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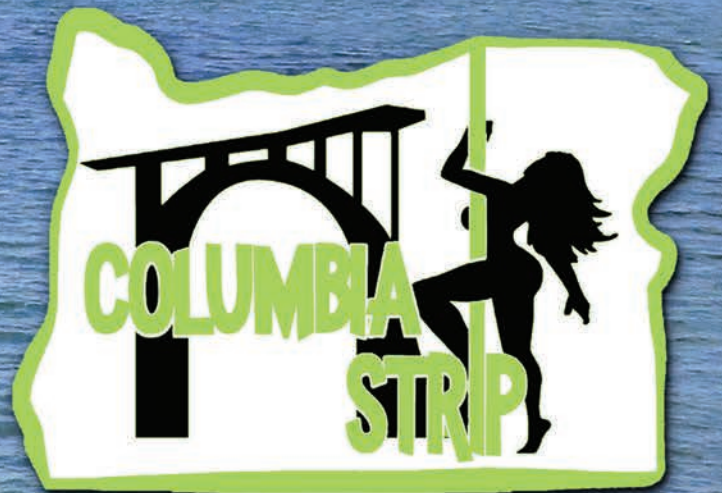
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THE MONTHLY

COLUMN

BY WOMBSTRETCHA THE MAGNIFICENT

SIX BIZARRE TAXES

THROUGHOUT THE AGES

Ben Franklin once famously said that only two things are certain in human existence: death and taxes. Certainly, the man who had helped in the American Revolution, touched off by a 3% tax on tea, would be utterly flabbergasted by the modern US of A, as many citizens end up forking over significant portions of their income to both state and federal governments, along with myriad other goods and service taxes. Fortunately for him, Franklin died in 1790 and remains dead. He probably wouldn't be that surprised at the things Americans are taxed on, as the past had its own share of ludicrous taxes. He would probably be surprised that we are willing to pay them, after all the fuss created by not wanting to pay a fat, insensitive government for the privilege of carrying on about our daily lives. Seeing as the sting of Tax Time is fresh in our memories, let

us review some of the oddest taxes from history.

6. Beards

In 1535, King Henry VIII, of "I'm Henry the Eighth, I Am" song fame, imposed a tax on beards. Having a rather nice beard himself, he fancied that it would be great if beards were a status symbol of the elites and so imposed this tax to make that happen. The amount paid depended on your social class. Oddly, aristocrats lined up to pay for government approval of their facial plumage, seeking, of course, the ostentatious display of their wealth. He eventually figured out that while clever, it was kind of dumb in the long term and ultimately discarded the tax. However, Queen Elizabeth I reinstated it later, imposing the tax on any beard past two weeks' growth.

Similarly, in 1698, Russia's Peter The Great had imposed a beard tax (which also included solo-flying mustaches), but not for status reasons. He just thought Russkies looked better clean shaven. If you paid Peter's tax, you got a special coin embossed with an image of a nose, mustache and beard, which you were to keep on your hirsute person at all times. The penalty for *not* presenting it when the authorities asked? They would shave you publicly, right then and there. This tax was only done away with 74 years after its implementation. You can find the beard coins on eBay if you want one. Search "Russian Beard Tax Coin."

5. Hats

Leave it to the English to find and tax pretty much anything in existence. Hats, being in existence, were eventually included in the large volume of Things The English Have Been Taxed On. Introduced in 1784, hatters, who hadn't quite gotten their contemporary reputation for madness yet, were moved slightly more toward insanity, when they were mandated to pay a tax of two pounds per year to The Crown for those in London and five pounds per annum outside Lon-



don. For reference, 2 Pounds Sterling in 1784 was 300 Pounds in 2021, or \$412 US Dollars, and 5 pounds was 750 new British Pounds, or \$1,027 USD. Hatters who paid the tax were issued unique stamps to attach to the hats they retailed, and those caught without one were subject to arrest and prosecution. A man named John Collins took to fabricating his hat stamps, citing a doctrine of "fuck the Crown." The Crown, however, fucks back and put Collins to death over the matter.

4. Dogs

For a year, beginning in 1797, Scotland issued a tax on all "non-working" dogs in the country. The idea was that dogs, which were mere pets, consumed resources that humans could indeed be using. While the tax only lasted a year, many people killed their dogs, citing an inability to pay it. The tax was intended to help the poor, but like most taxes, it was re-appropriated for other purposes.

3. Piss

Not a euphemism for booze, but actual urine was taxed in 1st century Rome by Emperors Nero and Vespasian. Urine was collected in large pots outside laundries in Rome and was used to wash clothes to get that tunic or toga its whitest, due to the ammonia content. Interestingly, and disgustingly, they also mixed urine with pumice and used it as a type of toothpaste. While urine is considered a sterile fluid, I doubt most of us would want to put it in our mouths. Unless you're one of *those* people, in which case, you were born far too late. The name for the tax was "pecunia non olet," in Latin, which translates to "money doesn't stink."

2. Cereal Without A Free Toy

Not quite a tax, but an exemption

from the same. Canada, Ned Flanders to the United States' Homer Simpson, has an exciting tax break for breakfast cereals, if they contain a free toy. Yeah, that's right. The normally stodgy-seeming Canucks are giving tax breaks to foment the childhood joy of reaching your filthy, unwashed hands to the bottom of a cereal box and harvesting a chintzy plastic widget from its bowels. However, the tax break is limited to toys that are not "beer, liquor or wine." Now, I'm left wondering if that was a thing *before* this and that Canadian kids had the best breakfast cereals in the world. You seldom see a shot of Crown Royal as "part of this complete breakfast" in the TV commercials, but damn. Everything happens for a reason, and now that they said you *can't*, I have to wonder who *did*.



1. Tits

In what would eventually become the Kerala state of modern India, the Kingdom Of Travancore imposed a tax on women's breasts, or, rather, those who covered them with garments. The tax was collected by revenueurs who would go house-to-house to collect the tax from every female who had passed puberty and the exact amount was levied according to the size of their milkers. This tax, only applied to the lower castes of society, with caste and status being taken

very seriously when it was imposed in 1813. The intent was to keep women of those lower castes from covering their knockers with cloth, which was a status symbol of the higher castes. A famous protest by a woman named Nangeli saw her cutting off her breasts with a knife, when the taxman came a-knocking in the early 1900s. She died as a result, but prompted social upheaval with regard to the tax, which was eventually repealed in 1923. It is unknown if the tax collector kept the severed tits, but whomever heard of a tax collector giving anything back?

There's my tax list. I hope that your tax times haven't been too hard on your pocketbook and that you have some dough to toss around.

Stay safe and may you avoid the tax man's eye.

-Wombstretcha The Magnificent

Wombstretcha The Magnificent is a begrudging taxpayer, semi-professional zoo ape taunter, John Lennon denier, writer, and retired rapper from Portland, OR. He can be found on his website, WombStretcha.com, on Twitter as @WombStretcha503, and on MeWe (yay!) and Facebook (boo!), as "Wombstretcha The Magnificent."





Indigo

FROM DV8

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UNDIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY: LET'S

BY ESMERALDA RUPP-SPANGLE

Let's not kid ourselves, folks. This last year has pretty much felt like the loser uncle of Armageddon. You know the one; he's always got some new sure-fire business prospect, but somehow, he can't seem to get out of that same studio apartment with the suspicious stains in the carpet.

Now though, we all look back at something like Y2K with dreamy, hazy eyes and think, "Oh, such innocent times..."

It's been hard on us all, sure, but a brighter future is on the horizon. More and more of us are getting jabbed with virus killin' autism juice, and before you know it, we'll be back to the social life we all remember fondly, but honestly wasn't all that great. Nevertheless, now is the time

to make grand plans for that future. In that spirit, here are some ideas to get you back in the swing of existing in a world populated with more than just your goldfish, the cute pizza girl and the Amazon guy who hurls your packages over the fence.

LICK EVERYTHING

Start with a bang. Lick that stamp! Hell, lick the wall, lick your car, lick the damn floor. You've been vaccinated, which automatically means you're now immune to pretty much everything. It's been so long since anyone's been out in the world, we've all forgotten how to socialize. So, a friendly lick on the cheek is just as likely to be reciprocated by a smack across the face. Even if it does, a smack across

the face is still human contact, and God, we missed that so much, we'll take anything.



EAT SOME EXOTIC ANIMALS

Where did it come from? Bats? Pangolins? A janitor at a poorly monitored



RING IN THE POST-APOCALYPSE

disease research facility looking to make a few bucks on the side? We'll likely never know for sure, but we do know we're immune now, so FUCK those guys. Wherever it came from, it wasn't human and I'm feeling vengeful. I'm 100% sure there's nothing else you can possibly contract by making a meal of any wet-market score, so what better way of showing your utter disdain for Mother Nature's wrath, then making it into a loaf?

ATTEND AN ORGY

It's been so long since you've touched anyone; it only fits to jump in the deep end. You can arrange one yourself with a colorful, cheery flier on a few choice phone poles or attend one of the absolute floods of prearranged sexcapades that are no doubt on the near-horizon. Just remember, don't show up to an orgy naked, it's bad manners. This is also an excellent opportunity to practice licking things as incautiously as possible.

GET FAT

Oh my God, we've spent this whole quarantine trying to be Our Best Selves™ and get healthy. We gave up gluten, started running on the treadmill every damn day, lifting weights, quit smoking and drinking (except for THOSE days...you know), started waxing regularly...now that human contact is going to be a thing again, it's time to put your foot down and say, "Aw, fuck it."

Go to a bar, get wasted, eat three or-

ders of mozzarella sticks, have a one-night stand with whoever's there, smoke, fuck, sleep all day. Bliss.



DO SOMETHING POLITICAL/DESTRUCTIVE

Oh boy! Crowds can gather again! Time to don a balaclava and smash some shit in the name of whatever's the current political cause du jour. Finding a reason to get all hot and bothered is easy. Just go to Facebook. That's it, that's all you have to do to suddenly be filled with a white-hot rage that can only be appeased by a wanton spree of destruction and property damage. So, get on with your bad selves, time to do some arson and spray paint something angry and topical on a public building. Yeah!

ACTUALLY ENJOY ALONE TIME

Now that we're going to be given leave to go out into the world again, I'm personally finding more and more

that I absolutely don't want to. I don't know about you here, but learning to be an involuntary introvert has been

bumpy. The more I go back out into the world, though, the more I want to be at home. Shouting expletives at the cat, ordering in and wearing jammies that are so frail, a gust of wind might turn them to dust, getting high and playing video games...I mean, who wants to go to a party and make awkward conversation with someone you've never met and aren't interested in, while blotting out the whole affair with lousy wine? You? Well, good on you then. For the author, I can only say that this entire time has given me a genuine appreciation of how little I like any of you, anyhow.

Esmeralda Marina Rupp-Spangle is feeling positively huffy tonight. If you absolutely must talk to her, she can be found on Facebook as Esmeralda Marina and The 'Gram as @EsmeraldaCitadel.

A long, long time ago...a guy walks into a porn shop in Vancouver.

It was about 1999, after they decided to erase my memory, I found myself somewhere quite different from the Special Ops program which had locked me up in a dark closet that smelled of jizz and bleach. I think they thought I was the janitor. But I just went along with it until it was too late.

Plainly speaking, to expose the editor of a porn magazine isn't really what you might imagine. There was always some trigger riding my ass. But how do you find a way to make a living off porn without sex? Wouldn't that be prostitution?

After escaping from my porn-hole in Vancouver, I headed for the City of Roses to spread my wings and embrace the nudity. My name is Spooky and I am a pornographer.

You see, there was a shakeup way back in Old Town where two or three "gentlemen pornographers" challenged the crown. After close to half a dozen local porn mags over more than 20 years, the ONE you're holding in your sweaty little hands is the only one that has survived. Hats off to you *Exotic*. How in the FUCK I landed here again, I'll never know? But now that I (involuntarily) stepped up, let's take a little time to say goodbye (for now) to Ray McMillin. You remember him, right? He was the guy sleeping off his Squib in the stairway.

But now that we stepped up to the task, let's give Ray some time to tell us how much he'll love and miss us.

Thanks for that crystal clear and non-ambiguous introduction, John.

So, it appears that I am being asked to expand on what it was like to take over the position as "editor" for *Exotic*, over the course of the last five years or so. To answer that, I will take you back to how I began writing.

It was at the age of nine months, when I

had discovered that I could use my diaper to write on the walls of my parent's attic (which doubled as my bedroom). For the next twenty years, I honed my shit-smearing ability to the point that I was eventually able to submit full-length shit posts in the form of articles. Flash forward to another ten years or so and I found myself with a felony (for a single ounce of now-legal weed), as well as a degree from Portland State University, which qualified me to do exactly one thing: journalism. Since it's Portland, journalism involves either kissing the asses of hipster fuckwads whose opinions are easier to predict than left-wing social media responses to Trump tweets, or, waiting in line to work as editor for *Exotic*. Because I enjoy paying my bills, I opted for the latter. And, eventually, John "Spooky X" Vogel handed me his job.

This is where I would normally continue the story, but I'm actually going to pause here and ask John why he chose the name "Spooky X," voluntarily, for purposes of using in print. To me, "Spooky X" could be one of three things: a Juggalo emcee who is not embraced by fellow Juggalos and, therefore, only associates with goth kids, a fictitious designer drug mentioned in a 1980s sci-fi movie or, most likely, the pen name of a man whose high school rebellion caught up to him the day he turned 40. John, let's pause here for a second and talk about your name.

Spooky X died a long time ago, Ray. I buried him when I sought out new adventures in Seattle, and with a little help from *Exotic* magazine...*Exotic Underground* was born. Jesus, how many magazines did I participate in? *Exotic Underground* was my baby, but getting off the vices wasn't helping. I had a Two-And-A-Half-Year Run expired. Broke and beaten, there was only one thing left to do...pack up the family and head south to sunny Portland, Oregon.

The element of having a family unit had no use for Spooky in Portland, or anywhere else for that matter.

So, I put him down like a rabid dog. Somehow, I became the editor again, whether I liked it or not. I held up with the deal for a few more years, and eventually decided to become DJV at the world-famous Kit Kat Club in Ankeny Alley. In addition, I continued to be the organizer/stripper wrangler for every *Miss Exotic Oregon* and *Polerotica* event until I decided I had enough.

I remember the day when we parted ways with *Exotic*, as friends and family. Ray had already gotten himself into some chaos before I ever checked into our lodge, good thing the cell had no service... (or did it?)

Ray obviously got his shit together and was knocking them dead with his razor-sharp prose and pornography. I never really got the potential use of the word "statutory" as a surname though...

Just so we are clear, "Statutory Ray" was a Juggalo emcee who was embraced by fellow Juggalos, so I don't think that needs any further explanation. Juggalos are the only group to hold a successful, nonviolent political demonstration in the last decade, by the way, so whoop whoop to that!

Okay, back to taking your job from you and then immediately realizing how poor your negotiating skills are—the first thing I did after taking my new job as editor for *Exotic*, was ask for a raise. I mean, that was before I even asked what my duties were—twenty percent, immediately (feminists, take note: the wage gap is bullshit and it's because men like John don't bother setting a good example for broads to negotiate in the workplace). After blackmailing my boss into paying me more than John asked for, I got comfortable with the gig.

As I've stated before, editing for *Exotic* goes from "Ooh, neat, I get to look at my friends naked in print" to "So, is buttplug hyphenated or not?" really quick. Any job can get boring (in a good way), regardless of how exciting it once was. Since I was (and, as a writer, still am) involved



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HAPPY HOUR NOON-3PM

in the industry because I refused to grow up beyond the "hang out with the cool losers and snort shitty coke off of someone's dad's marble table while talking to a narcissist about who his stupid band paid to open for" phase of Portland adolescence, the excitement wearing off made me realize, "Hey, maybe I'm good at doing other things for money and not just in it for the free drugs and sex." With this attitude, I decided to completely skip my middle age and opted to open a booth in a Salem antique store, while doing HTML and screen printing on the side. I am currently dating one (1) woman who is not a dancer (well, she hasn't been since late last year), I go to bed before 10pm and I recently got into Steely Dan. In other words, you can take the club out of the thug and I'm living proof.

This brings us to late last year, when I put in my three-month notice of departure from *Exotic*, sometime around August, so that I could pursue my dreams of making Salem great again—again, this was in August of 2020 when I gave my ninety-day notice. Now, I may not be good at math, but I basically got the "six weeks to flatten the curve" treatment from my plans and schemes, and here we are in May of 2021, with Ray penning yet another goodbye column. I may as well be KISS at this point, in terms of farewell tour bullshit...by the way, is anyone else joining me this summer to see KISS in Not Quite Vancouver, WA? I'm guessing John is going. John, are you going to KISS?

Not on the lips Ray, not on the lips.

To be honest, I love *Exotic* and the Portland scene. I'm still going to write *DJ Booth*, *Green Room* and *Other Column I Won't Admit To Because Cancel Culture Hasn't Died Yet*. I can't wait to return to the club as a customer someday, rich off my Dogecoin earnings and ready to throw cash at "the ladies," while being given constant reminders by the DJ that touching is not allowed. And, if that DJ turns out to be John "Spooky X" Voge, all the better. Cheers.



DELTA-8: THE INCREDIBLE EDIBLE LEGAL TREAT

GREEN ROOM DIARIES BY STONED COLD SATIVA AWESOME

It's Monday, which means "medible Monday" specials at the dispensaries. So, being the cheap bastard that I am, I went by my local weed store for some gummies. On a whim, I asked the lady behind the counter if she had anything other than the usual suspects (Wyld, Windberry, Whateverstartswithw), because I wanted to spice up my pallet. She recommended a product and told me that her shop hasn't "had any trouble with it, when it comes to legality." I had no idea what she meant by this (and, this is why I'm keeping the location anonymous), but if anything is legally questionable and flavored with sour apple, I'm going to try it.

This was four or five hours ago, but it's felt like an eternity—and, a great one at that. I spent my afternoon walking around downtown, calling children "sir" because I thought they were midgets, trying to pet geese and smiling at locals that I know I hate. This is all thanks to what was suggested to me at the dispensary—these gummies containing something called "Delta-8," an isomer (basically, a sibling that may as well be a twin, more on that in a second) of THC. For the same price as a 50mg package of normie gummies, you can grab 250mg of Smokies Edibles brand Delta-8 "Cannabis-Infused

Green Apple Gummiez." And, let me be perfectly clear—I smoke high-percentage THC every day. My tolerance is bigger than our national debt. It usu-



ally takes me three or four blunts to get started. But, with the Delta-8 gummies? I took 50mg and was on Cloud 9 (or, as the dad joke in me would say, Cloud) for the entire afternoon.

The best part? Apparently, this shit is more legal than THC, because it's de-

rived from hemp. I have no idea how this makes a variant of THC legal, but I'm not the type to ask questions in the face of new drugs. The package I ate from does say "cannabis-infused," but the terms "hemp" and "cannabis" are as broad as the term "stripper" or "sex worker," in that they are interchangeable in many circumstances, but vastly different in other contexts, depending on who is asking. Either way, when it comes to the botanical science, "too long, didn't read" as the kids online say.

However, I did read up on the legality of Delta-8, because my weedhead girlfriend is flying to Florida next month to test out her new vaccine (and the TSA people are apparently cool with CBD—another mostly legal green product). What's even weirder, is that there are a handful of states in which Delta-8 has been deemed illegal, but beyond the obvious ones (Utah, Idaho, etc.), there sits...Colorado? Weed mecca of the west, land of Boulder and home of at least two thousand dispensaries named after the Rockies?! Weird. But, as my attorney always said, "legal in Florida is legal in Florida." So, on to why my wifey-in-training is able to bring this shit with her on her COVID challenge trip...

For those of you who weed napped through chemistry class, an isomer is a molecule or ion that shares similar molecular makeup with another molecule or ion. Everyone reading this already knows what Delta-9 is, because... plot twist, it's commonly referred to as Delta-9 THC. Yep—that THC. Through some sort of weed wizardry that I will never understand, canna-scientists have given us Delta-8 THC, a THC that isn't *technically* the "real" THC, the same way that Sublime With Rome is technically not the real Sublime. If someone was tested for "having seen Sublime live," no, Sublime With Rome would not yield a positive test result. But, if the end goal of seeing Sublime live is to hear some Boomer white dude karaoke his way through the lyrics of "Santeria," then yeah, Sublime With Rome is the same thing. Other Delta-8 THC comparisons would be The Misfits, The Ramones, Starbucks that are located inside Safeways and Hawthorne Strip—literally one degree off from the version you grew up on, but in many ways, faster and better.

Speaking of speed (not the drug, but the physics that the movie *Speed* was based upon), the Delta-8 gummies I ate hit me quicker than the frat boy whose ass I accidentally bumped into on the walk home. Ho-lee-shit. Comparing this stuff to booze, if regular weed gummies are wine and blunts are beer, Delta-8 is like a shot of vodka injected directly into one's liver. I'm pretty sure I was high by the time I figured out how to re-seal the first necessary childproof bag I've ever been given at a dispensary. This is, of course, because "eight" is easier to break down than "nine," in complex science terms or something. The lady at the dispensary mentioned this, but this is a drug column in a nudie magazine, so I won't get all Neil Degross Hawkins on you right now.

Did I forget to mention that "green apple gummy flavor" is not something that goes well with "just eat one?" I just

ate two more of these things and now I gotta wrap this article up before I forget what I'm talking about.

So, this stuff is a legal isomer of the illegal THC. Does that mean you can fly with it, to Florida and back? Yes. But, can you stop in Colorado on the way? No. Oh, and will you test positive for "THC" if you apply for a job? Well, that's another shitty part of weed laws—while (currently) federally legal (which Delta-9 THC isn't), the standard drug tests required to work for Wagie, Inc. are not complex enough to differentiate Delta-8 from Delta-9. You will test "positive for weed" if you apply for a job at FedEx (which is fucking

Sadly, as a lowercase-L libertarian, I've been through this ride before, with e-cigarettes, homemade AR-15s and cryptocurrency—legal ambiguity never ends up on the side of the people. Sooner or later, this shit *will* end up getting the same treatment as "regular-ass" Delta-9 THC. This is why I am stocking up on a ton of it now, while it's still cheap. And, you should, too—do your own research, of course, but definitely get while the getting is good.

Lastly—and, most importantly—the effects of Delta-8 THC are very, very similar to the "hot tub" effects of THC, but without the paranoia (and, sur-



ironic, considering what half of their packages contain). However, if you're working for a company that is willing to let you submit your own drug test, you can pay out the ass to prove you don't have any Delta-9 THC in your system. So, if you're broke and looking for a job, no dice. But, if you work for Tesla or some shit and want to apply at Spaceforce, you can probably eat as many Delta-8 gummies as you can cram into your astronaut suit, as long as you get an in-depth drug test, from a lab that isn't located in a strip mall.

prisingly, no crash or instant nap). The research says there are "no psychoactive effects," but that's utter bullshit, in the same way that weed is supposedly "non-addictive." Sure, you won't be giving handies in the Hot Cake House restroom for bags of it, but if you're out of stock and can't find any, it sucks. But, speaking of said "non-addictive" addiction, if I had to travel without "regular" THC for any reason, Delta-8 would serve as a beyond reasonable alternative. I don't know what kind of "high" this is, but I'm [*whatever type of high this is*] as fuck.

TALES FROM THE DJ BOOTH

BY DJ HAZMATT



Strip club DJs come in all shapes, sizes, races and ages—but, there is one thing that we all share in common: an MP3 folder full of the same dozen songs that have been deemed “safe” to play for pretty much any dancer or crowd. However, we rarely stop to reflect on the messages we are sending by playing these supposedly one-size-fits-all strip club jams. And, no, I’m not talking about obviously messed-up choices like “She Talks To Angels” or “P.I.M.P.” Rather, I’m going to be unpacking the problematic elements of songs that have been systematically given privilege, due to historical inequality. Okay, now that I’m speaking the Portland language, here is my list of songs that need to be removed from every strip club DJ’s playlist.

2 Chainz - “Birthday Song”

After declaring that he would like to be buried in a shopping mall after he dies, rapper and jewelry minimalist, 2 Chainz, opens “Birthday Song” with the following hook: “They ask me what I do and who I do it for (yeah) /

And how I come up with this shit up in the studio (yeah) /

All I want for my birthday is a big booty hoe (true) /

All I want for my birthday is a big booty hoe (tell ‘em).”

At this point, we, the listeners, are quite familiar with what 2 Chainz wants for his birthday...but that doesn’t answer the question as to what he does, who he does it for and how he comes up with shit in the studio. Hey, 2 Chainz, the people demand *answers*. Did you forget about your constituents? And, yes, this comparison of Mr. Chainz to a politician is no mistake—it’s the age-old, bipartisan trick of leading into what truly concerns the people, but then switching things up, so you can first ask the people for material goods. In this case, “material goods” may refer to a big

booty hoe, but it could be anything—all politicians play this scummy trick:

“People are asking if I will forgive student debt (yeah) /

And if we’re getting another stimulus check (yeah) /

All I want for 2022 is to get re-elected (true) /

All I want for 2022 is to get re-elected (tell ‘em).”

I mean, I can’t really tell the difference at all. Can you? Make a bunch of promises, pretend to care and then just straight up ask for a nice piece of ass (or the monetary equivalent, which has actually gone up during quarantine).

So, I ask you, 2 Chainz, do you really care about your fans enough to share your goals and secrets, or was this song just another lame attempt to GoFundHoe a big booty birthday gift? How do you come up with

that shit up in the studio? The Koch brothers? George Soros??? WHO IS FUNDING YOUR CHAINZ, SIR?

Mötley Crüe - “Girls, Girls, Girls”

“Friday night and I need a fight /

My motorcycle and a switchblade knife /

Handful of grease in my hair feels right /

But what I need to make me tight are /

Girls, Girls, Girls.”

It’s the weekend—Friday, specifically. And, the boys in Mötley Crüe are armed with switchblades and looking to beat someone up. So, they get on their motorcycles and... head to the strip club? Come on, Vince. Have you ever *been* to a strip club? If so, why do you plan on sneaking a knife past the bouncers, with the intention on instigating physical violence? This is why we can’t have nice



clubs, guys. And, to make things worse, Mötley Crüe doesn't just sing about any old club. No, they mention the exact names and locations of the clubs, in which they plan on slashing up strangers. The Dollhouse in Ft. Lauderdale must *love* the free publicity... jerks. "Come to our bar, stab someone and take a stripper home" isn't the type of motto that any respectable club wants on their reader board. "We don't play rap music here because it promotes violence," the closet racist manager tells the DJ. Uh-huh. Sure. Ice Cube brags that he didn't have to use his A.K., but these young lads are just running around in hairspray, waving switchblades at naked women. Sounds like a fair set of standards, David Duke.

Journey - "Don't Stop Believing"

"Just a small town girl /

Living in a lonely world /

She took the midnight train going anywhere /

Just a city boy /

Born and raised in South Detroit /

He took the midnight train going anywhere."

Okay, there is so much to unpack here, it's beyond frustrating. First of all, you cannot catch a train after 10pm anywhere on Amtrak's route. I am unaware of any other company that offers an alternate train service, but as a betting man, I'm going to assume that some upscale, indie start-up that offers niche railroad service at midnight, is not stopping *anywhere* near the Motor City. Further, I doubt that a single woman from a small town would feel comfortable even boarding such a train, so we're just going to assume that this whole interaction between South Detroit

Boy and his lonely girlfriend-in-the-making never happened.

But, if Journey is simply exaggerating for poetic effect, then let's look at the other begged questions that arise from this "wasted white person at a wedding" anthem (that has paid a significant portion of my rent, so I'm not just being a hater). What the fuck are "streetlight people," if not an army of brainless zombies, walking the pavement after dark, heading "anywhere" to avoid loneliness? And, why would the two protagonists of our story want anything to do with said people? What "movie" goes "on and on and on," while also referencing rail travel and South Detroit? Robocop? Beverly Hills Cop? Big Money Hustlas? I can't think of a single Michigan-inspired flick (yes, Axel Foley is from Detroit) that features even the slightest mention of a single railroad tie.

And, if not a non-existent midnight train, what are strangers waiting for up and down the boulevard? If they're waiting for a ride, then why are they *hiding*? Do they know how fucking hard it is for a taxi to find people who do this kind of thing? "Yeah, Uber, I'd like a pickup from 'somewhere in the night,' and, oh yeah, I'm from the D." Good luck getting that lift home, yo. Try not to get stabbed.

Did I mention that this is supposedly an age-old love story that repeats over time? "This guy got on a train and a girl got on the same train, but neither one knew where it was going. The end." But, then again, perhaps life isn't about the destination...

Slayer - "Angel Of Death"

It's a song about the holocaust. For fuck's sake, just play "Dead Skin Mask" and tell the dancer it's "Angel Of Death." Anne Frank will

finally stop frowning on you from beyond the grave.

Sir Mix-A-Lot - "Baby Got Back"

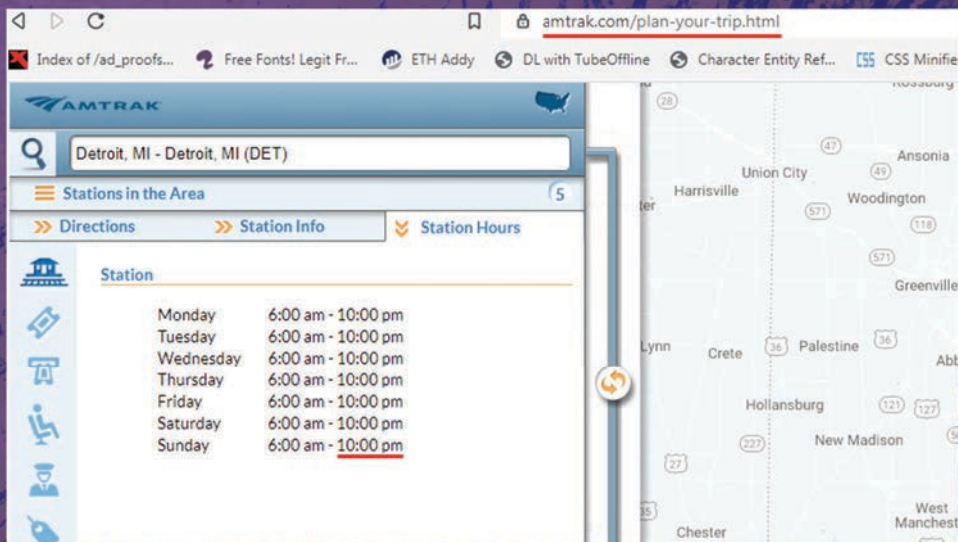
Everyone and their mom know this song, so I'm not going to insult our readers by quoting it. But, does anyone realize that a "healthy butt" is not one attached to someone with 36-24-36 proportions at only 63 inches tall??? If a woman (or a man) has "little in the middle," but is rocking enough back to cause one's homeboys to shout, they're looking at an extremely risky case of spinal injury, caused by high cholesterol and a genetic predisposition to mild dwarfism. If Mix-A-Lot cannot lie, then why is he proclaiming pseudoscience and encouraging women to stop listening to workout tapes? I mean, sure, the driver's seat of a Honda is no place to be emulating the gymnastic strategies of Jane Fonda, but that's beside the point—Jane Fonda's *Original Workout* tape is the highest selling VHS release of all time (dead serious, look it up). This means, that the statistical chance of Mix-A-Lot finding a woman who is barely five feet tall with a gigantic ass—and, that said woman never purchased a copy of the best-selling videotape ever—is less than the chance of someone being unfamiliar with this song. Oh, and let's not forget, that the same rapper encourages hooties over Hondas, as well as buttermilk biscuits, the average of which contains over 49 calories *per serving*. Have you ever tried to eat just one buttermilk biscuit? Those things are like crack. So, we're talking at least 245 calories per haul. All while driving around in a vehicle that violates D.E.Q. emissions standards? On Broadway??? I'm really starting to wonder who knighted "Sir" Mix-A-Lot-Of-Lies.

AC/DC - "You Shook Me All Night Long"

This is AC/DC's shortest song, next to "Big Balls" and "I Forgot The Title (Because It Sounds Like Everything Else From The Post-Bon Era)." We're talking about a band that milks Iron Maiden-lite riffs for over five minutes, while singing about one of two topics (physics and/or women). They have done this 175 times.

So, this brings us to "You Shook Me All Night Long," a love anthem that expresses one's desire to make love to a woman for the duration of an entire evening...or, three minutes and thirty-eight seconds. Ladies, if your man promises to screw you until the sun comes up, but pulls out less than four minutes into Tryst, he's probably an AC/DC fan.

TalesFromTheDJBooth.com



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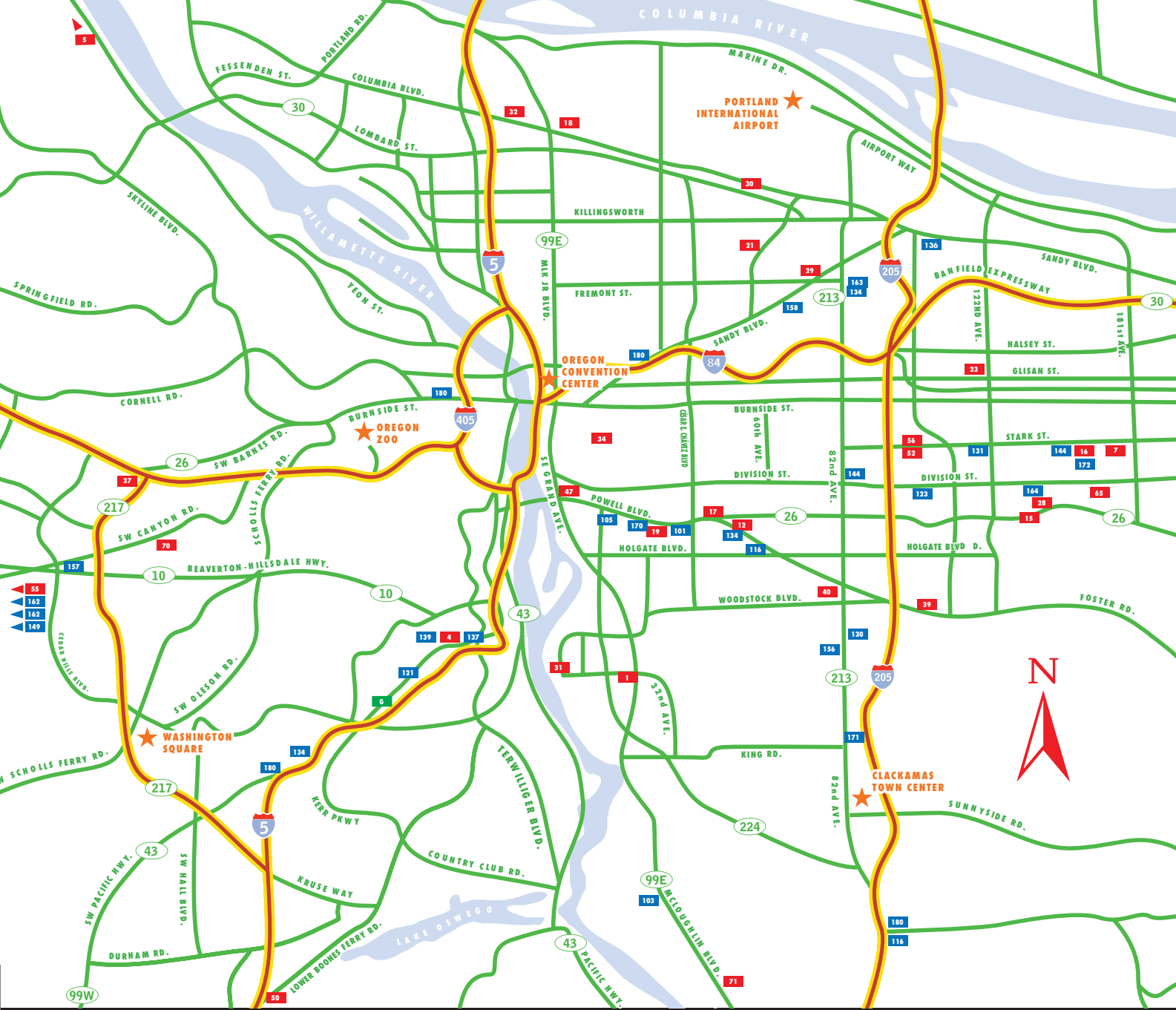
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SHOP TALK

BY JENNA PATRON

HE SERIOUSLY JUST WHIPPED IT OUT

I worked as a “lingerie model.” Throughout the Portland area, there are several shops in which guys (and gals and anyone who wants to stop by) are given a private striptease show, similar to a private dance, but more...well, private. There is a “glass tobacco pipe” euphemism that refers to our shops as “lingerie modeling,” in case a committed husband is out shopping for lingerie to give to his loving wife, but needs a second opinion and/or model to make sure it fits. And, of course, a hundred-plus-per-hour service offered at three in the morning is just the place to have a model demonstrate how well your wife’s new gift will fit...right?

Here’s what really happens at the shop, which is totally legal and equally obvious—guys come in, watch the show, bust a nut onto a towel if needed and then leave. Some ask for specifics (dirty talk, fantasy shows, etc.) while others just watch, enjoy and bail. It’s typically a pretty boring-in-a-good-way gig. But, even with explicitly understood terms and conditions regarding what one will receive in a “not-quite-a-brothel-but-better-than-a-strip-club” environment, some folks never cease to surprise me.

During one particularly slow evening, a short, older, stringy-haired, tweaker-looking gentlemen walked in and asked if we had any “strippers available.” Typically, this would not be anything out of the norm—but, in this particular case, the guy in question didn’t appear to have either the money or the interest in obtaining a show. If anything, he was the definition of “rando who just walks in off the streets and back out again without buying anything.” So, being the slightly judgmental-but-still-optimistic person I am, I informed the sketchy look-

ing old dude (he had to be pushing 90 years old) that shows start at a hundred bucks and move up from there, with various other options (kinks, outfits, etc.) being available at increasingly more expensive increments.

"Okay," the old tweaker dude said, before leaving to "go get money" (yeah, right) and letting me get back to my in-between-customer nap time. I didn't expect him to return, so I started to doze off.

However, shortly after the man I will refer to as "Gollum" left the shop to go get money, he, well...came back with money—like, a lot of money. I have no idea where (or how) he obtained such a large amount of cash in such a short time, but there it was, a giant wad of dirty, cash-money, pre-COVID currency.

Walking up to the front entrance lobby, Gollum held out a baseball-sized ball of cash and asked me how much it was to get started, to which I replied "a hundred bucks just to get the show going." Gollum peeled a single, hundred-dollar bill off the top of his money knot and I immediately felt bad for profiling the guy (that, or thankful that I was oblivious as to the source of his newly-obtained cash flow). Figuring, "Who am I to judge?," I took Gollum to a room and we started the show.

Normally, I would begin a dance with a striptease while the customer relaxed on his side of the room. However, this would usually be accompanied by the customer removing some or all of his clothing, to "enjoy the show" (rub one out) on one of the several towels provided by the shop—Gollum, on the other hand, was just sitting there, fully clothed, looking around the room as if I was the last thing on his mind. But, hey, money is money so I just kept the show going, removing clothing and dancing around as if it was for

any other customer. Some guys don't like to whip it out and I'm not going to complain about a dude who just wants to sit there, fully clothed.

I did, however, remind Gollum that it was okay to relax, get comfortable and do what he needed to do, in order to fully enjoy the show. With this, Gollum unzipped his pants by maybe an inch or two worth of zipper and then just sat back as if his Al Bundy posture was all he needed to enjoy his time at the "jack shack." Whatever he's into, that's his thing. If he wanted to get the same experience he could at a strip club, then that's fine with me. So, I began to dance.



After a song or two, I turned around from shaking my ass, to face Gollum. And, well, that's when he whipped it out—it was the longest, skinniest, dirtiest, whitest, most frail one I'd ever seen and my customer was now offering to stuff it in my mouth...of course, I'm not talking about a dick, but a real-life, actual, honest-to-god crack pipe. You read that right—homeboy just up and whipped out his crack, lit it up and then looked at me as if nothing was wrong. I'm used to seeing dicks, just not glass ones.

"Umm, you can't do that in here," I told my crack-smoking customer.

"Oh, I thought you said I could have my pants down," he replied as if he wasn't literally smoking crack in my workplace.

"No, not that. I mean the crack. You can't just smoke that in here."

Apologetically, Gollum immediately did what any morally upstanding human would do and apologized...for not offering me some first.

"My bad, did you want to hit it before I do?" he asked, while leaning forward toward me, zipper half-undone (with no sign of an erection), crack pipe in one hand and lighter in the other. This is the one part of my job that I've always had a problem with—explaining to customers the whole "Yes, you are allowed to touch yourself in our private establishment, but no, you can't smoke crack while doing so" logic. Yeah, I know...it's pretty authoritarian and fascist of the owner, but the towels we provide can't clean up a crack fire. It's also extremely illegal to smoke crack in any Portland-area establishment, regardless of said establishment's rules regarding nudity or adult entertainment. Adult theater, strip club, XXX video store, Taco Bell bathroom, lingerie modeling shop or otherwise—even if nudity is common, it is still against Oregon law to fire up a crack rock indoors (especially now, with all the COVID laws and such, but this was back in simpler times).

"Yeah, I can't have you smoking that in here. But, you can still enjoy the show," I told the visibly disappointed Gollum, who replied with an apologetic, disappointed nod.

Gollum had maybe ten to twelve songs left for his hour, but I went ahead and danced for about two more before asking him if he enjoyed the show. After all, I was the last thing he was looking at—his eyes were dart-

ing around the room like flies looking for an open window that didn't exist, high as hell on (or, possibly, coming down from) whatever substance was in his crack pipe (I know, I'm judging here...it could have been completely legal and healthy CBD powder extract or something, but I'm gonna go out on a limb that intersects with 82nd Avenue and assume it wasn't).

"Oh, is the show over?" he asked, digging through his pockets and rocking, while his eyes scanned the room. There was no way in hell that he had any sense of time or place, so a few skipped songs likely didn't register on his time-and-space radar. For a second, I thought he was going to steal something or try to rob me. But, that giant wad of cash he brought with him suggested that any theft or robbery Gollum had planned on engaging in had already taken place.

"Yeah, we're done unless you want some more time," I told my still-clothed but no-longer-high-enough customer.

"No, that's fine. Here's a tip. I'll see you later," Gollum told me as he stood up and bolted for the door. "Huh," I thought. "That was easy money and the only thing I had to remind him not to do was smoke crack." In this industry, girls see and hear all sorts of shit, up to and including requests for sex (not allowed), violent or heavily inappropriate fantasies and role play (which I choose not to do) and propositions to "hang out after work" (which I also choose not to do). Hell, I've even had customers subtly offer me lines of coke, which I definitely choose not to do (and is also not allowed), but cocaine is something that can be consumed from on top of a key, while hiding in the corner. It's more discreet, because coke doesn't give off a strong odor, unless you're fucking *smoking* it inside a lingerie shop. Customers

occasionally even try to snort "legal medications," but that's never been any of my business—correction, the time I walked in on a customer using my vibrator to grind down Xanax pills, that was my business and yes, I made him pay for the vibrator. But, no one ever drilled a hole in one of my dildos and filled it with crack rock.

Back to Gollum, I thought he had all but disappeared into the darkness of the Portland streets, until my next show, which was with a "normal" customer (the kind who just shows up, enjoys the dance, does his business and leaves). This guy, who I will call "Norm," was relaxing in his chair, quietly, while I was dancing with my ass



facing toward him. Suddenly, I noticed a bag of white, powdery substance that I *guessed* belonged to Gollum, laying right in front of me on the floor. I swept the bag up with my hand as I was dancing, then tossed it into the trashcan, hoping Norm wouldn't notice. "Hey, what was that!?" Norm asked.

"Huh? Oh, nothing just a piece of trash." "No, what was that??? Was that a condom?!" Norm demanded to know, as he was clearly concerned for his own health and/or safety.

"That was not a condom. We don't do that kind of show here," I told Norm, forgetting to mention the other types

of shows that are not allowed, such as crack-smoking shows. "It was probably something a customer dropped." "Let me see," Norm demanded. "Fine," I told him. "You can dig through the trash and you'll find a white baggie with something in it that isn't mine. Feel free to take it if you want." "Oh, uh...never-mind."

"Okay then, let's get back to our dance," I said, while continuing to twerk while my customer did whatever it was he wanted, by himself, that didn't involve smoking crack or looking for floor condoms.

After the show with Norm, Gollum returned to the shop in a panic. "Hey, uh, I think I left something here," he said while looking around.

I had to spell it out. "No, you didn't. And, if you did, I would have thrown it away. Because, whatever it was, it was probably illegal and perhaps something that belonged in that pipe you whipped out—the one that doesn't belong in our establishment."

Gollum looked let down, similar to how he felt when I politely declined his offer to share crack with a lingerie model, inside of a poorly ventilated (and very clean) establishment. "Okay, thanks anyways," he said, while turning around in a slump and leaving once again.

However, Norm hadn't left. He just stood there, staring at me and wondering what just happened, in terms of my random interaction with a crackhead asking for his stuff back.

I took Norm's money, thanked him for his time and said, "I told you it wasn't a condom."

So, welcome to the shop. Yes, you can whip it out, but no, no one is going to touch it and you can't stick it in my mouth. The same goes for crack pipes.

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DEAD LEAVES IN THE SUN: PART 7 BY CM BROWN

The End Of The Line wasn't much different from the beginning. I stepped off the train, onto another platform of dripping shadows, but this time, there were no lights or stairs. The doors of the train slid shut and it stayed put, blocking the tunnel in the direction ahead, and back the way I came wasn't going to solve any cases. So, I did a few rounds of the platform and then stopped in the middle, looking at my shoes and pondering what that weirdo on the train was planning for dinner on a night like this. The drip started to sound like the walls were salivating and grinding their jaws around me. I tried to think of it as rain, and as I did so, I noticed something funny. It wasn't dripping on me. In fact, there were no puddles around to speak of and the air seemed dry. I walked around again, listening at the dripping and trying to discern a source. It moved around on me, one moment across the tracks and the next just over my shoulder. I decided

that the dripping was fucking with me.

Not being one to back down from an impossible situation, I started shuffling in a slowly expanding spiral, as I heard that ants separated from the nest and people lost in the woods, should do. On about the third turn, I was sure that the dripping was coming from somewhere off to the right, where there was a wall. It was a solid wall. A wall that asked who's asking. I quit the spiral and went to see what was up with the wall.

It was trying to pretend it had nothing to do with the small crevice, hidden by a shadow in the corner. Just out of reach, drops plunked sweetly into puddles on the other side, playful like. I squeezed myself against the wall and reached an arm and leg through, knee and shoulder protesting. A small kind of music started from somewhere down there, light percussion sweeping up with the dripping,

while a few strings strummed in tandem with the rushing sound in my head. As I exhaled all the air left in my chest and scraped my way through, ribcage crushing, panic in my head saying turn around and also saying too late now. I gritted my teeth and pushed through the claustrophobic crevice, thinking rats can squeeze themselves down to a quarter of their size or something like that...and it was too late to turn back now. After a lifetime of inching forward, I was birthed onto the wet pavement, ready to kick-off my stubborn, right ankle that eventually came with me. I took large breaths on the cracked floor, as all my exposed skin burned raw with a phantom infection from God knows what was on those walls. A small drip splashed on my head. Another drip followed it, and together, they trickled down through my eyebrows. The music was in stride now, the brush strokes on hi-hat light as a feather and the strings droning something

like a transition song between scenes. A gloaming music. It faded as I stood up.

If turning back was unlikely before, it was impossible now. I've never been good at making decisions and prefer to be at the whim of things outside of my control, so while some would consider being stuck in a place like this to be a bad spot, I felt right where I should be, if I were someone who said shit like 'should be' or 'destined to.' Regardless, the darkness before me remained and I let the tunnel be a tunnel. I walked forward at a leisurely pace and let the dripping start up the song from earlier. It played an odd tempo this time, as if someone were missing from the ensemble—the drips hitting every other spot on something like a 4/4 rhythm.

The air was warm and humid and smelled musty and metallic-like, inside something rather than just underneath something. After a short time of walking, the tunnel curved to the right and then to the left and so forth, until I could no longer pretend to keep track of the direction I was heading. Sometimes, the walls would grow closer and then farther apart again, and if I got to stepping faster, they would seem to pulsate like something breathing. Or, they were digesting. My feet were getting wet from slogging through the puddles of the dripping. I was starting to think, this was the wrong sound to follow in the first place. After a few more gurgling, splashing turns, I took a break and sat on my haunches in the posture my middle school gym teacher used to call 'Ho Chi Minh City Squat,' because Saigon wasn't a place anymore. He thought he was really clever. I pulled out a cigarette and lit it quickly, as if feral enemies lurked out of sight. Smoking in total darkness

makes the darkness that much uncannier; you expect to see the smoke leaving your face, and when it doesn't, you get that vertigo-sick feeling of something's not right. I pulled out the flask and it was getting down to the sad part. Panic started to set in as I cursed and

bad. I whistled a few notes of a happy tune that dropped dead and echo-less around me like invisible leaves in the darkness.

I started getting flashbacks to the time I'd spent in solitary as a younger and



threw the cigarette off into the nothing. It bounced a few times, before sputtering out—the cherry leaving a pinwheel arc of red, like the saddest, loneliest firework on a deserted planet—long after the bombs had dropped, when the grid was knocked out and the gasoline went

smarter man, so I stood my ass up and kept walking. Not the time to start talking to myself. The Blue Jay would've loved this place.

As I continued to turn this way and that, I started feeling that this would be a pret-

ty good metaphor for my life— counselors and therapists standing up in their seats, on the edge of a breakthrough. A labyrinthine exploration of both the outer and inner landscapes, etc. I took a second break and squeezed my eyes shut hard, until bursts of light formed on the wine-stained curtain of my eyelids, and I didn't wake up in bed, with clean sheets and the sun slanting through the shades, with small, quiet birds chirping just outside, while I wasn't late for anything. I pinched my arm. I crouched down again, against a moist wall and finished the flask, pouring out nothing for the fallen. The wall was mossy, wet and I figured that I could start sucking on the stuff for nourishment in a day or two. The whiskey did its slow-burn thing down in my gut and I nodded off.

I opened my eyes in a dream of gossamer blue light that threatened to shatter if I coughed or something. I held my dream breath and watched as a beta fish drifted

past, its fins as light as kelp in the current or breeze. It turned its hollow fish face to me and opened its mouth and closed it; the fins drifting bloomed fully in such a delicate way, for such a martial creature. The fish evaporated, as red cream stirred into a blue coffee and out of the purple murk—Jane's dead face hung for a moment and blinked blearily at me, and then it all went black.

When you live your best life the way I do, you get used to waking up in places far from the last home you remember, but opening my eyes in this tunnel, still got my goat. Aside from the aphasic dark-

ness and damp, it was a different tunnel than the one I'd passed out in. The mossy walls were mossier and closer. The air was stifling and wet now and smelled like blood and urine, with a musky, slumbering animal tint to it—like a leather jacket draped over the driver's seat of a decaying backyard Chevy on blocks in the rain. I put my hand against the wall to stand up, but quickly withdrew it. It was warm, like flesh. I tentatively put my palm back again and held it there until I could be sure. It was unmistakable. This fucking wall had a pulse.



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THREE THINGS THAT ARE

CANCELED

by Blazer Sparrow

IN THE POST-COVID LOCAL MUSIC SCENE

We're almost there, folks. Cases are down and vaccines are rolling out. Fairly soon, Mr. Gates will activate those microchips; instead of being subtly manipulated with well-algorithmed ads, we'll buy dumb shit during mini-fugue states. But, I digress.

With the world returning to some normalcy, we can only assume that live music will rear its ugly head once again. As much as it didn't seem like it, pre-COVID (especially in Portland), the demand is clearly there. An endless slew of Brady Bunch split-screen COVID jams and Livestream events have proven this. Along with the memes decrying the absence of live music for over a year now.

It's not going to be the same. At least not for a while. The germaphobes are probably not going to feel safe to come out for another five years and everyone else will get cold feet before hop-

ping into the sweaty whirlpool of flesh that is the mosh pit. Still, those arenas and theaters gotta pay their back rent, and people want to see their favorite acts. However, these more significant, more professional venues are not my jurisdiction. My snide commentary is reserved for the paltry local scene that will probably also rise from the ashes reasonably soon. Bars can't do karaoke every night.

God knows that too many local groups are just itchin' to get back out there. It's gonna happen. But, before we all pile in the van and piss off the sound guy, I think this year off has given us the chance to do some house cleaning. There have been some incredible innovations in technology to try and work around this whole crowd debacle. It was kind of cool to have a world-changing event to bring us all together, but the following things are *verboten* in Blazer's new musical utopia.

Brady Bunch Split Screen COVID Jams & Livestream Events

As mentioned above, this was a neat way to simulate that whole live music thing, but we all know it was about as good a substitute for the real thing as I Can't Believe It's Not Butter. We pretend we can't believe it, but we can all very much believe it. Although Grimes—in all her electro-twee Canadian wisdom—insists that live music will soon be obsolete. I insist that precisely the opposite will happen. While tech wizardry has allowed for some really neat not-a-live-show-but-sorta experiences, I think the people would much rather have the real, sweaty deal. Music in its modern form has two halves. The performed and the recorded. If you want not to leave your house or put on pants, there are things called recordings—be they on vinyl, cassette tape, or non-fuckable tokens or what-



ever the hell they're called. Despite what Elon Musk's baby mama says, that other half is something you, unfortunately, have to put on pants for. Or not. Who knows what social norms will be like post-COVID. Bottomless dance parties are a thing.

The Guest List

I appreciate Dante's doubling up on this sentiment. The Guest List, also known as "The List," to those who can't shell out five fucking dollars to see their friends perform say they are "On," is now canceled. Hopefully forever. Look, unless you are a roadie, a merch bitch, or the fucking manager, pay to get in the goddamn show. If you're a guy-with-camera, sorry photographer, the publication you shoot for will reimburse the price of your ticket. Even if you're fucking someone in the band, be a good sport and throw down some dollars at the door. When you drink at your significant other's bar, do you expect free drinks? I mean, I know you do, but you shouldn't. It makes your fuckbuddy look bad. We're all trying to pay rent and buy groceries, goddamnit. Once the world opens back up, we have a chance to make live music that's not propped up by

massive entertainment conglomerates a thing again. We can build from the ground up. We don't even have to wear pants if we don't want to!

Bedroom Pop

Before you accuse me of being an old man yelling at a cloud, hear me out. Bedroom Pop is fine and dandy, and, as a far-leftist, I support artists seizing the means of music production with their laptops. I think there is some uncertainty with this fad of lonely,

sad sacks plunking away on toy keyboards, preparing us for how to deal with this year of isolation artistically. The progression of this genre from the mid-2010s onward, arguably peaked around 2019 with Little Miss Eilish pulling a Christopher Cross at the Grammys. And, perfect timing, cause when the plague hit, every singer-songwriter had an acceptable template to refer to when trying to connect with all of us stuck in our bedroom. It's almost like it was planned [*tightens tinfoil hat.*] However. Once we're all allowed out of the bedroom, I think it's time for this disco to finally die. Instead, take your laptop to the garage or the basement and record your friends playing poorly. Learn to keep time and play poorly together. Isolation had its time in the spotlight, and thanks to COVID-19, it got a sunburn. Let's bring back neighborhood hip hop crews, bratty suburban punk bands—hell—convene with fellow nerds using laptops and do the Kraftwerk thing. It's time to stop playing with yourself and start playing with friends. You don't even have to wear pants!





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