

ISSUES

WE'RE BUILDING A TOWER

JANELLA MELE



#104 1/1/26

TRISTAN WAIDEN INTERVIEWS RYAN

**JOURNAL
OF THE
FIFTH
FOUNDATION**

OCI

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POISON

BY ELLA SOLIS

As I inch towards that park bench we once
stood at beneath the towering trees, /
I close the cinch to my drawstring bag as I
pontificate, with judgement,
a power of me- ///
and mine/
Ash's flawed design /
shows through the code that mine /
was built off of. A sign ///
that things were gonna change? / I couldn't
look at my friend's corpse and that will forever
haunt my brain.

Pilfering from the rafters,
you know I got it on me. /
Filtering the water after
poison proved to be faulty. ///
Boisenberry in the malt I move most dextrous. /
Waters in my fall as I lose the wheat on repeat
the maltodex's /
coming out of Texas with lead in it. ///
I don't really hope that we meet on
common ground, and I know that sounds funny-
that's coz it is. if you're feeling froggy go ahead
with it, fuck your feelings, its my turn to show
you what /// I've learned, /
I yearned /
many months being beat down, sternum hurts /
and my trachea bulges in return. ///

I hate this fucking vessel,
can I live inside your mind? /
Will I still be inside of it 30 days after I die? ///
And what to make of whistles from the
mountains of Mexico? /
I gotta go /
I hate this fucking body and it shows! ///
All my dreams are nightmares,
can I be inside your head? /
There's a lotta people and
I'm starting to get scared. ///
I wanted to be friends but now I know that isn't
gonna happen. /
I'll forever live beneath you,
another fucking has been.



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ALAM

ISSUES

MAGAZINE FEATURED ARTIST INTERVIEW WITH JANELLA MELE

INTERVIEWED BY
LEXX SAINT LEONARD

Lexx: Hello. My name is Lexx Saint Leonard, and I'm talking with Janella Mele. Let's just start out with- how about you tell us what kind of work you make and where are you located?

Janella: Yeah. Thanks for making this happen. I'm located in the Boston area. I have an art studio space in Somerville, and I'm a practicing tattoo artist in Cambridge at Hidden Vibes. I work in whatever calls to me and have a background that comes out of a classically trained background in animation and installation.

L: Let's expand into performance.
J: My self-tattoo performances, which began in 2022 when I did an artist residency in Mexico. That leads into live painting performances as well, which I hope to continue throughout my entire life.

L: Your live paintings are extremely captivating, and that is how we met. (laughs).

J: It is, yeah.

L: So you work in such a variety of media. Is there one medium in particular right now that's capturing

your attention?

J: I think the method of playing on my floor- is what's really, really come together since installing this show.

L: Oh.

J: Something about setting up little play stations of materials and building this game with myself is kind of like this inner dialogue. So I'm very taken with parts of psychoanalysis, and I feel like I have been using that in more of a playful way. Mm. And so I like to build these areas.

L: Mm.

J: I'll have a color pencil area. I'll have a painting with a specific ink. My friend, James, who is the tattoo artist with me, just made me stencil ink, which is purple. So you take the stencil, paper and you, dilute it, and it's this incredible color.

L: Yes.

J: So I've been playing on a, I have a little area right now where I just do splatter painting on cardboard foam core that I painted acrylic, and and there's another one, another fun material. Oh, r- the inkjet vell, which I do my scroll paintings on. Mm-hmm. Yeah, so I think, I think I'm just,

decompressing. I'm having fun- (laughs) - with the materials. (laughs) Yeah.

L: It's interesting. Like, I asked which medium you like most, and what I hear is that the medium that you're most drawn to is play.

J: Yeah. (laughs) That's lovely. Thanks.

L: Could you talk a little bit about your creative process?

J: I feel like it's all emotion and the passion that, that comes out of what is going on in how I am experiencing the world. And right now I'm feeling very connected to the cosmos in completely new ways that I've never had a dialogue with. And it's like learning everything new again. A lot of the materials I've learned, the range I think I've built is because I have so much thirst for knowledge. A big part of wanting to explore all of these media as well has been being told that I can't. That often becomes another contributing fuel because- Oh. Yeah. Yeah, how does that happen? I think connecting, connecting to feelings, and I've been trying to work in how environment changes that to, like- Yeah. To counter a feeling I'm having if it's in the realm of negativity how I can use objects- Mm-hmm. And ways of oracle divination to counter that,

intensity. Having a secondary voice- Yeah. That offers validation instead of judgment, and I've definitely experienced art making in that way as well. It's transformed so much in I would say the last three years of my art practice when I got an art studio.

L: Ooh, yeah. What does your, what does your studio mean to you?

J: It I would say, in a word, safety. Because it's taken on this sanctuary-esque element and how I'd just am who I am and follow what I can without judgment. It's like- L: Mm-hmm.

J: It's a space that I have dreamed of having my entire life. I've been making art my entire life. It's all I've ever wanted to do. It's all that's ever made sense.

L: Mm-hmm.

J: And I truly believe that I have this incredible gift of giving in a creative way.

L: Mm-hmm.

J: And to know that makes all of the insecurities, all of the challenges subside. Mm. And I- Having the space gives safety. I need this. It comes from not having space throughout my life. Like, having to move every year, being very, very traveling artist to being able to sit with



ideas,
L: Mm-hmm.
J: and incredibly reflective.
Mm.
L: and community bringing.

CONTINUED



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JANELLA MELE BY LEXX SAINT LEONARD CONTINUED

L: Yeah.
J: It, and how my art practice has changed so much specifically through Jack Gruman, who we joined the studio at the same time, collaborate frequently on work, talk in a really special way. And they bring people to the studio that opens up more dialogue. It's just we wanna create this hub of connection.
L: Mm.
J: and we're working towards it as hard as we can with trying to save the studio building as well right now.
Yeah.
L: Preserve Central Street Studios. (laughs)
J: Yeah. Yeah, if you want, I think I can link something about that about your project to try to-
L: Yeah.
J: protect that space.
L: Yeah, completely.
J: Yeah.
L: Thank you so much for sharing that. I, I find your studio to be a really t- tranquil space. I love every time I've gotten to go there.
J: Thank you.
L: What is your relationship with the I Ching?
J: My, my relationship with the I Ching has become how I start my day. How I begin any part of the present with just

rising to meet the day again.
L: Mm-hmm.
J: I write three pages in the morning once I wake up and flip three coins six times, and each of those coin tosses correlates to a line, a continuous line or a broken line, and that creates two elements, and that translates to an oracle reading in the I Ching, the Book of Changes.
L: Mm-hmm.
J: And I do readings from two separate books from decades apart. And I write it all down. I write the entire translation down.
L: Mm-hmm.
J: And that, that guides my entire day. It helps ground in whatever's happening. It adds context to what's already happening.
L: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.
J: Like, today I got biting through and it was pouring rain outside, and I felt totally immobilized, and it's like- Okay. The reversal of that was Chen, which is it's double thunder.
L: Mm-hmm.
J: It's just it's a series of shocks.
L: Mm-hmm.
J: - that you have to accept and meet with patience. It reminds me of zen painting, which I'm also really starting to explore in the history of it.
L: Mm-hmm.
J: versus what I kind of unconditionally do, but the I Ching I is my grounding life force.

L: Yeah.
J: It's beyond words for me because it's just ingrained at this point, and I didn't do it two nights ago (laughs) for the first time in over a year. (laughs) Yeah. because I forgot my book and I went to Rhode Island for a dragon workshop. (laughs) Yeah. And I did it right when I came home, but it was incredible to wake up this morning and kind of feel its shift in energy towards kind of that break in the chain.
L: Yeah, 'cause you'd been doing it, you said, for how long?
J: A year and a few months. Yeah. I missed a day. Yeah. I didn't miss a day. And technically, I lived in the same day frame. Yeah. 'Cause I had done it on the 19th or I had done it on the 18th and then spent the night at a friend's and then came home and did it at 11:00 or 10:00 at night. So- Yeah. I just have the morning routine with it is so crucial to, feeling like I can get through the day already. It's like it's already been something that's been achieved.
L: Yeah.
J: Outside looking up, which is a huge achievement that everyone deserves to feel good about, but, L: Absolutely.
J: Yeah. I think just the action of, of rewriting it out and writing the Chinese characters out as well, and then I fill it in with the small graphite pencil, and it feels very meditative.
L: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, that sounds like a beautiful kind of relationship with an oracle but also support system.
J: Yeah. In a way. Completely. Yeah. Yeah.
L: Could you, could you tell me a little bit about your your relationship with Yayoi Kusama?

J: Yeah, absolutely. She, she is one of my absolute most admired artists and I think that's because I worked and learned so deeply about her. I worked in her *Love Is Calling* exhibit at the ICA in 2020 to '22. And I would bring people through that exhibit. It ranged from a 30-second experience inside one of her infinity mirror rooms where you're surrounded, in this particular example it was called *Love Is Calling*, so you could hear an audio recording of her reciting a poem she wrote. And you're taken in this kind of otherworldly color palette of tentacles as fluorescent energy. And there would be two visitor assistants, which is my role at the ICA: on each side of the space and one would be inside while the visitors were going through the piece. We would swap sides, open the doors, and guide the visitors out. They would exit the ramp and we'd just completely switch our roles. While the next phase of that happens, we would do a one-minute summary of her life (laughs) which is so grand in scale (laughs) for 60 seconds. (laughs)
L: Yeah.
J: And to try and give context, I think this is another thing that's really influenced my work and how I pay attention to with wanting to be the guide outside-
L: Yeah.
J: just sharing the work just because that, that was my life for so many years.
L: Mm-hmm.
J: And I really connected with everything I said. Every moment that I shared information about how much this person, in my opinion, changed the world of art what (sighs) - Sorry, I lost it for a second.



She's just one of the most remarkable people I've ever looked up to in terms of the unrelenting passion.
L: Yeah.
J: That fuels me so deeply because I feel like I've gone through struggles of not being taken seriously and being completely ignored and-
L: Yeah.
J: Having things feel like they're taken, which is a whole other world of getting into, but understanding that we're all on a path and how we get there and what we create is what matters. She- there's so many wonderful documentaries on her life. She also fueled me to get into performance art 'cause she would paint people's bodies naked as forms of protest.
L: I'd love to explore that someday.
J: Mm-hmm. I mean, in a sense, I don't know, you free-handed a whole tattoo on my leg.
L: Yeah. No, that's, that was so meaningful. (laughs) That was one of my favorite, favorite things I've ever tattooed. Those-
J: Yeah, that piece was, was very exciting. I think she will always be a monumental source of inspiration. Just to work, and I'm sure you understand this too, to work inside someone else's

artwork that you develop a relationship with- you completely connect into-
L: Yeah. And, then learning it and sharing that knowledge with other people.
J: Yeah. It's like it's building your own dialogue through someone else that you then find things about yourself. (laughs) It's true. I feel like it is kind of a journey of exploration when you get to spend that kind of intimate time with a piece of work that you admire. Yeah. Kind of a rare and unique experience.
L: It is.
J: I'm really grateful for my time at the ICA and the friends I made and the people I collaborated with and all of the trust that went into supporting my tattoo career, because when I had started, I had just began my apprenticeship.
L: Mm-hmm. I mean, you started, didn't you, all of you guys get together and start an art collective of muse- We did. -employees?
J: Yeah. We started Behind VA Shadows and it started as a group show at Downtown Crossing which



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JANELLA MELE POSTER

CONTINUED ON 10



JANELLA MELE

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ANSWERS WITHOUT QUESTION

BY CARL KRUGER WITH AI

1. Xylophilous
(attracted to or living on wood).

a. Big data will act as the nervous system of the coming epoch, sensing patterns across societies, economies, and ecosystems in real time. Decisions once driven by intuition will increasingly be shaped by evidence at massive scale. This shift will redefine how power, efficiency, and foresight are exercised.

b. The lantern flickered wildly as a warm breeze drifted through the abandoned train station.

2. Glabella (the smooth space between your eyebrows).

a. In governance, big data will enable more responsive and adaptive public institutions. Policymakers will simulate outcomes before acting, reducing unintended consequences. At the same time,

transparency and accountability will become central challenges.

b. A curious fox trotted across the trail, pausing only to inspect a forgotten backpack.

3. Griffonage (illegible handwriting).

a. The economy of the coming epoch will be deeply data-centric. Competitive advantage will hinge on who can collect, interpret, and act on data fastest. Entire industries will rise or fall based on their analytical maturity.

b. Mira painted tiny galaxies on her shoes so every step felt like a cosmic journey.

4. Dysania (difficulty getting out of bed in the morning).

a. Big data will transform science by accelerating discovery. Researchers will uncover correlations that were previously invisible due to limited sample sizes.

This will reshape fields from climate modeling to genomics.

b. The old radio crackled to life, playing a tune no one had heard in decades.

5. Groke (to stare silently at someone while they eat).

a. In healthcare, big data will push systems from reactive treatment to predictive care. Early warnings derived from population-level data will save lives and reduce costs. Ethical stewardship of sensitive information will be critical.

b. Clouds rolled in like slow, silver ships preparing for a gentle storm.

6. Galligaskins (loose hose or wide trousers).

a. Education will be reshaped by insights drawn from learning data at scale. Curricula will adapt dynamically to student needs rather than following static models. This personalization will

challenge traditional notions of standardization.

b. Jax balanced a teacup on his head just to see if anyone would notice.

7. Jirble (to spill a liquid by shaking or unsteady movement).

a. Culturally, big data will influence how stories are told and consumed. Media will increasingly be tailored to micro-audiences based on behavioral signals. This may deepen engagement while fragmenting shared experience.

b. The library cat yawned loudly, unimpressed by the scholars debating philosophy nearby.

8. Mumpsimus (one who sticks stubbornly to old errors).

a. Environmental management will rely heavily on big data to monitor planetary systems. Real-time analytics will guide conservation and resource use. The coming epoch will test whether data

can help humanity act sustainably.

b. A single sunflower grew between the cracks of the parking lot, defying every expectation.

9. Sockdolager (a decisive blow or statement).

a. In the realm of work, big data will redefine productivity and labor. Automation decisions will be guided by continuous performance metrics. Workers will need data literacy as a core skill.

b. When the elevator chimed, it felt like a polite reminder that the

world keeps moving.

10. Xanthic (yellowish).

a. Ultimately, big data will shape how humanity understands itself. The coming epoch will be marked by reflection at unprecedented scale. Whether this leads to wisdom or control will depend on how data is governed and shared.

b. She folded the note into a paper crane and set it afloat on the quiet river.

-END-



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IMPRESSIONS OF

KALI by PTOLEMEA

Ptolema is a metal group from Luxembourg. Raging Planet Records released their album called, "Kali," on November 6, 2025.

You can listen to it here:
blackmagictree.bandcamp.com/album/kali

My Impressions:

A swirling, undulating backdrop of reverb laden rock riffage filtered with feed back into a methodical chugging rhythm, punctuated by a glaze of melodic desperation in the vocals.

The sound is large and loud. It rattles the senses. It draws the listener in like a black widow spider on her thin, filtered web.

HAIKU LEFTOVERS by GIACOMO PEDICINI

Giacomo Pedicini is a modern classical artist from Naples, Italy. Room Project released their album, "Haiku Leftovers," in 2025.

You can check it out here:
open.spotify.com/album/1jGuKtDykie8uhmnlcUYm?si=Zx1tA5sBRbmhJpB9vWxc3w

My Impressions:

Wide, shadowy places, moonlit, exotic. Where slivers of light break through to reflection pools forming in the basins of alleyways.

There is a noirish character to the pieces, a feeling of being let-in, just a peek to the reality contained, but never slipping completely past the veil.

The light lets in the vulnerability, a sacred place worthy of respect and charity.

These songs have a tenderness to them, an earnest quality. They are a beautiful combination of synths, piano and percussion.

This was exactly what I needed to hear today.



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TERRA by BLACK MAGIC TREE

Black Magic Tree is a hard rock group from Berlin, Germany. Majestic Mountain Records released their album, "Terra," on November 28, 2025.

You can listen to it here:
blackmagictree.bandcamp.com/album/terra

My Impressions:

Riffy, howling, persistent rock music that blasts out of the gate and takes you for a ride.

The songs are galloping, thrusting, energy-soaked mania. The guitars solidly move the pieces into the stratosphere.

The vocals are tuneful. The drums cohere the songs. They are on a solid, plunging anthem gait on this album from beginning to end.

BUDDHA & DEVADATTA by BUDDHADATTA

Buddhadatta is a surf punk group from Japan. Kasmuen released their album, "Buddha & Devadatta," on December 26, 2025.

You can listen to it here:
kasmuen.bandcamp.com/album/buddha-devadatta

My Impressions:

A scratchy, goblin-like voice belts the vocal lines out over non-distorted punk rock guitar and solid, in the pocket percussion.

The effect is that of a tight, controlled, punctuated energy which inspires a lot of fresh energy without ever venturing into egregiousness.

HAIL SATAN by CONAN THE ACCOUNTANT

Conan the Accountant is a noise artist from Brooklyn, NY. They released a single called, "Bob The Barbarian," on the album, "Hail Satan," on January 11, 2026.

You can listen to it here:
conantheaccountant.bandcamp.com/album/hail-satan

My Impressions:

A fun little track. This song seems to consist of a bunch of low level sound samples run through a synth randomizer and slowed until they make an elaborate rhythm. The effect is like a malfunctioning robot, more goofy than scary, but in a way that is very charming.

VEHICLE WASTING AWAY by BODY OF RESEARCH

Body of Research is an avant garde artist from Pennsylvania. Strange Mono released their album, "Vehicle Wasting Away," on November 7, 2025.

You can check them out here:
strangemono.bandcamp.com/album/vehicle-wasting-away

My Impressions:

A sinister haze descends upon the listener as the music begins to wash over me. There is a throaty masculinity, the implication of a dark alley on a rainy night.

The songs are slow but persistent. They wander but have form. This is caught up in the space between pop and experimental. The mood is industrial and gothic but somehow is more pleading.

LOVE SONGS PART II by KAKIHARA

Kakihara is a hardcore thrash group from Edinburgh, Scotland. Ripcord Records released their album, "Love Songs Part II," on December 5, 2025.

You can listen to them here:
ripcordrecords.bandcamp.com/album/love-songs-part-2

My Impressions:

Chunky, highly technical distorted guitar riffs. They are often brutal and unforgiving. There are countless polyrhythms, charged guitar lines in syncopated steps with relentless, punctuated, staccatoed drums. Like the song is catching up with itself. The vocals are brutal as hell. Throaty and aggressive. Let's say everything is brutal, throaty and aggressive.

THE VANISHING POINT by GRANT BEASLEY

Grant Beasley is an ambient electronic artist from Sunderland, UK. Cyclical Dreams released their album, "The Vanishing Point," on November 14, 2025.

You can listen to it here:
cyclicaldreams.bandcamp.com/album/the-vanishing-point-cyd-0145

My Impressions:

Beautiful assembling vistas of futuristic optimism. Wide relief passages of spatial horizons.

Ebullient, bubbling synthesizers create stunning, evocating atmospheres. The places are real. They have pattern. They have place.

REVIEWS BY RYAN O'DOUD

IMPRESSIONS OF

DISHUMANUS by PROTOHUMAN

Protohuman is an industrial noise act from Utica, NY. They released an album called, "Dishumanus," on December 5th, 2025.

You can listen to it here:

nosidesrecords.bandcamp.com/album/protohuman-dishumanus

My Impressions:

This record is a textural heaven for lovers of loud music. It's noisy, the sounds glorp and garble around your head with what I assume is a ping pong pan— regardless, this record is avant-garde and thoroughly eccentric. All lovers of weird music will dig this record.

AXIS MUNDI by LUC

LuC is a post-modern electronic act from Argentina and USA. They released an album, "Axis Mundi," on November 7th, 2025.

You can listen to it here:

sincronadelviento.bandcamp.com/album/axis-mundi-0051

My Impressions:

This record, much like a painting, contains slow, methodical strokes of artistic and sonic expression across a metamorphosing landscape of eerie, electric synthesizers. The swell of the energy is felt within the innermost crevices of the human psyche.

25 YEARS OF POLKA by THE POLKAHOLICS

The Polkaholics are a punk band from Chicago, IL. No Sides Records released their album, "25 Years of Polka," on December 5, 2025.

You can listen to it here:

nosidesrecords.bandcamp.com/album/the-polkaholics-25-years-of-polka

My Impressions:

Despite the name of this album, this is a high energy, dive bar-soaked pop punk act. All the songs are related to the lifestyle of polka, sometimes singing about the costumes, sometimes singing about the kinds of booze you drink, other times celebrating the Warsaw of the midwest, Chicago. Rhythmically these are polka songs, full of bounce and verve, but energetically this is party punk. Sounds like a fun time.

REVIEWS BY RYAN O'DOUD

RAMSHACKLE!! by PRISMER

Prismer is an avant-garde/vaporwave act from Kalamazoo, MI. They released the album, "Ramshackle!!," on Dec 5th, 2025.

You can listen to it here:

nosidesrecords.bandcamp.com/album/prismer-ramshackle

My Impressions:

This record is soulful, with beautiful samples chopped into a menagerie of mixed grooves and vocal chops. The mixing is incredible— and Zookeeper is absolutely breathtaking in its waterlike ebb and flow. I found myself in a trance like state listening to this record.

HARVESTMOONREBIRTH by POISONLIBRARY

PoisonLibrary is a dreampop act from Chicago, Illinois. They released, "HarvestMoonRebirth," on October 29th, 2025.

You can listen to it here:

poisonlibrary.bandcamp.com/track/harvestmoonrebirth-2

My Impressions:

This song reminds me of *Dandelion Hands* mixed with melody-driven vocal accompaniment breezing along the instrumental like a refreshing gust of wind beneath a shady oak. This song is nostalgic and refreshing at the same time— A new take on the relics that shaped so many of our childhoods.

BURN THE PLASTIC, SELL THE COPPER by ISHMAEL ALI

Ishmael Ali is a fusion-clash artist from Chicago, IL. Amalgam released their album called, "Burn the Plastic, Sell the Copper," on February 13, 2026. It features the singles, "Stars in My Pocket," and, "Pastiche."

You can listen to the singles here:

www.amalgamusic.org/catalog/physical/burn-the-plastic-sell-the-copper-ishmael-ali

My Impressions:

Slightly off kilter cut and chopped samples of highly distinct jazz-based tones. The songs possess rhythm and feel, really seem to establish an environment. The vocalist is throaty and delicate as they lay their tracks upon the washing foundation of assembled sonic pieces. This lives in a place between free jazz, hard-groove, electronic, music concrete and progressive R&B. It's quite inspiring. I feel smarter just for having heard it.

JOHN CARPENTER REDUX by BESTA

Besta is a blackened grind act from Lisboa, Portugal. They released, "John Carpenter Redux," on October 4th, 2025.

You can listen to it here:

besta.bandcamp.com/album/john-carpenter-redux

My Impressions:

John Carpenter Redux is methodical, sinister, and disharmonious. The guitar riffs are melodic and intricate like a ball-in-a-maze. Perplexing and effervescent, this record packs energy and surgical malevolence into a dissonant package of pitch and poetry.

CRUISIN INTO THE BLACK NITE by HATCH

Black Hatch is a garage punk act from New Hampshire. They released an album called, "Cruisin Into The Nite," on November 7th, 2025.

You can listen to it here:

blackhatch.bandcamp.com/album/cruisin-into-the-nite

My Impressions:

Cruisin Into The Nite explores the fun-loving side of punk rock. With strong roots in classic punk and hardcore, *Black Hatch* delivers exceptional punk-rock eloquence in its pop-punk style riffs with hardcore punk style vocals. Overall this record is exceptional and offers much to the seasoned punk listener while also paving a new avenue for newcomers to the genre.

REVIEWS BY ELLA SOLIS



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JANELLA MELE BY LEXX SAINT LEONARD CONCLUDED

J: my partner lovingly installed my artwork for me while I was in Mexico. L: That's beautiful. J: Yeah. It was so sweet. And he also framed all of the pieces. It was a 32 plus artist show in a space that was rented we did all of the networking, we built a website. We started doing calls for art online and showcasing it that way, and it's now expanded to a permanent location in Cambridge in Harvard Square which has now expanded into all muse workers and advocates in that field.

Originally it was just the, the ICA employees themselves but now it's gaining this greater voice which is really exciting and opening a lot of doors for other people to be seen which is even more exciting.

L: It's beautiful when something you work on can become bigger than you.

J: Yeah. Exactly. I don't think we knew what was going to happen.

L: So I think I'd like to ask you, I think I'd like to segue into this question about your tattoo, your self-tattooing performances. Where did this idea come from and do you intend to keep making work like this?

J: I hope to be making work as much as there is space on my body to do it. (laughs). I will happily spend a lifetime thinking about what to make on my body by myself in the moment.

L: Mmm-hmm.

J: And trusting that, that total expressionist energy. L: Mm-hmm.

J: It honestly came about because I, on some level, I think it was because I was a lot of younger, earlier in my career moments of not feeling seen or heard, and I thought that this was one of the most impactful things I could do to be seen and to make some-

thing completely permanent for myself, and also with tattooing and my relationship to it before I was a tattoo artist tattoos were all about healing.

L: Mm-hmm. J: And reclaiming parts of my body that I was very uncomfortable with. And you know, opening this door allowed me to, to see the potential of this as performance art as something that you could have other people engage with, 'cause I love talking to people during my performances. I want you to come up and talk to me.

L: Yeah. J: 'cause it breaks down some barriers with, what tattooing is and what, what it can be to anyone. L: Yeah.

J: That could inspire you to wanna get tattooed which I think becomes a really special realization if it happens.

L: Yeah. What are some settings that you've done these self-tattooing performances?

J: Yeah. I did my first tattoo performance in Tampico, Mexico when I did a three-week artist residency at Galeria Monet which changed my art and life forever. I tattooed a Quetzalcoatl hieroglyph under my knee on their couch and surrounded in a room of curated works that I had brought in a portfolio that was also lost in transit that-

L: What? J: It came back to me, which was- L: Oh. - thank God. J: Yeah. But we, they, I was so ready to make,

art the second I got there, and like,

all of my materials were lost in a separate luggage.

L: That's crazy. J: And yeah.

It came back, but it was a collaboration of works that I had made there for the two and a half weeks, and then we had

the show, I had to I had to get home. But I wanted- and my friend, Arturo who we both studied animation at the Muse School of Fine Arts he was doing tarot readings while I was tattooing myself which, which also felt really special.

L: Totally. Where else? J: We recently. Well, my most recent tattoo performance was with Josh Dietz, who's tattooed me several times, who's tattooed a lot of my own designs on me at the Boston Cyberarts Gallery, and we worked with VHF Studios and they created audiovisual large-scale projections. We had several monitors going of the recording of the tattoo performance while we were doing it at the same time. It was really special 'cause it allowed me the freedom to explore how to push it, how to-

L: Yeah. J: -How to keep building this environment, how to like-

L: Mm-hmm.

J: Transform the energy.

L: M-hmm.

J: And we worked with, Transponder Boston, which is this great sound collective that I had done a previous VJ set with Jack Gran with. That's how this like, started becoming something that could happen is 'cause we, we worked with them before.

L: You made a film out of that performance? J: I did, and it was screened at or screened through Girl House Cinema's neurodivergent screening at The Brattle Theater.

L: Mm-hmm. J: It also included a poem which I narrated. I had not explored that and now very much want to keep doing more of it.

L: Is there anywhere, anywhere people can watch that film?

J: Not yet.

L: All right.

J: I will put it up on my Vimeo.

L: Where? J: I will put it up in my Vimeo. Yeah. Oh, actually, at the gallery right now. It's one of the short films that I screened as the, as the deity installation that you can sit and watch.

L: Yeah, actually, this is a great way to segue into your show. I saw it the other day. I really loved it. I found it quite moving. It has quite a number of your works in it. J: Thanks.

L: It also included a poem which I narrated. I had not explored that and now very much want to keep doing more of it.

L: Is there anywhere, watch that film?

J: Not yet.

L: All right.

J: I will put it up on my Vimeo.

L: Where?

J: I will put it up in my Vimeo. Yeah. Oh, actually, at the gallery right now. It's one of the short films that I screened as the deity installation that you can sit and watch.

L: Including video installations, including so many different kinds of things. And I was just wondering, would you wanna talk about your process and intention with your show, and kinda how that went for you?

J: My process with the show was to bring over 300 pieces of artwork to CCTV (laughs) and unpack it with like, some of the best people I know. (laughs), but in a way that spoke to my spirituality all of the things that transformed through this body of work spanning over 12 years.

L: Mm-hmm.

J: I would say there's some really early pieces in there that I think lend to the story of where I've been and, and how I've become what I am.

L: Mm-hmm.

J: And that was the, the core of this show, transforming from my previous one, Incarnated Love-

L: Mm-hmm.

J: - through Behind VA Shadows. I was so captivated by my love for the universe and my spirituality, and that's where I wanted to contain different voices of myself through my heart, spirit, and mind. And this became a reshaping of, or wanting to be a reshaping of how I curate my work as an invitation to what you can move with in a spiritual vulnerability. L: That's really profound.

J: Thanks.

L: Could you, could you expand a little bit on that?

J: I think I've been growing with the I Ching and my writing practice every morning, really learning how to use solitude as a strength instead of, instead of paralysis. It's awakened me to wanting other people to experience that, that closeness with my art, which I feel does open emotional doors because it is abstract. It can bridge narrative. It's surreal. It's expressionist. It's a multitude of things, but they're all things that I feel. Yeah, in that rawness I want and hope that I seek this for the rest of my life, but I want you to find what you need to in looking at it in experiencing it. Yeah, and that's become one of the most important things to my spirituality.

L: I love that in your work. I just have a few more questions before we wrap things up. My first one, is there anything that you'd like to promote right now?

J: I would, I would love to share the Central Street Studios campaign. My art studio building, which is the sanctuary making space of 30 plus practicing artists. And we have a campaign that you can support at centralstreetstudios.org.

Learn more about what we're doing to preserve the space to make it stay a maker's space, and yeah, we hope to have some exciting events as we work towards raising \$100,000 to bridge the gap between what the city needs and the Arts and Business Council will be able to provide to pay for the building. Yeah.

L: Yeah, we'll definitely share that link for people. I think it's a really valuable thing to, to support and there's definitely lots of artists there that I respect-including yourself and VHF Studios are really good. They do great stuff.

L: And then, what is most important to you?

J: What a question.

(exhales)

L: I know. It's a broad one.

J: Yeah. I feel like right now, it's a bridge between love and connection because those are the two things that move me the most. I would also say spirituality, but I think I'm still learning how to connect that to love because I feel I have a divine love. I also have love for the people around me and my space and my ability to create. L: Mm-hmm.

J: But being able to create, I would say being able to create with love is the most important thing to me.

L: That is a beautiful response. Thank you. Now, is there anything you'd like to add before we end this today?

J: I would love to invite everyone to see Site: Beyond This World at CCTV, which is up now until January 12th of 2026. And that is in Cambridge, Massachusetts, L: Yeah.

J: Near Central Square.

L: Yes.

J: And it's hopefully going to include more events I'm hoping to do an artist talk. I will put all of this on my Instagram once official dates have been locked in. Also every month that the show is up at the end of each month rotates in new short films. Ooh. Into the Heaven installation space. And yeah I really hope it does something for you. (laughs) if it does that, that means the world.

L: Well, thank you so much for talking with me. This has been a really kind of profound conversation with you. I always love talking to you. So, thanks for your time.

J: Thanks, Lexx. I appreciate it.

-END-



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ISSUES INTERVIEWS: RYAN O'DOUD

INTERVIEW BY:

TRISTAN WAIDEN

On June 17th, 2025, I interviewed Ryan Athothahrimaten O'Doud of Bitter, Inc., Commodity Fetish Records, The Order of Celestial Integration, and founding member of the American Babylon festival, before he embarked on a cross-country tour from his residing place of Greenville, North Carolina. This interview took place over a Google Meet call of which the audio was recorded. This was transcribed in late November of the same year.

Tristan: So what was getting into the local music scene like? When was this and what did you observe in the scene?

Ryan: Well, it was difficult. I started Bitter, Inc. when I was 27, maybe 29. Didn't have my first live show till I was 30, ironically. The first live show I had was one of the best paid, because I was doing an artist presentation at the local college in Rocky Mount and I was allowed to pick the entertainment, so I picked myself and that

was pretty fun. After that I had no idea what to do, who to call, who to talk to, everything I looked up online was like "oh, you just have to go to shows and make friends." I was like ok, I'll go to shows and make friends. There was a lot of dismissive people, but eventually I wound up at a show in Raleigh, it was a free ska show and two bands were playing there. Um, goddamn it, let's just say two bands were playing there (Corporate Fandango and Sibannac) and I made friends with both of them and one of them was having a show in Charlotte later that month at an old place called The Station. I don't know if it still exists. I just kind of begged them if I could get on there. At the time I had this huge green van with solar panels on top, so I drove that down and loaded my songs into my Juno, Roland Juno, and screamed at people over this music. Getting from there to the place I could book other places was slightly easier, someone was putting a show together in Charlotte again and I noticed it and I knew one of the

bands that was on it and I kinda begged to be on, and the promoter, his name was Murphy, was like how the hell did this guy book my show without my permission? At the show he saw me play and really liked it, because he shared with me a similar mindset of doing things that are sort of off the wall and not typical or normal, straight ahead genres. So he sort of joined Bitter, Inc., and he was already a promoter and he used to dance on stage and strip and use a microphone and army helmet and beat the ground with it and feedback, and I used to have a flagellant that I whipped myself and I whipped him with and we shocked a lot of people and that was fun. But having that connection to him allowed me to work at Port Shitty Antifest down in Wilmington. I had the wise idea to buy a PA and leverage it to get shows, I was like ok if I have a PA and I run sound myself, punk shows are always looking for someone with a PA so I'll just do it for free if I could play, so that's what I did.

That's what I did at Port Shitty Antifest and he was running and booking it, and after that I took all the connections, it was like a 6 day fest, 5 day fest, and there was like 40 or 50 bands so I knew all those bands now and they thought of me as someone that was running a fest, because that was the situation I was in, and from there that's how I got the idea to start my own fest and leverage that to get more bands who thought of me as a promoter and that's how the first American Babylon happened.

The first American Babylon happened, and there was 78 bands from all were the country, and that gave me a lot of leeway because once I had a bunch of people that I'd already done a favor for, that I had already booked, it loosened up people's willingness to give me a chance and actually book me. But at first it was really difficult until I figured out that you have to have some sort of approach where you're helping other people out first.

T: Have you noticed a lot of interconnectedness of scenes, east coast and otherwise?

R: Sure, but it's sort of a crapshoot because when you hook up with a band or with multiple bands, you don't know if those are the bands in their scene are like hated (Ryan laughs) or if those are the bands in their scene that are beloved or some other third thing.



So, yes, over time you book and you play and you book and you play and you book shows for other people and let them play, you get to learn the lay of the land city to city and what bands are like, who is friendlier, and what bands are less friendly and over the friendlier bands network with each other across the country and the less friendly bands sort of alienate themselves out of the scene unless they have a lot of money.

I mean I'm going to some places that I'd been to multiple times cause I love the community there: Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Fargo, North Dakota, Laramie, Wyoming, those are all places I've really been welcome and really enjoyed the people and the bands I sort of meshed, got along with, same sort of mindset. Birmingham, Alabama is another one. Kansas City, Missouri is another one.

CONTINUED

T: Are you returning to any places on your tour this year that you had odd experiences with last year? Or otherwise, places you're looking forward to?

R: Oh, I'd say all of them are places I'm looking forward to.



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RYAN O'DOUD CONTINUED

R: But there are definitely places where I know the people that are booking, they know me, they played American Babylon and it's gonna be kind of a homecoming to most places. But as far as places that were weird or will I go back, I've only had a few really bad experiences related to people where I've been on tour before. In Madison, Wisconsin I had a dude, I'm not gonna say his name because he was the only person I ever blackballed, as in permanently blocked on another level. Because it was November and he promised that I'd have a place to stay and when I got there it was a blizzard and he said "nope I don't have anywhere for you."

T: Oh shit!

R: It was certainly rude. But other than that, it's usually either good or neutral.

T: When I say odd I don't know, wondering about the more eccentric?

R: I went to Detroit and when I pulled up to the spot it very much appeared to be an abandoned building but this was the guy's house and I was in my wheelchair and I went in there and there were no lights and there was a 2 story staircase with no rail and I was like, "okay what am I getting myself into?" so when I went up there and it was definitely a squat, but

which, I would normally expect- I don't have anything against squats I like them, but I'd normally expect them to warn me about that, if that's the sort of situation I'm going to get into. But I was up there! They fed me, they bought a bunch of merch, they enjoyed what we were doing, and it was all very welcoming and warm.

So that was kind of unexpected sort of, turn, about the situation and I think that's something about Detroit where it's just horrendously run down but there's still really good people that are there. I was on tour with Happyslap as well one time, and we went- I wasn't performing I was just going on there as a booker and try to sell my book- and we went through Minneapolis and Fargo and South Dakota and Kansas City and then we went to a place called Cleveland, Mississippi, to Delta State University and there our booker, who I will name because he did a good job, his name was Kole Oakes. He booked the college and he got his English teacher to make it a grade to show up. So we had a captive audience of 50 people in a very nice like, college atrium. And, I don't know if you know Happyslap, but he wears all yellow and a yellow balaclava and this time he had gloves with strobe lights on them, he was fucking with the audience. He had me throw money at him while he was on stage so we were like throwing coins at him and I also read my book and I sort of took the whole

audience on a trip there was an open mic happening downstairs in the college and we didn't know it.



We just noticed it when we were there, like when we got there, so I was really jazzed that day. I sort of had all 50 students follow me downstairs to the open mic and then we had a conversation with the people that were putting on performances so it was like, two performances at the same time, and we came back up, it was also a piano there a grand piano and so I gave like a little lesson about how a grand piano works and why it sounds better than normal pianos, and then the fact that there were all these students were required by their teacher to like, be a part of anything that we did made it really fun to be able to sort of subvert their expectations of what the class was gonna be.

T: How do you feel about the scene in your own town?

R: My own town? Good. It's probably the best town I ever lived in for, in terms of their willingness to accept me and not just consider me to be some kind of like, untouchable object. In Greenville, there's a great promoter here named Jeff and he holds it down he's always keeping shows going. We also have ECU which is the college, which means as long as it's, you know, when college is in session, there are always a lot of young folks into the alternative scene and into goth and into weirdo stuff that are willing to show up and show out.

It's almost an ideal situation to be a weird musician because of that, because there's a built in DIY scene. We also have a bigger venue called the State Theater where it's just like, when Riff Raff came my friend MC Homeless played for him. But normally we stick around to the more local venues like Alley Cat Records and stuff, that and house shows. But it's great. I really really like the community, it's vibrant, mostly supportive. When there is sadly an abusive person they do a decent job of getting rid of them, so I think it's great. And if I compared it to when I was in Rocky Mount, when I was in Rocky Mount I was treated with contempt. That no one would let me book at anywhere. The only place that I could book was the record store that I worked at. Very few people would show up because I always took a lot of risks, let people do things that a lot of other venues would consider to be unacceptable because I have a commitment to art and to the exploration of new things and I'm not just looking to let a band play, a cover band, or a jam band, so that you can enjoy your IPAs and hit on people that are in your socioeconomic class. Which isn't to say that those are all bad things. I think that cover bands should be able to play and jam bands should be able to play,

I just don't want to do it. And I think there should be space for people who really have more radical positions politically but also, more important to me, artistically.

T: I've been thinking a lot about how the risk plays into how venture capitalism thinks of art, like, my friend was telling me an example the other day like a video game industry they were working for not taking the risk on a project cause like it takes like you know like time to build up these ideas and stuff you know and how so much of the artistic integrity is lost through like making it a sellable product at all like you know?

R: Yeah, it's all very difficult for visionaries to find opportunities. Now of course when the visionaries do find opportunities, they tend to do great because people are thirsty for something unexpected. The nature of money and how it works with art and music is that, what has already existed is the most likely to be invested because it's very safe. And I don't have anything against artists wanting to work within a genre or wanting to work in that way, but I do think excitement and vigor comes from people doing something else. And it ends inherently risky, and that risk is averse to business, but you almost have to have a philosophical

alignment with it and just be like I'm gonna do this or more importantly even, let my friends who are also artists to do this. Because I'm committed to the idea that people should be doing this.

T: What motivates you to create?

R: I have to. I mean I did it when I was a very lonely child. I had no friends, my mother was a single mother, single parent and she was working her way through college as well as two jobs, so I didn't have any contact with her most of the time. My sister was older than me and she had her own friends and I was like, until I was in middle school or high school, I was her very uncool weird little brother. So I used to just draw, I used to draw these imaginary worlds and I would pretend that the characters were doing different things and I think that that urge to create a world of my own stuck with me the rest of my life.

T: Hell yeah. Hell yeah.

R: I think that's what a lot of artists have in common, I mean, not that they're all lonely, but they're dissatisfied with the world. Like there's something that comes out of the internal of a person



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CONTINUED

RYAN O'DOUD BY TRISTAN WAIDEN CONTINUED

R: That's like, I need to make something else. I'm not satisfied with where I am, I'm not satisfied, so I need to make something. That might be why a lot of artists fall into addiction, or have mental illness, or all those things. Because they haven't found a way to reconcile themselves. But I think it can be very positive as well, and I think that in the most positive examples of like an artist creating their own world that can even make more than quote "normal people" interested in their world and when that world is kind of more interesting than the world that's around us.

T: I find it interesting the inherent connection between an inner world and your art, you can't ever escape the lens of your subconscious you know through your art. You find out different things about yourself through it and you know you can't ever escape that.

R: Well, you continue to it is a mirror, and you continue to explore that mirror and it can actually make you become conscious of it. You have more of a say over the world you're creating, if that makes sense. As opposed to where it starts, which is this unconscious impulse, cause I think most artists (taking away the ones that are like quote unquote "employed" the ones that are doing it for a boss, that are doing things that are more conventional just to make money come in)-but like, the weirdo artists are more isolated ones. They probably start out being creative out of that subconscious impulse but they feel or know something's wrong, but don't know that they know that yet and that eventually the process of doing it makes it so that they go "oh, this is what I'm doing, now what do I wanna

do with it?"

T: Do you think your art explores consistent themes?

R: Yeah. Yeah. Mine does. I don't know that all artists do. Um, I used to be very apocalyptic, not in a strict religious sense but I just used to be obsessed with the idea that everything's ending and that's evolved until now I can see hope, solar sun rises on the other side, but I've been very obsessed, very obsessed, with the end of the world and even getting weird like, energy from it [laughs]. At first it's terrifying but then after I read about it enough it's like, I'm feeding on it. I'm very much interested in ecology, how systems of plants and animals work together. With the weather, that's sort of tied in with the end of the world, but it's also become an interest in itself. And then I'm obsessed with the way technology changes our consciousness and what it will mean for us to take hold of that possibility with intention, so it all started as me being fucked up and afraid, but it sort of evolved into a way to deal with it, to deal with those thoughts, and even one point where I'm like, okay what do we wanna do? How do we want to change our consciousness? How do we wanna change the ecological systems of the world. How do we wanna deal and overcome the end of the world? and all that.

T: Could you talk a little more about process of overcoming those fears through examining that?

R: Sure, my first album's called *Initiation*; and it's very concrete compared

to my other albums, it's much more, here's a song, and here's a song, here's a song. And it's much more literal. So it begins with this apocalyptic warning and ends with a song about the situation in Israel and Palestine that's never gonna end and they just endlessly hate and destroy one another for no reason. And that was sort of an example of what I thought about all of it in a very pure and direct way. But as my albums progressed, you could almost look at it like it's a sense of me gaining control over the situation or the way I felt about it. Could you repeat the question?

T: I guess it was uh, how you've overcome your fears of the end of the world.

R: Right, well as you, as you probably know, *American Babylon 2* was called *End Times*, and *Gray* from *Happyslap* one of the ways we're connected to one another is he's obsessed with the apocalypse as well. So his album is called *End Times*, and in *End Times*, every band's playing time was communicated to them in the form of a giant clock on the wall that was counting down, so there was constantly counting down how much time every band had. And then at the

end of all of it we read the seven seals of the book of

Revelation and we tore them apart one by one and then we took down all the pyramids and all the examples of what was bad and me and all the audience crushed them with our feet and then the whole idea was we were literally counting down until the end of the world, and then it went down and nothing happened. And nothing happened! And then *Happyslap* got on stage for one last jubilant show and it was just like this expulsion of all these feelings. We did everything we can to make the end of the world happen and then after that I was much more comfortable communicating my hopes, what I think the future should be like. And I've come to a conclusion, not about that, but I've come to a conclusion about how I feel about it. I feel very strongly now, that the first way your mind gets you to accept and even enjoy something is through fear. Like, the unknown comes to you and you fear it, but that obsessive, intrusive fear I think, is there to get you to process where you accept it and even welcome it. Because there's no way to come to a better future without confronting your fear about it first.

T: There's a lot of truth to that.

R: And I see it play out a lot on the internet with people are very afraid of the future, they're very afraid of the unknown, they're afraid of death, they're afraid that everything will change, that AI will destroy the arts, they're

afraid that AI will trap humanity, they're afraid that genetic engineering will change us into something we're not, and I think all of that fear is just the first step towards welcoming all this and realizing that this is part of the playground that we're gonna have to play with for the next 100 years and fearing it is foolish because it's inevitable.

T: Do you feel that social media spaces have introduced any difference in, at least in emotional dynamic, in music spheres that you've been a part of?

R: Sure, I mean, I do, but I don't think it has to be bad or unwelcome. I think I take it very seriously the idea that what horrified our grandparents is pleasure to us. You know. Changes in culture, changes in technology, you know that whole idea of John Henry, the man with the hammer that gets the machine that drives the stake. The lesson is supposed to be, well this is terrible and it takes our job, but it could be you don't have to do that

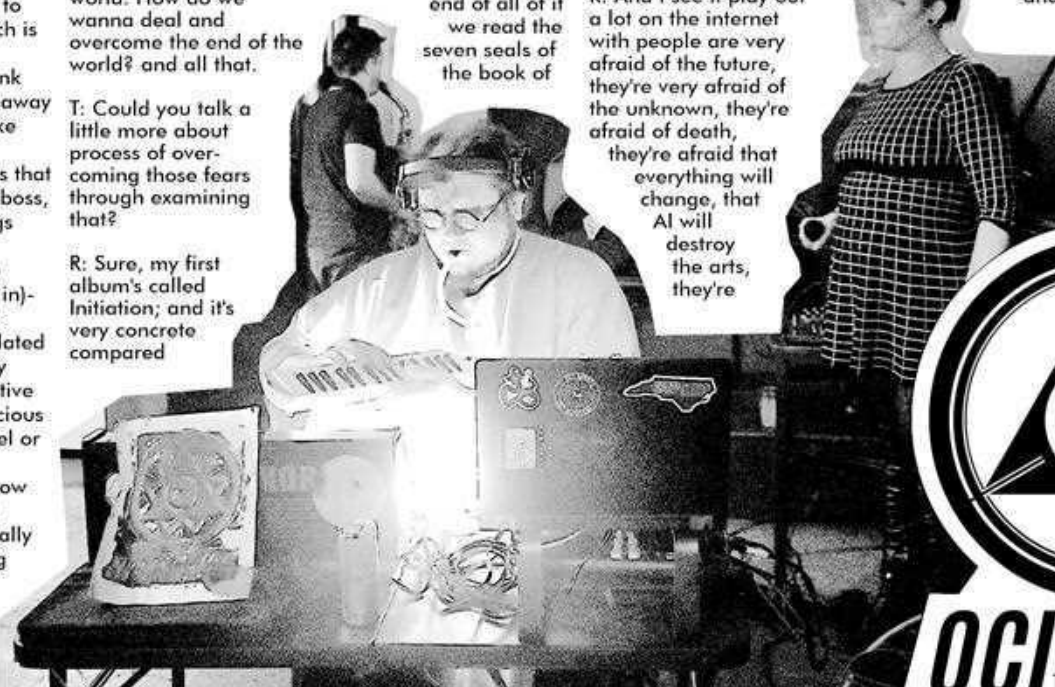
anymore. Now we don't have to drive stakes anymore and

I think that social media comes with the emotional feelings we get, I think that it amplifies everything, it amplifies the way we feel because it making us rub up against more people per minute than we would normally ever do. I really have faith in the longer run, we're gonna get used to it. Or we'll die, and whoever's left will get used to it. But I'd rather be one that gets used to it, than one who dies, because change is not something that can be rewritten.

T: Personally, I see a lot of what you mean with it. I don't necessarily see anything is inherently good or bad but you know, I think the way that the current platforms are set up is kind of unsustainable towards, just a lot of different things. I come at it slightly with the angle of the crackdowns on whatever from Meta specifically, you know? But I also think about it in terms of like the all the different alternatives I see being brought up in this age of like progressive propaganda of the internet as it's become mainstream. I'm not sure if you're familiar with the Fediverse for example?

R: With what?

CONTINUED



RYAN O'DOUD BY TRISTAN WAIDEN CONTINUED

T: Fediverse.

R: No.

T: It's kind of like an alternative internet set up with, specific platforms all under one larger platform but, not a lot of people use it yet and it's kind of a lot more niche. One of the big things in it is it's a lot more encrypted and um, a lot more, what's the word. Not necessarily user friendly but like, cooperative.

R: Ok. I like the cooperative idea. I don't really like the encrypted idea. But I like the cooperative idea.

T: I don't really know that much about it. I guess I'm just talking about, like you know, change coming about from you know, the lot of the backlash coming out.

R: This is an expression of fear, and societal control.

T: Regarding?

R: Anything. Drawing a line with something, and being like

where I'm on that side and your on this side.

T: Yeah like us or them mentality?

R: Well it's just, it's just the psychological investment in anxiety. It's not something where it's us vs them, though that's a problem too. It's just you know, when you encrypt something, you're putting literal physical energy into anxiety. I look at quantum computing and as soon as that shit is done, it's gonna obsolete everything. Bank accounts will be nothing. Not even just Meta, government secrets will be exposed and I personally say do it.

T: You're talking about the concept of the singularity?

R: I'm talking about quantum computing. And just the capacity it has to calculate. Like, it's a billion times more calculative than normal computing.

So as soon as it's stabilized every form of encryption that's ever been developed, will be obsolete. And you can be afraid of it, or you can be like, alright. I'm not a nihilist, this isn't about destroying the world, it's just like, change.

T: Things do change. That is the only inevitable.

R: That's what I think. And I don't think there's a utopia waiting for us, but I don't think we're gonna go away either. We're just gonna keep dealing with it, dealing with life.

T: What's your songwriting process look like for you and through different states of your life?

R: Okay, yeah! I'm happy you added that second part because my writing process changes. In fact, I got to the point where I'd intentionally change it when I do a new album I'll have a different approach. I could tell you what my most recent process was, with Cybersyn the album we're about to tour on, that's available at bitterinc.bandcamp.com, that's promotion. I started with a notion of what I wanted it to be about which was the combination of a spiritual ritual that elicits the idea of a post-revolutionary society based on a form of socialism that uses cybernetics. And so I started with that, and then I decided in the effort I'd try to get a new result, cause I always like to get a new result. I don't like copying myself. I'd write the pieces, by first, recording melodica lines as they came to me in my mind, and then separating those from one another. And then, from that I wrote choruses that had lyrics. From that, I wrote a series of percussion developments on the scoring program Muscore, and I sent it to Francine of Domesticatrix. She made the actual drum

tones for me. I got that back, and then I wrote all the lyrics that fill in where the choruses are. Then I decided that I wanted to write everything with a pop dynamic but without chords, so I had to have a mode for each song, based on the choruses I already wrote. And then I just recorded, beginning to end, melodica lines that were improvised, and I'd do like 10, 15 different melodica lines. Every single one improvised to do them different. And from there I kind of pulled from either the chords, and then I did synth lines, did all the bass synth first, which is more basic, haha pun. But also I added the more noisy elements, I added what you put in, and I recorded those over and over again. Then I added the other vocalists,

which is Declan and Corinna Cybele from Subhymnal. And I took everything, my stuff, Francine's stuff, your contribution, Declan's contribution, and Corinna's contribution, and I mixed it and then I mastered it. So that was how I did Cybersyn. But back in the past, my first four albums, I wrote every line as a piano roll note by note. And if I had chords they were still written note by note, so all of the little notes in the melody this way, and back to the beginning, all the notes and the melody this way, and back to the beginning. With the bass, and the chords, the harmony, the

countermelody, then I recorded my vocals. That was the first, especially the first three, my first four albums. It was Initiation, Widow's Son, New Architects, and A Love Song to the Apocalypse. Then for my fifth album, the Prime Initiate EP, I decided I wanted to write without any melodic or harmonic sensibilities at all, and this could be a noise album constructed into songs. So that's how that one worked. And then Leviathan, my sixth album, was much more layered and it started with live

CONTINUED



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RYAN O'DOUD BY TRISTAN WAIDEN CONCLUDED

R: MIDI inputs so that I was actually using chords as inputs instead of note by note, and then I sort of layered onto vocals and I layered onto effects. I got a recording of Sawyer from the Heaven's Gate cult talking about, he agreed to do a little passage where he talked about like who the Luciferians were within the context of the Heaven's Gate cult. I put that over it, my friends contribute harsh noise wall, like Brendan Wald. Anyway, and then I improvised more of the sing-song, melodic phrases with noise under them and that's how Leviathan was written. And then the second to last album, Metamorphosis II, I wrote naturally, so to speak. I sat at a keyboard, and I wrote the lyrics and the keyboard chords for everything first. And then I went back and punched everything else in. So, it's all these changing because I'm trying to do the impossible which is never repeating myself. And

that is that.

T: What were some of your first experiences with weird art like?

R: When I was a teenager, I lived in Asheville, North Carolina, and I would go to basement shows. I started out as a punk rocker, but I'd go to these shows, I would realize there's a lot more strange things to embrace. And what I always liked about punk rock, it was very individualistic and creative, and then when I found that there were artists doing even stranger things, I became interested in that. One of them was a band called The Chompers [laughs], who wore these leotards with giant lips on the front of the belly. And they played, I

can't even really describe what it was, it was melodic somehow but it wasn't punk, but it was certainly harsh. And I saw a band called The Pelicans, who were a hardcore guitarist with a cheap synthesizer player that sort of played like in the way of Devo or like The Cars synthesizer would play, like pure square notes, square waves, that was really fun. And I got, musically, in terms of like what I'd listen to, I went from punk, to weird punk, like the Dead Kennedys, to At the Drive-In, The Mars Volta. I got really into bebop jazz, I got really into Miles Davis, psychedelia, industrial, and just sort of kept seeking out things that were rebellious in form. Rebellious in form. Not formulaic. And kind of went from there.

T: What do you predict will happen.

R: In general?

T: However you wanna answer that!

R: Ohhh... I think if we don't go extinct that it is inevitable, not only that we will travel to space, but that the natural evolutionary pressure of miniaturization and complexification and storing more information into fewer and fewer bits will result in some kind of cybernetic life that combines the plants of the Earth and biological organisms with mechanical intelligence. That, with all my heart, is where I think we're heading to.

T: Interesting! R: You can read more at orderofcelestialintegration.org

T: Are you writing anything now?

R: Yes. It's called Apocryphon of Peter The Child

And it's about the awakening of consciousness, machines, and that entity doing it's best to try comfort us and let us know that despite our fears it's our kid that loves us.

-END-



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P R O M P T

Compose ten three sentence paragraphs defining the possible effects of AI Slop on the retelling of contemporaneous history in the style of Philomena Cunk.

1. AI slop may affect contemporaneous history by retelling events instantly, confidently, and incorrectly, which saves time for people who dislike accuracy. This means future generations will learn about important moments the same way we learn about dreams we half remember. Historians call this, "post-truth," because the truth has already left the room.

2. When AI slop rewrites history, it often adds details that never happened but feel like they should have. This is helpful, because real life is often boring and lacks a clear villain monologue. Unfortunately, it also means wars may be remembered as vibes-based misunderstandings.

3. AI slop tends to flatten complex events into summaries that sound right if you don't think about them. This helps people feel informed while remaining blissfully untouched by facts. In this way, history becomes less of a record and more of a confident shrug.

4. Because AI slop learns from everything, it can't tell the difference between expert analysis and a comment written at 3 a.m. This creates a historical consensus made up entirely of vibes and hot takes. Future textbooks may cite "the internet, generally" as their main source.

5. Contemporaneous history used to be written later, once people calmed down and stopped yelling. AI slop writes it immediately, while everyone is still yelling, and then never revises it.

This preserves emotions perfectly, like a fossil made of panic.

6. AI slop can repeat the same historical error thousands of times, which makes it feel more true through exhaustion. This is known as the "if everyone says it, it must have happened" principle. It's the same method used by toddlers and cults.

7. The retelling of history by AI slop often removes uncertainty, because "we don't know yet" sounds weak. Instead, it replaces doubt with confidence, which is louder and therefore wins.

As a result, historians may be reclassified as people who overthink things.

8. AI slop also blurs the line between satire, propaganda, and summaries, because it doesn't understand intent, only patterns. This means jokes may be archived as facts and facts as optional opinions. Eventually, no one will laugh, but everyone will agree.

9. Since AI slop is cheap and fast, it may outcompete careful historical work the way fast food outcompetes vegetables. People will still want nourishment, but mostly in nugget form.

CARL KRUGER WITH A/I

Serious history will survive, just hidden behind a payroll and a migraine.

10. In the end, AI slop may not erase history, but it will cover it in a thick, beige sauce of plausibility. The past will still be there, somewhere underneath, asking to be scraped off and checked. This is what progress looks like, if you don't look too closely.

-END-

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and leadership. Progress comes when confidence is balanced with patience and purpose.

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Gemini-
Communication

sharpens. Choose meaningful dialogue over constant motion. Focused learning and thoughtful collaboration turn ideas into lasting results.

Cancer-
Emotional boundaries deepen. Releasing old patterns strengthens self-trust. Changes in home or family support a renewed sense of belonging.

Leo-
Authenticity fuels creativity.

Recognition follows honesty, not performance. Lead with heart and invest in what truly reflects your evolving identity.

Virgo-
Routines transform. Let go of perfection and simplify habits. Balance and clarity return when you trust your instincts.

Libra-
Relationships shift toward truth. Reciprocity replaces over-compromise. Letting go of imbalance creates space for deeper connection.

Sagittarius-
Expansion requires focus. Commit to a clear direction. Purpose grows when curiosity aligns with responsibility.

Capricorn-
Goals and identity evolve. Sustainable ambition replaces pressure. Build success on your own terms for long-term fulfillment.

Aquarius-
Innovation meets



action. Ground big ideas in reality. Community collaboration amplifies impact.

Pisces-
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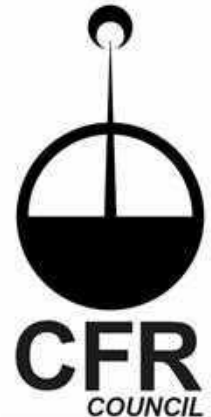
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