

# Lower Haight Local

The Local Magazine of Lower Haight, SF

Issue 11 | August 2026



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# Little Free Library

by Lisa Zahner

If you are a book buff, you're in luck! There's a new Little Free Library in the Lower Haight, and we can't wait for you to stop by and visit! It's located in front of **348 Scott Street between Oak and Page**, right in front of the green Bike Box on the Wiggle.

The Little Free Library on the Wiggle officially opened **July 13th**, and has been busy – we're book lovers here in the Lower Haight. I've wanted to host a Little Free Library for years. As an avid reader (sometimes 2 books a week), I was always visiting the LFLs in the surrounding blocks on **Page & Fillmore**, **Page & Baker**, and **Waller & Steiner**. We made ours a family project, and painted it to match our house.

Our library was open for business for just eleven minutes before our first reader found their book! It happened to be one of my favorites, and one of my kids' favorites, too: *Yertle the Turtle*, by Dr. Suess. (If you haven't read it, I highly recommend it for kids and grown-ups alike - lots of excellent lessons about greed, vanity, and the importance of humility - all told from a turtle's point of view.) There is something for everyone to read in the LFL - it changes every day.

The Little Free Library held an opening party and many fine folks and pups came to meet each other, exchange books, swap stories, and enjoy cookies & lemonade. Several tourists came by, so we treated them to the full Lower Haight hospitality that our neighborhood is famous for. We even had a book in French, which the Quebecois appreciated!

Hosting a Little Free Library is easy: the non-profit, **Littlefreelibrary.org**, sells the kits, you assemble it, then register the library on the website. The hardest part is digging the hole... which must be at least 26" deep, and takes a while!

Follow The Little Free Library on the Wiggle on Instagram @lfl\_thewiggle We're posting new books every few days, and can't wait for you to come by!



*ajl*

As always, this is your paper. Get involved and help make it what you want!

To stay up to date, follow us on Instagram @lowerhaightlocal

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1074 Folsom Street

# Choux: Growing From Lower Haight

by Joel Reske

Nestled just off Haight Street on Fillmore, Choux has been making a very particular kind of French pastry for **12 years**. At 296 square feet, the shop is smaller than a lot of studio apartments.

There are plenty of French bakeries in San Francisco selling croissants. This isn't one of them. "We're a dessert-first bakery," owner **Kat Kuo** told me. Their signature item is the choux, pronounced "shoe," a cream puff.

I asked Kat to describe a perfect one over the phone and it made my mouth water. A light shell, baked with craquelin on top so it has a bit of crunch, filled with custard. The raspberry is their bestseller. That purée comes from France, and each one takes about two hours to make from start to finish.

The other thing to know about is the **canelé**, a treat with origins in Bordeaux. Rum and vanilla batter, baked in copper molds until the outside caramelizes into a dark, crackly shell. Inside it's almost a pudding. No filling at all.

Everything is made fresh each morning, and they tend to sell out by late afternoon. "We open at 10am, but our pastry chef starts at 6," Kat said.

Laura Athuil opened Choux back in 2014, then moved to Los Angeles, looking for someone to take over. She wanted, as Kat put it, "someone who would understand the heart and soul of Choux and take over the baton."

Kat took the baton in January. She grew up in Belgium, where her parents, who are from Taiwan, ran a Chinese restaurant. She's a native French speaker and lived in Paris for years. Her roommate there was training at Le Cordon Bleu and later worked at Ladurée. Kat is upfront that she isn't a pastry chef herself. She runs the business and works with two chefs, sometimes bringing in a visiting French pastry chef for a week to learn from.

She thinks about Choux in relation to *l'apéro*, the French habit of gathering before a meal. "That relaxed time when friends and family gather over small bites, drinks and conversation," she said. "It is less about formality and more about slowing down."

Which is why everything is small. "**The intention of Choux is connection**," Kat said. "For you to bring it to

someone, to a friend, or even to your next meeting." If it's your first visit, she'll tell you to get a box of four, one of each, and share it.

Kat has been so overwhelmed by the loyalty of Choux customers. One customer bought a box of four to send out with his resume. He got the interview but it didn't work out, so he came back and bought ten more boxes, for ten more resumes.

Another regular lives right upstairs and walks past every single day. He's become the shop's unofficial taste tester, and an honest one. When a new flavor doesn't land, he tells them.

"This is a neighborhood bakery," Kat said. "That's what we're all about, to get to know the people who come to us, and to make things they love."

A few weeks ago that meant making 1,000 choux for a World Cup event. Five flavors, due at 11am. All hands from 6am, every inch of the shop full of pastry. They ran short of molds and had to split it into two bake-offs. The display fridge filled up. "That was such an operational puzzle," Kat said. "[We decided that day] our max capacity could be 1,000, no more."

That's part of why she's looking at a second location, somewhere with more room to produce. Nothing is settled yet. But she was firm about one thing. "We're not going to move out of the Fillmore space."

*Choux is at 248 Fillmore at Haight, open 10am to 6pm, Tuesday through Sunday.*



# A Waterfall and a Watershed Moment

by Joel Pomerantz

In pre-urbanized San Francisco, let's say around 1776, there were two naturally attractive routes across the landscape from the north edge of the city to the basin-like valley containing the Mission District. Both entailed much effort trudging across sand and both sliced through the Lower Haight before flopping out of the dunes onto the "very good" "soil for planting" in the area of the Mission.

I pick this specific year for the reason that on March 29th of 1776 the Friday of Sorrows—*Dolores* in Spanish—a momentous decision was made by two appointed representatives of Spain. Though they didn't get along especially well, their joint assessment, and the resulting actions of the Spanish settlers they instructed, are why we celebrate the 250th anniversary of our city this year, just as the country celebrates its 250th.

They concluded that water, soil, and Yelamu labor were all available to establish a farm along the south edge of our neighborhood. Farming (food, wool) was necessary, as no supply ships could be expected this far out on the edge of the Spanish Empire.

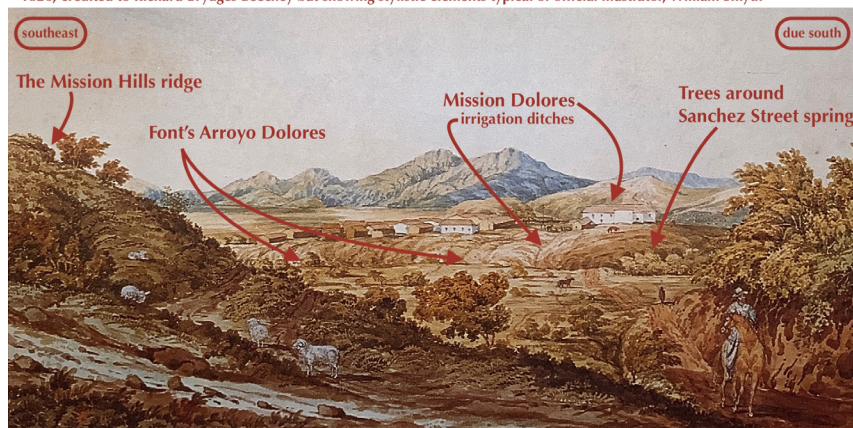
The deciders were Anza and Font, one the expedition leader (a military man) and the other the geographer (and a fastidious priest). They had camped beside Mountain Lake: still there, and after which Lake Street is named. They had then made their way through what we know as the Marina. Turning south, they followed the low area that is now Van Ness Avenue. To avoid marshy wetlands, they veered west of Civic Center arriving in the Lower Haight around Fillmore Street.

Anza, who had visited also on the previous day, noted in his journal that he saw a reliable spring, located most likely where Sanchez Street is today, half a block from Duboce Park. Font wrote more in his, describing the soils (quotes above) and naming the stream, Arroyo Dolores, that flowed from Anza's spring. Font also wrote of the hill at the south end of a ridge (described and illustrated in my article last month). The creek flowed in an arc around this hill, into the lowlands and salty tidal marshes near where Rainbow Grocery is today. Erie Street was once Creek Street.

Father Font also specified that there was a waterfall.

It's the only natural falls we have any evidence existed in the bounds of the city. Based on the geology of the now-flattened Lower Haight Ridge (a.k.a. Mission Hills) which they splashed over, the falls would have been near Ramona Avenue on 15th between Dolores and Guerrero.

Looking southward through a dune gap from a spot just east of Page & Fillmore  
1826, credited to Richard Brydges Beechey but showing stylistic elements typical of official illustrator, William Smyth



Tracking these waterways isn't simple. The creek was eradicated by diversion into farm ditches right away and the spring was the most likely of a possible few around the Lower Haight. Also, today's waterscape is drier. We don't know how wet the winters were just prior to our not-very-celebrated Founding Day. That would determine where and when water flowed, pooled, overflowed, and absorbed into (and leaked out of) the dunes. With such wide variance in weather conditions from year to year, and so little data, we are left to speculate on particulars.

In fact, even during the earliest years of San Francisco's urbanization, at the Centennial celebration events in 1876, there was public debate about whether "Dolores" referenced any known body of water. We now know Anza's spring and Font's creek both were named for the Friday of Sorrows. Later, with the creek gone, the settlers who followed started calling something Lake Dolores which wasn't even near the spring or creek, and wasn't a true lake. Thanks to recent research, it's clear that *Laguna Dolores* was a tidal inlet with marshy shores, over a rise at 18th Street and South Van Ness. Rumormongers have tried to reinvent it as a lake ever since (such as a false map at Camp & Albion Streets).

I began by mentioning a second route through the dunes into and through the Lower Haight. This path came across near Scott Street and will be the topic of the next installment of our Lower Haight Local history.

# Toronado: A Conversation With Bill Lewis

by Nandini Novarr

Toronado has anchored the Lower Haight since **1987**, built a global reputation on **50 rotating taps**, and remained stubbornly, defiantly cash only through every tech boom. Bill Lewis spent decades falling in love with the Toronado before buying it in June. After a near-miss sale to a crypto investor who floated the idea of a ToronadoCoin and a roof deck, Lewis and his brother-in-law Wall Pringle stepped in, promising to change nothing essential. Four weeks into ownership, he's been replacing a toilet, patching the floor behind the bar where spilt beer was pooling, fixing a plumbing leak, and upgrading the beer refrigeration. This is what ownership looks like from the inside of a legendary bar: boring, essential, and mostly invisible.



**What felt different once you were on the other side of the bar?**

My appreciation for the staff. You might be a door person, you might be a bartender, but everyone chips in and covers whatever needs to be done. It's a lean team and they're very talented. I just hadn't seen any of that as a customer, and it's been awesome to witness.

**Previous owner Dave Keene is staying on as ambassador. What does that actually look like?**

Dave has been amazing. I can pick up the phone and he picks up. What he always comes back to is that he just wants us to be successful. When I thank him he says, "Bill, whatever you need to make this work." He's given us the keys in a very real way.

**What does Toronado need structurally that customers will never see?**

The main beer refrigeration was well past its useful life and the beer was warming up, so we replaced that. People will notice the temperature is better. And we're working on the smell. There was unevenness behind the bar where beer spills pool up over time, so we've patched and sealed everything. People have come up and said it smells better in here, so it's starting to work.

**What does curation mean in 2026 with craft beer more saturated than ever?**

It's really two things. One: in one place you can drink exceptional beer from so many different places, many of which you'd have to travel to experience at the source. Two: brewers want to be on our board. Many of them have origin stories at Toronado. So we get access to unique things, special small batch runs, rare beers from cellars. Outside of four or five consistent staples, everything else is constantly changing and reflecting what's great and available. That's what makes it Toronado.

**Is Toronado built for the AI era?**

Tech has been changing the Bay Area forever, this is just another chapter. But I think Toronado makes more sense than ever in that world. It's an analog place. Cash, a jukebox, people who come in to see their friends or talk to strangers. For younger people there's something genuinely novel about walking into a bar that runs on cash, plays records, and expects you to talk to the person next to you. The community at Toronado is as important as the beer. They go hand in hand.

**What's the most surprising thing regulars have told you since you took over?**

How many people brought first dates here. How many people met their spouse here. Not the least of which is Brando, who runs beer operations here. That was not something I was expecting. That's when you know a bar is more than a bar.

**What does the person who takes this from you in 40 years need to understand?**

The community. You have to experience it firsthand, you can't tell it to someone. And the relationships with the beer makers. You know going in that you'll need those brewery relationships, but you're not going to understand the details until you actually have those conversations.

# Haight of Flavor - August

by Tamara Kahhale

As summer is nearing its end (how dare I, I know), there are still so many delicious summer foods and recipes to try. Some summer produce worth shouting out are **cucumbers, summer squash, blueberries**, and the last of the **apricots**. Don't be afraid to add savory and sweet to the same dish, as lots of fruits go well in **salads**, with **cheese**, on **toast**, or even in a **salsa**. Summer is the best time for flavor experimenting! (*Divis Farmer's Market: Sundays from 9am - 1pm in the DMV parking lot on Fell - open year round!*)

## Bell Pepper

A member of the nightshade family, these crunchy sweet veggies come in many different colors. The spice paprika comes from dried bell peppers, and green peppers are just unripe fruits (botanically, the pepper is a fruit since it comes from the flower of the plant!). The greens tend to taste more bitter, and have slightly less nutrients and vitamins – so eat the rainbow!

## Strawberry

California is the country's leading supplier of strawberries, producing roughly 88% of the US's supply. Until fairly recently, it was believed that strawberries could not be grown organically at production scale due to the way they grow – directly on the soil, making it difficult to control potential disease and insects. Conventional strawberry farming can be very chemically intensive, which means that smaller, local, and organic farmers have their work cut out for them when practicing non-chemical production. This often means a lot of work by hand, which results in those higher prices for

strawberries. This type of farming is safer for the farmers, and better for the earth, so if it is within your means, consider supporting your local farmers for their strawberries!

If you happen to have an abundance, or have some strawberries on their last leg, consider making a **strawberry shortcake**:

- 6 cups strawberries, quartered
- 40 grams sugar (~3 tablespoon)

## Biscuits

- 340 grams flour (2  $\frac{3}{4}$  cups of flour)
- 50 grams sugar (~ $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of sugar)
- 4 teaspoons baking powder
- Pinch of baking soda
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 170 grams unsalted butter (3/4 cup, 12 Tbsp)
- 240 ml (1 cup) buttermilk (you can make your own by adding a few tablespoons of vinegar to milk of your choice, and letting sit for a few minutes)

## Whipped Cream

- 240ml (1 cup) heavy cream
- 40 grams sugar (~3 tablespoons)
- Few drops of vanilla

Grate or finely cube the butter, then stick it in the freezer.

Place the strawberries with the sugar in a large saucepan, and allow to cook together for 5-10 minutes (alternatively, put the strawberries and sugar in a bowl, mix them together, and leave them in the fridge overnight). This will allow the strawberries to release some of their juices, and make a sweeter, syrupy filling.

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Mix flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt together in

a bowl. Add in the frozen butter, mixing it into the dry ingredients until a sand-like dough forms.

Add buttermilk and fold in, being careful not to overmix – shaggy is the right texture! Pour the dough onto a well-floured surface, and with well-floured hands, bring the dough together. Once you have one cohesive dough shape, flatten the dough into a rectangular shape. Fold one side to the center, then the other side, creating a book shape. Flatten again, then turn the dough 90 degrees. Fold again, and flatten again. Turn, then repeat the folding and flattening one final time.

Cut out whatever shapes you want from the dough. Keep adding the scraps back in until you have about 10 biscuits.

Arrange them on a parchment paper lined pan, and bake for around 20 minutes, removing when the tops are golden brown (feel free to add an egg/buttermilk wash!). Let cool before assembling.

To make the whipped cream, add the heavy cream, sugar, and vanilla to a bowl, and beat on high speed with a hand mixer or stand mixer until medium peaks form. Alternatively, put the ingredients in a container with a tight lid, and mix by shaking the container by hand.

Slice biscuits in half, and layer the whipped cream and strawberries. Enjoy!



# Teahouse on Haight

by Joel Reske

Gather SF, the collective that grew out of The Center, has a space for the next **3 to 6 months**.

After a year of pop-ups and a long search for a lease, Gather is moving into **438 Haight**, the old Radical Reading Room, dark since February. Soft launch is **early to mid August**.

It's a collaboration between Gather and Midnight Teahouse, another group that has spent the last year running pop-ups with gongfu service, candles, and live music. The space is secured through at least October, and may continue longer.

**Alex Zirbel** of Gather calls it a heart-centered community teahouse.

At first it will be simple, tea and community, with the rest of the programming still being figured out.

The last week has been spent patching walls and painting. The plan is to open **Tuesday through Sunday, 3 to 10pm**, though Alex encourages people to check the Instagram and the website ([gatherersf.org](http://gatherersf.org)) for updates on schedule and events.

This isn't a permanent home, and Gather is still looking for a larger space that can accommodate tea, yoga, and other larger events. But in the meantime, this space will be a meeting place for the neighborhood and a focal point for the community while Gather works out the next step.

Follow [@gather\\_sf](https://twitter.com/gather_sf) and [@midnight\\_teahouse](https://twitter.com/midnight_teahouse) for updates and events.

## August Events

DM [@lowerhaightlocal](https://twitter.com/lowerhaightlocal) to get your event featured!  
Full listing at [lowerhaightlocal.com/events](http://lowerhaightlocal.com/events)

*Saturday, August 1st, 10am–1pm* **August Issue**

**Distribution** Grab the new issue at the corner of Scott & Page. Pancakes, free coffee, and live music. Come say hi!

*Saturday, August 1st, 6:30pm* **June Swoon at Mercury**

**Cafe** The LA band plays with Davia Schendel and Marika Christine at Mercury Cafe (201 Octavia). \$12.

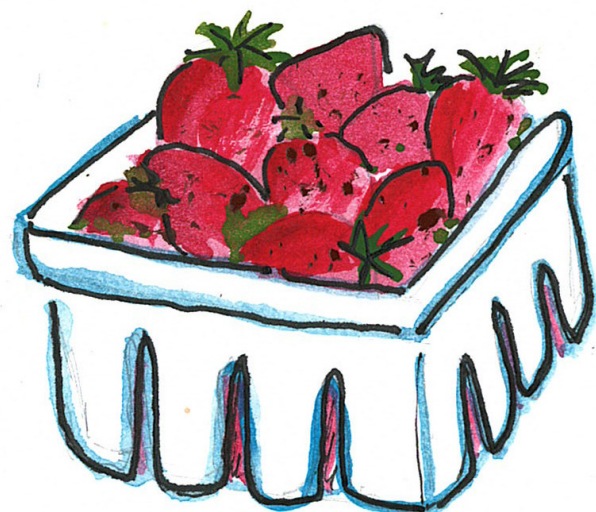
*Saturday, August 1st, 9pm* **Prince vs Michael at**

**Madrone** The legendary dance-off between Prince and Michael Jackson fans returns to Madrone Art Bar (500 Divisadero). \$10.

*Sunday, August 2nd, 6–8:30pm* **Tablao at The Faigt**: An Evening of Flamenco Live flamenco at The Faigt (475 Haight).

*Thursday, August 6th, 7:30pm* **Resipiscent Presents at Peacock Lounge Leaking**, (FF):, Evidence Trio, and 5K Candle at the Peacock (552 Haight).

*Thursday–Sunday, August 6th–9th* **Outside Lands Night Shows at The Independent** The festival's after-hours (628 Divisadero): Clipse Thursday, GRiZ Friday, Goldie Boutilier Saturday, and Ben Böhmer Sunday.



Siena Applebaum

*Thursday, August 20th* **Third Thursday at Peacock**

**Lounge** The Peacock's monthly night returns at 552 Haight.

*Saturday, August 22nd, 12–5pm* **Duboce ParkJam** Free live music returns to Duboce Park, with five local groups across the afternoon. Bring a blanket.

*Saturday, August 29th, 7:30pm* **Dysphoric Magazine Launch Party at The Faigt** The new SF magazine celebrates its first issue with live DJs, local vendors, and dancing (475 Haight). \$16 advance / \$20 door.

*Saturday, September 5th, 10am–1pm* **September Issue Distribution** The next issue lands at the corner of Scott & Page :)

# Cozy Cubs Puzzle Club™

"Casual Games for  
Consenting Adults"™

## You May Compare Answers

"What do you want to be?"

### Across

1. Vessels that can become instruments
5. Session for improvisers
8. Superfood berry
12. Nighttime set that is one B short of becoming lunch
15. W/o delay
16. Type of friendship
18. Currency of 1-Down
19. 1984 comedy about a certain type of training
21. Prefix for athlon or glyceride
22. Type of fun
23. Non-numeric Uno card
24. See what's in store
25. Makes a place cozy
26. "See no \_\_\_\_"
28. Substantial volume
29. Fictional archaeologist who is afraid of snakes
33. "Presto!"
37. "\_\_\_\_, Officer Krupke"
38. Bao
39. Some are ginger, others are pale
40. Burden for a beast
44. "I \_\_\_\_ to do that."
48. Object involved in a cut and paste operation
51. Animal that holds hands when sleeping
52. Sage is a common one
53. Target of CRISPR snips
54. Brownie box instruction
56. Gin inventor Whitney
57. Ones who all live in Texas, reportedly

58. 2024 album featuring covers of "Blackbird" and "Jolene"
64. October birthstone
65. Grey who wrote "Riders of the Purple Sage"
66. Basic unit of quantum computing capable of existing in a superposition of zero and one
71. Less-common name for Millennials
72. Letters before Q, often
74. Face up
75. Neither Dem. nor Rep.
76. Archetypes of macho men hidden at the start of this puzzle's theme answers
79. Kickoff prop
80. Big bank whose name sounds like a merger of a country and one of its core practices
81. First name in modern linguistics
82. Crash-prone pilot in "Catch-22"
83. Feels regret
84. Kind of loop
85. West Coast : Dryer's :: East Coast :

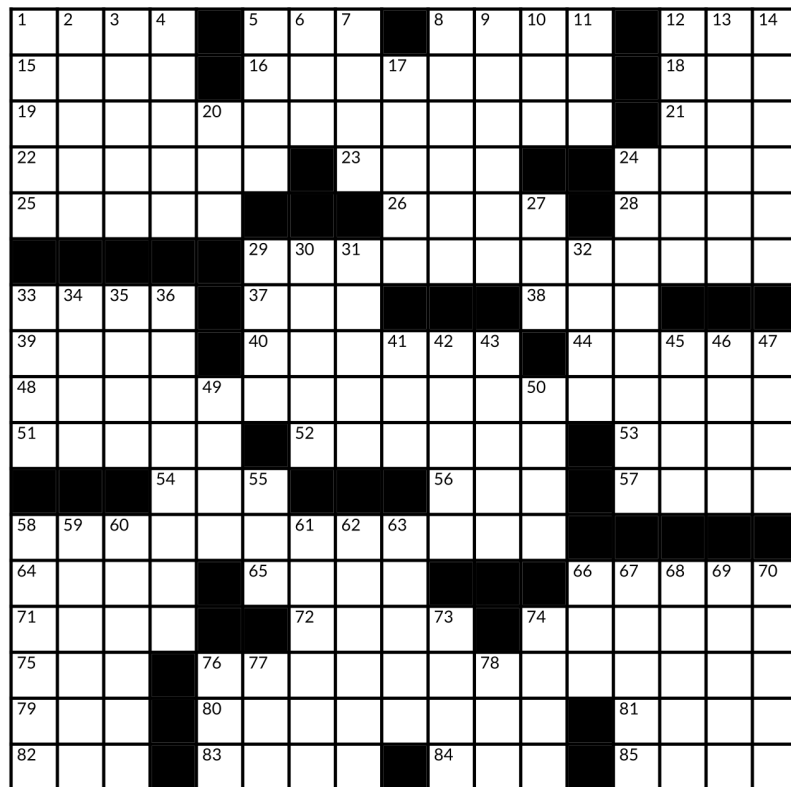
### Down

1. Country with a Shinkansen
2. Hwy. whose mile marker zero is in Key West
3. Black-tie affairs
4. Like proverbial milk
5. Format for many selfies
6. It goes before the "carte"

**Cozy Cubs Puzzle Club**  
is a creative project of  
Sage Kitamorn.  
I believe in Analog Fun.



This puzzle first appeared  
in Cozy Cubs issue #44.  
Answers and more at  
[www.cozycubs.club](http://www.cozycubs.club)



7. They sport shiny apples
8. Lady in "Don't Stop Me Now"
9. What's left after bowling a nine
10. Muppet maker Henson
11. Slick, as frozen roads
12. Many prefer it to Java
13. Robbins who decided Sharks should pirouette
14. Decides to be "that guy" in a multiplayer video game
17. "Oh Myyy!" author
20. Complement of SIN
24. Setting for Weird Al's "Bedrock Anthem" (Yabba dabba, yabba dabba dabba doo now)
27. Chem classroom
29. Sikorsky or Stravinsky
30. Travel program shared by the US and Canada
31. Record label that sounds like a nickname for someone named Debecca
32. Shared name of a #1 hit for Van Halen 1984 and Kris Kross in 1992
33. The edible emoji for Cozy Cubs issue #17
34. Plenty
35. Evidence of impact
36. A group gathered for a purpose, or a language to elevate thinking above the binary
41. Outkast's hometown, briefly
42. Levi's 501 fastener
43. Fabric with a repeated scenic pattern
45. Tippy-top
46. Hawaiian bird that sounds like a dance move (Watch me whip, watch me...)
47. Cuatro menos uno
49. Ensemble with exactly 47-Down members
50. Hair remover brand that rewrote a song about short shorts
55. "Umm, your fly is down"
58. Start of a line that could get you sum? (hey, it worked for Rene)
59. Warm up band
60. Go astray
61. Blondie hit that predates texting
62. They may be right
63. It reinforces concrete
66. It could mean *that* or *what* (depends on the accent)
67. Leading by a little
68. Stand with two legs
69. Mosaic technique
70. Overflows with
73. Initials for a happy ending?
74. Duke it out
76. Device that can rewind
77. Letters of credit?
78. System starter

Things that  
make you go  
hrrm...



find us  
and get  
involved  
with the  
zine!



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