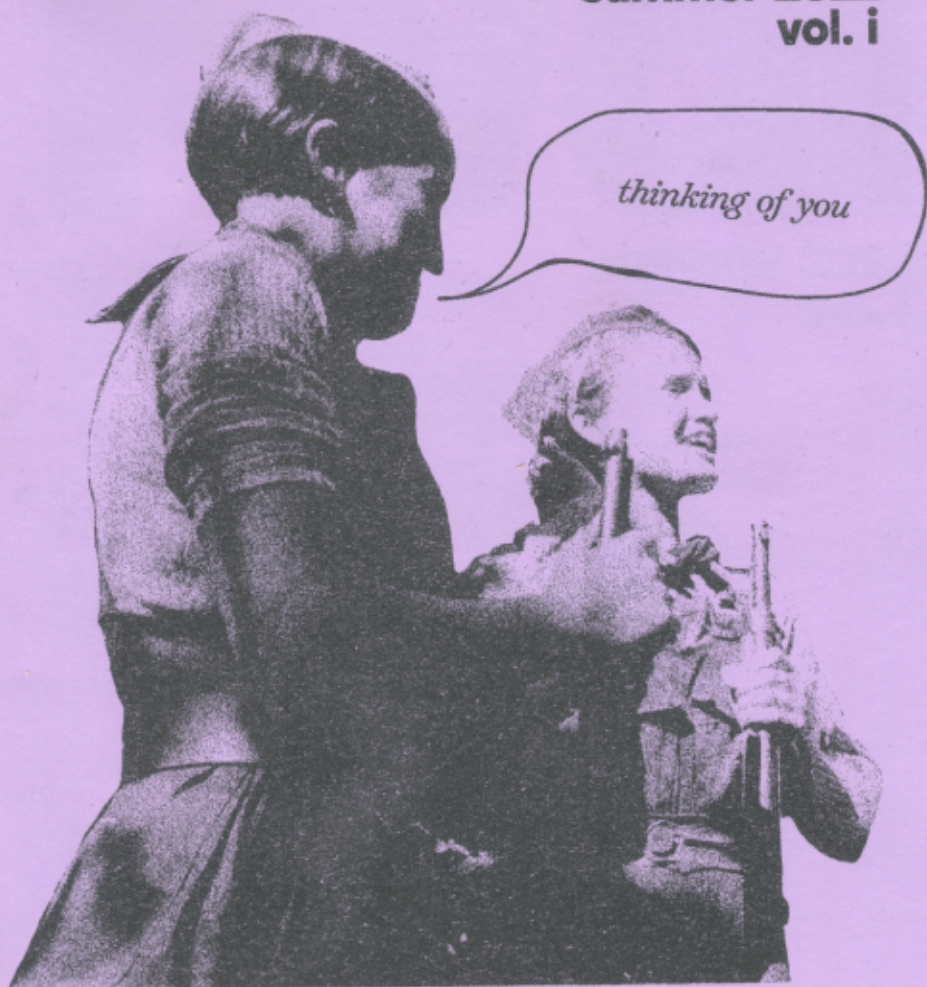


rival

summer 2022
vol. i



*an independently printed and published local zine
in this issue: public transit, Lenin, noise music, and more*

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rival

summer 2022
vol. i

published & printed
on risograph by

grotesk press

June 2022



@groteskpresslex



groteskpress@gmail.com



groteskpress.com

What is **rival**?

Rival is a locally and independently published and printed zine distributed in Lexington, KY and online. Rival is primarily concerned with art, culture, and politics, and supporting and publishing the work of local artists and writers. Rival is published triannually: once in the spring, the summer, and the fall.

Rival is printed completely on Risograph by Grotesk Press.

Freedom of the press is guaranteed only to those who own one.

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Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader:

I just spent several years designing and editing a different local publication here in Lexington, a tenure that just very recently ended. And with the end of that era, I realized that I had to fill that local-zine-shaped hole it left behind in my life with a new publication that's completely independently written, produced, published, printed, and distributed. And that's how we ended up with Rival. I am a zine-maker and an artist with the means and skills to publish a project like this, so it seemed only appropriate that I had to facilitate the birth of a new local collaborative zine, made completely with the collective efforts of other fellow writers and artists that I love and respect, and whom this zine would not be possible without.

Rival is proudly printed by my own risograph press, Grotesk Press, which I run with one of my dearest friends, closest collaborators, and partner in art crimes: Jenry. We have worked tirelessly to bring this publication to you, completely brought into the physical world and onto the printed page with our own two hands.

Seeing this zine come together and become a thing that is more than just an idea is incredible, as it always is when making something. To everyone who has made

this flagship issue of Rival possible: I love you, thank you, and I owe you a drink (or several). I look forward to the many issues of this zine we will make together in the future.

I also, of course, have to thank you, dear reader, for picking up this zine and reading it. Please continue to consume art in all of its forms. Truly, I owe you my infinite gratitude.

I love you, collaborators. I love you, Lexington. I love you, reader. Thank you, thank you, thank you. And I'll talk to you all in the next issue.

Lots of love and all the best,
Claire Thompson



Seriously, What is to be Done About Gas Prices?

Jenry

We can talk circles around each other about the abolition of parking minimums, zoning law reformation, the emergency conversion of Idle Hour's course into a dense mixed use urbanist mecca, putting every landlord on trial for war crimes, etc. But until the great revolution comes: gas is almost \$5 a gallon¹, and no one in this town is just going to get a 30% raise to deal with that. An overwhelming majority of people in Lexington drive their own personal vehicle to go anywhere. It's not any individual's fault, the reason any city in America looks like this is a hundred-year long domino chain where a cruel god picked the worst outcome at every branch. Regardless, Lexington (and most Americans in general) face a two-pronged crisis. On one hand, this entire country's geography and environment has been destroyed by the automobile², and on the other hand, it's a really fucking expensive habit that most of us are literally forced into partaking in. So, if you

happen to find yourself in city gov't, you might be wondering then: what is to be done about all of this? And I'm talking about like right now, not next month, not next week, literally right now. I got two answers for you: immediate expansion of the city's (protected!) bike lane network, and turning LexTran into something that isn't a service of last resort.

Point one: the bike lanes. While Lexington has a lot more bike lanes than before, almost none of them are really safe to be on. Paint does not protect you from getting hit by a car, nor does having the right turn lane merge into the bike lane. Bike paths, in order to receive mass adoption by people who actually use them to get around, need separate right of ways that are physically blocked off to cars. When they do intersect with those right lanes, it needs to be after the turn, where the traffic will intersect with the bike lane at a right angle. This is not something new, nor is it

1. I'm writing this a few weeks before publication, currently is about \$4.70.

2. And don't get it twisted, it's an affect of capitalism, but I'm trying to be more specific than that.



just in Amsterdam, nor is it something that needs to be "piloted," the research is done and is available, just do it. quick and provisional infrastructure is also something that is well known, Chicago just recently did it for Wacker Drive. In Davis, California, the true "pilot" for all usable bike lanes in America, was done in 1967, which is, and I'm not kidding, over five decades ago. It's not new, it's got low overhead, and it really works to get people off the road.

But what all of Fayette County needs more than anything is, point two: make LexTran real for people outside of UK. While adding more connector routes would be nice, the absolute minimum, and really most critical part of this whole essay is this: every bus stop needs to have a 15-minute wait maximum, and really even then that's pushing it. The moment you don't have to check the BUS SCHEDULE to see if you can go to work is the moment people start taking the bus that have the means to not take the bus. As the saying goes "Frequency is Freedom!" Busses need to come frequently and run

beyond business hours. The UK Blue/White Route is an excellent example of a good bus route, it goes to places people want to go, and it comes every 3-10 minutes!! That's exactly what every other route needs to become a viable replacement for the car, kicking off the feedback cycles that govern mass transit. More service means more riders means more revenue means more service. If there is any takeaway from this essay it is this: pour money into LexTran like you do into car infrastructure, the issue with LexTran is not the mindset of those who run it, everyone who is a transit nerd/employee knows that the number one thing to do is run frequent busses. What is preventing you from doing this is operating cost, you need the busses and you need the labor, both of these solutions are solved with money. And you won't see any success with LexTran until it becomes a viable means of transit, an obvious statement but one that bears repeating to those in politics, because, folks, it's always political, and to win the right to mass transit, we're gonna have to fight for it.



Wacker Dr. in Chicago

WHY THEATRE?

Joan Dolf

There's not many towns or cities in the states that are known for theatre. You have New York City, Chicago, Louisville, Boston, and LA (LA really only if you're into film and television).

While Louisville is home to the Humana Festival, I dare to say Lexington is the tortoise ready to pass it by. With tons of community theatres and an equity theatre based downtown, Lexington has tons of theatre to offer. However, the variety of work is sparse. This is why back in 2017 I opened Cypress Productions: to bring new and unproduced work to Lexington. To push us away from our 14th production of *The Addams Family* musical. To broaden our communities outlook on humanity through theatre. To fight against the hierarchy of theatre creation and provide local artist and students with an artistic hand/voice rather than just a stage presence. I don't believe entertainment is the purpose of theatre, that's for TV. Theatre is to transform, to question, to bring an energy in a room that digital spaces can never replicate. While every aspect of life is tragically being streamlined,



theatre holds its ground. So it's our responsibility, not to fill seats, but to find humanity.

Continuations of canceled 2020 shows, or new productions deflecting the realities we now face are swarming community theatres around the country. To not address the loss, anxiety, depression and isolation only further alienates us. Keep quite and continue the song and dance. Roll your dice, and smile real wide and pretend all is fine. This is what these shows are telling audiences. This is dangerous.

Our goal is to continue pushing ourselves as people and artist respectively. We hope to have your input and presence in this ongoing journey of life examined through theatre.

L.A.M.E.

is a socialist podcast
about Lexington.

Covering local and state
politics, jobs, private
developers, discourse,
landlords, the slow
eroding away of the
Commonwealth's
administrative capacity,
and of course: riding the
damn bus.

You can listen to it
wherever you normally
get your podcasts.

And on lamepod.com.



Ode to the Soviet Union

by Ирина Рекова

We really had something

Something that would better humanity

Beyond material means

It was a project bigger than ourselves

A project we could have been proud of

The workers gave their lives for us

To never worry about want, worry, inequity

They labored tirelessly, fearlessly, thanklessly

Think about what could have been

Had it worked out for the better

What we could have looked forward to

A future we want to be a part of

"Lenin lived

Lenin lives

Lenin will live"

And yet he was killed

Betrayed by those who called him their ally

He killed the tsars

He defeated the fascists

He took us to the stars

He gave us all of our wants and needs

And we destroyed him

From his death we made our own

On a path set towards destruction

What can we do to save ourselves now?

I do not know

I do not know

But whatever it is we will need him

Lenin

by Langston Hughes

Lenin walks around the world.
Frontiers cannot bar him.
Neither barracks nor barricades impede.
Nor does barbed wire scar him.

Lenin walks around the world.
Black, brown, and white receive him.
Language is no barrier.
The strangest tongues believe him.

Lenin walks around the world.
The sun sets like a scar.
Between the darkness and the dawn
There rises a red star.

Ленин

Лэнгстон Хьюз

Ленин шагает по миру
Границы не могут его сдержать.
Ни бараки, ни баррикады ему не мешают.
И колючей проволоки его нельзя напугать.

Ленин шагает по миру.
Черные, желтые, белые его ждут.
Язык - это не преграда.
Его понимают на всех языках.

Ленин шагает по миру.
Солнце садится, как шрам.
Между тьмой и рассветом
Там восходит красная звезда.

Translation: Johnna Warkentine

Спасибо Валерии Валерьевне Мэйнс за помощь с этим переводом!

Ленин жил, Ленин жив,



Ленин будет жить!

The Day My Workplace Ratioed Elon Musk

Charlie Carey

May 30th, 6:38 AM Central time. A message in the Hard Drive News Slack, "Elon liked it lol."

Attachment: 1 image:

@elonmusk on May 30th, 2022. 4:55 AM. "Niche meme [Attachment: 1 image, a screenshot of one of our articles, "Zodiac Killer Letter Solved by Opening It With VLC Media Player.]" Screenshot cropped so both Hard Drive's name and the writer that was paid to write the satire article were removed.

Editor in Chief, Jeremy Kaplowitz, replies.

@HardDriveMag at 11:52 AM: "hey i'll give u a horse if u stop cropping our name off our articles"

Ratio.

It's all that can be done. We think nothing of it. We make jokes in the chat and move on.

Ten minutes pass.

A reply.

@elonmusk at 12:01 PM: "Well, if you make something that looks like a meme & someone (not me) crops your name, so it goes. Also, this is only a 6/10 meme, so maybe step down from that high horse! The selfless art of anonymous meme creators is something to be admired."

We are comedians. There is simply no other option. As someone in Slack put it, "a flame war with the richest man on earth."

12:23 PM @HardDriveMag: "Ok, well lemme know what you think about this one [link to article headlined "Elon Musk Admits He Wants to Travel to Mars Because No One Hates Him There Yet]"

Ratio.

12:55 PM: @ElonMusk: "Less funny than SNL on a bad day. This could make a drunk person sober. Try harder!"

This is it. The chat goes crazy. Several people (including yours truly) typing. Wait, wasn't Musk one of the notoriously worst SNL hosts ever?

1:02 PM: @HardDriveMag "well you're the expert on SNL's bad days [Attachment: 1 image. Elon Musk dressed as Wario on SNL.]"

Ratio.

But the multi billionaire cannot let it go.

@ElonMusk at 1:10 PM: "The reason you're not that funny is because you're woke. Humor relies on an intuitive and awkward truth being recognized by the audience, but wokism is a lie, which is why nobody laughs."

But if this is the case, why did he steal our joke?

The world may never know. Because at 1:21 PM, we received word that the man with a net worth of \$214 billion had deleted the original tweet.

Hard Drive trends in the United States.

It would cost \$6.6 billion to end world hunger.

I USED TO BE A WORM!

It was very cold underground— not at all to my liking. So, I packed a suitcase and left Earth. I can't exactly say where I ended up, but it was a very dusty place. As soon as I got there, I was stopped. Two people stood in my way; two stories tall with eyes as big as the smallest feature on the face of someone who is two stories tall. They told me to empty my pockets. That I had something that belonged to them. Before I could tell them I wasn't wearing any pants— I was grabbed and torn in half.

"Uh-oh," I said to myself.

"What a mess!" I replied.

They dropped me and took the half of me that was no longer me and flew away. I fell about one and a half stories and bounced as I hit the ground. Looking down I saw several large arms had sprouted out of my lower half. As soon as I noticed them, they began to burrow into my body. "Hey, get out of there!" I said.

The arms rolled me inside out— my organs began to sputter and rupture, turning into more arms. Before I knew it, I was a husk, and the arms were all shaking hands. They detached from me and headed east at about 708°. "That's it? Wait! You can't just leave me here!" I said.

The arms paused, scooped up what was left of me and started pulling, stretching, yanking, shifting my form. Chewing me with their little finger mouths. After 200 years in this rubbery state, I finally felt at peace. Then the arms dropped me.

They wiggled away.

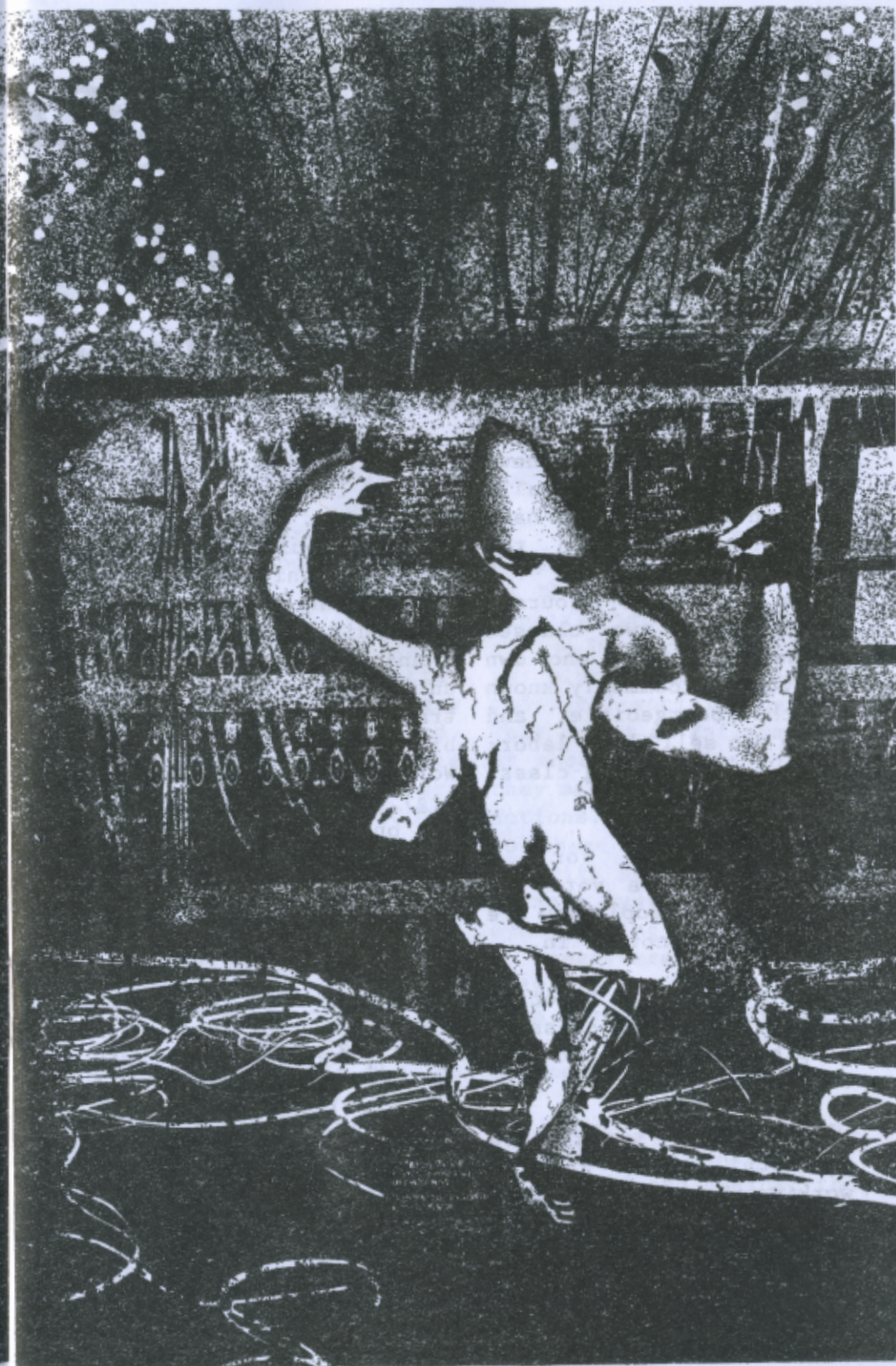
I was alone.

...

I work the telephones now; help connect long distance calls. My extra appendages allow me to operate at the efficiency of 2 or 3 "standard operators." Every hour on the hour I'm provided with a serving of "nutri-gluc." It comes in through a convenient, multi-purpose tube. The boss says it keeps me perky.

It gets cold in here.

It bugs me.



Rival's Recounting of Relevant Political Information

Given the recent news in America, and especially here in Kentucky, we have some reminders for the reader:

There are, of course, really only two classes of people: those who own everything, commonly known as the Bourgeoisie, and those who sell their labor-power to the owning-class, the Proletariat.

A vote for a Republican is a vote for the class of people you are not and will not be in.

A vote for a Democrat is a vote for the class of people you are not and will not be in.

The only way to give political power to the working class is to organize outside of these Bourgeois political entities.

In short, the most lasting, direct, democratic, and powerful way of building worker power are unions. If there is anything you take away from this it is this: join a union. If there isn't a union that represents your trade, you can join that one big union: International Workers of the World (IWW.org), who will always take you on, no matter the job, even if you're unemployed.

For Political Parties (if you really must join one) you have some options: Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL), The Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA), or even, if you really must, the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA).

We write this to remind you that the only

lasting positive political change has not, does not, and will never come from the ballot box in this country. No matter who you voted for, Roe v. Wade was both established and overruled. No matter who you voted for, gay marriage was legalized, and no matter who you vote for it can and (if you are to read literal SCOTUS Justice Thomas's opinion) will be illegalized. No matter who you vote for, they will return the legality of contraception "back to the states to decide." No matter who you vote for in your red state, you will lose this too. No matter who you vote for, your student debt won't be forgiven, even if they pinky-promise you it will. When they said "Roe is on the ballot this election," they must've been talking to someone else, literally

not you.

How many political failures must we suffer in this country before we realize that the true nature of the Democratic party is to block all meaningful political social progress. This is not an inflammatory or shocking thing to say, they make it clear in their actions. This is not also to shame you for voting, and with Kentucky's closed primary system, this isn't even shaming you for being a registered Democrat. This posting only serves as a reminder: individuals do not make history, movements do.

Until the Left begins again to articulate itself outside of and against the DNC, we will only regress further.

A Short Introduction to Risograph Printing

This zine was printed entirely on a Risograph, so us here at Grotesk Press think it's imperative that you, the reader, learn something about risography from this zine.

A Risograph, or Riso for short, is a type of digital duplicator originally from Japan, made by the Riso Kagaku Company and first released in 1980. It isn't a photocopier, but rather a duplicator, which is more like a mimeograph than a Xerox machine. The internal mechanism of a Riso works somewhat like screenprinting, in which the machine uses a thermal printhead to create an image in a master or stencil. These are created either by scanning an image directly on the Riso or by sending a digital file to the machine from a computer, something that is possible with newer models that have USB capabilities. This stencil is then laid over a drum of ink on the inside of the Riso, and each impression of this stencil is created by the paper going through the machine and the stencil rolling over it while ink is forced through the gaps in

the stencil.

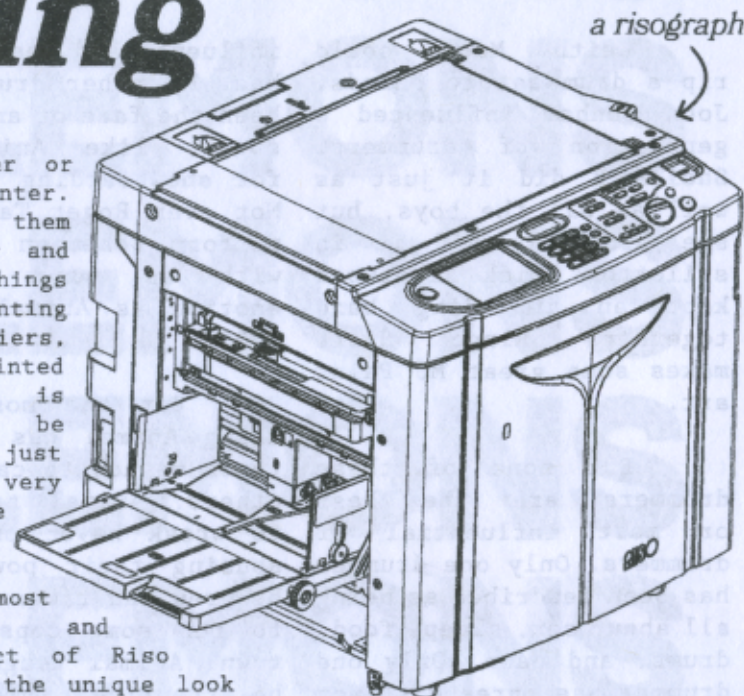
A Riso prints one color at a time, again also like screenprinting, and you need an individual ink drum for each color. Newer models may also have the capacity to print with two drums at once, meaning that when a paper goes through the machine, two impressions are made on it in a single pass. When printing, you manually switch out each drum between colors. Risographs also print with soy ink, so it uses real ink like offset printing and doesn't require heat for the ink to adhere to the paper (making it also more energy efficient). Also because of this, the ink can literally be felt on the surface of the paper, something that offers another dimension of unique appeal. Risograph ink is also partially translucent, meaning that you can create new colors by layering different colors of ink on top of each other.

Risographs are intended for mass duplication, and when used to mass print something, it is far more cost effective

than a laser or inkjet printer. This makes them both popular and useful for things like printing zines, fliers, and other printed matter that is meant to be distributed, just like this very zine you're holding now.

The most noticeable and iconic aspect of Riso printing is the unique look of the finished prints. Risos print in an almost binary way since they print one color at a time: either there is ink in a spot or there isn't. They also print in halftones, so the finished results have a particular gritty, textured quality. The distinct look of a Risograph print is very difficult to recreate with any other method, which is one of the main allures of these machines.

The origins of Risograph printing started in office settings, being used



like Xerox machines to create large volumes of copies. But nowadays, as Risos have largely been phased out of these settings, they have become much more sought after by artists and printmakers, like ourselves here at Grotesk Press. Risographs combine the appealing physicality of traditional printmaking with the ease and efficiency of digital printing, and it is a whole field being explored by more and more artists, designers, and printers.

An Ode To The Greatest Drummer Of All Time

Charlie Carey

Keith Moon could rip a drum set to shreds. John Bonham influenced a generation of drummers. Sheila E did it just as well as all the boys, but she literally did it in stilettos. Mick Fleetwood kept an imploding band together. Ringo Starr makes some great MS Paint art.

But none of these drummers are the best or most influential of drummers. Only one drummer has been described as being all about sex, sleep, food, drums, and pain. Only one drummer has three distinct styles: loud, louder, and deafening. Only one drummer has battled Buddy Rich, Travis Barker, Dave Grohl, Harry Belafonte, and Andy Hurley, and won them all. Well, a few of those ended in the drum set being thrown, but I still count it.

That drummer is Animal from Electric Mayhem.

As much as other drummers can try, they will never match the

influence and reach Animal has. No other drummer has been the face of an Olympic sport, like Animal was for snowboarding in 1998. Not even Roger Taylor can perform Bohemian Rhapsody with as much powerful emotion as Animal did in 2009.

But the most metal thing Animal has done is teach me how to care about others. Animal taught me to wreak havoc on people abusing their power when he grew ten times his size to run some cops out of town. Animal taught me to be attentive to my friends when he was the only one to recognize that Kermit was replaced with an imposter. Animal taught me that it's okay to show my big emotions whenever he yells out exactly what he thinks. He also taught me that it's okay that my room is a little messy because he lives in a literal jail cell and at least it's not that.

I just think Animal is neat.

Cypress Productions presents...

LEMONS LEMONS LEMONS LEMONS LEMONS

imagines a world where we we're forced to say less. It's about what we say and how we say it; about the things we can only hear in the silence; about dead cats, activism, eye contact, and lemons, lemons, lemons, lemons, lemons, lemons.

August 4 - 6

More information available at
joandolf.com/cypress-productions

An amateur production by arrangement with
Nick Hern Books

A Case for Noise

or a Brief Introduction for
Those Still Uninitiated

Claire Thompson

I would bargain to say that no genre of music is reviled, even feared, like noise. And I mean real noise: power electronics, death industrial, harsh noise, wall noise, and so on. Music that is punishing, brutal, unwavering, and unrelenting in its presentation. It's music that hurts you when you listen to it. Noise is full of rage and pain and raw emotionality that is unreachable by music composed of typical instrumentation.



by sounds that are made with conventional uses of strings and keys. Noise is wires and knobs and crashing and smashing, electricity riding waves of feedback as they course through inputs and outputs on analog synthesizers being used and abused as the hardware means to radically transcend musical ends.

Sometimes, when I listen to really good noise music, I can feel it through my body, like a sensation that is both like pins and needles and

like elation. Starting in my head and out through my scalp, the feeling reaches the end of each hair on my head, beginning in the follicle and radiating through the length of the shaft like a current traveling through a wire. I then feel it through my whole body, reaching my fingertips and the bottoms of my feet. It makes me clench my fists, curl my toes, screw my eyes shut, and I feel overtaken as the same electric sensation travels through every little hair on my body, as though every pore is vibrating with the thought *holy shit, this is really fucking good*. It's like a good orgasm or falling in love or getting really, really good news. It's like being a pig and rolling in shit. It's like laughing so hard you vomit.

Especially spectacular noise music does occasionally make me want to throw up, in an absolutely good way. It's so overwhelmingly powerful, it hums and buzzes and screeches and overtakes every part of you. I wrap my arms around myself, my headphones on, and curl up in simultaneous agony and ecstasy. I think this is what sets noise apart: it is commanding and unignorable, it demands that you hear it and that you can't shut it up. This may be to the chagrin of my roommate when I play noise in the apartment while doing dishes, but its emphatic power is undeniable.

This is not to say

though that noise doesn't inspire a variety of emotional and physical and spiritual responses; there is a vast and treacherous landscape of noise to be explored by listeners, and I invite you, reader, to begin a journey with me by just dipping our toes into its murky, abyssal deep. I think we will both find that there are more depths to be plumbed in the treacherous bowels of noise than there are hours in a day or days in a year or years in a lifetime. But every journey into depravity starts with a single step.

Step 1: What the Hell is "noise" anyways?

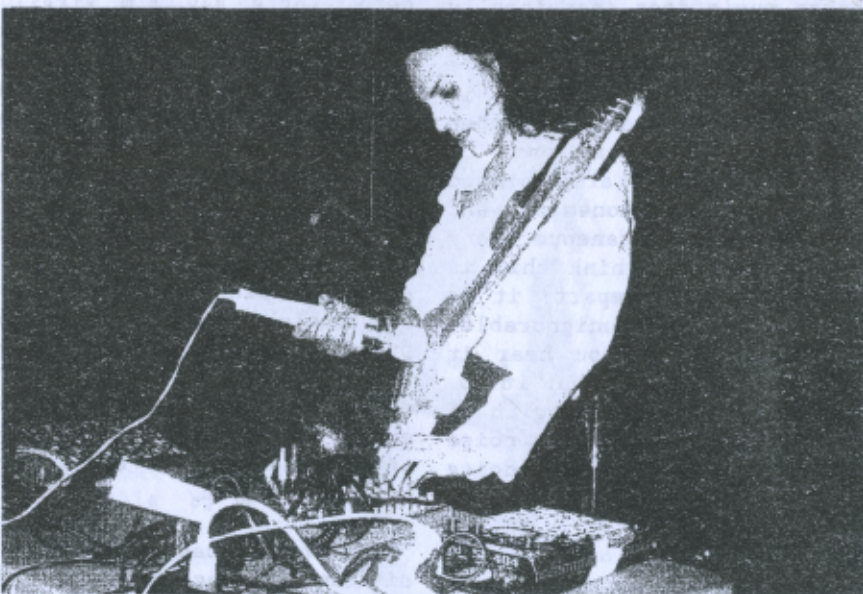
For those who are unindoctrinated, I'll start here. Let's say I'm Virgil, and you're Dante, and we're in Hell right now. And we're going through Hell, and I'm going to show you all of the treacherous sights. And on some very basic level, noise is like the grand expanse of Hell: vast and winding and full of unknowable, ununderstandable sinners who are being punished (or looking to punish you) with a wide array of retributions. The scope of noise music is surprisingly expansive, and I aim to try and define some of these far reaches for you.

Very broadly, noise music can often be characterized

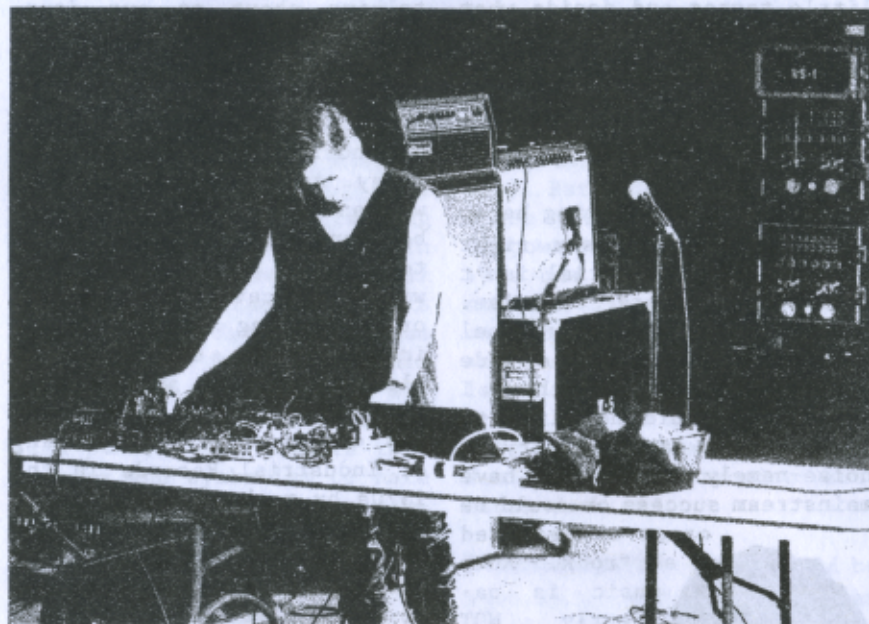
by the use of non-musical or unconventional sounds in a musical context ("musical" being used kind of loosely here). And these "non-musical" sounds can be produced by a wide variety of things ranging from the literal sounds of industry (like mechanical assembly lines in factories, power tools, heavy machinery, or any other non-musical object) to things that are very much musical, like analogue synthesizers and even (gasp!) an abused electric guitar. There's a very iconic photograph by notable noise scene photographer Jane Chardiet (also sister of Margaret Chardiet, aka Pharmakon-but we'll come back to her later) of noise artist Superior Human Vomit holding a Hitachi wand to the strings of her electric guitar while simultaneously

turning the knobs of a synth. This kind of fare is very typical for traditional instruments in a noise context, and the sounds they produce (as well as any other sounds in this context), are often distorted and warped beyond recognition by a series of modular synthesizers lovingly laid out on a folding table at a noise gig.

But this of course means we have to address other types of music that use non-musical sounds in a musical context, especially older, more classic experimental genres like *musique concrète* or landmark experimental music à la John Cage. I mean, are these things noise? Well, I would play them on my noise & experimental genre radio show, but I am no music historian; I am merely a



Superior Human Vomit photographed by Jane Chardiet



Prurient with his white folding table visible

meek and miserably inadequate enjoyer of noise music trying to convert you, the sinner, to see the light. So, I do not aim to draw any hardlines on the beginnings of noise as we know it today. Rather, I think it's important to see these other genres as the mothers and sisters of noise, all coming from the same loins of early experimental music.

Here's what I do know: noise is actually undefinable, and I would go so far as to say that the definition I previously outlined is completely fallible and shouldn't be taken as gospel. Noise is, more than anything, an attitude towards the music you're making; this is true in all areas of art: intentionality is everything!

And the abstract nature of noise and the way that sounds can exist so abstractly within compositions is the central appeal of the genre. I could draw many comparisons between noise and Contemporary art, but I'm going to get into that later. And I mean, it's music, sometimes you have to hear it to believe it.

But regardless of any umbrella term, there are a number of definable subgenres that make their home under the shade of noise. It is here that we can get into some specifics, but I must tell you that I am by no means creating a comprehensive list; I am simply trying to create a sampler of what can be offered by noise so that you may take

little tastes and decide what you like best, or maybe get an idea of what invested and active listening of noise can give you. So, let's get into these circles of Hell:

Industrial - I'm starting here, and I'm going to say right off the bat, industrial isn't really a "subgenre" of noise. Industrial is a tricky label that gets applied to a wide variety of things that I personally would not like to fit into the same category as noise—namely things that have mainstream success or could be cross-categorized as "rock." Rock music is patently NOT noise music, even though there is noise rock and no wave (who I will NOT be

talking about on our journey), which are notable fusion genres. Rather, I would say that industrial is the precursor to a lot of what we understand as noise music today. And really, industrial was an early unholy marriage between rock and electronic to extreme sonic ends paired with provocative, offensive, or upsetting imagery. So, industrial is sort of like electronic music with a punk attitude, and the genre name was coined with the founding of Industrial Records in the 1970s by members of Throbbing Gristle and Monte Cazzaza. And back in the 1970s, when the industrial scene was starting to materialize, this approach to music was totally radical. What I love most about industrial is that it openly took inspiration from Modern and Post-Modern artists, writers, and philosophers and their ideas and conceptual approaches—and I will come back to this as we go further on our journey.

Power electronics - One of the most classic styles of noise, power electronics is marked by looping feedback, static, squeals, abrasive sub-bass pulses, and often punishing, distorted lyrics yelled over this cacophony of electronic noises. If you've never heard industrial music before, power electronics probably sounds a lot more like what you would expect such

a genre to sound like. The main adjective I would apply to power electronics is unremitting—these tracks are not often overly-long (as is typical for a lot of noise music), but they are tracks of just unwavering, brutal screaming and static melding together in some horrible mire of atonal muck. Power electronics is also infamous for many of the artists that fall under this label to be guilty of a sin that is common in other genres like punk, where artists take imagery and symbolism of hate or fascism or something similar and appropriate it to either critique it or just to add to their overall facade of terror. And because of this, they can easily be seen by an undiscerning eye very simply as Neo-Nazis or otherwise some other brand of fascist (even if they claim they're not). Really notable groups that would be tried for this crime are Genocide Organ and The Grey Wolves—both of whom are like super-famous in terms of noise acts. I will say that I have often enjoyed

Genocide Organ, but just know that with this subgenre, like black metal and punk and other extreme genres, there are those acts that are actually truly evil (and not in a fun way). But I don't want this to scare you into not listening to power electronics, because it's one of the subgenres of noise I listen to the most, and there are many fantastic artists that fall under this label. Power electronics is great! But as in all areas of life, stay vigilant. In short, Nazi power electronics artists, fuck off.

Death industrial - This could be seen as an off-shoot of power electronics, but personally, I love death industrial the most out of all of the children of noise. It's a lot like power electronics, but often slower, heavier, and more drone-y. Because of these qualities, death industrial is arguably even more brutal than power electronics, because it

Pharmakon
photographed
by Jane
Chardiet

is so weighty; it feels like black pitch weighing you down into an inescapable trench of tonal terror. Delicious!

Japanoise - This is half-subgenre, half-music scene, but the title says it all: Japanoise is Japanese noise. The noise scene in Japan is huge, monumental, seminal, and genre-defining. A lot of the most important pioneers of noise music came out of this scene dating all the way back to the 1980s, and there is no area of noise that consistently pushed the musical envelope in terms of sound and performance further. A lot of Japanoise artists are the ones who are known for doing things like throwing metal biohazard drums and driving a bulldozer onstage (Hanatarash) or releasing tracks that are just recordings of people having

sex to the Japanese national anthem or shitting (The Gerogerigegege). The most arguably famous of all harsh noise artists, Merzbow, is from this scene. We'll talk about all of this and more as we continue on our descent into Hell.

Harsh noise wall - I'll say it, harsh noise wall (or simply wall noise or HNW) is probably the most difficult to love subgenre of noise. It is exactly what it sounds like: a wall of noise. And not just any noise, but completely unlistenable, eardrum-splitting noise. The subgenre is radical for how monolithic it is, but it is not for the first-time noise listener. In my teen years, exposure to wall noise made me afraid to dive any deeper into noise for quite a while.



the infamous Hanatarash bulldozer photographed by Gin Sato, 1985

Drone - If there was a true middle ground between ambient and noise (two genres that I consider to be dark and sensuous lovers), it's drone. And this, much like industrial, is tricky! Because a drone, in music, is not just a genre thing, nor can it be bound by the parameters of noise music. But drone music as a modern genre is recognizable by sustained tonal clusters and a minimalist approach to avant-garde noise. The origins of drone can be directly traced to folk music and other global musical traditions that feature droning tones and notes. Often though, drone in the modern sense is dark, brooding, and even a little unsettling, frequently sounding like the soundtrack to a horror film or a psychological horror video game. Also, this is distinct from drone metal, which certainly sprouted from the same dark soil as drone, but, of course, is metal, so it's less stylized like electronic music and noise and is rather often composed of the traditional makings of rock (guitars, basses, and pedals).

Dark ambient - Take one step away from drone and towards ambient, you'll find dark ambient, which I must include on this list because of its connections to industrial and other early noise. In the 1980s, this genre was even often called "ambient industrial." I would classify dark ambient with a lot of the same markers as drone, but I

suppose with some more tonal variation. Also, I simply must make note of my favorite derivative form of dark ambient: dungeon synth, which is like dark ambient with a fantasy bend, complete with knights and castles and dungeons and dragons and so on. Very cute!

EBM and industrial techno - If you start at noise and start taking steps towards more pure electronic music, that's EBM and industrial techno. EBM stands for Electronic Body Music, and it really is like noise does IDM. If you want techno or music you can really dance in a club to, but want it to be a little more brutal or punishing or painful or just plain noisy, then this is what you're looking for. While I could write an entire other article about these genres, neither of these are pure noise genres, though they're worth noting, because the long arms of noise tend to spread out into other areas of music when you least expect it.

Step 2: Noise as art, and other perspectives

So, we're familiar with what noise is, or at least can start to understand some of the ways one could describe noise music. But noise is also a highly conceptual genre, breaking down the barriers of traditional notions of music to build back a completely new

beast. I mentioned earlier the influence of artists, writers, and philosophers on early industrial music. These influences included writers like William S. Burroughs, philosophers like Michel Foucault, and artists like Marcel Duchamp and other Dadaists. Noise music often directly descended from other art movements in the 20th century, including Fluxus in the 1960s with artists like Yoko Ono, Nam June Paik, Joe Jonas, and Robert Watts, to name a few, whose avant garde performance-based works and music machines would influence later noise acts. The Futurists, several decades earlier, also had a large influence on the development of noise, including Luigi Russolo with his 1913 manifesto *L'Arte dei Rumori*, or *The Art of Noises*. Russolo is often

considered one of the first avant-garde and experimental composers, and his manifesto argued that the Industrial Revolution gave modern people a larger capacity to appreciate non-musical sounds and theorized that constrictive traditional melodic music would eventually be replaced by noise. Russolo turned out to be kind of correct.

The entire history of experimental music is extensive and, must I remind you, I am no music historian. So rather than getting into the weeds with experimental music theory, I want to come to you as an artist, because I'm a visual artist and feel that my love for Contemporary art and my love for noise go hand-in-hand. On a conceptual level, what I love about noise is its disregard for sounding good, for being

listenable, for being beautiful, or for being palatable. Noise music is tough, it's often an acquired taste, and when music is so often viewed as something for pleasure, noise can dole out a serious dose of pain. But that's what I love about noise, and what many other noise-enjoyers love about it too.

I like that noise is a genre that undermines expectations, and juxtaposes an audio format with unlistenability; I like that sometimes listening to noise is like an auditory challenge. These things are often also valued in Contemporary art. I learned a long time ago that there's no point in arguing with someone who detests art to try and convince them to instead value it. But there are lots of people who need only someone to take them by the hand and open their eyes to the rich and exciting world of Contemporary art in order for them to love it. The same goes for noise. Art is for art people, noise is for noise people. But, and here's the real secret: anyone can be an art person or a noise person, you just have to want it.

are notable or noise artists I like. In order to do that, I would need to blacken many more pages. This is only to offer you, the reader, with some insight into some artists to start with based on my recommendation, presented to you in no particular order. If you already like noise and you're just reading this, please judge my picks.

Pharmakon - Pharmakon, aka Margaret Chardiet, is kind of a modern death industrial and harsh noise legend in my eyes. If I had to choose only one noise artist to listen to for the rest of my life, it would be her. At time of writing she has four records: *Abandon* (2013), *Bestial Burden* (2014), *Contact* (2017), and *Devour* (2019). All four of them are worth many repeated listenings. Pharmakon's work is so visceral, potent, and heavy. In Marc Masters' review of *Contact* for Pitchfork, he said Pharmakon's music "heaves, throbs, and decays." That is exactly how I would describe it: like this wretched creature which is dragging its bloated, decaying body through filthy industrial halls, thrashing about against chains and ragged metal plates. Pharmakon delivers powerful vocal performances as well, her voice full of ragged pain, as if pleading for help or salvation or simply for you to understand her suffering and agony. Her music is beautiful, pitch black in spirit, and brooding like blood boiling and

Step 3: Fellow travelers

I'm going to introduce you to some notable noise artists whose work I enjoy. This is by no means a complete list of either noise artists who



Bonnie Baxter via
womenofnoise.tumblr.com

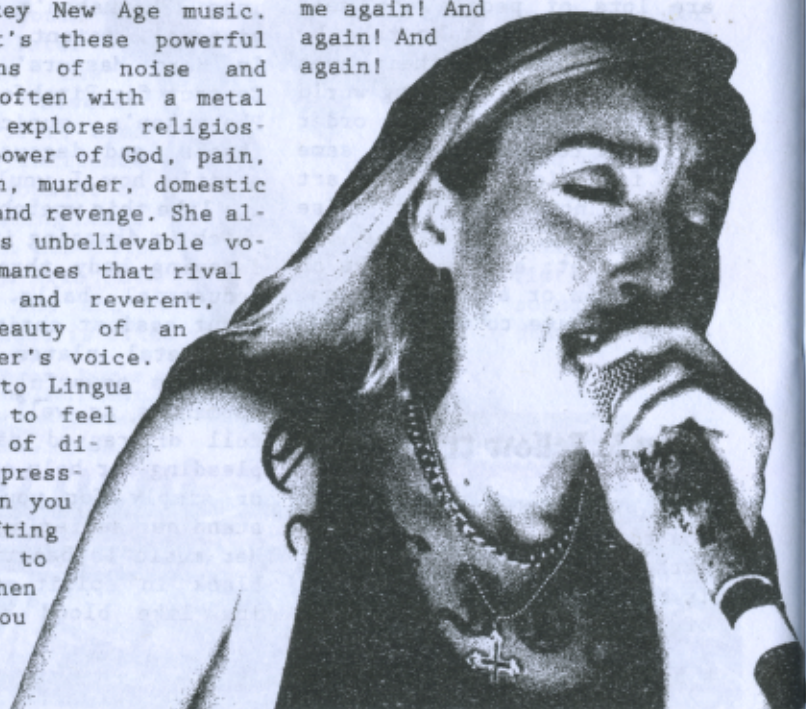
curdling under a thin, fleshy surface. Pharmakon is by far my favorite noise act, period, and definitely one of my favorite artists of all time.

Lingua Ignota - Lingua Ignota, which literally translates from Latin as "unknown language," is the stage name of Kristin Hayter, and is most notable for her use of heavy religious themes and overtones. In fact, the name *lingua ignota* refers to a constructed language by Christian mystic Hildegard of Bingen, and Lingua Ignota herself is very interested in glossolalia (speaking in tongues). Her work is like a musical lightning rod for an angry, dark Old Testament God who can possess or speak through a human body. Of course, Lingua Ignota's work isn't like worship music or corny, hokey New Age music. Rather, it's these powerful combinations of noise and classical often with a metal bend that explores religiosity, the power of God, pain, retribution, murder, domestic violence, and revenge. She also delivers unbelievable vocal performances that rival the power and reverent, sublime beauty of an opera singer's voice.

Listening to Lingua Ignota is to feel some sort of divine power pressing down on you before lifting you up to Heaven, then letting you

crash back down to the craggy, cruel earth. She has released three LPs at the time of writing that are all excellent cover to cover: *All Bitches Die* (2018), which combines audio samples of Aileen Wournos with a gut wrenchingly tragic tale of abuse and retribution; *Caligula* (2019), which is some of the most frighteningly brutal noise music I've ever heard in terms of both content and performance; and *SINNER GET READY* (2021), which takes the levels of religious fervor to a terrifying fever pitch.

Oh, Lingua Ignota, I love you so much! I come to worship at your feet, just a miserable and pathetic sinner seeking salvation and forgiveness. I beg of you to smite me with your almighty sword, with your ruthless, holy axe! Smite me again! And again! And again!



Consumer Electronics - Consumer Electronics is a British group that was started by Philip Best in 1982 when he was only 14. To be honest, the story of Consumer Electronics is muddled, I couldn't give you a comprehensive history if I even wanted to. And Philip Best wasn't always making music as Consumer Electronics: he used to be a part of the Whitehouse, which is the band that coined the term power electronics! And oh boy does Consumer Electronics make GREAT power electronics, and other noisy, brutal fare. Consumer Electronics makes evil, malevolent music rife with aggressive, paranoid lyrics delivered by sputtering, angry voices. More recent Consumer Electronics tracks feature what sounds like the mad, hateful ravings of an old man, and this man is performed by Best himself—it's frankly some of the best and most compelling vocal performances in noise out there, topped maybe only by the previous two mentions on this list. I highly recommend *Estuary English* (2014) and *Dollhouse Songs* (2015), but Consumer Electronics has a rich catalog of sonic horrors that span three decades.

Evicshen - Victoria Shen is a sound artist and instrument-maker who performs under the moniker Evicshen. One of my favorite things about her work is that she approaches it a lot like a visual artist and gives artist talks about her

work and the concepts behind it. As a visual artist myself, I absolutely adore how effortlessly and seamlessly she bridges the gap between academic, fine art thinking with gritty noise performance. Her music is noise music in its purest form: a combination of analog synths and strange homemade electronics that screech and roar and howl. At the time of writing, she has only released her debut LP *Hair Birth* (2020), which I highly recommend.

Wolf Eyes - Everytime I listen to Wolf Eyes, it conjures images of little evil goblins or some sort of medieval wretch with festering buboes on crusty, flaking skin, it's yellowed, hateful eyes piercing into your mind and soul. By far their best records are *Burned Mind* (2004) and *Human Animal* (2006).

Puce Mary - Puce Mary, the stage name of Frederikke Hoffmeier, is classic power electronics made in the modern day. Colin Joyce of Pitchfork used the phrase "grating percussive scraping and nail-on-chalkboard vocalizations" to describe Puce Mary, and really I couldn't say it better myself. Many of her tracks are like playing a long game too, spending much of tracks building up tones that will set your teeth on edge to create a cacophony of distorted, disturbing noise. I can't recommend *The Spiral* (2016) enough.

(left) Lingua Ignota
photographed by Su Xu

Prurient - Prurient is one of the aliases of Ian Dominick Fernow, and he is a noise titan. He's performed under other names and has made such a vast catalog of music that he's probably covered every subgenre of noise in his body of work. He also founded the label Hospital Productions, which has put out so, so, so much fantastic music. If you're ever looking to just find some random noise and industrial, just go through the catalog of things put out by Hospital Productions. He's also released so many excellent collaborations with people like Wolf Eyes, Philip Best, Alberich, and many others. His music ranges from haunting and subtle to cacophonous and ear-splitting. One of my favorite Prurient records is *Cocaine Death* (2009), but he has more releases than I could even begin to try and name.

Uboa - The noise, doom, and ambient project of Xandra Metcalfe, Uboa makes emotional, painful noise about depression, her experience as a trans woman, and mental anguish. There isn't enough openly LGBT noise out there, and I love Uboa for doing it and doing it so damn well. *The Origin of My Depression* (2019) is one of her most notable releases, but I personally really adore *The Sky May Be* (2018).

Pan Daijing - Much like Evicshen, Pan Daijing is also

a noise artist who operates in the fine art world. Pan Daijing is even doing performances at places like the Tate Modern, so she's fully embroiled in the art world. She combines visceral vocal performance with rolling, murderous waves of noisy, electronic sound to explore the expanse and limits of human noisemaking. *Tissues*, the hour long recording of her performance at Tate Modern in 2019, is a treat. So is *Lack* (2017), her intense and meticulous debut record.

Hair Police - For all of my Lexington readers, you all should know Hair Police: a legendary band made up of local Lex legends. Hair Police has been around since 2001 and most recently consisted of Robert Beatty, Mike Connelly, and Trevor Tremaine (some names you may recognize from the local Lexington scene). In case any of you are reading this: I love you guys, I love Hair Police, and I can't get enough of *Mercurial Rights* (2013).

Step 4, and every step from here on out: Being brave enough to go on your own, and a final push

As a final parting gift, I'm going to leave you with a playlist, just of some of my favorite noise tracks that I want to share and think are good noise starters; I am passing this proverbial mix-tape from me to you. And I

want to remind you once again that this is only the beginning! Noise is so expansive and vast, I didn't even begin to break the surface tension of the deep, cloudy waters of noise on our journey together. So, I implore you: wade into that dark sea and let it caress every contour of your naked body. xoxo



THE PLAYLIST:

- No Natural Order - Pharmakon
- Stabbed in the Face - Wolf Eyes
- Under the Stall Door - Evichsen
- Slow Agony of a Dying Orgasm - Puce Mary
- God Sent Us I - Genocide Organ
- Sex Offender Boyfriend - Consumer Electronics

- Historically, Women Use Poison To Kill - Prurient
- God and Faith - Alberich
- The Scent - Hair Police
- God-noise-god - Hanatarash
- Promotion Man - Merzbow
- Thigh High Cat Tights - Uboa
- Woe to All (On the Day of My Wrath) - Lingua Ignota
- Promises of Death - Brighter Death Now
- Act Of The Empress - Pan Daijing
- Desiring God (Intercourse) - Prurient & Alberich
- Pristine Panic/Cheek by Jowl - Pharmakon
- Product of Fear - Ramleh
- Maggot Death, Pt. 3 - Throbbing Gristle
- Murder Your Masters - Consumer Electronics
- DO YOU DOUBT ME TRAITOR - Lingua Ignota
- Jonbenet in Heaven, Me in Hell - Prurient

I would love to receive your feedback on this article, and especially if you've listened to any noise music since reading this! Any questions, comments, concerns, praise, criticism, corrections, love letters, fanmail, hateemail, or death threats can be sent to cmthompsonart@gmail.com.

Contributors

Jenry - ½ of Grotesk Press. IG: @marxistristoist. If you know, you know.

Joan Dolf - Joan Dolf is a Columbia College Graduate, Kentucky actor, playwright, producer, and founder of Cypress Productions. They believe art is a liberation from the preconceived notion of who we are, and that theatre might be the only job in the world where you are required to be alive. See everything they are up to at joandolf.com.

Irina Rekova (Ирина Рекова) - Trans lesbian advocate for Marxism-Leninism in Lexington government

Johnna Warkentine - Johnna Warkentine is a student at UK studying linguistics and Russian studies. She loves zines and communism.

Charlie Carey - Charlie Carey is a recent graduate of DePaul University and is now trying to figure out this whole "real life" thing. So far that means she's a freelance music, pop culture, and comedy writer. You can read more of her writing at charliehcarey.com and reach her at @charliehcarey on Twitter and Instagram.

Walter Melon - Walter Melon lives and works in a puddle just outside of Lexington, Kentucky. Walt enjoys short songs, dew drops, and the little things in life. :)

Claire Thompson - Claire is an artist & designer from Lexington, KY. You can see lots more from her at @clairewitchproject1999 on Instagram and at clairethompsonart.com. Also ½ of Grotesk Press. <3

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You can submit writing, essays, poetry, art, or anything else!

Contact groteskpress@gmail.com with any questions or submissions.

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published & printed
on risograph by

grotesk press

June 2022

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Thanks for reading!

XOXO

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