

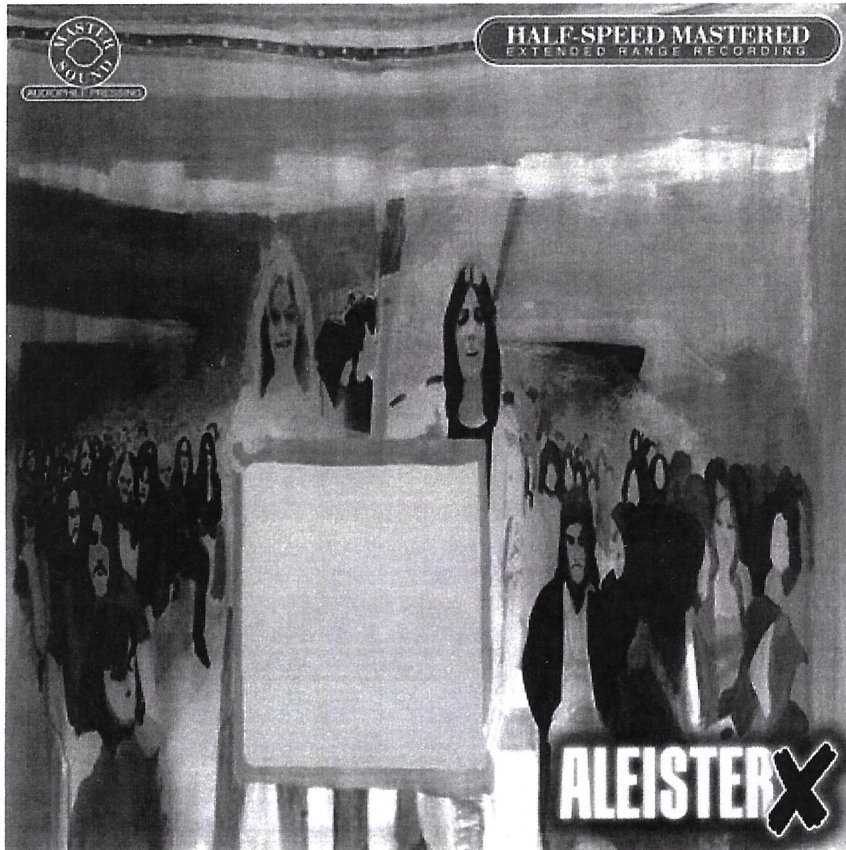
THE (BEYOND) GENIUS OF ALEISTER X

2013 was the year that Aleister X wormed his way into the SALT inner sanctum. His album “Half-Speed Mastered”, a co-release by the illustrious Nod and Smile Records (profiled elsewhere in this issue) and Andrew WK’s Steev Mike label was the outstanding album of the year; a devastating blast of twisted hip hop beats and limitless lyrical conundrums, all drenched in acid-fuelled guitar heroics and a free-for-all attitude to production continuity. Here finally is someone unafraid to take rock’s fetid history, tear at it’s worn out clichés and build an altogether more frightening Frankenstein’s monster from the remnants.

Aleister X is the rock jester of 21st century, a playful/incarnation of carnal excess and sonic pleasure dressed in counterfeit Lakers gear: the darkest laugh, the bitterest pill, the fatal overdose. His latest EP “Rockaway Beach” is another smash, a vicious tangle of porn star glory and Van Halen samples. It is my great privilege to feature this extensive interview with Aleister X in this issue.

Who or what IS Aleister X?

Aleister X is a dreamer living a dream, in a piecemeal fashion, One dream at a time; a true entertainer. A capturer of imaginations, including his own, and mine. A figment of imaginations. A terribly true and living persona. A shockingly true artist in a false designer age.



To me, "Half-Speed Mastered" hit home in an out of nowhere fashion, unlike anything I've heard before.
What environment and/or pressures allow you to create your music?

My ultimate environment is a place called "Nowhere." It's where I do all my work, driven by Nothing, to end up Forever. It's a philosophic singularity popularized by shamans, shucksters, and shills since the beginning of thought.

What is the significance of the Lakers jersey you're wearing in the "LAX" video?

Funny you should ask. The "Lakers" jersey was an attempt to blend in with the whole "LA" vibe of the album. There's this wonderful area in the Downtown LA Fashion District called, "Santee Alley," where it's loads of stalls selling cool cheap crap, fashion knock-offs, luggage, makeup, lots of fun stuff. We were shopping down there for wardrobe and props, with all the tourists and super-stressed stylists, and immediately I spot the uniform. I had to have it, and at \$20, I did. I'm no basketball fan, so I had to ask whose number was on the jersey. "Kobe," she said in a thick Vietnamese accent I didn't catch at first. It took me a month to figure out it was actually a fake made to look like a "Showtime Era" Lakers uniform. The Lakers uniforms never had "Los Angeles" on them. It was a tourist knockoff. I guess the authorities cracked down on all the realistic fakes and bootlegs.

How important is the visual aspect of the Aleister X aesthetic? The videos that accompany your tracks are heavily saturated invasions, unforgettable spectacles of debauchery that are both inviting and repellent.

Wow, thank you for saying those things. Visuals are paramount to the Aleister X aesthetic. I work on incredibly small budgets, practically next to nothing, many times absolutely nothing. Thankfully, I've been blessed with many artistic skills and talents which I've worked hard my whole life to develop. I have extensive practice in creating very much out of absolutely nothing. Much like the artistic practice of great NYC artist/performer, Kembra Pfahler/Voluptuous Horror Of Karen Black, and her "Availablism" approach. I would love to have more funds, or any funds, to put into videos, stage show production, wardrobe, photo sessions, props, make-up, but I don't, and have always worked with nothing, so I can do it. A lot of people in this game can't, and don't have the depth of experience, talent, and skills, and are left to depend on means/wherewithal, and/or too many other people, so I'm grateful. The powers of my voice, musicianship, stage presence, and production skills lift the simplistic visuals I produce and create, be it video, photo, or styling, taking them to a higher level than seems possible. Some people call it magic, and so do I.

How inspirational a place is Los Angeles to live in day to day?

LA is one of the most inspirational places on Earth. No one can deny it. You don't even have to live there or ever go there; it has and will continue to influence you. Me, I choose to go there and sometimes live there. Eventually I will live there forever, and ever. LA makes you examine closely. You have to be like a skilled detective. It's best to invoke the personalities of your favorite LA-based TV/movie detectives while exploring this city of wonders, contrasts, and confusion. Knowing the history of The Industry will help you appreciate it even more. Required reading: "Hollywood Babylon I & II," "Six Degrees Of Paris Hilton," "Easy Riders Raging Bulls".



How did your association with Andrew WK begin, and what does his belief in your work mean to you?

Andrew was one of the first parties (pun intended) to show interest in my earliest recordings. My super-rare first EP, "Wicked Wicks," caught his ear, when a mutual friend played it for him in 2004 or 2005. He introduced himself to me at my first show in 2005, at The Weird Records party called, "Weird." He was one of 5 people to see my set. A little later that year, the great Matt Sweeney put a live band together around the "songs" on my first EP, and Andrew played bass (Paul Major of now darlingized, Endless Boogie, played guitar), for a one-off

show. After that Andrew worked on some remixes of other early tracks of mine, then later the label came about, and we just focused on new material. We've been working on stuff together ever since. Not just my songs, but also songs for his upcoming albums. I co-wrote a track off his latest Japan-only EP "Party All Goddamn Night." Andrew's belief in my work is everything to me. He's a genius and has great big balls; bigger than anyone in NYC or anywhere. He doesn't follow the pack, and neither do I.

What is your lyrical approach? I wrote that it came across as "attention deficit" but a track like "Topanga Strangla" is highly concentrated blast of sinister, drugged out observation.

I'm all about what is going on around me, and tweaking it. Sometimes I ask myself, "What do I want to happen?" Then sometimes I ask, "What is the most ridiculous thing that could happen?" I've been coming up with titles first, then the chorus or a pre-chorus hook, then the verses. I like to be inspired and indulgent. I like fantasies. I like blending/blurring fact and fiction to a point where what is real is unimportant.

Are you the observer or the participant?

Aleister X both is observer and participant, and I like to watch.

"Comedy City" is a remarkable litany of celebrity names and high profile figures in the film and TV industries. What does reeling off a roll call of such notorious people say about 21st century culture?

You see that's a good example of fact and fiction. Some of the names on that roll call are real, others just sound real. Aleister X is also a comedic personality, and a fine humorist. The love of comedy is very real, and the persona is steeped in appreciation of comics. I love comedy and am a huge fan of so many comics. I'm not sure what the track says about 21st century culture. All I know is its deliberately conscious of "The Business." The entire album is. "Comedy City," harkens back to the performance art background of Aleister X, and early spoken word tracks. Aleister X is an artist.

Is "Half-Speed Mastered" satire, indictment or prophecy?

Equal parts satire and indictment. The indictments rely on the power and safety of blind iteming, which also makes it more fun. Aleister X ain't no prophet.

As a skilled practitioner yourself, what place does guitar heroism have in contemporary music?

Not much of a place it seems. But in my contemporary Aleister X music it has an important place. A huge place. This place will be growing. Aleister X is a grower AND a shower.

What do you bring to the stage as a live performer?

Presence, timing, spontaneity, perfection, imperfection, heavy vibes, bad vibrations, even good vibes, intensity, physical comedy, wicked moves, and songs.

Your mention of Kembra Pfahler made me wonder if you're a fan of the Cinema of Transgression and/or the work of Matthew Barney?

I like that Nick Zedd exists, and he did and does his thing, but I'm not really a fan of the work. I mean its ok, but I'm more a Richard Kern guy. I like the refined qualities Kern lends to the sleaze. That's very important. As for Matthew Barney, it's all about the 'Cremaster Series'. I'm not even sure what his other work is like. 'The Cremaster Series' is one of the greatest art projects of our time.



As 'a terribly true and living persona', what are your thoughts on the return of David Bowie (his new album, exhibition, presence in contemporary culture)?

I took a listen to a couple songs off Bowie's new album and they seem good enough for a master of song and stage. I don't know about the exhibition, but he is, if nothing else, a great artist. His presence in contemporary culture is god father-like.

Are you a fan of the group Black Bananas? Your enthusiasm for and affinity with LA is mirrored in their spectacular album of 2012, "Rad Times Xpress IV". It was their album that came to mind when I first heard your work - in terms of their sensibility, not necessarily their sound.

Yeah, Black Bananas, I don't know. I'm a Royal Trux fan from way back in the day, and I think that comes through in some of my music. I thought RTX was pretty good, but I haven't listened to Black Bananas. I bet I would like them. Jennifer Herrema is such a unique and powerful vocalist, and a true maven of style and presence. It's obvious she spends, and has spent a vast amount of time rehearsing looks in front of mirrors her entire life. She's invented so many forward looks and hyper-conscious styles. I never met her, but everyone I know knows her. She seems like one gigantic vibe. She might be seven feet tall, I don't know. I'd like to pull some rad bongz with her out on some rad terrace by a rad pool in Laurel Canyon.

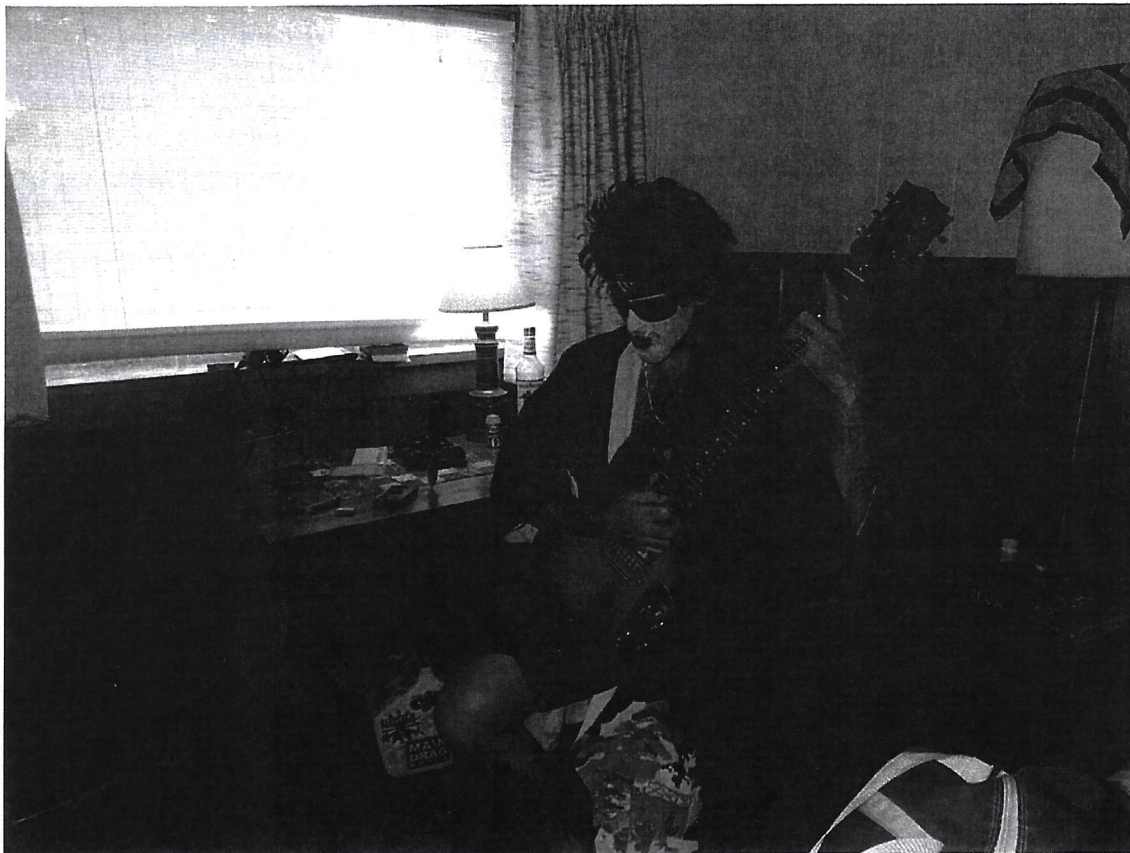
As a guitarist, who are your particular axe-wielding heroes?

In no particular order some of my favourites are:

Jimi Hendrix, Eddie Van Halen, Buckethead, Jerry Garcia, Dimebag Darryl, Eddie Hazel, JJ Cale, Jerry Reed, Billy Gibbons, Chet Atkins, Greg Howe, Vernon Reed, Bill Frisell, John Scofield, Buddy Guy, Randy Rhoads. I could go on forever because I like so many guitar players and all different styles. I just love guitar so much.

As "Half-Speed Mastered" has been released on both LP and CD, what are your thoughts on the issue of physical formats?

To me it's all about the packaging. I don't really care about music formats, but other people do so that's cool. Does vinyl sound better than CD? Does vinyl sound better than digital? I really don't know and don't care. As a producer, I do know that digital recording is way easier and faster than analogue; the editing capabilities are like magic and the sky's the limit.



Do you have any new works ready for release in 2014?

Oh man, I have at least one album worth of new material, and at least another of unreleased, older material, but no plans for releases. I'd like to do a single with Third Man Records. I've been visualizing on that. I think Jack

White would dig what I'm doing. It'd be cool to go there and record on analogue tape and eat Coney's in Detroit. Or is his shit Nashville? Do they have Coney's in Nashville? You think Jack White does steroids? I'll probably self-release some digital download-only thing before year's end as well. I'd do a limited edition vinyl

but I just don't have any money and REFUSE to audience source/finance ala Kickstarter. I'm all about my audience, I love my fans, I really do, but today "The Audience" has way too much power over the artist, thanks to the internet and talent voting shows. It's not enough to be grateful for and love your audience, now they have to be shareholders in your artistic process, and decision making. No thank you. I mean when did making an independent album become as expensive as a short film? Then there're these bands doing Kickstarters to raise tour money. WTF is that? This shit is way, way out of control. We need to go back to the days when only the most determined middling-to-shitty artists got their music out, and they almost had no hopes of ever touring.

There will be a Nod and Smile vinyl full-length in approximately May 2014 (exact vinyl format to be determined), with digital format through Sonny Midnite Music. "Wicked Wicks" EP (2000) was just digitally released in January on the Bandcamp page (I'll be self-releasing more music this year on Bandcamp/Soundcloud). Also, the Placenta Recording label has reached out to do a CD release for 2014 (date TBA).

As a regular user of Twitter and other social media, what do you see are the benefits and drawbacks of being able to communicate so directly with so many people around the world?

First of all Twitter is a depressing indicator of how uninteresting and religious most people are. Also 140 characters is too limiting. Facebook is like high school or college, and the dude (Zuckerberg) is a twisted social miscreant. That said, I use my socials more like the way comedians use them. Most musicians are just

promoting their shit, most rappers are tweeting unreadable text grunts, while comedians use the shit to write material, and new content. Since comedy/humor is a huge part of what I do, I do what the comedians do. I like

Facebook over Twitter. The people that follow my shit there are more likely actual fans, whereas Twitter followers are mostly hookers, spam bots, beat "producers," and people that Andrew WK, and Robert Florence of BBC Scotland's "Burnistoun," got to follow me. (Side bar: I worked on a bunch of comedy songs with those guys for their show a few years back). The only real drawback is haters, trolls, and just plain nutters stalkers (and I attract the most possible of these) have a direct path to fucking with me. Every once in a while I have to block a user, but generally I have a vast capacity for mixing it up on the socials. It's fun. They're great tools for creating content beyond the music and traditional "product."

When you talk about being determined to have your music heard, and the struggles that seem to have been eliminated from the music industry (working your way to "the top"), what obstacles are there left for anyone to overcome? Are barriers actually still necessary?

I believe artists still have to work their way to the top. The illusion of the opposite is stronger than ever before; that an artist can just hit the top out of nowhere. Even the Youtube/viral sensations work to be good enough to get millions of views. Being good takes work. Of course things like cuteness, youth, hotness, tits, ass, will always capture the simple imaginations of the crowd, and the internet helps to make that happen faster than television. The barriers now are other forms of entertainment and the endless information stream people are sorting through. Capturing peoples' attentions is harder and more competitive every day. Musicians are competing with fucking food, man! It's totally not necessary but it is what it is.

Are there any artists that you would most like to collaborate with if you were given the opportunity?

Scooter, Thirstin Howl III, Juicy J, Kool Keith, Courtney Love.

This is a cheeky question, but what song were you playing on the rooftop for Balcony TV? Did anyone guess correctly and what prize did they win?

Oh yeah! That was the Intro to "Sweet Jane" off the Lou Reed "Rock'n'Roll Animal" live album. It's a duelling lead number between Steve Hunter and Dick Wagner, two of my favorite guitarists I forgot in the list. I sort of play both of the parts, but more Dick Wagner I guess. That's one of my favorite things to play at Guitar Center.

One person guessed it on Youtube. There was no prize.

Who are what are you currently listening to that most excites you at the moment?

Nothing new really. I don't really care about the new Daft Punk album because I never cared about Daft Punk. I really dig Nile Rodgers, though. He's fucking great. Pharrell just looks like an alien. He looks creepy. I do like that he signed up Narduar to his media company. New music isn't getting me very excited I guess. I really don't listen to a lot of music that I'm not working on these days. I get excited by the Tremeloes cover I just made of "Here Comes My Baby." That song's been getting me excited. Also sides 2, 3, and 4 of "Sandinista." Louis Armstrong And His Hot 5/Hot 7, "Van Halen I", "II", "Women And Children First", "Fair Warning", "Diver Down", "1984", Professor Longhair. I always check out new music on Youtube, when I hear of someone/band. There're so much new music out there. More than ever before. Too much, really. I usually go to Youtube check em out and get unimpressed. I like these punk kids, The Amoebas. I like the new NYC bands, TV Baby (dudes from A.R.E. Weapons), Jail Bait, Call of the Wild, and I like Endless Boogie for about 15 minutes. That's a band that should put out 15 minute albums. Actually there're a lot of great bands that should do that. I guess that's the thing with all these indie jam bands.

If you've seen it, I wondered what you thought of the film "Spring Breakers"? Is Harmony Korine an artist after your own dark heart? I only ask about "Spring Breakers" as I just got to see it recently. It's not been that easy to find here in the UK, but I really enjoyed it. Franco's performance is a trip on its own.

Haven't seen it. Don't know what to think. Looks like Franco just aped Riff Raff's whole look and vibe. Apparently Riff Raff thinks so too. I don't know man, Harmony Korine? I like that dude because he's a forceful auteur and a great artist. That said, his feature films don't really grab me and seem forced. Except the one he did where he made all these huge dudes beat the shit out of him. Brilliant!

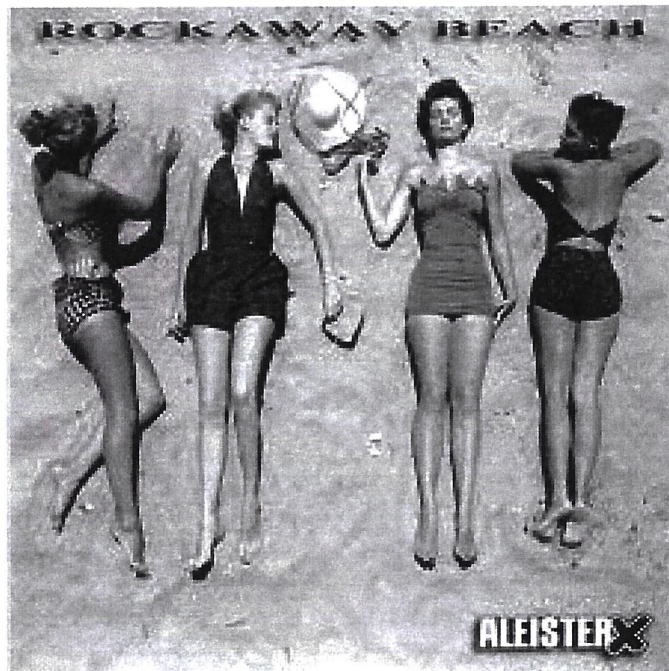
**What is it that you think is so special about them and how important are they as an inspiration to you?
Would you ever want to collaborate with Eddie or David Lee Roth?**

I've always loved DLR Van Halen, and NEVER, Van Hagar, NOT ONE SINGLE SONG. They were one of the most original heavy rock bands ever, and came out of the great tradition of Southern California/LA California good times in the sun pop/rock bands, which I love. It's also hard to grasp by kids today, but they were like the original post-Zeppelin Bad Boy Party Metal Rock band. I mean in the simpler time of the past when I first heard the opening riff to, "Ain't Talkin Bout Love," it was the heaviest, most ominous riff I'd ever heard. It's not just "Oh Eddie Van Halen, the greatest rock guitarist post-Hendrix." Sure they had the modern monster guitar hero vibe, they kind of invented that, but they brought a whole level of showmanship that was second only to KISS in rock. Shit, Gene Simmons discovered them and paid for their demo that got them their deal. And DLR was a regular on the Hollywood after-hours art-damage/punk party scene and brought performance "art" and "punk" vibes to the music and style. Like Madonna. But without Eddie, and to lesser extents Alex and Michael...I don't know. "Crazy from the Heat" was like, "Eh...Ok," and he had fucking Steve Vai. I think DLR was one of the coolest front men in rock ever.

I'm shocked at how little interest there seems to be in DLR VH on YouTube. I would fucking love to collaborate with Eddie and/or DLR.

Lastly, what is the credo of Aleister X?

It's not original but, "Fuck 'em if they can't take a joke."



"Half-Speed Mastered" is out now on Nod and Smile Records (LP) and SteevMike Records (CD)

<http://aleisterx.com/>