

# SEATTLE PASSIVE AGGRESSIVE

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ISSUE #9



## ANCIENT WARLOCKS

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Twitter: @theseattlepa email: [theseattlepa@gmail.com](mailto:theseattlepa@gmail.com)

Letter From the Founder:

Hey Everyone! Thanks for picking up Issue 9 of the Seattle Passive Aggressive. Now heading into our third year of publication, it's been a honor and a huge amount of fun to do. I never imagined it would get this far, and I've got all of you to thank, and a great team of hardworking writers and other folks to thank as well. Thank you all for helping, and supporting local heavy bands.

We've got a few things to announce, first I'd like to welcome Cat Jones to the team. Cat is the founder of Southern Cross PR, and is writing for a few other different outlets. On top of her first piece in this issue, Cat will be helping me roll out the Portland Passive Aggressive. Similar to what we are doing here, the goal is to promote all the great heavy bands in both cities. Our first issue of that should be ready by late February. So welcome Cat Jones! We are always looking for passionate people around heavy music to help us write, distribute, and donate their time to the cause. We also have an online store set up- you can buy shirts, koozies, past issues, and more. Check that out at [theseattlepassiveaggressive.bigcartel.com](http://theseattlepassiveaggressive.bigcartel.com), and please support us however you can. Look forward to more announcements coming soon.

Thanks,  
James Ballinger



James Ballinger  
Founder/Editor/Layout/Writer  
[theseattlepa@gmail.com](mailto:theseattlepa@gmail.com)

Pamela Sternin  
Co-Editor/Writer  
[paramountnow@yahoo.com](mailto:paramountnow@yahoo.com)

Lori Baron  
Copy Editor

Distribution:  
Tyann Draper, Bree Siegel  
Sean Booth, Ian Etheridge  
[seattlepadistro@gmail.com](mailto:seattlepadistro@gmail.com)

Staff Writers:  
Brian Kim  
Dustin Carroll  
Jeffery McNulty  
Brandy Rettig  
Lee Newman  
Cat Jones  
Angelica Jannone

Web Management:  
Ryan Adams  
[mradamsemail@gmail.com](mailto:mradamsemail@gmail.com)

Cover Photo:  
Mike Savoia  
[savoiaphotographylive.com](http://savoiaphotographylive.com)

Logo designed by:  
Andrew Crawshaw  
[broken\\_press@yahoo.com](mailto:broken_press@yahoo.com)

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# ANCIENT WARLOCKS

By Cat Jones  
Photos by Mike Savoia

"It's strange," Aaron Krause, singer and lead guitar player of Seattle rock and roll group Ancient Warlocks muses. "I remember a number of years ago thinking, 'I wanna have a fucked up rock band that's messy and riffy,

but still has hooks' and I thought I was brilliant. Then, I realized that my city came up with that in the '80s. Fucking 20 years before I 'thought of it.' And instead of being disheartened I was proud. I felt at that moment like it was a cultural thing. Ingrained."

No matter what it is, whether it comes from the cosmos or something in Seattle's water supply, Ancient Warlocks are the real deal. But one thing they seem to be doing for the Pacific Northwest, and the rest of the rock and roll world for that matter, is to challenge what the term "heavy" means. An Ancient Warlocks show is undeniably heavy, and their brilliant new, self-titled album certainly is, too, but heaviness is not only felt in their thunderous riffs, but in the youthful carefree hedonism it seems to evoke in all of us.

"Too heavy to hold" is the phrase Krause wails over their deliciously thick, blues-in-a-smoky-biker-bar track "White Dwarf," in regards to an actual white dwarf in the literal sense: a star whose density is incomprehensible to the human mind. The fictional characters in the song flee through space as their nearby star becomes a white dwarf, which renders their home unlivable. Their frantic, heroic flight into the cosmos whilst their home is destroyed is depicted through the blasting of otherworldly psychedelic riffs and a soaring guitar solo that rivals the heaviness of the white dwarf itself.



Then, of course, there's "Cactus Wine," the lyrics for which Krause, admittedly a Tequila lover himself, wrote about a drink from the old west, which, as legend has it, was a mixture of tequila and peyote. The song depicts a story of an outlaw fleeing through the desert and drinking himself to death on the stuff, seeing the mythological "riders in the sky," an Americanization of the old European folk tale of the wild hunt, which supposedly you see when you die and join after seeing. Then, poetically, since he's drunk, on peyote and alone, no one will ever know if he's hallucinating or actually seeing them. A heavy tale indeed, despite its fantastical whimsy.

Perhaps the ultimate snapshot of Ancient Warlocks' attitude comes in the form of the bluesy, swaggering introduction to their entire self-titled debut album, the track "Into The Night." The song itself might be about a scientist who discovers an ancient helmet which wakes his dragon guardian that he then battles with a laser torch from the back of a motorcycle, but when Krause's battle cry of "Into the night I roll!" casts its hedonistic spell on the listener, it's easy to sing it to yourself as you stroll down the road with an extra mischievous spark in your step, in search of a night filled with seedy bars, well whiskeys and unknown pleasures, to gloriously free to be held down by any person or entity.

Indeed, the literal meanings of their lyrics might lend themselves to fictional stories, but in a culture of music that is loud both in its sound and in its philosophies on life, the phrase "too heavy to hold" has taken on countless meanings.



That is, after all, the ultimate goal of all good art; to create something so massive—in this case, dense—that other people take it and conjure up their own meanings. In a sense that means the heavy grooves and gravelly, crooning lyrics of Ancient Warlocks have achieved immortality. What you live not only comes out through the music that you play, but the music that you choose to listen to as you thrive in what makes you feel good. That, in and of itself, is perhaps what rock and roll has always been about. "Music is mostly an intuitive process for me so 'heavy' has some unquantifiable boundaries," Krause tells me via text message. He apologizes for his hurried answer. I tell him not to worry; I prefer to creative people to give me the quickest sentiment that comes to mind, as it's generally the purest and most honest response. Besides, who pulls a ten-dollar word like "unquantifiable" out of their arsenal in a hurried text message to a journalist? Krause does. "If youthful hedonism is in there I'd say it's because that sort of swagger is in rock and roll inherently, so it's just always there. It's a good time, it's cathartic, and catharsis is magic," he continues. "Somewhere in fuzz and riffs and staying out all night to see what happens is release. Somewhere in those qualities are some of the reasons that we all end up coming back for more."

Though the band has put out several seven-inch records, including a split with their good friends and fellow Seattle riffers Mos Generator, Ancient Warlocks' Fu-Manchu's-supernatural-little-brother-from-Seattle attitude was noticed by Dutch label Lay Bare Recordings in 2013, who put out Ancient Warlocks on a gorgeous vinyl record complete with appropriately witchy gatefold artwork by renowned stoner-metal artist Adam Burke.

Not surprisingly, the band sold out of their vinyl copies within their very first tour with it in their hands. Since then, the band has set their sights on playing as many local shows in the Pacific Northwest as possible, and potentially going abroad in 2014.

Darren Chase, the band's rhythm axe-wielder and purveyor of the greatest groove face rock and roll has ever seen, channels the spirit of good rock and roll vibrations into other projects, too: As the creator of the boutique, homemade "Ape Blaster" fuzz pedals, he recently decided to set his sights on a good cause. He created a one-of-a-kind silver pedal and auctioned it off online for ten



dollars a ticket, all of which was to be donated to the Philippines' Red Cross to help with hurricane relief. "I was going through some emotional hard times right before I started it...I happened to see some pictures of what life was looking like after [Hurricane] Haiyan and all of a sudden my hard times seemed pretty easy. I figured I could step up even if it wasn't in some huge way and help these folks out," Chase says. "Pedals being my only currency at the moment I thought I'd raffle a custom one and see what I could make of it."



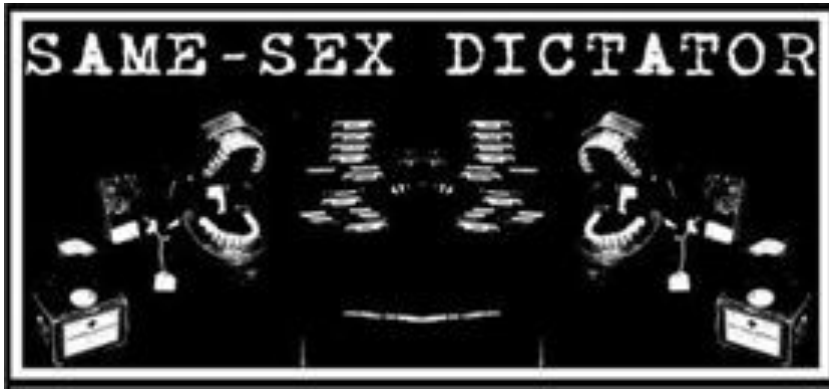
In the end, Chase raised nearly \$1,300 to help the victims—heavy rock doings its part to ease the heaviness in the lives of others. "As far as where we come together on [heaviness] as a band I think it would be best to call it on being the heartbeat, the pulse and the focus on that. To connect to people on the most visceral level," Krause says. "Like there's something your head if

you want but the important part is to get straight to people before they have time to think. To get down to the unconscious and ritualistic. So, we're deliberate about distilling and purifying everything down to that pulse at the heart of a song. I guess that's heavy. Whatever it is, it's what we do."

If you haven't listened to Ancient Warlocks yet, go forth and surrender to their spells of magical rock and roll. Immerse yourself in their supernatural riffs. You cannot feel bad listening to this band.

Ancient Warlocks: I feel so free.

<http://ancientwarlocks.bandcamp.com/>



By Pamela Sternin

Photos by Invisible Hour

Isaac Newton's "newly revised" law of motion states that a band that is in motion will not change its velocity unless an external force acts upon it. Staying true to physics, Same-Sex Dictator's seven year dash is exhibiting no signs of slowing down. Originally a three-piece, Lee Cizek (bass/synth/piano/vox), Justin Straw (drums/percussion/vox) and Shamus Jones (guitar) started down the path to musical weirdom. Nearly a year in, Jones moved back to Brooklyn, NY leaving Cizek and Straw to carry the torch continuing to play the usual songs as a duo. "Some of those initial songs without guitar sounded a little weird played live, but that was only for a short period of time. They gradually morphed into two-piece songs. We adapted the songs to fit better without guitar," says Straw. "We thought about getting another guitar player but Shamus has a unique and singular style of playing," exclaimed Cizek. "We did a one off show with Mitchell Bell of Thunder Grey Pilgrim on guitar for No Guitar Fest (Ha, thought we'd be different and rock the boat a little bit) but that was as far as that went" says Straw with Cizek adding, "We were Sioux City Pete and the Beggars' rhythm section for like a year! People who saw the Beggars in that capacity must have thought, 'Whoa, that was weird.'"



Watching Same-Sex Dictator since the beginning of their musical career I can attest to their transformation. Initially very abstract and abrasive sounding with an emphasis on progressive riffs/time signatures, their current repertoire hails back to their roots but has noticeably grown a twisted and gnarled backbone bringing with it an oppressively heavy

element to their song structures. "Vince says we sound like Born Against and Godflesh. Someone in Eugene said we sounded shoegazey," says Man is the Bastard's #1 fan, Justin Straw. "Swans, Born Against...those are some of my main influences," Cizek replies. You can really hear those influences coming through on their latest full length album, *From Beneath You It Devours* (recorded by Brandon Fitzsimons at Sound House and the Audaretum). This LP (released on Long Way Records) bulges with in-your-face supernatural noise,

multiple personality disordered bass lines that go from sludgy chords to effect saturated melodies or flat out fucking head banging rock. Straw's drumming is as diverse as his bassist counterpart. Burly and most certainly syncopated, Straw punches through blast beats and attacks his kit like all out war (a must see live drummer). Ian Edmonds lends a hand on Beyond Thee Anti-Lord Beat interjecting a solo as guest guitarist. The duo are equally engaged in vocal duties with Cizek's raunchy, reverbed shouts pairing well with Straw's straight up demonic overlord growl. The whole band sounds like some ugly atrocity pulled straight out of Frances Farmer's ice bathed nightmares.

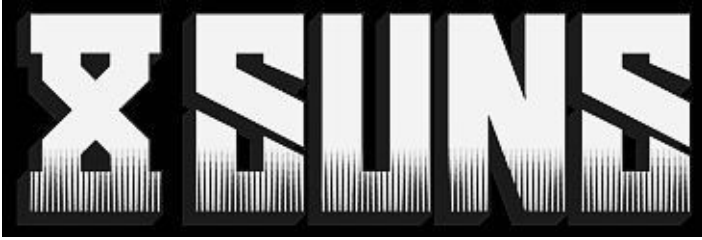
Since From Beneath You It Devours there's been two more releases. A three song cassette EP and a 7" split with San Diego thrash rockers, Death Crisis. Each album evolving, each release more mature than the last. In my opinion Same-Sex Dictator is one of the best underrated bands in Seattle. Their song production is gaining momentum seemingly becoming more



productive as the years go by. A statement they might roll their eyes at but I would beg to differ. " Cizek pokes fun, "We're insanely unprolific. We have a recording that is halfway done, and we're working with Brandon Fitzsimons again (Airport Grocery Recording Studio). The next full length will have 9 songs. We'll also record some additional tracks for future compilations plus we're re-recording one of the songs we did on the split 7" with Death Crisis. The new album might be called Open The Coffin." "That kind of sounds like an Autopsy album title," Straw snarks, "This album is more psych whereas the last album was more prog. It's probably the most brutal album we've done. More hefty. The songwriting is more developed, and the music in general is much darker." "Yeah, it's not really that prog. Compared to the way we used to sound we're a lot more straight forward," describes Cizek, "Now it's more intricate arrangements, more layers." "It was supposed to be our dumb album, but it wound up being smarter than we anticipated. We're back to our pretentious ways," Straw jokingly admits. "We're a really smart band," Cizek harrumphs.

As far as touring this year goes for the duo, 2014 might bring the possibility of an East coast excursion. For a band that has five tours under its belt it seems the natural next step, but something tells me they better do it soon. Confesses Cizek, "We have a band cannibalism/suicide pact. That's going to happen in September of this year."

<http://same-sexdictator.bandcamp.com/>



By Dustin Carroll  
Photos by Invisible Hour

In Chinese mythology, there once existed ten entirely separate suns that traveled across the Earth's sky, one for each day in their calendar week. Bored with this routine, the suns chose one day to ascend across the sky together, making the Earth unbearable to live on. Yi, the Archer, was chosen to shoot down the suns with magical arrows, and the solitary sun that Yi left unscathed is the one that remains in our sky today.

It's an old tale that sets the tone nicely for the Seattle post-rock quartet, X Suns, pronounced with a Roman numeral "ten." The bands soaring melodies blend together creating a dense atmosphere with hard hitting dynamics keeping a root or two planted in the earth below. Similar in all the best ways to mainstays like Explosions



in the Sky and Do May Say Think, X Suns have a unique ability also pull a good rock song out of the cacophony of delay and reverb their guitars weave. I sat down the group to discuss the bands origins, influences, how much they miss The Highline's kitchen, and the exact measurements of Eric's (of Grenades) penis.

Formed around 2010, the group began as a three-piece with bassist Adam Tricoli, drummer Trent McIntyre (also of Grenades and Old Iron), and Keith Furtado (of Plains). The band gigged steadily and put out a 5-song self-titled EP to positive reviews. Wanting to expand upon their sound, the group added ex-Patrol guitarist Skippy Tim King in 2012. More shows followed by more hiatus as Furtado quit the band (to later form Plains), and ex-Claymore guitarist Eric Hohnstein-Von Etten eventually became his replacement.

With this current lineup in place, the band began work on their newly released digital-EP The Greys. With two new members behind the guitars, one would think the groups sound would have a significant change, but the group have managed to maintain the same dreamlike, underwater qualities of their older material while still breathing new life into them. Opening track "Jupitourist" riffs for days, exploding into heavier passages that while loud, are never dissonant or displeasing. "Highlife Refined Palettes," despite being one of the most notably Seattle-sounding song names ever, expands a bit past the taste of swill beer and aluminum to paint portraits of enveloping sound through palm-muted guitar builds and tight dynamics.



"To the Bottom of the Sea" rings out in a chorus of E-bow and multiple melodic guitar progressions, providing a satisfying climatic end to an almost cinematically-sounding album. McIntyre and King both insist that while there may be some conceptualizing of ideas in their own minds regarding the groups music, they prefer to leave it widely



open to interpretation by the listener. "It's meant to invoke emotion, no matter what you think it means or what it makes you feel, no one can tell you it's wrong because there's simply no lyrics to disprove anything," King muses. From start to finish, *The Greys* is something that should be digested in full with your eyes closed, your feet up, and the remnants of a cashed bowl smoldering nearby.

Earlier this year the band caught the eye of *Covert Sounds*, a cross-country independent documentary about underground music across the United States. While still in the process of being completed, it sounds as though footage of X Suns performing will likely see a place in the film. The movie's website is worth checking out as there's a slew of various photos and videos from all over the producer's trip. Another noteworthy staple of 2013 was their involvement in a couple cover shows. Earlier in the year the group tackled the unmistakable grunge and grit of the Pixies, and then later teamed up with Jon Weisnewski of Sandrider fame to put on a memorable Devo tribute evening, complete with energy dome hats and fully adorned costumes. Not nearly content or ready to slow down, X Suns look ahead to 2014 with aspirations to stay prolific and productive. Also, bigger.

"Like, physically bigger, as people," according to King. The Greys will see a cassette release within the first part of the year, followed by extensive West coast touring. "We have a vegetable oil fueled van, and once it's all ready to go, we're hitting the road"



King remarks, "all the way down the West coast, and ideally further East as well." Keep an eye out on the bands Facebook page, as the new year looks to bring lots of good things for the band.

<http://xsuns.bandcamp.com>

# Local Spotlight

By James Ballinger

There is no doubt Hannah Levin has been a longtime supporter of local music around town. Though she originally got into the music business as a band manager, Hannah has written for both the Seattle Weekly and The Stranger and national publications (Rolling Stone, Spin, Bust, among others). She is also is a DJ on KEXP, and the creator of the stations metal show Seek & Destroy on Saturday nights at midnight. Hannah caught the music bug early in life and recalls some of her first music memories fondly: "The first record I ever fell in love with was the soundtrack to A Fistful Of Dollars. My father passed that along to me. I've loved music since I was a very little girl. My mom played Beatles albums for me when I was really little and my dad was super into Johnny Cash," she says. "My first concert was Twisted Sister, but the first time I fell in love with metal was the first time I heard "The Trooper" by Iron Maiden. I heard it and I was just captivated. I ended up listening to it over and over again. It was on my next-door neighbor's stereo and I had these headphones. Everyone else went off to play and I just sat there with the headphones on listening to "The Trooper" over and over again trying to cram Steve Harris into my brain. At the end at the end of the day my little ears were all red and swollen."



In 1996, Hannah had the epiphany to get into the music business after working on a window display for her friends in Modest Mouse at the now long gone Orpheum record store. After spending a few days on the display, she was overwhelmed with the joy she got out of it, and decided to quit her job as a Clinical Research Director at Planned Parenthood, and started out managing a band called The Delusions. After a few years of managing smaller bands and dabbling in PR and Promotions, Hannah made the choice to jump to writing. "One day it really occurred to me that I had always really liked writing, and my woman studies degree was really heavy on critical theory and critical writing and things like that. If my main goal is to draw attention to these little artist that I adore, why don't I write about them and get one of the big papers to pay me to do it? At that point I'd been around for a while and I knew all the editors at the papers and just went to the Seattle Weekly and asked if I could review the new Lou Reed record. He said yes and within a month I had my first cover story and it went from there." After freelancing for several outlets, Hannah is now more focused on her work as the producer of Seek & Destroy, booking in-studio performances and DJing at the station. On top of that, she's working a day job at the Breast Cancer Society, working with SIFF, and booking events at her space Underwood in Fremont. Next, Hannah will be covering the Roadburn 2014 festival in Holland for the KEXP Blog.

Listen to Seek & Destroy Saturday nights at Midnight on 90.3FM in Seattle, or online worldwide at <http://kexp.org/>



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