

THE
SANDUSKY
REVIEW

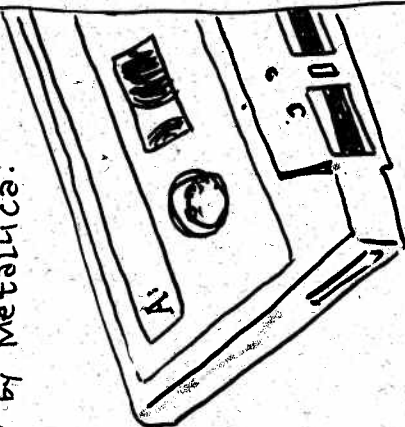


she doesn't know it's NEW YEAR'S

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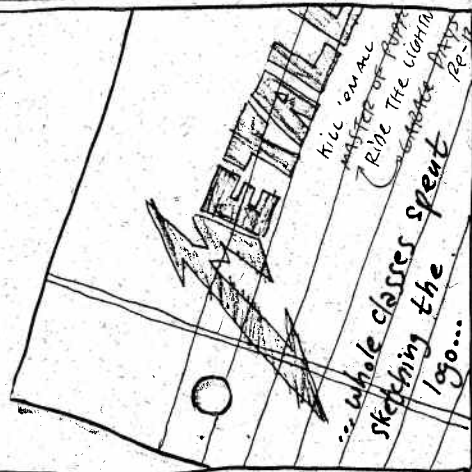
FALSE METAL

IN 1989 my best friend made me a copy of ...And Justice For All by Metallica.



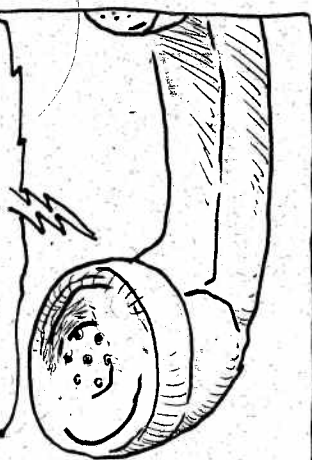
It was kept, unlabeled, underneath my mattress.

CUE four years of studying lyrics & pushhead drawings...



...hours calling I-95 and requesting our favorite.

I SAID we'll NEVER PLAY "ONE," YOU METALHEAD PUNKS!!



FALSE METAL REDUX

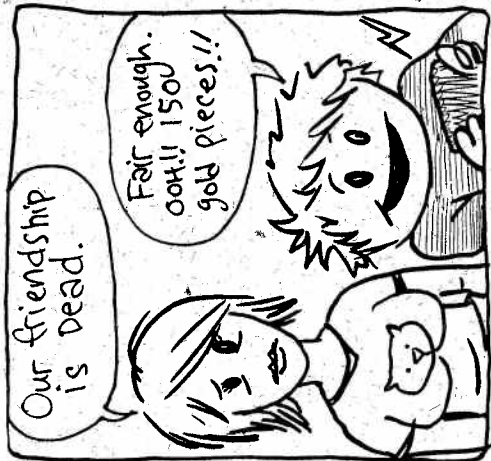
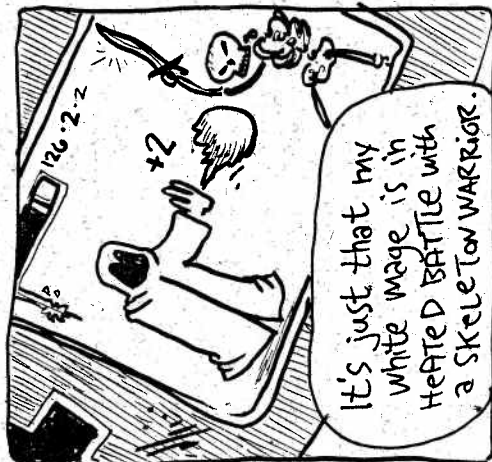
Remember that time when you were in high school and music occupied whole epochs of your life? Did you ever fall in love with a band, unfurl the lyric sheet from its case (that sweet chemical smell of plastic grapes), chanting the words until they tumbled out faithfully on demand? I don't want to lie to you: a major goal in my life as a teenager was to be able to name every recorded Led Zeppelin album and song. In chronological order.

In 1993 my favorite band was no longer Metallica but they still had a warm place in my heart. In the three years since I fell for them a lot had changed: I got a girlfriend, got a car, got my ear pierced (only to recant later once I saw that diamond sliver glitter in the fluorescent light of a truck-stop bathroom), wrecked the car and got dumped (that's what I got for our song being "What It Takes" by Aerosmith).

I loved Metallica, but after the commercial splash of the "black album" in '92, our relationship had grown a bit strained. They were even on Mtv, for God's sake—and so I had to look elsewhere for truth. (This is the eternal quest, the same one shared by the punk fan who stops listening when her band stops showing up in the back pages of *MRR* and leaves Lookout! or Epitaph; the same one felt deeply by the hippie when his band stops allowing their shows to be taped by the flip-flopped trust fund masses; the same echo in the soul of the Bowie fan when she sees a "Serious Moonlight" onesie for forty-five bucks at Macy's, that need to not only be a part of something but to also have an exclusive connection, especially exclusive of the people you hate the most).

The problem with trying to make myself a Megadeth fan is that we didn't really click. I loved the story—that Dave Mustaine was briefly a member of Metallica in the early days, but reveled in excess to the point even the self-styled "Alcoholica" kicked him out—and I liked the crunch of "Hanger 18" and "Peace Sells" but they didn't have the visceral snarl of anything from *Master of Puppets* or, hell, even the cold craft of the heavy ballads from the black album. It's like trying to date your ex-girlfriend's little sister. Seems like a great idea until about ten minutes before you actually try to kiss her.

WHITE MAGE



FIRE EMBLEM is still the only game I've ever played with awesome white mages. And La Cat got over it.

TWELVE HUNDRED BAUD

It's 1990 and there's a poster of Robert Johnson on the back of my bedroom door and one of Wolverine by Arthur Adams taped carefully to my closet, a dubbed cassette of Metallica's . . . *And Justice For All* stuffed under the mattress of my bed, made earlier in the year by my best friend. His dad played guitar growing up and rock and roll, even metal, is allowed in his house. I'm fifteen and things are starting to change but I don't know why and I've never heard a real punk song before and I just heard of Big Star—nestled deep in a *Rolling Stone* article about R.E.M., glittering like a ruby—and metal is all I think matters right now but that'll shatter soon enough, like a cheap wine glass at the end of a terrible dinner party.

The internet will do much of the smashing, along with college, and (bite your tongue, but you said it back then) grunge. But right now I'm astonished because I'm on a BBS and it's not quite the internet yet but do you remember the first time you got an e-mail? It's not JFK and maybe it's not even when you got your driver's license but looking back, did you even get it? I think I might have, sitting in my bedroom tapping away on my Commodore 64, wading around in the shallows of the new digital world.

What did we do? We talked, mostly; the early bits were forums and message boards that would be recognizable even today. And lo, piracy, she loomed full and luscious even then, the first uses of inter-telephonic communication in my life the attempts to lure delicious cracked games onto gigantic floppy disks, crawling over the phones lines a few K at a time.

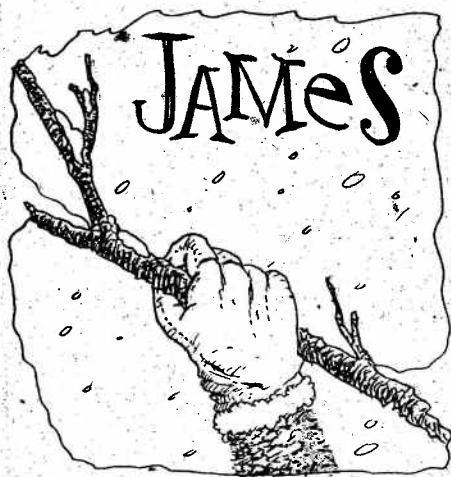
And we had names: long before blogspot or myspace or before everything got un-capitalized we had noms-de-Commodore; I shall not tell you mine, as it is astonishingly embarrassing, and I say that as a man who has publicly vomited on himself and then gone home to change in order to return to the bar. Within the last six months. But oh, those glittering teenage days: when for the first time, I could define myself not by my body, my voice, my eyes but my words.

EXODUS TWENTY THIRTEEN



If my mom had raised Dick Cheney the world would be a better place.

DREAMS OF RAREBIT MYTH

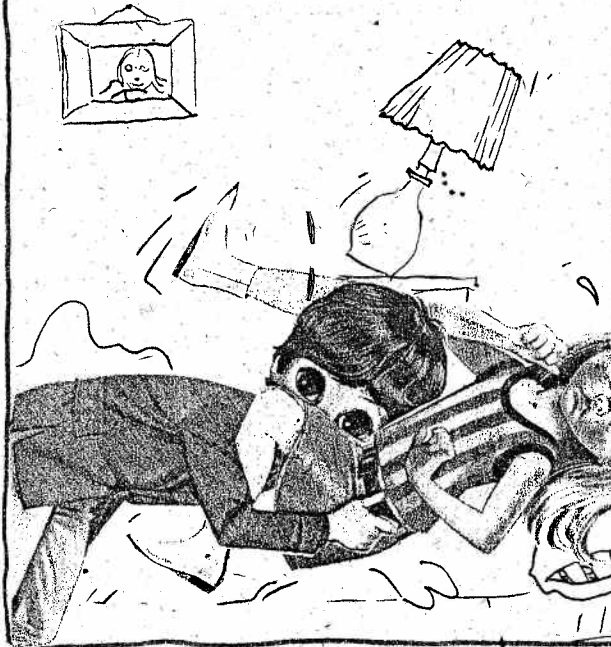


A "rarebit myth" is a visual transcription of a vivid dream pioneered by the cartoonist Winsor McKay. This one was a nightmare that got better.

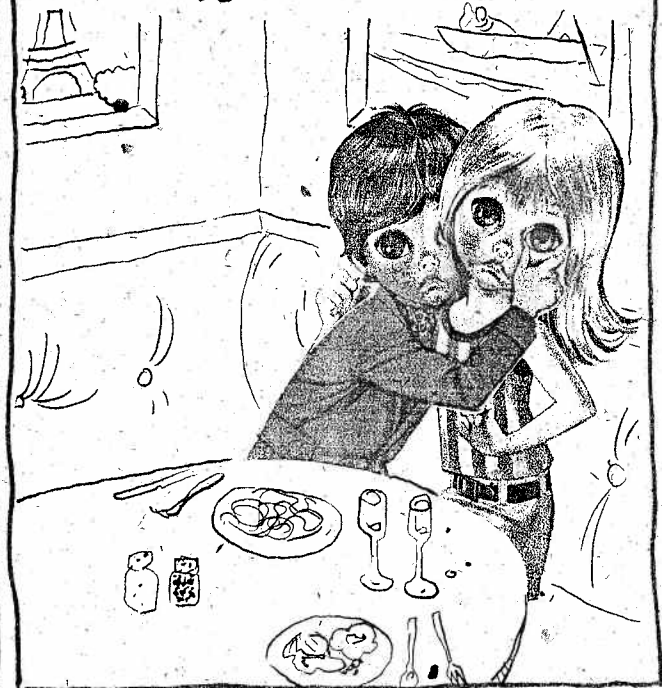
MEET AT INDY-ROCK SHOW.



IMMEDIATE ATTRACTION;
DRUNKEN MAKE-OUT.



THE INSEPARABLE LOVERS.



GARJUS 2004

"I SECRETLY CANNOT STAND
THE SIGHT OF YOU."

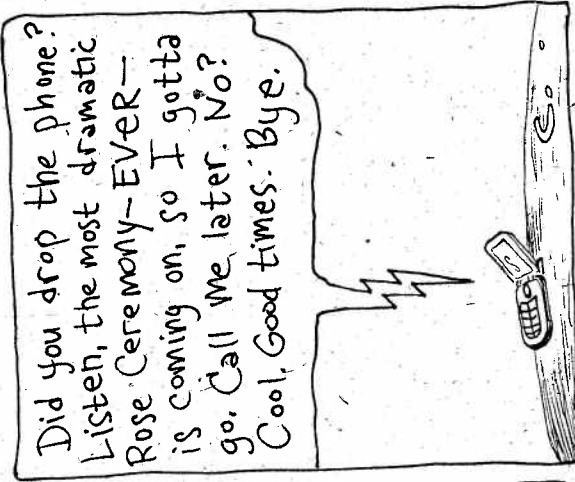
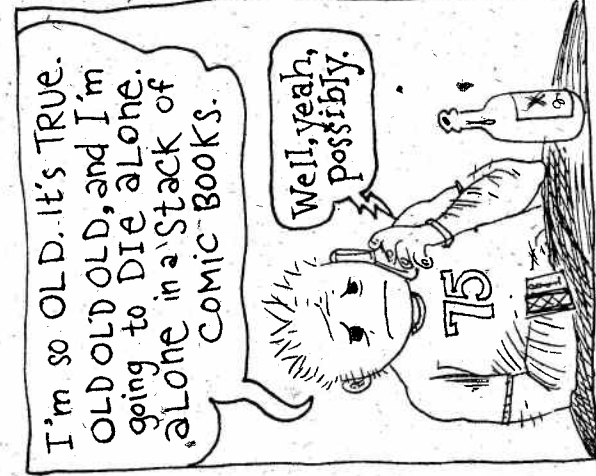


TEARFUL REMORSE;
DIVISION OF BOOKS +
RECORDS; AWKWARD
GOODBYES.



START OVER.





My friend Sally really helped me through this tough time.

CHEVROLET TRUTH

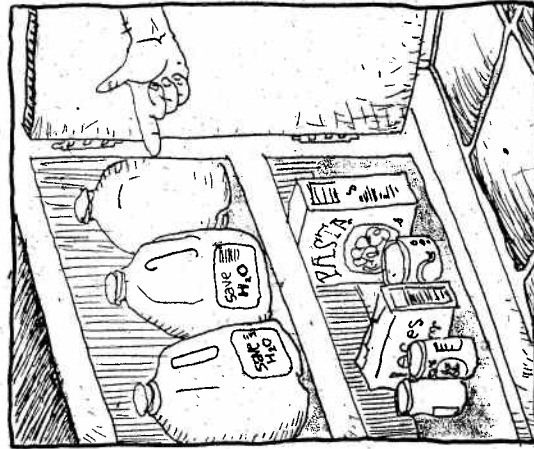
Listen, this much is real: When I was sixteen I was a blue-eyed, red-haired Alabama boy driving a 1969 Camaro as fast as I could around the streets and curves of Hueytown and Adamsville and Ensley and Concord and Pleasant Grove and when my sister and I drove to school we listened to cassettes stuffed with Beatles and Led Zeppelin and Stevie Wonder and

Listen: she'd throw her ice skates in the trunk and we would hurtle down the highway, and we didn't know that it was special, we didn't know it was magick, we didn't know this was they tell you in stories how America was supposed to be, we didn't know it would never be this way again, even when she started dying her hair and I was seeing how many silver bangle bracelets I could jam onto my left wrist. Bama in 1992 was like much of the world: we didn't know what was cool, we didn't know what wasn't: we listened to Alice in Chains and Lynyrd Skynyrd in regular rotation and, God love us, debated whether Eddie Vedder or Kurt Cobain was the better singer. I wore knee-torn blue jeans and black steel-toed boots and the laces were always black, never red, and

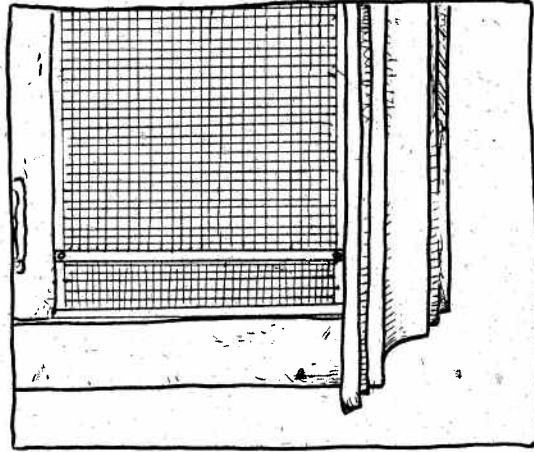
Listen: we wrote terrible poetry and were all in love with the same girls and made five bucks an hour and cruised the Winn-Dixie parking lot on summer nights and heard that so-and-so had a few hits for sale, eight bucks a pop, and one night we rode to a Tesla concert in the back of a Toyota pick-up, even though it was raining out, just because, and

Listen: I put that blue Chevy in a ditch somewhere in Oktibbeha County on the cusp of my twenties. Don't believe the stories, I was sober as hell, but maybe that was my teenage Altamont, the end of going back home pronounced by a slur of twisted steel and shattered plastic jammed deep into the Mississippi dirt, rain dripping on my face, heart twisted up into my throat, chrome skittering across asphalt.

BLOWBACK



"We've got water and food for about ten days or so."



"Some of those expandable screens, a battery-powered fan..."



Maybe it's overkill, but I'm just not taking any chances.

—Jay susi, Jackson, Miss. 08.27.06

To say that Katrina changed our lives would be an understatement.

SWITCHBLADE SUNDAY

My dad used to tell me about growing up in Sandusky, going to Minor in the sixties, turning a hundred screws on a hundred carburetors on a hundred Chevrolets on a hundred Saturdays. He and his friends would hunt switchblades in the pawn shops, ribbing the old guys running the stores in Bessemer and Jasper, asking for prices on Saturday Night Specials and pop-out knives.

If you don't know why his son was looking for switchblades a full thirty years later, then give yourself an "F" in "Southern Manhood and Fiction." In the alternative: If you do understand why his son was looking for switchblades thirty years later, please mark your grade as an "A" and also indulge in Cud'n Walker's delicious mint julep recipe (please note the crushed ice must be crushed *eggs-ack-erly*, with a wooden mallet upon a Delta cotton towel).

High Street, Jackson, Mississippi, 2002, I stumble on this illicit, unwanted grail: nearly six inches long and swathed in false blue mother-of-pearl and aluminum, it's the pop-out-the-side kind. It's nestled amidst a dozen buck knives carved from battle-flag ivory and curved-blade daggers worthy of the cruelest Sikh assassin, literal buckets of "Swiss" Army knives complete with dull scissors, bent toothpicks, blurry magnifying glasses and off-crimson sheathes.

"Those are twenty."

"The blade is dull and the case has a hairline crack. I'll give you fifteen."

"They're still twenty."

"What about seventeen."

"Twenty."

I put the cash on the counter and silently admit to myself that even forty would have been alright. I'm wary as I mash the button, and the knife jumps in my hand as the blade *shlicks* out. There's grease smeared around the etched *MILANO* on the blade and it shimmers under the warehouse lights.

CROWN OF THORNS

We all had the best cars. Brian had a white 1965 Mustang with no headrests and a 289 which would scream you up Rock Creek Road, those skinny tires straining to keep us off the cliff. Billy had a '73 Monte Carlo with something related to a 350 squatted down under the hood and a succession of underperforming Edelbrock 4-barrels which could never make that great lunk of a car move as fast as he wanted. And Greg had a 1986 Accord with a pretty decent tape deck and the headrest on the driver's seat permanently jammed in backwards.

A little different but so was he. Senior year in government class we read the Supreme Court said you didn't have to say the Pledge of Allegiance: from that day forward Greg sat in his seat, refusing to stand. He got sent to the principal's office a half-dozen times, each time declining to answer any charges of insubordination and only pointing, mutely but with grace, to the passage in our *Modern Civics* textbook. They'd keep asking him why he was so angry but he never said a word. He knew he didn't owe them a goddamned reason.

His momma was divorced and he lived with her along with his two brothers, walls covered with Alice in Chains and Mother Love Bone posters ripped from the center of *Metal Edge* and a cap with the word "Stauffer" jammed down low over his black curls. We never knew what Stauffer was but it earned him a nickname, one he wore with a half-smile.

One day he called me all excited; seems his little brother had spilled a half-gallon of milk and Stauf went to clean it up. Under the sink amidst the bright colors of Lysol and Pledge and Windex was a big glass bottle of tequila. His momma must have thought none of her boys would ever take the initiative to clean up after themselves.

Did I want to come over and listen to some records and work on that bottle? Hell yeah I did.

Maybe tequila don't seem like such a big deal nowadays—I know it really don't to my Mississippi and Louisiana friends, who were able to drink publicly by the time they were fifteen,

in many cases snagging gallon jugs full of strawberry daiquiri at shaky roadside stands—but in Alabama, between hyperstrict ABC stores, 21-and-up bars, and Baptist parents, we rarely even saw booze. Low-level drugs were plentiful—you could most always score some pot, there was acid around a lot of the time, some probably-fake mushrooms, and dozens of types of pills raided from the medicine cabinets of a legion of mommas and aunts, mostly Valium but tons of bits that were just sorted by color and primarily traded by the rock-and-roll girls at the lunch table. Liquor was rare and coveted even more for that fact.

Here's the thing about tequila, though, and us just being kids we didn't know the gig: the cheap stuff you can't drink straight without something to cut it, even just a shot you really should do the salt and lime dance, but all we knew was that being drunk was probably awesome and so: we both filled up big-ass plastic cups full of the stuff (Stauf had already resigned himself to getting busted by his mom and grounded). And . . . yeah, that tastes *terrible*.

So we decided that in movies they were always mixing liquor with other stuff, right? So what's in the fridge? Well, some grapefruit juice and the rest of the milk that Stauf's little brother didn't spill.

Have you ever had a glass-full of tequila and grapefruit juice? Friends, I've done some dumbass things in my life, and not one of them has ever come close to being as dumb as this—up to and including that time I decided it would be a great idea to date a Catholic Yankee who happened to be my best friend's girl. I mean, *damn*, tequila and grapefruit juice is a plague upon humanity worse than locusts or frogs or maybe even dead first borns. It's just that damn bad.

We choked down a few gulps, and I hollered mercy. Stauf kept drinking but added some sugar to cut the bitterness of the juice and that ghetto agave and—look, we weren't that smart. We were just two Alabama boys who sat around listening to Ozzy and trying to get drunk. I don't see Stauf anymore; haven't in over a decade. But you don't forget friends that call you when they get a little something to drink, whether they're sixteen or thirty-six.

The Sandusky Review is by

G O R J U S

an artist + writer from Sandusky, Alabama who lives in Jackson, Mississippi. He works primarily with two battered Polaroid Land Cameras and a set of alphabet stamps from Cavallini Papers & Co. There is a spinner rack in his bedroom filled with comic books from 1983.

More Polaroids, cartoons, and stories at:

www.prettyfakes.com

Write gorjus at gorjus.prettyfakes@gmail.com

Issues of *The Sandusky Review* are available, post-paid, for two American dollars or the equivalent in stamps or so-called "traveler's cheques," care of
Light + Glass Studio
523 South Commerce Street, Jackson, Mississippi, 39201.

“Don't worry about losing your accent;
a Southern man tells better jokes.”—Jason Isbell, 2002.

The cartoons in this artifact were created and previously published from 2004-2007; commentary and more detailed information regarding them are available at prettyfakes.com. The essays were written in June and July 2007 and have not previously appeared in any form (unless you've been across the table from me at a dive bar sometime in the past fifteen years, in which case I probably owe you a couple of shots or at least a beer).