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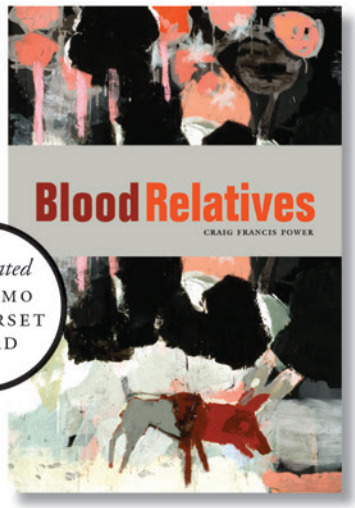

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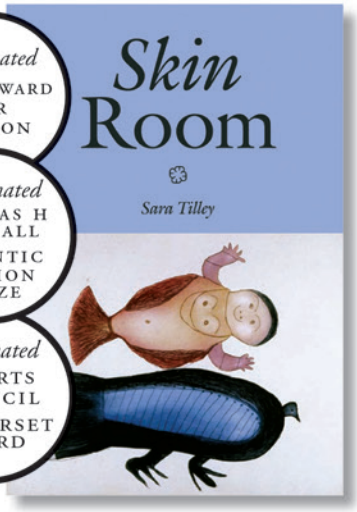
2010 BMO WINTERSET AWARD



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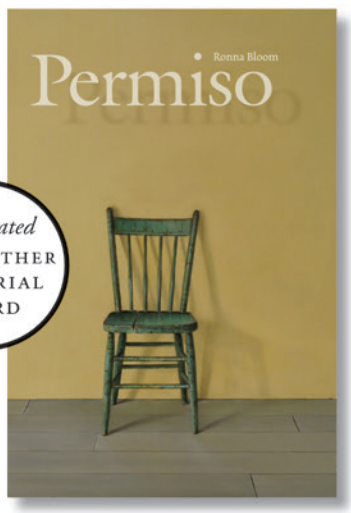

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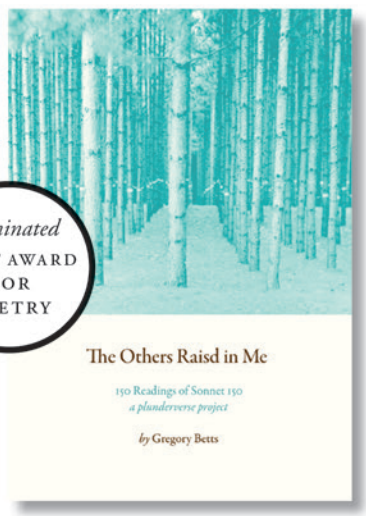

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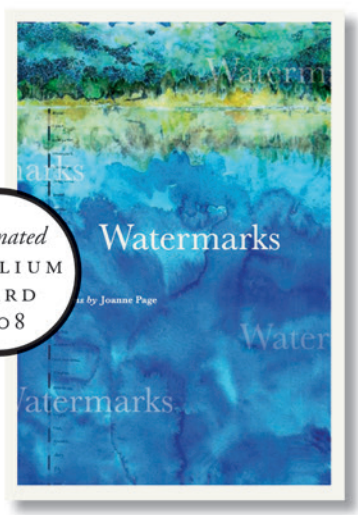

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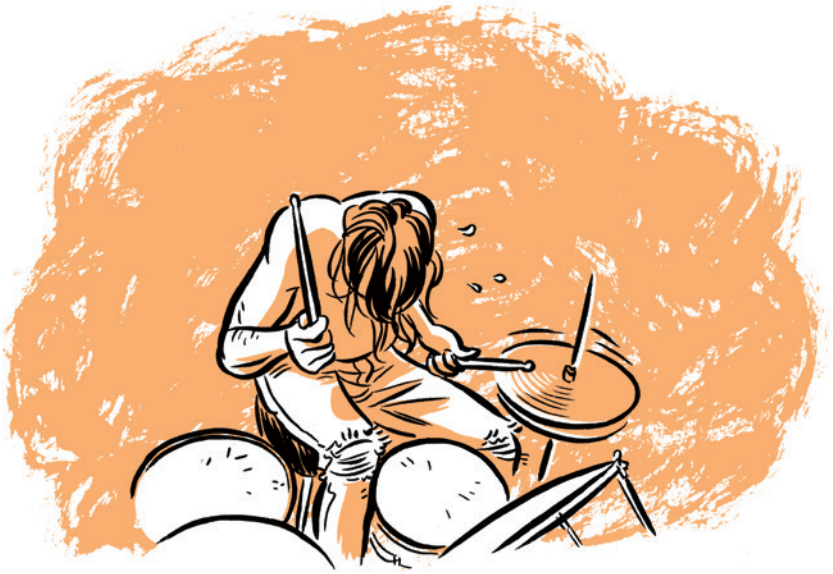
TADDLE CREEK

A HIGHER STANDARD OF STANDARDNESS

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH NUMBER, FOR CHRISTMAS, 2011



THE CONTRIBUTORS

Adrienne Weiss ("The Straw Man," p. 7) lives in the Junction Triangle. She is the author of the poetry collection *Awful Gestures* (Insomniac, 2001). She teaches part-time and writes sometimes.

James Lindsay ("They Have a Music," p. 9) lives in Parkdale. He is the co-owner of Pleasence Records. His work has been published in *Prairie Fire* and *Pilot.*

Laura Trethewey ("Boom Times," p. 12) lives in Parkdale. She is the assistant editor of *Broken Pencil* and still manages to churn out the occasional zine every few years. Her work has appeared in the *Globe and Mail, National Post,* and *Toronto Life.*

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Jennifer LoveGrove ("Clairvoyant," p. 19) divides her time between Davenport and Haliburton, Ontario. She is the author of the poetry collections *The Dagger Between Her Teeth* (ECW, 2002) and *I Should Never Have Fired the Sentinel* (ECW, 2005). She currently is working on a novel and new poems.

Thomas Blanchard (photographs, p. 21 & 35) lives in Rua Açores.

Pascal Blanchet ("I Love You," p. 30) lives in Trois-Rivières, Quebec. His work has appeared in the *New Yorker* and on the covers of Penguin books. His graphic novels include *Nocturne* (Pastèque, 2011) and *Baloney* (Drawn & Quarterly, 2009).

Jackie Linton ("Imperfect Clarity," p. 40) is a student in the publishing program at New York University. She is a graduate of the University of Toronto, where she edited the *Hart House Review.* Currently, she publishes the independent arts and culture quarterly *Bad Day.*

Lauren Kirshner ("Tupelo," p. 49) lives in Dufferin Grove. Her first novel, *Where We Have to Go* (M. & S., 2009), was short-listed for the Toronto Book Award, has been translated into German and Dutch, and soon will be published in the U.S. Recently, she was appointed the writer-in-residence for the County of Brant Public Library, and is at work on her second novel.

Dave Lapp (*People Around Here,* p. 52) lives near the Church-Wellesley Village. His most recent collection is *Children of the Atom* (Conundrum, 2010). In 2012 Conundrum will publish a collection of his slice-o'-life comic strip, *People Around Here,* which has appeared on the magazine's back page since 2004. One of these strips also appears in *The Best American Comics 2011.*

Ethan Rilly ("The Spots") lives in Montreal. He is an illustrator and an award-winning cartoonist. The second issue of his comic book, *Pope Hats,* recently was published by AdHouse Books.

Matthew Daley (The Cover) lives in Liberty Village. His work has appeared in *Broken Pencil, Exclaim!, Spacing, Cottage Life,* and the *Wall Street Journal.* His Web comic, *Mr. Monitor,* appears semi-regularly in *Broken Pencil* and on brokenpencil.com.

SECTION ILLUSTRATIONS BY IAN PHILLIPS

TADDLE CREEK

THE LEADER OF THE BAND
Conan Tobias

THE STAND-UP BASS
Kevin Connolly

THE KEYBOARDS
Joyce Byrne

THE CYMBALS
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THE GROUPIE
Amy Stupavsky

THE SLEEVE DESIGNER
Conan Tobias

THE ROADIE
John Montgomery

THE LIGHTING
Matthew Daley

THE BACKUP BAND
Tim Davin, James Lindsay, Jay Somerset

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THE EPHEMERA

Game Over

Recently, a writer challenged *Taddle Creek* on its (generally accepted) stance of not italicizing the titles of modern video games. The magazine was somewhat dismissive of the argument, as it has heard it many times before, usually from someone without much editorial experience who just likes video games and doesn't see the lack of logic in their argument. Nonetheless, *Taddle Creek* said it would present its thinking officially at the first opportunity. The magazine does not relish rehashing the argument, but it does so enjoy proving people wrong.

First, some quick background: as any style guide worth its weight in en dashes will tell you, standalone works of art such as books, paintings, magazines, movies, and albums (there it is–the link to this issue's music theme!) are usually set off in italics or alternately, though less frequently, with quotation marks. Also of note: while the contents of books, movies, and albums (i.e., the words) can be copyrighted, the titles of such works cannot. Were such copyrights (or, more accurately when talking about titles, trademarks) possible, teenage girls around the world would have had to settle for wondering whether Paul would prevent Jesse's nineteenth-century murder–depriving Suze of the only ghost she ever loved–in Meg Cabot's *Twilight,* forever deprived of the forbidden love between the tortured vampire Edward and the teenage Bella of Stephenie Meyer's book of the same name.

Usually, when the argument to italicize the titles of video games comes up, the joystick wielder presenting it offers one, or some combination of three arguments: these games–your Halos, your Grand Theft Autos, your Call of Dutys–like movies, have higher production values than video games past; like movies, these games are sold on discs; and these games have more of a narrative than older games, also like movies. *Taddle Creek* calls it the "like movies" defence.

Weaker arguments there never have been, and if you'll indulge *Taddle Creek* in some more background, it will tell you why.

The closest old-school equivalent to a modern-day video game is a board game (*Taddle Creek's* favourites include Monopoly, Risk, and Pop-O-Matic Trouble). These games are products–their names, in nearly every case, are trademarked and thus, capitalized. Other games, such as poker, hopscotch, or hide and seek, are not trademarked, nor are they capitalized, in keeping with their generic nature. *Taddle Creek* cannot remember there ever being a movement to treat any of these games, whether trademarked or generic, as art forms whose names called for italics.

Taddle Creek also cannot recall a similar movement to italicize the names of early arcade games, such as Pac-Man or Dig Dug. Nor was there an argument to italicize popular home system video games, like Super Mario Bros. (It should be noted that all of the aforementioned game titles are trademarked.)

And so:

Modern video games do have higher production values than previous video games. But quality, sadly, does not an art form make. If it did, there would be no need to italicize *Howard the Duck* (the movie, not the comic).

They come on a disc, like movies? Go check out the nineteen-nineties board game Nightmare. Seriously. It's on YouTube. *Taddle Creek* will wait while you look. A major component of this game was a videotape. Have a look and then tell *Taddle Creek* if it's an art form. (Nightmare actually does double duty arguing against the quality argument too.)

Narrative? Nearly every video game has a narrative. Mario saving his girlfriend from Donkey Kong? Narrative. Preventing a demon invasion of the earth in Doom? Narrative. The difference between a video game narrative and a book or movie narrative is, books and movies end the same way each time you read and watch them. Like an art form. Video games, though they usually have a singular goal, can and do end any number of ways. Like a trademarked product. Which is what they are, however good their production values, and however much time you waste playing them instead of reading books and talking to girls.

Taddle Creek will admit readily that editorial style rules must remain open to change with the advent of new technologies, but it does not support blind change for the sake of change simply because something new appears unfamiliar when, in fact, it is really something old dressed up in a different package.

The Music Issue

As mentioned above, this is the music issue of *Taddle Creek.* Unfortunately, it does not play "Happy Birthday to You" when opened. The magazine could not afford the royalties. There will be a future audio component to the issue, however. See page 51 for more details.

Dreyfus in Wichita

BY CARY FAGAN

Michael Spearman, the music and science teacher at Beth Shalom Hebrew Day School, an institute located in a former Toronto car dealership, was reading while eating his lunch of cold leftover stir-fry when he came across the following sentence: "As a demonstration of its sympathy for the disgraced French captain Alfred Dreyfus, the citizens of Wichita, Kansas, elected Miss Sadie Joseph, a Jewess, as their Carnival Queen for the year 1899."

The book was a cultural history of nineteenth-century travel, of no use to the students of Beth Shalom, which only went up to Grade 9. Like many books in the school library, it had been donated in a carton of garage-sale leftovers. The basement, which housed the library, the science lab, the music room, and the furnace, had a fur of mildew growing between the cinder blocks. But at least down here, Michael could think and dream and feel the quiet thrumming of disappointment in himself.

Reading the words again, he let the fork drop into the plastic tub. The thrumming became something else, louder, surged through his body, and roared into his ears. All he could do was stand up and begin to pace the room, manoeuvring around the battered music stands, the cellos abandoned on their sides. It was such a beautiful idea, what had come to him. Had he really stumbled upon the subject through which he might finally release his woefully wasted talent? For here, in this one sentence, was everything. A small town, during a period of tremendous change (the first motor cars, telephones, electric lights) and with brilliant period music to draw on. A story not of a great historic event itself, but a small side drama in a place far from the centres of power in which the largest themes might find expression. A heroine, hardly old or experienced enough to know herself, yet with intelligence and hidden resources, a girl on the verge of womanhood (with a marvellous soprano voice) who finds herself the sole focus of attention in the town that is her world.

And what a great name! Sadie Joseph. So lovely in its ordinariness. The roaring in Michael's head quieted just enough to allow the ideas to come pelting down. Sadie would be the daughter of the proprietor of the local dry goods shop, the pivotal role around which circled equally important characters. The mayor looking for a way to survive a financial scandal. An idealistic Protestant schoolteacher who speaks out about the Dreyfus case and so becomes the catalyst for the unfolding events. The president of the Honorable Men of Kansas Society, Wichita chapter, with his racist grudge against Sadie's father and secret lust for Sadie herself. The young Jewish store clerk who is Sadie's unofficial fiancé and dismayed by her sudden celebrity. The mayor's son, decent and handsome, home from Harvard Law School, whose love for his father conflicts with his hatred of injustice. (Naturally, he too must fall in love with Sadie.) The jealous rival, who had been previously assured of the Carnival Queen crown, and the mayor's son, for herself. But the story would need somebody to tell it, an outsider, say a reporter from the big-city newspaper, who arrives with a pen dripping with cynicism but who discovers a chance at redemption for himself.

So much came to Michael during that lunch break that he could hardly record it all in the copybook he pulled from his desk. When the afternoon class stormed down the basement stairs, he was still scribbling frantically and did not even hear them.

Michael had grown up in the eighties, witness to the death of punk, the rise of the pop superstars, MTV. He'd played in garage bands with his friends, thrashing their way through covers of early Elvis Costello and the Clash. But he stuck with his conservatory piano studies and played the viola in the school orchestra. He had to keep secret his fascination for Broadway musicals, sneaking out to see the bus-and-truck shows that came to the Royal Alexandra Theatre, on King Street. At home he hunkered in the living room listening to his parents' record collection: *Show Boat, Carousel, Annie Get Your Gun, Cabaret.*

His garage-band friends went to work for law firms or studied internal medicine or joined the family condominium-development company. Michael's music degree landed him only a job at Sam the Record Man, so he went back for a year of teachers' college and spent nine months substitute teaching in the public school system before he got the job at Beth Shalom. He met a woman during the intermission of a local production of *Company,* a frizzy-haired animal-rights activist named Frida Yaffe, who spoke French, Hebrew, and German, baked bread, and played claw-hammer banjo. She disliked musicals but had won a free ticket while listening to CBC Radio. They lived together in her flat on Major Street and then bought the tiny house on Manning, near the cheap Korean restaurants. When medical tests finally revealed that her eggs were sterile, her melancholic nature deepened. Over the years they acquired two dogs, a cat, an African grey parrot, and a plastic bathtub of turtles, all of them rescued. The floorboards projected splinters into bare heels. Their second-hand furniture wore out and was replaced by more second-

MATTHEW DALEY

hand furniture. All the while, they held on stubbornly to a certain idea of living, like ever-aging students.

Michael worked on the score, or the lyrics, or the book, when he could–every holiday, including Yom Kippur, and, of course, during the summer months. Over time he conceived a three-act structure and settled on the more traditional Broadway approach of a book with dramatic songs rather than the pseudo-operatic sung-through show. The first number had to be muscular but lyrical, a hymn to the sweetness of a small-town life that was about to be turned upside down. Then the narrative would start without delay with a scene of Sadie's boyfriend telling her she ought to enter this year's contest for carnival queen because she was the prettiest girl in town and the most talented, with her nightingale voice. Of course she would resist: "You forget, Nathan, what we are and how this town sees us." To which he would reply, "Ah, Sadie, that doesn't matter. Don't we have friends? Don't people like us? Doesn't the mayor himself shop at your father's store? It's almost the new century, Sadie. We're part of this place now. We belong here as much as everybody else."

The musical was more work than he had ever imagined. Nine ballads, seven rhythm numbers, three specialty songs. Solving one structural problem caused three more to spring up–solos running back to back, characters acting against their motivations, the first-act curtain closer requiring an overly complicated narrative set-up. If it hadn't been for Frida he might have given up. She would bring him a mind-stimulating herbal infusion and, kissing him on the neck, say, "Drink up, Wolfgang. Nobody said it was easy to be a genius." And after a week or two Michael would find another little revelation, a small breakthrough–the completion of a signature melody, a contrapuntal rhythm, a lyric that would say in five words what he'd been struggling to voice in pages of dramatic scene.

After eight months he could see the shape of the thing, and after another eight some genuine dramatic moments and real musicality. It took a year to get the rest up and ten months more of further discarding and ruthless revising. More polishing before he could score each of the orchestral parts–violins, violas, cellos, basses, the brass, woodwind, and percussion, and also mandolin, banjo, autoharp, and mouth organ.

Michael was now forty-two. He felt both relieved and humbled, but also twitching with anxiety. Now that the work was done, what was he supposed to do with it? It had been easy to daydream in the basement of Beth Shalom, but if there was one thing Michael knew about himself, it was that he had no entrepreneurial push.

Lying on their futon at night, Michael said into the dark, "What good is my musical if it never gets heard? It's just paper. But I don't seem to have the required ambition. I want it to be performed–on Broadway too. I just don't seem to have the strength to do anything about it. Or even believe it could happen."

"You give up too easily," said Frida. Her frizzy hair had already begun to silver at the edges; she had map lines around her eyes. She'd grown thinner too, and had been shocked by the onset of diabetes. "Do some research, Michael," she said. "Make a plan. You have to think of this as something to act on. Make some noise, sweetheart. Otherwise, nobody's going to hear your songs."

Michael mustered the energy to make a telephone call that, to his surprise, earned him a meeting with David Mirvish, in his office near the Royal Alexandra. Mr. Mirvish was attentive and sympathetic, but would not take the proffered copy of *Dreyfus in Wichita.* He spoke gloomily of the Canadian musicals that had failed–*Napoleon, Duddy*–and told Michael that he would only consider his show if it had already proved a success, like *The Drowsy Chaperone.*

Michael understood now how this daydream had tricked him into believing his life was more than the sum of its ordinary parts. He wished he'd never written the thing. When he arrived home he saw Frida standing in their tiny living room, one of the cats mewling against her ankles, holding a gift-wrapped present.

"Frida, why are you giving me something? I don't deserve it."

"Sha. You can be a pain in the ass, Michael. Just open it."

He unwrapped the large book carefully, knowing that Frida reused the paper. *How to Sell Your Musical to Broadway and Make it Big.*

The Straw Man

I survived it all: Dorchester, vaudeville, the Golden Age,
all those TV variety shows, and yes, Oz. I have front-page
memories of that makeshift and lengthy road I tramped along,
after my hero, the role of my dreams, that perfect song.
I can, even now, summon the steps I took as, and I quote,
"a horse-faced hoofer"–the distance I was willing to devote,
for a brain. And, by happenstance, the straw man would be
all I would ever need to be; after 1939, no yearly TV or
DVD residuals, just the blessed gift of immortality.
And I'm old these days. I have not ruled in Oz for years, and
am unaware of the politics that arose after me. A band
of Winkies took over, perhaps; it was, after all, their time.
Or good ol' Mervyn LeRoy–nestled, all pickled and fat
on a plush throne in Emerald City. Yes, I could see that.
Over time I saw less and less of everyone. A star was born
in Judy, Jack found himself on TV, while Bert was reborn
a savant on Broadway. And back to the grind we were thrust.
We rarely talked of the days we owned that road, or fussed
over the lore that evolved of its own accord. No one but us knew
we sang those tunes as though they were our very due.
Only ten years ago, if I had walked a few blocks down
North Beverly Drive, I might've encountered the Tin Man–the man
I didn't know how to be–as if a villager in Munchkinlan'.
He lived well, of that I am quite sure, with his heart intact.
I do not know what or if he ever thought of me. In fact,
I survived them all: a good witch and a bad witch, a flying
monkey, a bumbling wizard who knew nothing of wizardry,
a lionhearted terrier and a terrified lion, the lovely girl Dorothy,
or was it Frances or Judy?–I no longer remember which
name her fate later came to curse. Each of us a small, quotidian
part of her legend; like scrap parts, from the days of nickelodeon,
when chewing the scenery was a job for the lowly proletarian,
was all the circuit's two-bit players had by way of feeling utopian.
Now I lie in a hospital bed, patient Gwen rubs my forehead.
She talks to comfort me, but I'm consultin' with the flowers,
or is it the rain? "Ray," she calls, and in her eyes are a red
and yellow cornfield where a murder of crows circles a lone, weary
straw man–a ratty obelisk against a rainbow-less sky. I hear
the steps of clicking shoes, the poised bark of a dog, leering
closer–and I am resolved to return, because, as my song knows,
with all the thoughts I must be thinkin', I have much still to learn.

–Adrienne Weiss

He turned it over. "You paid forty-two dollars for this?"

"You're welcome," she said and headed up the stairs.

The book listed the names of one hundred and seventy-three agents and fifty-six producers working on Broadway. Over the next two weeks Michael composed a cover letter, made copies of the score, bought mailing envelopes. The enterprise cost him just under three thousand dollars.

A week. Two. Four.

"Well, of course," Frida said. She was knitting a shawl while stroking their blind dog with her toes. "There's an old boy's system at work. And look who they hire these days–has-been rock stars. To write shows about superheroes. Something like *Dreyfus,* that finds relevance for our times, of course it's going to be a tough sell."

"Maybe the work's not good enough."

"It's good," she said.

"You don't even like musicals."

"That's right, and I like yours."

Michael noticed she was wearing her puff-sleeved top, with the lacing that criss-crossed the open bosom. She wore it when she wanted to have sex; she liked him to undo the lacing. But he felt no rise of desire. When she looked down at her knitting he put his hand over his groin to judge whether he might coax some life into the thing, so as not to disappoint her.

Arriving home the next day, he found Frida in the kitchen, adding beets to her vegetarian hotpot. "There's a letter for you on the dining table."

"What do you mean a letter?"

He was already moving through the doorway, picking up the envelope, reading the return address: "Cohn Musical Entertainment, 107 Fourteenth Street, Suite 3B, New York, N.Y. 10375."

His hands started to tremble. Frida came up beside him, licking the wooden stirring spoon.

"So? Open it."

Dear Mr. Spearman,

Dear? I ought to cry, Hail Spearman! For you are a true musical genius. Do you have any idea what your *Dreyfus in Wichita* means to a man like me? A producer can wait years, a whole lifetime even, and never make a discovery like this. Scores we get in the hundreds, thousands even. But to find one with such depth, such seriousness of intent, which manages nevertheless to entertain as it transforms its story into the idiom of the American musical–ah, how rare that is, Mr. Spearman, how rare!

Mr. Spearman–may I call you Michael?–I kiss your hands. Let me bring your masterpiece to the Broadway stage and the public it deserves. Please call me. Collect.

Yours in awe,
Mort Cohn
President

They danced, they laughed, they declaimed the letter aloud, first Frida and then Michael, and carried it triumphantly over their heads. After they had collapsed onto the afghan-covered sofa, Frida said breathlessly, "Go . . . ahead . . . and . . . phone."

"Phone? Now?"

The smile evaporated from Michael's face.

Frida just gave him a look. Then she

reached over to the end table and handed him the phone.

Someone picked up at the first ring: "Cohn Entertainment Group."

"Is Mr. Cohn available?"

"Who is calling?"

"Michael Spearman."

"Michael! I can't believe I am actually speaking to the composer of *Dreyfus in Wichita.* Let me assure you, I don't usually answer the phones around here but the secretary's got strep throat. My God, you should see me–I've got tears in my eyes. I haven't cried like this since Lenny Bernstein died. Michael, listen to this–"

Michael heard the thin humming of Sadie's theme. Just as abruptly, it stopped.

"You hear, Michael? Already seared in my memory."

"Mr. Cohn, I'm amazed. I'm overwhelmed."

"As soon as I'm off the phone I'm going to talk to Hal and see how his schedule looks."

"Hal Prince? He's still working?"

"Hang on, Michael . . . . Nancy, you're back. Start working on that Spearman contract. We'll FedEx it overnight. And make sure you get the names spelled right."

The contract arrived, not by Federal Express, but regular mail. Along with the signature, it required a cheque for eight thousand dollars in U.S. funds.

"Absolutely standard practice for a first-time composer," said Cohn, when Michael called. "Besides, read the whole clause. You become an investor in your own work. A percentage of the receipts goes to you, and not after we recoup but from *Day 1.* Everybody knows that Sondheim made almost nothing until he wised up. Do you want to be one of those schmucks who makes everybody rich except himself? You're a long-term investment for me."

For three days Michael dithered, but he knew he would send the cheque. Frida refused to help him decide, but she looked sorrowful.

"And not because of the money, honey," she said.

He had to take out a loan against the equity in their house. Even as he slipped the envelope into the mailbox, he knew it was gone forever. Shortly after, he found Mort Cohn's phone to be disconnected. Mail sent to Fourteenth Street was returned "ADDRESS UNKNOWN."

They Have a Music

Ever since my sons moved out and foreigns moved in
I can't sleep a night to save the last of my life.

I'm not sure how many are here; always children,
and always night crying and forever foreign.

They have a music, they play it from radios
after hours, at all hours, listing slow.

They stay outside each chance they get. They hang unders
outdoors! They leave the baby with the old man,

as if a man our age could care for a kid. As if
men like us have extra essence. The two of them,

reliant and alone. I hear him yell in his
language for help. He's over his head, I know,

I see. This is how they conduct themselves in broad
daylight, youth indifferent to the ones left behind.

–James Lindsay

In June, Frida got arrested at the G20 protests and spent a night in jail. Michael was at home at the time, sprawled on the sofa watching a DVD of *Rent* while absent-mindedly tossing grapes to the parrot. He didn't watch the news and so missed seeing Frida get dragged into a police van.

In September the school year began, when most of the students had to be retaught the simplest fingerings of their instruments. Michael performed his teaching duties with grim conscientiousness.

"You know who I am in class?" he said to Frida. "I'm the guy in that Edvard Munch painting *The Scream.*"

She was boiling up pectin-free rhubarb jam in a cast-iron pot. "Boy, are your students lucky to have you."

"I don't care about my students any more."

"Then you're in worse trouble than I thought," she said, stirring with the wooden spoon. "Maybe you ought to quit."

"We couldn't afford it."

"Yeah, well, your students can't afford you being like this either. Now taste this and tell me if it's too tart. You must be good for something."

As sometimes happened, a new student enrolled in the school after the year had started. Laura Appelbaum, a first-rate violinist, had started on the Suzuki method at the age of four. She took to visiting Michael in the music room at lunch hour so they could play duets. She had a natural ear, a fluid bow, an excessive love for the romantics, premature acne, a retainer, and pigtails, but she didn't seem to care about being considered a freak by her peers. At home, Frida became weirdly jealous, listening to Michael go on about his prize student, but she solved the problem by inviting Laura for dinner. The two hit it off instantly; they were, Michael could see, kindred spirits. They split their sides laughing over Laura's imitations of the Beth Shalom teachers, sparing only Michael himself because, as Laura put it, "You're not exactly the sort who can laugh at himself, are you, Mr. S.?"

For a month he held off telling Laura about his musical. Naturally, she asked to see the score.

"I don't think so," Michael said gently. "I don't feel like disappointing you."

"Come on, Mr. S. I really, really want to see it. *Pweeze?*"

He sighed and pulled open the bottom drawer of his desk. She pulled it from his hands, gave it a friendly pat, and ran out of the music room.

Michael could not sleep, because a twelve-year-old girl named Laura Appelbaum was reading *Dreyfus in Wichita.* He drove to school and sat in the music room limp with regret. It was three minutes to the bell when she slid through the doorway, the score under her arm.

"We've got to do it, Mr. S.!"

"Do it?"

"You know what I mean. It's great. It drags a little in the middle of the first act, and Sadie's ballad in Act 3 is weak, but otherwise it's amazing. We can do it here at Beth Shalom. We've got the orchestra. Miss Litvak can direct and you can conduct. I'll be first violin, naturally."

"Wait, wait. This isn't a Garland and Rooney picture. First of all, it's too musically sophisticated for kids. The syncopation, the minor keys, the harmonies–"

"O.K., so it's not *Grease.* But they'll get it. And if they get to skip some classes for rehearsals, everybody will want to be in it. All we've really got to do is convince the principal."

"Yes, well, that ends it, doesn't it. Rabbi Pinkofsky won't possibly agree. He wants the school to concentrate on its academics and Jewish learning. He won't even give me a cent for new strings."

"Exactly. Which is why my dad's idea is so good. He says that if we make the performance a fundraiser for the school, the rabbi will go for it. Dad says"–she lowered her voice to a whisper–"there's asbestos under the ceiling tiles."

"I don't know, Laura."

"You're just like my little brother. You have to be asked ten times before you'll agree to something you want."

Rabbi Pinkofsky asked Michael to stand up in front of his fellow teachers and give a synopsis of the work. He was saved only by the intervention of Ellen Litvak, who'd been dying to put on a musical for years.

"In my view, there's a real advantage in putting on Michael's show. Sure, we could do *Fiddler*, but we'd have to pay

for the rights, and they're not cheap. We don't have to pay Michael a dime."

In the end, a majority of the faculty voted in favour, with only the gym, mathematics, and Halacha teachers against. At home, Michael tortured himself over the decision.

"My life's turning into a parody," he said to Frida.

"If you didn't want it you could have said no," Frida replied. "But I think you doth protest too much. You're secretly thrilled.

"Do I look thrilled?"

"You hide it. Disgust you'll show. Annoyance, long-suffering weariness. Occasionally mild pleasure. But you never look thrilled, ecstatic, or blissful."

"Are you serious?"

"Oh yes, you can also look appalled, as you do now."

To Michael, the next several weeks felt more like a caricature of the production process, a kid-sized version of *The Producers.* During the auditions he heard a dozen girls belt out "Over the Rainbow" or songs by Lady Gaga, whoever that was. In the end he chose thirteen-year-old Shoshona Zeiss, who had taken singing and tap lessons. In the first rehearsals, Miss Litvak had to simplify her choreographic ideas, especially for the boys, who could hardly tell their right feet from their left. Michael held separate orchestra rehearsals in the basement, halting every two bars. At least he didn't have to worry about Laura's violin solos, or the banjo, which Frida would play. Shoshona projected sincerity, but was rather one note and, of course, any underlying hint of sexual passion was lost entirely. The heavy boy cast as the mayor brought some energy but was a little too *Guys and Dolls.* Hardly their fault; they were modern kids, used to surfing Internet porn and listening to lectures about S.T.D.s. They weren't so much mystified by the contradictory yearnings he had worked so hard to capture as they were simply unaware of them.

Michael arrived at school one morning to find the walls covered in posters.

WORLD PREMIERE!
ONE NIGHT ONLY!
Beth Shalom Day School Presents
DREYFUS IN WICHITA
Book, Music, and Lyrics by Michael Spearman
Directed by Ellen Litvak
Saturday, December 21, 8 P.M.
Tickets $10.
Available in Rabbi Pinkofsky's Office

Three days later, the posters had red banners pasted across them: SOLD OUT. Shoshona Zeiss and the other leads were strutting around like celebrities. Laura Appelbaum reported that the stage crew had taken to eating in the cafeteria only amongst themselves and that at least two of the actors were planning to arrive on performance night in hired limousines. "O what hath thou wrought?" Frida teased, but Michael didn't find it funny.

Rabbi Pinkofsky himself came down to the music room to offer his congratulations. Michael had always been nervous around the rabbi, afraid (as he had been as a boy) to be asked a question or made to recite a passage he didn't know. "*Mazel tov,*" the rabbi said to Michael. "You've given us a new roof. Now it doesn't matter if it's a hit or a miss."

The morning of the performance found Michael retching into the toilet.

"Perfectly normal, honey," said Frida, bringing him a wet cloth. "I hear Kaufman did it all the time. Or was it Hart? Anyway, it brings good luck."

At school, Michael threw up in the staff washroom while Laura Appelbaum stood in the doorway with her violin case under her arm.

"You O.K., Mr. S.?" she asked when he emerged, pale and trembling. "You want me to get Mrs. Kompert?"

"No, I'm all right now. "There's nothing left inside me."

"The dry heaves, that's the worst. I can't wait for tonight!"

Somehow he held himself together through the teaching day. At two o'clock an announcement over the P.A. called the actors and crew from their classes for a final tech rehearsal. A rented Klieg light fell, missing the big-city reporter by inches and causing Shoshona Zeiss to burst into tears. The sets were taking an excruciatingly long time to change.

"I wanted *Peter Pan,*" said Ellen Litvak, "and you've given me *The Ring of the Nibelung.*"

Back at the house, Michael lay on the sofa as if it were a berth on the R.M.S. *Mauretania* in a heaving sea. What had he wanted from it all? He hoped it wasn't a sick need for unconditional love, because he didn't want it now, he didn't want anything from anybody or anybody to want anything from him. He had, after all these years of teaching in a parochial school, no prayer on his lips.

He woke to the touch of Frida's fingers caressing his face.

"Time to wake, maestro," she said gently. "Come and see what I've got you. Ta-dah!"

It was a tuxedo. With tails.

"Frida, I can't wear that. I'll look ridiculous."

"Of course you will. Make the most of it, Michael. Embrace the moment."

She had to help him with the tie and cummerbund and drive the Tercel up to school, her old Stella banjo rattling in the back seat. It was already dark when they arrived and a light snow was falling into the glow of lamps surrounding the former car dealership. In the first classroom they passed, mothers serving as volunteers were powdering faces and applying rouge and eyeliner. Orchestra members were corralled in the teacher's lounge; they gave a ragged cheer when Michael and Frida entered. He set to work tuning the instruments.

Ralphie Neugeboran, headset on, looked into the room. "O.K., orchestra. Follow me."

"Showtime!" Laura said. She pulled Michael down by his tuxedo sleeve and gave him a quick kiss on the cheek. "Good luck, Mr. S."

They filed down the hallway to the rear door of the cafeteria, where the lunch tables had been converted to benches. One of the flute players knocked over a music stand, but somebody else caught it. In the audience there was a jostling for the last seats. The lights dimmed. A spotlight came up on the conductor's stand and Michael began to walk up the aisle. The applause sounded muffled and far away. When Michael reached the stand he had a sudden moment of panic over his baton, but there it was in the inside pocket. He smiled gratefully at Frida, who winked at him. Now Laura played her A string and the other instruments pretended to tune up. He held out his hand for silence. He raised the baton, took a deep breath, and cut the air for the first, discordant burst from the brass section.

Three hours and fifteen minutes later the baton came down for the last time, drawing a fading note from the first violin. Onstage, frozen in their final poses against the background of the town square, were all the major characters: the mayor holding back his anguished son, the father clutching his heart, the jealous girl with her hands clenched as if in supplication to a higher power, the newspaperman with his notepad discarded at his feet; and young Sadie Joseph, collapsed in the arms of her fiancé, hair trailing down, eyes closed, face bloodless. The only figures moving were a ghostly chain of bearded men in hats and long, dark coats, and women in kerchiefs and shawls, prefigurations of the larger tragedy to come. They had been Ellen's idea and he had argued against them, but their appearance had drawn gasps from the audience.

The stage went dark. He looked down at his exhausted musicians. Laura Appelbaum was visibly panting, her face glistening with perspiration. The applause had already begun. He turned to the audience—the fathers rising stiffly, the children sprawled asleep in their mothers' arms—before turning back again. Only now did he look to Frida and her banjo, chagrined that he had not sought her out first, but there she was, smiling up at him, her eyes shining. Michael could not keep his eyes on her and looked upward toward the temporary grid of lights, feeling so bereft that he wondered if somebody close to him had died, somebody he could not at this moment remember. There were whistles and cheers in the audience, as if they were all at a ball game. He felt hungry and thought with a wolfish anticipation of the backstage boxes of limp kosher pizza and cans of ginger ale. His gaze descended to the actors bowing, standing in a row and holding hands, children again. Shoshona was motioning to the orchestra and, for some reason, to him. The applause swelled. He turned and smiled, touched his finger to his brow, and remembered who had died.

Cary Fagan lives in Dufferin Grove. His next book, the short story collection My Life Among the Apes, will be published by Cormorant in spring, 2012.

Boom Times

Art with a homemade touch.

BY LAURA TRETHEWEY

When the crew of *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World* wanted to capture the offbeat side of Toronto featured in the film's graphic-novel source material, they called Tim Oakley, the window designer of Sonic Boom, a new-and-used record shop located at Bloor and Bathurst streets. Given how much time the eponymous Pilgrim spends at the store, Oakley was only happy to create three customized in-store displays for the fake bands mentioned in the 2010 film.

"They didn't come right out and say it, but they wanted it to look shitty," says Oakley. "They were like, 'You know, just do it how you do it.'"

Pausing to look at Sonic Boom's window is like asking your much more with-it friend what you should listen to. You won't find any shrines to Beyoncé here; rather, Oakley charmingly recreates the album art of indie darlings such as Sufjan Stevens and Blonde Redhead, as well as hometown heroes like Hooded Fang and Fucked Up.

Oakley had no formal artistic training when he casually expanded his store-clerk duties in 2005. For his first project, Oakley gathered old oscillators and speakers from throughout the store, piling them up to create the stone tower depicted on the Chemical Brothers' *Push the Button* album.

Keeping to a loose schedule of one display every six to eight weeks, Oakley has lost count of how many he's created. He'll soon have an even harder time keeping track. After being ousted from its Bloor Street location this summer to make way for a Dollarama store, Oakley is now twice as busy creating windows for Sonic Boom's two new locations: the relocated flagship, in the nearby Honest Ed's, and a spinoff in Kensington Market. "I almost have to step up my game," he says. "It's so artistic around here."

TIM OAKLEY


MIDNITE


TOO LATE NIGHT
GREEN RIVER
LOVE SONG
HIGHWAY
STEAM
ALMOST DONE
LOUNGER DAYS
HOODED FANG
ALBUM
$14.99
LAUGHING
PROMISE
GHOSTS
SPECIAL
SPECIAL
SPECIAL

Rue du Doo

An excerpt.

BY DEREK McCORMACK

Intro

It's Paris, or scenery that looks like Paris. A bat shits on cobblestones. The bat's a puppet. The shit's a puppet. Count Choc-o-log strolls down the street. He's a puppet. He sings:

Somewhere beyond the box tops,
Here am I,
I'm the Count from the breakfast cereal that you buy.
Somewhere beyond the box tops,
Here I am,
I'm the star of this special television program.
Somewhere beyond the box tops,
I am here,
I'm in stop-motion like *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer.*
Someday I'll slay that red-nosed clown
And Santa, too, and flush them down the sewers.
My show will air at Halloween and Christmastime
And I'll be seen by billions of viewers!

"Somewhere beyond the box tops," he sings, "here I'll be, way down deep in the–" He slips in shit. "Shit! Shit is *très, très Paris*!"

1.

"Die, mirror, die!" Count Choc-o-log hurls a shoe at a mirror. The mirror never sees it coming. The Count has no reflection; the Count's clothing has no reflection.

The Count's a vampire.

"Count Choc-o-log?" Boo-Brownie blows in.

"Miserable mirrors," the Count says. "Why put mirrors in a vampire dressing room?"

"It's hardly a vampire dressing room," says Boo-Brownie, bobbing about like a blue balloon, or the ghost of a blue balloon. He's a ghost; he's blue. "Werewolves use it as well. And mummies. And monsters."

"Friend?" Franken-Fudge clomps in.

"The Count is browned off," Boo-Brownie says.

"How many times must I shop at this department store," the Count says, "without being able to see the suit I'm about to buy!"

"You no need mirror!" says Franken-Fudge, a Frankenstein with a pink head and hands. "You have friends. That suit suits you. Chocolate good colour for Count!"

"What would you know-nothings know about it?" the Count says. "Ghosts can see themselves in mirrors–even though they're see-through! Monsters can see themselves–even though they're unsightly!"

Franken-Fudge paints his fingernails pink.

"Things would be much clearer," the Count says, "and I'd be a chicer cereal-ier with a mirror, a mirror–a mirror!"

The Count sings:

I could pick a pod of cocoa,
I'd pin it to my coat,
So I'd have a boutonnière.
I could wear a real bow tie
And not a bat about to fly,
If I only had a mirror.

The Count's bow tie flies off. It's brown. A brown bat.

I could coif my coiffure so high,
I'd comb it up to the sky,
Or to the chandelier.
I could wear Estée Lauder,
Put on lots of paint and powder,
If I only had a mirror.

A brown chandelier. Boo-Brownie bobs about it. He holds bits of broken mirror in his hands: he's a mirror ball. *Boule miroir* or *Boo miroir*?

Oh, me! I'd like to see my *l'image inversée.* I'd look at myself and never look away. I'd look and look and look all day!
If I had a magic *miroir,*
I'd slip into a *peignoir,* or something else that's sheer.
À la Marie Antoinette, I'd see myself in my toilette,
If I only had a mirror.

Cha-cha-cha–chocolate! Franken-Fudge disco dances across brown broadloom. Dance doesn't describe it: heel to toe, heel to toe–he walks the way all stop-motion animated puppets do, like he's learning to walk in high heels. Fred Astaire? Fred Ascare!

"Alas!" the Count sings as the music slows. "I do not have a mirror because a mirror is a mere joke on a *vampyr.*"

"A friend is a mirror with hair–," Boo-Brownie sings.

"Friend tell friend what to wear–," Franken-Fudge sings.

"A hairy mirror?" the Count sings. "Oh dear, oh dear, oh–" He collapses like a push puppet, which he's not. The mirror is a puppet. It shattered in stop-motion. The shoe is a puppet. Aren't all shoes puppets? Aren't all mirrors?

Franken-Fudge gives him some fudge. Every ghoulish bloodsucker deserves fudge.

"There is a mortal," Count Choc-o-log says, flinging the fudge aside, "a magical mortal, the most magical mortal of all. This wizard will make me a mirror. There is nothing he cannot conjure. Angels appear to him. Angels dictate books to him. He can foresee the future in a crystal ball. Elizabeth I of England consulted him on her court and

MATTHEW DALEY

her country. Shakespeare turned him into a character called Prospero. Spenser wrote of him in the *The Faerie Queene.* Ben Jonson wrote a play for him–*The Alchemist.*"

The Count's bat comes back carrying the wizard. He doesn't look like a wizard. He's a boy with bad skin. And beady eyes. And a barrel chest.

I'm the boy. I'm not magical. The monsters don't know it yet.

I'm a puppet. I don't know it yet.

"I am Count Choc-o-log," the Count says, "the mascot of the delicious breakfast cereal that bears my name."

My face is frightened.

The Count sings:

"*Bienvenue au rue du Doo!*"

Boo-Brownie and Franken-Fudge sing:

"Tra-la-la, tra-la-la, tra-la-la-la-la-la-la!"

"From now on you'll be history," the Count sings, "you'll be history, you'll be history! We'll glorify you every day! You'll be a bust in the mirror *musée*!"

The Count:

"Boo-Brownie, welcome the wizard!"

"I represent the Boo-Brownie brand," Boo-Brownie sings, "the Boo-Brownie brand, / the Boo-Brownie brand. / And on behalf of the brand of Boo, / I wish to welcome you to rue du Doo!"

The Count:

"Franken-Fudge, do you have something to say?"

"I am the Franken-Fudge friend for you," Franken-Fudge sings, "friend for you, friend for you, / and if you want to be friend of Frankie, too, / I wish to welcome you to rue du Doo!"

"Boo-Brownie and Franken-Fudge are cereal mascots, too," the Count says. "Boo-Brownie's cereal is blueberries and chocolate; Franken-Fudge's is strawberries and chocolate. They do not sell as well as mine. They look bad in the bowl–the toilet bowl! Boo-Brownie turns poo blue; Franken-Fudge turns poo pink.

"Count Choc-o-log," he says, "the cereal, is chocolate, and as such makes poo the darkest, dankest shade of brown–poopier than poop itself. Poopy like a chocolate log, like eggs and butter and sugar and semi-sweet chocolate and cocoa and cream and cream of tartar and vanilla extract, blended together and cooked for an hour and thirty-three minutes at–oh, but enough about baking! Say something magical and mysterious!"

"Puppets!" I shrink away. "You're puppets! Puppets! Puppets! Puppets! Puppets! Puppets! Puppets! Puppets! Puppets!"

Fade to brown, then fade in on–

I come to. I fainted before the fade. A puppet is in the dressing room with me. He's dressed like a nineteenth-century French poet.

"Marshmallow?" I say.

Ventilator

Twentieth century driving home drunk from your dead-end job to your dead-end house
hitting Seek under mauve chemical skies while the Fanta sun sinks
behind pre-sold pre-sod Major Mac subdivisions.
Twentieth century your lawns are tan, thirsting for rain, and there's nothing on television.
Twentieth century all your melodies were written twenty-eight years ago, your songs are anemic,
thirsting for rain, they bring only pain with each tired refrain.
Twentieth century your wife left you long before you even met her–she was gone,
and you have taken it out on every woman since.
Will you make it in to work tomorrow with your bloodshot eyes and your Advil buzz?
Will anyone notice? Will they get on better without you?
"What'cha gonna do about it? What'cha gon-uh DO?"
Now you are naked on the Internet, you have waited forty minutes just to see
yourself–flesh out–but it is not your body and it's not your face either.
Tomorrow you will wear yesterday's socks. You're all talk, twentieth century, foxing nobody.

You are dreaming you are "the pure products of America"
going crazy. Look at yourself. "Stretched out
in room ten-o-nine, with a smile on your face and a tear right in your eye."
Y'are a terrified thirty-six-year-old tired beyond the twilight of youth and any cliché,
twentieth century, your heart is fluttering like the wings of a small bird,
your heart racing like the heart of a small bird, while you cling
to your nest; to a torn and frayed dream of nostalgia–
You Are Poetry, twentieth century!
Lead foot on accelerator
(that shit don't deflate like the old stuff)
breathing oxygen through a ventilator suit–
looking down from the moon–waning twentieth century–our one lonesome moon,
did you really think fashion was just perspective?
That all you learned from technology has taught you nothing, albeit painstakingly;
has shut down the circulation of blood to the heart, actually?
What exactly do you see from up there, twentieth century?
Do you expect us to believe you will ever return;
that your soul might survive and your bones not cinder up on re-entry;
that you might walk down the streets of your hometown an exile
in the pale green light breathing pale green etherized air?

Have you had one original thought in your life, twentieth century? One?

You are a footnote.
Y'are a three-line item buried deep in the library's sub-basement:
"Your face swollen like a purple cabbage: 'Oh I had a bad fall.'
What kind of staircase could do that?
Tell us whose fist it was. Twentieth century, don't lie to us."

–Chris Chambers

*(With lines from the Rolling Stones songs "Ventilator Blues" and "Shine a Light,"
the William Carlos Williams poem "To Elsie," and the John Ash poem "Twentieth Century.")*

"*Non,*" he says, "I am Marshmallarmé. Stéphane Marshmallarmé, a puppet and a poet, a poet and a puppet–a *poupoète*! You are a puppet, too."

"What do you mean?" My left eye falls off.

I shriek.

"Poopy?" I say.

"*Non,*" he says, "I said '*poupée.*' It's a puppet *en français.*"

"I'm a puppet in French?" My eye is *plastique.*

"You're a puppet in Le Mal Marché, the department store for puppet monsters. It's where Count Choc-o-log buys his wardrobe. It's not Bergdorf Goodman, but Bergdorf Badman. It's on the rue du Doo."

"Scary?" I say.

"*Non,*" he says, "I said *sucré, les monstres sucrés.* The Count, Boo-Brownie, Franken-Fudge–all the mascots from monster cereals shop here."

"They're not real!" I say. "They're cereal!"

My eye's a choking hazard.

"They're real *poupées,*" he says. "Count Choc-o-log rules Monstermartre, this part of puppet Paris. He rules it with Bataille, who brought you into the store. Bataille is his bat. And his tie."

"Besides being a poet, I am a fashion critic. I pen and publish a paper devoted to doings at Le Mal Marché–*Le Dernier Cri,* I call it. The Count? What a wit. He calls it *Le Derrière Cri.*"

"I cover the Haunted Hair Salon," Marshmallarmé says.

"Antoine is the salon's *chef coiffeur.*

"Franken-Fudge has his hair done there. He's a strawberry blond, but without the blond.

"Boo-Brownie has his hair blown out and dyed blue. Sometimes he wears bangs or a bob or a bouffant. He always wears a boater.

"Hair is dead matter. Hair is the ghost of hair. The Count has worn the same style always–hair piled into a pair of peaks, like a couple of Dairy Queen dipped cones, or Hershey's Kisses."

"How does it stay up?" I say.

"Chocolate mousse."

"I cover the Haunted Cosmetics Counter," Marshmallarmé says.

"Choclette is the counter's *chef cosméticienne.*

"Franken-Fudge doesn't need blush, but he wears it anyway. His head's a strawberry. He has seeds.

"Boo-Brownie is bonkers for blue eyeshadow. He looks like he's made of blue eyeshadow; like he's the ghost of blue eyeshadow.

"Men expire; cosmetics do, too. Monsters wear makeup that's gone bad. Testers teem with germs. After a vampire's used your lip gloss, it's garbage. The Count prefers an evening palette–brown."

"Who makes monster makeup?" I ask.

"Cover Ghoul. Maybooline."

"I cover the Haunted Couture Atelier," Marshmallarmé says.

Clairvoyant

The double helix harmonic whir
of the throat singer–the only doublespeak
free of hypocrisy.

My mother smashes my wineglass
and reads the shards like tea leaves.

The winding dirt road of avoidance–
finally washed out, impassable.

We fled the escalating violence
of the violin, soared between branches
and reassigned all borders.

One day we'll swim through the subway tunnels
of our history and not reach the far bank,
not win the gold-plated prize of hollow stones.

The larvae she plucks from my mouth
harden in the light, knock
against each other like marbles.

The circle, in a fit of misguided empathy,
lets in even the myopic landlord.
Muy bien, muy bien! the sidewalk cheers,
roused at last from its dusty, waltz-free ennui.

The glass fragments line up,
sweep themselves into a pile
and reassemble into today.

–Jennifer LoveGrove

"Franken-Fudge will wear anything pink.

"Boo-Brownie's a ghost in a blue shirt. He's the ghost of a blue shirt. What size shirt does a spiritualist wear? Medium.

"Cocoa Chanel sews suits for the Count. He wears her exclusively. She's more than his seamstress: she's his screamstress.

"Like all vampires, he can become a bat. When he changes into a bat, his suit must shrink to size. When he changes back, his suit must change back, too. The cloth's woven from vampire bat fur. And a lot of elastic."

"Who sews Boo-Brownie's shirt?"

"Boo-lenciaga!"

"The Count is despicable," he says. "Contemptful of his fellow monster mascots. Contemptful of the staff at Le Mal Marché. Contemptful of his *coiffeur,* his *cosméticienne,* and his *couturière.* Contemptful of the puppets of puppet Paris. He lives in Sucre Coeur cathedral as if it were his castle–it's *sucrelège*! He reserves his cruelest contempt for the children that consume his cereal. He murders boys. He loves to murder boys. He's the most murderous cereal mascot since Gilles de Raisin.

"He didn't murder you yet. *Pourquoi pas?*"

"Wizard!"

Count Choc-o-log comes into the scene and sings:

I'm here to see the wizard,
This wonderful wizard of ours,
I hear he is a wonderful wiz
With wonderful wizard powers.

With Boo-Brownie and Franken-Fudge behind him, bopping to the beat, the Count continues his tune:

I hear this wiz is fantastique,
He'll make me a miroir magique,
Because, because, because, because, because–
I have the gall of a Gauloise!

"You're awake, wizard," the Count says.

"Wizard?" I say. "I'm Derek. Derek McCormack."

"Derek McCormack?" the Count says. "That is not your name. Your real name is John Dee."

"My name is Jonathon Derek McCormack," I say. "Mom and Dad call me Jon-D. It's my nickname. I'm from Peterborough. I go to Peterborough Civic High School. I'm a teenager!"

"That's some wizard," Boo-Brownie snickers.

"I like Snickers!" Franken-Fudge says.

"You're John Dee!" the Count says. "The great wizard of Elizabethan England!"

"No," I say.

"No one says no to me!" The Count's so cross, his eyes are crossing.

"I'm sorry, but you're mistaken."

"Mistaken? I don't make mistakes!" The Count's hair stands straight up. He's that mad. As is his hair.

"I don't know anything about being a wizard," I say. "I've played Wizard, the board game. I own Merlin, the electronic wizard. I've eaten Alpha-Bits–there's a wizard on the Alpha-Bits box, isn't there?"

"Wizard, you will make me a magic mirror so that I may see myself reflected!" He rises off the rug. For a moment he's a marionette. The strings are almost see-through. There are nine. "And if you don't, then I will eat you for breakfast and shit you out before lunch!" ⊳

Derek McCormack lives in Sussex-Ulster. His most recent novel is The Show That Smells (ECW, 2008). His previous novel, The Haunted Hillbilly (ECW, 2003), was turned into a musical by Montreal's SideMart Theatrical Grocery in 2009, and was staged at the 2010 SummerWorks Theatre Festival. His short story The Count was published in 2010 as a limited-edition art chapbook by Pas de Chance.

Local Hero

The music promoter and former journalist Dan Burke reinvents himself.

BY JAY SOMERSET

It's four days before Christmas, 2010–the shortest day of the year. For the first time in nearly four centuries, the winter solstice coincides with a lunar eclipse, which, early this morning, caused the sky to turn a reddish hue and made the light dusting of snow covering the ground in downtown Toronto glow. Now evening, much of the city is blanketed with seasonal lights and decorations. The streets are busy, and as a streetcar rolls along College Street, passengers stare through frosted windows at the bustling bars and restaurants lining Little Italy. Not far away, in Kensington Market, flames light up the night as revellers gather to celebrate the neighbourhood's annual Winter Solstice Festival.

For Dan Burke, perched on a stool at the top of the stairs inside the entryway to the Silver Dollar Room–the music club where typically he works three nights a week–it's just another Tuesday night. Only tonight, it's the last place he wants to be. "Right now, right at this moment, I'm tired of this fucking business," says Burke in a hoarse, raspy voice that can come only after years spent shouting, smoking, and staying up all hours. "Tired of this job. Tired of the hard living. I just want to make some money, enough to get home to Montreal for Christmas," he says, pulling a wad of twenty-dollar bills from the front pocket of his well-worn beige cords.

The Silver Dollar's stairway is harshly lit and lined with autographed photos of former bluesmen who have played the club. Since opening in the nineteen-fifties, the Silver Dollar has had many incarnations: cocktail lounge for the neighbouring Hotel Waverly, heralded blues venue, and, since Burke started booking its acts, in 2003, home to some of the best underground garage rock and punk shows in Toronto. Tall and wiry, Burke, fifty-four, looks fit yet grizzled, like a former boxer who might not last in the ring but could easily outmuscle someone half his age or shuffle an empty beer keg down a flight of stairs. It's a cool evening, and each time the front door opens, a wintery breeze rushes in. Not that Burke cares. With his winter jacket and a black toque perched above rheumy eyes and a mouth full of broken or missing teeth, Burke looks like he can handle the cold.

A music promoter best known for booking bands such as the White Stripes, Black Lips, Zoobombs, and Nobunny, not to mention the best up-and-coming indie acts, Burke is a workaholic who earns about forty thousand dollars a year, and whose tireless promotion of young groups, coupled with his renegade "fuck-all-y'all" style earned him the title "local hero" in a 2008 issue of *Spin* magazine. He's also a former journalist who worked for CBC's *The Fifth Estate* and wrote on crime for magazines including *Maclean's* and *Saturday Night,* a hustler, an admitted thief, a recovering crackhead, and a drug abuser and alcoholic. As 2010 comes to a close, Burke is officially homeless and spends most nights in his office above the Velvet Underground bar, on Queen Street West, or at the Oak Leaf men's bathhouse, where for twelve dollars a day he rents a locker and has space to undergo his workout regime of extremely cold showers coupled with hot steam baths.

Burke has spent the past three-odd years "mostly clean." The previous week he drank tequila right from the bottle, and in a few weeks, at a Super Bowl party, he'll attempt to score some cocaine but fail because he no longer has the right connections. "I used to be able to stay up for days at a time, but now it gets to me," he says. "I used to do every drug, and regularly. E. Powdered cocaine. Crack cocaine. Special K. G. Liquor. I'd be paralyzed for days."

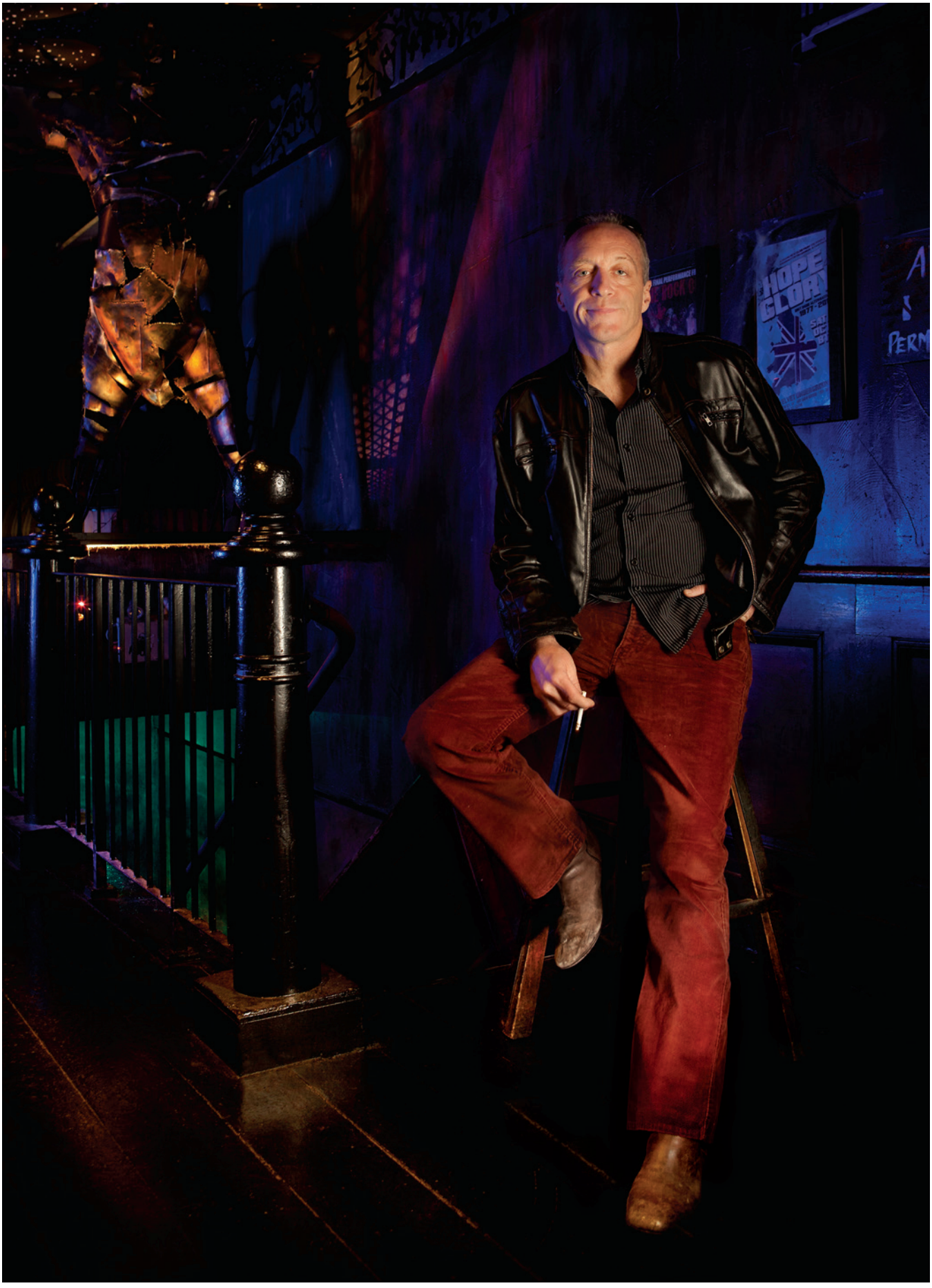
Burke stands up and looks through the glass window of the door leading into the bar. It's early, not quite nine, and inside the club a few wait staff stock the bar, checking that the kegs are running smoothly. Two musicians unpack gear beside the black wooden stage adorned with a drum kit, four microphone stands, and myriad black wires and power cords. Burke has booked four bands tonight, including Black Pistol Fire, a raucous drum-and-guitar two-piece originally from Toronto and now based in Austin. "I kind of hope the fourth band doesn't show up," he says. (They do.)

The evening's entertainment is nearly an hour behind schedule, and things aren't looking good. "The first band, what the fuck are they called? Ghostwalk Greek–they're supposed to be on already and they're not even here yet," says Burke. Neither is anyone else, which, he adds, is kind of a blessing. "If a band's onstage and playing to no one, I failed at my job."

Sensing he has a moment, Burke jumps up off the stool and, with the agility of an athlete, descends the staircase two steps at a time. He plucks a half-smoked John Player cigarette from behind his ear, lights up, exhales, and opens the door onto Spadina Avenue. Located on the northern tip of Chinatown and flanked by the University of Toronto and, a few blocks to the west, Little Italy, College and Spadina is a sort of nowhereland–an inner-city island, home to cheap computer stores and a 7-Eleven, which, tonight, is largely populated with patients of the nearby Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

"It's painful to have a shit night," he says. "My reputation is always on the

THOMAS BLANCHARD


HOPE
GLORY

line, every night. If you're doing a show at the Dollar or the Horseshoe or Lee's, you've got to take it seriously, because it's only somewhat amateur. Otherwise the place becomes a rehearsal space. There's no explaining your way out of it–well, there can be, there can be reasons, but the results of your work are plainly obvious. It's straight numbers."

Two men and a woman walk by. They see Burke and stop. "What's going on here tonight?" asks one, reading the club's sandwich board. The light from the Silver Dollar's iconic marquee shines down, casting shadows on the painted red-and-black brick facade, bricks once spray-painted with the words "DAN IS A CRACKHEAD"

"It's a rock show. You like rock, don't you?" says Burke. Laughs abound. They decide to stay, and walk inside. Burke snuffs his half-finished cigarette and tucks it behind his ear, rips open the door, and jumps up the stairs, passing the threesome midway and perching on his stool. "Five bucks each," he says, a slight smile forming as he makes change from a twenty. He stamps their hands, opens the door, and peeks inside. A moment later he's back outside, somewhat reinvigorated.

"I was thinking about writing a story on what it would be like to reinvent yourself. Like someone who doesn't exist, coming to life. That's me. I have no I.D., no credit card, no bank account, no pension plan. I don't go to doctor; I don't get sick. Although I went to the dentist recently and he said it would be about four grand to fix my teeth. That could be the first part. But how do I begin? I'm a drug addict and an alcoholic with about twelve years left–twelve years of work–and I'm about to reinvent myself."

In the fall of 1992, Royal Canadian Mounted Police Inspector Claude Savoie received word from above that he'd been transferred from Montreal to take up a new position as assistant director of criminal intelligence at R.C.M.P. headquarters, in Ottawa. To the moustached forty-nine-year-old francophone with twenty-seven years of service under his belt, it seemed like a promotion–a reward for his investigative work and firm handle on, among other things, Montreal's burgeoning drug trade.

But when news of the transfer reached the staff of the CBC-TV news program *The Fifth Estate,* the small team of investigative journalists that had been tracking Savoie felt otherwise. Months of research had led them to believe Savoie was a dirty cop, involved with organized crime. At the forefront of the investigation was Dan Burke, a rising thirty-four-year-old journalist who'd spent years infiltrating Montreal's underworld–as a writer covering crime and as a casual drug user–and for the past year had worked as a researcher on the show.

Initially, Burke gained the inspector's confidence by telling him he was working on a story about the West End Gang, Montreal's notorious crime family. But Burke had a card up his sleeve. Through a shared drug connection, he was able to tie a direct line between Savoie and the West End Gang drug kingpin Allan "the Weasel" Ross, then incarcerated in Leavenworth, Kansas.

Savoie had been leaking Ross copies of internal R.C.M.P. documents tracing the progress being made on a case against him, with Ross's lawyer, Sidney Leithman, playing the middleman. This continued until May of 1991, when Leithman was murdered, apparently for failing to get a Colombian drug lord's girlfriend off the hook after she was caught smuggling five hundred pounds of cocaine by plane into Fredericton, New Brunswick.

Less than a week before the *Fifth Estate* exposé on Savoie and Ross was to air, Burke finally confronted the inspector by phone about his relationship with West End Gang leader. Though a shaken-sounding Savoie admitted to having met with Ross, his explanation lacked detail. "He sounded like a man backed into a corner," says Burke. "Very worried." Savoie knew he'd been caught–not just by his superiors, but also by Burke himself.

The following Monday, December 21st, the day before *The Fifth Estate* broadcast, three carloads of Mounties set out to Ottawa from Montreal to meet with the R.C.M.P.'s assistant commissioner, Gilles Favreau, who at the time was in charge of Canadian drug enforcement. It was decided it was time to confront Savoie about his dealings with Ross, which saw Savoie receive more than two hundred thousand dollars in bribes.

Savoie arrived to work shortly after the visiting officers. Having forgotten

his security pass, he had to sign in, likely seeing the signatures of his accusers freshly scrawled above his own. He walked up to his office on the third floor. Minutes later, his immediate presence was requested in Favreau's office. Savoie stood up and closed his office door, wrapped his jacket around his revolver, and shot himself in the head. He was found dead fifteen minutes later.

News of the suicide travelled quickly to *The Fifth Estate,* shaking the show's host, Hana Gartner. Burke was unfazed. "People ask me if I felt bad," he says. "Fuck no. That was the game. He was a dirty cop, and I nabbed him."

Crime reporting came naturally to Burke, who grew up hanging out on the streets of the largely Irish Notre-Dame-de-Grâce neighbourhood in west end Montreal. Known locally as N.D.G.–or "No Damn Good"–it was the sort of place where kids knew the shopkeepers, where newspapermen and cops, hustlers and gangsters all mingled, drinking beer and Jameson at the same bars–and where Burke's father, Tim, drank with Mordecai Richler–sharing frustrations that came with working blue-collar jobs.

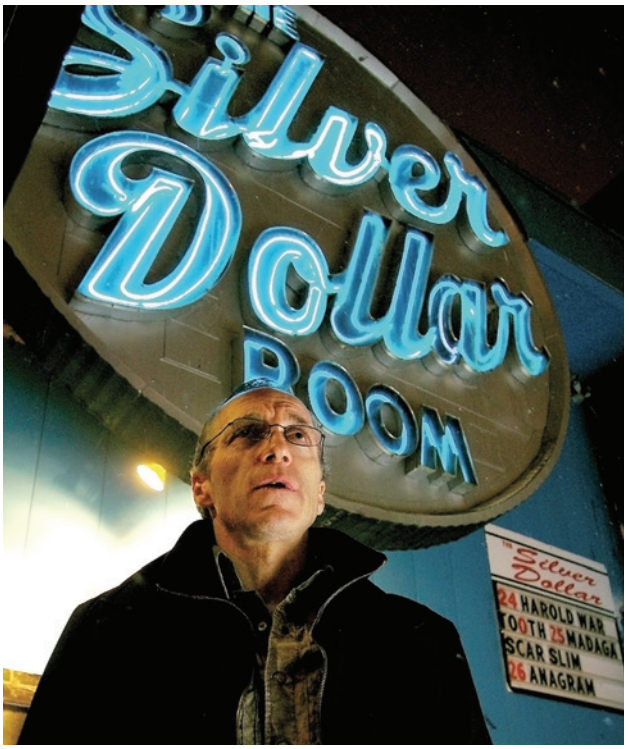
Montreal was, in the late sixties, the sexiest, most colourful late-hours city in Canada and, arguably, North America. Its downtown jumped and nightlife, the domain of the dominant still-young baby boomer demographic, was full of fleshly delights. Long before the rise of provincial lotteries and licensed video-poker terminals, Montreal was a den of drink, drugs, sex, and gambling, replete with bookies, layoff houses, loan sharks, "and the whole raffish world that gambling once represented," says Neil Cameron, a Montreal-based writer and historian.

Born in 1957, the eldest of three siblings, Burke stepped into journalism in his late teens as a copyboy for the *Montreal Gazette,* a job his sports columnist father helped him land. Tough, loyal, and funny, the Burkes were a classic Irish family.

"Dan could be described–like many baby boomers who longed to be part of a world known by their fathers, [a world] dying out in their own time–as a man born too late," says Cameron, who, in the eighties, worked with Dan and Tim at the short-lived *Montreal Daily News.* While they were never close, Cameron and Burke were regulars at Grumpy's Bar, on Bishop Street, and at a long-defunct after-hours club a few blocks west. "Both Tim and Dan struck me as being romantically Irish," Cameron says, "Pugnacious, hard-drinking, sentimental, and rather fond of the more disreputable elements of Montreal."

In 1978, after a stint at the *Edmonton Sun,* Burke enrolled in the journalism program at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute, in Toronto. "Dan was hot," recalls a past girlfriend who first encountered Burke in a photography class. Well-built and healthy, he'd wear snug-fitting T-shirts with his chest hair curling out the top. "He was very funny, had a slight lisp, and was also a bit of a brawler," she says. "I seem to remember he had a summer job working on a ship in the Great Lakes, and he'd talk about getting into fights. It was almost like he was from another generation."

Burke might have had a reputation for brawling, but those who knew him better recognized a talent for writing and the ability to dig deep into a story.



Burke at the Silver Dollar Room, in 2008.

DAVID PIKE/THE VARSITY

Macho yet learned, Burke soon became close friends with a student nearly ten years his senior and equally hard-boiled, John Haslett Cuff. "Danny was like my kid brother," says Haslett Cuff, a documentary filmmaker who spent twenty years at the *Globe and Mail,* as a feature writer and TV critic. "We both had a passion for doing colourful stories, the sort of stuff being written by Hunter Thompson and Gay Talese. [Burke] could blend in, he could mix. It was a real talent."

"If you'd known and seen Burke in the early eighties, he was a star," says David Hayes, a freelance writer based in Toronto. "I remember meeting for lunch with a publisher at a restaurant in Hazelton Lanes. In walked Burke, looking like a million bucks. He was, back then, a very fit, good-looking guy–in a classic, dangerous, Paul Newman kind of way. And on this day he was wearing an expensive-looking, beautifully tailored suit. I remember thinking, 'Burke's really made it.'"

Burke left Ryerson without graduating, taking a job at the *Toronto Star* before returning to Montreal to freelance. He wrote about the underworld in which he lived, taking on stories no one else would, or could, gain access to, and immersing himself in a lifestyle that would eventually ruin him. In the late eighties, Burke began work on a profile of the Canadian boxer Dave Hilton, Jr., part of the notorious Fighting Hilton family, a once-leading force in Canadian boxing that was eventually toppled by crimes ranging from drunk driving to assault to robberies and, in the case of Dave, Jr., sexually abusing his own children. "He was hanging out with the boxing crowd, snorting coke and gambling, drinking too much," says a former colleague.

"[Burke] got into some really bad drugs," says Haslett Cuff. "I remember when he was doing work for *Maclean's,* he'd call me up in the day, not about a story he was working on, but because he was high at his desk and thought it was funny." Near the end of the decade, Haslett Cuff travelled to Montreal at the request of Burke's family to lead an intervention. "We were all concerned about

Burke launched a successful campaign to restore the El Mocambo's historic palm tree sign in 1999.

JEFF BLUNDELL/ANNEX GLEANER

his drug use. But the intervention failed. I myself had only just quit drinking, and it only got worse for Danny."

But while Burke was going off the rails, he was also delivering impressive investigative stories, including a 1987 piece for *Maclean's* revealing corruption in the office of the Mulroney cabinet minister Roch LaSalle–a piece that provoked the firing of LaSalle's special assistant and eventually saw LaSalle himself resign.

"Dan was certainly willing to take some risks," says Cameron, referring to a 1987 *Saturday Night* feature on the West End Gang and its leader, Frank "Dunie" Ryan. Titled "An Uncommon Criminal," the story garnered Burke a National Magazine Award nomination for investigative journalism.

"When he didn't win, he got excessively drunk," says Hayes, who was with Burke after the awards ceremony. Hayes rode up an escalator with Burke on their way to a party being hosted by *Harrowsmith* magazine. At the top of the stairs stood the journalist Gare Joyce. Burke and Joyce had had a confrontation at an Irish pub a year earlier when Joyce was in Montreal covering a boxing match. According to Burke, Joyce began taunting him, saying, "You're not in Montreal any more–you don't have the mafia to protect you," and asked Burke to step outside to fight.

"I was with my girlfriend, in a fucking suit," Burke says. "I wasn't going outside. So I laughed at him and started imitating pushing weights. I clocked him and he bit me on the forehead."

Joyce has his own version of events: "After greeting him, I asked him how tough he was without a throng behind him. Then I goaded him into a fight–easy, his head zippers up in the back. There was no hope he could hurt me. He bounced a punch off my forehead and two seconds later I had him pinned to the floor. I bit his forehead as I choked him. I wanted to hear him scream, to make sure he was still alive."

As security arrived to put a stop to the fight, Hayes continued on to the *Harrowsmith* party. Burke arrive at the door soon after. "They took one look at this drunk, mad guy with blood rolling down his forehead, and some of them literally hid behind the curtains," says Hayes.

Today, Burke's disdain for Joyce remains at a boiling point. "[Joyce is] too stupid to write about anything but sports," he says. "I'd fight him today. I'm a hundred and eighty pounds now, you know."

"[Burke's] a marginal writer befitting his not-even-marginal character," says Joyce. "All water finds its level, and Dan Burke is a fetid puddle in a cranny of a sewer. This is an obit you're writing, I hope?"

After helping shake such an established institution as the R.C.M.P. to its core, Burke was on a roll. Things were working out at *The Fifth Estate,* where his quick wit, easygoing manner, and renowned research abilities let him get close to subjects and sources few others could tackle. "Dan's journalism was based in the notion that, if you travelled with a down-and-out side, that's where

you found the essence of life, the essence of a story," says Linden MacIntyre, a long-time reporter for *The Fifth Estate.*

With a shared interest in Irish politics and history, plus the fact that MacIntyre was fifteen years older than Burke, thereby representing the generation of sleeves-rolled-up reporter Burke so admired, the two men hit it off, working together on several difficult stories, including one about a New Brunswick man accusing his uncle of killing his younger brother. "Dan caught wind of this story, tracked down both men, and then cooked up the idea to bring them together in a motel room," says MacIntyre. After much buttering by Burke–chain-smoking the uncle's cigarettes the entire time–the uncle, who wanted nothing more than to confront his accuser and talk things out, was led in a van to the motel, where his nephew and a camera crew were waiting. "They started screaming at one another, 'Fuck you, you killed my goddamn brother,' and so forth," says MacIntyre. "It was amazing television."

But by 1993, Burke started to slip. His drug use was escalating, eclipsing his investigative persona. "The first sign for me was when a story we'd been working on was sabotaged, accidentally, by Dan," says MacIntyre, referring to a months-long investigation that had Burke regularly conversing with a source's lawyer. "We were this close to getting what we needed, and then Burke started acting weird and the lawyer backed away. I was really pissed off."

The story was a bust, and though he'd been recently promoted to associate producer, Burke's antics were now well known within the CBC. Colleagues, led by Victor Malarek, a fellow Montrealer now with CTV's *W5,* struggled to get him into rehab. "Victor went out of his way to help Dan, took him to detox, lent him money," says MacIntyre. Word began to spread around the CBC that Burke was in freefall. "He'd say things like, 'I want to live the life rather than talk about it," says MacIntyre. "For a long time, I thought he was just researching something, working on a novel, but he was just out of control, trying to give it a romantic gloss."

In December, 1994, in a mid-day drug-induced fog, Burke stood up from behind his desk and walked out of his CBC office, never to return to work. Not long after, Burke was summoned to the office of Bob Culbert, CBC-TV's executive director of news and current affairs, for a meeting. Culbert, a former newspaper reporter who spoke with an Irish accent, had a soft spot for Burke. "Bobby called Dan in and said he'd help him; that the CBC would do whatever it takes to get him back on track," says MacIntyre. "Burke listened, and then said he didn't want to be back on his feet, and asked Bobby for a twenty dollar loan."

Burke's new occupation: crackhead.

From the end of 1994 through early 1997, Burke was, in his own words, "living rough." Largely homeless, at least by most definitions, and working odd, temporary jobs, the once-respected journalist was now a petty thief–nothing more than a Chinatown rubby.

"Dan became a character in his own life," says MacIntyre. "I think he knew this, and it brought him comfort. He never looked down on people that were down and out. And so now he could look

at them and say, 'I'm one of those people, too. So be it.'"

Burke's friendships snapped apart, and those who tried to help him were rebuffed, including Haslett Cuff, who offered Burke a job researching a documentary. "We hired him because of his research skills, but he just got high and fucked up," says Haslett Cuff. "I was cruising crack houses in Regent Park, looking for Danny and the rental car we'd given him."

Burke's appearance had also deteriorated greatly. No longer the lady-killer in tailored suits, he took on the look of someone who spent his nights outside, his days crashed on a shit-stained sofa. "I'd run into him occasionally," says Haslett Cuff, "and each time he'd look a little worse–fewer teeth, hoarser voice, like he'd just stepped out of the Scott Mission."

Among his many odd jobs, Burke was selling wholesale flowers with some businessmen in Chinatown. While looking for storage space to rent, he came across a third-floor pool hall just south of Dundas Street, on Spadina. The building's owners, unhappy with the hoodlums and loiterers shooting stick and dealing drugs, were looking to transform the space into a music venue. "They asked me if I knew anything about running a club, and I said yes," says Burke. It was a lie, but Burke felt that with his research skills and general stamina for nightlife, he could do it. "That's how I got into this business, wayward and lost."

Burke knew he would have to get clean to make his new venture a success. He started attending Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and stopped smoking crack. Scouring the city's weeklies, he discovered who the players were in the local music business: the other bookers, the rising bands, the different crowds. Burke booked the types of acts he related to most: down-and-dirty rock, punk, glam, and garage. "I didn't know anyone in the music business," says Burke. "I'd read through the weeklies, get a feel for the story, and then try to set something up." Working seven days a week, Burke set his sights high, hoping to create a music venue that would become synonymous with an era, a defining point of the city–Toronto's CBGB.

On the Canada Day weekend, 1997, Club Shanghai opened its doors. The timing, Burke admits, was a rookie mistake. Being a long weekend, no one was in town. One night in and Burke was back on the pipe. But then, slowly, Club Shanghai started to gain notice as a place to see young, exciting bands such as the White Stripes, Sloan, the Brian Jonestown Massacre and the Deadly Snakes. It also became the new home of Davey Love's popular dance party, Blow Up.

But as Club Shanghai gained in popularity, Burke's relations with the building's owners began to sour. By mid-1998, Burke quit. He received a buyout of about twenty-three hundred dollars, which he spent in four days. Meanwhile, Love had moved Blow Up just up the street, to the El Mocambo, home to legendary Toronto shows by international artists including the Police, the Ramones, Elvis Costello, Jimi Hendrix, and the Rolling Stones–who performed a surprise set in 1977 to an over-capacity crowd, including a recently separated Margaret Trudeau. But by the late nineties, the El Mo was tired and decaying. Even its iconic palm tree marquee, erected in the nineteen-forties, was barely visible, its lights knocked out long ago.

As a Ryerson student, knocking on the door . . .

Still, it was something, and when Love told Burke that the El Mo was in need of a booker for its upstairs room, he quickly landed the job. Though the venue still had an international reputation, by 1998 it had become shunned by Toronto's indie bands, who perceived it as an industry club where record companies showcased packaged artists looking for a deal. On the verge of closing, it was nearly as bankrupt as Burke himself.

"I wanted to make the club significant again," says Burke, who quickly began to breathe life into the space, bringing in bands he'd read about, such as the Detroit Cobras and Tokyo's Zoobombs. "You'd see him on a payphone, booking some band from Memphis that nobody in Toronto had even heard of," says Clint Rogerson, who plays in several Toronto bands, including Action Makes. "The Black Lips, Brian Jonestown Massacre–Dan was the first to make that shit happen."

Like a New Hollywood auteur, Burke became the in-house attraction. With his freeform dance moves, pugilist pose, and seemingly endless stamina, he was something to behold. "There's been a lot of shows where nobody's having a better time than Dan," says Rogerson, noting that sometimes Burke had too good a time. "He'd get a couple drink tickets that were supposed to be for the bands, and he'd be at the bar: Scotch. Scotch. Scotch. And then suddenly there'd be an altercation or misunderstanding that would escalate into a brouhaha," including one fight that put Burke in a coma for two days.

Burke finally was making decent cash again, enough to contribute some funds toward getting the El Mo's marquee back into working order. He also had a girlfriend, his first serious relationship in years. Soon working both floors of the club, Burke's reputation as one of the city's best bookers was waxing. Finally, there was stability, fame, and funds all at once.

Then, a slap to the face: the building housing the El Mocambo was sold and the club was shutting. Burke was in shock. He had forty-five days to get out before the legendary venue turned into

DAN HAMILTON

a dance studio.

On his final night, November 4, 2001, Burke pulled out all the stops for a show that culminated in him flicking his sunglasses at the new owner and being arrested for alleged assault. It was to be another miserable winter, and by the following May, the majority of his eighteen thousand dollar life savings had gone down the pipe.

It was the beginning of a narcotic blur that lasted for nearly seven years, and included several failed-yet-creative attempts–including a somewhat fruitful residency at the short-lived Tequila Lounge near the Annex neighbourhood–to reclaim his place in the city's growing music scene. Still determined to make it as a booker, Burke supplemented his meagre wages by shooting pool and spent weekends dancing till dawn at the somewhat disreputable Comfort Zone, an after-hours club situated next door to the Silver Dollar, where he narrowly avoided a mass police raid in March, 2008, that saw dozens of arrests. "If I'd been there, I would have been nailed," says Burke. "That's when I started to change. I woke up and thought, 'Fuck. Holy Jesus, this is heavy.'"

"Just tell him to just fucking drive down. Tell him he can park out back." Burke takes a drag from a cigarette, cranking his neck to hold the phone so he can look through the pile of papers strewn across his desk. He's sipping a large coffee and somehow standing and sitting at the same time, unable to find the right position. A stream of smoke sits in the air, illuminated by the overhead lights in the windowless basement office of the Silver Dollar.

"It's Friday, March 11, 2011, the third day of Canadian Music Week. Over the course of four nights, Burke will present more than forty-five bands at three separate venues: the Comfort Zone, the Silver Dollar, and the Velvet Underground.

"I've got big plans this year," he says, locking the door and walking downstairs to the Comfort Zone. A small crowd has gathered in the club and, even though it's early, Burke is annoyed by the scene. "Look at the fucking stage–there's a door open and it's letting in light. It looks like shit." He grabs some electrical tape and, between songs, tapes the door closed. "It's the small details that matter most. The sound. How things look. It annoys me when you can tell somebody hasn't put in the effort to make things perfect."

Upstairs, at the Silver Dollar, things are looking a bit better, as the country singer Katie Moore plays to about seventy-five people. "She's great–from Montreal, you know," says Burke, clearly content with the early crowd and that he was able to score Moore, whom, he believes, is set to blow up big. Burke is in a great mood tonight, nervous yet energized, frightened of the future but ready to adapt. No longer escaping into drugs every day, he is clearly trying to make his mark as a legendary booker.

. . . of the media baron Conrad Black's headquarters.

"Dan's returned to ace form these past few months," says Rogerson. "He's collaborating with other bookers, putting on some of the best shows in the city." It's a new era for Burke, who in the past refused to take part in Toronto's major music festivals, including the lucrative Canadian Music Week and North by Northeast, the latter of which Burke once ran a counter-festival to. "[The NXNE president Michael] Hollett recognized I was making a valid point with the adversarial shows–point being, the festival could be a lot better than it was," says Burke. In 2006, Burke began working with Hollett on NXNE, which he now deems "a brilliant festival."

Collaboration isn't just helpful, it's necessary in a city like Toronto, where a single player dominates bar-level booking: Collective Concerts. The talent buyer, led by the promoter Craig Laskey and run out of the Horseshoe Tavern, has created a virtual monopoly on touring bands, as evident by the double-page spread of upcoming shows that runs each week in *Now*. "They get all the shows," says Burke. Still, as successful as Laskey is, he is largely invisible–a behind-the-scenes roadie to Burke's onstage star-of-the-show persona. "I've never seen him this rejuvenated, this jacked up, and basically clean," says Rogerson.

Burke has also been reuniting with some old friends. "He's still alive, so he must be doing something right," says Haslett Cuff, who met with Burke recently to shoot pool. "I don't know the nature of his survival, but he seems better than he's been in a long time."

Within the next six months, Burke will have landed an apartment of his own and have more in his pockets than a wad of cash, including a cellphone, a birth certificate and an Ontario health card. Before the year is out, he'll also have a full set of teeth. "I got a full set of upper teeth now," he wrote in an E-mail at the end of a gruelling Canadian Music Week. "After going to sleep at 5am on Saturday morning at the Silver Dollar . . . I got up at 9am and went to the dentist. He did three more extractions, including the remainders of my top left front tooth, put stitches and temporary plate in–and then I went and did my three final shows of the festival.

"What a fucking weekend." ⊳

Jay Somerset is a writer and editor living in York. From his Spadina Avenue office, he writes about everything from golf to New Age music. His work has appeared in the Globe and Mail, Maisonneuve, Reader's Digest, Signal to Noise, and Maclean's.

The Saxophonists' Book of the Dead

BY GARY BARWIN

As soon as Miss Billie Holiday turned to write on the blackboard, Lester Young whipped out his peashooter and fired a spitball at the blackboard, right where she had written the date. The spitball rolled down into the chalk gutter, leaving a damp opalescent trail.

"Pfft," Coleman Hawkins said, shaking his head at Lester. Before Miss Holiday turned around–she first finished writing the double bar at the end of the song–Hawk shot another spitball right at her butt. There was a rippling around the point of impact on her sleek dark skirt.

"John Coltrane," she said looking at me. "John William Coltrane. I know you helped pioneer the use of modes in jazz and later were at the forefront of free jazz. I know you were recognized for your masterful improvisation, supreme musicianship and iconic centrality to the history of jazz, but you march yourself down to Principal Hodges' office right now and I don't mean later."

"Yes, Miss Holiday," I said, standing. Ben Webster looked back from the seat in front of me and mouthed Miss Holiday's words as soon as she said them, opening his mouth wide like a satchel.

I wasn't worried about the principal's office. I'd been there before. My buddy Bird had taught me to play "Cherokee" in at least twenty-one keys. I could handle the principal. Before long we'd be talking about his lifetime in the Ellington band, about Harry Carney, and even about Billy Strayhorn and Mercer. And besides, what was he going to do, send me home? We all knew there was nothing beyond the classroom. At the end of the school's linoleum, things just faded out. Nothing but the empty sky of infinite space and the chorus of stars.

I walked out of the classroom but stood for a moment outside the door, listening as Miss Holiday continued the lesson. We were learning "All the Things You Are," even though we'd all played the song a thousand times.

"Who can tell me what happens during the bridge?" she asked.

Eric Dolphy's hand shot into the air. This should be good, I thought. Eric was always pushing things right to the edge.

"Yes, Eric?" Miss Holiday said.

There was something about Miss Holiday's voice that was so fragile yet still kept us in our place. Even Lester. At recess, he would defend her when the other boys began to talk. And I wondered if he deliberately missed when he shot his spitballs. He'd get that crazy look in his eyes, twist his head funny, and shoot the peashooter at a weird angle and never get it anywhere near her. Still, a river of saliva down the board was something. Most guys, the spitball would just bounce and land on the floor with only a small dab of wet where it had hit. And there were those times when Lester would play a song with Miss Holiday. Even though his conception of rhythm and harmony were rudimentary compared to the sophistication that I felt I'd achieved especially in my later years, I couldn't help but feel moved in a sleepy old-timey kind of way.

"Miss Holiday," Eric began. "You know where the G-sharp melody note over the E major chord turns into an A-flat over the F minor seventh at the turnaround of the B section?"

"Yes, Eric," Miss Holiday said. "But please stand when you speak in class."

"Sorry, Miss Holiday," he said, shuffling to his feet. "In my estimation that's a particularly striking employment of an enharmonic substitution in an American popular song, and one that facilitates the use of a chord built on every one of the twelve tones of the chromatic scale."

"That's an astute observation, Eric. And one that reflects your particular sensitivity to heightened chromaticism, something that is often tragically misunderstood. You may sit down."

"Thank you, Miss Holiday," he said.

I couldn't tell if Eric had been trying to be sarcastic. Sometimes he was very subtle. But Miss Holiday had handled him deftly, I thought.

Out of nowhere, Lester suddenly murmured, "You are the angel glow."

"Pardon me?" Miss Holiday said.

"YATAG, ma'am." It was Charlie Parker, slouched as always in the back row, his nose stuck deep in a book as if he wasn't listening. "YATAG. 'You are the angel glow.' Some of the most beautiful lyrics of all time. In the B section, ma'am."

My own favourite line was, "What did I long for? I never really knew." It was in the verse, which was almost never sung.

I started walking to Principal Hodges' office. Deep space loomed at the end of the hall, just past the pictures of the student council and the pop machine. A rich velvet darkness and the stage lights of the silver stars.

There weren't very many rooms at the school beside our classroom: the boiler room, the office of Nurse Bessie Smith, the gym where we played basketball and performed our concerts, and, of course, the principal's office.

The door was half open and I could see Principal Hodges in his customary ash-coloured wide-lapelled suit, chair tilted back, shiny shoes up on the desk, his eyes barely open, a haze of smoke like an interstellar dust cloud settled around him.

"Time and again I've longed for adventure, / Something to make my heart beat the faster," he said through the door. "John William Coltrane," he said.

MATTHEW DAILEY

"Trane," he said, motioning for me to enter. "How long have we known each other?" he asked.

"A thousand years, sir," I replied, though I didn't really know how long, having little to measure it by.

"And here you are at my office again? I thought we'd developed an understanding."

"It wasn't me, sir. It was Coleman," I said.

"That's what you told me the last time. And before that, you said it was Lester." He took a long drag on his cigarette and then blew it out in an extended blue sigh. "John," he said. "John, it's about listening. The others look up to you. It's time to take responsibility."

"Yes, sir," I said, looking at the floor, the many burn marks like dark constellations in the taupe linoleum tiles. "Responsibility."

"Now go back to class and do what's right."

"Yes, sir," I nodded.

"Can you really play 'Cherokee' in all twelve keys?"

"Yes, sir. Charlie taught me. And it's at least twenty-one if you consider the enharmonic spellings."

"Right," he said. "But they don't sound any different, do they?"

"No, sir."

"Before you return to class, John, I would like you to take a long walk around the school and think about what I've said."

"Yes, Principal Hodges," I said, knowing that what he asked was impossible, that I'd be lost in empty space like all the others.

I went back down the hall and listened again at the classroom door.

I heard the click of cases opening, a small thrumming of fingers on saxophone keys as my classmates held reeds in their mouths, saturating them with spit to prepare them for playing. I heard the small talk, the muttered jokes, the first few riffs, and the plangent vibrato of high notes. The quick whistle, the resultant shout as someone hit someone else with a spitball when they weren't looking.

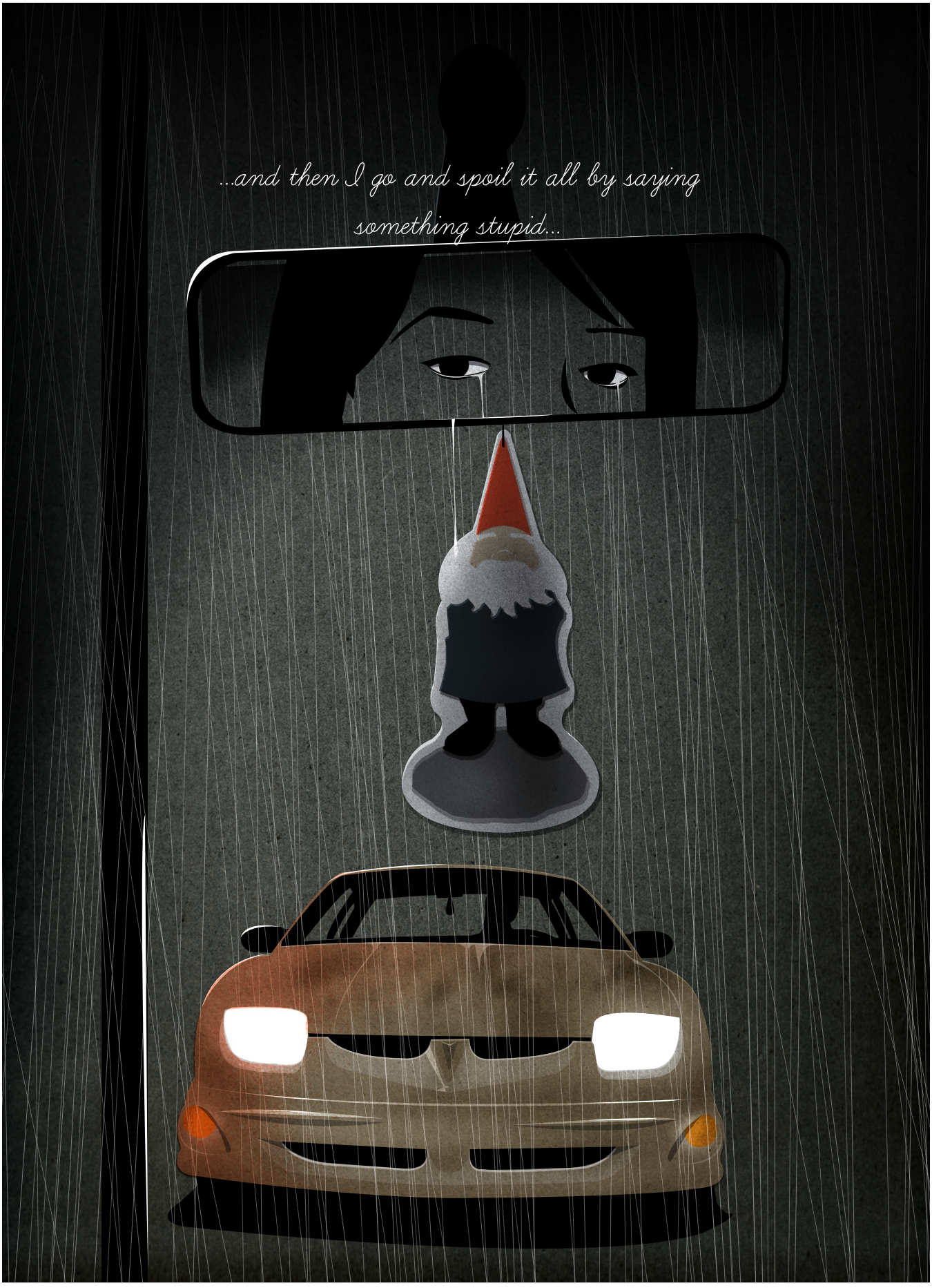
I went back into the classroom.

"O.K.," Miss Holiday said. "John's back. Get your tenor out, John, and let's take it from the top."

Gary Barwin lives in Hamilton, Ontario. In Grade 7, he switched from cello to saxophone in the hope he would be able to play onstage before an admiring audience of Valerie Bertinelli look-alikes. Later, he discovered free jazz. He is the co-author of The Obvious Flap (BookThug, 2011) and Franzlations: The Imaginary Kafka Parables (New Star, 2011).


I Love You
BY
PASCAL BLANCHET
..I know that there's a chance you won't be leaving with me
and afterwards we drop into a quiet little place...
Tim Hortons


...and have a drink or two...
Tim Hortons


...and then I go and spoil it all by saying
something stupid...


...like I love you

Stranded in the Jungle

For fourteen years, Flipped Out Phil restored the sanctity of the radio D.J. across Montreal's airwaves.

BY TIM DAVIN

Rockabilly, punk, garage, psychedelic–Flipped Out Phil played it all. From 1985 to 1999, the jive-talking host of Radio McGill's *The Subterranean Jungle* spun tunes with a rat-a-tat-tat style reminiscent of D.J.s from AM radio's golden age. Originally a half-hour pre-recorded show, *The Subterranean Jungle* hit its stride when it expanded to a two-hour live-to-air program in 1987, when its campus station became CKUT and broadened its reach, across Montreal's FM airwaves. Today, Phil lives in Toronto, where he works as a record store clerk and a voice-over artist. He has been archiving *The Subterranean Jungle* on flippedoutphil.com–while also plotting its return. Tim Davin, a Toronto-based art director and no stranger to the world of music himself, spoke to Flipped Out Phil about his years spent in the Jungle.

Tim Davin: *You asked that I not reveal your full name. Has it always been off the record?*

Flipped Out Phil: Yes, instead of starting off my show, "Hi, welcome to *The Subterranean Jungle*! I'm Phil —, your host"–any more than Wolfman Jack was calling himself by his real name, or the Mad Daddy was saying, "Hey, I'm Pete Myers"–I wanted to be in character. So, the fact that I was sort of anonymous behind the microphone meant I could not only invent an imaginary place of my own choosing called the Subterranean Jungle, but I could also invent my own D.J. name, which was a play on Phil: flip, flipped out. And if I wanted to be over the top and manic and crazy over the airwaves, talk in a way that wouldn't necessarily get me arrested, I could do it under the alias–recreate myself.

T.D.: *How did you arrive at the character Flipped Out Phil? And when did you start getting into being a D.J. and having a D.J. persona?*

F.O.P.: In 1985 I decided I wanted to walk the walk, and not just talk the talk, by doing my own radio show. And I had the opportunity by meeting the new production manager of Radio McGill, then known as CFRN, and talked to him and he just basically said, "Wanna do a show? It would only be half an hour a week, I'd produce it. It's not easy to get a show on the air right now, but if you come in through the back door . . . ." And, you know, I'd fantasized about doing a show, but I never got off my ass to do it. And so I thought of the kind of show I wanted to do, and I really wanted to play stuff I loved and stuff I was continually getting into. Because getting into music is almost like peeling back layers of an onion, right? And it made me cry to do that. I was so stoked on sixties punk, so stoked on the new garage-revisited scene of the early to mid-eighties.

T.D.: *Give me some for instances.*

F.O.P.: Like the Fleshtones, from New York City. Lyres, from Boston. The Chesterfield Kings, from Rochester, New York. And a new band on the scene in Montreal, called the Gruesomes. I loved Deja Voodoo, who'd been around for a while, from Montreal. And that's just the tip of the iceberg. And I loved punk rock. I was exploring. By then I'd gotten beyond the oldies to explore the more obscure rockabilly rhythm-and-blues from the fifties, soul surf and groove from the sixties, the whole British beat, and the psychedelic scene. The proto-punk thing, too. And as I was amassing a record collection, I just wanted to do something with it. I loved radio, and I fantasized about what radio could be like at its best, and I wanted to have a chance in my own little way on a college community radio station, like Radio McGill, to do it. But I thought, screw being so-called natural behind the microphone–I only have half an hour, and O.K., I'm going to be coming from a place that's going to be underground, that's going to be hidden from view. I can play around with the imagery and the underground subterranean. It's wild, primal, and primitive. It's untamed. *The Untamed World*? No. Already been taken. *The Subterranean Jungle*! It's a great Ramones album. And I loved "Subterranean Homesick Blues." It's like *The Subterraneans.* And songs like "Stranded in the Jungle," by the Cadets, and the Cramps' "Psychedelic Jungle." And then I just thought of a D.J. name. I loved the sound, the timbre of those different AM radio D.J.s who I remembered from the seventies, when I was a teenager. I'd reach back to do a bit of research on earlier D.J.s when they were in their prime, in the sixties, and I thought, "You know, I don't want to imitate anyone." I was more shy at the beginning. The first time behind the microphone I was more muted sounding than compared to when the show was full-fledged.

T.D.: *Let's go back to your early influences. I want to talk about the D.J.s. We spoke earlier and I told you that the first time I heard your program, on flippedoutphil.com, I was reminded of the Mad Daddy, from Cleveland. He was really hot at the end of the fifties and early sixties. Were you really that aware of him when you were building your character?*

F.O.P.: I was aware of him when I began doing the show. It was probably from reading interviews with Lux and Poison Ivy, of the Cramps. Lux remembered listening to the Mad Daddy when

THOMAS BLANCHARD


LITTLE BIT O'SOUL
MUSIC EXPLOSION
The HAPPENING
MUSIC DE VOL
LIVERPOOL FIVE ARRIVE
NO ROYALE

he was originally on the air, raving about this D.J. who rhymed all the time and was creepy. And I just imagined what he would sound like, and then I caught a little excerpt of the Mad Daddy doing one of his spiels on an obscure comp. But by this time I'd already started flipping out in the Jungle.

T.D.: *How about some of the other ones? Who were you aware of as a kid or afterward? Because, unfortunately, now we're in an era where there are no more radio personalities.*

F.O.P.: Well, growing up in Montreal, I listened to CKGM in the seventies. It was the main English-speaking Top 40 AM radio station. I may not have always liked the music–there was a lot of crap, in my opinion. There was some great stuff like Curtis Mayfield, Alice Cooper . . . stuff that I responded to. But I liked, or loved, the whole feel of the jingles, the contests, in and out of the songs. The D.J.s were sometimes interchangeable. They had names like Chuck Morgan and Steve Shannon–they did not sound mellow and stoned, they sounded really excited. So finally, years later, I began doing my own show. I wanted to be fast-talking. In and out, and just be super-descriptive without being long-winded about it. I did a bit of research into Montreal radio in the sixties, which I was too young to remember. There were great D.J.s like Dave Boxer, Dean Hagopian and Buddy Gee, all of whom later had oldies shows in Montreal, playing the general, well established–

T.D.: *Kinks, Beatles, Stones stuff, or even older?*

F.O.P.: Yeah, almost ad nauseam. It was great when I didn't know this stuff, but you know, "Party Doll," by Buddy Knox, followed by "Ain't That a Shame," by Fats Domino, the Shangri-Las, Herman's Hermits, and you know, "My Girl," by the Temptations. And I thought, they're just scratching the surface and playing to commercial regulations and restrictions, but when they were in their prime, they'd not only play the top national hits, but regional breakouts, and I thought, "I'm going to dig into the sleazy underbelly of rock 'n' roll and play that stuff. But with the kind of AM approach. So, that was basically the founding philosophy, so to speak.

T.D.: *Your two-hours shows were live?*

F.O.P.: Better live than dead! And I was hopped up like crazy, baby. I had jumping beans in my jeans. I was bouncing around the D.J. booth behind the microphone, and at the same time laying down those wailing pounds of sound, and queuing the records, and playing stuff off cassette. And the jingles and vintage commercials I had. So I was high while doing it, because I was playing the air guitar to the music, but then, fuck, I had to queue up the next record. It was a natural high.

T.D.: *Yeah, a natural high . . . . I was wondering how you prepare yourself to be so rapid-fire, and how do you come off–*

F.O.P.: You've heard of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde?

T.D.: *Yeah.*

F.O.P.: You've heard of mild-mannered–not that I mean to compare myself to such a legend, I'm not that much of an egomaniac–but you've heard of Clark Kent and Superman?

T.D.: *Yes.*

F.O.P.: So basically, Phil's Clark Kent–*flipped out!*

T.D.: *What kind of kid were you? What was your upbringing like? Were you always gregarious, loud, and maybe the class clown, or were you more introverted, and Flipped Out is an alter ego of sorts?*

F.O.P.: I was not a class cut-up–didn't like to raise my hand and volunteer stuff. I used to love to draw cartoons, and I'd be drawing in my exercise book and all that. I was not a shy boy, I was pretty sociable, but I wasn't the life and times of the party either. I think as I got older, I just acquired more confidence. I think I was perhaps a closet case when it came to being comfortable on stage or behind the microphone, but I didn't know it yet as a child, or even in my teens. It started to bloom for me in the mid-eighties. And then I eventually hit

the stage as a lead singer of a couple of bands, and now I'm a professional voice-over artist, too. But I never went to broadcasting school. In retrospect, I guess I could have and tried to make a living doing that, but . . . .

T.D.: *As a kid, did you collect a lot of music?*

F.O.P.: I taped songs off the radio. I didn't have too much disposable income. My parents were working class, just above the poverty line, and I had the same G.I. Joe from the age of four to seven.

T.D.: *What a hardship!*

F.O.P.: I was deprived! So when I was listening to CKGM, I taped songs off the radio. As I got summer jobs and a little money, I started buying records. The Beatles blew my mind.

T.D.: *What was the first record you ever bought?*

F.O.P.: My first forty-five was given to me–I'm a kid still–"House Of The Rising Sun," by the Animals, that my aunt owned. I loved the Monkees when they were on TV, and I loved *Batman.*

T.D.: *So you were a normal kid, then?*

F.O.P.: An abnormally normal kid, yeah. I really immersed myself in the world of raunchy sixties rock 'n' roll, and I just thought that, given the opportunity to play that stuff over the airwaves, even if it was just on a great community college station . . . but when CKUT got its licence to broadcast over the entire Montreal area, that was a license to kill–or a licence to thrill! It was great.

T.D.: *Once their broadcast bandwidth was enlarged in 1987, did you get an idea of what the Subterranean Jungle audience was like?*

F.O.P.: Totally! A bunch of mop-top teens and twenties wearing pointy Beatle boots and chicknicks with long straight hair and flowered skirts and–

T.D.: *Is that right?*

F.O.P.: Yeah–in my imagination! I found out that a good friend of mine now, as a teenager got hooked on my show. He said it opened him up to a whole world he wanted to be a part of. And guys who were older than me who had been collecting records for a long time were tickled by hearing that stuff on the radio. And at times, working in a second-hand record shop, I'd occasionally talk to customers who'd walk in. They'd pick up something and I'd played it on the air and I'd strike up a conversation with them, or try to come on to the girl buying the record, and find out that they'd heard the show. And then, depending on how I was feeling, I'd say, "It's me," and, "Can I sell you my autograph?"

T.D.: *Does anyone ever ask you to do the voice on the street? Give us a sample of something Flipped Out Phil would say.*

F.O.P.: Oh yeah, baby, you better believe I don't mean maybe when I say you're going to be flipping out with me tonight, here on *The Subterranean Jungle,* where the boss sounds are totally outta sight! I'm Flipped Out and I'm going to be with you till midnight, so, baby, stay tuned, strap yourselves down, cause these tunes are hog-wild!

T.D.: *And you'd do two hours of that?! Let's talk about the commercials for a sec. Without the Internet, where did you find the little commercials and jingles and things you used between songs? They were in and of themselves nostalgic commercials.*

D.j.ing a party at a Toronto bowling alley, in 2001; m.c.ing a music festival in Montreal, 1998; an event poster from 2009.

SOPHIE COSSETTE

F.O.P.: Often featuring great rock 'n' roll bands. You know, the Who, for Great Shakes milkshakes, or Freddy Cannon, for Coca-Cola, or the McCoys, for the Heart Association. I'd be a commercial ghoul digging up these thirty-second spots. I also found them on obscure compilations of fifties and sixties rock 'n' roll surf garage. I was able to play them on rotation–along with jingles from *The Who Sell Out*–to give that feel. The music, the jingles, the commercials, the spiel.

T.D.: *You mentioned earlier that you were in a couple of bands. Let's talk about them.*

F.O.P.: Yeah, from ninety-two to ninety-six, Platon et les Caves–Plato

and the Morons. It's a play on the legend of Plato and the cave. We were doing strictly French garage stuff. The band was partly put together by Bobby Beaton, who had been in the Gruesomes as lead singer and guitarist. The Gruesomes were no more, and he wanted to do French-Canadian stuff and wear togas. My attitude is, Have toga, will travel. So we played in Montreal bars and a couple of out-of-town gigs in Ottawa, and a couple of our songs wound up on compilations, including a Nardwuar compilation. I regret that we didn't actually get our shit together enough to record an album's worth of songs.

T.D.: *And you matured and moved on to a turban band—the Whammies, in Toronto.*

F.O.P.: The Whammies were even more infamous than Platon et les Caves, and if Platon et les Caves had a lot of fun being half-assed about it, we were quarter-assed about the Whammies. We were around from 2001 to 2005, with some really talented fellows who have also played in other local Toronto bands—the Midways and the Primordials—with a couple of lineup changes. We played a few bars and clubs in Toronto, opening up for bands at the Horseshoe or Rancho Relaxo and so on. And we never even got as far as recording. But we're still thinking about it for the 2015 reunion tour. The reunion tour of Rancho Relaxo to the Horseshoe and back again.

T.D.: *You said you opened for some other bands. What was the hottest band—the biggest honour opening for?*

F.O.P.: Well, with Platon et les Caves, some personal favourites of mine were the Fleshtones, back in ninety-six. That was a real blast. It was a lot of fun inviting Neko Case to go-go dance to one of our songs when Platon et les Caves opened for the Smugglers, with the great Grant Lawrence, in May, 1993.

T.D.: *She wasn't really "Neko Case" back then.*

F.O.P.: She was to herself.

T.D.: *What band was she in?*

F.O.P.: I think she was playing in Cub or was taking over for someone when Cub and the Smugglers played the Jailhouse Rock and Platon et les Caves were invited—much to the promoter's eternal regret—to open up for them.

T.D.: *What the worst time you ever had on stage?*

F.O.P.: I think when the Whammies played a cold March night at the Cadillac Lounge, in deepest, darkest Parkdale. It was 2002, and for some reason, despite how much fun that place could be, we had a bit of a hostile audience that didn't want to see some goofball on stage in a turban gyrating around to Kingsmen songs. And so some crusty punk with a staple gun came up and started basically trying to, uh, staple us. Staples flying . . .

T.D.: *You also do some writing, mostly for zines—*

F.O.P.: No! Biblical tracks! Warning the populous of the upcoming apocalypse. What are you talking about?! I love zines! You know, aside from listening to the radio and collecting records and meeting musicians and record collectors and soaking up that so-called trash culture, which is a treasure for me,

zines, not just mainstream magazines from way back, like *Rolling Stone* and *Creem,* but great zines, like *Kicks,* out of New York City, or *Ugly Things,* out of Southern California. They also became an education for me when it came to finding some of these sounds.

So I co-edited a zine called *Lost Mynds,* based out of Montreal in the mid-to-late eighties, and another one called *Popaganda,* back in ninety-seven, in Montreal. And I contributed to other local zines as well.

I love counterculture, especially when that meant something–call it "under-the-counter culture." So, you know, whether you're talking about beats, or at one point, dangerous biker gangs, and surfers and mods and rockers and punks. The punk rock thing was the first thing of my time I could really identify with, because the rest, like the beats, was really behind me. And certainly in my own way I tried to pay tribute on my show to all that as well, and, sure, I was definitely influence by the beatnik lingo.

T.D.: *I get the sense that Flipped Out Phil is the byproduct of all these cultural influences.*

F.O.P.: I'm a one-man Dumpster and garbage got thrown into me and I just spewed it out in my own way after that. But hey, it's the grooviest garbage around.

T.D.: *You were pen pals with Lux Interior, from the Cramps. How did that happen? How long did it last*?

F.O.P.: A few of us were just hanging out backstage at a Montreal club called Les Foufounes Électriques, where the Cramps were doing a sound check. A close friend of mine, Daniel Fiocco, record collector and totally knowledgeable about French-Canadian Québécois garage rock and surf stuff from the sixties, had some rare–for Americans–sixties Quebec surf compilations for them. And my wife, Sophie, brought some of her self-published comics she thought they might get a kick out of, because Lux and Ivy loved comic art. And I had a tape or two of my radio show, and so we chatted with them briefly after their sound check before watching them go hog-wild that night, and we just exchanged addresses, so for a while Lux and I corresponded and sent each other tapes in the mail. Audio and video tapes. And, as it turned out, I was flattered to find that they really enjoyed my tapes of the show in their car as they tooled around Los Angeles.

T.D.: *That's cool.*

F.O.P.: Yeah, it was an honour. And hopefully I didn't give them too much of a headache. So may he rest, and hopefully he's rocking out like crazy in the chicken shack in the sky.

T.D.: *O.K., why did it end?*

F.O.P.: Basically, my wife and I made our move down the 401 to Toronto, and it was the new millennium, so the very last *Subterranean Jungle* show was broadcast on the CKUT airwaves on December 28, 1999. And a week or so later we were unpacking our records here in Toronto. And I did Internet radio for a while, worked in television, and I've been working as a freelance voice-over actor since 2003 along with working at a record shop that will not be named–too many groupies at the front door. Fortunately, I've been getting the shows I have taped digitized before they totally deteriorate, sound-quality wise, and putting them up on the website. And I might do a podcast! *The Subterranean Jungle* will rise again!

T.D.: *Well, fourteen years is a good run. O.K., well, let's sign off, Phil. Just pretend it's one of your shows, and give me the full-on Flipped Out.*

F.O.P.: Well, baby, I gotta make like bubble gum and blow, or like a banana and split, but remember, baby, you can always take a frantic fit with me, Flipped Out, in the Subterranean Jungle, next week, when I return to blow your mind, and not your cool, with all the sounds guaranteed to make you drool.

Tim Davin lives in Little Italy. He has fond childhood memories of collecting CHUM Charts and listening to the Jungle Jay Nelson morning show. He lives with his wife and two sons, who don't listen to radio. Listen to an all-new episode of The Subterranean Jungle at www.taddlecreekmag.com/flippedoutphil.

Imperfect Clarity

The strong yet simple aesthetic of Doublenaut.

POSTERS BY ANDREW AND MATT McCRACKEN

True to their company's namesake, Matt and Andrew McCracken, the fraternal twins behind the design shop Doublenaut, share a two-headed focus on their practice. "When one of us has spent a couple of days working on something, the other can usually help balance out what's missing," says Matt. "We have the same taste, and often have a similar outlook on a direction for our clients."

The McCrackens launched their design careers in university, making silkscreened posters for a music booker in their hometown of Ottawa. After each obtained a design degree and spent a year or two working apart—one at an advertising agency, the other at a design firm—the brothers decided they would rather work for themselves, setting up shop in the Toronto neighbourhood of Parkdale, in 2004. Concentrating on their lifelong interest in music, an early poster they designed for Modest Mouse gained notice from fans, circulating on online forums. Since then, the McCrackens steadily have built an aesthetic noted for its striking use of strong, innovative colour pairings and understated, retro-looking illustration. Today, Doublenaut's clients include some of the most well-known independent artists in the industry, including Dan Mangan, Metric, and Tokyo Police Club. The shop is also the official visual designer of the Polaris Music Prize.

The McCrackens' love of simple and strong graphics speaks to a handmade process, where fine details take a back seat to bigger issues of clarity, and the least amount of colours is the usual choice. It's also no surprise the duo's large text-based aesthetic has attracted the attention of Penguin Books, for which Doublenaut is now designing covers. The company also has branched out into logo design, magazine illustration, and T-shirts, but for Matt, his favourite jobs still involve working with musicians. "It's something I like doing and that I'll always want to do," he says. "It's fun to find a band and figure out what they're about by hearing their music, and then making something that hopefully their fans will love."

—Jackie Linton

BROKEN SOCIAL SCENE

Forgiveness Rock Record

POLARIS MUSIC PRIZE 2010


FLIGHT of the CONCHORDS
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MASSEY HALL
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MYSPACE PRESENTS
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APRIL 2, 2009
THE GREAT HALL
TORONTO, ON - 9PM
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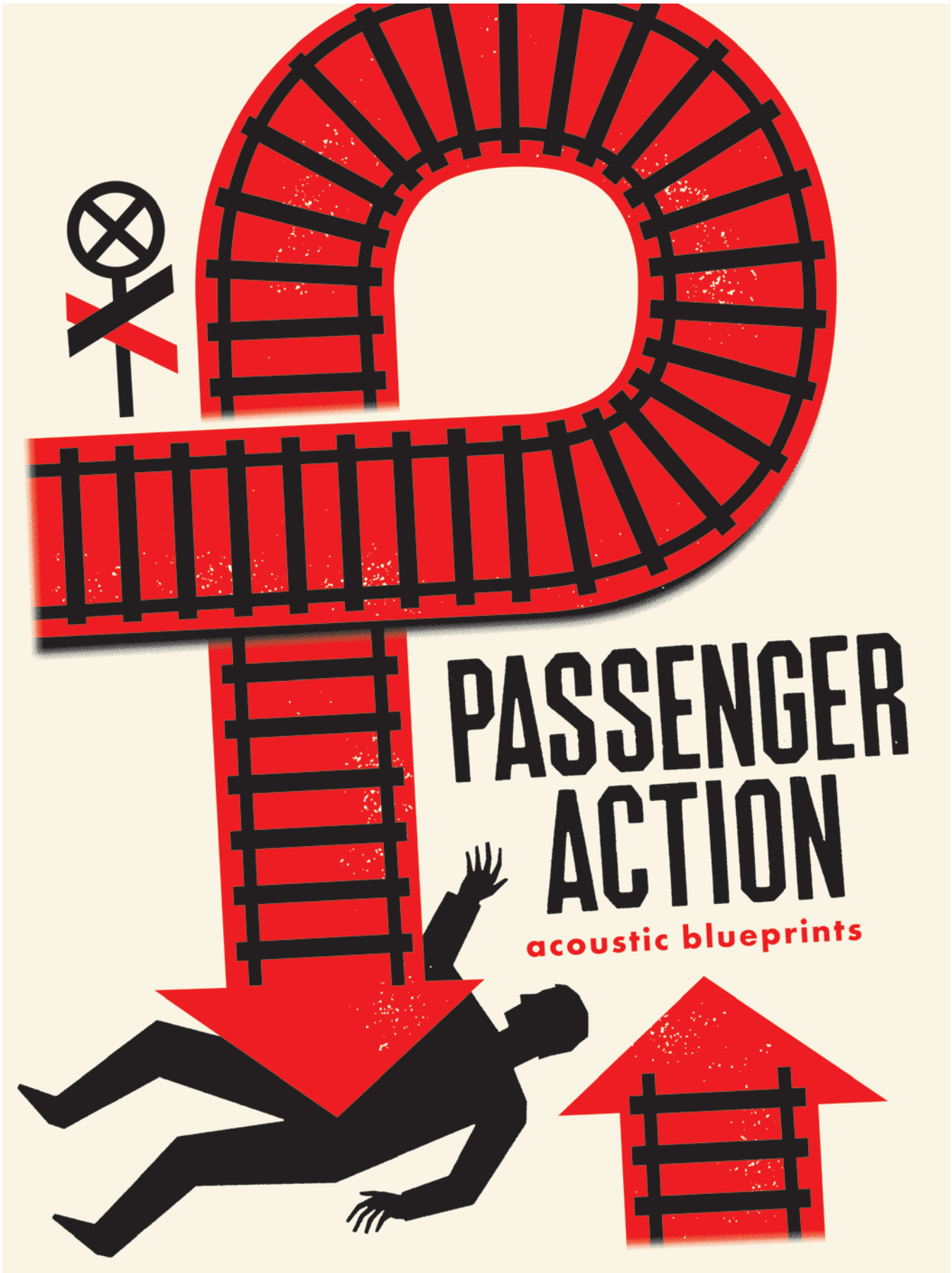
November 2, 2009 / Massey Hall / Toronto, ON / An evening with...
MONSTERS OF FOLK


ALEXISONFIRE


PASSENGER
ACTION
acoustic blueprints

LIVE NATION PRESENTS

The Flaming Lips

Spoon & Tokyo Police Club

with Fang Island / July 8th, 2010

Molson Canadian Amphitheatre

Toronto, ON / 6:30pm / AA


with SPECIAL GUESTS / NOVEMBER 3, 2009
THE EL MOCAMBO / TORONTO, ON
FUTURE OF THE LEFT

Opening Act

BY AMY JONES

On the top floor of the TexPark garage, at eight o'clock on a Friday night, Alexandra watches while Sam and Fallon share a bottle of vodka. They pass it back and forth, Fallon sipping, her gum stuck to the end of her index finger, Sam licking drops of vodka from the rim before tilting his head back. Fallon giggles and sticks the gum back into her mouth while she waits her turn.

"Are you sure you don't want any?" she asks Alexandra.

"Um, *yeah,*" says Alexandra.

Sam and Fallon sit on ground between two parked cars, one of which has a bumper sticker on the back that reads, "JESUS IS COMING . . . LOOK BUSY." Fallon thinks this is hilarious. She leans against the wall, her bare legs stretched out from the tight black dress she has partially covered with a red plaid shirt, ankles laced into brand new shiny Doc Martens. Sam sits beside her in his holey jeans and T-shirt, knees pulled to his chest.

Alexandra stands. Above them, a single star glows in the sky, and she stares at it until it fades to a tiny spark.

"More for me," says Fallon, shrugging. She glows tonight–she always glows, in a different way than other girls do. Alexandra wonders if it's because she's had sex. Something must change in you then, she thinks. Making things quieter inside. Especially if the sex you've had is with half the school.

"No way," says Sam. "I get her share." Sam has been drinking a lot lately. He thinks it makes him seem more like a troubled artist. If you asked him, though, he'd say it was because he *is* a troubled artist. There's a difference.

"Awesome," says Alexandra. "Another show missed with your head in the toilet."

It's not that Alexandra is so straight edge. She drinks with Sam sometimes, sitting in his parents' basement on Saturday nights, mixing everything together from his dad's liquor cabinet, then adding Coke. She just thinks drinking in public is stupid. She imagines Fallon is one of those girls who gets drunk fast, tries to stick her tongue down your throat, then starts to cry and passes out in the bathroom, vomit caked around her mouth, face streaked with mascara. It's so boring. Oh, look at you, you're a fucked-up teenager. Big deal. Who isn't?

"Whatever," says Fallon, waving her hand at Alexandra, the momentum knocking her over onto her elbow. "So," she says to Sam. "I still say it's Flea."

"You wouldn't say that if you were a bassist," Sam says. "If you were a bassist, you'd know it was Les Claypool."

"If I was a bassist," Fallon says, leaning forward, grin on her face, "I'd kill myself."

Sometimes on those Saturday nights at home, Alexandra and Sam talk, or watch a movie, or she lets him go down on her, his bony fingers pressing into the insides of her thighs, leaving bruises like fingerprints on her skin. But mostly, Sam just wants to play his bass. He's in a band, Nietzsche's Watering Can, with two kids from Summer Rock, Pete and Robbie, both twelfth graders from Halifax West who have a late-night punk show on CKDU and are obsessed with *Star Trek.* The band hasn't had a show yet, but Robbie has been talking to the manager at Cafe Olé who thinks he might be able to get them into the Battle of the Bands.

"That's so cool your boyfriend's a guitarist," Fallon said to Alexandra two weeks back, on the front steps of the school–the first words she had ever spoken to her, even though they had three classes together and rode the same bus. Alexandra was minding Sam's bass while he ran back to his locker to get his math book. "My brother's a guitarist. He plays with the Truth, have you heard of them?"

"No," said Alexandra, even though she thought she might have. "And it's a bass, actually."

"Oh, cool," said Fallon, touching the top of the case with the tips of her fingers. "Cool."

Four floors down from the TexPark, a car honks. Fallon jumps, and vodka sloshes over her arm. Sam takes her wrist and runs his tongue over the wet part.

Gross," says Fallon, pulling her arm back and wiping her wrist on her shirt. But when she looks at Alexandra there's light in her eyes.

Sam puts his arm around Alexandra. He is so skinny she can actually feel his ribs through the layers of both their clothes. She can't understand it–he eats more than a human being could ever possibly eat.

"Why can't you be vodka flavoured?" he asks.

"Why can't you be an actual human being?" Alexandra shoots back.

"Too much work," says Sam. Then his hand is in her hair, his hot breath in her face. While he kisses her, she looks past him to Fallon, staring into her eyes until they fade away.

They'd planned to sneak into the Double Deuce to see Eric's Trip, recently signed to a Seattle label and now the new favourite band of every single person who lived in Halifax and the outlying areas. Including Fallon, apparently, whose brother's girlfriend works the coat check at the Deuce and who was "totally" going to get them in. "For sure. No problem."

"I can't believe they're actually coming here," Fallon had said to Alexandra

MATTHEW DALEY

that afternoon in math class, her boots clunking against Alexandra's desk. "Did you see them mentioned in *Sassy*?"

"Holy fucking shit," thought Alexandra. "Someone actually still reads *Sassy*."

"Alexandra?" Fallon poked her shoulder with the blunt end of her pen. It was fat, one of those ones with the four different coloured push-down tips–blue, green, pink, purple. Alexandra would bet money Fallon always used pink. "Can you believe they're coming here?"

Alexandra dug the tip of her own ballpoint pen into her desk, where she had spent the better part of the year carving an elaborate replica of a Descendents album cover into the wood.

"Yes, actually, I can," she said, without looking up. What she really couldn't believe was that she was actually going to go see Eric's Trip with Fallon the poser and her posse of brain-dead, flannel-wearing stoners. The type who go to shows just to stand around in the alley and get high, or fling their hair around in the mosh pit, all arms and legs and complete lack of any semblance of self-control. But Sam was going, and that meant Alexandra was going too.

"Hey," said Fallon, scratching the tip of her pen into the back of Alexandra's desk. (Purple. Close enough.) "You spelled 'Descendants' wrong."

For a moment Alexandra ignored her. But she couldn't stand Fallon thinking she was smarter than her. "That's how they spell it," she said.

"Oh," said Fallon. She wrote "Descendents" on her hand. "Are they good?"

"Yeah," said Alexandra. Then, unable to resist, "I saw them at Camaro's a couple of months ago." Camaro's was an all-ages venue in an old furniture store that opened up after the Casino, a similar club in an old movie theatre, had closed. But Fallon wouldn't know any of this. Up until three weeks ago, Fallon was on the fucking cheerleading squad.

"She was an ironic cheerleader," Sam said later, while they were walking home. "You know, like the ones in the 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' video."

"They weren't ironic," Alexandra said, shifting her backpack on her shoulders. "They were anarchists."

"Whatever," said Sam. "She's cool. She's going to get us into the show."

"Yeah," said Alexandra. "She's *cool*."

"You just don't like her because of that time we went to Wendy's."

Sam and Fallon and two of her moronic little minions had gone on a free period. They all shared one small Frosty and got kicked out for making fun of the retarded kid who cleaned the trays. When Alexandra heard about it, she freaked out on Sam. She was all for making fun of people on even footing–but then again, maybe Fallon and the retarded kid *were* on an even footing. None of it had anything to do with the fact Fallon had bigger breasts than Alexandra, or that she did this thing where she said a person's name ten million times in a conversation: "Hey, Sam, what did you get on that history test, Sam? Oh, God, Sam, I think I totally failed it, Sam, Sam, I am such a dunce sometimes, Sam, you know what I mean

Tupelo

I wanna go to Tupelo with you.
I don't care that I've never seen that place outside of a picture,
because I think that town would hold us
like a glass bowl holds peaches,
keeping us cool, keeping our skin warm because we're tasty.

I want to sleep in a hotel room where everything is velvet and green.
Where the end of the toilet paper roll
is dog-eared like a Jacqueline Susann novel.
I want to make verbs with you.
I want my thighs to stick to the seat.
I want to shave my legs in a parking lot
with a razor from a pack of six.
The pack has to last us three weeks.

I want to eat warmish macaroni at an Esso station
in a town between others with names.
I want to sing until my voice sounds like yours
and yours like mine. I want to almost leave you one night
in a dead mall over something tiny that explodes.
I want to love Elvis with you without irony.

I want to take care of all that business I built up without you
on my own. I want to cry lost time into every stitch
of the pillow until all those stitches loosen into notes.
I want to take a bath of notes. I want to loofah my legs with B-flats
and slide As down my stomach to a place
that in teen movies is secret and sacred.

But I want you to know me entirely. I want you to record music on my skin.
I want to play your eyelashes, your toes,
your fingernails, the hoarseness of your voice.
I want us to be louder than the radio.

–Lauren Kirshner

Sam? Sam, Sam, Sam, Sam." None of it had anything to do with the fact she thought she could just walk into Alexandra's world and own it.

"Yes," Alexandra said, walking faster, her hands slung under the straps of her backpack, her sneakers silent on the concrete. "That is the bajillionth reason why I don't like her. Number bajillion and one is that she's a dirty skank."

She waited for a reaction, but when she turned around Sam wasn't even listening. He was in the process of trying to take down a gig poster from the telephone pole in front of them.

"Can you help me?" he asked. "I don't want to rip the top part."

"You're doing it wrong," Alexandra said, swatting his hand away. "Let me."

She slid her hand into the gap on the sides between the wood and the thin paper, and gently pulled upward, the gummy tape globbing together on her fingers.

"You don't even like Bubaiskull," she said, examining the poster as it peeled away from the telephone pole.

"They're O.K.," said Sam, looking away.

"Holy fuck," said Alexandra, letting the poster fall to the ground. "Is she, like, your new music guru or something?"

Sam bent down and picked up the poster. Alexandra could still feel the weight of it in her hands, the stickiness that was left behind on her fingers.

On the way to the Double Deuce, they stop at Blowers Street PaperChase for chocolate. Alexandra and Sam get Wunderbars, as usual. Fallon buys Junior Mints.

"I like your hair," the guy behind the counter says to Fallon, pointing to the pink streak that had appeared amongst the blond a couple of days earlier.

"Thanks," says Fallon. "I did it with a Magic Marker." She stands on her tiptoes and props herself up over the counter. "Feel it! It doesn't even come off."

The counter guy tentatively fingers the strand. "Cool," he says. Fallon's knee bumps against the box of Aero bars and they fall to the floor.

Alexandra moves through the racks of magazines toward the door.

"Are we going to have to wait for her to blow him?" she asks Sam. Sam shakes his head and takes a bite of his Wunderbar.

"You're such a bitch," he says. It comes out sounding like "Mmmmphummmmp," but Alexandra understands him.

The plan is to walk right up to the door of the Double Deuce like it was their regular weekend activity.

"Just be confident," Fallon whispers into Alexandra's ear, her words slurring together, breath all mint and chocolate. "Bouncers are like bees. They can smell fear."

"I don't know if that's true," Alexandra says. She looks at Fallon. "I thought your brother's girlfriend was going to get us in?"

Fallon doesn't answer, just skips ahead and links her arm into Sam's.

"Hurry up," she says over her shoulder. "I don't want to miss the opening act." She turns back to Sam. "Wait, who's the opening act?"

"You're the opening act," says Sam. "Hurry up, you're going to be late."

Fallon stops, laughing, and holds her hand over her diaphragm, singing, "Mi mi mi mi mi mi" in a fake operatic voice. Sam mimes applause.

"That's actually pretty good," he says. "You should sing for Nietzsche's Watering Can."

Alexandra now wishes she had shared the vodka with them, so she would have

an excuse for crying. She thinks about the first time she met Sam, at a Thrush Hermit show at the Flamingo. They had snuck into the over-nineteen section to get to the front of the stage. There they danced side by side, their bodies pressing into each other under the crushing weight of the crowd, until Sam motioned upward, mouthed "Do you want to?" and without even waiting for a response, bent down and grabbed her foot, guiding her upward until the crowd lifted her, until she was floating over everything–blinding lights and the feeling of a million hands on her body. Floating until eventually the floor came up beneath her and she was set down hard, her legs jarring in her sneakers, suddenly back in the all-ages section. She could see Sam making his way back through the crowd, even though he could have stayed up front. When he reached her, he put his hand on her hip. That was all. His hand on her hip. A million hands on her body and the only one she really felt was his.

"I can't go in there," she says suddenly.

"Huh?" says Sam.

Instantly, Fallon is at her side, her hands cradling Alexandra's face.

"Yes, you can," she says. Her hands are hot, like little irons pressing Alexandra's cheeks. "You're amazing. You can do anything."

"No," says Alexandra. "I can't do this."

"Come on, babe," Sam says, taking her hand. "You love Eric's Trip."

"Yeah, I know," says Alexandra. "They're my favourite band."

They really were, from the very beginning. It was so stupid. She can't believe she's even wearing the fucking T-shirt.

"Mine too!" Fallon says, knocking her forehead against Alexandra's. "They're the best," she whispers. "Right, Sam?"

"Right."

He smiles at her, trying to be reassuring. He still thinks she is worried about getting into the bar.

Alexandra holds Sam's hand very tightly. She hopes he can feel it, can feel something.

Fallon drags her fingers down Alexandra's cheeks and then lets her arms fall to her sides.

"You're so beautiful," Fallon says. She lowers her eyelids and for a second. Alexandra thinks she is going to kiss her. Then Fallon slumps forward and vomits on Alexandra's shoes.

"Awesome," says Alexandra.

"Oh, fuck," says Sam.

"It's O.K.," says Fallon, wiping her mouth with the back of her hand. Then she vomits again, off to the side, half-chewed Junior Mints spraying across the sidewalk. On the other side of the street, a group of kids start cheering. Fallon hiccups. Then she starts to cry.

Their route home takes them past the Double Deuce. Fallon's wailing, having softened to a whimper, reignites when she sees the bar.

"I want to go in," she says.

"No," says Alexandra, studying Fallon's face. "You really don't."

Fallon sits down on the curb and drops her head between her knees. Sam leans back against the building next to the bar, hands in his pockets. He's trying to pull it together, but Alexandra can see that he's still drunk. She stands next to him. A car drives by, some kind of country music blaring out the windows. The doors to the bar are closed, and there are no people outside, but the building pulses. Alexandra can feel it.

"I'm hungry," says Sam.

"You're always hungry," says Alexandra.

On the curb, Fallon lets out a moan.

"I suppose this is one bajillion and two," says Sam.

"No," says Alexandra. She looks at Fallon. "This was already covered."

Sam tilts his head to the side and rests it on Alexandra's shoulder. His eyes are heavy, tired. Alexandra wants to tell him something, her body throbs with it. But she's not even sure what it is.

Sam lifts his head briefly, then lets it fall again.

"I can sort of hear them," he says.

"No, you can't," Alexandra says. She looks up, trying to find the glowing star.

Amy Jones lives in Thunder Bay, Ontario. She is a graduate of the University of British Columbia's M.F.A. program in creative writing. Her first collection, What Boys Like (Biblioasis, 2009), won the 2008–2009 Metcalf-Rooke Award.

THE MISCELLANY

The Production Notes

• This number of *Taddle Creek* is one of the magazine's rare theme issues, the theme this time being music. So once you've made your way through the visual component, keep an eye out for *The Taddle Creek 45,* coming in early 2012. An interesting side note: three authors in this issue reference Judy Garland and/or "Over the Rainbow." Draw your own conclusions.

• *Taddle Creek* usually does its own fact-checking in-house, but sometimes even the vast knowledge of the magazine and its staff has its limits. So a big thanks to Angelina Chapin for her help in deciphering Derek McCormack's thoroughly disgusting use of the French language (she didn't vomit once!), Bethany Horne (*Taddle Creek's* Twitter crush) and Waye Mason for their expertise on early-nineties Halifax, and Demon Richard Underhill and Perry White for their smooth lesson in jazz theory.

• Last issue, *Taddle Creek* presented a story on Lindsay Zier-Vogel's Love Lettering Project. In the interest of giving credit where credit is due, the poem featured in the story's accompanying photo spread was written by Rhya Tamasauskas (though Lindsay writes many of her own love letters, she sometimes has friends contribute to the project as well).

• The illustrator Gary Taxali's cover for *Taddle Creek's* twenty-fifth number recently was selected by the New York–based Society of Illustrators to appear in both its annual travelling show and its awards program. Bravo!

• This fall, the magazine delivered The Second Taddle Creek Junk Mail Campaign to thousands of homes across Canada. Aside from a snazzy envelope, it contained a nice letter and a little flyer politely telling would-be readers what they've been missing by not subscribing to *Taddle Creek.* Orders were as healthy as expected–based upon prevailing industry "wisdom"–as were the number of jokers who found it funny to tear up the package and mail it back at the magazine's expense in the provided postage-paid envelope. But what was less expected was the volume of mail received praising the campaign. Even people who had no interest in subscribing wrote in to say how much *Taddle Creek's* junk mail had brightened their day. *Taddle Creek* was so chuffed by the response that it seriously is considering changing its format to a subscription-getting flyer and giving up on this whole magazine nonsense. If you'd like to see the package, and the comments it generated, visit www.taddleceekmag.com/junkmail.

The Books

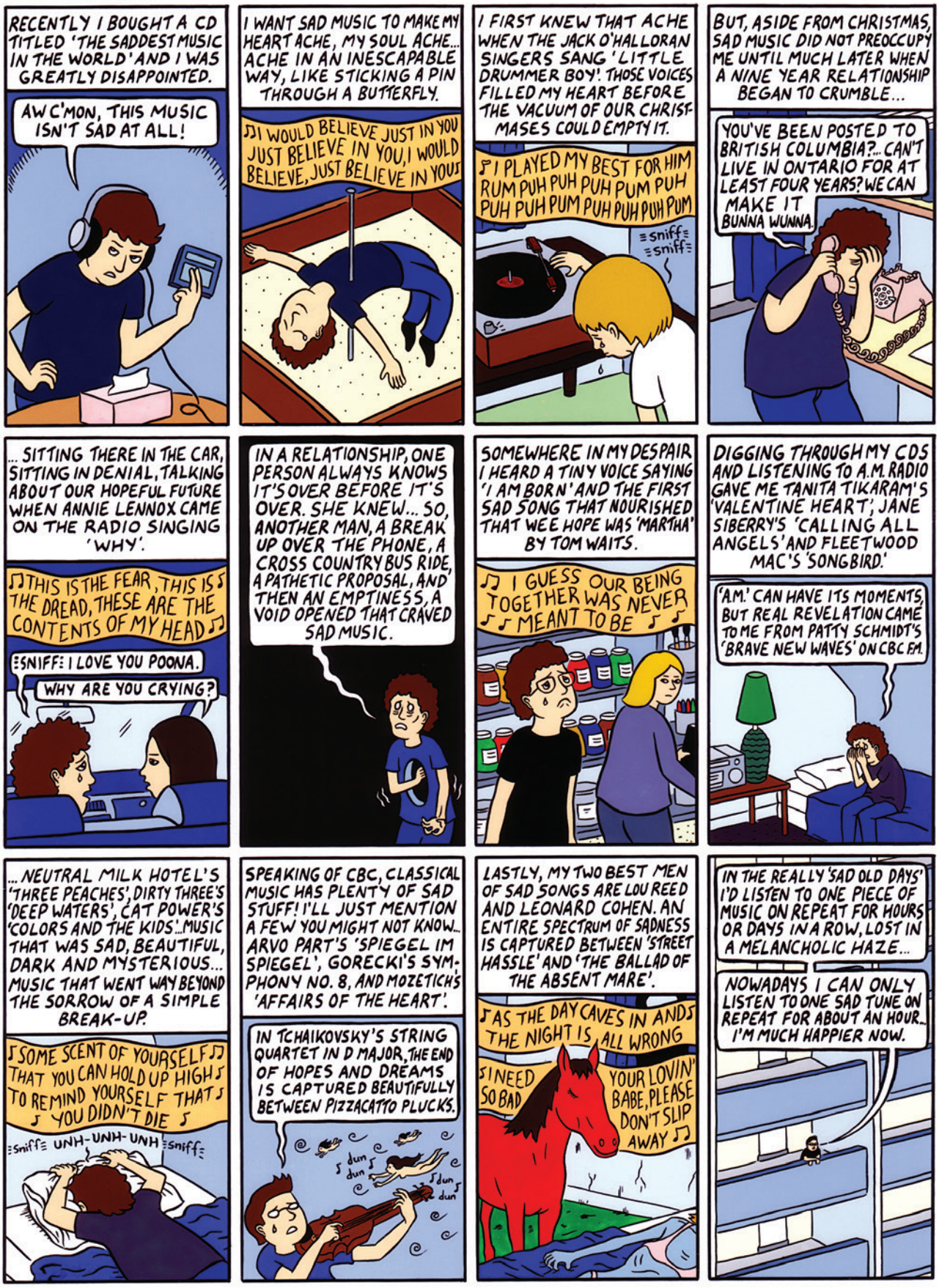
Keeping up with his Niedzviecki-like publishing schedule, Gary Barwin co-authors two new books, *The Obvious Flap* (BookThug, $18), a collaborative poetical jam, and *Franzlations: The Imaginary Kafka Parables* (New Star, $19), the title of which describes its contents better than *Taddle Creek* ever could. Pascal Blanchet releases the French edition of his new graphic novel, *Nocturne* (Pastèque, $34.95), a book so mind-blowing *Taddle Creek* may not wait for the English version. The above-mentioned illustrator Gary Taxali and his little monkey friend return with *I Love You, OK?* (TeNeues, $19.95), a non-linear examination of life's paradoxes. Seth stays nerdy with *The Great Northern Brotherhood of Canadian Cartoonists* (Drawn & Quarterly, $24.95), another affectionate tribute to the author's obsessions, this time with a Canadiana bent. Dani Couture wins this year's *Taddle Creek* award for best book cover with *Algoma* (Invisible, $19.95), her first novel, which is not entirely about ships. Michael Boughn unleashes his long-worked-on mystery novel, *Business as Usual* (NeWest, $22.95). And finally, *Taddle Creek* is especially excited about two new works by the Daves it knows. David Whitton's much-awaited debut, *The Reverse Cowgirl* (Freehand, $21.95), is a collection of short stories, many of which appeared in these pages (though one story from these pages does not appear). You're welcome, world. Also, Dave Lapp's *People Around Here* strip from issue No. 24 of *Taddle Creek* appears in the 2011 edition of *The Best American Comics* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, $28.95). It is the second year in a row Dave appears in the anthology, as well as the second year in a row a story from *Taddle Creek* is included.

The Corrections

In the essay "Peeling Back the Layers," by Alfred Holden, in the summer, 2011, issue, Paul Martel was referred to as a landscape architect. He is, rather, an unmodified architect in private practice. *Taddle Creek* felt it had checked this fact with Mr. Martel, but apparently some wires got crossed. *Taddle Creek* regrets the error.

sad music

dave lapp



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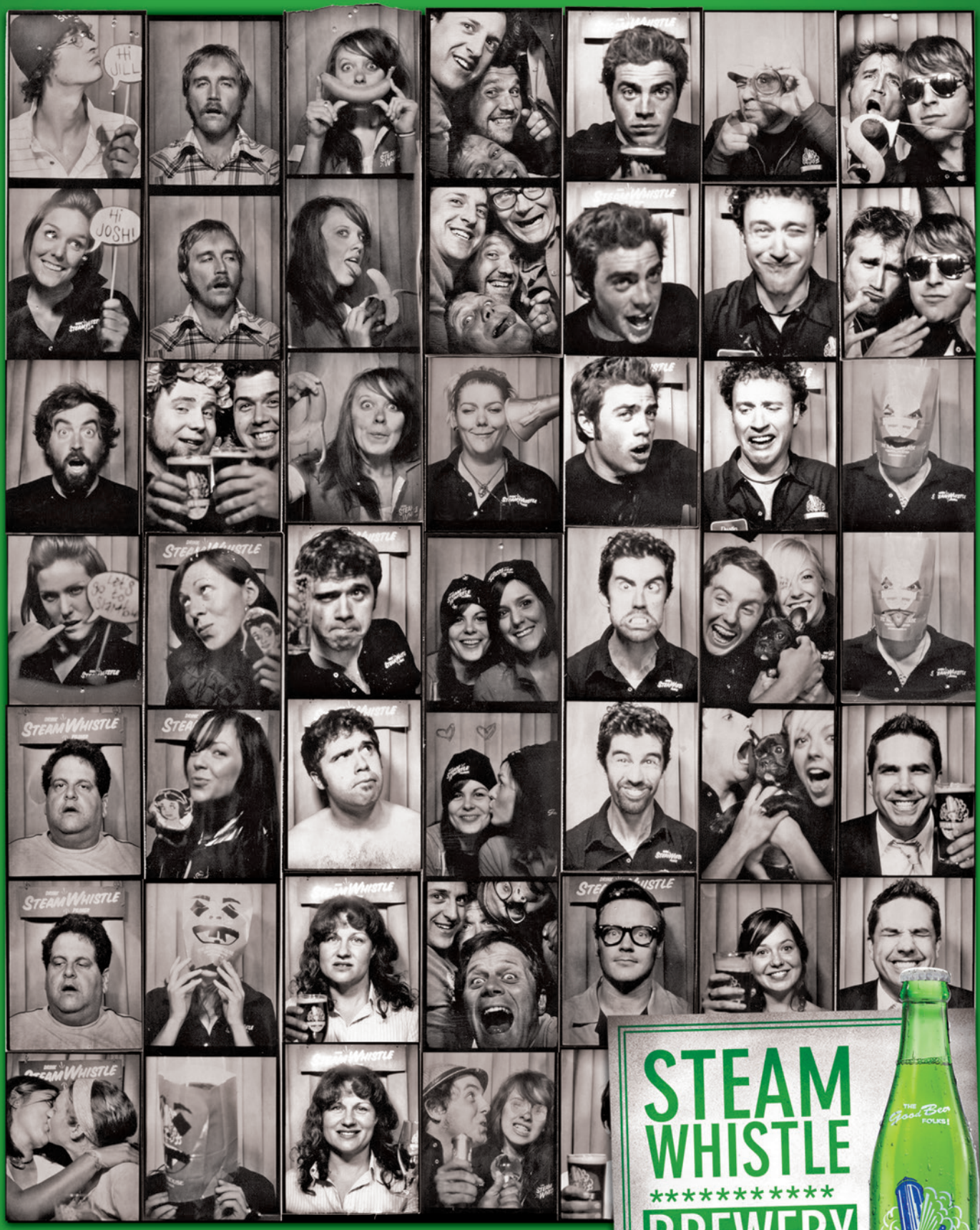

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