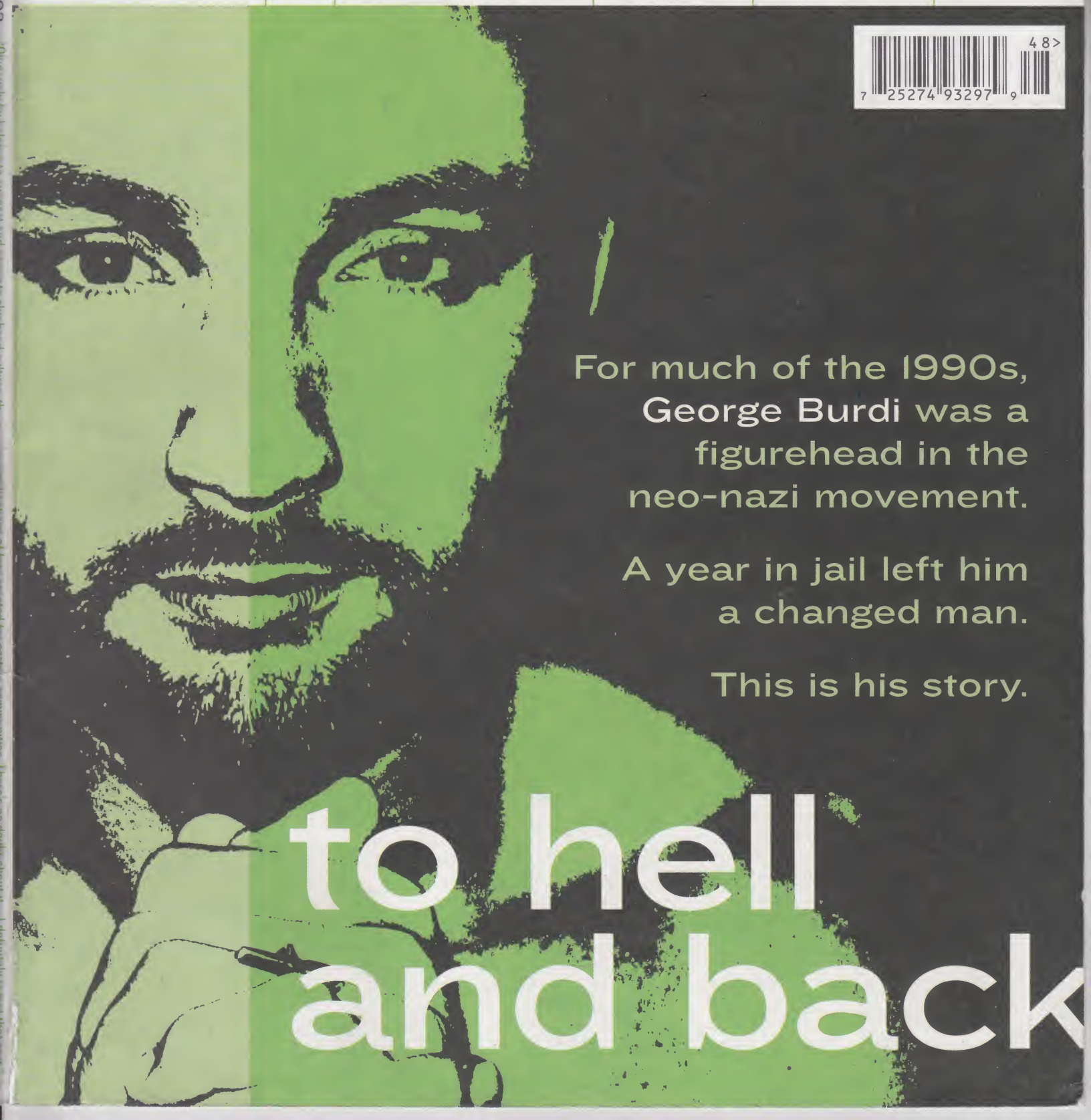


punk planet

ISSUE #48 | MARCH & APRIL 2002 | \$3.95 US
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magazine

death of a one-stop | oval | the dollar in ecuador | erase errata | the dirtbombs | derek hess

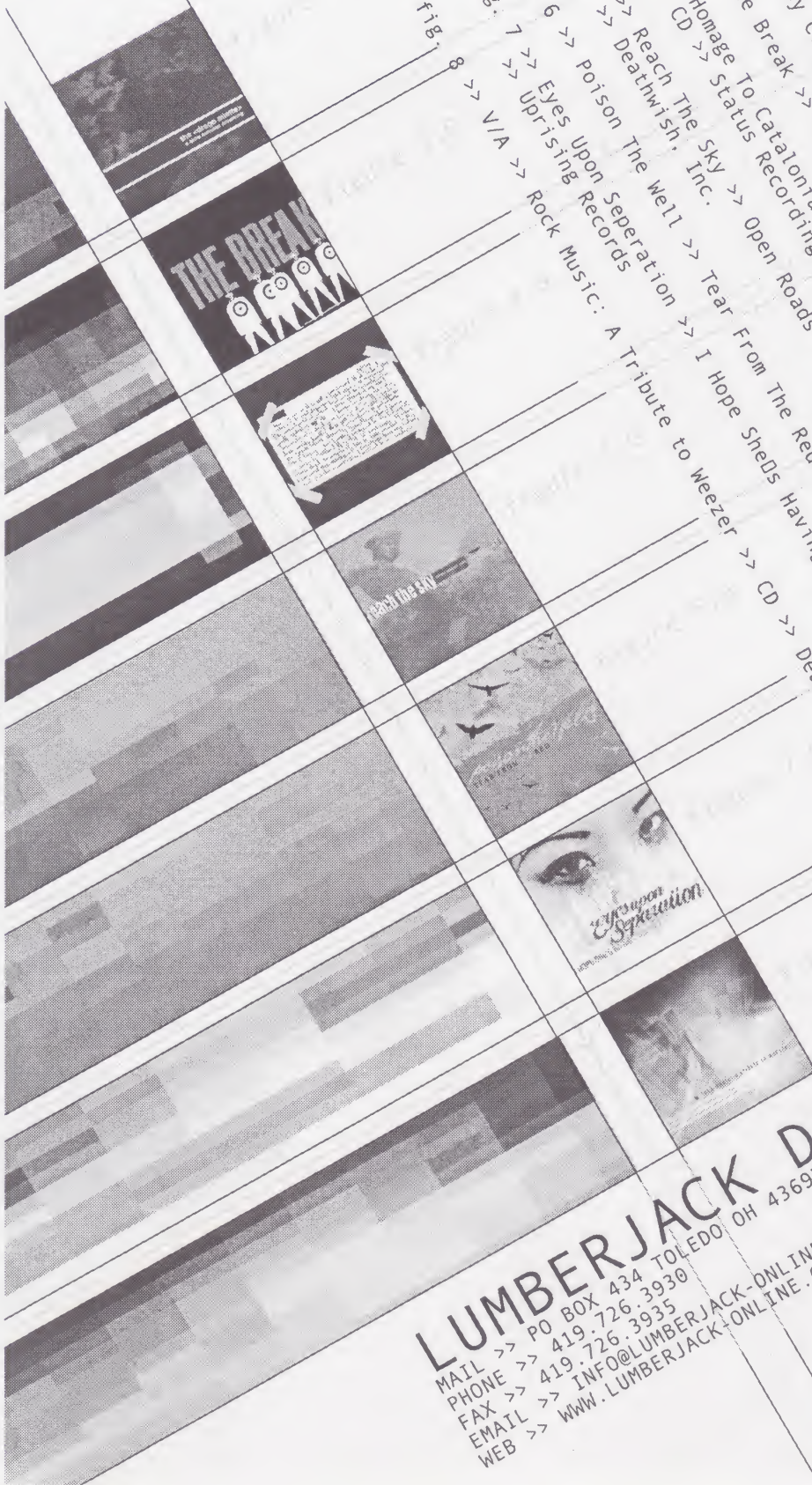
A high-contrast, black and white portrait of George Burdi, a man with a beard and mustache, looking directly at the camera. The image is split vertically by a white line.

For much of the 1990s,
George Burdi was a
figurehead in the
neo-nazi movement.

A year in jail left him
a changed man.

This is his story.

to hell and back



- fig. 1 >> Jesuseater >> s/t >> CDEP >> Deathwish, Inc.
- fig. 2 >> The <Drago Miette> >> A Slow Summer Drowning >> 7 inch
- fig. 3 >> Happy Couples Never Last >> CD/LP >> Doghouse Records
- fig. 4 >> The Break >> s/t >> The Estimated Temperature of Heaven
- fig. 5 >> Homage To Catalonia >> Open Roads And Broken Dreams >> MCD
- fig. 6 >> Reach The Sky >> Tear From The Red >> CD >> Trustkill Records
- fig. 7 >> CD >> Status Recordings >> I Hope SheDs Having Nightmares >> CD
- fig. 8 >> V/A >> Rock Music: A Tribute to Weezer >> CD >> Dead Droid Records

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ERASERHEADS P.70

PP48

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can't come up with some-
thing witty here.

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Chris Ziegler
probably could.

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for PP50 July/August 2002

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Those are the risks ... Are you the gambling type?
the risks

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intro48

Spring is in the air—can you smell it? Or maybe it's just the scent of the Enron scandal that smells so sweet. Either way, I'll take it.

I know it has been said before, but there's something that's so restorative about spring. The knowledge that you've survived another grey-plagued winter. The syrupy warmth of the wind. The new growth reminding you that change *does* come and that redemption *is* possible. Maybe that's what's most important—especially nowadays.

If it's redemption and change you're looking for, it doesn't get much better than our cover interview, "George Burdi: to hell and back." Burdi's journey from the depths of neo-nazism, to the confines of prison, to being a free man who realizes the mistakes that he's made, is one of those tales of redemption that they make movies out of. Except this isn't a movie—it's real life. Burdi tells the tale in his own words to Jon Quittner who took time out from touring with the Tight Bros from Way Back When to do the interview for us. And what a fantastic job he did.

Maybe it's just the excitement in anticipation of spring, or inspiration from the cover interview, but change permeates *all* of PP48, not just Burdi's tale. For those of you keeping score, you'll notice that we're about halfway through a slow-motion redesign that began with PP47 and will wind its way through every section of the magazine culminating in the knock-down drag-out party known as *Punk Planet* #50.

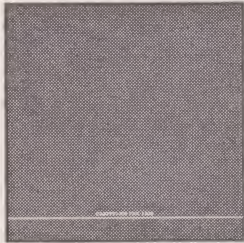
We're moving away from the Xerox madness we introduced way back in *Punk Planet* #29 and towards a cleaner, more accessible approach that puts the writing front and center. Or something like that. Mainly, I'm just scratching an itch that's been bothering me lately. Either way, expect some changes this issue and even more next time, and then expect something totally fun for our 50th issue (anyone feel old reading that? Cause fuck if I don't feel old writing it).

Anyway, enjoy the issue—I really think it's a good one. And enjoy the spring weather. I know I will.

Talk to you soon,

DAN

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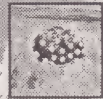
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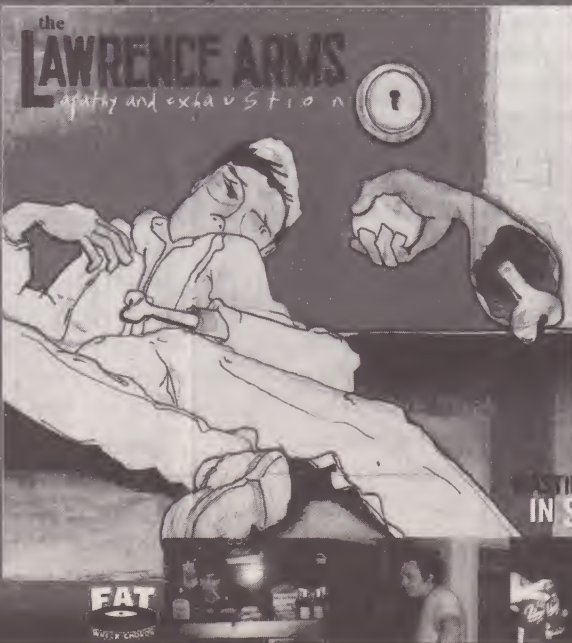
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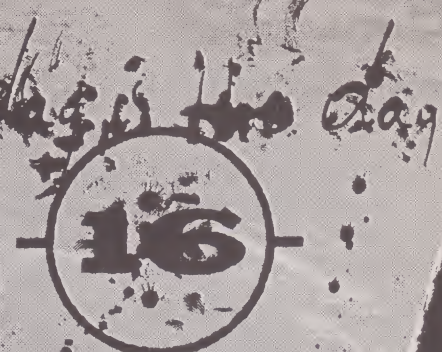
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Punk & STD research

Hi,

My name is Mary. I am 20 years old and I work for a Boston non-profit organization. I am a HIV and STD prevention educator working with high risk youth ages 13-25. I have been involved in the punk scene for almost half my life and the music and what it means to me has a lot to do with my choice of work. I am currently starting up an HIV testing program at a needle exchange program here and at the same time starting up this research project.

I have lost a few friends in the past years to overdose and have friends that are currently HIV+. They were and are involved in the punk scene. I have also been seeing a rise of kids using the exchange that are also at the shows I go to. The scene is fairly small here and everyone sleeps with everyone, it is very incestuous.

My research project is to find out if the current HIV/AIDS risk is as high as it was back in the day (Johnny Thunders, Tomata du Plenty, Chuck Briggs, Darby Crash, the list goes on and on).

My questions I guess are things like are we using condoms? clean needles? are we severely depressed? are we passing STD's from tour? are we educated or is the risk that plagued the past still with us?

This is my community and I love it as much as I love my job. So, with that whole long explanation my question for you is if you or anyone else has had

friends in the community that have overdosed, committed suicide or died of AIDS or AIDS related illness please contact me. It can be anonymous for everyone. If this is something you think you could help me with that would be awesome. I need good research to get the money and the ok to do this and I think it will be really important to see what is happening now. I know I have 2 STD's and I have plenty of friends with a few good ones too, so it is out there.

Thanks,
Fuck Safe, Shoot Clean.

Mary
mwheeler@jri.org

Art & Design praised

Hello.

I never cared about *Punk Planet* until I saw the art/design issue [PP46] last month. I can't stop reading and re-reading the interviews with Shepard Fairey, the Hernandez Bros, Nikki McClure, et al, because they give me this inspirational rush every time I crack the cover. Art and design is [are?] an area of the punk culture that don't get enough recognition and I wanted to thank you all for spotlighting such amazingly talented artists.

As an aspiring illustrator, Shepard Fairey's story taught me more about honesty and creativity than any professor I've had or any art book I've read. His critics are arrogant fucks and I'm glad he realizes

that and treats them accordingly.

Thanks again, *PP* keep up the good work.

Abi

PS. Al Burian's comic/column was great.

PSS. So was the article on the DSLR in Chicago, by Kari Lydersen—we need them in Washington DC so much!

Art & Design not-so-praised

Hey pretentious fucks—

It's just like a magazine like *Punk Planet* to devote an entire issue to artists and designers. What a fucking joke! Didn't you know that punk was about music? It's bad enough that you normally take up half your space talking politics, but to give up the WHOLE magazine to art? What the fuck was the point of that?

I know you did it before, and I guess it made a lot of money for you—at least you admit you're just biting *TV Guide* with the multi-cover bullshit—but to do it again? That's just petty arrogance. PUNK IS ABOUT MUSIC, NOT ABOUT ART.

Now don't even get me started on all the "music" that you cover that isn't punk. I've said enough already.

Brian Austin
Boston, MA

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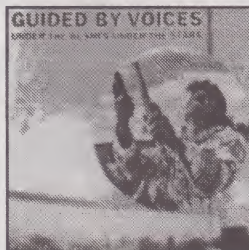
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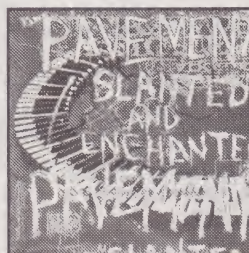
Guided By Voices
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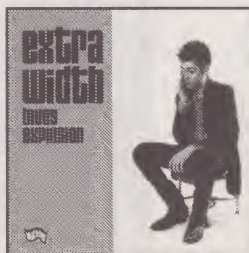
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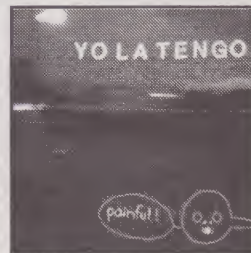
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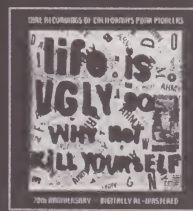
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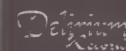
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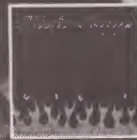
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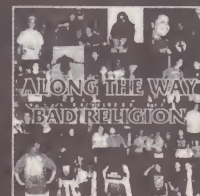
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DOOMED

How am I supposed to write about national events in a magazine that won't be published for another four to

six months? Last October, that kind of time lapse would have seemed insurmountable. From my current vantagepoint (New Year's eve), anything that could be written seems predestined for irrelevance. The evidence of resumed normality is still mounting and only circumstantial. These days I have to make fewer judgment calls, for example, about driving over stray American flags. Could there be fewer flags on the roads? The animated freeway billboards of local car lots still carry their touchingly weird post-attack slogans (imagine the staff debates that produced Chevrolet of El Monte's "NO VICTORY IS WORTH THE SACRIFICE OF IDEALS" or Ford Advantage of Monrovia's "PRAY FOR THE DEAD"), but only as ghostly subroutines, each week ceding more and more airtime to deals on '01 overstock and salesman of the week announcements. At Borders Books of Montclair, the table reverently done up with plastic patriot bunting and dedicated to 9/11 (books on grief, explaining calamity to children, *When Bad Things Happen To Good People*) has slowly been overrun with new paperbacks. By Halloween, only one side remained for The Cause and even that side was demoted after a few weeks to the Default Afghanistan Section and shrunk again through the holidays until all that prevailed was a lone corner for the new batch of 9/11 new-age straight-to-cutouts (like; *Civilization Under Attack; An Astrological Perspective*). Even fiery west coast sunsets—which, for a while there, threatened a type of daily poignancy that, frankly, made me uncomfortable—have reverted to "merely good" sunsets, nothing more, just as prone to vandalism by stray snippets of Pearl Jam from passing cars as they were on Labor Day. I don't know anyone who still boils their water to kill enemy spores. The box of supplies I'd earmarked for Run Out Of The Fucking House We Are

Being Attacked has reverted to Earthquake Preparedness. And the same mental cues I found on a sign in the men's room of the Happy Family restaurant in Monterey Park ("State law and *common decency* demand that you wash your hands" [italics mine]) and which triggered a fathomless depression last September now brings me unexpectedly symmetrical elation when I read, in the men's room of the Staples Office Superstore in Upland, "FREE EX-WIFE PHOTOS - WIPE TO DEVELOPE (w/ arrow pointing towards tp dispenser). Even Michael Bloomberg's election to mayor of New York, while obviously the result of a grotesque clerical error, has a familiar absurdist feel to it, as if a talking pair of pants had staged a bloodless coup. Stupidity is back! I'm not sure how to quantify these traces of commonplaceness, but they're always welcome.

Which is why I feel strange writing about my persistent feelings of doom, in specific the quite strong feeling that New York is doomed. The evidence is just as speculative. It's certainly not a hard thing to come to grips with. It's an impossible thing to come to grips with. There's no reasoning your way through or around the idea's basic obscenity. Maybe this is why so many people have already indexed September into the fold of history, as if the attack was one more bit of interesting local lore, like the blackouts, or Tammany Hall. Radio commentators discuss the "great art" that the daily NY Times mini-obituaries will one day comprise. I've read of photographers "archiving" ground zero for future New Yorkers. From the December 2001 Vanity Fair; *The visual record of Sept. 11 echoes not just the great war photography of the past but the entirety of western art*. Some of this sentiment is motivated by good intentions and some is tastelessly hasty and some of it is just tacky. But all of it is based on the assumption that the worst is behind the city. The cover of the 10/22 Business Week, set over a shimmering backdrop of the midtown skyline, plugs "The Future Of New York". But what if it doesn't have one?

It seems at least as tacky for me to even write about this. Why am I writing this? I guess it's because I can't stop thinking about the city's destruction. And because, despite not having read or heard any acknowledgment of this prospect, I think there must be other

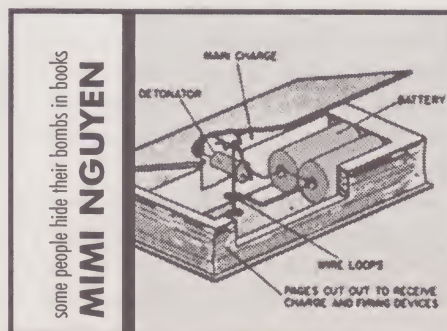
people who are thinking this same thing. And because, after many years of idle speculation, the "New York won't be here forever" speech I've been delivering to various non natives ever since the first WTC attack suddenly seems quite plausible (I last delivered this sermon to J_ of Rah Bras only last May as we crawled along that loop in 495, right before the Lincoln Tunnel, where one can view the breathtaking sweep of lower Manhattan. Rah Bras flew out of Newark for their European tour on Sept 14, the first full day or resumed international flights, and it was J_ who later described to me what the still smoldering hole looked like from above). When I moved to Manhattan as a college freshman I used to lie awake at nights pondering just these unknowables, the threat of instant evaporation. Would it actually be instant? Could it be achieved (as I would want) with no warning, no sirens? I occasionally see the building I lived in that year as background now, in news clips of the Union Square memorials. And I've felt that type of sickly dread a lot in the last few months. It's already been at least five years since the State Department issued their "15 year" directive. As in, it'll be at least fifteen years before rouge elements have access to the kinds of weapons that could destroy a major American city. Those rouge elements probably don't have those weapons yet, but no one now doubts which city is being gunned for. For the record; Soviet suitcase bombs, which may have fallen into enemy hands, still require access codes but, depending on who you read, are *only* .01-.02 kilotons strong—about 1/750th the size of the Hiroshima weapon. Which is enough to kill hundreds of thousands, not millions, making these weapons best suited for dense and vertical cities. The main threat to NY, as I write this, remains the same threat that kept me awake in 1987—launch of a Russian warhead. The closest we came to accidental launch actually occurred right in between those cold war nights and me writing this—after a mishap involving a Norwegian rocket on January 25, 1995.

When Pakistan and India became nuclear powers three years ago; I nursed a similarly obscene thought, which I share now only because I have a similar suspicion that I wasn't alone in thinking it. Namely, nuclear war on the Indian subcontinent might be humanity's best and perhaps last hope for a politically feasible uni-

versal nuclear disarmament. Ok.... that looks pretty gross on paper. Melodramatic as well. Maybe it's not true. But the deaths of millions would lend massive political leverage to a total disarmament campaign, much the same way that Sept. 11 gave new muscle to the worst impulses of the Bush administration. And, just like my earlier speculation about the fate of the Big Apple, it was infinitely easier to contemplate as an abstraction. Now that Kashmir, along with Palestine, is a bookend to the US conflict, all three are more clearly bound to each other than anyone could've imagined.

Local rap station Power 106 started in with the civil defense air sirens in mid September. These little segues between the umpteenth Nate Dogg or Ghetto Fabolous song are actually very well executed in that I am forced, in a haze of adrenaline, to turn down the car radio and make sure I'm not hearing real doomsday alarms echo across the freeway. I understand that this must be a hoot to anyone under 25 (meaning, under 6 when "The Day After" first aired), unaccustomed to cold war response mode. The other night, on a different station, I heard an emergency broadcast test for the first time in years. This didn't activate panic so much as reawaken old phantom pains from Reagan days, forgotten vistas of powerlessness. Some day, say the odds, I'll be hearing one of the bells or tones for real.

I have no idea how to end a column like this.



In his essay "Theses on the Philosophy of History," Walter Benjamin wrote, "The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of emer-

gency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule. We must attain to a conception of history that is in keeping with this

insight. Then we shall clearly realize that it is our task to bring about a real state of emergency."

When Benjamin urged his cohort of critical leftist intellectuals to generate a crisis of political contest, he was responding to the outrages of fascism in the early part of the twentieth century but also to the violence of what Lauren Berlant calls "hygienic governmentality." She describes this as, "a ruling bloc's dramatic attempt to maintain its hegemony by asserting that an abject population threatens the common good and must be rigorously governed and monitored by all sectors of society." She continues:

Especially horrifying are the ways the ruling bloc solicits mass support for such "governing": by using abjected populations as exemplary of all obstacles to national life; by wielding images and narratives of a threatened "good life" that a putative "we" have known; by promising relief from the struggles of the present through a felicitous image of a national future; and by claiming that, because the stability of the core image is the foundation of the narratives that characterize an intimate and secure national society, the nation must at all costs protect this image of a way of life, even against the happiness of some of its own citizens.

In the aftermath of September 11, these means of maintaining and disciplining the US populace are perhaps more obvious (and more entrenched), but they also reveal that the real state of emergency—not this crisis of America "under attack" but the hegemony of state violence against its citizens and non-citizens—has been with us for many years. The apparatus of national culture mobilizes the comic-book politics of George W. Bush to manufacture a set of "core national values" and an "appropriate" response—"America Under Attack," "America Strikes Back," "America: Open For Business." The imagined innocence of US citizens prior to the attacks and the "American way of life" are cited as victims in this war, never mind that many have never experienced America as a land of plenty, or a place of liberty—and that in this period of recession, racism, and reduced rights, many fewer will. That such representations and regulatory practices—of America, of Arabs and Muslims, of "bravery," of the nature of democracy, of the West and the Rest—go unchallenged even as Congress passes retroactive tax cuts for multinationals, the Bush administration rejects an International Criminal Court and pushes to expand the "war on terrorism" across the world, and the Justice Department undermines the Constitutional rights of citizens, is the ongoing crisis.

And while public service messages and politicians' statements urge "good citizens" to recognize Arab and Muslim neighbors as "fellow Americans," the daily proposals for new policies to "fight terrorism," and the thousand or more individuals being held in an eerie limbo of anonymity, are themselves exercises in violence. This discourse—of individual restraint matched by governmental excess—configures the role of the state as an avenger, meting out punishment and regulating liberties *on behalf of its populace*.

This state of emergency and these conditions are not an aberration but the foundation of the U.S. nation-state and its domestic and foreign policy.

Persons who are otherwise perfectly aware of the non-transparency of "feelings" are insisting that this particular event demand some sort of transcendent pre- or post-political reaction, rather than analysis or historical inquiry. But there is certainly nothing pre- or post-political about the anti-Arab/anti-Muslim violence or the Bush administration's declaration of war on that vague specter called "terrorism," that thing that operates so much like "communism" did only decades ago. Or is it because the Right is mobilizing around the issue politically (and effectively), the Left is just meant to bask in the purity of our mourning—? Will this win over the patriots?

Between academic blacklists and high school suspensions, between newsmedia events splashing "America Strikes Back" across our television screens and popular culture reproducing endless montages of picket fences, families, and flags, the national discourse regarding 9-11 in particular has produced a certain set of organizing images and importantly *a certain kind of ideal citizen*. This ideal citizen—a fantasy in her own right—is defined by her passive participation in an imagined democracy. That is, she willingly forfeits her "right" to participate as a critical citizen in a working democracy for a sentimental image of community and unity.

A young Asian American woman on a list-serv stated that, "Even though I am a devout Democrat, I believe that what the nation needs now is unity in hunting down the killers, and not dissent. I am an American."

The statement "I am an American" is both affirmation of her identification with the nation but also an implicit line in the sand, a move toward exclusion. Clearly those who do not wish to affirm their American-ness in the same manner are therefore un-American; it is a "love it or leave it" proposal which leaves little room to critically participate in the democratic process because somehow, *the democratic process is now understood as itself un-American*.

Interestingly and pointedly, another woman on the list asked, "Do you think that if this attack came from China or Japan, that you would be allowed to claim America in the same way?"

To this, she had nothing to say.

Such that every sentiment is a social product, patriotisms and nationalisms are exemplars of this phenomenon as sentimental discourses of inclusion and exclusion. And I want to know what kinds of inclusions and exclusions are being enacted in the name of "America."

In the months before 9-11 the national public discourse was obsessed with the "hidden monster," the child gone terribly wrong, the juvenile offender, the school shooter, the "out of control" teenager. Forms of popular knowledge about adolescence (and in some cases pre-adolescence) imagined young men and

women as time bombs, balanced on the precipice of anxious parenting, turbulent social forces and savage hormones. But in the aftermath of 9-11 we are returned to the figure of the "innocent child," either as the bright and shining future of the nation; the nascent citizen-victim to be protected by the mighty arms of the state; or the unintentionally "wise" commentator whose innocence is the source of that wisdom ("out of the mouths of babes").

On one critical Sunday morning George W. Bush read the following in his speech announcing the nighttime attacks on Afghanistan:

I recently received a touching letter that says a lot about the state of America in these difficult times, a letter from a fourth grade girl with a father in the military. "As much as I don't want my dad to fight," she wrote, "I'm willing to give him to you."

This is a precious gift. The greatest she could give. This young girl knows what America is all about. Since Sept. 11, an entire generation of young Americans has gained new understanding of the value of freedom and its cost and duty and its sacrifice.

This anecdote, which concludes his speech, is quite clear about its message. Bush's (and his speechwriters') use of a female child to represent "what American is all about" harnesses a political agenda to the sentimental image of the infantile citizen. This ideological flourish operates on several levels.

First, it constructs the family as the source of national strength and reproduces a gendered, heteronormative hierarchy of "good citizenship." A number of familiar icons constitute ideal types in this drama of nationalist domesticity: the masculine citizen-soldier, the patriotic wife and mother, and the properly reproductive family. In this instance, the female child who gives her daddy to the state is the model for the wife or mother who gives her husband or son to the state—as a feminine citizen this is imagined as the greatest civic duty she can perform.

Second, this anecdote affirms that the threat to the innocence of "our" children is located somewhere "out there," in which the enemy is the Other of the nation-state. Of course, violence of all kinds happens in the "home" nation—whether welfare reform or domestic violence, racial profiling or hate crimes. There are many children in the United States who are never figured as *innocent enough* to warrant protection, and quite a few who are criminalized (according to race and class) before they even reach adolescence. And admittedly, I wondered if this "dutiful" fourth-grader (if she's not a figment of a speechwriter's imagination) might not want her father out of her home, or her life, for reasons other than patriotism.

Third, this discourse mobilizes the figure of the giving child as the pre-political manifestation of political love. That is, while her willingness to give her daddy to the state is commended as the proper expression of national duty, this "sacrifice" is simultaneously figured as *non-ideological*, as an authentic, emotional instinct rather than a hegemonic narrative naturalized by the imagined innocence of a child. This also is a fantasy of the nation as an ahistorical phenomenon and patriotism as a natural inclination.

A child is supposedly the most "natural" creature (or "lil' citizen") of all, and her sentiments are imagined to be unadulterated by impurities—such as politics or a critical knowledge of U.S. foreign policy.

Fourth, the young girl is understood as a model of proper citizenship, in which the citizen surrenders power and responsibility to the state. Because she cannot or *will not* act on her own behalf, she designates the state as her proxy and protector. She gives up her right to participate as a critical citizen in a nominal democracy (or as a child, having been denied this right) in the name of duty and sacrifice, allowed agency (noted in her effort to communicate with the President and to sacrifice her father) only long enough for her to give it away to the state. This gesture becomes justification for the suspension of civil liberties, the suppression of dissent, et cetera, because it can be said that *she asked for it*.

The story is not incidental—the young fourth-grader is the subject through which power is relayed, and a certain sentimental narrative of national belonging is generated. The appropriate citizen is an infantile one—stripped of adult privileges (e.g., civic participation in a critical democracy) and assigned a passive, dependent role in relation to the nation-state. Back talk, it is implied, are not to be tolerated. We are to refuse debate or dissent because *Daddy told us so*.

Of course there are "other" children being figured in this imaginary, and other things to consider—multiple uses of innocence can operate in complex and contradictory ways. For instance, U.S. media images of armed Arab children may mobilize a different set of representations than George Bush's newly created Fund for Afghan Children (vicious Third World savages versus primitive Third World victims), but the seeming incoherence of these two narratives does not fundamentally disrupt the power to portray an image of "America" as righteous nation and otherwise render the issue of war responsibility ambiguous.

It is this ideal of a naive nationalism that makes it possible for the *New York Times* to print color photographs of undulating flags against clear blue skies, or miniatures clutched in solemn reflection, above a series of articles about increasing anti-Arab and anti-Muslim violence. Perhaps it does not occur to the *Times* that not a few flag-wavers might be perpetrators of such violence, or that the mythically imagined ideals and privileges of citizenship encoded into the U.S. flag have historically functioned as a veil or even a rallying cry for exclusion, and that for some readers this lay-out and its juxtapositions might feel threatening, or horrific, or ironic. And when this is acknowledged, the violence is not necessarily understood as a directed expression of patriotism (produced by both institutions and ideologies), but a sort of instinctual, individual reaction to national trauma.

An article about some Euroamerican citizens arming themselves in the aftermath includes statements such as this from a Mr. Phil Beckwith, "I know just what to do with these Arab people. We have to find them, kill them, wrap them in a pigskin and bury

them. That way they will never go to heaven."

This elaborate homicidal fantasy is not figured as a racist or indeed, a terrorizing sentiment, even while appearing above a photograph of a Yemeni American storeowner's shot-up shop window. Instead Beckwith's violent sentiments are portrayed as pre-political and non-ideological. His statement is narrowly understood as an expression of his pain, his suffering on behalf of the nation, which is somehow more "truthful" because he is infantilized by this discourse of naïve nationalism as emotionally raw and politically innocent in his loving, patriotic identification.

This ideal of the infantile citizen is a political subject created from the suppression of critical knowledge about U.S. foreign policies, but also from *the production* of certain kinds of knowledge about patriotism and political love.

The limits of sentimental citizenship are clear—what qualifies a person as a citizen is *not* her ability to act in the public sphere as a critical participant in the democratic process. Instead her duty is located in her ability to emit certain patriotic *feelings* (and of course, to shop) as the proper expression of national collectivity. These feelings are heralded as a citizenry's best effort to "heal the nation," and are both generated and regulated by a national apparatus of discourses, institutions, organizations, laws, administrative measures, celebrity statements, et cetera. It is forcefully suggested that to feel *differently* is to "let the terrorists win."

The limits of such sentimental and therapeutic discourses for political dialogue are firmly in place. A recent news program featured angry e-mail messages from viewers suggesting that politicians who are concerned about disappearing civil liberties would "feel differently" if they had lost family and friends in 9-11, and that voicing such concerns is an "invalidation" and a "betrayal" of those who died in the attacks. Those who lost their loved ones also in the World Trade Center and Pentagon but have publicly denounced the war in Afghanistan waged in the names of their dead are treated as incidental, delusional, or otherwise bearing all sorts of "unnatural" or "impure" political feelings.

Such discourses leave other analytical, historical, and critical framework unexplored, and obscures the complex nexus of history and geopolitics that has brought about these events. I want to challenge the suggestion that raising the question of U.S. foreign policy in relation to 9-11 and its aftermath somehow signals unrealistic, callous or abstract leftist dogmatism. For those of us with links, ties, and/or roots in parts of the world that have been effected by US/NATO foreign policy in the form of military violence, the desire to interrogate the historical and ideological conditions of US policy is hardly intellectual detachment or "unfeeling" inquiry.

I walked into the lecture hall as the earlier class trickled away, or orbited the professor at her desk. I put my books down on a chair while a young white woman made an ugly face and bitterly complained to a fellow classmate, "I know there are people here who hate America, so why don't they go home?!"

And I suppose it never dawned on her that *some of us are here because you were there*, and I wonder how many more dispossessed—because of war, because of terror—will arrive on America's shores after the rains (of bullets, of bombs) wash away their sense of place, history, and home.

And some of us knew, in any case, that home—or America—can also be a space of danger.

There is so much more I could have said, but let this be a start. I have been encouraged by the wealth and depth of critical debate circulating in the various spheres of my life—academic, punk rock, et cetera. Thanks go to the following: the women who published the Transnational Feminist Practices Against War statement (Paola Bacchetta, Tina Campt, Inderpal Grewal, Caren Kaplan, Minoo Moallem, and Jennifer Terry) and the others who belong to Professors for Peace; Scott Soriano for his intelligent and detailed columns in *Maximumrocknroll*; Craig Willse from *makezine.org* for our on-line discussions; Derrick Cameron for sending me the cheery editorials from the *UK Guardian*; J. Pearson for sharing with me his wonderful thesis on 9-11, patriotism and consumption; and Rachel Szego for her essay "Toward Compassion." And of course Lauren Berlant, whose *Queen of America Goes to Washington City* taught me so much about sentimental citizenship.

As always, contact me at PO 11906 / Berkeley, CA 94712-2906 / slander13@mindspring.com, but leave your death threats and hate mail at home, thanks.



CHRISTMAS
MORNING 1997—
It's 2:00 a.m. and
we're doing 80 on
495 in a dark teal
'76 Cadillac
Fleetwood four-
door. I'm driving.

I've been driving the whole time. Josh is on the passenger side, head out the window. He's only been puking intermittently for the last hour, but I've been wondering if vomit will strip the paint off the side of the car the whole time. This isn't even my car. I mean, officially. Yet.

What started two days ago as a road trip with a perfectly reasonable aim has gone terrifically awry. All we had to do was pick up Hooten's grandma's car from Key Largo, Florida and drive it to Boston, to drop Josh off, at which point the car was all mine. His grandma had died two months before, and left the car to Josh. Little did she know that at 24, he was unlicensed and still refusing to drive, for reasons, which, according to him, were both political and personal. I mentioned to him that the Fleetwood was

my dream car as it was the favored, exclusive of ride amongst both retirees and pimps (in movies), as was the height of '70s towncar elegance, and also the largest cars ever manufactured in America. He says the car is mine for the taking, all we have to do is pick it up. And that was our meager goal, until early Christmas morning, shortly after we left some shitty dive bar that didn't card on the south side of Philly.

We were stopping off for a little meet n' greet with Agnew (Sean, not Spiro), who had, up until then, never met Josh. Although, they had a serious mutual appreciation going on (via internet) which was rooted largely in the fact that they both had a host of bad straight edge band tattoos, which were fast being rendered moot and/or ironic, as they were meeting a bar to drink together.

At about 9:30, we show up at an anonymous blue-collar bar with a shingled exterior and neon Bud Light sign in the window. Inside it smelled like Brill Cream and chicken. Sean was already there, sucking down hot wings from the free Xmas Buffet in the back. He stands up and waves us over to his booth and orders a round of drinks for us—Jagermeister for them, an extra virgin Shirley Temple for me. After two hours of shots of progressively cheaper drinks, the boys have worked their way down to Aristocrat and Schlitz, Sean still in relatively decent shape yelling "Man Up! Man Up!" as Hooten would slam them back in effort to keep up with our host. Their talk is excitable and slurred, peppered with eruption ala "EYE FOR A FUCKING GODDAMN EYE, MAN! NOW THAT WAS THE REAL FUCKING REAL DEAL SHIT!" and "GREEN RAGE—I KNOW! I KNOW". The bartender would give us an occasional glare, for disturbing some telethon bullshit he and the other two old men patrons were watching, though I was the only one that noticed. Circa midnight, both the boys are sauced and swaying; I declare it's time to take our leave of the City of Brotherly Love. Outside the bar, Sean sticks something in my hand—"Listen. This is a little something for you guys, from me, for the drive". A mixtape. I tell Sean thanks, him and Josh do a lot of bro-hugging and slapping on the back, and we're back in the plush velveteen interior of the Fleetwood, heading towards the freeway.

Josh throws the tape into the boom box, as the car has yet to be equipped with a system, and you cannot do a five-day drive with AM radio only. First song is The D.O.C.'s "It's Funky Enough", followed by two Rockwell songs that aren't the "somebody's watching me" hit, though that doesn't stop Josh from singing those lyrics in a booming falsetto. He rewinds the tape, turns the little stereo up full blast, as if to give the tape a proper introduction to the world, and begins again. Josh is now bouncing up and down, straining against the seatbelt. He rolls down the window, sticks his arms and head out, with my hot pink ear muffs over his eyes and at the top of his lungs screams "HELP ME—I CAN'T SEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!" at passing holiday travelers. He turns to me, pops an earmuff up to see me with slaps my arm and yells over the music "This is the best Christmas ever, Hops!" "Pert

near" I say. He turns around to yell at some people caroling on South Street about his ear muff induced blindness, but instead vomits out the open window.

This trip is the first time Josh and I have ever spent an extended amount of time together, despite being good friends for the last two or three years. For the trip he has awarded me the nickname of "Hops", which he insist be my alias and CB handle. "C'mon, I'll give you a car if you pretend to like it" he says. He even went through the trouble of buying a foam trucker hat and writing "I am Hops" in death-metal lettering with a marker on the front. The kid is my best friend, and is giving me his dead grandma's towncar—what am I supposed to do, but take it and wear it with pride and answer "Yes, Josh" when he addresses me "Hops". This is the sort of shit that being friends is about, right?

Josh is now permanently propped out the window, hanging his head, barfing in a tired, slow way. I've turned the blare off the now familiar Rockwell B-sides and instead put on the soft AM radio in the car, which is nothing but x-mas carols. Josh is dry heaving his way through his end of a duet with chestnut-roasting Bing Crosby. I pull-off at the next exit, and let him gag in peace in a truckstop Hardee's parking lot while I get some coffee inside. When I come back, he's sitting on a dirty snowbank, looking sad, holding out the right arm of his hoodie like it's not his own, which over the last few miles, has been covered in his own bile. "I'm not letting you back in the car with that barf on." I tell him. "Do you have anything else you can put on?" "No." he says. I open the trunk to look in with my stuff, already knowing I have nothing except maybe a sweater vest or a trash bag. I do find a plastic Wal-Mart bag of beach-stuff that had once belonged to his grandma: Sunscreen, a giant Garfield towel... and a plus-sized striped caftan. I pull out the caftan and hold it up. "I found the perfect outfit for you, Joshy". It's kind of Nana; it's kind of Laurence of Arabia. He doesn't even have enough energy to look bemused; he doesn't even put up a fight. He takes off his barf-clothes and throws them into the snowbank, dons the beach muumuu. He looks like he's going as Bea Arthur for Halloween.

We get back on the highway; Josh steals my coffee, guzzling it in hopes of sobering up. I tell him he can keep it, because as close as we are, I don't drink after anyone who's spent the evening expelling the contents of their stomach onto the side of the highway. I don't imagine the caffeine will do much for him anyway—still 90% drunk out of his mind, so he's got a way to go. He clumsily tries to occupy himself, checking out the map, playing with the radio, wiping specks of vomit off the window with the wings of the caftan. He settles with putting the Agnew mixtape back on, seeing what it has to offer past the first three songs. It soon becomes clear—a homemade Best of Lungfish. Yes, Lungfish, as in the best band ever! Lungfish as in our shared favorite band, held like a secret, a litmus test for a secret society based on the world according to the almighty prophet and bearded frontman, Dan Higgs. "Fuck yes" says Josh, and grabs immediately for the CB. Despite the CB being a trillion years old and

neither of us having any idea how to work it, this does not keep us from using it at will. He turns it on, picks a station where there are people rogering and 10-4ing back and forth, clicks the "talk" button on the microphone-thing, holding it up to the speaker of the tape deck "Judgement/Condemnation/ Trial and Tribulation / Lock and Keys / And one-way streets / Schedules and Games Plans / Mouth to Mouth and Hand to Hand ...". I imagine that all this is distorted and impenetrable, coming out on the other end, Higgs sounding more like a primeval animal-man birthing a new galaxy of thought than he already does. I imagine the anonymous "they" of long distance truckers, AARP-member with mobile homes, cops, whomever is picking up the scream, that they will hear it as a different kind of howling, having no idea what sort of rubble Lungfish makes of every truth we've ever been taught. It's the sound of dropping to your knees where you stand, digging straight to the core of the earth, shoving fistfuls of dirt straight into yr mouth. It's all personal, it's all political, it's the knowledge we are born with and the joyously unknowable, the secrets of life and the liberation of death. All contained within one bands discography.

"I would live in Dan Higgs beard," sayeth Josh.

"This should be our job. Driving around rural America, playing Lungfish for unsuspecting people. We could get a grant, if we could figure a way to measure the results. It needs to happen. Maybe not in the US, but we could get a grant for this in Canada. It would help people." I am genuine as can be.

"Right you are, Hops, riiight you are" he says.

A few minutes pass, silent as we listen to Lungfish. "I vomited up a blinking eye" sings Higgs. Josh laughs—"Me too!"

"Let's go find Dan Higgs." He suggests.

I look at my watch. It's officially Christmas, by about 30 minutes. "Now?" I ask.

"Yeah now, why not now?!" he says, blustery and incredulous. "Do you think Dan Fucking Higgs celebrates the birth of the baby fucking Jesus?" his arms gesturing wildly, he continues, "I don't fucking think so. I bet he's, like, outside his house... making a snowfort. I think we should go find him, right now. Right now. It's as good of a time as any. I mean, we're almost there anyway!"

"Actually, we're almost to Trenton, New Jersey"

"C'mon Hops, Pleezee. Pleasepleaseplease?! For me?" He squishes up his face and starts making this whiny-crying-dog sound.

"Awright, fine." I have no idea why I say yes, but I do.

"This is going to be the best Christmas, ever!" he squeals and attempts to hug me, but his seatbelt prevents him from crossing the expansive front seat of the Fleetwood.

"Ok, so — how are we going to find him?" I ask.

"The phonebook." He says, smiling, as if this was the most natural answer in the world.

"Josh, people as enigmatic as Dan Higgs aren't in the phonebook. The man wears two pairs of pants, for chrissakes."

"But the mom's of enigmatic dual pants wearers would TOOOOTALLY be in the phone book. Think about it. We'll tell

her we're old friends of Dan's and we're trying to track him down. No one will deny their own child the pleasure of friendship. Plus, I'm wearing a caftan, who's not going to believe that I am friends with him?"

I grant him that much and pull and illegal U turn and head back the way we came on the other side of the interstate.

By 3:00 a.m., we've downed about two liters of gas station coffee, making giddy faith for me, making for near-hallucinations for him when combined with his blood alcohol level. We hit the beltway outside DC, and despite mini-bouts with the barfing, Hooten's in good spirits. "We're an hour away, sir" I reassure him. "Arrrrgh, matey! We will have Higgs in our possession by day-break!" he cackles in a pirate voice, into the CB, while checking his beard for detritus in the lighted make up mirror on the visor.

About 3:45, we stop for gas. I get out to pump, Josh pops the trunk and walks to the back of the car. He reaches in the trunk, grabs the tire iron and looks at me—"I'll be right back. Don't leave with out me."—And heads off towards the phone booth far end of the parking lot. I don't bother to try and figure out what he's doing, but finish pumping and go inside to pay and distract the attendant, as meanwhile Josh attempts to pry and wack the phonebook off it's thick "theftproof" metal cord. I return to the car mere minutes later to see Josh holding the Baltimore metro area white pages in his lap like a proud father. Why he wants the phonebook rather than just the pages we need is not a question I am going to ask at this point.

By 4:00 a.m., we're downtown, in a phone booth, armed with all the change we have. Josh dials, I hold the receiver. Our logic being that people won't be so annoyed if some strange girl, as opposed to a strange man is calling at 4 a.m. Christmas morning. There are five Higgs' and four D Higgs'. I plunk in the change; Josh gingerly pokes the numbers. It rings and rings and rings. We try the next one. Diane Higgs. "It's a machine, what do I do?" "Leave a message" Josh implores. "I can't—What the hell do say—" Hey strange lady, call me back in the phone booth if you know Dan Higgs? ". I pass him the phone. "Hellooo, Diane. This is Josh Hooten, I'm sorry to bother you at such a late hour, but I just got into town and ... see, I am uh, maybe you remember me, an old, old friend of Dan's, from school. Grade school, actually. And I wanted to surprise him and, well, I figured this being Christmas and all, why not give the gift that keeps on giving, you know? So I uh, I'm wondering if, you, perhaps could be so kind as to—" The beep cuts him off. I feel like we're having a Fletch II moment. "Fuck. I got cut off. It beeped." He puts down the receiver and stares at the phone for a second. "That's it, let's go."

"What do you mean, *lets go*", I say, "WE JUST GOT HERE!"

"No I mean, lets go, let's go to these addresses. No one's going to answer the phone in the middle of the night, but everyone would answer their door, wouldn't they? Of course! Of course. Trust me on this one Hops!" he says, patting me on my ear muffs "We are so close! Best Christmas ever, remember?! BACK IN THE CAR, MY FRIEND!"

And so we are back in the car, Josh plotting and studying the map, Lungfish tape now kickin' the gems and jams of side two. By 6:00 a.m., we've woken up three people who are not Dan Higgs and do not know him. After the third one, I elect to stay in the car, engine running, in case we had to make a quick getaway. The third one was where Josh and Mr. Derek Higgs got in a fight on the tennis-racket-wielding Mr. Higgs's porch that involved the man yelling at Josh to get his drunk, blanket wearing ass off his goddamn porch before he calls the cops. To his credit, Josh kicked over a life sized wicker reindeer wrapped in Christmas lights as he ran and screamed "Merry Christmas, Fucko!" Before hopping in the car.

Before continuing, we stop for a quick breakfast at a greasy spoon. The waitress tells Josh that she likes his Three-Wisemen costume and praises him for his Christmas spirit. He plays along, compliments her on her antler-headband. "Don't you just love Christmas?" she ask him. "Yes, ma'am, I sure do." He says. We finish our pancakes and coffee as fast as we can, eager to get back on the road, for the Great Higgs Hunt of '97 is on.

Locating the final D Higgs we have a listing for what involves a complicated drive out to a quiet but cramped suburb. Small, brick, post war row houses with neat little stoops, bushes adorned with festive lights, some have Christmas drawings in their windows, tinsel in the bushes. We pull up to the house and park. There is a life-size plaster Jesus in the manger in the front yard. Two 3-foot tall light-up candy canes bracket the baby messiah. Like they are his parents, guarding him. It is just starting to get light outside.

"What time is it?" asks Josh.

"Approximately 7:45," I say.

We sit, unmoving. Josh turns around and looks at me funny. I look in the rearview mirror, see what he's looking at. "I look like total shit." I announce, unalarmed.

"It's okay, I look like shit too, plus I am wearing an outfit that could house refugee children."

"Plus you smell like you took a bath in a tub full of St. Ides."

"So, basically, what yr saying is I have a lot going for me." He says, laughing.

"Yes, basically."

"Okay, great. Wait here, I'll go investigate."

"I'll keep the car running. Just to be safe."

And with that, he gets out, walks up the steps and rings the bell. The porch light goes on. An older woman, maybe late sixties, opens the door; Josh talks to her through the screen. They glance over to the car. Josh talks some. The woman talks a little and then opens the door. Josh motions towards me to come in. Both him and the woman are smiling. I can't imagine what sort of things he has told her that would make her want to invite us into her home. I turn off the car and make my way into the house.

The woman is clad in a robe, pajamas and slippers. "Come in, come in, get out of the cold!" she says.

Josh makes the introductions—"Jessica, this is Darla Higgs.

Darla is Dan's grandmother."

"Oh it is so nice to meet you," she says, "Please, come in, have a seat—would you like some tea? Or some coffee? Can I fix you something to eat?"—She is all grandma charm and manners. She seats us at a yellow Formica table in the kitchen

"Oh, no thank you." I say.

"I'd certainly love a cup of tea," Josh says. I shoot him a look. A look that hopefully says "We are going to hell, we are lying to someone's grandmother". Josh just smiles back. He starts in—"I was just telling Darla about our little adventure, about being in town and deciding to look our old pal Dan up." He clears his throat. "And Darla told me that, unfortunately, Dan's not in town for the holidays, as he's on active duty"—Darla interrupts—"He's in the Philippines, now. I just got a nice long letter from him the other day. Let me see if I can find it" She puts the kettle on the stove and toddles off into the living room. I kick Josh under the table and whisper—"What the fuck do you think you are doing? She's the wrong Dan Higgs grandma, we can't sit here and drink her tea and lie to her!" I say, as furious as I can be while still whispering.

"Her Dan is her only in town relative. She was going to spend Christmas all alone. She insisted I come in. Grandmas aren't supposed to be alone on Christmas! What was I going to do, tell her to fuck off, that her Dan Higgs wasn't good enough for us?!"

We are interrupted with Darla returning. She's got a letter in one hand and in the other, is a framed portrait of her Dan Higgs, in uniform.

Darla hands the picture to Josh—"Wow, he hasn't changed a bit since Jr. High, has he, Jess?" he turns the picture to face me.

Dan Higgs, U.S. Marine Corps. It's one of those official serviceman portraits. He's about 22 or 23, he looks solemn, stoic even, his face is round and cheeks flushed pink—still a bit of a babyface.

I look at Darla "Still handsome as ever." I say.

The kettle is whistling. She prepares two cups of tea, and brings them over to the table. She sits one in front of me, and one in front of Josh. "The sugar is in that little bowl, right next to the salt. Help yourself", she says, as she sits down. She hands me the letter to read. She turns to Josh and she starts excitedly talking about the wrong Dan Higgs. Josh listens, and nods and agrees wherever he can. I pretend to read the letter. I can't bring myself to actually read the letter. I can't engage the lie any further than I already am. I am convinced we are going to hell and that the baby Jesus might strike us down dead with a laser beam direct from his die-cast manger upon leaving the cozy confines of Mrs. Higgs house. I pass the letter over to Josh. "Sounds like the Marines is quite an experience for Dan..." hoping I sound convincing without being patronizing.

To be continued...

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In comparing earlier versions of the *Diagnostic Statistical Manual* (DSM), one finds each succeeding volume getting larger, and larger,

and larger. Earlier editions considered homosexuality a diagnosis; later editions do not. Later editions are more expansive—more encompassing of emerging illnesses. So it goes to show what I've been saying for years: there are those who merely react to what's going on (most people), and those who truly are visionary (a few who might appear in *Utne Reader*). The medical/psychiatric/psychological establishment is largely reactionary, finding need in diagnosing problems instead of focusing on what creates and exacerbates the problems.

That said, I think there is some value in diagnosing and medicating people, since, culturally, we fuck ourselves up so much. Diagnoses and prescriptions are very beneficial for many people. The fact is, many medications for many illnesses work. Quite well. Is this abused? You bet, especially because of systemic pressure to make money for pharmaceutical companies—not the problem, but rather merely symptomatic of our much larger, ingrained lifestyle that tends to isolate profit toward those at the top of the economic ladder, a symptom also of our hierarchical social system and the beliefs that perpetuate that system.

As the healthcare industry bankrupts itself more and more, after it can't squeeze resources out of the public anymore, people will continue to lean toward more homeopathic approaches to healthcare. Successful doctors and other healers take truly holistic approaches with people to include all influences that contribute to their dysfunctions: culture, environment, family, heredity, individual, etc. That's why people like Patch Adams have truly got it. Adams, along with his group of like-minded visionaries, have accomplished far more to benefit others and their immediate environment than 20 thousand anti-globalization protestors. The latter struggle more with inherent—and very real—paradoxes that characterize much of who we are.

An example: even though the DSM IV indirectly benefits pharmaceutical companies, many people would be dead, more crazies would be out on the streets, and the millions who are depressed would be much less pleasant to be around. There is indeed quite a wonderful social cost in maintaining a medicated culture even though it is fairly transparent. Most don't know which of their neighbors are organically pleasant or cheery because of the happy pills they take each morning. But many of us know which of our neighbors we wish would be taking those magical little Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (e.g., anti-depressants). In other words, despite its corrupt approach, the diagnostic characteristic of our culture is both self-perpetuating and beneficial.

And it continues to sidestep larger issues already raised: how much of what we enact culturally contributes to the dysfunctions we medicate. Since something like widespread contentment or discontentment is difficult if not impossible to measure quantitatively, it is doubtful that many doctors, researchers and other scientists will be attempting to answer these broader questions.

A challenge then remains. The disserved, the discontented ... probably 90-percent of those reading these words: it is up to you to do it. I don't mean taking to the streets, nor do I mean that these problems are your responsibility; rather, because of your passion for a litany of issues about, really, the overall health of our species and life at large, you realize that there is something better for us. Embracing the difficult dichotomies and consenting to them as a reality, instead of fighting for one contrary side, can then bring the broader issues to the forefront.

Good luck.

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**EUROPE TAKE
IV, PART II**
Sunday 16 July
2000 •
Potsdam,
Germany

I woke up at
around two, just

in time for the amazing pasta with tofu that Jörn cooked up. After we'd had our fill, we jumped on some bikes and headed out to the park in the chilly late afternoon air. As we were crossing a bridge, Jörn stopped and turned around to face me. "Did you catch that? It's a van full of British punks and they look lost." We rode up to their stopped van to see if we could help them out. They said they were supposed to be playing a show in Potsdam but they couldn't find the space. We asked what they were called. "Riot Clone." Jörn laughed. "I'm organizing that show but it's not today. It's on Tuesday!" He gave them directions to his squat, Breiti, and said we'd meet them later on. We rode out to the huge park and biked around inside. It seemed to be nothing special to him—in fact, we ran into some of his friends who were surprised to see him there—but I thought it was quite nice. On the way back, he showed me a house he lived in until he was 14 which was right around the corner from the Breiti, which was also next door to the hospital he was born in. I thought that was pretty crazy; I can't imagine living in the same area of the same town for my whole life.

At 7:30 we headed into Berlin to meet a guy named Ilja at Jörn's favorite Japanese restaurant. Ilja had lived in LA for a while and spoke amazingly good English and he chatted away the whole time. He related this funny little anecdote about a guy from

Japan that he used to correspond with. The Japanese guy would always write, "Please send back stamps," at the end of every letter he wrote but Ilja noticed that none of the stamps were visibly altered or had any glue on them. He finally asked him about it and the guy wrote back that he didn't really know what that meant, but since it was at the end of most letters he got from other punks, he thought it was some sort of end greeting like "take care" or something.

We got back to Potsdam around 11 and I talked to Dave from Riot Clone for a little bit. He told me they'd been around in one form or another for 21 years! They had toured recently in the US but I guess it was a total disaster. He found out after it was booked that the guy who had organized their tour was this 15-year-old kid that had never done a tour before, their LP was delayed and not out by the time of the tour, and they paid someone £500 to make some T-shirts that he never made. Their current tour didn't seem to be faring much better. A guy from Poland was supposed to meet them in Potsdam to take them to their shows in Poland and Czech Republic but he hadn't shown up and almost all their shows in Scandinavia had been cancelled.

Riot Clone ended up playing a sort of impromptu show. There were about 15 people there but everyone seemed to be having a good time and had big smiles on their faces. They did a great "encore" which was the guitar player just picking strings and the bass player singing "Qué Será". When I had first arrived in Potsdam, I'd brought Jörn a copy of "Fucked Up and Photocopied", which we looked through for the rest of the night. After a few minutes of drooling over old Misfits and Negative Approach flyers he groaned, "I was born in the wrong country, the wrong year."

Monday 17 July

Somehow I managed to wake up even later than the day before. We had a nice "breakfast" of soy yogurt, Tartex, smoked tofu, sun-dried tomatoes, and hummus. Henrik called and said I needed to pay his phone bill. I had no idea it cost so much to call Jörn's cell phone, but he told me that it was more expensive than calling the US. Jörn gave me a bunch of records: the La Fraction LP, Wasted 7", a Malaysian 7", and some posters he drew. His new band had practice that day so I headed into Berlin. Henrik was asleep when I got to his apartment so I let myself in with a key he'd given me and took a shower. We walked over to our friend Jens' apartment. Jens told us about the time that he saw Black Flag in Indiana in 1986 and that they sucked. "At least you can say you saw them," I said. "Well, I saw them in '82 in Berlin. There were 2500 people at the show and there was a streetfight for two days afterward with the police, which was great fun." I looked at him quizzically. "I was much different when I was younger." I noticed a strange setup near his stereo and asked him about it. He had sold off all his records except for his "favorite 1000" and was in the process of digitizing all of them onto minidisc. Interesting. At one point during our conversation, Henrik used the word

"geil" and Carsten explained the meaning to me. Older people don't use the term but know that young people say it to mean "good". Henrik laughed, "Yeah, you know, young people like Carsten and Jens," (they are both well into their thirties). Henrik and I took the train to the Breiti pretty late and ate some food that Jörn had saved for us from a dinner they had. Man, all those people at Breiti were just amazing cooks!

Tuesday 18 July

I actually got up before noon and Jörn took me out on a sort of "squatter history of Potsdam" bike tour. He pointed out some buildings on one particular street that now have security cameras on the outside "because someone might do something awful like spray paint the building or something." The whole street used to be squatted and there would be street parties for days at a time with huge fires roaring. "The police didn't dare come here." One of the squats was evicted under the pretext of "danger of contagious disease" and even though the squatters won the court case, they were never able to actually re-inhabit the building. It was still abandoned.

We went to a huge supermarket inside the train station to get some food to prepare for Riot Clone. Jörn, who is the best cook I've ever met in my life, wandered around just throwing things in the cart, not sure what he was going to make. In the baking aisle, he tossed some things in with a big smile on his face. "I'm going to make you some chocolate hazelnut spread by myself." He looked quite proud of himself and I was touched. The way to my heart is definitely my stomach.

Back at Breiti, I played my band's 7" for everybody in the pub on the first floor and Marian, who plays in Crude BE, asked if we would do a split LP with them, which got me all excited. They asked me to take some photos of Crude BE at their practice. It wasn't the best time to do the photos since Henrik was missing. I asked what he did in the band. "He plays bass...not very well." Shortly after the practice, dinner was ready. In something like two hours, Jörn had whipped up veggie calzones, some kind of barbecue dish, rice with a nice yellow wheat gravy, three or four pizzas, and a great salad. Riot Clone was absolutely ecstatic about the food, as everyone always is. "We're going to kidnap you, Jörn!"

This night they played the show that was actually booked and properly flyer'd so more people showed up. The atmosphere was similar to the other show, really fun, and the crowd wouldn't let them stop playing. They actually ended up playing one song twice. There was even a dance party afterwards with much beer swilling and spilling.

Wednesday 19 July

I woke up just as Riot Clone were leaving and we said our good-byes. My breakfast consisted of bread and loads of the wonderfully decadent chocolate hazelnut spread Jörn made. He had packed some up in a jar for me to take on the rest of my trip as well as several bars of chocolate. "Are you trying to fatten me up?" I joked. "Yeah, so you will be less attractive and no one will

want to be with you. I will destroy your sex life."

Nadine, Rebecca, and Thomas were all at Henrik's when we got there. I tried to arrange travel to Paris to meet up with my friend Julien but all the buses were sold out until Saturday! I kind of freaked out since I'd already called Julien and told him I'd meet him the next day but I guess that's what you get for flying by the seat of your pants and making decisions at the last minute. I somehow managed to wangle a seat on a Gullivers bus. We made a little visit to Carsten at his new job at Coffee Star, the first coffeehouse in Berlin. I was happy for Carsten, who was singularly obsessed with coffee. I remembered the first time I met him, in Pavia, Italy. He and I stayed with my friend Mila for a while and when he left to go back to Germany, he had taken about five kilos of Italian coffee with him. A week later he called Mila and asked him to bring five more kilos with him when his band was passing through Berlin on tour. I wanted to see Carsten in his element.

He whipped us up some espressos with a flourish. As we sipped away, he explained the whole process of coffee making to us. I saw a tall steel and glass contraption behind the counter and asked what it was. "It's a coffee bean roaster." His eyes lit up. "Do you want me to show you how it works?" He took out a silver tray and carefully weighed out 500g of beans. He hemmed and hawed, removing three beans, replacing two, and finally removing one more until the weight was perfect. He inserted the tray into the machine, pressed some buttons, and the machine started up. The beans were sucked up into this clear glass tube and started whirling around inside of it. The skins flew off the beans magically and they progressively became darker. I was impressed. I spoke with Thomas about German punk and he made me a little list of bands I should check out. A drunken guy stumbled in and Henrik struck up a conversation with him. Thomas shook his head. "It is always like this, he starts to speak with a guy that looks dangerous. Like one time after a show he starts to talk to this really big, muscular Russian guy who said he hated gays and Henrik says, 'Oh, you are gay?'"

Jörn, Henrik and I went to an Ethiopian restaurant. We talked about the potential upcoming Y tour in the US and possibly travelling together in Mexico at some point. They continually ridiculed me for trying to eat healthy but made up for it by paying for my dinner.

Thursday 20 July

As a change of pace, this day I made breakfast. I fucked up on everything but Jörn was sweet and pretended to like it. We met up with Henrik at his apartment and went out to the record stores. There were some good finds: the Upright Citizens double LP for cheap, a Schwarzenegger LP, Purgen LP (a band from Russia!), and Keine Experiment vol. I for DM25 (about US\$11). Thomas showed up at the last shop, which was interestingly enough called Maximum Rock N Roll, and we went out to everyone's favorite falafel place. Although I'm pretty sick of falafel, this place was pretty awesome. They put lots of nice pickled vegetables in the pita

and the patties were really tasty. Thomas started on one of his tangents about girls in the punk scene, why don't they get more involved? Why don't some of them start to play instruments? It was difficult to articulate what I thought about this; the best I could come up with is that girls are not encouraged to play bass or guitar or drums. We're supposed to pick up flute or violin instead, which don't work in most punk bands. I thought it was rather shitty to just dismiss girls like that, as if we are to blame that only 1% of people at shows are girls and only one in every 100 bands has a female member that does something besides vocals.

Jörn and I hurried off to the bus station and got there just in the nick of time. He hung around for a few minutes and then gave me a hug and kiss. "See you again somewhere." How romantic (not being sarcastic). The line for the bus was fucking huge. By the time I boarded, there were no seats left and I ended up having to take a sleeping place by happy accident. I hadn't realized there was a choice between regular seats and sleeping places, which were bizarre-looking bunk contraptions. The sleeping spots were; of course, more expensive so I totally lucked out. If only Greyhound could take a cue from this coach of luxury... In addition to the driver, there was another employee whose purpose seemed rather nebulous. He spent most of the ride harassing the fuck out of everybody, constantly waking people up to ask pointless questions and giving people shit if a man and a woman were laying next to each other in the sleeping places. I wanted to throttle him within 20 minutes.

Friday 21 July

I arrived in Paris at 9:45. Julien and his two friends Zeline and Sebastien were waiting for me. We took a bus to the river and had a nice little picnic next to some sculptures. They shit-talked a few American bands, who shall remain nameless, that had come to tour in Europe and disappointed a lot of people by being assholes and/or not really living up to their supposed politics. This seemed to be a very common complaint from a lot of European punks. By 12:30 we were on a train to Nevers. I thought to myself that I must be the only tourist that ever went to Paris and didn't even catch a glimpse of the Eiffel Tower.

We got a whole compartment to ourselves on the train and stretched out, talking. They discussed at some length the power struggles between the European Union and the US for world domination, which I had never really thought about before. In one little discussion about gluttonous capitalism and luxuriant lifestyles, Sebastien told me about this chocolate shop in Lyon that had truffles with a small piece of real gold on the top. From Nevers we took another train to Luzy where we split up and hitchhiked the rest of the way to the outdoor fest we were going to. The driver of the car Julien and I got into told us the boulangerie in her village baked 800 baguettes for the fest so she actually knew where it was located and took us straight there. We were some of the first people to arrive and quickly set up Julien's tent. He said he hadn't opened it for over a year since it got drenched at the

last leper fest in Belgium. We were hoping for the best.

The fest organizers had done a pretty good job preparing for it. They had dug a shitter and actually put up a tarp around it for privacy and there were bright red garbage bags tied to poles everywhere. There were booths with food and drinks and even lights and tarps for the distros. I spent most of the day looking at records and bought way too much. Everything was super cheap though, between US\$1-2.50 per 7" and \$4-5 for LPs. I was excited to find a lot of Darbouka and Tien An Men 89 releases. Sebastien bombarded me with amusing questions, saying he didn't know any other vegans. "Do you fart a lot? Is your shit like diarrhea?" I met Christophe from Stonehenge and Yann Boisleve from the International Straight Edge bulletin and talked with them about music all night long. I also ran into my friend Bernd and chatted with him, surprised that I saw somebody that I knew. Julien and I turned in around 3:30 but were kept up by a loud drum circle. We joked about taking direct action against the drum circle before falling asleep.

Saturday 22 July

I woke up at 10, covered in sweat, and promptly fell back asleep. Julien woke me at 11:30 to walk into town to get some coffee at a small bar. A really old guy in the bar kept staring at Sebastien's hair and between us and a huge, loud group of other punks, I thought the old man's eyes were going to pop out of his head. The bathroom was really nice with actual towels hanging up neatly on a hook. We went on a walk in an attempt to enjoy nature and found the "river" which was more like a thin trickle of water. I was taking some photos and Sebastien said, "You're like a Japanese tourist." I told him I was somewhat offended by that and he took it in stride, unfazed. "Oh, okay, I'm sorry." I was glad it didn't turn into some sort of pointless sociopolitical discussion, which probably would have happened with most other people. Instead, he asked me curiously if I had ever felt left out because of my ethnicity. We stumbled upon a little church and Sebastien walked in with two middle fingers raised and stole a bunch of candles. I wasn't sure what I thought about that.

Back at the fest, there was free food! I couldn't believe it. Lentils, rice with corn, beans, and peppers, some grains with soya chunks, cucumbers with vinaigrette, two pasta dishes, bread, and fruit. Everything was vegan and delicious, which I couldn't believe considering it was cooked in such mass quantities. I ran into the guys from John Holmes and they looked rather surprised to see me. The last time I had seen Dale was at a Dickies show in Rome two years prior and we marveled at how we seemed to see each other in really random places. Later on in the afternoon we ended up at the bar again to get more coffee and talked about a plethora of interesting topics such as the CIA and how France completely fucked Africa up. I ate some yummy mustard-flavored chips, which I spent the rest of my time in France searching for. Sebastien told me that French companies sometimes add gelatin to juice to make the consistency better and to be careful to read

the ingredients before I buy any.

I somehow ended up touching something similar to poison ivy and it drove me crazy for the next few days. Vomit For Breakfast were one of the few bands I appreciated that day. The crowd went totally apeshit while they played, stagediving, thrashing around wildly on the stage, and grabbing the mike and running off with it. When La Fraction took the stage, I was surprised to see that they were all pretty old. By that time (around three in the morning), everyone was pretty wasted and a bunch of drunk idiots kept climbing up on the stage. I could tell the band were getting pretty agitated and when one guy offered up his beer to the singer, she spit in it. The bass player and singer both stopped the show on separate occasions to ask people to calm down. I tried to stay awake to watch Kuruma Bakudan, the new incarnation of Coche Bomba, but I could only manage to watch a few songs. The singer occasionally busted out this weird-looking pipe instrument and had a crazed look in his eyes. I didn't get back to the tent until five or so and it started to rain, unfortunately.

Sunday 23 July

We forced ourselves awake and had some cold leftovers and coffee. It started to rain again...and then started to pour. We had to walk about one and a half miles in the downpour to someone's car and drove to a small town called Autun to get some food. I bought some amazingly good whole grain bread and we ate in front of what looked like the city hall. The stoplights in this town were made out of silver and were beautiful, almost works of art in themselves. At Sebastien's house in Lyon, I spread out my record sleeves to dry and they got all crumpled up and bumpy. We went out to some of the Chinese shops to get some food and I saw so much crazy stuff I'd never seen before, like dozens of unidentified green vegetables and something called "grass jelly juice". Sebastien said he always wanted to try out some of the vegetables but had no idea how to prepare them. Judging by the looks of them, it seemed like a bad idea to guess at how to cook them.

Back at the house, Julien broke off some pieces of chocolate and stuck them inside some bread. I asked if that was a common snack. "Anything in bread is common in France." Somehow we started talking about this liberation movement for lawn elves that was making some headlines in France. Julien said that people actually drove around and "rescued" the plastic elves and gnomes from their "slavehood". After a nice meal of noodles with tofu and cilantro prepared by Sebastien, they showed me around Lyon. They took me to what they called the "crazy stairs" which were these tiny little steps up the side of a hill. We passed a beautiful old Roman auditorium that was closed to the public. The walk itself was proving to be quite interesting. We went through several little hidden alleyways and passages, which sometimes wound around, up, and through apartment buildings and houses. I have no idea how anyone could possibly figure out where all these pathways were. We ended up at a little park overlooking Lyon and chilled there for a little while, enjoying the view of the

city lit up in the night. "See the Panasonic sign? That's where my house is, in case you ever get lost."

To be continued . . .

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Soundtrack to this column: Björk-Homogenic LP, Concrete-Nunc Scio Tenebris Lux CD, Paintbox-Singing Shouting Crying LP, Manifesto Jukebox-Desire LP, Fire and Ice CD, Weezer-Pinkerton LP, Welcome to 1984 LP, Íslensk Alpydulög-Icelandic Folk Songs, Jón Leifs-Saga Symphony, Godspeed You Black Emperor-Slow Riot For New Zero Kanada LP

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Ingenious, really, how many ways Muggles have found of getting along without magic. —Arthur Weasley, in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*

I'm hesitant to mention Harry

Potter. Almost every time I do, it elicits rolled eyes, clucks of sympathy, or, in the case of one person I hadn't spoken to in a while, "Oh no, not you, too."

Yes, me too. In these times of crisis I should probably be brushing up on my geopolitics and looking into the more arcane subtexts of Islam and Judeo-Christianity, but I admit that for several heady weeks in November, I tossed aside all my more weighty tomes and dashed headlong through all four volumes of *Harry Potter*.

I don't regret it one bit. I don't care whether *Harry Potter* constitutes great literature, whether it's expository of a new zeitgeist, or how it does or doesn't mark a dramatic departure from last century's escapist masterpiece, *Lord Of The Rings*. I'll just say that it's the best thing I've read in ages, though I'm probably hoping in vain that I'll now be able to converse on an equal footing with my six year-old nephew, as he'll no doubt have moved on to something more *au courant*.

I did run into one guy, a normally sharp-tongued and cynical Frenchman, who took the books as seriously as I did, and to the slack-jawed amazement of several other adults sitting at the table, the two of us were off on an hour-long discussion about the characters and plot, talking about Draco Malfoy and Albus Dumbledore as if they were next-door neighbors.

That, I suppose, is the mark of great fiction, when its characters become as real as, or even more real than, the people we meet in everyday life. Of course the use of that test might end up saying more about the quality of our everyday lives than it does about fiction, but as usual, I digress.

I won't even presume to explain why the *Harry Potter* books

have become the best-selling works of fiction since the Bible, though Oscar Wilde's sarcastic definition of fiction—"The good end happily, the bad unhappily"—may apply to both works. Oh, hell, yes I will. *Harry Potter* is wildly popular—at one point various editions occupied six of the ten slots on the British best-seller list—because it's easy and exciting to read, and because it presents a perfectly formed and almost seamless alternative universe in which, as Oscar suggests, good does indeed, however implausible it may seem, triumph over evil.

Looked at that way, it's little wonder *Harry Potter* has become as popular with adults as with children. I stopped being even mildly embarrassed about reading a children's book on the train or bus when I noticed that half my seatmates were doing the same. Was it mere coincidence that this was in the immediate aftermath of the attack on New York and the ensuing war in Afghanistan?

I think not. Although it's long been said that the first casualty of war is truth, an even more immediate casualty is nuance, ambiguity, the middle ground. Fence-sitting is easy enough in times of peace and prosperity, and can even be seen as the mark of a reasonable and thoughtful man, one who doesn't leap to conclusions, who carefully considers every side of the issue.

Times of crisis strip us of that luxury. Faced with an immediate threat to our lives or well-being, we may still know in the back of our minds that the people trying to kill us are the victims of all sorts of historical and cultural forces, that our past or present political leaders have made foolish, short-sighted decisions that led to this crisis, that no matter what action we take or fail to take, innocent people are likely to get hurt. But all that fades away in the heat of the moment: unless we have managed to completely transcend human nature, our first priority is to do whatever we need to do to survive.

Most of us having grown up in a climate of moral relativism that enables us to change our values as easily, if not quite so frequently, as our underwear, we find this a very uncomfortable position. Our parents or grandparents might have enjoyed the certainty of an all-embracing religious faith or patriotism, but today such things are frequently sneered at as a mark of backwardness.

Whether that is true, or whether today's self-styled progressives and sophisticates have merely cogitated themselves into a corner, is hard to say. But it shouldn't be surprising that people who aren't quite ready to go back to the Bible or the simple virtues of national pride would find great solace in the world of *Harry Potter*, a world that embodies the most traditional of values, yet not onerously so.

It's pure fantasy, but fantasy with a believable heart. It's a kids' world where, despite the presence of adults, kids rule. There are troublesome adults—not to mention monsters and demons—but most of the adults are benevolent, even though their role is clearly to be subservient to the interests of the children.

What's not to like about a world like that, unless, of course, you're not a kid and/or find kids charmless and annoying? Our culture, like most cultures, romanticizes childhood beyond all

reason, flatters itself with the notion that children are unblemished innocents, incapable of evil. Which is nonsense, of course: this myth has only arisen because children are good at looking innocent and sweet. They are endowed by nature and evolution with this trick; it is probably the only thing that has historically kept parents from eating and/or drowning their young.

If the child employs the appearance of innocence as an aid to self-preservation, the columnist can always fall back upon digression, which I have succeeded in doing once more. I originally intended to write about Muggles, which, as my fellow *Harry Potter* fans will know, are people who aren't magic. In other words, the dull, thudding masses who inhabit most of the world, all that is, but the few privileged corners where we and our very special friends live.

In *Harry Potter*, there are wizards and witches at every turn, not to mention goblins, trolls, ghosts, poltergeists and giants, and somehow they manage to live in a parallel world with the Muggles without the Muggles ever cottoning on to the obvious. "Bless them," says Mr. Weasley, who works in the Misuse of Muggle Artefacts Department, "they'll go to any lengths to ignore magic, even if it's staring them in the face."

Mr. Weasley is enchanted—well, considering the context, that's not the proper word; let's say greatly intrigued—by the Muggles, who he sees as cute and surprisingly intelligent house pets, bipedal dolphins, if you will. But though he likes to study their ways and play with their toys, he doesn't take them completely seriously, just as most of us, when we're looking for a heart-to-heart with a fellow sentient being, will nearly always choose humans over dolphins.

The usefulness of Muggles is that they're outsiders and always will be. They just don't get it, and in fact can't. By being outsiders, they serve to define what is inside, the true brotherhood or fraternity.

Looking at it that way, we've all got our own version of Muggles to deal with. For rebellious teenagers, parents and teachers fit the bill. Pot smokers can sneer indulgently at the non-dreadlocked brigades, punks at hippies, gays at straights, the cool kids at the ones who aren't in the clique.

As someone whose entire life seems to have been lived in a succession of social (or, more often, antisocial) subsets, I've had plenty of Muggles to contend with. Whether as a juvenile delinquent, a hippie, a druggie, a glam rocker, a punk rocker, an artsy-fartsy cafe type or a tormented intellectual, it's always been a case of my little in crowd versus the great overwhelming tide of lamebrains.

It's embarrassing to admit, especially since I've changed sides so many times over the years that it's hard to keep track of which club I'm in or out of at any given moment. It also sounds like an enormously childish and self-indulgent way to look at the world. But hey, it's also human nature, isn't it? Why else would people all through history team up on the basis of skin color or nose shape, on whether their god had two heads or six legs, and then

proceed to beat the bloody bejesus out of each other for centuries at a time? I might be a snob, but at least I'm not killing anyone.

My reason for writing this, though, is because much to my surprise, I've found myself a member of a new club, one which I never had any desire or plan to join. It's the straight edge club, and even typing those words starts my cheeks burning with shame. I've spent so many years making fun of straight edgers, and making sure that none of the booze they left undrunk went to waste, that it really pains me to suddenly realize I'm one of them.

I haven't become a jock, I don't listen to loud aggressive music and punch the air with my fist while chanting slogans at the weak-willed sheep with poison coursing through their veins, but all that went out of fashion ten years ago or something, didn't it? All I did was stop drinking. It didn't seem like such a big deal when I decided to do it, but as has been the case so many times before, I was wrong.

The reason it didn't seem like a big deal, I guess, is that drinking has been a part of my life for so long that it seemed completely normal. You eat food, you drink booze, you listen to music, just the basics of everyday existence, I thought. There was a time, back in my early 20s, when I didn't drink for a year or two, but that was only because I had discovered drugs, and it took me until I was 23 to learn how to handle alcohol and drugs at the same time.

I gave up the drugs, first cocaine and LSD, and eventually marijuana, when it became obvious that neither my brain nor my body nor my pocketbook could handle them any more. I was so pleased with myself for being able to do so without having to go through rehab or jail that I decided I must have near-superhuman powers. In other words, if I could kick a highly addictive substance like cocaine, I certainly didn't have to worry about some mickey-mouse thing like alcohol.

That was the theory, anyway, and besides, booze was cool. There's all those great country songs (and rock songs, and Irish songs, and blues songs, etc. etc.) about whiskey and beer and wine. Hank Williams was drunk for almost his entire career, and so were at least half of my other musical heroes.

And booze is respectable. If you're going to do drugs, especially hard drugs, you need to keep it under wraps around certain people, whereas no one but a blue-nosed teetotaler is going to think worse of you if he sees you slipping into a bar or downing a beer at a party. As long as you don't get in a fight or fall on your face, no one is going to take much notice of what or how much you're drinking.

Which more or less describes my relationship to my own drinking. Every once in a while I'd wake up with an especially bad hangover or have trouble remembering how I got home, but I didn't get arrested, didn't get beat up, didn't spend all my money and end up on Skid Row, so I must be okay. And besides, I drank high class stuff, good Irish whiskey, the best Californian wines. If I had a drinking problem, I'd be slugging down Mickey's Malt Liquor, wouldn't I?

So no, I didn't have a problem with drinking. But, I began to discover, I seemed to have a problem with not drinking. In other words, I couldn't do it. Oh, after a particularly bad hang-over or an especially depressing week where I went out to pubs every night and had a miserable time, I'd quit for a few days, after which I'd feel great again. Which called for a celebration, which called for... Yep, a drink. Or, more likely, quite a few.

So nothing really changed until I got serious about not drinking, and kept it up for some time. Before, I'd never allowed enough time for the physical and psychological effects to leave my system. Once I did, it dawned on me that the last time I spent more than a couple weeks without being under the influence of drugs, alcohol or both, was around the time I turned 15. For those of you who don't know my age, that means it had been 39 years since I had been fully sober.

More important, it means that I had spent my entire adulthood in a state of altered consciousness. I can remember a time when my reaction to that news would have been, "Cool," but a lot of things seem cool when you're high that don't seem nearly so cool when you're not.

I'm not saying that I regret ever trying booze or drugs. I had a lot of fun, or what seemed like a pretty good imitation of fun, under the influence. What I do regret is not having tried life without booze or drugs, so I would at least have the ability to make a comparison. Okay, I'm doing that now, but it involves unlearning decades of habits and misperceptions that have been around so long it's difficult to tell where learned behavior leaves off and the real me begins.

Once my head cleared up a bit, some startling realizations kicked in. The time when I started drinking at age 15—and took to it so quickly and seriously that my gang nickname was "Drunk"—kicked off a disastrous several years during which I was molested and raped, arrested half a dozen times, set fire to several buildings, stole anything I could get my hands on, twice got cut up in knife fights, overdosed on pills, carried a gun to school and came frighteningly close to shooting some kids. And that's just the stuff I remember.

Whether booze was a cause or effect of my troubles back then, I couldn't say. Probably it was both. What's really mind-boggling is that until I had gone a couple months without drinking, it never fully sunk in just how awful that time was, just how terribly fucked up I'd been, just how fortunate I was not to have killed myself or someone else. Up till recently, talking about those years was like talking about a television show. I'd recount the events as conversational fodder, as if I had watched them happen to someone else.

And realizing that took me to an even more staggering realization: despite having had what seems like an incredibly eventful life, I hadn't been there for most of it. The bad stuff, the pain and fear, I could shrug it all off because I hadn't really felt it. But that came at too high a price, because I had also had to go without feeling the good stuff. The love and friendship, the accomplishments and recognition, all the places and people I'd seen and

met: I'd been sleepwalking through it all. People who read or listened to my stories often knew more about my life than I did.

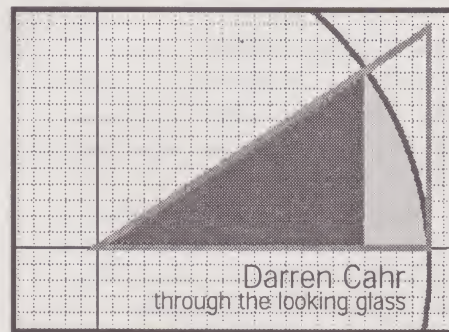
So I guess I'm the real Muggle here. Always on the outside, not even looking in, because I was usually too befuddled to figure out which way *was* in. It's been a bit over three months since I last had a drink. My last binge came in the week or two following September 11; I sat there staring at the TV with a bottle of Jameson's for company, imagining that the whiskey was providing me with the clarity to understand the situation and the sensitivity to grieve over it.

In an important way, September 11 also played an important role in my decision to get sober. In those first days, when none of us knew what was coming next, when it seemed perfectly likely that we might be attacked again, it felt vaguely obscene to be sitting around drunk. I didn't know what if anything I could do to help, but I felt it was important that I have a clear head and a healthy body in case I was needed.

It was really a case of bowing to the inevitable. Many foreign commentators have observed that in the wake of September 11, America has finally shown signs of growing up as a country, of realizing that it can't go on blithely blundering through existence as if the world owed it a living and all consequences were reversible.

The same seems to have happened to me on a personal basis. Having decided at a very early age that all adults were hopelessly corrupt, I'd vowed—probably without being aware of it—never to grow up. I gave it my best shot, and booze and drugs worked as well as anything to keep me in a state of suspended animation. Ultimately, though, it became obvious that the choice was not between growing up and not growing up, but between changing and dying.

And I thought I'd maybe like to stick around for a while. If nothing else, I wouldn't want to miss the next three volumes of *Harry Potter*.



The question that you must ask yourself, every day, is this: am I a jerk?

The likely answer, of course, is yes.

This does not mean that you're a bad person, this does not mean that you are somehow deserving of some horrible fate. It does mean, however, that you acted thoughtlessly, or to malicious effect on others, in pursuit of some unrelated thing. You were, whether you intended to be or not, a jerk.

This is important because, well, the United States is a jerk. Always has been, always will be. This does not mean that it is wrong, or right—just that it is a jerk. Just as each of us is a jerk. The reason why this is important is that many of us often criticize

the United States on the basis of what may seem to be its malicious intent. The United States is doing X, and regardless of the merits of X, the motives of the United States are malevolent, and thus X should be opposed. Unfortunately, this fallacy leads us to (a) poor conclusions about whether or not to support X, and (b) a poor understanding of why decisions are actually made, and how evil outcomes can be avoided in the future.

The complicating factor, of course, is that occasionally our conspiratorial fantasies are true (Henry Kissinger signing off on Indonesia's invasion of East Timor comes to mind) which makes us question all the more intently the things which may, in fact, hide no deeper truth. However, in most other instances, regardless of the eventual bad that may come of it, evil was not the intended consequence, and attacking those who support one position or another as "bad" people accomplishes nothing.

The war in Afghanistan is exactly this type of situation.

There are a whole host of reasons why we bombed Afghanistan—and it is absolutely proper to discuss the pros and cons of bombing Afghanistan. Some may say that it causes more harm than good and kills thousands of people; others say that it deposed a misogynistic regime that permitted terrorists to attack America and kill innocent people. There's the "two wrongs don't make a right" side of things, and the "if these guys aren't stopped they'll kill again" side of things.

Fine.

However, it is bizarre to (a) accuse those who are against bombing Afghanistan of supporting the death of thousands of innocent Americans, or (b) accuse those who support bombing Afghanistan of being bloodthirsty or focused on oil. Both accusations are unfair, and both miss the larger point, which is that both sides are trying to figure out the proper response to a difficult issue—how do you protect your citizens from attack? Neither side is coming up with its solutions for evil reasons—as much as I have a problem with Bush I don't sit up awake at night imagining that he's bombing Afghanistan in order to show off. I think that he, legitimately, believes that this is the best course of action to take to protect us. Whether that's true or not is, of course, a debatable point. Accusing your political enemies of bad faith on every issue, however, does nothing more than undermine your own credibility. There are enough situations where your political enemies are acting with genuine hypocrisy that it is unnecessary to extend bad faith arguments to things over which reasonable people can disagree.

Hypocrisy? You ask. What kind of hypocrisy do you mean? I mean the kind that we should be focusing on, instead of trying to second guess whether or not our leaders really want to protect us or not from a bunch of mass murderers or whether they just want to protect an oil pipeline that hasn't been built yet.

Here's my example:

I happen to think that the Taliban were one of the worst, most horrifying fascist regimes of the past 50 years and I shed no tears at their departure from this mortal coil. They killed women for sport, killed dogs for pleasure, tortured those who disagreed with

them, banned music, destroyed the cultural heritage of Southeast Asia, and engaged in mass rape and pillage in the name of religion. To that extent, regardless of September 11, I think that getting rid of the Taliban should have been a humanitarian goal.

However, one of the other worst states in the world on nearly every count that I just mentioned is Saudi Arabia. The Saudis do nearly everything the Taliban do, except (because they have money and expensive Western educations) they do it with style. They can purchase access to the highest levels of government to present their case. Women are ninth class citizens, and have no rights—at all. They may not travel without the husband's (or, if unmarried, father's) permission. Saudi Arabian money has gone to finance terror throughout the world, and to support religious movements, which are directed towards the suppression of modernity. The Saudis want to return the Muslim world to the 14th century, except with nice cars for the men. And our government, which is so busy bombing the Taliban (which I happen to think is not a bad idea) is simultaneously propping up a corrupt regime that stands for much of the same thing, because it happens to sit on a pool of oil. THAT is hypocrisy, and that's the kind of thing we should be focusing on.

Noam Chomsky has spent much of the past several months attacking the motives of the United States in trying to protect itself. He's barking up the wrong tree. It's not that attacking Afghanistan was so wrong, it's that we are simultaneously supporting other regimes that are not much different. That's the scandal.

The United States is a jerk, and it's up to all of us to tap the United States on the shoulder from time to time and tell it to mind its manners, and to tell it when we think it's wrong. There is no longer any place for "my country right or wrong." However, there is a difference between acting like a jerk, and acting in a deliberate, malicious fashion. There is also a difference between engaging in something that is wrong, but done for the right reasons and something that is hypocritical, and done for self-serving reasons. When we understand the difference between these things, in our own actions and in the actions of others, then we can truly be adults.

Now, if only some of the adults would grow up...



war is not funny
At approximately
12:30 AM on
September 13,
2001, Al Burian
gets stoned and
becomes the first
person in

America to attempt to make a humorous remark regarding the grim and horrific events of September 11, 2001. It goes over,

predictably, like a lead balloon. On the particular evening of September 13, Burian finds himself at a fairly rote, going-through-the-motions-in-a-comforting-ritual-of-archetypicality themed party, surrounded by the usual assortment of punks, tight-sweatered indie-rockers and bespectacled beatniks of his extended social circle, in a small second floor apartment in New Jersey. On the wall hangs a poster for the mid-1970's film remake of *King Kong*. Trying to up the special effects ante and generally adhere to the principles of inflation and supersizing, the producers had elected to have the enraged simian protagonist scale not the Empire State building (his famous 1930's stop-motion venture at getting to the highest point possible on the NYC skyline), but rather, climb the new and improved most gigantic and monumental New York skyline feature, the (now as of fifty hours ago reduced to ash and rubble) twin towers of the World Trade Center. Here in the poster stands Kong, one foot perched on each tower, holding an exploding jet plane in each gargantuan paw. The image is arresting, loaded with intense and unintended meaning, recontextualized into a new and tragic profundity, as so many things have suddenly become. It's as if the true meaning of the image has been always latent, suspended in a time-capsule of fading cheap yellowed poster paper and curled edges, waiting for world history to unravel and reveal itself, setting the stage for the grim punchline. It is left to me, as destiny's hapless errand boy, to wander into the room, read the inevitable writing on the wall, and deliver the line, which completes the great world-historical moebius strip of hilarity.

"Bin Kong," I suggest, pointing at the snarling ape. One person begins a half-chuckle and quickly catches himself in a feigned cough as they realize that the rest of the room has remained stonily silent.

Damn, people, OK, not that funny, but for off-the-cuff party repartee, not that bad. Why kill the messenger? I didn't orchestrate any acts of global terrorism or involve myself in the financing or construction of giant mechanical monkeys for the purposes of cinematic re-hacking in the 1970's. I've merely synthesized the elements, seized the world-historical moment, and made a funny. Somebody had to be #1. The room grows eerie and quiet. People glare. I slink out and lethargic partying recommences.

rock n' roll is not war

War seems to have frazzled the punks. That's an unusual turn of events for the sub-culture, which gave us "let's have a war," "let's start a war," "war on 45," "my war," "wargasm," "war all the time," and so on. The hipsters not laughing at my joke are the same hipsters who thought all the fake terrorist propaganda in the Nation of Ulysses' albums was funny. They thought the diagrams for bombing an embassy were cool, and thought that *13 Point Program for Destroying America* was a really coool name for a record. What embassy did you think they were talking about, New

Jersians? An African embassy? That wouldn't be funny; those actually get bombed. No, they were probably referring to an American embassy. Were none of the 13 points to destroy America going to include any actual destruction?

"Rock n' roll is war," said the rock band Frodus; but you know, it really isn't. "Rock n' roll is just rock n' roll," assessed AC/DC, somewhat more accurately, and, while certainly not noise pollution, it is, in the estimation of the Archers of Loaf, "too bad that the music doesn't matter." Rock remains rock, war remains war, and, despite everything being subjective and meaning something else entirely from what it appears to under the tenets of post-modernity and end-of-historicism, the fact remains that a lot of dead people is a terrible, terrible thing and a lot of people voluntarily self-inducing hearing loss is a less terrible thing. Yes? We are all in agreement here?

punk rock is history

Rock n' Roll is war! Let's "get in the van!" Back in the doe-eyed and innocent first twenty-one months of the new millennium, when things other than access to small-pox vaccine and the impending collapse of the US economy seemed real and relevant, a slew of books were appearing on the topic of punk rock and its sordid history. Seemingly a new one almost daily and amounting to an inexplicable sudden burst of publishing gusto oddly out of proportion with the number of people in the world actually interested in an account of the tour experiences of Black Flag, let alone seven or eight different accounts of the same tour experiences with extensive footnotes, cross-references, conflicting accounts of who was smoking pot and who wasn't, who was into listening to the Grateful Dead tape vs. who was into listening to the Black Oak Arkansas tape during the drive from Tulsa to Memphis on October 6, 1985, etc. But such was the overabundance of cultural production and general lack of important apocalypse-oriented topics available for consideration in the dewy and woebegone era of the early oughts. I read them all. Furthermore, I was fomenting a crafty little scheme during the time of this literary explosion to write some sort of incendiary scather of an essay on the sociological significance of these tomes—yes, this seemed important, well worth my time. I hoped to publish it in either *the American Journal of Sociology*, *the New York Times Book Review*, *Punk Planet*, or xerox and hand it out to people at the next large-scale gathering of kids in turtlenecks outside the Fireside Bowl. My thesis was this: In books such as Mark Anderson's *Dance of Days*, Dan Sinker's *Punk Planet: the Collected Interviews*, or Michael Azzerad's *Our Band Could Be Your Life*, we see a deep need to encapsulate and thus embalm and taxiderm a youth culture; the various narratives all represent attempts at the same obituary. Despite obvious fondness and emotional attachment to the sub-culture, the authors all seem to feel that punk has, in some fundamental way, outlasted itself as a relevant and evolving reflector of culture. We see this in the contents of the books, and in their very form, as books,

encapsulating their subject matter in the cold coffins of dust jacketed shelveability. American hardcore punk, as an expression of cold war apocalypse anxiety, had been born, and consequently died, in a corollary existence to the political circumstances that shaped it.

I know, I know; these seem like fairly irrelevant and self-indulgent trains of thought in the post-apocalyptic world of late 2001. I mean, who cares, really? There are more fundamental and profound issues on the table these days. At the party in New Jersey, a somber young beatnik informs me that he has resolved to make his every living moment count in the face of this great tragedy, to "get drunk and laid as much as possible from here on out." (I stare at him blankly and slowly nod my head; "well, good luck on that," I mumble.) But this, it turns out, is the articulation of a national trend: in the coming weeks NPR will report that Americans are "depressed" and that "there has been a sharp increase in reckless drinking and unprotected sex." Way to suffer, Americans!

grim conclusions

"Listen to me when I say, there is no hope for the USA," sang HR in 1980 or so, his voice reverberating with pre-millennial tension and whatever sketchopolis recording devices were used to commit that first tape-only (tape only! Those were the days) Bad Brains LP to posterity, weighing in with his two cents on the rock n' roll is war vs. rock n' roll is not war debate. But that was 1980; in 2001 we crave entertainment, escapism, low-brow partying and a reprieve from thinking about the bitter end which HR saw headed our way, even back then. The *Chicago Reader*, in a write-up for a recent show by a politics-on-sleeve punk band, smirks, "since young Americans have gotten a taste for real anarchy their appetite for it seems to have diminished." The fundamental interpretive problem of now seems to me summed up in this condescending formulation; that we've lost our "taste" for anarchy, as if it was ever a question of aesthetic choice, as if world obliteration was an '80s fad, like leg-warmers, an unsavory part of history best forgotten or perhaps regurgitated for a few months as a novelty trend. The unfortunate truth is that we have never had "a taste" for war or death; it is death and war that has a taste for us. Apocalypse is out, re-hashed new wave is in, but somehow the world just won't play along.

Here we are, post-punk; anxiously awaiting what is to come next, to see the shape of post-post-modernism. And it is: Cold War retro! King Kong is back, we're on the brink of extinction once again, and the old familiar lines have been drawn. You're either a flag waver or a traitor, just like in the days of Joe McCarthy, except instead of being a commie Red you're a terrorist sympathizer if you suggest any affinity for the great ape, if you imply that maybe he was just misunderstood. Hmmm, this sounds familiar. And I guess it's too bad, all things considered, that the music doesn't matter. ©



AS I SURVIVE THE SUICIDE BOMBER
 DALLAS, TX - Firing on all cylinders, SLOWRIDE's brand of hook-laden, melodic rock is, energetic, aggressive and in-your-face. A layering of punk guitars behind catchy melodies and smooth vocals, SUICIDE BOMBER is a smartly served dose of perfectly executed, pop-fueled punk...a truly inspirational, punk masterpiece. Not since Jawbreaker has any band so successfully combined heart-breaking melody and white noise. (11 songs/42 min), DER-406

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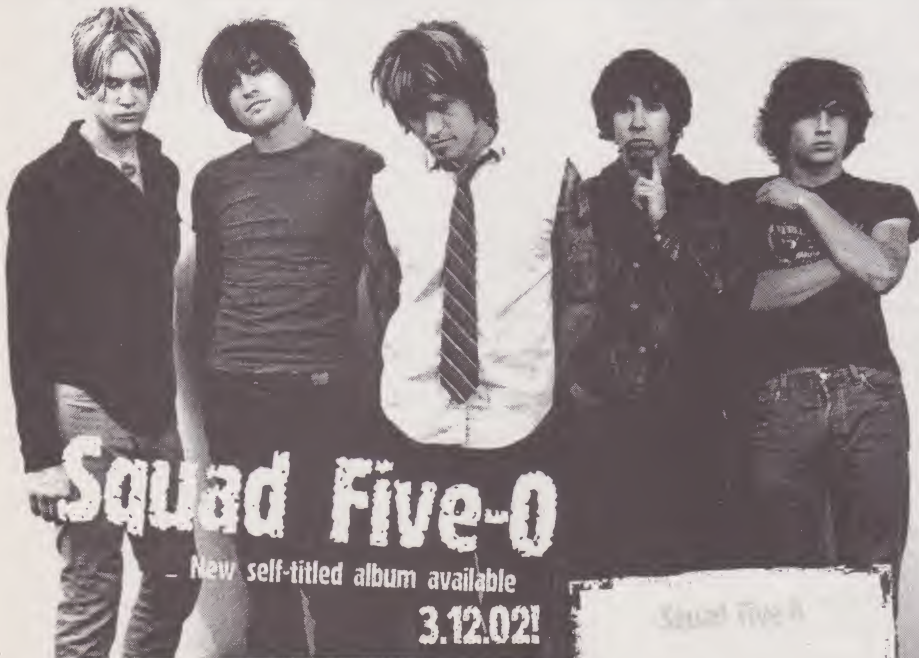
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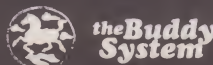
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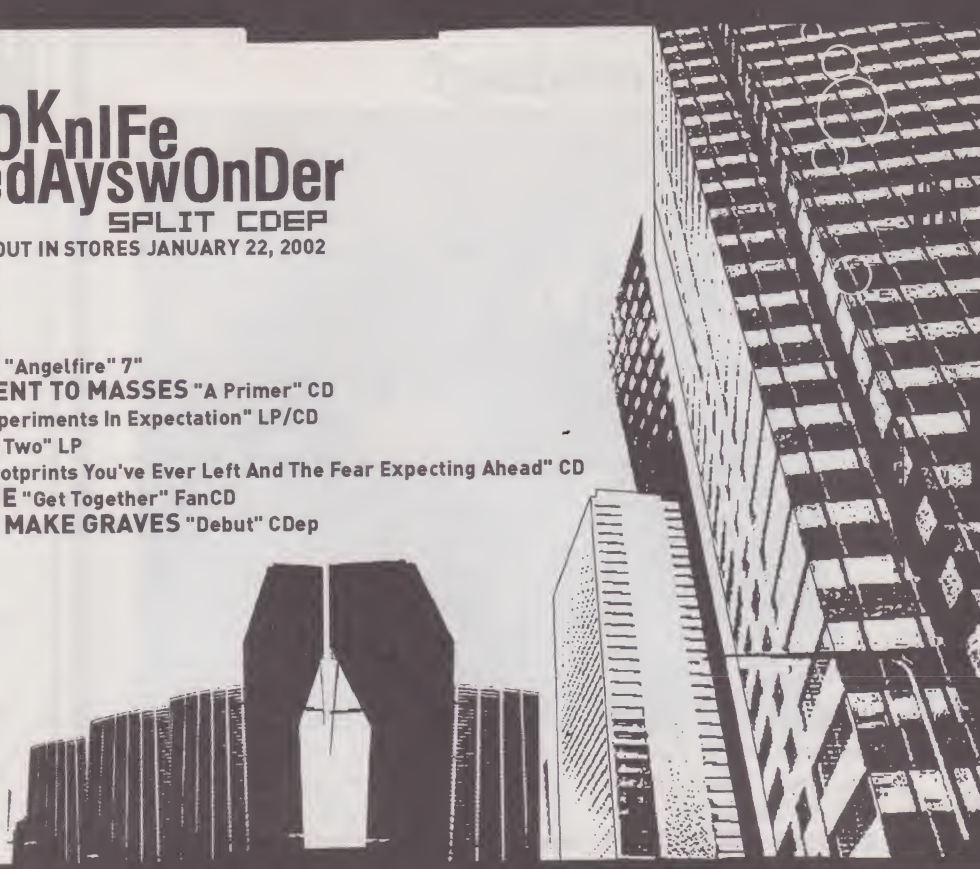
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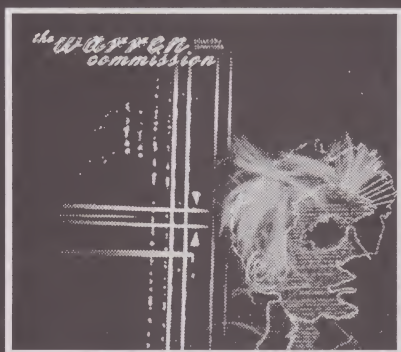
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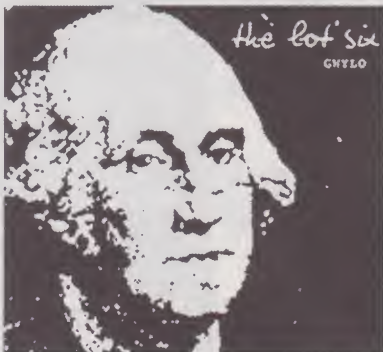
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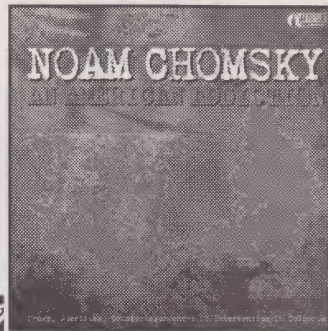


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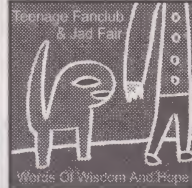
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operating under the name George Eric Hawthorne, George Burdi was the flag-bearer and general of the mid-'90s neo-Nazi youth resurgence. The record label and magazine he founded—both named Resistance Records—were the foundation for the new professionalism and visibility of the movement. Burdi's own band, Rahowa, sold 40,000 records without any kind of major distribution, thanks in part to the Internet's potential to market online; *Resistance* magazine went glossy where only xeroxed, crude hate-tracts had ruled the day a decade earlier; and Burdi himself wound up on CNN, A&E and MTV, and in the pages of *Time*, the *Village Voice* and the *New York Times*.



go
Guardi
hell and back

to hell and back

I wanted to be not just somebody who could make sense with his words first say what he had on his mind. I really talk show making complete asses of

Neo-nazi movements generally have floundered along since the big bang in the 1950s with George Lincoln Rockwell's American Nazi Party, surviving internal bickering between factions and not creating much interest until adherents kill somebody. From time to time, a new visionary with brains, philosophical backbone, drive, and organizational skills arrives on the scene. Hate-group membership expansion and a higher profile follows, and major and minor media wonder where this all came from. The '70s and '80s saw this role fulfilled by Tom Metzger, Ian Stuart (singer of late '70s punk outfit and later white-power pioneers Skrewdriver), and David Duke. The '90s gave us George Burdi and Resistance Records. But while Metzger (who is still active on the scene) was financially crippled by the lawsuit over the skin-head-beating-death of Ethiopian immigrant Mulugeta Seraw, Stuart was killed in a 1993 car crash, and Duke lost the nation's attention after a series of electoral defeats in local and national politics, George Burdi simply came around.

In 1997, while already losing interest in the self-defeating nature of the movement and questioning its ideals, Burdi was sentenced to a year in a Canadian prison for assaulting an anti-racist activist (he maintains his innocence to this day, saying he was tried for his beliefs. His conviction by an all-white jury played a large part in his philosophical turnaround). He took the opportunity to rethink his life, actions, successes and mistakes. Immersing himself in reading and meditation, Burdi later told an interviewer from the Southern Poverty Law Center that he came to the conclusion that racism was profoundly wrong because it "promotes fear and lack of understanding between communities."

Today, Burdi is seemingly a changed man—engaged to an east Indian woman and

playing in the multicultural band Novacosm (his bandmates include two black men and a Jewish man). Despite considerable risk to himself personally, George Burdi left the movement immediately upon his release from prison and went public with his conversion.

Today's George Burdi is 31, a friendly guy who calls you "buddy," talks very matter-of-factly about the ins and outs of being associated with the genocidally-minded, and maybe comes off a little defensive at times; a holdover from his style in the interviews he was giving in the mid-'90s. Being by anyone's definition a reasonably intelligent man, coming under constant attack for his association with presumed ignorant thugs seemed then and now to have taken its toll. Burdi considers his experiences in the movement as an important stepping stone in his life's path; it's hard to argue with that. And, as he added in the Southern Poverty Law Center interview, should he go back to the movement at this point, "somebody should lobotomize me."

Interview by **Jon Quittner**

[Finally connecting after three attempts]

Wow, with your cell phone, there's a trick—the third time's always the charm.

You know, it's never happened with anybody else.

It must be some international thing.

Yeah, it's a telecommunications conspiracy. *[laughs]*

Tell me George, is it the Jews? *[laughs]*

No, it's the midgets. I was wrong about the Jews. *[laughs]* There's a gang of midgets running the world.

How do you feel about having a high profile now that you're out of the movement? Your old cohorts have been known to take revenge.

I would definitely have preferred just to live out my days without being in the public spotlight, but that's just so boring.

[laughs]

Have you had any contact with people in the movement since you raised your head publicly against it?

Oh yeah, I've gotten my share of e-mail. Some of them are nasty, others are just expressing extreme disappointment. A whole other group are people who were once in the movement themselves and they appreciate the fact that I left and that I've had the courage to come out publicly and kind of take my lumps for it.

Have you received threats?

I've received some. Some of these guys are pretty serious, but do I look over my shoulder every day and live in fear? No. You can't live your life like that.

Years ago there was a guy who left the movement in Chicago. The old guys got him and I think they nailed him to a board or something . . .

That was a guy who left The Order. He was part of an organization that's out to "overthrow the enemy." It said right in the oath that he took that if anybody were ever to betray them that, they would behead him.

So I guess he got off easy.

[laughs] When you take that kind of an oath, you can probably expect that to happen. If you want to quit, just quit. Don't go try to rat out all the people you were around when you *know* how serious they were. That's not too smart.

Every 10 or 15 years, it seems like someone comes along in the movement that has real-

was tough and could back up his words with his fists, but someone who and only need his fists to defend himself if somebody told him he couldn't was embarrassed when I would see idiot skinheads on *Geraldo* or some other themselves. My interest in the movement was an intellectual one.

ly got brains and organizational skills. Without those figureheads, the movement seems to kind of flutter around in futility. You were definitely that person in the '90s—you were a North American answer to Skrewdriver's Ian Stuart.

I don't feel flattered, actually—a touch insulted, maybe, but you are of course correct. The truth of the matter is that it's not really a scene with too many bright lights, and I'm not the dimmest one that's ever lived. When I was in that circle, it was an uphill battle to get stuff organized and get stuff done. ¶ It all stemmed from me wanting to get my own music out. My band Rahowa had been signed on a European label called Rebelles Européens. They paid for our recording, mailed us the money to record it—four grand or something—and then disappeared. We decided to release it ourselves. One thing led to the next and sales were coming in. I just kept re-investing the money into signing more bands, because I was on a mission to get these ideas out there and proselytize. It seemed like the logical thing to do.

Back then that idea of reinvestment and level of professionalism seemed strange. It's not often that you run into real, intelligent people in the movement—you stood out.

There's really two distinct movements—there's the skinhead movement and then there's the elitist intellectual movement.

It seemed like you were involved with both sides.

I was kind of like a bridge between the two. I wanted to be not just somebody who was tough and could back up his words with his fists, but someone who

could make sense with his words first and only need his fists to defend himself if somebody told him he couldn't say what he had on his mind. I really was embarrassed when I would see idiot skinheads on *Geraldo* or some other talk show making complete asses of themselves. My interest in the movement was an intellectual one. ¶ It began as an intellectual interest in Nietzsche. I started reading Nietzsche when I was in grade 10. I was reading Orwell, HG Wells, Jack London, Ezra Pound . . .

Were you coming at it from a right-wing angle?

Not at all. I have never considered myself right wing. Everyone inside the movement has their own version of what the movement is, the same way everyone's got their own version of whatever religion they follow. I did not view the old conservative, nationalist approach as really meaning anything. I was very anti-nationalist. I was one of the first people to promote an atheist, racial world-view.

But what about your involvement with the Church of the Creator [an organization that combines religious rhetoric with hate speech]?

The Church of the Creator is very anti-Christian. It's an atheist religion.

I didn't know that until I saw your interview on the Southern Poverty Law Center website. The "creator", in the church's interpretation, is the white man—"creator of civilization."

That's right. Basically, when you start approaching life from an atheist perspective, who's gonna tell you what's ethically right and wrong? On top of that, you're gonna search for meaning in life beyond what convention teaches, because all the ideas that people are talking about

these days don't answer the questions that we've got about our existence—not *conclusively*. Because of that, it means that the answer is something else; it's something that we don't know yet. ¶ For me, I thought the answer was racialism. In reality, racialism was a stepping stone to seeing things from a much bigger perspective. And a necessary process for me to go through, in order to get *beyond* that idea, and in order to look at life from a broader perspective.

Did you think of racialism in a political context?

I guess to a degree, but it was far more spiritual for me. I was raised Roman Catholic, and I used to use the rhetoric of a preacher. I would use the word *spirituality*, I would use the word *soul*, I would talk about finding "higher meaning." I would talk about conquering yourself as a path to conquering the world. I was really talking about the man-god concept, which is one that Dostoevsky and Nietzsche have articulated. The concept that man has the potential to develop his own ethical system that will effectively make him superhuman, in the sense that he will have embodied almost divine qualities while still here on the material plane.

Do you still retain that philosophical aspect, without the racism?

I definitely do. But I've discovered that the idea was hijacked from Buddhism and Hinduism.

Tell me about your upbringing.

I was head altar boy at my Roman Catholic parish. I went to Catholic school in grade school and then I went to an all-boys private Catholic high school.

to hell and back

There's all kinds of reasons why a bad bitter, and they have no love in their life, name it's under—what flag is being flown, line is that you can't fight the human and inspiring them with genuine acts of

It seems like with a lot of people in the movement, they're guys who had no dad and a hard life. It sounds like you had a fairly solid family life.

Thirty-five years later, my parents are still married and happy. I had a *tremendous* upbringing and, if anything, I was very insulated from the hell that a lot of people live in. I remember being 12 years old and making my first trip to an American inner city—specifically Los Angeles—and the fear on my parents' faces. There was no hatred from them, but they were scared. I saw people living in conditions that I had never known people lived in—not in North America at least.

Where are you from?

Toronto.

They certainly have bad neighborhoods in Toronto.

They do now.

They didn't then?

No, not at all. Toronto was 90 percent white when I was growing up in the '70s. Now it's less than 50 percent white. It has changed a lot. The areas that are bad now are the areas that African-Canadians have moved into. Obviously—whether or not people choose to acknowledge the very real problems that this community is living through or whether they want to stick their heads in the sand and play video games and watch television and do all the other mind-numbing things that our culture seems so preoccupied with—there are some *very* real issues that people need to face. But back when I was in the movement, my attitude was "I want to separate from these people. I don't want to have to travel through their neighborhoods to get home."

You got involved with racist literature and such through a girlfriend's dad, right?

He had been in the Hitler Youth. He came over when he was 20 years old and wanted nothing to do with Germany—he was embarrassed to say he was German. He hated Germany and loved everything American. He couldn't get to the States but ended up in Canada. He came to hate Canada far more than he had hated Germany. He started to develop a German patriotism as he got older and really romanticized it all. He romanticized all the things he had wanted to reject so strongly when he was a teenager. He was a very well read man and he knew a lot about a lot of different periods in world history. My father is not a guy to read a lot of books; he's a hard-working guy, the silent type. So I had this older figure that I could have philosophical discussions with about reading Hegel.

In your family there wasn't an emphasis on learning or reading?

There was a tremendous emphasis on getting *me* to read, but my parents themselves weren't avid readers. I read a lot. I got tired of reading novels by the time I was about 12 or 13. I started reading a little more serious stuff—I was reading ancient Greek, ancient Roman literature, all the classics.

When did Nietzsche and Ezra Pound come into it?

That was before I met [the girlfriend's dad]. I knew *nothing* about Hitler. I didn't even know Nietzsche's image had been tarnished by its connection with National Socialism. I'd started with ancient Greek

and worked my way through each century until I got to Nietzsche. Coincidentally, I ended up meeting this German fellow right after I'd started reading Nietzsche. I didn't even know there was any such thing as a skinhead when I already considered myself a National Socialist. I was at Ernst Zündel's one time and there was some mention of skinheads, and Zündel was spewing some very negative attitudes about skinheads—that was the first time I heard about them.

Who is Zündel?

Zündel's a Holocaust denier from Toronto. I think he lives in the States now.

I think it's easier to be a Nazi in the states because Canada has more stringent laws regarding hate literature.

It's a lot easier, which is probably a good thing, I think. I'm not afraid of Nazis proving their ideas. Their ideas are not going *anywhere*. I think we have more to fear when we try to *suppress* an idea. With the Internet, there's no way to stop people from spreading their ideas anyway. All you can hope for is that you do a better job of representing a healthy perspective than they can do representing a bad one. ¶ There's all kinds of reasons why a bad idea takes root in the population. If people have miserable lives, they're really bitter, and they have no love in their life, they're going to be attracted to negative ideologies. It doesn't matter what name it's under—what flag is being flown, what ideas are being presented, what captured their fixation—the bottom line is that you can't fight the human condition. Only by making society healthier, only by uplifting people and inspiring

idea takes root in the population. If people have miserable lives, they're really they're going to be attracted to negative ideologies. It doesn't matter what what ideas are being presented, what captured their fixation—the bottom condition. Only by making society healthier, only by uplifting people sincere concern for the world, only then are we going to be able to change things.

them with genuine acts of sincere concern for the world, only then are we going to be able to change things.

Did you not really hold hate for non-whites at the time, or were you promoting separation of races in order to promote your own interests?

I definitely judged people first on the basis of the characteristics that they exhibited. For example, when I was at the height of my movement activity, I was working for a company where I was an assistant manager and I was in charge of hiring a couple of people. I hired a white girl and a black guy. Later on, when my face was in the paper—there was a half page picture of me in one of Toronto's daily papers—this guy comes to me and says, "What the hell is going on? You're cool to me." I'd shot pool with him a couple of times and he says, "You hired me. Yet I read in the paper that you were at a Klan rally. What the hell is this about?" Because of that, he knew I was not about hate. He wanted to sit down with me, drink a couple of beers, and hear what I had to say. I viewed multiracialism as an unworkable system, and thought that separation was the healthiest way to go so that each culture could develop its own identity without having to be concerned with having their own story of life getting interfered with by anyone else.

That's interesting, because National Socialism—Hitler in particular—did not share that point of view. He thought that Aryans are on top and everybody else has to get lost.

Right, exactly. The way I would have rationalized the difference—I was aware of the fact that I was different—was that I never said that Hitler was my leader. It was basi-

cally the same way that a Marxist-Leninist can say "certain principles apply today and certain ones don't." The core idea of National Socialism is that race is important, that race is a *tremendously* important thing. If you have to boil it down to a sentence, that would be it.

Do you no longer think that race is important?

I feel that there are *far* more important things. But do I think that race is irrelevant? No. Ask anybody about the incongruity of the races and the conditions that they live in and they'll say that race is *very* much alive and a *very* important issue today. I think that there are far more important things that racism overlooks.

I'm surprised to hear that the movement was not so much about hate for you. It always seemed to me that the more rational approach was a public face, even for guys like Tom Metzger. But you went to their websites, there's so much brutality and stereotypical childish cartoons that are straight up about hate.

Right. I used a lot of racial epithets on my first album. But later on, I was still with Resistance, I made a judgement that the first album would never be repressed once we sold out of the CDs in stock. One of my requests that came along with the sale of the record company [Resistance was eventually sold to National Alliance founder and *Turner Diaries* author Dr. William Pierce] was that it not be repressed because of what it contained lyrically. My second album, however, contained none of the same language. This was while I was still in the movement. I was maturing a lot, and I realized that those types of ideas were not what I wanted to be about.

Although it was guilt by association a lot of times—I can't say that I didn't have impolite thoughts about other races—I definitely was not motivated by hate. Even when I *did* feel hate—which I can't deny at times I did—I think that it was mainly my own lack of inner confidence and inner fortitude rather than it was a real feeling of disdain.

I've heard some of Rahowa's stuff, and there was still plenty of stuff about Jewish conspiracies and that sort of thing. It may not be about beating faces in, but where was that coming from?

When you start in the movement, you're told that there's a Jewish conspiracy. Then you go and you try and organize a hall, and there's a Jewish group that's stopping you by phoning the hall and pressuring them not to do it. Of course I understand now that they're trying to stop the spread of these ideas, but when you're in the movement and you're 19 or 20 years old, you go "See! There is a conspiracy." They're trying to stop you.

But that's a far cry from a banking, Hollywood, and a media conspiracy.

Of course. But back then, it was very common for people to put together flyers with all kinds of statistics and information like "68 percent of Clinton's cabinet is Jewish. How is this possible when Jews make up only two percent of the population blah blah blah . . ." You *never* go and find out for yourself whether any of this is true, because you're in a circle of people where *everyone* is reaffirming this idea. You filter out anything that doesn't fit.

to hell and back

I started off really tame and sensible but with on the left that it made me very to a Nazi shouting contest, then look at with scathing words now.

How did you find friends your own age who had similar thoughts? Were you the catalyst that brought other kids along?

What happened was that I was just hanging out with old guys, listening and talking to them. I went to Ernst Zündel's place, and the subject of skinheads was being discussed. As I was saying earlier, Zündel didn't like skinheads.

Why didn't Zündel like skins? Because they were thugs?

Yeah, he thought that they had no class. He said that in Germany during the war, they would have probably been put in concentration camps for being sociopaths. He really didn't like them at all. He thought that they gave [National Socialist] ideology a bad name. But somebody had mailed him a set of Skrewdriver records, so he gave me this tape of theirs . . .

You were turned on to punk rock by Ernst Zündel, a 70 year-old man? [laughs]

Exactly. He gave me this tape and as I was driving home that night, I put it on and really fell in love with it. Skrewdriver were raw, aggressive and full of energy.

You hadn't really heard punk rock until that point—didn't it strike you as being terribly abrasive?

No, it *electrified* me. I was on the football team, I was in the bodybuilding club, I was into Dungeons and Dragons. I read *Conan*. This stuff was obviously exciting—everything else seemed boring in comparison. I wanted something that excited me, that stimulated my imagination. For so long I had not felt like that. Regular life is just so mundane, so banal, and this was like a breath of fresh air. It was

something that stimulated me. I gravitated towards it immediately. I remember not being able to stop playing that tape until it was worn out. I had to hear more. I *had* to figure out how to get more of these CDs. ¶ The next thing I heard was that all skinheads wore Dr Martens, so I went to some stores in Toronto looking for them. When I found the store that sold most of the docs in Toronto, I started hanging out at that store, standing outside there in my private Catholic schoolboy's uniform, waiting to find a skinhead so I could talk to someone my own age. When I met my first group of skinheads, boy was I ever disappointed. I wanted to talk to them about Nietzsche and they just wanted to get beer!

So when did you start wanting to play music?

I actually had been in a band in grade eight. We covered "Come On Feel the Noise." We won our school's talent show and went on to the regionals.

And you were the singer?

Yes, I was. In high school we covered some U2 songs, and played a couple of originals. That didn't go too far.

Wait 'til Bono hears that he's been an influence on a young Nazi. [laughs] Bono is Catholic too, isn't he?

[laughs] Yeah. I've always liked his voice and his music. But getting back to the subject, I'd always been involved and interested in music. I'd also been in brass band and a Latin choir until grade eight, and another choir in high school. I very much loved music; it was a natural thing to do. When I came across a skinhead who was a guitarist, I told him I was

a singer, we got together and started working on some tunes. There was some good chemistry.

Were you hip to any other white power music at the time? I always thought Skrewdriver were great, but all those other bands were horrible!

I liked No Remorse as well, I liked some of Brutal Attack's stuff. Thinking back to all the other bands though, nobody really had what Ian Stuart had.

Certainly. Having run a record label, I'm assuming you have a large white power record collection?

Yeah. I have it in a box somewhere. I'm keeping it for posterity.

So Rahowa was your first white power band?

Yes, it was.

When did you get involved with the Church of the Creator? Before you started making music or afterwards?

I first got involved with the Church of the Creator about three or four months before forming Rahowa.

How did you get to know the Church of the Creator (COTC) in the first place?

A guy who allegedly fought in the Rhodesian civil war gave me a copy of a newspaper called *Racial Loyalty*, which was put out by the COTC. The first time I read it, I almost threw it straight in the garbage I was so shocked. I couldn't believe how vulgar it seemed.

Really? Even though you were already engaging in racist thinking?

Yes, but I never used racist slurs. The strongest thing I'd ever read was

was met with so much animosity by the people I was trying to have dialogue bitter and very angry. I was like "All right then, if you want to reduce this what I've got. I can shock the hell out of you, and I'm going to come at you

Rockwell's *White Power*, which is a comparatively tame book beside this COTC material.

Right, he *only* wanted to execute 80 percent of all Jews, not all of them . . .

The COTC was broadcasting a very clear rhetoric of genocide, of eliminating everybody in the world that wasn't white. As a matter of fact, the slogan of the COTC was "the planet is all ours." That's such a twisted idea! Even though I'd been around racist circles, I still hadn't come across anything remotely like that. I'd always been trying to view National Socialism as always having been misunderstood, that it wasn't evil at all just something that people don't understand.

Even though you thought the COTC was excessively hateful at first, you ended up joining them?

Yeah. I ended up being given a copy of a book called *Nature's Eternal Religion* by the COTC. It was [COTC founder Ben] Klassen's first book. It was more pain than racial loyalty. As he got older, Klassen got more bitter. His second book, *The White Man's Bible*, and subsequent six or seven books got progressively more vitriolic. But the first book, for all its excess, spelled out an ideology that sounded wholesome: Nature as the center of man's spiritual focus, taking away one's focus on materialism and placing it on culture and traditional values. I thought that these principles were good. He talked a lot about organic farming and environmentalism . . .

When you became interested in those ideas, is that when you became vegan? Are you still?

I am. I became vegan because of one of Klassen's other books, [co-credited to Arnold Devries] *Salubrious Living*. It prescribed the most radical dietary program you could follow.

So after becoming a member of the Church of the Creator, did you find yourself more hateful than you were previously?

Oh definitely. *Absolutely*. I wanted to totally overthrow the system. I wanted to spark a worldwide revolution. I was *tremendously* anti-government and anti-authority. I really believed in a scorched earth policy: that if we can't have the whole world, then let's destroy it and then claim it back. Really, I went *way* off in the deep end. ¶ Any kernel of goodness that there was in me, that I tried to appropriate into this ideology, had definitely gotten drowned out in Klassen's voice. I started off really tame and sensible but was met with so much animosity by the people I was trying to have dialogue with on the left that it made me very bitter and very angry. I was like "All right then, if you want to reduce this to a Nazi shouting contest, then look at what I've got. I can shock the hell out of you, and I'm going to come at you with scathing words now. Now you're really going to pay for not having listened to me." I really gravitated towards the COTC because it felt strong, it felt practical, it felt like it fit with the music I was listening to.

It felt *practical* to eradicate minorities from the earth?

It felt practical because it was promoting an ideology that talked about armed conflict as a means of achieving a goal. This is

19-year-old logic—a frustrated 19-year-old's rationale. I thought that this ideology was actually talking about taking tangible *action*, action that could result in a change." Rather than being a part of the crusty old John Birch Society and whining and having candlelit back room conspiracies where you talk about overthrowing the government, I was part of something that was revolutionary in its tone and I felt was part of "Might is Right."

It sounds like you'd lost faith in communication, which it seemed like you'd believed in previously.

Exactly. At this exact same point, as I was getting into the COTC literature, the topic that hit the hardest was the issue of religion. Klassen's *Natural Religion* really hit the hardest on Christianity. It was pounding away at the entirety of Judeo-Christian morality.

This had to do with the religious idea of mercy—that sustaining the weak elements of society was wrong?

Yeah. I felt like Christianity promoted weakness—the feeling that this world wasn't important but storing up riches in the next world was. It said to "turn your other cheek," and "resist not evil," instead of "hate your enemies," and "don't turn your other cheek; if someone hits you, strike them back twice." At this time I also came by Anton Lavey's *Satanic Bible*, which is heavily influenced by [Ragner Redbeard's] *Might is Right*, and is also an ideology that's strongly anti-Christian. I'd been raised strongly Catholic. I'd been devout. I'd read the whole Bible, and actually wanted to be a priest until

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I didn't change my point of view while I was exhausted. I could not maintain society, I stopped thinking with my to change my views.

puberty kicked in. ¶ During this period of time, I was struggling with faith in God. I was struggling with my belief and a spirituality that didn't really sustain me. I was kind of throwing it off. I was looking for a world view—for something to belong to; something to believe in; something to make sense of reality and give me a sense of purpose. The movement represented that to me.

Is it during or after your involvement with the COTC that you start Rahowa and Resistance Records?

The name Rahowa actually came from the COTC. It's an acronym of the slogan Racial Holy War.

When did you start Rahowa?

In 1990 or '91. Right from the beginning we were writing originals and covering some Skrewdriver tunes. We recorded a four song demo and sent that demo around to a few different white power labels that we knew distributed and sold other skinhead bands. We went from that point to the deal with Rebelles Européens—which as I stated earlier, allowed us to start Resistance by accident.

Tell me about Resistance, how it got so much press and attention, and how Rahowa sold 40,000 records. Could you explain how this came to be?

After Rebelles Européens folded, we had these recorded masters [of the first Rahowa record] which we released on cassette. I got COTC's mailing list, and put an ad in *Racial Loyalty*, and made up flyers saying that this cassette was for sale. I got orders for a few hundred cassettes through the mail. I was selling them for 14 American dollars each.

Damn—that's some markup!

It was pretty good money, particularly at that age. What I ended up doing was taking all this money that was coming in and went, "Wow, can you imagine if we had CDs. That would be amazing—we could sell a lot." Some bands that had heard Rahowa were writing me back and saying, "If you're going to release anything else, I have a band." So I ended up signing four bands, and spent a couple thousand dollars per band. We did an initial batch of titles and the CDs started selling like crazy. We then wanted a catalogue, so I said, "Instead of doing it as a catalogue, let's do a magazine. We can use all the pages in it to promote our bands." We couldn't count on positive press from the mainstream media, so we created our own alternative media. Very shortly thereafter, we started a website.

What do you think stopped a label like Resistance from existing previously?

The need hadn't been there. The first bands had been European and the labels over there like Rock O Rama and Rebelles Européens had really been taking care of everything. It was a relatively new thing that had started in 1978, so it took until the end of the '80s for there to start to be a demand in the US for it. There had to be enough of a skinhead scene for the music to get over here. When it did, then there needed to be a label. Since Rock O Rama was starting to go through a whole bunch of legal problems, I saw that as an opportunity to have this music promoted in this country that had freedom of speech laws. I made negotiations to publish the

Skrewdriver catalogue over here and push that domestically. There was a point where we were making several hundred thousand dollars in sales. ¶ But the objective was to increase social consciousness of our issues. I cared so much about the cause—it's all I thought about. Any means we could use to achieve that were considered desirable. We didn't care if we made a profit.

What made you want to be so devoted to such a cause?

I'd been such a devout catholic when I was younger that it was just in my nature. Nothing exists in a vacuum. If you take away your faith in one belief system, it's going to find itself and root itself in something else. That's what happened with me.

So at this point you've got this label and all of these bands who are straight up violent groups, with violent philosophies—and, presumably, violent actions. Did you feel a philosophical affinity with the other bands and other people in the movement?

Yeah. As much as I was leading it, I was trying to fit in also. It was electrifying to hear the strong rhetoric because I was listening to Skrewdriver, and Ian Stuart never really got too strong with his rhetoric. Stuart's rhetoric was nothing like what was coming from the American bands, like Aggravated Assault. Racism, for them, was just the landscape upon which they could be violent sociopaths.

And that appealed to you?

I used to think that Aggravated Assault were over the top, that they were bizarre, but at the same time I saw a lot of punk and hardcore bands that were

still in the movement. I left the movement for personal reasons because that level of activity. After I got out and incorporated myself into regular blinders on and saw things from a much broader perspective and then came

just as violent, but did not have the racism as part of it. There was a lot of violent gangster rap, there was a lot of violent death metal.

Yeah, but you could excuse a lot of that too. A lot of death metal is about war, a lot of punk is also about shouting about atrocities . . .

What's gangsta rap about? It's about gang war. What's skinhead music? It's just a white gang.

But with gangsta, the motivating factor doesn't seem to be hatred based on a philosophy. I'm not ascribing to it any benevolent philosophy, it just doesn't seem to be a philosophically justified violence. Anyway, what I'm getting at is that you were still heavily involved in Rahowa and Resistance when you were convicted of assault.

I was convicted of assault—causing bodily harm.

You went to prison for that.

Yeah. It was at the peak of my movement activity when I was convicted, in 1995.

But you've said that by the time you went to prison, you were convinced that you wanted to leave the movement?

What happened was that I went to jail first for a month and got out on an appeal bail. I went back to the movement for another two years before my appeal came up. It was at that point, when my appeal came up, that I was reaching burnout. ¶ I really used the time in jail as an opportunity to clear my head and figure out what I was going to do with the rest of my life—whether I was going to continue with this, or whether I was going to move on. I ended up coming to the conclusion

while I was inside—this was in '97—that I was going to leave it behind, and that when I got out, I would figure out where I was going to go with my life.

And it was somewhat thought-provoking that you were convicted by 12 white jurors?

That was definitely a factor for me. You can argue your point and restate your argument repeatedly, but sooner or later you have to come to the conclusion that having put forth your arguments, people have had a chance to hear you out and they're still not swayed. That's got to tell you something. The ultimate litmus test is to prove the viability of an idea—whether or not that idea succeeds.

Maybe, but it doesn't have to succeed in your lifetime. Christianity didn't succeed in Christ's lifetime.

But the fact of the matter is that every idea will stick around in some form or another. It'll evolve according to the times. And if some time in the future comes when that idea is suddenly more viable or makes more sense, the people of that era will then resurrect it. What became clear to me was that this idea, first and foremost, is not viable for this day and age. This is not the direction that society is headed in. This idea has no place in this society. No one is listening. It's not going to go anywhere.

If society had been picking up on racist ideas, would you not have been pushed to leave the movement?

It's really hard for me to speculate. If I had not been met with so much frustration, I may have ended up never reaching the point of burnout that made me rethink my life. I didn't change my point

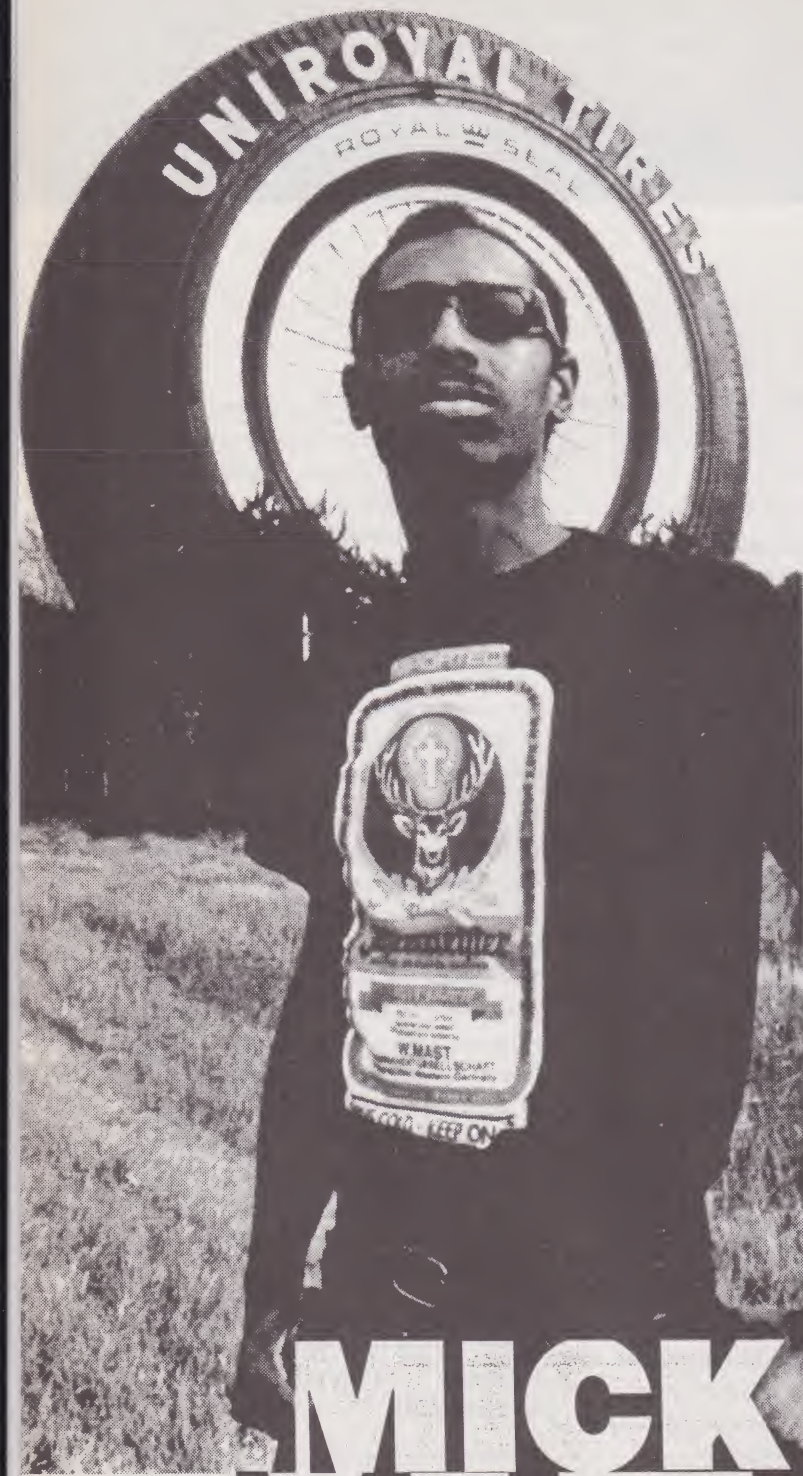
of view while still in the movement. I left the movement for personal reasons because I was exhausted. I could not maintain that level of activity. After I got out and incorporated myself into regular society, I stopped thinking with my blinders on and saw things from a much broader perspective and then came to change my views.

The pain that your work caused minorities and the people you were working against doesn't give you trouble?

It's all part of the growing pains our society has to go through. You can eliminate racism from the world, and the world will still be a mess of problems. So I don't think that there's any monopoly that any one school of thought has on creating fear or misery. The majority of the ideas that I was putting out there with all the records, were being purchased by people who wanted to hear them—they wanted to buy them. Obviously by helping to support and promote skinhead culture, there were ramifications of fear created for certain communities, there's no doubt about it. I definitely regret that part.

It may be redundant, but do you have any specific regrets about your time in the movement? Or do you value it as a learning experience?

Nobody would ever voluntarily put it upon themselves the problems that I brought upon myself. You would kick and fight and do whatever you could to prevent yourself from having to go through those things. I think that's the way it is for most growth periods in your life. But looking back now, I definitely wouldn't change it. A lot of my growth occurred as a result. ©



MICK COLLINS

THE EDITOR

Mick Collins is a true punk in the Detroit garage gang. Although he's best known for his work in the seminal stripped down, bugged out garage act The Gories, Collins refuses to be anchored to one genre, making whatever kind of fucking racket he pleases. The Motor City native who has spun soul and ska records, experimented with house music, has plans for future techno releases, and worked on side projects that stray into shoegazer pop and avant-garde rock. He's sung backup for Andre Williams and Rocket from the Crypt, remixed the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, and produced albums for the Demolition Doll Rods and the Dirtys.

Collins not only possesses the kinda music making energy that makes most rock 'n' rollers look like pussies, he's also been blessed with a deep, velvety voice—that glides through the Stevie Wonder and Smokey Robinson songs of his youth on the second full length release (*Ultraglide in Black*) by his eclectic act, the Dirtbombs. The idea for the Dirtbombs—a band with two bassists that formed at a time when kicking out the bassist was *de rigeur* in the punk scene—first came to Collins while in Europe with the Gories nine years ago. The band officially started playing together in 1995. Now in its 11th lineup—“There's enough ex Dirtbombs to make five whole bands. There's a couple people whose names I don't even remember,” laughs Collins—the vocalist/guitarist commandeers drummers Ben Blackwell and Pat Patano and bassists Jim Diamond and Tom Potter into a meandering world of musical styles.

Unlike Collins' other projects (Blacktop, The Screws, and the King Sound Quartet), the Dirtbombs puts the frontman's ideas front and center, but he wants to clarify that doesn't make him some kinda dictator. “The auteur

approach—*vis a vie* the Dirtbombs—gives me that much more freedom than with the other bands, and that's the reason I prefer it. It gives me the freedom to do things that I wouldn't ordinarily be able to do.”

I recently chatted with Collins via telephone from Detroit, so the man with the deeply infectious laugh could fill us in on what makes this self-assessed “freak” such an enduring musical talent.

Interview by **Jennifer Maerz**

What are some of your earliest memories about growing up in Detroit?

[laughs] Well, actually, they all involve records. My earliest memory is of this record called *Girl from Kenya* by the Fabulous Counts. I remember my sisters and some of their friends would go off every week and buy records and all these girls would get together and have a record listening party. After I got to be three or four I got sent off with them to go play. They would sit around and talk about records and boys and I'd listen to the records. I couldn't be bothered with the rest of it.

Were you a record collector from early on?

I wouldn't say I was a record collector, but we had *lots* of records around. My dad used to fix the car of the guy who owned the states' largest record distributor. The distributor was right across the street from the service station. This guy found out that my dad had a bunch of kids, and so he would give my dad new records that would come in every week. This started in the mid '50s, so we had tons of old 45s around the house all the time.

What's the biggest score you made on that deal?

Actually we had to leave a lot of them. We moved and my dad decided we weren't gonna take all those records with us. We had a basement full of records and we ended up leaving most of them.

I just read an interview with you where you talked about Detroit radio . . .

[laughs] Yeah, that was probably my biggest influence. Detroit had amazing radio from around '79 up until the summer of '82. There was a lack of playlists, so the DJs could play anything they wanted. I won't say they had complete freedom, but they had a great deal of freedom to play anything they wanted. So guys would play classical music and James Brown and Jimi Hendrix and whatever else they felt all in the same set. It was just when punk rock and new wave had taken off in the US and in England, so there were all sorts of indie records around and bands too. All kinds of records that I heard as a kid on the radio that would never make it to the radio now because the playlists are closed to indie rock.

It's so important to have a good station in your town.

Yeah, and we had like six of them. It wasn't just one station. Almost every station in town had a radio show where everything went. We had three album rock stations and they all had shows that played just local bands or just indie bands, you know? There was always some freak down there at 2 am on a Saturday morning playing whatever got sent there. And the local NPR station played amazing things. The





THIS IS A BAND THAT EVEN REBELS AGAINST REBELLION. WE HAVE NO QUALMS ABOUT CUTTING A COMPLETE POP SONG. IT'S LIKE IF WE FEEL LIKE IT, WE'LL DO IT. WE'D BE ENTIRELY LIKELY TO CUT A RAP RECORD.

first time I heard the Dead Kennedys was actually on the radio.

So then what happened in 1982 to end all that?

It's tough to say, but all of a sudden, by fall of '82, all of the cool shows were gone. Usually when we talk about it around here, we tie it to the release of *Rio* by Duran Duran. For some reason that was the death knell of Detroit radio. Everything just started sounding like hell. [laughs]

So you weren't a fan of the pop stuff coming out in the '80s?

I really quit listening to the radio around '83—I couldn't take it. I remember specifically "Come on Eileen" by Dexy's Midnight Runners really bummed me out and I couldn't bear it because I'd been hearing that band on the radio as this great blue eyed soul band, and then they come up with this complete waste of time track and it was a hit. I went "OK, I'm done here," and retreated into the NPR station and CBC [Canada's public broadcasting network].

I also read that you were part of Detroit's mod scene before you got into garage. What was that scene like?

We started when punk rock and new wave sort of made that split and the new wave guys went off and started listening to SPK

and the punk guys degenerated into bands like GBH. I started liking the mod thing because it was a stylistic rebellion, but

also because it was based on soul music. At the time it was very uncool to wear a suit, I liked that part too. I thought it was neat to be walking around in these clumpy looking suits. I thought the music was great, and I liked the older ska bands and I loved soul music, of course. I'd DJ parties because I had this huge soul record collection. ¶ Now, you go to clubs and everybody in a band has a suit on and you're like "Oh, that's a drag, it's fashionable now." I've always had a really bad streak, where if everybody in the crowd's doing it, I'm hellbent on *not* doing it. And this leads to problems [laughs].

So you've always had a rebel streak in you?

Oh yeah.

That kind of streak gets people into good music, though. You wouldn't like punk rock if you didn't like rebelling against cultural norms.

Right. Yeah, well I don't deny it. But now, the Dirtbombs are my current ultimate rebellion against conformity. This is a band that even rebels against rebellion. We have no qualms about cutting a complete pop song. It's like if we feel like it, we'll do it. We'd be entirely likely to cut a rap record.

That's cool, because it seems like as much as punk is about rebellion, there are certain factions of punk that are really filled with rules.

Yeah, it's really like this total conservative scene. You dare not step out of line and God forbid you should wear the wrong color straps on your pants. When the '60s punk thing moved in, there were very strict rules about what you were and were not allowed to do. They were kind of unspoken rules, but as soon as I figured them all out, I decided it was time to start breaking them. ¶ It's like all these sort of garage punk officiators now—the self styled scene nabobs—they were all bummed when they heard the Dirtbombs. They were like, "This is supposed to be garage punk." And I was like, "No, it's *not* supposed to be garage punk. We're not a garage punk band."

So even in Detroit there are sets of punk rules for you to break?

Yes. We don't see them as much in Detroit, though, because most Detroit bands have a disregard for any kind of authority. "You're not going to tell me how to play my guitar, man." I was just asked in another interview what are the similarities between the bands in the Detroit scene, and I was sitting there thinking, "There's a Detroit scene?" There's *no* scene here! But if anything were to characterize a scene, it would be that nobody's gonna tell us what to play, how to dress, or how to sound. We're all united in that.

The blues often seep into your various bands. What's your connection with that style of music?

The blues really is the foundation for much of the best rock 'n' roll out there. The whole punk rebellion thing is so heavily blues-based. These guys who call themselves blues musicians are just playing



standard album rock. They would never see a band like the Sexereenos as being a blues band, but they have a very strong R&B footing and their stuff comes straight out of the blues mold. The music they play, the chords they use, the rhythms they play are all heavily blues based, and yet allegedly they're a punk band.

A lot of the big names in punk and rock 'n' roll have been white kids. What's it like for you as a black man in a pretty much white punk subculture?

Well, back in the day, Detroit wasn't so white. There were a lot of black kids in Detroit who listened to punk rock. We listened to 999 as much as we listened to the Sugar Hill Gang—that was partially because of radio, there was so much of it floating around, and it's just what we liked. As time went on, there were fewer and fewer black folks around, but I never really saw myself as being an outsider, until the late '80s, when I was in high school. I was like gee, I'm the only brother in this muthafucker. [laughs]

Is that still how it is?

It was kind of dry there for a while. I could count the number of black people who showed up to Blacktop gigs on one hand, but with the Dirtbombs, I think I've been around long enough and we get our picture in the paper, so more black folks are coming out, and more black folks have heard *Ultraglide*. I think of *Ultraglide* as being black music. I grew up listening to those songs. They're not rock music to me, the O'Jays are the O'Jays. I'm not playing a rock version of the O'Jays, I'm just playing a louder, faster version of the O'Jays. It's still the O'Jays. [laughs]

It's interesting to hear how deep your musical influences run.

It's part of me, that's how I am. That's how I make music. I don't like to hear the same kind of music for more than 30 minutes at a stretch, let alone play it. From the beginning, I've thought that that this is the band that never sounds the same from record to record. That bums a lot of people out, I guess, but all the guys in the Dirtbombs are huge record collectors and none of us has less than 1,000 records. We like to hear all sorts of stuff and we all have different influences and so our records are like that. Our lack of a style is a style. [laughs] We're a band for people with short attention spans. We were originally conceived to be a band that only did singles, because we're all big singles geeks. I read a statistic that said that before CDs, when we were still buying vinyl, black Americans bought six times more singles than they did LPs, so I grew up with that. I listened to singles all my life, so I wanted a band that just made singles. With singles you can stretch out and do different things; you're not beholden to keep the same style for more than 3 minutes. So I've come to treat the albums in the same way I treat the singles, in that we do the same thing for the whole album, but don't look for us to do the same thing on the next album. We just did a glam rock single called *Motor City Baby* and our Christmas single last year was folk pop. The first Dirtbombs record, *Horndog Fest*, was originally conceived as three 7"s. But everybody said it was very impractical so it was released as a full-length. With *Ultraglide*, the majority of the songs

are tracks that I listened to as a kid. Those are literally from the family record collection.

Most of the records you've created, from the Gories to the Dirtbombs and the Screws have a very raw aesthetic. Is that a conscious rebellion against overproduced radio rock?

[laughs] Well it's not for lack of trying. I guess that's just how my records sound. One of my firm beliefs is that if you can't dance to it, it isn't rock n roll. So every band I play in, you're gonna be able to dance to it, because I don't like to go to a show and not be able to dance. I hate bands with lots of key changes or lots of tempo changes in the same song. That really just drives me nuts. Overall, Detroit is really a rah-rah fist in the air kinda rock town.

Do you have a strong need to be performing? Is that something that's always been part of you as an individual too?

I was never really a performer. I wanted to be a rock star. I've made not being able to play guitar a career for the last 10 or 20 years. I'm the lousiest guitar player that I know that's in a band. [laughs]

But somewhere along the way you must've learned. I don't think you can keep saying that you don't know how to play . . .

I still only know two chords. I first picked up a guitar with the Gories in 1986, so it's been that many years and I still know only two chords.

And no one has ever pulled you aside and said "let me teach you a couple more?"

They tried back in the early days of the Gories, but they gave up. ©



oval

Oval's reputation comes from the band's uncompromising approach to music-making. All the trappings of traditional rock music are absent from their records. There's no verse-chorus-verse structure, no backbeat, no singer, no drums. The music is pure computer, the apotheosis of PowerBook electronica. Perhaps that's why Oval's reviews tend to focus on the conceptual thought that goes into this minimalist approach and the custom software that makes its records possible. Or maybe it's just because Oval's founder and sole permanent member Markus Popp talks like a theoretical treatise.

As the interview here amply demonstrates, Popp's abstract, self-reflexive description of his own work makes the comments of rock intellectuals like Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore sound like the conversations in a high-school lunchroom. What this emphasis on Popp's philosophy of music-making obscures, though, is the fact that his records—particularly 2001's *Ovalkommers*—are saturated with pop elements. Even if the melody and harmony you'd expect in a traditional song are missing, Oval's music bears their traces like footprints in the sand.

I spoke with Popp at his home in Berlin, shortly after he returned from a tour

in the United States that featured both traditional concerts and exhibits of Skotodesk, the unit he designed to showcase his Ovalprocess software.

Interview by **Charlie Bertsch**

In reading reviews of your work over the years, I've noticed that they tend to pay more attention to the concepts behind your music than the music itself. Does this bother you?

"Bother" might not be the best word. I understand why it happens. It's true that my work is preoccupied with keeping other aspects of musical productivity in

focus. I don't want all the attention directed towards me as the *artist*, with my personal intuition and approach to the music." I was always more interested in electronic music-making, in the *productivity* behind the musical result. And that's why I eventually came up with the Ovalprocess software, which tries to provide a framework for decision-making in music, instead of making the decisions for you. It's like a study that helps you develop your own criteria for making music. It makes you ask, "What is creativity at all, under these circumstances?"

It's interesting that you try to deflect attention from your own role in the process. I'm reminded of the world of film, where there have been heated debates about the power of directors to put their personal stamp on a picture. Some critics insist that the great directors—like Godard, Hitchcock, and David Lynch—should

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be considered *auteurs* despite the fact that so many other people are involved in the production process. It sounds like you want to do exactly the opposite. You don't want anyone to mistake you for an *auteur*.

Right. I use listeners' time and attention span to point towards other factors in the production of music instead of trying to express how I feel personally. At the same time, there's always an emotional index to my music. I ensure that my work has musical qualities. It's not *pure* frequency or *pure* experimentation. But I don't think it's rewarding to read about how I feel about it.

So let me ask you, how do you feel?

[laughs] I don't know. Things are nearly instantaneous these days. They're communicated in seconds. Unfortunately, most of my time is spent organizing and com-

municating, shooting e-mails back and forth, and answering phone calls.

You mentioned that you wanted to draw attention to "other factors" in the production process. Could you be more specific?

I think standardization is a very important issue. To what degree is standardization suggested or even inherent in the implemented features and metaphors of productivity software? And to what extent is this underlying standardization already imposing a certain approach to sound? These days, what is left of a definition for electronic music? A couple of years ago, I thought that 44.1 kilohertz was the final element of a possible definition. But what matters these days is whether it's an MP3 file or a Word document, a streaming media file or a JPEG image. There is no longer a definitive criterion for electronic

ly possible to define what I do in these terms, even on my early records, there was always this analog, emotional aspect. I was never supportive of the efforts from other quarters in the world of electronic music to explore pure frequency.

Your first record was built from the sounds made by defective CDs. On *Ovalkommers* you're taking a somewhat different approach, but there's still an underlying layer of computer-generated noise through which tracks emerge. It seems that you've always found beauty within failure in a digital sense. I wonder whether your interest in redeeming digital imperfection would translate to software, which is also a digital medium.

I don't know. My approach is constructive—or reconstructive—rather than deconstructive. It's just that I start from the most unlikely angle, using these tiny frag-



ments of sound that nobody, not even myself, would consider to be of any musical value. I then try to build up some kind of semantics on this unlikely foundation. For me, the goal has always been to escape associations with the music world, such as using drum loops, or a drummer, or musicians, or instruments. Essentially, I don't owe music that much on a personal level. The more I think about it, the more I'd have to say that I'm the most imperfect factor in my entire set-up. By definition, software has to be functional, has to be user-friendly, has to have a certain look and feel. Any work you do on the interface becomes part of an optimization process. Everybody is a tester of the software. I don't see a big margin for error in its performance. I can't imagine how you would go about breaking the inherent logic or functionality built into software.

How has the disappearance of electronic music as a distinct genre affected your work then?

With the last CD *Ovalkommers*, I tried to reintroduce some elements of music as it was, like instruments, even though it's clear that I don't play these instruments myself, and that I didn't hire any musicians to come into the studio, and that I didn't sample anything off other people's records. That's part of my attempt to place the emphasis back on aspects of music that I always found important. I was always ambitious to give my music an emotional index—I never wanted it to be pure analysis. What came across in the media was always this very analytical, abstract approach to music. And while it's certain-

ments of sound that nobody, not even myself, would consider to be of any musical value. I then try to build up some kind of semantics on this unlikely foundation. For me, the goal has always been to escape associations with the music world, such as using drum loops, or a drummer, or musicians, or instruments. Essentially, I don't owe music that much on a personal level. The more I think about it, the more I'd have to say that I'm the most imperfect factor in my entire set-up. By definition, software has to be functional, has to be user-friendly, has to have a certain look and feel. Any work you do on the interface becomes part of an optimization process. Everybody is a tester of the software. I don't see a big margin for error in its performance. I can't imagine how you would go about breaking the inherent logic or functionality built into software.

You said that you come to music as an outsider. Do you listen to much music yourself?

Sure! [laughs] I don't know why this is always such a prominent question in the interviews I do. I listen to music like everybody else! That's the thing about music: it's already there. It's *everywhere*. When I hear music, it's usually in a café or wherever I happen to be at the moment. I don't often deliberately pick a record and play it. But that doesn't mean that I'm opposed to listening to music for pleasure. I never had the feeling that listening to music in a more concerted way would help me. This doesn't mean that electronic music can afford to turn its back on the mainstream music world. The people who are interested in exploring pure frequency don't, in my opinion, offer any suggestion for solving the problems in the field of music. On the other hand, a few years ago, with all of the time-based software for music-making, the problem was that the underlying metaphors for using the software were far too musical.

Is it hard for you to produce a finished product? You have so many files on the computer. And you spend all that time and cutting and pasting. Is it hard to know when to stop?

No, no, no. It's not about having infinite creative possibilities. It's a matter of making every track sound right; to accomplish a certain aesthetic goal. My expectations for a track can be very simple, one basic idea. There might be many

ways to realize this idea, many paths the track can take. I see my task as finding a solution that's elegant, yet one that can still convey what the original idea might have been. To the listeners, it should be clear that the idea was to make the track sound this way or that, but that something intervened in the process: me. I want the original idea to shine through the track. I don't want listeners to be overwhelmed by all the possibilities. I want them to perceive that the finished track merely presents one suggestion for realizing that idea.

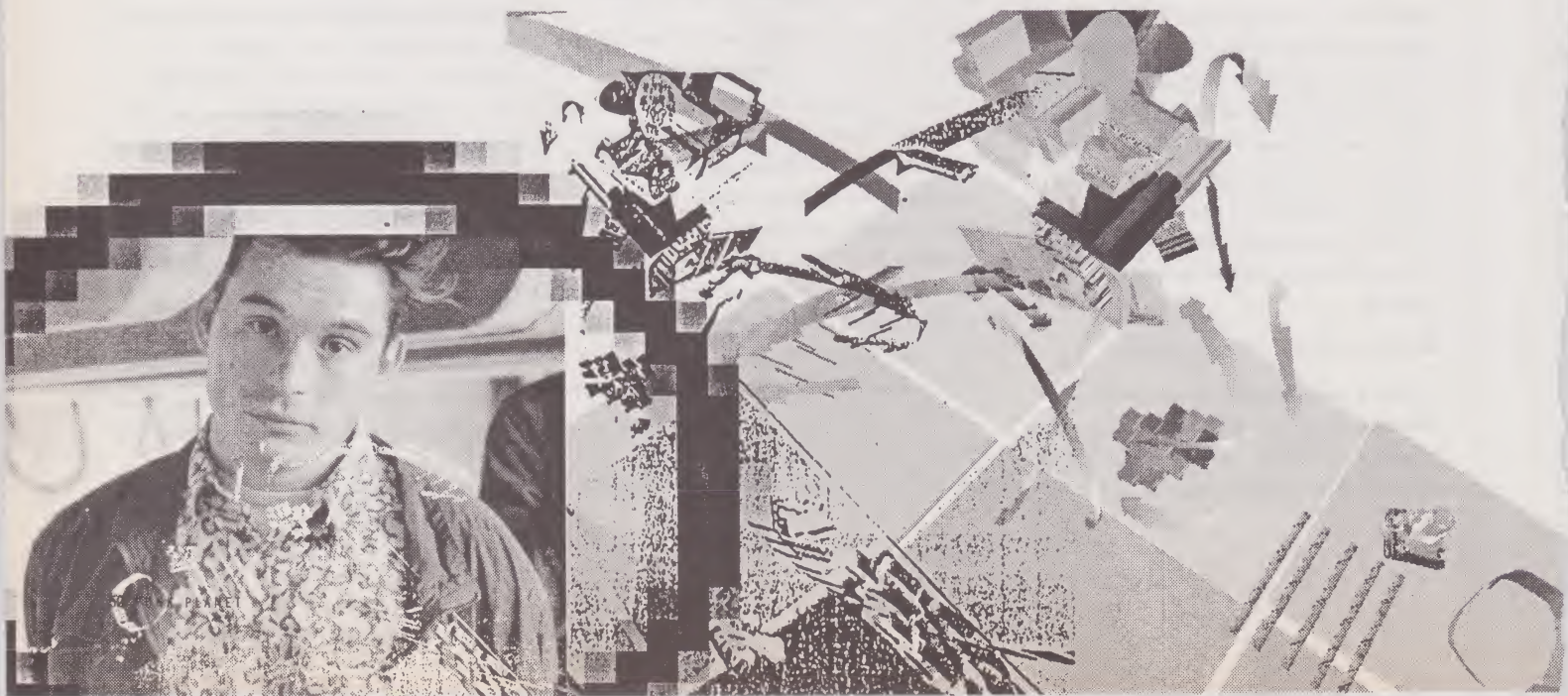
So, is it safe to say that the beauty in your music comes from the relationship between the finished track as you present it on the record and that underlying idea that shines through?

Yes, that's how I would put it. But there's more to it than that. In the first phase of my work on a project—I'm just coming out of that phase right now, for example—an idea is probably the least helpful thing for me, because I'm just generating material. But later on, when it comes to putting together the track, it's different. At that stage, there isn't an infinity of possibilities. I'm no longer working with media then; it's just collage. I want to keep that balance between the idea and its realization. It's more like a discursive approach, where you begin with a question and try to find an elegant answer to it.

But the answer does not exhaust the question, right?

Yes. The finished track should provide enough of an element of imperfection so that listeners can perceive that something is missing, so that they can bring their own expectations to the track. It's not about making this "high art" type of music. I have always wanted to maintain a more provocative approach that makes people say "I can do that—*anybody* can do that. Those sounds are made with 10 broken CD players, they're running completely out of sync, there's no discernible musical or compositional quality to it." But then they listen to it more and start to understand how everything is working together. I was so surprised to read some of the reviews of the new record in the German press. A few came to the conclusion that it isn't music at all. That's the sort of response I got years ago, when I sent out my first demos. They would write back and say "Something is broken. Send it again." But to have that still happening today, to hear people say "This is not music!" [laughs] Of course, I'm always grateful for this kind of reaction, because it shows me that my work still contains that element of imperfection. It's not interesting for me to make work that's "perfect" in the sense that it doesn't leave any questions. ©

Charlie Bertsch is a teacher and writer living in Tucson, Arizona. He welcomes your feedback: cbertsch@u.arizona.edu



the underground speaks for itself:

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Noam Chomsky
Sleater-Kinney
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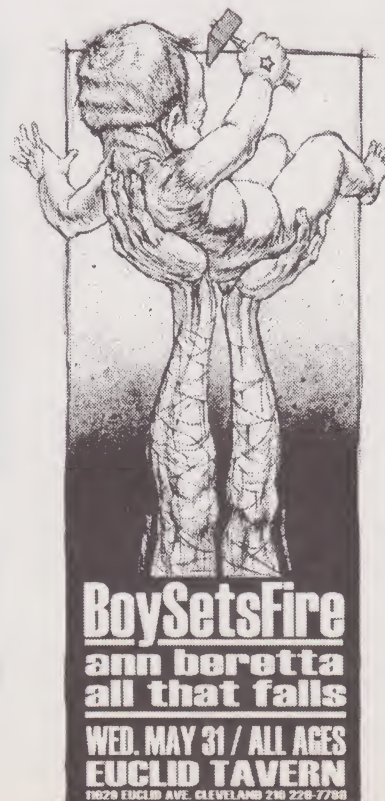
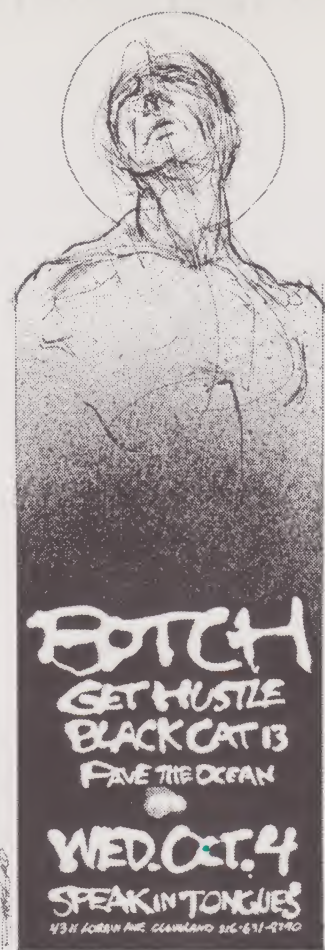


Derek Hess specializes in composing arresting imagery of the human figure, often in a state of peril. His artwork confines itself mostly to realistic constraints, when it comes to anatomy and such, yet wanders freely through the realms of imagination when it comes to the events happening in the pictures. He sticks to the darker, grittier end of the color spectrum, fusing together a love for classic album art, comic books, and a number of world-famous artists into his own unique, distorted vision.

You've probably seen some of his poster art over the years, or more recently his cover artwork for Converge and other underground bands. But what you may not know is that Derek has years of experience and training; that he's virtually invented various poster making techniques; that he's been featured in Newsweek; that former Motley Crüe drummer Tommy Lee once sought him out; that he's done artwork for The Rock And Roll Hall of Fame (based in his hometown of Cleveland); and that his artwork is featured at the Louvre in France.

Despite these many accomplishments, Derek continues to epitomize the DIY ethic that so many of us hold dear. He's thumbed his nose at many conventional art school attitudes and practices, paving his own way and achieving notoriety, relative fame, and a medium with which to channel his inner most thoughts on his own terms. He didn't throw himself at the world . . . The world came to him. Today, he's able to make a living off his artwork (something our society has made virtually impossible), without compromising himself one bit.

Interview by Ryan J Downey



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Walk me through an average day for you...
 Like, you wake up, and then what happens?

I wake up and the TV's running—I know what time it is by what show is on. But I'm generally out of bed between 7:30 and 9:00. Then I make my move to the coffee maker, I get that ready to go, and then I've got to go walk the damn dog, José. I come back and the coffee is ready and I start looking at what's on my plate as far as work and what needs to be done. I go from there. Sometimes it's preliminary drawing, sometimes it's finished drawing, sometimes it's setting up a poster . . . Whatever needs to be done. Working on fine art prints, working on who knows . . . That's where it goes. Some days are slower than others, but some days I forget to have lunch or dinner, because I'm busting ass.

Something I find difficult with freelancing is setting my own schedule. Somebody might call and be like "Let's go see this movie" or "Let's go have lunch." I end up thinking, "Well, I don't technically have to be here doing anything . . ." So I go and do it, then I come back and I'm like "Shit! I'm so behind!"

That doesn't happen to me, I don't have any friends. [laughs] Besides, the ones I do have work during the day anyhow.

Obviously, comic books helped your imagination take flight.

Not really the imagination, they just helped me figure out how the figure works. Guys like John Buscema, John Romita Sr. and especially Gil Kane were really taught well. They developed a style, but it seemed like the style came after they learned the fundamentals—how foreshortening works and so on and so forth. That's something that a lot of people aren't taught anymore. A lot of young artists who want to pursue comic art or whatever are very concerned about developing a style, whereas that should be secondary. The style will come as you learn how to draw correctly.

Outside of comics, what else has been a big influence?

Hipgnosis was a '70s company that did a lot of album covers—so was Pacific Ear and Eye. They did all of the old UFO covers,

Led Zeppelin covers . . . I can't think of others offhand, but they did *all* the good ones. I'm a big UFO fan and they had great record covers. Or Led Zeppelin's *Presence* and *Physical Graffiti*. I believe they did *Houses of the Holy* too. They just did killer art like that. I don't do that stuff, by any means, but I appreciate it.

But it was those record covers and comic books that got you inclined towards art?

Exactly. It was my environment. My father was also an artist. It was a combination of everything—and music, of course. It was across the board. Everything played a role.

Most poster art—Kozik and the like—tends to utilize bright, eye-catching colors. I've noticed that your work tends to be more drab: brown, dark yellow, gray, copper, rust . . . Do you think that your leaning towards that end of the palette has to do with growing up in industrial, gray Cleveland?

I think that has something to do with it. I also think that a lot of those bright colors are really unrealistic colors. I'm not trying to create an exact representation of the human figure, but I try to get a little bit closer. I don't want a perfect rendering. I want a little bit more of a realistic palette as well. And of course being in the rust belt tends to be another part of the environment growing up. I don't see day-glow, you know? That's somewhere else! [laughs] That's not around here!

Your late father, who you mentioned, taught at the Cleveland Institute of Art. What are your thoughts on how art can affect a child's development? Most kids suffer through poor art programs at city schools, and never have much of a chance to have creative expression explored or impact them.

I had a real shitty program in high school too. Had my father not been in the arts, I probably wouldn't have pursued it. I was a problem child. And I had a lot of issues. Had my father not been supportive in the arts and plugged at me to continue doing it, I wouldn't have been into it. He would take me to the art school on Saturdays when he had to go in for something. I'd go walk the hallways and look at life drawings when I was little. I used to go up to the top floor and look at life drawings when I was

in elementary school to look at all of the naked drawings of the girls! [laughs]

On your website, you talk about being clouded by alcohol for a few years, and the new-found clarity in your work since getting sober 12 years ago. What's the biggest difference in the work itself?

I really didn't get a chance to develop my work 'til I sobered up. I was just skating on the talent. You know, God gave me this talent . . . Everybody's got a talent; I believe everybody is given something. But people have more of a knack towards one thing than another. Michael Jordan obviously has got a knack for shooting baskets. Anybody can learn how to shoot baskets, but it comes much easier to him. It came much easier for me to draw, so I was skating by on that talent. ¶ I'd take weeks off in college. I'd come back and I'd be like, "I'm above all of these folks as far as art skills go, I can blow off and come back and do a drawing and be good." I'd come back and I'd see the progress these people made because they had applied themselves. And I'd be like, "Oh, shit!" But that still didn't stop me from partying! [laughs] I was an alcoholic and a drug addict—I was hooked. But that's a long story . . . ¶ When I sobered up, that's when I started to apply myself. I started working like a fiend. I realized all the lost time that was wasted. I went from there.

Your pictures tend to depict figures in peril, angels being attacked, rabid dogs, cryptic figures in masks . . . Where do you think the darkness in your art comes from?

[Pauses] You should see all of my new fine art pieces—those are good struggle pieces. It's turmoil: the inner struggle. A lot of it has to do with keeping it together day to day, just being functional. Just because I'm sober, that doesn't mean I've got it together. I mean look at the art!

It seems it has a dualist approach, the constant struggle of good versus evil.

Right. There's a fine line between black and white. Generally, the way I am is to pursue what is the "right thing"—whatever that may be—pertaining to whatever situation. You don't always do it and you don't even always know you didn't do it 'til a lit-

tle bit later. Then I generally pursue making amends to that. I guess a lot of my pieces are about that: Struggling to correct ways that you should go about doing things. There's an Iron Maiden line I could quote. [laughs] "There's a fine line between genius and insane!" I'm not saying I'm a genius, but I teeter on the insane some days. I keep it together though, but it can be tough and it comes out in my art. The 21st Century is a challenge.

I'm very pro- the usage of Maiden lyrics to articulate one's persona. Tell me a bit about the method you developed to imitate lithography, since you didn't have money to buy the equipment when you started out.

Oh, I still don't have money to buy that stuff! [laughs] It uses a process that's being phased out in graphic arts: Photostating your imagery with a Photostat machine. Basically, you take a picture of something in black and white and you can enlarge, reduce, or reverse it. It comes out on photographic paper, which is like paper and the front and has a plastic-y sheen on the back. Now, you can do all that on computer, so Photostat machines are being phased out. The thing I found was that on Photostat paper you can scratch the surface with an X-acto blade and make highlights throughout from the scratch lines. That's what I do. There's a joint

A LOT OF YOUNG ARTISTS WHO WANT TO PURSUE COMIC ART OR WHATEVER ARE VERY CONCERNED ABOUT DEVELOPING A STYLE, WHEREAS THAT SHOULD BE SECONDARY. THE STYLE WILL COME AS YOU LEARN HOW TO DRAW CORRECTLY.

here in town that still has Photostat machines. I don't know what I'm going to do when they close—I'll have to evolve!

Speaking of evolving, tell me a little bit about the transition you made from show promoter to full time artist. You started doing posters to promote your own shows. How did you eventually cross over from one completely into the other?



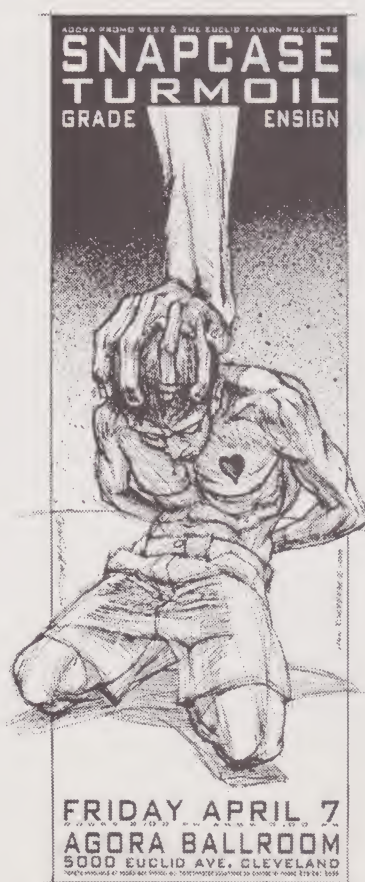
Well, the art became way more demanding and I couldn't do both—I was burning myself out. To get started booking shows I was working three jobs to do these shows and then handing over all my money to the bands at the end of the night when I didn't cover guarantees. But it was a passion of mine, so I kept doing it. And the art started picking up. I continued doing the shows because that's the way I could generate the art and continue to be my own art director and do my own visions of

these things. But I was hit-or-miss on the gigs. In '95, I was just *swamped* with the art and that's when I gave up doing booking. It was really hard to do that, because I really developed something in this market. It was hard to hand it over, but there was just no way I could do both. Ever since '95, I've been making a living on artwork, which a lot of artists can't do.

And you can always put together shows when you want to here and there.

Yeah, absolutely. Occasionally—*wgy* occasionally! [*laughs*]. I didn't go to a show for almost a year after I got out of booking them. I was just burnt and I didn't want to deal with anybody or anything. Now, I'm a fan—I can go to gigs!

I'M NOT TRYING TO CREATE AN EXACT REPRESENTATION OF THE HUMAN FIGURE, BUT I TRY TO GET A LITTLE BIT CLOSER. I DON'T WANT A PERFECT RENDERING. I WANT A LITTLE BIT MORE OF A REALISTIC PALETTE AS WELL.



You got your start around the same time as the so-called "grunge" and "alternative" movement . . .

Yeah, a lot of opportunities presented themselves to me after I did the footwork. When I started sobering up, that's when I started taking responsibility for my talent and actions. I was just doing the footwork, not knowing where it would go. I fell into booking the Euclid Tavern. This music was coming into its own, I was a fan of it, and I kind of rode that.

Did you ever feel pigeonholed as a "grunge" artist?

I never felt I was. I don't know if anyone else categorized me that way. I just did

stuff for bands I liked. I was way into heavy metal and then the hardcore/heavy metal crossover stuff in the mid-to-late '80s. Going to see Agnostic Front one night and then Celtic Frost the next . . . It was all good! I just pursued what I liked and I thought that music stagnated in like 1990, 1991. Then I was getting turned on to Cop Shoot Cop, Jesus Lizard, and Godflesh. I was like "Ooh, this is the direction heavy music should be going!" So I followed that and then Soundgarden pops in. I might be wrong on my timeline, but that's what I started booking, cause I liked it.

Was it scary in 1995 when you decided to become an artist full time?

Not really, because I could always go back to booking bands. The two things I like are art and music, so I could always go back to booking bands, but I was burnt and needed to try something new. It just really was snowballing in the right direction. Ninety-five was *huge*. The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame opened and I did the poster for the

grand opening concert. That was *huge* exposure. It was a really important year and a huge amount of momentum came out of it. Quitting booking was the right thing to do.

So how did your stuff end up in the Louvre, and what does that feel like? It's like the ultimate DIY success story, since you are a bit of a self-described "anti-intellectual."

Yeah, it was a trip. I was featured in a magazine in some non-English speaking country, I think in the Netherlands somewhere. They did a story on me and my posters and it got to the Louvre. ¶ Later, we got this letter from France. Marty, my manager, and myself don't read French—we're products of the American school system [*laughs*]. So, we gave it to somebody to get it translated, and it took about a month. And they were like, "Hey, this is from the Louvre! And they want some of your posters!" We were like "No shit!"

"Good thing we've been sitting on it for a month!"

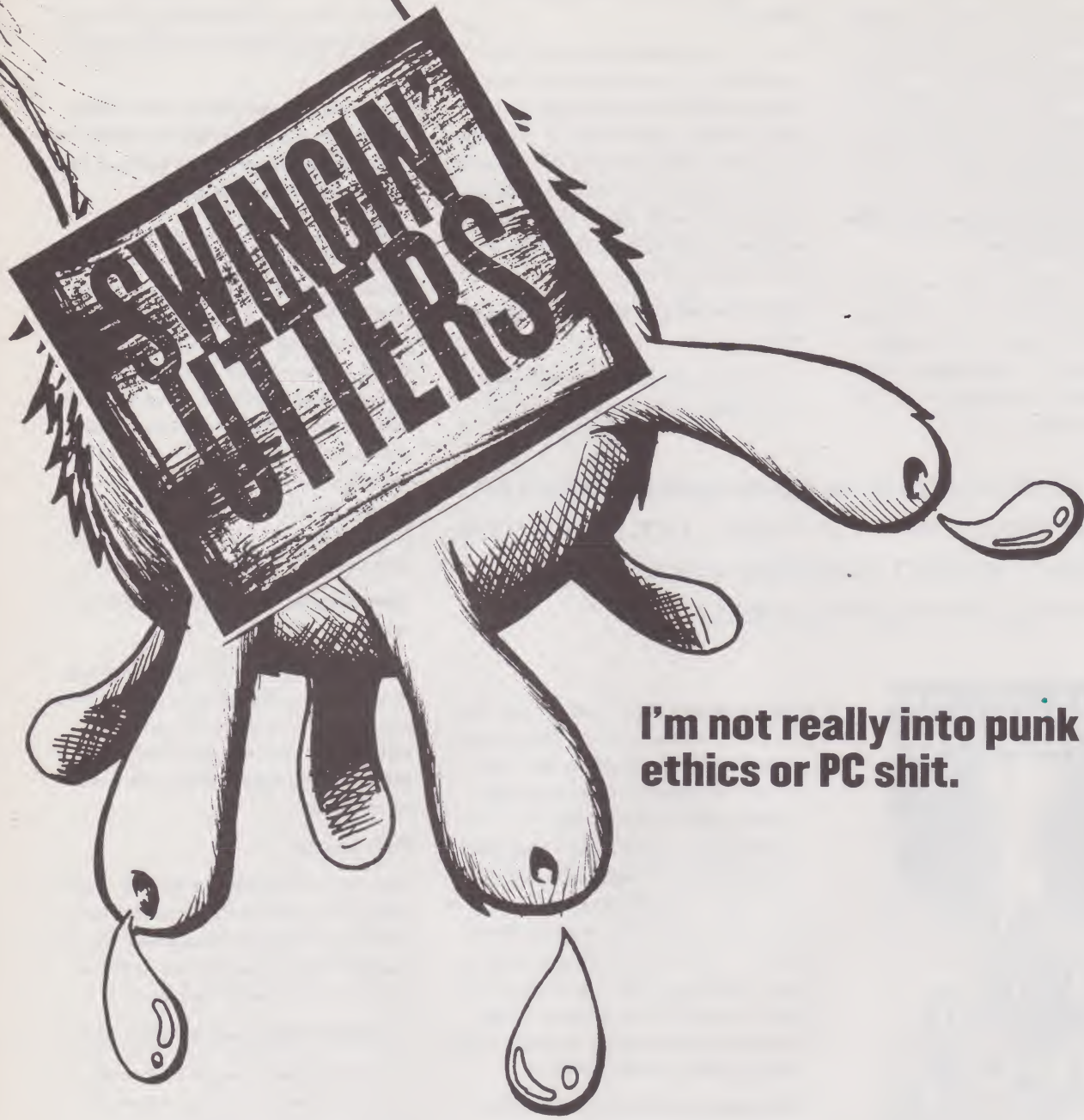
Right! "We've got more important things to worry about, like going to see that Jesus Lizard gig!" So, yeah, we got posters together and sent 'em out. They're part of the permanent collection of their poster art collection.

That's amazing.

Yeah. It's not something I shot for. I definitely had a hard time in art school with a lot of the snobbery of these artists who are just full of themselves and are really bad. And here I am, I'm in the Louvre!

It's like the ultimate punk rock "fuck you!"

Success is the best revenge. I *still* get attitude from these artists I see in town who are doing nothing now. They ended up fucking up. They could have done something. I was sobering up while they were developing a habit in art school. Now they're doing whatever so they can get their drinks at night and be bitter that their art isn't going anywhere. I see that with a lot of people, which bums me out, but there's nothing I can do about it, you know? ©



**I'm not really into punk
ethics or PC shit.**

In the shadows of San Francisco's Tenderloin district, infamous for its working poor, pockets of decrepid SRO housing, and ground zero for the city's economically disenfranchised, The Swingin' Utters are hanging outside the Great American Music Hall. It's the first night of their tour supporting the Damned, who have the audacity to play without original drummer Rat Scabies.

A hallmark of the Bay Area's multifaceted sound, The Swingin' Utters writing is introspective and personal, at once elegant, honest, and raw. Their lyrics, often romantic—though from the losing end—address the unavoidable sense of entrapment and frustration inherent in our culture rather than simplistic anthems of bricks and bombs thrown to thwart the man. One of the tightest units in rock 'n' roll, each Swingin' Utters record stands on its own, showcasing the growth of a group that began as a cover band in Santa Cruz, California.

Darius Koski, the band's guitarist and maestro and Johnny Bonnel, the band's fireball vocalist on stage—yet comfortably quiet throughout the interview—have made their mark. Whether their talent is fully appreciated and acknowledged is another story, but *passion* is a sign of great music—not popularity.

Interview by **George Sanchez**

How do you guys see your relationship with the audience, be it the kid saying thanks to you at the end of the night or the kids singing along with you

Bonnel: In Eugene, my voice went out and we just decided to let anyone who knew the lyrics to jump on stage and sing the song. It went over fairly well. Kids popped up and they knew the lyrics. They weren't bummed out that the lead singer was missing, too much. They were happy that they were able to get involved with the show. That alone was a blessing in disguise. I didn't think that that would happen.

Koski: We were really pretty paranoid but it turned out really good. But I guess you're always going to like the people who like your music because immediately—sort of automatically—you have the same tastes. I mean, if they like your music that you wrote yourself then you've got something

in common with the people. We're part of a subculture, we're all sort of different than your average . . .

. . . **Joe on the street.**

Koski: Yeah. We listen to different music, we look a little bit different, we understand different types of things, so you might not really understand other people who may not really understand you. I mean, you don't *hate* them, you're just not on the same wave-length. But when you're in a room with a 1,000 people who are on your same wave-length, it's kind of rad because you feel comfortable.

That reminds me of a line from your lyrics—and I'm kicking myself because I don't remember the name of the song, even though I love the riff—but it goes "I'm a speck in the collective minds of millions."

Koski: That's kind of, like, a tour song.

Does it feel like that sometimes?

Koski: Yeah, because, I mean, I want to be *famous*. I would love to be rich. But I'm not going to change what I do to do that. I don't really get on people about selling out—that's their own fucking problem. I'm not really into punk ethics or PC shit. None of us are against major labels or anything. I would love to be famous and shit, but on my own terms. I don't want to compromise. ¶ When you're a band like us, we're pretty well known and we have a bunch of records and I'm pretty stoked and I would never bitch about my life because I think we're all pretty blessed. We get to tour so much and put out records, it's a great thing. It's like a legacy that we're going to leave behind forever. But still, we're one of the *million* bands out there who are our size. ¶ I don't make a living out of this. I work when I'm at home. Johnny works. We don't make a living out of the band because we can't and that sucks. I want to be remembered by a massive number of people. Why wouldn't you want to be? I mean, yeah you're a speck in the fucking world because nobody knows who you are.

I guess that's what I dig about you guys, you're realistic in a lot of ways. The politics of what you guys are doing, it's not black or

white—indie/major; you're a sellout or you're not. That debate pisses you off. But where do you think that comes from, that sort of mind set? I know you guys were questioned about why you moved onto Fat Wreck Chords when that happened.

Koski: They're an independent label. We didn't change our sound to sound like a Fat band either. Nobody can say that because we didn't do that. When we got onto Fat, it was pretty much full of Fat-sounding bands. We didn't have that sound so we were kind of surprised we got on Fat. ¶ I don't think Green Day is a sellout. I don't think Rancid is a sellout. I fucking praise both those guys for what they did because they busted their ass and pretty much started at the bottom. Well, I think Rancid had a little more of a jump start because of the Operation Ivy thing. But Green Day . . . If *anybody* deserves to be where they are, it's Green Day. They busted their ass from high school on. They didn't change their fucking sound. I think they're a lot better than they used to be. I'm not a *massive* Green Day fan, I just think that what they did is fucking great, I think it's awesome.

Why do you think people have a problem with that kind of shit though?

Bonnel: Jealousy, I think.

Koski: I don't know where the whole punk ethic thing started, because the Sex Pistols were on a major, the Clash were on a major. Those bands were more punk than any band, I think. The Ramones have *always* been on majors. ¶ Never, ever in my entire life has it been an issue with me. I wasn't the type of kid who knew all the record labels all the bands I loved were on. I never really paid attention to that because I don't care. I couldn't care less what fucking label you're on. If I like your music, I like your music. I don't fucking give a shit if you're on Capital or on New Red Archives. It doesn't make any difference to me. The thing that really pisses me off is when people aren't a band's fan because they're on a major label. Fuck you.

I read a back issue of *Mother Jones* today and there was this interview with Bruce



There's more things to write about now. Changing Diapers.

Springsteen he said a line that made me think of you guys. He said that a lot of his music was taking revenge for his father and seeing his fathers struggle, coming from a working class background. Looking at your lyrics and the attitude towards what you do, do you feel like you're in the same boat as that?

Koski: Kind of. Both my parents were immigrants and they've *definitely* had to struggle from the get go. They always believed that you get what you earn—you need to work for it. They never handed a thing to me on a silver platter. I mean, I didn't fucking grow up poor or anything, but no one in the band grew up rich either, so we understand that.

There's a real working class ethic that seems to come through in your lyrics. I'm curious what kind of poetic or literary influences you've had, because it's clear to me that there is something there.

Koski: I don't like a whole lot of poetry, but I like Thomas Wolfe, I like Kerouac, I like Bukowski, I like Henry Miller, I like a lot of Russian authors. I like a bunch of philosophers and stuff. But poets, I really like Bukowski; Rimbaud's pretty good; Rainer Maria. But I don't read a hell of a lot of poetry. I think a lot of what I consider poetry, other people wouldn't—like Shane McGowan or Elvis Costello, or Tom Waits or someone. Really great lyricists—that's great to me. You know, Elvis Costello is putting out a record a year—that's somewhere along what I want to try to do.

Something you aspire to.

Bonnel: I like to just keep busy. It takes me

months to write one song. It takes him like one day. Knowing that pushes me. It keeps me writing and it adds to the Swingin' Utters as well.

10 years ago, you started out as a cover band . . .

Koski: That was Johnny, our old bass player Kevin, and Greg—they were Johnny Peebucks and the Swingin' Utters and they were kind of like a party band.

So your origins were a party band. Recognizing that, how does it feel to look back and realize how far you've come?

Koski: Oh, it's flattering as hell. Basically, we're totally lucky.

How much further do you guys think you'll be able to go?

Koski: I don't know. If the interest starts weaning, and people stop coming to our shows, then obviously we'll get too bummed out and quit.

Bonnel: There are a lot of old bands out there.

Koski: I think other people in the band might be, but I'm not worried about being an old guy on stage.

Why not?

Koski: People have something against "well, you're all old and fat now." But to me, if you're still a good band, I don't fucking care if you're 70! ¶ I'm *dying* to see the UK Subs. I still haven't seen them now that Nikki's in the band, again. I think him and Charlie Harper are pretty much the UK Subs and he's in the band again. Fucking Charlie Harper's pushing

60. So what? They're one of my favorite fucking punk bands, ever. I *still* want to see them. ¶ As long as we are still fresh and interested in playing, then we're going to keep on playing. I don't know if that's going to be a year from now or we're never going to break up.

How does being a punk rock dad change anything for both you guys?

Bonnel: There's more things to write about now. Changing Diapers.

Koski: Staying home and watching a lot more TV. I don't really go out anymore, but I never really went out that much anyways. It's changed a lot, but in other ways it hasn't changed. It's the biggest thing in my life, obviously, but it hasn't really changed the way I live that much.

Bonnel: It's changed my drinking habit—all for the best.

In terms of getting older, does it trip you guys out when we people talk about the "Bay Area sound" and how you guys are a staple of that now?

Bonnel: Yeah, I'd never fathom that in a million years. That's crazy. It makes you smile. But I don't know . . . There's so many bands right now from the Bay Area, so we're just another one added to it. It's nice, it's very flattering, but I'm not going to get a big head over it.

Koski: Yeah, I mean, it still trips me out that people come to our shows. I went to shows when I was a kid and I looked up to the bands and stuff. When kids come up to us and look up to us, it's really weird. ©

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QUESTIONS WITH THE BAND THE PLUS ONES

for more info, visit www.plusones.net

1. When did your band form?

Joel: The Plus Ones started rehearsing in late 1998, and our first show was at the Bottom of the Hill in San Francisco on January 6th, 1999. The band has had a significant line-up shuffle since then, so I also like to think that we had a second formation that took place in April of 2001.

2. When will it break up?

Luis: Probably when we are old and start suing each other.

3. What have you released so far?

Joel: Well, we've got two EPs to our name: The first, *On the List*, came out in March of 2000 and featured five songs, and the second (a split CD with the Travoltas) from August, 2001 was called *Going Dutch* and had three tracks from us. Our debut full-length album is entitled *It's a Calling* and was released in March 2002 on Asian Man Records.

4. Why do you play the music that you play?

Joel: As individuals, the members of the Plus Ones have fairly different musical tastes . . . but when we get together, our sensibilities blend and the sound just comes out.

Luis: I think it's a release for us emotionally, and the fine-tuning helps us in our goal to be the most dapper gentlemen in the music community.

5. What is the weirdest thing that has ever happened at a show?

Joel: Once we played a restaurant in Reno where a community dance troupe just happened to be dining. Right in the middle of our set they rose, en masse, and began performing an interpretive dance to the song. That was weird.

Luis: Also, people have actually listened and applauded.

6. What is the best show you've ever played?

Luis: The Old Ironsides in Sacramento, opening for the New Pornographers.

Joel: That night was one of our finer performances, but our first show with the current line-up really gave me goose bumps.

7. State your purpose.

Luis: To school the kids and rock the grannies.

8. What were the runner up names for the band?

Joel: This is going to be embarrassing. The main one I remember was "the Derivatives," which in retrospect is even more awful than it seemed at the time. We also toyed briefly with "the Plus Sizes," but I think that was more of a joke. Band names are funny—no matter how bad they are, if the band itself is good enough people will forgive.

9. How do you describe yourself to relatives who have no idea what you play?

Luis: Sheer pop-perfection with a little dirt.

Joel: "Um, you know, rock and roll and stuff. We play really loud, you probably wouldn't like us."

10. How do you describe yourself to kids in the scene who haven't heard you?

Joel: Indie, power-pop, rock and roll.

Luis: Sheer pop perfection with a little dirt.

11. What does the band fight about the most?

Luis: Schedules definitely. We are all extremely busy with jobs and play in other bands as well, so we have a hard time getting our schedules coordinated.

Joel: There was this one time when Luis showed up to the gig wearing the same outfit as me . . .

12. What is the antithesis of your band?

Luis: Probably John Zorn, although I am a huge fan. This band's music is about structure and trying to perfect the process of playing. So I would say that as fun as it is to listen to, for the purposes of this band, avant-jazz is probably the most polar opposite.

Joel: I agree. Anything freeform or improvisational is at the other end of the musical spectrum from us.

13. Outside of music and bands, what influences you?

Luis: Food and wine.

Joel: I like a good book. . .

14. What is selling out?

Joel: Listening to other's opinions before your own.

Luis: Limiting yourself or your decisions based on what others think. Feeling constricted to avoid criticism. I guess everyone aims to please, but if that comes at a cost to your artistic or musical happiness, then I guess you sell out to public opinion.

15. If you could make a living off your band, would you?

Luis: No, I love working 50 hours a week to pay my rent. Of course, dummy!

16. Where do you practice?

Luis: In Oakland, sandwiched in between The Pattern's room and Erase Errata's room. We hope to have a royal rumble with both bands soon, but they'd probably beat us up bad!

17. If you could play on a four-band bill, with any bands that have ever existed, who would you play with and what order would they play?

Luis: Redd Kross, Nick Lowe, The Muffs, and The Replacements.

Joel: The Buzzcocks, Weezer, Elvis Costello and the Attractions, the Kinks.

18. What goals do you have as a band?

Luis: To continually grow as songwriters and players and to charm all of the boys (and girls) in the world.

Joel: Deli trays backstage.

19. What makes for a good show?

Luis: A crowd that likes to drink, dance and make-out.

Joel: A smoke machine doesn't hurt either.

20. If you were to cover a song (that you don't already) what would it be?

Luis: "IIIIII'm Sticking with you, cuz IIIIII'm made out of glue!!!"

Joel: Right now the band is struggling with this very issue: We're open to suggestions . . .

It's absolutely necessary to know what it is to *not* be in the position of linguistic power. That is one of the primary methods by which we exercise power — amazing power — in this society and through which we erect and defend borders.



DEMETRIA MARTINEZ
DEIVIA MARIANEZ

In the spring of 2000 Chicana author and activist Demetria Martinez worked with three classes of fourth and fifth graders at a public elementary school in Durham, North Carolina. Demetria's residency was one of a series which I coordinated as part of my work for the Literacy Through Photography (LTP) project at the Center For Documentary Studies at Duke University. LTP uses photography and writing as tools for elementary- and middle-school students to explore their lives and bring their own knowledge into classroom conversations. In extending the scope of the project, we had conceived of a program to place nationally recognized writers in local classrooms to work collaboratively with teachers and students. The writers we asked to participate represented backgrounds and political positions we knew were rarely, if ever, openly discussed in Durham's schools. As North Carolina has the second fastest growing Latino/a population in the US, it was especially important to include authors who could speak directly to Durham's Latina/o children who were presenting their own challenge to the ill-prepared school system.

The recent migration of Mexicans and other Latino/as from Central and South America to the tobacco fields, furniture factories, and hog farms of North Carolina was disrupting the old Southern paradigm of race—a simple, visible binary of Black and white. Now racial divisions, distinctly *heard* as well as seen, challenged people on both sides of the familiar equation. Their language, lively in the Wal-Mart and DMVs, bold on the windows of the new *tiendas*, voiced the presence of the Latino community.

It was through Demetria's novel, *Mother Tongue*, that I began to examine race, language and culture in relationship to Durham and its schoolchildren. After finishing *Mother Tongue* in the span of a few hours I sat unseeing, feeling the echo of silence and numbness, the unsteady pulse after ravages of violence and confrontations with loss. In prose as unexpected as revolution and love, Demetria describes the intersection of 19-year-old Mary and José Luís, a refugee from the civil war in El Salvador who has been smuggled into the US through the sanctuary movement. In the final pages of the book, Mary, now grown, says, "A new language is a tincture, a drop of which forever changes the chemistry of the

person who is learning it."

The new language permeating Durham was forever altering the city. Its parks, schools, shops and workplaces rang with Spanish spoken by a generation of immigrants returning deep into a land where Demetria's ancestors had built their homesteads long before the Yanqui came to claim the land as theirs.

The preface of *Mother Tongue* describes the complicity of US government officials who knew of the massacres of El Salvadoran civilians while massively funding their murderers. Unlike them, Demetria, as a poet, novelist, and a columnist for the *National Catholic Reporter*, chose to not look away. In 1987 her activism took her beyond words and before a court where she was indicted on charges relating to the smuggling of Central American refugees into the US. Months later, she was acquitted on the basis of the First Amendment. Demetria has made an uncompromising commitment to her art and activism and drawing from her experiences she was able to elicit powerful writing from the Durham students.

Towards the end of an inspiring week, I spoke with Demetria about what had transpired in the classrooms and how she envisions herself as an educator and activist.

Interview by Dwayne Dixon

Over this short week we've talked about a lot of really important things and made a lot of really interesting connections—first between ourselves as both artists and activists, but also between the various issues we confront in our lives and work. However, some of the most startling insights this week have been made in the thoughtful writings of the students you and I worked with at Pearsontown Elementary School. Has this week in Durham challenged the expectations you might have had coming to the South?

Yes, certainly. The experience of working with the children and having them put themselves in the shoes of a Mexican undocumented worker really surprised me. As an activist who works on issues of immigrant rights and in my role this week as a teacher, I was really amazed by the students' capacity for empathy as they imagined what they would do if they had to flee Mexico in order to survive and

provide for their families. I was especially struck at how little I had to say so that they could paint the picture of what it's like to cross the brutal the conditions of the desert, the risk of death. They so easily imagined themselves trying to find work and the details of that experience; of what kinds of work were open to them; of what the working conditions would be like; and what it would do to your body. ¶ When I finally gave them the choice of writing out of the voice of a border patrol agent or someone who actually helps smuggle Mexicans—economic refugees—into the country, it was again really amazing to see how advanced they were in their thinking. By that I mean those children who were writing as border patrol agents generally really struggled with the moral dilemmas involved by assuming this position. There was rarely any mention of the cliched banality, "Well, I'm just following orders. I'm just doing my job." They described intense internal conflicts about being a border patrol agent but at the same time wanting to help people. These children confronted the realization of the refugees' plight and very often they chose to defy the demands of their own position as an agent and to clandestinely help someone or maybe let someone go. So these were all remarkable moral and emotional struggles to witness the students engage with through the writing process.

Was it easy for the children to make connections between different historical events or experiences perhaps distant from their own?

The children responded quickly to analogies I proposed. The classrooms were primarily made up of African Americans and when I asked them about the Underground Railroad they all nodded, they had all studied it. I explained that in the 1980s the sanctuary movement—the church-based sanctuary movement—called itself the "Underground Railroad" in its campaign to draw attention to the situation of refugees from Central America. The sanctuary movement actually brought people into the US and then, if necessary, smuggled them north as far as Canada where they could find safety. That historical analogy seemed to resonate with all of

the children. I think that's why when we did the exercise about whether to write as a border patrol agent or someone who helps refugees, those who chose the latter needed minimal explication. It's as if they had the historical memory or analogy already. They immediately started playing with ideas of how one might disguise a refugee or sneak them in the back of a car, all in this effort to go North.

You're a writer for the *National Catholic Reporter* and in that capacity you often critically examine institutions and their actions while you remain outside the confines of institutions and the culture they sponsor. And yet you've been working this past week in a school with a teacher who teaches from a state-produced curriculum and the walls around you were decorated with flags and George Washington cut-outs—the omnipresent symbols of the State reminding you of where you are. All the while you were discussing Latina/o immigration and experiences along the border in what are essentially radical terms with children who are receptive because they're not hearing the discussion as "radical." Did you find that contrast kind of unsettling or disquieting?

Yes, it was unsettling at first. When I said I was facing 25 years in prison in connection with an alleged conspiracy against the US government because, as a reporter, I accompanied a Lutheran minister who was helping Salvadorans into the country, the teachers acted more shocked than the kids did! [laughs] The kids grasped what it meant, I mean, they really heard it when I said, "25 years in prison" but then many of them took that experience and incorporated it immediately into their poems and tried to imagine what I went through. One girl recreated a courtroom scene and another student wrote, "Even if I get 25 years in prison I know that I did the right thing." The children quickly accepted the reality of my experience and the authenticity of my reasons. I didn't have to go into some heady policy explanation about why the sanctuary movement was vindicated and the Border Patrol was proven to have broken the law by discriminating on the basis of class against Salvadorans and Guatemalans. I didn't even need to go

into that. Sure, a lot of that would've been over their heads anyway, but they didn't demand some legal justification.

Moving your activism back to your hometown of Tucson, Arizona: could you tell me about some of the issues you're currently dealing with there?

I belong to the Derechos Humanos Coalition, which is part of the Arizona Border Rights Project. Our mother organization is the AFSC, American Friends Service Committee. We do a number of things: we document Border Patrol abuses; educate people about their rights; and in particular, we monitor the militarization of the border. In this part of the country we live very much in a state of siege—we've had *thousands* of agents sent to the border. There is also the active presence of the military in the so-called "War Against Drugs" which doubles as a war against immigrants. ¶ As the situation intensifies everybody is getting hurt, not only undocumented workers, but US citizens as well. Sometimes Native Americans and dark-skinned Hispanics are sent "back" or "deported" to Mexico even though they have proof that they're citizens. These kinds of abuses happen all the time. We also work with Native American tribes whose tribal lands extend into Mexico—the Tohono O'odham and the Yaqui, whose kinship relations live on both sides of the border. They have suffered harassment when they've tried to come into the US for ceremonies and had ritual objects confiscated. ¶ One of the things we're facing right now, which is really frightening, is growing vigilantism. Ranchers near Douglas, Arizona have issued a call to people around the US to come "vacation" on their lands and to bring equipment such as sirens and trip wires for flares and video. It's essentially an invitation to hunt down and round-up undocumented workers. We're working now to address that problem. There have been about 20 confrontations between armed ranchers and undocumented workers. ¶ One fact is crucial to understanding how the present reality of the border evolved: the head of the Immigration Service enacted a policy to seal off the

usual crossings, which were in or near the major border cities. This has forced people out into the desert and has led to the escalation of vigilante activity. The policy was intended as a deterrent and of course it hasn't worked since its hard to "deter" people who are hungry. So people are pushed out into the desert. Right now the "hot" area is the Douglas-Agua Prieta area where at least 300 people die every year trying to make the crossing.

You'd used a term earlier in describing the military presence—"low-intensity warfare".

Right. There's an elite unit, Joint Task Force 6 [JTF 6], which patrols the border and actually has the right to go into just about any major city, ostensibly to wage the "War on Drugs." JTF 6 caused an uproar when one of its Marines shot and killed a US citizen, a young boy from Martha, Texas who was herding his goats as he did every day after school. This killing drew attention to JTF 6 and its operations.

We're carrying out a war of economics with a high price in human casualties.

The irony is that even as we're sending more agents to the border, the Arizona governor recently requested a reinstatement of the guest worker program which previously existed in the US. There is a need to bring in more Mexican workers because there aren't enough people available to meet the demand for labor. While leaders are calling for more workers, people are perpetuating a common misperception, saying, "We're being overrun by Mexicans, we've got to keep them out." The policy in the US in regards to undocumented workers is really contradictory and very mixed up.

Borders are very plastic in that they occupy an important conceptual place in our culture, but also a geographic fluidity as well. How does the role of the JTF 6 in the Southwest and the militarization you referred to affect the actual definition of what constitutes the border? Can any city be considered a "border town"?

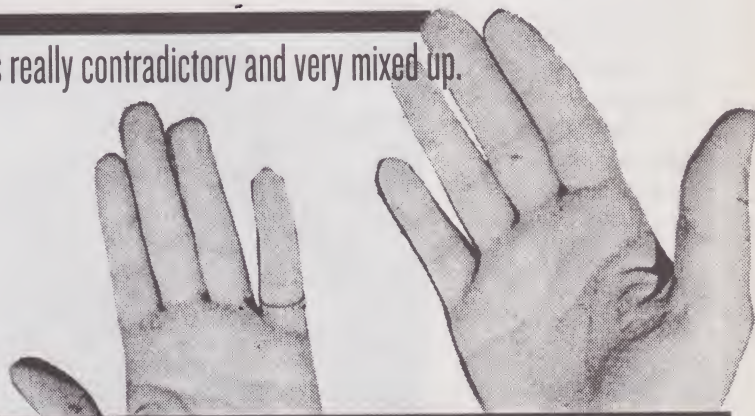
That's correct. For example, in the late '80s Albuquerque, New Mexico, which is about four and a half hours north of the border by car, was declared a border city. Border Patrol offices were set up there.

Increasingly there is a stronger presence of Border Patrol in cities that are very, very far from the border and of course among other things this enables them to raid workplaces. There has been quite an increase in raids. ¶ People need to understand that the vast majority of people who are here illegally aren't illegal entrants over the Mexican border. They're mostly people who've overstayed their visas but that doesn't fit with present policies which are determined to increase the militarization of the Southern border.

ders. I can see it in my own life: what I'm able to do or how I'm treated because I don't have much of an accent or because I can pull big, scary words out of my grab-bag. I see non-English speaking people who get tongue-tied and all that goes with that, the humiliation, and very often, discrimination. ¶ There's so much to be learned and to be relished as the student, the learner, the one who is *not* fluent. So much can be gained by someone who's willing to surrender to that experience of struggling with a language

that we really understand what the economics are. There've been some very good articles written by Elizabeth Martinez about why the WTO matters so much to people of color here in the US. We have to really go in that direction and begin to educate ourselves so that we can draw others into the movement. It is important to learn to speak the language to understand what globalization is about and how it affects all of us. That, I think, is the role of people like me who've been educating themselves quietly and slowly.

The policy in the US in regards to undocumented workers is really contradictory and very mixed up.



In *Mother Tongue* you are very eloquent in talking about the roots of language and the creation of invisible borders within and amongst ourselves through the constructions of language. When you talk to students or other groups of people, how do you approach the dismantling or the transcending of borders both within your own life and within the lives of communities and nations?

Well I think that one approach, on a real, practical level is a willingness by North Americans to get beyond the question of bi-lingual education for kids. Obviously the issue has to be dealt with and funded and so forth, but I'm asking for North Americans to change their image of themselves, to humble themselves, and to be willing to learn another language even knowing that they may never become fully fluent. It's absolutely necessary to know what it is to *not* be in the position of linguistic power. That is one of the primary methods by which we exercise power—amazing power—in this society and through which we erect and defend bor-

As I think about your activism and your ability to fuse border issues, language and spirituality, a tight and powerful resonance becomes apparent. We're seeing now the emergence of broad and active alliances also made stronger through resonance between issues. Resistance has been reinvigorated through protests beginning on other continents and igniting North America after Seattle. In some sense you're like our aunt who's been in the struggle since I was shoplifting Bon Jovi tapes. You represent a history of our collective activism which has been ignored or unsung except in the Southwest and by radical Catholics and others that have spent many years working with the sanctuary movement and on issues of America's relationship with its southern neighbors. Where do you see yourself in relation to all the mobilizations that are happening now?

Well, in some ways I feel that I've been working in solitude, preparing for this. I think it's absolutely *critical* that Chicano and Chicana intellectuals become really fluent in the language of globalization,

I'm sure other people have felt this way too, kind of thinking that you're working in isolation, or maybe working with your one lonely group who feel as if they're the only ones thinking about certain issues. I know I've felt this as we focused heavily on NAFTA a few years ago while it seemed to slip past most activists. Now though, it's just an amazing thing, it's just an incredibly energizing thing, to realize that everyone *did* come together and that people *haven't* been working in solitude who may have felt they were. ¶ You know, I made a very conscientious decision not to live the safe kind of middle or upper middle class life that a degree from Princeton could have made possible. I avoided the safe route—the life that would pin me down—because I felt that there was always something else out there. And that something else out there has certainly been about activism, about spirituality, about writing. But I see it all coming together now in a much larger, communal effort and in the end, you can't act alone. You have to act within the context of a community. ©

There are worse ways to spend time than hanging out in Brooklyn with Martin Perna, leader of Antibalas Afrobeat Orchestra. Afrobeat is a distinctive blend of Nigerian highlife and American funk and soul created by Fela Anikulapo-Kuti (1938-1997). Fela was an international symbol of resistance that sought to redraw borders or erase them altogether. A new generation is discovering him through a series of CD reissues, an excellent biography, and devotees such as Antibalas, whose second full-length, *Liberation Afrobeat Volume 1* was released last summer by London's Ninja Tunes label.

I met Martin Perna, Antibalas's frontman in upstate New York at a *BLU* magazine conference, and then caught up with him at the band's collective space, Amayo. On a block where the number of churches and botanicas are matched by the number of LOFTS FOR RENT signs and the first swanky cafe was opening its shutters in a neighborhood far from what most Manhattanites know as Williamsburg, the band's message of cultural survival means a lot more. The story of how Perna discovered Fela's work and attempted to realize it in his own life leaves him short for words, saying at one point, "I'm trying to put words to it, trying to figure out myself why it is that I grew up Mexican-American in Philadelphia, and all of a sudden I'm like one of the architects of the resurgence of very heavy Nigerian music in America!"

The following fascinating conversation about Martin's life, about Antibalas, and leftist politics is what transpired.

Interview by **Aaron Shuman**

I'm really excited that you're writing this for *Punk Planet*, 'cause Afrobeat is African punk rock. Fela was the original African rebel hippy. [laughs] He was all DIY. He got tired of playing these commercial venues where the music couldn't stretch out. He

started his own space where they had food; they had African and Black Power books and all sorts of history books you couldn't get anywhere else. It was a place where people could go and feel safe, as part of a counterculture looking beyond the confines of their realities in Lagos: either the confines of the colonial mentality, or the ghetto mentality, or something else. It was definitely a mindset that if they kept following the path, it was gonna liberate them. *Is gonna liberate them.*



How'd you get turned on to Fela?

When I was 15, I heard samples of Fela in this hip-hop group called X-Clan. I would always read the liner notes to hip-hop records, to figure out where I could find the original stuff. I started finding Fela records a few years later, when I came to NYC

How did Antibalas get started?

Around May of '98, we put together seven guys and had our first show, at this Afrocentric poetry reading up at St. Nick's Pub, in the heart of Harlem. They were doing poetry; we would play in between sets, and there were all these heavy people in the audience. I was like, "Fuck, this is our first show!" It started off miserably. The bass player was completely stoned, playing this fretless bass. Not only was the bass fretless, but it was out of tune, and he forgot the bassline. Everything took off after that. The show was really good, and people were bugging out. So I said "If we can be so disorganized and not get booed off the stage in Harlem [laughs], this is worth pursuing."

Antibalas is a pretty big band now, right? How many people are in the group?

There's been about 16 for the last two years. In addition to the regular line-up, there are seven or eight other people who know all the tunes, who all play in different projects but are sort of "on call." Some people even go on tour with us if other people can't make it. There are so many people in the mix now that even I can take off. I had to go away to Spain for a month,



and the trombone player just stepped up and started conducting and throwing all the cues, which is what I normally do. Everything worked out really well; he did a better job than I did, so when I came back, everyone was like, "All right, he's the conductor now." [laughs] That's how it works. The whole thing about Afrobeat is that it's a community of music.

Why aren't there more Afrobeat bands?

There's a couple reasons. First, Fela had a steady band up until 1978. Then a lot of musicians left, and from '78 to the end of his career, his band was kind of a rotating cast, with a zillion musicians. Point being that Afrobeat really just came from him. It's almost like people in the James Brown band. The rest of the guys were great musicians, but they were just sort of playing what the leader told them to play. ¶ Also, the music is much more sophisticated than a lot of people think. People who are coming into it, who haven't grown up in African music frameworks, might be like,

"OK, it's just as easy as this," and they'll miss it entirely. It's like someone eating spaghetti for the first time and thinking that the marinara sauce is ketchup, 'cause it's got tomatoes and spices. [laughs] Afrobeat is a really amazing, sophisticated kind of music, and I feel like Antibalas plays it really well, but there's so many things that we're just discovering about it.

Like what?

Different ways that the percussion works

signed and get a record out over here. And Afrobeat is definitely not that—it's a whole different breed of stuff.

Why did you connect, personally, with the legacy of Fela? Why did you get to the point where you wanted to do an Afrobeat band?

I feel like Afrobeat is the music that the world needs more than anything else right now. That's not to disparage any other kinds of music, 'cause if you go to my house, you can find all sorts of different

Fela's messages, and messages that I feel need to be propagated. Not that I feel like it's my personal agenda. Its just a path about community, about trust, about building alliances, about finding alternatives to the capitalist mechanisms that are around us. ¶ It's worked—it's totally growing. Afrobeat musically is also a heavy dance music. We can play it for anybody; whether they're African or American or Afro-American or Latin, they'll dance to it.

ANTIBALAS 'CAUSE AFROBEAT IS AFRICAN PUNK ROCK

together, and the dialogue between the drum kit and the horns. The drums don't just play beats; they announce all the changes and comings and goings in the song. It's more than just fills. African music in general, the way the horn parts and drum parts are written out, they mimic or imitate the sound of people talking, so you really have to be around that. Or else you're just trying to imitate something that you don't actually know; trying to recreate sounds that you've never actually heard. ¶ The music has definitely affected a lot of people, but it's such a mouthful, to take and really be like, "okay, let's do Afrobeat." We need more people doing it, just so more people *understand* it. So when we say we play Afrobeat, people will know what that means. It's such a general term, and it's been kicked around by music writers who don't know what they're talking about, or people who work at record stores and just file everything under "Afropop." They just spread that word as a glaze over anybody from Africa who's managed to get

stuff—everything except Meat Loaf. [laughs] But the state of the world is like just playing salsa—great salsa is not gonna do it. Just playing pure punk rock isn't gonna do it. Playing reggae isn't gonna do it, just because of where those musics are, and who traditionally has gravitated towards them. It's too limited. It wasn't like I had this map, and said, "Reggae's out! Punk rock's out!" [laughs] But Afrobeat is such a *crucial* music. From the beginning, Fela was so on in analyzing things that were keeping himself down, keeping people in the city down, in Nigeria, in West Africa. And while all the songs were particularly about the African situation, they could just as easily be about Mexico, Southeast Asia or the Caribbean. Any country that has been hit especially hard by colonialism and really found themselves at the bottom of the present, of globalization, of multinationals, and neocolonialism. ¶ As the leader of the group, I was kind of the catalyst in getting it together, and trying to maintain the center around

There's a lot of beats in it, not just one.

There's something about Afrobeat, about the repetition and the maintaining of a single groove within a song that has a lot of merit. Afrobeat songs are generally *at least* 10 minutes in duration. When we're playing it properly, when everybody's focused, when everybody's centered and listening to each other, *undeniably* magical shit happens. But that only happens, maybe 10 minutes into the song. That's like three top 40 radio songs played *with* commercial breaks. [laughs] ¶ But Antibalas is weird, because it's path is toward anarchic structures, towards human beings interacting that way. That's what really made me want to start the group. The music is a vehicle to incite that change, to inspire people, to bring people together from very different places in the same space, looking at each other, dancing, listening to ideas and hopefully talking about them afterwards. If you come to our shows and look around at who's in

the audience, I think there are few other groups that really bring so many people together in a sincere way.

Where do you get your politics from? Did you grow up in a political family?

Not really. I was raised by my mom in Philadelphia. There was a lot of independence growing up as a latchkey kid, sneaking around, finding all this shit out on your own. In high school, I did debate and

nected with what my grandmother was. But I'm like, "That's where our culture is." It's not what came from America in the '50s.

How did you start getting into anarchist stuff?

In college, I had some interactions with communists and socialists. I felt like a lot of the people that were really pushing forward in those realms were too dogmatic, too judgmental, too nostalgic about Mao, or Trotsky even. And I'm the first one to

admit that communism and socialism didn't fail because of their own faults but because they were constantly under attack by the United States. It's like trying to build a castle and having hordes of people come every day with sledgehammers to knock down what you've just been making. [laughs]

But I feel like anarchism is really the ultimate expression of responsibility and fraternal love, and that's something that we really need to shoot for.

Did you connect with anarchism through Mexican examples?

I started reading the works of Ricardo Flores Magon, who was really active right around the time of the Mexican Revolution. He organized different indigenous and mestizo communities in the central and north parts of Mexico, basically as anarchist collectives. They tried to shut out the police, take control over the land, and live together in community. ¶ But what's been even more exciting is to travel and to see people in different parts of the world, just other collectives, like this one in Mexico City that puts on this market called El Chopo. It's sort of a countercultural flea market concert series that's been happening every single Saturday since 1981. They have live bands, they have pirated cassettes, they

have books, and used clothing. It's a center for counterculture and ideas in Mexico City. And just seeing how that happens, how people build it up. People who run the market stalls make a little bit of money, but it's not a mall, you know? If they really wanted to be making money, they'd be selling guns or drugs or hot dogs. ¶ I spend more and more time in Mexico. It's tough with Antibalas, because I'm trying to build a community in Mexico, and this past year I've been juggling that with a lot of things.

Talk some more about that community.

Well, I got some land there, I built a cabin for myself, and I ended up getting this other piece of land with a big old house shack that has electricity. I'm just trying to make sure this is the right exact place to build. Here, it's hard for me personally to shake off certain behaviors being surrounded by New York-style capitalism—it turns *everybody* into a hustler. Everybody. If you don't hustle, you don't have a place to live and you don't have food to eat. ¶ It's not like that in a lot of other parts of the world, where things aren't as commodified or stratified. You can't walk around here and find a fruit tree; maybe you can throw a line in the water and grab a fish, but I wouldn't eat it. But in Mexico, it's different. There's fruit trees *everywhere*; there's fish; there's sunshine all year round. Cold and insulation aren't an issue. I was living there in a hammock for two months in the dead of winter, and having the best time of my life. I'm like, "Wow, I'm really learning to *live* all of a sudden." I learned how to really cook over fire; I learned how to dig holes; I learned how to pick certain fruits; how to do all this different stuff that's really essential. I just felt so much more connected to what it means to actually exist. ¶ I hope to establish something in Mexico, so I'm talking to some people up here, trying to get some teachers together, some people who know about health care, some people who know about carpentry, agriculture, and go down there and live. Just make a town of it, make a go at it.

When are you gonna do that?

I need to make a couple good records first. [laughs] ©



public speaking, so I started reading about all these world issues, but not getting that much perspective from my environment. I grew up in the lower middle bottom of a very wealthy area on the edge of Philadelphia, where people were NPR liberals. [laughs] Or they were really conservative, like these crazy old money WASPY people. ¶ My family in Mexico was really involved in politics at the beginning of the century. They ran a socialist bookstore right in the old center of Mexico City. My great-grandfather, who I didn't know during his life—but who I'm named after—was a philosopher and a painter and a pediatrician in Mexico City. He sheltered Trotsky for an extended period of time, while Trotsky was in exile there. So there's definitely history, but it's buried. In that particular part of my family, it's the typical immigrant thing, where my grandmother got a scholarship to study, came to Philadelphia, got married, had kids, and my parents' generation isn't really that con-

be an angel.



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ERASE ERRATA

No rain drops splat down on Portland, Oregon, tonight. A crisp, fall breeze blows on the shockingly dry October evening. Not quite dark yet, faceless warehouses and uneven loading docks stand slumping along the cracked streets of the East Side's 'Produce Row' industrial neighborhood.

Cut in fractions by train tracks, the area is mostly void and vaguely ghostly. But, ever so often, it's an area that flashes images of what's sure to come: trendy coffeehouses, art galleries and record stores. One such image has taken shape in the form of B Complex—the area's first live music venue—a minimalist, art-deco joint Erase Errata will play tonight.

Quickly introduced to the Bay Area jagged, post-punk four-piece minutes ago, we are already out the back door of B Complex, walking swiftly toward Nicholas—the small Greek restaurant about five blocks away I would interview them at—taking intermittent pit stops for photo opportunities.

"Take a picture of us in front of this van—we'll pretend like it's ours," Jenny Hoysten, the band's lead singer and trumpeter, says laughing, standing proudly in front of a luxuriously large, silver and black Econo-line.

The rest of the group, smirking, shuffles over to the van and stands tall with gravely seri-

ous expressions—ones that could burst into laughter at any second—as their picture is taken.

Smiling, my shoulders fall as I sigh. "Phew," I thought, "they have a sense of humor"—one that would resonate throughout our conversation at the quaint, golden-accented restaurant. Feeling more akin to hanging out with buddies than conducting an interview, the hour or so spent at the rectangular, plate-covered table saw playful, often sarcastic exchanges among the four girls—or more appropriately, friends. From behind the pizza-sized, raised trays of steaming pita bread and the white-shirted arm of the waiter who stopped, what felt like, every two minutes, to deliver a side of something, I saw four street-hip, punk-inspired girls who were just starting out, who were nervous yet cynical, who were intelligent yet reserved—and most of all—who were hungry. No, most of all they were *real* and not about to pretend to be anything but. Sit down and talk with them, you'll find they're not much unlike you or I. That is, until you hear their new brilliantly broken album, *Other Animals*.

The band's first full-length is frantic, screeching and edgy. Jenny's singing hiccups and pierces atop harsh, repetitive rhythm lines, spastic melodies and raw, thumping

beats. Having been compared to Gang of Four, Liliput, The Need, and Captain Beefheart, Erase Errata make fiercely intricate music that demands attention like fingernails sliding across a chalkboard—you can't help but be consumed by its gripping, abrasive hold. An affect as equally powerful in its own manic uniqueness on stage.

Tied incorrectly with its knot off-centered, the wrinkled tie Jenny wears on stage atop her old white T-shirt stands out against the casualness of her Dickies and sneakers. Maybe it was only for fun, or for flare, but the tie seemed to bring Jenny to another place where exhaustive realities fade out and artistic passions set in. Her moves—jerky, intense and awkward—show a performer who is not slyly charming the crowd with rhythmic grace but one that—lost in the chaotic, jagged noise and biting words of Erase Errata—rouses the onlookers through her own distraught, sense of absence.

Robust and broad-shouldered, Ellie, on bass, stands to Jenny's right, letting her head of mid-length, shiny straight blonde hair fall; slamming back and forth to the music with precision.

On guitar, Sara—with short brown wavy

ERASE ERRATA

locks bouncing from her nodding head—stands wide-legged to her left. With head down and eyes on her guitar almost consistently throughout, Sara's frail thinness shows through her baggy plaid, button-up shirt that's tucked into her loose jeans. Her skinny, long fingers move with speed and skill as she plays harsh, cutting riffs and impressively intricate solos.

Unusually close to front stage and wearing headphones, Bianca—with short blonde, spiky hair, oversized, black, thick-rimmed glasses, a scooped-neck, fitted T-shirt and colorful wristbands around her muscular arms—sits staunchly behind the drum kit, pounding out abrasive but dance-y beats.

On stage, they were a potent, mighty unit, shattering the conventions of rock 'n' roll—they had become something more than the smug, giggling friends they were at the restaurant. Without seeing the latter, I may not have been able to comprehend the first.

Interview by **Jenny Tatone**

In your music, I feel anger, confusion and resentment—as if it has already been scarred and broken. Are any of these emotions

involved in making it?

Sparta: I don't think there's any anger, do you mean in the voice or in the music?

In the music.

Hoysten: I think we're all just edgy.

Sparta: This is the happiest band I've ever been in, like totally dancing and fun.

Erickson: I think it's more just frantic.

Jaffe: I think it's a lot of us just processing what's going on around us and that's how it comes out. It's all over the place or frantic because that's how we process that energy.

Erickson: Yeah, absolute high energy.

Hoysten: I think that high energy and aggression get blurred sometimes. I think a lot of people might see us that way, but that's not necessarily where we're coming from.

Is it anger in a punk rock sense?

Hoysten: Yeah, it goes back to a more observatory stance. The music is more of a

regurgitation than an emotional response.

Erickson: But I think at the same time it's an outlet, definitely. If I'm feeling frustrated, I can't wait to go play some loud music. But I don't think it's definitely in the punk rock tradition. I don't think it's about "I hate the world! Let's play minor chords!"

What inspired you to form Erase Errata?

Hoysten: We were all friends just hanging out.

Do you all write the songs together?

Jenny Hoysten: Yeah, we do *everything* together. Sometimes someone has an idea that they bring, but a lot of the time it's like we're at practice and it comes from that.

I was reading about the whole ready-set-go approach to songwriting you use, is that exaggerated at all?

Hoysten: No it's not exaggerated at all.

Sparta: Some of our best stuff comes from that.

Hoysten: We all have the technicalities down and so we're all pretty comfortable just starting out like that.

How long have you all been playing?

Hoysten: Together?

Your instruments.

Erickson: Forever.

Sparta: I just recently learned.

Self-taught?

Sparta: Yeah.

Jaffe: One of the reasons I moved to San Francisco was because I knew there was a good music scene and I did want to play in a band that was sort of traditional.

I meant to ask you about San Francisco, do you consider it a good place to be as far as playing music?

Jaffe: I think it's a great place.

Hoysten: There's so much creative energy. There's definitely constraints put on by outside forces, like practice space is so expensive, or clubs shutting down. But as far as for creative arts people, it's great and not like New York where people have creative ideas but everyone is so nose-to-the-grindstone about working they can't get them out. I think there's a really good balance of energy in the Bay area. ¶ But there's also a lot that's wrong with San Francisco. Everyone thinks that San Francisco is such a lovely city. Even down at Fisherman's Wharf, the mayor is on a big screen TV that's on the side of the building going: "Welcome to San Francisco, our people love to play host to you." And then there's all these homeless people laying on the ground that obviously have no means to play host to anyone, it started with that whole thing. ¶ It was good to move to Oakland, but Oakland will probably be experiencing something like that really

soon. But for now, the class divisions aren't as distinct in Oakland—we're all pretty low income and a lot of people there are too. There's certainly parts of town in the hills where people have some money, but for the most part it's a working class town.

Jaffe: But at the same I definitely think, although it's really hard, there's a lot of positive activities going on in San Francisco like neighborhood community-oriented kind of things.

Hoysten: Yeah, they're trying to reorganize now and I think it's a perfect time, too, cause the dot-coms are pulling out. I think it's an important time for people to organize as far as neighborhood coalitions go.

That same sort of sentiment seems to inform your song "Other Animals Are #1". It seems to imply anti-capitalist, anti-technology—maybe anti-human—sentiment, saying we are the least evolved of all species because of our efficiency. Could you talk about the driving factors behind the lyrics and the personal beliefs that inspired them?

Hoysten: Wow, that's a time period for me, as a songwriter, where I was writing a lot about evolution vs Social Darwinism. I was thinking about how the development of society took over non-human members of the planet that were developing in a different way and adapting to us rather than us having to adapt to anything. It was

more an observation because of things I was reading and thinking about as opposed to a stance. Although there's obviously an opinion in "Other Animals Are #1", I'm not anti-human or anything.

Jaffe: Not speaking for Jenny—because she's the one who wrote the lyrics—but being from the Bay Area and watching the drastic changes that are happening with technology . . . It's not like, "Oh they say they hate technology but their guitars wouldn't be very loud without amplifiers." It's more the new techie revolution going on in the area where we live that we have a problem with. How they treated the area and the people that already lived there—in San Francisco and Oakland—that kind of the displacement.

Talking more about technology, do you view it as destructive in general?

Erickson: I think a lot of it is really unnecessary.

Hoysten: I think it'd be really stupid to say that it's bad. I think a general trend toward more technology is just inevitable. It's the kind of thing that we could drag our feet about, but it's gonna happen no matter what. But, in general, humans are in this automated state. I think it's inevitable, but we don't necessarily have to like the by-products of it.

Erickson: I think the most important thing about it is that people involved with it or developing it need to have a sense of responsibility for it and what they're bringing these new technologies into and how it's affecting people.

Jaffe: Yeah, whether it's the location of their business or the people that work for their business affecting a community. Or whether it's the fact that only certain people have access to certain technologies.

Hoysten: I think all those developments



are creating classes because that's just the nature of funding—it has a lot to do with money.

Do you think technology is part of our evolution and if it is, is there a better way to evolve?

Hoysten: I think its part of our de-evolution.

Could we evolve in a more positive way without it?

Erickson: I think you have to incorporate it into your life and decide how you wanna live. Nothing forces you to do anything.

What music did you listen to growing up?

Jaffe: I listened to a lot of punk rock. You want names? I've always been a huge Misfits fan . . .

Erickson: My first concert was Ah-Ha [laughs]. I think I listened to oldies mostly in junior high and then I figured out there was a punk scene in Nebraska, so I listened to a lot of local music.

Hoysten: There was always a lot of music in my family. My dad played piano and he was always into old standards and show tunes and that kind of thing. That was my really young sort of stuff. I always listened to the radio even if it was just Top 40 or whatever. Then I got more into indie or college radio scenes and started learning about more new bands—kind of coming from a really wide range and then narrowing in more and more along the way.

You have a very distinct sound that is obviously all your own, but could you cite some people you'd call influences or who've had an important impact on you musically?

Sparta: I think oldies radio totally inspired me to play drums in a certain way.

Like how?

Sparta: Ripping beats off from oldies songs [laughs]. The simplicity and the



steadiness of the beats. Our beats aren't necessarily simple, but we definitely study the old songs.

Erickson: I took a lot of experimental music classes so that opened my mind up as to how you can use an instrument.

Jaffe: I think we all listen to so many different kinds of music that we take in all of it. And it's a process of everything from the most random noisy stuff to the stuff we listened to growing up—it kind of all comes out.

You've been called a "post-riot girl" band. Do you feel in any way associated with that movement in music or affected by it, connected to it?

Hoysten: It definitely had a big impact on me when I was like 16 or 17 years old.

Sparta: I wasn't really affected by that. I was in Texas so that wasn't really going on. I missed that whole thing, but all the riot girl musicians are still around.

Erickson: We play with them a lot.

Sparta: And we play with them so we have a semi-community with them in a certain way, but it's not like we all identify with them.

Is there any sort of feminist thought in the music you make?

Jaffe: Sure, but not necessarily in terms of an agenda.

Erickson: I wouldn't say that anything really has an agenda necessarily. We're just

empowered women [laughs].

Jaffe: I really think there are a lot of girls out there playing fucked up guitar or whatever and that makes me feel . . .

Sparta: There are so many girls playing music, I think it's sort of funny how there's such an emphasis on . . .

Erickson: Do people forget—like from band to band—"Oh my God! All these girls are playing music too!" [laughs].

Hoysten: It's the scene we're in. We're around that stuff all the time. I've lived places where I've been like, "There's no girl bands in this town. I have to form a band just so that there's not just a bunch of dudes playing music." I mean, we're definitely privileged to be in a scene where that's not the case, so I think it's easier for us.

Has there been any discrimination that you've felt being girl musicians?

Sparta: Yeah, with sound guys—especially during sound checks.

What do they do?

Sparta: They think we don't know anything about our own equipment.

Hoysten: They tell us where to plug in our chords [laughs]. "You plug in your chord right here."

As artists, what have you encountered or experienced for the first time as the result of being in a band? Something maybe that you never would've expected?

Hoysten: This is the first band that I've ever sang in and been a front person for. I've been in bands, Bianca and I, in our two-piece, I sang and played guitar. But this actual experience for me feels a lot like performance art. Normally, I'm just a musician. In the other bands I'm in, I feel like that's my role. So this is a first for me. Artistically, I've really learned from that.

Sparta: I feel fortunate to get to meet a lot of nice people just because we get to travel so much, meeting a lot of people and

I'VE LIVED PLACES WHERE I'VE BEEN LIKE, "THERE'S NO GIRL BANDS IN THIS TOWN. I HAVE TO FORM A BAND JUST SO THAT THERE'S NOT JUST A BUNCH OF DUDES PLAYING MUSIC."

WE'RE ALL WORKING TOWARDS MAKING INTERESTING NEW SOUNDS THAT ARE MORE LIKE AN ART FORM AS OPPOSED TO A SONGCRAFT NECESSARILY

going places where I probably would've never traveled before. Getting to see a lot of the United States is really exciting.

Erickson: And in a really great way, not just going to the tourists sites, but going where people like yourself would hang out and meeting people there.

Jaffe: Definitely. I think for all of us, just playing with people who have the same musical ideas in a way—it's like what we, in our head, had thought we wanted to do. And then it all comes out on the pages the same way together—it's really amazing.

Hoysten: It has been really great meeting musically like-minded bands and finding people that we have a lot in common with socially and politically. It's really neat to see the underground people who aren't playing traditional music.

I know I've already mentioned this, but I really think you have a very distinct sound—it's very unlike anything I've heard in a long time. Where does it come from?

Sparta: I think we all have our own separate styles of playing so we try to adapt them together and that's the outcome.

Hoysten: And we're all pretty considerate about wanting to do something or not wanting to write a particular song. It's not like we set out to try to make it

as weird as possible. We're trying not to limit ourselves and push envelopes of where we've gone musically before. We're all working towards making interesting new sounds that are more like an art form as opposed to a songcraft necessarily.

Sparta: But, at the same time, being conscious that, "Oh, this is a dance-y beat so there's more to dance to and that's rad!"

Erickson: We have the most fun is when the audience is into it.

Sparta: Yeah, we like the dancing.

Hoysten: It just gets people moving like it's active—you're at a show and you're moving—it's such a good thing.

So live, do you have certain hopes for what a listener would get out of it?

Hoysten: I like it when they get really sweaty and energized and then, after the show, they can't stop dancing or moving around. They run around outside and everyone's really hyper and yelling, it becomes chaos. I'd like to incite a riot, but a nice one.

Sparta: We ran into some friends this morning in Olympia, Washington, and they said, "We're so worn out from how hard we were dancing to you guys last night." That's rad to hear.

Hoysten: I think that the active aspect of our performance is a really big deal to us. Like with the songwriting, we think more about types of music and the artistry of it. But when we're performing it, we really want it to be like you're experiencing something, you're not watching a concert on some screen, you're *there*.

What do you do to keep things fresh? Do you have specific goals for how you want your music to evolve?

Sparta: It's going day-to-day for me, like what I think is fresh. My tastes change all the time.

Jaffe: I think as far as recording the next album, we'd like to be able to spend some more time on it and think about the individual songs more. We were pretty rushed and the artwork was too rushed.

Hoysten: I think we're all record shoppers and we all listen to different music all the time and so I think we're always exploring things. Bianca is just now getting into sitcom music.

Sparta: Shhhh!

Hoysten: We all really try and explore a whole lot of different kinds of music and I think that keeps us fresh, so that we're always bringing something new. ©





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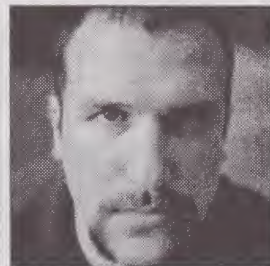
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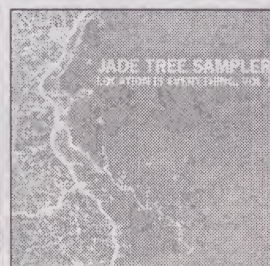
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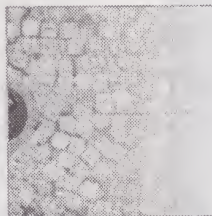
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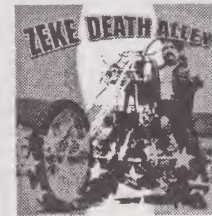
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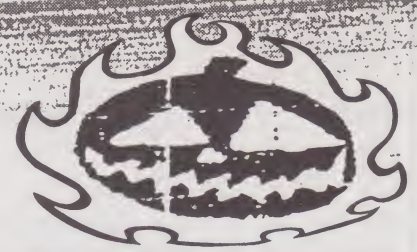
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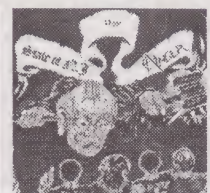
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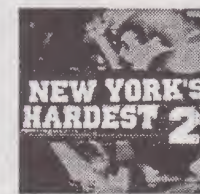
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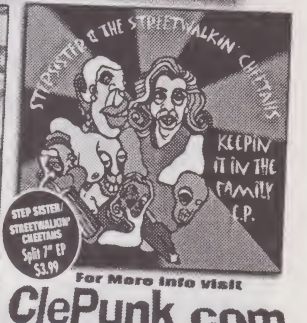
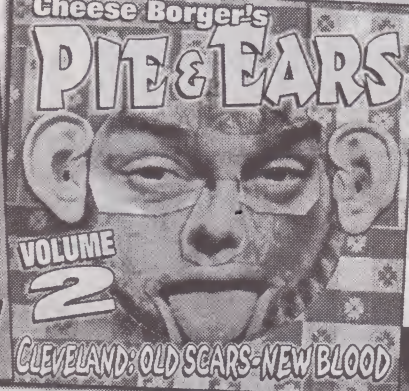
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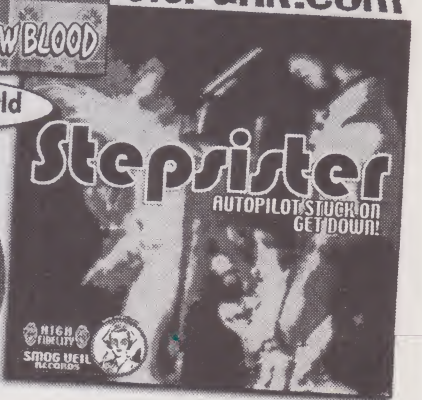


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Josh Rosenfeld should have been enjoying a great fall. Barsuk Records, the independent label he co-owns, had just signed with a new distributor and released a much-anticipated album from their biggest band, Death Cab for Cutie, on October 9, 2001. *The Photo Album* was receiving rave reviews. The Seattle-based band's popularity was soaring and they were out on a huge national tour, selling out multiple nights in cities like San Francisco and New York.

But instead of reveling in the success that was a result of years of hard work, Rosenfeld was keeping current with the latest industry rumors and how they affected whether or not his band's records were even going to make it into stores. And if stores did get them, would the label even get paid for them? Then came the news.

"The band was having a really great time out on the road and it really sucked to have to call them and tell them that the whole music business was taking a hit of millions of dollars and we got a share in that," Rosenfeld muses.

On November 20, 2001, super-media conglomerate Valley Media filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. The Woodland, CA-based "one-stop" supplied CDs, videos, DVDs and other home entertainment media to a variety of places like BJ's Warehouse, Best Buy, CD Now, and Amazon—as well as hundreds of chain and mom 'n' pop record stores. In most cases, one might shrug and chalk the bankruptcy up to yet another faceless corporate giant that had gotten itself into trouble through greed, hubris and bad investments. Unfortunately, although independent labels are not selling a whole lot of their music at CVS pharmacies, the closing of Valley still has severe repercussions within the independent music world. The downfall of Valley might just have affected whether or not you've been able to find the latest Death Cab for Cutie or Mogwai CDs in your local record store.

In one of the most direct hits, Valley's collapse resulted in the shuttering of their wholly-owned subsidiary music distribution company, Distribution North America (DNA) and its new small label-oriented distributor Emerge Records, which worked with such labels as Barsuk, Matador, K Records, Sugar Free, and Devil in the Woods. In this relationship, the labels channeled their releases through DNA in order to get them into stores. A week before the official bankruptcy filing, Valley closed DNA and Emerge, laying off their entire staffs and stranding all of their distributed music in the DNA warehouse.

Unlike larger companies, who might be able to just write off the loss of the CDs and the money owed to them by Valley, the independent labels affected by the closure of DNA and Emerge are not in a position to just whip up some new CDs to replace the ones caught up in the bankruptcy proceedings. They were also

caught without a distributor during the crucial holiday buying season, and while people probably weren't stuffing tons of stockings with the most recent Beulah CD, the holiday sales increase is significant for labels of any size.

The effects and fallout of the Valley/DNA closure are still being felt as the months pass and labels start to find new distributors and attempt to recover from this setback. The biggest repercussions may be yet to come—there are whispers of labels taking huge losses and closing up shop. The loss of Valley and subsequently DNA and Emerge, drastically changes how labels will get the records into the marketplace, with just one less avenue in an already contracting retail world.

Deep Background

Started in 1981 by Barney Cohen, Valley Media became one of the biggest and most powerful one-stops in the nation by the early '90s. As a one-stop, Valley Media bought music from labels and smaller independent distributors. In turn, retail outlets of all sizes bought music from them, serving as a centralized location for stores to purchase from many different labels. The purpose of the one-stop serves as a convenient way for stores to buy all of their music with one order without having to deal with hundreds of different labels.

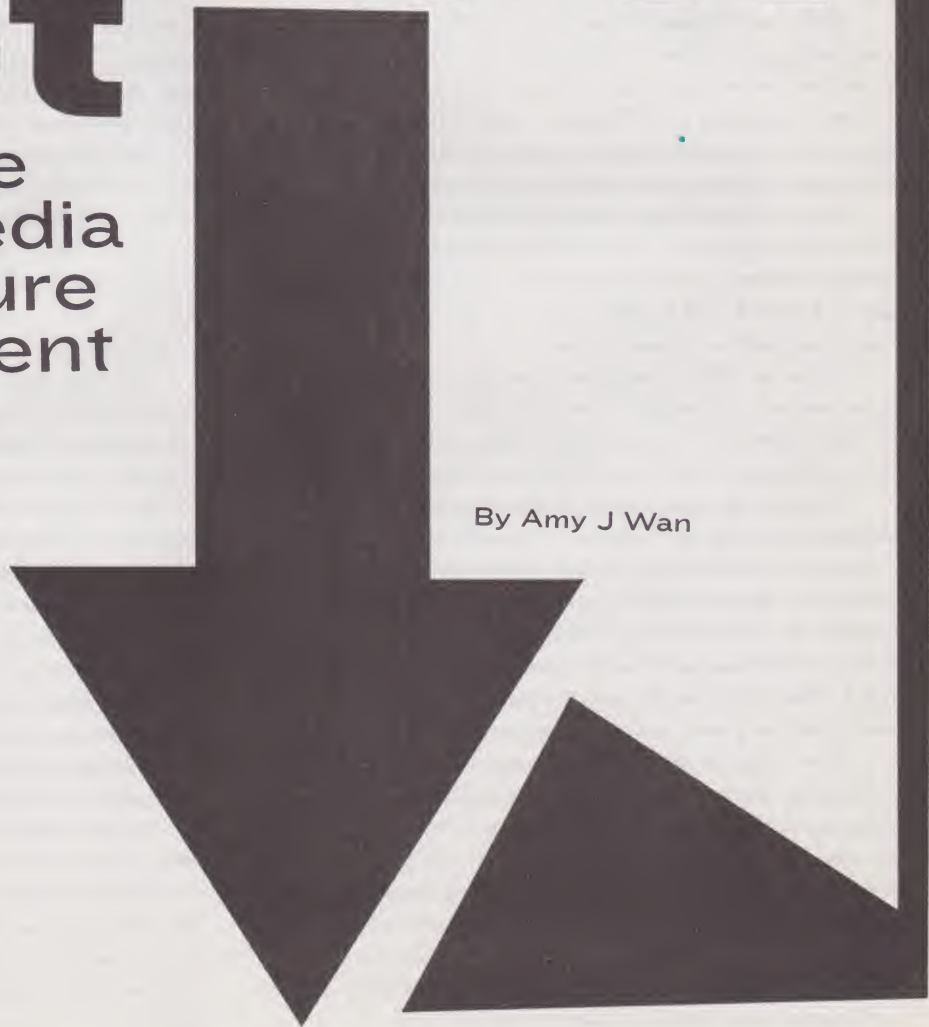
Valley Media had grown into a national powerhouse by the mid-1990s when they opened Distribution North America, a distribution company that would serve select independent labels as a consolidated alternative to the hodgepodge of regional and smaller independent distributors that many of them used. DNA aimed to bridge the gap between the large corporate and multinational distribution companies like EMD, Universal and Warner and smaller distributors like Caroline, Revolver and Mordam by giving their labels much-sought after access to national chain stores in addition to broad coverage among regional chains and the dwindling number of independent stores. Valley also got their foot in the door early for the Internet revolution that was supposed to change the way people bought music, becoming the main product source for burgeoning web-sites like CD Now and Amazon. And they were not only supplying music but also home videos and DVDs to what seemed like every major retail outlet in the country. Valley was a major and influential player in the retail world and had the home entertainment market in their pocket.

But the rumblings of Valley's demise have been on the lips of those in the music retail world since the middle of 2000. Rumors swirled about lost profits and bad Internet investments. Their stock took a nosedive. They brought in Chief Operating Officer Peter Berger last January in an effort to put Valley back

The Valley of the Shadow of Debt

The Collapse
of Valley Media
and the Future
of Independent
Distribution

By Amy J Wan



on track. But Valley's corporate honchos must have come to the conclusion that rather than try for a full recovery, there was more money to be made in the sale of the company.

With Valley being one of the bigger companies in the one-stop business, there were only a few logical and possible candidates for buyers. One was Florida-based Alliance Entertainment Corporation (AEC), and the talks for the acquisition began in earnest over the summer of 2001. AEC was Valley's biggest competitor and seemed a logical choice. By joining forces, the two would be able to create an immense customer base. Some people probably would have been laid off in the integration of the two companies, but it was a better option than the complete closure of Valley. As negotiations wore on, it became more and more apparent that Valley would close if the acquisition did not go through. According to *Billboard*, Valley Media's debt hovered around \$240 million.

Caught up in this mess were independent distributor, DNA, and micro-indie little sister, Emerge. Even though they were part of the Valley conglomerate, the distributors operated fairly independently from the parent company. With over 400 labels, DNA/Emerge was profitable and growing. Their employees followed the swirling rumors as closely as anyone as the negotiations over the acquisition of Valley carried on into the fall.

Valley and AEC spent most of the summer and fall going back and forth in negotiations. Valley asked their vendors and suppliers to forgive a percentage of their debt in order to make themselves look more attractive to AEC. Several times, it looked shaky but the deal had always gotten back on track. By the end of October, Valley and AEC were in the thick of contract negotiations.

Former Emerge Sales Manager Michelle Haunold describes the work environment: "Everybody knew they were just going through the fine print of the contract. It was literally like every day we'd come in and be like, is there an agreement, has there been an agreement? It was so close."

Everyone, Valley's employees, their customers, the rest of the music industry, all thought it was a done deal. Business went on as usual. Labels sent tons of music to Valley & DNA for the big holiday sales push. And then AEC simply walked away.

"Literally up until the second that it happened, nobody thought they would just walk away," Haunold says of the shock. "[Earlier in the fall], I had advised all the labels I worked with to hold off on shipping [CDs to us] because I didn't want to put anybody in a position that would jeopardize their company. And then the talks continued and everybody breathed a big sigh of relief. When it looked like everything was moving forward, labels started shipping again and it was business as usual."

When Haunold advised labels to start shipping their music to DNA again, she wasn't just doing it out of some blind sense of company loyalty. Not only did she work at DNA, but she is also a co-owner of Gearhead Records, one of the 400 labels that DNA distributed, and truly believed that everything was going to be ok, as did most of the Valley and DNA staff. Rumor has it that one of the DNA execs involved in the negotiations was so sure the deal would go through that he bought a house only two weeks before AEC turned their backs on Valley for the final time.

The weeks between the announcement of the failed deal and the closing of DNA was like a mad scramble. DNA's General Manager Jim Colson told his staff that he would try to find another buyer for just DNA and spin it off from Valley, but there was no time. On November 15, 2001, DNA and Emerge closed. Everyone was laid off. And their distributed labels had no way to get their music out into the stores, nor their stock out of the warehouses.

A multi-faceted victim in this scenario, Haunold recalls that after the announcement of the deal going sour, "I can't even describe the complete shock I was in. I had a job that I loved at a company that was growing and getting stronger every single day, and then I'm being told that our parent company is filing for bankruptcy. Then, not only am I losing my job but my label is losing a distributor."

She continues, "And the worst part of all is the horrible guilt I felt because of the labels I had brought into DNA and Emerge. We were supposed to be helping them. Make things better for them. Help them sell more records and get wider exposure. And here they are in a situation where they've lost their distributor and thousands of dollars."

Mike Cloward of San Francisco-based Devil in the Woods, one of the 400 labels who were affected by DNA's sudden closing. "I started hearing super serious rumors but a merger and/or sale seemed so certain that rumors were quickly dismissed, Cloward explains. "The inside word from the employees was that the sale was a done deal. The closure was very sudden and I think the folks that were most surprised were the actual employees."

Dawn Avagliano, a former DNA sales representative for New York, echoes the surprise Cloward described about the shuttering of the company. "Everyone always talked about how great DNA was doing. There was 110 percent growth over the last five years. Everyone just applauded us all the time and we were the shining star of the Valley compound. We got treated like we were going to be untouchable."

Although everyone involved had some warning once the Valley-AEC deal fell apart, options were limited since every label was still tied to DNA by contract and were not legally released until the official closing of DNA in mid-November.

By all reports, employees of DNA, like Haunold and Avagliano, did what they could to help their labels. Patrick Amory, general manager of one of DNA's largest exclusive labels, Matador Records, was in, as he describes, "constant contact with Jim Colson right up to the end and he told me what he was allowed to tell me." But as soon as DNA closed, all the music of distributed labels was locked up in the DNA warehouse, completely inaccessible. Everything was considered an asset to be liquidated in the bankruptcy proceedings, even though labels like Matador had not been paid yet for the CDs that DNA had in their hands.

The compassion and care that DNA employees had for their labels was not isolated to just this moment of crisis. "The people there were great and that's honestly one of the saddest things about this situation," Barsuk's Rosenfeld explains. "I mean, obviously, it sucks for the labels and bands. But a ton of people—good people—lost their jobs in this whole thing. And nobody's hiring right now . . . in a less cruel world, they would still be making

money right now doing what they know how to do really well. There's just nowhere for them to go."

Reading the DNA

Rosenfeld's perspective about how the greatest loss in this situation is the loss of DNA and their staff is pretty common among the distribution company's former labels. The amount of praise lavished on the company by people who worked at and with DNA is almost unreal, especially given their ties to the Valley corporation. DNA was able to attract so many reputable labels because they offered wide distribution, while still understanding the quirks of independent music. Over and over again, their former labels emphasized the commitment of the staff, the flexibility of the company to the needs of independent labels, and DNA's ability to look at releases on an individual basis and act in that record's best interest.

Haunold believes that in her time at DNA as an employee and as a label-owner, she "saw it as an opportunity to get access to national distribution but still work like an independent company with an emphasis on independent stores. Being with DNA, we had access to selling directly into Tower, to Borders, to some of the bigger national chains where it made sense. It was an exceptional opportunity for Gearhead and for the other labels. DNA was open to an independent thought process and they were totally supportive of independent labels. But because of the structure, they had access to things that only major labels had access to. And that was really the coolest thing about DNA."

Matador's Amory concurs with Haunold's insider perspective. Amory says that Matador initially went to DNA because "The changing retail climate and the mild success we'd had with some of our smaller records at the chains convinced us that we would do better by getting the muscle that goes with an exclusive distributor for North America. The staff was very eager to work with Matador to build the label's sales." He described DNA's attentiveness to Matador with their biweekly conference calls and access to all of the sales reps—an important hands-on element of Matador's ability to sell records.

Devil in the Woods' Cloward praised DNA because of the personal attention they gave to labels as well. "We decided to go with DNA because they had a very good relationship with the chain stores and their reputation on the streets was very good. Plus, they had very good people working for them, all quite knowledgeable and personable. You're only as good as the people representing you in the marketplace and DNA had good folks."

Unlike many other national distributors, DNA was willing to be flexible with their labels, understanding that it would be in everyone's best interests to get the records to where it made sense, even if it meant letting the label sell directly to other independent distributors or stores. Chris Scofield, head of sales for K Records and owner of the label, Strange Attractors Audio House, worked with DNA for over four years. With a non-exclusive distribution deal, K was the first "indie" label of its kind to sign up with DNA in 1997—until then, the distributor was best known as an independent blues and jazz distributor—because it offered the label a flexible deal that treated the music well. Scofield can't say enough

about how incredible the relationship was.

"They respected us and understood that [we used independent distributors] and were still responsive to us and our requests and did such a great job with our records. They didn't send out smaller developing stuff to huge chains, but they would for other releases like Modest Mouse, and did a kick ass job. And they were making money. It's just so unacceptable to me. They were the company making money for Valley," Scofield emphasized. "They were completely solvent. Valley just brought them down when they fell."

The Aftermath

The dilemma for most labels in such scenarios is this: Label X has a distribution contract with DNA. They send DNA their CDs. DNA sells them to stores, and then pays the label for what they sell minus a commission. But then Valley and DNA close and everything in their warehouse is considered an asset that will be liquidated in bankruptcy proceedings. Label X now has no distributor and cannot get CDs to stores. They also may

"Obviously, it sucks for the labels and bands," says Barsuk Records' Rosenfeld. "But a ton of people—good people—lost their jobs in this whole thing. And nobody's hiring right now . . . in a less cruel world, they would still be making money right now doing what they know how to do really well. There's just nowhere for them to go."

not have been paid yet for the CDs sold in the previous 60 days. The CDs that Label X has paid to manufacture are locked up in a warehouse somewhere until DNA's assets are liquidated.

Label X has several options. It can attempt to get their CDs back—in most cases, paying for CDs that they never received payment for in the first place (and since the assets are liquidated via auction, there's not even a guarantee Label X can get them back). If Label X does not have the money to buy their CDs back or afford the legal counsel necessary for negotiations, then Label X gets to see their CDs go up for auction and get purchased by another distributor, one-stop, store, or anyone else who wants to buy a truckload of CDs at firesale prices.

But there's more. Suddenly, there are a bunch of Label X's CDs in the marketplace and Label X doesn't see any of the money for them. Even if Label X finds another distributor and can scrape together the cash to manufacture more CDs, they're still not out of the woods yet. Stores who bought music from Label X's previous distributor may return them to their new one for full credit on music that the store might or might not have paid Valley for (since they had inklings of an impending bankruptcy) and that the label might or might not have received payment for. Additionally, retail outlets who purchased the liquidated CDs can return them to Label X's new distributor for full credit. And again, Label X has no choice but to take them back and pay for a

CD that they were never compensated for in the first place.

A similar scenario occurred when indie distributor and label Flydaddy went under last year and left many of their labels without payment and vulnerable to returns from music that was floating around the marketplace unattached. In many of the DNA cases, these labels are small operations that are labors of love, not moneymaking machines. Think about how many independent labels like Matador, Barsuk, Sugar Free, K (and the list goes on and on) will have to sustain losses like that. How many of them can?

Barsuk's Death Cab for Cutie dodged a bullet, in some sense. Their latest full-length, *The Photo Album*, had a release date of October 9, 2001, which was right in the thick of the negotiations between Valley and AEC and the rumors of Valley's demise whispered between everybody else. The album entered into the DNA distribution process as soon as the deal was inked, since distributors need releases a couple of months prior to the actual release date in order to solicit orders from retail outlets and then ship the records for the stores to get them in time. As the release date inched closer, the uncertainty about DNA's future became more and more apparent.

Barsuk's Rosenfeld cites, "By the time we found out things were looking grim, they had all of the CDs. We had no choice but to just carry forward and hold our breath." DNA performed a sort of swan song with their only Barsuk release, which Rosenfeld

"Part of the larger problem is that there is too much 'just OK music' being released due to how easy it is to make a CD," says Revolver Distribution's Held. "There is a serious epidemic of poor judgment being used by a variety of indie labels when it comes to releasing quality music."

simply describes as "a really good job of selling that record and a great job of helping to market it. A lot of people are in their homes right now, enjoying the record." As a result of DNA's "really good job," a majority of the records that Barsuk sent to DNA for them to sell ended up in stores by the release date and out of the now-locked warehouse.

By January 2002, *The Photo Album* had Sound-Scanned over 22,000 records. It's difficult to think about how many more they could have sold under better circumstances (like if their primary distributor had survived to do some follow-up) since the work of DNA played a huge part in that number. But even with those sales, Barsuk only received partial payment on the records because DNA was not able to pay for them in full before their bankruptcy. Since Barsuk did not have an exclusive agreement with DNA, they fortunately have received payment for some of those 22,000 by their other distributors. But there is still a significant loss that Barsuk will be forced to simply write off. "It's going to leave a bruise, but we realized we can keep going," Rosenfeld explains.

Basuk Records is one of the lucky ones. There are 399 other DNA labels who might not have had their CDs flying out of the

warehouse in the same manner, either because of a later release date or because they were stocking up for the holiday season. The labels each had a different type of agreement with DNA—some exclusive distribution agreements, some on consignment. But at least so far, all of their records are still considered assets of Valley Media and sit in their warehouse, awaiting liquidation.

Distro Woes

The bankruptcy of Valley did not just affect those independent labels that were directly distributed through DNA. Since Valley is a one-stop, they were buying from independent distributors like Revolver, Sure Fire, and Mordam [who also distributes this magazine] as well. These independent distributors sell to one-stops like Valley in order to get their stock into the bigger chain stores who only buy from a limited number of places—and to cover mom & pop stores who buy a large amount of their stock from one-stops. Revolver overseer Gary Held notes, "Valley has been our number one or number two customer since the mid-'90s. As the number one one-stop in North America, Valley sold to many accounts who only bought from one single distributor, so they were absolutely vital to everyone."

Held describes how in the summer of 2001, there was a "pre-death shudder when [Valley] held most people's monthly check, and our buyer advised us to stop shipping. Somehow they received another cash flow infusion and for another 60 days there were promises it would all work out when the negotiations with AEC were known. Then in November, our buyer told us to stop shipping again, and this time it was for real. Revolver lost \$83,000 in invoices due. History has taught us that we won't receive anything significant, if anything at all from the bankruptcy proceedings . . . We also lost \$36,000 in inventory that is being held there."

These distributors are in the same situation as the labels mentioned above—CDs that were never paid for, locked in a warehouse and considered an asset of the company. Except that with the closing of three other large one-stops in 2001 (Pacific Coast, Northeast, and Campus), independent distributors had been through this before: putting up the money to get their music back and keep it from getting out into the marketplace where labels might be forced to spend thousands of dollars to buy back their records. In Held's words, distributors like Revolver and Mordam have been offered the "opportunity" to buy the CDs back by putting in a bid for the product that they technically still own.

Having already sustained multiple hits from other one-stop closings, Mordam's owner Ruth Schwartz made the difficult decision of passing the costs back to the labels in order to get their \$60,000 worth of music back when Valley closed. "I tried to convince the labels that they should buy their stuff back. I know they feel like they're being double screwed, but how badly double screwed do you want to be?" Schwartz asks. "At least if you spend a little money for it, then you can sell it again. No one can return it back to you. If you don't buy it, then the best case scenario is they sell it and it ends up in someone's living room." Not that putting up the money is even any guarantee. Since the CDs in

Valley's warehouse are selling by auction, someone could easily outbid Mordam and the money set aside by its labels.

But luckily, unlike the labels it distributed, Valley was simply another customer to independent distributors and not all of Mordam's stock was tied up at the Valley warehouses. Schwartz cites that other one-stops have "stepped up to the plate" and have done a good job of getting CDs into the retail outlets that were once Valley's domain.

Distributed by Mordam, Alternative Tentacles is one of the labels that has to pay up in an attempt to get their music back. The 23-year old company has been using Mordam distribution since the beginning. With episodes like the Dead Kennedy's royalty dispute in its most recent history, Uli Elser, the label's general manager feels like "we've been hit a lot worse in the past couple of years. It's not going to kill us, but a smaller label who lives even more paycheck to paycheck than we do, maybe that's really going to mess things up."

What to do now?

Music industry types are speculating on what all this will mean, beyond the logistical mechanism of trying to fill the physical holes that Valley left behind that will force stores to get their CDs from some other source.

"Valley were the gods of the music industry. They called the shots and to hear that they're folding . . . You know something's up," says Alternative Tentacles' Elser.

Valley dealt with everyone—from the most major of the major labels to the scores of one-person operations and its closing will have a ripple effect that may not even be apparent yet. And in a sense, Valley's demise speaks to larger currents in the distribution of music that mirror the larger economic climate's penchant for consolidation.

So it's not as simple as hoping the affected labels and independent distributors will right themselves and come back scarred, but stronger and smarter. And it's not as simple as the indie vs major dichotomy because it's all interconnected. Even though independent labels might operate based on a different philosophy than major labels, they still depend on the same retail mechanisms—ones that seems to be growing less and less accessible.

There are a dwindling number of independent stores, which puts more emphasis on the importance of chain stores. However, the only way to have access to chain stores is to go through one of the national distributors that the chains will deal with. So when a powerful independent distributor like DNA closes, it makes it that much harder for an independent release to make it to store shelves.

The number of releases out there fighting for retail attention compounds this issue. Revolver's Held points out, "Part of the larger problem is that there is too much 'just OK music' being released due to how easy it is to make a CD. There is a serious epidemic of poor judgment being used by a variety of indie labels when it comes to releasing quality music."

Barsuk's Rosenfeld can already feel the effects. "Retailers are getting more and more conservative. Even the indie stores are being put in a position

right now where they've only got a limited amount of space and if they're going to take in CDs, they need to know that they're going to move . . . there's just no room. So it's just going to be the Superchunks and Stephen Malkmuses of the world and to a lesser extent, the Death Cabs. They're all great, but for newer bands, it's going to be tough."

But strangely, independent labels and music are somewhat better equipped to take the hit from the absence of Valley once they overcome the monetary losses. Because they don't have the bulky overhead of larger companies, they can adapt quickly to what works. And the community works. People who own labels have already been able to assess and strategize in this new world order. Rosenfeld says that Barsuk is going to be more conservative and realistic about how many records they can sell, but that they're still going to be able to put out every record they had planned on for this year. Gearhead's Haunold explains about how she and other label owners are sharing knowledge and educating each other about distribution options. Small labels like theirs can survive with modest sales, sell directly to independent stores and can offer mail order so customers can come directly to them.

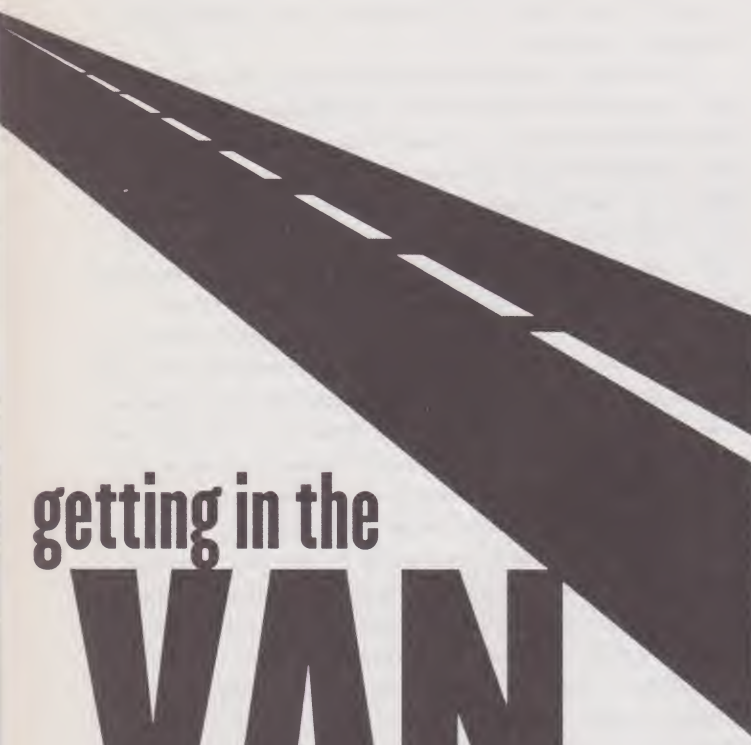
K's Scofield advises other labels to be aware that "Chain stores are necessary, but it also depends on what you're putting out. A lot of distributors just operate on commissions, so if a title doesn't belong in a chain, don't let them get in there because you'll just get them all back. Be cautious and protect yourself."

Revolver's Held also recommends that labels stop obsessing so much on chain sales "like it's some sort of 'proof' that they are somebody. The truth is that at an independent label level, demand alone inspires a chain to buy indie music . . . Records work better when they go from the ground up."

There will be no simple solution to the mess that Valley left behind. And at this point, there's still no clear-cut outcome. But it's comforting to know that it's not just a foregone conclusion that independent music will be dragged down with it.

The approach that has been long heralded by supporters of independent music might be obvious, but Held kindly reminds us, "If a band is going to get bigger, then they will be through patience, work and circumstance with a little luck. This is not going to change, with or without Valley. After all, the real gift is still the music itself." ©





getting in the

VAN

By Andrew Dickson

The *Good Grief* tour and the future of DIY culture

For the last couple of years I have been telling anyone who would listen that I was going to take my first feature film, *Good Grief*, on tour in my minivan, just like a band. When I finally finished it this past fall, I showed it for a cathartic week-long run at the Hollywood Theatre. As soon as that was over, I started looking forward to taking it on tour. But I couldn't help thinking that any self-respecting indie film snob would be thinking, "So, you didn't get into Sundance." No, I didn't. I didn't even waste my \$75 applying. Miramax executives fly free to big festivals on the entry fees of broke no-budget filmmakers who think the selection process is democratic. Sundance shows independent films that "only" cost a couple million dollars.

"Independent film" has become a dirty expression in my mind, conjuring up an image of an El Dorado cruising under the hot desert sun, *Details* magazine cover boys in the front seat, trunk filled with drugs, guns, and a dead stripper. How many bands do you know that would tell anyone but their grandparents that they play "alternative" music or "college rock"? If someone tells me their band is "alternative" I assume they sound like Matchbox 20. If I tell someone I made an independent film, I don't want them to assume it's *anything* like *Mallrats*.

Film is at a historic point. The means of production have

become affordable for the first time in the medium's infant history. Editing, the elusive glue that transforms raw footage to viewable film—the step at which most projects die—is now easy and accessible. A G4 computer and a copy of Final Cut Pro can transform any living room into an editing studio. What's more, with the proliferation of cheap, high quality digital video cameras, shooting to your heart's content is now affordable as well.

Don't get me wrong, making a film is hard fucking work. It took me about five years, counting writing, to finish *Good Grief*. Certainly you can do it much faster, but I've met filmmakers who are still struggling to finish projects after even longer amounts of time. There is a reason Hollywood films have credit lists of hundreds of people; making a film is a gigantic undertaking. Although making a film still requires an immense amount of work, you can no longer complain that it's too expensive. But now how do you get it to an audience? I'll be the one to break the news that calling Regal Cinemas isn't your best bet.

The way films are financed and distributed in this country is such that for vital "low-fi" voices and ideas to get seen, the same support network that exists in the music underground needs to develop for DIY filmmakers. Fortunately, it's starting to. There is a network of venues, zines, and micro-distros that are forming to support low-fi film. There are a number of small festivals starting up that are interested in DIY filmmaking. The Lost Film Festival out of Philadelphia, for example, is a touring festival interested in punk rock films that has linked up with similar fests like the Fringe Media festival in Dallas and the San Fran Indie Fest. Showcases for subversive and experimental films like Peripheral Produce, Charm Bracelet, and the Bike-In Theater here in Portland are cropping up in towns across the country. Indiophiles are starting to accumulate growing collections of VHS tapes to put on the shelf above their vinyl.

So it's not mere coincidence that after years of filmmakers watching as any and all bands with a copy of *Book Your Own Fucking Life* leave on a 60-day tour, we are starting to book our own fucking lives and tours. At one point this spring, I knew of five other filmmakers on tour at the same time, playing the same venues in towns across the country that I was. And if the scads of touring filmmakers coming through town this summer is any indication, its only going to get more hectic.

Hitting the Road

This past March, Al Burian and I tapped into this emerging network and set out on a 40 show zine/film tour. The first nine issues of Al's zine *Burn Collector* had just been put out in book form, and seeing as how I'm a character in the zine, and he's a character in the film, a joint tour made sense. A tour with no bands. Or, as fellow touring filmmaker David Wilson dubbed his similar journey, "the punk not rock tour."

I did most of the booking. I started early, wanting to get a few festival and college shows to anchor things with set dates and a guarantee of gas money. After that, I was free to get shows anywhere: film festivals, art theaters, all ages spaces, record stores, punk houses. Enlisting the help of friends and filmmakers across

the country I was able to book 40 diverse shows across the country and back again. Since I would have everything to show the film with me, all we needed was some darkness and an outlet.

We did the whole US, starting here in Portland at Disjecta, down to San Diego, up to Wisconsin, back down to North Carolina, then up to Maine before taking the northern route back home. We'd get to a town and hit the independent zine, record, and video stores to sell our zines and VHS tapes, meet the people putting on the show, set up and relax. Occasionally we played with a band, but the most interesting shows were when local filmmakers or zine writers shared their work with ours. I would get up and introduce the tour and talk about some of the things I'm talking about here, then Al would read from his zine for about an hour. We'd take a break, I'd talk a little about making my film, then I'd show *Good Grief* with my mobile movie theater. I brought a thrift store screen, a small PA, my mini-DV camera to use as the deck, and a very nice video projector I knew I could re-sell when we got home. Afterwards we would stick around and talk to people.

In some ways every show was a little awkward, but that's partly what made it exciting—not knowing if people would be into it; not knowing what kind of a crowd was going to show up for such an event. With the exception of video theaters like ATA in San Francisco, there isn't an ideal setting for a zine reading and film screening, but in some ways that was the point. *Anywhere* was a suitable place to have the event.

The response overall was fantastic. Not just to the reading and the film, which people seemed to enjoy, but to the idea of the tour itself—touring something *other* than a band. Although the zine and film are made by and most enjoyed by people in "the scene," they are accessible enough so that we could go places where a hardcore band's message would be lost in the mayhem. We could—and did—play a youth center in Tucson, a crowd of mostly 50-something literary folks in Albuquerque, followed by a Dallas film festival at a yuppie bar, a punk house basement in Fort Smith, Arkansas, and a theater filled with Tulsa's Rocky Horror Picture Show cast and crew.

The most amazing thing about touring a film was how *inclusive* it was. How we could interact with so many different kinds of people and not alienate them by the means to our end. Ironically, before the tour started, we were worried that people wouldn't be into it, that kids would be bored by a reading and a film in the context of a "rock show." Nothing could be further from the truth. People are hungry for something different.

More than Music

The most exciting thing about DIY culture right now is how it is branching away from a music focus and starting to penetrate other aspects of our lives. We as a community are starting to find, make, and support *true* alternatives to *all* forms of culture and ways of living. But we need to apply the same kind of restraint and standard that we apply to our music to *all* culture. It doesn't make sense to boycott major label releases and then insist *Repo Man* or *Sid & Nancy* is your favorite movie. Alex Cox is much like Rage

Against the Machine's Zach De La Rocha—he's got his heart in the right place, he makes great movies, but he's made scads of money for multinational corporations by selling pictures of punk rock for multiplex admissions.

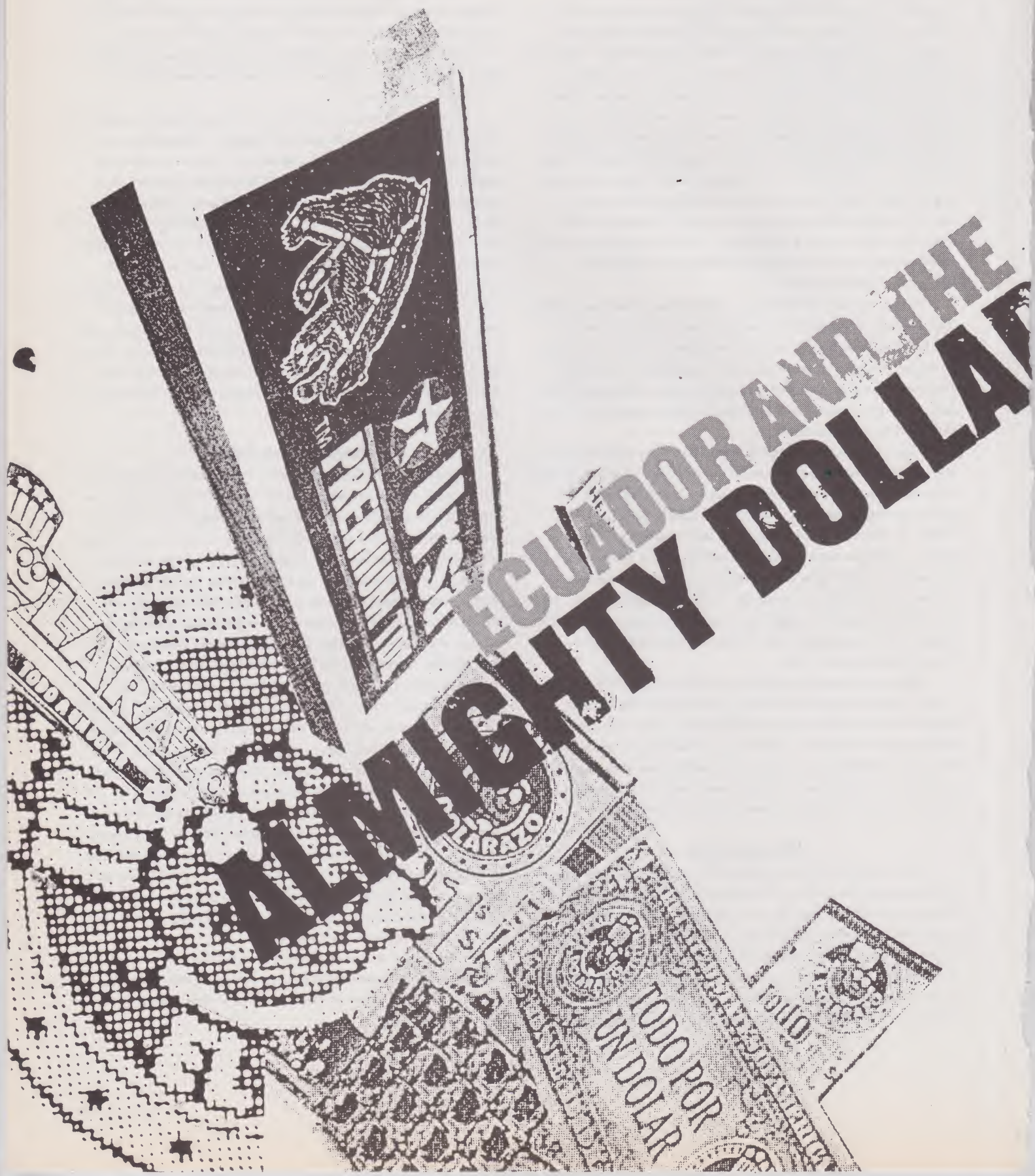
I'm not asking you to boycott Hollywood movies, just as I wouldn't ask you to swear off Rage (although I would ask you not to play them around me). I don't myself, and there is some incredible art being made within the rubric of corporate culture. But I would ask you to *recognize* and *support* filmmakers who are working independently.

Ideally, one day this network will develop to the extent that there will be enough work that quantitatively and qualitatively makes expensive movie tickets and useless TV unnecessary to the same extent that independent or DIY music has rendered chain record stores and big ticket concerts superfluous. In much the same way, artists of all kinds are tapping into, adding to, and developing the DIY spider web so that we've got our own recycled material fashion, touring puppet shows, our own presses and publishing houses, visual art that can't be caged by traditional galleries, and the venues, distros, festivals, e-rings, and words of mouth to support it all. This is the way to make our creation and consumption of art move past the personal and into the political. By thinking about what we support with our money, time, and energy—and by holding those things accountable to what kind of world we want to live in.

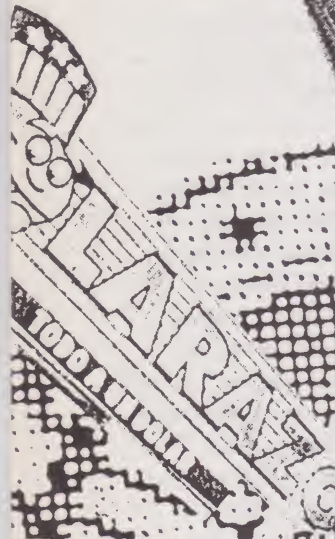
People Helping People

The biggest thrill of my journey was interacting with people from all different corners of the counterculture. Now that I'm back home in Portland I'm sadly reminded that if I see someone with a tribal tattoo on their face, chances are we won't talk and might even be suspicious of each other—especially if I'm walking down the street and they ask me for me some beer money. I don't have any tattoos, let alone the unemployable face variety, and I abandoned hoodies and black clothing in general years ago. Although our political views don't match up side by side, in the grand scheme of things, we are coming from a similar place, and probably have a lot to share and learn from each other. The magic of the tour was that I showed my film to people with tribal tattoos on their faces, to straight edge vegan high school kids, to East Coast emo dot.com moguls, and to people who had no idea what a zine was or what DIY stood for. I got to show them something I made that showed them how I see and experience things, and how I envision a movie being made and distributed. And in many cases, we got to talk and they shared things about themselves with me. In the best cases we hung out all night long, shared ideas, and became friends. It was those moments when the five years of hard work, the countless set-backs, and the credit card debt felt like it had all been worth it. ©

I'm starting a project to connect bands that want to be part of soundtracks with filmmakers looking for independent music. E-mail me for more information at acdickson@hotmail.com.



THE
PREMIUM
QUETZAL



ALL MIGHTY ECUADOR AND THE EQUINOCIAL DOLLAR



A chain of "dollar stores" in malls and on crowded downtown streets in Guayaquil, Ecuador's largest city, sport large red, white, blue and green signs—a US dollar bill with George Washington's face, the "O" in the word "dolarazo" smiles rakishly and wears an Uncle Sam hat. The signs aren't just advertising an eclectic variety of goods for a dollar, as they would be in the US, but the very fact that Ecuador, a country of 12.4 million located right on the equator in South America, now uses the US dollar instead of sucres as its official currency.

The greenbacks on the sign might be grinning, but dollarization hasn't exactly brought smiles to the vast majority of people in Ecuador. Prices for many consumer goods are equivalent to prices in the US—\$1 for a gallon of gas, \$12 for a CD, \$30 for a brand name shirt, 60 cents for a Coke. Housing and food prices are less than in the US, but still not cheap. Yet the average Ecuadorian worker makes only \$4 to \$6 a day. Two-thirds of workers make less than \$30 a month, according to the Associated Press. Even white collar professionals aren't likely to make more than \$800 a month—often much less.

And that is for people who are working—unemployment is high, as high as 70 percent according to some news reports—and most working people support multiple family members who aren't working. Many people make their living selling candy or water on buses or the streets for tiny profits.

Dollarization was fully imposed on September 12, 2000, despite the fact that former president Jamil Mahuad was deposed on January 21, 2000 by thousands of indigenous people, workers and military leaders protesting his dollarization plan.

After a military and indigenous coalition invaded the Congress building and forced Mahuad from power, a triumvirate junta was formed between Antonio Vargas, president of the powerful indigenous organization CONAIE (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador); former Supreme Court justice Carlos Solorzano; and Armed Forces Chief Carlos Mendoza, following the leadership of Lieutenant Lucio Gutierrez. They declared a "Parliament for the People" and vowed to end poverty and the rampant governmental corruption that has long plagued the country.

But the coup proved to be short-lived, as the next day the military wing withdrew support from the indigenous movement and ceded power to vice president Gustavo Noboa, essentially handing power back to the same government that had been deposed. Many Ecuadorians feel certain that orders and threats of sanctions from the US were behind this move. The indigenous and military leaders were granted amnesty for

their role in the coup, but top military brass were still forced to step down.

The Dollarization Trick

Despite ongoing protest, Noboa went through with the dollarization plan, signing the bill on March 9, 2000. Dollarization was intended to yank Ecuador out of a downward spiral of inflation and devaluation—the sucre had lost 67 percent of its value in 1999 and logged an inflation rate as high as 104 percent per year, the highest in Latin America. The government defaulted on much of its foreign debts in 1999, and for some time the country has been adhering to International Monetary Fund (IMF) austerity measures to obtain a \$300 million loan approved in the spring of 2000, part of a US-backed \$2 billion plan for international aid. In 1999, Mahuad—at the urging of the IMF—had frozen people's bank accounts in order to use their money to shore up the bankruptcies of major banks including Banco del Progreso and Filanbanco—bankruptcies which were essentially caused by the rampant corruption endemic to the country.

The IMF endorsed and made some changes to the dollarization plan before it was passed by Congress.

Inflation has in fact been curtailed substantially through dollarization. In August 2000 it was down to 1.4 percent, from 14.3 percent in January.

Even so, in the year and a half since dollarization took effect, the worst fears of the protesters are well on their way to being realized. Ecuadorians say that poverty has skyrocketed, with the attendant crime and violence in its wake. Wages are generally similar to what they were before dollarization, when there were 25,000 sucres to the dollar. But prices are basically pegged to the dollar rather than the sucre.

Gustavo Peralta, a Guayaquil resident who used to work for the city's main beer company, noted that an employer can tell his workers they should be happy with \$4 a day, since that would have been equivalent to a livable wage of 100,000 sucres before. But \$4 today buys far less than 100,000 sucres did before dollarization. Prices are generally rounded up to the dollar, so things that cost the equivalent of 20 or 30 cents before might be a whole dollar now.

"You used to be able to prepare a meal for a family for 10,000 sucres," Betsy Peralta, Gustavo's daughter, says. "Now it takes several dollars. The price of everything has gone up."

Everything except wages, that is. David Turner, a Quito resident and former worker for CONAIE, said people's incomes have plummeted since dollarization.

BY KARI LYDERSEN AND ALLAN GOMEZ

"Dollarization is a trick," he explains. "The bankers and other speculators in cahoots with the government had managed to bring the sucre down from 5,000 to the dollar to 25,000 in the last four months of 1999 . . . so someone making a monthly salary worth \$200 when the sucre was worth 5,000 to the dollar ended up being paid \$40 when the sucre was converted to the dollar at 25,000."

Many workers in Quito make only \$40 a month, he notes, while even professionals like teachers make only about \$100 a month. Public sector employees such as teachers and healthcare workers were hardest hit by dollarization, since their income was calculated solely in sucres while employees of multinational companies have always had incomes more closely pegged to the dollar.

As part of its austerity measures, the IMF is encouraging Ecuador not to raise its minimum wage. The IMF also succeeded in pushing Congress to increase the value added tax, or sales tax, by two percentage points, a move that makes the already rising price of essential goods even higher.

Crime and Migration

Residents of Guayaquil and Quito live in constant fear of the crime, always a serious problem, which has gotten much worse since dollarization. Carjackings and muggings in broad daylight are common, as are armed robberies and rampant pick-pocketing and purse snatching. Especially in Quito and other northern areas, crime and general economic problems are compounded by the influx of Colombian refugees fleeing the US-funded civil war in Colombia.

"There is much more crime," says Turner. "And it's not just criminals, but 'honorable' people. I know people who have gotten robbed and the robbers give them their papers [documents] back, or \$5 back to get home. People are just doing this because they need the money."

Dollarization has also spurred an increase in immigration, with Ecuadorians fleeing out of the country to Spain or other European countries, or whenever possible, to the US. There are now at least two million Ecuadorians working legally or illegally abroad, and money sent back to Ecuador from foreign countries is an essential part of the economy.

And as it gets more difficult for farmers to make a living, there is also an internal migration from the country to miserable slums in the cities.

"People are leaving in waves," said Monica Chuy, an indigenous activist from the Lago Agrio region along the Colombian border who now lives in Quito and works with an indigenous media project. "Not just from the city but from the *campo* [country]."

US Government, Companies Happy

Not everyone is upset about dollarization.

Not surprisingly, the US has been a big proponent of the

plan all along. Two days before Noboa signed dollarization into law, Robert McTeeter of the Dallas Federal Reserve Bank endorsed dollarization, and US Congressmen spoke in favor of it.

Ecuador became the ninth country or territory to use the US dollar as official currency, joining the US commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the US territories of Guam and the US Virgin Islands, as well as the Marshall Islands, Palau, Micronesia, American Samoa and the British Virgin Islands. The Senate Joint Economics Committee has even published a series of helpful pamphlets with names like Basics of Dollarization (including a Spanish version), Citizens' Guide to Dollarization, and Ecuador Update. Former Sen. Connie Mack, then-chairman of the Joint Economics Committee, introduced a dollarization incentive bill called the International Monetary Stability Act allowing the Treasury Department to rebate 85 percent of the profit from printing dollars for other countries.

A web page by Stephen Grimsley dedicated to Ecuadorian numismatics [coin collecting], noted that even with the rebate, the US stands to profit from the actual printing of dollars for Ecuador while Ecuador will lose significant revenue.

"Seigniorage is income gained by a government as a result of printing money," Grimsley explains. "The amount of income gained is the difference between the cost to produce the coin/bill and its value. For example, it costs the US government three cents in materials and labor to produce each dollar bill. But the US Federal Reserve Bank sells these bills to other banks and to foreign countries for \$1 each, keeping a profit of 97 cents for each bill printed and sold. Currently [before dollarization] the Ecuadorian government realizes similar profits from printing sucres; if the responsibility for printing money for Ecuador passes to the US government, the profits will too." (In typical globalization fashion, even when the Ecuadorian government was responsible for printing the sucre, the American Bank Note Company was actually the contractor for the work.)

US-based and other multinational companies clearly benefit from dollarization, making foreign investment more stable and attractive.

"This is clearly a bonanza for employers," says Turner. "They only have to pay their employees 20 percent of what they would have had to pay before the sucre went up from 5,000 to the dollar. This is true particularly for exporters of bananas and other goods whose workers' wages went down while they continue to sell on a relatively stable international market."

There is already substantial foreign investment in Ecuador, including oil, banana and lumber companies. Ecuador holds a large amount of oil, especially along the border with Colombia. Texaco and other US and European-based gas companies sell oil throughout Ecuador as well as exporting it.



The Indigenous Movement

Monica Chuy said indigenous people feel disheartened by the collapse of the mini-revolution and the brief triumvirate government of January 2000. But that victory, however short-lived, is still present in their minds and gives hope for the future.

"Ecuador is famous for that," says Chuy. "We got rid of a president. It was like watching a suspense film. The middle class were saying, 'Those Indians can't run the country.'"

Even after Noboa was instated, protests against dollarization and other economic "reforms" continued. A week after Congress approved dollarization, on March 21, 2000, the largest confederation of unions—including petrochemical, telecommunications, agricultural and others—staged massive peaceful protests and started strikes in Quito. Several weeks later, farmers staged a massive strike protesting dollarization and the proposed privatization of the Farm Social Security program.

"If the government insists on continuing with the privatization of social security and dollarization, there is no alternative but to follow Mahuad's path and step down," says Cesar Cabrera, president of the National Farm Security Affiliates Confederation, in a communique.

Workers also protested over a 64 percent hike in gas prices during the spring, part of the IMF-mandated austerity measures, and won concessions from the government by threatening a national strike. Teachers also went on strike during the spring and summer.

CONAIE continues to be a major force in the country, having some influence with the Noboa government and organizing around indigenous issues in cooperation with indigenous people of other countries. CONAIE's political project aims to create a "plurinational state and pluricultural society as an alternative to the neoliberal model," according to its web page. The group, formed in 1986, advocates for the respect of various identities, cultures and political models within the nation, and a focus on alternative economic development.

On January 21, 2001, the anniversary of the coup, CONAIE started a series of roadblocks and protests against steep hikes in gas and oil prices and bus fares that Noboa had passed in late December in keeping with IMF demands. By January 24, the military moved on the roadblocks and four indigenous activists were injured. Protests also broke out on university campuses, and about 8,000 indigenous and student activists occupied the campus of the Salesian Polytechnic University in Quito. On February 2, Noboa declared a state of emergency, giving the government power to search people at roadblocks and to search activists' homes. Six indigenous people were killed in this uprising.

Today, while the actual state of protest may be low, CONAIE and other community and indigenous groups con-

tinue to organize and gear up for new massive campaigns. Graffiti blanketing Quito and Guayaquil shows dissent has not died down. Spray-painted slogans denounce the proposed privatization of electricity and education, Plan Colombia and the US's role in it, and the US and Noboa governments in general. There is even substantial graffiti decrying the war in Afghanistan.

As the first country besides US territories and small islands to dollarize, Ecuador's fate is a harbinger of things to come. Since fallout from the Asian economic crisis and the effects of El Niño and various natural disasters, South and Central America have been in general economic upheaval for the past several years. Strikes and protests against privatization, low wages, environmental damage and labor issues have rocked Mexico, Bolivia, Venezuela, Peru and other Latin American countries in the past few years, and in December, 2001 Argentine president Fernando de la Rúa and his cabinet were forced to resign in the wake of massive rioting and protest against a plummeting economy and harsh IMF austerity measures. The IMF, the US and other foreign interests will likely push widespread dollarization as a supposed solution to the continent's economic woes, and an aid to globalization and free trade. Argentina's peso had already been pegged one to one to the dollar, one of the issues that brought the people's wrath down upon de la Rúa and his finance minister.

At a June 1999 meeting of the IMF in Washington DC, speakers discussed the possibilities of widespread dollarization in Latin America, defining dollarization as the adoption of another country's currency by it the US dollar, euro or yen.


The IMF said the risks of dollarization include loss of seignorage profits and loss of monetary independence, but noted the "longer-term benefits of increasing economic financial integration into a broader regional and global economy."

IMF plans obviously didn't pan out well for Argentina, and Turner says Ecuadorians are watching events there with apprehension, aware of the similarities in the two countries' economic situations.

"Even pro-dollarization economists here as elsewhere are looking nervously at the financial melt-down in Argentina, a country that Ecuador's present policies have in part been modeled on," explains Turner.

As in Argentina, Ecuadorians feel they are continuing to be squeezed from two sides—between harsh austerity measures imposed by the IMF from abroad, and a corrupt government at home.

"It's the same story in many parts of the world," says Turner. "Where the IMF, the World Bank and other bodies control small, impoverished economies and demand 'structural' economic changes while overlooking the corruption of local elites and the social and economic consequences to the poor." ©



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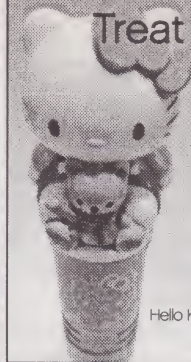
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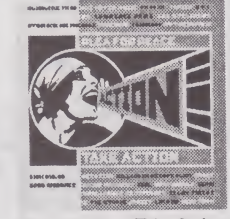
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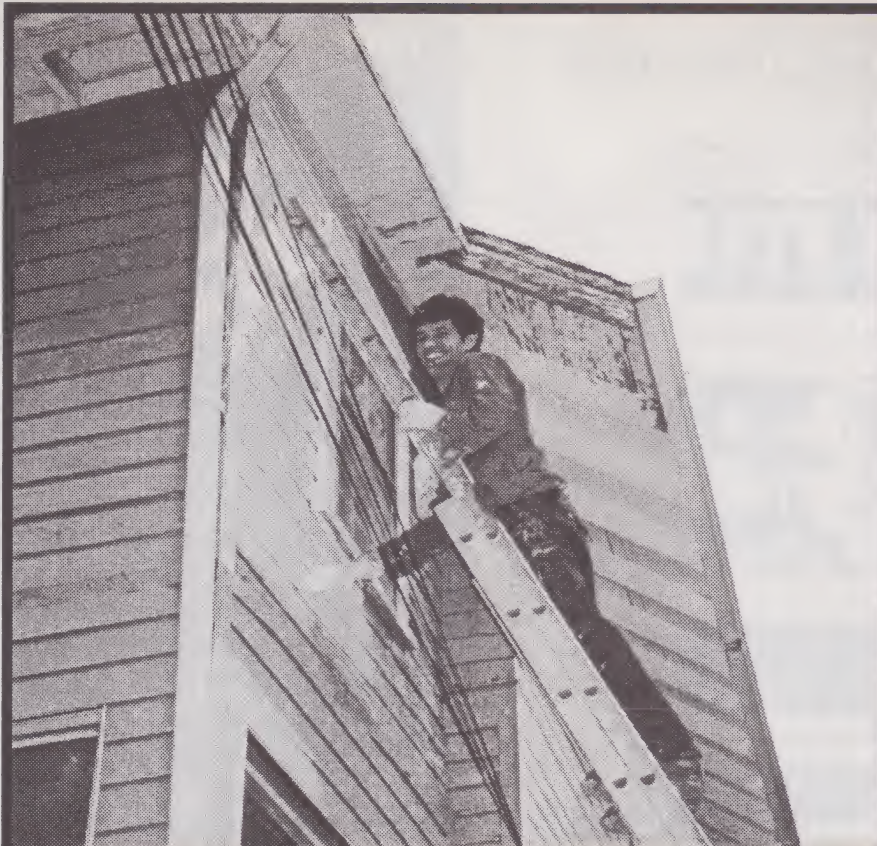
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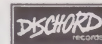
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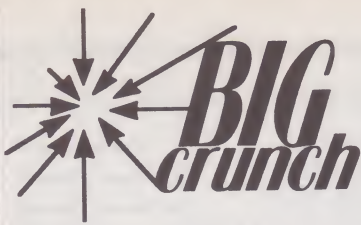


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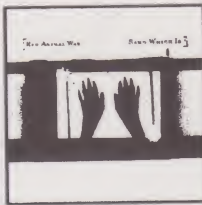
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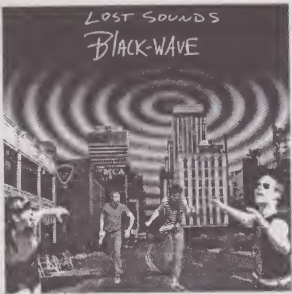
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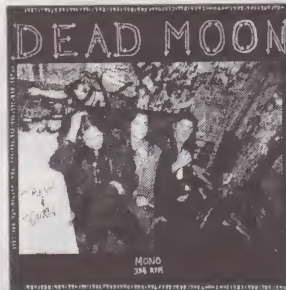


Lost Sounds Black Wave CD/DLP

Here it is, Black Wave, the follow up to 2000's album of the year "Memphis Is Dead" on Big Neck. This record is going to, and has, annihilated every formerly-emo-now-we're-into-New-Order-instruction-manual bullshit to come down the pike using their emaciated frames to try and flaccidly dry-hump their Casios into your heart. Band contains Alija (CLEARS, FITTS), Jay & Rich (REATARDS).

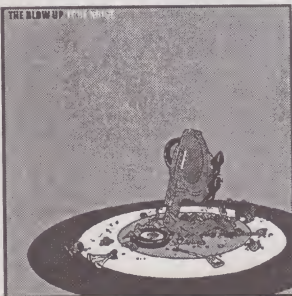
Dead Moon Trash & Burn LP/CD

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Bottleneck Dreams

by Brian Stannard

“I got two pairs of shoes!” The man wearing the “Unlock the Power Within My Pants” T-shirt yelled to Vlaiko without any prompting or invitation. “I got two pairs of shoes!” He said again as Vlaiko studied the shirt, trying to determine if he was misinterpreting something. Vlaiko felt annoyed since all he’d been doing was studying the pigeons at the 24th Street BART station as if they were a riddle. The time at the security guard gig went slow. All Vlaiko had were the pigeons. He tried to get into their gray, speckled heads. He made internal bets on their future movements. To ensure their company, Vlaiko always tossed a bit of breadcrumbs onto the bricks of the BART station. Some of the breadcrumbs floated in the urine puddles, or landed on the syringes or condoms half-lifting into the next century. He preferred the company of the pigeons to the people loitering around the station who had a tendency to yell at him like this man yelling about the shoes.

Vlaiko was pretty good at figuring out the pigeons, but he definitely didn’t understand the man yelling too quickly about the shoes because Vlaiko only understood his English language teacher who spoke slowly and concisely. His English teacher didn’t show up to class drunk, or on the nod on heroin, and he never seemed to have “bitches messin’ with his business” which seemed to be the predicament of most of the people at the 24th Street BART station, Vlaiko’s most recent security guard job.

“Two pairs of shoes!” The man with bloodshot eyes continued. His T-shirt slogan wasn’t clarifying why he decided to yell at Vlaiko about shoes. When the man went away, Vlaiko would write “Unlock the Power Within My Pants” in his notebook in his back pocket where he would write other confusing American expressions he came across such as “Whoops I did it again,” or “Raise the roof!”

At Vlaiko’s other security guard job at the Bayview meat plant, the meat packers with gold-capped teeth always asked Vlaiko to raise the roof, and Vlaiko had a translated version of what he thought this expression meant that contrasted how the meat packers were using it. Vlaiko used the expression a lot anyway because whenever he himself told the meat packers to raise the roof, they would laugh in a good way, high five him and yell, “You’re arr-rite!”

Vlaiko had a section in his notebook for expressions he thought may be in Spanish, another problem of the 24th Street BART station. Vlaiko rarely knew which language was confusing him. The man with wild hair distracted him from his linguistic musings, however.

“Two pairs, man! That means one pair gets stolen, I got back up! I’ve never had it so good! I’m 60 days off crack and it’s all comin’ together. Two pairs of shoes is just the beginning! I’m gonna’ rename myself Dynamite or somethin’ more meaningful than Steve! Guys named Steve aren’t 60 days off crack with two pairs of shoes! I’m a Force to be Reckoned With, a Power Surge, or maybe a god like Thor—

but not Steve.”

The man named Steve spread his arms and continued shouting. “’Cept I’m not too happy about the gods lately, they’ve been a bit greedy. Heaven’s been hungry, it gobbled up my brother who was my heart. My brother, Jeff, was a swimmer. You drop your keys off your boat in The Delta, he’d get ‘em for you. No tanks, none of that Jacques Cousteau shit ‘cuz he was part fish. Sort a. ‘Cept when he was drinkin’ and dove down to get someone’s wallet and he got tangled in the reeds and he drowned. Jeff was my other half, man. Why I never got married, no one was as cool as Jeff, and I don’t mean that in no fag way, he was my heart. I ain’t no fag man, I got crazy women on my right bitchin’ at me, crazy women on my left bitchin’ at me!”

The flock of pigeons on the bricks took to the sky and arced toward the power lines. Vlaiko and Steve leaned away to avoid getting pigeon shit on their heads, and Steve said, “When I was at the shelter I had me an old lady. ‘Cept you wanna’ hear the fucked up part?” Vlaiko just nodded. “The fucked up part is they kicked me out of the shelter ‘cuz they said I was on crank. I got so much energy since kickin’ crack that they accuse me of bein’ on crank so I tell them, no offense to the fine people that perpetuate the crack industry, but pardon me I was a 100% crack-head, a full blown crack piper. Until 60 days ago. You tell me this, if I was usin’ why would I be talkin’ to you, a cop? I know you’re just a BART cop, but man, when you’re usin’, the UPS man is CIA. Except I couldn’t say

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS: Keep those submissions coming! Remember that fiction should be no more than 1,600 words. Please post in the discussion on the Punk Planet website if you have thoughts about the fiction pages. It is best to direct submission questions to me by e-mail: fiction@punkplanet.com —Leah Ryan

this to the assholes runnin' the shelter two days ago 'cuz this was the shelter down at Fremont Street not 24th Street where we're at now, and you weren't there for evidence."

A different man approached Steve and Vlaiko, and this man announced, "I got outfits."

Steve waved him off and yelled, "Naaaw, I don't need nonna that crap, I'm trying to ask my friend here for some beer money." The man offering outfits shuffled off, and Steve turned to Vlaiko and said, "So whatta' you say you help me out with a little change for some beer?" Steve's bleary eyes became a hungover puppy dog's, and he made a dramatic frown. Vlaiko figured that he needed some money. Everybody needed money.

Vlaiko scratched his index finger with his thumb and said, "I don't have money, either. That's why I work too much. Too many jobs, no time for rest, and never any money. Maybe some money for a little vacation in August, but never any money after that. It is terrible." Steve vigorously shook Vlaiko's hand and said, "But that's all right, you seem all right, and I ain't on crack which is why I can talk to you. Keep out of trouble. Two pairs of shoes. Everything would be all right if heaven weren't so hungry!" Steve's handshake evolved into a soft, mutual fist punch, at which point he waved to Vlaiko, and descended down the staircase of the submerged BART station.

Vlaiko pulled out his notebook, and wrote down "Unlock the Power Within My Pants," for later investigation. He put the notebook away and squinted up at the pigeons on the power lines. They all had their heads tucked into their wings, and it looked like they were sleeping for the day. Vlaiko heard everyone call them ugly, but

he was always impressed that they could balance themselves on the thin power lines and sleep without falling off.

As Vlaiko looked up, he could smell the scents of the slowly cooked, marinated meat at the nearby taqueria. A waft of urine overtook this smell, and Vlaiko looked over to see someone urinating on an alley wall. He didn't have the energy to stop the urinator. Inevitably, one of the drunk's friends would urinate on Vlaiko as he chastised the initial urinator. He hated this job.

"It is terrible," he muttered to himself. "It is terrible"—his one English expression he got a lot of mileage out of whose meaning he completely understood. Vlaiko shut his eyes and tried to wish away the syringes on the ground that he didn't want to pick up. He tried to wish away the people approaching him to yell about shoes when he was only staring at the pigeons. He tried to wish this away, and he replaced the BART station with thoughts of his small house on Clement Street where he could hear foghorns off of the bay. He tried to think about foghorns, an elusive vacation in August, or getting drunk, but not with the drunks at the 24th Street BART station. Anything would be better than this job where time stopped, and people yelled at him before peeing on walls.

It was all quiet and peaceful until Evander, his replacement, nudged him on the shoulder and said, "Hey Vlaid-ko! What's really goin' on?" Vlaiko opened his eyes and saw Evander pull an opened forty of King Cobra out of his security jacket pocket. Evander offered Vlaiko a sip of the malt liquor.

"Sorry, homes," Vlaiko said. "Beer is for children."

Evander laughed and high fived him.

"Thas' right, you're a vodka drinking Russian!"

Vlaiko smiled and said, "Yeah, maybe I will have a bit to drink later. But now I must be going." Evander put the beer back in his pocket, shook Vlaiko's hand, and tried to snap his finger as punctuation. Vlaiko anticipated this, but he still could never get the snap right.

"You gotta' practice, you gotta' practice," Evander said after the botched handshake.

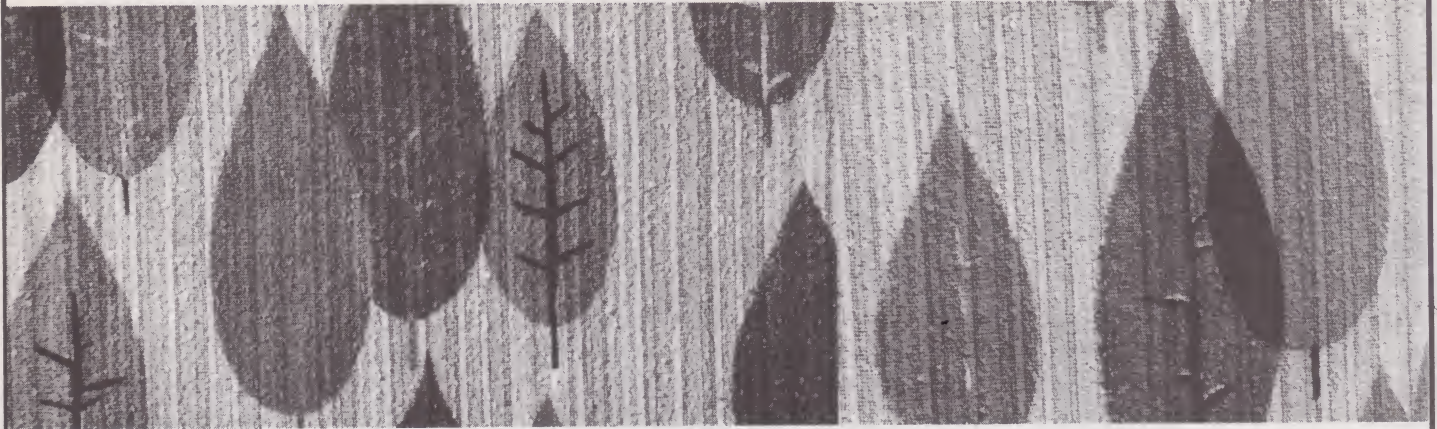
Vlaiko smiled, yelled, "Adios!" and walked up Mission Street toward the bus stop that would take him to his Bayview security job.

Evander put his hands in his pockets and looked around a bit to check that the coast was clear. Then he pulled out the King Cobra from his security jacket pocket, took a big chug, replaced it, and rocked on his heels a bit to try to create an interesting rhythm to clash with the boredom of standing around in one area for eight hours.

Like the nine-to-five commuters now trickling out the BART station, Vlaiko, too, was ending his work day as he walked along Mission. But one gig ended just to collide with another security guard gig in Bayview. He rubbed his face and continued walking along. The pigeons still slept on the power lines. "It is terrible," Vlaiko mumbled to himself as he stood at the bus stop.

A man with no hair on the top of his head, but dread locks by his ears and neck yelled, "Greed is good! Wood is not wood! And ketchup is a god-damn vegetable!" Vlaiko tried to ignore the man, but he pulled out his notebook and wrote this man's rant down anyway. The bus then pulled up. Vlaiko boarded and hoped that August would get here soon. ©

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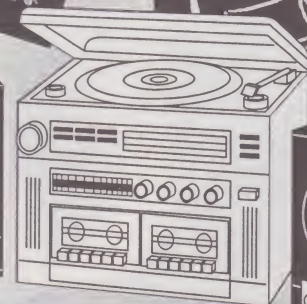
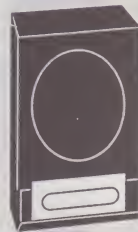
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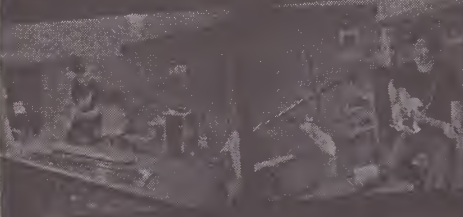


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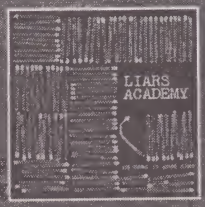
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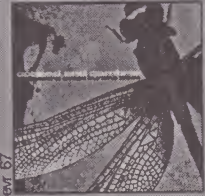
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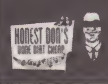
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How to Work Your Way Around the World

By Dan Eldridge

Maybe this is you: You work a wage-slave, shit job, and every month you somehow manage to piss away all your money on rent, food, bills, and beer. You're intelligent and talented, and you know it's up to you to create an interesting life. Still, after working an eight-hour day, fixing dinner and watching a little TV, there never seems to be any time left to think about your zine, get the band together, or fool around with that screenplay you haven't looked at in months. You've got a million good ideas, but every day seems more boring, repetitious and pointless than the one before. You're dying to lead an interesting life—one that actually makes a difference and gives you a reason to get out of bed every morning—but you're just not sure how.

It seems like every smart, creative person I know is struggling with the complications of finding fulfilling work, defining happiness, and deciding exactly what it is they plan on doing with the rest of their lives. Finally entering the real world can be quite a shock for someone who spent their first 20 years being coddled by middle-class parents; we are probably the first generation in American history to be experiencing the existential mid-life crisis in our 20s.

But consider this: thousands of interesting people just like yourself are *right now* choosing to fight their boring, status-quo, post-suburban lives by living and working in a foreign country. Most of you probably know someone who spent a year teaching *English in Japan* or a summer *slinging drinks in London* or Hong Kong and you may have seen them come home a different person.

I'm here to tell you that working and living abroad is *absolutely easier than you think*. It's a perfect way to make travel affordable, if you have no money. It's also a fantastic way to change the way your mind works, to become more sympathetic, to pad your resume, to learn a new language, to impress friends and strangers, and to feel more connected to the rest of the world. In other words, it's a sure-fire way to drastically alter the course of your life.

If you feel like you're running on an endless treadmill, consider a three-month, six-month or year-long stint in another country. Being a foreign worker is nothing if not a humbling experience, and no, you don't have to know any foreign languages. If you can speak English and squirrel away a few hundred dollars, you can change your life. Here's how.

Making The Decision To Go

Although working travelers need to possess a certain amount of spontaneity, please do yourself a favor and *plan your trip well*. It

could easily be the most important move of your life, and it requires a certain amount of respect. Talk to your roommates, family, and friends about your decision. Think hard about which parts of the world interest you the most, and spend as much time as possible in the library or the bookstore, reading about, and researching your possible destinations.

Please use this article as a starting-off point, but not as an exclusive guide. Spend some quality time with the books, magazines and web sites listed in the Required Reading section at the end of this article. Luckily, there is an entire cottage industry of literature which explains the ins and outs of transplanting yourself abroad.

If you've recently signed a lease on an apartment, don't ditch out on your roommates. Wait until the end of the year, or find someone to replace yourself. Consider taking a second part-time job to fill your evenings or weekends, so that you're earning money instead of spending it while planning your trip.

Be smart and get a round-trip ticket with a return date you can change. At STA or Council Travel agencies around the country (check the phone book for your branch), students (or anyone with a student ID, wink wink) can get a non-fixed, round-trip ticket to London for under \$300 in the off-season, good for one year (April through August are the most expensive months to fly out of and into the US.). Once you're in London, you'll find *ultra-budget travel agencies everywhere offering very affordable one-way plane, train and bus tickets to just about every destination on the globe*.

If you aren't able to talk your way into getting an ISIC card (International Student Identification Card) at STA or Council Travel, keep in mind that they're very easy to come by in most big cities which service foreign travelers. Ask at hostels, cheap guesthouses, or any other place where backpackers congregate. The ISIC card generally costs \$20, but will save you *hundreds* if you're thrifty. The ISIC card is always worth flashing anytime you spend money on anything abroad, from train tickets to visas to meals. Many places that offer a student discount fail to properly advertise it.

Additionally, if you need a passport, get an application at the post office. And if you plan on visiting rural areas in Third World countries, call a few local clinics to inquire about any necessary shots you may need.

Getting A Job And Finding A Place To Live

Obviously, having a roof over your head and a steady income in your new foreign home are your two most important goals.

They're also your two toughest obstacles. How the hell do you find an apartment in Cairo, for instance, when you can't read the classifieds? It may sound insanely difficult, but it's really as easy as one, two, three.

ONE: Avoid pricey hotels. Stay in youth hostels and guesthouses with a backpacker clientel, and *ask everyone you meet* for tips. You'll be amazed how quickly you'll find other people doing the exact same thing. Ask every employee at your hostel or guesthouse (especially the foreigners) if they know of jobs or apartments that need to be filled. Pay strict attention to hostel notice boards. Make the rounds daily. Surviving is now your full-time job.

TWO: Get to know the local expatriate community. Most decent-sized foreign cities have surprisingly large ex-pat communities. You'll find Americans, Brits, Australians, New Zealanders, South Africans, and various other Western and Eastern European people working and living in whichever city you visit, *and they will all speak English* (you will soon find, in fact, that being a native English speaker is easily your most bankable skill abroad. Soon after that you'll meet your first Belgian who can speak five or six languages, and then you'll just feel stupid).

If you move to a city where you don't know the local language, your job is to find these English-speaking foreigners and befriend them. Throughout your settling-in period, nearly every good thing that happens to you will happen because of someone else's kindness. You will very quickly learn the meanings of karma and empathy. Soon, you'll find yourself helping other new arrivals as they get settled. It's one of the best feelings in the world.

So how do you find these people? Again, your first stop will be any and every hostel or guesthouse in town. You're looking for backpackers, and anyone else who's also looking for work. The hunt becomes much more fun when you're doing it with friends. If your new town has any English-language newspapers or magazines, get your hands on them as quickly as possible and as often as possible. Get in touch with the editors and volunteer to do anything for free—you may end up sleeping on their couch for free. Watch the classifieds every day for job listings, and pay close attention to the ads—a restaurant, bar or cafe that advertises in an English-language publication almost definitely has people inside its doors that you want to meet.

THREE: Talk to everyone. I'm going to emphasize this again because it's so key to your success abroad: good communication skills will get you *everything*. You'll never find a job unless you ask a

million people, and the same goes for finding a place to live. Do not be afraid to ask for help, and when your time comes to help someone else, you'll know it. I promise that if you truly open yourself up to all sorts of different people—not just scuzzy backpackers or the hipsters at the hostel—you will very soon find yourself far removed from the boring, predictable tourist scene, leading a much more bizarre life than you ever could have imagined possible back home.

Teaching English

Teaching English is by far the most popular job for working travelers. It can be a taxing, demanding, and nerve-wracking job, but it's certainly easier than manual labor. If you plan to do it only for the money, keep in mind that for the most part, Japan, Korea, Taiwan and China, are the only places you're going to make much more than you'll spend.

If you plan to teach in Western Europe (or popular Eastern European cities like Krakow or Prague), it would definitely be worth your while to get a TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) certificate. These courses generally cost around \$2000 and last about eight weeks, but believe me when I tell you that they will pay off **instantly** once you land a job and start teaching. I taught English in Istanbul without a certificate, and made anywhere from 25 to 50 percent less than my friends who were certified. If you can afford it, get a certificate. Search for schools in your area on the web or in the phone book. Call local universities and colleges and ask if they offer TEFL, TESL, or CELTA courses. If you live in the middle of nowhere and have no classes near you, consider starting your trip in a nearby large city that does.

Tourism

This is a fairly vague area, if only because there are so many possibilities. If you plan to work in a country with a healthy tourism industry, you can probably find work doing *something*. In some instances you may be required to speak the local language, but not all. I was offered many jobs in the tourism sector in Greece because the Greek tavern and restaurant owners needed English-speaking workers to deal with their English-speaking customers. You can make lots of money working in tourism and have lots of fun if your attitude is right, but keep in mind that you'll be spending most of your time with drunken frat-boy types and rich, ignorant American tourists. You may find work penting beach umbrellas to Germans, or as dishwasher in a gourmet restaurant, or as a

bartender, or a tour guide, or a DJ. The best toursim jobs are always gotten by word-of-mouth, so once again, make as many friends as possible if you want interesting work.

Agriculture

You know those migrant workers you see picking oranges in Florida and apples in California? You too can join their ranks! The most well-known backpacker job in this field is the *vendange*, which is the annual grape harvest that takes place at the end of the summer in France. A decent portion of western Europe is filled with orchards and farms, however, and it's very possible to start in the middle of the summer and keep picking something or other—in different countries, of course—throughout December. Once you land a job and befriend your new coworkers, you will *absolutely* hear about other jobs in other countries, and if you're a decent worker and an organized person, you should be able to jump from job to job without having to worry about money.

Childcare

Guys, you can skip this one—only the most androgynous and luckiest among you will *ever* work with children abroad. But women, pay attention: this is your chance to live a very luxurious lifestyle and earn piles of money at the same time, as an *au pair*, or nanny. The best part of the deal? You can do this work almost anywhere in the world. Remember, Third World countries by definition lack a middle class, which is why it's surprisingly easy for American or British girls to become live-in babysitters for Indian, Thai, Turkish, Egyptian, or South African millionaires.

However, be aware that in many countries a nanny is a definite status symbol, and although you may be the sole caregiver, you'll also be given about as much respect as the family dog. That's a difficult concept for Westerners to understand, because in our culture people who make a lot of money are also highly respected, and you *will* make a lot of money as a nanny. Consider yourself warned: you will probably be seen as more of an object than a caregiver or educator.

Business and Industry

You've probably heard about the fishing jobs in Alaska, where you spend the summer on a boat or in a processing factory and come home with thousands of dollars. While the money isn't as good as it used to be, these jobs are still very popular and provide hundreds of people every year with travel cash.

Don't forget about working on a moshav or kibbutz in Israel—probably the most famous of all working traveler jobs—and also a decent way to meet a lot of interesting people and possibly earn a few bucks along the way. Most kibbutz are strictly voluntary, providing room and board for manual farm labor, while a moshav often pays well. The main difference is that a kibbutz is almost always a party scene, whereas a moshav is usually all work and no play.

Business and industry jobs are almost always done for no other reason than the money, however, because they almost always suck. I've known people who've packed apples in New Zealand, though, and have had fun. The construction industry in Israel, especially in Tel Aviv, is said to be very lucrative and very enjoyable. These type of factory and manual labor jobs are good if you really want to work your ass off, save a lot of money, and then do something much more fun.

Remember: easy money is very hard to come by when working abroad. Unlike many of the cushy jobs you've probably had at home, you will almost *always* earn your paycheck as a working traveler, and then some.

Voluntary Work

Volunteer work abroad is a bit of a prickly pear. Most people assume that it begins and ends with the Peace Corps, but once you do a bit of research you'll find out that there are literally *thousands* of volunteer opportunities in nearly every country on earth. However, figuring out which ones are truly legit and which ones are actually making a difference is *insanely* difficult—just do a simple web search for volunteer work in Africa, for instance, and you'll see what I mean. Half of these places look shady as hell, and in fact, many are. You'll soon learn that most organizations actually require *you* to pay *them* money before you can join their volunteer force, but keep in mind that most legitimate outfits do this as well—don't blindly assume you're getting scammed.

Nonetheless, if you really want to volunteer your time, it'll definitely be worth your while to research, research, research. And why not get involved with an organization in your own hometown before leaving the country, just to make sure that volunteering is right for you? Many worthwhile organizations that are truly strapped for cash constantly lose piles of money when would-be do-gooders bale after the first week. Working your ass off and getting paid in appreciation rather than money feels strange at first. Consider the effect you could potentially have on the world's true saints if you screw up their program, even if it's totally unintentional.

Required Reading

If the idea of being a working traveler interests you in the least, you absolutely, positively, without the slightest shadow of a doubt, must own a copy of *Work Your Way Around The World* by Susan Griffith. Friends, *this is not optional*. The book is published by Vacation Work, it's updated every year, and unfortunately, it's a bit tough to find. Nonetheless, you *will* find a copy, because you have to. After you own this book, it's all downhill. Go to the library, call every bookstore in town, whatever. Just get it. Seriously.

If you absolutely cannot find *Work Your Way Around The World*, pick up a copy of *Transitions Abroad* magazine. Most universities and libraries subscribe, and it's getting much easier to find it on the newsstand. Everything you ever wanted to know about living, traveling, working and studying abroad can be found within its covers, and it's published twice a month. No money? Visit transitionsabroad.com, which is almost as good.

If you want to teach English, visit eslcafe.com, which has regularly updated listings of teaching jobs all over the world. You'll also find tons of helpful tips for teachers, which I guarantee you'll wish you'd printed out and brought with you once you find yourself in front of 20 expectant Korean faces for the first time, scared out of your mind and having absolutely *no* idea what to tell them. You'd be very wise to pick up a copy of *Teaching English Abroad*, also by Susan Griffith and published by Vacation Work.

Once you narrow your choices down to a few countries or cities, hit the bookstore or library and find the appropriate Lonely Planet guidebook. Lonely Planet is *hands down* the best guidebook publisher on earth, and they specialize in budget travel. Each book is a cultural and historical lesson as well as a guide, and will give you a very honest idea as to what life is *really* like in the region you'll be visiting. Other guidebook publishers worth your time and money are Rough Guides, and to a lesser extent, Let's Go. lonelyplanet.com is a very important site for potential working travelers, especially their Thorn Tree section, which is filled with absolutely priceless tips from backpackers and other in-the-know types.

If you get anything at all out of this article, please remember this: *it is possible to radically alter the course of your life*. You *absolutely* have the power to do this. Good luck, have fun, and get to work—the whole world is waiting. ©

early to bed

by Sex Lady Sarah

SEX
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Dear Sex Lady,

I recently heard that condoms contain animal byproducts. I am a hard-core vegan and this disturbs me. Is it true? Are there any condoms that don't use animal products? What about contraceptive film?

Signed,
Vegan Boy

I did some Internet research and contacted a couple of condom manufacturers and I'm afraid I've got bad news for you, Vegan Boy. Most latex condoms utilize a milk protein called casein—also called ammonium caseinate—during processing. There isn't any animal product in the final condom, but if you are vegan enough to worry about the condoms in the first place, that probably doesn't matter to you. There *are* non-latex condoms (Durex Avanti) but honestly, I couldn't find out much information on their ingredients. Also, they tear easier and don't protect as well as latex does—however they are good for people who are allergic to latex.

I have been able to find only one manufacturer that makes 100% vegan latex condoms. The company, Condomi is a German company and their product isn't available in the US right now (that pesky FDA). The company has assured me, however, that their condoms should be available in the US in March of 2002. For more info you can visit their website at www.condomi.com.

Now, the contraceptive film you asked about has no latex at all and I didn't find any animal products listed on the package. For those of you unfamiliar with the film, it is a vaginal spermicide.

A single film is a 2-inch by 2-inch, paper-thin, translucent sheet that contains Nonoxynol-9 to kill sperm and is inserted into the vagina against the cervix before intercourse. Pharmaceutical companies usually make contraceptive Film, so while they may not contain animal products, it's entirely possible that ingredients were tested on animals.

Now is the part where I plead with you, Vegan Boy, to please, on this one issue, let your animal rights guard down a little, at least until Condomi condoms are available here. Latex condoms are the best protection you have against contracting diseases. There are lots of other contraceptive methods out there for you monogamous disease-free couples (see www.plannedparenthood.com for more information), but they won't protect against HIV, Herpes, Gonorrhea, etc. Granted nothing short of staying home and whacking off is going to protect you 100%, but condoms can make sex a whole fuckload safer, so please please please, don't let a little casein stand in the way of your safety.

And while we are on the subject of safer sex, it has been brought to my attention over the past few months that lots of people (especially you straight kids) don't know what latex gloves and dental dams have to do with sex! We all should know by now that letting someone else's body fluids into your body should be avoided because these fluids can contain diseases.

While sticking you fingers in someone's ass or vagina is a relatively safe (and very fun) activity, it can be risky if there are any cuts or anything on your hand. Even a little paper cut can potentially let a nasty virus into your blood stream so gloves should be used when fingering or fisting. You can use latex gloves, but again you have to turn a blind vegan eye to the possibility of casein. They also make a great glove that is non-latex and while it isn't as stretchy as latex, it is as safe.

Dental dams are a thin piece of latex that is stretched over the vulva and vagina or anus during oral sex. You can get plenty of nasty things from oral sex—just ask my sister (just kidding!). If you don't have a dental dam handy and want that protection, a condom carefully split in half will work, as will non-microwavable Saran Wrap. As with a condom, don't reuse dams or gloves and dispose of them carefully when you are done with them.

Dear Sex Lady,

This will probably sound really stupid to you but it's something I've got to know. My girlfriend and me tried having sex but I couldn't get my penis in her pussy. I tried fingering her until it made it easy for my finger to get in but then my penis wouldn't get in. So how do I get my penis in? I know this is probably the most pathetic question you ever got. Thanks.

Later,
Sammy

Please, your question isn't pathetic, Sammy. In fact it's probably more common than you think and I'll try and help you. Let me ask you first: is your girlfriend a virgin? Because sometimes girls are just super tight before they've had sex for the first time and your finger is probably a lot smaller than your cock.

If she's not a virgin, ask her about her past experiences, but ask nicely. While her past sex life is ultimately *not* your business, it is possible that she is tightening up for some reason. Maybe sex has been scary or bad for her before and she is scared to try again. Or maybe you are a lot bigger than the other boys she's been with. Also, if you've been trying and trying and it's been stressful for you two, it's going to only be harder. She needs to be really relaxed. Let me give you a few tips and maybe they'll help.

- Go out and get some lube and use it! I don't care *how* wet and turned on she is, lube is going to make it a lot more comfortable. You can get at the grocery store, your local sex shop or online (see my last column for a list of cool sex shops and websites).
- Keep trying. Sometimes it just takes a lot of attempts. When I first had sex with a guy, it took like five or more tries before he actually got his penis all the way in. It was too painful for me at first, but we kept working on it and eventually had a great sex life, until I decided I was a dyke, but that wasn't his fault . . .
- There are medical conditions that can make intercourse painful for women, so if this problem persists have your girlfriend get a gynecological check-up just to be on the safe side.
- Make sure she is very comfortable and that you aren't putting too much pressure on yourselves to make it work. Maybe give her a massage and spend a lot of time having sex with your whole bodies. No offense, but it seems to me like a lot of people seem

to think it's not sex if it doesn't involve a penis going in a vagina or something. Your *whole* body can be a site of pleasure—lickin' and suckin' and strokin' all different parts, including armpits and elbows and ankles and necks and ears and everything is *totally* hot! Plus, if you're focused on exploring each other's bodies and feelin' good all kinds of ways, she might open right up.

• On a related note, being all goal-driven is not very sexy in the sack. If you and your GF are approaching it like, "We'd better do this thing now," neither of you is going to have as much fun as if it just happens when it happens. And for christ-sakes, make sure she *wants* your dick in her. A surefire way to make sure you never get in there is to put pressure on a girl to do something she doesn't really want to do, or do right away.

I hope this helps, buddy. Remember, the most important thing about sex is that it should be fun for *everyone*. ☺

HEY EVERYONE: I run my own sex shop here in Chicago. It's called—what else—Early to Bed, and it's located at 5232 N. Sheridan. That's right between Foster and Berwyn—right off Lake Shore Drive and about three blocks from the Berwyn El. Please stop by and say hello—I'd love to meet you and answer any questions you've got.

Finally, I'm always here to answer your questions in Punk Planet: dijysex@punkplanet.com

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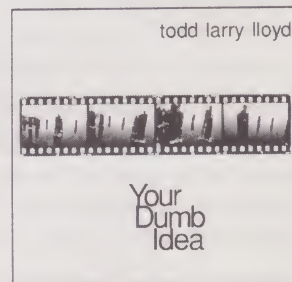


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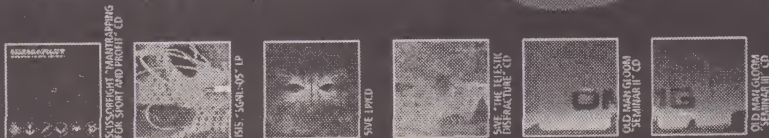
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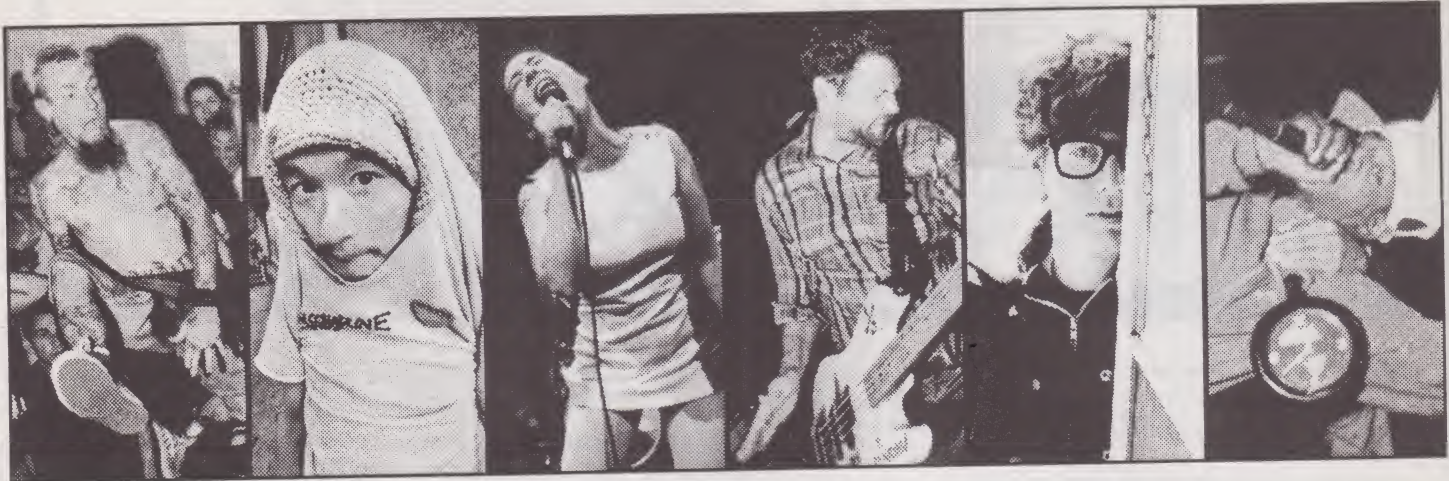
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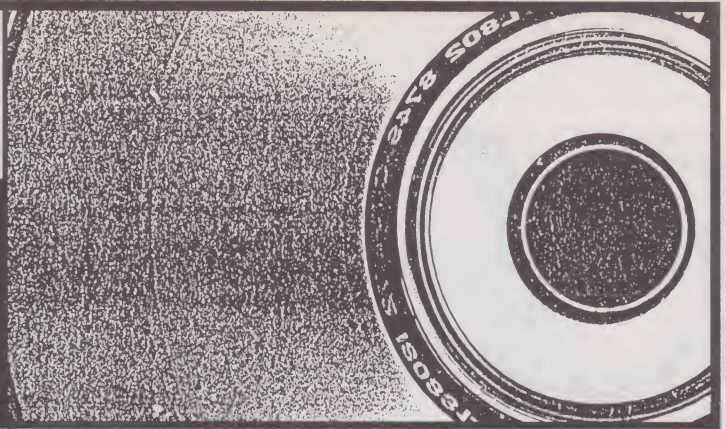


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7 Angels 7 Plagues - Jhazmyne's Lullaby, CD I like the guitar parts on this when they're not chugging along, cos they get pretty complex and intricate, but then they plunge back into typical hardcore chords over deep, growly vocals. (ES)

Uprising Records PO Box 42259 Philadelphia, PA 19104

7000 Dying Rats - The Sound Of No Hands Clapping, CD Part metal, part free form jazz, and all headache, 7000 Dying Rats have always done me right. At one point they made the mistake of associating themselves too close to Anal Cunt, but I can forgive them for that. For those unfamiliar with their sound, 7000 Dying rats did the jerky rhythm change, one musical style into the next, song routine long before it was cool and overdone. This release features recordings from 1995 to the year 2000, fifteen different musicians (?) total! (SY)

Tumult, PO Box 642371, San Francisco CA 94164-2371

ABC 5 - S.T., CD Goddamn, I have never heard an accordion beat on like this ever in my life. Imagine an aggro progressive band combining the accordion with drums and a combo of sax or guitars. It's pretty cool and would probably be awesome live but I am thankful this is only an EP. John Zorn fans may dig this. (DM)

Troubleman Unlimited, 16 Willow St. Bayonne, NJ 07002

Amazing Transparent Man - The Measure of All Things, CD Blink-182 influenced pop-punk from DeKalb, IL, and I don't mean that as an insult. This is a very well-executed fast pop EP that sounds like Blink at their best. Includes a fun cover of Cyndi Lauper's "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun." (AE)

Springman Records, P.O. Box 2043, Cupertino, CA 95015-2043

Appendix - 9 Collapsing Emotions (Like Hate), CD From the looks of the very cool cover and turntable graphic on the CD itself, I thought this would maybe be a techno-like CD. Nope. Fast Austrian hardcore with alternating singing/screaming in half English, half German (?). Not really my style, but overall it's not bad. (ES)

Firewalkwithme Records PO Box 65 1110 Wien Austria

The Apers - S/T, CD Never say never in the Netherlands! This is some great snotty pop-punk from a place we call the Netherlands (get a globe dumb ass.) Sure we Americans have somewhat ruined pop punk

through commercialism, but they seem to have gotten it right. (BC)
Stardumb Records PO Box 21145, 3001 AC Rotterdam, The Netherlands

The Apers - Teenage Drama Every Kid Will Understand, CD Punk rock along the same vein as the Queens, MTX, and Screeching Weasel. These guys are fun, and even better, they are from Rotterdam! (TK)
Stardumb records, PO Box 21145, 3001 AC Rotterdam, Netherlands

Ativin - Interiors, CD This is the most direct and to the point minimalist rock I have ever heard. Hell, there are only two songs that clear the four minute mark. In the vein of bands like Tarentel, Tortoise and Tristeza, you would think this band should start with a "T" to hang out with this musical genre. But Ativin deserves as much credit as they can with this release with or without a beginning "T". This is a wonderfully brooding collection of songs that helps to set a mood that is of awe and intrigue regardless if the music is lulling or more of a suspenseful attack. The mood is set with the traditional line up of instruments in a band along with the assistance of a cello, a viola and even the occasional whispered vocals. I am impressed. (DM)

Secretly Canadian, 1021 South Walnut Bloomington, IN 47401

The Atlantic Monthly / Dina - Split, 7" The Atlantic Monthly start off this split with a slower paced song that moves at a reasonable pace with the occasion neat-o synthesizer bits. Dina kinda rock and jangle out on two tracks. They have that sound like that favorite band in your home town that never really make it too big but will always be stars in your heart. And Dina Wins!!! (DM)

Firewalk With Me Records, PO Box 65 1110 Wien Austria

Audiocrush - So You Call These Flowers, CD Ex members of Good Riddance and Fury 66 bring punk influences to this surprisingly compelling pop debut EP. Heavy guitars drive the consternating vocals. Damn good. (AE)

Lorelei Records, P.O. Box 902, Santa Cruz, CA 95061

Bastard Noise - Selected Pathways to Undisclosed Planets: Live, CD I am always perplexed at how many post-departed releases Man Is The Bastard can kick out. Here is another one. A selection of live sets recorded from 97 to the year 2000, I am sure someone will be stoked to check this out. (SY)

Manufacture, 5410 Bergen Op Zoom, Nanaimo BC, V9T 2M2 CANADA

About our new review section: We still review all the records we receive, but we only give longform reviews to records our review staff decides they want to highlight. Those reviews are marked with an ear icon, which signifies that they deserved another listen... or something like that. That doesn't mean the ones that get short reviews aren't worthy, just that the reviewer decided that they could write about another record better. That also doesn't mean that all the ear-marked reviews are positive, just that a reviewer had something to say about them. Also, we now give each reviewer a "spotlight" section, where they can write about an old album they really liked and write about what they're currently listening to, which should give you, the reader, a better feel for what that reviewer's got going on—which in turn allows you to make a more informed decision about whether or not you agree with said reviewer. Finally, if a reviewer doesn't like your record, that doesn't mean that it's totally terrible or anything like that. It's not institutional policy that your record is good or that it's bad, it's just one reviewer's opinion—so don't freak out. We're sure you put a good deal of work into your project, and that alone is certainly worth some congratulations! But please, if you're pissed at a review, remember: it's not Punk Planet, it's just one reviewer.

Bigwig - An Invitation To Tragedy, CD New Jersey foursome plays big, fast, nineties style skaterock that reminded me of other Fearless bands and with lyrics tending toward the personal is political. (AS)
Fearless Records, 13772 Golden sweat St #545, Westminster, CA 92683

♪ **Bill Hicks - Philosophy The Best of Bill Hicks, CD** On this posthumous collection, Bill Hicks said there was one statement that made him disliked and lost him audiences. He was wrong. It wasn't one topic; it was his entire catalogue of comedic material. In understanding the typical comedy audience, the one hoping for "You know you're a redneck..." jokes, ethnic humor and the difference between men and women, Hicks was a radical. Savagely hysterical social critiques that lend to the underlying belief that America is a largely ignorant and complacent nation, Hicks took on government, drugs, religion, and UFO abduction. Sure, this is nothing really new in comedy, but Hicks didn't spout off because he knew someone would laugh, his comedy took on a sense of responsibility and concern in a realm of entertainment that is too often just another distraction. It's easy to compare Hicks to Lenny Bruce, which may be a blessing and a curse. Sure, there are few that can be compared to the critical comedic genius of Bruce, but it says something that a comedian from nearly 40 years ago is one of few overtly political comedians widely recognized and remembered. Hicks isn't political because of the issues he addresses, the man is outrageous and bold because of the manner in which he addresses the issues on hand. A damn good collection of comedy, social commentary and madness that few comedians today could top. (GS)
Rykodisc, P.O. Box 141 Gloucester, MA, 01931-0141

The Black Heart Procession - Between the Machines, 7" I love this band. This is some truly creative music here. The dynamics of these songs are amazing. They are also a bit sad and eerie. With three full lengths and a few other 7"s out there, you really can't go wrong. It just so happens that my favorite song for the week of September 14 (between the machines) resides on the first side of this recording. (TK)
Suicide Squeeze Records, PO Box 80511 Seattle, WA 98108-0511

Black Widows - Arocknaphobia, CD Pretty cool, definitely more original than most, surf instrumental stuff here with the obligatory hidden identities and stocking masks. Makes you wonder if they're embarrassed about the eighteen tracks that they spun. (AS)
Vital Gesture Records, P.O. Box 46100, Los Angeles, CA 90046

♪ **Blatz / Filth - The Shit Split, 2xCD** This has been out in a few different ways I suppose, but this is the best if you don't already own the vinyl. Hell, I was excited by this and I do own the vinyl. Both of these Bay bands gave the counter argument to the pop punk sound of the SF area. The booklet is a great read, even though I would have liked the story of how/why they pulled their catalog from Lookout. Each band gets one CD, just as each got one side of the original split LP that most of this material came from. As a bonus to fill the discs you get singles, and compilation tracks. The Filth side has thirteen tracks of rage, while the Blatz side has seventeen tracks of rage, ha! If you are not familiar of either band that you must own this package. The original releases kept me from becoming a pop punk wuss back in the early 90's. The Blatz disc contains my favorites "Fuk Shit Up," "Hustler," and "Roadkill." Extra points go for having it on two discs, even though you could fit this on one. I would hate to have to decide which band to put first and we all hate the alternating of bands on a CD, I hope. Perfect job on some very important history of punk rock. (EA)
Life Is Abuse PO Box 20524 Oakland, CA 94620

Blitzkrieg - The Future Must be Ours, CD Loud, Angry, Hardcore punk. This isn't really that different than most other hardcore punk bands

out there. It's not bad, just nothing too spectacular. If you're really into this genre they it may be worth your while to check it out. (RS)
45 Revolutions PO Box 2568 Decatur, GA 30031

Building On Fire - Blue Print for a Space Romance, CD Man, did you hear that Syracuse got like, a million feet of snow? You know what that means, don't you? More bored kids will be cooped up inside all winter making typical NY Hardcore records like this one. (ES)
Hex Records 201 Maple Ln. N. Syracuse, NY 13212

Cadillac Blindsight - The Allegory of Death and Fame, CD 6 songs from this Minneapolis band that sounds like they might have listened to bands like Superchunk. Rock this good will make you forget that your life does suck. (BC)
Fueled By Raman PO Box 12563 Gainesville, FL 32604

Captain Sensible - Smash It Up (Parts 1-4), 7" This is really a collector only release for Damned fans. These songs are taken directly from some old 20 plus year old Captain Sensible reel-to-reel demo tapes. The A-side is "Smash It Up" parts one through four. The B-side has two solo/keyboard songs and a weird noise version of "Love Song." It is a great look into the song writing process of one of the punk pioneers. (EA)
NDN Records PO Box 131471 The Woodlands, TX 77393-1471

Choose Your Own Adventure - La Mancha, CD There are no words. I kept waiting for them to kick in, but they didn't. Just mellow, pretty background type music. It's nice, but it sort of drags on for too long I think. It starts to pick up and rock out a bit more on track six, but then it's over. (ES)
Sit-N-Spin Records 302 Oak Ave. Carrboro, NC 27510

Creation is Crucifixion - UUM, CD Only 100 of these were made...good. Sounds like throwing both your high school metal shop and the computer club down two flights of stairs. (BC)
hactivist.com

The Cuffs - Cut Throat, 7" Two songs of rancid flavored Oi that fits in very well with the other drinking, fighting bands that Headache records has blessed the world with over its lengthy existence. Bottoms Up! Oi! (AS)
Headache Records, P.O. Box 204, Midland Park, NJ 07432

♪ **CZOLGOSZ - Liberation, CD** Let me take a guess...Czolgosz really like Anti-Flag, Propagandi & Blanks 77. Hmmmm...and I guess flipping the bird in your group shot passes for anarchy these days. So FUCKING predictable! While they're attacking hipsters with "Style Over Substance," they ought to step out of their glass house and look in the mirror. Tell me, what do you hope to accomplish by attacking pacifists? Jack asses. For the record guys, the Sandinistas are now just as corrupt, if not more so, than the regime they fought against nearly 20 years ago. Failed revolutionary movements that have become what they once despised are not the best examples in politicizing and empowering others. Possibly another Politik Punk posture, possibly an honest but unfocused unit, maybe Czolgosz will figure it out with their next record. (GS)
Rodent Popsicle Records, P.O. Box 1143, Allston, MA 02134, www.rodentpopsicle.com

Damage - Final, CD Damn, I knew this thing was going to be tough, old school punk a la Madball and Agnostic Front. These songs are fast, anger fused and entirely legit. I would probably be scared shitless at one of their shows. (SY)
Deathwish, Inc. 432 Morris Avenue, Providence, RI 02906

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Art Ettinger (AE) THE CIRCLE JERKS "GROUP SEX" is the only album I've owned on cassette, CD, and vinyl at various different points in my life. It was one of the first "fast" recordings I heard and it radically changed my musical tastes at age 13. Every song is a total classic, and even though it's just 15 minutes long or whatever, it still feels like a complete album. Holding the record in front of me, it amazes me that these insanely short songs have such a lasting impact. "I Don't Care" is just 40 seconds long, "Deny Everything" is just 25 seconds long, "Operation" runs a minute and 27 seconds, "World Up My Ass" is a minute and 15 seconds, etc. I just saw the first night of their current tour (I was too big of a snob to plan to go in 1995), which was a blast. Caustic Christ and Submachine were great as always, then the Circle Jerks took the stage. They played a hearty mix of songs from all of their albums. I'd say they were better than on "Gig," and they played the early stuff as fast as ever. Keith Morris looked fine considering his severe health crises, and he had a ton of energy. It was also refreshing to see older punks come out of the woodwork for this one. Granted, a lot of great music has come out since 1980. But the Circle Jerks deserve to be put up on every pedestal. Hearing those songs live last week reminded me why I gravitated to the more hardcore forms of punk as a kid.

I've also been into The Templars lately and have been playing the fun debut recording of the local Pittsburgh band My Drunk Uncle over and over.

Damned – Ignite, 7" Live Damned tracks from 1995 and 1996, includes Neat Neat Neat, Love Song, Ignite, Gun Fury and the Hawaii 5-0 theme. Good song from one of the many Damned reunion line-ups. (EA)

NDN Records PO Box 131471 The Woodlands, TX 77393-1471

☞ **Dan Melchoir's Broke Revue – Heavy Dirt, CD** Just got this in time to review it for this issue so it is goin' to be short and sweet. Probably best known for his work with Holly GoLightly or Billy Childish, Dan Melchoir is a garage/bluesy modern hero. This release has fourteen tracks of stripped down, drunken masterpieces that should not be ignored. I still haven't had enough time to fully digest this record, but it is mighty fine. I am not sure how long it will take for Dan to get the respect he deserves and if I am correct in that he has transplanted to the US, then he just may get out of the whole Childish shadow cast upon him. In the Red Records has done a great job with this release and will be happy with the classics like, "Loveyougirl" and "Lonesome and Perplexed." This goes in the A-list pile for sure. (EA)

In The Red Records distributed by Revolver

Darwin – This Mental Nourishment, My Drive..., CD As much as I don't keep up with what Lifeforce puts out, I'm rarely disappointed by what I hear, and Darwin is no exception. To help lead the way of the new face of hardcore of spastic breakdowns, parts screamed, parts spoken vocals and a healthy dose of punk rock that has been missing from HC music for far too long. Keep up the good work. (DM)

Lifeforce, PO Box 938 . 09009 Chemnitz Germany

☞ **Dead Kennedys – Bedtime For Democracy, CD** All but the first of the Dead Kennedys records have been re-mastered and re-released on East Bay Ray's label, Decay Records. The reasons for this are too long for these reviews, but I will tell you that the sound on all of them are great. Unfortunately my favorite record, *Fresh Fruit for the Rotting Vegetables* is not re-released but the rest are so lets talk about them. Their last studio album was *Bedtime for Democracy* and was released in 1986 and being 13 years old at the time I remember being very excited when it was released. Listening to these twenty-one tracks for the first time in almost ten years later, I can tell you that unlike a lot of the Dead Kennedys' material this album holds up well. By this time they abandoned the more psychedelic surfy guitar and went back to a straight up punk/ HXC rhythm. Stellar tracks such as "Take This Job and Shove It", "Dear Abby" and "Chickenshit Conformist" still grab my attention. Probably not the first album of theirs that you should own, but definitely not a let down for their last studio effort. (EA)

Manifesto, Decay Records PO Box 11399 Oakland, CA 94611

☞ **Dead Kennedys – Frakenchrist, CD** Read the *Bedtime for Democracy* review first. This album, and more particularly started all the controversy. The trails over H.R. Giger's "Penis Landscape" artwork that was in the original LP and the cover photo were both dragged into courts of law. The PMRC and Tipper Gore lead the censorship brigade and chose this album because of the financial position of then relatively small Alternative Tentacles and Jello Biafra. I haven't listened to this record in quite a long time and one night after receiving the five discs from Manifesto I listened to them chronologically. *Frakenchrist* has two of my favorite Dead Kennedys' songs, "MTV Get Off the Air" and "Jock-O-Rama." What surprised me was how little I liked the other eight tracks on this record. I remembered it being better and I suppose at the time it was. It is considered classic to some, but I really think that the slower, more psychedelic phase of this band produced a record that really does not hold up at all. The music is more mature and the sound is well refined and at the time sounded new. Besides the two songs, which are classics, *Frakenchrist* just isn't as good as I remembered it. (EA)

Manifesto, Decay Records PO Box 11399 Oakland, CA 94611

☞ **Dead Kennedys – Give Me Convenience or Give Me Death, CD** Read the *Bedtime for Democracy* review first. This seventeen post-mortem disc was originally released in 1987 after the Dead Kennedys broke apart. I remember this album being released and sitting with my huge ass headphones on and dropped the needle on the record while reading the huge booklet inside. Actually, besides the first LP, I remember all the releases this way. *Give Me Convenience Or Give Me Death* is a hodge podge of singles, rarities and strange songs. Some of the best songs can be found here, and re-mastered sound even better than the first time around. "Too Drunk Too Fuck", "California Uber Alles", "Holiday in Cambodia" and "Short Songs" are just a few of the highlights. This record is really a must have if you don't own their classics on singles. The one part that makes this not compare to the original vinyl version is that even though it contains the original booklet, when it is shrunk from 12" to 5" you can't read it. The Winston Smith collages are all but indecipherable and that is half of the Dead Kennedys that I remember. (EA)

Manifesto, Decay Records PO Box 11399 Oakland, CA 94611

☞ **Dead Kennedys – Plastic Surgery Disasters / In God We Trust, CD** Read the *Bedtime for Democracy* review first. Now we are getting to one hell of a disc. The EP, *In God We Trust* is probably the Dead Kennedys at their best. The music is fast, the songs are short, and you can read along and follow all the lyrics. Not one clunker in the eight songs and worth the price alone. What is even better is that you also get their great second LP on the same disc, *Plastic Surgery Disasters*, sees the Dead Kennedys slowing down once or

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Andy Slob (AS) Being the junkie of rock documentaries that I am, I just recently finished the new book about the early LA punk scene, "We Got The Neutron Bomb". As with similar books, this had me rummaging through my record collection for things that were either mentioned or overlooked. I then came across one of my favorite releases from the LA area that was left out, CHANNEL THREE's album, "Fear Of Life". This 1982 masterpiece fits in between the era from where standard punk starting merging into hardcore. It's nearly a non stop barrage of anthems detailing the daily frustrations of teenage life all of which are punctuated with obviously overdubbed, but extremely effective, guitar parts and layered with "they make the record" shouted background vocals. Although some of the lyrics seem kinda sophomoric, but not necessarily unintelligent, the bands energy and enthusiasm more than make up for it. This contains so many classic songs. "Strength In Numbers", "You Lie", "You Make Me Feel Cheap" and "Manzanar" just to name a few. Just to give you some kind of comparison, it's just shy of the greatness of the Zero Boy's "Vicious Circle" LP. Search this one out and you'll have one of the great, catchy, unsung records from the West coast.

Recent happily purchased items: nearly all of the Daniel Johnston tapes, Fugazi's "The Argument", and X's "Los Angeles" reissue.

twice and start to play with the reverb/erie sound that is too prevalent on their next record. Probably the song that was played at extra length of every live show I have seen, "Riot" and their only ballad "Moon Over Marin" both appear on this release. Classic hardcore for sure, thought I will complain that the booklet that came with the original LP shrunk down to 5 inches lacks the impact that it originally had. Out of all the re-releases that I reviewed, this would be the first to buy. (EA)

Manifesto, Decay Records PO Box 11399 Oakland, CA 94611

☞ **Dead Kennedys - Mutiny on the Bay, CD** The first non-bootleg live Dead Kennedys album ever released Mutiny On The Bay does not disappoint. I have a handful of bootlegs, but none of them sound as good as this release. This disc was recorded over four different shows, one from 1982 and three from 1986. My only complaint is that switching from show to show loses the flow that is natural in a concert. That said, this live disc does it better than any other I know. You almost wouldn't know it with the careful sequencing and fades that take place. Any fans of the Dead Kennedys will enjoy this release. The sound is top notch and it contains most of their hits in its fourteen tracks. This was a nice surprise, and even more so because I would have loved this fifteen years ago and still enjoyed it today. (EA)

Manifesto, Decay Records PO Box 11399 Oakland, CA 94611

Defacto Oppression - Screen Symphony Suicide, CD What I want to know is, who thought it would be a good idea to print the cover all artsy and weird, the thank you page all tough guy, and then the lyrics inside the booklet in the BernhardtFashion font? That doesn't flow well, but whatever. The sound is fast, old school hardcore of the chugga chugga symbol crash repeat variety. I liked this kind of stuff six years ago when I was in my angry youth phase. (ES)

Hungry Ghosts Records PO Box 620241 Middleton, WI 53562

☞ **Diesel Boy/ Divit - Double Letter Score split, CD** Well, instead of over using the already over used and much popular term pop punk. Let's just call this catchy shit guitar driven, bootie shaken' punk rock. Both bands turn in fine recordings for this split disc. California should be proud that is still could produce two fine bands. Diesel Boy starts things off with a little organ intro then goes right into "Bad Art." This is an anthem for any punk band that has lasted over a year or so. Great lyrics about how you just keep putting out bad art because it is all you know to do to mess with people. They do a cover of Thelouious Monster's "Sammy Hagar Weekend." They then do a Spanish version of their tune "Titty Twister" and then (god knows why) close off their half of the disc with the hit "Livin' La Vida Loca." Divit then comes on to play 4 very fine songs including "Misunderstanding Maybe." Divit to me sounds like Seaweed hanging out with Down By Law. This is one of those rare CD's where every song is good. Wow never thought it would

happen again in the pop-punk world. Oops I mean the bootie shaken' world! (BC)

Coldfront Records PO Box 8345 Berkeley, CA 94707

☞ **Disaster Strikes - S/T, CD** Crude and rough, flirting equally with straight-forward rhythms (think Dee Dee Ramone) and hardcore breaks (ala early 90's Victory records), Disaster Strikes are somewhere between here and there, meaning though not entirely original, they've got a certain identity-developing throughout the record that is not yet unique, but very well may soon be. Toying with harmonies and layered tones, as seen with "No Chance" and "Scapegoat," it's clear that Disaster Strikes are near breaking out of the generic formulas that inhibit punk rock today; a refreshing notion. The guest vocals help break the monotony of hard core barking. A bit reminiscent of Berkeley's Thought Riot and the Nerve Agents taste for heavy riffage, Disaster Strikes are on their way somewhere. Hopefully growth in a more personal yet critical politick discourse and a matured sound will lead them out of the stray pack of punk, eventually emerging as a name to recognize. A lot of raw potential. (GS)

Rodent Popsicle Records, PO Box 1143, Allston, MA 02134

Downway - Defeat Songs, CD Fast and furious, catchy and poppy, I heard it before and will hear it again. This is decent but there's nothing that truly sets it apart from the new jacks of punk rock. (DM)

Sessions Records, 15 Janis Way Scotts Valley, CA 95066

☞ **Dread Full - Day Off, CD** In all honesty, I've had a hard time trying to review this record. It's beautiful in so many ways for a punk record. Dread Full play in a way that is moody like Catherine Wheel, jangly like Jawbox and Gang of Four, and incredibly moving like Braid. There's an intensity, anger, passion and honesty on this CD that hasn't existed for quite some time. It has so many good qualities going for it that I felt that I would not be able to do it justice in this review. You know what? I still can't. The best I can do is just admit that this is actually a great release and submit. Day Off gets the "it just fuckin' rocks out, man" award. Amen to that, brother. (DM)

Spicy Gracacoese! Etricas, www.spicyrecords.com.br/dreadfullShort Records, www.short.com.br

☞ **The Drones - Live in Japan, CD** The Drones are not only one of the first UK punk bands, but they're also one of the best UK bands of today. It's unconscionable that everyone goes nuts over Slaughter and the Dogs, Sham 69, and Peter and the Test Tube Babies but forgets this equally classic band. How many Drones shirts and patches do you see on the kids these days? Maybe I'm not looking close enough, but I just don't think these guys are quite the legends they should be. They formed in 1976 and only did one full-length in their prime. But they were one of Manchester's first bands and their sound was at least as

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Brian Czarnik (BC) Well, after you get divorced you need some mean music to play on your turntable. (X-wife took the CD player!) And one of the meanest records to come out in 1990 was a debut from NYC's HELMET called "Strap it on." This band had some radio success with a song on their second record called "unsung," but this is where it all began. I remember my friend Pete-O taking me to see them at the Metro in Chicago. We both were blown away by the simplicity of the beats and the loud ass guitars! Side one starts off with "Repetition" and then hits you even harder with "Rude." This band will get in your head and stay there. Page Hamilton's vocals and guitar are just so heavy and raw on this debut release. He was still working as a limo driver when they made this record. There is nothing as cool as a working man's angst to put onto a slab of vinyl. Side one closes with a great NYC classic called "Sinatra." If you can flip this record (because it is so dam heavy) over to side two you will find 5 more guitar driven songs to bang your head to. Peter Mengede (who I think went on to play in the band Quicksand?) lends some great buzz saw guitar work on these tunes. The rhythm section is just right in your face. Along with Jesus Lizard and Led Zeppelin these guys are the best at bringing on the beat. Before you think you like their more popular second record "Meantime" better, you had better give this one a good listen! My pet skunk even grooves to it.

Five best things in my review pile: 1-V.Reverse, 2- Diesel Boy/Divit split, 3- The Apers, 4- The La Dønnas, 5- Pinhead Circus

influential as that of better-known bands. Here they're showcased in well-recorded shows played in Tokyo and Osaka in 1997. The high-energy crowds got the band all riled up, and this plays like a young fresh band's set. There are no signs of a geriatric slowdown or "in it just to cash in" in this at all. Songs range from the classic "I Just Wanna Be Myself" to brand new hits. Kudos to 45 Revolutions for documenting these fantastic live shows. (AE)

45 Revolutions, P.O. Box 2568, Decatur, GA 30031

Dun 2 Def - Bomb Squad, 7" This is a solid melodic UK punk EP with a Sham 69 influence and off-key backing vocals that are growing on me. Also has a Misfits influence and some very rock guitar overdubs. Dun 2 Def has a bad name, but this is agreeable and well worth seeking out. (AE)

Dislocate Records, P.O. Box 321, Durham, DH7 7YG, UK

ESKA - Invent the Fortune, CD A rock band like Jehu and Archers (love the short slang versions eh?) They are OK and they come from the UK. (BC)

Gringo Records PO Box 3904, Clacton On Sea, Essex, CO15 5TF, UK

Exploding Crustaceans - Dudes and Bros, CD These guys fall somewhere between metal and punk without really sounding like one or the other. Not quite as speedy as Suicidal, but way less bubblegum than the Ramones. (AS)

Unfun Records, PO Box 2122, Saratoga, CA 95070

Eyeliners - Sealed With A Kiss, CD I really liked this band when I got their first few singles. Now they feel like a female version of the whole Queers/Screeching Weasel genre. I know that is over simplifying it, but when Ben does some guest vocals you are only perpetuating my comments. (EA)

Lookout Records

♀ **Faire Economics - S/T, CD** An amazing pop creation, this record is like nothing I've heard within the confines of one single recording. In one sense, it is a reminder of the truly democratic nature of independent music, fostering honest expressions of thought and emotion and uninhibited by the thought (threat?) of commercial value. Yet in noting "commodity number" above the record's bar code, this duo recognizes the seemingly futile function of popular music in the vacuum of capitalism. This record may also be a beacon of the sounds we may expect to hear emanating from bedrooms and basements across the country in the near future; no longer confined to six strings and a tape recorder, the advent of affordable home recording technology has pushed previously established limits into the obsolete. A virtual post-modern collage, Attention Deficit seem to borrow the goofy yet confi-

dent song craftsmanship from the likes of Adam and His Package and Devo, the melancholy stirrings of Sigour Ros, the pop punk and anthemic sensibilities of Gameface, and Atari Teenage Riot's manically methodical beat in creating a recording unique in setting. The strength in the wavering voice of Attention Deficit is just as full of purpose and identity as a hardcore bark, snide political wail, or gut scream that we've allowed to keystone our precious ideal called punk. However, the theme of objectification within "I Can Fuck Your Girlfriend" and the Lolita fantasy of "Even Though it's Illegal" casts a disappointing shade to an otherwise brilliant record. Even within this context of shy musical genius, there is no need for such immature and insecure lyricism that may speak to the socially inept but only encourages a culture of patriarchy. I cannot separate this from the rest of the album and am left unable to praise an otherwise brilliant record. (GS)

Mutant Pop Records 5010 NW Shasta, Corvallis, OR 97330 www.mutantpop.com

♀ **Forty - Hearts and Mirrors, CD** The inside artwork is awesome and I think Albert from Poison the Well is behind it. Regardless, another record of regret, words spoken that can never be taken back, mistake, forsaken love, heart breaks and the inevitable confusion of piecing together shattered relationships. Actually, it's not that bad. A tightness at times reminiscent of Face to Face and Berkeley's One Time Angels, pretty good straight up rock anchored by melodic break downs that seem almost a requirement at this point in the post-punk ROCK scene. It's endearing that 32forty doesn't achieve their possible intention of hardcore mechanical "intensity" and instead comes out more fragile and thus more identifiable. (GS)

Lotus Reords, 13414 SW 111th Terrace, Miami, Florida 33186 Attention Deficit—Adventures in Laissez-

Fugazi - Argument, CD I am not writing a long review of this for three reasons. One, this album picks up exactly where we left off with Fugazi and for that it is very good. Two, if you will ever own it then you already will by now. Three, the single blows this release away so much that I had a hard time listening to this release instead. (EA)

Dischord Records

♀ **Fugazi - Furniture +2, 7"** Okay now I am not sure if I have this whole story straight and please don't e-mail me. I should have e-mailed Dischord on this, but if I am wrong, talk to Scott Yahtzee from this zine, OK. Fugazi's new single released along with their new LP is amazing. I love all three songs and remind me of when I first loved the band from their earliest releases. After admitting this to one Scott Yahtzee, he tells me that the reason is that these are re-recordings of some bootlegged early demos. I scoured the internet for a few minutes to at least confirm that he is partially correct. I also found a lot of

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: (Mr) Dana Morse (DM) (Mr) Dana Morse once told me that a classic album doesn't have to come out a bunch of years ago or even be the most unknown obscure release ever. It's usually a record that was greatly under appreciated during its time. He was right. One of the greatest suggestions he ever told me to pick up was DISCHORD #101 BY BLUETIP. This record completely rips like a metal magazine of yesterday (does anyone get that joke? RIP magazine... whatever.). Featuring Jason Ferrel, the guitarist of Swiz on lead and on vocals, blazes the path with great lyrics ("She drank me dry and kept the nickel back deposit.") and some of the most amazing song writing. The created mood either rocked the fuck out or made you feel like you were on a death march. Even the novelty country tune at the end of the record speaks to me like a Hank Senior track would. Anyhow, I won't waste anymore of your time. Your greatest fan, D Morse

The bomb tracks that are so dope: The new Buck 65 release, Al Green G.H., Dread Full, Circle Jerks "Golden Shower", Sunshine, Bonfire Madigan, new Aesop Rock CD and some other whack, dope shit.

reviews of this single that complain of Fugazi ripping of their own classic "Waiting Room." Though it seems as if the title track, "Furniture" as originally recorded and but not released at the same time. I love the fact that they re-recorded the songs and supposedly the cover plays at the original bootleg. Leaving all that aside, this single is impressive. I played it over and over on a long drive and fell in love with Fugazi, again. (EA)

Dischord Records

The Gamits - A Small Price to Pay, CD Seven song EP of produced, radio friendly, good punk rock. If it came without a cover, I would have sworn that it was a Green Day outtakes album. Comes with a lemonade recipe. (AS)

Suburban Home, P.O. Box 40757, Denver, CO 80204

☞ **The Goblins - Missing Fits, CD** Lots to read in the booklet with this CD. Supposedly...these are recordings of songs that Glenn and the rest of the Misfits never recorded and were found in an original Misfits' coffin owned by the infamous Corey Rusk. Hence, the Goblins sound like a Misfits cover band except that many of the songs have different lyrics. So, "Last Caress" becomes "Final Massage", and "Bullet" becomes "Pellet". Other titles include "Getting Ripped" (about weightlifting), "Abbot and Costello Meet Frankenstein", and "Who Killed Agnes Moorehead?" While not sidesplitting funny, it is still humorous enough to warrant several listens and plays for those ever increasing throngs of Misfits fans. The Misfits are like the Flintstones - all kids grow up on them. Vocals aside (not bad, but definitely hard to duplicate), the music is pretty bass heavy dead on. And with the length at just under fourteen minutes, they keep their joke from wearing thin. (AS)

My Pal God Records, 47 Hardy Dr., Princeton, NJ 08540

Goddamn Gentlemen - Sex-caliber Horsepower, CD Sex, booze, and cars take precedence on this garagey release with a fucked up, loose production that sounds as if the band is going to disband at any moment and start kicking each others' asses. Reminded me of the Quadrajets. (AS)

Upper Cut Records, 4470 Sunset Blvd. #195, Los Angeles, CA 90027

Good for Cows - S/T, CD Jazz duo, with just bass and drums. I guess the bass player is also a punk, which is how this jazz CD got to PP. I don't know much about jazz, but it's fun to see a straight jazz CD with a song called "Chickenshit" on it. (AE)

Evander Music, P.O. Box 22158, Oakland, CA 94623-9991

The Hal al Shedad - Singles and Unreleased Recordings 1995-1999, CD Unfortunately, this disc was obviously crushed by someone in the postal system, so I couldn't listen to this. I didn't want it to go unspoken though. Sixteen tracks of their singles, three unreleased studio tracks, and a few live tracks. Without listening to this, I can guarantee

from knowing the singles that this is a must have release of 90's punk. (EA)

Buddy System 302 Bedford Ave. 284 Brooklyn, NY 11211

Homebrew - Monarchy in the U.K., 7" Punk 7" from Yorkshire, heavily influenced by Disclose and Peter and the Test Tube Babies. You get four drunk punk anthems here, all played in earnest. This one makes the grade and then some. (AE)

Dislocate Records, P.O. Box 321, Durham, DH7 7YG, UK

☞ **Infernal Noise Brigade - Insurgent Selections for Battery and Voice, CD** In 1989 Joe Strummer said, "Every generation must invent its own cure for the blues. To give itself something to think about, something to do, something to get involved in." Nearly two decades since Mr. Strummer sang of funky multinationals, the tradition of the blues within a politically active sphere has since mutated and manifested itself in a variety of sounds. The Infernal Noise Brigade is one of many proofs to Strummer's anecdote. Born of the latest wave of political dissidents, this post-modern indigenous beat collective—part Mardi Gras, part May '68 uprising—and their first collection of recordings "Insurgent Selections for Battery and Voice" are something to look out for. A collective of nearly a dozen percussionists, a vocalist and noise-maestro joined by a host of others (including a medic!), the organic beats they create are versatile enough to enliven the spirit of demonstration as well as the dance floor in the heart of Rio de Janeiro. The Indian inspired "Nagarawallah" and the Brazilian musical melee of "Bloco Fogo" build in a brutal thud and collapse of percussive syncopation, enhanced by call and response vocals, all of which quicken to an intensity that can only be matched by the abrupt nature in which it halts. This isn't a hippie drum circle, this is some serious shit. This is the sound of activism. This is an answer to blues of demonstration; where language and modern forms of music cannot match the rhythm of marching feet. It's the sound of protest at the gates of the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, the struggle in Genoa and the sound of Seattle in the midst of the Seattle '99 WTO protest. The universality of a drum beat in the midst of a march or demonstration is one which is simultaneously a call for direct action, a plea for humanity and the howl of pleasure in proclaiming ones autonomy. A great collection of organic beats born out of dissent. (GS)

Jack Killed Jill...—"Hello Neighbor," CD I'm actually surprised Jack Killed Jill... isn't on Fat Wreck Chords or even Cheetah's Records as they sound an awful lot like Tilt. I saw them open for Dee Dee Ramone once, or it might have been Dillinger 4—either way, they're a good live band; well versed in the Ramone's school of rhythm. Unfortunately, their sound is formulaic in a mid-90's Fat manner. I'd be interested to hear Revik Delfin's voice if she wasn't overtly trying to reach a Cinder Block like growl. However, I can't deny Jack Killed Jill... are

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Eric Action (EA) Recently Rip Off records released GOT A RECORD BY THE RIP OFFS on CD for the first time. I still haven't seen it or read the 24 page booklet that comes with it, but I couldn't wait another month for this record to make it in here. Around seven years have passed since this vinyl first touched the needle in my room. The line up includes Greg Lowery (Supercharger, later Infections and Zodiac Killers), Shane White (Fingers, later Infections and Loose Lips), Jon Von (Mr. T Experience) and Jason White (also in Fingers). Anytime Greg and Shane get together there is always words flying and it is worth staying around. The LP itself was brilliant, at the time of tough rockers and alterna-crap, the Rip-Offs came out with straight simple garage that was obnoxious, fast, and easy to sing along. Starting with a short blood pulsing intro "Heatseeker" right into "Rip Your Heart" and later a great cover of "Shadow" by the Lurkers and more classics to be. Here is a classic Rip Off line taken from "Ugly", "don't you know you look like a dirty hag, the only way to love you is with a paper bag..." The Rip Offs combined the idiocy of the Fingers, the simple retardation of Supercharger and the poppiness of the Mr. T Experience and came out with one of the best records of the 90's. When I was doing a punk radio show back in the mid 90's this record was requested more than any other newer release. Their singles are well worth hunting as well, particularly the "Go Away" 7". True to Rip Off Records fashion there are no lyric sheets - hell you are a moron if you can't figure out what they are saying. Live, in their pantyhose faces, dressed all in black, they were both annoying and fantastic at the same time. I am sure in the CD's booklet you will get Greg's and Shane's opinions on the history and importance of the bands. I am also sure that they will totally contradict and make fun of each other. Since this is now available on CD there is really no excuse for not owning this. Plus to line the pockets of Greg Lowery can only help the scene get more Registrators records released in the US.

I haven't been listening to anything new except reviewing material, but the Saints, Radio Birdman, Mission of Burma, Husker Du, and Radio Birdman have been spinning a lot lately in the Action household.

catchy as hell and I honestly can't stop my feet from tapping. (GS)
Geykido comet Records, P.O. Box 3743, Laguna Hills, CA 92654

Jane Doe - Converge, CD 12 fast and mad grindcore songs that took the band three years to make. Did I mention they seem to be mad? (BC)
Equal vision Records PO Box 14 Hudson, NY 12534

Jedi Five - relentless, CD The J-five guys play New Jersey style melodic punk and this record contains 12 new songs. Standout song title "Emo makes me cry." (BC)
Hell Bent Records PO Box 1529 Pt. Pleasant Beach, NJ 08742

The Jerks - We Hate You, CD Three gigs from one of the biggest support slot punk bands on the late seventies. Though KBD fans will appreciate hearing some of these live versions, the quality is a little shaky. The first ten of twenty-seven tracks are taken from a 20th year reunion. (EA)
Overground PO Box 1NW Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE99 1NW

Kammerflimmer Kollektief - Maander, CD (The Shimmering Collective, for all you English Speakers) Thomas Weber makes very Jazz oriented instrumentals including live drums, stand-up bass, guitars, and strings, then tweaked with different effects such as distortion and tape noise that make this a very original creation indeed. (TK)
Temporary Resistance Limited, PO Box 22910, Baltimore, MD 21203 USA

♀ Karp - Action Chemistry, CD A band way ahead of their time, after being together for more than five years, Karp broke up and everything went to shit. Absolutely no one has come along and been able to challenge the thunder and chaos left behind by them either. This compact disc captures all of their 7" and compilation releases. You also get a great, unreleased cover of Black Flag's "Nothing Left Inside." While often compared to the Melvins on speed, Karp greatly exaggerated the low frequencies and delivered it with chaotic urgency. Since this CD features Karp's first and final releases you get a complete progression of the band. I enjoy it all, from the shitty early recordings to the great sessions recorded by Tim Green. A necessary purchase. (SY)
Punk In My Vitamins? PO Box 2283, Olympia, WA 98507

♀ Kent 3 - Spells, CD Holy crap, this is real good, I mean from the first listen to the twentieth. I am very impressed with Kent 3's ability to write songs that are so catchy and give you that, "I have known this song for years," without making you feel like it was ripped off from some-

thing else in your collection. Like the handful of singles I have from Kent 3, this release has that garage to country to straight rock and roll feel. Songs that you can sing along with, because you can actually hear the words to the songs. Recorded in a hodge-podge of places and people, Spells is one great collection of songs. Hey punk rocker, try out some Kent 3 and see if I can convert you to something new. (EA)
1111 E. Madison PMB 287 Seattle, WA 98122

Keystone All-Stars - Man's Ruin, CD No holds barred straight ahead rock and roll from PA that goes 13 songs no stop balls out. "Frankensteiner" and the other beer drinking' tunes make this CD one of the best this I've heard this month. (BC)
Jump Start Records PO Box 10296 State College, PA 16805

♀ Kicked In The Head - Thick As Thieves, CD Hailing from Boston, MA is KITH. These guys play balls out punk rock n' roll, it's that simple. Thick As Thieves has a very aggro start right out of the gates with a calling out to open one's eyes, mouth and ears and follow it out infectious and speedy music with sing-a-longs and snarled shouts to spread the good word. From that point on there's no disappointments. They mix it up with skate rock, HC, slower rock tunes and the occasion horns that give it that Rocket FTC feel or a welcomed power ska tune. But just like a cage match it's no holds barred. This is definitely a CD I'm going to rock from time and time again. I'm also looking forward to see these cats since I recently moved to the Commonwealth State. This one is worth tracking down. (DM)
Resurrection A.D. Records, PO Box 763 Red Bank, NJ 07701

Killing for Culture - Hungry Bears Don't Dance, CD/EP Mid-tempo alterna-rock from the UK. Not much more to say. (TK)
ZiP Records, 116 New Montgomery Street, Suite 200 San Francisco, California 94105 USA

♀ Kingdoms of Black Lipstick - S/T, CD At times Melodic, a bit aggravating, this Indie band in various shades sounds like the latest Am Steel record or the early Velvets. Yet Black Lipstick has a hipster vibe to it that I can't really shake, possibly a result of their conscious effort to seem nonchalant within simple riffs. Very 60s rock n' roll—don't look for any thrash revival 4/4 beats hear. This is the sort of blues psycho madness that drove Syd Barrett to a padded cell. The lyrics are a slave to simplistic, at times Kerouac inspired, rhymes and the "too fuckin' cool for you" attitude that is the foundation for Black Lipstick's

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Scott Yahtzee (SY) When it comes to THIN LIZZY, everyone knows "The Boys Are Back In Town," but I find that they are a very under appreciated band. Not only do I feel that they pioneered the dual guitar attack to perfection, but Phil Lynott's lyrics were delivered with a heartfelt and soulful honesty that put to shame other rock stars who hogged the spotlight of the 1970's. "Live and Dangerous" is the album where Thin Lizzy is documented at their peak of strength. With the solid harmonic leads played in sync by guitarists Scott Gorham and Brian Robertson, Phil Lynott's vocal and bass abilities leading charge, and Brian Downey's barrage of power and class, they are a lineup of precision. Strangely enough, the album is 75% recorded in the studio! When getting together all the live takes, Phil decided he needed to replace some of his vocals. As the work was done they found that the only way to make it sound consistent was to replace all the vocals. Soon bass parts were touched up, and guitar tracks were redone leaving only the drums and audience reaction left in the "live." The illusion of a live album is definitely there, even if some trickery is used. This album features many powerful Lizzy gems, from the most romantic version of 'Cowboy Song' to the crazed guitar soloing in 'The Rocker'. There is nothing here to disappoint.

I spent some money on a portable CD player so I can start my day right while on my way to work. What treats me right? Dazzling Killmen's "Face Of Collapse," Manowar's "Kings Of Metal" Seaweed's "Spanaway" and Sweep The Leg Johnny's "Tomorrow We Will Run Faster"

reserved beat make this record really fucking hip (Check the Le Tigre/Strokes/Lou Reed crowd). "20 years behind, but fifty years ahead." Yeah maybe, but what about right now? (GS)
Peek-A-Boo Records, PO Box 49542, Austin, TX 78765
www.peakaboorecords.com

The Kung Fu Monkeys – School's Out..., CD Most of the 12 fun quirky pop tunes are under 2 minutes long. Which means a lot of nerd punkers could have sex to their favorite song. With singing candy coated hits like "Eat Your Vegetables" and "Peachy Keen" you may just never get laid. (BC)
Mutant Pop Records 5010 NW Shasta, Corvallis, OR 97330

The La Donnas – Complicated Fun, CD 10 rocking songs that deserve your attention. This is one of those dam fine straight-ahead loud ass rock bands. (BC)
Scooch Pooch Records 5850 W 3rd St. Suite 209 LA, CA 90036

Laymen Terms – An Introduction, CD Seven songs of heart felt catchy punk ala Alkaline Trio. If you dig AT, I'm sure you just might get into the swing of the Laymen Terms kids. Aren't these guys in the Emo Diaries? If not, they should be... (DM)
Soda Jerk Records, PO Box 4056 Boulder, CO 80306

The Locust – Flight Of The Wounded Locust, CD A CD release combining "The Locust 7" of the same name and the split release done with Arab on Radar. Not familiar with the Locust? The Locust is the pioneers of synthesizer driven hardcore thrash and they do it very well. Anyone else who has tried to participate in the genre just sounds like a copy and should be ignored. (SY)
Gold Standard Laboratories, PO Box 178262, San Diego CA 92177

Los Straitjackets – Sing Along With, CD Here you go, Los Straitjackets playing through sound with guests on every track. You will want this if you need to hear their fine friends: Big Sandy, Reverend Horton Heat, El Vez, Exene Cervenka, or Nick Lowe. There are a few more and this disc is a must for any surf/trash/garage fan out there. (EA)
Cavalcade Records through www.redeyeusa.com

Lovesick – S.T., CD Underproduced, punked out, indie rock that is so awesome in every way. It reminds me of listening to bands like Superchunk, Garden Variety or the Afghan Whigs in the early to mid '90's. Good times... (DM)
Makato Records, PO Box 50403 Kalamazoo, MI 49005

The Low Budgets - Go Bargain Hunting With..., 7" All the kids are buying organs these days, and the Low Budgets are no exception as they bust out four trashy garage like tunes with Rush minded instrumental

breakdowns. (AS)
Nancy Boy Records, 3143 Olympia Place, Philadelphia, PA 19145

M-16 – Canciones Escritas En El Exilio, CD Heavy NYC style hard core psych-metal style punk sung en espanol. 10 studio tracks and 2 live ones taken from CBGB's. (BC)
Mother West LLC 132 W26th St, NY, NY 10001

M-80 – Don't Take It Away, CD These boys from Providence, RI share roots in ska and aggro punk (melodic and forceful), dual vocals (sing and scream), and a sound similar to bands like Pennywise and Good Riddance (really good as far as the genre goes, heard it before, may make it huge). (DM)
Jump Start, PO Box 10296 State College, PA 16805

The Manges – The Manges 'R' Good Enough, CD This three piece from Italy takes from such American things as The Ramones, Elvis, The Queers, and The Misfits and then spits it all back at you all Italian style. (Which I guess means all smelly and hairy) We Americans must be so proud that we gave the foreign musicians so much music to emulate. (BC)
Stardumb Records PO Box 21145, 3001 AC Rotterdam, The Netherlands

McRad- Absence of Sanity, CD A big smile appeared on my face as I found this in my review stash. "Absence of Sanity" was one of those tapes that the older kids copied for you when you were first getting into the shit, and that's the only format I have owned it on to this day. I never even knew the song titles. I've been a long time fan of Chuck Treece from McRad being used in the Bones Brigade skate videos and even to Chuck's "Dream'n" solo record. I even got stoked during his short stint with Urge Overkill. To sum up all this rambling, McRad were from Philly and heavily influenced in the hardcore and reggae mixings originally pioneered by the Bad Brains. You could definitely find them playing with J.F.A. in the early 80's and even did some touring in the early 90's. Supposedly they are back together. This re-release captures the songs off the Thrasher Skate Rock Volume II comp, the "Absence of Sanity" full length, and some live tracks recorded at CBGB's and Trenton City Gardens. Funny, most of it sounds like it was mastered off a dirty record. Skate rock begins here. (SY)
Uprising Records, PO Box 42259, Philadelphia, PA 19104

Medication Time - One Free Miracle Ticket, CD Amazing crust craziness from present and former members of Dystopia, Skaven, Impulse Items, and Nigel Pepper-Cock. This is brutal material, fast and mean with a big early 80's hardcore influence and growling vocals. It can and will hurt the average listener. The lyrics present positive lefty politics through an intense hatred of Christianity and biting dark sarcasm.

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Timmy (TK) TONY ALL - NEW GIRL, OLD STORY, 12" The first thing I have to say is that All will never be as good as the Descendents. With that being written, Tony All is a collection of songs that were written by Tony Lombardo between the years 1979-1989. The rest of the band is the original All line up. This record is very eclectic, containing styles ranging from 50s pop rock/surf to 80s hardcore/punk. I could listen to this record forever and not get sick of it. I don't think I can really compare it to either of the bands the members were currently in/soon became. It has a sound all its own, but you can definitely tell who is playing the music. In my opinion this is a must for those into The Descendents or All. The best thing about this is that I found this for \$4 in the used records bin at Ear Wax, so keep your eyes open!

This was recorded almost four years ago, and the band, only around from 1997-1999, is no more. Why do so many good bands exist solely as side-projects and temporary gimmicks? This is sternly poetic shit hell bent on affecting its toughie listeners. Don't mistake this for metal, unless you want to. It certainly doesn't have any of the more annoying trappings normally associated with metallic sounds. The LP version comes with one of those neat gatefold covers, surely sounds better than the CD, and saves you the trouble of listening to a lengthy and goofy spoken word track from People's Park's Saint Paul. If you're like me and don't know a ton about this type of stuff, this sounds a lot like Dystopia but with more slow bits mixed in with the kinetic core. (AE)

Life is Abuse, P.O. Box 20524, Oakland, CA 94620

Mekons - Fear And Whiskey, CD One of the better English post-punk bands, The Mekons always reminded me of The Fall with a better attitude. This is a reissue of their classic 1985 album originally out on Sin Record Company label. While the Mekons have constantly reinvented their sound, Fear and Whiskey features a strong country music influence of the early days. Every song is dark and there is nothing to lift you up, but it's nothing short of genius. If you are sick of the music coming out today, stick to the reissues. They hardly ever let you down. (SY) Quarterstick Records, PO Box 25342, Chicago, IL 60625

Mensen - Stand Up For Yourself, 7" Sweden's rockers bring you two great girl fronted rock and roll originals and one, I believe, Dead Moon cover. Any fan of the mightily Scandinavian rock scene will love this disc. One of the best singles I have gotten in the last few months. The vocals have a distinct sound that set this Mensen apart from the others. (EA)

Wrench Records BCM Box 4049 London, WC1N 3XX

☞ **Merle Haggard - Roots, Vol. 1, CD** With the release of "If I Could Only Fly," Merle Haggard reclaimed his inheritance as one of Country and Western's leading crooners. Nashville took notice, but hardly enough to dent the saccharine streamlined pop production that is contemporary country. Instead of repeatedly pummeling country, this time the Hag sits down Nashville's flatbelly's, and anyone else interested in catching an earful of his wisdom, with a musical history lesson simply entitled "Roots, Vol. 1." "Roots, Vol. 1" is a collection of material that reflects both Haggard's fondness for a stereotypically kitsch genre and the rich history of a nearly forgotten art form. The playful nature in which Haggard ducks in and out of the rhythm of "I Want to Be With You Always" speaks to a familiarity that can only come with time. The light-tread of Doug Colosio on his piano keys accents the sentiment of the song in a reserved manner seldom found. The warm timbre of Haggard's voice backed by the balance of his bands, the Strangers, grants life to each song and not merely dusty lessons from a time past. Covering Lefty Frizzell, Hank Williams, and Hank Thompson as well as some new material, "Roots, Vol.1" may have served Haggard as a chance to fool around with some of his favorites, but this record is much more. "Roots, Vol. 1" serves as a reminder that

honest and straight forward songwriting will always outlast slick production and the lack of substance. (GS)

Anti-Records, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.anti.com

Micky & The Salty Dogs - Fresh Fish, 7" Good 'ole Mickey of the Milkshakes brings us four tracks of old time rock and roll ala 50's/60's. Any fan of the Milkshakes or the whole Childish regime will love this single. Their full length is also well worth hunting down. (EA) SmartGuy Records 3288 21st Street #32 SF, CA 94110

Minus The Bear - This is What I Know About Being Gigantic, CD Ah... Uhm.... Well... I did like the colors they used for the CD case. As for the music itself... The only way I can describe it is synthesized emo. It's kinda like... weird spacey robotic sounding shit with whiney vocals... yeah... thats about it. (RS)

Suicide squeeze records PO Box 805011 Seattle, WA 98108

No Use For A Name - Live In A Dive, CD Obviously by the title it's a live CD recorded specially to be released. Pop punk's long lasting NUFAN give you twenty live tracks, a comic book, and enhanced CD live footage. (EA)

Fat Wreck Chords

Orange Island - The Shape of Calling, CD Is it emo or alterna rock? I just can't tell anymore. These guys bust out the personal songs and toss in a nice "Crimson and Clover" cover as a hidden track. I wish it was more catchy, but the kids must be eating this type of stuff up as it keeps on coming. (AS)

Iodine Recordings, 1085 Commonwealth Avenue, PMB 318, Boston MA 02215

☞ **The Pac-Men - S/T, CD** Holy Fucking Hardcore! These guys are what HC should still be today. No tough guy jock pickin' up change bull-shit here. (In fact a few songs apposed to that mindset). Just some excellent HC songs that sounds in between Negative Approach and Minor Threat. Song titles like "The Incredibly Strange Creatures Who Stopped Living and Became Mixed Up Zombies (part two)" and "Serious Punk Rock Kids= Joke" shows that these guys have the sense of humor that HC lost along the way. What else do you need from a band? I guess these guys were supposed to play here in Madison a few months ago, but the cops shut down the show. I didn't care too much until I heard this CD. Pick up this release and you will be singing "WE ARE THE PAC-MEN!" in dreams of a Hardcore Revolution. (TK)

Red Tape Records, PO Box 4468 Danbury, CT 06813

Pain - Jabberjaw, CD Enhanced CD version of the new 7" by this prolific collegiate ska-punk band from Alabama. There are two videos included on this enhanced CD, which you can play on your computer and on some DVD players. The videos are for songs on two of the four (!) full-lengths they've put out since 1994. It's nice to see one of the bands of the early 90's ska explosion still playing and doing it well. Recommended. (AE)

Springman Records, P.O. Box 2043, Cupertino, CA 95015-2043



Pinhead Circus - S/T, CD 5 great songs (3 from an earlier release and 2 new ones) from this powerful and melodic band. They do Prince's "I Could Never Take the Place of Your Man" so check it out. (And by the way, I could take his place) (BC)
Not Bad Records PO Box 2014 Arvada, CO 80001

Pink Holes - Breakfast with The Holes, CD The Pink Holes were the Boris the Sprinkler of the 80's in Cleveland. This disc is a total gut buster, mostly with the hit, "The Proof is On The Pad." I remember when you could listen to bands such as the Meatmen or the Pink Holes and laugh at things that today are too un-PC. This is a part of mid-western punk history. Includes the original LP, plus 12 bonus tracks. (EA)
Smog Veil Records 774 Mays #10-454 Incline Village, NV 89451

¶ **Pirx the Pilot - S/T, CD** Experimental punk bands can be a big pain in the ass. Some of the best bands ever had very strange "out there" sounds, like The Crucifucks and The Minutemen. But over-complexity or extreme innovativeness usually ends up transcending" punk, and pissing people off. Yet occasionally a band does something truly different while still maintaining enough punk linearity to appeal to those of us with admittedly feeble, limited tastes. And that's what Pirx the Pilot has done here. This is excellent out there punk from the Bay Area, and it's easily my favorite of the records I got for review this month. What makes the band especially strange is that a droll intentionally robotic man sings the lead vocals, but these strange vocals are backed by a traditionally melodic female voice that can only be described as "pretty." There are five songs here, with punk lengths never exceeding 2:33. Song titles include "Dude, this Gas Station Has No Tofu," "Potato Cannon Ricochet," and "Love Song for the Proletariat," so you've gotta have a high tolerance for comedy lyrics if you're going to get this at all. The tempos range from the fast end of slow to the slow end of fast, usually changing within songs as opposed to from song to song. I'd get a kick out of seeing this band live. This is too fucking good. (AE)
New Disorder Records, 115 Bartlett St, San Francisco, CA 94110

Pithot - hedy lamarr 1913-2000, CD This sounds like throwing your local 5th grade concert band down a flight of stairs. (BC)
www.massparticles.com

Plus Ones/Travoltas - Going Dutch, Split CD Three songs apiece with the Plus Ones pulling the power pop vibe with a good nod to 1981. The Travoltas do the above average pop punk thing. Only one song from each is previously released, I think. (AS)
Asian Man Records, PO Box 35585, Monte Sereno, CA 95030

Racebannon - In the Grips of the Light, CD Engrossing second full-length from this "screamo" band that has a penchant for using weird samples in the background of their otherwise routine hardcore. Song titles include "Flip n' Fuck," "Clubber Lang" and "Go With the Flow." (AE)
Secretly Canadian, 1021 South Walnut, Bloomington, IN 47401

Recover - Rodeo and Picasso, CD Increasingly popular emo band from Texas that has a vocalist who swings from teary singing to ballsy screaming every few seconds or so. Good and diverse. (AE)
Fueled By Ramen, P.O. Box 12563, Gainesville, FL 32604

Red Animal War - Breaking in an Angel, CD Slow to medium paced melodic tunes that are notably tight with their changes, which there are quite a few of. Similar to Cursive, musically and vocally. The lyrics are a little over my head, but the song "Starter" rocks. The only thing I really didn't like was their poor choice of samples they use in their songs. What does the Italian couch scene in American Beauty have to do with words holding water collecting in buckets of blood. I mean,

come on. (TK)
Deep Elm Records inc., PO Box 36939, Charlotte, NC 28236

Replicator—Winterval, CD Motherfucker, I know my attention span is a little bit short, but fuck, this shit is boring. Swear to god they stole a Led Zeppelin riff on "KA Tet." (GS)
PO Box 224, Berkeley, CA 94701

Reynolds - Field Recordings, CD English dreamy art rock. The recording was all done by themselves. (BC)
Reynolds 27 Waveney Dr, March Cambridgeshire, PE15 8DY, England

¶ **Saturday Supercade - Everyone is a Target, CD** Fans of what I call "cute punk", because of the cutesy, poppy punk love songs they play, like Newfound Glory and the Get Up Kids, etc., would like this a lot. I saw Saturday Supercade play once at Sudsy Malones during my only trip ever to Cincinnati, and they're definitely fun to see live. The kids dance along, the boys jump around, a good time is had by all. I guess the style of music itself isn't incredibly inventive, simply because there are a lot of bands out there playing this kind of music now, but the Cade do it better than most. I'm all for stuff that is just fun and dancey and good. (ES)
Liberation Records PO Box 17746 Anaheim, CA 92817

¶ **Sensefield - Tonight & Forever, CD** I've always liked Sensefield, they are an excellent combination of "alternative rock" and "emo", though I hate to use either of those terms. Track five has an organ/piano part and then this weird echo-type thing, and the drums almost sound like a drum machine for a minute. It could just be a result of my cold medicine making me hear weird things, but it sounds good, and they've mixed it up well on this record. Fans of their earlier albums, like Building, my personal favorite, will appreciate the familiarity but also the differences and the progression they've made over the years, "evolving" and all that. The twelve tracks flow well together, making it one of those discs you can listen to the whole way through, telling a story and being upbeat and fun and then mellow and thoughtful too. If this sounds cheesy, I blame it on the cold meds. (ES)
Netzwerk America LLC, Suite 304 8730 Wilshire Blvd. LA, CA 90211

Seville—Waiting in Seville, CD Ummm—lets see, Seville really likes Jets to Brazil, Rival Schools, Crumb, and probably Jimmy Eat World. How's that saying go about imitation and flattery? A melodic clean production of post-punk emo complete with calculated riffs and feather and anvil dynamics, *Waiting in Seville* is as predictable as the record sleeve. The minimal cover art (a plain wall with a space heater to break the monotony of modernity) and band photo of a bunch of guys looking bored, hurt, and attempting to fit at least up to their elbows in their black slacks is SOOOOOOOO emo it fucking kills. If you really dig the bands I already mentioned, then this record will probably find its way into your collection. If not, don't even bother. (GS)
Fiddler Records, PO Box 330667, Miami, FL 33233

Shiner - The Egg, CD I like Shiner, at times they replace Jawbox in my collection to give me songs I don't know by heart. This newest disc is out on DeSoto (no surprise there) and recorded and produced with J. Robbins (even less of a surprise). This sounds as good, if not better, than their other releases with the guitar sound saying "listen to this a few more times." Two weeks from now I will like this even more. (EA)
DeSoto Records PO Box 60932 Washington, DC 20039

Soiled Doves - ST, 7" Featuring Johnny from the Blood Brothers may be the only thing that I can tell you without saying that I had a hard time figuring out what was the correct speed to play this records at and how much it sucked. (DM)
King of the Monsters, 8341 E. San Salvador, Scottsdale, AZ 85258

Soilent Green— A Deleted Symphony for the Beaten Down, CD Something needs to be said about a band named after a Charlton Heston film. Riff heavy metal a la Pantera & Slayer. Pretty repetitive and boring. Not much to say after all. (GS)

Relapse Records, P.O. box 2060, Upper Darby, PA 19082

Sonna - We Sing Loud Sing Soft Tonight, CD With ex-members of Torn Apart and Coalesce I thought I might have had an idea of what to expect. I was incorrect. This is a mostly instrumental band. Slow and very well written indie rock (emo) type stuff. Recorded by Steve Albini. (TK)

Temporary Residence Limited, PO Box 22910 Baltimore, MD 21203 USA

Spitfire - The Slideshow Whiplash EP, CD This band's resemblance to the Dillinger Escape Plan is ridiculous. 3 songs of technical hardcore and 1 easy listening track. (SY)

Goodfellow Records, 762 Upper James Street, Suite 275, Hamilton ONTARIO

☞ **The Spits - S/T, CD** First impressions are usually good and bad, and oh boy did this cover give off some weird vibes. The Spits have an bad band name, bad cover art consisting of a robot with a skateboard (with a back truck coper) and a naked woman smoking, and a band photo of three burly dudes sporting taxi driver style mohawks and mustaches. Jeez, I just didn't know what to expect. What I got was 9 songs of sub Ramones simplicity that would have fit well onto Killed By Death, oh say, #5. Extremely simple song structures textured lightly with keyboards and monotone vocals that made for just one hell of a catchy good time ride. If this stuff was actually from 1979, punk record collector geeks would be drooling into their keyboards on ebay looking for the stuff. These guys got that whole era/genre pegged. Weird production, shitty sounding instruments, odd vocal reverbs, and songs that sound like they wrote them all two weeks before recording or ten minutes after they decided to start a band. Songs like "Dropout", "Tired & Lonely", and "Black Kar" stand as a fingering testament to the fun that most bands sending releases to this magazine lack. As for the first impressions, the music contained within only ending up adding to the hilarity of the cover art and clocking in at just over seventeen minutes made the ride just all that more humorous. This is simple, honest, uncaring fun. A keeper. (AS)

Nickel & Dime Records, P.O. Box 12711, Seattle, WA 98122

Spitting Teeth - Legacy of Cruciality ☞ e.p., 7" Old school hardcore with some humor laced in. They got the straight edge but are opened minded to everyone united together. Not the most original idea, but Spitting Teeth execute it well and I am amused by the silly lyrics with songs about skateboarding and moshing in the pit. The * denotes an unneeded Project X cover included on the 7". Sorry I'm such an asshole. (SY)

1-2-3-4 GO!!! Records, 716b 47th Ave NE, Seattle WA 98105

☞ **Sprinzi - Something More Than The Last Time, CD** Wow. I was really unprepared for this. First, let me say that I've always wanted to go to Italy. In my head I've got this whole scenario planned: floating through the canals of Venice on a gondola with a hunky-yet sensitive Italian boy who is singing cute love songs in broken English. Now I'm not sure about the hunky part since the tiny pictures inside the CD booklet make it hard to really see anybody, but the rest of my dream scenario [minus the gondola part] apply here. I tried to follow along with the words printed inside, but it pretty much doesn't make sense. Still, it's cute. If you dig the Promise Ring's kind of random lyric type style and want to hear eight tracks of an Italian boy's accent trying to sing broken English, this is for you. (ES)

Alice Records via Campana, 7 10125 Torino, Italiawww.lovelyalice.com

Stereobate - Selling Out In The Silent Era, CD Cool, adventurous emo release, and I don't like much. Reminds me of the latest Fugazi, except with different vocals. One too many instrumentals. Lame cover art. Go get it. (AS)

Distance Formula Recordings, 66 N. 6th St., Brooklyn, NY 11211

The Starting Line - With Hopes Of Starting Over..., CD An innocent sounding, ambitious, emo pop punk five song EP. Reminds me of how the Get Up Kids started out. Decent cover of Starship's "Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now" from that 80's movie. (DM)

Drive-Thru Records, PO Box 55234 Sherman Oaks, CA 91413

Stomper 98 - Stomping Harmonists, CD Unique is the only way to put it. This German Ska/Jazz/Punk band had me laughing my ass off and I had no clue why. There were some parts that would sound really good but then it would switch over to something really weird and I felt lost. (RS)

Cargo Records PO Box 3314 37023 Gottingen, Germany

Stretch Armstrong - A Revolution Transmission, CD Stretch Armstrong has never been my cup of tea, but I respect what they do. They can kick out positive hardcore better than most, and their breakdowns still come across fresh. On this recording they keep their old school dynamics but can branch off into songs with singing instead of the usual bark. Don't be set off by the use of stringed instruments also. Original and relevant lyrics are an added bonus, but I say this one is still for the kids. (SY)

Solid State Records, PO Box 12698, Seattle, WA 98111

Styrian Bootboys - Bottled With Pride, CD As far as I can tell, this is a unity skin band of bootboys hailing from Austria. A few songs are in English but most is in their native tongue. The music is fun with some interesting guitar work and dual vocals (rough and whiney). The tone of the album goes between street and ska, which isn't uncommon, but these kids seem to pull it off pretty well. The Styrian Bootboys also are featured in the Cock Sparrer tribute featured this issue. (DM)

DSS Records PO Box 739 4021 Linz Austria

Submission Hold - Sackcloth and Ashes The Ostrich Dies On Monday, CD Submission Hold carry the torch of Ebullition and this release won't disappoint any fans of either. Strong female fronted vocals with a noise that infects behind. (EA)

Ebullition PO Box 680 Goletta CA, 93116

Superhelicopter - Indicted, 7" Noise, punk, trash all rolled into four songs. This mess was so all over that I have a hard time recommending it to anyone. Its not bad, I am not sure who will like the sound. Kind of like a dozen different French garage bands I can think of played through a cheap PA at the wrong speed. (EA)

Wrench Records BCM Box 4049 London, WC1N 3XX

Superhopper - The Days of Wine and Whiskey, CD Intriguing Midwestern Punk from St. Paul with an odd beat and an obvious Stooges influence. Fans of the similar Twin Cities' Dillenger 4 will like this nifty band as well. (AE)

Monkier?No!, 813 1/2 Blair Ave., St. Paul, MN 55104

TheRIOS - TheRIOS II, CD Noise music that switches between blast beats and hip hop beats with screaming and random guitar chords played over the top of it. At first I hated it, but it grew on me. I'm an audio geek, so I'm interested in how this was produced. (TK)

Hollenden records, PO Box 18129, Cleveland Heights, OH 44118-0129 USA

The Takers - Never Get Out of These Blues Alive, CD I guess now that the Murder City Devils have parted ways, fans of that bar room debauchery rock-n-roll like myself will be forced to listen to watered-down rock bands like this. It sort of reminds me of the kind of band you'd

see if you went to a bar in the suburbs with your parents. (ES)
Rubric Records 12 W. 37th Street, 5th Floor NY, NY 10018

Tension Wire - Explicits, CD The closest I can come to comparison would be fellow Chicagoland band Pegboy. Considering most music released in the punk scene lately has to either be screaming or crying, these guys are a nice relief from the norm. (TK)

Seymour Records, PO Box 56738, Chicago, IL 60656-0738

Tight Bro's From Way Back When - Lend You A Hand, CD The leaders of god-damn balls-to-the-wall rock-n-roll. The TBFWBW are unbelievable live and this newest disc seems so heavy compared to the wimp rock, or is it wuss rock of the new millennium. (EA)

Kill Rock Stars PMB 418 120 State Ave. NE, Olympia, WA 98501

Tokyo Knives - S/T, 7" All I know about this band is that this single bows to the mighty Detroit/Ann Arbor and then the even mightier Australian punk sound. I lost count of the number of "rock and roll" and "girl" clichés contained in the four songs. Straight up power rock without a doubt. (EA)

Wrench Records BCM Box 4049 London, WC1N 3XX

Traitors - everything went shit, CD 33 (yes 33!) average at best hard core tunes from this blue collar Chicago band. Cool thing is that 13 of the tracks feature vocals from Todd Pott (Apocalypse Hoboken) and up until now were impossible to find, bad thing is all 33 songs feature Marc Ruvolo on guitar. (Even from a broken down trailer in Tampa, I can still get my cheap shots in on poor old Marc). (BC)

Johanns Face Records PO Box 479164 Chicago, IL 60647

Tyrades - S/T, 7" Wow! At first played at 33 rpm, I was unimpressed, but then at 45 rpm! The male vocals turned female and the mid-tempo became break neck speed. This would fit in with anything produced by Tim Kerr in the last few years. May be known as that guy form the Baseball Furies other band. One great single including a near perfect version of the Dicks, "Lifetime Problems", thank you. (EA)

Big Neck Records PO Box 8144 Reson, VA 20195

Vanilla Muffins - Hail! Hail! Sugar Oi!, CD Beer-drinking, candy-coated German "sugar oi". Do I really need two discs of this? Truthfully, no. Remember how Rob and Fab [Milli Vanilli] just had something about them that made you laugh every time you saw them? That's how I feel when I look at the "centerfold" picture in the booklet with the three guys of VM standing together in tank tops and sunglasses with the title "Vanilla Muffins California Tour" off to the side. They must really like what they do, since according to the list of previous releases, they've been putting out records since 1993. (ES)

DSS-Records POB 739 4021 Linz-Austria

Vibrators - Live at The Nashville '77 and The 100 Club Festival '76, CD I am a huge Vibrators fan and this is for someone like me. Taken from two gigs, the first from the soundboard the second from a tape in the audience. Any fan should get this if not for only the three Stooges covers that were virgin to my ears. (EA)

Overground PO Box 1NW Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE99 1NW

The Wontons—Hex Appeal, CD Young, loud, and snotty, The Wontons are straight up dirty rock n' roll. Souped up blues riffs with a four on the floor attitude—this shit is dope. Reminiscent of the Dead Boys, early New York Dolls, and the late 70s Max's Kansas City Scene, their sound is grounded in the simple emotional outburst of 1960's garage punk as well as 60's pop. "If I live to be 100 years old/My true love will still be rock n' roll"—Hsieh's lyrics are honest and the Wonton's uncomplicated style speaks to a sexual energy that rock n' roll sprung from. What else do you need? (GS)

Bloody Banner Records, P.O. Box 49472, Austin, TX 78765

V.Reverse - Complete Recordings 1995-1997, CD Doug Ward is the workhorse of Chicago punk rock. From recording bands, mastering bands, letting bands practice in his basement, heading up Underdog Records for years, and countless other things even including playing guitar in Screeching Weasel for a very short time. (I won't mention the Kiss tribute band "KISSSS" that Doug did a fine Paul Stanley in) He works hard and his music shows it. You can describe his past former band 8-Bark and now his recent former band V-Reverse as the thinking mans punk band. The stop/ start rhythmic arrangements are just brilliant. And the guitar playing is original, and that is hard to do in this day and age. Songs like "Stupid Little Zine" and "T Shirt" really makes you look at what matters in punk rock. These 18 tracks (which also feature the angrier vocals of Patrick Scott on about half the songs) showcase the bands raw talent. Three great Chicago engineers (Chuck Uchida, Elliot Dicks and Rob Roy Campbell) put their hands on the knobs of these recordings. Many good bands come and go and this was one that many Chicago and suburban punks overlooked. Well, now you have the opportunity to glance back at one of the finest Chicago bands of the late 90's. (BC)

Arms Reach Records 1624 W. Columbia Ave. #1S Chicago, IL 60626

V/A - The Beginning of the End, CD Twenty-five tracks by bands like Midtown, Dynamite Boy, The Impossible's, Samiam, and Atom and His Package. My sixteen year old brother eats this shit up. (ES)

End Records PO Box 101013 Fort Worth, TX 76185

V/A - Boot to the Head Records: Sampler 2, CD To tell you the truth...I was really doubtful that this comp was going to be anything special after hearing the first few tracks, but the rest of it turned out to be surprisingly good. It has two tracks for most bands featured on it, giving you a better idea of what the bands are like. This one is worth checking out. (RS)

Boot to the Head Records PO Box 9005 PDX, OR 97207

V/A - D:S:S: Records We Rule The World, CD Wonderful 24-track international Oi and street punk comp, with the songs chosen by the editor of the European rag Moloko Plus from the 40+ releases D:S:S: has done so far. This is mainly cliché boot boy material, so people will likely have strong reactions to it one way or another. Big bands like The Templars and Patriot are side by side with lesser known greats like Milwaukee WI's The Service and the soon to be classic Stomper 98. Other bands are NOTA, Impact, The Cleats, Subway Thugs, Kim & The Echoes, Nice and Easy, Chapter 21, The Franks, Skarface, Soul Boys, Judge Dread, Blanc Estoc, Butchers, Street Troopers, Explorers, Madcaps, Bap, and Trinkerhorte. D:S:S: is doing a good job of getting distribution all over the world, so unlike many comparable labels, you may actually find this and other fine releases by them in your local punk record store. What I like the most about this is the sheer number of countries represented. Yes, fun thuggy street punk is a very international phenomenon. So why not give this as a gift to your bohemian aunt who is presently in love with World Music??? (AE)

D:S:S Records, P.O. Box 4739, 4021 Linz, AUSTRIA

V/A - The European Pop Punk Virus, CD Thoughts while listening to this CD. Damn, twenty-eight tracks! The virus has spread. Where is the damn vaccine? Hopefully, there aren't too many of those single string guitar solos. And thankfully, they are sparse. The influence of the Devil Dogs is thankfully present in European pop punk. People from Europe sing about things that I don't think apply to their life, surfing and the prom. Are kids all over the world really that hooked on getting the girl? Even these bands sound ridiculous doing that pinched nose, nasal, Screeching Weasel/Queers vocal style. Sizable amount of countries covered. The women are fairly well represented here

although they always seem to sound like pre Lookout era Donnas. The Retarded rock in a near Dead Boys way. Almost all of the choruses seem to start with "I wanna" or "I don't wanna". What's up with pop punk artwork always being some pseudo creepy/happy comic type cartoon? Wouldn't most of these bands want to, and probably sound better, singing in their native tongue? Fuck America! Don't pander to us assholes! I know that I would want to sing in Dutch. Overall a pretty good release, if you're still enamored by the genre. And the last three cuts skipped on my scratched CD (came without the jewel case), so I have no idea if you should rule the world. My regrets. (AS)
Stardumb Records, PO Box 21145, 2001 AC Rotterdam, The Netherlands

V/A - Fear of the Nothing, CD 30 unreleased tracks from the likes of Bongzilla, Ringwurm, Godstomper, and Cavity. Very heavy comp, with sludge guitar riffs all over the place. A hefty sampling of these bands for sure, with a thick booklet chock full of useful contact info. (AE)

Nothing Enterprises, 2538 La Mirada Dr, San Jose, CA 95125

V/A - Ghost In The Gears, CD Emo, screamo, grind, and hardcore fill up what appears to be a new label's sampler comp. Features unreleased and rare tracks, as always, by such luminaries as Good Clean Fun, Cave In, Catharsis, and everybody's favorite neighbor, Dahmer. (AS)
Iodine Recordings, 1085 Commonwealth Avenue, PMB 318, Boston, MA 02215

V/A - Honest Don's Dirty Dishes, CD Honest Don's compilation featuring mostly pop punk acts. Nerf Herder, Limp, Citizen Fish, Squirtgun, Dance Hall Crashers, J-Church, Teen Idols, and more. It is exactly what you would expect, including not one exclusive track. (EA)
Honest Don's Records

♣ **V/A—MonkeyWrenching the New World Order: Global Capitalism and its Discontents, CD** A great collection of dissenting intellectuals and activists versed in the havoc that is globalism and its many tentacles, this record includes the dry wit of Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn, Alexander Cockburn's irreverent sense of public speaking and the calculating criticism of Vandana Shiva. However, the problem is that we're preaching to the converted. An accessible source of education and empowerment, the most important lesson from this collection may not lay solely in the memorization of facts and statistics but in the manner in which this knowledge is converted into a viable mode of resistance. Cockburn warns of the danger in fetishizing demonstrations without the backing of solid political organization. A demonstration did not stop Vietnam, as he points out, but the political leverage that emerged from street mobilization did. Zinn warns of the efficiency of bureaucracy in dashing naïve attempts to thwart the education system without solid support. Chances are if you're savvy in globalism from a left perspective, this is nothing you have not heard. However, at the least, this record presents us with the ability to spread the word to those less politically informed. (GS)
Alternative Tentacles Records, PO Box 419092, San Francisco, CA 94141-

909232

V/A - Poppunk.com Presents: Pop-Punk Fever, CD Pop-punk fans will enjoy this 24-song comp with five unreleased tracks. Bands include Travoltas, No Motiv, Big In Japan, and The Unknown. Cool to hear an all pop comp in this anti-pop era. (AE)
Nice Guy, P.O. Box 42815, Cincinnati, OH 45242-0815

V/A - Punk Chartbusters Vol. 4, CD This is a ridiculous release, over fifty covers of mostly pop songs done by mostly obscure punk bands. Covers of Beach Boys, Cars, Madonna, Soft Cell, Britney Spears, John Denver, Doors, Prince, U2, etc. The thing is some of the versions are rather fun, while others follow the typical three chord pop-punk variety ala Me First and The Gimmee Gimmees. (EA)
www.wolverine-records.de

V/A - Punk Rock Strike (volumes I & II), CD Wow, These comps are very well put together. I liked just about every track on both of the volumes. 27 Tracks on the first and 24 on the second, and on top of that they're only a buck! yes only \$1.00! What a bargain! If you're looking for a great, inexpensive compilation CD this is it. Order 'em online. (RS)
Springman Records PO Box 2043 Cupertino, CA 95015
www.springmanrecords.com

V/A - Supersonic Sounds from the "Fuck You" Movement, CD Very reminiscent of the "Fear Of Smell" compilation put out by Vermiform almost a decade ago. A slightly impressive collection of noisy hardcore, prank phone calls, and white noise. Notable bands include Bastard Noise, Suppression, and Kojak. The rest of the bands range between intolerable and genius and you will definitely use the skip track button on your CD player. (SY)
C.N.P. Records, PO BOX 14555, Richmond, VA 23221

V/A - Surprise Package Volume 4, 7" Flying Bomb annually (or close to it) release a X-mas single that I always get to review right after the holiday depression kicks in. Volume four is highly suggested, though the bluesy/country twang to some of it fit in well with the post-holiday mood. Three Christmas tracks from Von Bodies, Mistreaters, and Soledad Brothers. (EA)
Flying Bomb PO Box 971038 Ypsilanti, MI 48197

V/A - A Tribute To Cock Sparrer, CD Oi! Oi! Oi! If you dig C.S. and want to hear decent renditions of songs from bands that may not have existed if it wasn't for this band, come and get it. Features the Dropkick Murphy's, Beerzone, Man's Ruin and 12 others. As far as tribute CD's goes, this one gets a seal of approval. (DM)
DSS Records PO Box 739 4021 Linz Austria

V/A - Upland Breakdown, CD Live sampler of a get together featuring "roots" acts. "Roots" being a country/blues hybrid trendy genre. Features Spot (of SST fame), Drag The River, I.W. Harper & the Blue Caballeros, The Stop & Listen Boys, and the cool, moody Grandpa's Ghost. (AS)
Upland Records, P.O. Box 36, Ft. Collins, CO 80522

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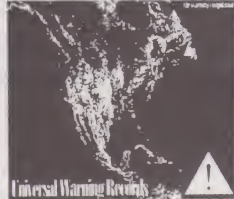
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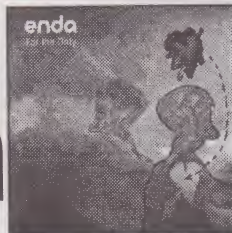
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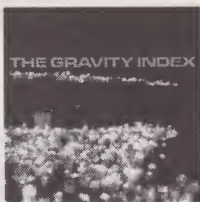
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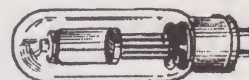
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PAPER

ZINES



Ache #3

This is a eclectic collection of comics and well written articles. It is a shame that Armen the everything man behind Ache is taking an uncertain amount of time off, because this fine publication should be a staple in one's regular zine reading. The articles are incredibly well written and entertaining and/or informative. The piece on Chick Publications (those crazy Christian comics that magically appear) is incredibly fun to read. Hell, you even get a sample comic for your own personal conversion. That's generous. Besides art and articles there are some music reviews and interviews with other zinesters and Easy Action (ex-Negative Approach). But Seriously, Ache is worth investing into with your time and cash. (DM)

\$3 ppd., 167 Cortleigh Blvd, Toronto, Ontario M5N 1P6 Canada

Drunken Master #2

Wow the Hissyfits are hot! Oh, and there are some comics and reviews and letters etc... But what I liked are the pictures of the band from NYC called the Hissyfits. Yeah Baby! I know I should say something about how the "girl" band sounds to be all PC, but I ain't heard them yet. (BC)

F-Art Joke #1

Shoots and Splatters, log jam, Poppy Long Stockings, Feces Pieces, Frans Kaka, Poo Sticks... If this is amusing to you check out this shit stain zine with somewhat amusing illustrations. (DM)
\$1, bsteckler@netrax.net

Fuzzy Heads Are Better #9

Patti Kim (ex-Punk Planeteer columnist) throws at us another FHAB. I fell in love with Patti many moons (more like 5-7 years ago I think) when I heard her band Meowch on a cassette sent to me while reviewing for this very zine. Later, I put out a one-sided LP compilation with a song of the cassette and read her zines and comics as she matured (ha ha) in her writing. FHAB is a zinester-zine. In other words all of these cool "kidz" in zine land know Patti 'cause she is cool and all. Personally, I am not in that world and I get a little smile every time I read FHAB and the little comics inside make me smile a little more. This issue in particular felt a little thin, but none the less you need to ride the Patti Kim train. (EA)

patti@bananapower.org

Gulk #6

The funny comic zine Gulk is back. A lot of sick drawings about shitting and having sex doggie style. My kind... I mean your kind of stuff. (BC)
RR#3 Box 5760 Skowhegan, ME 04976

Heironymus Bush, Number 1

Small comic depicting our current US president searching for intoxicants, beating up eco-freaks, and taking a bad acid trip. Fairly entertaining, I must say. (AS)

H.B., 710 Barnard St., Apt. H, Savannah, GA 31401

Her Side Of The Side Walk #1

Great block prints, nice hand binding. However the writing is a disjointed rant on the aspects of space, architecture and relationships. 68 pages... (DM)

\$3 ppd., PO Box 3444 Portland, OR 97208-3444

Hit It Or Quit It #16

Great full size newsprint magazine that is run by a few ex- and current Punk Planet folks. This issue contains a lot of the typical, with some real long record reviews that are well written. The best story for me was the "I Was a Teenage Antioch Arrow Cover Band." A great read indeed. The writing is above your amateur zine and really stands out as some of the best layout and articles in all of the punk print world. I recommend this to anyone who would pick up this zine, you will definitely love Hit It Or Quit It. (EA)

Order from insound.com

Ideas Is Matches, #3

Personal thoughts type zine with articles on traveling, reflexology, anti globalization, zine reviews and more all done up with the editor's own personal feel. (AS)

57 Woodview, Lucan, Co. Dublin, Ireland

Impact Press #35

Did you know that Philip Morris did a research study on the cost effectiveness for governments on the early deaths caused by smoking? Were you aware of any reason Bin Laudin could have been offended at American policy? Impact Press is a quality leftist paper [even if slightly distilled]. It has both a variety of news items and record reviews. It's the best \$2 [postage] you can spend to get some very interesting information.

Free/ \$2 ppd., PMB 361, 10151 University Blvd. Orlando, FL 32817

MicroFilm #4

A magazine about personal cinema in action (taken from the cover). Looks like they know what they are talking about. This is a good read for the indie minded film buff. Lots of reviews of movies and most of the flicks and news seem to be from the Chicago/Champaign Illinois scene. Man I love that wacky town of Champaign. College girls and a good record store. (BC)

\$3.50 Opteryx Press PO Box 45 Champaign, IL 61824-0045

Pick Your Poison, #1

Yet another personal story type zine. Lots of stories about his childhood pal's journey from a Christian upbringing into a mischievous metalhead. Pretty decent read. (AS)

Nate Gangelhoff, PO Box 8995, Minneapolis, MN 55408

Rated Rookie, Issue One

A zine that seems to actually have been put together by some actual writers, as I remember a couple referring to failed journalism careers. Lots of stories about job and other personal experiences without any mention of zines or music. Just one of the best reads that I've ever gotten to review.

Definitely worth the dollar asked. (AS)
28-07 38th St., #4L, Astoria, NY 11103

Restless #1

A decent road trip zine. The favorite past time of many a punk rocker. Anyhow, read about a trip through Ohio and a plane ride to sunny California. This is a short and sweet 30 page zine that is fun to read. (BC)

\$1 Laura Box 915 Hyannis, MA 02601

Ripped & Clipped #3

This was the best of the bunch as it has my favorite band Cheap Trick all over it. They have pretty much simply clipped a lot of old Cheap Trick (and a few other 80's bands) interviews and flyers and such. A great zine if you love Cheap Trick. And you should! (BC)

Slave #6

A very pro looking zine (looks like Punk Planet sort of) that has tons of reviews and ads. This issue they talk to bobby Steele, Tiger Army and artist Jeff Gaither. (BC)

\$4 PO Box 10093 Greensboro, NC 27404

Slug & Lettuce #69

This is a large newspaper print zine that is worth you checking out. This issue is loaded up with zine and music reviews. Neat interesting columns to start it off with. The editor also gives a little rant about turning thirty. (It sucks don't it!) Great classifieds and some cool ads. (BC)

Donations/ Stamps c/o Christine PO Box 26632
Richmond, VA 23261-6632

Strait #3

In this issue you can read about summer fun, learn a little when three guys discuss body hair and look at a funny comic or two. (BC)

\$1 Lane Van Ham 220 E. 15th St. Tucson, AZ 85701

Tales of Xyphoid Volume #2

The talented Illinois artist John Curtis puts this out and it is one of the best underground comics going today. 140 pages of insane story lines that along with some very decent looking heroes. The cool character "Violence" and the gang are back in some of the stories. There are long comics and short ones mixed in between for your pleasure. The style is like "Sin City" meets "The Tick". Great stuff! Also check out the now up and running Talesofxyphoid.com. (BC)

Tales of Xyphoid PO Box 1282Lake Villa, IL 60046

We ain't Got No Car! #6

Don't they know to never ever never use double negatives ever never? Anyway, Jack (ex-PP reviewer) takes us into his life and tells some stories in this little personal zine. You can feel his pain when he tells of how he was hit by McDonalds (never support them by the way!) french fries when tossed from a moving vehicle. (BC)

\$2 or trade Jack PO Box 3824 Portland, OR 97208

Working Jones #1

The debut issue of W.J. from the great Dorkboy comics gang. Working Jones is the story of all working stuffs trying to put meaning into their lives. If you love the funny and strange Dorkboy comic series, then get this. Hell, if you are reading this review...get this comic now shithead!

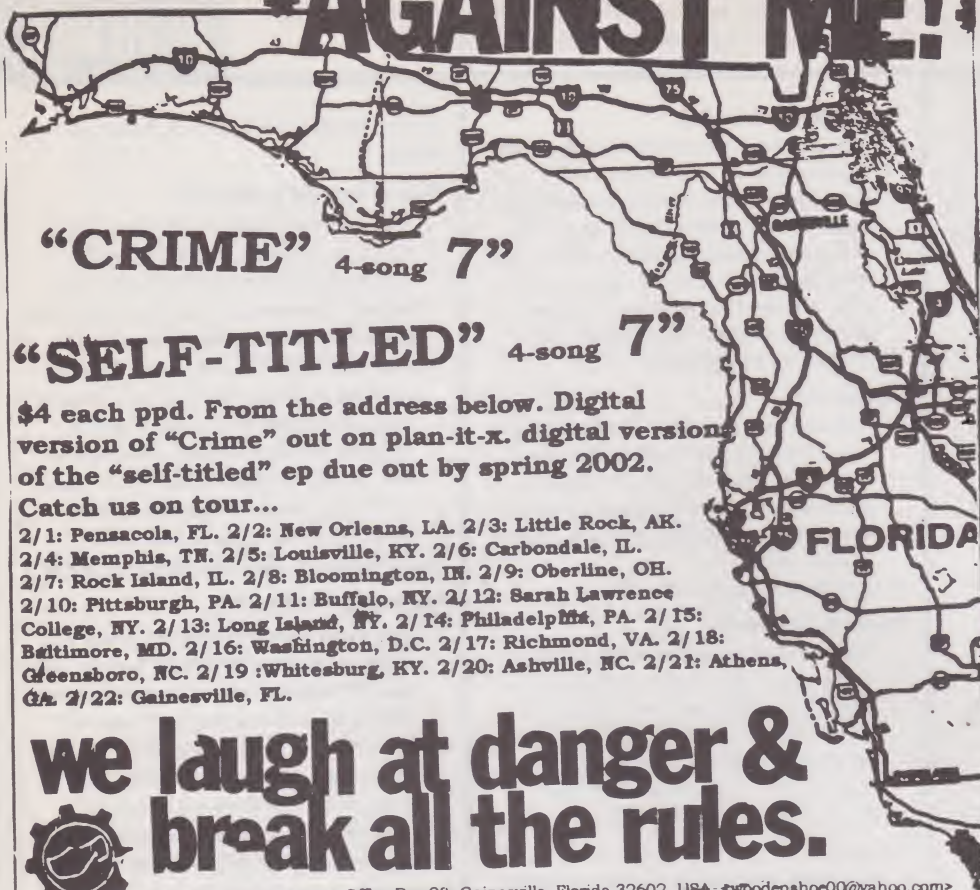
Three bucks is a tad pricey though. (BC)
\$3 Dorkboy Comics PO Box 64214 Calgary, Alberta T2K 6J0 Canada

XYZed, Issue 13

Personal experiences zine with articles on meeting Geddy Lee of Rush, Red Green, movie and zine reviews, and more. Has a nice accessibility to it. It's Neil Peart not Pert! (AS)

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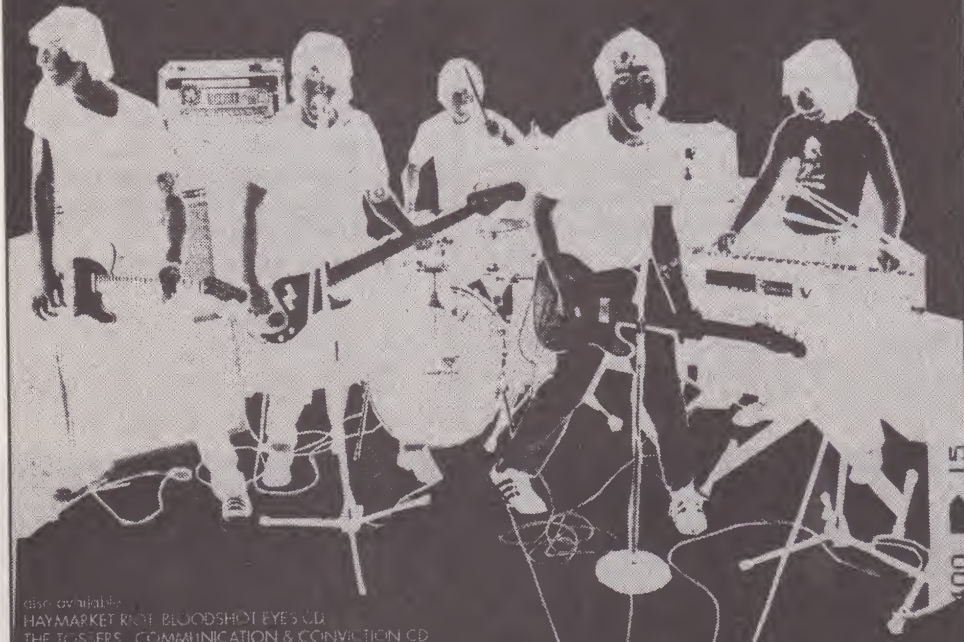


Sabot Productions, Post Office Box 28, Gainesville, Florida 32602. USA: <woodenshoe00@yahoo.com>

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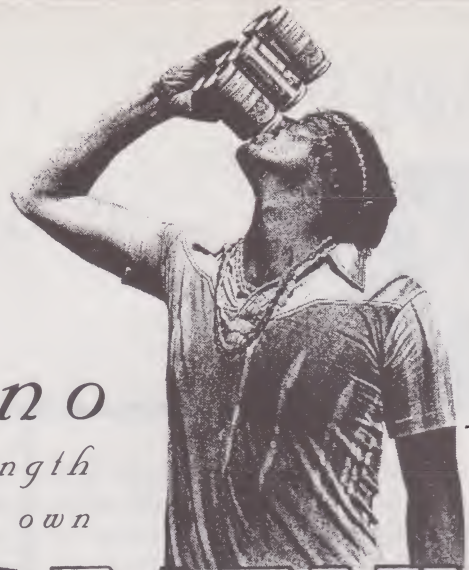
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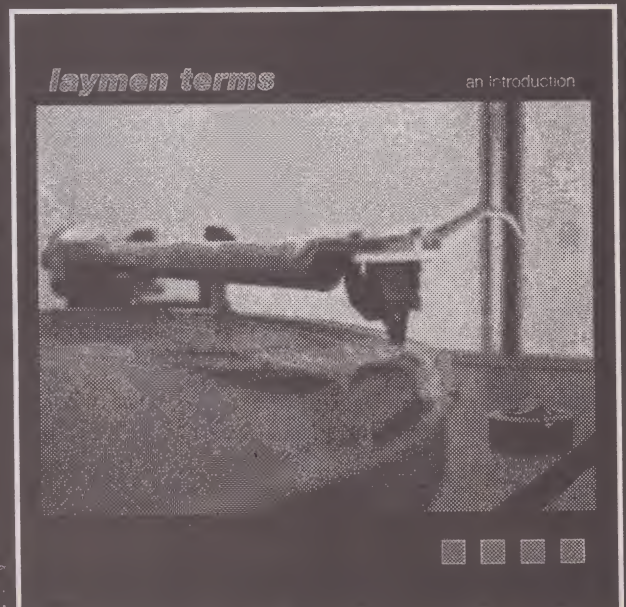
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PAPER BOOKS

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White Power, White Pride: The White Separatist Movement in the United States

By Betty A Dobratz and Stephanie L
Shanks-Meile
Johns Hopkins University Press

White Power traces the development of racist, anti-semitic American hate groups, locating and analyzing them in historical context. The use of the term "white separatist" allows the authors to group together the KKK, neo-Nazis, skinheads and the various Christian Identity movements with stereotypical right-wing militias. Focusing both on ideology and practice, Dobratz and Shanks-Meile seek to develop a political economy of white supremacy. The book's only weakness lies in the authors' development of an overly sympathetic relationship with some of the members. This sympathy, however, gives the reader enormous insight into the thoughts and psychology of these abhorrent hate groups.

Race hatred in America has quite a colorful history. And it's well-documented here. The KKK was founded in Pulaski, Tennessee in 1865 by former Confederate soldiers. Its second incarnation in the 1920s and 1930s was a mass movement estimated to be anywhere from two to eight million members. President Warren Harding, Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black, Chief Justice Edward White, and possibly even President Truman were members of this second phase.

Contemporary factions of the Klan began after World War II, evolving into David Duke's mainstream National Klan, which included amongst its membership the insidious Tom Metzger, who left to form

the California Klan and, finally the White Aryan Resistance. The authors also expose the history and ideologies of the American Nazi Party, the NSWPP, Dr. William Pierce and the National Alliance, the National Socialist Party of America, the National Socialist German Workers Party, the SS Action Group, Confederate Northern and the Eastern Hammerskins.

Christian Identity movements, however, lie at the heart of *White Power*. These movements link white separatist organizations with fundamentalist Christians and right-wing militias. These Christian racists maintain that "Aryans" are the lost tribes of Israel, that Jews are direct descendants of Satan, and that the world is on the verge of an apocalypse in which the good Aryans will battle the evil Jews and ZOG (the Zionist Occupation Government.) These ludicrous beliefs, however, underlie a fanatic militancy. From the Aryan Nations prison branch The Order's hijacking and armed robbery of a bank truck in Northern California (which netted three million dollars), to Tom Metzger's incitement of racist skins to murder Ethiopian immigrant Mulugeta Seraw in Portland, Oregon in 1988, the events chronicled in the book make for a fascinating portrait of an increasingly violent, ideologically complex community that cannot be ignored.

Perhaps the best part about *White Power* is the fact that the authors never lapse into the sensationalism all too common in literature about racialist movements. Unlike James Ridgeway's *Blood in the Face* and much of the armchair "hate culture" analysis pushed by organizations such as the Anti-

Defamation League, Dobratz and Shanks-Meile's book places the movement in a socio-economic context while also tying together apparently disparate movement elements. Hysterical federal government reactions to Waco, Ruby Ridge and other incidents strengthen their mutant viewpoints. As Metzger points out, white separatists permeate all levels and socio-economic strata of American society including top members of the US government and multi-national corporations. This book is an essential addition to any library on race, ethnicity and inter-ethnic relations. —Bill Mithoefer

Tape Op: The Book About Creative Music Recording

Edited by Larry Crane
Introduction by Tony Visconti
Feral House

Tape Op, edited by the well-regarded Portland studio owner and hipster engineer Larry Crane, is a magazine dedicated to creative, do-it-yourself audio recording. The first 12 issues of *Tape Op* have gone out of print and the magazine has gained an increasingly large following, patronized equally by artists and enthusiasts alike.

The *Tape Op* book contains the better part of the first 10 issues of the *Tape Op* zine and selections from issues 11-14. It is divided into five chapters: home recording; artists and bands; engineers, producers and studios; knowledge and techniques; and recording equipment. The book opens with an introduction by Tony Visconti, a reknowned British producer who has worked with David Bowie, T Rex, Iggy Pop, and many others. Visconti

attacks the nostalgia modern recordists have for the 1970s: "Recording is an art. Steadily we have been given more brushes and colors for our palette over the years. I have often been asked how we got our records to sound the way they did in the '60s, '70s and early '80s. Before I could answer, I would be told that it was all down to analog tape and vintage consoles, just fill in the blank. *Nothing could be further from the truth.*" Viconti argues that engineers made great records in decades past because they had to fight with and overcome the limitations of crappy and unreliable equipment. And that is the *Tape Op* attitude: make the best recordings possible with the gear you have at hand.

Many of the chapters come in the form of interviews, which range widely across gear, technique, attitude and anecdotes. You will learn, for instance, that Guided By Voices pursued a "lo-fi" approach to recording because Bob Pollard's wife Kim would not let him spend big money in a big studio. But you'll also learn about 4-track tricks, how to make a live recording with a minimum of gear, and how little some of the great 4-track recordists actually needed to make great records. The requisite Steve Albini interview is in here: "There's no reason to fiddle around with a bunch of new, cutting-edge nonsense if it doesn't do the job as well." And you'll find interviewees both praising and lambasting new digital recording formats.

Comparing these early essays collected together with a more recent issue will also give you a sense of where the magazine has gone. *Tape Op* now has much more extensive letters and Q & A sections, more gear reviews (including reviews of gear that no budget home recordist could afford), and is willing to move more into the domain of professional recording. But the spirit of the magazine remains the same, right on down to the fact that you can

subscribe to it for free. *Tape Op* is the major alternative to big corporate music production magazines, which sometimes read very much like equipment catalogues.

—Jonathan Sterne

Rock Til You Drop

John Strausbaugh

Verso

Reading John Strausbaugh's *Rock Til You Drop* reminded me of the year I spent in Santa Cruz, California during the mid-1980s. I couldn't stand the pretense of the city's hipper-than-thou Baby Boomers. Their high ideals bore little relation to the hard realities of everyday life. I couldn't help but point an accusing finger at all the pot smoking home owners lounging in their hot tubs after work. My friends and I called them "Fascist Hippies."

Pouring through the confrontational pages of *Rock Til You Drop* persuaded me that not every Boomer is so sickeningly reactionary. Strausbaugh convincingly narrates the story of the culture industry that grew out of the hippy scene in the 1960s, making it an allegory for everything that remains wrong with his generation. His targets include rock musicians, the music magazine industry, and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. A former underground musician himself, Strausbaugh moves on to criticize the first wave of cooptation of punk rock in the late '70s. Throughout, Strausbaugh sustains a damning critique of post-1960s free market ideology, demonstrating how business-minded Boomers mined Tom Wolfe's "radical chic" in order to push product on their own generation, not to mention those post-Vietnam era adults like myself who were spoon fed the idea of "1968" as though it were a doorway to a higher state of consciousness.

One of the most memorable parts of *Rock Til You Drop* is Strausbaugh's account of

the rise and fall of *Rolling Stone* magazine. The author shows how founder Jann Wenner masterminded the first large "Rock" periodical of the sixties. Incorporating Hunter S. Thompson's unique political writing with a knack for the zeitgeist of twentysomething hipsters, *Rolling Stone*, Strausbaugh argues, was initially a revolutionary idea. As the publisher grew up, becoming more and more concerned with making money than creating culture, the magazine declined in quality, with the exception of occasional flashes of brilliance by political commentators such as William Greider. For the most part, however, today's *Rolling Stone* is a joke, replete with cover stories on Limp Bizkit and military recruiting advertisements.

Finally, *Rock* takes on the "fascist hippies" I invoked earlier. Ben & Jerry's was able to make the experience of eating ice cream doubly rewarding for people, convincing consumers that what tastes good can also do good. As is also the case with *Rolling Stone*—not to mention the magazine's rock-and-roll namesake, which receives a predictable skewering—the story gets progressively darker. Strausbaugh shows some of the contradictions inherent in Ben and Jerry's marketing ideology. Donating leftover ice cream to local Vermont pig farmers resulted in pigs dying young from arteriosclerosis. News of the company's attempt to cover up the debacle compounded the damage. *Rainforest Crunch* was conceived as a flavor that would use Brazil Nuts sustainably harvested by downtrodden Amazon rainforest natives. Eventually the demand was so huge that the company obtained its supply from large multinational agribusinesses who began to buy out the land from small scale farmers. The irony may be delicious. But, as Strausbaugh's excellent book demonstrates, we would be better off if the 1960s left a bad taste in our mouths. —Bill Mithofer ©

All books reviewed in Punk Planet are independently published by small or academic presses. Due to space constraints and length requirements, not all books we receive will be reviewed, as it takes quite a bit more time to read & review a book (and write the corresponding review) than it does to plunk a needle down on a record and write a snappy capsule. If you'd like to have your book reviewed in Punk Planet, please mail it to: Punk Planet attn: Book Reviews PO Box 464 Chicago IL 60690 if you want anything else reviewed, please mail it to the reviews address given at the front of the magazine.



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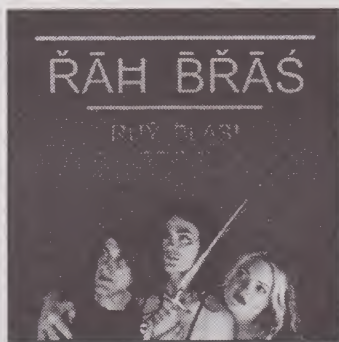
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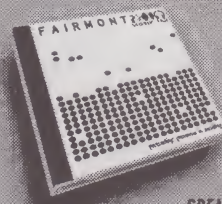
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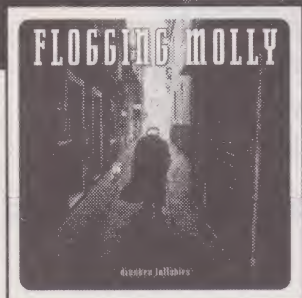
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PP36 March/April 2000 Punk Planet #36 takes a long, hard look at THE DEATH OF A PUNK IN AMARILLO TEXAS. Punk Planet writer Chris Ziegler travels to Amarillo, talks to the people involved and writes about the case and its aftermath. Also in PP36 is the story of the WTO PROTESTS in words & pictures. In addition to these two feature stories, PP36 features interviews with MATAODR RECORDS, THE CDUP, AK PRESS, DENNIS CODPER, AT THE DRIVE IN, TARPE OP MAGAZINE, LIMPWRIST and SARGE's ELIZABETH ELMORE, and many more. Articles in PP36 include moving PORTRAITS FROM IRAQ and a look at the LUTHER PLACE SHELTER, a shelter for homeless women in Washington DC. Plus there are columns, DIY, reviews and much, much more. 144 pgs

PP37 May/June 2000 CRIME AND JUSTICE 2000. In three articles, PP37 takes a look at the sorry state of the American criminal justice system. POLICE BRUTALITY is looked at in the article "War in the Streets." YOUTH ORGANIZING AROUND PROPOSITION 21 is investigated in "No Power like the Youth" and the PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX is exposed in "Crisis and Control." Interviews in this issue include STELLA MARRS; J-CHURCH'S LANCE HAHN; STEPHEN DUNCOMBE, author of ZINES AND THE POLITICS OF ALTERNATIVE CULTURE; the EVOLUTION CONTROL COMMITTEE; Q AND NOT U; EXHUMED FILMS; HORACE PINKER; and the story of STALAG 13, a Philadelphia-based punk club that was shut down by the city, fought to be reopened and won. Finally, PP37 takes a look at the RACE STATE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE and PP takes a peek at the lawsuit between the RECORDING INDUSTRY OF AMERICA AND MP3.COM. Plus more. 144 pgs.

PP38 July/August 2000 VOICES OF THE NEW LEFT. PP takes a look at the new anti-globalism movement. Interviewed in the "Voices" series are NDAM CHOMSKY, JELLO BIAFRA, DIRECT ACTION NETWORK, RUCKUS SOCIETY, QUEER TO THE LEFT and GLOBAL EXCHANGE. Also interviewed in this issue, BOY SETS FIRE, UNWOUND talk about building their

new recording studio, post-hardcore label HYDRANEAD RECORDS, controversial publisher SDF SKULL BODKS, MELVINS bassist Joe Preston talks about his project THE THRONES, electronic artist LESSER checks in and art rockers LES SAVY FAV yap at you. Also, PP38 takes a look at the growing RAPTIVIST movement. Additionally, PP38 looks at the GROWING ANTI-WALMART MOVEMENT. Much more. 156 pgs.

PP39 Sept/Oct 2000 Six years after punk "broke" into the mainstream, Punk Planet talks to many of the bands involved, GREEN DAY, JAWBREAKER, JAWBOX, SAMIAM, GIRLS AGAINST BOYS, THE SMOKING POPE, FACE TO FACE, JIMMY EAT WORLD, TEXAS IS THE REASON. Think you know what happened? Think again. Also in this issue: interviews with KILL ROCK STARS founder SLIM MOON; THE EXPLOSION; MARY TIMONY; SUE COE; ULTRA-REG; DIS-INFO.COM; and the CENTRAL OHIO ABORTION ACCESS FUND. Articles in this issue include a look at how groups like the WTO ARE EFFECTING THE LIVES OF THE GREAT APES; a report on the CHICAGO POST-ROCK SCENE; and noted economist Doug Henwood writes "BOOM FOR WHOM" which puts a new perspective on the "new" economy. 152 pgs

PP40 November/December '00. MEET THE NEW BOSS Through interviews with controversial biographers, Punk Planet #40 envisions the hell that the Bush presidency will be—and the hell that a Gore presidency would have been. PP40 also features interviews with INSOUNO.COM; The Fucking Champs' TIM GREEN; ELECTRICAL AUDIO; Anarchist theorist JOHN ZERZAN; MARCELLE DIALLO; VERSO BOOKS; MILEMARKER; and MATMOS. Articles in PP40 include a look at the WAR THE GOVERNMENT IS WAGING AGAINST THE NAVAJO INDIANS in Big Mountain, AZ, the PLIGHT OF C NUMBER PRISONERS IN ILLINDIS and a look back at WELFARE REFORM. 152 pgs.

PP41 February 2000 PUTTING DC ON THE MAP. PP41 takes a look at the history of the DC punk scene. From the influence of the Bad Brains to the birth of Minor Threat; from a violent

lan MacKaye to a not-yet-Rollins Henry Garfield. PP41 offers a revealing and detailed look into punk's past. Interviews in pp41 include: (INTERNATIONAL) NOISE CONSPIRACY, THE WIPERS, THE LDCUST, TNI BODKS, and DIY reggae pioneers RAS RECORDS. Articles in PP41 include a look at POETRY SLAMS and a devastating look at the BOMBING OF A COLOMBIAN VILLAGE. Additionally in PP41 is an inspiring talk with SUE MECCA, a 40-year-old punk rock mom. Plus, DIY tips, columns, reviews and much, much more. 144 pgs.

PP42 FINOING LIFE ON OEAH ROW Too often the story of state killing has been told through statistics—these unique conversations with three people who have been to death row (two are still there) bring readers beyond the numbers and into the cell itself. Interviews in this issue include: AMPHETAMINE REPTILE RECORDS calls it quits, SAMIAM, JETS TO BRAZIL'S JEREMY CHATELAIN talks about his solo work, filmmaker ANOREW OICKSDN, members of the powerful Seattle band THE GITS look back at the death of their singer Mia, and hip-hop culture mag BLU keeps it real. Also interviewed in PP42 is ALI ABUNIMAH, a young Palestinian activist who has helped turn the media tide during the latest Arab uprising in Israel. Articles in PP42 include a look at the growing anti-psychiatry movement—are drug companies convincing us we're sick in order to turn a profit. The revealing DIARY OF A PHDNE SEX WORKER lets readers peer into the world on the other side of the receiver. And PEDAL POWER chronicle's one woman's travels into the radical pro-bike movement. PP42 also includes all the columns, reviews, DIY and more that you've loved over the years. 136 pgs.

PP43 BECOME THE MEDIA PP43's 36 page cover section gives readers DIY tips on how to edit digital video, how to set up a low-power radio station, how to record audio, how to program HTML, how to build a web-based audio feed, how to shoot video, how to program Flash animations and much,

much more. In addition to those tips BECOME THE MEDIA also looks at the history of the INDEPENDENT MEDIA CENTER, who are setting the media world on end. BECOME THE MEDIA also features pieces about YOUTH MEDIA, the ZAPATISTAS AND TECHNOLOGY, NEWSREEL, and COMMUNITY ACTIVIST TECHNOLOGY. This issue is a must have for anyone interested in the new media revolution. Also featured in PP43 are interviews with radical historian HDWARO ZINN, rockers ROCKET FROM THE CRYPT (fresh off being dumped from a major label), "emo diaries" kingpin DEEP ELM RECORDS, author SHAWNA KENNY, who wrote I WAS A TEENAGE OMINATRIX, laptop rocker KIO GOG, religious zealots THE CAUSEY WAY, and the masterminds behind the PUPPET STREET PROJECT. Additionally, PP43 features all the stuff readers have come to expect over the last seven years: columns, reviews, and much more. 144 pgs.

PP44 THE WEAKERTHANS, one of the finest punk outfits to come along in the last few years grace the cover of PP44. This interview, performed by longtime Punk Planet contributor Larry Livermore, probes the mind of Weakerthans frontman JOHN SAMSON. In their conversation, Livermore and Samson go from poetry to revolution and back again. Truly an engaging and inspiring talk with one of punk's newest heroes. Also interviewed in this issue: MR LADY RECORDS is profiled through talks with the label owners and the artists they release; futuristic hip-hop duo DELTRON 303D; Pacific Northwest metal punk LORDS OF LIGHTSPEED; electronic music pioneer THOMAS DIMUZIO; HALF JAPANESE's legendary JAD FAIR; Pacific Northwest polit-rockers THE INTIMA; and \$5 CD label PLAN-IT-X RECORDS. Articles this issue include: UNIVERSAL RECORD'S ACQUISITION OF E-MUSIC—it may not sound all that exciting, but this business-section errata finds many independent labels not so independent anymore; reporter Heather Haddon looks at the ABUSE OF FEMALE PRISONERS IN AMERICA; new associate editor Chris Ziegler gives a hilarious behind-the-scenes look at SOUTH BY SOUTH-

WEST; PP investigates SLAUGHTER OF WILD BUFFALO IN MONTANA; and PUNKS REMEMBER JOE RAMONE in a moving tribute. All this, plus all the DIY, columns, reviews, and much much much more! 144 pgs.

PP45 features a special DOUBLE FEATURE cover story! This issue not only shines the spotlight on consumer-rights activist, 2000 presidential candidate, and all-around hellraiser RALPH NADER, but it also features an in-depth interview with uncompromising independents SHELLAC. Just for you, PP45 serves up a little double trouble—two cover stories for the price of one! Also interviewed in this issue: Latino punk entertainer EL VEZ; author PLESANT GEHMAN; analog electronic rockers MOUSE ON MARS; the new band to emerge from the ashes of Smart Went Crazy, THE BEAUTY PILL; queer zinemaker RUDY SCUTTER; filmmaker STEPHANIE BLACK; and independent country-rock and death-penalty activist STEVE EARL. Articles in this issue include a hair-raising look at THE YAZOD BACKWATER PUMP PROJECT IN THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA—these pumps, if built, could bring environmental devastation to this fragile region; BACK TO SHATILLA follows author Ali Abunimah as he visits a Palestinian refugee camp; and HDNOURAS: THE OTHER COLUMBIA looks at the US's secret involvement in the Honduran government's war against its own people. Plus columns, reviews, DIY and much, much more! 144 pgs

PP46 ART & DESIGN 2! This issue picks up where 1998's popular issue left off, by covering the known and unknown artists and designers working in and around the underground. As with the previous art & design issue, PP46 features FOUR LIMITED EDITION COVERS this time by artists JAIME HERNANDEZ (LOVE & ROCKETS COMICS), SHEPPARD FAIRY (OBEY GIANT POSTERS), NIKKI MCCLURE (Olympia, WA paper-cut artist) and JAY RYAN (Chicago, IL poster artist). Interviews in Art & Design 2 include Hernandez, Fairy, McClure, and Ryan along with filmmaker SADIE SHAW, designer ELLIOT EARLES, graffiti

artists JOCYLIN SUPERSTAR and LITTLE MISS ATTITUDE, San Francisco's not-for-profit PDND GALLERY, and CRASS collageist GEE VAUCHER. Articles in A&D2 include a profile of CHICAGO'S RADICAL STREET ARTISTS THE DEPARTMENT OF SPACE AND LAND RECLAMATION, an overview of DIY COMICS, a story about the MURALS OF CHICAGO'S PILSEN NEIGHBORHOOD, and a look at the PROJECT MOBILE/BOOKMOBILE PROJECT that is bringing zines and artist books into underserved neighborhoods. Plus reviews, columns, DIY and more. 168 pgs.

PP47 WAR SDNGS. Punk Planet #47 takes stock of the Bush administration's WAR AGAINST TERRORISM. Is it effective? Is it moral? Is it legal? We pose the questions that the mainstream media isn't asking to experts—the answers are eye-opening to say the least. PP47 dedicates an entire section to looking at the war from many different angles in interviews, essays, and articles. Sure to be controversial, PP47 pulls no punches in its analysis of the war. But it's not just bombs and tanks in this issue of Punk Planet—after taking an issue off to write about art & design, PP47 returns with tons of great music interviews. Interviewed in this issue are: classic queer punk TOM ROBINSON reminisces on the spirit of 77; Pacific Northwest stalwarts UNWOUND; the Indigo Girls' AMY RAY talks about her independent solo project; dyke punks THE HAGGARD take their bikes out for a spin; buzz band THURSDAY drops some knowledge; XBXX gives their last interview; and Punk Planet helps MINT RECORDS celebrate their 10 year anniversary. Also interviewed just in time for the Olympics: the BURN THE OLYMPICS collective—a secretive group of activists devoted to direct action against the 2002 Olympic Games. In addition to the war coverage, and tons of interviews, PP47 features reviews, columns, fiction, DIY and more.

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interviewed this issue:

George Burdi

The interview with Burdi done by the Southern Poverty Law Center referenced in the interview's intro is available online at:

<http://www.splcenter.org/cgi-bin/goframe.pl?ref-name=/intelligenceproject/ip-4s6.html>

Burdi's new band, Novacosm, which "brings together the club vibe of electronic trance with the rock sensibility of electric guitar" is online at: www.novacosm.com

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Demetria Martinez

Demetria Martinez is the author of *Breathing Between the Lines* and *Mother Tongue*. *The Devil's Workshop*, a volume of poetry, is being released by University of Arizona Press this spring. Demetria is currently working on *What Exactly is Olive Skin?*, a collection of essays to be published by University of Oklahoma Press.

For more information about immigration and border issues, visit the website of the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights at www.nnirr.org

Antibalas

For more information on Antibalas, stop by their web site at www.antibalas.com

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articles in this issue:

The Valley of the Shadow of Debt

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Getting in the Van

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Ecuador and the Almighty Dollar

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Kenneth Boyd's "The Crash":

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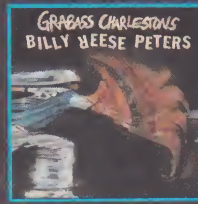
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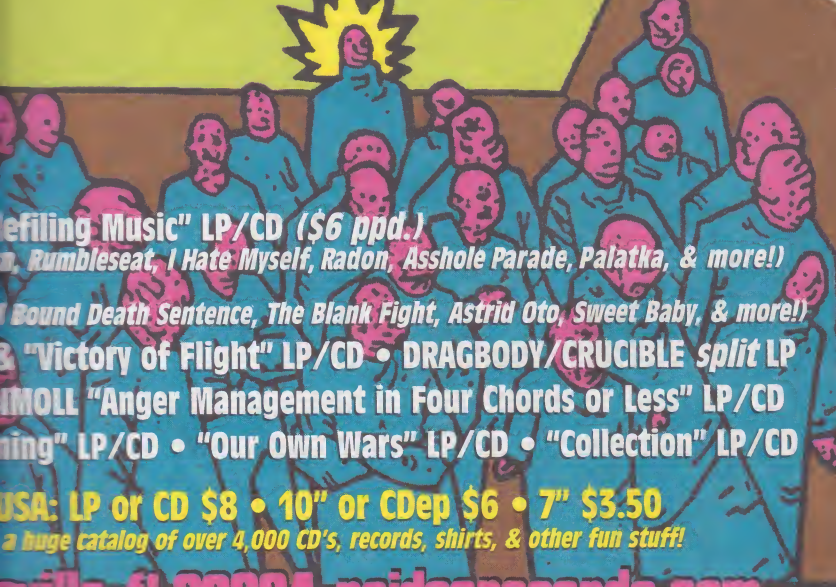


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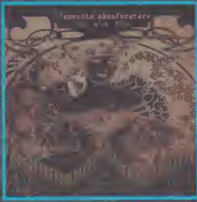
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punk planet 48

MARCH & APRIL '02

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