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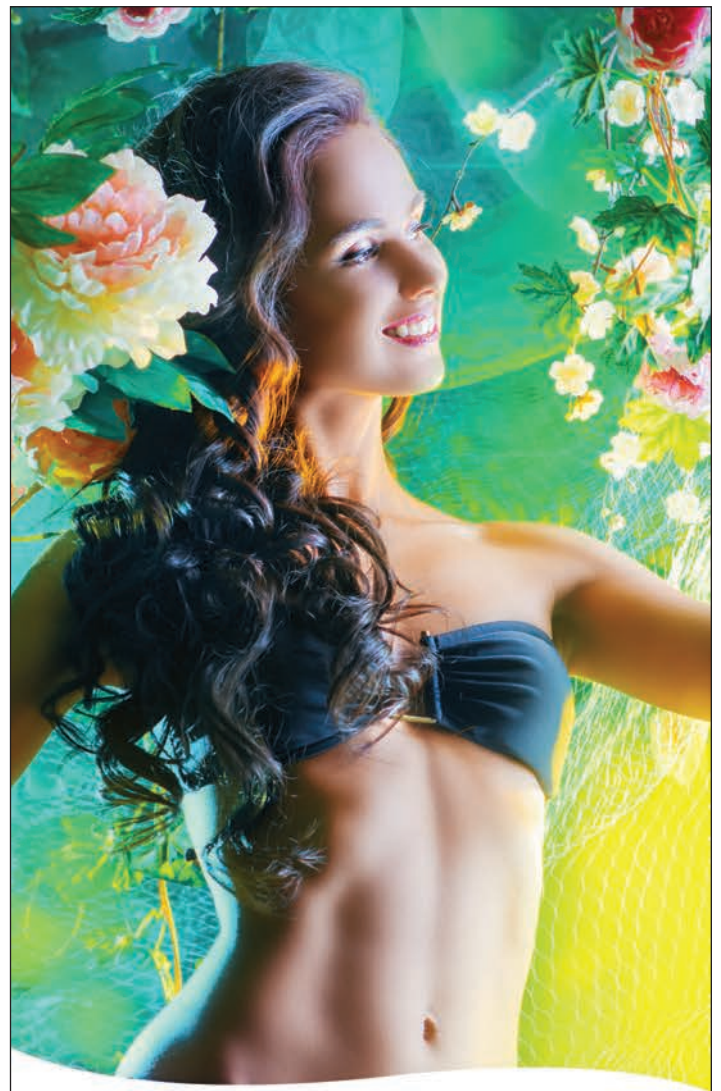
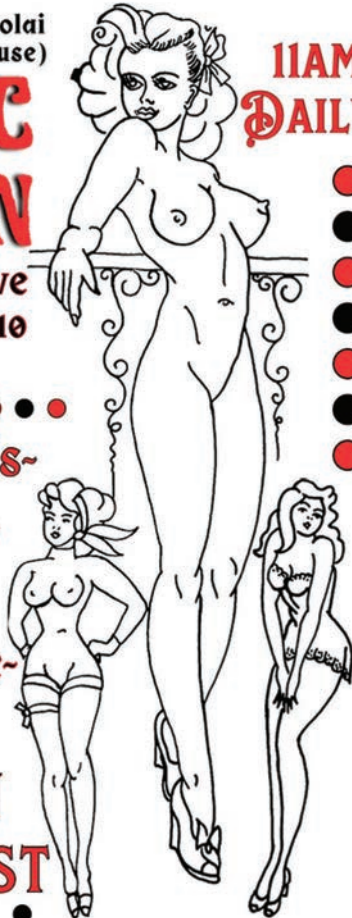
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Simone
FROM
THE LOUNGE

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QUALIFIER ROUND V
FRI, MAY 5 @ 9PM
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QUALIFIER ROUND VI
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THU, MAY 18 @ 9PM
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Lexi
CLUB SINROCK

Synn
STARS CABARET
SALEM

Destiny
GUILTY PLEASURES

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HOSTED BY DJ DICK HENNESSY

ROUNDS 1-3 FINALISTS

PHOTOS BY
HYPOX
PHOTOGRAPHY

Shayla
GUILTY PLEASURES

Decadence
STARS CABARET
SALEM

Cherry
STARS CABARET
SALEM

Harlow Quinzel
KIT KAT CLUB

Raven Lynx
KIT KAT CLUB

Vendetta
LUCKY DEVIL

THE P-TOWN HAPS

Yay—it's May! The month named after the Greek goddess and nymph Maia—her symbol being flowers quite fitting indeed, as blossoming commences from what once was a seed. Fresh beginnings of summer are on the horizon! From May Day to Star Wars Day, Cinco de Mayo, and Memorial Day (everyone's favorite long weekend because it kicks off with *Polerotica* finals, of course), May is certainly a worthy month to celebrate. And with all shameless self-promotion aside, there's plenty going on in the industry this month!

Starting at X Exotic Lounge downtown, *May the 4th Be With You* for Xotica-Go-Go on...yeah, Thursday, May 4, and every Thursday throughout May! Then on Friday, May 5, Stars Cabaret (Bridgeport) is throwing a Cinco de Mayo party. And while we're talking about Stars Cabaret, let's thank them for taking care of our active military, veterans, and first responders! All throughout May, it's Military Appreciation Month—these folks won't pay any cover charge and can enjoy food and drink specials. They go even further with a special veterans appreciation night at Stars Cabaret in Salem on Saturday, May 27. Thank you for your service!

What about industry contests, you may ask? We have two such offerings for you, my beloved connoisseurs of the fleshy arts. DJ Dick Hennessy's 5th Annual Motorbooty Twerking Competition kicks off on Saturday, May 6, at The Venue Gentlemen's Club. Make sure to check out all the dates on page 36!

And then, there was one...

POLEROTICA 2023



Well..well..well...it's hard to believe we're already at the halfway point of the contest! If you haven't made it to one of the qualifier rounds so far, you're definitely missing some fantastic performances and industry moments!

We'd like to congratulate all of our qualifying finalists to date:

Round 1: Vendetta from Lucky Devil, Shayla from Guilty Pleasures, and Destiny from Guilty Pleasures

Round 2: Decadence From Stars Cabaret (Salem), Synn from Stars Cabaret (Salem), and Cherry from Stars Cabaret (Salem)

Round 3: Raven Lynx from Kit Kat Club, Lexi from Club Sin-Rock, and Harlow Quinzel from Kit Kat Club

(Check out the left-hand page to see photos of all the above-mentioned finalists in action during their qualifying set.)

Don't miss the last three qualifying rounds: Friday, May 5 at X Exotic Lounge, Friday, May 12 at Dream On Saloon, and Thursday, May 18 at Cabaret! Then, it's the ultimate pole showdown at the Finals, Friday, May 26, at Dante's in Downtown Portland. *Don't miss this night!*

May the fuzz be with you!



Xerotic City spotlight

**MAY 04 – X EXOTIC LOUNGE
XOTICA-GO-GO**

**FRI 05 – STARS CABARET (BRIDGEPORT)
CINCO DE MAYO PARTY**

**FRI 05 – X EXOTIC LOUNGE
POLEROTICA 2023 QUALIFIER ROUND V**

**SAT 06 – THE VENUE
MOTORBOOTY ROUND 1**

SUN 07 – DANTE'S – SINFERNO CABARET

**THU 11 – CLUB DETOUR
MOTORBOOTY ROUND 2**

**THU 11 – X EXOTIC LOUNGE
XOTICA-GO-GO**

**FRI 12 – DREAM ON
POLEROTICA 2023 QUALIFIER ROUND VI**

**FRI 12 – GUILTY PLEASURES
JULIE'S BIRTHDAY PARTY**

SUN 14 – DANTE'S – SINFERNO CABARET

**THU 18 – CABARET
POLEROTICA 2023 QUALIFIER ROUND VII**

**THU 18 – X EXOTIC LOUNGE
XOTICA-GO-GO**

**FRI 19 – DREAM ON
MOTORBOOTY ROUND 3**

**SAT 20 – DANTE'S
FIRE ENTERTAINER OF THE YEAR**

**SAT 20 – THE LOUNGE
MOTORBOOTY ROUND 4**

SUN 21 – DANTE'S – SINFERNO CABARET

**THU 25 – X EXOTIC LOUNGE
XOTICA-GO-GO**

**FRI 26 — DANTE'S
POLEROTICA 2023 FINALS**

**SAT 27 – GUILTY PLEASURES
MOTORBOOTY FINALS**

**SAT 27 – STARS CABARET (SALEM)
SALUTE TO OUR VETERANS**

SUN 28 – DANTE'S – SINFERNO CABARET

DOES AMERICA NEED A FOURTH WAVE OF EMO?

By Blazer Sparrow

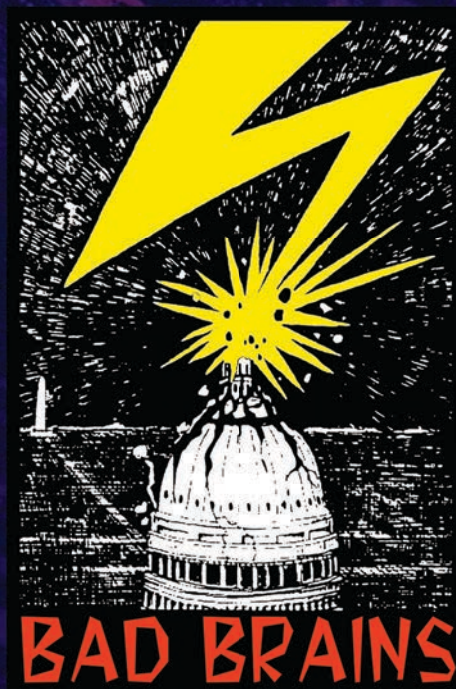
The short answer is no. But what sucks is it's happening whether we need it or not. Unlike the three waves of ska—which were not only necessary but inevitable—the three waves of emo, to date, are a bit harder to parse out and sadly reveal a tragic, full collapse (*sorry, I had to*) of the American Empire as a whole. Also... unlike the three waves of ska, which actually had huge generational gaps, and with each wave signifying a rediscovery and reinterpretation, the waves of emo are actually more like one slow-burn, catastrophic tsunami, which crested and made landfall in every white American suburb in the mid-2000s. This bubbling fourth wave that's coming, whether we are ready for it or not, is more of a literal second wave, since there's that generational gap and rediscovery process. Since there is no stopping this follow-up tsunami, we might as well prepare for it, and you, the reader, might as well learn how we got here.



A little history, first. Emo started in 1985 with Rites of Spring's first and only album. This start date is about as accurate as saying punk started in 1976, with Ramones' debut. It's simply a nice, clean, easy start date. Obviously, punk, hardcore, and post-hardcore bands in the late '70s and early '80s were dealing with more personal and self-searching issues in lyrical content. Have you ever read any Henry Rollins-era Black Flag lyrics? Dude is literally using being in a band as a substitute for therapy. Strip away the self-righteousness, and Minor Threat's "In My Eyes" is essentially an emo song. But either way, Rites of Spring's debut is simply a nice goalpost we can start at.

This "first wave" in Washington, DC, was fairly

limited to that city, with bands like Rites of Spring, Embrace, and Dag Nasty. Basically, anything on Dischord Records in the '80s can be considered Emo Mark I. So what's the connecting thread? The impetus? Musically, it makes sense. Young people like playing loud, energetic rock music, and if you're not that politically literate, what are you gonna sing about? Your feewlingz. That's the lazy, plebian explanation. I think there was something more nefarious at work. Where and when are we? Fucking DC in the '80s! We are smack dab in the middle of Reagan's Evangelical Theocratic Capitalist Hellscape! While these spry, young punk rockers may not have been intentionally responding to the cruel gutting of any and all possible economic future for themselves, I'm a firm believer that the environment you live and breathe in permeates your art. You see the high-rise buildings shoot up and the homeless shelters and mental health clinics shutter—the garbage piles up as trade unions fight their last heroic stand before finally getting swept under the neoliberal juggernaut façade of happiness. A new class of coke-raddled business elites in yellow ties step over droves of homeless that just got kicked out of those evil, taxpayer-burdening, nanny state establishments.



The left-wing political ire of English punk and bored apathy of the New York brand (and, to an extent, the earlier stuff in Detroit) clearly did nothing. Bad Brains started off the decade strong with some tight, succinct political grievances delivered at lightning speed, but they quickly fizzled out into a wash of drugged-out reggae without getting a movement going. I think sad suburban introspection was really the only thing left to sing about. The powers that be cannot be destroyed or dissuaded with music, so fuck it, let's just read our diary but jump around while doing it.



The second "wave" is a little more difficult to pin down but is largely referring to the "Midwest emo" phenomenon of the mid-'90s. Again, when you zoom into the nitty gritty, it really does start looking like one big tsunami rather than separate waves since we got a direct line from the initial DC scene to Fugazi and Jawbreaker in 1990, which is spitting distance from Sunny Day Real Estate's '94 debut masterpiece—vaguely the beginning of this second wave. Yes, I realize Seattle isn't in the Midwest, but it was hit just as hard by the neoliberal gilded age of the '90s. The glossy, end-of-history era where all major American producers outsourced their labor to countries where they could get away with shameless worker exploitation, and literally all the money was funneled to douchey tech startups, as this awful homunculus known as the internet was congealing into existence. This is where a more recognizable style known as emo flourishes, with The Get Up Kids, The Promise Ring, Cap'n Jazz, and Mineral providing the soundtrack for disaffected suburban youth across the nation. Again, while most of these bands were probably not consciously commenting on the literal dissolution of the American Dream before their very eyes, it was in the air they were breathing, especially in

Rust Belt cities that were essentially emptied of any hope for the future (i.e., manufacturing jobs where you could put in 20 years and at least come out of it with a house). They were told to just learn to code. This is where the suburban vibe really becomes part of the fabric of emo since it's in these disgusting sprawls that kids made bands in garages with, again, nothing to sing about except diary entries because there's literally nothing else going on.



Although the third wave was able to break through with the help of pop punk exploding across malls in the mid-'90s and arguably the first third wave emo albums came out in 1999 with *Saves The Day's Through Being Cool* and *Thursday's Waiting*—the pivotal moment is definitely the towers falling on 9/11, with Gerard Way literally witnessing the disaster firsthand and deciding then to quit his job and make My Chemical Romance. This timeline is arbitrary, but I feel like this third and most infamous wave (in that it's easy to make fun of cause of the guynier and side-swiped bangs) can be roughly placed between 2001 to 2008, between the towers falling and the recession, where the absolute failure of the American Empire and its inevitable decline, could no longer be hidden. It was right out in the open for all to see. Makes sense why this last wave-slash-crest of the tsunami started in New Jersey (and New York, depending on where you consider Brand New hails from) since they were closest to the epicenter. I think it makes sense that this wave was the most theatrical. At this point, the absurdity of the tactics of those in power, especially during the Bush administration, needed an equally absurd response. Again, none of this is intentional (except with Gerard Way, since he said as much, and the folks in Thursday have said on stage that a lot of the early stuff was in direct response to rampant government corruption). But if you can't escape it, it's gonna come through your art—like pouring food coloring in your plant's water.

This may seem really tinfoil hat to most of you, but I promise I'm getting to a point. Because, again, the fourth wave of emo is coming. It's already upon us. I'm just trying to help you, dear reader, to figure out why the fuck it's happening. If ever there was a time when the youth felt particularly powerless, unable to fathom anything resembling financial stability or even safety with all the geo-political chaos, it is now. And even though it seems this would be the generation to be more politically engaged and more involved in their communities, the last few election cycles have all but proven that nothing is going to change, and the people in power are only going to work to keep that power. They were told to vote, they did, and rent is still skyrocketing while we're still throwing missiles in every direction. It's nice to see some Starbucks and Amazon warehouses unionizing, and it was kind of a relief that an unintelligent, failed reality TV star that wears a diaper didn't get a second term as President...but still, everything feels pretty stagnant and hopeless. Time to break out the diary and jump around in the community center event hall! Whether or not America *needs* a fourth wave of emo, we certainly deserve it.

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CREATIVE CAMOUFLAGE

PART ONE

BY ESMERALDA RUPP-SPANGLE

So frequently in our lives, there are those occasions where the idea of “blending in seamlessly with the wall so the embarrassment over your drunken texts from last night” will be obscured. But sadly, humans are not great at blending in with one another. In fact, we typically prefer to make individualistic idiocy a competitive sport, at least here in the Western world. There are, however, a vast number of species that excel at making themselves nigh on invisible. Insects, amphibians, mammals, reptiles, fish, that weird rotting leaf over there? No, wait, that’s a...



Dead Leaf Butterfly

The Dead Leaf Butterfly is truly a unique creature. When viewed from above with wings spread, these lovely insects look very much like your typical butterfly, as flashy as a cheap pair of sparkly platform heels and just as likely to fall into pieces the minute you try, in vain, to waddle precariously in them. Once they (the butterflies, not the shoes) come to rest and fold their wings into a position of repose, their appearance shifts. Not to prolong the shoe analogy too far, but how nice a pair of fancy sneakers can look on the top; however, if you’ve walked through any Walmart parking lot and then seen the underside of your new footwear, you’ll get where I’m going here. The dead leaf butterfly, once it comes to rest and closes its wings, looks exactly like what it’s named after. Not just being a continuous dull brown but having shades of mock decay, veins, and even smears of faux bird shit to bring it all together. You’d have to be a confident or desperate predator to chomp down on a bird poop-covered leaf on the off chance it might be a yummy butterfly treat. Still better looking (and tasting) than the sole of a sneaker after a Walmart visit, though, no matter what.

Leaf Litter Toad

Much in the style of the dead leaf butterflies,

these ribbit bros do their very best to look like dead and fallen organic debris. Unlike the aforementioned insects, these guys would be much more of a tripping hazard. Less flappy, more squishy underfoot, but just as impressive at masquerading at rotting detritus. #Goals.



Sexy Cephalopods

If you bothered to finish grade school (fuckin’ nerd), you’d know that octopuses are wicked smart and damn good at the whole camouflage game. Far superior, though, are cuttlefish. A member of the same aquatic association, cuttlefish really steal the spotlight as far as the variety of colors, textures, and patterns they are able to produce. What really brings them to the top of the incognito game, however, are their mating habits. In an evolutionary angle that would infuriate Andrew Tate, cuttlefish really do illustrate the effectiveness of the so-called beta male. Some cuttlefish are what you might call Chad. The chicks love Chad. Big, dumb, and strong. Chad gets the girl, mates, and hangs out—guarding her after the deed to make sure her babies will be his. He’s looking for some stranger while simultaneously trying to prevent her from wandering off, though, and does get distracted. Another cute Cephachick comes along to join his harem, and Chad is too busy to notice that Cephachick is actually ye olde “Beta Male” in disguise. “Cephachick” (who’s just conducting an elaborate drag by hiding a couple of tentacles and low-key camouflaging his coloration) mates surreptitiously with Chad’s kept woman and then splits in a major hurry. This cross-dressing may seem simple because essentially all it requires is advanced tucking of gonads, but ultimately it means beta dude has as much chance of passing on his genes as Chad-o-pod. Brains or brawn? How about both?

Stonefish

Let’s make this clear. We left the ocean for a reason. Sure, in many ways, it (the sea, that is) is super amenable to life, but the competition is fierce. Like buying beachfront property in an up-and-coming hipster neighborhood, real estate is never easy. The tougher the city, the more the basic bitches migrate to the



suburbs. Stonefish live downtown and have for as long as they can remember. Rent control. They’re in the same family as scorpionfish—all poisonous, toxic, and largely deadly to humans. Their venom consists of a proteinaceous toxin called verrucotoxin, which causes intense pain, respiratory weakness, damage to the cardiovascular system, convulsions, and paralysis, sometimes leading to death. Also, they look exactly like something that would feel great if you just took your flip-flops off and...oh dear god, I can’t feel my feet (wheezing)! You should probably just put up your house as an Airbnb or get a timeshare or whatever. This beach is fucking dangerous.



Plants

Fritillaria delavayi happens to be a plant that’s lived amongst some mighty adverse conditions. Sometimes adversity breeds strength, sometimes PTSD, and occasionally both. This one is like us in so, so many ways. At first young and green, it blends in with almost nothing. In its youth, it’s independent, prominent, and bright; but the older it gets, the more it looks like nothing. Seamlessly, it blends in with the dull gray and brown hues of the rocks it grows amongst. Eventually, one can hardly tell the difference between rock and plant, all youthful uniqueness crushed in the wheels of an adherence to mediocrity. Just like how modern society forms us all into automatons following structural norms like paying taxes, getting jobs, wearing pants and adding your mom on Facebook.

Please be aware that this is part one of a series because wacky physical subterfuge in the animal kingdom is a subject that absolutely cannot even be addressed in one puny article. Two or three, maybe, but for sure, not one.

Esmeralda Marina is anti-pants. She can be found on Facebook as Esmeralda Marina or Instagram as @esmeraldasilentcitadel if you feel the need to hurl fan letters at her.

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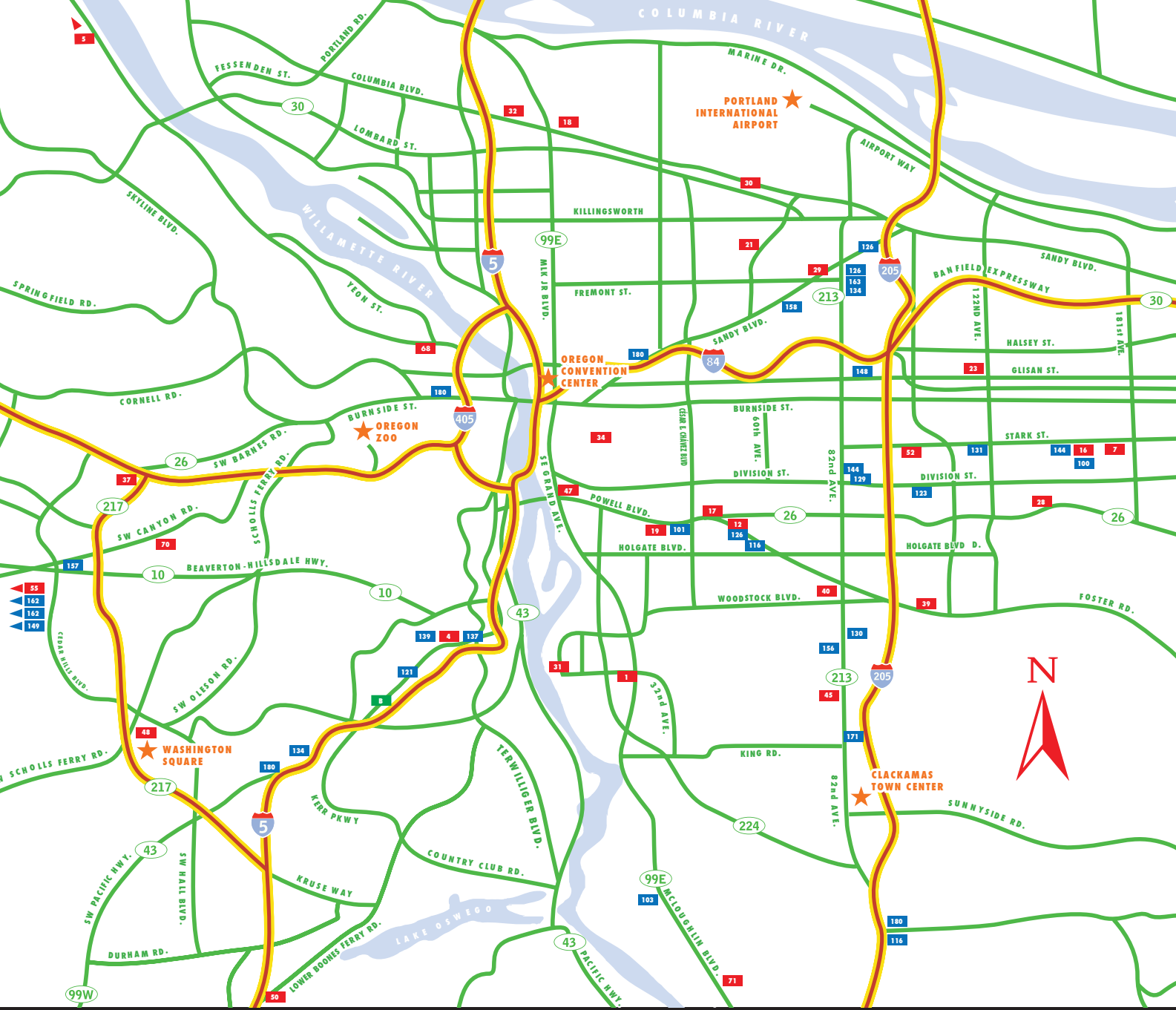
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It's Raining Outside (and the Roof of Your Convertible Just Caved In)

WHAT TO DO WHEN LIFE GIVES YOU A TUB OF LEMONS AND SQUIRTS THEM IN YOUR EYES

BY HANNAH ONE CUP

So, this year has been...continuing, which I suppose is all we can ask of a year nowadays; just continue, keep doing whatever it is you're doing, and make us a year older. We don't ask for much other than to not be worse than the year before. But what happens when it can't even do the one thing you ask it to do? What are you supposed to do when you're not even halfway through the year and now feeling permanently blinded by the continuous onslaught of lemons life keeps squeezing directly into your already bloodshot eyes?

You keep going. That's what you do. You soldier on, like the dog feces you just stepped in doesn't exist, and you don't even care about the smell because, at this point, you don't care what anyone around you thinks. You're basically just fighting to survive, so screw everyone else and their problems—especially if it has to do with something you did or smell like.

But this is so much easier said than done, and everyone hates when someone tries to solve their problems, so instead of directly involving myself in your problems (which I believe I've briefly discussed I don't do in a few articles past), I'll just give it to you straight, and on paper. It's like a text you don't have to worry about leaving on "read" and not responding to. Just read it and do what you want after. If that includes sending me a box of "thank you chocolates," I like dark. Real dark. So...onwards and upwards and forward bound, with the list I've created of ways to help you keep surviving after the onslaught of

paper cuts and lemon (juice) has hit you directly in between your fingers.

Lemon #1 – Your car was in an accident, and now you have a rental, but only until it's determined if your car is worth salvaging or not...and they have just now determined your car is not worth salvaging, so they are taking away the rental car...*fun!* This is a fun one. Personal experience has granted me the ability to tell you that this really is utterly awful to go through for the first time. I'm jaded about it at this point, but yes, the first time is awful. So, what do you do? Other than determining if anyone is worth suing if you plan to go that route, I suggest going on Craigslist and finding the cheapest car you can—title or no title. You just want something to get you to and from work until you save enough for a downpayment or outright cash to own a decent car. Several years back, I went through four \$200 cars off of Craigslist in one year to save enough to place a downpayment on a real car. Sure, the radiator went out on a couple of them, and they were extremely clunky, but they did the job, and I was usually able to take them to a scrap yard and get paid fifty bones for the scrap metal. Win-win.

Lemon #2 – You find out your rent is increasing at its max, and you can't afford to move or stay—this is another fun one! And usually, if I know my lemons, this tends to occur either *right* after the car scenario or right after the next lemon (which is also a doozy). What do you do in this situation? As hard as it is to say it, you have to ask for help. That's hard

for me to say and probably harder for you to do. If you have a friend, ask if you can pay them rent to stay with them for a while until you find a place of your own that won't force you to sell plasma every other day just to keep the lights on. Times are tough, and most people can at least count on one other human being that isn't a complete asshole and



This is titled "Giving Up and Sitting on the Couch While Drinking Whiskey"—brought to you by AI

would be willing to see you get set up straight. So, couch it for a while, save your money as best you can, and do *not* stay at that motel on Southeast 82nd by the taco shop and across from the food carts. I don't care how new their sign is, nor do I care that they still carry color TVs and HBO. Do not do it.

Lemon #3 – You lost your job, and it couldn't have come at a better time. Okay, does it ever come at a good time? Really? I suppose there are better times than others; for instance, you have enough savings (yeah, savings... wtf is that?) to afford at least one more



month's rent and utilities (*hahahaha*). But that rarely ever happens, and people rarely can afford that luxury. So, you lost your job, and you have no savings, and your apartment's rent just increased right after you lost your car in an accident, and your Craigslist '87 Corolla is on its last day before the temporary tag expires (and you don't have the title to this thing). *What do you do?* Before you decide that all is lost, and you might as well just stand in the rain with your mouth open, waiting to drown like a turkey*, there is hope. Your job was crap—remember how crap it was? Me, too. Yeah, go find a better crap job until you find a really nice, not crap job. Crap jobs exist all over the place. They pay crap, and you're doing crap—it's just crap all the way around. But *it's paying*, and you *need* that crap. So, put your resume all over the internet and walk into the day work employment building off of 82nd (a lot is on 82nd), and get hired. Yeah, you'll probably be taking the bus to and from places for a while, which sucks if you aren't used to it. But remember that dog feces you stepped in earlier today? Well, you get to leave that on your shoe and let everyone around you smell how crap everything is for you right now. You get to do that for *free*. Well, I suppose for the price of bus fare, but it's completely worth it. So, tune in to your podcast you didn't have time to listen to before public transit, and let that smell roam free around you. It's the smell of new beginnings, lemonade, and dog poop.

*Turkeys do not actually drown themselves in rainwater by looking up. Thank you, Snopes, for enlightening me. But I bet they might try if they saw their futures come Thanksgiving time!

Hannah One Cup can be found infrequently at a couple of our watering holes in Portland, not trying to solve people's problems while simultaneously not solving their own. She loves dark chocolate and whisky and was just gifted a large bottle of Malort straight from France...so come on over and have a taste of true regret! She can also be found on Facebook by their name or TikTok @thursdaynight_depression.



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BY WOMBSTRETCHA THE MAGNIFICENT

BIZARRE BOOZE – THE STRANGEST ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES EVER

Alcohol. Mankind has had a relationship with it forever. The earliest known historical record of a deliberately made drink, a sort of wine, was from China in around the year 7000 B.C. It's also a well-known fact that beer was important to the ancient Egyptians, as many tombs had jars of beer in them, and it's described as being part of the daily ration for those who were building the pyramids.

Our relationship with the sauce may go back even further than ancient China or Egypt. Humans, as a species, are rare among creatures for our ability to metabolize alcohol, but our close relatives in the ape family, chimps, bonobos, and gorillas*, also share this ability. It has been suggested that our pre-human ancestors did, too.



Early hominids, much like apes who cannot legally buy beer until now, most likely waited for things to ferment naturally and then ate or drank them. *“Ug, you leave fruit in sun, wait for smell funny, then eat fruit and feel real unga-bunga.”* This suggests that we have *always* con-

sumed hooch since the very beginning of our whole species. We have clearly moved past eating rotten fruit and have taken the art of booze-making in some very odd directions. I'm going to cover some of the weirdest types of alcohol people have invented in their quest to tie one on.

Listed in no particular order.



Jeppson's Malört

Originating at the hands of a Swedish immigrant to Chicago, who initially sold it for “medicinal use” in the early 20th century, Malört is a liquor flavored with aniseed and wormwood. It's a modest liquor, at only 35% alcohol by volume (ABV), but the strangeness comes from two things: the fact that it's pretty much only found in Chicago and the *taste*. It's a bitter, herby liquor, and the flavor has been described in such festive ways as *“like pencil shavings and heartbreak”* or *“taking a bite out of a grapefruit and then drinking a shot of gasoline.”* Despite this, it remains reasonably popular in Chicago and is, in fact, gaining popularity because of some high-profile appear-

ances in TV shows, though this increase in interest has truly only been inside the city. Next time you're there, ask for Malört—but be aware of its nature. I might suggest holding your nose.



Yogurito

It's a liqueur, and it's made of yogurt. Like many of the world's odd things, it's from Japan. Much like the Malört, that's really the *only* place it's consumed. Typically found at about 16% ABV, it's fairly mild. If you ever wanted to get drunk on yogurt, this is for you. It can be taken straight, but most drinkers of the milky beverage mix it with fruit juice or soda, in kind of a lactose-heavy version of things like screwdrivers and even Moscow mules. According to Suntory, the company which distributes this goo, *“Yogurito is made from yogurt and tastes like yogurt but is not yogurt. We cannot say that it's healthy.”* No shit. Nothing about this sounds healthy for either mind or body.

Ant Gin

Here's where we go deeper into the rabbit hole. Ant gin is from Australia



and was first produced by the Aboriginal people who dwell there. It is made from the local green ants (*Rhytidoponera metallica*), which are smushed and mixed with lime and coriander during the distillation process. They leave some on the bottom of the bottle, in a fashion similar to the worm at the bottom of mezcal. Also, much like the mezcal worm, they are edible if you dare. It is 42% ABV, meaning it's slightly stiffer than your average vodka. "Ant gin martini—shaken, not stirred."



Tuna Tears Shōchū

Another one from Japan, shōchū (which is incidentally, along with its Korean cousin Soju which is the same thing, the most popularly sold drink in the world, by volume), is a clear, wine-like spirit weighing in at around 22-25% alcohol. If you have never heard of it, despite it being so popular, that's okay. It's made from rice or other grain-based wine, which is then distilled like any old liquor would be. It can be made up to 55% ABV but is usually less than half that percentage. Traditionally served cold, you will find it all over most of Asia, with each country claiming to have invented it. It is also the national drink of Korea (both of the Koreas, from what I gather). What makes this so different? Well, if you go to what is known as a "tuna den" or "tuna house" in Japan, which serves fresh seafood, you can order this drink. It is just your normal shōchū, but they squeeze the eyeball fluid from the tuna

into your glass of liquor. Mmm, that tuna eye juice goes down smooth...



Smoke

A prohibition-era concoction, wherein folks desperate for a drink would go to clandestine "smoke joints" to get a glass of this cheap and very strong liquor. "What's so odd about bathtub hooch?" you might ask, and here we go: smoke was made of pure wood alcohol, which is not the kind our biology can process well. It's made by distilling wood chips and water and makes for great fuel, but you should not drink it. Deaths from the consumption of smoke were about one person per day, and that was just in the Bowery neighborhood of New York City, where they were actively tracking the stats. It's assumed that there were far, far more across the land as smoke gained popularity. The government—in their infinite wisdom—thought that people who heard of the dangers of illegal booze would simply stay away. "Just say no." Take a guess how that one turned out. At 10 cents a glass, it was the working man's way to get hosed illegally after work, and risks be damned!

Horse Milk Wine

Known locally on the steppes of Mongolia as "airag" or "koumiss," it's a wine made from the milk of a horse. To even obtain horse milk, you have to trick the mare into thinking a foal is trying to nurse. You apparently can't just grab and squeeze them fat teats and get a bucket like you can with cows. Supposedly tasting like champagne mixed with sour cream, it weighs in light at only 3-5% ABV. This means you could drink that sweet horse juice all day and still be good, so bottoms up.



Squirrel Beer

A Scottish brewing company known as BrewDog had crowdfunded a campaign to erect a new brewery in Columbus, Ohio, of all places. They met their goals, and contributors over a certain amount received a special gift: a bottle of blonde Belgian ale infused with juniper berries and Scottish nettles. Not so odd, you might think, but here's the kicker: the bottle contains beer of a whopping 55% ABV, which makes it much stronger than even most whiskeys, and it is wrapped in a taxidermied squirrel, which is typically bedecked in a silly, bespoke outfit. The only problem—should you wish to get some—is that they are reserved for those who invest more than \$20,000 in their company. That said, you also get a lifetime 20% discount on all their products, should you cough up that kind of dough. The brew is called "The End of History" and is the world's strongest beer.





Gilpin Family Whiskey

I know what you're thinking at this point...*"So what's the weird thing about this whiskey?"* Well, it's a full-bodied English-style whiskey, which has a smooth taste and is made from the urine of elderly people with diabetes. Yup, diabetic pee whiskey.

They harvested the urine of elderly type 1 diabetics, ostensibly to raise awareness of diabetes and its societal impact, then made it into whiskey. The idea being that people with diabetes excrete a lot of sugar they do not metabolize, and this would make fertile ground for a good whiskey. Should you be able to obtain some, as they only do limited-run batches from Britain, it comes with the name of the urine donor on the bottle. This gives the UK expression "having a piss-up" a truly double-edged meaning.

That concludes our list. There are many, many strange liquors and drinks out there, but these are some of the most bizarre I could find. Given the drinking holidays this month, most people will just be consuming regular old beer, wine, and liquors, but let it be known to explorers in the further reaches of experience that there are things out there that defy the norm and are available to those who would dare try them. Except smoke. Don't try that one.

Drink well and be well!

-Wombstretcha

**I would totally drink beers with a chimp, bonobo, or gorilla, so if anyone knows one, hit me up.*

Wombstretcha the Magnificent is a pee bottle collector, horse milker, squirrel imbibor, writer, and retired rapper from Portland, OR. He can be found at his website, wombstretcha.com, on Twitter as @wombstretcha503, and on MeWe.com (yay!) and Facebook.com (boo!), as "Wombstretcha the Magnificent."

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