

STICKY SOUNDS

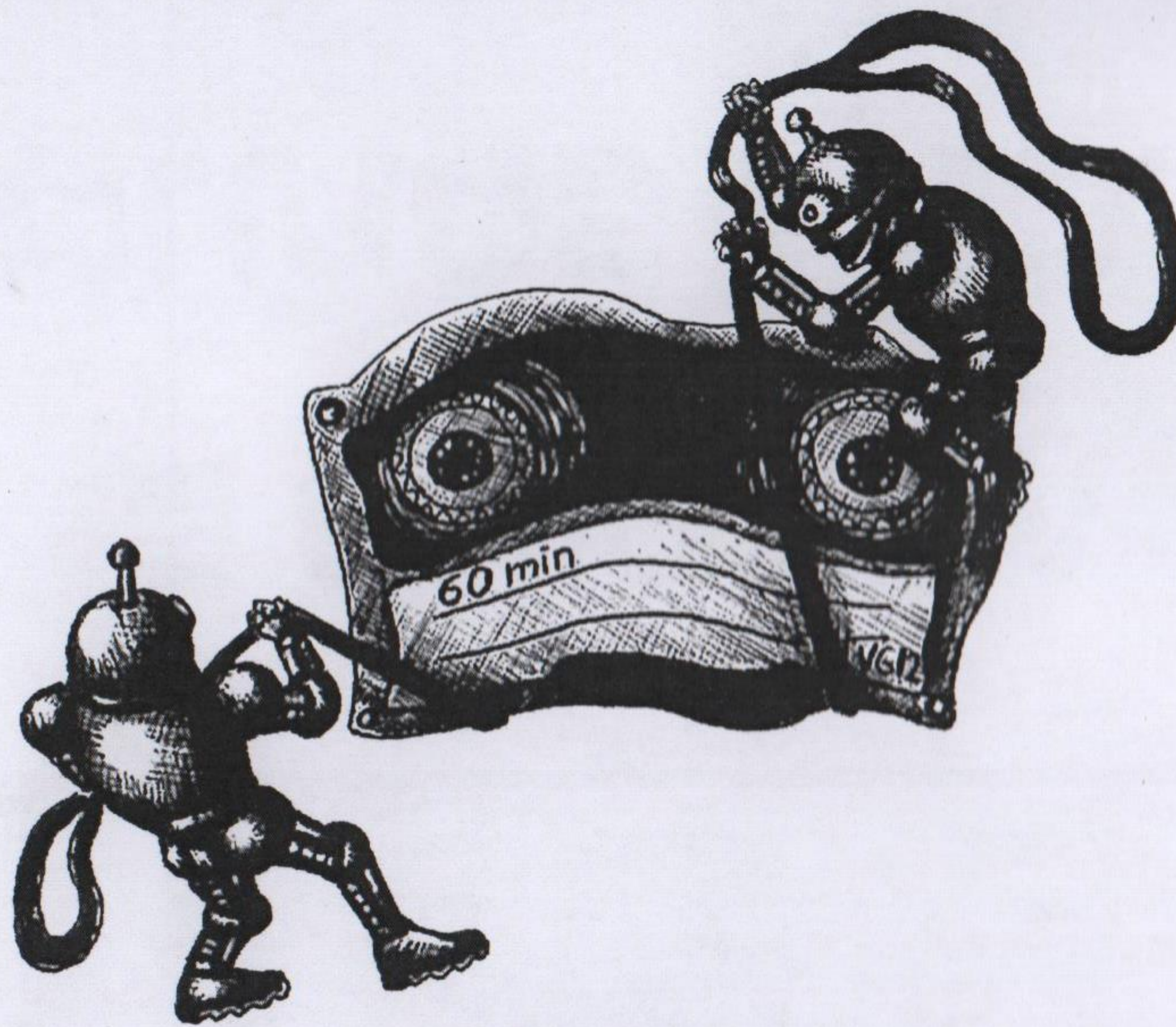
VOLUME 5



JUNE 2013



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Hideous Images

A look at the artwork of Matt Watson, whose designs go under the moniker of Hideous Images.

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Follow up to the essay in volume 4 on the 90s music that influenced me in my teenage years, this time looking at the following decade.

Vitriolic Response

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A short story about the time I was chased by a serial killer.

Photozine

To coincide with volume 5 of Sticky Sounds I have put together a very limited edition colour urban exploration photozine, you can find out more about that here.

Introduction to Volume 5

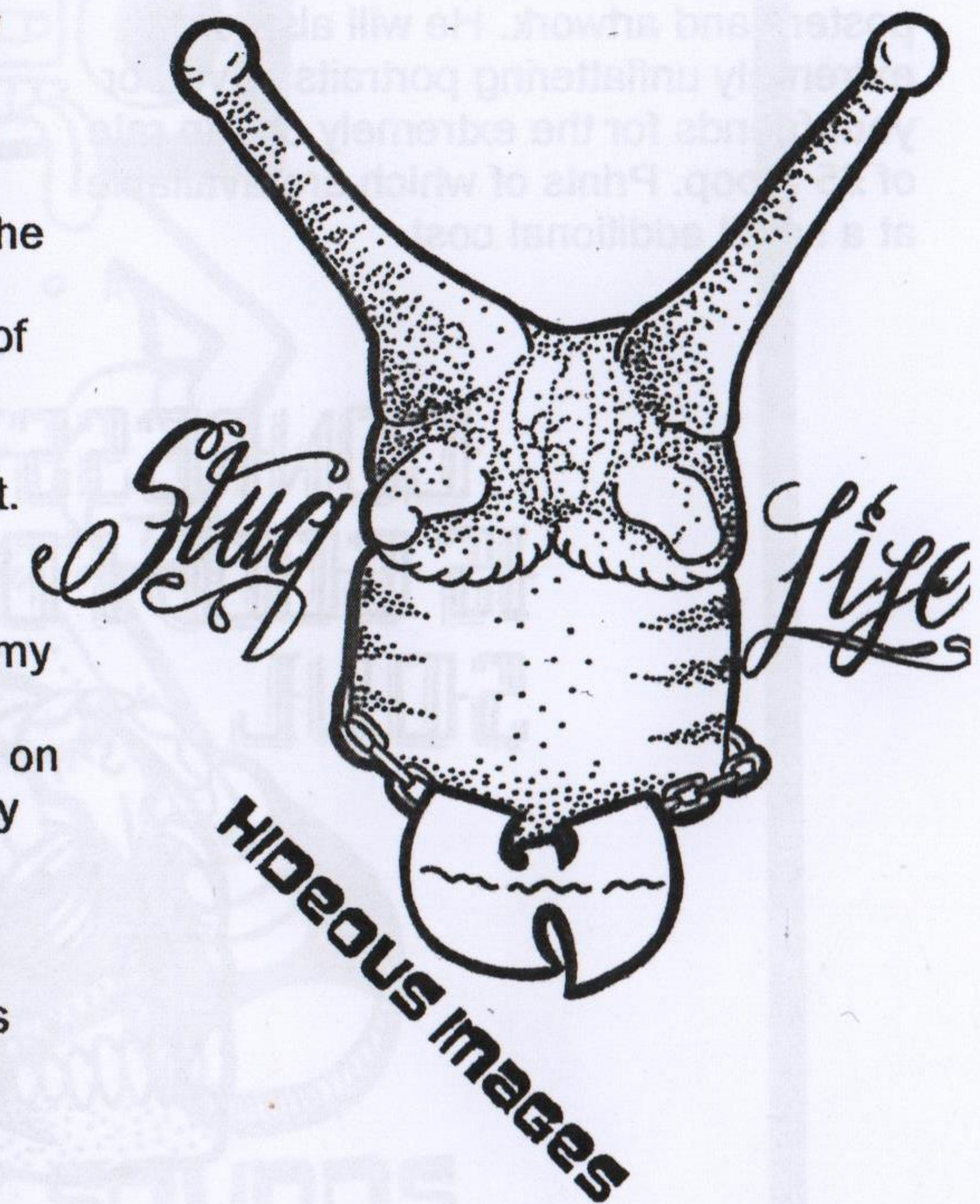
As well as being the fifth volume this is also the first anniversary of the zine. When I first started it I had no idea where it go, or even if it would continue past that first issue. Originally my intent was to do little more than put the content of my blog on paper. I would like to hope that it's become more than that now though.

Volume 5 is the first to include interviews, carried out with people responsible for producing books, artwork, and music which has so enthused me that I want to promote it in these pages. I would be reluctant to attempt to pigeonhole Sticky Sounds but I think that with this issue it has taken a slight step away from being simply a perzine, though it still remains very much my monster. The content of the zine is as varied as ever.

My mental health hasn't been too good of late and this has had a knock on effect with production of the zine, though perhaps not in the way you might expect. For reasons I won't go into here I've isolated myself, ceasing to attend appointments and even stopped taking my medication. This self-imposed exile has left me with nothing else to do but focus on the zine. As a result I've produced a very limited edition colour photozine (Sticky Sounds 5.5) to coincide with volume 5 proper. It's based on some of my adventures in urban exploration and has been sent to people I felt might be interested in that sort of thing. I've also included a few snippets here in these pages. Due to the expense of printing in colour I only produced a total of 30 photozines, if you didn't receive one but would like to then get in touch and I'll see what I can do.

Other than that volume 5 is an eclectic bunch of essays, including a short story documenting my brief dalliance with a serial killer and the story of my 2000-2010 mix-tapes.

As always you have my sincerest thanks for taking the team to read this zine. Should you wish to get involved, to contribute, ask any questions or request a back issue then my email address is stickyvickypunk@gmail.com

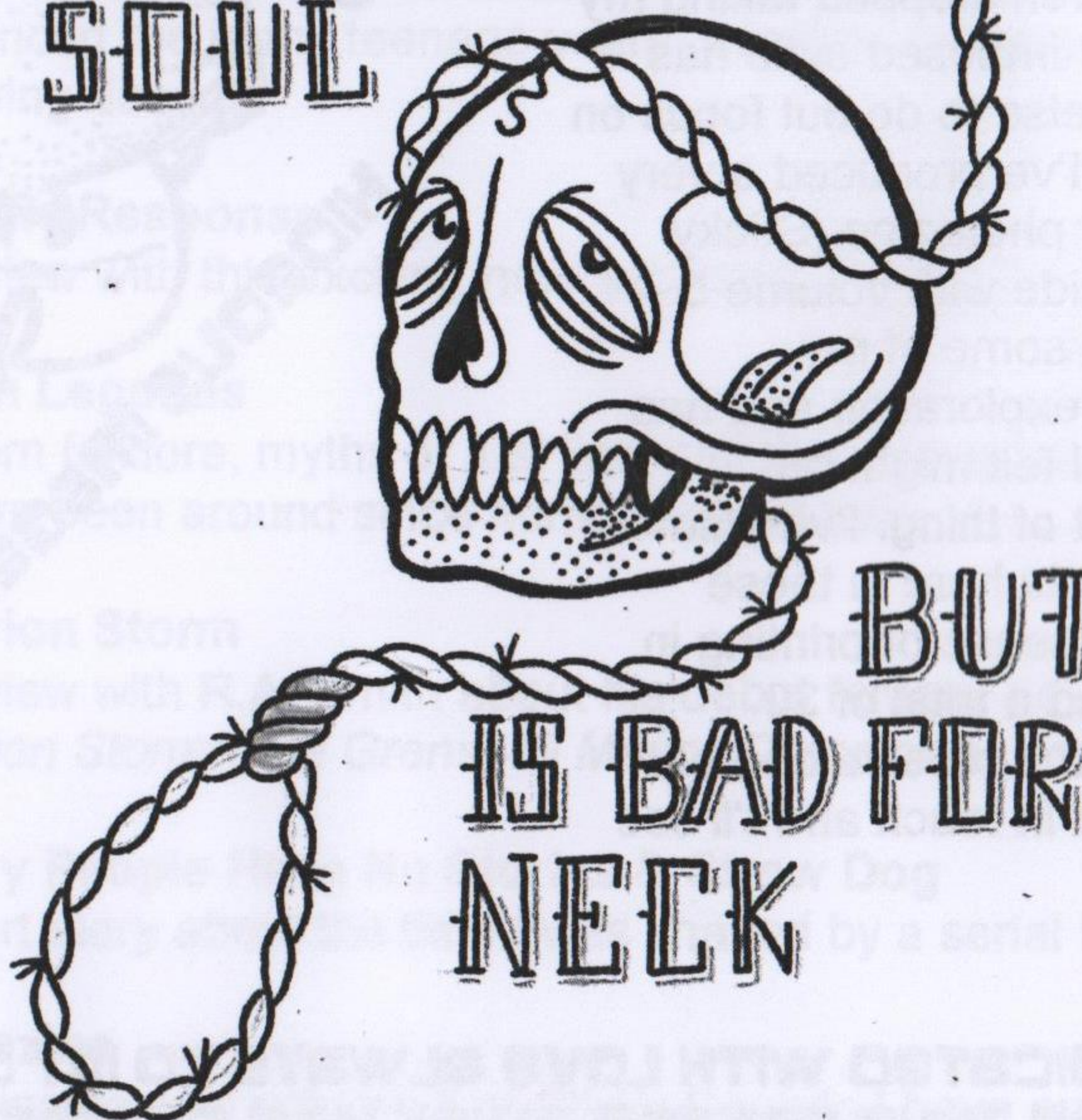


THIS ZINE IS DEDICATED WITH LOVE ALWAYS TO MY DEAR FRIEND 'SCRUBBER' ALAN, WHO PASSED AWAY WHILE I WAS WRITING IT.

Hideous Images

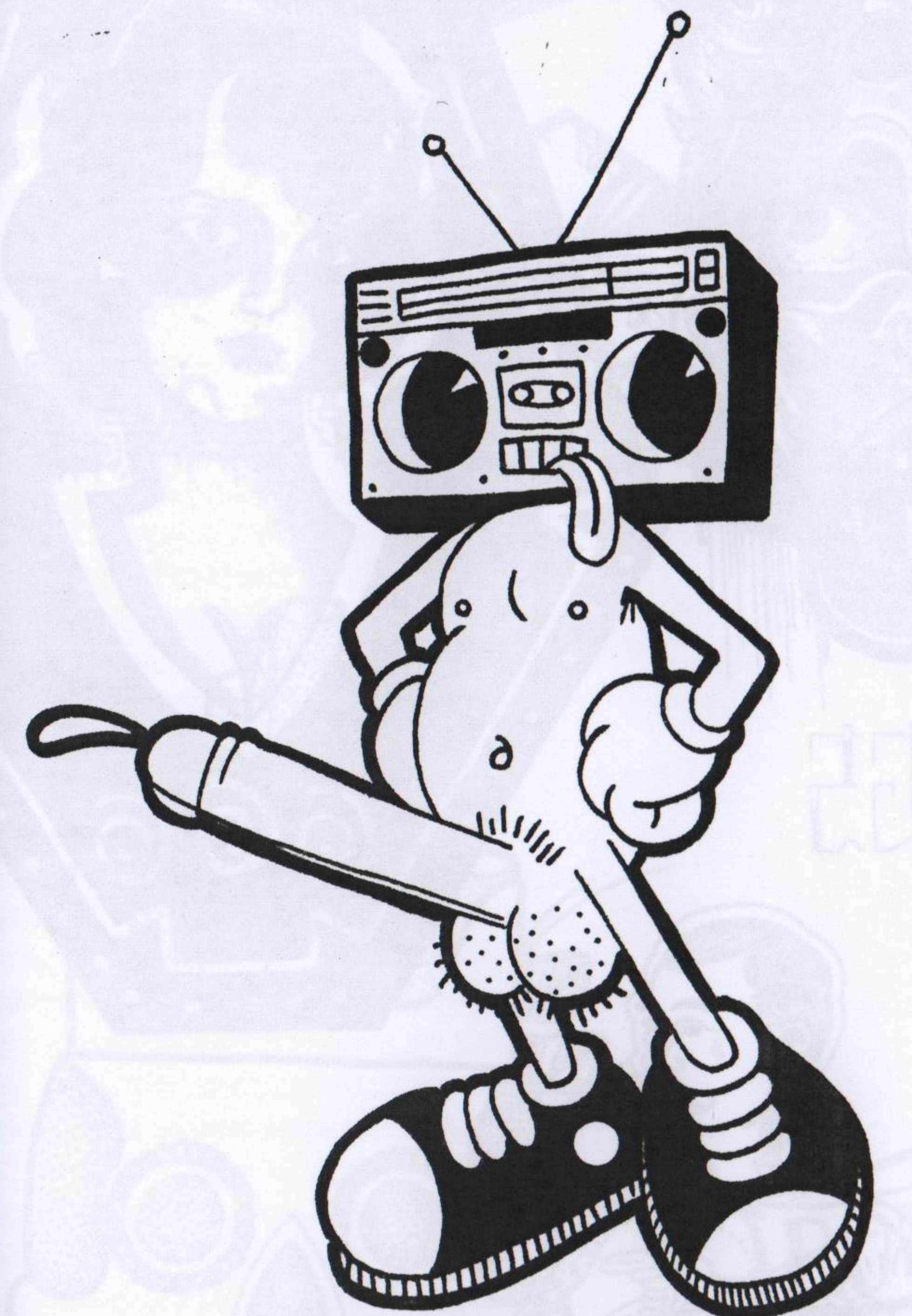
Hideous Images is the name that Matt Watson has given to the artwork he produces. He has a distinctive style which he describes as "illustrations that will make you want to punch your nan at a family get-together for no reason whatsoever," he further states that his artwork is drawn by "one individual who couldn't care less about the differences between graphic design, illustration and fine art." Under the moniker 'Hideous Images' Matt has produced numerous designs for local musical outfits and zines, including logos, posters and artwork. He will also draw extremely unflattering portraits of you or your friends for the extremely cheap rate of £5 a pop. Prints of which are available at a small additional cost.

CONFESSION
IS GOOD FOR THE
SOUL



BUT
IS BAD FOR THE
NECK

I saw Hideous Images via the facebook page and immediately loved the bold, distinctive style. I was planning to get some badges and stickers printed up for the zine so I contacted Matt to enquire as to whether he would be willing to design an image for me. I gave him no specifications on what I wanted and was simply interested as to what he would come up with based purely on the name of the zine; 'Sticky Sounds.' What he drew is simply fantastic; twisted, grotesque and amusing in equal measures, and I love it! It's just unfortunate that I didn't have the bottle to put it on the front cover where it belongs. I fear that if I did it would cause a repeat of the Dead Kennedys court case over the H.R. Giger 'Penis Landscape' artwork.



STICKY SOUNDS

HIDEOUS IMAGES CAN BE
CONTACTED AT
WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/HIDEOUSIMAGES



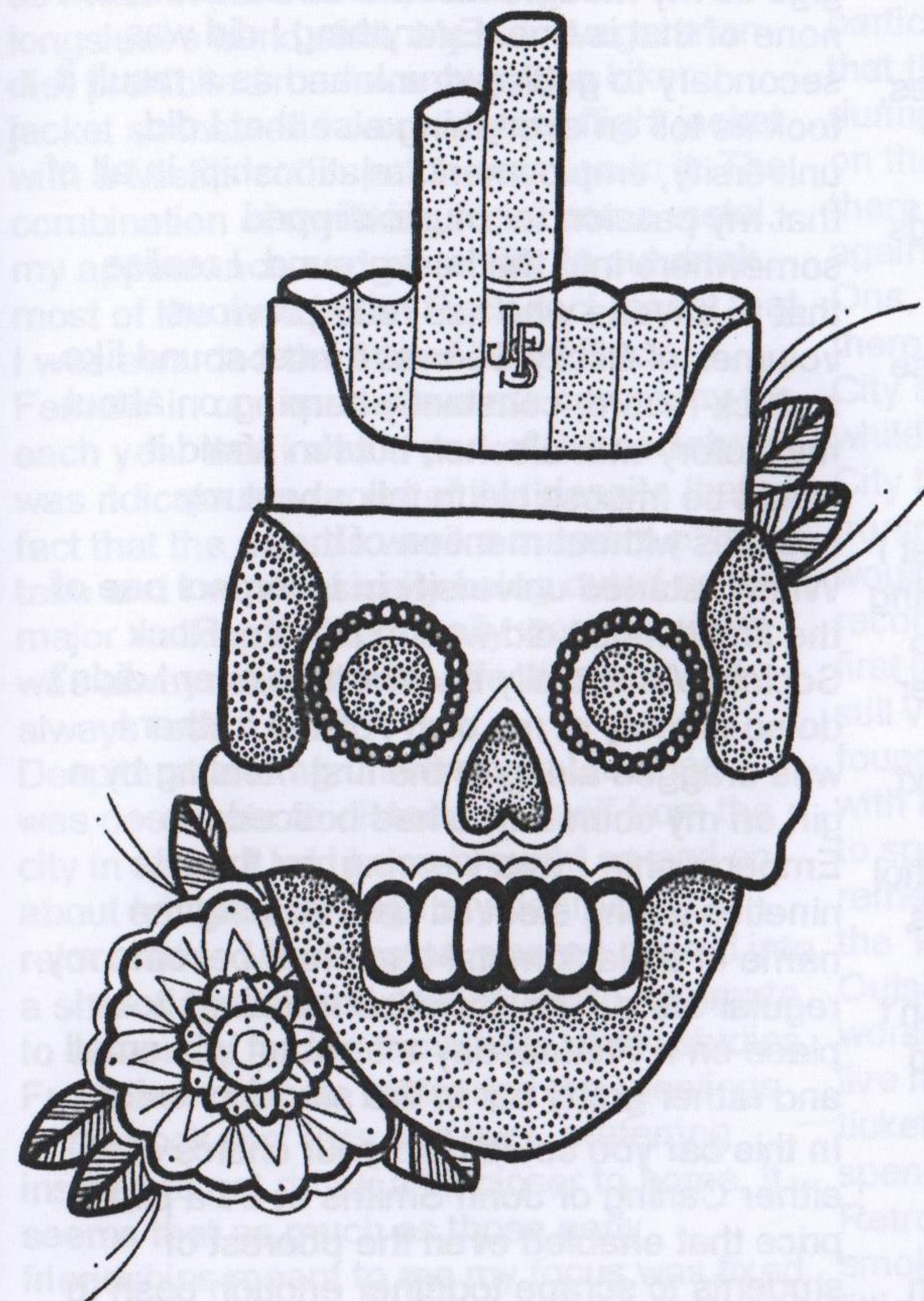
DRUGS

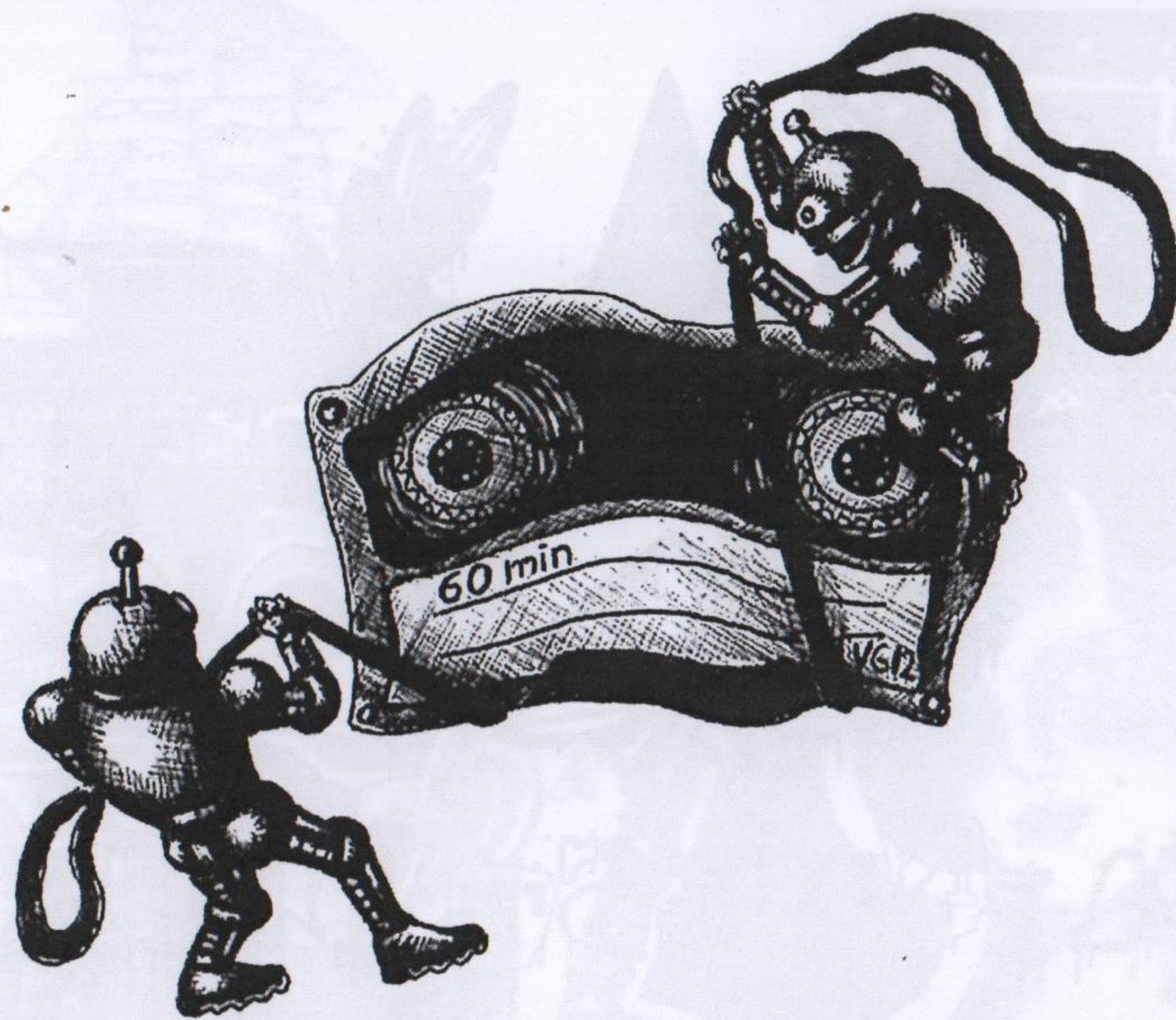


ADRENALINE



FANFIEST IDEA





2000-2010 Mix Tapes

It was fairly easy to write about the nineties, or at least to write about the part music played in my life throughout that period. Teenage years shine so brightly and bonds are formed with an intensity that seems rarely to be repeated in adult life. In my socially inept and somewhat reclusive case music became the focus of my little world, probably serving to compensate for the relationships I failed to build with other human beings. It was somewhat fitting that I spent the Millennium Eve in Cardiff watching the Manic Street Preachers, the band who had meant more to me than any other over the last 10 years.

It is far more difficult to write about the next 10 years, the decade when music and everything else took second place to alcohol and my pursuit of drinking as much of it as was humanly possible. Regrets are meaningless, we all know that, but it doesn't stop us from having them, even if we try to hide the fact. I would rather be able to tell you about how my twenties continued in much the same vein as my teens, how I continued to write for zines, practice my drumming and maybe play in a succession of cool underground bands, go to as many

gigs as my meagre income would allow, but none of that is true. Everything I did was secondary to getting drunk and as a result it took its toll on everything else that I did, university, employment, relationship, in all of that my passion for music slipped somewhere into the background. I realise that to anyone who has read previous volumes of Sticky Sounds I must sound like a stuck-record, constantly harping on about my history with alcohol, but I'm afraid it would be impossible to talk about my twenties without mention of it.

When I started university in Liverpool one of the first things I did was to join the Rock Society. As socially awkward as ever I didn't do so entirely of my own volition, rather I was dragged along to the first meeting by a girl on my course who had noticed the Emperor shirt I was wearing, by the late nineties a long sleeved shirt bearing the name of a black metal band had become my regular attire. The societies meetings took place on a Wednesday afternoon in a small and rather grotty bar in the students union.

In this bar you could take your choice of either Carling or John Smiths at £1 a pint, a price that enabled even the poorest of students to scrape together enough cash to get comfortably inebriated. It was the combination of cheap alcohol and people

with the same interests as me that enabled me to feel comfortable in a social situation for perhaps the first time in my life. I felt a real sense of contentment at that time, sat in that bar drinking pint after pint of Carling and chain smoking Regal King Size cigarettes. Alcohol had the magic ability of allowing me to feel accepted, to feel a part of something, in a way my flawed personality would never allow while sober.

It was everything I had ever wanted and it was available on tap.

***"This shadow is darkly cast on the retina of my soul and whenever I am dislodged from comfort my focus falls there."* – Russell Brand**

At this point my passion for music lay firmly in black metal and as ever I did not throw myself into this obsession with any half measure. I was a walking encyclopaedia on the subject and I dressed the part, kitted out as I was in para boots, combat trousers and long-sleeved band shirt. My strict vegetarian diet prohibited me from owning a biker jacket so instead I wore a black flight jacket with a Misfits coffin patch sewn on to it. The combination of my liking for extreme metal, my appearance and my ability to out drink most of the men in the Rock soc' meant that I was awarded the title of 'Most Rock Female' in our annual awards ceremony for each year that I was a part of the society. I was ridiculously proud of this despite the fact that the awards were a massive p**s-take and I was basically being outed as the major walking cliché I really was. The joke was always meant with affection and so I always took it thus.

Despite attending university in Liverpool I was desperate to distance myself from the city in which I had been brought up and so about half way through my degree I relocated to Manchester, where I moved into a shared house and proceeded to commute to university for the remainder of my studies. From that point on I attended the meetings of the rock soc' less and less, preferring instead to get drunk a bit closer to home. It seems that as much as those early friendships meant to me my focus was fixed far more on the alcohol I consumed while socialising.

My second haunt was to be the Retro Bar in Manchester, a place I would end up spending much of the next 10 years in. It began as just a bar in which I would meet friends when the UMIST student union bar was closed, from there it became my place of employment and a job that lasted roughly 2 years, and from then on it became my regular drinking haunt until I eventually faced my alcohol dependence at the end of the decade. When I started working there it was prior to it being the live venue/venue for an eclectic selection of club nights that it has since become. I didn't therefore expect it to have any influence on my music taste. While I worked there the Basement Club increasingly became a venue for alternative music nights and I saw a fair few bands, while working on the bar downstairs, who I still listen to now. The one that most sticks in my mind is the time that ska band Lightyear played to a relatively small crowd. In particular I remember the cardboard canoe that the band 'rowed' around the room in during Blindsight. I loved working in that club on the nights there were bands playing and there were certain bands I remember seeing again and again; Strawberry Blondes, Strap Ons, Hooker and Valerie. On top of this there were club nights like Voodoo and Sin City and all of the new music I would hear while working on the bar then. It was at Sin City that I met Moz for the first time (now frontman of The Dangerous Aces) and he would always have new music to recommend, I remember that it was him who first introduced me to Leftover Crack. I was still very quiet at this point and while working found it difficult to strike up conversations with bar patrons, few people notice or bother to speak to someone like that and I remember being described at one point as the 'little lesbian in the rock shirts.' Outside of work and as my drinking worsened I wasn't very good at going to see live music, even when I had bought the ticket in advance. Instead I preferred to spend the evening propping up the bar at Retro, drinking, talking s**t and chain smoking. Even my favourite band was of little interest once I had started drinking and plenty of tickets went unused over that

period. The internet became my primary source for accessing new music, in particular the sites blackmetal.co.uk and [myspace](http://myspace.com). In the early part of the decade I would still venture to clubs like Jilly's, the Brick House or 5th Avenue but it was rare that I would be able to remember much of the music that had been played the next day. A particular favourite was the punk room at Jilly's on a Thursday night and when I first moved to Manchester that became something of a weekly event. My housemate Gareth and I perfected something called 'dancing like a tit' which involved dancing in the most ridiculously exaggerated way possible, usually when the room was relatively quiet and we were the only two people on the dancefloor. Below is the cover of a mix-cd he made me for my birthday that year. I'm not sure I could do that anymore, either sobriety age or just plain feeling like a 'tit' would prevent me, but back then I had no such inhibitions. I'm pretty sure I must've looked like a right pratt. It was through Gareth that I first heard Reel Big Fish (prime 'dancing like a tit' music) and we saw them live a few times over that period. Despite my

love of black metal, punk remained a big part of my musical make-up and probably made up what little live music I did see and a favourite gig from back then was Deconstruction fest at the Apollo, headlined by NOFX one year and then Pennywise the next. As always I had no problems attending gigs on my own, having become accustomed to being the only person with my musical tastes in my teenage years. I never went anywhere without a walkman in my teens and this continued into my twenties with a variety of mp3 players. They accompanied my walk to a variety of jobs and on the drunken stagger home from the pub of an evening. It also accompanied me in some of my jobs, including the one in which I had to put 1000 stamps per hour on 1000 envelopes and also my more long term employment in the university library. I remember thinking how lucky I was to have a job where I could listen to my mp3 while quietly shelving books, particularly if I was working in the stores or during the students' holidays. Alcohol and the subsequent mental health problems took their toll though and I lost that job after 5 years of employment there.

MUSIC FOR DANCING LIKE A TIT

(AND FOR BEATING UP
THE ELDERLY AND
LIL' NEKKID CHEERLEADERS)



"For myself, I can only say that I am astonished and somewhat horrified at the results of this evening's experiments. Astonished at the wonderful power you have developed, and horrified at the thought that so much heinous and bad music may be put on record forever."
— Sir Arthur Sullivan, message to Edison, 1888

It was during my time working at the library that I became acquainted with the blackmetal.co.uk forum, though I never actually posted on it. Instead I would check it on a regular basis in order to read of new music. Through it I accessed a whole world of amazing underground music, bands including Caina, Instinct, Winterfylleth, Nuit Noire, Wodensthron, Fen and Ghast. It also introduced me to the fantastic Todestrieb distro which continues to be a major source of my music purchases to this day.

2009 marked my initial attempts to deal with drinking and with the help of antabuse medication I eventually stopped in early 2010.

It's all about escaping from myself, of becoming less self-aware and shutting off the voices in my head, of achieving a kind of numbness. Some kind of nothingness. I think that I tried to achieve that in my teens through music and then found that I could do it to far greater affect with alcohol.

The temptation is still there now, there have been times at gigs when I have found myself paying far too much attention to the bar or what the person next to me is drinking, but I'm also aware that as soon as I drink I will absolutely cease to care about the bands I had gone there to see.

The difference in my life has been marked, as though coming back from the walking dead. I began attending more and more gigs, particularly those put on by local labels and promoters; TNS, Slit and Pumpkin Records. Though still attending them alone, and rarely being able to talk to anyone for long I found that I felt a degree of friendship and acceptance there, and the underground music scene itself is awesome. Sobriety has brought with it a variety of mental health problems and as these took their toll it became increasingly difficult for me to attend gigs, or to be around people at all. I still regularly order the music from these distros and aim to get back to the gigs soon. You can be sure that when I do you will read about it in this zine.





DATE/TIME NOISE REDUCTION ☐ ON ☐ OFF

JAY REATARD - IT AINT GONNA SAVE ME • ANAAL NATHRAKH - LAMA SABAGTHANI
 THE ROOFTOPS - 5TH AND HOPE • DARKTHRONE - RAISED ON ROCK
 GALLHAMMER - BLIND MY EYES • AUTONOMADS - DUBBIN' UP THE DOWNFALL
 WINTERFYLLETH - MAN TOR • BADLY DRAWN BOY - IN SAFE HANDS
 HATEFUL ABANDON - BOILING SEAS • OFF WITH THEIR HEADS - TRYING TO BREATHE
 STAR-FUCKING - 911 WAS (AN INSIDE JOKE) • BURNT CROSS - (S)MOTHER EARTH
 GOGOL BORDELLO - IMMIGRANT PUNK • DRAGGED INTO SUNLIGHT - BURIED WITH LEECHES
 THE HYPERJAX - ONE BLAZING SOUL • GHAIST - GIVE YOUR WRISTS
 REVENGE OF THE PSYCHOTRONIC MAN - GET PISSED, TALK SHIT • AMON AMARTH - VALHALL AWAITS ME
 INNERPARTYSYSTEM - DON'T STOP • NUIT NOIRE - FAIRIES *** K HUMAN
 CRAZY ARM - STILL TO KEEP • WOLVES IN THE THRONE ROOM - DEA ARTIO
 DEAD TO ME - LITTLE BROTHER • CAINA - TEN WENT UP RIVER

TDK My 2005 - 2010 Mix-Tape FE

TDK
FE
NORMAL POSITION
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TDK



DATE/TIME NOISE REDUCTION ☐ ON ☐ OFF

AT THE DRIVE IN - ONE ARMED SCISSOR • MANIC STREET - FOUND THAT SOUL
 QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE - THE LOST ART OF KEEPING A SECRET • ALKALINE TRIO - PRIVATE EYE
 P.O.T.U.S.A. - VIDEO KILLED THE RADIO STAR • LIGHTYEAR - BLINDSIDE
 JOE STRUMMER - MEGA BOTTLE RIDE • OUTKAST - MS. JACKSON
 PENNYWISE - FUCK AUTHORITY • REEL BIG FISH - BEER
 LARS FREDERIKSEN & THE BASTARDS - ARMY OF ZOMBIES • RANCID - ANTENNAS
 MAD CAPSULE MARKETS - ISLAND • EMPEROR - CURSE YOU ALL MEN!
 MOBY - SOUTH SIDE • RAMMSTEIN - LINKS 234
 FEAR FACTORY - LINCHPIN • THE CASUALTIES - UNKNOWN
 DECAPITATED - SPHERES OF MADNESS • THE DEAD PETS - ATTITUDE
 LEFTOVER CRACK - CRACK CITY ROCKERS • TRANSPLANTS - DIAMONDS AND GUNS
 TIGER ARMY - NEVER DIE • CRADLE OF FILTH - FROM THE CRADLE TO ENSLAVE

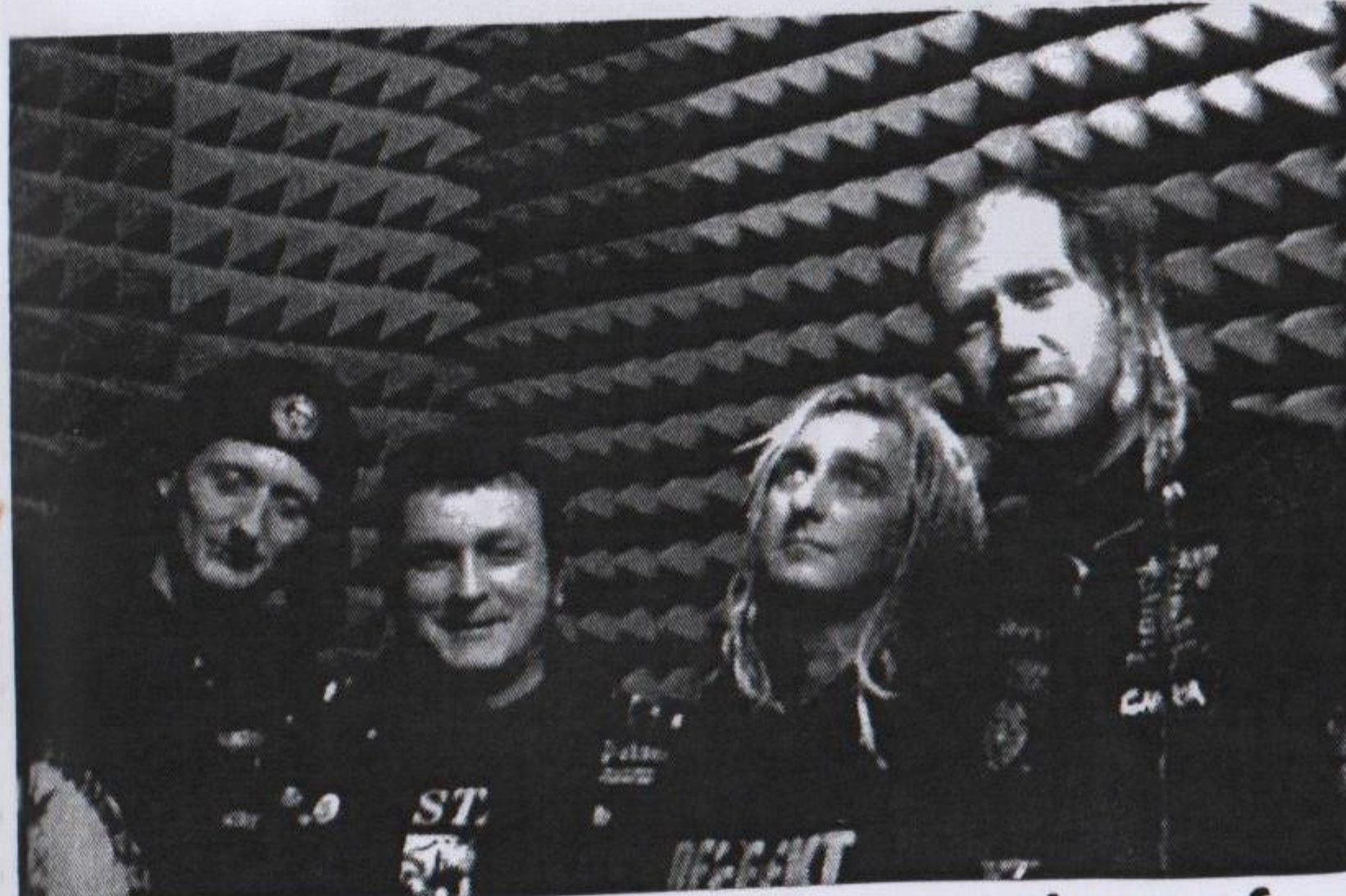
TDK My 2000 - 2005 Mix-Tape FE

TDK
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NORMAL POSITION
LECT TYPE I

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VITRIOLIC RESPONSE INTERVIEW



Could you introduce the members of Vitriolic Response and tell me a bit about each of them?

Rob: ok we are Defect – Drums, Flek – Bass, Myke – Vox, and me – Git.

Neurotic Myke: Rob – Geetar, Dee – Drums, Flek – Bass and Myke – Vocals. We've all been/are in loads of different punk/hardcore bands. But Vitriolic Response was brought together by our mutual love of crust. On paper this band shouldn't work, as we all live miles apart from each other - Manchester, Stoke and Derby. But I guess the extra effort of actually getting our shit together makes us appreciate it more.

What is the story behind the origins of the band? Where did the name Vitriolic Response come from?

DEEBEATER: Vitriolic Response well vitriolic means filled with or expressing violent and bitter hatred towards somebody or someone and that encapsulates our feelings towards society and all it's ills, our 'response' is hatred and disgust to a corporate system that has for decades been unjust and laid the burden of paying that price on the poor.

Neurotic Myke: I've always wanted to do this type of band, I was just never the right time or place. Last year I bumped into Rob at a mate's house in Leeds. We got talking and he said he was forming a crust band I volunteered in a heartbeat!

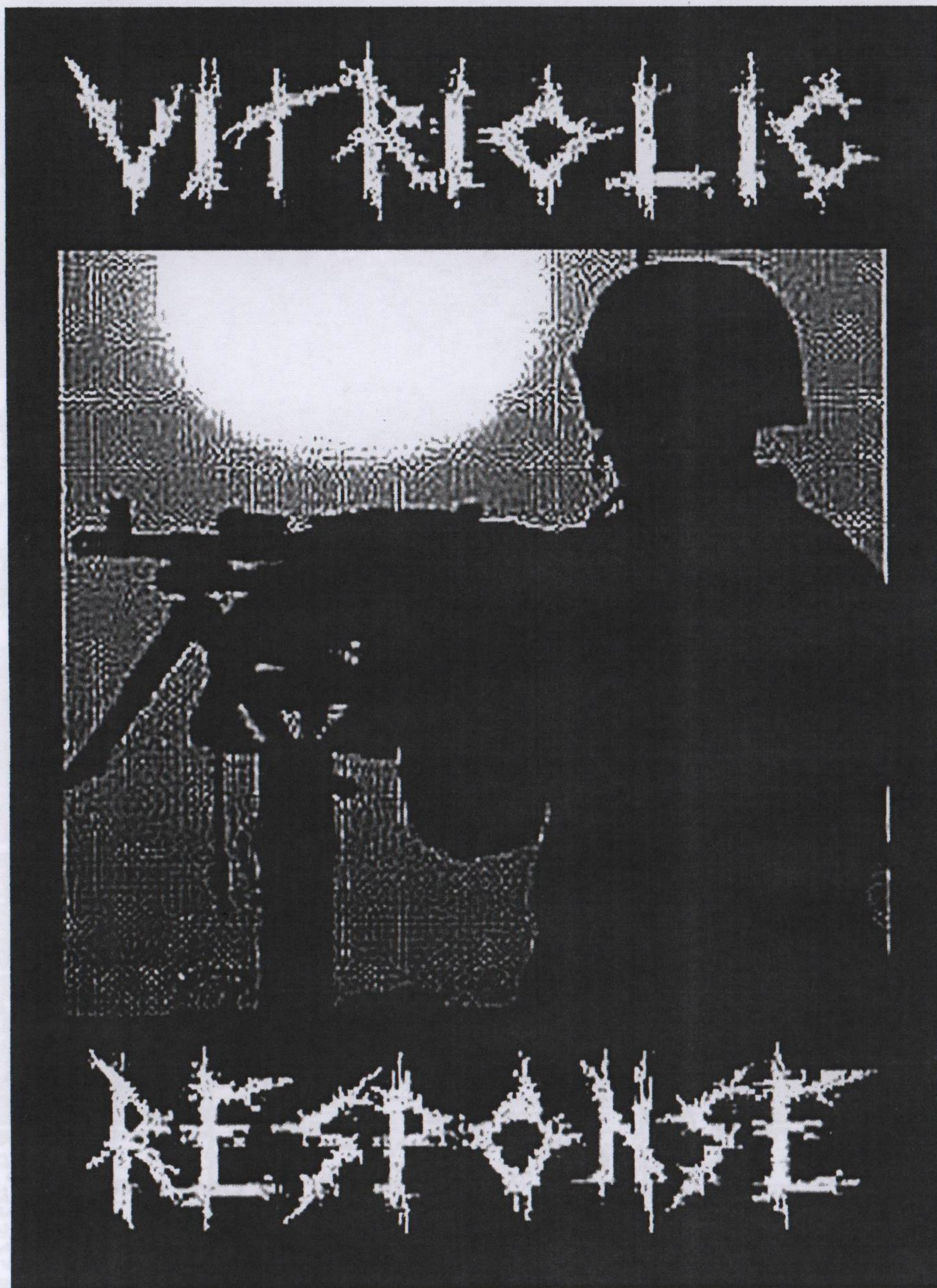
Rob: the band sort of formed out of many conversations with Dee, Flek and myself about doing a band we have always wanted to do and finally through a drunken haze we found the cuddly Myke and did it, and the origins of the name first popped into my head when my mum actually said it to a nurse or doctor on one of the many occasions I've been sectioned and it had always been stuck in my head and it seemed apt with our beliefs to use it for this.

Would you describe the band as having an ethos?

DEEBEATER: Our ethos so to speak is a fundamental collective of like-minded people, who have for the last 30 years or so have been playing and listening to protest Punk/HC/ Crust, this is the band that we all wanted to be in. There is definitely an unspoken bond and we work within that social context, it's the character of the group that becomes a whole, we just happen to wrap it up in a dirty, scum crust pair of trousers.

We are Cabbage Patch Punks and proud of it, too long in the tooth to change, growing up was never an option.

Neurotic Myke :- Yep most definitely, like Dee said, we have all been around for years and have been involved in the DIY punk scene in one way or another. There



VITRIOLIC RESPONSE

THE CRUST

CONTINUES

is a common thread and a mutual kinship with this band, its beautiful maaan! Seriously though we are pretty tight knit, we believe in the DIY ethics 100%, we all love the crust and we are all mates.

Rob: about the ethos I refer you too Dee's answer as I really cant say much more

What are your hopes for the future of the band?

DEEBEATER: pretty much get out to play, record and release quality records, work with D.I.Y people, promoters. Avoiding the usual corporate sponsorship nonsense that tends to strip any creative freedom. We'd rather use communication through zines and records and free radio and depending on your view of the Internet 'social media', we use every possible outlet that lends itself to free choice.

Lets face it, mass media or popular media tends to be watered down or at least short lived.

Neurotic Myke: I wanna jam, play, record and continue meeting new folk and making new friends. Also, If we can contribute something worthwhile by doing benefit gigs, or releases. Or if someone is inspired in someway by us either by the music, lyrics or the fact that they might see us and think "I can do better than that bunch of idiots" along the way, I'll be happy.

Rob: the hopes and future of the band first personally is to get out play, record and meet great people do anything we can to help with benefits and diy projects as I'm a great believer in this and also as a whole the band I feel think the same bringing crust back to being crust and not this post emo crust core bollox that seem to be in it to be seen not for what they believe we have all grown up like this maybe we are old and too long in the truth but hey a leopard cannot change its spots(or as I say a true crusty cannot change his trousers.....)

Do you have a favourite album or desert island disc?

DEEBEATER: Desert Island Disc...Wretched =Libero di Vivere, Libero di Morire play from Start to finished then play again!

Neurotic Myke :- the "This is Boston not LA" comp or Death Church by Rudimentary Peni...sorry can I have them both?

Rob: favorite lp im sorry to sound boring and predictable but anyone who knows me will know exactly what I'm gonna say....Antisect, in darkness there is no choice. I could go into the reasons why but you would have to do a whole new zine to fit it in so if I ever bump into anyone who wants to know just ask sit down and prepare to be there for a very long time

Do you have any musical 'guilty pleasures'?

DEEBEATER: every other musical genre, music is music but if it comes from your typical corporate label and distributed to large audiences through the music industry the 'whole' tends to be missing something, political protest punk is where my heart is, but to dismiss other music is just ignorance really. I tend to do downloads or U Tube audio downloads of none Punk stuff.

It becomes problematic because music have changed with time and

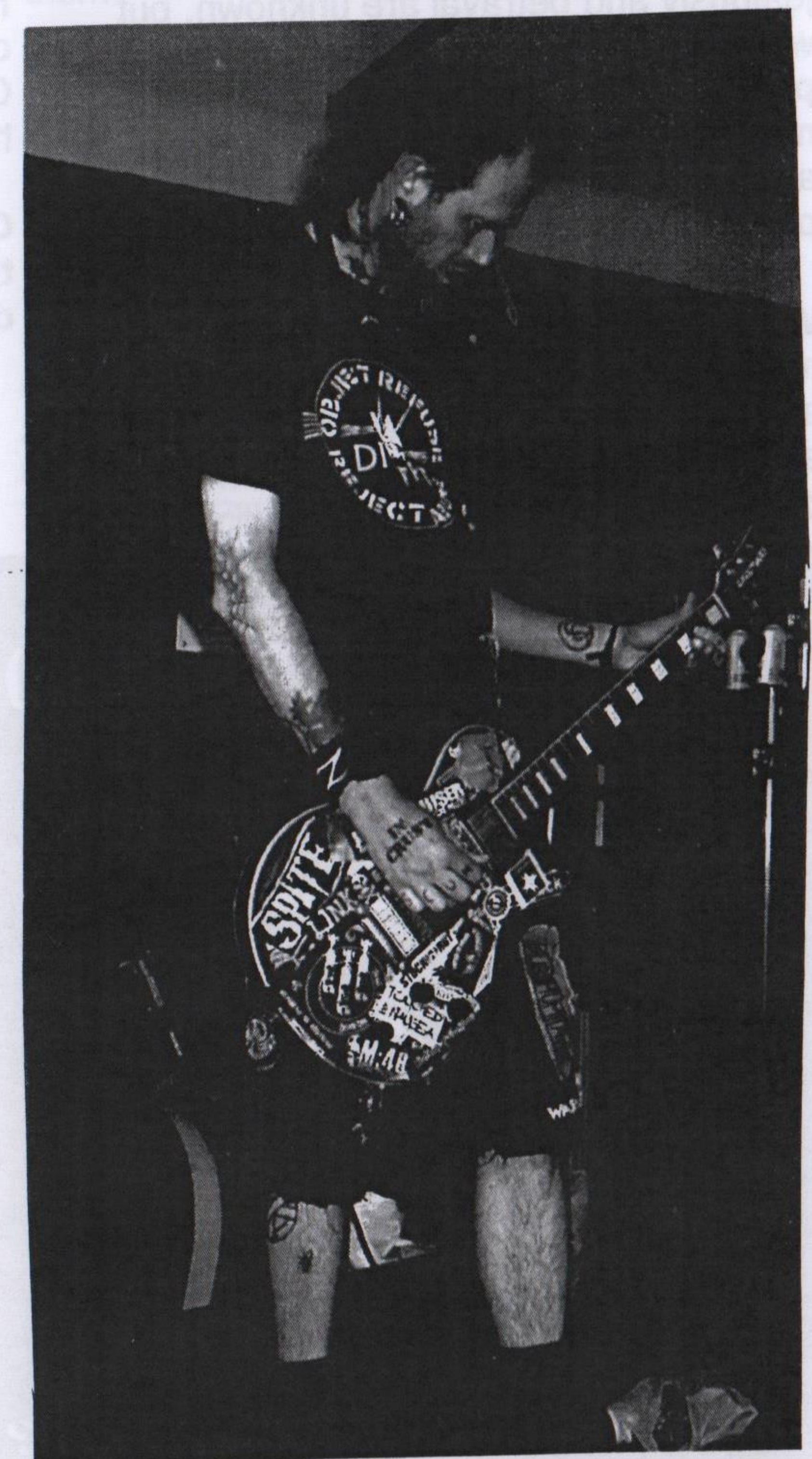
Social and musical structures change with the eras, punk has been simulated into the populous and it became static, Hardcore Punk came and now you have Hardcore Christian Music, so my guilty pleasure is I listen to music, good and bad, mostly bad.

Rob: hahaha guilty pleasures this is simple; Visage and the Human League in fact the whole new romantic scene nuff said really (oh the shame!)

If you could have a mutant ability/super-power what would it be? Would you be on the side of Magneto or Professor X?

DEEBEATER: If I had a super hero power it would be the ability to make everybody act like I do, and you'd have everybody getting their capes caught in a revolving doors, tripping up and falling over. Magneto every time who wants to be a goodie goodie with no hair?

Rob: to be honest with you I don't know who either those people are, I might ask me son but to be shown up by an eleven year old I don't think I could take the shame, so I diplomatically pass on that one



The author H.P. Lovecraft said that *"I never ask a man what his business is, for it never interests me. What I ask him about are his thoughts and dreams,"* so could you please tell me about your hopes and dreams?

DEEBEATER: Lovecraft also said *"if religion were true, its followers would not try to bludgeon their young into an artificial conformity; but would merely insist on their unbending quest for truth, irrespective of artificial backgrounds or practical consequences"* And I dream of a world where false hoods no longer exist, where jealousy and betrayal are unknown, but we live in the real world where we see people treated like shit every day and no matter how naïve we seem or come across, is it too much to hope for that other people feel the same way we do.

We scream because we live in this nightmare where dogs howl in the dark and cats prick up their ears after midnight, and all we have left is our hopes and dreams of a better world.

FOLLOW THE HERD EP



AN ALTERNATIVE
TO FUCKING WHAT?

Neurotic Myke :- I know this sounds like rhetoric but, I wish people would learn to just fucking respect each other. From the schoolyard to the workplace, from the cradle to the grave, in every walk of life, people are fucking each other over. I know

I sound pessimistic and yes I know that not everyone is this way, its just that the bad guys have the loudest voice...though it does help to have microphones and amps to drown the fuckers out every once in a while.

Rob: I think Myke and Dee have pretty much said exactly what I feel I could rant on about Man City or Lancashire Cricket Club, but I think I had better not really hahaha.

Cheers muchly to VR for taking the time to do this interview and answer my daft questions.

Urban Legends

"I am the writing on the wall, the whisper in the classroom! Without these things, I am nothing."

Urban legends, myths or tales are modern folklore. The story itself may or may not have its origins in truth, but it is always told as if it were true. These stories are circulated through communities, through cities, countries, even worldwide. They are organic, displaying variations over time. They are typically told as having happened to a "friend of a friend" and generally lacking in verifiable details. They can be of a supernatural nature, a 'horror' story, a mystery, sexual misadventure, conspiracy theory, and have modern or historical origins.



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Some are so famous that they are known worldwide, have been the subject/inspiration for numerous books and films, and even have their own monikers. There's the 'Bloody Mary Chant' which is not too dissimilar to the premise on which the Clive Barker story Candyman is based, *"If you*

look in the mirror and you say his name 5 times, he'll appear behind you breathing down your neck". 'The Licked Hand' where the girl believes her hand is being licked by her dog from under the bed, only to later realise that the dog is elsewhere or dead. 'The Spider Bite' in which numerous baby spiders later emerge from the site of an insect bite. 'The Missing Kidney', 'The Microwaved Pet', 'Alligators in the Sewers', 'The Back Seat Hitch-Hiker/Axe-Murderer', 'The Loch-Ness Monster', this list could go on and on. I don't even need to relate the last ones because I'm sure anyone reading this will already be more than familiar with them.

I've been told so many of these throughout my life and I love them, the idea of an absurd tale being told as fact adds something much needed to the boredom of everyday life. As a child I was told (and repeated) the supernatural tales and they remain my favourite type of folklore to this day. I even made up a few of my own based around the City of Plymouth in which I grew up, I would make up a story based around one of the cities derelict buildings, tell it to my friends as though it were fact and then dare them to go in.

As I've grown older the nature of the urban legends I've been told has tended to move away from the absurd horror stories of youth and take on the form of something slightly more grounded in reality. These are those stories of sexual misadventure that you hear in the pub or read in the pages of lads' mags, or those grotesque food based stories like the one about the curry that contained the semen of ten different men. Stories designed more to make the listener cringe or laugh rather than to scare.

Some contemporary legends are so ingrained in the psyche that they are accepted by many to be either fact or possible fact. The Loch Ness Monster, Conspiracy Theories based around a corrupt government or shadowy political underworld, or even the existence of Satanic Cults who

sacrifice unsuspecting animals and virgins in the woods at night. I was recently accosted by a woman while out shopping who enquired as to whether I was aware that symbols on my clothes promoted Satanism. In particular she was referring to a patch I had sewn on to the back of my hooded top which was printed with the logo of the punk band Leftover Crack. I am a big fan of both punk and metal and have numerous items of clothing emblazoned with pentagrams, goats heads, inverted crosses, devils, but to be honest I didn't consider the particular imagery to which she was referring to be very Satanic. I do not wear the clothes that I do to cause offence, to be honest I don't believe in either God or the Devil. I wear it because I like dark imagery, tales of the supernatural and horror films. For me Satanism is little more than the stuff of Hammer Horror films. I perhaps should have continued walking on this occasion and not tried to explain myself to the slightly irate women, however for some reason I chose to do the latter. I explained that I didn't believe in the existence of 'Satanic Cults' and therefore could not possibly be promoting them. I explained that the only Satanism I knew of was the Laveyan 'Church of Satan' but that I understood that to be little more than hard-line atheism given a name designed to shock. I said that I had never seen any evidence for the forest-dwelling, virgin-slaughtering Satanists of cheesy horror films, which she continued to insist *did* exist but couldn't say how she knew. Eventually, realising that we were never getting past that stalemate, I gave up and walked away. It has occurred to me that writing these words may offend yet more people who believe these cults to be more than the stuff of myth but hey ho, just please don't try and harass me about it while I'm out shopping.

There was an old gent who used to regularly sit at the bar of the Thirsty Scholar pub in town and tell anyone who would listen that he had once been poured a pint of draught Guinness and a whole, dead mouse had come out of the tap and fallen into his pint.

Despite this being utterly impossible he told it as if absolute fact, I think he had even come to believe it.

I have on occasion suffered from a condition known as sleep paralysis. This is a phenomenon in which people, either when falling asleep or waking, temporarily experience an inability to move. It is often associated with terrifying visions (e.g. an intruder in the room), to which one is unable to react due to paralysis. I am very aware just how scary and how real it can feel to be trapped in that state. It's that very 'real' feeling that has been used to account for historical folklore in which a figure usually known as the 'hag' would sit on the victims' chest, leaving them paralysed while their breath or soul is stolen, or some curse is placed on them. In modern day it has also been used to explain alien abduction experiences. People would recount their tales as true because that is how they would believe them to be, and the fact that more than one person seems to have experienced the same thing would add veracity to the legend.



Since childhood probably my favourite legend has been that of Spring Heeled Jack, the unearthly creature in brass or steel armour, with spring shoes and large claw gloves. Those who encountered Jack described him as having eyes like balls of fire and spurting blue and white flames from his mouth, he was also able to jump

unnatural heights thus earning him his name.

SPRING-HEELED JACK, THE TERROR OF LONDON.



"Spring-heeled Jack is a character in English folklore of the Victorian era who was known for his startling hops. The first claimed sighting of Spring-heeled Jack was in 1837. Later sightings were reported all over Great Britain and were especially prevalent in suburban London, Liverpool, the Midlands and Scotland.

There are many theories about the nature and identity of Spring-heeled Jack. This urban legend was very popular in its time, due to the tales of his bizarre appearance and ability to make extraordinary leaps, to the point that he became the topic of several works of fiction.

Spring-heeled Jack was described by people who claimed to have seen him as having a terrifying and frightful appearance, with diabolical physiognomy, clawed hands, and eyes that "resembled red balls of fire". One report claimed that, beneath a black cloak, he wore a helmet and a tight-fitting white garment like an oilskin. Many stories also mention a "Devil-like" aspect. Others said he was tall and thin, with the appearance of a gentleman. Several reports mention that he could breathe out blue and white flames and that he wore sharp metallic claws at his fingertips. At least two people claimed that he was able to speak comprehensible English."

The real joy of an urban legend is when it concerns somewhere that you know or are familiar with, thus imbuing that place with an extra, almost magical quality. I spent a few years of my life living in the City of Liverpool and that is somewhere that has its very own purveyor of modern legends and folklore in the form of the writer Tom Slemen. Tom has written all manner of books concerning bizarre goings on in Liverpool, most popular of which are the *Haunted Liverpool* series. These are collections of tales that document supposed paranormal happenings in and around Liverpool, from ghosts and ghouls to timeslips and curses, these are all based on stories either recounted to him by individuals or upon well established city folklore. The stories are a great deal of fun, especially when you are well acquainted with their location and it irks me somewhat that people constantly attack Toms credibility as an author of the paranormal. I would love to believe that such things are possible but unfortunately I don't, therefore I would question the 'credibility' of anyone who presents tales of zombies or leprechauns in Liverpool as fact, but maybe that's not the point. Surely it is much more fun to suspend that nagging disbelief and imagine just for a while that you live in a city where such things are possible. Tom is criticised for presenting his stories as fact, but for me that



is exactly the appeal of urban legends. My favourite tale of Tom's is without doubt that of William MacKenzie, the civil engineer and contractor of the early nineteenth century, who's buried in an oddly shaped tomb in a small cemetery on Rodney Street. As a child my orthodontist was based on that street and for two years I would pass by that grave and wonder about it while on my way to another painful appointment. The following is taken from *Haunted Liverpool 1*, a far more detailed account of the 'MacKenzie Ghost' can be found in *Haunted Liverpool 4*.

"The Rodney Street Spectre: Early one morning in 1970, a middle-aged woman who worked as a kitchen assistant at the YMCA in Mount Pleasant, boarded the number 86 bus near her home in Parliament Street at 6:30. At Leece Street, the woman left the bus and headed for her place of work via Rodney Street. She had been taking this route every work day for over six years and was well accustomed to the spooky aura that hung over the site of the derelict ruins of St Andrew's Presbyterian Church. By now, she considered herself quite immune to the eerie atmosphere of that

As she neared the old church ruins, she suddenly found herself confronted with the solid looking apparition of a top-hatted man in a cape, who came out of one of the walls that surrounded the church's cemetery. The ghost advanced towards the terrified woman, then hesitated, performed a U-turn and hurried back through the wall. Understandably the woman took to her heels.

The identity of the ghost, which has been seen by many people over the years, including a policeman, will probably never be known. However, not far from the spot where it emerged from the wall, in the grounds of the cemetery itself, stands a giant, sinister-looking pyramidal tomb of a Scot called Mackenzie, who was a wealthy promoter of the early railways and a restless advocate of scientific progress. Perhaps he is restless still....

Incidentally, Mackenzie left bizarre instructions in his will concerning his internment and so, inside the pyramid, the eccentric Scotsman's corpse is seated at a card table with a winning hand."

The myth of MacKenzie's burial existed on Merseyside long before Tom Slemen wrote his story, as it's difficult to substantiate no one can be sure as to whether it is true or not.

"William McKenzie was a notorious gambler, and once promised his soul to the devil to secure a winning hand at poker. Shortly after he became ill, and terrified that his pact with the devil would come true, he had this tomb erected and placed his card table and chair inside. Once dead, he left instructions to be placed sitting at the table with the winning hand of cards. His logic was that being buried this way would ensure the devil never came to claim his soul."

These days urban legends are often dismissed as little more than lies, hoaxes or practical jokes, but they can also be more than that. They can be the fantastic, the scary, or the bizarre stories that enrich the banal state of everyday life.

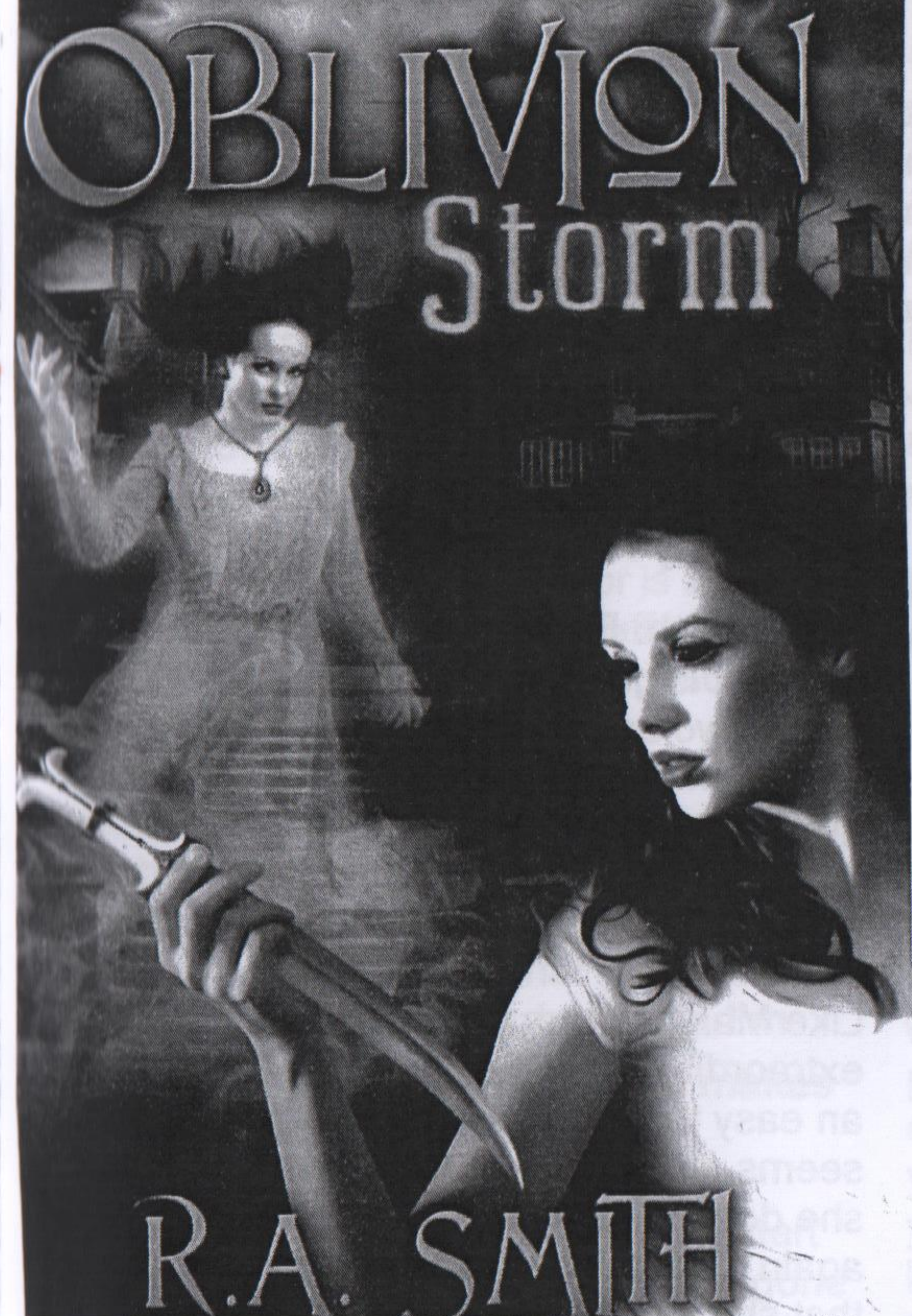


"Your death will be a tale to frighten children, to make lovers cling closer in their rapture. Come with me, and be immortal."

*I had planned to include a section on urban legends and folklore, both modern and historical, specifically from Greater Manchester and the surrounding areas, however to avoid this becoming too epic an essay I have decided to continue it in Volume 6 of Sticky Sounds.

Oblivion Storm: The Grenshall Manor Chronicles, Book 1 by R.A. Smith

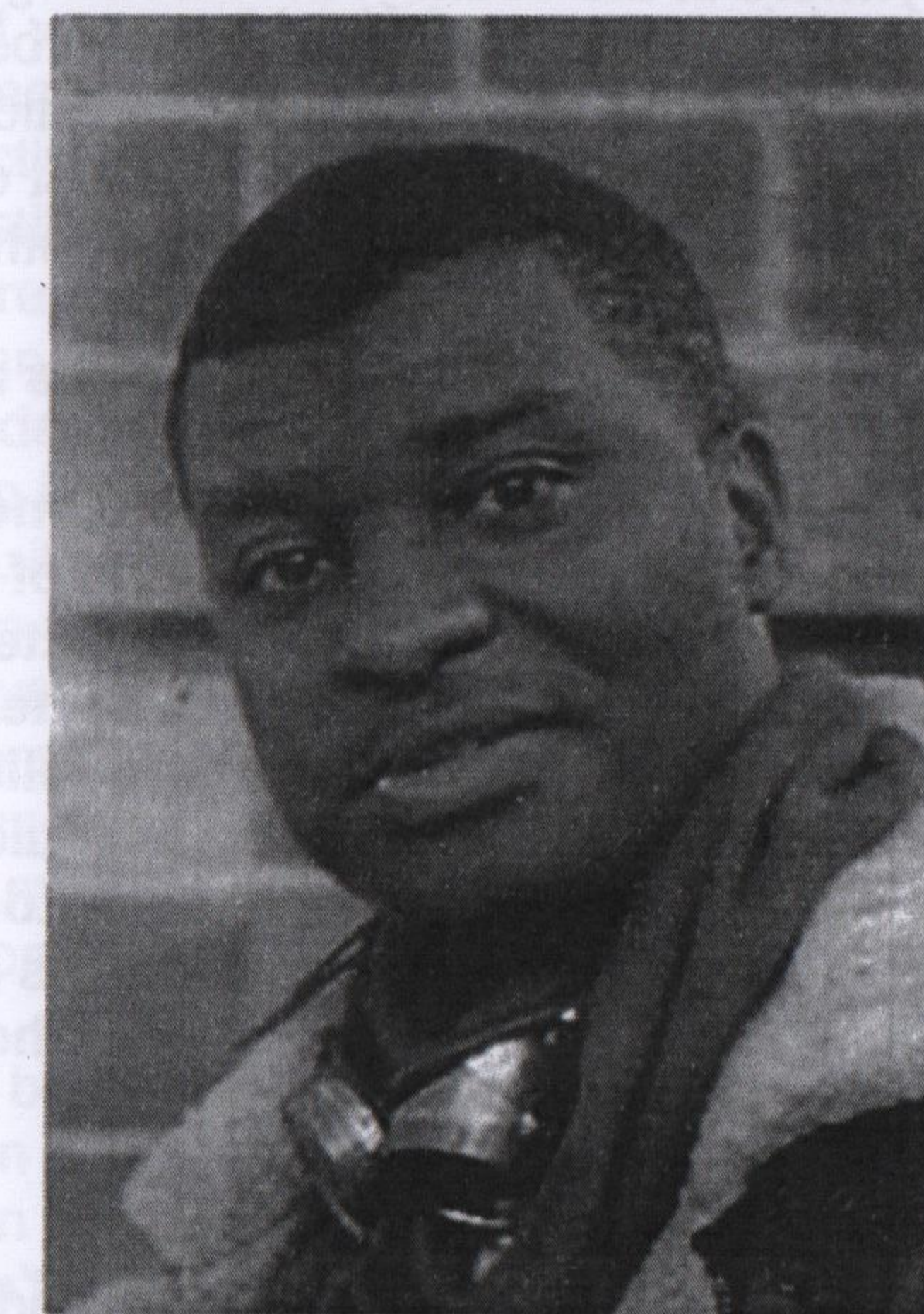
THE GRENSHALL MANOR CHRONICLES - BOOK 1



"Over a century past, a wily young pauper wins the hearts of a childless couple of ancient nobility, and a place in one of the most prestigious families in London. The sole heir to the Grenshall family legacy, Iris 'Tally' Grenshall fights to protect her family from the machinations of an evil woman, but discovers her adversary presents a threat much greater than she ever imagined... The victim of a brutal attack, Rose remembers one thing: a long-dead woman giving her an impossible task. She knows only the price of failure as she sets out to retrieve a deadly talisman, with the aid of new friends and powers over the living and the dead. As the body count rises, Rose's quest grows desperate--with London itself in jeopardy. Rose and Tally share fates intertwined. Rose must discover how before the secrets of the past destroy her, her friends, and all of London."

Oblivion Storm is the debut novel from R.A. Smith. It's a fantastic mix of urban and dark fantasy, central to which are some extremely well realised, strong female characters. The narrative follows two central strands which take place across two-time periods. It combines many different elements and is part Victorian ghost story, part modern fairytale. I adore the dark fantasy of Clive Barker and the urban fantasy of Ben Aaronovitch and Neil Gaiman, and Oblivion Storm combines elements of all of them.

The first of the Grenshall Manor Chronicles is a real dark delight and it sets the scene for a world that begs to be further explored. I cannot wait for the second novel in the series.



I was so enthused by this novel that I contacted R.A. Smith to request an interview, he kindly agreed so here it is:

Sticky Sounds: I think that it's really important in urban fantasy that the author knows the setting/landscape well, especially if the place in question is a real city. This gives a solid foundation and allows the fantastic to be seamlessly woven into the reality. It certainly seems from *Oblivion Storm* that you are well acquainted with London, what is your relationship with the City and what is it that made you set your novel there?

R.A. Smith: Well, it's where I was born! Though, of course, there's contention between some folk as to whether Croydon is considered London or not. It's a London Borough according to the council letters, so I'd say so.

In terms of what made me set it there, it was the right place at the time when I drafted it. I always had the mansion in mind, but that could have taken me anywhere in the country. In fact I'd argue anywhere in the country would have been easier to try and find a place for a fictional mansion than London. Because most of London's taken up in one way or another.

Sticky Sounds: I felt that there was a strong horror element in *Oblivion Storm*, particularly in the human 'meat puppets' controlled by the villain of the piece. I especially liked the character of Thomas Barber and the idea that he must inflict suffering in order to relieve his own. He's a character who wouldn't be out of place in a Clive Barker story! Are you a fan of horror books/films and do you have any influences from the horror genre?

R.A. Smith: I definitely read the odd horror from time to time. I used to read an awful lot more than I do now, but that's true of a lot of books at the moment; time constraints, mostly. In terms of books, I never quite got round to Clive Barker but

am trying to think who I used to read lots of now! I was always a big vampire reader. The classics like *Dracula*, *Camilla* and *Frankenstein* are books I go back to after a few years. I really like more contemporary writers too, including Anne Rice, Ray Garton and others.

Sticky Sounds: *Oblivion Storm* has a number of very strong female characters, my favourite of which was the super-human Jennifer. She remains something of an enigma in the novel though, can you tell me any more about this character and if you plan to feature her in any future books?

R.A. Smith: Funny you should say that – Jennifer is going to be the central focus of Book Two as I think her story is the next to tell, as where we left her in *Oblivion Storm* gives me a clear jump-on point. She's going to have very different things to deal with from what you saw in the first book.

Like Mary, though she's blessed with extraordinary abilities now, she's not had an easy time of things up to now. If she seems an enigma, that is down to things she doesn't know when we first join her again. One thing you do know about Jen is that she's a fighter, and that much doesn't change. What I want book two to do is get to the essence of what makes her that way.

Sticky Sounds: The narrative of *Oblivion Storm* takes place across both modern-day and Victorian London. How much research did you undertake with regards to the historical aspect of the book?

R.A. Smith: Short answer: quite a bit! Now, when I first started writing this, long before it became *Oblivion Storm*, there was this ghost called Tally, right, who turned up early on in the book. Now, this Tally character, who originally in my head was a quick on-off support to the main

modern protagonist, kind of got more and more involved in the story, and ultimately became a central figure. But to know her story I needed to know her time. And it's never the really big things that happen which are the problem. It's those finer details, such as the name of a theatre, whether it existed at the time, education for posh kids, how long ice cream has been about and what certain things were called back then. But for the big one of course it was learning more about the history of the London Underground. I'm actually reasonably clued up on certain parts of that now.

What I am eternally grateful for is a local friend who really knows her stuff about the era and my Texas-based editor who loves British historical drama!

Sticky Sounds: Could you please tell me a little about your influences in general, anything from books, music, films, role-playing, etc that you think has an influence on your writing. I'm always interested to know what makes an artist tick.

R.A. Smith: Wow. Where do I even start with this one? In terms of books, I've gone from a kid who used to enjoy going to the library during summer holidays and coming out with a huge pile of books several times over, to actually quite a slow reader these days. But when I do read, Jim Butcher's *Dresden Files* are hugely entertaining to me. I've read a lot of vampire stories, as mentioned, Stoker's *Dracula* being one I've gone back to a few times.

Music: too numerous to mention. I listen to a ridiculous amount, and will ALWAYS tell you my collection is too small. My playlists get very diverse when I'm working on stuff. Pendulum have been a huge help for my stories thus far, as have Machine Head, as have Enigma. Several soundtracks are often a big help.

I am, as you are no doubt aware by the question, a fan of roleplaying games, tabletop and live-action. It'll come as no surprise that I played all of the old White Wolf classic games, *Vampire: The Masquerade*, *Mage: The Ascension*, etc. and later did the *Dungeons and Dragons* thing. I've learned lots from different DMs and their different ways of running a game over the years.

Films: *Star Wars*, *Lord of the Rings*, the *James Bond* films, *Blade Runner*, *Enter the Dragon*, and the old Hammer Horror movies, to name just some!

I'm going to stop answering this question now. I could be here all day.

Sticky Sounds: In your opinion what's the best and what's the worst thing about writing a novel?

R.A. Smith: To me, the worst thing is easily that thing when you've worked out what you want to do for your novel, have a perfectly-working road map and know exactly what you need to be doing – and yet still manage to get to a part when you're writing and run into a brick wall. Damn, it's annoying, but the only way you can deal with it is to drive straight through. Even if you go away and do something else, it's still probably going to be there when you get back to it. Which you'll have to eventually. You may decide to take a different approach, delete the scene and try another, or whatever, but I regularly find myself slowed down on things like this at some stage.

The best thing, as far as I'm concerned, is when you have the opposite happen, when a scene just flows and elements you hadn't thought of crop up and enhance it, or better, when you are halfway through developing a character and they just show you exactly who they are while you're putting a chapter together. It can feel like

your story is writing itself, and in the good way.

Sticky Sounds: How's work going on the second novel and do you have a rough idea on a release date yet?

R.A. Smith: As we speak, I am working very hard on getting book two out for an October release. Stay tuned!

Oblivion Storm is available to buy from Amazon in paperback and kindle format, and from Kobo Books as an ebook.

You can follow R.A. Smith for updates through his facebook page and his blog projectshadowlondon.wordpress.com



Happy People Have No Stories

I only started keeping a notebook about three or four years ago, around the time I stopped drinking. Two things that were without a doubt connected. Without the magic potion that enabled me to socialise, to prop up the bar day after day and talk s**t to bar regulars who were either equally as drunk or else too polite to say how bored they were of my ramblings. When the drink ceased to flow so did my ability to converse with ease, instead I now found that I was spending increasing amounts of time isolating myself from others. My alcohol counsellor used to tell me that everyone has a social need and that I was failing to fulfil mine, I think that's where the notebooks came on. At first I was like a toddler taking its first tenuous steps and what I wrote showed little of my personality, instead I hid behind facts and leaned towards a fairly academic style of essay. A lot of my early scribbles formed the basis for blog posts when I set up Sticky Sounds, the 'Punk' essay is an example of one of them. It would be difficult to describe those early ramblings as natural, not with the amount of notes and re-writes involved. Even in the privacy of my notebooks I find it difficult to express myself or talk honestly and they could never really be described as journals. This brings to mind something my keyworker said to me recently, that I never talk about my emotions or connect them to the events that I describe. There's nothing wrong with the essays and the frustrated academic in me will probably continue to produce them, but I also wanted to try and produce something a little less controlled. I decided that maybe I could start by telling stories, the ones about those daft events from my past that I used to tell to a not-so-captive audience in the pub. Tales like the one about the time I was chased through the park by a serial killer, or when I was robbed at gunpoint while working in a betting shop. I even grew up in a house in Plymouth that was 'cursed,' or it might have been anyway. It's difficult to know exactly what I hope to offer with my scribbles on here and in the zine,

especially as I judge myself as inferior to just about anyone who has ever written anything, ever. There's only one thing that I can offer that no one else can and that's me. That's a fact that finally dawned on me with the receipt of an email sent to my by someone who didn't know me personally but had read the zine.

"Extremely interesting read, literally like no other zine i've read, I think its the self serving aspect oppose to the supporting of an adopted scene. I read the first one with no expectations and was completely caught up, I finished reading vol 4 at 3.30am due to getting up for a drink and the zines still being on my mind. Kudos to you."

I'm usually anti reading up about peoples lives and everywhere you look nowadays there are magazines dedicated to giving you the latest in some celebrities life and people buy them to pick up on flaws and normalities that will suggest that these celebs aren't too far from home. That said, I feel this 'perzine' is the other end of the spectrum I was captivated because it supports the idea that the common person is the most interesting or has a lot more to say and like you described has an 'uncorrupted purity'. I felt a bit like the character Evie from the book V for Vendetta when she receives the notes from Valerie, it was a true insight into someone in a similar position as myself but also very different, no falsity.

I think it's common to get wrapped up in my own life and find security in my own bubble and then the greater bubble which is world news and awareness of the world, and I think it's refreshing to have a little peek into someone else's bubble without feeling like your intruding. Like I said it was a great read"

I even set up a secondary blog, a kind of misery memoirs of my mental health issues, partly in the hope that I might one day be able to use it as a basis for my own version

of Girl Interrupted or Prozac Nation. I've got a long way to go before that happens though, not least because I don't yet know what happens at the end. Enough of the preamble and the other-thinking things though, I've got a story to tell. So, are you sitting comfortably? Then we'll begin.

It was a dark and stormy night.....

Straw Dog

"Like in so many cases the victim unconsciously came to his killer."

You couldn't imagine a 31 year old less likely to engage in regular exercise than I was. Physical education in secondary school had been enough to convince that it wasn't for me. Exercise also didn't sit well with the heavy smoking and hard drinking lifestyle that I'd fully embraced throughout my twenties. Though I had stopped drinking at the start of 2010 it was another six months before the cigarettes went the same way. I had become accustomed to the fact that climbing a single flight of stairs would reduce me to a bright red, wheezing mess.

All of this changed though, when the drinking stopped. For various reasons that I won't go into here, I found that I was unable to stop through sheer will-power alone, I needed to get a little bit of help from a medication known as antabuse. The result of taking antabuse was that I couldn't drink without becoming extremely ill, a fact which I fully established for myself by trying to do it... twice.

I was therefore rendered unable to consume alcohol, no matter how much my brain decided it wanted to. It is absolutely no exaggeration to say that the frustration of this became so overbearing that I would literally curl into a ball and sob. I was unable to settle or concentrate on anything and sleepless nights became the norm. I reached a point where I realised that there was nothing else for it, I would have to find a way to channel all of this excess energy

without it becoming self destructive. This also went hand in hand with a desire to shape a new life for myself that didn't revolve around alcohol.

Joining a gym was entirely contrary to my self-conscious and introverted personality, so instead I decided that I would give jogging a go. I wanted to run prior to starting work and so I set my alarm for 5am each morning, weekends included, and began heading to the local park. I was surprised just how quickly I took to it, how quickly my fitness changes and how addictive exercise was. I would hate it if for any reason I was forced to miss even a day.

The 5am starts weren't too bad at first, summer was only just coming to an end and the sun would still be starting to make an appearance as I reached the park.



Thus it wasn't until autumn was in full flow that I came to realise that the park didn't actually have any form of lighting. Not to be deterred though, I decided that I could see just far enough in front of me to avoid any possible obstacles in my path. Of course there was the other possible danger, that presented by other human beings while jogging around a dark and isolated park...

When I informed my alcohol counsellor of what I was doing, he said that though he was pleased I was finally exercising he was also somewhat concerned by the time and location I had chosen for it. He reminded me that there were a lot of "wrong-uns" out there.

The problem was that I had already firmly established my routine and I wanted to continue running before rather than after the day's work. I was also unsure as to whether I would be more at risk if I avoided the park and ran along the well-lit roadside pavements instead. On a number of occasions, as I travelled between home and the park I had been approached by a car from which the occupants had offered to sell me drugs, despite the fact that I was fully toggled out in running gear. So I kept to the park, and I have to admit that to make matters worse I further dulled my senses by continuing to wear my headphones and play Bad Religion loudly as I ran circuits of the park.

It wasn't that I was reckless or unaware of the possible consequences of the risks I was taking, I simply felt that I had weighed up the options and decided that the pros outweighed the possible cons. Running was having a dramatically positive effect on my mental and physical health. I found that pushing myself to my physical limits by literally running until it hurt provided a healthy outlet for my self-harming tendencies. I didn't feel that I was simply taking needless risks with my own safety. All of this is however leading up to an event that caused me to reconsider the wisdom of my decision, even if only briefly. It was a little after 5am one morning when I reached the park gates as normal and left the warm glow of the street lights to make my way into the darkness of the park. I am an absolute creature of habit and so set off following my now well established route, which led me around the park until I would arrive at the boating lake in the centre, around which I would then proceed to run laps. As the street lights on the road around the park were reduced to distant pin-pricks I would be left barely able to see the ground a metre in front of me. I had contemplated wearing one of those little head-torches in order to better illuminate my path, but had also considered that might have the added disadvantage of clearly advertising my

presence in the park.

I was just approaching the point at which the path forked to either the right or left side of the lake, there was also another path at this point which led off to the right-hand side and in the direction of the centre of the park. This path was surrounded on either side by trees and bushes and so obscured from view. I was probably not as aware of my surroundings as I should have been, made comfortable by the familiarity of routine.

I rarely saw another sole while out jogging and I certainly wasn't expecting to see a white van sitting in darkness, tucked away on the path to the right-hand side. I also didn't expect it to then turn on its headlights as I ran across its path and proceed to slowly follow me as I began my circuit of the lake.

I think that it was at that point that it really dawned on me just how isolated and vulnerable I really was. My gentle jog quickly turned into a full on sprint and I could feel my heart beating out of my chest. Immediately my mind was filled with images from all of the crime dramas I'd seen and all of the thrillers I'd read. Don't serial killers always drive small white vans? And who else would be lurking in a park in the middle of the night?



One particularly grisly episode of *Waking the Dead* popped into my head, in which a serial killer drove around with a ready made torture kit in the back of his van. I pushed myself to try and run even faster.

The van continued to match my speed, following slowly behind me, and I was aware that the route I was on would only succeed in taking me deeper into the empty park. Quickly I changed my route and veered sharply to the left, making for the rear of a small boathouse which stood there. I knew that this would be the point of truth as the van could not follow me there and the occupant(s) would be forced to go on foot if that was their intention. I did not look back to check. Aware that I was now out of sight behind the boathouse I continued on into the thick bushes there, pushing my way through sharp branches until I reached the railings that separated the park from the road beyond. The railings were at least the height of my head and there were no visible footholds on them. I looked around and realised that I could use a nearby tree, along with the railings to hoist myself over. I then dropped 5ft to the pavement below, falling forward onto my right knee as I did so and grazing the surface. Blood started to trickle down my leg and I limped at speed in the direction of home.

It was only as the adrenaline stopped pumping and I began to reassess what had happened that I realised the van had in all likelihood belonged to a park warden possibly on the look out for nocturnal drug users or vandals. The park was a common haunt for the former during daylight hours particularly in the subterranean viaduct there, and plenty of mornings I had arrived at the lake to find that the bins from around the park were now bobbing around in it.

I began to feel suitably ridiculous, even more so when I looked down at my blood and rapidly swelling knee. Though in my defence I also think that it was inexcusable for anyone to follow a small female jogger around a park in such a manner..... That's my defence and I'm sticking to it.

Photozine (Sticky Sounds 5.5)

Volume 5 of Sticky Sounds also happens to be the first anniversary of the zine. Who'd have thought it eh? Not only have I been writing this c**p for a year, but awesome peeps have actually been taking the time to read it. It's always featured bits of photography, mostly pictures taken while crawling around grotty old buildings. As the zine is printed in black and white it doesn't really do these beautiful locations justice though. I also think that the photos could benefit from having a few words put with them, to further tell the story of these buildings. I have therefore produced a very limited edition colour photozine, Sticky Sounds 5.5, in conjunction with the fifth volume of the zine itself. The photozine features location histories as well as reports of my visit. I've chosen a few excerpts here to give you an idea.



Once we'd covered all of the first floor and I had photographed the rooms and their sad relics of human habitation, we went back down the stairs and headed for the basement. I was still going first, telling Iain that he would have to remember to bring his own torch in future, and I reached the top of the stairs leading down into the

darkness. Was it darkness though?? I felt sure I could see a light other than that which was being created by the beam from my torch, I also felt sure that I could feel heat on my face. I moved back and Iain had a look, as he didn't have a torch he could see for certain that there was a light coming from underneath the building. We stopped in our tracks and quietly discussed what to do next. Though I really wanted to see the basement I was reluctant to trespass into what appeared to be someone's home. Iain was less concerned about the trespassing aspect and more about the danger that someone living underneath this battered building might present. I suggested that we should shout a hello before walking down in order to be polite, Iain immediately rejected the idea of notifying a potential nutter that we were coming. We further explored the ground floor while I took a few more photographs, all the while discussing what to do about the basement. The imagined possibilities for the 'cellar dweller' became increasingly far fetched until he was a crazed cannibal who feasted on stew made from unwitting urban explorers. We eventually came to the conclusion that we should leave the basement for another day and made our way back to the car, making sure to close the door behind us.



I think my own recent mental health issues enabled me to see Whittingham in a way I wouldn't have been capable of a few years ago. The corridors were in various states of decay and the first one we walked down didn't have very much of a floor left. It was this floor that I nearly fell through, when I jumped a hole but landed on a patch of unstable ground that immediately gave way beneath my feet. Iain grabbed me just in time to stop me falling through. Some of the corridors were lined on either side with patients' rooms and for me this was one of the most atmospheric parts of the building. Small rooms, some showing remnants of carpets, wallpaper and curtains, but little else of the lives once spent within them. This is where the boundaries between hospital and prison blurred. Who knows what brought these people here, but they were not free to leave when they were. Small windows on the doors allowed the interiors of the rooms to be visible from the outside and the doors all had locks on them.



Climbing was a bit of a struggle and not for the first time this short-arsed hobbit needed a leg-up. It was a fantastic feeling to then stand in that walkway, looking at a clear run either up or down. We walked up

and in to the station that time forgot, the ghost station. Tracks ran from sleepers out into distant bushes. There were a few buildings, most of them roofless and filled with pigeons both living and dead. Graffiti covered most available surfaces. Stairs led down from the platform to a handful of rooms below, crime tape was draped eerily around the bottom. These rooms had suffered extensive fire-damage and doors lay across the floors to provide access over absent floorboards. At one point Iain became overly confident and one of his legs went through the unstable flooring. We walked the length of the platform, and it was a strange feeling to be the only people in such a large open space. Looking over from Mayfield we could see the upper platforms of Piccadilly train station and the groups of people stood waiting for the train to arrive. It made you wonder when the last train had pulled in to Mayfield, before it was left to stand alone and forgotten by everyone except for time and nature.



Lettering on a window cast eerie shadows on decaying walls. Little remained of the hospital now except for the occasional sign, and plants grew through windows, from walls and from floors as nature took

over here. It was remarkable to stand somewhere like that, to look through the grimy windows and on to the traffic below. Removed from time, the rest of the world seemed not to exist from in there. Time doesn't pass, problems seem not to exist, and feelings or emotions that would normally haunt me drift somewhere to the periphery.

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