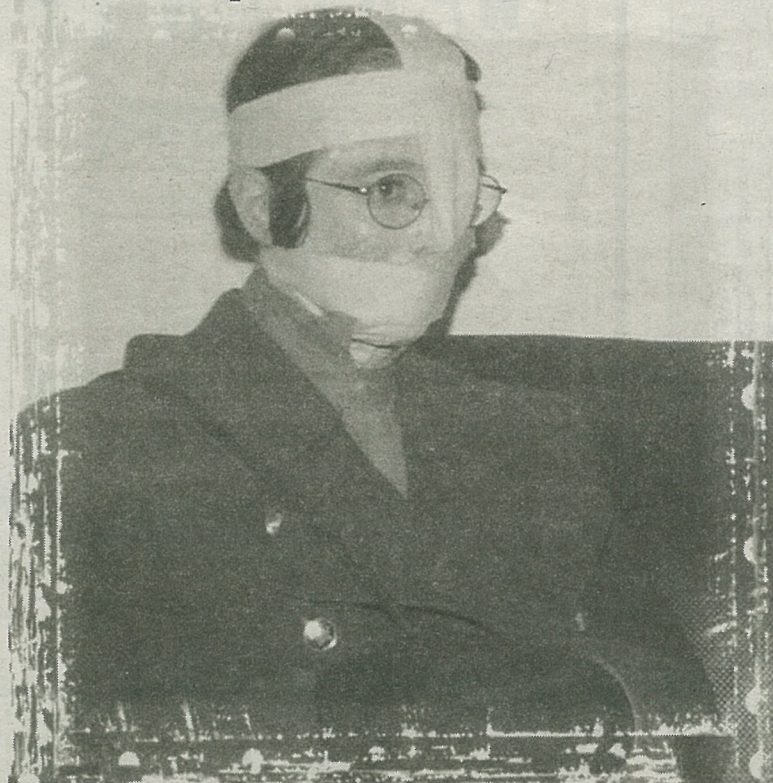


# buzz

<http://www.boulderweekly.com/buzzlead.html>



**T**he campaign begins with a conspiracy and a double-cross, a treasonous act that allows an ancient evil, the vampire Damien, to enter the city of VitaeMorte. To ward off this sinister intrusion, a ragtag group of vampires and werewolves band together in the city's stronghold, who must first overcome misgivings about each other before they can battle the ultimate evil.

Wait, vampires and werewolves, you say?

Before you conjure up images of craggy Transylvanian hillsides and Romanian mythology, understand that VitaeMorte is actually Hale Science building on the CU campus, and the vampires in question aren't actual blood-

## Fool-ish games

LARPers make CU the domain of vampires and werewolves

by Vince Darcangelo

in *Vampire*, you don't envision your character from a set of dice-determined attributes. You become your character, incorporating homemade outfits, a detailed back story, and physical interaction with other players.

see **Vampires** Page 17

suckers but rather LARPers playing a campaign of *Vampire—In the Shadow of the Fool*.

LARP, or live-action role play, is a cross between tabletop role playing games (RPGs), like *Dungeons & Dragons*, and improvisational theater. LARPs can include Civil War reenactments; murder mysteries; Renaissance festivals; Medieval-style combat with armor and padded or non-padded weapons; and non-combative games such as *Vampire*. However,

# overtones

<http://www.boulderweekly.com/overtones.html>

## The colonel's secret spice

by David Kirby

**A**rguably the most dangerous, and inarguably the weirdest, of the original H.O.R.D.E. bands that flipped their collective middle digits at the stifled live music scene of the early '90s by banding together like-minded players and galumphing across the country as a sort of anti-palooza, **Aquarium Rescue Unit**

has since languished in that sometimes-on, mostly-off twilight usually reserved for lame reunion retreat exercises in warmed-over nostalgia.

Formed around the gruff, rumpled persona of Col. Bruce Hampton (ret.), a longtime local musical impresario from Atlanta, ARU blazed across club stages with a frightening, failed-brakes propulsion, forging elements of southern boo-

gie, blues, scorcho bluegrass and fusion rock, framed around Hampton's almost Zappa-esque howls about trash culture and neo-Zen self-actualization. ARU was about chops and jamming, no doubt, but also about the primal struggle between chaos and order, harmony and dissonance. After years of underground

see **Colonel** Page 19

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Riding electronic waves

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We love sexual deviants

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Trimming the hedges

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Mild-mannered masala

## [buzz cuts]

Can't-miss events for the upcoming week



Suicide Machines

### Thursday

**Ralphie May** — You loved him on *Last Comic Standing*, and now the odds-on favorite in the Big Man Dance Challenge comes to Denver's top comedy club. Comedy Works, 1226 15th Street, Denver, 303-595-3637.

### Friday

**Katie Herzig** — Later this month local favorites Newcomers Home will play their farewell show, but for the band and its fans the future is now as Katie Herzig, the band's singer, kicks off her career as a solo artist by releasing her new CD at Nissi's. Nissi's, 2675 North Park Dr., Lafayette, 303-665-2757.

### Saturday

**Alfazar—"A Comical Tribute to Elvis and Sinatra"** — Think the King. Think the Chairman of the Board. Think funny. Boulder Community Talent Show, 909 Arapahoe Ave., Boulder, 303-579-4993.

### Sunday

**Colorado Symphony Orchestra** — The CSO performs "Classical Music of Dance," featuring Speaking of Dance dancers and music by Tchaikovsky, Bernstein and Smetana. Denver Center for the Performing Arts, 1245 Champa St., Denver, 303-893-4100.

### Monday

**Dropping Daylight** — Piano-fronted Minneapolis garage rock. Hi-Dive, 7 S. Broadway, Denver, 720-570-4500.

### Tuesday

**Pennywise, No Use For a Name, Suicide Machines** — An all-star lineup of punk heavies from the '90s is anchored by hardcore favorites Pennywise. The presence of the politically minded Suicide Machines makes this a can't-miss show. Gothic Theatre, 3263 S. Broadway, Denver, 303-788-0984.

### Wednesday

**Taos Mountain Film Festival** — A collection of the best films from the 2005 Taos Mountain Film Festival. Boulder Theater, 2032 14th St., Boulder,



In other words, this ain't your older brother's *D&D*.

"I think for most people it equates to those Choose-Your-Own-Adventure story books," says Mira Rookey, who runs the *Vampire* campaign on campus and heads the LARPer Society of Colorado University student group. "Video games are so popular because you get to control the guys, but you've got relatively set paths and boundaries. In LARP you can do anything you want. Very rarely are you able to actually have fun with something and also influence it at the same time."

In the current *Vampire* campaign, which began in October, Rookey serves as the Storyteller—what would be referred to as the Dungeon Master in *D&D*. She organizes the biweekly events, creates many of the outfits, arranges props and, during games, controls the action. Of course, in role playing, controlling the action means introducing plot elements at particular times, but for the most part the direction of the campaign is dictated by the players themselves. Like other RPGs, the objective is less the stated goal of the campaign (in this case defeating Damien) and more about the fantasy element of role playing and character development.

"It's the same thing that drew people to *Dungeons & Dragons* back in the day," says Rookey. "Life becomes boring and kind of stressful. There's really not a whole lot to look forward to. When you make a character, it's a way to step out of your world and be a part of something that's bigger, something that matters, that's exciting, that's fun. *Vampire* is a way to become part of an adventure."

The participants in this LARP run the gamut of adventurers: aggressive, sword-wielding warriors, misfit medics, disfigured werewolves. One such character is Ian Kelly, who plays as a werewolf named Josh.

"I like stepping into the shoes of another person. It's a little like being a writer in that I can explore other characters, but maintain facets of myself," he says. "Many adults in our society engage their imaginations passively, through reading or watching movies. This allows us a chance to do it actively, the way kids naturally do. This just gives us a way to keep doing it."

But for Kelly, it's more than just fantasy fulfillment. It's about the process of developing another persona, warts and all. Josh, his character, is lame from inbreeding among the

werewolves, and Kelly plays it to a tee, wearing a special shoe on his left foot to affect a crippling deformity and walking with the assistance of a cane.

"It's not just about living out fantasies," he says. "It's not any fun if your character can just do anything. Playing out the challenges is a lot more fun than playing Superman."

### Buzz Word

**Vampire—In the Shadow of the Fool** takes place every other Saturday, including this Saturday, Jan. 21, at 7:30 p.m., at Hale Science building, CU Campus, Boulder. For more information and game schedule, visit [www.shadowoffthefool.com](http://www.shadowoffthefool.com), or call 303-596-3836. Participants can join the ongoing, biweekly campaign or play for a night as a non-player character. New players are encouraged to arrive an hour early for character creation. Respond: [letters@boulderweekly.com](mailto:letters@boulderweekly.com)

No one knows this more than Rookey, who has been running and participating in LARPs for 12 years. When not serving as the Storyteller, she plays as Spider. For Rookey, Spider is more than a fictional persona she's created—Spider is part alter ego and part therapeutic process, existing in the space where LARP transcends mere escapism and


becomes a tool of identity exploration.

"Spider is absolutely my dark, seductive side," says Rookey. "She's a very different person than me. It's very therapeutic for me because in my life I have low self-esteem and I've always had weight problems and just issues with feeling not self-confident. Spider doesn't have any of those issues. To be perfectly honest, when I get in that role, those issues just melt away for me. I can't hold it forever, and I wouldn't want to, because it's not me, but it's so refreshing if, for a night, I don't feel that way. I don't feel bad about myself. I feel beautiful. That's an incredible experience, even if just for a little bit. It also helps me to understand that part of Spider is me, and therefore I can't be considered bad looking because Spider is not, and I understand that about her."

This exploration of identity is not uncommon among gamers. For Rookey, it's one of the most interesting parts of LARP.



"What I think is particularly of note is the rituals people perform to get into character," she says. "One guy gave me a ride to a game once and he put on this jazz song about the devil. He said he listens to it every single time on the way to the game because it reminds him that even though his character is relatively nice in the game that he is this kind of evil guy. You could see as he was driving that he would get into this place. By the time he was at game he was already that character. That's the amazing part: the transformation and watching people go through it."



For a successful LARP, imagination is certainly required. Cloaks and fake fangs are nice adornments, but the game is less about wardrobe and more



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exile, gigging around Atlanta and occasionally releasing solo albums, Hampton was fronting a meltdown outfit that was to spearhead the groove movement, ying to the nascent grunge scene's yang.

At the peak of the band's early popularity, though, Hampton called it quits, exhausted and crispy from too much playing and way, way too much driving. The band carried on, recruiting Paul Henson for vocal duties for a few more years and a handful of CDs, but the spark and the moment had faded, and its core members were getting busy with other projects.

Likewise, H.O.R.D.E. morphed into a more commercial enterprise, and soon enough bands like Widespread didn't really need the festival collective to keep their fortunes afloat. Hampton went on to other pursuits, like the Fiji Mariners and Codetalkers, the latter being his bread and butter group these days.

But don't expect him to take too much credit for his role as a jamband elder statesman.

"Yeah, they all went on to great success and they deserved it," Hampton says, speaking of fellow H.O.R.D.E. travelers Widespread Panic and Phish.

"All of them were outstanding musicians. But you know, the business as it is today, there's 200 guys out there that are incredible players that you'll never get to hear. Sometimes a band or a great player will slip through the gap, but usually not.

"Seriously, name me a really great, young band out there. Someone I've never heard of. Name one," he adds.

We stammer a bit, caught off guard.

"The great ears are gone, the great music lovers like Jerry Wexler and Ahmet Ertegun," Hampton says. "The business is run now

by guys who think the blues started in 1980. Their job is to sell stuff that's non-threatening, easy to digest.

"Hendrix couldn't make it today. The Beatles couldn't make it today," he adds. "No one would ever hear of Igor Stravinsky."

Still, Hampton is sensitive not to portray himself as a bitter outsider.

"I'm very happy. Every day that I'm above ground I'm grateful. The work is good and I feel great," he says.

Hampton returns for the Fox Theatre gigs ("one of my favorite rooms, anywhere") with most of the

original band intact. Guitarist Jimmy Herring, who's since gone on to anchor the guitar chair for Phil Lesh and Friends, as well as The Dead, joins now-Allman Brothers bassist Oteil Burbridge and Jeff Sipé, most recently of Leftover Salmon repute, as the core outfit. Codetalker guitarist/banjoist Bobby Lee Rodgers takes now-retired mandolinist Matt Mundy's old seat.

And Hampton leaves his old Les Paul behind in favor of a... what?

"Pedal steel. No, no... a lap steel," he says.

Jeez, how long you been playing that?

"About a month," he deadpans. "I saw one and became instantly obsessed with it. I can't put it down. I have no idea if I'm playing it right."

Can't Jimmy help?

"No, Jimmy doesn't play steel... or slide for that matter. Seventeen years, I've never seen him pick up a slide," Hampton says.

So much for that. As far as any more ARU gigs, Hampton doesn't seem to know.

"I dunno," he says. "I've got a cooking show coming up."

A cooking show?

"I'll be doing music, narration, and even some cooking, I think. I'm not sure what'll happen," he says. "I have to survive that first." ②



Vampires from Page 17

about imagination.

"It's heavily reliant on people being able to imagine being somewhere else, to imagine that someone who comes in wearing a costume is a different person," says Rookey. "You rarely get anybody at *Vampire* that is boring. You always get people that have an interesting story that are really excited about something, some part of their life that is missing."

And of course, those looking for passive entertainment need not apply, for LARP is not a spectator sport.

"We believe that the biggest draw to this game is that instead of just reading a book or watching a movie you actually get to live the adventure," says Rookey. "If people want to try this out, to explore this, it's a good way to get off the couch and out the door and really do something with your life that's worth doing." ②

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