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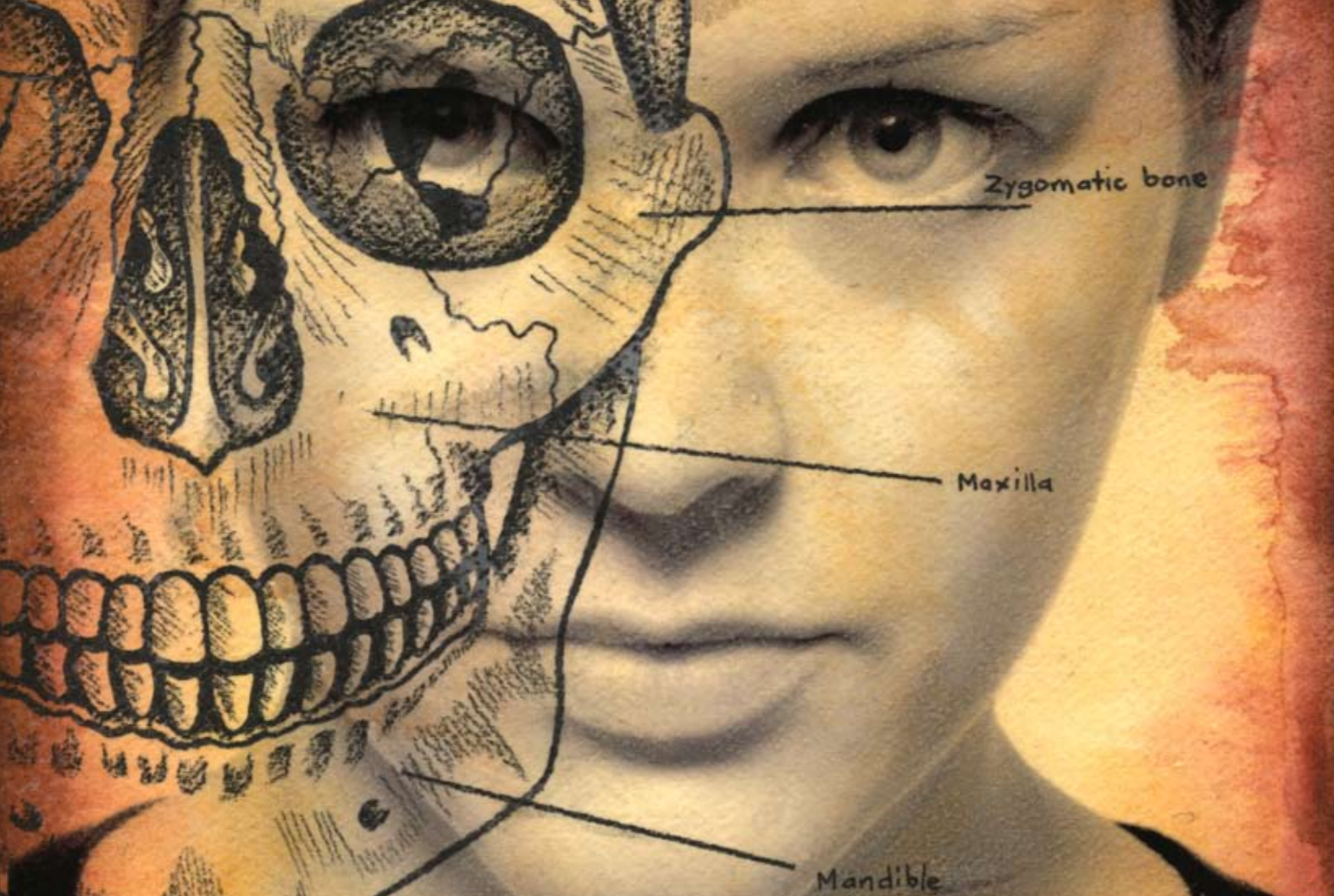
ISSUE 5

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The Hives • Ray Caesar • The Living End • Birds of Tokyo • Migs • The Drones • and heaps more...



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Welcome to our issue five, staying alive...

It's been a year! A whole frigging year! You all thought we'd go under but we showed you fuckers. 'Another street press in Melbourne? No way! The other highly reputable street presses will eat you idiots alive.' Bah! We laughed in the face of that beast and it looks like it paid off. But, it has been quite a while since the last issue and we know it's been tough on all of you, not knowing what to do or where to go, aimlessly walking around in circles, stopping momentarily to reminisce all the fun times you shared with the last issue. Well, to celebrate this special edition and to make up for our elongated absence, we present you with our Massively Epic Summer edition, featuring among others: **The Hives** (ooooo), **The Victorian Roller Derby League** (ahhhh), **The John Steel Singers** (aaaaw), the artful doger that is **Ray Caesar** and the usual amount of witty banter that you've come to know and love.

So what have we been up to that's caused us to snub you loyal readers? Well personally, I've been enjoying the fun and games of driving around the zoo in my ultra expensive luxury car throwing wedding cakes at small children and berating their parent's about their sexual history whilst playing Russian roulette with a panda bear. As for the others they've been diligently working their fingers to the bone crafting this beautiful specimen of a publication just to satisfy your voracious appetites. So read it because for every issue I see in a bin I kill 100 endangered animals...the cute ones as well...not like the **aye-aye** (that thing looks like a badly burnt rat).

It's kind of hard to run an independent magazine; lord knows we can't do it on the awesome power of our own modesty. So if you're a struggling writer, talented artist, resemble the monopoly guy or have this undying urge to spend a *whole lotta money* on young talent then give us a bell. The 1000th caller wins a night with **Kevin Rudd!** Lord knows he needs a root.

"Bistros Are Running Right Over New Macaroni Cheese Restaurants And Estuaries".

Barron McRae
 Inventor of the horizontal acrostic poem





CURING THE HIVES

Add a cup of high energy rock and roll, 5 tablespoons of audacity and a sprinkle of amazing on stage attire, and you have yourself a recipe for the explosive Swedish sensation that is The Hives.

A year since the release of their fourth studio release, 'The Black and White Album', The Hives drummer Chris Dangerous gives Synk some insight into the essential ingredients that make The Hives the world's greatest band.

"This is how it goes; We are the best band in the world".

Hives drummer Chris Dangerous blatantly defines himself and his cohorts. "There's no person, no band, no God, that could be the Hives and do a better job than we do. We're dead serious about that. We think that we are fucking great".

It is this uncompromising and ego maniac attitude that made heads turn when The Hives burst onto the scene with the release of their debut album 'Barely Legal' in 1997. In an era when garage punk was arguably at the peak of its popularity, the album highlighted the unmistakable force that is The Hives. After a two year break, the Hives released their second album, 'Veni Vidi Vicious', with singles "Hate to Say I Told You So", "Main Offender", "Die, All Right!", and "Supply & Demand". The band then released a 'best of' compilation album, titled 'Your New Favourite Band', which sent the world into Hives overdrive. 'Your New Favourite Band' was considered to be The Hives breakthrough album, reaching extraordinary record sales in the UK and US. After extensive world tours, the band retreated to their hometown of Fagersta to record their third album. The result was 2004's Tyrannosaurus Hives, their first new material in four years. The album includes the hit singles "Walk Idiot Walk" "Two-Timing Touch And Broken Bones" and "A Little More For Little You". Emphasised by their eccentrically energised stagecraft, sharp dress sense and self indulgent ideals, The Hives became renowned as one of the most prominent iconic garage rock and roll bands of the time, and they had no problem sharing that accomplishment with the world.

Although the band promised themselves when they were 17 that they would make three records and call it a day, they made the collective decision to continue on

another record, but venture into new territory with their latest release. Along came the bands fourth recording, 'The Black and White Album', a name which stemmed from the Beatles 'White Album' and Metallica's 'Black Album'.

"If The Beatles could make a 'White Album' and Metallica could make a 'Black Album', there was only one band who could make a record twice as good as those two combined. And as far as sales go, The Beatles' 'White Album' sold 11 million copies while Metallica's 'Black Album' has sold well over 16 million copies. The logic is undisputable: The Hives' 'The Black and White Album' will go on to sell 176 million copies, thus exceeding sales-wise anything The Hives have released before, or any modern artist since 1968". Guitarist Nicholas Arson eloquently states.

Chris Dangerous recalls the lead up in recording the latest release. "Recording 'The Black and White Album' was a pretty big challenge for us because we really wanted to change everything. When we sat down and talked about our careers, we felt like we weren't finished. So we thought 'what the hell?' Let's do something very different, let's try something new that will make recording as interesting as we possibly can for ourselves. We really wanted to focus on writing the songs and recording them properly, and not doing the business side of things that we had done for so long. So we got ourselves a manager and we changed so many things around the band too. It was really like we wanted to re-invent ourselves".

In the past, The Hives had captured the attention of none other than producer Pharrell Williams, who enthusiastically approached the band at the Summer Sonic Festival in Japan, and offered his assistance with recording. When it came time to record 'The Black and White

Album', the band recalled Pharrell's previous offer, made contact, and flew over to his studio in Miami. "We learnt a lot working with Pharrell". Chris recalls. "A guy like Pharrell records like 20-30 songs a week. We're lucky if we can record one. Previously when we record we've been so fucking anal about every single detail. It's been the five of us looking at the fucking guitar amp for 8 hours, then discussing where we are going to put the microphone, then having a meeting about which fucking microphone to put there and at what angle."

"When we went to Miami to record with Pharrell, he's like 'Ok, we've got some drums here, let's record, let's play, let's have fun- let's put that shit up and record!'. We were like, 'What? Aren't we supposed to listen to one note for three days before we press the record button?' We learnt to have fun and try to play different stuff instead of being so sure of exactly what you're gonna play and how you want it to sound."

Under Pharrell's guidance, the Hives recorded three songs, two of which that made it onto the album, 'Well All Right!' and 'T.H.E.H.I.V.E.S.'. Although Pharrell is predominantly known for producing hip hop tracks, 'The Black and White Album' still pays tribute to all that Hives fans originally loved about them, high energy rock and roll, powerful riffs, catchy kicks, and of course a hell of a lot of bravado. "We received maybe four angry emails from 18 year old punk kids that didn't like the fact that we recorded with Pharrell" Chris chuckles. "But there's a saying. You can't talk shit about the Fins until you've been to Finland. People might have thought that we were going to fuck up major by working with all these people. Looking back at it we were very happy with the fact that we actually did it. And I personally think the result speaks for itself".

~Cara Williams



RAY CAESAR

In my mind dreams are the foundation of which anything good can be built upon and without that dream there can be nothing at all". You truly wouldn't believe visual artist Ray Caesar was 50 years old. With the beautiful honesty of a child still intact, Caesar insists that we are all 'just children with so much to learn and deal with'.

Born in London, and being the youngest of four children Ray claims a career as a computer modeling/digital animation and visual effects agent for that he was born a dog (subjectively speaking). As a young boy, he television and film.

Explains that one of the 'defining' points in his life was when he received a G.I Joe doll for Christmas, in which he then insisted the name be changed to 'Stanley Mulver', attached grey wings to the doll and created various, strange outfits. Proudly wearing the doll around his neck, Ray declared, "SEE! This is the man I will be, a good man". Young Ray Caesar was already exploring with confidence, the strangeness (as opposed to the ordinary) of his character.

Over the years (amidst attending obedience school), Caesar has worked in such jobs as 'designing horrible buildings in architectural studios', medical art facilities where he witnessed 'miracles' performed on children who had serious conditions and casino computer gaming companies; all while attending art colleges. This eventually led Ray to

Produced is a very fine series of works after plummeting down his own personal and quite petrifying 'rabbit hole' for the self confessed 'staying indoors' type of artist.

First impressions of Ray's work may be 'dark' or 'disturbing' but what you cannot dismiss is how wonderfully true and precise they are to human kind. With an array of divine colours and textures, all digitally manipulated, one may find it quite confusing - the contradiction of meaning and presentation.

Something so beautiful, yet with so much hidden mystery. We are all guilty of our own pleasures, whether they are 'approved' in today's society or not... Let Ray Caesar's work open your mind, your heart and your soul... If only you will allow it.

You have achieved phenomenal feats in the art world, producing artworks that are as quality as yours, whilst still a canine. Before your mother came to you in the dream, entertaining you with the prospect of one day showcasing all your work in galleries, had you thought much about your work being perceived by the world on that level?

I never really allowed myself to entertain the thought that my work would ever be up on a wall for others to see as it was and still is a rather excruciating process to even think about. Putting art up on a wall for others to see is sort of like the time my mother made me try on pants in the aisle way of the local dept store... standing there waiting for pants is like showing art. I am a very shy quiet person that is a borderline agoraphobic and obsessive compulsive, and the making of pictures is more of an escape from the pressures that life can hand out. It took me a long time to understand that I truly did love making images and that the desire to do so wasn't some sort of curse or one of life's practical jokes. I thought it was an unhealthy obsession that had no practical purpose and I was completely unaware that people liked to collect Art, and if they did they certainly wouldn't collect

my work. I now understand that anything can be achieved in this world but first you have to entertain the dream and possibility that such a thing can actually happen. In my mind dreams are the foundation of which anything good can be built upon and without that dream there can be nothing at all.

Referring once again to the dream of your mother, it was very interesting how you explained that words were said 'about following rabbits down holes' - a direct reference to Alice in Wonderland. Was that a subconscious inspiration behind the young girls in your works or was that more from witnessing children from the hospital in Toronto OR some other idea completely unrelated?

I had given up making art for many years and it was late one evening in a small quiet hospital room that my mother died in my arms... her eyes looking directly into mine, and in her passing I felt something physical move right through me, her body lasted a few more hours, taking short shallow breaths as she laid in a coma. I knew she had left and was waiting for the last breath just like everyone else in the room. My sister also passed away shortly after, and I began to experience strange episodes of sleep paralysis and incredible lucid dreams and visions that didn't end upon waking... I had encountered similar things as a child. My mother knew I didn't like small spaces, and to go where I needed to go I had to face a few fears, so the rabbit hole was the first step... strangely I wasn't that familiar with the book by Lewis Carol but read it and 'Through the Looking Glass' sometime after. I sometimes think

that Wonderland is the world of the irrational and the world of nonsense and madness and for me I was trying to exist in the rational world where people had good, honest jobs and did a days work for a days pay in jobs they didn't like. The world of Art to me was the world of madness and irrationality, and I couldn't make that leap into giving everything up just to make pictures... especially my kind of pictures. For some reason I have never been able to make any other kind. I hated my very rational jobs but did them because I felt I was supposed to. When I went down that rabbit hole the entire world changed for me and I am still living in a kind of Wonderland. My work has its roots in the children I saw at the hospital but also they are archetypes for the "Divine Child"... the symbol of spiritual growth. My own childhood was difficult for many reasons, but working at "Sick Kids" in Toronto for 17 years helped me deal with that and see that life is truly a gift. As much as we don't want to think so, the adult is precariously balanced on the shoulders of that child that is in each and every one of us. Like the dream that becomes a reality... the child is the root of the adult... the core of who and what we are... the dream the adult is based upon. We grow older and look older but it's still the same fears and issues and things to learn that continue with us from the very first day of our lives. We are just old children and we still have so much to learn and so much to deal with. We have to work at mending the things that children had to endure before we can be the wonderful creatures of love and light and hope that each of us was meant to be.

I would like to say how truly gratifying it was to read that you find it 'appropriate that [you] live your dreams for those that didn't get a chance to live theirs' - referring to the sick children you worked with. Often art comes directly from our life experiences, what we have learnt, felt, seen, heard, touched, etc... Do you sometimes preview your work

years later, and still find more subconscious ideas that you hadn't yet understood on a fully conscious level whilst creating them?

Each of us has a set of experiences in life that are difficult to put into words... especially when words can't truly describe those feelings. "Art"... or more humbly... "making pictures" has always been a way for me to communicate something from that dark moonlit world of the subconscious to the conscious mind. We exist in these two worlds but we don't do a very good job of letting them communicate with each other. With all the terror and destruction and pain caused in this world... imagine if those who are responsible for it could look inside their subconscious mind and see the pain and darkness there and bring a bit of that fear and hate into the waking world for closer examination. I think if they could see those dark fearful, hateful places inside them and see the cancer growing in their heart and soul, I don't think they would be so ready to cause all the pain that they do. I find it strange that we often don't want to know our own minds and we leave the dark side of our mind to its own devices rather than confronting it, and in so doing understand why we do the things we do. All it takes is remembering a few dreams and examining the actions we do without thinking and to ask ourselves about our fears. Making pictures is one of the oldest forms of communication and I suspect it was first used as a way communicating something to oneself. I suppose I know Evil exists in this world... but

it doesn't have to! What we call Evil is the most weakest and frightened, fearful thing and it lurks in those dark places we are too afraid to go. Pictures are a way to bring those things to a light so bright it cleanses them.

Your latest series previewing 'In the Garden of Moonlight' opened on the 28th of June. It is a beautiful series, but (like most of your work) on closer inspection, it is revealed to be what some may call 'dark' or 'disturbing' or 'awakening'- most definitely 'thought provoking'. Is there ever any thought of how your audience may perceive your work before, whilst or after you have created it?

The dark things creep into my work without me even realizing it. We all live with a certain duality in our lives... one of light and one of dark, one of awareness and one of mystery. There are things both wonderful and terrible in this world and in our subconscious world, and I don't think I can keep them out of my work if they decide to be there... it's really just not a choice to be honest. I just try and take those dark things and look at them in a different light and in my own way try to see the beauty in them. Two children might witness a horrific accident in their youth involving painful injury and death. One might spend their lives hiding from such fearful things and tucking them away so deep they become a thing untouchable and another might work a kind of subconscious magic by setting a purpose and journey that by hard work and effort lead them to be a Doctor or Surgeon just by accepting that horrific moment and turning it slowly with hard

work over many years into something akin to a miracle. All I know is there are mysteries in the dark and sometimes they turn out to be quite a beautiful and a wonderful thing... all we need is to go beyond our fear and take a look and work a bit of magic with whatever we find.

What is the main idea behind 'In the Garden of Moonlight'? Are there any messages you are trying to portray to your viewers?

The garden of moonlight is the way I see my subconscious mind. It's the same garden of the daytime or conscious mind but it has different creatures that populate it and different little dark places for things to hide. I give the souls of this garden the spells and notions of the creatures of the night world... the bats and cats and spiders and the things that swim to the bottom of the pond. They are like the angels reaching into all the dark places to hold on to a little frightened hand and gently bring what lives there out into the cool moonlight and the infinite stars. My angels will then sit with them and nurture their fears until sunrise and let them travel on to a better place. This is just the way I set things up in my mind as I work and it allows me to create a kind of connection to all the pieces that are in constant flux. Its how I choose to see my own subconscious mind and what I want to communicate to my conscious mind.... not so much in a message but in a feeling or emotion of gentleness and kindness. The garden in my own soul and subconscious is a place where I can grow ideas and like any garden, it has its own herbaceous borders and beyond those are the dark forests of possibilities.

A lot of the girls in your pictures are somewhat 'alien' looking with the skin often pink or pigmented looking. Why?

Well... actually the girls are sometimes boys and are quite anatomically correct but they are in dresses as I like to mix things up a bit and in the 18th and 19th century boys were often dressed as girls without much of a second thought. I think boys are not taught to value feminine qualities in our society and that is why so many never learn empathy. The skin is most likely a sense of a combination of the translucent skin of a newborn and that of an older soul powdered like a tea cake, and as for being children I often think they are much, much older than us. Once at the hospital I had to draw a technical diagram the equipment around a tiny premature infant no bigger than my hand. Her skin was so translucent and in areas, transparent. I always think of her and wonder where she is now... in this world or did she move on to the next world?

I suppose the skin I use is my own and that of my wife, and I wrap that skin around a kind of doll and create a shell of flesh for some lost spirit to live in again. In other ways I see them as the centre of who I am... what my own soul looks like, so in a way they are a form of self portrait. Sleep paralysis is often the culprit behind alien visitations and other long forgotten myths of fairies from many cultures that those who have these experiences interpret them in many different ways. In experiencing what I do during this state I have seen some very strange things, but they no longer seem strange to me. For anyone



that is interested in the condition it is being studied at the University of Waterloo in Canada and seemingly has some connection with narcolepsy and those that research sleep paralysis believe the things I see are hallucinations... although I think it is something else entirely.

Your series of work 'Sweet Victory' with images such as 'Precious' and 'Suddenly' are quite sexually provocative. The images are sort of Edwardian style Era with the girls looking rather 'well to do', but not doing 'well to do' things (so to speak). Has that ever been a message you have tried to convey? Individuals of that status and of that time weren't always the prim and proper their parents raised them to be? That humans will always have instinctual actions?

Imagine a kitchen and a big pot of water and me in a very pig puffy chef's hat. I sort of work like I am making a soup... I add ingredients because it feels and smells and tastes right to do so... you don't think about what you are adding... you add it because you know it should be there. Sometimes it's a hint of sexuality or taboo and sometimes a bit of humour, and other times a smidgen of horror if it's chopped up just right and seared in oil. A bit of the past and a bit of the future, a pinch of prettiness and a soupcon of the things people never show one another... things they even hide from themselves. There are many herbs and spices and slabs of meat and fresh hunted game in my kitchen and lots of little bottles with strange names on. The one thing I understand about what its like to look at Art is the nature of the voyeur... we look and we pretend shock and modesty but the truth is we all

are strange creatures when we are alone in a room, and for some looking into a picture is like looking into their soul... and if my own mind is an example of what goes on in my mind I sometimes wonder what the hell goes on in every other persons mind, and there are 6 billion of us on this tiny planet. We are all like icebergs and the little bit we see is nothing compared to who and what we truly are. Everyone has their kinks and instincts and mysteries and secrets and horrors, and I grew up in a family that had more than most and I learned to see it in others. When I look at people I think even the ones who know them well wouldn't recognize what they would find if they could slip under the covers of that other persons mind and feel the flesh that lives there. The truth is I see the child in everyone and 17 years walking the hallways of a children's hospital and seeing the fear and grief and worry on the faces of parents barely able to cope was enough for me to understand what I was seeing in my mind's eye. I have always had an innate ability to soak in the emotions and feelings of a place or object in such a way that I feel a recording in what I can only describe as a sort of celestial wax... like the love of a toy box you find in an antique store or touching a locket or wedding ring. During those moments I feel something that has been left there... the years in that hospital walking the old underground passageways lined with ancient incubators and rooms with old iron lungs and machines whose function is lost in time carry so much of that embedded



Artwork | This Page :: Daybreak | Image courtesy of Jonathan LeVine Gallery

emotion in them that it often would almost knock me to my knees. In answer to your question I don't think I am trying to convey a message... I think I am trying to make sense of that hidden part of who we are as a species... we all feel it and know it, it's quite a dangerous side that people keep hidden and tucked away but it's there... the hunter and feral side of us sleeping with the kind and gentle like brother and sister. We are a very strange animal indeed.

Is there any where else you would like to see your work going in terms of success or world wide?

In all honesty I am just happy to continue what I am doing. Success is the pure and simple joy of waking up each morning and being allowed to continue doing what you love to do. I am 50 this year so I don't really think of this as a career but more of a wonderful way to waste the rest of my life. I already have more emails than I could ever hope to answer so I am not really wanting to be more "world wide" than that and have a suspicion the world is a very big place for someone that likes to stay indoors. I just love to make my work and I don't spend too much time wondering where it all goes after it's made... I just hope they find happy homes and bring a little happiness into the homes that find them. Every time I work on a piece I wonder who will have it in their room and I try to make a doorway into a place they wouldn't mind being in for a little while... even if that place is a bit odd.

MORGAN CATALDO



FILIPINO DISENCHANTMENT, LUSTY FOREST CREATURES AND GOOD OLD AUSSIE RACISM ARE ALL EXAMINED IN THE WORKS OF MELBOURNE-BASED ARTIST MIKE CHAVEZ (AKA MIGS) WHO DESCRIBES HIS STYLE AS "NEO-EXPRESSIONIST, URBAN, DADAIST POP".

migs



There is an element of humour in your work which seems wonderfully absurd, yet also comes across as carefully considered. How do you feel about people having a chuckle while viewing your work?

I've always enjoyed making people laugh through my art. I was an animator before I started painting and before that I was a cartoonist, so humour is a vital thread in my work. Actually, the topics I deal with in my paintings aren't that different to those I tackled as a cartoonist; politics, social issues, global concerns etc. I also think it's great that people can go to my exhibitions, see my work and have a chuckle, because galleries can be intimidating spaces and can seem inaccessible to a lot of people. I also like to upend the notion of what constitutes fine art because it seems like a lot of the time the fine art establishment has its head firmly up its own arse.

I am always fascinated to know what kind of environment an artist works in and their creative process. Can you give me a brief impression of an average day in the studio for you?

Starting out in the high pressure world of commercial art provided me with a great work ethic. Since day one I've always treated painting as real job. A typical day in the studio will consist of painting, painting and more painting. (I like to do more than one work at a time so I'm not sitting around pulling my pud' while paint dries). I also stretch my own canvases, photograph them, upload images to my website, bubble wrap them, arrange couriers etc. Then of course there's the whole admin side of things...

The latest series of work on your website, "menagerie a trois", shows monochromatic screen-printed animals encountering

one another with blue captions of awkward romantic clichés such as "you had me at hello". How do you choose these images?

I choose the subjects based on their visual appeal and composition. And also, the cuter the animal, the nastier they can be!

Your work deals with issues of identity and ethnicity. I believe this is something a lot of people can relate to, as we live in a world of globalisation and integration. How have your own experiences of these themes, as a Filipino who's lived in both America and Australia, affected your work?

I was three when I came to live in Melbourne from the Philippines. It was just at the tail end of the "White Australia" period so it was like landing on Omaha Beach on D-Day. When you're called names like blackie, abo, nigger, sambo, slope etc it stays with you. When I'm working with the themes of identity, ethnicity and racism, I guess it's a form of therapy.

Finally, we have a lot of young artists and contributors to this magazine. You are an artist who has had a good degree of success and recognition at a relatively young age. Do you have any words of wisdom to impart upon us aspiring young artistic types?

Well, the old clichés of "follow your passion" and "be true to yourself" are pearls of wisdom that apply to everyone but especially artists who can sometimes lose sight of their precious gift when the world bitch-slaps them. I would also add "be focused" "work hard", and "be kind to animals".

~Jessie Ngaio





MATT KELLY AND THE KEEPERS

MELBOURNE'S HIDDEN TREASURES MATT KELLY AND THE KEEPERS ARE SOLID PROOF THAT WORD OF MOUTH IS THE FINEST METHOD OF BUILDING A HEALTHY REPUTATION AMONGST MUSIC LOVERS THROUGHOUT MELBOURNE.

A weekly residency at Brunswick Street's Evelyn Hotel has seen Matt Kelly and the Keepers successfully cement their name into the minds of many awe-inspired audiences, who have been fortunate to witness their unassumingly explosive live shows.

Throughout the course of a recent interview with Matt Kelly and the Keepers, bassist John Gould recalls one of the bands more unforgettable performances. "The roof collapsed onto us at our second show! It was an inflatable wedding tent from India that was used for an outdoor festival. I wanted more bass, and there were two big bass amps. I blew the power, and the whole tent caved in. We've got photos of people holding up the roof... It was definitely our most memorable show".

Since their first live performance at the High Vibes Festival in 2007, Matt Kelly and the Keepers have altered their line up and refined their sound.

"Originally, our sound was majorly based around harmonies and melodies, and the rest of it was very vocally based". Kelly describes. "The sound expanded till it became larger and larger- it's very well layered now"

Onstage, front man Matt Kelly's mystique is as clear as it is contradicting. The softly spoken singer acquires an onstage charm, equally alluring as the music itself. His reflective and reserved nature is the very essence of what makes Kelly's character so appealing; his personality is mirrored in his stark and confessional lyrics.

However, despite the gorgeous vocals and brooding, introspective lyricism that Kelly offers, it is the tremendous aptitude of drummer Daniel Moloney, a highly dedicated and gifted Jazz musician, and bassist John Gould, a multi instrumentalist who earned a living busking on the streets of St. Kilda for a number of years, that evokes the precise spirit of the music and creates a truly magical sound. The addition of the two fellow band members see Kelly's

lyricism combine with faultless layers of stunning harmonies, thundering bass lines and powerful drumming, producing atmospheric tracks described by Kelly as 'mystical'.

"I think we've all found our sound together". Kelly delicately considers.

"...THE SPARKLE AND THE SHAPE THAT GETS BROUGHT TO EACH OF THE SONGS ARE FROM ALL OUR DIFFERENT INFLUENCES."

"We agree on the goal of the sound; whatever feels nice is what we agree on essentially. Perhaps because I write the songs my influence comes out a lot, but Dan's a jazz head and John's one of the best flamenco guitarists you'll ever hear... he's just the random musician man who can play anything and everything. I think that we all influence ourselves, because we've been working really hard on the sound together and have been trying to create a mood".

"Matt is the main songwriter, and he brings everything to the table". Moloney reflects. "However, the sparkle and the shape that gets brought to each of the songs are from all our different influences. There's definitely no pre conceived ideas on how our music will turn out, but it always ends up having that unique sort of feel because it's a fusion of all our styles".

The release of Matt Kelly and the Keepers debut EP, 'Off the Ground', saw the band working with some of Melbourne's finest industry professionals. The record was engineered by Chris Thompson (Augie March, The Waifs) with SOUP (Miso) lending a hand with the addition of glorious electronic sounds. The inclusion of keyboard, compliments of Ben Davey, provides an atmospheric feel to each track, accompanied by the addition of luscious string and horn arrangements. All in all, 'Off the Ground' is a release that will establish Matt Kelly and the Keepers as an unstoppable force in experimental rock music.

~Cara Williams

WWW.MYSPACE.COM/MATTKELLY



The hunt for the best vintage isn't easy, and most shoppers should embrace the experience; happy to explore the haystack, rather than look for the needle.



Retailers are embracing the move towards recycled and pre-loved clothes, as shoppers flock to nab one-off and second-hand goods. Second-hand stores are quickly becoming the fashion Mecca for cash conscious, clothing oriented shoppers.

Most people have their own favourite clothing shops, but if you know anything about second-hand clothing, you would know to keep your favourites to yourself. Tucked away in one of Melbourne's moderately dangerous Northern suburbs lives the second-hand mega-store of my dreams. It's hard to believe this place actually exists. Not that I'd ever admit it, or tell anyone else. Empty dressing rooms, un-pretentious staff, and cool classic hits

play around the clock to get you in the time-warp mood. The best part, though, is the clothes. Original vintage accessories, and rows, and rows, of the best second-hand and vintage collections in Melbourne. And I'm not using the word 'vintage' complacently, this is true vintage fair. There's gold, glitter, playsuits and pleather. That's just the trash. Authentic 90's grunge, 50's housewife, 60's mod, 80's everything. I'm already dizzy.

Being a faithful to the store, I've taken note that subtle changes have been creeping their way through the door. Groups of fashion conscious young girls, around the age of 14, who look better dressed than most their age, are trolling the aisles, vying for the same pieces I

am. Someone in the office has obviously taken a look around (not very far) and seen that vintage is extremely popular. Nearly a quarter of the shop is now dedicated solely to their vintage collections. (Where have they been hiding all this time!) Maybe they've been reading blogs, street-fashion sites? But it's more likely than not down at their local Westfield they've seen groups of girls wearing awful tan-coloured leather across the shoulder bags, \$10 woven berets and black leggings, and thought "Hey, maybe there's something going on here?" Not to mention the many other vintage inspired abominations hawked off by some of Australia's leading retail brands.

There is a lot to be amused by, when major retail brands embrace the vintage aesthetic and culture; simply because it just doesn't work. The vintage fashion culture is entrenched in the ideals of individuality, originality and creativity. For a major retail brand to pursue this is a tad ambitious. It's doubtful any discerning vintage enthusiast would pick a commercial brand over a genuine second-hand shop.

While fashion tastes are extremely subjective, and trends are not, second-hand clothing culture has been a fixture on the buying habits of the youth for years. It's cheap, fun to do with friends, and lends to a more individualistic attitude. Being on the hunt for a new second-hand find does take more time and effort, and sifting through the boorish or tasteless offerings (of which there are many) can be disheartening. But when you do find those treasured pieces, the one-offs, it makes the whole experience worth-while.

Be sure to check out their website for more great celebration offers this month: www.okcarnivale.com

In the major artisan shopping strips in Melbourne, second-hand and vintage shops are thriving. This is reflected by the dedicated patronage of the astute Melbourne shopper. The popularity of vintage clothes on the street is huge. Read any of the leading Melbourne street-fashion blogs and websites that document the style on the street and the overwhelming response from the subject is, "It's vintage". A typical and common response, this nonchalant reply is beginning to surpass the out-dated and crass declaration, "It's designer".

Not only does wearing vintage uphold the mystery and intrigue behind the item, concealing its true origins, but it reinforces an ideal that is shaping the Melbourne aesthetic. Second-hand and vintage clothing culture gives so much more than just a piece of clothing. It gives an interesting social history, and reflects trends which will remain commercially relevant, so long as contemporary fashion continues recycling the old. It is a culture that promotes conservation, saving money and reducing waste. Vintage pieces possess more integrity and substance than most designer or commercial pieces could ever hold. It's encouraging to see this culture embraced on the street, and to see people who aren't afraid of ignoring the major trends, looking like a bit of a nanna (a hot nanna) and keeping the names of their favourite stores to themselves, if they're smart about it.

~Claire Stapleton



Carnivale is an instrument of the avant-garde, leading the way to the next generation of ideas. Ok Carnivale is a fashion concept which embraces the spirit of carnivale. Launched in 2007 by designer Michelle Lewis, this unusual fashion label delves into Melbourne's bohemian nightlife and art scene, by catering for this unique collective of people. The current season (which of course is in shops now), My Grandma's Closet, is a playful collection inspired by the childhood dress up box. Through a clash of vintage trends and modern concepts, Michelle Lewis has created an avant-garde retrospective of 60s to 70s classics. Staying true to her roots as a dedicated op-shopper, she has sourced vintage fabrics that have been long forgotten in dusty local warehouses. These beautiful and distinctive materials are featured throughout the range. The bright palate and outrageous humour behind Ok Carnivale culminate in an exciting new look- 'Grandma with Attitude!' To celebrate the launch of their new website this month, Ok Carnivale is giving away a gorgeous printed fox-stole top. Oh! What a great new (and cruelty free) way to wear a classic vintage icon! Ok Carnivale is available around Melbourne at the following Australian Independent Design Boutiques: Pussycat Black, Lupa, NMBQ, I Like You and Blanc de Blancs.



One of the most innovative inventions to come out of Australia, The Drones' idiosyncratic folk/grunge sound was first noticed after their 2005 AMP winning album *Wait Long by the River* and the *Bodies of Your Enemies Will Follow*. Now in 2008 they've been all around the world and have released a further five albums, the latest being *Havilah* which was unleashed this year. SYNK spoke to Drones drummer Michael Noga as they prepare to take the stage at the Falls Festival and Big Day Out.

THE DRONES

First off, how were you recruited into The Drones?

Well...funny story. I saw them play years ago and they kind of blew my mind, I thought they were amazing. Beautiful and powerful band, I'd never heard anything like it before. I saw Gareth, the singer, in a pub one day and I just went up to him. I was playing in some bands at the time and I think he vaguely knew who I was and I just went up to him and said, "Look, my name's Mike and if you ever need a drummer, then give me a call. I'll drop everything and play drums for you." Then we swapped numbers and talked a little bit and said goodbye. Three years later he called me and asked if I wanted to play drums for The Drones and I went, "Yep, alright, cool" and that was it. The most romantic part of the story is that when we first met and shook hands and we talked about the things, we both knew that we'd always end up together, it was fate. Very romantic. Before recording *Havilah*, Gareth said that Gala Mill was pretty "fucking depressing" and he wanted to "write something that wasn't such an ordeal every time you played it".

Was this the attitude everyone was going in with when recording *Havilah*?

Yeah, I guess to a certain extent there was a conscious decision to not be so bloody noisy for a start. I mean, in the

band we don't really listen to a lot of rock 'n' roll music; we listen to a lot of jazz and classical music and blues. In a conscious sense we did bring a lot of those influences in and make something we don't have to get out and play every night and cut our fucking legs off and bash our heads against our instruments. We're in our early thirties now and I don't know how long you can do that. You just end up morphing over time...so we focused more on melody and structure of songs as opposed to how much depressing dark noise we can make.

What was the writing process for *Havilah*? Was it different from past albums?

Yeah, it was completely different. With *Gala Mill* when we went in to record that, the band hadn't heard the songs that much and all the songs were kind of half written and we just kind of bashed them out pretty quickly. Which was good, but this time we spent a lot of time, for us. Gaz was writing songs over a couple of months and the rehearsal time was a month, kind of like nine to five, going into the office and clocking on and rehearsing all day five days a week. We'd never done that before, so we really chopped the songs up and put them back together and tried every possible angle. So the writing process was pretty intense but it was good...everyone had their input. Very kind of group effort, it was nice.

Isolation seems to have become a factor for the band when recording an album, with *Gala Mill* and *Havilah*, is this better then a studio environment?

That's another thing we've made a conscious effort to do. We're not big fans of studios, they're pretty sterile and you've always got your eye on the clock as your moneys ticking over. It's a lot like going to work whereas it's so easy these days to pack up a computer and a bunch of microphones and record anywhere you want so why not do it in a beautiful place. There's no reason to go into a horrible fluro-lighted studio, it just doesn't make sense to us. With *Gala Mill* we went into an old convict mill down in Tasmania and with this one Gav and Fiona are living up in the mountains in Northern Victoria at the moment. A big ski lodge type place that was perfect for recording. It's good because if you want to put down a drum part at four in the morning you can.

When you're playing in the band, is it a major concern to play as close as you can to the recordings?

No, not at all. We tend to go off on strange tangents which can turn into a massive wank fest. With the new stuff a little more so because the songs are a lot more structured and there's not as much room for improvising but when we play some of the old stuff, its every man for himself. I can kind of take the conductor's role all

the time, which is nice, and everyone just has to follow me and bad luck to them.

In a past interview you said that "Australians may be waking up to decent musical tastes and not just accepting the Video Hits crap fed to them by the media", where are you seeing this and what do you see as causing this change?

Haha, was that me? There are a couple of things that stand out to me. There's a thing called the Australian Music Prize which is based solely on good music and not who sold the most amounts of records or what's number one on the charts at the moment. It just comes down to taste and who actually made a good piece of art. So that's really encouraging to see. The ARIA's are just a joke, a complete fucking joke, it's disgusting. But maybe there is a change in the air... I mean if a band like us, who aren't everyone's cup of tea...and we can be pretty noisy and pretty weird; if we can make a living off this in this country then I think that's pretty good and we don't take that for granted at all. We're pretty happy about that.

You can see The Drones at the Falls Festival and Big Day Out, and I don't think you'll have to look far to find their new album Havilah.

- Rhys McRae



JOHN STEEL SINGERS

IT'S BEEN A SPECTACULAR YEAR FOR THE JOHN STEEL SINGERS. IT WASN'T LONG AFTER SCORING A DEAL WITH LEVI JEANS NICHE LABEL 'LEVITY' AND RELEASING THEIR SECOND EP, 'IN COLOUR' THAT THE JOHN STEEL SINGERS WERE ANNOUNCED AS TRIPLE J'S UNEARTHED ARTIST OF THE YEAR. SO WE FIGURED IT APPROPRIATE TO PUBLISH AN INTERVIEW THAT SYNK RAN WITH THE 6 MAN BAND BACK IN AUGUST 2008, WHILST RELENTLESSLY TOURING WITH THE POLYPHONIC SPREE...

I arrive to the Hi Fi bar late on a Wednesday evening, where I am introduced to four of the six members of the John Steel Singers; Tim, Scott, Luke and Ross. The two absent band members, Pat and Pete are missing in action. I'm told this occurs quite regularly. I encounter an air of friendliness and merriment as I am greeted by the band and I fast realise that there is no obvious tension with the John Steel Singers. The concept of these lads being part of a prolific band quickly disintegrates, and I instantly feel welcomed by the group.

It's a busy night at the jam packed Hi Fi bar, and the backstage area is of no exception. The Polyphonic Spree, a 23 person band are about to take stage, and there is very little room and a relatively miniscule time frame to run the interview.

Regardless, the John Steel Singers take this in their stride and motion for me to retreat to a smaller, calmer corner of the room. We consecutively lean, crouch or sit on surrounding walls space and amps, in order for us to find a position that will hopefully allow for the many surrounding

voices to reach the hand held Dictaphone in my possession. I am introduced to the band, which is followed up by an immediate quiz on what their names were. They instantly discover one of my many faults, as I have already forgotten the name of Ross after approximately 30 seconds. My piece of paper with interview questions is quickly discarded as the conversation develops, and I find that it is far easier chatting to the boys, as opposed to sticking to a formulated interview process. Throughout the conversation, I learn that after leaving a previous band, songwriters Tim and Scott formed the John Steel Singers in late 2005. It wasn't too long until the Brisbane boys recruited Ross to play on drums. After the release of a small EP, their music was picked up by youth radio station Triple J – a great opportunity for the John Steel Singers. Shortly after they were selected as one of Triple J's 'Next Crop' artists, along with winning a 'Big Day Out Unearthed' competition. From this the band spawned a new found league of

fans, and when the band held a gig launching the release of their EP 'The Beagle and the Dove', the show subsequently sold out. In fact, their distributor was faced with such an overwhelming response from the sales of the EP, that more albums were pressed in order to accommodate the increasing amount of fans that were desperate to purchase the record.

"It's great to think that people we don't know are actually buying our album!" sings Ross. "I'd like to think that somebody is doing the cleaning and rocking out

❧
"I'D LIKE TO THINK THAT SOMEBODY IS
DOING THE CLEANING AND ROCKING OUT BY
THEMSELVES IN THEIR HOUSE TO OUR EP"
❧

by themselves in their house to our EP'. Tim imagines earnestly. "That's what I do to good records – how awesome would it be if someone was rocking out to our records while mopping?" It seems fairly clear that it is the simple things that bring most joy to the

band – seeing their fans singing along to songs throughout a live performance is considered as a tremendous feat. "We played a show in Canberra, and there were actually people singing along to our songs!" Ross exclaims. "The fact that we'd never played there before and people actually knew the words to our songs obviously had an impact on us". "Sometimes you'll play a song and you won't get much audience response". Tim elaborates. "Then you'll finish the song and you get a great applause! And then with other songs, people will dance

throughout the entire song. That's just how you can really tell if people like your stuff". Just as I am about to launch into my next question, the two 'missing' band members arrive into the room, and squeeze their way into our tight interview circle.

Photography: Luke Kellett



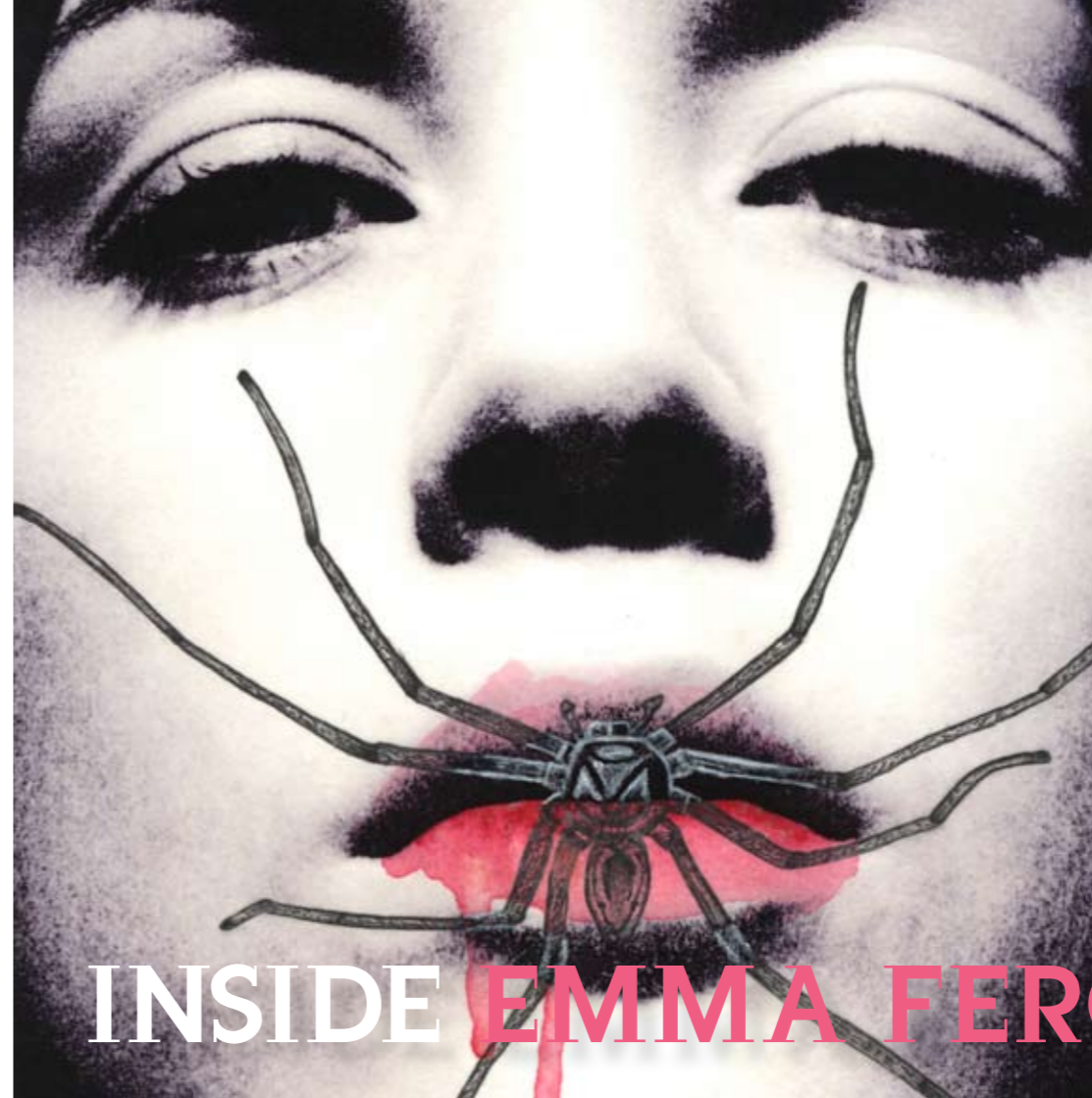
I suddenly realise the difficulty of running an interview with six people, and given the larger size of the band, leads me onto my next question – have the John Steel Singers faced many challenges in a six man band, in comparison to the majority of

musical acts that have an average of four band members? "I thought it was difficult until I started touring with the Polyphonic Spree!" Tim jokes. "When I saw their band I was like 'Wow! We've got nothing on them!'" "I think we mainly encounter

technical problems", he laments. "Six people don't fit into a five person hire car very easily. Six people are hard to organise for a rehearsal. Six people are more expensive to fly than five. But apart from all the 'real life' things, six people in a band are definitely

better. Works better for us". He motions complimentary towards the remainder of the band, who nod in mutual agreement. With so many musicians in one space, all which hold an array of musical influences and differing tastes, I'm curious as to whether difficulties arise when the band team up to write a song. "I guess it comes down to a lot of jamming", Scott suggests. "Generally we'll bring songs to the band room; we may not even have a song structure, just some melodies. We'll take that to the band, and everyone includes bits of their own. Or it may just be that one of us has a really strong idea of how a song should sound, and they try to get the other guys to learn those parts". "I found it really interesting the way we used to jam a year or so ago, and the way that we jam now, I feel like we're growing". Luke chimes in enthusiastically. "It's like we are constantly evolving as a group".

~Cara Williams



INSIDE EMMA FERGUSON

"Photographic portraiture can catch a moment, an emotion; a truth about the subject which you might have otherwise missed..."

Melbourne photographer Emma Ferguson seems never at a loss for inspiring words of wisdom, or of her uniquely crafted creativity in the form of portraiture photography.

Preferring an 'original source of substance', Ferguson chooses manual over digital and completes her one of a kind works with drawings, watercolours and various other modifications.

Ferguson's background of photography stems back to her father teaching her how to use his manual SLR film camera. The rest, as they say, is much loved history. Not owning her own camera until eighteen years of age, Ferguson's passionate interest for the subject saw her formally studying at Photography Studies College. Nowadays you will be seeing her work in many exhibitions, including her most recent in Brunswick Street gallery.



Drawing inspiration from the likes of street art, jewellery, to tattooist Kat Von - Emma Ferguson's art is most definitely in its own category of 'unique'.

Balancing emotion with the 'mechanics' of the mind and body, splurged with vibrant watercolours and finer lines of personal hand drawings – this young lady's visionary art has already become another's inspiration in it's own right.

What attracted you to the theme of Portraiture in photography?

The allure of using photography to produce portraiture is the visual realism that is captured. Everybody is unique, not only in their physical



appearance but also in what they offer up to the camera, what they reveal. Photographic portraiture can catch a moment, an emotion; a truth about the subject, which you might have otherwise missed.

You prefer to use manual methods over digital manipulation- a very admirable thing to do, considering that half of the world is upping to the 'latest' technology to cut costs and time. Why do you prefer experimenting manually?

The drawings are the most laborious and time consuming aspect to my work, it would be a lot faster and easier to layer the images and create them digitally, but I think they would lose that evidence of human activity and creation. I don't like the cheap repetition of purely digitally formed images, I believe



in having an original source of substance, something tactile and tangible. Something you can hold in your hand and know that it is the real thing, not something that can be reproduced exactly the same by pushing print.

Some of your latest works have been painted with watercolour, giving an almost tie-dyed effect over the images. How did this come about? Was this method purposeful or accidental?

Most choices in the creation of my work are with a purpose, although there are some things that are left up to chance, I still like to have some control over the serendipity of it. In the construction of my images I like to only include objects that contribute meaning to the image. A relevance. Everything present has



a purpose and everything else is absent for a reason. In the case of my latest work, I wanted to create an artificial reality, a dreamlike circumstance, where there is no context of place, time or space.

Your works are all a one off original, which can sometimes be a bit risky just in case it is 'destroyed' in the process, as you have previously noted. Have you had any such happenings, or have all the 'accidentals' worked out to be beautiful mistakes?

The techniques in which I produce work can come about as 'beautiful mistakes' during experimentation, but the images themselves are usually predetermined in my mind's eye. Therefore a large part of the work involves creating the idea or concept first. So when it comes

to form it in reality, most of the creative choices to consider such as cropping, placing, design layout, proportions, colour and materials used have mostly been already determined.

I have found that if I begin to work on an image before it is clear in my mind how it will look completed, it is never as successful. In this case I have destroyed drawings and artwork, because in the manual process of creating them you can't undo certain processes, and once a mistake has been made you have lost the image.

How long have you been photographing for and how and when did your interest start in the medium?

The earliest memory I have of photography is my Dad teaching me how to use his fully manual SLR film camera, and how I used to love looking at his black and white handprints from the 70's. This led to setting up a darkroom in my bathroom at home and learning how to develop my own film and prints. I furthered my interest in photography by studying it formally at Photography Studies College. I've always had a passion for photography but I didn't actually have my own camera until I was eighteen. Now I own many different

cameras, mostly analogue, including 126mm, 35mm, plastic cameras, pinhole, Polaroid and digital.

I think what draws me to photography is the impact that a photograph can have on you, and that each print is a moment of time encapsulated, a memory captured.

One of your most recent exhibitions displayed some extremely interesting works of people's faces covered with a detailed, skeletal drawing of different human body parts. What was the inspiration behind this idea?

I'm not sure what exactly inspired this series, it initially begun as a study of people, their anatomy, biology and underlying it all, the human condition. Each image breaks people down to their mechanics.

Artistically, who are your inspirations both for photography and otherwise?

I find a lot of inspiration in many sources ranging from street art to more established commercial artists. Concerning photography, Sally Mann, Harold Cazneaux and Trent Parke are a couple of my favourites. I really admire and appreciate their ability to generate beautiful imagery from what are everyday circumstances. They create the extraordinary out of the ordinary.



"The drawings are the most laborious and time consuming aspect to my work, it would be a lot faster and easier to layer the images and create them digitally, but I think they would lose that evidence of human activity and creation".



Audrey Kawasaki and Mark Ryden are two of my favourite painters; they deal in the same subject matter of portraiture, but each have an extremely distinctive and unique style. I love Audrey's flawless skill and technique, every aspect of her work is seductive, particularly the expression she captures in all of her portraits.

I also draw inspiration from William Griffiths who is a local Melbourne artist and creates his artwork in the form of jewellery. I love his use of iconography and subject matter and the creativity he shows in crafting such amazing pieces by hand.

Another inspiration for me is the amazing tattoo artist Kat Von D, who does incredibly detailed work in purely black ink. I think that tattoos are a great form of personal expression, and there must be no higher compliment than someone wanting to wear your artwork.

~ Morgan Cataldo



WHIBBLES OF FIRE

"It's not really a catty game at all." justifies Felicity Scragwell, President of the Victorian Roller Derby League after running through a rather extensive succinct version of the rules of Roller Derby. The sport has attracted much attention over the past few months, more so for the people who play it than

the actual game, but trust me, go down to Reservoir and watch a bout and you'll soon be entrenched in the increasingly popular world of Roller Derby,

writes Rhys McRae.

Although this media attention is attracting more skaters into the sport, according to President Scragwell, most of them don't really have a clue what it's all about. "I think to a certain extent what prospective skaters think the derby is like, isn't necessarily what it is... [They think] it's easy to do or they can do it straight away once they start. Lack of understanding of the rules and things that are legal... thinking that it's just chicks on skates hitting people". Look at the requirements for Roller Derby and you'll know what she means. To make it into a Derby bout you have to pass a series of physical tests to prove you have the strength and agility to hold your own in a derby bout. Not only that, you must be savvy to the extensive lists of rules which reads like government regulations and are constantly altered just to fuck with you, some may say. To get to the level considered essential to play in a team, it will generally take a prospect up to a year to gain the requirements; needless to say Roller Derby isn't for the faint of heart.

A sport that could only be invented in the 70's, back in the day bouts were played and televised in Festival Hall, but after a while the sport slowly dwindled. However, in the last few years Roller Derby has undergone a massive revival. The Victorian Roller Derby League's official inception was in April last year, and was founded by its first president Betty Bam-a-lam. Scragwell joined the league prior to it becoming official, after a conversation

that could have led to a major social concern if her plans had ever come to fruition. "Myself and Hotrod Stacey, captain of my team, The Toxic Avengers, were at the time in the same band and were chatting online. We decided we wanted to start, just for fun, an evil roller skating punk gang where we could wear leather mini skirts and get drunk and have flick-knives", chuckles Scragwell.

Now the president of the league, Scragwell is seeing the sport gain steam with keen skaters coming out of the woodwork. "When I joined it was kind of like the second little wave of people. There were already maybe about five to ten people interested, it wasn't actually an official organisation at that point", Scragwell reminisces. "Now we're into the third or fourth little wave. It's been great. We've had so many potential skaters get in touch with us that we don't know if we have the time or space to train them". According to Scragwell the supporters have also grown immensely, "The crowds are just getting bigger... especially in the last bout; you couldn't hear the ref blowing their whistles because everyone was cheering endlessly".

Although the rockabilly/punk image frequently accompanies skaters in Roller Derby, it appears to be just another of those dirty fictions perpetrated by the Media.

"We've had such a mix bag; we have no one type of person that is skater or a ref,

and that's really good because you get to meet friends you would have never met in your life". Scragwell explains. "I think what we've experienced so far with the media, is that the media tend to focus on the strange looking people, which is why people might associate that look with Roller Derby... the weird looking people are really in the minority".

"I guess the media must be focusing too much on American style Derby. A lot of the leagues in the US have a sexy image. 'We're really hot and wearing short shorts.'" Scragwell impersonates. "That's not really what the VRDL wants to do because that's not what we do. Short shorts are comfortable for skating in but those precious little fish nets underneath... it's leggings, usually - fishnets burn".

One of the most impressive facets of Roller Derby is that it is completely volunteer-based, from the merchandise makers to the refs. Scragwell likens her involvement in the sport to a second job, "Most league members are expected to do things behind the scenes, whether it's organising the bouts or being on sponsorship... it's a lot of work". The amounts of travelling the skaters do to get to their training sessions two or more times a week in Dandenong is a testimony to their dedication. The hard work that is going into the league looks to be paying off, hopefully one day we'll see it back at the height it was so many years ago.

The Rules of the Derby:

There are three types of skaters

The Jammer > Their job is to get past the blockers and the pivot on the opposing team. For each opposition member they pass they score a point.

The Pivot > She controls the speed of the pack. She also keeps an eye on the jammers, calls her team's plays and acts as a blocker.

The Blockers > Pretty obvious. Block the jammer.

>> You can only score points during the two minute jam periods, which can be called off at any time by the lead jammer.

>> Players may block using body parts above the hips, excluding forearms, hands and head.

>> Games go for forty minutes, with twenty minute halves.

Check the VRDL's website for details: rollerderbyvictoria.wikispaces.com



BIRDS OF TOKYO



Fresh off a sold out Australian tour, rock sensation BIRDS OF TOKYO have recently been announced to bring in the New Year at the Pyramid Rock Festival, and play on the Big Day Out tour in 2009. Synk had the pleasure of chatting to ADAM WESTON (drums) from BIRDS OF TOKYO...and let me tell you they certainly are in full flight.



You've been together for about four years now and you've come an incredibly long way in such a short period, including the independent release of two albums...how do you think this was made possible?

We've always had a very 'do-it-yourself' ethic even before we took on management or anything like that, and we just did everything ourselves. We've all done a lot of different work in the industry and looked after other bands. We've never had to outsource any further help to get where we want to be. But having said that now that we do have help and branch out a bit more...we've definitely taken the weight off our shoulders and started working with a lot of other people.

What should we expect from Birds of Tokyo in the future? I read that you guys are already working on a third album?

Yeah...it's just kind of odd because this 'Universes' record came out so soon after our first record. It's been a bit full on a couple of years. I think Karnivool may have plans to drop their long awaited record next year so I'm kind of looking forward to maybe having some time off with Birds during 2009...well I say that now, but I reckon it'll still be pretty full on...so we might not see another album until 2010.

So you are thinking about letting someone take over production for the next album?

I guess we'll cross that bridge when we get there...but offers have been flying our way for a couple of years now and its not attractive to us. We honestly feel that we will be in a better position by remaining independent, well in Australia anyway, and if anything else eventuates...we'll just have to wait and see!

Who do you identify with musically or who do you see as an inspiration?

Oww...this could open a can of worms. Well there's so many Australian artists ...everything from Regurgitator to Blood Duster...but again because I'm working with so many local bands and up-and-coming talent, I honestly draw more inspiration from those who are closer to me and around me. Those I get to kind of soak up every weekend... because as far as other bands are concerned I listen to everything from jazz to metal to whatever! I probably listen to more music from the 50's and 60's than checkin' the charts sort of stuff.

Tim Palmer, the guy who mixed your most recent album 'Universes'... how did you recruit him and what was his influence?

I think our guitarist Adam Spark he was the clued on sound engineer had been researching a few people and we definitely had a lot of options here in Australia but when Tim Palmer's name popped up and we knew he had worked with Pearl Jam, and U2 and The Cure and what not, we thought 'this could be interesting!' and I think it was more of an excuse to spend 3 weeks of debauchery in Los Angeles.. but yeah it turned out to be a fantastic decision, Tim was a very good guy to work with...very patient and he really knew what the record needed. A lot of people think it was about getting some big American hot-shot mixer, but really it was just good times!

"We've always had a very 'do-it-yourself' ethic even before we took on management or anything like that, and we just did everything ourselves."

Who does the lyric writing for Birds of Tokyo?

Ian Kenny definitely writes all of his own lyrics...I think it would be pretty weird to write some poetry and get someone else to sing it!

And are they personal tales for Kenny or just grand metaphors?

Well...I'm not too sure. You honestly think I would know more about what he does sing about but I don't! But yeah I believe there are some songs that he holds pretty close...but then there are others that admittedly make no sense at all! And Kenny and Sparky definitely feel that melody is far more important than lyrical content...so music first and words later!

You've toured Australia and have played the Big Day Out, which you have recently been announced at playing at again in 2009... how were these as performance experiences? Any favourites?

Well playing live is just such a blast! And fortunately for us the turnouts have always been very good and supportive, which makes us have a better night. I enjoy playing to 200 people in a pokey little Ballarat room as much as I would when I'm on stage at the Big Day Out. I appreciate every show.

And finally how are you anticipating playing the Pyramid Rock Festival on New Year's Eve?

Oh yeah that's going to be a bit of a messy one I'd say! But I think we're actually playing on the New Year's Eve and the very next day we have to fly straight out because we play the South Bound Festival on the 2nd of January! So I think it's going to be a few hectic days in there!

By Isabelle Tolhurst

A lesson in love from... Derik Dale

An epic love story is one that lasts through the ages. Take the classics, for example; Romeo and Juliet, Cinderella, Beauty and the Beast and, to a lesser extent, Shane and Simone. I'm Derik Dale and I don't fall in love, therefore I cannot share an epic love story of my own. However, I can share an epic love making story, if you catch my drift?

Once upon a time there lived a man (me, Derik) who was often mistaken for a god-like figure because of his amazing physique, supreme good looks and perfectly brushy moustache.

This man also boasted the power of having any woman he desired instantly fall in love with him.

Quite often this man would only desire a woman for a few hours an afternoon or for a mid-morning meal. He was known for his magical way with women and all the women in the fair land wanted to experience his magic, often a number of times in a session. It wasn't unusual for these women to return time and time again. The man would welcome them with open arms, whilst often they would come running back with open legs. There was a time in this man's life when his magical powers were not as refined as they are today, however, he reached a point at which all of this changed.

It was spring time, the birds were flapping and the bees buzzing. Though, with the man's powers not yet at full strength and considering the number of single ladies sitting at home alone, the bees weren't the only things buzzing, if you catch my drift? The afternoon was hot and sunny; the man was happily walking along the beach checking out the local talent. There were many, many beautiful women soaking up the rays. The man was minding his own business until, out of

the corner of his eye, he noticed a group of young, attractive women waving. He turned to face them and realised they were trying to gain his attention! He decided to head over to the group and was confronted by four very attractive ladies. One of them recognised him from his show the previous night. She told him how much of a fan she was and how excited the show had made her, if you catch my drift? The man blushed. The group of ladies then invited him back to one of their places for a coffee and he politely accepted.

Once back at the house one of the ladies made her intentions clear; she was fed up with the buzzing (not the buzzing of the bees of course, haha). This became obvious to everyone else there and all the ladies started to follow her lead. Soon the man caught on and became nervous and anxious. He had not yet been in such a situation with as many women before this point in his life (now it's a weekly occurrence). He decided to play his cards right, though in this situation he wasn't the one playing, nor were cards involved. He decided to have a 'chat' with each of the ladies, one at a time. The 'chat' with the first lady lasted just over an hour (not unusual for him), and was enjoyed by both parties. Next the man planned to 'chat' with the lady who lived in the house. As they were walking to a private room she informed the man that she still lived with her parents but assured him they were on holidays. After having entered the room they had a very intense 'chat' which only lasted half an hour.

The 'chat' with the third lady

lasted about forty-five minutes at which point the man was struggling to keep up with the ladies and their 'chatting' needs. The man decided to head to the bathroom for some relief; there he discovered the second lady's father's special pills which enable him to 'chat' with his wife all night long. He decided to take a couple of these special pills, branded with a 'V'. After sitting down for a while and thinking about what had taken place and what was yet to come the man was up and on his feet ready to go. He left the bathroom to have his last one on one 'chat'. This particular 'chat' lasted just under two hours. After that the four ladies and the man decided to have a 'group chat' which lasted on and off for the next two days. Fun times were had! This was just the beginning of what would become his legendary love making abilities.

Tips:

- Always talk to girls on the beach.
- Don't pop pills.
- Viagra is the exception.

Derik xo

For more advice, check out:
www.myspace.com/derikdale

THE LIVING END...



The Living End journey has certainly had its hiccups, but as the old adage goes whatever doesn't kill you only makes you stronger... and strong indeed are the trio of Chris Cheney, Scott Owen and Andy Strachan. SYNK had the pleasure of speaking to bass player and vocalist Scott Owen.

Plucking their name from the 1956 musical 'Rock Around the Clock' The Living End found their footing in the love child of rock n roll and country music; rockabilly, only to further inseminate the genre with a dash of punk and file themselves under the hybrid 'punkabilly'. But the details of such genre experimentation are surpassed when the result is a crisp unique sound that still defines the group nearly fifteen years after

their formation. Their youth had the boys following very much in the footsteps of their idols, the band 'Stray Cats', adopting the trio style so inherently rockabilly, and Cheney insisting that Owen abandon the piano and adopt the stand-up bass as his weapon of choice. 'I saw the Stray Cats as being something extremely exciting compared to the rest of the music that was around at the time...it was about hot cars and dressed up girls and dressed up dudes, cool shirts, cool shoes and cool haircuts...'. However when asked if Owen is still seduced by such imagery he simply replied with a chuckle, 'Our horizons have certainly broadened since those formative years...we O.D.-ed a bit on rockabilly'.

With their lyrics and ideology likened to that of musical greats such as The Who, The Jam and Iggy Pop, The Living End certainly have something important to say. With often anti-establishment and anti-authority undertones, Owen provided insight to where such beliefs were formed. Growing up in a suburban paradise, he says that Wheelers Hill 'gave us a sense of the fight of the underdog...that

there was more to the world than the few suburbs that surrounded us...'. Asked if Owen and the boys had been budding political activists trying to spread their message, he replied defiantly, 'We never camped out on the steps of parliament house with billboards...we don't use our songs as a soapbox for selling our ideas and beliefs to people. It's more a case of making people aware that they have the tools to make their own opinions... hows that for motivational speaking!'

However such motivation and empowerment lapsed as the band was forced into hiatus when Cheney was involved in a car accident on the Great Ocean Road in 2001 rendering him unable to play for some time. Similarly the band endured another significant break as Cheney himself took time off in 2007 as the heaving tour schedules and hectic life of the rock star became too much for him. He found sanction and a deep sense of calm in yoga and time spent in the domestic sphere. Although it was feared to be the final curtain call for The Living End, Owen ensured me that the break was a worthy one and served only to affirm their

passion for music. 'We returned with more juice in the tank and so much more enthusiasm...the thought of it not happening scared us so much it made us realise why we wanted to do it in the first place...'

Having played at a phenomenal list of gigs and locations including the USA/ Canada Warped Tour and supporting the Rolling Stones during their Australian leg, The Living End now look toward a hectic summer, most notably the Pyramid Rock Festival over New Years, and perhaps Australia's biggest gig, the Big Day Out in 2009. 'The Big Day Out is always a massive buzz...for punters and bands alike...it's just a good thing for Australia to have a festival like that; a festival with such diversity... and when providing an insight to how the band were anticipating Pyramid, only a few wise words were necessary. 'New years eve... anything can happen.' And no doubt the same is true of the bands future...anything can happen.

- Isabelle Tolhurst

Catch the boys at **The Pyramid Rock Festival over New Years and the Big Day Out!**

XBOX360

Fable 2

Virtual dogs are awesome.
Genre: RPG Rating: M



Usually choices in video games, where they appear at all, are rather arbitrary. They often don't have any major consequences and lack a certain impact, both emotionally and on the universe you inhabit. Kill a guy and you'll get a few 'evil points', or maybe sent to the local virtual jail to 'pay a fine', after which you're free to go and introduce more villagers to the sharp end of your sword. That is, when you can even kill the villagers at all. More often than not, you find the worlds of video games are little more than a static backdrop to the stories the designers wish to tell (I'm looking at you, Final Fantasy.)

Fable 2, in many ways, is much the same. For better or for worse, you're stuck performing errands for the great and honourable purpose of saving the world. However, how the world is saved is largely up to you. Fable is not so much about telling its own story, as it is about letting you tell yours, and how one person can change the world around them.

The first instance of this is a decision you can make at the beginning of the game. You're tasked with collecting warrants for a town guard, which have been scattered around the slums of Bowerstone by an errant gust of wind. When said warrants are collected, you're given the opportunity to either give them to the guard, like you agreed, or to hand them over to certain criminal elements. Depending on your decision, when you return 10 years down the line,

the town is transformed either into a downtrodden shanty town or an upmarket district. In one instance, you receive discounts at stores around the town, in the other you make certain contacts earlier in the game than you would otherwise. You can't have your warrants and eat them too, as they say.

"You become attached to the world not because it's epic, but because it's so unique and has a charm all its own."

You might be wondering why you should care about changing Fable's world. The answer is that, really, you shouldn't. Nobody is going to make you. It's not a condition of purchase. However, Fable is presented in such a way that it's likely you won't be able to help yourself.

The world of Albion is presented as an almost satirical version of mediaeval Britain. Between the exaggerated accents of the populace, to the trademark off-white British humour, on paper you'd think it would be hard to take the world seriously. And in that regard, you'd be right; and it works. You become attached to the world not because it's epic, but because it's so unique and has a charm all its own.

However, what will pull you in to the world of Fable, more than anything else, is the Dog. At a point you

make a friend of a stray, who inevitably becomes your faithful companion. The dog points out treasure chests you might have otherwise missed, and can sniff out dig spots where treasure is often buried. Again, on paper, the dog seems like little more than a glorified arrow. But the dog's actions are so realistic, and so ridiculously adorable, that you'd have to Dick Cheney not to feel some kind of empathetic response to it. And this is coming from someone who hates dogs. Besides, it's a damn useful little arrow.

Beyond charm and choices, Fable 2 has an excellently executed, if ridiculously easy (you can't die!), combat system. Three buttons are assigned to three different actions; performing melee attacks with your sword, ranged attacks with your firearm and spells with your... uh, hands. Depending on what you use to maim, blast or burn your opponents, you're rewarded with experience points specific to that skill.

So, if you prefer to be a gunslinging pistolero, then you'll more quickly be able to level up your ranged weapon skills. If you prefer to use all the abilities at your disposal, you'll find your skills will level up more slowly, but using combinations of your abilities are generally the best way to play the game.

Ultimately, Fable is a quirky, enjoyable experience. Although it might not be the best game in the world, it most definitely has one of the best worlds in a game.

Our verdict: Buy

Left 4 Dead

PC, XBOX360

Holy shit.

Genre: FPS
Rating: M



Primarily online based, Left 4 Dead, like many of Valve's multiplayer games (Counter-Strike, Team Fortress) don't rely heavily on story. But for the keen, it goes something like this... There is a widespread global virus that turns people into zombies (think Dawn of the Dead, 28 Days Later), these "Infected" are hungry for brains, and the only brains around are those of the four motley "Survivors", who must fight their way through these hordes of zombies to well... survive. It is pretty much like any other zombie movie plot. But it's not that, it's everything else, from the bone chilling music to the cliché movie poster loading screens and especially the fact that each Survivor look and act in their own unique ways, casually interacting, cracking jokes, saying those awesome one-liners, that really does make it feel more like you're playing a movie than a game.

In L4D, the zombies die from one well placed shot to the head, easy enough? Wrong. When there are 50+ zombies running, screaming and clawing at your face all at one time, shotguns, Uzis, miniguns, you'll need to reload eventually. Good thing your friends are great shots, and can hopefully pick them off you before you become zombie chow... right? You better hope they are, because this game is all about teamwork — believing your friends will be there with the pain killers when you're limping around or butting that zombie that's got you

down, who would have thought it'd be zombies that'll teach us to care for thy neighbour. And like all games, there are bosses, and in zombie games, there are zombie bosses, and these guys are tough. They may come at any time, each with different abilities, from zombies that fire projectile vomit calling in hordes of the Infected, zombies that have grappling tongues which strangle you or lumbering hulks that hurl slabs of concrete at you. This really brings zombie survival to a different level, especially when other players can actually control these boss zombies too, to give them an even more threatening touch. In "Versus" mode you can even fight against another team of players to see who are better at surviving or infecting, both teams take turns and performing tasks to obtain points, which will determine the winner at the end, sort of like a zombie cricket scoring system, the Survivors as the batters and the Infected as the fielders. There's also some strange feeling of utter achievement about spewing on an unfortunate individual and watching them getting clawed to death.

L4D has 4 "Campaigns" with 5 levels each, ranging from the classic city escape, climbing to the rooftop of a hospital, to the dark and eerie rural countryside survival. Valve use many of the new technologies they've developed, such as advanced use of dynamic lighting and shadowing, and cinematic

filters such as film grain, and colour correction really adds to the mood and horror of the game. The content may seem short and simple, and if you decide to only play it once through, you'd probably complete most of the game in 5-7 hours; pretty disappointing for something you spent good money on. But the "Director" must be recognised, an intuitive AI which observes and reacts to the progress of the players, adjusting the difficulty, musical score and pacing of the game to create an always changing experience for the players. Playing over a dozen times of the same campaign, zombies, supplies, basically everything will be in different locations. Trust that the Director loves to toy with you players, just when you think you have everything planned and set up, the Director will know exactly how to completely throw that plan out the window; there's nothing more humiliating than being zombie-dragged into your very own "foolproof" Molotov trap. Also in terms of content,

we must mention Valve's dedication to their games, they have promised to provide continual updates to their games, adding new maps, weapons, modes and other extras. But even before then, the game's modifiability, has allowed the online community to already develop many maps and extra features for the game. A custom map of Crossroads Mall from Dawn of the Dead has already been made, and there's plenty more rolling out the door.

L4D is packed full of goodies and moments that will either make your sleep uneasy, or sometimes even crack up laughing at the other team's misfortunes. Left 4 Dead is definite must for all the new zombie fans of the generation. I mean, what better way is there to prepare for the evitable zombie apocalypse? So grab the game, grab some mates, and fight the Infection.

Our verdict: Buy



THE HOLY SEA

The Holy Sea have been making waves on the Melbourne scene with their second album 'A Beginners Guide to the Sea' coming out earlier this year. Originally from Perth, the band was started in 1999 but broke up when lead singer and guitarist Henry F. Skerritt relocated to Melbourne. Now up and running again, The Holy Sea are gigging all around town. With some of the best drinking songs to date, The Holy Sea are a must see.



WHITE BOYZ CAN'T FUNK

Ladies and gentleman! Introducing the great, the funky, the unbelievable White Boyz Can't Funk!

Straight from the 'burbs of Melbourne comes a new breed of Funk. Worshipping the likes of Sly Stone, the Breakestra, James Brown and The Meters; their sound has gradually shifted to incorporate other aspects of Hip-Hop, Blues and Jamaican

Popular Music. These boys will have you dancing in the streets with Lydon Johnston (tenor sax) and Liam McGorry (trumpet) providing a sharp orchestra behind twins Joe and Kieran Daly's contagious rhythm section. Patrick Lundin (drums) kicks and crashes his way through the frenzy and Jonathan Resaicher's infectious vocals will have you singing their tunes for days.

But enough of the propaganda, it's up to you! Get down to a show! Buy an EP! CHECK THEM OUT! - Chances are they'll be playing this weekend, and the next, and the one after that...well, you get the picture.



Slite Return

Slite Return are moving organ drenched classic rock into the modern era and are probably the closest thing you're ever going to get to Deep Purple or The Doors. Their mission statement? To bring sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll back to an otherwise mundane world. Slite Return has just landed on the scene but isn't showing any signs of the nerves that tend to plague newbies to the stage. With a killer live show, you should check them out.

For more recommendations:
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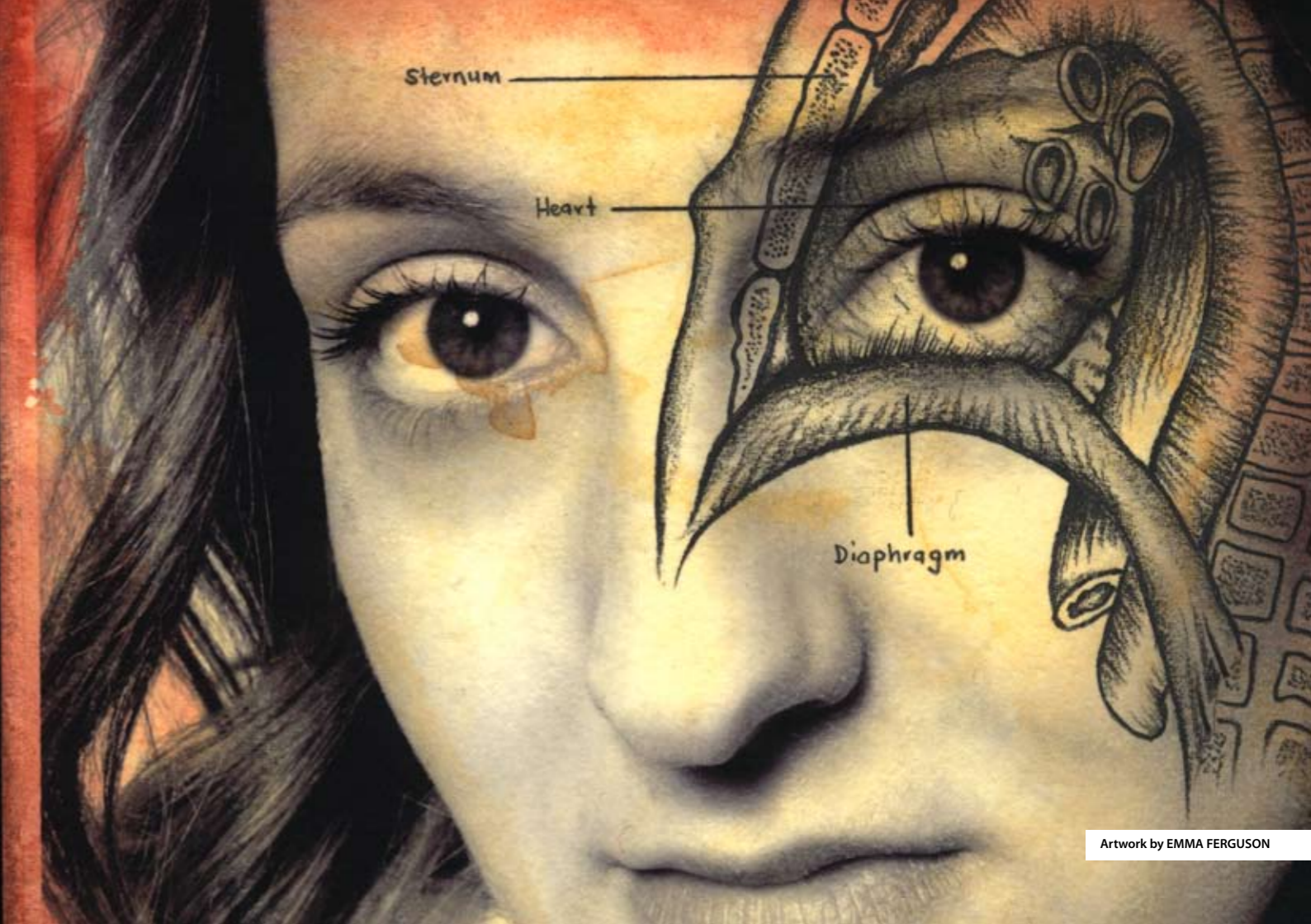
Hair: Tashi

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This is our one year birthday issue, keep a look out for issue 6 and support SYNK. We want your soul!



Artwork by EMMA FERGUSON



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