

VERITIES

From the Verities Archive
September 1999
By Christopher Hess

Does it seem quieter out there to you?

Maybe not quieter, but definitely different. More subdued. Hesitant, almost, as if the whole town is sort of holding its breath, sure that something is about to happen, knowing that all there is to do is wait. See what happens.

Me, I've been spending a lot of time at home. Watching a lot of movies, hanging out with my girlfriend and my dogs, getting acclimated to the slower pace that all things inevitably shift into during the summer months in Texas. And it ain't all bad, this slowing up, once you get used to it. The proliferation of time-saving technology and devices has created so much more work for the average shlub that during any day there is no down time.

What, read a book? OK, but only if I can listen to the news on the radio, return a list of phone calls and eat dinner at the same time.

One thing at a time is simply not enough to do anymore. But, if you want to keep up, you gotta do it, right?

Not during the summer. Screw it, let 'em get ahead. It's too damn hot outside.

So maybe the huge changes that have descended on the face of the Austin music scene with all the gentility of plastic surgery with a baseball bat have come at a good time. Though it's premature and uninformed to call the morgue to cart away the gasping body of live pop and rock music, it's getting close to too late to notice that things are changing in a way that a lot of people don't like. Over the 7-odd years I've spent in Austin, the vast majority of my evening hours (and a good number of the daytime, too) have been spent in music venues, watching bands. I went pretty much everywhere and saw a whole lot of what there was to see at one point or another. It was just what I did. I couldn't think of a better way to spend my nights than being on the receiving end of

someone's version of what rock music was supposed to be about. Time spent trudging through the clubs and the record stores and the music media of Austin opened my eyes to a world whose depth I had not previously imagined and introduced me to people and to music that will stay with me for the rest of my life.

When the Electric Lounge, the small and beautifully divey rock club next to the railroad tracks at 4th and Bowie, closed its doors in the spring of this year, a big chunk of that world disappeared. It was my favorite place. Away from downtown parking nightmares and close enough to stumble home, the Electric Lounge was always the place I wanted bands to play. Likewise for Liberty Lunch. If a band was too big for the Lounge, the Lunch was next in line. It too had easy parking and was just the other side of the river from the Lounge. Now that's gone as well. It'll be relocated, sure, and hopes are high for the partnership with Stubb's, but it won't be the same old warehouse with the uneven floor and history of sound ringing through the air.

So, it's not that there's no music happening. On the contrary, the music scene in this town keeps chugging along, producing increasingly-high profile pop stars and an underground rock scene that refuses to die despite losing its own Lunch and Lounge in the form of The Blue Flame and Bates Motel, two rat-hole punk clubs that were of utmost importance in giving bands who could not yet get gigs at Emo's or the E-Lounge or Stubb's stage-time and a chance to win fans. It all keeps going, regardless of measures taken by city council to stop it or development interests aimed at the new money of the high-tech insurgency. Just look at what's happening to Steamboat now, the venerable rock club on 6th Street—one of the last ones down there, if anyone's keeping count. They're getting the boot to make way for a more profitable use of the space, which will be severely renovated. They too will relocate, but it's a sign of the changing face of this town.

But, hey, clubs close, bands break up, and entire thriving sub-scenes can disappear without explanation or warning. It happens all the time, and it shouldn't be a shock to anyone who pays attention. Why, then, does this seem like such a big deal? Perhaps because the changes taking place are on such a massive scale that it's altering the look and feel of Austin that are so intrinsic to its appeal—namely, that this is a city that feels like a small town largely because of its Liberty Lunches and its Steamboats and its sweltering summer music festivals. When it comes down to it, though, I suppose it's a change happening on a smaller scale: namely, me. I've hit 30. I enjoy waking up early on a Sunday morning without a hangover, or spending a Friday night having dinner with a few friends without having to rush off to a club to see a band. The turtle's pace of the dog days, at least for now, is suiting me just fine. Besides, the music will still be there when I change my mind.



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Notes from the Woodshed

Paul Klemperer



So I was driving by the megachurch in my neighborhood and the giant cross-shaped electronic marquee flashed an ad in huge, glowing red letters (Why red? I always ask myself: so lurid, so venal, so naughty!) announcing that MISS AMERICA would be appearing at OUR CHURCH. Okay, I thought, trying not to veer into oncoming traffic, this is just another one of those quirky juxtapositions of different realities that happens all the time in America. After all, that's what makes our country great, right? A nation where a B-movie actor can grow up to be president, where Hollywood health clubs teach classes in pole-dancing, and the best-rated TV shows feature celebrities eating buckets of live maggots. Simply put, we live in a culture that thrives on entertainment.

Which got me thinking... Why are our most celebrated cultural products so visceral, so anti-intellectual? We make generals and millionaires our presidents, not poets or scientists. Why are generals and millionaires more appealing? Are they smarter? Doubtful. Better able to view the whole picture? Nope. Sexier? Hmm. Now we're onto something. It's no secret that sex sells (in fact sex sells pretty much everything these days), but what makes something sexy? To dig deeper into that question, we open the door to fetishism.

Now we don't have to get overly Freudian, but there are some basic ideas which come our way via anthropology. The term "fetish" is generally understood to mean an object believed to have magical powers. Every culture has its fetish objects, from rabbit feet to crucifixes to football jerseys. No big revelation there. But the more current (and murky) meaning of "fetish" is an object invested with sexual powers. The magical power becomes sexual energy. You got your shoe fetish, of course, and your underwear fetish; tame stuff by today's standards, but

back in the 1950s and 60s they were considered pretty kinky. Nowadays, thanks to mass media marketing, it's hard to think of an object that hasn't been fetishized. My latest *bête noire* of advertising is the Hummer ad: they are pimping civilian Hummers in sexy colors like canary yellow and cobalt blue, with sexy models driving them. I guess a Hummer can be sexy, in the same way a tank, a scud missile, or a death star can be sexy. Sure, why not? Think BIG!

But this raises a simple question: Isn't a sexual fetish supposed to be an object, which you actually need in order to satisfy your actual desires? It's hard to fit a Hummer into your bedroom. Expensive too. I suppose Arnold Schwarzenegger can do it, but for the rest of us we must rely on our imaginations. So we must distinguish between actual fetishes and virtual fetishes. When we think in these terms we can see that much of our daily life is filled with virtual fetishes. The term "virtual reality" describes more than just computer simulations. How much of your daily life involves perceiving and thinking of things which aren't physically there, and yet which evoke an emotional/sexual response?

Want an example? Okay, all the carnivores out there raise your hand. Most of us get enough to eat, here in the Land of Plenty. Yet we are bombarded by food ads, especially meat ads. Juicy steaks, plump hamburgers, crispy fried chicken! Mmmm... are you salivating yet? My point is that it's not just when we are hungry that these food objects stimulate our pleasure centers: The food itself has been fetishized. We get stimulated by the mere picture of a Big Mac, just as we get stimulated by a picture of a Playboy model (or a picture of Leonardo DiCaprio, whatever). So a fetish can be the object itself, or simply a representation of the

object. If a hamburger makes you horny, a picture of a hamburger may do so as well. It's a double fetish: the fetish itself, and an image of the fetish. What a wacky world.

Meanwhile Miss America is appearing at the megachurch. How does this all fit together? Well, if we weren't such a fetish-driven culture, we wouldn't be affected by all these roving icons and the media engines that promote them. Miss America, Hummers, even Big Macs would affect us less than the squawking of the grackles in the trees overhead. But these cultural icons do resonate with our inner needs, so we pay attention to them. We imbue them with fetishistic power, believing at some level that they will magically make us happy. We aren't totally nuts, of course, so we tuck that fetishistic belief in magic into a back corner of our psyches, and cover it with the label "entertainment," which makes it safe. Thus, all these icons dancing around on our cultural stage are merely different forms of entertainment. When they are doubly fetishized, reduced to glossy photos or visual bursts on TV, they further distract and entertain us without opening the door of the libido too wide.

But this safe form of fetishism does a disservice to entertainment. It turns things like music, dance and drama into recreational activities, not life-changing experiences. In times past, people could be moved to tears by a poem, could fall in love with a singing voice. Nowadays, if you become so emotionally involved with art (and you're old enough to buy cigarettes) you must be a Trekker, a stalker, have a prescription for the latest mood-stabilizing pharmaceutical, or all of the above.

Since Miss America is a "safe" sexual icon, she can be allowed in church. Her fetishistic attributes will draw parishioners like flies to shiitake mushrooms dipped in honey, but will not unduly disrupt the judeo-christian moral balancing act. Contrast this, for example, with the fetishistic qualities of Britney Spears, whose move towards soft-core status in recent years makes her an unsafe icon. What makes a sexual icon safe? I suppose the main thing is that the icon projects a simplified version of sexuality. Miss America is supposed to project traditional American values—apple

pie, the girl next door, middle class innocence. To preserve this idealized sexuality, the icon is rendered anti-intellectual, not in a "dumb blonde" sense, but in the sense that one is meant to idolize the object without thinking about it too much, without attaching ideas to it which could make it ambiguous in meaning. The controversy surrounding Miss America, first brought to the table by the women's liberation movement in the 1960s, was precisely about the meaning of Miss America as a cultural icon.

Cultural icons become ambiguous when too many conflicting ideas are associated with them. Rock Hudson was a sex symbol of the 1960s. Michael Jackson was a sex symbol of the 1980s. Their status as icons with fetishistic power became lost as the realities of their lives got in the way, and conflicting meanings became associated with them. The media industry expends vast amounts of time and money trying to turn people and products into icons with fetishistic powers. Hence the Hummer. The recent brouhaha over whether SUVs contribute to terrorism because they guzzle gas is on one level an ideological fight over the iconic meaning of the SUV, and its barbarian king the Hummer.

Some icons increase in fetishistic power precisely because they accrue conflicting meanings. For example, what has given Madonna such longevity as an icon? Her musical and acting talent? Methinks not. Rather it's because all the different phases of her showbiz projections add to her image, from streetpunk virgin to s&m diva. Perhaps her greatest talent has been her ability to stitch together fetishistic aspects of American sexuality into her public persona. She has withstood repeated attempts to deconstruct, redefine and explain her. She's just Madonna.

Finally, how do these ideas of fetishism in entertainment relate to the music industry? We can see obvious examples in the molding of pop stars, but I think there are ways to apply this analysis to the music itself, to the construction of musical styles and particular hit songs. I welcome any feedback/ideas on the subject and I'll delve into it further next month. In the meantime, keep your fetish dry.

D I V E R S I O N S

VISUAL ART

1st Annual Prisoner Art & Poetry Exhibition and Benefit Art Sale

*Monkeywrench Books & Gallery
110 E.North Loop
512-406-6925*

Preview exhibit: Sat.March 15 - Sat.March 22

Opening reception on Sat.March 22, 6-10PM.
Cinders , The Imbroglio String Quartet, and
the E.F.C.A.Trio perform live.



Balagan: photographs from the Middle East

*ProJex Gallery
1705 Guadalupe St.
512-472-7707
Open weekdays 10-6
Mon. March 3 - Mon. March 31*

Opening reception is Thursday, March 6 from 6-9 PM and a gallery talk is scheduled for the 22nd at 2PM. More description?

Avenida Paulista: Street Level,
Photographs by Charlie Ferguson
*Dorothy H.Gebauer Building 4.200C
College of Liberal Arts (UT Campus)
512-471-8418
Through April 4*

Sao Paulo's Avenida Paulista is the Wall Street of Brazil, but businessmen share this public

space with protesters, the homeless, performers, residents, and others. Street Level explores the tensions between the public and the private on this most famous Avenida. For more write brazil@uts.cc.utexas.edu or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/cola/lilas/centers/brazil/index.html>

Humboldt Current
*ArtAmici Studio/Gallery
78 San Marcos St.
512-457-0171
Open Saturdays 12-6 and by appointment
Through April 15*

New works by Jorge Sanhueza-Lyon (photography), Fernando Morales, (photography), Oscar Riquelme, (acrylic), and Pablo Taboada (oil).Four original and unique artists from Chile finding poetical forms to share their visions.

The Musikshow & The Rawk Show
*Gallery Lombardi
910 West Third Street
481-1088
Thu.March 6 - April 5*

Curated by Erin Leon, Rachel Koper & Nathan James, this show is about sound production and rock culture. Features national and local artists relating to music, sound production and rock culture. Opening Saturday, March 8, 6-10pm plus the SXSW after-party, Thursday March 13, 8-11pm.Visit <http://www.gallerylombardi.com> for more.



S

Stories Your Mother Never Told You,
Celia Muñoz
Mexic-Arte
419 Congress Avenue
512-480-9373
Mon.-Thurs. 10-6; Fri. and Sat. 10-5
Fri. March 14 - May 3

N

A 20-year survey of Muñoz's work focusing on the intersection of the artist's personal memories with her Chicana perspective, addressing concepts of language, culture, race and feminism. Visit www.main.org/mexic-arte for more.

C

Art Stars & Jazz Show
South Lamar Gallery
1702 So.Lamar, Austin
Sat. March 1-31

S

A two-woman Art Exhibition: Sidra Myers, Unveils "RED BRICKS" a history of Jazz paintings including images from 1914. Susan Bethke, presents "REFLECT A LONE STAR" Paintings & Collage: An Impulsively Rational View Of Texas. For more info, phone Lori Dunne at 512-791-8142 or email: lori@southlamarbazaar.com

R

Photography and Spirit of Music
Austin Spirit Gallery
1206 S.Congress Avenue
512.444.8500
Wed.- Sat. 11- 7 Sun. 12-5
Sat. March 5- April 6

>

Photographers & visual artists present a broad perspective and diverse range of photographic images and paintings, with emphasis on the spirit of music in all of its physical manifestations Opening Reception, March 5 from 5 to 8 PM and the Society for Photographic Education (SPE) Reception is March 21 from 5 to 8. Visit www.austinspiritgallery.com for more.

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D

InsideOutside: Texas Women Photographers

Women & Their Work Gallery
1710 Lavaca
512-477-1064
Mon.-Fri.9-5; Sat. 12-4

25th Anniversary Texas Women Photography curated by Anne Tucker, Photography Curator, Museum of Fine Arts Houston; and Clint Willour, Galveston Arts Center. Exhibition runs through March 29.

JAZZ



The Yellowjackets

One World Theatre
7701 Bee Caves Rd.
512-32-WORLD
Fri. March 7 at 7 and 9:30PM

Widely acclaimed for their fusion of a variety of genres including traditional jazz with R&B, rock, and soul, The Yellowjackets are considered one of America's most loved contemporary jazz groups, taking jazz in a new direction. Tickets available through One World Theatre or Star Tickets 512-469-SHOW.



McCoy Tyner
One World Theatre
See information above.
Sat. March 22 at 7 and 9:30PM

Now an annual visitor to One World, legendary pianist McCoy Tyner completely changed the sound of modern jazz piano. After twenty years of playing in the John Coltrane Quartet, this rare and genius musician is living history, continuing to deliver amazing performances. Tickets available through One World Theatre at 512-32-WORLD or Star Tickets.

LITERARY

Book Woman Reading
918 West 12th Street
472-2785
Fri. March 14
Reception at 6 pm, Reading at 7

Poet Nikky Finney reads from her book *The World Is Round*.

BookPeople
603 N. Lamar
1-800-853-9757

Drop in at BookPeople during SXSW and hear some words *without music* for a change of pace. The week's events include:
(March 8, 7 pm) Austin artist, poet and photographer Machelle Dunlop presenting her book of poetry *Chocolate Labyrinth: Savor the Journey*.
(March 11, 6:30 pm) George P. Pelacanos at

BookPeople's first Literary Happy Hour.
(March 12, 2 pm) Timothy "Speed" Levitch, presenting *Speedology: Speed on New York on Speed*, the book behind the award-winning documentary "The Cruise."

(March 14, 7 pm) Award-winning journalist, senior fashion slicks editor, and confessed fashion victim, Michelle Lee, presenting *Fashion Victim: Our Love-Hate Relationship with Dressing, Shopping, and the Cost of Style*.
(March 17, 7 pm) Sandra Cisneros with her new novel *Caramelo*.

COMEDY

The Austin Commedia Society presents
Pantalone's War
Mother Egan's Irish Pub
715 west 6th St.
512-444-5238
Saturdays March 22nd, 29th and April 5th

"Dissatisfied with Flavio's paltry dowry, Pantalone abuses his position as Baron of Bergamo to declare war on the French. It's the perfect plan to get rid of Flavio, sell Dotore's "super weapon", and get Capitano some fabulous new shoes." Special Fundraising Event March 5th. 7PM Musical Guests: Sause or the Pocket Symphonies 8PM I Megalomani in "Pantalone's War." Suggested Donation \$7.

Heather Gold at the Vortex
The VORTEX
2307 Manor Rd.
512-478-LAVA (5282)
Monday March 10 at 8:30pm

SXSW Interactive presents comedian Heather Gold! Austin's Gay Pride Emcee returns from San Francisco to preview her solo show: I Look Like An Egg, but I Identify As A Cookie. In this show Heather dishes on everything from strip clubs, lesbian relationships, identity politics, the cuddly side of George W., Michael Douglas' marriage, and her own life in this search for wholeness and genuine connection. The superficial melts away as Heather brings people together through food, humor, Air Supply slow-dancing and shared

experience. \$10 -15 sliding scale.SxSW Badge Holders Pay-what-you-can.

FILM

Journeys into the Shadow World:
the films of Arturo Ripstein
various locations
512-322-0145 [Austin Film Society]
Fri.March 7 - April 8

The Austin Film Society and the SXSW Film Festival Co-Sponsored by Cine Las Americas Media Arts Center present seven of the most representative films by Mexico's most prominent filmmaker.The first three films will be shown as part of the SXSW Film Festival, with director Arturo Ripstein and writer Paz Alicia Garcíadiego in attendance. Continuing the series after SXSW, the Austin Film Society will screen four more films for free. All films are in Spanish with English subtitles.For detailed program information visit: www.cinelasamericas.org.

THEATRE

Kentucky Cycle
Mary Moody Northern Theatre
St. Edward's University
3001 South Congress Avenue
512-448-8400
February 19-March 9

This sweeping epic of three families in eastern Kentucky spans 2002 years of American history.The nine-play cycle examines the myths of the American past that have created the country we are today.Winner of the Pulitzer Prize. By Robert Schenkken; directed by Melba Martinez. Part One: Wednesday, Friday, & Sunday. Part Two: Thursday, Saturday, Sunday

Celebrity Crush II: Celebrity Crush returns!
The Blue Theater
916 Springdale Road
512-927-1118
Fri.-Sat.March 14, 15

All new celebrities, all new crushes! Last year's crushes: everything from shirtless 50's heart-throbs to Donna Summer.This year should be a treat as well. For more write info@bluetheater.org

The Scarlet Letter
by Phyllis Nagy
The VORTEX
2307 Manor Road
512-478-LAVA (5282)
March 7-29 [Thursdays-Sundays]

A contemporary drama of *The Scarlet Letter*. Based on the story from the classic American novel, this fresh production is a new look at the letter. Drawing on Hawthorne's characters and plot, internationally-acclaimed, award-winning playwright Phyllis Nagy looks at the story from the point of view of the illegitimate child, Pearl. Tickets are \$15/\$13; Pay-What-You-Wish Thursdays and Sundays \$5 with 2 cans of food or baby formula.Discounts available.Limited Seating. Advance reservations recommended. For more visit www.vortexrep.org.

Tis Pity She's a Whore
Hyde Park Theatre
511 W.43rd St.
512-589-2332
March 6-9 (Thurs - Sun)
March 13-15 (Thurs - Sat)



A secret and illicit love unites a passionate skeptic and a trusting maiden in a cyclone of jealousy, lust, judgment, and revenge.In a world where love is purchased, piety is twisted, and Fate has replaced Faith, who's to blame? Performed by Bedlam Faction, Austin's cutting edge troupe that specializes in remarkable and exciting classics and new works. All performances start at 8 pm, except for matinees on Sunday, March 2 and March 9, at 5 p.m. For mature audiences. No late seating.For more write info@bedlamfaction.com.

The Mind of a Filmmaker

By Rebecca Murphy

Austin may be the city for independent film, but never before had this writer been given the chance to really see inside an independent film company. That is, until today.

Upon interviewing members of Mind Altering Creations, an independent film company now in its fourth year of existence, the world of film has taken on a new meaning for me. The group's filmmakers include recent Austin Community College graduate Brendan Eagleton, University of Houston student Justin Gilley, and University of Texas student Nick Jayanty. I had the chance to sit down with Mr. Jayanty and open my mind to new ideas.

"We want our films to [help us] shed the old ideological values and make new ones," said Jayanty. "The emphasis lies in breaking free from the norms. It is our social standards that constrain us today."

"The films we make will question things and society. The movies that people see today express our social standards. They socialize."

"When we are young children, we don't recognize unethical social standards until we see them in the movies. We learn so many things from the movies we see. As children, we 'learn' how to kiss, and we learn that sexism and racism are acceptable. But these young filmmakers are trying to change the ways that we as a society view ourselves."

Mind Altering Creation's films place their focus on the individual, rather than society. "The biggest mystery is ourselves, not what's outside of us. We want to focus on human experiences," insists Jayanty. In this way his company's films help "to restore people's dignity within themselves." He further argues that society, speaking through the media, "tells us what we need when we don't even know that we need those things. We are all that we need."

Mind Altering Creations, which produces

films, music videos and advertisements, began in 1999. They have recently made anti-drunk driving videos for Texas school districts, and are now in the process of transforming these videos into a feature film called *Keeping Reverie*, which will begin shooting this summer.

Jayanty recalled watching the boring anti-drunk driving videos in driving school as a teenager and falling asleep within the first five minutes. "I'm a kid; I know how to market to kids. *Keeping Reverie* will question American celebration rituals. Why does it seem that alcohol is necessary to have fun? Why is it always the fault of the 'troubled kids'? Where do you think they learned these rituals?"

"The power of the mass media moves the world today. Film inspires and motivates people. It is the responsibility of today's filmmakers to take advantage of this opportunity of having such a strong impression on society."



Brendan Eagleton (left) with Nick Jayanty on the set.

section eight

Daniel Davis Clayton

Dear Beloved-

Listen, I'm not complaining,

But I thought the point of being a poet was to analytically evaluate sullen situations and create contemporary commentary according to the laws of a natural state of peace and since this piece is borderline war time I thought perhaps I'd deviate from such said accepted outlines of instructed evaluations. Wouldn't you agree

that I'm not complaining,

it's just that I'm aware that our love affair had dwindled down to next to nothing and there's something about keeping appearances before others eyes when there's despicement between the two involved to be resolved and I'm curious as to whether you even care that our nosy neighbors are noting the negativity in our voices when the conversation visits on our alternating visions and investments, that's all I'm saying.

I mean, I'm not complaining,

I know how hard you're working on reconciling reparations from our past interactions. And the effort you've put into piecing together the compound fractions in the bones of our home which harbored thugs you saw so fit to remove. There's something about a structure unglued and misconstrued, rudely awakened in the night by the riders which were your Christian Kisses keeping Katabasis movements mandatory. I couldn't rest long enough or sleep straight to have the clarity to create a think tank that could perhaps alleviate the seriousness of our dire situation. But then again what are thoughts and peacekeeping promises in lieu of immediate actions of intimidation? Watts/Iraq. Brick City/of-Angels.

Don't get me wrong baby, this is not a complaint

just maybe we should separate for a short period for pondering. I'm wondering if outside intervention should be a condition of our impending union, I mean, you've never loved me. We shared communion and that's as close to a confession I've had but I'm learning your lessons well. It's probably inconceivable for you to imagine immaculate reciprocation of your own tactics. It's not that I want to but I've taught myself your own schematics, blueprints whereas I am unaware of the process of moving forward without the continuity of conflicts in our caressments. Yes, perhaps I should pull my economical investments which you've grown greedy upon and sarcastically shake your head when you see our situation post December 25th indications that I've spent too much frivoulously on the foundations of our fornication and now can't pay my belated bills.

I'm not complaining,

just a little disappointed that you deem yourself the anointed. I remember you when I was at my pinnacle. It was 1960 something and you came in jumping up and down gallivanting around my own destruction (and we were doing so well then). It was called methamphetamine and you had me hooked on heroin and hemp angel-dusted and thus adjusted to your specifications. You said I could make money and get high to feed my family until members annually fell victim to your vindication and it took me three decades to realize your repercussions were dissimilar to my own. You had some sort of lawful resistance, and doubled your insistence that once again I could not handle normal forms of recreation and that is why we could never be together.

My intention is not to complain

about your verbal distain of my education. You crafted your own evaluation which did not reflect my intelligence and stated my scores were irrelevant. Bad mouthing me to all your friends and what do you know. Your love's been pseudo and you're stating that I'm playing dangerous games on a high horse of which I may fall. But I fell before you long ago beseeching all of your infidelity. And I told you that I would put everything behind me if we could just kiss and make up so you made up even more misinformation about my hazy past and publicized me as a lazy ass who had no intention of fighting your unfounded verbal assault fabrications. And it's funny that a donkey doesn't fully represent me anyway although they called my grandfather Mule since I could recall. And its all antidotal but I'm not the one who's laughing at your matching of monkeys with my molecular makeup. I thought you loved me more than to participate in such foolishness my dear. But I'm a dummy,

call me crazy,

but weren't you the one who told me we should have an open relationship based on freedom to chose and do whatever we wanted as long as there was no disrespect but I suspected trickery in your intentions even then. I was a slave to your every whim and you gave me just enough to sustain my neediness. The first time we broke up you didn't want to let me go and even my cousins in California knew two years before me. Perhaps Texas was running on C.P.T. but you courted your way back into my life after I finally gained independence of your life-time sentence. Oh, how you've stooped to conquer and I stand somber before you're harshest judgments. But I'm not complaining. I'm just tired. You know, I still love you.

Even if our relationship requires revolution.

Warmly,

Daniel



interACTIVE

an interview with Hugh Forrest
SXSW interactive director
by Meredith Wende

In 1994, the South by Southwest (SXSW) entertainment festival and conference included, for the first time, a festival designed for the new and rising world of web-related technology, the Interactive Media Festival. Since then, it has become a legendary gathering of creative minds, drawing attendees nation-wide to the streets of Austin. I spoke with Event Director Hugh Forrest about the Interactive Festival's role in SXSW.

Austin Downtown Arts (ADA): What is your role in the festival?

Hugh Forrest: I am the event director for the interactive media festival. There are three wings of SXSW: music, film, and interactive media. I work with the panels that make up the big part of the interactive media festival.

ADA: What all is encapsulated in interactive media?

Forrest: I think we're still primarily focused on web related technology (like web design and web contexts) but we're beginning to branch into wireless technology. We are also beginning to focus on legal aspects like copyright laws. One of our panelists is an expert on cyber-law and how copyright laws play out on the internet. We like to think that we work with some of the internet's most creative people.

ADA: What are the different elements of the interactive media part?

Forrest: Our event runs March 7 - 11. Starting Saturday, March 8, we have four days of panels, about 65 total sessions, covering all aspects of interactive media. We've always termed it a festival as opposed to conference because there is a definite element of fun. Of course, it is an extraordinary time for attendees to network and to learn about new developments from the numerous panelists and keynote speakers, but I think that attendees enjoy the Austin atmosphere. SXSW is a lot of work but also a lot of fun.

ADA: What would it be like to attend this part of the conference?

Forrest: Attendees can decide which of the various panels they want to attend. I think that is one of the great things about SXSW in general: it offers lots of different choices. If you don't like the speaker in one panel, you can poke your head next door for a couple of minutes. We also have afternoon keynote speeches on topics we think are especially important and web awards for the best web sites designed the previous year. The web award ceremony is always one of the highlights of the festival.

ADA: What can attendees expect to learn from this?

Forrest: What we're best at offering is a chance to meet and connect with other people in this industry. It's an opportunity to network, learn trade secrets, and recharge your creative juices. Honestly, it's a tough time for new industries, and I think this festival can help new and experienced people alike by re-inspiring them.

ADA: Is it targeted at any particular type of organization or is it supposed to be beneficial to everyone?

Forrest: I think we're pretty general. A lot of our attendees do IT and web-master work for companies, but we also have some freelance workers.

ADA: What specifically do you think a small, arts-based organization could get out of it?

"Honestly, it's a tough time for new industries, and this festival can help new and experienced people alike by re-inspiring them."

Forrest: Interactive media definitely incorporates art. Many of these people consider themselves visual artists, bringing new ways of thinking to a relatively new medium. They are on the cutting edge of an innovative and quickly changing medium, and I think that is something arts organizations can tap into. Also, they would have the same opportunities to network and gather ideas.

ADA: How does this relate to the overall theme of SXSW?

Forrest: The general theme of SXSW is not about dressing a certain way or designing a certain way, but being eccentric and making a living doing new and exciting things. Across the board, SXSW tries to uncover the newest talents and ideas, and I think the interactive media part completely upholds that ideal. We try to push the envelope in our medium.

Josh Verduco



Teenage BLUES Sensation

Gary Clark Jr. spent the night of his 19th birthday at The Continental Club, but he wasn't part of the massive crowd cheering for the act on stage. He was the act.

Clark may have been too young to legally enter the Austin venue, but the soulful musician is no stranger to breaking age barriers — his talent has proven far too great to succumb to modifiers such as "young." He's still a teenager, but his most important label, he says, is that of musician.

And Austin is taking notice. Clark performed at the Austin City Limits Festival in August, where the *Austin Chronicle* described the applause that met his appearance as "long and loud." He has been invited to play again this year, but his next festival appearance will be at SXSW — running March 12-16

— where he won a gig at Austin's popular musical haven Antone's.

The fact that Clark is appearing at showcase after showcase is no accident. Already hailed as one of the most important blues musicians in the Austin music scene, Clark seems well on his way to achieving the status of his inspirations, musicians Freddie King and Albert King (whom Clark paid tribute to at the ACL Festival). He's sometimes puzzled by the overwhelmingly warm reception he's been given, but Clark takes it all in stride.

"It's kind of weird, seeing as how I am so young," Clark said. "There are so many great blues players, like Freddie King and Albert King, all those greats. And it's weird, coming after them."

**19-year-old local
guitarist Gary Clark, Jr.
to play at SXSW**

by Erin Steele

Clark has received a lot of attention because of his young age, assuming the stage at venues where other 19-year-olds would not even get past the doorman. He said his youth works both to his advantage and his detriment at times, although it's an issue he'd rather ignore.

"My age does a little bit of both; it helps me and hurts me sometimes, but it all works

out in the end. All I know is that playing music keeps me from getting into a lot of trouble," Clark said. "A lot of times, people say, 'You're pretty good for being young,' when you really just want to be good for being good."

Clark began playing the guitar seven years ago, although he had begged his parents to purchase the instrument practically from the moment he learned to speak. In 1996, after beseeching his parents for years, they finally gave in.

"I started playing seven years ago, at Christmas," Clark said. "I always thought the guitar was a cool instrument, I always wanted to be able to play it. I would always watch the guitar players when I saw bands perform.

"I told my parents I wanted a guitar when I was really young, but they never took me seriously — they bought me one of those little fake guitars, and I was like 'That's cool.' I was four, maybe. I was just really interested in playing, and they were like, 'You're never going to play it. You'll have it for a week and then you'll put it down.' But finally they came through."

Though his parents suspected guitar was just a fleeting passion for the young Clark, he proved them wrong, practicing religiously until he finally achieved a firm understanding of the instrument.

"The first two or three years, it took me a while to figure out what I was doing, as far as learning what key I was in, and all that kind of stuff," Clark said. "But after that was when I started doing my own thing. I was always pretty eager to learn. Any music I would hear, I would try to play it no matter what it was. I wanted to learn everything."

The more he played, the more inspiration Clark began to draw from, whether it was from other musicians, or everyday experiences. "I'm inspired by the blues guys I named earlier, Hendrix, all those guys," Clark said. "I think, 'Yeah, that's what I want to do.' And every day experience influences songwriting, I guess. But that's where the young thing kind of hinders you, because you don't have too much depth to draw from."

For those who seek out Clark for inspiration, his first CD — released in May 2002 and

entitled *Worry No More* — is available at Tower Records and Waterloo Records. Clark's favorite song on the CD is called "Drifting," and he said it is the only track he enjoys listening to with any regularity.

"On the CD I recorded, there's a song called "Drifting," that's an instrumental. It's the only song I listen to on the CD — I don't like listening to it that much," Clark said. "I'm real particular about listening to my voice, and that's song is an instrumental, so I kind of lay back and listen to it. It's weird — I love to sing, but I guess I'm just not comfortable listening to my voice. My voice is still changing and everything. Hopefully, I'll get over that."

Though he said it was exciting to record the CD in the studio, Clark much prefers playing live shows, where he can feed off the energy. "The studio is kind of weird," Clark said. "You think about getting it right more than playing what you feel. There are guys in

Gary performing at last September's Austin City Limits Music Festival.



Josh Verduzco

booths looking at you. But it was a neat experience."

Clark's favorite place to perform is The Continental Club, and his favorite performance to date was at the Austin City Limits Festival, from which he continues to receive feedback. "It was really exciting; that is my biggest gig to date," Clark said. "Just the other day, someone came up and said they had seen me there, so I'm still getting feedback from that show."

As for SXSW, Clark should prepare for even more feedback, as executives will be prowling the concerts looking for the next big thing. Despite the pressure, Clark's attitude is relaxed.

"I believe I'm playing at Antone's, which I've played at before," Clark said. "I know that all the record people will be there, but I'm not intimidated — who knows what will happen?"

Clark said his dream is to travel overseas, and play gigs all across Europe. Regardless of how far his talent takes him, he'll never escape the bittersweet relationship he shares with his much-talked-about youth, thanks to a little help from his parents' video camera.

"One night, me and a friend went down to Babe's on 6th street — it's not there any more, it's called Friends now — and we had this Walter Hicks blues jam that we were playing," Clark said. "It was the first time I had played in public, but we just got up there and started playing — we were 14, I think, and the guitars were bigger than we were. I was pretty nervous. Our folks were there and they recorded it. Every now and then, they'll bring out the tape, and I'm just like, 'Oh my God.'"



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LIFE UP TOP// AN INTERVIEW WITH SXSW MANAGING DIRECTOR ROLAND SWENSON

BY IMANI EVANS

Austin Downtown Arts (ADA): How long have you been involved with the SXSW festival, and in what capacities?

Roland Swenson: I'm one of the original group of people who organized the first SXSW in 1987. Initially my title was Director and then became Managing Director. I've worked on most areas of the event, particularly in organizing the music panel discussions and the marketing of the overall event.

ADA: What do you consider to be the most significant changes in the festival during the time you have been involved with it? "Changes" encompasses everything from the festival's actual offerings, to the way the festival is promoted, what it understands its mission to be, how it is perceived by the public, etc.

Swenson: Obviously, the growth in the stature and size of the event is the most significant change. Our first year featured 700 delegates and 120 acts. This year we'll host 6000 delegates and 1000 bands. In the early years we were largely perceived to be a regional event and now we're known around the world. But the basic idea has remained the same - SXSW is a place for artists and the companies they work with to promote their careers.

ADA: Being a novice to SXSW myself, in conversations with others I have often encountered the opinion that SXSW doesn't feature as much diversity(stylistic, ethnic, idiomatic) as one would wish for. Have you also come across this opinion and, if so, what is your position on it?

Swenson: In terms of the different styles of music, SXSW is very eclectic. We host most every style of music, to one degree or another. But of course SXSW is primarily known for booking rock bands and AAA acts. It's been a challenge from the start to go beyond that perception and draw in a more ethnically diverse group of artists and delegates. But we've made some progress recruiting black and Hispanic artists. We've hosted a number of large concerts featuring many top Tejano and Norteno artists, and we've made serious inroads into the worlds of hip hop and dance music. Certainly, we've hosted music from many different cultures and countries; everything from Siberian throat singers to Algerian rai acts.

ADA: Another thing that I have managed to extrapolate from conversations with various people about the festival is a desire for a more organic connection between the festival goings-on and the struggling musicians who make up the Austin local music scene. The

opinion has even been expressed that the festival, though a "cash cow" for the city, has become artistically barren. Do such opinions find their way to you often, and what is your feeling about them?

Swenson: I've found that many artists whom we choose to turn down to perform at SXSW consider the event to be lacking in artistic integrity. In 2002 we hosted 305 Austin acts in our festival which makes the suggestion that we've become "disconnected" from the Austin music scene laughable.

ADA: What do you consider to be the most pleasurable, stimulating or rewarding aspect (s) of your job?

Swenson: Working with the incredible group of people that labor tirelessly each year to make this incredibly complicated event come off is the best part of my job.

ADA: Okay, now what do you consider the most trying part of your job?

Swenson: Dealing with people who have a very limited understanding of what SXSW does except in regard to their own agenda.

ADA: What problems, issues or concerns are foremost on your mind heading into the festival? Are there any particularly thorny matters you find yourself having to troubleshoot frequently?

Swenson: Of course, this year the apparent upcoming war in Iraq is creating some fear and uncertainty, especially for the people who will travel here from overseas.

ADA: In your opinion, is SXSW living up to all that it can be? Do you ever ponder, or is it an on-going issue, what you and others involved with the festival can do to make it even more relevant to more people?

Swenson: SXSW is constantly in a state of re-inventing itself. If we become complacent then we will perish. There's always a need for improvement.

ADA: When I asked you what aspect of your job you consider most trying you responded with, "Dealing with people who have a very limited understanding of what SXSW does except in regard to their own agenda." I was just wondering if you could go into further detail—for instance, in what sense do you mean "deal with" such people, and can you give me any examples of the "agendas" that you refer to?

Swenson: Two examples spring to mind:

1. Bands who get turned down for SXSW often don't seem to understand that we have 6000 acts who want to play, and we only have 1000 slots, so a lot of good bands get turned down. We frequently receive bitter complaints from bands that we turn down who say that SXSW slots should just be for local, unsigned artists. We receive equally bitter complaints from bands around the state and country complaining that there are too many Austin artists given showcases. The out-of-towners don't understand that because SXSW is in Austin, and because many of the acts we bring to town are unknown here, that we need Austin artists to help bring in audiences. Bands from Austin often don't seem to understand that if SXSW only featured Austin bands that many fewer visitors would attend, which would mean that SXSW would not be a very effective event. Unknown bands don't always seem to understand that if we didn't book some acts that are well known, that many fewer people would travel to SXSW and they would not have nearly as good a chance of being seen by someone who might be able to help their career.

2. We are often embroiled in battles with major labels over bigger artists who want to play at SXSW to promote themselves to the press, radio and booking agents in attendance, but they want to play a small venue. They want to create a mob scene with lines down the street, because they want to make a handful of VIPs feel important when they walk into a show that most people can't attend. If these well-known artists want to demonstrate that they really care about their fans, they should play an appropriate sized venue so people will be able to see them.

ADA: It is our understanding that SXSW is a private company. Given that fact, I'm curious as to what the experience of your company has been in dealing with Austin's public sector (city government, police dept., community organizations, or what have you). What kinds of help does the city provide, and what issues continually arise? Who needs/requires/asks for what?

Swenson: This is a very big question that I can't entirely answer. But our relationship with the City is primarily that of a customer. We pay for the Convention Center, Auditorium Shores, street closures, softball fields, security, permits, taxes etc. We actively try to coordinate our program with the police and fire departments, and the city bureaucracies with varying degrees of success. SXSW is a very big and complicated event.

ADA: Is there anything else you would like to add about the festival or the work that you do?

Swenson: It'll be better next year.

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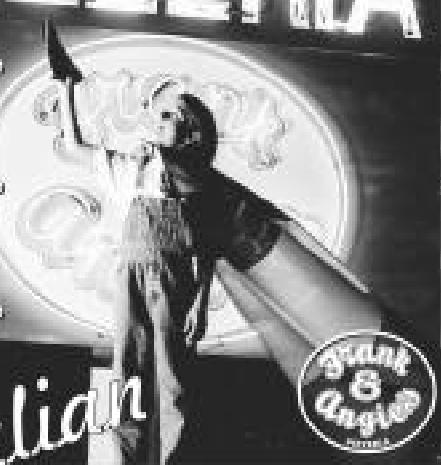
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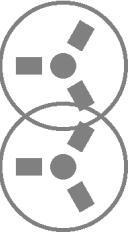
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SXSW 10th Anniversary Film Festival



by Cesar Diaz

In the last decade the South by Southwest Film Festival has attracted a wide array of regional and international films by veteran filmmakers and newcomers alike. This March the SXSW Film Festival celebrates their 10 year anniversary with a retrospective highlighting some of its most noteworthy features. The retrospective promises to honor a wide array of films that reflect the festival's last decade of outstanding, original filmmaking. The retrospective program will run in conjunction with this year's film festival.

A rundown on some of the films selected for the retrospective:

- Screenwriter/director Tim McCanlies' *Dancer, Texas Pop. 81*. Originally featured at the 1998 SXSW Film Festival, McCanlies's film, shot in a span of a month in Fort Davis, portrays four childhood friends (Brekin Meyer, Peter Facinelli, and Ethan Embry) who struggle to leave their small town behind after vowing to move to Los Angeles upon their high school graduation. (Alamo Drafthouse, March 8 at 5:15pm; March 13 at 2:45pm)
- Eric Saperston wrote, directed, produced and starred in his 2001 documentary *The Journey*. Saperston filmed *The Journey* as he drove his 1971 Volkswagen bus with a dog and three other travelers in search of "the meaning of life." The film is an engaging look into a man's summer road trip that often alludes to *The Wizard of Oz*. The film boasts cameos from Ken Kesey, Henry Winkler, and former Texas Governor Ann Richards. (Convention Center, March 8th, 7pm; Alamo Drafthouse, March 13th, 12:30 pm)
- *Made Up* is a coming-of-middle age comedy about a divorced mother that finds love at the most unexpected time in her life. The film, directed by and starring recent Golden Globe winner Tony Shalhoub, received last year's First Narrative Feature award. (Millennium, March 12th, 5:30 pm; Paramount, March 14th, 4pm)
- Aviva Kempner's *The Life and Times of Hank Greenberg* is a rousing documentary detailing the story of Greenberg, the first Jewish-American baseball player in the 1930s. Kempner superbly illustrates Greenberg and a sport that at the time was racially segregated and intolerant of racial equality.
- Also scheduled in this year's retrospective is Richard Linklater's (*Slacker*, *Tape*, *Waking Life*) first feature *It's Impossible to Learn to Plow by Reading Books* (Paramount Theatre, March 9th at 9 pm; Alamo Drafthouse, March 12th, 11:30 am).
- Christopher Wilchan's award-winning documentary, *The Target Shoots First* (Alamo Drafthouse, March 9th, 9:30 pm; Convention Center, March 12th, 12:45pm), and George Huang's *Swimming with Sharks* (Alamo Drafthouse, March 10th, 9:00 pm; Westgate, March 12th, 6:15 pm).

South by Southwest is currently scheduling more feature films for inclusion in this year's 10th Anniversary retrospective. For more information on tickets and screening information log on to www.sxsw.com/film/.