

You find ways to identify friends before they're friends. Now there are phone apps for it and breathalyzers, but you used to have to do it by observation. It wasn't difficult, because even when you're a kid the important things stick out like flags.

I met Chris in art class. He had a stupid grin and spent most of his time making bongos and cock-and-balls out of clay. He had a stupid nickname for every person and item in his life, and sometimes used "carny" talk so teachers and parents wouldn't understand him. I went to his house one time and he pulled a giant green bong out from under his bed and torched it up. He had a rubber hose rigged up so he could blow the smoke out the window even in the winter and his folks wouldn't smell it.

Jon used to hang out with a girl I knew who threw frequent keggers. I met him at the spot one day, and he said he was going to hike up the mountain to the reservoir and hang out. We got to talking about how the city's water supply was readily accessible up there, under a big rubber membrane you could jump on like a trampoline. I had occasionally fantasized about putting a couple of hits of acid in there, just to see what happened. Out of nowhere Jon said, "You could put some acid in there . . ." That's how I knew Jon was okay.

I saw this kid at the guitar shop in a homemade

T-shirt with spray paint stencil letters, and I was pretty sure he was okay. Turns out he played guitar and drew comics and basically everything that makes a guy okay. His name was Randy, and the first thing he asked me was “Have you heard the Sex Pistols?”

When I was a little kid if I saw another kid with a copy of *Mad* magazine or a Rat Fink sticker I knew I could talk to him. In junior high, it would have been *Fangoria*; in high school *National Lampoon*; and in college *Slash*, *No Mag*, or *Coolest Retard*. Nobody at my college read any of those, though, so I spent a lot of time in the city. In town I saw a lot of people and I could usually tell. I could tell when somebody was one of us.

Look through any issue of *Roctober*, and you can tell it’s one of us. *Roctober* has a way of cutting through the crap and getting right to what makes you take an interest in a something. We love awesome bands and crazy culture icons, each with a singular mania, and we love that *Roctober* is ready to articulate them for us. Bands with primate members, masked bands, bands of all little people, bands from space or wrapped in aluminum foil; bands of sock puppets, drag queens, naive artists, junk prophets, voodoo priests, and trannies with ineffectual makeup. . . . Whether inspired, depraved, obsessed, or moronic, *Roctober* lets them each shine their unique light on us, giving them patient attention and enough time to make their cases. Not looking for excuses to dismiss the easily dismissed, but rather looking for reasons to take them at face value. *Roctober* likes all the things you like, and for all the same reasons.

*Roctober* has a homemade shirt, a stupid grin, and a bong under the bed. *Roctober* wonders aloud if it could get the whole city tripping balls. *Roctober* is one of us.

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