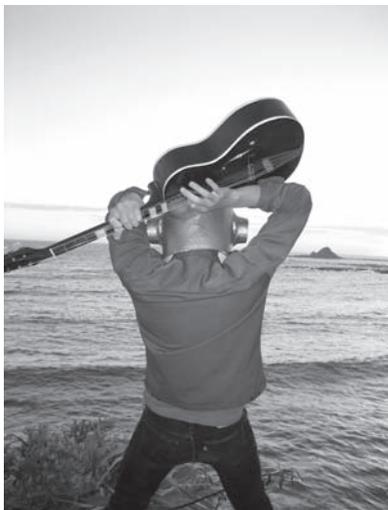


I used to buy fake blood and “kill” myself a lot

Dylan T. ‘Phats’ Herkes interviewed by Luke Wood



From: “Luke Wood” <[redacted]@[redacted].com>
 To: “Dylan Herkes” <[redacted]@[redacted].com>
 Subject: In the beginning...
 Date: Fri, 09 Dec 2005 16:04:09 +1300

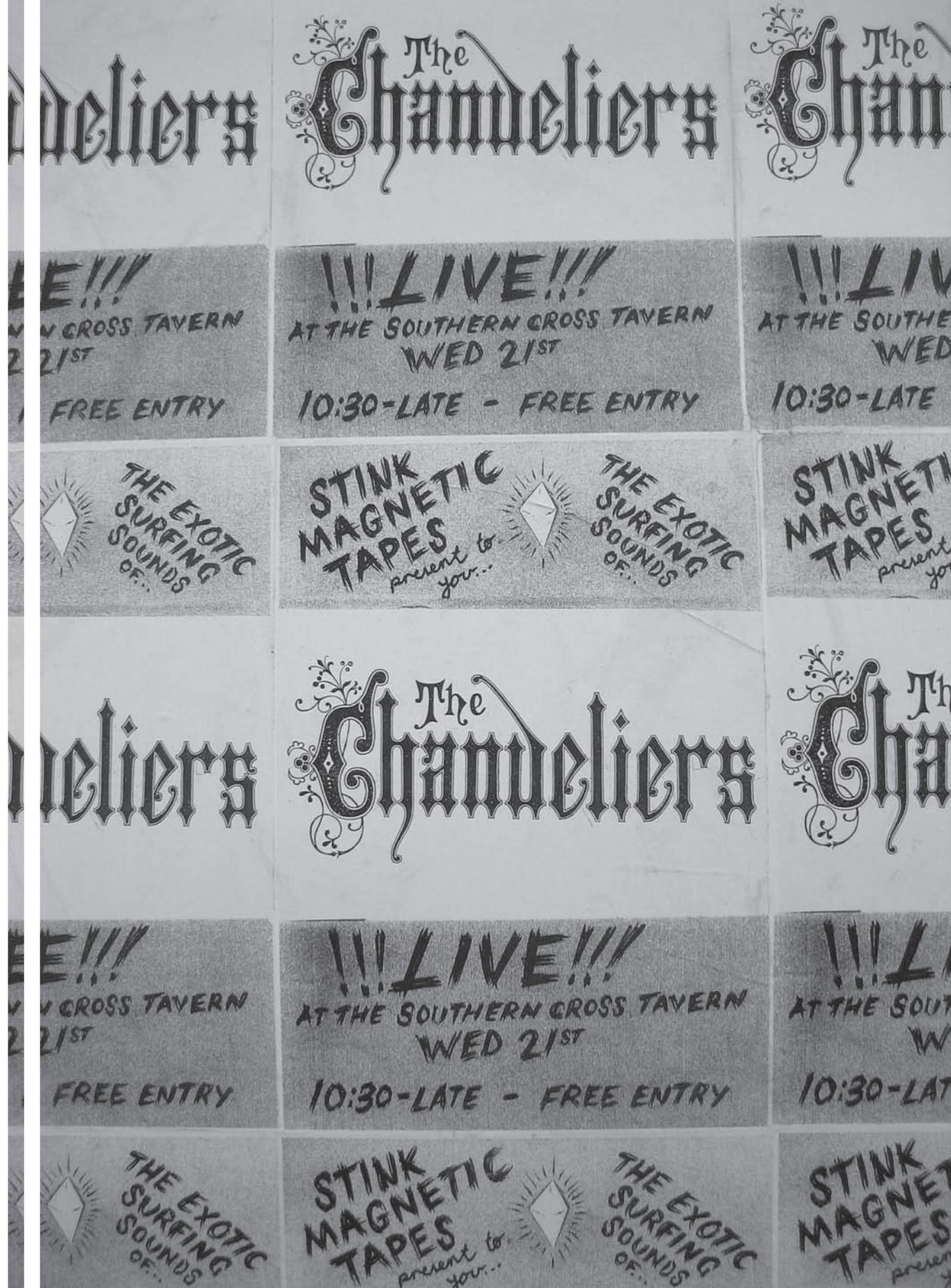
So I thought I'd start with the first time I saw you play (which I've since realised was not the first time I saw you, but I'll come back to that). It was a Pro Drag gig at the Wunderbar a couple of years ago. You'd come down with Cortina and they'd all stayed with us. We'd played the Wunderbar the night before, and Matt Hunt asked if we could leave our PA there for you guys to use the next night, so I ended up helping you set up. When you guys showed up I was immediately smitten with your gear, the old NZ made Jansen guitars and amps you and Moody had. I really enjoyed the gig, and afterwards you gave me a Pro Drag tape. The only tape deck I had at the time was in our car, a crappy old Lada, so I drove around for days listening to really lo-fi recordings of songs like 'Nitro is The Shit' and 'Grave Robbers are Real', interspersed with recordings of revving V8 engines and back-street burn-outs. Your tape acted as a catalyst for me to dig through the cupboards at my dad's and find my old tapes to listen to in the car.

A lot of people are obviously nostalgic about listening to music on vinyl, but I don't really know anyone anymore who listens to tapes. You obviously love tape. Your label is called Stink Magnetic, and you are also, at times, associated with your brother Tape Man. Why tape? Does it ever worry you that people might not actually have the technology to listen to your stuff? And, did you design that Pro Drag tape cover?

From: “Dylan Herkes” <[redacted]@[redacted].com>
 To: “Luke Wood” <[redacted]@[redacted].com>
 Subject: RE: In the beginning...
 Date: 15 December 2005 2:21:52 PM

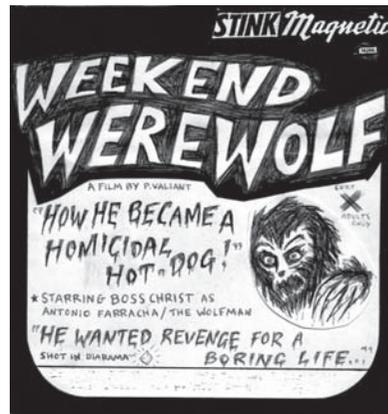
That tour was crazy... it was Pro Drag and Cortina and all our stuff in one Bedford van owned by this Australian band called The Stabs, who left it with Bek after their tour here. The night we played at the Wunderbar the taps in the front bar stopped working and we had to let people into the back bar, where we were playin, so that they could just get a beer but we got a lot more party coverage as a consequence. I thought you were talkin about Moody's amp at soundcheck and I was really surprised when you pointed to my blue Jansen — there aren't many people around who care to talk about old New Zealand made equipment so it was really great to see another enthusiast. For me, it's like playing something that was designed for the New Zealand scene — it's got everything that a good old amp should have; valves, alnico speakers, spring reverb... so heavy that you almost break yourself just carrying the bloody thing... now there's the spirit of Rock'n'Roll in effect before you've even struck a chord!!! By the way, those stairs at the Wunderbar could kill a man.

That Pro Drag tape was the first album we did at home by ourselves. We had made four track stuff before, like our Geraldine 7" *Heavy Duty*, but this was the first time we had made a whole album the way WE wanted. It was recorded at our drummer Willie's house in Masterton, Wairarapa, on his portable 8 track reel-to-reel studio that he named 'Keepin' it Reel' studios.



This page: Weekend Werewolf advertisement. 122 x 135mm. 2003

That page: Shera: Girlfriend of the Wolf advertisement. A3 black and white digital print. 2005



and get lost in there and suddenly feel everything that's going on and believe it for a second, it's the beauty of cinema. Yes, the elements that attracted me to the magazines I found dealt with science and lifestyles of your average dad back in the days when science fiction and science fact overlapped. The articles, images, fonts etc all inferred a feeling that we could live in a futuristic paradise where anything was possible and amazing things were a reality. There's a blurry line between science fact and science fiction. There's still a feeling now but it doesn't seem as pronounced. 'Ghost of the Woodville Straights' is a story I heard from a family member who actually saw it. Many people in the Taranaki region have seen it and there are a lot of stories about it—especially of rear-view mirror sightings. I once heard one story in particular where a group of three people were hitchhiking on the Straight when a motorcyclist rode toward them. It was a pitch-black night and the headlight shone down toward them. Just as it came near to them it vanished. There are lyrics I wrote to that song but decided that it was stronger without them. 'Mummies Tomb' is what we called this strange little song that emerged one day. A dark rolling verse with an angular chorus. It was a particular feeling that was gently formed by listening to what you imagine the song must do and remaining true to those little clues that you are given. It's following a feeling that reveals itself. I use this technique of writing as much as I can. 'Wolfman' is one of my favorite songs by The Side Effects. It was written right at the end of our term just before we toured and recorded. Werewolves are one of my personal favourite legends, and at the time I was getting right into them and had begun working on my first werewolf film *Weekend Werewolf*. I think werewolves are really fun people. It's unfortunate that people get hurt but there's usually a reason why they do. A smart person who was confronted by a lycanthrope would offer the beast enough beer and food to make him go to sleep and then drive him back out to the woods. They are great party animals. One of the guitarists in the Side Effects was a werewolf and he's one of my best friends.

One of my favourite shows on TV used to be this sitcom where this kid knew a family of vampires living down the road in a cemetery and every now and then the little boy vampire would come around and they would hang out. That was a great show. Really atmospheric. I had a big thing for vampires as a kid. I used to buy fake blood and "kill" myself a lot. I'm not scared of the dark but I'm terrified of heights!

From: "Luke Wood" <[redacted]>

To: "Dylan Herkes" <[redacted]>

Subject: Wolf Night

Date: Mon, 23 Jan 2006 15:43:33 +1300

Ok so that reminds me, the first time saw you on stage actually wasn't even in a band. It was at a fringe film festival thing in Wellington about five years ago now, and you got up to present your movie *Weekend Werewolf*. You were recently "officially recognised" by the NZ Film Archive for having made this. New Zealand's first werewolf movie! They held a reception for you that you called 'Wolf Night'. Did you ever expect that kind of attention? Was it a good party?

From: "Dylan Herkes" <[redacted]>

To: "Luke Wood" <[redacted]>

Subject: RE: Wolf Night

Date: 24 January 2006 10:15:42 AM

I didn't expect the amount of attention I got from that film at all! Just before the showing I went to pick my girlfriend Caroline up and when I got back the place was full with people! I sort of imagined several of my friends coming along and that would be it, but the house became full capacity and a lot of people who came to see the films weren't allowed in. Willie McKay, the guy who plays the werewolf, and whom the night is essentially celebrating, along with Bek Coogan, who plays Shera the she-wolf in the sequel, couldn't get into the event! I had to bust them in past staff through a fire exit so they could receive the award and make a speech and stuff! It was crazy! I had been editing a scene for another werewolf film called *Robot Wolf* all day, and also had an interview for television, so I was in a real

STARRING BEK COOGAN - WILLIE MCKAY - VLADIMYR LYMAREV - MARDY PUNE - HARRY HOMAN - ALICA PERRY - FELICITY PERRY - DONNA VALENS - AMY BROOKING - TIM HANDSCOMB - SARAH WOODHOUSE - LIAM BOURKE - NIGEL PATTERSON - LOUISE VAN KULK WRITTEN BY D HERKES EDITED BY D STRUCTO AND ALANA HAWK BOOM BY MOOSE SOUNDTRACK BY THE CHANDELIERES - DIRECTED BY SEGUE LUGOSI -

SHERA
GIRLFRIEND OF THE WOLF!

HALF-WOLF!
HALF-VIXEN!
- ALL WOMAN!!



This page: Pro Drag / High Plains Drifters / Bloody Souls poster. A3 (original artwork A5) black and white photocopy. 2003

That page: Voodoo Savage and his Savages / Tape Man poster. A3 (original artwork A5) black and white photocopy. 2003



spaced out frame of mind. It was quite an overwhelming day but it was a real honour to receive that recognition. It was really significant for me.

From: "Luke Wood" <[redacted]>

To: "Dylan Herkes" <[redacted]>

Subject: Possessed!

Date: Tue, 24 Jan 2006 13:24:07 +1300

Your thing with werewolves reminds me that I was quite shocked when you eventually hit the stage at the Wunderbar that night. I'd talked to you a couple of times and you were fairly quiet and reserved, but when Pro Drag finally went on you were transformed. It was like all of a sudden you'd been possessed. You seemed to get taller, you were screaming, and using the lights above the stage as a guitar slide. The 3D glasses certainly did seem to be hiding the fact that your eyes had rolled into the back of your head... because someone/something else had taken control of your body.

I've since realized you often taken on characters by way of a name change and/or disguise; Segue Lugosi [The Chandaliers], Night Fever [The Side Effects], Royal Wolf [Voodoo Savage and His Savages], Phats Punishment Distributor [Pro Drag], and of course you're associated with your brother Tape Man. You talk about how film "sweeps you away"—the suspension of disbelief—and I guess I'm wondering if inhabiting an invented persona frees you up to do things, and behave in ways you might otherwise not?

From: "Dylan Herkes" <[redacted]>

To: "Luke Wood" <[redacted]>

Subject: RE: Possessed!

Date: 24 January 2006 10:37:21 PM

I think it's difficult to say if personalities are invented or not. Identity, to me, is a really complex, changing concept. How do you identify who you really are? Are we just victims of circumstance? A name says a lot. It means a lot. It's a starting point. When your name changes you feel different in some ways and you question things. It can mess with your senses.

It makes you feel less secure about what you thought was previously true. You get a better perspective because you step outside and see from a different angle. It helps you to understand more about what's going on in there and you discover stuff that you never knew existed. Yep, I think it's useful to have an understanding that's beyond what you already consider to be your personality. Oh yeah, other names I've had: Juan Metrez, Ferron, Juan Palmer, Long Valiant, Fingron, Phats Valiant, Regal Valentino, Bongo, Donna Valens, D.Thomas Herkes, Magnetron, Ray Gunn.

I enjoy participating in that area of belief where things aren't absolutely clear yet. There's a great power in interpretation. You can believe it and then it becomes real.

From: "Luke Wood" <[redacted]>

To: "Dylan Herkes" <[redacted]>

Subject: Big cars and burn-outs?

Date: Tue, 24 Jan 2006 15:13:05 +1300

Big cars—V8s, hot rods, American muscle cars—are common images in your work, especially your posters. I can't help but imagine you as a black-jeaned teenager doing burn-outs and terrorising the streets of Pahiataua in a big old Holden or Ford? Has growing up in small-town NZ—being miles away from 'the action'—anything to do with your love of big cars?

From: "Dylan Herkes" <[redacted]>

To: "Luke Wood" <[redacted]>

Subject: RE: Big cars and burn-outs?

Date: 25 January 2006 11:21:28 AM

I was 15 when I learnt to drive. My uncle Peter taught me in an orange mini. Not a very glamorous vehicle but something to learn in none the less. If only it had been a black Charger with red and silver flames, then I think I would have learned a whole lot of other useful stuff too! I like old cars, especially from the 1950's/60's/70's. They look like they are one step away from being space explorers. That floating feeling you get when you're in them, the weight, the bench seat, the rich coloured vinyl... it's a special experience.



I got to borrow a Regal Valiant from my uncle after my grandma died so I could get to the funeral. It was amazing. It was a long white station wagon with blue interior, a Hemisphere. When I drove it on the open road the weight would swell up and lock it to the road with acceleration which emphasised its power. It had a button for the electric window at the back of the car and an arm-rest for the drivers left arm. It felt more like a moving lounge than a car. I drove from Woodville, where my uncle lives, to Wanganui, Palmerston North, Wellington and Pahiataua. I got a lot of inspiration out of those few days driving that vehicle and I wished that my uncle would sell it to me. He refused because he knew that I couldn't afford it. But I was thankful just to have experienced the feeling that car could give you.

From: "Luke Wood" <[redacted]>

To: "Dylan Herkes" <[redacted]>

Subject: Home-made

Date: Wed, 25 Jan 2006 14:33:36 +1300

Hey I bought a Billy Childish record today. I got it mainly because you told me that The Chandeliers played a support gig for him in Auckland just before xmas, and I hadn't really ever listened to much of his stuff. Anyway in the liner notes he says "I believe in home made music, home made art...", and of course I thought of you. Home-made music, home-made posters, home-made movies... I thought this would be a good note to end this on because it kind of sums up what I like about your work. It's 'DIY'. Your brother, Tape Man, literally does it ALL himself. But it's not DIY in the naive sense. It might sound or look that way, but it's all very considered. Your decision-making is informed and intelligent. You mentioned something recently about going to art school and I have to admit I was kind of surprised. Billy Childish wasn't initially accepted into art school, and then when he was he dropped out. Why art school? Why now?

From: "Dylan Herkes" <[redacted]>

To: "Luke Wood" <[redacted]>

Subject: RE: Home-made

Date: 30 January 2006 12:20:35 PM

Nah, I went to an interview there and thought "Fuck that". I was just kinda desperate for sometin to do if Caroline ended up leaving town. But she's not and I'm not bothered about that idea anymore!

Billy Childish is the shit! He is so great at playing honestly and with a raw, straight-from-the-soul style of playing. I got to speak with him and it was a real thrill for me. He likes a lot of the same music as I do. He thinks Link Wray is one of the worlds' best guitarists.

One of my favourite bands, The Mummies, were really into Billy's old band The Mighty Ceasers, so it was really exciting and kinda surreal to be talking to him about these bands that I have admired for so long. He told me stories about these people that are legendary to me and made it real. He is a scary man in a lot of ways. Very intense, with a depth of thinking and way of expressing like a true artist. I'm a big fan of his music. There is definitely a mode of thought there that he uses. His home-made aesthetic really does give a lot of character to his art and it's one of the aspects I enjoy about it. It sort-of voluntarily leaves gaps for the mediums and extraneous influences to get involved. It says a lot about time and placement, company and honesty, and it helps to reveal more of the essence of the artist in his natural setting. It's not riddled with contrived bullshit—it's plain and simple and uniquely himself, which re-enforces his ideas. It's bold and honest and it links up with the idea that any-one could make this stuff, but then it sets him aside as unique.