



**“North Carolina’s government needs serious renovation. From reinvesting in our schools and teachers, to ending the corrupt system of gerrymandering, we are past due for reforms that will create an efficient and effective state government.”**

## N.C. State Senator Jeff Jackson: A New Hope

by Cindy Sites-Wooley

Two years ago on a snow day, North Carolina State Senator Jeff Jackson was the only member of the general assembly to show up for work. He took to Twitter with the #JustOneLegislator hashtag, posted longer-form versions of his tweets on Facebook, and received national attention in the process. It’s not often that North Carolina politicians receive positive attention from the rest of the country, but those were innocent, pre-HB2 times.

In his tweets and posts, Sen. Jackson imagined himself as a legislature of one, expanding Medicare, giving teachers raises, bringing back the film industry, returning control of the airport to Charlotte and more. He showed the other elected officials how to combine social media and humor, and attracted more than just likes and retweets. “Am now receiving lots of calls from actual lobbyists. Even the false appearance of power gets their attention,” he tweeted. Later: “I just defeated a filibuster because I needed a drink of water. That removes any opposition to new child care subsidies.” By lunchtime, there was a BuzzFeed article about Senator Jackson’s #JustOneLegislator tweets.

Sen. Jackson, a young, photogenic Afghanistan veteran and former Gaston County assistant district attorney, was still new to the general assembly when he had that first brush with national prominence. He had become a state legislator for District 37 in 2014 when Mecklenburg County Democrats selected him to replace Dan Clodfelter, who had given up his seat to become Mayor of Charlotte in the wake of former Mayor Patrick Cannon’s arrest. Just 31 years old at the time, Jackson went on to run unopposed in the November 2014 election, campaigning enthusiastically even though he could have won simply by virtue of being the only candidate. Sen. Jackson just won a second term in the 2016 election, making him one of the few political bright spots for local citizens who follow a left-of-center path. He, along with every other state legislator, may have to run for office all over again this year because a federal court has ordered new districts to be drawn statewide, followed by a special election this November—but, as of press time, we were all waiting to see if the US Supreme Court would allow the process to continue.

Every time I talk about Sen. Jackson with my friends who are in his district, they all agree that he’s on his way to bigger things. I’ve heard from friends who live outside District 37 who wish that he could be their senator too. Sen. Jackson just earned national attention again in December, during the one-day special session that followed Charlotte City Council’s surprising decision to repeal its non-discrimination ordinance. As the nation watched this special session online, they saw Sen. Jackson make an impassioned case for repealing House

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Bill 2. All that day Sen. Jackson was active on Twitter, showing that the memes and hashtags that are normally used to make us laugh can also be effective at sending messages and spreading information. I always get the sense that Sen. Jackson will never stop fighting for his beliefs with his command of words, his ability to gain attention, and his speeches on the floor of the General Assembly chamber. It’s also possible that this is just the beginning, and that a broader political career awaits this state legislator who is only 34 years old.

So many North Carolinians are fed up with politics in the midst of the most contentious battle many of us have ever seen in this state, let alone nationwide, but Sen. Jackson isn’t resting. He continues to engage his constituents with the Gameplan 2017 that he announced in January, which is a four-part strategy for breaking the Republican supermajority in the state legislature. You can often find him on the ground with other Charlotteans at marches and other peaceful demonstrations. Maybe the best thing about Sen. Jackson is that he’s a government official who invites all of us to get involved.

**TANGENTS:** Senator, if you had to explain your Gameplan 2017 for the attention span-impaired, what would you like to say?

**SEN. JACKSON:** Gameplan is a way to make the biggest political impact for our state in the shortest amount of time. The basic idea is to flip enough seats to allow Gov. Cooper’s veto to be sustained by the minority party. It’s very doable and would completely change the political landscape in North Carolina.

**TANGENTS:** Have your priorities (as a legislator or as a citizen) changed after the 2016 election?



**SEN. JACKSON:** What's changed is my realization that people need a clear and simple answer to the question, "What can I do to change things right now?" After the 2016 election, I started getting that question several times a day. Gameplan is my attempt to answer it.

**TANGENTS:** By the time this is published the 2017 statewide special election situation may have changed again, but can you explain for us what's going on with that?

**SEN. JACKSON:** A federal court found lots of our districts to be unconstitutionally drawn and ordered a redraw. They also ordered new elections in 2017. Now the Supreme Court has put a hold on the case and we're all waiting to find out what's going to happen. Could go either way.

**TANGENTS:** Do you anticipate your district changing if the boundaries are redrawn?

**SEN. JACKSON:** Absolutely. Almost every district near a big city will be redrawn. For all I know, I will be drawn out of my district completely and be forced to move back into it if I want to run again. This is the kind of outlandish situation that happens when we let politicians draw districts, which we definitely should not.

**TANGENTS:** What's the single most important thing that an everyday citizen can do to make a difference in politics?

**SEN. JACKSON:** Take an extra 30 seconds every few days and read an article about what's going on in the General Assembly. We pass the vast majority of the laws that affect people's lives and almost all of them fly under the radar. If most people knew just a little more about what we were up to, it would force a big upgrade in the quality of their representation.

**TANGENTS:** Some people with great ideas don't get involved in politics because they think you need to have lots of money or connections. What would you say to a political novice who would love to run for office but doesn't know how to begin?

**SEN. JACKSON:** If you're not running for office because you're intimidated by the prospect of joining whatever political body you aspire to, go visit that body. If you'd like to serve in the General Assembly, come to Raleigh and walk around the building. Wander into the offices of some legislators and just start talking to them. Come to some committee meetings. Do that a few times and you'll start to see yourself there. The fear of the unknown will fade away and will be replaced with the confidence that you have just as much a right to serve as anyone who is already serving. In fact, you're probably exactly who we need.

**TANGENTS:** I have a friend in her late 30s who had made a conscious choice never to vote until last year. Now she's decided it's not worth voting ever again. How can we keep disaffected voters from tuning out?

**SEN. JACKSON:** Tell her that is music to the ears of everyone in office who is trying to pick her pocket. Whenever bad politicians hear that someone has become too discouraged to vote, their smile gets a

little wider and the burden on good people everywhere gets a little heavier.

**TANGENTS:** Twitter has been used as a tool for protest and organizing for years, but most politicians treat it as a way to make announcements rather than communicating. What are your thoughts on social media as a means of communicating with our elected officials?

**SEN. JACKSON:** Right now, people consider elected officials on social media to be a bit of a novelty. If one of your elected officials is on social media, chances are you aren't expecting a real interaction. That's going to change over the next few years. People are going to expect some level of authenticity from elected officials on social media, and they should. If that's how my constituents want to interact, it's my job to accommodate them.

**TANGENTS:** After HB2 the divide between Charlotte and the rest of the state feels even more pronounced than ever. It sometimes feels like we're in a different state, and this magazine has had fun imagining what would happen if Mecklenburg were to secede. How do you think North Carolina and Mecklenburg could reconcile our differences?

**SEN. JACKSON:** We still haven't had all the relevant parties in the same room to discuss HB2. That seems like an obvious place to start. A real effort to reconcile probably can't happen when the only time we talk to each other about this issue is through the press.

**TANGENTS:** Assuming you have any leisure time these days, what do you like to do for fun?

**SEN. JACKSON:** We have an 8-year-old and a one-year-old, so the hour or two I have each day that aren't scheduled go to them. Our little one likes toy trains and our older one likes football, so my nights usually involve a bit of both. Most of my hobbies are still in the aspirational phase. Someday, you'll see me on a mountain bike, fly fishing, wingsuiting, etc.

**TANGENTS:** On your #JustOneLegislator snow day, were there any Home Alone type moments that you'd be willing to admit to?

**SEN. JACKSON:** I spent the day eating old donuts and fielding calls from actual lobbyists who were hearing rumors of something strange happening in the General Assembly and wanted to know if they should be concerned. So I told them, "Yeah, I'm hearing that, too, not sure what's going on but you better get down here..."

**TANGENTS:** It's safe to say that you have an unusually high number of Twitter followers for a state legislator. Who are some of your favorite people to follow on Twitter?

**SEN. JACKSON:** @ericfraz, @katie\_levans, @greglacour, @andygoh, @panthers, @thebechtler, @narratedpotus

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# SOUTHERN GIRL IN A STRANGE LAND, PART I

by Michelle Kirk

*This is the first installment of a recurring column about a young Charlotte writer's move to California.*

In the summer of 2015, when I was 26, I took a solo road trip along the transcontinental Lincoln Highway from Charlotte to northern California and back. I visited 18 states in 25 days. Prior to the trip, I'd been stuck in a rut and I needed a radical change to snap me out of it. Upon returning, I realized that what motivated me to drive across the country was a combination of two (somewhat contradictory) motives: one, the stirring belief that I was capable of far greater things than I was accomplishing at the time, and two, the cowardly urge to run away from problems I wasn't ready to deal with at home. Newly encouraged by the perspective shift only travel can provide, I spent the next year getting my shit together, to put it eloquently. I drastically improved my health, published several articles in local publications like the one you're reading right now, dissolved a dead-end two-year relationship, and cut ties from most of my old friends. Charlotte and I were both growing, but no longer in the same direction. That nagging urge to experience life somewhere else never truly left me, and by the fall of 2016, I felt confident I'd done all I could do here. It was time to go.

On October 2, I packed up my life into my car and hit the road to California just like I had the previous summer, only this time it was for good. As soon as I reached an unfamiliar place in rural Georgia, I felt more at-home than I had the whole previous year in Charlotte. On Day 2, in New Orleans, my brain relaxed into the familiar comfort of calculating gas mileage and wondering if the nearest rest stop had wifi. And by Day 3, when I showered at a truck stop in Alabama, I was a full-on road gypsy again. People frequently asked me if I was scared, traveling the country alone. Rarely, I told them. I was made for this. What terrifies me is the thought of looking back on my life knowing I was a free spirit who didn't have the guts to be free. Regret, standing still, feeling stuck — these are the nightmares that wake me up in a cold sweat. I'd set down roots in California soon enough, but for the time being, home was where I lay my head.

After four days of driving that culminated in my sleeping on the street in Austin, Texas, I needed a break. I spent all of Day 5 in room 284 of the Days Inn in Sonora, TX, a luxury I earned by driving 200 miles west of Austin throughout the night and checking into the motel at 5:00 am. This drive across the country was significantly rougher on me mentally than the previous summer's — I'm not sure why. Maybe because this time wasn't a fun trip of sights and adventures interlaced between the long stretches of driving — this was a last-minute, permanent scramble out of the place that no longer felt like my home. Maybe it was because



GregRussell.us

## When people ask me why I chose to move to California (and they do, constantly), I can't tell them 99% of the truth.

I no longer had a home to go back to. Or maybe it was just the boredom and loneliness that can accompany any solo traveler, given enough time and space. I spent my day of listlessness and recuperation in the motel room watching *Law and Order* reruns, just like my friends and I had done every Tuesday back in college. That felt a little home-like, as did the shower curtain at the Airbnb house I stayed at in Houston, which matched a shower curtain I used to have in Charlotte. You can find glimpses of home anywhere, if you look.

Around 11:00 pm on Day 6, I finally landed in Apple Valley, California, at the home of my good friend Laurence Maher (whom many of you know from local bands like *The Carbonari*, *Concrete*, and *Asleep in the Weeds*). I practically fell out of the car and kissed the ground, which I regretted when I remembered we were in the desert and the ground was pure sand. Gritty lips notwithstanding, I slept like a newborn that night at Laurence's house. For the next week, I made daily commutes from the high desert down to Orange County to apply for jobs and look for rooms to rent. The freeways are lined with giant mountains of boulders, which made for a stunning commute but raised the question of who would choose to settle and build a town 3,000 miles above sea level. (A bit of research revealed that native tribes and gold-seekers were drawn to the Mojave River, which is nearby but not visible from the highway.)

When people ask me why I chose to move to California (and they do, constantly), I can't tell them 99% of the truth. The short answer is, to be a writer. I already was a writer, but a paid one, a professional music/arts journalist, that's the dream. (Before you ask, New York is too cold and expensive.) The remaining truths, the ones I don't tell, are things I couldn't definitively name before moving, yet somehow just knew I would find, like how motivating it is to drive amidst a sea of people with a hustle mentality — the dreamers and the doers and the strivers. Though I may be striving for different things than many of them (independence and community rather than fame or fortune), I still respect their grind. Or because California has some of the best food and wine in the world. Because it's home to more concerts,

festivals, hiking trails, and camping spots than one person could do in a lifetime. Because it's easy to be a health nut there (they put avocados in everything). The list keeps growing the longer I stay, but most people are satisfied with the short answer.

Determined to find indoor living and employment, I emailed responses to 30 or 40 Craigslist ads for housing in between dropping off resumes and interviewing for waitressing jobs across Orange County. (Why Orange County? It seemed as good a starting point as any.) More than one employer looked at me strangely when they asked for my address and I told them I didn't have one. To pay for gas and food, I used mealtimes to make deliveries for Postmates, a side hustle I started in Charlotte and rejoined in California. (I'd highly recommend it if you have a car and need extra cash.) Some days I couldn't do in-person applications because I'd slept on a couch and looked like an unwashed mess; other days I looked at rooms for rent that sounded promising but turned out to be disasters (i.e. a shared bedroom in Costa Mesa with a Russian girl and her newly-immigrated parents, whom I couldn't meet beforehand, and a Vietnamese man in Garden Grove who yelled at me within ten seconds of my arrival). Rootlessness, isolation, and aimless driving were starting to wear me down.

One night that first week in OC, I stayed at a hotel in Anaheim using a gift card I'd held onto for as long as I could. I had a full day of job interviews ahead, so I needed a real bed, shower, and hair dryer to use. The hotel was full of families going to Disneyland, some dressed in Minnie Mouse hats and whiskers. At breakfast, I sat next to a man of about thirty who was also eating alone. I told him he looked a bit like Edward Norton, my favorite actor, and he responded with a German accent gentler than any I'd heard before. He was a pilot from Munich who spent more than 200 days per year in the air. Good, I thought. A fellow gypsy. I asked the good-looking pilot if he ever gets lonely traveling so much, and a wry smile crossed his face. Nah, he said. He has friends in Germany and Dubai to visit on his off days, and he's "too young to be married." For now, he'd rather work and travel. That's how I feel too, I told him, but it gets hard sometimes,

you know? He said he understood and that's just the price we pay for living the transient lives of our choosing. It was all the reassurance I needed that I wasn't alone in my gypsy struggles. Reinvigorated, I said goodbye and retreated to my room. I never did catch the good-looking pilot's name.

Finally, on the seventh day of houselessness, I found a private room in Aliso Viejo I could barely afford to put a deposit on, and I moved in the next day. The house was recently purchased by Mike, a thirty-year-old who looked like a Malibu Ken doll from the waist up; it was co-inhabited by Mike's younger girlfriend, Rachel, and another young girl named Kelly. Nicer than any place I'd ever rented in my life, the townhouse sat inside a gated community surrounded by palm trees and featured an L-shaped patio overlooking the Aliso Wood Canyons. I couldn't believe I lived here. (Hell, I was just thrilled to live anywhere.) I set up my air-mattress, which served as my bed, and furnished my room with what few clothes and boxes I traveled with in my car. I did it. I moved to California. Now what?

Mike told me if I liked doing deliveries, I should call his friend Alejandro, who owned a florist shop and needed a new driver. I interviewed at his shop in Newport Beach the next day, and just like that, I fell into the flower business. For the next two weeks, I rode shotgun in the company car training under Corbin, a skinny ginger kid from southern France. His girlfriend, Maria, grew up near him in northern Spain and met Corbin two years prior in Bristol, UK. Corbin turned me onto French hip-hop artists like Oxmo Puccino ("Puccino, like cappuccino") and called Maria "my love" in five different languages. The job was simple, so I spent most of those training days oscillating between utter disbelief of the colossal mansions to which we delivered and motion sickness from riding in the passenger seat. Corbin was quitting the job because he and Maria planned to drive to New York City and fly to Barcelona, where they'd live for the next few years. Super-gypsies. I advised him where to go (and not to go) on their road trip and told him to get ready because the rest of America would NOT look like Orange County. Yes, this was a strange land indeed. The hills, the coastlines, the sunsets — it was like a postcard. I made a mental note not to stay here too long, for I suspected this kind of beauty and prosperity could make one lose all sense of "the real world," whatever that means. Not until I started getting to know the natives did I learn how correct my suspicion was.

## Defiance

You think that because you  
broke me  
you made me.  
Let there be no mistake:  
the truth is you did neither  
and you never will.  
You will never lay claim  
to the person I became  
when I summoned my bones  
to rise  
and lift myself beyond your  
reach,  
out of your short sight,  
too strong for your muscular  
will at last.  
Better to stand late  
Than play dead under the  
boot.

— Cindy Sites-Wooley

## Complex Simplicity

How hard is it  
To form my mind around  
The mediocre task  
Of the basic expression of self;  
Of thoughts, emotions,  
of ideas.  
I mean  
I know that it's there,  
I know that it lies hidden  
Behind the cobwebs of pain  
And mystery.

I know that given that  
One minute, second,  
of solitude,  
I can reach it,  
And get it,  
And show it,  
And shout it,  
And yell it ... yell it ...

But instead,  
You block it,  
You block it from surfacing  
Because you are scared,  
You are deeply afraid  
Of its immense power.

You are afraid because  
truth be told  
you are nothing compare  
you stand beside  
this wall of amazement  
and you disappear ...  
you become translucent  
and exposed.

So you block it  
Block it with your vanity  
Block it with your hate  
Block it with your sweetness  
And your put downs

Block it because you know  
That within that one minute,  
second  
Mountains will be moved,  
Waves will be parted,  
And you will be nothing ...

— Raheku

# JOINTS, DIVES & HANGOUTS

## VisArt and former local rockers creating East Side artists' hangout

by Lewd

VisArt Video has been a valuable resource in Charlotte for many years now. It's one of the last remaining independently owned video rental stores, and even though it has gone through a succession of owners, the movie selection has remained large, eclectic and brilliant. VisArt prides itself on owning movies that are hard or impossible to find anywhere else, even online.

And even though it is beloved by many, the store has almost always struggled to survive as many independent stores do. Moving the store from its original location on 7th Street to Eastway Crossing in 2015 brought cheaper rent and much, much easier parking for its customers. And now, Matt Christiansen of VisArt has plans to make the store an even bigger destination for people all over the region.

Christiansen is currently turning a room in the back of the store into a screening room for free showings from the store's expansive collection. Independent filmmakers are also encouraged to show their films there.

Christiansen also plans to start a Saturday morning tradition where the screening

Christiansen is currently turning a room in the back of the store into a screening room for free showings from the store's expansive collection.

room actually shows Saturday morning cartoons. The idea was conceived for children, but parents are already excited about the idea.

Also, VisArt is partnering with Abari Game Bar to set up classic arcade games in the back of the store. So VisArt will be a great place to hang out, play video games and watch movies.

To make the back room as eclectic and brilliant as the rest of the store, Christiansen is enlisting local artists such as John Hair-

ston Jr. and Greg Russell to paint murals in the back room. Hairston says, "We're doing an homage to cult films and popular favorites. It's gonna be fun."

If that wasn't enough, Dish co-owner Penny Craver, Gina Stewart and Brenda Gambill-Stewart are opening a restaurant next door to VisArt this summer. Tucked away in a little alley, the former members of The Blind Dates and Second Skin will open Eastside Local Java & Juice which will serve coffee, juice, beer, wine and pastries. Eventually, the trio plan to offer a menu heavy on gluten-free and vegetarian fare. And they will definitely be serving concessions at VisArt's screening room.

Stewart says that the manager of the shopping center is very supportive of local, innovative businesses. She expects Eastside Local Java & Juice and VisArt Video to become hangouts for Charlotte-area artists and filmmakers.

And she says that the shopping center has plans to announce more exciting local businesses in the near future. So keep an eye on VisArt and Eastside Local Java & Juice over the next few months, and watch the changes take shape.

## FASHION

### Lemond Hart's fashion is his ministry at House of LeMond

Over the last few years, LeMond Hart has gone to great lengths to find his own voice and the clothes that speak what he wants to say. Now located on Monroe Road, The House Of LeMond reflects many of the ideas that brought him to that space, and where his heart and head are at any given moment. Daniel Coston checked in with LeMond via email to discuss the clothes and their creator.

**TANGENTS:** Has your fashion sense always been with you?

**LEMOND HART:** Yes, but it has developed over time with using my gift.

**TANGENTS:** What designers were an influence on you?

**HART:** Robert Graham is one of my favorite designers. He does coordinating colors and alternating patterns in his designs. I Love it!

**TANGENTS:** At what point did you say, I want to make and design clothes now?

**HART:** My grandmother used to always say, "If you can't find it, MAKE IT!" So, as a kid, I always loved style and fashion.

**TANGENTS:** This isn't a job for you, is it? It's what you want to do.

**HART:** No! THIS IS NOT MY JOB. I believe that when you do what you love, you will never work again. I love clothes and #fashionismyministry.

**TANGENTS:** You're an independent

"My grandmother used to always say, 'If you can't find it, MAKE IT!' So, as a kid, I always loved style and fashion."

businessperson. Talk about the juggling act of working with several clients a day, as opposed to one, two or three large clients.

**HART:** It is important to have great time management skills, I *always* have several things going on at one time. I joke and say that I have OCD and ADHD ... LOL! I'll have a hundred things going on at the same time, and they *all* have to be perfect.

**TANGENTS:** People want to buy clothes online, but others want to come to a storefront. How does someone in 2017 do both? And how important is each of those outlets?

**HART:** Since Fashion is my ministry, I encourage face-to-face interactions. However, as a savvy businessman, I understand that over \$3 billion was sold online on Cyber Monday. It would not behoove me not to get any of those funds. Therefore, I am starting to sell gift cards and t-shirts online, while encouraging individuals to come into the store.

**TANGENTS:** How much do the fashions of the past inform the designs of the present?

**HART:** I understand how cyclic style and fashion is. I incorporate many of the details from vintage clothing into my modern creations.

**TANGENTS:** What trends in clothing are popular in 2017?

**HART:** I normally don't follow trends ... not trying to sound arrogant. I like to create them. However, I have noticed that more men are accessorizing their ensembles.

**TANGENTS:** Do you have a favorite period in clothing design or clothes-making?

**HART:** 1920s through the 1970s and some current designs also.

**TANGENTS:** Do the clothes make the person, or does the person make the clothes?

**HART:** The person makes the clothes!!! If the individual is not comfortable, they are more than likely not going to be as confident.

**TANGENTS:** And what do your clothes say about you?

**HART:** When someone sees me dressed they *always* say, "You look so dapper!" So my clothes tell folks that I'm ... #dapper-asf—k

Follow the House of LeMond on Instagram: @thehouseoflemond

## LITERATURE

## Local author Darin Kennedy is the Uber Geek!

**D**arin Kennedy is no stranger to the publishing world or flights of fancy. He is a doctor, a veteran, a dreamer, a songwriter, and an Uber GEEK! He is a renaissance man, something you don't see and hear a lot about these days. He is also a local Charlotte author, with his third book coming out at the end of February. Darin took a few minutes out of his day to have a chat with Tangents contributor Micki Knop.

**TANGENTS:** Most people are under the assumption that once a person becomes a writer that's all they do. You have a real world job, an important one as a doctor. How do you manage both and be successful at both?

**DARIN KENNEDY:** Thanks for doing this interview, Micki! This first question is one I get asked a lot. How do you have time to do both, to be a family physician and a writer? It's funny. I just saw an article on Facebook this morning that said if we spent all our time on social media in a year reading books, that we could read 200 additional books per year. We all have as much time as anyone else on the planet. My job as a physician always has to come first and I make sure that's all done correctly. I currently work Monday-Thursday and spend about 40 hours a week at work most weeks. I divide the rest of my time up as I need to to accomplish all the other things my life entails. Sometimes I have more or less time in a month to spend on writing depending on other obligations, but I always try to find time to put words on the screen. In the last two years, it's also been a challenge trying to find time to fit in the various conventions, festivals, and other events to promote my various books. And then, there is the social media commitment which I haven't quite mastered as yet, though I do give it my best shot. And then, there's keeping up the website. And trying to blog. And editing. And submitting new things for publication. And side projects. Not to mention eating, sleeping, maintaining relationships, etc. In the end, you divide your day into the things you prioritize and make the best of the time you have.

**TANGENTS:** After the success of the first book in the Fugue and Fable series, *The Mussorgsky Riddle*, how did you go about tackling the second, *The Stravinsky Intrigue*, and how daunting was that?

**KENNEDY:** I wrote *The Mussorgsky Riddle* as a standalone, though there were definitely plot threads remaining—more than I knew, actually—that made it easy to write a second and even a third part of this story. Just as I was inspired by reading the names of all the various movements of Pictures at an Exhibition for Book I, the titles of the various movements of Stravinsky's *The Firebird* and *Petrushka* fanned the flames of Book II. Most interesting, there are a lot of parallels between Stravinsky's works and themes I used in Book I, many of which I didn't even know were there when I started writing Book II. There were many "happy accidents" which make me look like I had a heck of a lot more planned out than perhaps was actually the case. Writing Book II and now Book III has been quite the exciting process, seeing the characters from Book I getting their full due and as I come to "The End" after all this time, I'm already discovering how much I'm going to miss them.

**TANGENTS:** Obviously, you take some inspiration from music, but where else do you find it when you are stuck or feeling challenged when writing a scene?



DARIN KENNEDY

**"I came up with the idea for *Pawn's Gambit*, a modern day magical superhero novel based on the game of chess, way back in junior high."**

**KENNEDY:** I like to go to Starbucks, grab a grande caramel macchiato, caffeinate up, and let the background noise of the place carry me away, at least for my writing in general. More specifically, for both Book II and Book III—which is almost done—I'm using the ballets of Stravinsky and Tchaikovsky as fodder for the imagination and have been amazed at some of the high quality productions of those various performances you can find online. It's been a lot of fun translating first music and now dance into the written word.

**TANGENTS:** Chess has also inspired some of your work, in particular your last novel *Pawn's Gambit*. How did you come up with the concept and where can the reader expect it to go since this is also a series?

**KENNEDY:** I came up with the idea for *Pawn's Gambit*, a modern day magical superhero novel based on the game of chess, way back in junior high (before it was called middle school). For the whole story, the author's note at the back of the book tells all. But in general, I grew up playing chess with my dad and always wanted to tell a story of chess coming to life. When I was in Iraq in 2003 for OIF I, I finally had time to start writing, in between taking care of wounded or sick soldiers, and wrote the first half of that novel in whatever spare time I could find. I finished that story after I returned from the Middle East, or at least the first part... *Pawn's Gambit* was supposed to be one long book that told the whole story from beginning to end, but as I got into it, I found that the story had way more meat than I had dreamed. Therefore, *Pawn's Gambit* is now just the first of at least a trilogy called *The Pawn Stratagem*, the second of which I plan to start as soon as I complete *Mira* and *Anthony's adventures in Fugue and Fable*. The first book gathered everyone together, albeit with no small amount of action and danger, but if your readers want to see what happens next, I suppose I need to get back to the keyboard!

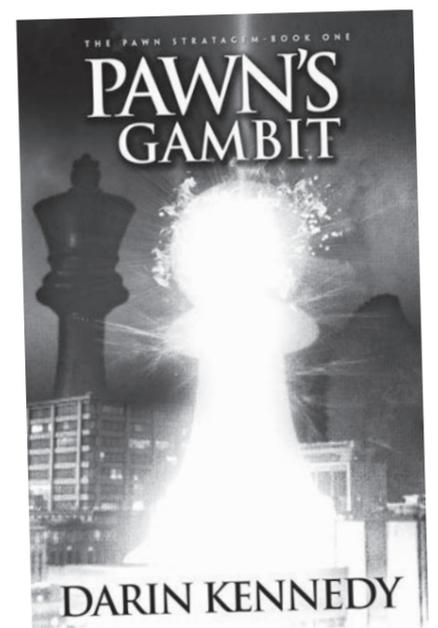
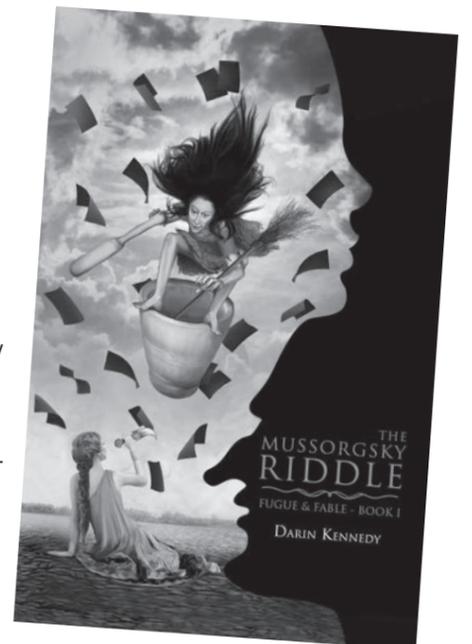
**TANGENTS:** What is your ideal writing situation?

**KENNEDY:** Moderately crowded Starbucks, unlimited mochas (that are magically zero calories), no screaming children, 72 degrees, inspiration flowing and classical music blasting in my ears. Or... having time to write at the same time that I have inspiration. That's always a lot of fun. Having the inspiration when you're writing is like cruising down class 4 rapids and hanging on for dear life as opposed to paddling across a still lake. They both get you where you're going, but one is a heck of a lot more fun!

**TANGENTS:** Who is your favorite superhero and why?

**KENNEDY:** What a loaded question. I have so many. I love the Wally West Flash from the '90s, Cyclops (pre-2004 and pre Emma Frost), Jean Grey, Nightcrawler and Batman, among many others, but I suppose the superhero that always sits at the top of my list is Daredevil. I've been following Matt Murdock since issue 181—*The Death of Elektra*—way back in the early eighties. So many things to love: "The Man Without Fear", the concept of a blind superhero coinciding with "Justice is Blind", the classic red costume, the many tragic romances, the enmity with the Kingpin, NINJAS, the outstanding work of writers and artists like Frank Miller, Ann Nocenti, Denny O'Neil, D.G. Chichester, Kevin Smith, just to name a few among many others. I'm one of the few that loved the movie and despite its many flaws. And don't get me started on the awesomeness that is the Netflix series. Yep, DD is my fave.

Your readers can find me at [darinkennedy.com](http://darinkennedy.com) and I'm also out there at Darin Kennedy—Author on Facebook and @darinkennedy on Twitter. *The Mussorgsky Riddle* and *Pawn's Gambit* are both available on Amazon and *The Stravinsky Intrigue* will be out 28 February 2017. See you all out on the road in 2017—RavenCon, ConCarolinas, and ConGregate, as well as more appearances to be announced!



Day and Age

Remorse  
Discourse  
Salvation through words.  
Hum, humming, hummer where  
is that sound coming from? I  
draw the line toe the line color  
outside  
and read between the lines.  
I spark  
the flame drop the name, resign,  
commit, encourage, describe,  
delight, desire, touch the sunrise,  
draw fire.

Look at me look at me look at ME.  
Escalate  
Reverberate  
Everything in my life hums.  
Electronic pulse computer age no  
sense of the physical. Glow of  
machines,  
monitors and screens. Screaming  
inside,  
laughing, jumping, running  
away no where to  
run.

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MUSIC

Rolling like a stone  
down Highway 61

A PERSONAL JOURNAL TO 'ALL THINGS DYLAN'

by Jerry Lee Kirk

On May 24th Bob Dylan will turn 76. Unlike most of his contemporaries, Dylan still produces work that is both artistically brilliant and relevant. Together Through Life, his 2009 album, continues a late career resurgence that began in 1997 with the Grammy-winning Time Out of Mind, followed by his first Academy Award in 2000 for best song, "Things Have Changed" from Wonder Boys, and even more. Dylan remains a true road warrior, performing electrifying live sets on grueling tour schedules that would exhaust musicians half his age.

It's almost embarrassing for me to admit that I came to join the cult of Dylan enthusiasts late. As a serious rock fan I've always admired the music of Dylan, particularly his songwriting skills. Blood on the Tracks remains one of my favorite albums since first hearing it in the late '70s. However, except for a few of his singles, such as "Like A Rolling Stone" and "Hurricane," and exceptional covers by others, including Jimi Hendrix's "All Along the Watchtower," I have always danced around the rest of Dylan's oeuvre. Many years ago, as I was making the transition from boy to teenager and music was starting to become important to me, I began paying closer attention to lyrics. First it was Jackson Browne with Late for the Sky and its songs of melancholy and romance. Joni Mitchell followed, introducing me to real poetry in music and then, Bruce Springsteen, who virtually created the soundtrack to my life and whose music continues to inspire and amaze.

Dylan's music was always in the background. I was aware of his influence on all of the artists I admired, particularly Springsteen, and of his importance to music. It was always my intent to further explore his catalogue and to learn more about what he had to say. Looking back, however, I think that "what he had to say" may have been the problem. Though fascinating and enigmatic, his words never really spoke to me on a personal level. Unlike Springsteen's voice of the common man or Jackson Browne's romantic odes to the human condition, Dylan's lyrics were more cryptic and evasive. It just wasn't what I was looking for or needed at that time.

With the 1997 release of Time Out of Mind, things began to change between Bob and me. Time..., with its dark, bluesy, almost foreboding sound and carefully constructed song cycle about life, growing old, death, and acceptance, gave me a fresh appreciation for his music. Maybe it was because I'd hit middle age and could relate more. Maybe it's also because the lyrics are more straightforward and literal than in his earlier work. That was followed by the almost equally great Love and Theft. Here Dylan is the traveling minstrel, shuffling across America, meeting common folk and evaluating the state of the nation through songs both humorous and ominous. Dylan and his crack band of Texas session gurus delve into everything from rockabilly to New Orleans jazz to folk.

Next for me came his exquisite 2004 autobiography, Chronicles Volume I. I found myself more intrigued by not only the music, but by the man himself. What really sent me reeling and out in search of more music was the brilliant No Direction Home, directed by Martin Scorsese. After viewing this compelling 2005 documentary that fol-



art JERRY LEE KIRK

lowed Dylan from his humble beginnings as Robert Zimmerman in Hibbing, Minnesota to his controversial performance at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival, where he began his move away from acoustic folk to electric rock 'n roll, I felt like I was starting to get it. Newfound knowledge (for me) about what Dylan was conveying in such classic tunes as "Ballad of a Thin Man" (his diatribe against the media) and "Maggie's Farm" (his abandoning of the folk movement), gives them more resonance. At this point I was hooked. I read Greil Marcus' 2005 book, Like A Rolling Stone: Dylan at the Crossroads and gained a new respect for Dylan's creative process. I played Highway 61 Revisited so much that my wife threatened to hurl the CD out the window. My then 5-year-old daughter was even running around the house singing the chorus to "Like A Rolling Stone."

For a long while, I couldn't listen to anything else. Because of what Springsteen's music meant to me as a teen, Dylan will never overshadow him, but Bob Dylan's music seems right for the times and right for me, right now. Dylan detractors say they can't get past his voice. I say they aren't listening close enough. It's the voice that's the thing: the most original, distinct voice in all of American music. Many have covered his songs, but only Dylan's voice can deliver them with the honesty and passion they require.

Embarrassed as I am that it took me so long to discover Dylan's brilliance, I'm actually grateful that it happened when it did. Dylan reminded me of how much music has influenced my life and of the joy it's provided. Since then I've delved deeper into the catalogue of other artists whose music I liked but only flirted with in the past, like my current obsession and Dylan protégé, Patti Smith. The path to Dylan also led me to newer artists like Arcade Fire, Beth Orton, Blind Pilot, and Sufjan Stevens.

Dylan's songs, both old and new, remain not only relevant and important, but can still teach and inspire. For me, this proves him to be an artist who has always been both before and of his time. So, happy belated birthday, Bob... it sure is nice finally getting to know you.

Visit [tangentsmag.com](http://tangentsmag.com) for the uncut version of this story.

## MUSIC

# Wilson native Lee Fields sings soul to please man and God

by Bill Kopp

Sometimes it takes decades to become an overnight sensation. Such is the case of soul stirrer Lee Fields; though he released his first single, "Bewildered" b/w "Tell Her I Love Her" on a tiny label in 1969, he didn't truly score big until 30-plus years later. And then his career truly took off some 20 years after that. But as one of the hardest working men in show business, Lee Fields has had many successes along the way.

Fields was born in 1951 in Wilson, N.C., east of Raleigh. His earliest aspirations had little to do with music. "I really just wanted to be a businessman," he says. "In that time, people of color had no vested interest in real estate or anything. It seemed like we had very small shares of ownership in anything."

But Fields – then only 13 – found himself on the receiving end of a dare. Some of his friends challenged him to appear in a local talent show. "Everybody was talking about this guy called James Brown, and how I looked like him," Fields says with a laugh. "At the time, I was more into Sam Cooke! But I learned the songs." He took the stage and started singing. "The girls went nuts, man! And I said to myself, 'This is not a bad job at all.'"

Fields says he still wasn't convinced that the life of a musician was for him. But along with an estimated 73 million other Americans on February 9, 1964, he watched The Beatles perform on The Ed Sullivan Show. "That really made me want to become an entertainer," he says. His mother signed for him at a Wilson music store, letting him buy a guitar on time payment. "I learned how to play," Fields says, "because I wanted to be just like The Beatles. With those funny haircuts and those black suits, they were from another place and time!"

Another landmark event in popular culture took place in December of that year. In a local movie theatre, Fields watched a new concert film. "I saw James Brown on The T.A.M.I. Show, and that sealed the deal: I wanted to be a businessman, but I decided, 'I'm going to stick with this music; this is what I really want to do.'"

As a self-trained guitarist and keyboardist, the singer landed live gigs, but wouldn't cut his first record for several more years. For a time, he was the singer for a new group, Kool & the Gang. But as their star rose, his seemed to fade. "Their instrumentals became so popular," Fields says, "that they didn't need a singer. And I could feel that." By 1971 he had left the group.

Between 1969 and the end of the next decade, Fields would record and release about a dozen singles for nearly as many independent labels. In that time, he often co-produced, learning his way around the studio equipment. Fields worked with Jerry Williams Jr. (aka Swamp Dogg) on a number of singles. "Swamp Dogg was deep down in the funk," Fields says. "Before George Clinton!" Speaking of P-Funk, Fields also co-wrote music in 1983 with keyboardist Bernie Worrell. "We charted on Billboard with 'Shake It Lady Shake It,' and I thought I was gonna get a bunch of gigs," he laughs. "I got two."

He had self-released an album, Let's Talk it Over in 1979; it would be reissued in 2012 after his national success. On its original release, the out-front funk of Let's Talk it Over didn't make Fields a household name, and as tastes changed toward disco, Fields took something of a time-out. "I spent a great deal of time analyzing the market, figuring it out,

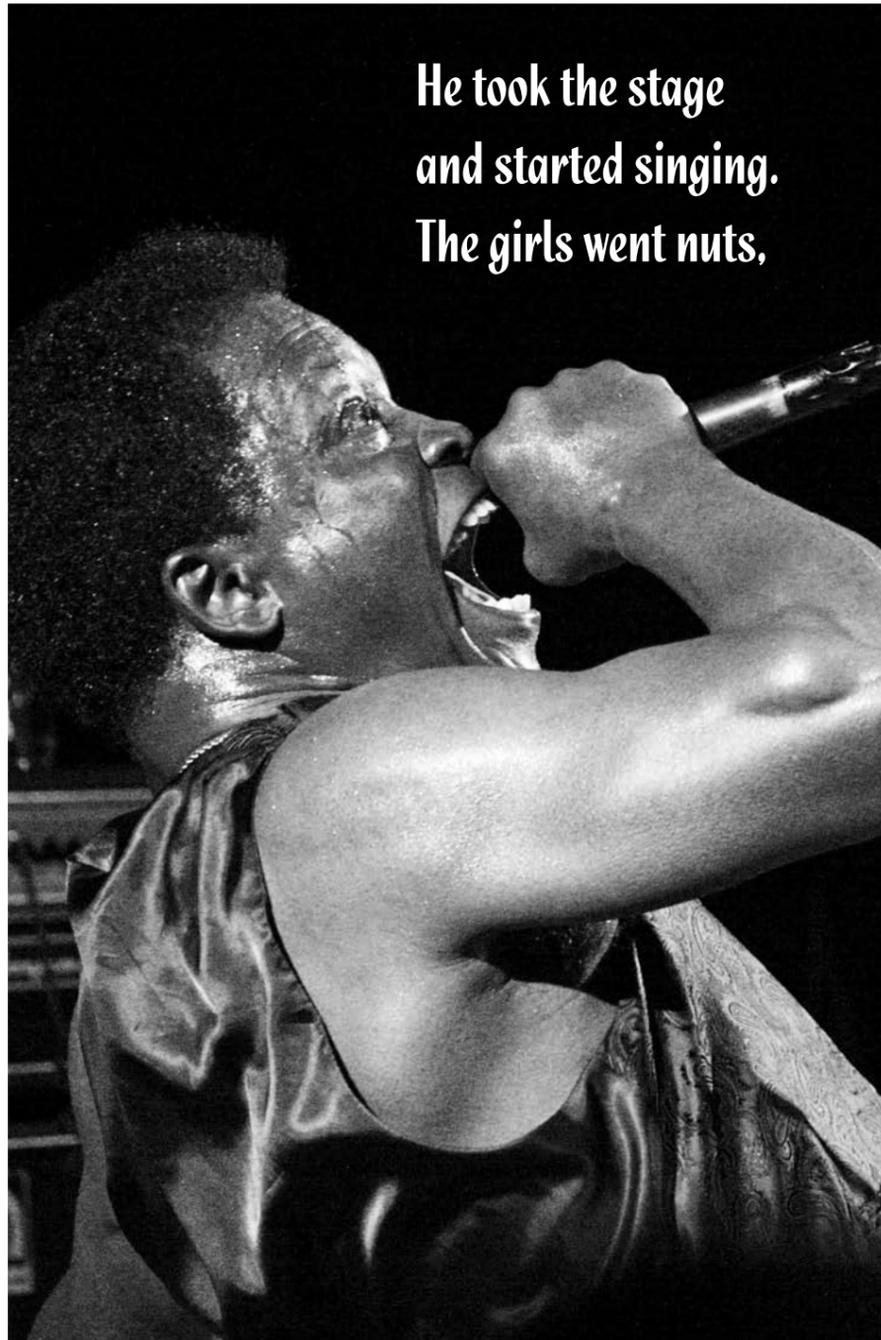


photo DANIEL COSTON

becoming a voracious reader," Fields says. To support his family, he reactivated those business goals, moving into real estate. But eventually he returned to making music.

In the early 1990s, Fields released *Enough is Enough*; its cover shows the smiling, jheri-curled Fields in full James Brown mode. The album was effectively a one-man show. "Two songs on *Enough is Enough* used live musicians," Fields says. "Everything else was me, and I'm singing background on everything." He recalls that the record was acclaimed by aficionados of Southern soul.

"But I wanted to be an artist for everybody," he says. What he really wanted to do then – and does now – is "break down ethnic and color barriers, because music is supposed to be a universal thing." Fields notes that much of what we call Southern soul was made by a very much integrated group of musicians; he mentions the Swampers out of Muscle Shoals, Alabama, and the Stax Records "house band," Booker T. & the MG's.

Fields believes he hit upon a way to "make the music adaptable, without changing." That approach has informed his music ever since his 2009 release, *My World*. That disc established the Lee Fields template for the 21st century: soulful, slow-burn tunes that ooze emotion yet crackle with energy. Backed by The Expressions, one of the

He took the stage  
and started singing.  
The girls went nuts,

best bands in the soul business, Lee Fields makes new music that's timeless. Lee Fields & the Expressions followed that set with four more albums; released in October, *Special Night* is their latest, and perhaps their best.

"Soul is a spirit," Fields says. "And that spirit I truly believe is of God. So when I sing soul music – pure soul music – I believe I've got to try to sing it in a fashion that, hopefully, will be pleasing to man and God." He laughs when he admits that his songs occasionally veer toward ungodly subject matter. "But God would probably say, 'Well, okay. I'll let you slide with that. But you're close!' So I'm very selective with the words that I put in my songs."

Fields' headlining spot at 2014's Transfigurations Festival in Marshall, N.C. was a highlight of that three-day event. "I remember that day very well," Fields says. "People came out and allowed themselves to be open to the music; they feel it. It's all about love." Fields spent most of January 2017 on tour throughout Europe, where he connects with audiences as well as he does here at home.

Fields is modest about the music he makes. "We're not doing anything new," he says. "A soul singer could be anybody singing from the spirit." He believes it's soul music "just as long as it's made by a combination of individuals who can interject their feelings into it."



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## MUSIC

## Regina Spektor: From Russia with love

by Bill Kopp

Regina Spektor readily concedes that she has a somewhat unusual biography. Born in 1980 in what was then still the Soviet Union, Spektor emigrated to the United States at age 9; her Jewish family was fleeing discrimination in Russia. By that time, Spektor was already three years into her piano studies, but she was forced to leave her piano behind.

After her family settled in the Bronx, she continued her classical studies, obtaining the use of a piano wherever she could find one. While her musical interests began to expand into popular idioms, Spektor enrolled in classical studies at Purchase College's Conservatory of Music, graduating with honors in 2001. Her popular music inclinations were never far from the surface, though. From her start, Spektor wrote and performed her own material, only rarely playing the music of other songwriters. She would self-release her debut album, *11:11* that same year.

Spektor's career really took off in 2006 with the release of her fourth album, *Begin to Hope*. That album represented a refinement and expansion of her sound. But most of the elements of her style – piano-centric arrangements, clear and often impassioned vocals, thoughtful lyrics – had already been in place for years. *Begin to Hope* was certified Gold in four countries, charting in seven. By the following year, she was a high-profile performer at the annual Bonnaroo Festival in Tennessee.

Her more recent albums – *Far* (2009) and 2012's *What We Saw from the Cheap Seats* – have top-tenned the U.S. charts, and Spektor's latest record, *Remember Us to Life* was released last September to overwhelmingly positive reviews. In just over a decade in the bright spotlight, Spektor has become one of the most admired singer-songwriters of her generation, all while making music on her own terms.

But while she admits that her unusual story does inform her music, Spektor is not especially interested in the ways she might be different from others. Instead she focuses on the ways that we all connect. "It's always really hard to figure out what comes from what," she says. "In some ways, sometimes it matters a lot that I come from Russia, that I come from this Jewish family and there is this history of persecution in the story of my family. I carry that with me into art, and into my experience of the world."

In another sense, those things hardly matter at all, she believes. Spektor feels more connected to the immigrant experience in general. "Sometimes I think it doesn't matter at all that I'm from Russia. But it mat-



photo SHERVIN LAINEZ

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**In just over a decade in the bright spotlight, Spektor has become one of the most admired singer-songwriters of her generation, all while making music on her own terms.**

ters so much that I'm an immigrant, because I have that experience of leaving a place," she says. Her own story helps her relate to other Americans with the immigrant experience, wherever they're from.

And Spektor embraces that feeling of connection in other ways, too. She and her husband became parents a few years ago. "You meet somebody in the aisle of a supermarket – someone with a child the same age as yours – and you can almost finish each other's sentences," she laughs. "So while my biography is unique, I'm much

more interested in all the places where we connect rather than where we differ."

And she feels that perspective is one worth cultivating. "At this moment in our kind of human history," Spektor says, "we're constantly being pushed to figure out our identities into these neat little packages and define ourselves." She'd rather explore the shared parts of life experiences: "Oh, you experienced grief? I have experienced grief. And, 'You had to struggle with this thing? So did I.'"

That kind of thoughtful perspective colors Regina Spektor's ideas about what consti-

tutes success. She says that the concept of "making it" in music is "very self-congratulatory; then you can assume that you can relax in some way." But on another level she thinks that defining success is just "part of the myth of making art." A moment like that never really comes, she says.

Citing various career milestones – achieving financial security, personal growth, becoming part of a community of artists and "being of use to the world in some way" – Spektor suggests that instead she appreciates "the tiny increments of excitement that happen. And my life has been crazy-full of them."

She mentions a particular bar gig from years ago. "All of a sudden, the after-work crowd just got quiet and listened to my music for an hour and didn't talk over my songs," she recalls. "I remember that moment, and it felt like I made it."

Another "increment of excitement" for Spektor was "the first moment where somebody said, 'Here's a hundred bucks for playing this show.'" Another: "Somebody invited me to open for them." And without a doubt, one of the biggest milestones in Spektor's career came in May 2010, when she performed at a White House reception honoring Jewish American Heritage Month; the audience included President and Mrs. Obama, and Vice President Biden.

Spektor appreciates the smaller victories, too. "Writing a new type of song that you've never written before" brings a sense of success, she says. "Or playing a chord that somehow – even though you've been playing this instrument since you were six – you never noticed that it's just right there, and you never noticed it before." When that happens, Spektor says with a smile, "You feel like you made it ... finally, you've made it."

Spektor's current tour in support of *Remember Us to Life* takes her to 21 cities in March and April, including a March 17 date at the Fillmore in Charlotte. As for her future plans, she remains open to whatever develops. She wrote "The Call" for the 2008 motion picture *The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian*, and recently dipped her toe back into the world of film music with a (for her) rare cover song, George Harrison's "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" for the soundtrack of *Kubo and the Two Strings*.

With her background in classical music, it seems that film scoring could be something she'd consider pursuing. "I would do it if it was a true creative endeavor," she says, "if it really felt like I was creating art in tandem with all these other people. I like to be cooperative and creatively excited, but I don't like to just sort of be a gun for hire. I only want to do it in a good way."

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## MUSIC

## 16-year-old Maya Beth Atkins' surprising maturity

She's the future," said a friend to me after Maya Beth Atkins' performance at the Levine Children's benefit concert in December. On that night, the 16-year-old singer, songwriter and guitarist took three of the biggest hits of the 1970s band Heart and owned them in a way that went way beyond her years. While the set that night was a revelation to some, to others it felt another big step for someone who was already gathering attention at such a young age.

Maya Beth was born into music. The oldest child of longtime Charlotte musician and current Charlotte Checkers keyboardist Jason Atkins (who also often accompanies his daughter at her shows), Maya Beth was singing and performing her own shows by the age of 13. Whether it's been a song from Pink Floyd or one of her own, there's a sense that Maya Beth Atkins is going to accomplish even more than what she has done in such a short time. Atkins answered questions about her career to date via email with Daniel Coston.

**TANGENTS:** Your dad is a musician. Do you remember when you first took an interest in music?

**MAYA BETH ATKINS:** I think I've always had an interest in music. Even when I was little, I'd always be singing something. My first memory of making music is probably when I sat down at my dad's keyboard and picked out "Lean On Me" and sang along.

**TANGENTS:** How much of your parents' record collection has influenced your tastes in music?

**ATKINS:** Oh, a big chunk of it. When I was in middle school, I was very into Pink Floyd, namely "The Wall" album. My parents exposed me to all kinds of music, so my tastes are pretty broad. There's not much I don't like.

**TANGENTS:** How old were you when you first started performing?

**ATKINS:** Oh man, I think I started performing when I was about ten or eleven years old. I played Michelle Branch's "Everywhere" for a music lessons concert. That's my earliest memory.

**TANGENTS:** What have been your most memorable gigs to date?

**ATKINS:** I think my favorite gigs have been the '70s and '80s tributes at the Neighborhood Theatre. I mean, wow. Those shows were my favorite because one, I love '70s and '80s music, and two, the energy was just so raw and real and it was such a rush. Both performances were really profound, like I had found my purpose and what I was meant to do, you know? They'll always have a special place in my heart.

**TANGENTS:** What would you say are your biggest influences as a songwriter and guitar player?

**ATKINS:** My biggest influences for both songwriting and guitar are probably Gillian Welch and David Rawlings respectively. Beside Fleetwood Mac and Nirvana, Gillian Welch just has this really bittersweet yet gritty mood to her lyrics that I'd love to emulate in my own music. Rawlings' guitar style is unique, and it's unpredictable, but it flows, right? It's bluegrass and folksy, but it rocks too.

**TANGENTS:** Your shows have been a mix of covers and your own songs. What's easier to play: your own songs or someone else's?

**ATKINS:** It depends, honestly. Sometimes it's more fun to play covers because I just love to play songs that I like. It's fun to have people know the songs and sing along. It's familiar. But I also enjoy playing my own songs and putting them out there for the world. If I'm especially proud of a particular original song, I'll have a lot more fun playing it.

**"My favorite gigs have been the '70s and '80s tributes at the Neighborhood Theatre."**

**TANGENTS:** How would you describe the scene in Charlotte and the places that you've played?

**ATKINS:** I would describe them as just very genuine. I know, nowadays, music has turned into more of a trend or a look rather than what it actually is, which

is music. Charlotte just really, truly loves music, and you can tell wherever you go, whether it's a cafe or a night venue, that it's a very real and raw city. I love it.

**TANGENTS:** What themes would you say pop up most often in your songs?

**ATKINS:** I've been told my music is a little on the dark or sad side, and that's not a lie. I write a lot about substance abuse, heartache and tragedy in general. Those subjects appeal to me because they aren't false. They're real, and I've seen what damage they cause. Every person knows what it feels like to hurt, so it's a very human approach to music.

**TANGENTS:** What was it like to play The Double Door Inn during its last week?

**ATKINS:** It was bittersweet, I think. I was really honored to play before it shut down, but it was also sad to look around and see all the history it had and the memories the patrons had bound to it. I loved The Double Door Inn.

**TANGENTS:** You recently covered Heart at

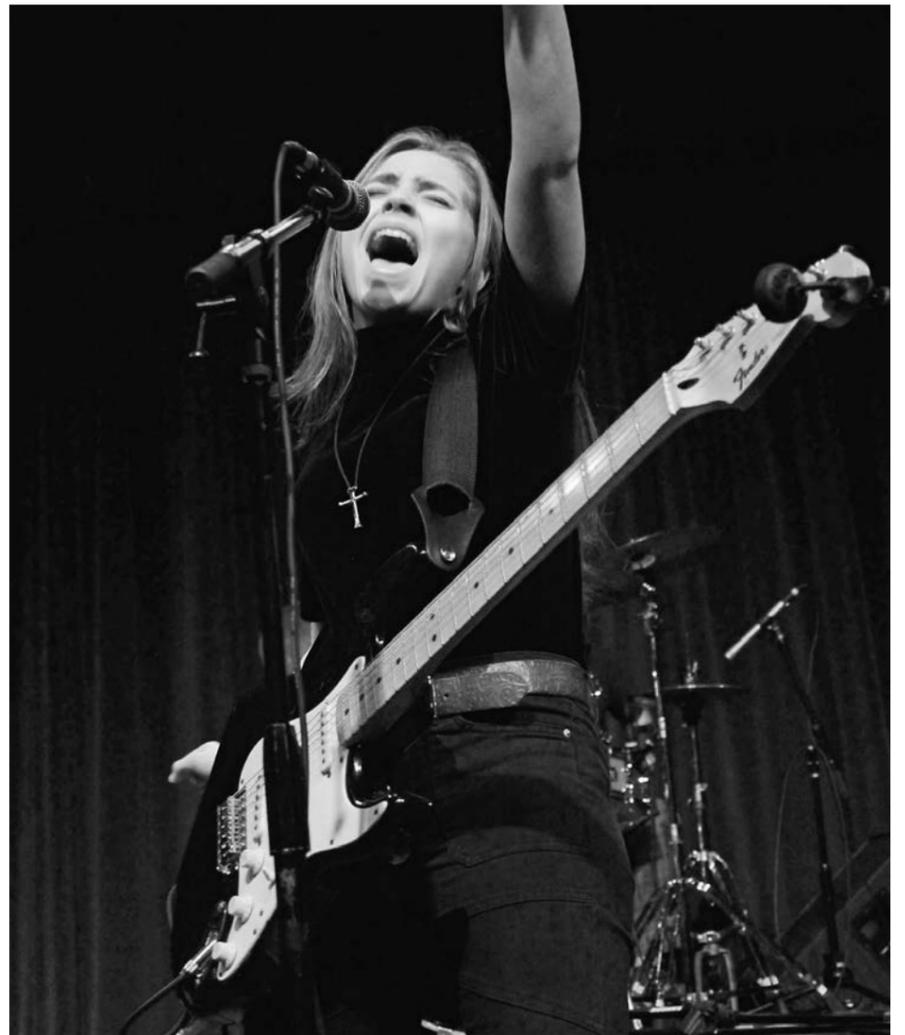


photo DANIEL COSTON

the Levine Children's benefit. Were those hard songs to learn or sing?

**ATKINS:** Oh my god, those songs were insane. They were super complex music-wise. Heart wasn't kidding around when putting down tracks. Ann Wilson's vocal range is really broad, so it was really hard to sing. Despite that, the entire performance was a blast.

**TANGENTS:** Do your friends at school know about your music career? Are they supportive?

**ATKINS:** My friends are aware, and they're super supportive! They'll come out and see me time to time or ask if I've written anything new. They're very sweet people, and I'm really lucky to have them in my life.

**TANGENTS:** Anything that I should ask you about?

**ATKINS:** I'm also interested in writing and drawing. Anything to do with storytelling, really. I hope my music speaks to people and tells stories.

**TANGENTS:** Finish this sentence. At the end of the day, Maya Beth Atkins is ...

**ATKINS:** ... slightly uncomfortable with this question.



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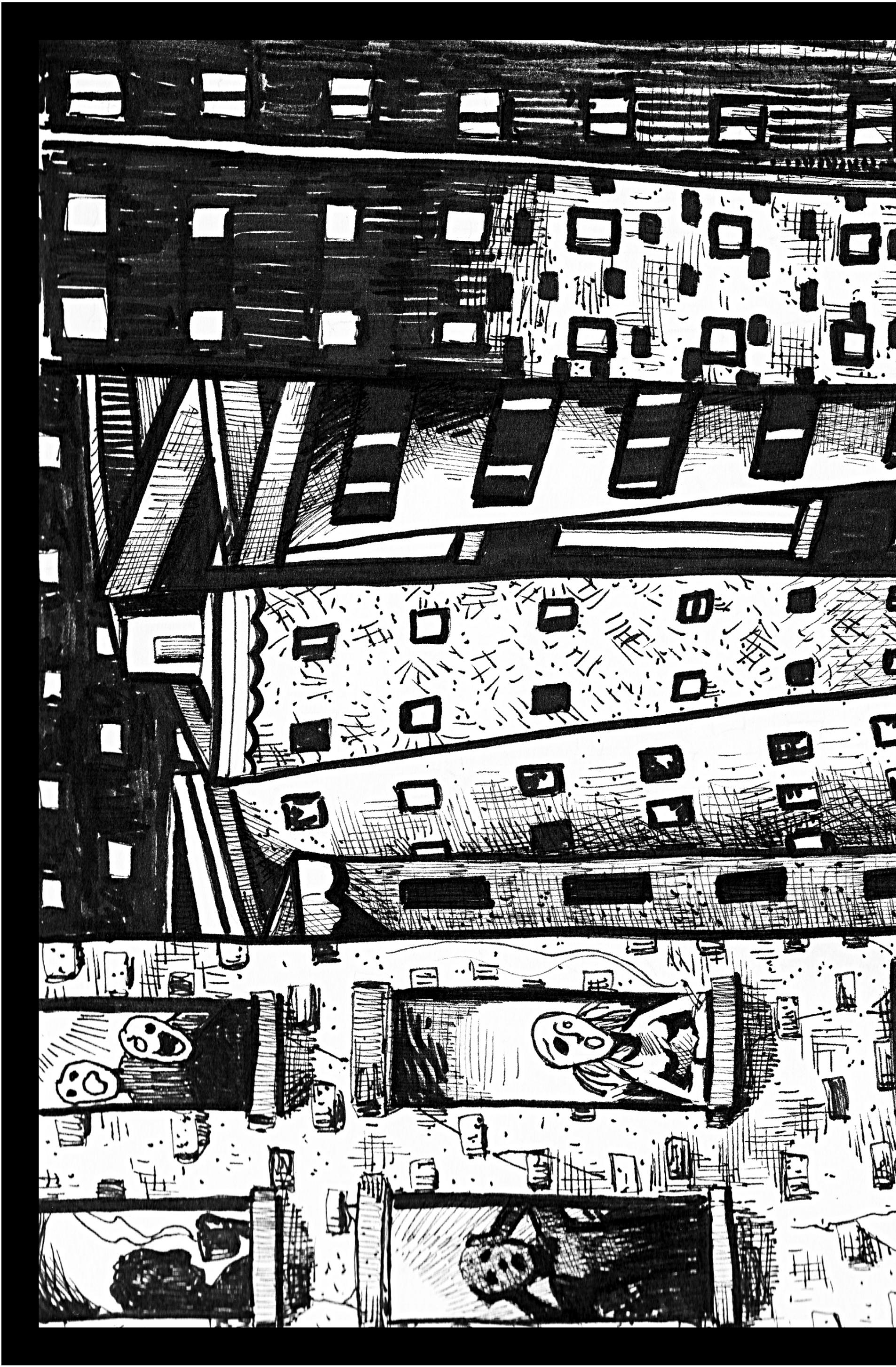
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KIRK

## MUSIC



photo JONATHAN COOPER

## LeAnna Eden is making 2017 her breakout year

**L**ife. Experience. Emotion. In all of its colors. It's all there in LeAnna Eden's music. Originally hailing from Milwaukee, WI, Eden has used her time in Charlotte to find where she is now and to make 2017 her breakout year. Eden talked about what led to this moment and what comes next via email with Daniel Coston.

**TANGENTS:** Do you remember when you first took an interest in music?

**LEANNA EDEN:** I was adopted at 7 and started playing piano. I remember writing my first piano piece at 8. I was in band. I played oboe. In high school, I performed in musicals and vocal jazz choir, but I really didn't start making music and writing just for me until I was 18 and my friend gave me my first guitar.

My adoptive parents were very Christian, and I really wasn't allowed to listen to anything besides Christian choral and classical music. But occasionally, on Sundays driving to church, my adoptive dad would let me listen to the oldies station. When I hit my teens, I got to listen to the alternative station. My adoptive parents and I went our separate ways when I was 16, I basically tried to play catch up, and I still am.

**TANGENTS:** Your music ranges over

several genres. Is that a conscious decision, or does that just happen?

**EDEN:** It used to just happen, but now it's turning into a conscious decision. I want to write music for everyone. I dream of having a song on every music chart.

**TANGENTS:** Who would you say are your biggest influences?

**EDEN:** Curtis Mayfield, Betty Davis, Corinne Bailey Rae and Valerie June.

**TANGENTS:** Contrast the music scene in Milwaukee and the Midwest with the music scene in Charlotte.

**EDEN:** The Milwaukee music scene was a beautiful place to grow into being a musician. The open mics were extremely supportive and gave me the feedback and encouragement that I needed to become the performer I am today. Milwaukee taught me that if I have a vision to do anything, all I have to do is ask. Milwaukee is a close-knit group of people who love and support each other. I see a lot of similarities between Milwaukee and Charlotte. Both cities have rapidly developing art communities. And a lot of my peers are finding ways to mentor and keep the music alive.

**TANGENTS:** How would you describe the scene in Charlotte and the places that you've played?

**EDEN:** I used to think that Charlotte was cliquey. When I moved here three years ago, I would have severe anxiety about going out and playing. But once I immersed myself in the music scene, I realized how supportive it is. But support is a two-way street. Now, I have anxiety about possibly missing my friends' shows.

I was lucky to have played Tremont Music Hall and Common Market before they closed. I love playing Petra's. [I hosted] a show there ... January 30th called "Session." I want to give the vocalists who don't have bands an opportunity to do their full set.

I've played the Station a handful of times. I love that bar. It feels like Milwaukee and reminds me of the bar where I first started doing an open mic called Frank's Power Plant. But my all-time favorite venue in Charlotte is The Visulite. I feel like they really held out a helping hand of support to my band and I. And I opened for Emily King at The Visulite Theatre.

**TANGENTS:** What themes would you say pop up most often in your songs?

**EDEN:** My songs are usually just observations about my surroundings, however good or bad, with a sprinkle of self-deprecation and a dash of hope.

**TANGENTS:** Talk about your new band, The Garden Of.

**EDEN:** The Garden Of is a broad term for all the artists in my life. From musicians, to painters, to music engineers and vocalists, to the people in the crowd singing along and the energy it feeds me. But the band The Garden Of is Zach Willard on lead guitar and James Jeffrey on drums. LeAnna Eden and The Garden Of just finished recording their first EP titled "11." It will be available for your ears soon.



"Doors of Perception (Charlotte Motor Speedway)" by Susan Bolash

susanyarb@icloud.com

## MUSIC

## Robert Nesbit is working to end homelessness with HousingFest

Two things loom large in Robert Nesbit's life: Music and social work. Nesbit combined them in 2014 with his first Concert To End Homelessness featuring a sold-out show with The Blind Boys of Alabama. After a successful second show last year with Josh Ritter and Charlotte's own Matrimony, the show returns to The Fillmore Charlotte on March 11 with a headlining set from new soul rebels St. Paul & The Broken Bones. For Nesbit and many others, this is more than a concert. It is a chance for music to have real impact on what many in Charlotte deal with on a daily basis. Nesbit talked about the concert and more via email with Daniel Coston.

**TANGENTS:** How did HousingFest come about?

**ROBERT NESBIT:** The idea for HousingFest developed with my friend Katie Church who organizes the concert with me. We were both working at Urban Ministry Center's Moore Place. Being musicians and music lovers, we began to think about the history of social justice movements and the role music played in them. We thought a benefit concert would be a powerful way to raise awareness and funds to help Urban Ministry Center end homelessness. We wanted to connect with young music lovers and provide an accessible, meaningful avenue for them to be part of ending homelessness in Charlotte.

We reached out to Gregg McCraw at Maxx Music. He agreed to provide the Neighborhood Theatre as a venue and promote the show. Then we began to email different agents and artists about being part of the bill. From there, things began to take shape.

**TANGENTS:** How did you land The Blind Boys of Alabama for the first year?

**NESBIT:** Jim Lauderdale was the first person to commit to play HousingFest, and his agent also booked The Blind Boys of Alabama. I asked if they would be interested in being part of the show. They were, and it was a good fit for the first year.

**TANGENTS:** Jim Lauderdale has also been a part of the first two HousingFests. How did he get involved?

**NESBIT:** Jim and I both have roots in Troutman, NC. (That's where my dad's family is from.) Jim's father Chap Lauderdale was a minister at the First ARP Church in Troutman. Jim's parents knew my grandparents and extended family.

When I was getting serious about playing music, my grandparents told me about Jim, who was the most successful musician they knew. As I explored Jim's music, I felt like we were kindred spirits. We were both from the same area and loved American roots music.

I spoke to Jim about the idea for HousingFest at a music festival at NC School of the Arts in Winston-Salem in 2013. He was interested and encouraged me to reach out to his booking agent. He's been a tremendous supporter of the show and our work to end homelessness.

Unfortunately, he's not able to be part of the show this year, but will certainly be back for future years!

**"We began to think about the history of social justice movements and the role music played in them. We thought a benefit concert would be a powerful way to raise awareness."**

**TANGENTS:** Talk about this year's show. How did St. Paul get involved?

**NESBIT:** Every year, Katie and I spend countless hours talking about potential artists to play HousingFest. We both enjoyed Paul's music and had seen him live. I reached out to his booking agent Frank Riley at High Road Touring.

As it turns out, Paul is passionate about ending homelessness. He volunteers with a charity in his hometown of Birmingham, AL. He also played a benefit concert for them. We're excited to have him on board. We know he will be a great champion for the cause.

**TANGENTS:** What does this show mean to the charity that it benefits?

**NESBIT:** HousingFest is presented by the Urban Ministry Center. Urban is Charlotte's leading homeless services agency, serving our community for the last 20 years. They provide over 250 units of housing with support services for the most vulnerable people experiencing homelessness in Charlotte. \$2 from every ticket sold goes to Urban. We also have sponsorship options for individuals and companies interested in helping end homelessness.

**TANGENTS:** What has been your proudest moment in doing these shows?

**NESBIT:** There have been quite a few highlights, but selling out the Neighborhood Theatre in our first year stands out. 900 people supporting the cause and enjoying the music inspired us to keep growing the concert.

**TANGENTS:** What can other musicians do to get involved in doing a show like this?

**NESBIT:** There are so many ways to give back to the community.

Our friend Justin Fedor is a talented musician who organizes his own series of benefit concerts for the Levine Children's Hospital. He has been a tremendous supporter of HousingFest by helping us with logistics and playing last year's concert.

Musicians can always unite others around a cause with music. But something as simple as playing for people who don't get to hear music often (assisted living centers, schools, homeless shelters) is a simple and meaningful way to give back.



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## Shelby, 1985

Blanche drank Sun Drop and hung Elvis on the wall.  
We didn't visit her much at all.  
She had ashtrays, we had angels.  
She had an Elvis, we had a Jesus.  
It feels like our differences were small  
when I think of that velvet Elvis on the wall.

— Cindy Sites-Wooley

## Individual

Sun shine  
resonate  
deliver all  
in a day a  
wonderful day.  
See through positive eyes  
delight in normalcy rebel  
against the norm.

Think outside of the box.

Strive forth  
against the grain  
all rationale aside wake  
and believe. Stand  
and deliver.  
Conquer  
crave  
dance  
stumble all  
in a day a  
wonderful day.

©Jerry L. Kirk



## Lost and Found

Learning to grow  
Where there  
Once was a hole  
That tore through  
All I believed in  
So many years  
I was lost  
Dark and barren  
I am now  
Opening windows  
Seeking sunshine  
For the wildflowers  
Blooming  
Inside me  
Whilst  
Laughing at all  
That tried to  
Control  
and  
Destroy me.

— Amber Comber 2016

# MUSIC

## Double it up to capture your tracks more thoroughly

So you're sitting in the sweet spot at your home studio and having trouble getting your tracks to mix easily. It seems like they don't have the right frequency balance and no amount of EQ is helping. Balance is achieved in some parts of the songs, but falls apart in others ... what gives?

There are a number of band-aids you could employ (multi-band compressors, dynamic EQ's, severe automation etc.), but an easier solution may lie in capturing your tracks more thoroughly. That is, if one input works well but isn't a complete solution, add a second one.

You might be thinking "here goes Rob on another one of his 'record in stereo - not in mono' rants" but I'm thinking not so much the capture of stereo air, width and space ... but the capture of a source's full spectrum of frequencies and dynamics to create a full, consistent and "complete" sonic recreation. Consider the following to be dual-mono solutions ...

**DRUMS:** Kick and snare, the most important elements in just about any drum mix, can be hard to capture with consistency, largely based on the difficulty of playing with idealized consistency. All that thumping, smacking and cracking has to be captured in full detail.

**WITH SNARE** ... start with your SM57 up top (like everybody!), but add a second mic ... maybe underneath the drum (capturing the lively snare wires), or add a condenser mic right alongside the 57 (AKG C451's are perfect). The bottom mic will likely need to be polarity-reversed (to maintain ideal phase correlation) and either 2nd mic can be noise gated (with the 57 un-gated) for more isolation and improved punch.

**WITH KICK DRUM** ... start with a typical inside mic and add either an outside mic

or an "aggressive mic". The outside mic can be dark and bassy (like a ribbon mic) and the inside mic may need to be nudged back in time to match the outside mic. An aggressive mic (like a Shure Beta 91) can be positioned inside the drum, right on axis with the beater and is great at picking up the beater's transients. Either method, try compressing it firmly (maybe even add a limiter too) for super consistent performance.

## HOME RECORDING

by Rob Tavaglione

If one input works well but isn't a complete solution, add a second one.

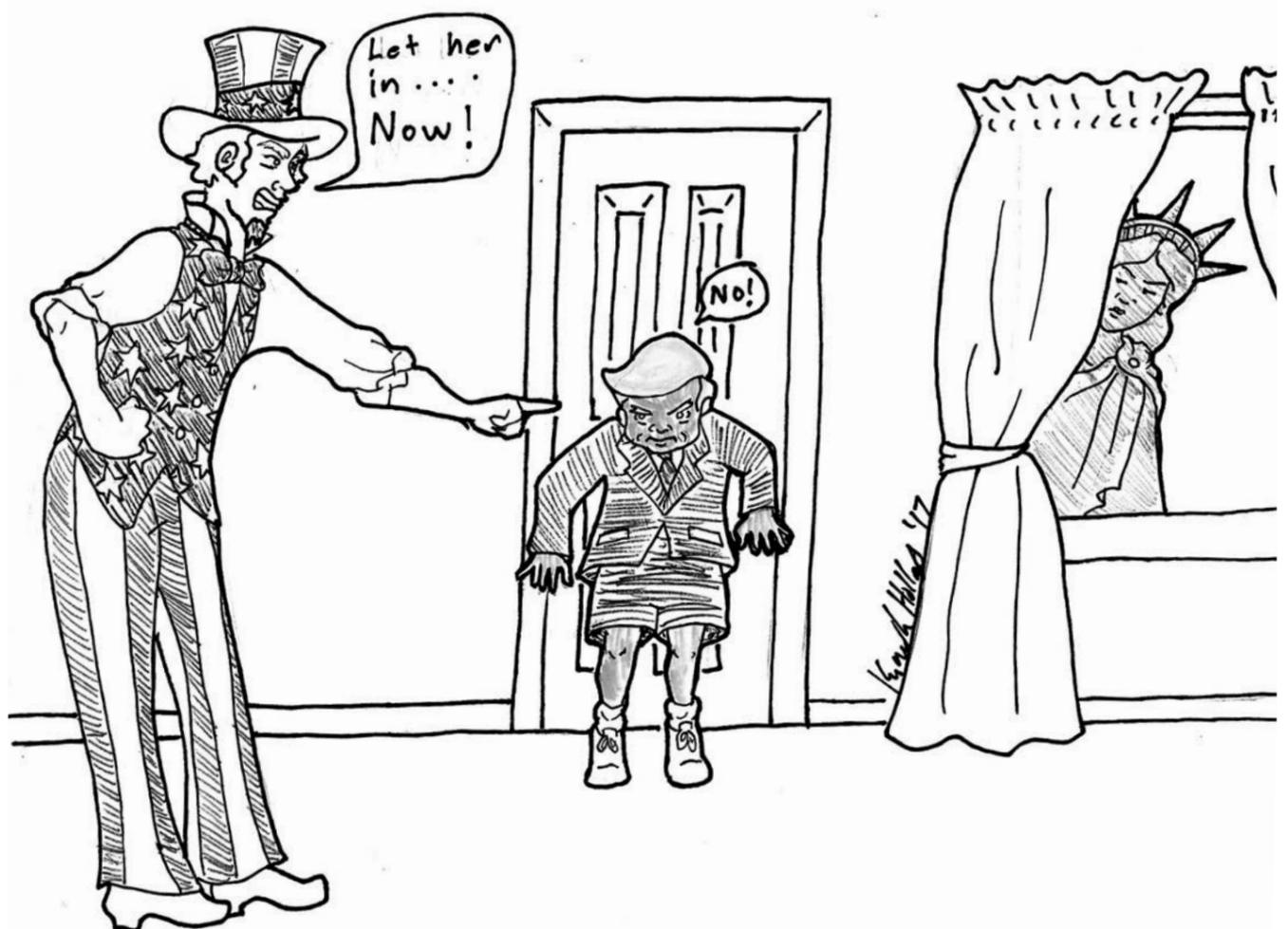
**BASS GUITAR:** When micing a bass amp, things can get too fat and boomy quickly. In order to grab more midrange and detail (yes, you actually need mids to "hear" and not just "feel" bass) try adding a small diaphragm condenser mic blended with your large diaphragm mic. Better yet ... try adding a DI signal to the amp. The DI will likely be about 3 or 4 milliseconds ahead of the mic, so nudge them into time and try flipping the polarity to get the fattest sound with phase accuracy. The DI might save your ass, in that you can re-amp the signal or use an in-the-box virtual amp should you need to radically change the tone later.

**ELECTRIC GUITAR:** There are three mic types that excel at guitar ... dynamics like a SM57 or a Sennheiser 421, condensers (often too bright), or ribbons (often too dark and smooth). Pick the two you need and most any amp sound can be captured in its glorious fullness. Ribbons help smooth out high-pitched solos, dynamics grab the chewy midrange and condensers bring the brightness and bite. For more air, move a condenser back a few feet as a room mic and blend in judiciously. While your at it, grab a DI signal too just in case you need to re-amp or virtual amp.

**ELECTRONICS:** With synths, drum machines and samples we often just take a pair of DI's for stereo signals. But, the absence of actually moving air can be underwhelming. Try running a mono-summed signal to a guitar amp and mic it, blend it in with your DI's, nudge it into time and enjoy some fullness, complexity and a greater sense of "reality."

**THE KITCHEN SINK:** Just about any source benefits from a secondary input, whether your talking micing the backside (Fender guitar amps), the underside (pianos and djembes), the room (drums, keys and vocals) or a direct-injection DI (for enhancement or starting over from scratch). Just remember to always check for phase compatibility, high-pass filter out the unwanted rumble and experiment with panning the two signals together or spaced apart. With a little EQ and compression you should find your tracks sitting well in the mix, translating all of their nuances and remaining consistent from top-to-tail.

Rob Tavaglione owns and operates Catalyst Recording in Charlotte, and is a freelance writer and musician.



Karla Holland

TheGorgonTransplant.wordpress.com

# MUSIC

## The Grim Freaker reviews crap so you don't have to

### BRIAN WILSON

BELK THEATER

September 19, 2016

So I'm lying on my fainting couch in my exquisitely decorated 1930s bungalow, and I see that the leader of the Beach Boys is playing in Charlotte. And I'm like, Alright! So I go to the show in my best Hawaiian shirt, shorts and penny loafers, ready to shag the night away. This is the South, where beach music is defined by being able to slow dance with your partner in one hand, and a beer or cigarette in the other. Even my grandfather, El Santo (as far as you know) could've told you that.

But NOOOOOOO!!!! This crowd was all middle-aged twig boys that wanted to listen to the music like it's some important symphony or something. Like it's all a teenage symphony to God. Beach music isn't to be revered! It's there to get really drunk to and make embarrassing passes at your friends' wives! At least that's what happens every time I go to a beach music show. You got a problem with that?

### TIM MCGRAW

BB&T BALLPARK

December 28, 2016

So, I go over to a local buffet restaurant, about dinnertime. I set up my immaculately painted Casio keyboard, which matches perfectly with my wrestling mask. And I start playing. Some Metallica, some Judas Priest, mixed with a few of my favorite Don Ho numbers. And people look over and smile, and keep eating. Later, a policeman comes in and asks what I'm doing. And I say, "I wanted to see what it was like to play to more people than Tim McGraw did in Charlotte." And the cop smiled, and immediately joined in on bongos. And it rocked.

### '90s REUNION SHOW

SPECTRUM CENTRE, UNTIL THEY GO BANKRUPT, AND GET BOUGHT OUT BY THE NEXT MEGACOMPANY

December 4, 2016

As Dusty Rhodes once said, what fresh hell is this? You remember the 90s, right? You wore big clothes, your played your music

loud, and you thought that everyone was so much cooler than the 80s. But then, the 90s got old. And ugly. Really ugly. Musicians past their prime, trotted out for one more show? Bad notes that even lip-synching and Autotune can't correct? Shows that go on way too long? I'm sorry, is this the 1990s, or a Lawrence Welk reunion show? At least the Lennon Sisters would have had better outfits. Survival is a pain in the ass, especially when you weren't supposed to last longer than fifteen minutes. Millennials, you have so much to look forward to. And it's not pretty.

So, I'm walking out of the show (even Helen Keller called and said, "Damn, this sucks"), I ran into a writer for the daily paper, who was furiously dancing in the aisles to the almost-music that was playing at the time. "I love this music!" he yelled over the noise. "It's just a shame that I have to give it a bad review in the paper. We write long articles now, so we can skimp on content!" For this, they killed off the Scene & Heard section? That's it. I needed to go somewhere and feel better about the world. So I immediately ran over to ...

### THE SOUTHERN CHRISTMAS SHOW

PARK EXPO

YEEEEAAAAAHHHH!!! Now we're talking. I purchased long scarves that don't clash with my wrestling tights. Some lovely hats that tell the world that I'm feisty, yet pretty, and still ready to hammerlock on my opponent when I'm good and ready. And the apple strudel is to die for! I even got up on stage, and gave an hour-long presentation on how to display plants throughout your Mid-Century Modern home. And then I jumped in the ring, and I kicked Ric Flair's ass! Yeah!!!!

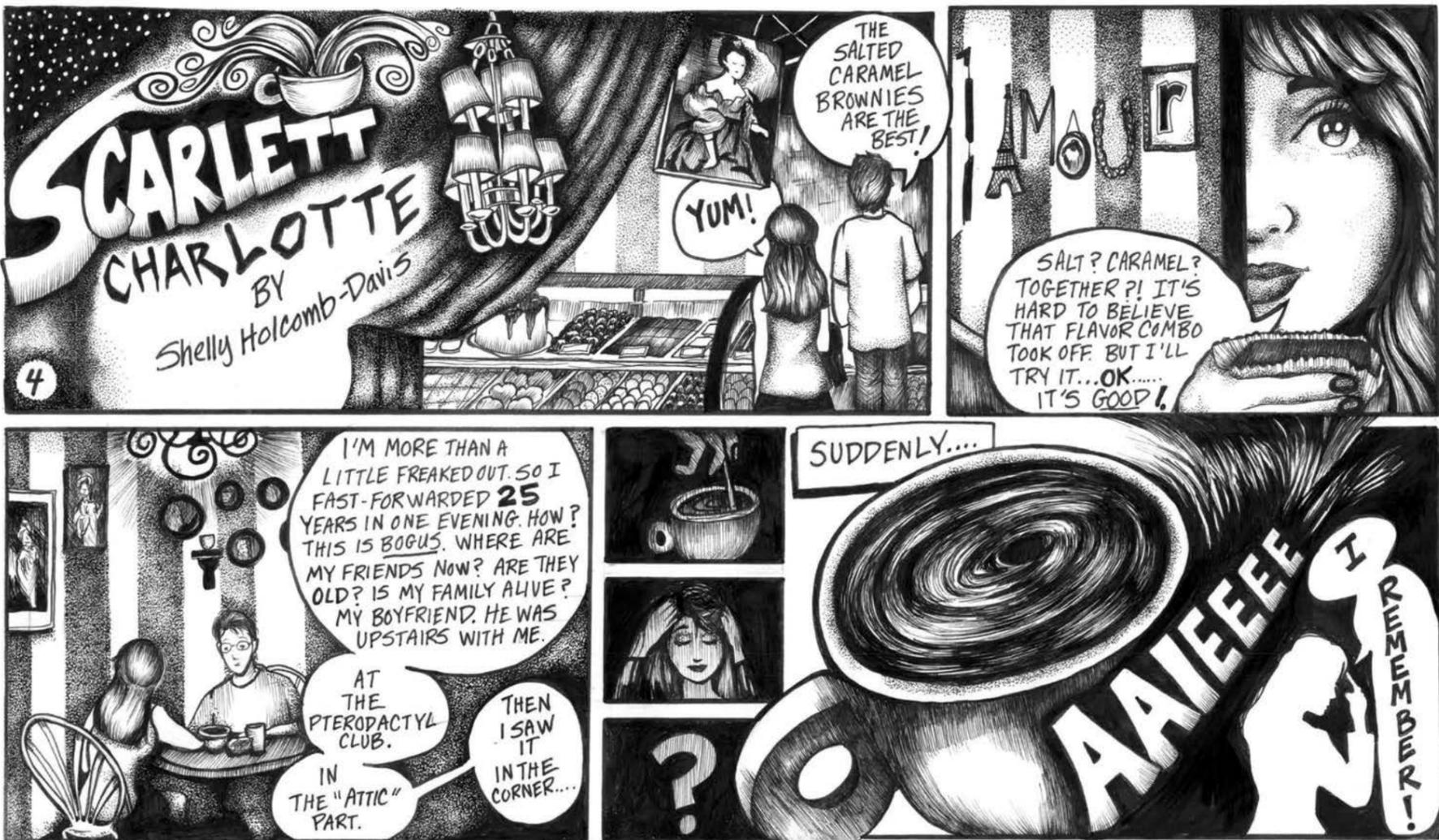
The Southern Christmas Show is my favorite thing at Christmas. Hands, and mask down. I hope that it never changes, or gets sold. Because then, I would be angry. And you wouldn't want to make me angry.

I'm the Grim Freaker. I wrestle and I take photos. Before each match, I send my opponents a pick-me-up bouquet in the shape of my wrestling mask. And then I kick their ass. You got a problem with that?!?!?



"On Stage" by Susan Bolash

susanyarb@icloud.com



HUMOR

Hell meddles in election



GregRussell.us

“Hey, babe. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_.”

Looking to send a clear message to what they termed the “Red Menace,” the United States government today announced sanctions against the Devil and Hell for their role in meddling with the 2016 elections.

“We have received copious intel from our intelligence sources and operatives in both Heaven and Hell,” said a government spokesperson. “There has been a clear pattern of interference to undermine the election process, to overwhelm the United States with hatred and ignorance, and to turn Facebook into a giant mass of bad mojo. Recently, and since the dawn of time, it is clearly the work of Satan and the Republic of Hell.”

Effective immediately, sanctions include a limit on transfers out of purgatory, an embargo on all hot sauces manufactured in Hell, and a shutdown on commerce with Hell’s casinos, McDonald’s, and Starbucks stores.

Forty diplomats for the Dark Lord were also banished from the gates of Heaven, along with Hell’s satellite offices in Branson, Missouri.

Republican senators welcomed the move in a rare sign of bipartisanship. “Yes, we know that Trump has unfairly been al-

**Satan said, “The fake news from God and his liberal media continues to undermine my good deeds.**

lowed to win,” said Senator Mitch McConnell. “We acknowledge that. And yes, there’s something that keeps us from reversing the results of the election. Like something is working against us. I don’t know what that could be.”

God Almighty also released a statement to the media supporting the actions, describing the sanctions as, “A good first step towards pushing back against the evil forces that have now gripped the world. I can’t believe that the world has gotten to this state. I was a Bernie Bro, myself. But no, you silly Christians had to turn your back on truth and follow the path of evil. Sigh. I know thee not.”

Meanwhile, President Donald Trump decried the sanctions, and what he said was

a smear campaign against a misunderstood person. “The Devil is a great guy,” enthused Trump. “He is a self-made businessman who built his empire up from the center of the earth. And that once Godforsaken land in Hell is prime real estate, and much warmer than New Jersey. Smart!”

Beelzebub also decried the sanctions at a press briefing held outside his Seventh Circle golf course. Shirtless, with newly shined horns and The Rolling Stones playing constantly from numerous nearby speakers, Satan said, “The fake news from God and his liberal media continues to undermine my good deeds. I’m just someone that believes in free market trade, unlimited oil supply, and no-nonsense contracts that ensure that everyone will spend their eternal lives in total damnation. And what’s wrong with that? Just ask Sarah Palin. Look what I’ve done for her career!”

“I have great respect for Mr. Trump,” added Satan, “and I look forward to repairing trade relations with him. We’ve known each other for years, although I’ve never met him. Please also pass along to him that my contract for his soul is still good, no matter what he says on Twitter.”

— J.F. Keaton



Jonathan Rosenbaum

majanation.com

## HUMOR

## Horoscopes by Morrissey

If today is your birthday, it doesn't matter. Everyday is like Sunday, anyway.

**AQUARIUS:** Be honest with your friends. Shut your mouth! How can you say I go about things the wrong way?

**PISCES:** I cry easily. Did I mention that I cry?

**ARIES:** I have a very strict tour rider and demands for performing, and must have my

entourage with meat all times. All while singing about how lonely and oppressed I feel.

**TAURUS:** Is that a veggie burger on the grill? I abhor the smell. Meat is murder.

**GEMINI:** Is that happy music that you're playing? Hang the DJ. Hang the DJ.

**CANCER:** Listen to your girlfriend today. Tomorrow, she may be in a coma.

**LEO:** That car doesn't have pleather seats, does it? I could never sit in such a car. I'm a strict vegetarian.

**VIRGO:** Don't ignore your problems. The more you ignore me, the closer I get.

**LIBRA:** Join up with others. Shoplifters of the world unite and take over!

**SCORPIO:** Oh, I see. If I remove my shirt several times during my show, I'm sharing something special with my fans. But if I do that while I'm standing in line at Walmart, the police are called. Oh, I'm so oppressed.

**SAGITTARIUS:** Look on the bright side. Heaven knows, I'm miserable now.

**CAPRICORN:** There is a zodiac sign that never goes out.

## Russia denies owning 'hilarious' Trump video

Spokespeople for Russia today vigorously denied reports that they have material of Donald Trump that they are using as blackmail, saying that the purported video does not exist, but if it did, it is a lot of fun to watch.

"We do not know where these claims come from," said a spokesperson for Vladimir Putin. "There is no such video, as hilari-

ous as it is, that shows the President with eight prostitutes, several German Shepherds, a pantomime horse, Danny Bonaduce, Flo from the Progressive ads, numerous GI Joes with Kung Fu Grip, games of Twister and Chutes & Ladders or hand sanitation lotions."

They denied that the video has not been photographed from numerous angles, will

not be available in Russia on DVD, download or Blu-Ray or aired on Russian TV as part of the popular "Russia's Funniest Americans" television show.

Russia also denied that they had compromising material that has kept The Strokes from making a good album since their first, kept the New York Knicks from having a winning season since the last millennium or

why "Blue's Clues" went horribly wrong after the first host left the show. Or why he left the show in the first place.

"We love American culture," said the spokesperson. "Especially when it comes crashing to the ground, and bad music and reality television takes its place. Not that we have anything to do with that."

— J.F. Keaton

## Ryan Lochte pregnant

Swimmer Ryan Lochte stunned the sports world and science community today by announcing on Twitter that he was pregnant.

"My baby bulge is already showing," he added in an additional tweet. "That may also be from all of the pickles and ice cream that I heard that you're supposed to eat when you're pregnant. Getting pregnant is fun!"

Lochte also added that his girlfriend is being supportive, although a bit confused.

When asked how he got pregnant, Lochte answered, "Dude, I have no idea. A few weeks ago, my friends and I went out and got really drunk. Tipped over cows, tore up gas stations. When I woke up the next morning, I had this big pain in my stomach that wouldn't go away. After a while, and watching a few episodes of Maury Povich, I was like, 'Dude, I must be pregnant!'"

When asked who the father might be, Lochte replied, "Man, I have no idea. For all

I know, it might be me. Give me six or ten tequilas, and I'll do anything."

"Mr. Lochte is certainly a wonder of medical science," said Dr. Kathy D'Eredita of the Seneca Falls Medical Research Institute. "Yes, a man becoming pregnant is supposed to be impossible. But I've heard it said that ignorance could lead to extraordinary things. And if that's the case, then Mr. Lochte just might be able to accomplish anything."

When asked what the child's name will be, Lochte replied, "Dude, I have no idea. I can't even decide on my hair color!" Lochte also mentioned that a friend told him that he might not be pregnant at all. "He was like, 'Dude, you may just have too much gas from downing all of those burritos and tequila shots. If that's the case, I'm gonna grab a butane lighter, and we're gonna light up the town! Olympic flame, here I come again!'"

— J.F. Keaton

## Yoder the Amish Jedi

Still reeling from the loss of Princess Leia, Star Wars executive producer J.J. Abrams held a press conference to announce the film series' future plans. "Obviously, Carrie Fisher's death has been difficult for us. It has taken some time to figure out where the final installment of the Star Wars saga would work without her. Now, we feel that we have that character that will help Star Wars blast off again."

Star Wars: The Force Awakens will introduce the character of Yoder, the long-lost Amish Jedi. A onetime friend of Obi-

Wan Kenobi, Yoder has spent many years hiding from the Emperor in the swampland of rural Ohio. Portrayed by legendary Amish actor Abraham Schmucker, Yoder drives a horse and carriage that goes beyond light speed, nicknamed the Millennium Barnraiser. He is a master of the Light Saber, except on Sunday, when he rests. He also reportedly makes really great bread and chicken soup.

"He wears all black, but he is a Force for good," Abrams told reporters. "Luke Skywalker and R2D2 find Yoder after days of

searching for him through the badlands of Beaver Creek, Ohio, and Yoder then reveals the way to defeat the Death Star over lunch at Lehman's. It's a very powerful scene. And R2D2 looks so adorable while wearing a giant black bonnet."

Speaking in broken English similar to Yoda ("We didn't plan that. All Amish really do talk that way, apparently," added Abrams), Yoder will give Skywalker wisdom that could change the future of the galaxy. In accordance with his religion, Yoder will only be photographed from behind so that "The

Dark Side will not steal my soul, yes," said Schmucker in a statement.

"We know that this is something different from previous movies," added Abrams, "but we feel that we have something that will be unlike anything else that has been seen in movies before. Hopefully, the Amish community will also embrace this character and help us spread the word through social media and various television appearances. That worked well for Jar Jar Binks' fanbase."

— J.F. Keaton

## Trump promises to meet with, grope all Women's Marchers

Giving in to the huge response that gathered to protest his inauguration, President Trump promised to meet with and grope each member of the recent Women's Marches.

"Over three million people is a lot of people," he remarked at today's news conference. "That's almost as many people as were at my inauguration. So today, I pledge to personally meet with and fondle every woman that was involved with the March. Especially

the ones that are better looking than a four."

Trump also announced that he would do this by going on a cross-country tour. "I'll be meeting with marchers wherever I can find them: Supermarkets, front lawns, public restrooms. I mean, it was a big deal before to get felt up by me, Donald Trump. But now, I'm like president and all that. That's really bigly.

"And it doesn't matter how old the Marchers are. Young, really young, kinda old. Even babies! Is that too weird? Oh, well. No one

seemed to be bothered by how I felt up my own daughter at the RNC Convention. Bring them on! My hands are ready."

"Each woman should feel honored to be groped by the president," said spokesperson Kellyanne Conway, her pale skin continuing to fall off her thin bones with each passing second.

"The press will say, of course, that this is somehow demeaning to women. I can tell you from personal experience that President

Trump has gone out of his way to demean and desensitize me since day one, and after a while, it doesn't seem so bad."

"I'm calling this my Hands Across America tour," concluded Trump. "My opportunity to reach across party lines and fast food check-out lines and reach the American public on a personal basis. And maybe get to second base. I look forward to that challenge, and God bless me. Oh ... and America, too."

— J.F. Keaton



## New Moon Masquerade

You will rise you will fall  
 You will survive through it all  
 Make no apologies...  
 For what you need to be free  
 Lose your mask  
 Before they create another  
 Society is to blame  
 Hold fast to one another  
 Before it all fades away  
 Break, fucking breakdown  
 Burn it all to the ground  
 Rise up from the ash  
 Silencing all their laughs  
 Cast your stones  
 Into the abyss  
 The weight it's  
 Just holding  
 You down

The truth  
 Is there if you're  
 Ready to see it  
 Relinquishing control

There you go again  
 Strangling the light  
 Can't you see me  
 Lost in these dreams  
 There is a beautiful madness  
 Inside your eyes  
 One I would like to touch  
 And climb inside  
 I am not frightened  
 Of your demons  
 Or the coy way  
 You avoid the light  
 That surrounds you.

— Amber Comber (November 2016)

## LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

# What the hell, 2016?

If you are reading this, you lived through 2016. congratulations. If you made it through this past year, especially if you're a musician, you are totally allowed to feel like Katniss at the end of *The Hunger Games*. 2016 was the year that went on forever, and took nearly everyone along with it. Even Tolstoy called and said, "Damn, this year went on forever, and was depressing as heck."

Unfortunately for those of us left behind, well, we are now living through *Left Behind*. People wanted change, they said. They wanted to rebel against the system. What they got was a bunch of rich white guys whose sole purpose is to destroy everything that's come before them. And now, they're in charge of everything that's come before them. All led by someone whose ideas, personality, and physical shape seem to constantly change in 140 characters or less. You wanted change? We got schizophrenia instead.

Rural America wanted a better economy, they said. So they voted for rich oil magnates who will be able to jack the gas prices up to four dollars again and raise the national debt to numbers that would make even Einstein's head spin.

You wanted a more stable government? You got Donald Trump. It turns out that much of America votes like they use social media: irrationally, with misplaced anger, followed by half-hearted apologies and grumbling about why people got so mad at them.

Come to think of it, maybe 45 percent of Americans didn't vote for change. They voted for the distorted face in the mirror. And now we're got to face that mirror, as well.

And North Carolina? If America is your messed-up older brother, then North Carolina is your whiny younger brother. So determined to be more emo, punk rock and straight edge than the rest of the world, that their love of self-mutilation on the national stage would make the Genitorturors shake their heads and laugh.

Look! We're standing up for a fallacy that only men use men's bathrooms, and women use women's bathrooms. How Victorian of us. All of which will have no bearing on upcoming court cases.

So, we all pretty much suffered for nothing. And the nation shakes their heads, laughs, and goes elsewhere.

Yes, we finally got rid of the Gooberna-

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tor, who did more damage to Charlotte than General Tecumseh Sherman ever dreamed of, but the swamp has not been drained. The monsters now lie in wait in the General Assembly, much like that episode of the *X-Files*. You know which one I'm talking about.

So what we can do to save ourselves? Apart from seceding to South Carolina? Looking out from my offices atop the highest office building in Qatar, I'm really glad that I'm watching all of this from over here.

The next year, and next few years, are going to suck. But, if people are willing to fight for things to not suck so much, we might have a chance. It won't happen immediately, and it won't happen soon enough. But, if we're willing to reach for those little victories, then they may become something bigger.

Life provides a lot of changes. If you had said that I'd be here in 2017, presiding over the magazine that I thought was left for dead twenty years ago, I would've thought that I was high. Well, I am high. And high in the air. That's how I've been coping with the world since November. But we are here, you're here, Tangents is here, and we might as well make the best of it.

Here's hoping that 2017 doesn't suck as much as last year. And that's the truth. Now go away. I need to go write some drunken post-truths on Facebook.

— Dickie Typoe



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## OPINION

## The Pussyhat evolution/revolution

Donald Trump had no idea the amount of fury and outrage he would spark when he made his now infamous comment:

"I'm automatically attracted to beautiful [women]—I just start kissing them. It's like a magnet. Just kiss. I don't even wait. And when you're a star they let you do it. You can do anything ... Grab them by the pussy. You can do anything."

Little has he realized that it wasn't just women who were offended, but men and intersex persons as well. It hasn't mattered if they are gay, straight, bi, or what race or ethnicity they are, or even what religion. He feels he can do anything and people, in particular women, will let him do it because of his celebrity. He didn't stop there though. He has kept going on with insensitive and hateful rhetoric to the point where people across America have decided this is not the president for them, even though he won the election. They have made a stand saying "No, you cannot do this!" That "NO" also includes those in government who are not working for the good of all of America's people.

The seeds for the Women's March on Washington were planted by their words and actions. Thousands of people said they would be there. Women were standing up for their rights, but the march was meant to be about so much more than that. The organization's "Unity Principles" spelled out that they wanted an all-inclusive, non-violent march to spread the message that not only did all women's rights matter, but so did ending violence (domestic, rape, police brutality, racial profiling, etc.), securing reproductive choices and rights, LGBTQIA rights, worker's rights, civil rights, disability rights, immigrant rights, and environmental rights. It is all important. But, would their collective voices be heard? Would the nation and the world see that all these people were no longer going to stand back and do as they were told by America's new leader, who does and says whatever he pleases, no matter what harm it causes?

The sea of pink that marched on January 21, not only in Washington, D.C., but in cities big and small across America, and numerous cities internationally, became a recognizable force for change. The DC marchers were estimated to be at least 470,000, with an estimated number of more than a million worldwide, making it a tidal wave of pink thanks to the efforts of co-founders Krista Suh and Jayna Zweiman of the PussyhatProject.com, and a few of their friends. Joining forces with the Women's March on Washington, the Pussyhat Project made an enormous visual impact and was a success. When the PHP started their endeavor they had two goals in mind:

1. Provide people of the Women's March on Washington, D.C. a means to make a unique collective visual statement which will help activists be better heard.

2. Provide people who cannot physically be on the National Mall a way to represent themselves and support women's rights.

Suh, Zweiman, and their friends made it their mission, creating an organization that has gained and garnered the attention of the world. Women and men made Pussyhats for friends, family members and complete strangers. It made a huge statement and all of the media took notice. Politicians around the world took notice. It was too big to ignore and made the issues at hand too prominent to be blind to. The power of the Pussyhat has helped reaffirm the power of the pussy. And, it seems it won't go away. Two more marches have been planned and the Pussyhat makers are still buying out all shades of pink yarn across the US, and countries near and far, making them as fast as they can. And the requests aren't all for pink hats, the meaning of the Pussyhat has grown as well.

The Pussyhat in general screams "You

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**Women and men made Pussyhats for friends, family members and complete strangers.**

can't ignore us. You will not grab us by our collective Pussy, and if you do WE will fight back!" Those who wear the hats have chosen to come together and fight back as a group. Why though?

Before answering "Why continue with the style of the Pussyhat," here is an extremely brief history of the pussy. In the beginning (and I am not talking about the bible), the patriarchy ruled because the pussy gave them power. Women were believed to have the sole ability to give life, thus immense power. Later, a woman's pussy was believed to be the weakest part of her. It was assumed that the pussy was the cause for many ailments, such as hysteria, making women weak and unreliable. In time, the word pussy became derogatory, meaning weak and cowardly. No more. The power of the pussy is being reclaimed. The wall of pink that marched on DC, across the country, and throughout the world is evolving before our eyes, and has become the rallying image for a revolution.

When asked why they are requesting different colored Pussyhats to represent their communities, the people from the LGBTQIA and science communities generally say that while the pink Pussyhats were a great start,

some felt that they were not represented and want to change that, followed by, "Trump is trying to make a grab at my way of life, my beliefs, my race, my sexuality, my choices, my rights, and either destroy or silence them. I won't let him do it. He can't grab me or those I know by the collective pussy and have his way! We will no longer take the oppression, the lies, the hateful rhetoric that Trump and the GOP are trying to force-feed down our collective throats."

One proud Pussyhat wearer even referred to a letter to the editor published in The Statesman, which openly states (paraphrased here) that they (the students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members of Stony Brook University) will stand up and fight for the injustices being done against not just one community but all. They see it as their duty/responsibility to stand, condemn, and fight the new administration, which encourages hate and fear on so many levels, and that the only way to overcome it is to stand and be a recognizable force together.

Pink made the Pussyhats easy to see, but now more are following their lead but changing the colors to represent their communities. Those who saw the bigger picture, driving the newfound power of the pussy, are embracing the Pussyhat for its deeper meaning: "You cannot force us to do what you want. You cannot force us to live by your skewed values or those of others." Those are the people who are already ordering their specialized Pussyhats. For the LGBTQ March on Washington on June 11, and all the smaller Pride marches and celebrations, you may be seeing the capital and the nation painted with rainbow Pussyhats. The scientific community may make a show of force with Pussyhats of green (representing the forests and grassland) and/or blue (for our sky and oceans). Now, think of all the races and ethnicities our great melting pot has in it, all those colors that need to be represented, and visualize all those powerful pussies coming together. I can only imagine it will be a beautiful sight, and all because of a pink Pussyhat. Welcome to the Pussyhat Revolution.

— Micki Knop



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