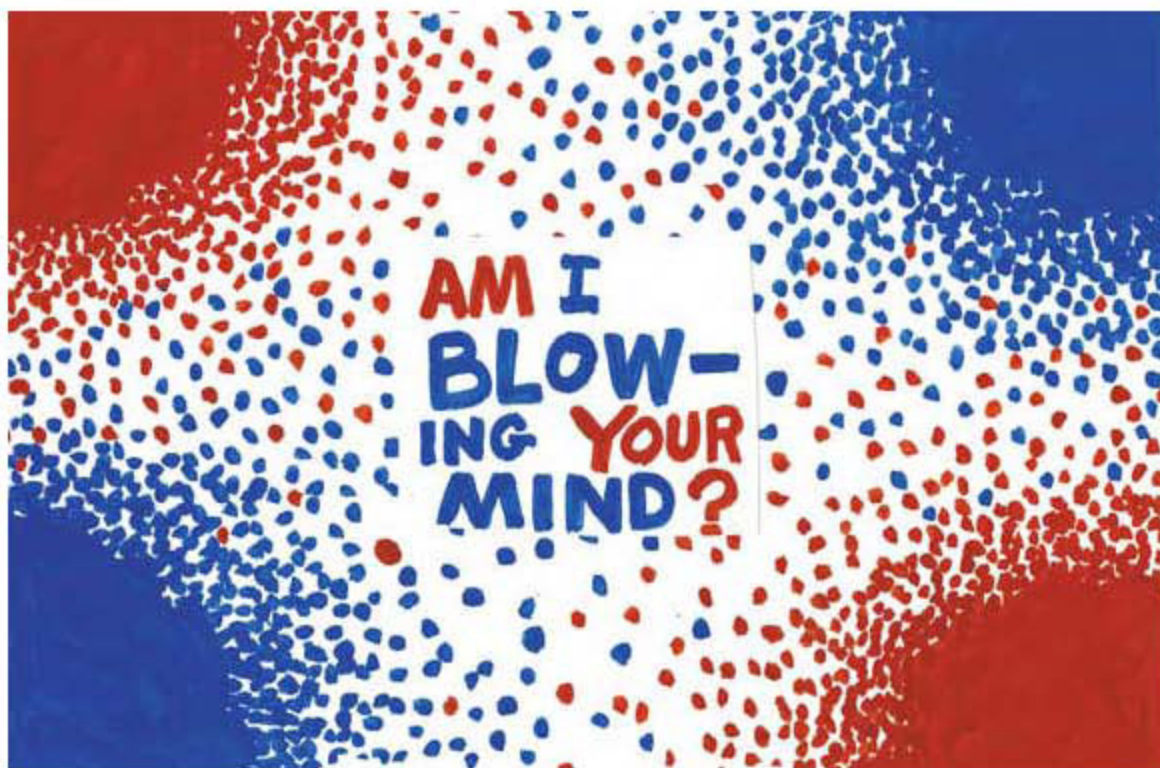


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STUFF

NOGOODNIKS

By Kara-Lis Coverdale



Our pals at Drawn & Quarterly recently sent us a book called *Nogoodniks* by Montreal-based artist/musician/creator-guru Adrian Norvid and told us we should talk to him because he was "British and really funny". We thought the book was great in a weird, warpy, kooky (aka British) kind of way, so we snapped up Adrian's gracious invitation to have someone from VICE (me!) up to his Mile End studio for a chit-chat and workspace whirl-around. As we talked about anything and everything from Joni Mitchell's ass to getting high on *Star Wars* I realized bantering with Adrian is a perfectly random, perfectly good time, not unlike the experience of looking at his drawings.

At some point during the hour and a half we shuffled around his crammed space I thought "Wow, Adrian is a good listener!", mostly because he agreed strongly with almost everything I told him, sometimes saying "good" three or four times in a row before responding while bobbing his head around and keeping arms folded and hands tucked way up in his armpits like a unleavened pretzel. In addition to the stuff he told me about his book

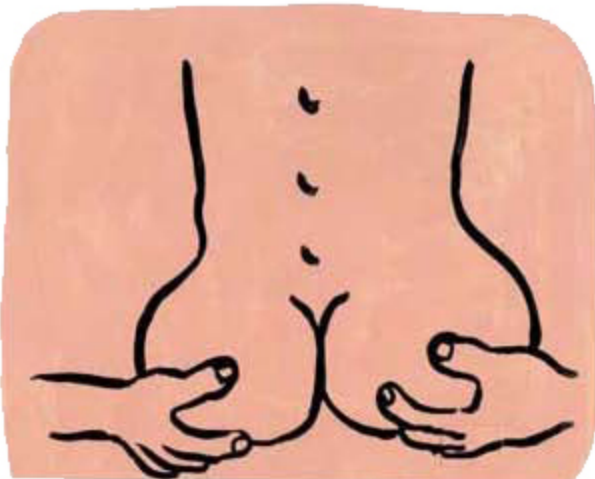
(see below), I also learned we have the same toy piano, the same back-pack, the same butterfly mug, and his studio address is my hometown area code. So, you know, I'm just rubbing it in at this point but with all that common thread we're pretty much BFF's!

What does "Nogoodniks" mean?

Nogoodniks to me is a sort of 50's 60's slang meaning damned no good types from the sputnik era perhaps, like, you know, "Peacenik" or "stick a 'nik' on it". To me each page in the book is a nogoodnik. In reality it seems it's a Russian word meaning pretty much what I always thought. Of course I didn't research too far.

Your work is pretty hilarious.

It's full of puns, yes.



Joni Mitchell's ASS Sure Fitswell

Where did that Joni Mitchell butt idea come from?

Well I'm not sure. Probably somewhere in my head Joni Mitchell just came through, like, "Joni Mitchell, Joni Mitchell..." and then I probably thought ... "Bum" ... "Joni Mitchell Bum..." Aha! I don't really know where these ideas come from, they just arrive. They arrive because it's just like a part of my brain is doing terrible puns and it kind of sends them down a shoot and it goes "Here's one for you... use it or weep." I came up with "Coco Ono" yesterday. I feel like I could have my whole career based around Coco Ono. That was very exciting.

Do you freak out when a pun comes down the shoot?

For a good one, yeah. Sure. Oh yeah.



My favourite is the one with the light bulbs.

Is it? Oh! Ha! That's good. That's good, that's good.

Yeah, I don't really understand it but it's funny. Maybe because "musn't" is a weird word.

It is? *I musn't... I musn't...* hmmm. Well I don't really understand it either. It's like, I dunno. Sometimes I have to wrestle with fluorescents. A lot of these lights up in here don't work and the building guys just stand back and say "We don't DO, the lighting." So you go to the hardware store to try to find the part that you want but then they look at you and say, "this is really old. Nobody does this stuff anymore." So you have to replace the whole thing. See here, there's this tiny little black box inside that weighs about five pounds and that's the part they don't make any more. That you can only get from the old lights, and you're not going to find them until everyone starts replacing their lights. Now, whenever I see a flourescent on the road I pick it up and haul it back here. They're very easy to wire up, but, you know, *does it work?* It's very mysterious.

That's why you have all these old lights lying around?

Yep.

So you're making art in retro light.

Hahaha. Nice work, nice work. Good one.

Someone said there is a lot of 70s counterculture stuff in your book.

Someone said that?

Yeah!

Well, I guess, since that was really my culture growing up. But lets see. There's the guitar pick, the guitar pedals ... those are sorta 70s. And just the idea of "Museli Man". Heh...

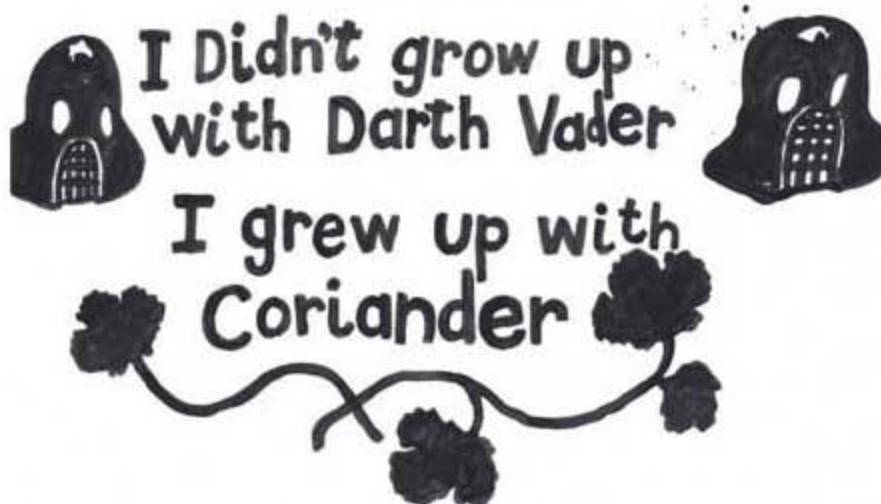


...but do I actually *think* 70's? Well I suppose I do a lot actually. And a lot of these things, when I put them in, I really had no idea whether people would relate to them at all. I figured a lot of people would probably just be like, "What??" But also with the Frisbee, oh yeah, THAT is definitely a dated 70s thing, actually from the early 70s.



Frisbee?

No, Freebee. It's not a Frisbee. It's a *pun* on Frisbee.



Oh I see.

Oh then there's this Coriander one. In the 70's I was just a little tiny bit too old to be really into Star Wars. But oh god it was crazy when it came out, the hype. That's probably why I refused to see it for a while, because I'm a snob like that. But then when I did see it I was like, yeah, that was amazing. I was stoned out of my mind and I just thought "Wow, I seeeee! This is the future! Robots and stuff! Soon we'll have chips in our brains!" Or maybe that was just because I was ripped.

Hey, I have the same toy piano as you! I loved this thing when I was a kid.

Really!!? Do you want to sell it??! I've had one on order for like 5 months. "JAYMAR" is actually "Schoenhut" right now. In the 70's it was supposed to be called JAYMAR. It was and *is* made in Brooklyn. But now it's all in gothic lettering and they're called SCHOENHUT.

Weird.

Yes!



Do you pump iron in here? (looking at barbells)

About three times a week I lift weights for about three minutes. And I think "I will do this EVERY DAY! I will do this EVERY time I take a pause! Mmmm, this is GREAT!" but then, that's it. But you know, the intent is there. I feel like I may have some weights in a performance.

People don't usually think of artists as healthy or strong.

Because they're not. Typically. Some are. It depends on what you're doing. I did see this one interview with Peter Saul who's a really great New York painter and he had a little trampoline and weights in his studio. I thought that was pretty neat. A tramp would be great in here.



Why do you think people like your art?

I think the people who like it -- because I'm sure there are people who hate it -- like that they don't have to have read Nietzsche to get it but maybe they've seen the cover of Nietzsche and can say "Yeah, you know, I never got that either!" And you're allowed to laugh. There's still this myth of the artist and we sorta want to follow his exploits in his world of not being able to make a living. Plus a lot of my stuff is music oriented and *everyone* is in love with music.



I think people like it because it makes them confront their pervy sides.

Oh, good.

Okay Adrian, I'll let you get back to it. Thanks for having me.

Oh my pleasure. Hey, nice back pack! I had the same one, you know. But then I had to end it. I had it stolen one night and then a couple days later some random person called me and said "Ooooooh your bag is here" so then I showed up and there it was in the rain, in a parking lot and I was like, "what the hell." So I decided not to use it after that. But yeah, leather. That'll last forever. It's indestructible. Good for you.

By Kara-Lis Coverdale | 3 months ago

Tags: Adrian Norvid, Nogoodniks, Drawn and Quarterly