

WAVZINE: Independent, localized cultural journalism in the digital age

A Senior Project

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

wavzine (also called *.WAV* or colloquially known as “The Zine”) is a music, arts, and culture multimedia website and print periodical founded by Cal Poly students in the summer of 2020. Two years on, it was comprised of roughly 45 regular staff members and even more occasional contributors, all of whom are volunteers. Along with independently publishing articles, videos, podcasts, and art online, *wavzine* also organizes and hosts concerts for local bands, collaborates with local cultural events such as Shabang Music Festival and the San Luis Obispo Film Festival, and sells its own branded merchandise. To its 2,700 Instagram followers, *.WAV* is a finger on the pulse of everything interesting happening in and around San Luis Obispo. Since its founding almost two years ago, *.WAV* is showing no signs of slowing down.

Without taking too much credit, I should mention here that *wavzine* was my idea. I didn’t build it alone, in fact I’d hesitate to assert that I was even all that important in the grand scheme of things. I acted as *.WAV*’s inaugural editor-in-chief from June 2020 to July 2021. It was my responsibility to oversee all the content that *.WAV* produced and to supervise the managers of each different department: those being the editorial content, video, and podcast teams. Occasionally, when there was a lack of content to publish, I’d write my own material. Truthfully, I don’t care for managerial work, I’m mediocre as an editor, and I loathe positions of leadership. But for the purposes of a student-run culture rag, one in which excesses of authority and egoism would be frowned upon and counterproductive, I was probably pretty good at my job.

When we created *.WAV*, we operated on a completely volunteer-based model. Our reasoning was simple— *wavzine* would be a platform for people to publish material to add to their respective portfolios, so people would contribute quality content that is reflective of their career

ambitions. Since its founding, there have already been alumni from the zine who've secured careers in the recording industry, in graphic design, in film & video, and much more.

.WAV was a proof of concept. The concept being that a high quality, grassroots multimedia organization *is* valid in an era where corporate digital media dominates. That such an organization can not only effectively cover the community it exists in, but also support it.

Statement of Problem

.WAV came into being because there was a perceived need for alternative cultural journalism dedicated to the greater San Luis Obispo area. "Cultural journalism" here being a catch-all term for anything pertaining to music, fashion, or art at large. Before *.wav*, the main fixtures of cultural journalism for the 18-25 year old demographic in San Luis Obispo could be found through Mustang Media Group's KCPR (Cal Poly Radio) and the *Mustang News Arts* section.

At the time of *.WAV*'s creation— The Cal Poly Journalism Department had just dismissed the student DJs at KCPR, inviting them to reapply but not guaranteeing them any seats; all this while also committing to turning KCPR into a more straightforward news radio laboratory for Cal Poly Journalism students. This decision was spurred by a number of reasons, many having to do with limited resources and changing philosophy regarding the role of Cal Poly radio and its space within Mustang Media Group (MMG).

KCPR— up until that point— had been a sort of bastion for creativity, exploration, and cultural expression at Cal Poly. Yes— its critics sometimes labeled it unwieldy, messy, pretentious, silly, even a liability. But it was also a platform for young creatives with no other space to develop themselves and build their portfolios. A number of KCPR alumni have gone on

to have careers in the recording industry, in music journalism— against all odds and expectations turning into respectable members of society.

It was in response to this perceived (whether real or not) vacuum of a creative arts outlet and the desire for space for young, aspirational creatives that *.WAV* was born. As one of the chief founders and the inaugural editor-in-chief of *wavzine*, the goal was to create a multimedia journal with its sights set on the sounds of the San Luis Obispo underground. Running with the DIY ethos of late 20th century fanzines, we updated the format to the 21st century, making it a point to do everything we could to not only cover our scene, but to support it.

The following is a letter from the editor I wrote for the second edition of .wav's digital & printed zine. It has been edited and excerpted for clarity, relevance, and to contain less obscenity.

“Let’s be real here. San Luis Obispo isn’t San Francisco, it’s not Los Angeles either, it’s not even Santa Cruz probably. But dammit, this place is special. And I don’t care how many frat bro line dancing elon musk *mouthbreathers* pollute this God given land where you can smell the manure from Madonna Inn to Morro Rock. Everyone who works at this zine believes in the humanity, the music, the blink-and-you’ll-miss-’em oddities to be found in our little community. That this place isn’t some playground for Los Angeles businessmen with deep pockets, for stimulant gooned tech yuppies looking for a profitable slice of the “Happiest City in America” (blegh). That this town has a soul, and this soul must be saved and protected and preserved and cherished *precisely because* it’s not Los Angeles or San Francisco or Goddamned Santa Cruz. But because it’s San Luis Obispo. That’s all.

Finally, I'd just like to voice how sad I am to be leaving. I'd like to stick around forever, but the last thing this zine needs is an aging hipster hysterically clinging to his youth and relevance.

Back in the day, way before my time, they used to distribute these little pamphlets called zines. Made by fans, made for fans, for people who gave a hoot about their scenes. Even though the format's different, we hope that the sentiment is the same.

Jake Davis

Editor-in-chief"

Background of the problem

The zine was founded in the summer of 2020— a few months into the coronavirus pandemic, a time of widespread isolation, nihilism, and social disintegration. Not only was *.WAV* founded completely remotely, it came into existence during a time when live, local music was rendered unviable. For the purposes of *wavzine*, a publication dedicated to the coverage of the local underground, this situation proved to be challenging. After all, how could one rationally expect to be able to provide coverage of a culture that seemed to be on the verge of collapse?

As stated earlier, *.WAV* is completely staffed by volunteers. For a creative outlet run by students, this isn't necessarily a bad model. However, without the incentive of payment for many of the contributors, without the face-to-face interaction that volunteer organizations often rely on to build community and a sense of purpose, *.WAV* faced a major productivity issue.

That said, working remotely conferred certain advantages. For starters, it immediately eliminated the need to establish an office space or “work out of the garage”. As far as digital

multimedia goes, the keyword is “digital”– so long as our people had computers and an Internet connection, we had a means to publish material– be it an article, a podcast, a video, a social media post– whenever, wherever.

The focus on local, underground journalism was borne from an urge to stand out from the generic cultural discourse churned out by global digital media. The logic being the more specific and niche our coverage, the stronger the overall aesthetic. These days, anyone with a passing interest in music can be exposed to any number of bands from around the world; a favorable review in *Pitchfork* can expose an underground Brooklyn rapper to a global audience. This is not a bad thing, not for consumers and not for artists. But an unintended side effect of digital globalization has been the diminishing role of unique DIY (“Do-it-Yourself”) “scenes” across the world. During the alternative/ independent music explosion of the 1980s and 1990s, different cities were host to a slew of underground bands, all interacting with each other, influencing each other, putting on shows with each other, and incrementally crafting a “sound” that matched their locale. From the burnt out & bitter grunge of Seattle to the ecstatic club rapture of the U.K. rave circuit; the in-your-face napalm hardcore punk of Los Angeles to the dirty, nightmarish pigf*ck music of New York City. Bands and their scenes were just as much of a geographical fixture as any historical landmark, any cloud capped mountain, any passed out bum on the street. Further discussion of this aspect of music history can be found in any piece of underground journalism dated before the dawn of the modern Internet; for the purposes of this paper the phenomenon will largely be analyzed in Chapter 2 through the lens of two writers in particular, Mark Fisher and Simon Reynolds.

There’s a common criticism leveled at contemporary music, that everything sounds like everything, that our culture is stiflingly monotonous and dull. While none of these assertions are

provable or empirical, this was the view we adopted when creating *WAV*, and this was the ethos behind everything we did after the fact. As simply as possible, on as manageable a scale as possible, we wanted to help create local culture while also curating it.

Research questions

- How can we analyze the structure of the modern digital media landscape?
- Once analyzing said structure, can a local, independent cultural journal be viable in the globalized digital marketplace?
- If culture is something specific to a place and time, can culture exist online— a space devoid of both?
- Has *wavzine* successfully and faithfully executed its goals of: serving as a cultural circuit for the youth of the San Luis Obispo area; establishing itself as a unique voice in a vast network of competitors; be objectively, categorically “cool”?

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

When *wavzine* was created and during my tenure as editor-in-chief, I was enamored with the ideas of Mark Fisher and Simon Reynolds. They both discuss the following to differing extents: pop culture as a means of imagining our future; the collapse of the underground in the Web2.0 era; French philosopher Jacques Derrida's "hauntology" and its manifestation as a collective obsession with our past, stifling our ability to envision a different future. Fisher was a British cultural critic, philosopher, and academic whose writings stretching from the early 2000s up until his suicide in 2017 remain all-encompassing and prescient. Reynolds is a music journalist, best known for his coverage of the U.K.'s underground rave scene in the 1990s. To say that *WAV's* existence is completely informed in any theoretical grounding would be going a bit far. Not only were there other members of this organization, each with their own visions of what *wavzine* ought to be, but even my own visions were often inconsistent—prone to that spontaneous energy that comes with the territory of working on something new, exciting, and with friends. Yet even these inconsistent visions between us, these horrifying lapses in reason, ideology, motive—these were instrumental in crafting *WAV*, and I believe they're instrumental in any attempt to effectively create a cultural space; they are akin to synapses, gaps in a structure through which electricity can travel and a signal can be created.

In a 2007 essay titled "Running on Empty", Fisher posited the idea that our cultural resources were running out in the same way our natural resources were. That, with the explosion in cultural output that the West experienced in the latter half of the 20th century, we are now experiencing the fallout. The observation that culture goes through cycles of expansion and

contraction, boom and recession— none of this is novel. Any person with a passing familiarity in 20th century American history can confidently assert with too little coherence that “the 1960s were like a party, and the 1970s were like a hangover. Or maybe the hangover began with Reagan, and yes, Watergate was quite the prairie oyster, but nothing was as sobering as the JFK assassination which... well that actually happened before the party began...” and so on. Here, Fisher cuts through vague allusions to political, social, even economic happenings and places this phenomenon of “the stalling, stagnation and retardation of culture” squarely on the decalibration of technological progress from cultural form. By this, he means that the technologies we use to produce media cease to be palpable in the media they produce. Gone, Fisher argues, are the days when one could easily discern the year a movie was made from the look of the film’s grain, for instance. As technology has progressed, it has made itself more obscure. The fidelity is higher, the grain is nowhere to be seen— and in the age of digital uniformity, the quirks of the analog grow increasingly sparse. Nowhere is this textureless, high fidelity quality more evident than in the great vehicle for culture and communication of our time— the modern Internet. And it’s not just for *our* time, that’s the thing, it’s for *all* time. Any piece of media, from any time period, from anywhere in the world, all easily and comfortably available to the consumer whenever he or she desires. Time and space themselves— the very foundations of our conception of the real, of art, culture, the human experience— are suspended and rendered a moot point. Or as Fisher puts it “first as Tragedy, then as Youtube”. To hear Fisher tell it, the triumph of Web 2.0 did not simply occur with its replacement of older technology, this would be business as usual, new technology constantly replaces the old; the fundamental shift was ushered in with the total obsolescence of any other form of media other than the digital through this old media’s total assimilation. This is hauntology.

Simon Reynolds comments on this phenomenon in *Retromania: Pop Culture's Obsession With its own Past*. That music has ceased to evolve at the clip it once did during the 20th century is a given; that music itself has ceased to be the main cultural touchstone informing the zeitgeist of the time is what's worth looking at. The music itself has been usurped in this regard by the digital networks that consumers access it through. If the Beatles and the Rolling Stones dominated the 1960s, it is the streaming entities such as Spotify and Apple Music that have come to replace them in the 2020s. The forward facing future rush of the old world has been supplanted by the instantaneous, frictionless rush of networks interfacing with networks.

.*WAV* is a primarily digital entity. Anyone with an Internet connection can access every article, interview, video, podcast, even printed physical zine published on *wavzine.com* and its manifold social media outlets. However, *wavzine* is also a printed periodical, with issues distributed at a number of San Luis Obispo businesses. *wavzine* hosts concerts with local bands, nights in physical space filled with people and music. Yes, .*WAV* publishes video performances and interviews with a number of local bands, artists, fashion designers, etc. through the "spotlight" series (in which the website spends a significant amount of time and resources comprehensively interviewing and showcasing a local artist's oeuvre). This could be seen as an act of archiving, of transposing the organic culture of San Luis Obispo onto the vast, frictionless, eternal Internet. But there's no going back, no pulling the plug on the digital networks that we all inhabit now. The best *wavzine* can do as a small publication reporting on independent artists from a farm town on the central coast of California is to document, preserve, and share that which can be shared on the Internet; to propagate and promote all the "real life" live events, grassroots gatherings, and geographical cultural idiosyncrasies that can't be. The fundamental

effort is to reassert temporality and geography into the larger cultural landscape, one which has been rendered completely bereft of both qualities.

CHAPTER 3

Preface to Methodology

This chapter will differ from a standard methodology section. Taking inspiration from Quinn Fish’s 2020 research project concerning the Mustang News special edition of the same name, “A Year After Blackface, Where Are We Now? A Campus Climate Special Edition”, I found it prudent to describe my role in the creation and early administration of *.WAV*, in detail, similarly to how Fish described the process of publishing the special edition firsthand. I will be including contributions I made in the form of articles I have written, edited, or otherwise significantly contributed to. Since *.WAV* is a multimedia organization, and many of my contributions were not only in print, I will provide brief synopses of audio and video content that I meaningfully contributed to. Obviously, if I wanted to include every piece of media I had a direct or indirect role in the creation of during my tenure, I could just as easily link an archived instance of www.wavzine.com dated to July 31st, 2021. This, I will not do. “Methodology” here will be taken quite literally– I will showcase my methods in contributing to and helping to create *wavzine*. More objective, cogent analysis of data can be found in Chapter 4.

Methodology I

As mentioned earlier, *wavzine* was my idea. Truthfully, I was heartbroken by the unfolding of events at KCPR, and during the firing I immediately started pitching the idea of creating a separate, independent organization to my fellow former DJs. Many were interested, but I got the sense that it was a demoralized interest, assent to a seemingly futile effort that wouldn’t materialize into anything of substance. On some level, I think I believed that’s what it was too. Talking was easy, venting frustration to my peers, promising something fair and new and better a cathartic indulgence; but what if that’s all it was? A loud protest followed by a

mumbled resignation, the preferred pastime of young Americans. I went to bed that night frustrated, exhausted, and strangely relieved. The post-graduate malaise had gotten a head start on me, and I consoled myself with the reassurance that I could finally really start phoning it in. Thank God, the situation was hopeless.

The next day, I received a text message from John Lindberg and Cassidy Wurtz. They were new at the station, among that contingent of rookie DJs that had been fired just as soon as they were hired; the ones who had a lot to prove and frighteningly little to be cynical about. They'd loved my idea and didn't know me well enough to know that I was bluffing. Right then something strange happened— that rookie enthusiasm started to rub off on me.

These two would each go on to be general managers of *wavzine*. Cassidy Wurtz being the first to serve along with Natalie Becker (the lock in candidate to be KCPR's next GM)— John Lindberg succeeding them along with Renee Kao. After some deliberation and planning, we got to work. I'd be the editor-in-chief, tasked with oversight of all the creative departments excluding graphic design— a field I had no experience or talent with. My chief duty at this time was rallying the troops, contacting every disaffected, dejected DJ who had been fired and recruiting them for *wavzine*. Some KCPR veterans ended up joining— but it was mostly those damned enthusiastic rookies that filled out the ranks.

During the remainder of the school year and the beginning of the summer, we got to work on the website and its content at launch. I hired managers for each creative department and got to work establishing the skeleton crews of different teams: an editorial content section, a playlisting section, a podcast section, and a video section. During this time period, my philosophy was to publish as much as humanly possible— yes, a lot of plates would be spinning and many would crash; of all the projects I was involved with over the course of my tenure, I'd say only 20% of

them materialized into anything tangible. So very quickly, I had to get used to things not working out, being frustrating, slow, and disappointing and moving on to the next thing. This was fine by me, the way I saw it, there was no other way to figure out what worked and what didn't work. When something is new and unformed, it's important to keep things on the move, to get as much accomplished as humanly possible, even if it's messy. In this way, it goes from something not so new and partially formed, and even if it's not perfect, it's something. This also meant publishing content that would generate interest; album of the year lists, weekly music roundups— stuff that was easy to produce, not totally specific to San Luis Obispo's art scene, but would nonetheless help *wavzine* grow a following.

It was important to me that *wavzine* be inseparable from San Luis Obispo's DIY scene. In my early days at KCPR, my seniors regaled me with stories of the station's heavy involvement with the community before the middle of the 2010s. Non-student DJs, station hosted shows in town, the freedom to speak the authentic, unclean, truth; it was this wild alien past that I wanted for *wavzine*'s future. Given that this was the era of COVID lockdowns and social distancing, these blueprints would have to be tabled for the immediate future. As I write these words, that stage of the pandemic seems to have ended, and that hazy future I once envisioned seems to have become a reality. *wavzine* regularly puts on house shows with local bands that see attendance number in the hundreds.

This early period was fruitful for me. It involved a lot of encouraging people, of getting things moving and started— this I'm very good at. Getting things started is one thing, staying consistent— especially during a time of isolation, of those lockdown blues that knocked the wind out of so many of us— that's another thing. I moved out of San Luis Obispo a couple weeks before the website launched, never to return. Even during a time period where things were

completely manageable while working remotely, living at home far away from my friends and colleagues in San Luis Obispo was difficult— especially when the project in question is so concerned with locality. Every time I’d drive back up to San Luis Obispo to visit or to attend a .*WAV* event that warranted the three hour drive, I’d feel pride in this thing I had a hand in creating, but a sort of sadness too. It might sound silly to say, but it felt like I was an old man close to the end, looking at a family that I’d soon be leaving. One that didn’t even really need me anymore.

I spent more time living at home, contributing what I could, editing and consulting and conducting Zoom meetings, so many Zoom meetings. Quickly and slowly— as time moved back then— a year had passed and I was nearly done with school. I was feeling long in the tooth at 23 years old, disconnected from the increasingly youthful makeup of *wavzine*’s staff. I hope .*WAV* stays that young, but even then I knew that I wouldn’t. So I quit. I handed the reins off to Delaney Faherty, a talented writer and editor, and I walked away.

To anyone curious as to how *wavzine* actually came together, or who would like to create something similar, I don’t know if I have a satisfying answer. Be in the right place at the right time, surrounded by enthusiastic people who are equally as passionate about whatever it is you want to cover as you are. I realize that’s probably not repeatable, but that’s the most important thing. Everything else is a bonus. As a baseline you should like people, since you’re going to be working with them, and it’s their work that counts— not yours. If you’re wrong, you’re wrong, move on and do the best thing for the piece. One time, I was on a trip with a girl I was in love with, also the editor of a publication at her university, and to impress her— or not even really to impress her, she wasn’t watching me work, I guess it was to convince myself that I was a “serious editor” and therefore her equal— I tore the piece I was editing to shreds. It was actually a

pretty well written article about, believe it or not, hauntology and Mark Fisher. A lot of my edits were needless, many of my suggestions were cruel; if I remember correctly, I called the entire piece derivative. I still lose sleep over this. Don't let your ego get in the way, you're already doing something a lot cooler than most people will ever get a chance to do. A few days later, I read the piece back, ashamed that I had so needlessly eviscerated such a decent article I called the writer and apologized for my arrogance. He didn't take any of it personally.

As I mentioned earlier, many of the projects I started failed to get off the ground. For instance, I wanted to create an online sketch show in the vein of KCPR's "Burnt TV"—a project I was involved with in my DJ days—called "static.wav". Didn't work out. A podcasting team was established, and a couple podcasts actually got published! But the team slowly fell apart: scheduling times to record became a real issue; editing the podcasts was laborious and slow-going; interest in the medium itself within *.WAV* evaporated after some time.

Still, I did manage to get some work done, though not as much as I would have liked. Oh well. Don't get the wrong idea, I'm extremely proud of everything *wavzine* has accomplished, and everything I had to do with it. What follows is some of that work. Not all of it, but a good spread.

Methodology II

This section contains some work that I directly contributed to during my tenure as editor-in-chief. In selecting this work, I decided to not include absolutely everything, but a representative sample.

The following is a spotlight story I wrote, edited, and published on February 22, 2021. The Spotlight series is an ongoing collection of feature stories that wavzine conducts for local bands, artists, fashion designers, and more. Generally, a spotlight will include a photoshoot, a profile piece, and accompanying video. I conducted the interview, wrote the article, and published it. What follows is written exactly as it was published.

UNCUT GEMS: AN INTERVIEW WITH PIEZAS UNICAS

It happened in the Cal Poly craft center during the last session of in-person classes, shortly before the end of the world.

Sophia Rivera and Julianna Quihuiz had been friends since their freshmen year when they had met working at the campus market. Julie trained Soph on the job, perhaps predicting a trend for the two of learning and working with each other. That said, one could imagine that more glamorous, interesting things were still to come. Certainly more than a campus dining gig.

Fast forward to New Years 2020. In their time at school, Soph and Julie had spent time studying for their degrees (Animal Science & Communications respectively) and bonding over their shared passions for fashion and sustainability, co-founding the sustainable fashion club on campus. As 2019 drew to a close, the two had resolved to be more artistic and decided to take a metalworking class together. Unbeknownst to either of them at the time, they were both standing at the precipice of discovering a previously unexplored creative passion. One that would become a craft, a skill, an art, and a business for the two friends: jewelry making.

During these retrospectively halcyon days of the Winter of 2020, the two of them quickly fell in love with the crafting process. Soph fondly recalls spending their free time, day after day in the craft center, constantly working on new pieces. It was exciting, an extension of everything the two of them loved about fashion, compounded with the added thrill of learning a new

craft—an artistic, practical one. They were both planning on taking more classes to pursue this passion.

And then the world ended. This, however, wasn't enough to stop either of them.

“COVID hit, and we were living together,” Soph explains. “So we were just kind of sitting around and we were like ‘How do we keep at this jewelry thing without going to the craft center anymore?’” They go on, “I basically went to Home Depot and I found all the supplies that the craft center had, but about a fourth of the price. I just set up all my stuff in the garage.”

Julie had also taken an interest in the newfound possibilities of DIY jewelry making. “I was like, ‘You know what? New hobby, let's try this out.’ ... That's when we really kind of launched our decision to collaborate on a [web]page together.”

Though their beginnings were humble, they've steadily managed to gain a following online. Their Instagram, @artbysophxjulz is currently sitting at just under 1000 followers. This pursuit of jewelry making has launched them into a larger community of online homemade jewelry makers. In the wake of COVID, many people shopping around for jewelry want their wares delivered directly to their door, or contactless pickup; both services Piezas Únicas happily provides. Surprisingly, their business has been able to thrive, even during a pandemic.

That said, neither Soph nor Julie can wait for the pandemic to end. Soph posits that this can make a huge difference. “Despite our world being so interconnected during COVID, there are no in-person interactions ... If we're able to have in-person classes again and, say 100 people are walking around campus with our jewelry, how many people are going to complement each other and pass on the information for our page?”

Beyond the business end, Piezas Únicas is the collaboration of two artists who have a message. Perhaps more than any other form of art, fashion is a medium in which the expression

of the creator and the consumer are intimately intertwined. After talking with Soph & Julie, I walked away with the impression that these are people who not only care about the craftsmanship of the jewelry, but people who understand the value art can hold to those who cherish it. Julie explains, “I think for me, it’s the love I’m putting into the product when I’m doing it, and the fun I get to have. It’s also a lot of hard work!”

“When somebody is wearing my piece, I really hope that when they look at it and wear it, it’s not just something they picked up at Target. A slave to the system of capitalism. I hope you can trace it back and see that I pieced this together! With all my hard work and love!”

Soph nods, “Yeah, exactly. I personally find so much confidence in myself- in my clothing. I define myself by what I wear and what I put on and stuff like that... What I want people to get out of our stuff when they’re wearing it, it’s that same feeling .”

Julie chimes in here, smiling, “I think, Sophia, whenever you make something, you’re putting out a piece of you.”

The following is from wavzine's 2020 Albums of the Year List. My problem with year end lists by most publications is that they're all the same. The goal with this list was to have an all-encompassing survey of the albums put out that year, so instead of voting on some arbitrary number of critically acclaimed notable releases from that year, I thought it would be better if every staff member got to include an album that they particularly enjoyed. I wrote the header and the first review featured on the page. The total number of albums included here was 25, so for brevity's sake I'll just include the first three. This should provide an idea of the overall tone of the article. The list was edited and compiled with Delaney Faherty, .WAV's content editor. Also featured: a review by Natalie Becker, wavzine's general manager at the time.

.WAV'S FAVORITE ALBUMS OF 2020

You already know what the point of this article is. It's a year end list. You like these, don't you? God, I can almost see you. Drooling, eyes glazed over. Head empty, in a state of pure bliss. Like a newborn babe.

Anyway, here are some albums from last year that we here at .WAV thought were exceptional. Hopefully you agree. If you disagree, why don't you make a website and post your own list, huh big shot?

What's Tonight to Eternity?- Cindy Lee

If you were to be cast into the abyss, it's easy to imagine that the sensation of falling would subside after some time. Perhaps a feeling of weightlessness would replace it- something indistinguishable from flight? After all, in the dark of the bottomless pit, you wouldn't know up from down anyway. As the hours turn to days turn to months turn to years turn to eternity, a starving madness, an enlightenment might even take hold. What's Tonight to Eternity is a blind plunge into oblivion, an infinity of harsh noise and sweet, mournful guitar. The name itself

appears to be more than a simple question. Perhaps it's an acknowledgment of the finite nature of existence on earth, perhaps it's a desperate plea for one's soul. At times, such as on the epic track "Lucifer Stand", it's undeniably a prayer. On "Heavy Metal" it's a wistful remembrance of a long lost friend. There's a very deep feeling of longing communicated in the music here, a longing that's simultaneously overwhelming and nostalgic. The abstract, scratchy album artwork depicting an emotional embrace seems fitting.

For those familiar with Patrick Flegel's past work with Women and Androgynous Mind, and now as Cindy Lee, this album will instantly appear to be a continued refinement of an aesthetic years in development; and certainly this wouldn't be an incorrect judgement. However, I believe it's a crowning achievement, a personal, intimate opus.

Jake Davis

Jazz is Dead Series (specifically JID02) – Ali Shaheed Muhammad, Adrian Younge

Adrian Younge and Ali Shaheed Muhammad's Jazz is Dead may be the best thing since mayo's rebrand to *aioli*. Much like the condiment's reinvigoration, Jazz is Dead took 1970s jazz legends like Roy Ayers and Azymuth and repackaged their sound with fuzzy strings and weighty basslines to gift classic jazz with a tang of Younge's and Muhammad's production upon 2020. There is so much to appreciate here, everything from the vintage equipment used to create a true 1970s sound, to the fact that this was Roy Ayer's first studio album in 18 years, to the other fact that Ali Shaheed Muhammad was able to work with the musicians that inspired much of ATCQ's discography; so much that I am not going to pretend like I can do it justice. Please just listen and know that I loved this album in the same way that I love how mayo-haters are unknowingly consuming the thing they fear most in their \$18, multi-grain ciabatta, free-range chicken sandwiches and loving every bit of it.

Delaney Faherty

Melee – Dogleg

This album is the perfect throat punch to wake you up from a hangover that you deserve. It has such a strong opener with “Kawasaki Backflip” and keeps the energy throughout the whole project. Dogleg came out of relative obscurity and delivered an album that feels bright, physical, and thrilling. This album is if the Midwest Emo genre learned karate as a kid. It’s not all the time you hear a debut project this mature and refined. It’s punk, baby! What more could you possibly want?

Natalie Becker

SYNOPSIS OF: FITE CLUB PODCAST: JESUS IS KANYE

The podcast was recorded remotely with Kyle Himmelein (*wavzine*’s podcast director) and Mason Zeller as the two hosts. I was the guest, along with Colin Brunson. In this podcast, Colin & I debated the merits of Kanye West’s 2019 album *Jesus is King*. Brunson defended the album while I attacked it. It reached 100 views on YouTube on release.

SYNOPSIS OF: THE WAVZINE CHRISTMAS SPECIAL

A video I edited for *wavzine*’s instagram. Beginning with a stop motion animation created by Satchel Collins, an artist at *.WAV*, it also featured performances from bands Silk Ocean and The Bogeys, rap duo Jewish Uncle, and an anime music video that I put together personally– as both a tribute to deceased rapper MF DOOM and a celebration of Santa Claus in anime. The music was provided by Christian Brahos going by his moniker Double Dribble, remixing DOOM’s song “That’s That”. It got 48 likes.

OTHER DUTIES

Most of my day-to-day work (outside of editorial oversight) was looking at content about to be published by *wavzine*— article, video, audio or otherwise— occasionally offering a suggestion, and giving it my stamp of approval. Outside of that, a lot of it was meeting with individual team managers, discussing strategy, projects for the future, meetings, meetings, and more meetings.

CHAPTER 4

Data sources

To get a good idea of the current state of *wavzine*, my two chief interlocutors were Renee Kao & John Lindberg, the current co-general managers of *wavzine*. These two people were fundamental contributors during the creation of *.WAV*, with Kao initially serving as the creative director (overseeing the art, graphic design, and branding of *wavzine*), and Lindberg serving as the social media & marketing manager at the outset. There are other founding members who have since gone on to graduate, and many people on staff at the time of writing who are vital to *.WAV*'s success. However, I selected these two because between the two of them— they share an all-encompassing view of *.wav*'s past, present, and future.

All the other data was collected through publicly available information— reports released by Cal Poly's Institutional Research or public social media profiles.

Data analysis

It's difficult to empirically define the successes of *wavzine* for the purposes of this study. Followers, sales, people— these are numbers that can be tracked, but any sort of “success”, garnered by *wavzine* would be more abstract since, as described earlier in the paper, its goals are to curate local culture while simultaneously creating it. About as abstract as it gets. This isn't to say that there *aren't* hard data points worthy of analysis, in fact it would be quite easy to throw around some numbers. For instance the Instagram account, launched with its first post on July 31st 2020, has grown to 2,731 followers as of May 15, 2022. Even with the limited data analysis tools offered by Instagram, those numbers indicate impressive growth and community interest. KCPR, the closest entity that *wav* has to competition in terms of target audience and space in the market, currently sits at 4,331 followers. Certainly more than *wavzine*, but when considering that

the KCPR's Instagram account has been online since its first post on August 5, 2013— nearly a decade ago— the difference in rates of growth become strikingly apparent. That figure of 2,731 followers becomes even more impressive when considered in proportion to Cal Poly's student body, which was 22,022 students in the Fall of 2021 (Polyview, 2021). Of course, it's impossible to know how many of the followers *wavzine* has accrued over past one year, nine months, and two weeks are actively enrolled Cal Poly students, or are even local to the San Luis Obispo area; this hardly matters, and any attempt to solidly come to this conclusion would be hairsplitting. What does matter, for the purposes of this study, is that it can be extrapolated with some certainty that a cohort roughly 8% the size of Cal Poly's student body is keeping abreast of *wavzine*'s goings on; that of the 18-25 year old target demographic located in San Luis Obispo, close to one out of ten people in this demographic are actively aware of and are following *wavzine*. By all indications, this figure is growing quickly.

Social media is tricky— useful for eyeballing fame or notoriety, but useless when considering actual, on the ground enthusiasm. Hard work went into growing that number: collective social media pushes, strategic collaborations with local bands and businesses, “playing the game” of social media essentially. If the goals of *.WAV* ended at being big on social media, this would be sufficient; however, this was never the case. It's nothing to press a “follow” button, to passively consume algorithmically delivered content. *wavzine*'s online presence is a means to an end, that end being, as noted earlier in this study, to curate local culture while simultaneously creating it. To reintroduce time and space to a culture and time period where such things are becoming increasingly rare.

On April 2nd, 2022, *wavzine* hosted a concert in collaboration with social media startup “BeReal”. The house show featured local bands Couch Dog and Pure Love Gang. Like many

other concerts put on by *wavzine*, it quickly sold out to a crowd of 300 people. The proceeds from the show are split between the bands, the owners of the house (and whatever tickets they may incur due to noise complaints), and *wavzine*. *wavzine* puts these profits toward printing physical copies of the periodical zines, placing orders for merchandise to be screen printed, and putting on more events in the future.

For each issue of the zine, a total of 50 copies are printed, divided up and distributed to local businesses across San Luis Obispo, those currently being A Satellite of Love and Skippers Brew SLO. For posterity's sake, it should be noted that *wavzine* formerly had a business relationship to Kin Coffee Bar that was immediately terminated once sexual assault allegations against its owner, Julian Contreras, came to light. These businesses buy a number of the printed zines in bulk (15-25, usually) and sell them at their own prices. Consistently, the zines quickly sell out. It's a similar story for *wavzine* merchandise: pre-ordered in bulk, quickly sold out, with proceeds going directly back to *wavzine* to fund more projects.

House shows, printed zines, merchandise, as soon as they are available to the public—they sell out. The funds collected support *wavzine*, and they support small, locally owned businesses and bands. So far, this business model has proved sustainable and mutually beneficial for *wavzine* and its collaborators.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

If I was asked to offer my objective, dispassionate opinion on *wavzine* as an outsider, I'd tell the person asking to get lost. If he insisted, I'd reluctantly tell him that it would be impossible for me to offer up that opinion, seeing as how *wavzine* was something so near and dear to my heart. If he offered me a piece of paper telling me that I had successfully fulfilled the requirement to achieve a Bachelor's Degree in Journalism, I'd tell him this: By every metric that matters, I'd consider *wavzine* a success, and I think it has a bright future too.

WAV has a sustainable business model. It has the support of the community. It's growing in influence, scope, and reputation. It's small, but it has a distinct voice, and there is much too much of just the opposite in the media right now. That last point alone gives me enough reason to believe *wavzine* will be just fine.

I wouldn't be surprised if the problems that plagued me while I was working there still exist, in fact, I know they do. They're built into the model, without them *wavzine* as we know it would cease to exist. A certain *laissez-faire* attitude, the staff members not taking the enterprise very seriously, a lack of strict, disciplined work culture giving way to lapses in productivity— I'm sure these issues persist, and will continue to persist until the last article is unceremoniously published, quickly forgotten, and the website taken down after some amount of time has passed without the bills being paid. I hope that day is far in the future, or better yet— that it doesn't arrive at all. But if it does, I'd be satisfied. After all, *wavzine* is for a specific time and place, not for all time and certainly not for all places. I think the important point is that it happened, and it happened on our own terms, and for one shining moment we were in charge and the enterprise didn't implode immediately. If the issues that exist in *wavzine* contribute to its probable

ephemerality, I'd hesitate to call them issues in the first place. The alternative: that *wavzine* goes the way of *Pitchfork*, of *Vice*, of *Buzzfeed*, that it exists in perpetuity, that it's bought up by some media company to churn out think piece after think piece about increasingly meaningless, fake content promoted eon after eon, produced by an underpaid staff, cashing in at a cool \$30,000 a year to say nothing, do nothing of substance. Whether *wavzine* as it stands now *does* produce content of substance, that's probably a value judgment— but you can be sure that the people doing it believe in it. Why else would they be doing it for free?

Recommendations

A changing of the guard is coming. After this year, only a handful of former KCPR staff, the people I know personally, will remain. After the next, none. It remains to be seen whether the new crop of kids running the businesses will be up to the challenge or not. I have faith in them, you have to have faith in them. I'm sure they're good people. One of the main points of the project was to prove that young people could do it by themselves, on their own terms. I hope the guard continues to change, and that the *wavzine* of the future understands that this is an important thing. I'd tell any prospective member reading this in the future to enjoy it and be ready to let it go, to let the young take over. But also, to please work hard. Because it is hard work. I realize it looks like a big party from the outside, but that's the outside. *wavzine* happened because people worked hard, because they decided to give time and energy to something that doesn't pay, that isn't even that fun most of the time, just so it could exist. That time and energy is built in to *wavzine*, it will stay alive if you can keep it.

To anyone looking to do anything similar to *wavzine* that is not *wavzine*: make sure you are tangibly, physically there. A lot can be done by working remotely, but not everything can be— and it will often be the case that the stuff that can't be done remotely will also be the most

important, rewarding work. Especially if your periodical is dedicated to a specific time and place, it's absolutely vital that you be there. My not being there is my chief regret, all other regret stems from this circumstance.

Taking the long view, this regret is nothing.

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