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DEVILZ KNIGHT

Devilz By Definition unleash their most powerful album yet with Devilz Knight — a 13-track storm of brutality, rebellion, and raw emotion. From the runaway chaos of “Trainwreck” and the apocalyptic clash of “Angel Warfare” to the desperate realism of “Insufficient Funds” (featuring Anthony Giacalone of Among the Rest), the album blends myth, destruction, and social commentary into a relentless sonic assault. Closing with “Alien”, a haunting tribute to late guitarist Mat “Alien” Dobbin, the record becomes more than just metal — it’s a memorial, a reckoning, and a statement of survival. With crushing riffs, vivid storytelling, and unflinching honesty, Devilz Knight cements Devilz By Definition as one of Canada’s fiercest forces in heavy music

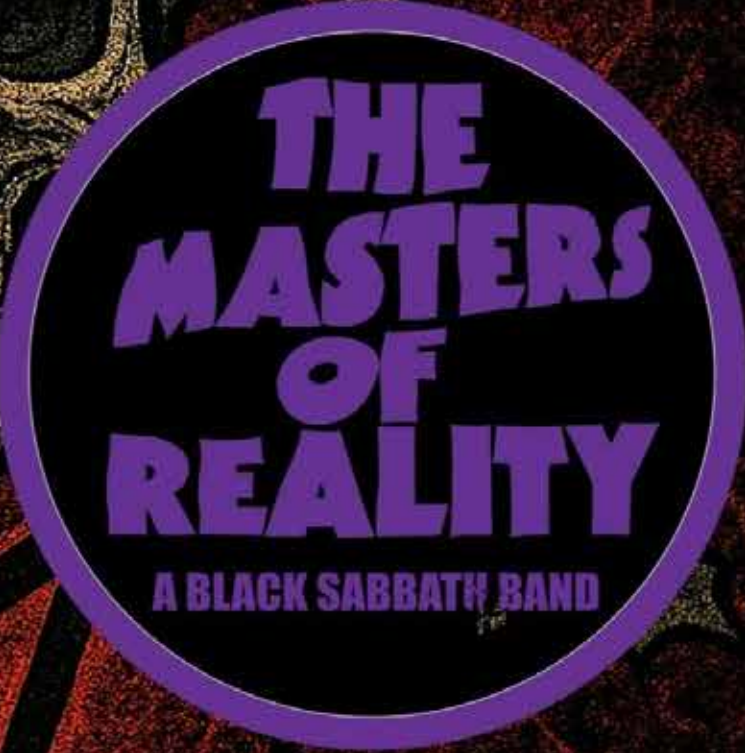


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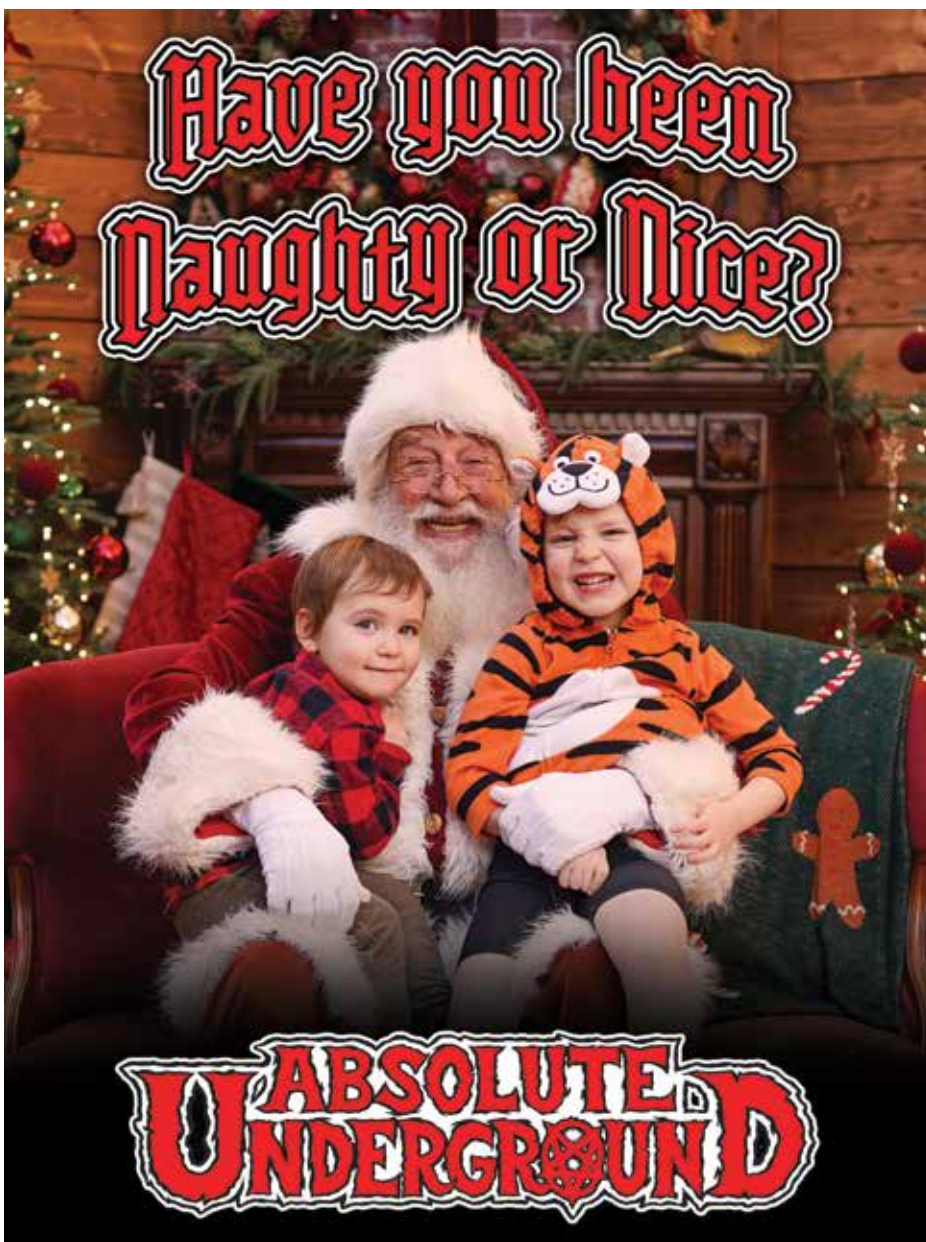
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ABSOLUTE UNDERGROUND

COVERING THE UNDERGROUND MUSIC SCENE SINCE 2004



VICTORIAS LOCALS ONLY

PONTIUS PILATE

By John Carlow, Finding Charlotte Photography

Absolute Underground: Introduce yourselves

Pontius Pilate: Eli Flarrow – Guitar & Vocals, Xavier Taves – Bass Guitar and Dallas Smith – Drums/Percussion.

AU: How did the band come around?

PP: The band came around through the Victoria Musicians Facebook group. Just found like-minded people with a passion for heavy music.

AU: What's your creative process?

PP: During our rehearsals, the three of us take turns starting the jam sessions. One instrument starts, could be a drum beat, could be a guitar or bass riff. If we come across something that sounds sick then we collectively build the song from there.

AU: Bands that have inspired your sound?

PP: There are so many amazing bands that have inspired us as musicians and our sounds. We can't list them all, but some of our favorites are: Black Sabbath, Electric Wizard, Monolord, Sleep, Windhand, Daevor, Megadeth, Metallica, Iron Maiden, Gojira and Cane Hill.

AU: Your take on the local scene?

PP: The local scene is great. You get to discover so many good bands. You get to bond with people that have similar tastes in music.

AU: What have you recorded?

PP: We just recently finished recording our debut album with Derek Mattin at Stefano's Artfarm. Planning on being released in 2026.

AU: Shout outs?

PP: Derek Mattin for engineering the entire recording process with us. Shout out to Stefano's Artfarm. Shout out to Bong Witch, Hail the Void and Burnt Lung.

AU: The road ahead?

PP: Releasing our first single along with a music



video. Getting some gigs booked. Releasing our debut album. Writing more music.

AU: What did you ask Santa for this year?

Eli: Orange Rockerverb 100 MKIII guitar amp.

Xavier: 70's Ampeg SVT bass amp.

Dallas: To play a show in Santa's workshop for the elves.

AU: Where do people find your stuff?

PP: You can find us online:

Instagram: [instagram.com/Pontiuspilateband](https://www.instagram.com/Pontiuspilateband)

Facebook: [facebook.com/pontiuspilate](https://www.facebook.com/pontiuspilate)

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HORDE III

PREMIERES IN JANUARY 2026

RIPCORDZ

REVERSAL OF FORTUNE

ACROSS

1. * With 9-across, ecoterrorists?
6. Tire measurement
9. * See 1-across
13. _____ the ground
14. Rest (against)
15. Lestat creator
16. Bottled water from France
17. "I'm ____!" ("Leave it to me")
18. Tonnes
19. * Headline of Nov. 23, 1963?
22. Highway helpers
23. Didn't do a passing play
27. * Heckling at a comedy club?
33. Metallica's first music video
34. "_____ the Universe"
35. Modern computer programs
36. Movie music offering (abbr.)
37. Big single for Eminem
38. Canuck rock band covered by DOA
39. Cartoon canine
40. Tree where you might find a yellow ribbon
41. Food staple of Hawaii
42. Small branches
44. Dir. from Calgary to Edmonton
45. * James Bond with a spray tan?
47. Madame in Madrid
49. Office computer set-up
50. * Dastardly plan by Batman's poisonous foe
57. Thin piece of wood
60. Music mag since 1985
61. Dredded religion?
62. Clark's girl before Lois
63. Shades of brown?
64. Big bet in poker
65. * With 67-across, make note of comedian Jack
66. Bullring cheer
67. * See 65-across

DOWN

1. Nerd
2. Guerilla party
3. Brockovich
4. Cohen who co-wrote "Tropic Thunder" and "Idiocracy"
5. Guitars that may look strange to some
6. Writes (a book)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		
13					14				15				
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57	58	59			60								
62					63				64				
65					66				67				

CROSSWORD NO. 120

CHRISTMAS 2025

7. Spoken
8. Workers in training
9. Ex-students
10. Feel unwell
11. Sergeant, for example
12. Word before 'out' or 'lost'
14. True to
20. Raised platform
21. Int'l Beer Day month
24. Offering at a merch table
25. Junior rank in the navy
26. Really hate
27. Actors Bateman and Priestly
28. Gasoline measurement
29. "Release the _____!"
30. A long time
31. Romance language source
32. Stock sale (abbr.)
38. Burlesque accessory
39. End of an internet address
41. Worships
42. Burn the surface
43. Middle East movement
45. Dune buggy or jeep, for ex.
46. Sex Pistols' Matlock and namesakes
48. Skinhead reading material?
51. October birthstone
52. Chris who played Kirk
53. Type of tale
54. _____ Nublar, home of the original Jurassic Park
55. Of the ear
56. Stab with a knife (col.)
57. "Suspect Device" band (abbr.)
58. 'Bad guy' in a 1968 film
59. "____-Gadda-Da-Vida"

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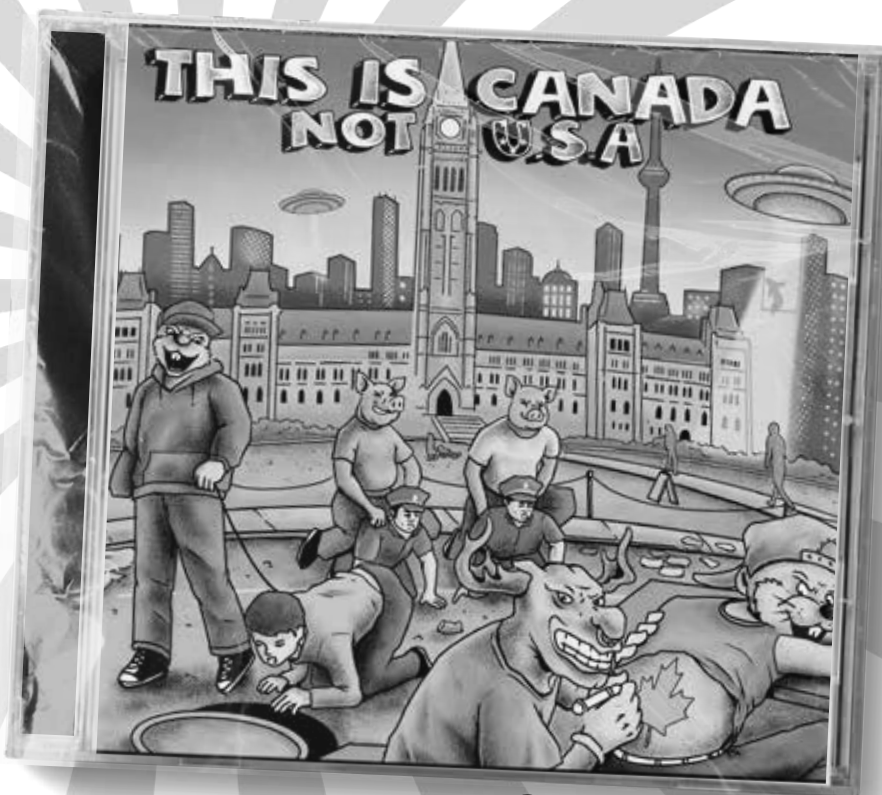
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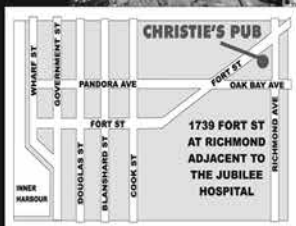
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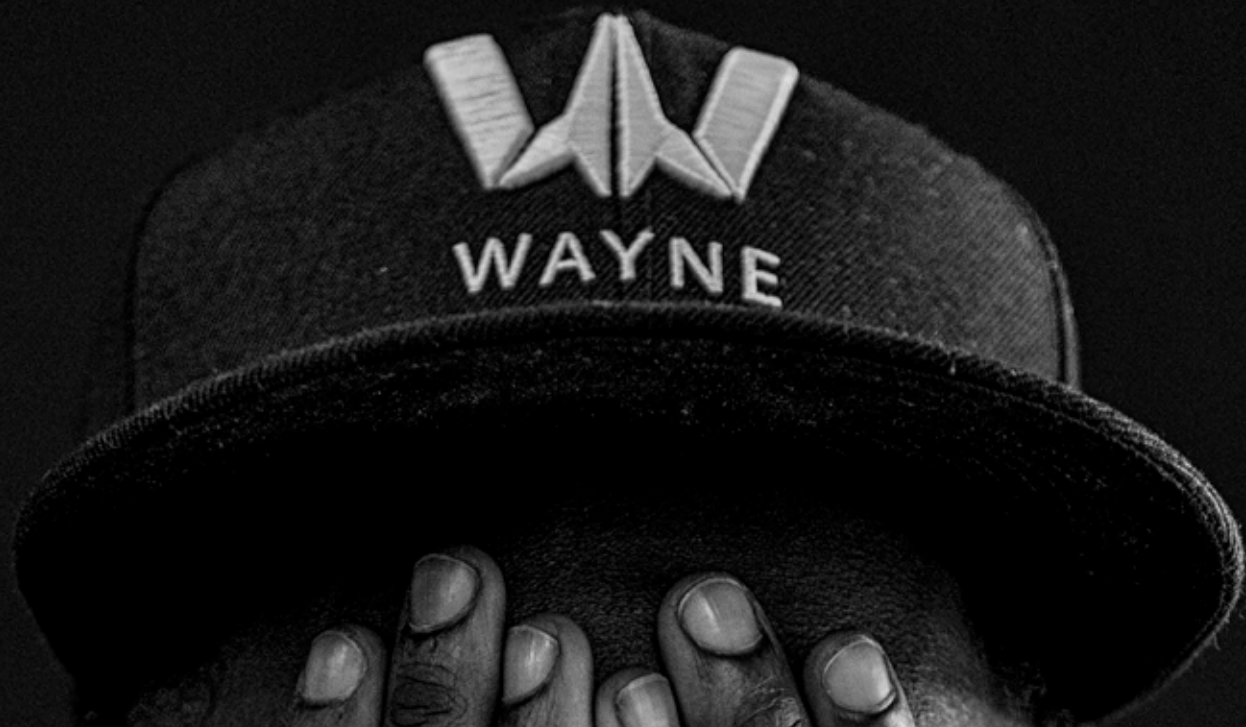


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As a concert and street photographer, I'm currently working on a documentary project that highlights the stories of individuals experiencing homelessness in Montréal. Alongside creating portraits, I give participants disposable cameras so they can capture their own lives from their own perspective. I'm proud to share that 100% of the proceeds from this photobook will be donated to the Mission Old Brewery. Every follow helps raise awareness and supports local shelters, including the Mission Old Brewery. Your engagement directly increases visibility for a community too often overlooked. Thank you for being part of this important initiative.



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Mercyful Fate, Sabbath (Japan), Cobalt, and Bathory, amongst others. The music is fast and intense, but isn't bogged down by taking itself too seriously. You can air guitar to it in your bedroom, or punch someone in the face to it in the moshpit. A lot of metal bands seem focused on either being brutal all the time or overly atmospheric and boring, and this album continues to show that we are going to reject those familiar paths and make the music we want to hear.

This album was a goddamn journey to record and it's a journey to experience. Buckle up.

AU: Tell us about the process behind writing and recording *NUCLEAR WINTER SPELL*.

S: One major difference on this album is our new drummer Kevin Emms (also of The Hallowed Catharsis). I'm convinced he's some sort of T-1000 sent from the future to annihilate drums and we're very lucky to have him on our side. He brought a new intensity

to our sound and his ability to pick up songs so quickly really saved our asses in the recording process. We also brought in a new engineer/producer Michael Kraushaar, who was a pleasure to work with. His attention to detail made us even tighter and his ridiculous sense of humour kept us sane during those long recording days. For better or for worse we recorded a shitload of material during these recording sessions, including some songs which didn't make the album but could very well be released in some form in 2026 so stay tuned for that. We were also fortunate to get our friend Jamie Hooper of Erosion and ex. 3 Inches of Blood to do some guest vocals on the track "Dead Stag".

AU: What song would you recommend to anyone who hasn't heard of Scalding? What album?

S: "Overthrown" off of our new album *Nuclear Winter Spell*. I think we managed to showcase everything we have to offer in one song that holds your attention throughout and I'm very proud of that.

AU: *NUCLEAR WINTER SPELL* is your second full album release. What else have you released? Tell us about them!

S: Our first album *Exordium* was released in 2022 and was engineered and produced by Andrew Saunders of Unleash the Archers. We were still finding our footing sonically at that point, but there are a lot of great tracks on that album that I still enjoy playing. With any luck we already have elitist fans who think we peaked with the first album. We also released a digital single for the song "Skull Collapse" in 2023.

AU: What's your favourite song to perform live?

S: "Valley of the Sepulchre". The slower tempo really lends itself to some great headbanging and no matter what mood I'm in beforehand, I'm in a good mood after playing that song.

AU: What's a song you'd want to cover for a future album?

S: I've always liked the idea of turning non-metal songs into metal songs or finding "metal" moments in non-metal songs and expanding on that. Sonic Youth's "Cross the Breeze" has an intro section that with some added distortion and blast

SCALDING casts a NUCLEAR WINTER SPELL

By Ray MacKay

AU: Who are you talking to and what are you most famous or infamous for?

Scalding: Simon Millington, guitarist, main vocalist, main songwriter and co-founder of Scalding, hopefully I'm most infamous for this band.

AU: Where are you from and what's the music scene like there?

S: I'm from Victoria, BC originally, but have lived in Vancouver since 2018. There are still a lot of great bands that come from Victoria, but unfortunately the music scene in my opinion is not what it used to be. This isn't a fault of the artists, but rather the NIMBY culture that dominates Victoria which favours investments over spaces to promote art or anything that poor people may enjoy. I've got to give credit to promoters such as Andy of Cavity, Tyler Akis, and Kyle Bolton who are keeping the Victoria scene alive against the odds.

AU: Give us a brief history of SCALDING.

S: Scalding was founded in 2021 by myself and bassist/vocalist Jon Maheswaran. After some initial shuffling of roles, our first full lineup was solidified in 2022 with the addition of Jordan Decker on drums and Anthony Sirianni on lead guitar, and we started playing live later that year. Dozens of shows, one new drummer and two albums later, here we are.

AU: You have a new album, *NUCLEAR WINTER SPELL* out as of October 3rd - tell us all about it!

S: Our sound is more focused, inspired, and aggressive on this album compared to *Exordium*, and yet there are still surprises and left turns for the listeners. This time I was hugely inspired by mixing elements of heavy metal and black metal, taking cues from early Slayer, later Darkthrone,



beats, could be pretty menacing.

AU: In your opinion, what's the best horror soundtrack?

S: That's a tough question, but I got to give it up to *Phantasm*. The main theme is an absolute classic spooky melody and any fans of Entombed's "Left Hand Path", should recognize it immediately. Honourable mentions go to Ennio Morricone's *Experiment in Terror*, Mica Levi's *Under the Skin*, and Johann Johannsson's *Mandy*.

AU: Any tours/shows coming up?

S: We'll be touring Japan December 4th -14th of 2025. More to be announced in the next year soon.

AU: Anything else to promote?

S: The new album *Nuclear Winter Spell* is out now! Stream it, buy it, steal it, do whatever it takes to

get your hands on it. We have shirts! We have stickers! We have pins! Give us all your money so we can spend it on drugs and create more music for you to break your neck to.

AU: Any final words for our readers?

S: Life is short, go wild and have fun with it.

AU: Where can we find you online?

S:

Instagram: @scaldingcvlt

Bandcamp: @scalding.bandcamp.com/

Email: @scaldingband@gmail.com

Photos by Sav Bagshaw

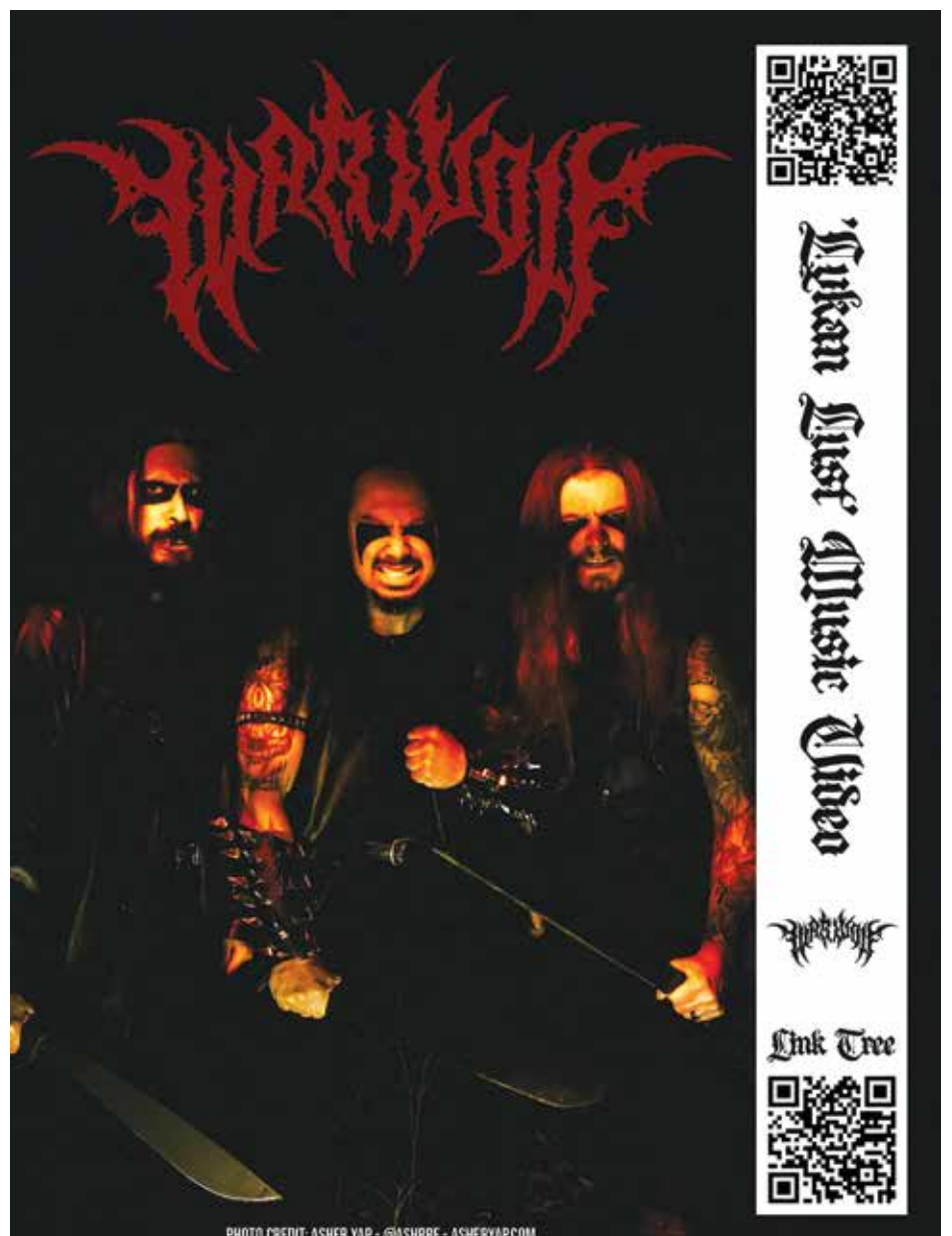


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TATARA

Through Grittied Teeth

Interview by Ray MacKay

AU: Sound off. Who are we talking to?

Jacob Dube: You're talking to Jacob Dube, I play bass and share vocals alongside George in Tatarara. We play groove metal with a heavy hardcore influence, and try to make every show feel intense and raw.

AU: Where are you from and what's the music scene like there?

JD: We're from Edmonton, Alberta. People don't typically expect a strong metal scene out here, but it's honestly one of the most supportive places you could start a band, everyone always shows up for each other. Some of the best people we've met and some of the best bands we've played with came out of Edmonton.

AU: Give us the history of Tatarara.

JD: Tatarara started when Dave (Drums) and George (Vocals/Guitar), who had played in a few different projects together decided to start a metal band. I had just put up a Facebook post looking to join a metal band and that's how I connected with

them. We started practicing in Dave's garage with a different vocalist at first, but when he had to leave, George and I taught ourselves to sing and split the vocals 50/50. The first few gigs were rough, we both blew out voices each show, but it was worth it and we've been learning ever since.

AU: Describe Tatarara's sound, if possible.

Our sound is mostly groove metal, something like Machine Head or Pantera, but with a hardcore edge with bands like Black Flag and Sanguisugabogg. Vocally, George and I lean into more punk styled yells rather than traditional false chords or fry screams, which helps to set us apart a bit. At its core, Tatarara is about grooves, heaviness and making music that's high energy and memorable.

AU: You just released your debut album, Through Grittied Teeth. Tell us all about it!

JD: *Through Grittied Teeth* is our debut studio album, and it's a big deal for me personally. Recording an album has always been a huge goal, and we poured everything that we had into it. We recorded it over five super busy days, sometimes going 12 to 13 hours straight with hardly any sleep. It really pushed our vocals and endurance to the limit, but it was worth it. The album is heavy, groovy and has a punk edge, something fans of Pantera or Black Flag could definitely be into. We didn't have a massive budget, but Levon Vokins our producer did an amazing job capturing the raw energy we wanted. We focused on making it tight, gritty and real rather than polished or flashy. Hopefully, people hear it and are able to feel the intensity we put in making it.



AU: What songs from Through Grittied Teeth are you most excited for fans to hear?

JD: I'm most excited for fans to hear the title track, "Through Grittied Teeth", and later song "The Future". George and I split the vocals and these two songs really capture the Tatarara sound. "The Future" is mostly my vocals, whereas George mostly sings "Through Grittied Teeth". If you lean more toward groove metal, start with the title track. If you're into punkier, raw hardcore, then check out "The Future", but both tracks represent our sound very well.

AU: Tell us about the creative process behind Through Grittied Teeth.

JD: The creative process for the album was pretty scattered. Some songs I wrote at home and brought to the guys later. Some were written by George and Dave in the garage and a few were full collaborations between the three of us. For example, "The Future" started from a riff I wrote like three years ago that I kept refining until I could finally write it into a full song. I'm the main songwriter on that track but overall, the album is very collaborative, no one person writes everything.

AU: What are some inspirations you draw on while creating music?

JD: I draw a lot of inspiration from bands like Sanguisugabogg, Dystopia and Black Flag, but mostly I'm inspired by the sounds I want to hear in my head. I'll imagine a groove metal song with punk style, shouty vocals or something with a death metal twist and I try to get that into the music. The main drive is just wanting to create something that feels new and hits the way I hear it in my head.

AU: Besides those mentioned above, do you have any upcoming releases, tours, or shows coming up you'd like to tell us about?

JD: We don't have any new releases lined up yet, but right now we're very focused on sharing "Through Grittied Teeth" and building momentum wherever we can. There are a few shows in the works and we're excited to get back on the road, hopefully this summer.

AU: What should we know about you that we don't already? What don't you want your family members to know?

JD: Something different about me is that I'm a big fan of Eurobeat and Europop, bands like Aqua and artists like Lesley Parrish and Lady Gaga. Lady Gaga in particular, has been a huge inspiration for me not just musically, but in terms of live performance, aesthetics and the freedom you can have with music. Her ideologies on authenticity is something I've really taken to heart and have tried to bring into how I perform and approach our music.

AU: Anything else to promote?

JD: Check out our album and see if anything clicks. Start with the title track, "Through Grittied Teeth" and see where it takes you.

AU: Final words for our readers?

JD: We'd like to give a big thank you to *Absolute Underground* for taking the time to interview us and for giving us this opportunity! We sincerely appreciate it, especially for helping out a young DIY band like Tatarara!

AU: Where can we find you online?

JD: Our main hub for news and updates is Instagram at @tatarara_band, but you can find our music everywhere as well. Apple Music, Spotify.

tatararaband.bandcamp.com

Instagram: @tatarara_band

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misery and auidal destruction on your prey as Warwolf progresses as a highly-regarded (and feared) bestial presence in the Edmonton/Canadian metal scene?

Continue to ravage the scene relentlessly and expand the forever insatiable Beast Battalion.

AU: Famous last words...?
HAIL THE DESTROYER



linktr.ee/warwolfbdm
warwolf.bigcartel.com
instagram.com/warwolfbdm

Band Photo Credit: Dana Zuk - @zukshoots

BW Photo Credit: Asher Yap - @Ashrre

Artwork by by Konstantyn Kopacz - @warheadart

Logo by Christophe Szpajdel @christophe.szpajdel



Warwolf Bestial Death Metal Interview by Lacey Paige

AU: How did Warwolf come to transmogrify into Edmonton's premiere lycanthropic bestial blacked death metal band and ravage your way into the local metal scene? Aside from being part of the BDM subgenre, can you further elaborate on Warwolf's sound, aesthetic, and the general mythos behind the band?

Warwolf is a pure dominating force above all planes of existence. Its purpose is to reveal the true feral power and unleash the beast within.

AU: Other bands, genres of music, artists, movies, monsters, mythology, etc. - who/what have been some of the Wolves' most noteworthy influences?

Our main influence comes from the bloodlust for extreme violence and aggression.

AU: You mentioned in our Instagram chat that Warwolf is currently finishing up writing and recording an EP as well as having plans for a CD release show in February/March of 2026. What guts can you spill out of your arch enemies on these upcoming projects and initiatives?

Recording is finished and we can't wait to unleash our freshly bloodsoaked brand of Blackened Death upon the masses. We plan to push the album and send our EPK out to expand the bestial campaign globally. CD release is tentatively scheduled for February/March 2026. We are currently working on something to gain more traction leading up to its release.

AU: What other shows, festivals, events, etc. (that you know of, anyway) can we expect to see Warwolf at in the new year?

We have just recently secured a spot at the Death and Decay Metal Fest in Lethbridge on May 2nd as well as a very blackened show in Calgary.

AU: How do you intend to further inflict pain,

Upcoming Shows

Sat Dec 13 Sparkle Blood, Peasant Vision, Pike
7PM 18+ BLAKBAR

Sun Dec 14 Daybreak, Look Out!, Clowns Against Fascism
6PM ALL AGES BLAKBAR

Fri Dec 19 Null/Void, Kleetus, Jerry Bludd
7:30PM 18+ BLAKBAR

Sat Dec 20 Morosoph, Av!tas, Ballpark Franks
8PM 18+ BLAKBAR

Thur Jan 8 Rockin4Dollars YEG: 90's Night
7:30PM 18+ THE BUCKINGHAM

Sat Jan 10 Hi-Light Festival 2026 Line-Up Reveal & Fundraiser Show
7:00PM ALL AGES THE AVIARY

Fri Jan 24 Far Out Again Album Release w/Av!tas
9PM 18+ BLAKBAR

Sat Jan 31 Arts Major, Melina Sterling, Mya Hill
5PM 18+ THE BUCKINGHAM



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WASTING TIME

Loud shows, fast riffs and questionable choices

By Chad Cornies

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you most infamous for?

Wasting Time: You're talking to Wasting Time, the band that somehow survives on pizza, caffeine and poor life choices. We're most infamous for catchy hooks, loud shows and always being down for a good time.

AU: Give us a brief history of the band, who is in it and what are you all about?

WT: We formed in Toronto out of a shared love of punk rock, touring and wanting to always create.

Over the last few years we've turned jam sessions into a bunch of releases and tours across Canada, Japan and Korea. The crew: Vlad on rhythm guitar and lead vocals, Mike on bass and backup vocals, Bill on lead guitar and backup vocals and Nick on drums. He's just vocal. We're about big melodies and big energy, with songs that actually mean something without losing the fun.

AU: What does it say on your bandmates' Tinder profiles and on yours?

WT: Tinder...? I hardly even know her! Our guitarist's says, "Will trade riffs for doobs." Our drummer's married. I don't think his wife would approve lol. Mike's says, "Hey, this is the wrong app." Mine says, "Butt stuff is my first base," or something like that... damn autocorrect.

AU: Where is the band from and what's the music scene like there?

WT: We're from Toronto, Canada. It's a city where you can find a killer show any night of the week. The punk scene is gritty, supportive, diverse and loud. It's the kind of place where bands lift each other up and people actually show up early.

AU: Describe the band's sound if possible.

WT: Melodic pop punk with a 90s throwback. Think catchy choruses, driving guitars and honesty without taking ourselves too seriously. Punk rock with a pulse.

AU: How would you describe your live show to the visually impaired?

WT: Imagine being hit by a freight train made of harmonies, energy, sweat and questionable jokes. That's us. Bill joining the band really changed the dynamic. It's just a bunch of friends hanging out on stage.

AU: Have you released an album recently? Tell us about it. What can we expect to hear?

WT: Yeah, we're working on a new record, *Are You Out of Your Goddamn Mind!?*, on People of Punk Rock Records. It's our tightest and most honest work yet. Big hooks, upbeat tempos and melodies that hit hard.

AU: Does the new album explore any particular themes or topics?

WT: It digs into nostalgia, getting older without feeling older, relationships that don't go as planned and finding meaning in the chaos. Basically, all the stuff that keeps us up at night.

AU: Any standout tracks you're stoked on?

WT: Our new single, "Ripped Blue Jeans," comes out December 12. It's the title track and hits the hardest. We're also stoked on "In Due Time" and "Dark Mission," but honestly the whole record feels like a step forward for us. We had the



privilege of working with Matt Gauthier. He was a big contributor on this record. It's definitely our best work yet.

AU: Sex, drugs or rock n' roll? Or all of the above?

WT: Rock n' roll with the occasional side of the other two in responsible adult quantities. Mostly.

AU: What should we know about you that we don't already? What don't you want your mother to know?

WT: We work way harder than we look like we do. As for what my mother shouldn't know... I'm just hoping no one translates the Tinder section for her.

AU: Any tour plans?

WT: We're lining up shows for next year, looking at hitting the road again and working toward another run overseas. Keep an eye out for dates. We're coming back swinging.

AU: Anything else to promote?

WT: Stream the new single, "Ripped Blue Jeans," distrokid.com/hyperfollow/wastingtime4/ripped-blue-jeans Come to the shows, buy some merch and tell your

friends we exist.

AU: Any final words of wisdom for our readers?

WT: Support your local scene. Start a band. Go to shows. Wear earplugs and never trust anyone who says punk is dead.

AU: How do people find you online?

WT: Follow us on Instagram at [@wastingtimemusic](https://www.instagram.com/wastingtimemusic) and contact us at wastingtimeto@gmail.com. Hit the link in our bio for music, videos, shows and more.

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APRIL 23rd: TORONTO, ON - THE GARRISON

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DISCOVERY THROUGH TORMENT

Interview with band members on
their *Telesynthetic Rebirth* EP

By Asher Thrasher

Absolute Underground: Welcome. You just released your third studio offering, *Telesynthetic Rebirth* EP. It tells a video game-inspired story of humanity's abduction and transformation. What drew you to this sci-fi, dystopian angle, and how does it reflect your band's identity?

Charles-Étienne Lafrance: The sci-fi element emerged during the songwriting process through our experimentation with synthesizers. As Sam (guitar) experimented with different sounds, we realized that the textures he created were ideal for a sci-fi narrative, so we went along with it. Additionally, our new singer is a storytelling

aficionado and was eager to explore this concept for the first time in an album setting.

AU: The EP alternates deliberately between "epic" and "heavy" tracks. Why was that structural pattern important, and how do you think it impacts the listener's journey?

Alex Desroche: Indeed the EP deliberately shifts between "epic" and "heavy". We think this contrast reflects the overall theme of the band's growth through impact. The "epic" moments provide a breath of fresh air, while the "heavy" tracks slam the listener back into the visceral side of the journey. We believe that this back-and-forth structure gives the EP a sense of variation, rather than remaining in one style for twenty minutes. However, let's be honest: the entire EP is heavy! :)

AU: You tracked all the instruments in just four days, while taking extra time with vocals. How did that fast-paced recording environment shape the final sound?

Alex: Studio time is costly, so it's essential not to waste days rethinking everything. This pressure pushes you to be well-prepared, know your material and play with intention. Working with a different engineer to spend extra time on the vocals was a creative choice, allowing us to focus on enhancing texture and controlled aggression. Overall, this approach gives the EP a distinct quality that you don't achieve when you spend months trying to perfect every detail.

AU: Most of the synths came from Sam experimenting in pyjamas with Native Instruments. Do you think that playful, DIY approach added something unique to the atmosphere of the record?

Sam Fortin: The only thing that helped was taking my time to explore different textures without a specific goal in mind, just to have fun trying new sounds until I found something that served the song while wearing something comfy. It sure helps!

AU: The artwork's ominous red hues and lone figure set a foreboding tone. How did you envision the connection between this imagery and the EP's narrative of collapse and rebirth?

Alex: This artwork serves as a prequel to the entire narrative. It's understandable to question how a solitary figure dressed in vibrant red hues connects to a story about invasions and mass control. However, its significance lies in the nuances of the storyline. Before the collapse, before manipulation occurs and before larger

forces take control, there is always an origin point.

AU: The EP hides nods to the F.E.A.R. video game series, including the acronym in the final track. How do video games and pop culture references feed into your songwriting and world-building?

Alex: Sam has always, in our opinion, conveyed a sense of power fantasy, reminiscent of video games through its vivid imagery. This genre often calls for a unique approach to engage listeners effectively. We believe that incorporating subtle references can foster a connection based on shared memories, similar to how other genres evoke different emotions. While some connect with themes of melancholy, anger and past relationships, we aim to resonate with listeners through a happier "if you know, you know" perspective, despite the intense



nature of the story.

AU: Anything else you would like to add for our readers?

Everyone: Stay hydrated, eat your veggies, always ask for consent & kiss your homies good night!

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BORN DIVIDED

Interview with composer/bassist
Tommy Demers

By Asher Thrasher

Absolute Underground: Welcome. Who are you and what do you do?

Tommy Demers: First of all, thank you for giving us visibility—it's truly appreciated. I'm Tommy Demers, the band's main composer and bassist.

AU: Chronicle of a Shipwreck feels both epic and devastating. What inspired you to frame

the album around this imagery of collapse and survival?

TD: *Chronicle of a Shipwreck* blends many different musical styles. I'm a huge fan of progressive music, extreme metal, melodic metal, old-school death metal and power metal, and I try to incorporate as many of these influences as possible. The album carries an epic and dark atmosphere throughout, and the title track, "Chronicle", leans even more into a darker Black Metal sound.

AU: "Run, Burn, Die!" is described as the wildest track on the album, with unpredictable

structures and stacked riffs. What was the creative process behind writing something so volatile?

TD: "Run, Burn, Die!" has a truly unique structure—no riff ever repeats. It starts with a prog-inspired beat reminiscent of Rush, then moves through death, black, power and old-school heavy metal. I wrote it over several days because I wanted every shift to surprise the listener. I also love that it's full of abrupt breaks and tempo changes. Yet, I think it still holds together with a sense of logic, even though no chorus riff ever returns.

AU: The video for "Everything Comes to an End" captures the song's haunting atmosphere. What was your vision for bringing that emotional intensity into the visuals?

TD: We wanted a simple video of us playing—something that feels like a jam session.

AU: With "Chronicle of a Shipwreck" as the title track, how did you approach its video differently to emphasize the darker, more chaotic side of the album?

TD: For that video, we went all out. We filmed shots on one of the tallest buildings in Québec City using a drone. To emphasize the track's dark atmosphere, we also staged performances with four flamethrowers blasting fire more than 30 feet into the air. The flames against the night sky really added to the song's sombre character. We're very proud of that video, which reached 100,000 views in less than a month.

AU: The artwork shows a ship with torn sails battling a raging sea, symbolizing humanity losing itself in time. How does this visual metaphor connect with the album's lyrical themes?

TD: The artwork reflects the central idea of the album: humanity struggling against the passage of time and the forces that erode identity. The lyrics carry a recurring sense of loss, fragmentation and drifting—whether it's the heart sold to crows, the homeland that may never have existed or the journey that feels like a shipwreck. Each song explores a different part of this existential voyage, where illusions collapse and scars replace smiles. The ship becomes a metaphor for the human condition—fragile, battered yet still pushing forward through chaos. Just as the sea is relentless, so are the emotions and challenges that shape us, and the album captures that tension between despair and resilience.

AU: Christian Donaldson of Cryptopsy mixed and mastered the album. How did his involvement shape the final sound and elevate Born Divided's vision?

TD: Christian did an incredible job with the mix and master. He brought a powerful sound that elevated the album to another level. We produced the record ourselves and recorded all the tracks on our own but Christian came in with his sonic vision and gave the album the sound of 2025. He's an absolute machine.

AU: Anything else you'd like to add for our readers?

TD: We invite everyone to watch our music videos on YouTube and subscribe to our channel—check it out! linktr.ee/borndivided



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GOLDEN LAL LENTILS

This dish will turn a hard-to-get
vegan into a randy sexpot.

By Lochlan Smyth of Prince Rupert, BC.

Lochlan has been a professional chef for three decades and now runs a non-profit kitchen in Prince Rupert. He misses the dick jokes from the old kitchens he worked in.

What you'll need

2 Red Onions, thinly sliced
½ Cup minced Garlic
½ Cup minced or thinly sliced Ginger
1 Can of Coconut Milk
1L of Vegetable Stock or Water
1.5 Cups of Red Split Lentils, washed and drained
1 bunch of Cilantro, rough chopped
1 Lime
½ Cup Olive Oil or Ghee or fat taken from a recent sacrifice

From the spice cupboard:

Whole spices

1 tsp each of Cumin Seeds, Brown Mustard Seeds and Dried Curry Leaves
1 Cinnamon Stick
1 Bay Leaf
Ground Spices
1 Tbsp each of Garam Masala, and Madras (or Yellow Curry Powder)
1 tsp each of Paprika and Chili Powder

½ tsp each of Cardamon, Nutmeg, Turmeric, and Black Pepper
Salt to taste

Method

Add your fat of choice to a thick bottomed pot on low heat and add all the whole spices except the Curry & Bay Leaves. Cook on low for a minute or two, until the spices are fragrant. Add the leaves and onions,

repeat the caramelize/water process until onions are nicely browned.



along with a little salt, then increase the temperature to medium. Cook until onions have started to caramelize.

Add a splash of water and cook until the water has evaporated & re-caramelized.

Add another splash of water, then add Garlic and Ginger, then

Add Ground Spices and cook for about a minute.

Add Diced Tomatoes and cook for 1-2 minutes, then add coconut milk, lentils and stock (or water).

Bring to a boil and reduce to a simmer. Cook for about 25-30 minutes, stirring regularly, until the lentils have softened. If it looks too thick, add a splash of water as

necessary.

Remove the Cinnamon Stick and Bay Leaf, then add the Cilantro & Lime juice along with salt to taste.

Serve with warm Naan Bread and Basmati Rice. This protein packed meal should last for a week in the refrigerator, and it also freezes well.

You can also serve this dish with Cilantro Mint Chutney and Cucumber Tomato Raita.

Cilantro Mint Chutney

1 bunch of Cilantro
1 bunch of Mint (use only leaves)
1 Onion
1 Jalapeno, remove the seeds and membrane if you can't stand the heat
3-4 Garlic Cloves, peeled
1 Thumb-size piece of Ginger, peeled and roughly chopped

2 Tbsp Plain Yogurt
1 Lime, juiced
2-3 tsp ground Cumin
Salt & Pepper to taste

Put everything into a blender/food processor, puree until smooth, add a little water to help it blend... and that's it! Not exactly fucking rocket science, eh?

Cucumber-Tomato Raita

1 English Cucumber, grated
1 Large tomato, diced
1 650g tub of Plain Yogurt
1 Tbsp Ground Cumin
1Tbsp Ground Coriander
Salt & Pepper to taste
Grate Cucumber into a bowl, add the rest of the ingredients and stir.

A trained monkey could make this, so if you find yourself struggling... God help you!



ver·nac·u·lar

GINO TRASH

By John Carlow, Finding Charlotte Photography

In this feature Absolute Underground highlights someone in the local Victoria, BC scene.

Absolute Underground: Introduce yourself.

Gino Trash: Folks call me Gino Trash. I play guitar in a few bands. My main project is the Gnar Gnars, which is mainly original music, although we do enjoy butchering a classic song from time to time. You can also find me on stage with my SNFU tribute, Painful Reminder and Danzig tribute, Danezig.

AU: What do you do away from the stage?

GT: I run part of an airplane factory as a Special Process Technician. That's a fancy way of saying I

work with aerospace-related chemical processes. On Friday nights I deliver pizza for my buddy's place, Peninsula Pizza. I started doing that to get out of the house during lockdown and for extra money. Other than work and being a music-aholic, I spend all my free time with my dog and guitars.

AU: What are your thoughts on the current state of the local scene?

GT: I think if you know where to look and have an open mind, the local scene is doing really well right now. There are still tons of the old timers like myself and my peer bands, but if you look past that you'll find lots of great new talent playing shows around town. Having consistent places to play has long been an issue in Victoria. But the scene manages to persist.

AU: Logan's Pub R.I.P. What did it mean to you?

GT: That's a big question. Logan's was the first real bar I ever performed in. I was in a band called Ted

Bundy Project back then and Logan's welcomed us and treated us like gold. I played there with many bands over the years and it was basically the bar I called home. No venue is perfect, but if I could bring back any venue that has vanished, I would bring back Logan's and Robin, R.I.P., and Scott, the whole crew. They were basically family to the whole local scene.

AU: Favourite Logan's story?

GT: There were so many good times it's hard to pick. I recall one show where my band Alcoholic White Trash had to headline after our pals the Hoosgow. They were all rather large at the time and had a gimmick where they would do ranch dressing shooters on stage. By the time we hit the stage, the whole place reeked of ranch dressing. This prompted our already drunk singer Ratboy Roy to become physically sick all over the stage, causing what was basically a vomit and ranch dressing slip-and-slide. We never missed a beat of our set, but Roy wiped out in the mess about two dozen times and the rest of us had to hold our breath to keep from adding to the mess on stage.

AU: What's important to you in the local scene?

GT: Venues. Bars, community centres, anywhere that lets bands play. Victoria has always been full of amazing talent, but with nowhere to play it all seems wasted. I think all-ages venues are especially important. Kids need to start rocking out as early as possible. Leaving the island to play is extremely expensive and difficult. If bands can have places to play here, word gets around and they can make a bit of money to pay for trips off-island and really get out there. I get that the internet has made getting your band out there much easier, but there is no substitute for seeing a band live.

AU: Book highlights?

GT: It's been a long time since I've read a book, but I think everyone should read *1984* by George

Orwell. It's by far my personal favourite, and with the way the world is going these days, it could serve as a good eye-opener and catalyst to change the direction the world is headed.

AU: Favourite bands and recordings?

GT: My favourite bands are all over the map but my top five are Clutch, Pig Destroyer, Melvins, Golers and a toss-up between early Black Sabbath and Bon Scott-era AC/DC. I recommend everyone listen to literally anything by Vancouver greats the Golers and the albums *Prowler in the Yard* by Pig Destroyer, *Houdini* by Melvins, and *Psychic Warfare* by Clutch.

AU: Shout-outs?

GT: Big shout-out to all the people making the effort to put on and promote local shows. Brains from my band the Gnar Gnars, for example, puts a huge effort into our scene. All of the venues in town that give us a place to showcase our art, such as Lucky Bar and Phoenix Bar and Grill. And I'd be a fool not to shout out all of the amazing local photographers, yourself included, who come out show after show and document our shenanigans in venues that often have horrible lighting and awkward stages.

AU: Should music have a message?

GT: I think music is a good place to deliver a message, with its ability to reach a wide audience, which can be a double-edged sword. Messages can be harmful or helpful depending on how they are perceived. There is a crazy amount of negativity and bullshit going on in the world right now, so when I write music I try to make it fun and silly. I don't want to say music shouldn't have a message, I just think if it does, it should be carefully delivered.

AU: What's on the road ahead for you?

GT: I think my future consists of continuing to write and play fun music until I expire. As long as people keep showing up to gigs, I will keep performing. All I have ever wanted to do was make music, so I'll just stick to what I know.

AU: Thanks, Gino.



**Mountain Collective American Tour 2017:
The Storm of the Century Part 6
On To Taos**
By Brydo "Pull 'Er Over And" Parker

We left off last time as Ira and I were leaving Mammoth Mountain Ski Resort in our rented RV after another epic day with another Mammoth dump of snow threatening to close the Sierra Nevada mountain range passes. We were hammer down at a whopping 25 kilometres an hour up to a top speed of 25 miles an hour. I figure if we can keep going, no matter what speed we go, we will eventually get there. Ira cranks the tunes and was actually able to put together meals while I drove the old Mobile Home on to more highway glory.

Three brakes and way, way overloaded. We cut across a piece of black desert sands with giant white snow fingers trying to grab us, but we are running just in front of the main storm coming in hard off the Pacific. Snow all night. The road was nowhere in sight. I was on adrenaline and scared shitless driving in the raging storm when in front of me, across an ancient bridge, a roadrunner ran down the road. I knew I needed a break. I asked the Navigator, "Did you see that?" Ira said "What?" "It was a roadrunner, man, running down the road all day." "You wanna pull over?" he asks. I keep driving!

Taos, New Mexico, the sun is rising and we are fading but gas up, coffee up, directions up, and up we go to North America's 4th highest resort. We are deep in the heart of the beast. Taos Ski Valley, not a lot of RV dudes with Canadian plates around here and we were definitely getting some stink eye, but the early RVer gets the parking spot no matter where you are from. All these locals are so excited and nobody has any idea of the shit storm of the century that we would cause at this unsuspecting ski resort. That we would unleash, and Mother Nature too.

Whoa, I am getting ahead of myself. It seemed like we were on a movie set as there were a lot of big dudes in military winter gear. It turns out it was

military day, costs next to nothing for military and family to ski, but the ticket price otherwise was 200 American bucks. They weren't getting any money from us though because we had two days here for free on the Mountain Collective ski pass.

The RV is parked close to the lifts and we are good for the night. Morning comes and we get our passes, wait in long lines and get up LIFT 1, not too creative, but also not confusing. Then LIFT 2, we check in at ski patrol and look up at West Basin Ridge. A short hike up and you are in the Mecca for killer steep chutes. We blitzed down what we could see on the way up. And back down to LIFT 2. We saw lots of locals ignore what we just rode, untouched pow all the way down. What else could be up there that we are missing? Only one way to find out. Back up LIFT 2 and hike higher, we ended up dropping into an area called Two Bucks. It was super wind slab and bottomless pow all the way down to LIFT 4 and up we go.

The weather was deteriorating rapidly, this mountain is no joke, you need gear to ride here and we had it all. Avalanche backpacks, peeps, and probes, this is what saved us but not how it normally would. So anyway, we get on the brand new Kachina Peak Lift and up we go to 12,450 feet, so high you can die from oxygen starvation. It's cold and they were closing the lift as we got on. This is our only shot at glory on this lift today and it's probably gonna be closed tomorrow. So this is it for the rest of our lives. We have never been higher on a lift before so it's time to smoke a precious fatty. It is really hard to light up at 12,450 ft high with high winds and pelting ice crystals, even with a propane jet lighter. But mission accomplished and we burned a lung busting Gorilla Glue greaser. Before we rocked down, we sacrificed a juicy big roach to the Norse god of snow at the top of the world in thanks for the abundance of snow so far, and for continued puking flakes. Conditions were super sketchy as the snow was hard as steel and steep but we made it back down to LIFT 4 again.

We decided to go back and ride the front side deep pow again. The storm was picking up again and the flakes were getting bigger, no doubt due to our earlier sacrificial offering. From LIFT 4 we cut hard left to hit the steeps but ended up on the right hand track. We were following a river drainage and ducked several ropes sticking to our line. As we got closer to the bottom we were crossing runs with lots of military personnel beginner skiers flailing on them and somehow we touched off several rock avalanches that poured large rocks out onto the runs, Oops!

I was quicker and remained unobserved but Ira landed in a flatter zone with more rocks and was spotted by somebody with a radio. As I got to the bottom of LIFT One I was swarmed, and not in a good way, by upset ski patrollers who were up in my grill asking, "Where is your buddy who ducked the rope?" I get on my phone and try to warn Ira he is busted. Too late. He rides up to me with the happiest shit-eating grin right up until the ski patrollers rolled up on him and were getting in a heated conversation about avalanches of rock and ducking ropes. They were saying it was a crime punishable by pass removal, which in my ski religion is tantamount to death, and it is my best bud fighting for his!

I slide over and am already familiar with their

tactics. I also had plenty of time to come up with a quick counter plan story excuse for what was about to happen to Ira. I say, "Guys, as I said before, we were doing everything right but we got lost following tracks down Two Buck chutes and hit that fog layer and ended up on those cliffs when that rock slide took us out and across the run. We had to ride down the closed area because we needed to get down here fast to let you guys know that there was a dangerous situation. We have all our safety gear" (I am panicking because we were inbound when the slide happened.) Also Ira has injured his knee. "Obviously we are from Canada and it is our first day here." "And your last." said the head patroller who was not buying the story. He took Ira's two day pass. He at last took pity on us and said "Come see me in the morning about getting it back!" "Sorry," is all we could say.

I said to Ira "If that jack-ass does not give your pass back I will buy you a new one. I took us down that line and started that slide and you got caught. Makes for a good story." We got wasted, made dinner and went to sleep anxious to ride the mighty Taos again. We wake up and instantly fuck around. Parking people unhappy with our rockstar parking as we moved the rig when the best auto spots vacated. If there was a sign saying, *Do Not Park 40 Ft Shitty Old RV Here*, I wouldn't have parked there.

Everyone was scanning their passes to get on LIFT One in the morning to a pleasant beeping sound but when Ira went to scan his pass it let out a



very loud bloodcurdling Wolf Howl! Awooooo!!! and they wouldn't let him up the chair. Ski Patrol jackass still had his pass blacklisted. Divide and conquer, Ira was waiting for Mr. Patroller to come down to get his pass reactivated. The line for tickets was super long and getting longer. I got in line and waited to see if Ira didn't get his pass back by the time I was first in line I would buy him a replacement pass. At the last second Ira comes running up and says "Let's ride. I got the pass back!"

And ride we did, with pure impunity and a sense of immunity as we never went back to LIFT One ever again. The moral of the story is if you ride like an asshole don't go back to LIFT One because they will take your pass away.

Next issue we start to head back home through the mighty Rockies. Next stop Aspen and the home of Dope and Dopier!

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FORTRESS TATTOO

Absolute Underground: What are your skills to pay the bills?

Cory McCaughley: Hi, my name is Cory McCaughley. I am the co-owner and founder of Fortress Tattoo in beautiful Victoria, Canada.

AU: What is the origin story of Fortress Tattoo?

CM: As a young tattooer I spent a lot of time travelling and tattooing. While on the road I met my amazing wife Cori while we were both tattooing at a convention in Alberta. With the addition of our young family we felt it was a good time to settle down,



set some roots, and build something permanent that represented our journey in tattoo. Although our first location was in Langford, we quickly outgrew the space. With the knowledge we acquired from our first shop we opened our new bigger location in Quadra Village at 2571c Quadra Street. It's an amazing location in a beautiful and eclectic neighbourhood.

AU: How long have you been a tattoo artist?

CM: I have been a professional tattoo artist since 2008. But I have been around tattooing for a lot longer. Tattooing has been a part of my family since before I was around.

AU: What tattoo style are you best known for?

CM: I'm best known for my black and grey work but I pride myself on my versatility and the versatility of our shop. Big or small we do them all.

AU: Who else works with you at the shop?

CM: First and foremost my amazing wife and co-owner **Cori @csolistattoos**. She loves to do large and small scale tattoos of animals and floral designs in both black and grey or colour and much more.

-Next we have **John @inhellireignsupremo** John is an amazing wealth of knowledge on the history of tattooing. Although



table.

AU: What are you most proud of in regards to your shop?

CM: I'm very proud of my crew and the support of the community that allows us to keep doing what



extremely versatile, John is known for his lettering and classic black and grey.

-We also have 2 super talented apprentices who come to us with extensive backgrounds in art.

-**Stu @stu_art78** who is a world class professional sign painter.

-**Ashley @the.smiling.fox.creative** who is a diverse artist who does everything from wood burning to portraits.

AU: Describe your shop's style?

CM: Our shop has a classic style with a modern twist steeped in tradition.

AU: What makes Fortress Tattoo unique?

CM: The thing that makes Fortress unique is the people that work there, the history perspectives and the backgrounds everyone brings to the



we love to do.

AU: Anything else you want people to know?

CM: Although we are a tattoo shop, all of our artists are extremely talented and we do commission work on all kinds of art. I encourage everyone to check out all of our artists and see all the different things we do.

AU: How do people set up an appointment?

CM: You can message the shop on facebook or instagram @ **fortresstattoos** or message the artists directly.

AU: Any final words or wisdom to share?

CM: I just wanna share my gratitude for the community that supports us and the career that has given me my crew and my family. I couldn't do it without you all. Thank you.



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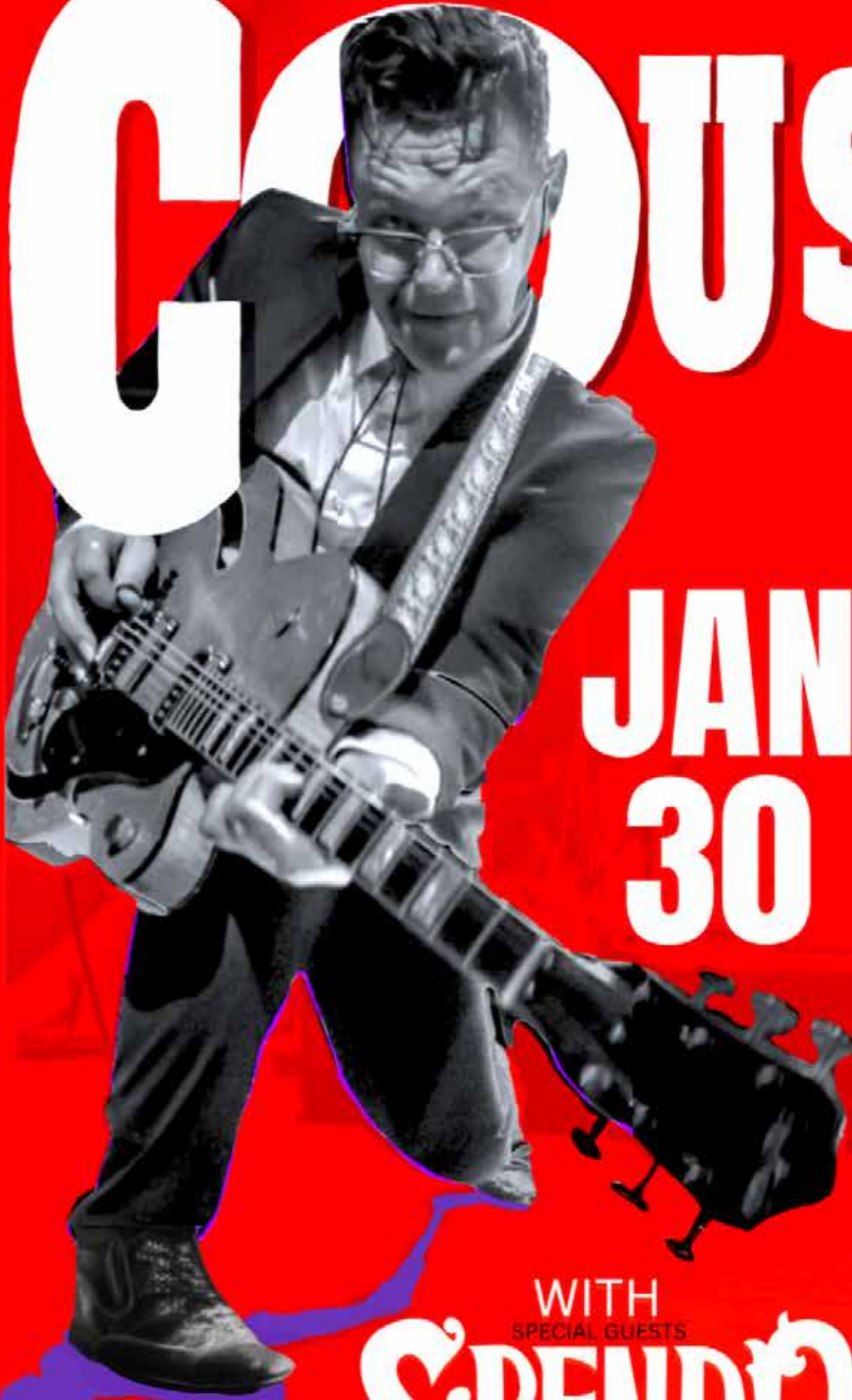
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New//Present Location 4062 St Laurent

REVOLUTION 514 Skater-Owned Montreal Skateboard Shop By Paget Williams

Some skate shops are built on trends, but ours was built on friendship, passion, and the purest roots of skate culture. Opening 3 months before covid, what started as a shared dream between longtime friends **Orion Curiel** of *Shades of Culture* and **Paget Williams** of *Greenland Productions* quickly became a mission: to create a real old-school skate shop run by real old-school

skaters. This wasn't going to be a boutique or a lifestyle showroom. It was going to be the kind of skate shop they grew up with—raw, authentic, welcoming, and deeply connected to the heart of skateboarding.

The shop's first four years were something truly special. Sharing space with **Le Nouveau Soundcentral** was more than convenient—it was a perfect match. A record store and a skate shop operating side by side created a vibe unlike anything else in the city. People joked that the space was "*Montreal's smallest mall*," but to the community, it felt more like the city's coolest clubhouse. The air was filled with music, conversation, and the steady hum of skate & music culture growing stronger every day.

Some of the most unforgettable highlights from those early days were the opening party on Nov 21, 2019 with the whole crew including **Bill Danforth** and the shop's first Christmas party, where **Tony Alva**—a true legend of skateboarding—came to DJ. Having Alva behind the turntables wasn't just an honour; it was validation that the shop was tapping into something real, something rooted in the culture's history and future.

As the idea took shape, a few more partners joined the crew: **Ri**, Montreal lifelong skater, **Peter Edwards**, guitarist for *GrimSkunk*, and **Louis Corbeil**, a dedicated old-school skater with decades of experience under his belt. Together, the group of us brought music, culture, skate history, and community passion under one roof. Their combined energy became the foundation of a shop that felt less like a retail business and more like a cultural home base for Montreal skaters.

But just like every great skate story, challenges came. A **fire** forced the shop out of its beloved shared space, bringing an abrupt end to an era that had meant so much to both the owners and the community. Leaving Shawn and Le Nouveau Soundcentral was emotional and difficult—but the story didn't end there. Skaters are built on resilience. They fall, get back up, and keep pushing forward.

Only two weeks after the fire, the shop was already hosting its opening party in a brand-new home: the old **Greenland office** upstairs from



Old Location on Coloniale



Revolution 514 Crew- Left to right - Orion Curiel, Peter Edwards, Paget Williams, Louis Corbeil

Barfly at 4062 St-Laurent. The move wasn't just practical—it was symbolic. It brought Paget full circle and gave the store the room it needed to grow, evolve, and become more than just a shop. It became a brand.

facebook.com/revolution514
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youtube.com/@revolution5145

Since then, the shop has continued to make waves not only in the local scene but internationally. They've produced custom boards for bands such as **NOFX**—including boards for their last three shows—along with collaborations for DC hardcore punk legends, **Scream & Malmo**, **Sweden's Satanic Surfers**. Their "Bro" models bridge generations, featuring old-school lifer **Bill Danforth** and modern-day Indigenous skate mentor, **Joe Buffalo**, showcasing the store's commitment to both skate heritage and the culture's ongoing evolution.

Today, the shop stands as a testament to what can happen when passion, community, and authenticity drive everything. It remains exactly what it set out to be: a real old-school skate shop run by real old-school skaters. The past has shaped it, the present fuels it, and the future? **The future is ours!!!**

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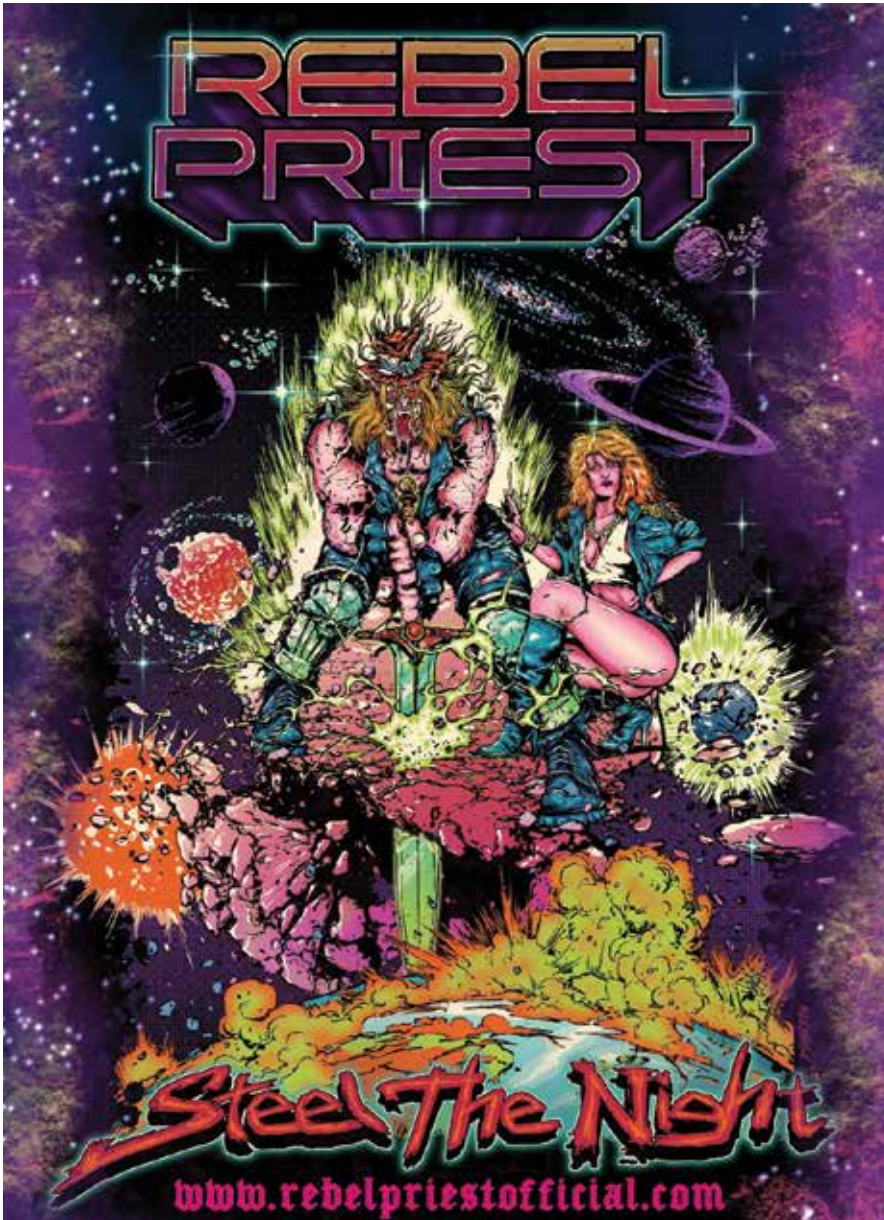
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Island Genetics

Interview by Iree-I

AU: Who are we talking to and what do you do?

Zach Chester: I am Zach Chester, I am the founder and CEO of Island Genetics.

AU: When did you first start growing Cannabis?

ZC: I started growing around 2013 with my business partner at the time, Davis Allen under the MMAR and ACMPR program. We spent those years doing a lot of research and development; hunting for exotic seeds, breeding and comparing different styles of cultivation from drain to waste, flood tables and organic living soil. It was these trials over the 7 years that gave us a lot of insight into the different outcomes achieved by each system from plant growth and smoking quality.

AU: What drew you to the Cannabis industry?

ZC: There were 2 things that drew me to the industry: **1.)** It was new and it seemed like there was a lot of opportunity at the time to be a first mover. **2.)** I always had a passion for cannabis and the different flavour experiences that unique genetics bring. I personally have an appreciation for fine cigars, wine, and whiskey. High end cannabis fits right in with all of this as another adult use product that I figured would eventually evolve and gather the same appreciation that these products have attained over the years.

AU: How is it being a Licensed Producer in BC?

ZC: It's been very tough out the gate, but it is starting to get a bit easier. Everything costs a lot to get going, the regulatory hurdles are overwhelming and mistakes are very expensive. The heavy regulation makes everything move slowly. It makes cash flow a constant issue, especially with the international shipments.

AU: What's the best part of your job?

ZC: It feels very rewarding to get positive reviews on a flower drop that we have worked hard to produce. I feel like we have built a small cult

following for our brand and local drops. I really enjoy the interactions with the shops that support us and their loyal customers that always buy the new drops.

AU: What strains do you currently produce and what makes them unique?

ZC: We are currently growing: Lime Heads, Strawberry Froyo, AK Pie, Red Wasabi and Kool Grapes. We are constantly bringing out new genetics. We have a few new genetics coming out in 2026. Lime Heads is a sativa dominant hybrid that has a great taste translation. It has a unique lime note with an herbal and savoury undertone which I find unique, it's not your typical lime profile. Red Wasabi has an earth and gas profile that is similar to an OG Kush but with a fresh wasabi spice on top making it very unique. AK Pie is a sativa dominant hybrid that has an exotic sour fruit and gas nose with some earth. It's definitely an exotic flavour profile with a very clean sativa effect. Kool Grapes has an old school sweet kush profile with a sour gas and menthol overtone. Strawberry Froyo smells like strawberries and yogurt which seems to have a strong following with people that are looking for that profile.

AU: Do you prefer Sativas or Indicas?

ZC: I don't have a preference myself, it depends on the situation. A more social situation typically leans better for a hybrid or a sativa that doesn't get me too sedative. I find some sativas can make me feel a bit anxious.

AU: Favourite all-time strain to smoke?

ZC: It used to be our Panama Red that we grew in the ACMPR days. It had a very unique terpene profile and effect for me at the time. It was an uplifting sativa effect, very clear headed and didn't cause any anxiety which was quite different compared to the usual heavy gas strains that were

common in BC. These days I would say my favorite strains we are growing right now are Kool Grapes, Lime Heads and Red Wasabi.

AU: What makes an expert grower in your opinion?

ZC: Experience at different scales, experience with different types of cultivation systems and major attention to detail. We had the attention to detail right out the gate but lacked the commercial scale experience. This was a major adjustment for us early on. Efficiency was not something that we concerned ourselves with at

the smaller ACMPR scale.

AU: Any growing secrets or tips you can share?

ZC: We strongly believe in the quality of flower produced in organic living soil cultivation. I think every smaller craft grower should be growing this way and the salt nutrient systems should be left for the large scale producers. A tip that I feel comfortable sharing about this system is if the soil is balanced with all the needed nutrition before transplanting, the crop will get a decent result without too much further tinkering. If you don't



CANNABIS CORNER

start out perfectly then the organic system can end up being a lot of extra work trying to play catch up on nutritional imbalances that you will never be able to get ahead of and you will think it's a sub-par growing system.

AU: Why is it important to support local growers?

ZC: I feel we are the backbone of the industry and truly represent the cannabis culture and innovation that Canada is known for worldwide. We employ Canadians and pay them well. Larger corporations mostly employ foreign farming workers doing simple large scale cultivation tasks, where the local craft growers need skilled laborers to do these tasks at a higher level. We contribute to the local economy with sustainable local employment.

AU: Where are your products available?

ZC: Our products are available at select retailers in BC that have craft focused menus, for example Evergreen Cannabis in Kitsilano always carries our products. They will deliver anywhere in BC if you order from www.ecsvan.ca

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Alan Harlow Lindsey Mitchell Ron Tabak Rocket Norton John Hall
Prism Capitol Records

PRISM with Loverboy – Victoria Memorial Arena, December 5, 1980

By Clark 'Super' Mantei

Hello again, past blasters. Let's travel back to a snowy Friday night in Victoria, BC, to the Memorial Arena. The bands are Canadian hit-makers PRISM, along with the new sensation that is Loverboy. I was thrilled to go to the show with my best friend, Rick. It was our first concert outing and we were stoked. First, let's time travel back to the beginning—to how Prism came to life.

Dateline 1965: Vancouver drummer Gary Wanstall (aka The Rock) formed a garage band with guitarist Bob Kripps. The Norton motorcycle

made a model called "The Rocket," and it was then that Gary changed his name to "Rocket Norton," and then Bill was reading *The Seeds of Time* and thus found their band's name.

In 1967 they went on tour and played across Canada performing their music. From 1969 to 1971 they recorded four singles and went through many members along the way. "My Hometown" was a hit in Canada in 1970. Of all the guitarists in the Seeds band I must mention Jerry Doucette and also Tom Lavin. Jerry went

solo and Tom formed the Powder Blues Band, while Lindsey Mitchell ended up in Prism. Along with Lindsey were John Hall on keyboards, Ab Bryant on bass, and Rocket on drums. *The Seeds of Time* came to a close in 1974.

Dateline 1975: The four Seeds members teamed up with Bruce Fairburn, a gifted horn player and arranger who knew a singer named Ron Tabak. They joined forces with manager Bruce Allen and the new project was ready. They needed a record contract and a name. Local talent Jim Vallance, a songwriter, teamed up with them to write a demo to distribute across Canada. The name was "Stanley Screamer," and soon they were offered a recording deal with

GRT Records after hearing the track "Open Soul Surgery." They began playing live using the name "Under Construction" until the name PRISM was suggested. Throughout 1976 into 1977, they

made their debut album.

Dateline May 1977: *PRISM* is released and radio begins to play "Spaceship Superstar," which remains a radio staple to this day. Prism began opening for big acts like Chilliwack and April Wine and everyone loved them.

Dateline June 1978: Prism released their second album, *See Forever Eyes*, with the hits "Flyin'" and "Take Me Away," both written by new member (once in Seeds too), Al Harlow.

Ab Bryant left to join Chilliwack. Prism then joined forces with Meat Loaf on a North American tour to support his *Bat Out of Hell* album.

I discovered Prism in 1978 at our summer home when a friend turned me onto them. I went to his house that fall and he showed me *See Forever Eyes*. I turned the jacket over and saw all five rockers and I was hooked. I wanted to be Rocket Norton!

Dateline Summer 1979: Prism released *Armageddon*. The title track was a radio smash, as was "Night to Remember," and I learned Prism songs on my drums along with so much more from all my 45s of the era.

Dateline May 1980: My 13th birthday found me a teenager. That month I heard "Young and Restless" on the radio—a new Prism record—and the title track was a hit. Every day Van Halen, Styx, Blondie, Bob Seger or Prism played on top 40 radio. Back to school for Grade 8 to move into my teenage glory. I was an Air Cadet and joined the school band to keep drumming and learning.

Dateline August 1980: Vancouver band Loverboy released its debut album. Managed also by Bruce Allen and produced by Bob Rock, the record was a smash. I heard "Turn Me Loose" the night it was released on my stereo and biked to buy the record the next day.

Dateline December 1980: Prism released *All the Best* and then I heard on the radio they were coming to the Arena that month. I called Rick and told him we should go. His brother Ed insisted and dropped the stylus and blasted "Armageddon," yelling, "You're gonna see this live, Clark!"

SHOWDAY: Dec 5th had arrived and the day was a blur. After school and paper routes, I inhaled dinner and Rick and I got into his brother Ed's mini car to catch a ride to the show. It was snowing heavily. We exited the car and bought tickets—less than \$10, though my stub has since disappeared.

SHOWTIME: It's Friday night and we're inside. Being a young rocker, I assumed I'd get popcorn like at the movies. We made it to the back and chose dead-centre seats. I think I was the only guy in the audience with popcorn. I looked across the arena and realized the PA was like a massive home stereo. The songs were louder than I'd ever heard and felt electric. Then the lights went down. The local DJ from CKDA appeared to introduce Loverboy. Their first concert was in November 1979 backing up KISS! The lights and music took hold as "The Kid Is Hot Tonight" exploded into the arena. All five guys were playing even better than on the record. They played the whole album and saved "Turn Me Loose" for last. The singer is Mike Reno, and in his red leather pants he was a star under that spotlight. His voice soared.

As the lights went up we made it to the front of the stage as the PA played in a lit arena.

PRISM: I was transfixed staring at Rocket Norton's drums high on a riser. The house lights faded to

blackness. My senses were glowing as the band hit the stage and "Virginia" kicked in, the stage lights erupting. Dry ice, the singer centre stage, keyboards upper right, Lindsey and Al on either side, Rocket behind his spectacular kit—right in front of my naked steaming eyes and ears. Sensation like never before. "Fucking eh!"

The popcorn was kicking in as hit after hit played: "N-N-N-No," "It's Over," and the guys from the LP's back cover were alive before my eyes. When "Mirror Man" was played and the talk box came out for the guitar solo I was hypnotized. Then Rocket played his fantastic drum solo. When "Young and Restless" was played, Prism said goodnight.

Encore: The intro to "Spaceship Superstar" began—so good to experience live. Lastly they played "See Forever Eyes" as

the laser lights came alive. They took a bow and we headed to merch. I bought a signed poster and a Loverboy shirt. We stepped back into the snowy night into Ed's mini and made it home safely. I hung my snow-damaged autographed poster on my wall and dreamt through the night.

Dateline Dec 8, 1980: Back at school telling everyone about the concert, then to Air Cadets. Rick's mom picked us up and cried the whole way home. She said, "Someone killed John Lennon," and my heart sank. I had his new LP. Once home, everyone was upset. Dad said, "There go the Beatles." I asked why the Beatles? Dad said, "John was in the Beatles, Clark."

The world cried for weeks. I realized how special music was, how important life is, how memories matter. Songs hold timelines.

R.I. peace, John Lennon.

Dateline Dec 9, 1980: Prism performed its last show with Ron Tabak as he left the band to heal himself. Was it fame or the Lennon tragedy? Regardless, Ron departed and Prism's glory days ended.

Dateline Fall 1984: Ron and Prism planned a comeback. Prism had made another LP with another singer, but they planned to regroup.

Dateline Dec 24, 1984: Al Harlow was to spend Christmas Eve with Ron. Ron chose to bike there. Along the way, he was struck by a passing truck's mirror—or brushed—hit his head, and was transported to hospital. He suffered an aneurysm and passed away Dec 26, 1984.

A terrible tragedy. When I heard Ron had died, I played every Prism album all night long. His beautiful voice remains with us. Rlpeace Ron Tabak.

Dateline Dec 5, 2025: Here we are 45 years later. I called Rick and he remembered that night well. Blasting back isn't only about great times. It's about music and memories. I'm not 13 anymore. Prism has continued performing with Al Harlow on guitar and vocals. I saw them in 2005 and many times since. Al does justice to Ron Tabak; his vocal ability is second to none.

Tour dates for 2026 are available. I still recommend seeing the legendary Prism if you can. It's a blast from the past.

It's time to bring this issue to a close. I wish everyone a safe and healthy Christmas season and a bright, shiny 2026.

Always remember to "Rock out and Rrrrrroll On."

Clark "Super" Mantei





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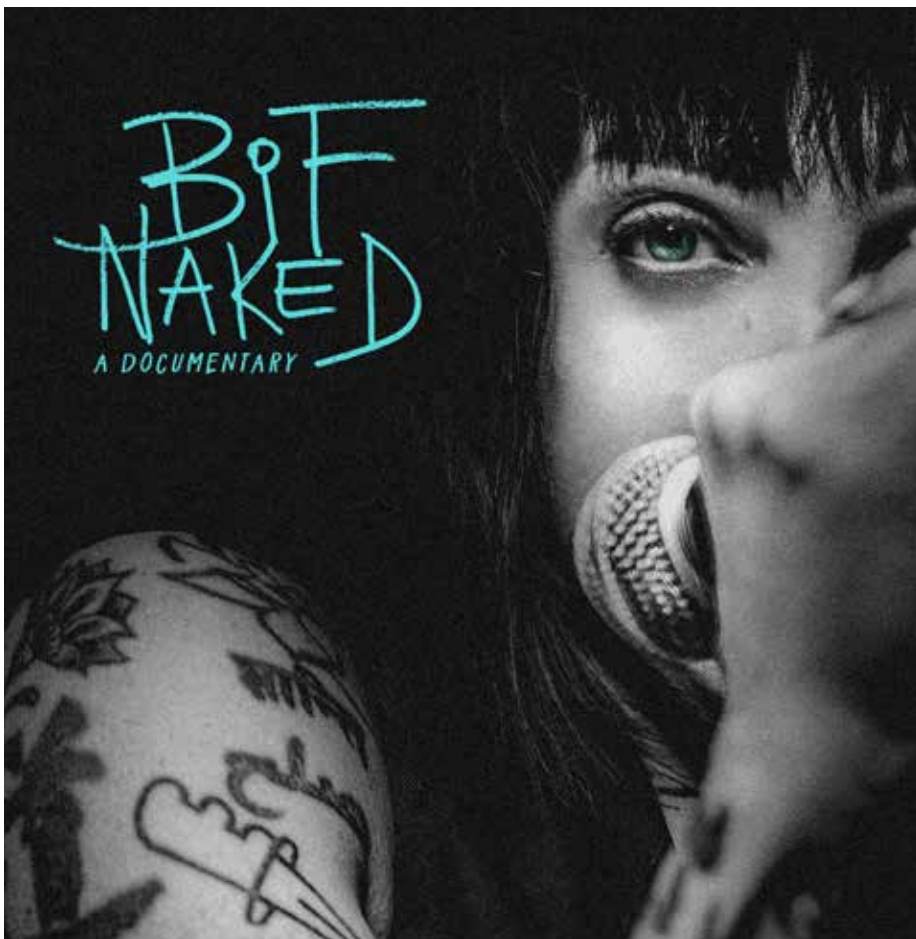
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BIF NAKED

The Hard Core Rocker's New Film!

Interview with the Director,
Pollyanna Hardwicke-Brown

By James Borsa

AU: We have a very special guest on the show right now, Pollyanna Hardwicke-Brown. Welcome to Ultrasonic Film.

PHB: Thank you.

AU: We're going to be talking about your new film, "Bif Naked", which is very appropriately named, isn't it?

PHB: Very much so, very much so. Lol!

AU: Quite a powerful documentary, and also very brutally honest. Was that something that you were going for right from the beginning of the project?

PHB: Yes, absolutely. Bif is pretty open if you've ever talked to her, or been around her, even in her concerts. She doesn't hold anything back, and if you've read her book. You really get a sense that she's willing to talk about anything, and she doesn't really sugarcoat it.

AU: How did the project start?

PHB: That would be Adam Scorgie, the producer. They approached him, and he's done a lot of award-winning documentaries that we've worked on and collaborated with, and so... I'm a fan of Bif Naked, so I had my arm up right away, saying, I want to be the director on this. He was really, really great about it.

AU: How did you get such open access to Bif Naked and her life? Because this is, again, a very open, very powerful documentary.

PHB: We were lucky. We got a couple of really good interviews with her, and her manager, Peter,

is also very open. She gave us a lot, quite a bit of time, to sit down with her.

AU: Were you actually able to show her the documentary after it was completed? I would be curious as to her reaction to it.

PHB: I actually sent it to Peter first. I was a bit nervous, um... And I went through 2 days of, like they must have hated it, and I had myself in this state. And then he sent me a picture of just 5 tissues. It took me a second to figure out what he was sending. Fortunately, he wrote underneath of it. They had a pretty good reaction!

AU: Awesome. Now, of course, you interview various different people with this documentary, what were the particular challenges in putting this together? Because you span quite a few years of Bif's life in this documentary.

PHB: It was the age of tape. And not great tape, so they tended to get rid of stuff. I was thinking

when we first started it, oh, she has all these music videos, it'll be great, but then you discover...they didn't actually keep any of the raw footage. So, we had to go and... really, uh, delve through the archives. I had a really great guy working with me, Graham Fellows, that did a really terrific job as well. It had its hurdles, the only great thing was she was so popular on Much Music.

AU: I always found that Bif Naked was a hard artist to categorize in a specific music category. Can you talk a little bit about her punk influence? Because punk is

certainly something that Bif Naked draws from, I would say.

PHB: Absolutely, and actually, I'm in Edmonton, and that's the start of Chi Pig. And that was her hero, so finding some Chi Pig stuff was a little bit difficult, and finding her and Chi Pig was even harder, when delving into those, we found somebody who shot on an old VHS camera, but Chi Pig she had admittedly said he was her

biggest influence.

AU: How many years ago did you first hear her music and realize that she was something truly special?

PHB: I went to a concert at West Edmonton Mall, and I went with the guy that I actually still live with. And he was a Bif Naked fan, and we were at the back a bit, and um, he very nicely said, could you stay back here? I'm gonna push to the front, because Bif Naked might see me. And, um, that might be the end of the relationship if she does, so I just want you to know! And so I was... more tuned in, thinking, who is this person? And I loved her from that day.

AU: Isn't it remarkable so many years later that you're now doing the documentary about her?

PHB: I am super lucky. I would have never guessed back then, or even moving forward, I was so excited when Producer Adam Scorgie said he had secured the production, and right from the get-go, I just kept putting my hand up and saying this is one that I would definitely like to direct, I had previously edited a lot of his films.

AU: How long did it take you to put the documentary together?

PHB: About 9 months, I would say, once we really got going. I'm really fortunate with the group of people that I work with, and got a lot of help.

AU: Working on documentaries in Canada, I would imagine friends are among the most important thing, because, of course, they help you with your project, and then you go



ahead and help them with their projects, so it's definitely a team effort, wouldn't you say?

PHB: Absolutely. Can't do it without a team, for sure!

AU: So what would you say are one of the most striking things that people should check out

in the Bif Naked documentary? Would it be her brutal honesty, her sense of humor, or just those incredible performances?

PHB: That's hard to choose, that's a tough one! I would say brutal honesty. George, Peter and Bif are really excellent in the film.

AU: Pollyanna Hardwicke-Brown, I want to

thank you very much for joining me here on Ultrasonic Film. I really appreciate it.

PHB: Thanks so much for chatting with me!

"Bif Naked" (2025) Can be seen on Superchannel

Visit (www.youtube.com/esTheMovieFan) for more great interviews!



Photo Credit: Karolina Turek

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XOXOXO



BRASS MONKEY BREWING

Interview with Clay Potter

By Bobby Barrel

AU: Who are we talking to and what are you best known for?

CP: Clay Potter; Co-Owner, Brewmaster & Distiller at Brass Monkey Brewing Co. Best known for my good looks and ok beer.

AU: How long have you been involved in the world of beer?

CP: 20 years professionally

AU: What is on your brewing resume to date? Is it true you trained as a brewmaster in Germany?

CP: That's a dirty lie, I did my Masters of Brewing and Distilling in Scotland, but I did fall in love with German Beer and German Brewing techniques while I was over there.

I got my start in 2005 at Lighthouse Brewing Co. Moved to Europe in 2010

Worked for the Devil in 2011 Owner/Brewmaster of Moon Under Water 2012-2025.

Co-Founded Brass Monkey Brewing Co in July 2025.

AU: What was the genesis of Brass Monkey Taproom in Victoria, BC?

CP: Started it with my partners Morgan Watson & Jason Clifford. They brought the Food and Hospitality experience, I brought the production experience, but we all bonded over our love of music. Everything from 70's to 90's Rock, Punk and Hip Hop, so we built the whole business around that.

AU: Is it also a music venue?

CP: Since opening, we've hosted a few local and international Rock and Punk shows, nothing on the regular but a couple each month.

AU: Any upcoming shows to mention?

CP: Our last one was at the end of November, and we don't have any booked over Christmas, but will start booking more in the New Year.

AU: Describe the decor, atmosphere and vibe.

CP: We're in the industrial Rock Bay part of Victoria, so we've leaned into a more raw, gritty vibe. The walls are a visual chronicle of the underground, counterculture rock and hip-hop scene. We've got



a collection of album covers, posters and iconic images of the last 60 years covering the walls, hand drawn lettering and logos from local signpainter Chris Dobell, plus tributes from local graffiti artists covering the parking lot.

AU: What types of beer do you brew?

CP: I love trad German Lagers like Pils and Dunkel's, but we still make the modern IPAs and Hazy's for the kids.

AU: What beers are currently on tap?

CP: We've got a lot. High Dough Hazy IPA, Hello Dunkel My Old Friend, London Calling Porter and Scaramouche Scaramouche Bohemian Pilsner are some of the favorites.

AU: What sets your beer apart?

CP: We try to use 100% locally grown grains for all our beers and spirits, and our head Brewer Fernando is one of the most talented Brewers I've ever met, a hell of a lot better brewer than me.

AU: Any unique brewing secrets you can share?

CP: Decoction. The old German technique to intensify flavour while leaving the beer with less residual sugar. We boil the mash and add it back in portions. It allows our lagers to be



BREWING 101

rich in flavour from the Maillard reactions, so we can ferment it dryer. Less sugar = less hangover!

AU: Where are you located if people want to stop by to sample your beer?

CP: 350 Bay Street. Victoria, BC

AU: What do you like best about brewing beer?

CP: The history, it's been around for 10,000 years and we're still creating new styles.

AU: Anything else you would like us to know about Brass Monkey Taproom?

CP: We also have an incredible Whisky program started back in 2018. We've got some exciting 100% locally grown single malt/single cask releases coming out in 2026.

BrassMonkeyBrewing.ca

facebook.com/brassmonkeytaproom

instagram.com/brassmonkeytaproom





WES BARKER

Interview by Ross Hansen

Wes is a magician/comedian based in Toronto, originally from Vancouver. Wes was on Penn & Teller's show Penn & Teller: Fool Us.

Absolute Underground: Tell us about yourself.

Wes: I grew up in Langley. I used to work for the City of Surrey, and that's where I learned my magic tricks. Working for the city, there was a lot of downtime, waiting for a dump truck or whatever, so I'd learn card tricks at work. At 25 I quit that job to try and do magic full-time.

I made that choice 14 years ago now. I went from quitting that job to doing close-up gigs, starting out at comedy bars, just learning how to get on stage. If you eventually want to perform in front of 1,000 people, you gotta first get on stage in front of 10 people. Comedy clubs were a good avenue for that. My style is very comedy forward – I like being funny. There has been no looking back. I have had dozens of TV appearances, I had my own show, and I've seen a lot of success in this realm.

AU: When you say close-up magic, you're talking about sleight of hand tricks?

Wes: Yeah! But on stage it's a different type of sleight of hand. You need to be able to entertain a thousand people, you'll need bigger things, bigger ideas! Up close, you need to control attention in a different way, your sleight of hand up close has to be on the money because people are only two feet away. On the stage you're more worried about "Will this choreography work?"

and make it interesting to a thousand people. In magic there are different types of magicians. A stage performer, in famous terms would be David Copperfield, big illusions, then close-up performer, you think David Blaine on the street doing coin tricks and card tricks – those are the two ends of the spectrum.

AU: I heard a lot of these tricks are sold.

Wes: Yes, it's a huge industry in magic, creating tricks that work well, and you can sell them to other magicians. I never got into selling them, but I have bought them. A lot of these guys don't make a ton from performing but they do make a ton from selling their ideas.

AU: When making a new trick, how simple can it be?

Wes: It can be so simple. I walk around Canadian Tire, and dollar stores all the time looking for inspiration. I'll find a funny little object, then "Oh, I can make a blow dart gun out of that!". Elastic bands and magnets can be your best friends as a magician. Literally, any magician will tell you the dollar store is their best playground

AU: I gotta ask about Penn & Teller: Fool Us.

How did you end up on the show and what was it like?

Wes: They had done a season of the shows in 2011, it was in the UK, I randomly came across it on the internet one day as I was looking up magic stuff. I watched every episode of the show. "Gawd, this is amazing". I had just come up with a trick "The Sword and The Phone Book". I thought, "I'm going to apply for the 2nd season" and then it never got renewed. In 2014, I do a show at the Vogue Theatre in Vancouver. I released a bunch of clips on the internet, and three of those clips went viral, in 2014, those three went into the millions of views. I didn't have a following; they just popped off. Then the phone starts ringing. I got MTV, the Sci Fi show, America's Got Talent, and I get a call from Penn & Teller. I say yes to all of them. *Penn & Teller: Fool Us!* "What?!" So, they started a new season but it's in Vegas this time. They just said, "Pitch us your ideas". I said, "Oh boy, I have this idea that I have been sitting on for four years – ever since I saw the show." So, I pitched my phonebook and sword idea, which they didn't like at first, but I eventually convinced them to do it. I go down there and I'm super nervous; I have only been on TV a few times at this point. I don't care about *America's Got Talent* and if Heidi Klum likes my magic trick, haha, I don't care, but if I go on Penn & Teller... they're the people I'm trying to get approval from. It was terrifying and amazing. Partway through the trick, I was stressed. It was a trick that I had been doing for four years, but it's harder doing it on camera, but things were going well. After the trick, they're trying to guess my methods, and they were so off. When they said, "You fooled us", there was no better feeling. It was one of those feelings that was very vindicating. I spent a lot of time in my career, especially up to that point, wondering, because my style of magic is so unique. I was one of the first people to ever fool them. No one had fooled them that day. I fooled them with a trick that I had created. Afterwards, Penn & Teller came backstage to ask how I did it. I told them how it worked. Penn was

pissed because he missed it, then he left. Teller was excited about it he said... [REDACTED]. Later, Teller helped me get my visa for the States. It was a huge moment for my career.

AU: Where can we see you digitally, or live?

Wes: I kind of tour non-stop. All over Canada and the States. Wesbarker.ca is where I post my dates. If you don't see your city on there, send me a message and I'll add it. I post daily on my Facebook page.

AU: What advice would you give to aspiring Canadian performers?

Wes: Make sure you're doing something that you genuinely like doing. Not doing something that you think is going to be popular. Because you're going to have to do a lot of it. More nowadays than ever. Your consistency has to be super high, your output has to be so high, you have to be good just to be average these days. So, pick a lane that you really love – not what's popular, because you're going to do it so much, you don't want to burn yourself out. For example, if you're good at impressions but you don't like doing them, then don't make that your thing, because you're going to have to do it every day. Get laser focused on what you love. I go on stage every day knowing I could do a better magic show, but I refuse to do that show. I want to do the best Wes Barker impression of all time. I stay true to me, because I love this more, because I'm going to be doing this for the next 30 years of my life. If you're good enough and you do it long enough, it's going to happen.

wesbarker.ca

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JON ENDO

By Jon Endo and Ross Hansen

Once in a while, newcomers in the comedy scene will ask me for advice. I am no master of the comedy scene, matter of fact, I'm a newbie in the pro league, bottom of the barrel working my way up. A student of the comedy game. I'm learning everyday myself. With that said, if you are new and still are interested in what I have to say, here are some frequently asked questions I get:

Absolute Underground: How does one improve their Stand-Up Comedy game?

Jon Endo: Write some jokes, go to a few open mics, practice the intended joke on stage, go home, review, if necessary, edit the joke, then go back the next week and repeat until you got something. Don't get married to one idea, keep your mind open. Don't drink too much, keep yourself in check. Focus on the work, not on extracurricular bullshit. All of this, easier said than done. Most importantly, entitlement is your worst

enemy, so get rid of it quick.

AU: I've been doing open mics for a while now... How do I get booked on a Pro/Am show?

JE: Record a solid 5-minute set, NOT EDITED WITH LAUGH TRACKS OR STUPID SHIT LIKE THAT. Then research the rooms with Pro/Am shows and submit your application accordingly. It is never guaranteed that you will be booked. Make sure your material is presentable, be courteous, be patient. And keep re-applying at a reasonable interval. You may get a shot. And if you get that shot, do your best and have fun.

AU: How come open mics are not paid gigs?

JE: When you sign up to a gym, the gym doesn't pay you to get ripped, if anything, you pay them. Open mic shows are not paid because it is a workout room for comedians. Besides, if you're asking me this question, pay is the last thing you should be worried about right now fam. Get good first.

AU: How do I know when is the best time to approach a Pro comic to talk to them?

I'm trying to figure that out myself. Everyone's different. Never know unless you ask. I tell people this – it's better to keep things short and concise when first meeting. Respect the person's boundaries and time. If the timing is right, you may have an opportunity to talk to them. If not, at least you were respectful and trust me, that will take you a long way. The worst thing you can do is "casually" insert yourself into a circle of pros while they're chatting, insert yourself into a greenroom when you're not booked, or insert yourself in between the Pro and an Audience member right after a show. That kind of approach makes you look like a desperate uncle in a nightclub. Ew. Just

keep cool, be respectful.

I'm not master in comedy; I can only share what I've learned. Wishing you happiness and good luck with your endeavours.

Jon Endo is a Vancouver based comedian who has made appearances on Just For Laughs Vancouver, South Rock Comedy Festival and Comedy Here Often Shorts. He regularly performs around on Vancouver's best comedy stages. Follow his Instagram to see where he's performing next.

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I Want to be Loved by You

By Vince D'Amato

This last year has been stellar for mass-released horror. It's been my favourite year of genre films in a very long time – possibly as far back as the 1990s. The deservedly hyped *Nosferatu* and *Sinners* were mesmerizing and inspiring, the latter being particularly tense, *Weapons* was a jangling electric jolt to the face (although this one admittedly had moviegoers divided, I thought it was killer, featuring an astounding and unexpected performance by Amy Madigan), and then this Halloween season closed with master filmmaker Guillermo del Toro's take on the Mary Shelley classic *Frankenstein*, which was deep and thoughtful and lush and a dark, gothic, beautifully epic example of horror. I wish this one had received a better theatrical run, but I understand that it was, after all, a Netflix production. We'll call this year of cinematic horrors "The Loved" for the sake of this article, as I actually wanted to talk about the antithesis of *The Loved* and shine a spotlight on something of a hidden treasure – something I accidentally stumbled upon in the near-infinite pages of Wikipedia, while I was article-hopping and happened to land on George A. Romero's *Survival of the Dead*. Possibly Romero's least-loved film, it was his final one, and rumors reported that the overwhelmingly negative reception to it was the underlying reason this brilliant filmmaker never made another film before his death 8 years later. Somewhere deep in this Wikipedia article someone quoted a vlogger named Scout Tafoya, who had been doing a series of short documentaries for RogerEbert.com titled "The Unloved". There, Tafoya explores the most unloved, critically derided, shunned, and ignored films from an array of genre, international, and horror directors. And there is a

surprising number of video essays on horror cinema in Tafoya's massive output. Admittedly, trying to track down every short documentary he's made on a horror subject is somewhat challenging – it becomes something of its own treasure hunt. Some videos can be linked to from the Roger Ebert website, others can be seen on his YouTube Channel,

and still others are hosted elsewhere entirely, like his essay on Brian Yuzna's *Return of the Living Dead 3*, which can be found on Vimeo if you search for it specifically. I ended up using RogerEbert.com as a catalogue list of Tafoya's essays and then pasting individual searches into Google – and even with that, I wasn't able to find every film subject I



wanted to see (or at least not at the time of this writing). I was still trying to find his essays on Wes Craven's *My Soul to Take* and David Cronenberg's *Crash*; eager to see Tafoya's take on those, I have

a feeling I'd be on his side with them. But the ones I did find (most of them) were each championed as if Tafoya felt he was the sole person cheering fiercely for these cinematic underdogs, and his enthusiastic essays were all well worth the search. Some I've watched more than once, like his essay on John Carpenter's *The Ward*. As you



can probably see the pattern start to surface here, most of the films that Scout Tafoya examines come from the later eras in these filmmakers' careers, and in the case of John Carpenter and

George Romero, it focuses on those last films they ever directed. Tafoya has so much to say in his self-edited 7 minutes of documentary screentime that you often get more depth and insight there than from some entire filmbooks about their subjects. When he talks about *Survival of the Dead* or *The Ward*, he speaks to each of the filmmaker's legacy, style, impact, inspiration, and things that their own fans forgot about as the directors' careers moved on into the twilight of their years. While he did provide fun and meaningful insights into the likes of *Return of the Living Dead 3*, Dario Argento's *Phantom of the Opera* (which is also severely underappreciated by yours truly), Larry

Cohen's *The Ambulance*, Fred Dekker's *The Monster Squad*, and Sam Raimi's *The Quick and the Dead*; and even a double-shot of Troma films (*Surf Nazis Must Die* and *Def by Temptation*), no essay is more poignant, I think, than the one Tafoya gives us on Tobe Hooper's *The Mangler*, at one point describing Hooper's body of work as something of an expressionist gothic tableau. In this essay, Tafoya says, "There are those who think Tobe Hooper's *Texas Chain Saw Massacre* was an accident. Those people are wrong". That moment in the

Tobe Hooper essay really struck me, as I'd argued that exact point to a friend of mine over 16 years ago. As our argument about

Tobe Hooper's talents got a little on the energetic side, I tossed one word at him: *Lifeforce*. At this, he leaned back, and said, "Yeah, okay, there's that one, too". But to me there was more than just that one. I think Tobe Hooper was in fact a very consistent genre talent in his lifetime, with the majority of his works succeeding, or even transcending, with his comedically twisted inspiration within the horror genre. And according to Tafoya, *The Mangler* was just one of those examples. For me personally, his Cannon

trilogy is the perfect example of this. Tobe Hooper has always been one of my top four (or Mount Rushmore of) favourite horror directors, and proof of his talent can easily be found while he was working alongside his own peers where Hooper's work stood out almost most starkly, like in his closing third of his friend John Carpenter's *Body Bags*, or in his violent and horrifying Season 2 opener for the anthology series *Masters of Horror*. Just this past Halloween season, even the high-art Criterion channel offered acknowledgement to Hooper by making his 2004 take on the 70s' drive-in horror *Toolbox Murders* available to stream in HD. I mentioned earlier that I'd probably agree with Tafoya's take on some of the video essays I hadn't yet seen – but realistically, that's one of the great things about his

extensive vlog, it's Tafoya's talent and ability to get you to agree with his passionate insights which somehow seem obvious only after he's pointed them out – if only we, ourselves, had taken a little more time to see them, and dare I say, appreciate them, rather than ignoring the latter-career films of these titanic horror filmmakers as "not as good" as their earlier works. Shame on us. We can see all this more clearly once Tafoya has dissected and examined *The Unloved* films for us, these movies that even we fans of these filmmakers have turned our backs on far too quickly, and in most cases, have completely forgotten about. The beautiful thing here is



that Tafoya is the one who bothers to take a deeper look for us. And so, if or when you find yourself all caught up on the mass-released well-



loved horror cinema from this past year, I would highly recommend a leisurely stroll through Tafoya's videos, and not just the horror ones. His



insights into each of the films and filmmakers he's discussing is inspiring, and is absolutely and undoubtedly done with Love.

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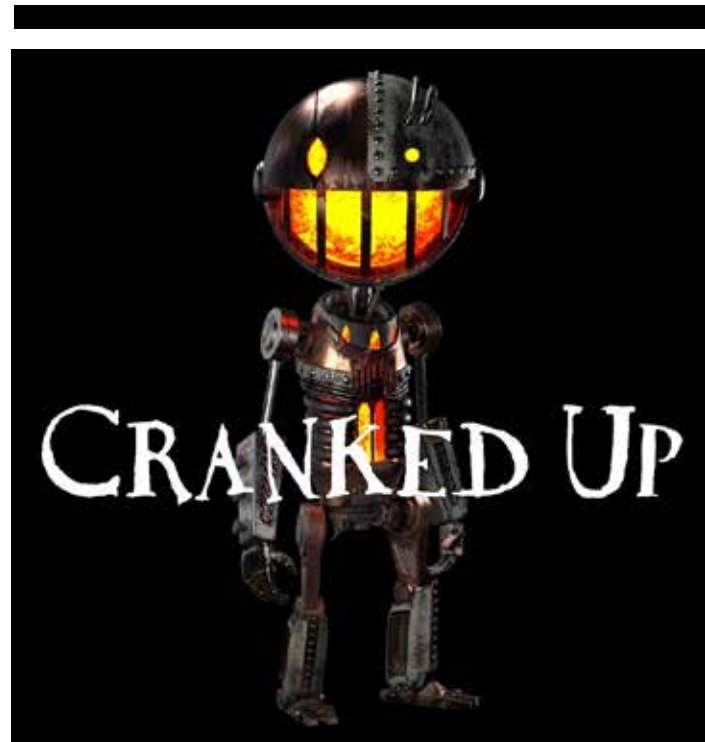
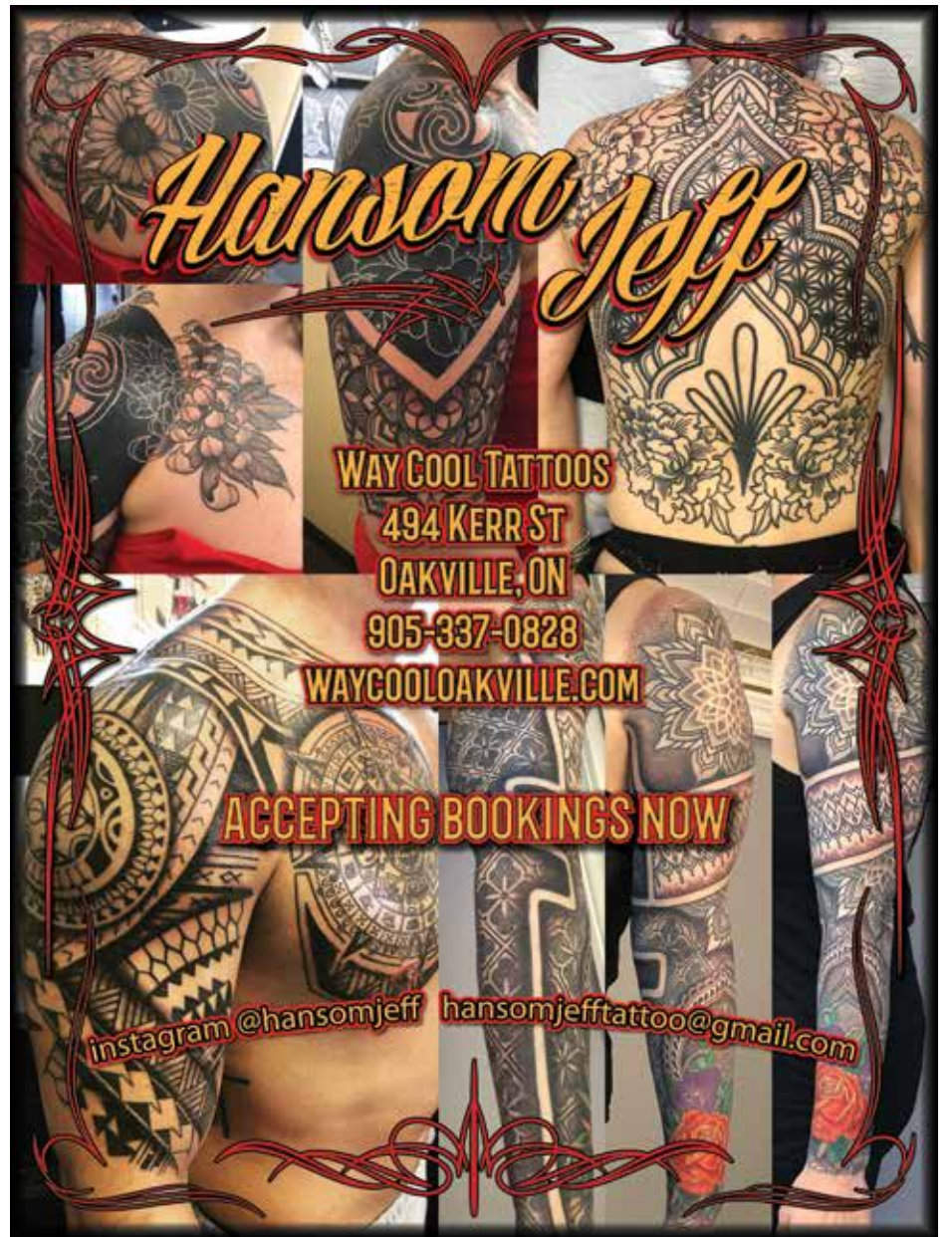
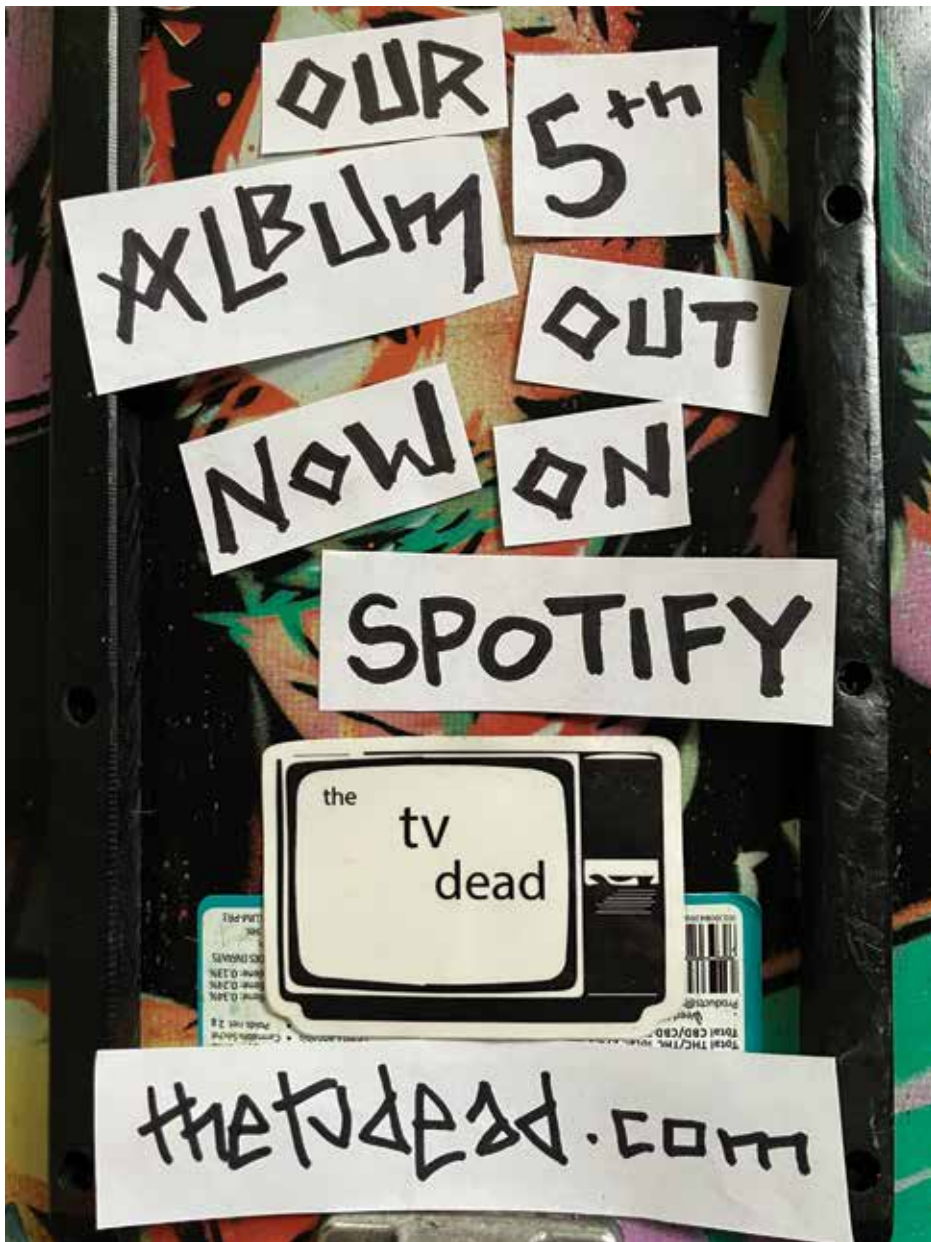
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Up! TV Focus directly on the niche world of horrorcentric indie and cult films with multiple options to view them. And they're not the only ones. In November, film trade magazines (like *SCREEN*) were reporting that StudioDome had launched what they hoped to be a leading competitor to the immensely popular *Shudder TV* with their own streaming station, *Bloodstream TV*. Admittedly, *Shudder* would be a huge act to follow, however, we're seeing the corporate-owned horror streaming platform (*Shudder* is owned by AMC) catering to a built-in audience for already-established international horror

Tales from the Darkside: Cranked Up!

By Vince D'Amato

There are some new and exciting things happening for indie horror, and you spell those things T-V-O-D... or maybe S-V-O-D... Okay, obscure *Creepshow* references aside, I wanted to talk about *Cranked Up! TV* – an independent genre streaming station hosting an array of different genre titles, from straight-forward indie horror to sexy-horror titles and even some extreme-extreme horror of questionable taste... if that's your taste. This platform, regarding indie horror in general, is in many cases a better alternative to Amazon Prime, as indie streamers like *Cranked*

and cult films instead of taking any risks on indie horror films – and this is where platforms like *Bloodstream* and *Cranked Up!* Can step in and fill that niche programming for audiences that might not be so mainstream in their tastes. You only have to look at the splash pages of these platforms to see what you can't find (or what is extremely hard to find without a direct title search) on Amazon, and to some extent, even Tubi. *Found TV* is yet another super-niche streamer – niche-niche – catering to the found footage crowd of filmmakers and fans (again, very horrorcentric) who utilize this ultra-indie concept to create micro-budget oddities that might otherwise never find a home on mainstream commercial platforms. By accessing these sites (and others like it, such as *B-Stream*) and

TALES FROM THE DARKSIDE

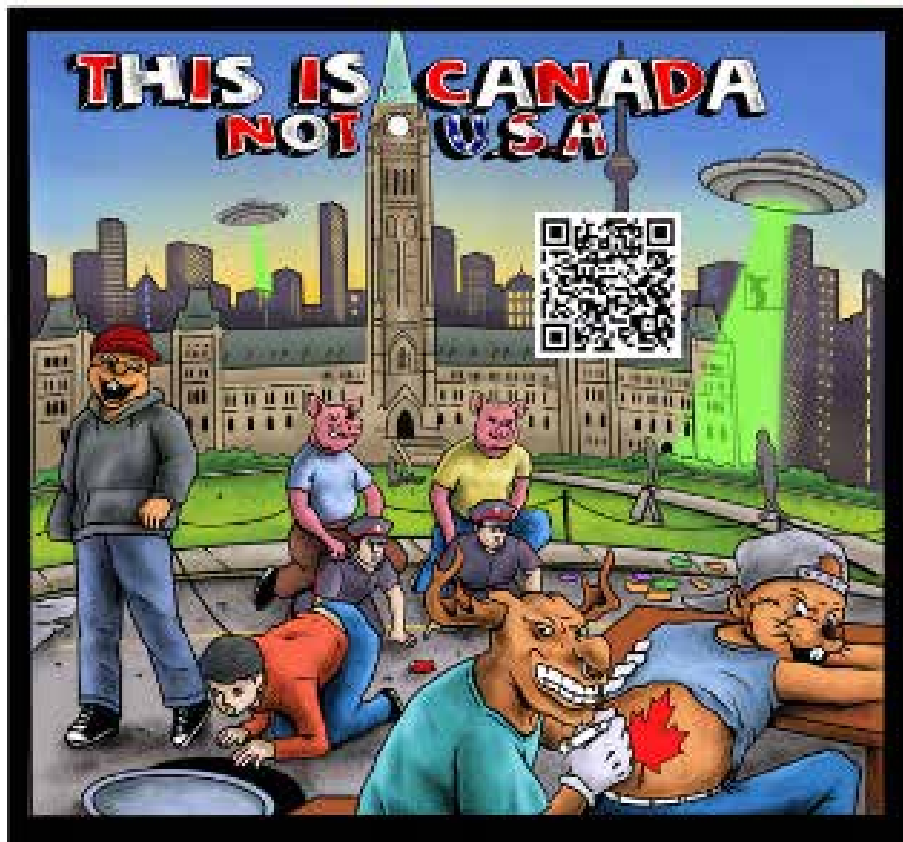


utilizing their cheaper Subscription or individual Transactional VOD rental environment, it makes the user-end more affordable for fans while actually generating more revenues for the indie filmmaker over platforms like Amazon Prime and YouTube (and also the films are UNCAT, unlike

on YouTube, who *used* to be cool a decade ago). I love that just as it seems platforms like *Shudder* have created a stranglehold on horror streaming, platforms like these pop up to save the indies.

darksidereleasing.com





THIS IS CANADA, NOT U.S.A

Compilation Review

By New Musicshow

The underground isn't a place, it's a pressure. AP RECORDS keeps the valve twisted, letting the country's noise leak out in raw, righteous blasts. Their new compilation, *This Is Canada, Not U.S.A.*, is a point-blank statement and a map of the scene: Lip Crunch, Iron Moose and a swarm of lifers and first wavers clawing for floor space on a single disc. Three exclusive cuts seal the deal from Ripcordz, Dayglo Abortions and Death Sentence, turning the tracklist into a time bomb with a fuse long enough to rope in every basement from Niagara to Nanaimo.

Compilation Overview and Three Exclusive Cuts

AP RECORDS is dropping *This Is Canada, Not U.S.A.* with the kind of DIY blitz you only get when the label head is also the street team: a multi-city record store push and two shows (Camp Cataract in Niagara Falls and Oeey Gooeys in Hamilton), positioning the comp as both release and rally. It's the label's big-tent snapshot of thirty-one bands across Canada and a statement of intent for Southern Ontario as a hub instead of a footnote.

Ripcordz Exclusive

The Montréal warhorses deliver a full-throttle reminder that longevity in punk isn't nostalgia, it's endurance. Ripcordz have a history of blasting into community fundraisers and mixed-bill mayhem; their presence here is both a co-sign and a dare to keep the locals hungry.

Dayglo Abortions Exclusive

Dayglo's track arrives with decades of gasoline under it. This is a band that burned satirical holes in polite society with records like *Death Race*

2000, combining speed, snot and a grinning disregard for civility. On this comp, their exclusive feels like a spike strip: it stops traffic and cuts the tires.

Death Sentence Exclusive

A Canadian hardcore lineage piece, the Death Sentence contribution snaps like cold rebar. It's the kind of exclusive that makes a compilation more than a playlist. You hear a chapter get written.

From top to tail, the sequencing climbs in ferocity; each cut ratchets tension and texture so the final third feels weaponized. That's curation, not accident, and it's why comps matter more than algorithms: someone with calluses arranged these songs so your pulse has somewhere specific to go.

Across Canada Roll Call: Bands that make the comp bite

This disc isn't just a roster, it's a long-distance scene report. You hear Hamilton grit, Niagara speed, Toronto chaos, Prairie frostbite and West Coast vinegar.

Lip Crunch: Niagara-born hooks strapped to a brick. They grind at a tempo that makes small rooms feel like they've swallowed their exits; on a comp, they're the glue that turns fast into ferocious.

Iron Moose: Toronto trash punk with a gig calendar that reads like a brawl schedule: local bills, Spiderfest chaos and Ask A Punk showcases that treat stages like accident scenes. Their inclusion signals the comp's appetite for bands that live in the gig economy and spend their pay on strings and gas.

Together they strip the paint off the national picture. Canada's punk isn't monoculture, it's topsoil thin, stubborn and everywhere.

Southern Ontario Scene: The Pulse and the Proof

Southern Ontario is a choke point: craftsman basements, university radios, art crawl detours and bars that remember your face from the pit. Hamilton's documented punk history, Teenage Head echoing through the Casbah years and CFMU's Punk City walking tour set a civic precedent for loud culture as actual culture. Canadian punk's roots run parallel: Viletones and Diodes in the east, D.O.A. in the west and Hamilton's own lifers carving a middle finger in steel.

AP RECORDS builds on that foundation with shows that tie charity to chaos (Ripcordz at Taps for Community Care), putting scene ethics into circulation: noise for need, speed for food and flyers as public service announcements. That's how Southern Ontario keeps the lights on DIY as utility, not hobby.

AP RECORDS: The one-man army model

Bee Gee runs AP RECORDS like a siege: small-batch duplication, releases announced like emergencies and hands-on coordination between bands, venues and media. The Medioq listing shows a release calendar that reads like a campaign bulletin: drops, debuts, rollouts anchored by a December 5 compilation milestone and a Niagara-Toronto corridor of shows. "One-man army" isn't branding, it's logistics: booking, pressing, promoting and pointing the convoy toward borders when the locals need a breather.

That energy bleeds into cross-border radio syndication and multi-city events, pulling U.S. and overseas ears into the Southern Ontario noise orbit. When you see the same AP fingerprints on flyers, streams and matinee bills, you're looking at a person treating a label like a community service.

Plunk O Rama Radio: Monthly broadcasts, live sets, scene talk

Plunk O Rama isn't a background, it's a switchboard. As a monthly radio show, it splices live performances, interviews and scene chatter into a continuous wave, with programming blocks that spotlight label months and partner showcases (*That Damn Punk Show* syndication, Canadian punk roundups and community features). It's accessible and participatory: listeners can call in, bands announce releases and you catch live tapings that turn the studio into a micro-venue.

This is where the comp gets legs: radio segments that preview tracks, profile contributors and route new fans to upcoming shows. In a country as spread out as ours, radio is still the bridge; *Plunk O Rama* makes sure the bridge isn't gated.

Plunk O Rama Zine: Bi-monthly flyering, bios & review culture

Print is dead only if your hands are clean. *Plunk O Rama Zine* drops bimonthly, handmade in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and treats flyers like civic documents: dates,

venues, lineups and the promise of sweat. Each issue pairs those flyers with band biographies and local album reviews, turning event promotion into scene documentation and giving new acts a permanent page instead of a disappearing post. For a compilation like *This Is Canada Not U.S.A.*, the zine is the echo chamber that matters: print the lineup, profile the exclusives and pin the next gigs to refrigerators across the province.

Why this comp matters

Curation over algorithm: AP sequences this thing so it escalates, each cut sharper than the last, because someone is steering, not sorting.

Infrastructure with heart: Radio and zine aren't add-ons; they're accelerants. They form a media triangle with shows so bands have multiple lanes to be heard.

Regional truth with national reach: Southern Ontario holds the lantern, but the shadows stretch coast to coast.

Direct answers: this compilation rules because it feels like a street-level census taken at volume. If you're inside the scene, it sounds like your weekend. If you're outside, it sounds like a reason to come in.

How to engage and amplify

Buy the comp and show up: Hit the record store drops; make the two-show release nights louder than the street outside.

Tune to Plunk O Rama: Catch monthly broadcasts, live sessions and scene talk; submit stories and requests to keep the lines hot.

Grab the zine: Read the bios, circle the flyers and bring someone younger to the next matinee so we don't age out of our own noise.

The underground isn't hidden; it's simply where the work is. Bee Gee and AP RECORDS are doing the work. This disc proves it.



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LIP CRUNCH

Interview with guitarist/vocalist
Mark Stingray Salem-Braga

By Mal Content

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you best known for?

Mark Stingray Salem-Braga: Hi, I'm Mark, and I'm known for playing guitar and yelling for a couple of Ontario punk bands. I'm also known as a skateboarder and as a millwright by trade within the scene. When I head out to play a show or meet up for a skate sesh after a shift, sometimes I'm still in my shop uniform and smell like metal, oil, and grease. Kinda nasty—but you can't get more punk than that.

AU: What band are you in, where are you from, and what is your band all about?

MSSB: My band is called Lip Crunch. We formed in August 2022 as a three-piece. Most of our members at the time, myself included, were from Hamilton, Ontario. I now live in Bowmanville.

We're currently a four-piece with the addition of Mike on saxophone and Hannah, our new bassist. Lip Crunch aims to radiate youthful, rebellious energy by playing the style of punk rock we grew up loving—fast and melodic, but with a horn twist. We're not a ska-punk band, but we definitely share the vibe and energy. We like to refer to ourselves as Horned Skate Punk. We're pushing 40, and the goal is to have as much fun as possible while being sore, tired, and sleep-deprived at the same time.

AU: Tell us about the track featured on the AP RECORDS compilation *This Is Canada, Not U.S.A.*

MSSB: I wrote the guitar parts and Adam, our drummer, wrote the lyrics for "A Hardcore Lesson in Perception of Love." According to him, it's a song about the complexity of relationships and the feeling you get when the person you thought was "the one" suddenly becomes a stranger, leaving a lot of unanswered questions. Fight-or-flight can take on a whole new meaning—full of confusion, seclusion, delusion, and words left unsaid.

AU: What do you think sets Canadian punk bands apart from U.S.A. punk bands?

MSSB: Personally, I haven't interacted much with U.S. punk bands to know what they're currently



all about. What I do know is that Canadian bands are still defined by a strong DIY ethos and a focus on community building while being very anti-establishment at the same time. We got to experience this while touring all over Ontario. Most of the time, punkers are very tight-knit and respectful to one another—especially the younger punkers. More power to them! Stay kind! Stay punk!

AU: Any strange punk rock traditions you do for the Holidayze?

MSSB: Strange traditions??? How about punk rock karaoke during holiday dinners?! Songs like "Xmas Has Been X'ed" by NOFX and "Happy Holidays, You Bastard" by Blink-182 will definitely make a traditional Filipino family gathering uncomfortable and awkward.

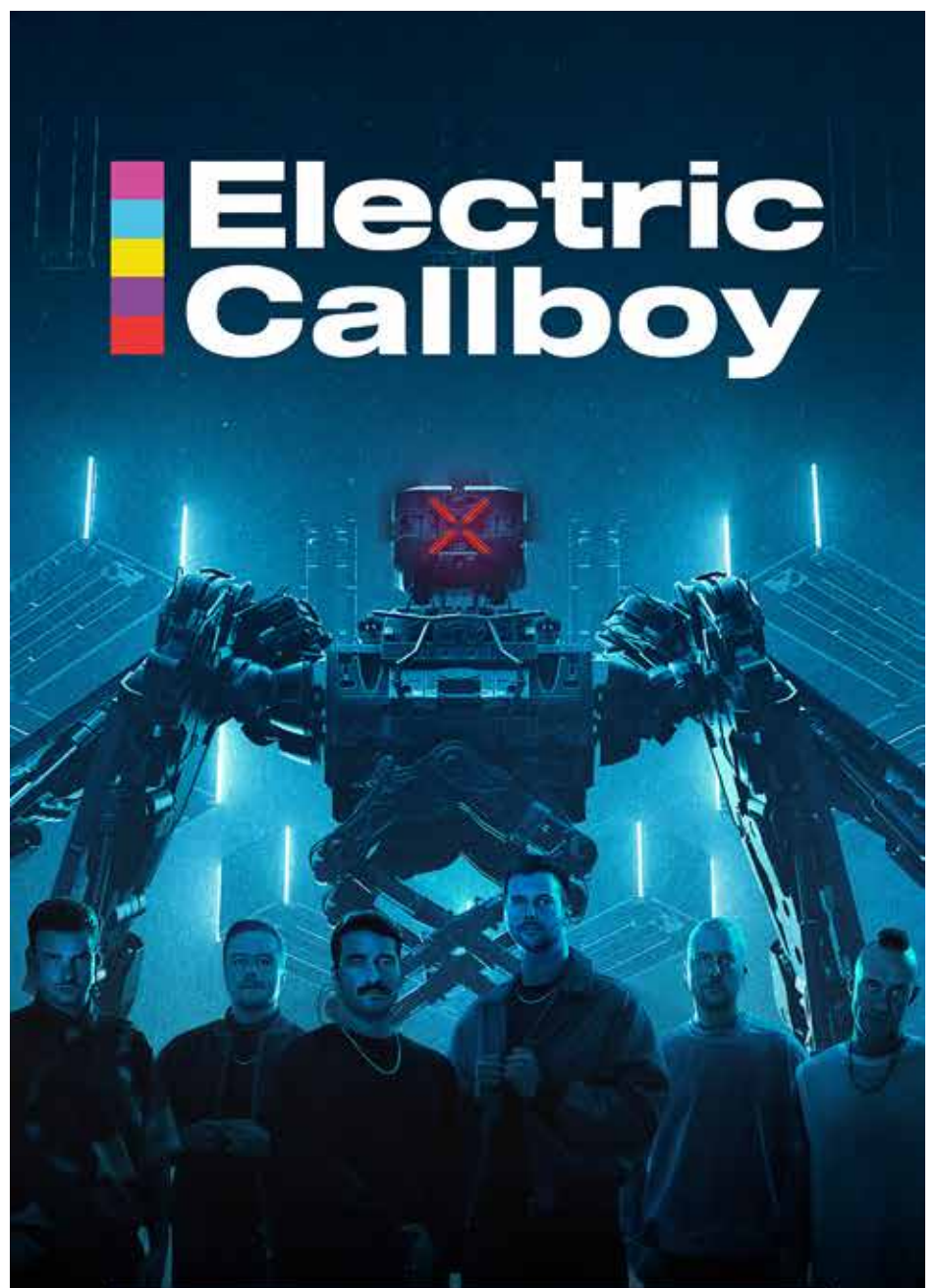
AU: Anything else to mention or promote?

MSSB: You definitely need to check out our brothers' and sisters' bands on A.P. Records (ON) and our pals at Outhouse Records (BC)! And these kick-ass buddies of ours: They Call It

Chaos (Niagara), Losing Streak (Hamilton), Frank Dux (Cambridge), Collider (Welland), Lime Ricky (Toronto), Lucid Smog Disorder (Hamilton) and Mean Bikini (Vancouver Island)!

AU: How do people find you online?

MSSB: If you like what we're doing, follow us on **Instagram: [instagram.com/lipcrunch](https://www.instagram.com/lipcrunch)** and check out all of our social media and music platforms: **[lipcrunch.com](https://www.lipcrunch.com)**



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OUT NOW





DEATH SENTENCE

Statue Of Misery

Interview with founding member
Syd Savage
By Mal Content

AU: Who are we talking to and what are you best known for?

Syd Savage: You are talking to Syd Savage. What am I best known for? Crackin' skulls, playing guitar, and writing songs.

AU: What band are you in, where are you from, and what is your band all about?

Syd Savage: I am in Death Sentence, have been

since 1982. I'm from South London, England. Our band is all about anarchy, we are all about being a part of the solution, not part of the problem, we are about family, and I am playing with the two best players that I have ever played with.

AU: Tell us about your track featured on the AP Records compilation album This Is Canada, Not U.S.A. ?

Syd Savage: Well, it's called "STATUE OF MISERY" and it was written in 1983. It was on our first demo which landed us the record deal on Undergrowth Records. About 6/7 months ago Kristoff was listening to that '83 demo and when he heard Statue of Misery it blew his mind and he said "We are doing this song". He picked up on all kinds of nuances in the demo recording and came to us with a new version he made which we all then finished together to create the song

on the compilation. Syd and Kristoff wrote the new versions lyrics, and Kristoff wrote all the new arrangements. We just had to finesse what he arranged in the rehearsal space.

AU: What do you think sets Canadian punk bands apart from U.S. punk bands?

Syd Savage: We love American bands and we love Canadian bands. What sets up apart? Well, here in Canada, There isn't as much of a homogeneous sound regionally speaking. In the US you have your East Coast sound; Fast, to the point. Like Bad Brains, Cro-Mags, Agnostic Front. And you have a distinct West Coast sound; I.e. Dead Kennedys, Germs. We don't really have that here. We certainly have a hell of a lot further to travel in order to hit population centres as well. And with that being said, we here in Canada have incredible regional scenes which develop in their own independent way, unlike probably anywhere else in the world really. Cheers to Canadian PUNK!

AU: Any strange punk rock traditions you do for the Holidayze?

Syd Savage: Well, growing up skid punks, you don't get much opportunity to develop tradition outside of what you'd already expect, mate.

AU: Have you been naughty or nice?

Syd Savage: Oh we're always trying to be nice, even when we're naughty.

AU: What's on the band's Xmas wish-list?

Syd Savage: Our wish would be to put Death Sentence back on stage all over the world. Me, Syd Savage, my brothers Jimmy, Kristoff and Paul Bulcock, our roadie.

AU: Anything else to mention?

Syd Savage: It's a fucking insane time to be alive and what Death Sentence stands for is more relevant than ever before. That being said, we want to be a part of solutions to this mess. Not contribute to the problems. We played



a fundraiser for DULF earlier this year. We commemorated Ashtrey earlier this year. We want to contribute to our community and punk family in Canada.

We also released "Statue of Misery". You can find it on our Bandcamp: deathsentence1984.bandcamp.com

Instagram: @deathsentence1984

Facebook: Death Sentence 1984

Statue of Misery originates from the unearthed demo written and recorded in 1982 by founding members Pete Keller and Syd Savage. Reimagined and rebuilt for 2025, this long lost recording

has been transformed into a fierce statement of intent and unmistakable declaration that DEATH SENTENCE has returned.

Credits:

Released December 7, 2025

Syd Savage: Vocals, guitar

Jimmy Sigmund: Bass, vocals

Kristoff Maier: Drums, vocals, guitar

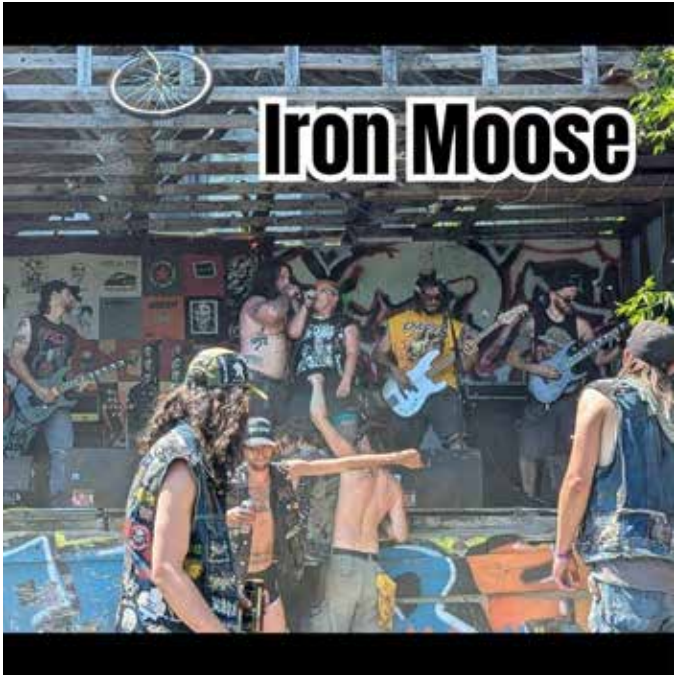
Photo Credit: Don Denton

Statue of Misery collage art by "Spoil Born"

Instagram @bxxnebox

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CALENDAR



IRON MOOSE

A Dual-Fronted Crossover Thrash Band from Niagara

By Mal Content

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you best known for?

Ivey and Cheese: This is Ivey and Cheese, best known for being loud and in your face!

AU: What band are you in, where are you from, and what is your band all about?

I&C: Iron Moose

punk bands?

I&C: Nothing but a border. We're all just people playing music.

AU: Any strange punk rock traditions you do for the Holidayze?

I&C: Not really. We love to cook band meals, but we do that all year round.

AU: Anything else to mention or promote?

I&C: Look for our album *Bangers & Thrash* coming out in 2026, as well as an exciting new split we're working on! Check out our latest single, "Motorhead

Religion": linktr.ee/ironmoose

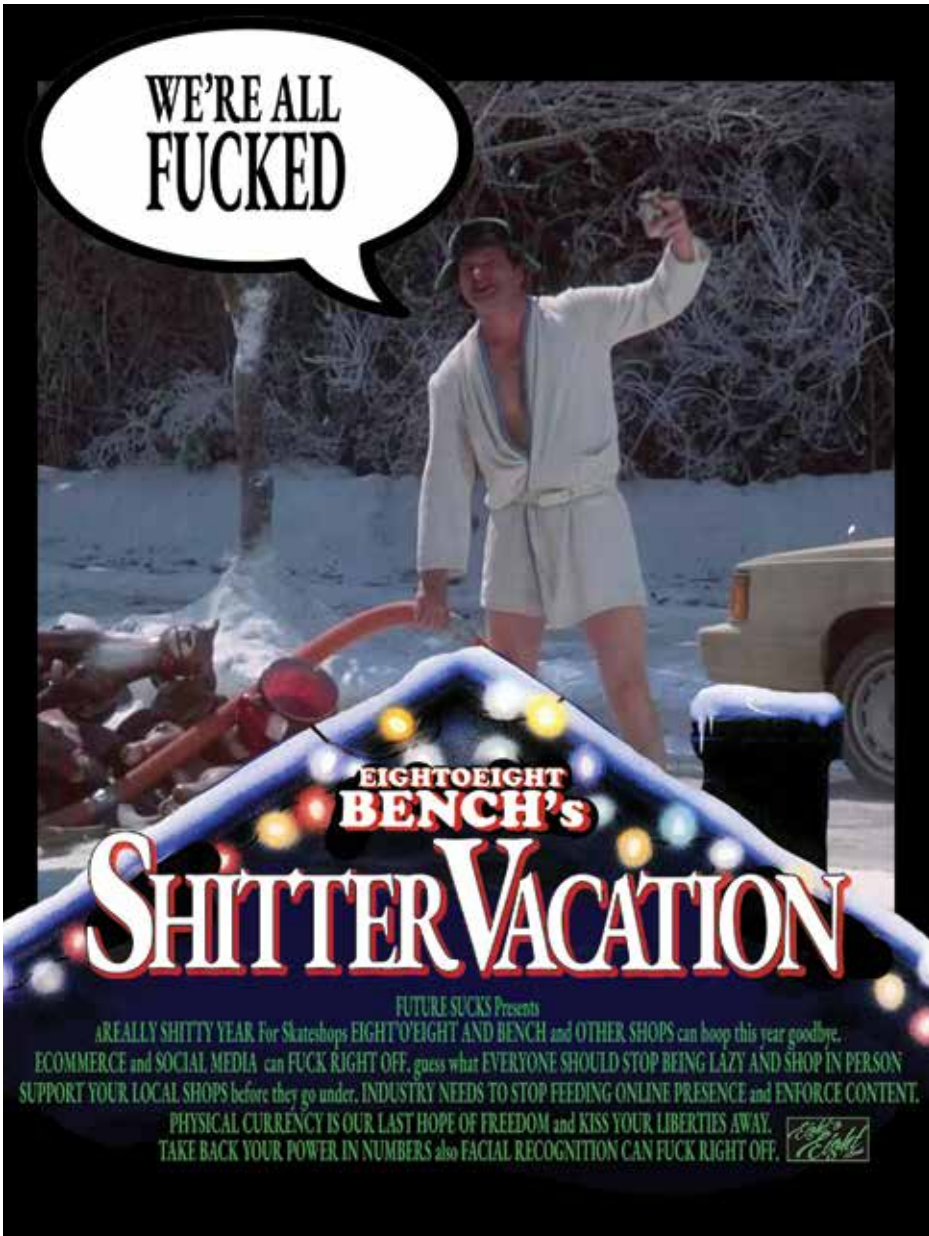
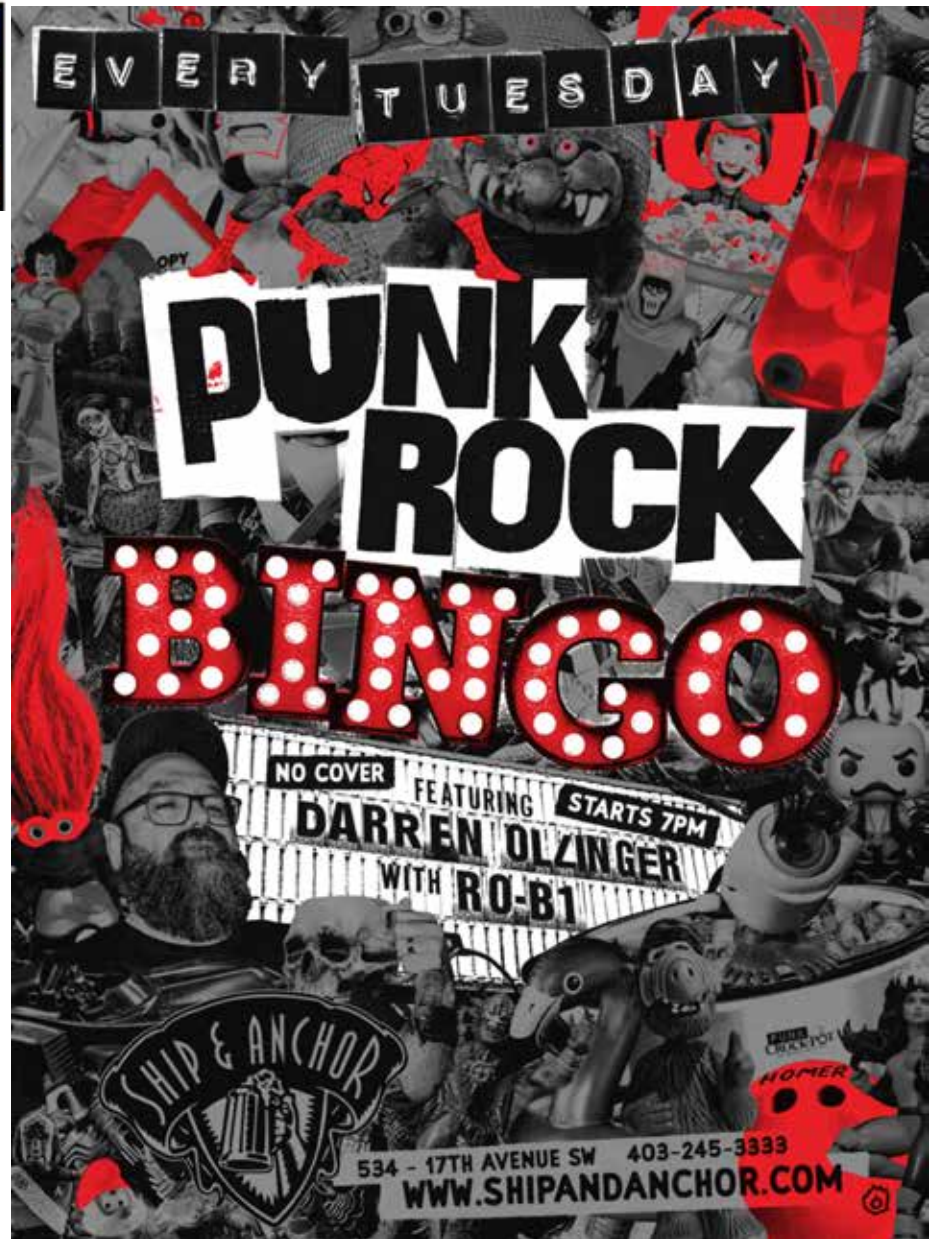


from the Niagara Region. We're all about heavy music and community.

AU: Tell us about your track featured on the AP RECORDS compilation album *This Is Canada, Not U.S.A.*

I&C: "Trucker Bomb" is our track on the AP comp. It's off our upcoming album *Bangers & Thrash*, a fun, fast-paced song about having to pee while you're on a long drive.

AU: What do you think sets Canadian punk bands apart from U.S.A.



MICKEY MOONE

One-Man Band

By Mal Content

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you best known for?

Mickey Moone: My name is Mickey Moone. I am best known for being that folk-a-billy-country-rock-punk guy who simultaneously plays drums and guitar while singing.

AU: What band are you in, where are you from, and what is your band all about?

MM: I am a one-man band from Skeleton

Lake, Ontario. You must swim through the river of bones to get to my house! I'm all about giving it everything I've got — see it to believe it!



AU: Tell us about your track featured on the AP RECORDS compilation album *This Is Canada, Not U.S.A.*

MM: "My Defence" is a song written about revenge, redemption, and helping oneself come to terms with mistakes in the past.

AU: What do you think sets Canadian punk bands apart from U.S.A. punk bands?

MM: The perseverance to perform through the monumental winter storms.

AU: Any strange punk rock traditions you do for the Holidayze?

MM: We don't have a fireplace, so we hang stockings off the motorcycle in the living room.

AU: Anything else to mention or promote?

MM: I have an album being released by A.P. Records in 2026, called *Reptilian Warlock*.

AU: How do people find you online?

MM: mickeymoone.com



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- THE MURDER BIRDS
- THE PAGANS OF NORTHUMBERLAND
- SCRIBBENS
- 66 ACES
- THE VICIOUS CYCLES
- WILLFUL DISOBEDIENCE



RIPCORDZ: Interview with frontman and Punk Canada organizer-producer Paul Gott

By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today, and what are you most notorious for?

Paul Gott: Notorious for a lot of things. I'm Paul Gott, singer and guitarist for Ripcordz—not "the" Ripcordz, since 1980. Which makes us the most famous, unknown band in Canada.

I've done a lot of work in the punk scene including running EnGarde Records, which has put out around 60 albums and has kind of been revived for the compilation. We help other bands, go out on tour every year, drink a lot of beer and meet a lot of people. Back in the 80's and 90's I used to help people with cover designs because I used to own a graphic design shop, but now I just do it for fun. I published a tabloid magazine back in the 80s that basically recorded the scene in eastern Canada for 6 years. Did I mention managing a college radio station? You name it. I've always liked building the scene as much as playing in it. And, oh yeah, I do the Punk Canada stuff, which I guess I'm semi-notorious for.

AU: What band are you in? Where are you based and how would you describe what the band is all about?

PG: We're Ripcordz. I formed the band in 1980, thinking I was too old to start a band but look at me now. I started it for fun—I liked punk, and none of my friends did, so I discovered a lot of it on my own. I played softball on Sunday mornings

with friends and afterwards, we'd get kinda drunk. One day, after a few beers, I said, "Hey, come over, there's a drum kit in the basement"... and that's how Ripcordz began.

We got out of the basement in Montréal in the mid-80s and started playing a lot of shows. We started releasing albums in the late '80s and started touring cross-Canada in the early '90s, and have kept it going. We've always done everything ourselves—our own label, posters, videos—for 45 years. Our sound has evolved a little over the years. Our first album was very garage punk. After that we kind of got a little more sophisticated. Only in the last four or five years have we really hit the road again in a big way, up to 50 shows a year. Why are you in a band? It's fun. We play Punk music. Old school, because I'm old.

AU: You organized and produced the Punk Canada compilations. What sparked the idea to document Canadian punk on a national scale and how did the project first come together?

PG: I basically started Punk Canada with a Facebook page during COVID because A) I was bored and B) I kept looking around for web pages that were

and promoters. No hoarding contacts, no secrecy: if the scene is going to grow, everyone has to share the same information. That naturally led to

about punk. Most of them were shitty memes and people trying to be more punk than everybody else. I didn't like that. I looked at Canadian pages and they were all about either Toronto or Vancouver and Victoria. Great scenes there and I love supporting them but those pages ignore most of the Canadian scene. Great scenes there and I love supporting them but it ignored 90% of the Canadian scene. So, I said "Okay, I'm going to start a page that's going to be for everybody and we will have all the scenes." This is how Punk Canada began and I think it's turned out pretty much the way I wanted it to be. It's about supporting Canadian Punk bands and Punk scenes.

From there it expanded quickly. I revived my old touring guide—now online—so bands across the country could book one shared list of venues

the Punk Canada compilation series, which I'm very proud of. Each volume features 16 Canadian bands from 16 cities covering 16 Canadian punk bands from the 20th century. It's a way to showcase a lot of bands, some of which people don't know. The bands on the compilations are encouraged to get a hold of each other and hopefully trade shows and organize tours. Some groups—like Shit Happens—jumped on the contacts and immediately hit the road, which is exactly what I hoped would happen. Other bands are doing that too now, so it turned out kind of perfect by accident. I'd love to take credit for having really thought it through, but I didn't.

AU: Many of the bands that have been interviewed for the Punk Canada feature in this issue of AU have expressed their heartfelt gratitude that you've done this.

PG: It's funny—some of the best things in punk happen by accident. Somebody contacted us and said a friend was needing help putting a compilation together and asked if we would be part of it? I said, "We'd be happy to." We recorded a track—but the comp never happened, leaving us with this song sitting around. That sparked the idea of having 21st-century bands cover 20th-century bands. I started calling friends from Random Killing, Motherfuckers and Artificial Dissemination—bands we play with all the time—and almost everyone said yes immediately.



CANADA, IF YOU DONT OWN THESE RECORDS, YOU'RE A POSER

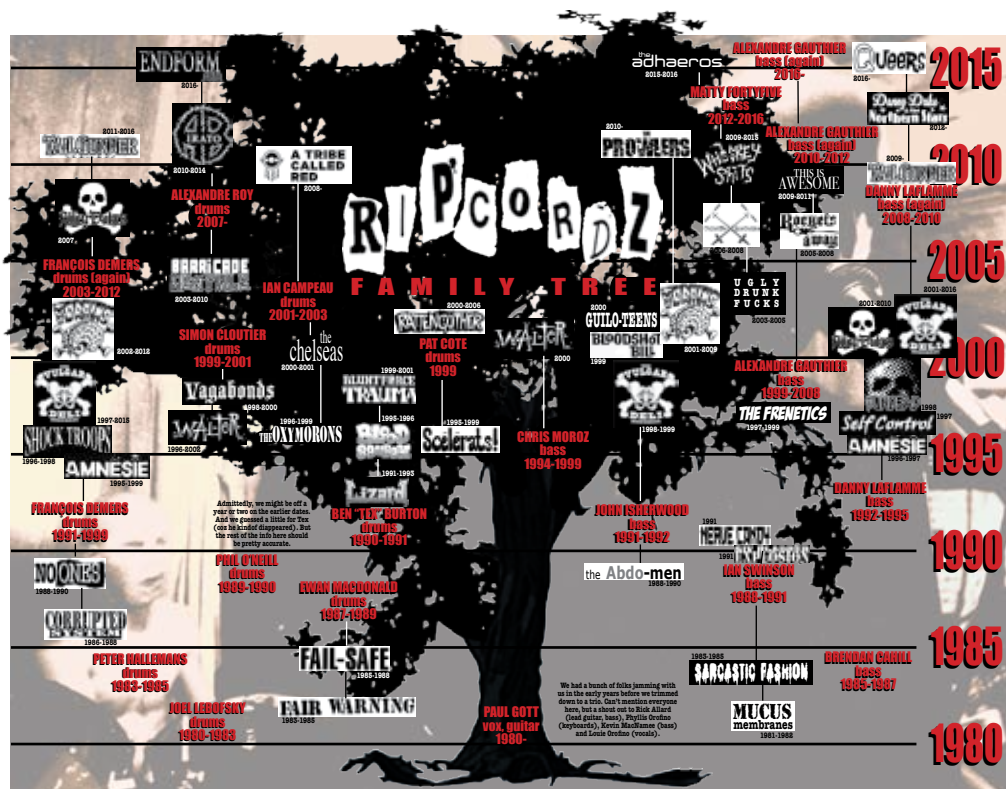
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I had ten committed bands before I'd even fully decided to do it. Since they were all from different cities, we leaned into that: one band per city, each financing their part and getting copies to sell exclusively in their area. It wasn't some grand plan; it just evolved naturally. But it worked—bands weren't competing with each other, local scenes got represented and people across the country could discover great music from smaller towns.

AU: There are currently four *Punk Canada* volumes. Any chance of a fifth?

PG: Absolutely. They've become an annual late-spring release and the response keeps growing. I stumbled into the perfect format and as long as there are Canadian punk bands to spotlight—and there are plenty—we'll keep making more.

AU: What Canadian punk band and song did *Ripcordz* choose to cover and what drew you to that band/track?

PG: We covered The Wet Spots, "Stay 19". We played a bunch of shows together in the late 80s/early 90s. They also put out an album on my label, EnGarde Records. We know them well and they're really great. It's nice to have that opportunity to salute a band that you like and a song that you think is great and hopefully put a tiny bit of your own twist on it. I'm glad that this thing kind of grew up around that song. That's the song that really started the compilations.

AU: Is there another Canadian punk band or song you'd like to cover in the future?

PG: There's a band in Montréal we used to play with called Amnésie. They have so many really cool tracks. I would have loved to have done one of theirs. There's another band called Walter. Terrible name, great guys. They put out an album and every one of their songs was just rocking.

Due to conflicts within the band, that whole album has just disappeared. It's not even online. That album should be covered and I'd love to do it, except I'm not that good a guitarist, so I'm not sure I actually could.

AU: If someone is discovering *Ripcordz* for the first time through *Punk Canada*, what one song do they need to hear?

PG: There's only about 350 songs to choose from that have been recorded. When you're in a band you always like your newer stuff better. Right now, my favourite song to play and to listen to is the first song on the new album. It's called "All Gods Must Die". It's a really simple song but it's got a really good driving rhythm to it.

AU: You mention a new album. Tell us about it!

PG: We released one last year called *More Songs*



You'll Never Hear on Spotify Because Fuck Those Guys. I always tell people don't turn into your own cover band. You got to keep things fresh, keep things new and you've got to keep writing songs. Mix things up, don't just play stuff that you played in 1992.

AU: Do you have any upcoming shows?

PG: Only about 50. I'm booking our 2026 Western tour right now which includes 30 shows, starting in Montréal then heading west. We're playing a few shows in Montréal, Québec and Ontario in May/June, then we're going north over the Great Lakes with about 30 shows happening between mid-July to mid-August. In September and October we'll do a Maritimes tour, then more shows in southern Ontario and maybe a couple more in Québec.

AU: Any plans to hit the West Coast?

PG: Oh definitely, Vancouver, Victoria, Cumberland, Chilliwack and it looks like maybe Mission for the first time ever. We always try to play places we've never played. Out west we play Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver, Victoria, Saskatoon, Regina and Winnipeg, so there's seven shows. That means playing 23 other shows in 23 smaller towns and cities. We will go up to Prince George again and play a bunch in the interior of BC. We like playing in small towns because it is more of an event. We're playing in a garage in Kimberley and have a few places that are tons of fun to play. I think those are essential to keeping ourselves grounded, keeping ourselves punk. There is one last show this year on New Year's Eve at Thrash Can in Montréal, which is one of those places, if you know it, you know it. If you don't, you'll never find it. We know how to play "Auld Lang Syne", in our own drunken version. We actually did a drunken version of it to finish off one of our albums. It's one of those times where

you invite all your friends to come to do backing vocals for an album and didn't think they'd turn up. Then 30 people turn up. We had cases of beer in the studio and everybody was drinking. Most of the time people were shushing each other in between backing vocals but for "Auld Lang Syne", it's like "Okay, everybody can make as much noise as you want for the entire song, it doesn't matter." Clink beers, drink, yell, it'll be fine and it worked out.

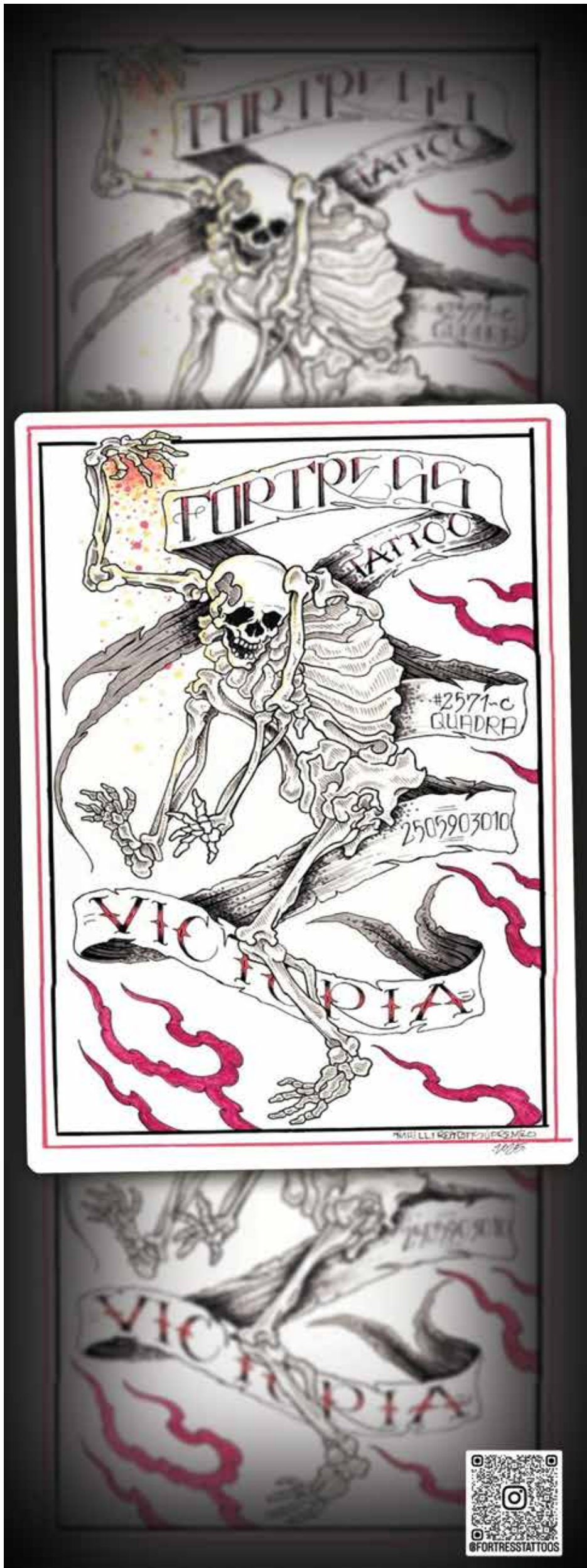
AU: What's the best way for people to hear your music or to find you online?

PG: We're not on Spotify, as you might have guessed from that album title but we are on Bandcamp. People can listen to our stuff pretty much for free. We've got the maximum number of free listens but I think if you've listened to our songs like a hundred times, then you should probably buy the friggin' album. We've also put a dozen or more of our produced videos up on YouTube and everybody posts our live stuff there too, so that's a great way to hear it. We've sold out of all the physical copies of most of our albums over the years, so I suggest going to Bandcamp. All our albums are there.

AU: Any final messages for our readers, listeners or future punks out there?

PG: Here's a message I say all the time and truly believe it. As somebody who's been in the scene since 1980 and kind of on the periphery, trying to figure out what punk was for a couple years before that, I hear a lot of people talking about how the 1980s was the golden age of punk rock. Yes, there were a lot of great bands and total respect for the ones that built the scene here and elsewhere but at the same time it's like being nostalgic for the 80s. You remember the best of it and you don't remember the worst of it, which was 98% of it. Nowadays in Montréal, there's probably 20 shows a week happening and I'm sure it is the same in Vancouver, Victoria or Edmonton. In the early 80s, when a band came through it was "Oh, Black Flag's coming. Cool!" but then it was two months before another band came through. There's more bands now, more clubs, more places to play and more people touring. Plus there's this whole internet thing that makes it way easier to find bands. There are so many more ways to be punk nowadays and punk means more than just old school. Don't live in the 80s. Respect what happened in the past, live in the present, look forward to the future and support any new bands coming up. Any young punks, even if they don't look punk, especially if they don't look punk, support them because they're the future of punk. Not you, not me. If you don't support them, punk will die and it will be a bunch of old guys sitting around a campfire somewhere singing a punk version of "Kumbaya" and that would be awful.

ripcordz.bandcamp.com
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FOREVER DEAD!

Interview with bassist Jorge Gratzo

By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today, and what are you most known—or notorious—for?

Jorge Gratzo: Jorge Gratzo, I am acting as the intermediary for the band. Keeping things cohesive and making sure shit doesn't fly off the handle. It's amazing how fast things can get side-railed and turn into an episode of *It's Always Sunny In Philadelphia*. Everyone talking at the same time about totally different shit. No context to anything. Just, rabble rabble rabble.

AU: Which band are you in, where are you based, and how would you describe what the band is all about?

JG: I'm in the punk band Forever Dead! We're from Thunder Bay, Ontario. We are working class folks from a working class town eight hours away in any direction from civilization. Our music is born of frustrations and creative energy. Lyrics range from ridiculous stuff like "Modular Man", about a modular meat robot that looks like a chicken wing, looking for love, to everyday life stuff like Lockdown... you gotta interpret that one for yourself. Influences come from Punk, Rock, Ska, Reggae, Blues, Rockabilly, Psychobilly, Metal, Comedy, Horror, Satire, and daily encounters with the human public.

AU: What Canadian punk band and song did you choose to cover for Punk Canada, and what drew you to that band/track?

JG: We wanted to pay homage to Thunder Bay punk heroes Headcramp with "Bike Thief". Big time inspiration for us and other bands in our scene. They were one of the first punk bands from Thunder Bay and opened for The Offspring and Rancid back in the '90s. The song captures the essence of having your bike stolen, which is practically an anthem here.

AU: Is there another Canadian punk band or song you'd like to cover in the future?

JG: We've covered "Suddenly" by SNFU but haven't recorded it yet. Tried "Back to the Motor League" by Propagandhi but the drums are fucking ridiculous—what the fuck Jord? Maybe we'll do "Run With Us" by Lisa Lougheed from the late 80's classic theme from the animated series (The Raccoons) or something by L7.

AU: If someone is discovering your band for the first time through this project, what's the one song of yours they need to hear?

JG: Definitely "Black Mamba" off our latest release *Here's To Long Drawn-out Terrible Endings*.

AU: How did you first get into punk, and who were the Canadian acts that shaped you early on?

JG: In the late '90s, alternative music and punk were really taking off. Cool bands came through town, playing spots like Cocks N Rolls, 201 Syndicate, and The Apollo. Stomp Records tours brought Planet Smashers and Ripcordz and Belvedere came through regularly. Shows often started at 8pm with lineups down the block, including all-ages shows at community centres for just \$2. My older brother Jesse was into punk, had posters on the wall and played in a band. The first song that really knocked my socks off was "Bad Habit" by The Offspring when I was about 9 or 10. The DIY mentality stuck with me: if you want to do something, don't rely on others—just do it. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't, but give it your best effort and don't let anyone drag you down.

AU: What's your favourite Canadian punk

memory—show, scene, moment, or mishap?

Chelsea: Last year we saw NOFX in Toronto. The pit was insane, it rained the whole time, and it was humid as fuck. Standing on the sidelines of the pit and witnessing the way punks look out for each other was beautiful. A guy fell from exhaustion, and punks quickly formed a circle around him, pouring water into his mouth. Within minutes, he jumped back up and ran right back into the pit. It was like a punk rock baptism! Knowing that no matter your race, gender, sexual identity or religion, you know you're safe. I'll never forget that moment.

AU: What are you listening to right now—Canadian or otherwise—that's keeping you inspired?

JG: The *Punk Canada* comps are a great listen. There are some excellent Canadian punk bands on those. Paul is doing a really cool thing with that. By the way, that is Chelsea Gratz on the cover of Vol. 3. Canadian bands that are usually on the playlist are Propagandhi, The Flatliners, SNFU, Dayglo Abortions, The Rebel Spell, Gutter Demons, BOIDS, B.A. Johnston, THE LOOKOUT, Corb Lund, Stompin' Tom.

AU: Do you have any new releases, projects, or upcoming shows you'd like to plug?

JG: We put out a music video this year for "Black Mamba" on YouTube. That track and "Bike Thief" are on our latest album, *Here's To Long Drawn-out Terrible Endings*. We also recorded a version of "Scavenger Type" by NOFX. We're working on another album, with about five songs written and the studio set up for demos.

AU: Any plans for the Holidaze this year?

JG: The dream is to gather all of Thunder Bay's old Christmas trees and build a giant bonfire at the CLE grounds. Everyone can gather in unity. Doesn't have to be real trees—throw in fake ones, aluminium poles, old TVs, tires, couches, lithium batteries... let it burn for peace on earth. We're all family in the band: Chelsea (vocals) and I (bass) are married, Jesse (guitar) and Tylor (drums) are my brothers, and Marc (1st and 3rd guitar) is like our adopted cousin. Aside from rehearsals, we'll celebrate Solstice with the brush pile burn, telescope viewing for 31/ATLAS, enjoying mead, pierogi soup, sandwiches and celebrating Marc's birthday on the 27th. Each year we buy him his age in shrimp rings and drink tequila in the sauna till the sun comes up.

AU: What's the best way for people to hear your music and find you online?

JG: Best if you order a CD or record from us. You can find us at foreverdead.org or on Facebook. For live footage and our new music video, go to youtube.com/@XForeverDeadX. Our music is on most streaming services, but seriously, order a CD or vinyl. Those bastards are getting rich off the backs of independent artists and we just get crumbs.

AU: Any final message for the readers, listeners, or future punks out there?

JG: The government and corporations do not give a fuck about you. Stop picking teams and backing them like they are a part of your identity. Power and wealth are the most addictive drugs there are and we all bust our asses to feed their fix. Fend for yourself.





DAYGLO ABORTIONS

Interview with Murray (the cretin) Acton
By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today, and what are you most known—or notorious—for?

Murray Acton: Hi, you are talking to Murray Acton, AKA the cretin from Dayglo Abortions. I am most known for playing guitar and singing for the Dayglo Abortions for 45 years and possibly for having two of our albums singled out in an unsuccessful attempt to get them banned by a Nepean, Ontario police officer back in the day.

AU: Where are you based, and how would you describe what the band is all about?

MA: Dayglo Abortions are out of Victoria, BC. Our motto is “insolence vs intolerance since 1980.”

AU: What Canadian punk band and song did

you choose to cover for *Punk Canada*, and what drew you to that band/track?

MA: The song we covered on *Punk Canada Vol. 2* was “Choking On My Puke” by Drunk Tank, another Victoria band that our drummer Blind Marc played in. I am also playing bass on a Betty Ford song being covered by Dirtnap and I play a guitar solo on a cover of a LummoX song (that I wrote) called “Hockey Fight” (played by Supermodel Taxidermy). That will be on the latest *Punk Canada comp* along with another song that I wrote, “Arg Fuck Kill” by Dayglo Abortions, covered by Danger Box (I think that’s their name).

AU: Is there another Canadian punk band or song you’d like to cover in the future?

MA: Sure, I could come up with a hundred songs I’d like to cover given the time, but time is of the essence as they say and I don’t have it right now.

AU: How did you first get into punk, and who

were the Canadian acts that shaped you early on?

MA: I got into punk in the late 70s because the things we were doing were going to land us all in prison. I was influenced early on by Vancouver bands like D.O.A., the Subhumans, Pointed Sticks and Wasted Lives.

AU: What’s your favourite Canadian punk memory—show, scene, moment or mishap?

MA: Maybe it was when the Supreme Court of Canada court case against Fringe Records over our first two albums finished and, as a consequence, forced them to re-write a section of the Canadian Constitution regarding freedom of expression. It could also be when we played in front of about 100,000 people at the Montebello Rockfest. There’s live footage on Youtube.

AU: If someone is discovering your band for the first time through this project, what’s the one song of yours they need to hear?

MA: “Isn’t This Disgusting” from the album *Two Dogs Fucking*.

AU: What are you listening to right now—Canadian or otherwise—that’s keeping you inspired?

MA: A French band called Igorr. All their albums are amazing.

AU: Do you have any new releases, projects or upcoming shows you’d like to plug?

MA: Yes, the Dayglos are working on new material and so are the other bands I play with, like Stinkhorn and Dirtnap. We

are all working on new material that we plan to record in the new year.

AU: Any plans for the Holidayze this year?

MA: The Dayglos are playing a benefit for Kick Cancer’s Ass in Victoria on December 6th. It will be epic and it also features the return of Cocaine Moustache and the west coast hip hop legend Snak the Ripper. We will then spend the rest of the holidays playing shows in Ontario and Quebec.

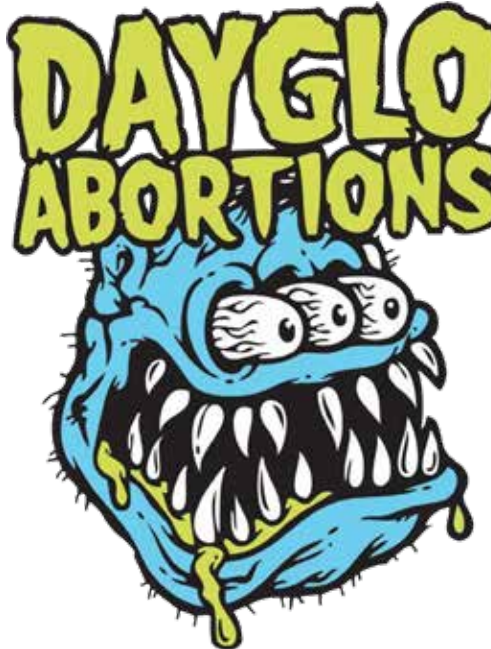
AU: What’s the best way for people to hear your music and find you online?

MA: Our music is on Spotify and Apple Music.

There’s also lots of live stuff on Youtube and I have a Bandcamp page, Murray (the cretin) Acton, with a lot of my music from most of my bands: murraythecretinacton.bandcamp.com




AU: Any final message for the readers, listeners or future punks out there?

MA: Think for yourself. Follow the science but be very careful whose science you are following because most of it is funded by organizations with a hidden agenda. Find out who is doing the funding and why, then make sure their agenda is in line with your agenda.



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MOTHERFUCKERS

Interview with vocalist Dan Izzo

By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: Who are you talking to today and what are you most known—or notorious—for?

Dan Izzo: I'm Dan Izzo, singer of the Motherfuckers and some other bands along the way.

AU: Which band are you in, where are you based and how would you describe what the band is all about?

DI: The Motherfuckers are based in Calgary and have been playing shitty punk rock since 1998. Tim (drums), Hunter (bass) and I have been in the band from the start. Matt has been in the band since 2013, making him our longest-lived guitarist. Josh (of The Beta 58's) joined the band for our tour with Bats Out! in October. He'll be back with us for our upcoming show with FEAR in

January and beyond!

AU: What Canadian punk band and song did you choose to cover for Punk Canada and what drew you to that band/track?

DI: We covered the song "Exit Death" by Montréal's Sc.u.m. I've owned that record for ages and always thought it was a great track but honestly didn't know much about the band. Since the release of the album I've gotten to know Georges and actually worked with him and Jean from Sc.u.m. on another project called Enough.

AU: Is there another Canadian punk band or song you'd like to cover in the future?

DI: Too many to list! A few of the other possibilities we tossed around were Riot .303's "Skate Punx", Death Sentence's "R.C.M.P." and Problem Children's "Activate". Since Volume 1 came out I've been trying to convince other bands to do a BunchoFuckinGoofs cover but no success yet. I may need to start a fake band just for that purpose. Sssh, don't tell Paul!

AU: How did you first get into punk and who were the Canadian acts that shaped you early on?

DI: Somebody played me a Dead Kennedys cassette 30-some years ago and everything changed overnight. The first Canadian bands I got into were probably D.O.A., Forgotten Rebels, Death Sentence and BFG, as well as the local Calgary and Edmonton bands that were playing around that time: Inquisition, Kentucky Fried Children, Rosco Pecoe, Lackeys and Glory Stompers, to name a handful.

AU: What's your favourite Canadian punk memory—show, scene, moment or mishap?

DI: Playing a show in Coaldale, Alberta and watching the cops wake a dude up to arrest him while he was sleeping on the couch.

AU: What are you listening to right now—Canadian or otherwise—that's keeping you inspired?

DI: Random Killing, Half Dead, Reifer Madness

and Bats Out! always gets me pumped up, but we played a lot of all ages shows on tour this year and there are tons of new bands everywhere we go. I think it's really important to keep checking out live music and getting into new bands even if you haven't heard of them before. Don't just watch your buddies' bands and then take off.

AU: Any plans for the Holidayz this year?

DI: We generally hibernate over the winter but we'll be back with some surprises in the spring.

AU: Do you have any new releases, projects or upcoming shows you'd like to plug?

DI: We'll be opening for FEAR in Calgary on January 25th. It will definitely be the best show of the year (so far).

AU: What's the best way for people to hear your music and find you online?

DI: We're on Bandcamp: scum-mtlhc.bandcamp.com as well as all the usual streaming sources. You can also pick up our records at any of our shows.

AU: Any final message for the readers, listeners or future punks out there?

DI: In a world of streaming music and social media remember that there's a real world out there and real people to interact with. Keep going to shows and make sure live music and physical



media continue to exist. This band and a lot of the people reading this are middle aged and beyond but punk is still a vibrant youth culture and the young kids coming to shows now are the future.

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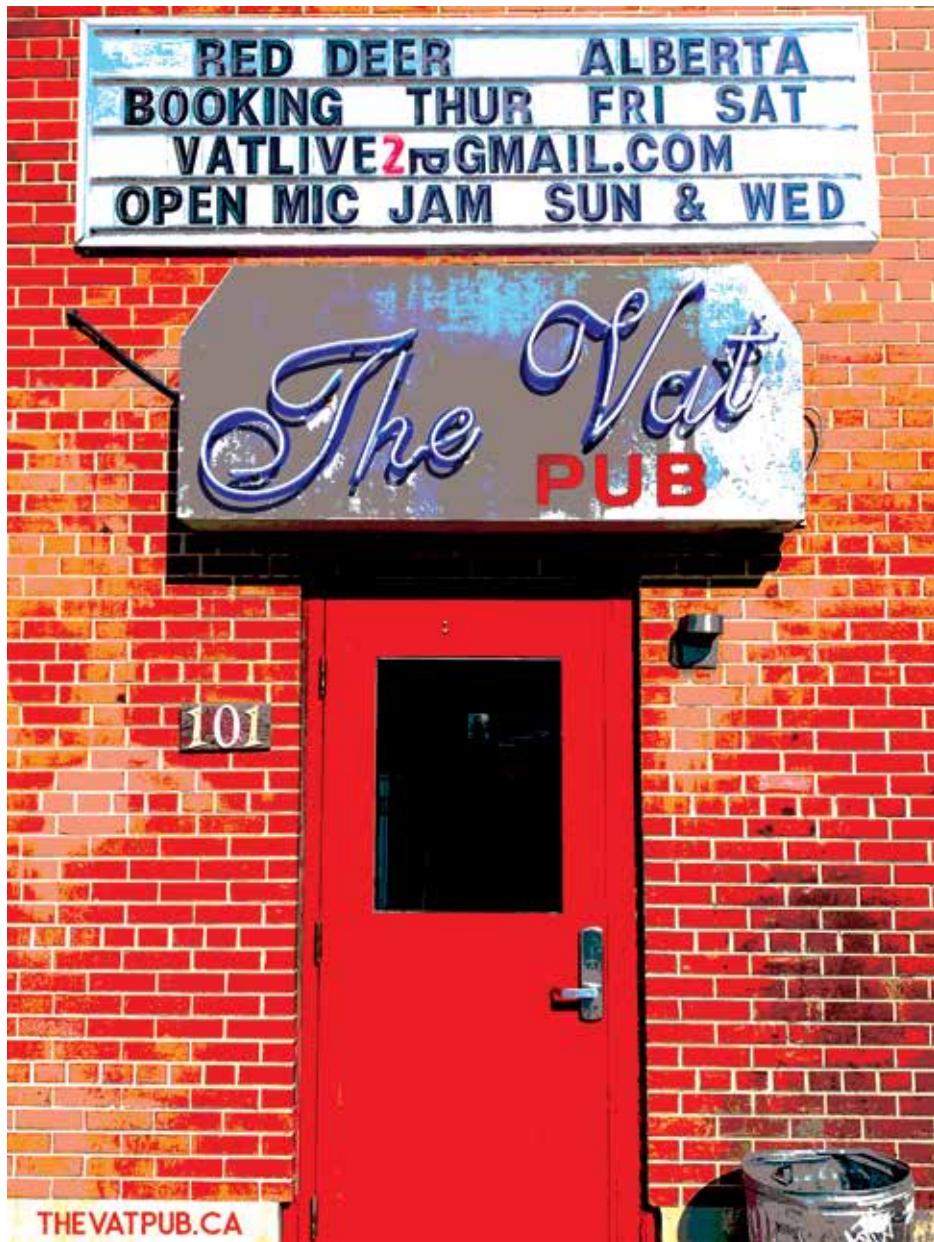
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HIPPIECRITZ

Interview with vocalist Skidley Bones
By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today, and what are you most known for?

Skye Bryant: You are speaking with Skye "Skidley Bones" Bryant. I am mostly known for playing music on stage, creating jam sessions at house parties, and promoting local shows.

AU: Which band are you in? Where are you based, and how would you describe what the band is all about?

SB: I am in the band Hippiecritz. I sing lead vocals, play rhythm guitar, and write lyrics for the band. We are based out of Kelowna, BC and formed in 2003. Our band is all about that fast, old-school punk rawk sound. It's lyrically driven, chaotic, and honest.

AU: What Canadian punk band did you choose to cover for Punk Canada Volume 4, and what drew you to that band/track?

SB: "Overhead Projector" by Gentlemen of Horror. It was originally released in 1981. We chose that band because they were one of the first punk bands from Kelowna, BC and we're a punk band from Kelowna, so it just made sense. Gentlemen of Horror later became the band The Grapes of Wrath.

AU: How did you first get into punk, and who were the Canadian acts that shaped you early on?

SB: I lived in a small town where there were only a few punks—St. George, New Brunswick. I had a drum kit in the basement of our house that I

would play all of the time. Before I knew it, I started meeting other people around town who liked to play music and jam, and they showed me cool new bands I had never heard before, like Ripcordz, Dayglo Abortions, D.O.A., SNFU and tons of local bands like The Scapegoatz, E.I., Not Yet Dead, G.F.N., and the Megalomaniacs. The list goes on and on.

AU: What's your favourite Canadian punk memory, show, or moment?

SB: I'd have to say playing with Ripcordz for the first time was pretty amazing. Also, touring with the Dayglos back in the day was incredible. Recording our first single "No Clean Pants" and having it featured on a compilation called *Back Off*, which also included D.O.A. and Propagandhi, was unbelievable. We had only been a band for a month at that point. Playing with Hippiecritz has given me some of my greatest punk memories. Phil Guenther, R.I.P.

AU: Do you have any new releases, projects, or upcoming shows you'd like to plug?

SB: *Punk Canada Volume 5* is coming out soon, and Dirtnap is on it—that's another band our drummer Rylan plays in. Mr. Awesome, our bass player, has a lot of music online, mainly solo, but he puts on an awesome live show, pun intended. Max, our lead guitarist, is still an OG member of the band. And if you're wondering whose face is on the cover of *Punk Canada Volume 4*, it's yours truly, Skidley Bones. Thanks again to Paul Gott from Ripcordz for that honour and for creating these amazing Canadian punk compilations.

AU: Any final message for the readers, listeners, or future punks out there?

SB: Stay rad and keep supporting your local music scene!



KROOVY ROOKERS

Interview with Rowdy Rebels from Edmonton

By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today, which band are you in, where are you based, and how would you describe what the band is all about?

Kroovy Rookers: Kroovy Rookers are a bunch of rowdy rebels from Edmonton,

AB, playing street punk/Oi! We've been playing western Canada for the last 20+ years with no signs of slowing down. We've played hundreds of shows over the years and have shared the stage with greats like UK Subs, Vibrators, the Business, NoMeansNo, Agent Orange, C.J. Ramone, D.O.A. and SNFU, to name a few.

AU: What Canadian punk band and song did you choose to cover for Punk Canada, and what drew you to that band/track?

KR: We chose "We're Alive" by Subhumans. It's a classic track and a blast to play!

AU: What's your favourite Canadian punk

memory—show, scene, moment, or mishap?

KR: We went as a band to see the Personality Crisis reunion show in Winnipeg while on tour in 2017. None of us thought we'd ever get the chance to see them, but we lucked out! It was unreal how amazing they were. They are really down-to-earth guys. It was a really special night, partly because it was one of the last tours we went on with our bass player Tom "Slippy" Lacey before he died.

AU: Do you have any new releases, projects, or upcoming shows you'd like to plug?

KR: We've had a recent lineup change and are starting to play gigs again after a short hiatus. Plus, we're busy working on an album that should be out in 2026!

AU: What's the best way for people to hear your music and find you online?

KR: Our music is free to play and download on

Bandcamp: kroovyrookers1.bandcamp.com, and can also be found on all major streaming platforms.

AU: Any final message for the readers, listeners, or future punks out there?

KR: To all the young punks out there, go to gigs. As many as you can possibly make it to. Really any live music. It's good for the soul. You'll meet the most interesting people and make lifelong friends. Beats sitting around doom scrolling or watching the boob tube!



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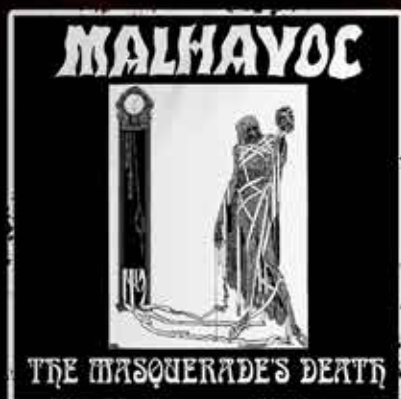
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YER MUM

Interview with bassist and vocalist,
Jenny Wuckert

By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today, and what are you most known—or notorious—for?

JW: This is Jenny Wuckert — bass and vocals for the now inactive Winnipeg punk band known as YER MUM (2013–2025). We were mostly known for causing a racket, writing songs about skateboarding and some unpleasant topics, and for our guitar player busting the odd skate trick on stage while playing (or playing while injured from a skateboarding injury!). Personally, I am known for that time I beat the shit out of someone with a microphone stand on stage while playing, because someone being racist in the crowd is lame!

AU: Which band are you in, where are you based, and how would you describe what the band is all about?

JW: I am bass and vocals in the new Winnipeg punk band called Toaster Bath, which formed in January 2025. This punk band is all about having

a fun time playing and creating music with some rad human beings! We have only played a few local shows during 2025, but we are having a fun time seeing our usual loving and supportive crowd as we find our footing. So far, the theme seems to be taking a sour topic and

writing a funny song about it, which seems to turn into an inside joke of sorts.

AU: What Canadian punk band and song did you choose to cover for Punk Canada, and what drew you to that band/track?

JW: We chose the band MUNG and their song “Lick the Sweat From My Scrotum.” The late guitar player and frontman, Scott Schillemore, was a good friend of ours. We were so lucky to have shared the stage with MUNG numerous times over the years, and Travis from our band YER MUM played drums with them in their last years. Before Scott passed away, we asked him for permission to cover the song for *Punk Canada*, and we were very happy to receive the OK to do so. We hope that we made him proud with this one! Scott and the entirety of MUNG were—and always will be—a huge influence on us. We loved his raw energy, his ability to offend anyone, and his ridiculous jokes. We miss him so much and



created some of our most favourite memories sharing the stage with him.

AU: Is there another Canadian punk band or song you'd like to cover in the future?

JW: I personally would love to cover more MUNG songs. I am also open to whatever Toaster Bath would be interested in covering! We are unsure what covers might look like for us, or if we want to do them at all. Right now, the focus is on original content, but covers are a lot of fun regardless.

AU: If someone is discovering your band for the first time through this project, what's the one song of yours they need to hear?

JW: If they are listening to YER MUM, definitely check out our last album *Yer Fuckin' MUM* on **Bandcamp: yermum.bandcamp.com** Anything on there was a lot of fun to release and play. Toaster Bath is working on getting some tracks out there, so stay tuned for that!

AU: How did you first get into punk, and who were the Canadian acts that shaped you early on?

JW: I first got into listening when I was a teenager in high school. I loved a lot of things about the genre, especially the grit and chaos of it all. In the early years of playing, I was the shy-as-hell band kid who hid behind her music stand, whether it was playing bass or tuba. After taking a couple of years off from playing bass, a friend asked if I would

like to start a punk band with her and therefore my first punk band, The Pinkslips, was born. Again, still so shy about playing—especially live! I was way more into the local ska bands when I first got into live music, such as SubCity Dwellers and Ten Too Many. I honestly forget who else I was into at the time; it seems like forever ago! In terms

of bands I shared the stage with early on that influenced me, it was MUNG, Dayglo Abortions, Pantychrist, and The Car Stealers, to name a few.

AU: What's your favourite Canadian punk memory—show, scene, moment, or mishap?

JW: Oh WOW, there are A LOT. I also do not want to talk about the really bad ones that might get us in trouble, ha ha. I will go with this one: We got asked to play in a back alley for an event called *Nuit Blanche*. It was at an old place called *The Neon Factory* — literally a facility that had almost every neon sign from previous Winnipeg bands. It was a perfect fall evening, and as we were playing, we could see people ripping around in the dirt mosh pit, people hanging off fences, sitting on dumpsters, and on the tops of buildings surrounding the “stage.” It was such a beautiful sight that showcased the incredible support from our favourite people.

AU: Do you have any new releases, projects, or upcoming shows you'd like to plug?

JW: By the time this is published, Toaster Bath will have played the last show booked for the year, which is 22 November 2025 at Bulldog Event Centre in Winnipeg. Nothing booked for 2026 yet, but there is talk of a punk festival in July 2026.

AU: Any plans for the Holidayze this year?

JW: Honestly, just hoping to record with Toaster Bath over winter after our last show in November. We would like to get a few tracks up, get some merch rolling, definitely work on more songs and, of course, eat a disgusting amount of food after ripping down some hills on the ol' GT Snow Racer.

AU: What's the best way for people to hear your music and find you online?

JW: Right now, Toaster Bath can be found on **Instagram: [@toasterbathwpg](https://www.instagram.com/toasterbathwpg)**



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MAVERICK




what drew you to that band/track?
E: Northern Vultures, "Rise Up." Good old Montréal hardcore punk band. Plus, the song rips!
AU: Is there another Canadian punk band or song you'd like to cover in the future?
E: Sc.u.m., Infamous Basturds.
AU: Do you have any new releases, projects, or upcoming shows you'd like to plug?
E: A new EP is on the way. Looking to release it before summer.
AU: Any plans for the Holidayze this year?

MAVERICK

Interview with frontman Eddie

By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today, and what are you most known—or notorious—for?

Eddie: Eddie, MAVERICK's frontman and songwriter. Not notorious.

AU: Which band are you in, where are you based, and how would you describe what the band is all about?

E: MAVERICK, Montréal. Fast and loud.

AU: What Canadian punk band and song did you choose to cover for Punk Canada, and

E: Kick back, relax.

AU: What's the best way for people to hear your music and find you online?

E: linktr.ee/maverick_punx


AU: What are you listening to right now—Canadian or otherwise—that's keeping you inspired?

E: So many bands... Montréal's Walter is always one of my go-to's. Good shit.

AU: Any final message for the readers, listeners, or future punks out there?




E: Have fun, y'all! Enjoy yourselves! And always remember, live and let live.

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CITIZEN RAGE

Interview with vocalist Mark Russell
By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today, and what are you most known—or notorious—for?

Mark Russell: This is Mark Russell; I've spent the last 25+ years cheering on underground music like it's a full-contact sport. I enjoy long romantic walks on the beach, the occasional marijuana cigarette and booking shows in venues your GPS politely refuses to acknowledge. I've also been known to scream in a band or two.

AU: Which band are you in, where are you based, and how would you describe what the band is all about?

MR: I'm a member of Citizen Rage, a Calgary-based hardcore punk band. We're all about dragging real issues into the spotlight. We stand and fight alongside the queer community, advocate for human rights and confront lived hardships and police brutality head-on. Mental health is core to our message; we work to normalize those conversations in our scene and beyond.

AU: What Canadian punk band and song did

you choose to cover for Punk Canada, and what drew you to that band/track?

MR: We chose Calgary hardcore punk legends Beyond Possession's "Skaters Life." This track screams old-school HC. We all grew up skating and listening to these cats, so we felt it very fitting to honour them and recreate it CR style.

AU: Is there another Canadian punk band or song you'd like to cover in the future?

MR: We would love to cover some SNFU or even something way different, maybe an OG Rascals track or some Headstones in the key of CR.

AU: Do you have any new releases, projects, or upcoming shows you'd like to plug?

MR: Yes, we do! We recorded a split album with our friends Berserker from Lethbridge, titled *See You in the Parking Lot*, which will soon be released by Cursed Blessings and Moments Fest Records.

AU: Any plans for the Holidayze this year?

MR: No, not really. Ross is the only one with a billion kids and grandkids, so he'll be fully submerged in holiday chaos. The rest of us just chill and do our best not to get swindled by the seasonal overload this time of year brings. And remember, kids — Santa loves rich kids more than poor ones.

AU: What's the best way for people to hear your music and find you online?

MR: First off, forget online listening — buy hard copies. Let's make collecting music cool again instead of relying on the internet's discount bin. But if you must stream, we're on all the usual suspects nobody likes but everyone uses: **Bandcamp:** citizenragehardcore.bandcamp.com, Stupid Spotify, YouTube Music, Apple Music... or you can be a legend and grab a hard copy from Cursed Blessings Records.

Photo credits: Emm



THE PAGANS OF NORTHUMBERLAND

Interview with singer, Clayton MacNeill

By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today, and what are you most known—or notorious—for?

Clayton MacNeill: Clayton. I am the main songwriter and singer. We're made up of old friends from other bands like Knucklehead, The Motherfuckers, Mad Cowboys, and a little Chixdiggit.

AU: Which band are you in, where are you based, and how would you describe what the band is all about?

CM: The Pagans of Northumberland. We are from Calgary. We are a punk rock band, but we have strong ties to street rock and Oi. We write songs about politics, social issues, and always include a touch or reference to football (soccer). Our team, Pagans FC, is sponsored by Longshot Music and The Palomino (a Calgary bar).

AU: How did you first get into punk, and who were the Canadian acts that shaped you early on?

CM: I was big into skateboarding, so that just organically led to punk rock. My first show ever was SNFU in 1989 at a place called Studio-A-Go-Go in Calgary. It changed my life, and I've been a huge SNFU fan ever since. I've seen and played with them almost as much as Ripcordz.

AU: What Canadian punk band and song did you choose to cover for Punk Canada, and what drew you to that band/track?

CM: We did "Twist Off" by The Von Zippers. We chose them because they are a huge influence on us, musically and personally. We grew up on The Zippers and became good friends with Al Charlton, the main songwriter and singer. I even play his old guitar.

AU: Is there another Canadian punk band or song you'd like to cover in the future?

CM: We do throw obscure punk rock covers into our sets, but we try to make sure the band isn't playing anymore. So Ripcordz is top of our list, but Paul ain't stopping anytime soon, so it might never happen.

AU: If someone is discovering your band for the first time through this project, what's the one song of yours they need to hear?

CM: "This Can't Go On." A lot of our songs have a touch of football or a reference to it, but this one is very personal to me. The Highway of Tears is an extremely awful reality, and I wanted to shed a bit more light on the treatment of Indigenous people in this country, especially women.

AU: Do you have any new releases, projects, or upcoming shows you'd like to plug?

CM: We have a new record ready to be recorded—just need some time to get it done.

AU: Any plans for the Holidayze this year?

CM: The Ship & Anchor, eggnog, and football. Playing around Calgary and Vancouver in the very near future.

AU: What's the best way for people to hear your music and find you online?

CM: All our stuff is everywhere—Spotify, Apple, etc. Instagram: @paganpunkrock



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MEAN BIKINI

Interview with vocalist Milli Lyman
By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: Which band are you in, where are you based, and how would you describe what the band is all about?

Milli Lyman: You're chatting with Milli, vocalist of Mean Bikini from Cumberland, B.C., a small village on Vancouver Island. We're a queer hardcore punk band that loves to play fast and loud and do our best to bring people together through music.

AU: What Canadian punk band and song did you choose to cover for *Punk Canada*, and what drew you to that band/track?

ML: When we got asked to do the compilation, I knew exactly what song I wanted us to do and advocated heavily for it. The song we chose was "Vampire's Dream" by Winnipeg legends Personality Crisis. It's a fast and vicious tune, and the first time I was shown it by ex-Real McKenzies guitarist Bone, I was immediately drawn to the

deep gravelly voice and the wild late-'70s guitar that carried the tune. When we found out we had to get the songwriter's permission, I began scouring the Internet for ways to contact their vocalist, Mitch Funk. Finally I got a hold of him, and he told me we had his blessing, but he was in the hospital so couldn't do much to help out. I asked for the lyrics, which he scribbled on a scrap of paper, took a photo of and sent to me. We had no idea how sick Mitch was. Once we finished the song, I was about to send it to him, when that exact morning I was sent an article from CBC saying he had passed away after a long battle with cancer. I was floored. To know that when he was that sick, he still took the time to send a band he'd never heard of everything needed to cover his band from over 30 years ago. The article detailed who Mitch was as a person. Back when Personality Crisis was big and touring all over the country, he was an outspoken advocate for women in the scene. He was well loved by his community and spent his life caring for people through his work in hospitals. It's a beautifully tragic story that we have, and I do wish he

could've heard our rendition of their song. We are forever grateful that we got the opportunity to help carry on his legacy through the *Punk Canada* compilation.

AU: Is there another Canadian punk band or song you'd like to cover in the future?

ML: We have such a huge list of covers we want to do. In terms of Canadian covers, our bassist has always wanted to cover "End in Sight" by Calgary's Knucklehead. Earlier this year we started covering "All We Want" by The Rebel Spell. Not only were they such a unique and incredible band, but they had an immeasurable impact on not only our music, but how we interact with the world around us. We finished all 24 Canadian sets with it this October and no matter where we were, there would be two or three people rushing to the front of the stage and screaming along to every word. It's been a treat to bond with other people over how prolific that band was and to keep their legacy alive.

AU: What's your favourite Canadian punk memory—show, scene, moment, or mishap?

ML: I'd love to use this question as a way to plug our local scene in Cumberland on the Island. After travelling across the country multiple times to so many beautiful and thriving communities, nothing quite feels like home. Our shows, even on weeknights—although fewer and farther between than a lot of places—sell out, and the majority of the people packing the space are young, queer, neurodiverse kids who carry so much passion and enthusiasm and joy with them. When we see the way these kids thrive

and carry the spirit of community and punk rock, it gives us hope that the future may be brighter than things are now.

AU: If someone is discovering your band for the first time through this project, what's the one song of yours they need to hear?

ML: Take a listen through our recent release "This Ain't Gonna End Well...". We're certain that in those



13 songs at least one of them will resonate with you!

AU: Do you have any new releases, projects, or upcoming shows you'd like to plug?

ML: At the end of November, we were wrapping up a month-long cross-Canada tour, where we played 24 dates in 30 days between Vancouver Island and Prince Edward Island. We have some rad stuff cooking for the new year and just began writing our next full-length. Keep an eye out, as chances are we're most likely playing a town near you in 2026!

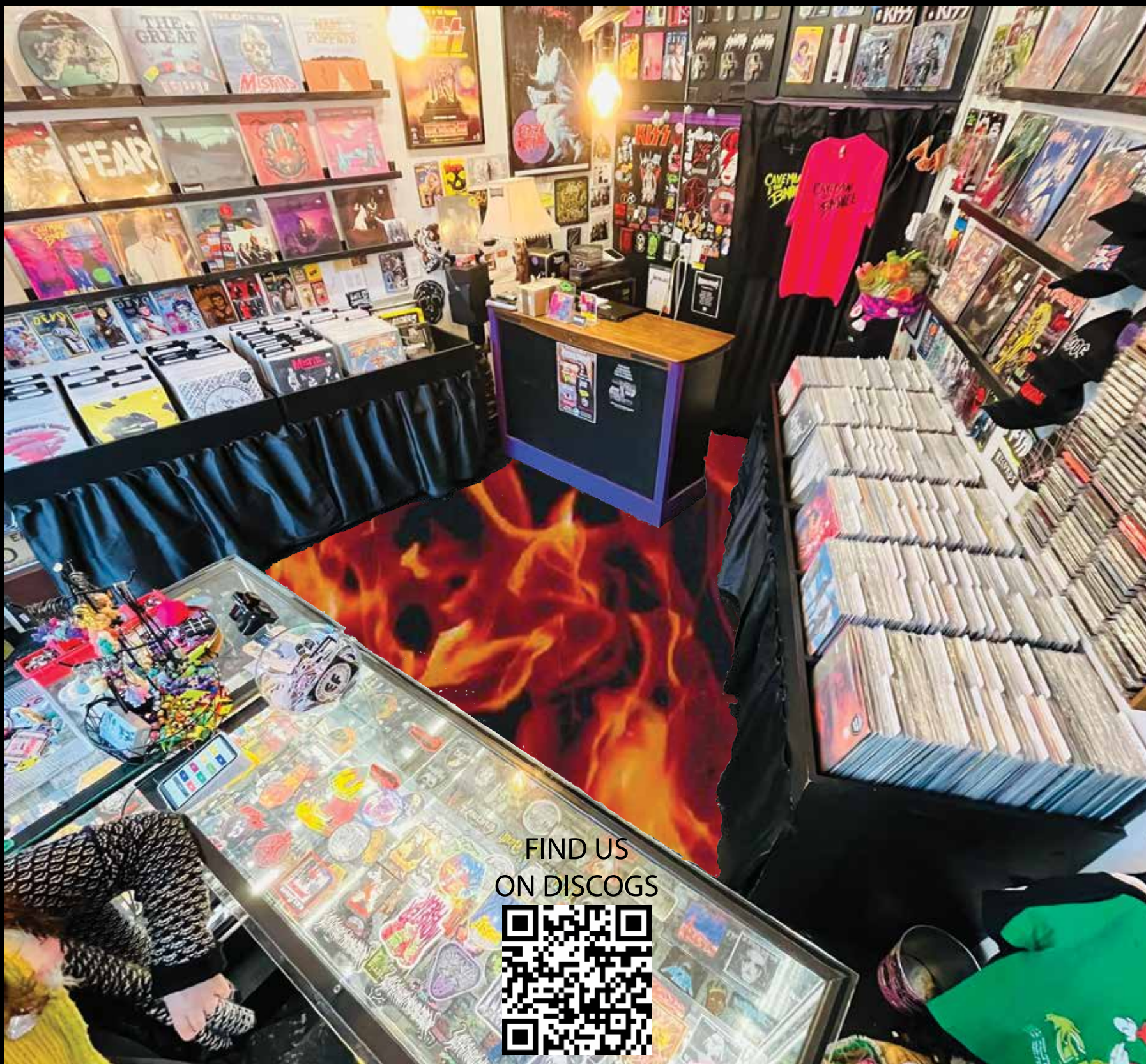
AU: What's the best way for people to hear your music and find you online?

ML: Our music is available everywhere, but we highly recommend getting it off our Bandcamp, where not only do we have it up for free download, but we also have all of the lyrics posted: mean-bikini.bandcamp.com



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THE MURDER BIRDS

Interview with guitarist Paul 'Twist' Schaeffer

By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today, and what are you most known—or notorious—for?

Paul 'Twist' Schaeffer: Paul 'Twist' Schaeffer, guitarist for the band The Murder Birds.

AU: Where are you based and how would you describe what the band is all about?

PTS: We're a punk rock cover band based out of Winnipeg.

The band has been in existence since 2018. The current lineup also consists of Brett Naskrent on lead vocals, Dave L'Heureux on bass and Marty Chatrin on drums.

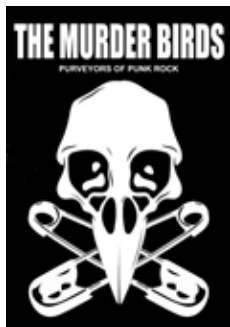
AU: What Canadian punk band and song did you choose to cover for Punk Canada and what drew you to that band or track?

PTS: This was a tough decision, to say the least. So many great Canadian punk bands to cover! One of the rules for being on the *Punk Canada* compilation was that you couldn't cover "the Big 6," those being D.O.A., SNFU, Dayglo Abortions,

NoMeansNo, Teenage Head and Forgotten Rebels. While this narrowed the playing field somewhat, it still didn't make our choice any less difficult. We were all big fans of The Nils from Montréal. Marty was even asked to play drums for them many years ago, well before the inception of The Murder Birds. We used to cover "Fountains" by The Nils, so we thought, let's do that one!

AU: Is there another Canadian punk band or song you'd like to cover in the future?

PTS: Being a band that plays exclusively punk covers, we always have a certain amount of "Can Con" in our sets. For example, we just recently added "The Prisoner" by D.O.A. to our set list. Crazy fun to play! Not only do we play Canadian punk covers, but we've also had the privilege over the years of sharing the stage with a number of Canadian punk legends: D.O.A., Dayglo Abortions, Teenage Head, Personality Crisis, Ripcordz, The Real McKenzies, and just recently, we had the honour of opening for Stretch Marks, who regrouped for a one-off, sold-out show this past November.



AU: What's your favourite Canadian punk memory—show, scene, moment or mishap?

PTS: We've had our fair share of memories over the years as a band. For me, I will always remember Chi Pig getting up onstage with us (we were opening for SNFU that night) and doing the Damned's "New Rose." It was completely surreal. Sharing the stage with this punk legend is not something I'll ever forget.

AU: Do you have any new releases, projects or upcoming shows you'd like to plug?

PTS: There's talk about heading back into the studio in 2026 to record a mini-album of cover tracks, as well as a possible video project. Stay tuned, punk rockers!

AU: Any plans for the Holidayze this year?

PTS: Sleep and drink beer, not necessarily in that order! Actually, in all honesty, we're looking forward to a bit of a break over the holidays. 2025 was a busy year for us. We need to recharge our engines to get ready for a crazy 2026!

AU: What's the best way for people to hear your music and find you online?

PTS: We have two Facebook pages: "The Murder Birds" and "Friends who like The Murder Birds." We're also on Instagram: [instagram.com/themurderbirdswinnipeg](https://www.instagram.com/themurderbirdswinnipeg)

AU: Any final message for the readers, listeners or future punks out there?

PTS: In recent years, we've been seeing a lot of young punk rockers attending our shows. This is a wonderful thing. The next generation is dispelling

the rumours that "punk is dead." I can assure you that is the furthest thing from the truth. Punk rock is alive and well and coming to a stage near you!





THE BLOODY HELL

Interview with singer Ian Kean

By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today, and what are you most known—or notorious—for?

Ian Kean: I am Ian Kean, best known for my raspy, aggressive vocal style.

AU: Which band are you in, where are you based and how would you describe what the band is all about?

IK: I sing for the occult rock band The Bloody Hell from Halifax. We try to make catchy sound as ugly as possible.

AU: How did you first get into punk and who were the Canadian acts that shaped you early on?

IK: I first got into punk and rock music as an early teen, mainly from MuchMusic back when they actually had music. *Much Loud*, *The Punk Show* and *Coast to Coast* were all great programs that used to showcase punk and Canadian punk. I was also involved in tape trading communities, whether VHS or cassettes. I grew up in a small, shitty town with little to no access to good music other than the above-mentioned MuchMusic shows. In the early internet forum days, I would talk with kids all over North America on message boards and trade dubbed tapes through the mail. Things like ECW wrestling, punk or rock

mix tapes, and stuff like CKY, early *Jackass* or *The Tom Green Show*. Stuff that was hard to come by opened me and my small group of weirdo friends to a lot of great music and the subculture of the 90s.

AU: What Canadian punk band and song did you choose to cover for *Punk Canada* and what drew you to that band or track?

IK: We did the song “Barbra” from Vancouver punk legends Modernettes. It’s a song I’ve always loved as a teen and feel it is very underrated and could use some more love. I love how simple and catchy it is, and the original just has this snarky punk attitude that gives a nice punch to a catchy little song about a high school crush.

AU: Is there another Canadian punk band or song you’d like to cover in the future?

IK: Sometimes we fuck around with jamming on “I Hear You Calling” by Gob. Maybe someday we’ll actually truly learn the parts and record it in our own style — make it less shiny pop punk and more scrappy aggressive punk.

AU: What’s your favourite Canadian punk memory—show, scene, moment or mishap?

IK: I saw Propagandhi play at Montebello Rockfest in... 2015? They made them take down the corporate sponsor Budweiser logo off the stage before they would go on. Whether previously arranged or not, to this day it is the

most punk rock thing I’ve ever seen a band do.

AU: Do you have any new releases, projects or upcoming shows you’d like to plug?

IK: We have our whole new album completed. Our third album, entitled *Blood Code*, was set for release in fall 2025, but our guitar

player had a baby so the release has been pushed to spring 2026. We want to be able to gig and support the release without stressing his family life, so we look forward to that.

AU: Any plans for the Holidayz this year?

IK: Rum

AU: What’s the best way for people to hear your music and find you online?

IK: Instagram is our most active social media, but you can find us on all platforms and streaming services. I’d

encourage anyone interested in our music to check out our YouTube page. We have plenty of cool and interesting music videos that capture the essence of the band.

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EAST END RIVALS

Interview with bassist, Phil Howe

By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today and what are you most known—or notorious—for?

Phil Howe: You're speaking with Phil (bass). Some might know me as the former singer for both Treble Kings and Rock N' Rebels, or as the singer/guitarist of The Atlantix.

AU: Which band are you in, where are you based, and how would you describe what the band is all about?

PH: I'm the bassist for East End Rivals, out of Moncton, NB. We are all about bringing danger back to rock and roll and punk music. Our songs are about what we've lived through and seen in



this life.

AU: How did you first get into punk, and who were the Canadian acts that shaped you early on?

PH: I was a metalhead until I was 12. I had a friend who one day brought over two cassettes: Misfits *Walk Among Us* and Cro-Mags *The Age of Quarrel*, and I was hooked. Although I still enjoy some metal, it never quite resonated the way punk rock did.

AU: What Canadian punk band or song did you choose to cover for *Punk Canada*, and what drew you to that band/track?

PH: We, like all the bands on this comp, wanted to pay tribute to the bands that paved the way. We decided to cover Jay's old band, Birds of Passage. Both the original drummer, Craig, and his replacement, Fuzzy, passed away. Neither had the opportunity to release anything on vinyl, so this was our tribute to them and that band.

AU: Is there another Canadian punk band or song you'd like to cover in the future?

PH: We had actually learned Teenage Head's "Walkin' Alone" before we realized they were one of the bands that were off the table for this comp. We also started recording Genetic Control's "Love Rat" before we found out someone had already claimed that band.

AU: What are you listening to right now—Canadian or otherwise—that's keeping you inspired?

PH: Believe it or not, I've been listening to a lot of early KISS. I dismissed them for decades because my introduction to them was *Animalize* and *Lick It Up*. I assumed it all sounded like that. But those first few albums were all rock and roll. Aside from them, Mean Street from Bathurst, NB, The Kings of Nuthin', Ramones, Blitz, B.A. Johnston, and The Real Kids are always on heavy rotation.

AU: Do you have any new releases, projects, or upcoming shows you'd like to plug?

PH: One of our originals is featured on the *Ramonescore Brigade Vol. 4* compilation, which

just came out as a collaboration with Faster & Louder Records, Insipid Records, and Mom's Cellar Dwellers Records. We're also recording material for a new EP, which should be out summer 2026.

AU: What's the best way for people to hear your music and find you online?

PH: We have a few videos on YouTube, or people can find us on Bandcamp or Spotify (eastendrivals.bandcamp.com)

AU: Any final message for the readers, listeners, or future punks out there?

PH: Don't be afraid to step out of your musical comfort zone. No matter where your musical tastes take you in this life, punk is always there waiting to welcome you home.





HALF DEAD

By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today, where are you based and how would you describe what the band is all about?

HD: We are Half Dead! Hardcore punk from Edmonton, AB, and we love to kick against the pricks, whether it be politicians, billionaires or injustice in general.

AU: What Canadian punk band and song did you choose to cover for Punk Canada and what drew you to that band or track?

HD: "Back From the Dead" by Negative Gain. In the early days while trying to name the project, one of the names we came up with was Negative Gain. A quick online search revealed a band out of Toronto had beat us to the punch by four decades. Our vocalist Hillary found the track and we thought it would be a fun one to cover.

AU: Do you have any new releases, projects

HALF
DEAD

new twists and turns. It should be out sometime next year.

AU: What's the best way for people to hear your music and find you online?

HD: Bandcamp is our preferred way for folks to check us out (name your price), but you can find us on any major streaming platform. [halfdeadband.bandcamp.com](https://www.bandcamp.com)

AU: What are you listening to right now—Canadian or otherwise—that's keeping you inspired?

HD: The new Plözher album rips! But really, there's so much good punk music coming out right now, with lots of great Canadian punk to boot. Vargouille, Open Eyes, Man Meat, Dead Tired, Punitive Damage, Bootlicker, Headcheese, Territories, Quit It! and Mean Bikini, to name a few.

AU: Any final message for the readers, listeners or future punks out there?

HD: Be good to one another. We're stronger together than we are apart. Protect trans kids. Free Palestine. No war but class war.



or upcoming shows you'd like to plug?

HD: We put out our first album *Nasty, Brutish, and Short* in 2023 and we're currently working on a follow up. Expect the same hard edge and cutting lyrics but with some fun



THE ADITS

Interview with vocalist/guitarist Kirk Stevedore

By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today, and what are you most known—or notorious—for?

Kirk Stevedore: Kirk Stevedore, guitar/vox with The Adits. We're best known for paying our producer with gold that we dig from the earth.

AU: Which band are you in, where are you based, and how would you describe what the band is all about?

KS: The Adits are spread out across the Kootenays like a gnawed piece of bubble gum, but headquartered in Castlegar. The Adits are all about wit, humour, drinking Kölsch, and enjoying this hobby known as music.

AU: What Canadian punk band and song did you choose to cover for Punk Canada, and

what drew you to that band/track?

KS: We chose to cover "Riot" by Dirty Bird, one of our favourite bands out of Toronto. We were drawn to the track because I used to play in Dirty Bird and could still remember the lyrics and chord progressions.

AU: Is there another Canadian punk band or song you'd like to cover in the future?

KS: We'd be down to cover Teenage Head, Forgotten Rebels, or LummoX—who we already rip off.

AU: Do you have any new releases, projects, or upcoming shows you'd like to plug?

KS: Our second record, *Bottom of the Fifth*, was released in mid-2025—an homage to booze and baseball. We have some exciting shows coming up in 2026 with our pals The Honeymans out of Kimberley... they have a new album out, too!

AU: Any plans for the Holidayz this year?

KS: Dave (bassist) and I are waiting for Andy (drummer boy for the ensemble) to invite us for a big supper, a hot-tub soak, and plenty of drinks... just like Thanksgiving.

AU: What's the best way for people to hear your music and find you online?

KS: The Adits can be found on every streaming platform, in your sister's earbuds, or by buying one of our records! theadits.bandcamp.com Message us on socials: [instagram.com/the_adits](https://www.instagram.com/the_adits)





HOCKEY MOMS

Interview with singer Mac Dahl

By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today, and what are you most known—or notorious—for?

Mac Dahl: Hello, my name is Mac Dahl or Mac Whippersnapper. I guess I'm best known for my stage presence? More for being the guy that jumps around too much, ha ha.

AU: Which band are you in, where are you based and how would you describe what the band is all about?

MD: I was the vocalist in the Hockey Moms. We were a Lethbridge-based punk band. Due to my interprovincial move, we're no longer active. We were known for our fast paced, raw, energetic

music and live shows. We jokingly got the moniker of "Lethbridge's favourite punk band". Our band was pretty much about four friends pushing themselves to the musical limits and trying to blend our different styles. It was, and still is, extremely difficult to label what music we made. We were called street punk, hardcore, punk, everything and anything.

AU: What Canadian punk band and song did you choose to cover for Punk Canada and what drew you to that band or track?

MD: We picked Knucklehead's "Shotdown", 1989. Knucklehead was the bee's knees! It's our love letter to one of the best Alberta punk bands. My first exposure to them was in 2008 or 2009. I was 16, pissed about the lack of all ages punk shows and too lazy to sneak into bars constantly. So the first show I ever put on was Knucklehead, Rum Runner and Falling Planos. This show was really the first time I was exposed to the fantastic

scene in Lethbridge, the first time I met lifelong friends and the first time seeing the legendary Knucklehead. I became a huge fan. Watching and listening to their music live was inspirational. We blew the PA when my high school punk band played so we had to run everything through cheap guitar cabs. There were kids skating in the back of the hall. The pit was huge. The bathrooms were trashed. Just pure chaos and love. Knucklehead sounded even better through the shitty distorted cabs. Covering "Shotdown" for me was a love letter to that night. Greg (GG Scallywag) was a fixture of the scene for 20 plus years with The Scallywags as well as Hockey Moms. As soon as I brought it up with the guys, GG didn't hesitate in saying the song is one of his favourites. The cover is now a love letter to our fallen hero of Calgary and Lethbridge punk rock, Brody Scallywag. He did backing vocals on the track.

AU: Is there another Canadian punk band or song you'd like to cover in the future?

MD: At the time, I so badly wanted to cover Rebel Spell or Wednesday Night Heroes. I also brought up SNFU. It was a hard "no" because we covered "Drunk on a Bike" for a split we did with our dear friends The Spewers. We did it as a tribute to Chi. GG was lucky enough to work with him out in Vancouver. He used some of the outtakes, which is super cool. I did move out to BC. There's always a possibility that I'll be back on stage covering these amazing bands. Same with the rest of the Moms. Hands down, some of the best musicians and guys to be around.

AU: Do you have any new releases, projects or upcoming shows you'd like to plug?

MD: There may be a reunion at some point. I miss playing shows and the guys in the Moms so much. I am currently working on putting shows on in Chilliwack, BC. My company, Stay Honest Promotions, is always looking for new connections and great bands. As far as new releases, we do have an EP that needs to be mixed. I would love to get it out someday.

AU: What's the best way for people to hear your music and find you online?

MD: The best place to listen to the Hockey Moms is on Bandcamp: hockeymomsband.bandcamp.com

AU: Any final message for the readers, listeners or future punks out there?

MD: Just fucking do it. Do it with a god damn smile on your face. Express yourself. Make the noises you want to make. Be the most authentic person you want to be. Maybe Paul will reach out to you. Do digging. Go online on Bandcamp. Go to shows. Go to

record stores. Put on shows. Meet all the new people. But always remember to love yourself, love unconditionally, keep that PMA and UP THE PUNX!!



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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DECEMBER

- 1st - Open Mic
- 3rd - Brodie Christ & Garrett Lajole
- 4th - Zero End, Spiral 8, I ♥ My UJT, Karma Farm, Sam Brown
- 5th - Cover Night; Metwist plays Tony Hawk Songs, Sullen as PJ Harvey, QEW as Title Fight, Flake as L7
- 6th - Evelyns, Lip Crunch, Green White Checkered, F-Bombs, The Deprecates, Fast-Eddie
- 7th - Just Amsterdam food drive show w/ guests
- 8th - Open Mic Comedy
- 12th - The Approximators- Live Band Karaoke
- 13th - The 45 Selector- Outer Limits Dance Party
- 15th - Open Mic
- 17th - Punk Rock Sewing Pit
- 18th - Danceland with Ryan and Friends
- 19th - Dyke Takeover
- 20th - Flannel & Femme- Drag Party
- 22nd - Open Mic Comedy
- 26th - BA Johnston with guests
- 28th - Dartboard, Heart Shaped Bead, with guests
- 31st - Something Strange presents; New Year's Eve Freakshow

JANUARY

- 2nd - Hellbent Rockets with guests
- 3rd - Carousel with guests
- 5th - Open Mic
- 8th - Paper Petals with guests
- 9th - Pretty Face, Consuming Misery, Second Death, Thou Shalt
- 10th - The 45 Selector- Outer Limits Dance Party
- 11th - MOTHER- Monthly drag night
- 12th - Open Mic Comedy
- 16th - Junestine- with guests
- 17th - Asterknox with guests
- 18th - 4Life & Smit
- 19th - Open Mic
- 23rd - Conor Hart, Mike Legere, Emma Whale
- 25th - Green Mountain Road with guests
- 26th - Open Comedy Mic
- 29th - Noise Hotel with guests
- 30th - Droids Osaka with guests
- 31st - The Approximators- Live Band Karaoke



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Photo by Sean Wesley Wood @sugardrop1e

SCRIBBENS

Interview with singer Nigel Hanks
By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today, and what are you most known—or notorious—for?

NH: Hi, today you are talking to Nigel. I am not known for much to be honest. Certainly not known for notoriety.

AU: Which band are you in, where are you

based, and how would you describe what the band is all about?

NH: I am in the band Scribbens from Prince George BC. Corbin plays drums, Clay plays bass. I sing and play air guitar. I think we are about bringing something that not everyone would like, something a little bit different and a style of music that we love to play. We wanted to be the band we want to see live.

AU: How did you first get into punk, and who were the Canadian acts that shaped you early on?

NH: Early on acts like Subhumans and Propagandhi really got me going. I played in a shitty punk band in 1995 locally and it was pretty fun.

AU: What Canadian punk band and song did you choose to cover for *Punk Canada*, and what drew you to that band or track?

NH: We chose to cover NoMeansNo's amazing song "Stocktaking" because it has truly compelling lyrics and a satisfying yet simplistic approach to the instrumentation. So simplistic we had to rehearse that one song for weeks just to get it close to how they did it. The song begins with a question and is fearlessly honest and a bit snarky, which is the language I am most fluent in.

AU: Is there another Canadian punk band or song you'd like to cover in the future?

NH: We probably won't want to do any covers ever again. But it was a really fun experience and we were thrilled to be able to cover NMN. We really broke our own rule, our no-cover rule, on this one. We are glad we did but we will not bend like that any more. I really want to cover a song by Quesnel band No Big D (they are great) but again, we likely won't be breaking our no-covers rule anytime soon. Sorry!

AU: If someone is discovering your band for the first time through this project, what's the one song of yours they need to hear?

NH: Oh nice. I dunno, I think "An IOU" just because it's very unlike the rest of our songs, which all sound the same to people.

AU: What are you listening to right now—Canadian or otherwise—that's keeping you inspired?

NH: Right now I am listening to ESG, formed in the late 70s, and yeah, I love their music. They remind me of Nice as Fuck, another favourite of mine.

AU: What's your favourite Canadian punk memory—show, scene, moment or mishap?

NH: I really enjoyed watching The Rebel Spell

perform. I guess that might be a highlight.

AU: Do you have any new releases, projects or upcoming shows you'd like to plug?

NH: We are working on a new album and if it comes it comes. We have a no-rush policy. We would rather take forever to get songs we love playing than slap a bunch of garbage together that we will be forced to regurgitate. So even though we would love to enjoy the end result of having songs to perform that are less than five years old, it wouldn't do us any good if we had 12 new songs we didn't believe in.

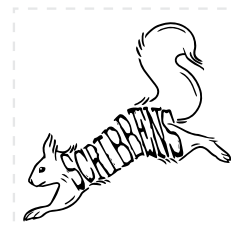
AU: What's the best way for people to hear your music and find you online?

NH: We have vinyl copies of the *Punk Canada* comp, so let us know if you want one. Larry might still have some for sale at Prince George's

Second Thoughts store. You can also find us online: scribbens.bandcamp.com. We went with DistroKid to distribute our music, so likely any streaming service you prefer you will be able to hunt down our album *Live at Last*. It might autocorrect our name to "Scribens"—it's "Scribbens"—so take precautions.

AU: Any final message for the readers, listeners or future punks out there?

NH: I really like it when people use their musical endeavours to be brave enough to say how they feel about things. It can be really scary and not everyone will agree with you, but doing that with your friends together and making music you love, and maybe if other people enjoy it as well, is a great feeling. Have fun doing this too. That has been the whole point for me. And try new things. It can be very rewarding (as well as isolating lol)





MD: "Limbo Leader" by My Dog Popper—we had a long-time friendship with them. We loved them, and they supported us a lot in the beginning. Great band too!

AU: Is there another Canadian punk band or song you'd like to cover in the future?

MD: Yes, but we all have different opinions and ideas—all good ones—so we'd have to give it more thought. For

example, The Nils' "Scratches and Needles" was a close second.

AU: What's the best way for people to hear your music and find you online?

MD: Find us online, including on **Bandcamp:** armedandhammered.bandcamp.com

AU: What are you listening to right now—Canadian or otherwise—that's keeping you inspired?

MD: Newer bands like SAGO, Stand Against Fear, Iron Moose, H.A.L.T., Susans, TV Freaks, Black Budget, Emma Goldman, Peach Pact, Rebel Grrrlz, and Above Top Secret.

AU: Any final message for the readers, listeners, or future punks out there?

MD: Stay hard, stay close, stay punk.

ARMED AND HAMMERED

Interview with singer Mopa Dean

By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today, and what are you most known—or notorious—for?

Mopa Dean: Mopa—known or notorious for being involved with community radio and loving animals.

AU: Which band are you in, where are you based, and how would you describe what the band is all about?

MD: Armed and Hammered, based in Toronto. Punk rock, hardcore, social justice.

AU: What Canadian punk band and song did you choose to cover for *Punk Canada*, and what drew you to that band/track?

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Abortions, SNFU, D.O.A., Random Killing and, of course, Ripcordz. We had a fantastic local punk scene in Sault Ste. Marie.

AU: What Canadian punk band and song did you choose to cover for *Punk Canada* and what

AVOID THE COMMENT SECTION

Interview with guitarist Ash Richtig

By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today, and what are you most known—or notorious—for?

Ash Richtig: My name is Ash, guitarist for Avoid The Comment Section.

AU: Which band are you in, where are you based and how would you describe what the band is all about?

AR: ATCS is based out of Windsor, Ontario. We write political songs and also fun songs.

AU: How did you first get into punk and who were the Canadian acts that shaped you early on?

AR: I grew up in Northern Ontario in the 90s, where all the great Canadian punk bands on tour had to pass through, such as Daylo

drew you to that band or track?

AR: We covered "Dead End Violence" by GrimSkunk on Vol. 4. I've been a fan of theirs since the 90s.



AU: Is there another Canadian punk band or song you'd like to cover in the future?

AR: We have covered other Canadian bands such as Kittens and Random Killing, to name a few.

AU: Do you have any new releases, projects or upcoming shows you'd like to plug? Any plans for the Holidayze?

AR: We are currently in writing mode for the winter.

AU: What's the best way for people to hear your music and find you online?

AR: The best way to hear us is **Instagram:** [instagram.com/avoidthecommentsection](https://www.instagram.com/avoidthecommentsection) or **Facebook:** [facebook.com/avoidthecommentsection](https://www.facebook.com/avoidthecommentsection), until we get a Bandcamp page together.

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ARTIFICIAL DISSEMINATION

Interview with guitarist Shawna T. Heist & drummer Jamie Problem

By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today, and what are you most known—or

notorious—for?

Artificial Dissemination: Hi! My name is Shawna T. Heist and I'm most known for being a guitarist in many punk bands in Toronto since the 1990s. And... Jamie Problem here! Known for Problem Children in the 1980s/90s, and for promoting over 100 monthly Sunday Slamfests at This Ain't Hollywood in Hamilton from 2011–2020.

AU: Which band are you in, where are you based, and how would you describe what the band is all about?

AD: We are Artificial Dissemination—A.D. for short. We're based in Hamilton, in Southern OntTerrible. We've been spreading awareness about "fake news" since 2013, well before the dawning of Orange Cheeto Dust. Our view of where the world is headed is pretty close to the world depicted in the Mad Max movies. And the news, as reported in the media, is akin to the gossip columns written in that Hollywood rag called the National Enquirer: FAKE. Artificial. Use your brain to untangle truth from lies!

AU: What Canadian punk band and song did you choose to cover for Punk

Canada, and what drew you to that band/track?

AD: We covered "Hate Generation" by Direct Action (Toronto). We chose Direct Action because they were one of the seminal and influential hardcore punk bands in Southern Ontario in the early 1980s, when we were both getting into the scene. The lyrics are still completely relevant over 40 years later, and they fit perfectly with

the concept of 21st-century bands covering 20th-century bands. We also noticed that Direct Action was often referred to as D.A., and we are known as A.D., which is a cool mirror image of two generations.

AU: Is there another Canadian punk band or song you'd like to cover in the future?

AD: We seldom do covers, so it's not front and centre in our thoughts. If a similar type of compilation or project were to come up in the future, we would pick a song that fits that specific theme.

AU: If someone is discovering your band for the first time through this project, what's the one song of yours they need to hear?

AD: "Robot Apocalypse," from the album *Modern Day Peasants* (2020).

AU: What are you listening to right now—Canadian or otherwise—that's keeping you inspired?

AD: Stompin' Tom, arguably Canada's first punk—his music and work ethic are an inspiration, and he stuck to his convictions. We are also inspired by every new band coming along that we play with or get to see live.

AU: Do you have any new releases, projects, or upcoming shows you'd like to plug?

AD: We had a busy 2025 touring Ontario, Quebec, and Eastern Canada, and our last show of the year is December 6. We are playing the Hamilton show for the BROKE & HUNGRY national food drive. Bands from across the country are coming together to raise awareness of the growing problem of food insecurity in Canada. There's also a digital compilation containing 56 songs from some of these bands at: <https://tttantrum.bandcamp.com/album/broke-hungry-canada>. All proceeds from the shows and the comp go directly to reputable food-sharing programs in each band's respective city. Equalizing X Distort on CIUT 89.5FM (University of Toronto campus radio) aired the interview with the organizer,



Twitchy Tantrum, on November 30. EXD is the most amazing long-standing punk show in Toronto (since the 1990s!) and airs every Sunday from 10 p.m. to midnight.

They post all shows to their enormous archives/blog/website so people can listen from anywhere in the world at any time—if you missed the live airing. By the time this interview is published, this event will be over. But there will probably be another one next year, so keep your eyes peeled if you want to participate in 2026!

AU: Any plans for the Holidaze this year?

AD: Drinking, feasting, resting... and strategizing our plans for 2026.

AU: What's the best way for people to hear your music and find you online?

AD: www.Artificial-Dissemination.com

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NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

Interview with vocalist Grant Forsythe

By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today, and what are you most known—or notorious—for?

Grant Forsythe: I'm Grant. I have too many records and a tattoo of the one-eyed monster from the 1968 film *The Green Slime*. Clearly, I'm no one's idea of an ideal son-in-law.

AU: Which band are you in, where are you based, and how would you describe what the band is all about?

GF: I'm in the band Neighbourhood Watch. Our footnote in the history of Maritime punk is that we were the first New Brunswick band to have a record out (much respect to Graeme Price for taking a chance on us all those years ago). We hail from Fredericton, The City of Stately Elms. What

are we all about? Man, we're just a small-town band with some things to say. Nothing more and nothing less.

AU: What Canadian punk band and song did you choose to cover for *Punk Canada*, and what drew you to that band/track?

GF: For *Punk Canada Vol. 2* we covered "Tanks Keep Rollin'" by Winnipeg powerhouse Unwanted. I've always loved that song, so that was my suggestion. The others just went along with it. I honestly don't think we did it justice, but I'm my worst critic, so...

AU: Is there another Canadian punk band or song you'd like to cover in the future?

GF: So many amazing bands I'd love to cover. Off the top of my head: House of Commons, System Overload, No Policy, The Craze and Guilt Parade.

AU: How did you first get into punk and which Canadian acts shaped you early on?

GF: My first audio exposure was the song "London Calling". That pretty much rewired my brain. As for formative Canadian acts that ruined any chances of being an upstanding citizen, I lay the blame squarely on these records: Painted Sticks *Perfect Youth* LP, The Action TV's *On the Blink* 12" EP, Subhumans *Incorrect Thoughts* LP, Viletones *Screaming Fist* EP.

AU: What's your favourite Canadian punk memory—show, scene, moment, or mishap?

GF: My favourite would be the first time we played Halifax back in the 80s. I had no idea what to expect, but it was crazy. We got there in the afternoon and there were punks, skins, skaters all over the place. It was the first time I saw "punk" as being a community. Maybe a little naive on my part, but it was certainly a good feeling.

AU: If someone is discovering your band for the first time through this project, what's the one song of yours they need to hear?

GF: That's for the listener to decide, but I think "Bought & Sold" was an appropriate track for the compilation.

AU: What are you listening to right now—Canadian or otherwise—that's keeping you inspired?

GF: I'm all over the place: everything from the furious years of Italian hardcore punk to 80s Deutschpunk to current Canadian bands like Alien Boys, Home Front, Forbidden Dimension, Hard Charger, Which Witch Is Which and Cell Deth. The list is seemingly endless.

AU: Do you have any new releases, projects, or upcoming shows you'd like to plug?

GF: Our next show is Dec. 6, then back to finish recording. We have a show slated for March in Saint John at the legendary Panic Room. We're also returning to our Punks 4 Paws benefit shows for local animal rescues, though no dates have been confirmed yet.

AU: Any plans for the *Holidaze* this year?

GF: Visit some family, that's about it for me. As for our band's co-founder Ciaron Lewis, he is a professional Santa, so he will bring Christmas cheer to all the little punks, old and young alike.



AU: What's the best way for people to hear your music and find you online?

GF: The best way to experience us is with the vinyl pressing of our self-titled 2020 album (we have a handful of copies left), which comes with a pretty swanky embroidered patch, or through

Bandcamp: neighbourhoodwatchband.bandcamp.com. If you dig a little, you can still find our debut EP *Death at the Hands of Time* on Discogs-type sites. It's also available as a digital download on Bandcamp. The best way to reach us is via **Facebook:** [facebook.com/NeighbourhoodWatchBand](https://www.facebook.com/NeighbourhoodWatchBand)





Jeremy: I'm the guitarist/vocalist in Toronto-based hardcore punk band A.S.O.P., which stands for Apple Sized Olive Project -- but we switch it up, and try to come up with a new meaning for A.S.O.P. at each live show. Our drummer's love of olives, but his general complaint that they are too small, put us on a mission to create a new breed of olive that is the size of an apple. As a band, we're all about having fun and playing the music we love, without taking our musical and lyrical content lightly. We write

A.S.O.P.

Interview with guitarist/vocalist Jeremy

By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today, and what are you most known—or notorious—for?

Jeremy: I'm Jeremy. What I'm known for probably depends on who you ask... to some I'm just a geeky, intellectual, introvert scientist... to a local contingent, I'm the guy who leads traditional wartime Ukrainian call-and-response chants at the Ukraine benefit shows that we've played... I've been accused by other vocalists of writing way too many lyrics for songs... to our drummer, I'm one of two lucky individuals fortunate enough to be in the band of the sexiest, most sought after drummer in the scene. Perhaps the one thing that I'm actually more broadly known for is wearing shorts all year round (not just on stage).

AU: Which band are you in, where are you based, and how would you describe what the band is all about?

high energy songs that incorporate different levels of technicality, mixing in abrupt, tight starts and stops and lyrics that often provide clever and provocative takes on issues of the time. For us, music is an outlet, a medium of expression, and the soundtrack for voicing some of our views, perspectives, and frustrations.

AU: What Canadian punk band and song did you choose to cover for Punk Canada, and what drew you to that band/track?

Jeremy: We covered the song "Corporate Cog" by Guilt Parade. Musically and lyrically, I've always appreciated Guilt Parade and feel like they are under-rated. Their sound was unique and had a certain breadth to it, containing a variety of musical styles and some great technical elements, along with clever lyrics. They wrote so many great songs, but when it came to choosing one, I really needed to consider what I would realistically be able to handle when it came to the guitar parts -- Jeff Beardall is capable of much more than me on guitar -- and I wanted to make sure that we could inject our own style in a way that would hopefully do justice to the original. Lyrically, it also holds as true today as it did when Guilt Parade wrote it (perhaps even more so).

AU: Is there another Canadian punk band or song you'd like to cover in the future?

Jeremy: Too many great bands and songs to choose from to be able to comment on that now. We really focus on writing original material rather than working on cover songs, so narrowing it down realistically wouldn't happen until the opportunity presented itself again.

AU: How did you first get into punk, and who were the Canadian acts that shaped you early on?

Jeremy: Back in the 80s, there was a Saturday night college radio show called Arg Rock/Aggressive Rock on CKLN. My older brother started tuning in and I was quickly hooked on what I heard. Early on, the Canadian bands



are tracks that would give people a good feel for what we're about.

AU: Any plans for the Holidayz this year?

Jeremy: We ended up having to turn down a couple of holiday shows this year, since our drummer is likely out of



commission until the new year while he recovers from his recent carpal tunnel surgery. My plan is to work on a bunch of lyrics for all the riffs I have written, so that we can hopefully pull together enough new songs and get back in to the studio to record a new full release in 2026.

AU: What's the best way for people to hear your music and find you online?

Jeremy: All of our releases, complete with lyrics, can be found on **Bandcamp: asop.bandcamp.com**, which

also has links to our social media.



AU: If someone is discovering your band for the first time through this project, what's the one song of yours they need to hear?

Jeremy: It's tough to pick just one song, but probably "Crazy Times" or "Oxymoronic World"

Photo credit: Paul Gott



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the opportunity to cover it!

AU: Is there another Canadian punk band or song you'd like to cover in the future?

J: We are all big fans of the legendary SNFU, so something from their catalogue! I'm originally from Alberta, so gotta give a shout-out to Knucklehead and

Wednesday Night Heroes—would love to cover one of their tracks one day.

AU: If someone is discovering your band for the first time through this project, what's the one song of yours they need to hear?

J: One of our newest releases is called "All Blood Bleeds Red." It's an anti-racist song, and I think it's very pertinent considering the current political climate in the United States.

AU: Do you have any new releases, projects, or upcoming shows you'd like to plug?

J: We recently whipped up a 7" split with our buddies The Fomites. It's called Split a Slice. And we're currently working on a bunch of new tunes.

AU: What are you listening to right now—Canadian or otherwise—that's keeping you inspired?

J: Territories, Béton Armé, First Attack, Bootlicker, Chain Whip, Languid, No Brainer, The Fomites, Home Front,

WAIT//LESS, Pagans of Northumberland, Alien Boys, The Buzzers, Phane.

AU: Any plans for the Holiday this year?

J: Some beers and Christmas cheer. And hopefully some pow turns in the mountains. A couple of our members have kids, so hopefully some sick Lego sets?

AU: What's the best way for people to hear your music and find you online?

J: Bandcamp works great, and you can pick up merch from there too! terminalcityrats.bandcamp.com

AU: Any final message for the readers, listeners, or future punks out there?

J: Punk rock is essential in this day and age. It is a reckoning force that stands up against injustices and wrongs in this messed-up world we're living in, while helping individuals and the group (punks, skins, and freaks) alike. Stay punk, stay free, have fun, and don't take yourself too seriously.

TERMINAL CITY RATS

Interview with singer, Jameson

By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today, and what are you most known—or notorious—for?

Jameson: Whaddup, punks!?! It's Jameson here—noise maker and show promoter. How's everyone doing?

AU: Which band are you in, where are you based, and how would you describe what the band is all about?

J: East Vancouver's most hated and dedicated melodic street punk band, Terminal City Rats. We like making anthemic punk tunes for the young guns at all-ages gigs and the old dawgs who stand at the back.



AU: How did you first get into punk, and who were the Canadian acts that shaped you early on?

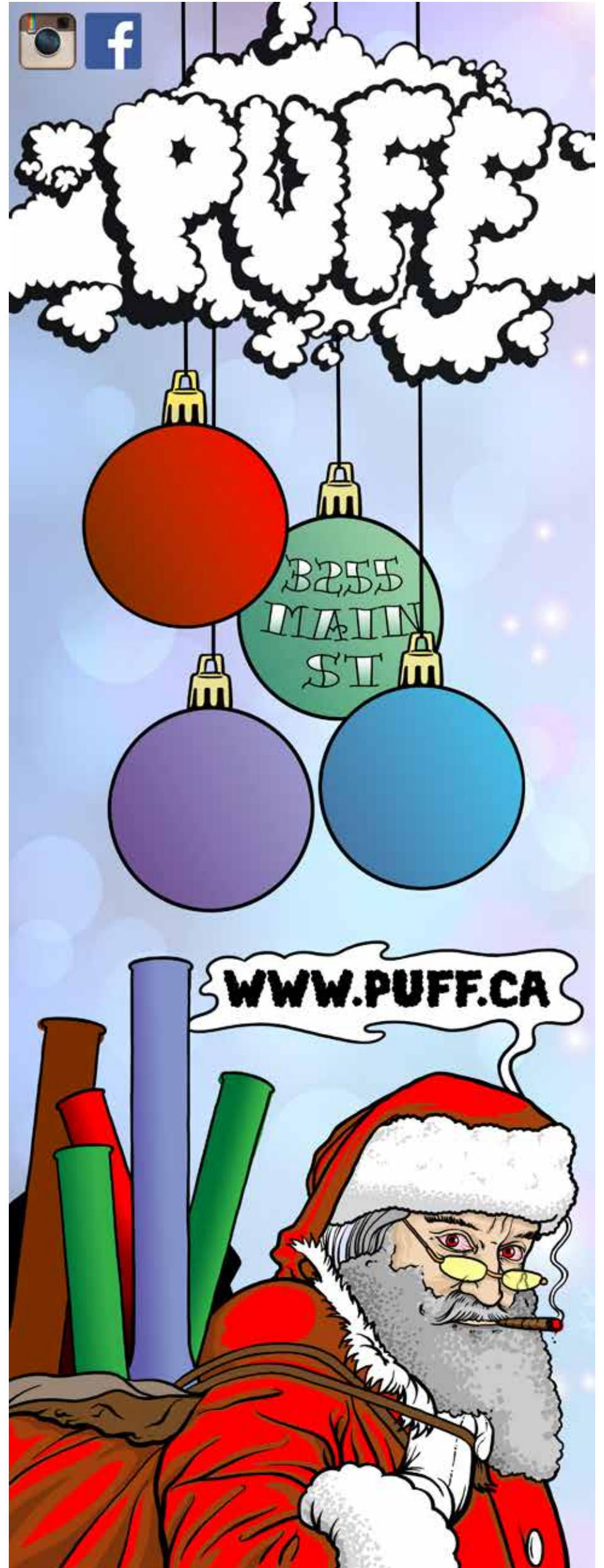
J: One of my first gigs when I was 12 was seeing Knucklehead and Ripcordz open for The Misfits at the old MacHall in Calgary. There was no turning back after that.

AU: What's your favourite Canadian punk memory—show, scene, moment, or mishap?

J: I got to see The Rebel Spell open for The Restarts in an old Victorian punk house in East Van called Chateau Noir. That was pretty freakin' epic. The place was packed! It's always funny to see our drummer, Marco, dressed as a chicken being crowd-surfed several blocks down East Hastings, from dive bar to dive bar, when he's playing in The Dreadnoughts.

AU: What Canadian punk band and song did you choose to cover for Punk Canada, and what drew you to that band/track?

J: "Anarchy" by Ripcordz, from the album *There Ain't No H in Ripcordz, Dork-Face*. Thanks, Paul, for



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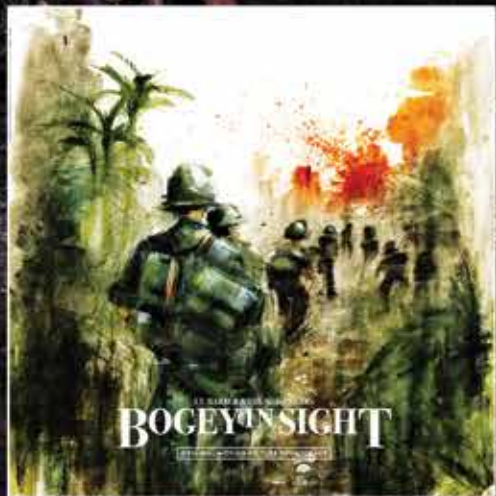
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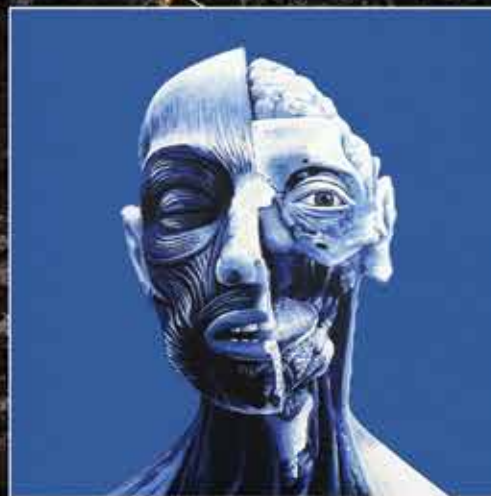


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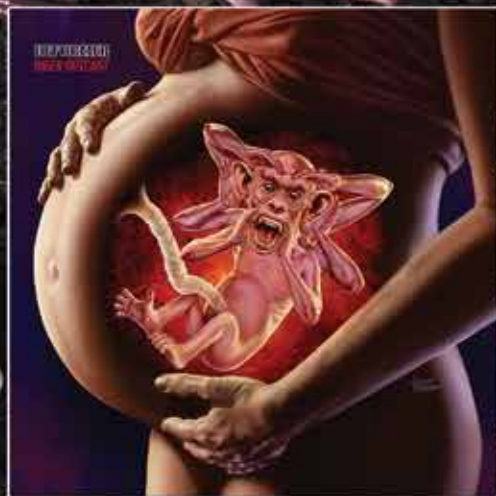
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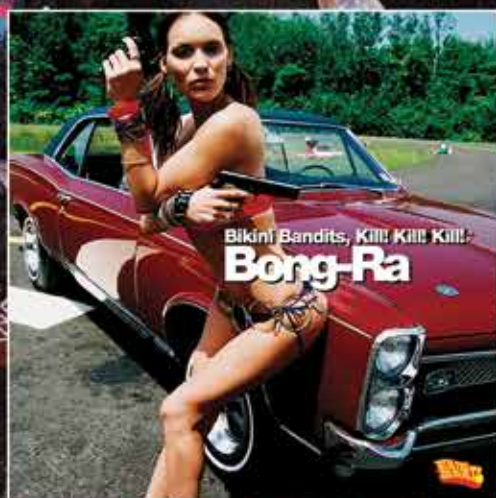
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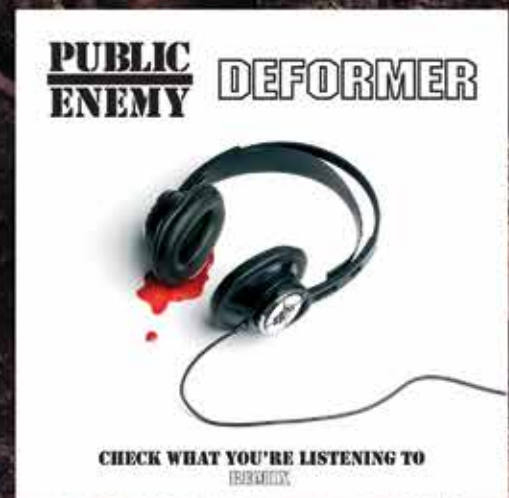
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THE BORDERGUARDS

Interview with Mike Blammo and Victator, Victor Pratt

By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today, and what are you most known—or notorious—for?

Mike Blammo: Mike Blammo. I am most known for removing my pants on stage in previous years, but not so much with BG.

Victator, Victor Pratt: My name is Victor Pratt. I am probably notorious for making the world a more colourful place in my former Doc Marten-wearing years.

AU: Which band are you in, where are you based, and how would you describe what the band is all about?

MB: I play bass for The Borderguards and we are spread to the four winds in terms of location. I am in the Edmonton area along with our vocalist Rod. Vic (guitars/founder) and Darren (drums) are in Calgary, and Dan (lead guitars) is in Kelowna. The band is all about inclusion and doing your part. There is a solid spirit of fighting for what you believe in, and also drinking.

V: I play guitar and write for The Borderguards. I strive to keep the band focused on playing high-energy street punk for common, working-class people. We do not have a specific political stance. The band's name comes from an early Red Alert track of the same name and means nothing more than standing up for, and staying true to, yourself. I simply want people to enjoy themselves



when they listen to the band and have a beer. If the listener has done this, then I have achieved my goal. If you want a good idea of what the band is about, listen to "We Gotta Go!" or "4 Chords & The Truth" from our previous work, or "Arms Race", "Working Class Zero", or "Liquor Pig" from our latest work.

AU: How did you first get into punk, and who were the Canadian acts that shaped you early on?

MB: I wanted to play bass to be in bands and get chicks, but then the ska/punk wave hit, so I had to learn to play reasonably well. Canadian punk bands that definitely shaped me were NoMeansNo, Propagandhi, D.O.A. and SNFU. The Dayglos always have a special place in my heart.

V: I had been listening to punk since I was about 11 or 12 but really became a committed punk rocker at about 15. I listened to Ripcordz, Death Sentence, Forbidden Dimension and The Dayglo Abortions quite heavily back then.

AU: What Canadian punk band and song did you choose to cover for Punk Canada, and

what drew you to that band/track?

V: We covered "Dreamdate" by Forbidden Dimension. When I was a teen, I listened to Forbidden Dimension a lot and always wanted to play some of their stuff. When we were trying to decide which song to cover, I suggested "Dreamdate" to the band because I always loved it. This compilation gave me a great opportunity to live out my teenage dream of playing it.

AU: Is there another Canadian punk band or song you'd like to cover in the future?

MB: Personally, I'd love to cover some Dayglos or Propagandhi. Not sure about the other guys.

V: I would like to cover one of several songs off "There Ain't No 'H' In Ripcordz, Dork-Face" by Ripcordz, or "68 Hours" by National Velvet. They were more alternative than punk, but this particular song has a fun Ramones groove.

AU: What's your favourite Canadian punk memory—show, scene, moment, or mishap?

MB: In a previous band, I played the "Alf House", a punk squat in Vancouver. It reeked of piss and the basement was gutted. Stealing power from houses nearby, they crammed 40 kids into a basement with a roof no more than 3 inches from my head. I thought I was going to die, but it was a ton of fun. One extension cord, one trouble light, and 40 crust punks losing their shit.

V: I saw D.O.A. at an all-ages show in Calgary in 1993. It was a life-changing event and one of the funnest, craziest shows I have ever attended in my entire life. The show was packed, with 40-year-olds in the mosh pit along with 15-year-olds. Everyone was having an amazing time together. It really showed me that music, and punk rock in particular, does not have any age boundaries. Also, meeting Paul Gott for the first time when Ripcordz played in Calgary around 1995 and asking him to play some of my favourite Ripcordz material live, which they did, was pretty cool. Years later, I would be lucky enough to open for both D.O.A. and Ripcordz in my own punk rock band, The Borderguards.

AU: Do you have any new releases, projects, or upcoming shows you'd like to plug?

V: We just released a split 7" record on blue vinyl with the Motherfuckers last year. We also released five brand-new songs on a split cassette with a fantastic street punk band from Kirov, Russia called Old Robbers on Clockwork Punk Label out of Moscow. The split will eventually be released on vinyl in Canada, but for now, it is exclusive to the Russian punk scene. Right now, we are working on a three-way split release with an ass-kicking American Oi! band from San Antonio, Texas called Blood n Beer, and a street punk band from Santiago, Chile called LOS DEAD. Each band has committed three songs to this split, which we aim to release in 10" format with a booklet or poster. Two smaller independent labels, Attack With Force Productions out of Saskatoon and Burning Bridges out of Lethbridge, are cooperating to carry the release here.

AU: Any plans for the Holidaze this year?

MB: I am old as hell and have young kids, so mainly trying not to die. I also want to get to writing some new tracks so we can work on something newer. I believe most of the guys are in the same boat, minus the kids for the rest of them.

V: Good times with good friends and family.

AU: What's the best way for people to hear your music and find you online?

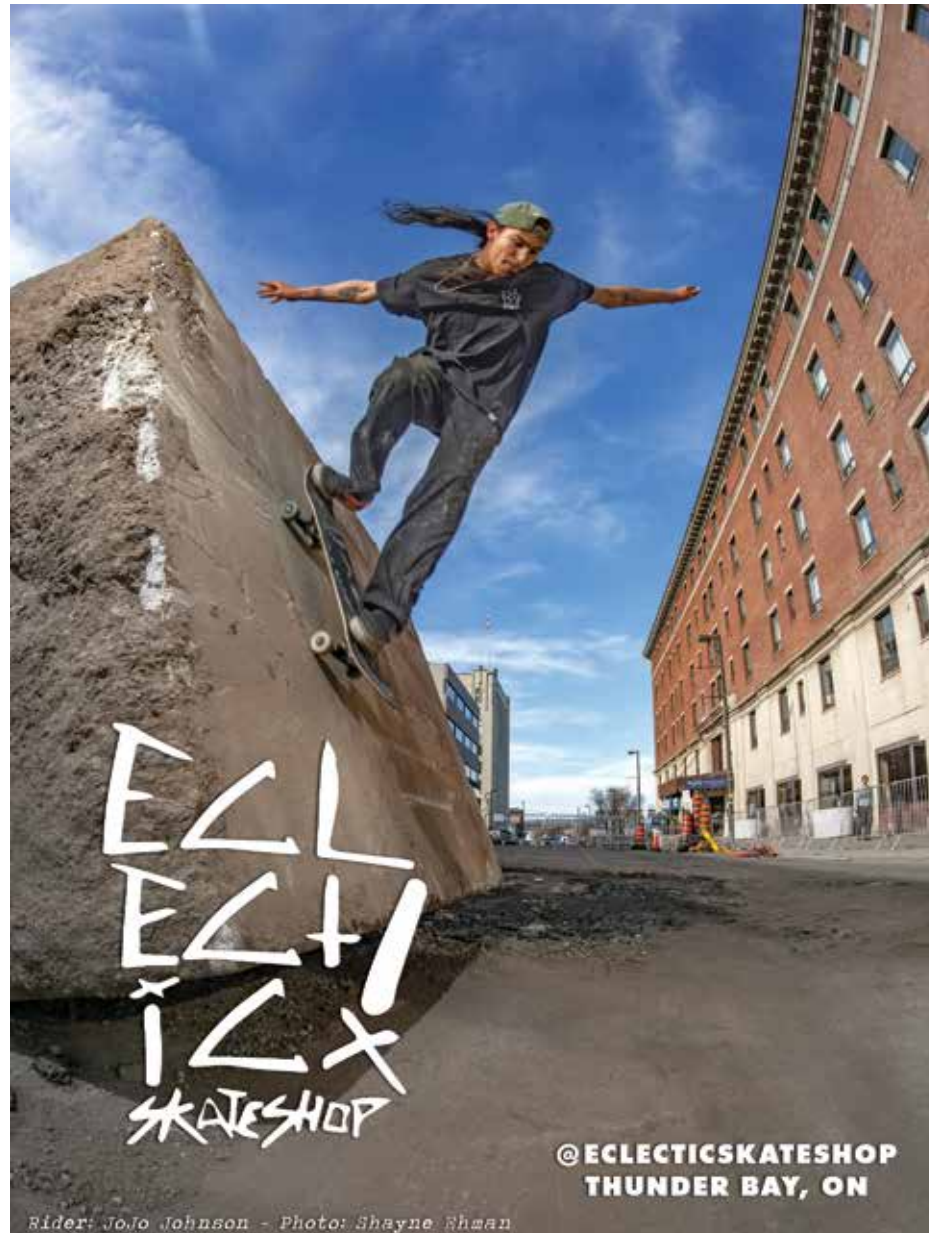
MB: YouTube is the best way to get introduced to our music. There are older albums and compilations, as well as some newer tracks we have worked on.

V: We have some stuff on YouTube (look up "Borderguards band") and you can check us out on our **Bandcamp: borderguardsrnr.bandcamp.com**

If you are looking for something specific, such as a shirt or release, you can email us at **borderguards_band@gmx.com**. Send me your hate mail there, please.



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the window and what's in your cup!
Bonnie Leggat: I live in moq'wem (a swamp), enveloped in sk'ómexw (blackberry) and plagued with qwá:l. Temqwá:l, it's the end of mosquito time, so I have lám (rum) in my cup.

AU: Tell us about the origin of the project. How did the band come to be? Can you share the mission of the band and what you want to get across?

BL: Íwesá:ls (a guide, showing people) awakened. She, along with her fellow s'íkw' smestiyexw (lost souls), shares the metal history of First Nations through song. We are Lekwépsem, and our sole purpose is to spread the deadly lore of s'ólh téméxw (our land).

AU: The name of the band Lekwépsem is mentioned to translate as "break your neck". This is about as metal as it gets! How did the name come about?

BL: Our name is a fusion of metal and language, an invitation to all. Love us, bang your head, and break your neck. If you hate us, break your neck. Tsel ts'íthóme, thank you for the work you('ll) do.

AU: Can you tell us about how the newly released album



"Tómtomiyéqw: Man with the Club" has come to be? There is a powerful narrative woven in the songs. Where is the cultural basis or history for the songs? Who is the "Man with the Club"?

BL: Íwesá:ls learned of Tómtomiyéqw when she

travelled through Shxw'ówhámél, near Laidlaw, BC. His story is carried and passed on by Stó:ló cultural historian named Naxaxalhts'í, also known as Albert "Sonny" McHalsie.

Tómtomiyéqw lived in a cave near Hope, BC, overlooking the Stó:ló (Fraser River). His name translates to "One Who Upends Canoes", as his primary prey travelled up the Stó:ló. A brusque and violent man who felled his victims with a sturgeon club.

AU: Interspersing of the traditional language amidst the English lyrics is powerful to create a dual voice and different characters within the song... help us understand what language it is, and perhaps how you keep the vocabulary alive, which is used in the lyrics? Who are some of the characters that appear in the songs?

BL: Halq'eméylem is the Upriver dialect of the Halkomelem language, one of three dialects. Songwriting keeps the stories and language alive to be shared with others.

Tómtomiyéqw slowly leaves behind his humanity and is drawn to the call of Stl'áleqem (supernatural beings). The characters in his story include his family, his victims, his salvation and his doom.

AU: There are some sound samples/dual voices on the track "Lekwépsem (Break Your Neck)" which sounds similar to a female school teacher or perhaps a radio announcer - can you explain who that "voice" is and how it relates to the track?

BL: The role of Íwesá:ls is to guide and teach. She

intended to give a lighthearted lesson on why everyone should be more concerned about their neck health.

AU: There was also a hot second of "Sonic: The Hedgehog" soundtrack there... are you Sega Genesis fans? What is your most memorable game from this era?

BL: Crank it with Toejam & Earl.



AU: Tell us about some shows coming up, and touring plans for the new album! What's your angle? Where do you want to take the band?

BL: We're breaking some necks this New Year's Eve Celebration at the Slice in Lethbridge, 2025, with esteemed Metal guests "664-The Neighbour of the Beast".

Lekwépsem is looking forward to breaking necks worldwide.

AU: What is your aim with this newly released album? Is there a central message to your band which can help new listeners grasp the music more accurately?

BL: We're here to share the deadly story of Tómtomiyéqw. We're here to celebrate Indigenous excellence and history, one story at a time.

AU: Can you share how you blend the musical and cultural influences of the West Coast / Stó:ló / Coast Salish with Treaty 7 / Alberta?

BL: We blend by seeing and being.

AU: Last words to metal heads across the West Coast - send your message!

BL: Break your neck <3

[instagram.com/lekwepsem](https://www.instagram.com/lekwepsem)

lekwepsem.bandcamp.com

Lekwépsem – a coast Salish story told in metal

fighting out of Deroche, British Columbia and Treaty 7, Alberta – sharing stories with singer Bonnie Leggat

By Erik Lindholm

Absolute Underground: Good day friend, where are you now? Please share your view out

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OUTLYING

Interview with vocalist/guitarist Fred Dubeau

By Asher Thrasher

Absolute Underground: Welcome. Who are you and what do you do?

Fred Dubeau: Thank you! My name is Fred and I do vocals and play guitar in Outlying.

AU: You recently released *Oblivisci*. What can you tell us about it?

FD: We had many internal problems for years but were always coming up with ideas, riffs and lyrics. Everything was recorded here in Trois-Rivières on a low budget while trying to get the best result possible. Close to twenty songs were written and we picked the ones we felt worked best. We wanted a shorter record but failed, I guess, because it still runs close to an hour!

AU: *Oblivisci* explores trauma, alienation, grief and addiction. Why choose the Latin word for “to forget” and how does it reflect the album’s emotional arc?

FD: Our last records all had long titles, so we

wanted a change and went with one word this time. Using Latin made it stand out too. Since many songs deal with escapism and oblivion, the title fits the vibe perfectly.

AU: The three-part “Dreamless Nights” suite is based on your struggles with addiction. How did you turn that experience into a musical narrative?

FD: It took introspection. The three parts represent cycles that repeat in addiction. The first is about traits or events that push someone toward unhealthy coping mechanisms. The second is the false sense of bliss. The third deals with the consequences of those choices and how they make things worse. Each part needed its own musical and lyrical identity.

AU: Songs like “Stigma” and “Pitch-Black Serum” confront judgment and defeatism. Is Outlying’s music a response to society or more of a personal catharsis?

FD: A bit of both. Some say art is a reflection of society. The way I understand this statement is that even if you talk about personal stuff, many people often deal with similar issues. I often start with topics that affect me personally, then try to find a perspective where I can see how many

people could relate to it. I often find parallels between different things that many people would not normally associate with each other.

AU: Outlying blends aggression with melody, including power ballads like “Sentinel”. Why do these slower, emotional tracks resonate so strongly with your audience?

FD: For some reason, they’re often our audience’s favourites! Slower, melodic songs tend to express melancholic themes better. When *Scars of Daylight* was released, I worried I’d get backlash for “The Last Time” but for the most part, people really felt the song and appreciated it.

AU: The artwork shows a post-apocalyptic Trois-Rivières. How does that imagery tie into the theme of forgetting and withdrawing from reality?

FD: It’s cool not to be too predictable or tie the artwork too literally to the themes. It keeps things a bit more mysterious. But it’s personal for me because it’s a street corner near my apartment and has this sort of dreamy, nightmarish vibe that fits the album’s atmosphere.

AU: Each member joined the band through odd coincidences—from a radio show in France to a borrowed soldering iron. How have these encounters shaped the band’s chemistry?

FD: Our drummer discovered us on a small radio show in Quebec when he still lived in France. Honestly, we just became friends. I’m not sure coincidence really makes a difference! Sometimes in life, people come and they go, even people you knew for a long time. I think we’re grateful to have met each other.

AU: Trois-Rivières has a tight metal scene connected to bands like Strigampire and Hopeless Nation. How has that community

influenced Outlying?

FD: I believe Voivod are from Saguenay, but yeah, there are quite a few metal acts here and everyone knows each other but unfortunately, the underground scene has become fragmented and not everyone gets along. Outlying is a bit of a wildcard because we’re not really a product of the local scene. Our bassist Charles Alex, wasn’t active as a musician for years and is from the Victoriaville area and, well, our drummer is literally from another continent.

AU: You’ve handled audio production and graphic design since the start. How has that DIY approach evolved into the band’s creative process and what advantages does it give you?

FD: DIY has specific pros and cons. It’s cheaper and you can take the time you need, but it’s harder to consistently get top-notch quality results or keep a fresh perspective. Budget is still an issue for us, so I do most things myself, but I’ll likely involve more people on future record productions.

AU: Anything else you’d like to add for our

readers?

FD: Thank you very much to everyone who supports us and everyone who took the time to listen to the album. Thanks to *Absolute Underground* for the interview, very interesting questions, I really appreciated answering!

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CURSED BLESSINGS RECORDS



¡Sigan Luchando! Meet Rosa Venenosa of Toronto's Latin-Punk Battaladoras MALDITA! By Ferdy Belland

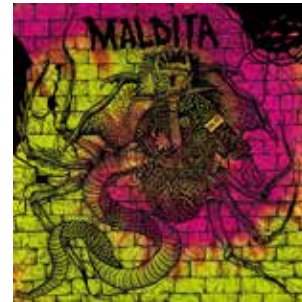
"Things are going very well for the band," says Rosa Venenosa, the fiery lead vocalist of Toronto's razor-sharp metallic punk desperadas Maldita. "I actually don't live in Toronto anymore. I moved out to Mission BC back in 2021, but I travel back to Ontario pretty often, since my family still lives there. The other guys get together every week for Maldita practice and they're all so musically active. Our guitarist Matt Black also plays in Last Agony, and our drummer Dylan also drums for Pests. Our previous bassist Stevie - who's the brainchild of the band - has now become our new second guitarist and our new bassist Alberto is also in Vestigio, which is another Latin Punk band. We're all good friends and we all get along

well! That's why we don't want to fold the band and start something new - we want to keep the gang together! We're just so excited by the wild welcome we get from the crowds - it's amazing! We have to keep our connection going! *Maldita Forever!*"

It does seem as if Maldita (translation: "Damned") will indeed be running forever, much to our joy. Their explosive new album *Un Mundo En Demencia* (translation: "A World Gone Mad") is a cojones-to-the-wall Hardcore Hurricane of a record - available for a fitting \$6.66 on their Bandcamp account - which delivers everything one could want in knuckles-clenched-white punk fury: bashing oil-can drumbeats, blurrily-insistent riff-havoc on the guitars, zippy melodic bass, and a pissed-off Latina barking out one defiant lyrical FTW after another. Half the songs don't even make it to the two-minute mark, which is just fucking awesome, but even the longest song (closing track "Egoismo", at 2:53) rockets by in a spitting flurry that leaves the listener breathless.

And that glowing assessment isn't singular.

"The album's been received pretty well!" beams Rosa. "We're very happy with how the studio time went with Preston Woundedpaw. But we're not resting - we have a bunch of songs that were left over from the recording sessions that will probably form the basis of a new album. I always listen closely to the instrumental tracks that the other guys compose, and I'll find Spanish words that go well with the riffs and the rhythms. I build the lyrics up from there. I'll draw inspiration from my experiences until everything fits into place. It's like magic! When it comes to the music, it's an equal democratic process between Mark and Dylan and Stevie - and now Alberto! - but the lyrics in Maldita are all me. And I'm always coming up with new lyrics - I mean, how couldn't ANYBODY come up with new punk-protest lyrics with everything that's going on in the world today? There's no lack of inspiration, for sure."



Which only proves that Punk Rock has always been needed, but it's needed now more than ever. "If ever we're invited to play a political protest where it's a good cause that matches with our values, then we'll definitely play those types of shows," says Rosa. "If there's any events which help to raise funds for oppressed groups, then we're there." In fact, Maldita was on the December 13th bill for the Benefit for Sistering holiday-fundraiser at Toronto's No No Room (formerly Doc Ellis' Basement), along with MRSA, Cult Crime, Pests, and Bad Egg.

"We opened up for Sacrifice on October 11th in Toronto at the Concert Hall - the wonderful old Masonic Temple on Yonge Street," gushes Rosa. "We used that performance as our official album release and that was a GREAT show - it was sold

out! We're talking over 700 people! Korrosive and Debellion were also on that bill - just awesome! I don't think I've ever fist-bumped that many people in one night! The last time we played for an audience that big was when we did this big festival down in Mexico. We got a lot of good feedback from that Sacrifice show - a lot of nice comments from people who really enjoyed the album. Conceptually, playing with Sacrifice isn't too far removed from us, especially with the subjects and concepts of our lyrics."

Maldita is certainly not alone in the crossover worlds of Latin Punk and Latin Metal. "I mean, we're big fans of Los Crudos, who've been a big influence for us," says Rosa. And there are exciting Spanish-language artists from across the world who would be deliriously happy to share stages with Rosa & Co.: Boikot, Rata Negra, Cuchillo de Fuego, Alcala Norte, Lendakaris Muertos, Ternura, Ataque 77, and Tungas, to name but a few. Even the Voodoo Glow Skulls recorded an entire Spanish-language album, *por el amor de Cristos!*

"We haven't been able to play as much across Latin America as we'd like, as yet, but we're working on it!" says Rosa. "We mostly play live across Eastern Canada - but coming up in April 2026 we'll be touring down the US West Coast! We have played Vancouver before, at the Have A Good Laugh Fest back in 2019, and that was an awesome great time. We're welcomed very warmly on both coasts! We're also looking forward to planning a tour in Europe, for next November. We're currently searching for a suitable promoter, or promoters, who can help us out. In the meantime - KEEP FIGHTING!"

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Inside the Monster Machine with Artist Ahmed Sidky

By Ira "Hellraiser" Hunter

Absolute Underground: Please introduce yourself. Who are we talking to and what are your skills to pay the bills?

Ahmed Sidky: Season's greetings to the misfits, night-owls and creatures reading this by the flicker of a dying bulb. I'm Ahmed Sidky — illustrator, character designer, and full-time conjurer of cartoon demons. I seem cosmically doomed to summon silly monsters whether I'm paid in cash, cackles or crooked smiles.

AU: How long have you been an artist? What got you started?

AS: Depending on who you ask, I've been an artist since birth — though the legal documents only acknowledge about 25 professional years. Before that, I was a plump, TV-motivated kid inspired by the neon magic of 1980s and 90s cartoons. I knew instantly: this is it. I drew along with my favourite shows, hoarded scraps of inspiration — magazines, cereal boxes, toy packaging — anything with a face on it. My older brother could draw comic heroes better than I could; his encouragement is probably why I kept going. Looking back, that era set the stage. Some spells never wear off, drawing and watching cartoons still mesmerizes me.

AU: How would you describe the art you create?

AS: Imagine a 90s cartoon that slipped past the censors and wandered into slightly stranger territory. That's my lane. I like it there. My shapes are simple and funny, my lines chunky and bold, my colours

unapologetically loud — but there's always a dark pulse running underneath. Cartoons don't need to be exclusively cute or cuddly; they can grin in the shadows and still charm your socks off. I like proving that when

I can.

AU: What are some of the major influences on your artistic style?

AS: Picture a museum curated by a sleep-deprived goblin child: vintage

horror, retro toys, mythic playground rumours, Halloween masks, Sega Genesis cartridges, and enough candy to summon dental demons. That's my artistic DNA.

If you want the gruesome specifics, steel yourself for my catalogue of influences: *The Addams Family*, *The Munsters*, *The Twilight Zone*, *Outer Limits*, *Resident Evil*, *Garbage Pail Kids*, *Wacky Packages*, *MTV Oddities* (*The Maxx*, *The Head*, *Aeon Flux*), *Spike & Mike's Twisted Animation*, *YTV*, *Daria*, *Beavis and Butt-Head*, *Scooby-Doo*, *Ren & Stimpy*, *The Venture Bros.*, *Looney Tunes*, *He-Man*, *Batman: TAS*, *TMNT*, *Beetlejuice*, *Jim Henson*, *Aqua Teen Hunger Force* — and the teachings of Stephen Silver, my former instructor and creator of the *Danny Phantom* character designs.

AU: What sort of stuff did you start out doing when you were first getting started?

AS: Like every budding heathen, I began by mangling other people's creations — *Batman*, *Wolverine*, *Count Chocula*, *Slimer* — all drawn with the anatomy of the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man. Eventually I sought redemption in life drawing, gesture studies, and character design. That's when the chaos in my brain gained structure. Painful, yes. Transformative, absolutely. I learned that structure isn't always visible in my art but it's there like a faithful old skeleton propping up my creations.



AU: What are some of your favourite projects you've been involved with?

AS: Almost always my own, because there's nothing like creative freedom right? Commission work can feel like babysitting someone else's imaginary friend. *Monster Machine*, on the other hand, is pure unfiltered joy — my strange playground, my epic tomb, my unapologetic evening ritual. No compromises, no revisions, no apologies. Just me screaming my heart out.

AU: What medium/media do you work in? Is there something new you've never tried?



AS: Pencil, paper and the glowing slab known as iPad. I've dabbled in painting, screen printing, sculpting, and animation over the years, but drawing remains my one true love. That said, I yearn in my bosom to collaborate with a 3D sculptor and transform my characters into toys. I'm pushing forward to make that dream happen one day. Also: practicing hand lettering — especially when

paired with a cold pilsner and the soundtrack of *Castlevania II - Simon's Quest* rattling my brain.

AU: What music do you listen to when you're working?

AS: Mostly synthwave, surf rock, horror soundtracks, and video-game anthems — I am what I am. I still love punk, metal, and hip-hop, but the cranky old man in me keeps shouting to turn it down. Still, eternal devotion goes to: *Death*, *Black Sabbath*, *Iron Maiden*, *Judas Priest*, *Slayer*, *Obituary*, *Ramones*, *The Cramps*, *Black Flag*, *Bad Religion*, *Rage Against the Machine*, *Social Distortion*, *Ministry*, *NIN*, *MF DOOM*, *Wu-Tang*, *KRS-One*, *Public Enemy*, *Geto Boys*, *Beastie Boys*, and *Rakim* — all rattling the chambers of my crispy, blackened heart on minimum volume.

AU: Do you take commissions? What's the strangest thing you've ever been asked to draw?

AS: Rarely — only if it aligns with my cartoon-horror instincts. I've endured caricatures, pets, and strangers' children, each testing the limits of human sanity. The oddest request? *Robin the Boy Wonder* as a fat old man. I took the money but my soul still hasn't forgiven me.

AU: What's the latest, greatest thing you've been working on?

AS: *Monster Machine* — my cartoon-horror laboratory. It lets me honour cinema's iconic monsters while indulging in nostalgia, comedy,

and chaos. The monsters become my friends. Creepy and pathetic, right?



AU: Tell us more about *Monster Machine*. What is the ultimate goal of the project and how can people support your efforts?

AS: *Monster Machine* is my haunted gift shop — where Saturday-morning innocence collides with Friday-night horror marathons. At the moment, I'm offering stickers and art prints; next year I'm expanding into shirts, pins, plushies, figurines, and whatever cursed objects crawl out of the Sketchbook.

The long-term plan? Animated shorts, eventually a full show — something with *Scooby-Doo* vibes but a little sharper around the teeth. Beneath the humour is a heart: *Monster Machine* supports children's charities. Some kids idolize heroes. Others — like me — gravitate towards monsters. That imagination can be powerful, empowering, fun and healing. I want to help give kids that spark.

AU: Any plans or strange traditions for the Holidayze?

AS: Yes — I've finally decided to stop ghosting Satan. It's fricking rude. He sent me a Satanic Bible last Christmas and ironically it turned out to be a fantastic read about believing in oneself and shaking off societal brainwashing.



AU: Have you been naughty or nice?

AS: I'm going to get philosophical for a split second. Morality is situational in my opinion. But if I really must choose: naughty. That's where the memorable stories live and it's undeniably more sexy and spankable.

AU: Krampus or Santa, and why?

AS: *Krampus*, obviously. The child-kidnapping is problematic, but the field trip to the underworld

could be interpreted as profoundly educational. And let's be honest — *Krampus* will always have the bigger sack.

AU: Have you ever seen your art tattooed on people?

AS: Not yet. Until that day dawns, I recommend a Tim Curry Pennywise tattoo — the ones online are spiritual experiences for me.

AU: Dream project you're dying to do?

AS: A monster-mystery cartoon: short episodes, wicked soundtrack, a crew of misfit kids surviving encounters with cartoon versions of Jason, Michael Myers and whatever else crawls out of hell. Yes, it sounds like a bootleg *Scooby-Doo*/*Monster Squad* hybrid — and yes, that makes it even cooler. The kids would travel in a van called the *Monster Machine*. Of course they would.



AU: Words of wisdom for readers or aspiring artists?

AS: Make art because it nourishes you, not because you're chasing fame or money. Most of us won't be rich in a conventional sense — but creativity is its own rebellion. It's resistance, joy, identity, existence and expression. Your work doesn't need permission to matter. It just does.

AU: Anything else to promote?

AS: Support *Monster Machine* by going to my online store and picking up some merch or visit my Ko-fi support page and throwing some money my way.

AU: Where can people find you?

AS:
Website: monstermachine.ca
Shop: monstermachine.shop
Ko-fi: ko-fi.com/ahmedsidky
Substack: [@monstermachine](https://www.substack.com/@monstermachine)





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RECORD STORE PROFILE



MOON'S RECORDS

Cumberland's Kick-Ass Vinyl Hub!
Interview by Max Rotation

AU: Who are we talking to today?

CM: Chris Moon.

AU: How long has Moon's Records been in business?

CM: 13 years.

AU: What is the origin story and history of Moon's Records?

CM: We (myself and partner/wife **Kristin Moon**) started selling clothing that we were making at local artisan markets back in 2013. With our sales going well at the markets, we decided in 2014 to lease a workspace in Coombs where we could set up our sewing and screenprinting equipment. That space had enough room for us to include a retail space in the front, and our first store "The Other Side Artisan Collective" was born. We sold a variety of local handmade goods, which included our own clothing, as well as jewelry, ceramics, art prints, and other things that we would source from the other artists we'd meet at the markets we were vending at.



After a couple years, we added a small section to the store dedicated to vinyl records. As a huge record collector and enthusiast, I was always playing records in the shop. People loved it and would always mention how they enjoyed it, so we started with a small crate of records in the corner and it really took off! A large sign was mounted on the side of the building that read "MOON'S RECORDS". Once people saw that sign, they just kept showing up with record collections for us to purchase, and we kept buying them!!

In 2019, with a little luck we were able to secure a lease for a second store in Cumberland. We had so many records at that point that we decided to name the new store Moon's Records, while keeping the same theme of The Other Side and selling all the artisan products as well. We managed to run both stores for a short time before deciding that our energy would be better spent just focusing on one store. The Other Side shop was passed on to some friends of ours, and Moon's Records received our full attention. Cumberland took us in with open arms and the rest is history!! We are so grateful to the wonderful community and people who support us!! Thank you!

AU: What's your record selection like?

CM: You can browse what's available in our online store if you visit moonsrecords.com. We have hundreds of new and used titles. With the used records, we are limited to what shows up in the collections we are purchasing locally, so we see a lot of 70's country and psych rock!! Lotsa classic rock for sure. Some genres are harder to come by, like Punk, Metal, Reggae, etc. but we do try to stock as much as we can. Thankfully now that almost everything is being repressed, we are able to order just about anything in, including all the great albums from the 90's and 2000's that were never initially released on vinyl. We try to keep our finger of the pulse of what's currently making waves and

listening to our customers to hear what they're after.

If it's out there and in print, we will order it for you!! I personally am a bit of a Jam Band nerd so you'll also find a larger than necessary stock of Grateful Dead and Phish records!

AU: Do you sell anything besides records?

CM: YES!! Most of the items in our store are created by local artists on Vancouver Island, and we have a pretty great Book Section! Jewelry, Ceramics, Stickers, Candles, Disc Golf, Art Prints, T's, Hoodies, Hats, etc. We also offer custom screenprinting if your business needs some swag!

AU: Do you host any kind of events with local Cumberland musicians?

CM: We used to have a big stage in the store and had some pretty great intimate concerts. We moved up the street recently and the new location did not have room for the stage unfortunately. We had a blast doing them though!

AU: Tell us about some of your best customer experiences.

CM: I'd say that it's always a great feeling when someone comes in asking for a record they really want, and I'm able to locate it for them in some random spot where they wouldn't have found it otherwise. Like a needle in a haystack! I have piles of records all over the place!!

AU: What music do you usually have playing in the store?

CM: I try to play a little mix of everything. Depending who's working, you'll get a different experience as we all have our own tastes. We all try to keep things happy and upbeat for the most part. I'll play a fair amount of Soul, R&B, Funk, Blues, Jazz. Throw in some Classic Rock, a little Folk, Bluegrass. Don't worry I only listen to Phish in my car!! The goal for me is mostly to read the

room and play music for the people shopping in the store. Sometimes you can be a great DJ and really nail it. The reward is when you hit that spot and someone asks "What are we listening to?". It's exciting to turn someone on to a new artist, and share in that experience together.

AU: What is your mission statement as a business?

CM: Don't sell anything you don't love! (We don't sell Nickelback records) ;)

AU: Anything else you would like to mention?

CM: Our in house handmade "Marie Moon Jewelry" is another great feature in our shop. Kristin Moon is the artist and works with Brass, Silver, Gems and Stones to create unique earrings, necklaces, and exquisite rings. Check out @mariemoondesign

AU: Final words of wisdom for our readers?

CM: If you collect vinyl you'll want to get to know us! Send us your wish list!! You never know, I might

just have your White Whale sitting in our shop or in my living room!

If you don't collect vinyl but have some to SELL US, give me a call!! We pay top dollar for your records and we can arrange house calls if needed!

Call Chris 250-739-1188

AU: How do people find Moon's Records online?

CM: Browse our online store at moonsrecords.com or check out our Instagram @moonsrecords. Follow us on Facebook at Moon's Records Cumberland. facebook.com/moonsrecords moonsrecords.com



MERFOLK

Interview with frontman and soloist Patrick Loisel

By Asher Thrasher

Absolute Underground:

Welcome. Who are you and what do you do?

Patrick Loisel: I am Patrick Loisel, 55, normally the frontman and soloist of Augury but I have been involved in multiple other things since the 90s and it is about time some of that came out!!!

AU: Your latest album, *Sundaland*, explores an Atlantis-like cataclysm with witches, ghosts and sea monsters. How did you weave such mythological and sociological themes into the music without losing its raw intensity?

PL: Parts of the narrative are very intense and violent since we deal with a whole country being destroyed by a tidal wave, which they assimilate to a sea monster or the wrath of the gods.

Hence the parts about witches warning them and human sacrifices in hopes of appeasing this wrath.

AU: The album artwork is an Aztec shield from Mexico while the concept is rooted in Asia. What reactions were you hoping to provoke by deliberately creating that cultural dissonance?

PL: A reaction of curiosity, but it kind of backfired since many fewer people noticed the dichotomy than I expected. Being a historian, I knew that most North American native art was a long transformation of the art their distant ancestors brought from Asia when they migrated in prehistoric times. There are identical features on the Yonaguni monument underwater in Japan and Puma Punku in South America.

Other reasons for using this were practical and emotional. I already had the piece, which is a gift from my ex-wife that she brought directly from Mexico, and I wanted to pay attention to her. She is a great person. I am very happy I did not waste time trying to imagine and create a 10,000 BC version of this shield because very few would have appreciated the effort. After reflections, I just went "fuck it," snapped a picture of my bedroom wall, and told the CD plant "Put the logo here and the title there."

AU: Tracks like "The Plowing Sea" and "Krasue Came Warning" are steeped in folklore. What drew you to the Krasue myth and how did you translate that imagery into sound?

PL: While "The Plowing Sea" is pretty universal (people mistaking cataclysm for an angry divinity whom they try to appease), "Krasue" is a myth rooted specifically in South-East Asia and surrounding islands. But there, the word "manananggal" is a bit too long, so I chose Krasue from mainland Vietnam, which depicts the same creatures.

AU: Most Asian ghosts are only hovering heads with no bodies. Asian ghosts are physically mutilated. The typical Krasue is a hovering head that moves around trailing its entrails

underneath. How much more METAL can you go?

PL: I wanted something different, unusual, with a big WTF factor. I think I got it!!!

AU: You handle everything yourself — instruments, recording, mastering, even merch. What does that independence add to Merfolk's authenticity?

PL: Mainly, I don't have to compromise. I can push things as far as I want without someone telling me it's not appropriate. I'm often only creative when I'm the sole master on board with no one blocking my ideas. Lots of people hate whistling in metal, for example. Someone even called me to convince their band to remove whistling. Being alone is the only way I can do things my way. I've spent my life dodging people trying to change my ways. I'd had enough. It's also why I've released three albums in under five years. I don't wait for anyone. I work when I'm inspired, usually alone at night. When everything comes from one person, it creates a different ambiance.

AU: Some listeners thought your drums were programmed. How do you respond to that skepticism and what does it say about the perception of one-man bands in extreme music?

PL: I rarely play drums in public, and the last time I did was in 2012 when I was still a beginner. What bugs me is the attitude behind the skepticism. I started as a multi-instrumentalist but people first saw me as a guitarist. So the moment I picked up something else I'd hear "Stick to guitar." When Augury started, angry people told me "You're not a singer." When I bought a drum kit and posted videos, it was "You're not a drummer." It's like if you're too polyvalent people think you're stealing someone else's job.

Here, I often got negative reactions while people abroad congratulated me. What impressed Europeans seemed to scandalize some locals: "Who do you think you are?" I'd get asked "Why didn't you hire X drummer, Y producer, Z violinist?" Some even refused to share my work over that or because they didn't want me to outshine another artist. A few opposed my career

because of how I look. Bottom line: some people think only full touring bands doing things the old way deserve visibility.

AU: In Augury, you collaborate with other highly skilled musicians. How does the creative process differ between the collective synergy of Augury and the solitary, all-consuming vision of Merfolk?

PL: Funny, Merfolk is less time-consuming because I can use it in the gaps in my schedule. I live in my studio and work nearby. This is the big difference with Augury. The guys are busy and we live far apart so we have to plan our displacements and we operate in the moments where we are all available, which means not often.

On the other hand, I live a very solitary life and it saves my mood that the people I create with are my best friends. It is far more collaborative and even if a song has a main composer, everyone else writes their part over it. It's not the type of band where you bring sheet music, put it in front of people and go "Play this!" I make shit tracks for drums and show the guys the parts that are crucial to me but it stops there.

AU: You've been a physicist, historian, ecologist, stand-up comic and even a keeper of 300 tarantulas. How do these diverse life experiences feed into the eclectic, unpredictable spirit of Merfolk's music?

PL: Merfolk was inspired by my interest in the paranormal. All the stuff I did in the past helped me learn how to achieve this or that aspect of the work. It made me more polyvalent and less specialized. All those life experiences add to my studies in history and psychology so I use them more for my sociology blog (which is actually my personal FB page). I view my mind like a puzzle and every life experience completes the image.

AU: Anything else you would like to add for our readers?

PL: I would like to thank you very much for the attention and for helping me reach new people! Keep it metal!!!

<https://merfolk.bandcamp.com>

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FALLSTAF: Brass Metal Legends Return with new album, *Ode To The Dead*

Interview with vocalist IANN

By Asher Thrasher

Absolute Underground: Welcome back. It's been over a decade since we last spoke to the band. For those unfamiliar with Fallstaf, who are you and what do you do?

IANN: Hi, Absolute Underground Magazine! We are an unusual band from Montréal, a brass metal band. We have a masked trombonist in the group.

AU: Your comeback record, *Ode To The Dead*, explores grief, survival and rebirth. After nearly a decade of silence, how personal was it for you to channel those themes into this record?

IANN: Let's say that the band members and I have experienced many of these themes over the years: we lost parents, friends and I almost died in

an accident in 2016. Rebirth is mostly about how we overcame these tragedies. I wrote the album's lyrics based on our personal experiences.

AU: With suits, ties and a masked trombonist, audiences often expect ska before you play. How do you embrace that surprise factor and what does the trombone add to your heaviness that guitars alone couldn't?

IANN: It's often the case when we get on stage. We always love seeing the audience's reaction at the first chord and when the drums kick in! We come from an alternative band; our music was sad and melancholic. The trombone wasn't happy like in ska; our trombone adds a sad and dark touch, along with the guitars. People say we're a good mix of Reel Big Fish and Hatebreed but our trombone isn't as cheerful. As for the suits and ties, we just wanted to be different from most metal bands; we wanted our outfit to reflect our music.

AU: RICKK's trombone parts often cuts through riffs in unexpected ways. Can you share how you approach writing brass lines that feel

integral to metal rather than ornamental?

IANN: We've been working together for 18 years because of our alternative band (North East Bistro) and the guys are used to mixing all the instruments together. At some point, the trombone lines blend perfectly with the bass, guitar and drum beats; it's the little sad touch we need! RICKK has been playing brass since 1990; he has a good ear and he plays the trumpet very well too.

AU: You reunited with Kevin Jardine (Slaves On Dope) who also produced your debut. How did his perspective help shape *Ode To The Dead* compared to your first record?

IANN: Kevin has known us since 2009; our former bassist had contacted him to remix our first demo *The Hitman Plays Trombone* and he really liked our style, so we worked with him on our first LP *Bastard Sons of a Pure Breed*, in 2011. Back then, our sound was rougher, less polished; we simply sounded different—it was our beginning. We came back together in 2024, and we had all evolved musically. Kevin noticed all of that and pushed us to make a more mature, more professional, more melodic record. He saw the growth of each member and also helped GOYY (bass), who was doing his first studio recording. GOYY did an amazing job! I also wanted to work on my vocals and explore the other tones I'm

capable of; I didn't just want the scream you hear on the first album. He guided me like a pro.

AU: After your near-fatal accident and years of silence, what was the turning point that convinced you Fallstaf had to return? How has the band's dynamic changed since then?

IANN: I had a long musical break of three years following my accident. MATT (drums) and SIMM (guitars) were in another band. I hadn't seen RICKK and GOYY for a few years. SIMM, MATT and I did a small project in 2019, *One Foot in the Grave*; we recorded a single with Jardine but then stopped. We talked about restarting Fallstaf,

but needed to reconnect with RICKK. Life brought him back into our circle in 2022 and GOYY returned in 2023. We started jamming again just for fun and after a few months we really got into writing. We went into the studio in September 2024, and that's how *Ode To The Dead* came about! It's a beautiful story.

AU: Anything else you would like to add for your readers?

IANN: No matter

what style of metal you play, it's still metal and music; music brings people together. We make metal that stands out but we have fun doing it. We can't wait to play shows again, play with other bands and get back to the Montréal metal scene, which is one of the best scenes in the world!!! Long live music and huge thanks to *Absolute Underground Magazine*!!!



BUSINESS PROFILE



Fade N Dye: Creative Colour, Punk Roots and Radical Self-Expression

By Amanda Lawrence

Absolute Underground: Please introduce yourself. Who are we talking to and what are your skills to pay the bills?

Bx Pfeiffer: My name is Bx Pfeiffer. I am the owner of Fade N Dye Hair Salon and Barbershop on the Sunshine Coast. I have been a stylist for almost twenty years. I started my career in Germany, moved to Canada in 2012 and I am now officially a Canadian citizen. My speciality and what pays my bills is creative colour, vivid transformations and anything that is not normal.

AU: What inspired you and started you on your career path?

BP: As a punk kid I was always drawn to crazy hairstyles and it was impossible to find a stylist in a small German town who knew what to do with that. I wanted to become that person so I left school a year early to start hairdressing which sent my parents into orbit but it was the right choice.

AU: What is the origin story and history of your hair salon Fade N Dye?

BP: The name Fade N Dye goes back to when I worked with a friend who opened a barbershop. I suggested it because he was the barber and I was the colourist. He never used it so I kept it in my back pocket. When I opened my own salon in 2018 I already knew that was the name. I like it because it is edgy and it says exactly what we do. I never wanted a cookie cutter salon with white walls. That is why I created an alternative space where people can be themselves.

AU: What makes Fade N Dye unique in your opinion?

BP: Fade N Dye stands out because it has personality. It is colourful, loud, honest and not afraid to be different. We do not try to have a fancy spa vibe. We are an alternative salon where people show up as they are. We specialize in creative colour and bold transformations but we also do the everyday stuff like blondes, cuts and lived in colours. You do not have to walk out with a mohawk or a neon spider web to be our client. If you want something wild, great. If you want something soft and classic, also great. The point is that you feel good and have a good time while you are here.



AU: What kind of services and products do you offer?

BP: We offer everything from vivid colour and creative work to blonding, cuts, styling and barbering. That includes full colour transformations, lived in blondes, root touch ups, toning, corrections and all kinds of cuts from classic to alternative. On the product side we carry lines with biodegradable packaging and fair paid workers. We also have shampoo and conditioner bottles with raised markers so people with limited vision can tell them apart. We carry a wide range of Canadian products and we have our own Fade N Dye merchandise because people love that shit.

AU: What is your mission statement as a business?

BP: Our mission is to create an inclusive alternative salon where people feel welcomed, respected and able to be themselves without judgment. That goes for clients and for my team. I want my staff to have freedom, support and room to grow so they can build a life that feels good and successful. Fade N Dye is meant to be a place where everyone feels valued and where creativity and individuality actually matter.

AU: Who else works with you at Fade N Dye and what do they bring to the table?

BP: My team is small but solid. Britt is my best friend and we have known each other since I basically got off the boat when I moved to Canada. We already worked together in Vancouver so it was a no-brainer to get her to move to the Sunshine Coast and work with me again. She is great with textured haircuts and she loves a good mullet. Ichiko has been by my side since day one. She is all about blonding long hair and she is the queen of highlights. She is also our great organizer and keeps us in line and on track so she is basically the mom of the shop. A couple years later our friend Blair joined the team. He is our barber and he brings more than fresh cuts to the table because this man has lived an exceptional life and always has a great story ready to go. It has been the four of us ever since.

AU: What are some common misconceptions about hair care or top tips you want to share?

BP: A big misconception is that it does not matter what shampoo you use. People spend a lot of money on their hair then wash it with drugstore products and wonder why the colour fades fast. Good home care is everything. The right shampoo and conditioner keep your hair healthy and make your colour last way longer. I always tell people to ask their stylist what to use at home because we work with this stuff every day and we actually know what will help your hair not wreck it. Trust your stylist. They know best.

AU: Do you have a favourite hair colour or style you could do all day or is variety the slice of life?

BP: My favourite is obviously creative colour but especially the placement of it. It does not have to be a full head. I

love using small sections or slices that make the whole look pop. People always say they do not want yellow hair but adding a tiny slice of neon yellow can make every other colour explode in the best way. Mixing shades, creating custom tones and making something unique for each client gives me an absolute thrill. Working with colour theory is something I could do all day.

AU: What do you do to keep from burning out?

BP: Self care is important to me. I eat healthy, I take a bath pretty much every night and I make sure I take real time for myself. I also travel a lot

because getting out of town helps me reset. Those breaks keep me from burning out so I can actually show up for my clients without running on fumes.

AU: What experience can people expect when they book with you?



BP: People can expect a real no bullshit hangout when they book with me. I like actually connecting with people and a lot of my clients have become friends over time. I am very German, I am very honest and you will probably hear the accent. We might laugh, we might go deep who knows. What I can guarantee is that I will always try my best and give you hair that feels right for you.

AU: Do you have a specific kind of music or artist you work best to?

BP: Our clients are all over the place so I try to keep the music somewhat neutral. I usually play classics, lots from the 70s and 80s and I have a 70s punk playlist I love. But honestly it can be anything. You might even hear some Vengaboys. It just depends on the day.

AU: What is the music scene like on the Sunshine Coast and are there any local bands people should check out?

BP: The Sunshine Coast has a thriving punk scene and one of my absolute favourite bands from here is Trenchraid. They play fast aggressive hardcore punk that hits right where I live. If you like raw energy you need to check them out. Other great local bands are SFH and Janky Tyger. There is a lot happening on the Coast so it is always worth keeping an eye out for shows.

AU: Any plans or strange traditions for the Holidayze?

BP: For over twenty years I have been hosting a Hawaiian Christmas party. That is my tradition. I started it in Germany and I still do it now. I force all my friends to dress up in Hawaiian outfits and

we celebrate Christmas Mele Kalikimaka style. It is honestly my favourite part of the holiday season. We have a little tiki bar. We play dumb games and it is the highlight of my year.

AU: Have you been naughty or nice?

BP: Depends who you ask. I try to be nice but the German honesty probably gets me thrown into the naughty pile pretty fast.

AU: Any special events planned in the near future or anything else you would like to mention or promote?

BP: I am working on expanding the education side of things with one on one classes so feel free to reach out if you are interested in learning from me. I also have some exciting projects coming up with wigs, creative colour work and more Fade N Dye merchandise. We also do a lot of fundraisers so follow us on Instagram at @fadendye to stay updated on our events. There is always something cooking in the background.

AU: Final words of wisdom for our readers?

BP: I am a big dreamer and from my experience I can say that if you have a goal or a dream and it is outside your comfort zone you should go do it anyway. There is a lot of growth in going after what you want. If you are in a situation that holds you back or a person holds you back you need to get out of it and move forward because you do not want to be eighty one day and regret staying somewhere that did not let you live your life.

AU: How do people find you and the salon online?

BP: You can find us on Instagram at @fadendye and our website is fadendyehair.ca

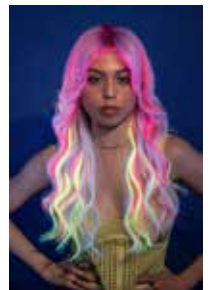


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RECORD LABEL PROFILE



BANDWIDTH RECORDS

Interview by Ray MacKay

AU: Who are we talking to and what are your skills to pay the bills?

Adam and Terry here - majority shareholders of Bandwidth Records. To pay the bills... Well, Terry is totally using his anthropology degree working at the Capitol Theatre as Technical Director and Adam designs media for education. Super punk rock.

AU: What got you started and how long have you been doing it for?

We started Bandwidth Records in 2021. This ties in to the next question.

AU: What's the origin story of Bandwidth Records?

Yeah, so in the summer of 2021 I (Adam) got a call from our friend Nelson From Nelson who was at the recording session for the local doom duo BATH with Roger Swan at Hallowed Sound studios. He knew I loved BATH and called to tell me the session was amazing. I asked what the next step was... what were they going to do with



the recordings? He said, probably they would just release them online. I was stunned. BATH's music was epic, mesmerizing, heavy and beautiful. Being released as just a fucking compressed mp3 was unacceptable. So I joked I would have to start a record label to release their album. Nelson laughed. When I hung up I couldn't stop thinking about it. Is it even possible? So, I called my friend Terry and pitched the idea. "You wanna start a record label and release BATH as our first band?" "Hell yeah" he said. And that was it. 8 months later we released our first record.

AU: Where are you located?

BC, West Kootenays, Nelson.

AU: What's the music scene in your city like?

The scene out here is pretty amazing. For such a small city the scene extends out into the deep, dark valleys, but people come out! Punk and metal and weird shit is VERY appreciated. It's funny. People often think of hippies and ravers when it comes to the Kootenays but every step of the way it is the heavy music scene out here that constantly brings out THE best people. It's an accepting, supportive scene and people look out for each other. Pretty rad. More kids are coming to more shows cause they feel safe. That's good. We have great promoters, a cooperative radio station for small basement shows and a crazy 3 day heavy music festival called MASSiF Music in September. We have folks putting on shows in communities like Salmo, Castlegar, Winlaw and Slokan...honestly... the scene rocks.

AU: You've released doom epics like *Atty's* by BATH, acid grunge like *Soul Music* by The Tarholes, and the garage rockers like *Bitter Illusions* by Bitter//Washed amongst others. How did these epic groups and albums come to Bandwidth Records?

It has been a natural progression from band to band. We go to shows, we put on shows, then we just talk to the bands we want to put out on record. There are more bands than we can release. But I feel like every band and each record stand alone and don't feel or sound like they are from a small rural mountain town. These are big city sounds! haha

AU: Your most recent release is *Back To Uranium City* by Laughing Sickness. What can you tell us about releasing Laughing Sickness' sophomore album?

We had seen Laughing Sickness play live many times in the Kootenays, and loved their first release, *Infection*, so we just felt like it was the right time. We spoke to Kevin and Keith and they were down! We couldn't be more excited.

AU: What services do you have to offer?

Our focus is on helping bands get their music onto vinyl and create some kind of music home. We also offer therapeutic services and unsolicited advice.

AU: What kind of bands are on your roster?

All of the bands we have released come out of a thriving music scene in the Kootenays. For such a beautiful area there is a lot of dark and heavy sounds. Maybe 'cause there's a lot of space to scream and make noise. But for us, it's just how things line up. Right now we are putting out one record at a time. The most exciting music, for us, is the heavy music.

AU: How can bands and musicians get a hold of you for more info?

They can email us at info@bandwidthrecords.com or message us on Instagram.

AU: Where can people find your catalogue?

Our vinyls are available at fine record stores all over BC and Alberta. Our website has everything at bandwidthrecords.com including free digital downloads with every vinyl purchase. Why not own the music you pay for?

AU: Anything else you'd like to mention?

Laughing Sickness Record Release night with label family: The Tarholes, and Bitter//Washed and friend, Mr. Awesome on Dec 13 at The Royal in Nelson. Support your local bands, buy their shit.

Oh... and if anyone reading this is interested in doing some kind of distribution train between cities, get in touch.

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GNARWHAL

Lucid Machines

Interview by Ray MacKay

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you most infamous for?

Gnarwhal: You're talking to Gnarwhal — a heavy band from Canada's sub-arctic. We're most infamous for being far too loud for a city this small, writing riffs that sound like they were chipped out of the permafrost, and playing shows where something usually breaks... gear, strings, or the will to live of whoever has to load out in -35°C.

AU: Where are you from and what's the music scene like there?

Gnarwhal: We're from Yellowknife, Northwest Territories — a remote northern city with a surprisingly fierce music community. Because of the isolation, everyone pushes harder. The scene is DIY, collaborative and full of people who show up ready to go off because big tours don't roll through often. When something happens here, it feels like an event.

AU: Give us the history of Gnarwhal.

Gnarwhal: Gnarwhal started as a loud idea in a cold storage lock up. Over the years we built a reputation for high-energy shows at festivals, DIY spaces and any venue willing to let us plug in. We've toured Western Canada, played some rad festivals, DIY'd countless northern shows. Our sound got heavier, stranger, more refined — and we eventually settled into the groove that created our second full length album - *Lucid Machines* (coming March 2026)

AU: Describe Gnarwhal's sound, if possible.

Gnarwhal: A collapsing glacier — Heavy, diverse, and emotional — but with riffs. We blend sludge, post-metal, stoner, and progressive elements, with atmosphere and melody threaded through everything. It's introspective, crushing, and occasionally sounds like a snowmobile hitting thin ice at full speed.

AU: Recently you released your new single, "Wherewithal". Tell us about it!

Gnarwhal: "Wherewithal" is one of the emotional anchors of our new record. It's about resilience — the stubborn internal engine that keeps turning over even when you feel completely spent. Sonically, it's massive: big riffs, a soaring melodic core and an ending that leaves you staring at the ceiling for a moment. The single artwork was done by Aaron Bonogovsky, who nailed the vibe perfectly.

AU: Tell us about the creative process behind "Wherewithal".

Gnarwhal: It started with a riff that felt like both a plea and a cry. We built out from that tension. The writing process was about stripping down to the emotional essence, then slowly piling intensity on top. It went through several versions, but once everything locked into place, it clicked as one of the groovin' tracks of the album.

AU: This is the second single from your forthcoming album *Lucid Machines* (out March 19, 2026). Tell us about this upcoming album and the previous single from it.

Gnarwhal: Our first single was "Circuits", which

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introduced the heavier, more chaotic side of the record. "Wherewithal" showcases the reflective and melodic counterpart. The full album, *Lucid Machines*, explores the balance between human feeling and mechanical overload — clarity vs. noise. The full album artwork, designed by Dylan Davis, ties that entire concept together visually. Vinyl pre-orders are available now on our website.

AU: What has the process behind *Lucid Machines* been like?

Gnarwhal: It was a deep dive. We recorded it in our home studio, The Penalty Box, in Yellowknife, in the dead of winter — which definitely influenced the atmosphere. We brought up producer Dan Ponich (based in Vancouver), who contributed massive energy and refined the sound into something layered but still raw. The whole process was challenging, inspiring, cold and incredibly rewarding.

AU: What song from *Lucid Machines* are you most excited for your fans to hear?

Gnarwhal: The title track. It ties together the themes of the entire record: tension, clarity, chaos, introspection. It feels like the beating heart of *Lucid Machines* and we can't wait for people to hear it.

AU: Besides the single mentioned above, do you have any upcoming releases, tours, or shows coming up you'd like to tell us about?

Gnarwhal: Yes, more singles are coming in early 2026. We also have an upcoming live in-studio session dropping soon with High Voltage TV, which we're really excited about. And our next set of shows is in Alberta this January, including a set at Winterruption YEG Festival in Edmonton.

AU: Any strange traditions for the Holidayze?

Gnarwhal: Someone usually ends up roasting something on a space heater in the jam space and we argue about riffs while drinking questionable northern beverages — and once someone breaks out the festive greenery, the riffs get way heavier and the snacks get tastier.

AU: Have you been naughty or nice?

Gnarwhal: We've been loud. We'll let the universe sort out the morality part.

AU: What else should we know about you? What don't you want your family to know?

Gnarwhal: Every big Gnarwhal riff starts as a joke that gets way out of hand and we definitely don't want our families to know how much money we've spent on pedals while saying "this is the last one." ... it's never the last one.

AU: Anything else to promote?

Gnarwhal: *Lucid Machines* drops March 19, 2026. Vinyl pre-orders are up now. New singles and live content are coming soon. Also keep an eye out for the High Voltage TV session as well as tour news.

AU: Final words for our readers?

Gnarwhal: Stay heavy, stay curious, support your local scene and never trust a band with perfectly functioning gear.

AU: How do people find you online?

Gnarwhal: Find us on all major socials and streaming platforms under Gnarwhal.

Instagram: @gnarwhalsounds

Facebook.com/gnarmusic

Website (vinyl pre-orders + merch + all links): gnarwhalband.com

Band Photo Credit: Jonny Vu

Lucid Machines Album Art by Dylan Davis

Wherewithal Art by Aaron Bonogovsky

Live Shots Photo Credit: Chase Bishop

PEOPLE OF PUNK ROCK



instead of feeling dated.

AU: You've played in over 20 countries. Any favourites, and how does punk culture vary globally?

Scott: Brazil's Vans Zona Punk tour stands out. Fans there really appreciate bands coming to play; the energy was incredible. We've got footage on Youtube of "Polisci 101" in Vila Velha that captures it perfectly.

Greg: I love discovering new venues run by people who genuinely love music and community. A lot of the time, especially in Europe, that means we end up playing a squat, but I love the commitment and community behind those spaces. El Paso Occupato in Turin, Italy, is one I've played more than once. BLACKHOLE 212 in Singapore blew my mind too. According to their

Facebook page, it's completely non-profit and run by punks who believe autonomy and DIY can make the world a better place.

Bryan: Playing somewhere new is always a highlight. Meeting global punk communities and making new friends is one of the best parts of touring.

AU: Which tours stand out as the most fun?

Bryan: Asia/Australia/New Zealand in 2010—packed shows, exhausting but exhilarating. I booked the whole thing on MySpace, never speaking in person to a single promoter, so it could have gone sideways quickly. The other thing was we did it as a 3-piece and played almost every night. The last weekend of the tour we played Brisbane on Thursday, Wellington on Friday, Auckland on Saturday and I was home on Sunday in Chicago having dinner. The whole tour was like that.

Scott: Some European tours and playing festivals like Groezrock. Also Brazil of course.

Greg: It's a toss-up between Asia/Australia/New Zealand and Brazil. The Asia/AUS/NZ run was a ton of fun—we crossed huge distances for single shows and met tons of great people. I think we were only in Singapore for about 24 hours. Brazil was both thrilling and a little intimidating. On our first night, we went to a Brazilian soccer match, and it was absolutely wild.

AU: You've always self-released music. How has that shaped the band?

Bryan: We set up studio time, pay for recording,

then shop around for labels. We've always found a home for releases, but we've never had the consistent push of a label, which might be a downside. Fat Mike even called us the smallest band ever on Fat Wreck Chords.

Scott: Haha—love Fat Mike! Also, OffTime is Bryan's label, which put out amazing records and bands like Shyster and At The Drive-In. It's true—he put out their first two releases.

Bryan: Yeah, I was dumb enough to run a label for about 7 years.

AU: Outside music, what do you do, and how much of your time goes to the band?

Bryan: Since we don't do the band full time anymore, I'd probably say the band is really our hobby. I'm an executive at a technology company and have three kids, so that pretty much consumes most of my time. Right now we're in an active phase of the band, which is really cool to do again and I think we're very fortunate that we all have careers and families that allow us this flexibility.

Scott: I'm proud to say my daughter did a bunch of back-up vocals on our new album. And I'm a professor. Boring! (just kidding, I give scintillating lectures each and every class, just like Greg Graffin)

Greg: I do graphic design and am a certified personal trainer, and hope to segue a side gig into a new career. I like to travel, which is why touring is so great. I get to see places and play music. Rock'n' Roll vacation! As for time spent on "band" stuff, it's the writing process where I put in the work.

AU: Tell us about the new album. What are its themes, and what inspired its sound?

Scott: We wanted to build on past releases, tackling both personal issues and bigger-picture topics like climate change. Favourite to write was "Three Against Me," which came from a burst of creativity with lyrics and music flowing together. Working with Greg on the songs was a highlight—our process feels natural and collaborative.

AU: What are your plans moving forward? Any Canadian tour?

Scott: Europe next—Belgium!

Greg: I'll keep playing as long as I enjoy the music. The new album's reception has been great.

Bryan: Eventually, maybe our kids will take over. The Canadian tour is planned for late spring/early summer.

AU: Any final words of wisdom to share?

Bryan: Hands up, chin down and always look'em in the throat.

Scott: No one knows what that means, Bryan. I don't know

what that means. Also, we're recording new songs in December and we'll have some splits coming out next year with awesome bands. Can't wait!

Greg: It's all bullshit. Just be honest with yourself and you'll be fine ;)

AU: How can people find you online?

Scott: Instagram @horacepinker
peopleofpunkrockrecords.com

Hands Up, Chin Down: Thirty Years of Horace Pinker

By Mike Willisko

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today, and what are your roles in Horace Pinker?

Bryan: I'm Bryan, the drummer—but not the naked guy though, as I played bass the first few years of the band.

Scott: I'm Scott, guitarist and singer, best known for keeping Horace Pinker alive over the years.

Greg: I play bass. Probably best known for my hair.

AU: How did Horace Pinker get started, and which early punk bands influenced you?

Scott: We loved the tight-knit Arizona punk scene in the 90s, playing clubs like the Silver Dollar with bands like All and Fugazi. We had a lot of fun, but we also took political issues seriously—we never let Nazis into our shows, and you might be surprised how many racist skinheads would still show up. I'm proud we didn't just ignore them like

some clubs did back then.

Bryan: I got into skateboarding and punk rock early on. The DIY scene was everything—early SoCal bands and Discord bands really laid out the blueprint for what we've done over the years.

AU: What's the story behind the band's name? Is it related to the horror character from the movie *Shocker*?

Scott: We took our pop culture seriously, so yes, it's a nod to Wes Craven and his really bad horror film *Shocker*.

Bryan: It was either that or our original drummer's mom's name - Dona Ramsey.

AU: Over three decades of punk, how have your lyrics and message evolved?

Scott: Thinking back to hardcore shows overtaken by violent skinheads and

now seeing today's political climate, it's funny how little has changed. But we've always tried to write songs that speak to universal truths rather than lock into a specific political moment.

Bryan: Exactly—our lyrics are open to interpretation, which helps them stay relevant

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PEOPLE OF PUNK ROCK



DOWNSTATER

Losing Grip

Interview with vocalist/guitarist
Jean-Philippe Lagacé

By Ray MacKay

AU: What are you best known for?

Jean-Philippe Lagacé: J-P here. Definitely known for being the most dangerous animal in the cold North punk rock scene.

AU: Where are you from?

J-P: We're from Quebec City, Canada. Our city was the Mecca of punk rock and skate punk back in the 90s and 00s and is still to this day one of the best places in the world for everything punk related.

AU: Give us the history of Downstater.

J-P: The band was formed in 2016. I originally wanted to build a hard rock band with my old friends but since we all grew up on punk rock and we all previously played in punk bands for years, our skate punk roots quickly came back in full effect when I started writing songs.

So we just kinda embraced our roots and went punk rock all the way cause we'll forever be punk rockers at heart.

AU: Describe your sound, if possible.

J-P: We have a very 90s/00s punk rock sound like The Offspring, Rise Against and No Use For A Name, with epic choruses and melodies. Our goal is really to bring that kind of sound back on the map.



AU: Recently you released a new single, "Losing Grip". Tell us about it!

J-P: Losing Grip is the perfect representation of Downstater's sound: fast, melodic and epic. We want the listeners to have the melody stuck in

their head for days. On the lyrical side, all of our songs deal with dark themes like death and the absurdity of existence and this new one is no exception. Losing Grip is about the struggle of finding strength in desperation even though you know defeat is imminent. So it's an existentially charged song but with the energy of the punk rock aesthetic.

AU: Tell us about the creative process behind "Losing Grip".

J-P: I write all the songs lyrically and musically in Downstater. So most of the time, I usually find the perfect chorus, build a song structure around it, write the lyrics, show it to the band

and then each member adds his own touch to the song to make it shine.

AU: What inspirations do you draw on?

J-P: My main inspiration is always the 90s bands I grew up with, bands I previously stated and countless others. I always try to give a modern twist to this sound that I loved as a kid and to make it resonate with the existential questions and struggles I live now as a grown man.



AU: Any other upcoming releases?

J-P: This single is actually part of a full length that's gonna be released in 2026. We have a lot of other singles dropping in the upcoming months. We'll also be on the road a lot next year; we'll be on tour in Europe this spring and we'll play several summer festivals in Canada and internationally. So keep an eye out on our social medias to know the dates.

AU: What don't you want your family to know?

J-P: As you probably noticed, I'm a philosophy teacher in college so that's why I love talking about existential and heavy subjects. But I have nothing to hide from my loved ones since they already know I am the devil's son.

AU: Any plans for the Holidayze?

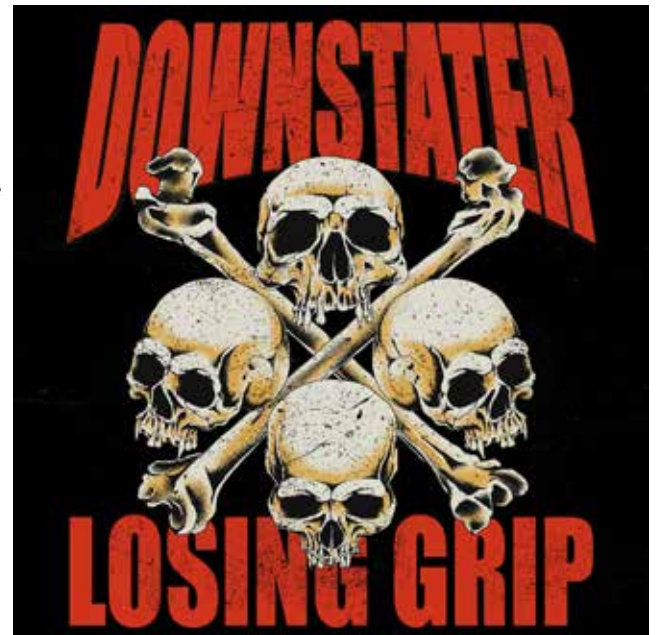
J-P: We're doing a show in our hometown on December 22nd to celebrate the holidays. So all I want for Christmas is stage dives and circle pits.

AU: Have you been naughty or nice?

J-P: I've been evil, that's even better!

AU: Anything else to promote?

J-P: Check out our new single "Losing Grip" and if you haven't already, keep your eyes open for upcoming tour announcements.



AU: Final words for our readers?

J-P: Thank you for supporting punk rock and I hope to see you guys in a circle pit real soon!

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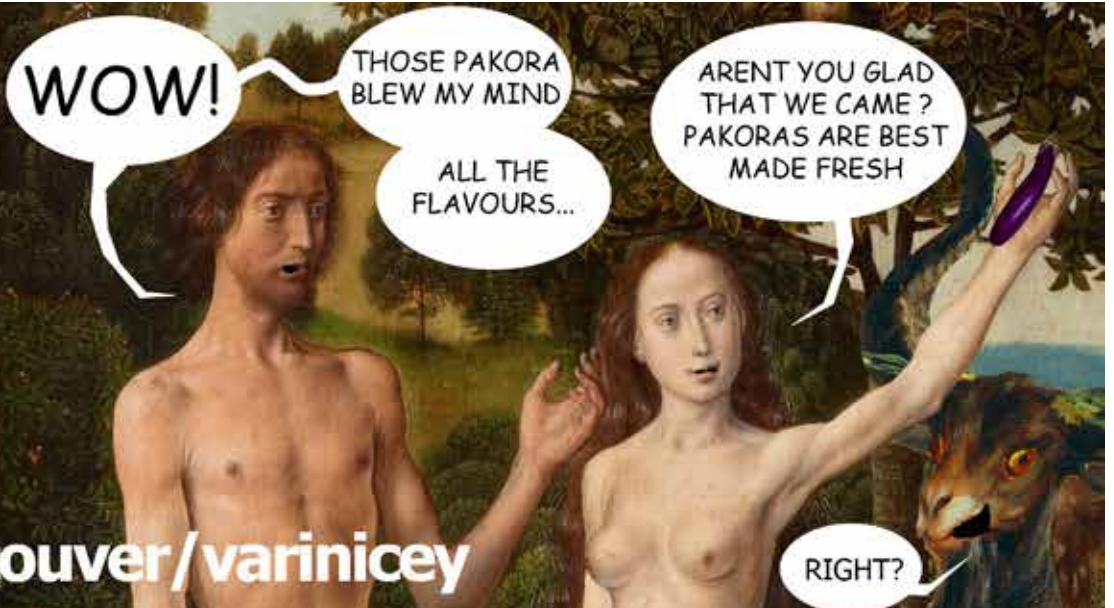
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Grunge, Metal and Pantyhose at Riverfest Elora

August 21, 2025, Elora, Ontario
By Kip Phillips

One wouldn't necessarily expect to hear the raw guttural sounds of metal & punk gracing the stages of Riverfest Elora, renowned as a family festival with people of all ages enjoying age appropriate music. Yet, this festival truly embraces all genres, and provided grunge, metal & punk lovers with

the multiple acts that included the warm and fuzzy sounds of screaming and mosh pits to lull our dark souls into bliss.

Riverfest Elora is an annual festival in its 16th year, running from August 15 to 17th, 2025. This festival began in 2009 when artist, Marilyn Koop, started the festival with 800 people attending, and was hosted in the backyard of the Elora



Centre for the Arts as a fundraiser in the stunning town of Elora, Ontario. This festival has grown to an audience of over 15,000 people over the course of three days of music, and has attracted top acts since its inception.

Marcy Playground kicked off the festival on Friday, August 15th, attracting grunge and rock fans from far and

wide to listen to a classic 90s band whose odd mix of alternative rock and grunge music has

captivated audiences for years. Front row, and living out a dream of seeing one of the favourite bands of my youth, frontman, John Wozniak crooned the likes of "Sherry Fraser", and closed out the night with the infamous song that haunts every bar in North America, "Sex and Candy".

On Saturday afternoon, War on Women, a feminist punk band hailing from Baltimore, Maryland, graced the stage, and soon had fans frenzied in a mosh pit and chanting their suffragette anthems. Songs included "White Lies" with lead singer, Shawna Potter, growling "if the bastards grind you down, become a diamond, if the bastards grind you down, become a diamond, and cut them all"; and "Anarcha", a song about an enslaved woman who was the subject of medical experimentation that led to advancements in gynecology, and she is known as one of the mothers of gynecology. Slash Need, a new music project hailing



from Toronto, played Saturday night with a post-punk/goth-electronica set that was incredibly captivating, and just as strange. Donning pantyhose on their heads, two members

of the band crawl around the stage appearing to be otherworldly alien creatures, and gyrate to the pounding subwoofers stacked on the stage. Alongside this theatrical stage performance, Lead singer, Dusty, screams into the mic and allows the audience to feel out their frustrations, to feel powerful, and to feel enchanted by this gothic futuristic fairytale, here to haunt our dreams and thrill us at the same time.

Riverfest Elora shocked and delighted with the friendliest and kindest crew who ran the festival, generous fans, yet also pushed the envelope by embracing metal & punk acts to embrace all different types of music at this spectacular festival.



Photos by Michael Dockstar @mdockstat



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GATE THEORY from Victoria, BC

...an examination from the jam spot, with the whole band...

By Erik Lindholm

Absolute Underground: Good afternoon, we're here at your jam spot. Help describe the band for new listeners, what's your sound?

ENGINEER: We made an effort to not have every song be the same. Which is both our strength and our weakness. We've heard the criticism saying "Why isn't this more cohesive focused sound?" But that's not what we're going for. We call it "experimental metal". We've tried uploading it to Spotify and it analyzes to see what you sound like. It never has any idea.

HUNTER: We all listen to different music. We bring it to the writing table, and write collectively. Sonic alchemy!

AU: Is there a method to the madness, or the experimentation of the alchemy? What is your musical gold?

ENG: What seems to happen every time is, somebody comes in with a bold idea. Then everyone else has to step it down, flesh it out, balance it. As a group we make it consistent, make the idea come across and make sense. Bring the idea to life.

AU: Talk about some of the gigs you've played lately. What have been some highlights lately?

ENG: The Globe in Nanaimo was amazing. Everything was great there, back line, audience, the drinks. Even the parking was good!

HEALER: We played the Wacken "Battle of The Bands". We also set up a show at Brass Monkey with Tremblers of Sevens, and Henry Hagen Band. That went really well. We're building momentum.

AU: What future gigs are coming up?

HUNT: There's opportunities around town. The Phoenix is always doing great stuff, different genre shows. We'd like to play some festivals. It's one of our goals. Those shows are always a whole lot of fun. I'd love to get us into festivals next summer in 2026.

ARCHITECT: Give it time. You put it out to the universe, right? This is the point of this thing. You name your intentions, and keep trying. This lineup is barely a year old. It's early days.

AU: Can you speak to the name of the band. Is it like a physical gate? Is it a door?

BASTARDE: It's a conceptualization of the body's internal capability to regulate self, and pain, which is subjective, even down to the internal state that the individual is in. So in the 1960s, some neuroscience pioneers tried to

conceptualize this. They conceived this idea of a "gate" within the spinal cord that controls the amount of pain coming in, say, from your arm up to your brain. So it doesn't become pain until it hits your brain, until then, it's just a signal. And so whether that signal goes through or not, is up to the gate.

AU: Can you tell us about the names of players in the band?

BST: On guitar... "Bastarde" is a old stage name that I've used a over the years. I decided early on in my younger days to not use my real name. And to be honest, it's just silly. It was when Austin Powers came out and there was "Fat Bastard". Oh, yeah, I just said I'm "Pat Bastard". In all honesty, that's all it is. There's no more thought put into it.

HUNT: "The Hunter". I'm on harsh vocals and bass for like 5% of time.

HEAL: "Healer" on clean vocals.

ENG: On bass and piano, "The Engineer"... Our old singer gave it to me, and was too generous. He gave it because he said "I made everything work". Out of next to nothing. Electronics for the recording sessions, and stage lights like that. I should have been, the "Jerry Rigger" or something, would be more accurate.

ARC: I'm "The Architect" on drums. It was given with the intention that what I do on the drums helps form the foundation for the songs and allows people to build off of that. In my day to day, I work on building resilient software systems, with software architecture, so providing a foundation in both spaces.

AU: Speaking to your music, your recent single is "Twin Flames". You've got a music video for it where the band is a freight elevator?

ENG: That's my workshop, service elevator. I wanted to make a video, and knew we could do it in one night of recording. Everybody put on their best face and it was fun, and worked. It was strictly utilitarian to do it there - we could set and teardown fast - we recorded it in two hours.

AU: What are current goals of the band?

HUNT: We are making collaboration tapes and CDs with other local bands. We want to help promote other bands, and share new music. We have Krypteia, Moonbather, Butcher, Hexenbane, Mutual Trauma, Thrashlord, Decryptor, and Endr involved so far. It'll come out in the new year.

AU: Who do you want to play with next? Who would you like to reach? Play with a bigger audience?

ENG: No question. Taylor Swift, she has the biggest audience. Even if only 1% like it, you're reaching a lot. It's a sheer numbers game! *laughs*

ARC: I would really like to see this band branch out and play with acts of different genres. Even Deftones, for their UK tour have Denzel Curry opening for them, the rapper. We're in a new age of streaming where there are challenges, but more artistic freedom. Its okay to be eclectic and weird. We could open for anyone. Let's play with anyone.

ARC: Now the lineup is cohesive, I'm excited to see how new writing turns out. We're building from the ground up. I'm curious what new material will look like. How individual expression will come to the forefront. This is a cross generational musical collective, everyone is coming at it from different angles and influences. Seeing where we can intersect and unite motivates me.

AU: Last words to metalheads across Canada reading the mag:

ENG: Go to GateTheory.com!

HUNT: Keep going to live shows! Go see local bands. Don't let AI write all your music.

ARC: Support human music!

www.gatetheory.com

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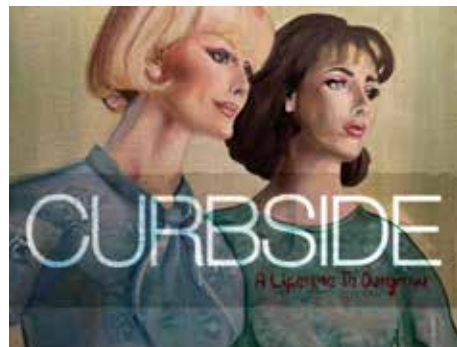
2025 Holiday Gift Guide (SPOILER: it's all records)

By Jonathan Sohn

The year is winding down and there's no better way to show your appreciation for the people in your life than by presenting them with a physical gift to drive it home that they matter to you. Of course, the greatest gift of all is the gift of music. If you're reading this magazine, you already know which music is good music. But just in case you're stumped, here are some suggestions to ensure success.

For your friend that still makes it down to the skatepark once a week

Curbside - A Lifetime To Outgrow
(Thousand Island) - CD/LP



With skateboard in hand (and using it to whack Tony Moon across the back of the head) **Curbside** is one of those bands that just puts their foot down and floors it. *A Lifetime To Outgrow* is melodic, technical and goddamn fast with a sense of urgency that'll have you screaming your heart out. Tell your friend to use any of these songs as the soundtrack to their skate video montage. Now, no one cares that the landing on that frontside 180 kickflip was sloppy. They get to listen to **Curbside!**

For your pal who resists new technology **Shiv and the Carvers - Tell Me You Love Me Again** (Twin Fang) - Cassette



The self-proclaimed "roller-derry punks" Shiv and the Carvers have created a playful take on the riot grrl sound of the 90's. *Tell Me You Love Me Again* is currently only physically available on cassette. Your friend can put this four-song banger in their pocket and take it anywhere. Listening to your music through your phone speaker in public places is a crime against humanity. Carrying an oversized cassette deck on your shoulder and blasting it on 10 is a party.

For your resident metalhead **Christian Mistress - Children of the Earth** (Cruz del Sur) - CD/LP

Last seen in 2015, this is the comeback record from one of the gems of the New Wave of Traditional Heavy Metal movement that has revived and iterated on the classic metal sound of the late 70's and early 80's. Christian Mistress has a twin-guitar attack and technicality that would make Randy Rhoads (R.I.P.) blush. Your friend already owns ten copies of *The Number of the Beast* (which gets reissued every five years) Blow their mind with some killer trad metal that's



brand new!

For your friend who already has tickets to Warped Tour next year **Keep Flying - Time & Tide** (Smartpunk) - CD/LP

Warped Tour is back baby and it's coming to Montréal! We don't know who's playing yet



but that hasn't stopped your pal from buying tickets, booking their flight, finding the swankiest accommodations possible and filling it with their choice contraband. They probably don't have any money left for records. A damn shame. This is where you come in: grab them a copy of *Time & Tide* by **Keep Flying** - a cheery piece of melodic

punk - and give them the souvenir they deserve. We're not sure if they're playing next year. But they played this year and that's the next best thing!

For that someone who has everything
Various Artists - **This Is Canada Not U.S.A.** (AP Records) - CD/Cassette

For the friend who has it all, you have to hedge your bets. Rare is the comp that is all-hits. But also rare is the comp that is all-misses. Your friend is content. Your friend has no idea what they



want in life. They have no idea that there's a hole in their heart the size of the Niagara/Hamilton scene. *This Is Canada Not U.S.A.* is the brainchild of Niagara On The Lake-based AP Records who have assembled a 31-track compilation from bands all across the country. Your friend might know **Ripcordz** and the **Dayglos**, but have they heard **Convikt** or **Lip Crunch** yet? A clever mix of old and new, this collection could introduce your friend's next great obsession.

Jonathan Sohn hoards physical media in preparation for the streamapocalypse. You can find his opinions in the pages of Plastic and Wax or anywhere else that will let him get a word in. He's never used his turntable and his cassette deck broke down years ago, but he keeps external CD-drives on his desk and in his car.

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Interview with THUDLIFE APPAREL's Ryan Hamilton

By Ray MacKay

AU: Who are we talking to today?

Thudlife Apparel: Hey, I'm Ryan. Most people call me by my last name, Hamilton.

AU: When did Thudlife Apparel start?

TA: 2018 it got registered as a business but the idea happened many years prior.

AU: What is the origin of Thudlife Apparel?

TA: I can't take credit for the name nor the original conception. It was my friend Matt Howell who had on a Thudlife tee one day at the skate park back in like 2015 and I was like "Dude, that is hilarious what's the deal?" He said our friend Aussie Tim coined the phrase during a



skate sesh back in like 2012. Matt or Doug Hardy took a rockin slam and in typical Aussie fashion he blurted out a one liner wize crack which was just "Thudlife mate"... or something like that. Matt made a one time small run of tee-shirts and that was that... until I saw the tee. He had a few left and couple weeks later gave one to me. I was sure I still had it but just looked in my closet and couldn't find it. Anyways I said to him let's fire it back up and make something of it. I loved the idea and the knock off of Thuglife. As skaters we live a Thudlife. It's brilliant.

Don't matter how good you are or how long you've been skating you are guaranteed to fall and make a Thud. Matt kept involved for a couple years but then bowed out to focus on his construction work. I then invited another buddy Trevor Moncaster to jump on board and we did a few runs of shirts. The initial years were pretty disorganized and lacked effort. I was wasted all the time and delegating who does what to grow the business just didn't happen. Trev moved from Vancouver to the Koots & got deep into his construction work too and kinda faded off. If you see this Trev give a shout haha. Haven't heard from ya in a long time. I quit drinking end of 2022 and



in the start of 2023 I started to take things more serious. I also started to get into biker culture in 2023 so mixed in motorcycle themed vibes and products. Once 2024 rolled around I made the decision to go all in solo with 100% effort. I wear all the hats; create all the product graphics & web design, photography, filming, make like 95% of the product, sell the product... as Muska says... a one man corporation lol.

AU: What kind of products do you sell?

TA: Mens & ladies wear. Tees, Tanks, Hoodies, Jackets, Hats, Beanies and now as of recently I did a production of sick leather Biker Cuts. Got riding

gloves on the go now & soon to have riding rain gear then helmets.

AU: What makes Thudlife Apparel unique?

TA: Good question, haha. I mean it's a lifestyle brand and literally the product, the graphics and the vibe is driven by

my personal lifestyle. It's authentic cause I eat, sleep, breathe all facets of the brand & business and have been doing aspects of it my whole life. (I'm half way through 47. Been skating for 39 years. Photography & design for 30 years) The new leather vests are unique in that I searched the market for existing cuts and sought to improve on what I saw and added in some unique features I didn't see

on other vests. But at the end of the day it's just clothing with a quirky name. I'm a perfectionist and like quality shit so I do strive to make everything top quality. I kick back \$ to people I know who are doing D.I.Y. projects and spend money to go renegade D.I.Y. spots around town.

AU: What was it like being a vendor for Mosh The Rock Metal Festival in Sooke.

TA: Mosh The Rock was great. I need to bring way more patches next year lol. All the music & band patches I had were a hit but my selection needs to be amplified mega for next year. At first when the gates opened I didn't think my style of clothing and product would connect with the audience but I was wrong. I did well that day and the best seller was "The Government is not your Friend" graphic ... that platitude bridges many subcultures obviously. It was cool to operate the tent and get to watch all the bands. There was some sick ones... fave for the day was Pharm, they killed it.

AU: What's your mission statement?

TA: Try Harder. Be Better. That is the newest of my taglines. The other two taglines are "Cruisin' for a Bruisin'" and "Let's Fuckin' Ride" Those aren't mission statements I know. Well Try Harder. Be Better. Kinda is. I wrote out a motto which is on the website and basically the short version of that would be live a good life and have fun and mind your own business without being a whiny little bitch complaining about shit & being an asshole. Still not a business mission statement haha. Fuck I dunno... Quality gear at humanized prices?

AU: Anything else to mention or promote?

TA: I want to start doing Thud of The Month again lol. The idea is to have people submit slams and pick the best slam each month from the entries. Win a tee or something and showcase the bails on the socials. #thudofthemonth might have to ignite again. Also I still have a few of the Class Clown Cuts left, be rad to off load those and get a new run of vests going. I'd give some major thanks to Jenna 2 Kicks for all her patience & support helping me on this sobriety journey. She is amazing and love her heaps. Huge thanks to both my folks also for their help. I'd still be a drunk if it wasn't for all of them.

AU: Final words of wisdom for our readers?

TA: @jason_at_barnesharleydavidson was a

stranger until he sold me my Dyna in 2023 and now we are great friends; he is 55 and just took up skateboarding @ grampadadskates. Also shout out to Indi, my mom, who is 73 and learning to ride a motorcycle and going through the steps to get her class 6. I mention these two people because life is short and you are never too old to get out there and live life. Can't imagine two more difficult things to



pick up doing later in life. For any of you readers who have aspirations or ideas of wanting to try something new or fulfill a dream just go fucking do it. Don't care about what others think. Chase dreams and laugh at your haters, there's always gonna

be a few. Not one person I know who is actively making moves to better their life and doing cool shit hates on others for what they are doing. It's just the lames who are keeping stagnant and regressing that hate on others so ignore them.

AU: How do we find Thudlife Apparel online?

TA: www.thudlifeapparel.com or follow what little is posted on the insta account lol, I need to get working on that to spice & spruce it up. Just too many things to do. @thudlifeapparel



Photo credits: @shifting_shadows (Jason Schultz)

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The Strange Hour, An Interview with Ira Cooper

By Ed Sum

Ira Cooper is the artistic director and founder of Spec Theatre, an independent collective that may one day be like Second City. More DIY and experimental, it's a place where new and seasoned talents can offer works in progress, or show that this indie spirit is alive and well in Victoria, BC. He's one of the producers behind *The Strange Hour*, a live-action theatrical variety show designed to give performers room to take creative

risks and connect directly with audiences.

He jokingly describes himself as a white settler with Jewish and Eastern European roots. He says Spec Theatre was built around collaboration, humour and community engagement. His background in theatre began early, leading him through school productions, a BFA, and a decade of stage work across BC and abroad. His experience ranges widely—from touring Fringe circuits to living and cycling through China for two years while performing and later staging shows in Beijing and Japan. These travels shaped his belief that theatre can function as a cultural bridge, and informed his interest in developing original, ensemble-driven work.

As the company grows its presence, Cooper hopes *The Strange Hour* can become a recurring fixture in the city's cultural calendar. Through its blend of grassroots production values and cross-disciplinary performance, the show aims to

contribute to a broader movement of accessible, community-focused theatre that reflects the region's artistic identity rather than importing it.

Absolute Underground: Can you tell me more about your international work?

Ira Cooper: I collaborated with Theatre Gumbo in Osaka on *Forest of Truth*. They invited me to perform in *Salaryman Macbeth*. I acted in Japanese—two songs and dialogue on a minimalist stage. Over there, stages come in different shapes. Some are meant to symbolize something spiritual. At another time, I played a Trump-like character, using exaggerated gestures and broken Japanese; the audience laughed at the right spots—thankfully!

AU: How does collaboration fit into your

creative process? Is it easy to find people who share your vision?

IC: That's always the hard part. Collaboration is tough but essential. When you're young, you form theatre companies with your friends—it's easier before ego and individualism interfere. I've always been interested in collaborative creation. At Spec Theatre, our process includes everyone—actors, director, lighting designer—everyone has input. I'm usually the primary writer, but I rewrite based on group feedback so that each person feels invested. Over time, I've become good at facilitating collaboration—sourcing people, building relationships, showing up at events and being curious about others. It keeps me grounded and connected.

AU: When collaboration turns tense—someone wanting more of the pie—how do you handle it?

IC: It's difficult. Spec Theatre has gone through many iterations. The current one includes my partner, Ruby Arnold, who's been our designer for years, and a small board led by my creative partner, Hilary Fillier. We just returned from the Edmonton Fringe Festival, performing *The Human Cat Experience*, about two cats high on catnip on a mission for kitty litter. It featured cardboard puppets, sex dolls, rotisserie chicken burlesque, wild dance and original music composed by me.

AU: The Strange Hour is only a few months old. What made you decide to take charge and create something new for theatre enthusiasts?

IC: Fear, honestly. The scene here in Victoria is in an artistic crisis. We've lost five venues and the Metro Theatre is next—it's the only mid-sized venue artists like me can afford. The others are too big or inaccessible. We do have other spaces, but they're different. Performance venues are scarce. We have lots of galleries but very few stages.

The Strange Hour was born from a desire to



bring artists together—a brunch variety show that's a safe, fun space to try things. We've had wrestlers, burlesque, drag, comedians, a guy who makes music from bugs, comic artists, business owners—you name it. We also rotate vendors, co-hosts, and artisans.

AU: How would you describe *The Strange Hour* for those who've never experienced something like it?

IC: It's a 19+ brunch variety show. We have locally made food, drinks by Driftwood Brewery and a lineup that changes every time. It's modelled loosely on Vancouver's *Talent Time* by Paul Anthony and Ryan Beil—wild, unpredictable shows where you might see a dog riding a turtle or a BTS fan group performing. You never know what you'll get. In a world obsessed with reviews and

previews, *The Strange Hour* brings back surprise and discovery. It's "brunch plus art." Come hungry, come curious. Whether you're a regular theatre-goer or someone who's never set foot in a theatre, you'll find something that surprises you.

spectheatre.com





A Look Back with The Gents

The Gentlemen of Horror

By John Carlow / Finding Charlotte Photography

Not too long ago I caught the last night of the Grapes of Wrath acoustic tour across Canada. As I watched Tom Hooper and Kevin Kane on stage, it reminded me that a younger Tom was part of the infamous punk band Gentlemen of Horror. Named after a horror film, Kelowna's GOH hung out a couple of years (1980-83), played maybe 20 shows and released a highly sought-after 7" that has been sold for up to \$4,000. I caught up with Tom, and we talked about those days.

Tom Hooper – "Casey Casem" Guitar, Vocals

Chris Hooper – "Nigel Watts" Drums

Donny Walchuk – "Friendly Giant" Bass

Absolute Underground: Just prior to GOH forming, you had a short-lived band called Kill Pigs. Tell me about that.

Tom Hooper: There were only maybe six of us in the early days in Kelowna who were into punk, including my brother Chris and our childhood friends Kevin Kane and Darryl Neudorf (who later joined 54/40). His dad was my geography teacher in grade 8 and I had gone to kindergarten with his younger sister Adele. Kevin happened to be walking by a condo near his house and heard the Sex Pistols blasting, so he had to knock on the door and Chuck McDonald answered. He was a total punk rock dude with dyed hair and was, I think, around 23, although we were way younger. I was 13, and Kevin and Chris were 15. We had to hang out with this guy and he had an amazing record collection, all the classic punk records. I remember he had a record by Crass (*Shaved Women*). It was so scary sounding.

We decided to form a band. Chuck had this briefcase with a zillion lyrics in it. I was in grade 8, and every day after school we would rehearse at his place. I loved these times because it was fun and, as someone who was pretty much getting bullied at school for being punk rock, it was very cool. This was 1979. It was very cool to be hanging around with this pot-smoking punk guy with all his girlfriends around. Everyone liked him. He was quite personable. Even the bikers in Kelowna liked him. He was blind in one eye and had scars all over him from fights, but he was a sweet fun guy. I remember there was a riot in Kelowna after a Streethart concert and I guess Chuck's place had been a party place. A huge group of people went to his place afterward. He wasn't home at the time, but the party got out of hand and the police came, and there was a riot. It was on the Kelowna CHBC news. They tried to steal my bass amp, but it was found down the road. We weren't there, of course. We did an interview with Terry David Mulligan about that.

After a few months, we had a huge number of songs and Chuck got us a gig at a party in Kelowna. There were about 10 people there and we played in the living room. We auditioned for the Kelowna Regatta and called ourselves KP's. The funny thing about the name *Kill Pigs* is that

it was Chuck's. We were so innocent we didn't know what that meant. We did a demo cassette in the spring of 1980, and then Chuck went off to the oil rigs to raise money for our first record and was killed in an accident. There is a cassette of the recording which I have yet to find.

AU: It's said that The Clash, X-Ray Spex and Stiff Little Fingers, plus B.C. fellow punks D.O.A. and Subhumans,

fed your influences.

TH: For me, first it was Sex Pistols, The Clash and X-Ray Spex for sure. I remember Chuck had the X-Ray Spex rare first album and I still have his copy. Also, Vancouver bands like Subhumans, D.O.A., Pointed Sticks, Private School and No Exit as they were our age. Later I really got into L.A. punk like Germs, X, Circle Jerks and Black Flag.

AU: With GOH the style was fast, short songs?

TH: The Gents started with me and my friend Donny in September 1980. We would just hang out in his basement and make up funny punk songs with me on guitar and vocals and him on bass. We eventually got my brother to come and play drums. When we first started, we were mostly into classic punk rock but also high into PIL, although you wouldn't know from the single. There were some groovy songs like "Kill The Cow Drain The Blood," which was more PIL-like, but of course there are no recordings anymore of that. As we went along, we got into the D.C. bands and, like I said before, L.A. hardcore, with the songs getting faster and shorter.

AU: How long was it between forming and your first gig?

TH: It's funny how, when you are young, all these experiences seem to be over a long period of time, but in reality, it was a matter of months. I can't remember the first gig. I don't think we played a gig until after our EP came out in January 1981. Could have been the Carnegie Centre in Vancouver with The Metros, Thirsty Souls and some other band. There was nowhere for us to play in Kelowna until I eventually started renting halls. We had punk rock friends in Penticton, so we would go down there and hang out with them and they would rent halls as well. No one would ever come except rednecks looking for trouble.

AU: That first record (on IRS Records, reissued in 2002) with a run of 200 was a five-song 7" made with borrowed money and is now highly sought after, fetching ridiculous prices (50 copies of which were lost on a bus). Ever pay back that money?

TH: Haha, no. My dad and Donny's dad each put in \$200, I believe. I'm sure they would never believe that in 44 years it would be worth \$4,000. We never did find those 50 missing copies.

AU: You did the sleeve design of that run yourselves, correct?

TH: If I recall, my brother and I did the cover. We ordered black labels to save money, and when we got them, we all sat in my bedroom with some friends like Kevin Kane and drew our own labels with felt pens.

AU: In August of 1981, you did an outdoor gig in Kelowna for around 500 with Sick Society and Empty Set, much to the dismay of city officials thinking it was a rock show. Sounds like you caused some trouble. Did any of the bands survive the show without serious injury?

TH: We had a great time. It was amazing to draw a few hundred people even though most were yelling and booing at us. Other than beer bottles being thrown, no one came on the stage to hurt

us. I think people were in disbelief at what was going on. Every punk band at that time pissed off crowds just for playing punk rock and looking punk rock. Well, maybe my brother pissed off people by yelling anti-religious and anti-German rants. We had a kind of joking anti-German thing. There were so many old Germans in Kelowna who kind of ran everything. We thought it was funny because like, "You got a problem with me ranting about Germans? They started WW2, ffs," haha... but it was all sarcastic.

AU: There were some Cranbrook shows that made the history books too?

TH: Yeah, a friend of ours booked a couple shows for us in his hometown of Cranbrook. The first show was a hall which was sparsely attended. The next day we played at the local roller rink. We were set up at one end of the rink and people would skate by us. We didn't go over very well, and all these roller dudes would skate by and call us names. It was quite funny. Nothing much happened until after we finished and went to load up the gear. When we got outside, little kids with hockey sticks started throwing rocks at us and let the air out of our friend's van tires. A cop car showed up and the officer basically said we should probably leave Cranbrook for our own safety and escorted us to the city limits.

AU: Writer Bruce Mitchell was a supporter of GOH. Tell me about him.

TH: After my dad dropped us off after rescuing us from the city park show, we were hanging out at Donny's house drinking Pop Shoppe pop when we got a phone call from local music writer Bruce Mitchell. He wrote for the Kelowna *Daily Courier*. He was like, "Who the hell are you guys?" He thought it was great. Over the years he was a big supporter of the Grapes of Wrath and he also gave my number to Tom Harrison when he was doing an article in the Province about punk rock fanzines.

AU: Speaking of which, you had a zine out at one point. Tell me about *Indecent Exposure*. Any copies still around?

TH: Yes, I did two issues of *Indecent Exposure*. I did them on a photocopy machine at a drugstore. I would take them down to Vancouver and get them in the cool record stores. I remember all the people working at these stores were very friendly, especially Grant from Quintessence who would always mail me posters of gigs in Vancouver. I have no copies of *Indecent Exposure*. The name was taken from a Sex Pistols bootleg I had. I was trying to promote the amazing Okanagan punk scene, which there really wasn't, but some people believed it. My friend Len Morgan (R.I.P.) in Vancouver was also doing a fanzine called *Idle Thoughts*. We were the same age so we would correspond. It's crazy to think the way we corresponded was letters. So different from now.

You had to wait weeks sometimes if you sent a single to Flipside in LA, but it was also great because you always got a reply. At that time, the scene everywhere was so small.

AU: Are there stories you recall from Vancouver or Victoria specifically?

TH: We played the Smiling Buddha a couple times. That was memorable. I think I was 15 and remember how small it was, not what I thought it would be like. The second time we played two nights with our heroes, Subhumans. That was a big deal for us. I remember the crowd didn't think much of us. We were way younger and at that point (1982) our songs were really fast and really short. I remember one guy telling us, "Your songs are too fast!" We were like, "Fuck you old man," haha. Victoria was always a fun place to play. It was smaller, and most of the punk kids were more like us. Hardcore 1983 (Dayglos, Red Tide and The Neos) was cool. We had achieved a bit of notoriety by that point, and I remember one of the bands playing before us doing a cover of "Bank," one of our songs. But I don't remember much. It's disputed that GOH were the headliner that night.

AU: Tell me about *Dogs of War*. You released only one song under that band name that made its way onto a cassette?



TH: It's too bad. We just thought we would change our name from GOH and be more hardcore. We were on a great punk comp called *Charred Remains*. I wish we hadn't changed the name because I think it's one of the best band names ever. We

did change it back to GOH. That one song was "Crime Watch/Block Parents." It was my complaint about an anti-crime thing that was going on. Again, it was just a joke about old people suspecting people like us instead of real criminals.

AU: What actually broke up the GOH in 1983?

TH: We basically drifted apart. I was listening to different music. No big reason or fights or anything. I think I had a girlfriend at that point.

AU: Grapes of Wrath formed in 1983 on the heels of GOH. It seems an incredible leap of genres. How did you go from one extreme to another?

TH: Yes, I suppose, but when I listen to our first album or even the cassette of our first gig, you can hear the punk roots, especially the bass and drums.

AU: Thanks for the trip down memory lane, Tom Best of everything.

Photographs courtesy Tom Hooper

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Ricky Bascom

Interview by Ray MacKay

Absolute Underground: What are you best known for?

Ricky Bascom: I am a rapper and producer. People know me for my thought provoking lyrics and crazy production with live instrumentation.

AU: Where are you from and what's the music scene like there?

RB: I'm From Arkansas in the US. There is not much of a music scene there I guess. I usually just work on music in my house by myself. I have a few friends in my town that will record some verses and be in my videos sometimes like NoWaay, Daveo, StaccShxw, YBG Lan, etc.

AU: Give us a the history of your music career.

RB: I started out playing guitar when I was 4. I started a band with my sister called PinkleTank and we played alot of shows and got signed as a children's rock band. When I

got around 14, I started getting into rap music. I started producing all my own beats.

I couldn't find people who would rap on the weird unique beats I would make so I started rapping myself. Fast forward now I am mixing a lot of stuff from my younger Blues/Southern Rock sound with modern rap music to create the ideal music I hear in my head.

AU: You have a new album, TrapRockNBlues, out now - tell us all about it!

RB: TrapRockNBlues is the 1st step to creating a brand new sound. I feel like it's a rough draft showing where I want to go. I would recommend listening to "Don't Come Near Me" first. Before TrapRockNBlues, my production was all sample based and I would search for hours trying to find samples

to match the sound I had in my head. My album TANK is the best representation of that. But after TANK, I was getting so specific about what I wanted I couldn't find anything perfect. I had to start making these ideas myself. So I started taking vocal lessons to create these vocal samples I would always hear in Kanye West style beats. But I always like to add some blues and some in between notes in my music. I also like it to be heavy with some distorted guitars in a Classic Rock kind of style. But not too heavy like a modern metal sound. You see this is too specific and couldn't be found. I'm not

perfect at all these styles yet, but I had to start working on this so I wouldn't be limited to using music that is already made. So I made 13 songs that sounded like the style I was looking for, and sampled them. You can't cheat in this process and just make the part you want to sample. You really have to make a whole song to get it to have the spontaneous feel of a real sample. Vocally, I love old style vocals without autotune so that's what I did. It's not perfect but the first step to create this sound I wanted was taking the training wheels of autotune out of my process and start working with my real voice. I want an explosive, authentic, and completely unique sound. I know my fans love when I sample but my sampling was only going to get worse because

I felt so uninspired by it. This was for the best and maybe taking 1 step backwards to go 100 steps forward in the future.

AU: Blacktop Records has licensed your hit "Right To Be Retarded" for a limited run of 300 pressed on 180 gram black vinyl. How does

it feel to have one of your earliest and most popular songs licensed and produced in such a great format?

RB: I'm glad my fans get to enjoy the vinyl. I am proud of some of those songs. I haven't listened to it yet because I spend every second working on new music. But all I have seen is great feedback from it and everybody likes it. Blacktop Records has been great at helping me make these.

AU: You're very popular on tiktok: @tankgangaffiliate. How do you channel your creativity into the platform?

RB: I just focus on the music. Other people run these accounts.

AU: Who are your musical inspirations?

RB: I think my favorite music is trap from 2010-now and rock from 1960-1979. I love artists like



Future, Chief Keef, Young Dolph, Playboi Carti, Lil Double 0, BEO Lil Kenny. I also like bands like Ted Nugent, Queen, Boston, Kansas, Dust, Journey, Free etc.

I just know what I like and I stick to it.

AU: Where can we find you online?

RB: I'm on all music platforms as Ricky Bascom. I'm on instagram as @Ricky_Bascom. My website is rickybascom.com and has everything on it

blacktoprecords.ca

blacktoprecords.bandcamp.com

Photo Credit: Ricky Bascom

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Tommy Bolan talks N.Y.C.'s new album, *BUILT TO DESTROY*

By Ray MacKay

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you most famous or infamous for?

N.Y.C.: BOND...James Bond...(haha) Actually this is Tommy Bolan, Lead guitarist from the band Warlock (with Doro Pesch)—I am best known for the album *Triumph and Agony*, which contains the song "All We Are".

AU: Where are you from and what's the music scene like there?

N.Y.C.: I was born and raised in Queens, New York, and like many music scenes currently, I would have to say, in my opinion, it's struggling and not up to what it used to be.

AU: Give us a brief history of your band.

N.Y.C.: I formed and founded the band N.Y.C as guitarist and lead vocalist and I have had some different members in the past but when Adrenalizing Media got involved, it took N.Y.C. to the next level. I would also have to say with this lineup of Stet

Howland on drums and Steve Unger on bass, I now have the "Rhythm Section from Hell™" to help deliver the energy I was looking for in my music.

AU: Tell us about your new album, *Built To Destroy*.

N.Y.C.: This album contains a lot of my blood — while many people have stories to tell — if we are telling mine — then this one is my apex of self sacrifice, pain and endurance balanced with an unrelenting tenacity for life - I can't wait to bring this to the stage and I hope the fans dig the energy and thank any all ahead of time for their support.

AU: What was the creative process behind *Built To Destroy*?

N.Y.C.: I am always writing music- so basically I tapped into how "Fed up n Disgusted" I was at

that particular time (haha) - so I had these songs ready to go but did take some of them in new directions when the recording process started, as I was producing this album as well - and then Stet n Steve added their style to the songs which was Rockin'.

AU: What song do you think people will react to most on *Built To Destroy*?

N.Y.C.: Honestly, I hope they react to all of them as they all tell a different story and the album has a wide range of emotion on it that I feel will appeal to many people for different reasons - whether it's an anthem, ballad, groove or something that just grabs them - you know it when you hear it - Something that moves you Inside and Out - from the Groove to the Grit - but if I had to pick one - I would say the title track - "Built To Destroy".

AU: You've also released a new single, "Heavy As Hell". Tell us all about it!!!

N.Y.C.: "Heavy as Hell" is a song about actually playing live and on your own Stage of Life with the intensity we all crave and it's the first "Official NextGen UE5 Music Video" which was Directed by Academy Award Winning VFX Director, Walter Schulz. The video came out Fkn Great and it matches the Energy and Feel of the song.

AU: What should we know about you that we don't already?

N.Y.C.: I Forget Nothing - I Remember Everything (wink).

AU: What don't you want your family members to know?

N.Y.C.: They Know Enough (haha).

AU: Anything else to promote?

N.Y.C.: My signature guitar strings from Optima Strings (made in Germany) are really cool and can take an "N.Y.C. Style Beatin' and Still Shred!"

optima-strings.com/shop/en/guitar/electric-guitar/premium-nps/3179/4028.tb-e-gitarre-tommy-bolan-signature-set

Also - N.Y.C. Has some new merch in our shop definitely worth checkin out:

adrenalizingnetwork.com/shop/nyc

AU: Any final words for our readers?

N.Y.C.: Final Words?? Hmm - I want to thank all of those who take the time to check this out and to anyone who has helped out along the way with any type of support - I really appreciate it and if you don't like it for some reason, well... that's cool too... BUT - here are some other Final Words - for "some people" (haha) - To anyone who got in the way - talked shit - or lied or had a negative agenda or fucked with this program in any way shape or form - Go Fuck Yourself®



AU: Where can we find you online?

N.Y.C.:

nycband.com

Instagram: @nycband

Facebook: @NycTheband

Threads: @nycband

Tiktok: @nycband

Youtube: @NYCTHEBAND

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Photos by Adrenalizing Media Works

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THE SASQUATCH SISTERS Talk New Album, *BETTER THAN YESTERDAY*

Interview with Cassie Loewen

By Matt Norris

The Sasquatch Sisters are Ink. D and Cassie Loewen

AU: The ghost of Elvis said he wishes he wrote your songs. Do you feel bad for how jealous the legends must be right now?

SS: We rolled him a joint and told him to chill. Legends don't compete, they vibe.

AU: For the freaks who haven't heard your music yet, what style is your new album?

SS: Don't make us answer that. Our style is any style. *Better Than Yesterday* is a fkn mind warp that, in the end, somehow all makes sense. It's a vibe you'll swear you know, but you've never heard before.

AU: So you did invent your own style...

SS: We didn't invent anything. We just drop the ego and projectile-write to every beat we vibe to... hip-hop, reggae, swing jazz, you name it... and it turns out, well, however it turns out. Maybe we invented our own style.

AU: You wrote this album in 10 days and finished recording in a month. How did that happen?

SS: Spur-of-the-moment wit and no agenda. Ink. D had been asking me to record for nearly a year while we worked the same shitty job. After we both escaped that hellhole, Ink. D poked me once or seven more times saying "highhhhhh," and "when are we recording?" I had a 10-day window, so I showed up, smoked up, and we wrote until we collapsed under the weight of our own genius. In ten days, *Better Than*

Yesterday was born.

AU: What inspired you to get going with the new album?

SS: We made it for our hyperactive brains... something you can zone out to and let your mind melt. Or at least go for a ride while you focus on the road. Loopy, vibey, trippy. I usually over analyze everything, so for me, this album was only possible through letting creative expectations be taken by inspiration and the moment existing fluently.

AU: You're so chill but also obviously the best. How do you make it look easy?

SS: Because it is. I think it's because we both embrace our state of mind and do whatever the fuck we want. We make music, smoke blunts, and laugh while everyone else clocks in. Make music fun, it writes itself.

AU: What's something people misunderstand about your music?

SS: That there's a meaning behind it. We don't need a reason to do what we do best. We don't try, we just are. And what we are is constantly creating from the moment we wake up to the moment we sleep. Thasssit.

AU: What's the question you want to be asked but no one ever does?

SS: "How does it feel to make the system sweat while sitting in sweatpants?" And the answer is: sublime.

AU: Being this good—burden or party?

SS: Both. The burden is learning all the rules, the party is breaking every single one... and leaving people wondering why they ever played it safe.

AU: Any additional promotion?

SS: Just bump the new album, share it if you can.

Check out The Sasquatch Sisters' new album, *BETTER THAN YESTERDAY*.



UNREAL CITY

January 15th-17th - Vancouver, BC

Unreal City, a three day local winter music festival running out of the Rickshaw Theatre and Russian Hall in Strathcona.

The 2026 edition of the festival takes place January 15th, 16th and 17th (Thursday, Friday and Saturday) at Rickshaw Theatre and a transformed Russian Hall (600 Campbell Ave).

The lineup for our second year features 27(!) of Vancouver and Victoria's best underground rock bands (plus one from Calgary!), including performances by Spencer Krug (Wolf Parade, Sunset Rubdown, Moonface), By A Thread and Devours.

In addition to live music, we'll have spaces for community advocacy, vinyl DJs, drinks (including local

brewery features), sandwiches from Rebel Rebel BBQ and flash tattoos!

Unreal City is proudly DIY, run entirely by volunteers. For the second year running, the festival is fully fundraised and bootstrapped by its own members, all to build community and showcase local music. The fest is put on by the nonprofit Unreal City Society and is not affiliated with any promoters or booking agencies.



unrealcity.rocks

@unrealcityfest

Photo Credit: Sol Kauffman



GLACIAL MUTILATION METAL FESTIVAL

February 19th-21st, 2026 - Vancouver, BC

Absolute Underground: Who are you and what are you all about?

My name is **Colton Hession**, I'm the President of Journeyman Production and the sole organizer of Glacial Mutilation Metal Festival. I've been a musician since before I was in high school, and I've been playing and putting on shows here in the local Vancouver scene for nearly 10 years now!

AU: Tell us about the genesis of the idea to start Glacial Mutilation Metal Festival?

The idea behind the festival was to serve as an anniversary of my very first show I put on as a promoter back in 2018, which is why it takes place in the Winter which can be a very uncertain time period to put on something like this. In some ways I consider that show the unofficial first iteration of the festival, 6 bands played that night and to this day is still one of my favourite shows I've been a part of.



@opalinsky

This year we have an incredible mix of bands. From old school trash metal, death metal, metalcore, techdeath, prog, I really do believe there's something for everyone this year. Our headliners are Seattle's Xoth for Night 1, who are veterans of the festival with this being their third year in a row playing it. They're one of my personal favourite bands and this year I get to see them have a headliner length set! Los Angeles' Mourning High for Night 2, who won this year's Wacken Metal Battle USA and got to fly to Germany and play Wacken, which is insane! Then on Night 3 we have Vancouver's own Opal In Sky (who I just so happen to be the lead guitarist for, by the way!). But well before I even joined they were already on the path to revolutionize how to "make it" in the

music industry. I got the chance to put on their first show here in Vancouver before I joined and you could feel it in the air in the room that night that something special was happening. The connection that the fans have to their music is like no other crowd I had seen before, the pure raw emotion on people's faces told the whole

AU: Where does the festival take place?

This year we have three nights: February 19th at The Cobalt, and February 20th & 21st both at the Rickshaw Theatre.

AU: What's the festival's motto?

"The Frostiest Fest In The West".

AU: What bands are playing this year's festival?

story. I wanted them on last year's festival but we couldn't make things work, but now being a part of the band I've made it happen!

AU: What are some changes or improvements planned for this year's event?

This year I really put an emphasis on special bands for the lineup. And what I mean by that is, choosing bands that you aren't going to get the chance to see every day here in Vancouver. For example, 14 out of the 18 bands playing are travelling in from out of town to play. And a lot of them have either never toured here before or it's been years since they did. We even have a band in Coven 6669 that are 40 year veterans of the industry but are playing Vancouver for the first time for the festival, and that's truly something special to me.

AU: What is your master vision for the festival?

I want this festival to serve as a launching pad for the future. Maybe it won't be immediately career changing, but I want to be able to give bands a significant opportunity to get lots of eyes on them that weren't there before.

Watching bands grow and trying to guide them along a path for success has always been my favourite part of being a show promoter. And perhaps one day the festival will reach a point where bands will think "We've made it" by being on the lineup.

AU: Words of wisdom for people planning to attend.

You GOTTA check out the whole lineup, I guarantee even if there's just one band on the lineup that you know of and like already, there'll be at least 5 others that you'll absolutely love too.

AU: What else do you want people to know about Glacial Mutilation Metal Festival?

I'm going to pull back the curtain a little bit here, but I want to emphasize how important getting your presale tickets early is. There are a lot of upfront costs involved in putting together events like this, and a lot of festivals and shows

of this caliber can straight up be cancelled if the presale numbers aren't where they need to be.



Mourning High

I know more than anyone that sometimes the funds just aren't there and money is tight, so I will never fault anyone for not being able to afford their tickets until closer to the show. So if you're planning to go, grab your ticket in advance! You'll end up saving yourself a lot of money overall too!

AU: Anything else to promote?

Festival headliners Opal In Sky just dropped their first new single in over a year called "The Artist" and it's without a doubt the heaviest and craziest song in the band's catalogue so far

AU: Where can people learn more info about Glacial Mutilation online?

Tickets and info can all be found at: EVENTBRITE.CA. It contains all the info about individual day lineups, where to check out the bands and everything else you need to know to get ready for the festival!

facebook.com/GlacialMutilation
journeymanproductions.org



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UNDER THE OUTHOUSE

Thee Soreheads Aren't Pulling a Single Damn Punch

By Laurie Storr

Absolute Underground: Who am I talking to and what is your role in the band?

Maria Jimenez: I'm Maria, the lead singer and lyricist of the band.

AU: Your debut EP *I'm Not Your Fucking Sex Doll* came out on November 28. How would you introduce the album?

MJ: I would introduce this album as a loud, cathartic, angry and fiercely feminist exploration of what it means to be a woman in today's society.

AU: The term "unapologetic" comes up a lot with music like yours. Can you touch on the importance of being direct in today's political climate?

MJ: Art to me has always served as a means of social change; it's what moves people, touches people and resonates with them. In a political

climate where women's rights are constantly in peril, I think it's vital to create music that challenges the patriarchy, especially those in positions of power.

My goal would be for our music to be a safe haven for all women, while also being used as a conversation starter for men and allies to reflect on their own actions and those

around them. We can all consider ourselves allies to marginalized people, but true allyship requires constant introspection and standing up for or supporting those around you who don't have a voice.

AU: There's no shortage of passion and rage on the album. How does it feel to get on stage and tackle such heavy topics?

MJ: It's cathartic to have a room full of women screaming back lyrics I've written, backed by an amazing band. I've only been making this style of music for a few years and the sense of liberation and catharsis is like no other genre I've performed. When I get on stage, I flail around and often become

overwhelmed with the emotional content of our songs. There's no sense of control and anything can happen within my performance, which is exciting but scary at the same time.

AU: Your live show definitely doesn't disappoint. How do you get that same energy into recording?

MJ: When we recorded the EP, we did the whole

thing in one day. We made sure to record the tracks live all together in one room to keep it fresh and alive. Later in the afternoon, I jumped in the vocal booth and went for it, jumping and moving around to keep up the same energy I have on stage. After a couple of very intense takes for each track, the whole thing was done.

AU: Your sound is hard to put into a single genre. How would you describe it and are there bands that influence your songwriting?

MJ: I'd definitely categorize our sound as punk, but I think all of us come from such diverse backgrounds within rock and music in general that our influences blend together to create a sonic amalgamation. My major punk influences are bands like Amyl and the Sniffers, Lambrini Girls and Bikini Kill. All those frontwomen really know how to command a stage and write incisive lyrics that combine comedy and confrontation in smart, thought provoking ways.

AU: Do you have a favourite track or lyric on the album?

MJ: It's going to have to be "I'm Not Your Fucking Sex Doll." I remember writing the entire song in a fit of rage at a cafe near my house, a stream of consciousness of all the anger I was feeling that day. It was the first time I wrote such angry lyrics and I think it encapsulates what the entire EP is about.

AU: What's the Montréal scene like? Any bands

we should check out?

MJ: The Montréal scene is absolutely amazing and inspiring. There are so many incredible bands that it's hard to keep up with what everyone is doing, but it also means you can find fresh discoveries all the time. Bands to check out? Too many to name, but Ribbon Skirt, Poolgirl and CANICHE always blow me away live.

AU: What's next for Thee Soreheads?

MJ: After this release we'll be going into the studio to record a

full-length debut album. We're super excited and have been perfecting those songs in our live performances for over a year, so it'll be refreshing and challenging to bring them into studio recordings. We'll also be touring. We're planning to go to the west coast with Outhouse Records in the spring and I'm particularly thrilled to play our first show in my hometown of Vancouver.

AU: How can our readers find you and your music online?

MJ: You can find us on all the socials (Insta, TikTok, FB) under **@theesoreheads**. We're also on all streaming platforms for your sonic pleasure. Just don't forget it's "Thee" with two "e"s.

Photo credit: Casey Ecker

EP Artwork by E.B. Sciales. @ebsciales



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Dad Religion on Their New 7" and Comic Adventure

By Ray MacKay

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you most famous or infamous for?

Dad Religion: You're talking to Kristian, lead singer for Dad Religion, a band known for specializing in toddler mosh pits.

AU: Where are you from and what's the music scene like there?

DR: We're from Edmonton, home of SNFU, the smalls and many amazing current bands like Midnight Peg, Open Eyes, Western Death Ballads just to name a few. So, I have to say the scene has and remains rad.

AU: Give us a brief history of Dad Religion.

DR: It all stems from the non-profit organization that I run called Rad Dads Edmonton. We are a group of fathers that model positive parenting, the empowerment of dads and foster the involvement of dads in the community. One way we try to achieve this is to host events for families and usually those events are around things I'm interested in such as skateboarding and punk rock. I called together a bunch of pals to do an "all ager rager" punk show with us paying tribute to Bad Religion in a family-friendly environment and so it began. It was supposed to be a one-off but here we are six years later still having fun.

AU: How would you describe the sound of Dad Religion?

DR: We are a straight up tribute band covering such acts as Bad Religion, SNFU and Dead Kennedys.

AU: You have a 7", Dad Religion With Special Guests out as of August - tell us all about it!

DR: The 7" came about as part of a collaboration between the band and the creative team of SNFU Tales. I was part of that team too, where we produced a comic entitled *Come With Me, I'm On My Way: Four Tales of Misfortune Inspired by SNFU*. The comic book took inspiration from four songs from SNFU's debut album and no one else wanted to play ("Bodies in the Wall", "Cannibal Café", "The Gravedigger" and "Loser at Life/Loser at Death"). Dad Religion decided to create a 7" to accompany the comic. We had Marc Belke and Brent Belke and Jimmy Schmidt play on the album as well.

AU: Tell us about the process behind Dad Religion With Special Guests.

DR: Once I had the idea and the band was on board I reached out to Marc, Brent and Jimmy to see if they would play on one of the songs and they all agreed!! The band hit the studio with Rob Lawless at Lawless Recordings in Edmonton. Jimmy lives in Edmonton so he came to the studio with us and ended up playing on all the songs. For Marc and Brent who live in BC we sent them the tracks and they sent us their parts - pretty seamless really and an amazing honour. I still can't believe I get to be on a record with the remaining surviving members of SNFU.

AU: Give us some highlights from your most

recent shows.

DR: We just had a comic/7" release show in Edmonton this past August to celebrate the achievement but also pay homage to the 40th anniversary of ANOEWTP. We as a band learned all the songs from that album and had Jimmy play bass on all of them. We also added a few songs from *If You Swear You'll Catch No Fish* and had bassist Dave Bacon (who played on that album) join us on stage for those. Was a packed house at Temple/Starlite! Shoutout to Tyson and the crew there.

AU: You've also recently produced a comic book, which you funded on Kickstarter - tell us about it!

DR: The comic the SNFU Tales team produced is entitled *Come With Me, I'm On My Way: Four Tales of Misfortune Inspired by SNFU*. The comic book took inspiration from 4 songs from SNFU's debut album and no one else wanted to play ("Bodies in the Wall", "Cannibal Café", "The Gravedigger" and "Loser at Life/Loser at Death"). The creative team behind that project was me, Adrieen Koleric and Dillon Korbisser. Dillon did all the art for the book and killed it!

AU: What was the process of funding your comic on Kickstarter like?

DR: That's more a question for Adrieen. He was the main force behind putting it together.

We launched it in July 2025 once Dillon had completed the book. The book was funded by an Edmonton Arts Council grant which covered the production of the art and scripts. The Kickstarter was used to cover printing costs and pressing costs of the 7". We were stoked at the interest and raised over \$10,000 to bring the comic and record to life.

AU: What was the creative process behind this comic? What comics inspired you, if any?

DR: The comic was inspired obviously by the SNFU songs but also *Tales From The Crypt* horror comics. Each story had Crypt Keeper Chi introduce the story and each story was seven pages long to keep with the lore of SNFU where each album title had seven words.

AU: Do you have any more comics planned for the future?

DR: This process took Dillon about two years to do and many hours. I think we'll just relish the moment before even considering another comic in the series.

AU: Any tours/shows coming up?

DR: No tours but that would be fun.

AU: Any final words for our readers?

DR: Thanks to everyone for all the support with the comic, 7" and Rad Dads Edmonton events.

AU: Where can we find you online?

DR: Rad Dads Edmonton:

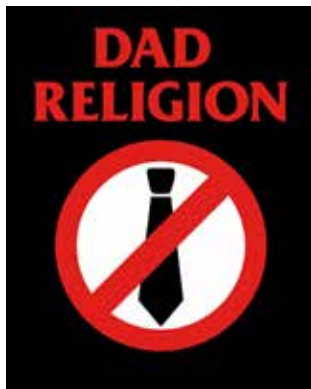
raddadsyeg.com

Instagram: @rad_dads_yegchapter

SNFU Tales Instagram: @snfu.tales

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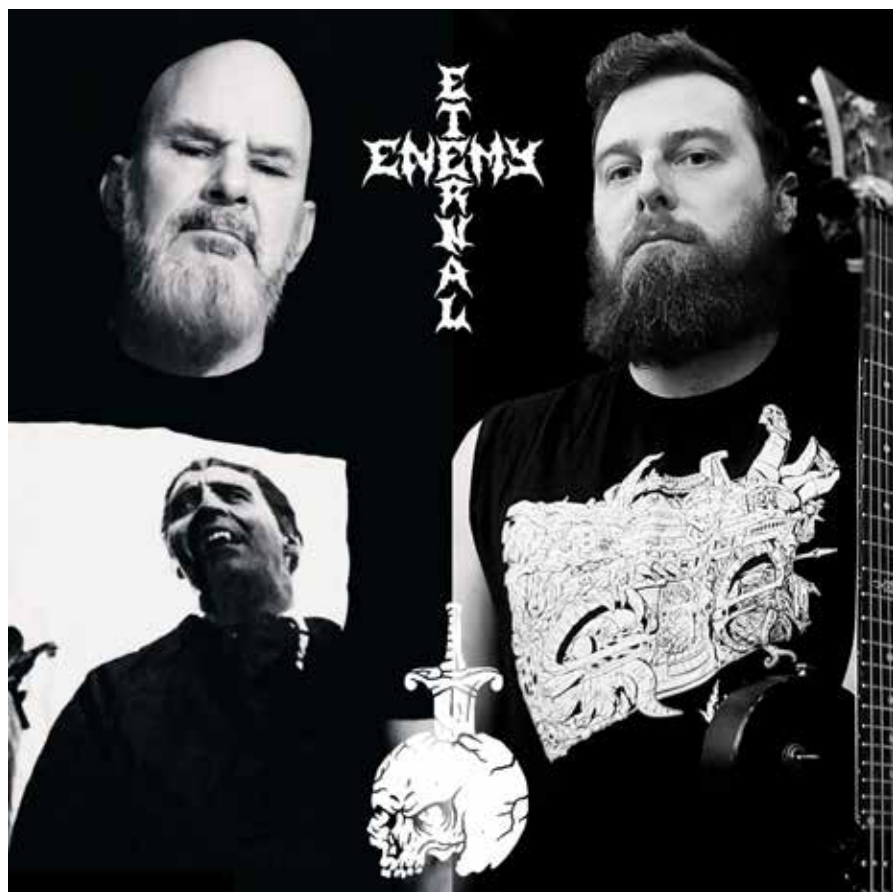
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ETERNAL ENEMY: Raising Hell from Victoria's Underground

By Ray MacKay

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you most famous or infamous for?

Eternal Enemy: We are Eternal Enemy. A death metal band where the sole purpose is to stand in opposition to the sinister dark forces that pull the strings and manipulate mankind.

Throughout humanity, there always has been those who stand and fight against the tyranny of mankind. Since the inception of church and state, the common man has always lived under the boot heel of corruption and hypocrisy. Those trusted with the power to govern have always had ulterior motives that do not align with the struggle of mankind. Eternal Enemy will always lurk in the shadows and fight for what we as a society

should deserve rather than oligarchs, religious figureheads and corrupt governments stand for. Those who blindly follow will always be fed upon by those who chase the almighty dollar and power. We prefer to rage against the ivory towers.



AU: Where are you from and what's the music scene like there?

EE: Eternal Enemy is based out of Victoria, British Columbia. The underground scene in Victoria is alive and well. Punk rock seems to lead the way as far as grabbing the most attention from the music scene and metal while thriving, still seems to be

unrepresented. Many well-established metal acts choose not to come to Victoria because of the cost, so we lose out on a lot of opportunities for local bands to share the stage with many major

acts. Local metal band Hedonist has given a bit of credibility to the scene having toured with Carcass in the past few months.

AU: Give us a brief history of Eternal Enemy.

EE: Eternal Enemy is a project born of necessity. For the better part of the year, the two founding members are involved in Wolves Of Russ. For a couple months of the year, one of the members of the Wolves goes on a hiatus and in that time Eternal Enemy was born. Looking to do something a little more wicked and with a darker tone, we forged the beast and the sound that is Eternal Enemy. The original mission for Eternal Enemy was to write a 10 song EP with every song being under 2 minutes and 30 seconds. That mission was accomplished with the first album self-titled *Eternal Enemy*. Now with the second album, *Fatal Disease Called Life*, Eternal Enemy is taking off the restriction and going all out.

AU: Your second album, *Fatal Disease Called Life*, is out now, tell us all about it!

EE: Since recording our debut album a year ago, the world and society in general has been cast into chaos. As we watch wars erupt, politicians growing more openly corrupt and the church causing issues which are perpetuated by the overall hypocrisy and growing descent, praying on the weak seems to be a new bloodsport that those who hold power are tightening their grip on. *Fatal Disease Called Life* is a reflection of the overall scope of the downward slide we see happening all around us. The wealthy always seem to come out on top and the church still wields so much backroom power, we felt compelled to speak out against it more than ever and that's what this album represents.

AU: What was the process behind writing and recording *Fatal Disease Called Life*?

EE: We are just two members with a 22 year age difference between us. We bring a mixture of old and new metal forming what we feel is an invigorated onslaught of ideas. Always looking to be progressive in our technique, we work fast and furious in the space of two months, writing and recording the majority of the material, taking a couple months to do the editing and engineering, we always come at it with velocity.

AU: After the hit that was your first album, self-titled *Eternal Enemy*, how are people reacting to *Fatal Disease Called Life*?

EE: So far in its infancy, the reaction has been very positive. The word has gotten on as far as

South America and we are looking forward to being in *Trauma Magazine* and having a single on an upcoming compilation they are putting together. "Massacre the Masters" off of the new record will be the song we are submitting. We are greatly looking forward to casting a wider net and hopefully seep deeper into the metal culture way down south.

AU: What's your favourite song to perform live?

EE: Eternal Enemy thus far has been strictly a studio project. With the two members doing all of the music at the moment, there are no foreseeable shows in the works. Perhaps down the road we will get some hired guns to bring the project to the stage but for the foreseeable future writing and recording is the main objective. We would definitely love to play songs like "Massacre The Masters" or "Rivers Of Ghosts" which are a couple of stand outs on the album. It would be a highlight to play live someday.

AU: What's a song you'd want to cover for a future album?

EE: For us covering others music has no place in our agenda. While bands like Terrorizer or Inferi would be the possibilities that might hold some promise in the way of a cover.

AU: What song or album do you recommend to anyone who hasn't heard of Eternal Enemy?

EE: "The Night Is Dark And Full Of Terrors" along with "Fatal Disease Called Life" are two standouts in our opinion. "Fatal Disease Called Life" being the latest release, we would recommend anyone to find their personal favourites.

AU: What should we know about you that we don't already? What don't you want your family members to know?

EE: With Eternal Enemy we are always working on honing the edge of our craft. Whether working on better production techniques or more in-depth writing, we are always striving to get a foothold in the music scene. Having our family and friends being so supportive and spreading the word of Eternal Enemy has been a blessing. One of the members daughter did the artwork for the current album and past videos, we would just like to thank them for their unwavering support.

AU: Any tours/shows coming up?

EE: At the current moment in time, we are waiting for one of the members to have his first child. With a bit of a break in the action for the foreseeable future, we will continue to write. Hopefully next year we will be ready for the third album and one day to hit the stage and spread the word.

AU: Anything else to promote?

EE: With the current release out on Bandcamp and soon all streaming platforms, we would like to get the word out to a wider audience in hopes to continue growing our fan base.

AU: Any final words for our readers?

EE: On the whole we are very grateful for the opportunity to create and spread the word here with *Absolute Underground*, a magazine that means a lot to the people of Victoria and across the country. We always look forward to every new addition to find out what is happening in our local scene and across the country. Great to see familiar bands and new up-and-coming bands, and we are as always fortunate to be part of the action in this city. Those who pray on the weak should fear Eternal Enemy, and let our music be the battle cry of revolution.

AU: Where can we find you online? Website/socials/etc?

EE: Find us at Eternal Enemy on **Bandcamp: eternalenemy.bandcamp.com** and all streaming platforms or **@eternalenemymusic** on social media. Fight on and thank you to all.

Art By Mila Martin @inked.by.mila



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No Frills, Just Fury: Moments Notice Unleashed

By FLORA

Absolute Underground:
Who are we talking to and
what are you most famous
or infamous for?

Keegan Goodspeed: Hey,
this is Keegan. I'm not
famous or infamous for
anything, but I guess if you
were to know who I was,
it would be from my other
band, Botfly.

AU: Tell us about the
band—who's the lineup,
where are you based, and
what's Moments Notice all
about?

KG: Yeah, we're a five-piece band: Paul Atwood
(vocals), Mikey Bowers (guitar), Nick Jones
(bass), Matt Allen (drums), and myself, Keegan
Goodspeed (guitar). Moments Notice is about
playing fast and getting to the point. We're all
in other bands or doing other creative outlets,
but we all wanted to do something fast, fun, and
stress-free—a band to jump on shows when
needed, if a touring band was coming through
town or a local show needed one more band.

AU: How would you describe your sound for
someone who's never heard you before?

KG: We're trying to go for that early 2000s
northeast sound, you know, like the Boston scene
that existed back then.

AU: Halifax and the East Coast have their own
heavy flavour—how has that shaped the band,
and what's the local scene like these days?

KG: The East Coast has always had an amazing
heavy music scene. For such a small part of our



country, I think we do our best at keeping up with
the bigger Canadian cities. The scene is incredibly
healthy here and has stayed strong since the
pandemic. If anything, every year just keeps
getting better, with more bands, more people
interested in starting bands, and bigger bands
touring out to our area. We have a great crop of
really good bands all doing
their own thing. We felt
the sound that Moments
Notice is going for was
lacking, so we decided to
fill that void. But overall,
there's a good variety of
bands here, and everyone
should think about trying
to book a tour out east.

AU: Your 2025 demo just
dropped with Endnote
Records—tell us about
it! What can we expect to
hear?

KG: Not to sound like a
broken record, but you
can expect fast riffs and songs that are a minute
long. We get to the point and move on, hopefully
leaving you wanting more.

can expect fast riffs and songs that are a minute
long. We get to the point and move on, hopefully
leaving you wanting more.

AU: What keeps you motivated to make
heavy music? Who are your strongest musical
influences?

KG: Heavy music is the only music I've ever
enjoyed making. Like anyone, I listen to a broad
range of music, but the intensity and energy you
create while playing heavy/hardcore music can't
be denied. It's the only style of music that, when
you're watching it, keeps you engaged from start
to finish. For a band like Moments Notice, my
biggest influences would be bands like American
Nightmare, Give, Carry On, Cursed—stuff like that

AU: Any upcoming shows or gigs we should
mark on our calendars?

KG: We've got some gigs in the new year, but
nothing's announced yet, so we'll keep it hush-
hush.

AU: The Holidayz are coming up—any special

plans lined up for the season?

KG: Writing more songs and eating lots of food

AU: Anything else to promote?

KG: Yeah, all the members have other bands
everyone should check out: Botfly, Dulce, Targeted
Individual, Helsreach, Pavel Stroke. Paul is also an
incredible graphic designer—you can see a bunch
of his work on Instagram: @quartertone_studio.
A few members of the band are also involved
in a couple of booking collectives out here and
can help anyone trying to book shows across the
East Coast of Canada. You can check it out and
reach out to us on Instagram: @harbourhc and @
crossoverbookings902.

AU: How do people find you online?

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KG: You can check us out on **Bandcamp:**
momentsnoticehhc.bandcamp.com or follow us
on **Instagram:** @momentsnotice_hhc. We're also
on all the evil streaming services too, if that's how
you listen to music.

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DEVILZ BY DEFINITION: An Interview with CrAzY CoUv

By Ray MacKay

Devilz By Definition is a Canadian metal band that has carved a name for itself with relentless energy, dark themes, and a fiercely loyal fanbase known as The Devilz Fam. I caught up with vocalist, guitarist, and co-producer CrAzY CoUv to discuss the band's history, their upcoming album, and the philosophy that drives their music.

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to, and what are you most famous or infamous for?

CrAzY CoUv: Hi there, you're talking to vocalist, guitarist, and co-producer CrAzY CoUv. I guess my name says it all, lol. I've always been a bit of a wildcard. I'm most known for my energetic unpredictability and creative musicianship while performing. I came into the band in 2015 as a bass player, but shortly after my role switched

to guitar. It wasn't until 2023 that I became the vocalist, out of necessity in just a few days. And now, here we are.

AU: Where are you from, and what's the music scene like there?

CC: We're from Windsor, Ontario, Canada, right across the river from Detroit. Being in a border city, the music scene is alive and ever-changing. Bands from almost every genre perform around the city, but our metal community is tight. Up-and-coming bands like Among the Rest and I See Aura hail from here too.

AU: Give us a brief history of Devilz By Definition.

CC: Devilz started years before I joined, but here's the Reader's Digest version. Since our debut in 2010, we've endured 12 lineup changes, released two full-length albums, a few EPs, and played hundreds of shows across southern Ontario. Teddy joined in 2016 after *The Devilution* (2016). During the recording of our upcoming album, we found the final piece of our puzzle: Kulstof. His passion and skill cemented him into this family. After signing with Self-Made Records LLC

in October and meeting Erik Scarlet, we're on a warpath of musical destruction.

AU: Does the band have a motto or creed?

CC: We have a few, including a pledge to heavy metal featured on *The Devilution*. But the core of Devilz is family. Fans, bands, parents, friends — we all support each other. We are The Devilz Fam.

AU: You have a new single, "Devilz Knight", out now. Tell us about it.

CC: This is probably the most brutal track we've written to date. It's about the Knight of Retribution sent by the Devil to cleanse the earth of evil. With powerful grooves and eerie licks, it's a testament to what we can bring as musicians — and we're just getting started.

AU: You also have new singles "Angel Warfare", "Food Fight", "Trainwreck" and "Liquid Death" with a full album out on June 6th, 2026. What can fans expect?

CC: The album follows an overarching theme: poverty, injustice, corruption, and greed. It starts with chaos in life, moves to inevitable catastrophe, and culminates in a celestial war. "Food Fight" explores survival amid elite-controlled food systems, while "Liquid Death" tackles struggles with alcoholism and addiction. The album ends as a tribute to our original guitarist Mat "Alien" Dobbin, who passed in 2023. Every track carries the dark themes Devilz are known for — revolution, justice, and raw emotion.

AU: How do you approach writing and recording?

CC: Many songs were written a while ago, but lineup changes delayed recordings. Popz and I are primary songwriters, with Teddy helping refine arrangements. Sometimes we create spontaneously in practice, other times

individually, then bring songs together. It's fluid, not rigid — that's how it should be.

AU: Favourite songs to perform live?

CC: Hard to choose, but probably "Food Fight" or "Know Thyne Enemy". Both are fast, energetic and a thrill to play.

AU: Any covers in the future?

CC: We've done Lamb of God, Pantera, Sylosis and Slayer in the past. For now, we're focused entirely on original material.

AU: How do Canadian and American metal bands differ?

CC: Canadian bands have to work harder to gain recognition. Resources are limited here, so our drive is stronger. Some American bands take what they have for granted, though hard work exists everywhere.

AU: Upcoming shows or tours?

CC: We have a few 2025 dates left, including Nov 22 in Niagara Falls and Jan 3 in Montréal. 2026 will be packed with a 56-date cross-Canada tour.

AU: Anything else to promote?

CC: Watch for five upcoming

music videos leading into the album release, including an exclusive trilogy story.

AU: Final words?

CC: We are the Devilz, but only by Definition. We're passionate, kind, and here to call out the world's evils. Devilz by Definition — and we are coming.

AU: Where can fans find you?

CC: Facebook, Instagram, Spotify, YouTube, Apple Music, Soundcloud, Bandcamp and Google.

Current online store: selfmaderecordslc-business.com/devilz-by-definition



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"It's the record where SLAYER became SLAYER," says guitarist Kerry King. Alongside Tom Araya, Jeff Hanneman (R.I.P.), and Dave Lombardo, he helped create one of heavy metal's greatest albums.

A departure from 1983's debut *Show No Mercy*, *Hell Awaits* is both an outlier and a solidification of form, with longer, more progressive tracks influenced by Mercyful

Fate. Three of its seven songs exceed six minutes, showcasing intricate speed, chops, and aggression. Araya delivers blistering vocals on tracks like "Kill Again" and "Praise Of Death," spitting lyrics a mile a minute.

The reissue arrives May 15, 2026, across vinyl, CD, and digital formats. Highlights include a 3-LP vinyl box with *Hell Awaits*, 18-track live audio from Bochum 1985, a 60-page book, replica tickets and tour memorabilia, plus a "blood" filled vinyl limited to 666 copies. The CD earbook and digital editions feature the album and live bonus tracks, all mastered and restored from the original 1985 production tapes by Patrick W. Engel.

Preorders are available now at: metalblade.com/slayer

Special 40th Anniversary Reissue of SLAYER's Hell Awaits Coming May 15, 2026

SLAYER's iconic second studio album, *Hell Awaits*, is receiving a 40th anniversary reissue via Metal Blade Records next spring. Originally released in April 1985, the album marked a new era for the band, defined by heavier, faster, and darker metal, and remains a cornerstone of thrash history.

Formed in 1981, SLAYER assaulted the world with a heavier, faster, darker hybrid of metal and punk, defining not only a genre but an attitude. The band never faltered, remaining crushing and brutal, steadfastly refusing to cater to the mainstream.

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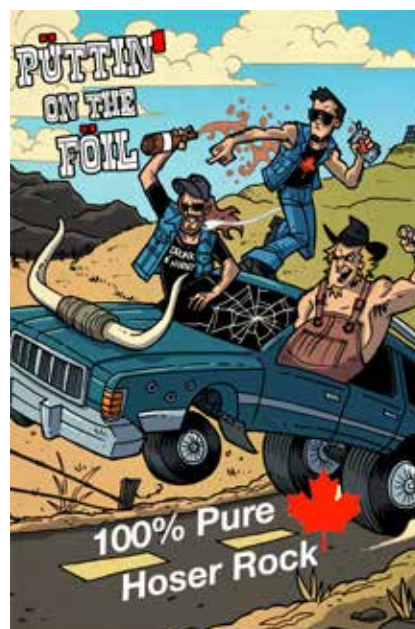
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Puttin' On The Foil: If It Feels Good... Do It.

By Mal Content

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are most famous and or infamous for?

Trayne Rekk: Trayne Rekk - Famous...mmmmm. Interesting. I've been recognized in public lots but idk. Infamous for sure. My mouth gets me in trouble at times. Up on the stage spewing filth. I've scaled it back a little. Our show has a bit of stand-up in it.

AU: Where are you from and what is the music scene like there?

TR: Okotoks/Calgary Alberta. Scene is okay. Lots of bands.

AU: Who else is in the band and what does it say on their Tinder profiles?

TR: There's Jordie on the skins. He quit Tinder. Said it was broken. Dylan on Guitar. His Tinder

says he's gentle, likes to hike and will take anything.

AU: Describe the band's sound if possible.

TR: It has the edge of Motorhead, fun of the Ramones and Hank Williams thrown in.

AU: Sex, Drugs, or Rock 'n' Roll? or all of the above?

TR: Drugs not so much. Weed and I love K. Beer should be in there...Always Rock N Roll. Sex. Yes, please.

AU: Tell us all about your latest album, If It Feels Good... Do It.

TR: It's our first vinyl. My favorites from our first 2 albums and 3 new songs.

AU: Any songs on it you are extra stoked on?

TR: "Kickin' Ass" is one of the new tunes. Super fun. They're all hits on the album.

AU: Describe your live show for the visually impaired.

TR: We rip. Lots of energy. Lots of guitar solos. When in doubt. Whip the solos out.

AU: Any plans or strange traditions for the Holidayze?

TR: Just going to get ready for the Whisky A Go-Go shows December 29/30.

AU: Have you been naughty or nice?

TR: Wish I was more naughty. Nice here and there. Does being a drunk asshole count as naughty?

AU: Is it true the band is headed down to L.A. to play some shows? Any tour plans?

TR: It's true. Four years of begging and the right shows. We're always touring around western Canada.

AU: Anything else to mention or promote?

TR: December 19th at the Border Crossing in Calgary. Playing a three set show. Going to have silent auctions etc. Raising money for our L.A. shows. Remember life is good. Girls keep it tight, Guys keep it stiff.

AU: How do people find you online?

TR: puttinonthefoil.com and on all the streaming sites.

REVOLUTION

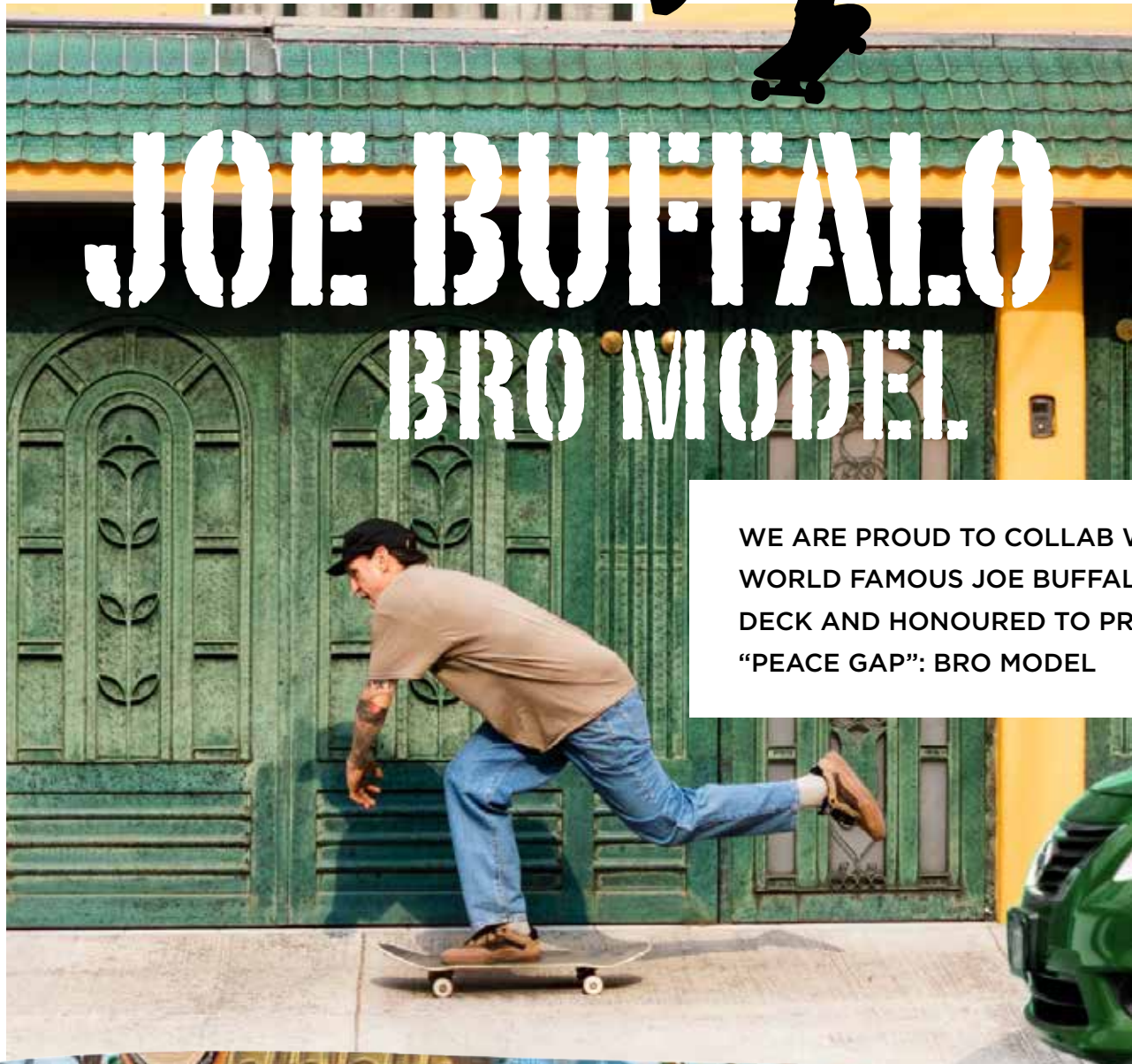
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hell hound

Hell Hound's Heavy Legacy Lives On

Interview with Gary Anderson and Glen Politano

By Ira "Hellborn" Hunter

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you best known for?

Gary and Glen: Drums and guitar respectively.

AU: What is the origin story of your band Hell Hound? What year did the band form and how old were the band members?

Hell Hound formed in the spring of 1973. Norm (bass/vocals) and Glen wanted to put together a very heavy sounding band and needed a drummer. Glen and Gary had worked together in previous bands so Glen knew that Gary would be a perfect fit. We were in our late teens when the band formed.

AU: Describe the band's sound if possible.

Very heavy aggressive rock.

AU: What makes your drumming style unique in your opinion?

Aside from laying down the backbeat and locking in with the bass, I also focused drum patterns around the guitar parts.

AU: How many shows did you play as Hell Hound? How would you describe your live show back then?

100-150 shows. Live shows were very heavy and loud and included original material and original arrangements on covers by Black Sabbath, Grand Funk, Robin Trower, Deep Purple, Uriah Heep and other early 70's bands.

AU: At that time who were the other local, heavy bands? Specifically the heaviest ones, please share their names if you remember.

Holy Smoke, Cold Sweat, Sugarcane and Earthbound.

AU: Do you recall any other very heavy rock bands on the Island or Mainland that were not drenched in Hammond Organ?

Earthbound had organ but also featured guitar.

AU: Tell us about the 45 record you have out. What record label is re-releasing your vinyl? Is there another Hell Hound release planned?

Ancient Grease Records. The 45 was recorded live in rehearsal shortly after the band formed.

AU: Does the record explore any particular themes or topics?

Not really. Our only objective was to play hard and loud and to push our abilities to the limit.

AU: Sex, Drugs, or Rock N Roll? Or all of the above?

We tried to stay focussed on Rock N Roll... but you know how it is.

AU: How and where did you get your heavy rock records in '72-'73?

There were numerous local record shops that carried obscure records including bootlegs. Shops like Kelly's, Gipper's, Richard's Records and Victoria Sound Centre.

AU: Did you go to see Black Sabbath

play in Seattle in '72?

No, but saw Led Zeppelin in Seattle in '73. We saw Black Sabbath with Van Halen opening for them in Buffalo, NY in 1978.

AU: Have you ever shaved your moustache in the last 50 years?

No. I was born with it.

AU: Any plans to reunite and tour?

Hell Hound retired long ago.

AU: Anything else to mention or promote?

There will be future releases featuring tracks from the Fable period.

AU: Final words of wisdom for our readers?

There were lots of great heavy bands in the early 70's that got little recognition. I would encourage readers to track down some of these bands and give them a listen. I think you will be pleasantly surprised. Ancient Grease Records is a good source.

AU: How do people find you online?

Through Ancient Grease Records ancientgreaserecords.com

and the **Fable rock band website:** fablerockband.com



TURNBUCKLE SANDWICH



Built on Bruises: The Krofton Story

By Mike Thumbtacks = OUCH! Croy

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking with?

Krofton: My name is Brendan Wilkinson, or if you're a fan of Pro Wrestling on Vancouver Island, I go by the name Krofton.

AU: What are you best known for or infamous for?

K: As Brendan, I'm known locally as the kid who did a bomb threat in high school in grade 12. As Krofton, these days... being a guy that you can rely on for a match the crowd and the boys will remember.

AU: How long have you been wrestling?

K: I found a backyard group in Nanaimo in 2003. I have been taking bumps pretty much ever since.

AU: Who trained you to wrestle?

K: I don't have one specific trainer. I've done sessions with Juggernaut, Aaron Idol, Tony Baroni, Artemis Spencer and many others. I've always been a fan and took to it naturally in the backyard.

Some of us would pay money to train before shows by some of the guys (mentioned above). They'd show us a few things and we would take that and practice on our own. BJ Laredo, Scott Steel and I used to rent a boxing ring in Nanaimo and we would train for hours on everything we were shown. Then a group of us rented a shoe warehouse in Parksville and we trained there. Cremator Von Slasher helped me a lot as well, not just in the ring but the 'why' and the 'whens' of what we do.

AU: How has

wrestling impacted your life?

K: Wrestling is all I've ever known. I wrote my grade 12 English provincial about Mick Foley. I saw André the Giant, Hulk Hogan, Macho Man and The Ultimate Warrior a handful of times before I was 10. Not the most popular thing loving wrestling in school, but the kids sure seem to think I'm pretty cool now when they come to the shows and tell people "we went to school with Krofton."

AU: How do you define success?

K: If my mom approves, then I know I did it right. Success isn't one thing, it's many little things all the time. For some, getting up and through the day is success. For others, they may wanna climb mountains or buy that fancy car.

AU: Who inspires you?

K: My dad. I never missed a hockey game or practice and I always got to go to wrestling shows. No matter how long his day was I got to do what I needed or wanted to do.

AU: What's the craziest match you've been involved in?

K: A fans Bring the Weapons match from 365 is #1. I've been in those matches before but I've never

been busted open and bled so much in my life. At one point everything was white and I laid down on the mat and just watched the pool of blood. I've been in a tag match where a fan jumped in the ring and tried to attack us. That ended in a locker room clear out in Langford for VIPW almost 10 years ago.

AU: Have you sustained any significant injuries from wrestling?

K: I was given a piledriver in 2015 that cracked a vertebrae and fractured another. Multiple concussions and the most recent is the ruptured quad I suffered mid match. Took me out for eight months and gave me a pretty sweet scar.

AU: What would you still like to accomplish in wrestling?

K: I've done it all! Title belts, TV, radio, invited to kids' birthday parties, free food (thank you Tacofino) but if I had to choose one thing I want to do, it would be wrestle at the Commodore Ballroom for BOOM! Pro Wrestling someday.

AU: Who are some of your favourite people to work with?

K: Eddie Osbourne, Tony Baroni, Lak Siddhartha, Scott Steel, Inferno, Haviko. I could name 20 more but also Lenny Lilac or Chico. There's no "night off" in wrestling, but sometimes it sure flows nice.

AU: What's something you can't live without?

K: I have two. Family and my girlfriend. Without my family I would never have been able to raise my daughter on my own. Now she's 15, has a job and gets way better grades than I did. Also, my girlfriend Heather. She's an Icelandic baddie and I love her. The guys all love her and see how she makes me smile.

AU: What advice would you give to younger talent just starting out?

K: Shut the f*ck up and listen. Whoever's training you doesn't care what podcast you listen to or

what YouTube video you watched. When you're at training, you listen to your trainer. Take what they say and show you and adapt it into your gimmick and don't forget to breathe.

AU: What accomplishment are you most proud of?

K: I'm in a book! A lot of us are, but I had no idea I was going to be mentioned in it, let alone given a paragraph. *(Un)Controlled Chaos: Canada's Remarkable Professional Wrestling Legacy*. The 20 championships I've won aren't bad either.

AU: Are there any match stipulation types

you haven't wrestled under, that you would still like to?

K: There are two matches I would love to do, a cage match is one and the second is a little bit more twisted, but I would like to do a 'light-tubes' match before my days are done.

AU: What can we expect from Krofton coming up?

K: I'm currently one half the 365 tag team champions. I plan on getting more belts, dropping more elbows and showing up at more companies.

AU: As we wrap things up, Krofton, is there anything else you'd like our readers

to know?

K: If you made it this far, thanks for reading! Life's too short to think about it. Just do it.

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U.S. Hardcore Punk Veterans DFL Release

New Single "NO U DON'T"

U.S. hardcore punk veterans DFL (Dead Fucking Last) are back, dropping their brand new single "No U Don't" through European punk powerhouse SBÄM Records. The new track sees the Los

Angeles trailblazers reconnecting with their roots while pushing their three-decade-spanning legacy forward.

"This is more like a classic DFL song," says guitarist Monty Messex. "It's about pent-up frustration about... God knows what. I'm angry. 'No U Don't' is classic DFL, with vocalist Crazy Tom howling while I crank out a high-speed, charging riff. The track is

more about the emotion of anger than any particular event, as evidenced by a line near the end where I scream, 'Now... you're gonna DIE!' Sometimes you just want something or someone to frikkin die — that's what this song is about."

DFL formed in 1993 when Monty Messex teamed up with Adam Horovitz of the Beastie Boys and skateboarder Crazy Tom Davis. All three shared roots in the first wave of hardcore: Messex had fronted early hardcore band the Atoms with a pre-Guns N' Roses Izzy Stradlin, Horovitz came up in the early NYC scene with The Young and the Useless before joining the Beastie Boys, and Davis was a fixture of the Marina Del Rey skate scene.

In 1993, I was obsessively listening to Bad Religion's *How Could Hell Be Any Worse*, Messex recalls. It brought me back to the early '80s hardcore scene — the Circle Jerks, the Germs, The Adolescents. I wanted to make a record that captured that rush.

Messex and Horovitz soon recruited Crazy Tom Davis and drummer Tony Converse. Their debut, *My Crazy Life*, produced by the Beastie Boys' in-house producer Mario Caldato, delivered 15 tracks of raw, ragged hardcore capturing the band's manic live energy.

DFL's sophomore album, *Proud to Be* (1995, Epitaph Records), was produced by Horovitz and became a cult favourite. Their third album, *Grateful...* (1997), experimented with Balinese interludes and Sabbath-style slow burners as a single 26-minute track. Despite its creativity, DFL split before its release.

Messex and Davis reunited DFL in 2013, returning with YRUDFL (SBÄM Records, 2021) to critical acclaim. The current lineup includes Patrick Sullivan on bass and Snare Jordan on drums. DFL is recording new material with punk rock icon Fletcher Dragge



of Pennywise, with further releases planned for 2025–2026 via SBÄM Records.

Stream "No U Don't" now via

SBÄM Records:

bfan.link/no-u-dont

facebook.com/proudtobedfl

x.com/proudtobedfl

Photo credit: Honza





When Santa Goes Slashing: Holiday Horror Comics of 2025

By Ed Sum

Horror and Christmas go together better than

people admit. The Victorians told ghost stories by the fire, and now comic creators are keeping that tradition alive in ink and blood. White landscapes often conceal something sinister beneath, and whether a spectre lurks in the fog like *A Christmas Carol* or horrors fester in the halls of Crimson Peak, the motif is unmistakable. Add beasts on the prowl—Krampus, the Yuletide Cat, or worse—and the season is ripe for tales where carollers might not make it home.

In consideration for the season are the following new releases for 2025.

Dread the Halls (One-Shot)

Publisher: Image Comics / Syzygy
Writers: Chris Ryall & Jordan Hart
Artists: Walter Pax et al

Arriving December 3, 2025, this 72-page anthology rekindles the Christmas Eve tradition of telling ghost stories—only these tales are darker, bloodier, and wrapped in twinkling lights. Imagine *Creepshow* colliding with *A Christmas Carol* if Marley's chains dragged more than just regret. Each short story offers a distinct take on yuletide fear, from haunted hearths to interstellar dread. It's a rare big-publisher project that gives holiday horror the prestige treatment, showing how the genre has clawed its way back into the mainstream with polish and purpose.



Yuletide (Oni Press)

Writer: George Northy
Artist: Rachele Aragno

This three-issue limited series (October–December 2025) unfolds in the deceptively quaint town of Christmas, Pennsylvania, where an ancient relic awakens something cold-blooded beneath the tinsel and cheer. Northy's script blends adventure and pagan folklore, while Aragno's art teases the line between whimsy and nightmare. *Yuletide* is perfect for readers who prefer myth over massacre—those who savour slow-burn dread steeped in legend. It's a reminder that not all Christmas horror is about blood on the snow; sometimes the terror is in what's been waiting under it.



Silent Night / Deadly Night – Dark Winter #1

Publisher: American Mythology Productions

The infamous slasher Santa sharpens his axe again in this continuation of the cult horror film series. *Dark Winter* brings back the grim

absurdity of the original—mixing holiday nostalgia with arterial spray. Christmas spirit, in this case, is terminal. This comic taps directly into the aesthetic of 80s B-movie horror, complete with cheesy one-liners and snow-dusted carnage. For genre purists, it's a warm glass of bloody eggnog—familiar, guilty, and satisfying.



Scary Christmas #3

Publisher: American Mythology Productions

This indie anthology unwraps a new batch of nightmares every issue, from cursed ornaments to vengeful snowmen. *Scary Christmas #3* continues that tradition of gleeful pulp, leaning into its low-budget horror roots with tongue firmly in cheek. It thrives on imagination rather than polish—proof that indie comics still do festive fear best. Each page feels like a midnight drive-in flick come to life, its unfiltered charm keeps the spirit of grassroots horror alive, even as larger publishers chase safer holiday stories.

Scary Christmas V: Killer Claus #1

Publisher: American Mythology Productions

When Saint Nick finally loses his marbles, he takes the naughty list personally. *Killer Claus* is pure slasher cinema in comic form—candy-cane weapons, splattered snow and one very unjolly old elf. It's campy, gory and utterly self-aware, embracing every excess the "killer Santa" sub-genre can offer. Beneath the red velvet and ringing bells, there's a wicked sense of fun reminding readers that Christmas horror doesn't have to be serious to be satisfying.

Closing Thoughts

Whether it's Image's polished anthology or American Mythology's gleeful grindhouse chaos, these titles prove that the holidays are best enjoyed with a touch of menace. Beneath the tinsel and snowdrifts, something ancient still stirs—and if you listen closely, the ghosts by the fire are still whispering stories to keep the dark alive.

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TOXIC TOAST



Westbound Train Returns With New Album *Sing The Ghost Away*

Interview with Singer/Trombonist Obi Fernandez

By Chuck Andrews

Absolute Underground: Who am I talking to today, what are your roles in Westbound Train, and where is the band from?

Obi Fernandez: My name is Obi Fernandez. I sing and play trombone in Westbound Train. The band originally formed in Boston around 2001 but currently are spread out over the east coast of the U.S., in Massachusetts, New York City, and New Jersey.

AU: Can you tell us a little bit about Westbound Train?

OF: Westbound has been around since around 2001. We play our take on American ska and reggae. We're deeply inspired by so many that came before us, from The Skatalites to The Ethiopians, The Slackers to Hepcat, Sam Cooke to The Impressions. We all have such eclectic taste that the Westbound sound is a bit of its own soulful melting pot. It's always a fun time to see what sound we're going to make when we get together. Being together for over 20 years, we've had our fair share of ups and downs. We've seen people come and go but we're grateful we're still able to make records together.

AU: Who and what is the band most inspired and influenced by?

OF: We're inspired by great art! Great songwriting and playing. Whatever will push us to be the best versions of ourselves.

AU: Tell us about your new album! What is it called?

OF: Our new album, *Sing The Ghost Away*, came out Nov. 7 via Org Music, who are the wonderful people who released our record.

AU: You have released two singles so far, "Slippery Slope" and "L.M.A." Can you tell us a bit about each of these songs?

OF: "Slippery Slope" is a reminder to keep moving forward no matter what season you're in. It's for anyone who's ever felt like they were barely hanging on but chose to stay present. "L.M.A." is a self-love letter wrapped in a groove. It's playful, soulful and has a little bit of a disco vibe

to it. I actually wrote that song on my way home from the mall after hearing a couple having an argument on the escalator.

AU: I really like the two singles a lot, heck, I really like the whole album a lot! "Meet Me at the Metro," "Miss Reason," and "Keeper from the Start" also jump out at me. What are some of your favourite tracks?

OF: Yeah, I am with you on all those picks. We're really proud of this record. We think it's a solid representation of who we are currently and the journey we've been on as people and musicians. If I had to pick one tune, my pick today would be "Gasoline."

AU: Is everyone in Westbound Train involved in the songwriting process?

OF: In some sense, yes. I'm usually the one bringing in the lyrics and melodies but it doesn't fully come to life until we're all shaping the groove of the tune together.

AU: Westbound Train once played the Victoria

Ska and Reggae Festival in Victoria, BC Canada. Any chance you guys might return to play that festival again?

OF: It would be awesome to play Victoria Ska Fest again. Dane and company are so amazing at what they do. If it made sense for everyone involved we'd love to be there.

AU: Any plans or strange traditions for the holidays?

OF: Nothing too wild. Just hanging, eating and being merry with our families.

AU: Have you been naughty or nice?

OF: I think that would depend on who you spoke to. lol

AU: Would you like to add anything else about your band, or in general?

OF: Thanks for taking the time to check us out. We appreciate you taking the time to ask some questions about our band.

AU: How do people find you online?

OF: westboundtrainmusic.com or @westbound_train_ska on Instagram

Check out the new album at: orgmusic.com

Photo Credit: Nick Karp



VENUE PROFILE



THE OPEN STUDIOS: Building Community Through Music & Art Downtown Victoria's All-Ages Live Music and Creative Arts Hub

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are best known for?

Drew Murgatroyd: It's Drew Murgatroyd lead singer from Apex Breaks, a 9-piece psychedelic jungle funk monstrosity based in Victoria, BC.

AU: What is the origin story of your venue, The Open Studios? How and when did the venue start? Where is it located?

DM: I've just opened an all-ages venue in Downtown Victoria called The Open Studios! It's in Nootka Court next to the Vic Theatre on Humboldt Street, across from Miniature World. It's the high school where I work that I've turned into a creative arts hub whenever school is not in session (after 4pm and on weekends). We got a Cultural Infrastructure Grant from the City of Victoria to do some facility upgrades over the summer and we kicked off in October 2025 with some great live music performances and workshops. We're currently booking for 2026.

AU: Tell us about all the services you provide at your space? What makes your venue unique?

DM: We've got 2 bookable music studios with full backline where we can teach you how to play in a band and record your music. There's also a stage with a pumping sound system and lighting rig for live music and workshops. Our goal is to livestream all of our events so emerging artists and presenters walk away with high quality recordings. Our location in the heart of Downtown Victoria makes it easy to get here and our fully accessible space drives inclusivity for all participants.

AU: What kind of events/shows do you usually hold there?

DM: We've hosted the Pop Punk Party, Youth bands opening for local headlining acts, professional musicians, Guitar Maintenance and Poetry workshops, Murder Mystery parties and more! We're gearing up for 2026 with more live bands, a DJ'ing workshop, Open Mic, Karaoke, Open Jams,



Trivia nights and any events that the community brings forward. We aim for our content to be driven by community input.

AU: Why are all-ages venues so important in your opinion?

DM: I grew up in Victoria. When I was in high school there were all-ages venues where youth and pro bands would play and I got hooked on that scene. It inspired me to pursue music outside of my school orchestra and eventually to make a band, record albums and tour Canada. I still play shows and make albums, but I have a different perspective on the youth scene as a high school teacher. Youth want something to do that isn't being at school, at home or online. We need safe, affordable "third spaces" where youth can create community, make friends, get inspired, learn and perform! Especially in the winter, when the big music festivals aren't happening.

AU: What are some of the programming and education aspects you provide at The Open Studios?

DM: In 2026 we will be offering Rock Band and Jazz Band collaborative music lessons with Your Place Music School and performance opportunities like Open Mic, Karaoke and Open Jam.

We've got some amazing workshops lined up such as DJ'ing with DJ Bryan Boytano, Guitar Maintenance Workshop with Trevor Woodland from Guitars Plus, DIY guitar pedals and pocket synthesizers with Filip from CCTV, and "Rock Band

Bootcamp" where bands make merch, record, take photos and then perform on the stage. We'll also be running camps during Spring Break and Summer.

We work in partnership with the Victoria Arts Promotion and Preservation Society (VAPPS) Sound-tech mentorship program to teach youth how to do sound, lights and video for live music performances and mix recordings. We've got a volunteer program for anyone that wants to get involved! It's a great way to get FREE ACCESS to live shows and workshops.

AU: Tell us about any upcoming shows you have coming up.

DM: We're currently booking live music acts for Fridays and Saturdays in January, February and

March. Contact us through our website! No worries if you don't have a demo yet, no worries if you don't have a full band yet. This is the place for you to create those connections and make those recordings.

AU: What's the best way for people to book your space for gigs?

DM: Contact us through the website: theopenstudios.ca or email directly: drew@theopenstudios.ca

AU: Is your space used for other non-music related events as well?

DM: Yes! We try to respond to community demand, so if you have an idea, contact us for hosting! We're hosting social events like Trivia night, Improv, Visual Art nights, Board Games and Vinyl night, "TED" style talks and more.

AU: Anything else people should know about The Open Studios?

DM: We are trying to keep accessibility high and cost low while paying artists fairly. So contact your local government representative or local business sponsors so we can run this place on grants instead of charging big money at the door. DO IT!

AU: How do people find you online?

DM: Check our website: theopenstudios.ca to see our Event Calendar, Buy Tickets or Book a Studio. Keep in touch on Facebook or Instagram.

Twitter (X): @OpenStudiosYYJ



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Photo Credit: Manuel Schütz

Back To The Front

Coroner guitarist Tommy T. Baron discusses comeback album *Dissonance Theory*

By Ferdy Belland

"It feels good to be writing again," says Coroner's lead guitarist Tommy Vetterli, also known as Tommy T. Baron. "It just took forever!" Even forever comes to an end, and Switzerland's thrash-metal eternalers Coroner are finally set to release *Dissonance Theory* (their first new album since 1993) this October. Even though Baron (along with bassist-vocalist Ron "Royce" Broder and drummer Diego Rappachietti) is exuberant

after a long day's production, I have to relearn everything on guitar and get my chops back. For some reason, I couldn't work on Coroner music in my own studio. Even though it's a very encouraging environment here, it didn't work for me to focus on our music - everywhere I turned, everywhere I looked, I just saw more WORK to do. So I had to go to the mountains by myself and find peace and silence... and when I found that, something else would happen!" But Coroner persevered in fine form, which is what Coroner historically does. Originally formed in 1983 by disgruntled Celtic Frost roadies who wanted a taste of the metal stage all their own, the band quickly elbowed their way into the growing European thrash scene and gained the respect of shared-bill contemporaries like Kreator, Destruction, Sodom, Tankard, Sabbath, and

about this glowing milestone in his band's long career, the task came with struggle after struggle. "I started writing new material as early as 2015, but life was happening all the time," explains Baron. "Family members were dying on us. I went through a divorce. Then came the pandemic. I work here in my studio all day, recording and mixing, working with other bands, and investing my creativity in other directions besides Coroner. And at the end of the day, all the inspiration had fizzled out. I'd end up hating music! And then

Artillery. Coroner released five critically-acclaimed albums between 1987-1993 and were renowned as a powerful live act before disbanding in 1996. The band reformed in 2010 and quickly regained their reputation, but the ever-elusive New Album didn't materialize - until now.

"Now that the album's complete, we're not writing any new material at the moment," says Baron. "Our time's taken up with assembling and practicing the new live set for all the upcoming touring and festival appearances. And then we'll see if this new album catches fire with everyone. If the fans receive the whole thing, like the wonderful reception we've got from the first single - and if we still have fun playing - then we'll see about writing another album."

As of this writing, Coroner's leadoff single "Renewal" is certainly standing the international metal world on its armor-plated ear, and it's almost as if no time at all has lapsed - so here's hoping that the band's creative engine keeps revving hot for years to come. Baron's time outside Coroner is taken up helming New Sound Studio in Zurich, a venerable (and desirable) professional recording facility that rarely sleeps - especially when a new Coroner album is in the works.

"It was a smooth and exciting recording process, but I changed into full-on Obsessive Mode," says Baron. "Having my own studio is a great opportunity, but out of fifty riffs I come up with, maybe one of them made it to the album. I get bored really fast with myself. So when we're finally recording a new album - after 32 years! - I needed everything to be fresh. For outside studio clients I can get good guitar sounds in two hours, or maybe half a day if things are complicated, a day at most. But for us, I spent three entire weeks tweaking guitar sounds! Every guitar, through every amp! I changed cables, I changed pickups! Super-crazy O.C.D. nerd stuff!"

It sometimes pays to be a nerd, where obsession becomes a virtue. "When I recorded the drums

with Diego, he was also fooling around with stuff," says Baron. "And my American co-producer Dennis Ross would also obsess! You have to mean what you say, you have to mean what you play, otherwise it's just not going to be HEAVY. And Diego gave it his all during the sessions. He did a lot of takes, and Dennis and I were happy with his performance. To me, this is the first Coroner album which I'm 100% happy with."

Dividing his time between Coroner and New Sound Studio, there's never enough hours in the day for Tommy Baron. "I'm usually always busy recording other artists in my studio," says Baron. "It's a big old-school studio with a big mixing desk and a lot of analog gear. It takes a lot of

work to keep everything floating. But this is the nicest job I could ever imagine. My current clients include Eluveitie, who are pretty much the biggest Swiss band these days. I've worked with them for over ten years now. Through the time it took Coroner to write this new album, I did two albums with Eluveitie! That band stays here for 2-3 months straight! I work with clients from all over the EU, and even bands from Brazil. Sometimes I'll do full albums, sometimes I'm only

recording drums and such, sometimes just mixing and mastering. Mostly I work with metal artists, but sometimes I'll have singer-songwriters in here. There are no preferred styles here - it's only good music or bad music. Right now my schedule is focused on Coroner, but today I just mixed an a-capella group!" laughs Baron. "I thought when our album was finished I'd have a bit more free time, but I just get busier and busier! But it's great. I'm super-motivated. So many people really like that new single we released, and the public reactions are great - over 200,000 views on YouTube so far! I scroll down through the comments - 94% love it, 5% think it's okay, and 1% are haters...but they don't count!"

Check out Coroner's new album *Dissonance Theory*: coronerofficial.bandcamp.com



BROKE & HUNGRY "CANADA"

Anything Helps

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to?

"Twitchy" Titch Tantrum: This is "Twitchy" Titch Tantrum from the HOBO BANDITO CREW.

AU: What is the origin story of the National Food Drive called Broke & Hungry "Canada" you are involved with?

TT: 2025 is the 20th Anniversary of HOBO BANDITOS & I decided to re-activate myself to

celebrate & make some noise across so-called "CANADA" about food insecurity and amplify the voices of the many great food-sharing initiatives across the country.

AU: What is your mission statement.

TT: The Government hates us so let's get together & help each other out for the holidays because it's the right thing to do!

AU: What is planned to get the word out?

TT: I've been here in *Absolute Underground*, *Articulated Chaos Magazine*, *CIUT's Equalizing*

Distort and the word on the curb! We've had shows in the campaign from coast to coast; St. John's, Newfoundland to Nanaimo, British Columbia and up into Dawson City, Yukon!

AU: Tell us about the compilation album that was recently released - what was the concept and who were some of the bands involved?

TT: The comp is a digital album available on every participating band's Bandcamp for a donation to a local food-sharing service of their choice.

IT'S THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING! 56 artists including everything from 3 Stack to The Defamed to Golden Scoundrels to Gouride!

AU: What can people do to help out?

TT: Donate to OPERATION BROWN BAG which feeds under-housed individuals & encampment residents, or support their local community fridge/pantry project.

AU: Does Broke & Hungry "Canada" food-drive have international counterparts?

T: This project is just in "CANADA" but it would work anywhere!

AU: What sort of food items are most needed?

TT: The most overlooked mutual-aid items are hygiene products (we got enough beans!).

AU: Any other worthy causes people should get involved with?

TT: Community fridge/pantry projects, Bad Date books (for SW's), FOOD NOT BOMBS, DULFI!

AU: Any final words for our readers?

TT: THE ONLY WAY FORWARD IS COMMUNITY.

AU: How can people find more info online?

TT: twitchytantrum.com + twitchytantrum on Facebook/Instagram & YouTube.



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ROTTEN TO THE CORE

Interview with Rotten Sound vocalist Keijo Niinimaa

By Marisa Flora

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you most famous or infamous for?

Keijo Niinimaa: Keijo, vocalist of Rotten Sound. I've been yelling at people since 1988 and this band started in 1993. Famous or infamous? I'm probably the wrong person to answer that one.

AU: Tell us about the band—who's the lineup, where are you based, and what are you all about?

KN: Grindcore with me, Mika on guitar and Sami on drums.

AU: How would you describe your sound for someone who's never heard you before?

KN: Grindcore, look it up. We're throwing in a bit of old school Swedish death metal in the mix but I would still say that we're grind.

AU: Finnish extreme music has its own cold, abrasive personality. How has that shaped the band and what's the local scene like these days?

KN: I don't think we are that shaped by the Finnish scene because we listened to UK, US and Swedish bands more than Finns. The scene is lively, especially with new OSDM bands.

AU: Rotten Sound is often mentioned

alongside legends like Napalm Death, Nasum and Wormrot. After three decades, how do you keep evolving without losing the raw, rotten edge?

KN: You tell me haha.

AU: The new Mass Extinction EP with Season of Mist dropped December 12 — tell us about it. Any stand-out tracks you are stoked on?

KN: Eight songs of blasting, chainsaw guitar and yelling. Songs "Brave New World", "Idealist" and "Ride of the Future" are my faves.

AU: Any upcoming shows or gigs we should mark on our calendars?

KN: European tour in January, some Finnish shows, Maryland

Death Fest and Obscene Extreme Fest are announced now but there's more to come.

AU: Anything else to promote?

KN: I would like to emphasize that people should go to every local extreme music show they can. Including ours, if we come nearby.

AU: How can people find you online?

KN: Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Bandcamp and all major streaming platforms:

facebook.com/RottenSoundOfficial

instagram.com/rottsoundgrind

rottsound.bandcamp.com

rottsound.com

Grab your copy of the new *Mass Extinction EP* today!

rottsound.bandcamp.com/album/mass-extinction

Photo credits: Mika Aalto

season-of-mist.com



ENTHRONED — Ashspawn

Belgium's Enthroned Summon a New Era with their new full-length *Ashspawn*

Season of Mist — 5 December 2025

With *Ashspawn*, their twelfth full-length, Enthroned marks a new chapter in their three-decade reign of ritualistic black metal. Conceived across six years of deliberate creation, the album stands as both an autopsy and a resurrection: a descent into spiritual death followed by the sublimation of rebirth. Written in close collaboration with occult author Gilles de Laval, *Ashspawn* channels arcane praxis, metaphysical calculus and esoteric mapping into a work that feels as much like ritual invocation as music.

Formed in 1993 in Namur, Belgium, Enthroned quickly established themselves as one of the most relentless voices in European black metal. Their debut *Prophecies of Pagan Fire* (1995) cemented their reputation for feral speed, occult imagery and fierce dedication to the Left Hand Path. Tragedy struck early when founding drummer Cernunnos took his own life in 1997, shortly after the recording of their sophomore album. Using his preserved rehearsal tracks,



the band completed *Towards the Skullthrone of Satan*, transforming grief into fury and ensuring Enthroned's continuation.

Over the decades, their catalogue expanded into a formidable body of work. Releases such as *Armoured Bestial Hell* (2001), *Carnage in Worlds Beyond* (2003), *Tetra Karcist* (2007) and *Pentagrammaton* (2010) pushed their sound into more violent, atmospheric

and esoteric territory. By the time of *Cold Black Suns* (2019), their *Season of Mist* debut, Enthroned had solidified their reputation as one of black metal's most enduring institutions.

Now *Ashspawn* emerges as their most ambitious statement yet. Ferocious blast beats, oppressive mid-tempo and progressive structures collide, laced with solos ranging from Morbid Angel-like chaos to classic heavy metal virtuosity. Lyrically, it operates as a metaphysical architecture, with tracks such as "Raviasamin," "Ashspawn" and "Ashen Advocacy" exploring violent catharsis and introspection.

More than thirty years on, Enthroned remain unwavering in their purpose. *Ashspawn* is a ritual weapon—born of fire, darkness and transformation.

Release Date: December 5th, 2025

enthroned.bandcamp.com

instagram.com/enthronedofficial

youtube.com/@enthronedofficial

Enthroned Album Cover artwork by Jose

Gabriel Alegria Sambogal

season-of-mist.com

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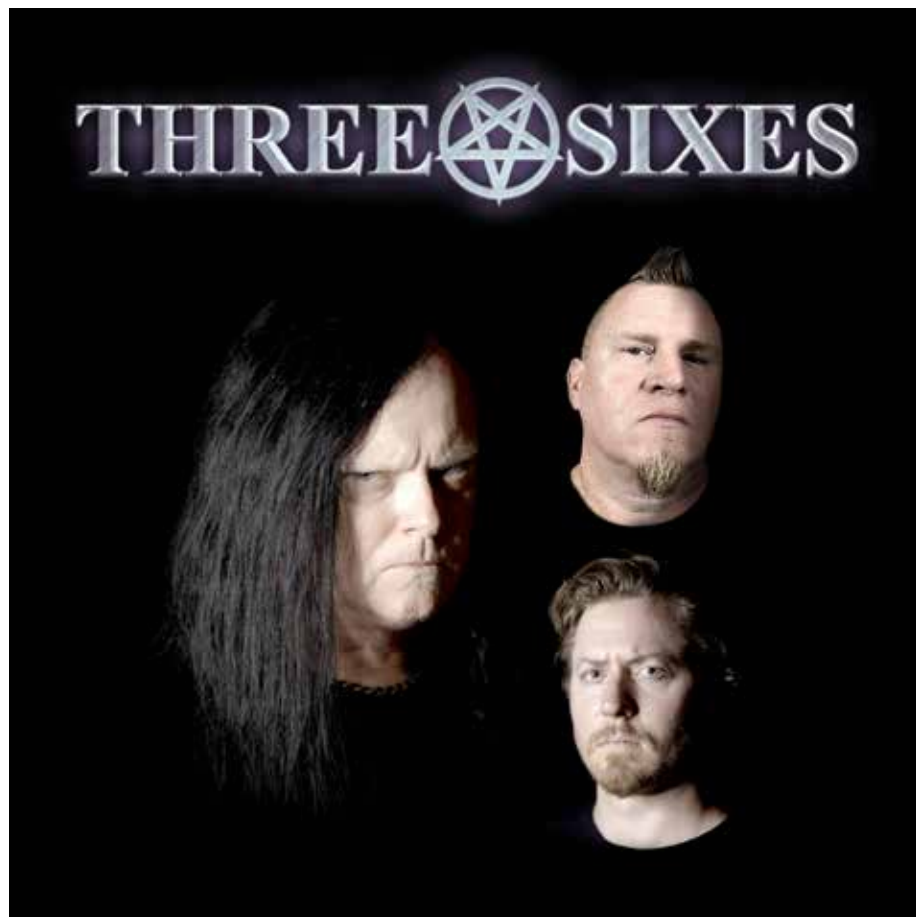
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THREE SIXES

Call Me The Devil

Interview with lead vocalist Damien

By Ray MacKay

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you most infamous for?

Damien: Damien here. I'm lead vocals and the founder of the band. I think infamous would be a better way to describe myself from some of the things we did back in the past with songs like "I.F.T.D.", "Holy Man" etc, as well as all the free gross stuff and porn we used to promote on our site. It made a lot of noise for a long time, haha!

AU: Where are you from and what's the music scene like there?

Damien: I'm from Huntington Beach, CA. The music scene is alive and well down here. All of the major acts stop by the area, so we never have a shortage of National acts to see.

AU: Give us the history of Three Sixes.

Damien: It all started as a "side project" that I ended up doing because I couldn't find a band that I wanted to join. It was only supposed to be temporary, and I didn't think people would even like it. A lot of people did and then the growth from there was organic.

AU: You just released your new album, *Call Me The Devil*. Tell us all about it!

Damien: Gladly! Unlike our previous releases, this one had a lot less sampling and programming on it. It's much more stripped down and straight Thrash based. While we still used ambient programming, it's not nearly as much as anything we've done before. The musicianship was seriously kicked up a notch or two by **Kill** and **Blake**, so we didn't want their efforts to be buried and preferred to put them in the forefront.

AU: Tell us about the creative process behind *Call Me The Devil*.

Damien: This is the most "hands off" I'd been in writing the music compared to the previous releases. Musically "Antitheist" was mine which **Kill** and **Blake** added to, but outside of that, I really didn't write much of the music on this record. **Kill** would send guitar demos to **Blake** with a click track and they would work on the tunes. Once they got each to a point they were satisfied with, they would send them to me for review. I liked everything they did and if it wasn't broke, I wasn't going to try to fix it. We agreed on the subject matter, I wrote the lyrics and recorded them. Those two guys found great chemistry together. I'm really proud of what they created and I got to add to.

AU: Before *Call Me The Devil*, you released *Know God, No Peace...* in 2014. How

has your craft changed/developed between the two albums?

Damien: Many of the older tunes (but not all) I had an idea for the music, lyrics and arrangement to start with. I was pretty involved with the music side. Our then producer Marko was also heavily involved as well as was **Kill**, our former drummer **Konnyaku** and a few of the special guests we brought in. While the intensity of the older material carried to the new for sure, I think keeping it stripped down allowed us to play faster and more aggressively this time around. I'm proud of both, but they sound so different from each other. Two albums, two visions and two different groups of players made two completely different records.

AU: What are some inspirations you draw on while creating music?

Damien: Life, the world around us, horror movies and world events. For the first time in **THREE SIXES** history, the news played a big role. The economy wreaked havoc on me, along with a few other things I had going on that I didn't deal very well with. **Kill** and **Blake** had issues in their own lives, too. We just drew from the negative energy and turned it into pure, honest, raw aggression that I think translated really well through the speakers.

AU: Besides those mentioned above, do you have any upcoming releases, tours, or shows coming up you'd like to tell us about?

Damien: As of today, we just employed the amazing **Martin V.S** to do our fifth music video from *Call Me The Devil* titled "All In God's Name". It's gonna be a ripper for sure and should be released sometime in January 2026. Stay tuned.

AU: Any plans for the Holidayze?

Damien: Maybe sacrifice a goat, drink the blood of our enemies. You know, the usual, haha!

AU: Have you been naughty or nice?

Damien: Let your imagination guide you!

AU: What don't you want your family to know?

Damien: Both good and bad, they already know it all.

AU: Anything else to promote?

Damien: Aside from "Call Me The Devil" all of our previous songs can also be streamed on all platforms. Check them out and spread the word threesixes.com

[Facebook.com/threesixes](https://www.facebook.com/threesixes)

[Instagram.com/threesixesband](https://www.instagram.com/threesixesband)

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Closet Door in the Room where they discussed Music: Interview with Toby Driver of Kayo Dot

By Alia Synesthesia

Absolute Underground: Your recent album, *Every Rock, Every Half-Truth Under Reason* is incredible, it really takes you on a journey into a different world. How does your composition process work?

Toby Driver: One of the things that is really important to me is to change my approach every single time. That's the way that I can grow as a composer and that's the way that I can learn things and keep from repeating myself. All of my releases sound different because I'm changing my method each time. For this most recent album, the journey began years ago with a completely different set of music; it was more in the rock and

metal spectrum. As I was working on it, I came to the realization that it wasn't really what I wanted to say.

My relationship with composition has also evolved over time. These days, I do a lot of this work in the studio, which is different from how it used to be in the past when I used to write songs with instruments on paper and bring them to a rehearsal space where everybody would learn the music. In those circumstances, recording would typically be a later stage of the process. But these days, I

record as I write, so I'm able to play things back and decide whether I like them. If I don't, I can go back and change them. This record, in particular, became an exercise in reduction. Most of the songs began as conventional rock and metal arrangements, then I started taking things away, removing the drums and stripping away the guitars. Then things started to have more of this atmosphere that I wanted. As I was going through that process, I was like, "Okay, this is the aesthetic that I'm looking for". From that point, I was able to start over with a new understanding of the sound and atmosphere that I was seeking. But it did take a long time, about three years of removing things, experimenting and throwing ideas away.

AU: When do you decide the record is truly complete?

TD: Generally speaking, understanding when something is finished is an intuition that a musician has to develop over the course of their life. I think younger musicians have a tendency to

add too many things when it's not necessary. I just go by my feelings and when something feels like it's finished, I know that deep inside. Practically speaking, it's also about this idea that you should be able to listen to a piece of music and not feel like anything is missing. If it is sending the message that it wants to send, then you need to allow yourself to say, "This is done" and maybe remove your ego from it; try to listen to it the way that somebody else would. Ultimately, it's about resisting the urge to add unnecessary elements that no one will notice or that won't truly change the piece. That's also one of the benefits of composing in the studio, because you can hear the piece as it's unfolding and you're able to have this immediate perspective. In that respect it's similar to visual art, because as you paint, it's all there in front of you. It's a beautiful thing to be able to actually make something with your hands and have it just exist.

AU: With the latest release, how do you bring that to a live setting? What are some of the challenges associated with it?

TD: This album was particularly difficult because the orchestration is so specific and layered. We don't have ten people in the band, so I made sure that I was composing with this limitation in mind. There are a few moments on the record where there are multiple layers going at the same time, and for those, we have to get creative. It's always a challenge to arrange the live orchestration to be as close as possible to the album and there's usually some compromise. On a couple of past Kayo Dot albums, we didn't pay any attention to that; we just put down whatever we wanted. The frustrating result is that those songs can't be played live.



AU: Do you have a dream project you would like to work on?

TD: I'd love to compose for a film, a high quality film with a budget where I could do whatever I wanted, exactly how I wanted. Even better would be to make my own film and then compose the music for it, to control every aspect. The only thing stopping me is the amount of money it would take. If somebody gave me a grant, I would do it.

The other dream is a concert with a real production budget. Enough to pay all the musicians and have a full week to soundcheck and rehearse on stage. This "ideal show" would be two sets. A single hour, even an hour and a half, just isn't enough time to hear everything. Imagine two 70-minute sets; then we could really encompass the band's full vision. Being in the underground, live music is always done at the limit. It would be great to escape that constraint. It's not very much to ask either. It's a small wish.

Catch Kayo Dot Live, January 13th at The Cave in Toronto and January 23th at The WISE Hall in Vancouver.



Making Music on the Pile of Human Remains: Interview with Arkona

By Alia Synesthesia

Absolute Underground: You are playing in Toronto in February. Are you looking forward to hitting the road? How many Canadian dates are you playing?

Maria Arkhipova: We're always looking forward to being on the road, no matter which corner of the planet we visit. At the moment, we are in the middle of a South American tour, and the enthusiasm is overflowing—one continuous adventure after another. While the tour schedule is still being pieced together, we only know about the concerts in Quebec and Ottawa so far; others will most likely be added. Keep an eye on our channels for updates. Once the tour is fully mapped out, we will publish everything.

AU: What is your favourite thing to do in the downtime between shows?

MA: We don't really have any breaks; as a rule, on days off we're on the road from one concert to the next. We rarely get the chance to travel and go sightseeing, but if by some miracle a few free hours materialize, we gladly visit local cultural landmarks. That said, we're also not opposed to resting in glorious solitude after the journey.

AU: You released *Kob'* in 2023, exploring themes of destruction, decay and human vs nature. Has your relationship with the record changed over time?

MA: My attitude cannot change because I invest in my creations the very feelings and emotions that haunt me at the moment of their writing.

Kob' is what it is, with its own spirit, taste, colour and smell. I cannot fathom how one could change their attitude toward any individual entity—person, product, or creative output. My attitude toward such things is constant; I don't deal in fluctuating sentiments.

AU: Who is the woman on the cover art for *Kob'*? What place does she hold in the concept of the album?

MA: The cover art was painted by the deeply respected couple Rotten Fantom, who we previously collaborated with on the album *Kham*. They created the artwork based on their own associations after listening to the album and thoroughly studying its lyrics. The artists describe it as follows: "Essentially, it's all a process of sorcery. We didn't want clichéd imagery, like a witch by a cauldron, but rather a complex, allegorical image with many layers of meaning. The figures form a kind of Tree of Life, embodying a multifaceted image of an old witch in the centre. She performs magic; the work represents transformation, pain, suffering, authority, motherhood, and birth. Essentially, it's like an entire people with their history and lives, and at the same time, one person. The snake symbolizes both witchcraft and wisdom, woven into the cycle (ouroboros)."

AU: Your music has a lot of detail in writing and production. As a band, do you prefer studio work or performing live?

MA: A band is a single, unified world where lyrics, music and visual components coexist. Everything together creates this specific world; one part cannot exist without the others. For Arkona, our live performances are just as important as our albums. Stage attire is as important as the cover

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art and booklet content. Everything resonates together, forming a holistic concept during a specific period of our lives. I cannot separate one piece and love it more than the rest—it's impossible.

AU: If you could play anywhere in the world—or on the space-time continuum—where would it be?

MA: It's difficult to play a concert in a non-material state of timelessness, haha. But in the form we currently exist, I would prefer to perform on a pile of human remains, as the last human unit left in this specific equivalent of material existence.

Catch Arkona live in Toronto on February 18 at The Garrison.

Holiday Frights for Christmas: Europe's Winter Beasts and the Modern Festivals That Keep Them Alive

By Ed Sum

Long before malls blared carols and Santa slid down chimneys, winter belonged to Stranger Things. Some lurked in shadows, and others would scratch rather than knock on doors to check if a family had been naughty or nice. The cold season wasn't just about warmth and gifts; it was about survival, awe and the strange powers people believed existed in the dark. Back in the Middle Ages, if not earlier, civilization was mostly European. Pioneers expanded to different areas to eke out a new life. The West has not won just yet. Before the Industrial Revolution, the long nights of Europe were thick with superstition. Snow and scarcity shaped imagination as much as morality did. The beings who emerged were neither purely good nor evil—they embodied winter's duality: harsh yet necessary, cold yet cleansing. Across Europe, they remain alive in parades, festivals and traditions that keep ancient fears breathing beneath modern cheer.

Belsnickel (Germany)

Wrapped in rags and furs, Belsnickel travels the Rhineland before midwinter, brandishing a switch for the naughty and sweets for the good. His rough, grimy appearance stands in contrast to gentler gift-bringers like Saint Nicholas, reminding children that virtue requires effort.



Modern Celebration: In Marietta, Pennsylvania, the *Belsnickel Festival* re-enacts his visits, complete with costumed mischief, storytelling and gifts for children. The event is detailed on visitlancasterpa.com

Ded Moroz (Russia, Belarus, Ukraine)

Known as Grandfather Frost, Ded Moroz is the frost spirit who delivers gifts on New Year's Eve, accompanied by his granddaughter Snegurochka, the Snow Maiden. Once a severe personification of winter, he became a symbol of endurance and renewal. His icy blue robes and regal bearing reflect ancient Slavic reverence for the cold itself. In the 21st century, he remains central to winter festivities across the Slavic world.



Modern Celebration: The *Veliky Ustyug Residence of Ded Moroz* in Russia's **Vologda Oblast** serves as his official home, hosting thousands of visitors each year through its Grandfather Frost Post Office and holiday park: dom-dm.ru

Frau Perchta / Bercha (Austria, Germany)

A spectral woman who walks the Twelve Nights after the solstice, Frau Perchta blesses the industrious and punishes the idle. Sometimes beautiful, sometimes monstrous, she represents balance and consequence. Scholars trace her to pre-Christian goddesses of fate and winter, making her one of Europe's oldest surviving midwinter figures. Alpine *Perchtenlauf* parades still honour her dual nature with masks, bells and fire.



Modern Celebration: Her legacy lives in the *Perchtenläufe*, the Alpine masked parades of Austria and Bavaria, which blend fire, bells and mythic spectacle. Listings can be found through austria.info

Grýla & the Yule Lads (Iceland)

High in Iceland's mountains lives Grýla, a giantess who descends at midwinter to gather misbehaving children for her cauldron. Her thirteen sons, the Yule Lads, visit homes in the nights before Christmas, leaving gifts or pranks depending on one's behaviour. Rooted in medieval saga tradition, their legends have shifted from terror to playfulness. Today they are beloved staples of Iceland's seasonal celebrations.



Modern Celebration: Reykjavik hosts public performances and children's programs featuring the Yule Lads' pranks and songs—information and schedules at visitreykjavik.is

Jólaötturinn — The Yule Cat (Iceland)

This immense black cat roams during the holidays, devouring anyone who fails to receive new clothing before Christmas. Born from farm life and the winter wool harvest, the tale encouraged diligence during the darkest months. Modern Reykjavik honours the Yule Cat with music, sculpture and lights—transforming a fearsome enforcer into a symbol of communal effort and resilience.



Modern Celebration: Reykjavik celebrates with a giant illuminated sculpture of the Yule Cat in **Lækjartorg Square**, transforming the feline into a proud icon of Icelandic resilience. Details at visiticeland.com

Joulupukki (Finland)

Before he softened into a kindly gift-giver, Joulupukki was a goat-like figure who demanded offerings rather than giving them. Rooted in the Yule Goat, he symbolized fertility, harvest and the year's renewal. In time he became associated with northern hospitality and generosity but his name—"Yule Buck"—still carries the echo of older rites. He remains Finland's winter ambassador, grounded in deep folklore.



Modern Celebration: His home at **Santa Claus Village** in Rovaniemi, Lapland, welcomes visitors year-round, with workshops and the Joulupukki Main Post Office: santaclausvillage.info

Kallikantzaroi (Greece, Cyprus, Balkans)

As tricksters who emerge during the Twelve Days of Christmas, the Kallikantzaroi are goblins who spend the rest of the year sawing the World Tree that holds up the earth. While above, they spoil food, frighten livestock and tease villagers; when daylight lengthens, they return below to find the tree restored. Their cycle mirrors the solstice drama: darkness surges then retreats, and the world endures.



Modern Celebration: In rural **Greece** and **Cyprus**, protective rituals like burning a Yule log or blessing homes with holy water persist. Regional folklore events can be found on visitgreece.gr

Krampus (Austria, Germany)

The horned companion of Saint Nicholas, Krampus is both punisher and protector. With chains, birch rods and a wicked grin, he terrifies the naughty while reinforcing communal discipline. Rooted in Alpine paganism, modern *Krampusläufe* combines



theatre, humour and heritage. In the 21st century, Krampus has become an emblem of Europe's willingness to embrace its shadowed past. For a more detailed look, please check out past holiday issues of *Absolute Underground Magazine* at absoluteunderground.tv

Modern Celebration: The *Krampuslauf* (Krampus Run) fills Austrian and Bavarian streets with hundreds of masked revelers on December 5th. For event details, visit salzburg.info

La Befana (Italy)

On Epiphany Eve, an old woman flies across Italy on her broom, delivering sweets to the good and coal to the naughty. Her roots lie in domestic hearth spirits who watched over families during lean months, later woven into seasonal gift-bringing traditions. Though ragged and sooty, she endures as a figure of comfort and generosity, closing the winter season with warmth.



Modern Celebration: *La Festa della Befana* in **Urbania, Marche** draws thousands each January 6th, featuring parades, performances, and markets. Schedule at visiturbania.com

Mari Lwyd (Wales)

A skeletal horse draped in white cloth, the Mari Lwyd arrives at doors in a singing procession. Households trade witty verses with her handlers; if Mari wins, she enters to share food and drink. Eerie yet joyous, the rite symbolizes rebirth and the turning of the year. Revivals across Wales have restored the Mari to the heart of midwinter.



Modern Celebration: The tradition thrives in **Chepstow** and **Llantrisant**, where revellers carry horse skulls through the streets to music and verse. Details through visitwales.com

Père Fouettard (France, Belgium, Switzerland)

The sinister "Father Whipper" accompanies seasonal gift-bringers in parts of northern Europe, carrying a switch and a sack. His stories point to local morality plays and folk warnings about behaviour and consequence. Though severe, he persists in parades and community traditions as winter's stern reminder that rewards follow responsibility.



Modern Celebration: He still appears alongside Saint Nicholas in **Lorraine** and **Belgium** parades each December 6th, notably in Saint-Nicolas-de-Port. See france.fr for parade schedules.

Tomte / Nisse (Scandinavia)

Small, bearded and watchful, these household spirits protect farms and families through the long winter. Offerings of porridge ensure their goodwill; neglect invites mischief. Predating Christianity, the Tomte/Nisse reflects a Nordic ethic of reciprocity between humans and unseen neighbours. Today, they thrive in story and decoration, guardians of a remembered hearth culture.



Modern Celebration: Scandinavian families still leave buttered porridge out on Christmas Eve, while the **Nordiska Museet** in Stockholm hosts exhibits preserving Nisse traditions: nordiskamuseet.se

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from Planet Earth on Pirates Press Records. Can you tell us a bit about how you came to be on the label and the choice to re-release this particular record?

BG: We used to press our records many years ago with Skippy and Pirates Press and really loved working with them. They've always been on our radar when they started the label-side of things so it was awesome to get to work with them on releasing *Burn After Listening*. For *Tales*, that record had been out of print for a while and we've been asked

a lot about it. It's a fan favourite in some circles, so it was due for a re-pressing. Mass Giorgini went back and remastered it and we're really stoked on how it turned out!

AU: The Riptides also put out a brand new album earlier this year called *Burn After Listening*. What can you tell us about making that record, and your future plans?

BG: *Burn* was recorded at The Blasting Room with Andrew Berlin, who really got what we were trying to do with that record. We pushed ourselves on it a bit more than usual because we had been sidelined for a while due to COVID, as everybody else was. A lot of the songs were written during 2020, so it's a bit darker in places compared to our past records. Right now, we're jamming, playing shows when

we can and working on writing songs for the next record.

AU: How did you get into punk rock music?

BG: I grew up listening to oldies like The Beach Boys and The Beatles, so as a young teenager [looking for new influences], discovering the Ramones, D.O.A. and Black Flag was life altering. I worked part time at a local independent music store in high school, where I was introduced to the Lookout Records catalogue, with bands like Green Day, The Queers, Screeching Weasel, The Riverdales and Operation Ivy. It changed everything for me. Once that door opened, there was no going back.

AU: Is there a thriving punk scene in our nation's capital?

BG: Absolutely. Being largely a white-collar government town, there has always been a healthy punk rock scene here. Some great venues throughout the years were very supportive of the punk scene, so a lot of bands had the chance to grow and build a following. The scene's still very much alive; it's just a little bit older now and likes to get to bed earlier.

AU: Who are your favourite Ottawa bands?

BG: The Muggins were one of my favourite Ottawa bands. My car's a little older, so it has a CD player in it and I'll still put on their record. More recently, I'm digging Wet for Days, Passenger Princess and Alley Beers.

AU: When did The Riptides last play the Canadian West Coast?

BG: Last time we played Vancouver was back in 2010. We were on tour with The Queers and Kepi Ghoulie at the Red Room. Always a great time in Vancouver! It's been a while, and we'd love to get back out there for sure.

AU: Have you guys ever toured Europe?

BG: Never. Would love to though! As well as Japan!

AU: What is the funniest thing that has ever happened on a Riptides tour?



BG: The really funny stuff can't be printed here. But there was one tour where we would pretend at shows that Bulltit (our drummer at the time) was a unilingual French-Canadian speaking guy that the rest of us couldn't understand; so on stage he would rage en français about how he's trying to get back home to Québec, but no one understands him. Very Canadian, and more for our own entertainment but the few people in the US that

understood French got it.

AU: Is there anything else you would like to add?

BG: For anyone that liked *Burn After Listening*, there were four songs recorded during that session that weren't on the record. Those songs will be coming out soon so watch for that... they are rad!

AU: How do people find you online?

BG: theriptides.com
[instagram.com/theriptides](https://www.instagram.com/theriptides)
[facebook.com/theriptides](https://www.facebook.com/theriptides)
theriptides.bandcamp.com
piratespressrecords.com/the-riptides-shop

AU: Thank you for taking the time to talk to us!

BG: Thanks for asking, eh!

From Ottawa to Planet Earth: Interview with Bassist Bob Goblin

By Chuck Andrews

Absolute Underground: Who am I speaking with and what is your role in The Riptides?

Bob Goblin: Bob here. I play bass.

AU: Where are The Riptides from?

BG: Ottawa, Ontario.

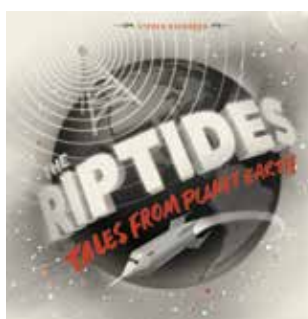
AU: How long has the band been around?

BG: Since 1998.

AU: How would you describe The Riptides?

BG: Canadian punk rock influenced by the Lookout Records scene from the 1990's, aging like a fine wine with notes of 80's hardcore and 60's oldies tunes.

AU: You recently re-released the album *Tales*



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T.B.D.
Fernie Skate Punks
 By Mal Content

Absolute Underground: Who you be?

Braydan Mynott: My name is Braydan Mynott and I'm the drummer from the band T.B.D.

AU: Give us the history of the band.

BM: We started playing music together about eight or nine months ago because Tristan Kent (guitar) and Dale Wyatt (bass) were looking to start a simple project that involved playing music that we grew up on. So, we started a skate punk band.

AU: Where is the band from?

BM: We are from Fernie, B.C. The scene here is small but its good and it seems to be growing everyday!

AU: Describe the band's sound if possible.

BM: We are a skate punk band. That's the best way I can describe our sound.

AU: How's your live chops?

BM: Our live show is fast and high energy. We try to get people moving if it is possible. The more the crowd likes it, the more we like it.

AU: Have you released any tunes recently? Any stand-out tracks you are stoked on?

BM: We released a five song EP recently. I personally like the song "Crazy" but I will leave it up to you to decide what tickles your fancy.

AU: Sex, Drugs, or Rock N Roll?

BM: All the above brother!

AU: What don't you want your family to know?

BM: I'm old and shit... don't tell my mom.

AU: Any plans or traditions for the Holiday?

BM: I enjoy kicking back and doing some snowboarding over the holidays personally.

AU: Have you been naughty or nice?

BM: Hail Satan!!!

AU: Any upcoming tour plans?

BM: Nothing set in stone yet but we are working all the time to bring our music to the good punks around the world!

AU: Anything else to promote?

BM: I like turtles.

AU: Final words of wisdom for our readers?

BM: Live dirty or die!!!

AU: How do people find you online?

BM: You can find us on Facebook @T.B.D. and on Instagram @tbdordie and you can find us on all major steaming services. See ya soon.



Squamish Punk Night Releases Sixth Compilation Showcasing Rising Canadian Punk and Punk-Adjacent Acts

Squamish, BC — BC promoter Squamish Punk Night has released its sixth compilation album, featuring a diverse lineup of punk and punk-adjacent bands, with a strong emphasis on Canadian talent. The new release includes 19 bands, with eight acts representing the Sea to Sky region, three from Whistler and five from Squamish. The remaining artists have either performed in the Sea to Sky or hosted Squamish bands in their own cities, cementing the compilation as a reflection of a growing interconnected scene. Beyond the local region,

featured bands hail from the Lower Mainland, Southern Ontario, Olympia (WA), and Sydney (Australia).

"This compilation isn't just a bunch of songs thrown together, it's a carefully curated ride through our scene. Every track is placed with intent, the way the best punk comps from the '80s and '90s told a story from start to finish."

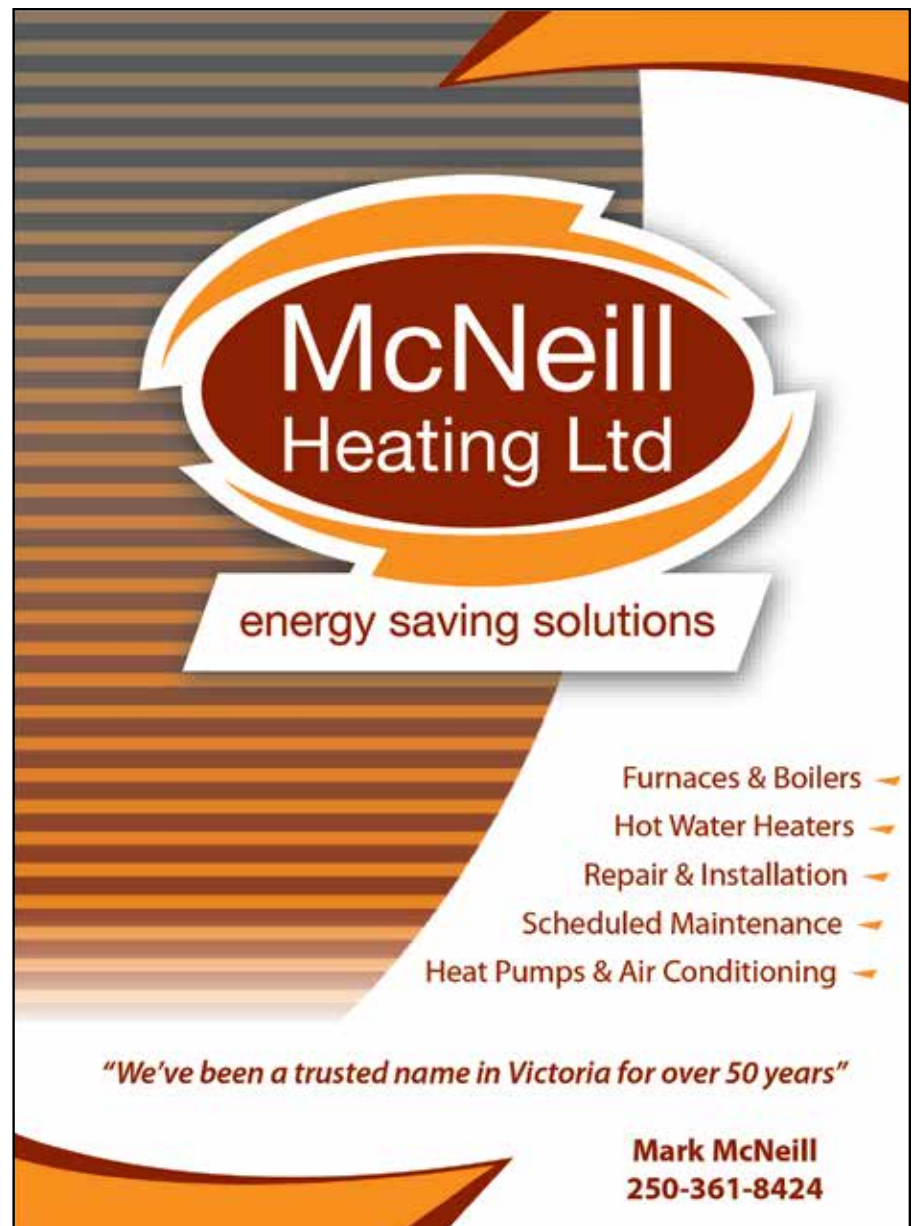
"This album is a celebration of the bands we've played in, played with, shared stages with, and shared greasy dance floors with over the past year, whether in Squamish, their towns, or anywhere the scene

pulled us. It also includes bands who've stepped up, helped out, or shown us love in ways that mattered this year."

"Our scene keeps growing, more bands are forming in Squamish, Whistler, and across the entire Sea to Sky Corridor. More out-of-towners are rolling through, more packed rooms and chaotic floors are happening, and now there's even a new place to play up in Pemberton. The energy from local fans is awesome, and every time the pit fills up, it reminds us why we do this."

-Paul and the SPN Crew
 @squamishpunknight

Listen to the full compilations here:
squamishpunknight.bandcamp.com



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HAPPY HOLIDAZE!!



Raw, Loud, Little

Garage grit, new-wave shine and emotional truth—turned all the way up.

By Chad Cornies

Vancouver songwriter Alex Little grew up surrounded by music and art, later playing in several punk bands before forming Alex Little and the Suspicious Minds. She built a reputation for raw, melodic songs with an indie-rock edge. With her new EP *Spider in the Sink*, released November 19, 2025 under her own name, she sharpens a sound that threads garage-rock guitar, new-wave hooks, and a bit of tongue-in-cheek attitude — written alongside guitarist and partner Adam Sabla.

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you most infamous for?

Alex Little: Hi! I'm Alex Little! I'm most infamous for loving music and karaoke!

AU: Give us a brief history of the band, who is in the band and what are you all about?

AL: The band is pretty new! I've been working on some solo tracks for a while. My partner, Adam Sabla, joined in to play guitar, and we were lucky to have Tony Dallas on drums, Natalie Vermeer on keys and Hayz Fisher on bass. We're all about rocking with some emotional moments peppered in.

AU: What does it say on your bandmates' Tinder profiles — and on yours?

AL: Same on all profiles: "LOVE 2 ROCK."

AU: Where is the band from, and what's the music scene like there?

AL: We're from Vancouver, BC — it's an expensive and rainy place, but there's a pretty vibrant music scene of all genres. We are small but passionate.

AU: Describe the band's sound, if possible.

AL: New wave/punk/pop — like if Blondie and Hole got together and added a little Sheryl Crow.

AU: How would you describe your live show to the visually impaired?

AL: Live show is very upbeat, with lots of pink and green, and little stage banter. We get straight to the rock.

AU: You released an album recently? Tell us about it! What can we expect to hear?

AL: Two singles have been released, but the

whole EP will drop Nov 19th! It's called *Spider in the Sink*, and it's all about growing up, anxiety, alcoholism and motherhood. It's really a mixed bag!!! I'd say it's really about figuring out who you are and being okay with it, despite the imperfections. It also tackles exploitation in reality TV and the extreme sadness of saying goodbye to childhood. Again, a mixed bag.



AU: Any stand-out tracks you are stoked on?

AL: Fave tracks overall for me would be "Finally Safe in the World" and "Forever."

AU: Sex, drugs, or rock 'n' roll — or all of the above?

AL: Rock 'n' roll! It is the most important by far!

AU: What should we know about you that we don't already? What don't you want your mother to know?

AL: My mom knows everything!! ... What you need to know... I love my mom and dad. Hi guys!

AU: Any tour plans?

AL: Not yet!!!

AU: Anything else to promote?

AL: We are playing a show Nov 21 at Red Gate (Vancouver). It will be the EP release party with Rempel and Mister Pets!!

AU: Final words of wisdom for our readers?

AL: Keep rocking!

AU: How do people find you online?

AL: [instagram.com/_alex_little_/](https://www.instagram.com/_alex_little_/)

Pick up a copy of *Spider in the Sink* today!

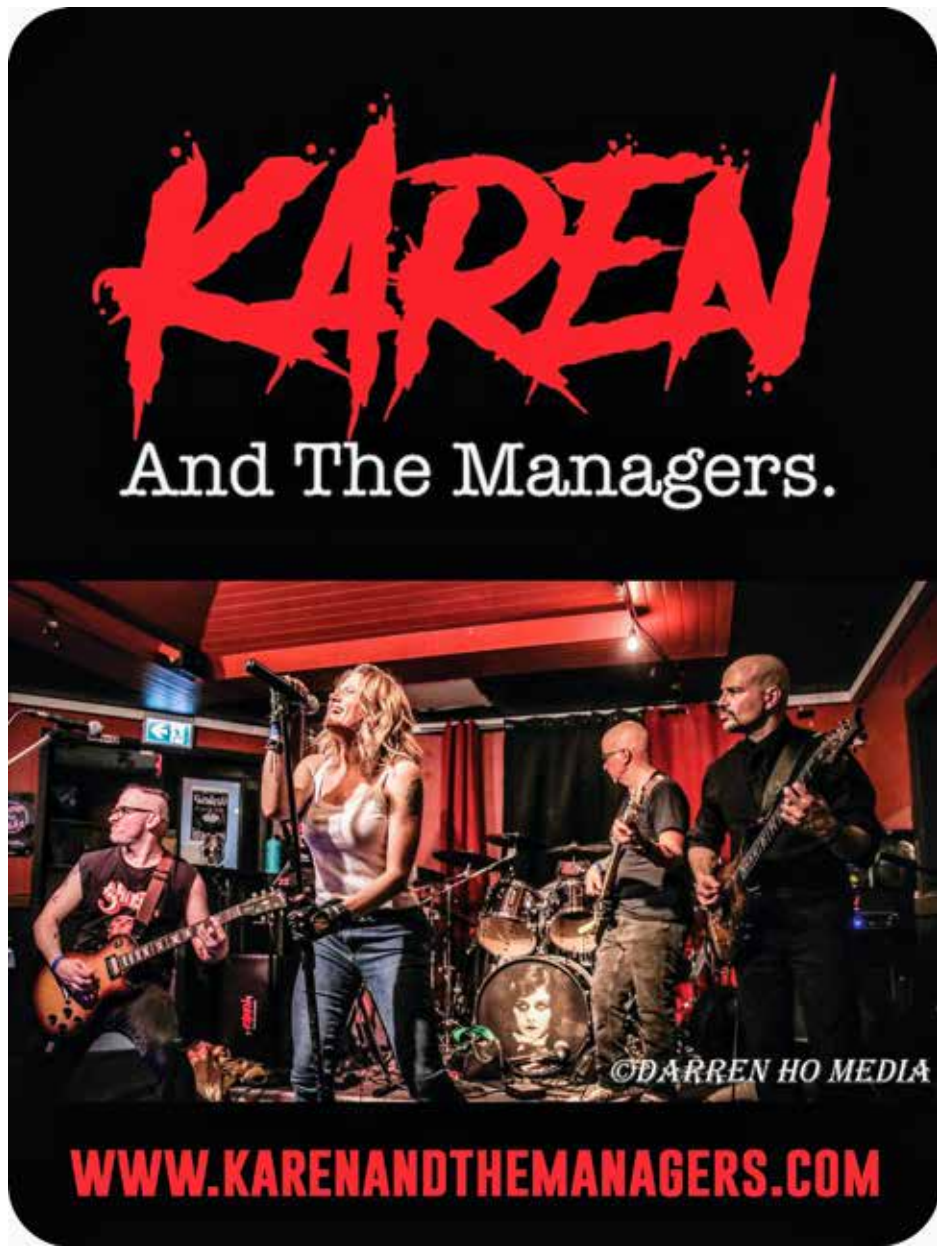
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Photo credit Megan Magdalena

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Nerve & Stress Tea Bath

Soak away the chaos, soften your skin, relax your muscles and pretend you're at a woodland spa while the world keeps on spinning outside. Lemon balm, chamomile, St John's wort, oat straw and skullcap soothe the senses, calm frazzled nerves and melt tension.

- Fill a mesh bag (or make one from cheesecloth) with herbs from Earth's

Herbal Nerve & Stress Tea blend.

- Steep it overnight or as long as you like to let it get strong and fragrant.
- When you're ready for your bath, pour the herbal tea into your bathwater and sink in.

- Use the tea bag as a gentle scrub. Your skin and your nervous system will thank you.

- Add 5 drops of chamomile essential oil.

Hangover Tea

For the morning after a drunken party or maybe you've been up all night wrapping gifts till 2 AM while eating half the shortbread tray. This blend is your best friend in a cup. It's soothing, balancing and surprisingly forgiving. Formulated with herbs for digestion, liver support, nausea and alkalinity, it helps your body bounce back when your halo's a little crooked. Nettles, fennel, dandelion, ginger, peppermint and rooibos.

- Use 1 tsp per cup. Pour boiled water over herbs and let sit for 3-5 min. Strain and serve.



Naughty or Nice Winter Self-Care

By Lily Fawn

It's that sparkly but stressful cinnamon-scented time of year again! Whether you've been more naughty than nice (or a perfect mix of both), I've got a few herbal tricks to keep you grounded and full of good cheer during the winter season. Because this season can be a lot with family dinners, parties, gift lists and that show glitter that gets everywhere, it's essential to build in a little YOU time. So, light a candle, pour yourself some herbal tea (or bubbly) and get winter cozy. Here are two of my favourite winter self-care items. You can find both of these blends (and plenty more plant magic) at earthsherbal.com.

Make Your Own Candy Cane Body Scrub

Trying some of your own kitchen witchery is fun and a great way to give yourself some care. Make extra and share with your friends. It makes a perfect last-minute gift too — if you can bear to share it. This is an easy energizing body scrub:

- 1 cup sugar (white or brown)
- ½ cup coconut oil
- 3 drops peppermint essential oil
- Optional: a pinch of beet powder or red clay for a pink swirl

Mix everything together until it looks like frosted candy. Spoon into a pretty jar, pop on a bow and scrub your way to soft minty-fresh skin. Rinse off with warm water. Pro tip: try it after your Nerve & Stress Tea bath for full retro spa goddess vibes.

Sign up for my '12 Days of Christmas' daily herbal mini-advent delivered straight to your Inbox

This December, I'm doing something extra festive!

HERBAL WITCH

You'll receive 12 of my favourite herbal holiday tips, recipes and rituals — one per day — to help you stay centred, sparkly and maybe even a little spellbound all season long. It's free, it's fun and brimming with personal cheer. A little gift from me to you, to make December feel a bit more herbal, handmade and heartfelt. Think of it as a gentle countdown to calm:

- Herbal cocoa recipes
- Winter solstice herbal rituals
- Kitchen apothecary tricks

Seasonal tea blends and body care ideas

To join in, just send me a note at: lily.fawn@gmail.com with subject line: 12 Days of Christmas...and remember: it's totally fine to be both naughty and nice — just make sure you take a bath either way.

Find your favourites at earthsherbal.com



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**SNFU Reissue Pivotal Punk LP
... And No One Else Wanted to Play
via Trust Records**

In 1985, underground rock was staunchly divided. At the heart of it was the crossover movement, which was the confounding middle ground between the longhairs and their arch enemies, the punks and hardcore kids. While each style had their version to the punk-meets-trash approach, which in itself confronted norms to their respective scenes, hardcore punk had its own disruptor in SNFU, who bucked all the rules by making their own, creating a singular document that proved frenetic hardcore pacing and genuine catchiness were not mutually exclusive.

Today, Trust Records is proud to announce the reissue of the bonafide classic, SNFU's debut full-length ...And No One Else Wanted to Play.

114... absoluteunderground.tv... please recycle this magazine... share with a friend.

The release marks the 40th anniversary for the pivotal release and will be available in stores and across digital retailers Friday, December 5. The physical edition includes two versions - a standard repress of the original LP and a limited deluxe edition which comes housed in a box with an additional rarities LP featuring all new artwork with elements from the original seminal release and an accompanying 104 page book of the band from 1981-1985. The book includes unseen early photos, original fanzine interviews, flyers, letters, and miscellaneous assorted ephemera in addition to Ty Stranglehold's oral history of SNFU (1981-1985), plus vocalist Chi Pig's original yearbook photo. Both versions are available in several color variants.

...And No One Else Wanted to Play is a cornerstone of skate punk and monument to punk rock writ large- helping to usher in the burgeoning genre of melodic hardcore. With the sung vocals of Mr.

Chi Pig, dueling guitars of the Belke brothers and the pummeling rhythm section able to drive it all with blinding velocity and an ability to switch course on a dime, ...And No One Else Wanted to Play accomplishes the rare feat of doing it all with a deep-rooted sense of melody and an ear for well-honed songwriting. Across fourteen classic tracks, ...And No One Else Wanted to Play show that SNFU can sit comfortably beside similarly classic acts like Bad Religion, 7 Seconds, Descendents, and others, influencing countless others and causing a shift that is felt today across all modern music.

SNFU began in 1981 in Edmonton, Alberta with the core members of Mr. Chi Pig (Ken Chinn) on vocals and the brothers Muc (Marc Belke) and Bunt (Brent Belke) on guitar, bonding over the love of skateboarding and punk. Originally naming the band Society's NFU (shorthand for No F*cking Use), SNFU recorded their debut LP across two hectic days at Track Record Studios in Hollywood, CA in December 1984 with BYO Records honchos Mark and Shawn Stern as producers. Bassist Jimmy Schmitz and drummer Evan C. "Tadpole" Jones filled out the rhythm section, and left soon after the sessions. "It wasn't the first time [in a recording studio] but it may as well have been," recalls Marc Belke. "We weren't well-versed in anything like over-dubs or anything like that. It was pretty much a whole new experience... I think about where we were at in terms of experience and things like that at that time, and we were very naive. We were just learning how to write songs and things like that. It was exciting when we first heard the recording... [but] we were also just excited to be in California as much as we were interested in being in the studio, honestly."

Upon its release, SNFU hit the road for a tour in support of ...And No One Else Wanted to Play, spreading those then-new classics live and

gaining cult success from coast to coast at 48 North American dates. With the record's release and SNFU corresponding live dates, those cities, and the world of punk, would never be the same. And now after decades of being out of print, neither will your turntable.

In anticipation of this release, SNFU are also pleased to share their new official music video for album centerpiece "Cannibal Cafe". The video was compiled by Nathan Drillot and features unseen live footage. SNFU's Belke Brothers will



celebrate the release at the Punk Rock Museum in Las Vegas. The two will partake in a round table discussion with special guests, in addition to a very special documentary premiere.

trustrecords.com

Photo Credit: Doug Humiski



SIXTEEN SCANDALS

Interview with guitarist/vocalist
Zazoo Pittz

By Ray MacKay

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you most famous or infamous for?

Zazoo Pittz: This is Josh, aka Zazoo (guitar, vocals) from Sixteen Scandals. We're not famous or infamous but our moms think we're pretty cool.

AU: Where are you from and what's the music scene like there?

ZP: We started as a two-piece with a bunch of guitar pedals in 2010. Once we got over that nonsense, we got a bit better. Dave joined on drums and we had a cool glass of milk named Issac on bass for three records and two EPs. Isaac moved on and now we have the infamous Jayniac Jr. on bass. I think he's infamous for Twitch streaming or jazz or something.

AU: Give us a brief history of Sixteen Scandals.

ZP: In 2017, we released one of my favourite EPs of ours called *Dorkmanteau*, which is a portmanteau of a portmanteau. All the songs were portmanteaus. I don't think people understand anything I just said so I thought: let's double down on it with *Dorkmantwo*. It's a bunch of malapropisms. We like wordplay... they're a solid Toronto band.

AU: This summer, you released *Dorkmantwo: Hellapropisms (Deluxe)*. What can you tell us about this album?

ZP: That record was supposed to be 14 songs released in 2020 but the pandemic, some mental breakdowns and never-ending revisions left it



so long we started hating the songs. We were going to release five of them but why waste all that time and money. So we decided to do a deluxe version with extra mediocre songs. I still have three that will probably never see the light of day. Maybe.

AU: You've released the singles "P.L.S.L.V.E.", "C.R.O.C.H.E.T." and "R.O.A.D.F.I.S.H." ahead of their upcoming 2026 release. What can you tell us about these new tracks?

ZP: Last year we recorded five new songs that are some of our best IMO, with Matt Gauthier in Hamilton. We still have the best two saved for early 2026. That will be part of an EP, *Dorkmantrois*. All the songs are acronyms. I swear that's the last one... at least until *Fourmanteau*.

AU: Tell us about the creative process behind "P.L.S.L.V.E.", "C.R.O.C.H.E.T." and "R.O.A.D.F.I.S.H.". Was it similar or different to your approach to *Dorkmantwo: Hellapropisms (Deluxe)*?

ZP: For this record I really tried to keep the songwriting as tight as possible. Don't bore us, get to the chorus, let the hook cook and no filler. On our last record I think there was a lot of filler. All our records have filler. This one was just hooks and I think we did too good a job because I'm having trouble writing anything better lately lol.

AU: Do you have any tours or shows coming up?

ZP: We're playing a festival on December 27 in Picton, ON.

AU: Any plans or strange traditions for the Holiday?

ZP: Picton is a little strange :P

AU: Have you been naughty or nice?



cartridge heart



ZP: We are very nice.

AU: What should we know about you that we don't already? What don't you want your family members to know?

ZP: I definitely don't want any of our family members knowing what we spent on guitar pedals/gear. Now that they know, I would add that they are an INVESTMENT. Better than cash.

AU: Anything else to promote?

ZP: The show on December 27 in Picton, the two new singles (the best ones yet) in the new year and we have a live, off-the-floor video on the Incorrect Thoughts YouTube channel. Also, check out The Mendozaz' new record!

AU: Any final words for our readers?

ZP: Look out, the call is coming from the basement.

AU: Where can we find you online?

ZP:

@sixteenscandals on Insta

@sixteen.scandals on TikTok

@sixteenscandals2103 on YouTube

We're on Facebook but please don't, and fuck the dumpster fire formerly known as Twitter.

Photo credit Ryan Brough



THE NARCANS

Hardcore Punk from Prince George, BC

Straight out of Prince George, BC, The Narcans deliver pure, unfiltered hardcore punk. Loud, fast, and relentless, their sound captures the raw edge of life in Northern BC... gritty, honest, and unapologetically real.

With breakneck drums, ripping guitars, and vocals that hit like a gut punch, The Narcans channel chaos into energy. Their songs dive into the struggle, the noise, and the need to break free...the kind of music that grabs you by the throat and doesn't let go.

No gimmicks, no gloss... just



hardcore punk in its truest form. The Narcans are here to make noise and mean it.

The Narcans are:

Rowan Siebert – Vocalist

Nick Bosiak – Lead guitar

Tyson Seymour – Rhythm guitar

Kay Compton – Bassist

Matt Campbell – Drummer

Manager/promoter:
Darlene Campbell
- 250-552-1842

thenarcans@gmail.com
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theNarcans.bandcamp.com





different cities and sailed around the world cheffing on Yachts. I ended up back here in 2007 and opened my first place in Gaston called Cobre. In 2008 I opened a diner called Deacons Corner at the north end of Main St. In 2010 I opened a BBQ spot called Peckinpah down in Gastown. I sold Deacons in 2011 and with the money I made in the sale opened a commissary/communal kitchen/deli called Woodland Smokehouse on Commercial close to Hastings. Woodland burnt down in 2015 while I was building a distillery called Resurrection Spirit which opened 2016. In 2021 I sold Peckinpah and attempted to start it up in Squamish. Unfortunately, it was not meant to be and

RUMBLEFISH

Are You Ready To Rumble?

AU: Who are we talking to, and what is your role at Rumblefish restaurant in Vancouver?

Tyson Reimer: I'm Tyson Reimer, the owner/chef/operator.

AU: What experience do you bring to the table?

TR: I've been cooking since 1992. I started out in Vancouver and while I moved around and traveled extensively for a good part of my career. Worked at fishing lodges, on a dinner train, few

I sold/shut it down in 2023. A buddy of mine helped me out bigtime and helped me get a food truck which was the genesis for Rumblefish. After a year of running the truck, I knew I had to get back to the city. I wanted to succeed and that's when we found the space down at 2296 East Hastings, where we are currently operating.

AU: What was the inspiration for starting it?

TR: The inspiration was that I had been doing BBQ for thirteen years and felt that I needed a change. Seafood seemed like the next logical step.

AU: What is your mission statement?

TR: Make everything we can from scratch and

I LIKE FOOD



never cut corners.

AU: What is the menu inspired by?

TR: The seafood products we have available to us here in Vancouver and a love of deep frying.

AU: What makes eating at Rumblefish a unique experience?

TR: I do like to think even though it's just fish and chips and other blue collar eats we still treat it with respect. Anyone can do what we do by filling a Costco cart up with frozen shit and premade garbage and try to feed you, but at that point you're not dining. You're just consuming.

AU: What are your most popular menu items?

TR: Fish and chips is by far the winner of the popularity contest but the Prawn roll and Grilled salmon sandwich are high up there as well.

AU: Describe some of the flavors people will experience.

TR: Oh man, It's a kaleidoscope of nuanced and delicate tastes. Like your tongue just did DMT. But that being said its tasty flavours. Why are you using the American spelling of FLAVOUR?

AU: Oops, Sorry, Eh! Do you endeavor to source locally whenever possible?

TR: For sure. It's part of the reason I started this. Seafood has become so bourgeois and I wanted to try and steal it back from the man. Grilled fish with beans and rice is one of the best things to eat in my opinion. It's proletariats food. Food without pretension. I fucking hate how expensive some of the seafood we have right outside our front doors has become. It feels like everything is getting further and further out of reach price wise, and this province exists because there was a sustainable fishery here. We should be able to afford the goods and services that enable this whole place to exist.

AU: What do you look for when hiring kitchen and serving staff?

TR: Good musical taste. Non-medical related scars and a good sense of humor.

AU: Why should people seek out Rumble Fish?

TR: I think they should seek us out because I think we are doing some pretty tasty food here. It's not all deep fried. We have grilled fish, seared, gluten free and all that fun stuff!

AU: Where are you located and what do you love about the neighbourhood?

TR: 2296 East Hastings. Almost at Nanaimo. You can't miss us. Were the building that's not burnt down.

rumblefish.rest
[@rumblefishyv](https://www.instagram.com/rumblefishyv)

Photo Credit: Michal Urbanek Photography



@rumblefishyv

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Photo Credit: Michal Urbanek Photography



I LIKE FOOD



CARLINA CAFE

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what is your role with the restaurant, Carlina Cafe?

Charly Cardilicchia: I am Charly Cardilicchia, I pay the bills and my son Payton owns the place.

AU: What experience did you bring to the table when deciding to start this restaurant?

CC: I had zero restaurant experience getting into this, but coming from a culture and the family I did food was always a centre of all things, connections and memories. It just felt like a natural progression for what fed my soul.

AU: What is your motto at Carlina Cafe?

CC: Family first, food second.

AU: What is the menu inspired by?

CC: Our menu is inspired from generational recipes, Sunday dinners and family gatherings. Some recipes I was taught, some I have adjusted to made my own. I took a long time putting our menu together, I didn't want to put something out there until I felt great about it. So now I'm very confident you can close your eyes and put your finger down on our menu and you'll have a great experience. The two people have influenced me the most are definitely my mama Rosemary and of course my loving Nonna Lina. I like to say "It's a labour of love" and those two women have never told me that, but showed me that my whole life.

AU: What makes eating at Carlina Cafe a unique experience?

CC: I think the charm and authenticity of our restaurant is amplified by the way we serve our sit down customers. We are constantly being told that we remind people of their trip to Italy. From the way we insist you order, get a drink,



sit down and relax, have your food, possibly enjoy something sweet like gelato or tiramisu. We like to let the food speak for itself. And the fact we get our cold cuts straight from Italy definitely separates us from some other sandwich spots

AU: What are some most popular menu items?

CC: As far as our fan favorites, we offer quite a unique selection of subs, hot sandwiches and house made artisan focaccia masterpieces. I would say that Enzo is our most popular sub (with Tony being a close second, the woppy Giuseppe aka the meatball sub is a no

brainer, and the Sinatra is elegance on a plate). But is there really anything better than spaghetti meatballs smothered in Parmesan cheese I like to call our Sugo, which is our traditional 100 year old family slow simmered Neapolitan tomato sauce recipe, a hug from my grandmother.

AU: Describe some of the flavors.

CC: Savoury tomato. Housemade pesto's deep, flavoured basil stock, rosé, house made ricotta cheese, along with extreme flavours from our housemade spices such as our basil salt and my onion and garlic powder, which is the reason our focaccia bread is absolutely off the charts. Another unbelievable flavour people should not go without missing is our tiramisu.

AU: What's the secret of a good sandwich?

CC: I do know a lot about a great sandwiches, from the way we cover the bread with the cheese so that the sauces don't make the bread soggy, to the way we tear our cold cuts. But besides that we finish it with some of the most quality finishings that you could have on a sandwich, plus our house spices, balsamic vinegar, freshly grated Parmesan cheese and high quality olive oil

AU: Do you endeavor to source locally?

CC: We are definitely inclined to using locally sourced products because if there's one thing that matters at Carlina Cafe, it is the quality of the food.

AU: Why should people

seek out Carlina Cafe?

CC: If you like fresh, homemade, delicious food and portions that will knock your socks off, we gotta guy!

AU: Where are you located?

CC: We are located at 264 Island Highway in Victoria, BC. Parking is around back.

AU: Any plans for the Holidays?

CC: We're planning to go to Hamilton to surprise my Nonna for Christmas. I haven't been there since I was a kid. I'm very excited and she's gonna be very surprised and will show me some new recipes, so we can bring you guys more amazing creations.

AU: Anything else to promote?

CC: We're gonna start an all you can eat pasta challenge in the New Year. Stay tuned.

AU: How do people find Carlina Cafe online?

CC: Right now, Google and Google maps is the best way to find us.

Instagram: @carlina_cafe



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TERMINAL SESSIONS



The Brains - Photo by Jay Flett

THE BRAINS AND THE FOMITES

Interview with Rene Dlamuerte and Jesse Death

By Jay Flett

Absolute Underground: Who are you and how would you describe your sound?

Brains: I'm Rene Dlamuerte. We are in a band called The Brains and it's called psychobilly by default because people called it that. I do punk rock and I have a stand up bass.

Fomites: I'm Jesse Death. We describe ourselves as a spooky skate punk band. Fast fun horror

themed.

AU: How and when did you get started? Have you had any lineup changes?

Brains: We started 26 years ago. I've had 5 drummers and 3 bass players.

Fomites: We have been doing it since 2016. Our drummer broke his collar bone skateboarding and was out for about 18 months. In that time we did a bunch of writing while we waited for him to heal.

AU: What are your major influences? and has that changed since the band started?

Brains: Latin music, Stray Cats, Ramones, Metallica, Slayer. All the good shit, Motorhead too. It hasn't changed much; it's the fuel of

our music.

Fomites: First and foremost we just wanna make it fun. We kinda describe ourselves as Misfits sung by NOFX. It's the 90s skate punk with horror sensibility.

AU: How are you finding touring post Covid and has the east or west shown more support?

Brains: That thing completely broke everything, as before that we had really good momentum and were able to get full tours. After that it became really difficult. The east coast is smaller drives and the west coast is longer, so that can be

problematic with gas prices but really everywhere has been difficult.

Fomites: All of our touring has been post Covid during which we locked down for almost two years and jammed.

AU: Do you have a favourite show or shows you've played over the years?

Brains: I really enjoy playing the Psychobilly Meeting festival in Spain. It's really fun. We play it every year. Montréal is always fun.

Fomites: We opened for The Koffin Kats. It was our first time at the Rickshaw. We played there another time with CKY so these two are up there. Hard to beat the Rickshaw when you are Vancouver local punk.

AU: What motivates you to continue to play?

Brains: It's our life, we just want more and more and more. New people, new places.

Fomites: You do it for the crowds and people that come out. There's no purer form of validation than someone throwing themselves into the mosh pit.

AU: The Damned or The Cramps?

Brains: The Cramps.

Fomites: The Damned.

AU: What do you see for the future of live music venues?

Brains: I think there is a little change happening that can grow exponentially if it continues. Vinyl



The Fomites - Photo by Michael Aaron Keith

sales are going lower. CDs and cassettes are coming up, which tells me that kids are looking into portable music without the phone. It's more pure without a commercial agenda. Kids can listen to whatever they want without any publicity and get in touch with the band.

AU: What does the future look like for you?

Brains: Super awesome, just keep going. It's a great fucking

life. There are ups and downs but it's always awesome.

Fomites: More shows, more shows, more shows. We wanna get back to the east coast again, we wanna get to Europe. For now keeping our sights on Europe and we also have friends that have done Japan. Let's just keep the party going!

The Brains and The Fomites music can be found on all streaming services.

Connect with The Terminal on Instagram: @theterminalnaim

Photo credits: Jay Flett/The Brains; Michael Aaron Keith, Renegade Rock Photography/The Fomites

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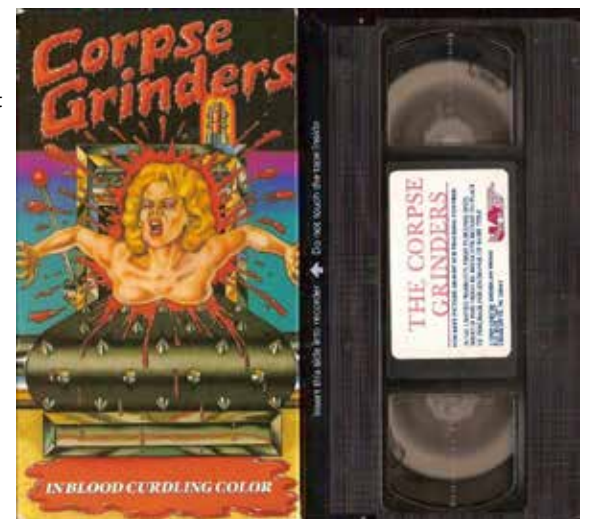
Vintage Video-Centric Newspaper Clipping Offers Up a Bit of Magnetic Mystery!

While recently going about my daily rewind-inclined wanderings around the world weird web, I was offered a chance to check out a totally killer video-centric vintage newspaper clipping harvested from Newspapers.com, found courtesy of fellow Tapehead and all-around cool dude Julian DiLorenzo (@UncleSporkums). The clipping he shared was out of Salina, KS, and detailed a shocking mistake made at a magnetic magic duplication facility, inadvertently causing an explicit horror flick to appear at the tail end of

a seemingly innocuous children's cartoon tape. Here's the article that originally appeared in The Salina Journal on Wednesday, January 10th 1990: Well, that could have been quite a nasty surprise for little Kevin, eh, Tapeheads! Now this was right around Christmas so this little VHStinker could very well have been a Christmas cartoon tape. No mention is made of the cartoon(s) on the videocassette in question, so this of course is purely VHSpeculation. However, we do know that it's definitely a United American Home Video cartoon tape, and they do mention that Vista Video did "record ten volumes of Children's Classics" so that piece of info could help, but a bulk of UAV's cartoon output was set in volumes,

as shown below. Now this analog-oriented error could very well have been completely anomalous – a lone mistake made by Vista Video that allowed one non-erased tape to slip into the final production output. But then again, you have to think there is a considerable possibility that Vista may have had a number of tapes that slipped through, or just didn't fully take on the erasure process. They must have done them in batches, right? One would think so. Though these pernicious videocassettes were largely recalled, there's still the notion that more of these cartoon tapes with the erroneous ending could be out there. Even beyond that, another question burns: what was the presumed "detective film" that appeared after the cartoon spewing forth decapitation, rape, and sadomasochism?! The rewind-inclined world may never know.

LUNCHMEAT



So there's a bit of magnetic mystery and a potential start of some serious analog investigation for the more curious Videovores out there. It surely would be incredible to find another slab from that sullied batch of cartoon tapes. One thing's for sure: now every time you spot a United American Home Video cartoon video, you'll just have to wonder, man. Thanks again to fellow Tapehead Julian DiLorenzo for bringing this wonderful piece of printed history to our analog attention here in Lunchmeat Land! Julian, we VHSalute you!

—Josh Schafer
lunchmeatvhs.com



Cartoon video takes violent turn, stunning parents

By DAVID CLOUSTON
Staff Writer

A frightening finish to a cartoon videocassette purchased in Salina apparently was an isolated incident and the case is closed, Salina police said Tuesday.

About 3:30 p.m. Saturday, Betty Pelzel's son Kevin, 5, and a friend were watching a cartoon videocassette Kevin received for Christmas. When the cartoon ended after 30 minutes, he left it in the VCR and the two boys left the room to play.

But instead of stopping and re-winding, the tape continued after a short break.

"They thought the movie was over; my husband was sitting nearby at his computer. About 20 minutes later he heard a scream from the TV," said Pelzel, who with her husband, Jerry, lives at 2077 Edward.

What the couple saw then were explicit scenes of decapitation, rape and sadomasochism — part of what appeared to be a film about a detective's hunt for a mass murderer. Pelzel said the first part of the film had been recorded over by the cartoon and they could not find the name of the film on the remainder of the tape.

"I guess it just steams me because it was on a children's tape. We're just lucky Kevin didn't see it," Pelzel said.

The couple went to return the tape Sunday to Alco Discount, 1820 S. Ninth, where they had purchased it and two other tapes about 12 days before Christmas, but the store manager wasn't in.

Monday, Pelzel called City Manager Dennis Kissinger, who called Salina police, who picked up the tape. The police also contacted Alco store officials, who pulled remaining cartoon tapes produced by United American Video Corporation of Charlotte, N.C., off the shelves.

The two other tapes the Pelzels purchased did not contain any similar material.

Both police investigators and cor-

poration officials say the scenes on the tape were an accident. What happened, said Eleanor Pettus, corporation president, is that the tapes were manufactured in Chicago for United American Video by another company, Vista Video Cassette.

Vista Video, which is no longer in business, recorded ten volumes of "Children's Classic Tapes" on supposedly erased film, Pettus said. But in this case, the old film wasn't completely erased.

"That's the only thing we can figure out what happened," Pettus said.

United American Video does its own production now; it had subcontracted orders to Vista Video at Christmas because of the high number of orders it had received. The company has recalled all products produced for it by Vista Video.

"We're a family company, and we're pretty darned upset about it, to tell you the truth," Pettus said. United American Video, which manufactures children's videotapes and movies on compact disc, has been in business since 1985.

The Vista Video tapes, Pettus said, were distributed to stores in the East, Southeast and Midwest.

Charles Bogan, vice president and general counsel with Alco Discount headquarters in Abilene, said Tuesday that 81 Alco stores in a 10-state area were pulling United American Video cartoon tapes from their shelves. No other tapes from the Salina store were discovered to contain any material similar to what the Pelzels found, Bogan said.

Betty Pelzel said police told her Tuesday that the case was closed and the tape she turned over would be destroyed.

"We just buy them so we can sleep in on weekends. Kevin knows he's not supposed to watch regular TV unless we're around so he goes down and plays his tapes," she said.

"I've had trouble sleeping the last couple of nights because of it. I can imagine what a 5-year-old would feel like."

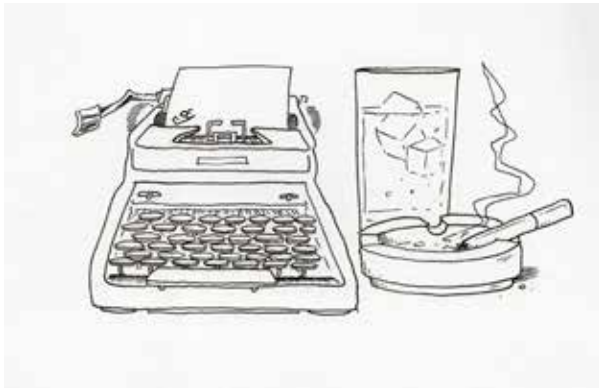
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Tales From the Typewriter: Detroit City, Lou Reed & The Rationals

By david eugene everard

I was nursing a holiday hangover with a couple of room-temperature boilermakers when Second Story Stan came by to say hello. I looked up at him, nodded, lit an unfiltered cigarette and gently steered the untouched drink across the hard smooth surface of a very well-polished walnut table. As usual, I was sitting in one of Flitcraft's leather-bound booths so I could watch Billy Sparks, the best bartender in the business, work his magic.

Stan was the new entertainment page editor here at the *Spring Falls Dispatch*. I'd seen him around the newsroom and was looking forward to swapping a few stories with him. He shook my hand, sat down, picked up his drink and proposed a toast to better times and bigger dreams. Stan told me that he'd cashed his very first professional paycheque working for a music magazine out of Detroit, Michigan, called *Creem*. They were a monthly publication dedicated to punk, rock and heavy metal that competed with *Crawdaddy*, *Circus* and *Rolling Stone* for shelf space on newsstands and in headshops during the 1970s. Although somewhat unfamiliar with

the Detroit scene back then, I was (and remain) a huge fan of The Rationals. Aretha might have stolen "Respect" from Otis (adding her "all caps" invocation to what was already an R&B staple), I informed Stan, but it was The Rationals who turned Redding's absolute classic dissertation on domestic relationships into a hard-charging, foot-stompin' rock and roll anthem.

After a quick snort of Billy's best bourbon, Stan proceeded to tell me about the time he had been assigned to write a feature article

on *Metal Machine Music*. It was Lou Reed's fifth album as a solo artist, he recalled, released in 1975 on RCA Records as a full-length double album, with each track (one per side) clocking in around the 16-minute mark. Stan had liked his work with the Velvet Underground ("Pale Blue Eyes" being his favourite song from that period), as well as what he'd heard on his first couple of solo albums. With that in mind, he thought he'd give the album a quick spin, write a snappy review, drop it off at *Creem's* office then head straight down Cass Avenue to the Temple Bar in time for happy hour. Unfortunately, that plan went out the window as soon as the needle dropped.

As far as he was concerned, this so-called "electronic instrumental composition" was nothing more than an over-driven, self-serving, drug- and alcohol-fuelled nightmare trying to pass itself off as the next big thing in the annals of amplified art. Nobody could figure the fucking thing out Stan acknowledged. A few people considered it a masterwork in heavy metal feedback, while others claimed it was nothing more than a contractual-obligation album from an artist who liked to piss people off just for the pure pleasure of it. Someone else wondered if Lou had borrowed the idea from Terry Kath's free-form guitar freakout on the first (and only) *Chicago Transit Authority* album. In an effort to generate any kind of return on their investment, RCA even



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considered releasing it on their classical music imprint, Red Seal.

Stan slammed both Lou Reed and RCA for releasing a record that was 64 minutes of pure unadulterated, self-indulgent, masturbatory bullshit. In the end, however, his piece didn't get published and *Creem Magazine* never gave him another Lou Reed assignment. He smiled at the memory, finished his drink and headed back to the office.

While I was dealing with the tab, Billy casually mentioned that he'd overheard us talking about *Metal Machine Music* and thought I might be interested to know that it was a big hit on their weekend playlist. I gave him the look, added an

extra couple of bucks to the tip and waited. Billy Sparks continued to polish an already spotless highball glass while he told the story. *We have nights he explained when some of our more shall we say, "satisfied customers" can't quite seem to wrap their heads around the idea that the bar is now closed and they need to take the party home with them. It didn't happen very often, Billy chuckled, but when it did, the night manager would simply grab a C-60 copy of Metal Machine Music, slide it into our second-hand tape deck and push play. A finger snap later, the only thing left in Flitcraft's Bar & Grill was the smell of spilled drinks and stale cigarettes.*

Artwork by Gareth Gaudin

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CRYSTAL LAKE "THE WEIGHT OF SOUND"

Interview with vocalist John Centorrino
By Raymond MacKay

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you most famous or infamous for?

John Centorrino: How ya doin? My name is John and I sing for the Japanese-American metalcore band, Crystal Lake.

AU: Where are you from and what's the music scene like there?

JC: I'm from Brooklyn, New York. In 2017, I moved to Tampa, Florida to be closer to warm weather and my rapidly aging family lol. I think everyone knows the music scenes in both cities — lots of history. Very hardcore and heavy up north in BK, and very death metal and heavy down south in Tampa. I can't speak to the current scene; I can't remember the last time I went to a show in either place. For me, it's like going to my job on my day off haha. I usually just say hello to friends and don't stay for the shows.

AU: Give us a brief history of Crystal Lake.

JC: We started in Tokyo in 2002. A few years later, the band went worldwide. With such a long history, the band has had a few alumni and changed hands a couple of times, most recently in 2022 with my arrival. Now we're waiting on our next LP, *The Weight of Sound*, which you can pre-order now. It drops worldwide January 23rd, 2026.

AU: Tell us about the process behind writing and recording "The Weight Of Sound".

JC: First, YD (lead guitarist and founding member, Yudai Miyamoto) sends me music and a description of how it makes him feel. That gives me an idea of what emotions we can test. After that, I sit with the song on repeat for about seven days and start going in on lyrics. I try to let the song sing to me before I sing to the song. It's all about listening closely. I have a notebook full of hooks, one-liners, and poems. From there, I try to get in the right mindset and let it flow. I demo track in my studio and we go back and forth until we're both happy. I'm a firm believer that you have to get all the shit ideas out before you reach the good stuff, so usually everything sucks at first.



AU: The title track, "The Weight of Sound" released October 10th, 2025, is one amazing track on the new album. What can you tell us about it?

JC: Thank you. A lot of the lyrics on this album are meant to make you cry — big Counterparts vibe. "The Weight of Sound" pulls from different points in my life. I cried for hours writing it. I wrote it after being gone from home from August 29th, 2023 to January 28th, 2024. Easily my favourite lyrics and song on the album. It's hard to explain in full, but in short it's about my dream world, where I met the mother of my child before we actually met; the difficulties of touring; expectations from fans, family, and yourself; and having faith when others want to stop you.

Being on tour 8 to 10 months out of 12 is hard — on everything. It can damage your personality. It can ruin your life while you're working to build it. You're never there for the people you love when they need you. People don't always believe in your struggle. They doubt you. They resent you. My own family. The fans. They'll tell me to quit.

They'll try to break me down, but I believe in myself because no one's gonna do it for you. I carry the weight of sound.

YD: Each note we play weaves a harmony that becomes music. To play that music together with comrades-in-arms is what it means to be a band. And the music that the band creates has the power to shape a new culture. Our new album *The Weight Of Sound* is a reflection of this way of life.

AU: What should we know about you that we don't already?

JC: There's a lot you don't know. I had a very fucked up childhood. A family member kidnapped me for three years. I've been in mental

institutions and had a rough social life with ZERO friends. It was hard to become well adjusted. In the end, family helped me become a normal human. As far as my blood family, I don't hide from them. Depending on who it is, they either deserve to know the horrible things or I trust them enough to share. Everyone is between 65 and 91 now, so these days it's all love... kinda lol.

AU: Anything else to promote?

JC: Halloween marked the end of the road for us in this 2025 cycle, so nothing that we have announced yet, besides the new album.

AU: Any final words for our readers?

JC: Follow your dreams but be careful what you wish for. Don't lose yourself in the dream. Don't run from home on tour. Learn to love yourself. Learn to love your family. The "stage you" is not your identity. Can't forget yourself.

AU: Where can we find you online?

JC: Instagram @bullfrogmafia and Facebook as John Robert Centorrino (Crystal Lake). Crystal Lake is on IG @CrystalLake777 and Facebook/X as Crystal Lake.

New album drops worldwide on January 23rd, 2026. PRE-ORDER NOW! crystal-lake-band.lnk.to/TheWeightOfSound-Bio

Photo credit: Jesse Kojima





Brooklyn Hardcore Legends Biohazard Drop Their First Album in a Decade

Brooklyn hardcore legends Biohazard made their long-awaited return with the release of *Divided We Fall*, their first studio album in over a decade, out now via BLK|BLK Records. Reuniting the original line-up, the album delivers a blistering statement of unity amid chaos, reminding fans exactly why Biohazard has remained one of the most vital and influential bands in heavy music.

To celebrate the release, the band shared new track "S.I.T.F.O.A." alongside an official visualizer. Vocalist/guitarist Billy Graziadei explains that the track captured the band's core spirit:

"This song's about holding your own when life swings at you. When everything is stacked against you, you don't fold, you fight harder! It's for everyone who's been beaten down but came back stronger. Knocked down 9 times, stand up 10! That's the Biohazard way: strength through struggle, no matter what!"

Produced, mixed and mastered by Matt Hyde (Slayer, Hatebreed, Deftones), *Divided We Fall* showcases Biohazard at their rawest and most unrelenting. The album blends the band's

unmistakable fusion of hardcore, metal and streetwise groove with a sharpened edge for a fractured modern world delivering a powerful reminder of why Biohazard remains one of the most vital and influential bands in heavy music.

After reuniting in 2023, the band returned to the stage to massive fan response, headlining the opening night of Milwaukee Metal Fest for their first show back. Critics praised their energy, with *Ghost Cult Magazine* noting they "explosively unleashed their fury with fortitude and force." They followed with two sold-out hometown shows in New York City, a run of UK and European festivals and a North American direct support slot with Megadeth.

In 2024 they kept the momentum going with festival appearances across Europe, the UK, South America and a dominant return to the U.S. circuit.

More incendiary and relentless than ever, the band has a fresh outlook and revitalized spirit. This is more than a reunion - for Billy Graziadei (vocals/guitar), Bobby Hambel (lead guitar), Danny Schuler (drums), and Evan Seinfeld (vocals/bass), it's a revitalization and rebirth.

Divided We Fall stands as proof: Biohazard is back and more powerful than ever.

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SNFU EXHIBITION OPENS DECEMBER 5th

The Punk Rock Museum, Las Vegas

On December 5, The Punk Rock Museum celebrated the 40th anniversary of SNFU's landmark debut album, ... *And No One Else Wanted to Play*, with a special exhibition and party. Founding members Brent and Marc Belke led guided tours and joined a roundtable discussion on the making of the album, the band's history, and its lasting influence.

Also taking part were Joe Nelson (Trust Records), Jared Williams and Kristian Basaraba (Gaggle of Friends: The SNFU Exhibit), and Greg Jacobs (author of *Hell On Wheels* and project manager of the album's reissue). Attendees grabbed exclusive SNFU merch, scored a free SNFU button (while supplies lasted) and soaked in a playlist of the band's classic tracks. The night wrapped up at the museum's Three Star Punk Bar.

Released in 1985, ... *And No One Else Wanted to Play* helped define melodic hardcore, pairing Mr. Chi Pig's signature vocals with the Belke brothers' dueling guitars and a driving rhythm section. Across fourteen tracks, the album stands alongside Bad Religion, 7 Seconds and Descendents, cementing SNFU's influence on modern punk.

Formed in 1981 in Edmonton, Alberta, SNFU (originally "Society's No Fucking Use") recorded



the album over two days in Hollywood with BYO Records' Mark and Shawn Stern producing. Bassist Jimmy Schmitz and drummer Evan "Tadpole" Jones completed the lineup. Following the release, the band toured North America on a

48-date run, building a devoted following and leaving an indelible mark on the punk scene.

Trust Records will reissue ... *And No One Else Wanted to Play* on December 2, 2025, with copies available at the museum's record store, Vinyl Threat.

Photo Credit: Doug Humiski



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Absolute Live Reviews

STOMP RECORDS 30th ANNIVERSARY

REAL SICKIES / RAYGUN COWBOYS / THE PLANET SMASHERS / THE REAL MCKENZIES

November 21, 2025, Rickshaw Theatre, Vancouver BC



For the 30th Anniversary of Stomp Records, I found myself hitching from the island to beautiful downtown Vancouver. I knew two of the four bands (and had previously interviewed them for the Punks On Pizza Podcast), so I knew even if the other two were horrible, we'd pass with a 50% grade. Fortunately, every band absolutely killed it up there that night.

Opening were the Real Sickies, a straightforward, high-energy punk band with a healthy splash of garage tones coming out of the man behind the keyboard. Couldn't help but think the guitarist/vocalist, Alex McKie—adorned with a healthy head of curly hair and a paisley jacket—had the appearance of a punk-rock Syd Barrett; I can dig it. Hailing from Edmonton, I didn't know when I was going to see them again, so I bought a copy of all three records they had available at the merch booth. Stellar set out of the lads, but hey... no fuckin' Louie Louie!

Second up—but the headliners in my eyes (this opinion was shared with quite a few others from the crowd, including a lad who drove up from Washington for the show)—was Raygun Cowboys. I saw them open for D.O.A. in 2017 in Oshawa, Ontario, then again when they finally made their long-awaited return to the island in Cumberland. With the announcement of a hiatus, I wasn't missing them in Van, and am I ever glad I didn't. The brass-heavy, high-energy sounds that come out of this band are top tier—dare I say, the best Rockabilly/Psychobilly in Canada, period. I have trouble choosing exactly which of those two categories to put them under because I think they're either the most high-energy Rockabilly band, or the absolute cleanest Psychobilly band. What I mean by that is Jon Christopherson's guitar isn't drowned in fuzz à la The Cramps; it comes across... clean. Shredding, ripping, and roaring, of course—but clean. Oh, and his vocals aren't full

of the snarls and screams associated most with the genre. His vocals are a deep, boisterous bellow that is unmistakably him. Rockabilly/Psychobilly? Give them a listen and decide yourself. As for the set that night, it was all us Raygun Cowboys fans could've wanted, and "We Want It All."

Third on the docket (whom I thought were headlining, seeing as their band's logo was the largest on the poster) was The Planet Smashers. All I knew about this band going into it was horns and ska—and lo and behold, they lived up to expectations. Singer/guitarist Matt Collyer joked that they had three shows coming up, which was a lot for them. They opened a lot of songs with, "This one came out in '91," and, "Here's another from the 90s," giving the feeling that they might not be as active out there as their longtime record-label mates and headliners of the show, The Real McKenzies. The crowd pogo'd until the cows came home; the brass section was tight. Ska just isn't really my thing, but that said, I could recognize that in the realm of ska these guys were very good and earned their ranks. The highlight of the show for me, of course, was when they invited Raygun Cowboys on stage for their big '99 hit "Super Orgy Porno Party" (video on the Punks On Pizza channel), which saw more horns on the stage than an arrival at the pearly gates.

Lastly, the big kahuna—the one and only, never fake, and always The Real McKenzies. This band has been bagpiping their way through the country and around the world for, as lead singer Paul McKenzie will tell you, since the creation of the bagpipes. Their long, storied career (which actually began in '92) brought them here, and they hit the stage hard with their punk Celtic sounds. The crowd stomped along with such impact it felt like we all might get a backstage tour through the basement. They wrapped their set, slaying their hometown, and are now preparing for their 2026 European tour. If this set was any indication, they're prepared to light the world up again. The show was a blast; his hot sauce—with the recommended can of herrings to go with it—still remains to be seen, and for that, I am less hopeful.

See more pictures on [facebook.com/PunksOnPizza](https://www.facebook.com/PunksOnPizza) and videos from the show and past interviews with the bands on [youtube.com/@TylerSmithPunksOnPizza](https://www.youtube.com/@TylerSmithPunksOnPizza)
—Tyler Smith

GWAR / HELMET / THE DWARVES / BLOOD VULTURE

October 31, 2025, MacEwan Hall, Calgary AB



I have lost count of how many times I have seen Gwar now, though this would be the second time I've seen the band post-Dave Brockie. Last year, the band played a show at The Back Alley and my analysis of the band was fairly critical. I still feel that the aura of Gwar feels different, though the band is still fun. This tour, with the return of their Gor Gor character, cemented what I suspected: that the band has cranked up the nostalgia, which makes shows more or less celebrations of Gwar rather than pushing some sort of new Gwar era or direction (though some new characters show up).



Even the choice of openers reflects the nostalgia factor. It isn't Frozen Soul or 200 Stab Wounds, no. Opening these dates are The Dwarves and Helmet - two bands who are more or less Gwar's peers. Then there is Blood Vulture, who will probably be remembered only for having a Bret Hart-style T-shirt for sale. Helmet being direct support felt like a deserving break for the band. They are so influential, yet are still a bit unsung. This slot gave them time to perform a near-headline set of songs every night, which was sure to work well in converting new fans who forgot to wear their helmets in studying rock history. The same could be said for The Dwarves who wore ICP makeup on this night in Calgary.

As this show was on Halloween, the

costumes people wore inevitably turned into bloody versions by the end of the night. The set list did tickle my fancy this time, with "Bring Back the Bomb", "Saddam a Go-Go", "Metal Metal Land" and a rare appearance of "Pussy Planet". The whole Gor Gor shtick was more or less the same. The horny dinosaur did look impressive on stage, though it got me thinking - if Gwar does this

for this show, what's next? Will they bring back a wrestling ring? Sleazy P. Martini? They have a warehouse full of shit. Guess we will see next year.

—Ryan Dyer

THE VICIOUS CYCLES / TRANZMITORS / STEVE ADAMYK BAND

September 26, 2025, Green Auto, Vancouver, BC

I recently attended an incredible show at Green Auto in Vancouver, BC, featuring The Vicious Cycles, Tranzmitors and the Steve Adamyk Band. The energy was electric from start to finish, with each band delivering outstanding performances. The Vicious Cycles, in particular, stole the show with their rockabilly-infused punk sound and infectious stage presence. Their album *Get Wrecked* is a must listen, and there live

performance only solidified their reputation as a top notch band... and in my opinion, their album is definitely a contender for the best album of 2025.

—Al Johnson

PHOBOPHILIC / GORGUTS / DEATH TO ALL

November 12, 2025, MTELUS, Montréal QC

Hailing from Fargo in North Dakota, Phobophilic delivered a dark and twisting surge of modern death metal that immediately pulled the room into their orbit. Their riffs shifted and coiled instead of moving straight ahead, which created a suffocating and subterranean atmosphere. The rhythm section hit with heavy force and the band

played with disciplined aggression. It was a stark and haunting performance that opened the night curated by Extensive Enterprise.

Gorguts delivered a completely different level of intensity that felt technical, eerie and deliberately unsettling. Their off-axis riffing and uneven rhythmic changes landed with precise control. Montréal was reminded why they remain one of Quebec's most visionary and influential metal groups. The performance flowed between dissonant chaos and slow atmospheric tension while staying completely focused.

Death To All's Montréal appearance presented by Extensive Enterprise never felt nostalgic. It felt alive and rooted in everything Chuck Schuldiner placed at the foundation of death metal. The set opened with "Living Monstrosity", "Defensive Personalities", "Lack of Comprehension" and "Altering the Future". "Zombie Ritual" and "Within the Mind" brought the room back to the band's early core. "The Philosopher", "Spiritual Healing" and "Symbolic" carried emotional depth and expressive weight. Montréal responded loudly during "Zero Tolerance", "Empty Words" and "Sacred Serenity". The final run of "1,000 Eyes", "Without Judgement", "Crystal Mountain", "Misanthrope" and "Perennial Quest" showed songs that still breathe with energy. "Spirit Crusher" and "Pull the Plug" closed the night in full catharsis. Steve DiGiorgio anchored the emotion and Gene Hoglan controlled every shift.

—JF Gosselin
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I MOTHER EARTH

November 12, 2025, MTELUS, Montréal QC



I Mother Earth delivered a full 1990s alt rock revival. Drawing from "Scenery and Fish" and "Dig", they moved through "Pisser", "Used to Be Alright" and "Raspberry" before the room lifted for "So Gently We Go" and "One More Astronaut". Their long and spacey jams filled the venue with energy and the night ended with a joyful cover of "I Just Want to Celebrate" by Rare Earth.

—JF Gosselin
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TOM MORELLO

November 1, 2025, Théâtre Beanfield, Montréal QC



Tom Morello turned Théâtre Beanfield into a blend of storytelling, protest and guitar expression. "A Night of Stories & Music" felt intimate and personal. "One Man Revolution" and "House Gone Up in Flames" carried emotional weight. His stripped down interpretations of Rage Against the Machine and Audioslave songs added sincerity and connection. Morello balanced technical skill with political reflection for a night built on truth and power.

—JF Gosselin
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SPADES / BALLISTIX / BURNT KNIVES / THE EXPLOITED

October 26, 2025, Piranha Bar, Montréal QC

Spades from Toronto performed with confidence and force. Their setlist of "They Live", "Rise", "Hands", "Red", "SCR", "Wrecked", "Cenobites" and "United" moved with precision and intensity. "They Live" set an aggressive tone. "Rise" and "Hands" built strong momentum. "Red" and "SCR" carried heavier grit. "Wrecked" and "Cenobites" pushed the room into motion. "United" finished the set with an anthemic impact. Spades delivered a performance that felt sharp and fully controlled.

Ballistix from Longueuil delivered a fast and tightly executed hardcore set. "Punk Is Art" and "Narcissist" opened with speed before "No Fun at All", "Firing Squad" and "Saturday Night" kept the pressure high. "Studs and Bones", "Geneva Convention", "Witless Spell" and "Knocked Down" added heavier structure and darker tone. "Ballistix Wounds" acted as the central highlight. "Someday" and "Divide n Conquer" closed the performance with sharp energy.

Burnt Knives from Toronto brought

<p>NEW! SE52</p>  <p>SIKPHUXZ <i>Sikphuxz</i> 7" EP 1980 Punk Rock Victoria, BC, Canada</p> <p>Pre-Dayglos punk by Murray "The Cretin" Acton and Trevor "Spud" Hagen!</p>	<p>NEW! SE55</p>  <p>PYTHON <i>Shock Treatment</i> b/w Pink Ladies 7" 45 1972</p> <p>Hard Rock / Proto Punk Vancouver, BC, Canada</p>	<p>NEW! SE54</p>  <p>DEBT OF NATURE / CREPITUS <i>Imminent Purge, Eternal Unrest</i> 12" LP 1991-94</p> <p>Extreme Death Metal Victoria, BC, Canada</p>	<p>NEW! SE64</p>  <p>SUBURBAN SLAG <i>Suburban Slag</i> 7" EP 1980</p> <p>Punk Rock Calgary, AB, Canada</p>	<p>NEW! SE53</p>  <p>MORAL DECAY <i>To Build An End</i> 12" LP 1989</p> <p>Thrash Metal Victoria, BC, Canada</p>	<p>NEW! SE49</p>  <p>THE NERVE <i>Self Audopsy</i> 12" MLP 1978</p> <p>Punk Rock Edmonton, AB, Canada</p>	<p>NEW! SE60</p>  <p>JEFFERY SEZ <i>Building Rafts Out Of Burnt Bridges</i> 12" LP 1998-2004</p> <p>Hard Rock / Grunge Victoria, BC, Canada</p>
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**THE VOGUE THEATRE PRESENTS:
SAVING GRACE, FEATURING
ROBERT PLANT AND SUZI DIAN**
November 19, 2025, Vogue
Theatre, Vancouver BC

I was very fortunate to experience this show, having arrived from Victoria with no ticket to a completely sold-out event. Yet, as luck would have it, I met the curator of the theatre and mentioned I'm a writer. He knew of *Absolute Underground* magazine and found me a single lucky ticket. It was truly a golden egg granting entry to witness the vocal prowess of the once 'Golden God' of the almighty Led Zeppelin and my Cheshire cat grin lasted for days.

This was the 13th time Plant had played Vancouver, and I'd never missed a show. He ended his first tour at the PNE Coliseum in 1983 with Phil Collins in his band, and ever since he's appeared with several new ventures. He's played the Coliseum six times, the

Orpheum and the Queen Elizabeth Theatre three times each. Yet on this night, he graced the magical Vogue Theatre at last—his 13th time—and my ticket was orchestra centre, row 13. The set list included 13 songs as well. The concert was like a time warp, with songs encapsulating the era from which they came. "How years ago in days of old, when magic filled the air."

The new group, Saving Grace, hails from his hometown of Worcestershire, England, and

features a five-piece ensemble. Suzi Dian sings and plays accordion in a surreal, soulful style as only she and Plant can, standing throughout the performance while the other four gifted musicians remain seated. One musician commands the electric realm, another is a multi-acoustic master, and the cello player, with a few effects, produces sounds rarely heard before. The orchestrated drummer uses sticks, brushes, and mallets, completing a remarkable folk-rock band. The new LP, *Saving Grace*, was sold on CD at the venue, featuring ten classic reworkings from ancient times and many 1960s-era tracks.

Plant and Dian sang in perfect harmony on most songs, eliciting waves of applause and occasional

standing ovations. Zeppelin-era favourites like "Ramble On" and "Gallows Pole" were reborn, with Plant digging deep into his 77-year-old soul, howling like he was in his twenties. Dian introduced him as her favourite singing partner of all time, and she even sang solo with no band, leaving the audience breathless.

The 90-minute concert left everyone satisfied, and my spirits lifted higher as the show progressed. Bravo to Robert Plant for joining Suzi's hometown band. *Saving Grace* makes a great Christmas gift for a friend—or even for yourself.



Opening act Rosie Flores delivered a fantastic performance. Her rockabilly guitar and vocals from Austin, along with her three-piece group, created a timeless, old-school sock-hop experience—a pristine performance of the golden era of rock 'n' jive.

Lastly, The Vogue Theatre itself is stunning. Built in 1941, the plush venue is stylish and comfortable, seating up to 1,280 people. The staff were incredibly kind, and it's a Vancouver landmark that deserves its own story. Purchasing a CD and shirt from Rene was a highlight, and to Matt Friesen, thank you for making this happen for *Absolute Underground*. See you in May. Merry Christmas to all.

Cheers,
—Clark "Super" Mantei



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a strong surge of metallic hardcore. "War Crimes," "Life is Beautiful," "Convicted" and "Worm Circuit" set an intense mechanical pace. "Driving Cars" and "Cult Lick" added groove without dropping aggression. "No Progress," "Poison Ivy" and "Giving Up" ended the set with honest force. Burnt Knives played with intention and Montréal felt the impact clearly.

The Exploited returned to Montréal with immediate intensity that electrified the Piranha Bar. "Let's Start a War," "Fightback," "Dogs of War," "Massacre" and "UK '82" opened the show at full volume. "Chaos Is My Life," "Dead Cities," "Alternative" and "Why Are You Doing This" kept the crowd in motion. "Rival Leaders," "Troops of Tomorrow," "Noise Annoys," "Never Sell Out" and "Anarchy" all carried their original force. "Beat the Bastards," "Holidays in the Sun," "Cop Cars," "Porno Slut," "Fuck the System," "Army Life" and "USA" brought the room to its loudest point. "Sex and Violence," "Punks Not Dead," "Was It Me," "Maggie," "Disorder" and "There Is No Point" ended the night with pure punk energy. Montréal left exhausted and energized.

—JF Gosselin
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**DEATH SENTENCE, NEUROSPAZM,
OUT ALIVE**
Dec 6th, 2025 - Lucky Bar -
Victoria, BC



Self Defense pulled out of this bill at the last second. Whoever booked it didn't see that Cocaine Moustache and Dead Bob had already booked venues the same evening way back in the summer, typical for Vic. But it turned out amazing considering... especially with a load of drunks

showing up from the annual Six Side Bar-B-Que...

Out Alive came in at the last second and threw down a tight set of melodic yet blazing hardcore that got the gang ready for Neurospazm's relentless street punk beat down. A few new ones and of course "Midget" and "Punch" had a few pints get spilled in the pit.

Death Sentence this night was fucking killer... Kristoff on drums from Fü Kon Riots was no joke and brought new blood and fire into the mix. 1987 OGs Jimmy FITZ Sigmund and Syd Savage were perfect together up front with all 3 handling vocal duties well. Solos were great. They ripped hard on "R.C.M.P.," "IN FLAMES," "DAWN OF THE DEAD," and "FAKE"... all the hits! Bass runs were on point and the



songs off the second LP, Stop Killing Me, seemed to really go down well!! Syd was mad when some street person grabbed the mic but all was back in order soon enough. We even got treated to a few new songs. Save your "Back In The Day" speech for someone else... this line-up rules so

go check them out. Oh, and they are putting out their first new material in decades.

—Dusty Jaks

Photo Credit: Don Denton

**GWAR - The Return Of Gor Gor!
HELMET, DWARVES, BLOOD
VULTURE**
Oct 29th, 2025 - Vogue Theatre -
Vancouver, BC

Presented by Live Nation

What says Halloween better than GWAR!!!! It was time once again to get shock rocked by the Scumdogs of the Universe. The GWAR show was an all-ages show, which blows my mind. I ask this question; Is GWAR for children? Your mind wants to scream, No, of course not! The blood, guts, beheadings and random body fluid sprays. Or, if you really stop and think about it, was GWAR actually the best live action puppet show that ever existed? So let me rephrase and say GWAR isn't for children, unless they are the type of kid who likes big swords and giant dinosaurs. Then hell yeah GWAR is for children! The ones on their parents shoulders getting sprayed with all the colours of the bleeding rainbow seemed to have smiles on their faces.

To open the show Blood Vulture swooped on stage and picked the audience's bones clean with their atmospheric sludgy goth metal.

Next up the Dwarves lubed up the crowd and the legendary greatest frontman in rock 'n' roll, Blag Dahlia aka Blag Jesus, Blag The Ripper, Blag History Month, Blag Friday etc. (I just call him buddy!) was laying out a fine array



of showmanship and oral foreplay with classic cuts like "Back Seat of my Car," "I Wanna Kill Your Boyfriend," "Everybodies Girl," "We Must Have Blood" and "Speed Demon". As always Blag and the boys left the crowd moist and wanting more. Best show I'm seen them play since Rising Scum Fest for *Absolute Underground's* 20th Anniversary.

The crowd geared up and prepared to be punished by Helmet who pounded the crowd without mercy with their guitar driven audio onslaught. Main dude man Page Hamilton and his band was tighter than Tina Turner's pants on a Saturday night. Bangers like "Ironhead," "Milquetoast," "Gun Fluf" and "In The Meantime" buzzed past our fully stoked ears. Helmet was a very welcome blast from the past and they definitely still dominated the dojo.



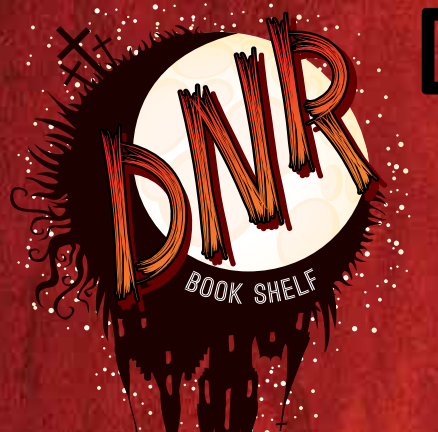
GWAR's The Return of Gor Gor tour was built around the

coinciding release of GWAR's new 3 song EP and comic book of the same title. During the show Gor Gor is initially an egg that cracks as the band plays the song, you guessed it, "Crack In The Egg".

Gor Gor grows from a cute little flesh eating baby, to a toothy teen terror, all the way up to the full bore hardcore massive monstrosity we all know and love. Will GWAR survive? Wouldn't you like to know. You shoulda gone to the show if you really cared, and you call yourself a bohob!

Fun fact for those who only worship at the altar of the Cuttlefish of Cthulhu, Blothar was the original Beefcake, not just some ringer off the street. Highlights in the tuneage department were "Fuck This Place", a hard teased farewell to Oderus Urungus, "Bring Back the Bomb", "Lot Lizard", "America Must Be Destroyed" and their eternal anthem "Sick of You". Until they invade again... All Hail GWAR!!!

—Mal Content
Photos by Tina Clark



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BONES BEFORE FORTUNE



Keith Durocher
Cult Fiction Studios
March 29, 2025

Billed as multi-hyphenate Keith Durocher's first foray into "the splatterpunk/grimdark realms of fantasy fiction," his debut novel *Bones Before Fortune* offers up a bleak, warring world in which antihero Setioch leads the remains of a motley free company known as the Warfire Brotherhood. During a much-needed respite after their most recent job, things are thrown into chaos when an unexpected assault on the city catches the Warfire Brotherhood in the crossfire. When they escape the melee with a mysterious woman in tow, the company finds themselves heading toward a new destination with the promise of increasing violence blocking their path.

Durocher's experience with gaming, particularly TTRPGs, is unsurprising as the novel reads like a D&D campaign adventure. While the writing clearly conveys the author's cinematic eye for detail, it is at times aggressively verbose. Durocher's creativity does shine through and his descriptions of history, terrain and various environments mark him as a talented world-builder, yet I found myself hovering just outside of being genuinely engaged by this adventure. Setioch and his mercenary band remain somewhat flat as characters, making it difficult to feel deeply invested in their stories. Despite these hiccups, *Bones Before Fortune* proves to be a fun, blood-spattered adventure story that would appeal to anyone who grew up on classic '80s fantasy fiction and now finds themselves wanting something that evokes that nostalgia while also scratching a darker, gorier itch.
Laura Phaneuf

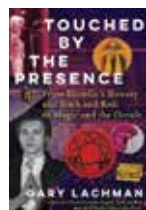
THE DEVIL'S KISS



Michael Essington
Independent
June 24, 2025

Back in June 2016, veteran punk author Michael Essington published *Misconceptions of Hell*. *MOH* was a collection of short fiction stories. In it, he introduced a detective team of Bo Herne and Hank (aka Hank the Drunk or Hank the Bum). The stories featuring Bo and Hank were steeped in the crime noir feel. However, the author always added a twist to Bo's character. Bo was a traveler/Gypsy. In each case he was presented, he had to consult his tarot cards. Then, before he walked out the door, he would sneak away to feed his drug habit of crack or whatever prescription medicine he had stolen from a client. Then, in December 2018, Essington put out *Pieces of Silver* and revisited Bo and Hank. I enjoyed these stories, and I wished that the characters could develop into a complete novel. Well, as luck would have it, Essington published *The Devil's Kiss* this year (2025). If you enjoyed the gritty work of writers like Andrew Vachss and Eddie Little, you'll love *The Devil's Kiss*.
Edward Cook

TOUCHED BY THE PRESENCE: FROM BLONDIE'S BOWERY AND ROCK AND ROLL TO MAGIC AND THE OCCULT



Gary Lachman
Inner Traditions,
November 18, 2025

It would be hard for me not to love a book with two of my all-time heroes on its cover: Aleister Crowley and Debbie Harry. The connection between the two is Gary Lachman, who, in a previous incarnation as Gary Valentine, was a member of Blondie and wrote (*I'm Always Touched by Your Presence, Dear*). Gary wrote the best book on Aleister Crowley, Aleister Crowley: *Magick, Rock and Roll and the Wickedest Man in the World*, in which he very convincingly argues that we now live in Crowley's world. An essential book in any genre.

Gary is a fine writer and his story is most engagingly told. As a snapshot of the vibrant New York '70s music scene it easily ranks alongside any of the great music books.

Of equal interest is Gary's discovery and exploration of occultism, which came, of course, through a follower of Aleister Crowley. What Gary has done—what all of us should do, but sadly rarely do—is listen to his own inner voice and, through this, discover his own true will, which has led him on marvellous adventures. An important and inspirational book.
Steve Earles

SCREAMING AND CONJURING: THE RESURRECTION AND UNSTOPPABLE RISE OF THE MODERN HORROR MOVIE



Clark Collis
1984 Publishing,
September 2, 2025

Entertainment Journalist, Clark Collis, has followed up his 2021 book on the untold story of the making of *Shaun of the Dead* with a much more comprehensive offering on the rise of the modern horror film. Horror has been a mainstay of cinema since cinema began, though it has experienced ebbs and flows in popularity. This particular tome kicks off with the horror-revitalizing phenomenon that was *Scream*, and its impact on what came next, touring the reader through franchises, standalone films, and reboots from the mid-nineties to the present.

Screaming and Conjuring is a near-encyclopedic record of essential horror viewing, that pads its pages with anecdotes, box office takes, and behind-the-scenes photos from some of the most iconic films of the genre from the past 30 years. While extensive, it is by no means exhaustive, and with its focus on the American film industry Collis does overlook some important entries. Naturally, with a book of this scope, there will always be oversights, but I was disappointed to find that though the most recent films mentioned do include releases up to and including 2025, the past decade of horror cinema receives relatively little focus. Despite this, I think Collis' book is a worthwhile addition to the shelves of any horror

aficionado. A word of caution: ensure that you are well caught up on your horror watchlist before embarking on this read—spoilers abound!

Laura Phaneuf

UNCANNY: THE ORIGINS OF FEAR



Junji Ito, Jocelyne Allen
(translator)
VIZ Media LLC,
October 15, 2024

Uncanny: The Origins of Fear caught me off guard, then, much like one of Ito's own jump scares. Instead of a compilation, this book feels like Ito's version of *On Writing* or *Danse Macabre*: a reflective, autobiographical look at the inspirations, thought processes, and creative mechanics behind his body of work.

Ito's most iconic stories—Uzumaki, Gyo, Tomie—are sprawling and imaginative, but they're still rooted in the short-story form. Ito has always been a master of flash fiction and one-shots, and *Uncanny* offers a rare glimpse into how he constructs them. Sometimes the spark comes from fusing two unrelated ideas until they become unsettling in combination. Other times, a simple "what if?" expands outward: for example, sharks attacking on land eventually evolving into Gyo's larger, weirder premise.

I found this especially resonant because I often work the same way—starting with a single striking idea, building outward in a controlled way, and ending before the tension dissipates. Sustaining a mood is, to me, one of the most essential ingredients in fiction, and Ito's signature "creeping dread" shows how effective that sustained emotional pressure can be.

What makes his stories uncanny is the balance: everyday normality is presented with total sincerity, even as the bizarre intrudes and slowly reshapes the world. Ito always tries to keep the internal logic consistent, which only heightens the contrast between the familiar and the impossible. That balance—rational structure holding something irrational—is where his work becomes truly unnerving.
Ryan Dyer

'EVERYBODY IS A BOOK OF BLOOD: WHEREVER WE'RE OPENED, WE'RE RED.'
CLIVE BARKER, *BOOKS OF BLOOD: VOLUMES ONE TO THREE*

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PYTHON



PYTHON: TOUGH VANCOUVER HARD ROCK, 1972

Interview by Jason Flower

Chris Raines – guitar & vocals, David West – guitar, David Pemberton – bass, Warren Cann – drums.

David W: I left home the summer of my 16th year and moved from Sudbury to Vancouver to live with my older brother in a house full of revolutionaries, artists, and stoners.

Chris: The moment I arrived in Vancouver, the first thing I noticed when I stepped out of the car was the smell of pine trees. I was 18 and looking to form a travelling band and make a living.

David W: In late 1970, Chris and I decided to go to Toronto. We stayed there briefly and then headed to Montreal. It was cheaper to live there and frankly more fun than Toronto, so we rented an apartment for \$65 a month. We formed Lucifer with Simon on bass, Chris on guitars and vocals, a local drummer (name unknown), and myself on guitar. We opened for well-known local acts such

as April Wine, Mahogany Rush and Mashmakhan as well as international acts like Johnny Winter and Long John Baldry.

We returned to Vancouver in late 1971 without Simon and rented a band house. We evolved Lucifer into Python – which was a less in-your-face name – and really hit our stride when Warren Cann joined the band on drums. Warren was more professional than us, and he was also a hairdresser and took pains to get us to look better. Soon, David Pemberton joined on bass (same name but not the same person who later played drums in David Raven and the Escorts). By 1972, we were playing high schools, strip clubs and bars.

Chris: We recorded a 45 at Psi Chord with Robin Spurgin and were fairly new at professional recording. Foot Records was the agency that was booking us. John Whitefoot handled the record stuff. When the 45 came out we had a party. Whitefoot invited a bunch of strippers and industry assholes, people who ran clubs and stuff like that. They were never going to do anything with or for us.

David W: We got nowhere with our single. On the radio at the time it was all flower-power soft rock; nobody wanted anything to do with us.

Chris: Warren was an extremely good drummer, very business-like – showed up on time, did all those sorts of things. He dressed like a British rocker. He had his own style and I believe he did hairdressing on the side. He had good qualifications for rock and roll and wanted to be famous. He made that clear right away, so there were no surprises when Warren left for England. It was just the next phase for him.

David W: Discouraged, broke, breakups with girlfriends and testosterone levels rising – we split up. Warren left for England in '72, replaced by a guy who's name I don't recall. I quit in the summer of '72 and left for England in February '73.

Chris: If we'd had proper management and some promotion early on, it might've been a very different thing. It might've satisfied Warren's need to be famous, and David's wanting to make albums and stuff. I ended up getting hired at CKVU television, because our old Python roadie

Gary, who helped build the original studios at Little Mountain Sound, had been hired to help launch CKVU-TV and its flagship live program "The Vancouver Show". I was there for 10 years.

David W: Warren and I shared a little flat in North London. He joined Tiger Lily, which turned into Ultravox and had great success. By 1980 I was back in BC again, where I took the stage name David Raven. At that point my band became David Raven and the Escorts. We released some EPs and long-players, got some airplay, did a lot of roadwork, from 1980 till around 1989, when my heroin use rendered me unemployable.

Chris: Despite the fact that this era only lasted a few years, the production of this record, when looked back on, is a point of pride. For young guys who loved the blues and rock and roll, we produced something that many people have told us was ahead of its time. A combination of a pugnacious attitude and good musicianship jumps out at you immediately. For those of us who were in the band, we have lived full lives well past that point, but those years of playing together remain anchored in our hearts as one exciting moment in a much longer life.

David W: We were young men; I was 18. The band lived in the same house and rehearsed and played live gigs on a regular basis. To record in a professional studio was the holy grail. To that end, we rehearsed and honed our skills. The thought of putting something down on tape was equal to establishing our manhood. Looking back some 50 years later, I believe it stands the test of time. I am proud of what we did. It's honest, raw and somewhat beautiful.

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KILLED BY DEAF: PUNK TRIBUTE TO MOTÖRHEAD Celebrating Lemmy and Motörhead's 50th Anniversary at The Punk Rock Museum

On Saturday, December 6, The Punk Rock Museum in Las Vegas celebrated the release of

Killed By Deaf: A Punk Tribute to Motörhead— a ferocious new album uniting punk legends to pay tribute to the loudest band on Earth. The event honoured the band that blurred the lines between punk and metal, marking Motörhead's 50th anniversary with a high-energy tribute album featuring iconic bands Rancid, Pennywise, Lagwagon, The Bronx and more.

Fans enjoyed a curated Motörhead playlist throughout the museum, custom Motörhead themed cocktails at the Three Star Punk Bar and a roundtable discussion where friends of Lemmy shared stories and memories. Soldiers of Destruction performed live, including their cover of "Overkill" from the tribute album, adding to the evening's intensity.

The album is available for purchase at the museum's record store, Vinyl Threat, allowing fans to take home a piece of the celebration. The night brought together music, memories and the punk community to honour Lemmy's enduring legacy. thepunkrockmuseum.com

Crossword Answers

REVERSAL OF FORTUNE

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CROSSWORD NO. 120 CHRISTMAS 2025

Absolute Comix

DAY 7/18

SUNDAY
JANUARY
21, 2024



Backdoor Cartoons



THE FART SLIDE by Keenan Poloncsak



THE FART SLIDE

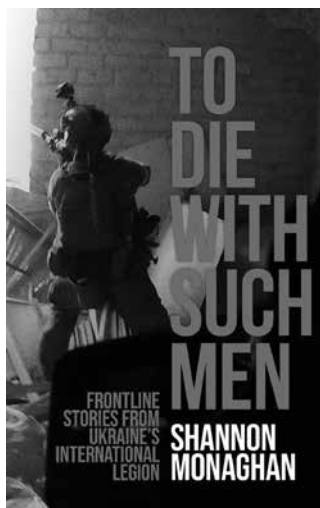
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Absolute Graphic Novel Reviews



TO DIE WITH SUCH MEN: FRONTLINE STORIES FROM UKRAINE'S INTERNATIONAL LEGION

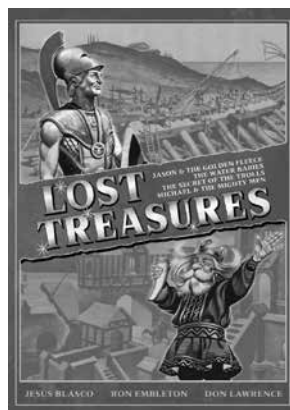
By Shannon Monaghan, published by Hurst

This is an extremely well-written and well-researched book telling the tales of Ukraine's International Legion: volunteer soldiers, men who revolted against Russia's illegal invasion of a democracy with an army of scum, rapists, convicts and murderers, the dregs of the Earth. I've worked with Ukrainian refugees and the stories they have to tell are terrifying. Europe stands at the abyss. How has this happened? It has happened because we live in a time when democracy is under siege, not just from dictators like Putin but from wannabe dictators

like Trump, a narcissist and bully, the greatest threat from within Western democracy has ever faced. A 'man' like Hitler before him, emboldened by the capitulation of the world. Like all bullies, the more you give them, the more they take until there is nothing decent left in the world.

I urge you to read this fine and important book. It will change the way you see the world and make you recognise the value of democracy, under siege as never before, something we need to defend not just in Ukraine but everywhere.

—Steve Earles



LOST TREASURES VOLUME TWO
Illustrated by Jesús Blasco, Ron Embleton, Don Lawrence. Published by Hibernia

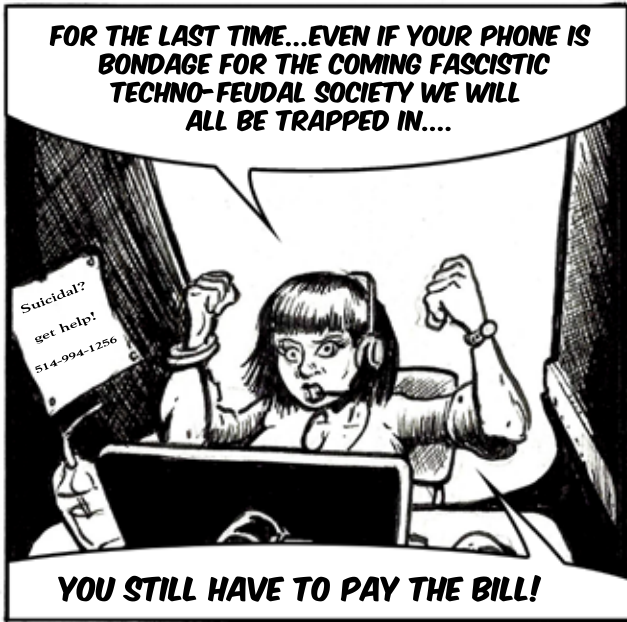
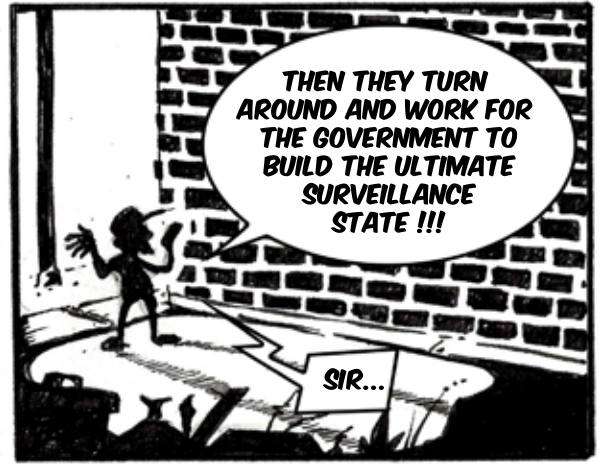
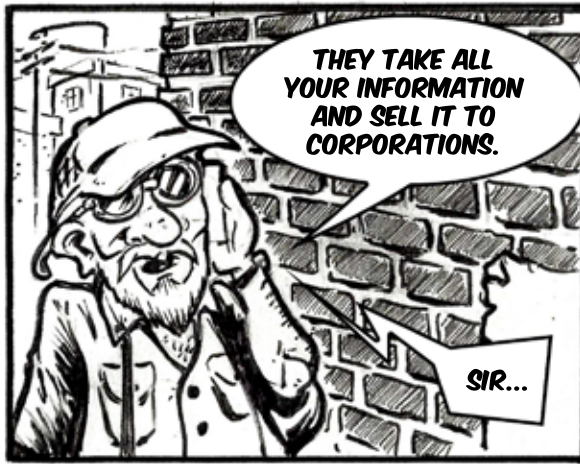
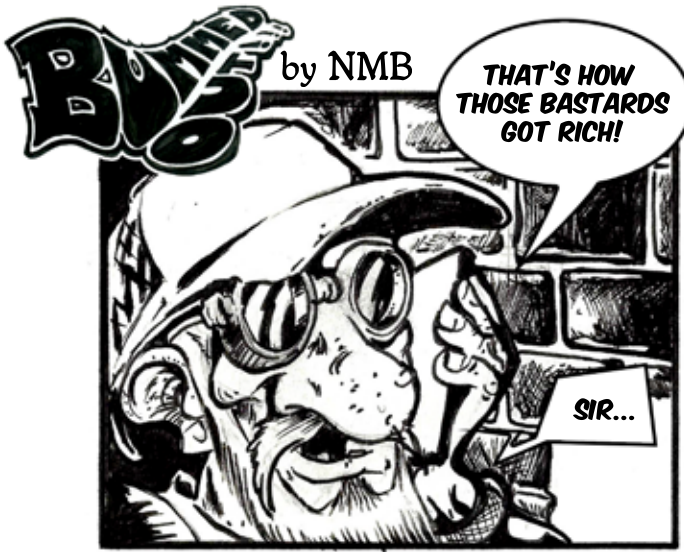
Judge Dredd writer Michael Carroll told me that *Lost Treasures II* was the most beautiful comic book published this year, and he is right. While the first *Lost Treasures* was in black and white, this latest edition is in full colour with beautiful restoration from the original comics of the art of three marvellous talents: Jesús Blasco (whose colour work is a revelation; I had only seen his black and white art before), Ron Embleton and, last but by no means least, *Storm* and *The Trigan Empire* artist Don Lawrence, one of my all-time favourite artists.

These stories originally appeared in *Once Upon A Time* (published between 1969 and 1972). According to Hibernia's David McDonald, they are "quite possibly the most beautiful comic ever produced." On the strength of this fine collection, I'd believe it. The highlight of the

book is *Jason & the Golden Fleece*, illustrated by Don Lawrence, but *The Water Babies* by Jesús Blasco is a fine achievement and *Michael & the Mighty Men* by Ron Embleton is divine.

It is no understatement to say this book is a thing of beauty and a joy forever.

—Steve Earles



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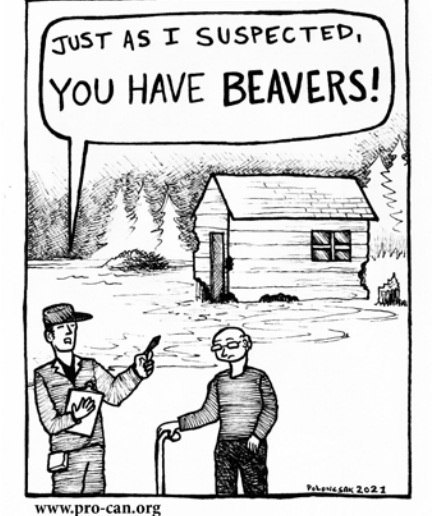
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THE FART SLIDE by Keenan Poloncsak



THE FART SLIDE by Keenan Poloncsak



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Absolute Album Reviews

ROTTEN SOUND — *Mass Extinction*

Season of Mist

Finnish grindcore vets Rotten Sound's "Brave New World", is a grindcore masterpiece!



This 2025 single from their new *Mass Extinction* EP is a powerful statement with heavy riffs and screaming vocals that pack a punch. Rotten Sound is grinding out a reputation as one of the most revered bands in that genre and "Brave New World" is the perfect example of their unapologetic, no nonsense approach. This album is a must listen for anyone who loves grindcore. So, buckle up and get ready to have your world rocked... Rotten Sound is taking the grindcore scene by storm!

—Allan Johnson

UFO—*The Misdemeanor Tour - Live At The Oxford Apollo 1985*

Cherry Red Records

While the Michael Schenker era (1974-78) will always be the best regarded period of UFO's lengthy career



(witness the seminal live 1978 album *Strangers In The Night* for proof), UFO made plenty of other strong albums, such as 1985's *Misdemeanor* album.

Now, to 21st Century ears the drum sound is, to put it politely, 'of its time', as are the keyboards but that was the norm for many '80s rock albums, so I can forgive that because

it's a strong album. Bassist Paul Gray brings some muscle to their sound while guitarist Tommy McClendon is excellent.

While *Misdemeanor* performed poorly sales wise (at the time UFO were caught between a rock and a hard place. Thrash metal and glam metal. UFO were neither.)

But live, they were still potent and a popular draw, as proven by this potent live set recorded on that tour, mixing new tunes with classics to great effect.

There's a reason why Lars Ulrich loves UFO, listen to this excellent set to hear why.

— Steve Earles

ATOMIC ROOSTER — *Circle The Sun*

Cherry Red Records

It's always great when an album you review exceeds your expectations.



And I certainly did not expect 'Circle The Sun' to sound so like classic Atomic Rooster. While the production is contemporary, that lush Hammond organ sound is superb. I was reminded a lot of the sound achieved by Rick Rubin for Trouble on their two classic Def American albums.

I want to put Atomic Rooster's influence in perspective. Some years ago, my friend Crin at Godreah Records exhaustively compiled one of the finest metal compilations ever, the splendidly-titled *Britannica Infernus*, a chronological collection

of British occult songs (something along the lines of Cherry Red's excellent *The Devil Rides In*). It featured Atomic Rooster's seminal and highly influential "Death Walks Behind You". Atomic Rooster makes the Hammond organ sound truly evil!

Returning to the present day, Atomic Rooster have much to offer, there's a real magic in these songs.

Atomic Rooster... still keeping it evil after all these years!

— Steve Earles

URIAH HEEP — *The Shadow and the Wind: 1973-1974 (Box Set)*

Cherry Red Records

Uriah Heep were, and indeed are, a fine band (a friend who saw them live recently testified to their musical excellence). But they were routinely savaged by the critics and they found themselves unfairly living in the shadows of the unholy 70s trinity of Black Sabbath, Deep Purple and Led Zeppelin.



But Uriah Heep were none of the above, they were their own men, with their own unique songs, identity and sound.

This collection concentrates on their extremely creative period of 1973-74, when they were on fire! In this brief time frame they released two superb studio albums, *Sweet Freedom* (1973) and *Wonderworld* (1974). Classic songs, but moreover, on top of their impressive studio output, Uriah Heep killed it live! As heard on three fine discs in this collection, 'Live 1973', 'Live 1974' and

'Live At Shepperton '74'

An essential collection for Uriah Heep fans!

— Steve Earles

WRATHCHILD AMERICA—*Climbin' The Walls / 3-D*

Cherry Red Records

This collection is an absolute pleasure to review, two criminally underrated albums from



a criminally underrated band, Wrathchild America (so-called because a shite glam metal band already had dibs on the name).

I always loved Wrathchild's *Climbin' The Walls* debut— excellent '80s American heavy metal (not glamor thrash, think Armoured Saint, Vicious Rumors or in a modern context Night Demon. Good company!). Brilliantly played (killer bass sound), great songs and a killer cover of Pink Floyd's "Time" that Wrathchild truly make their own, all wrapped up in fine Ed Repka sleeve art.

3-D is even better, there's a unique 'out there' vibe on this album that reminds me of the excellent Voivod (who Wrathchild played with, along with Metallica, Slayer, Judas Priest, Iron Maiden and Nuclear Assault).

So why didn't Wrathchild become Metallica-huge? I'd say due to lack of support from Atlantic Records, the need for stronger management and changing musical trends. Wrathchild morphed into Souls At Zero, then called it a day.

I'd love to hear a live album from Wrathchild and the Souls At Zero material. But more than that, I'd love to see them reform, the fans would love it!

Meanwhile, we have a splendid reissue of two of the finest American metal albums ever!

— Steve Earles

HAWKWIND — *Hall of the Mountain Grill*

Cherry Red Records

A fabulous Hawkwind album just got even better with this masterful remaster of



Hall of the Mountain Grill. And this is Hawkwind with Lemmy! We are not worthy!

The original album is amazing, this is a Hawkwind firing on all cosmic cylinders. Just listen to Lemmy on "Lost Johnny" for proof, or the sublime "The Psychedelic Warlords". Any Hawkwind line-up that features Dave Brock, Lemmy, Simon House, Nik Turner, Del Dettmar and Simon King could not be anything less than amazing.

There is an astonishing level of chemistry and innovation in this line-up, even by Hawkwind's own high standards. This is a band that recognizes no limits to their own creativity, it's very pure, very positive, very sincere. If you listen to the album in its context, you truly realize what a unique entity Hawkwind are. Cosmic!

The highlights of this amazing reissue are a plethora of fine bonus tracks, including single b-side "It's So Easy", an alternative version of "Wind of Change" and a single version of "The Psychedelic Warlords"... and much more!

To conclude, not just one of the all-time great Hawkwind albums, but simply an all-time great album... period!

— Steve Earles

LOGSOTHEP — *Abominaciones Innombrables (2025)*

logsothep is one of the most recent projects to come out of Vancouver's Covenant Circle. Their debut album



has been in the works for the last five years, soon to be released in a number of independent Latin American underground distros. A final master was made available physically as a demo during Covenant Festival X.

Reminisces of the old school era of death metal with its raw and brutal sound. Guitar and Bass, both absolutely brutal and complimentary to each other. The drumming production was surprising as it carried that raw and unfiltered feel. While used sparsely and left me wanting more, the vocals felt evil and menacing. Booming over the mix, like something from above speaking down.

"Entity at Silver Gate" - Setting the tone as the opening for the album with an absolutely amazing groove.

A song filled with abstract chaos driving hard in a triplet groove. My favourite part is in the opening with the drums panning across with just sheer chaos from the guitar creating an amazing atmosphere.

"Howling Forever in Maelstrom" - A beautiful guitar harmony to begin, going into what I can only describe as a mosh worthy song. The abrupt ending got me by surprise, honestly it could have kept going and I would have loved it.

"Undulating Mass" - Right out of the gates ripping with an abrasive guitar solo. Through and through a relentlessly aggressive song.

"The summoning of Eyog-So'Thep" - A break from the heaviness, an interlude to bridge the final track in. I love the layering, it never felt like there was too much going on where I couldn't enjoy all the elements blending.

"Unnamable Abominations" - By far my favourite riff out of the album, solid groove creating an amazing foundation for the rest of the song. The sheer number of solos was very entertaining, I found myself stopping every so often to map it out and to attempt it myself.

Overall, the album left me hungry for more. Exploring heavy and dark elements through the music with the feel of an occult ritual is something that I feel is greatly missing from modern music.

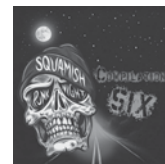
Jakob Favelle is a metal producer in the Metro Vancouver area, inspired by Mick Gordon and Odeholm. He is also a vocalist, guitarist and music technician.

logsothep's *Abominaciones Innombrables* is only physically available through the band, if you can find them. logsothep is summoned by Sebastian Montes and Abelardo Mayorla-Fierros.

— Jakob Favelle

VARIOUS ARTISTS — *Squamish Punk Night Vol. 6*

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album, fucking dynamite. This album may cause severe neck cramps and rehab stints, possibly bad faded green mohawks. Bands like Shoulder Pains from Whistler stand out, The Fomites, fucking legends Death Sentence, Dead End Drive-In. Should I name every band? Probably because they all stand out. If you like mixed style punk and want to represent killer music, buy this album. You won't regret it. It seriously rocks on all levels and keeps me far from sober. A cold beer and a bong rip while wearing your favorite old jean jacket with your patches across it. Long live punk rock and the great people making great mixtapes. Featuring Tides Will Turn and Prior Convictions plus so many other great bands. Raw and real. 19 songs well worth their weight in punk rock girth. Long live the rockers making this music and the efforts of the people releasing it to us.

— Matt Norris

TATARA — Through Gritted Teeth

From Edmonton, Alberta. These guys may be young but if this is what the next generation of metal looks like then, thank fuck for them. Classic killer riffs with just enough nu metal and thrash to make this an instant hit to the melon. Some metal bands try to prove they are heavy by playing superfast or growling like a dying dog. Other bands are just naturally heavy, making it sound officially awesome. Tataru are naturally heavy, thus officially awesome Perfect fukin headbangable riffs and a good mix of styles makes this a perfectly balanced intense metal album. Basically, a headbanger's goldmine. I hear all kinds of influence on this album. Every influence though an exact fit in the puzzle to intense potent perfection. A band to seriously watch out for live. Buy this disc or pay for download or you are a dick who probably hates good metal. Every member of this band is incredibly talented. A band that can and should easily step into the big leagues in my opinion. Go listen.

— Matt Norris



an awesome industrial metal hybrid insanity, Reject Control! It is a great hook. This is killer. You gotta love songs that continuously get better. Unflawed starts with the best head banging riff ever...tell me differently, you can't. What a great main riff, the band is on point. I want to make my neighbours deaf...this is a true wall of sound. Welcome to the new World order sounds like the end of the world. It's organized chaos and I mean that in a good way. I have to admit it's hard to compare this song to anything I've ever heard and I own like 5000 real albums. Fukin' brilliant riffs, exotic layering's and pure headbang-ability. I love it. This whole album has more intensity than most bands' whole repertoire could ever dream of. Great band, talented as hell. Original as can be, nasty and dirty and heavy as 1000 things I shouldn't mention. Great band, check them out: Three Sixes, Welcome To The New World. Order on YouTube. Intense from start to finish.

— Matt Norris

ETERNAL ENEMY — Fatal Disease Called Life

Awesome album cover. Born out of different eras and age gaps aside, these guys have morphed musical madness into genius. Dark and evil sounding songs with just enough melodic misery to mind melt the monotony. Singer Dean Martin gurgles razor blades and battery acid for breakfast before eating lead paint and drinking boiled diesel fuel. Multi-instrumentalist Dylan Tapp taps into the depths of derelict depravity inside his genius riffs and musical mastery. Borderline Black metal with some great classic riffs, I swear I heard some Randy Rhoads influence inside the song waiting to die. This aint no pussy rock. This is for metalheads who touch on the obscure and dwell in the darkness. Thrash, grind core, death mosh, black metal and fans of intense styles check these guys out. They mean business. Give Fatal Disease Called Life a spin and thank the metal genres of many a year to make albums like this happen.

— Matt Norris



THREE SIXES — Call Me the Devil

An energetic A grade freight train of metal straight to every thrash fan's mosh pit infested dreams. Incredible riffs and relentless musical brutality. "Reject Control" confronts the noise barrier and ignites the 40 db into



THE CHURCH — Sacred Echoes (Part Two) (single)

Few bands enter their fifth decade of making music with all the fierce creative energy of their early years. Even fewer bands are like The Church. 27 albums and the feeling is that the momentum is still building and the creativity is overwhelming and beyond apparent. Dismal and beautiful emotion with so much

colour and beauty. Some songs make the heartbeat in different ways. Good, and bad. This is musical heartbreak and fuck it is joyous darkness and poetic despair. I am a huge fan of Leonard Cohen and Nick Cave, but if both those guys had better voices and more melody well...anyways. This is big, this is real. This is a style you can't fake. God, I would hate to try to fake a style so bleak and transparent yet progressive and orchestral. Like I said, how can you fake genius when it comes from an unexpected place ridden with burdens, intrusion and blinded passion? This is music, music is everything. Musical heartbreak as the sun shines on a new vibe. Yeah, I'm a fan, but I wouldn't advise this song if you're feeling super bleak.

— Matt Norris



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Absolute Comic Reviews

JIMMY CORRIGAN: THE SMARTEST KID ON EARTH by Chris Ware

I had a chance to reread Jimmy Corrigan recently, so that's what I'm talking about today.

This is a graphic novel unlike anything you've ever seen. The art is quasi-minimalist, almost mathematical in how images are crafted from clean geometric structures, yet the illustrations maintain a deceptively deep quality that you can find yourself falling into and getting lost within.

It's a story about loneliness, isolation, generational trauma, and the social relationships of award people; families who don't actually know each other that well.

It's clever and sad, much like I purport to be. I would argue that it's one of the greatest works of art to be committed in the form of a narrative told through sequential images, though "sequential" is certainly up for debate when Ware is so experimental in how information is arranged to flow across the page along multiple paths, like electricity coursing through a microchip.

A beautifully haunting rendition of how modern life acts as a reflection of the past, and vice versa. One of the best books you'll ever read.

CATBOY by Benji Nate

Catboy is a series of short stories by Benji Nate, the comedian/artist behind one of my other favourite modern comics, GIRL JUICE. These stories center around a young woman named Olive, and her cat Henry, who becomes anthropomorphized by a wish. But that's all just the setup, the actual meat of the book is slice-of-life shorts about paying rent, being shy at parties, and finding something decent to wear on laundry day.

This book is cozy, like sitting by a rainy window while drinking a warm cup of tea and eating a leftover slice of pizza. The art is adorable, the adventures are odd yet relateable, and there's a nice sense of queer

inclusivity, featuring a male cat who wears feminine clothing and looks quite nice.

There's a simplicity to the art; big-eyed characters in a recognizably real world all done in relaxing pastel colours. Reminds me of Scott Pilgrim, in a good way.

It's not too dark, it's not too heavy. It's lovely and sweet and cute. And I will tell you, my friend, we could all use a book like that every once in a while.

This book sits very close to my heart. You'll love it.

POWERS 25 #1 by Brian Michael Bendis and Michael Avon Oeming

Powers 25 is the latest continuation of the *Powers* comic series, a crime-drama comic book series that takes place in a world full of superhumans, aliens, and all that shit you see in the Marvel and DC superhero universes. However, *Powers* is more like a cop-show you'd see on HBO, complete with cursing, intense violence, and graphic sexuality, including more than a few shots of naked people with their bits out.

It's also one of the best-written character pieces ever established in the world of superhero comics, as well as being a refreshingly challenging bit of literature that calls into question many of the tropes and clichés of both police and superhero fiction.

Aside from one ludicrously bad live-action adaptation, *Powers* has managed to fly under the pop culture radar, despite being one of the best-made adult superhuman comics ever produced.

Powers 25 is a celebration of the series, a rebooting, a refreshing, and a continuation of the past. It's a fine place to jump on as a new reader, but will be most rewarding to those who have done the legwork to take on the previous two and a half decades of storytelling.

PREDATOR KILLS MARVEL UNIVERSE #1 by Benjamin Percy, Marcelo Ferreira, Daniel Picciotto



Disney owns the Predator now, so they can do whatever they want with it, and if they want it to fistfight Wolverine and Spider-Man, that's what's gonna happen, whether it makes for good stories or not.

The Predator has existed in comic book form for decades, perhaps most notably in the first *Batman VS Predator* miniseries which concluded with the Batman beating the Predator with a baseball bat, maybe the most memorably clever thing the story had going for it.

But this new stuff offers nothing much of interest, aside from the childish glee of seeing a movie-monster killing Marvel superheroes. The special effects that make the Predator such an interesting antagonist in live-action don't transfer well to the printed page, where his cool cloaking ability becomes a partially transparent illustration.

The characterization is pedestrian. There's nothing that feels actually alien about the Predator's perspective; they're just bros who care about human concepts like honour and trophies. There's no sense of encountering something truly different and incomprehensible. It's just a big

dude.

Unlike the original movie that spawned all these sequels and spin-offs, this comic is not mysterious, it's not clever, and it's not fun.

ABSOLUTE BATMAN 2025 ANNUAL #1 by Daniel Warren Johnson

This annual became a sensation with a story where Batman beats up a bunch of refugee-hating white supremacists. Given that we're living through a time when a US president openly flirts with those same views, I get why this resonated. There's a certain escapist thrill in watching

a costumed hero pound on villains who feel like stand-ins for the real ones voters have empowered over the past decade.

But honestly, I find it a bit cloying. It's easy to show a masked vigilante smashing a guy yelling "white power," but that doesn't address the fact that plenty of ordinary citizens quietly support those beliefs. It's like handing out a fire-safety pamphlet after a third of the house voted to burn the place down.

I get the desire for fictionalized justice, but in this case the book mostly reminds me how powerless corporate "semi-progressive" art is against actual social problems.

Expecting a Batman story to meaningfully fight bigotry feels like expecting Walmart to arm the revolution.

In the end, it feels to me like art designed to reassure us that the world can be fair and that bigots always get what's coming. Given the state of society, that's a tough fantasy to swallow — though if it inspires someone to stand up to hate, maybe it still has value.

—Hank At Golden Age Collectables



Absolute Snacks

DORITOS Collisions: Pizza and Cool Ranch

In celebration of the final season of Netflix's *Stranger Things*, Doritos released a collision-combo bag, attempting an homage to the vibe of the show's inverted otherworldly horror by mixing two different flavours in a single bag: cool ranch, and pizza.

They might as well have just called these Pizza; I've eaten like ten bags of these, meticulously going through them like I was looking for clues in a murder mystery and have yet to encounter a single actual Cool Ranch chip. Pizza flavouring dominates the bag like a big loud party-monster coating the place in marinara sauce as they scream the lyrics to their favourite jock-rock ballad, as the Cool Ranch chips sit quietly in the corner looking at cat-memes on their phones.

But I'm not complaining. Strange or not, these things are delicious. I've gone online and heard that some people find the pizza taste a little weird, but for me it ranks as one of the best Doritos I've ever had. It just kills me that they're just a promotion for a show, since it means once these guys are gone, they're gone for good.

And they're too good to be gone that long.

CHIPS AHOY! Stranger Things Chewy Chocolatey Strawberry-Flavoured Filled Soft Cookies

After trying the *Stranger Things* Doritos, I had to give these cookies a shot. *Stranger Things* is a weird show. It's inspired by an actual conspiracy that involves the US government experimenting on children in an attempt to create soldiers with paranormal abilities and it also contains some big references to *The Invisibles*, the 1990's occultist action comic which suggests that all experienced reality is just a piece of art being constructed and viewed by extra-dimensional beings who hate being bored.

In this way, it could be suggested that we manifest our own versions of reality, the shared fractal ontology allowing a bleedthrough of psychokinetic conceptualization. Everything shifts, and we shift with it but do we command the waves, or do the waves command us?

Anyway, these cookies were pretty nasty, like gross. They tasted more like the chemicals

found in a janitor's closet than any strawberry found growing in a field.

I guess they were a bit like the show, in that they reminded me of a sterile secret lab, where abnormal research is carried out despite the obvious harm being done to the innocent test subjects.

RUFFLES' Honey Habanero

I bought these chips from a downtown Dollarama located next door to a Christian church, their neon-white cross on black iconography acting as a visual counter-point to the Dollarama's illuminated logo of a large glowing golden coin.

Inside the shop was a cacophony of incongruent ailing and non-Euclidean shelving. Whole human souls could be seen trapped in the cracks of the linoleum, the calmingly repugnant stench of purgatory filling the place like a thick mist.

A one-eyed man with a dead raven on his shoulder warned me about these chips. Said they were cursed, the whole place was cursed and I was probably cursed too. Then he scampered away, folding his limbs up

into an impossible space between the aisles like some sort of transdimensional spider squeezing back into a dark corner to await its prey.

Dunno if the old madman was right, but I'll admit the chips were not great. The spices lacked balance, so while I was curious about the honey, all I got was habanero, resulting in chips that tasted like the back-mouth burp of the flavour I actually wanted.

PRESIDENT'S CHOICE Rippled Kettle Cooked Hot Honey & Lime

Y'all remember Thunder Crunch Chips? Any time I'm eating Kettle Cooked chips, that's what I'm reminded of. Back in the nineties, when I was still in grade school, living at home, spending my weekends with my best friends, fighting demon puppets on the edge of town. Some of us survived, receiving psychic scars we carry to this day. Others were torn into thin, screaming strips of pain, all that youthful vigor and optimism reduced to a series of bodies found at the treeline of the old woods, which were eventually pinned on an old hobo who'd committed no sin greater than

being caught by the police without a good alibi.

Of course, we did manage to defeat the demon puppets, using the power of friendship to put down their twisted little army, but sometimes I worry that they're still out there, their broken bodies gradually reforming as they plot their revenge.

These chips got some kick. Not as sharp as the kick of the sickly red shoes worn by the demon puppet king, shoes capable of shattering the very molecular composition of a child's body, but they're not kidding around about the hot honey. The lime, not so much.

LAY's Cloudscape Of Dreamlike Imagery

Some nights you might see a shop growing up out of a vacant lot, its roofing and walls unfurling like the petals of a budding flower. Within it, labour faceless employees in uniforms that appear scratchy and poorly made.

The shop is full of items unimaginable to most human minds. Curious and souvenirs of lost and abandoned plains of existence. Spheres of cheese encased in small eggs of

compacted jellies. Miniature clockwork mechanisms full of caustic black sand.

Periodicals like "Car Kissers", "Gloveless Fingerlings" and "The Inescapable Spiral" clog the magazine rack, unread since the dawn of time.

The place's very existence makes a mockery of every faith from the Tibetans in the Himalayas, to the scientists punching holes in the earth's molecular stability down in the tunnels of East Vancouver's secret underground particle accelerator.

The chips they sell are colder and wetter than bagged chips should be. Something was moving at the bottom of the bag, alive and aware, scurrying about to avoid my fingertips.

The taste of these chips make me doubt that I will ever escape this tormented cycle of psychic degradation that forms up the memories maintaining the illusion of my freewilled life.

—Hank Pattison

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Absolute Film Reviews

Frankenstein



Guillermo del Toro's *Frankenstein* lives or dies by how much of Mary Shelley's novel he chooses to resurrect. He's clearly rearranged its bones and not all of them make sense. While these changes deepen the story's emotional and thematic charge, they do not necessarily honour what the original author wanted to explore.

Here, Heinrich Harlander (Christoph Waltz) helps pay the bills. He is Victor's (Oscar Isaac) secret benefactor; when we learn that he is an arms dealer seeking immortality, the motives are understood but sadly gets cut short, tossed aside like what the Monster would do so the story does not deviate from the established lore.

In this film, instead of Victor, it's his younger brother William (Felix Kammerer) who's engaged

to Elizabeth (Mia Goth). The omission of Shelley's third Frankenstein sibling underscores the film's theme of fading lineage and fragile hope. William alone holds a chance at redemption or continuation.

The framing narrative shifts too. Gone is Robert Walton; in his place stands Anderson (Lars Mikkelsen), a Danish sailor who rescues Victor from Arctic ice. Calm and rational, this boat captain is the film's moral ballast, though his exchanges lack Shelley's philosophical heft.

Del Toro's spirituality remains lush but elusive. A burning angel visiting Victor in dreams recalls *Paradise Lost*, Shelley's great influence. The vision is breathtaking—pure del Toro—but fleeting. The Christian allegory never

quite ignites, leaving only a glimmer of divine sorrow amid the snow.

In the end, *Frankenstein* isn't perfection—it's resurrection. A story of compassion surviving corruption of hope clawing through despair. The finale offers redemption, not punishment; forgiveness,

not vengeance. What we feel at the close depends entirely on how we define humanity.

3½ stars out of 5

- Ed Sum

Scared Shitless

On Netflix, *Scared Shitless* proves to be a hilarious, slime-soaked tribute to the *Alien* franchise and other beloved creature features. When a tenant in a rundown apartment complex accidentally unleashes a strange leech into the sewers, chaos bubbles up in ways that go well beyond the typical single-location horror formula. While its frantic energy recalls *Evil Dead: Rise*, the film also channels the streetwise energy of *Attack the Block*—but with a distinctly Canadian twist.

In tone and aesthetic, the *Ghoulies* influence feels stronger than *The Blob*. Written by Brandon Cohen and directed by Vivieno Caldinelli, the film reminds us that some of the scariest threats lurk just

beneath our feet. But unlike most monster movies, where creatures simply pounce on whatever's nearby, this story centers on a father and son struggling to save their neighbors from the sewer-dwelling menace while working through their own personal disconnect.

Don (Steven Ogg) takes enormous pride in his plumbing work. When he reluctantly brings



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along his aimless son Sonny (Daniel Doheny), the duo's mismatched dynamic gives the film its heart. Their relationship begins as a sniping Abbott and Costello act but evolves into something surprisingly genuine. Sonny, a withdrawn nerd still mourning his mother's death, slowly reengages with life amid the chaos. The family tension keeps the stakes emotional even as the pipes start spewing gore.

Ultimately, *Scared Shitless* delivers exactly what its title promises—gooey, grotesque fun that leaves a trail of victims and laughter behind. The practical effects are pure B-movie joy, proudly campy and

unapologetically gross. They recall the 1980s heyday of VHS horror, with shades of *Astron-6*'s DIY aesthetic.

Adding to the madness is Mark McKinney as the eccentric Dr. Robert, the delightfully deranged mind behind the plumbing catastrophe. He's equal parts mad scientist and sitcom oddball—imagine a deranged Bunsen Honeydew who accidentally floods his lab with radioactive sludge. His gleeful energy balances the horror and gives the film a surreal, *Kids in the Hall*-style edge.

Though Dr. Robert quickly loses control of his creation, the resulting mayhem is gleefully messy. The

creature effects, though low-budget, are inventively shot and teeming with personality. The film's rhythm of scares and laughs is so well-tuned that the audience never feels whiplashed.

As a horror-comedy, *Scared Shitless* hits the sweet spot between parody and sincerity. It delivers just enough terror to keep pulses racing. For fans of gross-out monster movies with heart, it's a charming, chaotic surprise. Who needs a killer tomato when you've got a sewer slug?

4 stars out of 5

- Ed Sum

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REMEMBERING PAUL DANIEL "ACE" FREHLEY
27 April 1951 – 16 October 2025
 By **Ferdy Belland**

When I was a little kid back in the 1970s, it was impossible to escape KISS. They were everywhere: the older brothers' record collections, on TV, posters, lunchboxes, comic books, T-shirts, collector plates from the Franklin Mint and even on the *Donny & Marie Show* one Halloween. These guys were real-life extraterrestrial superheroes conquering the boring-ass world

of the 1970s through overdriven power chords, pyrotechnics, levitating drum kits, fire-breathing, blood-spitting and synchronized stage choreography. KISS was All. All was KISS.

Say whatever the hell you want about KISS but if you're going to casually shit on them, you need to remember that they emerged from the same early-'70s pre-CBGBs New York City "Trash Rock" scene that spawned the New York Dolls and Twisted Sister, so you might as well shit on them too. Their costume shtick wasn't uncommon in those peak-glam days and neither was their music: if you're gonna sing the praises of Slade and Humble Pie, Free or Mott the Hoople, then take serious comparison to KISS (especially the first album, where all British rock influences were raw and unchiselled). Those

starving shnooks in KISS were doomed from the start, right? Talk about determination. Talk about perseverance. Talk about obstinacy. Talk about stubbornness. Talk about sheer gutter show-biz genius. Despite whatever self-congratulatory bullshit Gene Simmons or Paul Stanley still quack out, I'm here to testify that KISS never would have gotten off the ground if it hadn't been for the true musical talent and personal charisma of Ace Frehley.

Simmons and Stanley had already been playing with Peter Criss for a year as a trio and they were focusing on concentrated and gruelling writing-rehearsing schedules but they knew their

evolving band concept wasn't going to take wing until they found that special someone. Then one day, while hosting yet another audition in their Bowery loft space, in struts this skinny, long-haired space cadet who didn't know (or didn't care) that his sneakers were different colours. He plugged in, a bemused Gene counted in the band and instant rock 'n' roll chemistry ignited. The links in the chain were finally forged.

As a guitarist, Ace Frehley is up there with Paul Kossoff, Tommy Bolin and Mick Ronson, whatever that may mean to any self-described axe-choppers out there; it wouldn't matter if Ace's Les Paul burst into flames during an extended solo (then flew off into the lighting rigs above the arena stage) if he couldn't riff and if he couldn't compose a memorable melodic solo. As a songwriter, Ace came up with some of the best songs in the KISS repertoire: "Cold Gin", "Parasite", "Shock Me", "Rocket Ride" and "Talk to Me" among others. Of all the 1978 solo albums, Ace's was the best by a long shot. If the band was mostly the songwriting vehicle for Simmons and Stanley, then Ace was the George Harrison of KISS.

Much of the criticism KISS gets heaped with comes from the fact that Gene Simmons is the biggest loud-mouthed asshole in all rock and roll, a concrete fact that he sadly revels in. But Ace's happy-go-lucky oddball humour was always on hand to bring the overbearing KISS guys back down to earth whether they wanted to or not. Then there's the inspiration he gave out to the

world in spades. How many of you rock/punk/metal guitarists out there reading this now — how many of you were inspired to beg your parents for a Sears catalogue Taiwanese electric guitar? How many heated arguments did you get into with your friends over who was going to paint their face as Ace Frehley when Halloween came around? Did you trade the bubble-gum

cards? Did you display the KISS albums on the window ledge in your bedroom? For me, it was Gene who was my first bass hero but KISS was a band cleverly developed as a four-character unit and Ace was the fascinating one. Especially when he bent at the skinny knees atop his moon boots, wailing away another overdriven bend. Ace used Gibson Les Paul because KISS only played the best. We've now entered that time that all of us classic-rock fans knew was coming but were too glum to talk about: our heroes are finally dying off on us, day by day. How could Ace Frehley die? He was an extraterrestrial superhero — and

extraterrestrial superheroes can't die, can they? Where does that leave the rest of us?

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There Can Only Be One Spaceman

A Tribute To Ace Frehley

By Ed Sum

A star has faded from the skies—or as Ace Frehley might have said, “I’m one with them now.” The legendary guitarist has passed away, his soul joining the great cosmic harmony he always seemed to channel. After suffering a serious fall and being hospitalized, reports remain vague about the timeline, but the damage was deeper than anyone realized. The fact that he was still playing right to the end says everything about who he was.

Surrounded by family, he took his final bow the same way he lived—on his own terms. Although they made the call to pull the plug, he probably was conscious enough to approve. Back when KISS were in their prime, Frehley was the band’s lead guitarist—the cosmic spark that gave their spectacle its soul. That customized Les Paul didn’t just smoke; it howled. Others could wear the makeup, mimic the riffs, even reproduce his solos, but none could replicate the electricity that made him the Spaceman and his influence still resonates with today’s guitarists on stage. He earned the moniker



both on and off the stage—a mix of cosmic dreamer and Bronx charm that no one else could quite pull off.

Those who saw him live knew he could ignite a crowd like few others. His attitude wasn’t polished—it was pure, reckless honesty that resonated with the masses. That’s what made him magnetic. From

the bounce of that New York Groove to a look that could disarm an army, Ace embodied what rock ‘n’ roll was meant to be: messy, thrilling, human and just a bit dangerous.

From the start, he carried that rare blend of grit, humour and unfiltered authenticity. A Bronx kid with dreams of space, distortion, and stardust, he never pretended to be anything else. Every string bend, every echoing riff, every sly smirk was

unmistakably his. You didn’t just hear his music—you felt it. Even players who mastered his solos note for note couldn’t summon the same energy. Ace wasn’t about perfection; he was about presence. The grin, the swagger, the chaos—that was the art. Every performance was a cosmic joyride, a rocket launch with no seatbelts. Gene Simmons and Paul Stanley summed it up best in their statement: “He was an essential and irreplaceable rock soldier during some of the most formative foundational chapters of the band and its history.” Whatever disagreements existed between them—whether spun by the press or amplified by time (including this latest)—none of it dulls that truth. The history of KISS will always orbit the gravity of Ace Frehley’s guitar-work and presence. I was too young to see them live, but I cheered through grainy bootleg tapes and glossy magazine pages. I joined the original KISS Army, my devotion shaken only when news hit that he

and Peter Criss were leaving. He would later form his own band, Frehley’s Comet.

As a kid, I didn’t care about egos or riffs; I just wanted the music. Despite the media frenzy around their feuds, Ace’s passion for rock shone

through. His presence remains undimmed. From “Rockin’ With the Boys” to albums like *Space*

Invader and *Spaceman*, his solo work proved he could craft hits—and improve upon them—on his own terms. Every track bore his unmistakable fingerprint: joyful, defiant, and a little unhinged.

This talent didn’t play a character. He was the Spaceman. He lived the myth and laughed through it, inviting fans into the joke like fellow travellers on his interstellar ride. Even in the interviews I revisited while crafting this tribute,

his charm was unfiltered—blunt, funny, and thoughtful in the same breath.



He admitted his struggles, owned his triumphs and never let fame sand down his edges. Whatever the tabloids claimed, what endured was his truth: he lived rock and roll as himself. Decades later, the world remembers him not just as a guitar hero, but as something rarer—a genuine soul in an industry full of masks. His spirit hums on in

the riffs, the laughter and the cosmic standard he set. Because there was—and will only ever be—one Space Ace.

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Pacific Northwest Conventions Guide (Jan–Apr 2026)

By Ed Sum

After the holidays, many geeks and weebies waste no time gearing up for the winter convention season, and 2026 brings more mid-sized and major events than ever. Some haven't appeared in past guides simply because space is limited and timing is everything, but this year's lineup is bursting with energy. The season may not have officially kicked off yet, but there's nothing like the warmth of community, cosplay creativity, and spirited celebrations to chase away the winter chill. Across the Pacific Northwest, you'll find furrries, sci-fi diehards, tabletop adventurers, cryptid hunters, fantasy readers, and even the occasional xenomorph wandering the halls. While no alien invasion is expected, one cleverly named event leans right into folklore. Presented here is a guide to everything nerdy from January through April — organized by date to help you plan, budget, and maybe even squeeze in the time to finish that costume once Santa's safely packed away.



is dedicated, so whether you're there to meet creators, snap photos, or shop for rare finds, you'll never run out of things to do. It's a flagship event where fandoms collide, and where big-name stars rub elbows with local talent and superfans.

Guests Announced So Far: Elijah Wood, Sean Astin, Billy Boyd, Dominic Monaghan, Ron Perlman, Tom Welling, James Marsters, Kristin Kreuk, and the cast of the original Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles films (Kenn Scott, Brian Tochi, Ernie Reyes Jr., Robbie Rist, Judith Hoag, and François Chau) and from Deadpool, Peggy the Dog!

TSUKINO-CON
Feb 20–22, 2026, MacLaurin Building, University of Victoria, 3800 Finnerty Road, Victoria, BC

Tsukino-Con celebrates all things anime and manga in a cozy, laid-back campus setting on Vancouver Island. It leans into nostalgia, kawaii culture, and the joy of shared fandom, with panels, screenings, and community events. Whether you're an anime diehard or a more casual fan, Tsukino-Con gives you a fun, relaxing weekend to geek out with fellow otaku. It's small enough to feel intimate but big enough to host great programming — perfect for connecting or discovering something new.

Guests Announced So Far: None formally announced for 2026, but the convention confirms panelist and performer submissions are now open.

VANCOUFUR
Mar 5–8, 2026, Richmond Conference Centre, 7191, Westminster Hwy, Richmond, BC

VancouFur is a welcoming, fur-forward con that brings together fans of anthropomorphic art, storytelling, and costuming. With fursuit parades, meetups, and artist alley, it's a haven for both experienced furrries and curious newcomers. The programming often includes panels on character design, voice acting, and inclusivity, making

it as thoughtful as it is fun. If you're looking to celebrate all things furry — from tail-wagging cuteness to deep community bonds — VancouFur is the kind of joyful, creative space you'll want to return to year after year.

Guests Announced So Far: Anny the Rain dragon (Guest of Honour).

Community Spotlight: MageMech.

TERMINAL CITY TABLETOP CONVENTION (TCTC)

Mar 13–15, 2026, Vancouver Convention Centre–East, 1055, Canada Place, Vancouver, BC

TCTC is a tabletop gaming lover's dream in downtown Vancouver, combining board games, RPGs, vendor tables, and designer showcases. This con is heavily community-driven, focused on providing a space for both casual players and serious hobbyists to connect and play. With open game spaces, scheduled tournaments, and playtesting, it feels like a weekend-long hangout with your gamer tribe. Whether you're into strategy games, role-playing campaigns or just want to try something new, TCTC offers a thoughtful, fun, and welcoming tabletop experience.

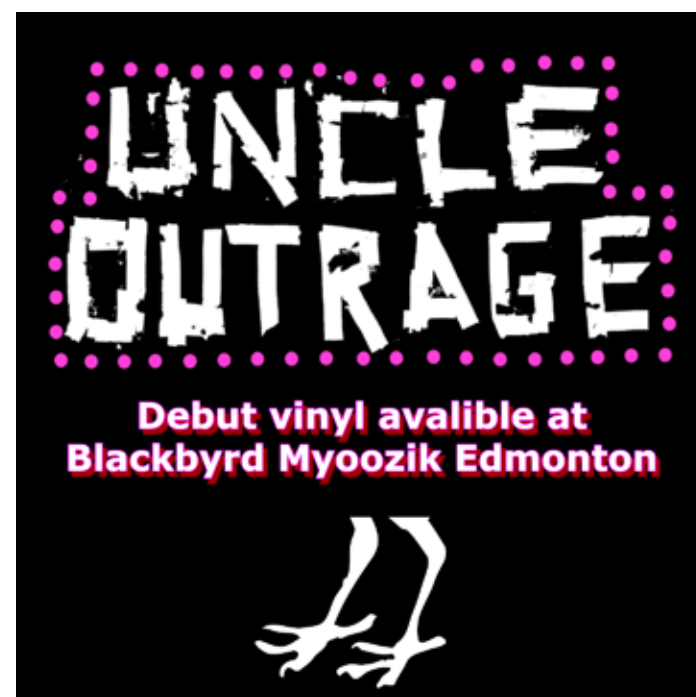
Guests Announced So Far: The focus is on game designers and local creators via the "Proto-Alley," rather than celebrity guests.

ISLAND FANCON
Mar 28–30, 2026, City Centre Park, 1089

Langford Parkway, Langford, BC

Island FanCon is a pocket-sized pop-culture convention on southern Vancouver Island, bringing together fans of comics, anime, gaming, and more in a friendly, accessible setting. It's community-oriented and very much fan-run, with panels, cosplay, and local creators showcasing their work. Because it's smaller, there's a real sense of connection — you'll probably run into the same enthusiastic people all weekend and have meaningful conversations. If you're looking for a more intimate con experience without the usual overwhelm, Island FanCon is a hidden gem in the PNW.

Guests Announced So Far: Please check islandfancon.ca. Their line-up won't be announced until late December/Mid-January.



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