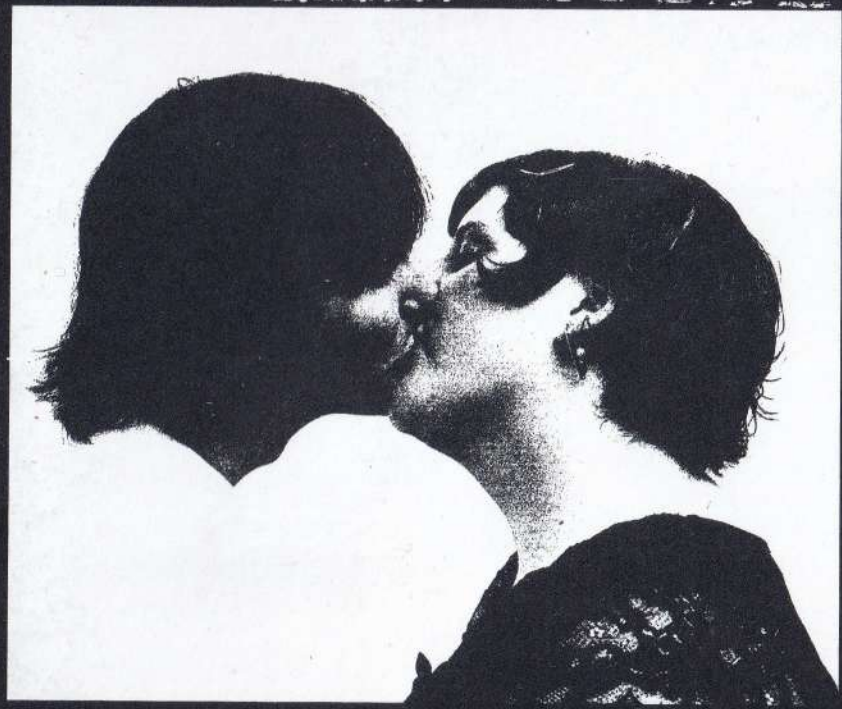


my little underground

issue #4

cease to exist



swirlies

ex pilots

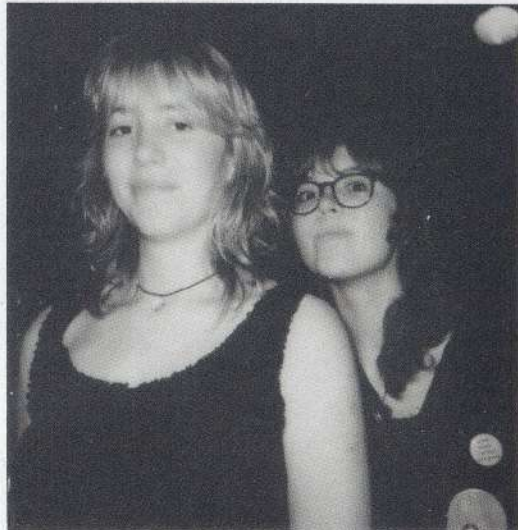
magnetic fields

heavenly



#083

ZINE BY:  
SHANNON MCMAHON



~~JUNE~~

JULY 2024

"I love getting old.

I think it's hilarious

that in some ways I've

become part of the establishment."

- John Waters



Dear Reader--

TICKET

835399

MME INDUSTRIES

Last year, before I left NYC for the winter, I watched Sean Price Williams' film "The Sweet East". Immediately, it stirred in me a strong desire for a change of scenery. Or at least, that's what I'm telling my mom to account for the hundreds of dollars I spent on bus tickets in the past few months. I ended up finding myself in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Delaware, New Jersey, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. I dedicated this semester to changing up my routine and to seeing as much of the world as I could. Life is rad. Brooke, Alex, Mandy, and I started playing a few shows together as Dogtooth (@dogtoothdogtooth) and we have a few more coming up in July! Hopefully we'll record something in the fall. STATIC released our first print issue in May after years and years of hard work, so, go buy one! & along the way, I was able to interview some wonderful people and a few personal heroes too. This may very well be the most meaningful issue yet. & we're half-way through now. I hope you enjoy your summer (and fall, at that). I'll see you again in the winter.

See ya!

Shannon



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R.I.P. STEVE ♥

ALBIN!

for her. And then  
all she's got to do

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YR SELF IS STEAM



# PuNkS Guide To BaLtiMoRe

In January, I started reading Shock Value and visited the "Pope of Trash" exhibit at the Academy Museum in LA and fell down a deep, deep rabbit hole of everything John Waters.

The first of his films I ever saw was Serial Mom when I was seventeen. It's like it flipped this switch in my brain- Ah yes! Movies like this are exactly what I should be watching...I developed this taste for campy, abandoned, edge-of-town suburbia flicks and became obsessed with everything from Gummo to Nowhere to Pink Flamingos to Brain Damage. Three years and hundreds of trashy art films later, I think my favorites of his have to be Desperate Living and Female Trouble. But for me, it was always less about the movies themselves and more about the production behind them.

In February, Amelie and I took the bus pilgrimage to Baltimore to see Divine's grave, various filming locations, and other Dreamland-related spots. If you ever feel like visiting the site where Divine ate dog shit or you just want to take a day trip to Maryland, here's everything we did:

We began our journey at Port Authority at 8am on a Monday morning- I wouldn't recommend that part- but an early start is a must. Our Peter Pan bus took us about two-and-a-half hours including a quick pit stop in Delaware and spit us out at Baltimore's Downtown Bus Station. From here, you can either take more buses (the charm city circulator, only five bucks will get you a day pass to ride around as much as you want) or you can do what we did- spend the excess amount of Uber gift cards given to you by your parents over the years for seemingly no apparent reason until that very moment. Our first stop was:

## Celebrated Summer Records

Other than the strange organizational style (Machine Gun Kelly and T. Swift were in the indie rock section?), it was a pretty alright establishment. It's walls hosted hundreds of 1970-80s punk show bills and setlists, signed memorabilia, and original records and posters. I snagged a couple of free zines from the front and after a quick walk-through we moved on next door to John Waters' favorite (and mine!) book & zine shop.

## Atomic Books

I could've spent an entire day at just the front of the store which housed hundreds of locally made zines and a slew of zines from the eighties thru the early oughts-all at the original price tag. I left with ~~X~~ postcards of Divine and John, Robert Mapplethorpe, and Debbie Harry, a fanzine titled "for the love of Cookie Mueller," a copy of issue #2 of "CASH FLAGG" a fanzine about movies from 2004, and a split zine "WhiteBread" issue 15/ "CLUNKER" issue 4, a zine made by two brothers sometime in the late 90s, all for twenty bucks! If you ever find yourself in Baltimore, make sure you find yourself here.



### Roosevelt Community Park

Another fun place around the corner from Atomic... Covered head to toe in graffiti + skatepark + huge open field of grass and trees—it's awesome.

### Divine's Grave

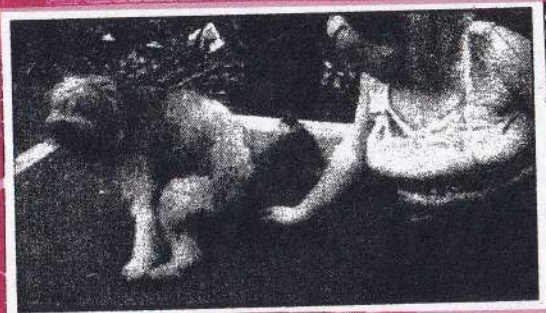
You'll have to travel a little outside of Baltimore into the neighboring town, Towson. The cemetery is across the street from a shopping mall. Enter at the top and walk down to the very bottom to find Divine and pay your respects. Look for a tombstone with lipstick kiss stains and painted stones lying next to it.

### Divine Mural:

Located at 106 E Preston St.

Where Divine ate dog shit in Pink Flamingos:

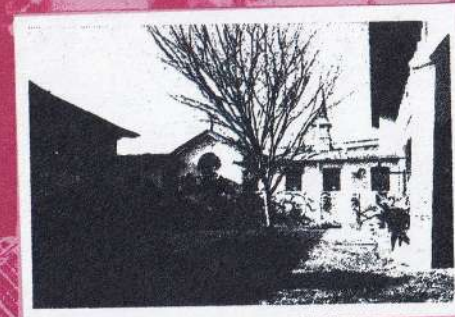
The corner of West Read St & Tyson St!



Amelie & the Divine mural



Me with ice Cream from Baltimore in A box...



corner of the park



Divine's grave



Amelie outside Atomic Books!



## slideaway festival



damon tutunjian



me and brooke and le liberty bell

damon tutunjian



march ninth

If you're an avid reader of this zine, it should come as absolutely zero surprise that I am a fan of shoegaze. Or at least, I was. From around the time that I was a senior in high school up until about a year ago, it seemed like all of the most exciting up and coming bands fell under the subgenre. TAGABOW, Hotline TNT, Wednesday, feeble little horse, Sword II, etc.—these were (and still truly are) the bands who were pushing the limits of modern indie rock. This uprising of new bands and their newfound success of course then opened up the floodgates for 1) All of the bands who originally pioneered the genre to come crawling back into the limelight (and often, making new, not very good albums—I won't name names.) and 2) cause every person with a guitar, an effects pedal, and a dream to record some of the most banal music the genre has ever seen (again, I won't name any names...) which effectively killed any regard I had for shoegaze as a whole. It made me realize that maybe you *can* have too much distortion. Everything that once felt innovative suddenly soured with the oversaturation. I toted the phrase 'shoegaze is dead' (whilst wearing a my bloody valentine shirt) everywhere I went, far and wide. I went to a Have A Nice Life concert and thought it was the worst thing I'd ever seen. I listened to nothing but hardcore and post-rock for three months. I scoffed at teenagers in Duster t-shirts. Surely I was better because I liked it three months ago. But then, Slideaway was announced— a festival hosted by the band Nothing celebrating all things shoegaze. The show boasted a lineup with Knifeplay, TAGABOW, Mint Field, Glixen, lovesliescrushing, Astrobrite, and the Swirlies. For about forty dollars and the price of a round trip bus ticket I immediately caved and forgot about any opinion I ever claimed to have. "Shoegaze is still dead! But this is my last hurrah," I told everyone...likely story. I dragged Brooke to Philly with me and we made a weekend out of it, visiting the Edgar Allen Poe house, The Liberty Bell, The Magic Gardens, and the Franklin Museum (highly recommend all btw). By the time we finally found ourselves at Union Transfer, I dragged my feet through the door only to find Knifeplay on stage and my love of jangly guitars, dreamy vocals, and pedal boards restored, just like that. Brooke said they were like the shoegaze Big Thief and I have to agree. I think what really worked for most of the bands on the lineup was that they used shoegaze sensibilities to rework other genres and to this day I find that the most interesting way to sonically utilize the influences that shoegaze brings. Seeing lovesliescrushing was also something that fifteen year old me would never imagine happening and I was pleasantly surprised. They were kind of like This Mortal Coil if they turned the gain and reverb to eleven. It would have been nicer if people weren't talking throughout the entire set. They Are Gutting a Body of Water were as amazing as ever too, it was my fourth time seeing them. They are one band I will never not back with all the love and support in my heart. There are very few bands who hold up an entire scene upon their backs like pillars in the way that TAGABOW does. Another standout was definitely Mint Field who I had never heard of prior to the festival. It can become pretty easy to get lost in the American and European scenes that it's easy to miss out on bands like them from Mexico City! Seeing the Swirlies also felt like completing every item on a bucket list all at once. Growing up going to the Taang! Records store (don't go there! evil, evil record label and overpriced records!) in Hillcrest, the Swirlies were *the* band for me throughout my teenage years. I think everyone needs to see Tall Ships live at least once for their life to be worthwhile. Brooke and I got to speak with Andy Bernick, the bassist, before the Swirlies went on stage and asked him a few questions which you will find when you turn this page!



Shannon and Brooke talk to: Andy Bernick of the Swirlies...

Q: We read in your bio that the band depends on "sacred symbols" – the ostrich, the number 11, and the one who speaks abstractly on recordings. What do these symbols mean and what do they represent to you? We also saw that you said these symbols didn't prevent "the curse." What is the curse?

A: There's a lot of silly things on there. Those became elements, artwork... some of them were just random. The ostrich is a photo that my uncle took in New Jersey when he was at a wild animal farm that we ended up putting on the artwork and then every one need to have an ostrich on it. We've had a lot of bad luck and bad choices. First and foremost the label we signed to, Taang!, was terrible to us. They don't even speak to us anymore. I think it started then.

Q: There are a lot of bands from the 90s that have faded into oblivion but the Swirlies remain a constant pillar in independent music. What keeps you going after all of these years? When you first started in the band did you ever imagine you would end up at somewhere like this festival which is celebrating a genre you essentially helped to pioneer?

A: So Damon and I went to high school together and when we went to college I went to Rhode Island and he went to Boston. He formed the band then with Seana Carmody. About six months later or so I joined on bass. The two of them were playing with this punk group Rusty Nails and then they kind of splintered off. We were nineteen when we started it. You don't really think about how long something is going to last when you're nineteen, you know, we were just doing it. We got some luck at the beginning, to an extent. It was just so enjoyable and we kept on going because you know, we were good friends. I've dipped in and out a little bit due to other life things but we've always kept it going. I don't think we would have expected *this*. We played all through the late nineties and early 2000s and there wasn't really a lot of interest. It was always a fringy-type of thing. But the last few years it's been a lot different. This [festival] is probably the biggest surprise. We all still enjoy each other and enjoy making this music. It's just such a rare opportunity to be able to stick around for this long and still be here, and that keeps us going.

Q: What is your favorite song to play and what is one you all will never play again?

A: There's two on the Cats of the Wild record that I really like to play called Rare Moment and Le Bag. There's nothing I'm closed off with, but I'll go on the record and say that Damon refuses to play Pancake. Everyone else is okay with it, he's just being a stick in the mud. He does have certain favorites but he has a few that he will never play again because he thinks they're dumb which is a shame.

VIGILANT ALWAYS  
JEREMY PARKER  
IN HARMONY NEW FOUND  
FREEDOM  
SOUNDS OF SEBRING  
LE BAG  
SUNN  
SAN CRISTÓBAL DE LAS  
CASAS  
TALL SHIPS  
WRONG TUBE



I WOKE UP AT 6 AM ON MARCH 15<sup>TH</sup> TO SILAS SLEEPING ON MY RUG, STILL DRESSED IN THE CLOTHES HE HAD ON THE DAY BEFORE. I STILL STUNK OF SLEATER-KINNEY AT BROOKLYN STEEL. JILL AND TALIA HAD JUST LANDED IN NEWARK, ROWEN WAS NOT FAR BEHIND THEM. WE BRUSHED TEETH AND MADE BEDS AND TOOK THE SUBWAY AT PRINCE ST. UP TO 34<sup>TH</sup>. AT PENN STATION GREETINGS WERE MADE WITH SLEEPY EYES AND FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 3 MONTHS I WAS HELD IN THE EMBRACE OF FRIENDS WHO I'D COME TO KNOW ONLY THROUGH TELEPHONE NUMBERS AND POSTAGE STAMPS. AS WE COLLECTED OURSELVES I DRAGGED EVERYONE DOWNTOWN TO THIS COFFEE PLACE ON GRAND CALLED LANDMARK CAFÉ - DOWN THE STREET FROM WHERE I WAS LIVING AT THE TIME. IT'S A CRAMPED PLACE FOR FIVE. THE TABLES ARE ROYAL BLUE AND CHIPPING AT THE CORNERS. THE CHAIRS ARE CLUNKY, SCRATCHED-UP, AND METALLIC. I ALWAYS ORDER THE SAME THING - FRENCH TOAST WITH SCRAMBLED EGGS, BACON, AND A BOTTLE OF APPLE JUICE. I'D RECOMMEND THE PLACE FOR ANY SORT OF SPECIAL ~~OCCASION~~ OCCASION, BUT ESPECIALLY A BREAKFAST ON YOUR 20<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY. ALTHOUGH RECENTLY BROOKE AND I HAD TAKEN A LIKING TO GOING FOR NO REASON AT ALL. IT'S WHERE WE THOUGHT UP THE HAIR-BRAINED SCHEME TO TAKE A DAY-TRIP TO PROVIDENCE BY BUS, DISCUSSED SEVERAL ~~PRESENT~~ BAD DATES, PLANNED TO BE ROOMMATES, AND STARED IN AWE AT A MAGICAL STRAWBERRY SMOOTHIE (ASK BROOKE TO SHOW YOU THE PICTURE IF YOU EVER SEE HER). BUT TODAY WE WERE ANALYZING THE BOOK COVER OF 'THE ETHICS OF AMBIGUITY BY SIMONE DE BEAUVOIRE (OR SEE - MONE DAY BOO-VIRE... FRENCH IS HARD FOR SOME PEOPLE TO PRONOUNCE) WITH A BALDING SCHOOL TEACHER. JILL THOUGHT IT WAS UGLY, SILAS AND THE STRANGER DIDN'T MIND IT. I WAS TOO BUSY DIGGING AT THE POOL OF SYRUP ON MY PLATE. TWENTY FELT LIKE TOO BIG OF A NUMBER FOR A PERSON TO BE. I FELT TOO BIG TO BE IN THAT TINY RESTAURANT. TOO ~~BIG~~ FAR FROM WHO I WAS AT SEVENTEEN WHEN ALL THESE PEOPLE WHO SAT <sup>SOUP</sup> BESIDE ME FIRST MET ME. NO AMOUNT OF FRENCH TOAST <sup>CAN</sup> CHANGE ANYTHING. I FLOATED THROUGH THE REST OF THE DAY. PAST PROSPECT PARK, PAST UNLIT CANDLES ON STRAWBERRY CAKE. PAST ACORNS FALLEN IN DIRT, PAST MY FAVORITE CHERRY BLOSSOM TREE. PAST BAR ITALIA AT WARSAW, PAST LOU REED SONGS AND CIGARETTES AND PIZZA IN THE STREET. PAST THE LONG ISLAND EXPRESSWAY AND ALL THE ~~SEA~~ TRAIN CARS HEADED TO RHODE ISLAND.



me, twenty, with cake



I DIDN'T STOP UNTIL WE REACHED NEWPORT, EATING BAD SANDWICHES IN A FIFTIES-THEMED DINER WITH CHECKER-TILE FLOORS. I WAS FINALLY FULFILLING THE DREAM I'D HAD SINCE I WAS TWELVE TO VISIT THE BEACH WHERE SAM AND SUZY DANCE TO FRANÇOISE HARDY IN MOONRISE KINGDOM. WE WALKED PAST THE CHURCH WHERE THEY KISS ON THE ROOFTOP (I THINK YOU'VE STILL GOT LIGHTNING IN YOU) AND CAUGHT A RIDE TO FORT WETHERILL. IT WAS A LOT SMALLER THAN I'D IMAGINED IN MY HEAD FOR ALL THESE YEARS, BUT IT WAS ALL THERE, MILE 3.25 TIDAL INLET. THE ROCKS WHERE SUZY READ BOOKS IN HER UNDERWEAR AND THE PAIR JUMPED INTO THE WAVES. I COULDN'T HELP BUT SHOUT "THIS IS OUR LAND!" AS I CLIMBED THE ROCKS TO REACH THE SURROUNDING TREES. IT FELT SO INHERENTLY STRANGE TO FINALLY REACH THIS PLACE THAT HAD COME TO REPRESENT SO MUCH OF MY CHILDHOOD AS AN UNDENIABLE ADULT. MOONRISE KINGDOM FELT LIKE THE FIRST THING THAT WAS TRULY "MINE" GROWING UP. AFTER YEARS OF LISTENING TO AND WATCHING EVERYTHING MY PARENTS DID, MOONRISE WAS THE FIRST THING 12-YEAR-OLD-ME FOUND, AND FELL IN LOVE WITH WITH MY OWN AUTONOMY. IT BECAME A PATHWAY AND A FANTASY I WOULD REVISIT OVER AND OVER AGAIN. AND NOW, I WAS BREATHING THE SAME AIR, WALKING ON THE SAME SAND, SITTING UPON THE SAME, GREAT ROCKS. WE ALL SAT THERE FOR WHAT MUST HAVE BEEN THREE HOURS. I CRIED TO 'TOUS LES GARGONS ET LES FILLES' WHILE JILL WROTE IN HER NOTEBOOK AND TALIA SMOKED CIGARETTES. ~~I TRIED TO IMAGINE WHAT~~ I STARED AT SEAWEEED SWAYING IN THE MURKY BLUE WATER. I STUFFED ROCKS IN MY COAT POCKET AND TRIED TO REMEMBER MY THIRTEENTH BIRTHDAY PARTY. I CURSED MYSELF FOR NOT BRINGING BINOCULARS AND LETTING MY MOM DONATE THE SUZY BISHOP COSTUME SHE SEWED FOR ME WHEN I WAS IN THE SEVENTH GRADE. I HAD ALREADY FORGOTTEN THE SEVENTH GRADE. I STARED DOWN AT THE EMPTY BEACH. I WAS TWENTY YEARS OLD AND FOUR DAYS.

# ex pilots interview



(ex pilots outside mhow from left to right: ethan oliva, mary komondy, mitch delong, andy yadeski, nick boston, & ralph dilullo)

In February, I met the Pittsburgh band, Gaadge, hot off the release of their album "Somewhere Down Below" when they were doing a weekender with a stop in NYC. (You can find my interview with them up on [staticmag.org](http://staticmag.org)!) Soon after, I discovered that all the members of Gaadge also made up another one of my favorite projects, Ex Pilots—the shoegaze band (led by Gaadge's drummer, Ethan Oliva) under Smoking Room who's s/t record was one of my favorites from last year. On March 16th, I caught up with the band as Ex Pilots before they opened up for Cherry Glazer at Brooklyn's Music Hall of Williamsburg to discuss their upcoming record, origin stories, and D&D campaigns... I also brought my friends Talia & Jillian (who were visiting me at the time) along for the ride. You'll come to find that what follows begins as an interview and falls completely into shambles with overlapping discussions on Charlie Brown characters, moral alignments, international women's day and fist bumps, to name just a few topics. We were having a little too much fun. Please note that this conversation has been thoroughly edited for clarity and conciseness...



Shannon: Can everyone go around and introduce themselves and say what instrument you play?

Mary Komondy: My name is Mary, I play the keyboard and I sing.

Ethan Oliva: My name is Ethan, I sing and I play guitar and that's it for live. I do other stuff on the recordings.

Andy Yadeski: I'm Andy, I play drums.

Mitch DeLong: I'm Mitch, I'm a bassman.

Nick Boston: I'm Nick, I play guitar.

Ralph DiLullo: I'm Ralph, I play guitar.

Shannon: Wonderful! A Six-piece band!

Ethan: Yeah, we're actually called Belle And Sebastian...

Shannon: Today is the last night of the Cherry Glazer run. What's been your favorite part of this little tour you've been on so far?

Ethan: Hopefully tonight! So far, though, the Philly show was my favorite. It was just like-I can't speak for everybody- but I was extremely nervous. Because, at least with this band, we have never played in front of this many people.

Nick: Also the show in Boston got canceled. So at the last minute we set up a show at this dive bar, and that was really fun. That was a highlight of the tour too.

Mitch: Yeah it was nice to have that kind of smaller show in between these bigger shows. It was like something we're a little more used to.

Shannon: Earlier, when we were at the WNYU Studio, you mentioned that a new record was in the works and coming out probably in October or November. I was wondering, is it going to be similar to the last Gaadge release where it's a little bit more collaborative than your previous efforts? I also want to know, what song are you the most excited about? And, are there any specific themes you explore on the record?

Ethan: Well, the first Ex Pilots record was just me, and then Nick was on a song and Mary was on a song. In this one, we're all on it. Every single person in the band wrote a song on it. And that's the way it's gonna go forward. So yes, very much like the last Gaadge record. This one's like a lot- I don't know if I would call it darker, but- I got better at using Logic...the program [laughs]...

Mary: Yeah we were taking advantage of our rapper friend, Logic [laughs]. He's been helping and guiding us.

Ethan: Yeah. This record is very uplifting but the sound is a lot more in your face and more traditionally shoegaze, I guess you could say. It's a little bit more Hi-Fi- maybe, Mid-Fi. I am most excited about Mary's song, Dog in the Yard, because that one has some very, very cool dynamics. The verses are just Mary in some quiet passages and then the chorus just kind of explodes. And then the ending is kind of like a juxtaposition of those two things. That's my personal favorite.

Ralph: I'm excited for Glory Thread. We did it over like, a day? We spent like 12 hours on one song... so hopefully it's good! It's the weirdest song I think we have.

Ethan: Yeah, for sure... We haven't told a lot of people about the record yet. I probably shouldn't say the name of it yet- I'll tell you off the record!- But I'm extremely excited for it.

Nick: And this one's also the longest record, right?

Ethan: No, it's about the same as the last record. But there's more songs. There's a couple songs on it where we do the Guided by Voices thing where it's really, really fast punk-leaning indie rock songs and then it's over in a minute and ten seconds.

Jill: I noticed your Guided by Voices shirt earlier and the first thing you said was they are the only band that matters. And I know you were joking, but it felt serious. I was really curious about all of your first introductions to music. I'm assuming Guided by Voices was important to you growing up or at some point, but I would love to hear about everyone's beginnings.

Shannon: Yeah! And more on the impact of Robert Pollard on Ex Pilots.



Ethan: Well, for me, if we're going way back... Weird Al and Pink Floyd. When I was five my dad gave me Running With Scissors by Weird Al on cassette and my grandpa gave me the Pink Floyd Pulse VHS and that pretty much cemented like, okay yeah, I want to make music...When I was 13 or 14 I had been recording at home for a couple of years and I was discouraged because I couldn't afford anything because I was 13. And I was like, "Man, all this stuff I'm making sounds like it was made at home. This sucks and no one's gonna like this." And then I found the Lo-Fi Wikipedia page at school one day and I stumbled upon Guided by Voices and I was like that's the coolest band name ever. So then when I got home that day I listened to Propeller and I was like, "Oh, this sounds like what I'm recording at home. I can just keep doing this." So what hooked me was that sonically, it sounded like what I was able to make myself. And then the bonus was, the band is just that damn good. Ever since then GBV... I don't want to say it's a cult but, if it was an actual cult I would be a proud member.

Guided by voices, pictured here



Mary: I don't even remember my intro to music. I started playing the piano when I was five years old and my teacher was friends with the youngest daughter from The Sound of Music. So honestly, that was kind of my introduction to it. My uncle was a band photographer and had this giant record collection in our basement so as a teenager I would listen to just literally everything. So much stuff. Otis Redding was probably my favorite.

Nick: Not a starting band but when I was in high school I had a radio show at Princeton with my friend, shoutout to WPRB. We were really huge music noobs but most of the music I listen to still comes from doing that show. We would literally just judge a book by its cover and pick out the coolest album covers and start finding which labels we really liked like Teen-Beat and C86 and all that stuff. So, yeah! College radio was how I got into music.

Jill: I was wondering, you know, there's so many amazing artists out there that have secret other creative outlets. Do any

of you guys do anything outside of music that you feel like contributes to who you are creatively? Especially hearing that all of you worked on writing the songs, it would be really interesting to hear where you got inspiration for song lyrics or what around you inspires you or what other creative aspects in your life are interesting to you.

Ralph: I work in film! I do music videos for like every band in Pittsburgh. I did the Ex Pilots video, the one that exists, and then I did a video for [Ethan and Andy's] old band Barlow, and Sober Clones. Not Gaadge yet, but, hopefully we'll do some more with this record that's coming out soon!

Mitch: I've always enjoyed screen printing. A couple years back I got really into that and I was volunteering and working at a shop. And when I'm working on something visual, something will pop into my head like a melody or like a lyric or something like that. So that's always kind of helped out. And it's fun to do show flyers and stuff like that too-

Nick: Also, I feel like the thing that defines this band is that everyone likes to laugh-I mean *everyone* likes to laugh, but I feel like we're really trying to make each other laugh all the time.

Andy: We're silly for sure.

Ethan: Outside of music, I draw a lot. I would love to call myself a cartoonist but nobody sees the stuff that I do. I made the avatar on our Instagram, the smoking bartender, he's got like six cigarettes in his mouth. I love comics from the 80s. I love Bloom County. I love Calvin and Hobbes. I love The Far Side. I also do a lot of collage work. The first Ex Pilots record is a collage I made.

Mary: Writing is definitely a creative outlet for me. I consider myself a collector of hobbies in a way. I like sewing and making stamps- whatever you can do to just get it out of your head and into the world I think is a great thing.

Talia: How did you all meet? How did this band come to be?

Mitch: Four of us are from the same city- We've been playing shows and doing this pretty much since we were 15-me and [Ethan] were 15...

Ethan: Yeah, we met when we were 15 or 16 in just our local scene and it kind of just snowballed. We've all remained friends for a long time. I've actually known Mary the longest out of anybody here. We met in a photography group online when we were 15... This band was originally called Miles of Lace-



Shannon: That's my favorite song of yours by the way!

Ethan: Oh, thank you, thank you!... Yeah, when we realized that's a terrible name for a band, I figured I'd just call a song that instead. But yeah, Summer 95 onfindlayis the first thing [Mary and I] did together and that was before I knew any of these guys. You can hear in our voices we're very clearly 16.

Mary: Yeah! We recorded that in your dad's basement.

Ethan: Yeah I told him about that. And he was like, I don't remember that at all. And I think he had a glass of wine in his hand, so, of course, you don't, Dad.

Andy: Me and Ralph have known each other for an extremely long time. Like kindergarten, second grade kind of thing.

Ralph: You were two or three years older than me in school-

Andy: -I still am!...-and me and Ethan we had a band and we played with Mitch's band, in like, 2011 or 12-ish. And then yeah, and then we met Nick living in Pittsburgh, he came to a show.

Nick: Yeah. My friend Elaine actually introduced us because she knew the three of us were like, huge Guided by Voices fans.

Ethan: Yeah, there's nobody else in the city that likes that band as much as we do. And that's on the record, Pittsburgh!

Andy: Oh, and Mitch? We hired him last week... [laughs]

Shannon: What's the story behind the name 'Ex Pilots'?

Ethan: So I initially wanted to call it Psychic Pilots because there's this Robert Pollard song called 'Psychic Pilot Clocks Out.' I think his best solo song. I love that song so much, but then I thought to myself, that's a little on the nose because we sound so much like GBV. So I then wanted to call it Tarot Pilots, but that does not roll off tongue at all. And then my mom was actually, what about Ex Pilots? And I was like, I love you, Mom. So, I guess my mom came up with the name. I wish it was some crazy story like "oh, we all met in pilot school and we dropped out to do a band that makes no money." But, yeah. It's essentially a dismantled GBV reference.

Jillian: So, I don't know if you guys are this type of nerd, but I have been really wanting to start a D&D campaign...

Mitch: Yeahhhhhh! Ethan: Oh yeah, Mitch is your guy.

Jillian: Oh thank god...If you think about it, your band is kind of like a campaign all the time. Over the summer we're going to Norway and we were trying to make this whole description of what kind of people we would be. My friend, Carter, was like, I would be like the thief, I'm like the rogue, and he's like giving himself this really cool description and then everyone else is like, no, he's a goblin. Yeah, he's a goblin. And yeah, Shannon is like the little creature that's on my backpack. She's very wise and whispers things to me, I know her language and can translate for her, but no one else knows. But this is unnecessary lore...I was wondering if you guys could place each other on this moral alignment scale so we can learn a little bit about every member.

LAWFUL GOOD	NEUTRAL GOOD	CHAOTIC GOOD
LAWFUL NEUTRAL	JUST NEUTRAL	CHAOTIC NEUTRAL
LAWFUL EVIL	NEUTRAL EVIL	CHAOTIC EVIL

pictured above: jill's moral alignment chart.



Ethan: That is amazing... can we go down the line and have all of [the band] rate that member?

Jillian: Oh yes, perfect!

Ethan: Can we start with Mary? because I think we'll probably all pick the same thing... I would say lawful good for Mary just because anytime I do something really stupid she's like... Stop!

Andy: Mary neutral good, I'd say.

Nick: Neutral good feels good, yeah.

Ralph: Can I go for Ethan chaotic evil immediately?

Mary: [laughs] I agree!

Ethan: I'm chaotic evil?

Mitch: I would say chaotic neutral...

Nick: I'd say strong chaotic neutral! He's a chaotic neutral going towards evil...

Jillian: A few episodes of evil...

Ethan: Okay so [Mary is lawful good] and i'm [chaotic evil], that's a good start!

Mary: Andy...

Ralph: I'd say lawful neutral.

Nick: I'd say between lawful and just neutral...

Ralph: He made a prank call the other day so, I'd say just neutral, yeah.

Talia and Jill: He's skewing!

Mary: He's kind of lawful evil, but not quite evil

Ethan: My vote is skew lawful neutral and lawful evil for Andy because in the many years we've known each other, he's a lot more responsible than me. But we laugh at the same jokes... are up to the same pranks-

Andy: I'm known to cause a ruckus!

Ethan: Alright, Mitch!... He's chaotic good.

Everyone: Yeah, chaotic good!

Talia: It's unanimous!

Ralph: Nick is lawful good.

Ethan: I would also say lawful good!

Nick: Oh hell yeah!

Andy: Don't kill me... but i'm going to say neutral good for Nick.

Everyone: Woah woah woah!

Andy: I know that's going to come up later...

Mitch: He has smoked two cigarettes on this trip!

Ralph: I had to say lawful good because he let me stay at his house the week before the tour. It was very lawful. No laws were broken in his house...

Ethan: For Ralph I would say neutral good.

Andy: I would say just neutral... between just and chaotic neutral, for Ralph. Or, I'm back to just neutral for Ralph, I'm sorry.

Jillian: Just to entertain me, could you tell me what kind of character you would be? An elf, a paladin, a troll, or any sort of mystical creature...

Mary: I can answer this question easily. I've been told on multiple occasions that I remind people of a wood nymph so, I think that has to be my answer by default.

Ethan: Can I name my character, but it's not a DND character?

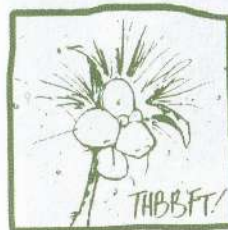
Shannon: Yeah!

Ethan: I'm Bill the cat from Bloom County.

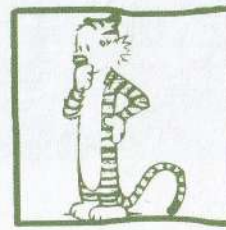
Andy: You're stoopui cannopio! S-T-O-O-P-U-I C-A-N-N-O-P-I-O!

Ethan: [Andy] is Hobbes from Calvin and Hobbes.

Andy: I'm- (pulls up a picture of Andy, Snoopy's sibling in Charlie Brown) His name is Andy!



Ethan



Andy



Also Andy?



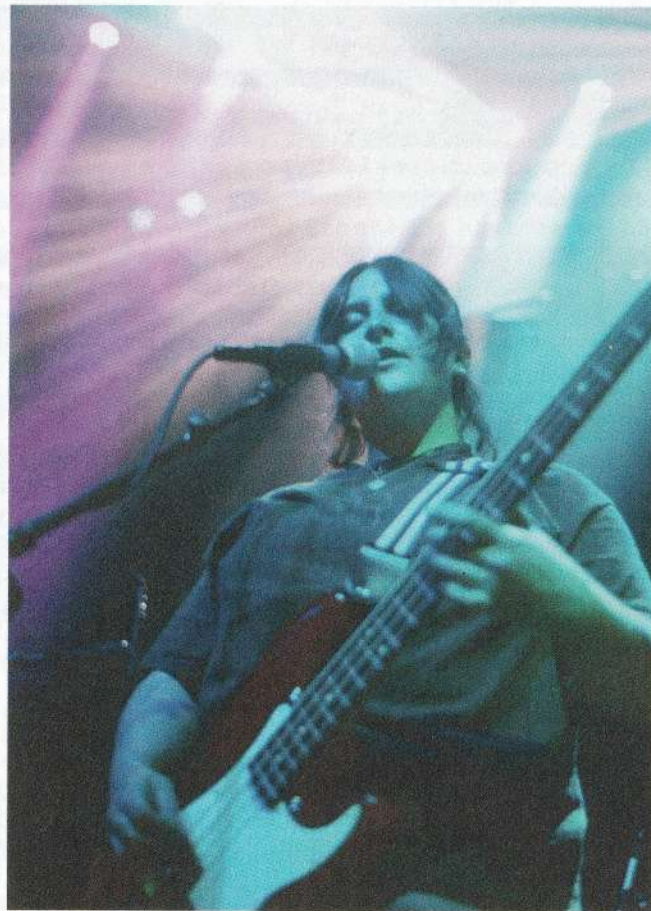
Mitch?

Andy: I was going to say Mitch is Spike. But you haven't showered in a few days... I'm sorry PigPen.

[the interview falls into shambles around here- separate conversations, in depth charlie brown character assignments, international women's day gifts, we were having too much fun with each other.]

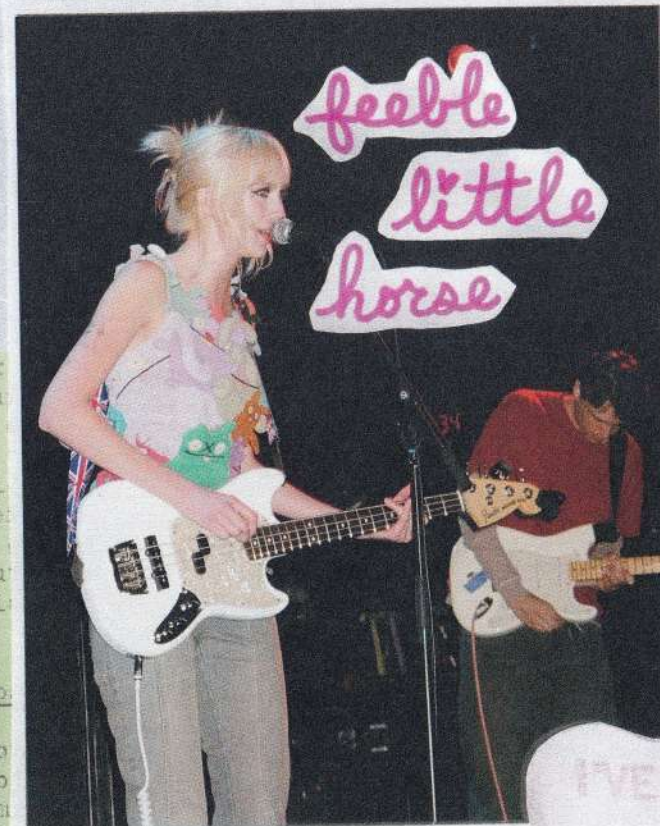


full body 2



April 12<sup>th</sup>  
White Eagle Hall, NJ

"THERE'S SPACE I LONG  
FOR NO LONGER  
FITS ME."  
-2



feeble  
little  
horse

I'VE GOT  
A  
SECRET

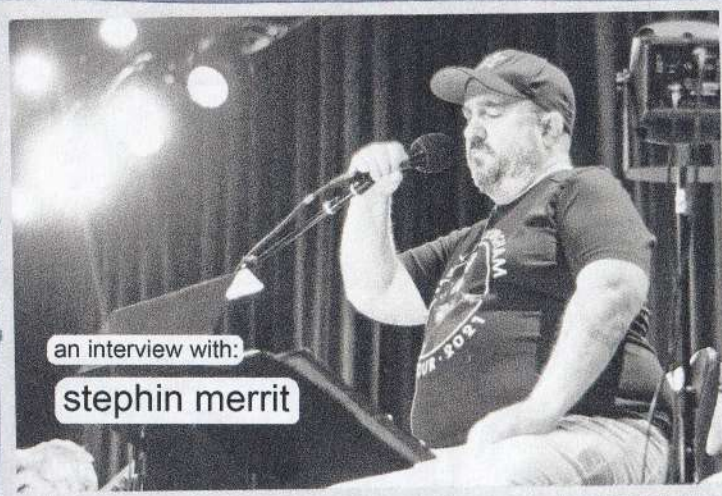
May 4<sup>th</sup>

@ Racket, NYC









an interview with:

**stephin merriit**

**Shannon:** An aspect of 69 Love Songs I really enjoy is the instrumentation and the use of a mix of different analog and low-budget instruments. I was wondering what inspired you to use unconventional instruments and if there's any one of those instruments in particular you feel the most drawn to or find the most interesting.

**Stephin:** Well, the album before 69 Love Songs had one song that I played on ukulele—and it wasn't even my ukulele, it was Claudia's ukulele—and I fell in love with it. So I started using it on lots of 69 Love Songs and it grew and grew. Probably a third of the tracks on 69 Love Songs feature ukulele in some way—even if you can't hear it as ukulele... which I didn't realize at the time was going to cause every journalist in Germany to believe that it was an album featuring badly recorded guitar because they have no idea what a ukulele is in Germany. I featured the ukulele in a way that made the record sound different. I didn't really think of that at the time. That wasn't the point. But, I unintentionally prefigured the ukulele revival. I don't know that I had any effect on the ukulele revival, but it was a big part of my life... well, before the release of the sheet music "Metallica for Ukulele," which happened about 12 years ago.

**Amélie:** Well, yeah, that's another thing too. When I was learning the ukulele. It would go like Riptide and then Magnetic Fields...

**Stephin:** I think that's great. Thank you for saying that I have not heard that before. When Eddie Vedder put out an album of ukulele songs ten years ago, more than ten years ago... the New York Times called me and Amanda Palmer and we were the ukulele experts! We hadn't heard the album yet, but, you know, we know what Eddie Vedder sounds like. I realized that he had this twin fetish of ukulele and typewriters, and that there was an equivalence that he was making with obsolete technologies having their own charm. But now the ukulele is not at all an obsolete technology, it's at least as contemporary as guitar, maybe more, because people no longer think of it as sounding like the 1930s, which it did 25 years ago when I put it all over 69 Love Songs... My grandmother played the ukulele, which I didn't know until I started playing the ukulele. My mother grew up with a ukulele in her household and never played it— and she played, she was a folkie. She learned guitar, nylon string guitar, classical guitar. Which is actually odd because, the Dylan-type folk scene, Greenwich Village folkies, were playing metal strings. But maybe the fact that she grew up with the ukulele made the nylon strings seem normal. The metal strings, you know, they hurt your fingers. They're hard to play.

**Amélie:** 69 Love Songs, is a collection of love songs, and then Fifty Song Memoir, your memoir, and then Quickies is all short. Does having these concepts help you write, or is it just something that kind of comes naturally?

**Stephin:** I think that it works both ways. I have certain songs sitting around. I notice that they have something in common that suggests maybe that it would be a good idea to write more in that type or in that vein. But in between those records, we also did Distortion and Realism and those don't have lyrical themes, they have production themes. Realism is instruments that you would find on a folk album but with no amplification. The rule was you couldn't turn on an amp for the two months while recording the album. On Distortion, everything went through an amplifier except the vocals and the drums because we were using the Jesus and Mary Chain's Psycho Candy album as a template— which in my opinion is the last time anything major happened in music production. So, even when I don't have a lyrical theme, I like to have a central conceit of an album. That said, a perceptive Swedish journalist informed me when he was interviewing me about Realism, that it was a concept album about solitude and I absolutely had not thought of that. All of the songs are about



Solitude. I mean, clearly that's what I was going through on some level. But not really. I had a boyfriend at the time. I was in the middle of moving to L.A. It was a strange time to have released a concept album about solitude. So anyway, the moral of this is that, whatever I do, it's a concept album, even if I don't intend it to be. And I think that would be true of most artists. If you listen to Roxy Music, they sound like Roxy Music for their entire career. What that sounds like begins very clunky and ends up so elegant that on Avalon, it can't be improved on, so they had to break up. It's like they reduced themselves to the essence of what they were getting at, and that was the end of the manifesto. You could say that Roxy Music was a single concept that got sharper and sharper until it reached a point.

**Shannon:** I was watching your documentary the other day and there was a quote that you had that I really loved, and it was, 'not being in the film world is sort of like being mute or not involved in the conversation.' How does cinema influence your writing and the music you make, and are there any films in particular that have influenced you?

**Stephin:** I would say that the album *Charm of the Highway Strip* is essentially one long response to *Carnival of Souls*. I don't usually have an entire album having to do with one movie, but *Carnival of Souls* was so massively inspiring to me at that time that I could just churn out responses to it. And I didn't think of it as that at all. But once I listened back to it and I realized what I had done with the album cover... I guess I thought I was writing more about roadside America and J. B. Jackson and John Stilgoe and the built environment, which is what I had been studying at that point, when in fact I was writing about *Carnival of Souls*. The weird thing about *Carnival of the Souls* for me is that when I first saw it, I thought it was the stupidest thing. I thought it was a low-budget movie that had no art to it at all and was depressing and bleak and pointless and had nothing to say. Then I lived a little more and I realized that it's a profound statement on the nature of human existence. It went completely over my head when I first saw it at the age of 16. I don't know that any movie has ever had that much effect on my life compared to *Carnival of Souls*. But there's a lot of movies that I've seen a lot more. I was a Rocky Horror person in the 80s and late 70s. I went to Rocky Horror every Friday night like everyone did. But I don't know that that directly influenced my life in a long term way. There's

some songs in it that aren't especially great songs...but there's plenty of songs in it that are actually really funny and really engaging and very unique. Where else are you going to find Sweet Transvestite? And I can still do the time warp...

**Shannon:** The whole dance, everything?

**Stephin:** It's just a jump to the left!

**Shannon:** I also used to watch Rocky Horror on Friday nights during high school. But then, COVID kind of stopped that with the actors for a little bit.

**Stephin:** Yeah, what would you do?

**Shannon:** There was nothing else to do!

**Stephin:** Well, one thing, during COVID, I went to some movies in drive-ins...in your car, with your bubble. I saw *Salò*, or the 120 Days of Sodom—

**Shannon & Amélie:** We just watched that together!

**Stephin:** I would ordinarily say you should see it with an audience, but I didn't really see it with an audience. I was in a car with my friend Bill. Who knows what the other people were experiencing in their cars. It's like the Gary Numan song, we're all alone in our cars. It was kind of a profound experience, actually, to be in a drive-in movie theater because you had to be. I also, at that time, saw as part of the New York Film Festival the Spike Lee version of the David Byrne Broadway show. The name of which is escaping me...

**Shannon:** American Utopia!

**Stephin:** American Utopia! It was very faithful to the Broadway show in terms of the way the viewer sees it. It's from audience level, mostly, and then sometimes to remind you that you're looking at a movie, he does an overhead shot or something. But for 10 minutes at a time, it's very much verisimilitude. Watching that in a movie theater that was outdoors and everyone's in a car, that was really strange. The whole movie is about people in groups and togetherness and they're



barefoot and they're sharing sensations together. David Byrne has been all about the eccentricities of groups of people for almost 50 years at this point. Watching it in that kind of isolation while in a group, I mean, [it was] very Carnival of Souls. We're all invisible to each other and unable to relate to each other and life was exaggeratedly like that for two years. Bleh!

**Amélie:** I know you probably get a lot of questions about the Book of Love, but I still find its legacy pretty fascinating. A show called *One Day* recently used it over the end credits.

**Stephin:** Like a TV Show?

**Amélie:** Yeah, on Netflix. It was number one on the website for a while. What is it like having this popular song that's still relatively unknown, I guess, to specifically Generation Z. We're still kind of discovering the hits of yesteryear...

**Stephin:** For me, The Book of Love is the very definition of a slow burner. No one considered it making a single. It's never been a single in the U.S. Peter Gabriel covered it. And from that, it got movie placements, notably in a JLo movie. Thank you, JLo, for my house. No, really... When my father, who is a singer-songwriter, was very young, he wrote a musical called *Soon* which was up for, I believe, two days before it closed. It was a rock musical about how horrible the music industry is. You can imagine that the music industry was not interested in supporting it. The cast of *Soon* included Vicki Sue Robinson and also Richard Gere. Richard Gere was singing and dancing in my father's musical for the rehearsals plus the two days of performances. So there's Richard Gere in my father's musical. And, 50 years later, there's Richard Gere dancing with JLo to The Book of Love in a big major motion picture. So, both I and my father have written songs to which Richard Gere danced in public. That's part of the Book of Love backstory that I don't usually tell. I could write a book about the Book of Love, in fact.

**Amélie:** It probably wouldn't be long and boring!

**Stephin:** It would definitely be long and boring! At least, to me. I've played it at weddings and I've played it at one funeral and I will never do that again. It was the funeral of a friend, it was a very bad idea, but they asked me to do it. I didn't realize how bad an idea it was, so I didn't refuse. But now I would refuse. I couldn't get through it without crying, so I was really trying to hit the notes but not always succeeding. The friend in question was Maggie Estep, who was my downstairs neighbor in the East Village when I was recording 69 Love Songs. She was de facto the first listener to 69 Love Songs, I guess including The Book of Love...

**Amélie:** Very different now, I guess, but I have friends who are huge fans of Pieces of April—

**Stephin:** It's also the only Thanksgiving movie that I at least can think of, so it has this kind of permanent function and it plays every Thanksgiving on TV.

**Shannon:** I mean, there's Charlie Brown Thanksgiving, but I don't know if that counts.

**Amélie:** That's not really a movie. That's like 10 minutes long!... But the soundtrack, doing the soundtrack... A: Is that something you think you'll do again? B: How was going about that different from what you normally make?

**Stephin:** I like doing soundtracks. I've done a few since then, actually. I like constraints. I like working with structures where I can just sort of describe the structure and that's halfway to writing the music. I like writing for other people who are telling me what to do on some level. I haven't made any soundtrack music for a few years. But actually, I did make a 10 minute tone poem during COVID lockdown, which was essentially a soundtrack because it describes a walk around Washington Square Park at night. It's so similar to making a soundtrack that I can easily imagine someone just doing an animated movie in which someone is walking around Washington Square and the things that happen in the music are happening to them on screen. I



think that that might be a thing that I would like to do again— make the score before the image happens. There's definitely no money in it, but I do a lot of things that there's no money in.

**Amélie:** Thanks to JLo.

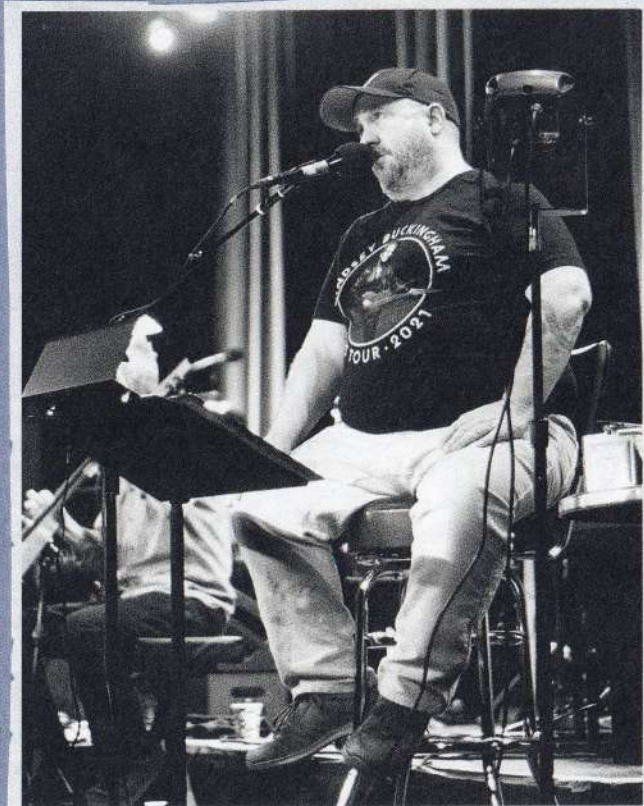
**Shannon:** Yeah. Shout out JLo... Do you ever see yourself being on sort of the other side and being the filmmaker or making a movie?

**Stephin:** I went to film school. So for years, I thought that I was gonna make that my life. But, I don't think that's where my talents lie. I don't think I think in terms of visual movement. I certainly think in terms of movement, but it's conceptual and it's sonic. I just think my brain doesn't work that way, in a way that would prevent me from being a talented filmmaker. I also wish that I had realized that a little earlier rather than majoring in it in college. I'm still very much a cinephile. I went to a big chunk of the Japanese Horror Festival at Film Forum earlier this month. I like to consume movies at festivals. I think for me it's a good way of learning—comparing movies to each other that are alike in some ways and unlike in others. At a Japanese horror festival, the horror is usually not something that we would call horror now in the U.S. or Hollywood. We would call it 'psychological thrillers' or 'supernatural thrillers.' There's zero jump scares. You know, it's not something that you would play in a 42nd Street theater in Times Square at midnight and have people screaming. They're slow and moody and dark and disturbing. It's great! I love it. I'm pretty slow and moody and dark and disturbing myself, so I fit right in.

**Shannon:** Did you have a favorite of any of the films you saw at the Japanese Horror Festival?

**Stephin:** Oh, for me the great revelation was *The Face of Another*, which is about burn victims and people who have no face. They have a series of philosophical monologues about anonymity and what it would do to

society if people could just change their faces all the time. What they end up describing, I thought, while I was watching the movie, was the internet. Where anonymity allows people to get away with anything they want and there are prices to pay for it, and the power that people get is usually limited to a particular site or something. But because people are anonymous, they behave very differently from how they would if they were in an ordinary, recognizable situation. They behave as though there were no consequences for their actions. They also lose sincerity because they don't have any reputational tie to being trustworthy. So why mean what you say if it doesn't matter?







# GOOD SONGS:

BABY BLUE - THE CHOCOLATE WATCHBAND  
 CONEY ISLAND CYCLONE - MERCURY REV  
 GET ME OUT OF BED - AVNT KATRINA  
 BITE ME - GINA GORY  
 STRANGE ATTRACTION - SATANIC TIGAS  
 NO SIDE TO FALL IN - THE RAINCOATS  
 ANNETTE'S GOT THE HITS - REDD KROSS

YURI-G - PJ HARVEY ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

MURDERED OUT - KIM GORDON

FLESHLESS HAND - ML BUCH

LOVE SONG FOR THE DEAD  
 CHE\*1 - NORTHERN PICTURE  
 LIBRARY

EMPTY & SILENT - MOUNT  
 KIMBIE + KING KRULE

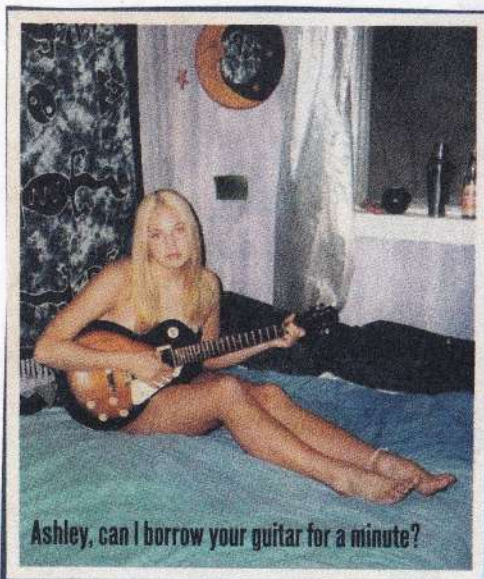
B-MOVIE - LALI PUNA

PURE STUFF - JESSICA LEA  
 MAYFIELD

TRIAL RUN - ROCKET

TRIPPING ME UP - BRITTLE  
 STARS

ON PLANETS WHERE I WAS YOUNG - THE BROTHERHOOD OF LIZARDS



Ashley, can I borrow your guitar for a minute?

PABLO PICASSO - THE MODERN  
 LOVERS

TALL SHIPS - SWIRLIES

STILL IN LOVE - CAT POWER

COME AND CHANGE MY BODY  
 - GREG FREEMAN

SECURITY - AMYL & THE  
 SNIFFERS



IF IT WEREN'T FOR STEVE ALBINI'S WORK + HIS MUSIC,  
 THIS ZINE WOULD SIMPLY NOT EXIST. WHEN I FIRST  
 BEGAN DISCOVERING MUSIC, THE ONLY ALBUMS I  
 WOULD LISTEN TO WERE THE PIXIES' "SURFER ROSA",  
 THE BREEDERS' "POD," NIRVANA'S "IN  
 UTERO", SONGS  
 ELECTRIC CO.",  
 "ATOMIZER"

"RID OF ME"

"PACER"

GO ON.  
 IT DOWN  
 IS MAKING  
 REALIZE  
~~NEED~~ HOW

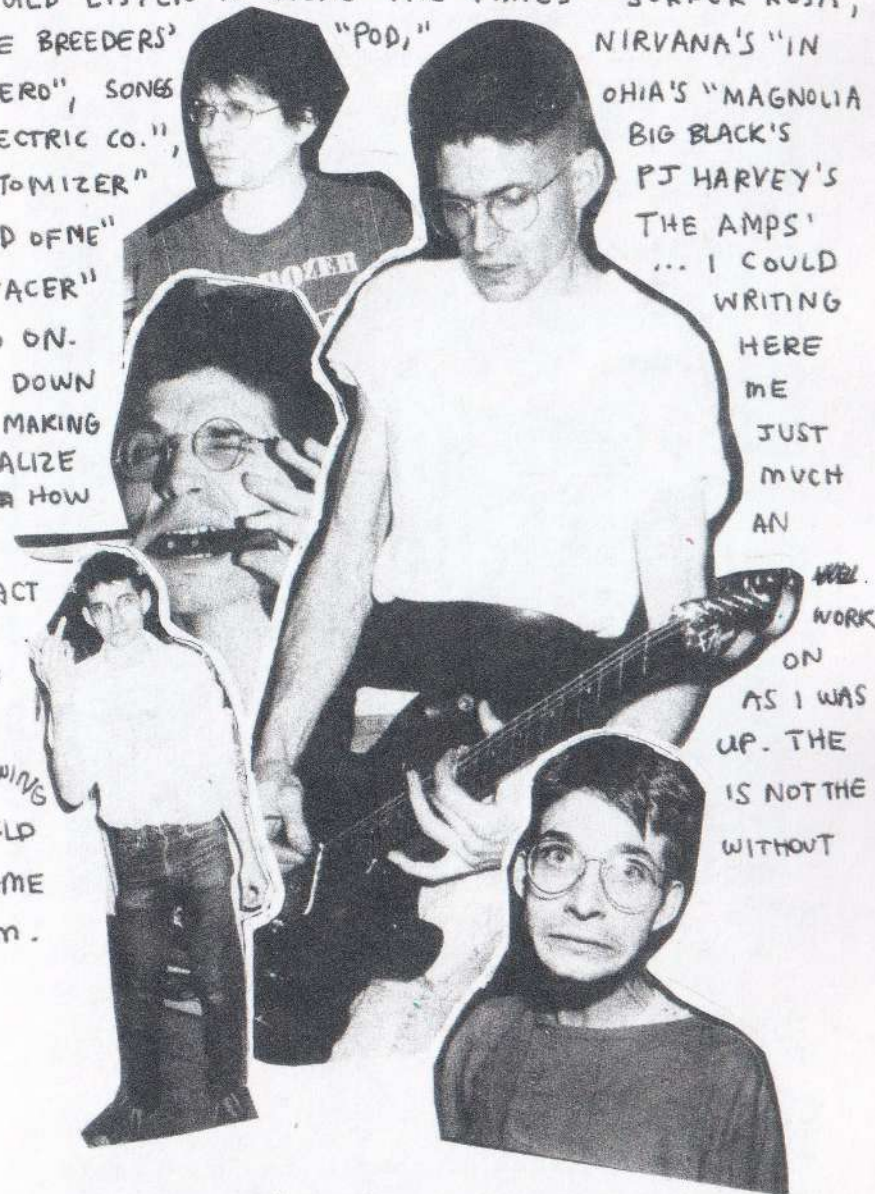
OF

IMPACT  
 HIS  
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 ME

GROWING  
 WORLD

SAME

HIM.



OHIA'S "MAGNOLIA  
 BIG BLACK'S  
 PJ HARVEY'S  
 THE AMPS'  
 ... I COULD

WRITING  
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REST IN PEACE ☺

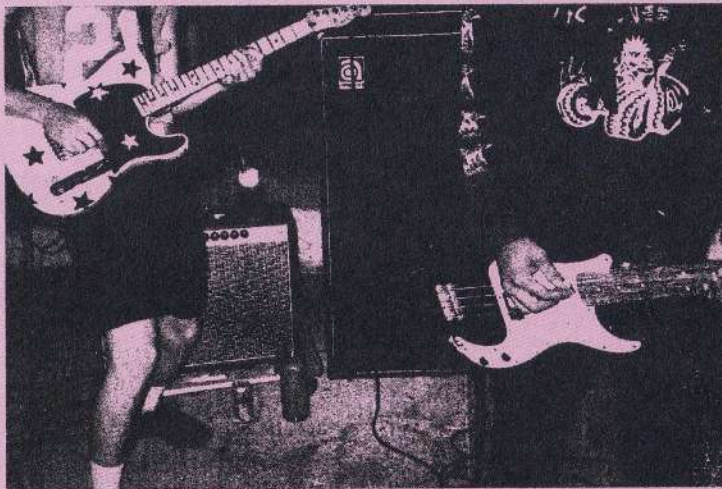
1962 - 2024



# How to: Generator Show

So you want to throw a generator show, huh? So maybe you can't find a proper venue or maybe you've decided that breaking the law with an unsanctioned show is your ideal way to stick it to the man. Whatever your reasoning may be, generator shows are a fun, cheap way to D.I.Y. a concert in your area and contribute to your local scene.

STATIC recently put on our first generator show and I now feel I have the authority to instruct the masses. Here's everything you'll need to do and consider:



HOTLINE TNT GENERATOR  
SHOW IN SD, 2022

## Step 1) Find some bands.

You can't have a show without any music! Ask your friends to play and keep it simple. If you're looking to get Alex G to headline, you're probably out of luck. Generator shows are good for showcasing smaller, local acts. It's a great way for new bands to get started playing shows too. I'd recommend finding 3-4 bands who understand the nature of the show and are down to play!

## Step 2) Form a team.

You can't do all of this planning on your own. Assemble a solid group of friends & volunteers to get this show on the road. You'll need help with all of the following steps & with set up the day-of. The more the merrier!



(EX. GREAT TEAM PICTURED ABOVE!)

## Step 3) Pick a location.

This is arguably the most important step and will make or break the success of your show. If you don't already know of spots in your area where generator shows are typically held, you'll have to do some scouting. You'll need to find a location where you won't get bothered by law enforcement and will also be safe for your audience. You should be far from anywhere that will get you noise complaints- the more abandoned, the better. A good way to tell if a spot isn't patrolled is if it's covered in lots of graffiti. (Here's a few places I recommend: If you're in Brooklyn - Trash Bridge & the abandoned A train tunnel. If you're in SD- the overpass by Balboa Park. Don't be a dick, don't burn out the spots!)



## Step 4) Get a generator (& other equipment).

I think it goes without saying but to put on a generator show, you'll need a generator. More likely than not one of your friends' dad's will have one sitting in the garage collecting dust. But if you don't have one on hand, renting one is quick & relatively cheap! Look up generator rentals in your area (The Home Depot is always good if you have one nearby.) A 2k-3k watt generator will probably do you good and it'll run you about \$100 or less for a 1-day rental. In terms of other equipment, make sure someone is bringing a light source, amps, PA's (optional but always helpful), cables, a drum kit, and extension cords! (Bands should bring their own instruments and breakables and any other additional equipment possible).



## Step 5) Promote, promote, promote.

Promoting a generator show can be tricky. You don't want to confuse anyone but you also don't want to give too much away either. Post flyers on social media & tape them up all over town. Include the following information: the name of your show (if applicable), list of bands, how much tickets are & where to buy them if you choose to sell in advance (or at all), and the time/day of the show. You should always pick a time that falls after sunset. In place of a location, put "ask a punk" / "secret location" / "generator show" or some combination of the three. Have people ask for the location and keep it secret or send it out

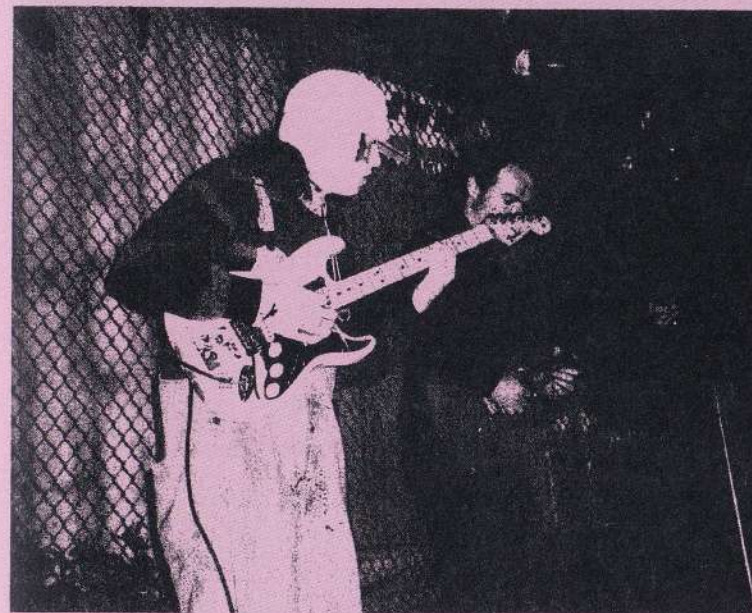
to everyone the day of. It's important to keep the location secure to ensure your show doesn't get prematurely shut down. Ultimately, just make sure the word is spread. Tell all your friends to tell their friends to tell their friends too.

## Step 6) Set up!

Bring your crew and band members to the location 1-1.5 hours before the show is supposed to begin. You don't want to set up too early and bring attention to yourselves. Be prepared for something to go wrong and think on your feet. Bring extras of everything. Set up your "stage," and test the generator. (Make sure it's full of gasoline before you come and bring extra if need be!)

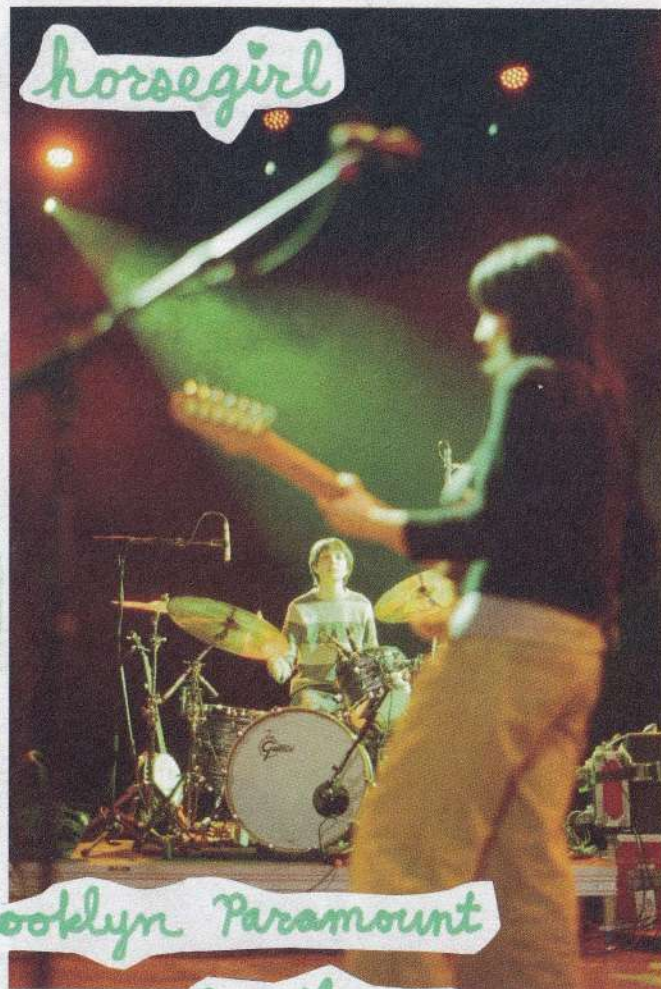
## Step 7) Rock on!

You did it! The show is planned and in motion. Have fun! Be safe!



MUDSKIPPER (NYC) PLAYING AT STATIC'S  
GENERATOR SHOW AT TRASH BRIDGE MAY 3

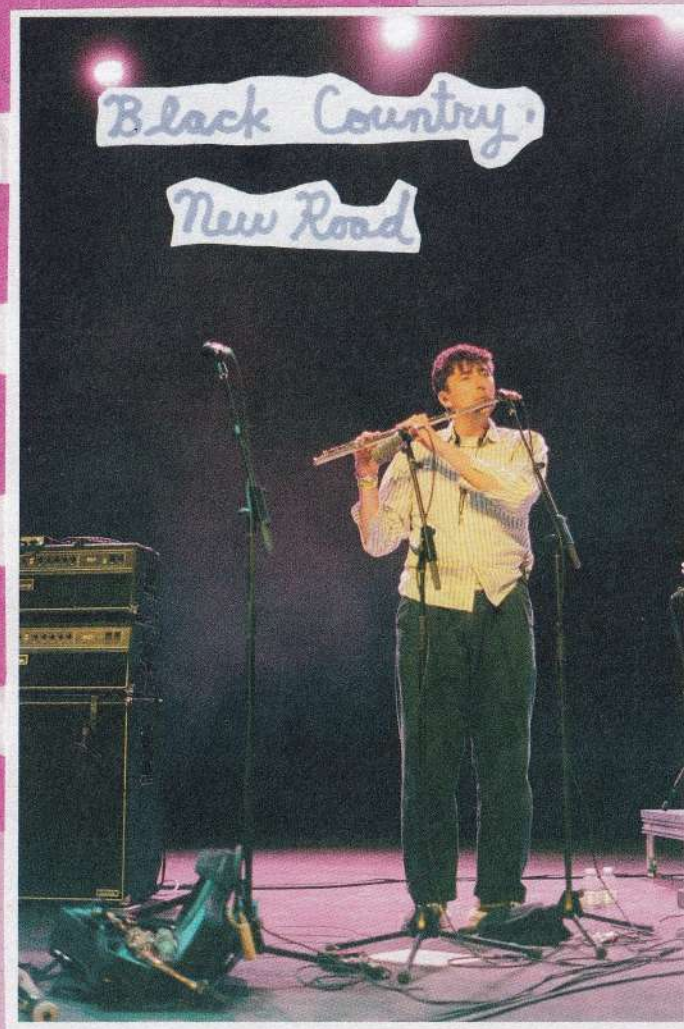




horsegirl

Brooklyn Paramount

April 24th



Black Country

New Road

Brooklyn Paramount

April 24th

HELLEB



An interview with...



## Heavenly

When I was fifteen years old, I discovered Heavenly through a playlist made by a boy I had a crush on at the time. I remember their music really struck me because I'd never before heard any band make songs about such difficult subjects sound so upbeat and pretty. It doesn't matter who you are or what your music taste is, if you ask me to recommend you any music I'll almost always mention Heavenly because they're one of those bands that's just *that* good. I think anyone can find something to enjoy about them. In May, I got the chance to speak with the band before they embarked to play their first American shows in over 20 years and we discussed everything from their lyrics to Calvin Johnson to San Diego's infamous venue, The Casbah.

If you are a true fanatic, you'll know that Heavenly was featured in my very first fanzine, GERM (which boasted a total of two issues created during my sophomore year of high school before going out of print). Needless to say, doing this interview was a very full circle moment.

Could you guys introduce yourselves for the record and tell me what you do in Heavenly?

Amelia: Okay, I will go first. I'm Amelia and I sing and play guitar in Heavenly and mostly write the songs.

Rob: Hello, I'm Rob and I play the bass in Heavenly.

Cathy: And I'm Cathy and I play keyboards and sing.



I wanted to start by asking— you all came back to Heavenly a few years ago now, but I feel like within the last year or so things seem to have exploded in terms of love for the band. Now you're playing festivals and you're coming back to America to a bunch of sold out shows. For a while though, it never seemed like your intention was to come back. What was the deciding factor that finally brought about the reunion of Heavenly? And how has it felt to come back and play these old songs to an entirely new generation of young fans?

Amelia: That's an interesting question. We were not [planning on coming back]. I'd wanted to do it for quite a long time and no one else was that enthusiastic. Well, Cathy might have been, but I didn't dare ask her. But I thought no one else was very enthusiastic. But then we started re-releasing our albums because we discovered that they weren't very easy to get ahold of, and they were selling for silly money on Discogs and secondhand shops. And in the process of putting them out and kind of finding, you know, discussing them amongst ourselves and writing notes for the booklets that come out with them about our memories... I think we all just kind of started to think "Why aren't we doing this anymore?" The people are interested! So we did a couple of shows in London and I think we were really taken aback by just how emotional they were. There weren't that many younger generation people at those, I think it was more older generation kind of rediscovering and being reminded of why they loved the band all that time ago. But I think now— we weren't necessarily gonna even play any more shows— but we loved that so much that it seemed kind of silly not to. So we've now got quite a few



shows booked and we are starting to see some younger people who've discovered the band in the meantime through TikTok or Spotify or whatever. And it's yeah, it's fantastic.



Rob: I got to admit I was one of those grumpy people who thought we shouldn't again. Partly because there are so many ancient bands like us on the road taking up valuable stage space and I think there's something wrong about it. But yeah, I was persuaded and it is really good fun. And also we're doing quite a lot of new music as well so I kind of tell myself that we haven't completely just turned into our own tribute act.

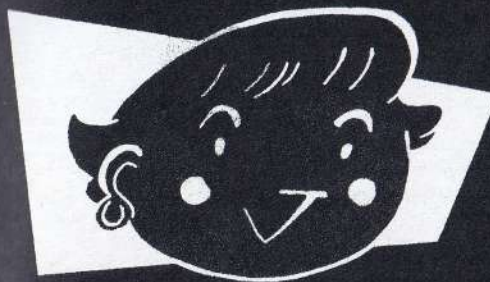
Cathy: I think Amelia and Rob have covered pretty much all the bases. I kind of agree with all of that. I think it was quite tentative how we all agreed to do it and it was just for these couple of shows. I think it just felt like a really incredible shared experience with the crowd, to be with probably many of the same people who we last saw 25 years ago. So yeah, that definitely gave us a taste to do more. We would love to have some more young people! We played in Madrid earlier in the year and there was a really nice mother and daughter who came. The mother was of our sort of age and was a Heavenly fan back in the day and the daughter had discovered Heavenly through TikTok. And then they both discovered that they knew Heavenly! They were like "Why do you listen to this? What do you mean, why, how do you even know this?" And they came to the show together. That was so nice.



Rob: Sorry, the other thing I should say, because I want to mention him, is a man who plays drums for us now. Because, obviously, the band came to a very sad, abrupt end when Mathew died. That was also a reason why it was very difficult to imagine playing again. But thanks to Ian, who plays the drums in our band Swansea Sound, we just felt we had met someone who was very, very good, but also really nice. We could imagine it working with him. So that was a bit of a moment as well... Ah, there's Pete!

Pete: Sorry I'm late!

It's all good. We've only done one question so far! But one thing I will say before I move on, I think you guys are going to be surprised when you come to New York at just how many younger people are going to be at the shows, so that'll be fun.



Everyone: Oh? Cool!

Yeah! I know so many people who are around my age who are just obsessed. So, I think it'll be a fun couple of shows.

Rob: Well I'm nervous now!

## Heavenly

Moving on, I wanted to ask about the lyrics. The first song I ever heard from Heavenly was Atta Girl, and what immediately struck me other than the incredible instrumentation was the lyrics. I think one of the strongest aspects of the band's songs are the words that accompany everything. So, I wanted to ask—after that first album, Heavenly vs. Satan, there's a sort of thematic shift in your discography with Atta Girl, Operation Heavenly, and The Decline and Fall of Heavenly. You go from making these more pop-y love songs to these songs with more difficult subject matters such as rape and abortion. What caused this shift?

Amelia: So the shift was, I think, partly about growing up. But I think it was also a lot about discovering Riot Grrrl. We went to the west coast to do some shows when we were on K records, which was based in Olympia, and we weren't quite expecting what we found the second or third time we went to Olympia. The whole place was buzzing with this thing called Riot Grrrl that literally at that point had just been invented. And we didn't want to become a kind of, I guess, "standard Riot Grrrl," and we didn't want to sound like Bikini Kill. But we found the issues they were discussing just really rang true. And we were kind of, I guess, almost ashamed, or at least I was almost ashamed, that we had not really covered those sorts of issues in our songs before, even though we talked about them. It just hadn't really struck me that one could. So we started to and I think it was a real sea change. I will admit though, P.U.N.K. Girl is a song that I wrote the lyrics to and people are always saying, "Did she really write the lyrics?" There were apparently rumors that it was written by a



boy...but I have to admit that the words to Atta Girl were written by my brother. So you like his lyrics on that one... but they're brilliant lyrics!

Well all of the lyrics on that EP are great! Especially Hearts and Crosses, too! So fantastic... Going with that, though, I also wanted to ask, as you said, you didn't want to sound like Bikini Kill, why did you choose to keep the same sound that you had on the first record, even though the lyrical themes evolved? I feel like a lot of the music is almost, not tricking people per se, but in a way you seem to hide these sort of darker lyrical themes behind this perception of softness and femininity.

Cathy: I think that's really interesting— I mean, it's a really good way that you put it. I think it would have felt fake if we'd have completely changed our sound and tried to be a band that we weren't. And, I suppose we still like a really melodic sound, we like lots of harmonies, and we like a real tunefulness about the songs. I quite like the fact that it's kind of like a bit of a Trojan horse—but for messages that you might not expect. You might be kind of like “tra-la-la” singing along and then be like “Hang on, what did she just say?” I think that that's quite a nice surprise, that the form and the content don't have to be always in sync.

Can any of you remember the moment you decided that you wanted to be in a band or what sparked your love for music?

Rob: I think for me, it was when I was at school. I think it's quite common that your best friend gets a guitar of some kind— which my best friend Tim did, because his brother had it and couldn't be bothered to play it so he let him have it. And he said, well, you better get a bass. It was just kind of logical really, because that's what the other person had to do, and then it was immediately more fun than anything else. That was when I was 15 or 16. And then I think once you've got that, the fun of playing music with other people— I mean, I think I don't get any fun from sitting around and playing music by myself—but when you're playing with other people, it's a kind of fun that you don't really want to stop.



Pete: Yeah, I think it was when I was probably 13 or 14. My friends and I were very interested in music. We kind of wanted to be in a band more than we actually wanted to play music. It was just the kind of fun bonding thing to do with your friends focused on music. I think often people's first band is really just an imaginary band and they don't know how to play instruments or anything. And it's good when the music culture can allow people to easily make that transition from loving music and wanting to be in a band to actually doing it. As opposed to having a sort of obstacle course to it, which was more like what it was like in the 70s, where you had to pay your dues. But even when I was young, it was starting to be possible just to... you know one band might let some kids get up and play before them even if they were really hopeless and didn't know what they were doing. That was when music really started. That was a really big change in music— when you could just make that transition from loving the idea of being in a band to actually doing it.

Amelia: It's funny that you said that about imaginary bands, because when I was about six, I went to see a show in London about the Beatles. And the Beatles in this show were in Hamburg and there was some German guy in it who was calling them “The Pee-dals”. I loved this show, and I loved the Beatles, so I tried to form this band at school called The Peedals and got various people to say they were in my band and each of us had to be one of the Beatles. I think I was Paul in the Peedals.



Rob: You are Paul!

Amelia: I am Paul [laughs]. But I have to admit, I didn't think that there would be anything like writing songs or learning to play guitar involved...



Rob: You were really just trying to get some friends.

Amelia: [laughs] Yeah, I guess when I wanted to properly be in a band— I guess I had dreamed of it for quite a long time, probably since I was six!— I knew some kids when I was at school who were basically thinking of starting a band and I got my way in as their singer.



Cathy: It's funny because I think for me, it's the total opposite. I did lots of music when I was a kid, but it never occurred to me to be in a band! But I did lots of really square music. I had a friend and we used to make little comedy, like spoofs of things that were on at the time. And so we would do music like we did a cover of this song by Barbra Streisand and Elaine Paige called "I Know Him So Well," but with mixed up lyrics. It was quite bad. And I had another friend who was a really swotty musician and she wrote a carol that we entered in this—There was a really bad TV program called Nationwide and they had a carol competition and we entered a song for the Carol competition! [laughs] I played in orchestras and those kinds of music things, but it didn't occur to me that it was possible to be in a band, somehow. Until many years later, when I met these guys.

Rob: I never heard that story before!

Cathy: It just came back to me!

Rob: [laughs] You entered a Christmas carol for Nationwide! Well I'm afraid on this basis that at this moment Cathy is sacked!

Amelia: I actually wrote a carol for the Christmas Nationwide carol concert as well!

Cathy: Did you!?

Amelia: I remember writing one, so I was just as square.

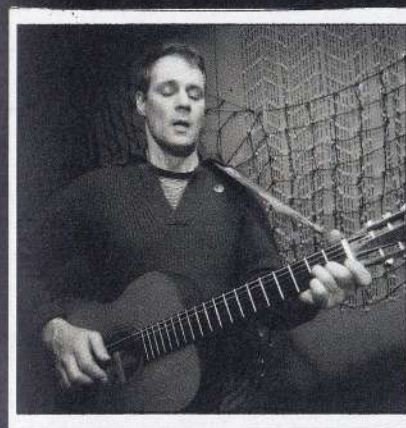
I know, we touched on this a little bit earlier, but I also wanted to ask—in America, you worked with K Records, to release your albums. How did you come to meet Calvin Johnson? and what was it like working with him not only through K, but also as a musical collaborator?

Rob: Well, I mean, that song, C is the Heavenly Option, that he is on, we didn't meet him at all while we were doing that. He was sent the song with the gaps for him to sing it and then his vocal came on a tape and we stuck it in. So, it felt like he was in the room, but he wasn't in the room.



Amelia: Yeah, in the old days everything was really slow. You had to basically send a tape across the Atlantic and then this tape would come back a month later and you just played it with slight trepidation because if it wasn't any good, you had to start all over again and you weren't going to get your album done in time. I just remember us all falling around the room with laughter—which maybe wasn't the right answer, but it was good! But we had already actually met him by then, because we were already on K. But I think, actually, Calvin was the reason we signed to K but he wasn't the reason we got asked to sign to K. He used to run K with a woman called Candice, and Candice I think is the first person that kind of discovered Heavenly and really liked it. She played it to Calvin and then they approached us.

Pete: There were connections between our sort of music scene and that sort of music scene starting in the 80s when bands like The Pastels and other Scottish bands had a certain amount of interaction with Beat Happening and other bands. We also were on a label, an Edinburgh based label, 53rd & 3rd, which also released at least one record by Beat Happening. There was a kind of transatlantic link established in the 80s just on a very small scale. It's still kind of going strong I think. That's how we first became aware of Beat Happening and Calvin. And Mathew actually went out—was Mathew the first of us to go to Olympia? I think he was...



Calvin Johnson

Cathy: I seem to remember that. Yeah.

Pete: I think Mathew, after he finished at school—Amelia will correct this—I think he might have invited himself to go visit Calvin and Candice one summer and we scarcely knew them. But they were really hospitable and he had a really good time with them.

So, that was another factor in building the bridge, I think. Is that right?

Amelia: I'd completely forgotten it, but it does ring true!



Rob: In fact, we're going to be going back there in October. Because, I think these gigs get announced tomorrow actually, we're doing gigs on the West Coast.

Yay! Are you coming to California at all?



Rob: Yeah!

Also we're going to start— we're not going to play in Olympia but we're going to play in Seattle, but we'll be seeing that kind of people again... Where do you call home?

San Diego!

Rob: Oh yeah! I remember playing there...

Pete: We played in a concrete punk rock club underneath the flight path of the planes landing. One thing I remember about San Diego from my visit is how close the airport is to the city center. You can walk to it, which is pretty incredible. And one effect of this is that the punk rock club was incredibly noisy with airplanes going overhead, which is probably why they were allowed to play punk rock, though. Do you remember what it was called?

Is it The Casbah?



Pete: It might've been The Casbah, that sounds familiar.

Amelia: That sounds right, yeah!... It was also an over 21's only and Mathew was actually under 21 when we played there and they made him stay outside until the minute we went to play and then he had to go straight outside again. Luckily it was nice weather, it being San Diego.

Pete: ...And he liked planes!

It was definitely The Casbah then if it was 21+. I have one last question that's mostly for Amelia and Rob. You both run your own record label now, Skep Wax! What inspired you to start this? And how has it been being on the other side of music and distributing it and all that?

Rob: Well, we hate bands now [laughs]. We started doing it— I think it was partly a lockdown thing, because there was time. It's the sort of thing you talk about for years and never do and I thought if it's ever going to happen, now's the time. It's been really good! I mean it started off— the first things we released were our own bands— Swansea Sound and a band called The Catenary Wires, which is another permutation of us, basically. We were using ourselves as the guinea pigs, just to see if we could do it, and then it went quite well. So then we started inviting other bands to put stuff out. We're working on some more things now. It takes over. I mean, it's quite all consuming. And not all of it is the most fun. So you have to do things like fill out MCPS sheets—it's just like a sort of tedious office job [laughs].

Amelia: I get secret joy from the fact that I quite like doing really nerdy, filling out forms and stuff, but I just refuse to do it because Rob hates it. So much of running a label is doing that. If I just took on doing all those bits I would just spend my whole life doing this so I just make Rob do them and I hear swearing across the room as he's just filled another bit of a form in wrong—but it's quite entertaining!

Rob: But I really like it. If a song that you've released by another band appears on the radio is almost as exciting as if it were your own band, so, it's good!

Amelia: It is! And it's really nice building a community. I mean, I think what I really liked about all the labels we've been on, but particularly Sarah Records and K Records, is that they built a community. There were people actually all around the world who liked that kind of music and they were keen to actually meet each other. That was what was so nice about the Heavenly gigs in London is it felt like people were as excited to see each other there as they were to see the band. It was just kind of a really lovely feeling of community, and I think that's actually quite a motivator, at least for me, running a label is that we are starting to generate that kind of community ourselves again and it's lovely.





Rob: The thing that I'd say is that I feel a slight sense of duty because for many years other people have done it for us, you know they've filled in the MCPS sheets! So, it kind of felt like our turn, really. But [labels] do make a difference. It is a bit intangible these days because obviously when we were on Sarah or K, the only way you could get the music was to buy the record from the label, whereas now it's just it's in the air. But [labels] seem more important than I thought they would be. It's still great. Like Amelia says it creates a kind of community, a part real and part virtual community, but it is still one. So, that is a nice thing.



## new record reviews

so, what's new? i present to you: an unranked compilation of (mostly) everything that has caught my eye this year... i hope you take my opinions to heart.

let's start with '5301' by tankerlow. BIG shoutout to mishka and carter for putting me on to their friends band. ethan wynner is a witty lyricist and it shines especially on 'american rock festival,' my favorite song on the release. riyl: slint, sprain

### 'life on the lawn' by a country western:

i brought the band to wnyu for a live sesh and they were the nicest people i'd ever met. with this release they leaned into slacker rock and refined their sound to a new peak! fav tracks: sidewalk, wasting the weekends, great is the grip of the hawk

### 'bright future' by adrienne lenker:

i've been sitting with this record since february and it might be my favorite so far. it perfectly captures the feeling of solitude in winter and was my soundtrack for many morning walks thru the snow. the layers of analog warmth and adrienne's voice feel like a scarf around your neck. favorite tracks: already lost, fool, sadness as a gift.

### 'radio ddr' by sharp pins:

as some may already know, i was a massive fan of 2023's 'turtle rock' and this record only further proves kai's musical prowess. the analog recording and fuzz makes each song seem like an old memory resurfaced and sounds like the fleeting freedom of childhood summers. chicago has the best youth scene right now, i firmly believe. favorite tracks are: you don't live here anymore, you have a way, and race for the audience.



continued...

'dedicated to the world' by chanel beads: this one took a month to really grow on me but once it did, it really did! insanely unique blend of genres executed perfectly, merges everything i want to listen to into one big beautiful album. favorite traxx: i think i saw, embarrassed dog, coffee culture

'manning fireworks' by mj lenderman: this won't be officially out until september, but i managed to find myself at anti records' private listening party before the album was announced and saw mj do a couple numbers from the new record too. it's nothing like boat songs- it's slow, and mj takes his time with each track. he also fully leans into his southern roots and drops the slacker rock for full-on country. it opens with this beautiful acoustic track and follows up with a lot of the material he has been playing live the past few years. there's even a new version of 'you don't know the shape i'm in' too! favorite tracks: wristwatch, bark at the moon

other stuff i like but don't have time to talk abt: the collective/kim gordon, mirage/hooky, company car/snooper, come n play/triage, i hate when girls die/die spitz, empty and silent/mount kimbie+king krule, diamond jubilee/cindy lee jackrabbit/fan club, birdseye/babehoven, skill issue/untitled halo, kiss me you idiot/guitar, i'm all fucked up/this is lorelei, facts/amyl+the sniffers, prude/prude, pureblissnoworries/bling

'oxalis' by swapmeet: i found this band after randomly scrolling thru playlists and was completely swept off my feet after listening to them. i'm fully convinced they are the next best thing. the band hails from south australia and they pack a punch into every one of their songs. favorite tracks: ceiling fan & i wish i

I V NEAL YOUNG



well, it was silly, really. I used to be good at art when I was at school. I say good—better than I was at anything else. I always

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I walked home from school alone today. I saw the pastor sitting in the churchyard. She held one finger up to the sky and laid still in the grass. The myth of the maker persists in her arms. I dropped my lunch as I ran past a cop car and the tire crushed the brown paper bag signed 'love, mom.'