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the bus when we tour.

S.Z.: *M4 are much like traveling minstrels in that you tour a lot, you share stories of Portland with other places and stories of other places with Portland. Give me a peek into what tour is like for MarchFourth, a little vignette that exemplifies M4 on the road.*

J.A.: The atmosphere and life on the bus are pretty chill. Because there are so many of us, people tend to get really small with their personalities on the bus. There isn't room for all of us to be popping off and being wild and crazy.

An interesting phenomenon is that we've built a community of hosts around the country. We can't afford to get hotels. We go for cheap or free lodging. Most of the time we stay at people's houses.

All over the country there are households small and large that welcome us back. People have put us up and let us sleep all over their floor; put us up in spare bedrooms, or let us put tents in their backyard. We do our dishes, and we usually leave places looking better than when we found them. And we're really kind of proud of that. It's great. We roll back into town, they know we're coming, we put them on the guest list, they bring a couple of friends. After the show, we all go to their house and so we're building these relationships with our audience. Some of them are relatives of people in the band, that's how it started. But now it's fans too.

We've had moments where we've had to announce from stage, "Hey we don't have a place to stay tonight, so if anybody has a place for a 45-foot bus to park, come talk to our merch person." It works.

S.Z.: *How many days a year are you on tour?*

J.A.: The last two years, it has been about 200 — each year.

Sue Zalokar: *You have called the Alberta*

neighborhood your home base for the past 13 years, since you moved to Portland. What are some of the changes you have seen in that time?

John Averill: The Alberta of 12-13 years ago was a little more 'punk rock'. It felt like a small town kind of happening versus a city destination, a trendy thing to do. The biggest thing I've seen change on Alberta is the green space disappearing. I walked down the street yesterday and looked at some of these new businesses. They look like they belong up on 23rd Avenue in Northwest. I love Alberta — I still do. I'm not dissing it. When you live near a street for 13 years, you get attached to your little vistas.

I love that there's a venue on Alberta — The Alberta Rose Theatre. That's maybe one of the best things that has changed about Alberta. I like the idea of being able to walk to get everything that you want to get out of living in a city.

S.Z.: *What about Last Thursday?*

J.A.: I am a friend of Last Thursday, but it's kind of a clusterfuck. There are just a lot of people. It's not just people coming from the neighborhood. People are coming from everywhere. A good thing becomes popular, and it attracts people. That's what happens. I think it should continue, regardless.

S.Z.: *As I understand it, you are living out of a storage container.*

J.A.: I'm staying with friends and house sitting. I put all of my stuff in storage in May because of the touring. Basically, I paid rent in a house — the only way I can afford rent in Portland is to share a house — that I didn't really live in. So in between tours, I now have the option of whether or not I want to come back to Portland. I've got places to stay all over the country, so I've started treating Portland like another tour stop. I'm just here more than any other place.

S.Z.: *Have you any experiences with poverty*

and homelessness in your travels?

J.A.: There is poverty all over this country. I was in L.A. recently and we had parked the bus on this side street off Sunset. A friend of mine, she has a house there and I went walking around on this hillside and I saw these little paths. So I started following them. There was just a sprawling hillside with no development on it or anything, it was near Dodger Stadium. I found a home that someone had built out of woven twigs. It had a little table and chair and it had flowers. You see some pretty ingenious structures as far as homeless camps go.

S.Z.: *Have you any thoughts on the importance of art and music education in our schools?*

J.A.: Thoughts that it's way underfunded and under valued by society in general. You teach kids how to create and problem solve at an early age and you encourage them to have resources to do cool things, you're going to get a society of very

functional, creative, integrated people. You cut all that funding and you've got a bunch of people that watch TV.

My fantasy is that MarchFourth could tour as an art project. A step beyond MarchFourth being sustainable as a band, it would be great to take excess money and put it into school programs. I would love to give back in that way.

There is a program that Ariel, one of our dancers, started. She doesn't dance with us so much anymore, but she started the Joy Now Foundation. Basically, there are two camps a year and they're camps for kids of all ages up through high school. She's taken the MarchFourth model and music as the study material and she puts this camp together. Former MarchFourth members — those that don't tour anymore — are part of the teaching staff and they work with these kids over a weekend and they learn a handful of MarchFourth songs. The camp culminates with a performance or a parade down Alberta.

S.Z.: *"Joy Now" is kind of your rallying cry.*

J.A.: Yes. It comes from a fan from Bloomington, Ind., who presented us with a banner at a show at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. Stevie Jay showed up and held up this giant sign in the audience that said, "Joy Now, Bitches." We thought it was the funniest thing ever. He gave it to us and we dropped the bitch and kept the Joy Now.



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— JOHN AVERIL
MARCHFOURTH BANDLEADER.



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