

pop cult

Essential Reading Material for the Bathroom
Issue 11 Winter 2010/11

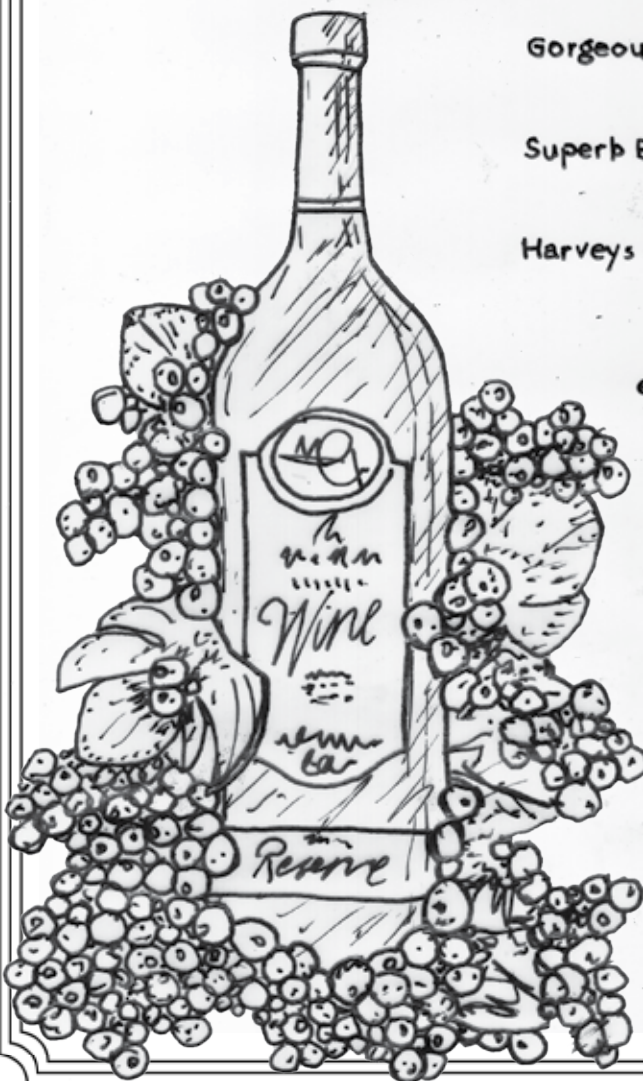


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Editorial

BONJOUR and WELCOME again to Pop Cult, Essential Reading Material for the Bathroom.

This issue comes to you as we prepare to celebrate Pop Cult's fifth birthday. It was late 2005 when we came together as a group, and the following February when first issue was published. Back then I doubted we would do a second, but here we are five years later ...and what an issue we have for you.

From the excellent front cover to the very last page, our fine group of writers, artists and mind-catchers have once again conjured up another bumper package of delights to tickle your thoughts.

In this issue, we are also proud to bring you an exclusive short story provided to us by the rising British talent that is Gavin James Bower. Gavin's superb debut novel *Dazed & Aroused* caused a stir when it was published earlier

this year, so go buy it now, find out what the fuss is about and book yourself a seat on the GJB Express.

In addition to bringing you one of the country's most exciting new literary talents, we also bring you insight from one of the country's best-kept musical secrets. Anja McCloskey of Haunted Stereo reveals what life in a band circa 2010 is like, and there is also the chance to win Haunted Stereo CDs.

Once you've finished reading this issue, please email it to all your friends, or tell them to visit www.popcultmag.co.uk to download it and back issues.

With best wishes,

Keegan Wilson

Editor

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Sparkle

Emerson Marks takes a low rent look at things

by Emerson Marks

Illustration by Luke Sanderson

The Flaming Lips arrived on stage through a hidden door that opened between the legs of a naked women, whose body pulsed between every colour of the rainbow on the half moon video screen that framed the stage of the Portsmouth Guildhall. Later, streams of confetti were blasted high into the air from two double barrelled cannisters that flanked either side of the stage, as the band's front man, Wayne Coyne, scurried over the heads of the packed crowd in a ball made of flexible transparent plastic, calling for man to show more humanity to his fellow man; but all the time, all I could think about was doing more drugs.

The drug I had in mind is called Sparkle. It sounded like a magazine for seven year-old girls, not something you snort up your nose. Neither had much business being in the men's toilets at Portsmouth Guildhall. I was there with a friend. Try this, he said, as we stood at the bar. I asked him what the cellophane bag of white powder he'd slipped into my fist was. The good news is that you don't have to worry about breaking the law any more to kill yourself on drugs.

This is the reason that some, like shadow Home Secretary, Chris Grayling, want legal drugs banned.

When politicians warn the public about drugs it usually has no effect at all, but in this case it seems that there are still people who just can't get enough of legal drugs. The effects of Sparkle have been compared to MDMA, in that the user experiences a wave of euphoria. There is no shortage of people on the Internet prepared to share their experiences of the drug.

Some kept their identity a secret. "Oh my God," wrote Anonymous online, "racked two fat ones an hour ago and now I can't focus." Things quickly took a turn for the worse for Anonymous. "I'm pulling faces, I can't control my hands and I'm really horny." It sounded serious. As I logged off I knew one thing: I didn't need to spend £40 to go online and feel horny, I had a far more competitive broadband rate.

You can buy Sparkle from the Bargate Centre in Southampton. During a recent visit it was clear the shopping centre was suffering from a lack of customers. Outside one shop were two racks of fleece jackets with pictures of dogs woven across their fronts. They used to cost £19.99. The price on the tag had been run through with black felt tip pen. The dogs' faces were solemn. Nobody was buying



**DO
YOU
REALIZE?**

them for £9.99 either. It's enough to turn you to drugs. Luckily Lucid is next door. Their windows are covered in flyers for various events that people will be no doubt doing drugs at. Inside, they sell the usual kind of drug paraphernalia, but not all recreational drug users are impressed. A friend whose tongue was loosened by afternoon Guinness put me straight on the subject. "They use that stuff to fertilise tulips," he continued. "Did you know that?" I didn't. He'd said he'd rather get drugs elsewhere. He meant illegally.

My experience with Sparkle was even more frightening than my investigations showed. Paranoia, nausea and quite a bit of self-loathing got hold of me. All the while the stuff was still hidden in the pocket of my sheepskin jacket. The symptoms were brought on by security, who'd decided take a look at the gents. I'd have had more chance convincing him I was searching for my keys if he'd got home and caught me with my fingers in his wife, than making him understand that the white powder I was carrying was as legal as a packet of Fruit Pastels. I was having difficulty convincing myself. He was too busy emptying his bladder at the urinal to ask me to empty my pockets.

I locked myself in the cubicle. It was safe inside. I took a seat and pulled out the bag of Sparkle. Rock stars snorted drugs through fifty-pound notes off women's naked bodies. I made do with a tightly rolled Asda receipt and a vivid imagination. It slipped down the back of my throat like loose change down the crack of a sofa. It burned. It made my eyes sad. Tears ran down my face as I waited to feel euphoria; I didn't need a dictionary to tell me that that didn't mean a crying sensation experienced when locked in public toilet.

I let myself out and washed my hands in the sink. My tongue was restless. It felt like a pink trout trying to negotiate a flight of stairs. I was armed with Wrigleys. I needed all six sticks to keep it occupied. The support band was still playing. I hadn't bothered to find out their name, but they sounded good. I followed their noise, nodding my head in approval to everyone I passed. They didn't reciprocate. They were too busy leaving. I didn't understand why.

The question echoing my mind was no longer what's the name of the band driving this rhythmic siren through my skull, it was why is everybody leaving? It was with initial disappointment that I found out I could recreate this epic sound just by burning my morning toast, even more so when security pointed me in the direction of a fire exit. The band's equipment had overheated causing the fire alarm to go off. What a fire alarm though!

Having paid my £22.50 ticket money like everybody else, reason pointed me firmly in the direction of the band. I should have been hanging on to every word of Wayne's sermon about how tough it'd been to be a free citizen under the administration of President Bush and all that jazz that rock stars like to go on about. I should've been there among the crowd when he dedicated a heart-felt rendition of 'Do You Realize?' to the girl whose brain had earlier lost control to strobe lighting with an epileptic seizure, but I wasn't. I was down the corridor hidden behind a toilet door feeding a hungry nose and making my eyes water. "Do you realize" sang Wayne, "that happiness makes you cry?" For a moment, at least, I felt justified.

Ten Lies About Devon

by Christien Haywood

Illustration by Paul Solomon

Hi - there's been a lot of untruths and 'spin' told about people who live in Devon, so I thought it was about time the matter was set straight. Sure, Devon people do a lot of things. Hey - who doesn't? But there are lots of things they WOULD NOT do. They just wouldn't, okay?

In fact there are a lot of things Devonians would NEVER do under ANY circumstances, no matter what you might hear, or what the Guardian might say, or what you think you can dimly make out using Google Earth zoomed in as close on Bishops Nympton as it can go.

So, just for the record, here is the definitive list of what people from Devon would NEVER DO, no matter how much you and your friends secretly think they do.

1. People in Devon DO NOT like to rub the cheeks of black people 'for good luck'.

2. People in Devon DO NOT finish the Lord's Prayer by muttering "Apart from you, Oh Mighty Fudge God" under their breath

3. People in Devon DO NOT all have the same ringtone of a cooing woman gently coaxing them to answer the phone. It is a MYTH that this is the only way they can be encouraged to pick up the 'magic piskie wand'.

4. It is NOT TRUE that Devon's BBC1 and ITV1 is just the SAME channel tinted differently to save money.

5. It is a LIE that Devonians only build houses three feet high as they believe stairs to be "Ladders-of-the-Goblins". In fact, one house in Devon is over SEVEN feet high. (Although it IS cursed by a goblin).

6. Devon DID NOT attempt to fool the world with a "Capricorn One" style Mars landing in 1984, which was only unmasked due to a keen-eyed viewer seeing an astronaut on 'Mars' eating a Werther's Original without a helmet on.

7. It is SOMEWHAT EXAGGERATED that, whilst on a fact-finding tour of the region, Henry Kissinger was run out of Devon on suspicion of "being a grockle".

8. It is PARTLY MISLEADING to suggest Devonians cower with fear each evening as the "Silver Sun-Gobbler" appears in the night sky.

9. It is more or less TRUE that Devonians have yet to invent the cheese-clamp, unlike most civilized nations, which would prevent their massive cheddars from rolling downhill and being chased by idiots.

10. It is a REGRETTABLY WELL DOCUMENTED FACT that a powerful cargo cult has sprung up in Dawlish, based around a Parcelforce delivery van.



No Quarter

by Billie Mumphrey

Illustration by Ben Evernett

Quite how Dmitri Harris came to get his last job, or any job, come to think of it, was a matter of some curiosity to me. The first couple of months had passed virtually without incident. There had been some very lively discussions, some pretty nasty jokes and the occasional flash of anger, but nothing to complain about.

It was after one of the regular staff outings that Dmitri really started to blossom. A few of the lecturers often used to head into The King's Bush for a pint on a Friday lunchtime. This was known to drag on into the evening if classes were thin on the ground. We talked about some of the new measures proposed by management - the usual bureaucratic nonsense wielded as a tool to maintain self-serving hierarchies the world over - and Dmitri was really going off on one. "If that bloody woman wants me to fill out these reflective journals, she can come down to my office and we'll do it the old-fashioned way."

"And what do you mean by that? As a woman, and an academic, I find this line of discussion troubling," I said, semi-sarcastically.

"I think he's saying that he would gladly have his way with our fine Vice Chancellor, even though she's past her best and pretty rough round the edges," contributed Marcus, a PhD with

several published journal pieces on the role of feminism in effecting social progress.

"It's not just that I would do her," clarified Dmitri, "it's that I'd have to." His eyes started to glaze over a little and he seemed to focus on the middle distance as he elucidated his bizarre little fantasy. "I would be obliged. And I guarantee that it would be pretty fucking extreme. Merciless."

Shortly after Dmitri's little monologue, which had continued for several minutes into an uncharted realm of erotica, bad taste and Stasi interrogation techniques, we decided to call it a night. Unfortunately, the otherwise pleasant pub was in a bit of a rough area, and I always dreaded the walk back to our campus accommodation. The locals were, for want of a better word, disgusting, and marching past the great unwashed always made me feel very middle class. They seemed to socialise through an unstudied and intricate language of spitting, shouting and being sick, and that night they were being particularly communicative. A group of teenagers were leaning against a phone box, shouting at us as we went past on the other side of the street, and all of a sudden, a projectile was launched from their direction and flew just past my head. It made me jump, and the kids howled with a sadistic and frankly disproportionate laughter.

I looked down and realised that they had thrown a sausage roll at me. There was probably some amusement to be found in it, at some absurdist level, although not at the time. I was happy to let the matter pass - what was I going to do? Dmitri though had seen the whole thing. He picked up the sausage roll, pocketed it and crossed the road.

“Alright, which one of you shit rags threw a sausage roll at that woman?” began Dmitri. The laughter subsided into aggressive remarks. He got right up in the face of what was probably the culprit. Dmitri wasn’t a big guy, but he could certainly be intimidating when he wanted to be, and in a tight t-shirt he looked quite menacing.

“He can do what he wants, fuck you, bitch,” said one of the other three kids.

“Bitch?” said Dmitri, turning to face the self-appointed spokesman, whom he then kicked in the stomach and sent crashing into a bin.

Dmitri had momentum now and it wasn’t worth trying to stop him. He turned back to the culprit, who must have been a good six feet tall and probably 13 stone or so in weight, and slapped him with full force across the cheek, several times in quick succession. “If I’m a bitch, I suppose that means I’ll have to give you all a slapping.”

The other two kids backed off pretty quickly, as Dmitri grabbed his stunned and embarrassed target. With one hand on the kid’s collar and another on the waist of his grubby tracksuit bottoms, he pulled him back and launched him

full force into the glass wall of the phone box, which smashed instantly as the kid crumpled into the booth. Dmitri opened the door and, drawing the sausage roll out of his pocket, forced as much of it as possible into the boy’s mouth, shoving loose crumbs up his nose. “Never waste food,” he growled, before walking away and leaving the kid spluttering on cheap pastry and processed pig entrails.

From then on, it just got worse. For the next two years Dmitri would commit acts of violence and borderline terrorism, which seemed to accord with his own personal code of ethics, if not those of broader society. Sometimes his actions had the air of vigilante, a sort of cowboy morality that appealed to me on a primal level, although I would never openly admit to this. I had to stop myself from applauding when he intervened in a nightclub in order to save one of his first-year female students from the unwanted attentions of some boisterous members of the Union Polo Society. Never before had I seen so much strength in the face of adversity. As academics and historians, we often see such cases from a distance and on a grand scale, reading about them in third-hand reports of battles and revolutions down the ages. To witness it in person is quite an unusual sensation, especially when it involves much more blood and gristle than you were expecting.

And, like any great character in history, Dmitri had his dark side. In fact, it was never so clear as a dark and a light side for him, so much as a unified system of belief to which he strongly adhered. He saw nothing inappropriate



I accept
no
quarter!

in vandalising a shop he didn't like, just because he had found their latest piece of marketing particularly insidious and irritating. He would have no problem berating entire groups of students, and telling them that were headed for certain failure unless they took private tuition with him in his maisonette. Just how much of this was old-fashioned, honest financial extortion, and how much involved "merciless" acts of physical abuse, I couldn't really say. Once, when he'd had a few to drink, I asked him exactly what did go on during his notorious private sessions, and perhaps naively, why he did it. With an almost immediately sober regard, he replied to both questions in four short words: "I accept no quarter."

Of course, the complaints poured in, although for a long time nothing appeared to amount from it. Dmitri seemed to have some sort of immunity, legally, professionally and morally. More and more draconian measures were implemented by the University management, at the behest of the Vice Chancellor, and they were increasingly targeted at our department. Academic restrictions, pay cuts, curfews and surveillance, just about anything to make our lives harder.

The staff all knew it was because of Dmitri, and some of us decided to confront him about it. So, steeling ourselves, Marcus and I went to knock on his office door and found a most unusual appendage just above his name plaque - somebody had nailed a jumbo sausage roll to the door, and pinned two scotch eggs either side.

The door swung open, and there was

Dmitri, sitting in his swivel chair, a cool, detached look on his face. "What the hell's this about?" asked Marcus, pointing to the door.

"It's a message, from the Vice Chancellor. Can't you read it? It says, 'Don't mess with me and mine.' She runs a lot more than this damn university, you know."

"How do you mean?" said Marcus, asking for the both of us.

"She tries to keep it quiet, but she's got all the local authorities wrapped around her crooked little finger. Councils, police, businesses. And I'm the thorn in her side that's been trying to stop her. Within five years, she plans to have this entire conurbation declared an autonomous zone, and within ten there'll be a rogue police state in the heart of England. Other towns will be added in her great anschluss, enlarging the dominion."

Oh, Dmitri. You poor soul, I thought. Too many little crusades; and now in uniting them, you have lost what you fought so hard to protect - your sanity.

"I've been slowing her down, trying to stop her over these past two years. My own friends in high places, they did what they could, but she was never going to forgive me. Not after I made it personal." It gets better, I thought. "You remember that night out we had, about two years ago, where I beat up that scumbag in a phone box?" "One of your finest moments; how could we forget it?" I said.

"Well, it turns out that was the VC's

son. He's not been the same since... depressed, brain damaged, that sort thing. He hanged himself last night, so I've heard, and now she sounds the battle cry." He pointed at the party food stapled to his door, before standing up and clearing his throat. Picking up a large brown sack from behind his desk, he hoisted it over his shoulder and gave his dictum: "I'll give her a buffet she won't believe." Then he set off, presumably on his own strange quest for Justice.

"Do you think any of that's true, even slightly?" I asked Marcus.

"Lord only knows. People like that, when they crack, there's no way we can tell," he replied.

"Maybe he'll have forgotten about it all by tomorrow, eh?"

That night, dozing in my campus quarters, I dreamt of Dmitri. He was a sheriff, a cowboy, and an outlaw, all rolled into one strange combination that could only make sense in a dream. We walked through a Texan plain and talked, and I asked him about his name. "Are you Russian, at all?" I said.

"With a name like Dmitri, you must be at least a little bit Russian."

"No ma'am, I'm as English as they come. English as apple crumble, as they say. Parents just called me Dmitri 'cos they liked the sound of it."

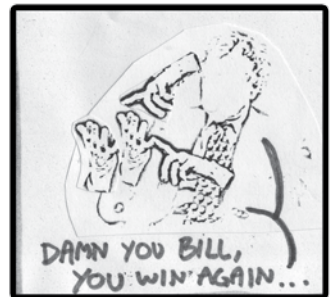
And with that, the bed shook, and the floor beneath it, and the walls and the buildings around them. I sat up quickly, and looked at the time: 3.30am, a funny time for an earthquake, surely? Those things never happen at night; even earthquakes need to sleep. I slipped on my trainers and walked over to the window, peeping through the curtains. There were fires in the distance, coming from some of the other university buildings and accommodation. I could hear alarms being triggered and decided to go outside and see what was happening.

On the concourse outside the staff apartments, I stood and looked up at the sky, which was filling up with smoke and dispersing debris, and then looked down again to see Marcus standing in front of me.

"Careful," he said, "you've got some ash on your face."

I raised a hand to my head, wiped my brow and then looked at the substance on my fingers. "That's not just ash," I said. "Some of it's pastry."

Drawgasms



Being Bret Easton Ellis

by Gavin James Bower

Illustration by Alice Strutt

I'm in a Paris hotel room, a nail gun in my hand and Hip To Be Square by Huey Lewis & The News on full blast, straddling Bret Easton Ellis. It wasn't meant to be this way.

While Bret - we're on first name terms now, as you can imagine - was publishing his first novel, aged 19, I was wanking my way through an arts degree and not really figuring out what I was going to do with my life.

Then, at some point during my second year, I read *Less Than Zero* - and it hit me like a surprise prison fuck:

I was going to be a writer.

Armed with ambition and ideas aplenty, I graduated with an acceptable 2:1, moved to London and wrote some stuff for free - y'know, until I could break into the industry. I thought to myself, maybe I'll get a job on a magazine or something.

Or something.

I worked bar jobs, I temped - I even found some mildly tolerable, dare I say, rewarding work in the media. I met a nice girl too, and moved into her huge apartment, rent free. Predictably, I fell in love.

But as each day passed, as my salary appreciated and my email signature grew ever more sophisticated, as I gradually lost the will to fight the management speak and the crushing ennui of being, I was writing my debut novel.

In my head, anyway.

It wasn't 'til I was made redundant for taking photos of my cock at my desk that I finally had the creative freedom to sit down and write. It took me six weeks to pen those 50,000 words, plus another six to find an agent.

And I was all set.

I was going to turn the literary world upside down, spearhead a new breed of existentialism and dumbfound the critics, like *Less Than Zero* had in the 80s.

I was going to knock all those celebrity chefs off the bestsellers lists, sell the film rights to Hollywood and go out with a string of supermodels.

I was going to be the next Bret Easton Ellis.

Then the book got published.

The shops didn't take it, the journalists wouldn't feature it and the reviews, when they came in at all, called it 'mediocre', 'meandering' - even, 'shite'.

And it got worse.

A few Amazon reviewers sounded off about the book being a rip-off of *Less Than Zero* - and a poor one at that. Before I knew it I was fielding questions in interviews, not about my tour de force of post-postmodern existentialism, but about Bret.

'How relevant do you think *Less Than Zero* is today?' they asked.

'What do you think he meant by the phrase "disappear here"?' they mused.

'Who are your favourite writers? Other than Bret Easton Ellis, of course...' they sniggered.

My so-called career turned in on itself, swallowed up into a black hole of self-Googleing, unreturned emails and flagrant recrimination. I once told an interviewer - a female blogger who loved cats, and asked if I had a man crush on Bret - to fuck off. She didn't post the interview, so I didn't even get the publicity.

Everyone hated my book, and I, in turn, hated everyone.

It was probably when my girlfriend

kicked me out, unable to deal with my descent into diazepam-induced despair, that I realised I had to do something.

I used what was left of my severance pay to buy a cheap Eurostar ticket to Paris, and decided that I'd only return to London with a finished second novel under my arm. The book would be different to anything I'd ever written, and different to anything Bret had ever even thought about writing.

The book would be about love.

I got a studio apartment in Montmartre with a cupboard-sized kitchen on the cheap, and settled into my new life as an expat writer in Paris. Now, I had everything I needed to complete my masterpiece. Vin, pain et fromage - I even had a typewriter, for added authenticity.

But things didn't work out quite the way I'd hoped. A week into my stay, when I finally finished the opening sentence, I realised something wasn't right.

'People are afraid to merge on the streets of Paris.'

It was obvious. I had lost the ability to write.

I found myself only capable of gimmicks, lazily reproducing slogans I'd seen in advertisements or on the walls of apartment buildings, italicising and repeating them for dramatic effect, without a care for plot or character development or anything much else.

Then, inevitably, I started to write



pornographically, my underwear around my ankles, with every chapter ending in the same way: a money shot, followed knowingly by the words, 'We slide down the surface of things.'

When I eventually got over the porn, red raw and teary-eyed, I returned to writing as Bret.

People are afraid to merge. To merge. Disappear here.

So that's what I decided to do.

Standing atop Pont Neuf, on the brink of ending it all, I called my agent. For the first time in a year, he actually answered his phone.

'Um, hello...?' I replied, a little surprised to hear his voice.

'Who's this?'

'It's me, Bret...I mean, Melvin. It's Melvin Jamie Bauer...'

'Melvin...? Oh, Melvin! Um...how are you my man?'

'Not good. I'm in Paris, thinking about throwing myself off a bridge. And I can't seem to start my second book...'

'You're writing a second book?' he interrupted.

'Um...yes.'

I'd told him all this a year ago. He'd even seen a synopsis and a black and white YouTube video of me reading it out loud while walking under a subway in Dalston. I'd posted it on my blog and everything.

'Well why don't you email me some dates and we'll do lunch next week, to

discuss. I'm in a meeting with a client now, so let's talk later. Bye.'

I'd heard it all before. When I first signed with him he'd told me my book would be a big hit. He'd also told me I'd get a real writing job, on a magazine - maybe even, a paper.

As soon as my book came out, though, everything changed. He stopped returning my calls, he didn't reply to my emails and, when I did get hold of him, maybe even managing to set up a face-to-face, we'd go over all the things we'd talked about months earlier. He'd buy me an expensive lunch, make vague assurances of future meetings and send me away happy.

Relatively speaking, of course.

Funny how things happen, eh? There I was, about to kill myself, when a chance call to my agent made me climb down, turn around and stare at a poster across the street.

Séance de dédicace avec BRET EASTON ELLIS ce soir, Hotel Ritz

Right there, in the middle of Pont Neuf, the merde of two million Parisians rising from a grate beneath my feet, I had an epiphany. Rather than do something hasty - like, say, topping myself - I'd go to the signing and talk to Bret.

He'd understand, surely. He is a writer, after all...albeit a slightly more successful one than me.

But none of that mattered, did it? His latest book, Lunar Park, had been a disaster - at least, in the eyes of his fans. An anonymous reviewer, on one of the numerous blogs that are dedicated to him and I faithfully follow, even claimed that he was going through a

crisis in confidence and it was affecting his work.

Maybe he could understand me, after all.

It was a no-brainer, so much so that I had it all figured out before I even got to the nearest Metro station. I'd just wait my turn, get him to sign my copy of *Less Than Zero* - the limited edition hardback, which I carried around with me at all times, just in case - and then I'd ask him straight:

'What would you do, if you were me?'

It seemed like a good idea at the time.

But once I'd managed to find the Ritz Hotel - not to mention blag my way upstairs, so I could get in - it was all over. I searched adjacent rooms, the bar and even several floors in vain, before giving up and leaving through a door with a sign saying 'Not An Exit'.

All of a sudden, it mattered.

My failure as a writer. Being dumped by my one true love. Coming all the way to Paris, unable to speak a word of French, only to discover that I'd somehow lost the ability to write. Even Bret Easton Ellis being more successful than me - and then, as if taking some kind of sadistic pleasure in it all, abandoning me. It all mattered.

I took out my last cigarette, which I'd meant to smoke before calling my agent and then throwing myself off the bridge. I laughed to myself. When I arrived in Paris, a week earlier, I'd felt sorry for all the sad Parisian smokers, only recently forced to light up outside by law - in my view a sacrilegious slight on art, on culture, on France itself.

Now I was one of them.

'Hey what's so funny?' called an American-sounding voice.

I turned around, and there he was. Standing holding a cigarette and a mobile phone. All alone.

Bret. Easton. Ellis.

Now was my chance, I realised, my eyes lighting up as he smiled kindly at me. I could ask him, right now, for help. I could ask him anything, anything I wanted. I could ask him straight:

'What would you do, if you were me?'

Instead, as his smile faded and the corners of his mouth drooped, as I struck him on the side of the head repeatedly with my copy of *Less Than Zero*, until he lost consciousness, I had another epiphany.

'What could I do, if I was you?'

'Mmmpffhmm!'

'What's that Bret?' I tear the duck tape off his lips, to let the big time author speak.

'What are you going to do with that?'

'Don't you recognise it, Bret? I'm re-enacting a scene from your much-hyped vision of Reaganite decadence, *American Psycho*. I thought that was obvious...' I climb off the bed and walk around the room, smiling inanely in my transparent plastic rain coat. 'Now, I'm going to keep the duck tape off, but if you scream I'll drive this fucking nail gun through your head, ok?'

'What do you want from me?' he whispers, realising I'm serious.

'I want you to tell me...how to... fit in...' I reply, changing the CD to Sussudio by Phil Collins.

'I don't know what you're talking about!' he says, his voice louder all of a sudden.

'Are you mocking me, Bret?!' I scream, climbing on top of him and holding a screwdriver over his right eye. 'Do you think, because you've sold millions of copies of your books and there have been films based on them, films starring Batman and even fucking Dawson from Dawson's fucking Creek, that you are somehow better than me? Is that what you think? That you're more talented than me? Are you mocking me with your talent?'

He shakes his head.

'What would you do, if you were me?' I say, climbing off him again and starting the video camera, as the song kicks in. 'No wait!' I say, realising something and turning the camera to face the floor. 'I mean...what could you do, if you were you...but you were actually me...?'

He frowns.

'I...um...dunno...' he answers, after a moment. He's sweating now, a bead running down his right temple and into the corner of his mouth. I zoom in as he licks it.

'Go on, Bret,' I say, urging him to tell me what I want to hear. 'Go on...'

It's been six months.

Six months since I almost killed myself.

Six months since I kidnapped Bret Easton Ellis, kind-of-but-not-really-by-accident, and tortured him in the style

of Patrick Bateman, to the soundtrack of Whitney Houston and using a coat hanger, a piece of plastic tubing and a ravenous *rattus rattus* as tools.

Six months since I left him there, gagged and bound, in a Paris hotel room, returned to England and moved back in with my parents.

Six months since I started again.

I've got a job working at my local library now, and I'm looking on the internet, at my mum and dad's, for teaching courses and placements. I'm planning on being a creative writing teacher, if everything works out. I suppose I'm happy.

Relatively speaking, of course.

I did look at one of the Bret Easton Ellis blogs, though, while I was meant to be looking for jobs.

I couldn't help myself.

And it wasn't long before I found what I was looking for. There's a rumour about a new book being circulated, virally, about an author who gets kidnapped by an estranged fan who wants to be just like him.

Apparently, there's a real buzz about it.

Apparently, it's going to be amazing.

Apparently, there's even a title.

Being Melvin Jamie Bauer.

Gavin James Bower's first novel, Dazed & Aroused (Quartet Books), is out now. You can buy it at http://www.amazon.co.uk/Dazed-Aroused-Gavin-James-Bower/dp/0704371596/ref=cm_cr_pr_pb_t

The Laslo Boniek Emails

from: laslo boniek
<lasloboniekpc@googlemail.com>
to: business@trevorbaylisbrands.com
date: Tue, May 4, 2010 at 5:43 PM
subject: Shed invention

Dear Trevor the Bayliss,

I swim to UK country all way from Ippleonia, a tiny island in the Aegean Sea. I escape the tyranny of the goats, fruit and vegetables that need the constant attention and serve as our masters by making us proud Ippleonians tend their every need. I flee this Dante's infirmary, this living hell, by coming to UK country to butter myself and buy Lynx so I have the women swarm on me like the goats swarm on the fruit and the vegetables that lead to Ippleonian elders saying I not to be trusted alone to watch goats and that I a simple case in the head who lose almost entire crop and must receive 50 lashes.

Anyways, I not wish to bore you with gory details, I want to excite you with invention. I invent machine that emits the goodwill vibes and make even misery guts like the Jermey the Paxman break out in song, be jolly and share giddy gladness with people. Just plug it in and watch it happen.

I tell my friend Korky this machine will help mankind and I thank my lucky chickens for such invention coming to me. No need now for miracle pills. No more do we need the shrinks who ask you to pop up on couch and talk. All we need is 'Laslo Boniek's Brain Wave'.

I trust cheque is in post and you buy idea from me and I fulfil ambition to buy every can of Lynx in UK country. Thanking you in advancements.

Laslo Boniek.

from: business <business@trevorbaylisbrands.com>
to: laslo boniek <lasloboniekpc@googlemail.com>
date: Fri, May 7, 2010 at 10:04 AM
subject: Re: Shed invention

Dear Laslo,

Thank you for your uplifting message. Clearly our gain is Ippleonia's loss and doubtless in times to come the leaders of your country will regret the haste with which they encouraged the departure of one of their leading thinkers. Your message illustrates very clearly what we can expect of Ippleonia.

There will be many people in the UK this morning who might be glad of your feel good invention and a surge in Lynx sales might be just the stimulus to lead the way to economic recovery.

Regrettably our budgetary allocation for brainwave machines has already been committed, as has that for goats, but we wish you every success and look forward to a feel good future.

By the way, opinion is divided amongst the ladies in the office as to whether

they prefer the smell of Lynx or the goats.

Trevor Baylis Brands plc

from: laslo boniek <lasloboniekpc@googlemail.com>
to: business <business@trevorbaylisbrands.com>
date: Tue, May 11, 2010 at 5:44 PM
subject: Re: Shed invention

Dear Trevor the Bayliss,

Okay. I see what we doing. We doing the negotiating. You cool on my Goodwill Machine, but see I is a bright young inventor starting out ploughing the road to top of the tree of success. I tell this to my friend Korky and he say I delusional. I tell him 'Not so fast hot shot, you cool your boots. I a good inventor and the Trevor the Bayliss organisation say this and I show him your emailing. Korky read it and say you making the funnies out of me and say he worry I a danger to myself. I tell him he drunk and should leave off the Vimto and Rum. Then we fight.

Not sure if it is the drinking of too much, or losing the fight - this time - to Korky - I ahead overall - or what.... but next day I wake up late for work and now supermarket have to find new person to herd trolleys. I tell you, UK supermarket trolley is a much more determined and strong willed creature that I now respect very much. It a much harder animal to manage than goats back home.

Anyway, this exciting opportunity of looking for new work also gives me idea for new invention. It a time traveling machine alarm clock. To give it updated brand name that perfect for future

living and catch on and all that, I call it the Ti-Mac AC. This how it work: You wake up late for work and what you do is step inside the Ti-Mac AC. You set machine to deliver you back to exact time you set alarm for and ignored and you step out of machine and wake up your sleeping self in time for work. You may have noticed that the Ti-Mac AC - the time traveling machine alarm clock - is also a cloning machine. There now two of you in present. So, maybe it better if version of self who go back in time because he/she had plenty of rest and overslept go to work and let sleeping self sleep. Then when time travelling version come home the two selves work out way of living together. Hopefully they not both oversleep and have to use Ti-Mac AC again, as one will have to go back in the time to wake the two up, creating three in the present and it not as cheap for three to live as it is as cheap for two.

The Ti-Mac AC, I think you agreeing, is cracking invention, although not sure if world be ready for more Laslo Bonieks and the Trevor the Bayliesses, so we better not sleep in! Do I have the inventing job now? I not negotiating further. I walk away now from table, bump leg on chair on way out of door with all my inventions. Wait till you hear about my sustainable, environmentally-friendly invisible and imaginary mansion in the country invention that one day everyone could own - it will shoo away your socks from your feet!

I promise that with my inventing talent and your guidance I could be master inventor in no time at all.

Thanking you in advancements,

Laslo Boniek.
No Reply

Future Patch

by Roland Rock

Illustration by Billy Mather

Rachel Anthrobus scrolled down the list of files. Should she tell him now?

Sitting behind Rachel, as elegant as ever, his ornate cane resting against his left leg, he took a green capsule from the antique silver box he kept in the breast pocket of his suit. He didn't examine the capsule, the device he credits for accentuating his powers, and what others in the know would call "that rotten drug he's addicted to that has caused his talent and health to wither at an alarming rate."

Without looking, the man, who had a decade or two earlier written some of the most powerful novels in the English language, routinely swallowed the green pill. He sent it south in a swell of Red Bull. He was feeling his age, but soon would have the return of his wits, for a brief time anyway.

Rachel, her back to him, heard the familiar opening and closing of the silver box and knew what was happening. When she came to him five years ago to work as his assistant he'd been a hero. She loved his books. In her formative years they, along with other authors, inspired her love of words and the desire to also be a writer. For her it was a dream assignment.

She'd been warned about his diminishing skills and the health problems that besieged him from time to time, and she'd been told of his reliance on stimulants. His writers'

block was acute, legendary in the literary world, but when he stepped out through the haze, which wasn't that often, he was still capable of magic.

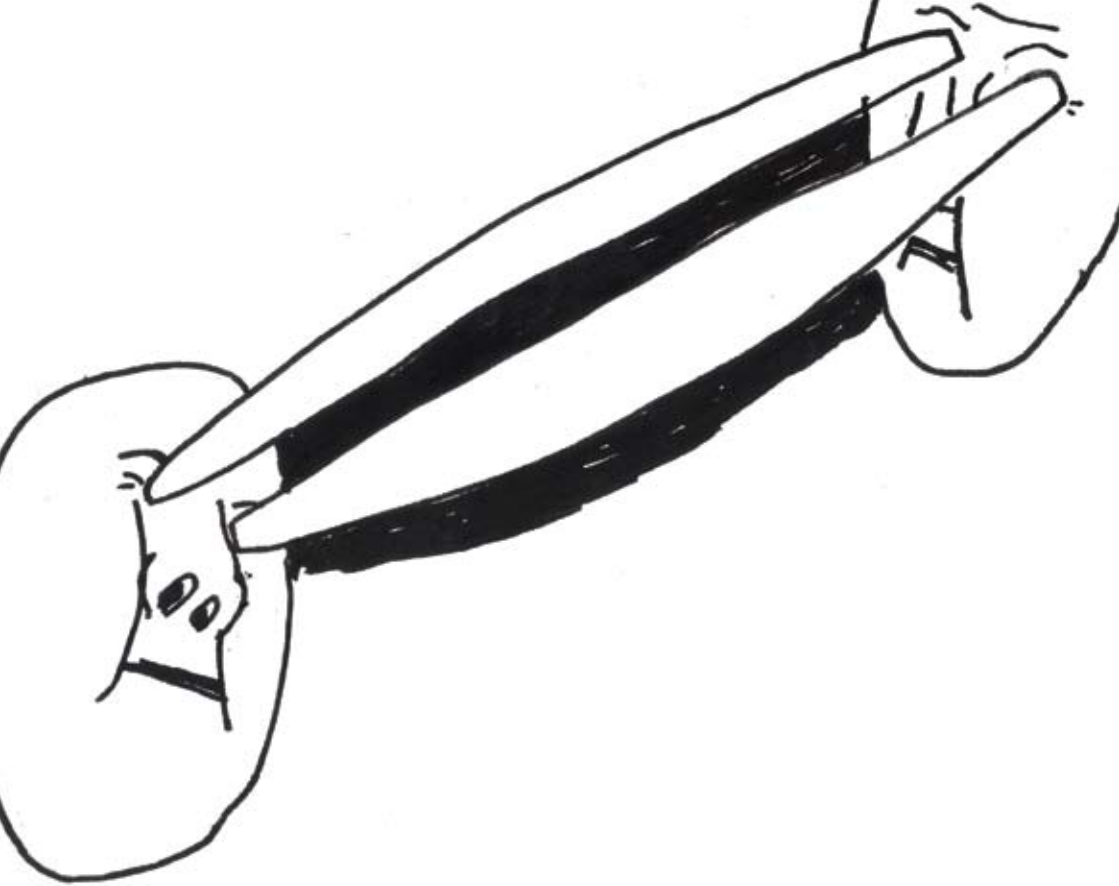
A pattern of work was developed, or rather she fitted in with his routine, which was irritating at times, but bearable because she believed she was learning from one of the few living writers she actually admired and felt strongly about. However, he was tired, ill, and not long for this Earth.

"I've found the document." Rachel announced double-clicking its icon.

"Good, let's open the fucker up and start to work."

It was an early draft chapter of yet another project he would no doubt abandon. Rachel thought that as a novel it had potential and was part biographical. Its main character, Kingsley, being a writer who discovers his mind is host to an elite alien warrior injured in battle. The writer eventually realises the world in which he lives, and ultimately he himself, are just another front being fought in a war he barely understands. What appealed to Rachel most about the story was its setting in a world much like ours, but with enough subtle changes and deviations to make it different.

Rachel began reading aloud: "Barrett shook Kingsley awake. 'What time is it?' Kingsley said, opening his eyes. 'It's just



gone quarter past two. Rowan is waiting in the car. This is going to shock your block.’ ‘It had better,’ said Kingsley, swinging himself out of bed. Five minutes later and Kingsley walked down his driveway to Barrett’s car. The moon shone through broken cloud moving swiftly across the sky. He rubbed his hands for warmth before opening the passenger door.”

Rachel continued reading. It was pretty turgid stuff and she felt sad for him.

“‘So, what’s this all about?’ Kingsley asked Barrett. ‘Yeah, Barrett,’ said Rowan, ‘what you got us up at this time of day for?’ Barrett slipped a couple of hits of AIR down his throat and took a slug of beer. He started the engine and drove away from the drive and onto the road.

“‘In your last book, Kingsley, you actually make a worthy point.’ ‘Just the one, eh Barrett?’ ‘Yes. There is a character who obeys fashion throughout, to the point of unhealthy obsession, an old theme granted, but the point you make, or at least I feel the point you are trying to make, is that if fashion is so good why is it constantly changing? I myself can’t help having exceptional taste, but I’ve never been a slave to fashion and its whims. I rise above such shit and am my own person. Take this old car for instance. It is an exquisite piece of engineering. Sleek, distinctive and beautiful to the eye, and extremely rare these days anywhere in the world, and I went to a lot of trouble to bring it in to the country. In essence this vehicle is not only the embodiment of who I am, but it reaffirms who I am.’

“‘It’s certainly unique,’ said Rowan from the back. ‘Hmm,’ said Barrett pulling the car over. ‘Why we stopping

here?’ ‘Be back in a minute,’ and with that Barrett left and Kingsley and Rowan watched him disappear up the street. He returned ten minutes later holding something in his hand as he walked. He stopped in front of his car, vanished down from view and then reappeared moments later only to go to the back of the car and vanish again. He then opened the boot and threw something in.”

Rachel stopped reading and spun round in her chair to look at him for a reaction. “Well?”

“I don’t think anything,” he replied, his head now resting sleepily atop the cane.

Rachel turned round and began reading again. She’d decided to tell him as soon as they’d finished going through this chapter.

“When he got back in the car, both Kingsley and Rowan were looking at Barrett. Rowan, his hands gripping the headrests in front and leaning forward, wanted to know what was going on. ‘What you up to, Barrett?’ Barrett started the car and roared away. He increased his speed and said nothing. The acceleration caused Rowan to fall back into his seat and when the car turned he almost toppled over, much to his own amusement. He hollered his approval. ‘This is more like it’ Then, ‘Ah shit, my beer. I got a wet patch where I don’t want one.’

“Kingsley said nothing, but wondered what Barrett was doing. The speedometer kept advancing as the car motored through the quiet streets. Rowan, thinking Barrett had finally flipped out, continued whooping. Now he removed his beer-wet shirt, opened the window and put his head

out to scream. He felt around in his pocket and pulled out a joint. He lit it and enjoyed the feel of the cold air smacking against his face.

“Barrett said nothing and showed no sign of slowing. He swung the car around corners and manhandled it back to position. Rowan slid back in and passed the joint forward. Barrett grabbed it and grinning like a mad man puffed away. By now Kingsley was wondering why he had allowed himself to be woken in the middle of the night for this. Barrett and Rowan were having fun, but was he? No. He was scared. ‘Maybe you should slow down, Barrett.’ ‘What?’ crowed Barrett. ‘We’ve not even got going yet. Wait till we get out on the freeway.’

“Rowan, thinking Barrett had definitely flipped, was enjoying how Kingsley had suddenly become uncomfortable, and he started laughing. ‘Give me that,’ said Kingsley, snatching the joint from Barrett. ‘Have you lost your fucking mind?’ Barrett, although driving at high speed, turned his attention from the road and looked Kingsley in the eyes for a good few seconds before replying, ‘No.’

“‘No?’ cried Kingsley. ‘Ah,’ said Barrett resting the joint back from Kingsley and taking a puff before passing it back to Rowan, ‘You’re talking about the surveillance.’ ‘Surveillance? Every fucking road has cameras on the go. Everything is recorded.’ ‘Would you like a go driving? Don’t tell me you haven’t longed to drive at these speeds like they used to.’

“‘I’d have a go, but I feel wasted, man,’” said Rowan from the back.

“Barrett hit the accelerator as hard as he could and inside the bodies of

the three men they could feel the car lurch forward, feel its effects internally as it tugged them along with it. Barrett reached down and ripped up the handbrake and casually turned the wheel, sending the vehicle into a 360-degree spin before releasing the handbrake in time for it to again bomb forward. It was an audacious manoeuvre - insane thought Kingsley - one that would show up on police cameras and later in courtrooms as dangerous and have Barrett jailed for a long time. Barrett was buzzing off the whole episode, having the time of his life, bouncing up and down in his seat and hitting the steering wheel every so often and going ‘Oh yeah!’

“Then Barrett brought the car to a peaceful stop at the side of the road, ‘You know,’ he said, ‘this car is me. I am it and it is I. The only one like it in the whole county. So when I was out shopping for groceries the other day and see another one driving past I know I have to get revenge.’ ‘What?’ Rowan said, not quite understanding. ‘Someone has copied me, Rowan. I have been plundered. They have seen this vehicle, this extension of myself, and wanted it too. They have taken my personality, my individuality, and grafted it to their own empty life. Someone has intruded on my being and taken a spark of my originality. So I followed the bastard home and returned later when everyone was sound asleep to temporarily borrow his licence plates.’ ‘You’ve put his plates on your car?’ said Kingsley, at last relaxing and beginning to laugh, ‘You mean when the cops check the surveillance film of our drive tonight they’ll think they’re seeing his car and lock him up.’”

He banged his cane on the ground behind her. Rachel immediately stopped

reading and turned. He looked up at her through glassy eyes, smiling through his thick, grey beard, and she could tell he was already losing interest in the morning's work.

"Say," he began, "I've an idea, which sounds like an African inventor, Ivor N'Dea, well... I've an idea for a new and better book. I've an idea that this African inventor Ivor N'Dea is an idealist who believes we have lost our way from God's vision of a happy, harmonious planet and that what we have as our reality is not what God would want, and so he begins work on an anti-weapon, a machine that can be deployed in war zones, that emits goodwill and turns battle-hardened veterans into puppy dogs.

"Now, Professor N'Dea builds a prototype of this anti-weapon and tests it out in what he thinks is a controlled environment. However, the machine is too powerful and it ends up affecting everyone on Earth; it doses them all with goodwill, so much so they are rendered incapable of doing anything. They can't do a stitch. People waiting in doorways are locked in a perpetual motion of insisting others go first, 'no, after you', each unable to move until the other does. Meanwhile, other people are unable to remove themselves from the situation of continually saying 'thank you' and so on, the whole planet stuck solid, being overly polite to one another.

Ultimately Ivor N'Dea's prototype is not just faulty, it is catastrophic. This machine that was created to be a peaceful weapon spreading goodwill in fact captures people in a cycle of politeness which they are unable to extract themselves from. Goodwill, it turns out, is the worst thing that could happen to the human race, as people

competing to be the most mannered eventually shrivel up and die of thirst and hunger until no one is left."

He hit his cane on the floor once more before declaring, "Too deep, and Mr N'Dea's not interested either. Please continue reading, my dear."

Rachel turned to the screen and continued from where she was before the interruption.

"Barrett was grinning like the devil at Kingsley and nodding his head. 'Well I'll be....' commented Rowan, easing himself upright on the back seat. 'Yup,' said Barrett, obviously pleased with what he'd done, 'let the fucker wriggle out of this. His plates are on the car and he is caught bang to rights. It'll be his word against.... mine, maybe? But maybe not. Will the police even bother questioning me? Sure we are the only two people in the country who have the same car, but why would I do it?' 'Cos you're a crazy bastard,' laughed Rowan. 'If he accuses me then it will be obvious to all that what the police are dealing with in him is a low-down devious rotten crook, a desperate man in a desperate situation. He'd be delaying the inevitable, attempting to escape what's coming to him. He obviously loaded up on Christ knows what and took his car out for a drive and was so smashed he couldn't even remember doing it. What else has he forgotten doing? He's probably guilty of other crimes the police could lay on him. No, the police won't bother me, they have their man, it will be there on the surveillance film, his car, his plates, on the road and breaking all kinds of laws.'

"For all the mayhem of the past fifteen minutes, a bizarre wind of peace blew in and settled over the three men as they each realised they were fucking

over another person, a complete stranger, even if he had made the mistake of buying the same rare car as Barrett, whether Kingsley or Rowan wanted it or not, they were now in on the gangbang.

“The mood was interrupted by Rowan’s mobile ringing. He fidgeted around in his coat pocket, mumbling on about who the hell could be calling at this damn time of day, the middle of the fucking night, and answering it he brought it up to his ear in time to hear a familiar voice requesting he put the phone on loudspeaker for the benefit of everyone else in the car. Dumbstruck, he did this. Then the voice, Barrett’s voice, sounding older, more lived in, boomed out of the phone and filled the small space of the car with its presence. ‘Hello from the future, yuk, yuk. It works. I’m telling that to me, to Barrett, because he, or I, well, we, you see, we’ve been working on this for some time. Rowan’s phone exists there with you in the past at point A, and I, I am in the future with my phone at point B, and all I had to do, sorry, we had to do, was work out a way to communicate from point B to point A, and hey presto, here I am talking to you way back when.’ Barrett looked at Rowan and then deep into the eyes of Kingsley, ‘Do you know what this

means?’ Then Barrett from the future piped up, ‘you should listen to him, Kingsley and Rowan. He’s a lot smarter than you think. It is time for you to live like Gods.’”

There was nothing left on screen for Rachel to read. The chapter had petered out. The story, she thought, had something, although it went on too long and lacked the cutting originality and flair of his older work, but the idea of communicating like that with your future self was electric. Inside she made a promise.

Just then Rachel’s own phone rang. It made them both jump. She answered it and set it to loudspeaker. Her future self spoke to him - to them both. Her future self thanked him for all his help and kindness, and she explained that this would be the last day her younger self would be working with him, as her own career as a writer was about to launch, and her older self told him to have confidence and continue writing, because good things would come of it. Her younger self would still stop by, she said, and the replacement sent by the publishers would be good for him. She sent her love and wished them both luck.

The call ended and she could see tears forming in his eyes, he looked so proud and pleased for her.



Musicians

by Anja McCloskey (written in April 2010)

Illustration by Ryan Gillett

Party-friendly, lazy and unorganised? Surely you are not talking about musicians!

I am on a high. I have just spent the last two hours googling my band's name and - finally - found a new blog entry on page 17 of the search results. It is lovely, witty and very complimentary. Good! This makes me feel much better than a previous entry I found, which, in one way or another, proclaimed that my singing sounded like a cat drowning in a washing machine...

Contrary to what you may think, most of my "free time" is not spent making music (I am a musician). It is spent researching, promoting and contacting everyone and anyone who is affiliated with the music industry. And I think that is normal if you are in a band signed to a small co-operative record label.

You become grateful for the smallest mention in a blog, magazine, or on the radio. It is perceived as a justification of why you are sacrificing your life, your family, your friends and most frustratingly your sleep, youthful looks and the little money you have, to (maybe) one day be able to make a living from your musical outpourings.

Being in a band is generally not an easy task. It is even harder when you are not signed to a major label, do not have a

360 degree artist deal, or are not best friends with Beirut.

You have to juggle the complex social structure of a seven-piece band with the mounting pressure on band members to commit to an array of unpaid activities. I agree that it might seem a stupid idea to drive to Bristol from Southampton, play a gig to five people, drop a violinist off to Cardiff on the way back, make it back home by five in the morning and then get up two hours later to work a day shift for no obvious financial reward. But you have got to start somewhere. And if that one person in the front row who was dancing on their own throughout your whole set becomes your biggest fan and your music can move them in one way or another, then that is totally worth it to me.

My band Haunted Stereo have been together since late 2007. In the beginning we definitely suffered from over-enthusiasm and a naïve belief that all promoters approached us because they liked our music. I remember a particular gig - one of our first - that was meant to be a label showcase. We had sent a technical specification to the promoter warning them that we

had quite a lot of instruments to sound check. Seeing that the sound engineer arrived three hours late and only had four channels on his desk, this now seems like a pointless exercise to me. It also was not particularly motivating that the promoter left before we even played, we had no monitors on stage and the people upstairs were having a little rave. Try playing accordion when you have techno music penetrating your right eardrum!

In the end we saw it as a learning curve. The first investment we made following this experience was in a mixing desk and a multi-channel DI box which we could bring along to gigs to make sure our technical requirements could be met. If this means nothing to you, I sympathise. I class myself as a technophobe and can easily be scared by iPhones and "server-thingies". But wanting to be in this band meant that I had to toughen up! I now know all about jack leads, DI boxes, which battery type my pick-up needs, etc... I find it all quite scary.

Luckily for Haunted Stereo we have also had some rather lovely experiences since we took our first tentative steps. We played an intimate gig at the Amnesty Book Shop in Brighton to a crowd that were really into us and then released a single for Amnesty International as a thank you. We organised and hosted two sold-out EP launch nights in Southampton, played a few festivals last year, but most importantly, have met so many fellow bands and solo musicians along the way, who have assured us that we are not mad - there are others out there. And they are all struggling with the same

things - disorganisation, lack of money, lack of acknowledgement and again, lack of money.

It is so frustrating as a musician to have to hold down a full time job, whilst trying to be a full-time musician, a full-time PR agent, a full-time booking agent, a full-time accountant and a full-time agony aunt. I cannot remember the last time I just sat down and watched a film. Who says musicians are lazy? I think we are some of the hardest-working people around!

After struggling through the cut-throat world of an unsigned band for a year or so, we were lucky enough to be taken under the wings of Southampton's Sotones Records. It is an independent co-operative record label run by the bands that are signed to it. Being part of this collective is one of the best things that has ever happened to us as a band. I have never worked with a bunch of people more fun-loving and enticingly chaotic as the Sotones crew. Consisting of South Coast bands such as The Moulettes, Moneytree, Lonely Joe Parker and Jackie Paper (there are more), and a ramshackle office in Southampton, you can definitely count on the members to get your creative juices flowing. There is always someone on the label who is writing new material, or recording, or lecturing about performing rights. But most importantly everyone helps each other out. It is - in the truest sense - a co-operative.

The morning I wrote this, for example, the whole band assembled in my flat at 8am. Quite an achievement for a Saturday! We had arranged to have



promotional pictures taken for our single release, due to be released in May. As professional photographers charge a fortune, and we as a band are not really making a profit yet, a good friend and founding member of the Sotones Co-operative agreed to take the pictures for us. This is why we found ourselves sat outside our house in freezing temperatures, posing on some Georgian steps, with our photographer boldly placing his tripod in the middle of the road, whilst cars tried to navigate past him. We were laughing at the fact that the single is not going to be released until May, with the pictures showing us all in thick coats and scarves. It was just too cold to bear without the appropriate winter clothes.

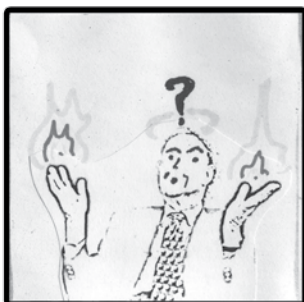
The promotional side of things, which includes decent press shots, is another area that I have had to become well versed in. These days, if you would like to get efficient coverage on a release, you need to approach the media at least three months beforehand. When we were unsigned I used to do all of this myself. And it is very hard work. Researching the right reviewers, publications, blogs, maintaining constant contact with them, chasing up CD reviews - all of this takes up

a lot of time that could be used for developing new song ideas instead. I am very relieved that Sotones Records have their own PR agency who are now doing the work for us. In fact, I cannot wait to see the results of their promotional activities. They have so much more experience and contacts than a single band could ever have...

Also, handing over the promotional activities to an agency means I have more time to devote to my newly acquired post of Director of Finance for Sotones Records. Somehow I have a feeling that this may be quite a time-consuming task... Bookkeeping does not seem to be one of the collective's strongest abilities and it is about time an organised freak like me takes over the "most boring" (quote), but also, one of the most important aspects of the label. Without sound financial ability, even the most creative will get stuck at some point. Sad, but true.

Haunted Stereo have released their EP "Cross the Sea" on Sotones Records. We are giving away two copies to readers - email popcultmag@gmail.com to win one.

Drawgasms





FROM DESIGN TO TYPOGRAPHY, ILLUSTRATION TO PHOTOGRAPHY AND WEB DESIGN TO ART DIRECTION. WE PUSH TO OFFER OUR CLIENTS THE COMPLETE PACKAGE, YOUR PERFECT DESIGN SOLUTION.

AT JOHNNY TOASTER WE STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT ALL COMPANIES SHOULD BE ABLE TO AFFORD AND BENEFIT FROM OUR WELL-DESIGNED ORIGINAL ARTWORK WITHOUT PAYING THE HIGH FEES ASSOCIATED WITH A TRADITIONAL DESIGN AGENCY.

WHY NOT CONTACT US TO SEE HOW YOU CAN BENEFIT FROM OUR AFFORDABLE, WELL DESIGNED ARTWORK.

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