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hey everybody...
Let's make!
a zine!

WEST 23RD STREET & ELSEWHERE

VOL. 1, NO. 1
NUMBER 1

a family-friendly invitational zine

ISSUE #7: ZINE 'EM IF YOU GOT 'EM

Seven years of very good luck has resulted in yet another issue of this zine that I love so much. We had to get this done a couple of months early due to Zine Fest Houston rescheduling from November to September. My deepest gratitude to those who contributed to make it all possible.

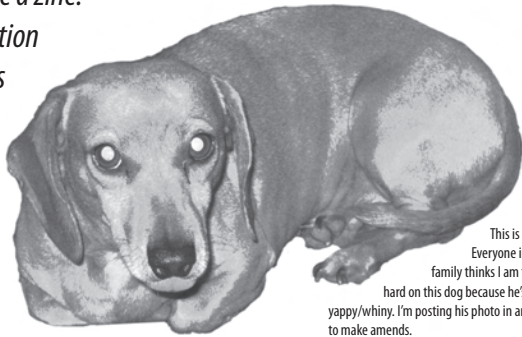
Patrick Brooks

Editor

hey everybody... Let's make a zine!

A West 23rd Street Production

9/2/2019 • Houston, Texas



This is Paco. Everyone in my family thinks I am too hard on this dog because he's super yappy/whiny. I'm posting his photo in an attempt to make amends.

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<http://west23rdstreet.com>

Shane Patrick Boyle (1969-2017)
Vivit in aeternum facundi Musa

FIVE POEMS

by Anna V Phillips

Festival Fever

Bubbling and buzzing
just under the surface
Edinburgh prepares for the August frenzy.
Expectant tourists roam free and easy.
The city, a stage.
The people, their theatre.

August 2018

From Me to You

Once upon a time I wrote
a letter full of hope.
Today I read you mournful words,
so laden with reproach.
Another day I'll write again,
when we are friends once more.

August 2018

And the Clock Strikes 13

The eleventh hour ticked slowly by.
I watched the hand reach twelve.
I waited with my bated breath -
But there was no 13th chime.

August 2018

Day Dreams

Even in the midst of war, A daydream sidles in -
Perhaps the only way to cope...
Knowing no one wins.

August 2018

Vision in the waves

Is that a face I see
just beneath those lapping waves
that ripple gently, sparkling
as the sun caresses
the cool, vast ocean

Are those eyes I see
reaching out from sleepy waves
That darkly dream of shadows
Wrapping carefully
In a warm protective wish

Is that a mouth I see
sinking with the silky surf
in peaceful reverie, languishing
in the lovely touch
of a goodnight kiss.

Why are you there?
What do you wait in silence for?
this watery lair
you shelter in
so clear, yet undefined

What do you think
looking skyward
catching me
in the forlorn reproach
Of your wide piercing stare

What search has led you to this place
alone, drowning silently
screaming to the stars above
to hear your wave and touch your heart
to let you sleep - deeply.

Do you wait for dawn to shift
and pull you in on the morning tide
to let you rest on golden sands
to breathe fresh air in recompense

What do you want
as you are warmed by the gentle stroke
of the sun as it wakens to feed the day
and you settle, at last,
on firm dry land - home.

August 2008 (Revised May 2019)

HYMN FOR INANNA-ISHTAR

by Faye Neal

Yes sing inanna daughter of the heavens woman of the stars - sing inanna daughter of anu/enki, ishtar, daughter of sumer, sing to us about all the years you have watched over in your sacred temples, tell us about your descent into kur, into the black nothingness of near death and death - of hubris and the flinging of dumuzi your lover into the hands which you so narrowly escaped, tell how you were saved by enki dragging you back to the surface how only he took pity on you, how nobody else had the motivation to come for you, and think that perhaps you had sealed that for yourself sister of the harvest, sister of the rains, have you ever thought, generous and violent ishtar, of what happens to the people you do not favor?

king of kings, hero of heroes, and son of gods, gilgamesh told you his connection with the heavens would be severed - that man had no use for those above him anymore, that humans would be fine on their own, and you, inanna, beautiful and beastlike, when you turned to your silver tongue, wore liquored jewels and dripping gold, and he said NO to you - as nobody had dared - and your insides flared with divine hatred - sending gugalanna, the bull of heaven, downwards to punish him, only to have enkidu, child of clay, born of punishment and destiny,

drive his sword through the barren ribcages of humbaba and gugalanna, and ishtar how you screamed, ishtar how you wept, not tears of sadness, but of wrath, coating your eyes with the fire that would soon kill enkidu for his sins. but was the quarrel ever really about gilgamesh in the first place? tell me honestly - for goddesses never lie - has it ever been about anyone but you?

inanna-ishtar, today i sing because i see you in the morning star; i see you in the glow of my arms and legs and hair at night; i see you holding tight every woman you can find, wrapped around your sisters like a snake; i see you hissing through cans of mace and short knives; i see you loving - not mothering but prospering in the thought of your own beauty; i see you as the one who flirts with danger and sheds light on alleyways i see you in brown-black eyes everywhere every day i see you tricking, scheming, scamming, persuading i see you laughing, shouting, bodice covered in linen like clouds, hands outstretched both to steal and to nurture, laugh like the waves of a newborn monsoon, both exquisite and dangerous, gold-plated eyes, hips of a cuneiform tablet; because ishtar though your name might be buried under layers and layers of rock and carving many of us know as well as you do that you are still among us

FLOWAH

BY oen KENNEDY

Viridescent ravishing Bee
Landing on a flowah
Little legs and face
Seeking out nectar
Pollen gathering collecting
On her body
Growing tiny packets
Surrounding her back knees
Brimming with color life
And sweet ecstasy

Flowah! Flowah!

Ultraviolet Purple-Yellow Aster
Glowing and waiting
Receiving ancient friends
Into the nectar grove
Sending out a lovely flow
Letting the pollen go
Dancing eternal energy
Always creating
Perfect evolution
Unfolding in every

Flowah! Flowah!

MUNKEY

by Sophia Crawford-Vargas



AURAL MENTAL HEALTH

Not too long ago I read about how patients with dementia or Alzheimer's Disease come alive when they hear music from their teenage years. I assume that the neurons of ancient memories are released from catatonic bondage, giving the patient a new sense of well-being.

Extrapolating, I'm supposing that the voices of friends and family from childhood, college and one's early adulthood could have an effect analogous to the experience of patients with dementia: Neurons are aroused from ancient sea beds of memory. There is a mental-health lesson here: we should use our cellphones and routinely ring up friends, siblings, children and class- and bunk-mates from decades past, voices that we would instantly recognize—even from the grave.

I explained all of this to my wife, letting her know that I had found a new reason to listen to what she says: it is good for my mental health. She gave me a look of rebuke and amusement that I would regard listening to her voice as a form of neurological therapy.

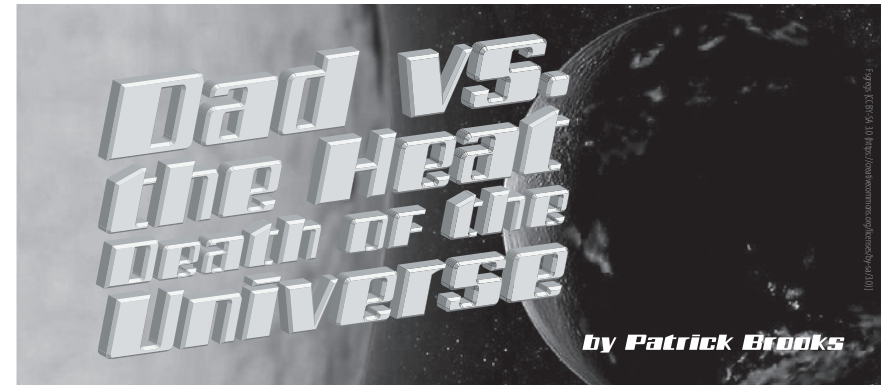
Next day, I called my younger daughter's ex-husband, asking if my grandson who lives two time-zones away in California could come for a summer visit. That night, his mother called me—a rare event. Her voice tight, she informed me that if I were to continue to have any contact with her ex, she would never speak to me again. This unexpected denouement of my phone call to her ex led me to wonder if the music heard by patients with dementia would remind some of them of heart-breaks in high school.

"Donna" would be such a song: Richie Valens is not telling the truth when he laments that his girlfriend left him. The truth is that her Anglo parents didn't want their daughter to have a Hispanic boyfriend.

While, neurologically, I was uplifted by the seldom-heard sound of her voice, I was distraught by what she said. If Richard Valenzuela had not died in that wintry plane crash in 1959, just months before we both would finish high school, he might compose a song about the heart-breaking call from my daughter.

Next day, I called one of my few remaining friends from college, a retired physician. "This is a medical call," I said slyly, as if to suggest that I needed advice about a liver ailment. I went on to explain my new theory of neurological rejuvenation, and after we had talked a while, I said, "so it's not enough to send me emails, you have to also call me from time to time, for the sake of the mental health of both of us." That's how we left things.

George Baker 7/17-18, 2018



One day, when I was 6 or 7 years old, my older brother, Mike, came home from school and was excited to tell me some new science facts he had just learned.

"Hey, guess what? One day the sun is going to blow up into a red giant and it will consume the entire solar system!" I think he thought that was the coolest thing ever. I was horrified because what Mike did not stress at that time was that this was about 7.5 billion years away from the present era. I thought it was imminent in our lifetimes if not next week. "But what's even cooler is that the expansion of the entire Universe will one day slow down until everything is at absolute zero and nothing will ever happen!"

Both of these new facts led me to a profound existential crisis. Everything and everyone I knew were to be consumed by the sun? Beyond that, anything existing anywhere was also going to eventually be impossible? It was a hard concept for me to get my head around.

No family, no pets, no neighborhood, no friends? No G.I. Joe or Major Matt Mason toys? No Beach Boys, Beatles or Herb Alpert & the Tijuana Brass? No Jonny Quest, Thunderbirds, Batman or Lost in Space on TV? For that matter, no TV at all? No Uncle Scrooge, Peanuts or Tintin comics? My entire world as it existed at that age was in peril.

I had to go somewhere alone to have a long, hard think about this new information, so I hiked over to a set of rocks that we played on in a mostly empty section of the camp*. I stayed there a very long time and may have missed dinner. Eventually, my Dad came looking for me, found me, and asked me what the deal was. I explained that Mike told me the sun was going to blow up and consume the solar system. I don't think I bothered to mention the end of the universe.

He replied something to the effect of "Nah. That's not going to happen. Let's go back home." And so we did.

My Dad was not a scientist and I don't think he knew half as much as Mike did about astronomy, physics, or even science in general. He really was unqualified to make such a sweeping dismissal. But at an anxious time for me, he was able to reassure me that everything I knew was not about to end in a fiery explosion or a frozen stasis and for that I was and always will be grateful.

*Note: this narrative takes place in an oil company town in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia



Photo 41752269 © Rawpixelimages - Dreamstime.com

Healthy Almond Milk Turmeric Latte*

Makes 1

- 1 cup of unsweetened almond milk.
- 1 tsp. of turmeric
- 1 tsp. ginger
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 tbsp. coconut oil or coconut butter (optional)
- dash of black pepper (optional)
- pinch of cloves (optional) vanilla (optional)
- optional: 1 tbsp. sweetener of choice (honey or maple syrup)

*If you are new to this type of drink, I would just start off with a few dashes of each: turmeric, ginger, and the cinnamon. As it begins to heat up, taste test and add more if needed!

Directions:

Simmer over medium to low heat for 15 or so minutes. Garnish with dusting of cinnamon.

Notes: The longer it simmers, the stronger the flavor. For unfamiliar taste buds, add a little sweetener



Point Reyes Flora

by Absalom J. Fortescue

Battery, Point Bonita

by Holly Castrillón



THREE POEMS

by Robert Hughes

Lost in 2015

Walking under a morose sky,
Rain dripping from the raincoat visor.
Hand extended to guide and be guided.

But emptiness overwhelms
And in the gloom
The trail is lost and all is lost.

Dolor

I ceaselessly pace my bedroom cage,
Ravaging my books for knowledge.

All I have learned is
Certainty that
Mortality makes all lives tragedies

And the only purpose of life
To make copies of ourselves.

Love

She was scarcely a woman when we met,
In the springtime of our lives.
But we knew we were one
In the springtime of our lives.
As the years sped by with children and work
We didn't know that summer was passing
In the summertime of our lives.
And before we accustomed ourselves to the quiet of our home
It was the fall of our lives.
Then we knew illness heralding our mortality as we grew old in each other's arms
In the wintertime of our lives:
Leaving one dead and the other mortally wounded.

Mermaids

by Sam Miller



OCTOPUS

by David Castrillón



OF Late-Nite Meditations, Screaming Babies, and Severed Dreams

by davis Brooks

My eyes bleary, my mind foggy, my thoughts clouded, I awaken once more to the cacophonous cries of our youngest ward.

Our foster child, ██████████, has had... difficulty sleeping these past few nights. Awakening at three o' clock in the morning has become irritatingly commonplace. However, more than just the insufficient rest my weary adolescent body craves, these disturbances have robbed me of something else.

Normally, I remember nothing of my dreams when I awaken, my drowsing ruminations being lost to me. And yet, this morning, I awoke with the most peculiar sensation. By awakening me, it was as if ██████████ had stolen me away from the theater just as the climactic third act was beginning. I could have told you none of the details of whatever bizarre concoction was fermenting inside my mind, but what did yet remain with me was an odd tingling sensation, the likes of which I experience only when gazing at the surreal.

This sensation only lasted for a few fleeting seconds, and was quickly replaced by disappointment. Whatever was once there had fled, and I was left to enter the waking world alone.

As I write this, it's getting late, and I plan to once more enter the dreamworld. Who knows what awaits me there.

Illustration: *Kevin Hill* at *Art by Thomas* from *Thomas* (2011)



Detail from
Albedo: Number 2
by *Nina Hays*

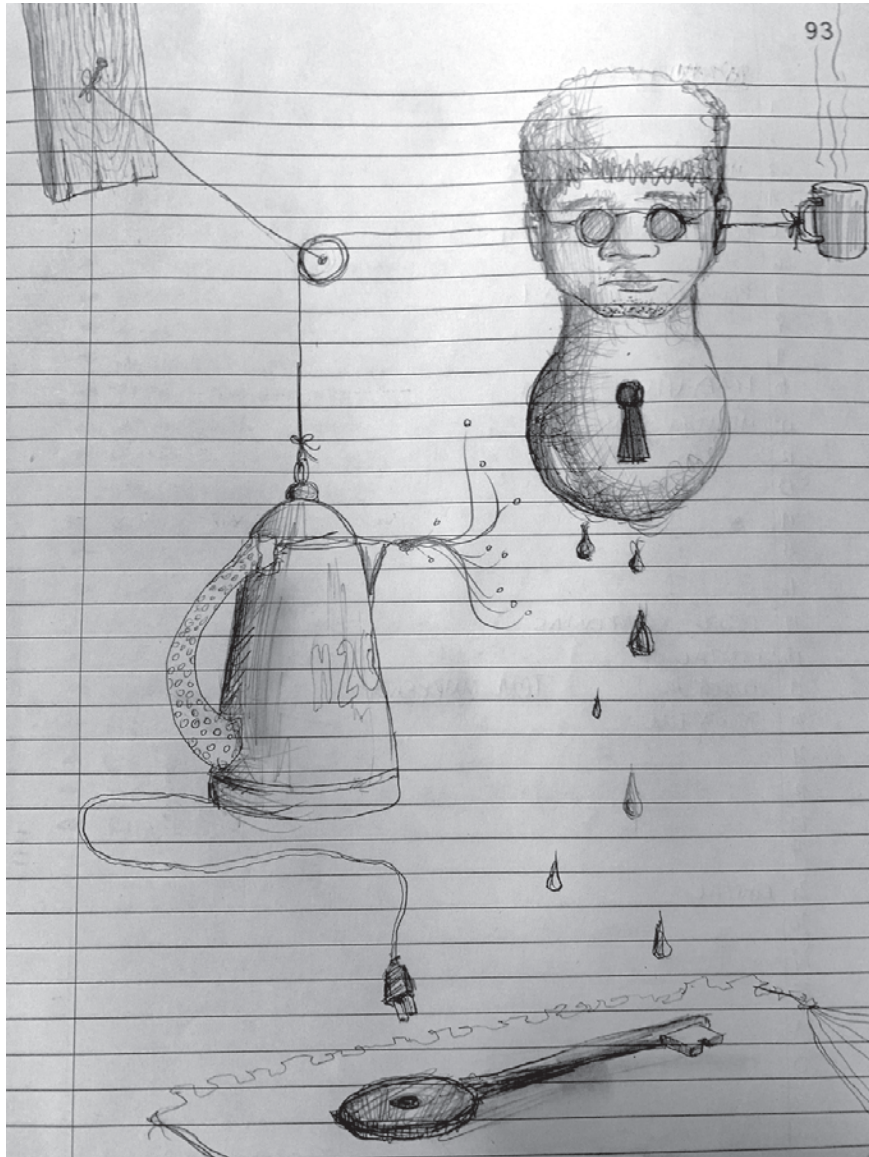
Blue, Blue, ... Red & White for Apathy

by *Hank Lee*

C
omplacency— come & gone
Border, Beware
old campground there
Logan, Brownsville, Del Rio, El Paso
everyone needs a Hero
Actuary, Sanctuary, Dock
Hickory, per square foot
Dickery/web
Ain't no time to go to bed
Hours + hours of last man standing
Children's books are less demanding
Observation, Starvation— Not in your
Grandfather's "Geographic"
Only in Spock's "holographic" is there
Hope for Another Day
May "population growth-zero" be thought about
"Planned Parenthood" never shouts
Never ending, never remembering
old cane poles + corks
Hidden in lakes + streams
odd dusty, dirt road, moments
of freedom + serenity
No developers, or engineers, except on the
Atchison, Southern Pacific, and Santa Fe
Rails + bales, outside the automobile car windows
Old steel bridges, suspiciously suspended in
history & survival
Mounded long-hidden turrets + bunkers from
the 2nd Big War
U-boat plans for Galveston, oh Galveston
Rice fields + cotton and "Stuckies"
"Americana" from the past
"Heroes" deplaning fast in "wastelands" of
tax coverage
Blue, Blue, Red & White for Apathy
As a "crazy man" is trying to make America
Great— again
Don't know much about History or
Algebra books, but don't never need them
if you drop the Bomb first. ★

HOW TO

by Camilo Gonzalez



Olivia's Space Adventure

by Olivia Warmbrodt

Excerpts from my Bicycling Playlist

No-one could ever accuse me of being fast on a bike. When I am riding the MS150 or simply commuting to work, and I want to exceed my normal cruising speed, I've found there's nothing more effective than some banging tunes played on a bike speaker (headphones on a bike are dangerous y'all).

Accordingly, I've arrived at a set of motivational songs that really get my pedal cadence up compared to my riding without them. Not all of these are necessarily songs that I'd want to hear in other contexts. They tend towards somewhat repetitive electronica but other genres are referenced as well. The common denominator is that they feel good to hear while trying to pedal hard.

An additional consideration, given the frequent wind noise that you get while bike riding, is that these songs are in a sonic range that is still very audible – even when your batteries are starting to fade.

Keep Hope Alive – The Crystal Method 125 Beats Per Minute (BPM)

I guess we'll start here. This song utterly captures the feel of the late 90s for me. The beats and various synth stabs are irresistible and induce a pedaling frenzy.

Lego Mars Mission theme – Unknown Artist 125 BPM

The theme from an obscure mid 2000s Lego online game. It is at heart about 90% a rip off of the song above it in this list (Keep Hope Alive). Same basic groove minus the Jesse Jackson quotes (which are not really needed). I hear this song and I'm off to the races. I only wish it ran a bit longer.

Prime Audio Soup – Meat Beat Manifesto 126 BPM

Set me freeeeee! Typical MBM beats and burbles that really get the blood pumping. This is the song I want to play when I retire from my brilliant IT career.

Paid In Full (Mini Madness) [The Coldcut Remix] – Eric B. & Rakim 98 BPM

Yes, The remix by Coldcut has perhaps aged poorly but I still like to get “def with the rekkid” and play this while cycling. Yo, what happened to peace?

Oirectine – Boards of Canada 106 BPM

Perhaps my favorite all time head noddin' BOC release. From early in their career, this captures the essence of what makes BOC great. Simple yet not simplistic. Feels great to hear this on a bike but it's even better on headphones.

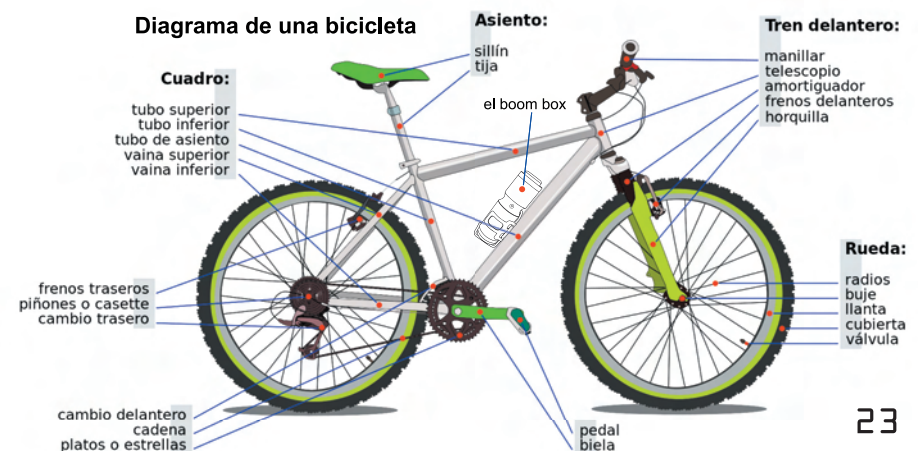
In the city – The Jam 178 BPM & I Live In The City – The Humans 162 BPM

Two classic mod/new wave songs with aggressive delivery on the topic of urban living.

The Good, The Bad and the Ugly – Hugo Montenegro (composed by Ennio Morricone) 116 BPM & Theme from The Magnificent Seven – Los Straitjackets 153 BPM

When you're cycling the backroads from Houston to Austin on an MS150, nothing beats classic western anthems like these two. They work well in an urban context too. I mean this is Texas after all.

—Patrick Brooks



FATHER'S DAY IN THE MAILBOX CEMETERY

Cicadas sing through summer heat.
The grass of this modest cemetery
Was opening itself to settlers' remains
When the land was part of Mexico.

A crowd of friends and family graces this Father's-Day
Anniversary, sharing Blue Bell ice cream and watermelon,
Roane's favorite foods. My nephew's son,
He loved the green mailbox that he helped to paint.

He loved his dogs, Belle and Blue.
Loved the ranch where he lived and died,
Visible from this place.
It is a year since we said goodbye.

A new green mailbox guards the ranch
While the original tops his grave,
Its baby blue coffin buried deep, and on the ground above,
A Tonka truck, a pinwheel, smooth rocks
Painted by other preschoolers.

My nephew's wife greets visitors with a smile.
Her face is stiff with shock recalled, white
And brave. My dad sits on the sturdy new bench
Reading one of the letters that still appear in the mailbox.

In a few months, though none of us can know this,
Dad will join his great-grandson on the boy's birthday.
Now, however, ice cream melts in the Southern summer
Though trees give ample shade in this hollow space.

Grief waxes and wanes.
Cicada song rises and falls.

— *Kimberly Nelson*