

dy ing metaphors

And as he stares into the sky, there
are twice as many stars as usual.

issues

issue no. 3



lusus- noun deriving from Latin word *ludere*, which means to play, *lusus* is a noun that means a deviation from the normal, a freak, or a mutant.

The feeling of being othered or outcasted is somehow so intrinsically human, because everyone has experienced this feeling, yet in the moment we are utterly convinced that we are completely alone. Strange to think we are that special. Take comfort in your solidarity among your freaks.

Every normal being is simply masquerading as what they're not. Take joy in this and revel in the beauty of the unconventional.

-Callie Townsend, Editor in Chief.

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Nick Dunkenstein

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Editor in Chief: Callie Townsend
Business Manager: Kai Richter

Copy Editor: Isaac George
Writer: Ellie Dorr-Laughter and Valerie Allbritton

Contributors: Gwen Amburgey, Jay Beck, Percy Jean, Kieran Mai, and Mudz Waite

once a friend, now with a
masked jest array.
they, former lovers, with
scorn portray.

mocking glances casted like
arrows from a bow,
in an echo of disdain, their
tales fall low.
the mirror reflects a cold
design.
yet, resilience falters with
every line.

i force my laughter, too brittle
a sound.
concealing wounds that
silently abound.
a bitter swallow, my pride and
my pain,
strength wanes, amidst
relentless strain.

with sore cheeks a spirit falls,
an unyielding heart succumbs
to the calls.
to laugh along, a choice so
veiled,
defying the lies, in illusion
prevailed.

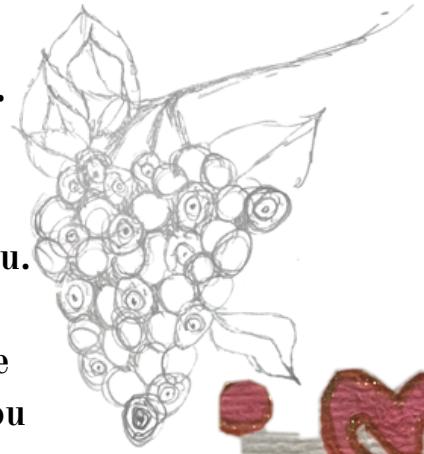
as circled words sting and
tears still fall,
i have no redemption in a
twisted thrall.
in a self unloved, in no refuge
i drown,
my beauty will wither on a
desolate ground.

-Kieran Mai



Labored Fruits

My flesh too sour
Unripe fruit
Feast upon me
Peel away from you.



Bitter you call me
Impatient I call you
Wait for me to ripen
To bear something you'd call fruit.



Poison my tree
Pump me with fertilizer
Tell me to produce
I don't want to give anything of mine to you.

I'd cut my own limbs
Sever myself the sharpest
So I could never be anything
You'd want to harvest.

-Ellie Dorr-Laughter



Drawings by Jay
Spencer

I love art but I don't feel very artistic
I love poetry but I don't feel very poetic
I love love but I don't feel very loving
I love loving but I don't feel very lovable
I love talking but I don't feel very interesting
I love being known but I don't feel very open

-Kai Richter

The New and Improved Satanic Panic

The Rise in Fearmongering and Christian Nationalism Creating

An Increasingly Hostile Country for “Outcasts” By Callie Townsend

Has your child been taken to the dark side of liberal veganism? LGBTIA agenda or punk rock?

Angry feminist daughter or satanic witch? Look for these signs in your child to identify The Devil’s agenda- free thinking, expression, and nonconformity. All marks of the new age devil!

Fear is a base emotion which can often override rational thinking even when presented with new information. This is why fearmongering has such a powerful hold on those it has ensnared.

Young new-age Christian men have turned their uncertainty and fear towards sinners. Now with the idea of being “based”, Christian youths have become a regurgitation of old age

Christianity which often frowns upon “sinners.” Free thinking women, LGBT individuals (especially trans youth), and other religions have become a main target of social media condemnation. Despite Gen Z showing to be one of the most openly LGBTIA and left-wing generations so far, American men have been the only demographic to become more conservative.⁽¹⁾ Andrew Tate, Ben Shapiro and other “liberal feminist gets wrecked” content creators have become the idols of young boys dissatisfied with modern politics. It’s easy to find blame in “sinners” to point to the downfall of modern society. This feeling of loss of control creates this idea of victimization and persecution in Christian youth’s heads. POVs with captions about “when” the Bible becomes outlawed and other videos illustrating this perceived oppression of Christians and/or men. More than half of young men believe that their life in America is harder than the average woman’s.⁽²⁾

Despite these claims of oppression, harassment, both online and physical, of young LGBT teens, women, alternative people, and people of other religions and skin colors has become increasingly normalized online. Videos throwing things or yelling at young alternative girls has become something to brag about online. Almost every teenager who is “different” in some way or another can give you dozens of stories of the harassment they have faced in their own high schools. These social outcasts are often filmed or photographed non-consensually (often without their awareness) and then uploaded online for mockery. Photos with captions like “This is what is wrong with society,” circulating right-wing subreddits.

This cruel behavior flies in the face of Jesus’ teachings and creates a hostile country for minorities to live in. Jesus was close with immigrants, outcasts, and sex workers, while the same people are condemned by modern conservative Christians. Christianity has now become an orthodox ideology used to justify sentiments that “these other people” don’t belong in our country. Unfortunately many of these teens are too entrenched in their ideology to empathize with the people around them. Is that what Jesus would have wanted? For his teaching to become the justification for persecution?

1) “Are Young Men Becoming Conservative?” by Daniel A. Cox for the Survey Center on American Life, June 15 2023

2) “Growing Despair And Polarization Between Young Women & Men Impacts Elections” by Martijn Lampert for Glocalities, 2023



Ugly

Love me like I am ugly
 Like I have four eyes
 Like I have three sets of teeth
 Like my limbs are twisted
 Like I am inside out.

Love me like I am disgusting
 Like my flesh is rotting
 Like my face is slipping off my skull
 Like my nails are peeling away from my fingers
 Like I am coming apart.

Love me like I am grotesque
 Like I am something macabre
 Like I am a skeleton
 Like I am death itself
 Like I am diseased.

Do not love me for my beauty
 Do not prize me for my looks
 Love me like I am ugly
 Love the me that is inside.
 -Ellie Dorr-Laughter



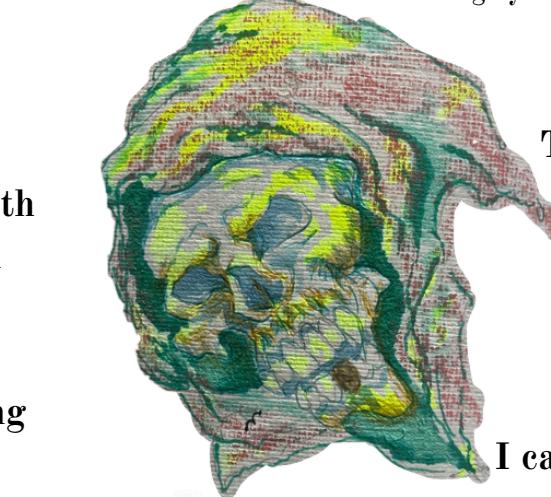
Drawing by Jay Spencer

Twice

Born with two heads
 Two brains conjoined at the mouth
 I am twice as smart as you,
 Yet you hide me like a freak.

Born with four hands
 Sewn to one torso
 I can carry twice as many stones as you,
 Yet you shame me like I'm weak.

I am gods gift
 A perfect creature made twice
 A miracle on four legs
 Yet you treat me like a mistake
 -Ellie Dorr-Laughter



Drawings by
 @customadebackstabber

Like a foreign object the world wraps around me and swells with puss.
 My presence is unwanted, however I did not ask to be inserted so rudely beneath your skin.
 Infected it grows angrier with me as I don't budge, but I am unable.
 I pray to God to change me and make me acceptable, but he cannot change what he did not create.
 To make myself sterile, clean, and anew,
 To change my chemistry seems impossible by means of will and force.
 So I wait one day for it all to reject me.

-Callie Townsend

Crows: A Comprehensive Guide To Becoming Best Friends With a Murder



By Ellie Dorr-Laughter

Do you often wake up to an ominous cawing noise around your home? Would you like to?

What Is A Crow?

The first step in getting to know the crows in your neighborhood is to identify the difference between a crow and a raven. See a smaller, straight beak, and an overall smaller bird? Hear a distinct 'caw'? Live closer to an urban area? That's a crow! See a bigger bird with a large, curved beak and hear a 'croak'? Live in a rural area?

That's likely a raven!

What Makes Crows So Special?

Crows are apart of the *Corvus* genus, a subsection of birds that includes crows, rooks, & ravens. What makes these birds so special? Their intelligence. The average American crow has the brain capacity of a 7-10 year old child. They have something only found in few animals (including humans!): the power of reasoning. This makes

them excellent problem solvers, with studies demonstrating that they can solve puzzles, and often enjoy doing so. Their advanced bird brains are not only used for puzzle solving. Crows can identify human faces so well that they can communicate what it looks like to other crows, so they can recognize you too! Crows also have the incredible ability of empathy; they can, and often do, mourn the loss of other crows with 'funerals'.

Crows In Media

You've probably heard at least once that crows are a bad omen of death, sickness or evil. Some superstitions even claim that the number of crows you see will relate what happens to you. As someone who has been taking care of and has been followed by a family of crows for over two years: it's not true! No matter how many you see, or what direction they fly in, you will not catch a cold and there will be no misfortune on your family, I promise.

Making New Friends

So you want to make friends with your local murder? Here's where to start:

Food:

If you start leaving out food for the crows, they will begin to recognize your home and your face (and maybe even tell their friends about it!) and will begin to hang out around your yard. Start with something simple, like cat/dog food, peanuts, or corn. Anything is much appreciated, and once you get to know your murder, you may want to offer them treats like lunch meat, berries, fruits, nuts, hard boiled eggs, and meal worms! but be sure to stay away from treats with tons of seasonings, salts, or added sugars.

Water:

Offer the crows a bowl of fresh water! They often use it to help swallow their food, and it can be a good piece of recreation for the crows. You can even consider investing in a bird bath!

Hangout:

Crows love to roost, so make sure to provide free horizontal spaces in your yard for them to perch and hang! And make sure to get rid of anything that may scare them- think wind chimes, bells, and reflective surfaces that might spook them.

If you follow these steps with care and patience, soon enough you should have your own murder! When the crows trust you, they may often follow you up to miles from your home, get super up close to you, and even offer you gifts! Enjoy getting to know these birds and their individual personalities, and soon you'll be best friends with a crow.



Kithera's newest single



Kithera at Raindogs 12/13/23(@charlieshuck)

Self Produced Artist Gives Folk A New Sound

By Callie Townsend

This striking, yet understated flute-guitar soloist can be found at open-mics around town; with a melancholic acoustic sound characteristic of a more indie folk and grassroots Midwest Emo. Raised on artists like Modern Baseball and Crywank, the talented young musician hopes to create an emotional outlet akin to similar artists while experimenting with the musical boundaries of the genre.

This past January, Kithera wrote, produced, and release his debut album “Godspeed John Theodore”, full of particularly beautiful emotional renditions of the artists struggles, while still maintaining an artistic composure akin to many renowned authors, as opposed to the on the nose writing of many people wanting to imitate the genre. With tracks like “The water’s infected with schizophrenia and so is my best friend”, the artist explores typically taboo mental health subjects without a tinge of self-pitying. Kithera said, “That’s why I don’t try to make my lyrics overly corny. I just feel there’s better ways of conveying that result in more creative ways.” Emotional base still clearly remains the driving force behind his music, and he said, “I tend to go for more lyrical driven, like one day I really hope that someone can really dissect my lyrics and think like, I really want to know what that means.”

His songs are made even more genuine by Kithera doing all his own producing and recording at every step, following in the footsteps of forefathers of Midwest Emo and the grassroots inspirations he draws from. “I kind of self-produced out of necessity because it’s like, I could steal beat off YouTube right? That really does not feel genuine. It doesn’t feel like I can make it what I actually want to,” Kithera said. His D.I.Y. acoustic simplicity has no intention of holding the musician back, however. With immense talent and huge drive to expand his artistic and professional connections beyond Jacksonville we are sure that he will go far, if not with Kithera then with whatever he chooses to do. If you’re interested in supporting a young self-made musician’s dreams, then we implore you to check out Kithera’s music on all platforms and YouTube. In the interview Kithera expressed clear intentions of an album coming out soon even more refined than the previous so please be on the lookout for this young talent.

Screamo's Not Dead, At Least Not In Jacksonville The Genre's Recent Revival In Our City

By Callie Townsend

The Genre's Recent Revival In Our City

Florida's modern screamo scene has been thriving for years with new bands making a name for themselves all over

Florida. Bands like Novelty, Gravess, Opposition Dolls, Bloom Dream, DIME, Flowers for Emily, and Gillian Carter all hailing from Florida, garnering streams and playing with household screamo names like In Loving Memory and Usurp Synapse. However, for many years it was uncommon to see these participants of the Florida screamo scene be from Jacksonville. In the past year this has begun to change.

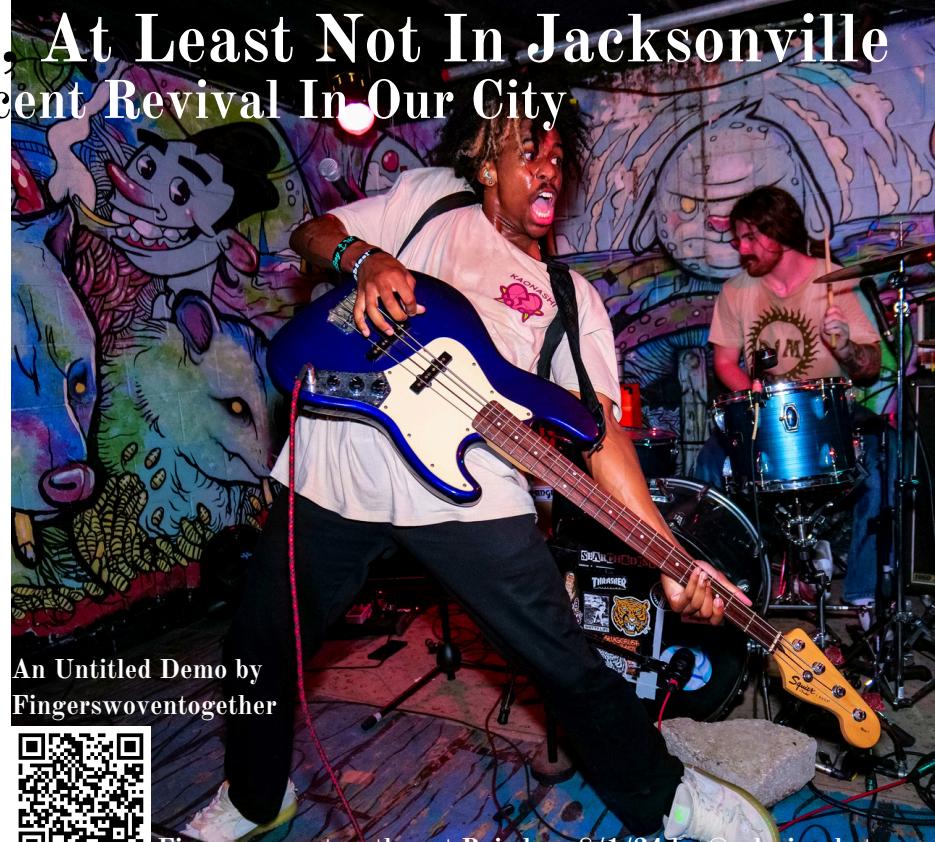
Fingerswoventogether, Thumskru, Closeface, and

Tiny Silver Hammers are spearheading the screamo revival in Jacksonville. Each band represents a different aspect of the wide genre from emoviolence from Woven, emo-grindcore from Thumskru, and Closeface's indie midwest emo influences. All of these bands have either formed in the past year or changed their sound to incorporate screamo. Jack Zurn "Zurn", vocalist of Thumskru

explains, "We originally were a hardcore-powerviolence band but we realized after a while

that we enjoyed the creative freedom that comes with the emotional grindcore/emoviolence territory and we just kept expanding from there." The band recently recorded their upcoming EP with local DIY producer Tommy Vulgar. Closeface also switched over to a more screamo sound after their time as an indie-rock band previously known as Funlight. Joey Jenkins, Funlight's bassist clarified the change, "As a band I feel like we got bored of playing exclusively soft songs. We wanted something new, and screamo was something we all enjoyed outside of the band". The common theme between both bands is that Jacksonville's emerging screamo scene is granting a new lens to get more creative freedom.

While four bands may not constitute a "new wave" in many people's eyes this represents a turning of tides for the Jacksonville hardcore scene. The division between emo sounds and traditional hardcore dates back to the beginning of the genre. Some scene veterans might recall a particular instance of emo and hardcore (Hatebreed and Dashboard Confessional) shows,



Closeface at Sarbez 6/23/24 by Anna Schell(@eyetakepiess)



happening across the street in 5 points, “Just a nightmare in the middle of the street”.

Despite emocore and screamo deriving directly from hardcore the emotional vulnerability and soft elements of the genre did not appeal to hardcore elitists, and until recently the emo scene remained almost nonexistent in Jacksonville. Justin Hernandez, guitarist of Thumskru, remarked on the change, “Finally, some good fucking music.” The scene is certainly not slowing down anytime soon, Closeface is planning to release “The Inevitable Red Ring of Death” Oct 27th with an album release show, and Noah, guitarist from Woven teased a coming split with Opposition Dolls and Agile.

“It’s so sick! I love everything about hardcore, but that wasn’t what I grew up with. So the fact that screamo and other ‘weird’ genres of music are starting to take hold in Jax is a feeling I can’t even explain. It’s amazing to see bands that speak to me and my tastes on a greater level more and more frequently”

-Tyler Peterson, bassist and vocalist from Fingerswoventogether.

Hopefully, with the rise of emocore adjacent bands in Jacksonville we can see a continuing rise in nontraditional hardcore styles. Noah remarked, “I think it’s awesome! Seeing kids rocking white belts and size small shirts is sick, and it’s even sicker that they actually fuck with cool screamo/metalcore bands.” This emo revival has grown with the genre being invented in new and traditional ways across the state. “I think it’s awesome. It seems like Florida has started showing a rise in screamo in general and since then, it’s been spreading throughout cities like Jax, and it’s so cool. Screamo bands are something that this scene needed and it adds a new taste to the heavier genres it has to offer. Fingerswoventogether was my first taste of Jax skramz and it was mind-blowing to see that kind of thing in my city,” Justice Winterrowd drummer of Thumskru said. Is screamo going mainstream once more? These screamo bands are helping pave the way.

Darling Dog

Darling dog sitting
pretty
I've filed down my
own teeth
I can't chew my
food now.

I've clipped my
claws
It was difficult
with no thumbs
Paws bleeding but
I won't make a
mess.

I can sit. I can
wait.
Just call my name
And I'm yours all
over again.
-Nameera Bowden

I will rip my hair out of my
head
tear the thread from my
skin
cut myself open,
piece by piece.

To show you what's inside,
to show you there's a
person
inside of me.
to show you there's hope
and light inside.

Just to make you believe
i'm worthy.

- Inés Fernandez

The Backroads

Our car wasn't legal. So we took
the backroads to church. Sunday
morning. Sunday night.

Down those limerock roads. Doing
crimes for Jesus.

-Damon Thomas

Drawing by Justice Winterrowd



Drawing by
@customadebackstabber

The sun and the moon

When feeling down,

Like the entire world is hating you,
The moon will be there for you.
The moon will comfort and shine the
midnight sky towards your face,
Showing that even though she can't be
right next to you, she is here for you.
When feeling like the universe is going
your way,

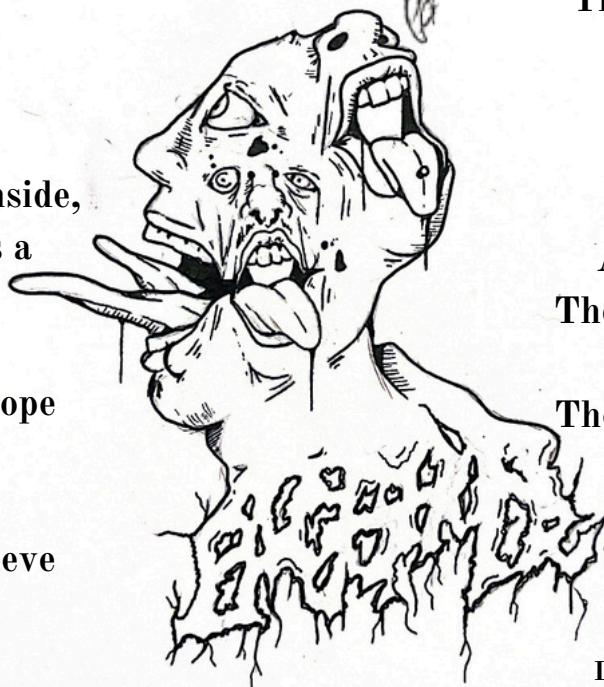
The sun will beam its waves down on
your face.

Giving rosy cheeks and freckles,
As if a trophy.

The sun and the moon,
Although they cannot be together,
They know that you are their pride and
joy.

They know that it's up to them to make
you feel better

-Gwen Amburgey



Drawing by Ethan Bond



"Overexposure" on Spotify.

Sick Day is an indie noise “outsider rock” band from Chicago. Lead by singer-songwriter Olivia Wallace, her mixed media piece “Holy Mother & Child” (above) is accompanied with an EP released March 14 called Overexposure. She does shows all over the Chicago music scene under the Sick Day name which has expanded to include guitarist Ryan Donlin, bassist Kaity Szymborski, and cellist Chaepter. The title track from the album, “Overexposure” features grunge elements mixed with Olivia’s hypnotic singing and the band’s layered noise. Be sure to check it out!

The Noctambulant

By Callie Townsend

Blackened Death Metal Embraces Southern Roots

With Black Metal emerging in Europe the prevalence of Nordic and Norwegian cultural elements has been a motif of the genre. While

this is a part of what makes the genre interesting, Jacksonville band

The Noctambulant felt that just trying to emulate other genre-

greats was disingenuous to themselves and their culture. The Noctambulant, formed by vocalist

Eddie Helvete, bassist Lars Goerschafft, and drummer Darin Franseth, had their first release in

2013. Eddie recalled the band as initially “not being a really real band, just heavier people would come

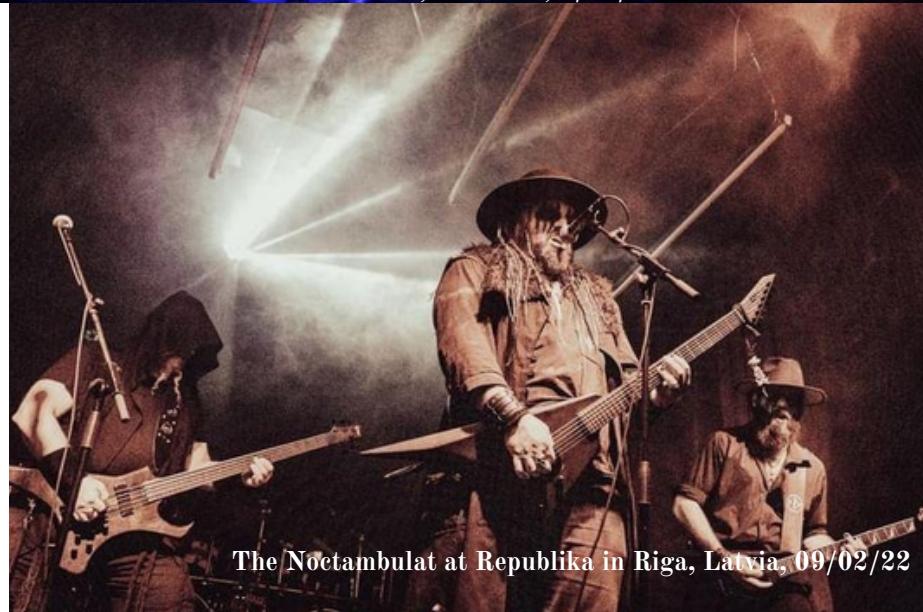
through and being the only people playing this stuff in Jax it was like, well sure.”

Despite this, the band has evolved into a cohesive and extensive image, complete with characters, backstories, costumes, and more. Now joined by their guitarist, known as Reverend Beaumont, the band has fully embraced the southern gothic

motif. Watching their music videos, viewers are transported into a dark Florida swamp, complete with Witch Fathers, a common folklore name for the devil that Eddie goes by on stage. “One of my friends back and Europe just told me that, like you guys have a really cool thing going on here and there’s no reason to be someone you’re not,” Eddie said. “I don’t know why but over in Europe they fucking dig the



The Noctambulant at Gimle in Roskilde, Denmark, 9/13/22 with Vader and Hate



The Noctambulant at Republika in Riga, Latvia, 09/02/22



www.grablewski.com

At Kuźnia Społeczna in Olsztyn, Poland 08/30/22 by Bang Your Head Photography



bang your head
THE NOCTAMBULANT

whole southern culture and even if they don't really know a whole bunch about it, it definitely helped us stand out."

With more research, the band has incorporated Southern folklore into their music in many ways, with a very personal connection. They filmed a music video on Eddie's family farm, and the hat the Witch Father is often seen wearing on stage is a plantation hat worn by Floridian cowboys and farmers. Every part of their stage wear relates to their characters in some ways, even down to their corpse paint; Eddie explained "Our guitarist, he came up with that he's like he was some Reverend that came to the swamp where we're from, and I put him under my bawl. And so he does this, the this thing will roll his head, his eyes back in his head, and, play like he's possessed".

Their upcoming album, which they have recorded and are mastering now, incorporates different elements of Southern culture, including Hispanic and South American folklore. Their singer remarked that "Spanish culture is a large part of Southern culture and our guitarist is Hispanic so I wrote a song about some of the horror folklore". The song, San Martino, even includes some lyrics in Spanish. The band has many songs exploring dark themes in folklore and ancient culture. Another song "Killing Tree" is about the execution tree used in many medieval European villages where they hung the criminals. The song describes the uneasy and restless spirit surrounding the tree. The band balances their own characters and stories with the dark sides of human history and folklore without a sense of inauthenticity. Their vocalist Eddie clarified this balance, "There's a fine line between doing southern stuff and there's a fine line between authentic and offensive", elaborating "You have to be very cognizant of what imagery you're using so you're not being misconstrued". The Noctambulant is built on the recognition of southern culture and heritage, without glorifying its bigoted and harmful aspects. The Noctambulant's melodic sound and Lovecraftian lyrics are on full display in the upcoming album. While they don't play in Jacksonville often, their music is available on all streaming services, where you can get transported to the haunted swamps of the American South. The band's dedication to playing their unique sound in a city where the scene for them is obviously lacking shows through the unmatched quality of both their songs and their cohesive image.

Between You and God

Article and Photos By Callie Townsend

In a music scene dominated by traditional

hardcore and powerviolence, this band
reminiscent of early 2000s metalcore stands

out amongst a new wave of Florida
metalcore bands. With the release of their
demo in June, the band solidified themselves
within this wave of metalcore in Florida,
with similarly timed releases from Keep
Reaching, Daturas Embrace, With Paper
Wings, and Away With Words. However,
Between You and God stands out with their
heavy sound, not reliant on breakdowns,
along with their 2000s metalcore influences.

Vocalist CJ, along with backing
vocals/guitarist Jackson have been playing
music together for years, most notably in
their hardcore band Consequence. Despite
being hardcore scene veterans both
musicians described a nostalgic love for
metalcore, citing inspiration from bands like
Shai Hulud, Evergreen Terrace, Poison the
Well, Jackson explained “I just want to take
the Saosin sound and make it like evil”.
With a shared interest in diverging from the
normal hardcore projects they’ve been in,
Between You and God was created, joined by

their drummer Christian, guitarist Jayson, and bassist Mitchell. After making
friends with members of Cutthroats Between You and God was able to go on a
US tour with Cutthroats and Kind Eyes. Jackson recalls “we had a bunch of
challenges that we had to deal with, and it was kind of like a matter of trying to
get out there around the same time as our demo release. So like, I just wanted
to, like, put ourselves in people's faces, in as many places as possible. So we had
a minivan and a dream”. BY&G had to substitute band members because of
circumstances outside everyone's control, but they were determined to make it work, making
this project their main focus. CJ remarked, “We're playing for the sake of music...We've finally
written something that we're all very happy with, and we just want to show everyone, and I



Jackson and CJ from Between You and God at Tradewinds 6/27/24



BY&G's first
single "Demo"



BY&G drummer, Christian, at Tradewinds 6/27/24



Whole band picture from their Instagram

us that are just...years before this time", their unique style is a byproduct of their own unique experiences with music. BY&G's dedication to diversifying the Jacksonville scene is apparent outside of this project as well, CJ currently has a harsh noise album on Bandcamp and other songs under the name of Yung Piss Test. We hope to see the release from Between You and God soon, as the release date is currently undecided, but their unique sound is appreciated by music lovers across the 904. Their long song titles certainly captivate your attention as the band emulates the sounds of their nostalgic 2000s metalcore phase and the modern take on the sound is a welcomed musical outlier to our scene.

think this is the first time I've been actually... truly, really proud of something that we've done" he continued "Consequence was sick or whatever, but that band was written for friends... just to play shows together." The new identity of BY&G is a horizon crossed by these musicians, becoming beacons in a newer, and more expressive global music scene, and heralds of a new artistic age for Jacksonville.

They have no intentions stopping, having just finished recording their new five song EP release. The band has tried to emulate the sound and essence of 2000s metalcore in a modern style, without sacrificing their music. Additionally, a mainstay of their style is the non-reliance on breakdowns, their vocalist Jackson elaborates on this "You know, it's hard to make that balance between, I want that metalcore dramatic climax, but I also don't want it to just be a contest of...who can have the, biggest metalcore riff." To BY&G, speaking their personal truth, and creating something unique takes the priority over normal markers of the metalcore genre.

CJ says the coming EP is a "Little whiny, kind of heavy, [and] nostalgic...because every bit of it came from places, from all of

Insert Clever Clickbait Title to Grab Your Attention

In A World Where Everything Fights For It So Desperately

By Isaac George

In 2012 pop science journalist Jonah Lehrer was shown to have plagiarized, falsified, or recycled large portions of his writing, while Lehrer faced his well-deserved public humiliation, and many of his works were taken out of publication, we all ignored the largest problem; Jonah Lehrer is fucking terrible. He churns out articles in a profit model that favors clicks, thus his writing consists of vapid platitudes that use vague, scientific-sounding words to deliver a pointless message about some buzz topic, like “The Psychological Benefits of Horror Movies*” or “What Tennis Can Teach Us About Technology*”. This flavor of content, using empty uplifting scientific claims to excite the audience without providing actual substance, evolved into short-form pseudoscience videos, in which phrases like “according to science” or “psychology says” are stitched onto nonsense statements.

This loss of meaning is much broader, and much more destructive than hack bloggers and barely conscious TikTok’s. Meaning is lost when historic buildings are torn down to build gray cubes to sell to real-estate investors, or LED billboards blasting steaming-hot extra-chunky corporate spew plastered across our cities in place of art. Meaning is especially lost when instead of using expressive, descriptive language, social media only promotes the same handful of undefined hashtags “skibidi” or “brat”, which act more as marketing tags than words. The cause in each case is the profit-motive, corporations intent on making as much money as possible will shred any fiber of creativity in the world they own (the one we live in) if we give them the chance.

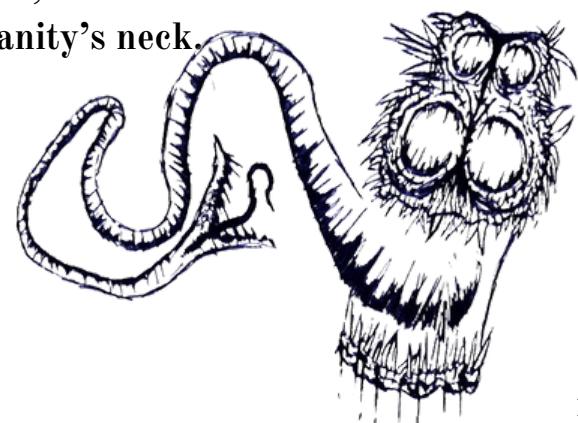
This loss of meaning isn’t as simple as a handful of evil companies, or as new. It was the central concern of George Orwell’s essay *Politics and the English Language*, the namesake of Dying Metaphors Zine. In it, Orwell describes a loss in meaning by writers, especially political ones, in which vivid, unique, tangible phrases are replaced with pretentious, obfuscated language thoughtlessly sewn together from common strings of words. The vagueness and lack of expression, in Orwell’s view, are not symptoms of a problem, but a necessity for powerful entities trying to avoid responsibility. As Orwell puts it, actions taken by the imperial capitalist machine “can indeed be defended, but only by arguments which are too brutal for most people to face ... Thus, political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question begging and sheer cloudy vagueness”. If powerful interests were forced to fully speak their mind, with their teeth and claws sunk deeper daily into our families, our homes, and our planet, they might begin to spit, and choke, on the ugly realities they’ve created.

Every year more than the last, writers and artists lose their role in our media landscape to advertisers and propagandists. Every screen crowding the walls of Times Square trying to sell you boner pills and payday-loan apps, could if nothing else, by a very pretty painting, every branding jingle stuck in your head is a moving album that will never be written. Advertising is subtractive, and harmful to anything it touches, advertising that masquerades as art is dead on arrival, made with no face, no thoughts, and no soul, it is the bulk of what we consume. What may have been dreams, desires, connections, and works that shape the lives of strangers, become investment projects, only meant to be novel enough to sell, to evoke a click, a chuckle, or an extra six seconds of watch time; never novel enough to risk causing a thought, or an emotion.

This overwhelming surge of uncreative, unsatisfying, dead corporate rot leaks into our communication, both when we create art, and in our conversations. This leakage is already in the public consciousness, we've even given it a name, brainrot.

This isn't just about a loss of beauty alone, it's also something much more pragmatic. Consider a 12-year-old today, in a Floridian 7th-grade classroom, who is exposed to the same handful of words every day by the same handful of friends, watching the same slurry of unthinking 10-second videos, and who has possibly never read a book in their life. According to the U.S. Department of Education, 20% of American adults have low literacy skills, classified as unable to read short sentences, find single pieces of information, or fill out simple forms. Without exposure to new words, ideas, or perspectives, we lose our ability to think critically and express ourselves. Our writing becomes dry, and with it, our activism stagnates. Our power of empathy atrophies as we fail simply to find human perspectives to empathize with. We become alone in a sea of substanceless foaming linguistic rot; the most powerful species on the planet, the storytelling ape, and our ability to organize ourselves on a large scale vanishes. This is not an accident.

With the understanding that this is an assault, not only on human beauty but on humankind, we become more powerful, and we can give ourselves hope. Just as the dismantling of expressive passion is intentional, we can choose to be passionate intentionally, we can choose to write and love and feel and connect. This clear, meaningful, radical communication is the only knife that can cut the sick capitalist noose around humanity's neck.



Small Town Brothers Bring Music Across Southeast

Photos and Article by Callie Townsend

A band of brothers, Asher, Baxter, and Hunter Kicklighter are an indie-rock 3 piece hailing from Woodbrine Georgia charms audiences with their high-energy songs and awkward, endearing stage jokes. Kicklighter has traveled all across the Southeast with their music since producing their debut album *Isn't This so Fun?* with Aaron Gillespie.

Since releasing in July 2023, the three brothers have charmed cities across the South with their unique blend of grunge and Midwest emo elements with a indie rock base. Their recent single, "Common Sense" displays the energetic side that the band is growing towards. Baxter characterized this change saying "it's not emo, but ... if you are going to let

but ... if you are going to let life drive what you're writing, that can be scary as hell because if there's some shit going on, and you're gonna write honestly about it, it may come out a little bit earlier", later saying, "we've been noticing what we've been writing recently has been a bit more aggressive, a bit more punk". Kicklighter however has never shied away from variety in

their music, their debut album combines classic energetic indie rock sounds with more gritty unpolished elements of Midwest emo.



Asher Kicklighter at Kona Clubhouse 7/6/24



Kicklighter's recent single
"Common Sense"



Hunter Kicklighter at the Underbelly 6/14/24

The "patchwork" nature of their first release can be attributed to how the record came to be. Initially, Hunter and Baxter were in a band called Card, which was unfortunately meeting the end of it's life. As their last show they played with The Almost, where they made the connection with Aaron. The brothers were given the offer to create an album in 4 months. The brothers accepted, and after some time Aaron flew down, and they recorded and mixed the album in 10 days. This unusual writing style and deadline created a record where the brothers artistically vomited all their different songs and styles. Asher explained their process, "We kind of did everything backwards. The music that we had came before anyone ever knew anything about us". When releasing their debut, Kicklighter wasn't limited in their creativity



Baxter Kicklighter at the Underbelly 6/14

it's great to play new places. It is it's a really fun time. I love traveling and I love camping and stuff. And so I love any opportunity for a new city or meet new people," Baxter remarked. Make sure to keep an eye out for them expanding into your area and check out their latest single, a personal favorite of ours, "Common Sense."

the same way many bands are by the expectations of an established niche, and could fully express their emotions and experiences in the band's new sound.

While their first album was a product of circumstance, their creative process is very intentional. They described to us the lyric-first method they often use for song writing, and the emphasis on genuine connection with lyrics and fans. Nowadays making a name for yourself in the music industry often means building an online presence, and Kicklighter feels they can bring this authenticity to social media to also be successful. Regardless of the method, they are set on expanding, the small town band plays shows all across the Southeast in places like Savannah, Tallahassee, and often Jacksonville. With them they bring energetic performances and quirky on stage bits. Audiences may know them as the band that announced they will only be playing "smooth jazz," or they are "Kicklighter, not to be confused with Punch Harder." Hunter explained the motif, "we've put together the set and then obviously there's going to be time to stop and tune up...we try to fill the space... in that time, we just blurt something out. Sometimes it lands sometimes it doesn't."

While they have their travelling stand up act down now, Kicklighter has been years in the making. From it evolution from Card to Kicklighter, it has now become the charming namesake band we know today. "[Aaron's] the reason that we call it Kicklighter. He was like, 'you guys are dumb if you have that as your last name and you're not using it.'" These small town musicians have no intentions of stopping here. " And a goal of ours from the start was eventually to try to expand, you know, bit by bit originally. And I think we've been we've been doing that and it's been a good time. It's been a learning experience and

“It’s Who I Am,” Retiring Drag Queen Leaves Legacy of Unapologetic Artistic Expression

By Valerie Albritton

Chasity Ross Boen is a Jacksonville drag queen who has been performing for 31 years, since she was 18. She started out performing at a local gay bar called Bo's

Coral Reef and ended her career performing 3 to 4 nights a week at the InCahoots nightclub on September 29th, 2024. Chasity realized she wanted to do performance art as a young girl,

“When I was just an adolescent my mother was a bartender. She would dress up on holidays to tend bar. One night at dinner, as she was dressed up before heading into work, I had an epiphany, that when I grew up, I too wanted to dress up for a living. I had always been trans.

Always looked at as a girl, if you will. Drag and the stage fit the part of what I knew that I wanted at such a young age.”



Chasity at Miss Florida F.I by Loc Robinson Photography

Chasity never felt she had to hide her identity from people, stating “I was always open about it. I had found my calling and was not ashamed to live my truth. It wasn’t always accepted, but I did it.” While Chasity can be open about her identity, many others can not, whether due to hostile circumstances, or internalized transphobia; as trans rights fall under legislative attack, people lose the ability to be open about their identity. As the cruel grasp of a fascist state takes hold of the public perception of trans people, more and more of our trans siblings lose the ability to express themselves. The fight’s against transphobia in the legislative and cultural realms are not separate.

Drag queens in the American south have been subject to relentless discrimination from local governments, in Florida specifically bills such as SB 1423 and 1438 target drag queens by giving broad definitions of “sexual performances” in an effort to attack drag shows. In an interview with Chastity she said “As far as rights. As long as they are something that can be voted on, no, there is no protection.” The current mentality that the rights of people are something that should be voted on is a slippery slope to take as a society, and brings into question what these rights even mean if they can just be repealed or voted away by a future bill. This is a sentiment many minorities have about their rights. When asked about how she thought 18 drag queens related to LGBTIQQ rights Chasity referenced Marsha P Johnson's efforts in the



Chasity at Miss Florida F.I 10/03/22 by Harry Demasido

express identity, for some it gives the opportunity to give back to their communities through book readings at libraries and charity events. There is a sentiment among state legislators, and their supporters, that drag performances and events are inherently sexual, this rhetoric is extremely harmful to the drag community and has resulted in both discriminatory laws and real-life violent acts. When Chasity was asked her thoughts about people holding this perspective, she said

"It's honestly none of my business what goes on in people's minds and I do not care what they think or what their perception of the art is. Drag is art, there are those that are sexual with it and those that are not. Drag has a huge range. If all folks have seen is the sexual side of it, perhaps they should be exposed to more drag shows. There is so much more to it."

Chasity's perspective highlights the multi-faceted nature of drag. Uneducated perspectives held by the public about drag performers are a byproduct of deliberate misinformation spread by alt-right media outlets defending the views of a handful of state legislators, using drag as a scapegoat to distract voters from failing infrastructure and mass impoverishment, all promoting a twisted perspective about drag performers.

Resources

If you or someone you know are dealing with LGBT related mental health crisis, please remember it is okay to reach out and suicide will never be the answer. Trans and LGBT people will always exist and becoming one of the rising statistics of teen suicides only helps fascism. Your existence is resistance. Please reach out to someone who cares about you or one of the resources.



We love you- Dying Metaphors, for "freaks" by "freaks"



Chasity at Miss Florida F.I by Loc Robinson Photography
stonewall riots in 1969 and said "if it weren't for drag queens, there wouldn't have been rights."

Drag is a creative outlet, and a means to express identity, for some it gives the opportunity to give back to their communities through book readings at libraries and charity events. There is a sentiment among state legislators, and their supporters, that drag performances and events are inherently sexual, this rhetoric is extremely harmful to the drag community and has resulted in both discriminatory laws and real-life violent acts. When Chasity was asked her thoughts about people holding this perspective, she said

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Trans Lifeline(run for and by trans people)- <https://translifeline.org/> (877)-565-8860

The Trevor Project(LGBT suicide prevention)- (866) 488-7386

Crisis Text Line- Text START to 741-741

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline- (800) 273-8255 (online chat available)

The LGBT National Youth Talkline (ages 25 and below)- (800) 246-7743

The National Runaway Safeline(aid to those fleeing abusive homes)- (800)-786-2929

The True Colors United (helping homeless LGBT youth)- (212) 461-4401

Self Abuse Finally Ends (S.A.F.E)- <https://selfinjury.com/>

National AIDS Hotline (800) 342-AIDS / (800) 344-7432 (Spanish) / (800) 243-7889 (TDD)

Pride Institute(helping LGBT addicts)- (800) 547-7433 24/7

U.S. National Domestic Violence Hotline- (800) 799-7233 (English and Spanish) (800) 787-3224

Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund- <https://www.transgenderlegal.org/>

Anti-Violence Project(24/7 crisis phone/text/online chat line for LGBT and HIV positive people facing violence)- <https://avp.org/> and 212-714-1141

JASMYN (LGBT org with HIV testing, mental health resources, housing aid, Sexual Health

Clinic, support groups and community events)- jasmyn.org and (904) 389.3857(non emergency) 19



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