

FLUKE

10



#2

Welcome to issue 10 of *Fluke*! This issue is heavy with interviews, we haven't had this many since #2 way back in 1992, which featured Lungfish, Nuisance, Phleg Camp, Monsula and Ben Sizemore of Econochrist. *Fluke* and the East Bay have always had a great friendship over the years and this issue builds on that relationship with East Bay bands Emily's Army and Mystic Knights of the Cobra. Also, Anna Joy Springer and Commander Angel Nova of the Phenomenauts are from the East Bay. I'm really appreciative of all the love this fanzine has been shown by the East Bay, thank you! So let me tell you what all we have this go around.



The first two interviews need prefacing, as they were conducted in London this past January. Tony Anastasi, Green Day fan extraordinaire and music fest start-up, invited a bunch of people over to **London** to get the ball rolling on the first of hopefully many great music fests. He invited my wife Sarah and me over, as well as a ton of great bands such as Bobby Joe Ebola and the Children Macnuggits, Mystic Knights of the Cobra, The Phenomenauts, Kepi Ghoulie, Prima Donna, Bryan McPherson, Fever Charm and more. It was an unforgettable weekend of music, plus Sarah and I walked and transported all over London, taking in as much as we possibly could in three or four days. I want to take this

opportunity to publicly thank Tony for sending us out, it was definitely an incredible time!

The first interview from outside the club Dingwall's in Camden was with **Alex the Russian**. Alex was on holiday from his teaching job in Russia and just happened to stumble upon the show on the first night. He stuck around for the remainder of the fest and displayed an enormous amount of camaraderie and excitement. **Angel Nova of The Phenomenauts** makes a cameo appearance!

I really loved **Mystic Knights of the Cobra** and jumped at the chance to interview them as well. This band is punk rock with no apologies. Their live show was great and a whole lot of fun.

Stevie D, of the Phoenix punk band Glass Heroes, wrote about Dee Dee Ramone for issue 7 in '09. He returns with **LAMF '77**, about reading punk fanzines in the '70s. The photo is from '82 though; he couldn't dig up anything earlier. Check out his Cramps shirt!

Up next we have **Burt Taggart**, the long-standing de facto mayor of Little Rock music. Burt has been playing in Little Rock bands since 1990, splitting duties between guitar and drums. Bands such as Displaced Aggression, Chino Horde, 5-0, Iodine, 12ft6, Jetjangua and Pants come to mind. He ran **File-13** records for a few years in the early '90s and started up his **Max Recordings** label in '02. Burt currently plays in The Cane Hill Engagement and of course his perennial band, **Big Cats**. We finally get around to catching up with Mr. Taggart to talk about his years with Big Cats and what they have in store for 2012!

J-kNee January writes about growing up as a female in the Little Rock punk scene and being influenced by **Alice Bag**, who recently released the book **Violence Girl**. Janie moved to Tacoma, Washington in the early '90s and has since relocated to Seattle, where she fronts her band The Januariez.

Victoria Sackett reviews **Anna Joy Springer's The Vicious Red Relic, Love** and asks her questions about her new book. Anna Joy was in the early '90s Berkeley punk band Blatz and while we're at it, Victoria was in Chicago punk band 8bark, also from the '90s.

Finally, Corbett Redford, of Bobby Joe Ebola and the Children Macnuggits fame, sits down with Oakland's very own **Emily's Army**. This brings everything full circle for us at *Fluke* headquarters, these guys are the next generation right here. Emily's Army is a young punk band with a lot of enthusiasm and love for music and friendship.

So that's what we have for this issue. I've always been really inspired by music, I'm putting the fan back in fanzine! Thanks to everyone who wrote letters from last issue, you helped to make the 20th anniversary even better, keep them coming! I almost did a letters section for this issue, maybe next time. I have other stuff that I was going to put in this issue as well but felt like it didn't really fit so I'm saving it for issue 11, which will be out later this year. If you know of any cool record shops, book stores or anywhere else in your area that would carry *Fluke*, please drop me a line: **Fluke Fanzine/PO Box 24957/Tempe, AZ 85285**. Send \$3 cash for a copy of *Fluke* or contact me for wholesale rates if you'd like to sell it at shows or through your distro, etc. Thank you and enjoy!

-FLK, April 2012

FF: Okay, Alex the Russian, where are you from?

AU: Yes, Alex the Russian. I am from Russia, obviously. Voronezh, southwest Russia. Not the best place to live, but still.

FF: How did you find out about this show?

AU: Well, I was walking, on my business in the Whitechapel, and I see a couple of beautiful-dressed guys with black hair and guitars with the cases like coffins. I came there and I asked the keyboard man, "What's going on?" He said, "Yeah, we have a gig, come in at 7 o'clock." I came in and it's the best weekend I've ever had in years because rock and roll still lives and that's important.

FF: So who were your favorite bands?

AU: Well, you know, Prima Donna, obviously. I mean, I love the guys – the music, the attitude, everything, it's perfect, and he sings like Jim Morrison from time to time which gives him much more credit.

ALEX the RUSSIAN

(w/GUEST APPEARANCE BY ANGEL NOVA OF THE PHENOMENAUTS!)

FF: Right. So, how's punk rock in Russia, is it existent?

AU: It exists but it's very underground and because it's in Russian, nobody understands so nobody listens except Russia.

FF: Do you guys have shows there?

AU: Yeah, of course. A lot of pop music just like here - MTVs and stuff and a lot of acoustic rock. Russian rock is all acoustic, it's all about playing solid guitar, and some voices and maybe percussion drums. We have a lot of acoustic rock going on, all the time.

FF: So is this one of your first punk shows?

AU: No, I've been to punk shows in Italy before but since we're in England this is a rock show which is even more important. It's rock and roll.



(Commander Angel Nova of the Phenomenauts walks up)

AN: Alex, what color shirt do you want, red or black? And what size?

AU: I want a black one! Small, because I want it tight.

AN: That's pretty tight! I'll give you a medium.

FF: Jump in on this interview, I do a zine called Fluke.

AN: Alright. This guy was so awesome that I want to make sure he gets a shirt before he leaves.

FF: So how was this weekend for you?

AN: Oh, it was amazing! It was so much fun. The whole thing was like a rock and roll victory.

FF: Is this the first time the Phenomenauts have played in London?

"He ate brains!"

AN: It is! We've played all over Europe but this is the first time we've played in London.

FF: So do you guys have any new music coming out?

AN: We're writing stuff right now so it will be a while before we put anything out but we're working on it.

FF: How'd you meet Alex the Russian?

AN: He just showed up and was awesome so...

AU: I just started fuckin' dancing (laughter)!

AN: He went all super crazy...

(Sarah Thompson joins us)

ST: He ate brains!

AN: He ate brains, like so many zombies.

AU: Oh, you guys!

MYSTIC KNIGHTS OF THE COBRA



FF: Introduce yourselves.

CC: I'm Chino Cobra.

LC: Lady Cobra.

BC: And I am Baby Cobra.

FF: Here we are in London, at the legendary Dingwall's. Are you guys as bewildered by being here as I am?

CC: I am more confused than you are (laughter). I got to play a punk rock show in London and that's all that counts.

LC: Yeah, we have no idea what's going on.

BC: I was told that if it's too good to be true then it's too good to be true but it actually fucking happened, it's really crazy.

LC: With some of the best friends and East Bay punk bands. We're having a fucking blast and we're gonna do it again when we get back home.

BC: These bands we've played with are really close friends, really good, we love playing with these bands. They're all local and we have a lot in common. The hotel was a comedy act in itself.

LC: It was like a big punk rock silver party!

FF: What I really appreciated about your set was that you guys just had a great time, you were up there having a lot of fun.

CC: Everyone out here told us we were the only ones having fun. Everyone else who is playing shows, they're having fun too but when it comes down to it, when we wanna rock, we wanna have fun and it's a party. It's a moving party - we moved the party from the East Bay to London.

LC: Yeah, the Cobras never plan anything, we've never booked a show in our whole entire...career, if you wanna even call it a fuckin' career

(laughter). We've never booked anything, we just go with the flow. "You wanna play in London?" "Yeah, fuck it, let's do that."

BC: The objectivity in us playing shows is literally to have a good time. Even at practice - "I'm not having fun, I'm not having fun." Okay, let's have a couple shots, now let's practice.

CC: And we are drunker than any other band that is out here.

FF: Yeah, one of the funniest things that happened while you guys were playing last night is when Tony Anastasi took your beer and you said, "Hey, I paid for that beer, give it back!" and you realized it was Tony and you said, "Oh wait, you probably paid for this beer!"

(Laughter)

CC: Tony hooked us up, Tony hooked us up. I'm glad to be here in London, I don't wanna leave.

BC: We're missing our bass player because he's blacked out and falling on the ground. He's had the best time! He's seen three foxes fight in the streets of London. Then they stopped fighting, looked at him and took a poop.

FF: Another highlight for me was when you guys played the Nunchucks song, I was yelling for you guys to play it again.

CC: I originally wrote that with her (Baby Cobra) and our original bass player. We were in a band called Red Summer, which was awful. No one needs to hear that shit (laughter). It was very Hot Water Music-y. It was Discount. The whole reason we started was to have fun and play music with our friends.

BC: The band started on a dare. "Hey, all you drunk assholes say you're in a crew, why don't you put on a show? You have one month to put it together." We fuckin' killed it. We write lyrics about nothing because if you write a romantic song, people are all, "Wait, I have feelings about it." (laughter) Comedy goes over way better than emotion.

LC: She's been my best friend since I was twelve.

FF: So you guys all grew up together in the East Bay. Did you guys grow up in Oakland?

LC: We fuckin' claim Crockett. We were born in Oakland, San Francisco, and we claim Crockett...

CC: We're East Bay.

BC: We all met in Crockett because that's where we all ended up.

FF: I read in Sniffin' Glue fanzine that The Clash rehearsed right in this neighborhood (Camden), the Ramones played at this club, The Damned played here...

CC: The Clash is the biggest asset that we as a band have, outside of East Bay music. Kepl and the Groovie Ghoulies, we grew up with them.

LC: We have a band crush on Kepl, you should be interviewing him right now. He is the most amazing person.

BC: We all have been sharing Kepl stories this weekend. "Kepl said this to me!" "Oh yeah? Well he said *this* to me!" (laughter)

CC: We're close with Kevin Preston and the Prima Donna guys and now that he and David are in the band with them, we see them a lot more often. They just played the show with my brother, who is also in Bobby Joe Ebola, which is an excellent band, and you know...playing with your heroes, how could you go wrong?

BC: Being sent to London with all your favorite bands!? It's insane.

CC: We're going home tomorrow, we're trying to run this show back home in Oakland (laughter).

FF: Are you guys recording new music?

LC: Yes, it's called "Where the Sausage Meets the Bun."

(laughter)

BC: Actually, Kepl's a new Cobra girl and his face in the wolf hat is going to be the cover of the album. In the taxi last night, he put the wolf hat on and took a picture and said, "Here's your cover!"

CC: I got to sing a song with Kepl tonight, that's like my childhood dream. It really is and it means so much to be out here playing with people I respect. The Phenomenauts are absolutely amazing. Bryan McPherson is incredible.

BC: Bryan's one of the nicest guys I've ever known.

FF: Did you guys hear what Bryan said before he went on last night? He said, "This might not be punk enough for you guys" then he paused and

said, "I'm punker than all you fuckers...that was just a trick."

(laughter)

CC: Damn right he is! He's Boston hardcore, dude. I cannot say enough good things about Bryan McPherson. His music is heartfelt shit, these girls had a room right next to his and they got to hear him writing a new song in the hotel.

(Caoimhe walks up and asks, "Hey, what are you guys doing?")

FF: We're doing an interview for a fanzine I do called Fluke.

LC: This is Kee-Kee.

CC: Caoimhe's wonderful.

FF: So tell me about your album that's all about ninja weapons.

LC: That's pretty much it, you explained the whole thing. (laughter)

CC: Me, Monica (Lady Cobra), my brother and my brother-in-law David Crumpton, who's excellent, started a band just to have fun. It was supposed to be drunk-proof. You play your songs as fast as you can and what's better than

ninja weapons? So, we went for that.

FF: You guys have any closing comments?

LC: We're having an awesome time and thank you.

CC: Thank you, thank you, thank you. I really enjoyed it. Being in your zine is awesome. And thank London for this shit.

BC: Hey, do you realize we're standing on cobblestone, in the middle of London, while we're doing this? I just wanted to put that out there. Perfect! Excellent! And good night!





LAMF '77

Being still in my teens in the '70s meant that not only was I a glam refugee but that I was already an experienced concert-goer and gate crasher. So when the new scene coming out of New York was being hawked as punk, I was primed and thrust with the energy, awareness and naïveté that only a youth can have.

Something that I took pride in and coveted was discovering the new music that was coloring my world with the sounds and attitudes of this new breed of miscreants and outcasts. Everyday there was a new band that was donning leather jackets and Levi's with Converse and slinging guitars machine gun style, with amps and monitors cranked up really high! Nowhere else was this covered better for a new nugget than in the zines.

I loved nothing more than crawling out of my bed in the afternoon, throwing on a pair of ripped up jeans and an old t-shirt and walking the blocks to my local record store. Wednesday was when the new shipment of LPs and zines would come in. What would I find when I got there? One zine that I got early on was called *PUNK*.

PUNK was like my bible of sorts. The first copy had Lou Reed on the cover and what I got out of it was that it was totally tongue in cheek. Yes, firmly planted. It was like they were goofing on good old uncle Lou! The cover had him cartoon-figured in one of his tight leather studded jackets. Another copy that I had was when the Sex Pistols did their American tour and the cover had doll or clay figures of the group posturing as if in a live performance. The article was covering the antics and goings on of the band and groupies on the tour, complete with photos. The cool part of that issue was that it also covered the Bay City Rollers and the fact that those two groups were worlds apart, but were they really? That, for me, was an endearment of sorts of those who were flying the flag at the zine, giving the reader an idea that all kinds of new musical events were taking place all over the world. When I got a new copy, the first part I'd turn to was to the top 100 and bottom 100! The top 100 were the coolest things, not just music related, either. It could be anything from an artist, music store, color

or anything cool. The bottom were the worst things such as Pink Floyd (or some other such rot at the time), candy bars or even the weather. From there I would read the funnies. The little cartoon strips with adventures of the Ramones were my favorite! The photos were always the coolest, Joey Ramone carrying a surfboard, barefoot and bare-chested in some Levi cutoffs, pale as could be in the light of day. Another cool photo was of Joey lying between the sheets with the sexy Debbie Harry, with a copy of a New York newspaper that had Son of Sam on the cover. Such was some of my education in the early days. The 45s and LPs that were reviewed were the ones I sought out.

Another zine that came around early on was called *Zig Zag*, which came from the UK and gave coverage of the groups across the Atlantic. This was like a roadmap, a virtual treasure hunt only for me, or so it seemed. *Zig Zag* had a glossy cover and was a monthly zine. The local UK scene was covered and many bands were exposed on these shores for us American kids, rightfully so as there was so very much going on over there.

I was good for a copy of each at the record store, monthly for a long time. Again, the music by the bands that were discussed made their way home with me to my turntable!

On a local level there were a couple of zines that hit the streets and were put out by other kids, talking about local bands and shows in Phoenix. On the rare occasion that there was a single released, it would be panned and I always supported the locals and bought whatever came out. There were photos and such of some of the local talent and some cool interviews. The two local zines at the time were *Gagging Dog* and *Phenis*. By that time, the mood had changed of that original burst of energy and gave way to the Hardcore crews/bands that were decked in flannels and bandanas. The old guard of punk was quickly picked up by these young skaters and time moved on.

My first trip to Hollywood was in '78 and I picked up a copy of *Slash*, which was a local zine and there was also the record label of the same name. The bands and their shows were covered and a few hauled it down I-10 to carry their

message to us here in the desert. There was nowhere I'd been in my youth prior to that visit that felt more like I was home. There were a thousand, if not more, strong punks. That was also the first time I'd seen the style of print that *Slash* used for their logo. I got it, it looked like it had been slashed right through the paper or record label and it was red ink which gave it more of a serious tone. All of this was new to me and I ate it up.

So it was a combination of life experience mixed with the zines that I discovered, along with the bands on the covers, that I was given the gift of punk. The message that spoke to me from those other kids was that it was okay to be myself. As well, as the old mommy-approved mentality wasn't for me and I could carve out a life fresh with energy and hope, along with the knowledge that I wasn't alone. These photo-copied, stapled and ink-stained tomes that were assembled at the local copy shop, along with the live shows and records, are what fanned the flame that burned for me as a youth and it still does to this day.

BURT TAGGART



The Big Cats started playing in late '93, after the breakup of Chino Horde, Five-o and Substance, which were all bands of the hardcore variety. What inspired you to shed that style of music and form a rock and roll band?

BT: It's a long way back to recollect but I remember getting slowly burned out by the sound. We were in Westfield, New Jersey playing at Jon Hiltz's house and I remember walking out after we'd played and another band had just started and it wasn't that I was unhappy especially or depressed but once I got outside and was walking around this little bucolic neighborhood, it was like a weight just lifted. That's vague as hell, but it's something I haven't forgotten. It's true too that I was listening to more rock and roll or classic records at the time and the air of high school had finally lifted that it was okay to listen to whatever you wanted. I think I would've gotten there eventually anyway but Steve's mix tapes on that tour helped me understand it even sooner. They weren't unified by a particular genre or sound, but by sheer quality.

When you came home from the Chino Horde tour, you soon took off for Kalispell, Montana where you holed up in a motel room and wrote the first batch of Big Cats songs. Why Kalispell and what songs did you have when you got back to Little Rock some months later?

BT: It was actually the second batch of Big Cats songs. There were eight or so that happened a few months before I left town that I gave away to a girl I was seeing. "Route 66" was from that first group. At any rate, Chino Horde had passed through Montana the summer before and it had stuck with me. We slept on the top of the van in sleeping bags, staring up at the stars somewhere just north of Yellowstone. I remember I woke up with Aaron Elliot's size twelve tube-socked feet in my face. The memories are rushing back. Ha. Anyway, I think that's why Montana was on my radar. It just seemed like a good place to get some perspective. In retrospect, it was probably too remote but even that helped in a way. It kept me productive. I think I came back with another ten songs or so and the realization that we should invite Shannon to join the band.

Was it a natural progression in songwriting, from Chino Horde to Big Cats, or was it something from which you had to consciously shift?

"I remember I woke up with Aaron Elliot's size twelve tube-socked feet in my face."

BT: Yeah, it was a conscious shift but one that I had no idea how to pull off or for that matter, if I'd even like it once I did. I remember in Chino Horde everything was little two-note guitar bits with a lot of ringing dissonant strings in the background. Aside from an open A or E, I think everything else that was supposed to give the music power was played as a bar chord. So that said, I do remember thinking that rock and roll should probably be played more straight ahead than that. "Route 66" for example was all open chords. I remember trying to simplify the imagery as well. I probably over-corrected on that front early on but, if I did, it was only because I wanted to make a break from things that I'd done before.

I imagine that once you got comfortable with writing rock and roll songs you probably felt like you were working in a wide-open space as opposed to a more confined space within punk rock.

BT: I guess you're right, maybe it should have felt uninhibited. I think at times it did. I actually remember being pretty self-conscious about all of it though, too. I was just trying to figure out where I was going, where the band was going, etc. The do-it-yourself aesthetic had literally changed how I viewed the world and I wasn't entirely sure if I was allowed to take those lessons away and apply them to rock and roll or if they somehow belonged exclusively to punk rock.

I'm not quite sure the Little Rock punk scene was ready for the Big Cats. I can remember seeing your first show, which was '93-'94 New Year's Eve at Rice Street and I sort of thought it was a joke. What was the initial reception from your audience, if you recall?

BT: Well, I think you're right. It was serious to us when we were learning the songs for that show but the combination of it being New Year's Eve and Josh, Colin and I playing these songs that didn't sound anything like our previous bands did make it feel like a spoof.

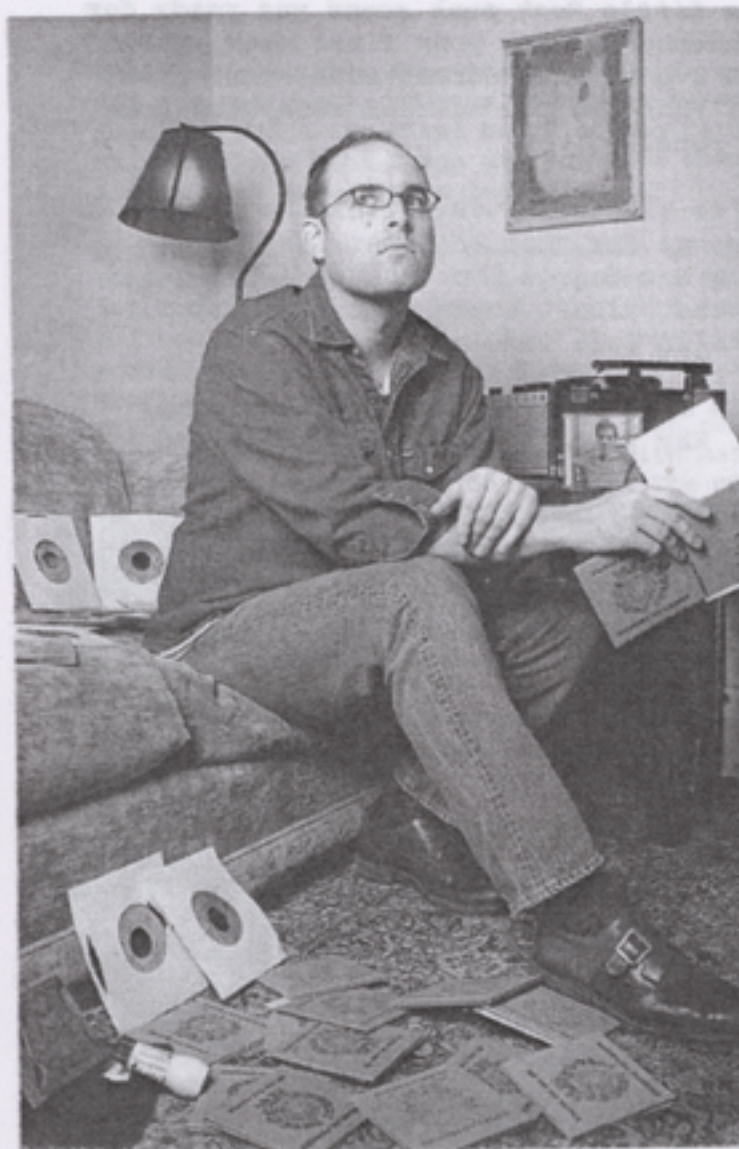
Shannon soon joined the band and you guys got some songs together and recorded. Why weren't those songs released until years later?



"I wish I could have some of those days back."

BT: That was a big mistake. Some of those songs did come out on a cassette that circulated around town but there's really no good answer why I didn't release some things as 45 singles or as an EP. Maybe I lost sight of things around that time. I guess I thought that maybe the band should make a go of it and have our records put out by a larger label and tour, etc. It's not like we were thinking EMI, more like Merge or Matador. It felt like a reasonable step at the time, in retrospect, it seems like wasted time. We had spent the first half of the '90s figuring out how to make records, how to set up shows, how to run a label - all these hard won lessons - only to shirk it and back pedal to filling out mailers for demo submissions.

Shannon passed away unexpectedly in 2000, a heavy blow to Little Rock and to the Big Cats. What was your motivation to keep the band going, with Jason taking over on lead guitar?



BT: Well, you know Jason had spent time in the band previous to that. Josh needed a break for a few years around '96 to '98 and so Jason saved the day and moved back from California to be with us. Those were great years but also exhausting, I think it was before we got comfortable with the fact that we weren't going to be big stars. There was a year or so after Shannon died that it wasn't even mentioned. Slowly though you start to wonder what is right and proper to do and at some point we all felt like it was a way to keep our friendships tight. So after Shannon, Jason was just the natural choice.

In 2002, you started your own record label, Max Recordings, titled after Shannon's middle name. The logo itself is a silhouette of Shannon. The first 45 you released was a Big Cats record. Did you start Max Recordings to remember Shannon and share his legacy?

BT: Shannon died in 2000 and that very questionable year for all of us was the rest of 2000 and into 2001. I finally picked up the guitar again that December and two songs came out really quickly. They just seemed like Big Cats songs to me and so I used the opportunity to see if the guys wanted to get together. A lot of memories fade but I actually remember quite a bit from the days we recorded those songs in Fayetteville. I think that was a really healthy thing for us to have done. As much as we thought of and missed Shannon, we also needed something to show us that it could still be fun and meaningful to play together. Anyway, you asked about how Max started. Yeah, that was it. Those two Big Cats songs seemed like a new start for us and then realizing we could start a label to put it out. It just

connected a lot of dots for us - going back not just through the tough year we'd just had but also all the way back to our beginnings with punk rock and diy.

You eventually put those two songs and the recordings with Shannon on the album "Worrisome Blues" but your first proper LP was "On Tomorrow," released in 2007. That record opens with the bells of Montserrat, another nod to Shannon. Can you share your experience with him in Spain?

BT: I was just thinking about that the other day. Those bells did come from Montserrat. There's just a monastery up there, that's it. But it's quiet and beautiful and pretty unforgettable. That entire trip was great. We split ten days between Barcelona and Paris. Shannon had never been to Europe and was just on cloud nine the whole time. I wish I could

"It's quiet and beautiful and pretty unforgettable."

have some of those days back. I'll always remember his parents picked us up from the airport and he told them that if he wasn't settled and happy in five years that he was moving to Paris.

In the song "Minor Decay" there's the line: "There's geese in the pond, right down from our home." In my mind, that pond is in Highland Park behind War Memorial Stadium. The song seems to touch on a turning point for you, with a young family and thoughts of old Little Rock friends who have moved out of Arkansas or maybe just don't come around anymore. Could you elaborate on your inspiration for writing that song?



BT: Yeah, you're right. Every day I would be stuck for a few minutes waiting for the lights to change there and invariably there's either a few guys skipping work to fish for the afternoon, a father and son, or in cooler weather, geese taking a break on their way south. And there are just some monuments at that intersection as well - the stadium, the park, etc. It seems vague to me now but I know I was in transition after just having my first child. I think that little spot in my day came to represent a few minutes of introspection behind a car window when you're kind of just taking stock of where you are, how you're living, and who's still traveling along with you.

The new Big Cats record is called "The Ancient Art of Leaving: High & Low." Leaving what, exactly?

BT: Well, we leave everything eventually, don't we? I've found meaning in it over the past year. The phrase though



is a riff on a Keith Richards quote. He always refers to the Stones guitar work as "the ancient art of weaving." Jason and I were a little cranky with each other one morning last year when we were recording the album and he snipped at me that it was going to be "the ancient art of leaving" that day. Give Jason a point for that one. Surprisingly it turned out to be one of our more creative days in the studio, but at some point you just crack under the pressure of fatigue or whatever. We spent thirty consecutive eight-plus hour days in the studio. It was amazing but I don't know that I would choose to do it that way again.

You guys recorded dozens of songs and spent all of 2011 working on your new record(s). You just released the first LP of those songs and the next batch is forthcoming. What were your initial plans for releasing all of the songs and what is now in store for the songs that weren't on the new record?

BT: We just tried to get through every idea that we'd brought to the studio. A lot can amass in the years between our records and sometimes it's hard to tell which ones are going to take off, so we did our best to get to all of them to see what was what. As for putting it out though, at some point late in 2011, we began to agree on splitting it up into two albums under the same project name. The songs seem to sit next to each other really well, but all together, it's just too much to wade through, especially at first pass. So the first half came out last month and it's giving us a bit of time to tweak the sound of the second half. I think it'll come out this spring and then we're planning on putting all twenty-five songs together on a multiple vinyl project sometime later in the year.

The creative process can be an emotional rollercoaster but at the same time very rewarding. From the inception of a song idea, through bouncing that idea off your band mates, to creating the song, then recording, releasing and finally presenting it to a live audience. When it's all said and done, where do you most find the fruits of your labor?

BT: Each aspect of it is fun in its own way. The interaction with the band is probably my favorite, though. We've known each other for so long at this point that the communication and growth of the songs once we're in a room together is just fascinating for me to stand back and watch. You come to the table with something that you're proud of but really is mostly crude and simplistic and in the course of a couple of hours, it can start feeling like a cathedral. It doesn't always go down like that, but when it does, it's a great spot to be.



"It can start feeling like a cathedral."

BURT TAGGART

Killing It: Scary Girls and Small Minds

J-kNee January

A few months ago, I had the pleasure of meeting one of my punk rock icons, Alice Bag. She was a forerunner of women in a scene that I had only understood to be comprised of men. Sure, women played music but only in safe places, like orchestra, where they couldn't threaten a male ego. Growing up, I played cello and that was perfectly fine. I was expected to excel, because I was female. But punk rock in Little Rock, Arkansas in the '80s was not so inclusive. A girl with a guitar was a joke. But my misconception began to wane after I saw Penelope Spheeris' *The Decline of Western Civilization*.

ALICE BAG



Fletcher Clement turned me on to the documentary after a Trusty and Sobering Consequences show at the Antenna Club in Memphis. I was seventeen and I had been playing guitar since I was twelve but I didn't really like to play for people. I wanted to in the beginning, you know, when I first got my guitar. I knew I was gonna change the world. I could make it a better place and better yet, I might make some friends. But it wasn't long before my beloved

instrument, which I had bestowed so much faith in, only made me an object of ridicule. By this time, I hardly played for anyone.

But *The Decline of Western Civilization* blew my fucking mind! Not only was I turned on to some killer bands like the Germs, X, and the Alice Bag Band, but I discovered a world where women KILLED IT onstage. Sure, we had a cool scene in Little Rock in the late '80s and very early '90s, but there were no girls killing it! In Los Angeles in the late '70s, there were girls killing it and they were celebrated for KILLING IT! I had no choice but to move far away. No one would ever say to me, "What can you do, you're a girl?" I was going to KILL IT! Twenty years have passed since this night, and I still play guitar and I KILL IT onstage. And I still live very far away.

So last November, I got word that Alice Bag would be reading from her new memoir, *Violence Girl*. There was no question, I was going! I was flooded with so many memories and feelings of growing up down south. How isolated I felt as a female musician in Arkansas, knowing that there were places that gender bias didn't exist. And now, twenty years later, I was going to see one of these women who made my existence as a female musician and performer valid.

Aside from being the lead singer of The Bags (later known as the Alice Bag Band) in the LA punk scene in the '70s, Alice helped shape the movement. When I met her, she said that by the time *Decline* came out, the scene was pretty much on its way out. It had become all aggro and full of people who just wanted to fight. In her book, she discusses the early days as being open and receptive to all types of people. The LA punk scene transcended gender, sex, race, and religion. Alice and all her friends had been just a bunch of misfits who found home in each other. They hung out, made costumes, cut their hair, danced with the risqué, and played music.

This was not much different to the scene I stumbled into at the old DMZ club in Little Rock. It was called Nemesis at the time, and it was an all ages dance club brimming with all sorts of social misfits. It was here that I met drag queens, punks, lesbians, and other socially unacceptable types. I felt right at home in this utopia. There was plenty of different people, plenty of drugs and booze, plenty of make-up, and plenty of room for me to express myself. When Alice talks about her days at the Masque, I think about the days of Nemesis.

Nemesis was short lived, and its demise followed a new movement of punk rock shows, which was great, except there was no room for me as anything other than a spectator, or maybe a girlfriend if I had allowed myself. All of my guy friends were starting bands and playing shows and I was largely overlooked

as potential, although I imagined myself to be louder, more obnoxious, and more passionate than any other punks I knew. It's hard to know which is the chicken and which is the egg here but there were no bands like those from the LA scene. The only Little Rock band I remember featuring a girl had her politely sidelined as an ornament.

Unfortunately for me, I have never been polite. I have never been what society thought I was supposed to be. I have never been a nice girl. I didn't date or have boyfriends. I wasn't into propriety. I wasn't into categories. I wasn't into rules. According to all the people who knew me back in the day who I had lost touch with only to recently reconnect with them, I was a scary girl. Why? Because I was loud? Because I was dominant? There were plenty of boys who behaved like me, and they were all musicians. No. Because I was female, I was scary.

For me, punk rock has always been about breaking things - glass, old modes of thought, boundaries. When there is no place for the individual to break apart its socially defined role, punk cannot exist. Scenes come and go. And people say and do all sorts of things. The trick is staying in strong during those moments of dissent. Always be ready to destroy what no longer serves you.

Much has changed since those days. I returned to Arkansas for a brief stint in the late '90s. I started a band with some of the guys I used to run with. There were all kinds of girls playing music, and a lot of them were scary. Many of them knew nothing of me, and others treated me like I was some sort of legend. I still stand as strong, if not stronger, than I did when I was that hapless teenager wanting to start a band but knowing the reality of the situation. But now I am empowered by the fact that I still fight the current trend. I still buck the system. And I still look up to the women who lit the way, as I continue to cut the path for myself and make room for the "others."

Killing It: Scary Girls and Small Minds

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Book Reviews

Victoria Sackett

The Vicious Red Relic, Love

By Anna Joy Springer
Jaded Ibis Press, 2011
202 pages/ \$26



Being a fan of Anna Joy Springer's since the early '90s when I first read her work in issues of *Cometbus*, I was more than thrilled at the chance to get my hands on a copy of this book. Back then I admired her for her frank and unapologetic style of writing, which was often humorous. This book, which certainly has elements of that style, has the makings of something truly magnificent and brilliant.

Anna Joy Springer's *The Vicious Red Relic, Love* is a fractured love letter disguised as what some might consider a grief memoir. It is a book which can be read and enjoyed in bits and pieces. Upon closer reading, the reader is bound to discover that it is actually a piece of high LGBTQ literature with many tendrils in different graphical and literary devices.

Through the eyes of the narrator Nina, a student living in San Francisco in the '90s, we are told the story of her relationship with her girlfriend Gil, a cult survivor who, unbeknownst to Nina, is also HIV positive. The story shifts through time when in present day, Nina

crafts a small tinfoil elephant companion named Winky, who she sends back in time to be with Gil as she makes her descent into disease, addiction and ultimately death.

The book includes sketches, collage, cult literature, as well as pages from notebooks filled with class notes, which serve as guideposts and reference points that help anchor the reader throughout the inter-dimensional twists and turns. The writing and the graphics together create a cohesive and morbid reality that is beautiful yet tragic and unyielding. You won't want to stop reading this book once you're in it. It is innovative and high-minded without ever being dry or overly academic, and I highly recommend getting engrossed in it.

Anna Joy is an Associate Professor of Literature at University of California, San Diego. She teaches experimental Writing, Graphic Texts and Post Modern Feminist Literature.

In March 2012, while Anna Joy was in Chicago for the AWP (Association of Writers and Writing Professionals) Conference, I was able to catch up a bit and ask her a few questions.

What books or authors inspire you and why?

Books that teach me a new way of understanding narrative, including the life narrative, or the narrative of success, or the narrative of conflict inspire me. Most often ones that do this also undermine conventions of language or of what literature is/does, too.

Anna Joy

What's on your personal bookshelf?

Lots of graphic novels and contemporary poetry and lyric fiction, plus books on Buddhism and things I use to teach writing. Mellis's book is a collection of a novella and short stories, and it's grim and bizarre, like Beckett - cool and distant with unexpected twists and gallows humor. I just heard Winterson read, but haven't cracked the book yet - it's a memoir of her family life in Wintersonland, like her book *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, but also of a depressive breakdown, and it seems that it may be a spiritual memoir, though not a cute or proscriptive one. I haven't read *Zami* for about 20 years, and decided it was time to return to it.

What is your favorite text you like to use to teach and inspire your students?

One Hundred Demons by Lynda Barry.

What are you teaching your students right now? What are you working on with them?

I'm teaching a class on experimental speculative fiction - to imagine a new way of life is to imagine a new way of articulating the imagination. So I'm using *Riddley Walker* by Russell Hoban, *The Descent of Alette* by Alice Notley, *The Event Factory* by Renee Gladman, and *The Evolutionary*

Revolution by Lily Hoang.

Any advice for outsiders turned aspiring academics on how to avoid being "indoctrinated"?

Indoctrinated by what? I guess my struggle right now is to keep myself aware of alternative understandings of "success" and then to put myself around people who are happy or at least live meaningful lives within that idea of success. It's important to have examples to counteract the example given by conventional academia, the art or publishing worlds, or mainstream market capitalism. It's important to remember that most people are acting from fear and lack of imagination, and that such states are very contagious. At the same time, there is a lot of flexibility within academia, but the pressure is intense and not always necessary or useful.

Are the graphics used in *The Vicious Red Relic*, *Love* actual artifacts from that time?

The class notes and sketches are mostly notes and doodles I made while an undergrad at New College of California in David Meltzer and Lyn Hejinian's classes. I've rewritten or drawn some for legibility, or added things I needed to add for the book. The Synopology stuff is all fictional.

Can you explain why you chose an elephant made of tinfoil to represent Blinky?

No, I don't know. I can't remember if I loved elephants first or if I had a piece of garbage that looked like an elephant first.

The East Bay has been pretty notorious for a good amount of pop-punk music streaming steadily from its parts for the past three decades or so. In recent years, in my bitter & embattled opinion, the sounds have waned, the bands have been drier, caustic or even purposefully void of fun. Then along came these dudes. Emily's Army is an East Bay band that has emerged and with their rise, they have cured this blight. This band works hard, plays tons of shows, tours and writes the kind of songs they want to hear - strong, passionate and thoughtful odes to life and ails of the world. Their influences are vast and their attitudes are choice. Emily's Army is a band I will be listening to for years to come and I am happy they are bringing back a new life to the music of my region. Members are Travis Neumann (guitar & vocals), brothers Max Becker (bass & vocals) and Cole Becker (guitar & vocals) and Joey Armstrong (drums).
-Corbett Redford, interviewer

EMILY'S ARMY



Alright, fellas, let's start with your name, favorite color, favorite Kinks and favorite rap song. Take your time.

COLE: My name is Cole Michael Becker. My favorite color is blue, favorite Kinks song is "All Day and All of the Night." Favorite rap song is probably, "Good Vibrations" by Marky Mark and the Funky Bunch.

TRAV: My name is Travis Michael Neumann and my favorite rap song is "Hard in Da Paint" by Waka Flocka Flame.

"Friendship, common interest and love."

JOEY: Joey Armstrong. Green. Favorite Kinks song is "Sunny Afternoon." My favorite rap song is "Can I Kick it?" by A Tribe Called Quest.

MAX: My name is Max Steven Becker. My favorite Kinks song is "Till the End of the Day." My favorite rap song is "Gz and Hustlas" by Snoop Dogg.

When did you all start playing music together? How long have you been friends? What Homeroom Mac & Cheese dish did you order most recently?

COLE: We all started playing in about 3rd grade and from there it was history. Last Homeroom dish was the "Trailer Mac." So darn good!

TRAV: I joined in 7th or 8th grade. Last dish I had was the "Mexican Mac." Love me the heat!

JOEY: I started playing music with Cole when I was in 3rd grade. I've been friends with Travis since 4th grade and I have been friends with Max and Cole since I was four years old. I love me some "Mexican Mac."

MAX: We all started playing when I was in 5th grade, Joey in 4th, Cole in 3rd. Travis "The Miracle" came along in my early freshman year. He was still in 8th grade. We've been friends since longer than I can remember. The most recent version of the "Exchange Student" was my most recent order at Homeroom. Best restaurant there is.

What are some of the things you like about growing up in the Bay Area? Oakland, specifically.

COLE: The food! The people! The ambiguous scenery, being able to go on hikes and go to a rock show in the same day.

TRAV: I like the environment. You got a little bit of everything and you also have some hot spots for great food, such as home of Roscoe's Chicken & Waffles, Everett & Jones, and, of course, Homeroom.

JOEY: I love the diversity. I also love being able to get any kind of food anywhere within a five minute drive. Oakland's awesome because I love the Raiders, even though they suck. In Oakland, there are many sick views & spots you can explore and hike around.

MAX: My favorite part about growing up in the Bay Area, specifically, is that I've been exposed to so much in just one area. I can surf here, see any kind of sports game, go to the city, go on a hike, and get some delicious food whenever I want!

You have become one of the few Gilman go-to "house" bands in recent years. A solid local band that has built up a solid local following. What was it like playing there for the first time? How long ago was that?

COLE: The first time was really scary. Everyone always puts it on a pedestal because so many great bands have played there. We had a great time, but it wasn't out of the ordinary, just a fun show. The shows got better as we progressed, definitely. It was May 15th of 2009. The same day Green Day's "21st Century Breakdown" came out. Or was it '08? (laughs)

MAX: It was May 15th, 2009. It was one of the greatest experiences of our lives. We stepped into a whole realm of awesome.

"Show respect, get respect."

How did the West Coast treat you all on tour? What are your plans for 2012?

COLE: The West Coast is the best coast! We are hopefully going to record some more and see where it takes us, and definitely tour in the summer.

TRAV: West Coast tour was interesting. We played just about every possible place. Bars, garages, rec centers, abandoned churches. For this year, we plan to keep bringing the new music and hopefully put out another album in the summer, then do a sick summer tour.

JOEY: The West Coast tour was interesting. There are a lot of weird people in Oregon. Touring down to San Luis Obispo is fun. Really good shows and we also get to see Max and Cole's cousin and her friends. Most of SoCal has hella good energy and we can get a lot of people at our shows.

MAX: West coast treats us too much like kings. I'm happy to play in front of one person as long as we can give them a good time. We've been having some great shows out here in the "wild wild west" and meeting way cool people. Plan for 2012 is to probably start recording a new album and also touring more parts of the country, as in the South, Midwest, and more of the East Coast.

What are you each listening to lately? What is on your turntables?

COLE: Lots of The Ergs, New York Dolls, Edith Piaf, Chuck Berry, Smoking Popes, The Kinks, The Beatles, Mr. T Experience, Bobby Joe Ebola, The Clash, Creedence Clearwater Revival, Johnny Cash, The Replacements, Smash Mouth, The Backstreet Boys, Wham!, Tchaikovsky, Taylor Swift.

TRAV: Lately I've been listening to Methadones, and The Matches' first album.

JOEY: The Fratellis, Mumford & Sons, Velvet Underground, and Locksley.

MAX: I've been listening to Sam Cooke, Fleet Foxes, Surfer Blood, Trampled by Turtles, Social D, and The Cute Lepers a lot lately.

I haven't known you all for that long, but in the few years that I have, you have all grown a lot musically and vertically. You take the music you build seriously but also have a lot fun with it. What does it take to have a band that sticks together?

COLE: Friendship, common interest and love.

TRAV: The key to sticking together as a band is friendship.

JOEY: We are all very close friends. We call ourselves brothers. We mess with each other, have a lot of fun and don't get too stressed out.

MAX: I think it's not really about musical skill. It's really all about the chemistry, none of us really started off that well on our instruments, but we stuck with each other rather than kick people out for better skills, and then we grew together! We literally hang out every day and spend most of our lives together so it's kind of hard not to progress together.

You are noted to have gaggles of adoring fans. I have seen them standing there in line giggling, crying, shaking to the point of almost peeing and you treat each and every one of them with kindness and respect. Where did y'all learn to be so damned nice?

COLE: What's the fun in being mean? Also, the song "Mean" by Taylor Swift is a good lesson.

JOEY: Show respect, get respect.

MAX: The nicer you are to people, the more they have something nice to remember you by.

Favorite recreational activities? What do you love about surfing?

COLE: Hiking, camping, bowling, working on my car, building stuff, reading, writing, fishing, finding more ways to be more manly than I already am, and interpretive dance. But seriously, surfing just kind of helps relax everything. It's good for your skin, too!

TRAV: I enjoy skating, playing a game of hoops, beating Joey in Madden and going on adventures to undiscovered territory.

JOEY: I love to shred the mini ramp. I love to play some FIFA. I love to go to parties and be around bunches of girls.

MAX: Hiking, high school sports, musical theatre, theatre, skating, skiing, snowboarding, running. I love them all, but surfing rules over all. One of the greatest feelings is to be out there on a perfect day, can't get any better than that.

Explain your love for S.E. Hinton's *The Outsiders*.

COLE: Besides Cherry Valance being a babe, it is just a very damn good book. It is really easy to relate to even if you're not from Tulsa, Oklahoma in the '60s.

MAX: Cole is more into that one; I'm an *Into the Wild* man myself. I've read it at least 8 times. Obviously I've seen the movie a lot too.

Is Travis quitting the band to tour & play kazoo with The Squirmin Hermans? Why?

COLE: Yeah, it breaks our heart, but he said the teacher in the flame-laden Hawaiian shirt was just his type of fella.

TRAV: I was considering quitting to join The Squirmin Hermans until the lead singer yelled at me saying, and I quote, "Get the fuck off my stage!" He just didn't respect my musical talent on the kazoo.

MAX: Travis will do what he does. There's no telling him otherwise.

Joey, your father is a musician, your uncle is the drummer for the East Bay band Freedom Club and your grandfather was also a drummer. How does it feel to be keeping the family tradition of rockin' and rollin' alive? When does the new joint with local rapper Big Baby drop?

JOEY: I think it's pretty sick. I have a lot of different influences that push me as a musician. Big Baby is my bro, we are gonna be making some beats and putting out a mix tape soon.

Cole, aside from a guitar, what special magic item and what spirit animal does your Emily's Army action figure come with?

COLE: A wand and a sun bear.



EMILY'S ARMY

WHO DID WHAT?



I did the Alex the Russian and Mystic Knights of the Cobra interviews (and took the photos) as well as the Burt Taggart interview. All of the editing and layout in this issue by me. I also took the Westminster Abbey photo in the introduction.

Steve Davis wrote LAMP '77.

All photos of Burt Taggart (including cover) by Matthew Martin except photo on last page of interview by Jim Hunnicutt. Shannon at Montserrat photo by Burt Taggart. The photo of Burt and Shannon on stage is uncredited

J-kNee January wrote *Killing It: Scary Girls and Small Minds*. Alice Bag photo by Melanie Nissen.

Emily's Army interview by Corbett Redford. Photo on last page of interview by Melissa Avignon-Redford. Emily's Army (with roadie Stevey Rowe) cover art by Nate Powell.

Anna Joy Springer interview by Victoria Sackett.

Photos without credit are by unknown photographers. Family photo on this page was in or around Little Rock, Arkansas, probably in the '20s. I think that's about it. Keep in touch, see you again soon!

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