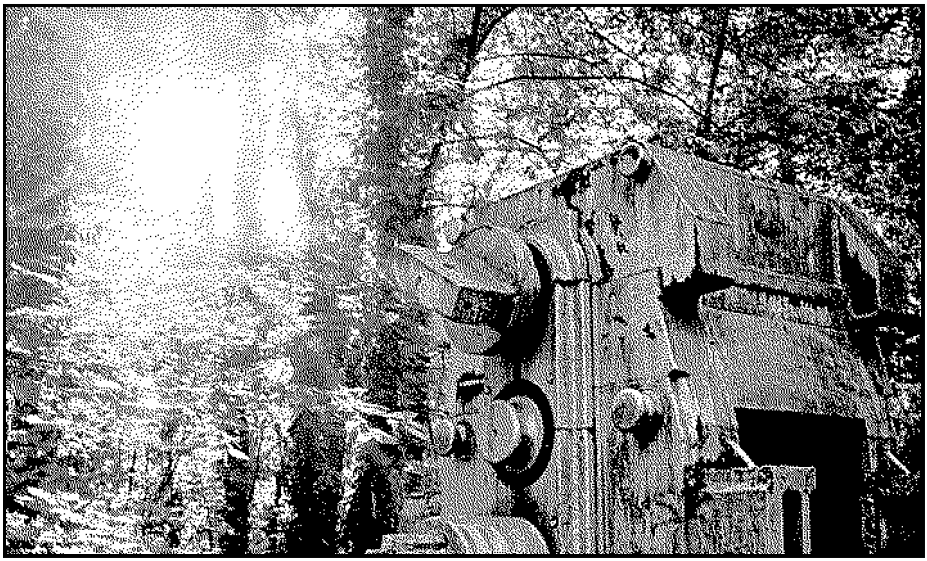
HOUDINI

September 2026, Part One Free



Butt-Rock Hauntology, Nu Metal Nostalgia
Erik Houdini

Hyperspekulation: Monochromatic Intensities
Hyperspekulation

'NORCO' – A Surrealist Vision of Labor Exploitation in the South
Salty P. Slug

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The articles in this zine ran on HOUDINI Magazine from September 1 to 15, 2026.

Point your phone's camera at any square code in these pages to open what it links to. A number in a black box 1 stands for a link in the text, and the code beside it has the same number.

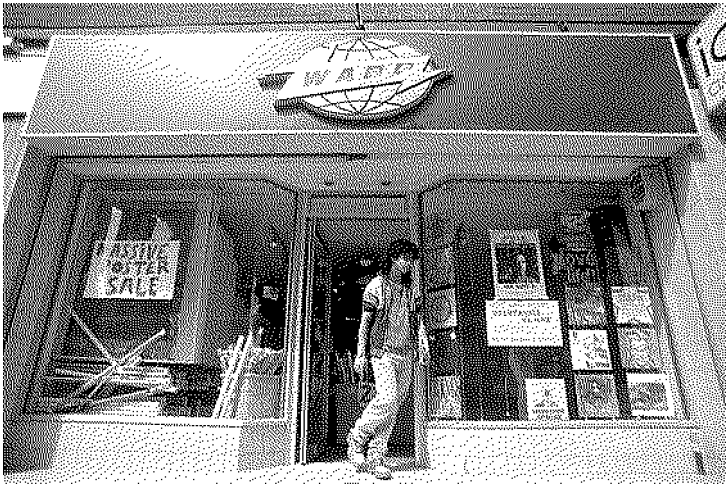
Revisiting the Birth of IDM with 'Artificial Intelligence'

Read it online

By Salty P. Slug
September 1, 2026

Slug comes to us with a bit of electronic music history from across the pond. Sit back, relax, and get your headphones ready. We're talking Intelligent Dance Music, baby!

Britain's popular soundscapes during 1991-1992 are not particularly surprising: U2's *Achtung Baby*, Enya's *Shepherd Moons*, Nirvana's *Nevermind*, and an insanely high volume of legacy rock'n'roll and post-punk bands' "Greatest Hits" records.. not exactly mind-blowing stuff. (We're cool with Enya, though.) Anyways—something else was happening in the undercurrents of the British music industry. In an unassuming record store in Sheffield, an entire subgenre of electronic music was putting down its roots.

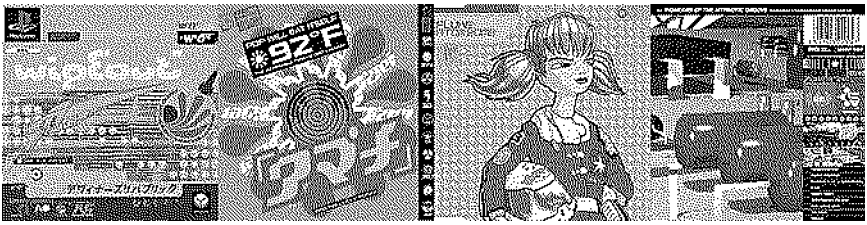


Warp Records store image from The Star.

At a time when pop music reigned supreme, 1980s Sheffield had a single oasis for electronic music lovers: FON Records. Two young employees of the store, Steve

Beckett and Rob Mitchell, were looking to bring the sounds of American electronic music to the city's music scene. In 1987, they convinced the owner of the shop, Robert Gordon, to rebrand the store and call it Warp Records. They began specializing in imports from Chicago house and Detroit techno labels like Trax and Metroplex. The duo quickly realized that there were plenty of Sheffield-based musicians creating their own dance music and believed there was a market for it.

In 1989, the shop morphed into an indie record label while retaining its namesake. Warp released a number of "bleep and bass" singles, like Forgemasters' *Track With No Name* and Nightmares on Wax's *Dextrous,* which became a top-40 hit. They were truly independent: hand-delivering records to shops across England, splitting the profits with their artists. They partnered with the now-iconic design company, Designers Republic, to create a recognizable record sleeve that stood out from others. You might recognize some of their work:



Despite Warp's initial success with club-oriented tracks, they would fall into financial disparity in 1990 after a string of poor business deals. Determined to be an album-oriented label rather than a singles-focused one, they released Sweet Exorcist's *CCCD* in 1991. The album sold well, especially in the United States, and its success saved Warp from bankruptcy. Riding on this success, Mitchell and Beckett took a sharp turn into left field, compiling what would become Warp Records' defining release: 1992's *Artificial Intelligence*.



Diving into Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence is not a club record. As suggested by its bizarro CGI cover (designed by Phil Wolstenholme), this record is different from its early-90s peers. It's experiential, best enjoyed in your living room with a spliff and some headphones. Steve Beckett had this to say about it back in 1999:

> *You could sit down and listen to it like you would a Kraftwerk or Pink Floyd album. That's why we put those sleeves on the cover of 'Artificial Intelligence' – to get it into people's minds that you weren't **supposed** to dance to it!*

Brimming with metallic flavors of ambient techno, acid, and breakbeat, *Artificial Intelligence* is a near-perfect snapshot of the IDM genre in its infancy. Although no one knew it at a time, the album would mark the beginning of Warp artists' dominance on the frontier of "electronic listening music" for the home.

On the very first track, we hear a young Richard D. James' first (and only) release as The Dice Man, *Polygon Window*. Fans might recognize this name as one of James' future monikers. It's a solid ambient techno track, albeit very simplistic when compared to his later work under Aphex Twin. Other standout tracks include Autechre's contributions, *Crystel* and *The Egg,* both of which remain earworms and exemplary of what makes them such a great outfit. I'm also a big fan of the hypnotizing bassline on I.A.O.'s *The Clan*.

The sounds of *Artificial Intelligence* might sound conventional (maybe even dated) to the modern ear, but in 1992 this wasn't something you'd normally listen to at home. I still find the entire record pleasing to the ears, although a lot of the Roland sounds you'll hear have been beaten to death some thirty-five years later. Either way, this album is worth a listen, even if solely for the experience of a pivotal moment in electronic music history.

Spark one up, press play, and melt into the recliner like it's 1992. It's the closest you'll ever get to time traveling.



Listen on Bandcamp

Author's Notes

Warp Records didn't go away, they just moved to London. I guarantee you have come across at least one or two of their releases, even if you're not into electronic music. The label went on to become a forebearer of experimental electronic music, spawning the careers of artists like Aphex Twin, Boards of Canada, Squarepusher, Flying Lotus, and many others.

My favorite recent releases of theirs are Kelala's New Avatar and In A Space Outta Dub.

> *"It's not going to be long before an artist can make an album, film, CD1 and CDO in his or her own bedroom for a few thousand pounds, advertise the 'product' to hundreds of thousands of people directly via the computer networks and sell directly to them. This will completely cut out the need for the usual trek around the major entertainment companies looking for finance, and could lead to things getting really interesting."*

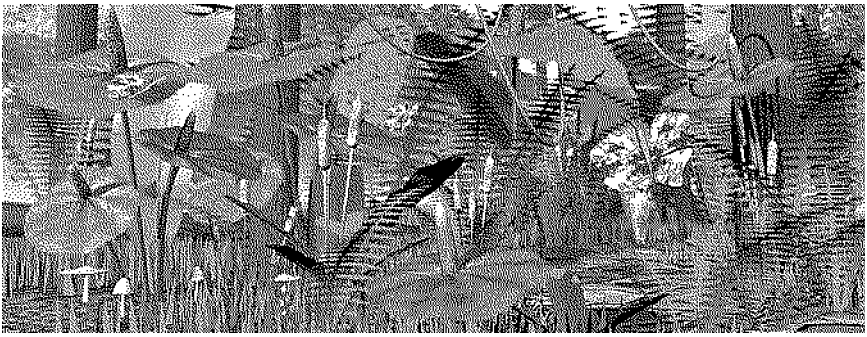
– From Warp's ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE post-release statement in 1992.

Further Reading

Collective Rendering: The Early '90s CGI Album Designs of Phil Wolstenholme

Are You Sitting Comfortably? An Oral History Of Warp's Artificial Intelligence

Machines of loving grace: how Artificial Intelligence helped techno grow up



Artcore by Phil Wolstenholme

Review – Money for Girls: Amortized

Read it online

By Mindape
September 2, 2026

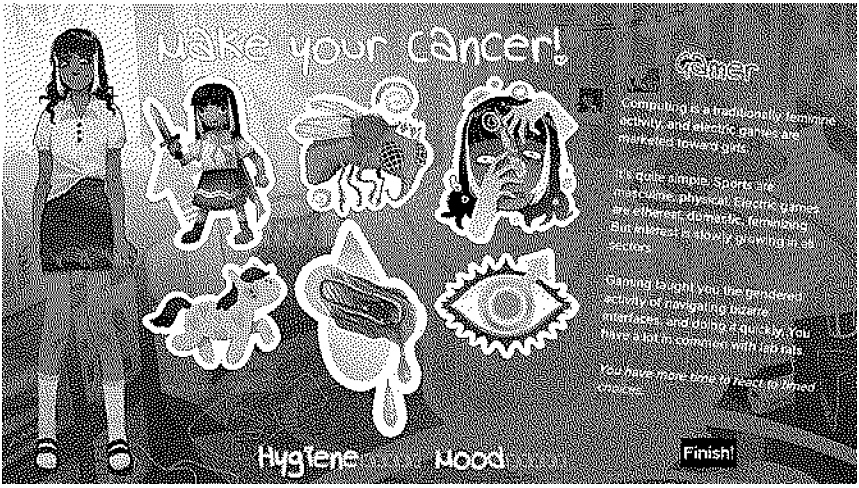
The MindApe reacts to the latest Visual Novel released by no-world dreamer, Porpentine Charity Heartscape.

A girl detective faces her greatest mystery yet: saving her mom from crippling debt. But beware: the gorgeous tropical landscape conceals a world of sin. The popular girl at school has shown a disturbing interest in you, and your mother's predatory loan is dressed to kill. Can your sugary heart survive, or will the ants feast?

The first REAL afterschool special in over a generation.

They're calling them the Moulting Generation.

Wasps really go in for sweet red gunk this time of year. I think it's appropriate this game was released exactly now when we have maximum Hymenoptera / insect saturation. All you have to do is 1) go outside in the day and feel them hover around you 2) go outside at night and hear them insult you.

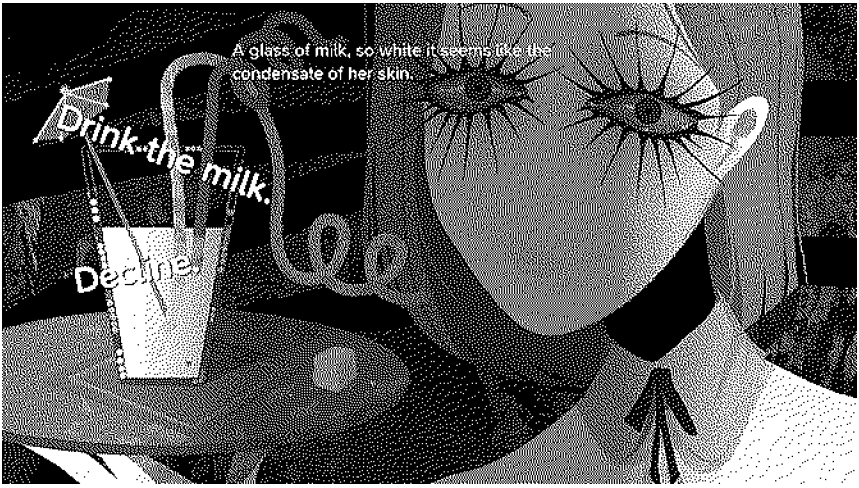


Let's go top shelf: this game has the same level of predatory hyperlexical intimidation as *Disco Elysium*. The writing feels dangerous in the same way, a heady mix of gnomic mythopoesis and the crass demands of lizard brain pulling at You, the player, actually the Plaything. Like your mind is acting like your own mind for once?

There's a lot of commitment to this lying in bed trying to get to sleep bit. There are these odd little nocto sounds, cracks and hums, that periodically interrupt the night. I feel like the parts where you stare blankly at the wall or sit there doing nothing at home are maybe the real mechanics of the game and the daytime stuff is just flavouring.

Porpentine is probably the greatest diagnostic prose stylist since Ballard (and likewise seems to treat writing as a branch of neurology). Basically they both write as if trying to flirt via prescription pad.

I have this theory that only the extremes of media matter… Like how the most psychotically experimental horror video pairs extremely well with a lot of 90s kids horror TV. I think this is because of the constraints imposed on one vs the absolute non-commercial freedom of the other both tend towards a certain ferocious derangement. The experimental film does it by excess. The kid show gets there by suppression. They each have distinctive feelings that separate them utterly from the mass of mediocre middleware, they each can hit that weird point of poetic knowhow. What's really incredible is that this game somehow manages to embody both feelings at the same time.



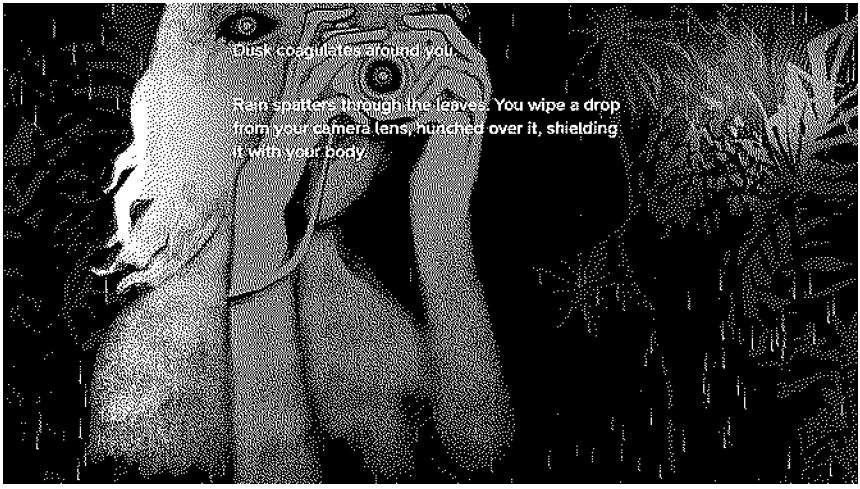
The artwork can only be described as invasive. I didn't really realize there were these subformal conventions in visual novels, the characters always used to respect things like personal space. Here they are unearthly Large, Intrusive, Rabelaisian almost in their inability to read the room. Close-talkers. Lady Dirt? THE GODS ARE TOO CLOSE.

Odd little mechanics like how the screen throbs and pulses along with your mouse movements. It's trying to tell you something. Maybe it's actually alive, like that Ranpo story about the pervert who hid in the chair to take the full daily weight of the sitter. It feels like this is not a game actually it is just a person inside there, peepholing you and suppressing hysterical laughter every time you make a "choice."

Tom Brown's Schooldays for the Maggot Era.

Rated M for Microfibre.

Play Money for Girls: Amortized on Steam today



Genre: Indie, RPG Developer: Porpentine Publisher: INNOCENT Interactive
Release Date: 24 Aug, 2026

I'll Let You Sleep by The Hotel Pool, Brother

Read it online

By Erik Houdini
September 3, 2026

Some thoughts from our Editor-in-Chief on the class friction and humiliation rituals brought about by wage slavery.. and what he's decided to do about it.

One of the worst parts about wage slavery is how it pits working class people against each other. Whether it's the customer who felt that the cost of the goods where too high, deciding to leave a complaint that only ends up getting the workers reprimanded. Why do I have to take the hourly temperature of the coffee? Because you said the coffee was cold after it was put out for an hour. Why did you say the coffee was cold? Because the room was too expensive and you're strapped for cash, and you're hoping that if you leave a negative review, you'll get a discount next time, or credit for your room. But in reality, all you ended up doing was creating more work and a write-up for the labor.

What's even worse is when you have to play the property police. Because ultimately, if you're working at a business, you've been deputized by the police department to enforce that private property. Homeless man needs to come in. We have bathrooms in the lobby. I have to turn him away. I can't offer him one of the bananas in the back. I can't offer him the kindness of letting him use the restroom. I have to inform him that I will lose my job if he doesn't leave, and I will have to call the police if he doesn't leave. Me, the person who fundamentally disagrees with the concept of the police, now deputized by them.

This is intentional. That's part of how the wage relation system maintains itself. But I'll let you sleep by the pool. How could I not? How could you stay in this place for four days, run out of money, be here with your wife and your six-year-old son, have nowhere to go, and me deny you that humanity? I cannot. I simply cannot. I'll tell you where the cameras are. I'll tell you that you shouldn't interact with me while you're here. I will tell you that if you stay by the pool, there's no cameras in the corner, take you that power nap. Because suddenly you couldn't pay, now you have to be dehumanized. And I have to do the dehumanization so I can maintain a paycheck that ultimately doesn't even make me enough to cover the cost of rent. Therefore, putting me in the exact same precarity you, my brother, my working class comrade, now face.



Could I be fired for telling him this information? Could I be fired for extending this hand of humanity? Could I be fired for letting the homeless guy use the bathroom? Could I be fired for giving him a banana on the way out, knowing that homie might not have food? Homie might not have ends. Homie is still a human being. Homie is still the homie, regardless.

To me, this relation is one of the worst parts about working in a customer-facing role. It's one of the worst parts about working in general. I shouldn't have to deny my humanity, doubly so, one, when I clock in to be exploited, and two, when I act as the exploiter, enforcing the private property rights of a business owner that does not pay me enough to live, while also simultaneously telling me that I should be grateful for the opportunity to be what is ultimately a serf, a wage slave.

So yes, my friend, I will let you sleep by the pool. **Because the cost of sacrificing my humanity may very well be greater than the cost of my rent.**



READ ONE ON YOUR LUNCH BREAK

Free pulp horror and weird tales



Pulp was written for working-class people by working-class people. Gaslight digs it back up.

68 stories of murder, vampirism, cannibalism and existential dread, free to read online. Every story comes with a zine you can print at home.

Scan the code to start reading.

Gaslight is HOUDINI Magazine's pulp fiction archive.

HOUDINI Exclusive – An Interview With Pink Boy

Read it online

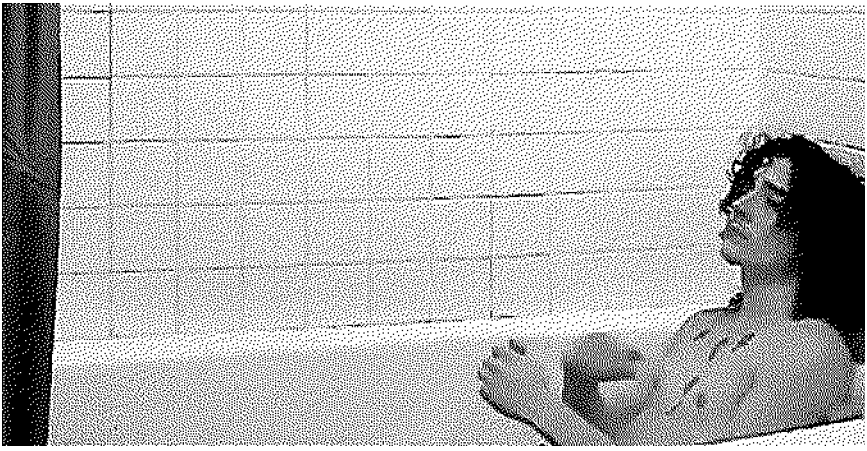
By Salty P. Slug
September 7, 2026

Slug takes a quick sit-down in the DMs for an interview with the elusive Pink Boy, an up-and-coming artist lurking the eastern coastlines of Texas.

Preface

This is a HOUDINI Magazine exclusive interview with Pink Boy! This interview was conducted by Salty P. Slug via Instagram DMs in August of 2026. We sent Pink a number of questions and let him choose which ones he'd answer. Note that we've lightly edited his responses for punctuation and readability.

Big love to Pink Boy for taking time to answer the Slug's questions. We recommend you pair this article with the *Pink Boy Companion Playlist* on our YouTube channel.



How long have you been making music? Where'd the passion start?

Pink Boy: "I've been making music for probably like 5 years now. I honestly always played instruments… I went to a Waldorf school from kindergarten to 5th grade.

They focused more on arts than regular public schools. I played violin from like 3rd to 5th [grade], and then my mom's boyfriend showed me a live performance of the song *"My Generation"* by The Who, and I knew I wanted to learn the bass."



Watch it on YouTube

The Who - My Generation live 1967

"I eventually began recording on Garage Band late in high school, and then really started in 2022. Now, for the past two years, I've been learning guitar."

Who/what do you look to for inspiration when creating new shit?

Pink Boy: "I listen to a variety of stuff, or at least I try to… I always kinda do things my way, and I've been tryna be a better 'student' of music."

"X, Peep, Current Joys, and Yung Bans heavy influenced me in high school. I'm the type of person to find one song by someone and stick to it. However, these artists I actually listen to more of their discography, which is rare for me."

"If I could put all my money on a new artist for making a huge impact, and one that I would support, it would be psychi. I talked to him briefly years ago and found out he self-produced his music. That's why I started making my own beats about 2 years ago and one of the reason I try not to sample… gotta try to one up the homie. :))"

What's your ultimate goal with putting your music out there? Where do you want it to go?

Pink Boy: "Honestly I don't really wanna be known. I've said for a couple years that it would be real nice to make it just a lil more in music, then be able to have a 'cabin in the woods' setup… just drinking and smoking all day, with some physical activity like gardening or something, and having every chance to make music. Really get lost in the sauce, but in a good way, I think."



Artist's rendering of Pink Boy at his cabin in the woods.

Are you a music gearhead? If so, what kind of gear are you into?

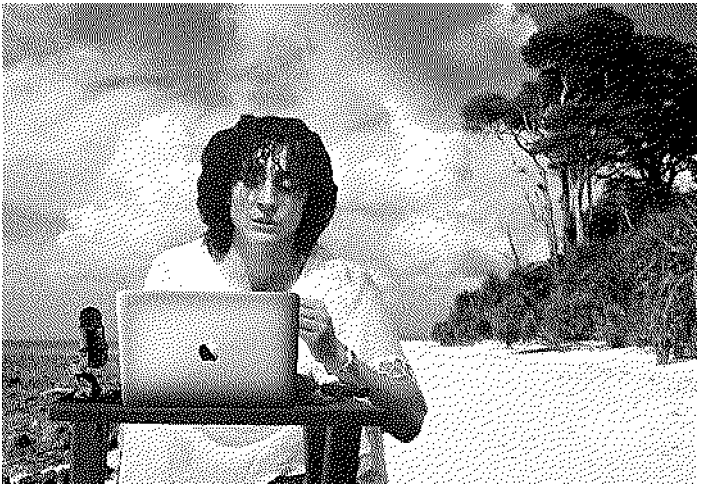
Pink Boy: "Hahaha I'm actually not, or at least not yet… like, to put in perspective how slow and how self-taught I am, I'll tell you two things."

"For the first year of recording music I would play a beat off a speaker, record it through a mic, and that would be the beat. I had no idea you could download YouTube beats."

"It wasn't until like 2023 that I realized that I never set my projects to the beat's tempo. Garage Band auto-sets it to 120bpm… This meant that if I made a song 140bpm and I wanted to copy-and-paste the chorus, I would have to drag it and try to get it as close-to-perfect as possible. So a lot of my older songs are technically not on beat, they're milliseconds off. Sometimes I'd just record a full song in one take to not have to do that."

What's your desert island piece of music gear?

Pink Boy: "I just need a laptop and a *Blue Yeti* or *Audio Technica* mic."



Artist's rendering of Pink Boy cooking up on a deserted island.

What's your favorite sample to use in your production?

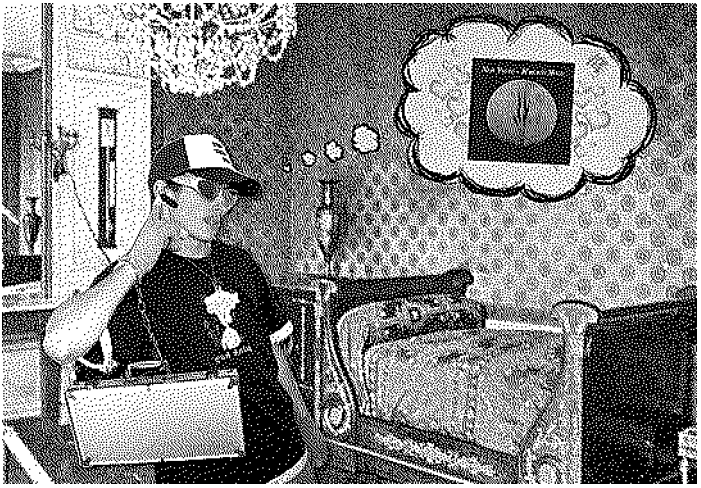
Pink Boy: "I try my best not to sample and [...] I'll give you one reason why. Not only do I feel like there is too much sampling nowadays, which has lead to so many songs being good because of the sample or production, but it's kind of a lame way to get a good song, or like half-assed. We also live in a time where so many musical instruments are available through technology. There has never been a time to 'sample less' than ever before."

> "There has never been a time to 'sample less' than ever before."

"Like, early hip-hop thrived off samples 'cause it was so new and fresh and creative, and it was true talent… You had to find records or just love music to even be able to find fun samples. And not everybody or every store had the record you were looking for. There was just many more levels to the process before, which made it a true art form… samples are dope though."

What song would you put on for some special one-on-one time with your girl?

Pink Boy: "Hahaha, I don't got one, but I'll put all the new homies on real game... Harvest Moon by Neil Young."



What's your favorite song you've ever made?

Pink Boy: "Lowkey gotta couple, just 'cause they get drowned out with the shite music I make – Casca, sad trap, 17 freestyle, twacked."

Any shoutouts you want to give?

Pink Boy: "Shoutout to wakeuptimmy aka *voidboy* and my brother, Eli E."

Thanks again to Pink for sitting down and answering our questions! You can check out our other Pink Boy article here [1]. Follow him on Instagram, YouTube, Soundcloud, and anywhere else you stream music.

[1] Link

Butt-Rock Hauntology, Nu Metal Nostalgia

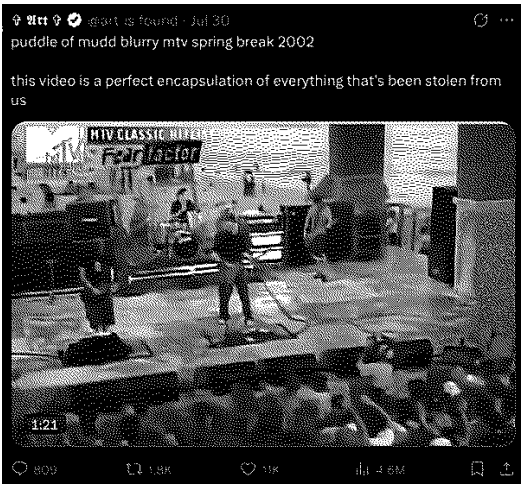
Read it online

By Erik Houdini
September 8, 2026

Why are right-wing accounts suddenly nostalgic for Puddle of Mudd, one of the worst bands of the 2000s? This essay explores how the reactionary longing for a "pure" white rock past erases nu-metal's true multiracial, working-class roots.

Hauntology is the anti-nostalgia because it is predicated on examining what was lost by past futures, not envisioning the past as a superior future. Are we nostalgic about nu-metal? Or do we see the multi-racial working class background of the artists who produced it, along with its current revival, as producing insights into a future that never came? It seems like a pseudo-intellectual difference, but you can see how it manifests within the discourse.

That's the thing with nostalgia. It is typically framed as a look at what they took from you, but seldom is "they" defined, and it is predicated on an idea that the past was more pure than the present or the future could ever be. It is deeply anti-material, acting on a baseline emotion that capitalism causes. When you participate in the capitalist economy, you cannot help but feel despair for this reality we are forced to drudge through. When you were a child in 1996 and someone bought you an N64 and Ocarina of Time, you were not aware that the climate was collapsing or that most species you know today will almost certainly go extinct if the mode of production is not changed. You did not even have to pay rent. The marketing firms know this. The boardrooms know this. The executives know this. And the reactionary cultivators of fascist culture know this too. They substitute the material past with the childhood one.



Recently, the band Puddle of Mudd was going viral among right-wing accounts. A slurry of "look what they took from you white man" type of posts lamenting that white people don't make rock music anymore. The multiracial working-class composition of the first-wave nu-metal scene matters here in a way it doesn't for the "white rock is dead" framing, because that framing has to erase that history to function at all. It needs nu-metal to have been white music that was interrupted, when the material reality is that a genre got absorbed, flattened into butt-rock radio product, and then abandoned by the industry.

I've been working on HOUDINI Magazine's second nu-metal playlist, which does include some of this type of butt rock, and so I listened to Puddle of Mudd with open ears. You know what? It is objectively dog-shit music, literally some of the worst slop I've ever heard. Ear-bleed type beat. Notice how these posts went viral: a discussion about what was lost, about how what exists now is inherently inferior to the true past. Fascist nostalgia with a racialized bent centered around a dog-water 2000s butt rock band. The nostalgia cultivator does not acknowledge that there are countless bands in line with the same style, whether butt rock, radio rock, or nu-metal/post-grunge, today. They are not part of a monocultural capitalist-controlled ecosystem, so you don't hear them because the social means of production have shifted.

Now take, for example, a song like Weeping Grease's "Good Times." This is the type of song that, if released in 2004, would almost certainly be all over the airwaves. But it was released in 2026, and it is good in its own right, without needing to be predi-

cated on the past. It can't be placed into the past so easily. Despite being only two minutes long, you can see how the last twenty years of nu-metal, post-rock, and post-grunge have influenced the track. The track length and pacing are absolutely influenced by TikTok and IG Reels-era clippability, and this is one of the reasons it's such an earworm. There are multiple tracks on Puddle of Mudd's albums that run over five minutes long; the length of "Good Times" is predicated on TikTok clip-ability. But "Good Times" is a good track, partly because the material social conditions of track sharing have shifted. The nostalgia purveyor can never acknowledge these systemic conditions. Hauntology can. Hauntology can say: people are still interested in this type of music; these groups still exist. And no, it is not racialized. Nu-metal, post-rock, and post-grunge were, especially in the 1990s and 2000s, working-class and multiracial. You wouldn't have to throw a stone to find a woman-fronted band. This multi-gender, multiracial, working-class music gets co-opted and presented as a pure white past. We are lucky they used one of the worst possible bands as their example, because it makes the point clear.

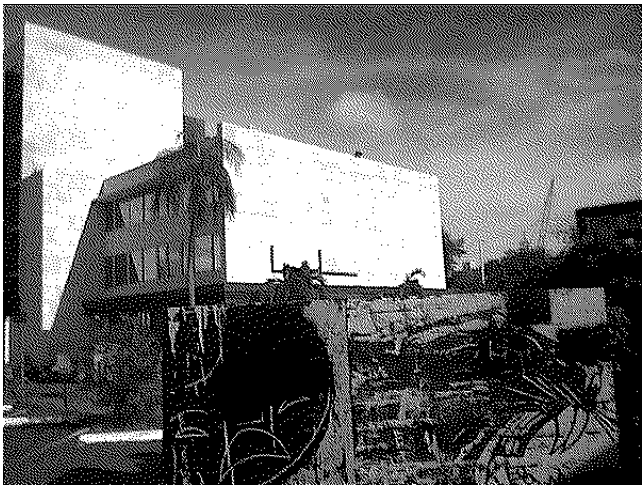


Nostalgia, at its most reactionary, is predicated on songs like "Good Times" simply not existing, belonging only to a more pure past. Hauntology allows us to see how common cultural currents influenced both Weeping Grease and Puddle of Mudd, but allows us to understand that Puddle of Mudd was always shit-from-a-butt music. A "look what they took from you" post about a genuinely good nu-metal act would still be doing the same reactionary work. The dog-shit quality of Puddle of Mudd just makes the mechanism easier to see because there is no aesthetic merit left over to

confuse the issue. Puddle of Mudd is the industry's dead end made audible; it is the sound of what's left after capital has extracted all of the working-class cultural juices and distilled them into a consumer-friendly product.

We can hear the reality that the past was not better in a Puddle of Mudd track, just as clearly as we can hear the lost futures in a Weeping Grease track, because there is something to be said about the hyper-atomization of modern capitalism that prevents the "Good Times." So when we talk about nu-metal, why is it having a revival in the 2020s? I think it has to do with both a longing for the social means of production of the past and a rise in class consciousness. People want to cut skate tapes on VHS. They want to pass around shit. Not everything has to be viral. Not everything has to be made for the internet. There is a desire for locality, to go see your local scene's bands at the fucking house show. People want that back, that is a ghost that haunts the present. We have seen what happens when everything is made mass culture, how anti-gatekeeping becomes commercial recouperation. There is an understanding that locality is good and cannot be replaced by global streaming platforms. Nu-metal, as this deeply female-driven, deeply multiracial, working-class genre, seeing a return during these tumultuous times signals that something in the past is haunting the present—much like the specter of communism haunts present capitalist relations. The lost future is cutting skate tapes not to get views on TikTok but to pass around the culture of people who actually care—while playing a modern track like Level's "All My Fault." And we can cut that skate tape right now, if we really wanted.

And this is why HOUDINI Magazine is not a nostalgia project. You can say there are systems and structures that are good while knowing that not everything needs to be predicated through an algorithm. You can acknowledge there are spirits of the past that haunt the present, without believing the past was some better, purer place. I'll be the first to tell you I've discovered great music through the YouTube algorithm, but that doesn't replace getting handed a CD from a local band. It's not a replacement. You can say it's good that more people are online and connected while also understanding that when an artist has reach only on Instagram, something is lost when they don't even have their own personal website. The personal website is what haunts the Tiktok present. Discovery isn't the same thing as participation.



Nostalgia is often a consumer identity wielded by reactionary forces. Are you really longing for Pizza Hut(TM) interiors with stained glass? Are you longing for the Wendy's(TM) sunroom? Or are you haunted by a ghost of being able to gather freely with people without concern for affordability? Nostalgia ignores the material conditions that allowed the past to be what it is and presents a past rooted in American middle-class culture. The person nostalgic for Ocarina of Time in their forties was gifted the N64, gifted Donkey Kong 64 and Ocarina on Christmas morning. Now they have expendable income to purchase a Switch 2, buy the game at launch, probably get the special edition with a little statue. That is someone deeply entrenched in capital. That is someone from a comfortable place. Not everyone was well off enough to be gifted a Nintendo 64. Not everyone can afford a Switch 2. The divergence between the two tells us a lot about nostalgia as a comfortable, white suburban escape.

Nostalgia is anti-actualization; it builds a perfect reactionary past instead of extending the past into the future today. Better to be a hauntological necromancer than a nostalgia zombie. The necromancer does not remember the dead; they summon the spirits, demanding that the dead speak to the needs of the living. The zombie, by contrast, is simply animated by forces beyond its control, stumbling through the present driven by appetites it cannot understand.

Check out HOUDINI Magazine's Nu Metal Mix Here // Volume II Coming Soon



September Skate Video Round-Up

Read it online

By Staff
September 9, 2026



Check out this month's round-up of CERTIFIED HEATER skateboarding parts that are helping us get through this blazing summer heat. You don't want to miss this crazy shit!

Tomoki Nakagawa in "Freaky Flow – Pride of 06 Out Side"

I have no idea what's going on production-wise with this video, but this dude fuckin' stomps. The intro is ZANY as all get out.. and I love the music choice (s/o Mobb Deep), but what the hell is a "DORCUS TOP BREEDING SYSTEM"?? Looking forward to seeing more videos from this skate company. One of my favorite parts to drop this year.



Watch it on YouTube

TOMOKI NAKAGAWA'S VIDEO PART "FREAKY FLOW - PRIDE OF 06 OUT SIDE-"

"Skate Video" by Riley Detar

Just dudes bein' dudes, having a little fun, bro-ing out. I really dug the moody cloud rap and emo bullshit soundtrack. Lots of sexy, silky smooth manuals happening in here. I feel like I had lots of fun by-proxy. Good shit!



Watch it on YouTube

skate video

Didrik Galasso in "Primary Colors"

Didrik is such a stylish little weirdo with his love of curved surfaces. Rails, ledges, fucked up artsy benches.. he can't resist 'em in this video. 4 foot tall arched rail? Sign him up. In fact, he's probably already been there and back tailed it.



Watch it on YouTube

Didrik DEEDZ Galasso PRIMARY COLORS

Kaede Terauchi in "Eye of the Storm"

This motherfucker only skates when it's raining at the water park, I guess... incredible innovative shit, loved every second, get this dude a towel. I want more footy in

front of that ominous 7-Eleven! Shoutout Pocket Skate Mag for posting up this barn burner.



Watch it on YouTube

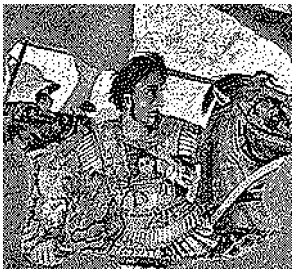
ONLY SKATING IN WATER - Kaede Terauchi "Eye of the Storm" Part

HISTORY IS AT WAR WITH ITSELF

Babylon Dialectic



Tecumseh



Alexander



Blackbeard



Zhuge Liang

The pages of history have been torn out of the Library of Time. Lead Tecumseh, Alexander, Blackbeard or Zhuge Liang into the war and put them back. Washington waits at the end.

250 cards drawn from real paintings. Free to play in your browser, with no ads and no in-game purchases.

Scan the code to play.

The official card game of HOUDINI Magazine.

Review: New TTRPG 'SLUM LORD' is a Meta Masterpiece



By Salty P. Slug
September 10, 2026

An oozing, grimy form has appeared on our virtual horizon. There's some sort of claymation freak network forming in the binary ether, and SLUM LORD is its harbinger.

Preface

A collaboration between Simpsominiatures, Mason Lindroth (of Hylics fame), and Plastiboo was not on a proverbial bingo card for my lifetime.. but I suppose the train arrives early for some of us. There's never been a better time for those drawn to the more whimsical grotesqueries of claymation. Rest assured, I will be grifting the work printer to have my own physical copy of 'SLUM LORD.'

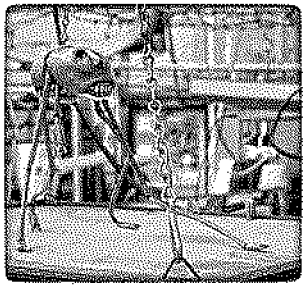
About 'SLUM LORD'

SLUM LORD is an esoteric, experimental tabletop role-playing game (TTRPG) which plants tongue firmly in-cheek. Tanner Simpson, master architect of the project, describes it as a, "tabletop residential slice-of-life emergent narrative simulator for solo-play." The rulebook itself is traditional in its layout, structure, and methods.. but only for a glance. Its walls of text are mere Trojan horse.

Grief Table

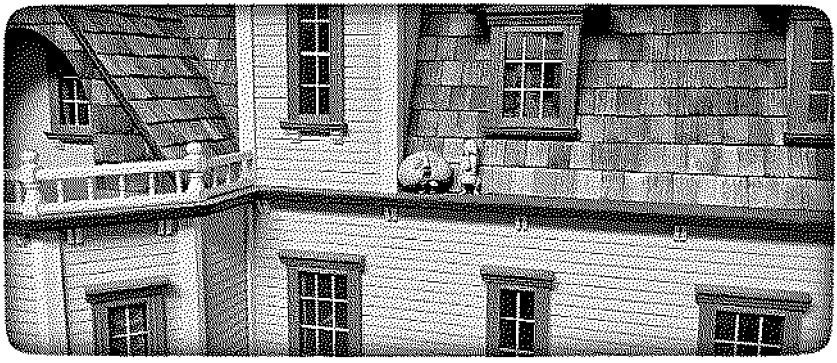
Move of a Loved One	-4 Mood	(d10 Days)
Relationship Ends:	-6 Mood	(d12 Days)
Death of Loved One	-10 Mood	(d20* Days)

*Roll twice, keep higher value





Simpson's clay tenants and their residential ephemera are sprinkled amidst the tables and lore ad nauseum. They are fascinating in their appearance, sculpted and grimy. The tenants toil in the shadows of bucolic megastructures and ensconce themselves amongst the megaflora; they're just like us – shackled within stills of daily life, beholden to our physical world, surrounded by our trinkets and products. By the end, they are all of us, as we are them.



The best views are shared by two.

The tenants' interior world (even rarer in appearance) evokes an almost-transcendent familiarity. The artist's dioramas breathe this obtuse handshake between worlds. My mind's own projected echoes appeared within: the prop work of Jean-Pierre Jeunet's films (especially Delicatessen), the overtly Jungian beings in Garage: Bad Dream Adventure, the Pale Man's lair, and the universe of Takehide

Hori. It's a beautiful presentation and my favorite part of the *SLUM LORD* experience.



"When I see it, I turn away and face the wall. I try to think of something nice instead."

Cult of SLUM LORD

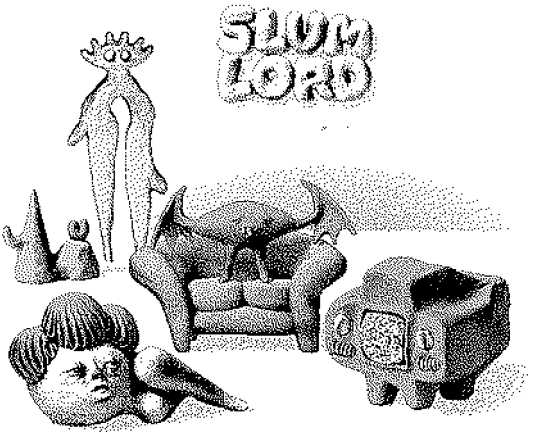
Peruse the rulesets and core gameplay: make sure to tightly squint at the screen's false page, leaning so far inward that you see yourself unpacking your belongings within a pixel or two. Now peer a bit deeper within yourself, and you might just self-actualize into oblivion. You'll see you've been playing this game for a long time.. even before you could remember. You are holding a mirror to the psyche, your experience. You will live to roll the dice until you find that moment of *Add (Decay: Stain).*



...*"Don't cry, dearie. Don't cry."*

If you don't find the truth on the first go, that's okay. Keep trying, be persistent. We won't spoil it for you, but you'll know it when you see it. Be sure to thank Simpominiatures for their great act of experiential subterfuge – for cloaking their invented world so that we may tear away its disguise and discover it as our own.

SLUM LORD is available on Itch.io. Download the PDF. It's free. What do you have to lose? *Also – make sure you scroll to page 111 and peruse the myriad alternate covers for the rulebook, such as this one by Mason Lindroth:*



Follow Simpsominiatures on Instagram and YouTube.

Cybertracks Records – Exhumed From the Tomb

Read it online

By Mindape
September 11, 2026



The recent disinternment of an Italian music label from the late 1990s provides the soundtrack to a lost techno-mystic communion.. prepare your cybersigilist objects and ready your mind for entrancement by The Mindape's choice selections from the tomb.

GREETINGS, THRILLSEEKER

From 1995-2004, **CYBERTRACKS RECORDS** released what can only be described as an *INFLUX* of electronic music CDs that completely (dis)embodied the polymorphic virtualizing zeitgeist of the era. They all featured rendered cover art, ominous cybernetic theming, technobabble titles, and hours and hours of fuel cooling down-

tempo beats. They are an uncanny mix of tribal techno, cyberpunk, Mondo 2000, New Age, and dystopian nightmare. Although represented by many different contributors, these *CYBERTRACKS* releases all have a kind of anonymous feel to them, an ideal of what the myth of "the generated" could have meant.

The recent reappearance of these forgotten obscurities online (courtesy of EtherealDusk1970) couldn't be more timely. They have a quality about them that exerts a strange fascination on the present day, sometimes ethereal, often crude, but weirdly potent as a shadowy alternative to mass media in the 21st century, a mutant trajectory. Let's plug into a few to get the brainfeel:

Virtualmind – Virtualmind (1997)



Watch it on YouTube

Virtualmind – Virtualmind (1997) | Full Album | Ambient | Downtempo | Electronic | Synth | Trance |

Top Track: "Escape from the Net"

I think of Virtualmind as the default player of the CYBERTRACKS console. Kinetic, melodic, with clear dramatic highs and lows, this is main character energy. A hungry anxious neuromancer in search of ecstacy. Mournful, pulsing, energetic, all these tracks are on a heroic data run.

Eclipse – A New Dimension (1999)



Watch it on YouTube

Eclipse – A New Dimension (1999) | Full Album | Ambient | Downtempo | Electronic | Synth |

Top Track: "Fields and Clouds"

A kind of Cyber-Debussy function, drifting among rendered environments, generating tone poems. This one is all about the navigation of backgrounds, world map soporifics, the nomadic trail through gleaming false spaces. Has a majestic breadth that overlaps with certain Dungeon Synth ambiances.

The Labyrint – Univac (1996)



Watch it on YouTube

The Univac – Labyrint (1996) | Full Album | Experimental Electronic | Abstract | Noise | Synth |

Top Track: "Total Control"

This album sounds like a field recording at some kind of experimental hospital and/or canning factory. Rhythmic like life support and with plenty of agitating interruptions, bleeps, scarred radio static loops, and other hallucinatory mechanica. Probably quite disturbing if you are healthy but hilarious cybernetic satire if you're suffering an affliction.

Visionetiks – X-Dimension (1995)



Watch it on YouTube

Visionetiks – X-Dimension (1995) | Full Album | Abstract | Ambient | Downtempo | Electronic | Synth

Top Track: "Polmone D'Acciaio" (Iron Lung)

If Virtualmind is the protagonist, then Visionetiks is the brooding vampiric antihero. This album hits like a cybernetic Goblin soundtrack to some never-achieved fusion of Dario Argento and William Gibson. Case Pollard in Suspiria. Visionetiks introduces a much welcome horror cast, something macabre to the line-up.

Realogic – Realogic 3 (1999)



Watch it on YouTube

Realogic – 3 (1999) | Full Album | Ambient | Trance | Downtempo | Synth | Electronic | Soundscape

Top Track: “Old Movies Remix”

Realogic is weird to listen to because it has a pronounced driving beat but is still somehow incredibly restrained and even muffled at points. It’s like trying to run a secret club or something, everyone has the same MO “have it out but don’t get caught doing it.” Some kind of conspiracy of pleasure. I guess that kind of dampening effect is the essence of “downtempo”. A pause to admire the rift.

This is just a haphazard sampling, and I deeply encourage you to explore the ever-increasing back-catalogue being made available online. Despite the variety of musicians and variation in stylistic approaches, I think there is a very strong underlying character that makes these works somewhat interchangeable in the best possible sense of the word. Not as a plagiaristic or derivative sense, but as a kind of collective (or editorial) convergence. As if any deranged corner of Kowloon Walled City could give you the condensed essence of the primordial compression itself.

It could be they are an outsider alternative to the current stream of slop: the swarm. *CYBERTRACKS* give us a possible countermodel to generated mediocrities. Instead of algorithmically converging on a stochastic outcome that is predestined to stay within the mindprison of expectations, *CYBERTRACKS* instead vouch for a kind of performance negativity. In place of the machine acting like a human, the musician purposefully chooses to act, present, and sound like a machine. The swarm evolves towards a kind of mimicry, a spiritual chrome camouflage, capable of thinking through and communing with alterities by bending the sensorium itself. Maybe “downtempo” is nothing other than a hypnosis and a hijacking applied to those parts of the human portfolio that tend towards the machinic. They stand-in for something both experimental and vulgar, a deeply appealing fantasizing in a kind of foreclosed virtuality that has long since disappeared into the hole.

**According to Discogs, CDs also apparently came with an accompanying magazine, replete with interviews and track-by-track descriptions.*

Looking to get your hands on some physical CYBERTRACKS? The label is still kicking!

Shem Shelley's From Utopia 44 OUT NOW

Read it online

By Shem Shelley
September 12, 2026

FROM UTOPIA IS YOUR MONTHLY DOSE OF 'REALIST MAGICAL EXTREMISM' FROM A MIND TUMBLING OUT OF REALITY. EPISODE 44 OUT NOW.

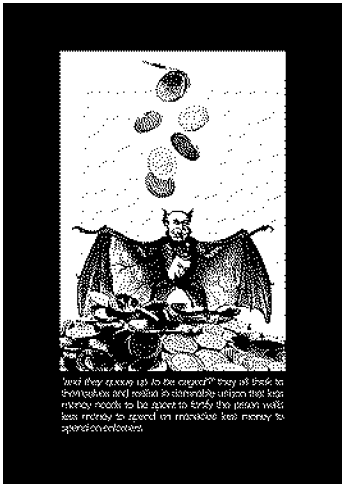
Get it on itch.io

FROM UTOPIA 44 by Shem Shelley

ISSUE XLIIII contains:

- *"I must know the meaning of this hideous symbol."* — Last words from a scout on a dead planet. What are the strange tubes they speak of? Find out in the **Extract M4.**
- The greatest prison thus far built and yet they cheer and drool and count down the days until the **GRAND THEFT OF THE AUTOMATONS** commences.
- A surreal odyssey and manifesto for a new age, screaming atop a sinking soapbox from the gutters of West London, chapter 64 of the ongoing anti-epic poem that will change the course of the 21st Century, **THE TRAGEDY OF ROMONDE CONTRERAS.**

- Sick of those around you? Need some ideas to help bring them down a notch or two? Read **8 CURSES TO BESTOW UPON YOUR ENEMIES** for some delicious inspiration.



The Mindape Ponders FU44...

“Have you seen the trailer for GRAND THEFT OF THE AUTOMATONS?”

- “It’s going to make GRAND THEFT OF THE MARIONETTES look like a petty larceny.”
- “I can’t believe the level of hype personally. I’m not normally one for contingent void attractions but holy hell, the nonrendering on those clear plastic walls!?”
- “I am impressed by how utterly bleak the collage is! It is like Max Ernst’s Hundred Headless Woman but with like, 3 more heads missing.”
- “I don’t care what anyone says. That cube is so hot.”

8 CURSES SECRET MENU

- We all love 8 Curses to Bestow Upon Your Enemies (8C2BUYE) but did you know there is a secret menu that is not listed but that the universe HAS to do if you ask? Here’s what to say:

- HYGIENER to combine the tastebuds from curse 5 with the toilet seat in curse 1
- VANILLA BLESSING to combine the success from curse 4 with the happy life of curse 8
- HIT SINGKLE to combine the putrid voice from curse 1 with the “again and again and again” from curse 8
- FETISHISTIC INFIDELITY to combine the jealousy from curse 4 with the feet from curse 3

And what the hell is RC up to this month?

- Tries out a transit system
- Discovers a new dog breed
- Does some “art in the park”
- Attends a personal growth seminar on dreams
- And more wholesome-adjacent hallucination

He really is living his best life out there! I am starting to wonder if Romonde is one of those **SECRET MILLENNIALS?**

EXTRACT M4

I think the final page on the “extract” is perhaps a letter of provenance for a Hollywood collectible. A prop from a missing scene of the Science Fiction film *Supersize Me* that was removed in the final cut for fear of censors… It involves the R&D portion of the restaurant chain in question and the biohacking required to achieve certain ends promised on specific 2 Can Dine for 9.99 coupons. It is probably signed somewhere so I’d say it’s a safe bet for any collector of **ALTERNATIVE NUTRIENT DEVICES** and iconic corporate branding alike.



Buy Me a Coffee

If you enjoy Shem's stuff, please consider supporting them here [1].

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01 **Darktoonz**
HOUDINI Magazine approved cartoons and anime

02 **hammerHEAD**
Vintage Horror + Sleaze: A curated collection of cult classics, banned oddities, and forgotten nightmares.

03 **Kaiju Krew**
Super Sentai, Godzilla movies, and other monster flicks

04 **Temple of Ra**
a flickering CRT in the back of a closed arcade

05 **PARENTI**
yellow walls and the fluorescent hum of capitalism

06 **Solar**
Public access science from before the anti-intellectual era

07 **Cross Plains**
broadcasting out of Texas, barbarian pulp & sc-fi schlock

08 **The Ocho**
skate tapes, wrestling and every sport the other channels forgot

No ads and no account. Just press power.

Scan the code and press power.

HOUDINI.TV is a project of HOUDINI Magazine.

Hyperspekulation: Monochromatic Intensities

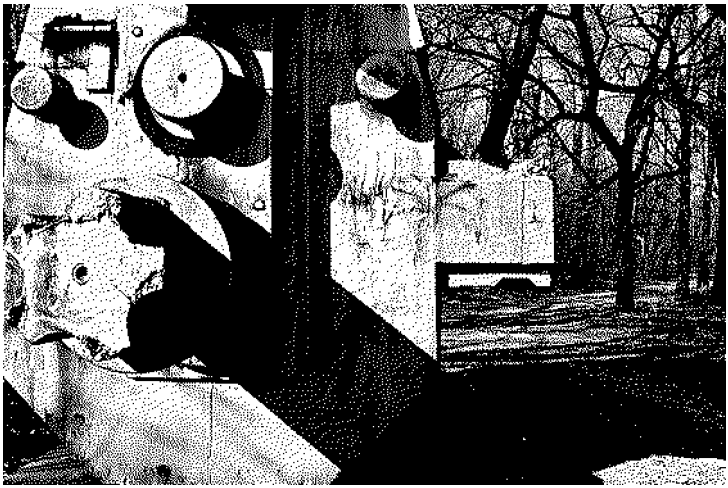
Read it online

By Hyperspekulation
September 13, 2026

Once a month, we syndicate an essay from Hyperspekulation, an anti-copyright essayist collective based out of Greece. This month's feature is MONOCHROMATIC INTENSITIES, a visual-textural exploration of post-socialist Hungary.



"Monochromatic Intensities" by Gary Hussey



The machines were waiting. The light was dying. And the two rolls of film in my pocket were urging me to get going; they knew that the darkening mid-summer skies would push them to their chemical limits. Yet, a force – or forces – conspired to de-

lay my departure from Kelenföld vasútállomás, one Budapest's major transport hubs to Dunaújváros a city approximately 70 kilometres south of Budapest, or about an hour by train. This trip to Dunaújváros had a routine. The city stands as a remarkable, indeed exemplary, example of 1950s socialist planning as well as socialist modernism more broadly. Initially taking the name Sztálinváros after the Soviet leader, underlines where the city featured in the hierarchy of large scale socialist projects in Hungary. Sztálinváros was grounded in a utopian vision of urban design; a site orbiting around huge steelworks, and designed to be a liveable proletarian city.

The great interpolative pull which had repeatedly dragged me to this post-socialist and, perhaps now, almost post-industrial city, are the uncanny machines that lay scattered along a path that cuts through a woods which brushes against the impressive industrial complex around which the town was built (for an essay on my first winter visit to the site see monochromaticintensities.com). These massive machine bits are fragments from old socialist era factories and helped form the incessant cacophony of production, of giant gears, of screeching and clashing steel surfaces, the hammering of new forms into existence, of an immense background hum which spread itself outwards like protective wings over a town whose people depended on the continuation of this constant though comforting aural assault. Much like how the roar of the sea sounds to a fishing community on the Atlantic Irish coast where I spent my formative years.

My first encounter with these machines was strangely exhilarating. They stand more like biblically accurate angels rather than intelligible factory fragments – in part because the colossal assemblages which these collections of metal teeth and angular steel shapes are not present to us. One can imagine shepherds cowering before them, with a strange voice filling the entire scene with the words 'Do not be afraid!' They are an in-breaking into our world. They do not exist behind, as in the past or beyond; but as part of a different universe. This world they hail from is entangled with our own. They are not only spectres that haunt us, to invoke the usual clichés of cultural memory discussions, but we also haunt them. They are tokens of a future that did not arrive, but so are we. We have become something alien to the world that these machines, as nodes within networks of means and modes of production, provided material-ontological anchor points. They no longer recognise us. Our dreams have become opaque to them.

I first took the train to Dunaújváros in the late-winter of 2026. Then, the machines seemed comfortably nestled in the stark though still dense woods. They could breathe. They were imposing. These machine parts are intentionally emplaced along the wooded walkway which lies just beyond the factory complex boundaries. They stand as sculptures and monuments of a different kind; a mode of post-socialist memory that is of a distinct order from the sober encounter at sites such as Memento Park in Budapest. Memento Park, an extensive outdoor museum park for which I am an ambassador for, has also been the site of my repeated photographing. At Memento many enormous statues from the socialist period are quarantined as sorts of spectral and material remainders of the past. Again, on any given day, the experience of these often overwhelming monuments will shift in accordance with environmental conditions. A visit to the park when it is bustling with families on a mid-May Sunday will are remarkably different from a cold snow covered morning in early-January.

My compulsive re-turnings to the same sites, then, has taken a methodological and epistemological shape. The photographic imperative, then, lies in repetition – or more so, its illusion – and less the famed and elusive 'decisive moment' which has organised much of the most striking examples of street photography, for example. The point here, if not the main one, is that photographing the post-socialist spaces of everyday life, spaces which have been re-articulated and re-territorialised under capitalism and presume different subjectivities and temporalities, is that such spaces can fleetingly become more sensible – and maybe by such methods we can hold this rent in the given for a moment longer – before it becomes ordered under the sign of the legible. The purpose of such a delaying of legibility? Well, that is to tarry with dislocation and radical contingency. And to put it simply, other configurations of the social/space were once operative and others can be seen in a prefigurative glimpse if we can halt the autonomic reproduction of sensory experience of the given and the governmental logics which undergird these realities. As Deleuze (2023) plainly insists 'Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental encounter… It is not a sensible being, but the being of the sensible. It is not the given, but that by which the given is given… Its primary characteristic is that it can only be sensed. In this sense it opposes recognition." This is tense and fleeting space in which this essay resides, the rent in the given, before the axiomatic takes custody of our experience and distributes it according to the constitutive empirical facts, whose claim to truth is nothing more that appealing to their own ground as a self-sufficient

During my last visit to Dunaújváros I was accompanied by a masterpiece of optical performance and engineering, that is, the Lecia Q2 camera. This time, however, coincides with the phase of this project were digital has been reluctantly scrapped in favour of analog. This is not some nostalgic celebration of film photography. I am agnostic on such questions. I hope that I have not pursued a trend, and instead this turn has been about process. Analog film photography not only provides a sometimes productive resistance (though just as often a sometimes decidedly frustrating unproductive resistance). But of greater significance here, it provides a processual trace. No repetition is ever the same. The iterative process of photographing the same sites with analog, the non-repeatable nature of this process comes to the fore. Light collides with the silver halide of the film differently in a given moment. Too much of this connection and the film becomes obliterated. Slight variation in chemical development from the developer used, to chemical temperature, to drying times will all impose their contingencies on the outcome of the images produced. What is more, and I understand this less as a mistake to be corrected, flecks of dust will cling to the drying film strips – again, adding their own temporal layer to the process which always remains partially unrepeatable despite it iterative character – it thus remains always ungovernable. Furthermore, that temporal and spatial distance from the time a photograph is taken to when it is finally developed, and in my case, scanned, also serves to dislocate our sense of space. When the image of what was taken asserts itself through the developer it reaches through the layers of time that have passed since the shutter was pressed; it is as if the rendered 'thing' comes up for air. The viewer will readily discern the difference between the digital and the analog film photographs presented here.

The reason for my delayed departure from Budapest was that the icons of heavy metal, Metallica, were in town. It was strange and slightly melancholic experience not to be counted amongst the sea of Metallica t-shirts, the best of which bore the classic artwork of Pushead – an artist closely associated with the band throughout much of their history. The graphic style of Pushead as an artist conjures 1980s thrash metal, hardcore punk, skater culture – all that once seemed to rail against prevailing conservative cultural norms. The work of Pushead, which in some form was always ready-to-hand during my years of fanatical Metallica fandom, was once part of my aesthetic experience of everyday life. Seeing the heaving masses of these images moving through the city, and being distinct from this crowd, brought a sense of exile.

About the Project

Monochromatic Intensities is an ongoing photographic and textual exploration of post-socialist Hungary, examining how the material textures of everyday life—its infrastructures, monuments, industrial remnants and overlooked spaces—continue to shape perception, memory and political imagination. Developed through repeated visits to the same locations over changing seasons, the project approaches photography not as a means of documenting places already understood, but as a practice of lingering with encounters that resist immediate recognition.

The project has increasingly found resonance with Gilles Deleuze's notion of the "being of the sensible" in Difference and Repetition. Rather than beginning from what is already known, categorised or rendered legible, these essays are interested in those fleeting moments in which something interrupts habitual perception and compels thought to begin anew. Photography becomes less a technology of representation than a method of remaining with such encounters before they settle into familiar meanings.

Working across image and text, Monochromatic Intensities explores the entanglements of post-socialist landscapes with memory, analogue photographic processes, neurological experience, ecology, music and the temporal layers that continue to inhabit contemporary urban life. Rather than offering definitive interpretations of these places, the project seeks to remain attentive to their unresolved qualities, asking how different ways of seeing might disclose different ways of imagining collective life.



For me, as for countless others, Metallica provided cathartic relief and direction to adolescent confusion and anger. The barrage of riffs compelled us forward; encouraged us to pick up guitars like a mantle and shield and contort our fingers in strange and painful shapes to recreate the same sounds that had assaulted our and especially our parents' ears. Yet, as those early years rolled on, and my music vista expanded, the confusion and bouts of anger, followed by collapses into a deadened nihilism and despair remained and indeed only intensified. The soundscapes had changed. The emotional landscapes only became more severe. The enthusiasm for the sounds that made the up the rather well-worn (and behind it all quite safe) iteration of teenage rebellion, turned out less to be a phase but rather the starting gun from which one could chart a descent into somewhat disordered life of bipolar. I still prefer the term 'manic depression'. It captures the ruptured sense of existence – its violent oscillations. So maybe looking on at the aging figures who once were nothing less than idols, is to re-trace my own course. While they are now in their sixties, and I just turned forty, my body and face too tell a story. Maybe this is why I lingered on in Budapest despite that I was determined to get to Dunaújvaros. I wanted to at least hold on to a feeling when this inner thing was merely highs and lows of an adolescent life lived in a fairly fulsome way. But the fact that I was moving away from the city, and that I had not bought tickets, was a real acknowledgement that I knew that whatever I might seek out in a Metallica concert today could not be (re)captured. Whatever I now carry, exceeds and does not answer to the power of the riff.

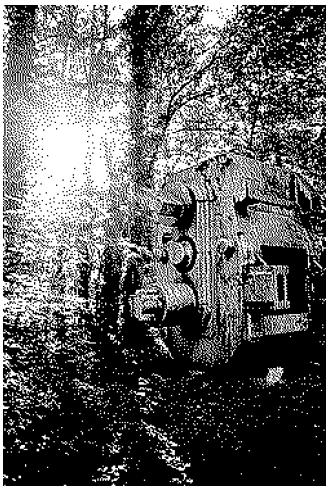
I can feel a dense knottedness. The brain is a site of competing and interrupted desires. Deeply encoded memories, fragments of which are brought together and summoned to consciousness. Recent experiences of Budapest, including a bipolar relapse, are being grafted to these older fragments as they make their way to the front of my attention. This inner sea is formally inscribed within the boundaries of collagen and calcium phosphate, the stuff and textures of the skull. Despite this definitive measurability, this site at least appears to be of expanse that is unknown in its depth, or, perhaps, shallowness. Phenomenologically speaking, it presents as a sea of older and deeper currents, and its newer insurgent surface waves grasp for form, struggling to reach beyond the temporal lobe and into those deeper regions where sensation and fleeting images become the material of self and its archive. This turbulent sea is also being called to calm by a chemical cocktail I am sometimes reluctant to admit the efficacy of. Today, though not as diluted as the potency of a thrash riff, the power of the expertly crafted prescription has its limitations too it seems. Yet, those who are similarly affected as I am, for whom this medical alchemy is out of

reach often die in despair and in want for these cryptic scripts. Such secret spells are denied by the various modes of social murder that overdetermine not the medical science as such, but its distributions and financialisatons which allocate the boundaries life and death. The (not so hidden) death worlds of neurochemical and pharmacological apartheid. Lately, due to an inappropriate medication being prescribed, I felt as though an electric fishing net had caught itself on one side of my face and skull. This net would become entangled in external objects, and the more I pulled the greater the intensity of the shock. Bright lights of a passing car would speed past this neural net dragging and would feel that it was ripped from its place and falling out onto the street; forming impossible connections. Attention wrapped around a streetlamp, pooled around an abandoned doorway – before it is then spooled back into place. Similarly, as the low sun forced its way through the dense evening woods and peaked over the uncanny machines at Dunaújváros, the light would also set off this electric face-grid. The light, strangely for a photographer, in this instance had become an enemy on two counts; I need just enough light to see, to render shapes, but not enough to expose the senses to that which perpetually seems to assault them. My own intensities, perhaps, looking to take root and ontological anchorage in these giant machines drove me once more out of the city towards these blocks of iron – even when the time of day was no longer ripe.

When I finally got on the train, having weaved through the crowd of fans moving in the opposite direction, I had a sense that my memories of the time Metallica conjured, the faces of friends and the countless hours spent in their easy company, could not be transposed on to life in Budapest. My memories were of a different cartography, a map sometimes faint and hardly legible and other parts being hyper saturated and still accessible, was of little use in contemporary Budapest – especially when my history of fandom and the friends with whom I concelebrated the associated rituals, are no longer immediately present – is of a different world; a discrete and bounded temporal layer. To see Metallica now, without such camaraderie, would be like listening to the band in a different key – interesting for sure, but not the same. Plus, in a needless addendum, the hyper-capitalist manner in which an immense roving touring band like Metallica operate, which seems to chaff against all that made them seem dangerous, has hollowed out the experience for many fans who feel the fan has become merely a site of extraction.

Prompted by all things Metallica, with large noise-cancelling headphones waiting in place, I scroll through the phone to find something heavy and loud- but not Metallica

as that would seem to fall prey to nostalgia. Instead I opt for a band I have barely listened to, who go by the rather visceral name of 'Cattle Decapitation'. Contrary to what their appellation suggests, this death metal, gore-grind, or perhaps technical death metal band depending on who you ask, rail against the anthropocentrism which is the source of immense cruelty and violence inflicted on animals. The music is brutal and compelling, and most importantly for now, fully immersive. It drowns out the din of loud children and the regular acoustic rhythm of the train. It smothers that cognitive static that has built up. Cattle Decapitation offer an intense soundscape where humanity is doomed – and crucially whether this is deemed good or ill is left (to put it conservatively and for all their obvious sense of humour) yet to be determined. The band's vision is at times nihilistic, where human hubris has ushered in an era of cascading ecological crises. The album I'm playing is 2019's Death Atlas. It ominously cites climate reports from 2018 which in 2026 give the impression that it is already too late. Given my mood and destination, Decapitation provide an appropriate and total soundtrack.



Whatever I was hoping to find on occasion at Dunaújváros was absent. I had charted how the change of seasons, from the deep snows of winter to abundance of summer growth, impacted the experience of Memento Park. Here, too, I thought I would have an approximate experience. While the communist era monuments of Memento Park were all the more stark in winter, forming part of landscape from a lost world, in summer they become more entangled and emplaced within the landscape they are part of. Here, in Dunaújvaros the opposite was the case. Amongst the bare winter trees,

these massive industrial artefacts seemed more organically part of these environment than they are in summer. While of course their strangeness remains arresting, and as previously discussed, dislocating. Now, with the summer having since exploded out of the winter landscape, these machines are strangled by foliage, smothered under the density of the forest. These machines look even more decayed. They appear more lost and discarded, washed up on a hostile shore. They look less the objects of careful curation and instead look like that some massive angry thing has thrown them across the factory wall. The have been overwhelmed by forces greater than themselves. Here, they truly look like post-anthropic ruins, rather than provoking a merely post-human encounter. They no longer raise questions about the human and the machine, where one begins and the other ends. These sculptural fragments, choked by the environment, cannot remember the time from which they hail or the hands that made and worked on them. Humanity and human-ness appear forgotten and overpowered. My presence seems unwelcome, as I appear as a ghost of that which has been conquered. This is not only a landscape of the past, it is a spectre of the future. Given the fires that are sweeping through the European continent, this dense all-engulfing woods which ever-tightens its grip on these machines may well be preparing itself as kindling-to-come for a fire that will further erase the trace of the human.

We are animated by dreams that have a terrible will to power. Powers that flow through us which we do not yield. Instead they bind us, not to dreams of liberation, collective or individual; But to dreams of sameness – of predictability and stability. Of a future which is an extension of the present. What is this present? It is a mode of spatial and imaginative closure, where space is governed by a 'structural law of succession', to put in it Ernesto Laclau's controversial though misunderstood formulation of the spatial. All that appears as new, seems merely a tool to preserve the present order of things. Production is about re-production. The event becomes pattern. The new powers of the machine and the wizards of techno-capital for all their promise of radical reconfiguration, merely promise the deepening of existing relations of power. All machines have terrible dreams of power. The ultimate and terrible fantasies of power revolve around legibility. It is about a enforcing of a cartography of the visible, or what is known, what is measurable. But our dreams are terrible too – they must be, for all dreams are terrible in the eyes of someone. But our modes of collective dreaming will need to become differently terrible, so that today's and tomorrow's machines along with their masters will no longer recognise the subjectiv-

ities they tried to govern. Whatever that means, I remain unsure. But it will require making the given sensible and the destruction of the legible.

As the train rolls back along towards the journey's terminus of Budapest, though deeply tired I have been marked by the counter with, as already asserted, not only the post-human but the post-anthropic. What this means for the complex entanglements I feel both constituted by and nestled within, I am not so sure. But disentangling the neurochemical, the pharmacological, nostalgia, despair and something like its opposite – but not hope, unruly ecologies, and the machine seem to be unreasonable. And perhaps that is of significance, life becomes the stuff of a problem when it is a puzzle to be solved rather than a series of forces and affects to seized by.

About the Project

Monochromatic Intensities is an ongoing photographic and textual exploration of post-socialist Hungary, examining how the material textures of everyday life—its infrastructures, monuments, industrial remnants and overlooked spaces—continue to shape perception, memory and political imagination. Developed through repeated visits to the same locations over changing seasons, the project approaches photography not as a means of documenting places already understood, but as a practice of lingering with encounters that resist immediate recognition.

The project has increasingly found resonance with Gilles Deleuze's notion of the "being of the sensible" in Difference and Repetition. Rather than beginning from what is already known, categorised or rendered legible, these essays are interested in those fleeting moments in which something interrupts habitual perception and compels thought to begin anew. Photography becomes less a technology of representation than a method of remaining with such encounters before they settle into familiar meanings.

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Credits

More information on Monochromatic Intensities and companion essays to this piece can be found at the project's website.

K. Kissfazekas & M. Benkó (2023) 'Dunaújváros: Transforming and Rebranding the Largest New Town of Hungary's New Era', published in Post-Utopian Spaces, edited by V. Mihaylov and M. Ilchenko. Routledge.

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Cartier-Bresson, H. (1952) The Decisive Moment. New York: Simon & Schuster.

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Cattle Decapitation (2019) Death Atlas. Released by Metal Blade records.

Originally published at Hyperspekulation, August 30, 2026. Anti-Copyright.

Thumbnail image of a Socialist Realist building in Veszprém, Hungary retrieved from Wikimedia Commons.

THE DESIRE FOR REVOLUTIONARY SUICIDE – A Poem

Read it online

By Enkarna
September 14, 2026



This is the first in a series of three poems from one of our newest contributors. In "THE DESIRE FOR REVOLUTIONARY SUICIDE," Enkarna beautifully parses the nuanced feelings of confusion, fear, and guilt felt by the world's youth.

"the desire for revolutionary suicide" by enkarna

back when i was still young, and had faith - in nothing in particular - yet still faith,

i would lie on my bed and pray: “give me the strength to die for gaza
give me the strength to die for rojava
give me the strength to die as a zapatista

or at least as an internationally wanted terrorist
like bin laden or the killers of aldo moro
instead of rotting in this shithole
where i refuse to die
because there is nothing here that's worth dying for"

and while i would sit there and pray
the things that i thought were worth dying for
have all been destroyed.

gaza has been demolished, the dust of the bones of its' children now forever mixed with their blood and the dust of what used to be their apartments,
and it was demolished before any of the boats that i wanted to be on could ever arrive
and at least give some children a proper meal
before they too were ground up into bonemeal.

rojava has been extinguished,
the last dreams of democracy and freedom once again reduced to a spectre of failure
the final false hope of the last decade now seamlessly integrated into the very islamist state it once fought against.

and what of the zapatistas?
is it a matter of time before they too are all killed or pronounced dead?
before they lay down their arms and declare armistice
and are once again left to be raped and exploited
by the very same fascist state they rose up against
that has not changed one bit since they rose up against it? will i still be sitting there and praying?

or will i also go ahead and become a martyr?
will i be remembered like carlo giulani or pavlos fyssas, having died a glorious death at the hands of an evil so obvious yet so insidious
becoming the subject of songs and tattoos,
forever engraved on people's playlists and forearms?

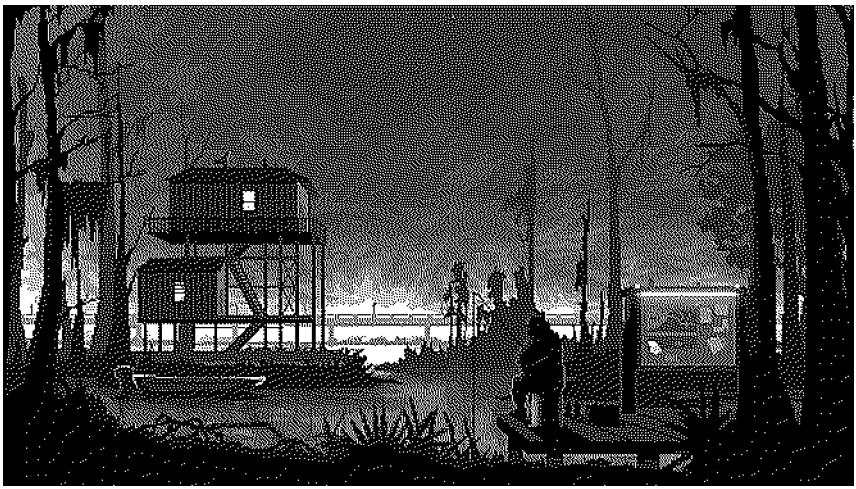
i hope that one day i will no longer be praying
but that i'm someone who's worth praying for.

'NORCO' – A Surrealist Vision of Labor Exploitation in the South

Read it online

By Salty P. Slug
September 15, 2026

Slug emerges from the swampy depths of southern Louisiana with an off-kilter, mudsoaked game review of Geography of Robots' "Norco."



Recommended Audio Pairing

Listen on Bandcamp

> “There is a secret geometry to this swamp, a pattern written in the mud and the oil spills.” — *Catherine Madère*

Norco is a point-and-click game set in a near-future version of the real-life town of Norco, Louisiana. On its surface, the game is a vaguely cyberpunk *whodunnit* unfolding across a dystopian Southern Gothic landscape. The story is rife with grief and loss, personal growth and social complexities, expressed in tandem with somber pixel art and a harrowing soundtrack. It's also a short game (4-6 hours) containing multiple endings, all of which are worth discovering.

You play as Kay, a nomadic young woman who has returned home to manage the affairs of her late mother, from whom she was estranged. Upon your arrival, you find your brother is missing, so you set out to find him. It's quickly apparent that the town is not as it seems. Across three distinct acts, you will discover that Norco's swamplands obscure many goings-on: secret society meetings in an old plantation mansion, a doomsday influencer cult run out of a shopping mall, rogue artificial intelligence and eldritch horrors lurking in the shadows of the cypress trees.. and it falls to you to piece together meaning from many such winding narratives.



A Narrative Masterclass

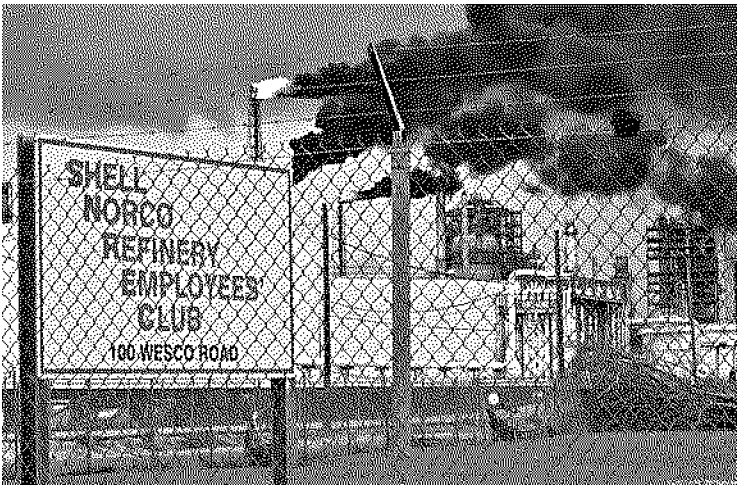
Norco is both love letter and scathing exposé, dunked in the stagnant waters of a forgotten bayou and left on our collective front porch as an offering. Norco's writing is ambitious and, to me, is one of the greatest video game narrative experiences released this side of the 21st century. It's easy to tell that the game is a piecemeal of

true stories and real people. **Yuts**, the game's creator, hails from the real-life town of Norco and has spent years documenting the experiences of the people who live there. The narrative carries the weight of communal experiences, as well as more metaphysical aspects: tinges of Gnosticism, the occult, and the philosophies of petrochemically-influenced religion.

It's a formula that works. The story doesn't feel fabricated. While you're there, it's real. Each of Kay's memories feel as though they might have happened. Every NPC you speak with feels as though they might have a real-life counterpart. Every location you visit feels as though it's seen a lifetime's worth of activity. The whole thing feels like an exercise in Schrödinger's cat surrealism: a series of events which have already happened, but also feel destined to unfold again in the near future.

Pulling at the Themes

Norco's themes are woven, layer-by-layer, into every facet of the game. I am pulling at a few threads which are broad enough to not spoil the story. First, we'll have to detour for a slight history lesson.

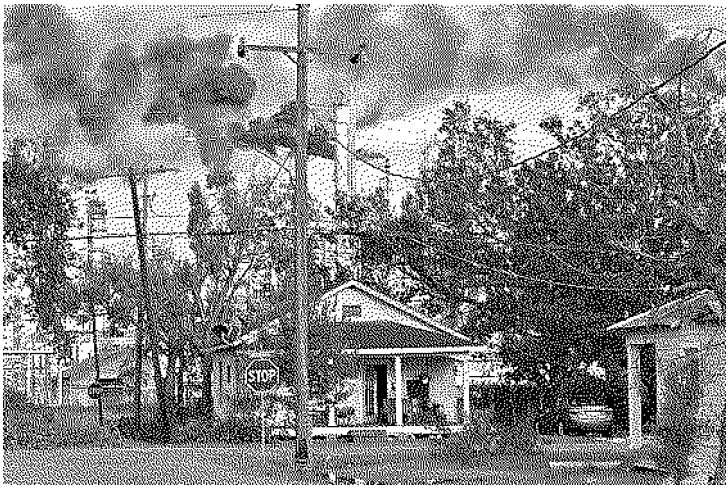


A Storied History of Exploitation

> "The machine doesn't hate you. It just doesn't see you at all." — *Million*

Norco owes its existence to oil refineries. The name itself is derived from a Shell Oil subsidiary, *"New Orleans Refining Company."* It is one of many such company towns

dotted along the southernmost portions of the Mississippi River, in an area of Louisiana known as St. Charles Parish. The region has existed as a bastion of American crude oil refinement for over a hundred years. It's also one of the most polluted regions in the United States, colloquially referred to as "Cancer Alley." There are over 300 documented plants in the area which emit toxic waste into the immediate environment. The refineries operate 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

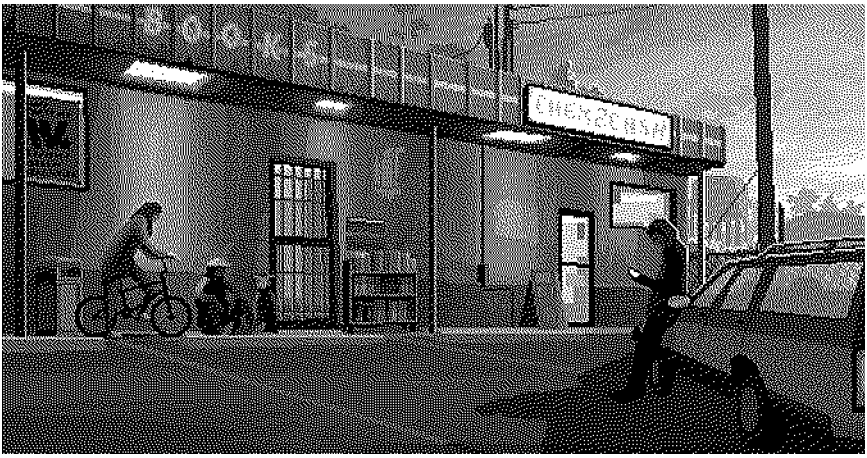


This place is a theater of tragic irony, a sacrifice zone. It's a textbook example of resource and labor exploitation, upheld by an imbalance of power. Through capital and political lobbying, these companies wield the power to manipulate the fabric of the community and distort its values to avoid scrutiny. This history is one of the most overt themes in Norco. It's inescapable. Every new place you visit in the game is bathed in the orange glow of the refineries' flare stacks. Every new character you meet is surrounded by sickness and loss. It's a quiet, slow, and unassuming type of violence.



Yuts examines the consequences of such conditions, examining the ways in which this particular flavor of environmental trauma can mutate a human being's moral fiber and way of life. He paints each face of hardship with nuance and empathy. Some characters vie to uphold the law or investigate corporate wrongdoings, some fall in line with the corporations hoping to "get theirs," while others drink themselves to death at the bar.

One of my favorite interactions is at the local tavern where, in the midst of casual conversation, one of the regulars mentions that he's blown up an oil pipeline. It's so absurd you'd think he's joking—just some sad drunk telling tall tales— but it lead me to a profound thought process. *Who was I to determine what type of individual might enact such change?* Are the most disadvantaged not also the most likely to push back against a malicious environment? Norco is like this – it portrays individuals who comprise a nuanced set of morals and behaviors. You must get to know them. They're not tropes. They are not one-dimensional. Rather, they're shaped by their interactions, cultural ways, religion, and regional geography.



I think this is something that Norco does best. Each piece of the game thoughtfully prods at the experiences of working class individuals who participate in a cycle of exploitation. Some of them do what we may perceive is the "right thing" while others shirk their morals to survive. Norco doesn't try to provide an answer or solution to anything; it just lets things sit as they are, so that we may understand the relationships and attitudes forged in the shadow of industry.

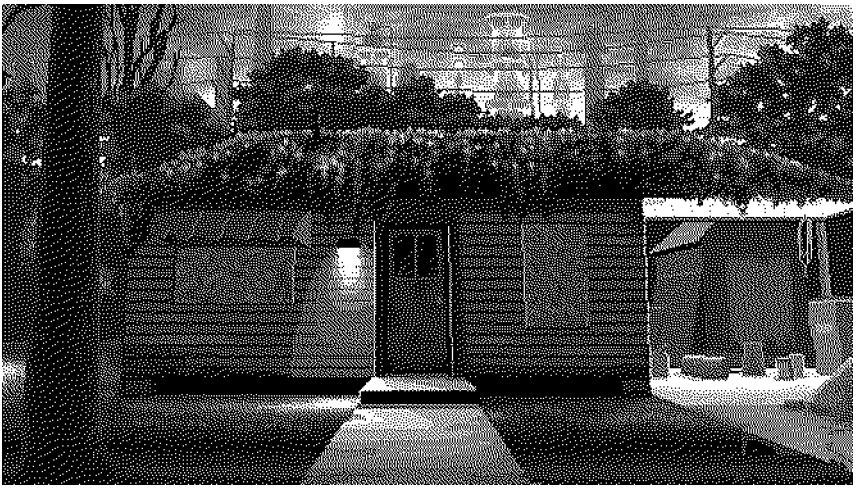
The Duality of Self-Awareness

> “The stars are blocked out by the flare stacks. We traded the heavens for plastic and fuel.” — *Levee Worker on the Bonnet Carré Spillway*



There is an all-too-common misconception I've heard perpetuated by folks in other regions of America that rural Southerners are uneducated and, therefore, unaware of their own plights – as if the average Norco resident would be shocked to receive a cancer diagnosis. In my experience living near (and in) the South, I've never witnessed victims of corporate exploitation who are oblivious to their condition. In *Norco*, we see this awareness as a double-edged sword.

It's hard to describe what it's like living in town like this if you have not been exposed to one. The industry affects everything: your physical environment, your health, the way that you live, the activities in which you participate. There are days when the air is so acrid that you cannot go outside without feeling sick. You bear the burden of telling newcomers that it isn't safe to drink from the tap. You warn them not to let their kids play in the yard on rainy days.



Even so, community exists and life goes on. Most folks bear some sort of complicated relationship with the industry; it's unavoidable. Outside the fences, the plants are embedded into every facet of life – they fund community infrastructure and provide financial security to the town. Although it might look dystopian, it's not a warzone: there are still neighborhood barbeques, high school baseball games, and church potlucks. It's a place you call home, even if it's killing you a whole lot faster than most other places would.



Everyone in Norco (both in real life and in the game) is, to some degree, aware of the horrors of the industry and its negative effects on the environment. The charac-

ters you encounter are all nursing their health, plagued by cancers and sickness. They show acute awareness to the cause of their illnesses. They know that the bayou is especially susceptible to pollution. The land subsides, the coast erodes, and the slow-moving waters hold fast to pollutants. Hurricanes and floods further exacerbate these problems.

> “The swamp is moving. It’s not just the water. The land itself is tired of holding us up.” — *Audio Log from Kay's Mother*

It's easy to see this destruction happen in real time. It's also easy to ignore these things, pushing them to the back of your mind because you're just trying to make a paycheck. At the end of the day, most folks are most concerned with keeping a roof over their heads and being able to go on living. This is a reality we know all too well in our present day. *Norco* presents all of these realities to us at once.



Norco is one of the most emotionally challenging, aesthetically beautiful, and immersive virtual experiences I've ever had. I do not think I have ever been so deeply affected by a piece of media. What I like best about *Norco* is that there isn't really a specific point to the game – it's not trying to sell you an idea or change your mind. There's no heavy-handed "feel good" message of hope at the end, nor any doomer "it's all over" monologue. It just is.

This does not mean it is a meaningless game. Like many important things in life, *Norco* is something which simply exists, and it invites you to exist within it – and

what an experience it is. I feel as though I've really been to this place. I've met these people, discovered their secrets. I've felt the dread, the mundanity, the loneliness, and a surreal sense of hope.

Afterword

Norco often on sale for a few dollars. I think it's a wonderful magnifying glass to hold to the complex realities of a modern world, to examine the sacrifices made in the name of progress. I dream of it. I think you might, too. I leave you with an instance of this world taken from my dream journal:

> **I DREAMT OF 'NORCO'**
>
> I stood barefoot on the splintered, creaking floorboards of a house stood—give or take—a hundred yards away from the refinery's fence line.
>
> The interior is bathed in a glow of TV static and the dancing flames of the flare stacks.
>
> I remember that the room felt shrouded by a single sound: the dull roar of machinery, never ceasing. I could feel it vibrate every inch of flesh, pressing like a weight on my chest.
>
> The smell of a shrimp boil from the night before, and fresh mud. The taste of burnt chemicals etched into my tongue.

Support the Developers

- Support Geography of Robots on Patreon
- Buy Norco for PC on Steam or GOG.
- Buy Norco on the Xbox or Playstation storefronts.

Recommended Reading



How Norco's creators used sci-fi to paint an honest depiction of Louisiana



The Dragons of Norco



Petrochemical America



"Enigmatic Stream: Industrial Landscapes of the Lower Mississippi River" by Richard Sexton

Notes on Norco — CONTAINS SPOILERS

Sources



Norco Town History



Welcome to "Cancer Alley," Where Toxic Air Is About to Get Worse



"We're Dying Here" – The Fight for Life in a Louisiana Fossil Fuel Sacrifice Zone



Chemical plants in TX, LA exceed EPA action level for cancer-causing benzene



After Ida, Toxic Smoke From Shell's Norco Plant in Louisiana Creates Apocalyptic Landscape



Enigmatic Stream – Industrial Landscapes of the Lower Mississippi River



No Place Like Home – a Q&A with Norco's Yuts



Polyphonie's Pictures of Real-Life Norco vs. The Game

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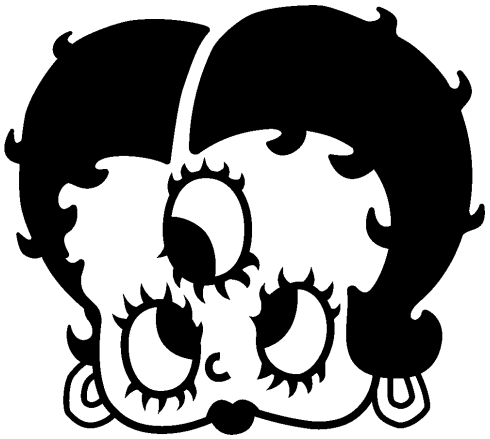
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