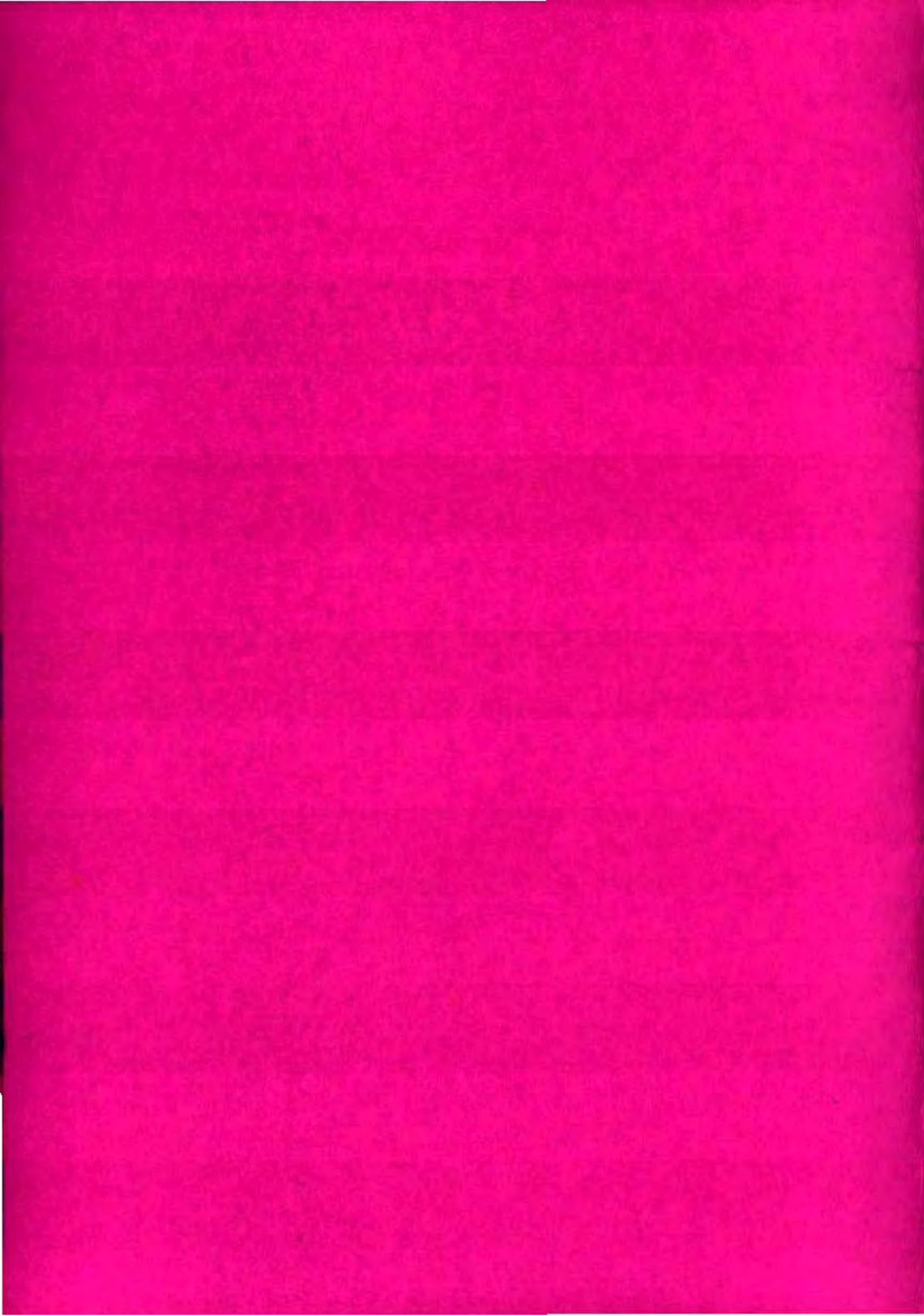


D90





A MIX-TAPE ZINE #2



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Over the spools and far away, pt 3
or, Sorry Mark, but haven't you heard that no story is truly objective?

My last issue of this zine (pauses: God god... I'm a sophomore... shudders), started with a railing against Mark Knopfler and his flippant uses of the word faggot. This was one of the first rants I wrote, sometime late in 2007 when making a mix-tape zine seemed like such an awesome idea that there was no fucking way it would take a little over a year to make.

A little over a year later, after rapidly compiling the first issue on the morning of the TINA zine fair in Newcastle, I handed out a coupla dozen issues to other ziney folk - all trading and lovely - and... well, I got responses. One person in particular gave me a beautifully detailed response, though she did take issue with the Mark rant.

The rant focused on the 'Money for nothing' song he did with Sting on the Brothers in arms album from '82. Apparently, the homophobic rant was told from the point of view of an electrical appliance store salesman looking at a video clip (or listening to a song) and the song happened to be Dire Straits. It was part of this general snide comment about how easy professional musicians get it, which Mark, understandably, took issue with.

See, he borrows from the country/western tradition of songwriting heaps. In this example, he was using the 'telling stories' attribute, which, well, can involve talking from the point of view of someone that's not you... possibly someone you quite despise. This is meant to be quite obvious in the way that you tell it. Which, I guess...

...it was. But it somehow missed me. And it somehow missed others, I'm sure. In the early 80s, when you're a not particularly feminine pop-rock star who's, well, just generally more male than the new romantic fops of the day who are ready to kick off their heels and run full pelt from the teddy boys who want to rip their guts out... and, well, they're quite used to being called 'faggot', Mark. That sentence wasn't complete. Oh well.

My point, which I'll jump to now, is that you can't steal someone else's words AND their voice - it is always your voice. Some people may misinterpret you. It'll still be you saying it. Damn... should've quoted Foucault. I was right to be chastised, but I'm still a bit cynical in my attitude to the Straits. That's Dire, man.

Welcome to my new zine, by the way. The last issue of D90, as you read earlier (unless you're just browsing through this idly like a lame shit), took over a year to come out. And, well, if you saw the last one, you'll remember that even given that timeframe of creation, it still came off looking a bit rough. Part of this was due to it being photocopied on a machine that was flashing 'low toner' at me for the hour or two it took to squeeze the first run out. Mainly, though... it was rushed. Most of the work was done in a matter of days, the time in-between spent working full-time, studying, moving, going through a number of personal issues, finally starting to see a shrink, and... a whole bunch of other excuses that really aren't good enough.

But thanks to the power of Target 144, I shall be getting this issue done in the space of just under a week, as can be seen by my metcardy proof of purchase/proof of date-ages. Hopefully. And, almost as hopefully, I see it being prettier... with a bit more leg. Sizzle.

5/4/05

My Friend John,

I find myself in highs and lows all the time - But I'm okay with that - As it means that half the time I'm stuck in the middle feeling neutral - Where I should be. ✓

Obviously I'd like to thank you quite a lot for the tape of "The Driver's Eyes" release - I really enjoyed it as it came across as the type of music I've been into these days - Night time, drinking, aggressive, thoughtful and hooked. - But maybe that's just me.

I mean it when I say that sadly I won't be able to join you in going to see this band play on Saturday night. I do have something else on I'm sorry to say - Planned quite some time ago, and kind of unavoidable.

As you can see I have followed

suit and sent you a tape also.
Side A containing a sample of songs
by "The Brian Jonestown Massacre" - A
band that I haven't stopped listening
to for over 12 months now. The R.E.M.
of my twenties, and the greatest band
that you will never hear of - until
now.

Side B are just some songs, some
long songs, that I have also enjoyed
lately that I thought you might as well.
But what do I know? - Give it a listen
and feel free to love and hate at
your free will.

We will catch up soon - It is great
knowing you are still around.

In time,

Simon

PS - I finally got to see R.E.M. play
on Sunday!

Mediums of theft

Harsh, John. This is really the way to kickstart your new issue. You ended on self-deprecation with the last issue, but that don't mean you need to start the next installment on the same tune. Sheesh...

It's happened to me a few times recently, though, and its getting me worried.

You see, every time I get a new CD, I have to back it up in MP3 format on my computer. I've been doing this for years, well before I got an MP3 player *grimaces, ducks, and weaves*. This probably started back in the day when I spent a fair chunk of my time on that big box of fans and heat and games (lots of fans... seriously... that thing doesn't like summer). Course, now it's not as common to be on for that long. But, obsessive compulsion being what it is, I have to keep on doing it.

This of course meant anyone wanting to grab huge chunks of my music collection could do so quite easily. And this happened a bit. It was really, really easy. If someone said they liked a certain album, artist, or even genre in my music collection, they could have it. Often, this would happen in a heartbeat. Somewhere in that beat, there was an even smaller measure of time - that measure held within it the warmth of sharing; that measure held a small particle of the currency of happiness known all too well by diligent zinesters sharing their pride and joy, as well as their shame and disgust. That currency has honesty and it has integrity.

That briefest moment escapes your grasp, though, no matter how hard you focus on it. I could make a photocopying analogy, but that doesn't seem right - someone has an exact version of something you had, and they can chose whether or not they want to listen to all, some, or none of it. Um, okay... that line of thought aint working too well either. I'm trying to get to that bad aftertaste. Maybe a clearer picture is called for.

The problem with the ease in which music can be transmitted this way is the way in which it changes the way the music is thereafter approached, a change that is often foreshadowed in the acquisition process. If great swathes of music are being considered, very brief comments on the music in question is often solicited. Here is where the first dismissals tend to arise.

Because the copying is so easy, other steps can seem clunky if they too are not also quite easy. Now, I'm not known for saying things quickly, so I tend to stumble at this point. I'd struggle for a band comparison, knowing they won't quite fit, then I struggle even more clumsily for a genre that would fit. If I take too long, onward the search goes through the rest of my music. In the end, I'd probably just leave them to browse and pilfer whatever they wished.

A few months back, a lover of mine was talking with a mutual friend on the topic of music - I'm unsure whether it was Martin Martini, The Dresden Dolls, or another similar such group - and the offer of a copy was made. Said mutual friend declined the offer, stating that his parents were both involved in the music industry, and had both been scarred in one way or another by music piracy. This caused quite a drastic change of heart in my lovers approach to her music collection. Some of her most treasured CDs were burns. At least one - one of the first burns she ever got - held

nostalgic value not only for the music it carried, but for the CD and photocopied packaging itself, once such a rare novelty. Nevertheless, she set about weeding pretty much every burnt CD out of her collection, buying new copies of the ones she couldn't live without this. I admired her conviction, and I also felt a little bit ill inside - if you stand for nothing, you'll put up with anything. Fuck.

It's not easy to harp on about how terrible MP3 culture is when all I'm doing here is harping on about the glory days of mix-tape yore. I remember my mother telling me about how one of her brothers used to consistently buy records for people as presents, then transfer them to reel-to-reel before handing them on. The technology kitsch makes me grin, but the gut feeling I get when offloading huge slabs of my music collection like... well, not off-loading - it's like someone picking nits out of my hair. Wait, that doesn't work either.

Confusion - that's the operative word here. Probably nausea too. It's that kind of nausea I get these days when I feel myself substituting my profession for my identity too often. Course, that isn't too out of step with the contemporary reflection of tape culture. People wear tapes as jewelry, and make t-shirts emblazoned with a coupla dozen scrawly mix-tapes. The idea of tapes is popular. More so, the idea of sitting down for a few hours and compiling a mix-tape is popular. Well, smiled on. It just doesn't sit comfortably in the contemporary music consumption consciousness. You're not expected to more or less listen to a 90 minute play-list, not without having the power to skip through if the first five seconds don't sound appealing. You could argue that fast-forwarding is driven by a similar impulse, but at least there's a random element in play - you're never really sure where you'll end up next.

Confusion. It's not like what's happening here is different in principle - it's still sharing music. But the time and regard given to each track has changed. MP3s are rarely deleted, but their also rarely given the time a track on a mix-tape is. MP3s, as omnipresent as they are, are ghosts - they could disappear, and no-one would know. They're the most ephemeral of ephemera, because they're clones. They can hop around the globe, then one day get lost, and that's okay. A track on a tape degrades. You can't pass it on without losing quality - it's finite. You have something no-one else will really have. You wouldn't think twice about trying to preserve it digitally - the analog and the digital just wouldn't gel, and it'd sound flat.

Tapes are moments, I guess. And you can't steal moments, even though music is far too easy to do so.

SIDE A

- 1: Spandau Ballet - Age of blows
- 2: The Amenta - Skin
- 3: Anathema - Closer
- 4: Dif Juz - Marooned
- 5: A Frames - Experiment
- 6: The Sinking Citizenship - A man
- 7: The Bedridden - Inland sea
- 8: Penelope Swales - Sweet thing
- 9: Margie Adam - I've got a fury
- 10: Slayer - Bitter peace
- 11: MZ.412 - Vampiir of the north
- 12: The Berzerker - Disregard

SIDE B

- 1: The Human League - Crow and a baby
- 2: Gary Numan - Moral
- 3: The Drivers Eyes - Reckless love
- 4: Fields of the Nephilim - Vet for the insane
- 5: Harold Budd / Elizabeth Fraser / Robin Guthrie / Simon Raymonde - Eyes are mosaics
- 6: Michael Gira - God's servant
- 7: Arab Strap - Pyjamas
- 8: Jane Badler with Sir - Single tonight
- 9: Lighting Bolt - 2morro morro land
- 10: Big Black - L dopa
- 11: Ghinzu - 21st century crooners

NOTE: In the last issue, I made the claim that the only type of tapes you can get these days are D90s - that was an out and out lie, as this page demonstrates.



But the sentiment is still the same, and I stand by it.

Death metal drag

Last year, on a cold windy night atop one of the tallest peaks in Newcastle, there was a gathering of around three dozen people. I rocked up sometime soon before midnight. At the top of the hill was a monument known only as the Obelisk. There, a metal-themed zine was to be launched by Luke and Ianto. Metal was being pumped from a small tape player, then from a laptop. I attempted some metal talk with the owner of the laptop afterwards, somewhat fudging my way through my knowledge of Black Sabbath via some more learned comments on Slayer, but that only lasted so long. At this point in my life, I've become quite aware that any serious friendship cannot be founded on music alone - it's not worth wasting piles of energy hoping for a connection. Some of the most annoying people I've met have been Cocteau Twins fans.

After a copy of the zine was burnt atop a sundial, the party slowly disbanded. Something that makes me quite fond of the zine community is its tendency to pike at about the same time in the evening as me. As much as I love the idea of staying up late and soaking in the night air amidst bizarre conversations, after a bit I just end up grumpy and sooky, looking for the nearest opening within which to make an exit. If an easy exit isn't possible - no public transport, too far to walk, no-one sober enough to drive - I start building walls. If you want to shatter the illusion of being a pleasant person to associate with early on in a friendship, I strongly suggest walls - big, fuck-off cement cunts. Then you'll be eyed with suspicion and kept at a distance for at least the next few months until you snap out of it.

On the way down from the hill, Luke asked me when my music career was going to begin. We walked a few more steps, which actually covered a far bit of space because of the steep decline towards the backpackers, and I took half a breath in, trying to think of the best way to respond. Before I properly exhaled, he smiled and said, enthusiastically, "I think next year at TINA". That gave me a year to give myself a swift kick up the arse. I think I gave a laugh, but not in a really dismissive way - I knew that he was right.

In the last year of my undergrad, I spent around four or five months as the keyboardist for a band that ended up being called Schadenfreude (that's German for finding pleasure in the pain of others). I technically had six or seven years worth of piano training under my belt, but that all finished back when I was 15. Also, I was a terrible student. Most of the memories of my first teacher are of him telling me off for not having done a drop of practice since the previous week, and most of the memories of my second teacher are just generally littered with her particularly reserved form of passive aggression. I was the first person to make her leave the piano room mid-lesson, and every time I saw her brother at the local Salvos in the years that followed and spoke to her brother behind the counter, I thought about that... and sighed. When my mother told her that I was doing keyboards for a band, she apparently said that people often come back to the instruments they learnt in

UNTITLED

CHORUS:

A^{'''} C G
A D G
A C G
A D C

~~82~~ SOUNDS: SAW WAVE
82 (PRESENT)

VERSE: G/E

G^{''} A^{''} B⁻
G A B A G
E A B
E A B

SOUND:
PS POW
82/VMS

G E

VERTIGO:

E G A
E^{'''} F^{#'''} G E[#] E F E

SURELY MORE THAN THIS
VERSE^m

A^m C D^m F

CHORUS

C E A^m F

G = F[#]

A^m = NATURAL

D^m = ?

F = ?

their youth. Or, well, something. My memory of my mother's paraphrasing have been a bit blurred by my own second-guessing of whatever emotion was rippling beneath the surface. In case you're wondering, my first piano teacher disappeared - he had debts, and he had to run. He reminded my a bit of Michael Tunn.

So, on paper, it looked like I had talent. But a couple of months in, and that really wasn't the case. I liked hanging out with the group, and the thought of being a part of some creative musical force set sparks off in formerly dormant parts of my brain. But I still wasn't practicing. Every week, my friend, Kitty, would drop around to my place in Carlton, taking me and the keyboard off to the rehearsal space in East Brunswick. It was a run-down, dingy kind of place that on occasion reminded me of an ugly bastard child of the Pony and the Tote. Old blankets, bits of foam and crappy mattresses lined the walls and ceilings. Every week, we spent a few hours practicing a handful of songs, trying (and failing) to pick a decent name, drinking beer, and making dick jokes. The last point got to me more and more, although I didn't feel up to saying anything about it, lest the extra space I then would be taking up made it even more apparent that I had no sense of rhythm. This, along with the fact that I couldn't afford the \$20 a week to go toward the use of the rehearsal space, eventually lead to my voluntary resignation. They decided to make do without a keyboardist. I tried not to feel a little disheartened when their Church/Icehouse flavoured, new-romantic blended rock stylings began attracting larger crowds, but it's hard to avoid those gut reactions.

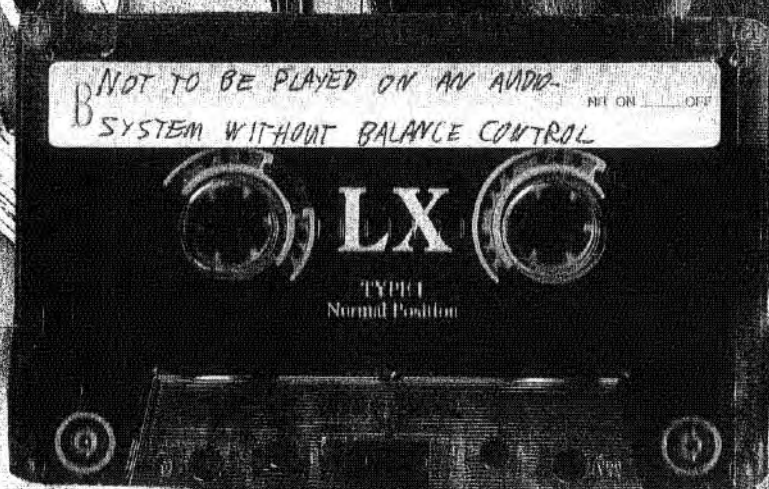
The next year, I did a couple of DJ spots at a noise club - the first time, due to a communication error, as 'DJ John', and the second as 'Fitzcarraldo'. The year after that, I did a spot at a regular goth club, doing the first coupla hours of the night. They didn't ask me back. All throughout that time, I was also doing a radio show called Cake & Sodomy on a local gay & lesbian radio station (that has how the latter club spotted me). Also, that time period coincided with my re-ignited love of mix-tapes. I was becoming more and more shameless about it. Before then, this shameless urge was mainly limited to the selection of music I would play in my times volunteering at Sticky, often with mixed results (it's hard to feel truly at ease in a small store being filled with Swedish industrial sounds, I guess). But, despite that amazing sense of creative elation and resurrection I got through my brief time the-band-that-became-named, I still didn't feel confident or inspired enough to bang away at the keyboard that I still had on long-term loan.

Now, though, I'm getting fewer and fewer excuses. My anger at things that are missing within the broader musical stratosphere is getting more specific, and somewhat righteously indignant - if I don't channel this soon, I'll probably end up hurting someone (needless to say, it's extreme metal I'm focusing on - more specifically, intolerance and faux-transgression that... well, here's where I get academic and start losing readers... sorry, I'll leave that for another forum). Also, I'm steadily accruing more and more gear.

Late last year, a closer friend of mine was given a 4-track as she was leaving a house interview, which she promptly passed on to me. And, fuck it, it works. Oh yeah. I've also still got Kitty's keyboard on long-term loan - it's always only one or two ka-chinks away from being plugged in and ready to burn. My computer has plenty of sound-processing and recording software, if I ever wanted to do anything non-analog (or, well, just wanted to make a digital pressing of my analog master... or, ya know, do it the other way around, to get some samples going). And I have a mike. And it works. Damn. All that's left between me and some kind of offensive black metal noise disaster piece is a distortion pedal (or two) and a drum machine. Just, dammit, something. It's hard to get momentum when you're standing still.

So this is where I'm heading, I guess. If nothing else, I have the memory of the Obelisk, and those words that followed, keeping me in check. You can't really keep on handing on this much music, no matter how precise and amazing your track transitions are, without the urge for bigger and greater coming into play. Pretty soon, all that bitching about the lack of death metal drag gets a bit trite, and the onus turns around and pulls you a big of greasy. There's gonna be plenty more tapes with that same gap that'll be finding their way into the mix-o-sphere, but not everyone's gonna be complaining about it as much as you are.

There we go... slightly evaded responsibility by way of 2nd person perspective. Nice one.



On 9/24/06, John <[REDACTED]@student.rmit.edu.au> wrote:

> Dear Jesus (ie: Shad),

>

> I'm home. Your article was the affirmation I've been looking for. It spoke to me. Who is me? Well...

>

> For the first five years of this millenium, I was studying writing. This year, I've chosen librarianship, because as a friend once put it: You'd be a GREAT librarian! You're anal retentive AND you look great in a cardigan!

>

> In my spare time, I can be found presenting a radio show on a local queer radio station, volunteering in a zine store, and making mix-tapes. I should write more, but...

>

> Now you know.

>

> We should share music. One of the few points I could think of that your article was lacking in was a mention of the importance of introducing people to new music, rather than just giving them what they want. Fuck, people don't know what they REALLY want! It takes a tape of wonders, full of tracks they're just as likely to hate as love. That's another point, I guess: ALWAYS give them something you're almost certain they'll hate. You never know, you just might hit the right notes on the musical color wheel, make a perfect contrast, and BAM!! They're changed forever.

>

> If your interested in some international mix-tape madness, e-mail me back with a postal address, and with any luck you'll have a tape within a fortnight - Guaranteed.

>

> Come on... we both deserve early christmas presents.

>

> Yours in tape,

> John

> (Melbourne, Australia)

Over the spools and far away, pt 4
or, Why Akercocke need less cock(e)

This is an issue I've been thinking about a bit of late, more so since I realised that the completion of my masters will prohibit me from attending the first ever 'heavy metal and gender' conference in Cologne, Germany in October this year (grrrr). Any example of gender/sexuality subversion in heavy (or, better yet, extreme) metal seems to get my full attention. As a flip-side, I tend to be grumbling more at the myriad fucked-up things to do with gender/sexuality representation in metal. Ah fuck it, it's mainly extreme metal. Not that heavy metal's more noble in the fight against heteronormativity and/or gender essentialism - fuck, it's worse most of the time (thank you very fucking much, glam metal, for all your superficial good intentions) - but, fuck it, extreme metal just grabs me more.

When I was a whittle 16 year old, Dani Filth's awesome make-up-ness helped lay the groundwork for my new identity as a transvestite in rural Victoria. And, well, his generally really gay friendly and pro-pink public comments helped my grinning at him too. Course, their rather uncritical quoting of 120 days of Sodom, alongside the same kind of objectification of women that every black metal band worth their awful, crusty salt emblazons all over their album covers... that's kind of hard to avoid.

And then, in the last year, I've discovered Akercocke. These guys - progressive blackened death metal who, like Dani Filth's dark metal Cradle, also hail from the UK - got noticed for a few reasons. For one, they're sound is quite unique: hammered dulcimer, Sonic Youth-esque riffs, power electronics/industrial flourishes. Also, they all wear full suits. Ties. Shoes. Coats. BEIGE coats, people... Beige. They'd do photo shoots as if they were upper-class 19th century Englishmen, riding in the woods around, um... Devon. Then hunting, rifles cocked over their arms. That's when you start to get worried. Then... you notice a blurred image of a woman in the foreground, her breasts the only really distinguishable thing. Then you jump a few albums earlier, flick through their video clips, and it's pretty much all them sitting back, gazing at the naked women making out.

Goddammit! I'd lost my interest in black metal years ago - back then, it was mainly due to the neo-nazi stream - and these guys were rejuvenating it. And, hell, I still fuckin' listen to them. But, now that I've discovered 90s death metal drag grind-masters Filthy Maggoty Cunt, and seen the vocalist for Swedish suicidal black metallers Shining passionately making out with Maniac, the former vocalist for Norway's own Mayhem, and... and... I'm in the process of discovering an intriguing and experimental Finnish black metal group called Enochian Crescent... and... FUCK! People, like Keith Kahn-Harris, are writing about this more these days, too, so I know I'm not the only one.

Well, that was facetious of me. I haven't done a single damn semester of gender studies, and nor do I plan to anytime soon (3/4 of a decade spent at some form of tertiary institution is enough, I think). I've just had some growing anger at patriarchy, masculinity, and men in general enhanced over the last ten years by identifying as a bleeding great tranny. And I still love metal, regardless. I'm just sick of apologising for it as much as I used to. I want to be damn proud of my music, without having to hide elements. This is probably why I don't put much metal on my mix-tapes. I have an idea of the image tape recipients will get in their heads, and I know it'll be pretty accurate.

They are sexist dicks. They do think women don't have a place on stage. And they're about as homophobic as the christians they claim to hate. Then stop singing about sodomy, alright! FUCK!



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