

ART + MUSIC + PHOTOGRAPHY + WHATEVER

# FANE

**FEATURES:** MIA PRIEST (MULTIMEDIA), MR. M (PHOTOGRAPHY), PRINCESS DISEASE (MUSIC), STRAIGHT PANIC (MUSIC), JESSE STROHAUER (MULTIMEDIA), STEPHANIE T. (POETRY), JO BRAGG (MULTIMEDIA), MANUEL J. PEREZ III (COLLAGE), MONO THEORY (MUSIC), PETER KALISCH (MULTIMEDIA), PRETTY HATE (MULTIMEDIA), **ARTICLES:** "IT'S TIME TO RESHUFFLE THIS ACRONYM!" BY R. T. FERENT, "SEIZURE" BY SEAN HALPIN, "COINS IN A BLENDER" BY LINDSAY VICTORIA, "UNDER WHAT POWER" BY LOCKE FITZROY

PLUS MUSIC, BOOK, AND LIVE SHOW REVIEWS + MORE!

ISSUE NO. 3

SUMMER 2024

Photo by: Steve Goodwin

# VAL DENHAM

THE LEGENDARY BRITISH ARTIST TALKS WITH US ABOUT A LITTLE OF EVERYTHING; FROM HER EARLY ART SCHOOL DAYS AND THE EMERGING INDUSTRIAL SCENE, TO SURVIVING GENDER DYSPHORIA, FINDING HARMONY LIVING WITH OCD, AND HER ELECTRONICA INFUSED NEW ALBUM "POLTERZEITGEIST".





# Stop!

*Before you devour every tasty morsel packed into this Issue, a few pleas from:*



**1.** *We are desperately trying to increase/improve our standings across all social media platforms. If you aren't already, please consider following us on Instagram (our largest community by far) and all other platforms.*

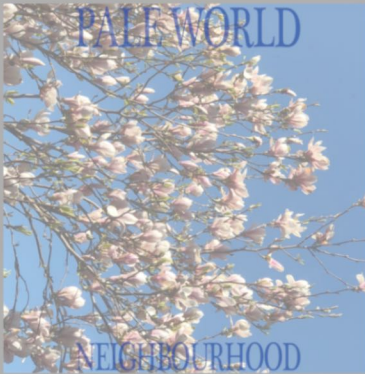
**2.** *We are just starting to create video content on YouTube (and possibly other places in the future). Recently, we've partnered with Veronica Wood of The Fanta Phantom to help bring better visual content, and wider coverage, in the future. Please subscribe to both the FANE and The Fanta Phantom channels on YouTube for some excellent content to come!*

**3.** *If you would like to help FANE grow, please consider making a financial contribution. The best way to do that is through our Ko-Fi where you can make a one time or recurring donation in your amount of choice. Next would be buying some of our shirts, hoodies, and other ephemera. The digital edition of FANE will always be free, but it does take a lot to make happen (and even more to do it like the "big boys" do). Right now FANE is created entirely on a hand-me-down iPad nearing forced obsolescence, using the Procreate app. I desperately need to repair my PC which has been holding back a lot of what I'd like to do, and am capable of doing. Look, I know everyone's hurting. If you can't support FANE financially, please consider doing any or all of the actions mentioned in 1 and 2 above.*

**All FANE Links: [linktr.ee/FANEmag](https://linktr.ee/FANEmag)**



# Venalism 2024 releases



**PALE WORLD**  
'Neighbourhood' (V38)



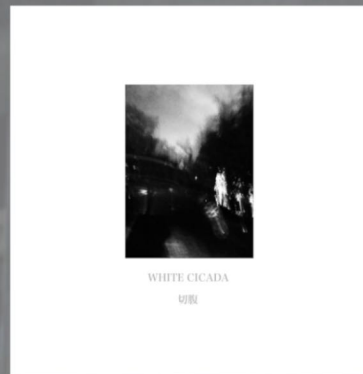
**SMR.TNI**  
'Unreasonable' (V37)



**WHITEHILL//POSSIDENTE**  
'Scraps' (V36)



**ZURA MAKHARADZE**  
'Dionysis' Blood And  
Sperm In Our Mouths' (V34)



**WHITE CICADA**  
'切腹' (V33)



**RITUAL PURIFICATION**  
'Gods Of The Winds' (V32)



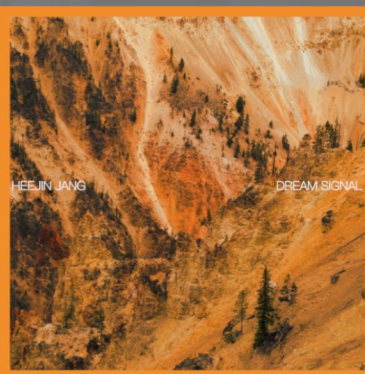
**KATE FINLEY**  
'lacrosse' (V31)



**STABLE**  
'Empty Gestures' (V30)



**CAUSTIC BLISS**  
'Anthracite' (V29)



**HEEJIN JANG**  
'Dream Signal' (V28)

Label based in Edinburgh, Scotland.  
Music on cassettes.  
Pro-intensive creativity.  
Anti-industry.  
Anti-bigotry.

[venalism.bigcartel.com](http://venalism.bigcartel.com)  
[venalism.bandcamp.com](http://venalism.bandcamp.com)  
[instagram.com/venalism\\_music](https://www.instagram.com/venalism_music)



# CONtent

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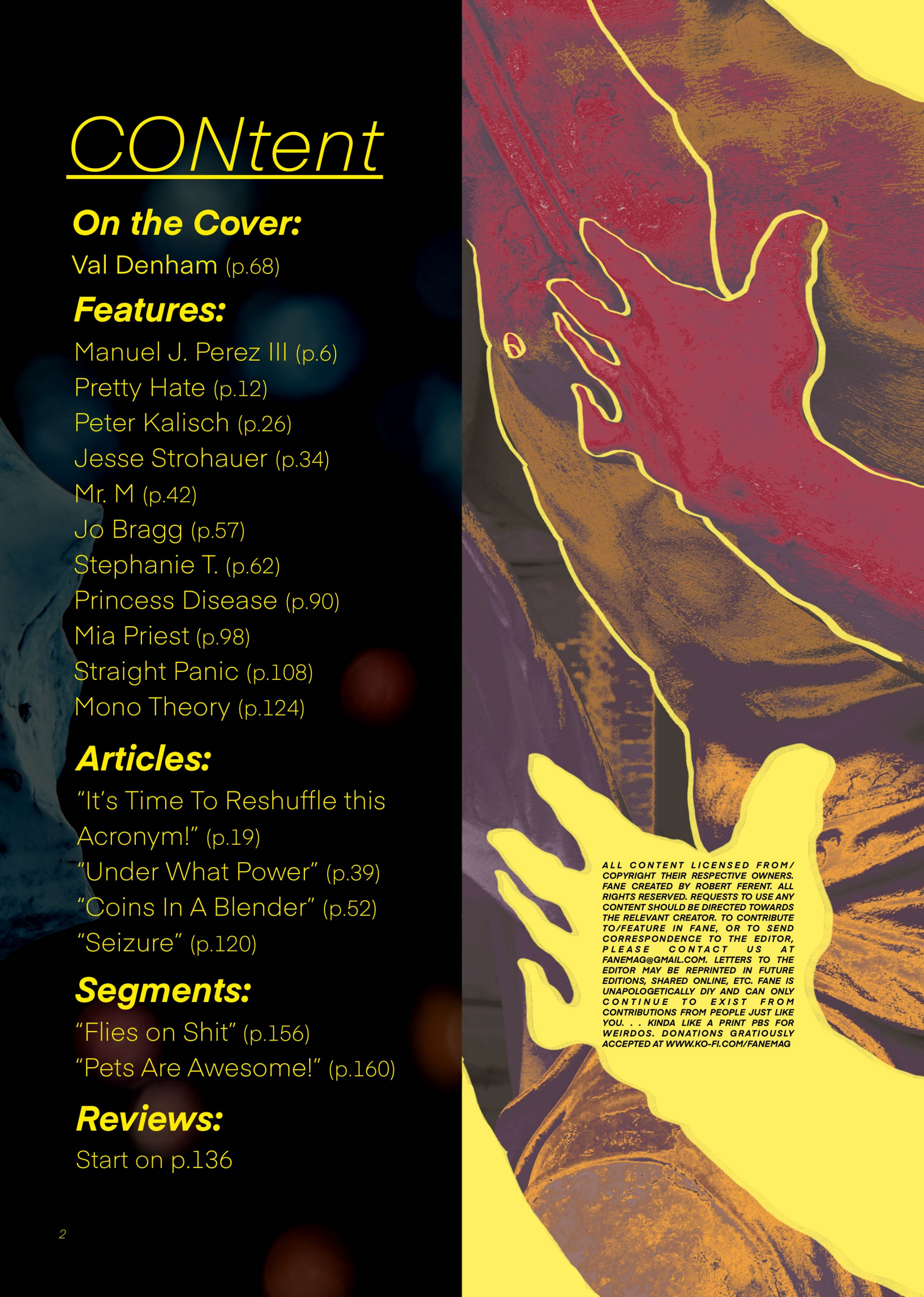
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## CREDITS

**Robert Ferent** Editor-in-Queef  
**Veronica Wood** "In-House" Videography

**Manuel J Perez III:** Photography provided by MJPIII. Digital Collage by MJPIII. Design/Layout by FANE..

**Pretty Hate:** Photography, Collage, Painting by Sydney (Pretty Hate). Design/Layout by FANE..

**5 Albums I Can't Live Without feat. boyslut:** Photography by @casperxross (on IG). Written by boyslut. Design/Layout by FANE..

**"It's Time To Reshuffle This Acronym! / Demystifying Transitioning & Dispelling Lies":** Written by R. T. Ferent. Marsha P. Johnson photo by Henry O'Neal via Wikimedia Commons under a CC0 license. Sylvia Rivera photo provided by Roseleechs via Wikimedia Commons under license CC BY-SA 4.0. Design/Layout by FANE. Consulting graciously provided by Mia Rose Malone, Evelyn Dearbourn, Sophia C. (@skilasophia on IG), Kyra Nightingale, Lillith Mircalla Aurora, Rae C., and Opal Ammer. We greatly appreciate their input and patience.

**Peter Kalisch's Contention Exhibition:** Photographs provided by Peter Kalisch. Live photo by Arrow John Bradley Rodriguez. Swing photo by Scott Freeman. Main photo by Roman Udalov, Collage by Peter Kalisch. Interview by R. Ferent. Design/Layout by FANE.

**Jesse Strohauer:** Photography, Mixed Media Artwork, Written by Jesse Strohauer. Design/Layout FANE.

**"Under What Power":** Written by Locke Fitzroy. Photography by Wikimedia Commons user Ramcru, used under license CC BY-SA 4.0. Design/Layout by FANE.

**The Leather and Fetish Photography of Mr. M:** 8 Photographs by Mr. M. Design/Layout by FANE.

**Mono Theory:** Photography by Mono Theory. Interview by R. Ferent. Design/Layout by FANE.

**"Coins in a Blender":** Written by Lindsay Victoria. Photography, Glitch Graphics courtesy of Lindsay Victoria. Design/Layout by FANE..

**Jo Bragg:** Photography, Written by Jo Bragg. Design/Layout by FANE.

**The Litanies of Stephanie T.:** Photography, Written by Stephanie T. Design/Layout by FANE.

**Val Denham:** Cover & Inside Spread photography by Steve Goodwin. All other photographs and artworks from the vaults of Val Denham. Back Cover painting by Val Denham. Interview by R. Ferent. Design/Layout by FANE.

**Princess Disease:** Photography, Illustrations by Thom Imbalance. Interview by R. Ferent. Design/Layout by FANE.

**"Seizure":** All photographs provided by Sean Halpin. Written by Sean Halpin. Edited by R. Ferent. Design/Layout by FANE.

**Mia Priest:** All photographs taken or provided by Mia Priest. Interview by R. Ferent. Design/Layout by FANE.

**STRAIGHT PANIC:** Splash photo by Johnny Ray. Color half page photo by Gyna Bootleg. Black and White live photo by Collin Heroux. All other photography, and collage by Thomas Boettner. Interview by R. Ferent. Design/Layout by FANE.

**Reviews:** Written by R. Ferent. Performance live photography by Veronica Wood and R. Ferent. Cover art for reviewed media included under Fair Use; we in no way make any claims to those pieces, and they appear here solely for review/academic purposes as allowed under US Law. Design/Layout by FANE.

**"Flies on Shit":** Illustration/Written by R. Ferent. Design/Layout R. Ferent.

**"Pets Are Awesome":** Photography, Pet Information by Thomas Boettner. Design/Layout by FANE.

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# A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome back everyone to another Issue of FANE. Had some real ADHD burnout during this one that caused a whole bunch of delays, and a couple failed features, and I'm truly sorry about that. I was riding a great Hyperactivity wave, but when it crashed... oh boy did it crash hard. I would like to thank everyone I had to email or message during my apology tour; every last one of you were understanding and cool, and that was greatly appreciated. Ok, enough of that, let's get to business!

The cover feature for this issue is the incredible Val Denham. If you aren't familiar with Val, she's a British artist who became known for her associations with the emerging industrial music scene in England. Genesis Breyer P-Orridge was a big early supporter of Val's, including her art first on Throbbing Gristle and Industrial Records items, and later extensively throughout Psychic TV's career (the dogheaded christ upon the psychic cross imagery synonymous with PTV? That's Val's work). Val's earliest music group, The Death & Beauty Foundation, even almost had an album on Industrial Records. You've also seen Val's work pop up over at the Some Bizarre label, most notably on the cover of the infamous "If You Can't Please Yourself..." compilation, as well as works for Marc Almond/Marc & The Mambas and more. If you were lucky, you might have caught her performing live with Black Sun Productions in the mid/late 2000s.

All of her scene accolades, and obvious artistic talent aside, Val is a 67(!) year old Transgender woman, which in today's society is the equivalent of seeing a pink elephant with butterfly wings. She survived the cruelty of Thatcher's England, made it through the AIDS crisis of the 80s and 90s, and continues to thrive despite the full on assault on the Transgender community throughout the last who knows how many decades by religious and conservative ignorance throughout the world. We have lost so many of our elders to violence and disease. It is a genuine gift that we still have people like Val to celebrate. Oh... and Val's got a darkwave/electronica inspired new album coming out called "POLTERZEITGEIST"; and it's really great. I dunno a lot of 67 year olds turning up the tempo and heat on their music careers, do you? Get all up in the artistic greatness that is Val.

As cringe as this may be, I've asked (ok begged) our readers for feedback on the published issues of FANE thus far. Mostly we received Hearts/Likes, which I'll take... my ego starved to death in the early 90s and is desperate for resuscitation. We've also got some nice comments/thoughts on IG and via email, some of which I'll proudly and happily share here (credited anonymously since some were said in private conversations):

*"The best quality in a DIY subculture magazine I have ever seen."*

*"I love it. Hope to be in it one day."*

*"Y'all do a great job. It was great to show mom being quoted in Issue 1."*

*"In an age of too much information, a great way to find the best of the best in contemporary queer and experimental art."*

*"The layout is gorgeous."*

*"It's really good. Well done!"*

I get some of those are just simple, positive statements, but where they came from meant the world to me. I have a very hard time accepting, or believing, compliments, but these got through. Thank you.

In other news, turns out getting grants for a small business with no money is next to impossible, unless you can somehow pay out hundreds to thousands (annually) to gatekeepers who hold the "certifications" you need. How exactly do they certify I'm gay anyway? Is there a dick sucking test or something? Do I have to give an appointed reviewmaster a rim job? When the revolution comes, don't forget about these fucking assholes who claimed to support their fellow communities while extorting them. This capitalist hellscape is really getting to me these days.

Anyhow... Issue 3 is loaded, as you're about to see. We've got features with 10 amazing artists from across the creative spectrum; musicians, illustrators, painters, photographers, poets, etc., and we've got articles discussing life with seizures, putting coins in a blender for the sake of art, protesting and protecting each other as a community, and more.

I've also written an opinion piece for/about the Transgender community. I may have not worded everything to perfection, but my intent as an ally is, hopefully, clear. I put every last functioning cell of my heart into it. I did run parts of it by members of the Transgender community willing to lend me their time. I know educating strangers can be exhausting, and I am so grateful to those people who helped me grow, and did so with kindness and patience. A lesson: DON'T FEAR BEING CANCELLED BECAUSE YOU DON'T KNOW EVERY GENDER/SEX RELATED TERM! Just be a respectful human, declare your intent, and have a civilized conversation. I made mistakes. We corrected them together and no one got hurt. The only people being *cancelled* are those who seek to cause harm with malicious intent in their hearts.

I'm probably going to have to revisit format after this one. I hate that the print edition costs as much as it does, and it only goes up with each added page. As a "print-on-demand" publication, there's little I can do about the cost. I've already set prices as low as I can. I couldn't choose to make \$0 on each issue, so, for example, I make \$0.90 on every \$25 copy of Issue 2 sold. \$25 is a lot for an indie magazine, and it's a lot to ask of people living paycheck to paycheck. To maintain quality until there's enough interest/demand to print these on my own, I may have to go to a firm 76pg (80 w/covers) format at \$20 like Issue 1. I dunno... let me know what you think! Would you rather have more content/fluctuating price or a fixed amount of pages/consistent price? Please, keep in mind, the digital edition will always be freely available on our website.

Ok... enough rambling! Go enjoy the issue!

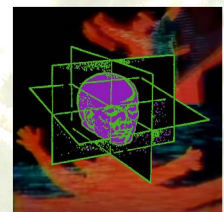
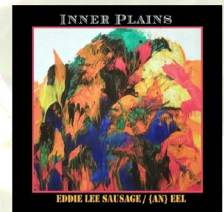
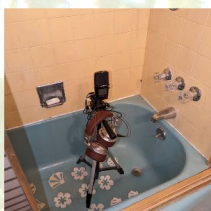
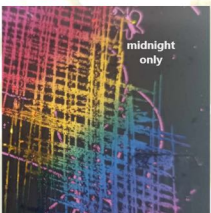
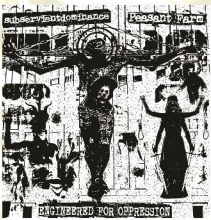


#PutTheTFirst  
#FixYourHeartsOrDie



# Love Earth Music

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CDs Only \$7 / LPs Only \$15!



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- Dying In Space - "002" - LEM-302
- Abdul Sherzai - "Idle Passage" - LEM-303
- +DOG+ - "The Family Music Book Vol. 4" - LEM-304
- Viliji - "I Came From Nothing" - LEM-305
- Peace & Love - "New American Nihilist" - LEM-307
- Keach - "Never Alone" - LEM-308
- Threes and Will & Huerequeque - "Blood River Poort" - LEM-309
- Inlet Terror - "It Came From The Shore" - LEM-311
- +DOG+ - "X9" - LEM-312
- V/A - Gnawing Teeth / Mallard Theory / Vasectomy Party / Takeshita - LEM-313
- Caleb Chase - "Looking At Bugs Under A Log" - LEM-315
- Zilmrah - "Hallucinatory X-Ray Visions" - LEM-316
- Extra - "Spiral Athletics" - LEM-317
- +DOG+ - "To Share Forever With You" - LEM-318
- Juice Machine - "Broken and Dilapidated" - LEM-319
- DJ Sid James - "Perricone's Coat" - LEM-320
- Compactor - "United" - LEM-321
- Luca Sciaratta - "de sobnet ach" - LEM-323
- Thee Checkered Shoe Dude - "A Lit Test of That" - LEM-324
- +D:A+ - "2" - LEM-325
- Blue Collar Calling - "Anxiety Attack" - LEM-326
- +DOG+ - "X10" - LEM-327
- Modelbau - "Blackout" - LEM-328
- Macronympha / New Grasping Machina - split - LEM-329
- Chefkirk - "Giant Size" - LEM-330
- Peace & Love - "New American Extremist" - LEM-331
- Cosmic Cars - "Soft Attack" - LEM-332
- Rudolf Eb.er / Alice Kemp - "Skinned Alight" - LEM-333
- Commode Minstrels in Bullface - "Demonion Abyss Broadcast" - LEM-334
- Flesh Shuddering - "Scissors" - LEM-335
- Eddie Lee Sausage / {AN} EEL - "Inner Plains" - LEM-336
- Midnight Only - LEM-337
- Instagon - "Ghost Hunting" - LEM-338
- +DOG+ - "Angel Wings" - LEM-340
- Bison Squad - "Prodigal Nothingness" - LEM-341
- subervientdominance / Peasant Farm - "Engineered For Oppression" - LEM-342
- Deftly Demolition - "Quantum Sleeper" - LEM-343
- Spacial Absence - "Clear The Airwaves" - LEM-344
- E.O.C. - "Dreams" - LEM-345
- God Pussy - "Trilogia Do Terceiro Mundo" - LEM-346
- Unredeemable - "Preverbal" - LEM-347
- Money - "Money" - LEM-0000000000000000
- Matt Luczak - "Sony Guts" - LEM-349
- Howard Stelzer / Richard Youngs - "This Is It" - LEM-350
- Hot Tag - LEM-351
- Dysmorphic - "To Defy The Laws Of Grindcore" - LEM-352
- +DOG+ - "Peace" - LEM-354
- +DOG+ - "Our Beloved....." - LEM-356
- Unsub - "Ambitious Victim" - LEM-357

[loveearthmusic.com](http://loveearthmusic.com) to order physical items.  
[loveearthmusic1.bandcamp.com](http://loveearthmusic1.bandcamp.com) to purchase downloads



Age: 28  
Pronouns: Any  
Gender: Non-Binary  
Location: Troy, NY  
Creative Mediums:  
Digital Visual Collage,  
Sound, Performance,  
Improvisation, Architecture,  
Prose, Social Art

glitched out with  
**MANUEL J.  
PEREZ III**

Manuel J. Perez III, an interdisciplinary artist and experimental performer based out of the northeastern USA, began Death Rattled in 2019. Their artistic work has been shared internationally (Turkey, Germany, Canada, etc.) within the bland white walls of institutions such as Istanbul Bilgi University, TU-Berlin, and Wesleyan University, as well as within thriving DIY communities worldwide.

Death Rattled, his primary creative vehicle, began in 2019 out of a desire to explore the assembling, juxtaposition, and disfiguration of recognizable symbols. Their work continues to explore this through many multimedia and audiovisual mediums (e.g., digital collage, embodied performance, music genre mashups, music videos, soundscapes, sampling, etc.). DR is proudly anti-cop and anti-fascist.

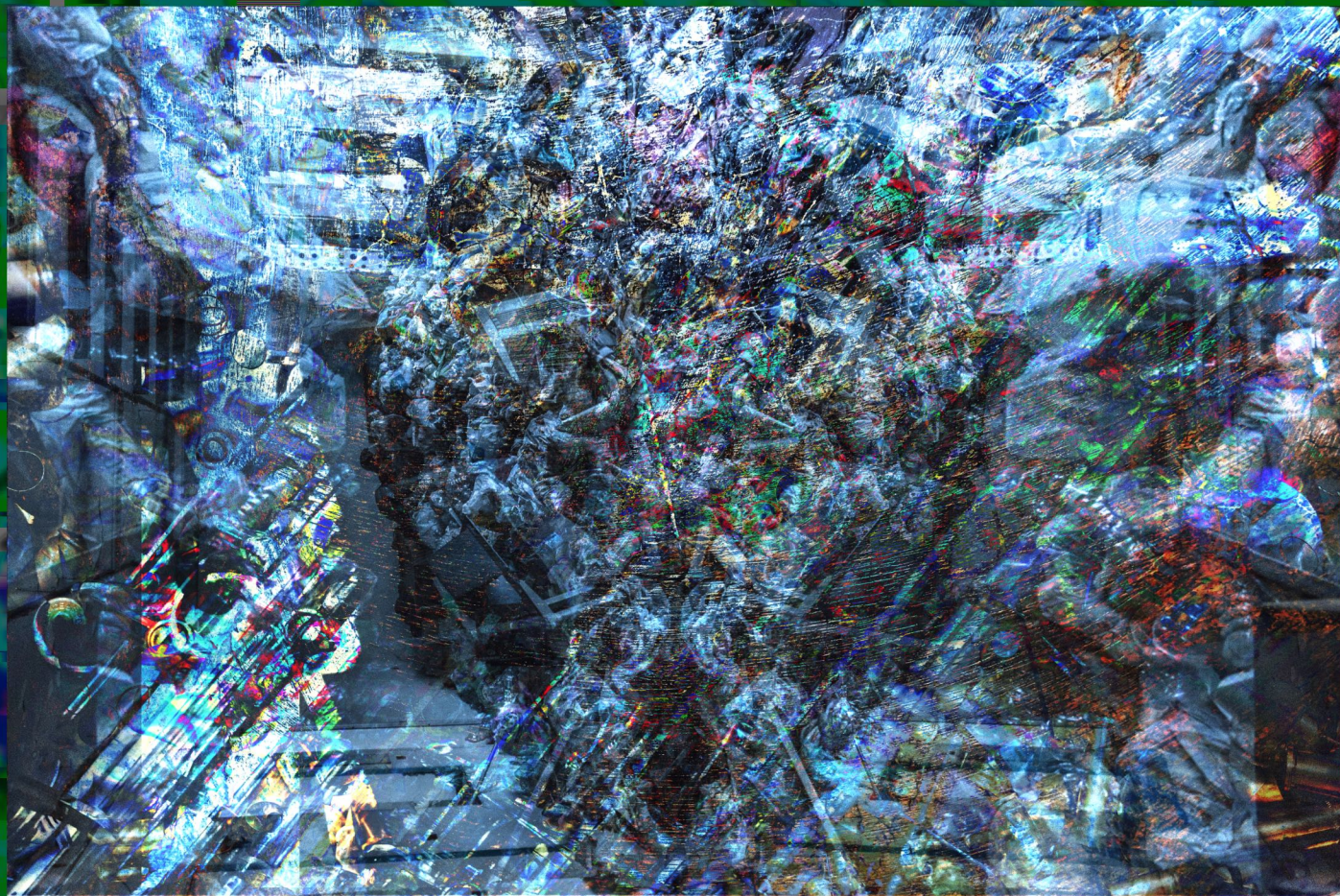
Each work consists of images uploaded on royalty-free image websites that are disfigured through digital processing, specifically layering and filtering techniques. DR's image sources now include large corporations, search engines, and other capitol-driven enterprises as a politically charged means towards reclamation. This process explores one way out of our perpetual commodification hellscapes of capitalism by using reclaimed audiovisual media to make the old new again.

Links: [deathrattled.com](http://deathrattled.com) | [mjpii.bandcamp.com](http://mjpii.bandcamp.com) | @mjpii01 & @death.rattled on IG

Photo furnished by MJPIII



Mind (from *Caustic*), 2022, Digital Collage



About:

The cold, alien nature of *Mind* draws its power from "metal," "brass," "steel," and "mines." One of Death Rattled's earlier works, an emphasis is placed on finding a balance of the textural nature of each source image. The cold, icy coal/cobalt mines encroach upon the mind.







## Schism (from *Distance*), 2023, Digital Collage

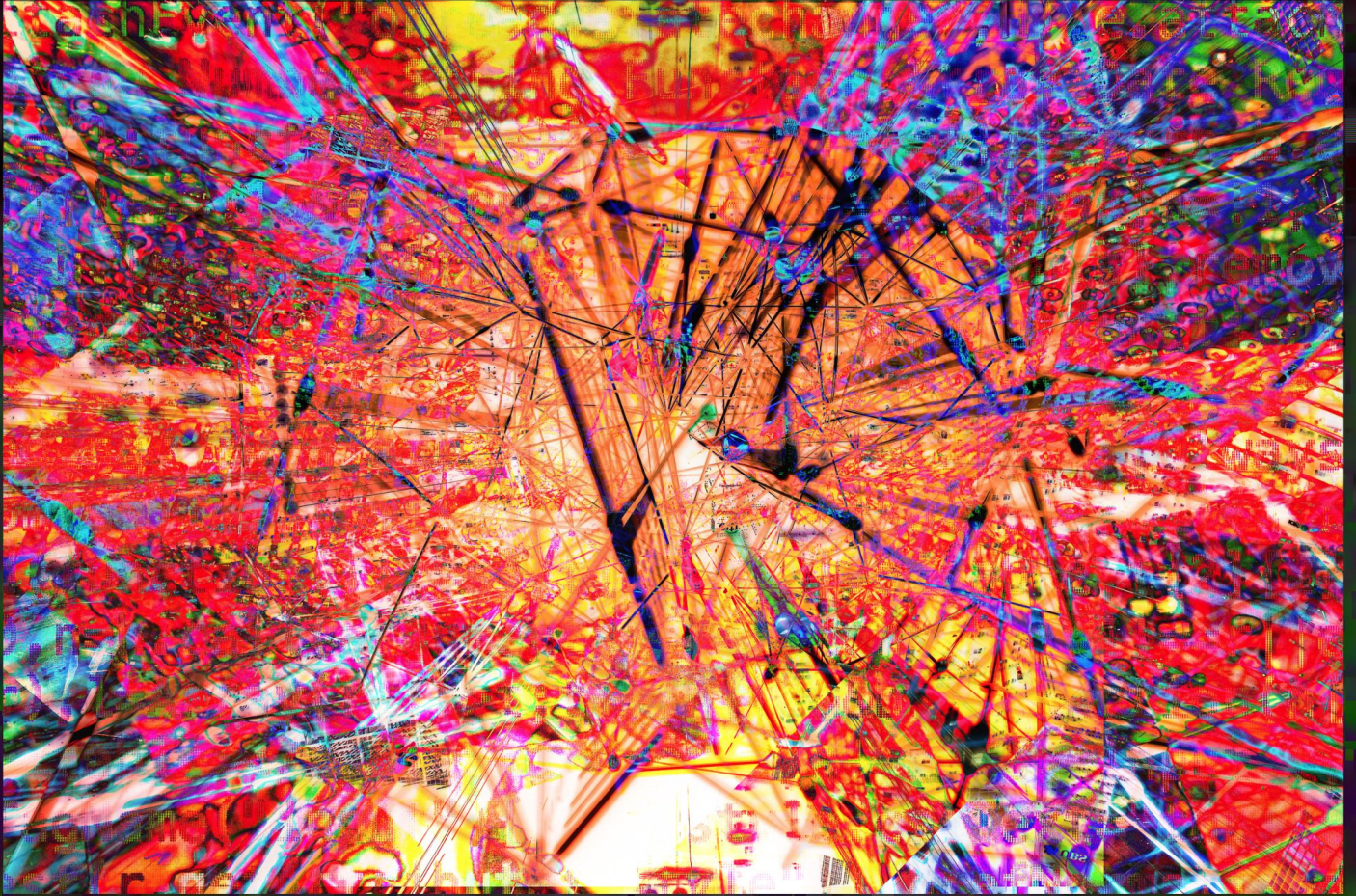
### About:

Schism shoots off like an arrow of longing darkness. It's series, *Distance*, emerges from ruminations on long-distance connection. Whether a letter, video chat, or simply a memory, the communication of our being can be received by others across time when embedded in objects, places, and memories. We are lucky to be perceived and held by others. Schism seeks to elaborate on this disconnected connection with its obscuring of temporal and geographic location (in this case an European city).





Automata (from *Networked*), 2022, Digital Collage

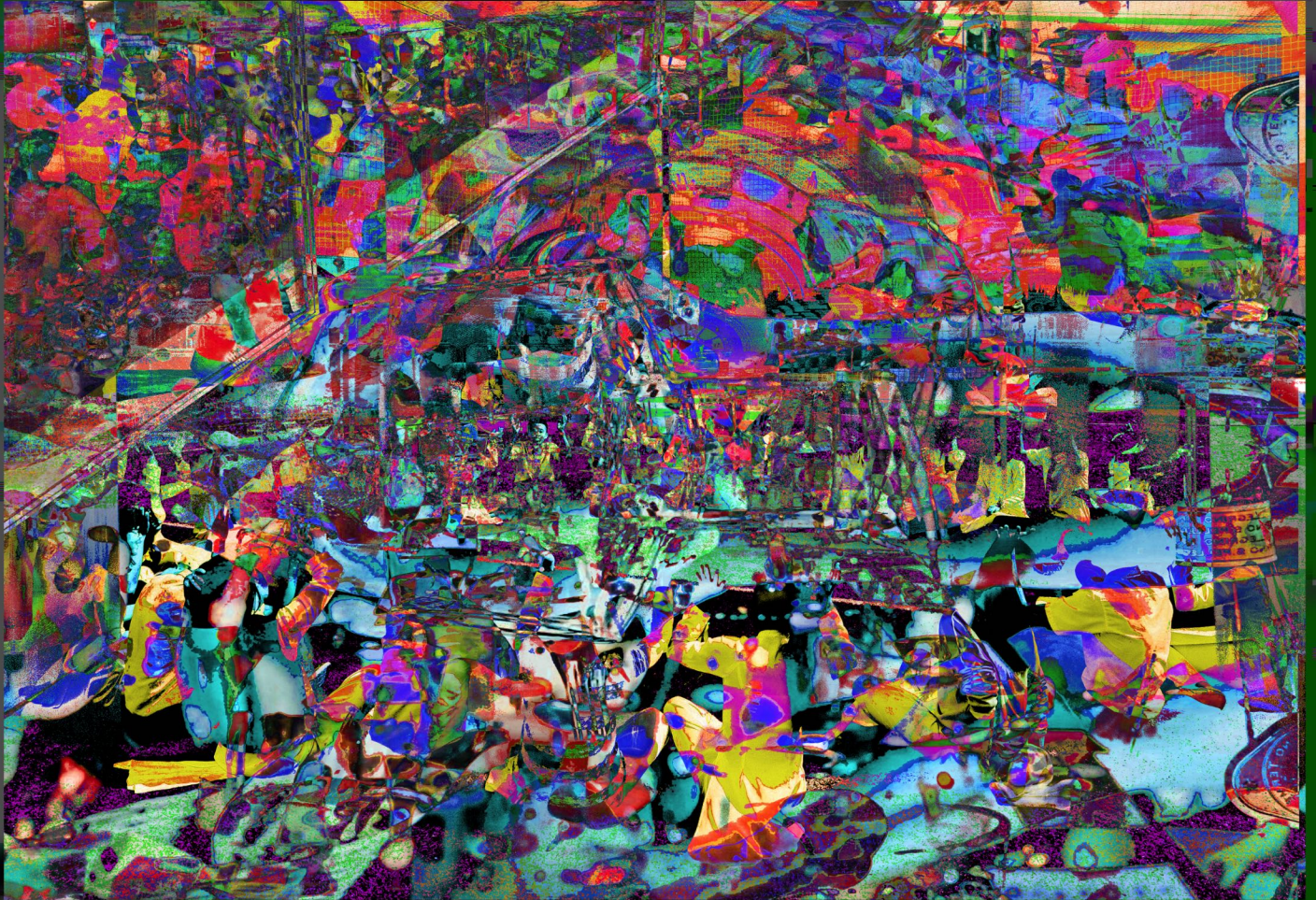


About:

Comprised of images sourced from keywords like "algorithm," "computer," and "programming," Automata offers a glimpse into the way we visually represent the many computer systems in our lives at our current epoch. Pulls toward and away, from the past into the future, are present.



## Solitarian (from *Talking Point*), 2022, Digital Collage



### About:

Many of us are plagued by the digital and capitalistic static of social media profiles, online banking, digital alarms, and online applications daily. Solitarian, and the series Talking Point from which it emerges, draws its source material from keywords like "community," "meeting," and "app" in hopes of bringing attention to our lack of attention when with others in our community. Solitarian hides the communal togetherness of the everyday behind digital artifacts and abstraction, reduced to a colorful mush of people in praise of...something.





Untitled #1 (from *Struggle*), 2023, Digital Collage

About:

Connections are all around us. They are what help ground us, uplift us, and help us breathe fresh air. Connections also bring entropy into our lives: new opportunities for change and growth. #1 from the series *Struggle* is a very personal reflection on the potential of connection and the intricacies it brings.



PRETTY HATE



**Name:** Sydney (Pretty Hate)

**Age:** 28

**Pronouns:** she/her/they/them

**Gender:** Non-binary

**Location:** CA

**Creative Medium:** Photography/Collage

**Bio:** Biblically accurate angel and multidisciplinary artist of the dissociative erotic; painting the world in catholic guilt.

**Links:** @pretty\_hatemachine\_ on IG

*Photo by: Pretty Hate*

HATE





**L-R: My Angel ♥ / Baby / Sapphire Seraphim  
2023, Mixed Media Objects**

Anytime I have felt scorned or betrayed I re-read *Venus In Furs* by Leopold Von Sacher Masoch (highlighted copy filled w/fucking post-its at this point) or I pilfer every cheap broken angel figurine I can find at the thrift and embellish them like so.

One of my ex boyfriends sold his mothers lladro figurines to fuel his coke addiction. Where was the divine intervention there?





**Twin Flame Reunification**  
2024, Mixed Media Collage/Painting





## I Am Not Unlike Them

2024, Mixed Media Collage

Collage is an act of chaos magick. These two pieces were created upon, and grappling with, the role of divine timing and the identification of my twin flame.





**Self Portrait Lunar Ritual**  
2023, Mixed Media Photography/Performance Art





## Self Portrait Lunar Ritual II

2023, Mixed Media Photography/Performance Art

These images are documentation of an action that took place on October 2, 2023. People think the exposure of my body is often the vulnerability or the allure of my thirst traps - or perhaps a bid for validation, attention, engagement... but many of these photos are taken on nights of ritual and subsequently broadcasted; a practice based on my interpretation of certain passages from *Thee Psychick Bible*. Each image is an ephemera of experience and intention, something you learn well attending mass every Sunday as a child. Rosary beads, incense, depictions of sacred moments. The real voyeurism and exhibitionism encompasses something far beyond nudity and self abandonment. If there is a god, wouldn't they contain a bit of both?



# FIVE

## ALBUMS I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT

feat.

# boyslut



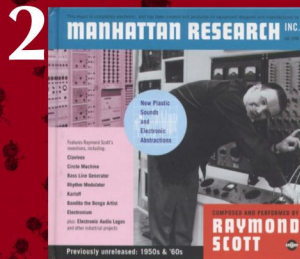
Photo by: @casperxross on IG

**BOYSLUT IS AN EXPERIMENTAL ELECTRONIC NOISE PROJECT BASED OUT OF THE CHICAGO LAND AREA.**



**Death Grips**  
*The Money Store*

There is nothing imperfect about this album. It is perfect and I love it so much.



**Raymond Scott**  
*Manhattan Research Inc.*

I found this album through a local record store, but didn't have the money to buy it. When I did, I returned to find it was gone; I was distraught. Full of so many cool and unique sounds, it reminds me a lot of Wendy Carlos.



**Various Artists**  
*White Cock 1-4*

Though it is a compilation album, I love the diverse mix of artists and styles such as Hardcore, Gabber and Breakcore. My favorite being the Tutti Fruity Booty remix by Knifehandchop.



**Cindy Lee**  
*What's Tonight to Eternity*

I'm in love with this album and how Cindy Lee writes beautiful, atmospheric ballads with moments of harsh and noisy instrumentals.



**John Coltrane**  
*A Love Supreme*

I listen to this on the drive home from shows. It's very relaxing.

**Check Out Boyslut's Latest Single "My Boyfriend" On All Streaming Platforms.**



# *It's Time To Reshuffle This Acronym!*

*An open letter to the greater queer community, haphazardly but passionately written by **R. T. Ferent***

*Dedicated with all of my love to my fearless nephew Remus, who is so much stronger than I ever was at his age (though I wish he didn't have to be).*



## HISTORY AND CONTEXT

After the days long riots against police brutality and oppression at the Stonewall Inn in June of 1969, it was clear the time was now for the criminalization of our very existence to end, and that we all needed to unite to accomplish that shared goal. Many acronyms began to pop up as community leaders began to form the earliest organizations of the queer rights movement ("S.T.A.R" comes to mind). Who knows exactly how, but somewhere along the line we ended up with "GLBT" to represent the community at large, standing for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transvestite/Transsexual (later changed to "Transgender" as a means to encompass all gender non-conforming members of the community). That stuck for the better part of a decade, if not a little more.

When the 80s came, it brought with it heartless christian conservatism disguised as patriotism, and a new illness being reported as a "Gay Cancer". This was HIV/AIDS, possibly the most devastating virus to plague humanity, and no one holding political office at the time seemed to care. Gay men were disproportionately affected by the virus and were dying at alarming rates. The damage done to our community cannot ever be understated. All the while, Reagan's FDA did absolutely nothing. There exists evidence of people in the Reagan Administration virtually laughing at the HIV/AIDS death toll, brushing off the whole thing like it was pest control. They did care a little, though, when they were concerned they may contract the disease from their mistresses, or the sex workers they'd hire (but never respect).

In true form, this is where the Lesbian community stepped it way the fuck up. When the Gays couldn't physically protest for themselves, the Lesbians were there, front and center, and louder than everyone else in the room. They helped propel groups like ACT UP, who gave us the rallying cry of "**SILENCE = DEATH**", and even stormed the indifferent FDA to demand acknowledgment and action.

When doctors and nurses wouldn't even be in the same building as an AIDS patient, the Lesbians within those fields nurtured and treated the sick with all of the compassion they had, and with the extremely limited science/medical knowledge available to them at the time.

Remember, viable medication didn't exist until the mid 90's, after straight white children and sports superstars started being diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. Without the fearless devotion of the Lesbian community, who knows how many more would have died, and of those who did succumb to the virus, how many would have done so utterly alone.

This brought the next acronym shake up. How do you repay a group within your community that you owe an impossible debt? You can start by putting them first. "GLBT" changed to "LGBT" in honor of our sisters who stood up for our brothers when no one else would. It was the very least the community could do.

As years passed on, and accurate information became more readily available, more people became aware of the truths of the community, and not the vicious lies spread by conservative media. We began to adopt better terminology to help ourselves, and others, navigate the full width of our spectrum. New letters began to be added to our acronym. "Q" made its way in, a reclamation of the word "Queer" (later also directly representing Gender Queer individuals). Then "I" for our Intersex family members, and "A" for our Asexual loved ones. Recently, "2S" for Two Spirit, in recognition of the rich traditions of our Indigenous members, has been incorporated. And lastly, at the end, we always add a "+" (except in hashtags for technical reasons) as a symbol of inclusion for anyone seeking acceptance and community.

All of that is truly wonderful. Personally, if the acronym gets to incorporate every letter of the alphabet, as well as all of our numerals, that's fine with me. I know some people don't particularly care for having to learn a series of letters and numbers, but oh well... fuck 'em. If our flag ends up with hundreds or thousands of criss cross patterns with unique color combinations representing everyone in a Pollack-esque barrage of colors, I'll love it. The idea here is inclusivity after all.

Maybe, eventually, we'll get everybody in and all this discrimination, fear, violence, otherism, etc., will come to a long overdue end when people realize all those jumbled numbers and letters were trying to spell "HUMANITY". Idealistic? Sure. Naive? Maybe, but it beats the endlessly looping doom and gloom.





**Marsha P. Johnson**  
***"The Hand that Threw the First Brick at Stonewall"***  
**Photo taken in 1977 by Henry O'Neal**

[Source: Wikipedia Commons]  
(NOTE: AI Upsampling was performed on this image)



## CONTEMPLATION AND REFLECTION

So... I sit with all of this info, and the gears start to turn. The individual most often ceremoniously credited with *"throwing the first brick"* at Stonewall is the Transgender revolutionary and activist Marsha P. Johnson (The "P" stands for "Pay It No Mind"). Often mentioned in the same sentence is community leader Sylvia Rivera, co-founder of STAR, who helped push the gay rights movement forward, and worked tirelessly, and effectively, to tear down discriminatory NY laws used to oppress it's queer citizens. If these women were the catalysts of the original movement... **why wasn't the "T" put first in the acronym?**

Marsha & Sylvia put their faces everywhere (making themselves targets), gave interviews, did all of the ground work, and won, legally, many times for the rights of the Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual communities. Yet, somehow, the Transgender community was left out of the anti-discrimination laws they worked so tirelessly to pass.

On July 6th 1992, not long after NY's PRIDE celebration, our beloved Marsha was found dead; her body floating in the Hudson River. Police ruled her death a suicide, despite the blunt force trauma to her head (I can only speculate, but perhaps the willingness to write her off was in response to her fierce advocacy at Stonewall and beyond). Witnesses gave accounts of people harassing her around the same area before she was killed. Those who were close to her said there was absolutely no way she would have committed suicide. Her remains were cremated and scattered across the same river she was found in. Marsha P. Johnson, the *"hand that threw the first brick"*, has still not received justice for her murder.

Sylvia Rivera passed in February 2002 after a battle with liver cancer. She was poverty stricken and homeless, choosing to take up company with the other outcast queers at the Manhattan Piers. Even with virtually no resources, she continued to organize, and ferociously fight for the rights of the homeless. All her life, she fought for the dignity and respect of all mankind, and in the end got very little of it in return. To quote her from her fearless 1973 speech at the Christopher Street Liberation Day Rally, where she was incomprehensibly booed by the predominantly white, cisgender crowd:

***"You all tell me, go and hide my tail between my legs. I will no longer put up with this shit. I have been beaten, I have had my nose broken, I have been thrown in jail, I have lost my job, I have lost my apartment for gay liberation, and you all treat me this way? What the fuck's wrong with you all?"***

There have been hundreds of targeted killings of Transgender and Gender Nonconforming individuals in the last year alone. Statistics suggest that violence against the Transgender community is well on the rise. Right now, conservative lawmakers across the country push harmful bills targeting anything remotely related to gender or identity, vilifying anything beyond the status quo with baseless nonsense, complete lies, and boogeyman rhetoric. They're even trying to paint Drag performers as pedophiles who want to groom children and "turn" them. Not only is it clear that they have no idea what they're talking about, but they also clearly have never actually met a Drag Queen... and these people want to "regulate" them.

The same question just keeps ruminating in my head; endlessly looping over and over. **"Why isn't the "T" first?"**





**Sylvia Rivera**  
**"Tireless Fighter for the Rights of the People"**  
**Photo taken in 1970 (She Was Only 19)**

[Uploaded to Wikimedia Commons by Roseleechs]

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## CALL TO ACTION

Well? Why isn't it? But more importantly, who gets to decide, and what more do they need to see to be convinced? Right now, all over the world, the "T" needs us more than ever. The era of pushing the "T" to the side because the politics are too complicated, or people aren't ready, or whatever other bullshit excuse some cisgendered white man came up with to ensure his own agenda came to pass, is fucking over. Not one more day of this cowardice. **It's time to put the "T" first.**

I know it's a small gesture. I know it doesn't roll off the tongue as aesthetically pleasing as some may like. I know it's going to take quite some time for people to adopt. And yes, I know there are going to be capitalists upset that they have to trash and update their stock of generic, passionless PRIDE merch. Nevertheless, I think it's important and must be done.

Just think of the potential open dialogue this could create. Imagine people logging into their social media of choice and seeing trending hashtags like [#TLGBQIA](#), [#TLGBQIA2S](#), [#WhylsntTheTFirst](#), and [#PutTheTFirst](#). You'll have people commenting and correcting the order of the letters, which then presents the opportunity to explain to an engaged individual why you've decided to put the "T" first. You'll also have people who have no idea what this "T" is and why it needs to be put first, and before what exactly. Another perfect opportunity to have a discussion and educate others. Fear and hate are just products of ignorance, and through education and conversation, one on one or otherwise, we can overcome.

That being said, regardless of how others feel about all of it in the end, you've created a positive dialogue to encourage progress. On the internet, those can be fairly permanent, meaning they'll be there for others to discover, read, and learn from for years to come. Imagine a world where people are better educated on what it is to be Transgender and nobody buys into the child mutilation propaganda sold by snake oil salesmen holding lower case ts and threatening you with eternal damnation carried out by their imaginary friends that they've plagiarized from the countless cultures they've stolen from and stomped out for centuries (phew!). Maybe I'm a dreamer, but I'm not alone.

Alright... I don't know that it'll do all that. But, it might lead to a parent learning more about, and ultimately accepting, their child for who they are. It might be that small, "dumb" thing that signals to some of the most marginalized of voices within our community that we hear them, we see what's being done to them, and we have their backs as they have had ours since the very start.

I implore you, starting this very minute, **PUT THE "T" FIRST**. Start asking others "Why Isn't The "T" First?". Put those aforementioned hashtags in your social media profiles, in your tweets, in your emails, in everything. Start putting some equity back into the Transgender community who have given everything of themselves to benefit all of us. It's literally the absolute least we can do.

[#TLGB](#)

[#TLGBQ](#)

[#TLGBQIA](#)

[#TLGBQIA2S](#)

[#PutTheTFirst](#)

[#WhylsntTheTFirst](#)

[#TransRightsAreHumanRights](#)

[#FixYourHeartsOrDie](#)

Looking for some resources? Here are a few that come recommended to us from fellow readers.

[Point of Pride](#) | [pointofpride.org](#)

- Provides financial AID to Transgender individuals in need of health/wellness care.

[G.L.I.T.S Inc.](#) | [glitsinc.org](#)

- Provides support to Transgender individuals, especially those from the BIPOC community.

[Transgender Law Center](#) | [transgenderlawcenter.org](#)

- The largest national Trans-led organization advocating self-determination for all people.



# DEMYSTIFYING TRANSITIONING & DISPELLING LIES

*NOTE: **THERE'S NO ONE CORRECT WAY TO TRANSITION.** Every Transgender individual takes their own path, which may or may not include things like hormone therapy, surgery, etc. The below is a hypothetical example to help clear up false conservative talking points, particularly the "mutilating children" misinformation that continues to spread.*

## **EXAMPLE:**

Sally Samplé, who was assigned the sex of male at birth, now identifies as female and openly lives as a woman. She opted to undergo hormone therapy and surgical options as part of her transition. From a factual medical perspective, what could Sally's transition from childhood to adulthood have looked like?

## **INFANCY TO CHILDHOOD** (neonatal to 11 years old)

During these stages of Sally's life, her only available medical option was psychotherapy. This time is generally where individuals change their hair style, clothing, name, etc. Outside of religious exemptions (circumcision), there are generally no genitalia/gender affirming related surgeries performed at this stage. There are always rare exceptions, but other than what has been done to the Intersex community throughout recent history (which would require multiple pages to begin to properly explain), no one is simply performing sex/gender related surgical procedures on children.

## **ADOLESCENCE** (12 to 18 years old)

More options became available to Sally at this stage. Hormone blockers to help delay/control puberty. Estrogen/Testosterone hormone therapy, typically through patches and other non-sharp delivery methods, were now available. All options required medical supervision and doctor approval. Gender affirming surgeries, like top & bottom surgery, remain unavailable except under very rare circumstances.

## **ADULTHOOD** (19+ years old)

Surgical options became available to Sally, but not without extensive psychotherapy, certifications that she was sound to make the decision to undergo the surgery in question, and publicly living as a woman for an extended period of time. Some states require more than others before an individual can undergo procedures like a double mastectomy (type of top surgery) or Phalloplasty/Vulvoplasty (types of bottom surgeries). It's not possible to just simply elect to have any major gender reaffirming surgery.

In a very basic sense, that's the reality about what's available to whom and when. Johns Hopkins ([hopkinsmedicine.org](http://hopkinsmedicine.org)) has been at the forefront of gender reassignment surgery for decades and would be a great resource for more information. Also, you can check out A4TE ([transequality.org](http://transequality.org)) who seek to educate the public on the realities of the Trans and Non-Conforming communities.





Peter  
Kalisch's  
Contention exhibition

Collage by: Peter Kalisch  
photo by: Roman Udalov





**Peter Kalisch** is a performance artist, curator, and noise musician based in Los Angeles. Apart from creating a variety of intense live performances, Kalisch is also the head curator of the event series *Queerspace* in Los Angeles. Kalisch has performed for *Queer Biennial*, *the Broad Museum*, *the Getty Museum*, *Re:art show*, as well as a variety of underground warehouse and nightlife venues. FANE got the opportunity to steal some of Peter's time & attention. Below are the results...

**FANE:** So... How's social media been treating you lately?

**Peter Kalisch:** Social media is... interesting. It is a tool, but a tool I don't have control of, which was exemplified by me going semi-viral on Libs of TikTok and other MAGA associated accounts for speaking on the current Palestine-Israel conflict. It was an interesting experience to have so many people viewing and commenting on me (in mostly hilarious derogatory ways). It gave me insight on how so much of social media and online politics are based on projection, and the assumptions we make about the categories we place people in. It's extremely important for me to be able to separate myself from the ways in which I may be publicly perceived, because that is something I have little control of.

**F:** I have to commend you. From what I've seen, you always handle yourself academically (in terms of putting facts before feelings), and appear to be in total control of whatever "shitstorm of the moment" detractors bring to your door. Where did that outward showing strength come from?

**PK:** I have always had to be bold and confident in who I am to survive. Not even just because of my sexuality, although that does play a role in my survival instinct. It was a combo of growing up in a repressed environment, a bit of bullying, and confusion about who I was, that created a fierce confidence and drive in me to stand up for what I believe in. I have been threatened, spit on, and gotten into fights defending myself, so I'm pretty much used to it. It's also not a situation I feel particularly victimized by, as I have simply accepted it as a part of life, that not everyone will approve of or accept me.

It's incredibly important for me to stay factual in my political arguments, so I can point out the emotionality that often controls both Republican and Democrats here in America. On one side, you have extreme religious fanatics triggered over gay people etc., and on the other side, you have many gay / queer activists triggered over small disagreements. Both sides, in acting this way, do not contribute to the greater good of humanity. It has been extremely important to me lately to point that out.

**F:** Toughness, to varying degrees, is certainly a requirement to survive in this world while being LGBTQIA+. In your opinion, how important is vulnerability? What role, if any, should it play in a person's life?



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*“On one side, you have extreme religious fanatics triggered over gay people etc., and on the other side, you have many gay/queer activists triggered over small disagreements. Both sides, in acting this way, do not contribute to the greater good of humanity.”*

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**PK:** Vulnerability is the key to authenticity, in my opinion. It allows us to grow stronger by showing our true selves to the world, we can become fearless. LGBT people know this well because we often have to advocate for ourselves throughout our lives, and that has inspired a confidence in me that relates to all areas of my life.

**F:** What's the limit? How much of your soul do you think the audience deserves to see? How much should be yours to keep?

**PK:** I think that's different for everyone, and that's only something that each person can feel for themselves. For me, I need to feel grounded and connected to the world surrounding me, and if I get too wrapped up in social media or how others perceive me, I run the risk of losing myself.

**F:** When you look for creative inspiration, where do you turn?

**PK:** Lots of my creative inspiration comes from people that aren't artists, activists who have risked their lives for their work, such as Edward Snowden or Julian Assange. Politics and my observations of the culture surrounding me are my main inspirations. Some of the artists who inspire me however are Throbbing Gristle, Three 6 Mafia, Japanese noise artists...

**F:** Which of those artists would you have most liked to collaborate with? What do you think the project would have been like?

**PK:** Cosey Fanni Tutti, Kim Gordon, Merzbow, Korn, Slipknot. All would be so iconic.

**F:** What's a piece of media that always makes you cry? What about it does that to you?

**PK:** A piece of media that always makes me emotional and inspired is a documentary about Louise Hay called *Doors Opening* from the 80s. The documentary, available free on YouTube, shows her work and workshops, many of which were a safe haven for gay men with HIV / AIDS to work through their physical and mental traumas. She was one of the only public advocates for them at the time, and it's incredibly inspiring and eye opening to see a marginalized group from the queer community take control of their lives, the narrative against them, and step into the power of love with each other's support.

**F:** Who's someone that's always been there for you, ready to lend their support?

**PK:** My friends and family! Too many to count, but I'm so grateful for those I've encountered.

**F:** What kind of film work have you been up to lately?

**PK:** In terms of film I have been focusing on creating music videos for my band, MMDA, with my good friend Aaron December, and for my upcoming solo noise release. I also have written a feature length script that, well, if anyone's dying to read and give me feedback, they're more than welcome to...

**F:** Where can our readers view your videos/films?

**PK:** Vimeo, articles about me, Youtube, Instagram.

**F:** Your latest music project is MMDA, a collaboration with the aforementioned Aaron December. How'd this come about?

**PK:** Aaron and I had collaborated for a couple of years and the idea to form a band really came along during discussions about politics and culture. We figured it would be a great idea to merge our talents and ideas to make this project a reality. It's been an amazing collaborative experience.





Photo courtesy of P. Kalisch







**F:** Tell us about the name. What does MMDA mean?

**PK:** It was a combo of my old porn name which will remain a mystery and Aaron's initials. It's also a play on the drug MDMA, which references the gay nightlife culture we cover in our music.

**F:** MMDA's latest single, "Good Ally (Yass)", is quite a departure from the sound of your solo material. What's steering the change? Feeling more playful?

**PK:** It was important for me to flex my creative muscles in a genre more danceable and accessible. I love noise music and making it, but it is such a niche that it often left me feeling disconnected from a wider audience. Therefore, in an intentional branding and creative move, me and Aaron made the active choice to make "dance" music that was accessible, but with a political and noisier edge.

**F:** Sort of a trojan horse approach. What political message is MMDA currently spreading to the masses?

**PK:** That there is a new political movement forming in the queer community, one that rejects neoliberalism.

**F:** MMDA recently DJ'd at Cruel World. How'd that feel for you? How was the reception?

**PK:** It was amazing!! We were so grateful to Cruel World and Club Doom for having us, and it went over well. It was great to bring a bit of noisier techno to that space, and we definitely made sure to construct a set people would love.

**F:** What was your favorite set/performance there?

**PK:** Model/Actriz, one of the openers, was incredible. Patriarchy, Nuovo Testamento, too.

**F:** What's going on behind the scenes for MMDA? Preparing future singles? An album, maybe?

**PK:** We have been playing shows, working on music videos, and are currently working on a remix for our friends Dildox.

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*"I seek to showcase the widespread sense of anxiety I feel throughout society today..."*

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**F:** I'd like to talk a bit about your performance art. Tell us about your most recent exhibition.

**PK:** My performance pieces are usually based in noise music, with me interacting with costumes and sculptural objects. I seek to showcase the widespread sense of anxiety I feel throughout society today, through the use of historical and canonical sounds and objects. I want people to take away a sense of curiosity and wonder, a possibility for a different future.

**F:** Tell us about a specific exhibition/performance of yours that didn't go the way you'd hoped. With the knowledge you have now, would you have done anything differently?

**PK:** One time my good friend Celeste X and I did a performance at a gallery space called Last Projects here in LA. We accidentally started a small fire since we were using lots of electronics and liquids. The moral of the story is to practice and know what you are doing. In the past I've enjoyed the rush and danger of going in blind to performances, but lately it's been nice for me to practice and come to the audience with intention.

**F:** What kind of toll do these exhibitions take on you? It has to be exhausting, both physically and mentally.

**PK:** Performances can be both mentally and physically very taxing. I jokingly call myself a traveling clown, putting my crazy thoughts on display by transmuting them into music and movement and trying to get an audience to understand it. It can be taxing to put oneself on display and practice vulnerability, but it is ultimately so gratifying in the end, for that vulnerability brings us closer to others.



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*“I stand against all forms of classism and elitism in the art world.”*

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**F:** Are you planning any future exhibitions? If so, could you share some details about what you’re planning?

**PK:** Not at the moment.

**F:** What about being a creative do you love the most? The least?

**PK:** I love the freedom it provides me. I am very grateful to live in a place like Los Angeles where you can basically pursue whatever career path you choose. At times, I possibly resent the emotional and personal connection I have to it. It can be risky to tie something so personal to me, like art, with business goals, which undoubtedly becomes a necessity in a capitalist society.

**F:** What do you think about the “fine art” world, in economic terms?

**PK:** It is ultimately so important for me to open the beauty of art to everyone. I stand against all forms of classism and elitism in the art world. I believe art can inspire a universal power in us that everyone can connect to.

**F:** When you’re not creating, what do you do, either as a day job, for fun, or both?

**PK:** I teach fitness classes, watch people’s dogs, make clothing, love spending time in nature, enjoying friends and good movies. Basic bitch shit.

**F:** What’s one of the most memorable experiences you’ve had, either creating privately or performing publicly (or both if you like)?

**PK:** I’ve had the opportunity to work with some of my idols, from having Kembra Pfahler perform at Queerspace, to DJing for Bruce LaBruce to working extremely closely with Geneva Jacuzzi. It’s been an incredible gift from the universe to be able to learn from artists that have inspired me. Additionally, I’m often inspired by how art can inspire cultural change, which can be seen in the energy activated at Queerspace and during my performances.

**F:** Tell us about Queerspace. When did that kick off? How’s it going?

**PK:** Queerspace is a party and movement that was created by Jordyn Kramer with the LA branch of the party taken over by me in 2017. I started curating these shows with the idea that there is a missing niche in the gay nightlife scene, one that caters to more harsh, aggressive forms of music, such as noise, hardcore, metal, techno, punk, and more. It’s been an amazing journey since then, and I’ve loved watching Queerspace grow and connect with more people.

**F:** Where can people learn more about Queerspace?

**PK:** Instagram @queerspaceparty

**F:** What’s something you’ve learned along the way that you wish you knew when you first started putting your art out into the world?

**PK:** Everybody at the end of the day prioritizes themselves first. Never expect anything from anybody. Expectations lead to disappointment. Clear your side of the street, pay people for their work, be as self-sufficient as possible while maintaining positive connections.

**F:** What should we expect to see next from you?

**PK:** MMDA will be coming out with a release soon and will be playing shows. Our next show is August 10th for Das Bunker’s Summer Massive event at Catch One here in Los Angeles. Also, expect to see a solo release from me in the coming months, as well as appearances in multiple films and videos from fellow artists.

**F:** Before we let you go, could you give the fans a little detail about the upcoming solo release? The last tape was about five years ago if I’m not mistaken, so I’m sure they’d love a tasty morsel.

**PK:** It will be a different departure in sound for me, experimenting with more ambience, and “beauty”, if you will. I wanted to take the darkness I’ve experienced that I used to create tortuous noise music, and channel that same energy into something more peaceful, with a harsh edge.

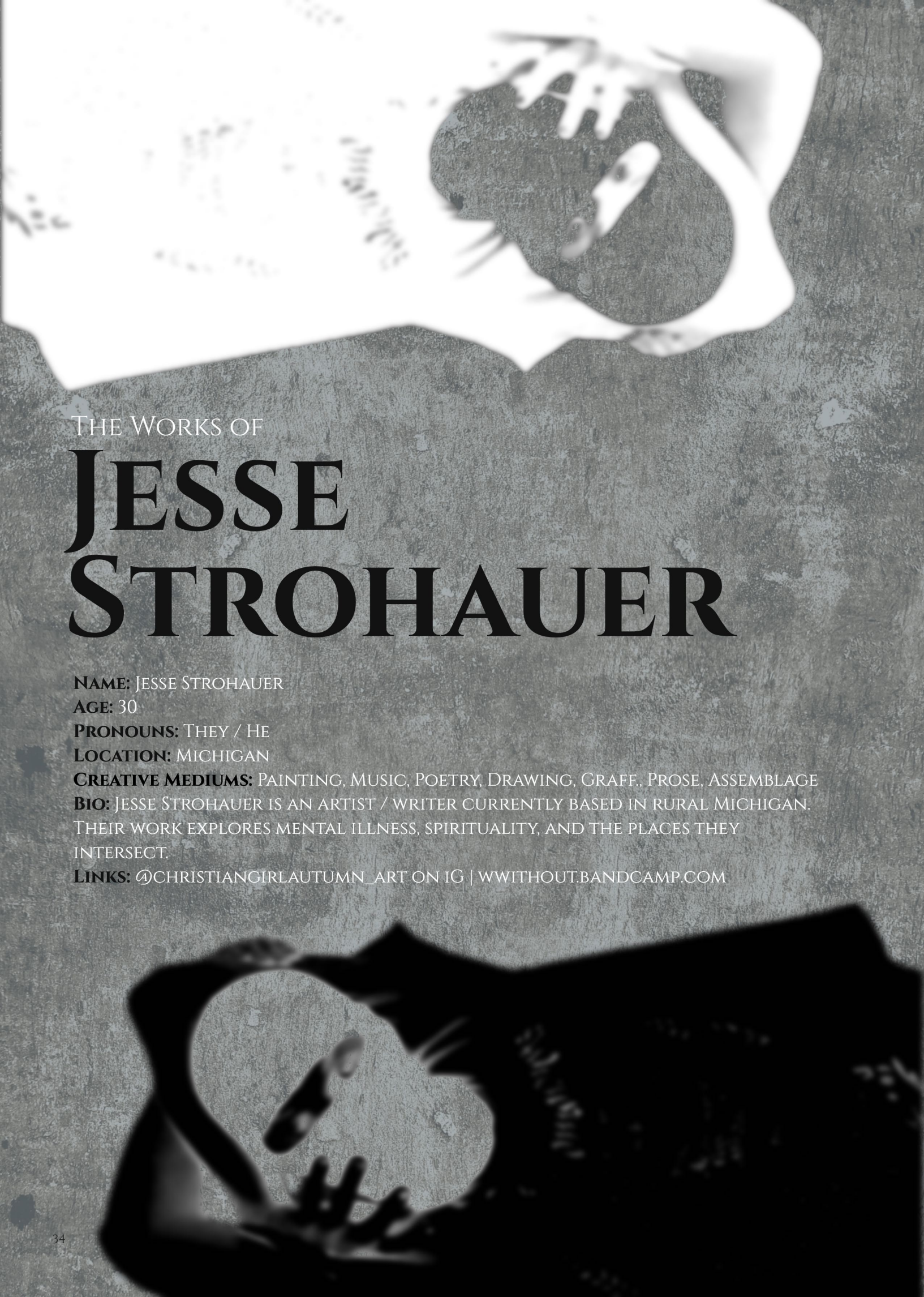
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Thank you to Peter for taking the time out of his hectic schedule to answer our questions. If you wanna see some really cool, radical shit that also has a sense of humor, albeit a dark one, check out Peter on IG @noisepup. For more info on his latest collaborative project MMDA, check out @mmda000 on IG. To get shoulder deep into Queerspace, check them out, also on IG, @queerspaceparty.









THE WORKS OF

# JESSE STROHAUER

**NAME:** JESSE STROHAUER

**AGE:** 30

**PRONOUNS:** THEY / HE

**LOCATION:** MICHIGAN

**CREATIVE MEDIUMS:** PAINTING, MUSIC, POETRY, DRAWING, GRAFF., PROSE, ASSEMBLAGE

**BIO:** JESSE STROHAUER IS AN ARTIST / WRITER CURRENTLY BASED IN RURAL MICHIGAN. THEIR WORK EXPLORES MENTAL ILLNESS, SPIRITUALITY, AND THE PLACES THEY INTERSECT.

**LINKS:** @CHRISTIANGIRLAUTUMN\_ART ON IG | WWITHOUT.BANDCAMP.COM





## **“Azazel Stricken w/Dementia”**

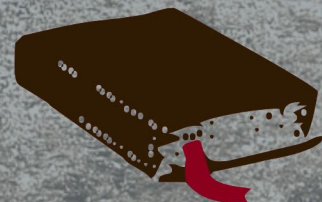
Azazel in his old age, no longer protected by the longevity afforded to angels, finds his memory starting to fail him.

He remembers singing in choirs and the opulence and ecstasy of Heaven. The pains of body and spirit he contends with now, grey hair, liver spots, tarnished armor, he does not remember.

He can't understand why he is cursed to live on the ground among the sons and daughters of men. Relegated to a motel 6 overlooking a freeway exit, he whittles away his days reading the Gideon's Bible and working for a call center.

In the book of Job, the namesake is given trial upon trial, as a test to see whether or not his piety is dependent on his good fortune. Despite all the hardships, and the admonishing of his wife to curse God, Job, despondent and covered in sores, refuses, and is restored to his former splendor.

Azazel finds comfort in this story.







**Destroying Angel** (2018)  
Digital Photograph

**What Does Love Say?** (2023)  
Acrylic on Canvas







**Faith, Hope, & Love Wrapped Around  
an Oak Tree and Beheaded (2023)**

Canvas Board, Surgical Gloves, Spray Paint,  
Construction Adhesive, Nails



**Satan Open House Tour (2023)**

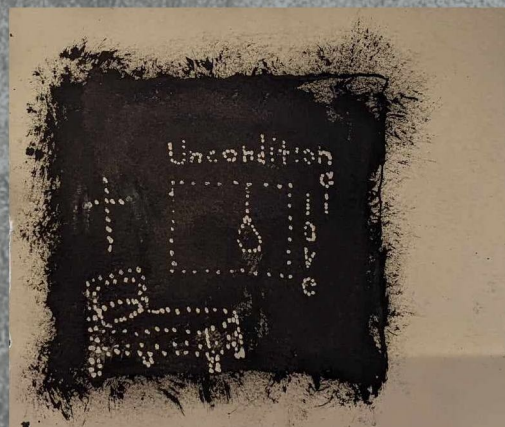
Ink, Paper, Pen, Blood, Red Pew Fabric





**Sex-Negative Christian Ethic (2023)**  
Canvas, Thread, Superglue, Latex Mask, Spray Paint

**Unconditional (2023)**  
Ink and Paint Marker on Paper







# UNDER WHAT POWER

by Locke Fitzroy

*"Kenmure Street Protests - Crowd" by Ramcru. Used under the CC BY-SA 4.0 license: [creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)*

*“On the morning of 13 May 2021, two Sikh men of Indian origin living on Kenmure Street in the Pollokshields area of Glasgow were taken from their home and detained by the Home Office in a van on the street for alleged immigration violations. [...] Immigration advocates criticised the detainment of long-term residents in the community. In addition, the timing of the raid came under scrutiny as it was conducted on the dawn of Eid in a diverse neighborhood with a high concentration of Muslim residents and during the transition of government following the 2021 Scottish Parliament election.”*

*- Wikipedia, retrieved 09 June 2024*

13 May 2021 was a Thursday. Around noon I got a text from my friend Josie, a bright-eyed soccer queer, who produced remarkable psychedelic artworks featuring vampires and snake-like swans. Both of us being more or less employed at the time, we were somewhat adrift, and usually suitably available during regular working hours. She sent me a message and a hastily-created infographic.

J: I'm gona go over do you want to come?

L: just saw this! what's happening i'm definitely down for a protest any day

J: immigration are trying to take ppl away and police got involved

This was the morning of Nicola Sturgeon's swearing-in. It was the morning of Eid al-Fitr. Pollokshields was experiencing a massive Covid outbreak. A new immigration policy was being prepared in Westminster. And Priti Patel had sent a dawn raid into the heart of Sturgeon's own constituency. Take all the finely-sharpened blades of a hostile government and, carefully, push them under the skin of its country: Each one of them will hit a different nerve, until all that remains is a cold kind of agony.

I had never seen more policemen in one place. I had never seen more police horses, certainly never realised how threatening their presence could be. So much riot gear. Low voices in the crowd spreading news: They brought in more horses, waiting at the corner of... did you see those vans with the dogs?

Kenmure Street was a broad canyon between tall sandstone tenements. Water bottles and medical aid were available at a bus stop right next to the van. Someone passed around hundreds of photocopied flyers. One for each of us.



*"No Comment: You only have to give details to the police if you commit or witness a crime, or are driving a vehicle. In these situations you only need to give your name, address, date of birth and nationality. You don't have to answer questions, say "no comment". This includes Police Liaison Officers in light blue bibs.*

*Under What Power: Ask police if you are legally required to do something they ask of you. Ask what power they are operating under."*

Below that, bold black phone numbers, email addresses.

*"Don't accept a duty solicitor. We recommend you call..."*

We scrawled these numbers in sharpie on our arms. Anything we had on us could be broken, lost, stripped.

It was crowded and it was loud. Kenmure Street was awash with bodies. Most people in the area hadn't been eligible for vaccination yet; neither had I. The vast majority wore masks. We accepted the risk. We chanted. These are our neighbours, let them go. Power to the people. Shame on you, cops go home, shame on you, Shame On You: For the police stood surrounding the Immigration Enforcement van, stone-faced, shoving anyone who got close. The one directly in front of me wore a Thin Blue Line patch on his gear.

Whenever the energy within the crowd began to shift, the humanitarian lawyer with the megaphone held another speech, called us to reason, subtly reminding us among more noble sentiments that the police were just begging to be given an excuse. We all knew about the horses and the riot shields. We went back to singing, for a while, until anger would rise in our throats like bile.

Scotland Police didn't work for, or with, the Home Office. They did not need to be guarding this van. Much less were they obligated to threaten us with scores of armed and mounted units. Later their head would say he'd done it for the security and safety of all parties involved.

There was a man under the van for eight hours, making sure they physically couldn't drive away without maiming or killing him. Policemen tried, and failed, to drag him out.

About an hour or two after Josie and I arrived at the scene, heavy-helmeted riot cops moved up towards us. We were stood in the middle of the crowd at the back of the vehicle, close to the doors behind which the two men were being held.

The riot squad linked arms and began to run straight at the crowd, at us, *into* us.

I cannot describe this picture to you.

All around me, as one, people sat down. We grabbed each other's shoulders and arms and knelt on the asphalt. Nobody scattered. Nobody fought back. The Police didn't make it to the van. Their line broke up, and they retreated.

That nameless man who had crawled under the van in nothing but a t-shirt, discarding the bike on which he'd followed the van... other members of his grassroots network arrived soon after; Sitting on the road in front of the van. Ringing doorbells, shouting into the intercom: Dawn raid, dawn raid. Neighbours came, wearing slippers and bathrobes. Whole families that had come together to celebrate Eid al-Fitr gathered around the car. Some neighbours allowed protestors to use their toilets. Others brought cakes and water, called friends, alerted their own networks. Little children waved from the tenement windows, delighted at the great amount of waving-back they received. An older couple watched the protest from their window, expressions inscrutable, for a few minutes. Then one of them disappeared, and returned with an anarchist flag they hung from the window to our cheers. The wind tossed it wildly.

Glasgow's Southside has a long and bitter history with the Home Office. This was the second dawn raid within a month. The seemingly-sudden Kenmure Street protest was the result of decades of hard work to establish neighbourhood connections, fast response teams and a feeling of unity and belonging. We surrounded the van because we believed it to be the right thing to do. If you choose to live in Glasgow, you are Glaswegian, and you belong just as much as someone who was born here.

More and more people were leaving work and heading straight to Kenmure Street. Nobody was going anywhere, this much was clear. Sometime after 5 p.m., eight hours after the start of the protest, the decision to release the men back into their community was made. When the doors of the van were opened, the two men slowly came out to riotous cheers. The first to step outside was wearing a puffer jacket. It was of the brightest, purest white I have ever seen.

Kenmure Street was, in hindsight, the worst protest I could have chosen for my first one ever. Don't get me wrong, I had been to a good handful of demonstrations in Berlin, but those had been little more than long walks through an urban hellscape, accompanied by loud music and self-absorbed, well-meaning students.

No, Kenmure Street ruined me for life. Because this day taught me, irrevocably, that protests could be *won*.



Doubtlessly many policemen and women are kind humans that want to make the world a safer place, but the system they help to uphold remains flawed, not by mistake but by design. Queer people, like so many minorities, have made their own experiences with it. We warn each other, like isolated tribes passing along hushed messages of stalking wildcats. Codes of conduct. Risk reduction. Dodgy areas. What to do if you get tear gassed (rinse, rinse, rinse: poke a hole into the bottom of a water bottle, and direct the stream into your eyes). What to do when you're being beaten with a baton (curl up in the fetal position to protect your guts, pull in your head and cover it with your hands, and if you can do this with your back to a wall, it will help to protect your kidneys). Josie and I told two younger girls standing next to us: No, don't save it to your phone, write the solicitor's number on your arm. Who says you'll still have your phone?

It sounds drastic as I write it from the comfort of my couch. I wish I could claim it was. The only reason I am here today is because I took my lessons from these hushed messages. There simply aren't enough of us to protect each other. There is no strength in our numbers. The only thing we can do is look out for one another, and teach each other about the wildcats.

When I was young, my mother told me that if I got lost in a crowd and needed help, I should approach a family with children, a policeman, or a punk. The kind with heavy boots and spiky hair. She said they were among the most caring people, and they would help if I asked. My grandmother believed that the police are upholding a corrupt system, and their intentions don't matter as much as the outcome of their collective action. She told me this, unprompted, as we marinated in cigarette smoke on the balcony of her hotel room. My great-great grandmother was arrested for attending a demonstration and jailed for several days. She had been marching for German women's right to vote. Later she was arrested a second time, staying gone for a few weeks this time. She owned a small grocery store, and she had been continuing to sell food to Jews after laws to the opposite effect had been passed. No matter the flaws of my bloodline, of which there are too many to count, one trait I have always admired: Civil disobedience.

As I write this I consider myself lucky to live in safer, easier times, where I am not the man in the back of the van or the Jew at the door of a closed shop. But the men from Kenmure Street were my neighbours. These men walked the same streets as I, frequented the same shops and cafés. Think of the term dawn raid, really think of it for a moment. And at this point I remember the statistics for my own people. At this point the thought of comfortable safety leaves me quietly, almost gently. My ears prick up at feet marching in step, the flypaper-glue effect of newspaper ink, the soothing rage nurtured in stale afternoon pints, and algorithmic lullabies.

I am an exceedingly confident person. I walk with a swagger, I carry my head high, and when I laugh, my voice carries far. I know how to breeze past lingering stares and ward off clingy catcallers. I am always ready to grin and spit back. And, best of all, I can act unfazed when I am anything but: even if someone manages to get to me, they won't know. I'm a terrific actor when I'm scared.

I wear fur coats and dresses. Blood-red lips, home-bleached hair, dark kohl on the lower lashline. I paint my nails, I call other men darling, I grin, and I drink and oh, I dance, I dance like a moth dances with a flame.

But I will never wear a pair of shoes I couldn't run away in.



## About the Author



Photo courtesy L. Fitzroy

**Name:** Locke Fitzroy

**Age:** 27

**Pronouns:** he/him

**Gender:** male (self-made)

**Location:** South England

**Creative Mediums:** Stories, painting (oil, acrylic), drawing, sewing, singing, poetry

**Bio:** Locke is a writer, a magician, an artist and story-teller. He treasures books and sea-stones and lost things like himself. Like driftwood, he keeps washing up in the strangest places.

**Contact:** locke.fitz@gmail.com



*The  
Leather  
and  
Fetish  
Photography  
of*

*D.M.  
K.*



# Photographs

pg 44. *Mr. New England Leather 2024*

pg 45. *Aamon Drako and Matthew Funkin*

pg 46. *Michael James*

pg 47. *Mx KYNK 2023*

pg 48. *Mr. R and Roped Boy*

pg 49. *Gio and Forrest Rivers*

pg 50. *Hush n' Bound*

pg 51. *San Cat*

## *About the Photographer:*

Mr. M is a portrait photographer based in Lincoln, RI, whose journey with photography can trace its roots back to the 1990s. While his work encompasses a broad spectrum of photographic endeavors, his recent focus predominantly revolves around encapsulating the raw essence of both the LGBTQ+ and Fetish communities.

Mr. M's recent concentration on portraiture has introduced a compelling new facet to his body of work; Notably, his commitment to, and active engagement with, the aforementioned LGBTQ+ and Fetish communities.

Mr. M's approach to his craft is distinctly model-based, underscored by a collaborative process with each subject. The individual style and mood of every portrait are shaped by the model's input, resulting in each photoshoot being a combination of the artist's perspective and the unique vision that the model brings to the session. This current collection of work thus embodies the collective artistic viewpoint of Mr. M, harmonized with the diverse visions of each collaborator.

The fetish community showcased in his work is inherently diverse, and Mr. M's overarching objective is to authentically capture and represent this diversity. His work aspires to encapsulate the richness of the community through a lens that is acutely attuned to its multifaceted nature.

*Link:* @mrmphoto1973 on IG





































# COMING IN A BLENDER

Noise, Novelty, and the Problem of Screeching Feedback  
by Lindsay Victoria

## About the Author



**Age:** 24  
**Pronouns:** She/Her  
**Gender:** Woman  
**Location:** Baltimore  
**Creative Mediums:** Music, Visual Arts, Writing


### Bio:

Lindsay Victoria has been writing music more than half her life, and has been playing noise for more than half a decade. She's half of the band *Aether* and a third of the band *Unwashed Sex Objects*. She likes tea, jazz, sharks, and the slaughter of her enemies. When she's not having her enemies slaughtered, you can usually find her cooking, hiking, or playing with her cat, Meowstner.

### Links:

Aether  
[aether42.bandcamp.com](http://aether42.bandcamp.com)  
Unwashed Sex Objects  
[@unwasheds.objects](https://www.instagram.com/unwasheds.objects) on IG  
Lindsay Victoria  
[@lindsay\\_aether](https://www.instagram.com/lindsay_aether) on IG  
Visual Arts  
[@addershall](https://www.instagram.com/addershall) on IG





The anything-goes attitude of experimental sound design is wildly endearing. You can touch alien sonic territory with elaborate labyrinths of VST effects. So much great noise comes from artists whose pedalboards look like Kevin Shields's. Some of my favorite experimental music starts and ends with layers of effects applied to inputs like vocals, synthesizers, and field recordings. But if experimental art's ethos is anarchy—if our best praxis is radical creation in spaces with no rules, no cops, and no obligations—sometimes it pays to spread our wings more.

A good deal of the most exciting sound design happens with the most exciting inputs. I've seen Dustin from Chasing Ghosts use Electro Lobotomy's Sonic Forest live: it's so good for death industrial music that it's probably my most sought-after audio gadget right now.[1] Then there's a whole world of esoteric acoustic instruments like the waterphone, which Mark Korven used to score one of my all-time favorite horror movies. We have novel ways to use nature as an instrument, like subterranean microphones that capture vibrations through soil. People even bio-mod synthesizers, kids' toys, and drum machines to make infernal glitches with the power of circuitbending. Strange sound sources are a subcultural phenomenon in the world of experimental music.

As a noise musician, this all completely captivates me. The notion that I could turn any source sounds at all into a compelling track pushed me hard toward noise over half a decade ago. I'm far from the only noise artist who values this creative liberty. All the noise musicians I've ever wanted to talk to take pride in their work's originality. Every good noise set I've ever seen does something novel with its performance, sound design, or both. And it's generally both, because—like every other music genre—so much of what makes noise exciting is the way it's performed, and so much of what makes noise performance interesting is the way it uses sound. Every good noise set I've ever seen sounds edgy and naturally tends to look the part.

In the world of noise, the intersection of caustic sound and abrasive performance art stems from a decades-long cross-cultural affair with danger music. Everybody knows about Hanatarash's bulldozer and everybody wants to be as cool as that in their own way. I'm not exempt from that. At this point I've played dozens of Aether sets, and the performances the audience likes most—unfailingly, unfailingly, unfailingly—are the ones that draw blood. And I'm happy to give that to them. If my art looks—or even better, if it is—arduous, tricky, and abrasive, I know I'm making people think.



My personal preoccupation with painful performance means my ears perk up when people discuss violent ways to write music. In noise subculture—at the very least in the parts of it I know best—people are always talking about this. Crazy ideas get thrown around. Garret from Cemetery Bastard has probably been playing an electric guitar with a handsaw for longer than I’ve known about noise. People allegedly take power tools to cement. For years now my bandmate Caden’s been wanting to do this thing with a fish and I’m not even allowed to tell you about it.

Of all these strange and dangerous schemes to touch audiences’ souls, one in particular captured my imagination for years. It seemed novel, but not prohibitively expensive; abrasive, but relatively self-contained; scary, but not life-threatening. I forget how I initially encountered this thought, but it hooked me instantly when I recently reconsidered it: what if I put scrap metal in a blender?

It’ll take a while to explain the appeal here if you’ve never played noise yourself. See, Caden and I agree that Aether works because there’re two of us. There’s one person to punch pedals while the other scrapes scrap metal. There’s one person to enharmonically abuse instruments while the other pushes up the mixer’s gain. There’s one person to do scream vocals about mental illness while the other curls up in a ball and inaudibly whimpers about mental illness. This holds true with both the studio and the stage. A central unspoken tenet of our band’s work is that until we hit the “stop” button on our recorder, at least one person is always doing something.

Now, it’s normal (if not expected) for a noise set to be just one really long, improvised song. Aether is far from unique there. But microphone feedback tends to fill the dead space in other artists’ long songs, and Aether isn’t really about that. Caden thinks feedback noise is outmoded. That means every time one of us connects a microphone to an amplifier, someone’s doing something that mitigates feedback and keeps our sound in perpetual flux.

That’s a fine objective for a band. With at least two sets of hands, it’s piss easy to make music that vaguely adheres to an innate sense of dynamics and no other rules besides constant change.[2] Caden and I could do work like that together until we’re at least as old as Merzbow, and, if climate change doesn’t get us, I really think we might. But we don’t make all our music together. I knew this, of course—Caden’s been doing solo stuff for years, and even Aether was originally his one-man thing. But that didn’t make me panic less when invited to play a set he couldn’t attend.

Performing solo is better than not performing at all, for sure. Even so, before this set I made music for over a decade and only ever played live with others throughout all that. The sentiment of all that group performance casts a powerful shadow over me. Personally, I think microphone feedback sounds cool sometimes. However: imagine you’ve spent

years playing across half the East Coast with someone you care a lot about, and he finds microphone feedback as tiresome and irritating as you find Ed Sheeran. Imagine that your work with this person is some of the first art you’ve made that people connect with. Imagine that discussion with this person informs nearly all your ideas about live performance. It doesn’t matter how you feel about putting feedback in your own music. When confronted with the existential terror of your first-ever solo set, microphone feedback becomes the holy water to your witch.

What the hell do you do? If you’ve ever seen a solo noise set that uses anything more than a mixer and pedalboard, you’ll know that feedback noise is pervasive. If you haven’t, look at this Prurient performance, which has at least as much microphone screeching as it does tortured, evil vocals.

This is really standard for this kinda thing. Vocal noise—the stuff I’ve gravitated most toward in my last couple years or so of performance—doesn’t exude high-pitched sonic terror because everybody wants to ape Whitehouse. It’s because of a simple mechanical problem most sound engineers bend over backward to avoid.

Amplifiers and microphones are delicate feedback systems requiring perfect sets of circumstances to cleanly amplify the audio they process. A microphone turns sound in the air into electricity, which an amplifier connected to it then absorbs and reconverts into generally louder sound. When you send too strong an electrical signal through a microphone, however, the amplifier can output sound the microphone picks back up, which then travels back to the amplifier as electricity, then again to the microphone as sound, and so on. This creates those screeching feedback loops most musicians don’t like.

Do you know what gives harsh noise its genre-defining, abrasive, overdriven sound? That’s right—it’s running excess electricity through a microphone to an amplifier. You know, the very thing that also creates all that ear-piercing feedback noise.

In Aether one way I learned to fight the inevitable high-frequency screeching was by constantly feeding sound to our microphone. When you bombard an amplifier with audio frequencies that vary enough over a short time, none of them stick around long enough for the electric excess of a feedback loop. Contact microphones are another thing that let you have your cake here and eat it too, which is why they’re so relevant to noise. Because a contact microphone only captures the vibration of sound through solids, not air, it doesn’t have a way to feed an amplifier’s output back into itself. This is amazing for sound design, especially in a live context. You can tape a contact microphone to a resonant solid (like a piece of metal) and dial in exactly the kind of sound you want with a careful touch and a little practice.

Unfortunately, the very thing that makes contact microphones so amazing for careful sound design also makes them useless for the vocal part of vocal noise. Put your laptop on a wooden desk that has a



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***“If you want the audience to like your set, your voice needs to compete with the really fucking loud midrange noise your gear inevitably creates.”***

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contact microphone taped to it—it’ll pick up the sound of your typing, even from a few feet away. Now get an inch away from the contact microphone and scream into it at the top of your lungs—you’ll be lucky to hear more than line noise even at max gain.[3] Your contact microphone can’t pick up your voice through air, so what do you do for your vocal noise set?

You can try your best to scream at the audience unaided. Do you remember a few paragraphs ago, though, where I explained how that process of shoving all the electricity you can into an amplifier creates the toothy sound that defines harsh noise as a genre? That also tends to make your audio really fucking loud and—this revelation just might knock your fucking socks off—really fucking loud is the genre-defining default dynamic of harsh noise. If you want the audience to like your set, your voice needs to compete with the really fucking loud midrange noise your gear inevitably creates. If you read this far into this technical article about noise, demographically you’re probably a man—do you trust yourself to vocalize at a high enough pitch and volume to cut through all those electronic decibels? If you answered yes, you’re probably the sort of guy who thinks he could take a point off Serena Williams. Even Kristin Hayter performs with a vocal microphone. Dumbass.

If you want to make vocal noise, there’s no way around using a vocal microphone. That means there’s no way around feedback noise, right? Well, not necessarily. You can turn the vocal microphone off or at least lower its gain when you’re not using it. Although, that’s a tricky thing to track if you’re playing the sort of show where the microphone and three quarters of your clothes might be halfway across the room five minutes in. You can avoid pointing the microphone at the amplifier or getting the two too close, but that again means not losing yourself in the chaos of the set.[4] The best thing to do is constantly feed the microphone sound, but how do you do that as a single performer? Sure, you have a voice—one you’ll presumably use extensively in your vocal noise performance—but as a noise musician you probably smoke enough weed, cigarettes, or both that your lung capacity isn’t sensational. You’ll have to stop to take a deep breath or drink water every now and then, and maybe you’ll want to occasionally pause the vocals besides that for drama, dynamics, or suspense. If you have any kind of stage presence, one of your hands is probably already gripping the vocal microphone, which means you only have one hand left over for your pedals, mixer, laptop, other microphones, scrap metal, acoustic instruments, drugs, et cetera. This quickly becomes inadequate as soon as you want to do something as complicated as changing your contact microphone’s distortion while feeding sound

into it. Which is, you know, the bedrock of any noise set willing to entertain lofty pretensions like narrative, tension, or dynamic range.

This is how we get back to the scrap metal blender. You don’t see this much in Aether’s live performances, but numerous times I’ve used a vibrator in the studio to create drones. You just touch it to a piece of metal to which you’ve affixed a contact microphone, maybe tool around with the intensity and pulse, and then until the charge dies you’ve got a sound that’s variant enough not to create feedback if the vocal microphone picks it up, but consistent enough to provide a wonderful foundation for sculpting with your pedalboard.[5]

The scrap metal blender in the abstract is a more theatrical version of this same idea. You take a machine that makes annoying sounds, turn it on at the right part of the song, and marvel as the repurposed noise frees your hands up for more interesting things. A blender is much louder than a vibrator, even. I was hoping I could use it unamplified and unaffected to free up my interface’s two inputs: one for a contact microphone in a pan, the other for a dynamic vocal microphone.

As an unemployed college dropout whose biggest daily responsibility for most of last May was doing the dishes, it wasn’t hard to find time to acquire a blender. I nabbed a \$50 one from a chainstore—this a half hour after purchasing a Hitachi Wand for use on scrap metal first and the girl I was with second.[6] I should’ve spent that night applying to jobs, but instead I smoked some dry salvia, read the Wand’s entire excessively long instruction manual, and ate half a frozen pizza and too much candy. After fucking around with the vibrator for awhile, I got to charging up the blender. My initial thought was dumping all the coins in my wallet in there and seeing what happened. Then, I looked at the time and postponed till the next day.

Mid-morning came and I donned my protective science goggles, pictured below. I was pretty sure I’d be fine, but sight is pretty important to me as a visual artist and I didn’t wanna take any chances.



I deposited a couple dozen coins of varying sizes into the blender, flinching a little as a few clattered against the still-stationary blade. I practically vibrated with anticipation. There I was, perched on the precipice of what was poised to be a revolutionary scientific discovery. I was about to actualize a latent sound design dream years in the making. The universe, opening itself before me, all but promised that this, this shining instance of cutting-cutting-edge sonic experimentation, would become the cornerstone of my upcoming solo debut. The clouds obscuring the Æther dispersed, unveiling the rubicund countenance of God Himself



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*“... common sense compelled me to stop before the entire thing exploded all over my laptop.”*

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beaming down upon me. People would come to revere and tremble before the name Lindsay Victoria for years, and Et cetera et cetera et cetera et cetera et cetera. Anyway, I tried to start the blender and the shit fucking jammed. I flipped it over and shook it a bit to unstick the coins from the blade, then pressed the “play” button again. This time it functioned. I guess. Pretty immediately a network of scratches spiderwebbed up the blender’s body. It looked like plastic when I took it out of the box, but after a fifteen-second maelstrom of zinc, copper, and nickel it cracked like thawing ice. I hit pause and emptied all but three or four coins from it, then started it again. I watched the blender break apart from the inside for about another half minute. At that point, common sense compelled me to stop before the entire thing exploded all over my laptop. Here’s a colorized photograph of the experiment’s results:



Though the entire research team chokes back considerable disappointment over the abject failure of its hypothesis, it publishes its findings regardless. Scrap metal in a blender is a reckless noise musician’s pipe dream. Maybe you can find a sturdier blender or a more suitable metal to toss in, but there’s no sober mental calculus that justifies further experimentation here.

If you fuck around with this, especially during a live set, you endanger yourself and others. And for what? Everything happened so fast that I couldn’t grab a recording of the blended coins, but trust me: this doesn’t even sound good. It’s like a harsher, louder version of recording blended ice. Nothing about this is worth an audience member losing an eye. I’m glad this didn’t hurt anything besides the blender and my ego.

I’m also glad I could try this so that nobody else has to. Exploring new methods of sound design is just like any other kind of experimentation: the sad thing is, the outcomes you get don’t always excite. But don’t let that discourage you! Novelty is always a worthwhile pursuit, especially if it could potentially feed into powerful artistic inspiration. Even though this experiment failed, it still gave me ideas for that solo set. Plus, now I won’t spend the rest of my life wondering what it’d be like to try this.

In fact, this whole experience stirred up something deeply inspirational within me. I feel imbued with the spirit of adventure, excitement, and intrigue. I’m going to go now, and channel that positive energy into getting high on a gram or two of Benadryl. Maybe I’ll even see a friendly spider or sixty.

Curiosity can be such a beautiful thing, don’t you think?

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[1]Well, tied with the pair of hydrophones I want to use to make this really cool concept album about the abyssal ocean. That’s an idea I’ve had for over half a decade, but nice underwater microphones are fucking expensive.

[2]Seriously, anytime someone comes up to me after a set and says they “could never do” what I do, I invite them to reconsider. Especially if they’re impressed. Noise doesn’t require practice, patience, dedication, talent, or art. It is the punk music of punk music. Your grandma’s cousin’s mom’s dog’s squeaky toy could do an Aether set. That’s what’s so cool about all this.

[3]Interestingly but tangentially, I have occasional success picking up louder vocals with contact microphones when I firmly tape them to or press them up against certain pieces of metal. That doesn’t mean they’re suddenly learning to detect air-based vibrations. It just means that my voice—at an appropriate volume—can sometimes strike enough resonant frequencies with some metal structures that it vibrates through them in a way that contact microphones can interpret. Because the human ear is much more accustomed to hearing the human voice through air than through solids, these vocals-through-metal recordings unfailingly sound strange. Usually not in a particularly captivating way, either. It’s like being a fish and hearing sound through water your whole life, then surfacing and hearing it through air. You can approximate this kind of recording by running audio through certain delay or reverb plugins with low decay settings. You know, anything with a bunch of closely-clustered comb filters.

I don’t think it’s the sort of thing that could create an interesting vocal style for a body of work—you’d be better off singing into a guitar, or using a vocoder—but I’ll occasionally do it when our vocal microphone shits out at Aether performances, or if I’m doing an extended recording session and run out of all the better ideas.

[4]And, like, even if audiences didn’t crave chaos (and they overwhelmingly do), the chaos is the most fun thing about performing noise music. Why deprive yourself?

[5]All you prurient art critics might fancy this a Dadaistic interrogation of the transfeminine phallus, but I started doing this as a garden-variety nonbinary faggot who thought vibrators were just for cis women. I’m not making a statement. It’s just practical.

[6]In the same weekend, no less, but I did the responsible thing and washed it between uses. Apparently baby wipes are all you need, but I like to put condoms on it when rubbing it against scrap metal out of an abundance of caution.



# Jo Bragg

Name: Jo  
Age: 30  
Pronouns: He/Him  
Gender: He/They  
Location: Tāmaki  
Makaurau  
Primary Medium:  
Photography/Poetry  
Other Mediums: Video

## Bio:

Co-founder of  
Meanwhile Artist-Run  
Initiative, Tāmaki  
Makaurau born and  
based Jo Bragg  
(Ngati Porou Iwi) is  
a poet, art critic  
and gender theorist.  
Bragg holds an MFA  
by Research (First  
Class Honours)  
awarded in 2021 by  
Monash University  
(Naarm, Melbourne)  
majoring in gender  
and trans-feminist  
theory as it applies  
to the field of  
contemporary  
performance, video,  
photography and fine  
art. Bragg's  
photographic works  
feature in the  
collection of both  
the Wellington City  
Council and  
Christchurch Art  
Gallery Te Puna o  
Waiwhetu. Bragg  
currently works as  
'Inventory  
Coordinator' for  
Webbs Auction House,  
Auckland.

Links:  
[jobragg.space](http://jobragg.space)



Photo by: Jo Bragg



# BANALITY

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I am reading a pamphlet about the causes of Hepatitis C in the Gender Clinic waiting room. There is a radio chained to a heater against the back wall. Eyeing up the water cooler, I absentmindedly glance over a bowl of condoms in a glass bowl, on a low table; in the middle of the room. There seems to be a connection there - though sluggish in the recesses of my mind this morning - between lukewarm water and condoms. More than likely, it's just the banality of the environment forcing associations.

Banality: the only thing left unsaid about the decision to medically transition. People have been remiss not to mention the banality. The endless hours spent repeating yourself and waiting. On this particular visit I am waiting to discuss the waitlist to access publicly funded FTM Top Surgery and to self-administer a shot of Sustanon 250 Testosterone, with supervision by a nurse.

From the waiting room I am instructed to walk up a flight of stairs, along a corridor with no lights and into another dim, sparsely furnished room. I am going to have my chest photographed. From behind a thin clinical-blue curtain I remove my T-shirt and emerge. A nurse instructs me from behind the dispassionate lens: face front, side, back; you're done.

As a transgender person "lacking the privilege of an uncomplicated I"[1], means that I am unperturbed by most things, including the idea that no one has maximal agency over their own body in a medical setting. Back behind the curtain though, left alone with the thought of sticking a needle in my own asscheek in front of a perfect stranger next, it occurs to me how a more dark-web-silkroad approach to accessing Testosterone might have been easier.

The medical industrial mind fuck of accessing gender affirming care is, well, just that. Make no mistake this is not mutual aid, this is a system and not unlike most contemporary systems it comes with a history of systematic transphobia.

Not unlike what I have to witness in my working life in the contemporary-art-world, at the nexus of the contemporary-art-world and the medical-industrial-complex is money and therefore a pageantry of care. A pageantry that parades itself as progress.

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[1] Hil Malatino, (2020). Trans Care. University of Minnesota Press, (p. 35).





F

Thinking about the bloodstream

Calcification

Atrophy

As well as things that flow

Frisk



R

Being trans

Mortified

Or just tired

Frisk



I

Sorry for the trouble invading  
my privacy has caused you

Frisk

Agitated against your own will

Allegedly



S

I get blood test, after blood  
test, after blood test, after  
blood test, after blood test,  
after blood test, after blood  
test, after blood test

while yours boils

Frisk



K

Thinking about the bloodstream

Calcification

Atrophy

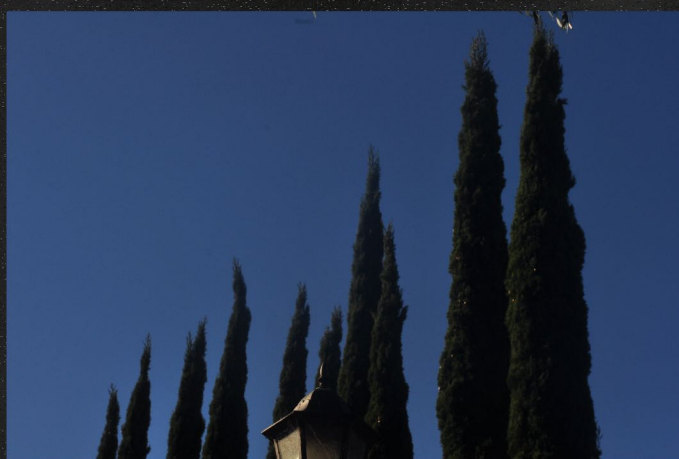
As well as things that flow



# Photography



<  
Melbourne, Australia, 2019



>  
Melbourne, Australia, 2019



<  
Mount Cook, Wellington, New Zealand, 2016

>  
Glenorchy Art and Sculpture Park,  
Tasmania, AU, 2017







^ Newtown, Wellington, New Zealand, 2018



# THE LITANIES OF STEPHANIE T.

Photo by Stephanie T.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

**NAME:** Stephanie T.

**AGE:** 29

**PRONOUNS:** She/Her

**GENDER:** Trans-Femme

**LOCATION:** New England, USA

**CREATIVE MEDIUMS:** Music,  
Writing, Poetry, Physical/Digital Collage,  
35mm Photography, 16mm Film.

**BIO:** Stephanie is a multi-faceted artist who has used her creativity to translate her subconscious into tangible ideas. In college, she pursued a BA in film with a preference for 16mm film and cheap, unconventional digital cameras. She currently runs an independent digital/cassette label, DCH Sound Co, which serves as a home for her and her friend's music projects of varying quality. Her main focus is her powerviolence band, Pageant, and her collection of semi-functional motorcycles. She lives in New England with her wife and three cats.

**LINKS:** [dchsound.neocities.org](http://dchsound.neocities.org) | [dchsound.bandcamp.com](http://dchsound.bandcamp.com) | @sy\_attica on IG



## OFF PUTTING

I GO ON A TANGENT  
AND IT EATS ME  
E ATSM E  
EA TSME  
EAT SME  
EATS ME  
EATSM E  
AND I CAN'T STOP  
IT JUST KEEPS GOING  
A NDDING  
AN DDING  
AND GOING  
ANDG DING  
ANDGD ING  
ANDGDH NG  
ANDGDIN G  
I CAN'T SHUT MYSELF OFF  
UNTIL I COLLAPSE

## BODY MODIFIER

CUT ME UP  
PUT ME BACK TOGETHER  
WITH NEW PARTS  
THROW AWAY THE OLD  
MAKE ME FEEL LIKE  
A NEW PERSON



## I DID THE MATH

IN 2022, TAYLOR SWIFT'S PERSONAL JET RELEASED  
8293.54 TONS OF CO<sub>2</sub>.

JUST HER JET.

THAT GOT ME THINKING ABOUT HOW MY MODE  
OF TRANSPORTATION CONTRIBUTES TO A DYING  
WORLD.

SO I DID THE MATH.

MY CAR EMITS 6.5 TONS OF CO<sub>2</sub> EVERY TEN  
THOUSAND MILES, OR ABOUT 1.3 LBS EVERY MILE.

I'D HAVE TO DRIVE 12,759,292 MILES TO BREAK  
EVEN.

YOU PROBABLY THINK I DRIVE SOME KIND OF  
FUEL-SIPPING  
FART-SNIFFING  
LIBERAL-LEANING  
FAGGOT-LOVING  
UNDER-THE-SPEED-LIMIT-IN-THE-RIGHT-LANE  
ELECTRIC HY-BRED MOTOR VEHICLE.

I DRIVE A TOYOTA TUNDRA.

I'D HAVE TO DRIVE THIS  
TWELVE-M-P-G-GETTING  
DICK-MEASURING-CONTEST-STARTING  
PLANET-DESTROYING  
KINDERGARTEN-KILLING  
MASTODON-CLASS-LOVE-LETTER-OF-POST-9/11-  
AMERICAN-EXCESS  
12,759,292 MILES JUST TO BREAK EVEN WITH HER.

SHE DIDN'T EVEN TOUR THAT YEAR.



## INVASION

FOREIGN INVADERS  
SWIFTLY PULLING OUT THE RUG  
THEY ARE HERE TO HELP

## FLUIDS

I AM AND AM NOT  
ONE WITH THE NATURAL WORLD  
AN OMNIPRESENCE

## FAMILY VALUES

YOUR FAMILY VALUES  
ARE KILLING PEOPLE DAILY  
REEVALUATE

## DANCE

STARING AT THE SEA  
MOON AND TIDES DANCE TOGETHER  
SHE'S WAVING AT ME

## FREE DOM

YOUR SONGS OF FREEDOM  
OF DREAMS AND SANCTUARY  
DON'T APPLY TO ME

## HOT BUTTON ISSUE

AS I BAWL MY EYES  
OUT I MUST BE QUIET 'CAUSE  
I'M IN THE MEN'S ROOM



## THE SCAPEGOAT

I AM THE SCAPEGOAT  
I AM THE STREET LIGHT STARING YOU  
DOWN  
YOU CAN'T GET OUT OF MY SIGHT  
I'M WATCHING YOU

I AM THE SCAPEGOAT  
I AM THE MIRROR ON YOUR  
BATHROOM WALL  
YOU DON'T LIKE WHAT I SEE  
I'M JUDGING YOU

I AM THE SCAPEGOAT  
I AM THE CREAK IN YOUR  
FLOORBOARD  
YOUR WEIGHT MAKES ME SCREAM  
I'M HATING YOU

I AM THE SCAPEGOAT  
I AM THE KNIFE IN YOUR KITCHEN  
DRAWER  
YOU LIKE HOW I FEEL  
I'M KILLING YOU

I HIDE IN YOUR SHADOW  
I WALK IN YOUR FOOTSTEPS  
I KNOW WHO YOU ARE  
I KNOW WHY YOU CRY  
I'M INSIDE YOUR HOUSE  
I WALK UP THE STAIRS  
I KNEEL DOWN NEXT TO YOUR BED  
AND WHISPER IN YOUR EAR

"YOU'RE GOING TO BE OKAY"





Heathen Fawn Recordings is a PNW based record label. Founded in the beginning of 2024, the intention of Heathen Fawn Recordings is to support new artists amongst the thriving PNW experimental music scene. A particular focus is showcasing new projects from artists who built their chops in metal, hardcore and punk.

The Heathen Fawn represents rebellion from convention. Through unconventional recorded sound we show our true and vulnerable self (fawn). We share this without expectation of reception or popularity, only to continue the conversation of authentic expression (heathen).



[meltdown archive] *Plastic Soup*

### Upcoming 2024 releases:

August Droneroom/Corpse Pose *split cs*  
September Death Spa *Cracked Eggs cs*

### Still Available (Limited Quantities)

- Corpse Pose/Balcony View *split cs*
- In Cascades *In Cascades cs*
- Cranial Key *Only Noise is Real cs*



*Fawn Frequencies Volume 1*

[HEATHENFAWNRECORDINGS.BANDCAMP.COM](https://HEATHENFAWNRECORDINGS.BANDCAMP.COM)

*"Heresy is the spring in which new ideas flow."*

*-John Charles Polyani*





Photo by: Steve Goodwin





# VAL DENHAM

**THE LEGENDARY BRITISH ARTIST TALKS WITH US ABOUT A LITTLE OF EVERYTHING; FROM HER EARLY ART SCHOOL DAYS AND THE EMERGING INDUSTRIAL SCENE, TO SURVIVING GENDER DYSPHORIA, FINDING HARMONY LIVING WITH OCD, AND HER NEW ELECTRONICA INFUSED ALBUM "POLTERZEITGEIST".**

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**What's the earliest memory you have?**

It is a common misconception that we don't really remember anything before the age of 2. I am living proof that this is a fallacy, as I can remember being a baby in my Silvercross pram. I was outside in the front garden and I was having a lot of fun hitting plastic yellow ducks and pink teddy bears which were hung across my pram on a string. I loved the way that they spun around when I hit them properly. This was later corroborated by my mother, she said that those ducks and teddy bears across my pram would keep me entertained for ages.

**You've said you were creating art before you were born. Do you come from a lineage of creatives?**

No. I know what you are referring to, that film on YouTube of me at the Some Bizzare Gallery in 1987. I did say in the film that I was creating art before I was born. But I was simply being facetious. I often say odd things just to see people's reactions. As Jack Kerouac said in his book *On the Road* "*He never said a common place thing.*" I love that!

**How old were you when you began formal art training? Was it something you were enthusiastic about, or were you resistant to instruction?**

I first went to art college in 1974. It was at Bradford College of Art, in Yorkshire. I was only 16 years old. You had to be 18, but I was let in as an exception.



**How did you first get involved with what became the original industrial music scene?**

I was interested in making primitive music, using cassette decks to record on to. I had no instruments other than pots and pans, old radios. Oh, I had a harmonica too. I used to record onto one cassette recorder, then play that as I was recording onto another recorder. Very primitive over-dubbing.

I also learnt that I could make tape loops out of cassettes if I opened them up, took out all the tape except just enough to go around the two spools. This was sellotaped at the back of the tape. I also learnt to make the tape play backwards. I gave a one off cassette tape which I had recorded to my friend Genesis P-Orridge and he loved it. He played it to Chris Carter who was in Gen's band Throbbing Gristle. They were thinking about the possibility of releasing it on their Industrial Records label as vinyl album, but the other band members felt that it was just too crude.

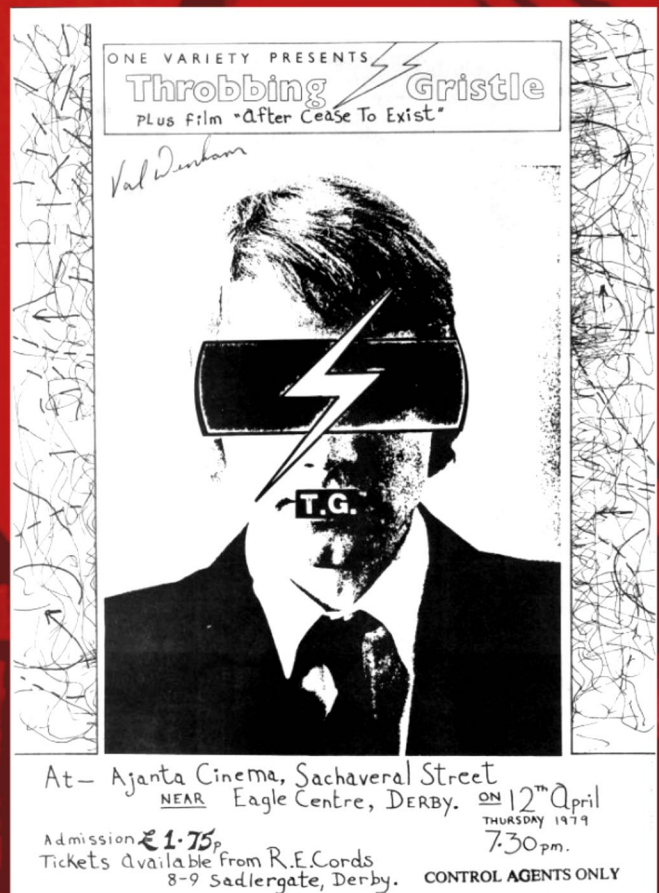
Eventually I started to perform live with my band The Death & Beauty Foundation. I met my friend Oli Novadnieks who could play guitar and had a proper reel to reel recorder. My band was considered to be part of that whole Industrial scene. I think that I was taken more seriously as I was always championed by Genesis. However, many of the other bands found us to be an awkward addition to the Industrial scene.

We were always very provocative, and would do distorted cover versions of songs such as Working in a Coalmine, Moon River, Venus in Furs and We are Siamese from the Disney film Lady and the Tramp. I would also start gigs with a speech. As you can imagine this all confused our audience, often resulting in things being thrown. On one occasion we had to leave the stage by the back entrance before the gig had finished due to threats from the simple-minded individuals in the audience.

**Starting in the late 70's, your art starts to pop up in/on releases by artists like Throbbing Gristle and Monte Cazazza. How did that come about?**



Val Denham in 1977



Throbbing Gristle flyer featuring Val 1979





Elita, Genesis, Val, and Sleazy, Lyceum backstage 1981

Once again, Genesis loved my art, so I was asked to do various artworks for Industrial Records, such as T-shirt designs and various cover art for releases.

#### **How did The Death & Beauty Foundation come together?**

I was at the Royal College of Art from 1979 until 1983, and whilst there I became interested in performance art action pieces. I was deeply inspired by COUM Transmissions, Genesis and Cosey's performance art group. But eventually I started to introduce sound. This eventually mutated into DBF (The Death & Beauty Foundation). I was collaborating with my friend Mike Wells, later of the duo Greater Than One and it was actually Mike who came up with the name The Death & Beauty Foundation. We would perform at the Royal College of Art in the lecture theatre. I did a performance piece in the college canteen for my final degree show. Genesis, his wife Paula and Caresse were there. Jhonn Balance, Marc Almond, Stevo and was Derek Jarman there? I can't remember. I do remember that on that occasion the band was myself, my ex-wife Elita, my good friend Antal Nemeth, Mike Wells, Stuart Jane and Nick Coombes. I have many photos of this event in 1983.

After that the group line up changed constantly. We had an appearance at the Fabulous Feast of Flowering Light all day group show at the Hammersmith Odeon/Apollo in London 1985 with myself, Oli, Danny Loker and a girl on saxophone called Plume. We used a drum machine and backing tracks on that occasion. The DBF ended up eventually being just myself and Oli Novadnieks.

#### **Did you have a goal/mission for The Death & Beauty Foundation, or was it more about experimentation and seeing where things ended up?**

We were very interested in experimentation. I just loved to hear the tapes that we produced. We would record on Oli's reel to reel in his basement flat and then download onto two cassettes. I would print off 2 covers for the cassette with the album title and track listing. Limited edition of 2! How crazy is that? One for Oli and one for me. We just presumed that nobody else would be interested in what we were doing. We became very obscure. Our private band. Of course now all those, or most of those tapes have been officially released as albums on vinyl and CD. Some people find that old stuff fascinating now, but at the time we were just playing for our own amusement.



Plume & Val on stage 1983



**During this period, are you showing your artwork publicly? What was inspiring your work at the time?**

The only exhibitions of my work that I was involved in at that time were a solo exhibition at Some Bizzare Gallery in 1987 and a group show at the same place, not long after. Also I was involved in a group show of Young British Artists. I can't remember where that was now.

**After the implosion of Throbbing Gristle/Industrial Records, you became involved with Psychic TV and The Temple of Psychic Youth. Were you an active member, or more of a voyeur of sorts? I know at the very least Psychic TV utilized a lot of your artwork.**

I was never involved at all on any level with The Temple of Psychic Youth. Genesis was interested in the possibility of creating a cult movement, with himself as the leader of course. I would often mock him, because I saw this experiment as something of a joke. This did sour our relationship somewhat, but we remained friends. I would produce artworks for PTV album covers, T shirts, etc., but I was never convinced by the idea of his cult and simply found the whole thing amusing. I think this frustrated Genesis somewhat as he presumed that I would be heavily involved. However I am much too strong in my own individuality to be part of anything, even to some extent the human race.



Val & Oli of Silverstar Amoeba



"Off the Hook" used by Psychic TV

**From the outside, TOPY looks like an artist's collective trying out new ideas. What did it look like to you from the inside?**

Rather silly to be honest. I was most definitely on the outside. It was someone else's idea not my idea. I even have my own private Deist ideas about the universe. And if you think about it I was right all along. TOPY did self-implode and Genesis became an exile as a result. I knew that he was heading for trouble. Too many unstable individuals were being drawn into this experimental web and I could see that it was trouble from the start. Genesis's ego was growing out of control.

**I imagine John & Peter leaving PTV/TOPY to form Coil was the end of the "commune" era of TOPY (it has been stated that Genesis P-Orridge became controlling/possessive of PTV/TOPY at this time). Was this when you decided to distance yourself from the group?**

I was distanced anyway! Count me out. Mind you all that time I did remain on good terms with Genesis and Paula (now known as Alaura). We used to baby sit for them. They always considered us to be friends that were apart from the TOPY idea. Genesis trusted me and my opinions.



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***"I never put a label on myself, but society did."***  
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The Death & Beauty Foundation also comes to a head around 1985. What caused the project's cessation?

It just got whittled down, to myself and Oli Novadnieks. So after a time we started to refer to ourselves as Silverstar Amoeba. Which is a name that came to me in a dream. I was actually seriously considering changing my name to Silverstar Amoeba at one point.



"Boy Demon in the Starlit Night" 1986

Looking back at the period of, say, 1977 to 1985... could you share with us a favorite memory of yours, and possibly a silly story/anecdote, too?

The renowned British photojournalist Don McCullin came up to Bradford around 1977. He was doing a book about poverty and various eccentric individuals in the north of England. The book was eventually released in 1979 as a hardback entitled 'Homecoming'. Many of the photographs in the book were taken in and around Bradford.

One rainy lunchtime Don was sat in The Acropolis café, just down the hill and across the road from Bradford Art College which I was a student of at the time. It was raining and he spied me walking down the hill. I had cropped white hair, full make up and I was wearing second hand clothes purchased for next to nothing from the local Oxfam charity shop. I stopped at a waste paper bin opposite the café, completely uninterested in the customers of the café watching me. Someone had thrown away a black umbrella. I looked up at the rain, held out my hand, then down at the discarded umbrella. I got it out of the bin. He was watching me the whole time. I put the umbrella up and it was completely broken, but it did have half its material left and half the spokes. So I put it up anyway and I walked down the hill with this ridiculous broken umbrella. I reasoned that at least I might remain half dry. He told me later that it was just like watching a Charlie Chaplin film.

He visited the college and asked some students who this odd person with white hair was. He got my home telephone number from my girlfriend at the time called Christine Head. When he rang my house, my mother answered the phone and he asked her if he could speak to me. He asked me if it would be possible to photograph me. I said sure, I loved having my photo taken, but I didn't have a clue who he was, so he explained.

After I put the phone down my mother then asked me if he was an old pervert and why was he wanting to take pictures of me. I told her, "No, he said that he is a professional photographer and he's doing a book!" I told her that he had said that he works for the Sunday Times. She said "Ah, The News of the World is a better newspaper".



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***“Looking like a freak was so much better than looking like a straight person in my view.”***  
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The next day I met Don McCullin at the art college and he asked me where my favourite place around the college was. I told him the empty white rooms above the studios where the current art department was stationed. These empty white painted rooms had just been renovated to become extra studio space in due course. All there was up there was a large paint splattered mirror and a white wooden box. I used to go up there to apply my make up and be alone. It seemed that I was the only person who ever went up there. Sometimes I would go up there to eat my lunchtime sandwiches which my mother had made me. Usually my lunch consisted of cheap white bread with some horrible white cheese and a Mars bar for desert.

So I found myself there with Mr. McCullin and his big fancy camera. I wore my black leather jacket as I thought that it gave me a rebellious appearance. I sat on the solitary box and he clicked away. He must have taken a hundred photos. He was somewhat intrigued by my preference for this cold and empty white environment. I explained that I liked being alone. He told me that he was really annoyed at himself for not having a camera on him when he was sat in that café and that he would be sure to never make the same stupid mistake again.

Eventually I felt rather disappointed that none of the photos made it into the book. However he did give me two A4 size black and white photographs from the photo session. My mother said that he had managed to make me look like a freak, but I rather liked the photographs. Looking like a freak was so much better than looking like a straight person in my view.

From what I could find while researching, it looks like you stepped back from performance/music in the mid/late 80's and for most of the 90's. I'm assuming you were actively painting and furthering your art career at this point? Tell us what you were up to.

Well, I became a house husband or housewife. I was raising two kids and doing all the housework. I also had a part time job as a graphic artist working for the council in Walthamstow, East London. I was still recording music, sometimes with Oli and sometimes just solo stuff. I was creating a lot of art, but I was reluctant to show it to anyone as it became quite personal. I was also writing a lot. My obsessive compulsive disorder became quite a problem and I saw a psychiatrist on the NHS. This resulted in the extreme years of my gender dysphoria. I became obsessed with the idea of changing my gender.



*“Venus Castina”*





"MILKY TURGID"

1985

Val Dantoni

"Milky Turgid" 1985



**Let's talk about gender/identity. Going back through life, before working with the Psychiatrist at the NHS, did you ever put a label on yourself or feel comfortable in labels others put on you?**

I never put a label on myself, but society did. I was perceived as a boy and I was expected to act accordingly. The fact that I did not act in the correct manner, caused me to exhibit certain mental health issues, such as obsessive compulsive behaviour and Tourette's syndrome. I always felt like an outsider and I am ashamed to admit that I became a bully. I must have caused a lot of confusion because I was called a sissy, yet I felt compelled to push certain kids' heads down school toilets. This is what the binary conspiracy does to transgender kids, as Philip Larkin, the poet wrote *'They fuck you up, your mum and dad'*; well, I would add society to that.

**Earlier you spoke about doing your make-up in that White Room. Was make-up just something to do, or was something more personal happening for you mentally when you applied your visage? I can't imagine the general public under Thatcher was very welcoming to anyone remotely androgynous.**

I wore make up because, that's what a lot of girls like to do. It's innate, a compulsion to appear feminine. It was never a rebellious act, I simply had a typical girl's brain in a male body. I simply couldn't help myself. It used to really freak out my parents, particularly my dad. The idea of looking male just made me feel very uncomfortable. I plucked my eyebrows and shaved my body. I would occasionally get punched in the face by lads with very minimal intelligence, basically because they felt that that was what they were supposed to do. The truth is that transgender people are just made that way, the same as gay people can't help being gay. Conversion therapy is a complete lie. Nobody can be converted to another sexuality. You are what you are and you will always be what you are.

**Were you exclusively dating/intimate with women, or were things a bit more nebulous?**

Mostly women, but occasionally guys too. I am 70% lesbian, attracted to women. But when I masturbate, I always visualise being submissive with big guys. So I suppose I'm really bisexual? I just think of myself as what I am, a transgender woman.

**The deeply personal artwork you were making in the late 80's/90's... have you ever shown any of it publicly in any way (Art show, magazine article, social media, etc.)?**

A few bits, here and there on social media and magazines, my official books etc. But some of that stuff is very personal. Maybe one day I might have facsimiles produced of all my private books. These books are full of artworks and biography. Some of it very shocking.

**Would you be willing to share a piece from this time with our readers (we, of course, understand if you decline)?**

Nah, too painful, too personal. Maybe one day.

**You are open about having OCD. Could you tell us about when this first manifested and how it was generally impacting your life before seeing the Psychiatrist at the NHS?**

That is a book in itself. My Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) first became obvious when I was a child. Before I saw a psychiatrist, I didn't even know that I had OCD. I saw a show on television about a woman with the same obsessive symptoms as myself, and my first wife said *"Oh God, that's just what you do!"* So it was decided that I should see a shrink. I still have pretty extreme OCD. I live with it every day. I even dream about it! It impacts on everything. I am compelled to do a clean of upstairs and downstairs every single day. I do this after breakfast. Notice that I said 'I am compelled to do....' I honestly have no choice. If I don't do my rituals in exactly the same order every day, I will feel very bad indeed. So it's best for me to just surrender to my brain. Then my brain is happy and I'm also happy. We get on fairly well these days. Mind you my brain does seem to require way too much alcohol. (After 5 p.m.)





*"Time Vortex scroll emanating from anal tripod with genetic female" 21.9.96*

"Anal Tripod Part 5" 1996

**Other than your Doctor, who was your greatest ally during this time?**

I had no allies at all. I had my family and my friends, but nobody could really understand me. My first wife would simply shout at me to stop it. Sometimes I did feel rather alone with my brain.

**What's something about OCD that you wish more people understood?**

Well, that's a hard one to answer. Maybe just that it is a very powerful compulsion. It does infiltrate all areas of your life. It can be very tiring, but, and it is a big but, is my OCD responsible for my advanced artistic talent? Yes of course it is! Is it part of my personality? Yes! Is it actually a gift? Neurodiversity and all that? Plus my house is really clean, and I do like it being clean. It makes me feel safe. Who would I be without OCD? Would I be some boring guy in an insurance office? Has it made me rebellious? I'm not sure that I

would like to be someone else. I have a good life, I'm happy most of the time, just a little unbalanced sometimes. I have been married to my second wife for 20 years now and we adore each other. Complete soul mates. How many people have that? So, I would say that you can live a good life even with OCD. Just stroke it, listen to it, be nice to it and you can get along with it... most of the time.

-----  
**"Don't be so hard on yourself. You are not the same as other people, but hey! That's a good thing, right?"**  
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# *Favorite Things*

*with Val Denham*  
(a brief interlude)

## *Favorite Books:*

Hmmm, that's a difficult question as I live in what looks like a library. We have books everywhere. Even going up the stone stairs! We have piles all over the place. I'm a bibliophile, I just love books. Most of our books are art books; from [Raphael](#) and [Caravaggio](#) to [Keith Haring](#) and [The Chapman Brothers](#), loads of books on art.

These are my favourite books: I like nonfiction books. So maybe my favourite art book is the big [Pierre Molinier](#) book by [Jean-Luc Mercie](#). But if we are talking fiction, Then maybe [The Tennant of Wildfell Hall](#) by [Anne Brontë](#). At the moment I am wading through The Guardian list of the most disturbing fiction books ever written. I do like to be disturbed. I've just gone through the top 5 most disturbing true crime books.



## *Favorite Films:*

*Vertigo* is a big favourite of mine, I adore *Alfred Hitchcock*. I love the films of *David Lynch*, *Powell and Pressburger*. *Jean Vigo*. *Stanley Kubrick*. I watch *The Rocky Horror Show* every year. We love the *Mel Brooks* 1967 film *The Producers*. I'm an *Ed Wood* fanatic. I love the trashy 1950s horror sci-fi films. I love the old Universal Monster films such as *The Bride of Frankenstein*. I adore film noir and my favourite is *Gilda*. I love *Humphrey Bogart* too.

Possibly my favourite film ever though is *The Red Shoes* by *Powell and Pressburger*. I can watch that anytime. I've got it on Blu-ray and I've seen it about 100 times. We even saw it on the big screen. That one and their *Black Narcissus*. We love old films. I like newer stuff too, such as *There Will be Blood (2007)*. I loved that *Poor Things*, too. That and *The Zone of Interest*. I make no apologies but I really liked *Barbie* too! I love going to the cinema, especially in the weekday afternoons when the cinema is almost empty.

## *Favorite Music:*

I love so many! But I am passionate about the US band *The Residents*. I collect literally everything that they have ever released. Even rare stuff. I have a ridiculous Residents collection. So maybe my favourite of theirs is *The Third Reich 'n' Roll*. I just love that album and I have many alternative versions on vinyl and CD. I even paid a crazy amount for a first pressing.

I do tend to listen to the same albums that I was listening to when I was 15. So I love *Alice Cooper*, *David Bowie*, *Kate Bush*, *Frank Zappa*, *Iggy and the Stooges*, *Roxy Music* and *Hawkwind*. I am also a *Beatles* fanatic, but then, who isn't? At the moment I am into a Swedish band called *Fever Ray*.





*Time Vortex scroll from Anal Tripod with Mona Lisa*

*"Anal Tripod 4"*



**What advice would you offer to someone struggling with OCD?**

Is this interview turning into an article about OCD? Okay, so, I would say that if you are struggling with your OCD, then do see a doctor. They will refer you to a psychologist or psychiatrist who will involve you in behavioural therapy. This can help a lot of people. If that doesn't help then they may prescribe medication. This can also reduce the compulsive behaviour. If none of that works, as it didn't for me, just try to embrace it and if you don't let it overwhelm you then you can live with it. You have a demon on your shoulder and if you accept that then it can be easier. Don't be so hard on yourself. You are not the same as other people, but hey! That's a good thing, right?

**During your therapy sessions for OCD, you were also experiencing what you referred to as "Extreme" Gender Dysphoria. Tell us about some of what you were going through?**

Well, when I saw the shrink, she said at one point *"Is there something that you're not telling me?"* I said, I do think a lot about my gender identity? Then she said *"I knew it!"* At this point the Pandora's Box was opened. My sessions with the psychiatrist became all about my gender dysphoria and not my OCD. The psychiatrist was convinced that the OCD was a symptom of my gender identity problem and that it would alleviate when I transitioned. She was wrong of course, as I have now transitioned and I still have that darn OCD. Gender dysphoria, that is a whole new book. I talk at length about it in my forthcoming biography. I could go on about that forever.

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***"I don't really want to be a middle aged woman, I just simply am one!"***  
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**Did you find support among family/friends?**

Nope, friends and family just do not get it. I lost many friends and several family members. My mother did get it eventually. But to most people it's just such a freaky thing to want to do. Someone said about me *"Who would want to be a middle aged woman?"* Well, I don't really want to be a middle aged woman, I just simply am one!

**What was transitioning like for you? I imagine the entire process was highly emotional.**

Very hard, you have to be tough, it can be really embarrassing to transition. Some unkind people will say, *"yeah, but he still looks like a guy"*, which is shit because I never looked like a guy anyway. It takes forever for people to use the correct pronouns. But then one day, you will have moved so far into your desired gender that you no longer care what people think. And it's then that it all levels out and you can relax. At first I felt that I needed to wear make-up and look feminine when I went out of the door. However, now I'm much more laid back. Now I will go to the shops often without make up in jeans and a T-shirt. But with 17 years of hormone treatment, I now have boobs and soft skin. I don't grow facial hair and everyone says 'madam' or 'love'. I'm something of a 'stealth transsexual'. I let the world believe that I am a cisgender woman. It makes me very happy. And now friends and family call me her and she. It worked out just peachy.

After your transition, you returned to music, appearing on albums by Farmacia and The Sword Volcano Complex. You also released the solo album *"Somewhere In Between Desire and Despair"*. Was it frightening for you to put yourself out there post-transition? Exhilarating? Something else?

It was what I had always wanted. I was finally the real Val Denham. You must be fearless and believe who you are.



**How did you end up crossing paths with Black Sun Productions?**

Black Sun Productions were my friends Massimo and Pierce. They had heard of me because they were involved with Jhonn Balance and his band Coil. Jhonn was a big fan of me and my work, and this interested Massimo and Pierce, so they asked me to collaborate on various musical releases and perform as a guest with them on stage. We had some great times together!



"Somewhere Between Desire and Despair"

**What made you decide to collaborate with the group?**

Their enthusiasm for me and the fact that their own music was interesting and experimental. Plus, let's be honest they were and still are very attractive fellas. I found them to be great fun, but then I always did get along really well with gay guys. I have friends now who are gay guys. There is no barrier with them. They never worry about making fools of themselves.

**Your performances with Black Sun Productions presented a Post-Industrial Cabaret of sorts. What was it like planning/performing those events? What was inspiring you at the time?**

We didn't do too much planning really, it was all fairly spontaneous, maybe a couple of

rehearsals. We had an element of uncertainty about the live shows and I loved that. They weren't afraid to let me shine. No big egos really. Just three or four guys and a transsexual having fun. I was inspired by everything. Being alive was inspiring.

**Were there any stand out moments for you at any of these performances? To clarify, I'm referring to audience/fan interactions, humorous happenings, surprise guests, that sort of thing.**

In Biel, Switzerland, I'll always remember a lot of the audience dancing like crazy as I belted out 'As I Walked Out One Evening', the words to the poem by W.H. Auden, which I sang to drums and synths. I'd never had an audience so enthusiastic before. It was quite a shock!

When we performed in Amsterdam, along with Psychic TV, it was cool meeting people like Lydia Lunch. Before our gig I was asked about my 'rider'. I didn't have a clue what the organisers of the show meant by 'rider'. They said, well whatever you like to have in your dressing room. So I said, "I like vodka and chocolate". I was surprised when I went into the dressing room and found baskets of every chocolate that you could imagine and enough vodka for a nightclub.

**Did you ever participate in one of Black Sun Production's "Plastic Spider Thing" rituals? If so, what are your thoughts on the experience?**

No, that was before they had the fabulous honour of working with me.

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***"It's a strange experience to hear your own voice from so long ago..."***

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**2012 saw the release of, I believe, your first art book, "Dysphoria", on Timeless. How did this project come to pass? Were you looking for a publisher, or were you approached with the idea?**

A friend of mine called Claus Laufenburg was friends with Xavier Laradji, who runs Timeless books in France. Claus conveyed to me that Xavier had expressed interest in publishing a book about my art. I was reluctant at first, but they eventually won me round, when I saw the amazing production values of their publications.

**How did you choose the pieces featured in the book?**

I didn't, I sent Xavier a huge amount of images and he chose the images he wanted in the book. I agreed with his choices.

**You followed that book up with "Tranart", also on Timeless. Comparing just the titles, "Dysphoria" feels more uncertain, where "Tranart" feels like a declaration. How do these volumes differ in your opinion?**

"Dysphoria" was an edition of only 300, and it sold out almost immediately. This gave Xavier the impetus to produce "Tranart", a larger edition and a more lavish book, on better quality paper, and using the images that did not appear in "Dysphoria". Owing to the success of "Dysphoria", I believe I was taken more seriously as a publishing prospect. Genesis P-Orridge was keen to do the introduction to the book, which also includes writing by Graham Duff, and a piece by my wife concerning my obsessive compulsive disorder. The titles for both books were chosen by me and I didn't see them as uncertain or as a declaration; I did like the title "Tranart" very much as it is a palindrome.

**Both books are gorgeously produced. Did you take on the layout/design duties, or were you able to let Timeless Editions do their thing?**

Timeless Editions did their thing with the text and layouts, but the covers were designed by Valnoir who is a graphics genius, and hopefully he will do the cover of my upcoming autobiographical art book.

**Tell us about the archival projects with Vinyl On Demand. Knowing Frank's love of the original industrial scene, and tape culture in general, I'm assuming this was something that was in discussion for a while.**

It started when Frank contacted me via email and told me he had already purchased one of my very early cassettes; he asked if it would be possible to make a vinyl record of this recording. God knows where he got it from. I asked for a file of the cassette as I was unsure which one it was. I was horrified when I received the file, it was a terrible piece of work. Very primitive indeed. It was basically a recording of me twanging a guitar and spontaneously making up lyrics, with dirge like tape loops in the background.

I told him that I had much better tapes from the period, and he got excited and asked if he could purchase some of my old cassettes, as he is an obsessive collector. He was particularly interested in recordings from the late 70s and early to mid-80s, which as you know, were the early days of the industrial scene in the UK. I couldn't believe how much he offered to pay for what were old cassettes that had been buried in an old case for decades. These tapes contained music made by my band The Death and Beauty Foundation, and from the mid-80s Silverstar Amoeba.

All the cassettes had handmade covers, and so were more or less one off master copies. Nevertheless he purchased all of them. I downloaded most of the stuff to CD-R so it wasn't lost to me, then I posted his box of cassettes to Germany. When Frank had listened to all the cassettes, he was so enthusiastic that he decided he wasn't going to do just a single LP; he was going to produce a box-set of a large proportion of the cassettes. It is a very well-produced box-set. The object itself is intrinsically aesthetically pleasing with tortoise shell coloured vinyl. I was delighted with it. It was all browns and gold, even the T-shirt inside the box was brown and gold.



**Was it a positive experience revisiting that work 30+ years later? Did you rediscover anything you had long forgot?**

Absolutely, some of this stuff I hadn't heard since it was recorded. It was and wasn't a positive experience, some parts blew my mind and others were embarrassingly bad. It's a strange experience to hear your own voice from so long ago; there was a charming youthful naivety to it which has been lost as I age.

**What did you think of the reception of the sets? I know many had waited a long time to finally hear much of the material covered, myself included.**

I was surprised that people were so interested in something that seems so long ago, and which, to me, seemed to be rather amateur. At first it seemed curious to me that young people would be interested in that era, until my wife pointed out that the young always seem interested in collecting vintage items from about 50 years ago; it's the hindsight of history. At the time I was fairly ignored!

**Let's (finally) talk about your new album, "Polterzeitgeist". Why that title?**

My wife and I are addicted to Danny Robin's BBC Podcast Uncanny which concerns people's supernatural experiences, with witnesses for team sceptic and team believer. The interesting thing is, we tend to listen to the podcast through our television set so we can listen together without earphones. The television shows a static image of Danny and curiously, because it is on the television we can't help ourselves from looking at it, even though we don't need to as it's audio. One other series Danny did was entitled The Battersea Poltergeist and the title was on the television screen all the time we listened, so I looked at the words for quite a while which got me thinking. I knew the German word Zeitgeist means spirit of the age and I came up with the idea of adding zeit in the middle of poltergeist and as polter means noise it seems most apt for an album title – noisy spirit of the age.



"Polterzeitgeist" Album Cover

**Who did you work with for this album (your band, producers, etc.)?**

This album I have worked only with James Hardiman, who has composed most of the music and produced the album with suggestions from me about the sounds I want, and the general feel of each track. I usually work with my Argentinian friends Farmacia, who are Ariel and Diego Sima. I love their piano and trumpets, but I wanted a different feel for this album. I don't doubt that I will be working with them again.

**When you began working on this record, did you have a specific vision for where you wanted it to go?**

The title itself formed the direction; I wanted a negative vibe and a feeling of unease throughout the album. There is more percussion on this one than any previous work to give a more aggressive feeling throughout.

**"House on Fire" is the lead single from "Polterzeitgeist". It's also the opening track. Tell us about it.**

It relates to the feeling of disquiet and domestic insecurity; the breakdown of people's dreams and ideals: *'All I ever wanted was a happy life'*.





"Skull" 2018



**“Cheated” really resonates with me. I interpret it as an exploration of the emotions someone goes through when they realize a hard truth later in life (in my case, an adult ADHD diagnosis). I know for me, it was a lot of ‘What If’ and ‘Why Didn’t’ and the like accompanied by red hot frustration. What were you feeling?**

That’s an interesting question, as a person I am generally quite content (yes, the OCD is a large part of my life, but I accept it and that cuts it down to manageable proportions). However, as a child you grow up hoping your life will be wonderful, but then you get a few knocks and that can lead to disappointment with your life. Subconsciously, I think I was writing about the experience of my marriage breakdown, and divorce to the first Mrs. Denham.

**Many of these tracks are primed for the dance floor. “Polterzeitgeist”, for example, gives off a sort of Pet Shop Boys if they were a Ralph Records recording artist vibe. Were you trying to write a dance record or did it just sort of emerge beneath the poetry and experimentation?**

It just emerged, rather like the track “Walk Away” dictating what it was. These things just become what they are.

**And then we come to “Walk Away”, which is, dare I say, Nashville-infused? Has Val gone Country?**

That’s the anomaly on the album and James thought it might be wise to omit it, but I work instinctively, and of the people who have heard the album, that’s the one they like first as it is so accessible. I think that I just needed to break the angry mood a bit. The truth is that I dream of performing it at The Grand Ole Opry in a huge Stetson hat.

**The orchestral “Revelations” closes out the album. In its opening, I was instantly reminded of how Scott Walker would place unsettling dissonance just beneath beautiful big band arrangements. Were you a fan of Scott Walker?**

Who wasn’t a fan of Scott Walker?

**The track clearly presents apocalyptic themes. Given the current state of affairs throughout the world, do you think humanity’s gone to shit, or do you think we still have a chance to overcome?**

When has the world not been going to shit? I am a UK Baby Boomer, and we were fortunate to live through a long period of peace; the idea of World War III seemed unlikely, but that has changed now. The Falklands War in the early 80’s was the only time that I heard that my ‘country was at war’. Wars are always, and have always been going on. It is horrific, but tragically, it’s nothing new.

We don’t have a car, we use buses and trains, sometimes taxis, we don’t have passports, we recycle, and global warming concerns us. We mature as we age and hopefully become wiser and more conscientious, but we die and the next generation goes through the exact same process from start to finish, and so humanity does not progress. I wonder if we had a two hundred year lifespan that it would make any difference. I have a grandchild now and wonder what her future holds. As a species we should have wised up, but we haven’t.

**Which track from the album is your current favorite? Why?**

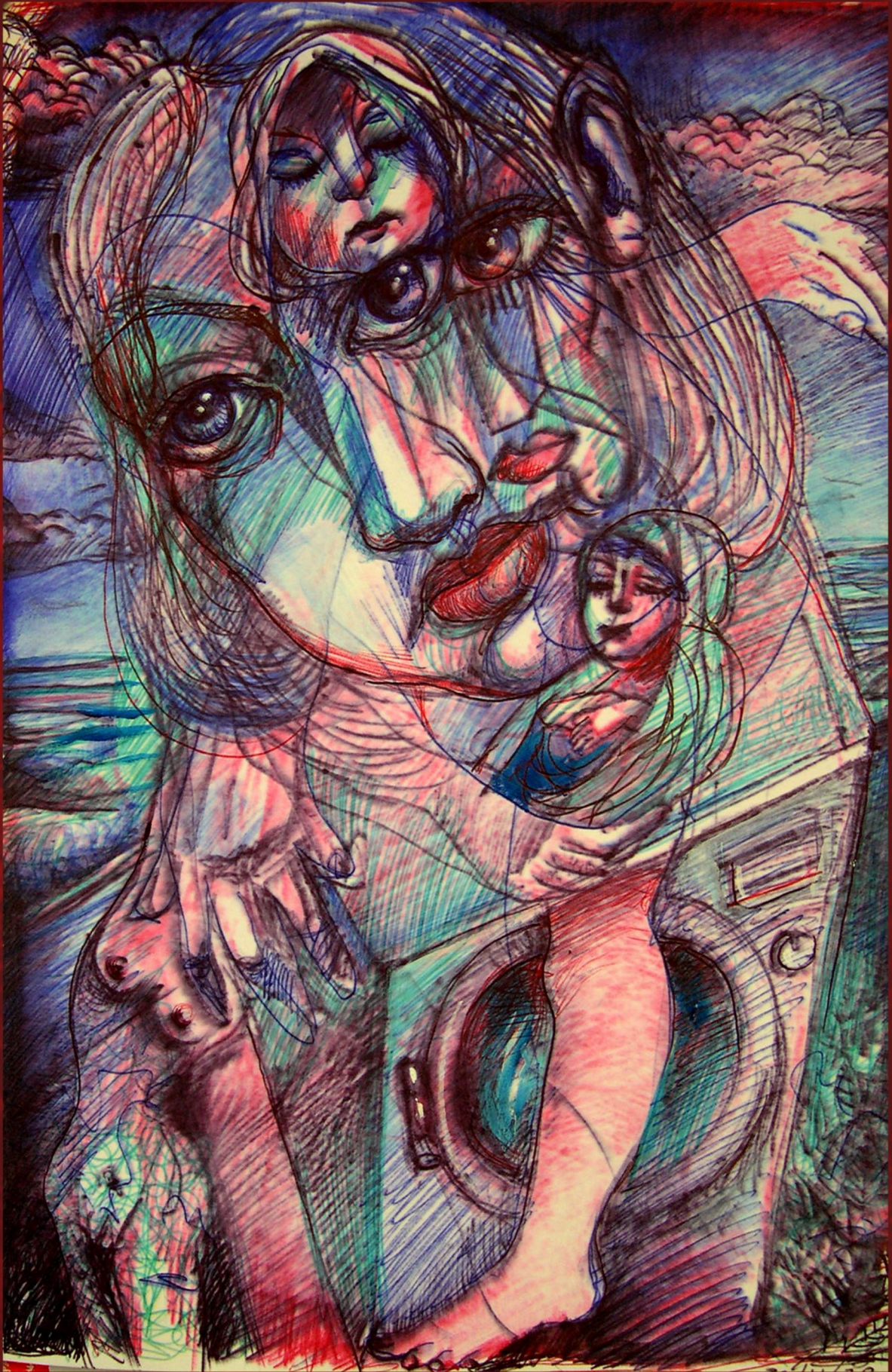
“A Job”. I like its languid anger and that it sounds as if someone is having a nervous breakdown.

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**“I hope the album makes people think that they are not alone in this uncertain world of ours.”**

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"Washing Machine" 2023





"Marjorie Cameron" 2016



**Which track was the most difficult to create (emotionally, technically, or otherwise)? What made it difficult?**

Possibly "Nosferatu", for the reason that it has such lengthy lyrics. When it was recorded I wasn't happy with it, but couldn't analyse why. Then I realised it needed breaking up into separate parts, and a chorus put in between the sections. So I wrote a new chorus for it, and it really worked. I had to do about six or seven takes to get those darn words right. I usually nail a song on one or two takes.

**What do you hope people take away from the album?**

I hope they enjoy it and it makes them explore my other releases. I hope the album makes people think that they are not alone in this uncertain world of ours. That other folk are scared too. Just walk away. We're all in the same shitshow.

**Are you planning any performances or appearances in support of the new album?**

Nothing is planned at present, but who knows?

**Where can our readers hear/pick up 'Polterzeitgeist'?**

It's being released by Psychofon Records and should be available in their online shop.

**How about your previous albums and collaborations? Do you have a Bandcamp or similar place people can hear/purchase your musical back catalog?**

Many of my songs are on Soundcloud and a few things on Spotify and YouTube.

**What's next for you? Are there any projects you're working on behind the scenes you could tell us a little bit about?**

I'm working towards completing my biography. Xavier at Timeless Editions wants it by October, and so I am focusing on that.

**I'm sure I've exhausted you by now, but do you have anything you would like to say in closing?**

Thank you for a brilliant interview, Robert. It has been a pleasure. It's so cool to be asked such interesting and difficult questions for a change. *Sic itur ad astra!*

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**Our sincerest thanks to Val Denham for her time and patience (we took up a lot of both). We know it can be very exhausting talking about things like OCD and Dysphoria, and we immensely appreciate Val sharing her experiences with us.**

**Be sure to pick up a copy of "Polterzeitgeist" from the Psychofon Records online shop. [www.psychofonrecords.com](http://www.psychofonrecords.com)**

**You can also grab some of Val's other musical collaborations from [anarcocks.bandcamp.com](http://anarcocks.bandcamp.com)**

**Lastly, you can still pick up a standard copy of "Tranart" ("Dysphoria" is out of print), and the occasional art print, from Timeless. [www.timelessedition.com](http://www.timelessedition.com) There are very limited standard copies remaining.**

**Alternatively, you can order an Artist Edition of "Tranart" direct from Val Denham. Each book has an original artwork pasted inside the front cover. £100, which is an absolute steal for an original Val Denham artwork.**

**All photographs, artworks, line art, etc., provided by Val Denham from her archives and used with her kind permission.**







# PRINCESS DISEASE

**You could accuse Thom Imbalance, the creator behind Princess Disease, of being many things: Self Destructive, Abrasive, Nihilistic, and Transgressive to name just a few. However, unlike the project name would suggest, Princess Disease is about as far away from vanity & materialism as it gets.**



**FANE:** What was your favorite thing as a kid (toy, cartoon, book, etc.)? What made it special?

**Princess Disease:** I was basically raised by a Super Nintendo, so that's probably my favorite thing as a kid. It's still one of my favorite things.

**F:** Tell us bout growing up in Kansas City, MO?

**PD:** I didn't grow up here. I grew up in a college town in southeast Nebraska called Lincoln. It was horrendous to say the absolute least.

**F:** What did you want to be when you "grew up"?

**PD:** I never had direction as a kid, and I never really had positive role models either, so I had no idea. I remember kindergarten when they wanted to us to draw what we wanted to be when we grew up. I just drew a fire truck because I knew that's what they wanted.

**F:** What was family life like?

**PD:** Family life was barely existent. Until about 6 I was basically raised by my sister who's only 4 years older than me. I could go on for too long, so I'm gonna stop myself right here and just say it was bad.

**F:** When did you first realize that you were part of the LGBTQIA+ community?

**PD:** I think I just knew I was "bisexual" since I learned what that word meant. But beyond that, in the last two years I finally came out as non binary. I realized I never truly felt like a man at all, but not quite a woman either, even though my pronouns are they/she.

**F:** Were you comfortable being yourself, or did you struggle?

**PD:** I have always hid it from my mom because she has said so many homophobic things in the past that I don't even want to hear the bullshit that falls out of her mouth by even telling her. As far as I'm concerned she can be left in the dark on this one. But otherwise not much struggle at all. I feel like I didn't even have to come out if that makes sense.

**F:** Who would you turn to when you needed support?

**PD:** No one back then, but I didn't really feel like I needed it.

**F:** What's the first music you related to on more than a passive level? What about it grabbed you?

**PD:** When I was a kid I listened to trash music, and I'm not sure which shit nu metal or fake goth nonsense I was into in the nineties.

**F:** Still, you found something to relate to there, no?

**PD:** I think I just knew I was somehow different than everyone else and wanted to reflect that maybe. Plus my sister was into the same things so I probably was just following her.

**F:** How did you first discover noise/power electronics?

**PD:** I discovered power electronics because of that dumb video on youtube for Why You Never Became A Dancer by Whitehouse. It wasn't until I was in my early twenties that it really grabbed me and took hold.

**F:** What is the noise scene like in Kansas City?

**PD:** I have no idea anymore. It used to be kind of shit, but I had a good time while it lasted for me.

**F:** How did Aqua-Eroticum come together? Was this your first project?

**PD:** Aqua-Eroticum came together because I heard Atrax Morgue's Exterminate and The Sodality's Beyond Unknown Pleasures. After that, and a few failures while I was trying to get a hold of my electronics and writing, I was hooked and Aqua-Eroticum was born.

**F:** Why'd you pick that name?

**PD:** Because it essentially means auto-erotic drowning and I'm a pervert.



**F:** What were you trying to express through this project?

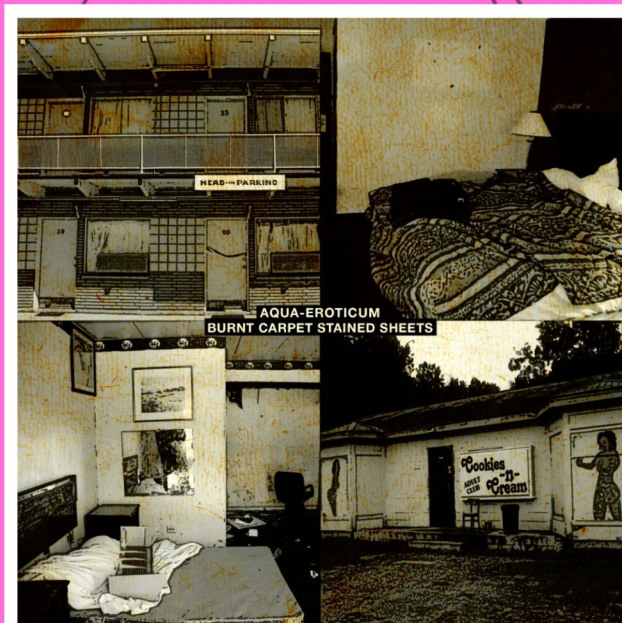
**PD:** I wasn't trying to really accomplish anything until the end when I recorded *Burnt Carpet Stained Sheets*. I was so over it at that point that I wanted to make the most vile release possible and hopefully get myself cancelled by printing my lyrics but I have only received positive feedback which is still good in a sense for sure but I didn't quite get the response I thought I deserved.

**F:** You've written or contributed to 20 or so different releases under that name. Which was your favorite?

**PD:** *Burnt Carpet Stained Sheets*.

**F:** Why did you decide to retire the project?

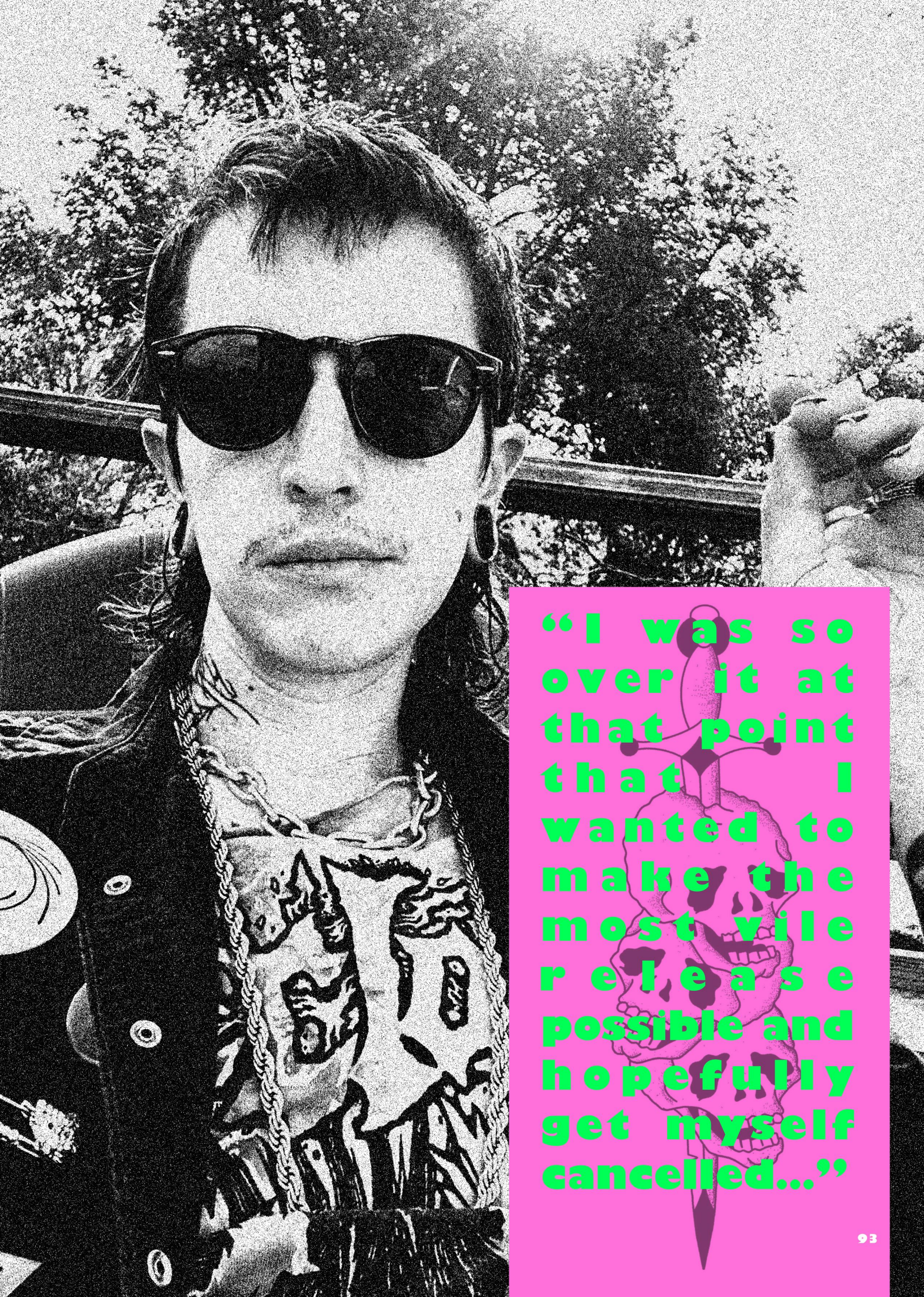
**PD:** The writing started to influence the bad decisions I was making in real life, and my friends seemed to either move on or end up being pieces of shit. But, basically, it was making me a piece of shit too, which is strange because in some sense I started this project as a sort of therapy from the bad, sad and angry feelings I felt when I was younger. I'm alot more soft now.



**"Burnt Carpet Stained Sheets" Cover**







**“I was so over it at that point that I wanted to make the most vile release possible and hopefully get myself cancelled...”**



**F:** It's at this time you start the Princess Disease project, correct?

**PD:** No. I took a hiatus from 2016 when BCSS came out. I focused my life on being a drunk and drug addict for about 5 years until my pancreatitis decided to catch up to me. Now, I am alcohol, adderall, and cocaine free, and have been doing much better. I'm getting off topic here.

**F:** What's different for you now with the new name?

**PD:** I wanted to tell the truth (mostly), and the term Princess Disease always fascinated me. Even before I had heard Whitehouse's Cruise.

**F:** Tell us about making your first release for this project, "I Hate It Here". Also, where's "here"?

**PD:** Here is Earth. I wanted to do something like Aqua-Eroticum, but with much more 80s influence and coming from my actual experience.

**F:** When you say 80's, are you talking more analogue?

**PD:** I use nearly the exact same equipment as I did with Aqua-Eroticum but really I mean the influence is even more apparent. More raw. More unhinged. Less structure. Atleast for now. Who knows. The next Princess Disease tape could just sound like an AE release.

**F:** How did you connect with Death Bed Tapes?

**PD:** I just asked Alex and he immediately said yes because he knew my old project, AE.

**F:** Listening, the sound is visceral and tensions are high. Lyrically, you talk about gender dysphoria, narcotics, self mutilation, sexual extremes... there's a lot to unpack. How much of this is autobiographical?



**"I Hate It Here" Cover**

**PD:** About 90% of it comes from real life experience. I have a shit memory and sometimes need to fill in some gaps. It's hard since I've been an alcoholic since I was a teenager. There are a lot of gaps when you stay blacked out.

**F:** You mentioned earlier that you've been able to kick the drinking and drugging. What snapped you out of that cycle?

**PD:** I quit drinking. I wouldn't say I quit drugging but I have it under control. For now. If I never got diagnosed with chronic pancreatitis I would be doing cocaine and/or speed and downing whiskey everyday still.

**F:** What, or who, is helping keep you grounded?

**PD:** My beautiful wifey Maddie and my dislike for the hospital.

**F:** Let's talk about your most recent tape, a Split with Straight Panic on Black Ring Rituals. How'd you get involved with SP and BRR?

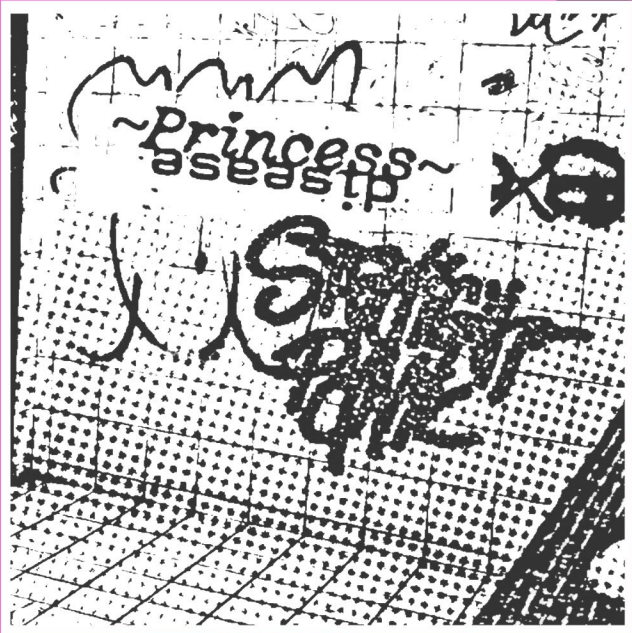
**PD:** I've in some sense been in touch with Thomas for years now, but we finally decided to do a split because I enjoy his project very much. He hooked up the deal with BRR. I had nothing to do with that.





**“If I never got diagnosed with chronic pancreatitis I would still be doing cocaine and/or speed and downing whiskey everyday.”**





**Split w/Straight Panic Cover**

**F:** Tell me about your track, “Amphetamine Induced Gender Dysphoria”. The title says plenty, but I’d love for you to elaborate.

**PD:** The track is basically about amphetamine induced psychosis and the intrusive thoughts that come along with tweaking. That’s all I really have to say. The lyrics are horrific.

**F:** When you’re not experimenting with noise, what do you like to do?

**PD:** I play old video games and have been tattooing for about a year.

**F:** How’s the tattooing going?

**PD:** Slowly but surely.

**F:** Who would you most like to collaborate with, in any creative capacity, living or dead?

**PD:** I haven’t thought much about it as of now.

**F:** Well, how about you tell us about one of your favorite creators (Art, Music, Photography, Whatever)?

**PD:** John Sharkey III. My favorite musician and total prick.

**F:** What are you currently listening to?

**PD:** Puerto Rico Flowers (if you don’t know look it up on bandcamp or apple music), Clockcleaner (one of my very favorites), and my partner is basically turning me back onto pop music. Sorta.

**F:** What’s next for Princess Disease?

**PD:** I’m hoping to record a self titled release, about half an hour long. At least that’s the plan, once I can get myself to write again.

**F:** Anything you’d like to say/add in closing?

**PD:** Thank you for taking the time to interview me. It means a lot.

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Thank you to Thom Imbalance/Princess Disease for taking the time to answer our questions.

You can check out Aqua-Eroticum at [aqua-eroticum.bandcamp.com](http://aqua-eroticum.bandcamp.com)

“I Hate It Here” is available from Death Bed Tapes. You can grab yourself a copy at [deathbedtapes.bandcamp.com](http://deathbedtapes.bandcamp.com)

The Princess Disease/Straight Panic split is available from Black Ring Rituals. Pick up a tape over at [blackringrituals.bandcamp.com](http://blackringrituals.bandcamp.com)

All Princess Disease photographs, and all line art, by **Thom Imbalance**.





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**Name:** Mia Priest

**Age:** 40

**Pronouns:** She/Her/They/Them

**Gender:** Non-binary Trans Woman

**Location:** Cambodia, Singapore, NYC

**Creative Mediums:** Music (Guitars/  
Vocals), Graphic Design (Layout/Print  
Design specifically), Writing (Flash  
Fiction/Prose)

**Links:** miapriest.com (Official Site)  
linktr.ee/miapriest (Bands/Merch)  
@evilporkbun (Instagram)







an interview with

# MIA PRIEST

Mia Priest is a highly creative Non-binary Trans Woman who splits her residency between Cambodia, Singapore, and New York City. In Asia, Mia fronts the groups **ABSENCE OF THE SACRED**, **ABYSSAL VORTEX**, **BLOOD DIVISION** and **NIGHTMARE A.D.**, and is the former lead guitarist of **IMPIETY**. In the US, she plays guitars in **SEV LEZU** and another secretive Black Metal project. She also promotes and organizes shows under **GET IN THE PENH** and is one of the co-organisers of the annual **SLAM CITY ASIA** festival in Cambodia.

In this interview, Mia gets real about growing up in an ever changing environment, abuse at the hands of her father, her Singaporean military service, suffering terrible losses, building successful businesses, the danger of Christian Nationalism worldwide, and so much more.



**FANC:** Tell us about growing up. What was it like being a child in Singapore?

**Mia Priest:** It was daunting growing up as a child in Singapore, under the shadow of an authoritarian government inherited from the ashes of the former British Empire. We were constantly bombarded with nationalist propaganda, while all forms of foreign media were viciously screened and censored by the government. All the songs we sang in school were about being loyal to the nation, and we were taught from young to never question the government or people who were senior to you in age and social status. Sex education was non-existent, and the government often relied on the parents or conservative religious organizations to explain the nature of sex to pre-adolescent students. Needless to say, most of us were only taught a very conservative and narrow view of what sex is (between 1 man and 1 woman, penile/vaginal intercourse only, etc.), leading to a lot of repression in the general population that has in turn led to countless acts of harmful sexual deviancy and violence in Singaporean society.

This lack of transparency when discussing sex as an educational topic has led to irreparable damage in our collective psyche, leading many to lead unfulfilling repressed lives as zombified human cogs in the crushing wheel of capitalism, venting their frustrations through unhealthy habits or acts of domestic/sexual violence. Thankfully it wasn't exactly like North Korea; I grew up on a lot of British and American music and TV (we had cable in the 1990s), and we had a lot of American and European products coming through our ports on the way to Australia and vice versa. My mom fed me cod liver oil daily (an awful inherited British practice), taught me dining etiquette, had a whole jello-making phase and always whipped up a Full English breakfast for me on Sundays. I watched G.I. Joe, He-Man, Centurions and Thundercats on Saturday mornings while chowing down on sugary cereal and milk. It was a strange amalgamation of Western capitalist imperialism and Asian nationalist conservatism that tried and is still trying to find a middle ground in Singapore.

Being raised as a human cog of the Singaporean economy, I never quite fit the mold that they tried their best to force me into. It was common and even encouraged in the 1980s to beat your children if they got bad grades or misbehaved, and corporal punishment was present in both the home and school. If you upset the teacher or the other students (or got bad grades), you would be punished in school by having your hand or ass slapped with a big ruler or a rattan cane, and then they would call your parents to ensure that you got seconds from them after you got home. I was also violently abused by my father whenever he felt I didn't live up to his expectations. The abuse got worse after my parents divorced, when my father got custody of me. Unfortunately, Singapore has a lot of unchecked social decay with one of the highest rates of divorce globally. This has led to many broken families, members of which do not seek therapy to deal with the fallout of a failed marriage; they prefer to either swallow their pain with alcohol and pills or place focus on religion or work. Singapore is resentment, bitterness and repression tucked under a nice, clean and shiny veneer. It has failed me as it has many others.

**F:** I like to ask about favorite toys cuz I'm a big kid at heart. What was your favorite toy (or other thing) from childhood?

**MP:** My stuffed toy mouse named Mousie, which I had all the way until I was 19 and put in my mom's coffin before she got cremated along with it.

**F:** You moved around a bit as a child; from Singapore to Australia to the US. Did you develop any strong bonds with any of these places? Did you detest any as a child?

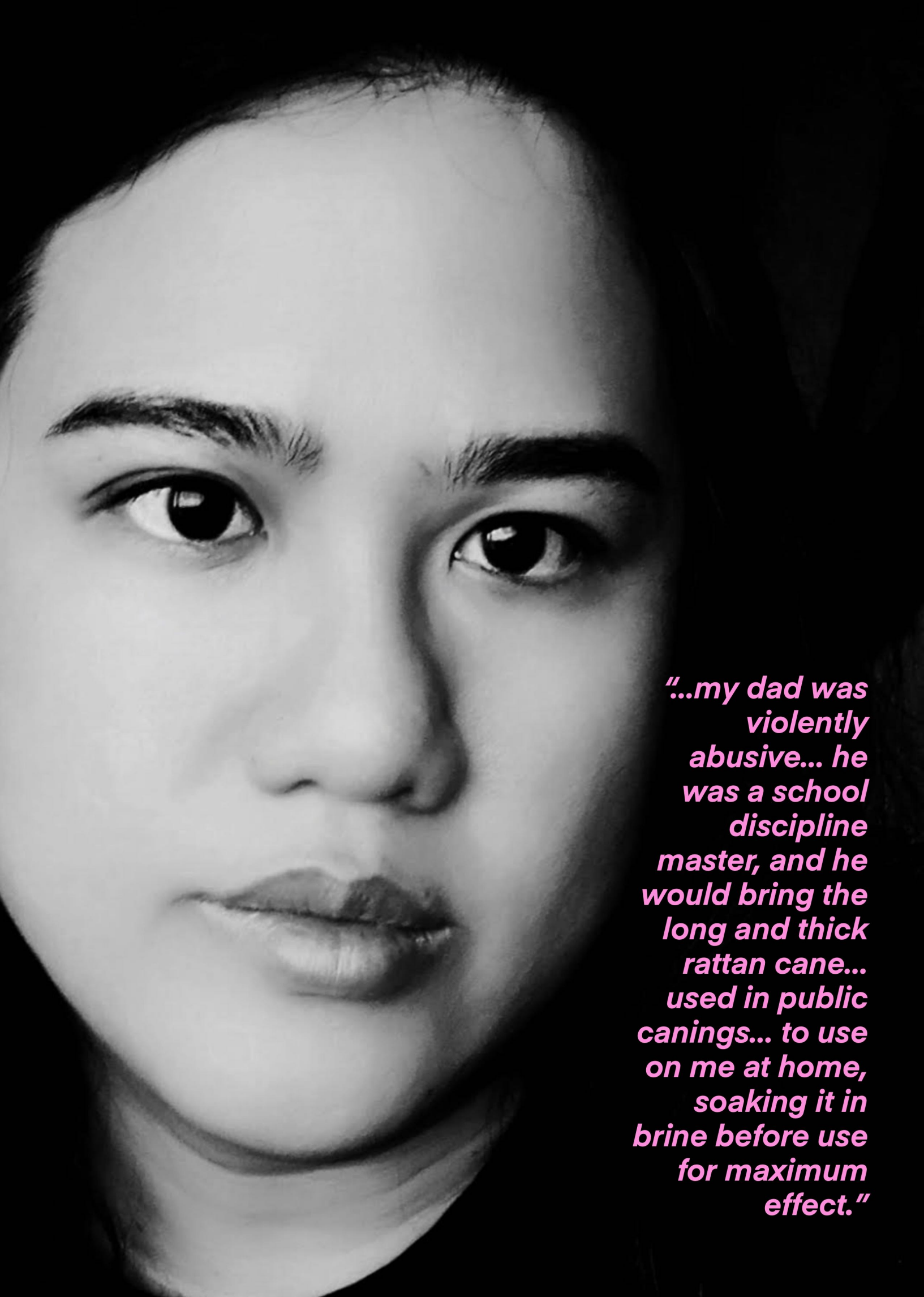
**MP:** Well I spent time in Australia, like months at a time, from when I was a child to adulthood. I have/had family in Perth, Sydney and Melbourne, so my parents (most often my mom) would bring me over, and I'd go over on my own as a young adult. It honestly feels like a second home but I wouldn't live there as I don't really vibe with the culture so much, though it's definitely changed for the better in recent years, with the recognition of aboriginal lands and peoples and people of European descent slowly acknowledging that they aren't superior to other ethnic groups that live in Australia. There's also less tolerance of public displays of bigotry or racism than in the past, at least in Melbourne where I just came back from a fortnight ago after visiting family and friends. I haven't been back to Oz in 12 years, so it was a refreshing change.

I was in the US in the mid 1990s, on the West Coast. We were initially there to visit my uncle who moved to Texas, but we wanted to stay a while in California first. San Fran was a great little city then (fave memories: lovely walks by the pier and clam chowder bread bowls by the wharf), but L.A. was a whole other animal, pure feral energy. I arrived just 3 years after the infamous L.A. Riots, and my mom feared for my safety after someone got stabbed outside our motel. I wasn't allowed to go out alone after that. We spent most of our time pretty much in San Fran and L.A. but we did take some short trips, a day-trip to Tijuana and a week or two in Nevada (mainly because my mom and her friend wanted to hit the slots in Vegas). We also went to Knott's Berry Farm in Buena Park and Disneyland in Anaheim. We didn't have enough money to fly to Texas to visit my uncle in the end, so we just stayed in Cali as long as we could until we had to go back. I did return to the states last December but on the East Coast instead, so it's been almost 30 years (28 years to be exact) since I've been back on American soil. It's strange being back there on the other side of the country and as an adult, but I felt like I belonged there despite it being my first visit to New England.

**F:** In your online bio, you've mentioned that you faced abuse as a child. If it won't trigger you, etc., could you elaborate upon this? I'm asking solely in the interest of visibility for our readers.

**MP:** I mentioned that my dad was violently abusive, and to elaborate: he was a school discipline master, and he would bring the long (1.25m or 4'1") and thick rattan cane that he used in public canings in the school to use on me at home, soaking it in brine before use for maximum effect. He would slap me hard across my face whenever I answered back, and when he used the smaller thin rattan cane to deal punishments, it would split my skin and I'd start bleeding from the wound. My mom actually begged him to let her cane me instead so that I wouldn't be subjected to such brutal force, and she would go to the balcony and cry after dishing out the canings on me. After the divorce, I was living with only my dad as his then-girlfriend (now wife) had to go back to the Philippines after her work visa was canceled. My mom lost her job and was unable to get custody of me. For four years he would berate me every single day, especially during dinner, calling me useless, a mistake, a fuck-up and that I should just quit school and go to work because I'll never make it in life. He went too far one time when he choked me against the wall with my feet off the ground, and held me there for 5 to 10 seconds before letting go and I slumped to the floor. He then just walked out the front door and went to work. I packed my shit and ran away, sleeping in public spaces, getting accosted and molested by creepy men at night at some of the places (I was 14 at the time) and





***"...my dad was violently abusive... he was a school discipline master, and he would bring the long and thick rattan cane... used in public canings... to use on me at home, soaking it in brine before use for maximum effect."***



thankfully ended up staying with family friends. I eventually returned to my dad's place after being persuaded by my mom and those same family friends, and they made him promise not to hurt me. He still verbally assaulted me but at least the physical abuse stopped. I ran away again when the verbal abuse got too much, and by that time I was already 16 going on 17. He finally stopped all forms of abuse when I turned 18.

**f:** When did you first begin to have questions about identity and gender? Were you able to express your feelings to anyone? Did you find it isolating?

**MP:** I hated the way I looked since I was a child. I hated seeing photographs of me and seeing my reflection, and it got worse as I aged into puberty. I have distinct memories of trying to cut my penis off with a pair of kitchen scissors, and I did cut into the flesh but the pain made me stop. I remember putting on make-up that my dad's wife left behind when I was a teenager and admiring how I looked in the mirror before hastily rubbing it off my face in shame. There were definitely strong signs of me having a crisis of identity but I just couldn't pinpoint why I felt so uncomfortable in my body. I was always bisexual/pansexual, and I thought perhaps I might just be gay and that embracing being a gay feminine man would help solve this crisis, which it obviously did not as the problem wasn't my sexuality. I hardly knew anything about being transgender, and any media representations of trans people that were put out during that time were painful caricatures that played into stereotypes (men in drag doing sex work and getting murdered for it or being a murderer/rapist) which I did not identify with, and there just weren't any easily accessible resources to help me understand why I hated myself so much.

I didn't tell people how I felt as I feared being abused, shamed or shunned by my peers. There were only a few close friends who knew how I felt, including my god-brother Kieran, who transitioned when I was still presenting as male, but I couldn't relate to his transition as he's trans masc and I was trying to break the cycle of me overcompensating my personality and characteristics with an overbearing sense of masculinity. It was only much later at the age of 33 whilst living in Cambodia that I had a full-on revelation of my gender identity, and had access to the modern internet and the resources to reference things through. I then took steps in alleviating my gender dysphoria through consultations with a gender clinic in Singapore, and eventually receiving hormone replacement therapy (HRT) that helped me immensely.

**f:** What was it like talking about being on the Trans/Non-binary spectrum with your parents? I can't imagine it was easy.

**MP:** Well I came out as trans after my mom passed on (I doubt if she would have had an issue as she used to be a business partner in a drag comedy club in Singapore and was very much a LGBTQIA+ ally), so I had to contend with my dad who lives in the Philippines. When I was still presenting as male, I tried reaching out to him after my military service at the end of 2005, and I went to see him and my step family in the Philippines. He was apologetic about his past abuse and we patched things up, but we had a big argument in 2012 that led us to stop talking to each other for 7 years until the pandemic happened, and then we reconnected via email. I had already transitioned when he reached out, and he referred to me by my dead name and old pronouns, despite him knowing that I transitioned from my step family as they saw my gender updates on social media. I told him to stop using my dead name and corrected his use of pronouns in my reply, and he replied saying that he will always think of

me as his son and that he will always refer to me as such. I then told him that if he chooses to do so, he is choosing to disrespect my autonomy and agency as an adult human being, and that I will cease all communication with him should he insist in doing so. He then changed his tune and said that he would try. We still do communicate these days albeit rarely, but he has been respectful in all our communications so far. He's 80 this year, so I don't really expect much from his end.

**f:** Did you have an ally you could lean on during this time? Friend? Sibling?

**MP:** My god-brother Kieran definitely supported me through it, along with a few close friends. My mom's side of the family was supportive as well.

**f:** When did music first enter your life in a serious way? Do you remember how you first got hooked?

**MP:** I remember enjoying the tunes of the radio in the 80s as a toddler, with songs by Tears For Fears, Belinda Carlisle, Heart and Michael Jackson being played in circulation. My mom would sing songs like "Que Sera, Sera" to lull me to sleep. My dad would play ABBA, The Beatles and The Carpenters in the car and my grandparents would put on John Denver, Johnny Cash, Jim Reeves, Waylon Jennings, etc. during the holidays. I liked all those, but what really got me hooked was hearing Nirvana, Pearl Jam, Alice in Chains, Green Day and Guns N Roses in the early to mid 90s. Kieran introduced me to those bands as he had all the tapes, and I wanted it louder, faster and heavier. When I was 12, I was over at my cousin Fiona's house one day and she let me hear Metallica's s/t (a.k.a. The Black Album) on CD and said that the song "The Unforgiven" reminded her of me. I remember my mom and I walking in our local mall, and we picked up Metallica's "Master of Puppets" on CD as the s/t record was sold out, and that album changed my life! I started checking out other bands like Iron Maiden, Venom, Slayer, Megadeth, Testament and Dark Angel, reading Metal magazines like Metal Maniacs and Terrorizer at Borders and Tower Books as well as loitering around in record/merch stores like Roxy Records and La Vanita. I was definitely hooked at that point.

**f:** When you decided to play for yourself, which instrument did you start with and why?

**MP:** I loved to sing as a child, but when I got into Rock and Grunge, I wanted to play guitar. I got a classical guitar on my birthday, and tried to learn how to play it. Kieran told me I sucked and I gave up after a while. After getting into Black and Death Metal, I met Impiety's then-guitarist XXXul at Tower Records where he worked and he invited me to hang out and watch Impiety jam at their regular studio space. I knew of Impiety and was a fan, and hung out with them and their other "groupies" on numerous occasions. Through these hang-outs, I met a guy named Mamat, who wanted to form a Death Metal band and was looking for a vocalist as he played guitar. I ended up joining and we started getting other people into the band under the name Tomb Butcher. I practiced my vocals to Deicide, Vital Remains and Cannibal Corpse to the point that my throat bled internally, but it ended up sounding pretty brutal. We got another guitarist called Sham, and he got a drummer and bassist into the band. We rehearsed and eventually recorded a 3-song tape demo before Mamat and I were both kicked out of the band by Sham and he pretty much took over everything because he's such a wonderful specimen of a human being. I think he renamed the band Nympholepsy.

After getting kicked out, I tried forming another Metal band but no one wanted a vocalist to tell them ideas about riffs in



in their head, so I picked up guitar again, practiced playing the guitar and doing vocals at the same time and formed a Hardcore Punk band with two classmates called The Myopian Patients. We cut a crappy demo in a rehearsal studio with a tape deck, which you can actually hear on my YouTube channel along with the rest of my output via this link: [linktr.ee/miapriest](http://linktr.ee/miapriest) Eventually I got better, played guitars in a Melodic Death/Thrash band called Disdain, which was the precursor (in a way) to my band Absence Of The Sacred that I formed with different members in 2005. And the rest, as they say, is history. You can read more about my musical journey on my website at [miapriest.com](http://miapriest.com) in the About section, which is still in the works but the foundation is pretty much there.

**f:** What other instruments, if any, do you play?

**MP:** Aside from vocals and guitar, I also play bass. I'm an amateur drummer but would love to learn how to drum properly one day.

**f:** You're very clearly a huge proponent of the Metal scene. I think all of your projects are various sub-genres of Metal, and you even opened a successful brick & mortar record store. What does Metal mean to you?

**MP:** Metal was and still is an important catharsis for me. It helps me vent so much of my anger and frustration from the abuse and trauma that I've endured in my life; it's so vital to my existence that I've essentially dedicated my life to it (including learning how to organize, promote, set up the backline and operate the mixer board for live shows, learning and doing layout and print design for shirts/vinyl/CD/tapes, creating mixed media collage art, selling merch and music, managing bands, etc.), despite my childhood dreams of becoming an astrophysicist. Aside from doing the early legwork in my own bands, I started out bouncing at Punk shows (organized by my friend Shaiful of Prohibited Projects) when I was just a teenager, and slowly learned the ropes of how to do things and make things work. I then started working at bigger shows like Opeth, Slipknot and Metallica, doing everything from security to marshaling to ticketing.

I did own a record store called Hell's Labyrinth in Singapore in my mid-20s for about 4 years, 2 years of which I had a business partner named Brennan but he couldn't commit further due to familial reasons. We were approached and partnered up with an Indonesian guitar company for a while to sell their guitars and gear on consignment, and we were also a ticketing partner for established local entertainment companies and professional promoters like LAMC, KittyWu Records, Street Noise Productions and Cynical Sounds. They have collectively brought down bands like Metallica, Slayer, Kreator, Slipknot, Marduk, Morbid Angel, Malevolent Creation, Toxic Holocaust, Warbringer, Obscura, Russian Circles, Napalm Death, etc. I saw a ton of shows because we were given free tickets to all the shows as a partner. Malevolent Creation and Warbringer came by the store and they were super cool; the Russian Circles dudes signed the gig poster in my store and we spoke about Black Metal for a good half hour!

**f:** If you don't mind my asking, tell us about your chosen name [if this is bad terminology, please tell me!]. I've got a feeling it's got origins in Metal.

**MP:** Shyathan of Impiety told me that I needed a moniker in the band when I joined back in 2007, so I chose the surname Priest after Judas Priest (lol), and so I was known as Mike Priest when I was playing with Impiety, and that just kinda stuck. My friends would make weird sounds with my name whenever we got drunk, and they started calling me "Miak";

which I thought was weird and hilarious, so I just took off the "k" and became Mia when I transitioned. The origins are kinda silly overall but a name's a name. Mia Priest does have a nice ring to it though!

**f:** Your discography is intense. You've been in a lot of bands, toured a lot of places, seen a lot of things. Why so many different projects? Are people pulling you into different things? Is it the attention span (I can relate to that)?

**MP:** It's a mix of things, mostly because I love exploring the subgenres of Metal and that I get roped into things or want to start something with people I feel a kinship to. I do have a shorter attention span and tire more easily due to age, getting COVID thrice and having been in three motorcycle accidents and 2 car accidents in the past, so these days I'm definitely more selective of projects that are worth dedicating my time to.

**f:** What music do you have coming down the pipeline? I imagine there's gotta be quite a few things, yeah?

**MP:** The 4th album from my Singaporean Death Metal band ABSENCE OF THE SACRED is coming out next month, the EP with SEV LEZU (the new NYC Black Metal band I'm in with Melissa of SONJA, Talia of MANAT and Sasha of FIREWALKER) is coming out within the next couple of months or so along with another EP from my other NYC Black Metal band (secret project). Aside from those releases, my Thrash Metal band in Cambodia NIGHTMARE A.D. will be recording our full-length in August/September. It's an exciting year for sure!

**f:** What's the Metal scene like in Asia, in terms of the fanbase? Do you find it to be an overall positive environment for Transgender and Non-binary folks, or anyone who tends to be "othered"?

**MP:** I think there's still a long way to go in terms of LGBTQIA+ representation and acceptance in the Metal scene here in Asia. Anything to do with sex, including gender identity and sexual orientation, is still seen as taboo (due to either religious condemnation or the aftereffects of colonization by the Europeans, especially the British) in many countries around all regions of Asia. So far only Taiwan and Thailand recognize gay marriages and are generally safe for LGBTQIA+ people to live and thrive in. In my personal experience, Cambodia has been generally fine, people might giggle and have an awkward laugh, but I don't face violence or discrimination here being transgender. Singapore prides itself as a "first world nation" but still holds archaic views on gay marriage and gender transition, mainly due to the influence of American Christian Nationalist organizations like Focus on the Family having a presence there and that Singapore fears straying from the nuclear family model and encourages cis-heteronormative relationships to bring about more children to benefit the national economy (as if trans or gay people can't have children these days through IVF, adoption or natural insemination).

Before we had the influx of Abrahamic religions and European colonists, many parts of Asia recognized the existence of multiple gender identities, such as Indonesia and India, with the Bugis people of Indonesia recognizing 5 genders and India as a whole recognizing Hijras (transgender people) as sacred beings. China and Japan in ancient times viewed homosexuality as a normal facet of life, with recorded accounts dating back to the 10th century. It's a terrible shame that all this knowledge and acceptance was lost and replaced with the European-Arabic Abrahamic ideals of who marriage is for and mandating cis-heteronormative relationships as being the bedrock of socio-economic progress and stability.



**f:** What band do you love that you wish more people were into? Where can we check them out?

**mp:** If I can only mention one band, I would say the Progressive Death/Thrash band ENORHTED from Singapore. Their one and only album "Panegyric to the Iniquitous" was awe-inspiring when it was released in 2003. Unfortunately you can't find it anywhere online, you probably have to find a CD or tape copy on discogs.com to listen to it.

**f:** Tell us about being in the Singapore Air Force? I'm under the impression it wasn't something you chose to do, but were required to do.

**mp:** Unfortunately being conscripted at the age of 18 (I was drafted at 18 but went in at 19 due to medical checks as I was diagnosed with depression and mild schizophrenia when I was 16) is the norm in Singapore, where either military or civil service is mandatory for males or male-identifying individuals that have a male gender marker in their identity cards. If you refuse to be conscripted, you will be arrested and thrown in prison, after a year or two of which they will ask you if you will comply and if the answer is no, back in prison you go. If you go overseas and refuse to come back to serve, your citizenship will be revoked and you will end up stateless, having to apply for asylum in other countries. You will be barred from entering Singapore to see your family and friends, and attempting to enter Singapore will result in your immediate arrest. Singapore doesn't fuck around, and the only choices they give you are to serve or be banished from the country.

I did my Basic Military Training and was subsequently placed in the Air Force, doing administrative work for the Central Administrative Branch then becoming the PA to the Head of Logistics. It was soul-sucking work but I can't say too much of what I did there due to some of it being of a classified nature. What I can say is that I mainly handled writing base orders and reports along with mobilization exercises. Our base generally manages C-130s (cargo/troop transportation) and KC-135s (refueling) planes, and our squadrons at the time were deployed regularly to Afghanistan and Iraq to assist American forces during the Afghan-Iraq war and the hunt for Osama Bin Laden. We were exposed to a constant live feed of the conflict that was going on in both countries (as we had personnel there and we needed to know what was going on at all times), and the amount of violence and death we witnessed was horrifying to say the least.

**f:** While enlisted, you suffered the loss of both of your parents in different ways; your mother passed away, and your father abandoned you to live with his new family in the Philippeans. This had to be truly soul crushing. How did you get through it?

**mp:** I was conscripted into the military in 2003, and my mom died 2 weeks into my service. My dad came to the funeral, shed a tear and left me behind the very next day (while the funeral service was still going on) to be with his wife in the Philippines. It was devastating. My relatives were all too caught up in their own grief to bother with mine, and I just sank into a deep, dark hole. I started smoking, having bouts of dissociation and moments of intense suicidal ideation. My mom meant everything to me, and losing her destroyed all my will to live. At the time, the military was paying me a couple hundred Singapore dollars a month which was a pittance and I was broke as fuck, keeping any extra lunch rations for my dinner (sometimes there weren't any and so I didn't have any food for dinner). My entire military salary was spent on bills, public transport, cigarettes and basic necessities like toothpaste, soap and toilet paper. I couldn't afford anything else.

I tried to kill myself 6 months after, but was caught by my superiors and sent to a mental health facility under high-risk suicide watch for a two-week period. My relatives were notified and some of them came to see me. Apparently my dad came back for a few days and they told him that I've been admitted, so he came to see me and I told him to get me out as the place was literally driving me insane. I had to be reviewed by a multitude of different medical professionals before they let me out under the care of my dad. He left two days after he got me out, but the time spent locked up in a mental facility gave me a fresh perspective on life and my freedom. I took up running and started getting heavily into Metal again, and a combination of those things helped me through the trauma at the time. Unfortunately I injured my knee in a bad fall towards the end of my military service, and I wasn't able to run like I used to. I ended up turning to alcohol as a crutch, and was an alcoholic for 12 years until I broke the cycle in 2017.

**f:** It's fair to say that your service during the early 2000s ultimately made you more fiercely political, yes?

**mp:** I would say so. I definitely became more interested in the political nature of things and how it trickles down and affects all of our lives, whether we ourselves are political or not.

**f:** Let's talk some politics, which is something I don't do enough of. Being that NY is one of your home bases, I have to assume you've been sucked into American politics. How would you say America differs politically from some of the other places you live(d)?


**mp:** I've been sucked into American politics way before that. As I've mentioned, I've been deeply indoctrinated by Westernized ideals (especially American ones) since I was a child, especially when I was on the West Coast. This had a profound effect on me and my political beliefs, especially in regard to personal freedoms and liberty. I was enamored with "The American Dream", and always kept an eye on American news and politics. NY is just a recent home base, but I'm planning to move out of Asia to live in Scotland next year, so it'll be much easier to concentrate on things in NY once I'm closer.

I believe that every country is dystopian in nature; all of them run on political systems that place power in the hands of the few, inevitably resulting in corruption. Countries that are run on that basis become manifestations of those in charge, who shape them according to their will instead of the will of the people. America is no better than Russia or China politically, ruled by capitalist demagogues enshrined into power by their wealth and status who run the country purely for the sake of their own interests. Some dystopias are worse than others, all subject to the individual's perspective of course; I've said this to several of my friends who've asked me for advice on where they should move to: "Everywhere is fucked, so just choose your own flavor of dystopia."

**f:** America seems to be getting more hostile towards the Transgender community, and really any community that doesn't conform to heteronormative standards. What are your thoughts on Project 2025? What do you think we can do to fight against it? I can certainly tell you I worry about me & my family if this fash-trash becomes law.

**mp:** America isn't hostile as a whole to the Transgender community or any non-cis-het communities; it's the Christian Nationalists and their conservative billionaire donors who are funding the propaganda war against everybody that isn't cisgender, heterosexual, white, English-speaking and Christian. Project 2025 is the manifesto of that totalitarian vision, and we've caught a glimpse of that vision when they





***"...it's the Christian Nationalists and their conservative billionaire donors who are funding the propaganda war against everybody that isn't cisgender, heterosexual, white, English-speaking and Christian."***



puppeteered Trump to elect the conservative judges in SCOTUS and placed their skills in many government agencies to sway policies in their favor, while taking the rights away from everybody else that doesn't fit their vision of how America, and in fact the world, should be.

Americans need to wake up, start identifying and dismantling these right-wing Christian Nationalist think-tanks and organizations like Alliance Defending Freedom, The Heritage Foundation, Focus on the Family, The Center for Renewing America, etc. They also need to know who are the billionaires funding them, billionaires like the Koch Brothers, the Mercer family, Peter Thiel, Tim Dunn, Farris Wilks, Sheldon Adelson, etc. They are domestic religious terrorists undermining America and the very Constitution it was founded upon with their own twisted dogmatic vision through their wealth and power. The longer they are allowed to exist and puppeteer political systems with their billions in donations, the closer America will be to a totalitarian ethno-theocracy.

If Trump wins in this upcoming election, he will give these organizations everything they need to proceed with Project 2025, eradicating the rights of women, ethnic and religious minorities, LGBTQIA+ communities, the working class, the poor, etc. Let me rephrase that with what I said earlier with added emphasis: if you are NOT cisgender, heterosexual, white, English-speaking AND Christian, then you will not be welcome in their new America. A truly frightening vision.

**f:** Christian Nationalism, specifically the White kind, is tightening its grip on American "morality", even with dwindling numbers. Are you seeing this happening in other parts of the world? How do we stop the continued "crusades"?

**MP:** I've been at war with Christian Nationalism for several years now, even before the pandemic. American Christian Nationalists have spread their propaganda far and wide, all the way to Africa and Asia. During that time, I was trying to prevent Focus on the Family Singapore (an American Christian Nationalist organization with a branch in Singapore) from getting a speaker from the social conservative advocacy group American College of Pediatricians (not to be confused with the American Academy of Pediatrics, an actual professional association of pediatricians) named Quentin Van Meter from conducting an online conference about Transgenderism for the Singaporean public. Quentin Van Meter peddles in pseudoscience and advocates anti-human rights views. He is an ardent supporter of Conversion Therapy and has been ruled by a Texas Court of Law in 2020 to be not an expert on the issue in a case over whether a transgender teen should be given puberty blockers. The University of Western Australia canceled an event that featured the doctor after students and the public protested his appearance. I organized a petition against the online conference and had my friends share the petition around, getting about 1000 signatures. I forwarded the petition and signatures to several of our ministers and the police force (ACAB), but of course, nothing was done about it and the conference went ahead. This was unsurprising to me as some of our ministers are involved with the local chapter of Focus on the Family; they were even appointed by the Ministry of Social and Family Development to lead relationship workshops in colleges and being approved by the Ministry of Education to conduct sexuality education workshops in Singaporean schools. Thankfully those workshops ceased a decade ago due to backlash by educators and researchers who have debunked Focus on the Family's pseudoscience when it comes to gender and sexuality.

There needs to be constant backlash and pushback, with evidence and insistence against these pseudoscientific crusades done in the name of religious bigotry. Silence means acceptance, and it also means death. We cannot afford to remain silent as they seize our rights and enshrine their own systems into law to benefit from them but are nothing short of detrimental to the rest of us that don't fall in line with their beliefs and policies. We need to fight back by organizing public talks and rallies against their agenda, be an activist by always shining a light into the darkness where they lurk, and letting everyone else know what they are up to. Vigilance and action are key to stopping these "crusades" that they are waging, and we have to make it known to them that they will never take over, and that freedom and love will always win.

**f:** Part of me feels like all of this is just a distraction from the destruction of the middle class and the imprisonment/enslavement of its outcasts as late stage capitalism sinks its teeth in. There are places in the US where it is essentially illegal to be homeless now, creating a government sanctioned poverty to prison pipeline. How do we fight back against this ugly machine, especially when we have brothers and sisters who are foolishly fighting for it?

**MP:** That is all certainly happening, but Christian Nationalists like Russell Vought see the opening and are using the opportunity in this discordant time to seize power. Don't forget that they have worked/are working with Trump accelerationists like Steve Bannon and JD Vance who are politically-savvy and whose socio-political goals align with theirs. Regarding the illegality of homelessness, I believe that a federal law needs to be introduced and enforced across all states to change that and have outreach programs to help people out of homelessness, which would all be possible to enact if the government wasn't pumping most of the taxpayer dollars into the military industrial complex and funding wars overseas. America's next president needs to concentrate on the real issues of America (poverty, homelessness, gun control, class disparity, etc.), and not the wants of corporate/religious lobbyists and not the wars of allied nations. That of course, is sadly idealistic. The only way you can fight back is to make your vote count and make your voices heard, making sure the person you voted in carries out the actions you voted them in for and holding them accountable.

On top of that, all Trump cultists/loyalists need to be rooted from all systems of government including SCOTUS and the GOP, corporations and religious institutions need to be permanently banned from being involved in any capacity with politics and the government (both state and federal levels) except being answerable while under oversight. The government should function as it should, a system made to serve the people of the nation by managing public services like healthcare, transportation, power and ensuring that the needs of the population are met (food, water, shelter). A government shouldn't be funding or waging wars, conducting experiments on their people or living lavish lives while being worshiped by the working class and being above the law of the land.

**f:** Let's pivot to your graphic design work. Tell us about how you got involved in that?

**MP:** I started designing for my own bands because I didn't have the money to hire a graphic designer, and eventually started working on the designs for my friends' bands. I have done some mixed media collage artwork for album covers and shirts, but most of the work I do is based on layout and print design. I also handle colorization work and color-correction for printed materials. As my work was being



exposed more, bands outside my friend group started getting in touch with me to do work, and eventually the word spread to record labels, entertainment companies and restaurants. Lots of recommendations by friends and word-of-mouth I suppose.

**f:** Where do you look for design inspiration? Are there any designers you're particularly fond of?

**mp:** Everything from film to architecture to album covers. I'm very fond of H.R. Giger, Gee Vaucher, Kristian "Necrolord" Wåhlin, Dan Seagrave, Justin Bartlett (RIP my friend), Raymond Pettibon, Stephen Kasner (RIP), Maria Delfino, Eiko Ishioka, Fritz Lang, Zdzisław Beksiński, Chris Moyer, Joe Petagno, Michael Whelan, Wayne Barlow, etc.

**f:** Do you find it difficult creating something for a customer where you have the perfect design in your head, but they're pushing for something... less artistic?

**mp:** Normally I would suggest it and if they are agreeable to the idea, I'd put it in a draft and send it over for their approval. If they do not like the idea or insist on their vision, I just do it according to what they like. It's a job after all, and I don't see the need to dissuade them from their vision just because I'm personally underwhelmed by it.

**f:** Is there a design you pulled off that you feel most proud of, or at least very proud of?

**mp:** Hmmm I think I'm pretty happy with all of them. Most of them aren't perfect, but they are part of my ever-learning process, so I appreciate them as they are.

**f:** If you could pick up and move to anywhere in the world, where would it be and why?

**mp:** Scotland! It has a great quality of life, beautiful ruins and rolling hills. It doesn't have a tropical climate which I'm sick to death of, and it's safe enough for trans women like me to live and thrive in.

**f:** What music/books are you currently consuming? Anything blowing your mind?

**mp:** I'm currently reading Chelsea Manning's autobiography "Readme.txt", which is quite interesting as her experiences mirror some of mine in some ways. I've got "Nevada" by Imogen Binnie (as recommended by my friend Axel) and "Tell Me I'm Worthless" by Alison Ruffitt lined up next on my reading list!

As for music, I would say Atræ Bilis and Replicant have been an interesting listen as of late, along with Cemetery Filth (great old school tech death with trans members - they just released their new EP). Benighted's latest album "Ekbon" has been blowing my mind lately (their drummer Kevin also plays on my band Absence Of The Sacred's upcoming album "IV: The Hand That Wounds") along with Gridlink's latest release "Coronet Juniper". Sonja's latest single "Discretion for the Generous" is brilliant, proud to say that I heard the demo version in Melissa's car when we were hanging out and discussing band stuff in Philly!

**f:** Is there anything you would like to say to our readers before we finish?

**mp:** Thank you Rob and FANE Magazine for showcasing a vulnerable side of me. A big shout-out to my wonderful bandmates, family and friends around the world who are reading this, much love. Last but not least, thank you dear reader for making it all the way to the end!



Massive, massive thanks to Mia Priest for sharing all of that with us. Truly some very difficult subject matter that was no doubt exhausting to relive. I sincerely hope one of our readers going through some of what she did is able to see themselves in the interview, and realize that despite inhumane conditions and senseless violence perpetrated by the one's who are supposed to care for us, they can overcome their current situation and truly thrive in the world as themselves; critics be damned.

You can keep up to date with all things Mia Priest at her official website: [miaopriest.com](http://miaopriest.com)

If you're looking to jump right into some music, you can pilfer Mia's linktree! [linktr.ee/miaopriest](http://linktr.ee/miaopriest)

And lastly, if you'd like to connect on social media, you can follow [@evilporkbun](https://www.instagram.com/evilporkbun) on Instagram.

All photos courtesy of Mia Priest.



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AN INTERVIEW WITH  
THOMAS BOETTNER OF  
STRAIGHT PANIC

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*Photo by: Johnny Ray*





For almost a decade, Thomas Boettner has been pushing the boundaries of extreme musics as **STRAIGHT PANIC**. He's well known for his unapologetically homosexual visuals and themes, his overtly sexual lyrics, and his unwavering support of the queer noise community. In this interview, Thomas talks about his early life, being openly gay in high school, discovering noise music, moving all over the country, and his latest vinyl LP "Stemming the Rose".

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**FANE:** Tell us about your childhood. Where did you grow up? What was it like?

**STRAIGHT PANIC:** I grew up in Spartanburg, SC. Pure suburban 90s Americana. I don't remember much except feeling like there was a lot more happening other places. I was an only child. I was quiet and intelligent because I'm probably on the spectrum in some way. So, you know, I was a "gifted child" and everybody thought I was so mature for my age, and that has resulted in me being a disappointment. I didn't live up to anybody's expectations, but I'm pretty happy with my life, honestly.

**F:** What's something you loved as a kid?

**SP:** Comic Books, specifically X-Men. And Legos.

**F:** Who was your favorite X-Men character? Did you identify strongly with anyone in particular?

**SP:** How I didn't actually turn out to be a furry will forever escape me, cause I was definitely a fan of Beast as a kid. I think it was because he was intelligent, well-read—refined and cultured—but at a glance was, y'know, a big blue Yeti.

**F:** When did you first realize you were gay?

**SP:** Probably around 13 or 14? Puberty age. At least, that's when I really became conscious of the fact that I was different, and different was bad.

**F:** What was coming out like?

**SP:** Well, I had tried to structure things to better my situation, which is to say I applied to—and got accepted by—the South Carolina Governor's School For The Arts and Humanities. SCGSAH was a residential program that covered my junior and senior years of high school. I would be 27 miles away in the much cooler town of Greenville, SC, surrounded by artists, writers, dancers, musicians. I came out there, to zero fanfare, and finally met other queers. But they had accepting families and tales of sexual exploration, and I was just some gay virgin falling in love every other day. And then I met another 15 year old on XY (yikes) and I went on my first ever date, and got my first kiss, and somehow ended up with my first boyfriend just in time for winter break.

To make a long story short, my parents listened in to us on the phone one night (who knew they'd be scanning all the phone numbers my phone called/received?), burst into my room, etc. I tried to run away from home, blah blah blah. Needless to say, they pulled me out of the SCGSAH—firmly blaming the school for "turning me gay," because well-adjusted straight teenage boys wanna go to residential arts school—found some "therapy" to force me through, and sent me back to the public school I'd left. The only good thing was that word had gotten around already that I was officially gay. It sucked, and definitely was an awful experience, but at least the initial shock and awe portion had already faded.

The thing is, when we talk about "coming out" stories, I feel like that's an ally-perpetrated idea, because most queers can attest that "coming out" is very often something you have to do over, and over, and over again throughout your life, with varying degrees of importance/impact, but still.

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*“I've had people tell me that I'd probably do pretty well in jail. I guess that's a good thing.”*

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**F:** Who would you consider to have been your greatest ally at that time?

**SP:** Once I was back in public school, I had three (and they're so typical its embarrassing): David Revan (AP English, Intro to Film), Melissa DeLoach (AP Lit), Jason Paris (AP English, literary magazine faculty advisor).

**F:** What first made you interested in music? Was there a special artist/group?

**SP:** I had been a "musically gifted" child, taking part in everything from church youth choir to the accelerated music program in my school district. I started learning the cello in fifth grade (roughly what, 12 years old I guess). I was in school orchestra, as well as a regional youth symphony. I always had an interest in music, but as far as actually writing/composing my own work, that wasn't really until I got into college, and that mostly is thanks to both Xiu Xiu and The Microphones. Both projects are primarily the work of one person, so I figured if they could do it, I could probably manage.

**F:** What was your first ever release? How did it come to be?

**SP:** That would have been a CDr under the moniker of US WITHOUT WINGS, which was a one-off post-rock duo I tried to start the summer after high school. Unfortunately my "bandmate" was a bit of a nonce, but I kept the name for my first release which was mostly "indie rock" tinged singer-songwriter material, if I recall correctly. I made it as a freshmen, burned copies in my dorm room. Honestly, I'm not even sure if I still have a copy anywhere, which is probably for the best.

**F:** Tell us about Fire Island, AK.

**SP:** That was initially a sort of singer-songwriter project in the veins of The Microphones and related projects. Solo project, multi-instrumentalist. Not exactly "twee," but definitely wore its heart on its sleeve. That project ran for ten years (2004-2014), but didn't make the full swap to being a noise project until 2008. If you line everything up chronologically, you can hear the noise creeping in; more instrumental tracks, more dissonance, eventually leading into small noise interludes, noisy elements as part of the compositions. And I guess I'll explain the name while I'm talking about the project. There's Fire Island, NY which is a gay enclave. Then there's Fire Island, Alaska, which is a wild bird sanctuary and, I think, an NOAA station maybe? Not manned, just for like, data collection. It's a tiny little spit in the inlet that you fly directly over on your way into Ted Stevens International (ANC). So, the name was meant to reference the first one, but be separated from, which is still how I feel about gay culture (culture in general) to this day.

**F:** What was your gateway to Noise? How did you discover the genre?

**SP:** Xiu Xiu and Godspeed You Black Emperor in 2002. Keiji Haino in 2004. Wolf Eyes, Throbbing Gristle, Jandek in 2006. Scott Walker's The Drift in 2007. But really it wasn't until 2008 when I met my buddy Ralph (I had since moved back to my hometown) who showed me Prurient and Whitehouse, and from there it was just a rabbit hole of connecting the dots and making connections from artist to project to movement to label, etc.



**F:** How did you settle on the name Straight Panic?

**SP:** I'm honestly shocked no one had taken it already, like, it's clever but it isn't brilliant. So, y'know, legally there's the "gay panic" defense, which isn't exactly the "Twinkie Defense," but it's just about as ludicrous. For anyone who doesn't know, "Gay Panic" is when, say, Scott Amedure goes on The Jerry Springer Show in 1995, confesses to his crush Jonathan Schmitz on television, and is subsequently murdered three days later by his crush, who then receives a lesser sentence after using a "Gay Panic" defense. I just took the converse, y'know, what if someone told me they were heterosexual, and I just dismembered them immediately? Can I claim that I feared for my life because they were straight? I mean, statistically speaking, that's who would threaten my life—a breeder.

**F:** You're very open about sexuality in all of your work; from phrasing like "Power Bottom Electronics" or "Butch Dick", to using Pig/Hole humorously as pronouns and beyond. How important is putting all of that up front for you? Is it about fearless representation? Are you trying to rile up your detractors?

**SP:** Well "BUTCH DICK" is the moniker of Loren Macias, who's half of PLACK BLAGUE (and Raws' partner), so I take zero credit for that one. But as for the others... to me it's a sort of '79 UK punk take on queer theory. "queering the pitch," intentionally reading cultural markers through a queer lens, albeit in an obnoxious sort of manner. I'm def one who will wave a red flag, kick a hornet's nest, but not for the sake of the act in and of itself. There needs to be a purpose to which that serves, beyond simply "jk lulz."

Part of my goal is representation (yes, kink belongs at Pride), aggressive honesty. There's also definitely a bit of peacocking going on (are noise groupies a thing?), and yes, behaving badly for the lowercase-h haters. You don't like me? I'll give you something not to like. I guess there's an additional layer in that... I mean, you've met me. Do I come across as a homo? I think probably in certain contexts/circles I read as queer-coded, but to the public at large I'm pretty sure they think I'm a white supremacist. Which is fine, it keeps strangers from asking me where things are (usually), and unattended children from approaching me! But I never really feel welcome in queer spaces, still. So there's definitely a... let's call it "self-promotion," or maybe "dismantling the dialectical 'closet.'" Goddammit. <facepalm emoji>

**F:** Tell us about a time you felt afraid? How'd you get through it?

**SP:** Working door at an event hall in Anchorage, Alaska. I was like fresh 22, I think at that point, working door for the first time ever in my life at a bar and at an event hall, and drunk 20-year-old army guys and dudes who think they're hardcore criminals from the lower 48, and oh my God, yeah, I was afraid multiple times at that job. Just staring down people screaming at me all the time. It was insane.

Anchorage is weird because there's a military base, there's an Air Force base, and there's some colleges. If it's summertime, there's all the seasonal workers. There's tourists, and then there's a lot of people that get shipped up to Alaska to live with their aunt or long distant cousin because they got into trouble in the lower 48. Parents ship them up there and then they think like, well, I'm in Alaska, nobody knows me, so I'm going to pretend I'm some big name criminal from the lower 48. Weird mix of people. Wild mix of people.

**F:** You've moved all around the country over the years. How has that factored into your art? Was there a place you felt particularly creative?

**SP:** Moving so often has, I think, helped keep my work from stagnating too much. From a technical standpoint, there's the whole moving aspect, physically disconnecting everything and taking it somewhere far away; without fail, that leads to new configurations. But more ephemerally, there's the "scene" I interact with, become part of in each town, and what that brings to the table with regards to influences, impressions, and inspiration. I think Minneapolis was by far where I felt most creative, mainly because at that time they had a wildly diverse and active noise scene, numerous house venues, multiple venues/spaces that were noise friendly, plus the Tourniquet Noise Series once a month (still ongoing). There was just so much happening all the time that I couldn't help but feel really motivated and inspired on a near constant basis.

**F:** When did you start making collages?

**SP:** High School, I think. But compositionally, I didn't really start making any decent ones until probably around 2010.

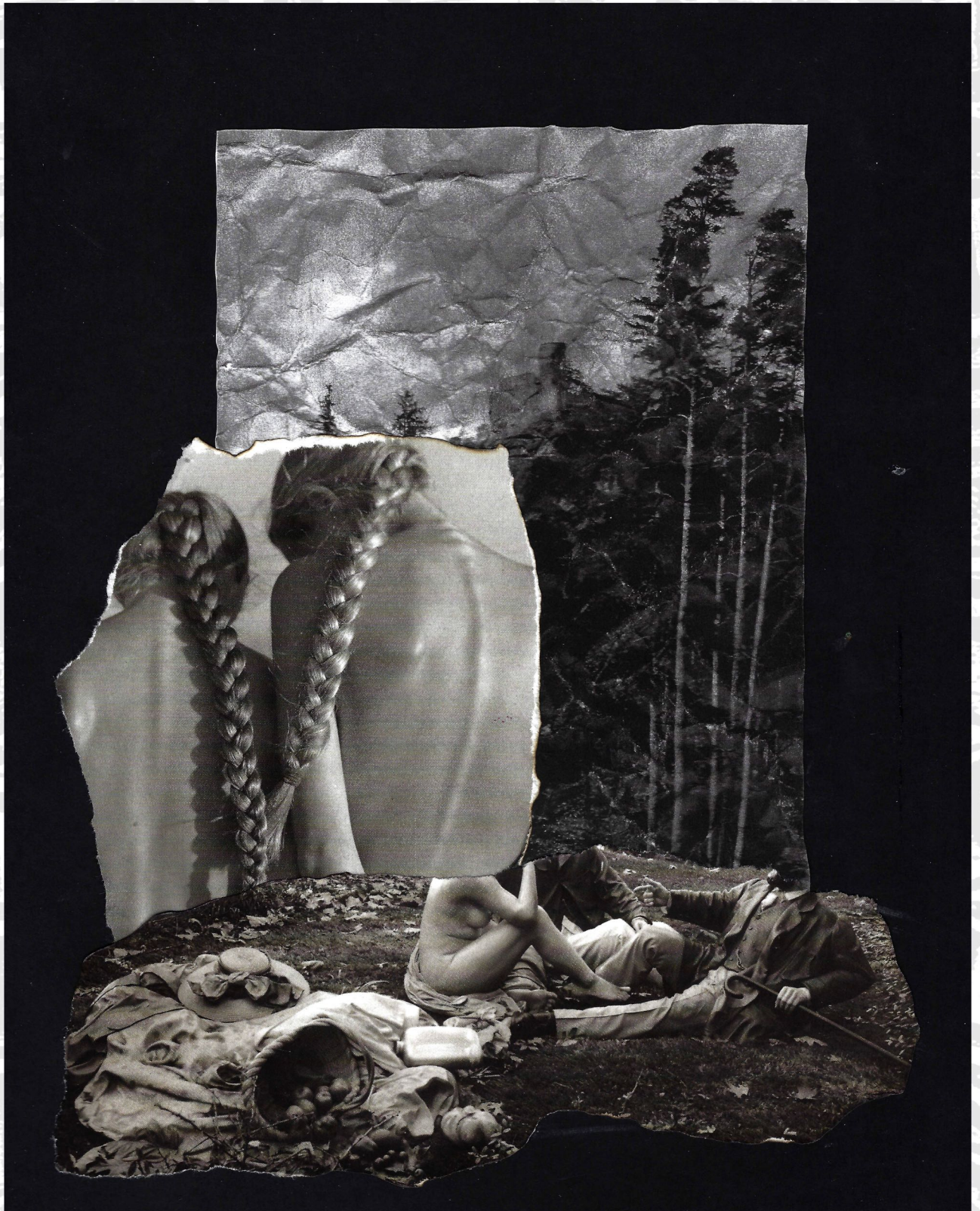
**F:** Tell us about this piece, "Feast Upon Their Lack".

**SP:** Teutonic class critique. Knocking the heads off the imaginary titans of EVROPA. Setting fire to every chevron and kettle drum I find. All the images were taken from this old photobook I've got called Deutschland in Bildern, by Dr. C.B. Schmidt (1931). I mean, honestly that's all conjecture. I just kind of piece the images together as I come across them, as they pop out screaming "pick me! Pick me!"

**F:** Have you ever put out a collection of your collage work? If not, is that something you would consider doing in the future?

**SP:** I haven't but I would, absolutely! Any enterprising labels or publishers feeling ambitious, I'm easy to get in touch with!





*"Feast Upon Their Lack" (2022) by Thomas Boettner*



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*“I’m kind of a  
pervert... I like  
talking about  
sex. I like  
having sex  
more.”*

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**F:** Let’s talk about tape labels. You’ve run a couple of them over the years. Tell us about them.

**SP:** Blank Tapes n’ Records / BTNR: all my own work, with a split here or there. Cassette tapes and CDRs. 2005-2013

Fuck Mtn. Label Records / Fuck Mtn. Ltd. Releases: originally intended to be a house label for Fuck Mountain (RIP), but no one else really wanted to do anything for/with it. 2014-2017

Jouissance du Rien: my first real, intentional label. Curated only / need not apply. Eventually I just couldn’t afford to put anything out anymore, but man, those were beautiful releases. Cassettes, zine. 2017-2022

**F:** Which tape that you’ve released through your own imprint(s) are you most proud of?

**SP:** That’s an impossible question! I mean, the design and look of the Jouissance du Rien catalog is still something I’m proud of, and I know everyone involved was appreciative to have such nice looking releases. The eyes are the first way in which you interact with a physical release, y’know? Much like how they say presentation is the first taste of a meal. I’ve long since hated how for a while there, D.I.Y. had become a kind of “ethical cop-out” for shitty presentation. Don’t shove a CDR at me, slapdash wrapped in a sheet of notebook paper. Unless that presentation somehow advances or contributes to the material in some way, then there’s no excuse. There really isn’t. You have to be your biggest fan, first and foremost, ‘cause if you—the artist—present your work as unserious, an afterthought, something you don’t really care too much about, then how can you expect a stranger to fork over \$10? I’m not saying you gotta P.T. Barnum this shit, but be excited. Stand behind what you put out. If you aren’t okay having your name attached to a thing, then maybe that thing shouldn’t exist.

Anyway, <end rant> I mean, I put out Dolores Dewberry’s first and only full-length solo release. I put out the final Contact Low release. I got to release Skin Graft, which was personally rewarding just ‘cause Wyatt is the G.O.A.T. of American harsh noise in my book. ... but if I had to pick one, out of everything?

I think I’m gonna have to go with the Silence=Death compilation from 2010/2011, which was co-curated/co-released with Bored Bear Recordings in Dublin. 18 projects from 9 countries, was how I first “met” January Hunt, Richard Kamerman, Richard Ramirez, and we even got Xiu Xiu! But this was pre-Bandcamp era. There were forums like Troniks, Maniacs Only, and Special Interests but finding people was not easy, and getting the word out about submitting was even harder. I distinctly recall getting a lot of pushback from people who “didn’t see why you need to make an issue out of an artist’s sexuality.” Regardless, we got it figured out and whittled down and sent 100 tapes out into the world.

I do wanna throw a secondary shoutout to my on-going series of regional noise compilations. The first was MPLS MMXIV (3xCS, 2014), then I did NOLA NOISE (cs, 2017), and finally got P.A.I.N. in New England (2xC60, 2021) together with the help of Cruel & Unusual Sound, Watchtower Imprint, and Mutual Aid Records.

**F:** What would you say is the most “off the wall” release you’ve done?

**SP:** Just in general? Either MPLS MMXIV or P.A.I.N. in New England, just for the sheer amount of material/people involved with each. At least with P.A.I.N. however, there was a small team of us working to solicit and organize submissions, work on design and layout, crowdsource funding, etc. MPLS took me basically an entire month to make entirely on my own, however. I could only duplicate one cassette at a time, real-time, so if I wasn’t at work, I was in my room dubbing tapes. That also means that my trips to Kinko’s self-service were not allocated to duplicating tapes. At 140 minutes long per copy (100 copies), that’s a dedicated 10 days of dubbed audio. I spent basically the entire month of November putting that release together. Minus special, limited release titles, that comp was the last home dubbed job I ever put together. After that I started paying the money to get stuff pro-dubbed, because y’know what? My time is worth something after all!

...but if we’re just talking sheer ambitious absurdity, I think The Jester As Victim wins. That was a FIRE ISLAND ALASKA release from 2012 that attempted to put my then-boyfriend’s then-current stint in jail into context through the lens of Doestoevsky’s Demons. Yeah, I know. I had a Kickstarter set up to try and fund everything, but back then you didn’t get anything if the campaign didn’t get funded, so I gambled and low-balled what I needed. There was a CDR version of the



album, a VHS version, and a full-package that included the VHS, CDr, a t-shirt, and a paperback copy of *Demons* (768 pages). The good news is that there was a local video duplication business nearby, I had all the blank VHS tapes, and the DVD of the video was ready to go (though they were really confused that I wanted put digital video on 50 VHS tapes). Bad news was that the VHS duplication cost basically the entirety of the kickstarter—and I still had something insane like sixteen copies of *Demons* to purchase, plus blank shirts, plus mailers, plus shipping, etc. Finished the whole thing, and on time too, somehow. Consider this a cautionary tale: don't lowball yourself.

**F:** How important is the format music is presented in? Are you an analogue purist, digital futurist, or something else entirely?

**SP:** I view digital as being purely for convenience; sending a release from my studio to the mastering lab to the label doesn't require hoping that the postal system doesn't lose or damage anything. If I'm walking around on errands during the day, sure, .mp3 files on my phone will do just fine. I don't envision any sort of digital archive outlasting physical media, especially the way streaming services are going. Just look at how everything is going to a subscription basis. The global oligarchs really weren't kidding when they said "you'll own nothing." I'm so grateful I have a film collection, a small library, records, tapes, and CDs. I can enjoy what I want, when I want, instead of hoping it's currently available on some digital platform.

Having said that, I think splits should only be on cassette tape for obvious reasons; compilations on cassette or CD. Albums, all of the above, though I do prefer LPs just because you have so much more space for art, lyrics, inserts, etc.

**F:** Let's talk about creative process. How do you approach writing material for Straight Panic?

**SP:** I have a few different methods, which is kind of the same thing as saying "whatever works." For some releases—*God Is The Giver Of The Gift*, *Anthropobscenity*, *Brushfire Lorca*—the title and concept came first. Other times, the tracks have come out of just playing around with my gear, or trying out ideas I come up with, forming more organically from the ground up. Back when I had far less free time in my life, I had gotten very used to kind of mentally composing my tracks, then manually outlining the various bits and pieces as a sort of visual score, so when I had time to set up and record, I didn't waste any time fucking around or searching for the composition.

**F:** Your lyrics often include very sexually charged imagery and themes. Are you recounting personal experiences? Flexing your erotica/fetish writing skills?



*Photo by: Gyna Bootleg*



*Photo by Collin Heroux*





**SP:** PIG is a true story. One night at the sleaziest Motel 6 in Dayton, OH. Room next to mine was floor to ceiling, wall to wall, front to back, rolling office chairs. The door to my room had definitely been kicked in before. Watched a lot of prostitutes servicing truckers in the parking lot. Lots of yelling and doors slamming. People coming and going all night long from multiple rooms on multiple floors. All the Yelp! reviews said the place was bedbug free however, so that's basically all I need to know.

Sorry, what was the question? Oh yes, "does kink belong at PRIDE?" Isn't that the same question as "do I condemn HAMAS?" Sorry, sorry, I've been up 36 hours. Uh, yeah. I'm kind of a pervert (CLASSIC sense, not the new, horrible association). I like talking about sex. I like having sex more. In the grand, historical schema of Power Electronics, like, yeah... talking about sex is kind of par for the course. I'm just carrying on that tradition, but with my own experiences, kinks, fetishes and appetites as both palette and composition.

Also, on that note: song of the year, hands down, OVERLOAD, "Meaningful Blowjob" off Manson City (Initiation Services, 2024)

**F:** Have you ever had to deal with any fans who were looking for a little too much from you?

**SP:** No, but if you know of any send them my way. I did actually just find a fan (mutual friend told me of them) on Grindr the other day. I bugged him, chatted, and then wandered down to his hotel (not what you think) and gave him (stop it) \$120 in free merch. That was the first time anyone on Grindr has known of my work, and honestly it'll probably be the last time, too, so it was worth it. Besides, imagine how you would feel if one of your favorite artists not only hit up your DMs out of the blue, but then was standing at your door with a box of free merch. Day made. I just got a fan for life right there. They'll excitedly talk about STRAIGHT PANIC to anyone who will listen. If anything, I just organically grew my brand. Uggggh...

**F:** What are you currently reading? Listening to?

**SP:** Within the last week or so I've read László Krasznahorkai's novellas *The Last Wolf & Hermann*, Charlene Elsby's *Bedlam*, Christopher Norris' *The Holy Day, Come October* by Damien Ark, and after that I think I'm gonna start Pierre Guyotat's *Eden, Eden, Eden*. I've been really stuck on LEYA's *Flood Dream LP*, *LIMITING MINDSET* by DRUMLOOP, *Touching The Sublime* by Tomas Jirku, a playlist of my favorite Lana Del Rey tracks, *Manson City* by OVERLOAD (which is maybe the horniest album I've heard in a long time and comes with my strongest recommendation), *Serbian War Songs* by Zeitkratzer, *Cowboy Killer* by RX Cowboy, the *Dropped Pianos EP* and *Ravedeath, 1972* by Tim Hecker, *A Nightmare Etched In Stained Glass* by Mildred Pierce, and *Secret Passage* by COUGHS. After that, I'm really, really, really excited for the new *Old Saw LP—Dissection Maps—*to come out late June, plus the reissued, alternate version of their first LP, *Country Tropics—Meridian Edition*.

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*“Stand behind what you put out. If you aren't okay having your name attached to a thing, then maybe that thing shouldn't exist.”*

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**F:** If you could work in any medium with any artist, living or dead, who would it be?

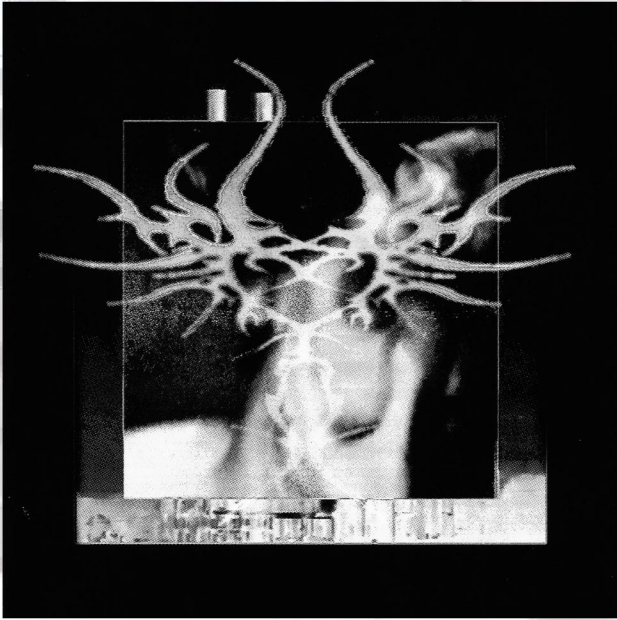
**SP:** Oh geez, I mean... do I pick just one? I would have loved to have worked for Scott Walker. Just to be up close and able to experience his process, his viewpoint towards composition and performance... I like to imagine I would have had the chance to talk to him about things but... One thing I'll say about noise, I've gotten to work with some people whose work I've looked up to, and are now friends; there is a glass ceiling, but it's relatively low-hanging by "industry standards." Uhhhhh... I wish I could have taken part in one of Hermann Nitsch's aktions, I have a few friends that got to. Antonio Urdiales, may he rest in peace, was a good friend. I regret that he died before we ever got to meet in person. We were working on a project before he died, but it wouldn't feel right to try and carry it forward without him.

**F:** What would you consider your greatest strength?

**SP:** I don't really panic. There have been many times in my life when something would happen, like the shit would hit the fan, and for some reason, I'm just the guy that takes a deep breath and is like, "okay, well, here we go, we'll just fix it. We'll get through it and fix it." That's really the only choice you have is to fix it or freak out about it. One of them is productive and one of them is not.

I've had people tell me that I'd probably do pretty well in jail. I guess that's a good thing. I'm not saying it'd be fun, but yeah, I could put my head down, "okay, three years, let's go." That's honestly kind of how I viewed my time in New Orleans. I did not want to go, but it was the ultimatum. "You're either coming with me or I'm leaving you." So I went. This mentality kept me at my last job longer than I should have been there, however. I accept things far past their expiration date, when sometimes it's okay to just freak out a little. I mean, I get there eventually, but by that point it's bad for everybody; my breaking point is so past where it should be.





“Stemming the Rose” (2024, Difficult Interactions)

**F:** Let’s talk about your latest album, “Stemming the Rose”. Why that title?

**SP:** As best I've been able to find, the term originates in Brokeback Mountain. I never read Annie Proulx' short story, so I don't know if the invention belongs to the screenwriters, Larry McMurtry and/or Diana Ossana, or Annie Proulx, but there's that scene where the rancher tells either Gyllenhal or Ledger that he wasn't paying them to "stem the rose." I loved that phrase, it reminded me of Death In June's song "To Drown A Rose." Plus it made me think of those oil burner pipes they sell at bodegas, "Love Rose" pipes (that's a meth pipe to the uninitiated out there). Initially I had this image for the cover art that was stylistically reminiscent of Dystopoa by Dystopia; a vibrant photo collage involving a central sort of bouquet of meth pipes coming out of a guy's asshole... I think we can all agree that the first idea isn't always the best idea.

**F:** Is there a track on the record you feel a special connection to?

**SP:** "Homo Will Not Inherit," partly because that's been in my rotation for 8 years before I finally got a decent studio recording down, but also because I think that track really kind of captures the different facets of STRAIGHT PANIC in one track; sleazy, political, horny, violent.

**F:** The released version of the album differs from your original vision. What brought about the changes?

**SP:** Initially the intro tracks—"The Rose Has Teeth..." and "Exile Tropic"—weren't included, and neither were "Young Parents" and "Asunder." I had sent what I thought was my finished version of the album in to the label and basically what I got back was, "I don't really care for the 'A' side of this LP." Before anyone starts getting indignant on my behalf, I wanna point out that I took no offense to that. Difficult Interactions put up all

the capital to put out vinyl for me, and they went all out with bells and whistles on the packaging. I'm very grateful, appreciative, and honored to be on their roster. ...but it's his money, and he's gotta move these records to get to the next one, y'know? I want to give him a final product that we're BOTH happy to put our names on. So I said, "well, okay, I have these other two tracks I recorded during the same sessions, maybe they hit you better?" Those are the tracks that ended up on the final version. The intro tracks though, those got added to fill out the time better, since I still had a not-insignificant amount of time left on each side.

This was the first time I ever worked with someone in more of a "Producer" sort of role. I'm not sure Kyle would want or agree with the title, but you get my point. This wasn't the usual kind of strategy where you make an album, send it to the label, and then eventually it gets released. There was a lot of back and forth between the label and I, tweaking things, going over ideas, testing drafts out on each other, and I honestly have to say that I think I benefited from that sort of editorial viewpoint... or at least in this specific instance I did, because this isn't one of my big concept albums, y'know? Stemming The Rose is definitely about failure and endings and loss, but it's all more ephemeral and esoteric than releases like Chechen Concentration Camp or the Satanic Verses.

**F:** The omitted material ended up being worked into another release, yes?

**SP:** Yes, actually! All the omitted tracks ended up on the Faggot Front / Gay Death / Straight Panic three-way split on Deathbed Tapes, Proud Boys.

**F:** Which track off of “Stemming the Rose” was the most difficult for you to make?

**SP:** Honestly, "Asunder," because the track is so minimal. Basically there's the melody loop, which was built first—sampled, mixed, effected, remixed, etc.—and then while listening to that on headphones I did a few different run-throughs until I had a good noise layer that fades in until it almost entirely overtakes the melody. Should I spoil the mystery? I feel like the album is very straightforward, but duh, I wrote and recorded it, of course it holds no secrets for me. ANYWAY, that track is about my marriage/divorce, and was... one I struggled with, partly because I wasn't sure if that was something I should even address under the moniker of STRAIGHT PANIC. From a technical standpoint as well, I had a hell of a time getting the vocals to a place where I was happy with them; that's actually always been a problem for me. I have a terrible time getting my vocals locked in, and an even harder time mixing them in properly! With a track as minimal as "Asunder," I didn't have a lot of wiggle room with the vocal track to cover up mistakes or kind of flesh out weaker parts of the delivery. I also didn't want to overpower the music completely, 'cause (at least with what I do) the lyrics are important, but the way I use vocals in STRAIGHT PANIC is closer to an instrument rather than just strictly vocals, if that makes sense?



**F:** Tell me about the album art.

**SP:** The main background image—it's a screencap of two guys shotgunning smoke, overlaid over a screencap of a controlled demolition—is from a video I made for projection during live gigs. I thought that it needed something else, an extra little "oomph," so I reached out to my friend DJ SPEEDSICK about giving it his treatment. I love his music, love his art, and really love his eye for design. I see his work and it's instantly recognizable, and has this very definite edge to it that appeals to me. I think when all was said and done he must have sent me something wild like fifteen or twenty different images for the art, and I eventually whittled them down to the two images used on the jacket (front and back). The sort of "tribal tattoo" design, that was something I had requested though, if he thought there was space for it, or a way to fit it into the art without looking totally shoehorned in; just kind of adds one more level of trashiness to it all in my eyes.

**F:** What's next for Straight Panic?

**SP:** Full-length-ish tape coming out in the next HANDMADE BIRDS batch; thrilled for that to drop finally, two VERY SPECIAL GUEST APPEARANCES. Related news: Secret Historian / Mouths Agape split CD coming from Petite Soles. T. Boettner split with Thomas Puopolo coming on Summer Interlude. Jonbenet Bataille releases locked in for both Summer Interlude and Damien Records as well. Playing my ten year anniversary show in Minneapolis in July (with Climax Denial, Burning, and more!), plus a spot on the Damien Records showcase. Been trying to work more on writing, but—in typical writer-y fashion—it's slow going and I tend to hate all of my own work, so... oh! But I have a piece in a forthcoming anthology Blamage Books is publishing; really among some A-list contemporaries, the imposter syndrome is strong. What else... working on a new full-length for Flag Day Recordings with a VERY, VERY SPECIAL COLLABORATOR, so that's exciting.

**F:** Any last words/thoughts?

**SP:** Free Palestine. Fuck 12. ACAB. *"The multiplication of our kind borders on the obscene; the duty to love them, on the preposterous."* - E.M. Cioran



Thank you to Thomas Boettner for taking the time to answer all of our questions (twice!). You can check out STRAIGHT PANIC and all of Thomas Boettner's works at [linktr.ee/t.boettner](http://linktr.ee/t.boettner)

Also, be sure to pick up a copy of "Stemming the Rose", out now through Difficult Interactions. Copies are very limited and going fast. Get yours at either [difficultinteractions.bandcamp.com](http://difficultinteractions.bandcamp.com) or over at [straightpanic.bandcamp.com](http://straightpanic.bandcamp.com)



*"xxvi. the Martyr, the Corpse" (2024) by Thomas Boettner*



# SEIZURE

by sean halpin  
of CRAOW



All photos for this article by or courtesy: S. Halpin

## About The Author

**Age:** 35

**Pronouns:** He/Him

**Gender:** Man

**Location:** Providence, RI

**Creative Mediums:** Music, Recording, Live Audio, Video, Ice Hockey, Ice Skating

**Bio:** Sean Halpin is a multi-instrumentalist and prolific recording engineer. He got his feet wet in the Tampa, FL underground music scene in 2003, where he could often be found at skate shops, under bridges, and anywhere else with available power outlets.

After relocating to Providence, RI in 2014, Sean began performing solo as the electronic project CRAOW, as well as playing as a backup musician for various local bands (currently Lazy Magnet). He co-founded the Black Lace/1911 live venue, a noise and queer friendly space.

**Links:** [craow.net](http://craow.net)  
[craow.bandcamp.com](http://craow.bandcamp.com)





etting out of bed is a strategic battle. I can't get out of bed too quickly, otherwise I'll start having small staring spells (Petit Mals) [a type of seizure where you appear to be frozen, staring into space]. If that happens, and I don't lay down, close my eyes, and just try to shut my brain off, it will likely lead to a big seizure. Essentially, my morning routine is me trying not to get seriously harmed or even killed. Case in point: I started writing this in December, and it's the end of May now. In that time period, despite my best efforts, I've had two incidents; one of which split my eyebrow open. That one I didn't feel at all. I just woke up in my bed bleeding and feeling extremely sick. When I walked into the bathroom, there was blood all over the floor and bathtub. This was a scene I've become all too familiar with.

## Diagnosis:

When I was 10-11 I remember people starting to think I was rolling my eyes at them while they talked. I can remember two situations distinctly; one where a friend was really mad at me, and one where a teacher kicked me out of class. I truly had no idea what either of them were talking to me about. What was happening was subtle, just a kinda bank stare for a couple seconds. When I was 12, my parents started noticing it happening more, and I eventually went to go see a neurologist. We were told I was having small seizures called petit mals, and that it was manageable with proper medication.

A few years later into my teens, I started having the big ones, Grand Mal seizures. I went back and had a couple weeks of being tested and having my brain scanned. For one test, I was kept awake for an extended period of time, then brought to the doctors where I had sensors placed on my head and was then exposed to flashing strobes so they could trigger a seizure and read my brain's activity. In the end I was diagnosed with "Generalized Tonic Seizures".

## Physical Toll:

Besides the small staring spells that were rarely noticed, the first time I had a big seizure in a public location was during a computer class in high school. I don't remember much, except that when I

came to, everyone was pretty freaked out and unaware of what to do. I did have a close friend who was in the adjacent classroom which shared a door, so when he heard the commotion and that someone had a seizure, he knew it was likely me and knew what to do.

You can't swallow your tongue. I don't even know where that comes from. But, you should try to open the mouth of a person having a seizure so they don't bite it off. You should also hold their head so they don't give themselves a concussion or worse. Usually, people come back to normal after a few minutes, so it's typically not necessary to call an ambulance. If they're alone, call someone to grab them, but be patient; it may take a few mins for them to get their head straight and communicate properly.

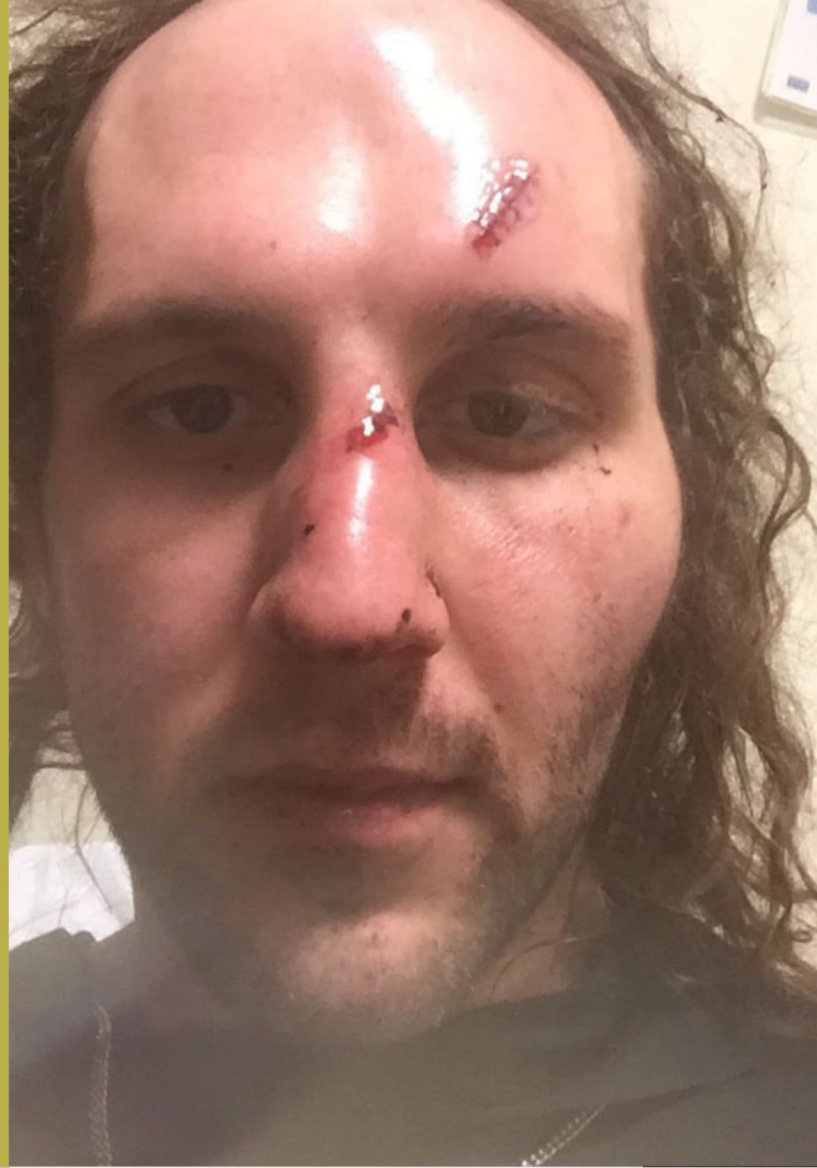
There was a time when I was younger where I'd just continue on with my day after having a seizure. I'd feel like shit, yes, but I've done long days at work, played shows, gone on tours only hours after an event. It takes too much out of me now, though, so I have to rest.

The day before my 23rd birthday I had a seizure while riding my bike on the way to work. I ended up fracturing my mandible. Fortunately they said they didn't need to wire it shut, but it was close. My face was all scraped up, but I wasn't in pain as much as discomfort, and I was determined to have a normal birthday (which I did). Then, the very next day, I had a seizure in the shower where I ended up breaking the other side of my jaw and worsening the existing fracture. Having no idea what had just happened, I got back in bed thinking I'd just woke up to an insane amount of pain. I tried to fall back asleep, but couldn't. Barely able to talk, I called my dad and told him something was wrong and I need to go to the hospital. In the end, I had to get my jaw wired shut for two months and had to adhere to a liquid diet. I've been between 155-165 pounds most of my adult life, and the liquid diet got my weight down to 140.

When I lost my teeth I didn't know how to feel. For the first year I didn't even recognize myself in the mirror. I play ice hockey, so it looked cool during games and most people just assumed that's how I lost them. People do look at you different, though. Any feelings of insecurity you have get amplified. I couldn't handle it, so I got implants over an 18 month span, which was yet another emotionally and physically taxing experience.



“When I lost my teeth I didn’t know how to feel. For the first year I didn’t even recognize myself in the mirror.”





## Mental Toll:

I would be lying if I said I wasn't bothered by this 24/7. Feelings of anger and negativity don't help, but they've been intertwined for so long they kick in just like muscle memory. I'd say my biggest fight right now is eliminating as much negativity out of my mind as possible. Insecurity and malice seem to manifest additional bad situations. I'm only now seeing how those feelings can push people that love me away.

It's hard. Most people don't understand it, and it's not a visible condition unless you're actively having a seizure. I've heard people joke about it not realizing I have this condition. It doesn't bother me as much as it may others. Decent people try to relate, but like any debilitating health condition, you can't really understand it until you've lived with it.

It took me a long time to address my condition as seriously as I should have been. I felt like people around me were more worried about it than I was. I still feel that way sometimes. I felt like I just had to keep doing what I needed to do, and get "better" at the things that mattered to me. I think I was trying to demonstrate to those around me that I was fine, and they didn't have to worry about me.

## Support:

I don't know if I've always coped with things correctly, but I've always had people around me ready and willing to help me get back on my feet and/or check in on how I'm doing; My parents, my family, my beloved partner Tara, and my friends, like Josh, and Andrea.

Then there are people like Kylie, who helped me to see the serious side of things, and Katie, who had to go through it all with me in my early adulthood. I've been blessed with so many allies, and I hope they are reading this and know I'm thinking of them and grateful for them.

## Positive Outlook:

I use to be of the belief you can do what you want, It's just harder for some of us. However, the constant reminder of my limitations, and the extra effort to do basic stuff, sometimes just burns me out. Pushing a rock up a hill without a destination, and working harder than everyone around you to do it, is exhausting.

Still, a pace of two steps forward, one step back, is progress. I've been able to accomplish a fair amount with my music. I have recorded multiple tapes and records as CRAOW. I've played in many different bands and projects, which often lead to me recording other bands and improving my engineering skills.

I've been able to go out on tour multiple times and met some truly awesome people, played many different spaces/venues under so many different circumstances, and seen what the rest of the U.S. sub-underground is up too. I've even been able to tour Europe a couple of times, and beyond just the shows... the other experiences that come with that are precious. It's all been a privilege.

I've even once had a 3 year period without seizures. I drove a car, and could just up and leave town whenever I wanted. Now, touring on a Greyhound bus to then fly to a show, and then take a train to a bus that lets you off a short walk to the venue is my stressful, logistical nightmare. But, I'm still lucky to be able to do it, and the stressing over safety has me motivated to have my shit together, which also helps me grow as an artist.

For those like me that live with seizures, medication helps, but you have to take your own path and navigate this condition to the best of your ability. Though these are just my experiences and feelings, and they may differ from yours, know you're not alone. Know that you are strong. Know that your humanity, your worth, goes far beyond any condition, illness, or trauma.



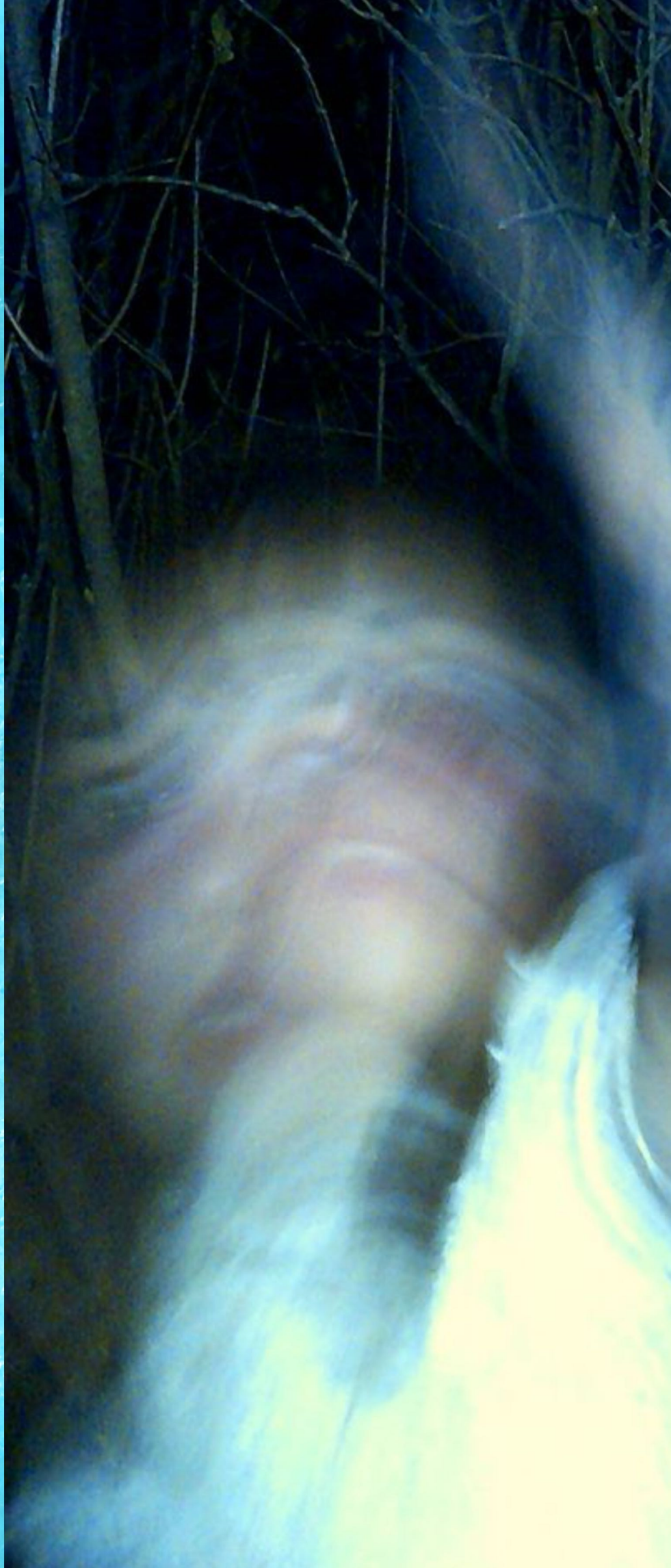


EXPLICIT  
Reticence  
In conversation with:


[MONO  
theory]

Mono Theory is an experimental artist from South Central, PA. Her signature style stems from a rich classical/operatic background, a catholic upbringing, and a deep love for sound art. Her sound is a mix of electronica, experimental field recordings, ambient drone, industrial, and noise.

In this interview, we discuss hometown hostility, living through trauma, finding a community through Japanese Lolita fashion, her latest album "Pareidolia", and much more.





A person is shown from the side, holding a flashlight that illuminates a dense thicket of trees and branches in a dark forest at night. The light from the flashlight creates a bright, circular glow on the foliage, while the rest of the scene is in deep shadow.

“Most people in my town see people like me as vermin needing to be disposed of, and my fear of being targeted because of my identity gets worse everyday.”



**FANE:** Tell us a little bit about growing up? What was that like?

**Mono Theory:** I'm from a small historical town in the south of Pennsylvania, right on the northern border of the Mason-Dixon line and about 40 or so minutes away from Baltimore city. It was decently sized, definitely not the smallest town by any stretch of the imagination, but very closed off and divided within the locals, especially by race and economic class.

I grew up in a multi-ethnic family, being half Puerto Rican and half white, and there was never a moment in my life where I wasn't seen as different. My mother let me spend a lot of time with my grandparents when I was little, so often time it felt like I was switching lives, and often times switching versions of myself, in each family. In my mom's family, I would live an average rural Appalachian childhood, but with my dad, I was Puerto Rican and was raised as one. My father surrounded me with the familiarity of his own childhood, so I would spend a lot of time with my Abuela on weekdays and weekends.

We were Roman Catholic, so we always went to mass to pray together and to speak with our priest during confession. When I was little, I attended mass at a Church that was mostly attended by Hispanic families. It was the only sense of belonging I felt I had when I was little. The beauty of my childhood church is something that even now still brings me to tears, with its white dusty statues and creaky seats and velvety floors with that bittersweet scent of bergamot and sage.

There was a competing church for white Catholics just down the street from the Spanish church I attended, and if you were seen there, you would be deemed a traitor. Most people who grew up here didn't have the money or resources to make a life for themselves or to build relationships or bonds with one another. Most were too busy just trying to not get kicked out on the street, which I saw all throughout my childhood. My town was that kind of a blue collar town where you either move far away and don't come back at any time except to visit family, you go into the military, or you stay in that town for the rest of your life.

**F:** Are you still living there, or have you made your escape?

**MT:** For now, I am stuck to live in my home town. I don't have the money or resources to move away at this moment in time, and as of now I don't have the financial security to go on tour. I've planned that in a few years, once I graduate from college and get my degree, I am going to try to move far away from this place, hopefully when I go into grad school. I'm to a point where I don't even particularly care about where I go. I have some ideas for places I can move to and stay, but I just want to live somewhere where I feel like I can have more security, and where I can live as a person and not in a vacuum seal left on the highest setting.

Most people in my town see people like me as vermin needing to be disposed of, and my fear of being targeted because of my identity gets worse everyday. I want to live somewhere where no one knows who I am so I can start over, living semi-anonymously. At this point in time, my hometown feels like a prison that I can't get out of, so anywhere I can make an escape will be worth it. I know one thing that's for certain, I don't want to live in this awful place for the rest of my life.

**F:** What was your favorite toy growing up? What was special about it?

**MT:** I'm definitely gonna have to say dolls. Since I was little, I've always been so captivated with the mesmerizing beauty of dolls; with their extravagant costumes and beautiful hair, gorgeous eyes and ethereal energy. As a child, my great grandmother on my mom's side was a doll collector, and I always loved going to her house filled with so many beautiful dolls. My great grandmother's entire living room was filled with so many dolls of all shapes and sizes, and I loved just sitting there and watching cartoons with them. I was so ecstatic to just admire all of their similarities and differences, and I always felt as if they were angels who were watching over me and keeping me safe.

I think when the world got a little too complicated for me, I just wanted to escape my life and be one of them; having happy beautiful days every day, free of the greed and pain that controls the real world. As an adult now I collect antique dolls. I think it's because they allow me to identify with my own femininity in a way that doesn't make me feel commodified, but instead connected to the security of my lost girlhood.

**F:** When did you first start to question your identity?

**MT:** When I was about 14 or so, I suppose. I had known that something was up with me, but I really wasn't sure what it was. As a young girl, I was sex repulsed, and I never understood how compulsive physical attraction worked for others. I was always attracted to others through their personalities and who they were as people. I could never imagine only being attracted to another person for their physicality. For a long time I felt like there was something wrong with me, because I lacked that ability to understand physical attraction for intimacy and sensuality.

For a really long time I had a lot of internalized homophobia, which made me ashamed to come out about my sexuality as a pan-romantic girl on the asexual spectrum. For as long as I could remember, I had always felt very out of place within the society around me, that pressured girls once they hit a certain age to sacrifice themselves and their bodies during intimacy in the name of becoming "women". I hated this idea to my core, and I hated being told that I would never be a real woman if I didn't adhere to the male gaze.

I think this was due to growing up Puerto Rican. Most Puerto Rican girls force themselves to grow up fast, and are pressured to act and dress older than they are. Acting sexy and mature never came naturally to me; I always felt like I was kind of harming myself or wearing this mask that was slowly burning me whenever I dressed for male attention or physical validation. In fact, I hated when people commented on my body in general. I hated being seen as a fantasy and not a complex person with feelings, and I just hated even being perceived as attractive.

On top of this, I witnessed all of the ways that men and boys talked about other bodies like pieces of fresh or used up meat. I witnessed women being catcalled and followed on the way back to their cars late at night, and knew women who were picked out for perceived convenience and naivety for an unsuspected assault or attack. I saw all of this pain, and I knew that I would one day be next, and it really broke me. Then I decided that I wouldn't ever let myself come to that end.



I think this is why, as a young girl, Japanese street fashion styles such as Shironuri, Sweet Lolita, Dolly and Mori Kei were so mind blowing to me. They gave me the ability to express my feminine style without feeling caged by the male gaze. They made me feel free, and they showed me that I didn't have to live my life just one way. That life is what you make of it, and if you're not happy, you can make changes so long as that is what you want. Once I started living for myself and not for external validation, the feeling of constant inadequacy started to dwindle, especially after learning about Japanese street fashion.

As a little girl, when I first learned about Lolita fashion, it blew my mind that people actually lived that life and dedicated that much time to it. All I wanted to do was to escape the society I felt like I was trapped in and go to that little corner of the world where boys and girls could all be beautiful royalty every day, with no care for how the greater part of larger society perceived them.

**F:** That's interesting to me, as Lolita fashion is often associated more with the predators who prey on those within that world than the creatives wearing the fashion. Was that something that ever concerned you?

**MT:** Interestingly, I've been met with the opposite the entire time I've been in the community. This tends to be a mindset that people outside of our general circles come to believe about j-fashion, especially with Lolita. People associate us with more extreme parts of the fetish community such as DDLG or ABDL, but Lolita has no connection to those communities, and does not support the sexualization of children. In fact, most Lolitas I know are trying to escape sexualization.

The origins of Lolita are Feminist in nature, stemming from Japanese women's wishes to express their femininity without feeling commodified by their body. Most Lolitas I know are actively trying to avoid those who sexualize the style. Every person I've ever met who has participated in Lolita has never seen this lifestyle as a fetish; they see it as an escape from the rigidity of society. I suppose this mainly comes from the name, which came from Japan in the 1990s, and has no connection to the novel by Vladimir Nabokov. However, individuals who don't have knowledge about our history tend to get this idea, mostly due to the name. Most people that I've known who have engaged in j-fashion have had some kind of trait where they felt difficulty in expressing themselves in the context of their autonomy and social skills; so many Lolitas I've known have been on the asexual spectrum.

**F:** Are you familiar with the work of Trevor Brown? What are your thoughts on him and his art?

**MT:** I am familiar with the work of Trevor Brown, and while I think he is an excellent illustrator with a fantastic art style, I do not support him or his art. It is such a shame, because I really enjoy the artistic movements that he was a part of, like lowbrow and steampunk. I love the contrast of his pastel, story book style with edgy and grotesque themes.

However, I think he takes this way too far with the unnecessary sexualization of children, especially when paired with references of extreme fetish and BDSM. There are also themes of racism that surround his work, including the fetishization of Asian women and children through their perceived innocence, which in general just really bothers me.

Maybe I could enjoy it more if he was trying to spread a message about child CSA or trauma, but to me his works

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**"You never know how much joy in your life can be taken away from you when you develop such a destructive, obsessive habit that isolates you from your loved ones and friends"**

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read as just an excuse to sexualize children, with no purpose. I do wonder, in his case, if his work acts as an outlet for his own dark fantasies? I remember reading of him admitting to being attracted to minors in a past interview. *[Editor's Note: Interview in YKnow from 2009 where Trevor states "I'm not even particularly sexually attracted to children at all. Well, physically, not until around the age of 14 but even then intellectual immaturity would make them fall short of desirability for me (although 14 year old females fans that have written to me haven't sounded exactly stupid). I love 18 year olds who look 12!" yknow-interviews.blogspot.com/2009/10/trevor-brown-artist.html]*

**F:** Many of us within the TLGBQIA2S+ community often feel isolated/othered. Have you had that experience? How did you navigate finding a community?

**MT:** I don't think that there has ever been a moment in my life where I haven't felt othered. As a kid, I was really shy and anxious. I've always thought about things and worried about insignificant things more than anyone else I've ever known. Even as a young adult, I'm still a very anxious person and I often fear for my future and sense of security along with my loved ones and friends. I've realized that my fear will never go away, but it's how I respond to the fear that will allow me to overcome it, and finally live.

I think finding a community is definitely something that has helped me, but this process is different for everyone; it's not easy and can take a long time. I know people who have gone their entire lives without having a support system. They've been locked inside themselves, stuck in survival mode since they were children, and when they grew up, they became used to the avoidance, and it became the only home they'd ever had. Some people do genuinely like to be alone, but I think finding like minded people who fully support you as a person is one of the biggest steps to recovery and healing.

**F:** Was/is there someone who stood out as an ally for you during that time?

**MT:** Unfortunately, due to me being so young, I really didn't have any of the emotional skills or tools to advocate for myself, and not many adults advocated for me either. This caused me to suffer silently for most of my childhood. I didn't know how to tell people what I was feeling, and I didn't think it wasn't normal. This is why as an adult, I love being able to advocate for other people in a way in which I never got advocated for in childhood. I write about these experiences, along with psych/case studies I research in my free time with the experiences of other previously non verbal individuals. I can only speak of my own experiences, but studying cases of fellow non verbal speakers and other survivors of trauma gives me a new perspective that I wouldn't have previously considered.



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"I feel like now, I've decided to not care about trying to fit into a neatly defined category of sound. I can make passionate music that I am proud of, and people who also feel that sense of passion will find it and connect to it."

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**F:** How did you first get into/discover music on a more serious level?

**MT:** I've always been around music since I was very young. I've been taking lessons in voice since I was about 4 or 5. I didn't come from a musical or artistic family, but my father played guitar and was a metal head, so he exposed me to all types of music at a very young age. As a result, I've always enjoyed music and partook in music, but I didn't start having an emotional bond to music until I started listening to ambient/ drone records along with the occasional harsh noise albums back in middle school. I suppose the thing that drew me in to this type of music was how raw it all was. It didn't rely on cheesy makeup, or a screamo growl to scare the living shit out of listeners.

Experimental music just brings the blood of an artists unspeakable pain to the forefront without having to rely on sparkly or pretty words. It made me feel less alone in many of my darkest moments. I listened to so many of these albums and artists, and I dreamt of making music like them because I was so mesmerized by all of them. It's kind of surreal that half of the people I listened to back then when I was so young and closed off from the world, I either know and talk to now, or we share the same community and circles.

**F:** Who were the big influences on the development of your personal sound?

**MT:** My influences stem from several places. I originally started many of my earliest recordings inspired by the works of Steve Roden and Testu Inoue, doing purely lowercase style recordings of sounds I collected/recorded from my bedroom. I would often make small homemade contact mic instruments using pieces of broken wire, glass, forks, marbles, old metal scraps, or just about any material I could get my hands on. Sometimes I would add on small loops of my voice that I would utilize for extra texture. I still have some of these recordings. I only ever posted them onto a private music forum I used to circulate back in 2018.

After that, I started trying to actually formulate songs, with an intention to replicate to sounds of artists such as Julee Cruise, Björk, and Aspidostrafly. For a long time I struggled in finding a style that felt right for me, due to backlash in my local community. Recently, I decided I wanted to honor my early classical training in opera, and I could use my voice to create texture and sound. As a result I feel like I am both a singer and performer, along with a sound artist, which is not that common in experimental music.

**F:** What's an album you couldn't live without that you consider to be highly influential?

**MT:** I could never live without Björk's 2001 release, *Vespertine*. I first listened to it right after I turned 13, after I experienced a deeply traumatizing event that left me unable to speak and emotionally disturbed until the age of 16. Even now, years later, I still struggle to speak at times, and I have days where I can get flustered. Trying to physically put all of my words together can feel like putting together a puzzle with pieces missing.

This album has been there for me more than any other person in my life ever could. It allowed me to feel as if I could be ok, that I didn't have to try so hard just to complete basic tasks and to function. I could simply be as I was, and I would be loved the same. Even listening to the album now, I can say that this album really saved my life. It was one of the biggest things that repaired my relationship with my self esteem, my bodily autonomy, and my right for consent.

**F:** May we discuss that trauma from your childhood, just on the surface? I won't pry, you can just tell me whatever you're willing to openly discuss and we'll leave it there. I don't want to draw blood from old wounds, I just want to provide visibility for others who may have a shared experience.

**MT:** I feel like my entire childhood was like a long flight of stairs that have led me to where I am now. There wasn't just one instance, but a lifetime of instances that have affected me. I didn't have the best relationship with my family for the majority of my childhood. Alcoholism is in my family, and when people would drink, they'd change. I used to get so scared. Fortunately, things are different now.

I suppose when children are exposed to things that they don't understand or can't control, they can feel as if they are at fault. I spent so much time trying to not make any person angry that I would well up my feelings into a ball, only to burst when I was alone.

I let me guard down trying to make everyone happy, and some bad people got through. I lost emotional feeling for years; it was like these assaults numbed me and hurt me. I fell inside myself. I was just so afraid of people. I feared being re-victimized. These experiences still have impact on my everyday life, but they don't control me like they did, and they certainly don't define me.

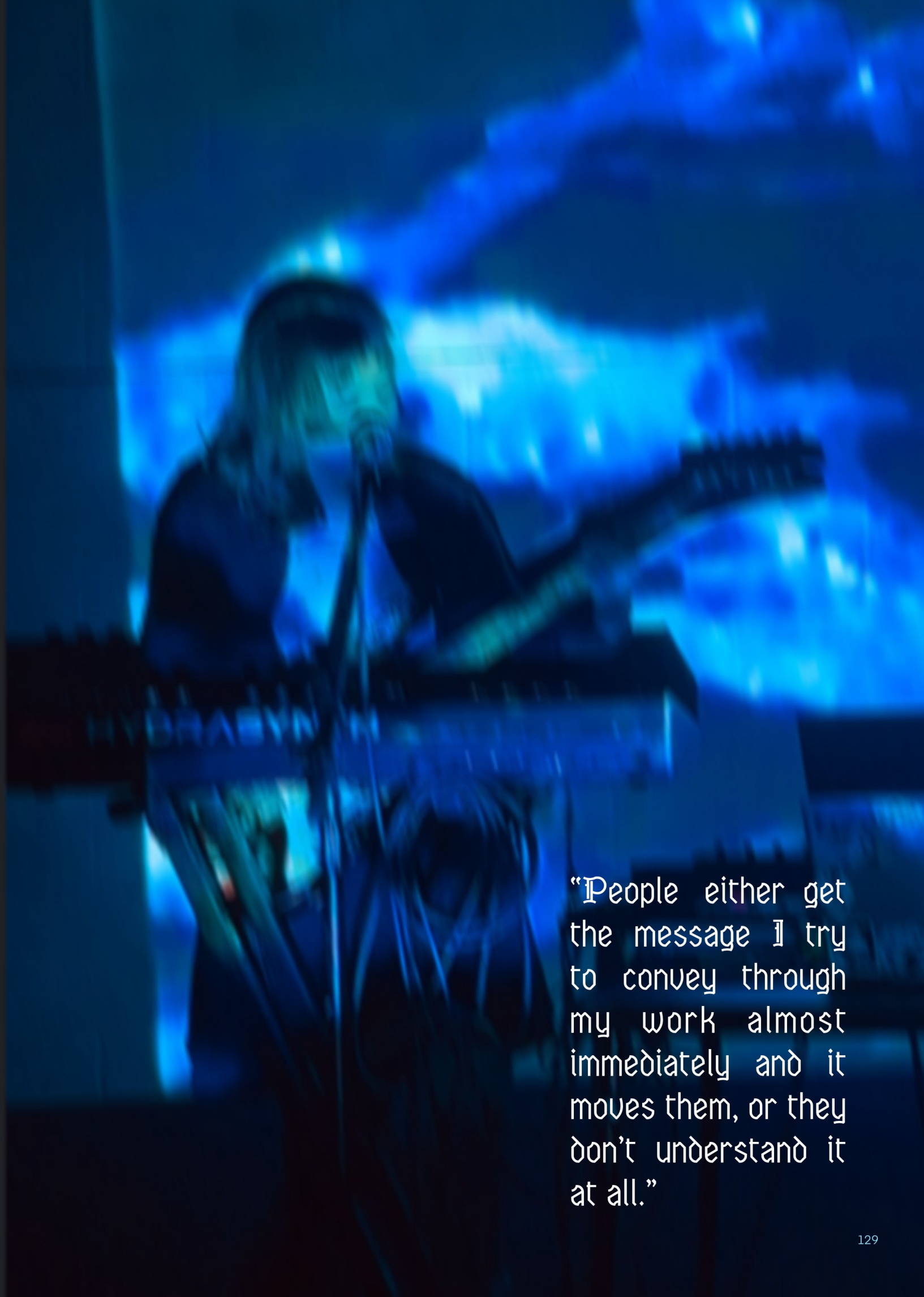
**F:** I appreciate you sharing those experiences with us. I'm not going to ask for any further details, as I don't want to cause anymore pain. I'm going to pivot to another topic. When did you first take *Mono Theory* to the stage? What was it like performing in front of strangers?

**MT:** If I'm not mistaken, my first actual *Mono Theory* set was in a small community theater. They were doing a local music showcase and I was one of the first artist to be featured. During this time, I was way too scared to go on stage with the gear I recorded with, so I resorted to a stripped back set with a mini keyboard and a reverb machine for my vocals. It's crazy to think of how long ago that was, and how much I have changed and grown as an artist. I feel like now, I've decided to not care about trying to fit into a neatly defined category of sound. I can make passionate music that I am proud of, and people who also feel that sense of passion will find it and connect to it.

**F:** How has the reception to your work been so far? Any positive experiences to share?

**MT:** While I find most of the reception I receive to be good, I feel like peoples reactions to my music are generally





“People either get the message I try to convey through my work almost immediately and it moves them, or they don’t understand it at all.”



“When I’m dissociating, I become physically and mentally numb, and I feel like I am outside of my body. I try to make my sounds reflect that, hovering over the world and watching your loved ones and friends like a ghost with no body or identity, wondering if this is what it feels like to truly be alive.”





polarized. However, one of the craziest parts about performing has been finding people who feel seen through my work. I never expected that. When I first started writing my songs, I was trying to get back into writing after I hadn't written any poetry for years. I had to give up writing for a brief period of time; I found writing and reading to be challenging due to becoming nonverbal. So when I first started, I cared more about the physical act of writing again than focusing on if people would relate to it. I simply wrote of my experiences and how I felt at the time when I went into recovery. To know that people connect with lyrics that I wrote about the love, loss, heartbreak, death, trauma, and illness I've felt since I was a child has been surreal. Also comforting in a way that I can't ever fully put into words. I've had people come up to me crying after hearing me perform for the first time. Most of my sets often feel like group therapy sessions; afterwards every person who was there has expelled something that they had locked away. I feel the audience is left with this gratitude for one another, which is the biggest honor to harness such an amazing environment.

**F:** On that same coin, have there been negative experiences putting yourself out there? I've often heard horror stories of overzealous fans, hostile audiences, or just outright perverts slathering their uninvited ick all over.

**MT:** I've had a few negative experiences. Maybe it's because many of my biggest influences stem from early musique concrete and lowercase music, which are all generally niche forms of drone and experimental music, but people either like my work, or they don't. I do also tend to sing about my own experiences and childhood memories, along with the unspoken stories of other people who I read about in psychological/clinical case studies. People either get the message that I try to convey through my work almost immediately and it moves them, or they don't understand it at all.

There've been some individuals who've been a bit parasocial with my work, who then became unhealthily intrusive over the more private details of my life. I've had individuals who have tried to find out where I live and implant themselves into my personal life, like they were a silent watcher treating me as if I'm not human, but some helpless toy. Regardless of what feedback I receive, I try to not let other people's opinions on my work affect my relationship with myself. It can be hard when you make open and vulnerable art, but it's imperative that you don't take it personally. Some people will take your kindness as weakness, and your weakness as a target to tear apart.

I've also experienced a lot of resistance and censorship in my hometown. Many of the promoters and local venues in my area had a strong dislike for any kind of music that wasn't made for punk rockers, so I was kicked out of my city and told by locals that my music had no place there. I was then forced to leave to other places and nearby cities where people would accept my art for what it was.

An older artist whom I respect once told me that the world is going to humble good artists, because they don't want that in their greater society, they do not want the insiders to look beyond what they've been led to believe their entire lives, and those who break those illusions of the greater society are seen as a threat, which is why they are cast aside. It's amazing to me how many individuals don't want to face the reality of how their neighbors and peers live on a daily basis; it's sad how desensitized we have become to other's suffering.

**F:** Let's talk about your latest album, "Pareidolia". First, why that title?

**MT:** Pareidolia is a psychological phenomenon based on the notion of the "uncanny valley", where our brains can see human features and behavior in non human objects. I wanted to name the album this because I think it really spoke to how when humans are in unfamiliar environments, we reach to find familiarity and connection in the environments around us. Similarly, when individuals find themselves in deep isolation, they find human features in the objects around them in an attempt to feel like they do have other people to connect to and to pass the time with. This album covers a wide range of topics including morbid and clinical depression, dissociation, love and a loss of self after grief and trauma. I also discuss life and death, along with rebirthing after traumatic events, which can be heard in songs like, "you look beautiful from up here" and "VOID".

**F:** Tell me about the writing process. How did you approach creating these tracks that make up the album?

**MT:** Every track is a bit different. Some were easier to write, and some were very taxing to write. Finding the strength to write again after I became nonverbal took many years and patience. Although it took me about 5 years to get back into writing after my aphasia set in, I'm happy that I never gave up on writing. For a long time, I thought I would never get my ability to write back again, but I'm very lucky to be able to functionally communicate and talk semi-normally now.

A lot of the songs on Pareidolia are about 2 and a half years old, some of which I written during a low point in my life; I was unable to process my own thoughts and feelings. So, I tried to approach my own retrospective feelings of hopelessness with kindness. Sometimes the best form of self care we have is to treat ourselves with the kindness that we wish we received as children, so at times when I get uncertain, I try to give myself grace and time. When I give myself time to really process what I'm thinking, it can be my greatest strength.

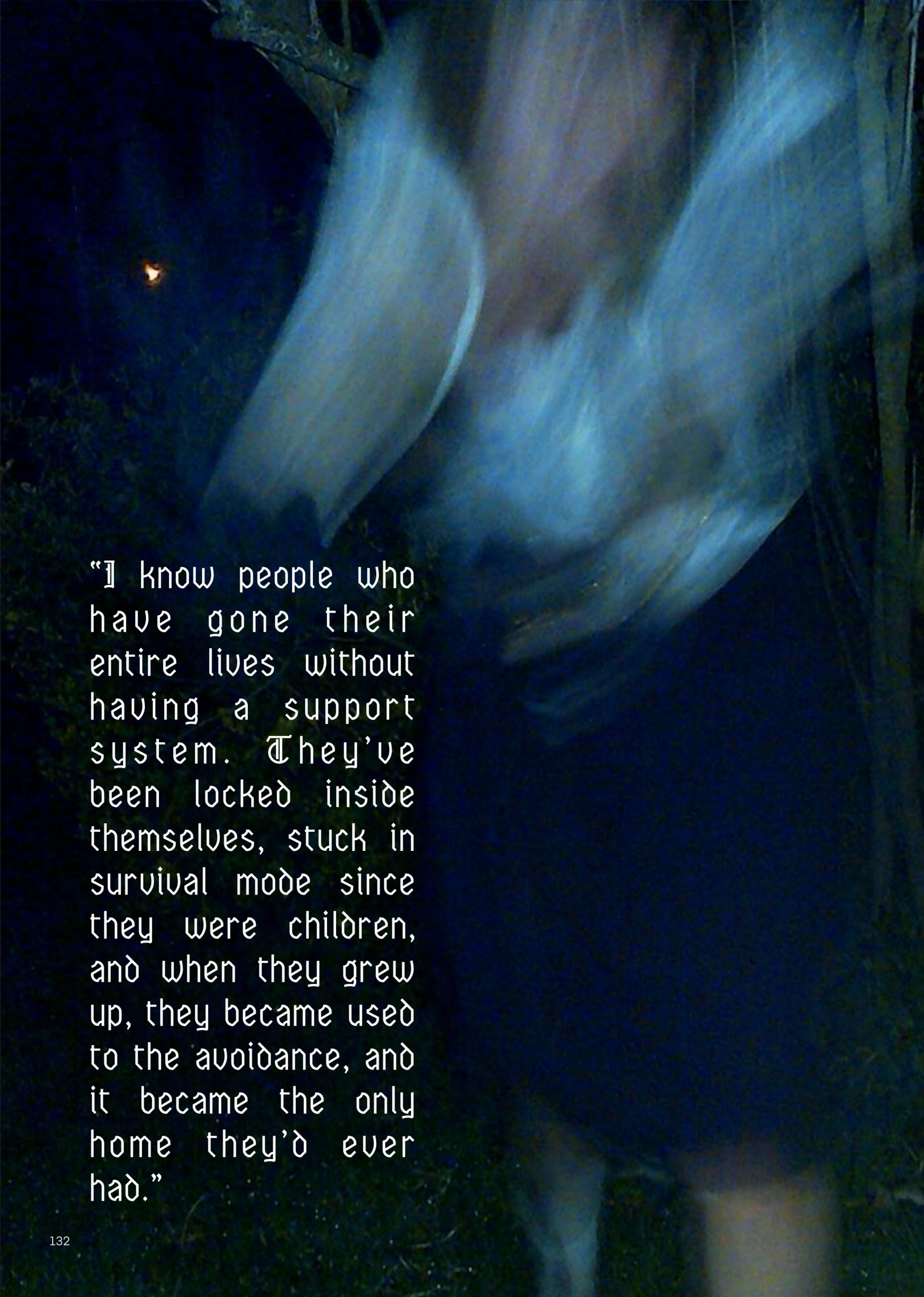
**F:** Which of the album's songs was the most difficult for you to write, either technically or emotionally?

**MT:** The most difficult song for me on Pareidolia would be "You Look Beautiful From Up Here". This song is probably the oldest song of the album by far. I made it over 3 years ago over the course of a few months on and off. A few years later, I rediscovered it and decided to use it. For a long time, I was really scared of releasing this song, as when I originally wrote it, I intended for it to be a death note for the project all together. This song was written about a habit I used to have back when I still went to school. I used to commute to the city everyday and after school, I had to wait for the bus to get back home. I would walk up to the rooftop on my school, and stand by myself, looking down at all of the beauty and life that the city carried underneath me. While doing this, I imagined what it would be like for me to jump. Sometimes I would just sit on the ledge, not moving, but imagining what it would feel like to fly in the air, never to hit the ground. This is probably one of my favorite moments on the album.

**F:** Is there a track on here you have a particularly strong connection to? I mean, they're all of you, and you're connected to them all, but I'm talking about the proverbial "favorite child".

**MT:** I feel as if I have a strong connection to all of my songs. However, one song that I particularly love would be Revelations IV. I'm most proud of this song in terms of writing. Revelations IV details a previous Christmas where I attended mass at my childhood church for the first time in seven years after I left Catholicism. I thought the process was really painful and sad. The location felt both painfully familiar and yet alien to me; I felt like I was being watched wherever I went. Needless to say, I felt like a monster, and I





“I know people who have gone their entire lives without having a support system. They’ve been locked inside themselves, stuck in survival mode since they were children, and when they grew up, they became used to the avoidance, and it became the only home they’d ever had.”



was not welcome there.

The only way I can properly explain how it all felt, to me, is like when you return to a dead loved one's house after having ended on bad terms. There is hurt, but there's also a lot of longing for something that will never call back to you. You wish to seek refuge in a place that no longer exists, to speak to someone who didn't even see you as human. Revelations IV represents having to leave one's home and way of life to seek refuge and safety in a new world.

**F:** I genuinely love how strong but delicate your music is. Sorta like a spider's web. How do you define your sound?

**MT:** A pseudo artistic spiderweb is a very accurate description of my sound overall! My music is a really good mixture of quiet and loud, hard and soft, which is what I do feel like I am as a person. I'm admittedly not the most sociable person on the planet, but I am passionate about things that interest me. Often I have so much passion that I mask my feelings away out of fear of how neurotypical people will perceive me because I have ADHD. I think that my music really reflects this part of me as I have a lot of music that speaks to an unmasked version of myself where I don't have to worry about social cues, or if anyone will accept or reject what I have to say. This allows me to reflect within myself in more quiet times of retrospection, along with the loud, raw and honest states of mind I can find myself in where I don't really care if anyone agrees with me. It's like I have no mouth, but I must scream.

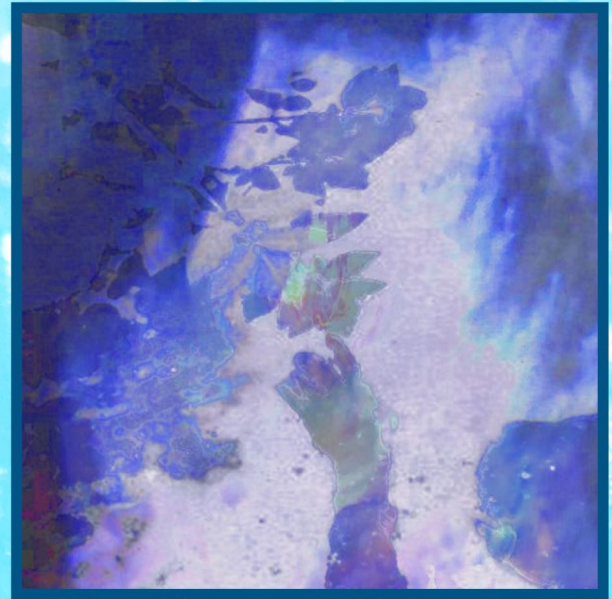
**F:** "Adderall" sticks out to me. It's possibly the most impassioned track on the album, at least in terms of sonic feel. Earlier, you mentioned you have ADHD, as do I. How has that impacted your life?

**MT:** When I was writing Adderall, I based it off of when I first got diagnosed with ADHD and was put on meds in an attempt to treat my inability to focus. However, my medication had the opposite effect, and I eventually just stopped feeling things. It was as if this medication was making me an emotionless zombie. In this way, I think Adderall is moreover a metaphor for addiction, and speaks more upon the way people often tend to use substances that can physically numb them to distract themselves from tackling the direct issues in their lives head on. It speaks of a kind of hunger for danger and excitement, which manifests into an addiction for that unhealthy behavior, as some short term escape from the real problem. An individual can get hooked on the emotional excitement from physical pain and discomfort. Something that I really tried to illustrate within the song is how humiliating and lonely addiction truly becomes for the sufferer. You never know how much joy in your life can be taken away from you when you develop such a destructive, obsessive habit that isolates you from your loved ones and friends.

**F:** There are a lot of field recordings present on this album, particularly birdsongs which appear throughout. How do birds factor into the album's overall message?

**MT:** I live in a rural part of Pennsylvania, so I just have good access to birds and Appalachian woodland forests. On top of this, I for one really enjoy nature, so when I do go outside to go on a hike, or explore the woods, I often tend to record. I try to record everything that I can, regardless of what I may be doing there. This has given me a very wide library of organic sounds that I normally use in soundbite and textures. The sounds that you hear throughout this release often are the sounds that I hear while I travel.

I feel like bird sounds are just very tied to my personal sense of nostalgia. I heard them so much as a child while I



"Pareidolia" Album Cover

was outside. I've always connected them with safety. Even silent locations I've tried to record. I feel that these recordings build character within the songs, giving them more complexity. One of my favorite field recordings within my latest album is in "You Look Beautiful From Up Here". It features a recording of an abandoned train station in New York City, which can be heard at the end of the song, representing transition into the spirit world. In Revelations IV, I took recordings of my old church during empty hours and added them into the background. I do this so that listeners can feel that they are being transported to another location when listening.

**F:** Who's the Valerie you sing about on "Song for Valerie"? What impact have they had on your life?

**MT:** When I was first writing song for Valerie, I wanted to base this song off of my Great Grandmother, who was a German Orthodox Christian who grew up during the Great Depression in PA. I intended to make detail her life, and how she dedicated it to giving people the kindness that she never received. However, as I kept writing, the song became more inspired by my closest friends and how I loved them for their own abilities to spread kindness. I saw similarities within how I loved them for who they were as people, but I couldn't physically put into words how much I loved all of them. Thus, Song for Valerie is not about just one person in particular, but instead a reflection of the love I feel for the close friends I have in my life.

I find it so sad how our society doesn't acknowledge the complexity of human love and connection. We only care if the other person gives us a physical chemical reaction through sexual contact or romantic interactions. I find so many peoples' ideas of what love is supposed to be so vain and shallow, honestly. I find it sad how disconnected we've all become. We can't even take joy in being alone with each other anymore without it being tied to some kind of transaction. My closest friends have been there to support and protect me more than any romantic partner ever has. When you find people that love you as you are, and not for what you can provide, it can have such a positive impact on your entire life.

**F:** You do all of your own visual work (album art, videos, etc.). Tell us a little about that.

**MT:** All of my work is created as multi-media. My photography takes the forefront in a lot of my most recent



work, especially for the shoot I did for Pareidolia. I have an interest in creating eeriness within my work, and I have always had an interest in ghost photography. Every project has had a kinda different approach in how I want to take the visual art. Pareidolia was more traditional photography, but Panacea was more multimedia photo manipulation and illustration.

I've always made my own photography and visual art; I love to reference things from art history, along with paintings that I love. I also like to collaborate with my fellow artist friends in various ways, whether it be taking photos with them, incorporating illustrations/paintings, writing together on songs, or performing with them. In this way, Mono Theory is not only a labor of love from my end, but also a collaborative labor of love between all of my closest friends and loved ones, where I get to showcase their work too!

**F:** Who, if anyone, would you say is a big influence on your visual work?

**MT:** I feel like my general vibe and aesthetic are a mix of many things, but I'm really inspired by the works of David Lynch. I am a big fan of Muholland Drive, Blue Velvet, and Twin Peaks. I love making references to his work through my photography and visual art! My literary work is inspired by late 19th century and early 20th century femme gothic writers and surrealist authors, such as Virginia Woolf, V.C. Andrews, and Sylvia Plath. I also reference the works of horror movies, along with artists, performers, and composers that I enjoy. For instance, on "this world is not meant for me" I sampled one of the performances from the Japanese performance artist, Sachiko Abe. She is most well known for cutting paper into thin, web-like strips, creating a "sea of paper" all around her as she cuts.

The song VOID was partially inspired by a horror movie my friend showed me. It was about a girl who died, but when she passed into to afterlife, she couldn't go to heaven or hell. Instead, she became stuck in a loop of reliving her life leading up to her death, with no memory of her identity and past before her death. Over time, dying becomes her only sense of security, where she exists to die, over and over again.

**F:** If you could collaborate with any artist, living or dead, who is someone that you would pick? Why?

**MT:** I would probably go with Steve Roden. Even though his main focus was in painting and art installations, Steve Roden is known in music for popularizing and creating the modern terminology for lowercase, which is one of my favorite sound art movements. It broke barriers of what sound could be. Listening to such beautiful, small increments of tiny sound, cut up into unearthly pieces of surrealistic noise was so satisfying; it changed how I viewed sound forever. It gave music more freedom than anything I'd ever learned when I was in classical music studies, which was caged by strict structures and rules. In a way, these odd movements of sound made me feel really seen when I had aphasia, and they validated how I felt in that state, along with how I viewed the world as a generally introverted person.

**F:** Talk to us about something you don't feel gets enough attention.

**MT:** One thing that I suppose doesn't get enough attention would be dissociative disorders. I feel like I base most of my work on dissociation, and I try to really illustrate through music how dissociation feels. When I'm dissociating, I become physically and mentally numb and I feel like I am

outside of my body. I try to make my sounds reflect that, hovering over the world and watching your loved ones and friends like a ghost with no body or identity, wondering if this is what it feels like to truly be alive.

The most well known dissociative disorder would be Dissociative Identity Disorder [Editors Note: Historically referred to as "Multiple Personality" Disorder], but there are so many other kinds. The DSM hasn't even recognized the extent of these dissociative disorders because there's such a lack of research on them. As a result, individuals who struggle with these disorders often do not get the help that they need, or they get mistaken for having some other type of mental disorder. I aim to study these topics in the hopes that one day, we'll have more tools to treat individuals, like myself, who struggle with dissociative disorders.

**F:** What are you currently listening to? Reading?

**MT:** As far as my favorite musicians go, I tend to take interest in musicians with interesting personalities and lives, on top of having solid music. Currently, I've been listening to the works of Katie Jane Garside, especially the works of ruby throat and Lalleshwari! I feel like she just has everything that I look for in a femme musician; with her dark, wispy, faerie like voice, juxtaposed with her strange sound that sounds both creepy and entrancing.

I tend to mostly read books about population studies or trauma, but one book I haven't been able to put down has been the memoir, "Three Little Words" by Ashley Rhodes Courter. The book details the author's experiences growing up in foster care. It's an all too common story of a child who gets separated from their family who were unable to take care of them, only to be tossed from foster home to foster home, and one indifferent foster parent to the next, with no sense of real security or consistency in sight. I picked this up because I had just gotten a client at my work who grew up in foster care, and I wanted to learn more about that experience since I didn't know anyone who grew up in foster care. After reading, it allowed me to approach her with more kindness and patience, and I can better understand her feelings and advocate for her when she cannot advocate for herself. It's these stories that I believe are so important to learn about, because they can teach us to be kinder to others, along with ourselves.

**F:** Any closing thoughts/statements before we let you go?

**MT:** None that I can think of, but thank you so much for taking time to talk with me!



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A most sincere thank you to Mono Theory for sharing so much with us. We know it can be very difficult, as well as triggering, to discuss past, and present, traumas and life experiences. We know there are people out there who will read your experience and feel seen; maybe for the first time in their lives.

For everyone who made it this far, here are some places you can go to get your fill of everything Mono Theory.

Official Website: [monotheorymusic.com](http://monotheorymusic.com)

Music: [monotheory.bandcamp.com](http://monotheory.bandcamp.com)

Social: [instagram.com/theory\\_mono](https://www.instagram.com/theory_mono)



# STAND IN PRIDE

## ***BUILDING A FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORK FOR THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY***

Stand In Pride is a 501(c)3 nonprofit connecting members of the LGBTQ+ community with chosen family. We believe in the **power of acceptance and the profound impact of having a supportive family**—especially for those in the LGBTQ+ community who have taken the brave step to come out.

### **OUR VISION**

is to have every member of the LGBTQ+ community receive the support and love that they need.

### **OUR MISSION**

is to help any member of the LGBTQ+ community who has lost the love and support of family. We will help them get connected with a loving heart that will be their Stand in Family.

### **GET INVOLVED**

Dealing with the challenges of today requires problem-solvers who bring different perspectives and are willing to take risks. Stand in Pride has thousands of members ready and willing to shower you with the support and love you need. Whether you just need to talk, or you're looking for someone to physically show up for any variety of special occasions, our members will be there for you.

For more information, please visit

**[WWW.STANDINPRIDE.ORG](http://WWW.STANDINPRIDE.ORG)**



## BOOKS

# THE REVOLUTION IS MY BOYFRIEND

**Bruce LaBruce**

*THE REVOLUTION IS MY BOYFRIEND*  
(2024, Baron Books) | [baronbooks.co.uk](http://baronbooks.co.uk)

Bruce LaBruce has been at the forefront of extreme queer expressionism since the 80's. He's the mischievous mind behind the highly influential J.D.'s zine; one of, if not the earliest, instances of unapologetically merging radical gay culture and punk/hardcore/skate culture (I mean, he essentially co-invented the whole homocore genre and then willed it's entire scene into existence). To date, he's made dozens of films exploring what it means to be queer; from 1990's "No Skin Off My Ass" to 1995's cruising homage to vintage Hollywood "Hustler White", to his latest sci-fi sexual liberation fantasy, 2024's "The Visitor". Hell, he's even worked as a photographer for pinnacle gay pornography mag Honcho. My point is, when it comes to subversive, transgressive, and outrageous *gay shit*, Bruce LaBruce is a tenured grandmaster.



“THE REVOLUTION IS MY BOYFRIEND”, freshly released through Baron Books, is a career spanning coffee table art book retrospective of Bruce LaBruce’s visual works. This hefty 200+ page beast is packed with film stills, production photos, portraits, and plenty of pornography. American novelist, poet, playwright, and art critic Travis Jeppesen provides the books introduction and gives the uninitiated a proper run down of LaBruce’s decades long career.

I was born in 1980, realized I was gay in the 90’s, and saw my first gay pornography in the very early 2000’s (well, not exactly my first, but that’s a story for another time). Flipping through this book brought back waves of memories of my first experiences with gay culture. The clothes, the faces... the angst and the beauty of youth. You can almost hear the music of the era playing in the background.

Instead of going for a chronologically linear narrative, the book seems to shuffle everything up into what feels like time loops. Breaking up the segments are pages with brutalist type declaring statements like **“HETEROSEXUALITY IS THE OPIATE OF THE MASSES”** or making calls to action like **“SMASH THE STRAIGHT STATE”** and **“JOIN THE HOMOSEXUAL INTIFADA”**. This June, Bruce is definitely reminding everyone what PRIDE is really all about.

The grainy black and white photography from “No Skin Off My Ass” stands out every time it loops... feels very otherworldly at times (Jarman-esque?). Many of the images from the “Hustler White” era are presented as double exposures, and sometimes even triple in a sense (when you think of the imagery in the reflective surfaces). They have a very Voyeur/Subject feel... seeing both sides of the looking glass at once. Tony Ward is handsome as ever, and those jeans are still holding on for dear life.

Then there’s Harmony Korine related photos, taken around his home and filming locations. We’ve got the director in candids, as well as actors like Brad Renfro, Tiger Tyson, and Dominique Swain (who appears seated on a toilet). Tiger’s photos leave nothing to the imagination, but are more art portrait than jack-off material (or maybe it’s high brow pornography? I’ve no doubt Bruce would love for you to get off through his art).

Staples of Adult Film make appearances throughout. The flawless Arad Winwin *shifts his gears* in a run down movie theatre; an additional panoramic shot of the *Fleapit* shows Winwin surrounded by other theatre goers with similar intentions. It almost looks like a renaissance painting. Francois Sagat, who hasn’t looked bad a day in his life, also makes some appearances. Production stills from “L.A. Zombie” show Sagat as a fang bearing walking corpse who still manages to stay fit and look gorgeous, while other portraits show him... *engorged*, and inviting.

The shots from LaBruce’s magazine works often blur the edges of what pornography is with his atypical framing. We go from shots of skater boys on boards with hard-ons, to someone *soaking* in what I think is a blow-up pony, to a plethora of photos of 20-something’s getting into all sorts of hijinks (with their junk out, of course). Nestled in there is a nice two image spread where on the left we have some trade preserving his modesty with a coffee cup, and on the right we have a full on fisting scene, wrist deep, where the receiver is doing poppers.

Stills/images from LaBruce’s latest film, “The Visitor”, are just as wild. We’ve got rubber/latex feet with vaginal openings on their soles... fleshlights for foot fetishists, I presume (*you werk that pussyfoot*). Additionally, LaBruce presents a 3-way alien ass eat’n human centipede, complete with a participant making full on eye contact with the viewer/reader.

Look... there’s a lot to take in, and there’s definitely something for every kinda ‘Mo out there. If you’re reading and enjoying FANE, you’re going to absolutely love everything Bruce LaBruce (he did it all first). For the (18+) youth of today, it’s a look at the beginnings of outsider queer art through the lens of one of its most important proponents. For the 40-something’s, it’s going to be a scrapbook of their journey finding and building a community of outsiders who were proud to be both “homo” and “core”. An essential addition to any Queer library.

Grab this up in Standard or Deluxe Limited Editions from Baron Books while they last. Order online at [BaronBooks.co.uk](http://BaronBooks.co.uk) (at the time of writing this, they were offering free shipping outside of the UK, which is a huge break for US customers).



official site: 2XYA.COM  
social media: @2XYA2XYA

the  
debut  
single

2XYA are a post-genre pop songwriting duo. We spent four years writing and recording a stockpile of hits before releasing our first single. Our goal is to get in your head and never leave. We won't stop until we reach the top.

2XYA is a music project, an "artist". The kids back in the day used to call all music projects "bands", until "Nine Inch Nails is Trent Reznor" showed up in the liner notes of Pretty Hate Machine in 1989 (Taylor's birth year) and opened the minds of the youth.



MAXI Releasing 8/13

# 2XYA

MAXI Releasing 9/3



the  
sophomore  
single

# 2XYA

2XYA is an acronym, but we haven't announced yet what it means. We wanted to see whether anyone could guess, but thus far, nobody has it right. Some of the guesses are even better than the real thing, child.

2XYA want to collaborate with you. Do you remix? Do you rewrite? Do you love to create? Do you yearn to destroy? Contact us for stems and remix opportunities. There are no limits.

official site: 2XYA.COM  
social media: @2XYA2XYA





# YELLOW BELLY

*"Ghostwriter,"* the debut album from Yellow Belly, invites listeners into an evocative world where melancholic melodies intertwine with hypnotic, downtempo electronic beats.

*"Yellow Belly is probably the most intriguing artist I've heard this year so far"*

- [Adam Walton, BBC Radio Wales]

*"An evocative capturing of a moment in time, subtle synth textures that float like plumes of smoke in the atmosphere, carefully laid with Finnegan's haunting and intimate vocals"*

- [Bill Cummings, God is in the TV Zine]



Available now on CD/Download  
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## MUSIC



### **dog scream**

#### ***“Clean, Safe, and Big Machines”***

May 2024, Self Released

[dog-scream.bandcamp.com](http://dog-scream.bandcamp.com)

dog scream is the experimental electronic project of Christsburg, Virginia based duo The Mummer and Little Devil Doubt. They self describe as “Cloacal Oneiric Noise”, which is a better overall description than I could come up with. If you enjoy all of the left turns experimental and extreme music genres provide, strap in cuz “Clean, Safe, and Big Machines” is gonna be a “fun” ride.

“7:(OTHER)” and “Intentionally Left Blank” bring in the heavy digital hardcore with streaks of “Birdseed” era Whitehouse thrown in to keep everyone on their toes. It’s abrasive, but you can dance to it. “Ceaseless Discharge” hits with some musique concrete playfully lobbed around atmospheres of building distortion and noise. “Apparition Spin” comes in as a chamber music heart-string piece before shifting into anxious minimal electronics with low, distorted, and almost growling vocals.

“EVP” is a creeper. I know I’m not hearing distressed children, but the distortion, frequency flutters, and impenetrable vocals sure make it sound that way. “Spider Value Pack” literally hits, with lots of metal percussion and blasts of steam-like noise. Incredibly reminiscent of the early UK Industrial scene. Then “Instar” comes through and brings us back into a more modern version of extreme electronics. Made me think of early Alice Glass. “Secrets Can Kill” continues that vibe, but the duetting vocals are more akin to that of Hanin Elias and Alec Empire.

This all caps off with the heftily titled “Mr. Gantry refused to go back inside and identify the remains; it could not be established whether they were those of Professor LeClerc, or of a heretofore unknown third party...”, which is a narrative piece recited over a bed of lamenting piano, minimal electronics, and field recordings. It manages to be both calming and unsettling in its delivery and is the perfect choice to close out the album.

The band is offering a limited run of the album on reclaimed/recycled cassettes. I can only imagine any phantom sounds left over from the previous recordings would enhance the ghostlike atmospheres already in play. Plus, they look really nice. Buy now or cry later.





## Public Defecation

### *"Hallucinations of Happiness"*

March 2024, Ember Lugosious | [emberlugosiousrecordings.bandcamp.com](http://emberlugosiousrecordings.bandcamp.com)

New Hampshire based Grind/Noise outfit Public Defecation recently unloaded their latest manifesto "Hallucinations of Happiness" upon the masses; 15 blistering skullfuckers that could fit comfortably on a single sided 7". Absorbed as a whole, it's rapid fire, blast beats, harsh noise, blown out vocals and roaring guitars in 2 to 10 second bursts that only ever slow down long enough to burn to death in the fried dirge of it's second to last track. There's a whole lot of nuance here that's not easily articulated, but seeing as the whole thing clocks in at around 5 minutes, it's not a huge risk to just experience the crispness for yourself. Oh, did I mention the artwork was gnarly AF?

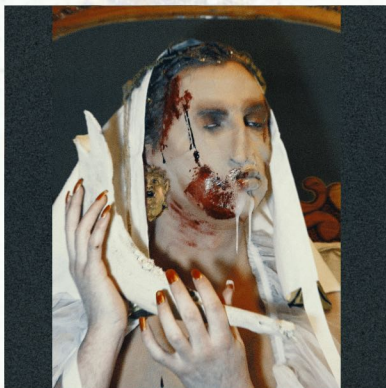


## Jenny Haniver

### *"Haunt Your Own House"*

April 2024, Landland Colportage | [jennyhaniverpdx.bandcamp.com](http://jennyhaniverpdx.bandcamp.com)

Jenny Haniver is the new collaborative project from Eric Niffler of Chase Bliss Audio and Randall Taylor of AMULETS. Their debut is a luscious post-everything masterwork that orbits the same dying star as groups like Mogwai and 65DAYSOFTSTATIC. I've followed AMULETS since the first tape loops on Tumblr, and Randall's silky soundscapes definitely come through here, albeit often twisted and formed into post-rock style instrumentals that sometimes recall old movie westerns (is that a pedal steel I hear?). When the band rocks, they rock hard with roaring riffs and piston-like drums, and when they want to soothe and lull, they pull you in tight and wrap you up in airy guitars upon beds of cloudy electronics. The actual recording/sound/engineering quality is beautiful, too! Essential.

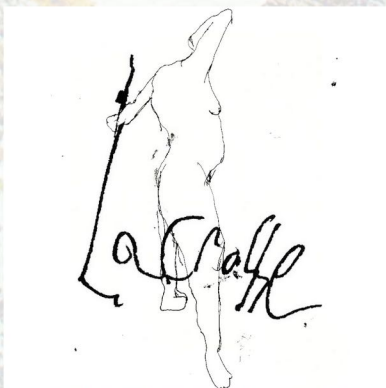


## Zura Makharadze

### *"Dionysus' Blood & Sperm In Our Mouths"*

April 2024, Venalism | [venalism.bandcamp.com](http://venalism.bandcamp.com)

Zura Makharadze is a mixed media artist from Tbilisi, Georgia. He works extensively with performance artist Darja Kazimira to create, often organically visceral, live actions. "Dionysus' Blood..." perfectly captures what being in the middle of a performance would sound and feel like. Heavy use of various percussive instruments and natural objects to formulate rhythms that invoke the indigenous, tribal music of our ancestors. Darja's vocals, when they appear, are used more as an instrument than a singing narrative. Raw emotions pour from the gentle sighs and gasps, as well as the raging screams and cries (reminiscent of Blixa Bargeld at times). The percussion gets so wild that I'm reminded of John Bonham's massive solo on Led Zeppelin's "Moby Dick". The esoteric, the unapologetically sexual, and their shared connections are emotionally explored throughout. Closest overall comparison I can think of is maybe Z'Ev, but that just scratches the surface. There are lots of layers of spiritual rubble to dig through, should you have the emotional constitution to do so. Definitely worth a listen.



## Kate Finley

### *"lacrosse"*

March 2024, Venalism | [venalism.bandcamp.com](http://venalism.bandcamp.com)

All 22 minutes of "lacrosse" showcases Kate Finley's innate talent for maximizing the minimal; music thin as tissue paper, but stronger than steel beams. I must confess, the initial couple of ambient pieces fit in so well, and had me so subdued, I didn't even realize tracks had transitioned at all (I was halfway through "mandaree" before noticing). "rumor" lets you know things are different now, with it's minimal, empty, dusty crackling, void of connection. "terminator" teases a dance club somewhere in the distance... maybe behind a reinforced brick wall. "aqueduct" does that, too, but gives us more music to work with. These tracks remind me of experiencing Porter Ricks live in an intimate space a few years back. "prosthetic" closes us out with waves of heated ambience, sloshing above racing keyboards and well buried percussive electronics. A very soothing, and quick moving, experience that's worth every one of those aforementioned 22 minutes.





## [meltdown archive]

### "Plastic Soup"

June 2024, *Heathen Fawn Recordings* | [heathenfawnrecordings.bandcamp.com](https://heathenfawnrecordings.bandcamp.com)

Ok, [meltdown archive] are taking us back to early 00's d&b experimentation and I am here for it! "jugalone" is just dreamy drum & bass with anxiety electronics peeking through. "twerk macht frei" is a bit more glitch & bass, and kicks up the tempo significantly before it's abrupt end. "rumble gut" brings on the belchy bass, soaring synths, and more warbling than you can handle. "reelin'" reminds me of something you would hear in an RPG while the main antagonist reveals their evil plot. "distotecca" pounds and pounds to squelchy synths and electro-metallic percussion. Ascending feedback reigns. "rumble gut 2" gets that ass shaking with some acid infused electro house stylings. I mean, I know I can see people pop & lock to this in my minds eye. Great cassette... kid606 style fun the whole family can enjoy!

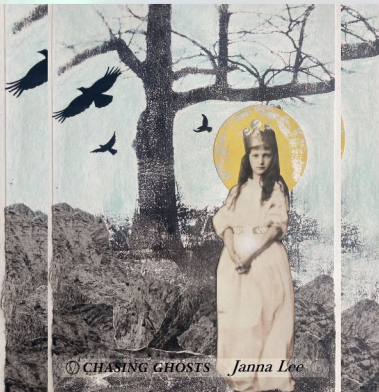


## Pain Chain

### "Hellflower"

July 2024, *Mutual Aid Records* | [pain-chain.bandcamp.com](https://pain-chain.bandcamp.com)

"Hellflower" is the latest single from Pain Chain; a preview of their upcoming split with Ciccatrice. Unlike the name would suggest, sonically, it's a calm moment in the Pain Chain discography. Yes, there are plenty of electronics buzzing, crackling, and otherwise making themselves known, but they're hanging in the back. In the forefront is this splish/splash amalgamation of sounds. It brings in a "set adrift" kind of feeling. Malachite's voice calls to you above the faux sea through song, whispers, and vocal cut ups. With all of the vocalizations layered on top of each other, it's going to take quite a few listens to decipher everything being said. Fortunately, it's well worth replaying.

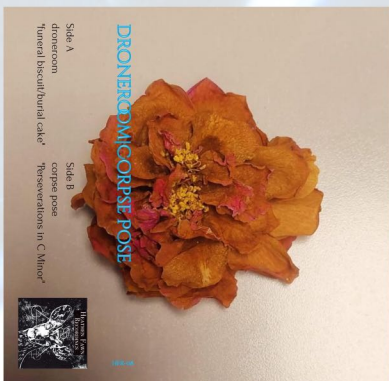


## Chasing Ghosts & Janna Lee

### "Chasing Ghosts & Janna Lee"

June 2024, *Wish Fulfillment Records* | [summerinterluderecords.bigcartel.com](https://summerinterluderecords.bigcartel.com)

This is great collab. Chasing Ghosts and Janna Lee set bare their flesh for the lash on this self titled album. "Descent" is an all around aural assault with blistering, crunchy waves of noise. Janna's vocal, used here more as an instrument, slithers it's way through smoldering heaps of static. "Falling Away" is a complete 180. Gentle metallic percussive rings surround scattered whispers and sultry vocal drones. Dense, but sparse, and I dunno how that works or makes sense but it does... beautifully. "Sadness in Spring" brings back in the heavy walls of static, but you can hear lightly shifting tones and ambiance in the background, fighting their way through. "This Hell Called Longing" begins with Janna's dry vocals, turning prose to poetry. Found objects rattle, patter, and echo in the background whilst they slowly build and ascend. About halfway through, the track goes full noise wall blast with Janna talking, laughing, screaming, and more. A gorgeous, if intense, release. Let's hope to hear more from this pairing in the future! CDs sold out at label, but are still available from the Summer Interlude Records distro.



## Droneroom / Corpse Pose

### "Split"

August 2024, *Heathen Fawn Recordings* | [heathenfawnrecordings.bandcamp.com](https://heathenfawnrecordings.bandcamp.com)

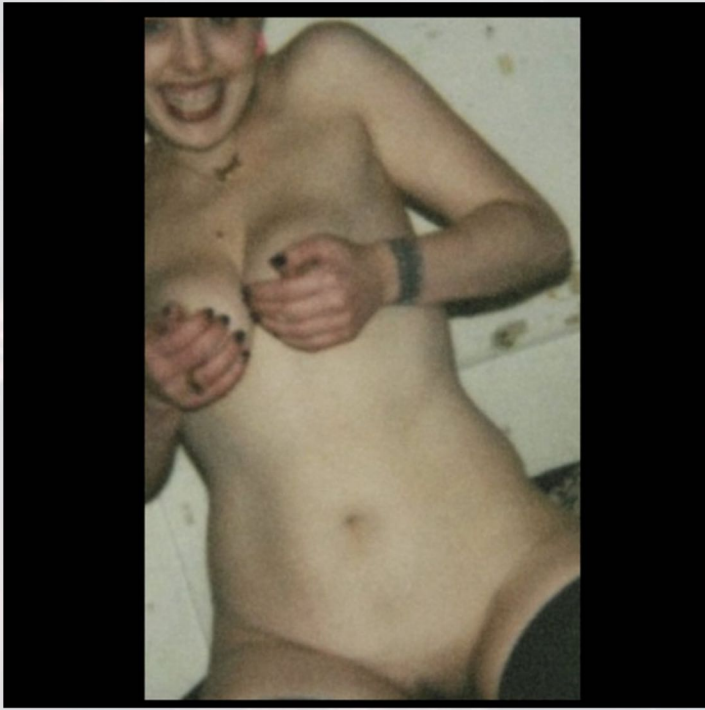
This upcoming split on Heathen Fawn pairs the label's mainstay ambient guitarist Corpse Pose with likeminded, and aptly named, artist Droneroom. The end result is a cool almost southern gothic layered with guitars, drones, samples, and synths.

Droneroom's "funeral biscuit/burial cake" is full of very western sounding guitar jangling. It has that country twang, but don't dare call it country. In the background is an ever creeping drone laying a concrete bed of anxiety. Film samples aplenty.

Corpse Pose brings "Perseverations in C Minor". Gentle acoustic guitars take us is, gently setting us adrift on waves of delay and reverb. Guitar parts seem to struggle against each other when they're not being disjointedly strummed together. Synths provide electronic percussion.

Great C30. Lot's of experimentation by two kindred spirits. Be sure to snatch up a copy when they release!





## **Jhane P.** ***“The Stains of Angels”***

July 2024, EK Verlag | [falsemaria.bandcamp.com](https://falsemaria.bandcamp.com)

Jhane P. is a writer, artist, and one half of the international noise duo False Maria. She's much more than that too, which she gives us glimpses of on her debut solo album “The Stains of Angels”.

There's an urgency immediately with “Damned Women”. A flanged sample of possibly crickets or birds leads us in, with a reversed guitar arrangement that sounds like a panic stricken hurdy gurdy. Jhane delivers her own translation of a favourite Baudelaire poem in mostly steady monotone. The poem, which incited the entire album, declares that she and all the women who bed down with other women are damned. In the same breath, by the album title, she claims that they are all angels. A dichotomy that she says will follow her to the grave.

“Horse Girl” recounts an intensely sexual and emotional experience with a horse riding companion. In the background, fluttering noise and percussive elements join scrapes and high pitched whistling sure to startle your pets. I can't help but catch every “I sucked on her pussy hair...” that floats through the layered vocals. The tryst certainly sounds to have been a favorable, consensual experience for all, but the music refuses to let it feel that way. I'm not even approaching these tracks from a sexual angle and that music's got me feeling like some creep in a trench at a seedy video store. Undoubtedly exactly what Jhane was going for.

Riding the discomfort train comes “Paraphilia”, with it's looped moaning. Samples pop in from all angles... are they laughing? Are they crying? This made me more weirded out than Whitehouse's recordings of kids splashing in bath water ever did. This one... shivers right down the spine.

“From 5:30 to 7:30” consists of cut ups of voicemails left for Jhane by a lover. Her voice tender, shy... very gentle.

I don't speak french, so it's difficult for me to make out those parts, but I'm told she's essentially asking for Jhane, whom she assumes is still sleeping. In her submission the girl refers to Jhane as Mommy. The sweeping metallics left me very uneasy while listening... like someone was going to come up behind me and... do I dunno what, but I knew I didn't want to find out.

“Sara Floyd “ starts with the clicking of old rotary phones. Buried deep is an acoustic guitar, very gently and exhaustedly strumming. Jhane recounts experiences with Sara; her baggy tshirts, the smell of her shower, the feel of her bathroom tiles, kissing her upon her eyelids, the suicide pacts left unfulfilled.

“Paraphilia (Reprise)” is every bit the creep factory of it's predecessor. We hear what sounds like a beeping hospital ventilator. Steam like noise flashes accompany pitter-patter clicking. Distressing vocalizations overlap in crisscrossing patterns. What I can isolate, I can't identify (Tears? Laughter? Both?).

As False Maria have done on their debut full length, so has Jhane P. done here. A solid recording loaded with intrigue, sexuality, fear, blistering electronics and, perhaps most of all, uncertainty. How was I supposed to feel about all of this? What does it say about me that I enjoy this? Why am I left so uncomfortable?

I'd say act fast, but EK Verlag is already sold out at the source. Maybe Jhane P. will have copies? Good luck!





## **Cementation Anxiety**

### **“AGNOSIAREIGN”**

May 2024, Black Artifact

[cementationanxiety.bandcamp.com](http://cementationanxiety.bandcamp.com)

Sometimes the band name just simply says it all.

New Jersey’s Cementation Anxiety serves up some of the densest and foggiest ambient music out there right now. We first caught up with them on their magnificent split cassette with Masoller. For this release, it’s ~60 minutes of Kyle Nelson at the wheel showing you all the reasons you should already love him.

“Labyrinthine” starts the album, and lives up to its name. It’s easy to lose track of time and space when you’re in the thick of the track. If I close my eyes, I see myself in a stone labyrinth, gray overcast skies, moss covered walls, thick fog obstructing anything more than a few feet away. Air gusts of indeterminate direction graze my skin.

“Ghosts of Glass” introduces some beautifully strummed and delayed-out guitar work over rolling synths and ascending drone. Crystalline shimmers create an auditory glowing effect. I can’t be absolutely certain, but I think I heard voices calling out from deep within a phantom zone.

“Life is ebbing” | “Nothing is nothing” is immediately more sinister in feel. Your anxiety levels, which were previously fairly stable, are now spiking quite hard. There’s harsher elements below the dense ambient beds, slowly clawing their way up. With about a minute to spare, gently plucked guitar rings through the air as the density dissipates into nothingness.

“The Only Faith You Ever Had” is akin to a warm bath to these ears. Makes me think of something Eno might have done in the mid to late 70s.

“Mimesis” continues the overall sonic theme, but more fragments of noise and distortion are pushing their way to the surface. The word “torrential” comes to mind, but not wet; dryly static with hot, singed edges.

“Nausea” puts us in some sort of windy cavern or tunnel. Slightly warbling bass cushions the bed. Breathily bursts of flowing air dance and dirge before fading into the next track, “Waking Warmth”, which builds upon the previous with ascending synths, dreamscape delays, and a genuine sense of newfound hope that a breaking day and a ray of light can provide. The analog chorus that greets us before the fade is the cherry on top.

Guitars return for “Mirage Beside”; at first jangly strummed and then delayed, echoed, and enraged. Concrete dense walls of layers and layers of reverberating guitar work; power chords mash against massive drones and wailing tones. The tracks slows down just long enough to disarm before rebuilding itself as a cannibalistic sandstorm of increasing noise density, concluding in a flash. Glorious!

Closing out the album, “Reachless Within” tip toes through many of the sonic themes we’ve heard play out. Ambient washes, reverbed guitars, slightly offset air bursts. Finally, a discernable human voice calls out from the aether in what sounds like the form of a crackling cellphone voicemail sample. I can’t make out the words, but their tone both gentle and firm. An affirmation? A warning? Before I can crack the code, the track fades to only low humming static and abruptly ends.

A great, dense, ambient drone experience. I struggle to find a better description, honestly, as it feels very aggressive... like maybe the washed out beds we’re laying on are just what’s leaking out of the cracks of a soundproof box? Like there’s an underlying force desperately trying to decimate you with extreme prejudice, but they’re muted by some kind of dampening shield. Whatever it is, it’s good stuff that to these ears is unique to Cementation Anxiety’s sound. Go be the guy in the Maxell Tape commercials with “AGNOSIAREIGN” blasting from your speakers and thank us later. Cassettes, which are still available, look really nice, too!





## Trans Power

**“Vol. II: Trans Revolution Now!”**

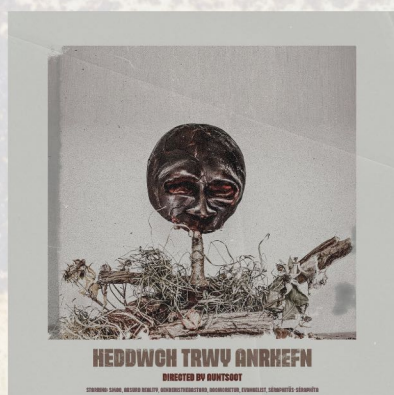
October 2023, Drama Recorder | [dramarecorder.bandcamp.com](http://dramarecorder.bandcamp.com)

Trans Power is the noise project of London, UK artist Jacquie S. On this second volume from the project, released on Drama Recorder (Spain), Jacquie brings the pain with screeching walls of sound. There’s also plenty of space for abstractions, minimalist experimentations, clips, ear piercing high frequencies, and more. Politics are delivered quite clearly in the albums visuals and track titles; there’s no mistaking the meaning of the pounding PE of “Gas in the Face of the Transphobic Disgrace” or the distorted bullhorn blasts of “Hand Over Our Trans Rights Now!”. Digital edition offered as “name your price”. Cassettes were long sold out at the label, but the artist has a few copies left! If you contact them on IG (@trans\_power\_and\_miss\_world\_) you may be able to score one.

## Auntsoot

**“HEDDWCH TRWY ANRHEFN”**

May 2024, Beyond Death | [beyonddeathrecordings.bandcamp.com](http://beyonddeathrecordings.bandcamp.com)

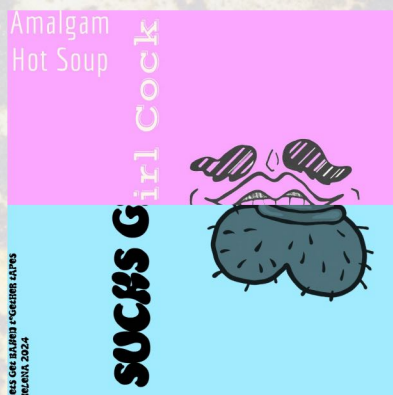


The latest from France’s Auntsoot showcases the artist in constant collaboration; presenting the double album as though it were a film he’s directing and starring artists like Gender Is The Bastard, EVANGELIST, Absurd Reality, etc. There’s a lot to digest in this 140+ minute beast. “Wendigowak” with Gender Is The Bastard is a refracting, slowly building dark ambient piece that folds over itself. “Nocturnale” has beautifully gentle, lulling ambient guitar before breaching into what I believe to be extremely distorted field recordings with a dense ambient bed; themes that carry into the collab with smog, “Le chants de baleines II”. Absurd Reality’s collab piece “Der Weg nach Atropos” is cavernous, crystalline, and riddled with squirming, anxiety inducing electronics. God, there’s so much here. Head over to the artists music page ([auntsoot.bandcamp.com](http://auntsoot.bandcamp.com)) to hear the full record, grab the digital at your own price, and snatch an extremely limited 2xCS (EU only). US distro handled by Beyond Death Recordings (ask them about getting a physical copy in the US/NA). Essential.

## Sucks Girl Cock

**“Amalgam / Hot Soup” & “Spaghetti Sleeves / Rising Bread”**

May 2024, Let’s Get Baked Together Tapes | [sucksgirlcock.bandcamp.com](http://sucksgirlcock.bandcamp.com)

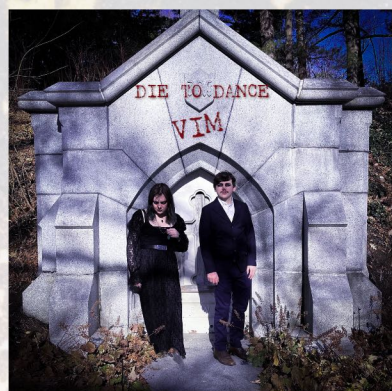


Here we have the first two cassettes from Montana’s conservatively named Sucks Girl Cock.

“Amalgam” is a straight forward HNW that immediately establishes it’s sonic ferocity and holds it for 5 minutes without relenting. “Hot Soup” is a bit more playful, with audio samples of the worst president in US history talking about protesters throwing cans of soup at police officers (since bricks are too heavy), flanged feedback, and percussive samples.

“Spaghetti Sleeves” brings awareness to human needs over what sounds like a spinning projector wheel and wet hot slew electronics. Gave me an early Vagina Dentata Organ vibe. “Rising Bread” brings the oven heat feel with droning tones, crackling static, and what sounds like engines in various state of rev.

Don’t see tapes for sale, but you could always ask for them! Digital is readily available.



## Vim

**“Die to Dance / The Killer”**

February 2024, Self Released | [vimsmusix.bandcamp.com](http://vimsmusix.bandcamp.com)

Boston’s Vim brings back some of that electroclash feel on their second release. “Die to Dance” is minimal electro that I could see being thumped during the DJ Hell/Gigolo Recs dancefloor explosion of the early 2000s. It’s got an ass shaking groove, frigid synths, and call outs every goth-infused club head can get behind.

“The Killer” is more of a slinky, sultry vibe. It has that sparse bass pattering coupled with rapid synth hits that give off paranoia. You’re listening to the duet of predator and prey, celebrating the nightly rituals that bind them. Don’t be tricked by the gentle voice of the prey. They’re every bit as dangerous as our Predator, and they’re oh, so eager to prove it. “This ones for you and I / Living for our dark delight”, they sing in unison. Whose delight ultimately comes out on top remains to be seen. Maybe we’ll find out in the next single.





## **The Steve Walker Project** **“Fucking Weirdo”**

July 2024, Self Released | [on.soundcloud.com/GTefFjSkbFagdJEB8](https://on.soundcloud.com/GTefFjSkbFagdJEB8)

This is fucking fun. Steve Walker has been writing, recording, producing, and more for over 30 fucking years. On this fucking single, Steve Walker celebrates something I consider near and dear to my heart... being a fucking weirdo. Crunchy guitars fucking chug and shred. The drums fucking pound. The vocals remind me of fucking Klayton from Circle of Dust when grumbling, and Jason Miller of Godhead when melodically belting out those fucking notes. Sonically, it leans into fucking Disturbed type metal territory, and the recording/mixing/mastering is fucking flawless. If you wanna take a break from the usual fucking brooding and *break stuff* with your besties, this would make a fucking great soundtrack.



## **C. Ward featuring Carbon Son** **“blind from our wishes”**

January 2024, Stalk Market | [carbonson.bandcamp.com](https://carbonson.bandcamp.com)

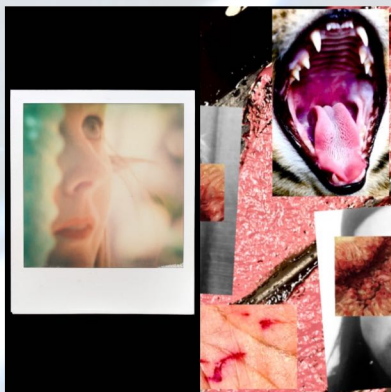
I'm a sucker for these kinds of collaborations. On the insistently lower case “blind from our wishes”, writer/lyricist C. Ward recites poetry, thoughts, feelings, and musing in spoken word style over Carbon Son's constantly mutating electronic stylings. “pegasus syndrome” sounds like the inside of the mind of a person with ADHD (to these ears, anyhow). “fire” serves as a memento mori of our impending doom, as C. Ward explains to us ad nauseum that the world is on fire. “applecore” has a gentle guitar/rhodes neo-folk almost sound. “gestation” turns up the heat with motorized static and rhythmic abrasions alongside descriptions of the miserable lives of malnourished gladiators. Throughout, C. Ward's delivery is reminiscent of Nichole Blackman (KMFDM, Golden Palominos) and Annie Hardy (Giant Drag), and with Carbon Son's excellent electronic and dreary soundtrack, I can't help but think of the late Anna Wildsmith and her project Sow. Modern industrial beat poetry? I dunno, but it's certainly worth a listen.



## **smr.tni** **“UNREASONABLE”**

June 2024, Venalism | [venalism.bandcamp.com](https://venalism.bandcamp.com)

Only just last issue was I turned on to smr.tni, and I've been fortunate to hear, I think, 3 different releases so far? Whatever the number, “UNREASONABLE” recently released on Venalism, is a welcomed addition. smr.tni vocalizes and harmonizes through 6 slabs of concrete static. “Intro” makes me think smr.tni is some kind of Wind Elemental. On pieces like “Devotion” and “Your End”, smr.tni shows they've got a great way of patchworking walls into more palatable and digestible PE slices. “Wahnhaft” jars with the sounds of slashing and scraping knives along with paced vent blasts of noise. Laughing slowly builds and reverberates as the track becomes more and more distorted, unstable, and driven into the red. Another great showing. The cassettes, with their cardboard slipcases, look beautiful, too. Consume with confidence.



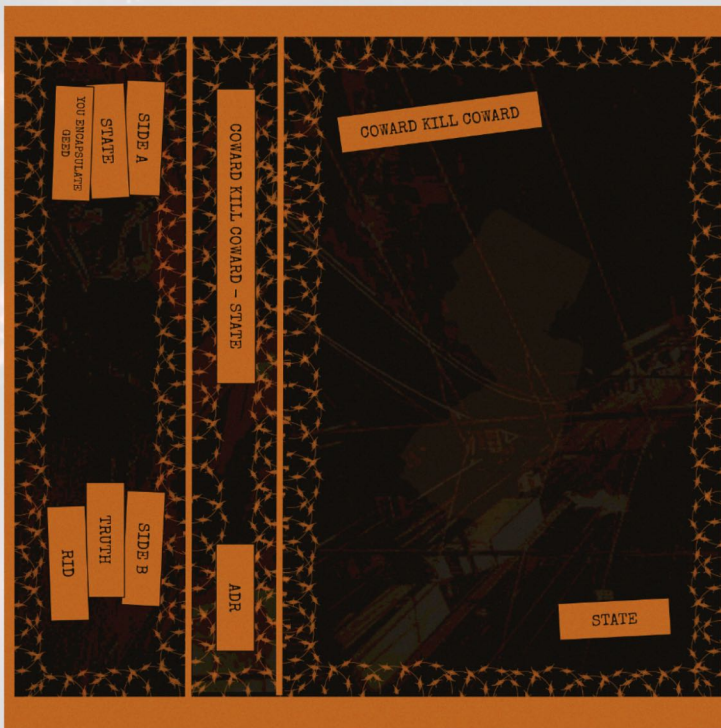
## **Himukalt / False Maria** **“Nothing Will Come Of Nothing”**

July 2024, Constant Existential Crisis | [constantexistentialcrisis.bandcamp.com](https://constantexistentialcrisis.bandcamp.com)

Here we have another limited edition False Maria release, but this time the duo share space with Himukalt, who are providing the other side of this lathe cut 7”.

False Maria bring “With a Mind Full of Love and a Heart Full of Hate”. False Maria aren't pulling any punches as they let worthless exes know exactly how little they think of them and their bullshit, and exactly how in control they have been the entire time they were trying to manipulate them. Delicious! Sonically, Tomasz C. is bringing the death industrial, but wisely holds back just enough to let Jhane's voice shine. A guest spot from Matt K. adds some nice guitar to the mix. Himukalt brings “End This Pain”. Sandpaper whirls of noise scour all audible surfaces while a booming thud keeps pace in the background. Lyrically, Esther's reciting criticisms, fictions, sexcapades and other thoughts present on an unearthed recording she had made with an ex lover years ago. This is her way of finally closing that chapter of her life. Another stand out release from both projects; it's just too bad you can't get your hands on it! Maybe there will be a tape or something in the future for mass consumption? We can hope!





## **COWARD KILL COWARD** **“STATE”**

October 2024, Self Released  
[cowardkillcoward.bandcamp.com](http://cowardkillcoward.bandcamp.com)

*“Dear god, please open up every hole in my body and forcefully jam this album inside them. Amen.”*

COWARD KILL COWARD are a self proclaimed Sludge band hailing from central New Jersey. Their mission statement: “Hate be my rifle. Pain be my axe.” On their upcoming full length C40, COWARD KILL COWARD are giving you wild electronic experimentation (tons of stretching and crushing) coupled with Earth/SUNN O))) style droning guitars marching steadily towards oblivion.

First up is “STATE”, the title track. It’s wildly shifting electronics create a fast paced, ever changing *rhythm* which get’s totally offset by slow, crushing, droning guitars. After more than half the track forces itself through with a cacophony of bursting electronics, the guitar, drums, and vocal really kick in. The whole thing feels like... *Blackened Sabbath* (there’s gotta be a band with that name, no? If not, it’s mine!).

“YOU ENCAPSULATE GREED” gives us copious amounts of screeching guitar noise (think early SWANS) between heavy, delayed chugs, pounding drums, and brutal vox. It’s a slow, relentless burn with plenty of sharp tongue lashings for blind consumerism and soulless capitalists.

“TRUTH” pushes the tempo significantly with thickly reverb laden drums, speed riffing guitars, and a bellowing demand for someone to answer for what they’ve done (presumably some unacceptable bullshit requiring penance).

“RID” absolutely revels in its ear piercing feedback and noise guitars while a frantic voice tries to figure out what the intentions of this amorphous person is. They demand to know why violence and mental torment had to be carried out by their hands. “I Would LOVE to KNOW your ANSWER!” repeats with escalating force until the voice just breaks, and then we fade down to the lone voice exhaustedly trying to get out the words, desperate to receive any acknowledgment or reply. It never comes.

This release is heavy in absolutely every sense of the word. If you ever got down to Neurosis, ISIS, Godflesh, and the like, this one’s gonna be for you. This beast doesn’t unleash until October, but you can preorder “STATE” now at the band’s Bandcamp, and get yourself an early download of the grinding ear bleeder “YOU ENCAPSULATE GREED”. Additionally, the band has a couple of releases under their belt you could check out while you wait for “STATE” to fuck up your existence, including their ferocious debut album “NOTHING CAN BE GOOD”.

I highly suggest you get on that mailing list/follow the band on Bandcamp, and that you grab those tapes up the very second they become available. I can’t imagine copies will stick around for very long.

**Essential!**





## ***subservientdominance / Peasant Farm*** ***“Engineered For Oppression”***

March 2024, Love Earth Music | [subservientdominancepeasantfarm.bandcamp.com](http://subservientdominancepeasantfarm.bandcamp.com)

Here we've got a juicy split 12", brought to us by the MA label Love Earth Music (gotta shout them out for the love they put into their releases, and the ridiculously fair prices they charge for their vinyl offerings). subservientdominance is the main noise project of D. Dewalt. For Their side, they bring the full on audio assault. Noise oozing from everywhere, static laden percussion smashing in sparse intervals, and plenty of bubbling and squelching for the whole family (think Dilloway-Era Wolf Eyes). Peasant Farm is the experimental project of Ian Tyler. Their side starts with samples from, I think, a brainwashing/deconditioning seminar of some kind. Warm, sizzling noise comes in, accompanied by vocals distorted beyond the point of simple comprehension. Searing squeals and hot pulsing bass fluctuate in cycles from track to track, until we're left with skittering, crackling pops of noise that dissipate to oblivion. Personal highlights: "Blanket of Pearls" and "Pay The Price". A solid effort.

## ***Stable***

### ***“Empty Gestures”***

April 2024, Venalism | [venalism.bandcamp.com](http://venalism.bandcamp.com) ttt



Stable is the long running project from Venalism founder Andy Brown. On their latest, "Empty Gestures", they're delivering what feels to me like anxiety electronics. "Built Scared" makes me feel like I'm running through some factory, trying to escape some malicious force trying to consume me. Blown out vocals flare up and dissipate like steam from mental exhaust. "There's Always A Cunt At The Front" brings in the chunky, flange laden electronics. If the rapid fire drum machine bass kicks didn't leave me feeling disoriented, the stereo bouncing PE style fuzzed out vocals sure did. The title track continues the theme of rolling thunder percussion. Backing vocal bursts remind me of the types of sounds you would hear emanating outside a church during mass. The percussion builds and builds before ultimately pistoning your face into nothingness. "So Wise" and "Killing With Clean Hands" made me think of late era Whitehouse, and W.B.'s latest project, Cut Hands. "Relief" brings some of what the title promises in the form of a low rumbling ambient bed, but all of the anxiety and impending doom are ever present, and occasionally rise to meet you. Thoroughly enjoyed this one.



## ***Klovis Gaynor & The Urinal Cakes***

### ***“PEACE BE WITH EVERY LITTLE FAGGOT”***

May 2024, Self Released | [venalism.bandcamp.com](http://venalism.bandcamp.com)

This was a nice surprise! Klovis Gaynor & The Urinal Cakes are an incredibly queer quintet coming out of NY. The vibe is one part smoky piano bar, one part glam rock, a dash of cabaret, and a sprinkle of punk sensibilities. Klovis' voice reminds me at times of a sultry Tim Curry, and at other times like a wailing John Nolan. Lush strings and gentle piano arrangements sound like something that could have been written for the debut ANOHNI "Antony and The Johnsons" LP. There's a delicious, although too brief, fuzzy glammed out guitar solo that I just adore. Above it all, lyrics like "god turned me on / that fag made me gay" or "lord come and fuck me / lord rail me hard" ring out with earnestness. Can't wait to hear what the impending album sounds like!



## ***+DOG+***

### ***“Peace”***

June 2024, Love Earth Music | [dognoise.bandcamp.com](http://dognoise.bandcamp.com)

+DOG+ is comprised of seven artists from both coasts of the United States, and I can't imagine that makes recording sessions easy. On their semi-latest release, "Peace", we've got 16 tracks (18 for the digital) of varying experimentation and abrasiveness. I hate to be generic, but this album is a genuine blend of some of your favorite noise and industrial artists. You've got that early analog Merzbow vibe on tracks like "The Glow From The City", "Nowhere & Everywhere" has that *limited to 10 copies* American Tapes sound, and I don't know about you, but I hear Throbbing Gristle in "Willis Lake 2". Now, I'm not saying we've got copycats here, just pointing out these players know their history, and know how to operate in the same realms as those who kicked all of this off. Copies of the album available through Love Earth Music records (they have insanely priced vinyl, and I mean that in a good way!).



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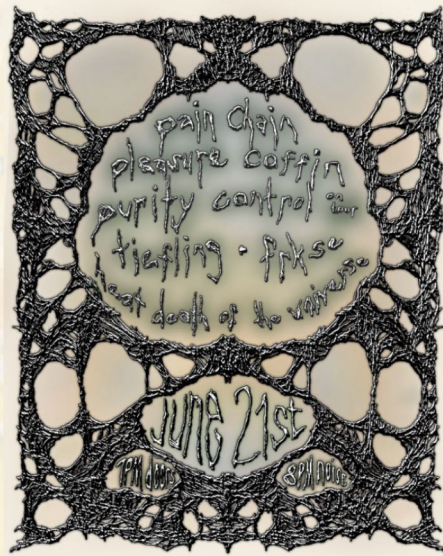
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## PERFORMANCE



Poster by Purity Control

**Live at Pasta Planet**

June 21st 2024

**Tiefing**

**FRKSE**

**Purity Control**

**Pain Chain**

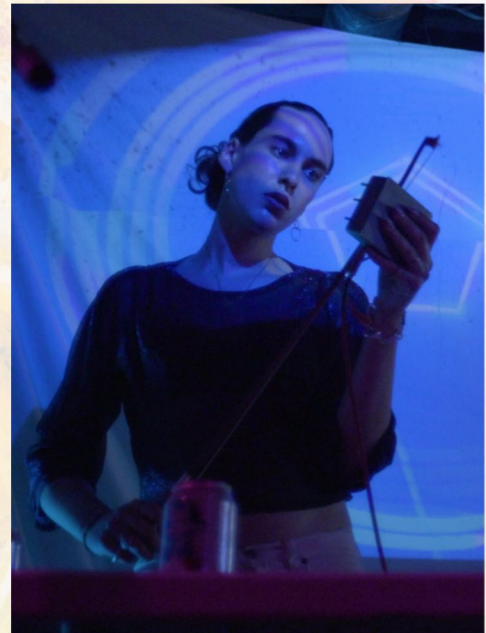
**Pleasure Coffin**

**Heat Death of the Universe**

'Twas a rainy, muggy evening somewhere in the land of Massachusetts, and I found myself attending an underground noise show for the first time in a *very* long time. Before I get into the evenings entertainment, I would like to shout out everyone who was in attendance that evening. I don't think I've ever been in such a respectful group of concert goers in my life. I also want to thank everyone who put in the extreme amount of time and effort to make the venue a cool space and keep it that way. And lastly, a special shout out to everyone who said hi or had a conversation with me, especially Devin and Opal.

### **Set 1 - Tiefing**

Tiefing is a multi genre/multimedia project (they appear on FANE's Queer Noise Terror Vol. 1). This evening, Tiefing brought their Dance/IDM side to get the audience going. Lots of pounding beats with live glitch/warp type manipulations. I struggled to get any good shots, as the dance area filled up quickly, which obstructed my view. The audience pulled in even tighter for the last part of the set, which was a roughly 3 minute ambient noise piece performed with a violin bow. I wanted it to go on forever, but there were 6 acts, only 3 hours for them all to perform, and Tiefing didn't get to start until probably 8:20 or so.



Tiefing (Photo by Veronica Wood)

I do want to give Tiefing some bonus points for *working* the show. They could often be seen tweaking the mixing/sound board throughout the evening, and this may be the first noise show I've attended where I got my face clear melted off, but didn't have my hearing ruined in the process. Sound work perfection!

### **Set 2 - FRKSE**

I really felt for this performer. FRKSE has been doing this for around 15 years, and is one of the creators behind the boutique Divergent Series label. They're no stranger to performance, and they've



proven their chops plenty. However, as Murphy's Law dictates; if something can go wrong, eventually it will.



FRKSE (Photo by Veronica Wood)

The hardware for FRKSE's set completely malfunctioned on them. I couldn't make out what exactly broke (looked like a trapezoid shaped device of some kind), but it was crucial and killed the performance. To everyone's credit, the other performers tried their best to assist, offering gear of their own that might work as a replacement, or trying to resolve the hardware issue, but the issue just couldn't be circumvented in time. FRKSE took it in stride, which is the best anyone can do in that situation. They got my respect.

### ***Set 3 - Purity Control***

Making a tour stop here was Colorado's Purity Control [Editors Note: Do NOT confuse this project with the white nationalist choads of the same name]. At the start of her set, Mabel, the sole engine behind the project, announced "this is going to be different than usual". Cue eerie synths building and swirling, then shifting into moments of complete static bombardment. Mabel's intense screaming, which comes in unexpected bursts, originates from the very pit of her soul; maybe somewhere even deeper. The electronics start pattering static blips, while haunting ambience churns & gargles.

Without warning, everything just exploded into a gabber infused power electronics mosh fest, and the place went absolutely nuts. It was tight, it was sweaty, it was everything a charged up audience should be. People were jumping all over the place, but for the most part everyone was looking out for everyone else (I didn't see anyone fall or get hurt). Mabel mixed in with the front of the crowd, shredding her vocal cords and leading the fray, while the bassy kicks just pounded away.

After a short while, the set shifts back to a more noise/dark ambient style, but with the bass turned way, way up, which strangely gave off a sorta furnace vibe (you can see it make my camera footage wave on the FANE YouTube channel) before coming to a cindering conclusion. I don't know what the usual set is like for Purity Control, but I'm quite glad we got the unusual one.



Purity Control (Photo by Veronica Wood)



#### *Set 4 - Pain Chain*

Malachite, the artist behind Pain Chain, is also one third of the abrasive power/experimental electronics group The Cost of Living, and one of the founders of the Mutual Aid label. Their set begins softly; Their visage covered by a self made collage mask that was giving Phantom vibes (I mean this respectfully). A very light, airy bed of electronics simmers beneath a recording of a speech being given in, I believe, Cherokee. I can't make out everything that's being said, but the few English words that slip through make it clear it's about injustice.

They begin to softly sing in lullaby tones about unjust imprisonment, and the "concrete coffins" we shove people into. The set is then dedicated to their imprisoned loved ones, and to people everywhere locked up in cages. Hard, chunky noise starts to blast out of the speakers. Lots of frequency/pitch shifting coupled with the sound of metal crashing. A no-input mixer(?) shoots laser-esque sound waves which get squelched, bent, and beyond. The vocals turn enraged, with searing synths infinitely ascending into billows of noiseclouds; soft enough for you to sleep, but sharp enough to puncture deep.



Pain Chain (Photo by Veronica Wood)

Slowly, a low-end, gentle, electronic crackling fills the room as everything else fades. Malachite's siren-like voice wraps around us and guides us home to end the set. Felt really good.

#### *Set 5 - Pleasure Coffin*

Pleasure Coffin is the experimental project of Sophia Ré. Most recently on her EP "The Wound is a Gift", Sophia showed off a more hyper-pop influenced sound. Absolutely none of that was present this evening. This was far more of a performance art piece than any kinda pop concert.



Pleasure Coffin (Photo by: Veronica Wood)

A motor like droning hum begins to exude from a collection of electronics kept within a coffin shaped case. Sophia uses her voice to generate sound and emotion more than any discernible language. I can't be certain, but I believe she had contact mics on her throat picking up the vibrations and turning them into ghoulishly haunting wails and cries. At the top of a wheeled metal pole (the kind used for IV drip bags) is a dangling construction light with a single bulb. The light is often moved around and extended above the audience, while Sophia hobbles disjointedly about the front of the room.

Assisted by Malachite, who helped control the IV Pole and light, Sophia moved all through the dense crowd, mummifying herself in thick, black, fabric straps fed from a spool hanging on the IV pole. All the while, just completely unsettling child like whimpers and cries expel like phlegm out of her choking throat. It's the kinda thing that gets the anxious "fight or flight" going.

Eventually, the light had to die through a ritual involving syringe delivered thick dark fluid (paint?) that slowly encompassed the surface of the bulb until it was smothered, and the light inside it dead. In a word, the set was haunting.





### ***Set 6 - Heat Death of the Universe***

Oh boy...

Heat Death of the Universe is the current main creative project of former THRESHOLD associate Opal (aka DJ Buttsex, et al). Before anything starts, an announcement and trigger warning is given; The performance is going to contain needles, blades, references to self harm, lots of blood, and, to quote the artist, *“a really great pair of tits”*. However, we’re informed that what we’re about to see will be hard to watch, but it is insisted upon that those who stay do not look away. The exhibition we’re about to witness is titled “Solstice”.

Following the warning, we are told *“Heat Death is about one thing, and one thing only; the radical visibility of the trans body.”* Further, we are highly encouraged to take photos, record videos, etc., and post them wherever we like. If we are uncomfortable posting the media we recorded, we’re asked to send it to the artist who will post it on our behalf. After a moment to allow people to leave, everything is put in place. A tarp was carefully set down in the middle of the room; a rolled up towel to serve as a makeshift pillow for her head. The crowd closely encompassed the tarp, which has now become the main stage.

It all begins with a slowly building, droning, mid frequency tone. Opal, who has now been stripped down to just her plain white panties, walks through the crowd and lies down on the ceremonial tarp. Samples of children recalling various happy memories, coupled with messages of support from parents, start to form a possible narrative of the subject’s life.

Liz, who is an organizer within the local queer scene, begins to pierce Opal’s forehead with needles, forming a sort of “crown of thorns”. In addition to being an organizer, Liz is also a trained medical professional who volunteered to administer everything safely, using only brand new, sterile sharps, etc. Everything looked 100% professional and completely above board to me.

The droning tone begins to take a darker shape. Negative, intrusive thoughts play over samples of surgical instructions. Needles are continually pierced through the skin around her collarbones, forming a wide neckpiece. Three incisions are made in Opal’s chest, which are then covered with a cupping device to draw out blood. We hear her voice come through from the void; “I just want to feel clean. I just want to feel clean.”



Voices are now clashing, talking over each other about themes of disappointment and failure. Suddenly, a strong, clear, repeating “you are forgiven” begins to come forward. Buried electronic flickers, the laughter of parents, words of encouragement and discouragement bubble about. “You are forgiven” repeats. Needle by needle, almost 40 in total are administered over the course of about 12 minutes. Court/Prison interview samples of people questioning what being put to death will be like dominate the narrative. In a lot of ways, we are indeed witnessing an execution.

“If you want to kill yourself, remember that I love you” is delivered in a sing-song manner by what sounds like a room of young people, with the word “kill” occasionally being swapped out for “cut” or “hurt”. We’re implored to “do it for the living, and do it for the dead”, over and over. This is clearly some type of recovery mantra. Opal slowly sits up, and Liz begins to remove the various piercings making up Opal’s crown. As she does this, blood starts to pour from the small holes in the skin on Opal’s forehead, racing down the smooth angles of her face. Liz hastily, but expertly, removes the remaining piercings and the cupping device. Opal’s voice starts to bounce around the space through the speakers, asking of us all... “don’t look away.” At this point, I don’t see how anyone in attendance possibly could. “Blood” is chanted, over and over; tensions are rising quickly, and then it breaks.



*Blood Pours from Opal’s Wounds* (Photo by Veronica Wood)

Quietly, “Du Gamla” by Håkan Hellström begins to fade into the ambient mix as the original backing tracks of “Solstice” fade out. “Du Gamla”, if you’re unfamiliar, is essentially a sample of an older woman singing what sounds like a religious folk song. It’s genuine, it’s pure, and the woman puts her joyful heart into it. Opal stands and starts to make very careful motions along to the song; her face red with blood, her lips mouthing the words.



*A Brief Connection* (Photo by R. Ferent)

She turns in my direction, and we lock eyes for about a second; My eyes desperately trying to tell her that I’m here with her, not that she needs me. She gives me a gentle smile, and continues slowly moving around the room to the swing and sway of the singing coming out of the speakers. After about 2 minutes, Opal returns to the floor and grabs Liz, burying her face into the nape of Liz’s neck. Here, Opal finally cried, letting out all of her emotions, while the voice from the speakers sang: “Hush lil’ baby / don’t you cry / you know your momma’s been born to die / Say’s my soul got a seat up in the Kingdom / That’s all right”. It took everything I had to not just start full on ugly crying.



This was unlike anything I've ever experienced at a noise performance, or anywhere else really. I can only think of a single time in my life I was moved this much by a performance. An absolute surrender and transformation, right before your very eyes. The artist who first laid on the tarp was not the artist who rose from it. Shame, guilt, trauma... all of it flushed out in a wash of literal blood, sweat, and tears. A genuine reclamation of body and mind.

On the way home, sitting in the back of a rideshare, I stare at the moon. It's full and bright, with thin clouds seemingly embracing it. I feel privileged to have been able to bear witness to the events of that evening. I will never forget it for the rest of my life.

Support, and respect, your local queer noise scene. Yeah, you might get your face gloriously melted by static supreme, but you might have your entire life positively, and irrevocably, changed too.

---

For more information about the artists:

**Tiefling:**

@tief.mp3 on IG  
tiefling.bandcamp.com

**FRKSE:**

@frkse\_divseries on IG  
divseries.bandcamp.com

**Purity Control:**

@purityctrl on IG  
soundcloud.com/petbud

**Pain Chain:**

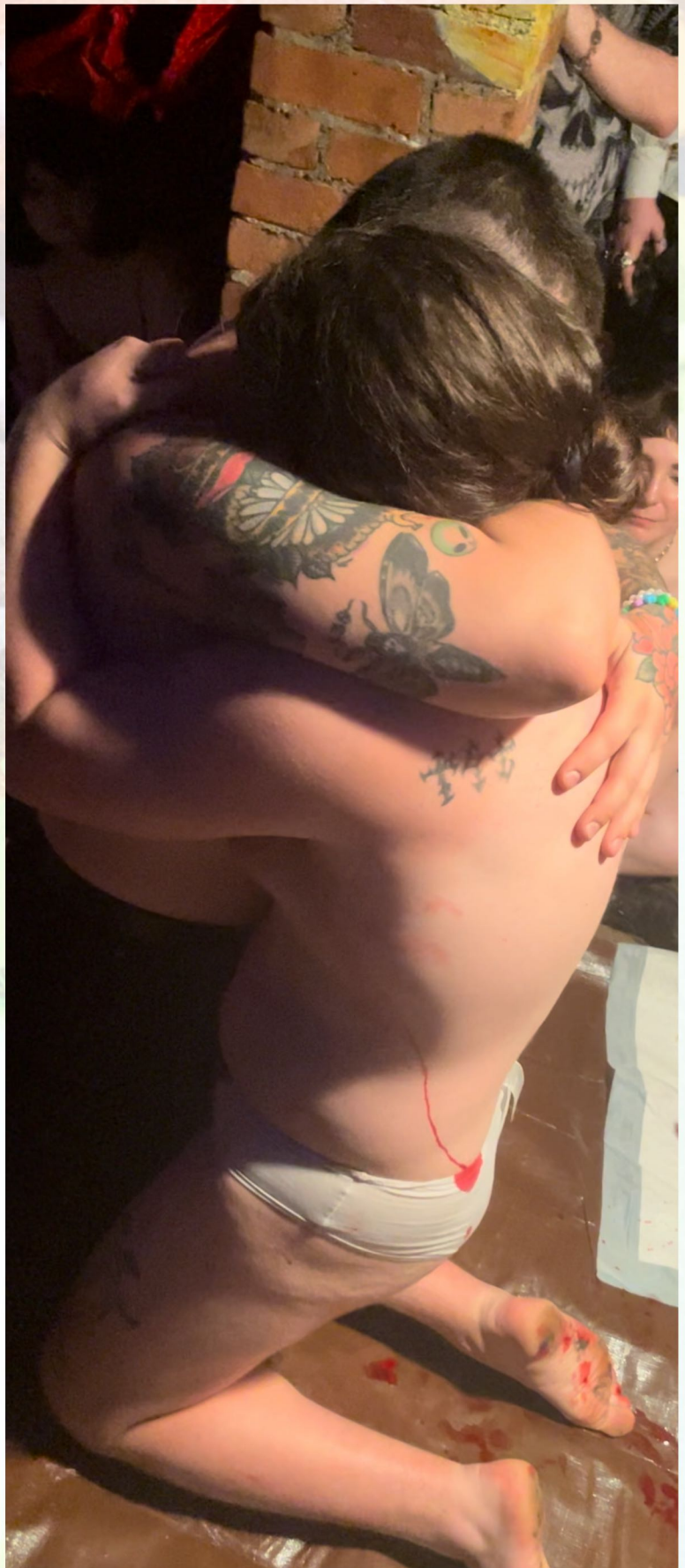
@painchain on IG  
pain-chain.bandcamp.com

**Pleasure Coffin:**

@pleasurecoffin on IG  
pleasurecoffin.bandcamp.com

**Heat Death of the Universe:**

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heatdeathoftheuniverse.bandcamp.com



*Opal and Liz, Embrace (Photo by R. Ferent)*



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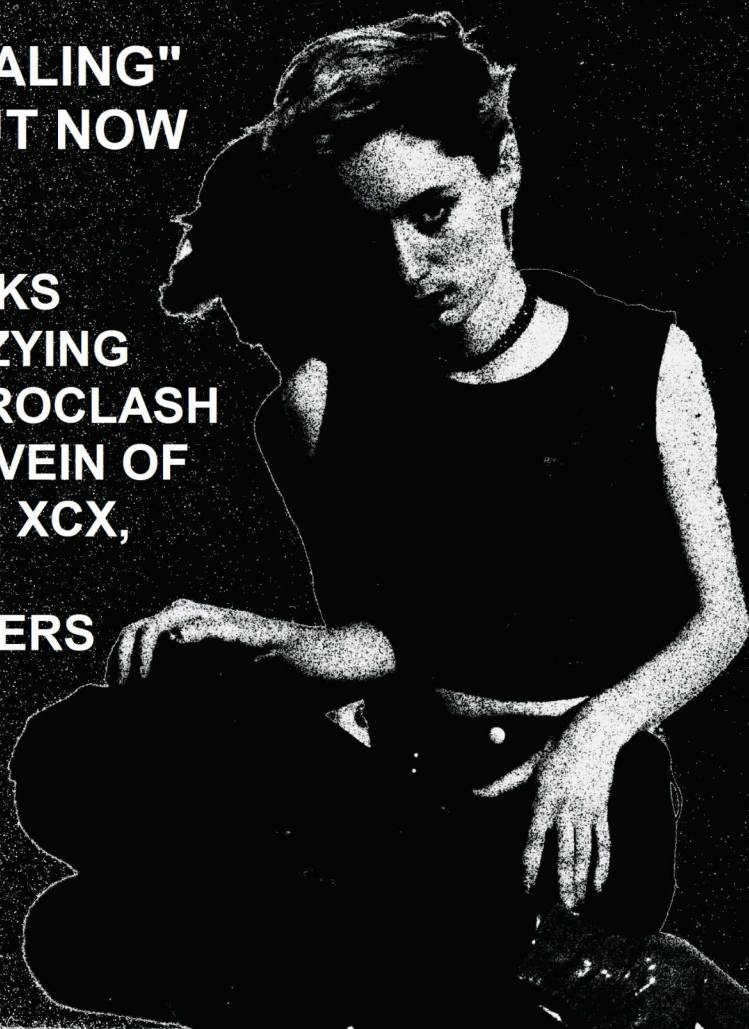
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COMPACTOR

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CRUELTY PIT

DEAD DOOR UNIT

DEFTLY D

+DOG+

DYING IN SPACE

ELKA BONG

E.O.C.

ERIC BAYLIES

FARRAH FAUCET

FEDERICO BALDUCCI

FLESH SHUDDERING

GLUCK GLUCK

HOT TAG

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