

REMEMBERING ZEV ASHER

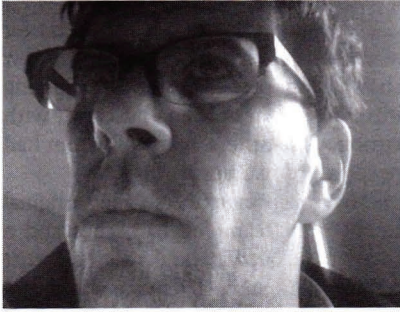


photo supplied by Jen Morris

Zev Asher was a filmmaker, musician and experimental artist. From 2004-2005, he was also the film editor at *Broken Pencil*. Asher died on August 7, 2013 from graft versus host disease, a complication from treatments he undertook to treat chronic lymphocytic leukemia. His stint as an editor was only one piece of a kaleidoscopic life of inspiring artistry.

Asher lived in many different places throughout his life. Born in Montreal, he travelled with his two siblings and his parents, who were CEGEP teachers, to places like Belgium, France and Israel. He never shook the urge to wander, and spent stints in Japan, Shanghai, Croatia, Vancouver and Zagreb. In a 2004 article for *Broken Pencil*, Asher wrote about his restlessness: "As I stay longer in a new place, it inevitably begins to

become familiar to me and takes on the characteristics of a hometown. Then I start to dislike it."

At the same time, Asher was cultivating an interest in outré music and started playing in noise bands. The most famous — or notorious — of these, Nimrod, toured through Japan and North America, building a multimedia blend of video, art and visceral performance. This embrace of experimentation built Nimrod — and Asher's — legendary reputations in the Canadian/Japanese noise communities.

His interest in film — illustrated in his depth of coverage and enthusiasm while working at *Broken Pencil* — led to forays into video art and directing. The film that Asher is arguably most known for is *Casuistry: The Art of Killing A Cat*, where he followed the trial and conviction of art student Jesse Power, who enlisted two friends to help him kill a cat for an art project. The film caused outrage — particularly amongst animal activists — when it premiered at the 2004 Toronto International Film Festival.

Linda Feeseey, who worked on the film with Asher, recalls that despite the horrific subject matter, he approached the subject with an unbiased professionalism that commanded

respect. "He'd come into a room and people would think 'Here's a real filmmaker,'" Feeseey recalls. "He had that kind of presence about him." His skills as a director led to more forays into the medium, including the well-received documentary *What About Me: The Rise of the Nihilist Spasm Band*, which combined his love of noise music and filmmaking.

Eventually the artistic freedom of Montreal lured Asher back, and it was in this city that he spent his final years. As his health declined, Asher began to document the process of his ongoing treatments, and Feeseey says he approached his illness with a sense of openness and optimism. "He didn't see [the treatments] just as trying to stay alive, or suffering," she says. "He saw it as kind of the extremes of what the body can do, can endure, and he was able to do that first-hand."

In this sense, Asher embodied the ever-curious nature of a consummate artist, one who never shied away from subjects that others would find weird, wild or flat-out unpalatable. "He was the anti-uptight," Feeseey remembers. That's how we remember Zev: a sweet, kind, even shy man who possessed a fiercely independent and fearless soul. (Alison Lang)

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Welcome to Night Vale

Imagine the *Twilight Zone* was written by Lovecraft and condensed into one town. Its bizarro rules (DO NOT ENTER THE DOG PARK.) and unspeakable terrors are unchallenged by inhabitants and relayed to you by a pleasant radio announcer. Amongst all the weirdness, the most normal aspect

is a wonderful queer love story starring Cecil, the announcer, and Carlos the scientist, who he routinely gushes about on-air. A podcast unlike any other, *Night Vale* will fill you with joy and horror beyond your strangest dreams. Listen at commonplacebooks.com/welcome-to-night-vale. (Alfea Donato)

One Terabyte of Kilobyte Age Photo Op

You miss Geocities. Even if you think you don't, that awful website you built was once your pride and joy. If you're anything like me, scouring internet ruins for virtual artifacts sounds like a pretty good Friday night. Kick back tonight with this tumblr blog featuring

the Geocities archive team's screenshots of webpages. Go excavating at oneterabyteofkilobyteage.tumblr.com. (Alfea Donato)

Ladylike

Some games you just can't win. In Nina Freeman and Emmett Butler's *Ladylike*, you play Nina as she argues with her mother. Much like real life, anything you say will only disappoint your parent further. I liked how eventually your choices lead to one inevitable option and that both characters knew exactly what to say to rub the other the wrong way. It's a very realistic simulation of family power dynamics. Get *Ladylike* at emmettbutler.com/games/ladylike.html. (Alfea Donato)