

Let's Get Started

As the haze from the smoke of the recent fires becomes a foggy memory, and coalesces into the End-of-Summer Bummer that we'll use to mark this particular season, it isn't that difficult to start with magical thinking and make things worse for ourselves from there. 2017 has been a challenge from November of the year previous, and as more personal and public disasters seem to pile up, it is easy enough to start building conspiracy theories and retreating into social media nests that are, at best, shameful.

And why not? We are now post-truth, post-reality, post-punk, and post-post-modern at this stage in the game, where the news is starting to look like a cross between *Network* and *The Day Today*, a not-altogether inaccurate, and yet entirely horrifying, distillation of where we stand, culturally, as we all thumb our way through MyFacester+ and Twinstagramblr, sucking up information about our world through these tiny windows that our phones have become.

But there is, as usual, another way to think about all of this, too. My wife and I moved to Salem a few years ago, looking for a new place to settle and build our life together. In that time we got married, went through some of the most challenging personal battles we'd ever faces, enjoyed some of the most precious moments together as a team... AND we have met amazing people, discovered the history and the geography of the area, and found our roles in the local community, however humble they may be. It's felt great to get to know everyone, and as I continue to make sense of it all, one thing has become clear: I need to take action.

Part of it is motivated by O45, certainly. Part of it is motivated by the fact that I'm desperately behind on making 'zines and I can feel a ticking clock, and maybe this will be the inspiration that will kick me into gear. Certainly having my house robbed, my computers stolen, and my ability to write taken from me had some influence, too. Now I want to seize my own creativity and really weild it, as best I know how.

But there is another factor, too: Salem is ready for a new perspective.

I don't claim that I can (or will) change everything. I don't claim that my efforts will save the world, or even be more than what it seems to be on the surface. I'm a simple man. I like my music loud, my food home cooked, and I want my journalism to be DIY.

And really, I want to share something I made with you.

It is my hope to build something new, for people who feel this same cultural tug and want to be makers again. I want to gather the experiences of all the amazing things in this town, and mix them with other voices and opinions that are not part of the SocialMediafication of our ideas and interactions. I want a brief reprieve from the digital domination of most all other communication, and a sense that, temporarily, we can share some cool and interesting ideas, in print.

At the very least, I want to return to my roots, return to a life that provided well and made my feel proud about who I was reaching and what I was saying. As much as this is a leap into the unknown, it is one that I am (and always have been) comfortable with, going back to High School. I work better without a net, fly more ably when I have no one but myself to answer to, and want to go places that I don't normally go when I know there is a deadline.

I want you to be a part of this. If, even, only as a reader. But let's build something positive. I do believe that we can make something fun that is not corny or cheesy, and is still heartfelt and wonderful. I think we can do it together.

And I'm going to step forward, square my shoulders, and do my best to set a good example.

And here's how I'm gonna do it:

Hobo Maker - Rumor Beast

Probably one of the most impressive things you can do to a person who is a fairly avid music fan is to blow his mind with the kind of revelation I was offered when Hobo Maker mentioned how the tracks were recorded for *Rumor Beast*.

"It's all me. Most of it live."



And when you give it a listen it is simply impressive to realize that is the case, not just on tracks like “Moby Dicked” where his guitar prowess is on full display, but on the opening track too, where a nearly full-band assault a la Hella pours forth from the speakers, and he just casually mentions that it was all him, “and some backing tracks,” well, that begs to be heard a few times more for verification, if nothing else.

Christopher—a veteran performer in iamthearm and a handful of other projects—has been writing and recording for a while now, humbling making Salem his home while he’s been recording some of the most incredible music. That’s what makes this album *the* record of the summer, if for no other reason than the tune, “Policies,” which is as Beefheart as it is Space Rocky, and with lyrics that are as mind-blowing as they are cryptic. It’s a fantastic listen, a puzzler that does not disappoint from start to finish, and more importantly, and experimental release from right here in our fair city. Hobo Maker is making an impressive debut.

And yet, parts of it sound familiar in a way that is charming and haunting. A fantastic Birdsongs of the Mesozoic-esque composition appears in the middle of the record (“Heroin is So Croquet”) that is completely unexpected and yet incredibly apt. While it is clear a debt can be paid to the work of Zach Hill in the percussion department, don’t let that suggestion fool you into think this is all knock-offs of other work. There is bombastic tape manipulation, a well-stocked synth section of brutal proportions, and a number of other oddities that explore worlds well beyond what these name-checks can provide, and carves out a place for Hobo Maker to build his jungle.

What Christopher has done with this project—and, specifically, with this *Rumor Beast*—is create a soundscape that is entirely his own, while incorporating elements from his influences the same way Silly Putty picks up snapshots from the comics page it interacts with. This record is impressive, with thrown expectations even in the back end of the album, where the title track busts out a horn section that is both appropriate and unlike everything else.

It’s something like this, brewed and released right here in our home town, that assures me the scene is doing just fine this year. So long as there’s plenty of Hobos to go around, we’ll all be a little better.

Why Aren’t People Coming To My Show?

I Don’t Know, Maybe You’re Not Asking The Right Questions Afterward?

I spent last night at the third installment of the local Comics Swap that I’ve been wrangling over at The Space, and had an incredible time. No surprises there, of course; every time we get together there, I have a fantastic time, and they really are set to treat the patrons and their performers with the utmost respect. And don’t take my word for it, either. The rumor beast travels fast, and people from elsewhere are asking me about that “vegan place” “down there.”

All of this is a long way of saying that the event was poorly attended. These things happen. What went wrong is any number of verging venn diagrams: the time of year, the poor weather, there’s a Comic Swap already established that I don’t know anything about yet. It is hard to say, really. But I returned home with what I brought, and under other circumstances, it might have been another summer bummer, a cramp in the week that was otherwise okay.

And to be sure, there is a bit of a leg-cramp in this scene, so to speak, when it comes to the expectations for our events. I see and hear this time and again, hampering any positive strut you could make after a recent event: It was lame, not many people showed up. It would have been fun, but there were only a few people there. If only there had been a good crowd...

Why is that? I find these kinds of comments weird, as if we are intentionally hobbling ourselves before we

can even make it onto the scene. Because, in the end, the size of the crowd is irrelevant when it comes to art, right? If the band played well, if the show was fun, if the people who *were* there rocked the fuckin' house, then why does it matter if there were only a handful of people at the show? Why do they have some much influence over how great things went?

The expectation that the crowds and the game of "who showed up this time" will actually make a difference is, unfortunately, a hold over from an era where the almighty dollar dictated our every move. Another cramp in our style that is preventing all aspects of our scene to evolve. Larger crowds used to mean more dollars, and in that sense, if that is the only kind of measurement of success, then yes, everything is a failure if there isn't a huge crowd. Why not let it ruin everything in our lives, then? Why do we even bother if it's likely our cramps that will keep us from seeing anything good about a sparsely attended show?

I've been thinking a lot about a conversation I had with Grady Roper of Pecan Crazy Records on *Mid-Valley Mutations* a few weeks ago, and we yakked about how it can feel when there are small crowds. He immediately shook it off, and pointed out how sill that thinking can be. "The right kind of people show up," and immediately I realized I agreed with him. When the right kind of people show up, the way to frame our after-show question now becomes, "did everyone have a good time?"

Just think about the difference that question makes in presenting what happened, vs. the demand to know why people didn't show up, only considering the size of the crowd? That difference is the sour taste at the end of the night, or a sense that maybe you do have a community that you belong to, even if it wasn't packed to the gills.

When I was about to leave the Swap, it would have been easy to just give in to the feeling of blandness and misfortune, to simply limp out and go home to read more *Green Lantern*. And yet—as I'm packing up and getting ready to leave, about to consider what all of this meant—Doug said to me, "We always have a good time when you're around. Thanks."

No matter what kind of mood I was about to let myself have, he completely saved me from it, and with nothing more than a few words and an earnest smile.

Maybe I'm naive to think that if we have fun, the

show was successful for only that reason. Maybe I'm naive to think that people want to have a good time when they actually overcome their leg-cramps and go out to a show. Maybe people want to get upset about things, and it's not worth the energy? Maybe being part of a positive community is not enough for them.

I don't want to suggest that a show can't totally blow. There are some that are just terrible, in any objective measurement, regardless of the crowd. And far be it to try and dictate your own taste. If something sucks, it sucks. So be it. But these things are unconnected to the size of our audience. We are a city that is experiencing growing pains, and there are cool things happening that are only just starting to gain momentum. We could let our sore legs dictate our own perceptions of our scene, causing parts of our scene to atrophy. But why should we?

There will be another Comics Swap. I'll bring more down, and if no one shows up again, we'll smile and slap each other on the back and do it again another night, too. And as long as my goal is to have a good time with people I like, to do something fun with cool folks that want to do the same, then very quickly every show has been a huge success.

Even before I start counting heads as they come in the door.

Pumpin' For The Man

It's not all playing shows and making art.
It's also health insurance the tools you use.

It's really disconcerting to come home and find that you have been robbed. It has now happened to us four times: once at our old house, three times at our current home. (To pinch a Merlin Mannism: "Don't be creepy.") At our current place they ransacked our car and shed each once. At both our Salem homes, junkies broke in and stole our computers, electronics, and strangely, my wife's lunch bag & winter coat.

There's more, I



could go on, but that's not the point. The problem was, most explicitly in the most recent case, that I was unable to make podcasts or write for a while. I mean, I could write on a piece of paper with a pen—and I did, for my own sanity—but I didn't have access to the usual tools I use to write. And, in a way, I still don't; this entire zine wouldn't exist without the borrowed computer of one Peter Vortex.

It was heartbreaking, to say the least, to wake up and want to sit down to make something, only to remember it is gone. As an artist, it is hard to not ply your trade. You just want to do something, when the mood strikes. I went over a week in that state after the break in, pacing, wanting to yell out and knowing that it isn't going to do you any good.

More importantly, there was a new problem once I was finally comfortable with what had happened. Now I had to go through the process of replacing the tools I lost. When you work for yourself, as I do, this becomes an insufferable process.

Questions like, "Who is your employer? How much money have you made this year? Who covers your health insurance? Are you, in fact, employed?" are difficult to answer, because as artists, they are often not cut-n-dry, or even simple. We do our best to get paid for what we do, but it is hard to convince people that we have value as creators in a world where everything is free on the Inter-Web-A-Tron, and even worse, just because we "art", we we don't seem to need the same kinds of protections that "employed" people have.

I have no Health Insurance as a "writer." I have no insurance that covers this break in as a "musician." I can't even get a former employer to verify that I have, at one point, been paid to do those things. As creators, we don't have the same kinds of systems in place, and we don't have the protections that someone who is pumpin' for the man has as part of the regular work day. When I say, "I'm an artist," to anyone who doesn't immediately like the work you do, that identity earns less respect than a gas station attendant. A gas station attendant gets a regular paycheck, and sometimes, benefits.

While my own white privilege is probably not the best way to win over sympathy, it is not hard to find a number of examples of people who are not white and male and objectively have it much worse. If my artist friends don't have another job, they are often one

medical problem away from a ruined career, and one paycheck from losing their place. Art rarely pays what it should, and having to replace your computers suddenly is a financial drain that can set you back for months, years and in some cases, could end a career.

I am incredibly lucky, and I owe it to the incredible community here in Salem who support their creators as best they can, and make it possible to get back into the game pretty quickly. I am thankful for their support and help, and it is because of them that I can even do this. In a way, I owe this to them as much as I do to myself.

But, just because I'm back "on my feet," doesn't mean that we shouldn't take action. We are in a position where art seems to be valued at an all time low. Hardly anyone gets paid for almost anything they do, and yet they are expected to produce endless streams of content in the hopes that someone out there "connects" with their work and deigns to pay them for it. Sure, that happens. Perhaps. Sometimes. My art income for 2017 has been in the triple digits, all of it freelance and all of it from friends. But that doesn't really help much when I have to handle the shopping for the house, or even get my next gig.

It is, perhaps, naive to think that I should be an artist. I understand that point of view, too. We don't really deserve to have entertainment either, right? Those movies and TV shows aren't really made by anyone worth paying, are they? Those people don't deserve to make a living. Everything you read all day long should be made by indentured servants, as well. Music is free, too? On the radio, right? We can just tune in. They don't need to get paid.

Do not mistake my own gratitude for some sort of insane assholery as I joke about a common problem. I understand how lucky I am to even spend my days writing, and any time that I spend making music is worth any hardship I ever experience, certainly. I am living the dream, and I wouldn't trade it for anything. But don't artists deserve the same kind of security as anyone else who holds down a regular job? If I spend 12 hours a day working on my craft, isn't it reasonable that I shouldn't have to depend on Oranges as my health plan?

Maybe this is a



mountain-out-of-a-molehill sort of situation, as I'm still processing a recent injustice that is, ultimately, no big deal. But in the time I was without my tools, where all I could do was pace around and make phone calls and get angry, I had a lot of time to think.

The result of that break was, in many ways, this publication. I need a new, immediate conduit for my writing, a place where it doesn't linger, but is quickly out for you to read. I want to take advantage of the lucky position I'm in. Most artists don't have the connections I do, aren't able to recover from situations like this. Many artists are just not given any kind of community to lean on, and that is the real problem. I'm sad I can't make my little GoPro movies anymore. I'm even sadder when I hear about people who have it much worse than me, and maybe need a creative community to help them out, too.

Maybe I don't have artist's insurance. But I can now support the community around me that saved my ass when I needed it the most. Maybe that's something. We'll see.

Etc. & Whatnot

In the future we would love to see your e-mail, letters and interactions here. This is your zine too. I would love to have to answer every nit that you pick, and have all of my type-os immortalized forever in a well-worded and clever letter from you.

A word about the name:

It is a well-worn adage that names are hard, and punny names are harder. So I don't expect that *The Cherry Picker* will gel with everyone right away. I guess the phrase is: tough shit. It's my zine. If you can come up with a better name, please, start your own zine and we'll have a zine symposium at The Space and invite The Copy Scams to play. I'd be into that.

The more I thought about it, though, it started to feel right. I don't claim that I can (or will) cover everything. Maybe with time I can have more *Pickers* help increase the scope of what we cover, and what you will find in these pages. But who knows? Best laid cliches, and all of that.

What this will be is from my perspective. I can do no more or less, really. I want this to be an inclusive place, where all points of view are welcome, but I'll be honest: I have no time for bigotry, no time for hate of any kind, and no time for blandness, either. I'll make a

place for you in these pages if you want to play nice. And I'll do my best to have complete transparency, no matter what the future may hold. I can't deny that this isn't biased, and all I can say is that the point at which I make a misstep, I'm hoping that the readers will call me out. Let's promise to keep each other in check, 'kay?

Ads. Fuck, I hate talking about this. But I must make it clear: we will be running ads. Yes, I guess that means I'm a sellout? DM me, bro. Perhaps I'll do a whole issue about my ethics if there is such a call for it. But until then, there will be ads, they will be for businesses we support, and if you don't like it, please have your business support us, instead.

I'll try to get these out every two weeks. But who knows? It's hard to say, again, what the future holds. But no matter how it pans out, we'll certainly try this for a while. And we'll both be proud of the results. We'll add to the dialog, we'll laugh, we'll cry.

And probably have a drink or two, along the way.

A Prayer For Rain

We need a rain. A rain to wash away the negativity. A rain to wash away the bullshit. To get our minds right and set us on the path.

A rain in our minds. A rain through the social media and through the dark corners of the Inter-Web-A-Tron. A rain that nurtures music and art, a rain that finds the seeds that need growth, and washes away the vines and weeds that choke our minds daily.

A rain that ignores the rich dipshits. A rain that cleans those who need it. A rain that finds the gardens that are dying, a rain that splashes young lovers too tentative to embrace. A rain that makes old couples squeeze each other tight and value the time they have together.

A rain that makes people forget the crimes of the past and the nightmares that haunt them. A rain that plays Devo and Orchards and makes you dance the whole time you are soaked.

A rain that makes up for all the bad things. A rain that brings you all the best things.

A rain that will get us through.

A rain that will get us through the next two weeks, anyway.

“We Now Live In The Future”

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Thank You:

M (my muse, my love, my life), KМУZ, The Space Concert Club staff, Peter Vortex, Amy & Tommy, Shawna & Rob, Jessica & Bella & Will, Jennifer & Noe, and, of course, you. Thanks.

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The Capital Couple (**thecapitalcouple.wordpress.com**)

Wait, We're Recording, Right?

(**waitwererecordingright.wordpress.com**)

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Additions to the calendar / Ad / Trade-Out Inquiries /
Letters to the editor: **austinrich@gmail.com**

Steppin' Out

- 13 September:** First Animation Club Meeting @ Wild Things Games, 6:30 PM
The Folly @ McMenamins Boon's Treasury, 8 PM
David Gilmour: Live At Pompeii @ Salem Cinema, 7:30 PM
Mouth, Pacific Radio & DoggyDogWorld @ The Space Concert Club, 9 PM
- 14 September:** Harvest Dinner Cooking Class @ Willamette Valley Kitchen Co., 11 AM
- 15 September:** Flash Fiction Friday Workshop @ Salem Art Association, 4 PM
The Ty Curtis Band @ The Half Penny, 9 PM
- 16 September:** Cerberus System Deckbuilding Tournament @ Borderlands Games, 1 PM
DragonBall Super Tournament @ Wild Things Games, 4 PM
Vintage Yu-Gi-Oh! Tournament @ Borderlands Games, 5 PM
Magic The Gathering: Pauper Tournament @ Borderlands Games, 6 PM
Live Stand Up Comedy @ Northern Lights Theater Pub, 9 PM
- 17 September:** Feel Connected, Shipping House & Jake Cohara @ The Space Concert Club, 6 PM
Superhero Superstar 6th Annual Jr. Closet Ball @ Capitol City Theater, 4 PM.
- 18 September:** Warhammer 40,000 Escalation League @ Borderlands Games, 7 PM.
- 19 September:** Bad at Parties Podcast: Future Ghost @ The Shipping House, 10 PM.
- 20 September:** Ben Hur @ Elsinore Theater, 7 PM
- 21 September:** Understanding Exposure @ The Shutterbug, 6 PM
- 22 September:** Suicide Awareness Benefit @ The Space Concert Club, 6 PM
Prince Tribute @ Venti's, 9 PM
The kiisu d'salys Interview @ KМУZ (Mid-Valley Mutations), 10 PM
- 23 September:** Star Wars Armada Q3 Tournament @ Borderlands Games, 1 PM
Salem Oregon Podcast Symposium @ The Space Concert Club, 7 PM
Fatboy, The Marvel, NRG Tribe & Devmo, Cerebral Cortex, & More @ The Triangle, 9 PM
- 24 September:** Star Trek: Discovery Premiere @ Capital Taproom (Time Not Listed)
Aerial Ruin, Solace & Data Tombs @ The Space Concert Club, 8 PM.
- 25 September:** City Council Meeting @ Salem Civic Center, 6 PM