

Female characters are flat and underdeveloped, with descriptions revolving around their sex appeal; Miss Thang, Bitch Goddess, Twiliter. What's a good film noir without a femme fatale, or a strong love interest? A notable exception is Duke's six-year-old daughter, Cordelia, who is the brains of the final operation to take down the bad guy—though in this case, it's technically the good guy. We're on the villain's side, and Duke's nuanced, human relatability is the book's strongest trait. Most punk rockers have been that misfit schmo who takes issue with authority and struggles to make something of themselves in a harsh world. It's pure entertainment, but *The Villain's Sidekick* would make a good quick read on a long plane trip, or perhaps in the back of a van on tour. —Claire Palermo (Budget Press, budgetpress.net)

### Zero Fade

By Chris L. Terry, 293 pgs.

As a young writer and recent addition to Razorcake's list of contributors, I have much ingrained respect for Chris L. Terry (known to Razorcake readers as CT Terry). I approached the book with a sense of obligation to support one punk's venture outside of music, especially in writing, as it always seems to me to be journeying outside the comfort zones of guitar feedback and garbled yells. So I was prepared to find any and every merit possible in *Zero Fade*. I was prepared to scrounge every paragraph and chapter. As luck would have it, the merits and brilliance of Terry's first novel are as obvious as an overpass billboard.

*Zero Fade* is the story of Kevin Phifer, a black seventh grader struggling with his position on the social totem pole of school life during the early '90s, and Paul, his supportive and closeted uncle. Paul is a museum security guard struggling to find a man while juggling his duty as Kevin's role model. Kevin is selfish, constantly avoiding bullies, guided by hard-ons and his longing for Aisha, a classmate who teases him because of his "mushy tushy," and perpetually grounded for talking back to his mama.

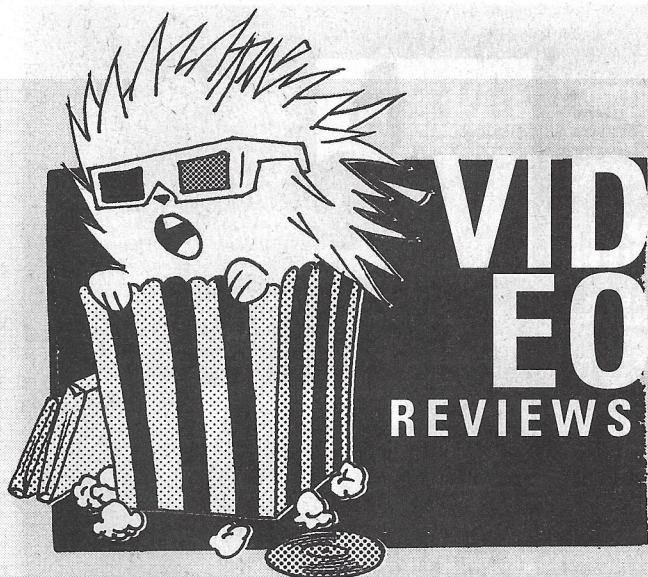
The majority of the story unfolds from Kevin's first-person perspective. Kevin is vulgar and clueless, but somehow endearing because of innocent misconceptions. Terry also grants Paul one section per chapter which allows the two narratives to commingle. Paul's portions are brief and written in the third-person, but they add several layers to his character. Overall, the writing is snappy, laser precise, and frequently hilarious. But the jokes often reverberate twice. When Kevin prances around his mother's room in tight red bottoms while imitating and listening to Eddie Murphy, there's a subtle drama developing around the machismo of pop culture and its treatment of homosexuals. (Terry includes several of Murphy's distasteful jokes about "fags.") Although *Zero Fade* is technically a period piece, the societal questions posed and the problematic behavior of Kevin are still very pertinent.

Slowly, Kevin begins to question his own identity. He questions if his haircut is "gay" or if the touch of a gay barber can be contaminating or detrimental to his image. All the while, Paul fears that his relationship with his nephew as both a friend and father figure might be compromised by the knowledge of his sexuality. Paul's internal conflicts and Kevin's childlike vanity read authentically. Paul's struggle is especially endearing as you constantly wish for Kevin to grow up. Luckily, the tone of the novel never detours into PSA territory. Instead, Terry allows the central figures to develop organically. In fact, after Paul comes out to Kevin, the seventh grader is dismayed and forced to confront his own prejudices. Yet, none of the resolutions are squeaky clean nor are they painfully cynical; Kevin's journey into maturation is just as awkward and clumsy as it should be. The final results are an adeptly human novel.

*Zero Fade* is a damn fine read with a resounding message that never preaches, but instead talks to you across the table like a friend and ally. Highly recommended. Chris L. Terry is an author to keep an eye on. —Sean Arenas (Curbside Splendor, curbsidesplendor.com)



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### Cosmic Psychos: Blokes You Can Trust: DVD

I snuck out of work for an hour on a Monday night about fifteen years ago to go see the Cosmic Psychos play an all ages show down the street. I figured nobody'd miss me and I'd hafta be a real douche to not go see the Cosmic Psychos playing a block away. I was likely right on both counts. Since the '80s, this Aussie trio—sort of like the missing link between Cream and the Lurkers, or arguably the antipodal equivalent of the Dictators—has drunkenly thundered out jillions of slabs of ear-pulping muck, and this documentary takes you from their roots ((rural Australian teenagers who somehow get hold of punk records and then there goes the neighborhood)) to the present ((rural Australian fifty-somethings worrying about losing the family farm they've had for three

generations)). Given that this is a band best known for ending its sets with a collective mooning, I was surprised how laid back the interviews were: The principals are shot, individually, relaxing in their cheerfully lit Australian homes. Towards the end, late-stage guitarist Macka eventually hams it up a bit by doing his interview wearing nothing but a pair of blue underwear, with the microphone taped to his chest blubber, but, generally speaking, these are some pretty down-to-earth dudes. Er, *blokes* ((i suppose that's fitting for a band whose principal member, Ross Knight, opted out of the band's first European tour because he'd recently bought a bulldozer)). This laid back, everyman feel extends to the interview segments with some of the band's more high-profile supporters—Eddie Vedder, Butch Vig, Steve Albini—who, by grace of association with Australian bulldozer owners, come off as normal joes a bit more than is their norm. The interviews are occasionally interspersed with brilliant, John Kricfalusi-styled cartoons depicting important moments in band history. The thing that struck me most after watching this was what a full, cool life Ross Knight has led—dude grows up on a farm in the middle of nowhere, starts a band, tours the world, meets all these people, dates a New York S&M queen, winds up getting songwriting royalties on an L7 song that the Prodigy winds up covering, sets world weightlifting records ((“for his age and weight class,” he'll be quick to point out)), has two kids, and still lives on a farm, goes down to the pub, rocks out, and shows his butt at the end of the night, even though he's in his fifties. Good on him. *I fucking knew beer made you smarter and more successful!* —Rev. Nørb (MVD Visual, mvdvisual.com)

### In Heaven There Is No Beer: DVD

This is one of the better music documentaries I've seen. I came into it with absolutely no knowledge of L.A.'s Kiss or Kill scene. The only band that I really knew about was the Dollyrots. The film documents the creation of a small, closely-knit music scene in a big city, and how it all fell apart because of the usual bullshit: greed, in-fighting, and

“That’s fitting for a band whose principal member, Ross Knight, opted out of the band’s first European tour because he’d recently bought a bulldozer.”

—Rev. Nørb, *Cosmic Psychos: Blokes You Can Trust*

pettiness. There’s a decent amount of live footage, but I could have used a bit more in the bonus section. —MP Johnson (MVD Visual, 203 Windsor Rd., Pottstown, PA 19464, mvdvisual.com)

**Ten Years War, The: DVD**

Tor Johnson Records has been an integral part of the Providence, RI, and greater New England music scene for over ten years. In May of 2012, a number of past and current bands from the label’s roster came together to celebrate the label’s ten year anniversary. Seeing nearly all of these bands in their primes was a touchstone to life in my early twenties. It was great to see them all come together for a night of music. This DVD does an excellent job of capturing and preserving a show celebrating one of the shining lights of local DIY music and culture. The DVD features highlights of each band’s set, including some of my favorite songs by each band: Saint Jude’s “Extinction Won’t Be So Bad,” Another Dead Juliet’s “Search for the Snow Leopard,” and Weak Teeth’s “Repetition Implies Importance, Implies Importance.” Some of the footage is a bit grainy, particularly the Another Dead Juliet track I mentioned, but the audio quality is great for a live recording, and the footage does a good job of capturing the essence of seeing each band live. This DVD is great not only as a capstone to a decade of amazing

music, but it also shows that the future of Tor Johnson Records looks bright. Here’s to the next ten years! —Paul J. Comeau (Tor Johnson, PO Box 1556, Providence, RI 02901, torjohnsonrecords.com)

**Tribute to Ron Asheton: DVD**

Every live video of Iggy Pop performing is important because it is another opportunity to try to determine the source of his power. How is he able to move like that? I’ve had a theory going that he is a highly evolved version of the robo-musicians that used to hang out at Chuck E Cheese and Showbiz Pizza. Upon scrutinizing this DVD, I’ve decided to throw that theory out. No cords. No place for a battery pack. Maybe he’s just a hundred gallons of molten rock and roll living in an impervious skin suit. I don’t know. This DVD isn’t about Iggy anyway. It’s about former Stooges Guitarist Ron Asheton. The current lineup of the Stooges pays tribute the only way they know how—by just destroying everything with music. They get help from Demiz Tek. Old man Rollins even sings a tune. How is it that Henry Rollins is now older than Iggy Pop? Why is nobody else trying to unravel the mystery of Iggy? —MP Johnson (MVD Visual, 203 Windsor Rd., Pottstown, PA 19464, mvdvisual.com)



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