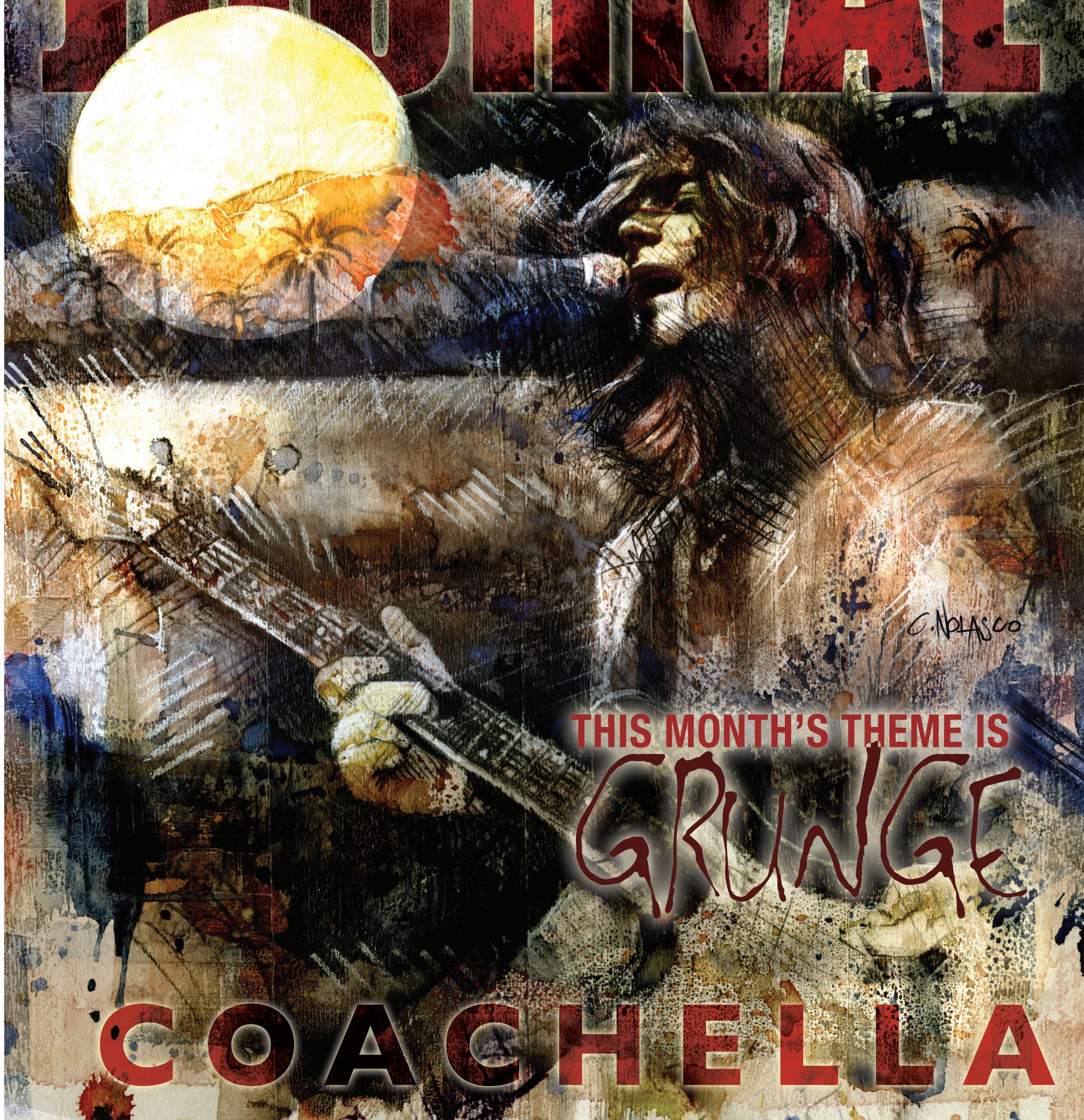


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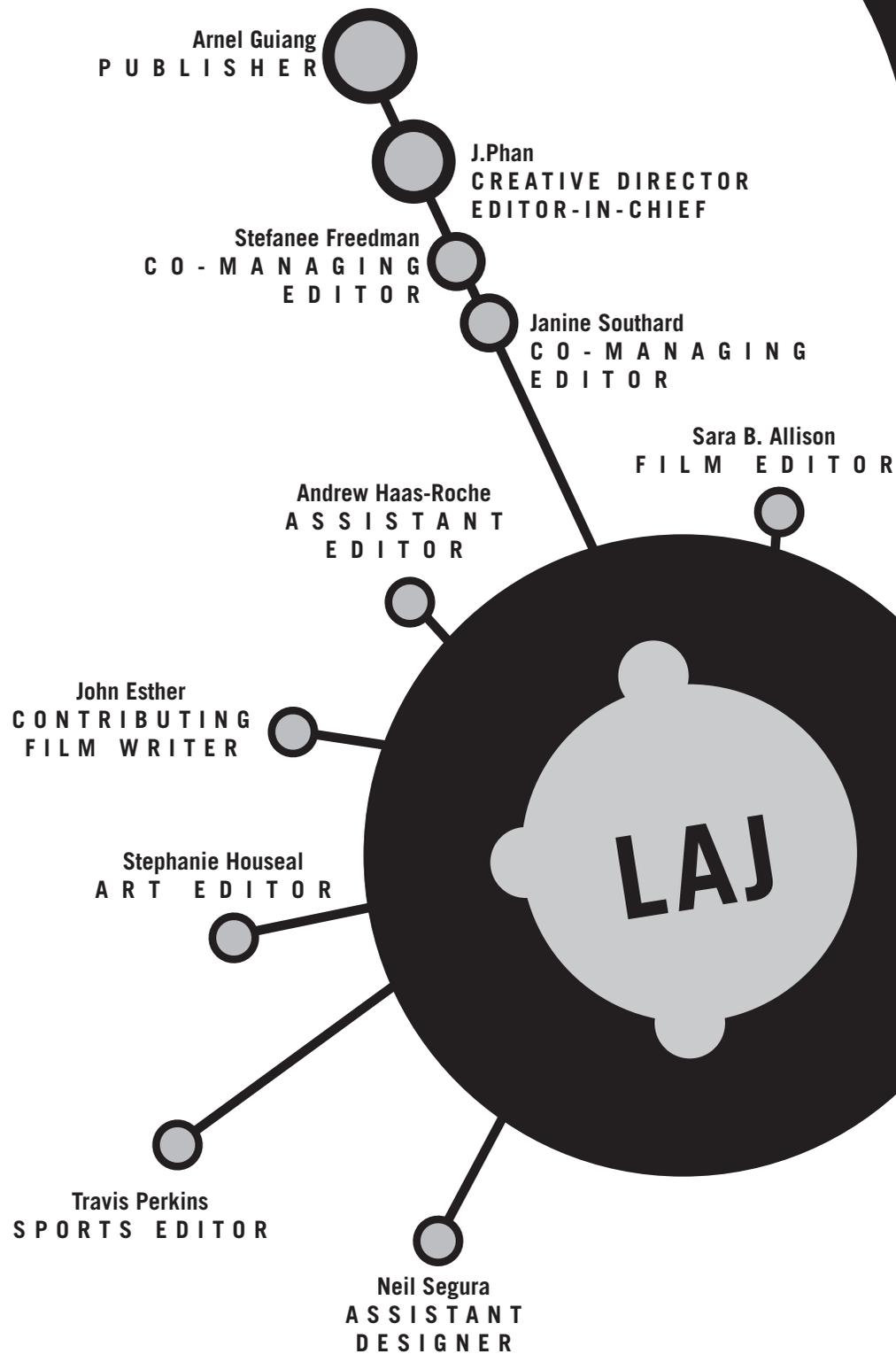
C. NOLASCO

THIS MONTH'S THEME IS

GRUNGE

COACHELLA

MEET THE MAKERS



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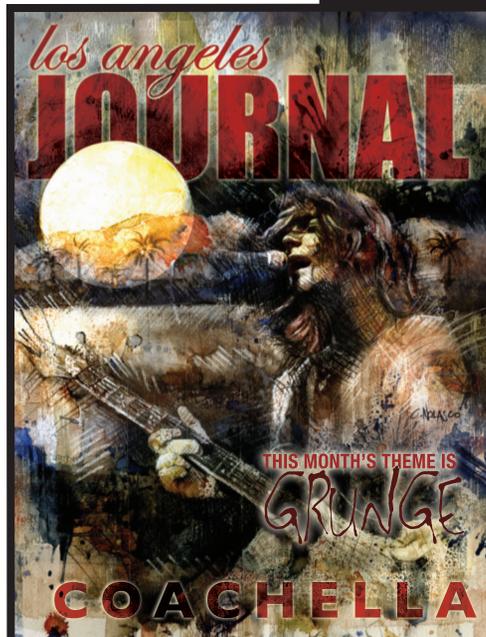
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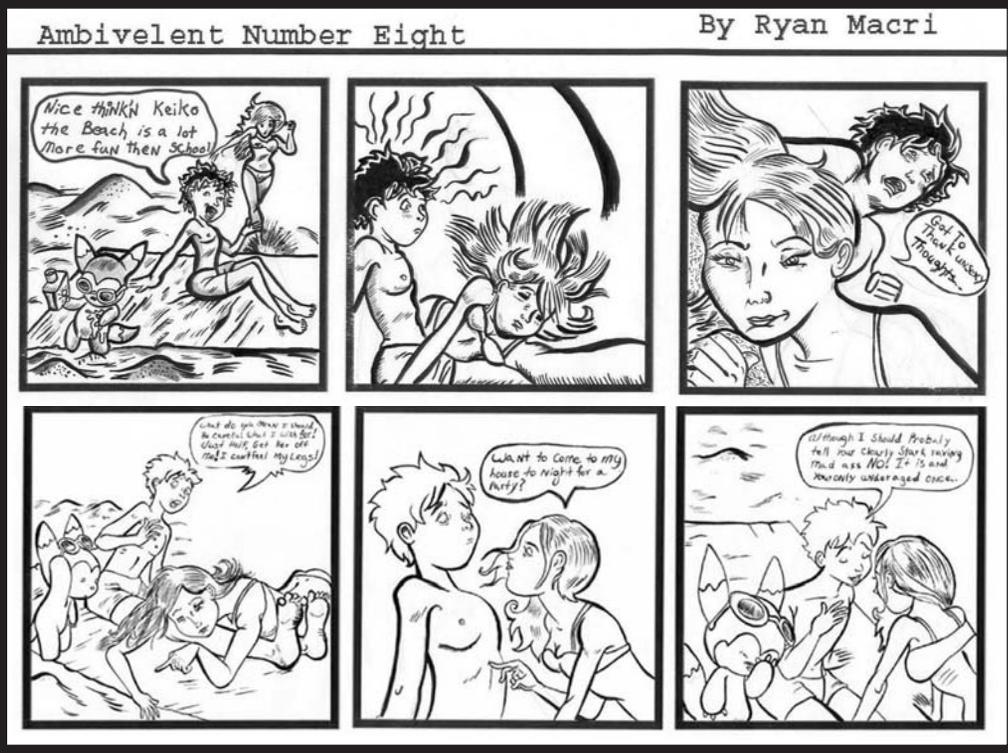
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..... COMICS



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PBS interview
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Inside My Mind

by Aldo Otero

I know of a place that only I can get to.
The sky is cloudless and a beautiful darkness covers
the red sky.
The wind rushes through
this horrid but beautiful place.

A colossal waterfall
roars and churns titanic amounts of
vile green water but no lake lies
underneath this colossus neither is there a river
as its source for it to exist.

The immense black oaks have
never grown life on their large branches.
Scorching volcanoes soar into
the darkened sky
My senses numb thinking about this
scene.

How can this stunning but
yet dreadful territory be
called Hell.
Its beauty is too mesmer-
izing to break free
from.
I can't stop from
going there...
Looks like hell
feels like heaven.
Beautiful
wretched mind

Accident
on Hayden
and National

By Zach Brott

An instant, a bouquet of children with broken
bones
Chaos moves inward, as we focus
gravitate toward the accident. My car slowly rolls by
The "New Car" smell from the air freshener becomes of-
fensive
The sounds of the radio assault my ears.
Window comes down, sober air rushes in.
There's an ambulance--some one has survived.

Policemen line the streets, changing the ebb and flow
of traffic.

I turn right, I'm in my office, the
indigo seeping into daylight has
a sound

A humdrum sound of slow
controlled processes being
carried out by keystroke.

Above, a muffled helicopter looms

As the day slips behind us a co-worker tells and re-tells a story.
A woman fleeing the scene, scattered,
but with him running behind her she cannot get away.
Inside her anarchy explodes, tears bursting outward, burning like shrapnel—
at home she has a two year old.
How does a child survive?

Untitled

By Mark Henry

Well, grunge is like dirty but not
like in flirty,
it's dirty like ass or dog
shit on the grass.
But there's grunge
that went down in
that way 80's sound
when the metal was
deep and the beers
passed around
made you feel wild and crazy
like demons were there
saying "Go kick his ass," with your long
80's hair.

On the kind of a night when you'd drink then
you'd fight
cause your life was the one thing you couldn't get it right.

Plain drunk not a stupor yet just in a haze
in the same stinking jeans for way too many days.

Facing off with a guy just as drunk as you are
cause he saw you lock eyes, this is rude, with his whore.

But then grunge can be cool when there are like three of you
and you practice your licks and learn theory in school
so when someone sits down and says let's hear your sound
then that wicked progression straight knocks their ass down.
Webster's says harsh chords, harsh riffs and sloppy clothes??
Maybe I should have some of what's up in his nose.
Nihilism, dissatisfaction and apathy soooo
if they can't burn it down they just cry loud and go???
Who said Webster knows every damn thing?

Ripe

by Suzi Smith

we're at that age now
where disappointments seem so
final

his hair line receding,
bellies to the bar every night
with something to prove

she, pregnant with her second,
still married
longer than we ever bet she would be

we're at that age now
where this is how we've 'turned out'
we have a good idea of which vices will
eventually kill us

most of your friends can't remember most
of their lovers
and you've begun to lose count of how
many times you've settled
cuz you can't remember what you wanted
in the first place

she's still waitressing
she dropped out of school
she drinks more than she used to

knuckles white,
holding tight to ideals and who we ought
to be
by now

the sky opens up and we all wonder how
we got this far gone.

The Waiting Room

by Melissa Wolfe

Sickly blood and
Sagging eyes can't
Hide from the boldness
Of fluorescent moons.
Harsh lights of the waiting room.

A fish tank
Placed in the corner there, gurgles
While bright yellows swim
Under empty grins of clowns
And wrinkled "People".

Sweaty palms,
Knobby legs, and
Old, tumored backbones
Have all stained
The cushioned seats.

I try not to think about
Those time-made grooves,
Or the balding girl
Who romps around
The occupied chairs.

In circles she goes,
Passing beady fish eyes,
And averted eyes,
Tripping on her blanket.
Sitting up startled.

Her head, like a peach
With violet veins
Bobs clumsily from her neck.
She's not ripe enough
To be picked so soon.

Her mother gazes at her,
And forces a smile.
The girl looks up with a face
Pale and gray as the moon.
Her name is called next in the waiting room.

Larips

by Bo Hobbs

Brief about this writing. The title 'Larips' is Spiral backwards. In reference to Nine Inch Nails (sort of). You said think music... I wrote this last December in 'tribute' to Trent Reznor. I like various music but, I've mostly listened to NIN for 14 yrs non-stop. He inspires me... especially these days with his "recovery" and all. Back to the poem... the line 'my life transmits a wretched song.' stems from my favorite NIN song The Wretched. The line 'the beauty in his noise is all I can see'... of course refers to all his music in general.

With every emotion I feel through my day... there's always a NIN album I can put in to suit my mood. I do hope you enjoy this one.

Larips

Need to dissolve my secret ways.

Only choking myself these days.

All my patience seems to fray.

Please make it all go away.

I don't recall where it all went wrong.

I always feel like I don't belong.

They all think inside I'm so strong.

My life transmits a wretched song.

Stuck in the echos of who I should be.

The beauty in his noise is all I can see.

I'm just like him - wanting to be free.

Disconnect myself from everybody.

Now I'm alone in my own little world.

Trying to get out of this dense swirl.

Painting my life in the misery mural.

All the pieces in a rushing whirl.

I Write For The.....

by Duane Cawthon

I write for the...
Clinically insane, the deranged
Obscene and strange

I write for the...
Disenfranchised, the debased most
Hated, hunted and ostracized

I write for the...
Owners of the five and dimes
Stuck up kids who commit crimes
then get slapped with five to nine

I write for the...
Lost tribe, my fellow scribes
The tortured souls of those who
commit suicide

I write for the...
Limitless, saintly parishioners who
worship the infinite

I write for the...
Slain victims, twice bitten
Newly free from prison
Perishing lackers of vision

I write for the...
Perfect line, purveyors of truth
Youth who dream of the perfect
crime

I write for the...
Multitudes, masses confused
Downtrodden often abused I write
for you

I write for the...
Hope that's left, cleansing of self
Assault rifle that's on the shelf
I write for myself

I write for the...
Dead end career, end of fear
Lover you hold so near

I write for the...
Luke warm trying to get them hot
Lover wondering do they love me or
love me not

I write for the...
Hopeless games, plotting of worth-
less gain
Death grip on fleeting fame

I write for the...
Coffee shop girl, HIV victim, the 3
time felon, for the third world

I write for the...
Pipe dream
Reason you punch the clock

I write for the...
Same thing

I write for the...
Bills paid, child's survival, lemonade,
spot in the shade, got it made

I write for the...
Piece of mind, bodies that grow old
Friends and foes that we've left
behind

I write for the...
Deaf, dumb

I write for the...
Blind

I write for the...
Nightlife

I write for the...
Sunshine

I write for the...
Chance of a lifetime

I write for the...
God Cipher Divine

I write for the...
Fall of Babylon, destruction of the
evil empire
For those that are sick and tired
Of being sick and tired

I write for the...
Dope fiend on the back alley
Pimp in the black caddy
Hooker that call him Daddy
These cats is not ready

I write for the...
Break beat, troubled adolescent
Living all alone on the street

I write for the...
Growth of hip hop, hope that
It will mature and won't stop, fact that
It all sounds like manure when it
drops

I write for the...
Have nots and plenty gots

I write for the...
Obscene jester, overweight king
Dream that festers
Question what does it mean?

I write for the...
In between time, meantime
Wish that it'll all be fine

I write for the...
I in me, the me in we, us in them
Hopefully one day we'll see

I write for the...
Reality bites, man restless days
Sleepless nights and

I write for the...
Chance to forget the pain
Freedom of life I gain
Shattering of spiritual chains

I write for the...
Starving children who live in squalor
Well-to-do who network in the
parlor

I write for the...
Vexed, cursed and hexed, blue collar
Worker living from check to check

I write for the...
Liars, cheats, connivers
Civilization of the eighty-fivers

I write for the...
Moon to turn to blood

I write for the...

Borough, street block, project, ward
and hood

I write for the...
Sun to darken, change that's sparkin
Hope that you'll hearken

I write for the...
Strangest things, sea of faces
Empty stares, hearts secret places

I write for the...
Souls that lost, survivors of the
Holocaust, Diaspora, Ho Chi Men
Square
Though I wasn't there, Viet Cong,
Vets of Vietnam
Kurdish and Pakistan, Iraqi's and
soldiers in Afghanistan
Rwanda and Somalia's, countless
victims

I write for the...
Headaches, life breaks
Stupid mistakes that you make

I write for the...
Hearts that you break

I write for the...
Chances that you take

I write for the...
Memories, perfect chemistry
Three hundred sixty degrees com-
plete symmetry

I write for the...
Poet, warrior, and lover in me

I write for the...
Blind to help them see

I write for the...
Freeing of minds eventually

Come with me

I write for the...
Crushing of grooves
Busting of moves
Keeping it smooth

I write for the...
New and improved
Using pen as a tool

I write for the...
Forcing of you
To use your mind
Free your thoughts
And do what you were destined
to do

I write for nothing

I write for it all
I write for the alpha omega begin-
ning and the ending
I write for the rise
I write for the fall
I write for the pen to run dry
I write for the doves to cry
I write for the life, don't ask why
I write for the release
I write for the peace
I write for the relief
I write for me
I write for it's the only time I feel free

I write for me

I write for it's the only time I feel free

Will you write for me?



Beer caps are cool.
LAJ is too. So don't throw either of them away.

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Photos by Roli Shalem

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by Annie Teegardin

Every woman out there (and some men too) has been in a situation in which you say loudly in your head, "I put mascara on for THIS?"

I came across a small case of utensils at a garage sale one day after dressing up for a day that wasn't worth getting out of my pajamas. The case on sale for \$3 looked dull from use and the cover had been torn from travel. A girl, who could not have been more than 16, asked if I wanted to buy the set. I inquired to see if her father was a whittler. She smiled and said, "No."

Her hands went up to the side of her neck to adjust her turtleneck. At that point my mind reeled at the possibilities. It was the middle of summer, this pretty young girl was wearing a turtleneck and my mascara was fucking uncomfortable and driving me crazy. There was just one loose eyelash that I would not stop jabbing me in the eye. Then it hit me. "Oh hell," I thought. "Not only was this kid a cutter, but she was trying to sell her tools at a garage sale!" I was disgusted and quickly bought the set. She looked happy yet a little timid as I gave her the \$3 she asked for.

When I got home, I created a woman out of my old photographs and words, who was being jabbed in the eye with one of the girls exacto knives and I entitled it "Torture."

I have no inspiration, I only have reaction and my work was born out of nothing but that and sheer poverty. Back in 2003, I didn't have the money to afford "real" materials so I was forced to improvise. I'd find used canvases at thrift stores (that always had Cousin Emily's first oil paint lesson on it) and rummage through clearance barrels for paint and glue at the cheap markets to get the basics. After the first layer was done, I'd take it apart, destroy something, put it back together and then find some trash on the street (perhaps yours?) and make art out of it.

Now, it's been a few years since I began working this trash and I can afford better materials, but I don't bother. There is something about the sad little abused canvases I find. They have a history, a prior life and a story to tell. Each one is a piece from someone's past. Each had a use or was loved and lost or tossed aside.

It's a Barbie some girl loved and adored that became my "Barbie Jesus" piece. It's a bag of used doll heads from a dead grandmother's home that I glued to a used canvas, burnt with a blowtorch and covered in acrylic menstrual blood colors.

Perhaps that is why I feel art is trash. It is all taken too seriously. That's why I choose to dig through the garbage and roam the streets for my materials.

Vividly, I remember the day I found the crack pipe I used in a recent painting. It must have been at least two years ago when I found myself downtown outside a Little Tokyo loft building. I was supposed to be picking up a friend, but after waiting outside for a good 25 minutes, forgot I was doing so. After a half an hour I didn't feel like waiting outside so I waited until someone exited the securely locked building and tiptoed in after them. I think that was my first time being in one of those overly industrial living spaces. It seemed to be an unfriendly and depressing environment.

I didn't have my friends loft number so I aimlessly walked around the floors calling her until my phone died. As a last resort, I went over to the mailboxes to see if her last name would show up anywhere. No name rang a bell; it must have been under a roommate's name.

But low and behold, in front of me... sitting on the mailbox was a large manila envelope with a note attached. Being the curious sort that I am, I took a peek. The note started off "Dear Crack head..."

I stopped touching it and looked around real quickly, I don't know why... I became very paranoid that either this crack head or the writer of the note would see me touching what was obviously none of my business. Yet, after confirmation that I was alone I read on.

"My child found your crack pipe in the garage by my car, you sick degenerate fuck..." and it went on and on for about a page explaining that this was a place where kids were present and the owner of said pipe should be ashamed of themselves for polluting the world with their presence.

It was a nasty letter to say the least, but this note writer was giving the crack pipe back to the crack head, which boggled my mind.

I thought for a minute because I usually don't steal, but if I was to yank the bag, would that classify as stealing? I didn't stick around to answer my own question.

Quick as lightning, I grabbed the envelope and ran all the way out of the lobby and down the stairs to my car and locked the door. My heart was pounding and I was out of breath from fear. "That crack head is going to find me..." I thought (which I know is ridiculous, but in the heat of the moment was justified).

It took me close to a year to work it into some artwork. I'd create something and then quickly destroy it or I'd show it once or twice, then rip it apart and create a new painting. All of my paintings are three or four year old paintings together

most of the pieces have floated from idea to idea until the find the perfect spot... or someone purchases it before I can destroy it again.

Finally the artwork came together with a Starbucks sign I swiped (really, I rarely steal... and I never lie), a no smoking sign and the image of a very classy white woman. On a deep, square canvas I found at a thrift store, I placed the image of the woman and in-between her luscious red lips and her delicate hands I placed the crack pipe almost like a drink. Above her went the no smoking sign and over the cigarette image I placed that crazy looking logo with the Beetlejuice Starbucks girl on it. It was perfect, for a while... until no one purchased it.

About three months ago, I decided to place it in one of my exhibitions at the I-5 Gallery in Los Angeles but the night before my drop-off, I painted the background from a charcoal ink splatter to a vibrant and striking solid red.

The piece, entitled "Crack" sold that day to a middle-aged optometrist. I told him that there was a good chance that there was



THIS MONTH IN HISTORY



by Sara B. Allison

EARTH DAY

Ready to get rid of the grunge in your life? April is a perfect time for spring cleaning! It's easy for Angelinos to complain about the smog in the air and all of the other dirt in this city that slowly kills us, but this is the time of year when it's easy to help remedy that because April 22 is Earth Day, a day to give back to the earth and clean it up!

Throughout the 1960s, Senator Gaylord Nelson wanted to raise more environmental awareness within the government. In 1969, he realized that since anti-Vietnam demonstrations called teach-ins had done well raising awareness, perhaps a grassroots effort for the environment might provide results as well. When he announced his intentions in November 1969, the response was incredible and many grass roots organizations came together to make the first Earth Day a success. Held on April 22, 1970, the day drew 20 million participants.

The Environmental Protection Agency was formed soon after the first Earth day to help safeguard the environment. Today, many environmental organizations exist to help fight to keep our environment clean, but it is important for each of us to show our interest in protecting the Earth. Over 4,000 organizations in 168 countries around the world hold Earth Day events. Los Angeles organizations offer many ways to help in Earth Day efforts as well. You can be a part of Earth Day by attending the following events, or check out, <http://www.earthday.org>, for a list of events in your area.

EARTH DAY ON THE PROMENADE

This free festival will be held on the 3rd St. Promenade in Santa Monica on Sat. April 15 from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. There will be activities for kids (including Children's Nature's Institute wild animals), 60 exhibits and a solar powered stage where musicians, speakers (including Assembly member Fran Pavley, who was important in passing global warming emissions legislation) and other entertainers will offer various programming throughout the day.

"We are pleased to bring so many family oriented entertainers to Earth Day, because kids can encourage parents to buy environmentally friendly products, which reduces pollution and global warming, making a healthier future for all of us," said Director Jim Stewart, Ph.D. "Earth Day helps people learn about environmental solutions already in the marketplace and learn effective ways to take action."

This event is organized by Earth Day Los Angeles, a project of the International Humanities Center, a non-profit organization. To learn more, visit: <http://www.earthdayla.org>.

TOPANGA EARTH DAY

This year marks the 7th Annual Topanga Earth Day Festival, organized by the Topanga Earth Day Organizing Committee. The group's purpose is to "encourage and educate people on alternative energy, inspirational music, ecological products & services, environmental demonstrations, and optimum healing; for families, our communities, and the entire planet."

A creek clean up will take place at the Topanga State Park Nature Center at Trippet Ranch (20825 Entrada Road Topanga, CA 90290) on Sat., April 22 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

The festival takes place in the same location on April 23 and features three stages (one of which will have a solar powered sound system) for musicians and guest speakers such as Dr. D'Andrea MD, ND of Naturopathic Medicine and Barry Leneman of "Necessity Housing Village".

Information booths, yoga classes, and alternative energy demonstrations (including solar pizza ovens) will be just a few of the activities to enjoy at this year's event. There will also be healers and merchants selling all-natural fibers clothing, organic foods and beverages, jewelry and crystals, and biodegradable products.

This event has a "suggested donation" entry of \$9.99. For more information visit the Web site at: www.topangaeearthday.org

..... Dear Artist

your relief from the the daily trauma of being an artist

Sleaze Disease

by Corey Blake

All right. We live in Los Angeles. We knew when we moved out here that this was the land of "fruits and nuts," where BMWs, unlike porcupines, wear their pricks on the inside and where everyone has a screenplay in their closet along with their lover. We accepted this when we drove down the 101 to our first craphole of an apartment, and we feel it every morning when we pull up to our favorite anti-Starbucks establishment and every night at the parties all over town where we want to know how everyone else is failing so we can feel better about our own misery.

The machine that is Los Angeles is ego driven. No one is arguing that fact. I'm not insinuating that there are not genuine articles out here — good people with good attitudes who have a sense of integrity and understand the ethical boundaries of business—I'm just saying that I haven't met any of them yet.

Okay, that's not true. I've met one.

And I was smart enough to make him my business partner. But then again in all of his integrity and loyalty to me, he pissed off my wife by

The most humorous part of the equation is that we welcome our anxiety. We adore our frustration.

revealing a birthday surprise I was not supposed to be privy to in an effort to clear up a miscommunication he knew we were having. Not really any of his business, though I appreciated his efforts and enjoyed the result of a screaming match with the love of my life. So now I backpedal to refer to my earlier assessment—I haven't met any of them yet.

Competition is ugly, but can be very effective. Entertainment is a tough business and there is literally no way to not let it affect us. On our journey to fame and fortune, we all have to accept the sacrifice we are making. Thankfully it's only our souls we have to give up. Our innocence we have to flush down the toilet. Our ignorance that will be shoved in our faces to repeatedly humiliate us. Point is, we have to get burned to learn how not to get burned. We have to get screwed to learn the value of a good agent. We have to get bent over the barrel to understand what a loyal producer does.

The most humorous part of the equation is that we welcome our anxiety. We adore our frustration. We would take our anger out to dinner if we could afford to because we love the emotion of life. Without our skeletons we would have nothing to pull our art from. Without our pain there would be no angst. Without our fear there would be no passion!

So we carry on as sons and daughters of the artistic revolution. Enjoying the time we have left, before we become the miserable old Norma Desmonds who lived out our dreams yet still remain unsatisfied. If LA teaches us anything, it teaches us that we'll never be happy enough, successful enough, rich enough, or clever enough. But damn if we won't spend our entire lifetimes trying to prove her wrong. Silly artists. ■

Corey Blake is the Development Director for LA Film Lab Entertainment (www.lafilm.com) and owner of Writers of the Round Table. Corey is currently juggling five screenplays, two manuscripts and half a dozen regular articles for magazines.

My Little Grunge Life

Growing into SoCal grunge

by Orlando Saiz

Grunge used to be my favorite genre of music. It's something I agreed with, but nothing I tried to be. I had my eight hole Doc's, thermal undershirts, long hair and mysterious attitude. To top it off, I was in college at the height of it all. Kurt Cobain was a big influence, along with Pearl Jam, the Seattle scene, Singles, Alice In Chains, Soundgarden and Temple of The Dog. That was all me, and it fit my demeanor. I wanted to be a part of something as cool and mystical as the grunge scene so bad. I loved the music, it was so meaningful and full of emotion. It was dark and cloudy all the time with that music, but I liked it. I love the rain, and the clouds are even more exciting.

I had a distant friend too, who left our hometown to go to school in Oregon and become part of the scene there, learned about raves and experimented with all that grunge had to offer. He eventually ended up back home, and in rehab, back and forth from Seattle and Oregon, until we just lost touch. He opened my eyes to the idea of freedom. I still recall the time I saw him walking on campus with his headset and candy-colored outfit shouting "the disco is back, man,"

That was something I never heard much about while lost in my grunge stage. I changed into my artist stage and headed for the university. Up north, or to the beach I thought. It seemed picturesque, yet shadowy and dreary towards the North and I needed something different. I chose the beaches of Southern California and finished school here.

My grunge phase had long since subsided and surf punk and rap metal became the guise. Until I began clubbing. Everything was recycled, I thought, dance was now rap and old school was eighties. And what about techno? That was just a novelty, something you hear in movies or on commercials. I was lost and confused.

A horrifying break-up drove me over the edge. I had done some reading, however, and stumbled upon an article about the island of Ibiza and how it was such a mystical underground paradise for the electronic music culture. Just the same, I stumbled upon a new station from LA called Groove Radio. Something new and inviting made me want to get out and experience the world again. But all the famous clubs were far away. London, LA, Miami, I had no contacts there. Yet, I found my fix in the middle of suburban Orange County.

I found some places that played my music, late in the evening, even past last call. I lived for those nights, the DJ and his musical accomplices were my new focus. I wanted everything that went with that, I couldn't get enough, I thought about all electronic music and how it related to a dance floor full of people going mad over it.

Where had all the time gone, even my sadness had subsided. My musical journey had taken a spin for the better and I always find something new within my newfound genre. I am now a DJ, an electronic musician whose aspirations stem from a love of all types of music.

In a way, grunge is still a part of me. The attitude, the style, the demeanor. Everything has just changed a little. Times are different, it has been almost 15 years since that time and the world looks different. Yet, the world of the mystical grunge scene can never go away. In a way, it becomes an aura that travels with you and attaches itself to your lifestyle making you understand where you came from, and what you stand for. Even if the trends lead you to think that they have something new with \$200 ripped jeans and already worn out duds; the grunger in me understands that these things are nothing new. They are

pre-packaged fabrications of what once was a novelty of the past. So, what's left? Who knows? Just follow the path ahead I suppose. Keep an open mind, and follow your feet. Absorb and transcend. ■



photo by Emin Ozkan

BENEATH THE GRIME OF SKID ROW

by Andrew Haas-Roche

Downtown Los Angeles is drastically transforming from the city's epicenter of business and commerce to one of culture and residence. Old banks and office buildings are being gutted and turned into luxury condominiums. State of the art concert halls, fancy restaurants and plush lounges, will replace the old theaters and clubs. Downtown urban renewal hopes to create a safe, beautiful place for families to live and play.

But one thing standing in the way of this dream is Skid Row. Thousands of homeless men, women and children inhabit the downtown area known as Skid Row, and plans to revitalize the area do not include them. Instead, the city is looking for ways to make them disappear.

Central Area Commander Andrew Smith is making Skid Row a priority by cracking down on drug trafficking, exposing practices like dumping and training rookie police officers on the downtown streets.

But city officials are looking at things a different way. Rather than addressing the needs for low-income and affordable housing, the policies target the people on the streets. Currently, the debate over Skid Row has brought forth two new contrasting ideas. One proposal calls for a strict enforcement of petty crimes and civil violations as a way of taking people out of downtown and into prison before crime gets out of hand.

The second proposal seeks to rid the area of "box cities" and tents that make up the walls and roofs of many people's everyday shelters.

Los Angeles Police Department Chief William J. Bratton is considering both plans, and both are under much scrutiny by community leaders and homeless advocates.

The first plan, targeting crime, is an attempt to weed out the criminals from those who need help. Managing drugs, prostitution and other illegal activities plaguing the area will help the police department begin to get things under control. Figuring out who needs what services is half the battle.

The second proposal would attempt to go through and sweep the streets, take down the cardboard boxes and tents in order to clean up the streets. The problem with this plan is that it does not have any goals for putting people in homes. It would solve the aesthetic of Skid Row, but it would in no way solve any of the roots of homelessness.

A few years ago, Bratton attempted to rid the streets of makeshift shelters, but the American Civil Liberties union sued the department for violating the civil rights of the homeless people living there.

For fear of similar legal repercussions Bratton is taking his time choosing between the two proposals. The fate of L.A.'s 90,000 disenfranchised citizens lies in his hands and critics do not think either program will solve the city's homeless problem even if implemented correctly.

The homeless population in Los Angeles County is greater than both New York and Chicago's combined. Skid Row is merely an icon for homelessness, for it really only accounts for about 10 percent of the entire county's homeless men and women. But it symbolizes a lot more, especially downtown, where things are changing in a way that will make the area more beautiful and attractive for middle-class and upper-middle-class individuals and families. The new L.A. plan does not account for Skid Row, where thousands of families are struggling to survive amidst the horrors of violence, drugs and prostitution.

Beneath the grime there are real lives at stake and none of the city's proposals consider acquiring housing for those who need it most. The housing being created downtown is not to house the homeless, but rather to inject a sense of glamour to the city's business district.

But the glamour will never be achieved while Skid Row is still there. And even if it is dispersed, where will the people go? They won't just disappear until a real plan will give them the one thing they don't have: a home. ■

Lint

by Annie Abbondante



illustrations by Alieo Wallace

James once said the first thing he noticed was my pristine white sweater in a crowd of stained and lint-marked others. I became known for never having lint on my clothes. My sweaters are pill-free. My black tee shirts are unscathed by impurities like cat hair or couch fuzz.

I'm not packing a bag. I can buy anything I'll need. Most of my stuff is just sentimental garbage anyway. Pictures, knick knacks, souvenir T-shirts—stuff that ties you to a place because its texture and fabric is woven with memory and sentimentality. Shit that fills a room but still leaves it empty.

I step onto the stoop carefully, not wanting my flip-flops to slip on the hard stone, still wet from a rain shower. The air is thick as I breathe it in, drowning me.

I had hoped my first breaths of freedom would have been thin and clean and refreshing, assuring me and pushing me forward. Instead, the air is sweating on me, leaving a hot film on my cool skin.

I left my keys on the kitchen table as a form of insurance. The locked door of the apartment has closed behind me. I can't go back even if I want to. I belong to myself now and I feel reckless. I walk down the street looking for trouble.

I want to find some frat boys to tease or an expensive sweat-shop-supplied designer store where I can spend some money. I want to flirt with a group of men smoking outside a sports bar. But it is way past the time when all the stores have closed, boys have gone to bed and drunks have been arrested.

One of the busiest streets in the city has almost nothing to show for itself, save the occasional unemployed taxi and scant-filled city bus. There is a 7-11 open, its lights projecting out onto the black street. I am a moth to its glowing fluorescence.

The old man at the counter doesn't look up from a tattered paperback as the bell above the door dings my entrance. His skin folds in lines around his eyes like he has spent many years laughing. His face bears a yellowish-white Santa Claus beard that hearkens the innocence of St. Nick. He should whittle toys for his grandchildren or write books about fishing. He should drink tea with his Mrs. on a porch while she knits.

I have a friend in this Santa; neither of us belongs in the world of 4 a.m. Perusing the aisles, I search for what I am looking for. Am I hungry? Am I thirsty? Do I need a medium ballpoint pen or a box of tampons?

The bell on the door dings, and a woman with greasy blond hair enters. She has dark brown roots many inches longer than any self-respecting hairdye would ever let hers grow.

"Look at this," she says, her voice cigarette-tainted. She takes an orange bottle out of her purse and dumps pills out onto the counter. "I got them from the hotel." She nods her head in the direction of the grand, old hotel across the street, its opulent lobby visible through picture windows.

I hide behind the muffin display, peeking out past the carrot brans, moving forward to listen.

"Put those away, Denise," Santa murmurs, shaking his head.

"Look at this," she says, her voice cigarette-tainted. She takes an orange bottle out of her purse and dumps pills out onto the counter. "I got them from the hotel."

"You know they don't ask you for a key when you get into the elevator?"

Santa harrumphs a little and shifts his book on the counter, ignoring her. He and I are both strangers in this world of too-bright, lighting and drug-addicted passersbys.

"They just ask you what floor you want to go to, and they take you up," she continues.

"Get out of here," he is trying to concentrate on his book.

"I just wiggled all the door handles until I found an unlocked one. Then, I went right in. I swiped the pills off someone's dresser."

"Please, put those pills away," he stands up, sliding his glasses down his nose to get a better look at her, "I told you Denise, you can't be bringing this around here anymore. I don't want you crackheads in the store."

She is counting the loose pills on the chipped beige counter, rolling her eyes at him, "Calm down, calm down. I just wanted to show you."

She begins to put them back, one by one. Each fingernail is half-covered in chipped red polish.

She is taking too long doing it, obviously testing him, obviously high, obviously having no place else to go.

I have never seen a real live crackhead up close before.

"I'm going to call the cops," he sighs like he feels bad for her. I feel bad for him.

"Aww, come on, don't."

"Well then just clean them up and go then, huh?" He moves behind the lottery machine and picks up the telephone receiver, dialing slowly. "Hello, yes? I am going to need some cops at the 7-11..."

"Fuck you!" she croaks, sprinting out the door, her bag clacketing with unprescribed medications as the bells tingle her exit.

Santa hangs up the phone and sighs loudly, looking in my direction apologetically.

"Did you really call the police?" I have decided not to buy anything.

"Dial tone," he shakes his head, picking up his book once more, "All they really need is a good scare most of the time."

The sadness both of us feel fills the room. Him, relinquishing his picturesque country life, and me wandering abandon. I want to tell him that I understand.

He begins to read again, ignoring me. The cover photograph is of two women kissing. *On Our Backs: The Best of Erotic Fiction, Vol. 2.*

My stomach turns at the thought of his being part of this seedy night time world. He licks his lips as he reads eighty-nine synonyms for "penetration" and creative descriptions of nipples. I have been tricked, duped by his grandfatherly whiskers and Kris Kringly appearance. I leave him for the abandoned streets.

If James knew I was out here, he'd flip his shit. Of course, if I read a book that was considered a best-seller or watched anything other than the History Channel, he'd flip the same amount of his shit.

I picture him waking up in the morning. The spot where I usually lie feels cold. I am not asleep on the couch with an approved title open on my stomach. I am not in the bathtub with aromatherapy bubble bath. I am not making him vegan bacon for breakfast.

He'd searches the apartment and then the light bulb appears over his head. My absence isn't the "yes" he wanted, but it also isn't as painful as the "no" I want to give him. I am gone and his proposal answered.

I would not have to hear him present another goddamned logical argument. We would not have to have a civil, even-toned, healthy discussion. I would not have to be the one who felt like she was about to go insane if I heard him say one more goddamned word.

It was over. I was locked out. Gone. Goodbye James.

Stretching up into the fog is the crackhead's hotel, and I make that my next destination, yawns creeping slightly into my breathing pattern. It's formal and ritzy, and I like the smug feeling inside of knowing that crackheads meander the hallways when no one is checking.

When I am spit out inside of the hotel, I feel very alone. The air is super-cooled to combat the humidity, and there is nothing to warm me. Everything is marble and gold. Glittery crystal chandeliers that drip from the ceiling. The lights are dimmed to create atmosphere, but I feel confined in darkness.

As I pass the front desk, I pretend I belong. The sleepy-eyed college students at the desk either don't notice or don't care, and I can't decide which makes me feel more invisible.

The elevator is old, gold-encrusted with curlicues and swirls, carvings of angels and leaves and little sprigs of berries on twigs. They could be the gates to Heaven..., or Hell. Which is why I press the call button.

It buzzes and clunks in an unsafe way. A young man in a red and gold uniform asks through the black iron gate, "What floor, please?," courtesy built into his voice. He is bored, but not tired. He tugs open the iron gate to let me in with him.

"Ten." I like the number. Even, divisible, useful. The doors slam shut and the cage clanks definitively.

I've never been in an elevator with an operator, and I am entranced. I did not know they even still ex-

As I pass the front desk, I pretend I belong.

isted. "Going up," he smiles gently at me, as though he can tell I have had a rough night. He presses a lever at the door, controlling our ascent.

He has green eyes. I don't know anyone with green eyes and have perhaps never seen one in real life. I am staring.

James is still sleeping innocently, having no idea that when he wakes up, his heart will be broken. I want to convince myself that it's his fault for even asking. Rose petals, white wine, classy dinner, all that...he knew that I wanted none of it.

We are silent until we reach the tenth floor, approximately an eternity later, and I wonder about elevator etiquette. I have stared into this boy's eyes for nine floors, and I step into the hallway without a word.

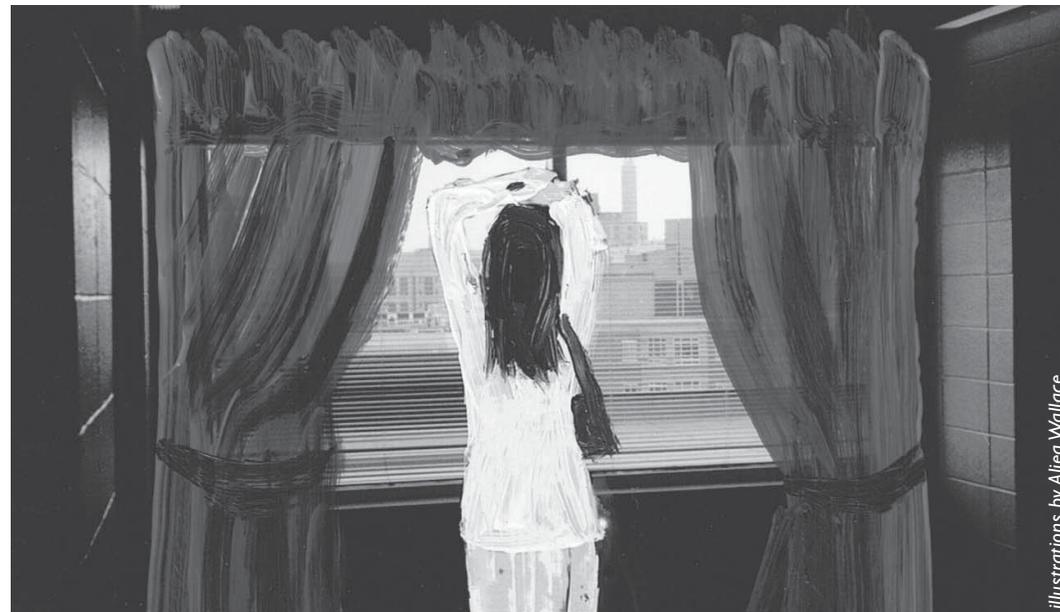
Richly-colored carpet and mahogany tables with delicate legs adorn the hall. The expensive, patterned wallpaper is broken up by thick doors with shiny gold numbers. The plush carpet smushes under my sandals as I make my way to the end of

the hall, where golden curtains hang to the floor, framing the twinkling skyline.

I hide in the thick folds of the plush curtains, keeping concealed should a hotel guest happen by. Pressing my cheek to the cool glass of the window, I take a deep breath. The city sparkles below me and I count the blocks and buildings to find my apartment. I can barely make out the grill on our building's roof deck in the morning's pinkening sky.

I wonder if James knows he will never see me again. I wonder what he will do with all my things—if he will leave them for the garbage, or if he will donate them to charity.

The city looks so innocent from up high. You can't see dysfunction and crackheads and perverts and boys who try to keep you. You can't see thieves like me who embezzle pretty views without paying for them. Thieves like me who steal into the night, never to return.



I go back down the hall and call the silent elevator operator and his loud elevator back to me. Waiting, I hear each little tick and clunk, each little bang and bump as the old machine comes to get me.

It feels like the doom in between James' question mark and my lack of response.

The bellboy smiles benignly, "Hello."

"Lobby, please."

He nods and does his job, not interfering with my trespassing. He is no policeman.

I move slowly, giving him every chance to protest.

I avoid eye contact on the chance I might lose my nerve. I wrap my arms around his neck, moving my body closer. He catches my seriousness, wiping the perma-smile off his face,

changing until he is a real person. One of his hands finds a place on my waist, but the other is operating the elevator, so we have to do without it. When I fall into him, pressing myself against him, he stumbles back and crashes into the wall off the elevator. I can feel the cables tremor.

Maybe he's tired, but he kisses me back without question. He doesn't taste like anything, which I kind of like. He's just warm and wet and good. Friendly, almost like kissing between girlfriends during drunken games of truth or dare. It somehow feels okay, wholesome—just me and a stranger, falling down an expensive hotel.

His hand lets up on the lever to give us more time, his other hand exploring the goosebumpy skin at the waistband of my corduroys, slipped just under the radar, only invasive enough to make me want him more, but not creepy or overly-enthusiastic so that he scares me off. I almost wonder if he's done this before.

His fingertips are caressing my bare skin, and I am surprised by their gentleness. For some reason, he's being tender, and I want to stop kissing to say thank you. For once, someone is kissing me.

I am surprised by how sexual my inhale sounds — bouncing off the walls, replaying over and over so that I want to throw myself back into him and feel his fingers tickle me familiarly. A blush runs its course all over my body, heating me in the air-conditioned icebox. I dart my eyes to the floor.

My lapse makes us both a little shy, and so he clears his throat and presses harder at the lever, moving a little faster to the lobby.

Neither of us talk, and I don't have the desire to. When we hit bottom at the lobby, he opens the door for me, smiling his calm bellboy smile.

The sky is whitening out of its sunrise pink as I emerge from the hotel. The world is waking up. Cars begin to fill the street; Starbucks flips its lights on; the bums on the corner are awake shaking their change cups.

The old man at 7-11 is replaced by a yawning lady with a potbelly. Light pours out of apartment windows into the street. I ascend the hill, dazed from kissing and not sleeping. I need food. I need water. I need home.

The door buzzer belches sound into the street, and I immediately want to take it back. I imagine catching the sound waves in a net before they reverberate into James' ears. I contemplate running, like I'd tried in the first place. But it's too late now. He is at the door, rubbing his eyes, "Where did you go?"

"Out."

"When?"

I push past him to get inside.

"What's this?" his eyes are wide, seeing me. He pulls a piece of lint from the sleeve of my shirt. ■

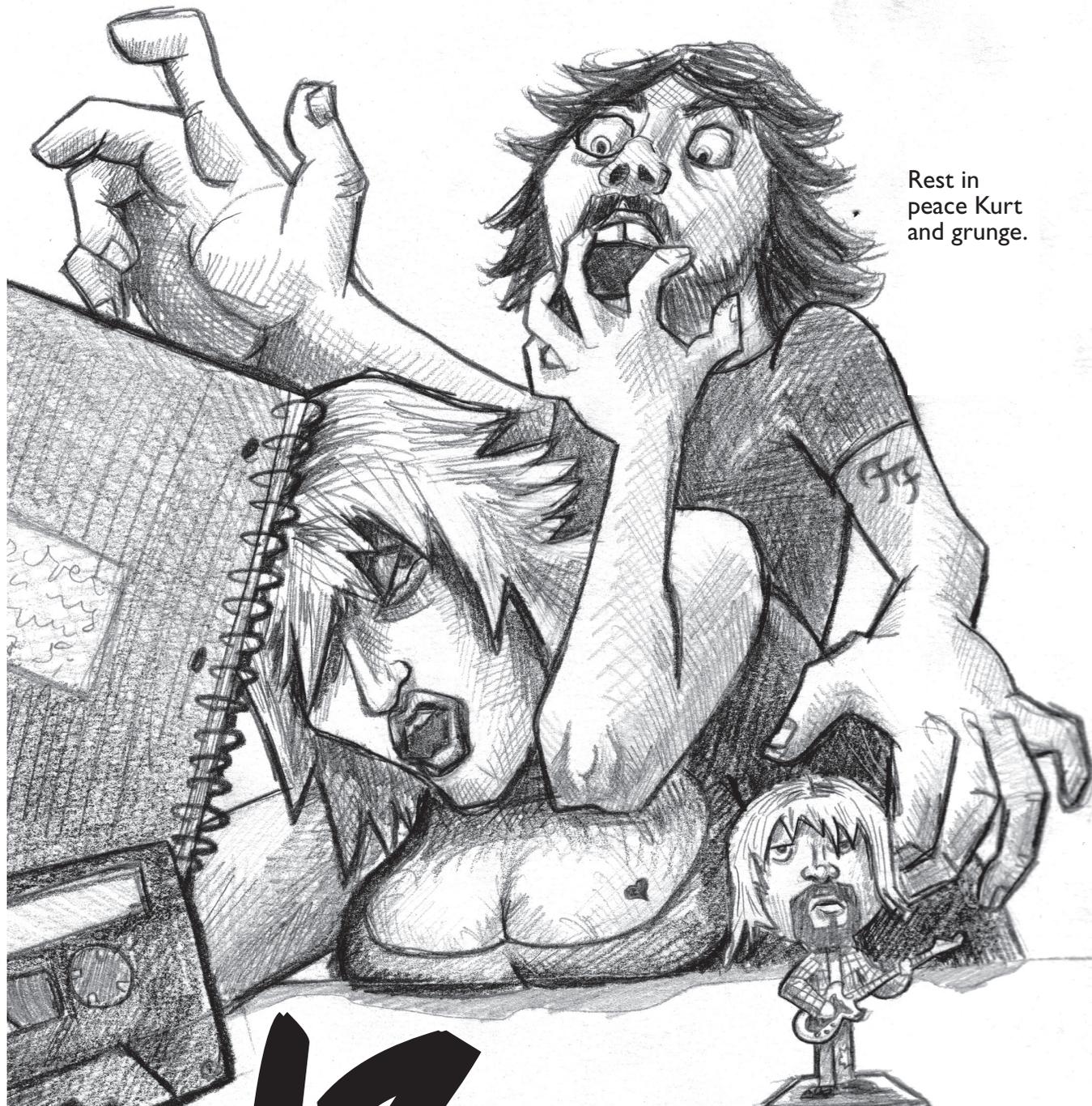


Illustration by Neil Segura

Rest in peace Kurt and grunge.

4) The Cover Song

Tori Amos covered "Smells like Teen Spirit". No comment necessary.

5) The Spice Girls

They hit the scene with movies, merchandise and not that much talent, but with maximum exposure. It was like Beatlemania. Then we came to their senses.

6) Fred Durst's Tattoo

Yes, the lead singer of Limp Bizkit has a tattoo of Kurt Cobain and Elvis Presley over his heart. And as horrible as that is to think about, that's not as bad as... Nevermind that's disgusting.

7) "With the Lights Out" Box Set

(Nirvana's lost material)

It cost me fifty bucks. The compilation contained a lot of unheard material. Courtney Love, Dave Grohl and Krist Novoselic fought for years in court over it. But I'm not bitter because it was worth it.

8) Hollywood Blondes

Paris Hilton. Jessica and Ashlee Simpson. Christina Aguilera. Britney Spears. All these blonds are driving a lot of perfectly sane people insane. Someone with as shaky a psyche as Kurt's could not have handled the praise of such non-talent.

9) Corporate Embrace

During a concert where tickets were seventy bucks for an over hyped and overrated show, I look up to see a banner that says "Here we are now. Entertain Us." I left and Cobain's spirit thanked me.

10) If you read you'll judge (Kurt's published journals)

Spirit cursed me a week later when I walked into Barnes and Noble and bought his journal. He says at the very beginning to never print it if he gets famous or dies. Too late!

11) MTV

After Cobain's death (which they milked), MTV has slowly turned into a corporate sponsored non-music playing, fad instigating, realm of life devoid of reality. Nevermind...he saw it coming.

12) Courtney Love

In the last twelve years her exploits have been well documented and talked about so I'm not going to say how disgusting she is. Just thank God Kurt didn't have to be here to watch the train wreck called her life. Sadly, we, the living do. Rest in peace Kurt and grunge. ■

Things I'm glad Kurt Cobain Was Not Alive To See

by JJaaCarrlllo Hhaiirsstcom

1) Emo

Or should I say grunge without the soul or punk without a point. Bands like Sum41, Blink 182 and Good Charlotte appear to be grunge cover bands with a pop appeal. Much like heroin they are a guilty pleasure music listeners should avoid at all costs. I know because I'm currently hooked on Fall Out Boy.

2) The Butch-Lesbian-Rock-Star Haircut

David Bowie has it now. Rod Stewart is the trend's spokesperson. Metallica decided to get it as a group, but only Elton John has an excuse for having it.

3) "The Best of You" Song and Video

Maybe this Foo Fighters song would have never happened if Kurt was still alive. But he's not and you're forced to ask yourself, "Who in the hell does Dave Grohl think he is?"



GRUMPY REPORTERS

A bad night to be covering the Clippers

by **Travis Perkins**

There were definitely grumpy reporters sitting in the upper media bowl at the Staples Center for the Clippers home stand against the Lakers on Feb. 24. Of course, that didn't include me and Jeff Foster, the Journal's photographer on hand for the game. In fact, now that I think about it, we were probably the only journalists in good spirits that night.

"I've got a feeling," Foster pointed out soon after our arrival of the night's eerie air. "People looked pissed."

Maybe it was just one of those games. Isolation, deadlines, pampered athletes, the absence of baseball/football — throw in another sorry ass Lakers performance — and tensions mount.

Then again, this particular occasion had way too many weird instances to merely be classified as a symptom of work-related stress. Shit happens, but this shit kept happening and happening again.

It started around the buffet — my favorite feature in the Chick Hearn Media Room — as it mysteriously disappeared early. The food is always tossed a few minutes into the first quarter, but there were too many growling stomachs in the press box for that to have happened.

A collection of lions stirring within the stomachs of journalists moaned, "Rrrrrrr-oooooooo-wwwww".

A snake within my own belly hissed.

With stomach pain intensifying, I feasted on popcorn and pretzels to dull the initial ache. Neither helped me. Desperate, I checked the Bud Light kegerator. No love there. So, I adhered to the advice of a security guard and "hit up the ice cream machine."

I was next in line as the dispenser spewed chocolate-vanilla swirl onto a female producer's white turtle neck. With a breast full of soft serve, her eyes turned deep purple. That's right, purple, a phase beyond the reddening.

"Sorry, miss," in the words of a 4-foot-11 male Staples Center employee, "it's not going to work right now."

Uh huh. Machine shut down. No ice cream with sprinkles. Try again later. Oh, well.

The time then came to venture back upstairs.

In the press box an edgy reporter mad-dogged a small boy — no parent in sight — who continually booed Elton Brand and joined every pro-Kobe chant.

The boy sounded something like, "Yeee- aahhhh! Yeee - ahhhh! M - V - P...M - V - P... yeeee-aaahhh! Yeee-aaahhh!"

I used to believe the only thing more annoying than Dave Chapelle's impersonation of Little John was a random idiot imitating Dave Chapelle's impersonation of Little John. Contrary to my previous beliefs, there is a sound and sight far worse.

A 12-year-old kid imitating Dave Chapelle's impersonation of Little John has replaced my old definition of hell. A fellow reporter, who probably didn't get his sundae either, shot the kid a stare icier than Dr. Freeze.

Was this gesture cruel? Perhaps, but it was one of those nights. He probably just wanted to this youngster to think twice about building a stat sheet paper-airplane and hurling it into the crowd below.

Then, of course, there was the foreign reporter sitting to my right who spoke little, if any English. How do I know this?

During the walk to the elevator, I asked, "Hey, man. Who do you write for?"

That's how I know.

After the game, this guy walked up and down the corridor — probably in search of the locker room — for at least half an hour. He had to be exhausted after his sixth lap of power walking. My legs were a little tender from merely ducking a few cameras. Still, at last and at least, I made it into the promise land — a.k.a. the locker room. This guy wound up being denied because his camera was against regulations or something crazy like that.

As he slowly walked away, he muttered, "motha...motha."

I would have connected his sentence for him with a giant F-bomb, but I wasn't screwing around. Not with the insane vibe in the air. Besides, if he couldn't string together a sentence, how was he going to understand the obscenities leaked in the Lakers' locker room?

There's no way he would've none to stay out of Phil Jackson's path, as I did when he shot me a cold glance that symbolically reduced me to a 12-year-boy mimicking Dave Chapelle. ■

Travis Perkins is the monthly entertainment and sports editor at the LAJ. He can be contacted at travis@losangelesjournal.com.

A 12-year-old kid imitating Dave Chapelle's impersonation of Little John has replaced my old definition of hell.

MOVING UP

by Gabriel Constans



If you enjoyed stench, spilled guts and sights too horrible to imagine, this was a dream job. It wasn't a cash cow or silk tie kind of thing, but it kept me out of trouble, paid the bills and satisfied my sliver of sanity.

I had the honor — no, the privilege — of driving the county roads for the district, picking up dead animals that had been dismembered, disemboweled or squashed like aluminum cans after they had followed an arousing scent or ran from a perceived or real danger.

The blue and white van I had been provided was a mockery to survival, but came with the territory. With brakes that needed to be pumped savagely to avert running into a brooding oak guarding a curve and lights that flickered on and off like a firefly, it was a matter of faith and fatalism that kept me roaming the roads like a vulture.

"Sure John, we fixed the van," the mechanics at the city yard would reply with a smirk, "a little gum here, some masking tape there."

They enjoyed their friendly razing, not realizing their haphazard maintenance was abetting my undercover mission to obliterate myself and obtain absolution for having the gall to keep living.

The early morning ritual of driving the two-lane roads in a death trap was actually quite therapeutic and made me acutely aware of the precariousness of my existence. The sad eyes of a dead raccoon, the resigned look of a possum or the dilated pupils of a terrorized deer strengthened my daily revelations.

I began to see their deaths as daily sacrifices for the rest of their species, not unlike the human sacrifices made in ancient cultures, in which it was believed that offering up someone's soul every now and then would somehow please the gods and protect the rest of the clan.

Staring into the trees, while driving along the blacktop at a crawl, my lights returning just in time to see the dividing line, I would glance out my bug-splattered side window and imagine the beasts of the forest at their nightly gathering.

"It's your turn," the eldest skunk would tell his brother, the one he'd always hated. "It's your turn, and everyone knows it."

The younger sibling would stare at the others in disbelief and frantically argue. "What do you mean my turn?! There have been more of us stinking up the road since last winter than there have been rabbits in a blue moon." Turning towards the rabbits, his nose up in the air, he snarls, "Why don't they put up for a change?"

I wasn't sure how they made their selection. Most of the animals that sacrifice themselves aren't pure virgins, though I doubted that mattered as much to them as it has with humans. I had a strong feeling their decisions weren't reached by consensus.

My mind tended to play tricks on me while I was shrouded in morning's dark shawl. Just before sunrise I would lose track of where I was and become blissfully disoriented. The thrill of thinking I was lost and abandoned, with a load of dead carcasses, made me feel like a kid who has just been terrorized from seeing a monster in the closet. It sent chills of helpless agony up my spine and though I soon regained my bearings, left a pungent residue of powerlessness that lasted until I returned to the county yard and dumped my scavenged cargo.

To my surprise and disappointment, the excitement and unique perspective the job provided eventually faded. Instead of adrenaline or anticipation numbing my senses, I became jaded and morose. The work became commonplace. My lovely nightmares ceased, and I began to look forward to my days off.

After weeks of deep contemplation I applied for an opening with the city's waste management division. They must have been desperate. Within days of turning in my application for a transfer, I was offered a job at the landfill three miles from town.

It seemed that good fortune had struck twice, and — unlike lightning — this was something I was looking forward to. A feast of garbage awaited my attention, and it was being served on a government platter with higher pay and benefits; though the health coverage and retirement fund amounted to a big fat zero since I didn't expect to live long enough to enjoy such entitlements.

They started me out at the sorting machines for recyclables, but that was too clean and tidy for my tastes. Luckily I got in good with Gary, the boss, and it wasn't long until he granted my request and demoted me to a better position.

"You sure you want this?" Gary grumbled, as he took the five bucks from a city resident entering the yard with a truckload of junk. He didn't like sitting at the gate all day, but Leslie was out taking care of her sick husband, and I was a failuer when it came to handling money.

"You bet," I said, staring at the ground and making sure he didn't see my grin.

"OK." He handed the driver his two-bit change and receipt then looked my way. "It's your life."

"Thanks, Gary."

As I put on my gloves and headed towards the screeching seagulls that made the landfill their home, he hollered, "If you change your

Annie and I had met in high school. Her best friend Sylvia had been killed in a freak auto accident the day before graduation. She came to me for comfort. I listened. She interpreted my silence as love and tethered herself to me like a goat to a stake. I have no idea what love is. When her friend had died, I just didn't know what to say and figured saying nothing was better than mouthing off a bunch of clichés or condolences. If I'd known she would become so obsessed with me I would have told her, "Everything will be OK." Or, "I understand. Don't worry."

Now there was nothing I could do but wait. I don't know how to say good bye; other people do that.

So, there I was with my stuffed dog and my mother's eyes. The neighbor's door slammed several times and the TV in the apartment below squawked like a rap song on downers. The water in the pot I'd put on the stove was boiling, the shrieking whistle increasing in force. I looked in those eyes, saw my reflection and wondered out loud, "Why did you leave? Where did you go?"

I went to the stove, turned off the kettle and poured what little water was left over my oolong tea. I turned up the volume on the radio, which I must have left on while I was at work. The announcer said the guy playing the violin had once played for change on the streets of Paris and now graced the stages of concert halls around the world.

I returned to the recliner, put the dog in my lap and placed my arms around its neck. The newly washed fur caressed my cheek. I closed my eyes and must have drifted off, as my potent reassuring

The snake-eyed woman oozes out of a festering sore, her hands and bony fingers reaching for my throat. She whispers, "Die my love. Die a slow death. There is nothing but pain and sadness."

mind, let me know and I'll put the next new guy on it." I waved without turning around.

Within five minutes I was wading into the middle of the filth to search for valuables that had been dumped along with the refuse. Whatever we found that was of any value, we set aside for the city to resell or recycle, but everyone knew we could take the occasional prize home for our own enjoyment or consumption.

One wet drizzly fall day, after slogging through a pile of decomposing lettuce and coffee grounds, I came upon a large black and white stuffed dog. It was the size of a small horse. I brushed off the fur, removed my gloves and felt it from head to tail. To my delight, it only had one small tear; the stuffing seemed intact, and it didn't smell too rancid. I turned it around to look at the face and felt like I'd been kicked in the stomach. The eyes were dark shiny half-shelled marbles that looked exactly like my mother's eyes.

I was a child when she had left her limp dead body on the bed, but the vacant expression in her eyes had been scorched into my little mind forever. Now, in the city dump, up to my knees in trash, I held my find above the waste and saw my mother staring back from her glassy-eyed, opium-filled world of refuge.

I whistled, then waved at my sorting colleague Sammy to indicate I was taking my break. He waved back and nodded. Sammy was the only guy I knew who liked garbage as much as I did. He always offered to cover a shift for the rest of us. He was afraid he would miss the find of the century the one day he was off work.

I walked to my oil-stained motorbike parked in the corner of the yard and tied the dog on the back of the ripped leather seat with a tattered bungee cord. It looked like a carpetbag slung over a pony's saddle and left little room for my sorry ass on the ride home.

That night I tenderly washed, combed and brushed the fur, stitched the tear and polished the eyes. I was absorbed in those eyes when the phone rang. I didn't answer. It was probably just Annie. She'd been hounding me for years. "You've got to move out of the city. Come live with me." She called once a week from her parents' home telling me how much she loved and adored me.

nightmare gracefully returned.

The snake-eyed woman oozes out of a festering sore, her hands and bony fingers reaching for my throat. She whispers, "Die my love. Die a slow death. There is nothing but pain and sadness." Her cold fingertips tighten on my Adam's apple as I flail with clenched fists trying to beat my way free, my knuckles smashing into her skeletal face without any impact. Her face changes into a tornado, sucking me in and spitting me out between her thighs. It feels like my heart muscle has been shredded into little pieces and is being flushed down the sewer.

My hand slid off the armrest and hit the floor. I found myself sitting in a chair, holding a stuffed dog with marble eyes. The phone was ringing again. I answered it.

"What?"

"Oh. Hi Annie."

She said, "What's up?"

"Nothing."

"Where were you?" she asked. "I called earlier."

"I must have been in the shower," I lied.

"How's your new job?" she asked with some disdain seeping through her cheerful "everything is always great" voice.

"OK, I guess. I found the coolest dog."

"A dog." Her voice raised an octave. "I thought animals weren't allowed . . ."

"No. They aren't allowed here," I agreed. "Not a dog dog. It's a stuffed dog. It was in great shape. I can't believe somebody threw it away. And it's big. I mean really big! If I stand it up it almost reaches my head. And the coolest thing of all are its eyes. They don't look normal. They're all glassy, deep black and vacant-like. They remind me of . . . well . . . they're very cool. You've got to see it."

"I've got Springer," she replied. "A real dog. Why on earth would I care about a fake one from the dump?"

continued from PAGE 29

illustration by Bryan Barnes

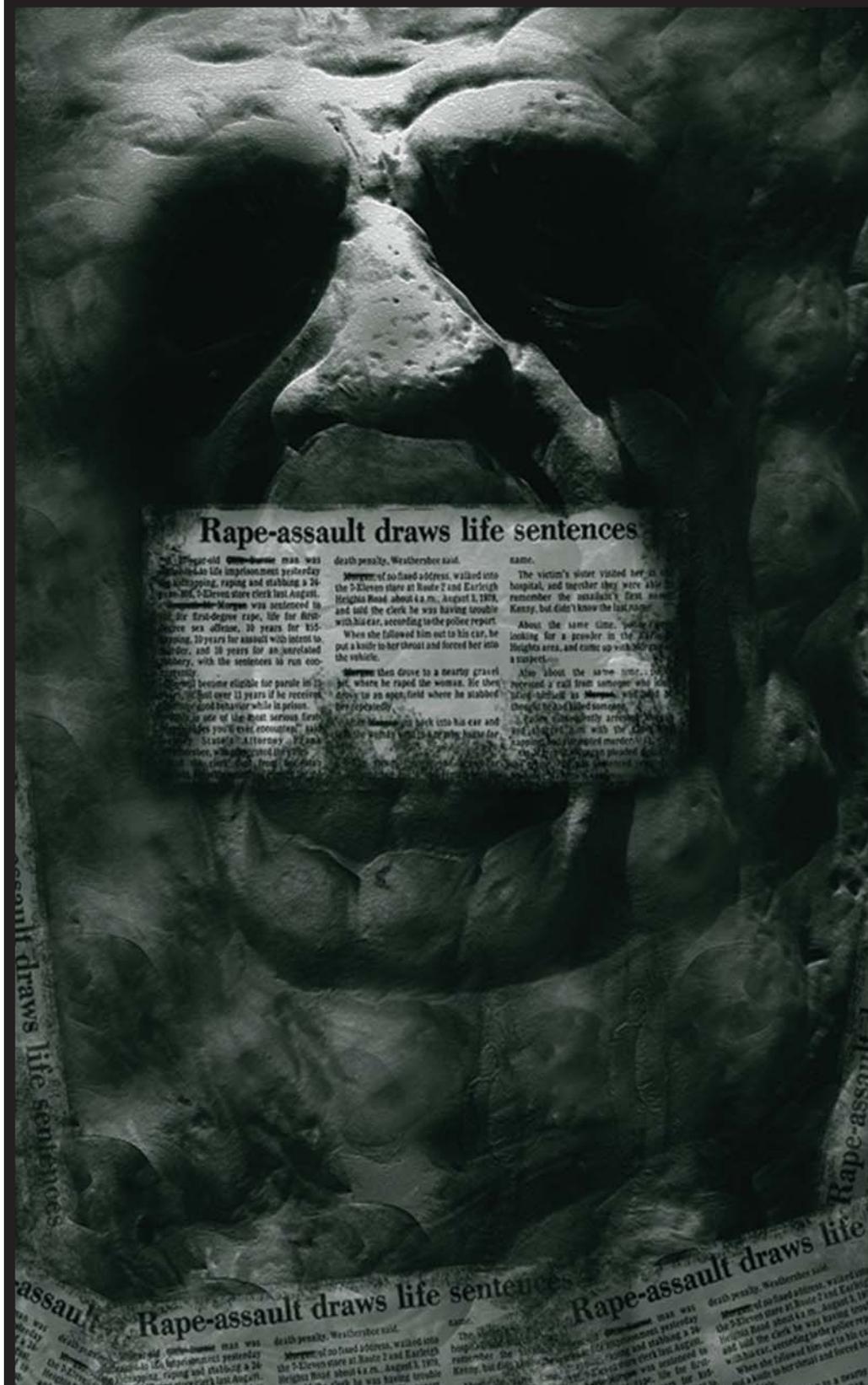


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THE ARTS

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Coachella Preview

A Weekend of Music in the Desert

by Sara B. Allison



Summer means the start of music festival season. Yes, it's a time when outdoor concerts with multiple acts attract fans of all ages to spend the day outdoors listening to music. In Los Angeles, we are lucky to live a few short hours away from the festival that kicks the summer off—The Coachella Valley Music & Arts Festival.

Rage Against the Machine, Jane's Addiction, Björk, Oasis, Beastie Boys, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Radiohead, Pixies and Coldplay have all rocked crowds of thousands from the main stage at Coachella, and this year's seventh annual festival packs the same punch with Depeche Mode headlining on Sat., April 29 and Tool closing out the weekend on Sun., April 30.

Bringing together the sounds of rock and dance music on two stages (the Coachella Stage and Outdoor Theater) and in three tents (named with desert themes: Sahara, Gobi and Mojave), Coachella has specialized in bringing top artists in alternative, rock, hip-hop and electronic music together since its premiere in October 1999. Organized by Goldenvoice, one of the most active concert promoters on the West Coast (they also promote Lollapalooza, Warped Tour, and many other concerts), the concert has grown from 15 thousand people at the first Coachella, to over 100,000 concert goers at the sold out 2004 show.

This year, contemporary art, films and other performers add to the ambiance of the festival, which is held at the Empire Polo Field in Indio, California. Booths selling a variety of food, beer and water (with bottled water available for \$2) will keep your thirst quenched and your tummy full throughout the day. There are also shaded areas throughout the venue. Sponsors such as

KROQ and Virgin Records have tents where events are held throughout the weekend. The venue has 70 acres of lawn space and when the sun sets over the surrounding mountains, it's almost guaranteed that pink clouds will greet the transition from day to night as temperatures dip down to a more danceable level.

The parking lot opens at 9 a.m. on Saturday, the venue opens at 11 a.m. and the music begins at noon. (Plan some time to get into the venue—there are only a few routes in and out). Although the schedule will be posted on the Coachella site a few days before, grab a festival guide when you enter to see the schedule, which includes maps and other important information about the venue and the festival.

Then get ready to rock and dance Saturday to the sounds of Depeche Mode, Daft Punk, Franz Ferdinand, Sigur Ros, Damian "Jr. Gong" Marley, Common, Atmosphere, Carl Cox, My Morning Jacket, TV on the Radio, Ladytron, Clap Your Hands Say Yeah, Tosca, Cat Power, Animal Collective, HARD-Fi, Derrick Carter, Devendra Banhart, She Wants Revenge, The Walkmen, The Juan Maclean, Imogen Heap, Audio Bullys, Lady Sovereign, Deerhoof, The Duke Spirit, Eagles of Death Metal, Lyrics Born, Matt Costa, The New Amsterdams, The Zutons, Platinum Pied Pipers, White Rose Movement, Chris Liberator, Colette, Joey Beltram, Hybrid, Living Things, Wolfmother, The Like, Nine Black Alps, Celebration, The Section Quartet, Shy FX & T Power and Infusion

This year, Sunday night features Massive Attack, making their first US appearance in more than eight years, on the main stage before Tool closes the show. The most recent addition is

The Coachella crowd at dusk—from Outdoor Theater Stage



photo by
Neil Segura



Depeche Mode headlines the festival on April 29th
photo by Joe Dilworth



photo by Neil Segura

Rilo Kiley, Depeche Mode and Bloc Party

Madonna performing in the Sahara tent on Sunday, making her first ever festival appearance. Other Sunday performers are: Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Bloc Party, Paul Oakenfold, Scissor Sisters, Matisyahu, James Blunt, Sleater-Kinney, Mogwai, Coheed and Cambria, Wolf Parade, Gnarls Barkley, Phoenix, Coldcut, Digable Planets, Amadou & Mariam, Louie Vega, Mylo (DJ Set), Seu Jorge, Ted Leo / Pharmacists, The Go! Team, Kaskade, Metric, Editors, Art Brut, Dungen, The Dears, Jamie Lidell, The Magic Numbers, Los Amigos Invisibles, Jazzanova, stellastarr*, Michael Mayer, Murs featuring 9th Wonder, Mates of State, Gilles Peterson, Infadels, Gabriel & Dresden, The Subways, Minus the Bear, OneRepublic, Be Your Own Pet, Youth Group, Giant Drag, Kristina Sky and The Octopus Project.

TIPS: If you don't have a hotel room yet, plan on staying in Palm Springs, or further from the site, unless you are willing to camp onsite (\$35 for 3 nights). Before you make the trip, read the rules posted on the Coachella site to know what is or isn't allowed inside the venue. Plan on layering your clothes. Daytime temperatures reach up to 100 degrees in Indio in April, but remember desert nighttime temperatures tend to dip. (I usually tie a light sweatshirt around my waist during the day, so I can use it to bundle up a bit when it gets cooler after dark.) ■

Tickets are available through Ticketmaster for \$85.00 for one day or \$165.00 for both. Visit www.Coachella.com for more information.



Audio Bulllys

A DJ Duo That Will Get You Dancing



Photo courtesy of Audio Bulllys

by Sara B. Allison

Tom Dinsdale and Simon Franks are Audio Bulllys, a DJ duo that mixes house, garage, hip-hop and strong basslines to make a unique sound. Hailing from London, their 2003 debut, "Ego War" won Best New Artist Album at the Miami Dancestar Awards in 2004. Their sophomore album, "Generation" shows an even wider range of sound and features a remix of Nancy Sinatra's "Shot You Down"—their most dance friendly track.

On Sat., April 29, Audio Bulllys will be performing at Coachella in one of the dance tents. Inspired by sounds as diverse as Daft Punk and Biggie Smalls, the duo's live set is often compared to performances by the Chemical Brothers.

Watch out for a new album from Audio Bulllys in the near future, which Simon says will be "something with a much more modern twist to it." In the meantime, remember to listen for the sounds of "Shot You Down" coming from a tent at Coachella—it'll surely make you want to dance! ■

how long is too long? (To Go Without Washing Your Hair)



illustration by Dawn Cotter

by **Julene Paul**

As a human being who has tentative consideration for the rights of others, but who also usually puts herself first, I often must ask myself that troublesome little question:

How long is too long (to go without washing your hair)?

It's a serious question that deserves serious attention. There's a fine, dirty little line between grunge-chic and pungent homeless odor.

Taking a shower or bath every day is definitely a fashion and health faux pas. Studies show that hair needs down time to reap the benefits of the oil the scalp produces, and without this natural oil the hair will break down and become brittle. Okay, so I'm bullshitting a bit, but my hair always looks better after two or three days without a washing. Additionally, washing hair this often wastes water, shampoo and conditioner. So, if you live on those miniature bottles of shampoo from hotels, you're aware of how spending

weeks adding water to those bottles, attempting to draw out some liquid that resembles a soapy substance gets old pretty quickly. An even more resourceful solution to the lack of shampoo and conditioner is to simply do without. There's something strangely satisfying about walking past the shower or the bathtub and thinking confidently to myself, "I don't need you. I am my own person, and if I don't feel like washing my hair, then hell, I won't."

However, like Halloween candy and hip, new post-punk dance bands, we can all encounter too much of a good thing. When that nice shine to your hair becomes heavy, gel-like grease, it's time to wash your hair. Leaving grease marks on a pillow will not get

needs to know his or her personal limits. I have developed a rather simple equation used to determine how often a person should wash their hair:

$[(\text{Hair Type} / \text{Age}) + (\text{Ability to Make Disgusting Bodily Odors Loveable} \& \text{Amount of Friends})] - \text{Formality of Career} = \text{Length of Time Between Hair Washes (in days)}$

My length of time between hair washes is approximately four days, and it serves me well. Never have I gotten so many comments about the nice sheen coating of my hair. I just smile knowingly, and attribute my hair excellence to the use of expensive products (yes, I call them "products") from my special salon, and a hairdresser I loving-

Leaving grease marks on a pillow will not get your grunge band on MTV.

your grunge band on MTV. Slicking your hair back into a ponytail using only self-made oil is not attractive. Growing ugly little red pimples around your hairline and looking like you have ringworm won't get you a date (at least, I hope it won't). Causing noses to wrinkle the moment you enter a room is not only repelling, it's rude and violates the rights of our fellow brothers and sisters to sniff without fear.

Washing your hair (or lack thereof) requires a good sense of balance. Everybody

ly refer to as Federico. In reality, my mom's friend cuts my hair in her living room, and I use Suave or V05.

My equation may not work for you. It really depends on what makes you comfortable, and if you like to go for weeks without touching hair to water, who am I to ridicule you? I like to follow George Carlin's immortal advice from his Hair Piece, in which he advises to "Be like a bear; Be fair with your hair; Show it you care," and, I add, to never, ever, get a perm. ■



From Here to Pater-identity

The holy ghost of the father wanders the bad dad-lands in Wim Wenders' *Don't Come Knocking*

by John Esther Contributing Film Critic

One of the seminal film directors to emerge from post-war Germany, Wim Wenders has built a career out of displaced, seemingly aimless characters in search of an aim and an identity in Germany, America and elsewhere.

The director of 40-plus films, Wenders' narratives are often punctuated with Pirandellian protagonists who understand little -- least of all themselves, in such films as *The Goalie's Anxiety at the Penalty Kick*, *Alice in the Cities*, *Kings of the Road*, *The State of Things*, *The American Friend*, *Wings of Desire*, *Until the End of the World*, *The End of Violence*, *The Million Dollar Hotel*, *Land of Plenty* and *Paris, Texas*.

Yet unlike the characters of the Italian playwright Luigi Pirandello, who had a doctorate in Germany philosophy, whose action was encapsulated in the space of the stage, or the mind, Wenders' displaced characters are products of a broader environment.

In his latest film, *Don't Come Knocking*, the characters are products of a father-

less environment trapped in the vast open country of Montana.

Reuniting the *Paris, Texas* team of Wenders and Sam Shepard, *Don't Come Knocking* commences when cowboy movie star Howard Spence (Shepard) walks off a film set without notice.

Tired of his blurred existence, Howard heads home into the arms of his mother (Eva Marie Saint), who disarms him with the knowledge (or reminder) that somewhere in America Howard's offspring lives.

Taking this as a sign, Howard sets out to find a new (nuclear?) family, hoping to discover something that is more real than reel. Meanwhile, anal studio executive extraordinaire, Sutter (Tim Roth), is on Howard's trail.

Born Ernst Wilhelm Wenders in Germany on August 14, 1945, Wenders has been living in Los Angeles for the past 10 years with his sixth wife, Donata Wenders.

In this exclusive interview, I spoke to Wenders about story, symbolism, space and our great facade.

Los Angeles Journal: Why did you want to tell this story?

Wim Wenders: The story of the lost father or the prodigal father is one that's been on my mind for a while, because I see people growing up without a father happening more and more. The amount of people who grow up without fathers is tremendous.

LAJ: In what ways do you identify with Howard?

WW: I don't have any children myself so that wasn't in the cards. But I know where you can wind up if you're driven by fame or whatever it is. Howard is my age and Howard, when he looks back at his life, realizes he doesn't appear in it. He appears in his own movies, but in his own life he's not even an extra and that bothers him immensely.

LAJ: What are your political intentions behind the film?

WW: You can see whatever you want to see in this cowboy that's falling apart. I'm not against it. He has no idea about conflict and gets into fights before he knows it and he's mainly responsible. You can see that as a political metaphor if you want [laughs].

LAJ: Howard, like Travis in *Paris, Texas*, goes in search of an unknown son. Why return to this theme?

WW: I don't think the two stories relate much to each other. They are both fathers and sons and that's where it ends. The relationships are different. Howard's son is 30 and he doesn't even know Howard exists. I think that's what got me started on this movie. How do you feel when some guy comes up to you when you're 30 and says, "Hi, I'm your father"? The film tries to see it from the son and the father's points of views. You see from these other points of views, especially through the eyes of the women he encounters.

LAJ: Why are you drawn to characters that are displaced?

WW: Maybe it's something from my upbringing after the war. It was a displaced country and the only people I met were pretty displaced. To be an outcast and forlorn was something I grew up with.

LAJ: Locations are often fleeting like your characters. What does this say about the uses of space in cinema?

WW: The sense of place is the most important thing. When I start a character I start from place. I need to know where this is happening and that it happened sort of necessarily out of these places. I cannot stand if the place is completely arbitrary. A lot of films can happen anywhere, but I need to know exactly where it takes place in order to know what takes place.

LAJ: This particular film covers some of your obsessions: the West, filmmaking space, travel and displacement. Are you making one big movie throughout your career?

WW: In a strange way the documentaries are done on a different level. And maybe films like *Wings of Desire* are more transcendental or spiritual than others. Maybe I have two stories in my head? Many directors only have one and I never thought that was a drawback. Some of my favorite directors like Yasujiro Ozu, Nicholas Ray or Samuel Fuller, they had one story they were paraphrasing all the time.

LAJ: You have made three films -- *The End of Violence*, *Million Dollar Hotel* and *Land of Plenty* -- that use Los Angeles as a character, often a menacing one. How do you view Los Angeles?

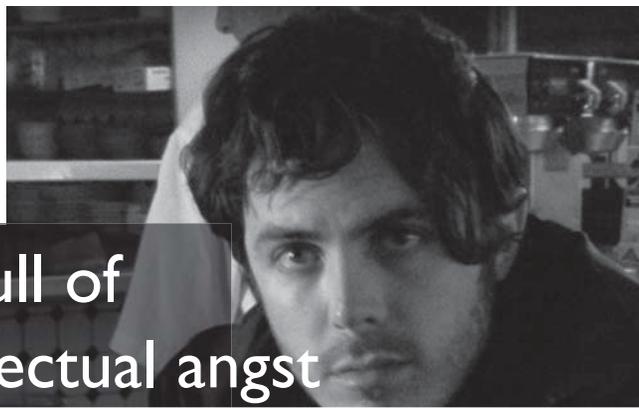
WW: The city is like no other. What I'm attracted to is the idea that a lot of it is a facade. What you see behind it is different than the front. It is more of a front than any other city.. In the *Land of Plenty* you realize it is not only the capital of glamour, it is also the capital of hunger in America and that is extraordinary.

LAJ: Why have you chosen Los Angeles as your adopted hometown?

WW: First of all, I like cars [laughs]. Second of all, it's the only place in the world where I can remain anonymous. I can go to the movies, do my shopping, drive and nobody gives a shit what a German director is doing. That is really nice. ■

Wander Boy

by John Esther Contributing Film Critic



Lonesome Jim full of pseudo—intellectual angst

In the beginning of director Steve Buscemi's *Lonesome Jim*, a man bundled in clothes (Casey Affleck) runs down the highway with suitcases. As the mis-en-scene wiggles across the screen it looks as if his effigy is chasing him. It is a telling scene and by far the best shot in this rather aimless film from an actor whose skills in front of the camera are vastly superior to his skills behind it.

He is in his late 20s, and quit his dog-walking job in Manhattan, N.Y., to return to Goshen, Indiana, the hometown of *Lonesome Jim* screenwriter James C. Strouse.

Perhaps not wanting viewers to think this was going to be another awful Affleck "Surviving Christmas" escapade, the film quickly eschews any holiday balderdash in order to illustrate uninteresting negative notions about parenting, responsibility and middle class comfort while simultaneously being paternal, irresponsible and bourgeois.

Jim is a loner living with depression and without dollars. He has returned home because of finances, not for family. His mother Sally (Mary Kay Place) is an affectionate and overbearing mom who diligently works at the company she and her noticeably older husband Don (Seymour Cassel) started when she was 18.

Jim's older son Tim (Kevin Corrigan) is a divorced father without the mutual custody of his two daughters, Rachel and Sarah (played by Rachel and Sarah Strouse – do I detect nepotism?) living with his parents, because he cannot afford child

support on his \$1 over minimum wage job otherwise. For some undisclosed reason, Tim does not want to make more money at ma and pa's plant.

Two brothers bleak, Jim points out to Tim that while he may be a "fuck up" Tim is "a tragedy." Tim responds to Jim's observation by running his car into a tree.

Lying at Tim's bedside in the hospital, Mom is in shock; Dad is pissed.

Forced to help out his family, which he cannot love properly, Jim takes a job at his parent's plant and works alongside his drug-dealing uncle "Evil" (Mark Boone Junior).

Lazy, inconsiderate, pretentious, sloppy, depressed and depressing, Jim embodies the worst elements of a grunge rocker while failing to create anything worthwhile. Jim pretends he is a writer by posting suicidal authors like Ernest Hemmingway, Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath on his wall but we never see him write a thing. He doodles while watching lesbian porn; does that count? *Lonesome Jim* is the kind of film stodgy parents would want their kids to watch if they caught them listening to Nirvana. (Except they would have problems with the scene where Casey's ass muscles flex while urinating.)

Jim's personality is blasé, his elocution is lethargic and his sexual skills are juvenile, but that does not stop him from attracting the likes of a pediatric nurse who looks like Liv Tyler named Anika (played by Liv Tyler, who played opposite Ben Affleck in that quasi-holiday film *Jersey Girl*).

A cheery gal of sorts, Anika is ready to break that sad shell of Jim's and use her son named – would you believe? – Ben (Jack Rovello) in the process. Pity the smart, employed, pretty woman trapped in

the town of Goshen if she has to settle for guys like Jim, Tim and Ben's deadbeat dad.

Anika notwithstanding, if life as he knows it was not hard enough for poor young Jim, the narrative starts throwing seemingly unbearable obstacles at him. After all, if merely living, or coaching his nieces' pathetic basketball team is an effort, what is Jim going to do when his mom winds up in jail and the government takes over his parent's business?

The answer is not much, because not much ever happens in the film – unless you believe in the cowardly finale where Jim realizes that he cannot keep running from challenges for the rest of his life. Conversely, one could interpret the finale as a sign that Jim cannot make it without mommy and must reside with a surrogate maternal figure with a body and little money in the bank. Regardless, the rest of the film is tidied up as well with the good going on and the bad being bagged.

As much as it wants to be tragically hip, *Lonesome Jim* is a failure of a film and its DVD or video box will be a lonesome item at the rental store after a quick theatrical run. ■



Alan Blumenfeld as Pa Ubu and Deborah Strang as Ma Ubu in A Noise Within's production of *Ubu Roi*. Photo by Craig Schwartz.

Two For the Show

If you are looking for some grungy visual arts, check out your local theaters

by John Esther

In the city of superficial glitz and glamour, what can be grungier for aspiring actors, directors, producers, costume designers, composers and theatergoers than small independent theater? Sprinkled around every part of the city, stages of all sizes showcase the chops of so many artists that one realizes how lucky those few visual artists are who can actually make a living when there is so much talent just trying to make ends meet.

While Hollywood stars make millions, these, often equally-talented actors might make enough to pay for the gas to and from their theater.

A perfect example is the raucous tour-de-force production of Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi* at A Noise Within in Glendale. As anyone in the theater business can tell you, this is a bitch of a production to perform with little reward beyond performing some unusually fantastic theater. A landmark in absurd theater, *Ubu Roi* is not the type of production where Hollywood types can be wooed. The acting skills required in this text require something anathema to the screen.

Under the direction of ANW's co-artistic director, Julia Rodriguez Elliott, this story about a brutal dictator name Pa Ubu (Alan Blumenfeld) and his Macbethian wife Ma Ubu (Deborah Strang) rams through at 115 minutes without intermission. In the process, ANW manages to capture the absurdity, austerity and political relevance of Jarry's viciously subversive play.

Far more sobering-yet unique-in its narrative and aesthetic is the production

of Jon Robin Baitz's *Three Hotels* at the Fremont Centre Theatre in South Pasadena. Directed by Kappy Kilburn, *Three Hotels* is a brisk production broken into three acts in three different hotel rooms (Tangier, Morocco; St. Thomas, Virgin Islands and Oaxaca, Mexico). Jim Harnegal plays Kenneth Hoyle, a brutal executive working for a sometime lethal baby formula company. After years of defending the indefensible and the death of his son, his wife Barbara Hoyle (Jennifer Buchanan) no longer recognizes the man she met in the Peace Corps.

Being a rare examination of the omnipresent corporate state, nobody seems to bother acknowledging, *Three Hotels* is a small, important work we should "Nevermind." ■

Ubu Roi runs through May 07. For more information call 818/240-0910 Ext. 01. or log onto www.anoisewithin.org.

Three Hotels runs through April 09. For more information call 866/811-4111 or log onto www.theatermania.com.

TUNE IN

BY JAVE LAFORTEZA

"Band Forming!"

If ever there was a historical movement against Corporate Mainstream music, it would have to be Grunge. The 1985-1995 decade was tainted with a lot of events that seemed almost psychedelically dramatic. Grunge basically started in the Pacific Northwest, namely Seattle, Washington. It was a time when a subculture became a worldwide phenomenon. Although this genre can not be specifically described without falling into the misconception brought about by the influence of Mainstream media, its basics are angst-ridden lyrics with heavy distortion and sporadic dissing on signed big-hair mainstream Rock bands.

Small town bands that pioneered Grunge are the likes of Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, and of course Nirvana whose legendary frontman Kurt Cobain took the music industry to a whole new level. When Kurt committed suicide back in the spring of 1994, many were speculating that Grunge had died along with him. What many don't know is that Grunge, no matter how much it got exploited by Mainstream, became deeply rooted not only in our society but also worldwide. It has helped evolve not only the musical influences of musicians and fans but also the perception of corporate labels that new acts that don't fit a preconceived notion of a hit in mainstream are necessarily unsignable.

Max Braverman is one such musician whose music was influenced by Grunge. Not to say that we're boxing him in an "only-Grunge" sound; more like he has evolved like Grunge which seemingly "disappeared" but only was really turned into something new. Not a new genre *per se* but like a catalyst that pushes things to Be, acts in the background and helps mold most of the music we hear and enjoy.

Los Angeles Journal: How long have you been song writing/playing your music?

Max Braverman: If you mean in general, then I have been playing for 11 years. The songs I am currently working on span back a couple years to when I was living in Boston. I am most excited about my newer songs, but the oldies that I still play have stuck for a reason. I do try to rearrange and improve parts from time to time.

LAJ: Who are your influences?

MB: Just to name a few: The Beatles, Nirvana, Fugazi, The Jesus Lizard, Failure, Autolux, Beck, Elliott Smith, Wilco, Radiohead, Supergrass, Soundgarden, Blonde Redhead, Jon Brion, Stone Temple Pilots (purple only), and Queens of the Stone Age. Those are some relevant rock bands that come to mind but I am influenced by everything I hear, good or bad. I find it beneficial to occasionally sit through an entire Nickelback song to know what not to do.

LAJ: What made you decide to form a Grunge-influenced band?

MB: I'm not purposely forming a "grunge" band but my style is rooted in those bands that made me initially pick up a guitar. My songwriting will hopefully continue to evolve, and I don't want to limit myself by pre-determining what my sound is, especially when taking into consideration what background and influences other band members may bring to the table. I can say though, I definitely expect it to be loud, sweaty and sexy.

LAJ: Since Grunge can not be really boxed into a stereotype unlike what mainstream media makes it out to be, what is Grunge for you?

MB: Grunge for me is pretty much a term I would prefer to avoid. Once there were products exploiting the hell out of it, it just kind of seemed inappropriate to use the phrase when not necessary. FYI, I bought the "grunge distortion pedal" when I was 12 years old. I returned it soon after discovering that it sounded more like something Pantera would use.

LAJ: Kurt Cobain posed for *Rolling Stone* with a shirt that read, "Corporate mags still suck." Is getting signed into a label a goal for your music?

MB: Although playing and recording music in my bedroom is rewarding, I would prefer to have the opportunity and support



Max Braverman. photo courtesy of Max Braverman.

a label could provide. I don't think there's anything wrong with signing to a label whether it's an indie or major: It takes money to make things happen, and I'd rather spend theirs than my own. With that said, it's always important to get a fair deal rather than jumping over any contract someone offers you.

LAJ: The 1985-1995 decade started a movement in music history basically giving America's Youth a voice to air out grievances. How much did this Grunge-era influence you as a musician, as a person, and as an individual from that generation?

MB: I was at a very impressionable age when these groups first began to surface. I formed an identity while listening to bands like Nirvana and still retain feelings that sprouted while engrossing myself in their music. I'm pretty sure that around this time I first began to question the sincerity of mainstream music and culture. Although this movement also enthralled many young people at the time, it still felt underground and rebellious regardless of all the media attention.

LAJ: What traits are you looking for in band members?

MB: I'm looking for musicians around my age (23) that have an innate sense of melody, rhythm and song. Ideal members will be ambitious, creative, and also someone I wouldn't mind spending a lot of my time with. Each instrument has a purpose for every moment of a song so a quality I look for in a musician is an awareness of where they fit and how to milk a song to its full potential. Oh yeah, I should mention that I'm currently looking for a drummer, bass, and maybe a keyboard Renaissance man who isn't afraid to pick up a guitar or tambourine once in a while. I don't think Nirvana ever used a tambourine but hey, I'm pushing the envelope.

LAJ: What are your general and specific goals for your band once formed?

MB: The goals for my band would be that of many like-minded musicians. I want to play a lot, make records, tour and if I'm lucky —

support myself doing it. I have friends that have been on tour and I feel I'm missing out for now. Traveling and playing shows seems too good to be true. I'm sure it can be exhausting, but I'm willing to accept the hardships. Europe sounds pretty good right now.

LAJ: How many songs do you currently have and where can readers listen to them?

MB: I have been recording acoustic versions of my songs to document them in a clear and simple fashion until the time comes to go into a professional studio. At this point, there are eight recordings of this nature but many more to come. I made a list recently of the songs I want to work on and it's a bit overwhelming. I either feel like I don't have enough material or too much for my own good. Four songs, which rotate occasionally, can be heard at www.BandForming.com. Surprisingly, I was able to snag that URL. For anyone who is interested or at least curious, I have already released an album under a label that leans a little on the electronic side. It has been heard on KCRW, CSI:NY, The Real World, and you can hear it at www.SKOPIC.com.

LAJ: Finally, were you into all that flannel shirts and Doc Martens back in the day?

MB: No Doc Martens for me but I have a flannel or two. I rock western shirts, which can be mistaken for a flannel from afar, but don't fool yourself.

Tune In supports the music scene no matter what sound it produces. Max Braverman's demos are powerful on their own (check them out!), and the possibilities are just endless with a full band. Passion and Dedication always make ordinary things extraordinary. If you think you can keep things real and rock, go ahead and get in touch with Max at www.BandForming.com, www.SKOPIC.com and skopic.music@gmail.com.

== Keep the Faith. Keep it Steady. == ■

Kim Kline QA

Interview with pop singer by Travis Perkins

A new unsigned talent is hitting LA clubs and recording studios. Unsigned and new, but not for long. Kim Kline, a down to earth girl from a small town (Graham, TX) two hours west of Dallas, has already caught the attention of major record labels while earning flattering reviews.

In an era comprised of manufactured songs, artists and images, Kline's sincerity should be welcomed with open arms. If the grunge explosion of the early 90s left any impression, it's that the music is what really counts. However, Kline's breath-taking looks and long, blond surely won't raise any complaints

Currently, Kline is collaborating with co-writer/producers Eddie Galan and Sean Alexander who have worked with artists such as Nick Lachey and Jesse McCartney. Also, the training Kline received under the tutelage of Ron Anderson, a major influence on trademark bands like the Rolling Stones, Janet Jackson, and No Doubt, almost guarantees her place on the road to fame.

LAJ: How is the recording session coming along?

KK: Great. I can barely contain myself.

LAJ: Any track you are particularly excited about?

KK: Yeah, one called "In Your Skin". I am working on it with producers Eddie Galan and Sean Alexander. It's going to be amazing, amazing, amazing.

LAJ: Do you prefer live performances or working in the studio?

KK: I'd have to say live. I am a people person and I love sharing music and emotions and watching responses.

LAJ: Are there any crazy fans at these shows?

KK: I have had a couple, but nothing too crazy or over the top yet. My fans are very supportive and true blue and die hard.

LAJ: Any shows coming up?

KK: Well, right now we are auditioning for the band...the previous one didn't work out so we are looking for people...and within a month or so we will be ready.

LAJ: What person has been the most exiting to collaborate with?

KK: Everyone brings something different. I am honored to work with such talent and people who represent great music. They are all so passionate...I am blessed.

LAJ: Have you met anyone in LA that you looked up to?

KK: In New York I did...Clyde Davis...what he has contributed is amazing.

LAJ: What's the best perk of living in LA?

KK: I love it out here. LA has been good to me. Good people. I can't complain. In my hometown (Graham, Texas) there are less than 10,000 people, so it is a change. Not to complain, but I do prefer a little change in weather.

LAJ: What artist are you listening to these days?

KK: Everyone from Alicia Keys to Sheryl Crow. And I love all the legends too like Led Zeppelin and Tina Turner. I also listen to singer/song writers like Rob Thomas.

LAJ: What radio station do you do you like?

KK: I listen to 98.7 the most.

LAJ: Did you enjoy the song "It's Kinda Hard Out Here for a Pimp"? Was that your pick to win the Oscar?

KK: I didn't watch the Oscars...not glued to the TV. I'm sure the songs were amazing but I'm so focused. If it is not the Grammys, it is tough to watch.

LAJ: Do you have any grunge influences?

KK: I love Nirvana. Is Pearl Jam considered grunge? Anyway, I love them both.

LAJ: Do you have any favorites on American Idol this year?

KK: I love Kelly Pickler. Her innocence and vulnerability is great. Also the grey-haired guy (Taylor), he is so much fun and passionate and soulful and it's great to watch him move. I dig his voice and performances.

LAJ: Did you like USC or Texas in the Rose Bowl?

KK: I have to support Texas...absolutely. I was thrilled when they won. I come from a long line of football fans.

LAJ: Are you single? Dating anyone?

KK: I am pretty much single. Right now I am so focused. I have been in so many relationships and you have to give a lot and for now I have to be focused.

LAJ: Anything you would like to add?

KK: Main thing...I feel blessed to have an opportunity to inspire other people. If you believe and put in hard work it pays off. ■

Travis Perkins is the monthly entertainment and sports editor at the LAJ. He can be contacted at travis@losangelesjournal.com.

continued from PAGE 19

"Well, no. I guess you wouldn't," I muttered, my excitement dampened with her curt, but realistic observation.

"You could have a real dog," she pleaded, "if you weren't so stubborn and moved out here."

"Well," I said, "I'll just have to enjoy my 'pretend' dog by my old stubborn self."

"Don't go all sad and sorry for yourself on me," she said. "You know what I mean."

"Yeah. I know," I said. "Grow up. Right?"

"You said it, not me," she laughed.

I knew she always wanted me to be someone or somewhere different, but she kept calling and seeing me anyway. If I could mint how many times she'd said "Grow up," I'd be a billionaire.

I have grown up, I thought. I like my life just fine. It's safe, secure and pathetically terminal. Except for my nightmares. They may leave me sweating in terror, but they're consistent, predictable and more painfully present than anybody I've known dead or alive.

She kept hoping I would change. She was like that, full of faith and seeing the good in people.

"Why don't you come stay with me this weekend?" she invited. "We could take Springer to the lake, go fishing and camp out at Crescent Cove."

"Sure, but I've got to work Saturday morning. I'll drive out in the afternoon. Maybe we could get in a little hook and sinker Sunday morning."

"I guess that will have to do," she said curtly. "See you then."

"Later," I said and hung up.

Truth be told, I could only handle being with Annie for a day, two max. Something about her always made me feel inadequate, like I was lacking some prime ingredient for her stew.

I looked at the chair and saw the dog had fallen on the floor. I picked it up, brushed it off and found myself staring at those eyes again. They seemed to hold me like a voodoo curse. I shook myself free and placed it by the wall, under the window with the dirty blinds that I never open.

It's been just over a year since I started working at the dump. Annie finally got smart and left me alone. I hear she's hooked up with some organic strawberry farmer who loves the country and has lots of "real" dogs. I'm still living in the same immaculately disastrous apartment, enjoying a Sunday to myself and reading the paper. The stuffed dog I found last year is still laying under the window, sagging a little more in the midriff, obediently collecting dust. I pick it up now and then, whenever I need a good shot of collected misery.

I'd just put down my cup of cold coffee when an ad caught my eye.

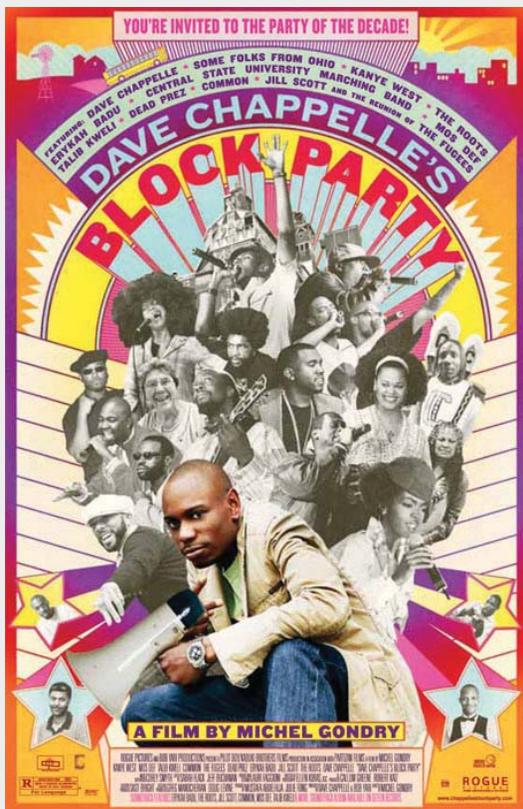
WANTED. NIGHT DRIVERS. NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY. WILL TRAIN. REFERENCES REQUIRED. CALL SEASON'S MORTUARY. 639-4518.

"Well now," I said out loud. "Talk about a dream job. I think I'll call them first thing in the morning." ■

Dave Chappelle's Block Party!

Going to the movie theater is more challenging than usual for me these days. Finding a film that suits me is a bit difficult. The hundreds of millions of dollars wasted on terrible filmmaking seems to be at an all-time high. When I stood at the box office recently and realized there wasn't really anything I wanted to see, I chose *Dave Chappelle's Block Party* by default. *What the heck*, I thought. I'm a Chappelle fan and always enjoy his comedy, but I knew absolutely nothing about the film.

Turns out that *Block Party* was quite an enjoyable movie. It doesn't hurt when the stars – in addition to Chappelle, of course – are Kanye West, Mos Def, Talib Kweli, Common, Dead Prez, Erykah Badu, Jill Scott, The Roots, Cody ChesnuTT, Big Daddy Kane and a reunited Fugees.



The film is mostly a concert and a party, with a few great humorous moments provided by Dave Chappelle. It starts in Ohio with Dave handing out Golden Tickets, very much like Willy Wonka, to a private show put on by Dave himself. He also provides the concertgoers with transportation from Dayton all the way to Brooklyn, New York, where the block party will take place.

Academy Award-winning filmmaker Michel Gondry (*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*) and cinematographer Ellen Kuras capture, documentary-style, the staging of a sort of impromptu concert in the less-than-affluent intersection of Quincy and Downing streets in Brooklyn.

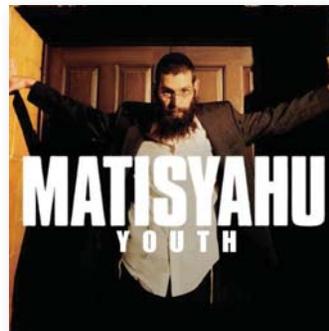
This isn't a traditional movie in any sense. It's more like hanging with and trailing Chappelle, with VIP access to the artists and a real look

at what it takes to put on a show. It was almost good as being there, but not quite! I wish I were there, despite the rain the invited guests had to endure.

Now, if you're expecting straight stand-up from Chappelle, this is not the ticket. But if you're looking for a fun experience, and you enjoy Chappelle's antics and humor as well as the guest artists in *Block Party*, I would totally recommend this feel-good film. It feels like Chappelle is trying to give something back to his community and share some music, humor and appreciation for the tremendous success he has achieved. It was a welcome change to see something done a little different on the big screen than the regular boring, regurgitated storylines. *Block Party* is refreshing, musically cutting edge and funny at all the same time. It was a wonderful combination of elements that don't come together very often and was unlike anything I've seen on film in a while.

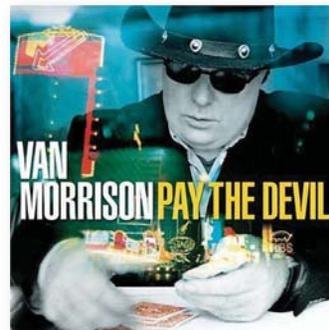
About the Author / Contact

Joshua has more than 14 years of experience in the Los Angeles radio market as one of the highest-rated on-air personalities. He recently launched This Month In Music, Inc., a nationally syndicated music preview column. If you have a band or a piece of music that you'd like to be considered for review, please visit ThisMonthInMusic.com for contact and mailing information. If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please e-mail ThisMonthInMusic@mac.com.



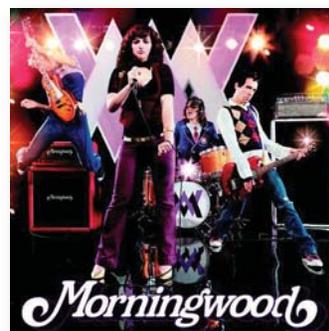
Reggae
Matisyahu Youth
★★★★★

Capitalizing on the success of his 2005 album release, this Hasidic Jewish reggae artist quickly put another round on the shelves. He embraces a totally original way of celebrating gospel music and messages through beat-boxing and a reggae band. A bit broader lyrically, but still based on positive messages of brotherhood and worship, listening to *Youth* is like going to church – or should I say temple? – in a whole new way.



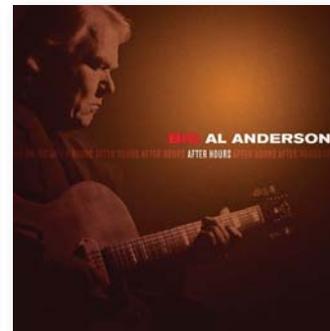
Country
Van Morrison Pay the Devil
★★★★★

One of my personal favorites of all time, Van Morrison releases a stellar album that explores a traditional country folk-and-fiddle style that has fallen by the wayside in today's mainstream music scene. He's stronger than ever after 40 years. Every track here is rich with thought and feeling, with quite a few remakes of classic tunes and a couple of original Morrison tracks. A must for Van fans and music aficionados.



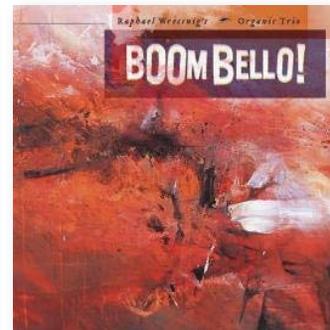
Rock
Morningwood Morningwood
★★★★★

This album is a throwback to the early '80s, combining the sounds of many different pop-punk rock artists of that era and giving it all a modern spin. Produced by Gil Norton (the Pixies), the CD has purpose and vision. Very well textured and arranged, *Morningwood* will find its niche. Some will love it and others will find it has too much of a polished edge. I think it's fun and energetic, and will do exactly what it's intended to do: sell!



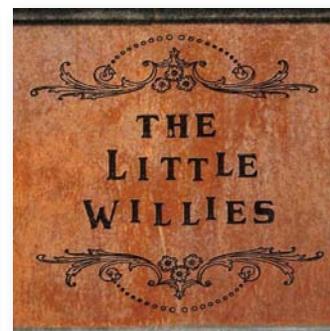
Country
Big Al Anderson After Hours
★★★★★

Anderson was the key figure in the New Rhythm and Blues Quartet, but his departure is ultimately to our benefit. Having written songs for many country singers, Anderson now writes for himself. *After Hours* is simply a gorgeous piece of work. I expect a Grammy nomination at the very least. The heartfelt lyrics with a blues-folk-country feel are so personal, it feels like Anderson is performing just for you in your living room.



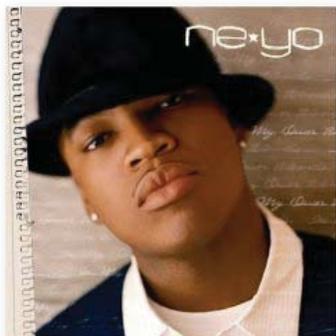
Jazz
Raphael Wressnig's Organic Trio Boom Bello
★★★★★

Rich, upbeat, exciting and full of imaginative improvisations, *Boom Bello* is the type of music you hope to hear when you go to see a live trio playing this style of jazz. Nine times out of ten, it's not nearly as good as this. A creative young musician with his own flair, Wressnig achieves a timeless and influential piece of work on a Hammond B3.



Country
The Little Willies The Little Willies
★★★★★

What began in 2003 as a side gig for five busy musicians has grown! With a very familiar voice (Norah Jones) fronting the band, and a mixture of covers from Fred Rose ("Roly Poly"), Willie Nelson (for whom the band is named), Kris Kristofferson, Townes Van Zandt, Lou Reed and more, this album is simply a must. It's a fun tribute to some American classics, and with Jones' exquisite vocal style, it's just great music!



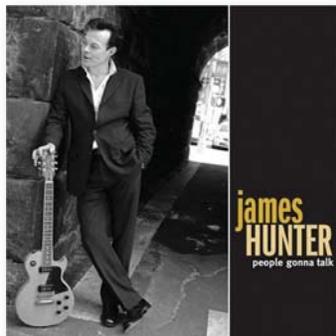
R&B
Ne-Yo In My Own Words

★★★★★
At 22, Ne-Yo (aka Shaffer Smith) has already had quite an accomplished career behind the scenes, writing for such notables as Mary J. Blige, B2K, Musiq and, most recently, Mario. So you can expect an impressive debut with a classic R&B sound. Ne-Yo is a great storyteller and has a voice that sounds like Usher and Tevin Campbell. The first single, "So Sick," is perfect for airplay, and so is the rest of the album.



Rock
Field Music Field Music

★★★★★
Field Music has all the sensibilities of classic Brit invasion rock. More than anything else, however, this is contemporary Beatles with an edge. The music is interesting — not hard or distorted rock, but more sophisticated in the approach. There are some great melodies and harmonies here, although the lyrics tend to be on the simple side. Expect to hear a lot more music from the Field; this trio will certainly establish a trend.



Blues
James Hunter People Gonna Talk

★★★★★
"James is one of the best voices, and best-kept secrets, in British R&B and soul. Check him out," says Van Morrison. That should be enough. A Van stamp of approval — get your cash out now. If you're a fan of Van, Ry Cooder or blues/ska, then Hunter's new album will fit right into your collection. He has been compared to Sam Cooke and other great artists from an early R&B era. You can't miss with this one.



Latin Pop
Belanova Dulce Beat

★★★★★
Take No Doubt and cross it with Kylie Minogue, throw in a nice samba with a pop-Latin flavor and you have the very fun, upbeat *Dulce Beat*. Some of these dance tracks are bound to appear on English radio stations despite the fact that the entire album is in Spanish. It's very enjoyable in any language. If you want something other than traditional U.S. pop styles, this talented trio from Mexico is ideal.



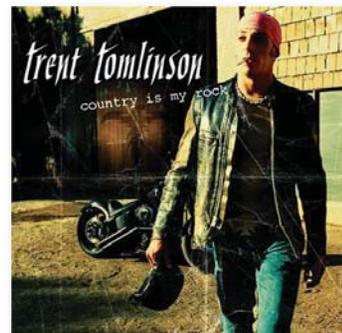
Experimental
Glenn Kotche Mobile

★★★★★
If you're looking for something entirely different and can appreciate experimental music, then Glenn Kotche's *Mobile* is worth a listen. A talented drummer on the Chicago indie scene, Kotche (of Wilco) gives the album a percussive foundation. The CD explores different musical styles with quite a twist. It's hard to label it. The best way I can describe this very offbeat, orchestral type of music is rock-techno-nervous energy.



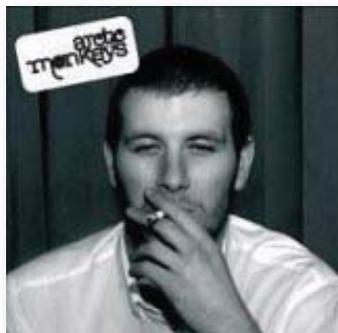
Alternative
Goldfrapp Supernature

★★★★★
This funky English duo (Alison Goldfrapp, Will Gregory) creates an interesting blend of music that sounds like something out of a Quentin Tarantino film. The title track gives you an insight into the band's true talent. "Ooh, La La" and "Slide In" should hit the airwaves pretty solidly. The rest of the CD has an electro-New Wave-'80s sound with a disco beat. The band is set to open for Depeche Mode's tour this year.



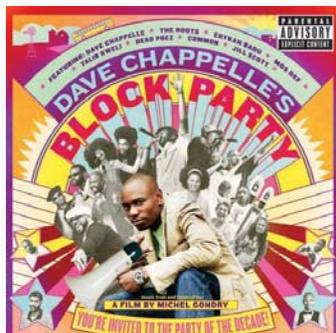
Country
Trent Tomlinson Country Is My Rock

★★★★★
Singer/songwriter Tomlinson is the next evolutionary step in contemporary country rock. Think Tim McGraw, but harder edged. *Country Is My Rock* borders on southern country-fried rock and sounds similar to Bon Jovi mixed with Johnny Cash and McGraw. His honest lyrics reveal his demons with a touch of humor. This album has ACM, CMA and Grammy awards written all over it. An excellent first release.



Alternative
Arctic Monkeys Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not

★★★★★
The Monkeys are the next big thing in alternative rock! I saw them on *SNL* and thought their live performance was impressive — unusual in an age of studio-produced rock. That talent, along with an edgy alternative sound, should send them up the charts quickly. The CD, a bit of punk with interesting lyrics and arrangements, will no doubt fly off the shelves.



Soundtrack
Various Artists Dave Chappelle's Block Party (Live)

★★★★★
If you like the movie, as I did, you'll enjoy the soundtrack on the go. The CD stands alone, but it's even better if you've seen the film so you can reminisce about the onscreen moments as you listen. An enormously talented lineup performs, including Mos Def, Erykah Badu, Common, Dead Prez, Jill Scott, Talib Kweli, The Roots, Big Daddy Kane and more.

Top 10 Albums

Matisyahu	Youth
James Hunter	People Gonna Talk
Arctic Monkeys	Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not
Field Music	Field Music
Trent Tomlinson	Country Is My Rock
The Strokes	First Impressions of Earth
Ne-Yo	In My Own Words
The Little Willies	The Little Willies
Van Morrison	Pay The Devil
Big Al Anderson	After Hours

Albums and singles listed in no particular order

Top 20 Singles

Arctic Monkeys	Fake Tales of San Francisco
Beyoncé f/Slim Thug	Check on It
James Hunter	People Gonna Talk
Matisyahu	King Without a Crown
Damian Marley	Move!
Field Music	If Only The Moon Were Up
The Strokes	Juicebox
Metric	Live It Out
Mary J. Blige	Be Without You
Big Al Anderson	Blues About You Baby
Trent Tomlinson	Country Is My Rock
The Little Willies	Love Me
Eminem f/Nate Dogg	Shake That
Van Morrison	What Am I Living For
Morningwood	Nu Rock
Raphael Wressnig's Organic Trio	Drinkin' Cognac
Goldfrapp	Ooh La La
Weezer	Perfect Situation
Belanova	Rosa Pastel
Ne-Yo	So Sick

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Illustration by Chris Kawagiwa

Dodgers Search for Nirvana

by Andrew Haas-Roche

If the Los Angeles Dodgers were a music genre, they would be grunge. For starters, most of the players on the team past their prime over a decade ago. They are more fragile than a teenager's self-esteem. And they make fans want to commit suicide.

In essence, they are hopeless.

Last year, the Dodgers' season was marred by innumerable injuries as they finished twenty games below .500. The team got off to a great start. But when players started dropping like flies, the team began to take the shape of a minor-league club. Expect something similar this season.

The Dodgers will start the season with an opening-day roster full of talent, but most of the guys won't make it past June.

During the offseason, the team's front office responded to last year's injury plague. They scoured retirement homes and hospitals for a group of guys that know a thing or two about injuries. Their first acquisition was Nomar Garciaparra. The perennially injured all-star is an interesting choice for a team, which suffers injuries any time someone sneezes. At least he will look nice beside J.D. Drew on the team's roster of invalids.

To accompany the two on the disabled list, they brought in 40-year-old speedster Kenny Lofton and were able to coax Sandy Alomar, Jr. out of retirement. If they could add Albert Belle and play Nirvana in the locker room, everyone might think it is still the early 90s and won't notice that neither player has much left in the tank. Or maybe they are just trying to put together the greatest disabled list of all time.

Add 35-year-old third-baseman Bill Mueller to the mix. Mueller is a nice contact hitter who can post a solid batting average, but don't rely on him to play a full season. Only once in the last three years has he played more than 115 games.

Second baseman Jeff Kent is back for another year and he is usually steady as a rock. Unfortunately, he's about as mobile as one too. He should play first base, but Garciaparra will probably have to play that position on account of his greater incompetence at shortstop. It's not a good sign when the battle for first base is between two elderly middle infielders.

The addition of shortstop Rafael Furcal, a legitimate leadoff hitter with a relatively clear medical record, was a good move and will be the centerpiece of this otherwise shaky infield. Plus, he wasn't born in the 60s, and it always makes things easier when someone can push the wheelchairs.

If the new corps can play up to expectations, meaning not at all, then Dodger fans can look forward to a comprehensive training in kinesiology.

The outfield is just as fragile as the infield. Drew should occupy his annual spot on the injured list for at least a few months. Lofton is already planning to sit out 50 games. That leaves Jose Cruz, Jr. and Ricky Ledee to be steady fixtures in the field. Cruz and Ledee are both major-league journey-men and shouldn't hold an everyday spot in any starting lineup.

Then there is the pitching. The Dodgers possess a fairly solid staff with the rotation shaping up to be Derek Lowe, Brad Penny, Odalis Perez, Brett Tomko and Jae Seo. Penny, Tomko and Seo are the new faces to the Dodgers. Unfortunately, the Dodgers let promising Jeff Weaver escape to a real L.A. team that for some reason plays in Orange County. Lowe could be solid for a year or two and while they've got him slotted as the team's No. 1 pitcher, the team really does not have an ace.

Odalis Perez should be due for a good year. He has them every other season and last year was not one of them.

Tomko will be able to eat some innings. And he is consistent, but that just means he's not terrible and not great. He has little room for growth.

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Then there is Penny, who has never panned out to be as good as he was with the Marlins and he missed a good chunk of last season due to injury. In a way, the success of the staff will largely depend on him. He could make them very good or very bad.

The only pitcher the Dodgers brought in that has potential is Seo, who could see a decent opportunity to pick up wins as the team's fifth starter. The 28-year-old Korean came over from the Mets. He could be a bright spot this season, if he can start 30 games.

The one thing that is certain is the Dodgers have a great bullpen, again, only if it can remain healthy. Of course, it revolves around the arm of Eric Gagne who missed most of last season with a sprained ulnar collateral ligament in his right elbow. The man they

If the new corps can play up to expectations, meaning not at all, then Dodger fans can look forward to a comprehensive training in kinesiology.

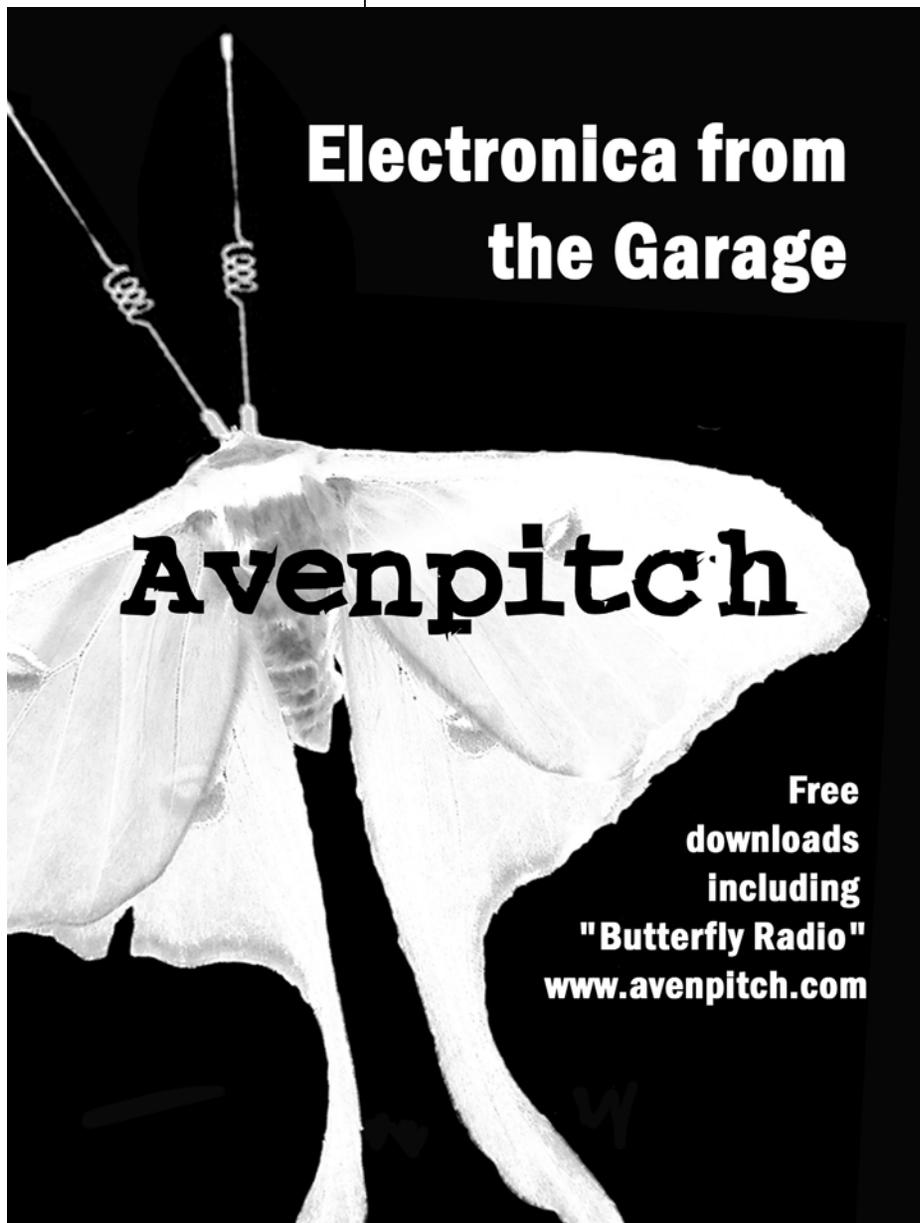
call "Game Over" appears set to come back and play a full season as the team's closer. He could be the best closer in baseball, but that is only if the Dodgers can give him the lead going into the ninth inning. Otherwise, he's useless.

They also have setup men Danys Baez and Yhency Brazoban. Both of these guys could step in as closer if Gagne were to go down, but again a closer is only as good as his team.

Obviously, the Dodgers will need to catch a few breaks, or need to avoid them rather, in order to win. But the chances of Garcia-parra and Drew being healthy at the same time are about as likely as Lofton stealing 60 bases again.

Position by position, the 2006 Dodgers could field a decent team. They've got decent starting pitching. The bullpen could be the best in the majors if Eric Gagne plays a full season and the lineup has some speed and a little bit of power. For the most part, they are a sorry bunch of brittle has-beens. Much like the old grunge bands of the 90s. ■

Andrew Haas-Roche is the monthly editor at the LAJ. He can be contacted at andrew@losangelesjournal.com.



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F1 + U.S. = ?

by Kali "Duke" Chowdhury

Why Formula 1 and America have yet to be friends.

If you are one of those people who think motor racing is just a bunch of cars going around, around a track wasting gas, well this article is not for you. Do not be fooled, however, there is motor racing and then well there is Motor Racing. Ask any racing fan in the world and chances are they will have heard of one particular racing series Formula 1 (F1), the pinnacle of motor sports.

It may surprise you to know that the most expensive motor sport series in the world is, to say the least, not very popular in the United States. The reason for this may have something to do with the fact that before this year, for over a decade, there were no American drivers in the sport. In fact, the last American F1 champion was Mario Andretti, and his son upon his debut in F1 was not very successful at all. This coupled with the fact that the kind of racing series that are a part and parcel of the American racing scene (NASCAR, INDY RACING LEAGUE) is quite different from the type of racing that is F1.

So what is F1? Well, it is hard to describe. In many ways it is just like any other racing series — a bunch of guys in a bunch of really expensive toys trying to go as quick as they can. Because traveling at 200 miles per hour is natural to them.

Then of course, you realize that in F1 a single team can spend over five hundred million dollars in research and development over the course of a season that lasts less than eight months — a sum that is greater than the GDP of quite a few countries I can think of. Yes, you read correctly. A single team. And there are 11 teams total in 2006! These teams employ hundreds of people whose sole goal is to reduce drag, increase fuel efficiency, increase aero dynamics and mechanical grip to make the car hit lightning speed.

The result? 0-130-0 mph in less than four seconds, performance that is matched by no other motor sports in the world (while some may accelerate faster, the overall drivability and

precision coupled with its speed and the strain it puts on the drivers is unsurpassed)!

That's why the FIA (the sports governing body) has been struggling to keep speeds down to a level that is drivable by a human being. Not surprisingly, the drivers in F1 are the fittest in the world, because continually pulling over three times your body weight can become very painful after just a few laps, not to mention 57. Yet despite the speeds involved, F1 remains one of the safest racing series in the world. The last casualty was Ayrton Senna, the three time world champion of more than a decade ago.

The good news is that much of the time and effort spent by teams in the series (Toyota, Honda, Mercedes, BMW, Renault) is for more than just kicks. The F1 is also a testing ring for the major automobile companies to see what faults will be transferred to their road cars, which of course for us means improved handling, traction, safety and fuel economy.

Which is a very real factor when choosing a car these days when filling up your tank costs more than \$2.50 a gallon. F1 plans to introduce rules that reward teams for using alternative fuels, which will, undoubtedly, find their way to road cars of the future, resulting in better fuel economy, increased engine life and one heck of a smooth ride.

Why then, has F1 not gained acceleration in the hearts of the U.S. sports fans? Perhaps, because the level of funding necessary to compete at a reasonable level in F1 racing is so high that very few teams can keep up, resulting in less exciting nose-to-nose racing leagues like NASCAR or INDY Racing League (IRL). Whatever reason you choose to accept, rest assured if Scott Speed, the first American in F1 racing in over a decade, becomes even a reasonably successful driver, you might just see a lot more of F1 than you could have imagined. ■



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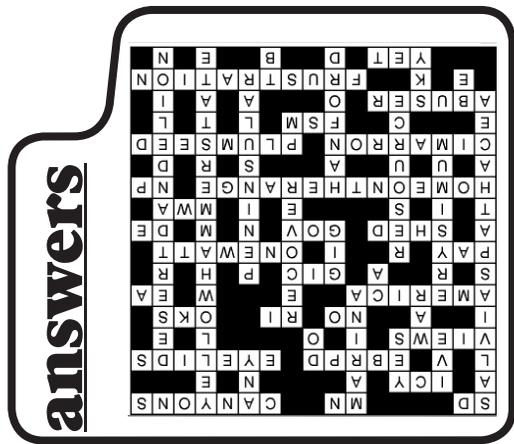
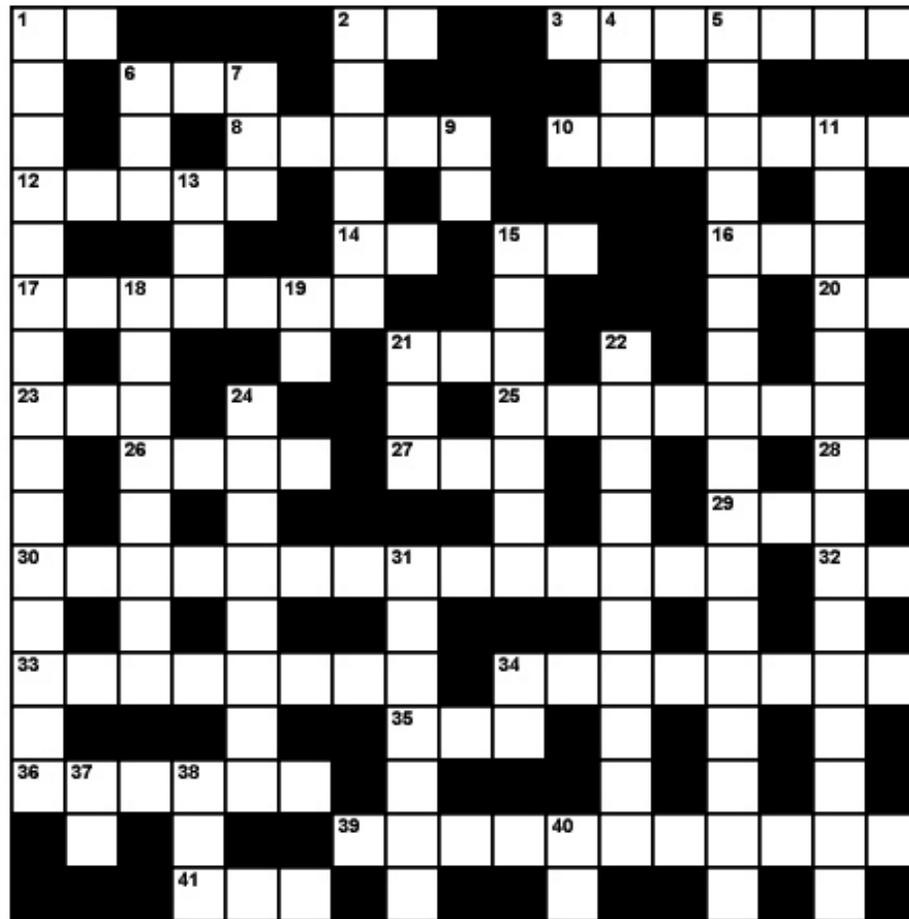
1. Nov. 02, 1889 state
2. Minnesota
3. _____, Cultures, and Environmental Change
6. ODE TO _____-BUMP
8. mismanager of East Bay cowparks
10. Where the moon caresses my _____
12. Responses to _____ Against Wolf Reintroduction
14. There is _____ beauty
15. Red Maple (state tree)
16. House Panel _____ Change In Forest Bill
17. Weed Science Society of _____
20. BLM didn't do one
21. Grazing Impact Checklist
23. Refuse to _____ forest use fees, hopeful urges
25. power required to rape the west
26. On the value of water _____ and ecosystem integrity
27. S.D. _____ Fears Drought Worsening
28. 1st state
29. Montana enviros
30. A western folk song
32. GIC - bison shot on public lands after they leave Yellowstone

33. _____ National Grassland closed to grazing (KS)
34. New Mexico _____
35. Forest Service Manual
36. "range management is a chronic _____ of riparian habitats"
39. Cites _____ with Forest Service mismanagement of grazing, logging, and personnel
41. Grazing retirement plan not off the tarmac, _____

Down

1. Hummingbird sage (sci.)
2. Parry's _____
4. Grazing damages more river miles than _____ other source of non-industrial pollution in the West
5. Nickname of Alabama
6. They take me aside and show where _____ strayed
7. _____, I love tomorrows
9. That they _____ half as much

11. Malacothrix glabrata
13. _____ on the West
15. Cows depart, but can antelope _____?
18. wallflower genus (sci.)
19. 3 1st state
21. When I've done my _____ I point my rig
22. _____ Bighorn Sheep
24. National _____ Inventory (NRCS)
31. Save the _____ Reach
34. Particulate Matter
37. Snake River Spring Chinook Will _____ Extinct In 18 Years
38. _____ lupine
40. Livestock killed, but no more _____ found



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Shoe's Untied - ARIES Fools!

Learn personal space, Ram. When you get drunk you instantly transform into that creepy, old man who wants to touch all the pretty, young things as you slurp down drinks that aren't even yours with one hand, and get the other one hooked around your underwear, tugging on that Eternal Wedgie. Your ideal birthday party resembles a beer commercial involving a fog machine, a pinata full of squirt guns, and she-clowns in bikini tops and rainbow-afro wigs. Weird, Aries. But at least you won't be cooped up inside talking back to your porn.



Overpriced TAURUS Attraction

After all the money you recently dropped on stuff you didn't need, you should stay in a while to play with your literary character action figurines while saving up your Holiday Inn points. Why not brush up your internet dating profile with some new witty quotes by dead people, then take your Mark Twain doll out to play in his remote-control steamboat? It doesn't take big crowds to appease you, little Bull. Your interests are simple. But I'd bring Rudyard Kipling's action elephant in from the porch before your Sagittarius neighbor gets drunk and tries riding it.



The Holy TWINSity

Most Geminis don't care whether God exists or not, but I need you all to take a lesson from infamous Gemini, Jeffrey Dahmer. Due to his strict religious upbringing, Jeffrey had a difficult time coming into his homosexuality - so difficult that he ate other homosexuals. Get your spirituality down, mighty Twins. Whether it's worshipping a cow or a skinny Jewish carpenter, you need a healthy relationship with the Almighty. I'm not saying the lack of such faith will lead you down a path of necrophilia and cannibalism, but I'm not saying it won't.



Take a ChANCER On Me

Dear Cancer, your tastes are so simple. You loathe noisy clubs and prefer staying in for a romantic evening with a box of wine and two straws. You enjoy fine dining and bingo. All you want is a partner who loves these things too. Places you should not explore for Cancer-worthy mates: the emergency room at 2 a.m. and the Port Authority bus terminal. Stick to candle stores and dog parks. And remember, sweet baby-face, what Mom always said: "If she has a tattoo on her ankle she definitely takes it in the butt!"



Disarm Your LEObido Torpedo

You're still single and wondering why. Let me help, Leo. When you meet a nice girl at the bar and she doesn't wanna shake the hand you just used to pick your nose, don't flip her the bird and shout, "Lesbian!" This will not go over well. Especially if her sidekick is a Scorpio in a flammable wig, looking for a fight. Man, if I had a nickel for every Leo I saw get his ass kicked last month I'd have enough to cover your dental bills for broken teeth! Get a muzzle on that festering mouth and you just might find someone desperate enough to date you. Or maybe your "friends" will at least start calling again.



Buy Cheap ViaRGro Online!

At the butt of everyone's jokes this month, Virgo is feeling pushed to the max. This is really gonna take its toll in May when you're hopped up on paranoia, thinking everyone's laughing at you when they're not. My advice for April is stay indoors making sweet love to the internet, buying Back To The Beach on DVD, maybe some vintage lunchboxes, and jazz up your oonderpants drawer by throwing new Underoos into the mix. If you do leave the house, try to limit it to late-night runs. But be careful wearing that hat and dark glasses after the sun goes down - you already give off a psycho-vibe without wearing the costume of one.



Nobody Likes a BRAggart

Dearest Scales, you're ruffling my feathers. We all got the holiday card of you standing between your Mercedes and Lamborghini, arms stretched to heaven as though thanking God himself for your success. And we liked your decadence just as much then as we do know now when you drive by blasting bad rap music about bling and bitches. Even though your fishtank of smuggled piranha died, you're having a fantastic year - but we're all sick of high-fiving you. Don't call me for a while - unless it's to go puppy-shopping.



Thank You, SCORPIO, May I Have Another?

You hate watching people floss. You hate members of the same sex. And you hate peanut butter. But you love fake hair, excessive eye makeup and new things to complain about. I'm so sick of your attitude and road-rage that I wanna tie you up in used floss, force-feed you chunky peanut butter, and set your wig on fire. But only a virgin wallflower or masochist would waste time with you, dominatrix of the zodiac. Go pull the wings off flies as you sit and wonder why all of your exes change their names and move six states away after your verbal spankings. I'll call you when I'm hating myself and maybe you can put me over your knee?



Don't Run With SAGissors

So you think you're ready for more responsibility, huh, flake? You certainly have made strides, Archer, but now you're considering yourself mature enough for an endeavor like pet owner?! Go slow, Sag. Get a cheap plant and see if it survives three weeks on your windowsill. It won't, but you'll still jump into whatever it is your spoiled little heart desires. You are the performing monkey of the zodiac. (Why do you think so many friends let you sleep on their couches for free?) Remember what happened to that kitten when they gave it to Cocoa the Gorilla? Think long and hard before any big commitments. A tattoo could look stupid but a dead kitten is really gonna stink up your bedroom (i.e. your friend's livingroom.)



GOAT For It!

It's been an inventive winter for you, Cappy! So what if someone else already patented your backpack vacuum cleaner and that visor you crafted to keep shampoo out of kids' eyes in the bathtub? It just goes to show that you were right - those would have been brilliant, marketable inventions! Keep thinkin' 'em up! Capricorns never say, "DIE!" But you do say made-up words like "Ass-Slop." Now that's a real gem and versatile as a noun or verb. "I ass-slop ye Capricorn Knight of Brilliance!" Now how about handing over your George Foreman grill before taking it apart to see what makes it tick and electrocuting your imaginative self?



Please Don't Feed The WATER-BEARERS

When busted for biting your nails, you get all cute protesting, "What's the big deal?! They're just nails!" And they're your nails - your body, your choice, Aquarius! But so help me, if you reach onto my plate one more time I'm gonna bite off more than your goddamn nails. I know you've stocked up on Girl Scout cookies, like some kind of pre-hibernating Smurf, so heaven help the water-bearer I catch in my stash again. It'll be more than your gnarled little hands that end up disfigured over my Peanut Butter Patties.

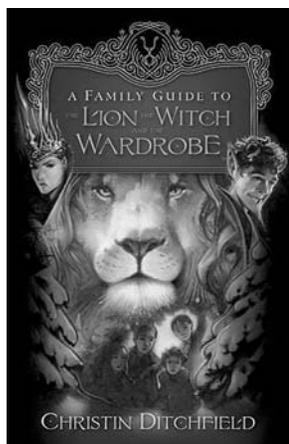


FISH Is Not On The Menu Tonight

Normally, you slay me, Pisces. You're mysterious, philosophical, poetry-instigating, and morbidly intelligent. Normally. But lately something's gone awry. Instead of farting under the blanket and savoring your own stink until you fall asleep, you should get back to pondering the dark mysteries of life. It's much sexier than the alternative, which you're so fruitfully basking in. ■

04.03

Dodgers Opening Day
Dodgers Stadium, 1000
Elysian Park Ave., Los Angeles,
1:10 p.m.: Dodgers vs
Atlanta Braves in Home
Opener.
(323) 224-1500 or
www.dodgers.com.



04.04

The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe - DVD releases Tuesday
http://adisney.go.com/disneypictures/narnia/main.html?deeplink=production

04.07

Friends with Money - In Theaters

A female dramedy set in Los Angeles.
http://www.sonyclassics.com/friendswithmoney/

04.07

Angels Home Opener
Angel Stadium of Anaheim, 2000 Gene Autry
Way, Anaheim, (714)
634-2000 or laangels.com.
7:05 p.m.: Angels take on the New York Yankees.





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04.07 & 04.10

The 7th MALIBU INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
http://www.malibufilmfestival.com/06_home.html

04.09

Clippers at Lakers
Staples Center, 1111 S. Figueroa St., Los Angeles, (213)-742-7340 or lakers.com.
6:30 p.m.: Final meeting of city basketball rivals.

04.13

Artist Reception of Group Show: Rittenhouse, Hans-Peter Langeder, Michelle Coffey, Marshall, Maggie Thomas Topping
Infusion Gallery, 828 South Main St., Los Angeles
Tues-Sat 12-6pm
(213) 683-8827
Show ends April 29

04.14 & 04.16

Bonds visits LA
Dodgers Stadium, 1000 Elysian Park Ave., Los Angeles, (323) 224-1500 or dodgers.com. Barry Bonds and the

c a l e n d a r

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San Francisco Giants make their first trip to LA to play the dodgers.

04.16

Lorna Simpson: Photographs from famous postmodern feminist photographer.
Museum of Contemporary Art, 250 South Grand Ave., Los Angeles
Mon 11-5pm; Thurs 11-8pm; Fri 11-5pm; Sat & Sun 11-6pm
(213) 621-1741

04.21

American Dreamz – In Theaters
The president becomes a judge on a TV talent show. A satire by Paul Weitz.
<http://www.americandreamzmovie.com/>

04.22

Lisa Eisner: A Butterfly Fluttered; Photographs of the West
MB Gallery; 612 North Almont Dr., West Hollywood
Tues-Sat 10-5pm
(310) 550-0050

04.28-04.30

Angels vs. White Sox
Angel Stadium of Anaheim, 2000 Gene Autry Way, Anaheim, (714) 634-2000 or laangels.com.
Angels seek early redemption in ALCS rematch.

04.29 & 04.30

Los Angeles Times Festival of Books
Saturday and Sunday @ UCLA
<http://www.latimes.com/extras/festivalofbooks>

04.30

Glass: Material Matters: Exhibition of contemporary glass incorporating more than fifty works from LACMA's permanent collection
LACMA, 5905 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles
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