

To Know Jack

Hot and Spicer Questions for Kevin Killian

INTERVIEW
BY DEL RAY CROSS



Kevin Killian

Kevin Killian is the author of two novels, a book of memoirs, two books of stories, and two books of poetry. He has also written on the life and work of the late American poet Jack Spicer, and recently co-edited, with Peter Gizzi, *My Vocabulary Did This To Me: The Collected Poetry of Jack Spicer for Wesleyan University Press*. Boog City sent indie-publisher and fellow Bay Area poet Del Ray Cross on an online trail of Killian, who made a recent stop in New York to moderate the symposium on Jack Spicer at the Poetry Project at St. Mark's Church.

What got you hooked on Spicer? And when? And where were you? ("Flares of melty sentiment" are perfectly acceptable here.)

I suppose I was in my 20s and the *Collected Books* had come out three or four years before. I was in grad school and

It definitely makes me blue—well, bittersweet—that Spicer is not my own little secret any more. The same thing happened with Dario Argento, and also with Kylie Minogue. Nowadays you don't have to be 40 and a gay male to know who she is.

one of my examiners was a Pulitzer Prize-winning poet and the last word in dapper. He was a player in the "confessional poetry" business. He had written a book that included a section on Robert Duncan, and he told me that Duncan had some qualities we should admire, but that Spicer was best left in the gutter. Where was I? Long Island of course, where everything dispiriting was going on at the moment, even the Amityville Horror.

What's your favorite Spicer poem?

Right now, it's "Helen," the serial poem Peter Gizzi and I published in *My Vocabulary Did This to Me: The Collected Poetry of Jack Spicer*. I wonder how it will go down with the general public since it's a little different from the Spicer we're used to. But now I'm cheating on "Helen," one might say, and the tall, lanky "Hokku Notebook" is taking its place. Do you know the poet Ryan Murphy? He has his own very idiosyncratic press and for every book he prints he uses a different press name; Peter and I are editing a particular 1959 notebook for Murphy to publish this summer.

Would you consider yourself an unvert?

That would mean I would enjoy going to bed with my own

tears! Never happens. If Jews and Negroes aren't allowed to be unverts then I don't want to be one either. But can I help it? That's the question Spicer poses (in his 1950s "essay-novel" *The Unvert Manifesto and Other Papers Found in the Rare Book Room of the Boston Public Library in the Handwriting of Oliver Charming*, also now available in full length in the recent Spicer collection).

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I assume that it must be quite satisfying, but do you ever have any mixed feelings about how, due in much part to your own doings, Jack Spicer is no longer a fringe poet, his name is basically on the tips of everyone's tongues these days?

It definitely makes me blue—well, bittersweet—that Spicer is not my own little secret any more. The same thing happened with Dario Argento, and also with Kylie Minogue. Nowadays you don't have to be 40 and a gay male to know who she is.

Jack Spicer and Kylie Minogue loom over your work, or you've been utterly immersed within the auras of both. Would you consider either or both of them alter egos (of yourself)?

I consider Spicer a great psychic master of mine, though not an alter ego. Kylie yes. She weighs two hundred pounds less than I do, and she's pretty, but otherwise we're twins at the same business.

Do you think Spicer would shop at Amazon.com? Sorry if it's obvious, but how do you think he'd feel knowing he could readily obtain this masterpiece collection via Amazon?

Thank you, Del. I don't know what Spicer would have thought, but I expect he would have seen Amazon as a horrid symptom of the spread of neoliberal globalism and would have mimed wiping his butt with it.

Have you ever written or typed your own answers to Spicer's "Poetry as Magic" Workshop questionnaire?

I never did complete it ... but, yes, partially. Did you know that Peter and I uncovered the original answers of many of the original participants in the Magic Workshop, as well as some by those Spicer rejected. Here's one of Jack Gilbert's answers:

Write the funniest joke that you know.

Man is radio announcer. Does on-the-street interviews, incredibly successful. Fame. Money. House by Van der Roes. Daughters married to Whitneys. One day... Drunk comes along. For joke asks him: Good morning, sire (etcetera).

Drunk: Knock knock.

Announcer: (Ha! Ha!) Who's there?

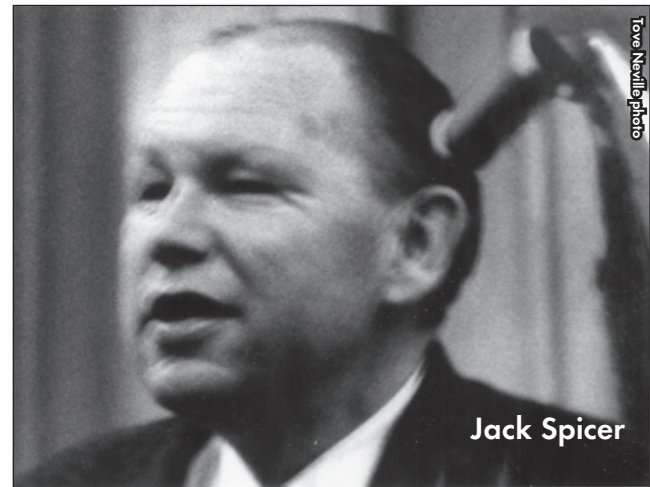
Drunk: Aga

Announcer: Aga who?

Drunk: Aga fuck yourself.

Catastrophe. Cut off the air. Ruin. Bankruptcy. Daughters divorced. Years of struggle. Night watchman in studio. 20 years. At night he studies names. Every possible knock knock on any name. Finally, one more chance. Sidewalk interviewer.

Incredible success. One day... Same drunk. Fate. Silently face each other, "Knock knock." Who's there? Chrysanthemum. (Relief, completely safe.) Chrysanthemum who? "Ah go fuck yourself."



Jack Spicer

What animal do you most resemble?

I don't know. Gilbert replied, "That simple white mongrel you see in any city at night."

If you were able to hop into a time machine back to 1964 and you then bumped into Spicer on the streets of San Francisco, what's the first thing you would ask him? The second thing?

If it were 1964 I would ask him for the rest of the "Map Poems." Then I'd try to buy him a drink. If it were 1954 I would try, you know, going to a hotel with him, maybe the one Janet Leigh and John Gavin are in during the opening sequence in *Psycho*.

And speaking of Lorca, have you heard about or are you in any way excited about Paul Morrison's film *Little Ashes*, the preview of which makes it look like a gay threesome love triangle with Garcia Lorca, Salvador Dali, and Luis Buñuel?

That's the one with the boy from *Twilight*, so yes, I'm there.

Del Ray Cross lives in San Francisco and edits SHAMPOO (www.ShampooPoetry.com)—both now for nine years running. He is the author of *Lub Luffly* and *Cinema Yosemite from Pressed Wafer and Ein frisches Trugbilt* (in German with English translations by Peter Rehberg and illustrations by Jessica McLeod) from luxbooks. Kevin Killian is his hero.

Joanna Penn Cooper
Washington Heights
See That Bird

Believe me or don't, I've been a hoarder of private glees. Have forgotten my givens, the muck of my beginnings. Thought on those other beginnings. How string-haired teenagers stood around my crib harmonizing Neil Young. I'm not even kidding. There is that in my species—an algebra of voice and floating particles. Sly jokes. Feet out the car window. Minor key susurrations. What if you saw me standing in the kitchen staring at an avocado pit in wonder and plain looking? How my Ezekiel bread and vegetables felt so blessed I wanted to kiss them before I took them into me and chewed. Well, ok. We have our ecstatic songsters. We have our quiet wonderers. But see that bird out your window, how small and impertinent and there for a season, screaming its little head off out its beak? That's kind of me.

POETRY

Crow Jane collective

France, England, Germany,
South Korea, and New York City

Here I Will Use Establishing Shots as We Say of Film

I'll make out with anyone: I stole Satan's socks—

Two hand grenades tossed on kitchen tiles
In France leaves Linoleum Blown-apart.

One short fortuneteller escaped from prison?
Small medium at large. While a chicken

Crossing the road is poultry in motion,
Backward poets write inverse.

If you don't pay your exorcist
You may get repossessed

Show me a piano falling down a mineshaft
And I'll show you A-flat miner.

When a clock is hungry it goes back four seconds.
Time flies like an arrow—but fruit flies like bananas

Covey

Still I am swept off by the Romantics
Maybe this foreign film will set me free
How can I believe Art is business
That Painting's been defeated by machines?

Through film and myth pictures persist
Masked women mounting fire-escapes
to plunder
Now do you see why mornings
Guys wake up with boners?

"Don't be tender to me"
Says the seaport hoodlum's song
There's a bloom called
Immortelle
Though I've never picked it

Geoffrey Cruickshank- Hagenbuckle

Elmhurst, Queens

Tragic Wand

for Ariana Reines

I stand at the world's door
Do you see the demon tree?

We're talking about my exile
From both poetry and the Republic

December's sky's a gurney gray,
Spavined with needle swabs.

They're tearing down the brownstones
And townhouses in New York—

"We don't draw pictures
Of the storm,
We draw power from it."

"Form is force not font.
Packaging won't
Pull the snake out of the hole."

3rd's Chinese foot-rub girl
Swoops her Hula-hoop,

Urban birds eat meat.
Baby ducks trail gaily by,

Tucked to training ropes; Day
Care kids wear yellow plastic slickers.

About the Poets

Joanna Penn Cooper (cover) teaches at Fordham University. Her writing has appeared in *Pleiades*, *The Cortland Review*, and *Scapegoat Review*. **Crow Jane** is an anonymous international poetry collective. All poems are collaborations. They translate themselves. **Geoffrey Cruickshank-Hagenbuckle** has been published in *Bald Ego*, *The Boston Review*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *The Paris Times*, *EOAGH*, *Explosive!*, *Fence*, *Jacket*, *Lit*, and *Verse*, among others. An editor of the poetry journal *Dear Bear*, he is the author of *Kook!*, *Nuit Maudit*, and *Close to the Art of Those Fearless at Sea*.

Submission Guidelines Email subs to poetry@welcometoboogcity.com, with no more than five poems, all in one attached file with "My Name Submission" in the subject line and as the name of the file, ie: Walt Whitman Submission. Or mail with an SASE to Poetry editor, Boog City, 330 W. 28th St., Suite 6H, N.Y., N.Y. 10001-4754.

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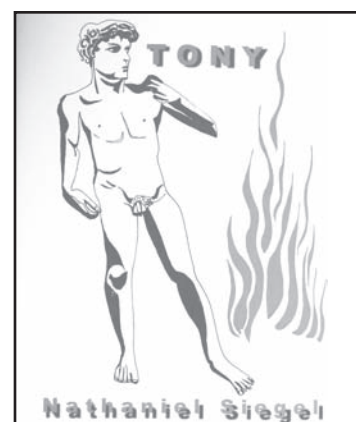
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On the Road, 2009, with Brook Pridemore

A Brighter Light
Brook Pridemore

BY J.J. HAYES



Herb Scher photo

Sir, Madam, whoever you are. Yes, you at the fiction and literature section. Put your hands where I can see them and step away from the Kerouac. Now slowly walk out of the store and go home and order a copy of *A Brighter Light*.

I'm doing you a favor here. I could take you in and charge you with Motorized Whitmanian Vicarious Enjoyment of a Half-Century Old Vastness and Wonder of America, but that usually does no good. No one ever told you that even half a century ago these were the ramblings of a 10-year-gone time, and you'll only end up wishing you were there. You can read about it and even set out for the road and try to live that life, except you'll end up exhausted because no one told you about the day-to-day from which that whole thing was selected. No one is going to commemorate this life of yours, but that is not the point. Your life is not *On the Road*, kid; your life is your life, and hidden in it, hidden in that scabies you just spent all day treating, are real moments of transcendence that you didn't even notice.

Let the songs of Brook Pridemore reveal this to you as they describe life from town to town or from subway stop to subway stop, where fisticuffs are an occasional fact but not therefore glorified; where if you can get out of your own head and just get out there, this will be the day and year you get it right. This train isn't just bound for glory, it may actually be hiding glory under these torn passenger seats.

There is hope for you yet, kid. I know it. There is hope for you yet, old man. I know it. Just listen to this disc, and listen to it well. You can dance to it. You will find yourself singing along with random lines just like you've done your whole life with all the albums that ever really meant something to you. I'm not saying this will happen on your first listen. My limited survey of two other people who have listened to *A Brighter Light* confirms that at first listen you will not be so sure. You may even not like it. But ... well, here's what happened to me.

The first listen: I am not liking the arrangements or the production ... or something. "Perhaps," I think, "I will just concentrate on the material, since these songs, most of which I am already familiar with, are quite amazing examples of songwriting."

The second listen: I say to myself, "Did Brook just call the ghost of Joe Hill a liar and make fun of Led Zeppelin within a space of 10 seconds?" This is an album out of the road, out of America. Pridemore is accusing Joe Hill's ghost and having fun with "Immigrant Song" outside of Santa

Fe. The album starts with "From Minot to Bozeman" then the "Buckeye State and Russell," and on one cut you could swear this was as about a New York song as you can get and the singer is all of a sudden getting gas outside of Palo Alto. I start to think about Brook Pridemore and America ...

The third listen: I'm playing it and talking to my brother, hearing the music in the background. And damn, don't that music sound real good, just playing there on the stereo while you talk with your brother.

The fourth listen: My girlfriend Jeannie and I are at friend's place in the Catskills. I throw it in a CD player in the kitchen. The bass kicks in on the first track and Jeannie starts dancing and so do I. We get to track 6.

The fifth listen: My friend with the place in the Catskills says "Let's put the radio on the deck; listen to some country." We do. Then I start fiddling with the CD and he's like "Don't try to force your music on me," and I'm like, "I'm not forcing anything on you; just thought you might like it." It starts up and he says "I kind of like this." He's reading the CD package, and he is listening, but conversation ensues and we make it to about track six. He tells me that this sounds like an album he may want to concentrate on but you can't do that gabbing on the deck in the Catskills.

The sixth listen: We're on Route 17, stuck in traffic, I pull out the CD and Jeannie's like, "Let's start where we left off. We keep hearing only the first part of the album." I'm like, "Sure," and then I hear "Trite Fidelity." The final image of the song hits me as the perfect summation of the pilgrim way of life:

We are all on a road, not a rocket ship to the ultimate earthly success story. It is all about doing what you were sent here to do on a given day, and then making your bed and getting some sleep, because you intend to continue that journey the next day.

I realize plumbing the depths of "Nathan Hale Part II" is going to take a lot of time, and don't tell me where Marlon Brando comes into this, I want to figure it out for myself. But I also realize that these arrangements are good and the immense skill and power of Michael David Campbell's drumming and the on-target bass playing of Dan Costello are no liabilities at all. They are channeling the songwriter's muse. They know precisely what will draw people first to dance and then to listen to this valuable work.

These feelings are only intensified by "Nathan Hale Part I," where we are in martyr-for-liberty versus martyr-for-salvation territory and it casts the previous "Part II" in a new light.

Then "Endlessly" comes on and it hits me for the first time how important this song really is. I have stood among crowds singing the chorus in unison; I have slow-danced to this tune; I have heard it numerous times, but now it is calling to me like some kind response to Kurt Cobain's death. (Don't know why, it just did)

The singer sings "I bleed like hopelessness pours of me —endlessly" but somehow I am left more in happiness than despair. I have written here and deleted, written and deleted. I can't quite put it into words. By

the time "Endlessly" finishes the only hopelessness that pours out of me is the impossibility of even scratching the surface of this remarkable song. We stop at a Friendly's to get some lunch and ice cream. I order a banana split.

The seventh listen: Straight through, uninterrupted, and alone. I am digging the music, my arms are moving to the drums, my fingers to bass. I realize that it would be in the interests of our children and our children's children if every family in America owned a copy of this album. I think riders should go forth from every town on Pridemore's current tour to alert the next town along the way that something important is coming. The singer of these songs, the writer of these songs, has achieved something worthy of emulation, purchase and repeated listening.

The fact, manner, and content of these songs all point to something. It is as if a normal human heart in the vast geography of 21st century America has gotten closer to the truth about this road of ours than any amphetamine fueled internal combustion coast-to-coast mad stolen car spree ever did or will. Moriarty for the academics; Pridemore for actual life.

So like I said, hands where I can see them and step away from the Kerouac. Someday you'll remember this moment and thank me.

www.myspace.com/brookpridemore

J.J. Hayes writes songs, poems, and essays. He may be at your show, opening, signing. He might review, assess, discuss.

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Couple Punk and the Orphan's Mystery

Low Blow

Schwervon!

By Tony Rubin

I saw that a couple of writers in Vienna are defining Schwervon! as "cuddle punk." Well OK ... fair enough, especially in interviews or at their charming live shows; but their new album, *Low Blow*, operates in a different, darker universe. If you've been following their career, you've seen glimpses of this place before. But this time out, they internalize the sense of dread that seems to be the background noise for the entire world right now, and rebroadcast it for your listening pleasure. *Low Blow* is the achingly beautiful sound of the excrement slowly hitting the fan.

The first seconds of album-opener "Dodger" give away the game: the unaccompanied tomtoms, possibly struck in anger and frustration by percussionist Nan Turner; Matt Roth's Goo/



Schwervon

Eric Lippe photo

Metallic K.O. guitar, all nervous energy and overtones; the lines "I call the shots/ ready or not/ there's dirt in my nails/ I'm not what you thought," Roth shouting like he's trying to be heard over a roaring sea. Scary stuff. As a tornado-alley native he might have said to Dorothy in another life, "you're not in Kansas anymore." On second thought, we are all in Kansas; it's everywhere. Everybody is perilously balanced in the tornado between Kansas and Oz, and Schwervon! wants to supply your whirlwind soundtrack.

I always love it when artists ask some version of, "what the hell is going on?" That means they are paying attention. In "Balloon," the album's pop-song heart, Turner and Roth sing, "so if you're reading bad stuff in the news/ and feel that there's not much more you can lose/ just teach yourself to learn to play the blues/ and take a look around." Its not quite "what can a poor boy do/ except to sing for a rock n roll band," or The Clash asking "what are you gonna do?" when they kick in your front door, but it does echo some of its famous predecessors with its evocation of the increasing weight of the world. It suggests that art is only meaningful if you are processing the big picture. The final verses describe the social function of music: "if the song is good you'll fill a room/ with more than just the same old gloom and doom/ the whole wide world will want to sing your tune/ trouble floats away/ like a balloon." You can argue with the simplistic resolution (although in the context of the song it's certainly not "Don't Worry Be Happy"), but it also seems like a million years away from the insular, domestic bliss of their first album's musically similar "Dinner."

In keeping with the fragile state of things at present, the album doesn't finish with the upbeat "Balloon," but with the bleak "Dogs For Hire." Even as the lighter sounding songs like "Balloon" and "Avec Plaisir" seem to have their roots buried deep in some dark aquifer slated for federal cleanup, the harder-edged songs bring the dreadful stuff right up to the surface. Although the default setting for both Schwervon! songwriters is abstract rather than literal, the churning psycho-blues of "Cut It Down" certainly applies to the current zeitgeist, no matter what the original intent: "you know we can run while we've got two legs." And "Wake and Bomb" (the title pretty much says it all) just might be a progress report on Kurt Cobain's generation 18 years later: "you burnt your lips on the exhaust pipe/ you move your hips until they feel right/ you spend more than you can afford/ you got the new blah blah and you're bored." As they scream in "Dodger," "you used to be punk/ now you're just drunk!"

Even those songs that can't be so closely linked to the CNN headline scroll deliver an eerie Apocalypse Now sort of dread, like the song "Lucky Rocks" with its mysterious protagonist, recalling the mission and the ambiguous relationship detailed in Bob Dylan's "Isis." The folk-ballad "Glasses On," which begins: "You've been crying/ all day long" and goes on to explore human non-relationships with claustrophobic effect. Or in the beautiful "Pretty Slow": "best thoughts come when I'm first

awake/ before I've got money to make."

Of course all this angst wouldn't have much resonance if not for the art, and we've got a plenty here. Partially because there are only two of them and mainly because they know exactly what they need to do, Schwervon! is completely economical but never limited. When "Balloon" needs its tiny organ break, there it is. The barely audible wind chimes in "Cut It Down" ramp up its thunder on a subliminal level. They put their two voices through endless variations: singing alternately, singing in unison, singing in harmony, doubling, screaming, whispering, always and only with the purpose of propelling the meaning of the song forward. Their ability to arrange and structure songs goes from strength to strength, with details—sudden pauses, shifts in direction and tone, instruments added or subtracted—that both surprise and delight, and never sound added on. Always in service of putting across the song. Even the first listening reveals moments of transcendent beauty, like the complex vocals of "Pretty Slow," the way "Lucky Rocks" morphs into the melancholy of its long coda, or the sudden pause in the blast of "Dodger" as Nan inserts five delicate lines.

This album doesn't have the stylistic breadth of 2006's *I Dream of Teeth*; no borrowed trumpet soliloquies

or proto-rap, but the evolution of the band is evident nevertheless. Considering that it started as a part-time side project for both members, with Nan learning to drum "on the job," Schwervon!'s development to this point is remarkable. The album needn't be compared; it succeeds on its own terms. Robert Schumann wrote, "Music is an orphan whose mother and father no one can determine. And it may well be that precisely in this mystery lies the source of its beauty." That's the sweet spot of *Low Blow*.

www.schwervon.com

Tony Rubin likes couple bands so much, he has one of his own. *The Recording Angels* have a show every eight years or so; catch it.

In Kitchens and On Computers

Hey Richard

Daniel Harnett

By Jonathan Berger

Despite the minimalist effect, the latest from long time acoustic performer Daniel Harnett is not lo-fi. Listen to the track that would have closed Side One in olden days, "Tragic or Tomorrow," and hear within the bridge a fascinating callback to "I Am the Walrus," suggesting the technological



Daniel Harnett

innovations of a generation past can now be accomplished in kitchens and on computers. Minor echoes, occasional sound collages, and a full band comprised of two studio players (producer Richard Martin plays everything that Harnett doesn't) create a swelling, emphatic, full sound throughout this full-length album.

The 12 tracks of *Hey Richard* are an excellent study in using a little to produce quite a lot. It is comprised mostly of guitars, keys, and layers of vocals, with more instruments added as necessary on a case-by-case basis.

From the initial backwards loops of "Wild Strawberry You" through the simple, subtle "Synapse," this album consistently showcases Harnett's lovely voice and decisive lyrics. While his choice of words does not always translate into linear storytelling, the album is rife with memorable lines.

"Songs From The Great South Bay" includes the percussive "Singin' that old time magic tune 'bout the story of the boy by the waxing moon asking for forgiveness from whoever he could find" near the close of the song. The emphasis of vocals combined with the emotional delivery makes Harnett's case. Ever heard the cliché about the guy who can sing the phone book convincingly? Take a listen to the "Man With The Three Hats," who, according to Harnett, is "Standing on the shore and trying to punch the waves back." Harnett is that guy, singing the phone book. He's been likened to Jeff Buckley, but with more sincerity.

An early track, "Continental Ooh," which may be a tale of the last few moments of a doomed flight, is sweeping and epic, and one of the standout cuts on the album. While every line is strong and well placed, it attains its climax in the chorus: "The Captain said, 'Get off; this is your last trip from the first time ya tried it.' Oh how does it compare to the airlines ya used to know?"

"Cant Talk To You At All" is achingly beautiful, and more than any other track tells a clear and present story of heartache. This song is powerful because of the pain present in the words and melody, not simply through vocal emphasis.

This is only the latest album from veteran Harnett, a historic New York performer. More are available, including a storied box set.

www.myspace.com/danielharnett

Jonathan Berger used to produce a lot more words, then a lot less. He's seeking to find that middle road, so that he's just write.

Not an Open Mic, Exactly

A Night at the Red Lion's

Bleecker St. Folk Club

By Bucky Hayes

On Monday I went to the Red Lion on Bleecker Street for Niall Connolly's twice-monthly Bleecker St. Folk Club. Niall is an Irish songwriter, and one of the hardest working men in the business. He is one of the few songwriters that I know in New York who doesn't have a day job. In addition to playing long solo sets each month at numerous venues, he runs Ceol's Wednesday Night Song Club in Brooklyn, and the Sunday Social at the LIC Bar in Queens.

I first went to one of his nights last fall when his Wednesday gig was at Mr. Dennehy's in the Village. When I arrived, vouched for by another musician who frequented the event, I was told that I might not get to play that first night. The events are not called Open Mics, after all, but rather Clubs, with scheduling of who will play partially figured out in advance. The stage was only open to songwriters for the beginning of the program, so some time-management strategies were employed. Niall is such a nice guy, the vibe among the songwriters was so warm and supportive that the Club felt like an especially open, open mic. I swore I'd go back to future events.

At the Red Lion's Folk Club on Monday, there

single featured performer plays a 20-30 minute set sometime during the night. The featured act gets paid, which is great and rare.

The venue itself is dark day and night, has tons of seating, a long bar, and a proper stage. The stage, perpendicular to the bar, faces the seating, which featured about 20 people. Some of the performers brought friends, but I noticed half a dozen people who were unaffiliated sit down and listen to the music while eating pub grub. The people sitting at the bar weren't there to listen, but some were pulled into the fold. One guy at the bar bought a CD from the featured performer.

The performers couldn't be pinned down by style. The artists ran the gamut: one guy was very soulful, singing most of his first song a cappella; one girl sang cute melodic songs with witty lyrics; an Irishman played beautiful finger-picking accompaniment to his sad songs. The featured act played like a finger-style Woody Guthrie, singing about Memphis on the morning train.

There seems to be no clique or pecking order at the Club. Connolly put everyone on first come, first serve. Assuming, of course, you were one of the initiated. Even so, there was quite a relaxed vibe; it would be a great place to try out new songs in a low-pressure environment. The performers focus more on songwriting and performing than any kind of self-promotion or networking.

You can obtain gigs from the venue, if you want, as evidenced by the acts at the Red Lion later that night. These are one act, three set affairs. The artists mix up originals with a healthy dose of covers to win the crowds over, but it's a good chance to play in front of new audiences and hone performance skills. As the great country singer Ray Price says, "If the crowd isn't familiar with you, play songs they're familiar with."

The Red Lion features a predominantly N.Y.U., bridge and tunnel, and European tourist crowd. You would be paid to entertain the crowd they already possess, but it's a paying gig, so you've got to give the people what they want - and they want it all the time. Certainly, playing long sets for strangers who just want to party is a great way to humble yourself and tighten up your act. Playing at the Folk Club is one way to get your foot in the door for a gig without using email is a treat in this day and age.

But whatever your intention, the Bleecker St. Folk Club is a good place to perform and meet other songwriters. It's low in pretension, high in song quality, and relaxed in atmosphere. I recommend it.

Bucky Hayes is a songwriter who just released his third album, *Bucky Hayes and the Radio*. Visit www.myspace.com/buckyhayes to find out more.

Exegesis Department Concerning 'Stockholm St. Syndrome'

By Brook Pridemore

He drank himself to death the same day monthlies came in due, because the good ones all were taken (He spent his savings on the papers). And the asphalt must be bleaker on the dark side of the pool, because he caught the first bus over, he cut the chase to baiting racial slurs at every pinche gringo that drove past to try to make the message last. So, when the rent comes due for me, I change my plans and try to be the bigger man. He asked if I was lonely, he tried to follow me inside. But I had barely got to know him, and so I slammed the door behind me. I ran upstairs and past the party, took a diver off the roof. I sprouted wheels and crossed the country, and stopped for gas in Palo Alto. And now every day I'm running from the guilt, and I will stay that way until I meet a girl who fucks like drums, like holds my hand; and then I'll stay right where I am. I meet a girl who fucks like drums, like holds my hand; and then I'll stay right where I am.

He drank himself to death the same day monthlies came in due, because the good ones all were taken (he spent his savings on the papers)

I have had two stepfathers. The first, my mother met while she and I and my Dad were stationed outside Suffolk (U.K.) in the early '80s. My parents were still married at the time. Mom and I came home to Michigan in late 1982, living with my grandparents for a while before moving into a two-bedroom house in Brightmoor, which was something of a borough of Detroit. My first stepfather, Mike, showed up on our doorstep about a year after we came back.



Niall Connolly

He'd scraped together all the money he could for a plane ticket, having seen something in my mother that he hadn't seen in all of England.

And the asphalt must look bleaker on the dark side of the pool, because he caught the first boat over.

Whatever Mike saw in my Mom or in the U.S. (if he saw anything, I lost all contact with him years ago, and lost all respect for him long before that) must have been quelled by the harsh reality of Detroit life in the 1980s. Our house was on the same block as several crack houses, many of the houses on my grandparents' block (not far from where we lived) have burned down over the years. Several black guys once assaulted my mother outside our home. I don't know if Mike was a bigot when he came over, but I grew up hearing pretty racist stuff stated as fact coming out of my parents' mouths. Every child should be able to trust his parents' word as the truth, and 20 years later, I'm still unlearning a lot of unfortunate lies I had burned into my psyche.

He cut the chase to baiting racial slurs at every pinche gringo who drove past, to try to make the message last.

Yeah, I don't know whose ignorance instigated or perpetuated the lazy bigotry I grew up hearing, but here I'm imagining Mike coming over to the states and assimilating the quietly, jokingly racist vernacular that is drilled into the heads of lots of Detroiters from birth. It's an incredibly diverse but incredibly segregated part of the country. Dearborn, for example, is mostly Chaldean, but 99% "Middle-Eastern," any way you look at it. I grew up one town west of Pontiac (a big city, as far as non-Detroit Michigan cities go), but was strictly instructed not to go to Pontiac. Smart white people who weren't hooked through the bag on something stayed the hell out of Pontiac when I was growing up. Now, with the economic crisis (which Michigan has felt since the late '80s, and is causing an epidemic of flight from the state), town lines are a lot blurrier than they were, but at the time, there was one black kid in my school. I thought that was the case all over.

The sad thing, to me, is my choice of language in the racial slurs the "he" in the first verse chooses: "Pinche Gringo" means, literally, "fucking whitey," which my mother and Mike, never having spoken a word of Spanish, have never had cause to say, ever. I chose the phrase "pinche gringo" after chickening out and omitting a much harder-hitting phrase more common to my house growing up, and one that I can't bring myself to type, even now. Not being able to type that word, even in a study of my own writing, makes me really sad, because the word itself has been deemed unspeakable by intellectuals, when it is the context of the word that should be held at arms' length. Randy Newman's *Good Old Boys* was in near constant rotation in my room when I wrote this song, and I thought long and hard about singing the lyric, unedited, to illustrate exactly how I felt about the way my parents talked. I sincerely believe that we as a politically correct society are much weaker in terms of language than intellectuals in the '60s and '70s.

So when the rent comes due for me, I change my plans, and try to be a bigger man

This is one of the first songs I wrote after I quit drinking in September of 2007. I had (and have) an iron resolve to not turn into

the small-brained, insecure, drunk bigot my parents seemed to try to make me. I know people my age that stayed back home and today have no frame of reference for what the world is really like. Last summer, in a bar in my hometown, I got the "Hey, check out the faggot" look from a couple of locals who probably haven't left town since I did. I am resolved not to be those guys.

He asked if I was lonely, he tried to follow me inside

In November of 2007, a man hit on me for the first time in my life. I was walking home from the train, about 2:30 a.m., after a long day of work. I was still quite insecure after giving up alcohol, and frankly, if a good-looking woman had approached me on my block, offering to suck my dick, I probably would have been just as freaked out. I thought, before this encounter, that I was incredibly worldly, that I had seen it all.

But I had barely got to know him, so I slammed the door behind me, ran upstairs and past the Party.

This is a little exaggerated. I DID stammer, "No, thank you," a couple of times to his persistent begging for a piece of my "white dick," before quickly letting myself inside. I went up and into the Brooklyn Tea Party, rolled a cigarette and tried to forget what had just happened. I did not sleep well that night.

I took a diver off the roof, sprouted wheels, and crossed the country. I stopped for gas in Palo Alto.

This is, of course, complete fantasy. I imagined being so overcome with fear of the gay boy on my street that I jumped off the roof and fast forwarded the remaining days until the next tour. A tour is a great place for me to escape harsh realities in New York that I'm not

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ready to confront yet. Unfortunately, touring is almost always also the breeding ground for new fears and harsh realities to unpack later. It's Catch-22, in a way. I picked Palo Alto because, although I've never been there, Ivan Sandomire's sister and her husband live there, and they hung out with us when we were all in San Francisco. I thought upon meeting them that they had a polar opposite lifestyle than we did, much healthier and happier than I felt (and certainly looked) at the time. I had not yet fully accepted my lifestyle as perpetually touring creature, and was feeling a pang of regret that I hadn't yet married. Palo Alto, therefore, seemed like a polar opposite to my harsh reality, getting aggressively hit on by strange men in my neighborhood.

Now everyday I'm running from the guilt, and I will stay that way until I meet a girl who fucks like drums, like holds my hand, and I will stay right where I am

I felt for a while like I was running to get away from the gay boy on my street, and running to get away from the racist shit my parents drilled into my head. White guilt exists, does straight guilt? I don't know, but I was overcome with straight, white guilt over my visceral reaction to that boy's proposition, and resigned myself to keep moving until the guilt wore off. The line, "I meet a girl who fucks like drums, like holds my hand," is meant to signify a woman who is both sexually powerful and tender enough to not bulldoze over my (considerable) emotional frailties. I have never been openly accused of misogyny, so I guess no one's taken that line the wrong way (or possibly, no one cares), but I struggled more with writing that line and keeping it than I did with the "pinche gringo" turn of phrase in the first verse.

I will gladly take anyone to task, anyone, who calls me a misogynist. I will also, gladly, stay at the side of whatever girl can make me slow down and look twice.

Brook Pridemore is touring the U.S. for *A Brighter Light*, his latest album. He often writes about touring, sometimes at myspace.com/brookpridemore.

Brook Pridemore Birthday Blowout

Thursday, June 18, 2009

8

Elastic No-No Band

9

My Idea of Fun Tour

10

Brook Pridemore

11

Endless Mike and the Beagle Club

12

Drew and the Medicinal Pen

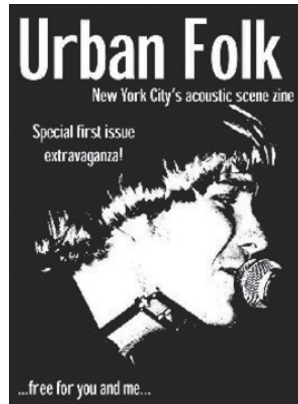
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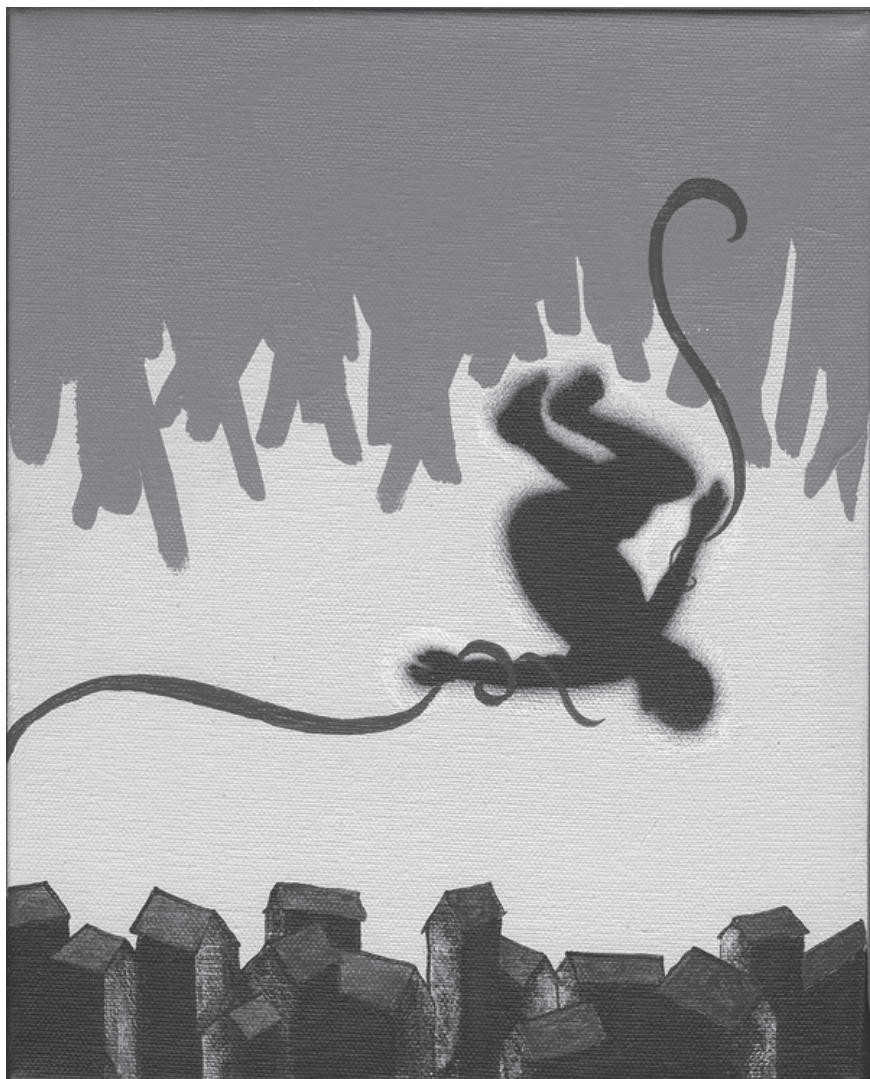
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About the Artist

As an undergrad studying sociology at Rutgers University, **Nim Ben-Reuven** began his artistic experimenting by creating two daily comic strips, *Number 5* and *Chemical Corporation Baby Funnies* (co-authored by Chris Spliedt), for the university's newspaper. To his surprise and bewilderment, the strangely drawn and often bizarrely non-sequitorial strips became a cult hit and were in print for almost eight years.

After a brief, post-collegiate stint on the west coast as a wandering wallet-maker, Ben-Reuven returned to New Jersey and began trying his hand at painting with acrylics and spray paints. He scored his first solo show at Small World Coffee in Princeton, N.J. in 2005 and has since been steadily showing his work in cafés and galleries around Princeton, Philadelphia, Brooklyn, and Manhattan.

Ben-Reuven's work showcases his talent for blending humor with melancholy, often painting characters in very simple, dream-like situations. His use of bright background colors mixed with quasi-three-dimensional foreground characters give his paintings a surreal depth without seeming pretentious or complicated.

www.nimbenreuve.com

Artist's Statement:

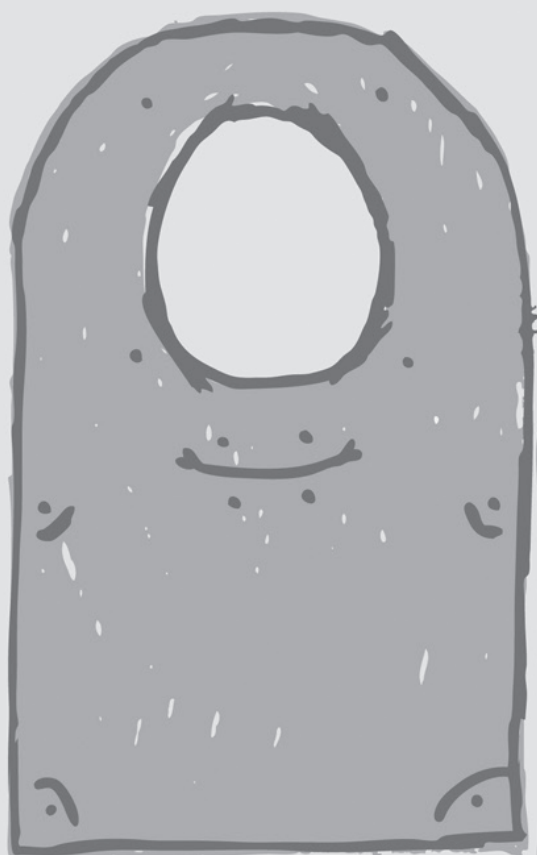
My paintings are meant to give the viewer a window into a dream or story that happened to be caught in a particular moment. I try to not make any distinctions as to the underpinnings of any of my images. My hope is for the viewer to feel inspired to create their own conclusions from what they see. By mixing spray paint stencils with acrylic and pen and ink, I try to give my paintings several layers which will hopefully interact with each other in a cohesive and balanced way. Since I do not have any formal art training, each of my works is essentially an experiment that tests my abilities. Although there are many mistakes and failures involved in this process, I find it very exciting to attempt to produce images when I have absolutely no idea how they will come out in the end. In many ways, I produce my paintings with very few expectations and I make sure to tap deep into my childhood daydreams to satisfy my lust for silly stories.



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