

# Aquabear Reader

**Athens ONLY Music and Art Magazine**

**Number 2 • Winter 2009**



**Venue Spotlight: The Union • What Happened To: AMAC?  
Aquabear County Fair 2009 • The Action Committee  
Athens County Festival Guide • Dinner of Swords  
CD Reviews • Comics • Short Stories**

# Welcome to the second issue of the Aquabear Reader!

This one has been a little while in the making but we feel it was worth the wait. There's lots of good stuff inside, everything from venue spotlights to short stories to cd reviews. Aquabear has quite a lot planned for 2009. We are getting ready for our 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Aquabear County Fair on March 6-7, we'll continue holding our monthly concerts at ARTS/West and we'll be releasing a compilation in late 2009. Most importantly, I want to remind you all to do your part in supporting local music and art. Go to shows, buy local music, and help to promote and support the amazing things going on in our community.

Aquabear needs your help too! Send us your stories, photos, reviews, comics and anything else you can think of for the the next issue of the Aquabear Reader.

-Brian Koscho

**Cover Art by Leo DeLuca  
Design by Todd Jacops  
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**Jen Kessler, Kris Poland, Scott Spice, Bram Riddlebarger, Aaron van Dorn, Andrew Lampela, Jill Mapes, Isaac Smith, Tim Race, Bob Kidd, Emily Bobb, Max Wheeler, Jonas Hart, Jeff Bowers**

## **Contribute to the Aquabear Reader:**

**Please send us your writing, photos, ideas, stories, reviews, and anything else you can think of that involves Ohio music and art. We may even publish it.**

**This magazine remains a FREE publication because of funds gathered from advertising and fundraising. Please consider donating to the Aquabear Legion to help keep the Aquabear Reader going. We could not make this magazine without you.**

**If your local business or organization is interested in sponsoring an advertisement in our publication, send us an e-mail at [contact@aquabearlegion.com](mailto:contact@aquabearlegion.com)**

## **About the Aquabear Legion**

Based in Appalachian Ohio, The Aquabear Legion provides a community network for creative people. We are dedicated to supporting and enhancing independent music and art in our extended region. We focus on collaborative relationships to create opportunities for independent musicians and artists.

## **Contact Us**

**[www.aquabearlegion.com](http://www.aquabearlegion.com) / [www.myspace.com/aquabearlegion.com](http://www.myspace.com/aquabearlegion.com) / [contact@aquabearlegion.com](mailto:contact@aquabearlegion.com)  
132 West State Street • Athens, Ohio • 45701**

## **Thank You**

**ARTS/West, Dan and Emily Prince, Amy Lipka and Max Jacops, Sherri Oliver, Andrew Lampela, Kris Poland, Family and Friends, and everyone who loves the Aquabear**

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# From the Bear's Mouth

## Aquabear County Fair 2009



**Machine Go Boom, 2008 Aquabear County Fair at ARTS/ West. Photo by Robert Kidd.**

The Aquabear continues our big yearly rock and roll gathering with the **3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Aquabear County Fair the weekend of March 5-7 in Athens, Ohio.** This year's festival features two nights jam-packed with Ohio music, as well as our **first ever, L'Aqua Porter Film Festival** (that's French for Aquabear). We will kick off the weekend on Thursday, March 5th with a house show at The (Bruce) Manor in collaboration with our friends at The Action Committee. Bands will be confirmed starting in January so make sure to check [www.aquabealegion.com](http://www.aquabealegion.com) and add the County Fair on Myspace at [www.myspace.com/aquabearcountyfair](http://www.myspace.com/aquabearcountyfair) to stay updated. You can find out more about submitting your films and art below.

### Submit your film to L'Aqua Porter Film Festival!

The Aquabear Legion is holding our first ever Ohio film festival and we are looking for entries! There is no admission fee to submit your film, but the Best of Show will get an Aquabear local music prize package. Our good friend, filmmaker, musician, and OU School of Film alum Brian Wiebe will be curating the festival. Send submissions to:

**Brian Wiebe / L'Aqua Porter Film Festival**  
**664 Jacoby Rd.**

**Yellow Springs, OH 45387**

**SUBMISSIONS ARE DUE BY FEBRUARY 14, 2009!!!**

\* Please include information about your film and yourself and complete contact information.

### Submit your art for the County Fair Art Show!

Aquabear is also looking for art of all kinds for our County Fair art show which will be up at ARTS/West for the County Fair and stay up for a short time afterward. If you're an Ohio artist looking to exhibit your work, e-mail [contact@aquabearlegion.com](mailto:contact@aquabearlegion.com).

## Athens Spring Music Festivals!

Spring is just around the corner here in Southeastern Ohio and that means there are quite a few fantastic music festivals coming up after Aquabear's own County Fair. All three festivals are a sure bet for a good time!

### Blackoutfest XIV

**The Union**

**April 16-18, 2009**

Blackoutfest is entering its 14th (!!) year and continues to be one of the best weekends of the year for live rock and roll in Ohio. Scott Winland pulls out all the stops annually. Past performers have included great acts like **Thee Shams, This Moment in Black History, The High Strung,** and **Gris Gris.** Local legends like **Geraldine, Appalachian Death Ride, We March, The Makebelieves** and countless others have put in time as well. The 2009 line-up will most certainly make for another must see weekend.

**More Info:** [www.myspace.com/blackoutfest](http://www.myspace.com/blackoutfest)

### For Real Fest

**The Union**

**April 25, 2009**

For Real Fest started in 2004 by Ray Houska as a way to showcase and support the hardcore punk and DIY community, bringing together bands from all across the country as well as Ohio for a whole day of loud and fast music. This year's festival will include acts such as **We March, Magrudergrind, Black September** and more. For Real Fest always features a great vegan potluck lunch during the day to feed the bands, so bring a dish to share and eat some good food before the show. This year they will have an all-ages kickoff on April 24 at Brown Town (35 Brown Avenue) with a potluck and bands.

**More Info:** [www.myspace.com/forrealfest](http://www.myspace.com/forrealfest)

### 5th Annual Nelsonville Music Festival Robbins Crossing at Hocking College, Nelsonville May 15-17, 2009

Stuart's Opera House continues its weekend long outdoor music festival for the fifth year and for the second straight year at Robbins Crossing. Last year featured **Akron/Family, O'Death, The Avett Brothers,** and some of the best local and regional groups around. **Buffalo Killers, Drakkar Sauna,** and Athens

favorites **Adam Torres** and **The Never Evers** are already confirmed for 2009 with many more to be announced throughout Winter and Spring. Plus, you can camp, drink, eat great local food, and see local art, and watch over 30 acts at the same time. Earlybird weekend passes offer a huge discount off the gate price.

**More Info:** [www.nelsonvillefest.org](http://www.nelsonvillefest.org)



**Akron/Family at the 2008 Nelsonville Music Festival.**

**Photo by Jonas Hart.**

## Some-Things Magazine

Some-Things Magazine is a mixed-media compilation magazine focusing on lost and found art. Some-Things is an outlet for things that haven't yet been seen. Contributors so far include: **Michael Hurley, Bill Plympton, Jay Duplass, Castanets, McSweeney's, Dan Reeder, Mike Kuchar, Dan Kennedy, Jay Rosenblatt, Jeffrey Brown** and many more.

Each issue will be a handmade book with the front and back cover silk-screened. The print section includes visual art, short fiction, non-fiction, poetry, comics, etc. The film portion includes short narratives, experimental film, animation, and documentaries; this section of the magazine will be included as a DVD. The music section includes originals and unreleased music, along with covers. This will be included as an audio CD. Some-Things showcases the work of well-known and new artists. Look for a series of benefit shows on February 27 and 28 at The Union, UnionArts, and The (Bruce) Manor featuring live music, art and more.

**More Info:**

**Contact Jeffrey Bowers at**

**[omethingsmag@gmail.com](mailto:omethingsmag@gmail.com) and  
[somethingssomethings.wordpress.com](http://somethingssomethings.wordpress.com)**

## Aquabear Legion Upcoming Events

**Sunday, January 25**

**Aquabear Legion Pancake Breakfast  
ARTS/West (Athens) @ 2pm**

**Saturday, January 31**

**Music Swap Meet @ Stuart's Opera  
House (Nelsonville) 12-5pm**

**Thursday, February 5**

**Aquabear County Fair Benefit  
Casa Cantina (Athens) @ 10pm**

**Friday, February 20**

**Aquabear Live @ ARTS/West  
w/ The Black Swans and  
The McGovern Brothers  
ARTS/West (Athens) @ 2pm**

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**Third Annual  
Aquabear County Fair  
March 5-7, 2009 Athens, Ohio**

**Thursday, March 5th**

**Kickoff @ The (Bruce) Manor**

**Friday, March 6th**

**Casa Cantina, 10pm**

**Saturday, March 7th**

**1st Annual L'Aqua Porter Film Festival  
ARTS/West, 2pm**

**Saturday, March 7th**

**The Union, 8pm**



# Venue Spotlight: The Union *by Jen Kessler*



**Spooktober plays on Halloween 2008. Photo by Emily Bobb.**

There is a definite lure in the pooling light that gathers on the sidewalk outside The Union on any given night. There is a certain comfort in the lined and kindly face of Jim the doorman, and a decided desire that swells with every musty creak of the steps leading upstairs. There is never anything but sure satisfaction in the barrage of noise that thunders from the stage and greets you head on, welcoming you warmly to another night and another show at the old dive.

Athens beloved, two story rock n' roll bar The Union is far more than just the premiere place in town to catch a live (indie, hardcore, punk, folk) show. Tucked at its center is a hard core of unwavering community, resting alongside a fascinating and storied history.

The Union is the oldest bar in Athens, with deep roots entrenched in the fertile soil of pre-prohibition years. During those dark times wherein the country took a valiant stab at drying up, it is whispered that the Union remained steadfast in her booze bloated ways and quietly took up the speakeasy mantle.

This rich history, however, revolves around only half of The Union that Athens boasts today. Circa the mid twentieth century, the downstairs bar still squatted under a couple of apartments. It wasn't until the latter half of the 1900s that said living spaces gave way to the clashing crash of the now infamous stage.

The stage is one that seems to effortlessly meld with the overarching musical trends

of any given period of time. While The Union has and forever will be known as a rock 'n roll bar, it remains relevant in that every rising subgenre – local, national or otherwise – is aptly showcased.

Athens native Scott Winland has been handling the booking at The Union since '97, and has been frequenting the bar since as far back as his junior high days. Hardcore was very much en vogue at the time, and The Union accommodated the trend with \$1 all-ages hardcore shows every Tuesday and Thursday.

"It'd be like, bands that I read about in Maximum RocknRoll, and living in Athens, Ohio – well, you'd never really seen anything like that," said Winland.

The hardcore shows skidded to a halt in the late eighties, to be replaced by an onslaught of grunge. This shift in trends coincided with the purchase of the bar by its current owner, Lou Lenart. According to Winland, Lenart was also a consistent patron of The Union and one of the fellows who helped to bring in so many of the hardcore shows that Winland had loved. This lent itself to a true and tight knit sense of community.

"At the time that Lou bought the bar...there was more of a family feeling," said Winland. "The fact that there were all these people who loved hanging out here, and then one of the guys who hung out here bought the place. I wasn't really part of that, because I was real young, but that's the impression that I get."

While yearly waves of new college faces softly alter the landscape of The Union like tides, that overwhelming love of good rock n' roll locked in the deepest recesses of the bar never diminishes. Respected and talented musicians continue to flood through The Union, and the people who want to see that continue to do their best to bring such artists in. The second story stage has played host to innumerable big names: The White Stripes; The Kinks; Guided by Voices; Man Man, and The Black Keys, just to name a few. Quite often, said bands have been in the very beginning stages of blossoming, blooming, and booming. The Black Keys, for example, managed a pit stop at The Union during their impossibly fast rise to fame, which occurred in the small window of time between the act of booking the band and their arrival on set date. The ecstatic Black Keys' burgeoning fame sold out the show, cramming the 250 person capacity upstairs with 450 eager fans.

"The neat thing about this place, or any place that has an underground music scene in a smaller town or a college town, is that the people who actually really like music seek out good music and try to bring it to town," said Winland. "It's cool to see who comes through and plays for a door deal, like, \$75, and then three years later they're opening for the Stones or something."

Of course, the touring acts that are drawn to The Union represent only a single facet of the bar's multi-surfaced aesthetic. The bar is an unshakable staple in the local scene; on any given night, one will find at least a few of the bands on their repertoire of local favorites showcasing their talents at The Union. Bands like Sad Bastards, Casual Future, Russenorsk, and We March (again, just to name a few) are stage regulars, and constant Dance or Die events with DJ Barticus and DJ Self Help always make for sweaty successes.

Spring and summer come bearing highly anticipated fests. Blackoutfest, in conjunction with Winland's company Blackout Booking, is an impeccable showcase of the best of The Union (both local and touring bands) – a wildly popular "three day rock n' roll party" with quite humble beginnings. According to Winland, "Blackoutfest started as just a few local bands that were friends celebrating birthdays." Thirteen years later, the fest has wound itself around the very core of the local scene. The Union is also a venue for the yearly For Real Fest,



**The Serfs, downstairs at The Union. Photo by Emily Bobb.**

a festival celebrating punk and DIY, and for the Athens Community Music festival.

People who frequent The Union care vastly for the bar, for the music in its innards, and for each other. Undoubtedly, that is what ultimately keeps patrons of The Union coming back over and over again – that distinct, intangible swell of warmth that is born of being a part of something bigger than oneself. The glow of community and the appreciation of genuine artistry are life forces within the confines of the bar, and they imprint themselves on every individual who crosses the well-worn threshold.

"I feel like [The Union] seems like the place it's supposed to be," Winland said with a smile. "If you go to any town – especially towns where there are only a couple places like this where you'd go to see shows – there's the rock n' roll bar. It's the kind of place who hires people who have something to talk about and who are interested in music and art or whatever. That's the kind of place where you wanna hang out. That's why I've always felt comfortable here – it's like home."

**visit: [www.myspace.com/theunionathensoh](http://www.myspace.com/theunionathensoh)**



# The Action Committee,

## or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Athens House Show Scene

by Scott Spice

This past summer an ambitious group of local youth, both musicians and students, decided to get organized and designate their rented houses as art spaces and/or venues for touring bands on the DIY basement show



**Jesty Beatz, Pencil, and Mayor Paul Wiehl at the Action Committee Chili Cookoff at Brown Town.**  
photo by Max Wheeler

circuit. Dubbed The Action Committee, this group has taken it upon themselves to unite likeminded people in Athens with artists traveling all over the country in need of places to perform and, eventually, sleep. Several houses in town, including Brown Town and Bruce Manor, have already begun wiring into this network, hosting shows for bands from as far away as Florida, Brooklyn and Chicago. I talked to Andru Okun, who lives at Brown Town and plays drums in the spastic noise-punk duo Submarine Spaceship; he's one of several champions of this movement.

"The idea to have bands, touring or not, come play places like Brown Town or Bruce Manor has been around long before either space existed," says Okun. The house show scene is just one of the many parts of the DIY community,

which "encompasses pretty much every form of media," he says. And it's not limited just to music; recently Brown Town held a chili cook-off with Athens mayor Paul Wehl and OU alum rapper Jesty Beatz as guest judges. "My motivation for booking at a place like Brown Town is centered around the desire to create the scene that my friends and I want to exist and that anyone can be a part of," he explains.

These shows are generally free, too, though someone will usually collect money so the bands can buy food and gas. Okun says, "I feel that it's the responsibility of the person(s) booking the show, as well as the house, to ask for and collect donations to help with the expenses of touring." This may be the most important factor in whether or not this scene succeeds. If all goes well, bands can make as much money or more than they would at bars and more traditional venues. This can lead to more success in the future. "If a band comes here and feels that they have been treated well, they will tell people. The wonders of common courtesy and hospitality cannot be understated in a scene that is so dependent on participation and support," says Okun.

It's true that the DIY kids can be more enthusiastic and attentive toward live music, but they are also more likely to be broke. In theory, if fifty people show up and each can toss in a few dollars, it's a pretty good night for both the band and the fans. But it takes a certain kind of diligence to both promote the show thoroughly and collect donations for the bands.

And even then, certain factors are out of the hands of those who booked the show. Max Wheeler, another longtime advocate for the DIY scene, had terrible luck with a show recently: one person showed up. It's this situation that highlights the risks of trying to take on too much at once, or too much by one person. No one wants to let the bands down, but sometimes there's nothing you can do.

If you're feeling like you can handle it, though, one of the ways these shows get booked is by the host checking out the band's touring schedule and offering to fill in a date, "Like in the instances of dd/mm/yyyy and Vivian Girls," says Okun, "I've noticed it never hurts to ask." Bands communicate through MySpace now more than ever, so there are networks constantly being built. Bands help out other bands, too, swapping shows and referring friends to each other. After all, Okun assures me, "we always make sure bands are fed and provided with places to sleep. Hospitality is guaranteed for sure."

**Visit:** [www.myspace.com/theactioncommittee](http://www.myspace.com/theactioncommittee)



# What Happened To.. AMAC?

## Television for the people, by the people

*by Kris Poland*

It wasn't so long ago that I was spending quite a bit of time in my dorm room. There were times when I would go days without departing from those tiny quarters with the fan constantly buzzing and an ever-growing mountain of pizza boxes piled high in the corner. And why not? Although free space was lacking, entertainment certainly was not. I had my bass and amp with which to annoy the neighbors, a brag-worthy collection of Dreamcast and N64 games, my CDs and my roommate's CDs. Plus there was the wonder of the Internet. That fabulous T1 line that single-handedly freed me from the shackles of a dialup connection was alone worth the cost of admission. It was a great time to be a hermit.

Despite all of this, I found myself bored quiet often. And no friend comforted me more in my time of boredom than sweet, sweet television. Its warm, electronic embrace held me late at night and lulled me into beautiful afternoon naps. Don't get me wrong. Most TV programming was utter garbage. But I found the diamond in the rough. I, for the first time in my life, stumbled upon public access television. This simple act opened me up to a whole new world of entertainment.

Growing up without cable left me ignorant of much of my country's and my community's popular culture. I didn't grow up memorizing lines from endlessly repeated movie showings on TNT, TBS, and USA. I wasn't hip to all the cool Nickelodeon shows my friends were into. I missed out on most major sporting seasons. Most importantly though, I was completely unaware of the wonders of public access. I didn't even know such channels existed until my first viewing of Weird Al's Oscar-worthy film *UHF*. Nonetheless, for me a world in which low budget television shows were made by the viewing public for the viewing public was purely fantasy. Years later I moved to Athens for my first year of college. Only then did I find out how real, and how truly amazing, public access could be.

I arrived in Athens in 1997 as an O.U. freshman eager to take in all that Athens had to offer me. While the multitude of bars, independent record stores, and cheap pizza joints were great, I found that a tiny television study

just down the hall from the Center for Student Legal Services would offer me more than I could ever imagine. From 1991 until 2005 Athens/Appalachian Media Access Center (AMAC) was the heart of public access television in Athens. I watched some great TV, produced my own shows and met some truly amazing people through this organization.

Recently, I caught up with one of those people to discuss the good old days for AMAC. His name is Leo McVicker, and he was one of the handful of people charged with keeping Athens public access operational. "I became involved in public access in high school, making shows and hanging out. Six years later I did my AmericCorps VISTA service there for two years. Following that I worked there for one year as the Program Director," he said. McVicker was an integral part of the channel's operation when my involvement with AMAC piqued.

After years of watching great call-in shows, live band performances, independent movies, sketch comedies, sports competitions, art openings, music videos and more I decided it was time to contribute something of my own. McVicker claims AMAC's goal was, "to provide local access to community media, as well as various other technology services." This was exactly what I needed. I had no clue how to run a studio camera or edit my videos, but AMAC's training programs took care of that. With the help of their staff I produced the musical sketch show "System of Entropy", a mini-documentary on local DJs called "Kids Can Spin" and "The Kid Panda Hands Anti-gravity Skin DVD Release Happening" which terrified all who tuned in to see it.

According to McVicker, I was not alone. "I would describe the level of participation as loyal. As our facilities and budget were limited, there was a cap on how much was provided. But on good days all five of our edit bays would be taken, and all of our cameras were in use. We had participation from the elementary school age through the retired. We aired about ten to 15 new shows a week," he said. That's quite prolific for such a small channel in such a small town.

Some of these shows became local phenomena. Kevin Holy's "Athens Music Video" featured local, national and world artists' videos that could not easily be seen anywhere else. Playing sets on "Live at Access Studios" gave local bands a chance to reach a much wider audience than they could in bars. "Failing at Life" offered viewers a window into a twisted comedic world that they may have otherwise only experienced in their most disturbing dreams. Add to this dozens of others shows spanning a wide array of topics and genres, and it is easy to see how AMAC presented its viewers something far

## Sample AMAC Schedule (December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2000)

**3:00 pm** Clawhammer Banjo-(the Traditional Music Preservation Project)  
**4:00 pm** "As Time Goes By..." Veteran's Day 2000  
**4:30 pm** "As Time Goes By..." Tanya Thompson: 'Then and Now' Art Show  
**5:00 pm** A Walk In the Woods  
**6:00 pm** Southern Championship Wrestling  
**7:00 pm** 'Friends and Neighbors:' Julia Nehls  
**7:30 pm** 'Sassafras:' Fed Hock  
**8:00 pm** The Puppet Show: 'Adventures of Vampire Chicken McNugget'  
**8:30 pm** The Imperial Orgy-12  
**9:00 pm** Adullam  
**10:00 pm** Last Bobcat Standing  
**11:00 pm** Radio Jimbo  
**12:30 am** T.B.U.

beyond the humdrum governmental affairs prominently featured on so many other public access channels in other sleepy towns across America."My favorite thing about working at AMAC would have to be seeing people get to make their own TV show, to have their voice heard," recalled McVicker. The local community put a lot of hard work and creativity into AMAC, and it was rewarded with quality local programming in return.

Yet, running Athens' public access station was not all sunshine and lollipops. Money was always a concern, and dealing with local politics could be disheartening. AMAC's annual operating budget was roughly \$50,000 per year. McVicker stated, "That may sound like a good amount of money, but after equipment costs/repairs, payroll, rent, it didn't leave a lot for substantial upgrades. But I think we did okay on the amount. Athens is not a huge city; there just wasn't the money available." Cities with public access stations receive franchising fees from their area's cable provider according to McVicker. It is then up to each city to decide how to best put these funds to use. "In Athens' case it was split between public access and government access," said McVicker.

The City of Athens' control over such monies is eventually what led to AMAC's untimely demise. "Every year anyone is allowed submit a bid to the city to run public access. City council, with advice from other city officials, ultimately makes this decision. They went with a different "sub-contractor" and AMAC lost its contract with the city," said McVicker, "That they accepted a bid from a government employee is a whole different can of worms."

To be continued...

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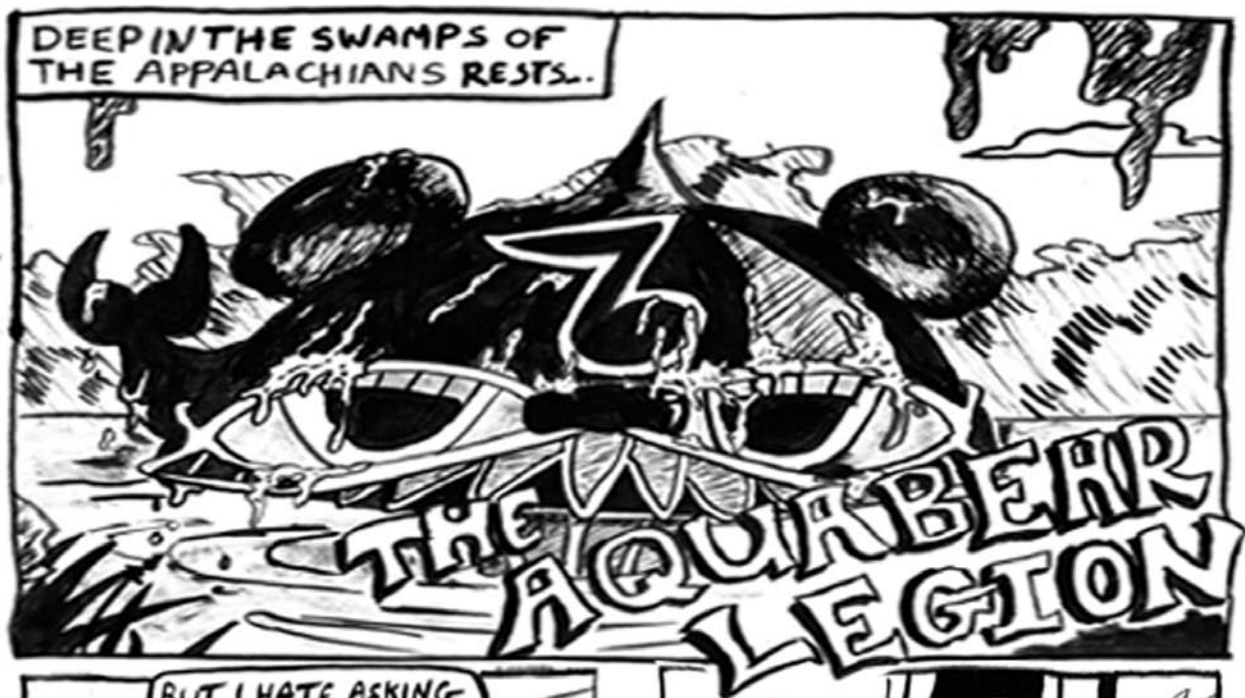
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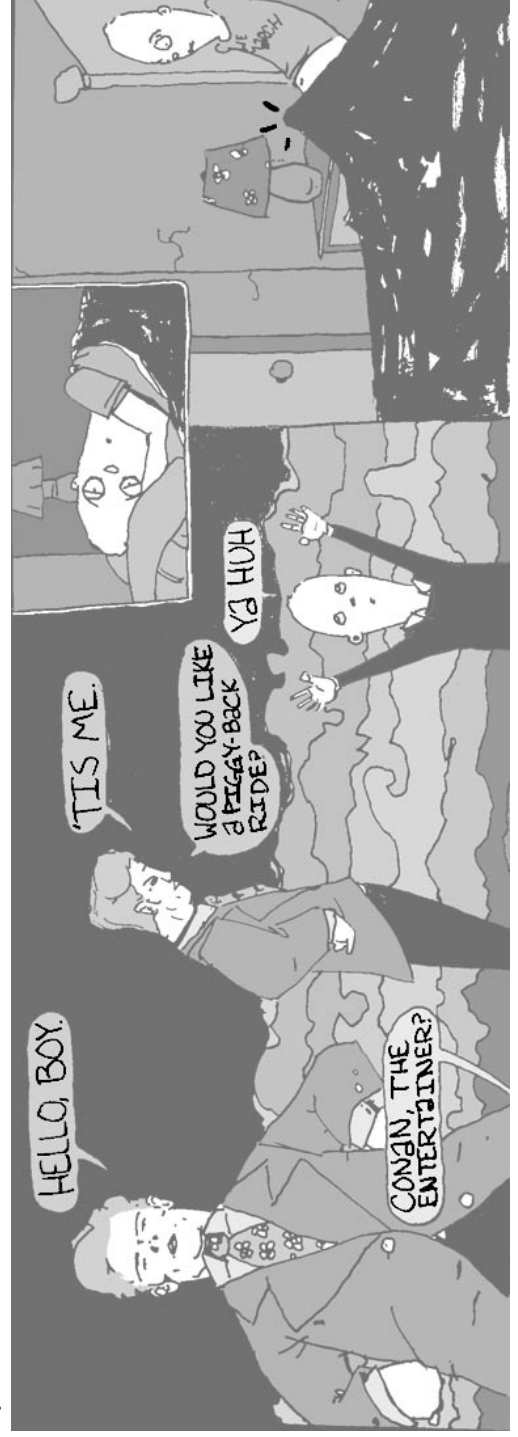




# The Barflies by Chris Monday



Rutter  
by Jed Collins





# The Anatomy of a Band-aid

by Bram Riddlebarger

Green sweatpants. She was wearing green sweatpants and a neon pink headband like a dumpster queen holding an Easter basket on an ominous day. The Easter basket was filled with empty calories that sparkled in bright, shiny packages and inside were morsels of prescient, if fleeting, bliss. At least that's how I feel now. At the time, they tasted pretty good and I thought they would last longer.

This was the first time that I saw Lisa, before the pork rinds. She was jogging past my front window in her green sweatpants, and her long hair was pulled back in a knot. The pink headband was wrapped about her head and did not quite keep her long bangs away from her panting face. Then she tripped and fell, and I ran like a blue-faced hero against the odds in an epic movie about good and bad and loyalty and devotion and things that hurt to help her.

As I ran I prayed, O, brave heart, fortify my undernourished social skills and give me the grace that this poor girl clearly may lack.

Sitting on the dirty road, Lisa hissed in pain. "Sssssffffff," she said through wrinkled lips as she pulled up a green sweatpants' leg to expose a beautiful, if bleeding, knee. Beneath the torn, green-cotton sweatpants' leg was a long scrape. The scrape was like a blood pudding that had never found its casing, but instead had been left too long on the butcher's block and was now separating and oozing liquid from solid like a high school chemistry experiment in platelets and fibrin.

"I have some alcohol and dressing in my place," I said. "I'll get some if you like."

"No salad?"

"I mean some band-aids."

So we went inside, and I band-aided her leg and tenderly said all the words that I thought would make us last forever and ever, and she went and picked up her things and moved in with her torn, green sweatpants, and we both felt good.

"I feel pretty good here," said Lisa.

"I could use some more salad," I said. "And then we could watch a movie or something."

We didn't leave the house for several weeks. Stagnation set in like an infection. Band-aids were used and then, before long, instead of bandaging our wounds, we

instead became the two, separate, white backing pieces that had once been happily attached in sticky band-aid Oneness, little realizing that, with time, we would each be peeled mindlessly away from the Whole and thrown in the trash. Detritus on the relationship highway. A broken trinity of healing helplessness. The need for new quests to fulfill our time. My prospects were dim. Her sweatpants were made for running, and they ran.

I was alone again, and things were loud.

## Huggable Buggable

by Aaron van Dorn

Brian looked around his empty apartment and took another drink. He was not quite drunk, but getting there. Weekends with his kids left him a strange mix of exhausted and elated to be alone again. Nature had not made him a natural father (or, to hear his ex tell it, husband), but he did his best: he eventually got tired of his seven year old son, but he had the good grace to feel bad about it. He took another sip of cheap whiskey and set his glass down on the countertop. He managed to place it back on top of the round, wet ring of condensation already on the small end table next to the couch. When the ring began to look like the Olympics, he knew he was drunk. Right now, he was still relaxing.

The apartment was in the shambles that only a seven year old, caught between two parents who tried to out-do each other in a favorite parent contest, could leave it. Few boundaries and too much aimless guilt meant that Brian's small, neat (if somewhat too austere) apartment looked like a Finnish toy store: too much blonde wood and too many plastic colors. There were tubs that slid underneath the furniture and into the wall panels, but Brian's son never seemed to find them. Brian felt he should clean up, but upon brief reflection decided there was too much whiskey to drink.

Time for another drink, Brian reflected as he stood. He told the display to switch to music. He had it set to automatically pick something for him. He wasn't particular, so he was generally pleased by its choices, when he bothered to notice. It sensed his heartbeat and pheromones or some shit. He had the brochure somewhere. The fridge dropped two perfectly clear ice cubes into his rocks glass, and his slightly-less-stable-than-last-time hand dropped in three (four, what the hell) fingers of whiskey out of a plastic bottle. He took a sip and felt a small shudder run down his spine as the whiskey ran down his throat. He liked that shudder.

He turned back towards the couch. The wall display had a shifting pattern of pastel colors, amorphous and soothing in a subtle way. The music was some sort of brainless pop music from a non-Western tonal system, probably generated by a computer. He didn't notice. He did, however, that the fucking Huggable Buggable sat in a corner, forlorn and forgotten, looking like the incredibly expensive, wholly unloved toy it was.

Brian almost threw his drink at it. The Huggable Buggables were the most famous media sensation of the last six months: serials, music, toys, interactive environments, they had it all. And, most crucial of all, were the Huggable Buggable toys – almost impossible to get, godawful expensive even at the best of times, practically guaranteed to shoot a parent to the front of the standings. And yet here it sat, slumped in the corner, ignored and forgotten for much simpler, and much less expensive, toys.

This particular Huggable Buggable (there were a finite number of them, although Brian was unclear on exactly how many) resembled something like the result of a torrid love affair between a cat and a grasshopper, all elongated limbs and body segments with an arch, demanding expression in its shining eyes. It had a name, but Brian couldn't remember that either. The pod it had come in, an egg like piece of plastic with constant, shifting, colorful hieroglyphics moving overtop of the latest episode of Huggable Buggable! had flashed its name periodically. The whiskey wasn't helping with Brian's memory, so he said to it, "What the fuck is your name?"

"Chitterchan," it chirped back, its voice a complex amalgam of brusque, insect like clicks and feminine, almost slinking purr. Brian found it an off putting voice, and upon reflection, he guessed that his son hadn't thought much better of it. As it spoke, it pulled itself up from the slumped, forgotten position it had held and into a more proper stance for discourse. It folded its complex series of legs underneath itself with no small amount of grace. It's soft, plush body, held together by an almost infinite number of microscopic tubes capable of expanding, contracting, twisting and could make almost any sort of motion, and yet could be cuddled, mashed, carried around and slept with. It was an incredibly sophisticated piece of technology to give to a child, Brian realized. He thought back to the talking teddy bear he had owned as a child, a crude thing, not in the least cuddly. It had required a computer to generate its voice, and could only play recordings. The Huggable Buggables were not just capable of responsive, articulate conversation. They could walk, run, play games with and in everyway entertain the children entrusted with them. At least, if the aforementioned child chose play with it.

"How can something," Brian asked it after another sip, "That cost me over a hundred and seventy thousand dollars fail to get my little brat to play with it?"

The Huggable Buggable said nothing, but its unsettling, unblinking gaze did not shift from Brian's face.

"Well?" he asked, irritation rising in his voice. The music picked up pace, moving into something closer to an aggressive, rhythm heavy music. The walls began to flash hotter colors, more quickly.

"I'm sorry," said the Chitterchan, drawing itself up with a shocking facsimile of dignity. "I took your question to be rhetorical." Brian thought for a second it cleared its throat before moving on. "Huggable Buggables represent the most sophisticated childhood entertainment system created. Our avenues of content delivery and the ability to respond dynamically to a child's wishes allow Huggable Buggables to delight a child in a way no mere toy ever could. And, as a dynamic and fully self-contained entertainment system, Huggable Buggables virtually eliminate the chance of children being exposed to outside influences and messages not explicitly pre-approved by the parent." Chitterchan turned its head to one side, with a pensive, apologetic shake. "Sadly, however, a child still has to choose to play with a Huggable Buggable for it to work. Internal research by Huggable Buggable's parent company, Senstor Corporation of Seoul, Kingdom of Korea, indicates that ninety-five percent of children begin maximizing their usage of Huggable Buggables only after first exposure to them."

Brian looked at Chitterchan and opened his mouth to say something back. He closed it without saying anything. He shifted his weight, opened his mouth again to speak, but once again said nothing. He instead decided to take a long pull of his whiskey. He set the glass down on the counter, filled it once again from the jug and held it, looking at the Huggable Buggable sitting like a trial lawyer in the corner of the room. The wall screen went from a pale, irritated red to a more tranquil, if somewhat tired, gray. "Yeah, well," Brian finally said as he started back towards the couch. "If he doesn't start to play with you, your ass is going back to the store."

"Purchase contracts with Senstor Corporation stipulate that Huggable Buggables cannot be returned once activated," Chitterchan informed him. Brian thought about replying, but he decided it was beneath his dignity to argue with a toy. If he wanted to do that, he could have stayed at work.

# CD

## Reviews



### Kaslo

**Ohio EP**  
**Self-released, 2008**

Friday, May 2, 2008, Kaslo celebrated the release of their album *Ohio EP* at The Union. They gave away

homemade copies of the EP for “not a lot of dollars,” says the note on their MySpace. The album was (and still is) also available for download for free from their website, [www.kasloband.com](http://www.kasloband.com). Every single thing about *Ohio EP* is fantastic. The music is well composed, and the tunes well executed. Kaslo is one of those bands that manages to sound polished and professional while still cramming a lot of energy into a studio recording. And that’s certainly an excellent quality.

Out of the six tracks on *Ohio EP*, “Moses” and “Nasty” are my favorites by far. “Moses,” with its gorgeous string opening and meandering melancholy melody is magnificent. And “Nasty” proves just how much energy Kaslo can manage to pack into a single handmade CD. The vocals are great, and I especially love the bit at the end when the whole band joins in and sings together. You can hear someone say at the end of the song, “That was a winner.” I couldn’t agree more.

There are some similarities between Kaslo and Southeast Engine that I found to be quite striking. I wondered if perhaps the bands shared members or brothers or whatnot. It turns out they don’t. Still, Kaslo is able to stand on its own two feet, and isn’t copying Southeast Engine in any way.

I see absolutely no reason not to download *Ohio EP*. Go get yourself a half-hour of excellently produced local music for free. It’s not that often that you come across free music (legally), and it’s even less often when that free music just happens to be as excellent and beautiful as this.

**-Isaac Smith**

[www.myspace.com/kasloband](http://www.myspace.com/kasloband)



### Casual Future

**Glows-in-the-Dark LP**  
**Light Cone, 2008**

When the time comes to lay down a new record, bands

seem to struggle with two possible horrors: stagnancy or loss of personal style. If they pigeonhole themselves into one sound too tightly, they run the risk of becoming boring. However, should they move the opposite way and surrender that particular sound entirely, they crash and burn in a horrible wreck of inconsistent riffs and indistinct fills. The key is that hard-to-hit mark called gentle evolution. Sure enough, Athens’ favorite bar band boys Casual Future have that mark impeccably nailed with their new album, *Glows-in-the-Dark LP*.

The band has held fast to their established and beloved-by-all indie pop aesthetic, while simultaneously pushing the musical envelope with tinges of experimentation and lyrical exploration. New additions like piano and cello are subtle in their composition, expertly woven into the band’s fundamental foundations of catchy guitar, grumbling bass and tight percussion. Such additions perform wonders in making Casual Future’s sound much rounder and fuller, and do so entirely without any sort of obnoxious flagrancy. Tiny touches of the less conventional have also been added, all of which have a heavy hand in spicing (no pun intended) up the album. Tinges of high frequency static and dashes of both vocal and instrumental reverb all work to amp up intensity. A quiet underlay of tinkling sleigh bells on “Nuclear Winter/ That’s Not Snow, It’s Ash” is a personal favorite touch – clever and wildly appropriate.

Scott Spice’s vocal performance on the record is especially noteworthy. His soulful voice seems to swell and swoop through the listener with a painful, pleading sense of urgency, laced with a lyrical hint of darkness that was arguably absent on *Footnotes in the City Lights*. The incredibly standout final track on the album, “Static Signal (Commercial Breaks Like Waves),” is a perfect venue for Spice’s compelling poetry – a bleak background of static and noise, held together with a careful and insistent guitar melody. It is also the perfect end for the album, slipping out quietly from under listeners and sneaking away into nothingness, leaving them desperately awed.

**-Jen Kessler**

[www.myspace.com/casualfuture](http://www.myspace.com/casualfuture)

# One Point Three



## Broken Arms Race Self-Released, 2008

Full disclosure must be given at the outset-I'm a huge fan of these guys. I've shared the stage, and many a beer, with these guys over the years and they only seem to get more punishing every time.

In a world where Dragonforce virtuosity and Lord of the Rings imagery has blossomed to the forefront, One Point Three sound like what Motorhead would have sounded like if they would've gotten a healthy shot of Am Rep, circa the mid '90's, and chased it in a keg of cheap whiskey and hate instead of sleepwalking through the last 15 years.

At a hair over a half hour, Broken Arms Race bludgeons with claustrophobic intensity, rarely letting up throughout. Concise, heavy riffs, screamed vocals and what seems like a constant drum fill from Chad are the order of the day. There's even a few riffs that remind me of Voivod (check the intro to the title track). Stand out tracks like Cloud of Locust, Drunkahol and The Red Scare are sure to cause some next-day neck pain live. And, seriously, who else's CD booklet has a couple of kids whacking a penis pinata made from post-its? You'll have to buy it to see...

**-Andrew Lampela**

[www.myspace.com/1point3](http://www.myspace.com/1point3)

# Weedghost



## Weedghost Self-Released, 2008

Weedghost is the brainchild of Andrew Lampela and Kris Poland. Andrew and Kris have spent time in The Arch Villains,

Dinner of Swords, and other various improv and experimental projects (including many with me personally). Weedghost is more like a full-body audio experience than a band, songs and performances have a way of building slowly as layers continue to be added until they peak in an explosion of sound. Upon listening to their self-titled release (recorded with Mike Makosky at Disjointed Studios), I found myself waiting to see where this album was going to take my ears. It began calmly enough playing from my bedroom stereo providing creepily pleasant background music to some work on the computer. I left the room at a point to get coffee only to return to a wall of sound pulsating from my stereo, and stood in the doorway unable to do anything but wait it out. Andrew himself told me of another review of this record coming from a friend of ours whose cats seemed to react in a similar way. Weedghost is a truly unique take on improv and experimental music, put this album on and experience it yourself.

**-Brian Koscho**

[www.myspace.com/weedghost](http://www.myspace.com/weedghost)

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# Lola Indiana



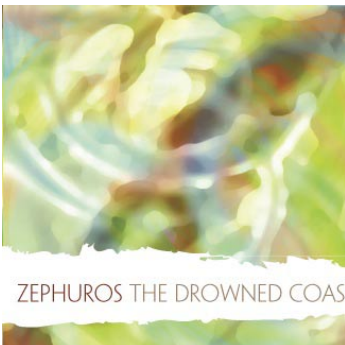
## Cololage Self-Released, 2008

Do you like music? I don't anymore, but I sure do like these Lola Indiana fellas. They hammer through nine songs of moody, anthemic rock on their debut Cololage. Think a

blend of neurotic Midwestern punk (Pere Ubu's angular riffing filtered through Devo's nerdiness) filtered through an omnivorous mid-90's indie rock diet and you get an idea. Recorded at Zombie Proof Studios in Cleveland, the record is all reverbed-out drums and slashing guitars, perfectly accentuating Wiebe's weary leeriness of a post-graduate world. Todd alternates between melting faces (check opener Clement Vallandigham for proof) and spooky atmospherics (I always feel weird about air-arpeggiating, but I do it anyway). Hell, even Brian gets it right, laying down appropriately gnarly bass lines. This stuff isn't for wussies- no sappy ballads here, just propulsive odes to whiskey, Satan and not having a real job. Well, okay, I'll give you the Book. I suppose it's close to a ballad. Quit your nit-picking, bust open that second case of shitty canned beer and scream along with Clement Vallandigham one more time, it'll get that out of your mind. And, oh yeah, get a real job.

-Andrew Lampela

[www.myspace.com/lolaindiana](http://www.myspace.com/lolaindiana)



## Zephuros

### The Drowned Coast Self-Released, 2008

It becomes clear that whether entirely purposeful or otherwise, Zephuros, AKA former OU

student Kevin Meyer, draws most of his inspiration from nature. Ducks, egrets, whales, flies, squirrels, leopards, foxes, grizzly bears, meadowlarks and roebucks (a European deer, to be exact) can be found roaming throughout *The Drowned Coast* as freely as they would in a peaceful meadow.

While it is a gentle voice similar to Ben Gibbard (of Death Cab for Cutie) that sings Zephuros' songs, Meyer's musical style is comparable to those of Sufjan Stevens and Andrew Bird, a multi-instrumentalist with whom Meyer has shared the stage. It is here on *The Drowned Coast* that Meyer's multi-instrumentalist background and Andrew Bird affinity seem to surface. There is a full orchestra of OU students at the helm of Zephuros' musical departure from his first self-release effort, *The Black Gull*. Providing an interlude between each song and accompaniments throughout all 16 tracks, the orchestra's high-flying flutes, meandering clarinets and plucky piano parts provide the musical variation needed to set *The Drowned Coast* apart from other acoustic albums.

While *The Drowned Coast* may leave listeners yearning for a bit more edge, closing tracks like "Mount Rainier" and "Emerald Sea," which tells the story of an immigrant deer attempting to make his way to the U.S., prove themselves as rightfully climactic and hugely dramatic. As "Emerald Sea" progresses, it becomes clear that it is more about a family separated by distance than an antlered mammal.

By the impression left by his music, Meyer comes off as the type of person who, despite eye-rolling annoyance from certain friends, would just feel wrong setting up mouse traps or squashing a bug. Perhaps what feels wrong above all, however, is that *The Drowned Coast*'s seemingly simple acoustic songs about animals can, and at some point probably will, bring listeners to tears. The reason for this is simple: Zephuros' wildlife lyrics reflect more insight into human nature than those of many young singer-songwriters today

-Jill Mapes

\*(Parts of this review have been published previously by SpeakeasyMag.com)

[www.myspace.com/zephuros](http://www.myspace.com/zephuros)

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# Interview with Dinner of Swords

by Mike Makosky

I had a chance to sit down and talk with Dinner of Swords, self described noise, party, fashion, improv, nascar, stripey, complex, simple, organic, artificial, sweet, loud, unique, multifaceted whup-ass, sweet sheets of noise punctuated with occasional grooviness and possessing the ability to clear a room, band. They're pretty easy to hunt down, especially the last Sunday of every month. You're almost guaranteed to see/hear them at the noise show at Arts West. I was able to corner them all except for Kris Poland, who was up north.

## **Are you guys totally improvisational or do you keep a rough concept for the songs?**

Emily Prince: Yup, totally improv.

Andrew Lampela: When we're not covering show tunes.

Emily Prince: Or movie music.

Dan Prince: We are movie music.

## **What/who would you say are your main influences?**

EP: Dan Prince, Bob Marsh, Julie Andrews.

DP: Peter Brotzman.

AL: Popsicles, boredom, and being awesome.

Todd Jacops: Van Halen, either one it's all the same...

EP: You have to put in Bon Jovi for Andrew. It's what made him the man he is today.

## **I have heard that and am very scared for my own life and yours.. How would you describe yourselves?**

AL: We average around 5 foot 1, medium build.

DP: How tall are you Todd?

TJ: About 6 foot 1.

EP: Let's see 6 foot 1, 5 foot 10, 5 foot 4, 5 foot 8.... That's hard... I'm not gonna do that anymore.

DP: 5'9" and a half, pretty average I guess.

EP: Pretty sweet for a bunch of white kids.

DP: How much do we weigh?

TJ: 130 after a big meal.

AL: Umm, close... probably around 185.

EP: Carry the two.. Alright, our average weight is 126.

DP: You sure about that? Let me see.

EP: When you learn music in school, you're supposed to be good at math too.

## **You just have to use base twelve math.**

DP: Let's see, base twelve..

AL: Boobs and butts.

## **So do you have a final number for me?**

DP: 122.

## **When did you guys get started?**

DP: Alright, 347 inches.

EP: Todd joined in 2006 and that's when we became good.

TJ: Didn't you play before that?

EP: About 6 months or so, we played with Missy in that time, we played 3 or 4 times and actually had a practice.

DP: 28' feet tall, 730 pounds, hair color... probably average light brown.

EP: We're all pretty pasty.

AL: I don't know I ate an awful lot of paste in school; I'm probably pretty pasty on the inside as well.

EP: Andrew and Todd are getting matching tattoos.

TJ: The aquabears.

EP: I'm getting a new tattoo the week after next. A sweet, sweet tattoo that Jimmy [Kisor] drew...

## **Well if Jimmy drew it, there's bound to be penises in it.**

DP: It's one of those that if you stare at it long enough you close your eyes and see penises on your eyelids.

## **Any shows booked?**

TJ: The next noise show, whatever the last Sunday in October is, the week before the Halloween party.

EP: And we had that show last week at The Union.

EP: We are available for parties and weddings.

AL: Bar mitzvahs...

DP: Corporate parties...

## **Songs or internet references available?**

Most: Myspace.

AL: I don't know how many times we have played, but that's how many songs we have.

TJ: Dinnerofswords on myspace.

DP: there's that one and there's the Noise Show myspace.

EP: We used to have a cello player, Deb.

## **Final statements!**

AL: Bah!

Brian Koscho: They're comfy, though.

AL: You gotta keep them aimed up, or the beer will fall out.

AL: Popsicles!!!!

## **Visit:**

[www.myspace.com/dinnerofswords](http://www.myspace.com/dinnerofswords)

[www.myspace.com/artswestnoiseshow](http://www.myspace.com/artswestnoiseshow)

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