

Meet me at the Sundowner

JUSTIN DRABEK
Press Staff Columnist

"Pour me a drink, and don't pour it too weak." Let's be honest, singer/songwriter Tim Kasher's music has always been brutal. Since his band The Good Life's inception, he has written songs about his divorce, his failed attempts at relationships after the divorce, and a laundry list of his other failures — ironic for a band that is named after Nebraska's state motto.

It is hard to imagine that Kasher is actually a happy person. It is even more difficult to believe that the songs on "Help Wanted Nights" are not about him. Instead they stand as a soundtrack to a screenplay he has written, which shares the same name. The premise of the story is a man who winds up in small-town bar called "Sundowner Bar."

While there, he becomes wrapped up in the patrons' lives. The album's ten songs act as ten different stories from ten of the Sundowner's regulars. Much like Charles Bukowski created an alter ego for his books, one cannot help but feel Kasher is doing the same.

Unlike past releases, which were laced with post-production sounds, "Help Wanted Nights" comes off as more faithful to how the songs were originally

written. Each song is relatively short and poignant (except the ten-minute "Rest Your Head"), and is musically akin to Neil Young and Fleetwood Mac.

Each note tells a story as much as the lyrics do. It is the moments when the band is just playing that you can almost feel the characters come to life; with heartbreak stories that are told in small town bars across the Midwest, even Traverse City. "There's no



talk of future plans/there's no romance/there's no reason we should be in love."

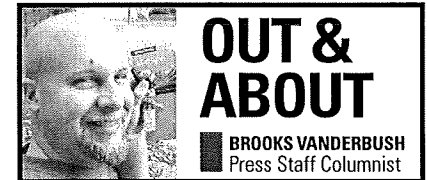
This record is life. We all stumble, and we've all found ourselves, metaphorically and realistically, at the end of a bar feeling down and out. So just rest your head. Let the music hit your ears.

Here's hoping that Kasher's screenplay becomes a film.

High above Traverse City

Greetings folks! Today's journey happens in real time! So, throw on some jogging attire, grab some classy clothes, pack a wee picnic, fold up this paper, and stick it under your arm and head to Hickory Hills.

Why Hickory Hills? Because of this week's theme of course! Traverse City from a different perspective: that is what I aim to show you today, and Hickory Hills is the best place to start.



To get there you must turn right onto Randolph from Division. This is the road with the

"Dairy Lodge" and "Sleder's Tavern." Take this street all the way to the dead end. This one's difficult: park. Okay, hopefully the parking lot is not full of little high schoolers making out in their back seats and smoking their joints. Crazy kids.

Now that you are out in the fresh air, take a jog down the dirt road, past the gate (or walk there if you want, I am just trying to help a brother, or sister, out here). The hill (yes, it is massive) that you need to climb is the second one on your left. I prefer to run up it, as the view is so much more appreciated during a near death experience. Hopefully you did not forget your little snackies as this view is worthy of some reflection and good food! I suggest you kick back here for a while, marveling at what a beautiful thing ol' TC really is. When your food is gone and the view is somewhat less than what it had been, walk a bit further down the path to find a rope swing. This thing is almost certain death dangling from a tree; I highly recommend. The first time I did it, I screamed like a schoolgirl at a Backstreet Boys concert!

Back in the car and ready for some downtown action are we? I've got just the thing! Just be sure to clean up, you sweaty pig, and change to your nicer clothes.

Dominating the Traverse City skyline is the Park Place. You will enter, and no matter how great the temptation, you will not buy a creepy doll from the gift shop to join you on this excursion.

I found the restrooms in this joint lovely. Even the paper towels held lovely messages:

"Call Holly for a good time at..." Well Holly, if that good time includes "Family Guy" and moon pies I am there for ya babe! Okay, a bit off topic.

Get into the elevator and press "T." When it opens, so does one of the best views in all of TC. I suggest taking a right and heading into the "Beacon Lounge." One of the best sights from way up here is the brilliant red of the State Theater. It looks so alive! (Nod, nod, nudge, nudge, wink, wink)

Now we are getting to a point in the day where we just want to relax right? Well, head to the Grand Traverse Resort and I'll show you the perfect place! For those of you that actually take this little adventure, you will understand the following: There is nothing better than a spinning door!

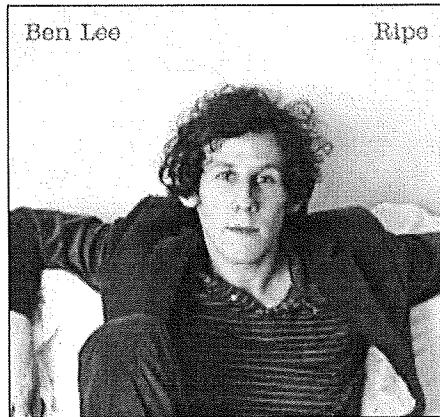
Climb into the glass elevator and push "17." This ride should be done after dark and is the beginning of the experience. What a view, huh? Upon exiting, you may feel elation. DO NOT LEAP INTO THE AIR IN GIDDY EXCITEMENT! Otherwise, the fancy chandelier will skewer you! Luckily, my thirty-three pound head can absorb a blow of that magnitude (but ouch man!).

Anyway, take a right and enter the bar. Take a seat and order a drink. You are now James Bond, or Carrie Bradshaw, or whomever you choose, it is your party. Personally, I just sat, sipping my martini. The live entertainment sounded like a Michael Bolton protégé, and that is okay with me man, that is okay with me.



Bloc Party "A Weekend In The City"

Every once in a great while, you get a record that you're supposed to wrestle with. This is one of those records. Drastically different than their stellar debut, "Silent Alarm," these songs are dark, depressing and catastrophic. Upon listening, there is no way you will not be immersed in a record that will have you captivated from the first note to the last.



Ben Lee "Ripe"

Australian native Ben Lee, who for the past few years has been releasing records full of wonderful, intelligent pop songs, now releases "Ripe" — 12 songs full of infectious melodies that will reside with you long after the record is over.