

THIS IS NOT A FRANK OCEAN COVER ALBUM

ALAN CHAZARO



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580 West

Listen: this is scorpions in the dark, the buzz of moonlight
catching almost-white teeth. This is hyphy as we glide

the Bay Bridge, bone and cartilage scribbling fences with tattered
alphabets. This is the curve of question marks, a nearby fog

mixing my breath. I am revolving around a certain body right now.
There's a black Acura breaking the boulevard, bending sound

corners. Briana says she wants to catch a vibe. Jerome
says you can catch these hands. I float around the city while Odd

Future grooves into an empty background. Lately, my outside is more
inside. Lately, blunt smoke waxes my tongue. A group of teenagers

are practicing free throws in the dark while adults get drunk
and throw money at the corner bar. What are they preparing

for? Lake Merritt looks upside down from this angle. Have you ever
wondered how palms trees fortress themselves in a city of asphalt

and dead starlight? Golden State is scripted onto the chest of my jersey's fabric.
Tonight my head is in another space. I am somewhere between Gap

corduroys and a black hoodie. I am above the surface but feeling
undertaken. Breath is an orchestra of unbroken body parts. Breakages

depend on how fragile you've become. I heard about a white woman
who called the police because her neighbor was breaking

into himself. Translation: he was entering
his apartment building. Fill in the blanks. Lately there are too many

blanks to be filled. Yesterday I asked where it all went. I woke up
to the rose dust of another planet in my backyard. I run the hills around

my apartment and look at a faraway skyline. It feels like it doesn't belong to anyone except those who don't deserve it. I remember being sixteen

riding in Andrei's Cadillac, smashing freestyles while we cruised freeways, steering into unknowns. I don't stay

connected much, rarely charge my phone, especially when driving at night, but here we find ourselves. I shouldn't text in a foreign language

when I can barely hold my own fingers. These flowers are too loud for me; I can hear them singing off-key with my windows rolled all the way up.

Self-Portrait as American

I say *fuck*
because it feels right
about now,
and I say *love* because
what wrong
could it bring?
I haven't shot a pistol
since my stepdad
flung his Desert Eagle
from the bedroom and took us
to burst freedom as kids.
The smell of sulfur
and devil, the pinch
of steel between my 10-
year-old fingers. I didn't
seek this, was never good
at hitting body-
sized targets,
kept my eyes
shut while I curled
the trigger. It's heavier
than you think,
to hold and re-
lease thunder.
Not like the movies but
somehow like the movies.
Ears still ringing,
vibrations
in my bones.

Glitch

The night entered me at a bar
in Oakland and I learned that
East Bay is pig Latin for *beast*
and sometimes the hills are coyotes
burning in their sleep and tonight
we need this moon between us
but who knows where this smoke
will lead and try listening to the deep
whistle of a sequoia and know
these Nikes make me feel royal
and curse minimum wage because
forever is tomorrow and today
will fade you without clippers
and patterns will form wherever
you let them because what is
a formula if not this and
who will breathe if you cannot

and where do things go after they are

buried and if bible was really truth

why does our blood hymn and I ask

about the body and I ask as if

you know what I am praising—



Photo: Briana Chazaro

Alan Chazaro is a former high school teacher at the Oakland School for the Arts, Lawrence Ferlinghetti Fellow at the University of San Francisco, and June Jordan Poetry for the People scholar at UC Berkeley. A Bay Area native, his poems have been featured in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Puerto del Sol*, *Huizache*, *Acentos Review*, and *Ninth Letter*.

This Is Not a Frank Ocean Cover Album was the winner of the Spring 2018 Black River Chapbook Competition. Chazaro's debut full-length collection, *Piñata Theory*, was awarded the 2018 Hudson Prize and is forthcoming from Black Lawrence Press. He currently lives in México. You can follow him at alanchazaro.com and [@alan_chazaro](https://twitter.com/alan_chazaro) on Twitter.