

94720

THE B-SIDE



FALL 2017 | ISSUE 3



EXECUTIVE STAFF

Editors-in-Chief

Sofia Duarte
Myra Farooqi

Managing Editor

Vivian Chen

Copy Editor

Jordan Aronson

Photography Lead

Fiona Duerr

Design Lead

Farida Radwan

Communications Leads

Arnav Chaturvedi
Annique Mitchell

Web Design Lead

Jackie Nam

GENERAL STAFF

Editorial

Yaseen Azzouni
Celia Davalos
Michael Elsanadi
Delaney Gomen
Leka Gopal
John Lawson
Veronica Irwin
Adrienne Lee
Shelby Mayes
Dylan Medlock
Anna Nguyen
Brendan Redmond
Matthew Sater
Adil Siddiquee
Natalie Silver
Walker Spence
Anthony Vega
Devyn White

Photo

Circe Ament
Noah Bogner
Michelle Cho
Desiree Diaz
Kavitha George
Rebekah Gonzalez
Sam Jameson
Kayla Kettmann
Alice Langford
Bianca Lu
Ally Mason
Jessica Morgan
Annie Nguyen
Mateo Savala

Design

Fabiha Fairouz
Camilia Kacimi
Communications
Rosie Davidowitz
Gaby Fooks
Alex Schudy

Marketing

Mariah Ao
Claire Danna
Elsie Fisher
Connor Tapley
Kenny Zhang

Web Development

Connor O'Shea

3

5

7

11

14

15

17

18

21

23

24

25

29

30

31

table of contents

WE SMOKED A BLUNT WITH KAHJ

Walker Spence | John Lawson

LONG LIVE PSYCHEDELIA

Bianca Lu

I AM KAMAU

Natalie Silver | Alice Langford

SMALL CRUSH

John Lawson

HOW TO BE A BAY AREA HIPSTER

Jackie Nam

ON MY ENCOUNTERS WITH OUM KALTHOUM

Michael Elsanadi

POPSTAR RANTS: WHY CARDI B STILL NEEDS TO BE CHECKED

Veronica Irwin

THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH LIVING LIKE THIS: ON THE ROAD WITH FIDLAR

Natalie Silver and Rosie Davidowitz

FRANK OCEAN: THE MOST SUBTLE ICON OF THE CONTEMPORARY MOMENT

Anthony Vega

WHICH BAY AREA VENUE ARE YOU?

Vivian Chen

POPSTAR RANTS: XXXTENTACION CAN'T KEEP GETTING AWAY WITH IT

Adil Siddiquee

AJ, THE ONE

Shelby Mayes | Mateo Savala

MAC DEMARCO

Fiona Duerr

POPSTAR RANTS: TAYLOR SWIFT STILL HASN'T DENOUNCED BEING AN "ARYAN GODDESS"

John Lawson

RECORDS WORTH SAVING

Circe Ament



Kahj

written by WALKER SPENCE | photo by JOHN LAWSON

In spite of the 75 degree weather, Kahj walked up with a beanie and a crooked smile. She exudes the same confidence in person that she portrays on wax; though she probably stands around 5'4", it feels like she's the tallest person in the room. About five minutes in, John, our photographer, pauses after taking a photo and says, "You know, this would look really sick with a blunt." Without hesitation Kahj replies, "I've got a backwood in my backpack" and starts rolling up on top of her skateboard. Throughout the shoot she stared down the camera like it's been talking shit to her, daring it to make a move as the blunt hangs from her mouth.

Kahj linked up with Threes in May to put out Momma Bam (2017), a short but captivating tape that evokes images of sun-bleached days spent driving around LA. Kahj rhymes effortlessly on all her songs, finding the pocket in every beat and staying there for the duration of her verse. On her new single "When U Go," she is lyrically vicious and uncompromising. The beat flips "Naked When You Come," a song by now-defunct Danish pop group The Lollipop. When pitched down, the sample creates a surreal, dreamy mood that serves to highlight how fierce Kahj's rhymes are. This track is a warning to all listeners: don't cross her.

During the shoot, I asked Kahj about her music, life, and views on the hip-hop scene.



So what have you been up to, Kahj?

[Laughs] I've been chillin'. After I did Momma Bam with Threes, we both decided it would be a good time to start my own project, something more focused on me. The first project is really telling about a person. It's pretty much your life up 'til then. Right now I just wanna keep putting out music, putting out songs. I'm aiming to have my project out by the end of this school year.

How did growing up in Torrance, CA influence the music you make? Where do you see your style fitting into hip hop as a whole?

Torrance... yeah. Torrance is cool. I grew up around a bunch of white kids by the beach, so a lot of my style and influence is kinda like skater, surfer, really just from LA. I didn't see a lot of hip hop in Torrance. High school was really my biggest writer's block, going through depression and nasty shit. I write about Torrance, but most of my music was developed after I moved up here. I didn't really get to find myself in Torrance 'cause it's a really homophobic place, a really racist place. I think my style is just me; people fuck with me 'cause I'm just unapologetic. I'm unique, I'm different, I don't give a fuck. I had to have that attitude 'cause I dress the way I dress and talk the way I talk.

When you start writing, do you hear a beat and write to it or do you write your verses and try to match them to a beat?

Flow is really important to me. There's always shit to write about, but it's how you say it that matters. Meeting Threes helped me 'cause I always like to hear the beat first, and he's got a lot to work with. The only way to do a beat justice is to listen to it and give it the verse that it needs. The song's already there, you just have to chisel it out.

How do you know when a song is finished?

[Laughs] That's tough. I'm a perfectionist. Because of my expectations for myself, I don't care if it takes a long time. Even if my feature did it in one take, I'll still do my five takes. The more I do it, the faster the process gets. That doesn't mean I'm caring less, I'm just able to do it in a shorter time.

How do you approach song order on a project?

I went through that process for the first time on Momma Bam. The theme of the project was springtime, and we recorded the entire album in half a week. We just shut the doors on ourselves, smoked endless blunts, and just recorded. I wanted to start off, like, setting the scene. And then you dive in and you explore the bigger themes, and leave it kind of open-ended. I wanted to end it in a thought-provoking way.

What is your vision for one of your shows? What feeling do you want to leave people with?

People are shocked to see a girl on stage. I have to show I'm not just a rapper who's good for a girl, 'cause I'm not. I'm good, period. The show's gotta have a progression too, just like an album. I want to time it right. At the end of the day, I want the crowd to see that this is lo-fi. I'm not pretending to be a millionaire rapper. I think a lot of rap is like a facade, and it shouldn't be.

Tell me a little about your experience as a woman who makes hip-hop music.

I think that it's cool, and I don't get offended when people seem surprised when they hear me. I feel like I'm showing girls that they can do it, they don't have to fit into a box or be a certain way. A lot of mainstream artists are really sexualized, or sound really flowery, and that's great, every girl is different and every girl should do their thing. But there aren't a lot of girls who are focusing more on the elements of hip hop. I focus on things that are real to me, and because it's so relatable, because it's so real, I think people feel it.

I wanted to ask you about a few lyrics off of "When U Go." One of my personal favorites was the line "I'm not just gay today/I'm not your phase/Oh you're bi bitch?/ha ha bye bitch." Can you expand on that a little bit?

"When U Go" is about my ex-girlfriend, the first female I ever dated. I was like 13 or 14-years-old, and she cheated on me, kissed some other guy right in front of my face. She lived far away, so I was excited to see her, and when I got there, not only did she not care that I was fuckin' there, she was with this other guy. At the end of the day, she didn't know who she was. I don't hate on all bi girls, but there's a certain type of girl out there who tries to experiment on someone else's time. And that kinda sucked. Growing up as a gay girl, I was really confused, and that experience just left me more confused.

What kind of releases can we look forward to? Any upcoming projects?

I'm working on my first EP. This will be the first time it's not all beats from Threes. It's gonna be a story. It should be out by the end of my senior year, and as of right now I am living the ending. I've also got a single coming out, "Birds." That shit is light and refreshing compared to the last song I put out.

Follow Kahj on Soundcloud (soundcloud.com/kah-jal) and Bandcamp (kahjandthrees.bandcamp.com) to stay up to date with her latest releases.

we smoked a blunt with Kahj

ALONG LIVE PSYCHEDELIA

photos and article by BIANCA LU | design by JACKIE NAM

Back in the 60's, San Francisco gave birth to psychedelia, an explosive new force in music, whose influence is still projected by local and foreign bands that grace Bay Area venues today.

Psychedelia varies from the dark and aggressive to lighthearted and pop-y. Whatever groove your heart desires, there's a show for you in the Bay. The surreality of psychedelic shows are amplified by the experimental purple haze manifested in the lighting, fog, dimly lit joints, and goddamned vaporizers. They're one of those experiences better felt than read about, so stop reading and take yourself out on a night of spacy, fuzzy, nonsensical beauty and soak in the madness that is psychedelia.



I AM KAMAU

written by NATALIE SILVER | photographed by ALICE LANGFORD

September 22 was a sunny Friday afternoon on a strangely subdued Sproul Plaza; with the golden light softening the charred London Plane trees from previous riots, chalked hate speech eroded by the soles of a thousand pairs of black Vans, the absence of screaming demonstrators, and that beloved Bancroft and Telegraph buzz a couple frequencies lower than usual, it was truly the calm before the storm.

As I walked with KAMAU from the basement of MLK to Mario Savio steps — where he would perform five hours later as part of a black consciousness celebration put on by UC Berkeley's Multicultural Student Union — I tried to explain through his happy humming and poetic riffing that this muted environment was not only disturbingly out of character, but also eerie given the events that would unfold on these same steps in the coming hours.

First would be his show — which, as predicted, proved to be loud, upbeat, provocative, enlightening, and galvanizing. And not even 48 hours after that would be what was planned to be FreeSpeech Week, an extremely polarizing and highly triggering event planned and hosted by the Berkeley College Republicans, which scheduled controversial speakers including Milo Yiannopoulos, Steven Bannon, and Ann Coulter. Though the same patch of land would host two acts boasting polar opposite ideologies in the same two-day period, KAMAU remained unfazed.

I sat down with KAMAU underneath a tree on this monster of a site — Upper Sproul — before soundcheck to talk about his upcoming show, the release of his new album *TheKAMAU-Cassette: ÜRTH GÖLD* (2017), race, love, police brutality, free speech, personal growth and the unity inherent in that, and the Land of the Free...which is really all anybody seems to be talking about now, anyways.

“

KAMAU is your first name?

Yes.

Does it mean anything?

Quiet Warrior.

Do you think that's what you are?

I think I am what I am.

”



Welcome to Berkeley, welcome to the madness, this is Sproul Plaza, the heart of our campus. You're here for the black consciousness celebration, which is being put on by our Multicultural Student Union, which is partnering with SUPERB for this event. What does black consciousness mean to you?

I don't think true consciousness has a color. I think that consciousness is awareness and I think it's important that we connect with our consciousness, because the more aware we are, the more informed we are. The more informed we are, the better decisions and the more effective our decisions are in the name of growth and progress.

I think that nature inherently is extremely aware, and there is no mediator between the awareness and the action. But for us, I think our ego is like this crazy translator, it distorts what we perceive in our awareness. In the translation between what we perceive and what we need to do to grow

is some type of distortion. That makes us grow strangely sometimes.

Is there anything you want us to hear though, especially in terms of tonight? I think that your performance does have a political undertone. I don't know if that's a deliberate thing on your end or not, but it is part of a black consciousness celebration. And I think a lot of students are going to be attending the show listening specifically for that.

It's not that it is not political. It's not that it's not black consciousness. It's just that I think that for us, in our music, I think we're just trying to express the reality that we're experiencing as loud as we can so that people can feel it.

I think part of the confusion that I've experienced growing up as a so-called black person that "black," "Negro," "colored," "African," — arguably African — I'm not sure if African is actually an African word. Most of these words are definitely terms that weren't created by me or even for me, as in like with me in mind...as a beneficiary, you know what I mean?

I mean, if I'm talking about identity as like a human physical body and not just as an energetic entity, but as a human, physical body, that word "black" wasn't a part of it. It wasn't even a part of its creation, wasn't part of its communication, it wasn't a part of its culture, wasn't a part of its construction, wasn't part of its achievements, any of that. You know, I know I'm speaking English; I communicate through English, but I don't know.

So the words are difficult sometimes. I think that sometimes knowing that certain things in language don't fit... It can be harder to use language.

Vocabulary is crazy to me; it's just someone else's perception of reality and then like a shortcut to that.

Yeah it's like if my black consciousness is something that I'm addressing and taking care of for me to grow, it's hard for me to consistently call the thing that I am addressing — potentially one of the most important parts of my growth — to name it, and repeatedly call it something that was created by an entity that has been one of the biggest predators on that growth itself. So do you call that a conflict of interest?

Definitely. So have you found a word or a term that you can use to convey your identity or is there not one yet?

Communication is important. And I understand the importance of words. But for me, I don't feel the need to call it anything. In

communicating ideas I understand that we do need to...or that it helps to have words that we all understand that represent an idea.

I mean that is an interesting irony because what you do for a living is you use your words, you use your words to convey a message...

I realized recently that the point actually isn't the words, but the words are for the point. The point isn't just to say words.

The point is to communicate. And words aren't communication — they help make communication possible. Trees communicate. Everything communicates, and most of the things that communicate don't use words. So words aren't the necessity. Music has always been about communicating, you know what I mean? And there's such a huge portion of it that doesn't have words. Miles Davis is communicating. You can know exactly what he's saying. What he's communicating...he doesn't need words.

I think the point for me is to figure out ways to make my words more supportive of what I'm actually trying to communicate.

What are you actually trying to communicate?

Well first I'm trying to become a better person. I'm trying to grow — or I'm growing. I think the point is for me to just be honest with myself. Through my songs, I need to be honest with myself. It helps me. I think sometimes when I actually take things outside, I can create a way to look at myself outside of myself in music and actually see what I'm doing and critique it in a way that promotes my growth.

Let's talk about your music. [TheKAM-AU-Cassette: ÜRTH GÖLD] just came out, congratulations! The last thing you put out was A Gorgeous Fortune in 2016. Did the election have any impact on the content of the new album?

I think the world affects everything inside and outside of it. Everything in an environment reflects the nature of the environment. And so making music while things are going on, things that are going on are either going to directly or indirectly show themselves within.

What about sound? Your sound is so hard to confine to one genre. I feel like it transcends all of the genre binaries that probably shouldn't exist. The first song I ever heard of yours was "PohLease," and I immediately thought gospel, this is gospel rap. But then you hear "Doo Wop," you hear more R&B, you hear more traditional gangsta rap in it. How would you describe your sound, especially in the new album?

The most recent project [TheKAMAU-Cassette: ūRTH GōLD] had a heavy presence of the voices and instruments in the production.

With A Gorgeous Fortune, I collaborated in production with No Wyld. So it was just No Wyld and me in the production for the entire project. With [TheKAMAU-Cassette: ūRTH GōLD], the production was split between a bunch of producers in different places.

We collaborated with some producers who were New York-based, some producers that were Paris-based, London-based, Virginia-based, different places. It got a lot of different perspectives when it came to the production, which I feel gave it a wider spectrum of sound because of the wider family, or the wider village, that created it.

What about lyrical content? I mean these lyrics are so explicit and graphic. Look at "The Icarus." You're writing that from the perspective of a slave. No one does that. Especially compared to colossal African-American stars right now....such as Kanye West, who is rapping about having sex with Taylor Swift...

If I'm just speaking on black artists, speaking on artists who are expressing themselves through a perpetual state of battery—not even talking about from society, but from our own sense of identity, you know we're taught from Day 1 that we are black, which we are also taught is synonymous with evil, you know? And everywhere we go, we come face to face with our blackness and consequently

come face to face with evil, and we identify with that. But we also deep down inside know that we're not, so there's this initially, from Day 1 conflict. There's this deception within ourselves, this battling within ourselves, the self seeking to prove itself to the self that society projects onto it.

And so through all of that, a lot of times, it's just tiring and people want to escape. I'm not making excuses for music that can be derogatory, but I'm just explaining how sometimes when things are suppressed for a long time — like in physics, if the pressure keeps getting built up, it explodes. In every direction. Not in a good direction, not in a bad direction, in every direction.

A lot of the time, our creativity is that. The letting out of the building up of pressure, because a lot of the time it's us reacting, us having our natural reactions to the things that we feel is dangerous for us, it will end up with us being perceived as overly aggressive or militant, or being killed.

I mean even when we were talking about the free speech...that's just people protecting their human being. But if we were to have the natural reaction to protect ourselves in a situation like that, it would be a massacre.

Your music still stands out to me as unique, though. The reason I started liking and listening to your music was because it reminded me of that '90s rap — brutally honest, very explicit, recounting of at least what is partially the black narrative in

America. And I think that, that was lost, especially within the last decade. So why are you doing that with your music? And why is no one else really doing that right now?

When it comes to making music that is reflective of narratives that need to be spoken, I don't think that it's something that's not happening. I think that I do that, but I think a lot of other people who do it...I do it in a way that reflects the way I was raised. And other people do the same thing, you know. So I might describe "The Icarus," or let's say we're talking about "PohLease," I might describe it from the position of someone who is more of a questioner. I mean "Who do you call, when you're food for the law?" I'm asking all these questions in the song. My song ends up coming out that way because that is the product of how I have come up.

But someone may make that same song from the perspective of someone who's getting directly attacked, and they've literally felt the burn of that happening. I've observed a lot of things, I've been lucky enough to experience things, but also to observe a lot of pain without it actually being directed at me PHYSICALLY. But some people don't. A lot of my people don't get that luxury.

So there's value in a variety of voices and different experiences in this larger "black narrative"...

If the same person as a child hasn't been taught self-love, this person is just going to react. They've been fed hate towards them and given hate to themselves to give to themselves as well...how is that person going to express it? Are they going to express it in some super zen-like, wholesome, worldly way? Or are they going to express it in the way that the world haught them to? I used to be very judgmental too, in talking about things like that in rap. Now, rather than talking about the things that people like Kanye may do that may be derogatory, I'd rather focus on the things that they do that's not.

You could find a lot of truth in creativity in general, regardless of who it comes from, and it may not be the intent of the artist. I mean, one of my favorite poems is called "If" by Rudyard Kipling, who is not someone I would want to hang with. He's not someone I would aspire to be like or want my children to aspire to be like, but I feel like through our creativity, truth has a way of coming out of us.

Do you have different expectations for the decoding of your lyrical content across racial lines? What is your message for your black audience? What is your message for your white audience?



I try not to expect anything. I just want to help. In America, outside of the so-called black individual, racism creates a willing or unwilling practitioner of hate or a feeling of superiority. And within the so-called black individual, it creates a reality of self-hate and a feeling of inferiority. So from that point on, from wherever they are, they're going to hear whatever they're going to hear.

But I think that those things that we experienced internally and that are manifested in our external actions...I think the point is to try to recognize those things and work on creating a healthier environment within ourselves.

Those windows behind those trees, those were all smashed last year. This entire building was surrounded. Yeah, we were surrounded by hundreds of cops in SWAT gear. It'll turn into a warzone and that's going to happen 48 hours after you take that exact same stage. On one hand we're celebrating this black consciousness, and then immediately after that there will be cops in here with clubs, with tear gas, with rubber bullets, and kids everywhere...and it's going to be unpredictable.

“
So if we're talking about contradictions, I've been walking on a contradiction since I've been born. We all have.
”

So how do you feel gracing the exact same stage with kind of completely different messages?

I feel that [conflict] every time I step on this ground and I'm walking on a grave. This is the Land of the Free, we were just talking about that. I mean you pay for freedom. You know. But the you in America hasn't paid for freedom. America...this corporation, took a group of people and said we're going to create this so-called freedom and we're going to make them pay for it. And then we're going to torture them for hundreds of years and then we're going to get politically correct and turn that torture into something that can be done without being criticized.

Because we were so good at hiding it and we're so good at making it...You know what I mean like. But this is the Land of the Free.

It's like an ecosystem — there's violence in an ecosystem.

And that freedom that exists in the wild is paid by everything in the wild, but that's not how it works here. So if we're talking about contradictions, I've been walking on a contradiction since I've been born. We all have.

You can't ignore it. I mean people do, but it's becoming harder and harder.

I'm grateful that other people are able to see what we see every day when we look in the mirror. We're able to see, when other people look at us, we're able to see the communication that we have with people. When people talk to people, it's different when people talk to black people. There's a difference, you know what I mean?

The way that we look, our history, the pain that we've been subject to, the investment in freedom that we've had to make without actually being able to get that product back, we see that every day.

It's not that I'm grateful for the violence, but I'm grateful that people are able to SEE it because when you're able to see it, then you start to dress the wound.

I'm grateful that I'm able to feel, and I think I'm also grateful that I think the numbness that racism awards people outside of — in America, outside of black people — is wearing away. And everybody else is not able to become as numb to it anymore. I'm grateful for that. And I wish everybody's safety and I wish everybody's peace, but peace has a price. You know, I think the most peaceful place is the jungle.

You know because there it's fair. It's not symmetrical, but it's balanced. I think that maybe we'll get into a place where—if everybody is able to feel their weight on the scale—maybe they'll shift to a place where the scales aren't as off.

What about tonight? Do you have any pre-show rituals? Do you get nervous?

I get very nervous, I'm very nervous right now.

How do you manage that?

It's just the reality of it. You know. I get nervous, and then I perform, and then it's over. I try to breathe. Other than that, I mean I try not to do away with it. I don't think the point is to not feel nervous.

I feel like the point is to be able to appreciate that nothing bad is balanced, because nature doesn't do that. Nature does the day/night,

cold/hot, lying down/standing up, inhale/exhale.

Can you talk about your decision to start showing your face more?

I just didn't want to not show my face anymore. I was purposefully trying to highlight something other than my face. And then at the point where I felt like I was hiding my face, I was like the point was never to hide anything, so I decided to highlight the same thing I was highlighting which was trying to highlight my growth through these wave files, through these songs. But to do so without covering my face.

“
The unity is one of the most important things... Nothing can exist without the unity of the things that compose it.
”

Also I think the good thing about not being in front of everything is that it makes it easier for me to establish a sense of community, not just like with my home, but within my work. If I'm not starring in my videos, I have other people who are great actors and great talents who can also show their creativity as well. Yeah. Because the videos are highly creative...and you were a film major so... You know, even in the next project, I'm not in all of the visuals, I'm only in some of them. I think it's good to have community with you. Community is one of the most important things we can have.

Community?

Absolutely. I mean it has “unity” in it. The unity is one of the most important things in the universe, nothing can exist without the unity of the things that compose it.

So I guess on that note, what can we expect for the future from you?

I don't know. You know, I don't expect anything. Just, you know, appreciate what you get.

I'm grateful to be here. I think this is a very important conversation, and I'm honored to be part of it.

small crush

written and photographed by JOHN LAWSON | assisted and styled by LIEYAH DAGAN



Small Crush formed when lead-singer, songwriter, and rhythm guitarist Logan Hammon (age 17, pink hair — now eggshell blue) felt that her band wasn't giving her enough freedom to write her own songs. She took lead-guitarist Jackson Felton (now age 15) and started a new project out of their garage. The duo, started making music inspired by Hammon's voice memos (shared over group text) and titled their group after a self-professed "inability to crush on someone for a long time, so lots of little crushes." Not long after Small Crush's genesis, Hammon and Felton recruited 17-year-old bassist Hank Herbert and 16-year-old Will Scherer from a nearby high school and started playing house shows, coffee shops, and restaurants. The group is multitasking, often switching instruments at practice, and the effect of Hammon's virtuosic lyrical introversion over playful riffs evokes Frankie Cosmos and Waxahatchee. The music seems to be derived from many small crushes, evoking a sincere and intense conviction too often lost in adulthood.

Planning around the band's after-school jobs and football practice, The B-Side caught up with the high schoolers at Hammon's house in San Leandro. They pulled up sipping cans of yerba mate with skateboards and a giant teddybear in the the back of Herbert's CRV.

An unlikely cohesion of seemingly different high school "types," it became quickly evident that their connection extended beyond the stage. They proceeded to sing along to blaring 80's synth-pop in the car (when they said it was their favorite music, I wasn't sure if they were kidding). Naturally athletic Herbert was carrying a 15-year-old Felton on his shoulders before we had time to change the first roll of film. The band concluded our phone interview by playing a completely ad-libbed song.

This October, Small Crush will be releasing a studio EP and playing for their second time at Berkeley's historic 924 Gilman. Read the interview:





B-Side: What's the songwriting process like?

Logan: I mostly write all the songs and give them the lay down.

Will: It usually starts with a voice memo [from Logan's phone].

Logan: And me sending it in the group text... And House Party, which is a four way video chat.

B-Side: The band has been active on Instagram for a while now.

Logan: Instagram has helped a lot with meeting people and connecting. It's so easy to DM people to do shows. Email, Bandcamp, for sure, and we are starting a website soon.

Hank: Most of our newest fans have come from playing with other bands. As we've branched out and started playing with bands in Sacramento and the East Bay like Mt. Eddy and Destroy Boy.

B-Side: So who was the outright hero of the 80's?

Will: Molly Ringwald

Logan: Debbie Harry

Jackson: Prince

Hank: Arnold Schwarzenegger

B-Side: Describe your style in a few words.

Jackson: I've been called mysterious from a lot of kids at school. And I'm kind of a...

Will (interrupting): —heroin addict!

Logan: —white boy

Jackson: ...Meme, but in a good way.

Will: Summer camp, going for a hike.

Hank: Middle-aged white guy.

All (shout): Oakland! Edgy!

Logan: Middle school band student.

B-Side: So, where do each of you see yourself in 5 years?

Will (jokes): A dirty white dude that is also a master drummer.

Jackson: Graduating high school. Still pursuing music.

Logan: Still pursuing music, hopefully touring with this band.

Will: I'm not sure yet about doing sports in college, but then again I still have time.

Hank: Going to a good school (he is graduating this year, but has not heard back yet from colleges), and then opening a combined bagel, music, and flower shop.

HOW TO BE A BAY AREA HIPSTER
HOW TO BE A BAY AREA HIPSTER
HOW TO BE A BAY AREA HIPSTER
HOW TO BE A BAY AREA HIPSTER
HOW TO BE A BAY AREA HIPSTER

jan	FIRE
feb	GIRL
mar	IVY
apr	JUPITER
may	THE
june	LUNA
july	MERCURY
aug	MUM
sep	NEON
oct	PASTEL
nov	SOUL
dec	STAR

A	CAKES
A-	ROCK
B+	STORIES
B	WOLVES
B-	GIANT
C+	VALLEY
C	LIPS
C-	TIGER
D+	LIGHT
D	POWER
D-	MAN
F	RING

PICK YOUR BIRTH MONTH

+

THE GRADE OF YOUR MOST RECENT MIDTERM

=

YOUR OWN INDIE BAND

أم كلثوم

MY ENCOUNTERS WITH Oum Kalthoum

written by MICHAEL ELSANADI

I stand amongst the crowd looking up at the stage. It's 2017, yet, I hear the crackling sounds of an old record seemingly jumpstarting itself to release the voice of beloved Oum Kalthoum.

I find myself lost, continually jumping from place to place, hoping to encounter somewhere in which I can obtain refuge. Music provides me with a refuge that conversely offers complications, pains, and aspirations.

It is not by our hands that we make our misfortune

I sit in front of my computer, ushering it to play me the music I require. The music I desire. The music that offers me an identity. One that tells me who I am through its language, tone, and style. The reverberations of strings transcending both time and place allowing for a development of an identity. However, is the music — and my identity that comes with it — fragile? Non-existent? Simply just air?

I am living between heaven and hell

I am laying in bed listening to Oum Kalthoum. The buoyant flows of the strings and the steady beats of the tabla lull me to a sleep — a sleep not of scenic Arabian nights with flying carpets, but a sleep of fear and anxiety for a Middle East that has been manipulated, twisted and turned, flipped on its head. Chlorine gas, falling statues, government intervention, international intervention. Where do I look? Where do I find comfort?

In Oum Kalthoum's voice I find comfort. Comfort in the images of Pan-Arabism and Arab socialism in a united front against Western manipulation. A united front in which Oum Kalthoum is its cultural head.

Yet in her coalescing voice -- the voice that unites the Arab world -- resounds a tinge of pain. What is it? Disappointment? Detachment? Fame?

Ah. Love.

Your eyes returned me to the days that had gone by

They taught me to regret the past and its wounds

That which I experienced before my eyes saw you

What is the wasted life to me?

Yet love for who? Her country?

Nevertheless, her song continues churning ceaselessly by the fuel of passion. No time for questions.

Relaxing their beat and slowing their strings, the instruments supporting Kalthoum almost anticipate her voice, quieting themselves in the hopes of catching a sound of her song, her pain, her identity.

To the beloved country take me

*My
Passion*

has increased

And the separation

Burns me

On the tails of her flowing dress follows a cultural renaissance that has supposedly reached a halt with the coming age of "savagery." Cries of war and claims of terrorism have subsumed any representation of Middle Eastern cultural expression within the dominant Western narrative, leaving those inhabiting the Middle East to affirm and assert their identity with only whitewashed, stereotypical trails of culture and identity breaking through the dominant discourse.

Oh!

Traveler

On the Nile River

Appropriation is the only effective method for Arab and Muslim culture to enter into the dominant Western world media. I find my identity at the intersection of these fluctuating forces. Jay-Z's appropriative sampling of the legendary Egyptian song "Khosara Khosara" in his song "Big Pimpin'" (1999) provides for an awkward collision between contemporary American music and Egyptian rhythm, which I confide in. These appropriations provided a harmful and reductive Western lens into my culture that (unfortunately) played an influential role in my upbringing. Offering me a diminished vision and idea of my heritage, the use of Egyptian and Arab music in Western pop culture subtracts its value and significance by carelessly depicting the Arab world as a society in which its only acknowledgeable features are camels and the Pyramids.

I have a paramour in Egypt

It seems as though we all have a paramour in Egypt. Western Orientalist fantasies of Egyptian society provide Westerners with an imagined culture that is simple, exotic, and not threatening. Yet they fear and intimidate those who withhold and support this culture. Agitators of this imperialist vision choose to acknowledge the Middle East's cultural products, but ignore its creators.

At the expense of a diverse or remotely accurate depiction of the Middle East, Western cultural production subjects Arabs and those in the Middle East to two representations: a magical, seemingly harmless and religionless Aladdin type; or a threatening, violent, extremist terrorist. Creators are either depicted as innocuous and naive characters, or are ignored as their complexity contradicts the singular Western narrative regarding the people of the Middle East. The "exotic" beats, chimes, and sounds found in contemporary Western music only further these images and perpetuate the refusal to acknowledge their origins.

His love prevents me the sleep

And yet here I lay restless not because of the love of my country but because of my separation from it. I lay restless not because of a passionate love for Egypt similar to Kalthoum's, but because I find myself stuck within this awkward convergence, thriving at its very apex. Where do I stand? Where do I lie? Do I choose? Have I already chosen? Or is this decision false? Maybe fake? Is it simply just air to which I ascribe an arbitrary identity to?

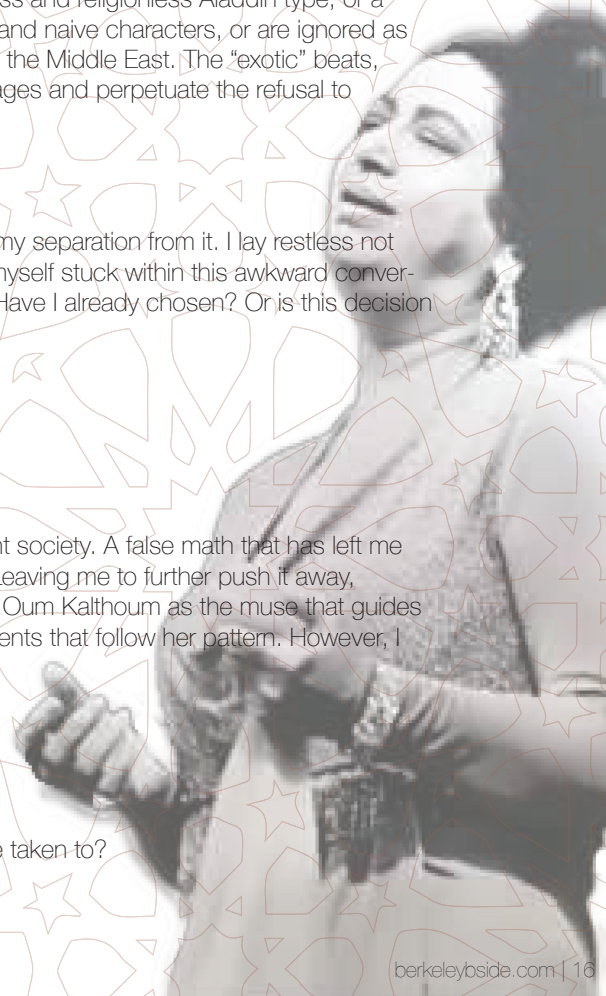
Regardless,

*Here
I
Lie.*

I was taught the math as a child that ancient pyramids + modern society = ancient society. A false math that has left me dismissing my culture and remaining ashamed of its perceived "backwardness." Leaving me to further push it away, leaving me dislocated, misunderstood, upset. Dwelling in this convergence, I find Oum Kalthoum as the muse that guides my diasporic identity, through the whines and wanes of her voice and the instruments that follow her pattern. However, I am still lost.

*To the beloved country
take
me*

She requests. I continually find myself requesting that as well. But where shall I be taken to?





WHY CARDI B STILL NEEDS TO BE CHECKED

written by VERONICA IRWIN
design by FABIHA FAIROOZ

There's no doubt that in 2017, Cardi B is making waves in the hip-hop and mainstream music industries. With her breakout single "Bodak Yellow" peaking at no. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 list, the 24-year-old rapper from the Bronx may seem like an unlikely (and refreshing) candidate to oust Taylor Swift from the top of pop. A strong-minded, black and latinx, sex-positive feminist (she was notoriously a stripper before making it big in the music business), she's also become a favorite of left-leaning social media communities, where she previously dominated for her witty, no-bullshit Instagram videos and tweets. As a musician she's equally impressive — every track slaps, and her lyrical authenticity and gaul is both humorous and inspiring. She is a woman of color who is both speaking her mind and making great music in a generally male-dominated genre — a combination we need to see more of in popular music.

"When a major pop song has underlying or overt themes of sexism, racism, rape culture, it normalizes those things in a public sphere."

However, it's important to check even the pop stars we love (and the people we love) when their comments are insensitive, inappropriate, or downright inexcusable. When a major pop song has underlying or overt themes of sexism, racism, rape culture, it normalizes those things in a public sphere. This similarly applies to stars' statements on social media, and though it's possible to appreciate art separately from the artist, performers should at least be wary of the consequences of their language and actions when speaking from a public platform. The transphobic (and, for lack of a better word, rape-y) Cardi B video that resurfaced on Twitter this summer is thus a vile and intolerable example of a star who needs to be called out.

The video in question was posted to the star's Instagram back in May of 2016, and involves Cardi's advice on getting "even" with a cheating boyfriend — namely getting him excessively intoxicated with a cocktail of alcohol and percocet, and then proceeding to involve him in a threesome with a (and this is the doosie), "tranny." In other words, she says that the ultimate punishment is to weaponize a trans woman and have a threesome with a man who is too intoxicated to consent. When fans re-discovered the video on Twitter in August they were outraged, many saying the star was "cancelled," or in other words, that her career was over.

Her response? Saying the word "tranny" a few more times, telling people to stop being "sensitive" and, at best, saying she was using the transphobic slur before she knew it was offensive. Worst of all was perhaps her interview with Dazed, in which she actually had the audacity to say she was the one feeling "violated," and then continued to shift blame away from herself and onto all the people who were "the real definition of transphobic." As critics shrugged off her description of sexual assault and focused on the transphobic slur, her shallow apologies made no reference to this element of the video at all.

"Cardi's shallow and unapologetic response is a disappointment, especially coming from an artist who is clearly intelligent, talented, and could bring so much good to"

General awareness of identity politics is increasing rapidly, so it might be permissible to forgive and forget Cardi's slip had she expressed any sort of remorse. I also have heard the very valid argument that she deserves the benefit of the doubt, considering her disadvantaged upbringing (she has opened up since about getting kicked out of the house as a minor, struggling to make rent, and frequently finding herself caught up in toxic relationships). These realities considered, however, Cardi's shallow and unapologetic response is a disappointment, especially coming from an artist who is clearly intelligent, talented, and could bring so much good to the industry. Further, her lack of remorse makes me think she might be a ticking PR time bomb — unable to learn from her mistakes or acknowledge the impact of her words, it feels like she might cross another ethical line and actually "cancel" her career any minute.

Commercially, Cardi B has recovered from this embarrassing tirade, supporting Colin Kaepernick in her VMAs performance and publicly condemning Donald Trump on social media. In a way, I still respect the star's unfiltered-ness and can honestly say I would never expect Cardi to do anything artificial for the sake of getting views, likes, or listens. However, her poor response to this video still taints my endorsement and leaves me in a position of moral skepticism about this star's future career.

THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH LIVING LIKE THIS: ON THE ROAD WITH FIDLAR

written by NATALIE SILVER & ROSIE DAVIDOWITZ | illustrated by CAMILIA KACIMI

It's kind of like being a 13-year-old who was dragged to Sunday mass... or a frequenter at sex addicts anonymous meetings... or a customer at Berkeley's iconic adult emporium Good Vibrations... or an inmate... or even a "white nationalist"... unless you're Cole White and company... (Sorry, maybe that was a bad reference? Plus it appears that the Nazis in the Trump Administration seem to have no problem with showing their faces, but I digress...).

Like you kiilllind of don't want anyone to know you're there... but those who do know can see you only because they're there too. There's an unspoken, mutual recognition — a silent camaraderie, if you will — that you're in this together and that you're not going to fucking hold back.

It's August 23rd at the historic Fillmore auditorium — or wait, maybe it's the 29th at The Catalyst in Santa Cruz. I wouldn't know, I was at both. We're STALKING a band frequently referred to as "The Beatles of our generation" on tour (sad, I know) from start to the bitter end. According to their bio "FIDLAR are slackers at heart"; so are we, which is why this piece is six weeks late and more about us than it is about them. So welcome to the schizophrenia and please join us in the experience:

You look around the pit; you're making eye contact. Oh my God, you recognize some of these people. Oh my GOD some of these people were at the show last week.

You can't give 'em shit for wearing Thrasher because you are too... your hair is in boxer braids and your boots are strapped up... you're ready for battle... and when you look them up and down you see that they are too. What does it matter if they're

they're only 15, who cares if you're drunk? You're in the pit and the lights go down... it's a free-for-all, and at this point, it's too late to question why you're there in the first place.

I look at Rosie — B-Side PR nut, ironic t-shirt enthusiast, co-visionary of the piece you're reading and are probably going to falsely take seriously, and the only other person in this publication who consistently shows up 15 minutes late to every editorial meeting. I look around... we're in a sea of black Vans and blue hair and "Fuck Trump"



attire, and for the night, we're in our fucking element.

Next thing you know, the place goes black and the band takes the stage and then that dark, uncannily familiar baseline creeps on you. It's in the key of, I don't know, A flat? And all of a sudden there's someone else's beer in my eyes and OH MY GOD IT'S SABOTAGE.

The song ends. It's madness. I'm already missing a shoe. The nine-foot-tall guy to my right turns around and addresses the rest of the pit with the line of the night:

"Now THAT was SO FUCKIN' CLICHÉ... yeeeeeee-HAW!!!!!!!"

Wait...what? And then it hit me...

I dissociated for a hot second and saw myself, my dear friend Rosie and a thousand other lost souls unemployed (yes, I quit my job that day — via email, like a rock star), out of school (yes, I also officially withdrew from school that same day), single as fuck (no, Rosie and I are not dating...yet) as pseudo-punk, belated angst, college dropouts somehow mildly fulfilling the FIDLAR prophecy — an experience that was ... well, for lack of a better term, dripping in clichés.

If I told you that by the end of the night I'd be in a stranger's car (a 1995 scrap metal Porsche with a shattered left blinker and ancient cigarette burns on the ceiling), with a bloody ear, a swollen lip, a snapped bra strap, a missing shoe, and a small smudge of human fecal matter on my ripped jeans (an unfortunate and predictable result of the band's request for everyone to sit down in the pit... and the result of either the questionable hygiene habits or the next-level dedication to the mantra "fuck it dawg" of the girl who sat on me), a destroyed pedicure, whole body bruises and

an abrasive, quasi-political shirt with the word "FUCK" on it that either smells like beer or beer vomit (unclear which at this point)... would that not be the most unbelievably cliché thing of all time?

Would you BELIEVE me?

Would you still READ me?

When I'm 64 stereotypes in?

So there I am, virtually living the FIDLAR truth. I'm part of this mass body, this angry mob, this over-zealous and hyperactive jackrabbit of an audience, feeling part of something, blah, blah blah. And the entire time, I'm thinking to myself...is it the music or is it the crowd I came for?

And now I'm freaking out more....am I THAT SELFISH? They clearly paid their dues years ago, but am I selfish for wanting an even crazier show?

In a way, the show felt kind of mass produced. For a fleeting second, four words — representing a more solemn rock and roll cliché — crossed my mind: SOBER AND OVER IT.

"I am on the face of this Earth to stalk cult bands into oblivion, over-write the shit out of them so that no one knows if I'm being sarcastic or not, and self-promote along the way..."

The band infamous for untamed, coked-out, savage shows, the band that planted the seed, planted the speed, self-destructed in a hot flash to the top...has somehow managed to transfer this energy to the body of their fanbase, which has grown and evolved to carry on that legacy.

I've moshed at big shows and small shows, under great bands and trash bands...I've done the barefoot festival mosh, the drunk high school girl mosh, and the pre-pubescent boy mosh...I've been the fox in the safe space Gilman mosh and the rabbit in the uber-violent, hyper-masculine pit at Social Distortion — I've done it all.

It's impossible to explain the irresistibility of FIDLAR because, on paper, they shouldn't be irresistible at all. There's no obvious reason that a three-chords-and-the-truth-band, co-opting Blink 182 riffs and blazing through almost every song (at least on the live playlist) with short, fast power chord combinations in a masturbatory rhythm, should be so pleasant to listen to.

Maybe it's the lead guitar filler and solos, or the strangely melodic songs and undying tenacity in between every note, or their celebration of universal truths all over the country, or maybe it's the hyper-engaged, yet slightly self-deprecating stage presence, or the brutally honest lyrics about drug and alcohol-induced oblivion that are touching but also somehow hilarious.

At this point I'm torn and frayed, tender and bruised, broken and scarred... yet I'm still going to Santa Cruz on Monday. Do I want to? Not really. Do I have a choice? Also no.

It all became clear to me during a recent conversation with my buddy, God. She told me: "Look man, everyone is on this Earth for a reason. I know you WANT to, like, fight systemic racism, personally ruin Donald Trump's life, and be the next Angela Davis or some shit... but you can make the world a better place and FIGURATIVELY accomplish ALL OF THAT with the tools I'm about to give you."

Then she gifted me a case of Natty Light, a degenerate friend named Rosie, fluency in and mastery of the the uber-pretentious indie voice, and the lyrics to "Stoked and Broke," and I haven't looked back.

It all became clear to me during a recent conversation with my buddy, God. She told me: "Look man, everyone is on this Earth for a reason. I know you WANT to, like, fight systemic racism, personally ruin Donald Trump's life, and be the next Angela Davis



or some shit....but you can make the world a better place and FIGURATIVELY accomplish ALL OF THAT with the tools I'm about to give you."

Then she gifted me a case of Natty Light, a degenerate friend named Rosie — have ya heard of her? — fluency in and mastery of the the uber-pretentious indie voice, and the lyrics to "Stoked and Broke," and I haven't looked back. I am on the face of this Earth to stalk cult bands into oblivion, over-write the shit out of them so that no one knows if I'm being sarcastic or not, and self-promote along the way... ultimately changing the world one column for the B-Side — THE PREMIER music magazine of THE NUMBER ONE public university in the world — at a time.

"It's impossible to explain the irresistibility of FIDLAR because, on paper, they shouldn't be irresistible at all."

Though I sustained physical injury, justified the initial experience, and paid my dues by attending the show at the Fillmore, and though it seemed excessive, over the top, pointless, redundant to go again, when it came down to it, all I had to say is:

Fuck it dawg, life's a risk.



EPILOGUE: ALL MY FRIENDS ARE PIECES OF SHIT

I, Rosie Davidowitz, am writing this epilogue because Natalie was afraid of the apparent shame and embarrassment that would follow if she wrote this entire piece by herself. I, on the other hand, am not ashamed of my love for FIDLAR. I refuse to deny the life-changing spiritual experiences FIDLAR has allowed me to embark on. I also want my mother to see what I've become and see my words in print, but Natalie threatened to take my byline away "if I didn't contribute more than just roasting her in the footnotes."

If you want to hear about what happened at Santa Cruz without all of her bullshit, keep reading.

0. After rushing to get to Santa Cruz on time, Natalie and I decide to park my car "a safe distance" from the Catalyst, so that her image is protected. This is funny to me because she's wearing a Janis Joplin shirt, so I consider her image already compromised. We wait in the car for half an hour because we want to look cool enough to miss the opener — we want to look like we don't care. This is funny because we obviously care — I'd argue that we even care too much. I'd like to remind you that we drove over three-hours round trip for this shit.

2. A belligerently drunk dude wearing all black and a studded belt (shocker) cuts the entire line to the women's bathroom and blindly stumbles headfirst into a stall. I see him as an unintentional warrior in the gender neutral bathroom movement. I'm into it; The revolution starts at home. And yes, my home is a FIDLAR concert. FIDLAR is my home.

666. Next thing you know, the place goes black and the band takes the stage and then that dark, uncannily familiar baseline creeps on you. It's in the key of, I don't know, A-flat?, and all of a sudden there's someone else's beer in my eyes and

OH MY GOD IT'S SABOTAGE.

5. Fast forward an hour into the show... we need water because we are wholesome young posers who moshed a little too hard. Plus, I'm out of shape. LITTLE DID WE KNOW that The Catalyst makes you pay two bucks for a bottle of water if you want to continue, you know, LIVING at their shows. Unfortunately for anyone miraculously still reading this piece, we survived. But we survived TO CALL THE CATALYST OUT. YOU HAVE BEEN CALLED OUT. YOU ARE THE CAPITALIST ANTITHESIS TO REAL DIY SPACES WHICH IS OBVIOUS BECAUSE YOU DON'T GIVE OUT WATER. YOU'RE LUCKY WE DIDN'T GIVE THIS PIECE TO ROLLING STONE, CALLED OUT. And we only didn't give this piece to Rolling Stone is because we're not, ya know, capitalist sellouts.

5. We were there and we were sober. Because we had to drive home and because we wanted to experience what it would be like to go to the show if we were someone like, I don't know, the slightly more mature Editor In Chief of The B-Side — which by the

way is the PREMIER music magazine of the NUMBER ONE university in the world¹⁰ — Sofia Duarte (who would never dare cover a show drunk. This is serious business). Plus, we figured if Zac Carper can get sober, we can be sober for ONE show.

69. Soaked in sweat, we drive home listening to FIDLAR, because it's FIDLAR or silence, and then we worked on this piece for like a month and didn't tell anyone we went to either show because we (Natalie) were ashamed.

7. As we write this (Natalie being my scribe, writing down the words I say I as I drink a warm PBR) Natalie says: "Do you think we should add a line about how your piece is more succinct because you're still in school and I'm not and all I have to do is listen to FIDLAR and over-write these shitty, whiny, self-indulgent pieces?"

EPILOGUE TO THE EPILOGUE:

Fast-forward — it's a month after FIDLAR, and Natalie and I feel lost. We've undeniably peaked, and we aren't sure where to go from here. We fill our time by reciting FIDLAR lyrics in a cult-like fashion. We find ourselves quoting FIDLAR in inappropriate social situations, constantly reminding ourselves of the fact that life can only go downhill from here. We go to parties solely for the purpose of stealing an aux cord and forcefully playing "Max Can't Surf" (subsequently getting kicked out of the only parties we've been invited to this Fall, and simultaneously starting rivalries with 2 of UC Berkeley's douchiest fraternities). We pray; we pray more than we've ever prayed in our entire lives that someday we will have the opportunity to find ourselves at a FIDLAR show again (literally in the physical sense, as well as emotionally in the "I literally don't know how to deal with these withdrawals and need to feel full again sense"). A note for Zac, Max, Elvis, and Brandon: if you're out there, we just want to say thanks. And we're both single.



FRANK OCEAN

the most subtle icon of the contemporary moment

written by ANTHONY VEGA | artwork by MEL LOPEZ

Frank Ocean is hardly the traditional celebrity. In an age where the internet dominates the media and technology is more than accessible, it is now simpler than ever for figures in popular culture to be the subject of media attention. Our guy Frank, on the other hand, consistently embarks on extended hiatuses from the public eye and strays away from social media altogether. These days, even his shirts seem to do more talking than he does.

Ultimately, his enigmatic presence has, in part, ensured that he has become one of the most compelling superstars of today. As he remains out of the spotlight, people seem to want to pinpoint his every move that much more. Hordes of youths tune into his sporadically-distributed — and now seemingly defunct — Blonded Radio on Apple Music, during which he often releases new singles. In the summer of 2016, the world stopped to watch the black-and-white livestream that was mysteriously placed on his website preceding the release of his visual album, *Endless* (2016).

“Frank is able to find beauty in subtlety like no one else in recent memory.”

Perhaps the most prominent example comes in the form of the Subreddit r/FrankOcean, which is the most popular and impassioned platform for Frank Ocean fans. Here, fans fetishize him in every way imaginable, from tracking all news and public sightings to sharing and selling their own Frank-related art, straight down to identifying the pieces of clothing he wears. I think it’s fair to say the man is well-sought-after.



You can probably imagine, then, just how desperately fans yearned for and theorized about his return when he downright disappeared for nearly four years after the release of his Grammy-winning commercial debut, *Channel Orange* (2012). During this period, barring a few instances, we couldn’t get so much as a peep out of him, let alone new music. His anonymity frustrated fans and listeners without end, such that, by the time he returned in 2016

with two consecutively-released surprises, *Endless*, followed by *Blonde* (2016), it had already become utterly transparent that Frank enjoys his privacy. And that’s an understatement.

However, with the aforementioned *Blonde*, a deeply personal, boundary-pushing, idiosyncratic account of his struggle with identity, Frank, with themes of heartbreak and individuality, offered his audience one of the only

glimpses into his personal life that we have to date. His soft-spoken, yet beautifully powerful, vocals and lyrics are given center stage, as he belts over a set of sparse, minimal instrumentals. Through its astonishing means of storytelling, the project displayed that Frank is able to find beauty in subtlety like no one else in recent memory. It seems as though, after four long years, he fully intended to let the music do all of the talking. Fans are now more sure than ever that he prefers this approach rather than any form of interview or social media outburst.

Still, Frank does make the occasional appearance on social media, specifically through his Tumblr, which, besides his private Instagram, is the only known official Frank Ocean account. When he does materialize his thoughts on Tumblr, it is often because he has some insight to share with the world. And he does so in the most elegant of ways — seriously, the guy can make anything he does look like a masterpiece. In 2016, he made a post where he essentially ripped the Grammys to shreds, pointing out how outdated they are and how less and less people are seeing them as a credible program. When he felt they were not fairly representing African American artists — in his post, he uses the moment Taylor Swift's 1989 (2014) won Album of the Year over Kendrick Lamar's To Pimp a Butterfly (2015) as corroboration of this — he decided to pull Blonde from the running and not to perform at the show. Following the 2016 shooting at Pulse, a gay nightclub in Orlando, Frank made a post in which he addressed the tragedy by poetically relating it to his first experience with homophobia, which came from his own father when Frank was only six. In 2016, he dedicated a monologue to the death of one of his idols, Prince. He also called out Donald Trump both pre- and post-election, which is always a good look. Hell, even when he uses Tumblr to talk about porn it's interesting.

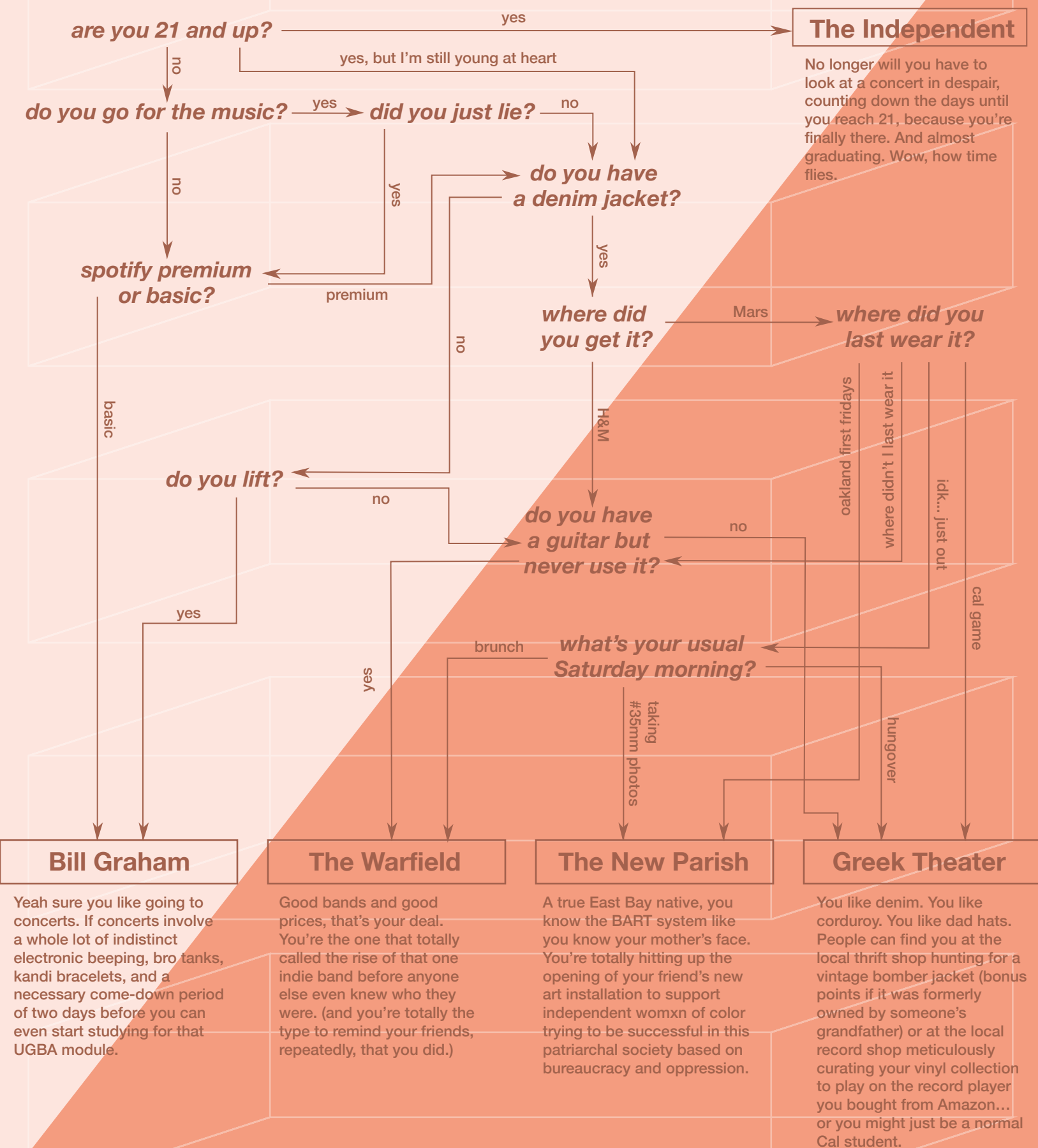
Most influentially though, in tandem with the release of Channel Orange in 2012, Frank boldly and wholeheartedly issued an open letter about his first love being a man. And what a groundbreaking moment this has proved to be for pop culture, and for hip-hop specifically. Though Frank is not quite part of the realm of rap in the traditional sense, as he is not a definitive rapper, the former Odd Future stand-out has absolutely paved the way for a more accepting community in hip-hop, a scene that

has historically been sullied by hyper-masculinity and homophobia. He's created a lane for openly queer rappers, like Kevin Abstract and Tyler, the Creator, to be accepted — even embraced. Even in the case of someone like Young Thug, who doesn't identify as queer, we see that, in a post-Frank-outing era, rappers, even the ones that are supposed gangbangers, can now be put on pedestals for challenging masculinity. For taking such a massive step in the right direction within the world of contemporary rap and continuing to be a beacon for queer people, it seems like Frank's name is thrown out there and honored by some at nearly every queer holiday, like with the recent National Coming Out Day on October 11.

***“an icon whose art
will transcend far
beyond his life, a
real mastermind of
this generation”***

Frank's overall prowess and influence as an artist is up there with the likes of Kanye West and Kendrick Lamar in today's industry. Everything he does, no matter the medium, is of the utmost sincerity, effort and excellence. I mean, the guy learned how to build an entire wooden staircase for his visual album, which he released just a day before his immensely-anticipated studio album. During the four years he was gone, he documented his life and turned his experiences into the most sentimental and highest quality magazine I've ever owned. At FYF, he brought Brad Pitt on stage to do a skit — yes, he had world-famous Brad Pitt do a skit. In the same light, he had Beyonce, of all people, do backup vocals for the track “Pink + White” without even crediting her with a feature, which is as much a subtle flex as it is an artistic decision. He took acid when making the music video for “Nikes” so that he could better convey the slurred party vibe he was going for with the visuals and cinematography. He's created some of the best bodies of music I've ever heard, Blonde being my favorite album of all time. On all accounts, I consider Frank Ocean to be an icon whose art will transcend far beyond his life, a real mastermind of this generation. He is, after all, “one of the best alive.”

WHICH BAY AREA VENUE SHOULD YOU GO TO?



XXXTENTACION CAN'T KEEP GETTING AWAY WITH IT

written by ADIL SIDDIQEE
design by FABIHA FAIROOZ

Perhaps no newcomer has made waves in the hip-hop world like XXXTentacion has in the past year. Perhaps no artist has succeeded commercially in trap rap, house, electropop, and indie folk like XXXTentacion has in the past year. And perhaps no provocateur has enthralled and inspired white teenage suburbanites everywhere like XXXTentacion has in the past year -- or since Tyler, the Creator was rapping about raping girls regularly.

Once this has been established, what's left of XXXTentacion? What's left is Jahseh Onfroy. What's left is a teenager charged with aggravated battery of a pregnant woman, domestic battery by strangulation, false imprisonment, and witness-tampering. What's left is a homophobic, misogynistic, attention seeking edgelord divided on whether he wants people to feel sorry for him or stand in awe of how quasi-woke he is

“But even if we did turn a blind eye to XXXTentacion’s persistent sociopathy -- as his equally nihilistic fanbase does -- the “art” is narcissistic, shallow bullshit.”

And somehow, what's left is the overwhelming support of thousands worldwide. XXXTentacion takes instrumentals, lies about producing them, and is praised for his artistry. XXXTentacion beats people after stealing their money, uses the incident's photo as album art, and receives millions of listens. XXXTentacion steals art from his fans, uses it as merch, and is voted in as part of XXL's Freshman Class of 2017. He abused his girlfriend within an inch of her life, locked her in a room, and threatened to kill her -- but his repeatedly delayed trial lets fans pretend it couldn't have happened.

XXXTentacion can't keep getting away with it. The list is far too long, the offenses are far too grave.

Apologists of any ethically problematic musician love to preach “appreciate the art, not the artist.” But even if we did turn a blind eye to XXXTentacion's persistent sociopathy -- as his equally nihilistic fanbase does -- the “art” is narcissistic, shallow bullshit. Sometimes, it isn't even his. His first song, “vice city,” notes on SoundCloud that production was handled by a “chriskentt & xxxtentacion”. It wasn't, it was a beat posted on YouTube by user

Canis Major. “Carry On”, off of 17 (2017), currently has 5 million views on YouTube. The exact same beat was dropped earlier by SoundCloud user Ari Bradshaw.

Thematically, the edgy provocation been done before -- think Tyler, the Creator during the *Bastard* (2009) and *Goblin* (2011) eras, or Eminem circa *The Slim Shady LP* (1999) and *The Marshall Mathers LP* (2000). What these artists have in common is their themes of shock violence, rape, and emotional volatility. Tyler frequently referenced raping women, and Eminem dedicated an entire song to fantasizing about murdering his wife. But references and fantasies are all they have: neither artist has acted upon their ridiculous subject matter, because it's just music. They know it, their fans know it, and given how long it's been since they put it on a record, everyone else knows it, too.

And then you have XXXTentacion. His fanbase is this generation's OFWGKTA (Tyler, the Creator's collective) and Eminem fans: they're excited by the gritty content, and empathize with the weepy garbage. I know this because I was once a high schooler enthralled by Tyler's antics and moved by his emotional vulnerability. The difference is, Tyler was never accused of persistent violent crime, nor was he ever faced with rape and assault charges. The same can't be said about XXXTentacion, who has four arrests detailed on mugshots.com. Under the listed offenses for three photos, such as AGGRAVATED BATTERY WITH A DEADLY WEAPON and HOME INVASION W/FIREARM is a comment along the lines of -- or exactly -- “FREE X.”

He's captured the hearts and minds of adolescent, naive cynics, prepared to jump at his command and defend his behavior with closed ears and screaming mouths. And with the release of his debut 17 -- an absurdly shallow R&B, indie folk album about his depression -- he received cosigns by Kendrick Lamar, Danny Brown, and Lil Uzi Vert among many others. I wonder if they're aware of the things he did before this album came out and changed face from a violent contrarian into a damaged artist. I wonder if they listened to his vocal support of the detractory All Lives Matter movement on “Riot”, where he equated black-on-white crime with white supremacy.

“Listen to this album if you feel anything,” Kendrick wrote in a tweet about 17, “raw thoughts.” I wonder if “feeling anything” includes feeling empathy for the people XXXTentacion has beaten, the artists he has stolen from, and the thousands of fans he has lied to.



AJ, *the One*

written by SHELBY MAYES | photos by MATEO SAVALA
styled by CAMILIA KACIMI | design by FIONA DUERR

A political activist, journalist, revolutionary, visual artist, and rapper, dynamic doesn't even begin to cover it. In an interview with The B-side, we spoke with AJ, the One about her community involvement, her unique perspectives as a young black woman, and her artistic goals and passions which uncover that she's so much more than a rapper.

AJ, the One, a 21 year old rapper from Inglewood, California, is one of eight members in BLK MGK, a hip-hop music collective based in New York City and the Bay Area. She is also the Chair of UC Berkeley's Black Student Union and an Ambassador to Selfology, which is a program dedicated to teaching young black women and girls to understand themselves more.



In addition to that, she is a part of Global Girls Media, which is an organization dedicated to uplifting underrepresented female voices all around the world through journalism and media.

With her most recent single “P4Y,” the song and music video are presented as “a visual reclamation of our sexual identities” according to AJ who wrote and creatively directed the video.

Empowering from beginning to end, one of AJ’s main passions with both this song and all her artistic endeavors is to represent womanhood in a frame that is unapologetic and multifaceted, breaking all barriers and disproving all preconceived notions of what black womanhood is supposed to look like.

How would you describe your style and your music?

As far as clothing goes, I don’t limit myself to the binaries that clothing stores put forth for people. I shop in every section. The kitchen section, the costume section.... But as far as myself as an individual, I think I’m just a super chill person. Overall, my style — I think that whatever other people think is not cool I try to just do it still.

Because that’s limiting. Like double denim... people hate double denim. But I love double denim.

And my music is for women. Period. Everything that I have produced so far musically, has been to empower women in different ways.



Is there a story behind the song “P4Y”?

The chorus came so organically. I was talking to my friend and I was hurt about something or another or someone was doing something to me. And you know I was venting to her and she’s just going back at me like “fuck these niggas this pussy don’t pop for them” and I was like “whoa what did you just say?” and she was like “this pussy don’t pop for them?” and I was like “I got a beat my nigga. Watch this.” The next week I had “P4Y” the song. So it came very organically; it wasn’t a specific situation. It was an overall conversation about how we’re being treated as women by men. It was a conversation that ended up as a really bold statement that turned into a song and an anthem.

Can you tell us more about your involvement in the collective BLK MGK?

We started off as a group of friends that created together and we decided to put a name to it and start branding ourselves. So that’s kind of how it started. Very naturally and organically. I love all women, but black women are my main concern.

How does your community involvement shape and affect you and your artistic projects?

I feel like every time I’ve entered a social justice space with black people I’ve always gravitated towards the other artists in the room. We would just gather naturally.

I think that my community work is my artistry since so much of my art is inspired by my ancestors and the things that they used to do: Oscar Micheaux, Ida B. Wells, Eartha Kitt. These people were artists but they were also revolutionaries. Seeing how they had it much harder than I do as far as violence and systemic oppression goes. They hella inspire me to be the best artist I can be.

If you could tell young black women everywhere one thing what would it be?

I would tell a young black woman to look at her body, look at her face, look at everything, and understand that she is fucking beautiful. I think one of my downfalls in my youth was thinking that I was supposed to look a certain way. I want black women and girls to know and realize that they don’t have to do any fucking thing that is not themselves.



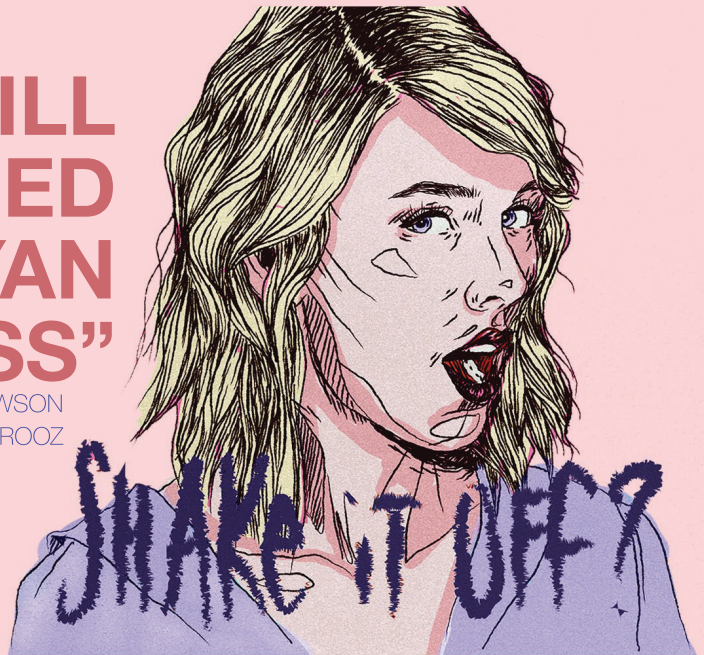
A woman with long, light-colored braids stands on a rooftop. She is wearing a white crop top, a dark blue jacket, and blue shorts with white stripes. She is looking directly at the camera. The background shows a cityscape with houses and palm trees under a clear sky. The entire image is framed by a thick orange border.

**“fuck these niggas this
pussy don’t pop for
them”**



TAYLOR SWIFT STILL HASN'T DENOUNCED BEING AN "ARYAN GODDESS"

written by JOHN LAWSON
design by FABIHA FAIROOZ



In the wake of a disastrous new presidency, the seemingly regular murders of black unarmed civilians by law enforcement, and the televised rise of a white supremacist "movement," political unrest has simply become part of the way we experience media. In 2017, it's commonplace, even expected, for pop idols to use their clout and art to express their values. Yet around the top of the charts, an eerie silence has begun to pervade the airwaves.

Yes, Taylor Swift has been claimed as a white supremacist icon — so is it okay to just "Shake it off?"

Infamously closed-lipped on every single civil-rights issue that has happened since her teen breakout "Our Song," Swift is usually a political non-entity — unless the stakes are low and there are clear promotional benefits. She has her own strain of white-girl feminism, rooted in a less-than-radical "hope that women and men will have equal rights and equal opportunities." Fans will tell you that she is an inspiration for young women and I'm not going to argue otherwise, but there is a sanitized nature to Ms. Swift's activism.

"Yes, Taylor Swift has been claimed as a white supremacist icon — so is it okay to just 'Shake it off?'"

The closest we got to an overtly political statement was last November, when Swift posted an Instagram picture encouraging fans to vote (note that her social media accounts have since been cleared in a promotional "stunt" for her new album), but never gave a clear verdict on who her ballot was for. And yes, after the conclusion of March's Women's March Taylor dropped a noncommittal "Proud to be a woman" tweet and stuck an indirect LGBT shoutout into chart-topper "Welcome to New York." But if those are powerful political statements then our political climate is a whole lot tamer than I thought it was.

Now, I'm not insinuating that Taylor Swift is a neo-Nazi, nor do I really think that she voted for Trump. But there is something to be said for the fact that her commercially-sound apoliticism made the pop star a perfect target for white supremacist trolls because they knew that she would never deny their allegations. To do so could turn away fans, seem opportunistic, or otherwise hurt PR in a whole list of unpredictable ways. So how exactly did White Supremacists target this unlikely chart topper?

It started in 2013 when a teenage girl named Emily Pattinson (@poopcutie) went viral after Buzzfeed published her Pinterest memes that falsely attributed Hitler quotes to Taylor Swift. The aftermath was a sharp rise in activity from both sides of the, for lack of a better term, political Pinterest spectrum. Some christened memes that turned the weird phenomenon on its head (T-Swift quotes on photos of Hitler), while others brewed content which we would now attribute to "alt-right" or "white nationalist" or "white supremacist" groups depending on your political affinity. At the time, most of us would probably dismiss this seemingly insignificant clickbait clash with an eye roll. But then Trump got elected and everything changed — retrospectively, @poopcutie's memes could be seen as the first sparks in a dark new trend.

Flash forward to August 2017, about half a year into the new presidency. Taylor released single "Look What You Made Me Do," and Breitbart (Trump advisor Steve Bannon's brainchild and the self-professed "platform for the alt-right") started rattling off lines from the song on Twitter, ostensibly legitimizing years worth of internet garbage circulating from the laptops of white supremacist internet trolls. If that connection is not convincing enough, see Breitbart's article from last May, bluntly titled: "Taylor Swift is an Alt-Right Icon."

This connection, though shocking at first, has since been beat to death in the news cycle. Though a countless number

of major outlets have reported on the issue, including NPR and The Washington Post, Taylor Swift Incorporated has remained disconcertingly silent in denouncing the allegations. In fact, the closest thing we have seen to any sort of denial is a personal letter from T. Swift's lawyer, J Douglas Baldrige, sent to teenage @poopcutie in 2013 regarding the Hitler memes:

"Public figures have rights. And, there are certain historical figures, such as Adolf Hitler, Charles Manson and the like, who are universally identified in the case law and popular culture as lightning rods for emotional and negative reaction."

**"Taylor Swift is an alt-right icon"
– Breitbart**

To paraphrase, Taylor Swift's lawyer is saying she shouldn't be associated with nazis because Hitler is "identified" by the public for being unpopular and hurting feelings. He could have just said, "try again, but pick someone that's not the archetype of dictatorship and genocide — it just doesn't sell." Swift's political and moral credibility are becoming as scarce as the content on her wiped social media accounts.

I'm not asking for a political manifesto, nor do I really care who she voted for after she posted her infamous photo from the election line. But when a growing hoard of neo-Nazis co-opt you as a bastion of white supremacy you should at the very least denounce their claims if you're not a white supremacist yourself. Because, Taylor Swift, we are all starting to wonder,



RECORDS WORTH SAVING

article and photos by CIRCE AMENT
design by FABIHA FAIROOZ

arctic
mon

OTIS REDDING THE DOCK OF THE BAY

MONO
HI-FIDELITY

180-GRAM VINYL

FEATURING:
"(SITTIN' ON) THE
DOCK OF THE BAY"
AND "TRAMP"

RHINO

0 81227 95639 6



It was approximately 4:00 a.m. on October 8th when Andrew Droulette woke to his panicked girlfriend and the fire alarm screaming from the kitchen. He sleepily peered out the second story window to see tall flames licking the side of his home and his neighbour's house completely engulfed. Immediately after dashing across the hall to wake his friend and housemate, Andrew heard pounding at the front door. Thinking it might be the fire department, he ran down to let them in, but it wasn't them: It was John Burbank, a close friend of Andrew's who had been awake when the fire started and noticed its proximity to Andrew's home. He had arrived just in time to rush up the stairs with Andrew and help him grab three boxes of records and a guitar.

The four of them made it out, unharmed, running toward their cars with little time to look back on the horrific sight. John drove off in his car and Andrew jumped into his own, still barefoot. He sped away with his records, a guitar, and his life.

“He sped away with his records, a guitar, and his life.”

It was the now infamous Tubbs Fire which took Andrew's home, as well as 6,800 other structures. Thousands of families were displaced and fifteen lives lost. Tubbs Fire now ranks most destructive in California's history. It is heartbreaking to see people wandering among the piles of stone, ash, and debris from their Sonoma and Napa County homes. However, the fire also inspired an abundance of compassion and strength within the North Bay communities. Many businesses and people have stepped up to the plate to offer refuge and support to the now homeless families.

Andrew was outfitted in entirely donated clothing from one of the many disaster relief centers in Sonoma County. Sporting a jersey which reads 'Nothing 2 Lose' on the front and 'Everything 2 Gain' on the back, Andrew exhibits a sense of humor about his new state of affairs. In this context, the jersey bitterly comments on the quandary he and thousands of other Sonoma and Napa county inhabitants now face.

In the cozy, friend-filled house, we settled on the living room floor with beers in hand while we shuffled through the vinyl. He first pulled from the boxes *L.A. Woman* (1971) by The Doors which marked the beginning of Andrew's record collecting hobby. Growing up in New Jersey, he fondly recalls making long and frequent trips with his friends to The Princeton Record Exchange, an hour from his hometown. Around the age of twenty, Andrew drove across the country and established roots in Santa Rosa. Many of the albums he still has today made that journey with him.

Among the trove of treasures we found Johnny Cash *At San Quentin* (1969) and a *Rage Against the Machine* collection. Digging deeper revealed *The Moment of Truth* (1998) by Gang Starr, *Green Day's Dookie* (1994), three Jim Croce albums, *Mac Demarco's Salad Days* (2014), *Sublime* (1996) by Sublime, *The Black Keys' Rubber Factory* (2004), *Illmatic XX* (1994) by Nas, *Cream's Wheels of Fire* (1968), and *Otis Redding's Dock of the Bay* (1967). As the evening wore on, friends in other rooms paused their conversations and gathered around us. We watched Andrew pull out record after record with a big grin on his face. At one point he declared, “Best Red Hot Chili Peppers album ever!” as he pulled *Blood Sugar Sex Magik* (1991) from a box. He announced that he owns every Elliott Smith album ever and reminisced about finding *Carole King's Tapestry* (1971) album in a small shop in the nearby town of Guerneville. It was evident why Andrew chose to save his albums — they have the ability to evoke powerful emotions. With every record he uncovered, his eyes lit up and he shared some little anecdote or fact.

When we began our examination we took care to organize them in neat piles — but by the end of our conquest, records were strewn around the living room. Now decorating the floor was the artwork of many excellent artists and groups by the likes of *Immortal Technique*, *MF Doom*, *Wu Tang Clan*, *Black Moon*, *Billy Joel*, *Jack Johnson*, *Kurtis Blow*, *Black Market*, *Bruce Springsteen*, *Mike Pinto*, and more.

The night was a grand display of the power of a tangible record collection. It turned a dispersed get-together into a cohesive group, all engaging with it, picking up and playing albums, admiring the cover art, and enjoying Andrew's stories. Record collections are a highly personal thing, especially ones collected over the course of one's life. It becomes an anthology of memories attached to the various songs and artists giving it immense intangible value.

Many of us have at one point or another considered what we might grab in the midst of a natural disaster — Andrew chose his immensely sentimental record collection. And, though he regrets not being able to grab any old photographs of friends and family, he doesn't feel that he chose wrong.





