

GRAVITY SERPENT



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The yoke of Capitalist Exploitation





collaborative novel?
experimental film?



zine?



Yes!
Ah... I used to make a zine, a long time ago. Maybe you saw it, then again few did. I did seven issues in seven weeks then it all burnt out. I sold the rights to a friend of mine





It will showcase our talent. We'll be doing something. It will bring our musings to a new audience

We could start a new scene, take over London. I'll show those doubters, I'll show them all...



What's going to be in it?

The stuff we've got in here my friend. Underground and uncompromising genius



INTRODUCING...

Jonny Kearney & Lucy Farrell
The Slaughtered Lamb 23/05/11

I was lucky enough to watch the charming Jonny Kearney and Lucy Farrell at the Slaughtered Lamb in Clerkenwell. The folk duo played a storm in intimate settings, performing a mixture of original material and a couple of covers with grace and panache. The powerful interpretation of *Down In Adairsville* is played sweetly with restraint on pizzicato fiddle and guitar. Experience is imbued in Lucy's voice.

Between songs there is banter. Lucy suggests that "maybe all you standing up should choose someone's lap to sit on. I don't know if that would make it cosy or awkward" and offers chairs from the stage. Jonny introduces the plaintive *Letters to Lenore* as "a miserable song about a man writing letters to his long lost love" adding "it's not autobiographical". His voice is rich and the harmonies between the two complimentary voices are quite lovely. The song is punctuated by soothing swells of violin, and the whole performance is well received by a polite and appreciative crowd. Lucy asks the crowd if they'd rather hear "a nursery rhyme or a song called *Disease*" which Jonny wrote when he was seventeen. They play *Disease* first and it gets into a lilting groove. After the song Jonny recounts that at a previous gig someone in the audience



yelled, "What is that about? Syphilis?" and added "I didn't learn about that until I was much older..."

The nursery rhyme that follows is a sweet reworking of *Jack and Jill*, with a particularly lovely refrain. They follow with *Green Leaved Trees*, which has a satisfying melody, and *Lullaby*, a tale set in the aftermath of a party, which is amusing and touching in equal measure. They play Richard Thompson's *Al Bowlie* with the kind of aplomb that comes from real fans of the music. In their hands it sounds confident and timeless, and comes complete with "Jonny Kearney guitar solo". *Song for a Sweetheart* is a graceful piece that showcases real craftsmanship. *Dixon Street* is introduced as a "song written as part of a tenancy agreement" and is another more lighthearted piece among some quite weighty songs.

INTERVIEW

How long have you both been playing music and when did you start playing as a duo?

Lucy – I've been playing the fiddle since i was about 13... half my life. Me and Jonny met at uni and started playing together in a band called the (Vicars of Blight) with our friend Rachel... then she left us for another band and we became a duo... so maybe we've been playing together for about 3 years?

Jonny - I've been playing piano since I was 7 and guitar since 12. We've been playing together for 2-3 years I think.

What influences you?

Lucy - I suppose each other... we both have different musical ideas... and lots of the songs are arranged through arguments and trying to work something out that we both like..

Jonny - Lots of things. Lots of music.

How did you start out?

Jonny - We met at uni and I guess we felt quite musically compatible.

Lucy - We started out playing at pubs and folk clubs around Newcastle- once we played on local radio in the middle of the night after a guy came into the pub with a microphone... we got lucky and supported the unthinks a couple of times on their tours which was really amazing....

How was the course at Newcastle?

Lucy - Great! lots of people to meet and play with...wonderful teachers...not too many essays...

Jonny - Good. A lot of interesting people all squashed into a relatively small place.

What informs your lyrics?

Jonny - Nothing in particular. Mostly girls I suppose.

Lucy - Boys...

Who writes what parts?

Jonny - We both share it all.

Lucy - In Jonny's songs he mainly has all the vision... maybe i do some harmonies and something on the fiddle... the traditional ones are more of a mix and we would probably play them through working out what they need together.

What was it really like on Dixon street and how did that song come about?

Jonny - Me and a friend moved to a place called Dixon street. Our landlord was Mike Tickell who also writes songs. He requested that I write a song about the street as a condition of the tenancy agreement. It was an interesting place. It's been knocked down now- I suppose the song is really a homage.

Lucy - I went to visit Jonny a few times on Dixon street and it actually was quite scary...

What does folk music mean to you personally?

Lucy – I used to go to lots of festivals when i was little ... so there something a bit nostalgia about the sound of accordians and fiddles and bells for me... but then i started listening to the folk and traditional songs much later and researching them ... i suppose im still working out what they mean.

Jonny - I'm very confused about the definitions of folk music.

What's your favourite animal?

Lucy - The animal I've been thinking about MOST today is the 13inch raptor they just found in Suffolk, but normally its kittens.

Jonny - It used to be a cheetah. Ducks are funny. I quite like pug-nosed dogs; mostly out of sympathy.

Do you ever drink Buckfast?

Jonny - I used to drink Buckfast at university.

Lucy - Yes!

What did you want to be when you were little?

Lucy - for a bit i wanted to be a plane... and then Nancy Drew... then a Borrower... then a nanny...
Jonny - A bricklayer for a little while. I loved the idea of systematically building things.

What was it like touring with the Unthanks?

Lucy - it was great! we had lots of fun... we all slept on a bus... got good at pouring boiling water into cups while lurching around.... dressed up... ate lots of cake....

Jonny - They're great, very friendly and caring.

You're quite funny on stage. Tell us your best jokes.

Lucy - my best joke is visual.... ill think of another...

Jonny - I only really know one joke, the one about Moses coming fourth.

How do you feel about jazz and does it influence the music at all?

Lucy - My first foray into singing was in the school jazz band... so I'm sure its still in there somewhere and peeps out occasionally- influences are weird because everything must leave its mark ...

Jonny - Jazz, yeah I like what I know. Not so much the jazz flute, though I could never write it off.

Do any other genres influence your sound?

Jonny - I'm not sure. It's compelling to hear or watch someone who is compelled, doesn't so much matter what it is they're doing unless obviously it is something that makes you feel sick. I'm not really sure about genres.

How was recording the album?

Lucy - Adrian cooked us amazing meals... we sing in the cupboard under the stairs... lots of discussion.... still ongoing!
Jonny - It's ongoing but fun for me.

Anything coming out this year?

Lucy - hopefully September!
Jonny - Yeah our debut album, which has no name yet. Any suggestions?

Playing any festivals?

Jonny - Yeah a few, we're mostly concentrating on finishing this album though.

Lucy - Towersey, Farnborough.... I can't find my diary....

If you had to travel to any place and time where would it be and why?

Lucy - Today I am in Kensington and we just saw some pictures of the high street pre 1960 and it looked amazing... I think today I would go for the 15th of July 1945, High Street Kensington....

Jonny - Oh my gosh- the possibilities. I can't answer this question. We're actually from the future and it's great.

What song would you have at your wedding?

Jonny - Hmmm. 'Grow old along with me' by John Lennon. That's pretty amazing.

Lucy - umm... Omar singing ' Little April Showers' from Bambi

What song would you like at your funeral?

Jonny - I'm not sure about that, Chopins music is beautiful.

Lucy - Omar ruining «And so it Goes» by Billy Joel

What's your favourite possession?

Lucy - I actually dont know... probably my viola. is should practice more

Jonny - Probably a music box my late Grandmother gave me. It plays this haunting Jewish tune. I'm thinking about using it for a recording. Like Gavin Bryars does with the homeless man in 'Jesus' blood never failed me yet'- that's beautiful.

SPOTTED!!!

Celeb of the month: Steve Davis at Tim Smith Benefit Gig,
Fighting Cocks, Kingston



Local Girls



Wizards of Twiddly (Awesome)



Five minutes with Max Tundra

Ben Jacobs, aka Max Tundra took ten minutes to chat with me after his exhilarating set at the Tin. The gig happened at the Fighting Cocks and featured among others the Wizards of Twiddle. Steve was one of the many gathered in support of the Cardiacs frontman. He answered my questions regarding an array of synths:

You did a Peel Session, did you meet John Peel?

I met him a couple of times. Once at Sonar Festival, which was a bit full on for me, Peel was there and we got talking and he asked if I wanted to do a session. He died before it was broadcast, Rob Da Bank was looking after the show then. My session was the third to last ever. He never got to hear the session. There's no one who stepped up to what Peel was doing. You would always be surprised with his show. Now you just have a Dubstep show for two hours. There's no point having a human being DJ when it's like that. It's boring. WFMU in New Jersey is weird and wonderful though.

Who designed the packaging for Parralax Error Beheads You?

I designed the digital edition. We bought loads of Kosher Chicken Soup and relabelled it. Someone at Domino thought of it because I'm Jewish. It's part of who I am.

You're into Lomography?

I left my Lomo Compact Automat at a new years eve party. But I now have a 110 SLR with interchangeable lenses and a Holga. I suppose I have an eye for it. It's a weird side line. I like taking food photographs, just nice plates of dinner. And fizzy drinks.

What's your favourite fizzy drink?

Purdeys Gold. If a fan wanted to buy me one I wouldn't object.

You program on an Amiga 500. Who bought your first one?

My first was bought with the money from my bar mitzvah. It lasted 20 years then I had to buy another one. I never use Mac or PC, I feel like I'm a bit behind all that. It's a painstaking process.

Anything new coming out?

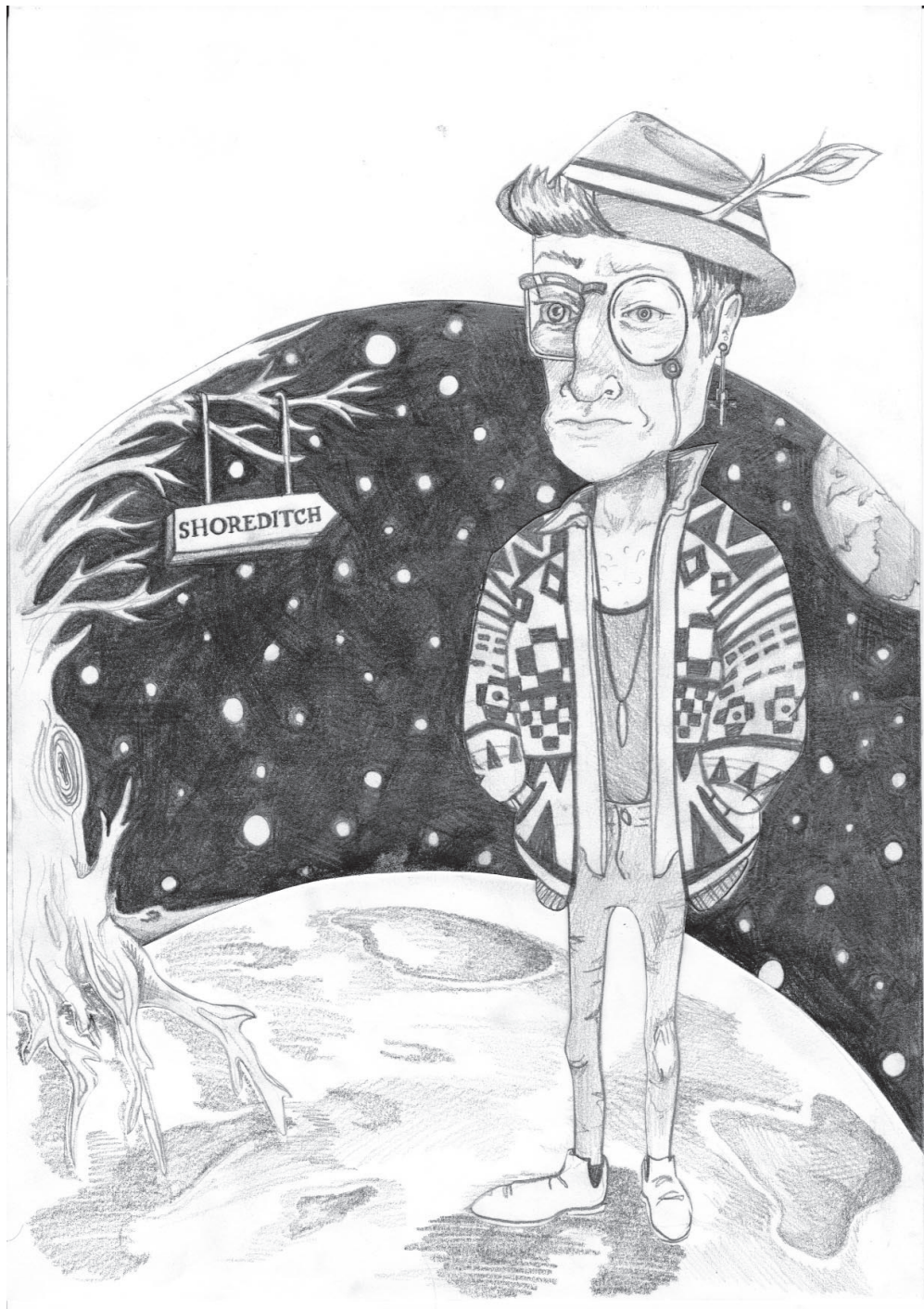
Not for a while. The next record that comes out

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What is cool's signified?

Let's think about a word often called upon to express approval. Or shall we use it to distance a movement from something less culturally relevant. However we use 'cool,' one thing is for sure: we don't understand what it means.

Cool is the ultimate abstraction. A word so ubiquitous that we all have an idea of what it should mean, without being able to identify a specific signified.

The importance of classifying what is cool is as important as identifying what isn't. Nazi's for instance, aren't cool. I can tell you that with little trouble. I cannot tell you why The Sonics, or Bukowski (deceased, but still cool) are. I can only grapple with a host of adjectives, which appease, and tend the garden of wellbeing. They don't, however identify a concrete feeling, an emotion or understanding which identifies these things as cool.

Perhaps the problem is one of classification. Perhaps we don't mean cool when we use it to describe just about everything. We should refer to a host of adjectives, which conjure up a more lucid emotional response.

Your turn of the century converse conjures up memories of The Strokes, and in turn their derivative strumming owes much to 70s New York band Television. Perhaps it is a memory, or a specific image conveying an idea of approval, which calls upon us to proclaim something as cool.

The iconic footwear started out life as a running shoe, eventually gravitating toward the New York punk scene. The image they portray is that of Joey Ramone propping up a microphone stand as well as a host of famous rock stars. Their application among globe straddling rockers solidified their status as an ice-cold accessory to the culturally relevant.

Identifying the cyclical nature of fashionable objects, at this stage, does not allow me any closer to understanding. Fashion is a consensus, obdurately working its way into the generic high street stores to clad the world in identikit omni shambles. To be in fashion, is to be in unison.

The use of attire, or reductive personality, will always be seen as a means of distinguishing ourselves from the norm. A Jesus and The Mary Chain T-shirt grounds its wearer in the relative obscurity of a Scottish eighties movement. A lady Gaga T-shirt evokes patronage to a mass-media shower of schism – unless they are being ironic of course. Perhaps I'm begging the question, but it would certainly appear that by its merit of obscurity, the Jesus and Mary chain T-shirt is cooler.

We revel in ground undisturbed; music which remains a whisper in Internet chat rooms; gigs that are secret; fanzines in the most limited of circulation. It is a sense of exclusivity, and to be cool in this sense would appear to be engaged in the worst sort of egotism. I wonder if it possible to remain cool without being self-aware. I move within the maelstrom of artefact and contemporary fad happily nodding my head in agreement, or is it disgust? I'll see what my friends think.

Tracey Emin — Love is what you want

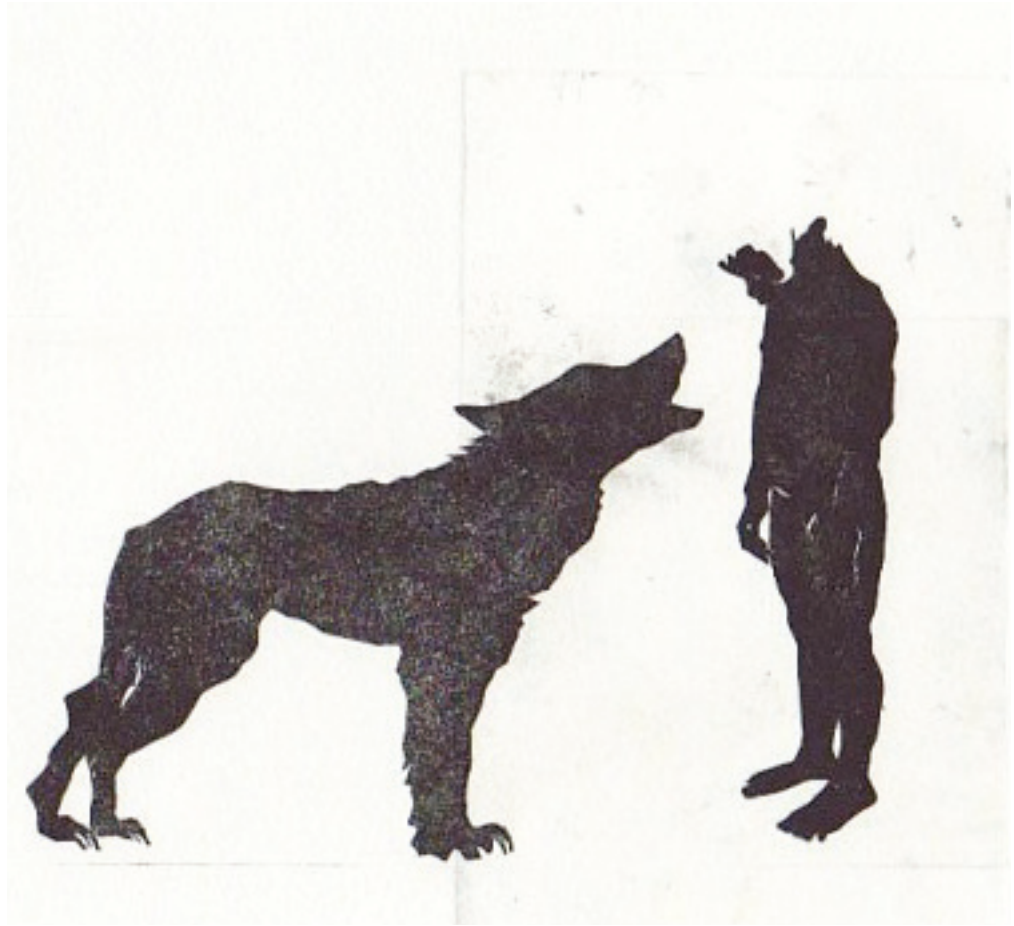
On entering the gallery I was confronted with a weather-beaten shack on a battered pier with a neon sign behind 'meet me in heaven and I will wait for you' – a message to her father, who longed to live on the beach as Emin longed for a place to be happy.

The rest of the room consists of patchwork blankets that vibrate with colour and detail. The work is unashamedly autobiographical, to the point of almost oversharing, like a drunk stranger that sits at your table and talks to you, but somehow remains charming and interesting. Tattered flags adorn the patchwork blankets, which are made of scraps of friends' donated clothing, and fragmentary words and sentences cut out of felt, taken out of context, form a verbal picture. The work is as confrontational as it is intimate and evokes a dialogue with the viewer.

Room 2 is dark and full of neon; cruel, impersonal, crass neon; but rendered in her own delicate handwriting. Once again she courts and cajoles the viewer in turn. Further on there are three video pieces.

Room 3 is a huge space full of artworks. It is hard to know where to begin. In the near corner a Ouija board is installed on a table beside a bright cardigan draped on a chair. Glass cases bustle with clippings, curiosities and mementos. Scratchy drawings excised from notebooks are exhibited in a grid, and are more evocative than their modest size and appearance would suggest. I've Got It All is tragicomic and iconic, depicting Tracy as a human vending machine spilling notes and coins. Pregnancy tests and used tampons may test the patience of the viewer, but form part of a personal narrative continued with a half crotched shawl and bespoke baby clothes which all brim with pathos of a mother's loss. Discarded wooden drawers form a scattered sculpture on the floor, beside work related to her abortion, the pain of which is all too apparent.

The paintings in Room 4, though gynaecological, attest to a sensitivity that may surprise a casual follower of Emin's career. The application is genteel and reserved making the provocative contents palatable. The embroidery is delicate and at times veers towards tweeness, were it not for the playful and flagrant eroticism. Room 5 contains larger sculptural works which hold a quiet grandeur. All in all Emin proves herself a sophisticated and unique artist beyond expectation.



untitled - Florence Boyd

The Corrections – Jonathan Franzen

The Corrections is the decade-old third novel from Jonathan Franzen - the Oprah book review hating Middle American. It was introduced to me, in light of my reluctance to pay £14.99 for last year's Freedom: a book in which I understand covers much of the same ground as The Corrections. In short, I'm glad I chose not to part with the exorbitant amount.

I am initially uninterested with the plot dynamics, simply because it is representative of much of contemporary solipsistic American writing - a struggling writer/screenwriter in a series of failed/failing relationships, and a warped sense of oneself.

That's all a little unfair, because it's much cleverer than ninety-nine per cent of those plots. Firstly, it's hilarious - or at least Franzen is hilarious - the third person narrative drenches the prose in pathos, and what can only be described (by me) as absolute truth.

This is achieved through microscopic analysis of the character's environment, and world-class dialogue - representative of Raymond Carver's short stories, with their beautiful observation and charming simplicity.

Heavy description can be labour-intensive, but Franzen is shockingly good at moving in and out. There is an undulation about his work. The reader can choose to engage upon the ethereal filtration of the character's mind, or simply follow the singular path of plot; both will keep you interested.

Humour is at the centre of all things, crucially, because his reflection on the central characters can be worryingly accurate to the point of questioning one's own disposition.

At times, the novel can be on the didactic side, and dare I say it, 'obvious.' There are political sidings, and character prejudice that may exclude a portion of conservative readership. Oh well.

I cannot reveal the reason for the title, but it is a source of huge satisfaction, and reason enough to continue through the 650 pages. I will say 'breasts.'

The Corrections – Jonathan Franzen

Fourth Estate Edition 2010 - £9.99

Attack the Block

Dreamt up by director Joe Cornish (of *Adam and Joe* fame) after being mugged by a gang of teenagers in South London, *Attack the Block* imagines the fate of alien invaders unfortunate to come up against modern society's greatest and most vicious army: London street kids. The result is a fantastic and hilarious debut feature for Cornish and his mostly untested cast. For Londoners in particular, the dialogue and characterisation will be a treat, deftly slipping in street slang and references that feel uncontrived and genuine. The combination of horror and comedy, all too easy to turn sour and slip into camp, is brilliantly realised, reminiscent of *Shaun of the Dead* – although taking a step towards somewhat darker themes.

Also satisfying to see is Cornish's use of the horror-movie-as-social critique method (see everything from *Frankenstein* to *Dawn of the Dead* to *District 9*) to examine the right-wing's much touted 'broken Britain'. While this is no *Kidulthood* or *La Haine*, Cornish guides the audience from an initial encounter with the protagonists as a vicious gang of muggers, through to a deeper understanding of the causes of their actions, while rarely resorting to schmalz. Key in achieving this is his placement of neutral, non-threatening characters who act as the audience by proxy – and their developing relationship with the gang moves the viewer towards a more sympathetic perspective.

Despite this nod towards its wider context and responsibilities, *Attack the Block* isn't a film with pretensions to do much more than entertain – and this it does with aplomb. The pacing is excellent, the cinematography immediate and engaging, and the dialogue snappy and believable. Also notable is the lack of CGI, with the monsters, when they finally are revealed, played by actual men in monster suits. If that sounds like a recipe for camp horror cringe, don't worry; some excellent and subtle design work results in great-looking creatures, especially considering the meagre £9 million budget.

Londoners, especially those south of the river, will feel a real connection with *Attack the Block*. While it's still a great movie outside of context, I would be somewhat worried about how well the jokes would land outside of the capital, and especially in the States (the distribution rights have been picked up, but a release date hasn't yet been scheduled at the time of writing). Regardless, this is another great addition to the recent flurry of strong British horror-comedies, and hopefully the start of a new career path for the eminently talented Joe Cornish.

the soft spot. . .

Nocturne (Thursday 5am)
Omar Majeed

The night is a tablecloth soaked with stars.
The moon is a dirty dinner plate
Smudged and scraped.
The streets are peppered with passing cars
I sit alone, the hour is late.

Adrift on a broken raft of woes I pray
That these lines may be posted out to sea,
And meet soft hands or unforgiving rocks
As the accident wills.

Sometimes in these darkening hours
I wish I was a spiritual man.
I wish that I could bottle sunlight.
If only I could have you back
Without my mistakes.

You stand alone as an evening star
Brightening the great painted vacuum.
I sit solitary and scared.
I never wrote much for you
Or really knew how much I cared.

A spider sits upon my shoulder
Its silken thread brushing my neck.
It whispers of the mortgage, the end of student days.
Of never knowing what could have been
Were things different. Of passing time,
Of friends drifting away.

A few lines in my notepad read:
Blue bells ring the start of spring
Great swathes of regret
With time the loss of everything
Of everyone
We ever met.

Epistemology
Emer O'Toole

Post hoc ergo propter hoc,
There's nothing pure about my reason.
Meet me doctor for a walk,
Let summer be our walking season.

Abandonment is justified,
Who knows who propositions who?
Skeptics tell the biggest lies,
We need belief to make things true.

I see you find my logic rough,
Such ready jilt of justification,
Is getting lucky not enough?
You crave appropriate relation?
Yet summer is a strolling time,
Immodest, like unfirm foundation;
Coherence, caught between two minds,
Dumps evidence, dates indication.

Limbs in step are contexts,
Inferring truths like Gettier,
Worlds divide, facts unfix,
When bodies pull away.

Make not Montaignes out of molehills,
Allow me to deflower your reason,
Meet me actor, let's go out,
Summer is our walking season.



The scene that celebrates itself

As the 1980s dawned, Punk was drying up. Limited and predictable – devoid of the looming threat it once posed, its appeal began to wane as new technologies and social change signaled a transition in the musical landscape. As the decade developed, the punk formula was seized and contorted into strange, ungainly shapes – their angles obtuse and stark. New bands, influenced by the likes of The Velvet Underground, Krautrock and The Stooges, were emerging in the UK with the intention of taking the music handbook and shredding it; resulting in a handful of albums reconstructing the face of the alternative music scene by the decade's end. In 1985 The Jesus & Mary Chain released *Psychocandy*. In 1986 Cocteau Twins released *Victorialand*. In 1988 My Bloody Valentine released *Isn't Anything*. Meanwhile, across the pond Dinosaur Jr. and Sonic Youth were unloading a savage flurry of murky and unhinged guitar melodies soaked in feedback and distortion, evident on 1987's *You're Living All Over Me* and *Sister*.

The significance of these holy cows is profound; they inspired and laid the foundations for a plethora of bands who would go on to form the crux of a movement that came to be known simply as Shoegazing.

Coined as a result of the tendency for musicians to stare down at the myriad effects pedals they employed during live shows – much to the dismay of bands within the scene, the movement reached a creative zenith in the early 90's with releases such as My Bloody Valentine's *Loveless* and Slowdive's *Souvlaki*. New bands were forming constantly – especially here on our Fair Isle; notably the likes of Moose,

Chapterhouse, Ride, Loop, Swervedriver and The Boo Radleys – as well as numerous bands that surfaced long enough to throw an EP or two into the scene's heady cloud of smoke. However, an exclusively British subculture this was not, with bands such as Holland's The Nightblooms, the Czech Republic's Ecstasy of St. Theresa and America's Medicine all releasing exceptional albums pigeonholed under the Shoegaze umbrella term.

It remains to be said that the music contrived during this period was mind-blowing. Typified by the extensive use of effects pedals, vocal instrumentation that served as a tonal element (to the detriment of lyrics), and slathers of distortion, bands within the genre set out to create an amorphous wall of sound; replete with swirling, droning etherealism that seemed to hover in the air – oozing from guitars. To those scrunching their faces at such a description, despite what may sound like an inaccessible aural onslaught; more akin to an endurance exercise than a piece of music, underneath the multiple layers of feedback and pitch-bending flows a strong sense of melody; a river of acid meandering through the deepest chasms of cognition, fizzing and bubbling with a wistful elegance. Hey, you hear worse sounds emanating from rectums.

Alas, it is something of a cultural tragedy that the often challenging, experimental and hugely expressive music of the early 90's in Britain was slowly but surely marginalized by the concurrent rise of the Grunge juggernaut (damn you to hell Nirvana) and Brit-Pop, as bands either just petered away or, as was the case with acts such as Ride, Lush, The Boo Radleys, Blur, The Verve and Catherine Wheel, remolded themselves to be swept up in the tails of change.

However the influence of Shoegaze lives on in a haze of sound waves, as is evident in the recordings of bands such as Black Rebel Motorcycle Club, Interpol, The Pains of Being Pure At Heart, Autolux and A Place To Bury Strangers, as well as the fledging Shitgaze subgenre; where bands such as Waaves, Railcars, Blank Dogs and No Age amalgamate the Shoegaze sound with Lo-Fi Indie Rock and Punk influences. Indeed, its grip even reaches Hip Hop, where groups such as Dalek and clouDDEAD blend an abrasive surge of sound with Hip Hop beats and decipherable lyrics.

So there we have it, the rise, the fall AND the resurgence of a movement reduced to a painfully overlooked, yet significant, footnote in music history. Next time you're left near comatose on the bus listening to two old dears prattling on about that pigeon eating a quaver, stick your earphones in and stare back into the long, intense gaze. It might just make your journey seem vaguely worthwhile.

Five essential albums

My Bloody Valentine – Loveless

Chapterhouse – Whirlpool

Ride – Nowhere

Slowdive – Souvlaki

Lush – Gala

techno animal.

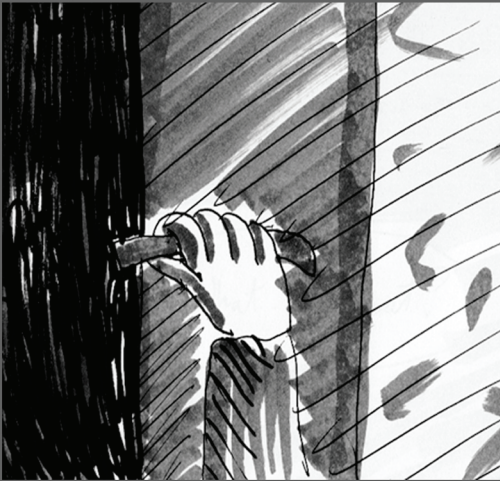
Skulking amidst a haze of dub-soaked industrial soundscapes since the early 90s, Techno Animal added immediacy and confrontational aggression to their repertoire with 2001's *Brotherhood of the Bomb*. A collaboration between David Broadrick; founding member of Godflesh, and Tim Martin, the group calls upon the formulas central to individual projects such as the dark ambient leanings of *Final* and noise-grime tendencies of *The Bug*, and mutates them into warped, distorted compositions prowling across a rumbling under-current of foreboding intensity.

Yet what really distinguishes *Brotherhood of the Bomb* as arguably the band's finest work is the melding of this industrial experimentalism with hip hop. The likes of *Dalek*, *El-P*, *Vast Aire* and *Antipop Consortium* wade into the sludgy mix to inject the swirling phantasmagoria of otherworldly drones and echoes with venomous lyrical deliveries and pulverising, scratchy beats to concoct an end-product both cavernous and unnervingly visceral.

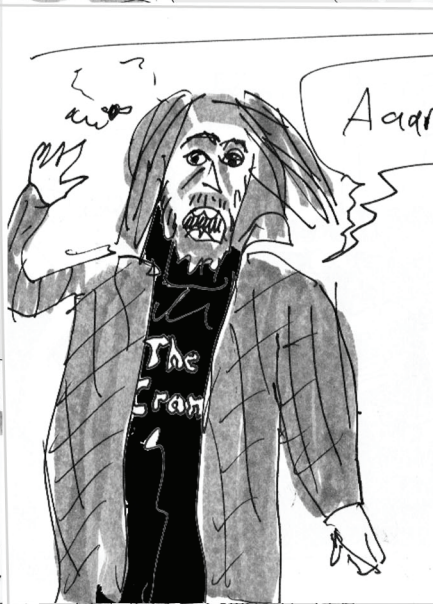
Throughout the course of the album's hour-long duration, the listener's brain careers within a maelstrom of distant, creeping etherealism and unadulterated hostility, evident in songs such as *D10* and *Piranha*. On paper, the mix may sound paradoxical – a mess. Yet, due to the mastery of Techno Animal's production, the album manages to gather such disparate influences and meld them into a piece that retains a focus throughout – unlike, say, *Martin's Ice* project, which implodes under the weight of its own experimentalism.

If you like the abrasive sonic explorations of *Dalek* and the unhinged production aesthetic of *Company Flow*, this is an album for you. A howling, thunderous storm of an LP, *Brotherhood of the Bomb* summons the deepest, most inaccessible pockets of the shrouded subconscious, and thrusts it to the forefront of your perceptions. It melts the synapses and clouds cognition – leaving in its wake a throbbing mass of fizzing static. Why wouldn't you want to listen to this?

The Demon







the end

Fireside Chat with the Mormons

I've been talking about this article for a long time, and have finally met up with the lads from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints today. Part of what we're doing here at Gravity Serpent is to give a voice to the unheard and marginalised, and that's not just me and Stu...

The idea for this article came about with a chance meeting with Elders Rasmussen and Sima, who then were to me just two polite and interesting young men enquiring where I was going with a large rolled up piece of paper and a portfolio (I was off to hand in my final year design work at uni). Unfortunately I couldn't stop then but we arranged to meet up the following day. We emailed for a while about doing an article for our then embryonic magazine and today it happened!

Just to explain, as was explained to me on meeting, 'Elder' refers to their position as a teacher. The Elders are on a mission which takes two years and are based in the Kingston Ward, covering a large local area. Elders Rasmussen and Sima were today joined by Jonathan Leisure, the Public Relations Director for the Staines stake. He summarised for me the Mormons beliefs...

The Church recognises the King James Bible, and the fall of man through Adam and Eve's partaking in the fruit. Adam and Eve, the scriptures say, worshiped God, built an altar and a church on Earth following being cast out of the garden of Eden. Furthermore when Jesus was on the earth he established the church with 12 apostles and the power and authority of the priesthood (or God). The Mormon faith or The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints believe they are the restored church of the church set up by Jesus Christ, which fell from the earth after an apostasy period. In the midst of the conversation the question was raised, if God is loving why would he lead us with revelation for thousands of years then stop talking to us in the modern day? It was put forward that God is here and helps us, through the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the teachings of living prophets. The current prophet of the church is Thomas S. Monson.

According to Jonathan, Mormons are a diverse group, with their own difficulties and passions, who believe in God and the help He can bring each member individually and the church as a whole. A common aspiration in the church is wherever you go members help each other. An example of this is when the major snowstorms from last Christmas hit England and the airports shut down, traveling members of the church knew they could contact the local wards for help and assistance during their flight delays.

Next, I asked the Elders how they got involved with the church. Elder Rasmussen was brought up and raised in Utah, where ~60% are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. His parents were intermittently active in the church. He said he believes we all need to have a personal conversion to know if the path we're on is the path God wants us to be on. In his late teens he chose to go on a mission to help spread the word of the importance of this path for all who are interested.

In Elder Sima's case, missionaries knocked on the door of his parents' house. His mum was a spiritualist and his dad was of no particular religion. They were taught and baptised and after personal study raised him in the church. He says he's in the mission now because he knows it's true and wants to share the goodness of God with others.

Jonathan said these two cases bring up an interesting point – that you have to think about the scriptures, the teachings of the church, and pray to see what your personal journey should be. God promises if you think and pray you will know the truth and both Elders went through that process. Jonathan was also raised in the Church, but in his teenage years prayed to figure out if it was right for him, and was the Church true. He also received this confirmation and as encouraged he shared his testimony to others. The sharing of testimonies among members strengthen the members and provide learning opportunities for all.

Regarding prayer, a personal relationship with God is not an exact science. However, God is there and He does listen. God speaks to man through the Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost. Some common ways of how the Holy Spirit answers your prayers include when you are reading the scriptures, through engagement with other people, a burning in the bosom telling you the Holy Spirit is there, or a still small voice that tells you your prayer has been answered. These are a few examples, it is important that each individual develops a relationship with God and learns to listen to the Holy Spirit in their own way.

According to the Elders, in the New Testament there is a passage that says the body is a temple, and the opportunity to have life involves a responsibility to maintain that body. The church support a commandment called the Word of Wisdom. Which teaches to avoid smoking as it is bad for your health, likewise drink and drugs, which as well as the health problems and can cloud your judgment. And the reason they avoid coffee and tea is because of the impact on the body and the habits or dependence it may form. A further responsibility of moderation and mindfulness is applied to eating, focusing on fruit, grains, fish and vegetables and eating meat sparingly. To take care of the physical body helps take care of the spiritual soul.

When I asked what they did for fun, Jonathan gave a list – he plays

basketball, runs, goes to the gym and on bike rides, travels, enjoys the movies. The missionaries are more restricted for the time they are on the mission. Elder Rasmussen has a year left on his mission in August before he can go home, Elder Sima a year and two months.

Overall my fireside chat showed me the human side of the Mormon faith along with the basic principles and teachings of their church. These are normal people who have a strong belief in the Bible, the Book of Mormon, modern and ancient prophets, and that each person can have a personal relationship with God. And it is this personal relationship and fellowship of members that help them get through the tough and joyful times that we all face in life!

More information can be found at lds.org.uk



Black Abba

played at Yes Way in Peckham. They emerged as masked horrors from a nightmare wood, constructing pagan drone soundscapes that captivate and lift towards transcendence. Two drummers were in appearance due to a broken wrist, the sling adding a certain something to the proceedings. A sock stuffed cello tears through the noise constantly with a home microphoned acoustic guitar providing much mortar for the wall of sound. When it changes and eases ofd the pressure, something amazing happens, then it all builds up again. Black Abba, don't play songs in the traditional sense, but exist as one swelling organic mass bleeding into the space around, shaking the foundations of the building. They are an injection direct into the spinal cord, and in a two song set provoked ecstasy and nausea in equal measure. Time stood still.

Gravity serpent spoke to them briefly outside the venue:

How long have you been together?

We've been going about ten months now.

How did you break your wrist?

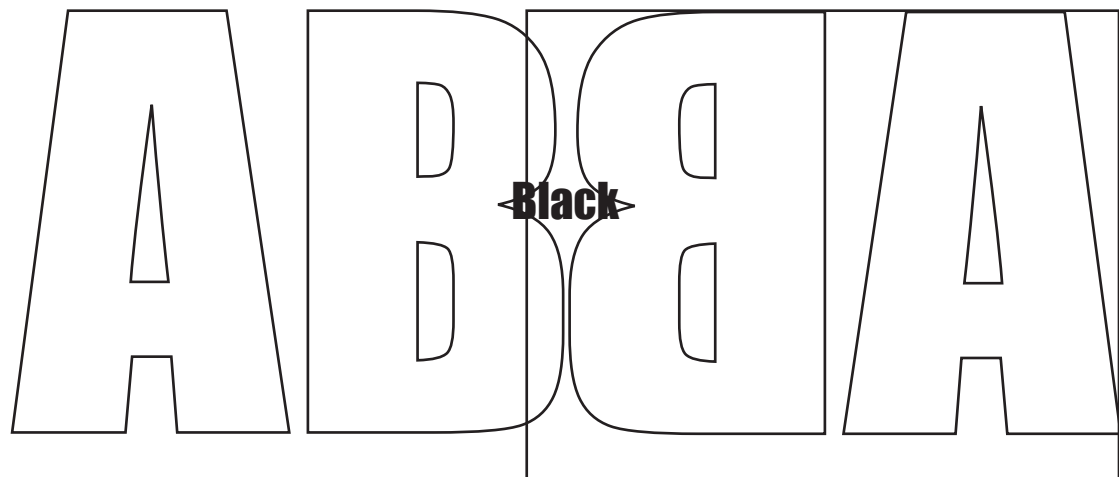
I got excited at Woodland Gathering and threw myself off a bench. I'm very clumsy.

Why the Scorpions T-shirt?

They're the best.

What was that song in 91?

Hmm. You mean Wind of Change. I meant their seventies stuff. They're just a psychedelic band.



Peter punched Marting clean in the face.

An opal/mauve bruise ensued, swollen and large.

Marting: "Peter?!"

Peter: "Marting," whispered Peter.

Then Marting gripped Peter's jeans and slapped him. This was closely followed by several karate chops to the nose, neck and lips. Peter paused and gestured as if to say,

"No Please."

Some time had passed, and Marting took to finishing the washing up but Peter had been planning a stealth attack. Peter grabbed Marting round the back of the neck and swung him into the fridge door then dragging his limp carcass onto the fruit bowl a tumbling mandarin distracting Peters mindless bulging blood pumped hammers and with them his attention for a time giving Marting enough space continuum to pinch Peters cheek and twist with a force he had not intended let alone mustered before. He was a powerful man his heaving chest was a whole head lengths higher than Peters withering pitted brow. Not meaning to dismiss Peter's forehead. If exhibited publicly no viewer would come away with the incontrovertible decision that it is thin or meager. It was robust and surrounded with tissue paper skin and he knew this wiping the crumbs away which had assembled in and around the corners of his mouth; and so proceeded to launch a full global assault.

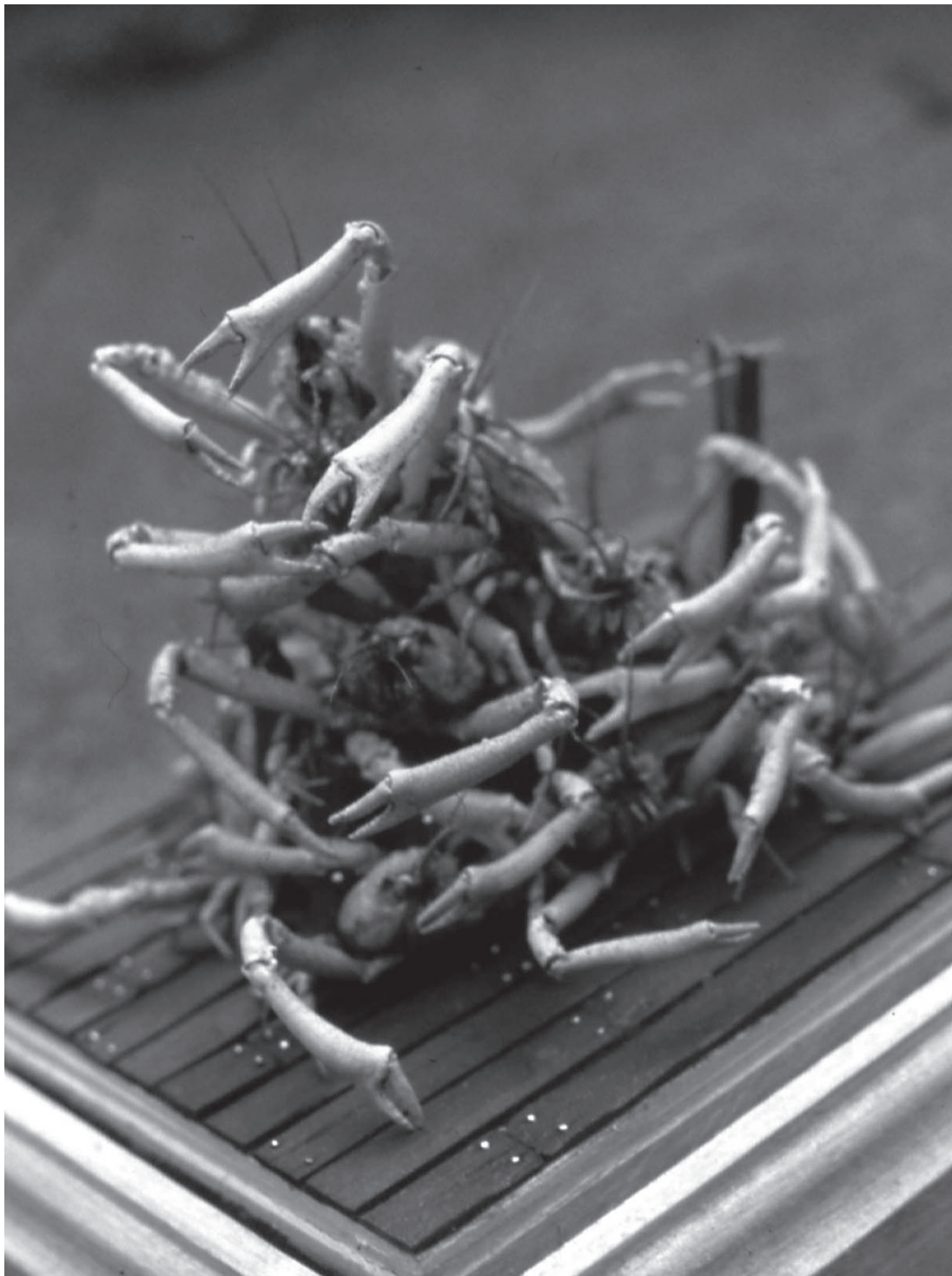
Martings sternum took the brunt of the butt and he wheezed as he sprawled on the floor. The plastic lino was no comfort and with that Marting sprang to life, dazed though as he reached his original height. Marting and Peters relationship by now had become war-torn, a gaping varicose cavern repeatedly opened by swab strokes of clumsy reconciliation. Pleasuring Peter with everyday run of the mill gestures was fast becoming far beyond pointless. To receive even a grunt of appreciation from Peter's moist worm midriff lips would involve a complicated system of levers and pulleys the type of which that Marting was not prepared to rig up.

Peter: "I was playing Marting," Peter wheezed.

Marting: "You are too rough," Marting shrieked.

Peter walked in and Marting turned around. Peters face was puffy and in need of a soporific refreshment. This time in the country had served them distinctly badly.

Peter: "Shall we have my mutton and stilton cobbler Marting?"
Marting "we shall," Marting announced violently at first, petering out into a dull grown.



when I come home - Rex Birchmore



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