveting show I bugged them into getting a copy. In true from, it was just a blank CD, no song titles or band signifiers, still I held it close to my heart. I saw some of Money Mark's set, but my night ended with a performance by Houston's own **Yppah**, which featured Kerry Of Satin Hooks on guitar (third guitar). The band basically replayed compositions Yppah had created, but Kerry mostly moved around wildly to play all of three notes, it was wildly entertaining.

Well there you have the SXSW experience. Yeah, I missed a lot of the secret parties and hoopla, but I have not the energy to chase down the cool, and well…I needed one of those stinking badges. So to all of you who went to SXSW, just to go, that's dumb. I talked to plenty of people who were just in Austin hanging out that saw nothing, you could do that here and save the gas money. Mad shout to my love, my partner, my woman, for without you none of this would've been fun, she stood by my side throughout the madness, and without her I am but a man writing about bands (which I technically still am with her, but, you know what I'm saying). She also took some pictures, which I never would've done, and she stood lovingly while a paraded around the town schmoozing the products and product handlers. Will I go next year? We will see…

shows for april

YO LA TENGO
4/05/07 | Warehouse Live, 813 Emanuel

CELEBRATION
4/14/07 | Numbers, 300 Weastheimer

BILL CALLAHAN
4/18/07 | Orange Show, 2402 Munger

ADULT w/ PARTS AND LABOR
4/18/07 | The Mink, 3718 Main

QUINTRON and MISS PUSSYCAT
4/21/07 | Orange Show, 2402 Munger

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Wednesday, April 4th, 2007

HASTE THE DAY - Solid State Records

FROM AUTUMN TO ASHES - Vagrant Records

MAYLENE AND THE SONS OF DISASTER - Ferret Music

THE SLEEPING - Victory Records

ALESANA - Fearless Records

The Meridian 1503 Chartres
Doors @ 6:00 pm All Ages $14 presale / $16 day of show

Tuesday, April 10th, 2007

AUGUST BURNS RED - Solid State Records

FROM A SECOND STORY WINDOW - Black Market Activities

SEE YOU NEXT TUESDAY - Ferret Music

CHAING VICTORY - Mono Vs Stereo

LIFE IN YOUR WAY - Solid State Records

Walter's 4215 Washington Ave.
Doors @ 7:00 All Ages $12

Monday, April 16th, 2007

SET YOUR GOALS - Eulogy Recordings

WHITE LIONS

ON MY SIDE - Words Of War Records

KEMO FOR EMO - Montrose Records

Walter's 4215 Washington Ave.
Doors @ 7:30 All Ages $10

Monday, April 23rd, 2007

NEKROMANTIX - Hellcat Records

TIME AGAIN - Hellcat Records

THE HEART ATTACKS - Hellcat Records

ORANGE - Hellcat Records

The Meridian 1503 Chartres
Doors @ 7:00 pm All Ages $12

Trans AM: Now Liberated, Change Sex

Kwame M. Anderson



Trans Am released their latest album, Sex Change (Thrill Jockey), on February 20th. As the band has always purveyed this sense of conceptual rock albums (The Surveillance, Futureworld, Liberation), one could only imagine where this album was going. Was it changing gender? Were they actually going to change the act of sex? Well, in interviewing the Phil Manley, I was curious as to what jewel he would drop on me, and he responded…

"It's a total non sequitur."

What?

"Because we made the record in a hurry, um, it was kind of great because we didn't have time to over-think anything, so like, the artwork, and the album title, and the songs also, we were, like, 'Alright that's good, let's go with it,' like no second guessing, and as a result the record sound a little more maybe fresh, and less considered than something like Liberation (where) I think we labored over it, you know, we put a lot of work into it, and this one kind of like more spontaneous."

Well, I take "fresh" to mean like the dirty way you talk to a girl at a club that might get you smacked. So let's say that this album is like a sexy album for Trans Am, though not really, like there's no 2 Live Crew type shit going on, but there is a song called "Obscene Strategies" and it kind of makes want dance dirty, so I'll just go with that.

So here's the dilemma, you release your most overtly political album in one, and then you take like four years off, play with bands such as The Fucking Champs and Weird War, everyone in the band moves to different parts of the globe, and then somewhere in that you decide to release another album, far removed from every circumstance that's colored your albums thus far. Well, that's kind of what happened with Trans Am. But more than that, when recording this album, many times it was just in whatever time they had, that every member could attend. Well, the result is one of the most concise Tran Am albums. Sex Change manages to sound like Trans Am, but in a more complete way than any other album. It sounds like Trans Am's self titled debut, it sounds like Futureworld, it sounds like Red Line, it sounds like TA, and so, it basically sounds like all of Trans Am's albums while still managing to be new and reaching.

"I know what you're saying, it's like, um, something about being a band that's been around for this long, we start to, it's like a self awareness, where we can be like, 'Let's write a Trans Am song,' you know, like we kind of know there's certain clichés, that we like…it's like weird self referential songwriting where we're like, oh yeah, we'll do this and we'll do this to make it sound like a Trans Am song, sometimes it's conscious and sometimes it's subconscious…it's like, there's still some jumping back and forth between the space funk and then the heavy rock, but I think, hopefully, we're more successful when it doesn't, when there not so disparate, but it's like, oh yeah that sounds like Trans Am."

In this world of flavor of the week rock, where bands are almost obsolete and forgotten, and styles come and go in a matter of months, it's refreshing to hear a band that maintains consistency, that doesn't try to fix was it not broken. The beauty of Trans Am is that even in there most far reaching moments, they are still able to sound familiar to those who adore them. They haven't abandoned their fans, so to speak. I mean, honestly, very few bands do their own thing as opposed to trying to suit themselves to whatever is happening at the time. Of course, I thin a lot of that has to do with having an identity in the first place, and it seems as if Trans Am knows where they fit in the land of rock.

" I think like Trans Am music is like, kind of, moronic rock music, and it's like accidentally experimental because we're just kind of...the combination of three of us, just for some reason we write like weird songs…We're like a band that appeals to sound guys, not to like 16 year old girls, for better or for worse I don't know."

Well, soundmen, and 16 year old girls alike can rejoice in the fact that Trans Am will bringeth the rock to Houston April 15th at the Engine Room. As the band is always solid live, this time will be no different. Anyone who has seen the band can attest to the fact that they always deliver, and whether your taste is the dancefloor side or the rawk side of Trans Am, both tastes will satiated. The thing about Sex Change is that it seems, immediately, like a live record. From album's inception to it's conclusion there is an vigor, a joie de vivre, that hits you and never releases you and in a live arena this always translates.

"I know what you mean, that might be true, I think we also brought so much energy to playing with another again (after a long absence), it's not even the music that you're hearing, it's the energy of us playing together again."

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KEMO FOR EMO

Friday, 04.20
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w/ The Life And Times,
Sharks and Sailors

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Wed. - Apr. 4
Haste The Day & From
Autumn To Ashes
The Sleeping
Maylene & The Sons of
Disaster

Thur. - Apr. 5
Gym Class Heroes P.O.S.
RX Bandits
K-OS

Fri. - Apr. 6
TV On The Radio
Augustana
Vega 4
David Ford
Orange

Fri. - Apr. 27
Type O Negative
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Free Press Houston
Issue 78 | 04/07

Previews: Shows in April

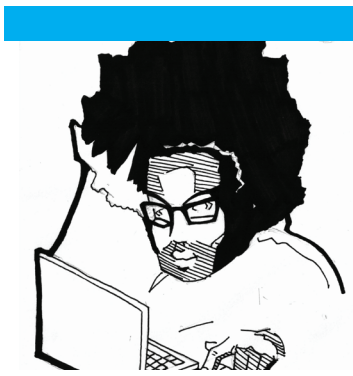
by Shelby Kelly



Ted Leo & The Pharmacists

April 5, 2007 | Numbers

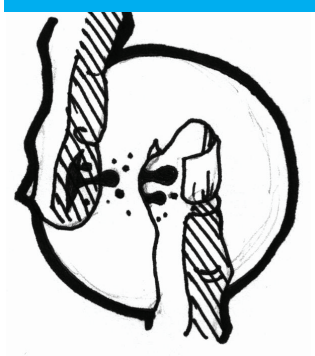
I haven't honestly heard too much of this dude's material but my girlfriend likes a lot and so do a lot of kids I know with decent music taste. From what I can tell, this dude is one of those dude's that makes it feel alright to wear what you've always wore and work a 9-5 and do regular shit that everyone has to do at some point in their life. I saw a video of him covering a Bruce Springsteen song on Pitchfork and it was pretty good. He has like that genuine feel to him that most singer-songwriters these days like for the sake of sounding like little gay robots or whatever. I'm sure you will make a good friend at this show.



TV on the Radio

April 6, 2007 | Meridian

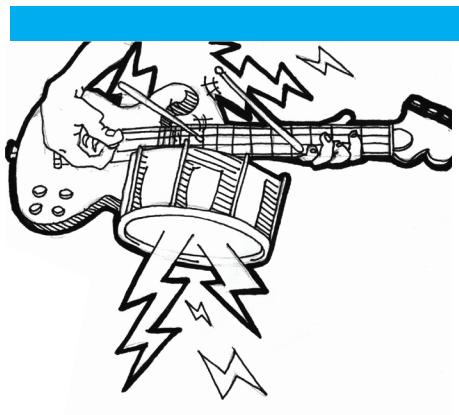
These guys new album, Return to Cookie Mountain, slays on so many levels. My friend Gabe drunk dialed me the other night and left me a message saying that Black Thought from The Roots was in their new video but then called me the next day to tell me that he was wrong and doesn't know why he thought that. The reality is that it wouldn't be too far fetched. TV on the Radio have done a lot for music in the last several years, from having their hands on the boards of Yeah Yeah Yeah's albums to being THE band to see at almost any industry catered event. I think these guys should totally do a song with Saul Williams but I'm probably just putting the obvious out there. I, as well as most of my friends WILL be attending this show because we're talking about burning it down with them boys and waxing philosophy with em so we can name-drop later.



The Blood Brothers w/ Celebration

April 14, 2007 | Numbers

Last time these guys came to town was with Austin's, … And You Will Know Us By The Trail of Dead, which I was unable to see due to being locked up in county. I e-mailed these guys years ago about doing a tour with them and they just now do it and I'm in jail when this happens?! Gimme a fucking break. Regardless, The Blood Brothers new album, Young Machetes, is goddamn amazing and should be played a lot. With the new album they've like, figured out a way to harness their noise into catchy songs. Not typical catchy songs though, like, their kind of catchy. Like, think of all the catchiest things they've ever done in the past, and put all those moments on one album. They will be playing with Celebration who gets down with TV on the Radio and Dragons of Zynth and shit so you know they got that piece.



Lightning Bolt

April 18, 2007 | Notsuoh

Lightning Bolt is one of my friend Mark's favorite bands, and this guy is one of the most elitist fucks you will eve know. No matter what it is, he has it vinyl, before it was big, and while the group was still "credible". Just kidding, mark, I know you can't afford a Jumbo Jack much less vintage vinyl. Lightning Bolt will, however, be shredding elitist and all human mental capacity's assholes out. Believe that this show will slay. It's going to be at Notsuoh too so that means PARTY AT CLARK'S AFTERWARDS!!! Hopefully this band will play loud enough to shoot cocaine out of the noses of Main street socialites.



Daughters and The Locust w/ Cattle Decapitation

April 26, 2007 | Emo's (Austin, TX)

Holy fucking shit. Are you serious? This will be chronicled as the noisiest, sweatiest, gyrate fest ever to hit a stage. I know this shit is in Austin, but that shit is only like two and a half fucking hours away and you should do yourself the favor and just make the fucking drive. Houston doesn't always have the best shit. I just downloaded the new Locust album, New Erections, and found myself laughing in hysterics at the end of hearing each track because of how ridiculously amazing and intimidating it was. I got a chance to see Daughters in Austin at SXSW and I think if they wanted to take it there, they could very well shock everyone into a Marilyn Manson-esque state of idolatry. My little brother loves Cattle Decap and so do most of my friends. I'm told they sound like Genghis Tron, which should slay nonetheless. I guess if they are on this tour they have to be doing something incredible with music.

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Friday April 6th
7pm China Blue
Micha X Peled. 2005. 88min. (U.S./China)
9pm El Inmigrante
David Eckebrode, John Sheedy & John Eckenrode. 2005. 90min. (U.S./Mexico)

Saturday April 7th
7pm Flock of Dodos
Rand Olson. 2006. 84min. (U.S.)
9pm Shooting Under Fire
Sacha Mirzoeff. 2005. 72min. (Germany/Israel/Palestine)

Sunday April 8th
7pm Sisters in Law
Kim Longinotto & Florence Ayisi. 2005. 104min. (Cameroon)
9pm A Map With Gaps
Alice Nelson. 2006. 28min. (Scotland)
Today's Man
Lizzie Gottlieb. 2006. 55min. (U.S.)

$6 Single Screening
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Wine & Cheese Festival Launch Friday April 6th, 6pm
with Keynote Speaker Tarek Elhaik



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6th Annual Houston NORML 420 Fest

420 TIMES

In This Issue

High Times Editor
Steve Bloom

Drug War Memorial
Hempstorian Exhibit

Music, Speakers
Door prizes and more

April 20, 2007
Doors open
4:20pm

Last Concert Cafe
1403 Nance

Also inside

Local Reform Groups
Speak out against
Marijuana Laws

Music review

Soundtrack for
Freedom by

Two High String Band
Hightailers
Potroast
New Jack Hippies
Nectarine
Lee Alexander Band
Drum Circle at 4:20

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Free Press Houston
Issue 78 | 04/07

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ALL OF THIS STUFF YOU SEE HAPPENED ON 3.24.07



PHOTOS BY: DONNY HALL, PAM, AND SOME OTHER GIRL I FORGE

super happy fun land

Mon April 2nd:
Truman Sparks
Al Coda
Forever Miles
Hollywood Black

April 5th:
Mad Happy
PLID
Nectarine
Babel Fish

April 6th:
Armed Metropolis
Slug's Revenge
Whiskey Smile
The Fatal Exception

April 7th:
Sat Matinee Showcase for Local Bands

April 7th:
Cocker Spaniels
The Low Ends
Chuck Turner

April 8th:
Screen Printing Workshop
2pm-6pm Email or call to RSVP

April 8th:
The Loving Ones
Division Theory
The Skies We Built (Chicago)
Quiet Morning
Doors open at 7pm

April 10th:
Jacuzzi Suicide
Fire Team Charlie
MK Ultra

April 12th:
Elaine (Bluebirds)
Kelli Hicks
Alle Norton
Ayn
And After

Friday April 13th:
Cardboard Art Show Opening 7pm-9pm

Friday April 13th:
Summer-Side Project
Doo Doo Butter
Searching For Signal
Rise Over Ruin
Shades Of Blue

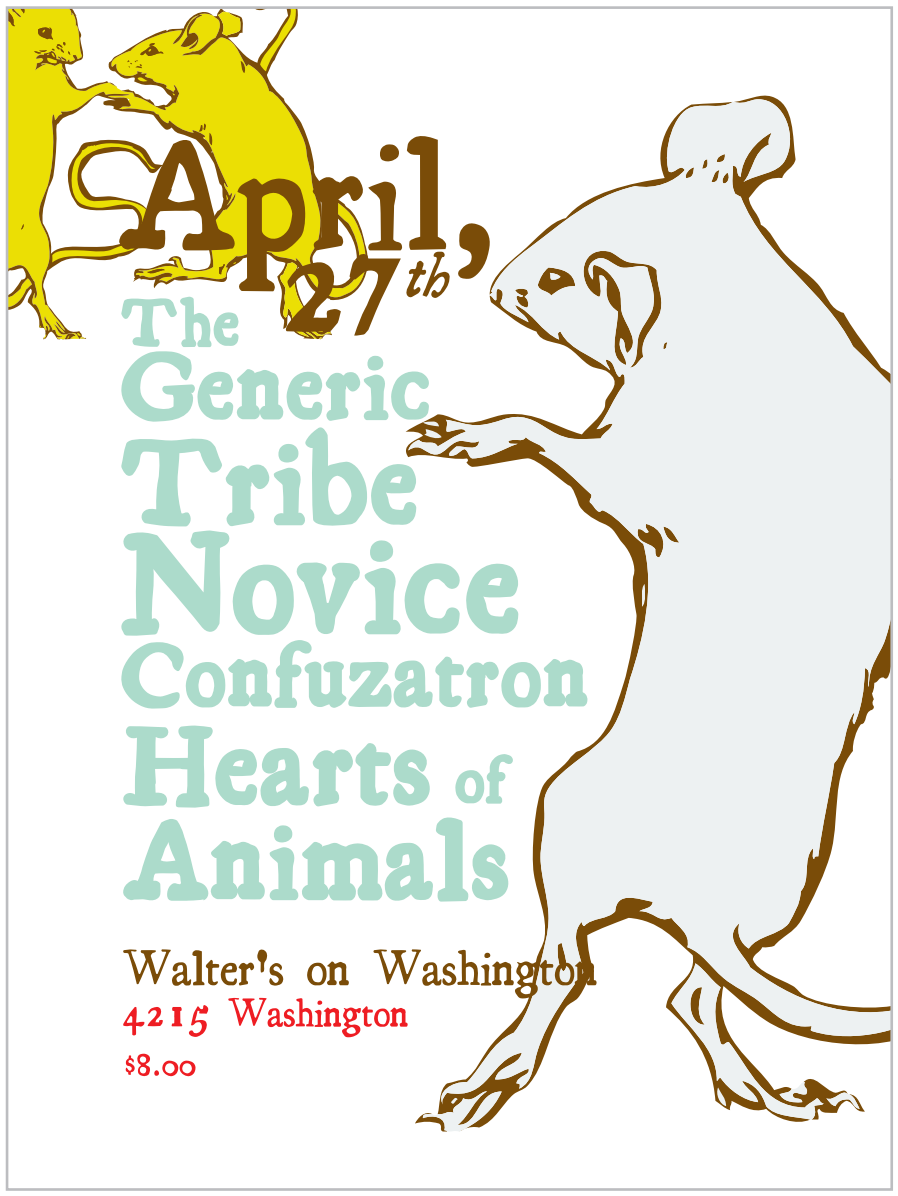
April 14th:
Sat Matinee Showcase for Local Bands
3pm-7pm sign up now!

April 14th:
Wrapped Inside
A Crack In The Wall
Another Run
Gatsby Was Taken
Daniel Craig (The Lone Tiger)

April 17th:
Darwins Finches
Poopy Lungstuffing

April 19th:
Syd Barret Tribute
Mo Pair
Organ Failure

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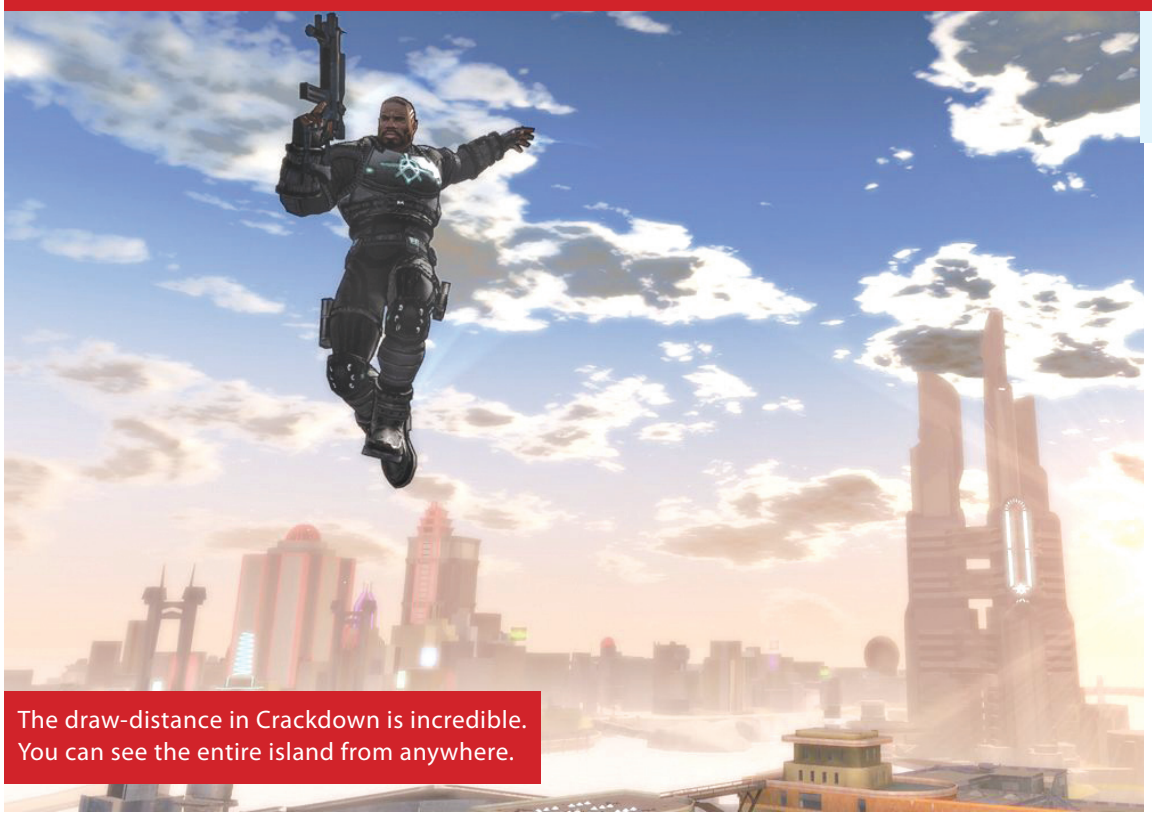




Free Press Houston
Issue 78 | 04/07

Reviews: Next-gen 3-way

by Tyler Barber



The draw-distance in Crackdown is incredible. You can see the entire island from anywhere.

Crackdown

Xbox 360 | 1-2 Players | Realtime Worlds | Rating: Mature

Soaring with a playful physics engine, Crackdown conveys a sense of joy in play the way too few modern games do. The game's key feature has you build up your character's abilities to crack-head-levels in five areas: fire-arms, explosives, agility, driving and strength. For example, maxing out your agility will have you launching into the air with every jump, reaching tops of ten-story-buildings with ease. Placing your heels in the boots of a super-human cop, you'll enforce (with an emphasis on force), the law by administering death to hundreds of gang-members in as many ways.

Admittedly, I wasn't excited about Crackdown when I first saw the game last year at E3. But Crackdown laid to rest my skepticism the more I played it. I found myself wanting to get back to the game more and more because I had thought of a new way to dispense of a group of bad dudes. 'This time, I'll throw a car at them, and right before it hits them, blow-it-up with my rocket-launcher.' In lies the hook!

Crackdown also serves multiplayer co-op in as an excellent side-dish. The game becomes ten-times more crack-head with a friend. In fact, they should've just called the game Crackhead, cause that's how you'll behave in this virtual playground.

Still, this game, like all others, isn't without its flaws. Crackdown is about killing and killing only. And unless you really like the point-A-to-B street races (with no opponents), there's not much else to do. Lastly, there's a glaring problem when, after you've killed all the gang bosses, you can't resurrect them to try different approaches.

But rest easy, downloadable content is on the way with fixes to those problems. Expect new weapons, vehicles (aircraft?) and game modes. I didn't even mention that Crackdown comes with an invite to the Halo 3 beta. There's almost no need to as on its own, Crackdown is a fantastic game, and is well worth a purchase.

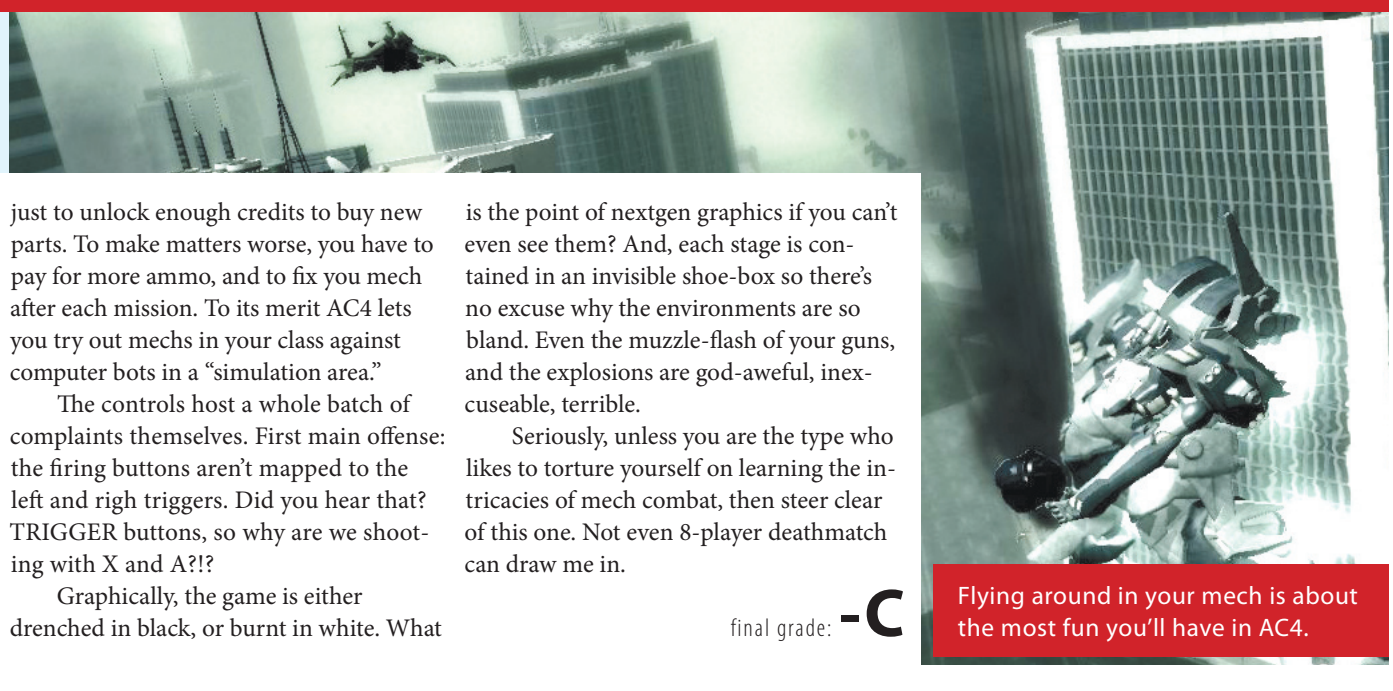
final grade: **-A**



The explosions get bigger and more chaotic the more level-up your explosives.

Armored Core 4

Playstation 3 & Xbox 360 | 1-8 Players
From Software | Rating: Teen



Battletech. If that word piques your interest, then Armored Core 4 may be for you. If not, well, you may want to pass on this mediocre robot simulation. In AC4 the main draw is customizing your mech in countless ways, which is a premise I can get into. The problem is that mech customization in AC4 is extremely difficult to do, because the menu systems is bass-akwards.

AC4's missions are also extremely short, and uninspired, and to get the meat of the game (ie: mech customization) you'll have to play a shit-load of missions just to unlock enough credits to buy new parts. To make matters worse, you have to pay for more ammo, and to fix you mech after each mission. To its merit AC4 lets you try out mechs in your class against computer bots in a "simulation area."

The controls host a whole batch of complaints themselves. First main offense: the firing buttons aren't mapped to the left and righ triggers. Did you hear that? TRIGGER buttons, so why are we shooting with X and A?!?

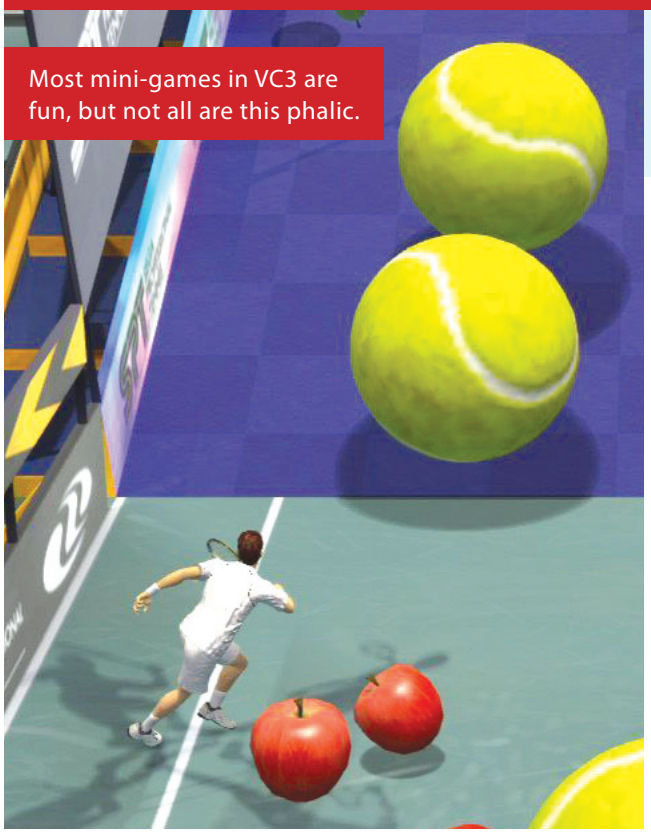
Graphically, the game is either drenched in black, or burnt in white. What is the point of nextgen graphics if you can't even see them? And, each stage is contained in an invisible shoe-box so there's no excuse why the environments are so bland. Even the muzzle-flash of your guns, and the explosions are god-aweful, inexcuseable, terrible.

Seriously, unless you are the type who likes to torture yourself on learning the intricacies of mech combat, then steer clear of this one. Not even 8-player deathmatch can draw me in.

final grade: **-C**

Flying around in your mech is about the most fun you'll have in AC4.

Next-gen 3-way *cont.*



Most mini-games in VC3 are fun, but not all are this phalic.

Virtua Tennis 3

Playstion 3 & Xbox 360 | 1-4 Players
Sega & Sumo Digital Rating: Everyone



I know nothing about tennis, and I don't like sports games, but I really enjoyed Virtua Tennis 3. VT3 has the pick-up-and-play mechanic that gets everyone in the room wanting to play. Throw in an addicting career mode, great mini-games and online matches, and you've got an excellent extension of the Virtua Tennis franchise.

I started where everyone should start; by creating my own fugly avatar to tour around the globe and climb the ranks in the career mode. As you work your way up in rank you'll compete in fun mini-games that build specific skills. For example, if you play the "fruit grab" mini-game, you'll bob-and-weave your character in and out of giant, rolling tennis-balls while trying to pick up fruit. At the end of the round you gain points that better your footwork on the court.

At first, you'll find little competition in the career mode, but once you get around rank 150, it starts to get very tough, and technical. And this is where the game stumbles a bit, not because it gives you a challenge, but because it doesn't tell you how to execute the more technical moves.

The difference between the two console versions are that the Xbox 360 version allows you to play online matches, and the Playstation 3 has the exclusive Sixaxis control (tilt control).

My dour disposition towards the sports videogame genre has been put to the test by Virtua Tennis 3. The ease of controls, excellent graphics and slick presentation reeled me in. It only takes giving this game one try to recognize its appeal.

final grade: **+B**



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World

Travail for Armaments

Sousan Hammad

Every two years, at conference halls in London and Abu Dhabi, UAE, thousands of military delegates and arms consumers from more than 50 countries join the world's leading weapons manufacturers to view, discuss and purchase the latest military trends, equipment and technologies that are displayed in market-like manners. But as these military exhibitors colorfully market their trophies of death, morality is left to linger at the doors of these convention halls, making their death tools seem benign.

The Defence Systems and Equipment International Exhibition, DSEI, which takes place in London later this year, and the International Defence Exhibition, IDEX, a weeklong exhibit which occurred in February in Abu Dhabi, claim to display a "multitude of defense equipment and systems" and are not "promoters of war" but of "defense". Ironically, the U.S. Department of Defense is an official supporter of IDEX.

According to Control Arms, a campaign run by Amnesty International, Iansa and Oxfam, in 2005 the U.S. earned more income from arms sales to developing countries then they gave in aid.

IDEX's last event accumulated $2 billion dollars through commercial deals, signed in just five days. The exhibitors, delegates, and other IDEX partners are also 'honorably' invited to a 'breathtaking' gala dinner and ceremony at the Emirates Palace Hotel at the end of the five-day exhibition. Nothing marks a more profitable deal then having a glass of wine with other braggarts and businessmen to celebrate the smell of steel and money.

Exhibitors at the event such as Lockheed Martin, which manufactures many of the (Hellfire I and II) missiles used by Israel against Arabs in Palestine and Lebanon, demonstrate the new and upgraded armaments to potential buyers with live firing and mobility demonstrations, sometimes using video games to demonstrate how well they can kill the 'enemy', but never is it mentioned in the linguistics of their brochures the reality of what these weapons are used for – war and death.



The Defence Systems and Equipment International Exhibition and the International Defence Exhibition claim to display a "multitude of defense equipment and systems" and are not "promoters of war" but of "defense".

When Robert Fisk, the British journalist for The Independent, covered the 2001 IDEX in Abu Dhabi, he described how the "bazaar was decorated with tea stands, flowers, purple and gold and green in the early spring heat, as the merchants of death", referring to the arms salesmen or exhibitors, "banned the word war and replaced it with defence," as they carefully described their newest military tanks, fighter jets, and missiles. He even mentions the Americans' choice of names when it comes to weapons – Apache Helicopter, Arrowhead navigation system, Kiowa multiple launch platform, Hawkeye infrared sensors, all named after the Native American population which the Americans slaughtered. The Native American heritage has become the face and meaning of death in a sickening aspect brought to you by the United States weapons manufactures such as Boeing-Vertal, Bell, Hughes, Sikorsky and Lockheed Martin, just to name a few.

United Kingdom's DSEI is referred to as the "world's most prestigious defence exhibition", the exhibitors give substance to the realm of arms and 'defense' (the word is easily used over one hundred times on their website and brochures) with not even one mention to the consequences, namely the death of so many anonymous people killed from the very 'prestigious' machines that are used against them.

The authoritarian role that the press plays in time of war only helps these weapons manufacturers and fanatics by justifying their actions in war. We are told the war in Iraq is going well. We are told that Afghanistan is a safer place now. Both countries are on the 'road to democracy', we are told.

The truth is, without the existence of war, the arms industry would neither flourish nor exist. It thrives on the bloodthirsty leaders of countries and propagandists to create mythological scenarios, "security concerns," as reason to invade countries who are brewing destructive weapons in secrecy. The ethical disregard to humanity is apparent in the sterility of linguistics that is marketed in the many arms exhibitions, and the nature of these exhibitions is not to bring awareness to death, but to "defense", an appropriation of fatuous terms making their death tools seem like toys.

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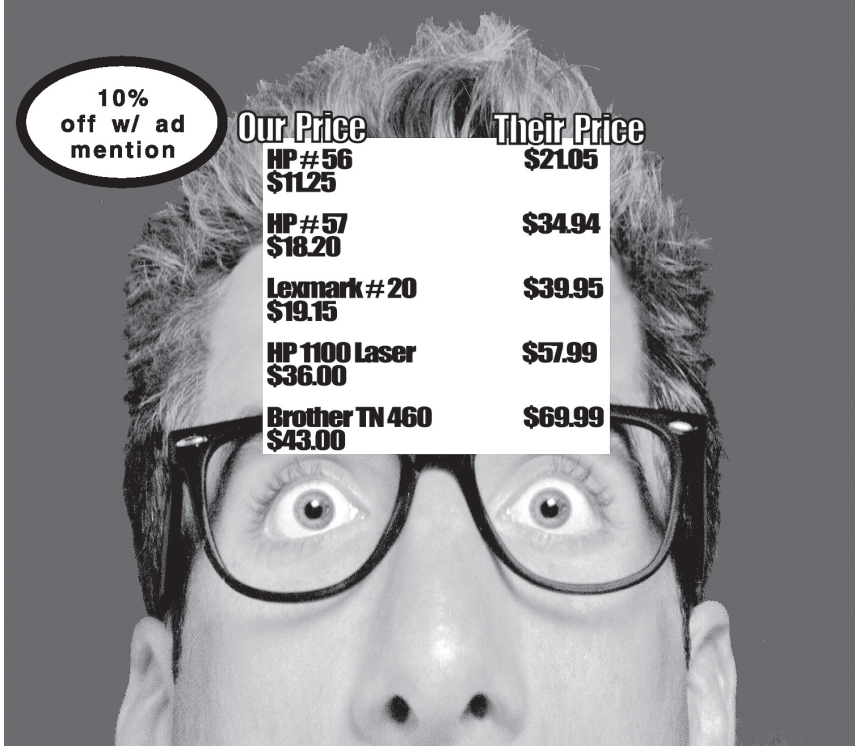
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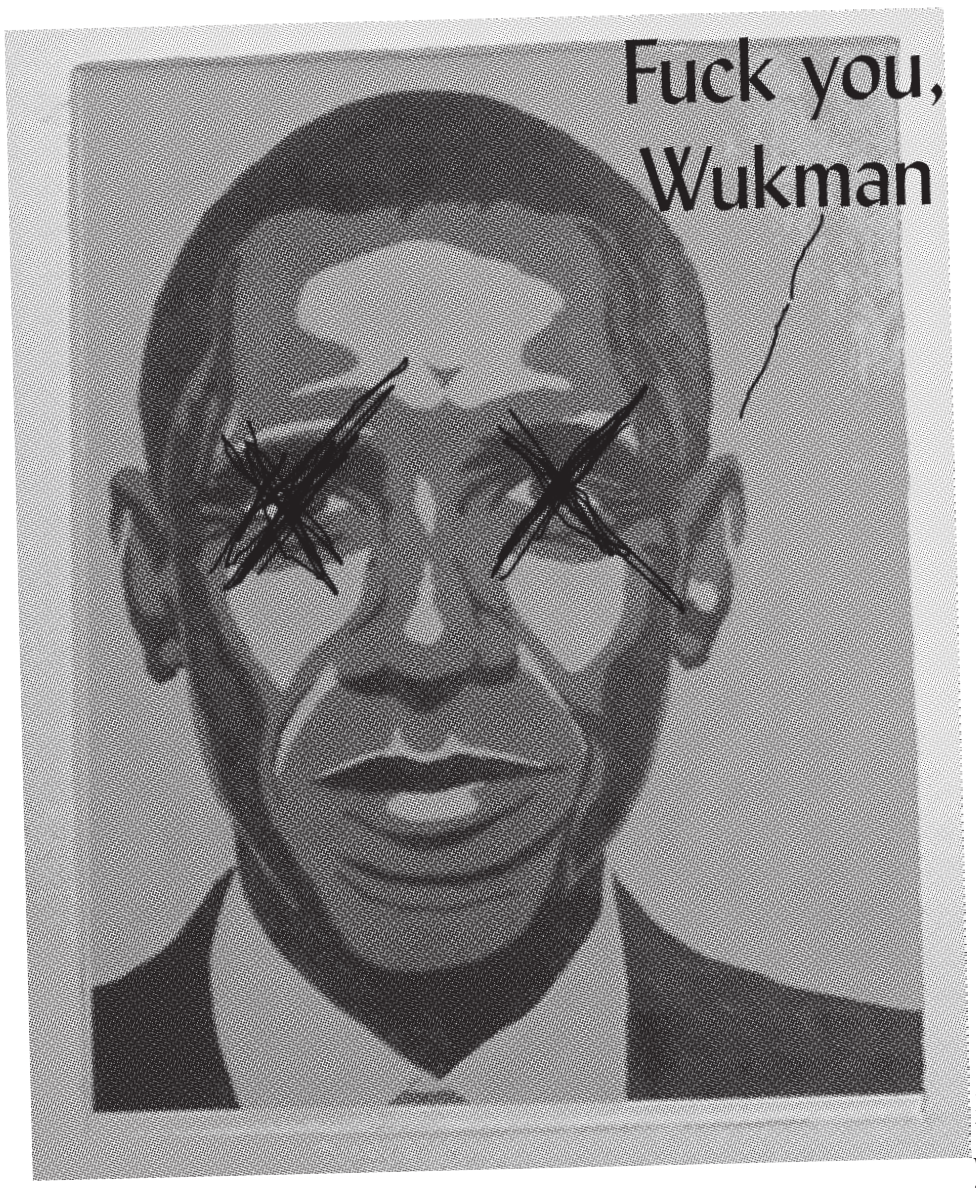
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The trouble with Obama

by Alex "Asshole" Wukman



Due to a truly incredible amount of plausible deniability the Obama campaign is virtually immune to criticism. David Geffen's comments to Maureen Dowd and Phil de Vellis' Hillary-1984 ad have been explained away as the work of overenthusiastic supporters, which they very well may have been.

What are not so easy to explain away are Senator Obama's public statements and hawkish views. In his 2004 senatorial campaign Obama gave an interview to the Chicago Tribune in which he advocated cruise missile strikes against Iranian nuclear facilities and invading Pakistan. After acknowledging the strain such strikes would put on U.S.-Arab relations then State Senator Obama said, "…having a radical Muslim theocracy in possession of nuclear weapons is worse," he then went on to say, "So I guess my instinct would be to err on not having those weapons in the possession of the ruling clerics of Iran."

As the conversation turned to other matters in the Middle East, Obama was asked about the stability of Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf's government which led him to say "I think there are elements within Pakistan right now—if Musharraf is overthrown and they took over, I think we would have to go in and take those bombs out."

In addition to making what some may see as militant statements Obama, in his short tenure in the U.S. Senate, voted yes on the nomination of Condoleeza Rice to Secretary of State, John Negroponte to National Intelligence Director and Michael Chertoff to head Homeland Secirity.

He also voted against John Kerry's "Troop Redeployment Amendment" in June 2006. Senator Kerry's amendment called for President Bush to withdraw the majority of troops from Iraq by July 1, 2007. It also stipulated that "some forces shall remain in Iraq to train Iraqi security forces, conduct counterterrorism operations and protect U.S. personnel and facilities."

Three months earlier, in March of 2006, Obama voted yes on a bill designed to extend the Patriot act to 2009 as well as authorize the FBI to conduct "roving wiretaps." In addition to voting yes on the patriot act and no to ending the war Obama also voted yes on the border fence, no to protecting the personal information of immigrants who apply for citizenship, yes to making English the only language U.S. government services and materials can be provided in and no to increasing the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program.

These votes may seem incongruous with the popular perception of Obama as an anti-war candidate. When viewed within the scope of his problematic relationship to the Democratic Party they are more easily understood.

Some of the clearest examples of Obama's struggles with the party come from the 2004 convention. However to gain some perspective on Obama's actions at the most recent Democratic National Convention it is necessary to go back two. In 1996, the same year Obama was elected to the Illinois State Senate, the DNC was held in Chicago. The opulent display of wealth and the attention given to special interests prompted then candidate Obama to comment that "the convention is for sale."

Eight years later at the even more opulent DNC in Boston, a convention that was so over the top it drew criticism from Tim Russert, Obama was markedly silent. After John Kerry was nominated and the Democratic Party began gearing up for the campaign the Obama camp found itself on the wrong side of the war issue. This prompted them to remove an anti-war speech from their website and replace it with a statement that more reflected the party's current view. The Obama campaign has given no explanation for this 'towing the party line.' They also have been silent on another of the changes their candidate went through when he arrived in Washington. As a State Senator from Chicago's primarily poor, black South Side Obama was firmly on the side of School Vouchers. Once in Washington he repeatedly stated that he was opposed to Voucher programs. Some believe this reversal was due to the influence of the Teacher's Union, one of the Democratic Party's main contributors.

This stance would be more easily

The trouble with Obama cont.

understood if the Teacher's Union was a large contributor to Obama's campaign, but as of February 19, 2007 they have not given him any money. However Clear Channel, Viacom, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Coca-Cola and Best Buy have all given between $1,000 and $3,000.

In addition to having a hard time explaining his campaign contributions Senator Obama can be expected to be brought to task for his votes in the Illinois Senate. While there he was one of three State Senators to oppose a bill making it illegal for people on probation or out on bail to associate with known street gangs. He also voted against expanding penalties for some gang activity to include the death penalty.

The explanation Obama gave at the time was that, "there's a strong overlap between gang affiliation and young men of color," he went on to say that, "I think it's problematic for them to be singled out to receive the death penalty for carrying out certain acts than are others who do the same thing."

The Obama camp is quick to point that the Senator does support the death penalty in certain cases—primarily those of terrorists, serial killers, and child murders. However he does not support the way the death penalty is currently administered in this country. No one could be reached for comment for further elaboration on this peculiarly worded statement.

Perhaps the one thing that will do the most harm to Obama is Obama. Over the years Obama has given many interviews and made many public statements, most of which are contradictory. When he gave the Keynote Speech at the 2004 Democratic National Convention Obama said, "The people I meet—in small towns and big cities in diners and office parks—they don't expect government to solve all their problems. They know they have to work hard to get ahead, and they want to." Fiver years earlier then State Senator Obama told the Hyde Park Citizen, "I made sure our new welfare system didn't penalize people by kicking them off the rolls."

In 1990 he told The New York Times that he was "personally interested in pushing a strong minority perspective," and that he was, "fairly opinionated about this." Fourteen years later at the DNC Obama believed that, "there is not a Black America and a White America and a Latino America and an Asian America—there's a United States of America."

In September of 2004 he told the Chicago Tribune "I'm a Christian. And so…I do believe that tradition and my religious beliefs say that marriage is something sanctified between a man and a woman." However in February of that same year he told the Windy City Times "Since 1996 I have been the sponsor or a co-sponsor of measures to expand civil liberties for the LGBT community, including hate-crime legislation, adoption rights and the extension of basic human rights to protect LGBT persons from discrimination in housing, public accommodations, employment and credit…. For the record I opposed DOMA (the Domestication of Marriage Act) in 1996, It should be repealed and I will vote to repeal it on the Senate floor. I oppose any proposal to amend the U.S. Constitution to ban gays and lesbians from marrying. The effort to demonize people for political advantage should be resisted."

To Senator Obama's credit he was later able to find a way to simultaneously balance these two views and avoid taking a position on the issue. He supports letting individual states determine whether or not to sanction civil unions for gay and lesbian couples.

If the belief that Presidential Politics are high school popularity contests writ large is right then Barrack Obama is doing a fine job of being the kid everyone likes but no one knows exactly why, which may qualify him to be president of the fraternity but not the country.

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Decadence, Danger, & Castration

Adventures at the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo Carnival

By Woodie Stephenson



Andy steps up to Zero Gravity and his jaw drops.

"This is it, the mother-fucking Vomitron 2000 reborn!" he says, taking a sip of his frozen strawberry lemonade mixed with Courvoisier.

It felt like an insurmountable trek to reach this apex. We had ventured to the Metro Park & Ride which was a quarter-mile hike to the train station and rode to the gates of the Reliant Energy Megaplex, a massive area that hosts the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo. There, in the distance, it stood looming; the Northern Hemisphere's largest traveling non-stationary Ferris wheel, La Grande Wheel. The revolving wheel's neon lights streaked across the breezy night sky making the February eve's full moon look like a tiny speck of fading nothing. Bree was terrified—she's nearly 25 and had never gathered the courage to ride on of these precarious attractions. But for us it would still be a long journey to reach this renowned wheel; we would have to brave passing a row of 173 consecutive unsanitary Port-o-lets, a barrage of Mexican food and roasted meat stands, and the Ford Truck Zone, a display of the world's largest best-selling F-Series trucks perched on humungous slabs of Hydrostone. Andy had stopped to inspect one of the trucks the F-950, a new Ford model that appears large enough to devour an SUV and shoot molten lead and fire out of its 7 tail pipes.

"Look, at what the specs on this beast say: 'This vehicle is permitted to keep fuel economy rating classified to any potential buyers'—what the fuck, man, this truck must burn pure jet fuel and they don't even have to tell you."

We escape the truck zone unscathed and find ourselves in a miniature version of the rodeo carnival where all the scale models are much smaller than the representative prototypes of terror. We watch a 20 foot Ferris wheel make squeaky loops as a nearby ride attendant announces with a fake Jamaican accent that children must wear shoes in order to enter the ball pit. Of course there is no throwing of balls in the ball pit but this rule is always stated with the quiet understanding that whoever created the ball pit had in fact created a pit so devious that the urges of human desire could never resist the temptation to throw the balls at others (in fact, it could be argued that if there were somebody who could just casually wiggle themselves around in the ball pit and resist all urges to throw them then they should in fact become a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize.) Continuing our carnival experience, we would have to pace ourselves through an the children's carnival. We needed booze in us quickly. Concealed in my track jacket I had two pints: Courvoisier and Captain Morgan's. Earlier I was stricken with truck-nausea and had sprung my bottle prematurely behind an F-750 extended cab.

"Patience," Andy instructed me as we were to purchase large carnival beverages with which to dilute these potent liquors. A moment later Andy had spied the frozen lemonades and insisted that they were created with the sole intention to be mixed with French cognac—an allegation which I believed to be untrue until I tasted their juxtaposition, a harmonious blend of the sweet amber and high fructose corn syrup with sour lemon. Not so unlike a sidecar cocktail. This cognac-lemonade blend would truly be just the match in intensity for the carnival; a beverage like no other that could only intensify the nausea from the jerky carnival rides, yet somehow still be held down in our sloshing gullets under the extremes of our first ride, Zero Gravity.

While we expected to find the Gravitron, that fabled ride of our youth that spins you in circles at an immeasurable speed while you are pinned against a padded wall all the while enclosed in a capsule filled with fog machines and alien spaceship strobe lights, instead we find the Gravitron on steroids: Zero Gravity. Andy and I board the ride with no hesitation despite any demonstration of its frightful g-force. Bree, on the other hand, in a sensible nature is terrified of it and for good reason—Zero Gravity not only spins in circles at peak acceleration but it tilts at utterly insane angles with its only restraint being a flimsy and loose belt of fabric which is not even fastened to a secure hook but only slipped over a metal peg.

Before experiencing the absence of gravity, Bree was kind enough to issue me a friendly challenge: "If you don't puke, you may get lucky tonight," she tells me. Facing a cold night alone with puke breath, I have no choice but to hold it down.

Once we begin to spin and tilt, the carnival becomes a blur as I genuinely feared for my life

continued pg. 26

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Decadence, Danger, & Castration cont.

and start to talk to Jesus for the first time in several years. Surprisingly, we exit the ride unscathed but completely disoriented and are forced to take a seat on the nearest bench to try to shake our nausea.

"At last I know what it feels like to travel through time and visit alternate dimensions," I remark on the experience, taking a generous sip of my frozen sidecar.

"Yeah, but your brain is permanently warped," Bree informs me, "Look, there's blood running out your ears!"

"What?" I say, checking my ear lobes in panic as I fall prey to Bree's cunning ruse.

Undaunted by our experience on Zero G, I scarf down a candy apple covered in several inches of thick caramel and peanuts and follow the trail of screams to our next ride, Tango.

Tango spins, flips, and jerks its riders upside down 40-feet into the air and judging by the sight of the ride it appears to be much safer than our last. Andy and I board a four person car and find the restraints extremely discomforting to the male anatomy. Although Tango uses over the shoulder restraints, most of the rise's safety support comes from an oddly misshaped crotch bar. As we are lifted and begin to spin, I feel sever pain in my prostate and cringe fearing a fate worse than death: castration by velocity impact bludgeoning. I exit the ride with my family jewels bruised but still intact. Despite the detrimental crotch bar, I enjoy the rides motions and thrills and vow only to ride it again if wearing a crotch protecting cup.

Next we conquered the Big Drop, a smaller more feeble version of the late Astroworld's Dungeon Drop. The ride looks only 50-feet high but once we reach the top it feels like we are about to drop through the clouds; never the less, my stomach and throat touch each other in a fit of excitement during the ride's two-second duration.

A seven-dollar beer later, Bree is finally ready to meet her maker. We step up to the La Grande Wheel in awe of its majesty—144 static feet of graffiti-scarred steel and plastic safety glass. Bree, noticing the cars have no restraints and violently rock back and forth at the top, begins to have second thought.

"They're shaking because people are kicking them up at the top," Andy tries to reassure her.

"Well, you guys promise not to kick the car when I'm up there or I'll have a heart attack," Bree demands.

"Besides," Andy goes on trying to convince her, "This rides lame—Woodie even got a blow job on this thing a couple years ago."

"Thanks for reminding me," Bree said, giving me a glare indicating that this information just cancelled out my earlier efforts in suppressing regurgitation.

We enter a car and Bree clings to me shaking as the Ferris wheel car revs up to make the trip to its apex. It's just our luck that the car we are riding in is the first to stop at the very top and begin to wobble in the gusts of cool night wind. Although terrified, at the end of the ride Bree had conquered two menacing birds with one stone: her fear of heights and her fear of the kind of substandard thrill rides that can only be found at a carnival. We reward ourselves with an order of fried Oreos from the fried everything stand. Although tempted to also try the fried Snickers, fried Coca Cola, fried Dr. Pepper, and fried Twinkies, I find myself pleased enough by the Oreos which are stuffed in fry batter and covered with powdered sugar and chocolate sauce. Their very premise proves to be utterly decadent and revolting, yet amazingly delicious. Foods like these should only be ingested on extreme occasions and our evening had proved to be just that.

We reward ourselves with an order of fried Oreos from the fried everything stand.

Leaving the carnival with Andy and Bree, I take one last glance at the flashing lights of my youth that I had finally revisited. I smile and let out a deep and stern groan.

"What's wrong, baby," Bree asks me, "Are you sad to leave?"

"No," I reply, "My crotch still hurts."

Andy, laughing heartily, chimes in, "We should totally come back next week and do this all again!"

"I'm not sure about that," I say, "A man can only cheat death so often."

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TAPES 'N TAPES

MON. APR. 23rd @ THE MINK - BACKROOM
AEREOGRAMME

THU. APR. 26th @ WALTER'S ON WASHINGTON
VEDERA
THIS IS ME SMILING

SUN. APR. 29th @ THE ORANGE SHOW
NEIL HAMBURGER
PLEASEEASAUR

THU. MAY. 17th @ WALTER'S ON WASHINGTON
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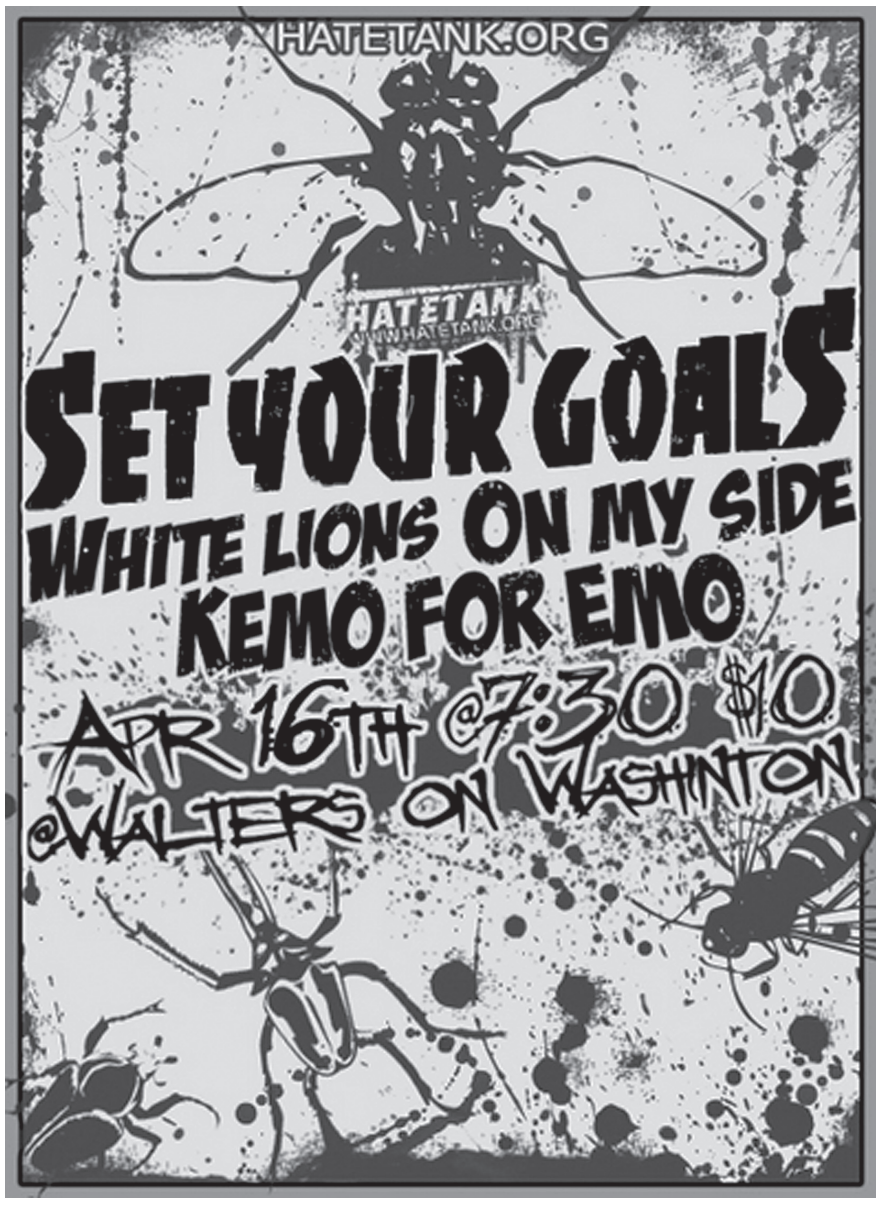
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Fridays	**Saturdays**
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FOR PEACE AND DEMOCRACY

PEACE THROUGH DEVELOPMENT GALA



Join us in Honoring

DR. HANAN ASHRAWI

Hanan Ashrawi is a Palestinian scholar, author, politician and activist. She is a member of the Palestinian Legislative Assembly; recipient of the 2003 Sydney Peace Prize and founder and chair of MIFTAH - the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy.

Friday, April 20, 2007

Sheraton Suites Hotel, 2400 West Loop South
(near the Galleria in Houston, Texas)
7:00-10:00 p.m.

Featuring:

Palestinian Cultural Exhibition

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The funds raised will benefit economic development for the women of Palestine, helping establish the West Bank's first **woman-owned & operated canning factory**

Palestinians for Peace and Democracy (www.p4pd.org) is a 501(c)((3)) nonprofit organization

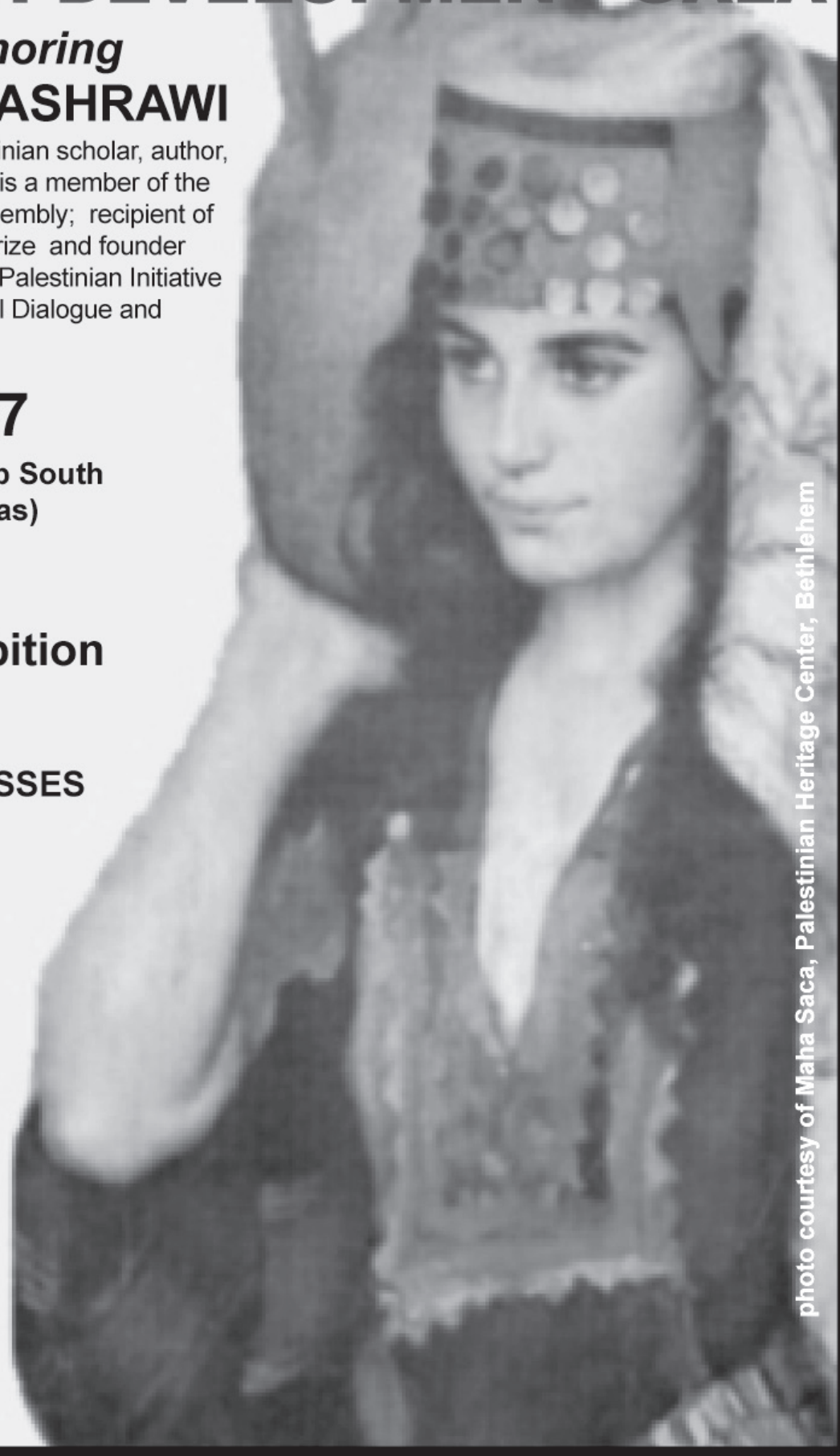


photo courtesy of Maha Saca, Palestinian Heritage Center, Bethlehem

co-sponsored by **The Bilateral US-Arab Chamber of Commerce** (www.bilateralchamber.org)

houston.indymedia.org

Freeway Bloggers mark the 4th anniversary of the Iraq Invasion

Motorists had mostly positive responses to the peace activists who took over 6 bridges to 'freeway blog' and protest the 4th anniversary of the US invasion and occupation of Iraq.

Many groups participated in the event, including Harris County Green Party, the Progressive Action Alliance, CodePink, Veterans for Peace, Military Families Speak Out, the World Can't Wait, First Unitarian Community Involvement Committee, Houston Peace and Justice Center, and 90.1 KPFT Radio for Peace. Food not Bombs distributed apples, oranges and carrots to protesters, and another supporter passed out water. Folks seemed to enjoy each other and I didn't see anyone who looked ill from inhaling lots of car exhaust.



Houstonians examine role of race in application of the death penalty



In 2005, the US Supreme Court overturned the conviction of Texan, Thomas Miller-El, due to racial discrimination in jury selection. Saturday night, SHAPE center screened a film that takes a close up look at the issue and presented a panel discussion that provided even more insight. The documentary, Race to Execution explores the clear link between race and the death penalty in America by following the stories of two Death Row inmates - Madison Hobley of Chicago, Illinois and Robert Tarver of Russell County, Alabama. It is clear from the film and discussion at SHAPE Center that race is an 'overwhelming element' in how the criminal justice system operates.

Anti-Racists Arrested attempting to reach anti-Klan protest



Part of the caravan of Anti-Racist Action folks who went to oppose the Klan were pulled over by the Texas Highway Patrol in Stephensville and given a ticket for having tinted windows on their car. After that it appears there was a swarm of local and state law enforcement folks that showed up and arrested 3 people who are belived to be from Austin ARA. The Police have given no explanation for this arrest.

A personal account of going to the rally and attempting to protest the Ku Klux Klan in Stephenville: So at this point we have 6 comrades in jail and one detained, later to be released. We were so pissed at this whole situation. The klan was being allowed to just give their hate speech while waving their fascist flags and sieg heiling, and not a lot of people were chanting or anything, and the cops were determined to put down all resistance to the klan. The police department obviously must have had sympathy for the kkk and since it was in such a small redneck town, it makes sense to believe that these people's relatives must have had ties to the klan at some point in the past. While the klan gave their speech cops looked at us from the windows of the city hall from above. I guess cops and klan really do go hand in hand.

Halliburton Moves to Dubai in Search of Greater Profit



Houston-based energy services giant, Halliburton, will relocate from Texas to Dubai in order to focus on making more money in the Middle East. A press release on Halliburton's website says its chairman, president and CEO will now be based in Dubai, and will run the company from the United Arab Emirates. Close to 40 percent of the company's revenue comes from sources in the Eastern Hemisphere. Halliburton says it plans to focus more resources in the region, and expand relations with state-owned oil companies. Surprise at the company's announcement fails to take into account its long term strategy to expand, in part by using the WTO. Dubai is the energy industry boom town of the Middle East, it also a tax haven... analysts say Halliburton could save more than a hundred million dollars in the move.

Members of the US House oversight committee are considering a hearing on the move, and Democratic Senator Patrick Leahy of Vermont called the relocation an example of corporate greed at its worst. He cited US soldiers and taxpayers who paid the tab for Halliburton subsidiary KBR's no-bid contracts in Iraq. Those contracts are resulted in billions of overcharging and waste. The firm is still the largest military contractor in Iraq.

Halliburton says it will still maintain a corporate office in Houston. As far as Indymedia can tell, the company is sticking with plans to hold its 2007 shareholder meeting in Houston.

Radical Encuentro Camp raises climate justice issues in Wimberly



The first weekend of March around 200 activists from across Texas (and beyond) gathered in Wimberly for the 9th Radical Encuentro Camp. This year had a theme of Climate Change, Climate Justice, and a number of the workshops dealt with climate issues and the disastrous consequences of using coal for energy production. A panel discussion had 3 women talking about resistance to coal plant construction in Navajo territory, resistance to coal extraction in Appalachia and resistance to TXU coal plant construction in Texas. Workshops were offered on a variety of different topics, including workshops from Houstonians on Radical Education, Abolition of the Death Penalty, Political Prisoners in Texas, Zapatismo and Media Strategy.

Joseph Nichols: 2nd man executed for same crime

On Wednesday March 7th Texas Death Row Prisoner Joseph Nichols was executed (hear report). Joseph Nichols and Willie Williams were both involved in a 1980 robbery of a deli in Houston where an employee, Claude Shaffer, was shot and killed by a single bullet. Willie Williams was convicted of capitol murder and executed in 1995. Nichols was first tried in 1981, the State attempted to convict him of murder under the Texas law of parties. He was found guilty but there was a hung jury over the sentencing.



Nichols was retried in 1982 by the same prosecutor who now argued that Nichols had fired the fatal shot (despite Williams testimony that he was guilty and it being central to Williams conviction). The prosecutor argued that "Willie could not have shot [Shaffer]… [Nichols] fired the fatal bullet and killed the man in cold blood and he should answer for that."

In 1992, a federal judge ruled that the prosecution had presented false evidence by changing its argument from Nichols's first trial to his retrial. He ordered that Nichols be released or retried. However, the state appealed and the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals overturned Judge Hittner's ruling.

Participate in the Local Collective

houston indymedia center

Meetings: (usually) the first Saturday of every month at 4pm

contact the editorial team: houston@indymedia.org

HIMC radio: Friday at 7:30pm on kpft 90.1fm or kpft.org

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HIMC Film Series

HIMC presents monthly screenings at Rice Cinema featuring films with a focus on social justice

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Free Press Houston
Issue 78 | 04/07

Partition & Theft

How Palestine Became Israel's Land

By Sonja Karkar



For Palestinians, theirs is not the land of conquest, but the land of their roots going back to time immemorial. Such a lineage does not rely on a biblical promise like the Jewish claim that God promised the land to Abraham and his descendants, and is therefore, the historical site of the Jewish kingdom of Israel. It belongs to the people of Palestine by the simple fact of their continuous residence repeated through birth and possession going back to the earliest Canaanites and even those people living there before recorded history. They were there when the Israelites invaded the land, occupied it, and held it intermittently as wave after wave of other conquerors came and went, and they were still there when the Romans put an end to Jewish Palestine by destroying Jerusalem in 135AD. If a religious basis is sought, then the Palestinians can lay claim to being the descendants of Abraham's son Ishmael who is regarded the forefather of the Arabs. But actually, Palestinian rights are enshrined in the universally accepted principle that land belongs to its indigenous inhabitants. Thus, the modern day struggle for this land by European Jewish immigrants who have no connection with Palestine other than through their religion is a colonial enterprise that seeks sovereignty for an "external Jewish population" to the exclusion of the indigenous Palestinians who, regardless of faith--Jewish, Christian or Muslim--have lived together for centuries.

Although eager to accept the UN Partition Plan of 1947 which recommended that 56% of the land be set aside for a Jewish State, 42% for an Arab state and 2% for an internationalised Jerusalem and its surrounds, the world has not said a word about the land that was seized by Zionist terrorists before the State of Israel was proclaimed on 14 May 1948. Through a series of shocking massacres, the territory assigned to the Jews suddenly became 77% resulting in more than 750,000 Palestinians being forcibly expelled and dispossessed of their homes, personal property and their homeland. The Jewish State then came into being without waiting for the United Nations Commission - prescribed in the Partition resolution - to hand authority progressively over to the Jewish and Arab leaders for their respective states.

And after the 1948 war, Israel declared Jerusalem its capital in contravention of its internationally-recognised status of corpus separatum--a status that is still recognised. Effectively, the new state of Israel was not only created in violation of, it continued to violate, the very resolution which Israelis now look to as giving them sovereignty. The Arab state imposed by the UN Partition Plan without consultation and in contradiction to the UN charter - which should have upheld the majority indigenous Palestinians' right to self-determination - has since been deliberately and methodically whittled away by Israel, leaving nothing but isolated non-contiguous parcels of land to some 4 million Palestinians.

Around 170,000 Palestinians remained in what became Israel, the largest number of whom resided in the Galilee area, originally a designated part of the Arab state under the Partition Plan. These Palestinians also became the victims of Israel's land grab policy. Over 438,000 acres, which was more than the total Jewish land holdings at the time, were confiscated and a further 400,000 acres were marked for confiscation. After Israel won the 1967 war, the total territory of Palestine came under Israel's rule. It annexed East Jerusalem, despite the Holy City's internationally recognised status and began implementing its Jewish settlement program with a vengeance. The Palestinians in Israel were increasingly aware of their precarious position politically and declared a national strike, known as "Land Day" on 30 March 1976 against Israel's continuing ruthless land expropriation. An affinity was quickly felt between Palestinians everywhere and "Land Day" was adopted as a sort of national Palestinian day which is commemorated by Palestinians and their supporters around the world each year. This awakening of national consciousness had an unequivocal political message: end the occupation and allow self-determination of the Palestinians in a sovereign state living in peace side by side with Israel.

Thirty-one years later, the message is till resonating, but the Palestinians are further away from seeing a solution than ever before. Daily, Israel is taking a bit of land here and a bit of land there, to make all of Palestine "Israel's Land". The problem then will be, what to do with 5 million Palestinians with no land? There are only a few possible, but criminal solutions - transfer, collective imprisonment, apartheid, and/or ethnic cleansing. Alternatively, Israel can disengage from the West Bank to the 1967 borders or agree on a single, democratic state for all. Without a just solution, the struggle for Palestine's land will continue.

After Israel won the 1967 war, the total territory of Palestine came under Israel's rule.

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