

Christopher Aque

Red-blooded, White-skinned, and the Blues

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Red-blooded, white-skinned, and the blues!

I was fifteen when Bright Eyes released their 2002 album *Lifted*. I can still feel Conor Oberst's voice echoing through my childhood bedroom, still imagine his face obscured by that mop of hair as he screams, “*I've got the blues, that's me!*” It feels melodramatic—embarrassing even—to revisit this now, but in the emotional and martini-induced hangover that followed the 2016 presidential election, I found myself drawn back in, reliving a different darkness.

The months that followed made it seem like the aughts never disappeared, all those moments of self-identification delivered anew. Arcade Fire released a largely ridiculed new album, while Broken Social Scene released one to critical acclaim. I could indulge this nostalgia and still keep up with the new releases, all while a new administration was doing as much as they could to dismantle the social progress of the previous decade.

Flipping through my car's preset radio stations one day, I noticed a station call that hadn't been there before—Alt 92.3, New York's New Alternative. While this model isn't a novel idea—lots of 90s and early 2000s standards plus a contemporary indie crossover or two—it seemed like a sudden change for a station that had until this time been devoted to Top 40 hits, like the majority of New York City's radio market. What became clear was that as these voices of white angst had returned to the mainstream, “alt” had taken on a very different meaning.

Christopher Aque (*1987, Chicago) lives and works in New York. Recent solo projects include *Idling*, Regards, Chicago (2018), and *Frame*, Frieze Art Fair, New York (2018). His work has recently been included in group shows at the Abrons Arts Center, New York (2018); Rzeplinski, New York (2017); SculptureCenter, New York (2016); and Motel, New York (2016). Aque was a participant at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Skowhegan, Maine, US in 2012 and received an MFA from Hunter College, New York in 2016.