



mini music mag 4

a collaborative
effort

an intro

by miranda reinert

When I initially had the idea for this zine back in April, everything felt different than it does now. April feels like years ago to me. I guess a lot is actually different for me. I moved from Chicago to Philadelphia, I'm starting law school next week, I don't live with the same people anymore, I started a newsletter, Dan Ozzi follows me on twitter now.. A lot has changed.

More importantly, of course, the death toll of covid-19 has reached beyond what I could have imagined back in April and the impending return to school has drilled a pit in my stomach no matter what your local school districts and universities have decided to do. Protests over systemic racism and brutality within police departments across America and Canada grew to staggering numbers and continue to this day. We've been forced to reckon with the American presidential election coming in November and all the ways Democrats don't serve us.

I don't need to tell you about the state of the world. I know you know. You can't not know. I don't need to tell you the music industry on all levels facilitates racism in every aspect. I don't need to tell you how overwhelmingly white and male alt/indie rock is. I do want to tell you a few things I've been thinking, though.

Overwhelmingly white indie rock scenes, myself included, all too often consider diversity as a "straight, cis men vs everybody else" issue to avoid their whiteness issue. To provide broadly non straight/cis/white/male representation is not enough. You must intentionally seek out and support people who represent all kinds of intersections of identity, specifically black artists who are not only underrepresented but are frequently expected to write about very specific aspects of their experience in a way white artists are not.

Being defensive and insisting on listing off all the ways your label or publication are diverse even though you don't represent any black writers or artists isn't helpful nor does it make you look good. You must take a hard look at yourself and really internalize how you contribute to racism and how your internal biases are reflected in your work in the music industry or simply in the way you engage with music as a fan.

For me, that's being more intentional with who I give my money and time to and why. It's being more conscious of who responds when I put out a call for contributors or calls for music to listen to and why white people might be more comfortable submitting their work. It's understanding where my biases lie. It's considering my zines and my twitter account a platform even if it's not that big.

This zine is a collection of essays from six different writers with the intention of publishing pieces that are either about personal connection to music or music as it relates to greater culture in some way. It's the kind of music writing that means something to me and I'm pleased to present every essay inside. It's the kind of writing I do and the kind of writing that has taken up a larger portion of the music writing space through newsletters of the last few months.

Thank you to Elizabeth, Yuji, Sam, Bahiyya, Connor, and Kay for your words and your thoughts. Thanks to all of you who bought this zine or are reading it.

- Miranda

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All proceeds will be donated to Brave Space Alliance.

"Brave Space Alliance is the first Black-led, trans-led LGBTQ Center located on the South Side of Chicago, dedicated to creating and providing affirming, culturally competent, for-us by-us resources, programming, and services for LGBTQ individuals on the South and West sides of the city."

More information on them can be found at bravespacealliance.org.

on TikTok

and why your snarky comment
about bands that get popular on it is stupid]

During middle school and high school, I was a part of what was known as the golden age of Tumblr. I would spend hours upon hours sharing posts about the things I loved, making new friends, and most importantly discovering new music. Although, I no longer listen to most of the artists I liked during that period of my life, they were extremely important to my coming of age. After Tumblr lost its popularity and I grew out of it, I felt as though there was a hole in the music community. So many of my friends and I found and shared our music through the site. People were still able to share music through Instagram and Twitter, but they weren't quite as successful in making or breaking new artists. This all changed however, when Musical.ly announced that it would be rebranding under the name TikTok.

The first time I heard of TikTok, I wrote it off as something only kids would use, much like its predecessor,

Musical.ly. Once it started being compared to the now defunct app, Vine, I decided to download it for the comedy content. Besides funny short videos, TikTok is mostly known for dances. These dances need music and are now helping to bring up new artists, as well as share important older artists with the younger generation.

The first time I noticed a smaller band gain TikTok clout was when Beach Bunny's "Prom Queen" went viral. At first I didn't know what was going on because I didn't have the app yet, but since pretty much all of the comments on the music video mentioned TikTok in some way, I figured it out pretty fast. Many people were using the song in videos to promote self-love, which is amazing. Before this all happened, Beach Bunny already had some success. I personally found them on the radio, so they weren't exactly nobodies. With this being said though, they were still an unsigned band playing small clubs and bars. Now, "Prom Queen" has over 52 million streams on Spotify, which is insane to me.

Beach Bunny is also a good example of the downsides of TikTok fame, unfortunately. Although I couldn't find where this originated, many people have started to refer to Beach Bunny as a TikTok band. Singer, Lili Trifilio, has spoken out in interviews about how she doesn't like this title and doesn't want to be pigeonholed. She also had to make a comment on the "Prom Queen" music video stating that the song was meant to promote self-love and not glamorize eating disorders and other harmful behaviors.

Fortunately, with a successful debut album and a tour full of sold-out shows, Beach Bunny seem to be doing just fine.

There are plenty of other artists who quickly rose to TikTok fame other than Beach Bunny. Another great band that blew up on TikTok is GRLWOOD. I admittedly had never heard of them before TikTok, but I found them rather quickly after their song, "I'm Yer Dad," started to appear in every cool punk girl's videos. The punk anthem currently has almost six million streams on Spotify, and I can only imagine that number continuing to increase exponentially. Unfortunately, GRLWOOD has not gone without their own criticism, though. Pop singer, Charlie Puth, attempted to start a trend making fun of their song by saying, "try not to laugh." Luckily for the band, their fans stuck up for them by dueting his video explaining that the song is about how men oversexualize women. It's still frustrating, however, to see great bands ridiculed for being different just because they're getting popular on an app.

Alongside bringing up new bands, TikTok is being used to showcase older music, as well. With the main demographic of TikTok being teenagers, many of them were not alive in the 90's to experience the riot grrrl era. For this reason, I was shocked the first time I heard "Cool Shmool" by Bratmobile in a young girl's video. I find that this music is very important, to me at least, because it empowers young women to be themselves, speak up about their experiences, and fight back against those who are trying to hold them down. This being said, I found it heartwarming to see "Cool Shmool," among others trending on TikTok. I even saw a band of girls covering the song, which was so empowering. Other riot grrrl songs that trended on TikTok, that I noticed anyway, were "Carnival" by Bikini Kill and "Deceptacon" by

Le Tigre. I absolutely love seeing these songs thrive almost 30 years after their release dates, continuing to empower young women around the globe.

I am honestly so grateful that TikTok exists and allows young people to share music they love, the same way Tumblr did for me growing up. So many young bands are finally getting the attention and recognition that they deserve. So many older bands are also getting amazing amounts of recognition and are continuing to inspire the next generation. In my eyes, it is an underrated platform doing great things for the music community.

~ kay roman

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an analysis on music as fanon + the beauty of blaseball

by yuji aoyama

I have made an above average amount of awful music in my lifetime. I'm not putting myself down needlessly; I used to make fanmusic for a webcomic where at least some of the intention was to shitpost musically. Though my work was even then qualitatively below the standard, I felt a lot of pride in it and making music with a community I loved was a great feeling. Beyond that, there was the feeling that I was a part of something, like I was helping to create new ways to remember a great story with a community of others. The interpretive nature of fanon combines with music in such a way that it scratches that beautiful storytelling itch you get if you're a fanfiction writer or doomed to DM your friends' tabletop games forever, and you start looking for ways to express your favorite parts of the story through music. Maybe you like a specific character who plays a certain instrument so you pay specific attention to the way it's used to try and convey a unique feeling, or maybe you make a vaporwave concept album about a post-ironic post-capitalist future and also it's about Dilbert. Being able to pick out things you pay attention to and turning your interpretation of these things into a series of emotion-inducing sounds you could call a story (not to mention the role of lyrics!) is uniquely empowering, and it's with this in mind that we now have to talk about absurdist baseball.

Blaseball is a clicker style strictly-fake-money gambling game where you watch simulated

baseball teams play against each other and bet on a winner. You can then use your money to further influence the outcome of the splort (sport) by voting to give a player on your favorite team extra elbows or by voting to reshuffle the players of the highest-rated team. A majority of the fun to be had in this game also comes from its vibrant community who cheer the games on as if they are real, coming up with chants and discussing strategy, and collaborating to write deeply detailed and tragic lore on fake people with names like Dominic Marijuana and Cedric Spliff. It's all a lot of good fun, and I would recommend you give it a try, at least to read the wiki and see what it's like.

My favorite team is the

Seattle Garages, an anarchist collective slash superband who make a stupendous amount of zines and use their instruments as bats. Like any other Seattle team, they are rarely expected to succeed, and spend most of their time lounging in the bottom half of the Chaotic Evil division. We cheer for any hit, expect our very inevitable losses, and break out the rye bread for the occasional grand salami. Unlike any other team, however, one of our greatest connecting strengths is the diverse music community that has (maybe obviously) formed around what seems like an incarnation of the DIY community. We make playlists for each of our players and have cultivated each one's music taste in accordance with their personalities. We make




fanzines for the incinerated, and just as each fan is considered a part of the band, we in turn like to plug our bands frequently and enthusiastically. This specifically brings me to The Garages [dot bandcamp dot com], which as far as I know is the only fanmusic team in the Blaseball league. In my eyes, they are the ultimate culmination of the collaborative fanon of the splort as a whole. With members consisting of any fan who wants to get involved, they make grungy lo-fi music about being the underdogs, fighting gods and the stories of their players. It's a really, really fun example of life imitating art, and it perfectly encapsulates the tight relationship between music and storytelling I was talking about earlier.

My favorite example of this is the musical journey of our team punching bag, Mike Townsend. With his fairly poor stats and his initially

disappointing play, the unfortunate pitcher became the subject of a song called "mike townsend is a disappointment". Written by rain

[rainrain.bandcamp.com], it lambasts him for his terrible play, his worthlessness to the team and his attempts at "[throwing] the ball in the air so that he can catch it and look cool but he misses catching it on the way down so he just drops it on the floor and has to bend down and pick it up again like nobody just saw him drop it". It's as funny as it is enjoyable, and the title has become a known callout for whenever he fails to perform. It says a lot about a player when the terrifying fate of incineration is wished upon them by their own team. However, Townsend has since seen a redemption in "mike townsend is a credit to the team"; an





“apology” to Townsend, it is an upbeat and equally wonderful grunge track about his “redemption arc”, helped by the fact that after growing extra thumbs and consistently beating the most feared team in the league, he has become by far our best pitcher. Between the joke lines in both of these songs, Townsend’s story has grown immensely. His amazing play against The Tigers is a product of the fact that like in “disappointment” he makes the exact same throw every time, unnerving them; equally, every time he wins us a game, we make it widely and publicly known that he is a credit to the team.

The way story and music have spurred each other in The Garages is wonderful to me. This isn’t a literature essay, so I’ll spare you the discussion on the importance of fanon and its role next to canon, but I strongly believe there is little else like the way they uplift each other and make new stories all on their own. There isn’t enough recognition of musicians as storytellers, and the community that comes around internet fanmusic allows for memetic growth that fuels fanon as a creative force, a positive feedback loop that can be cultivated into what is unmistakably art. I’m glad we are all love Blaseball.

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on Oh Wonder + the therapeutic value of music

There are songs that seduce, songs that inform, and, thank everything above, songs that sustain. Songs whose melodies and rhythms, lilting lyrics and immersion lets the heart beat just that much more safely until we're ready to face the world again because we've been successfully meditated, medicated, or whatever word best fits your need for spirituality or science or something in-between best. My cotton candy guilty pleasure tv show The Bold Type has introduced me to a fair number of actors, dazzling get ups, but it was far more likely for me to already know a song that played over their adventures like BLACKPINK or Hayley Kiyoko. It was only recently that they played a song I'd never heard before and yet my body calmed peacefully under its notes in a way that I haven't really known since this pandemic started and locked us all in the house to rattle around like marbles in a mostly empty nightstand drawer.

I'm not a fan of the character Jane Sloan at all, but when the premier opened with Oh Wonder's "Better Now" to show the long road to recovery as she came home from the hospital after her preventative breast cancer mastectomy I felt tears welling up in my eyes and found myself accessing a well of empathy I didn't know I had in me. The heart felt lyrics, "I hope that you're feeling better now better now better now" were like a magical chant, a spell cast to remind us of our shared humanity and wish for health in a time when pre-existing conditions can spell out a death sentence for people who contract COVID-19 and/or who don't have healthcare under our current system. Once I finished that episode I went back and watched the scene just to feel and be connected in that moment, then immediately looked up the song. Since finding "Better Now", I marathoned the British indie pop band's entire oeuvre and found similar songs in the UK alt-pop duo Oh Wonder's album "No One Else Can Wear Your Crown", which was released on Feb 7th, 2020, which in this haze of quarantine almost seems like a lifetime ago, but it was also because of quarantine that I had time to sit down and watch the tv show The Bold Type that used Oh Wonder's song "Better Now", and fell in love with the group in the first place, so it all connects.

The history of music therapy is really interesting and long,

depending on the region, but specific to the United States, Musictherapy.org notes that the practice grew in prominence as nurses and doctors saw its usefulness and practicality in treating WWII veterans in hospitals. From there, different schools of thought and certification grew and evolved, but the central takeaway for me is confirmation that music is powerful and can help elevate people's moods. I'm not a medical doctor (sorry mom) but I always know when I'm emotionally dehydrated and in need of some musical self-care, just me, my playlist, and the silence of my room.

And I keep coming back to "Better Now" for the simple reason that it's a restorative balm when the weeks inside my house start to feel like eons and I need a sound to guide me back to a calmer state of mind. This song, more than any other, remains an integral part of my self-care music playlist because the soothing repetition and build of the admonitions for health and perseverance through "dark clouds" speak to my core every time.

Another favorite of mine is the very first song on the album, titled "Dust", which has gorgeous lyrics that speak to the stasis, rather than clear trajectory, I find myself in as graduate school has to be pushed back. Like many people, I had a vision of myself as a productive, working person, one that's faded in quarantine and pushed me to look at my intrinsic value, the ones all humanity have from birth to death, whether they are able to contribute to society or not.



Being able to sit and ground myself through this song, to consider humanitarian value and what we leave behind when we're dust has helped me leave my music self care sessions with a more empathetic, holistic view of people, thanks to those songs. I think about how my therapist friend used to say to just feel your feelings, and then let them go, which is the best way I've found to exercise control over my life and making sense of COVID-19. And I'm not the only one.

These aren't just personal, isolated emotions, but something that the larger population, whether they listen to indie music or strictly Top 40 can and would find resonating with their own mental journeys through quarantine/isolation/sheltering in place and even the anxiety of forced re-entry phases that some states, like mine, are going through even as the second wave numbers start to trickle in. But when I listen to Oh Wonder, I feel a sense of peace and am reminded of what hope and certainty in the future feels like, and that's why I love them and make them a part of my self-care music time. I can't say what the future holds, but I know that my self-care, practiced to the best of my ability, helps me face those unknowns with confidence.

-Elizabeth Upshur

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Follow her @lizzy5by5 on twitter!



water me down - vagabon

confessions - sudan archives

heaven or - corey flood

beekeeper, part one - oux

green tea ice cream - angelboy + the halos

origami dreams - christelle bofale

muffy plays poker - charmpit

12 steps - japanese breakfast

IDFWA (art school) - proper.

the barge - the centaurettes

free the burbs - charmpit

minneapolis - vagabon

pool party - mint green

heavy heavy - pom pom squad

white sheep - proper.

**songs i've loved while
making this zine**

ALBUMS OF NEIGHBORHOODS PASSED

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DOWNTOWN, BOSTON, MA

Bury Me at Makeout Creek by Mitski

I stumbled across Mitski randomly on the internet. She had only released Retired from Sadness, New Career in Business, Lush, and BMAMC, and as soon as I heard "I Don't Smoke," I was hooked. I was living in a tiny room that had become a cocoon of weed, pbr, percocet, and sad music. I had never succumbed to depression and anxiety like I did that spring simply because my ego wouldn't allow myself to completely lose my shit like that. But something about that year created a perfect storm where I just gave the fuck up, and I'm pretty sure everyone saw it except me.

My obsession with this record was one of my healthier habits that year. It's release feels like such a special moment in music. Mitski's most recent record, Be the Cowboy is as heartbreaking as all of her work but, as many of her contemporaries do, covers devastating lyrics with catchy, dancy hooks. This route would perhaps minimize the blow of phrases like "One word from you and I would jump off of this ledge I'm on. Baby, tell me don't so i can crawl back in," but BMAMC offers no such emotional training wheels. The album alienates us early, "Texas is a landlocked state," an inside joke indicating that this record is not for anyone but the narrator and whoever broke her heart—that we are bystanders witnessing the dissolution of the relationship in real time.

CHINATOWN, BOSTON, MA

Kintsugi by Death Cab for Cutie

One of my most controversial music takes is that this record is fucking rad. It's obviously super fashionable to hate on later Death Cab for Cutie—that's what happens when you're a band whose early albums are so flawless. This record is the first to come out since Ben Gibbard's divorce from Zooey Deschanel, and it's pretty difficult to not initially read it as a breakup album. "No Room in Frame" and "The Ghosts of Beverly Drive" don't hold back in their scorn of Los Angeles, celebrity lifestyle, and the superficiality that Gibbard has attributed with that relationship..” The first four songs are catchy yet sentimental in true death cab fashion, and the lyrics once again prove that no one can describe heartbreak so effortlessly as Ben Gibbard.

The quieter songs on the record pivot away from judgment of the individual and disgust with the relationship and towards a deeper pity for everyone who has ever been disappointment's plus-one. On "Ingenué," Gibbard sings, "The currency of being twenty-three—it will remain the same, just by another name," warning of the inevitable fog of loss that slowly draws toward those who are full and content, until they are engulfed in it, too. I fell for this record the summer of 2016 when I was still pining for someone whom I had met two years earlier and barely spoke to anymore. I'm not going to argue that this record is as inspired as their earlier work. But this record, specifically the lyricism, spoke to me similarly to how Transatlanticism spoke to pretty much every heartbroken adolescent in 2003: "I guess it's not a failure we could help, and we'll both go on being lonely with someone else."

ROXBURY, BOSTON, MA

Quarantine the Past: the Best of Pavement

I got into Pavement right after I bought my first skateboard, which is hilarious. And yeah okay I know it's a cop out to use a greatest hits album but Pavement's discography is HUGE and overwhelming, so when I started getting into them a few years ago I defaulted to the greatest hits because I'm lazy. I think "Stereo" is the first Pavement song that really caught my attention—it begins as a brutal critique of the music industry but quickly folds into a love song to the music on the narrator's stereo. Stephen Malkmus writes about the former constantly, i.e. he famously beefed with Billy Corgan after shitting all over the commercial sounds of Smashing Pumpkins and Stone Temple Pilots in "Range Life." We love a little '90s alt rock drama.

Now that I'm well-versed in the deeper cuts, they have become one of my favorite bands, but their hits still bring me back to when I lived off the Jackson Square stop in Roxbury. It was my last summer in Boston and I spent so much of my free time walking (and skating) through my neighborhood into Jamaica Plain. Some of those walks were melancholy because I knew the expiration date on my time in Boston was rapidly approaching, but it was the first time I had taken time to walk around my neighborhood. I ended up finding this old run-down skate park and an abandoned house covered in art and graffiti and right off the Green Street stop. Since then every place I move to, I make a point to explore. And I may have given up on skateboarding, but I will never give up on the possibility of a Pavement reunion tour.

1-90, MADISON, WI → CHICAGO, IL

Next Thing by Frankie Cosmos

I hopped on the Frankie Cosmos train waaaaayyyyyyy late. I had "On the Lips" and "Fool" on a few playlists, but never really dove into them. I even remember actively disliking them in college when they first were getting popular. When I finally got into them, my partner and I had met about six months earlier, and I was driving down from Madison to Chicago pretty much every other weekend to visit. It was a two-and-a-half-hour drive, two if I left straight from my job in Stoughton. Either way it gave me lots of time to listen to and learn about new music, and there was one drive where I listened to nothing but this thirty-minute record four times in a row.

Next Thing is now one of my favorite records of all time; I've covered about half the tracks, and it's one of my Sunday morning go-tos. Greta Kline doesn't hide behind anything and isn't afraid to let their voice go so low it gets weak (Now that I know that every time you get sad, you just hate me) or so high it almost cracks (And I'm sorry if I have been a real bad friend. Your face too close to mine to hear you talk). The guitar parts are so rudimentary that they're genius, and I don't think there is any record that simultaneously relies on such basic chords and melodies yet has so much fearlessness. Frankie Cosmos always say exactly what they mean and it's always exactly how you feel: "Good-bye forever. What the fuck?"

TENNEY LAPHAM, MADISON, WI

Macseal's Self-Titled EP

When I discovered Macseal, I hadn't really been listening to pop punk or emo for the last few years, and when I had it was stuff like Turnover, Title Fight, Pity Sex, etc., which are more shoegazey emo than pop punk. Macseal, with a little help from Mom Jeans and Michael Cera Palin, made me dive back into pop punk again. Good pop punk lyrics are witty yet blatant, possessing a self-awareness that make emotions of melodrama charming & intimate instead of cringey & immature. Macseal's lyrics strike that balance so flawlessly: "Shedding my layers cause I finally need to leave. This three-month curse plagues everything that I used to be." I had yet to find a band whose melodies complained in a way that spoke to my emo teenage self without upsetting my newly mature notions of musical sophistication (whatever that is). Macseal was exactly what I, and clearly tons of others, needed. They blew the fuck up after Map It Out was released, which didn't surprise me considering it was one of the first records in a while that made me not only believe what I had been shouting for the past decade ("Pop punk's not dead!" "We are in an emo revival!!") but that the scene was actually fucking going somewhere worth following it to.

So, this record, and Macseal's two other EP's will always remind me of the spring in Madison when I rediscovered my love for pop punk. At this point, when I was listening to music that fit in the genre, I was listening to bands from the 2000s into the early 2010s wistfully and nostalgically. Macseal (and a lot of their contemporaries) felt fresh in their sound but familiar in their angst, and that whole spring I listened to nothing but jangly guitars and the poetry of the young, uncertain, and lonely.

LOGAN SQUARE, CHICAGO, IL

Taster by Hovvdy

Something about this record, man. It feels like there is so much space around it—the guitar parts are so unassuming, even when they swell or dive into distortion. It feels incredibly sad, too. It would make me feel nostalgic for Chicago even when I was literally waiting in line at Damn Fine. The lyrics are intimately personal, with details and images that are v specific to the narrator's lived experiences yet spoken with the confidence that these experiences are 100% universal. They're those kinda lyrics that are so simple, vague, and abstract yet you know exactly what they're talking about. One of the simplest songs, *Favorite*, the vocals sound like the narrator is on the phone, leaving a message: "I was not thrown off when you opened up too much too soon, moved to a new neighborhood." That sorrowful resolve, ya know?

No Dogs Allowed by Sidney Gish

I just couldn't choose between these two records because they both put me in Chicago but in such different ways. While *Taster* injects mid-february midwestern melancholia directly into my veins, *No Dogs Allowed* feels more hopeful, like the first day after daylight saving when the sun waits until eight to set. There are no songwriters like Sidney Gish, so discovering her for the first time will yank you out of the deepest music rut and drop you into a full-on obsession. Her lyrics are intricate, funny, and heartbreaking, riddled with the anxiety of a young adult who just realized they have to figure out a way to pass the time for the next forty years. She folds deeply personal social insecurity into broad existential dread, sliding them into the envelope of a perfect little pop song to be delivered to those who have no idea how to answer her questions, either: "What's a human being gotta be like?" "What's a way to just be competent?" "Was it a mistake to try and define what I'm certain's mad incompetence?"

Bark Your Head Off, Dog by Hop Along

Anyone who knows me (or at least follows me on twitter) knows how much I love *Hop Along*. I distinctly remember the first time I heard *Tibetan Pop Stars* a few years ago: I was going to meet my friend Dolan at this bar in Madison called *The Caribou*, it came on my spotify radio, and I stopped dead in my tracks. Over the next few weeks, I got really into that record (*get disowned*) and the older sister (*Painted Shut*). I had never heard anything like Francis Quinlan's voice in my life, and both the arrangements and lyrics were so bold and intricate. I came to especially admire the way Francis Quinlan took risk, like when she filled *get disowned* with lyrics full of depth and imagery, but then finished off the record with the satirically simple plea: "meteor, make me young." Ugh, so good.

But for some reason, I could never get into *Bark Your Head Off, Dog*, which came out just a few months after I discovered the band. *Get Disowned* was so raw and ugly, *Painted Shut* so lamenting and personal, listening to the polished string arrangements, drastically softer vocals, and hookier hooks of *Bark Your Head Off, Dog* I was like...what the hell y'all. But song by song, this record began to grow on me. It started with the hits—"*How Simple*," "*Somewhere a Judge*," and "*Prior Things*." I think the line "death, indiscriminate checks off the newborn buck with the broken leg," is what finally made me give this record a chance. But there were still some songs that I resisted that I have only fell in love with over these past few weeks of quarantine. In "*One That Suits Me*," Quinlan tackles violence of war (Of course, I am for peace. One that suits me.); in "*Not Abel*," her losses are "small and sentimental" compared to the stories of Genesis (It's the hottest summer again. Strange to be shaped by such strange men. But where will you go? Where?); "*The Fox in Motion*" calls back to the familial disdain of *Painted Shut*'s "*Texas Funeral*," (Cousin take me home vs. None of this is gonna happen to me);

on post-pandemic

hardcore

[speculating the implications for local scenes + potential for positive change]

Hardcore was once at war with itself. It's hard to say whether the battle will rage on, or if the times we now inhabit have pressed pause on the sentiments that were chewing away at the state of hardcore music from the inside out.

Before the virus, many who actively contributed to hardcore rightfully felt at odds with a new breed. No, not young folks unassumingly dipping their feet into a new pocket of the music scene, but those much older, who drove themselves to their first show and have stumbled upon the music through a seemingly infinite access to resources of the hardcore scene. Presently, a meme page about Harm's Way has garnered more Facebook likes than the official Harm's Way page. That's objectively embarrassing. Whether through a meme, viral Twitter video, or live footage making its rounds on YouTube, there was debatably too much access given to a culture full of rich context that most newheads don't have (or even want) a ripened understanding of, resulting in outsiders in every sense of the word injecting empty, unproductive dialogue into a music scene that thrives on real-world interaction.

This also resulted in a big-box mentality towards shows and music scenes. Every gig was a grand statement, every fest bigger and harder than the last. Every area had its hot pockets, mostly grown on the backs of fest-centric types all striving to put out a satisfactory demo, get a slot the next big regional festival and never be heard from again. Not only did this result in a lack of focus on local scenes, bands and venues, it resulted in hardcore becoming a social experience, a night out at a club or a week-long vacation; hardcore tourism. But now the virus has put all of this on an indefinite hold, and I'm hoping those (new and old) who participate in the hardcore scene take time to reflect on what can be done to make it better when the yellow tape gets cut.

To state the obvious, it's going to start smaller than any of us can probably recall. Don't fret though. It's actually

practical to let it stay that way for a while. That first show back is realistically going to be an all-local bill, with some new and some “old” bands – when was the last time you even heard of that? Probably years or a decade ago, unless you’re from a Detroit, Louisville or Long Island. Many stir-crazy folks will be psyched to dance to nearly anything, but those expecting a grand social gathering at the bar or a bloated mini fest are probably better off staying at home.

Realistically, we are going to be confined to our own cities and states. The lens forcefully will focus in at a local level. Don’t like the bands in your area? You’ll have to start your own. Don’t like the bills being booked? You’ll have to book your own. Don’t like your local shoebox shithole venue? You’ll have to build your own, or hope to God you’ve got a basement big enough for the job. What I truly hope changes is the much-needed shift in where hardcore exists. Real hardcore music does not exist on the internet. It grows organically and is informed by tangible, lived experiences. Keeping hardcore confined to a Twitch stream or pivoting your band into a clothing line is not the fucking answer.

I hope the new hardcore has a pulse. Feeling your stomach inside your throat during an exciting set is an energy we all probably took for granted and miss more than ever right now. Many are going to be desperate to see any hardcore show when this is over. Hell, I’d probably watch a Krimewatch set at this point. Others are going to be much more afraid of the implications of going into a public space that doesn’t compromise, and lives on unity and front-facing interaction. Those who truly want to be there, will be there. None of us know for certain whether this virus will ever truly end, even after we are welcome to attend gigs at our own free will. Imagine if hardcore music became a black-market activity? Imagine if you could get fined for going to a show?

I hope coronavirus serves as a reality check in every single facet of life, including how and why you are drawn to the subcultures you occupy. I for one can’t wait for the first gig back. I’ll probably watch a few bands I like, some new projects, and maybe even a band I dislike. Either way, I’ll be present, and you will be too if you really love hardcore music.

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on camouflage by the front bottoms

and a little bit of insight into the
making of this zine

When I first told Miranda I wanted to contribute to this zine (back in April, if you can ever believe that month happened), I told her I was gonna write about how The Beers by The Front Bottoms was really beautiful and that it made me feel empty. She said "Hell yeah I love that". But then July happened and Josh Franceschi from You Me At Six released a bunch of songs he had made in 2009. Everything about my life is rooted in 2009 and so I asked Miranda if I could then write about that, specifically the song Life With Strangers because it made me cry in my cupboard for an hour and write in a diary. I haven't done that since I shared a room with my sister and we lived in our old house and I'd only experienced death once. Miranda said "yeah sure!" and that Josh reminded her of being a teenager, and then we spoke about our crush on him for a bit and I really liked that two girls or women I guess who have never met and live in different countries could bond over something like that like we're 14 at a sleepover which would have been held at my house cos my mother didn't used to allow me to sleep out.

I wrote some stuff about Life With Strangers but then last Friday night happened (we're in August now) and I was watching The Front Bottoms' twitch stream and it was so much of fun that I watched through their previous streams and then they played a song off their new album called Camouflage. I remembered hearing that song like a month ago but really it was in December last year (what the fuck?) and I remember thinking it was sort of shit but when they played it on the stream I was immediately struck. I've felt struck before, but Camouflage has been my most immediate striking, so surprise! That's the song I will be writing about

The song ending with Brian Sella saying "It was hard to tell what it meant and how it felt" perfectly sums up the way I felt really listening to this song. I saw someone on Twitter say that it was a gay anthem and I mean sure, the chorus could be about a guy giving another guy a blowjob and being like "who knew I would even try it?", but for me it felt like there was something loose in my head and that this song was

tracking its movements. Some of the tracks include:

The thought of marriage and how if I married a man, I'd be freaked out

In the bridge when Brian says "I gotta make a commitment and it's stressing me out", that's me with a few things. Like when I get employed or unintentionally fall into a whatsapp conversation with someone that warrants ongoing replies. On a larger scale, it makes me think of getting married, specifically to a man, and how the concept of being a man's wife is pretty gross to me. The lyrics "And I will save it for my deathbed like I'm reading a vow" do nothing to dissuade me from the fact that Brian is talking about marriage and it's weirding him out. I don't know what more to say on this matter that doesn't result in this piece turning into a personal essay.

Being mentally ill and things are mostly shit but being manic is fun

I have borderline personality

disorder and when Brian says pretty much anything in this song, it feels like I wrote it because it's things I've been through or thought about. That part when he says he was having a mental breakdown while whoever he is singing about was painting their house feels like all the times I've tweeted about how I'm jealous of normies. Not that painting your house is normie but you know what I mean. Sometimes I think about people my age who are accountants or who have 5 year plans and how I struggle just to make myself some toast. I don't know. There are people who have mental breakdowns and there are people who paint their house.

Carrying on with the topic of mental illness, lyrics like "Sour but I think I like it" and "I am so loosely connected in a couple different ways and I might not act like it but I think I love the taste" which then blends into "Louder but I think I like it" remind me of all the times I've been manic and ended up doing really dodgy stuff that I know is bad for me. The sort of stuff I have to pretend to be abhorred by in front of other people when really, I do love the taste. And I don't mean to romanticise unsafe behaviour. Everyone else should be careful and as for me, well in time.

When I was reading through Camouflage's YouTube comments, someone said "Help me find Emily from German class in the comments, I know she listens to TFB, too" and someone else said "we're all looking for somebody down here" and it made me think of a guy I used to be really good friends with. He was the only person I've ever met who didn't think The Front Bottoms were shit. And I wondered what he thought of this song and if he still listened to them or if he was one of those people who say stuff like "I used to listen to them" and can't remember how they stopped. When I think of him now, he seems like he's started keeping shorter hair and has a five year plan. I had to stop writing here to go and listen to Five Beer Plan by Joyce Manor and then went to tweet It's a pleasure cruise when you're born to lose.

- Bahiyya Khan

- [REDACTED] 8 months ago
help me find emily from
german class. I know she
listens to tfb too.

003173 20 REPLY 9
v9 REPLIES

- [REDACTED] 8 months ago
We all looking for someone down here
- [REDACTED] 8 months ago
Maybe she wears camaflage to
blend in.
- [REDACTED] 7 months ago
you got this King

Bahiyya Khan is a South African game designer, writer and filmmaker. She makes games to tell brown people's stories as well as to explore social issues such as sexual abuse, mental illness & the legacy of Apartheid. She mostly talks about emo on twitter though: @BreakinBahiyya.



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