

Gracies Dinnertime Theatre

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Epiphanesque, part 7 – Pyrotechnics

By Gary Hoffmann

She inhaled deeply, then held her breath, letting the smoke drift slowly out of her mouth and nose. I watched as it curled up around her nostrils and cheek bones, brushing by her eyebrows and gently fingering her hair on its way past. “Prometheus caught between your finger tips.” She gestured with her cigarette, pointing towards me with two fingers holding it perpendicularly between them. She rotated her hand back to stare at the burning embers of crushed tobacco. She always smoked unfiltered cigarettes. She said it was for the same reason she never had sex with someone wearing a condom.

She inhaled deeply again, and as she spoke wisps of silver burning carcinogens escaped her lips, reaching out into the air briefly before dissolving. She reminded me of a fire-breathing dragon. “Fire is the most sensual of elements.” She paused just before saying, “sensual,” the way a person catches their breath when waving their fingers through a candle flame, the way a person inhales slightly when... stimulated. “Water is a close second, but fire is first. That’s why lust is always described as a burning passion. That’s why flame always comes in tongues. That’s why fire caresses, why it licks. You watch flame, it’s like bodies entwined in the act of coitus, the way it flows around itself, interpenetrating itself. That’s why so many people are pyromaniacs; the creation of fire is a sexual act, and an intensely satisfying one.” She emphasized the word “intensely,” forming the word slowly with her lips, leaning forward slightly to draw my attention to her mouth. It worked. “That’s why you always want to smoke after sex. It’s a natural succession: foreplay to coitus to lighting things on fire. One sexual act after another.”

She stood up, taking three steps closer to me.

She moved like fire, flowing more than walking. Her curves were like napalm beneath her tight, black dress. She leaned forward, resting her hands on the table, the slim stick of her cigarette still jutting forth from her equally slender fingers. Her breath was of brimstone and lechery. Her eyes burned like molten emeralds. “I mean, what do you think that whole ‘Holy Spirit’ schtick is really all about? Tongues of flame descending on twelve strong men who left their wives to go wander around the desert together for years on end, you tell me what really happened.” She had leaned even closer as she spoke, her voice reducing to a whisper, until I could only hear her because she was right next to my ear.

“You see, people enjoy smoking for the same reason they enjoy oral sex.” Her neck, barely hidden beneath her red hair, was so close I could’ve bitten it without having to move. “It’s the same feeling of tasting fire, of capturing it in your mouth, of controlling it, enslaving it between your fingers and your tongue. It’s the same going down on a woman as on a man, or the same idea, anyway.” She stepped back and sat down. “It’s too easy to put the attraction of smoking and fellatio and cunnilingus down to a puerile oral fixation. I think they’re all because of our desire to control nature, and what’s more uncontrollable than flame? Cigarettes focus that into a tiny stick, while oral sex concentrates sexual energy, which burns just as much as any forest during a drought, into a single portion of a person’s anatomy. It’s not about putting things in your mouth, it’s about consuming something you can’t consume, making it a part of you, and becoming stronger because of it.” She leaned against her seat, arching her back, and blew a stream of smoke straight up.

“Sure, it’s a disgusting habit, and the smell gets in your clothing so deeply you can never get it out, and eventually you’ll get cancer and die, but it’s still attractive to you, isn’t it? You still sense the sensuality of it,

the sexual power of breathing fire, and you're drawn to it." She leaned forward again, putting out the stub of her nearly extinguished cancer stick. She picked up a mug of coffee and held it up near her mouth, close enough to slowly run her bottom lip around the rim as if she was going to take a sip but hadn't quite decided where the best spot to drink from would be, all the while her eyes

bore straight into me from beneath her eyebrows. "So, I guess the question is, what will it be: a smoke," she kissed the edge of the mug as she closed her eyes slowly and reopened them to stare right into mine, "or sex?" She finally took a sip, the warmth of the liquid practically visible as she swallowed.

"I don't smoke."

What's the Frequency?

Q&A With A Young Songwriter

By Bryan Hammer

Recently, I had the pleasure of speaking with Corey Paige, Illustration major at RIT and lead singer of Candid Daydream, a local band out of Syracuse, about songwriting, growing up with music, and why music makes him tick.

BH: What's the first song you learned on your guitar, what do you remember about the experience?

Corey Paige: (laugh)...You know, I think it was that Blues Traveler's song, "Runaround." It's thrilling once you can actually play a whole song, [you think] "like wow, that is Runaround! I am in Blues Traveler!" Now I don't even like the song.

What song do you really wish you wrote?

I say this all the time, every day, for about 100 songs. I think I really wish I wrote "Just" by Radiohead. I wish I wrote a lot of Radiohead's songs, but "Just" always gets me.

BH: What bands do you think are truly talented today; locally or not?

CP: I feel funny talking about these guys like I'm in the same profession, but I love Radiohead and Tom York's songs. What I like about them is that they take chances, and that they don't care what's popular, or what's going to get them money. I can't get enough of Coldplay lately, and someone turned me on to Wilco recently and I think that's the best overall [recent] album. It's called **Yankee Hotel Foxtrot**. I never look at in terms of talent, although I can appreciate it. I take the bands I come across at face value, even if they're

not talented, I can still love their music. I don't associate talent with how much I like a band.

BH: Do you have any pet peeves when it comes to playing or listening to music?

CP: I listen to pop music, and I like it, but one thing that really turns me off as a songwriter is clichéd lyrics. A lot of the hard rock today is so bland and neutral; heartless. I think that you can always think of a new personal way to say something and it may be a weird lyric, but at least it's not the same. It lets you think and draw your own conclusions.

How does music influence your art?

You know, I think about this sometimes. I guess a parallel between them is that my art is loose. In my painting, I'm really only concerned about composition and aesthetic. I use bold colors and I outline everything. I try and put it on a level where it won't be complicated. I don't want to make things complicated for the sake of making it complicated. I think in my music if nothing else, I want you to be able to understand it. Not necessarily the lyrics, but relate to it, and move your ass.

How does music influence your life?

Well other than making me tired, and drive all over, I think I'd be lost [without music]. I look at it as a soundtrack to my life. [Music] can make you feel a little better, or a little worse. I don't know if it directly affects how I act, but it can certainly help [me] understand things. I might have a problem, and I'll pop something in and hear a song and say "Man this song is about my life." I love it when a songwriter can break it down to

a few simple points. I love it when I can hear that and say, yea exactly.

BH: What do you feed off of? What keeps you going in life?

CP: I love people. I like all the relationships you develop, and I love to see people interact in good ways and bad. It makes [life] interesting, and gives me stuff to write about. When [I] write something [I'm] really happy with, it's a great feeling, a great moment. It can really make my day, week, or month.

BH: How do you think you've grown as a musician?

CP: Well, I'm slowly learning, like anyone else. Songwriting wise, I'm getting used to form and trimming things that don't need to be there. I think I'm just getting older and more mature as a songwriter. I'm not saying that I'm getting mature or complacent. I'm not settling down, I'm just experiencing more, and every little bit helps; good and bad. I'm not trying to rhyme everything. You pick up little things, and you let go of little things you always thought were rules.

I know you have a new album coming out at the end of the month. What is this album about?

Well I don't know if it has a theme, but in general my

songwriting normally has to do with what is going on with me. It sounds selfish, but I don't know how to write about anything else. The new songs have to do with the aspects of getting older, and letting go of the things you're used to. I'm not about specific things. Learning how to run my life, or at least being in more control, has been a popular theme; just acknowledging that I don't know what I'm doing.

Can you describe your songwriting process?

I think the most common thing is a journal that I carry around, where I'll write down things that I find interesting, or just thoughts. Other times I'll be just screwing around on guitar, hit on something, and I'll flip back through that book, and see if anything fits. Then it's just determining where the music and lyrics have to fit.

What's the best advice you ever got?

Well, I'm not sure it's the best advice, but recently one of my professors said something when I turned in a painting I wasn't sure he would like. He said, "did you enjoy doing this?" and I said "Yeah." He said, "Then who gives a fuck what I think?" Basically, not everyone is going to like what you do. You just have to do what you want sometimes and not worry about it.

Come play with us.

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Dr. Brick**By Peter Gravelle**

As this office is a general practice institution, I see clients suffering from all kinds of illnesses. I'd like to give you some of my official case reports, although I have to refer to them by number instead of name. You know, privacy restrictions and all...

Number 04

Number 4 came in requesting a general rhinoplasty. I wrote out a referral to a cosmetic surgeon, but neglected to tell the patient that it severely needed some iodine pills to combat its massive goiter on the left side.

Number 01

This client is suffering from megalomania. It is convinced it controls a massive Institution, when it is capable of no such thing. The patient also appears to have a nervous tic causing it to repeatedly raise its right arm.

Number 07

Patient is suffering from some form of schizoid disorder. Seems to have two parts, called A and B. They fail to form a cohesive whole. Very creative, though, as is evidenced by its tendency to draw on itself.

Number 21

This one is very spacey. Seems to be suffering from ADD.

Number 50

Also a possible Multiple Persona Disorder victim, subject appears to be half-deaf.

Number 13

This patient seems to be suffering from dwarfism (and getting hit by an ugly-stick, if I may interject with my unprofessional opinion). Gave Growth Hormone, but the treatment has only succeeded in causing more problems.

Number 11

[File is missing, very small]

Number 5

Very intelligent. Seems to have hypertension brought

on by caffeine.

Numbers 604, 608, 612, 616, 620

Alcoholism.

Number 8

Very rigorous student. Enjoys doing Renaissance-era reenactments a bit too much, though.

I hope you all enjoyed a peak into my little confidential files. Don't tell my clients!

Muted Shades of Mauve

By Ren Meinhart

We aren't the same as we were before.

Your hand in mine feels
Different somehow;
Almost stronger.
Almost more careful.
Your intonations are changed.
Almost more confident.
Almost more refined,
Yet with a hint of the coarse
That wasn't there before.

It was different this time.
It was a different car.
A different time
A different place
A different us.

There are too many states to count
Between that which was Pennsylvania
And that which is now, and
The distance is too great
When the leaves fall the wind picks up.

You—
Say things that I know
You can't really mean.
For safety's sake.

And I—
I forgot to how to
Communicate fairly.
Really.

It makes sense that its
An altered experience and yet I
Can't help but wish that
I still felt
Something Bohemian in your touch and that
I still heard
Something youthful in your voice.

Because—
I'm tired.
And I miss my best friend.

P o e t r y

“onset”

watching white fall,

i thought,
and saw:

you are the tips
of snowflakes,

and i
will melt and mix you,

with sap,
from fallen trees,

and wash.

dalas verdugo

Damned Are the Clear-eyed By P.M.

Where oh where does the kb grow
And where are those who aid its flow
I just want to get lit
It only takes a little bit

Seems like everyone knows a guy,
Upon whom I must now rely
But when the time comes, they never
come through
Just leave me hanging and feelin' all blue

One-eighth an ounce is all I ask
Getting it has proved a mighty task
Where have all the dealers gone
Where is the man who'll fill my bong?

In Thanks**By Ren Meinhart**

For being a better brother to me
Than I have been a sister to you.
For the way that your voice sounds on the
Other end of the phone when I call every week.
For caring whether I come home or not and
Sitting through movies you didn't want to go to
With me when no one else would.

For being a better mother to me
Than I have been a daughter to you.
For spontaneous outings and nights spent in
Animatedly playing foosball. For the way that
You sing when you cook and laugh at my stupid jokes.
And because you continue to openly support me
While I stumble and falter while looking for my way.

For being a better father to me
Than I have been a daughter to you.
For sitting outside my door when all I
Thought I wanted to do was run away.
For giving me the freedom to do what I feel
In my heart I should be doing, and for working so
Hard so that I have the tools with which to fly.

For being a better mentor to me
Than I have been a student to you.
For pushing me when I thought that this
Wasn't my forte. Thought that I couldn't do it.
For convincing me that all I had to do
Was give myself a chance to grow and
Fulfill the latent promise that that you saw in me.

For being a better neighbor to me
Than I have been neighborly towards you.
For listening to me even when it was apparent
That I had no clue as to what I was saying.
For giving me reason upon reason to laugh;
And for the way that somehow you're able to
Infuse in me the warmth of home when I need it most.

For being a better companion to me
Than I ever was a friend to you.
For making me think and valuing
My take on things, even when you saw differently.
For the fact that no matter how much we
Hurt each other, you always forgave,
And I would always come running back.

Conversation**By Gary Hoffmann**

It was just another conversation over coffee
Like so many they had had so many years ago.
Maybe he would stare into her eyes,
Eyes the color of the coffee in her hand.
Maybe he would stare down at the floor,
Tear stained floor, love stained floor,
Stains from spilled and broken hearts,
Stains from lost and shattered dreams.
Maybe she would stare between his words,
Words the color of the moon before an April rain.
Maybe she would stare down at his hands,
Blood stained hands, love stained hands,
Stains from desperate attempts to remember,
Stains from desperate attempts to forget.
This is where they came when they first kissed
Years ago when kissing was still novel.
This is where they came to fall in love
Years ago when love was still important.
This is where they came before she left
Years ago when leaving still brought sorrow.
Now they sit and stare at nothing.
All that's left of love has been forgotten.
There once was room enough in both their lives,
Now that room is needed for regrets.
Once she'd say, "I love you, dearest."
Once he'd say, "I love you, too."
Now she whispers, "You loved me then."
Now he whispers, "And so did you."
It was just another conversation over coffee.

What is this magazine?

This is Gracies Dinnertime Theatre, a magazine of satire, literature, poetry and art. We publish out of Rochester, NY but we have readers around the globe. We exist as a medium for your expression and invite you to contribute.

Anyone is welcome to submit.

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