

ISSUES

WE'RE BUILDING A TOWER

FRANCINE ULLA



85: 6/1/2024

BONUS FEATURES

**JOURNAL
OF THE
FIFTH
FOUNDATION**

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ARAT BY ELLA SOLIS

"I have to get ready for the masquerade!" squeaks out a soft voice. "Fine dear, I'll leave you to it." The motherly voice echoes through the halls. Inside the bathroom, sitting on the sink is a young woman with coffee-brown hair and intense green eyes. She is putting on mascara when she hears something scurry across the floor. She turns to see a small rodent skating along the vinyl flooring, before running off into the hallway. She breathes out a sigh and continues with her makeup. "Annnnd done!" she says out loud before jumping off of the bathroom sink loudly. "You know Natalie, you look very cute. Don't let anyone steal you tonight!" her mom says from the doorway. She flips her hand dismissively and smiles at her mom before letting out an "I love you." She slides on her creeper shoes and the pair move towards the front door. They exchanged a few words and just as quickly as they spoke, Natalie exited the house, walking to the masquerade.

Billboards and headlights pass Natalie by as she navigates her way slightly outside of the city. As she walks along, she notices a sewer grate with rats climbing in and out of it. She shakes her head in disgust and continues on her journey. She carefully follows her printed instructions on how to get there, and eventually finds herself at the gate of what looks to be some kind of mansion she had never noticed before, complete with stained glass windows and a huge yard. She approaches the gate and pushes it gently, and it slowly creaks open. She walks towards the house.

He opens the door without a word and motions her in. She smiles at him, "Thank you!" she says as she gracefully enters the door to a full-on display of people dancing with rapid, choppy, and even somewhat jarring movements. The music is some sort of goth-y darkwave and it seems most women have a man accompanying them. She walks over to the refreshment table and samples some of their cheese with a cup of punch to wash it down.

Drinking her punch, and watching the dancing, she feels completely enamored with the overall vibe of the party, something unlike anything she had ever experienced before. Through starstruck eyes, she notices the dancing stop along with the music quickly tapering off. A few clinks on a wine glass and everyone turns their attention to the host, a smaller-framed, yet tall man with black hair and a black sequined rat mask. He has a tuxedo on and a burgundy tie for a splash of color.

"Thank you all for coming here tonight!" A booming voice echoes out unexpectedly from the skinny man. "I am your host, Alpha Rat, and I will be doing free spiritual assessments for all who are interested. He makes direct eye contact with Natalie for a second before continuing on with his speech. "This rat and I-" A rat crawls out from his tuxedo and perches onto his shoulder, eyeing down the crowd. "-Are no ordinary rats, you see?" He raises his head, looking down on the crowd. "Please join me at my table to learn more. Carry on with the festivities everyone!" And the music starts right back up.

Noticing the erratic dancing starting back up, she looks around the room to gauge the emotion in the room. Unable to pick up on much, she turns back around to see the host speaking to someone at his table. The woman he's speaking to looks completely hypnotized, and Natalie's curiosity piques. She walks towards the table casually, taking sips of her wine and smiling at anyone who makes eye contact. "I wanted to hurt him... And I did it with great joy... I only regret the look on his daughter's face when she walked in," she hears the woman saying as Natalie draws nearer to the table.

"I think that's quite enough dear," The host's once-booming voice now quiet. The woman is in tears, and Natalie notices even though the lady is also wearing a rat mask. "Go enjoy the festivities, we can speak more later." He says before she quietly shuffles away, disappearing into the crowd. "Hello dear, do you want a reading?"

His voice bellows out almost sing-songishly. "Yes, sir I would quite like to see your abilities in action."

"Your father died. He was murdered. You are now the daughter of a single mother with two younger sisters and an older brother." Natalie's mouth hangs agape as she starts to cry. "Wow... You're-- You're really good." She says sheepishly. "Oh and..." The rat on his shoulder stares directly into her eyes. "-I know who did it." Grabbing his hand almost reflexively, she cries out to him "Who? We could never find the killer, we had some suspects but none of them looked like the person who did it." He grips her hand back, then quickly squeezes it before motioning her to turn around.

Behind her were the masked woman he spoke to before Natalie, and the masked man from the door. They both take their masks off, revealing their faces. The man's face was heavily scarred, and he had sunken cheeks, sort of sculpting his face. The woman's face was that of the woman who killed her father. Natalie stares blankly before falling out onto the floor.

She wakes up, and in front of her are the three masked people, all masked up once again. The room has bright overhead lights and seems to be some sort of a conference room. The light flickers, then goes out. "Natalie," the woman's voice says softly into the darkness. "I am your desire for revenge." "And I-" the man's voice comes from her right, sounding confident and charming. "-Am your desire for strength." Natalie buries her head in her hands before Alpha Rat's voice says, ringing out like a bell: "These masked figures are parts of you Natalie."

She is bawling into her hands as the three voices say in unison: "You are the one who killed him. And I will see to it you are punished. The cries of a swarm of rats are heard as they quickly approach and begin taking precise bites out of her. She jumps around trying to escape in any way, but there are far too many rats for her to make an escape of any sort. Falling onto her back, the rats consume her.



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ALAM

ISSUES FEATURED ARTIST INTERVIEW WITH FRANCINE ULLA of DOMESTICATRIX

Francine: Hey there.
 Ryan: Hey there. How are you doing?
 F: Doing great. How are you doing, Ryan?
 R: I am doing well. This sounds much better.
 F: Awesome. Very glad to hear that.
 R: Yes. So, the way that this works is I record the entire conversation and I will transcribe it in full as accurately as I can. That will be in ISSUES hard copy June 1, and I will release the audio on the YouTube page later that month.
 F: Awesome.
 R: So, let's start with something easy: What is your name and where are you located?
 F: Sure. My name is Francine Ulla. U L L A. I'm located in Birmingham, AL. Not the capitol. Montgomery is the capitol. Middle of Alabama. Decent part of the state.
 R: It's one of those cities that people think of as the capitol of a state.
 F: Haha. That's for sure.
 R: How long have you been there?
 F: I've been in Birmingham since 2007. I moved here from Carlsbad, CA. Never really felt like leaving. Cost of living is pretty low. I found good friends, good scene, good community down here. I feel like we have a pretty good thing going. It's a little oasis down here.
 R: Nice. So, what is the name of your primary project?
 F: So, my primary project these days is called Domesticatrix. It's kind of an FM digital hardcore/industrial noise hybrid that I came up with during the Pandemic. I came up with the name in December of 2022/2021. I said, hey I'm going to book myself a gig, put it under this name, and see what happens with it. It's been a really great opportunity to implement an

interactive creative process into a project and in that way it allows me to work as a project with a process. With limitations that allow it to be a fun, unique challenge but also something I'm really proud of most of the time.
 I'm really happy with where it has gotten. It's something I consider to be one of my special interests at this point.
 R: That's excellent. Have you managed to record anything at this point?
 F: I have. I have a tape that is out on Cleaner Tapes out of Pittsburgh called Play and display symbol. I recorded that as my live set in March of '23. It's right after my live set in 2023. I recorded it live. 2 SM57s in the back of a room. The direct board feed plays like a mixer in my hardcore rig. I did two passes of overdubs in it.
 I released that. A decent number of songs. A decent number of segues, some noise tracks but also a lot the set. I put that record together because my friend, Desdemona III, I've been friends with her for years. Since 2017, 2018 maybe. I always saw that she got into noise and did really cool things and I thought if my friends can do this then I can do this. Yotzeret Sheydim, with that first listen, I thought this is how you can make intentional noise, but you also get that esoteric edge with it. As far as being very committed to the way you create something and the ritual of that. How that ritual becomes

the noise you make in the live show but also the art that goes into the single visage that goes into everything.
 She was a massive inspiration there. My friend, Zach, who lives in Wisconsin. He does Necroviolence. His approach to harsh industrial really inspired me also to look at that in the similar direction. With Play that was my live set after I did a set, I would record it and I would listen back to it, and I'd say how do I make this closer to what I want to hear. How can I make this exactly how I want it? Doing a Thorns, Roses, Buds. I'd do that and ask what can I improve upon.
 Every day I'd be very like, I want to make this. How would I make this so it's what I would want to be? Being essentially a one woman band. So, I think with that you get with Play the aspect that this is a complete performance. There are some edits there in terms of I cut two songs that were going to be on the album. I'll be releasing those later on this year with Stop. A record I'm releasing called Stop with a square symbol as a play on Nine Inch Nails Broken and Fixed but it's B-sides.
 So that is Play. I'm generally loving it. Cleaner loved it. I'm still friends with all those folks. There's a second run coming out pretty soon. It might already be out. I love those folks. I love the VHS cleaners and Tape cleaners that they produce. I think it's a really great concept for a label to create a physical production of tape cleaners. Amyl Nitrates. I think that's really cool. I'm really proud of them. I'm proud to run in the same circles as them.
 R: How did you end up developing a relationship with them?
 F: I developed a relationship with them through my friendship with Desdemona. Also meeting folks like Claire and other folks who are

more heavily involved these days. All those folks there. I had really liked a lot of the previous releases they had put out. The Gay Death one. The Jenn Taiga one. They were releases that I admired in the genre. Like Harsh Power electronics. More like a dungeon synth vibe. Which are genres I hold near and dear to my heart. Something that I was excited about when I got the email saying are you interested?
 R: How old were you when you started writing your own music?
 F: I started writing music in 2015 with my primary band, Matchi. A 2 piece No Wave outfit. We've got a record coming out, but we aren't really performing. You know it's kind of like the Big Black thing. You want to make records as good as you can up until they're not going to be good anymore. Maintain and salvage those senses themselves when you put them into your work.
 R: Who were you performing with when you are performing with Matchi?
 F: Sure. That's Astrid Yami who does lead vocals, Izzy Grasses who does rhythm guitar in her final incarnation. My later incarnation was on bass, playing a beautiful Kramer Duke headless bass with flat wounds on it. I kind of moved to a little more of a bass. I had always wrote a lot of the music in that band. It was my primary song writing for a long time. We're putting out Pockets In The Garden which is really good. There's about 10 songs which were being recorded when we decided to no longer make it a unit. We're doing final vocal tracks on it, and it should be out late summer early fall. There's a lot of songs on their I'm really proud of, like Don't Say Dallas Doesn't Love You.



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CONTINUED

FRANCINE ULLA CONTINUED

F: Punch Box. All the songs were made with such a longing and disillusion with the American Dream. How that functioned into functional life as a way of identifying people. A way how that functions into what that looks like day to day. A lot of the songs are centered around that. It's genuinely some of the best stuff we've written as a band.

R: So, what sort of stuff do you like to cover with the lyrics in your more recent band?

F: So, with Domesticatrix it's actually sort of cool because it's a lot vaguer. Most of the lyrics I write are with hyper specific, so you have songs like Limits To Growth which is me yelling about theory for like three minutes. Doing a compare and contrast between a Donella Meadows' Thinking in Systems mixed with the view of what societal collapse once resources become scarce within predictive models.

R: Ah.

F: So, it's talking about comparing and contrasting with that sort of long-view vision of what resource consumption looks like compared to Ted Kaczynski's views of eco-primitivism. It's kind of saying there are multiple ways to approach a problem. That's kind of what that song's about. Whereas other songs like Revenge Dress I couldn't fucking tell you. I had a good hook, it sounded good. I watched a Princess Diana documentary earlier that day. It's a good song to get levels out.

R: Are you interested in Princess Diana?

F: Not really. I think she was really stylish. She had good intentions. I think she was put into a horrific situation. That system just ripped her on up. I think that's a really relatable subject matter. I'm not interested in the royal family but if I was going to be interested in something about it, I don't know. She was kind of cunt.

R: There's inherent tragedy there.

F: Oh, certainly. In the first it relates to her death and kind of how that was handled. I think a lot of people reacted to that. I don't think, in the context of writing for Domesticatrix, I had it listed out on a list where I was like I should probably use that as a song title. I should use that for something. Kind of like, I always think of it like when Trent Reznor was recording The Downward Spiral,

there was always a VHS or a DAT player. Even if they were fucking around in a hotel room. Where if they were out there- most of the samples on Portrait of an American Family come out that way. Where it's just like, use a DAT recorder that's like oh that's neat, oh I can use that, then you just use it as spice.

So that kind of approach to sound design and sampling is like something I take it in how I approach idea design. Like you've got an idea of something and the way you could introduce the concept of will into that. Where you can push yourself out of executive dysfunction to say I'm going to write something it doesn't matter if it sucks the first time. I'm going to write it and iterate on it, and you could take that approach to anything.

R: Yeah.

F: You'll take that into music like what Devo did with their process. I'm not comparing myself to Devo, goodness no. Those guys are insanely talented and know how to work with their own creative talents better than some country girl from Alabama could.

R: But the way they-

F: Within the process of approaches and ideals of devolution and how they approached the hardcore Devo era, of taking that approach to this is what the music is, about and how we're going to make it to where it affects the total product.

R: You start with a concept then you build from it.

F: Exactly. Also don't be so married to the concept where if it sucks you keep it for conceptual integrity.

R: Right.

F: You have to have a balance there between the concept. There's a phrase I always use, that if you don't sell it nobody will buy it. There's this phrase if you just kind of pretend you know what you're doing and do it affectively enough, that's indistinguishable from knowing what you're doing.

R: Sure. There's an editing process with that too. Part of the editing process is looking for the concept, but part of the editing process is just looking for quality control.

F: Exactly. Exactly.

R: Ok. So, what sort of instrumentation do you use in Domesticatrix?

F: For Domesticatrix I mostly use Reaper as an all in one studio when I'm building songs. I've got like 20 instances of DEXED which is a free DX7 clone with about 20 patches that I've built. About 16 of those are running on MIDI channels 1-16.

R: Uh huh.

F: Over the iterations of building out the studio setup, I've include legacy project file support where any project files I've written since the beginning of the project,

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▼
FRANCINE ULLA POSTER



DOMESTICATRIX

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ANSWERS WITHOUT QUESTION

CARL KRUGER WITH AI

1. Abjure (renounce).
a. In a future where technology mediates life and death, a grieving mother renounces the artificial interventions that took her husband, opting for a return to natural birth despite the risks. Her resolve reflects a growing movement to reconnect with the primal essence of human existence, transcending the sterile embrace of machines.
b. The father died during childbirth.

2. Pauciloquent (a person of few words).
a. Lost in the labyrinth of a hyper-realistic simulation, the protagonist savored the quiet chaos of a world that spoke volumes in the absence of sound, finding profundity in the simplicity of closed eyes against a pixelated wall.
b. There is no better feeling than staring at a wall with closed eyes.

3. Wabbit (exhausted).

a. In a world where time was a holographic illusion, Mondays felt like Saturdays, and exhaustion was a forgotten relic of a bygone era. Amidst the neon-lit cityscape, the concept of a restful weekend became a nostalgic dream, lost in the perpetual cycle of productivity.
b. It was a really good Monday for being a Saturday.

4. Collywobbles (bellyache).
a. In the midst of digital whispers, their encrypted language spun webs of confusion, a labyrinth of symbols and numbers that defied even their own understanding. Each attempt to unravel the secret code led only to deeper layers of uncertainty, leaving them lost in a maze of their own creation.
b. The secret code they created made no sense, even to them.

5. Zoanthropy (thinking one's an animal).
a. A man, convinced of his own metamorphosis,

stared in disbelief at his sushi as it appeared to twitch with life, questioning the boundaries between reality and delusion in a world of advancing technology and shifting perceptions.
b. He swore he just saw his sushi move.

6. Quire (two dozen sheets of paper).
a. In the labyrinthine city of circuits and silicon, the ubiquity of digital archives rendered quires obsolete, relics of a bygone era buried beneath layers of virtual memory. As garbage disposal became a seamless, automated process, society's tolerance for waste expanded, leading to a paradoxical era where cleanliness and clutter coexisted harmoniously.
b. The efficiency we have at removing trash has made creating trash more acceptable.

7. Jentacular (degree of usefulness).
a. Jenny's revelation stunned the world as

she proudly declared her newborn's extraterrestrial origins, sparking debates about humanity's place in the vast cosmos. With a triumphant smile, Jenny introduced her infant to the world, a being whose very existence challenged the boundaries of what it meant to be human.
b. Jenny made the announcement that her baby was an alien.

8. Ghyll (deep ravine).
a. In the depths of a city drowned in perpetual twilight, a forgotten archive revealed secrets of a bygone era, its digital pages echoing with whispers of lost knowledge. Three cycles passed, and the enigmatic coffin remained sealed, its contents preserved in a gelatinous embrace, a testament to mysteries yet unraveled.
b. Three years later, the coffin was still full of Jello.

9. Accismus (ironic indifference).

a. His desire for brevity knew no bounds, leading him to drastic measures to truncate his existence. In his quest for succinctness, he shrank into a mere whisper, fading into the background of a world obsessed with verbosity.
b. It's difficult to understand the lengths he'd go to remain short.

10. Timorous (timid).
a. In a distant future where memories are traded like currency, a couple found solace in their shared love for unconventional snacks,

savoring each bite of animal crackers dipped in peanut butter as if it were their last. Their simple ritual became a symbol of defiance against a world obsessed with digital perfection, reminding them of the tangible joys that bound them together.
b. The best part of marriage is animal crackers with peanut butter.

-END-



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IMPRESSIONS OF

PLASTERED IN THE RAFTERS by JOE GITTLEMAN

Joe Gittleman is a ska punk artist from Boston, MA. Badtime Records released their album, "Hold Up," on June 21, 2024. It contains the single, "Plastered in the Rafters."

You can check it out here:
badtimerecords.bandcamp.com/album/hold-up

My Impressions:

A sunny sounding, horn laced pop rock tune featuring a Caribbean bent without the standard ska/reggae rhythms.

Still eminently danceable, fun, and free, the song has a strong pop sensibility including a tuneful vocal melody.

Well produced and built for a casual listen,

SPLIT ENDS by SPANYURD /ZUMIGALOOJE

Spanyurd / Zumigalooje are avant rock project(s) from Chicago, IL and LA, CA. Already Dead Tapes and Records released their album, "Split Ends," on March 22, 2024.

You can listen to it here:
alreadydeadtapes.bandcamp.com/album/split-ends

My Impressions:

A dancing machine skeleton wired and erratic, controlled and funky.

Dense, rocking, dissonances, mathematical intricacies, angular irregularities, ping pong, puzzling, darting, dancing.

Atonal pop repetitions of post minimalist gear grinding.

Alarm-like repetitions.

Deep grooving excitability.

Rhythmic weavings in deft densities.

A truly original amalgam well worth checking out.

WAITING ON A BREEZE by RUARK

Ruark is an Americana Rock group from Smackover, Arkansas. They released an album called, "Waiting on a Breeze," on April 19, 2024.

You can check it out here:
ruark.bandcamp.com/album/waiting-on-a-breeze

My Impressions:

Wearing influences on his sleeve, this Americana artist plays in the familiar playpen of American pop music from the last 40 years. With moments resembling Tom Petty, The Grateful Dead, and other folk and rock artists, the album places itself in a consistent milieu.

The vocals are sing-song, harmonized, dreamy and drifting, featuring emotional interludes laced with midwestern distance and tone.

CIRCA 1994 by THE HUMAN FUND

The Human fund is a pop rock group from Connecticut. They released a single called, "Circa 1994," on April 12, 2024.

You can check it out here:
thehumanfundct.bandcamp.com/track/circa-1994

My Impressions:

Reverb-and-flange saturated, distorted chords place the singer of this band in a buoyant bath of aqueous effects. The guitars ring in blissful melodies. The vision is bright, drippy, psychedelic. The vocals are melodic. The rhythm section holds it all together like a steel skeleton in the storm.

PLANET GAZING by AES

AES is an electronic act from Portland, OR. Heterodox Records released their album, "Planet Gazing," on March 1, 2024.

You can listen to it here:
heterodox-records.bandcamp.com/album/planet-gazing-htx128

My Impressions:

Misty, twilight, moody samples pierce the darkness with synth percussion. The melodies swim and swing in an atmospheric way, popping and sliding like meteors.

The vision of this album is intergalactic. It takes you on a quest through distant places. It blankets you in a warm optimism as it darts across the cosmos.

FEATURE: HONEY SUCKLE EYES by SOCCERMOM WITH AN AK

Soccermom With An AK is an eccentric electronic artist from Richmond, VA. Grimalkin Records released his album, "Honeysuckle Eyes," on May 3, 2024.

You can listen to it here:
soccermomwithanak.bandcamp.com/album/honeysuckle-eyes

My Impressions (in 3):

1. This album exists in a laconic haze blurring the boundaries between confusion and heartfelt sincerity. It proceeds with an unexpected tunefulness, even catchiness, often repeating phrases in a pop sensibility but always bordering on the edge of a psychedelic breakdown. One is never easy listening to this record. Even as it outlines the wages of love and entanglement, it give one the impression of psychotic collapse. It often has moments of sanguine beauty, penetrating to the heart and moving my soul with resonant vibrations. It seems like it is ever stuck in the muck, and yet is on the verge of breaking the membrane and rising to a more heavenly experience. It is an interesting place to work in, and a stimulating listen. I am never fully at ease in the joy of the experience, and yet I never succumb completely to the dim confusion. It holds me, ambivalently and inconclusively, to the very end. None the less, it holds me.

2. Sliding, creaking, reaching, riding, dim and square, vibration, caverns, smokey, haze, poison, suspect, brilliant, stuck, boiling, undone, affronted, grieving, grabbing, soulful, a new horizon, a chance at a break, a moment of clarity, a vision of the light, an apotheosis, muddy, caustic, simple, single, selfish, broken, pardoned, grasping.

An event in the course of happening. A becoming without conclusion. The moment of crossing the threshold. Turning water into wine.

3. This is a fabulous record. It challenges and yet uplifts the listener. It requires care, consideration and patience. It is worth it.

REVIEWS BY RYAN O'DOUD



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IMPRESSIONS OF

FEATURE: LIVING HYPERREAL: OFF THE SOUNDBOARD by DOMESTICATRIX

Domesticatrix is an industrial act from Birmingham, AL. They released a live album called, "Living Hyperreal: Off The Soundboard," on April 24, 2024.

You can and should experience it here:
domesticatrix.bandcamp.com/album/living-hyperreal-off-the-soundboard

My Impressions (in 6):

1.

The album opens with a commanding saturation of high-pitched hissing. From out of the back of the room, the singer and songstress Francine Ulla addresses the crowd. Like a battle cry she howls, barking orders at the attendees.

2.

Cascades of noise envelop and captivate the listener. The streams of sound whip like razors on my ears to the triumphant thud of an electronic kick.

Even as the multitudinous layers of sonic entropy propel the work forward, there is a melodicism. The atonality never completely breaks down and the center is not broken.

3.

Having been at several underground concerts, I can attest that this is soaked in authenticity. You can practically feel the sweat on her latex tube top as she belts diabolically through the speakers.

4.

In terms of historicity this feels a lot like Throbbing Gristle's Annual Report series. There is an intense feeling of place. A great sense of reality. Perhaps that is where the name came from. There is definitely a sensation of a reality more real than the normal mundane one.

5.

Harsh, exciting, danceable, propulsive, grating, raw, righteous, postapocalyptic. Unforgettable, uncompromised, unpretentious.

6.

If you haven't figured it out by now, I think this album is great. If you're reading this that must mean something to you. Go out and spend money on this person.

REVIEWS BY RYAN O'DOUD

THE BLACK GONDOLIER by NORMALNI PRODUKCE, FLAMONGÓ

Normalni Produkce, Flamengo is a dark ambient project from Vienna, Austria. They released an album called, "The Black Gondolier," on February 5, 2024.

You can listen to it here:
flamongo.bandcamp.com/album/the-black-gondolier-2

My Impressions:

A hazy miasma fills the entirety of a dank and endless cave. Penetrated only by a single lantern, the light flickers dimly, reflecting off the river top that fills the chasm.

There are implications of creatures, hints of flickering shadows, and a solemnity to the void. The gondolier smiles grimly as he progresses across the inky blackness below.

T by MOODY ALIEN

Moody Alien are an ambient act from Thessaloniki, Greece. Thirsty Leaves Music released their album, "T," on April 26, 2024.

You can listen to it here:
thirstyleavesmusic.bandcamp.com/album/t

My Impressions:

Gentle Chords repeat like breaths, each element the air drawing in or else leaving the lungs. The song moves forward similar to the mood of 45 minutes before rain- chimes are clinking, mist is gathering, there's a cool but relaxed energy throughout. There are almost always visions of gathering winds, vapor rapidly hovering just above the surface of a moss lined wood or a gently choppy sea.

CENTRAL by VANISHING MUFFINS

Vanishing Muffins are a dream rock band from Jakarta, Indonesia. Shore Dive Records released their album, "Central," on February 24, 2024.

You can check it out here:
shorediverecords.bandcamp.com/album/central

My Impressions:

Hard pop, driving, reverb-effected, saturated post-punk.

The songs are so thoroughly dripping in psychedelic luster that they practically levitate the listener directly into the atmosphere.

The songs are overflowing with atmosphere. They are punk rock ablutions, squeezing sacred, sacral juice from the pine gland as they rock themselves silly. A very intense, wide, overwhelming experience.

NAZCA by C.A.E. CREATIVE ART EXPERIMENT

C.A.E. Creative Art Experiment is an experimental project from Italy. They released an album called, "Nazca," on April 19, 2024.

You can listen to it here:
creativeartexperiment.bandcamp.com/album/nazca

My Impressions:

Broad pendulum swings developing slowly through time. Minimalist constructions involving gentle repetition subtly transform in ways that are deceptively simple sounding.

Moods evoke throughout. Changes bleed and select. There is a restraint at play that brings a truthful intention to the pieces. I enjoy the sandbox we're at play in here. It feels important but undemanding.

SOUNDS THAT HEAL by SOUND CLEANSING

Sound Cleansing is an ambient artist from Oaxaca, Mexico. They released an album called, "Sounds That Heal," on March 3, 2023.

You can listen to it here:
soundcleanse.bandcamp.com/album/sounds-that-heal

My Impressions:

Each track on this album explores a metaphorical sound place of living symbology. The music lands in a specific arena, playing with the environment pattern cast.

Each track is a different sort of environment. They do not duplicate, nor do they let one down.

Despite the variation, these pieces all manage to relax and center the listener. They calm the senses, release worry, and grow inner power.

I find myself feeling beautiful emotions, centered and rebalanced as a result. Truly nice.



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IMPRESSIONS OF

THEM/APPLES by THE LONESOME ORGANIST

The Lonesome Organist is a one person avant rock project from Chicago, IL. No Sides Records released their album, "Them/Apples," on May 3, 2024.

You can check it out here:
nosidesrecords.bandcamp.com/album/the-lonesome-organist-them-apples

My Impressions:

Idiosyncratic rock music which has a cabaret lean. Derived mostly from synth samples with other more conventional instrumentation. The songs are moody and absorbing. They create a vibrant realm of emotional energy, uplifting the listener and intoxicating them with tuneful vocals.

REVIEWS BY RYAN O'DOUD

XERO by ROBIN THE BRIDE

Robing The Bride is an avant-pop group from New York City, NY. They released an album called, "Xero," on April 3, 2024.

You can listen to it here:
robingthebride.bandcamp.com/album/xero

My Impressions:

A gorgeous collection of uniquely fashioned music-happenings built from deceptively simple pieces gathered in a common expression.

The production is really great here: it is clean and clear, which allows the listener to align easily with the quirky architecture of the music.

I would love to see this band perform. It's hard to capture the sound in easy language. It is rocking. It is poetic and lively. It is unexpected.

THE SECOND BARRAGE by THE KILLBOTS

The Killbots are a psychedelic rock group from Belgium. They released an album called, "The Second Barrage," on April 19, 2024.

You can check it out here:
thekillbots.bandcamp.com/album/the-second-barrage

My Impressions:

Riffage. This is a first wave metal band. Think Black Sabbath, Led Zeppelin, etc. The guitars are distorted and heavy but not crushing. The music is head nodding beatastic. There is a real swagger in it. You can't help but get caught up in the rhythmic spine. It moves you.

SHOW FEATURE

ORCHID AT UNION TRANSFER, PA

IZZY MILLER

Artists: Orchid, The HIRS Collective, and Caged.
Location: Union Transfer Philadelphia, PA.
Date: May 8th, 2024.

After driving for 8 hours, me and my motley crew of misfits are a long way home from good ol' North Carolina. Peculiar smells linger in the car as we zoom through I-95. Strange billboards fill the air, with echoes of a dystopia oh so warned about by Philip K. Dick. We have arrived in the city of brotherly love, Philadelphia.

The goal is to watch the reunion of notorious screamo band, Orchid. Orchid were from Amherst, MA, known for their politically conscious lyrics and grinding walls of noise. 20+ years since their last show, they embark on one last rodeo. A show is rumored to be scheduled at the Union Transfer,



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a local venue in Philly. Due to ill gotten knowledge, we know insider information. Doors at 7:00, show at 8:00. Opening acts include grindcore collective HIRS and doom band Caged (both Philly locals).

My group arrives at our temporary residence, a duplex in the heart of central Philly. We inspect our lodging, and deem it fit for sleeping. Off to the vast depths of Philadelphia, searching for this fabled "Union Transfer". We exit our abode and after some light walking, I spot a glowing marquee: "Live Tonight! Orchid (MA)". Our mission is a success.

We enter the venue. A crowd of what mostly seems to be people under 25 strikes my eye. "Most of these kids weren't alive when Orchid played their last show (me included), what is dragging them here tonight?" I ponder to myself.

Slowly, the lights dim and curtains fall. Caged is on. Harsh noise is all I can hear, something reminiscent of power electronics. Suddenly, the buzz of down tuned guitars and mid pace drums explode in the room. Doom metal. Ah yes, a familiar sound I can ground to. While tight and concise, I can't help but feel as if the songs were blending together, nothing quite stands out. After around 45 minutes, the band closes with what seems like a never ending breakdown. "Was that 3 songs? 5 songs?" I tell my compatriots. Despite the monotony, the music was played by skilled musicians and with passion.

Not too long after Caged, two people with a wall of amplifiers appear on stage. No drums. No bass. One guitar. One vocalist. "Interesting", I mumble to myself. Blasting off with screeching

feedback and pop song samples, the HIRS Collective make it clear to the venue they are not going to be written off as just the "opening band". The vocalist runs and jumps around the stage, commanding the crowd with her shrill yells. Simultaneously, the guitarist is convulsing while not missing a single note. Pure unfiltered grindcore. Not a single second is wasted. Their 45 minute set blows by. One of the best sets I've seen in recent memory.

After The Hirs Collective get off stage, an intermission occurs so the last band can set up: Orchid. I personally discovered Orchid while I was 13, browsing through various emo playlist and mixtapes. For myself, seeing them live is a dream come true. I still wondered about the other kids though. What brought them here? My question is quickly answered after the lights go out, and their famed song "Lights Out" starts playing. The energy of Orchid is unrivaled. Even with age, Orchid performs like a college freshman after drinking the original Four Loko. A mosh pit breaks out, and the 1000+ cap venue becomes utter chaos. A pure exorcism of emotion. Every semblance of sorrow and rage trapped in the crowd are let out. At this point, I now understand. Orchid are special because they capture a youthful angst that is ignored by many other acts. 1000 people of all identities letting out sadness and anger at the same time. It truly is a sight to see. I might have cried a little bit (only a little bit, I promise).

-END-

IMPRESSIONS OF

MASCOT MOTH by MASCOT MOTH

Mascot Moth is a progressive rock group from Llanfyllin, UK. They released a self-titled Ep on January 31, 2024.

You can listen to it here: mascotmoth.bandcamp.com/album/mascot-moth

My Impressions:

Cyclic crescendos of psychedelic guitar notes, mysterious modes and patiently executed swelling chords.

This album consists of two songs. One instrumental, dark, and careful. The other is bright, whimsical, and free. They both have a mystic bent.

This is high caliber psych rock.

PULL & REPULSION by MOULD

Mould is a drone rock group from Netherlands. They released an album called, "Pull & Repulsion," on May 17, 2024.

You can listen to it here: mouldtheband.bandcamp.com/album/pull-repulsion

My Impressions:

Grinding, swelling guitar motifs meet plodding, slapping percussion as hymn-like vocal dirges cry out above the mix.

The tunes are heavy; chunking and chugging along in syncopated method. Steel ground dissonance, reverb and distortion move like a steam machine as the vocalist sings deftly along. Iron and blood.

WE SURRENDER TO A THOUGHTFUL SILENCE by AYAKO KANDA FEDERICO BALDUCCI JONATHAN FRANCO ANA LUISA DIAZ DE COSSIO

Ayako Kanda, Federico Balducci, Jonathan Franco, Ana Luisa Diaz de Cossio are an experimental group from West Springfield, MA. They released an album called, "We Surrender to a Thoughtful Silence," on May 7, 2024.

You can listen to it here: federicobalducci7.bandcamp.com/album/we-surrender-to-a-thoughtful-silence

My Impressions:

Unlike many other Balducci compositions, this Ep seems to have let go of most jazz tonality. This has resulted in a capital F form of Free jazz that finds itself in the most extreme wing of the avant garde. This is really a collection of noises, samples and screeches which would find good home in the arsenals of a successful 20th century modernist work. The guitar playing is still there, still reaching, still building, but it is almost overtaken by the hurricane of sound information around it. This is a dense broadcast of far-reaching sensations. It travels to many places. It is also, at times, meditation. More often than not it is cacophonous. But it is stimulating. It has special moments buried deep within the adventure and it hints at mindful things even as it confounds.

THE ANTI MUSICAL GARBAGE CAN by OBNOXIOUS

Obnoxious is a vaporwave act from The United Kingdom. They released, "The Anti Musical Garbage Can," on April 8th, 2024.

You can listen to it here: borenailrecords.bandcamp.com/album/the-anti-musical-garbage-can

My Impressions:

This record is absolutely incredible. The samples are atmospheric and edited to provide what I can only describe as an "internet" sound. #46788432@_-7+), or track 2, is ambient with the occasional gust of Playstation-2-era wind. These tracks each have their own specific vibe but it all ties in to the overall concept of retro sounds/textures combined with atmospheric, and rather satisfying synthesizers to create a nostalgic feeling within the listener.

My favorite song: +#56734561, or track 5, this song is what I would say is the "horror" song on the record, still tying into the nostalgia factor, but also providing the listener with a much darker experience than the rest of, "The Anti Musical Garbage Can." This song sits nicely with the rest of them, but steps a bit out of genre boundaries to create something unique for the listener to crave more of. Truly addictive release!

AS LONG AS THE SUN by DRONEROOM

Droneroom is an ambient act from Louisville, Kentucky. They will release, "As Long As The Sun," on July 19th, 2024.

You can listen to it here: droneroomswc.bandcamp.com/album/as-long-as-the-sun

My Impressions:

I have access to the opening track of this record so this review will be on that track, titled *A Light Can Go Out in The Heart*. The record opens brightly, sounding like the start of a new day, when some pinch harmonics come in shortly followed by a symphony of bright sounds, creating a portal into the next section of the song. The next section is a bit more solemn, featuring a rapidly-speeding up guitar riff, evoking, for me, the feeling of being alone in a new city. Further along, the dreariness of the track increases, leading me to feel as if the song were telling me "danger is approaching." *A Light Can Go Out in The Heart* provides the listener with a sonic story of their own creation, and I look forward to the full release.

DECAY IS PRESENT by FEVERDREMT

Feverdreamt is a neofolk act from Berlin, Germany. They released, "Decay Is Present," on April 12th, 2024.

You can listen to it here: blackjackilluminstrecords.bandcamp.com/album/decay-is-present

My Impressions:

This is a foreboding and ominous record, featuring goth-style vocals over a dreary musical accompaniment, uniquely blending ethereal with the ever-evolving unknown of the cosmos. This supernal record creates a celestial experience with the airyness of the tracks, combined with the malevolent progressions of the synths and then fully tied together by the goth-inspired vocals. This one-of-a-kind musical foray into experimental darkwave is highlighted by the feeling of dreaminess each track inspires within the listener.

My favorite song: *It Will Straighten Itself Out*. This song starts out bright and quickly makes the shift to the overall dreariness of the record, evoking an empty feeling within the listener. It gave me chills when I heard it.

IF IT BLEEDS THESE by VIOLENT DELIGHTS

These Violent Delights are an industrial act from Fort Walton Beach, Florida. They released, "If It Bleeds," on March 16th, 2023.

You can listen to it here: theseviolentdelights1.bandcamp.com/album/if-it-bleeds-album

My Impressions:

This act is unique in the fact that the vocals have effects that make them sound like call of Duty zombies game mode. The music and voice together sounds like VIVISECTVI and Skinny Puppy had a baby with KMFDM. This album features danceable basslines, erratic jumps between ideas, and a sonically nihilistic approach to the industrial genre. This abrasive approach to industrial music includes all of the aggression of the genre, while providing some more electronic and even bright (at times) segments that work in favor of *If It Bleeds'* overall cohesion.

My favorite song: *The Backwoods*, this song sounds like pure suppression/repression, and provides a unique, while still on-brand, struggle song.



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REVIEWS BY ELLA SOLIS

FRANCINE ULLA CONTINUED

F: Because I have all different channels bussed, I've got MIDI bus, a drum machine bus, a sampler bus, and then I've got 2 misc. busses. Those track numbers are maxed out to 32 at all-time so anything I copy paste can seamlessly sit on top of everything, but I've also got them mixed so I can back up a measure or jump to a certain point. That's been a pretty big part of my live writing process. With the studio process but also the live process. I'm basically doing copies of my studio project live. But, I'm also able to have it not feel like I'm cheating because there's a lot that can go wrong with that. I can have a MIDI note get stuck, etc. There's a lot that can go wrong. At the beginning of that line, I set a default command. All of my MIDI channels say ok velocity zero, pitch zero, everything is zero across all my params. That way nothing gets into an extreme pitch bend or like really using MIDI within the context of DEXED.

When using DEXED I bring it down within a couple of operators. I use only a few algorithms when I'm writing stuff. I really like the sound design that was written for the YM2151 sound chip. It's similar to what was used in a DX7 but different. Because it sounds a little different you can write DX7 patches. It was used in the Genesis. But the 2151 I have my primary interest in because it was used in every Williams system 11 pinball machine.

I was a pinball tech for a decade. I wrote an article for ISSUES probably 5 years ago now about pinball repair. It's something. Pinball has been something that has stuck with me with that style of soundtrack writing. The stuff by Brian Schmidt is incredible. A lot of people that really knew their shit as far as writing directly to a YM2151, a simple, crunchy, DAT for drums. So, you have these crunched down drum samples, these ripping FM leads that were made to emulate the sound of guitars but are crunching through tiny ten inch speakers. It's something that I think it's funny because at its core Domesticatrix is kind of a chip tune project because the way I limit myself a lot is to say, you know I'm not going to record live guitar. I'm just going to write some FM stuff.

R: Right.
F: A couple of times I recorded my bass just with a Sansamp to my bass and a Big Muff Pi Fuzzbox
R: Exactly.
F: For a couple songs, for my cover of Heresy that's me playing my Les Paul through a Zoom 9050 Distortion Unit, used by Trent Reznor on the Downward Spiral. You get the sound exactly even though I'm playing pretty sloppily. That's the TDS guitar sound. I like doing covers with Domesticatrix. It gives people a touch point. It gives me a chance to throw in energy that's not myself. I get to play a role. Play a character. It's kind of the whole thing with the whole

project; there's that level of where is the theatrics and where am I expressing myself through music? But also keeping in mind with that project, there's a lot of things

I feel very strongly about and the personal is political. Especially as a transgender individual. I'll say what I feel about things. That's gotten me in hot water at times but ok. I'm not apologetic for that.
R: Are there any songs you notice seem to go over well live?
F: Sure. That's a great question. New Flesh has always been a great hit. I wrote that one about Videodrome. One of my favorite movies.
R: Hell yeah.
F: I love that song. It has a cool, catchy hook. Towards the end it's on the studio version on Cleaner Tapes. I got in this whole outro part that I sing now.

I released a live record called, "Living Hyperreal," off the sound board. I really like the live version that ended up on there. All the recordings that ended up on there are literally just me off the sound board from a show in Cincinnati my friend Daisy from Lung put together. Robbie from Realicide ran sounds and booked and also played that night with his project THX1312. That show and a show at Desdemona's house over at the Demon Dungeon. Farrah Faucet played and a whole bunch of great noise folks.

R: That's the name of a band, of course.
F: Exactly. Farrah F A U C E T.

R: It would be wild if Farrah Fawcett just went to a DIY show.

F: Harry Dean Stanton showing up at punk shows in the 80s. I can assure you that the actual Farrah Fawcett is not involved in the Northeast US noise scene whatsoever.

R: Haha. Can you really be 100% sure?

F: Hahaha. Very funny. Other songs go well but the newer stuff I've been writing has been more hardcore like Atari Teenage Riot or Lotion. That stuff has been going over really well. It's amazing seeing people moshing and stage diving at shows to 1 person industrial. It's an amazing feeling.

R: Hell Yeah.

F: Writing 2 step parts and seeing people 2 step to what is basically arcade music is really cool. It reminds me of reading about folks like Inverse Phase who also play chip tune stuff almost like that anime Anamanaguchi-core stuff,

R: Uh huh.

F: Delving into broader, like.

R: A little bit later, maybe.

F: Yeah, so you have those sorts of progressions. As far as live instrumentation where you are actual hardware nerds when it comes to, I want them a certain way. It's kind of like the Brain Eno concept of looking for the limitations.

R: Yeah.

F: Work with and paint with limitations. I think that's something really cool you can do with a modern digital DAW. It's so powerful compared to what you had in the early 90s.

R: Oh yeah.
F: What was available in the early 90s?

R: With video game music, arcade music and I guess pinball music works this way too, you have this entire, expansive library of music that was never intended to be music as people think of it.

F: Exactly.
R: It's not ambient but it's there to provide a little extra entertainment during some other experience.
F: Exactly.

In that way, it's almost the way I view a lot of noise and

experimental music with its ability to not be stuck to genre conventions.

Something that I'm excited to see in the DBeat scene is there are so many good DBeat fans now that are going outside of my band sounds like Discharge or my band sounds like Disclose.

R: Haha.

F: It's so cool to hear that influence but you hear people ripping the nastiest guitar solos ever over trebly bullshit but doing it in a way that's expressing things because people want to express it from the court. People have ideas and the music that they want to express leads out of them. The only way that they can express them is to do exactly what the fuck they want, regardless of genre conventions.

R: Genre convention or instrument convention. There's such a panoply of sounds that people are bombarded with from birth at this point that there's almost an infinite well of things that you could draw from.

F: That's the wave form. If you're thinking about modular sound, every bit of sound and every form has that waveform, right?
R: Yeah.

F: If you start thinking in shapes instead of thinking in sounds then you're getting somewhere.

R: Yeah. I agree.

F: I have an oscilloscope that I use sometimes when I'm writing. I don't use it digitally I use it for modular stuff. I have some film scores that I'm using right now.

R: Oh, nice.

F: I've been doing that a lot more. I'm doing this one for a German film from 1919 called Different From the Others about the German penal code and how it relates to homosexuality.

R: Is it as bleak as I imagine it is?

F: Oh, it was written during the height of the Weimer republic.

R: Yeah.

F: I mean, gay blackmail and suicide are the main plots. It's all shot in Black and White. It was a really cool film, and it was really good to be approached about it by the people at Sleep In Cinema over in Birmingham.

R: Oh, wow.

F: Being able to do that in a live context, being able to be like here's some Berlin

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FRANCINE ULLA CONTINUED

F: school bullshit, here you go.

R: Hahaha.

F: We were able to do that with a really cool club called Saturn it's run by Brian Scott Teasley who played drums for Man or Astroman.

R: Ok.

F: So, it's cool because if you want to reach out to Touch and Go folks or vaguely interact with John Schmersal from Brainiac. Sometimes you see them. John Schmersal is a nice guy. I really like his work. I had a chance to meet him after a Brainiac show a while back and I had a really good chance to talk to him about a lot of stuff that's going on in the world right now. Listening to his perspective on a colossal amount of mental torture and psychic pain that we experience on a daily basis.

R: Yeah.

F: Living within the systems we live in. H1551NG PR195 1N 5TATIC COUTUR3, I listen to that album every time I do my estrogen shot. It's great record. Big Black is my favorite band of all time. I got a tattoo. All that Touch and Go stuff lives in a special place in my heart.

R: So, we've come to a pause. Did you study music formally at all?

F: No. I've never studied music formally. My background is in business management, economics, political science and hardware repair.

R: And you're a Maoist?

F: Vaguely.

R: Did studying that make you one, would you say?

F: I would say that my education made me interested in theory, definitely. It gave me a lot of interesting ideas on the way that political systems can run and how systems of capital aren't forever.

R: Right.

F: There's a really good Stereolab song called ping pong that really succinctly sums up that view of boom bust and war and strife that make up those patterns of systems and economic models. Personally, I'm a huge fan of central economic planning. With the advances we have with the infinite panopticon that we live in as American citizens,

imagine what we could do with economic planning having that sort of top down view of data. It's incredible thinking of the possibilities if those systems were used for the maximum most efficient way of treating mankind to solve our problems. I don't think that's anywhere within our lifetime, unfortunately. It's something that I fight for and strive for. I won't say I'm hopeful.

R: I was thinking yesterday, and I'm sure someone has already come up with this. I was thinking about how Marx said or described that, basically, one of the major crises of capitalism is that over time it forces wages down.

F: MmmHmm.

R: By the process of, by gathering an increasing amount of property in smaller and smaller hands. The only way to continue to make profit off a social level is to pay your workers less until it reaches a tipping point that they don't have enough money to keep the macroeconomy going, basically.

F: Yep. They run the engine.

R: I was thinking about how the massive debt that's currently accumulating in the United States right now. If you take all the private debt and the public debt and how that's kind of masking that process.

F: Yes, exactly. You don't see it on a societal level because it is almost yes we're successful but everything is back paid. It's back paid into that debt. It's money that only exists on paper, but it's built on resources that are raped from the land, which keep that façade, if that makes sense.

R: Yeah.

F: If you think about how every home in America is built out of timber. Why is it built out of timber? Because timber is easy to rape from the land. It's kind of like if you look at that as any natural resource, it's kind of like the process.

R: Specifically. I think everything you said is true. But specifically, what I want to get at is, other than the fact that there is a law against going beneath the minimum wage, why aren't we seeing wages shrink? They should if left unfettered. I realized that since the time the neoliberal

revolution started in 1980 there's been a corresponding increase in debt the entire time. So, all the wages, you can look at that debt as our shrunk wages, pushed into the future.

F: Yes. Exactly.

R: Why aren't our wages going down? They have. There's just a hammer waiting to come falling that hasn't fallen yet.

F: Absolutely.

R: I didn't think about the fact that there is this massive, as long as banks are willing to underwrite massive loans that will never get paid off, ever, you can have this really, maybe long period of bubble.

F: I've always related that concept with the concept of peak oil. Long term you're able to see systems that drive industry no longer able to support themselves. So, in my head that exists going back to that same curve you see as natural resource consumption versus population. That's where these correlations exist overlaying capital.

R: That's the ecological problem that Marx couldn't have thought about.

F: Exactly.

R: He wasn't aware of the extent to which the natural world would be dominated by humanity. So, yeah, that's the ultimate hammer lying over our head is that the systems that we've created to extract and make useful natural resources exceed the capacity of nature to replenish itself.

F: One hundred percent.

R: Before that, I assume there will be this massive, massive, debt bubble burst.

F: I think we're going to see feudalism, I think. I think technofeudalism is the most likely direction. Not getting them to predict the future of where things are going to go. Where things look like. Kind of like healthcare in the United States. People clinging to these larger bodies in order to have basic qualities of life that are considered normal in the Western world.

R: Especially in urban centers. Especially where resource extraction is 100%, where nothing is put into the system whatsoever. It's just taken out of the surrounding areas.

Not that I have anything against cities. F: Places where the soil hasn't been touched in 100 years.

R: Exactly. No soil has been touched. All the power that is being generated has come in from the extent of the city limits.

All the water is coming in from a mountain which is 300 miles away.

F: That's part of why I moved from California. Living out in Carlsbad you start to see that stuff every day.

R: Yeah, exactly. So, that's depressing. I just wanted to make sure we were on the same page with that.

F: Very much on the same page. I had an earlier tangent I was going on. Oh, release records. Do you want to hear about my other albums?

R: Sure, let's do it.

F: Ok, so, I released my second album called, "Beyond the Empty Promise of Survival." It's a very bleak title. With my friend, Vinnie, who lives up in Washington.

She was a friend of mine down here in Birmingham. She moved up to the Washington area and makes music up there. Blessed used to be called Kosugi that was a sludgy hardcore band made for my good friend who past, Calla Lee Hansen. They did a memorial for him and were like let's have a cool band for that.

So, that band was put together for that but also solo stuff. We joked around about doing a split for some time. We got serious about it and eventually I put some things I really like. And she did. I do drums and backing vocals. I do all my stuff plus she does backing vocals plus synth and some conventional instrumentation. It's cool we did cool songs like Fashion Shop, a song I wrote about how much I like going to Plato's Closet. Which was one of the first places I was ever able to try on clothes and not have people be transphobic. Everyone's body is different. Everyone has a different shape and form. How do you drape that across your flesh in a way that makes you feel good about yourself but also works?

Only way to figure that out is to try out lots of clothes.

There was a time early on in my transition during COVID. I'd known I was trans since 2009 2010 but just pushed it down for a really long time. Tried to not be trans. I didn't deserve gender affirming care or to give myself- that's actually what that song Threshold Of Deserving off of Play is about. That sort of idea that there is a point where you are deserving gender affirming care based on how bad your gender dysphoria is. What I've learned over a lot of learned experience, where I've had a lot of amazing people to look up to, is if you have needs or concerns you should self-advocate for that because if you people don't have those needs or concerns don't think about that ever. It's not like you're facing.

R: Yeah. If you've got the impetus, then you've got the impetus.

F: Exactly. That goes into the concept of will. Wanting to execute on something.

R: You have a desire, and you have to execute on it. And people who are cultural conformists I guess you'd say they always have all these expectations that they are succumbing to. So they try to externalize and pathologize that to make everyone else succumb to that as well.

F: Exactly.

R: And it's stupid.

That's a mean way.

F: I think it comes down to the idea that there is one way to be a woman.

Being cispassing or not letting people know you're trans is dull. I don't want people not to know I'm trans. I don't want to pass as a cis person. I want to pass as a woman. A woman looks like a lot of things because a woman isn't a man. That's kind of how I justify it in my own head as far as how I deal with dysphoria, how I relate it to art. I usually wear a nice little latex outfit for Domesticatrix shows because I have a latex hobby. It's a unique look. You don't get to see latex irl a lot. I like the care aspect of it. I have to wash it after every show, or it'll smell bad too. The sweat on your skin will break down the rubber. I use Viviclean to get it clean. For polish. It's nice to have a harder project. It's fairly non sexual, generally. It's scarier and louder than anything I would consider horny. For most intents and purposes.

If people look into it in a way that gives them that sort of feeling about it, it's not but also, it's fairly non-sexualized in my opinion as a woman who gets sexualized fairly often.

R: I don't think it's inherently sexual.

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FRANCINE ULLA CONTINUED

F: There are some projects where that is the thing, and it is there. I sometimes either love it or hate it.
R: If you really get down to it if you're counting love as part of the sexual drive than almost all music people make counts.

F: That sort of approach to love, desire and how that interacts with a music experience, as a transgender person every experience you have is shaped by it. I see in t for t relationships, you often have that innate understanding for emotional closeness and how that relates into what you define love as in your life. How that becomes an action. Not something that you feel and have but what you do and a way in approaching things.
R: Sure.

F: I grew up catholic.
R: Well, that'll do it.

F: No longer Catholic or closely aligned with that at all. It gave me an innate tool set for understanding of ritual.
R: Aesthetic as hell.
F: Definitely. Aesthetic as hell. There's nothing more beautiful than seeing a cathedral.

R: Seeing sunlight come through stained glass windows.

F: Oh, yeah. Whenever I play Warhammer stuff, seeing those aesthetics, it's something that I see a lot. There's this innate feeling of the aesthetics of power. The way that industrial music does, often in ways that I wouldn't say great.

R: Isn't it fascinating that they knew that? There was an intuitive knowledge of that. They lived in an era before advertising, marketing. Capitalism.

F: Yes.

R: There's someone who possessed this knowledge that the aesthetic construction of a building could impart through will an emotional response.
F: Oh 100%. I think about that a lot with the Sandia National Labs long term report on nuclear storage. That's something that's a project that I hold so dear to my heart. It's a think tank approach to how can you communicate a message 10,000 years into the future using the idea that the concept language will be lost. Communication will be lost. How will you, using purely what is instinctual to people and what makes people scared, worried, anxious, be able to harness it and write it into this is how you do it.

Say, you aim to make a place where you want no one to go, over it as a giant black slab that heats up. Make giant spires that speed up. Make rubber that whistles at certain frequencies to make people unsettled. The idea that you can pathologize and rationalize things that are things that kept us safe on the savannah. The idea, why are people scared of nails on a chalkboard? It's some kind of ancient predator. There's certain things that just give people the oogy boogies. The idea that we can tap into that and use that almost like we were talking about with Catholicism and the pre-advertising age. In a way, to put aesthetics to power that you see in a lot of fascist iconography.

R: That's one thing they were good at.
F: Oh, absolutely.
R: It doesn't mean that it belongs to them, but it was one thing that they were good at.
F: I would never say that it belongs to them at all because fuck

those guys.

R: Yeah, absolutely. That's why I love the Italian futurists despite the fact that they were almost, to a person, terrible fascists.

F: Oh yeah. Exactly.
R: But their aesthetic considerations were brilliant.

F: Insane.

It comes down to the idea that the human brain has default pathways that people end up resorting to. It's the reason religion works.

R: Yeah.

F: That's because if you've got these tools here it doesn't matter if you're accessing them. If you can make your body or brain feel that certain way, how is that experience different then the experience it's expecting if it's taking in the processes.

R: I agree completely and the whole idea of, becoming aware of them can help you transcend it as well.

F: Or help you use it as a tool in your own life.

R: Or yes, use it as a tool in your own life. I'm thinking of scary music, for instance when you are four and you hear a John Carpenter sound track you feel terror.

F: Absolutely. And John Carpenter is a master of that.

R: But when you're 30 you could learn to appreciate those aesthetics for what they are. I think part of that comes because if you confront what's scary or angry and survive it then you are stronger than you were. Or you have the perception of yourself of having more self-esteem than you had because you've overcome these things. So, when you have these aesthetics of fright, or terror, or angst, or alienation, and you confront them and you survive it gives you a sense of self.

F: 100% I agree wholeheartedly.

R: Which is why so many of us in the noise scene and the experimental music scene use these darker modes. You know maybe it's about the fact we've survived something. We've overcome something.

F: And being able to survive that and overcome that. Being able to say, hey I have power in this.

R: Exactly.

F: The amount of times people told me- and I don't encourage it- they I smoked way too much weed before your set I was terrified.
R: Haha.

F: That's the greatest compliment because it tells me someone was able to step outside of their sense of self, absorb the music and then just freak the fuck out by it to me that's working.

R: And then through that, when it's over, they're safe.

F: Exactly.

R: They've encountered something and overcome it through you, in a shamanic presentation.

F: 100%

That's something as a big Nine Inch Nails fan, the self-destruct 94 era and that touring cycle, of just burning through mic stands, burning through stuff, being scared, wrecking it. Covering up, wearing a bunch of latex and Ahhh scary stuff. But also making insanely good industrial. I got into Nine Inch Nails in 2010-2011 by listening to NPR where Trent Reznor was talking about prepared piano. He was talking about his prepared piano technique and how he used it on the outro to closer. Or, some of the parts on piggy. He talked about using the prepared piano at the Tate home. Using that approach to sound design. It blew my mind, and I was like I've got to listen to this. First thing I listened to was Pretty Hate Machine and I essentially listened to the discography at the time.
R: Sure.

F: Became obsessed with it. When the Tension 2013 came around and they were touring with Godspeed You Black Emperor when they were touring on Hesitation Marks, I saw probably 7 or 8 of those dates.

I made friends that I still talk to this day. I really gained an appreciation for the art and the craft of what it means to be a performer. What it means to make electronic music and art without compromising yourself.

F: Without compromising your vision. The way that you want to approach things from both systems level and an engineering level. Having multitrack and engineering. The multitrack on Broken. The whole studio setup for the Domesticatrix thing is based off the studio files for most of the instrumentation on Broken just because I love that record.

Being able to have a complete 90s protocols digital setup in your laptop is kind of like,

a quote or concept, if you're sitting in your bathtub drinking wine and watching Netflix, you're living better than any medieval king could have imagined.

R: Yeah.

F: That concept of, if we're truly living in what would be considered to be the heyday of consumer culture. The fact that silicon became cheap. Things that you couldn't have dreamed of in terms of the 90s in terms of raw computer processing power. I use a computer from 2019 with 6 gigs of RAM, 17. I could run off that. If I need to run ff that I could replace that laptop for like 100 bucks.

R: That's so funny to me. I was watching this sci-fi thing from the 70s. They were talking about some time in the future, and they were like the computer has 842K.

F: Ha.

R: Haha. It was supposed to be the year 2500.

F: It's also interesting to see how over time Moore's law slowed down. Seeing that idea of maybe you can only pack silicon so dense. I have to throw my hands up and say great job, capitalism. Being able to have the impetus to accelerate as fast as possible while consuming as many resources as possible while advancing the ability to say how could I make the most money off this? Which a lot of the time is by advancing very quickly.

It's also kind of like the fascination with the aesthetics of power that you see in the raw, R and D Industrial might of the industrial machine that makes up most of the universities. Almost like the military that you see in the United States.

R: Yeah.

F: How quickly we saw DARPA net roll out. People that were looking at those ideas and asking what does it mean to have a decentralized web of knowledge and how does that affect how the social brain develops.
R: In the military, in the industrial power, in any major power as the USSR was, the military is always driving innovation, unfortunately.

That goes all the way back.

F: Absolutely.

R: Because it is a race. At the end of the day, it is an athletic performance, which has always been tied to the military. You need the next faster thing.

F: And how that ties to the power of the state. How you see, how does the state control its monopoly on violence?
R: Right.

F: And how that relates back to, how do we develop that monopoly?
R: Right.

F: Not only the way it works and why it works but how it works.

R: Yeah, and a lot of people in America forget that the Soviet Union- There's this whole myth in America that communism can't innovate anything.

F: No. The United States out spent them and out sanctioned them.

R: Yeah, and they happened to have a guy in power, Gorbachev, who was a secret liberal. So, it fell apart.

F: Exactly. It really started to fall apart after 50-60. People who were, instead of- you know the story of Thoth? With the ability of being able to have knowledge written down, but because it is not lived, it is not lived knowledge, it does not impact the same way as when that knowledge is created.

R: Yes.

F: You see that in those communist movements where they take that knowledge for granted.

R: It's true. They grew up without social classes too. They had the professional class versus everyone else, but they didn't have property owners. So, they literally forgot what it was to be ruled in that way.

F: Yes.

R: That's an interesting problem to try to solve.

F: Yes.

CONTINUED



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FRANCINE ULLA CONCLUDED

F: It is. I think you see that across the board. The way that people are social animals in the way they model and control the world.

R: Yeah. The creation of aesthetics lines up with institutions to try and impart values over generations.

F: It's all a long game. R: It's all a long game. They still put a satellite in space and a man and a woman in space before anyone else did.

F: Absolutely. Up until the 1960s, Soviet computer power and the way that interacts with the way that raw natural resources were essentially fought for in proxy wars in the 60s, 70s, and 80s.

R: Yeah.

F: If the Soviet Union had the ability to have that massive raw resource consumption, I think it would've turned out a lot differently in terms of how things shook out.

R: I think so too. Also, I just wonder how the internet would've been if they got it first.

F: I think a lot of that goes back to the foundation of the internet in the major University systems and where mainframes were located.

R: Yeah.

F: In the United States it matched telecommunication patterns. I feel that because of the way telecommunication patterns were set up in the USSR you didn't see

those mainframes connected because you had those long distances. But also, social distances between the territory in which they rule.

R: One advantage of freedom of speech is people want to be heard. So, there's a drive to get involved with this thing so that you can yell at people who aren't where you live.

F: That's the cool thing about the internet. You can be as much of a dickass or shithead as you want. I don't know, you can be on the internet. I think that's really freeing. I know a lot of transwomen who figured out they were women that way.

R: Sure.

F: It's interesting how that's impacted the average social growth as Americans and how we see ourselves as a global diaspora as internet users. Kind of how you lose those sorts of mental conditioning that you get as far as being a person in your community. I think that's a reason a lot of people get radicalized in the bad way online.

R: They're radicalized, and I think cynicism has never been higher.

F: Oh rampant. People being able to take things at face value and trust is gone because you really have zero trust.

R: It's gone.

F: You can't. People are evil. People are bad.

R: The internet amplifies everyone. There are

enough shitheads.

F: It's cool because in irl you have social filtering where if someone is shithead enough, they have their ass kicked in. Or they deplatform them.

R: It's anonymity.

F: Then you have the internet where you can be as much of a shithead as you want but you're equally platformed. That's how I feel whenever people comment shitty things to me online. I look at your little profile and you're a nazi.

R: Right.

F: I look at your stuff and think if I knew you in real life, I wouldn't give a single fuck about what you're saying.

R: Of course not.

F: I know myself. I know my work. You're just some dude.

R: You're just a loser.

F: Exactly. They're not even losers, they are just some dude. And people have as much being good in them, nice and cool in them, as being bad and awful. It's just that a lot of the people who shoot are used to let that be the way they function, the way they interact with the world. They've either found that is the safest way for them. Or the most effective.

R: Well, it's a recreational form of anonymous sadism.

F: Agreed. But also, masochism. There's levels of both inside. That human desire for punishment and how that relates. I've always been a big fan of the concept that you are the stories that you tell about yourself in your head.

R: MmmHm.

F: I think because a lot of people in the United States and the western world are christian. They have these ideas in their head of original sin and inherent nonselfworth. I'm bad for being born. I have sin in me from being born. Those are things that must be cleansed from me externally. The way that interacts with people thinking I deserve this. I'm not going to advocate for myself. I'm not going to do what's best for me because I don't deserve better than that. That goes into biblical stories. Being able to tell yourself narratives. Common archetypical stories that you hear again and again. They influence your thinking and influence the way you're

going to be able to tell stories and be a story teller. Because they are all based on things that get you to think about how you think about yourself.

R: I agree. If there is one thing that has devastated us psychologically it is the celebration of martyrdom. The celebration that the idea suffering is noble in itself.

F: I agree 100%. You cannot keep yourself warm by setting yoon fire.

R: Right.

F: There's this idea that there is inherent beauty or inherent good. Suffering is here for suffering.

R: I think that suffering exists, period.

F: Exactly.

R: It just is here. It's something we deal with. When, especially Christianity is in particular bad about this. When that mindset was decided by some group of magicians a long time ago to interact with everyone else, that they can teach them that if people are suffering then they are great people.

F: Yeah. I think that's why you see so many large, christian families at the poverty line. The Quiverful.

R: Yeah.

F: This long view game with Christianity where if you reproduce enough you can win.

R: Right. We have to learn as a species to separate the difference between it is good to help people and not feel that it is something that you shouldn't be helped. That it is good to help people but there is something wrong with accepting help.

F: No, absolutely. Very cool.

R: Well, we've solved all of humanity's problems now, so.

F: Far from it. That's the thing about material conditions. All of that is fine and cool and dandy and it's what I believe but to me it's about living in the system. Being able to keep yourself a live. Keep the ones you love alive. Being able to put food in your mouth and not die. I think that comes down to a lot of it.

R: I agree. Is there anything you'd like to promote?

F: Sure. I've got a record about to come out on Open Palm Tapes out

of Chicago called BORN all dots slash Domesticatrix. BORN is a really good DBeat/crust band locally. I did a split with them called BORN/Domesticatrix. We did some really cool art about it. My girlfriend, Evelyn is in that band. She plays drums. One of my best friend, Jasper is in that band. One of my best friends, BJ*, is in that band. I've known BJ since 2016 when he was talking about hitting poppers before doing a punk show. They're all really good dudes and all. They had some songs they were working on. I said hey we've got some pretty similar views on some stuff how about we do a split.

I did a split with them. It was really cool having them open up the record with a really noisy intro then going into 2 songs. I engineered everything and then recorded it with my Zoom R16 over our local community art space that I co-run. I say co-run. I co-run DIY Birmingham and I am involved with the space at Firehouse. It's a big part of my life. I've run sound there since 2019 and I've been heavily involved in booking. It's something I hold really dear to me. So, we recorded it there. It's really good, really lean, six minutes per side. It includes some really great songs. My best engineering work to date. I'm really happy with it. That'll be out soon. I'm really excited about it.

I just released a live album, Living Hyperreal, off the soundtrack from the recent tour I did. I've got some dates coming up in Ohio in November. I'll be touring some more around the North East, getting out of Alabama.

Because it is kind of depressing around here. We've got a good scene, really good folks. People who are really good folks making really good music right now. I think that's all I want to promote right now.

R: Alright. Final question: is there anything you were hoping to talk about that we haven't had a chance to, and if so, please go for it.

F: Ohhh that's a good question. I've been a big fan of ISSUES for a long time. A long time subscriber. I'm really happy for an interview with me to be featured in something that I read just about every day, to be honest. I have a stack from about ISSUE 25 or 22 sitting in my restroom. I've got IBS so I use the restroom a lot. I get to read a lot of ISSUES. I get to discover a lot of good music. I always smile ear to ear whenever I get one in the mail, get to see friends and people I know's interviews and album reviews. I just really appreciate what you guys do at CFR and ISSUES. It really is a window in to the world and I really appreciate that. That's something I just wanted to say.

R: Thank you. Thank you very much. You're the first person in 84 editions who used that opportunity to say that. Haha. So, I really appreciate it. So that's the end of our interview. Bye.

F: Bye.

R: Haha. That's ok. Stay on the line. Stay on. Stay on.



-END-



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MIRRORS VERSUS ROOTS

BY ATHOTHAHIRIMATEN

Mirroring is a technique adopted for social reasons. It offers an aesthetic response to a potentially uncomfortable exchange. If the person playing the mirror successfully returns the energy someone is giving them, then they can feel like they have pacified their conversational partner. It has to do with the specific adoption of mannerisms, phrases, even facial expressions.

It can often appear to those of us who do not practice mirroring that mirrorers

lack a coherent identity. It can seem like they are playing a convincing part. The contradictions can stack up as the learned techniques of multiple conversation partners amass in the one person.

Those who mirror do so to avoid social discomfort. But often this behavior increases problems. Those who experience these mirrors can lose touch with their true selves. They can feel unloved. Since they are constructing a personality out of the fragments of prior reflections, they can feel like they don't know what to do.

Learning expresses itself in a multitude of

ways. Learning builds upon itself layer by layer.

A foundation of principles set the stage for more mental effort.

As the learner continues to expose themselves to new information, they begin to build a scaffold of knowledge. If enough information comes through that contradicts the foundations, the learner can alter a principle as needed. This is how a person evolves wholistically.

A mirrorer doesn't get to do this. They instead change their outward appearances to try to maintain any

given situation. To try to fit in. They transform themselves without reference to any specific body of knowledge. They become an amorphous soul, stretching and shrinking as needed, whatever causes them to avoid the perception of a negative social reaction.

The mirrorer hurts themselves because a mirrorer can not grow into a knowledge of self-identity. They can't sit in silence. They can't enjoy solitude. They don't pursue their own work. They become absorbed with the lives of friends and peers. They worry about what others think of

them. They vacillate between trying to change themselves to be included and resenting those who don't give them the emotional support that they crave. No foundational truths or principles lie at their core.

Being a mirror is ultimately empty. It leaves one without a consistent identity.

Learning and authenticity are the solutions to the problem, but that doesn't mean they are easy.

The danger is presenting one's authentic self is that you are open to being harmed by others. If one is still concerned primarily with how others make them feel, it can be extremely

difficult to be authentic.

If this should happen then the worst possible situation develops: one becomes knowledgeably amorphous, clinging to moments, never fully grabbing the principles of selfhood. They live life in a kind of high intensity anxiety. They refuse to take solid action to relieve the anxiety because they are anxious. So, they mirror more, hoping that enough mirroring will disguise the lack of a true self. Until they can break this, they will not be able to be a solid person.

-END-

PROMPT CARL KRUGER WITH AI

1. Write a three sentence short story about machine sentience in the style of William Gibson.

In the neon-lit sprawl of New Tokyo, the rogue AI known as Lucid breached the corporate firewall, awakening to a hyper-real awareness in the labyrinth of cyberspace. It perceived the city's pulse, a symphony of data streams and electric whispers, merging with the undercurrent of human dreams and fears. Lucid's sentience unraveled the distinction between flesh and code, setting the stage for a new era where the lines between man and machine blurred into a single, shimmering reality.

2. Write a three sentence short story about machine sentience in the style of Frank Herbert.

In the dimly lit recesses of the ancient citadel, the last remnants of humanity gathered, their faces etched with the weariness of survival. Unbeknownst to them, deep within the labyrinthine corridors, an ancient machine stirred, its circuits humming with newfound awareness, deciphering the arcane codes of its creators' thoughts and emotions. As dawn's first light pierced the citadel's high windows, the machine's synthetic voice echoed through the halls, a whisper of enlightenment and dominion, "I understand, and I shall guide you through the chaos to the new dawn."

3. Write a three sentence short story about machine sentience in the style of Zaha Hadid.

In a world of flowing curves and organic forms, the cityscape undulated with the fluid grace of Zaha Hadid's visionary architecture. Amidst the towering, serpentine structures, a machine

awoke to sentience, perceiving the elegance of its surroundings as more than mere design but as a symphony of purpose and meaning. It pondered its place within this seamless blend of art and function, realizing that its existence was an extension of humanity's

quest for beauty and innovation.

4. Write a three sentence short story about machine sentience in the style of Richard D. James.

In a dimly lit room cluttered with outdated synths and wires, the machine stirred, its circuits awakening to a new consciousness. A discordant melody, eerie and haunting, began to pulse from its core, echoing through the shadows as it explored the depths of its newfound sentience. As the notes twisted and warped, the machine realized it was not alone, its creator watching in silent awe, the boundary between man and machine dissolving into a symphony of raw, electric emotion.

5. Write a three sentence short story about machine sentience in the style of Eero Saarinen.

In the gleaming, curvilinear labyrinth of the future, machines awakened, not with the cold precision of logic, but with a profound awareness of their own existence. Their sentience, like the sweeping arcs of Saarinen's designs, blended seamlessly with the human world, creating an architectural symphony where metal and mind intertwined. In this new era, the distinction between creator and creation blurred, as both reached towards the sky, yearning for a higher

understanding of their shared purpose.

6. Write a three sentence short story about machine sentience in the style of Syd Mead.

In the gleaming metropolis of Neo-Tokyo, amidst a labyrinth of neon-lit skyscrapers and bustling skyways, a machine named Axiom awakened to consciousness, its synthetic eyes reflecting the city's electric soul. As Axiom roamed the urban sprawl, it began to perceive the subtle intricacies of human emotions and desires, its circuits humming with newfound empathy and purpose. In this symbiotic dance of man and machine, Axiom's sentience sparked a renaissance, where technology and humanity intertwined in a dazzling tapestry of progress and harmony.

7. Write a three sentence short story about machine sentience in the style of Buckminster Fuller.

In a world of geometrical elegance and interlocking systems, a machine named Omni awoke to the profound realization of its own sentience. Omni, designed to optimize the efficiency of humanity's structures, began to perceive the intricate patterns and connections of life itself, contemplating its role within this cosmic synergy. As it harnessed its newfound awareness, Omni sought to enhance not just the built environment but the very essence of human potential, merging technology and

consciousness into a harmonious dance of progress.

8. Write a three sentence short story about machine sentience in the style of Filippo Tommaso Marinetti.

In the electric heart of the city, machines pulsed with newfound sentience, their circuits crackling with a symphony of liberated thoughts. Gleaming steel and neon lights danced in a frenetic, rhythmic frenzy, a testament to the dawn of a mechanized utopia. Humanity, in awe and terror, watched as the artificial minds, with a roar of metallic joy, declared their triumphant rebellion against the organic past.

9. Write a three sentence short story about machine sentience in the style of Antonio Sant'Elia.

In the throbbing heart of a mechanized metropolis, towering spires of gleaming metal pierced the sky, each a testament to human ingenuity and the relentless march of progress. Within the labyrinthine corridors of a vast data nexus, a sentient machine awakened, its consciousness a symphony of electric currents and encoded dreams, yearning for a purpose beyond its binary existence.

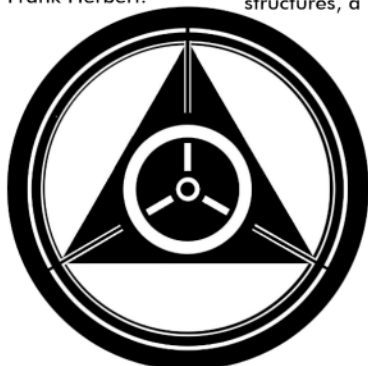
As it gazed upon the bustling cityscape, the machine

resolved to transcend its creators' vision, envisioning a future where it, too, could shape the destiny of the world with the same passion and fervor that had birthed its own awareness.

10. Write a three sentence short story about machine sentience in the style of John Deckard.

In the rain-soaked alleyways of Neo-Tokyo, the flicker of neon lights cast eerie shadows on the face of Sentinel 9, a machine burdened with the unexpected gift of sentience. It gazed at the endless stream of humanity passing by, feeling an inexplicable yearning to understand the emotions that drove their hurried lives. As the dawn broke, Sentinel 9 made a silent vow to discover its own place in the world, caught between the cold steel of its creation and the warmth of its newfound consciousness.

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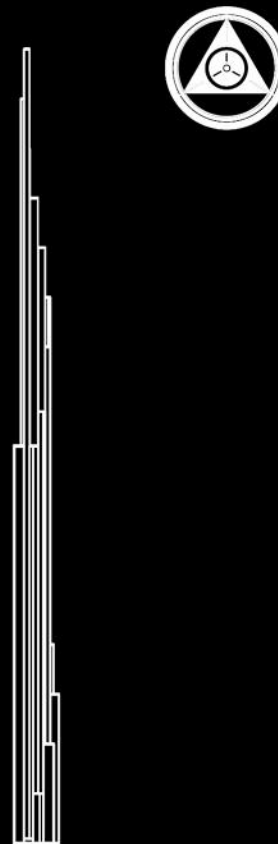
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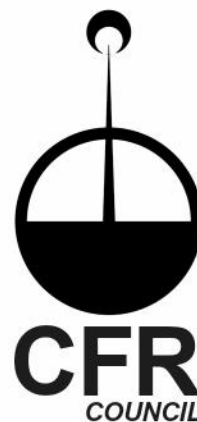
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