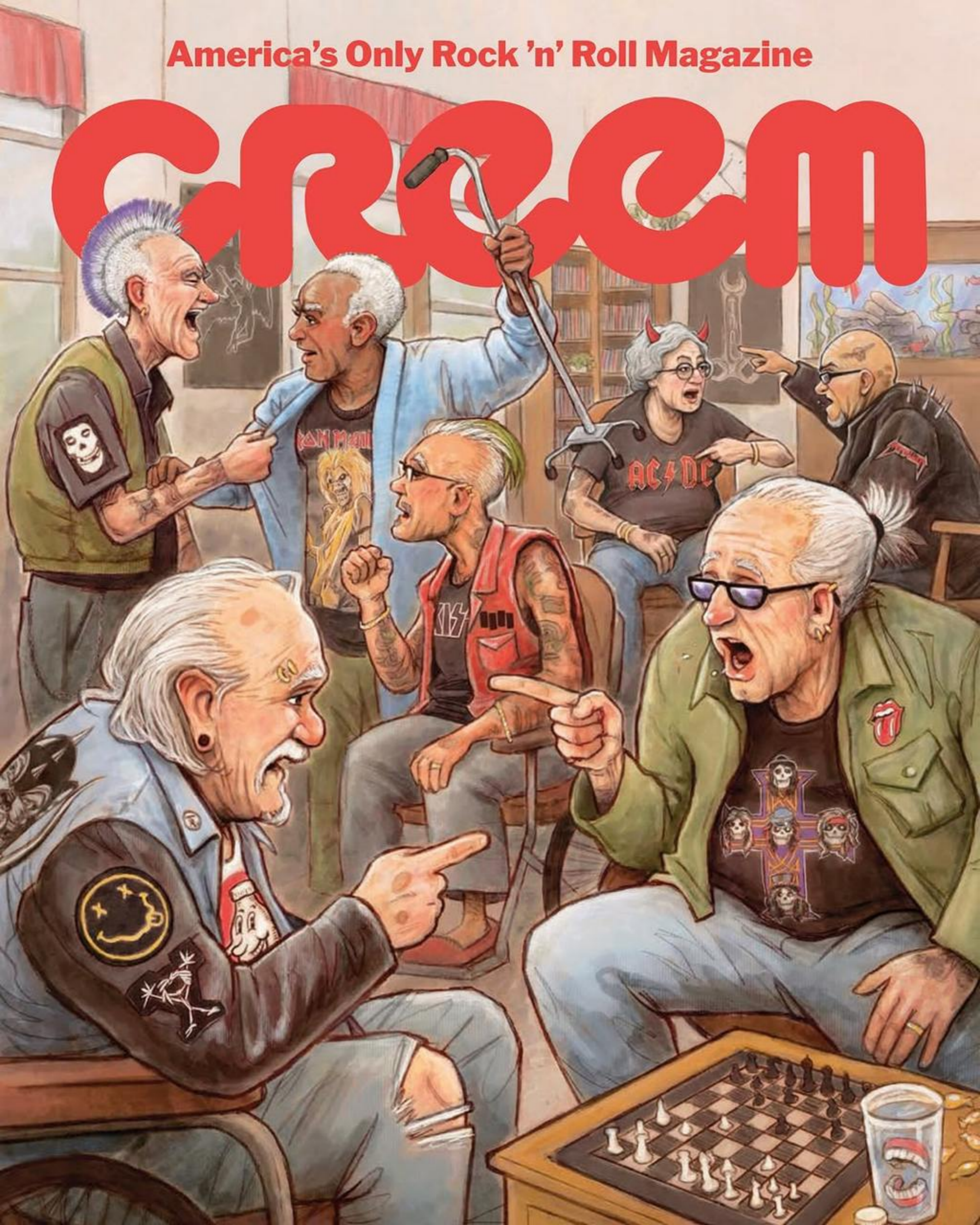


America's Only Rock 'n' Roll Magazine

# CRAZE



# THE MIKE WATT DICTIONARY

A lickety-split lesson in the Minutemen's native tongue

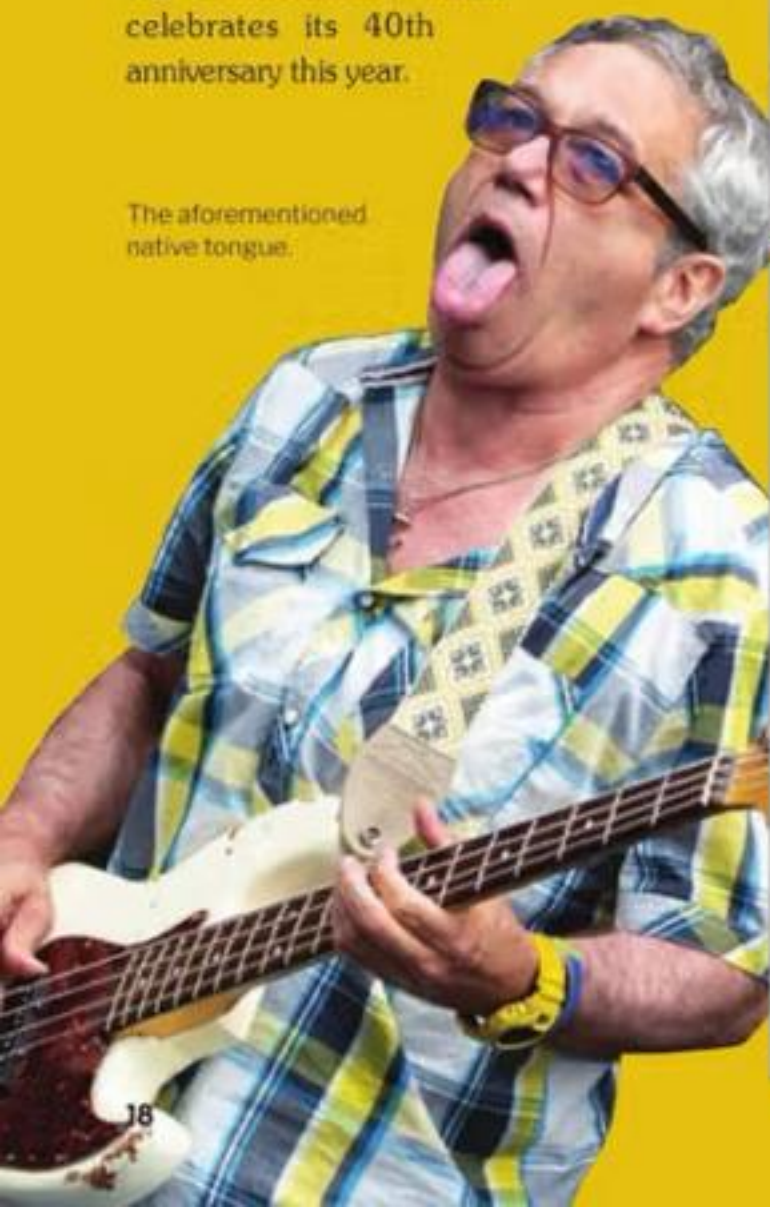
By Austin Woods  
Photos by Reed Dunlea

Talking to Mike Watt is—to borrow one of his favorite phrases—a trip. One moment he's sharing ribald stories of pissing in water bottles, and the next, an exegesis of Wittgenstein. What begins as an anecdote about a beat-up Porsche 912 ends as a meditation on the nature of reality itself. Political rants, cryptic philosophical musings, and plenty of four-letter words abound, often within the span of a few minutes. Watt speaks how his music sounds—careening, contorted, and totally one of a kind.

If there's one constant to his free-associative spiels, it's the arsenal of slang words he calls "Pedro-speak," after his hometown of San Pedro, California. Pedro-speak largely developed between Watt and his comrades in the Minutemen—an insular vocabulary that pervades the band's album titles and lyrics.

We caught up with Watt to help us assemble a guide to this homegrown vernacular, with particular focus on some of the phrases heard throughout *Double Nickels on the Dime*, the band's crowning achievement, which celebrates its 40th anniversary this year.

The aforementioned native tongue.



Watt when we told him to keep his Thunderbroom Econo because we weren't looking for scientist rock.

## THE BIG FOIST

**Origin:** From the song of the same name, inspired by the writings of James Joyce.

**Definition:** Watt's creative process. "You've got to admit to yourself that, when you make an artistic expression, it is kind of a foist. You've gotta put it out there, or find a corporate telephone pole and staple your flyer on it... In a way it's like, 'Oh, here's my contribution,' but in another way it's like, 'Here ya go! Deal with it!'"

## BIG SWEAT POINT

**Origin:** From "Political Song for Michael Jackson to Sing."

**Definition:** A youthful epiphany. "There's something about, when you're a younger man, this idea of shit making sense. It's a moment. It's trippy, because it's kind of like a gestalt. It all comes together without you forcing it. It's like the fates or some shit. Like Jim Joyce using one day to fuckin' talk about everything... When you sweat, you mean it. You have to work to get up a sweat."

## CHUMP LIST

**Origin:** From "Toadies," inspired by Dmitri Shostakovich's life under the Soviet Union.

**Definition:** A hierarchy or chain of command. "They exist on your block. It doesn't have to be a country or a company. It's just human relations... Just get away from the fuckin' lists! Get in a three-way with your buddies and make a band. Go on tour. Learn about other towns by actually visiting the people who live there. Work for 'em. Play for 'em. That's what I'm trying to do—participatory democracy."

## ECONO

**Origin:** From the Ford Econoline series of vans.

**Definition:** The only life worth living. "We were working people, right? So it's not just a slogan. It's a way of fuckin' life... You're smart with your bones, because you have to be. It was the way we lived. Why not talk about it in the songs?"

## CORNDOG

**Origin:** From "History Lesson—Part II," about Watt and D. Boon in the early days of punk.

**Definition:** An unrefined person. "We were going up to Hollywood, and the only punk rockers from Pedro were us and a couple of our friends... I even spray-painted 'Pedro' on my bass, and people thought my name was Pedro. This kind of identity problem. We were true believers in the movement, but in other ways, we were kind of mooks—not that sophisticated about it."

## SCIENTIST ROCK

**Origin:** From CREEM's own Richard Meltzer.

**Definition:** The madcap, syncretic sound of the Minutemen. "We knew Blue Öyster Cult, we knew Creedence, we knew the Germs, we knew the Dils, we knew Nervous Gender and the Screemers. And we were kind of putting this shit together, almost like they're formulas, to try to find our own sound... [Meltzer] calling us 'scientist rock' meant a lot to me."

## MERSH

**Origin:** From Watt's stoner days, short for "commercial."

**Definition:** Low-grade weed, or music created for mass appeal. "If you're gonna be mersh on purpose, well, I guess that's what record companies are for."

## THUNDERBROOM

**Origin:** A play on the Gibson Thunderbird.

**Definition:** Watt's weapon of choice. "[The bass] is kind of like glue. And what is glue without shit to stick to? Just a puddle. By itself it's nothing. That's why the bass makes sense. Because you're with your dudes—with Georgie and D. Boon. So a Thunderbroom, you know, a mighty thing. But whatcha doing? You're fuckin' cleaning up the deck! Important, though. That deck has gotta get clean."

## YARD TROPHY

**Origin:** Inspired by drummer George Hurley's dysfunctional Porsche.

**Definition:** A car permanently relegated to the front lawn. "There's so much shit I see people do just for appearance... Something about the movement always got us thinking about, 'What is really real?' I don't know what... Maybe we're collateral damage from some beatnik, hippie, Dada, Walt Whitman. I do see us in a tradition. Vaudeville. The only thing the Minutemen was original about was the way we put our parts together." 🍌