

NorCalNoiseFest 2017

What People Really Mean When They Say, "Let's Make Some Noise."

"It's really a conference, but if I called it that, no one would come. So it's a NoiseFest," Lob told me, as NorCalNoiseFest was wrapping up this year, and everyone was milling about, not ready to end this incredible three-day event. It makes sense, too; there is almost no way you could see all of the 50+ acts that played in those three short days, and while many of us genuinely tried, sooner or later, our conference instincts did start to kick in.

After 21 years of putting these on, and no sign of slowing down, the NorCalNoiseFest is a unique event in the world of music, in that it is absolutely home-grown and d.i.y., and yet, one of the most incredibly well organized events I've ever attended. The institutional memory shows through every aspect of how the business is handled, how quickly the shows move, how organized the crew is, and more importantly, in the acts themselves.

People who have been involved with the fest seem to come back year after year, and Lob would regularly have to give some spiel about how long he'd known everyone. The number of people who were there, and had been for the last 10+ years, was absolutely inspiring. But even more so, the relationships that were forming (and reuniting) over this weekend sealed the deal for me. This Fest is something truly special in the world of music, and the fact that it focuses on

Noise and Experimental music ONLY is not only spectacular, but almost unheard of.

While there have been others involved in various capacities since the beginning, Lob Instagon now runs the show, and when you meet Lob and see Instagon do their thing, you realize why he's calling the shots. Lob's

professionalism, curiosity, and understanding of Experimental Music has helped create an excellent environment for NorCalNoiseFest to sustain itself, and the crew he's assembled to help him are all incredible performers and artists in their own right. When you start to add up all the vectors, you start to realize that this fest might be more artist-centric than almost any other I've been to. Everyone pitches in, by the end.

I thought of a number of ways I could cover this story: a run-down of the bands I liked, interviews with key performers, or other tidbits like that. But when it comes to this Fest, there are so many others that have documented the hell out of it, that it seems odd for me to try and re-tread ground that is probably pretty muddy as it is. norcalnoisefest.bandcamp.com has an audio document up already, that covers some of the heavy hitters, and any day now it will contain full performances by all the artists from the entire fest. I went another way, and made animated gifs of all the acts I saw (bit.ly/NorCalNoiseFest2017), which was fun and gives for a slight dynamic feel to things. I urge you to check out the music; there were artists here that blew my mind, and if you like experimental music at all, this is a wealth of it in one incredible location.

But instead of going over the things that press usually cover, I'll say this instead: Sacramento is the capital of California, too. And for a put-together-by-friends fest, it was covered well by local press and radio, the papers and local news gave it attention, and people from all over the world attended as performers. It didn't happen overnight, obviously. This is the 21st of these things they've had, and I'm sure the first few years were fairly under-attended.

Those caveats aside, they have built something special down south, and this yearly event has such a reputation that I'm really surprised that it took me this long to check it out. I can only speak for what it was like as a performer, but in three days I met a ton



of artists who were curious, open to your work, put art first, and suffered none of the bullshit illusions that you see in so many other places.

Salem should take note. We are a state capital. We have an incredible music scene. And, with patience, we can build things with a 20+ year history, too.

But, we can only do it together.

More Noise With Toys

Noise Therapy @ 635 Ferry

While certainly common in a lot of cities, I'm so very excited to see Salem start building an experimental scene as various artists vie for new ways to expose themselves in the modern age. Eugene puts on regular shows, Portland has them in spades, and even Corvallis has an incredibly supportive experimental scene that hosts great events constantly.

But experimental music, while often embraced intellectually, is difficult to ignite in live venues, and this is often a challenge of the size and shape of any given scene. To put it simply: it is very easy to enjoy experimental art on your own, when you have time to digest it and make sense of it. But in crowds, with people around, these loud (and often confrontational) events can be difficult to generate interest from the people who are just walking by, looking for something to do. It takes careful curation, dedicated artists working hard (and working together), and patience before anything really comes together, and that's in places where all the elements are already in some form. Starting from scratch is even harder.

While Salem might have a lot of Experimental Music in its DNA, it's another thing entirely to say yes to the dress. So the shows that are being organized by Herd William (and the Salem Creative Network) are welcome in a city that struggles with its relationship to live (and loud) art. Herd has found a way to create completely unpretentious events that focus on people who love performing, and want to be involved in something fun. Meanwhile, Salem Creative Network is able to show that struggling spaces in Downtown Salem can not only put on successful events, but attract locals who want to start businesses, too.

This is only the second of these being put on, but both Herd William (and Ross of the SCN) are doing more, and the next is scheduled for November. But for



the October show, Herd assembled an impressive array of local talent that all work in different forms of experimentalism, creating an excellent showcase in the tradition of the *Corvallis Experiments In Noise* and the *Mutations Showcases* at the Space (not to toot my own horn, but Ross & Herd met at one of my shindigs).

Suffice it to say, there were more acts on this single bill than are often playing at all the venues in Salem during a given weekend: Justin Smith, Jocko Homomorphism, Rock Forming Minerals, Herd William, devilsclub, Talc & myself, performing a "Mini-Mutation" (a condensed version of my radio program). The entire spectrum of performers were represented: Harsh Noise, electronic improvisation, guitar & pedal noodling, cassette & Moog freakouts, and my own sample heavy cut-ups. To the outsider, seven rapid-fire acts playing 20 minute (or less) sets must have been a little odd, but to everyone performing we were able to get into a groove that was not only low on down-time, but high on energy.

Between the folks who wandered in, locals who came out to support the show, and friends of performers, there was a pretty great turn-out, and while this venue has no name, All Ages spaces where there are a variety of events don't need to have a name to keep the location alive and fun. But don't take my word for it; Salem Creative Network streamed all the performances, and you can see them on their Facebook Page easily (facebook.com/salemcreative). You'll notice quickly that there is an enthusiasm to the performances that spoke to how genuine everyone was feeling that night.

Herd and Ross have something with these low-stakes, low-budget, but high-fun and high-art content

events. These kinds of shows are not for everyone, and while it might seem like they just carved out a niche in an abandoned rental space and are putting on shows there, and you would be right in that assumption: it not only looks like that, but it actually is, almost in the tradition of squatters finding warehouse spaces and making something happen.

Which is actually kind of neat. There was a certain pleasure, knowing that around the corner was The Taproot, probably putting on something cool too, and around the corner, we were just as loud, just as incredible, and just as cool. In an era where bars can be over-rated, and getting drunk is not always compatible with real art, these kinds of venues are going to help take Salem's scene from something that is great as it is, to something that is truly special, much like the scene in Sacramento.



“Null Moats” by -i

Ultimately we're in this together! It's smart to unify and not become discreet projections that fall into obscurity...

əb'skyōorədē/ (noun)

The state of being unknown, inconspicuous, or unimportant. "He is too good a player to slide into obscurity."

Synonyms: insignificance, inconspicuousness, unimportance, anonymity, the quality of being difficult to understand. "Poems of impenetrable obscurity."

Synonyms: incomprehensibility, impenetrability, unintelligibility, opacity; a thing that is unclear or difficult to understand. Plural noun: obscurities. "The obscurities in his poems and plays."

Synonyms: enigma, puzzle, mystery, ambiguity. "There may be obscurities but no answerless riddles."

Ok so what is the mysterious “This” i refer too? In small terms i am referring to our neat little Salem music scene, in large terms i'm referring to the journey of our lives that are less separate than together; at the anatomical level. ALRIGHT that's a big breadth of message but that is “This.”

Why does “This” (hereto referred after as this) matter? That's a trick question. 2 answers are something that interest me.

Answer 1.) This matters because human expression matters. The ability for us to form our thoughts into a representative reflection and articulation of this hard-to-define experience is important. It adds color, feeling, and shape to peoples' otherwise dull adventure inside our vessel. It adds, at the bottom of the barrel, an archive of your experience to be shared and commiserated across language, medium, time, and dimension...imo.

That imo was meant to lighten it up a little bit. i used a new-timey internety acronym to soften my blow.

Answer 2.) Nothing matters.

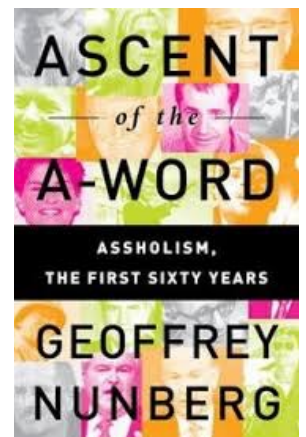
Ok so much for lightening it up.
stay tuned

The Asshole Problem

By embracing assholism, no one wins

More clever gents than I have dissected the very word itself, namely Geoffrey Nunberg in his book *Ascent of the A-Word*. But where he largely goes about the act of reviewing how the word works in our culture, up until recent history, the realm of the asshole was reserved to a very specific person. What is alarming is the spread of assholism to new areas that is affecting the world negatively.

Let's face an unpleasant reality: if you were a business leader, if you were looking for an afterlife with a Christian flavor, if you find that you are white and you have problems with both -isms (sex and race), then it is likely you might be an asshole. The Right has, historically, made assholism a part of their personality, in a way. “A person who thinks their status entitles them to a kind of behavior—to either abuse others, or make themselves more important than they really are.” This is the attitude of someone trying to climb the corporate ladder, to assert dominance when it is not



earned or deserved, and in some cases, has probably been chosen by his faith in the afterlife, too.

For my entire life, there was a pattern to the bullies and the assholes that I encountered. Sure, there were always exceptions, but on the whole, there was a distinct Rightness to assholes that was easy enough to smell once they started in with their bullshit. There's a privilege, a sense of, "everyone else is wrong," and a real desire to make their way to the head of the table, no matter what it takes to get there. These qualities, throughout my life, were considered boons in the world of business and politics, and yet are taught as amoral to children. The cultural narrative, reinforced by every movie from the last several decades, firmly portrays this group of rich and mean spirited people—these assholes, if you will—to be the problem.

I started noticing something changing around the time of the Obama election cycle, and certainly there were examples of this going around beforehand, too. There seemed to be a surge in assholism, in spite of this message of optimism and hope that was being delivered. And of course, all we saw "in the news" (our phones as we scrolled through MyFacester+ and Twinstagramblr) was this deluge of news that made it seem like the future would be a diverse, queer-friendly world where we would all be happy.

But in the real world, assholism was on the rise. A phrase I remember hearing incessantly over the last several years has been, "I just hate people, and can't stand going outside." It haunts me now, because I realize that this is code for, "I just push my way through the outside world to get back to my comfortable bubble as quickly as possible." Assholes never realize that they are, and as the outside world is full of impatient, mean, and difficult interactions in everyday life, Social Media was telling a different story of change, hope, optimism, and grooviness.

I'm convinced that the asshole-swing, itself a reaction to the optimism-swing that led to Obama's term in office, is what allowed the most recent election cycle to wind up the way it did. The assholes won, and they got the asshole they wanted in office, too. But even before that election, I saw another asshole-swing, a new movement of people who were adopting assholism and running with it in a way that was much different than what I'd known previously.

Now, there was a sudden rise of liberal assholes,

and they were not helping any cause they side with.

The logic has something to do with the fact that you can beat the dipshits at their own game by doubling down on the tactics that they use to get ahead. If a business bro is a total prick, then to take him down, you need to do the same, over-exaggerate your own importance, and bully the bully until they give up or it really comes to a fight. And this is, in many ways, what our military does when waging war anywhere in the world: pummel people into submission, and then assert that you did it in the name of good. If you are a dickhead in the name of doing something that benefits everyone, you're not really bad, right?

Here's the problem: being an asshole, even in the name of good, is not a winning strategy. It's like thinking you can use the Dark Side to help do the right thing for the Jedi, or taking up The One Ring and thinking you can make Middle Earth a good place when you do. It doesn't work like that. You don't win this battle against the worst people in our culture by being worse than they are.

As the new reality of 045 starts to set in, I have seen first-hand this new kind of left-wing assholism, where pedantry and tiny victories stand in for real change and activism. I see I'm-right-and-you-must-accept-it attitude that is not only a big turn off, but doesn't win any supporters. On the Left, I see people who will die for a cause in name only, but will not lift a finger to do volunteer work in their community. Somewhere, the messages got mixed, and we're still sorting it out.

I'm not saying there aren't causes worth fighting for. And there are certainly times when you should fight back, no matter how dirty the pool is being played against you. But when you don't rally behind a good cause, when your tactics are just as awful, when you behave the way they do, you don't do anyone any favors. We must find a way to speak our minds in discourse, not discord. We must find a way to challenge those we don't agree with, rather than nuke and obliterate them. We must find a way to unite in favor of important causes that move our culture forward, rather than stumble over small battles that do us no immediate good.

When you are asshole, no matter whose side you are on, you are still an asshole. And no one wants to hang out with you when that's the case.

As Nerdy As They Wanna Be

20 Sided Trivia every Tuesday @ The Space

There's no shortage of Trivia Nights in any city you live in, so when you want to invest your time into attending one, it takes a lot of heart and personality to keep people interested. That's why *20 Sided Trivia* with Kat & Bryce is your best bet for a very geeky trivia night in your home town. M & I went as *The Capital Couple* to check it out (as part of our ongoing efforts to see what Salem has to offer), and while we consider ourselves pretty dedicated *Firefly* fans, we still managed to get outdone by some of the attendees.

20 Sided Trivia is the brainchild Kat Baird & Bryce Lisser, both local business folk here in Salem. (Kat's one of the owners of The Book Bin, and Bryce is one of the Acupuncturists at Stone Guardian Acupuncture.) But their day jobs are irrelevant here, where they combine pop culture nerdery and a fun atmosphere to create the perfect kind of inviting Trivia Night that doesn't feel cliquey or awkward.

One challenge in the Nerd / Jock paradigm shift that happened over the last 20 years is how niche and insular certain geek scenes can be. While this certainly existed in the old days too—just ask anyone who had to descend into a musty basement comics shop to get his monthly dose of *Green Lantern*—it has been weird to see it percolate into the nerd culture of the modern era. We were supposed to be forged in an era when we were not considered cool, or even a part of the cultural dialog. Now there are weirdos of every shape and variety flying their freak flag, this seems like a strange time to start wanting to be so backward-thinking in the way we interact. We're all nerds. We should be supporting, and inclusive.

And *20 Sided Trivia* is exactly that. Even when it was clear a few of us didn't play video games, our joke answers were not only encouraged, but laughed at. When we didn't get to the final round, they invited us to join a one-person team anyway so we could keep going. And by the time we were finished, it felt like we made new friends, all from three rounds of trivia. So what if they bought us off with



with an actual package of Nerds candies?

Certainly, there are a ton of reasons for wanting to get involved with more activities that are outside our screens. And if you like geeky trivia, people who like to have fun, and an inviting place to do all of this, then you could do a lot worse than to grab a beer and join *20 Sided Trivia* every Tuesday at The Space. I suspect that it will only take one night of camaraderie to really sell you on a guy in a Fez reading you questions about Willow's girlfriend from *Buffy*.

(It's Tara, by the way.)

(facebook.com/20SidedTrivia)

Frankie Stein & His Ghouls!

(Expanded & edited from a podcast on 10/14/14, & a blog post from 10/22/15.)

Before The Cramps & The Misfits, there was another Monster Themed rock band, made up of real monsters that was blowing the socks off all the cool kids in mid-'60's: Frankie Stein & His Ghouls! But the story of how these monsters came to be was so secretive that, for many years, it was completely unknown to most. The mystery behind Frankie Stein & His Ghouls is, for some, most of the charm, and in the summer of 1964 when their first record slipped out into stores, unannounced, it was pretty clear that the Synthetic Plastics Company (under the Power Records imprint) had a hit on their hands.

For those of you who don't want the mystery of these recordings ruined for you, I completely understand. You might want to skip most of the rest of this essay. There is something amazing about the complete package you see in the album above. This was absolutely marketed to kids in every way, but also: to HIP kids. Kids who liked to dance, who understood how cool ghouls really were, and knew that having monsters at your party was fun. If you grew up like this, you probably don't want to know the truth about Frankie Stein. Who would? The band is better off as a group of unknowns.



In a way, I like to think that these records really were made by the monsters you see on the covers.

It's sort of lame, in this modern age of instant-information, to think that you have to know everything about everything. It's the same problem when Jandek went from a genuine mystery to this guy who releases eccentric records and a fair number of people have now met. This group of monsters cutting rock and roll LPs is just as reasonable to any boring truth that would probably ruin the charm of these amazing recordings. So, please, feel free to skip the story below. I won't be offended.

But, if you want more, follow me...

In 1950 the Synthetic Plastics company went from the premiere manufacturer of plastics that were used by the garment industry, to the premiere manufacturer of children's music entertainment, basically overnight. It was not a glamorous or financially solvent field to enter into, but from the perspective of the company, Children's Entertainment could be produced in the same way that their assembly lines had produced plastic products for clothing. Turn your limitations into strengths, and hire good workers to produce quality materials. Then, find the right store to stock your product, and roll out the advertising. The ideas had been basic business practices for decades now, and Synthetic Plastics went about creating a number of subsidiary companies throughout the '50's and '60's to release one kind of children's LP or another as a way to stay competitive.

While the idea that each of these different "labels" all had a traditional staff of record industry analogs is to even give the practice at Synthetic Plastics that much credit or planning. Each staff member at Synthetic Plastics headed "a label," and they were each in charge of the releases that label put out. The company had a studio, and everyone learned how to run the gear on their own. Once a recording was finished and the covers were designed (again, by the in-house, self-taught design team), the company would ship



these off to be pressed, after which the records were sent to their warehouse, then shipped out to every store that carried their albums. Everyone was urged to get as many releases out as possible to keep the product coming. Quantity was going to win this battle.

Story albums and collections of children's rhymes and songs were instant hot sellers, but as the '60's began to start rocking, it was clear that the kiddie dance crazes were another market that Synthetic Plastics could fill. Kids were really enjoying these LPs of dance songs, each song catering to a dance that was popular. This wasn't Rock and Roll per se, just a very watered down and "whitened" form that was popular everywhere now that groups like The Beatles and The Stones were starting to get going. These dance LPs (instrumental, of course) were safe ways that parents could let their children enjoy Rock music, and built in a guaranteed fan base for this kind of music as the kids got older. Synthetic Plastics began searching for some musicians that "got" this new sound, to produce records for them to release.

They found the perfect Duo in the pair Joel Herron & Fred Hertz. Joel had came out of radio, conducted his own band in the '50's, and had made a name for himself as a bit of a songwriter. Joel met Fred working on The Jimmy Dean Show, and they bonded over having grown up on jazz and swing, but having a love of the new R&B and Rock music that came with girls, dancing and drugs. Joel was approached by Synthetic Plastics to assemble an in-house band to record for some of these dance records they were planning, and the money was just good enough that he brought Fred Hertz (and some of his regular players) along with him. Joel and Fred bonded over pop culture, and loved talking about different creature features they had recently taken in, always making obtuse and crude references to bad horror tropes when the got together. Very quickly they developed a sense of humor that made them a perfect working partnership.

The idea was to lay down some tracks that Synthetic Plastic could use on multiple records. With a set rhythm section recorded, the label could go back and have different "lead" musicians do different solos and bespoke licks over the same bed music. This gave Synthetic Plastics the opportunity of creating a number of "songs" without having to record the

whole band every time, and by handing these recordings over to different label people, spreading out these “duplicated” recording would be as noticeable. The more unique lead parts they could lay over the tracks, the better to cover their ploy, and soon one session with a full band was paying off rather fruitfully for the business. Using different themes and cover designs released on different labels, Synthetic Plastics managed to do very well for themselves with this idea, and by 1963 a number of these Dance Records has been making the rounds in stores, and sold well.

It is hard to say who had the idea first, but after a night of getting loaded and goofing around in the studio, Joel & Fred took the halloween sound effects from the studio archives and laid them over the dance tunes they had recorded, put a few groans and moans over the songs with chains rattling, and made a tape for themselves that they would play around for friends. Partially a dig at “The Monster Mash”, the production was so lo-fi it sounded like real monsters were playing the tunes.

Both Joel & Fred were well aware of the Shock Theater! monster trend happening around them, and while the tape was started as a joke, once they got a cover mocked up by a friend, and had made a few copies for friends in the radio industry (pressed under the amusing moniker “Power Records,”) it seemed as if the idea was crazy enough to actually work. In 1964, Synthetic Plastic tested “Introducing Frankie Stein & His Ghouls: Monster Sounds And Dance Music” (The Ideal Party Record!) to an unsuspecting America. It sold out in every store, and thus the “Power Records” label – which had not existed before – was handed over to Joel & Fred.

Perfect Halloween Music

The next year was busy for Joel & Fred, and in the summer of 1965 they released four new Frankie Stein LPs, and re-issued the one from the previous year, all of which sold very well everywhere they were available. These were easily produced in the studio, again recycling other tracks they had cut for other dance records and remixing them with the “Frankie Stein Sound.” It seemed as if Joel & Fred had set up a cottage industry. But they also had other interests in Hollywood, and making kids fare all day, every day didn’t appeal to them, especially given how cheaply

Synthetic Plastics was producing the albums (skimping on things like studio time, and pay). Fred went on to be relatively unknown afterward, and Joel went back to radio and television, popping up here and there for the remainder of his life. Frankie Stein & His Ghouls would be a nice footnote to a small paycheck they had received from Synthetic Plastics, and wasn’t really thought about by either of them the next few years.

As time went on, these records began to become quite collectable. The original print runs were the only time Synthetic Plastics put any money into the project, and when Fred & Joel left, both Frankie Stein (and Power Records) essentially stopped production. Until some of these songs were reissued (incompletely) on a two-CD set in 2005, the primary way anyone heard this music was from a friend who had made a cassette transfer, and to this day LP rips float around online. Fans had no way of finding (or confirming) information about these records for decades, and while the value of the LPs (like much of the Synthetic Plastics releases from their early days) skyrocketed in value on the resale market among people in the know, they were completely unheard of by most everyone else. For a long time, these albums seemed mythical.

This, in many ways, ushered in the modern era of Halloween Novelty records. Frankie Stein took the ideas of scary sounds LPs and “The Monster Mash,” and combined them in a way that punk bands have been doing every year since. And there is immense charm and genuine strangeness to these albums that

qualifies as experimental at times, too. And, let’s not forget, they rock pretty good for 1964, when you get down to the playing. Frankie Stein did not invent the Monster Rock & Roll song, but in five albums over less than two years, he certainly perfected it, codified the sense of humor, and insisted on a good backbeat.

These days, these albums are virtually forgotten by the mainstream, and are rarely dusted off outside of record nerds like me. But the idea of



music by monsters is so compelling that these albums deserve a second listen. These are albums made during the golden age of children's albums, and in many ways, the perfect synthesis of a studio system creating the Casablanca of monster records, almost completely by accident, like some creature born in a lab.

It isn't required that you know how these kinds of records get made. But it is important that you get to know them, anyway.

([google.com/search?q=frankie+stein+and+his+ghouls](https://www.google.com/search?q=frankie+stein+and+his+ghouls))

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Halloween Treats

Beating writer's block

The last few days have been dreadful, because I really have been avoiding writing. Or, rather, I have been writing, just nothing to share in these pages. If I could share the household chores I was doing with you, that would be a new form of journalism I would be curious to pioneer. But that's not the case. My life has been full of boring things, mundane things, and sadly, not much rock & roll.

When it comes to not having much to say, those more eloquent than I have already opined in much more dramatic ways. But the problem persists: how do you keep at it, when your profession is to keep at it? The output of someone working in an office can be fairly easily measured once a rubric is applied, but how do you measure an artist if not by the art they produce? Shouldn't a word count be one easy rubric?

Part of the challenge is that of expectation. I want to be able to give you something good to read, and I balk when I start getting too judgmental before something has even hit the page. But it is odd that my reaction is to *stop* working, to *stop* making something rather than move forward. I would rather censor, than express myself poorly. What does that say about me?

I can't really say enough about the seasonal shift, either, if I want to get down to brass tacks. While I love the fall, and I love what this time of year offers me in terms of hobbies and fun times, it's hard to get over the dwindling daylight, the year coming to and end as all the things you didn't finish come to mind, and the weather gets colder as you are looking for warmer and warmer expressions of humanity from those who are all, systematically, closing themselves

off. Why not just curl up under a blanket, eat candy and cry? Seems the time of year for it.

I used to hate the rain, and I would scream and holler about this time of year until I was parched, and even then, I would sulk the entire time, longing for the sun to return, patiently making my way through the holidays like some maniac who was looking to get into a fight. But as the years have worn on, I have found some comfort in the seasonal cycle. Some of that comes with a loving partnership and the perspective of getting older, but there is also something to be said for learning how silly the frustrations we had when we were younger really were. Getting mad at the weather is not exactly something that paints a positive mental health image.

And yet, it is clear that two things happen when the leaves begin to fall: I get sad, and I stop being productive. It's like I hit an emotional wall, and all I can do is cry and think about my past as it spirals further away from me. Maybe not the most adult way to go about life, and certainly not productive. But there's another Bogart movie and a package of Skittles out there for every night I feel like shit, so why not?

And, pretty soon, it's been too long, and I haven't written anything in days, and even getting the computer to turn on and boot up is an hour long process, full of wiki-slogging and delaying tactics that are pointless, and yet, what I seem to long to be doing. At least, in the moment. If you asked me, of course I'd say, "I'd rather be writing. But there's so much *MST3K* I haven't seen yet, either."

I struggle with this barrier—not just to my own ability to write, but to the larger one of happiness this time of year—and while I knew it was coming, I assumed it wouldn't be a problem this time. And there is another vector for all of this, too: why am I so apposed to tackling my own mental health? Certainly, we have a cultural problem with this at hand, where we are not very comfortable with any amount of mental health discussion—be it in our government, our neighbors, or in ourselves. And while that is certainly a reason this is all difficult for me, it's odd to live in a world where we all seems to be suffering from different strains of mental health complications, and have no easy mechanism for dealing with that.

Short of chemical problems and ignoring reality.

Fortunately, I'm usually able to get the creative

juices flowing sooner or later, and while the quality and the quantity is not always up to my own expectations, I can get there, eventually, even this time of year. But it is harder, and it feels like I'm sore easier, wear out sooner, and find less to talk about that doesn't seem emo and introspective. But maybe we should all get more comfortable talking about ourselves, rather than letting these problems get worse, left completely unchecked.

Creativity is a way to help release the pressure valve that is the complex nature of our everyday lives. If we can't find a way to tap our creativity, release our own inner demons, and let these feelings run rampant in the way they need to, then what hope is there for any of us, anymore? I need to be crazy once in a while, I need to be non-communicative, I need to let my freak flag fly, and I need to know that, during these times of crisis, that everyone around me is understanding, and compassionate.

That's what we all need more of, everyday, I think.

Opening The Pod Bay Doors

This time of year has become one of my favorites, and largely for two reasons: the decorations, and the music. My wife and I collect corny and vintage Halloween decorations, blow molds, and papercrafts that reflect the season, and as soon as they are on sale I start putting out decorative gourds. (Because: decorative gourds, motherfuckers!)

I try not to overdo it too much, as there is a part of me what wants to push the envelope as much as possible and I need to keep that in check. But if I can make any kind of recommendation that I think you will enjoy, I must insist that you start subscribing to *Austin's Annual Halloween Spook-tacular* in iTunes (or your podcasting app of choice; it's in all of them). All of the episodes are at midvalleymutations.com, and they are the perfect complement to this time of year.

Even my earliest radio broadcasts were done with a Halloween record within reach, and some of the most memorable events of my adult life are associated with this time of year. But in 2003 I started making a concerted effort to collect Halloween music, and in 2004 started making those songs a part of my radio broadcasts. Now, for the first time in one place, you can hear all of my Halloween related broadcasts, as well as the ones I helped produce for *Closet Radio*, too. Over 60 hours of Halloween radio, all for you to enjoy.

Hosted by Miss Rikki, *Closet Radio* was essential

rock and roll listening for the growing child, in some ways, Saturday Morning Cartoons for the ears. When she would do her *Rikki Horror Picture Show*

broadcasts every year, we would wait, excited

to find out what she would play. Miss Rikki has returned to the airwaves on *Mid-Valley Mutations* recently, but my money is on the Halloween shows, which are now available in the feed. (also: closetradio.tumblr.com)

There are monster songs, scary stories, sound FX records, guests and music, and my patented Halloween Voice that is so dumb that there's no real way to determine what kind of accent I'm trying to achieve in the first place. All of it is in there, and depending on your preferences, there's a show in there for you. Perfect to throw on if you don't want to think about the music for your party of choice.

Many of the middle-period episodes are in the vein of my Audio Essays, where there is a longer scary story being punctuated by music and other sounds. While they still work for parties, I recommend the older episodes for monster music, and the middle-period shows for stories.

In the last two years, we started telling Ghost Stories on the air, for when you and your friends are sitting around in the evening, wanting a genuine scare. During these Ghost Story shows, we've been taking calls and having guests come in and tell their experiences, live on the radio. These are unexpected and incredible true stories that must be heard to be believed, and even then, they are absolutely bizarre. Put these on when the sun is down. These episodes are perfect for late, late nights.

While I'm generally proud of my radio work, these shows are really something else that I put a lot of energy into every year. Halloween is a great time of year to let your imagination run wild, and I want to provide a small part of the soundtrack that will help to let yours take on a marathon.

Happy Halloween!



(Generic RSS: feeds.feedburner.com/AustinsHalloweenSpook-tacular.)
(iTunes: itunes.apple.com/mt/podcast/austins-annual-halloween-spook/id471671424.)

Emotional Whiplash

While I love the Fall, and everything that it brings, it is certainly difficult for me to remember that my own personality is so heavily affected by the seasons that I'm like a Shakespearean character, moved to take action because a storm has swept in. The power of several rainy days and the sun setting so much earlier really does a number on me, and while I try to shrug it off and put up pumpkins and shore up the yard, the truth of the matter is that I'm so easily depressed that it only takes a few tender moments from *Stranger Things* to get me bawling.

While the term was called Seasonal Affective Disorder for most of my adult life, I think it is clear that, whatever it is, this time of year causes me to see the darker side of everything. It's not just that the Joy Division albums come out—though do more than the rest of the year—but that there is a certain pointlessness to my own thinking, a sadness that seeps into my thoughts, and my own words seem to just fill with negativity, no matter how hard I try.

It doesn't help that we have to continue into this winter knowing that nothing changed this year. O45 still hasn't had any action taken against him, and it is unlikely now that there ever will be, even if we discover more crimes by the man in office. And we have to go into a cold winter, full of other horrors and misery, anniversaries of friends passing, and know that we are going to wake up in Spring with his Orange Utterances coming out of the radio every time we get

in the car to drive to work?

I know that these negative feelings will go away, that like with the change of the season that brought this, eventually it will change again. The sun will come out, the days will get longer, everything will dry out, and we'll all feel a slightly larger pang of optimism than we usually do, and that, too, will feel weird. But it's part of the cycle, all part of the way that things ebb and flow. There is a value to the misery as much as there is to the good times, too.

I'm just trying to find a way to measure that objectively. I want to actually find a way to use these feelings to get to something better. Rather than just get miserable, and expect the world to accept it, I want to look this beast in the eyes and say, "Oh, yeah? Is that all you got?"

With your help, I think we can all do that.

We are at:

thecherrypickerzine.wordpress.com

Edited by Marla Rich

Written by Austin Rich (acronyminc.org)

Guest Column "Null Moats" by "-i"

Mid-Valley Mutations (midvalleymutations.com)

Why Did We Do This? (whydidwedothis.wordpress.com)

The Capital Couple (thecapitalcouple.wordpress.com)

Wait, We're Recording, Right?

(waitwererecordingright.wordpress.com)

Additions to the calendar / Ad / Trade-Out Inquiries /

Letters to the editor: austinrich@gmail.com

Mid-Valley Mutations: Ghost Stories IV w/ Arvo Zylo & Branden Marshall Calling In! (27 October 2017)

Sunday Service: Mutations Showcase 06: Brides, Lavender, Mons La Hire (29 October 2017)

Mid-Valley Mutations: Parallel Worlds Radio Interview w/ Anna Davis (3 November 2017)

O' My Goth DJ Night at Shotskis (9 November 2017)

Mid-Valley Mutations: The Weatherman (from *Negativland*) (10 November 2017)

Mid-Valley Mutations: Eden Mononym, LIVE! (17 November 2017)

Mid-Valley Mutations: Mark Hosler (from *Negativland*) (24 November 2017)

Nebulae Goth / Industrial Dance Night @ The Space Concert Club (30 November 2017)

Mid-Valley Mutations: The Kelly Taylor Show (1 December 2017)

Mid-Valley Mutations: NorCal NoiseFest Christmas w/ **Lob Instagon** (8 Dec. '17)



"Do You Want New Wave? Or Do You Want The Truth Through Music Quotes?"