

The clown prince

Portland punk has a voice in queer author, a
by Glenn Scofield Williams

As queer literature, art and music become more mainstream, it becomes important for those queer artists on the edge of the stream to stay vocal and visible. For those of us who find that overtly sexual, perverse, fetish and dark borders of the queer consciousness are some of the things that help define a queer genre, hope comes in the no-holds-barred artistry of the queer fringe.

Such an artist is Charlie Vazquez, a 34-year-old jack-of-all-creative-trades. Vazquez, who has lived in Portland for the past decade or so, is the self-published author of *Buzz and Israel* (FireKing Press, 2005; \$15 softcover), a novel that stands at the cusp of where the world seems sane and looks back into dark, dizzy, drug- and lust-filled places.

"Esthetically, I wanted the story to emanate twilight," Vazquez says of *Buzz and Israel*. "As far as drugs, sex and violence are concerned... they are universal problems that affect all people, everywhere, really... Queer culture certainly has its share."

Buzz and Israel is a rough-cut, often manic, first novel about *Israel*, a Portland punk who runs headlong into a relationship (and some wild, erotic and frightening adventures) with a beautiful but vicious drug-sternamed *Buzz*. Full of graphic, often provocative sex, out-of-control drug use and a cast of wild, violent and occasionally beautiful people, Vazquez's book has been called a "queer punk novel" by those who understand the punk sensibility: an extreme facade beneath which lies an intelligent, introspective sensibility.

"*Buzz and Israel* doesn't exactly sweep queer dysfunctions under the rug," Vazquez admits. "The dysfunctions of the characters are what carry the story forward—kinda like speeding through the night with the headlights off."

Vazquez also has several published short works, including the balls-out, nastily erotic piece "Angelic Snot," published in *Jack Hart's Straight? Volume 2*. Vazquez's next book, to be published early next year, is a collection of some of his own short works.

"There's five pieces so far," Vazquez says, though he's reluctant to give much away. "Two

of them are novellas—one about the punk rock clown and the other a love story (called *Crazón*).

I wrote when I spent six months in Mexico last year."

Not all the pieces are erotic, Vazquez says. "The book has more of a dark, comic bend since *Buzz and Israel* was such a dark journey. There will also be two nonfiction pieces relating to queer art and subculture in history."

Both books are self-published from Vazquez's own FireKing Press. (The Web site, www.firekingpress.com, also includes selections of *Buzz and Israel*.) The decision to publish his work himself did not come easily. In 2004, after attending the Saints & Sinners Queer Literary Festival in New Orleans, Vazquez utilized his considerable computer skills to get his own.

To aid distribution, Vazquez found "a few local businesses... extremely engaging, namely *Other Words and Reading Frenzy*." Also, several unexpected allies came to his aid, including *Spartacus Leathers*, which began carrying *Buzz and Israel* in its little-known book section.

"We've been planning a reading in the back room," Vazquez smiles. "I think I'd like to read naughty scenes to people with the smell of leather in the air."

Vazquez's literary work is not, however, his sole outlet of creative expression. In the past, he was involved with several music groups including "an electronic music project called *Factor Red*, accordion cafe stuff and more atmospheric rock" with Portland chanteuse *Kaitlyn Donovan* and others. He also was asked by the now-defunct Portland club *Panorama* to take photos for its Web site. His exquisite photos still shine with the atmosphere of the era, and Vazquez hopes to "show them in the future... perhaps in a small show mixed with non-nightclub shots."

But the most visible and, perhaps, well-known creative outlet for Vazquez is his alter ego, *Spittles the Punk Rock Clown*. A fixture at *Queer Fetish*, held every third Friday at *Noir*, *Spittles* has sadomasochistic tendencies and handles venomous serpents. "No kidding. Often you will find *Spittles* spanking bottoms for chadly."

"I adore Portland," Vazquez says. "If I need to go find creepy people in a dark pub on a rainy January evening, I have them... If I need to indulge in high tea and a smoked turkey dijon sandwich in a pretentious hotel restaurant, I can... The climate can be oppressive, but hey, that's what weird books are for!"



The author's alter ego, *Spittles the Punk Rock Clown*, is a fixture at *Noir*'s monthly *Queer Fetish* night.



Charlie Vazquez self-published the punk novel *Buzz and Israel* from his own FireKing Press.

