

From the Zola System

alexzola



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Location

New York, New York, USA

Birthday

January 30

Bio

I grew up in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, in the Zola System, my father's philosophy of life. He taught my brothers and me the basic life skills: how to run a street hustle, perpetrate a con or recognize when you were being hustled or conned; information we needed so we could feed our families if another Hitler came to power. My father Aron Zola was a Romanian Jew, a holocaust survivor, a black marketeer, a gun runner, a successful entrepreneur, a true citizen of Detroit. When I was 18, I rebelled against the Zola System and moved to New York City. I was fascinated with cultural heroes – Lou Reed, Bob Dylan, Jack Kerouac, Hunter S. Thompson and the aesthetic bohemian artist lifestyle that, in my naivete, I thought they lived. Now I see they were working their own hustles on the public, just like the Old Man. Even the Manhattan dating scene runs on the Zola System. To paraphrase Mark Twain, now that the Old Man is dead, I'm shocked how much he learned. I wrote reviews for SPIN, an unpublished brunch guide for New York City, covered the death penalty, reviewed books for the New York Law Journal and profiled sports stars for the Jewish Forward. I have two crime novels and a bartenders guide to New York City that I am trying to sell. After dabbling in so many genres, I finally realized I'd been running from my subject: my father and the Zola System. The Old Man is gone now and I am his eldest son carrying on as he wanted me to do. This was not supposed to happen.

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MAY 31, 2012 2:26AM

Remembering Robert Quine

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Times have changed. It used to be I'd crawl to the corner to find a cup of coffee, a copy of the *New York Post* and a bagel every morning while cursing the man who invented 8am and weaving in and out of the fashionable dressed men and women on their way to a 9-5 gig. Now, I start the coffee, grab a banana and log on Facebook to check out the action. The moving carnival that was the New York streets replaced with the occasionally narcissistic news of my friends and me. Welcome to 2012.

There are times when the actual information posted is actually breath taking. Such was the case this morning when [James Marshall](#), owner of the now defunct Lakeside Lounge, reminded the Facebook world May 30, 2012 is the eighth anniversary of Robert Quine's death; a fact that felt like a gut punch to your occasionally intrepid blogger.

I'm sure too most out there the name [Robert Quine](#) means nothing. Your point of view wouldn't change if you saw the man on the street. He was bald, wore round sunglasses, frumpy oxford shirts, a blazer and jeans. Bob could have easily passed for a piss poor insurance agent or the middle-aged neighbor who mows his lawn in white shorts and dark socks - instantly forgettable. However, Bob Quine was one of the greatest guitar players to ever hit the circuit. His violent, burning, brutal and occasionally lyrical no wave jazz influenced solos can be heard on [Richard Hell and the Voidoids](#) two records, [Lou Reed's *The Blue Mask*](#), [Matthew Sweet's *Girlfriend*](#) and on tracks by many other artists.

Quine wasn't like other the other guitar heroes of his generation who relied on the lazy listeners to overlook their lack of ideas from the jump – see Steve Jones – or recycled third generation blues licks picked up from old Led Zeppelin LP's and played behind dreamy hair – see Slash. Bob Quine's punk rock solos were equivalent to Charlie Parker or Miles Davis riffs, every nuance had to be listened to and accounted for. Something I had been doing ever since I first heard his long sustained notes and staccato screams on the title track of *The Blue Mask* in December of 1986.

Quine and I became 'street' friends on a late September day in 1988. That was the year of the great New York Telephone strike and since [NYU](#) did not supply its students with phones for their

ALEXZOLA'S FAVORITES



koshersala



Just Thinking...



Lauren J Barnhart



Heidi Banerjee

Out There
1993 to
2002

Brad Nelson

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UPDATES



Set Design
posted by: [Alysa Salzberg](#)



Justice,
Hypocrisy,&
Hosni
Mubarak:Vice's

rooms, I had to go to the NYT office every day in an effort to put down the deposit so someone would flip the switch and my suitemates and I could call home to Mom and Dad. After another unsuccessful afternoon spent in a line, I walked past Quine on 2nd Ave in between 12th and 13th Streets. I literally tackled the man screaming, “Do you know who you are? You’re Bob Quine.”

Fortunately, Bob had a sense of humor, thanked me for being a fan and took me to Eileen’s Reno Bar. He bought me my very first bourbon – a Jim Beam – in that dive. I almost got sick after my second glass looking at the leopard skin wallpaper and fake moose head over the bar.

Two months later I went to see [Richard Thompson](#) and his electric band at the Bottom Line on the *Amnesia* tour. I was quite sick with the latest swine flu to arrive from Southeast Asia and sitting right up against the stage proved to be a bad idea. After the third song, the vibrations bouncing off my chest managed to get me very nauseous. By the end of “Don’t Tempt Me” I ran to the bathroom barely making it in time to throw up into the first stall on the left and scaring the bald guy at the urinal. The bald guy just happened to be Bob Quine.

Shockingly, Quine remembered my name and love for Richard Thompson. “Alex, I think he’s playing ‘Shoot Out The Lights,’” he teased. I turned my head to say fuck you but all I could manage to do was vomit on my hero’s shoes. Quine lifted my head out of the bowl, felt my forehead and dragged me to a cab, all the while bitching at me for even thinking about coming to a concert with a raging fever.

I wouldn’t see Bob again for 3 years. This time I ran into him on 7th Avenue South near 10th Street where once again, he remembered my name and took me to Woody’s for a bourbon or several. He was happy I was working at [SPIN](#) but displeased I was living with a Princess and he guaranteed she would break my heart – he was right.

Over the next 7 or so years, Bob and I would run into each other twice a year, usually at the corner of 6th Avenue and Houston Street; if Bob was with his wife Alice and we’d shoot the shit for a few and then part. However, if Bob was alone, he’d drag me to a bar, buy me bourbon (he never let me pay for a round) and talk to me about my life. That changed in 1999 when he read a wild untamed piece I published on [Al Aronowitz](#)’ webzine *The Blacklisted Journalist* entitled “[Toe Sucking Night At The Vault](#).” One of my old editors at SPIN who was running a new start up magazine had given me a few dollars to write a semi-biographical article about a misadventure at the Vault, a sex club in the Meatpacking District and then rejected it out of hand as too risqué. It was then our chats about my life turned into lectures.

“You can really write,” he told me. “Stop existing and start living.” I was never quite sure what that meant but he repeated it every time I saw him and we ended up in a bar.

Tribute to Virtue

posted by: [Don Rich](#)



Happy New Year
(J D Smith - IP
Challenge # 10)
posted by: [scanner](#)



On Perspective
posted by: [FusunA](#)



Patience is the
key
posted by: [tai](#)



Open Salon
Action Reporter!
posted by: [Con
Chapman](#)



It All Ends As
Fury On Earth -
Iron Poets
Challenge #10
posted by: [J D Smith](#)



Repost: Running
For Congress
with a New Third
Party
posted by:
[koshersalaami](#)

MY RECENT POSTS

[Remembering Robert Quine](#)
May 31, 2012 02:26AM

[The Rabbinic Version Of Hell](#)
May 29, 2012 04:01AM

[Incinerating Chivalry](#)
May 15, 2012 04:37AM

[The Watergate Hotel Solves The
Kennedy Assassination](#)
April 13, 2012 12:18AM

[The Fashionable Assassin - Yalie
#2](#)
March 22, 2012 03:03AM

MY RECENT COMMENTS

“Nothing like a little Israeli self-
defense to bring out the anti-
Semites includin...”
June 04, 2010 11:58AM

“Liz, I’m glad someone had the
balls to say it. Thanks!”
May 19, 2010 06:24PM

“So who does love Chachi these
days? And what would Grandma
Nussbaum say?”
January 22, 2010 01:36PM

“The way I remember the
snapping turtles, you just fed
them, never threw the fish...”
January 22, 2010 01:33PM

“Since I am doing 2-5 in
Scottsdale at the moment, I am
a bit new to the Sheriff J...”
January 09, 2010 05:54PM

ALEXZOLA'S LINKS

New list
[The Zola System](#)

The last time we had a drink together was sometime in early 2001. After that I lost track of Bob until the early spring of 2004. Once again, we ran into each other at the corner of 6th Ave and Houston. This time he looked terrible, ragged, drawn. There was no polite small talk, Bob got right to the point. "You're a writer. Stop existing and start living." With that gem of wisdom offered, Quine turned his back to me and walked away. I with a hearty New York "fuck you" and walked into western SoHo. In early May, I heard Alice had died a year or so earlier and then came word Bob had committed suicide on May 30 by heroin overdose.


I wish I would have known about Bob's troubles. Although I had no idea where he lived, I would have been happy to have wandered his SoHo neighborhood with frequency and looked for him. Maybe he would have let me buy him a bourbon.

We lost an American Master I was fortunate to sort of know eight years ago today. The life of the dead is placed in the memory of the living.

Rest in peace.

AUTHOR TAGS: [the blacklisted journalist](#), [toe sucking night at the vault](#), [al aronowitz](#), [james marshall](#), [robert quine](#), [richard hell and the voidoids](#), [new york post](#), [lou reed](#), [matthew sweet](#), [charlie parker](#), [miles davis](#), [richard thompson](#), [the bottom line](#)

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