

READ

MAGAZINE

#24 THE WORST ISSUE

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INTERVIEWS WITH:

Aqua Teen Hunger Force
Sealab 2021 Space Ghost
Lawrence Arms
Planet Smashers
Division of Laura Lee
Madcap New Black
Reel Big Fish
Less Than Jake
Burnthe8track
Snowdonnas
Jordan Knight
Michael Ian Black
Keith Gordon
The MC5

PLUS!!

Bouncing Souls
Advice Column

Atreyu

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IN STORES JUNE 29TH 2004

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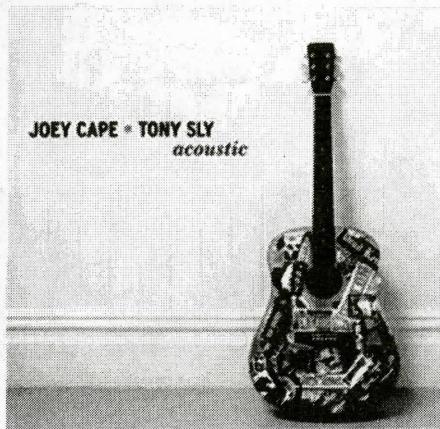
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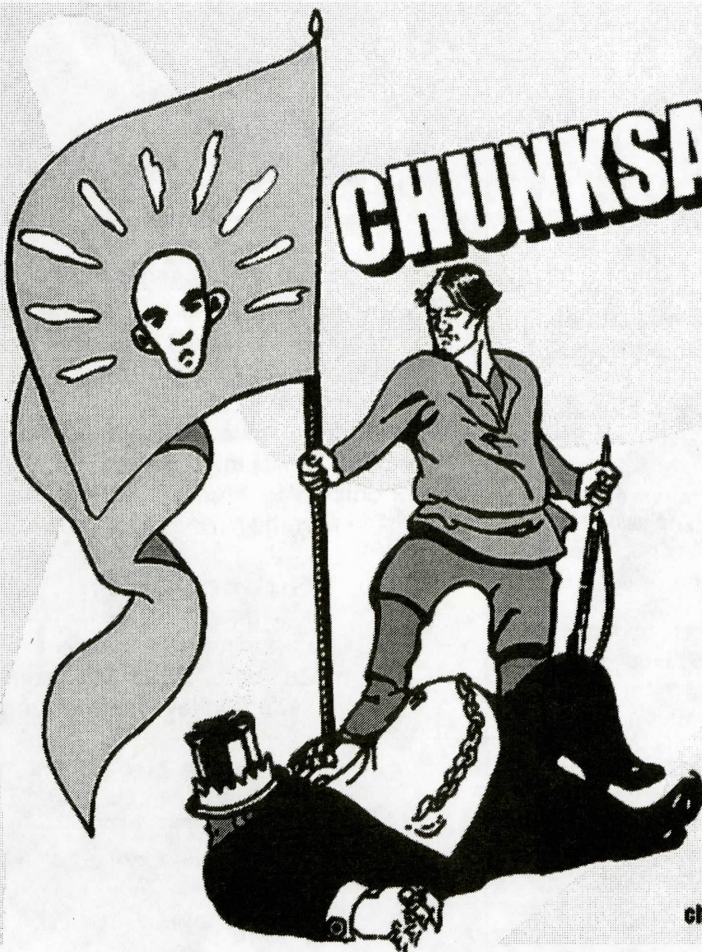


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Age of Ruin, Ann Beretta, Audio Learning Center, Belvedere, Break The Silence, Calico System, Casualties, Decemberists, Dick Dale, Down By Law, Facepuffer, The Faint, Giant Haystacks, Harkonen, The Kite-Eating Tree, Lagwagon, Laymen Terms, Leatherface, 'Lectric Chairs, Madcap, MC5, No Use For A Name, Pansy Division, Planet Smashers, Pretty Girls Make Graves, Vic Rice, The Riffs, River City Rebels, The Thrills, Thistle, The Toasters, Until The End, Useless ID

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Thank you: All the writers and illustrators, Jennifer, my family, the advertisers, readmag forum READers, Kittenpants.org, Reodorant.com, Haypenny.com Lowexpectation.com, Razorcake, Clint @ Tower, Shirley @ Marrakech, Mike @ Icons & Images, publicists/label peeps. Big shout to Bryan Kremkau.

Love Letters

Wanna become a READER? Write to us!

Adam! I just received READ magazine the other day and I have to say that READ is my new favourite mag! and believe me, I read a lot of magazines!! It's hysterical!!! Honestly, I am enjoying reading it soooooo much, I sincerely hope you sell tons and tons of copies and become a multimillionaire off of it. Yay for my new favourite magazine!! Oh yeah, don't print this, for your eyes only! Print it or die sucka. Thanks! -N.

Dear Adam, I have been distributing READS at music stores for years. I decided to give READ out to people at Gold's Gym. It's a HUGE hit. Everyone LOVES it. I have always been intimidated and shy around the big muscle head guys. They are now taking me into their "clique." They just LOVE READ. I dropped a pile off last week and within 2 days, they were all gone. I think I found a great following. Thank you for making me the popular girl at the gym. Love, Spankie

Hey Adam,
I was reading through your site, and saw you needed some publishing money. I figured I've been getting free READ's for years, and I had some extra cash, figured I'd return the favor. Use it for beer money, beer cash or beer dollars, whatever you want.
-Justin

Hey Adam, your review of Coheed and Cambria inspired me to pick up their latest disc, and I must say I'm really glad I did. Even though those dopes on the Toasters board didn't like it, I thought it was highly interesting and enjoyable.

Which leads me to the point of this e-mail. I've heard a lot of Coheed/Rush comparisons, but I've never actually listened to Rush. Can you believe that? The only time I've ever heard Rush, that I can remember, was in high school when my Physics teacher was listening to it after class. I asked him what it was, and he said: 'This be Rush.' He also had Rush posters on the walls (in addition to Van Halen, KISS, Albert Einstein, Batman and Marilyn Monroe). So I'm interested in checking out Rush. Do you have any suggestions as to where a curious bystander should start? I checked out their releases at the store, and there were practically thirty of them, it seemed. Everything from string tributes to Rush to other such fucked-up releases. Some pointers from the internet's most infamous Rush-lobbyist would be much appreciated!

Thanks a lot, and keep up the good work. I wish I could get my hands on a copy of READ - hopefully I can find one in Chicago when I visit next month!

--James L.

Hi! My name is Evan Johnson, and I live in Emmaus PA where none of these idiots have ever heard of your magazine. I think its great, and I'd love to distribute it around my town and neighboring towns/cities. I currently fit in the category of "You go to a really cool high school or college, and by handing out free READs you'll become super popular and attract more READers to READ and make us both super totally famous!!" I swear to God I wont sell any. My address is xxx. Get back to me if you have any questions.

Sincerely, Evan

Thank you so much for the back issues. They have kept me very entertained. I've lost my ISP so I can't go to the website or check my mail too often. I find myself instead wandering from free terminal to terminal in a vain attempt to stay connected and informed. My life on the lamb, public transportation and library internet access is only appeased by the select issues I have of Read in my backpack which keep me updated and can double up as a placemat for any scavenged food. Thank you, thank you, thank you....

~Brandon

Hey Adam,
Last night I decided to go to bed early, and I pulled out READ #22 to scan for a few minutes before I fell asleep. Not a good idea. I was up until 1 o'clock! I was laughing and gasping and crying and cheering while reading your great articles that chronicled your many jobs. Wow, man; it seems that you've lived a pretty full life already! I was kinda envious of your experiences, good and bad. But mainly, I was laughing hysterically. I especially loved the story which involved the mayor sending a mason operative to track you down at the bookstore. I read that one to my mom, actually, and she found it both "funny" and "awesome".
Later!

-Charles Thomas

Adam,
Happy New Year. I guess Alex Lifeson got his. I was reading the new Maximum Rocknroll in Borders and got a ton of ink on my hands, the newsprint sonofabitches. Also they called READ #22 "jockish", so naturally... I'd like to subscribe to your fratboy rag! [Enclosed] is an extra \$4 for postage or buy Bryan K the art guy a 7 layer burrito or something of equal or lesser value.

Thanks again, John V.

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READ reserves the right to print or truncate letters unless you specify not to reprint. Also, all typos and grammar/punctuation errors will be kept in cuz we're lazy.

I'm saddened by what you wrote on Antioch Arrow. That was some really crazy influential shit. The guys were in LA a lot while I was growing up and they set this crazy tone for meshing style and music together. They had a really neat look and presented themselves as a whole package. It was rad to see and hear them play. I remember one time evacuating a basement after they had fired off a fire extinguisher for no apparent reason. They really paved the way for bands like the blood brothers, the bronx, 400 blows and others I think. Unfortunately while I sit here and write it sounds like one of those things that if you missed it the first time around chances are you wouldn't be able to catch it on the second round.
Okay, hope you're well!
Fernando

Hey Adam,
See, I sent money. I am devoted! Ha ha, whatever yo. I'm really bored—can't you tell. And I went to the forum but no one was there. I'm waiting for the new issue. Excited. The old one is in the magazine rack in my bathroom. I'm sure that everyone who sits on that toilet has looked at it. It's either READ or GQ and I don't think that the people who use my bathroom are that sophisticated to read GQ. Not that READ isn't sophisticated or anything. You might be wondering why I have GQ. It's my brother's. I share a bathroom with him. Anyways, my friends seemed to really like all the copies of READ that I handed out to them. Hopefully when the next issue comes out they will pick up a copy. I do check out the Tower Records on Wabash every now and then to see how many copies they've sold. The last time I went in, there were no copies left. So that's good. Anyways, I'm reading A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius by Dave Eggers. In it he talks about how he had a magazine, Might. It sort of reminded me of you. But of course, he sounded pretty much like a loser in his endeavor. And you are no loser at all. Well, it's time for me to attempt to do some sort of homework for my class tomorrow. Sincerely, Christy C.

HATE MAIL

IN REGARDS TO A FAKE ARTICLE ON READMAG CALLED THE 10 WORST SKA MISTAKES

an open letter to mr. adam lieblich:

oh no, some "ska circles" included skinheads! skinheads were the first non-jamicans to listen to ska. as for fascist boneheads, i've never known any to be ska fans, and if they were, they're dumb fuckin posers that don't know their roots.

the 11th biggest ska mistake: writing that damn article. fuck smashmouth. it's kids like me that are keeping the ska scene alive, not big radio bands. don't pigeonhole the youth, please. the young bands that still play ska should get props, even though lots of em suck. but it's better than scapegoating to fuel your angst for the downfall of the once-prominent ska scene. i agree with some of your points, but you sound pretty full of yourself, as if you were the ska dictator and your empire crumbled due to some rebel factions of kids who started listening to swing.

we should learn from our past to ensure a healthy scene in the future, but a scene is built on positivity, not negativity. thank you.
-aaron

IN REGARDS TO AN ARTICLE WE PUBLISHED THREE YEARS AGO ABOUT DALE EARNHARDT

Re: YOUR DEPLORABLE ARTICLE ON DALE EARNHARDT, SR. & NASCAR

If there is any intent at humor, cause, or purpose, in the article, in which you have chosen to malign the name of Dale Earnhardt, Sr., and to label all fans of "NASCAR," according to your specific view of us as a whole, you have missed in all counts with the dribbling rhetoric that is rendered in that inane patchwork of pathetic diatribe. I call your attention to this link to refresh your mind as it is not likely that you are very long on memory either:

<http://www.readmag.com/Columns/dale.htm>

Your wretched opinion of "NASCAR" fans is yours and should be kept to yourself. Your ignorance shines too brightly when it surfaces among individuals that have the ability to read. For all that you find, so deplorable about Dale Earnhardt, Sr., just be assured that at the time that you too shall leave this world, you will not have to deal with the fact that grief for your passing will be shared across the nation. Most people aren't likely to ever even know and the people that you bash in your article aren't likely to be very sympathetic as result of your passing. But that is the basis of your rant. You too, are simply jealous, of what you fear and would be too gutless to attempt. You should sharpen your crayons before sending out any more of that heartless rubbish, aimed at the millions of good people that enjoy the sport of "NASCAR" auto racing. Pay especial attention to the color

yellow as it is the most suitable for your senseless rhetoric and personal vilification. Yours truly, Randy S. M.

A few words for you. KEEP YOUR THOUGHTS AND OPINIONS TO YOURSELF. You must not know anything about racing NASCAR to be exact. No I was not a fan of Earnhardt. But I am a fan of Dale JR. It is people like you who give our sport a bad name. You should be TARRED and FEATHERED. SHAME ON YOU.
—Patti H.



Two great tastes that taste great together.

First off -- I never heard of your magazine (if there really is one), and the writer's name is obviously fictional -- as is the whole premise of this charade. I am only writing this because "someone" may believe the foolishness that you are generating. The only thing I do know about this whole mess is -- IF I see the name "Dogg" on an article -- I will know enough not to read it!!! And I do not fit ANY of your characterizations of a NASCAR fan!!! Larry H., Lockport, NY

Subject : Numb Nuts DE column

1. Earnhardt drove a Chevy dipshit.
2. The NASCAR drivers will always have more money, get more pussy and be cooler than you Nate Dogg, get over it.
3. Regarding the simple minded (NASCAR fans), every family has one. Even yours, I'm sure. Thanks! Michele

"Dale Earnhardt was NOT, I repeat NOT, an American hero. If Dale Earnhardt is indeed a champion, he is truly Champion Of The Dumb Asses."

And you must be the HEAD OF THE DUN* A** committee stupid I wish that you were...well never that mind, To US NASrcar fans Dale is and always will be a ICON in his sport! You have never watched a good race if that is how you feel. I understand the constition and it says freedom of speach and Press but I wish you were not a MEMBER of the press. Your words were not only insensitive to the family and Racing world but to a man the will be a BETTER

MAN than you ever will be! You should not even count yourself as a man because I bet you would never sy those word to Teresas' and any member of the Earnhardt Family!
-S. M. Dade City, FL A EARNHARDT FAMILY SUPPORTER FOR LIFE!!!!!!!

Subject: earnhardt article is a disgrace to journalism

I am a journalism student at the Boston University College of Communications. I write for the student newspaper and consider myself to have a future in journalism. It is people like you who give journalists a bad name. You ruin our future. The Dale Earnhardt story, among others, failed to adhere to any of the loose guidelines of journalism. Your article was pure fiction. Even in an opinion piece a writer must employ quotes, facts, and ethics. Yes, ethics. Mind you there is a fine line between opinion and idiocracy. You do not walk that line but swin in the deep pool of stupidity. Perhaps you write such rubbish because you yourself are white, uneducated trash who never earned a college degree and who will never work at a real paper. It is a disgrace to find your racial, non-sensical words at my local stores. I will use the power of my pen to destroy your magazine. Look for articles from me in the Boston University Daily Free Press and other newspapers. Prepare for your magazine to be removed from the Boston area. Sincerely, A Real Journalist

This is just a tiny fraction of dozens we received. Hate mail archived at:
<http://www.readmag.com/Columns/dailemail.htm>

SKATARDED

In reference to an article written by Adam Lieblich (How to tell if a ska band sucks just by their name), I believe he has overlooked a few "minor" bands. Lieblich states: **Bad Ska Puns. Means that the band sucks. I makes sense: A band name reflects their music. Accordingly, a bad ska pun means the band is making a mockery of ska.** First, I am not quite sure what "I makes sense" actually means, and second, although many ska bands names are fairly cheesy, let's give an exception to this "mockery of ska" band name, for example the ORIGINATORS of SKA, The infamous "Ska"talites, whose name gave the true meaning to Ska. Also, The Scofflaws, who are most likely the most talented Ska band of the 1990's until today. Or, Skavoovie and the Epitones, who ska-groovy sounds will move anybody, from ska to jazz to swing. **Further, Lieblich states: Using "Los" instead of "The" when the band is not Spanish means the band SUCKS.** Personally, I take offense to this. A writer this ignorant should not be paid or available to post nonsense on the internet. True Ska, traditional ska, was originated in the Carribbean and Central America, therefore spanish may be included from time to time, regardless of race of nationality. —Sgt. George Devon

LetterFromTheEditor

Yesterday was quite possibly the worst day I've ever had.

It began when I meant to wake up at 11, but instead found myself up at 10:45. I couldn't go back to sleep, but I should've stayed in bed anyway given what fate had in store for me.

I eventually got up and took a shower that was only lukewarm, and my breakfast of quail eggs and chateaubriand did not completely satisfy.

My day only got worse.

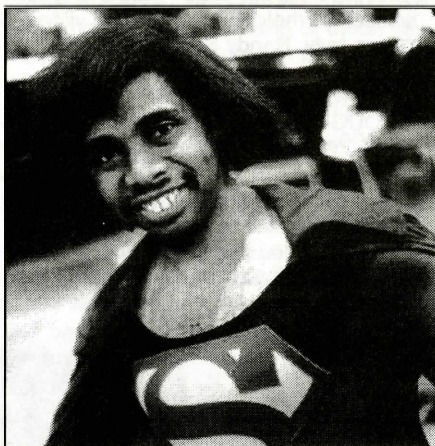
My car was a 40 minutes late, forcing me to wait impatiently on my veranda. I let the driver have it, but I doubt he could even speak English. As such, we got to the offices of READ Magazine, Ltd. later than I intended, around 1:30 pm.

I pride myself on being a great overseer of this magazine. I'm able to get what I want out of dozens of people without having to pay much, by promising advancement and higher wages "next year." I inspire hope in these little worms. Imagine my surprise then when the maggots refused to work.

"We can't work in these conditions—it's freezing!" whined our film critic.

"My daughter is sick! Please let me take her to the hospital!" complained the illustrator.

And so on and so forth. It took a good hour of threatening before they returned to their cubicles. And believe me, they'll see that hour docked from their paychecks.



I was so disturbed by this display of disloyalty that I decided to take a walk. Well, one thing led to another, I might've blacked out a bit, but a prostitute was dead and worse, my Armani was spotted with blood. (Thankfully, not mine.)

The cops who came to the scene of course recognized me from my "Letter from the Editor" picture, and didn't detain me long, though I unfortunately walked away a few Andrew Jacksons short.

But that didn't help the fact that my suit was ruined. I called my driver and told him to fetch me another, and while waiting, I went to a bar and played some keno (won only \$1,200).

The driver told me the office had called—they had a surprise for me. "What now?" I thought. I went back to the READ building, and the same gaggle of idiots who wasted my time earlier had bought me a large cake. Apparently it was "Boss Day." A couple of them apologized to me profusely: don't be angry at us, you're a great boss, we can't afford to look for another job in

this economy, yadda yadda yadda. They told me the cover artist had instigated the rebellion, so I promptly fired him and told the rest to get back to work. Enough time had been wasted today.

The cake had white frosting—disgusting. I threw the whole thing out.

I had a meeting to go to downtown. Miramax was interested in developing an epic film about my life. The meeting was on casting. Harvey wanted to cast Drew Barrymore and Julia Stiles as my love interests, but my girlfriends—Christina Ricci and Wynona Rider—wanted to play themselves. The meeting ended poorly: I threw Harvey down a flight of stairs. It was just another stone in the meditative rock garden that was my worst day ever.

The stress from the day was so bad, my dinner of braised duck and apple martinis didn't alleviate it. And later in bed, I couldn't orgasm for a third time, no matter how hard Christina and Wynona tried. And they tried everything. Finally, I had to kick them out so I could get some sleep.

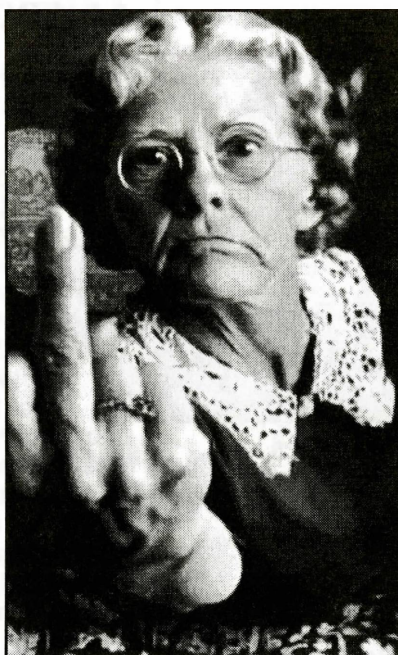
Truly the worst day, and I was glad when it was finally over. It's strange how difficult life can be, how the fates seem to work against you sometimes. But each day is different and brings something new, and because I have a good heart, I always find ways to be accepting and content with this miserable little planet we're stuck on.

LetterFromTheEditor'sMom

The editor of READ Magazine (who, incidentally, is my brilliant, adorable, cute, wonderful, thoughtful, generous, friendly, funny, terrific, creative, artistic, musical, entertaining, etc., son Adam) asked me to write an article for this "Worst" issue. He asked me to make it funny, so that left out my stressful job, my herniated back disks, my leaking roof, my heel bone spur, and my cat's constant puking.

What else is there, you ask? Well, that was a toughy for me, too, until I watched Star Trek: Next Generation. Man, I can't believe what klingon Worf went through when his cutie (Mrs. Worf) got phased out with a phaser. There were so many exclamations of "Goggghh!" and "Kerplahh!" and "Aghghoogh!!". I could feel his pain. It sounded like he was constipated.

Wow, constipation. One of the worst feelings is not being able to go to the bathroom. At school, I can only use the facilities for three minutes in between classes. If I can't go at that time, then I'm up shit's creek. I've been eating boxes of Metamucil cookies because they taste so good, but they don't do a damn thing for me, except make my stomach talk in foreign languages. So, in order to go to the bathroom I have two options: First, change my diet and second, exercise. Yuck! Those are the two worst things. Who wants to eat celery and lettuce when I could have chocolate cake? Thinking of that delicious oozing chocolate frosting dripping down the sides of a



thick, fudgery brown confection kinda makes me think of... hold on a second... I think I can... I can!

I'm back! Success!

The second worst thing on my list was exercising. So after working all day, trying to pee between 9:36 am and 9:39 am when I get my first break, screaming at apathetic and/or hyper kids, coming home to Spankie puking, laundry, making dinner, paying bills, marking papers, and THEN... I'm supposed to exercise? Gimme a break!

You mean to tell me that walking on a treadmill for 30 minutes is going to loosen up my hard, dry pebbles? Is riding a stationery bike for 28 minutes going to stimulate bowel contractions? Is stairclimbing for 15.2 minutes going to help me excrete feces?

Whatever happened to good ol' chocolate flavored Ex-Lax? Man, that stuff is delicious. I could eat a whole package and it wouldn't even move me. Not even a little bit. But, I have to do something fast because I'm starting to develop bad breath, body odor, coated tongue, forked tongue, fatigue, gas, bloating, headaches, hemorrhoids, indigestion, insomnia, obesity, and varicose veins. Other than that, I'm fine.

I don't know what's worse – giving up chocolate or being constipated. It's really getting to me. I suppose that I will really have to change my lifestyle. My only exercise is walking from the bedroom to the kitchen and back again (total: 33 ½ steps); the only water I drink is when I'm taking a shower; and the only fruit I eat are the ones in Starbursts. I'm tired of cutting the cheese, blowing the foghorn, and making music in my sleep. From now on, it will be whole grains, cabbage, brussels sprouts, citrus fruits, prunes, figs, and barley juice. I'll throw caution to my wind!

LetterFromTheDesign&LayoutSlave

Trying to design READ takes lots of time, but that's because the Editor-in-Chief makes me stay longer than usual and design it. And it still looks like a piece of shit. But that's not my fault, Adam is a controlling dictator who changes everything I do. Adam is such a cruel and unappreciative bastard for making me design this god awful magazine. If I don't design or illustrate something great, Adam takes out his whip and flogs me till my back is covered in blood. And I'm not even sure this will make the magazine because Adam doesn't use material that's negative towards him. Just look at his mother's "Letter from the Editor's Mom" section. Adam wrote that all, just building himself into something he's not. You know what Adam really is: a vicious, unintelligent, tiny dick human being that doesn't have any friends and has a shitty magazine. Adam, YOU SUCK!

—Bryan Kremkau



READ Miscellany

Crap that doesn't fit elsewhere.

Passion of the Christ: Top 25 Jesus Pick-Up Lines

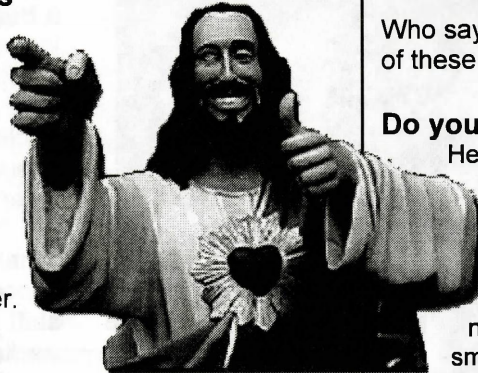
- 1) Want a good seat at my crucifixion?
- 2) Can I nail you to a cross? No, then how about in a bed?
- 3) Wanna find out what's under these robes?
- 4) Nice sandals, wanna fuck?
- 5) Want a glass of "water"?
- 6) Hey baby, I can walk on water.
- 7) They call me Jesus H. Christ. The H stands for Hotstuff.
- 8) You know, my dad was the creator of the universe.
- 9) You know, someone wrote a book about me.
- 10) My nickname is Superstar
- 11) God damn, it's hot out here. Why don't we take off our clothes?
- 12) I can kill people with lightning. Oh wait, that's Zeus.
- 13) Wanna find out about my real passion?
- 14) People always shout my name in bed, now you can have the real thing
- 15) C'mon, I died for your sins. Show me your tits.
- 16) Don't worry about your hymen - I've got healing powers!
- 17) You've got a friend in Jesus.
- 18) You're pretty hot for a leper.
- 19) Hey, want to go to a stoning together?
- 20) Wanna put the body of Christ in your mouth?
- 21) The meek shall inherit my sperm.
- 22) I promise to come back some day.
- 23) I know Mel Gibson.
- 24) Let's go out for supper, I promise it won't be the last
- 25) Jesus Christ, you're hot.

—Bryan Kremkau & Adam Liebling

Bonus: Straightedge emo pick-up lines

1. Wasn't Elliot Smith's death so tragic? Let's weep.
2. I would flirt with you, but I respect women too much.
3. Isn't smoking so disgusting? Even when I turn 18 in 6 years, I still won't do it!
4. Who needs alcohol when I get drunk just looking at you?
5. Does that X on your hand stand for X-tremely Beautiful?
6. Not drinking sure makes me feel morally superior! Let's go beat up the small kids in the pit!
7. It's a good thing we have hardcore music; otherwise we'd be Mormon!
8. God, you're sexy. I just want to grab you and cuddle and talk about feelings.
9. Hey, let's ditch our parents and find a place to make out!
10. I lost my teddy bear. Will you help me sleep tonight?

—Bryan Kremkau & Adam Liebling



ADVENTURES IN JOB HUNTING!

Who says the job market sucks? Why, just look at some of these job postings I found today on Craigslist:

Do you love tea? Want to learn more?

Here's what I'm looking for ideally: An honest hard-working person who is fascinated by tea, with an outgoing personality to assist small business owner with sales, day-to-day operations, and shipping. I need someone enthusiastic with ambition to learn as much as possible about internet wholesale/retail business operations, as well as small business development. There may be some travel involved, and the chance to grow with the business is yours, if you're trustworthy and genuinely *want it*. This is a 2 day a week position, but I'm expecting that to climb to full time within 3-4 months. Health insurance may be made available to full time employees. If all goes well, you can find yourself moving up to managing a retail outlet, perhaps venturing out to start your own franchise, or possibly teaching, researching, or buying tea on a large scale. Whatever direction your heart takes you within the realm of tea, I will definitely encourage it!

Tea? Be still my heart! I have forever longed to work with tea, especially in the sales and shipping departments. That's great I can move up the tea ladder, but I'm happy so long as I'm surrounded by the aroma of Earl Grey. Not the tea, but the actual Earl. He's so fragrant!

Part Time Person To Hand Out Flyers

We are looking for a part time person to hand out flyers by the train stations along the W & N lines in Astoria Queens. Your compensation will consist of an hourly rate of \$5.00 an hour plus commission on all sales from that day. If you are good with talking to people and can sell our products, your earnings can be substantial.

If I were good at talking to people and selling products, I wouldn't be handing out flyers underneath a filthy subway underpass for 5 bucks an hour.

Long Island publishing company seeks peple

Long Island publishing company looking for peple for temporary promotional work from March 2nd till March 12th between 4pm and 8pm, not including weekends. For those of you who have a great attitude, outgoing personality; consider this a 2-week job interview for possible long-term employment. E-mail for more info, resumes preferred.

For Misspellers Monthly?

20 dollars singer 2-13: morning in my house

come a wake up my girl with your voice- must look sexy and clean with a smile and a kiss on the hand-ladies only- due to the fact she is a lesbian

Women get the best jobs.

Ways Women Can Scare Men At Dinner

Discuss how you think syphilis has an unfairly maligned reputation. Ask him if he thinks calling it "silly-fis" would help its image.

Ask repeatedly if he told anyone where he was going that night, how long it would take people to realize he was gone, and if any bloodhounds already knew his scent.

Point to your breasts and say, "The doctor did excellent work with these...even better than on my penis."

Mention that your 12 older brothers are out at the shooting range celebrating your dad's early release from prison.

Halfway through dinner, politely excuse yourself by explaining that you have to go powder your nose... and take a massive dump.

Indignantly note that the entire IDEA of vibrators disgusts you, especially when rats are so warm, soft, and easy to train.

If he proposes, say, "Thank goodness, now I can really let myself go."

Start sculpting your mashed potatoes and say, "this means something..."

Ask if he's ever dated a woman with a prehensile tail, then quickly drop the subject.

While at dinner, keep asking the waiter/waitress, "wanna make out?"

—Joe Reodorant
(more at reodorant.com)

Top 50 Worst Bands Ever

50. Nirvana 49. AC/DC 48. Outkast 47. Weezer
46. The Misfits 45. Black Sabbath 44. Operation Ivy
43. Elvis Costello 42. The Lambrettas 41. Bosstones
40. Dropkick Murphys 39. Dead Kennedys 38. Metallica
37. Esquivel 36. Beastie Boys 35. Minor Threat 34. Yes
33. TFUL 32. Coldplay 31. KISS 30. Rolling Stones
29. Pizzicato Five 28. English Beat 27. The Strokes
26. Guns N' Roses 25. Queensryche 24. Gorilla Biscuits
23. Green Day 22. Led Zeppelin 21. Crass 20. Vaselines
19. Jethro Tull 18. The Specials 17. The Kinks
16. The Pogues 15. Queen 14. The Vandals 13. Primus
12. The Police 11. The Cure 10. Bob Marley
9. Miles Davis 8. The Who 7. The Jam 6. The Clash
5. The Pixies 4. The Beatles 3. Madness 2. Ramones
1. Your Favorite Band Here

Worst-Case Scenarios

...of typically good things

You win the lottery!

Bad: You owe the government half of it.

Worse: You owe your credit cards the other half.

Worst: You get hit by the Clearinghouse Sweepstakes van and die.

Your girlfriend lands the job of her dreams.

Bad: It involves a lot of travel...

Worse: ...with her male boss...

Worst: ...who happens to be Colin Farrell, and her job is to rub hot oil on his throbbing penis.

You get a great deal on a new television.

Bad: It's haunted by poltergeists who draw your children into an evil dimension.

Worse: The remote doesn't work.

Worst: It only receives ABC.

Your boss invites you out to lunch.

Bad: ...to fire you...

Worse: ...in front of all your coworkers...

Worst: ...while showing hidden camera footage of you masturbating into the creamer.

You pass your physical!

Bad: Except for the wild case of herpes.

Worse: And your herpes have gonorrhea.

Worst: But you've never even had sex before.

You get to spend the day with Mel Gibson.

Bad: He won't shut up about Jesus.

Worse: He won't shut up about Maverick.

Worst: He won't shut up about Transylvania 6-5000, and he wasn't even in that shit.

You gain the power of flight.

Bad: Your community looks even shittier from the sky.

Worse: You're scared of heights.

Worst: You get raped by a condor.

You get to meet God.

Bad: It's because you're dead.

Worse: He thinks you're a dick.

Worst: You're not staying long.

Your girlfriend agrees to a threesome.

Bad: She brings home a man.

Worse: It's your father.

Worst: You enjoy it.

—Adam Liebling

WORST

by James Lambert

It's funny that the theme of this issue is The Worst Issue and yet I can't stop thinking about the best times of my life. Sure, I've had my share of depressing and humiliating experiences including suffering severe intestinal dysfunction after my parents split up when I was in 2nd grade, urinating in my sweat pants after my teacher didn't believe that "it was an emergency", actually owning Vanilla Ice's *To The Extreme*, and even being personally insulted by CNN's Tucker Carlson (thankfully not for owning *TTE*).

But for all these painful experiences, for all the letdowns and embarrassments, I can't help but think back to the most wildly entertaining year of my life – 8th grade. That year paradoxically contained both my most enjoyable experiences of tomfoolery and my worst acts of egoism.

I was always an introvert. I've typically been a pretty gentle, reserved soul, and this has usually resulted in me having only a handful of friends at a time. I went into 8th grade with this humble demeanor, but, by God, I left it as a monster. Well, a cute monster. Maybe the Cookie Monster.

Now, being a dorky kid who was more into listening to Bon Jovi and watching terrible reruns of *Lost In Space* and the original *Star Trek* than playing football or going to parties, it was a huge culture shock to go from being a loner to being the most popular kid in my class.

I'm still not sure how it happened, but after the first few months the more social kids took a liking to my offbeat sense of humor. I began going to parties and engaging in a hyperactive social life. Every male in my class (8B) became my best friend (the girls were the smart ones – they saw me for the dork that I really was), and soon I shed my humility as my friends became more like fellow gang members, or even my goons.

For example, I once made some sarcastic remarks to a guy with a broken arm, and I was subsequently smacked in the neck with this gentlemen's cast. A few members of my "posse" (as I eventually called my friends) saw this, yelled "Hey! That's James!" and gave cast-boy a pretty harsh slamming into a row of lockers. Instead of fending off jerks like I had to in the past, I now had a small army of strong-arms to do my dirty work for me. Cool!

I was crowned with a new title: 'Big James.' A friend of my brother's called me the more appropriate 'Big Ego' instead.

Of course, I was eating up all the new popularity and power. School became something to look forward to, as the bond shared between the couple dozen guys in 8B made previously arduous classes like gym fun. (Our teacher, Mr. B, gave up on supervising us towards the end and we mostly played an ultraviolent variant of soccer.)

Towards the end I took it too far—I became to expect constant glorification and ego-boosting. I was no longer the dork who drew 12-panel comics of Scotty gaining weight and losing motor functions on the *Starship Enterprise*. I was more like a skinny, white version of Mr. T. Without the jive. Or the Mohawk. (Oh all right, I really wasn't like Mr. T at all.)

One of the most remarkable, hilarious, and sickening moments of that year happened during a 100-minute double block of Math. We had a sub with a strange accent (Belgium? Luxembourg?) who was terribly inept. Probably her fatal flaw rested in the fact that she said she was "too tired" to write on the board and instead dictated the notes in a confusing and agonizingly slow manner. Later, when we had to do an assignment, she perched over our desks and curved her long neck – and, I swear – made a ridiculous noise akin to a drooping chicken.

We stopped working and instead decided to laugh over her "chicken neck" and return to being complete asses. Chicken Neck snapped and told us to get back to work. She already had a ridiculously long list of names on the board to report to our teacher Mr. R, so the general consensus was that we had nothing to lose and that we should try to get *everyone's* name on the board – especially mine (teachers liked me, so if my name was up there, the sub would not be believed, it was reasoned).

So suddenly, kids just started yelling out random shit in her direction.

"Burn!"

"Death!"

"James! I don't want your answers! Let me work by myself!"

"Electric chair!"

"Lethal injection!"

"CHOKE ON SMALL LEGO PARTS!"

This was some seriously twisted shit. Chicken Neck was taken aback; she tried to shut us up one by one, but it was hopeless – our collective will was unstoppable. A loud, synchronous chorus of "burn!" formed. I have never seen someone so flustered – and terrified – before or since.

And then the unexpected happened. My friends Matt and Rob converted the chant of "burn!" to a chant of my name. I don't know if you've ever witnessed 30 thirteen year-olds pound their desks and chant your name in something reminiscent of a Thuggee ritual, but it's quite the experience, let me assure you. The chant of "James! James! James!" was deafening. My jaw dropped and my eyes bulged as even the indifferent girls and the geeky guy from Hong Kong joined in with passion and intensity.

The look of confusion and terror amplified on Chicken Neck's face. She must have thought the class was channeling the energy of some demonic god.

"Who is James?!" she shrieked.

The bell rang and cut the Satanic chant short. As we all fled the room with hollers of glee, I noticed Chicken Neck shaking in what appeared to be a nervous breakdown. The teacher from across the hall rushed in to console her.

I felt terrible. I didn't start the chant, but I sure enjoyed it. But I should have known better – my mom's a substitute teacher, and I've seen how teaching a bunch of brats can affect someone. I didn't feel so smug anymore, and it dawned on me that I had grown drunk with power and status, and it was pretty unlikely that I would remain in such a state for the rest of my school years.

In the years since, my demeanor melted to its natural equilibrium and I never duplicated that amount of attention or egoism. In high school, some of the guys in 8B didn't even make eye contact with me in the hallways. Every once in a long while, someone calls me 'Big James', and I look back upon that year with a big smile. Being a jerk, though, just isn't my nature.

How to Make a Mixtape...

Daniel B. Field

I've been faced with this before. There's a girl who thinks she's punk wants me to make her a mix tape to see if we're compatible. But she's ugly, and I feel like being vapid, so instead of coping out, I make the world's most unlistenable mixtape.

For the first time, I will reveal my secrets. But this is no FOX special, this is reality. Follow my lead and make the best worst mixtape ever.

Hypothetically, in the age of pirating everything, you *could* take the easy way out and make a mix CD, but that wouldn't show the ugly punk girl how much you truly don't like her. Instead, tape over your old Alanis Morissette album (face it, everyone had one), so as to not worry about having to fill 90 minutes. Instead, you're faced with the indomitable task of finding completely unbearable music.

But wait, you ask, what if she actually *likes* the songs I put on the mixtape? Well then, just tell her you can only be together if you can hump her leg in public. And if that doesn't scare her away, email Adam (editor@readmag.com), I'm sure he'll have some tricks.



...for a Girl You Don't Like

Side One

1. Metal Machine Music, Pt. 2 – Lou Reed (15:53)

Perhaps one of the most irritating pieces of music of all time. If you are strapped for time, you can just fill the entire tape with all four tracks on the album of the same name. I actually haven't heard them, to be honest, but come on, even Lou Reed himself said years later, "Well, anyone who gets to side four is dumber than I am."

2. My Pal Foot Foot – The Shaggs (2:31)

Funny in its patheticness, this song is a perfect example of outsider music, which, much like outsider art, is pretty damn useless. The short story of the Shaggs is that they were three teenage sisters in the late 60s whose father pushed them to play, even though they clearly couldn't. But they recorded anyway, and what we have here is the result.

3. Jazz Snob Eat Shit – Naked City (0:24)

Awesome enough in its name alone, this is the best example of jazz-metal I could find. But wait, it's supposed to be art.

4. Be A Man – Macho Man Randy Savage (3:00)

And I was hoping this would be good. The saddest thing, even beyond the lyrics, is that Macho Man is really trying to rap, but instead sounds like an SNL parody of himself.

5. Share – Cousin Oliver (2:44)

Ah, nostalgia. This song reminds me of when I was thirteen and actually thought these guys were credible musicians.

Leave the rest of side one blank. Make her listen to silence.



Side Two

1. Any song from the 'Canadian Idol' CD

If you thought American Idol was bad, you haven't heard singers with even less talent butcher songs that the Americans already sang.

2. Aaah-Ah Yawa Em Ekat Ot Gnimoc Er'yeht – Napoleon XIV (2:10)

This is the B-side to the 1960s novelty single 'They're Coming To Take Me Away Ha-Haaa!', wherein the already obnoxious song is played backwards. It may be funny in theory, but these 45s were actually in jukeboxes, and this song has been known to clear out entire diners when played. Hideous.

3. Pure Massacre – Silverchair (4:58)

Back when Kurt Cobain was only dead for a year, some Australian kids thought they could still capitalize on not having to bathe. And if it weren't for singer Daniel Johns' dreamy eyes, they would still be playing for dingoes and wallabies.

4. (Untitled) Track 13 [from Fugu 1] – Fugu (1:13)

I know everyone thinks they can be the next Brian Wilson by being unique and innovational, but for god sakes, whose idea was it to record crying babies? I wish at least there would be a slapping sound at the end of the track to create silence, but then again, I'm a dreamer.

5. Tip-Toe Through The Tulips - Tiny Tim (2:26)

This song will not work if she is a ukulele-playing midget with a weird falsetto voice.

6. Whole Lotta Love – Dread Zeppelin (4:34)

In theory, this might not have been so bad: a reggae Led Zeppelin cover band whose singer tries to imitate Elvis. But then again, in theory, Keith Richards should have been dead in 1982.

To fill the remaining time, just put as much of Hall & Oates' H2O as you can fit.

And most importantly, name your tape the "Love Mix". And seal it with lettuce.

Worst of Everything

—Adam Liebling

People

The Yankees

Rooting for the Yankees is like rooting for Bill Gates to hit the lotto. (Sorry if you've heard that one before.)

The MTA

The privilege of riding at snail's pace in a urine-soaked, filthy, uncomfortable, overcrowded schizo-panhandler haven known as the subway now costs \$2 per ride. The MTA got away with it by lying about a deficit (they had millions in surplus) and not giving a subway rat's ass about the public in any case. That was made clearer by the decision to eliminate dozens of ticket clerks, so stations can be unsupervised and once again run rampant with crime. This is just one of the many ways in which the NYC government and its billionaire mayor nickel and dimes its struggling citizens in the wake of crippling depression. MTA, you are bad, bad people. I weep for your souls.

Bloggers

No one cares about your boring life, and no one cares about the same news links we already saw on Fark.

Williamsburg Garage Rockers

I haven't seen this many rich people try to look so ragged and fail at it since, well, the punk scene. You get no street cred for living in Brooklyn, you retarded rich Jerseyites. Your immaculate "moppy" haircuts, expensive "thrift shop-style" retro clothes, Thai restaurants, and shitty contrived music don't impress me. You couldn't learn how to rock out even if it took all your parents' money. Go do your expensive drugs and drive up rents and push out working families elsewhere.

Arby Mitt

What the fuck? First of all, the Arby logo is a cowboy hat, not a mitt. Secondly, who thought an annoying talking mitt would be a good spokesman for anything? Fuck you, you Hamburger Helper wannabe mutant fuck.

Courtney Love

Nuff said.

Fans of The Darkness

How about instead of pretending to be into fake butt rock, you listen to real butt rock instead? Most of those hair bands are still around, sadly enough.



Friendsters

No one wants to admit that they only do Friendster to impress others with how many friends they have, and to cheat on their significant others. "It's a great way to keep in touch with friends!"

Yeah, because that's tough to do in the age of phones, cells, letters, emails, text messages, instant messages, private messages, faxes, message boards, and forums.

People scared of SARS

You have to be a complete moron to be scared of a bad cold. SARS killed a dozen people, mostly the elderly. The flu kills tens of thousands in the US alone every year. Put down the fucking doctor mask and walk it off, you pussies.

People Who Like Christopher Walken

Sure, Christopher Walken is cool, but let's put things in perspective. He's not exactly Jeff Goldblum. Get over it.

Michelin Tire Guy

As if I'm not traumatized enough by that Arby thing, I have to contend with this freaky ass tire monster that looks like the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man with all of the evil and none of the cute. I will never buy tires again.

People

I just don't like people.

Music

RIAA (Raping Independent Artists Anally)

Blah Blah Blah. Actually, I kinda like the RIAA because they piss people off. And I don't like people.

Radiohead

Critics only like this band because they don't want to seem like they "don't get it." Stop pandering and go with your gut feeling—these guys are even worse and more pretentious than Sonic Youth. They have fooled so many critics that they could release an album of them tuning their instruments and still get gushing, breathless rave reviews. And they have.

Emo

Life sure is sad when you're making money to travel the world in a band, sing like you're constipated, and have sex with underage girls. Emo fans make me wish the draft were reinstated.

Punk

George Orwell would've been proud at today's usage of the word "punk". Today's punk is tomorrow's shampoo commercial.

Metalcore

Metal for people who don't know how to play metal. This shit was cool in like 1987 when it was called Cannibal Corpse.

More Crap I Hate**Children**

Plain and simple, children suck. You completely end your life as you know it by having one, and by the time they're old enough to appreciate it, you have to use your retirement funds to pay off their college.

NASCAR Fans

If you want to see a car wreck so badly, go to a Courtney Love concert.

Food Poisoning

What the hell is up with food poisoning? Food is supposed to be good for you, but one slightly old McNugget will make you spray your innards all over the place. We're so evolved, we can blow up the moon with the push of a button, and yet we're undone by some microscopic bacterium.

The Smell of Condoms

Speaking of technological advancement, why can't we create a sturdy latex condom that doesn't smell like a combination of balloon and ass?

Cell Phones

Anyone who owns or operates a cell phone is an asshole.

THE WORST LIST

Tara Meehan

When my fearless leader, Adam Liebling, told me that "The Worst..." would be the theme of this issue, I had a difficult time deciding on which worst I should write about. The worst day, the worst date, the worst job, the worst sex... Unfortunately, I have many worsts to choose from. Then it occurred to me while watching the worst porn, the name of which aptly escapes me: I would compile a Worst List. While I highly doubt my list will be the only one of its kind to grace the pages of READ, my worst list will be one of if not the worst of the bunch. Here goes:

Worst Lie I Ever Told: "Honey, it's OK. I have a hard time with orgasms."

Worst Lie I Was Ever Told: "Honey, it's OK. I have a hard time with orgasms."

Worst Letdown: The split second after your first kiss with someone you're dating. Most times it's like, "What the fuck was that?" or "What now?" or "What was I thinking?"

Worst Decision By an Actor With Little to No Range: David Duchovny leaving The X-Files. Stellar career choice.

Worst Beer: Sam Adams Light.

Worst Day of the Week: Tuesday. By Tuesday, there is no escape. You are far enough removed from the weekend that it is a distant memory and far enough away for it to be a tease.

Worst Queer Eye Guy: I'm going against the grain on this one. It's not Jai. At least he's cute. It's Ted. It's not that he's a geeky food and wine guy. He's a geeky food and wine guy who specializes in bad food and wine. Who the hell makes tofu from scratch? Who considers Sutter Hell a top shelf vino?

Worst Talk Show Host: Ryan Seacrest. Why is he relevant in anyway, shape or form?

Worst Holiday: St. Joseph's Day. Basically, this is the Italian communities' jealous, lame response to the greatest of all saint related holidays, St. Patrick's Day.

Worst Unnecessary Necessity: The cell phone

Worst New York Met of the Last 20 Years: Tie between Vince Coleman and Roger Cedeno

Worst Subway Line: The G. It takes forever to arrive and nobody has a clue where it starts from or ends up.

Worst Non Drug Addiction: The Missed Connections (or MC) section of Craigslist. Postings range from truly pathetic (MC with my elementary school girlfriend) to completely bizarre (MC with my pancreas). It's fantastic.

Worst Elementary School Nickname: Apparently, a boy named Paul Smear attended grammar school the same time as me. His nickname: Pap.

Worst Offenders of Television Show Overhyping: HBO. Ok, The Sopranos, Six Feet Under and Curb Your Enthusiasm are great but for Christ sake I don't need to be told every five minutes on the network's propaganda commercials that I couldn't possibly live without seeing them. HB... O shut the fuck up already!

Worst Part of Waking Up: Not having Folgers in my cup.

Worst Thing to Happen to the Sadomasochism Industry: The Passion of the Christ. It's cheaper than paying for a dungeon and you have more time to take in the pain.

Worst Girl on Girl Porn Staple: What's the deal with the tongue on tongue flicking? Nobody does that and it's so not hot.

Worst Exploitation of a Cultural Phenomenon: The phenomenon is karaoke. The exploiter? Whoever the fuck came up with Movieoke. Movieoke is a new hipster craze where people go on stage and recite their favorite lines from movies. Great. More incentive for idiots to say, "You lookin' at me?"

RAELIANS FOR READ

by Joe ReOdorant (www.reodorant.com)

A cult known as the Raelians announced (and keep announcing) that they've successfully cloned a human baby.

The Raelians' religion is centered on the belief that humanity was cloned from aliens 25,000 years ago. Scientists have expressed doubt that the baby is actually a clone, while politicians and ethicists have described the act of cloning a human as morally reprehensible.

The big issue is why anyone chose to form a cult centered on cloning – which is reproduction without sex.

If I were founding a cult, I'd want to have as much sex with my followers as possible. That's one of the main selling points of forming a cult, along with making buckets of money and coercing people to dress funny.

Most people join cults when they're young and nubile, right? Ever see footage of the women in the Manson Family? HOT! All the slaughtering they did was wrong, of course, and it must have seriously cut into the time they had for fundraising.

My cult will be a model of efficiency! Any time not spent having sex with me will be spent raising money for me.

You're probably thinking, "Hey Joe, how does making people dress funny fit into your cult?" Glad you asked! You see,



The Cult.

proper cult attire accomplishes two things – it amuses me AND it aids in fundraising.

Let's say you see two women walking down the street - one is wearing an attractive blue suit; the other, a frilly taffeta robe, Viking horns, and pink combat boots mounted on springs. Which outfit better conveys the message, "I'm crazy - give me money to go away?" That's right!

Now, just because I'm heterosexual, doesn't mean I won't welcome men into my cult. Men are welcome, too - especially those with lots of money or boot-making skills.

I really look forward to starting my cult. I've always wanted to be my own boss, and I'll bet being worshipped as a god will totally rock! We'll also feature excellent dental coverage.

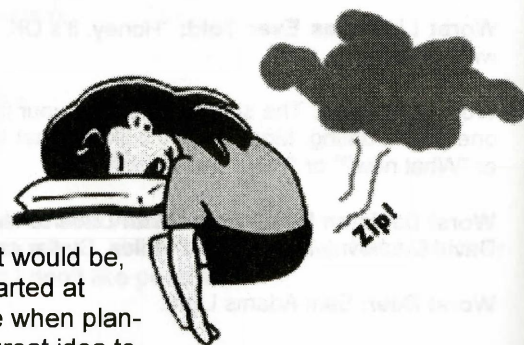
I'm still trying to think of a good leader-name. Do you think "The One Whose Penis Holds the Truth" is taken?

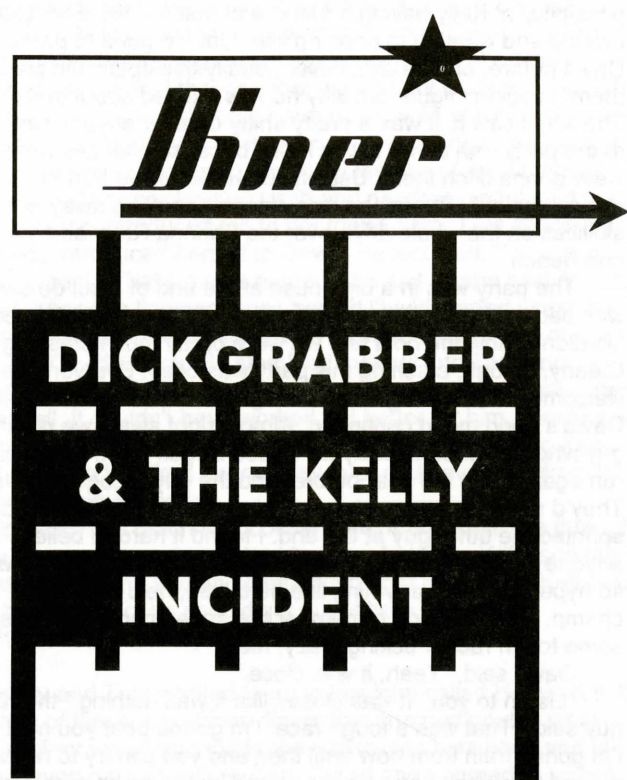
CLASS IS A BREEZE

By Nick S.

My worst-of story actually begins with another worst-of scenerio. That would be, the worst decision made by a high school graduate entering into college. It started at freshman orientation. It's natural for a freshman to lose sight of the big picture when planning their class schedule for the upcoming semester. I thought it would be a great idea to start school at 8:00 in the morning and finish by 11:30 am each day. That would give me the entire afternoon to do whatever I want. It really seemed like a brilliant plan. What I did not plan on was staying out late and partying every day of the week, or having friends hang out in my dorm room that just won't leave. As you can see, sleep was going to be a problem. Unfortunately for me, I was not one of those students that would skip class if they did not feel like going. No matter how tired or hung over I was, I always went to class.

With that said, my worst-of story, is my worst farting experience. Most people that know me, know that I fart a lot and am proud of each and every one. That is, when I want other people to hear them. Now, back to the story. I am sitting in my Accounting 101 class (8:00am), in my normal spot in the back of the classroom, as far away from the teacher as I can possibly sit. I am on minimal sleep, but that's OK because I took two years of accounting in high school and this class is a breeze. So, I nod off only to be woken up by a LOUD fart. With my head still down on the desk, I came to the realization that it came from me. No big deal. I will just go back to sleep. A couple of seconds go by and I had another realization. I WAS IN CLASS! I had a quick decision to make. Do I keep my head down and pretend it didn't happen or do I look around to pretend to see who did it? I decided to lift my head up and look around, only to find everyone looking at me!





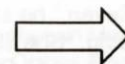
By Sean Carswell



I went to high school with a guy named David Dickgrabber. True story. Actually, his last name was Dickgraber. One "b." The last two syllables rhymed with "neighbor" or "labor." And when David pronounced it, he didn't pronounce the "ck." To hear him introduce himself, you'd think his name was de Graybor or something. His pronunciation did absolutely nothing to deflect the ridicule, though. Let's face it, if you're one "b" away from being a dickgrabber, as far as this cruel world is concerned, you're a dickgrabber. This was high school, after all. The place where David had to suffer was roll call on the first day of class, when inevitably one of his teachers would call him Dickgrabber and everyone would laugh. Or, even worse, the teacher would just read out, "David Dick..." and stop, horrified, then stutter, "...Dick... Dickgrab... David Dickgrab..." until David raised his hand and accepted the name David Dickgrab just to stop the giggling.

The thing was, I never giggled. Not because I'm above dick-and-fart jokes. Believe me, I love a good dick or fart joke as much as anyone, but David was my friend. He was in most of my classes and we usually sat by each other. This meant that I'd sat through the dickgrab ritual far too many times, and I had a front row seat to David's wincing and grinding teeth most of the time. So I kept my mouth shut and didn't laugh, even though it was funny to watch a middle-aged woman stand in front of a classroom of teenagers and stutter about grabbing dicks.

Plus, there was the Kelly incident.



The Kelly incident occurred during the summer between our junior and senior year of high school. I'd met a girl named Kelly out at the beach one evening after I'd gone surfing. I was just sitting on my board when she walked past me and smiled. I smiled back and watched her walk away in her little pair of cutoff shorts and little white tank top. After a few seconds of that, I went back to watching the back end of the sunset and watching my buddies stumbling and crashing on the waves. I had a whole rogue crew of friends who I surfed with in those days. We weren't the surfers most people picture when they think of a crew of surfers. We were all too skinny or too fat, too full of acne or too full of insecurities, too clumsy or too spastic, too slump shouldered, too poor, too something to be too cool. But what the hell? The waves never cared and we were out there all the time. Every day, if we could make it. David Dickgraber wasn't part of the crew, though. As far as I know, he didn't surf.

So anyway, I was watching those guys and waiting to see what they were going to do that night when Kelly walked by me a second time. I called out to her, "Hey, you. Get a job."

She stopped walking. "What did you say?"

"Get a job," I said a second time, even though I didn't know why I'd said it the first time.

"Why on earth would you say that to me?" she asked.

I couldn't explain, so I just came clean. "I couldn't think of anything to say," I said, "but I wanted to talk to you, so I just said the first thing that came to mind."

And who would've guessed it, but that stupid line worked. I had a towel and unfolded it for her to sit next to me. She sat down. We chatted about nothing, but hit it off, anyway. After about fifteen minutes, a few of my friends came out of the water. This turned out to be a bad thing, because my friends were geeky like me and because a girl like Kelly talking to one of us was such a rare thing that they didn't know how to act. They started saying all kinds of stupid things to her, I guess trying to flirt but going about it all wrong. She split almost as soon as my buddies started talking. Luckily, I'd already gotten her phone number.

The next night, I'd called her. She didn't feel right just going on a date with a stranger, so she invited me to meet her at a party in Cocoa Beach. I told her I'd be there.

I lived in Merritt Island, which was one town over from Cocoa Beach. I knew I wouldn't know anyone at the party, so I wanted to talk a friend into going to the party with me. This way, I'd have someone to hang out with and not look all desperate just waiting for Kelly. The thing was, I didn't want to invite any of the rogues who I usually hung out with because, well, they'd already pissed off Kelly once. So I thought of Dickgraber. He was a polite guy. He wouldn't spoil my chances with Kelly. Besides, I hadn't really articulated it this way in my mind, but somewhere subconsciously, I knew that there was an invisible fence around David, what with his name and all, and that fence had shocked him so many times in the past that he wouldn't try to step in on Kelly and me. I called him up and he had nothing going on that night. He was up for a party in Cocoa Beach.

I swung by his place at around eight o'clock. David was waiting outside on the front steps. A bunch of his brothers and sisters were out in the front lawn, playing tag. I stopped my truck and looked across the fenced in yard. As I sat there in the cab of my truck, a weird thought crept across my mind. I wondered this: if I walked into that yard and yelled out, "Look at all you little dick-grabbers," would they descend upon me like so many piranha on a cow that slipped into the Amazon? I didn't test the theory. I didn't even leave my seat, because David was out of the yard and ready to go before I had a chance to.

As soon as I started to drive away, I said, "Damn, David, how many brothers and sisters do you have?"

"Seven," he said. "And my mom's pregnant with one more."

I said, "She still hasn't figured out what causes that, huh?"

"Fuck you," David said. But he was in too good of a mood to

be genuinely mad. He started asking me all kinds of questions about Kelly. Well, not really about Kelly. He asked about the possibility of Kelly having a friend and that friend being good looking and wanting to hook up with him. I'd gone to parties with David before, and he was never usually this optimistic about them. I couldn't figure out why he was excited about this one. The way I saw it, it was a pretty shitty deal for anyone who went to the party with either me or Kelly, because chances were, we were gonna ditch them. Usually, David would've had this kind of cynical outlook. But no, he was chipper, chatting away with possibilities on the whole drive over the Banana River and into Cocoa Beach.

The party was in a big house at the end of a cul de sac. It was packed by the time we got there, which was good because we didn't know the host and we were pretty much crashing. Clearly, though, crashing this party was okay. Everyone seemed welcome, or at least ignored enough to not feel unwelcome. And David's good mood continued. Almost right away, we ran into a guy who ran cross-country for Cocoa Beach High. David had run against him the year before, and the guy recognized David. They'd run neck and neck for most of the race, but David out-sprinted the other guy at the end. I found it hard to believe that anyone could outrun this Cocoa Beach dude because he was so hyper. If he ran anything like he talked, he'd be a state champ. He said, "You remember that race, man? That was some tough race. Fucking crazy, man."

David said, "Yeah, it was close."

"Listen to you: 'It was close,' like it was nothing," the runner guy said. "That was a tough race. I'm gonna beat you next year. I'm gonna train from now until then and you can try to run with me but you won't have a chance and just to make sure I'm gonna start feeding you beer right now." He started to walk away, but two steps into it, he turned back and waved for us to follow him. "Come on, fellas. The keg's this way."

David caught up to him and they talked more about running. I followed one step behind, looking around for Kelly and wondering what had gotten into David. He was never this social.

We hung out and chatted with the runner guy for a while. He talked like mad and David kept up with him. I spaced out on the conversation a few times. For one thing, I'd had to work that day, picking up construction trash and hauling it to the dump. That's what I did for most of the summer. It paid for the gas in my truck and school clothes and what not, and I was also saving up money to have my truck painted, because the original bed had rusted through, so I'd bought a new bed from the junkyard, but the new truck bed was black and the rest of the truck was brown, except for the front fender, which I'd also gotten from the junkyard, and it was white. Anyway, I'd been out in the sun, lifting trash, loading it into my truck and a trailer, driving out to the dump, driving back, thinking about seeing Kelly again and wondering how it would all go down. I was kinda glad that David and the other dude were doing enough socializing so that I could just stand there and feel the breeze off the nearby ocean and wonder where Kelly was.

I did this for a while. David didn't talk to the runner guy that whole time. He met some of the runner guy's friends and made friends with them and they introduced us to other groups of people. It was like David was a new person. He was funny in a happy way.

In the meantime, more and more people started to show up to the party. It overflowed out onto the front yard and into the street. One keg dried up and some guys passed a hat and intimidated enough people to fill up the hat with money. They took the money and came back with three more kegs. Two of them were dry within thirty minutes. The hat went around again. The guys took off again. More beer was purchased. I didn't have to know anyone at this party to know that it was gonna get ugly early.

After we'd been at the party for about an hour, Kelly showed up. She did have a friend. The friend was a girl and she was good looking. Kelly and her friend walked right up to David and I just as David finished telling a group of strangers a joke about an ant and an elephant. Damn, I thought, that worked out well for David. The first impression this girl would have of him was of him making everyone laugh. I kinda wished it had been me telling that joke and making that good impression on Kelly instead of just standing around, tired from picking up trash and daydreaming. I said hi to Kelly and she introduced me to her friend Tara. Tara shook my hand and introduced herself to David. He just said, "I'm David."

She said, "That's a nice name." And just as she said it, these two fat, offensive linemen types behind David started wrestling with each other. The locked up and twisted and slid and crashed right into David's back. He stumbled forward into Tara and would've knocked her over but he recovered in time to catch her as she fell. It couldn't have worked out better for him. I could see it. Damn, I thought, I wish someone had knocked me into Kelly and I could've knocked her halfway over and saved her from falling and become a hero.

Instead, in a much less cool encore, a drunk girl ran through a few groups of people, pushed her way between Kelly and me, and started puking into an azalea bush right behind us. Kelly said, "Maybe the four of us should get out of here."

It was a pretty easy sell.

Kelly and Tara wanted to go to this joint called Herbie K's. It was one of those retro-fifties diners that charged double what a normal diner would and made the waitresses hula hoop and always stayed packed with tourists. David and I agreed to go because we wanted to be anywhere Kelly and Tara were.

I rode with Kelly and let David drive my truck, partly so I could get some time alone with Kelly and partly so that I could separate myself from my brown truck with the black bed and the white fender. It worked out for David, too, because that old trash hauling Datsun pickup was better than the vehicle he had, which was none.

Kelly had a little Toyota sedan. It wasn't too fancy but everything inside it looked new and shiny and it had only 27,000 miles on it, which was about 150,000 fewer than my truck had. The inside of the Toyota smelled like spearmint gum. Kelly offered me a piece. I hated gum because I figured that, if I was gonna do all that work chewing, I'd want some food to end up in my belly. But I took the gum anyway, just in case it was a hint. Kelly took a piece, too. She put it in between her lips, which were glazed with pink lip gloss. I couldn't take my eyes off of those lips. Kelly said, "I think Tara likes your friend."

I said, "Uh huh," because I didn't want to talk about that. I wanted to talk about me and Kelly.

"What's his name again?" Kelly asked.

"David."

"Just David?"

"He doesn't like to go by Dave," I said. "He says that all the Daves he knows are assholes."

Kelly chewed her gum a little as she thought about this. I glanced over my shoulder to make sure the black, white, and brown truck was okay. David and Tara were right behind us. Everything seemed in order. Their heads and hands were moving and the truck stayed between the white line on the right and the dotted white line on the left.

Kelly stretched out her fingers. Only the palms of her hands were on the steering wheel. Her fingernails were long. They were painted the same shade of pink as her lip gloss. She gripped the steering wheel again. "Well, maybe you and me and David and Tara can double date sometime."

This was more like what I wanted to hear, so I loosened up a little.

Herbie K's wasn't really too bad. There was an empty booth for the four of us and I got to sit on the same side of the booth as Kelly and I could smell the artificial strawberry scent of the shampoo that she washed her hair with. David and Tara seemed to be getting chummy, which was cool because that meant that we could have two conversations going on in the booth. I got a chance to talk to Kelly about music. She was really into New Wave still, even though most people had gotten past that a few years earlier. Kelly didn't give up on it, though. She still all of her Devo cassettes and her Elvis Costello cassettes. She even had the Vapors record—LP not 45—and the Go Go's first record. She listened to them all the time and loved them. I teased her about it, but really, it was way better than my last girlfriend who only owned one cassette and it was the Dirty Dancing soundtrack. I asked her if she liked the Ramones, and she said they were just okay, which, again, wasn't great but was better than my last girlfriend who said that the Ramones looked like cavemen in leather jackets. So things were looking promising on my side of the booth. I wasn't paying much attention to David and Tara's side of the booth, but there did seem to be plenty of giggling going on there.

After about fifteen minutes, our order came. We'd just ordered french fries and sodas, mostly because I knew that David didn't have a job so he wouldn't have any money to pony up, and we couldn't ask the girls to chip in. So I faked like I wasn't really hungry and just wanted fries, and everyone agreed. Anyway, the food came and we all ate a little and chatted with each other a little, except for David, who really dug into the fries. Kelly said, "David, do you have any brothers?" David nodded and chewed on a mouthful of fries. Kelly said, "That's what I thought. Whenever there's more than one boy in the family, all the boys learn to eat, like, super fast."

This slowed David down. He said, "I have five brothers."

Tara said, "Wow! Five?"

"I have two sisters, too. And another sister's on the way," David said.

"Eight kids already and you're mom's pregnant with another one?" Kelly asked.

"Yeah," David said, grabbing a handful of fries. "I guess she hasn't figured out what causes that."

Kelly and Tara laughed, but I was too stunned that David was stealing my joke. Not only stealing it, but getting a laugh out of it when all I got out of it was a "fuck you." I looked at David with a big smile on his face and a clump of fries in his hand and curly-haired Cocoa Beach girl sitting next to him, and it finally occurred to me what was going on here. For one of the rare times in his life, he wasn't a dickgrabber. He was just a David. A David like the guy who slayed Goliath. Or a David like a good, normal American kid who ran cross country and won sometimes and made friends easily and had fun at parties and went to retro-fifties diners and made pretty girls laugh and didn't grab his dick any more than anyone else who had a dick to grab. It had taken me all night to figure out what was different about him, and I finally realized that the electric fence was down. I felt a little pride for the guy.

That pride lasted about twenty seconds, and then turned to shit when Billy and Darren walked into Herbie K's.

A year earlier, Billy probably would've been hanging out with me. At least he would've been one of the geeky surfer guys who said all the wrong things and bumbled through trying to flirt with Kelly on the beach that one evening. But sometime during the summer between our sophomore and junior years, Billy had decided to go out for the high school football team, and since he sucked at football but was really tall, he started taking a lot of steroids. The more he took, the less his old friends hung out with him and the more time he spent with other roid boys and bullies like Darren.

Billy and Darren walked down the aisle between Herbie K booths and saw David and me and two pretty Cocoa Beach

girls. Apparently, Billy and Darren didn't think it was fair that they'd done all the weightlifting and suffered through all those football practices just to get girls and they didn't have dates, but a couple of goofy guys like me and David got to hang out with Kelly and Tara. The roid boys stepped up to our table, looked at David, and said, "What's going on there, Dickgrabber?"

David looked at me. Billy and Darren and Kelly and Tara all looked at David. I looked at everyone but him. Tara wrinkled her forehead in that unspoken question: why are they calling you a dickgrabber? Billy and Darren leaned down on the linoleum-topped diner table. The basket of fries slid down towards them. I grabbed the basket and pushed it down by the condiments. Everything was silent around our table except for the jukebox playing Sam Cooke's "Twistin' the Night Away." David's silence surprised me because usually he wouldn't put up with this shit. Usually, he jumped right back at guys like Billy and Darren, because one thing about being named Dickgrabber is you get a lot of opportunities to learn how to fight. David had learned well. But, on this night, David didn't fight at all. Maybe he felt like he'd already lost.

Billy stood up and folded his arms to make them look bigger. He wore a white t-shirt that was two sizes too small. He said to Kelly and Tara, "Which one of you are dating the Dickgrabber?"

They didn't know how to respond. Darren let out a goofy, awkward laugh. I said, "Hey Billy, are your balls still shrinking?"

"What the fuck did you say?" Darren asked, leaning in close to me.

I didn't shy away. Not because I was especially brave. I wasn't. I'd just noticed that two cops were sitting at the counter, about twenty feet in front of me. I'd also smelled all the booze on the roid boys. I knew that Billy and Darren wouldn't fight me when the cops were that close and it would be that easy for the cops to run the roid boys in for underage drinking. So I said, "Remember, Billy? You told me last summer that the steroids were shrinking your balls."

"Fuck you," Billy said. It was loud enough to turn a few heads around us. The cops were watching us closely. This made me even more arrogant.

Darren leaned in so that his face was only a couple of inches from mine. I leaned back in the booth and said, "Are your balls shrinking, too, Darren?"

Billy pulled on Darren's shirt. Darren stood up. "You're dead," he said to me. "And you, too, Dickgrabber." Darren grabbed a couple of fries and threw them at David. Billy started to walk past the cops and out of the diner. Darren turned, too, and started to leave, but not without saying to the girls, "I hope you don't fuck these losers."

What happened next happened as predictably as you'd imagine. The girls asked what it was all about and David explained his last name to them and Tara acted like it didn't matter but her face told another story and she suddenly claimed to have a curfew that was only a half-hour away and she really had to get home before she got grounded. Kelly was full of shrugs and sorries, but we got the bill and I paid and we got out of there pretty quickly. Kelly asked me to call her. I promised I would. Tara gave David a phone number. It may have been her real number, but I knew David and knew that look of pain in his face and knew he wouldn't call. The girls took off in their shiny little Toyota and David and I got back into the junkyard Datsun pickup and headed back for the island.

I drove out of Cocoa Beach in silence, but by the time I crossed the bridge over the Banana River, the silence hung too

heavy and I wanted to break it up. I said to David, "The worst thing about it is that no one ever says anything funny when they make fun of your name. Like, if your name was David Sphincter, the bullies could say, 'Ah, pucker up little camper.' But there's not joke that you can make about Dickgrabber other than," I dropped into my best Neanderthal voice, "huh-huh, you grab dicks, huh-huh."

David didn't say anything. I looked over at him. He stared out the window of the truck. He was grinding his teeth. A little muscle on his jaw popped up and down as he did this. He stopped grinding long enough to mumble, "Not now."

And I was left with nothing to say to him. We'd already talked about it all: about the lack of original dickgrabber jokes; about the cruel bastards at Ellis Island who would prey on illiterate immigrants by taking a perfectly normal name like David's ancestors had and turning it into Dickgrabber. We'd talked about it being a silly thing to be made fun of for because, shit, everyone who has a dick grabs it. We'd talked about him turning eighteen and being old enough to change his name, but he didn't want to change his name because, goddamn it, it was his name and a name change would be a slap in the face to his mother and father and five brothers and two sisters and one little sister brewing in his mom's belly. I'd gone through all the conversations with David and he'd gone through them even more times with more people and beating it into the ground wasn't going to do anyone any good. And I thought, if David were black and Billy and Darren had attacked him for that, at least David would have black friends who had had to deal with similar shit and could empathize with him. Or if they'd attacked him for being poor, he could've talked to me about it and I would've known exactly where he was coming from. But there is no unfortunate-name support group. And I couldn't possibly know what was going on with the guy. After all, my name was as normal as could be. No one would ever make fun of me for it. All I could do was have sympathy for David. Even my sympathy sucked because it was more like pity, and the last thing David needed was pity from a guy in a junkyard truck who spent his days hauling trash to the dump. So I just kept my mouth shut and drove the rest of the way back to the Dickgrabber residence.

As I dropped David off, he mumbled something like, "Thanks for driving." He got out of the truck and opened the fence into his front yard. I knew he'd rally in a few days. He'd be back to his normal self: cynical and tough and ready to kick anyone's ass if they fucked with him. In a few days, he'd take care of Billy and Darren on his own terms. For the time being, though, the guy was just so bummed, and I didn't know what to do. So I left him there, with his family of dickgrabbers and their search for a new way to take on this cruel world that's hell bent on finding any excuse to drag a person down.

Sean Carswell is the co-editor of Razorcake (razorcake.com), and owner of Gorsky Press, home of a ton of great independent books and collections (gorskypress.com).

The Worst of Rush

To say that Rush could release a less-than-perfect song is heresy, and I would rip out the tongue of anyone who would even suggest such slanderous, disturbing flapdoodle.

But Rush does have a number of incredibly shitty songs. Maybe they would be considered amazing songs if, say, Nickelback re-recorded them, but this is Rush we're talking about here. And Rush have set a standard of excellence that is unparalleled in the realm of art, even above Thomas Kinkade. "Great" isn't good enough for the masters of the truly awe inspiring.

So here it is, the worst songs by Rush:

Rivendell (Fly By Night)

Perhaps Rush at their dorkiest, which is saying a lot, this slow ballad paints the landscape of Rivendell, home of the elves in Lord of the Rings. The lyrics are painful: "Sunlight dances through the leaves / soft winds stir the sighing trees, etc.," and the music never has the patented Rush Kick™, which you expect at the 40 second mark, and then again at 30 second intervals. Unfortunately, there is no sonic blast of ROCK after a slow, acoustic introduction, but the lameness of acoustic guitar, flute, and Geddy's hobbit-esque voice continuous throughout the short eternity of 5 minutes. This song is the sole reason why Rush fans couldn't get laid in 1975, and Rush wouldn't redeem themselves in terms of odes to literary mythical paradises until 1977's "Xanadu."

I Think I'm Going Bald (Caress of Steel)

Sandwiched between the awesomely rocking "Bastille Day" and the lovely memorable ballad "Lakeside Park", is this horrifying, shuffling, bluesy tune full of crap. The standard Zeppelin riffing and lyrical immaturity might have been tolerated on their debut album, which featured much standard Zeppelin riffing and lyrical immaturity, but there is no excuse here on their third album, especially with Neil Peart behind the pen. I Think I'm Going Deaf.

The Twilight Zone (2112)

Marring an otherwise perfect album, this dopey ode to the sci fi tv show is an exercise in listening stamina. The verses and bridge aren't bad, but the chorus—from Geddy Lee doing the "nur nur nur" theme song to the cheesed out lyrics—is like something out of a bad Twilight Zone episode. Like the one in which the greatest band on the planet suddenly starts to suck with an embarrassing ode to the Twilight Zone. I only thank God (aka Neil Peart) that Rush never covered Star Trek.

Red Lenses (Grace Under Pressure)

Drab, minor key ditty that is gladly forgettable. The percussion is intricate and cool, just as it is on another otherwise forgettable tune, "Mystic Rhythms", and during the P/G tour, Neil Peart would actually bust out his drum solo in the midst of this song. I find it amazing that they would even play this song live. The lyrics seem like Dr. Seuss wrote them ("I see red / it hurts my head / it must be something I read"), and for all the nifty percussion, the song lacks punch. The other problem is that this song comes before the last song "Between The Wheels," another largely drab, minor key song (and way more synth-heavy than it needs to be). BTW is better, but after "Red Lenses", you tend not to bother with the rest.

Middletown Dreams (Power Windows)

Rush aren't very good with the Squeeze-ish day-in-the-life descriptions of average joes. This song follows a few poor shlubs who wish for something grander, but how they can always hold onto their dreams. Can I have some macaroni with that cheese? I suppose it's a decent song, but it doesn't make my dick hard.



Tai Shan (Hold Your Fire)

I used to like "Tai Shan". It's a pretty, poetic song about Neil Peart being affected by the haunting beauty of China, but somehow I got the image of Neil sitting around in a kimono, which itself is hauntingly beautiful. That, and the cheesy faux-Oriental melodies has turned me off to this once mighty mini-epic.

Neurotica (Roll The Bones)

"You just don't get it." You're right, I don't.

Stick It Out & Nobody's Hero (Counterparts)

I've spent most of my entire adolescence being told I was gay for liking Rush. There is nothing wrong with being gay, but there is also nothing gay about thinking man's hard rock! Then Rush had to go and release these two songs: "Stick It Out," which I suspect is about giving head ("Stick it out / Don't swallow the poison / Spit it out"), and the much better but equally socially embarrassing "Nobody's Hero" ("I knew he was different in his sexuality / I went to his parties as the straight minority / It never seemed a threat to my masculinity / He only introduced me to a wider reality.") Hey, I'm glad you've been introduced to a wider reality, but some of us are still in high school, you know. Although the song is somber and philosophical, it doesn't go over well in the locker room.

Test For Echo (Test For Echo)

I don't mean the song "Test For Echo", I mean the entire nefarious album. For the first time in 40 years, Rush puts out a thoroughly awful album. Even the instrumental sucks. But some songs have decent aspects to them: the swirling guitars in "Driven"; everything but the annoyingly repetitive "Half the world" lyrics in "Half the World" (jeez, it's almost as bad as the lyrically repetitious "The Big Money"); the upbeat percussion and jangly guitars in "Totem". Also, the songs "Time and Motion" and "Resist" are not only tolerable, but fairly good. Everything else on the album makes me wish I was never born with ears, including the ridiculous title track, the lyrical disaster of "Dog Years", and the unbelievably nerdy "Virtuosity", which boasts the lines "Net boy, net girl / Send your signal 'round the world / Let your fingers walk and talk / And set you free". It makes "Rivendell" look like something Ernest Hemingway would've written while strangling lions with his bare hands. This album made me realize that Rush may not be the gods I once thought, but lower-level demi gods.

Sweet Miracle (Vapor Trails)

It's a sweet miracle when this song ends.

Songs that are good, but not up to Rush snuff:

Need Some Love, The Necromancer, Cinderella Man, Circumstances, Witch Hunt (yeah, I'm not crazy about Witch Hunt, suck it), Chemistry, The Body Electric, Between The Wheels, Emotion Detector, Mystic Rhythms, Show Don't Tell, Double Agent

Don't let this article discourage you, young grasshopper. Go out and buy everything by Rush. Their songs are the music of the spheres.

I Want To Be A Better Person

By Sam Forsyth

January 1, 2004

Despite my urgings, I let a man walk right on by after he called me a name because I was standing in his way. I stopped myself from crying and punching him in the neck.

When I ran out of my prescription today I gathered myself, gauged how much time I had before my last dose wore out and placed an order for it to be delivered to my house immediately. I did not cry or punch myself in the neck.

I quit smoking Windex today.

January 2, 2004

I applied to Harvard Law today.

I signed up to take the GED. I have officially gotten over feeling guilty about dropping out of jr. High.

It is 2:30pm and I have not cried yet today.

I called my mother for the first time in two years. She still does not remember me.

I shaved off my beard.

January 3, 2004

I felt bad today. I stayed in bed until 6:00pm. I then felt a little bit better.

Today I decided that I would stop drinking beer, hard liquor and pop. I also decided I would no longer force myself to finish the milk that goes bad just because I paid for it.

January 4, 2004

Today I cleaned up the mess I made while opening up a package of Ramen Noodles. I got out the broom, swept it up and dumped the crumbs in the garbage. That got me in the mood to clean the whole house.

January 15, 2004

I finished cleaning the house today.

I started writing in my journal again.

January 16, 2004

In 1997 I met and shook hands with every member of Republica when their world tour brought them to the VFW hall in my hometown. This was an event that I have been obsessed with ever since then. Today, though, I finally washed my hands.

My doctor has noticed marked improvement in my stress and anxiety levels. I treated myself to a strawberry sundae.

I saw a pretty a woman at Thirty One Flavors, the woman who served me my sundae, I did not freak out. I simply and calmly looked her in the eye and said, "thank you miss." I then blew her a kiss and walked out.

Today I decided to quit smoking banana peels and sun dried tomatoes.

January 17, 2004

I've tried becoming a better person the last seven New Years in a row. Seventeen days is the longest I've made it by twelve days!

I'm becoming tired.

January 18, 2004

Today I smoked a banana peel. I also discovered that I am very close to the end of my prescription.

I called my mother again today. She said my name.

Today I nearly decided to start taking vitamins instead of swallowing bullets for iron.

I went to bed at 7:00pm.

January 29, 2004

Today I remembered that I was supposed to be improving. I have not done anything positive in eleven days.

Today I decided that I would start spelling certain words like they do in England or Canada. From now on it's colour and centre for me.

I beat up three kids who were huffing in my garage. I told them that my garage was no longer a paradise for teenage drug addicts. I punched one kid in the neck and slapped and screamed loudly at the others.

January 30, 2004

I woke up wrought with guilt and a feeling of failure. I made it much farther than any previous year. But I still did not succeed in becoming a better person.

Oh well, there's always next year! In times like these I always take a little comfort in knowing that I am guaranteed another year.

Check out Sam Forsyth's blog at
www.Televisionsolarsystem.blogspot.com
Originally published on haypenny.com

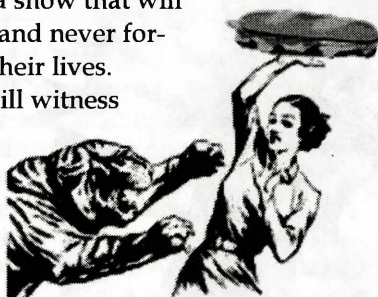
Public Apologies for Bad Advice

By Dan Burt

At one time, the Captain was the only person you could trust to give helpful, succinct, and impeccably correct advice. But lets be honest. Lately, my advice has been so disgraceful it borders on ignominy. And it stinks, too. Thus, I take this opportunity to apologize to the recipients of my lousy counsel. The apologies may take a few days (or weeks), so lets begin.

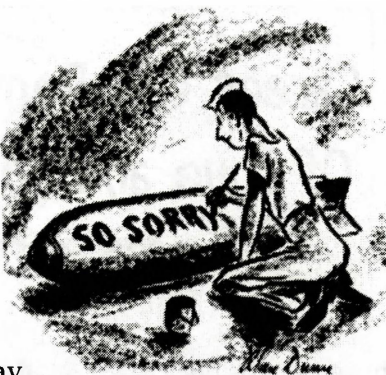
I apologize to Roy (of Siegfried and Roy).

I apologize to Roy (of Siegfried and Roy) for offering him the rest of my Arby's roast beef sub with au jus sauce. On the night of his dreadful accident, Roy complained of being hungry before the show. I had over half a sub remaining so I insisted he eat it. Roy, I said, your body is craving protein. You owe it to your fans to satiate your hunger so you can concentrate on giving them a show that will be seared in their memories and never forgotten for the remainder of their lives. Think of the children who will witness your magic for the first time. Provide those impressionable minds something they can sink their teeth into. After my impromptu pep talk, Roy pounced on the sandwich like a cat on a mouse. He grabbed the sandwich and ate it quickly, too quickly for he was dripping au jus sauce everywhere and little flecks of roast beef were flying past my face. Afterwards, he looked up from the wrapper where the now devoured sandwich once lay and smiled a big, au jus smile with sauce dripping from his chin and beef stock rivulets running down his neck. Before I could clean his face with the handkerchief from my sports coat, he bounded on stage, full of energy. I am deeply sorry for the way he exited.



I apologize to President Bush.

I apologize to the President about all that Iraqi War and Weapons of Mass Destruction hoo-hah (WMDs in the lingo of the biz). I know the press has actually started giving your man Scotty a hard time lately and I wanted to relieve some of the heat. I knew for sure Insane Hussein had weapons. Everybody saw the footage of him standing on the balcony and firing a shotgun over the crowd while shouting Yee-Haw! (in Iraqi, of course). Or the footage of the mushroom cloud



and all the buildings blown away from the force of the explosion. And the little Asian girl running down the road nude. How can any sympathetic, compassionate, and concerned citizen of the world ignore these atrocities of a tyrannical dictator? President Bush, I

said, how can you sleep at night knowing what Saddam has done to his own people? If WMDs are not reason enough, then think of the torture chambers, the mass graves, and the rape rooms so vile that not even your brother Neil would have sex in them with free Thai hookers. If Saddam would do this to his own people, just think what he would do to the oil. Thus, the President demanded a spring to action (or, as the cynical press put it, a rush to war). After David Kay said they found nothing (not even the shotgun), I changed WMD to WMD program related activities—a little wordy, but how else would you describe the cache of paperclips and rubber bands found in Hussein's desk!? And in the very palace in which he lived! Does he have no soul! The only bright spot concerning my presidential advice is that most people still believe the pretzel story I concocted.

I apologize to Steve Irwin.

I apologize to Steve Irwin for suggesting he participate in 'take your babies to work' day. Steve, I said, what a great opportunity to teach the kids about animals—the crocs with their cushy, sharp teeth and snakes with their silky smoothness. Crikey! Baby Bob will remember this for the rest of his life. How was I to know Steve was going to handle raw chicken and infect Baby Bob with a case of Salmonella? It took him weeks to recover. Happy memories indeed! Still I feel responsible.



Dan Burt is the
editor of humor site
captaincanard.com

Career Girl Romances: Of Love and Romance

by megan gerrity

Nine months ago I got a new job, and it turns out it is exactly the job I was born to do. Every weekday I unlock my office, sit down at my desk, open a manuscript, and start reading about sex. Not just *about* sex, but sex. Paragraphs filled with words like "thrusting" and "erect" and "moist." Not just about sex, but love. Pages filled with slow build-up and missed chances and grand romantic gestures and fated endings. I proofread porn for housewives for a living. I proofread romance novels.

Before I got my job, I didn't think much of the romance genre, much less read them (unless you count *Wuthering Heights* or Jane Austen, which, now that I think of it, you really kind of should). I've always had a soft spot for romance though; either cheesy, like the 1950s and 1960s romance comics I collected as a kid, with titles like *Girls' Love* and *I Love You*, or wistfully realistic, like *Rushmore* or *High Fidelity*. But I'd never picked up a classic bodice ripper or a modern chick lit "single-gal-in-the-city" book, and I had no desire to. Maybe it was the rows and rows of Harlequin Romances on my grandmother's bookshelves, with their Fabio-centric covers staring creepily out at me, but I dismissed them.

But it turns out reading romance novels is my dream job, because it turns out I'm built for love. From every cell to every molecule careening through my system, romance is all I'm about. I inhale whispered pillow talk and exhale flowery promises. My grey matter is valentine's red and girlish pink, and the blood flowing from my toes to my overactive heart is sugary sweet. The stars in my eyes are just visible through my glasses. If you stand close enough to my ear you may be able to hear the swelling orchestral music and ballads of broken hearts too.

If I'm not currently in love, I'm obsessing over who I could possibly be in love with, and if there's not a viable crush, my world turns to a boring, hopeless monotone, a feeling that's actually worse than the heart-wrenching, pride-destroying feeling of an unrequited crush. Unrequited crushes are devastating, and it takes weeks, and sometimes months, to purge them from my system, to stop wondering what happened, or what should have happened, or

what might still happen. In the best-case scenario, a new crush will stumble on the scene sooner rather than later, and the original unrequited crush will be subsumed by the new, probably also unrequited crush. And the cycle continues.

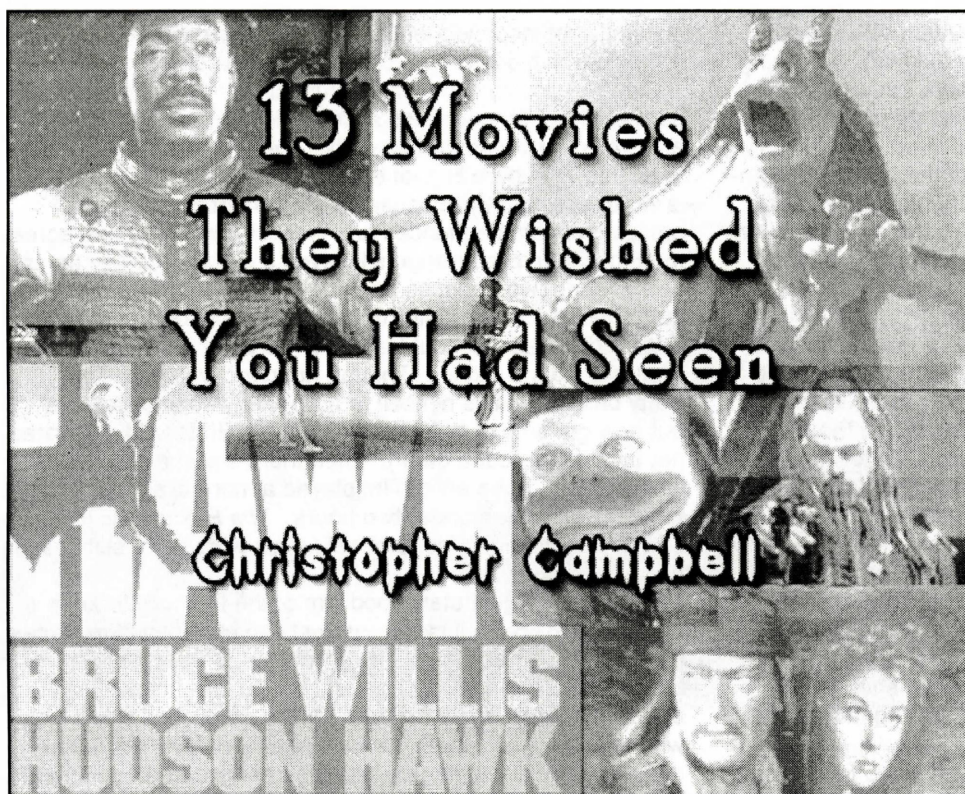
Ah, but when the crush is returned... When I see a young man and he sees me and we talk and we flirt and we kiss and we date and things keep progressing without anyone turning nervous or jealous (me) or duplicitous or neurotic or obsessive (me again) and then we are "dating" and then we are "going out" and then we are "boyfriend/girlfriend" and there is always someone to call and there is always someone to go home with... When that happens and all the romance and eagerness and pent-up sexual energy and months of reading about rose-covered beds and quickies on the hoods of BMWs has an outlet... well, that is one lucky young man.

I was built for love. It's something I've spent years denying and trying to overcome, feeling caught in a state of constant adolescent angst and wondering when I'd finally be a grownup and be able to treat romance and love and heartache with the sort of casualness I currently reserve for paying bills and getting to work on time. But I've realized that while that may work for other people, people whose daydreams involve corner offices and seven-figure salaries instead of exes returning with flowers and promises of undying fidelity, people who wake up to CNN and Bloomberg radio instead of carefully chosen songs of love and heartbreak programmed into the alarm clock the night before, it will not work for me. It's pointless to try. It's who I am, and hopefully I'll get at least a few good stories out of it.

Yes, I'm built for love – now I've just got to find some.

Visit Meg's blog *Sunny Days And Gasoline* at:
<http://sunnydaysandgasoline.blog-city.com/>





Though he died in 1979, John Wayne was killed in 1956 by a film called *The Conqueror*. That film, miscasting the actor as Genghis Khan at 20 years of age, was shot near a nuclear testing facility in Utah and it is believed no coincidence that at least 91 people associated with it, cast and crew, died of cancer resulting from the radiation (according to a People Magazine headcount in 1980 which did not include investigating the Native American extras). Arguably the least favorite movie of hardcore Wayne fans; it features "the Duke" with a fu manchu and his familiar droll as he conquers, not Asia, but the Tartar Queen Bortai played by the redheaded Susan Hayward. The film could almost be considered part of the western genre if one ignores the palace dance sequence; in many ways it is the antithesis of Wayne's greatest film, also from 1956, *The Searchers*. Not the first nor last picture to result in deaths, that it was also a flop, contributor to the madness of producer Howard Hughes and closing of RKO Pictures and, lets face it, unwatchable for any redeeming qualities, makes it a strong contender for the worst film ever made.

What makes a film bad? It is all relative and subjective of the audience. Some may think that *The Lord of the Rings* or *The Matrix* films are masterpieces while others think them to be trash. Either way, the true measure of a bad film is in its lasting worth, unfavorably or not. The fact that Ed Wood is remembered and held in regard for his popularly bad movies shelters his work from being a failure. Other films have been celebrated for their poor quality through the brilliant mocking of "Mystery Science Theater 3000" and the RAZZIE (aka Golden Raspberry) Awards, which since 1980 have coincided with the Academy Awards in (dis)honoring the worst releases of the previous year. On a smaller scale are websites like Ohthefunmanity.com (though they claim *Real Genius* is bad), TheStinkers.com (their mistake is including *Red Dawn*), IMDB.com (their bottom 100 is respectable on the basis of its democracy yet still biased because a certain number of people need to see the films to get the amount of votes necessary for qualification) and Maximonline.com which obviously lists too many

"chick flicks".

There are plenty of bad films which the public goes to see anyway and critically acclaimed films that nobody sees. The combination of failing at the box office and receiving bad reviews is characteristic of a cinematic failure. This happens all the time and it doesn't make a dent in the consciousness of the masses, but occasionally a large scale production with a lot of hype shows up in theaters only to be ignored. This is when a movie really fails. Last summer after the release of *Gigli*, a film which bombed in this way, MSN.com featured an article showcasing the 11 biggest financial disasters in recorded box office history. Seeing as how this critic enjoyed *Gigli* (see the review in READ #23) and the fact that many of the greatest financial successes (*My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, *The Blair Witch Project*) have been undeserving, it was quite possible that at least one film in the report needed saving from its reputation.

That film would be *Howard the Duck* except that the flop is now fairly

popular with young adults. Despite losing so much money for Universal Studios and ending the career of co-writer/director William Huyck, many kids became fans through countless showings on weekend afternoon television. There is one supporter so faithful that he not only pays tribute through a website but also created a trailer to his own proposed idea for a sequel (www.geocities.com/ceciniid/HowardIntro.html). This 1986 comic book adaptation was produced by George Lucas who supposedly planned for Howard to be done with computer effects but was then unhappy with the technology at the time. Maybe he could do that now and release it as a special edition. The duck suits, though, are part of the goofy charm for many of its defenders, placing its believability nowhere short of The Muppets. Other redeeming features include the very hot, crimped-haired Lea Thompson in a Runaways inspired band, that band's catchy theme song for the film and the whacked-out alien-possessed Jeffrey Jones who totally upstages the uninspired creature which takes his place.

The greatest thing about a DVD is having a commentary track discussing the merits of a film, or in the case of a bomb, defending them. Michael Lehman, director of *Hudson Hawk* stands by his action comedy arguing that critics and audiences just didn't get it or weren't ready for its brilliance. The reality is that, looking back, everyone took it more seriously than it deserved, but much of it also just doesn't work. Now it is more common for a summer blockbuster to be so frivolous. There is an appreciation to be had for Lehman's intentions as well as all the cinematic homage sprinkled throughout. As a follow-up to the director's previous pairing with screenwriter Daniel Waters on *Heathers*, though, it is a major disappointment.

The worst kind of DVD commentary is one in which the director completely ignores the issues which listeners are anxious to hear about. For *Battlefield Earth: A Sage of the Year 3000*, Roger Christian embellishes the art direction and special effects. This makes sense since he worked in the art department for films like *Star Wars* and *Alien* before the allowance to helm pictures of his own. Last year saw the similar

privilege given to production designer Bo Welch with similarly awful results (he directed *Dr. Seuss' Cat in the Hat*). The thing is that *Battlefield Earth* would have been more fun without the expensive effects even if they actually looked as expensive as they were. As your typical post-apocalyptic B-movie, the story has its moments before all believability gets thrown out the window and primitive humans learn how to fly fighter jets within hours. One thing worth noting on Christian's behalf is the attention given toward the language and respiratory barriers faced between the aliens and earthlings.

Heaven's Gate benefits from the technology of DVD in that Vilmos Zsigmond's cinematography is given a fairer exhibition quality considering how unlikely it is that anyone will ever get another chance to see it projected in a theater again. Remembered more today as being synonymous with failure than for anything else (it portrays an historically inaccurate telling of the 1892 Johnson County War), Michael Cimino's follow-up to the Oscar winner *The Deer Hunter* can also be seen in its 228 minute entirety as opposed to the theatrical length of two and a half hours. Some important sequences which had been missing are therefore now included but the lengthy edit continually drags. The real plot of the film doesn't even begin until after what is basically a thirty minute prologue. Aside from a beautiful look and sporadic scenes of interest, *Heaven's Gate* should be praised for little more than linking the roller skating fads of the 1890s and 1970s.

Ishtar has gained nothing from the latest video technology as it is only available on VHS which just shows how little interest the public has in it. Like *Heaven's Gate*, this picture's reputation outlives its memory. The overlong setup involves the film's initial joke: stars Dustin Hoffman and Warren Beatty play excruciatingly bad songwriters and the showcasing of their talents is not one bit funny. Getting past that and onto a lesser *Spies Like Us* plotline, Charles Grodin is actually humorous as a CIA agent and there are some good ideas regarding the confusion of undercover agents, traits which also show up in *Hudson Hawk*.

Town & Country, also starring Beatty, suffers from similar problems. Here he is teamed up with Garry Shandling who is even less funny than Hoffman. Like *Ishtar* it has the ability to grow on you with intermittent laughs but on the whole is just too immature and vulgar considering the age of its target audience.

As the biggest bombs of all time, the money wasted and lost on both *Cutthroat Island* and *The Adventures of Pluto Nash* combined (somewhere around \$185 million) could have contributed nicely to a number of charity organizations. They share a devastating bond which for both was not surprising but still unlikely. *Cutthroat Island* suffered from the curse that, until last year, pirate movies were not bankable in the least. Unless the swashbuckling was kept to a minimum (*The Goonies*; *The Princess Bride*), people would stay away. Considering the dreadful script by Marc Norman (who went on to win an Oscar for *Shakespeare in Love*) and Robert King is quite similar in plot to the shockingly successful *The Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl* goes to show that subject matter was never really the problem. In the argument for *Pluto Nash*, Eddie Murphy has been making equally bad movies for ten years and this is far from his worst, but the production cost fails to match what is on screen. If the movie actually demonstrated the quality of which \$100 million could pay for it might have been successful. There are television series with better set construction and special effects.

It is just as hard to tell where all of the money went in Kevin Costner's *The Postman* but at least much of it is nice to look at. Costner's acting notwithstanding (it certainly doesn't compare with his casting in *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* which is only a tad more rational than John Wayne's in *The Conqueror*), ri-

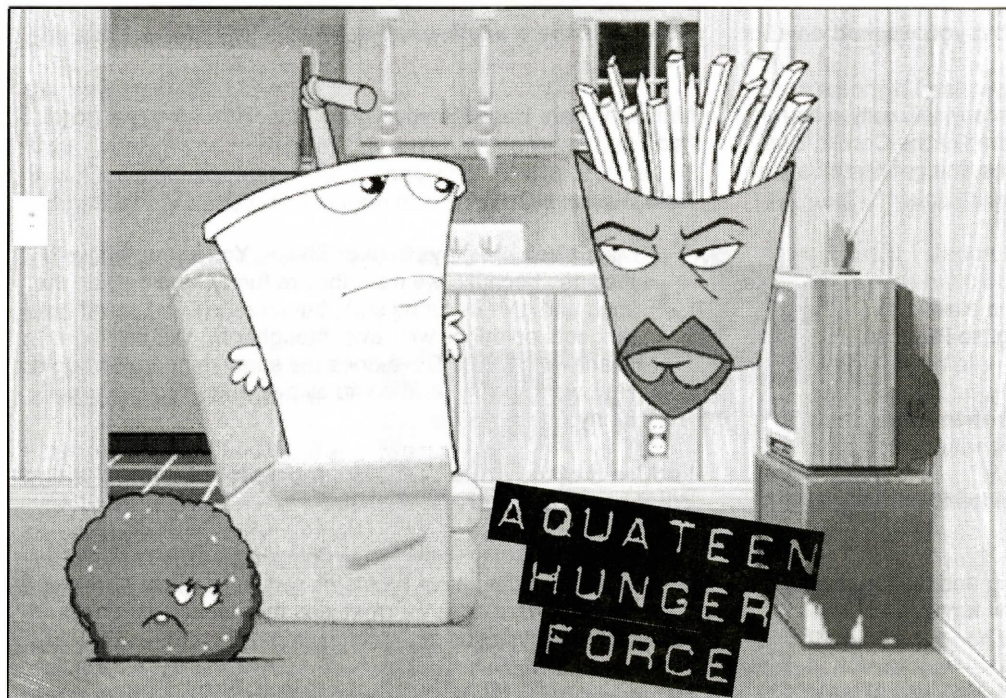
diculous plot inconsequential (it makes more sense than *Waterworld* which contrary to popular belief was a moderate hit worldwide) and running time excusable (on DVD, the episodic pacing allows for countless acceptable intermissions), the epic works as an absurd comedy. Though actually torturous to sit through, there is a lot that is hilarious in afterthought. It is worth seeing only because words cannot convey how amazing certain sequences are. A mechanically sexual agreement between two strangers is given a passionate five minute love scene. Two enemies become mutually respectful of each other based on their ability to recite the most obvious Shakespeare (it is sad truth but Hamlet's "To be or not to be..." soliloquy is such a cliché). Though not directly stated, Tom Petty basically plays himself, a man who was once famous but now governs over a place known as "Bridge City" (located not on a bridge but a dam!). Then there's all the laughable slow-motion. If the entire film played at normal speed, it might have actually been under two hours. *The Postman* is just as bad as you can imagine, probably even worse, but still has to be seen to be believed.

The only legitimately good film of the financial turkeys is **Cleopatra**. Though it is the costliest film ever (inflation places it comparatively at \$259 million), forcing 20th Century Fox to briefly shut down and cut corners, the picture at least looks expensive, and can be forgiven for the production's bad luck with regards to Elizabeth Taylor's health, delays, set reconstruction, director changes, location changes and equipment theft. It was the highest grossing film of 1963, won 4 of its 9 Oscar nominations and aside from the Egyptian Queen being played by a white actress (*The Conqueror*'s Susan Hayward was considered as well), is a well-made and believable epic. It would be greater if the version that director Joseph Mankiewicz wanted, as two volumes a la *Kill Bill* focusing first on Cleopatra and Caesar, then on Cleopatra and Anthony, could one day see the light of day. As it stands today at just short of four hours, though, there is plenty of footage to be enjoyed.

Since **Inchon** is out of print and unavailable a reassessment of its value can not be made at this time. Maybe it is the worst movie ever made as many critics at the time had said but this critic will never know. The fact that it is totally lost and mostly forgotten is of significance as well as its winning 4 of its 5 Razzie nominations. Of the other flops, *Heaven's Gate*, *Ishtar* and *The Adventures of Pluto Nash* failed to win worst picture while *Howard the Duck* tied, *Town & Country* wasn't even nominated and *Cleopatra* was released prior to their existence. As noted, a film can be terrible and still make a lot of money. The 1988 Razzie went to *Cocktail* which was one of that year's biggest hits.

Regardless of quality, the worst films end careers, ruin studios (*Cutthroat Island* sank Carolco) and in rare circumstances kill people. They may disappear forever or temporarily. *Inchon* may never see a reprinting on any medium but despite its 17 years out of circulation, *The Conqueror* was eventually available to the delight or indifference of John Wayne fans everywhere. Going by this list, I dare someone to make an official worst film ever. It would have to be a post-apocalyptic epic with a title starting with C, H or I and feature dual protagonists, one of which is Warren Beatty. During its production, the entire cast and crew, except for the producer who is also a wealthy religious leader, has to be swallowed up by an earthquake or some other disaster. Until this certified turkey is made, it seems that either *Inchon*, for its inaccessibility, or *The Conqueror* takes the prize for worst, most regrettable production of all time.

Christopher Campbell is the editor of *LowExpectation.com*



Because you could try to bait any group and probably get away, but the one group you don't want to ever offend is Southerners.

Matt: We are southern though.

I know this from experience, from making fun of Dale Earnhardt when he died.

Matt: Ohhh. Yeah, don't screw with our NASCAR, but other than that...

Dave: You know, Futurama did an episode about Atlanta.

Yeah, Atlanta as Atlantis.

Dave: And I didn't like it. I thought it was one note and didn't have any understanding of the South. But everybody working on this show, on Squidbillies, is Southern or has a Southern connection and understands the South a bit more. I don't think we'll

offend Southerners.

When will Squidbillies air?

Dave: We're trying to get one out by November. We'll try to do a bunch of them this year.

What exactly is your writing process for Aqua Teen like? Do you just brew a pot of coffee and stare at the computer screen?

Matt: Yeah, sometimes it starts out that way. We usually spend the first draft writing and Dave will come over to my house. I'll brew him some coffee. And make him some muffins. And we'll bullshit around for awhile and be like, "What if Shake does this?" and eventually something will stick, and it doesn't take much longer after that to write a whole script.

Do you guys put in a 9-5?

Matt: More like a 10:30 to 3:30. (Laughs)

Dave: Well, we do a bunch of other stuff to do. We're a small staff, so there's always stuff to do as far as producing, and other things.

Is there any rivalry between you and the other Adult Swim guys?

Dave: Not at all, we get along really well. We need to support each other, because we're such a small staff trying to do so many shows here.

Matt: It gets kind of incestuous here. We'll have them read our scripts, or we'll read their scripts. And, you know, we'll disregard their notes and move on. (laughs)

You two started out working on Space Ghost. What was up with that long hiatus?

Dave: We were spending that hiatus trying to put together the pilot for Aqua Teen.

I hate intros. You know that this is the best thing on tv, and that I am GOD for scoring an interview with its creators, Dave Willis and Matt Maiellaro. Hot damn, I rule. —Adam Liebling

How do you guys write so many episodes in such a short period of time?

Dave: No supervision! (Laughs) We're just in a groove. We've worked together for a number of years, and we can complete each other's sentences in a lot of ways. Plus we don't edit ourselves. We use everything. We think everything is golden that comes out of our mouths. We don't evaluate anything to see if it could possibly be any better.

No focus groups or anything?

Matt: Ah, hell no! (laughs) No focus groups. No concern.

Dave: Complete disregard. (laughs)

So you guys pretend to write everything, but I heard that you couldn't take this call yesterday because you were in a "writer's meeting." Ghostwriters?

Dave: No, we write everything on Aqua Teen. But we're doing Squidbillies with... Squidbillies is kind of a supergroup, like Asia. We've got guys from Aqua Teen, the Brak Show, Space Ghost... we're all working on it together.

Can you tell me anything about Squidbillies, or is it all hush?

Dave: It's pretty much all hush now. Except that it's hillbilly squids living in the north Georgia mountains, and, uhh, dealing with evolution in modern times.

You guys are going to get so much hate mail.

Matt: You think?

Dave: Why?

Matt, before Cartoon Network, I read that you worked on a lot of horror movies.

Matt: Yep, I did. My first movie was Darkman, not really a horror movie, but I worked on Hellraiser 3, Children of the Corn 2, Basketcase 3...I sort of sought out the pictures and got myself a job on them. I was a big horror fan growing up.

What did you do on the films?

Matt: On Darkman, I was a PA [production assistant], and after that I got into assistant directing, so I was an AD on those movies.

You can definitely feel a horror backdrop in Aqua Teen.

Matt: [Giggling] That's because we find blood to be really funny. And shocking.

Dave: Whatever is shocking and horrifying and makes people put their hand to their mouth... that's generally funny.

Matt: Yeah, we both like that.

Dave: But Matt takes it seriously. He thinks it's real life. And I'm scared to be around him.

Is it difficult working in a 15-minute structure?

Dave: Not for us, we've been doing it for ten years now.

Matt: It would probably be more difficult working in a 30-minute structure at this point. We're pretty used to wrapping things up by page 11.

In a lot of episodes, suddenly the climax is the last ten seconds. Is it that the episode is running long and you suddenly have to cut it short as soon as possible?

Dave: I don't think so. I think we do that on purpose, because we're enjoying what we're doing up until that time, and then we're like, "We gotta rap it up" and we finish it off in a goofy way.

You guys are both Southerners. But the show takes place in New Jersey. Have you received any negative feedback from angry Jerseyites?

Dave: I don't think so...

Matt: I haven't at all. I went to college with folks from Jersey, so I'm used to bustin' on them. We traded awkward insults that are based on complete stereotypical blanket statements... and that's basically what Carl is.

That brings me to my next question: how much of YOU do you put into your characters?

Dave: I think there's something from real life that finds its way to each of the episodes and characters. I mean, my wife's pregnant and we just wrote an episode where Meatwad gets pregnant...

Congratulations!

Dave: Thanks! ...And besides that, we've dealt with different things that piss us off in different ways in various episodes.

Gotcha. Is there any improv at all with any of the voice actors?

Matt: Oh yeah. Dana [Snyder] goes nuts. He was a real good find.

He's Shake, right?

Matt: Yeah, he plays Master Shake. You know, we write the lines because we think they're funny, and he'll do the lines and give us funny stuff, but then he'll just go off on tangents on things we never thought of... We call them "Dana-isms." And Dave does the same thing in the booth. He'll work the line and ad-lib all over until it's really, really funny.

I notice that the Aqua Teens don't do a lot of crime fighting. What happened with that?

Dave: They couldn't make money doing it. So they're currently on welfare. And they have problems with the current Administration's views toward it, so they get jobs this year, that don't involve solving mysteries or fighting crimes.

Because one of my readers was wondering how they could afford that big ass house.

Dave: They rent it. They get a really good deal because it doesn't have a bathroom. 2BR, no bath.

Man, you guys have closed all the loopholes. You have really created a foolproof universe here.

Matt: We sure have.

Dave: Oh yeah, it's completely airtight. Completely logical. [laughs]

How long have you two been working together?

Matt: Since '98?

Dave: Yeah, six years.

And what do you hate most about each other?

[Silence.]

Dave: Matt, you go first.

Matt: I don't know...

Dave: I hate his girlfriend.

Matt: I hate his wife. I hate their baby, and they haven't even had it yet.

Dave: [laughs]

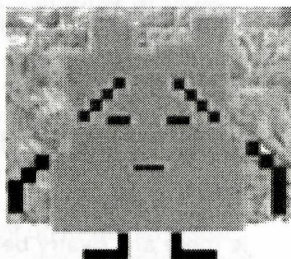
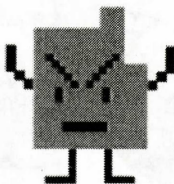
Matt: We get along pretty well. It's unusual.

Are you two bonded by anything?

Matt: A murder that happened several years ago...

Dave: We're not supposed to talk about that!!

Matt: We have the teeth...



Dave: ...the rest is buried in the desert.

Oh. Uh, okay.

Matt: We might be bonded by our ridiculous sense of humor and by what we think is funny. But probably not. We're probably bonded by our hatred of everyone else. We're bonded in bile.

If the Aqua Teens were a Happy Meal, what would be the toy?

Matt: A human arm.

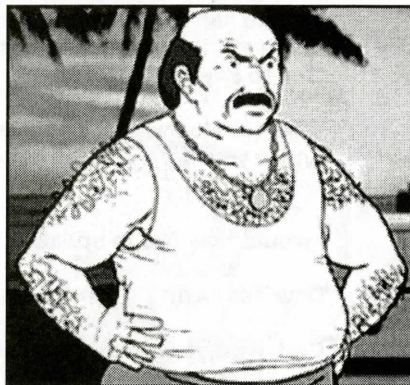
Aqua Teen has a rabid fan-base. Do you fear your fans?

Matt: No... I don't know... Because we never run into them.

Dave: We usually become their friends. But most people don't know who we are anyway.

Are either of you Rush fans?

Dave: Rush fans? Yes! Yeah, in a big way!



I'm talking about the Canadian power rock trio.

Matt: Yeah, we love them!

Wow, I'm really impressed with you guys right now.

Dave: We tried getting Geddy on the show. But he had "other obligations."

Did he say that, or did one of his people say that?

Matt: I wish that he had said that, but it was one of his people.

It would seem that he would be a big fan.

Matt: Yeah, we thought so too.

I saw that episode where Geddy swoops down in his giant flying bass.

Dave: Matt does a good Geddy Lee.

Let's hear.

Matt: [sings something high-pitched that my human ears couldn't pick up]

That's pretty awesome.

Matt: Did you notice when Meatwad was singing the solo to "Tom Sawyer"?

Of course. That was when I realized that I had to own you two. And keep you in my basement.

Matt: Oh... good.

This issue of READ has a "worst" theme. Which is your least favorite episode of Aqua Teen?

Matt: Hmm...

Dave: Toughie...

Is it easier if I ask which is your least favorite Space Ghost that you've done?

Matt: That's even harder because I've forgotten some of them. I'd have to watch them all back to back.

Dave: I think I stand by all of them. I think they're all great in some way, shape or form... The Cubing might've been a little light.

Matt: They're all very good. We give them A's. But that frat one [Frat Aliens] isn't my favorite. I wouldn't say it's the worst one. I don't think there is a worst one, but that one's pretty one-dimensional.

Dave: We hate the Moononites. We hate everything they're in.

No you don't.

Dave: No we don't.

How do you animate Aqua Teen? Is it done on computers or in a sweatshop somewhere?

Dave: It's done on Photoshop...

Well, that's good...

Dave: ...in South Korea.

Oh.

Dave: No, it's right here in Atlanta. We have some G5's down the hall and it's all done in Photoshop and AfterFX.

How long does it take to put an episode together?

Matt: From recording to finished product? About ten weeks. But we do a lot of shows at once, so there's a lot of episodes in different states of production. If we focused on just one show, it would probably take less than that.

Do you see yourselves doing this five years from now?

Matt: We could probably still do Aqua Teen five years from now.

Dave: I see myself at the Phoenix Sci-Fi Con, charging \$3 an autograph.

What were you guys like in high school?

Dave: I was the dick, jock, bully.

I can see that.

Dave: [laughs]

Matt: I was in a band. So I wasn't really a preppie or a druggie, I was just sorta in a band. Not too cool, not too popular, just there.

Have you guys been to any reunions? And you have to describe what you do and you just get back cold, blank stares?

Matt: I haven't yet, but Dave did that recently.

Dave: It was my 15th reunion, and yeah, totally. It didn't connect. I should've just said I was a physical therapist. I mean, you had to explain the title, and then you had to explain what it's about, and they all respond with "Oh, that sounds cute. Is that with the Comedy Network?" and you're like "...Yeah. Sure, it is."

So when will you guys clean yourselves up and get real jobs?

[Silence]

Dave: Tomorrow.

Matt: This is a great job. We have a lot of fun over here; it's really fun to do this stuff.

Yeah, I could imagine.

Matt: All the people here are really great. It's just a great atmosphere.

I want to kill you guys. You have the best jobs on the planet. You guys probably drink booze all day and giggle.

Matt: I wish we could drink booze all day.

I went to the Adult Swim message board and asked your fans for questions they'd like answered. Naraku_99 wants to know why there's a picture of Fryloc and Dr. Weird in Fryloc's room, even though it seems that the Aqua Teens have never met him. Is there some sort of backstory that hasn't been told yet?

Matt: There is?

Dave: There's not a picture of Dr. Weird in there.*

Hmm. Will Dr. Weird and the Aqua Teens ever meet?

Dave: Who knows?

Matt: Yeah, we don't even know. We take it on a Monday to Monday basis.

Tubleweed wants to know what your favorite beer is?

Dave: Pilsner Urquell.

Matt: I like the weenie Miller Lite.

Finally, I'm missing my friend Megan's birthday party tonight and she said she would forgive me if I ask you this question: She noticed in one scene, there was graffiti that said "Dirt Bike Annie", which is one of her favorite bands. She wants to know if that's coincidental or if you guys are in fact Dirt Bike Annie fans.

Dave: That was something planted by Chris, probably. Unless.. no, Bob wouldn't have put it there. Where was the graffiti, do you remember?

She didn't say.

Dave: Hmm, maybe it was Sealab. Are you sure it was in Aqua Teen?

Are you sure it wasn't? Jeez, you guys don't

really keep a tight ship, do you?

Dave: We must not! We're gonna have to bust some chops down the hall.

Matt: Yeah, someone's going to get their leg broken.**

Dave, you do the voice of Meatwad and Carl, right?

Dave: Mm-hmm.

Let's do a James Lipton thing where I call in your character. I would like to speak to Meatwad now. Meatwad, when you arrive at the pearly gates in heaven, what would you like God to say to you?

Dave (as Meatwad): To your left, there is a free hot dog buffet. And to your right, you can get yourself some smokes and some brown liquor.

I would now like to speak to Carl.

Dave (as Carl): You got it, jackass.

Carl, what is your favorite curse word?

Dave (as Carl): Eh, it's a tie between, eh, frig and... I tell you, the C-word sometimes lights women up. But you know, I kinda like it. I keep it in my back pocket if I need it.

Thanks guys. It's been fun.

Matt: Thanks Adam!

Dave: Thank you, we enjoyed it!

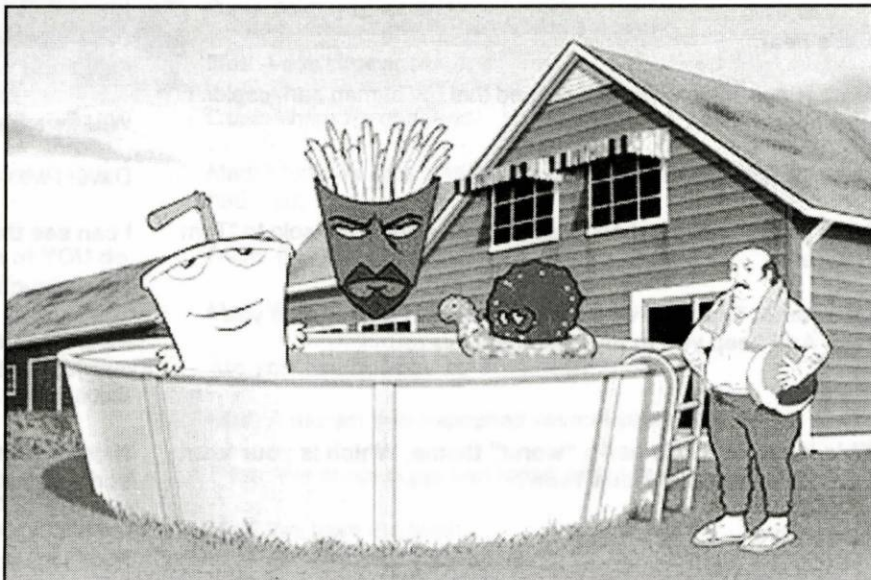
Aqua Teen Hunger Force airs every night at midnight on Cartoon Network, beginning April 18.

Many thanks to Jim Babcock at Time Warner for his help in setting up the Adult Swim interviews.

*The pic is in there, I think they were just being cagey.

**It turns out the graffiti was in Sealab. Sorry guys!

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MATT THOMPSON AND ADAM REED OF SEALAB 2021

Do you have the best jobs in the world?

This is a pretty sweet gig. It's a LOT of work, but normally it's fun work and our atmosphere at 70-30 is very laid back. Shorts and sandals and not having to shave. Gaming on the LAN (our entire staff is six guys sitting in a circle).

How did it all happen?

This whole thing happened back in 1999 when we sent an unsolicited pilot of Sealab to Mike Lazzo (with whom we used to work before we both got fired from Cartoon Network). Unbeknownst to us, they were looking for content for Adult Swim, and thought that Sealab might be a good fit. We were just shotgunning our stuff to everybody on the dial because we were out of work. So it was probably a combination of lucky timing and an incredibly, amazingly, heartbreakingly funny pilot. Actually, it was just lucky timing.

Can you describe the writing process? LSD and dream diaries?

One of us usually brings an idea in, and then at the brainstorming meeting, we'll throw it out, and see if we can build on it enough to make a script. The ideas generally either come in the shower or after watching a re-run of WKRP. Usually the latter. If you're very familiar with both Sealab and that seminal situation comedy (starring the incomparable Gary Sandy and one of the finest ensemble casts ever assembled) it's easy to see that our show is basically just a pathetic re-hash.

What would be a plotline that you would love to do for Sealab, but for legal or moral reasons, couldn't?

We keep pitching this episode where the crew of Sealab forms their own chapter of the Klan, but the network won't go for it. What they don't get is, the way we'd do it would be really funny; mistaken identities (because they're all wearing masks) and people tripping on their robes, and the cross-burning getting out of hand and setting the curtains on fire. You know, Klanny slapstick humor like that. People getting poked in the eye with a Bible.

Have you received any feedback from the creators of the original Sealab?

Not personally, but we did read an interview with Alex Toth (who, along with Iwao Takamoto, did the original designs for not only Sealab 2020 but a slew of other classic Hanna-Barbera cartoons) where he basically said that he was pretty well disgusted with all these re-purposed cartoons. And we

can see his point, since we're subverting and bastardizing and screwing with his original creation; like, if some punks came up with Sealab 2022 and screwed with our stuff, we'd be totally hacked off. But the thing with us is, we'd kill those guys.

Which classic cartoon would you love to rework?

Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kids. They're a band, but they're also international secret agents, fighting injustice and tyranny the world over. They have a jet and a super-computer and a dog who can dance. When we were deciding which show to re-purpose, it was actually a toss-up between Sealab and BCatSK. Because they're a band, but also international secret agents!

How has being part of Adult Swim helped your social life?

We honestly and truly thought that this whole thing would lead to more sex than it has. Sex for us, that is; it may be doing somebody some good somewhere, but it

sure ain't here. We'd like to think that people across America are putting Sealab on the VCR as a make-out tape. Instead of Al Green.

Could you do an episode of Sealab that revolves around the events of Rush's "2112"?

In a way, they all do...

Which do you think was the worst episode of Sealab, and why?

Hmmm. That's a tough one. They're all so damn good.

Will Sealab 2021 still be around in 2021? If so, will it simply be hardcore Debbie-on-Debbie action?

Ya know, it's funny you should ask that, because the network just signed us to a 17-year contract.

If a convincing rejection of dualism can be formulated, the classic mind-body problem will be solved by becoming a non-problem and the materialist approach of modern science will be vindicated. That said, what's on the menu at Grizzlebee's?

Grizzlebee's is rolling out their version of the Monte Cristo this spring: a half-pound of thinly-sliced Black Forest ham served open-faced on French toast and slathered in Maple Ranch Syrup® and dusted with powdered sugar. It's a sandwich, but it's also a dessert. Kinda like those crazy Butch Cassidy kids, because they're a band, but they're also international secret agents!

Visit adultswim.com for showtimes for Sealab 2021.



Greetings Space Ghost.

Right!

I appreciate you taking the time out of what must be a busy day. *snort* So what exactly do you do when the cameras stop rolling?

I lose myself in the rhythm.

Would you ever consider a co-host, like Kathy Lee or Dino Boy?

Yes.

For a super-villain, Moltar doesn't seem that motivated. Is he on "the reefer?" Have you given him "the talk?"

There is nothing super about Moltar except for his ability to stand for extremely long periods of time.

Who have been your favorite interviewees? Who are some that just didn't get it?

Yoda.

What are some zany outtakes that you couldn't show on the air?

There is no such thing as too zany...

What do your original creators think about your role as talk show host?

...although playful poodles romping about in colorful sailor suits comes close.

Can you replace your house band, Zorak and the Way-outs, with Canadian power rock trio Rush?

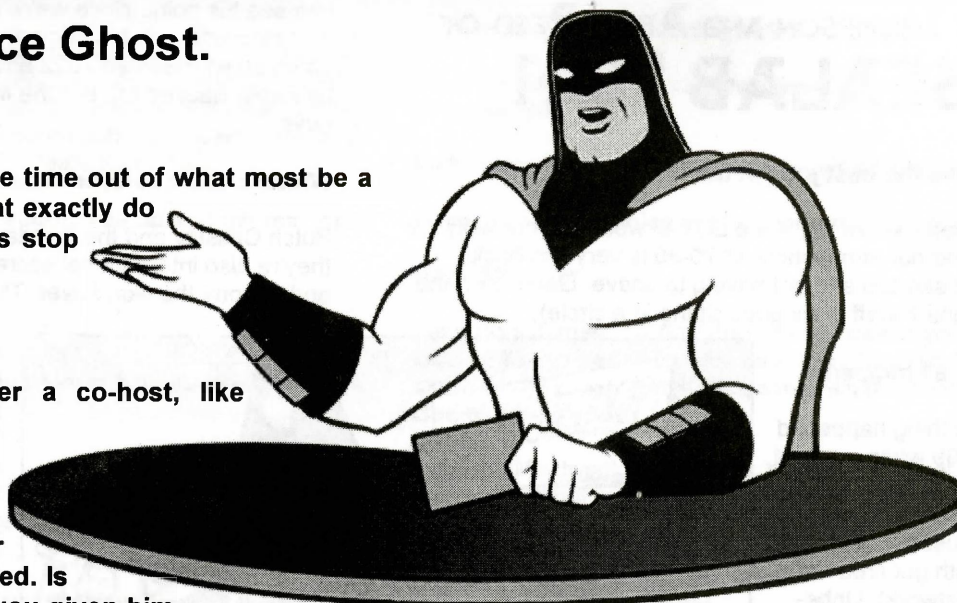
Right.

Have any good groupie stories?

Well, there's that one time I fornicated with Canadian power rock trio Rush.

Power of flight and Inviso rays are impressive, but what's a superpower you would love to have?

I would love the power of creating new superpowers at will.



Tad, if I may call you that, this issue of READ has a "worst" theme. What would be your worst, or least favorite, of the following:

a) **Movie**
On Golden Pond

b) **Band**
The Furious On Golden Pond Five

c) **Cartoon**
On Golden Pond Babies

d) **Coworker**
Henry Fonda in accounting

e) **Coast to Coast guest/interviewee**
The On Golden Pond Man

f) **Word in the English language**
Pond

g) **Hallucinogen**
Ditto ink

Thank you Space Ghost. You are truly a hero among heroes. Any shout-outs to your peeps?

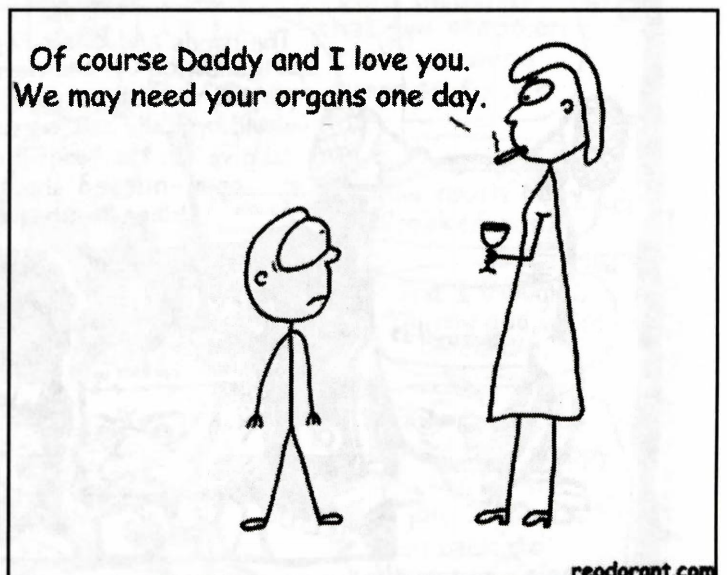
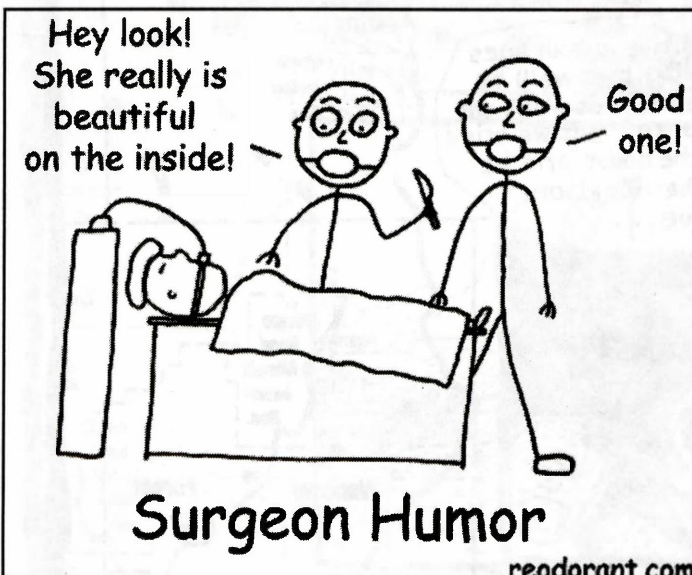
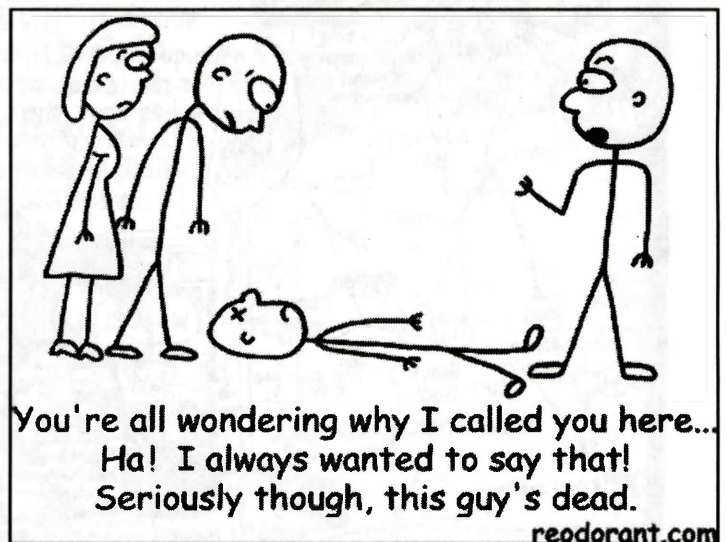
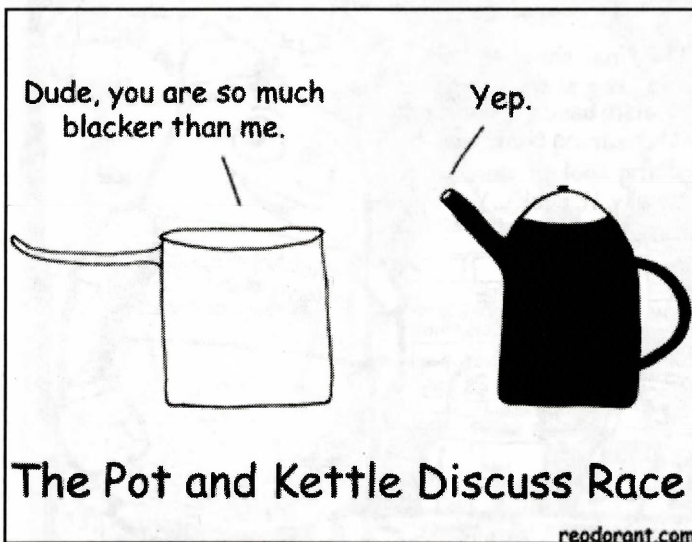
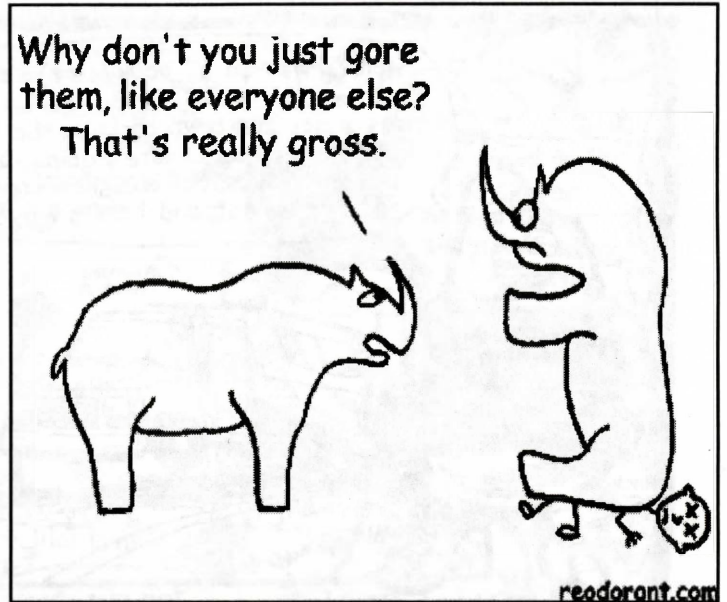
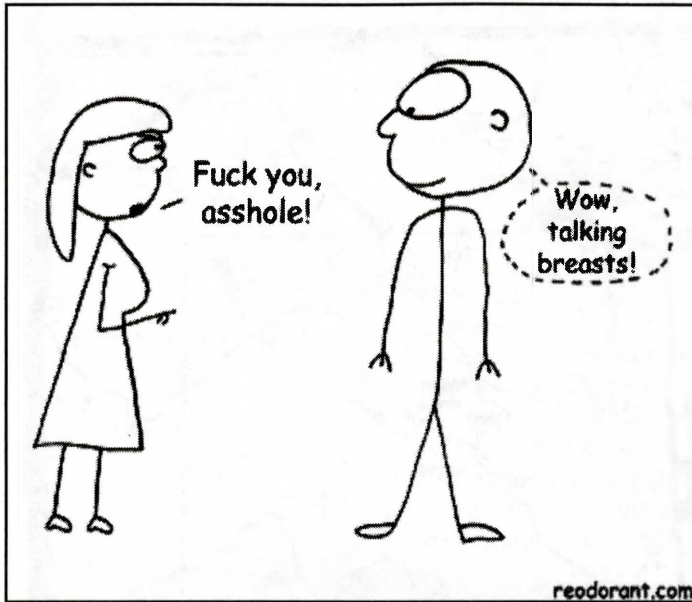
Yes: "AAAAAAHHHHHH!!!!!"

Eh, I'm disappointed too. I guess we caught SG on an off day. Watch Space Ghost: Coast to Coast anyway Sunday nights on Cartoon Network and buy the DVD.

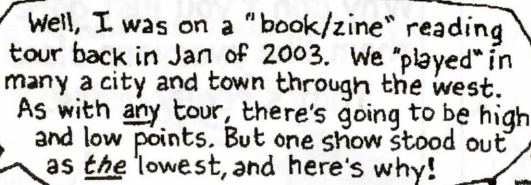
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REODORANT COMICS!

By Joe Reodorant



→ Made a wrong turn? Albuquerque



copy and
destroy.

Albuquerque, N.M. was the final show on this tour for me. When we arrived, the show promoter informed us that there were also bands on the bill. None of us were pleased with hearing that, due to our previous experiences doing spoken word with live music. (Basically, it sucks.)

shot by a
raygun.

The bands and their respective entourages start showing up, and we realize that we'll be playing with streetpunk bands ~ not what we would typically call "our audience." But we tried to give 'em the benefit of the doubt and be open-minded about the situation. When in Albuquerque...

crystallization.

DRUNK

FVK SHITE UP



11

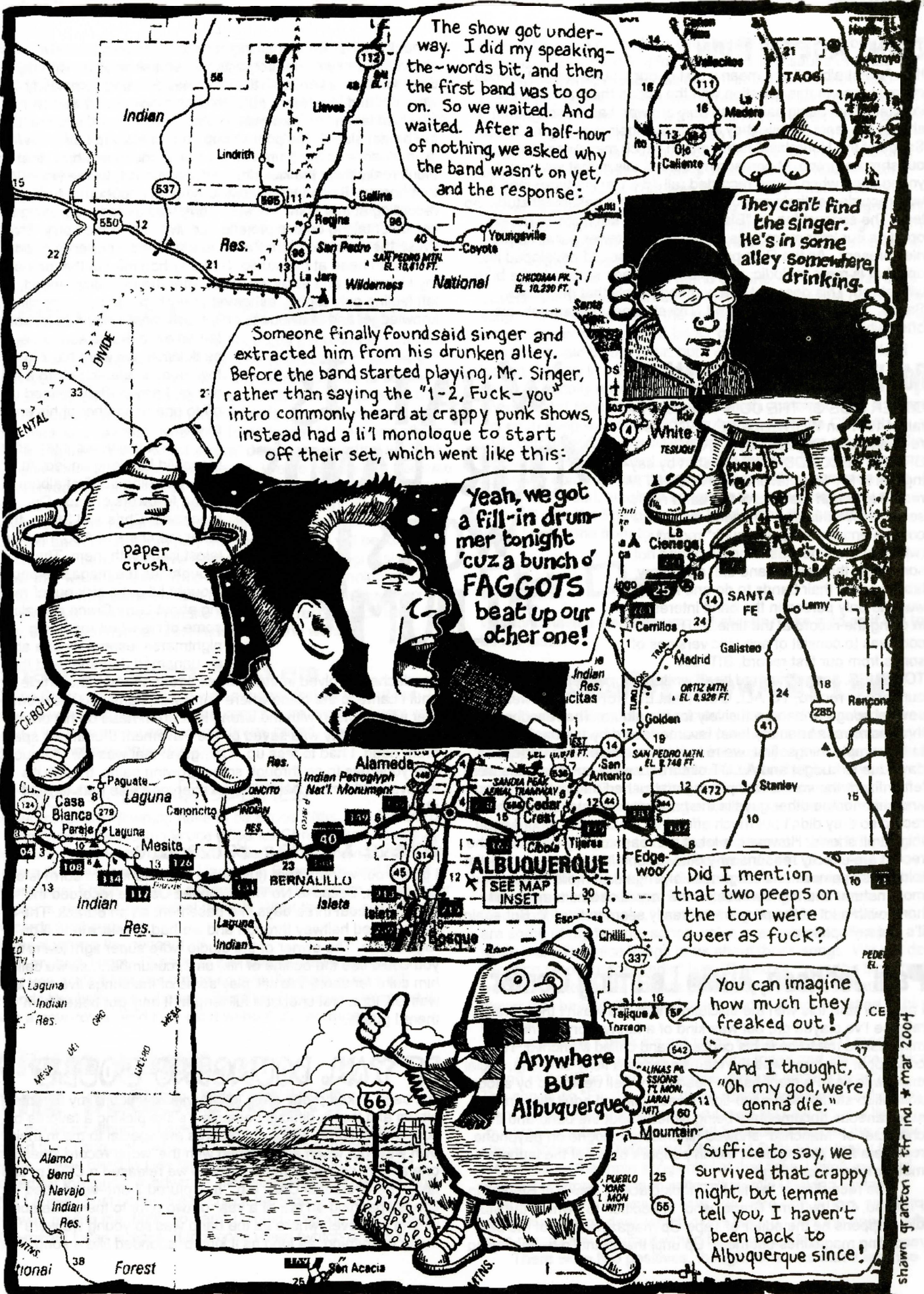
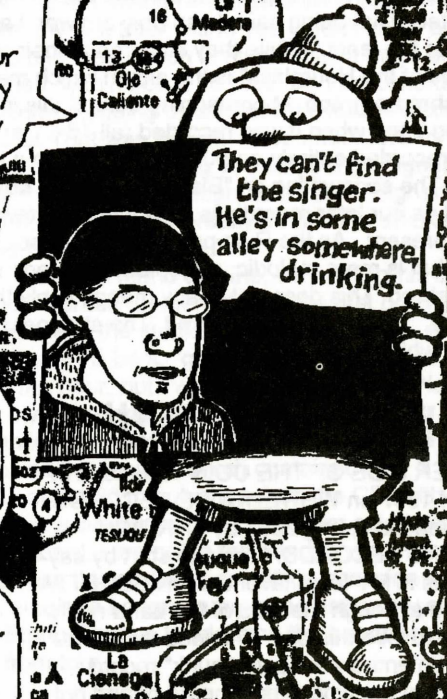
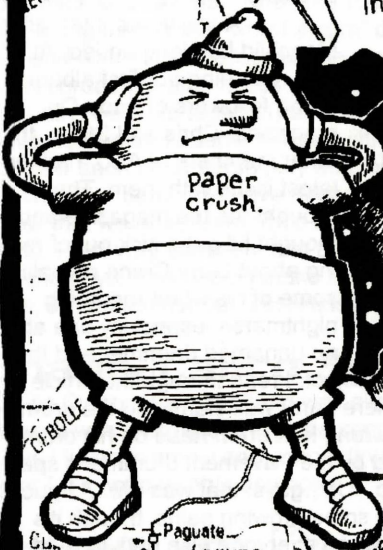
Li,

The show got under-way. I did my speaking-the-words bit, and then the first band was to go on. So we waited. And waited. After a half-hour of nothing, we asked why the band wasn't on yet, and the response:

They can't find the singer. He's in some alley somewhere drinking.

Someone finally found said singer and extracted him from his drunken alley. Before the band started playing, Mr. Singer, rather than saying the "1-2, Fuck-you" intro commonly heard at crappy punk shows, instead had a li'l monologue to start off their set, which went like this:

Yeah, we got a fill-in drummer tonight 'cuz a bunch o' **FAGGOTS** beat up our other one!



Did I mention that two peeps on the tour were queer as fuck?

You can imagine how much they freaked out!

And I thought, "Oh my god, we're gonna die."

Suffice to say, we survived that crappy night, but lemme tell you, I haven't been back to Albuquerque since!

Anywhere BUT Albuquerque

DAN, AGE OF RUIN

If by "worst album" you mean worst of our albums, I must precede my response to this question with the notion that I am entirely insulted. That being said, I can only answer it as "which album shreds the least." While they all shred in their own token, "Black Sands of the Hourglass" is the album which measures lower on our shred-o-graph. My reasoning behind this is that we were a young band when it was recorded (all 16-21 at the time), and it was recorded entirely on our own budget; in a basement studio no less. The songwriting on "Black Sands..." is not quite as developed as our later recordings, and there are fewer guitar harmonies present. As the Ruin progressed, our sound developed into one that is more melodic, more harmonic, and stuffed to the brim with shred. This does not in any means imply that the "Black Sands..." CD is absent of shred. The strongest statements are often whispered.

Rob Huddleston, Ann Beretta

OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN - released in fall of 1997 on WHITEHOUSE RECORDS, re-released spring 2003 by THROWN BRICKS RECORDS. I have to start by saying this is MY least favorite ANN BERETTA record although the fans of the band really seem to love this one. The idea was to record an entirely acoustic "punk" record (which at the time was unheard of and not something that every band did, and every label wanted their bands to do and in fact I was the only person in the band interested in doing the record at the time...) The record was to consist of acoustic versions of songs from our first record, BITTER

TONGUES, songs that had been written but not yet recorded for our second record, TO ALL OUR FALLEN HEROES, as well as several songs written exclusively for the album. The reasons why this has always been my least favorite record by the band is due to two simple things: first, we recorded and mixed it in under two days due to budget and A LOT of corners were cut. Mistakes were left unfixed, the vocals and playing are rushed and not very good, and second: the other guys in the band weren't into making the record so they didn't put much effort into making the record and I think it all shows. However, a lot of the reasons why I don't like the record are exactly reasons why other people seem to love it — I'm told the sloppiness and roughness of it makes it more honest and more natural and the rawness of the record seems to really hit home with a lot of the people who really seem to love it. But again it's just my opinion...

Paul Johnson, Audio Learning Center

I have to start this with the disclaimer that this wasn't the worst release I've played on, but was kind of a funny story. A friend of mine asked me to be in his concept band called Manchild. The concept of the band was the lead singer as a fishy-smelling, social misfit who wore a giant baby's head (very well designed by a local animation studio) and a too-tight sweat suit and adult diapers. A simultaneous documentary being filmed about the band and the character of "Manchild" showed him hiding bologna on payphone receivers and putting dead fish in people's driers at the laundromat, among other things.

The recording of the first EP took place at Jackpot! Studios in Portland, OR, by Larry Crane, who, in addition to owning the studio, happens to be the editor of Tape Op magazine, one of the best recording magazines out there. Up until that point I'd been playing

in punk bands, and not taking care of my drum set, and it showed. Larry was flabbergasted when I showed up with my drum kit. In addition to all the drum heads being completely worn out and toneless, I had the wrong kick drum head on my kit; I had taken the front head (complete with hole) and put it on the beater side. I was poor enough not to want to buy a new drum head, and my drum set already sounded so shitty, that I didn't really think the kick drum sounded much worse when I put that one on. Since I knew next-to-nothing about drum tuning or recording at that point, I'm sure Larry was already regretting his choice of taking on this project. Luckily for me, and Larry, Steve West, the drummer from Pavement, had left a perfectly good kick drum head at the studio. So Larry had me put that one on my kick drum and away we went. After the recording ended, I left feeling only slightly ashamed at my lack of drum recording knowledge, and oblivious to how much more Larry had to work

to make the drums sound decent. When we went back in a few months later to record a full album, Larry politely passed us off to one of another of his engineers.

A few years later, after Manchild had long ended, ALC was recording our first album. Being followers of Tape Op magazine, Chris and Steve, the other members of ALC, had the latest issue with them. They brought me the magazine and thought I'd get a kick out of reading about Larry Crane revealing some of his worst recording nightmares, especially one about an unnamed drummer and the

headaches involved in that project. I read through the article until I came to the place where Larry was slamming the drummer who came in with the wrong kick drum head on his drum and how the day was saved by the Pavement drummer's spare drum head. I had to fess up, "Uh...guys, that was me..." I guess everyone has to go through some growing pains, though it's always a little more painful when everyone else gets to read about it!

Steve Rawles, Belvedere

I guess our worst album (just like a lot of bands I'm sure) is our first album. Because No One Stopped Us. We recorded the album in about three days in a basement on an 8-track. The 8-track busted halfway through and we had to relocate to a garage studio. The owner of the studio wore super tight jeans so you could see the outline of his, um....cucumber....so we called him cuke for short. We still play some of the songs live and it was OK for a first shot at a full length. It only got better from there I guess.

BRYAN, BOUNCING SOULS

I've been asked pretty often in interviews which is my favorite album and that is difficult because it's like picking a favorite of your own children. All of our records are special to me in their own way, but when approached with the 'worst record' question, one always comes to mind. In 1993 we released a CD e.p. entitled "The Greenball Crew e.p." It captured 7 one-word-titled songs spanning an era of a year or two prior to then. The songwriting was everywhere as the band was so young we were trying everything, as long as it kind of sounded like a song. The

WHAT IS YOUR BAND'S WORST ALBUM?

result was a mediocre and pretty random-sounding collection of songs that came out a year after they were written. It took us so long to figure out how and raise the money to release it ourselves that we were pretty over those songs by then. On top of this we had no idea about production and the recording really sounds like total shit. So we printed 1,000 copies, sold them as quickly as possible at shows, and moved on with our newer and better songs. We've since recorded over the masters whenever we did one-offs, like a single song for a compilation or whatever. We can never release another legitimate copy, which is a good thing. Unfortunately, people do make and sell bootlegs. I've also heard of original copies going on e-bay for some pretty big bucks. So ironic.

Brian, Break The Silence

Well...as of now, our first record "Near Life Experience" just went on pre-sale on Hopeless Records. The street date is February 10th, 2004. Since we do not have any other releases to compare this album to, it makes it kind of hard to answer the question truthfully. I would only hope that three records down the road we can look back and say that "Near Life Experience" is the worst album. But, using the phrase "worst album" does not mean that we think it is and was not a successful release. We do realize that because we recorded the album less than a year after we formed the band (actually, we were together, as a whole, for 8 months), we might have wanted to do some things a little bit different. But as we grow to know each other personally and musically, we will become a much better band. We have already noticed our progression and know that we have learned so much since the beginning of this band. I feel very confident that our progress will continue throughout the days. This should make for a better record each time. And thus, the reason for our first record being the worst.

Shawn, Calico System

Calico System's worst album was our very first ep we put out. The artwork was horrendous and the song's were recorded very very slow. I listen to it now and cringe! It was called "Question the Answer." It's not available anymore.

Meggars, The Casualties

My worst record: It would have to be Bruce Willis, The Return of Bruno. Why?: It's fucking Bruce Willis for Christ sakes. That's right, from Pulp Fiction and the Die Hard trilogy. Doing god awful covers like Respect yourself, Under the Boardwalk, and Secret Agent man. Bruce.. stick to acting, please. The photo on the inner sleeve is pretty fucking sweet though. What the fuck was Motown Records thinking?

(After clarifying the concept...)

Ahh, my bad. Hmm...I'll have to say Live at the Fireside Bowl. Why you ask? It just straight up sounds like balls. And it still sounds like balls even though Liberation Records re-released it with a new cover. And they did it without our permission.

CHRIS FUNK, THE DECEMBERISTS

OK, the worst album I played on was a "band" from Eugene, OR called the "Thurgical Seed", or "Liturgical Seed" or some hippy name...I was hired to play lap steel for the session/CD, and I asked for the music in advance. The songwriter told me no, and that I should "just come in and check the vibe and jam dude!" Oi! He was paying me, right, so "jam" I would. Though I didn't know if that meant I was supposed to smoke weed (which makes me

climb a tree and chirp like a bird) before the session, buy some hemp clothes and/or fast for a few days in a sauna or what.

Fast-forward to the session, I'm in the studio with headphones on, listening to the music (which was surprisingly not too bad) and I lay down my first track. Mind you I didn't know any of the chord or tempo changes, which in hippie music there are always like 20 of them within about 16 bars. As I am recording I can see the songwriter jumping up and down over the mixing board. "Dude! Dude! That was freakin' awesome! Let's try it one more time, and do that one thing you did, but go higher, and really, really go for it this time!" I thought to myself, "Higher? I'm already wearing a hemp suit, now I really do have to smoke the funny shrub?", and I answer, "Uh, ok."

The engineer, who is a friend of mine, was rolling his eyes. Despite my "transcendental" moment during the first pass at the song, the kid keeps me in the studio for about 3.5 hours, playing over and over the same 16 bars, "going higher" each pass. I was being paid by the hour, but I was losing my mind. Plus I looked the fool in my new hemp suit I ended up buying for the session. I finally nailed it, I guess, and he cut me a rubber check. I later received the project, which contained only 2 songs (as each song was about 20 minutes long) on the CD, with a DVD companion from a live show. The packaging said I was "in the band". For the record, I am not in the band, if you ever somehow come across this project. I do still on occasion slide on the hemp suit, smoke a bong in my bean bag in my crib, and chill with the String Cheese Incident on the headphones when I get home from tour...

Dick Dale

We don't have a worst album.....I always make a cd as if it is to be my last...

Dave Smalley, Down By Law

It's difficult to state that one record is the worst of one's career. The difficulty comes not because of any false sense that everything you've done is perfect, but because you know, as an artist, that somewhere, someone's favorite album is the one you're getting ready to diss. And that person will be completely bummed to learn that the singer for their favorite album thinks it's weak.

So, I'm not going to use the word "worst." What I'm going with is the term "Wish I Could Re-record That One." And I'm going with "Fly the Flag" by Down By Law. And even that comes with some mixed feelings. Some of the songs on there—"Breakout!", "Automatic," and "Nothing Good on the Radio"—are some of my favorite songs we've ever recorded. People wrote incredibly nice things to us about those songs. We still do "Nothing Good on the Radio" live. "Breakout!" was the first time we'd had a non-punk outside guest player—the tin whistle player that beautifully played the melody I poorly whistled to him in the studio.

But overall, I think it's got some songs that didn't meet the DBL standard. It has some depressing tones and attitude, which in and of itself isn't bad, I suppose, but just weren't very "us." The songs on "Fly the Flag" didn't match the energy and excitement we were able to capture on Down By Law albums like "punkrockacademyfightsong", "All Scratched Up!" or the newest album, "Windward Tides and Wayward Sails." For that, I take the blame as the main songwriter at that time. I think my head was in the wrong space to write. Plus, after leaving Epitaph where we'd been for many years, we were with a new, smaller label as a one-off deal, which didn't help. If I had the opportunity to re-record any album, it would be "Fly the Flag."

There were two positives, though. One was that it was the

first time I'd been able to record with Milo Todesco on drums, and Keith Davies on bass. Both are such incredible players — and their efforts on the album are startlingly great. Making that album under difficult circumstances was actually a real bonding thing, and those guys are my friends (and still part of the group) for life.

And, that album's overall anguished tone led to us kicking it back into gear for "Windward Tides." I think because of Fly the Flag's approach, "Windward Tides" is much more kicking and raging, back to the Down By Law sound—and Sam, Keith and Milo played and wrote brilliantly on that. So it's sort of the cloud with a silver lining thing, hopefully.

Brent, Facepuller

Well, we here at Facepuller world headquarters figure our worst album is the as yet unrecorded one. We would probably have royally screwed up, and not worked with the likes of Ken "Hiwatt" Marshall, Francoise "KHoize" Lafleur, Dave "Rave" Ogilvie, Anthony "fu" Valcic, or Brian "big bass" Gardner. Very bad decisions.

TODD BÄECHLE, THE FAINT

The worst Faint album is and will always be "Media". Bad lyrics sound worse with bad singing. File this under: there is poop falling out the singer's mouth.

NATE, GIANT HAYSTACKS

I spent 40 minutes last night digging through my shit looking for something I could call the 'WORST.' I don't own any bad albums. If I buy something I don't end up liking I sell it off. What kind of stupid ass question is this?

(After clarifying the concept...)

Oooh!!! That's a much better question. Last night I was looking around for something that I had just kept around for a cool cover or kitsch, but that I didn't really like the music. Came up empty. So far Giant Haystacks only has a 7" out and a full-length scheduled for late March, so I can't really knock that one.... yet.

BEN, HARKONEN

The worst record we've done I guess would be 'Harkonen' by Harkonen. We only have two full albums, so I picked the older one. 'Shake Harder Boy' has way more silly sounds added, I love that stuff.

Tom Ackerman, The Kite-Eating Tree

My worse record came when I was in a band called Skiploader. Altogether I have made 6 full length CDs and 3 EPs that have been nationally released with five different bands (Skiploader, Neighborly, Sunday's Best, The Jealous Sound, and The Kite-Eating Tree). Recently I have gone back and listened to a few of them (I got an iPod for Christmas) and was quite surprised by how many of them I still felt the tingle of pride for, especially considering when they were made and considering their budgets etc. Unfortunately, one particular record stands out as a tremendous flop, mostly due to the advantages it had and how those opportunities got squandered.

The Skiploader "From Can Through String" CD was re-recorded in the summer and fall of 1995. We were recording for Geffen Records and we spent over \$75,000 making that record. I think it has sold less than 2,500 copies to date. The biggest problem was that I lacked vision. I wanted the early SD post-hardcore sound (a la Trombino). I was also too concerned with wanting everyone to like me. Therefore, not only did I let the producer steamroll me on how he wanted it to sound, but when certain

members were not cutting the mustard, they should have been replaced (at least on the recording).

Basically, the performances were sloppy, the overall aesthetic was rudderless, and to make matters worse, I was going through a period where I didn't want the songs to be too repetitious: in other words, I killed all the songs by limiting the hooks. There are still a few songs that I like, and I'm proud of the lyrics, but for how much opportunity we were given, we really choked big. The record came out early February 1996 and by April the band was done.

JOEY, LAGWAGON

I think our worst album is "Double Plaidinum" because it lacks chemistry. It is the weakest sonically as well. We were in a transitional phase to say the least. We had just lost two members after playing together for 6 years. The album was poorly rehearsed and thrown together in the studio. It's a source of frustration for me because I feel the songs could have been better represented. Some of them are favorites of mine.

Marc Peralta, Laymen Terms

Our worst album is our first release, "An Introduction," for the simple reason that it was recorded primarily to get shows around Colorado. We had only been a together playing music for a month before we recorded the EP, so it is rushed at best. We love a few of the songs on the album, but we never imagined that the record would be released to international distribution.

Stobbs, Leatherface

I think our worst album is "Cherry Knowle" for no other reason than it has some songs on it that I still like but the recording is tut, and I can't stand listening to it because of the production really....sad!

MARSH GOOCH, THE 'LECTRIC CHAIRS

The 'Lectric Chairs worst album would have to be Sparkolounger (on Dionysus). First off, it's only got 6 songs, and second, it's over in like 17 minutes. Sure, there are some of our best "singles" on it: "Joe Cancer" is a rocker getting lotsa airplay (live piece in Toronto), "Janet Weiss" is a power pop gem (even though her highness "wishes it were a better song"), and "GST 483" might even be better than The Dogs' own version. I guess it's not necessarily our worst album, but maybe because it's our only album, it's both the worst AND the BEST 'Lectric Chairs album out there. Next album will have Loren "Dog" Molinare on lead guitar and vox — that'll definitely up the ante!

JOHNNY, MADCAP

Stand Your Ground. This is definitely our worst album. Not necessarily because the music is bad though. I think there are some great songs on that record, don't get me wrong, but most of the music was written by a guy no longer in the band who lacked heart and passion for what he did. Half the band that played on that record are now gone doing the marriage thing. Not me though. I live for rock and roll. I had just gotten in the band when we put that record out and was new to the process and really had no say yet... While we were recording this album, I remember thinking to myself, "Is he actually gonna put that lyric in a song". We have two records out now, and are about to release our third, "Under Suspicion", on Victory records. We have been through so much and have no regrets about our past or our future and this new record is going to define the band. I really don't even consider that first record a Madcap album anymore. It

was just some band that didn't know what it's about and is no longer around. If you want to hear Madcap, go buy our new one "Under Suspicion" on February 24th. "If you don't think about the future, you can't have one".

MICHAEL DAVIS, THE MC5 / DESTROY ALL MONSTERS

The second MC5 album, "Back In The U.S.A." was without a doubt the worst record I have ever done in my entire career. Both as a musician and on a personal level, that record wreaked havoc in my life. While some point out the virtues and breakthroughs that that album accomplished, my view is compromised in what I see as a failure to translate the bands' awesome energy onto vinyl at a time when it was most needed. From there I spiraled downward personally until many years later, when for some reason, I realized that "Back In The U.S.A." was actually a fine record, loaded with classic tracks, and a major influence with young aspiring musicians all over the world. Maybe it doesn't really suck.

Dennis "Machine Gun" Thompson, The MC5

"Kick Out The Jams", the MC5's live debut album, is probably the worst. I like it because the performance was captured for exactly what the band sounded like at the time, a rather large, loud, drunken, swaggering, sweaty pirate, but I didn't like the sound quality, and the first time I heard it I thought, "Man, is this sloppy or what?" If we had recorded the song "Kick Out The Jams" in the studio as the single, and left out the epithet, it possibly could have rose much higher in the charts, taking the album with it. Of course my hindsight is perfect.

TONY NO USE FOR A NAME

Incognito. We were writing lyrics about the horrors of the DMV and trying to force like 37 parts into each song....total stoner punk.

BUFORD O'SULLIVAN

Really impossible to answer. More like it, there were worst moments on records rather than worst records. "Record of Convictions" is the least selling Scofflaws record and cost the most to make, but I like some of it. I don't like when Sammy yells "Sexiest Skinhead in Outer Space" on the live "William Shatner" [Scofflaws Live Vol. 1], but the take is good.

Victor [Rice] asked lately, "If someone complimented you on something you didn't like, would you be upset?" My answer was as noncommittal as what I just wrote. Hey, just because I don't like something doesn't mean it isn't good, even if I did it!

Jon Ginoli, Pansy Division

I would say that Pansy Division's worst album is our third album, Pileup. I like it, but it's the one I revisit the least. For the most part it collects the 45s the band put out during our first 3 years together; we were putting out singles right and left on different labels, trying to get our name out there, and for the B-sides we usually did covers. I still like most of them, but I don't have the attachment to them that I have to our own material. Of course, people love cover versions, so it's actually one of our best-selling albums; unfortunately, with 12 covers out of 20 songs, it gave the misleading impression that we were a cover-oriented band, doing

sometimes kitschy remakes of other people's songs. Only one of the 4 albums we've done since has had any covers at all. But for our worst album, I think it's still pretty good.

Matt Collyer, Planet Smashers

I'm sticking with our second record "Attack of the Planet Smashers" (1997). There's some good song writing on the record but the mix is horrible and band performance is our worst on record especially my vocals. The production was supposed to make up for the lack of it on our first record, but after all was said and done the results were sub-par. Dave Smasher wouldn't agree with my choice but "tough luck buddy, they asked me". Bye.

NICK, PRETTY GIRLS MAKE GRAVES

Our EP. It has too much of a watered down pop punk sound on it. I not going to give you a bullshit disclaimer about us being in some weird headspace at the time of writing and recording it. We wrote those songs. Unfortunately, I think they are awful.

VICTOR RICE

Well, the thing is, - okay, it's God Bless Satan by Mephiskapheles. First off, I love those guys and had a great time being involved with the record. But the thing is, I have a feeling that some opportunities didn't come my way because people could have been nervous about that concept and didn't get it, basically. I know it sounds ridiculous but some people could have believed that I believe in satan, and just never brought it up with me because they would have felt silly. What I'm saying is that I'll never know what cool situations passed me over because that record made some people nervous...

ANDY, THE RIFFS (UK)

Hi Adam, Love to help except, believe it or not, in all our time we've done just the one album (yeah I know, even Pink Floyd don't take this long!). So I suppose it's our best and our worst. Our worst because it was rushed, the line up changed within 2 months of recording it, and there are some shit songs on it. The Best however because there are some excellent songs on it (we still play some), and although we have no control over it tracks are still licensed world-wide which brings us new fans every week. However, our next album will be even better - honest, so start saving to buy one now!! Cheers.

The Bopper, River City Rebels

Worst album.... This is an easy one. The River City Rebels signed to Victory Records early 2000. Half the band was still in high school. Our studio experience was limited and our song writing skills were even more limited. My influences at the time were very narrow, and took from the present a bit to much I think. The Record I'm talking about is Our debut "Racism, Religion an war...." Most of the songs were only half complete. verses are repeated in a few of the songs. The guitar sound is almost metal. some of the horn parts were nailed once and then sampled to be used next time that part came up in the song. The lyrics were in a young mind set. The record lasted a whole 24 minutes. The insert didn't blow me away. You can't hear the bass guitar to save your life! With all this said it's still my baby, it captured the time, and the excitement. I wouldn't change a thing. You need stuff like that to progress.

Johnny Angel, Swinging Erudites, The Thrills

Swinging Erudites, "Unchained Parodies". It may have had the two biggest radio tunes I ever did, but it was kinda goofy and dim and Weird Al-like. Swinging E's made a second disc "Pretentious Crapola" that was more arch and funnier. And sold less.

MIKE MONTGOMERY, THISTLE

We started Thistle when we were pretty young, and for two of us, it was the first actual time we'd ever played music with other folks in a 'band' setting, so our first record, "FRICTION SHIFTER" definitely is our worst effort so far (and hopefully ever). First time in the studio, first attempt at writing a batch of original tunes, etc, etc. There are some highpoints, or endearing moments at least, but the influences are definitely worn on our sleeves on that one. Took us until we were older than 16-18 to start figuring out what we wanted to do musically.

BUCKET, THE TOASTERS

I'd have to say DLTBGYD, because even though it sold in excess of 50k copies it was an album that carried a lot of expectations. When it couldn't come through, the label (and the band) were pretty disappointed, so I'd have to nominate that one. It's not that we didn't like the tunes etc, in fact some of them over-achieved, got lots of radio play as well as tv commercials, but the release of that record (Oct 1997) coincided with the start of the "great ska collapse". It would have been interesting to see what that record might have done if it had come out two years earlier.

Dan, Until the End

Our worst record is our most recent "Let the World Burn." There are 2 songs, at best, that are decent. I don't know what the fuck happened. None of us were into it when we were writing and nobody even wanted to keep going. We pulled it together enough for the record, but nobody felt too great about it. It sucks because we all kind of reconnected after the recording session, but it was too late. There are positive qualities, just not a lot. For one, after all of the songs, it ends. That's great.

ISHAY BERGER, USELESS.I.D.

Our worst record has to be our first LP called "Dead's Not Punk." We recorded it in Israel back in 1997 with a friend engineering for pretty cheap in a pretty fancy studio, so what we ended up getting is a very bad sounding mix cuz our good friend used some mic's that didn't work for the drum tracking and since we didn't own a tuner back then, some of the music isn't even in tune. It's a real shame. We just licensed it to this label in Japan and it sells a bunch, but there aren't even any good tunes on it.

Editor's Note: Sorry for all the different fonts. I know it's distracting, but I just learned how to download fonts and now I'm hooked. While I'm apologizing, I'm also sorry this issue isn't too strong, and sorry for all the farting/poop references. Yes, I know it's scatological and immature. I assure you, at the offices of READ Magazine, we while away the days sipping cognac, debating topics your puny, less-developed minds couldn't even comprehend. Like why poop and farts are smelly.

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Chicken Soup for the Bouncing Soul

Advice by Bryan of the Bouncing Souls

I wanted to know what your advice is to be a band that has been together for two years and as soon as we played our first show we got a killer response and even signed to an Indy label! but we have our problems like we're not really stage savvy anymore (we've all been in touring band before but we haven't seen a stage in 2 years). and so I want to know if there's any advice you can give us and if not, if you could just hit our site surf it some and let us know what you think, you and the rest of the souls are our heroes and it would mean the world to us if any of you could just give us a hey in our guestbook or a post on our forum, we really take all our motivation from the souls directly for our sounds and the lyrics come straight from my life so if you have any advice you could give us that'd be great! Thanks for the Times,
Justin Edwards

Hey Justin,

Thanks for the kind words and congratulations on the success so far of your band. As far as "stage savvy" goes, the most important thing is not to worry. It's natural to be nervous of course, but there are two extremes on stage to avoid. On one end of the spectrum, there are people who are either so scared being "cool", or who put forth so little effort that it sucks to see them up here. They are the ones who either turn their back toward the drummer for minutes on end or just never look up or engage the crowd at all. On the other end, are the people who have actual "moves" and are so slick it sucks to watch them too. That's rockstar shit, it's just not natural. For us, we started by playing at our own parties and friends' parties. The atmosphere was always that there was no separation between the band and the crowd, we were all at the same party together, we are all involved in sharing the moment and making it the best time we can possibly have, together. So that's my advice on 'stage savvy'. Just chill and live in the moment. See no separation between yourself and the crowd. There never should be. This Zen approach carries over to every detail of the band. Writing, creating imagery to express what you want to convey, etc. Good luck and have fun!

Dear Bryan,

Maybe you can offer some advice. My friend is getting out of control with alcohol - really out of control. He's been pissing off all our close friends and no one wants to hang out with him anymore. When I bring it up, he says I'm overreacting because I'm sXe. I'm thinking of saying fuck you to the friendship and walking away, but maybe I'd feel guilty about it? I mean, I'd still see him at shows... Don't know what to do.
-sXeric

In general, the best policy is to do everything you possibly can, never turn your back on a friend as long as there is something you can do. Do your very best to properly resolve every conflict as they arrive in your life, approach them as challenges, meet them



with a calm and even mind, and grow as a person with every one. Unresolved conflicts travel with you forever, manifesting themselves in some form of negative energy, psychologically and even physically sometimes. So in the case of your friend, I believe that each of us is here to have our own experiences, insane as some of our

paths they may be. Personally I've needed to make similar mistakes as your friend to experience and learn certain things about life, and myself. This may be just something he has to go through. In other words, this might be some kind of "stage" Another guess off the top of my head is that he's bummed about something. Life can really suck sometimes and different people have different ways of dealing with it. Nothing beats a good crew of friends though for getting through it and making it deece. If he's really acting out, he may be reaching out. Perhaps he wants/needs attention. Try giving him good attention, as friends. (These are just random guesses as I am not there.) The one and only way I know to deal with a situation like this is by communication, the most open and honest you can be. It may sound cliché but you and your pal there need to have a serious heart to heart (when he's sober). It's important that you approach this with all the love and patience you can muster and maintain. As soon as the first voice raises or the first brow furrows, communication's tunnel squeezes shut little more. Careful not to end up taking opposing sides of a bullshit line. Calling ourselves "Straightedge" or "drunk punks", skins, etc, these are all ways of identifying ourselves, finding ourselves and our place in a fucked up society. Sometimes we forget the truth, that we are not separate, but one heart. Not to sound like a pussy or nothing, but love really is the answer. In love there is patience, there is no separation, nothing to react against or fight over. Handle this situation with patience and love, and if then it doesn't work out, you will be resolved in the knowledge that you did your best and did the right thing.

Thinking about getting a tattoo, maybe the crass sign on my leg. Or maybe an 8 ball. Suggestions?
Cheers mate, Ian

A picture is worth a thousand words, and your tattoos will be with you for the rest of your mortal life. My favorite tattoos are the ones that mean something to me personally, a lesson learned or a great moment or era remembered. Maybe a Crass symbol embodies your personal politics perfectly, in which it'll serve as a reminder of this time of your life when you discovered this, when your heart is most awake and seeking the truth. That is something you never want to let die. A Crass tattoo will always remind you. I really can't say and maybe I'm getting too deep here. Shit,



life's fuckin short, don't sweat it too much, do what you want, think it through, but there's also something to be said for spontaneous and maybe not-so-good tattoos. They are also reminders of a great moment. The circumstances surrounding you getting a tattoo also become part of what it symbolizes, or reminds you of. It's about you and for you, not about impressing anyone else. Make sure you find a decent artist, it's great having a really good tattoo here and there. I have good tattoos and crappy tattoos and I gotta say I don't regret any of them. As they say, it's better to regret something you have done than to regret something you haven't!

This may be a question you can't answer, but what the hell. My boyfriend is in a band and will hopefully be going on tour sometime in the future. I have a huge problem with jealousy, which I realize is an issue I have to work on on my own. I do trust my boyfriend, but he's never been on tour away from me for over 2 weeks. Is it a given that musicians cheat on their significant others while on tour? Is there any way I can make myself feel better about him being on tour surrounded by lame groupie sluts? It bothers me to even think of his band having girls on the bus after shows. How do the wives/girlfriends of the Bouncing Souls deal with this separation and jealousy (if any of them are jealous at all)?
Thanks, Adriane

Well, first of all it is not a given that all band guys cheat. A lot of them do, but plenty of them never do. To drive yourself crazy worrying about something you can't control is no way to live. It's an especially bad policy to ever try to control another human being, it only causes unnecessary stress and tension for both you and that person. The only thing you truly possess is your Self, it's what you entered this world with and what you'll leave this world with. How do you want to spend YOUR time while he's away? Don't waste a minute of it worrying and stressing about things (people) you can't control, those are moments of your own life wasted. See this a great chance to work on this lesson, find serenity and happiness. Enjoy your time off!

I am tired. I am tired of being unappreciated. I am tired of being talked back to and cursed at. I give respect and hope to get it in return but often to no avail. Can you guess my occupation? I am a teacher. I spend most of my Sundays working. I wake up at 5 am every weekday and by the time I get home I am yawning. I often fall asleep as early as 6:30. I put in 100% and get back very little. Often I wonder, why am I in this job? I make shit money and I get no respect. My principal is a bigot and crazy traditionalist. I went into teaching because I was a punk as kid and hating being treated like shit because I was different. I hated high school with a passion but returned to help "misfit" kids like me realize that they are actually quite normal - unlike how they feel because people treat them differently.

I wanted to teach kids about the past so that they could make a better future. But really they can give a shit about History. Most of them just care about our crappy commercial culture. Most have little depth. My decision to be a teacher was about not selling out. But I'm not sure that my decision is so true or realistic anymore? I could have easily went to law school but that is bullshit. I didn't want to be one

more lawyer destroying our legal system to make a buck. I wanted to do something that truly matters, that could truly change the world - one child at a time of course. I don't feel like I'm doing that. I just feel tired. As someone at my age with a totally different perspective, what do you think?
—Cat

Love creates will, will creates energy. If you're doing what you love, you will never feel tired. Sounds like you're cracked right now. No need to overreact, getting cracked comes from being put in toughest situations, ones that try your innermost self and push your limits. Cracking is a blessing in disguise, it's only then that the spirit grows and true wisdom is gained. You will learn great lessons (about yourself and thus life) from how you respond in these situations. In your letter, you are reacting, that's ok to vent, but it's not the whole truth, you're outside of your center. In being so tired it's easy to lose sight of why you got into this in the first place. The fact is, there are kids in your school that you definitely can help, I know it. Making a difference in just one kid's life here and there would make all the rest of the bullshit worth it, this is what drives you. In the immediate sense, I'd say you need some kind of rest, a mental break to recharge your batteries. If there is no actual time you can spend away from work, look into meditation. It may sound corny to you, but I've heard just one half hour to one hour of meditation can be the equivalent to hours of sleep, it can regenerate you, recharge your batteries - just a suggestion. If not sitting meditation, some form of meditation, some activity that puts you into that zone of no-thought. Your mind needs rest to balance as much energy as you need for this big job. Somehow you must do this.

As I recall, in every class there was always one teacher that everyone liked. If it's not you, find that person, how do they pull it off? There's a lot to learn all around you. Look for what's GOOD in the pop culture these kids are into, and almost anything can be tied into what you're teaching, a history lesson, with effort and creative thinking. You must first be inspired yourself about history and why it's important, that enthusiasm can be infectious. With time, effort, patience, and above all love you can create the ideal learning environment of your dreams. I believe that anything is possible, because I've created my own world out of nothing; you have to be able to embrace the world you see as something you have to power to change.

Basically everyone on this earth has to work, and no one's job is absolutely perfect, there are ugly sides to every occupation. It's easy to fantasize about escaping your particular lot in life, but in any occupation there is work to be done and lame shit to tolerate. Don't lose sight of why you got here in the first place. If this indeed is your calling, do the best job you possibly can, remember good work is it's own reward. I wish you all the love and strength you need for this massive undertaking. It's not unappreciated, it is so important.

Visit the Bouncing Souls at bouncingsouls.com and chunksaah.com. Get their great new album "Anchors Aweigh" on Epitaph (Epitaph.com)



Snowdonnas

You guys remind me of Galaxie 500 mixed with Magnetic Fields and a healthy dose of Rush. And maybe a little Morrissey. And what the hell, let's throw in some Paula Abdul. Would you agree?

TIM: Eh, to some extent. I think you could find the attitudes and egos of all those artists in Snowdonnas.

BYSSHE: That sounds like a beautiful trainwreck... surely as good as any description.

OTTO: Paula Abdul! Thanks! She is so talented.

NIKI: If we're talking "Forever Your Girl"-era Paula Abdul, then yeah, there's a palpable influence there. Everything else we've shamelessly ripped from UK bands of the 80's and 90's.

Snowdonnas strike me as the cuddling type. Do you cuddle your groupies, or do you look for the exit immediately afterwards?

TIM: Ooh, tough question. There was one time, no, that wasn't me. Actually I've never had the groupie experience. If I did I would certainly case the room for a bright, red flashing "EXIT" sign.

BYSSHE: Yep, we're a bunch of snuggle-bunnies and huggy-bears. Although a good spanking does the trick now and then.

OTTO: We look for the exit right away so we can get our post-show man-cuddle on.

NIKI: We really have to play that by ear. Sometimes we require discipline from the groupies, sometimes it's a love fest.

What are the worst things about your home state, Texas?

TIM: The weather...heat, humidity, and the size of the state...maybe.

BYSSHE: Good-ole-boy attitudes, fake tans, fake boobs, fake cowboys, fakery in general. There are some great earnest and tangible people here, but sometimes they are lost in a crowd Texas-style glitz.

OTTO: Wow, I was just going to say it gets a little hot here sometimes.

NIKI: You know, to be honest, I quite enjoy living in Texas. There's definitely an unattractive side to being here, namely the things Bysshe mentions, but you can find that anywhere you go by and large. Aside from the blistering heat and sweltering humidity, it's not so bad.

When's the new album coming out? What are your favorite and least favorite aspects of it?

TIM: Who knows when the next recording will be, but we are writing songs and we like some of them.

BYSSHE: Favorite thing is working on new material, least favorite is figuring out what to keep and what to cut.

NIKI: We're still working on new material, so we're not really sure when a new album will be ready for mass consumption. Nobody's pushing us to meet any deadlines, so it'll be ready when it's ready I suppose. Currently, I really enjoy exploring this direction the new material seems to be taking. I'm not sure whether there's anything that I don't enjoy about the new stuff, but I'm sure that answer will change as soon as we start tracking.



Snowdonnas don't know how to take a pic that isn't blurry, so here's Poison.

What's the strangest thing a fan has ever said to you?

TIM: "Can I have your guitar pick?"

BYSSHE: A guy made me chat up his girlfriend via cell phone after a show... I don't think she was that star-struck.

OTTO: If only I had a story...

NIKI: During the post-show love fest (or spanking), it's hard for our fans to get a word in edge-wise. Usually it's just muffled crying as we all hug each other tightly.

What was your worst gig?

TIM: Curtain Club about 2 months ago, due to the fact that the night before the show I had a dream the whole show went to shit. Objects caught fire, band members left the stage during performance. In reality it probably was a good show, but dreams are real too.

BYSSHE: Andy's Bar... Soundguy was plastered, wandering around nowhere near the board. Bad sound and lots of feedback.

OTTO: Yeah lots of feedback for just a vocal mic and one on the kick drum.

NIKI: Easily Andy's Bar in Denton, TX. The stars didn't align for us that night. It was just bad all around: the sound guy was otherwise focused, we turned in a sub-par performance, practically zero attendance... actually that zero attendance thing may have worked to our advantage that night.

You guys seem really good-hearted and calm. Name five things that really fucking piss you off.

TIM: 1. Me, 2. Snobs, 3. Lies, 4. Clear Channel Communications, 5. Sloth

BYSSHE: Intolerance, Impatience, Impoliteness, Unkindness, lack of compassion

OTTO: Lack of perspective, the inability to flawlessly perform a specific task that I have executed literally a few hundred times, tiger traps, not having my own private android to wake me up at 5am after she's ironed my slacks, the 24 hour day.

NIKI: My list is a slightly amended version of Bysshe's: intolerance, impatience, ignorance, unkindness, lack of compassion

Who are you voting for?

TIM: Hhhmm. Undecided among the Democratic candidates since the Green Party seems to have a very weak showing for this election. May go Independent.

BYSSHE: If Samuel L. Jackson would run, I'd vote for him. Someone with some real intelligence and the cajones to get things done. Oh yeah, I should have listed George W. in the worst things about TX category... Did I list Ignorance in 5 things that piss me off? No? Make it 6.

OTTO: An(y) opponent of George W Bush.

NIKI: An amalgamation of Wesley Clark and Howard Dean would've been my ideal candidate. Clark strikes me as fiercely intelligent with some sound ideas regarding foreign policy. Dean has already established a pretty impressive track record in Vermont regarding budget balancing and fiscal policy in general, skills the Union is in desperate need of right now. But since it doesn't look like either one of those guys have a real shot at a party nomination, all I know is that I'm not voting for Bush.

Snowdonnas, your music makes me feel warm n' fuzzy. Too warm n' fuzzy. What band would be a good antidote to a Snowdonnas overload?

TIM: Ironically a band that has a name very similar to ours... The Donnas. We're all guys, they're all girls. I write and sing about girls, they write and sing about boys. We have keyboards and they don't. We're light, they're heavy. I whisper in your ear...you get the idea.

BYSSHE: Opeth. Rammstein. Something to go smashy-smashy to.

OTTO: Destination Venus.

NIKI: Considering only bands that have a conventional rock line-up: Hanson. They may very well be the mathematical inverse of Snowdonnas. While we leave you warm and fuzzy, Hanson will leave you cold and confused, much like a hermaphrodite Eskimo prostitute.

Describe your newest album using a haiku.

TIM:

shallow demons break
I can't sense with my own ears
thick, crushing sounds swell

BYSSHE:

melodies unfold
swirling with melancholy
wistful songs of loss

OTTO:

what's this then, old man?
that scene is so over now.
you live in the past.

NIKI:

cacophony blurs
with a somber melody
the road home is gone

Snowdonnas are on Ballyhoo Withdrawal (ballyhoowithdrawal.com). "Over Now" is an awesome album. Visit the band at snowdonnas.com.

Q&A with Sunwheel Psychedelic

Your publicist tells me you're exceptionally smart. So let me ask you: six pounds of apples and seven pounds of pears cost \$20, whereas seven pounds of apples and six pounds of pears cost only \$19. How much are apples per pound?

I pay her handsomely to say these things. Anyway, the apples sell for \$1 per pound, the pears \$2 per pound. Both will soon be valued higher than shares of Martha Stewart Omnimedia.

Sally is now three-fifths Susan's age. A year ago, she was half Susan's age. In five years, she will be four-fifths Susan's age. How old are they now?

Sally is now three, Susan is now five. Tell them to look me up when they come of age. For now they can write to me here at Bellevue Psychiatric.

Jim is four inches taller than Jeb, who is fifteen pounds heavier than Doris. If they are standing on the moon, what is the population of Canada?

I don't know! If Elvis had arrived before Jesus, who would be King?

What makes you cry?

I'm a real sucker for soap operas and chick flicks (just kidding!). Boys don't cry, remember?

Who would win in a fight: Hawkwind or Blue Oyster Cult?

Is this with or without Lemmy? My money's on Hawkwind in either case. I'd like to see 'em team up and beat the Bush-Cheney Posse to a pulp. Amen!

Plug your stuff!

Log on to www.sunwheelpsychedelic.com for free downloads, b-side rarities, press, media and exclusive pics from the Burning Doves record release party! Also, look for my interview with with MK Magazine in the upcoming issue, available at all Tower Records and Borders nationwide. Peace!

Editor's Note: This dude is smart! He got those first two questions right!

New Black

RESPONDS TO MY REVIEW OF THEIR ALBUM!

AND WE RESPOND TO THEIR RESPONSES!

AND THEY RESPOND TO THE RESPONSES TO THEIR RESPONSES!

Try to follow... (Original review in bold)

New Black

New Black

Thick Records, thickrecords.com

There are some bands that would be awesome if it weren't for one aspect.

Liam (vocals/bass): ...of this there is no disputing.

While that usually holds true with respect to vocals or lyrics, New Black nearly messes up a perfectly kick ass new wave goth-punk sound with an overused, loud annoying keyboard.

Liam: I'm a little confused as to how this would be a "new wave goth-punk sound" without the keyboard. It's obvious that you aren't a fan of keyboards (I feel the same way about the saxophone), but explain to me what makes it "new wave" or "goth-punk" without the keyboards? Rachel (and Nick's) keyboards are a pretty integral part to the writing/arrangement of the songs, and would not be half as good without them. I also believe that the record has an incredibly balanced mix, and that the keyboards are never loud or annoying.

READ: You misunderstand. I'm not saying there should be NO keyboards, just that the keyboards on the record are too overused. You actually don't need keys for new wave or goth, though they have become an identifiable factor in recent times, which is why retro bands today overuse them to death. Like, bands that want to sound "80s-ish" (The Network, Atom & His Package, The Frequency, etc) try hard to incorporate that keys-heavy whacky Devo sound, but Devo was just one small slice of the 80s musical spectrum. I'm not saying you guys are overusing them to hammer home the point that you're new wavey, but... well... subtlety isn't a bad thing. And a lot of times, the keys on your album aren't necessary. Your songs are already great without them - it's like icing on the cake, only your icing is feces-flavored.

Rachel (keyboardist): Gee Adam. I'm getting the feeling you don't like my parts very much. I don't think there's anything I can do to help you embrace the beautiful sounds of my DX7—you either like it or you don't. What I can tell you, is that in this band, keyboard is never an afterthought. We write everything as a four-piece...I can't think of an instance where we've finished a song and then thought, "this could really use some keyboards...let's write a part for them..." The songs come from us working as one, and the reason New Black works so well is because each of us put all of our influences and parts equally in the mix. I suppose I've played in bands that thought my keyboards should be off playing quietly in the corner. But you've never heard of a single one of them. Get it?

Whether it be the pop-punky "Angels with Cockroach Wings" and "Hot Box" or the Siouxsie & the Banshees-esque "Last Wave", the majority of the songs totally kick ass.

Liam: Thanks.

EXCEPT that they have to add these lame keys.

Liam: Again, what is lame about the keys? Are all keyboards lame, or only ours? As I said, if the beef is with the instrument itself, please make that clear. If you just don't like ours, what don't you like about it? I think just calling something "lame" is pretty poor criticism.

READ: I don't like that the keys have an atonal, high-pitched but off-kilter and echoey tone, like an out-of-tune toy piano placed in a church. On some songs it works, like "Robotobor", which is a dark death-disco type song, and the keys are sparse and yet carry the melody. Or on "Hot Box", which is a straight forward, fun rocker, and the keys show restraint. But on other songs, you're rocking out and then all of a sudden it's like a Casio on "pipe organ" blasts through, and since it's loud in the mix and perpendicular to the melody, it really distracts from the song. Hey, I like keyboards in general. You're talking to a huge Rush fan, bub, and don't you forget it.

Rachel: "...like an out-of-tune toy piano placed in a church." Thank you! "Perpendicular to the melody?" Huh. They call that harmony where I come from.

I think they consider it spooky and it gives them a dark edge, but in fact they sound like a Castlevania game.

Liam: Maybe there's a little Castlevania in a couple of songs, but I challenge you to name them to me. I think Rachel does an incredible job of staying away from the overused retro-organ sounds.

READ: The opening track, "Put It To Bed", is Castlevania overload. I keep expecting Simon Belmont to start singing. Not that I know what his singing voice would sound like, though I'm assuming it'd be like Peter Murphy. "Last Wave" is an awesome song, in no small part because of the great vocals and driving drums, but the Middle Eastern melody on the keys, in that dorky register, really takes a while to digest. On "Beatrice" and "Booze Olympics", while the keys are softly behind the other instruments, they've also got that too-spooky video game sound that's at odds with the feel of the songs. "Twisted Lips" (one of my favorite songs) sounds like it could've been even cooler with a more drum n' bass keyboard sound, and the grand piano work sounds too exuberant for the spoken word vocal delivery (at least

until the ferocious drums and guitars kick in). Plus the piano reminds me of Blue Oyster Cult's "Astronomy", though I suppose that's not a bad thing.

Rachel: Eh. It's silly for me to try to argue my parts with you. I write them based on what I've learned over my 15 years as a musician and lifetime as a music lover. I figure that if the keyboard arrangements I write work for Nick, Liam, Patti and Greg Norman (our engineer over at Electrical Audio), then I have nothing to worry about. They're four of the most talented musicians I know, and they'd never let me get away with anything that would hurt the sound of the band as a whole.

Guys, you don't need it.

Liam: Yup, yup we do. If that's a deal breaker for you, then tough titty.

You have pounding wet-sounding percussion, dark guitar riffs, cool gothy Siouxsie-ish vocals.

Liam: Thanks again.

You need spooky keyboards like Rush needs a theremin.

Liam: Rush is pretty good, and I can think of a couple of instances where I believe that a theremin would benefit their songs.

READ: How dare you. Do not dare even suggest any Rush song is less than perfect the way it is.

You guys rock, but you're in danger of blowing it.

Liam: I'm glad that you think that we rock, but we ain't blowing a thing. If you're looking for one of those incredibly unique Guitar/Drum/Bass bands, you should check out AC/DC, I hear that they are awesome.

READ: They are awesome, my friend. Indeed. But I do like quirky new wavy punk bands, and you guys are one of them. I'm not a punker-than-thou traditionalist; in fact, my favorite punk album of the past 5 years is Intro5pect's debut. (It's like drum n' bass and keys done in a catchy street punk style.) I'm just saying you need to reign in the keys. Don't make them your selling point or your differentiating quality; let it work with the songs. Let it flow. Don't be "That Great Punk Band With the Spooky Keys". Instead, be "New Black - that great band, period." Treat your keys like a woman - touch her buttons gently and you will make beautiful music together. Bang her and she'll make a lot of noise until your head explodes. So I have spoken, and so it shall be.

Rachel: Adam, sometimes a woman wants to be banged. Sometimes she likes things loud and hard and out of hand. Maybe touching her buttons gently just isn't sufficient to set her off. Beautiful music isn't always about what's polite, proper and inoffensive. And last I heard, noise in the bedroom is a good thing. New Black works because we're loud and wild and fun. Every single one of us. And if it ruins the CD for you, then by all means, give it to somebody who will like it better. When you start your band, you're welcome to rein in the keys. In my band, we're turning them up.

New Black's album is on Thick Records (thickrecords.com)

Q&A with BURNTHE8TRACK

Burnthe8track - why do you have smooosh your name together? How do I know if you mean Burn The 8 Track or Burnt He 8 Track or Burn The Hat Rack? What's with all these emo bands smoooshing their name together? You think you're too cool to use a space bar?

Derek (vocals): Actually the name is not smooshed together. Burnthe8track is in fact a Canadian word used to describe Band who destroys all lame interviewers. By the way, what the fuck is Emo?

While playing around with your name, I came up with Burn the Rat Pack. I think that's the best one, because it conjures up Sammy Davis Jr. and Ol' Blue Eyes writhing in a fiery hell. Will you change your name to it and give me royalties every time you use it?

You are going to have to talk to the label about that one. I am sure something can be worked out though. Perhaps we can use calipers to exchange your current eyeballs with two glass marbles, get you all liquored up on Jack Daniels and have you perform show tunes while tap dancing on hot coal.

What kind of 8 tracks did you own? Rush, right? You wouldn't actually burn a Rush 8 track, would you?

Actually the United States of America claimed the rights to Rush while negotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement, We have stuck to burning such classics as April Wine, Loverboy and the Knack.

Let's talk about your music. You guys seem pretty emotional. Why is that? From what I understand, you guys are from Canada, which is a wondrous wonderland of cheese and wine and dancing in the streets. Break it down for me.

Emotional indeed. We are really trying to secure our success through the "Recently dumped by High School sweetheart" market.

What was your worst gig?

Last year we played a showcase at North by North East in Toronto. Right before our set the P.A. released a 25 minute atomic blast which cleared the room. We did however play an intense 40 minute set in front of the sound man.

How do the other bands on Abacus treat you? Cuz they seem like they could blow you over with their farts.

Unfortunately Abacus has yet to schedule the 2004 Rock and Roll Fartathon, However our substitution of meat products with Chick Peas and Lentils has allowed us to create the world's first Anal Pipe Bomb. I think our chances are good.

How has this interview inspired the direction of your band?

Will you write a song about me? How would the lyrics go?

I think that I will change my lyrical stylings from emotional to verbal diarrhea.

You have been a doll. Anything you'd like to ask me?

Do you get paid for this?

Plug your shizzle.

Actually we don't have shizzle in Canada, however, our first Abacus Release, "The Ocean" hits the stores June 1st. We will be touring Canada during May and Early June, Eastern U.S including New York during the end of June and early July, and then heading to the West Coast U.S in August.

Thanks a tonne for the interview.

kittenpants

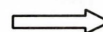
www.kittenpants.org
SPECIAL INSERT!

Once again, *READ Magazine* brings you the very best of kittenpants. In this special eight-page insert you'll find just a few samples of the awesome hilarity available online at www.kittenpants.org.

Hey kittenpants-ers!

When you're not busy *READ*-ing, check out **kittenpants.org** for all new interviews, articles, letters, and fun fun stuff.

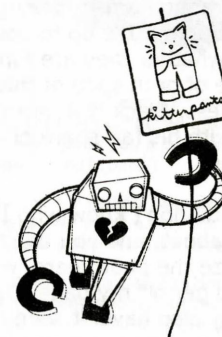
Now available: kittenpants Tees! If you like broken hearted robots, you'll love our new all cotton blue and pink kittenpants t-shirts, with a robot that looks like this



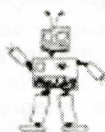
The first kittenpants book is coming this fall and we are currently accepting submissions. Plus this year has several kittenpants events in store – join the kittenpants army to get regular updates of events and activities coming to your town!

Got something to say? Send an email to **kittenpants@hotmail.com** with your stories, letters, ideas, lists, or amusing anecdotes, and maybe I'll print it in the next issue. Maybe I'll punch you. Either way, beats masturbating to reruns of *SMALL WONDER*.

Right?
xoxo,
kittenpants



The KP contributors in this insert are:



Kittenpants



Franky Pelvis



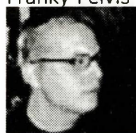
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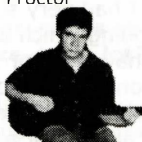
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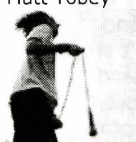
Uncle Sloppy



JAHGJTCJ



Mr. Toast



Green
Mamba



Steve
Douglass

MOSTLY... by Franky Pelvis

THIS AIN'T YOUR DADDY'S PUNK'D

Every time I watch the three episodes they made of that show (and only on MTV is three episodes "a season"), it's the same "Yo bitch, you got punk'd" line at the end of the prank. Well now that the show's been cancelled, I've thought of all these good alternatives.

Friendly: Excuse me, bitch? I regret to inform you that you've been punk'd.

Passive-Aggressive: You want me to say you didn't get punk'd? Fine. I mean you did, but fine, whatever. I don't care either way.

Evasive: You don't even want to know what you just got got'd.

Double Negative: Let me put it this way, bitch. You didn't NOT get punk'd.

Excessive: Yo bitch not only did you get punk'd, but you are ugly'd and fat'd and you have no friends'd. Sucks to be you, amigo.

Supernatural: I see a tragic event in late August. There is a name like "Tim" or maybe "Tom". Is this making sense? I see wings... maybe a bird? Oh, your husband Tom died in a plane crash last Summer? Well Tom says "Yo bitch, you got nunk'd!"

INTERVIEW: Michael Ian Black

By kittenpants, and Corn Mo

For those of you who are out of the fun-and-awesome loop, Michael Ian Black, who you may know from the now-defunct MTV sketch comedy show, "The State" (or if you're my mom, probably from the TV show "Ed") is also one third of a comedy triple-threat called Stella. With Michael Showalter and David Wain, he has made several short films and introduced the world to some funny, funny shit, often incorporating corpse-fucking and/or dildo-slapping. It's up to you to decide whether they are funny because of or in spite of this fact. Regardless, Black is a rare comic talent with his fair share of groupies.

If you still don't know who I'm talking about, and you don't recognize the photo here, well, fuck you and get off my page, Dad. You probably also haven't seen him in the best summer-camp comedy ever, WET HOT AMERICAN SUMMER. I asked Michael if we could interview him, and also why he thought so many people were finding kittenpants via the Google search "Michael Ian Black gay." His response:

Who is this 'we' you keep referring to? As in, 'We'll send you some questions.' Your little rinky-dink web site is obviously the product of one person, you, and boasting of this immense staff is not going to fool or impress anybody. As far as the person who searches your site for 'Michael Ian Black gay,' that was me. Mystery solved."

Awesome.

cm: Do your friends call you Michael or Mike or Michael Ian? Mike Black sounds like "right back". Why not Michael Black? What about Special Dark?

mib: My friends generally call me Mitch or Magic.

cm: Do You like Billy Crystal?

mib: I have complicated and conflicted feelings about Bill. But we have a long history. We came up together in the seventies. In fact, when we were starting out at the Comedy Store in L.A., Billy, me and Robin Williams used to all room together. Billy was a terrible snorer, as you probably know, and he had a habit of giving unwanted hand jobs.

cm: Do you know you're good looking?

mib: Are you making a pass at me?

cm: Do you wear shorts as short as the ones you wore in Wet Hot?

mib: No.

cm: You ever fight with the other two "Stellas"?

mib: We rarely fight, but we are often passive aggressive, which is just as good.

kp: Which one of you has the shortest temper?

mib: Sho.

kp: The sweetest disposition?

mib: David.

kp: The prettiest eyes?

mib: None of us have pretty eyes. Mine are boring, David has glass eyes, and Showalter's eyes are dead.

kp: The smelliest feet?

mib: Don't know.

kp: The best taste in music?

mib: Showalter will say he has the best taste in music, but all he listens to is the Byrds.

kp: Makes the best pie?

mib: I make the best hair pie.

kp: Makes the best dickfish?

mib: You can't make dickfish, asshole.

kp: Tells the best stories?

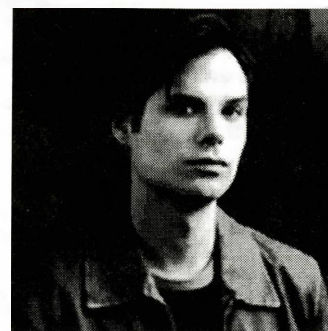
mib: Rudyard Kipling.

kp: Which was your favorite Stella short film to make?

mib: They're all kind of equally boring to make, but I liked making the one in the woods with Paul Rudd because I got to use my son in it. He was six months old and had a bad cold, but that didn't stop from us stripping him naked and holding him upside down in forty degree weather. I'm an awesome dad.

kp: Is there a "dildo master" on set?

mib: Chet is the dildo master. He trained in France with the renowned Dildo Master Claude Genet. We're very, very lucky to have him.



kp: Do you ever have arguments over the scripts, and if so, who wins?

mib: We don't really argue that much. None of us care enough.

kp: I hear you're a good poker player. What's your game?

mib: I am a poker player, but I am not a good poker player. My favorite game is seven card stud, but I'll play hi/lo, Hold 'em, Razz, etc.

kp: Have you ever been in a tournament?

mib: Yes. I've been in many tournaments and I rarely do well. Because I lack what poker players call "heart." It's what other people call "balls." Another way to put it would be to say I'm a pussy.

kp: How much ass do you kick at Scrabble?

mib: I am an excellent Scrabble player for an amateur. This is largely due to the fact that I am constantly doing anagrams in my head. For example, kittenpants can be anagrammed into "stink patent" with an "n" left over. You get the idea.

kp: What is the first album you ever bought?

mib: The first album I remember specifically buying was Wham's "Make It Big." I didn't have much money and so I had very strict criteria for deciding which album to buy: it had to have four or more top ten songs on it. I already had "Thriller," so Wham was pretty much the only album out at that time that fit the criteria. Don't get me wrong - I loved Wham.

kp: What is the first concert you ever attended?

mib: Three Dog Night at the Garden State Arts Center when I was about six or seven. My lesbian mom took me. The first concert

that I went to sans parent was Billy Joel at Madison Square Garden. The first actual cool concert I went to was the Psychedelic Furs. I went with my girlfriend and this guy Craig who had a crush on my girlfriend. Fuck him.

kp: What's the last book you read?

mib: Just finished "The Mark of the Assassin" by David Silva. Trashy spy book. I go to the library a lot because it's free and it's a great place to hit on senior citizens.

cm: Who's your top five bands?

mib: I don't like music, but if I had to pick the five most important bands to me over my lifetime, I would rank them as follows: 1. Husker Du. 2. Bob Dylan's "Blood on the Tracks" 3. The Thompson Twins just because they're awesome 4. Radiohead's "OK Computer" 5. N.W.A. because they taught me how to fuck shit up.

kp: What's the best joke you heard this year? Was it this one: Q. What's brown and sticky? A. A stick!

mib: Yes, it's that one.

kp: What's fun about making a TV show about a bowling alley?

mib: Primarily, the paychecks. And the free lunches.

cm: Did you go to your prom or skip it?

mib: Went to Junior prom, skipped Senior prom. And it wasn't because I couldn't get a date. Okay, it was because I couldn't get a date.

cm: Can you foot juggle?

mib: No, but I can make incredibly realistic fart sounds with my asshole.

cm: What do you do on Sundays?

mib: Mini golf and go-carts.

cm: Who cooks at home? Do you get take-out a lot? Do you like pizza?

mib: My wife cooks at home. She's a very good cook, but she only knows how to make turkey meatloaf. It gets very monotonous.

cm: Jack Black, Frank Black, and Michael Ian Black have to unlock a portal that is locked from the other side. Frank Black has a key hand, Jack Black has wings, but the bionosphere will

only allow Blacks with 3 names. How do you open the portal?

mib: Knock really loud and ask the janitor if we can come in. If he says no, bum rush him, then cock slap him into unconsciousness.

cm: Do you like celebrity riddles?

mib: This was my first celebrity riddle, and I really enjoyed it. It was especially satisfying to finally figure out the correct solution.

kp: Can you tell us everything we ever wanted to know about Capt. Monterrey Jack.?

mib: That was a skit we did on "The State." The character was created by pulling a title out of a hat, which was how we sometimes wrote skits. The title was "Captain Monterrey Jack." I don't know what more there really is to say about the character other than it was FUCKING HILARIOUS!!!

kp: Are you still mistaken for one of the Kids in the Hall?

mib: Constantly.

kp: Which one?

mib: We never get that far. They'll say, "Excuse me, weren't you in the Kids in the Hall?" I say, "No," and that's usually the end of it.

kp: Do you have any questions for kittenpants?

mib: Are we almost done?

kp: Yes.

Thanks to Michael for the interview. Check out, "The State" on DVD. Better yet, visit the next Stella show, and buy the short films. If that ain't enough, watch Michael reflect on how much he loves the 80's (and soon, the 70s) on vh-1.

OUTGOING MESSAGES by Dennis Proctor

With the increasing popularity of answering machines and voicemail comes an increasing need for hot, clever, offensive, informative or just plain funny outgoing messages. Feel free to use these outgoing messages as you please, without having to pay royalties!



- I'm not here, so have a beer on me [sound of beer being poured into a glass]. Too bad beer gives you a bad case of the farts! [fart sound] (beep)
- Thank you for calling Taco Sauce Eaters Anonymous. We don't exist, but wouldn't that be some shit if we did? (beep)
- Hi, and thanks for calling [Name]. Seriously, I really appreciate the call. I appreciate it so much, that I'm going to do you a favor, friend. In the movie Die Hard, the "terrorists" aren't really terrorists, they're smart crooks trying to trick the feds into helping them open the vault. Oh, and at the end Bruce Willis kills all the bad dudes and goes home with Bonnie Bedelia! Now you don't have to see that flick! (beep)
- Howdy, Bung-hole! The 21st century called! It said to email me! (beep)
- Greetings, fellow headbangers! This is Ricky Rachtman. I'm probably at a Dangerous Toys concert, or just maybe I'm banging at a Vinnie Vincent gig. Or perhaps I'm even rocking to some Faster Pussycat! Psyche! This is [Name], not Ricky Rachtman. That dude's a fruitball! (beep)
- Kids are dying all over the world and you're wasting your time playing around with the goddamn phone. You should be ashamed of yourself. (beep)
- I won't lie to you, caller, times is tough. Times is tough all over, and that goes double for the answering machine industry. So, it shouldn't come as any surprise when I tell you that I fired my answering machine four months ago. It was a real beauty too, with all the bells and whistles. It was like something outta Star Wars or some shit. Anyway, now all I got is this one that accidentally murders every caller at the sound of the beep! (beep)
- John? (beep)
- [Machine gun sound effect] Ah! They got me, pallie! My 'ol friend the mob done me wrong. [Machine gun sound effect] I can't believe theys done me wrong after alls the love I's given 'em. [Machine gun sound effect] Ah! That smarts, pallie. Keep ya nose clean, kid! [Machine gun sound effect] (beep)
- Hello. Thank you for your call. Due to you calling, we are closed. Please do not ever call back. [fart sound] (beep)

CAMPUS LIFE by JAHGJTCJ

College life isn't so much about "college" and "life" as it is about "vomiting" and "STDs". Some say college is the stepping stone towards a job and a nice house. Others say it's more like a stepping stone toward a liver transplant and a host of eating disorders. Well, not so much a stepping stone, but rather a brick that you throw through a BMW's windshield in a drunken rage. The following is a guide to dorm life on a college campus. If you don't live in a dorm, this doesn't apply to you, you filthy, commuting bastard. You are a dirty outsider.

Roommates

It's good to know where you stand with your roommates from day one. To test their breaking limits, do stuff like leave the Spice Girls CD on repeat for at least a month, or urinate on their faces while they sleep. Your roommates might say, "Stop that!" or, "I'll fucking gut you and drape myself in your intestines," but it's standard procedure, really. My roommates only communicate to me through hisses now.

Elevators

I think elevators are in some union where they get the hours of 6 to 12, holidays, and "the days where they don't feel like fucking working" off. If you happen to be carrying something heavy they are under contractual obligation to not work. If you do happen to get on the elevator, never look at what floor the elevator is on because this will prompt it to stay there until Pauly Shore is nominated for an Academy Award.

Eating

Your food choices are limited. The only form of currency in a dorm is Ramen. Eating in the cafeteria is an option, however keep in mind that a team of scientists is watching you through a one-way mirror monitoring your behavior, waiting to see who snaps first and begins acting like the "black guy" on the Real World.

Know your Area

If you live in a dorm, the distance from point A to point B suddenly becomes longer. Any place farther



than a 10-minute walk is grounds for sending a postcard. Getting up to go to the fridge is a job often decided by drawing straws. Going to class is something that requires a team of sherpas and a sponsorship from Timberland. You will begin

using any excuse not to venture to class, such as, "the gravity feels weird today" or, "my finals aren't for another 20 seconds."

Drinking

In college it's easier to develop a drinking problem than it is to catch SARS at a massage parlor. There are very good odds that you will wake up four years later with a, "what the fuck just happened?" look on your face. This is a direct result of the alcohol. Unless you were just in a regular coma. In that case, this article has nothing to do with you. Please stop reading and go get hit by a bus again because Carrot Top is still doing those AT&T commercials.

Your Social Life

When you come to college be sure to learn a musical instrument. This is the key to getting the ladies...into your room to tell you to shut the fuck up. You'll see quiet hours posted everywhere, but as a college student you have to look past signs and rules and look for the deeper meaning. In this case, the deeper meaning is, "Buddy! You should jam on your guitar in the study lounge until you learn every note of ACDC's 'Shook Me All Night long'."

Choosing a Major

Let's face it: the economy is in trouble, due primarily to the fact that Bush has spent half the nation's budget on ceramic NASCAR collector's plates from the Home Shopping Network. These days, "majoring in Liberal Arts" is another way of saying "majoring in living in my parents' basement eating stale pizza crust." Going to med school means you'll graduate just in time to die and have your corpse cut open and examined by other med students. Law majors only exist to be hated by me, as do business majors and philosophy majors. In fact, I think being hated by me is the most popular major. Majoring in

computer science says, "Hi, I'm Asian."

Study Habits

Prepare to spend a lot of money on books from which you probably won't read more than a chapter. No matter what a teacher tells you, do not read the pages he gives you. If (for some reason) you do read them, deny it when asked. Otherwise the teacher will ask you to give an in-depth explanation on how the book related to quantum differential mechanics. Trust me. The books are better used as beer coasters, or kindling in the large nazi-esque book burnings that college students partake in when they get bored.

Professors

Most teachers are looking for one specific answer to any given question. It is much like playing MadLibs except there is only one right answer and it might be a noun, adjective, or the diameter of Pluto.

The Wrong Answer

Professor Sullivan: "If you had infinite chances in an infinite number of worlds what would you choose to do with your life?"

You: "I think I'd like to be an astronaut."

Professor Sullivan: "I'm sorry, but the correct answer is 'boy toy for your teacher.' Now put this on."

Cheating

If you aren't willing to sleep with your teacher, cheating will become essential for passing your classes. There are all sorts of intelligent ways to cheat ranging from text messaging, to sending smoke signals with your bong. Just be careful about the more paranoid teachers. If you make eye contact with them you will be considered a cheater, even if you aren't taking a test.

Office Hours

Never ever talk to your teacher after class. You will be trapped in a time warp; your only means of escape being a flux capacitor and a smooth-talking Michael J. Fox. Any opportunity a teacher has to discuss his meandering ideas with you is nothing but a trap to kill you with sheer boredom and save themselves the chore of having to grade you.

**CLASSIC FOLK WISDOM
REINTERPRETED FOR THE 21ST
CENTURY
by Steve Douglass!**

Opinions are like assholes, and you're an asshole.

When you assume, you make an "ass" out of "u", you "asshole."

It is better to have loved and lost than to be as big an asshole as you are.

Everything that can go wrong will go wrong, because of what an asshole you are.

Make like a tree and shut your damn mouth, you asshole.

Heaven won't have me, because you're an asshole, and Hell won't have me either, for the same reason. Fuck you.

If it ain't broke, you'll probably break it eventually, you asshole.

Your pants must be aliens, 'cuz your ass is out of this world [Note: this timeless classic can never be improved upon, only passed down through the generations as the golden nugget it is.]

**WORST BIRTHDAY EVER
by Mr. Toast**

Early morning of my 37th birthday, I awoke, as always, in my Aquaman footie pajamas. I bolted downstairs to see what Bell Biv Devoe had left for me. No, I don't actually know BBD, but my parents understand what a huge fan I am, and convinced me that BBD sends me presents every year on my birthday.

Why my parents thought Bell Biv Devoe would send me tail lights for an 84' Le Sabre is beyond me, but if it was from BBD, I was determined to squeeze every ounce of fun I could out of those tail lights. And boy did I ever. I even took a bath with them, I was so excited. I totally lost track of time and my mom had to drag me out of the tub, screaming bloody murder.

Anyway, I grabbed my lunch, tied on my Keds, popped those tail lights in my Earth, Wind & Fire backpack and headed off to my job at Chase Manhattan Mortgage. As I chained my Huffy around the pillar outside my building, Frankie Perkins, the Eastern Regional Manager and all around stinkyface, told me he liked my backpack. But he said it in a real smart-alecky way, so I told him he was pooppy and ran into the building.



When I got into my office, my secretary, Janice, told me that our weekly board meeting had just started. Oh no! Chairman Bob Stenson was gonna clobber me for sure. I grabbed my day planner, laptop, and an Apple-Mango Hi-C fruit box and ran to the conference room. As I was running, Frankie Perkins intercommmed the entire floor that I made babies with Marcie Scoggins! Gross! I turned to yell at him but then tripped and skinned my knee. I started crying. This was the worst birthday ever!

Janice iced my knee and called my Mom. Then my Mom called Frankie's Mom at the Nursing Home and she made him apologize, but I know he didn't mean it. He's such a dum-dum. Anyway, after Janice put a band-aid on my knee and gave me a lolly I went to the board meeting. I don't know if it was sympathy or what, but that skinned knee and knowing Frankie was going to be demoted to Assistant District Manager must've lit a fire under me. I really impressed the board. They are going to be laying off the entire Eastern office and condensing it into one central location, and they want ME to be vice president of the entire mortgage division! My new office is right next to a sweetass roller rink! Awesome!

Actually, none of the above actually happened. I may be delirious from a massive loss of blood. I guess I was in a shootout with the ATF over some farmland. I would've had some of them, too, if I had a real gun and not a super-soaker filled with holy water. I guess that only works on vampires.

I guess the lesson to be learned from all of this is that the ATF doesn't hire vampires.

**Nine Things I'd Like to Say
to Scott Valentine
by Mr. Toast**

1. Sometimes mice tell me secrets in exchange for tiny headbands.

2. Who's that creepy little girl in horror movies? Got me, but the bitch owes me 85 cents.

3. I will be your father figure. Put your tiny hand in mine.

4. Laughter is like potatoes, its round and hot.

5. Contrary to popular belief, Skittles are not an ideal post-workout snack.

6. There's a kitty in my pocket. No...there's no kitty. I don't know why I lie like that.

7. If there's ever a weird baby floating on my ceiling, I'm not touching it.



8. What's the deal with Frankenberry? No grapes, no nuts!

9. I don't know when, and I don't know how, but Stephen Dorff knows, and he will find you.



EXPOSED
by Sam Forsyth

The letter I received was short and sweet. Darlene Carter asked me to be a member of her television crew for the weather program, Wake Up, Earth!. I was very excited. It was my dream job. It was exactly why I majored in television and minored in weather maps. So I left my tiny town in New York for the bright lights of Tallahassee, Florida.

Darlene was a strikingly beautiful woman with legs that would kill if they could. I could tell right away that sooner or later I would like to meet with Darlene on a casual basis and discuss non-work-related topics.

She showed me around the building. It was a very sterile place. Every wall was white, as was the carpet; very sterile. I didn't think that I would ever be able to learn my way around.

Darlene took me into the main studio where they were broadcasting some breaking weather news. She turned to me and asked if I could get her and myself some coffee.

"I promise you this day is not nearly over." She said, "You're going to need some coffee. You remember where the break room is right?"

"Certainly." I said, even though I had no idea. I thought I remembered a break room of some sort down the hall. I opened the third door on my right about half an inch before a man on the other side stopped me. He told me that I didn't have clearance to get into the room, but he sounded very worried. He had a desperation in his voice that made me want to know more.

"What's in that room?" I yelled through the door. "What the hell is in that room?!"

I kicked the door open. It was just what I'd feared: it was the control room. But its horror did not lay in what kind of room it was. The real horror was something more horrible than I would have ever imagined.

"Oh the horror," I screamed, "the God-forsaken horror!"

Chained to the chairs and workstations were hundreds of robots that were being forced to run the station. I ran back to the studio to beg Darlene for an answer.

"How the hell could you let this happen, Darlene?"

"It's business." She calmly replied.

"But it's the year 2097, Darlene! Robots are our equals now. They are no longer our slaves!"

"To you they may be equal. To me they will always be slaves. I will not change. And if you start to feel the same as I do, then I see a future in your future. You and I, we could rule all of cable weather if you stay and do not tell. Otherwise, you should turn around now and go. But be warned: you will not live long."

I knew what I had to do.

If I choose to turn and run, go to page 89.

If I choose to confront Darlene, go to page 103.

If I choose to join Darlene, go to page 42.

MOSTLY...
by Franky Pelvis

I CAN'T RELATE TO GEORGE BUSH. Seriously man, what was all that about Iraq seeking "Weapons of Mass Destruction-Related Program Activities and Significant Amounts of Equipment"? Jesus Christ, is that a mouthful or what? Imagine talking to other dictators and being all, "We don't have WMD's but we have a fucking shitload of WMDRPASAEs."

The other dictators would be all, "uh, whatever, dick."

The president I like was Clinton. The only thing he pursued was Blow Job-Related Activities, and the only place he had Significant Amounts of Equipment, was in his pants.

HAIRCUT 100
by Green Mamba



Okay. I admit it. I went to Supercuts. I got a sort of shitty over-the-ears/Beatles/70's kind of cut. I was going for something different, but this is what the highly trained Supercuts professional decided would look best on me.

When I got home, my roommate took one look and said, "Nicholas Bradford called. He wants his haircut back!" Then he laughed for, like, 20 minutes. He was, of course, referring to the character that Adam Rich made popular on TV's "Eight is Enough".

What a dick.

I went to my room, and sure enough there was a message on my answering machine from Nicholas Bradford! No, not Adam Rich--the character he portrayed had somehow achieved consciousness and given me a phone call! The message went something like this:

"Hey this is Nick. Seriously, man, I need my haircut back. These stupid cunts I live with won't shut the fuck up about it--and that's just Willie Aames and Van Patten. Listen, I'm just an ethereal 11-year-old, brought to life by my own sheer force of will. So I'm not gonna kiss your ass or threaten to kick it. I need my haircut back. In a few years I'll be doing coke and sporting a dangly earring--you can have it back then. Tubular, bro!"

I thought about it and bleached my bangs. Fuck yeah!

INTERVIEW: Keith Gordon

By kittenpants

It's finally happened. The website-about-Keith-Gordon-that's-not-really-about-Keith-Gordon finally has an interview with Keith Gordon.

The former teen star of ALL THAT JAZZ, DRESSED TO KILL, CHRISTINE, and BACK TO SCHOOL, has moved behind the camera to direct movies like THE CHOCOLATE WAR, A MIDNIGHT CLEAR, and most recently, THE SINGING DETECTIVE.

Next up is BILLY DEAD with Ethan Hawke, and for this film, the two have put a spin on film finance. Money is being raised through an initial public offering (IPO); they've offered 900,000 shares of preferred stock of Billy Dead, Inc.--a move which may be genius, and may be risky. Gordon says:

If it doesn't work, we get the project back after 180 days and then we go on and go back to the usual dragging it around and trying to get the usual kind of money. But I think it's very exciting. If it works, man, it's going to be a magical new way to make independent movies.

kp: So now how long has it been, and how has it been going? Magical?

kg: It's going well, although, frustratingly, I'm not supposed to do interviews right now about the financial side. We're in what's called the 'quiet period' of the IPO, and under government regulations I'm supposed to shut up about that side of things in the press for right now.

I can talk about how much I love the project, how much I'm looking forward to working with Ethan again, and all that kind of stuff.



Gordon as "Arnie" in CHRISTINE

kp: How does it compare to fundraising for The Chocolate War?

kg: The Chocolate War was the easiest of all my films to get made. Spoiled me for life. A couple of meetings with Jonathan Krane of M.C.E.G., and I was making a film. If only it was always like that.

kp: So you didn't sell chocolates?

kg: I did sell Chocolates in grade school, but not yet to make a film. But I'll try anything!

By the way, it looks like 'Chocolate War' will finally be out on DVD late this year. At least that's what MGM says.

kp: What else can you tell us about Billy Dead? Have you begun casting?

kg: Well, no one else is 'set', but Jennifer Connolly has read the script and is interested in playing the other lead. It would be a great stretch for her. I haven't approached anyone about the other roles yet. Those two are so much the core of the film.

kp: Tell me about the difference of working with an actor as a fellow actor, and then as a director. I'm thinking particularly of Robert Downey Jr., but I guess Wally Ward is another example. (And technically Nick Nolte, although I had to watch "I Love Trouble" 3 times before I saw you. That was difficult.)

kg: First, I am very, very sorry if you watched 'I Love Trouble' three times.



Gordon as "Arnie" in CHRISTINE

kp: Not as sorry as I am.

kg: To be honest, I've never watched the whole thing once. I only took that job so I could get close enough to Nolte to give him the MOTHER NIGHT script. And it actually worked!

It's always nicer working with someone you've worked with before, whether as an actor or as a director. You know each other, you're comfortable. When you don't know each other, there is that awkward 'first date' feeling that can last quite a while. Actors can often be defensive with directors (with reason!), so it's great if you can start from a place where the actor knows you're not a jerk professionally and personally.

kp: You don't have to name names, but have you ever worked with anyone who was so difficult that you will never work with him/her again?

kg: Oh, yeah. Hard to do so much without that happening. But only a few. Actually, when I'm casting, I take personality and reputation into account. If someone has a bad habit of making everyone around them miserable, I won't cast them. Period. Life's too short, and making a movie's too hard. I've passed up chances to get projects made when it became clear a star actor would make the process a nightmare.

kp: Is there anyone you really hope to work with?

kg: The list would be a mile long, but right off the top of my head: Meryl Streep, Emma Thompson, Ian Holm, Ben Kingsley, Anthony Hopkins, Nicole Kidman, Julianne Moore, etc. etc. Probably 50 names I could put on that list. Not to mention people I'd love to work with again; Ed Harris, Billy Crudup, Ethan Hawke (obviously), Jennifer Connolly (ditto), Nick Nolte, Michael Caine, etc. etc. (and if anyone reads this and feels left out, get over it! I just wasn't going to sit here and write down every name of everyone I've liked working with. This is just a representative sampling!)

kp: I think you overestimate the number of celebrities who read kittenpants. Thanks! Also, please put Billy Crudup in every movie. Not just your movies - he should be in all movies. He's really fantastic.

kg: And SUCH a nice guy! Everyone on the set was in love with either him or Jennifer or both.

kp: Tell us a Bob Fosse story!

kg: Well, Fosse was famous for playing with actors' minds to get them into a certain emotional state. I think that's what he was doing with me at one point. I was 17, and not very sexually experienced. So there I was being molested on camera by the three actresses playing the strippers, one of whom was actually a man, and another who was drunk and kept telling me how she wanted to fuck me when we were done. Creepy, and not the least bit sexy.

And then Fosse comes over and says to me, "It would be great if you could really get hard. It would look more real."

Well, that was the LAST thing that was going to happen, so I felt like a total failure as an actor and as a man. Looking back, I realize that was exactly what he was going for--getting that panic in my face. Not the nicest trick, but it probably worked.

kp: Do you still speak with Brian DePalma?

kg: Haven't talked to him in a while. We had lunch at the Montreal Film Festival a few years back.

kp: How much of an influence is he?

kg: He was a very big influence. Not just some of how he worked, but I knew nothing about the technical side of film before working with Brian. I learned a lot about 'film-grammar' just being around him. But I also liked the way he worked with actors. Very often, after we'd have a 'print' take, he'd say, "Let's try one more, more angry (or funny, or sad, or whatever)."

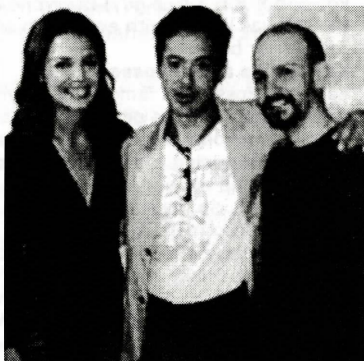
It really was freeing as an actor, because you didn't feel like you had one shot at it. He always printed two or three very different takes. That made for actors feeling more brave. If one approach to something sucked, no biggie.

kp: What other filmmakers influence you?

kg: Well, Stanley Kubrick was probably the biggest single influence. '2001' is what got me interested in films and filmmaking.

kp: How did you feel about Eyes Wide Shut?

kg: I loved 'Eyes Wide Shut', although I think it was an unfinished film. Kubrick was so famous for editing and changing right up to the last moment. '2001', and 'The Shining' both had scenes cut by Kubrick AFTER their opening weekends. So, when he died before the post-production process was finished, it meant that we probably didn't get close to what would have been his final version. But it still had more ideas; visually, thematically, etc. than just about any 5 other films made that year put together.



THE SINGING DETECTIVE'S Holmes, Downey Jr., and Gordon.

kp: Tell me your guilty pleasures. What's the movie that you watch every time it comes on TV, that won't be on AFI's 100 Greatest list.

kg: Believe it or not you're the second person to ask me that this week! I don't have a great answer, because A) There's not much I can imagine being ashamed of watching, and B) There are very few movies I watch "every time it comes on TV."

The only ones I go back to are ones I love, and I don't see any of them as guilty pleasures--even if someone else might. I've certainly enjoyed my share of dopey, sleazy, or socially unredeeming movies - from "Die Hard" to "Grand Prix" to "Behind the Green Door" to "Animal House", but I can't think of any that fill me with shame to admit, or any I've gone back to see repeatedly again.

kp: Any general advice for me in regard to film festivals?

kg: God, I've had so many great times at festivals. The chance to see so much interesting work by different people is always exciting. I often like smaller festivals better - less press, less pressure, less competitive vibe. Sundance has become a market instead of a festival. Telluride is really nice. I had a great time at Aspen. Montreal is maybe the most interesting North American

festival - they get so many films from all over the world - things you'd never see otherwise. Toronto has great audiences, and is really well run.

kp: JAWS II made me want to be a teenager. What did it make you want to do?

kg: It made me want to STOP being a teenager! I was the youngest of all the actors playing "the kids". The rest were all over 20. I was 16. So they were all having affairs, partying, living the wild life on location. And I was everyone's "kid brother."

Then one of the actresses would come to me at 2am to cry, because one of the guys had dumped them, but then laugh when I suggested myself as a possible replacement. I spent that whole film trying, unsuccessfully, to lose my virginity. Ick.

kp: Did you make out with Donna Wilkes?

kg: Yeah, for about 2 minutes one night. We'd sit around and she'd ask me about acting (I had done theater in New York, so I guess it seemed like I knew what I was talking about.) One night I kissed her. She kissed back. It was nice.

kp: Sometimes the most beautiful girls are the loneliest.

kg: I thought it was the start of something. It wasn't. She quickly moved on to one of the 'grown-up' guys. Sigh...

kp: What is the first record you ever bought?

kg: "Paperback Writer/Rain" by the Beatles (45 rpm). "The Beatles' 2nd Album" (LP)

kp: What was the first concert you ever attended?

kg: The Kinks, at a free concert on Central Park.

kp: Are you still a Yaz fan?

kg: Well, yeah, in the sense that if I put on their albums I still enjoy them. I don't play them as often now...

kp: Can you dance?

kg: Not well enough to do in public. Another pathetic white boy...

kp: Do you think you'd ever make Back to School 2: Graduate School?

kg: I guess I could play a teacher. I'm a little long in the tooth to play a grad student.

kp: What about Back to School 3: Ph-3D?

kg: Now THAT I'd pay to see. Rodney's eyes bulging out right into the audience's lap!

kp: Do you think you'll take up acting again, in a major role, or in a project that you don't direct or produce?

kg: If somebody offers me something good - sure. I just don't have the time or energy to chase it. I'd love to be Sean

Penn, and have great directors say, "Hey, do you want to come do this great part in my movie? We'll pay you a lot, and work around your schedule." But for me, it would mean going back to multiple auditions and call backs, and being willing to put my directing and writing projects on hold at a moment's notice.

kp: What if it's a buddy cop movie?

kg: Ummmm, probably not.

kp: What if it's MY buddy cop movie?

kg: Now that's a whole different story.

kp: You can be the "wacky coroner". Or the "wacky crime scene photographer". You have your choice of roles, wacky or unwacky.

kg: How about letting me be the "wacky killer"? Nothing more cathartic than playing a good, creepy heavy.

kp: What's it like to have an entire web-magazine dedicated to you which essentially has nothing to do with you at all?

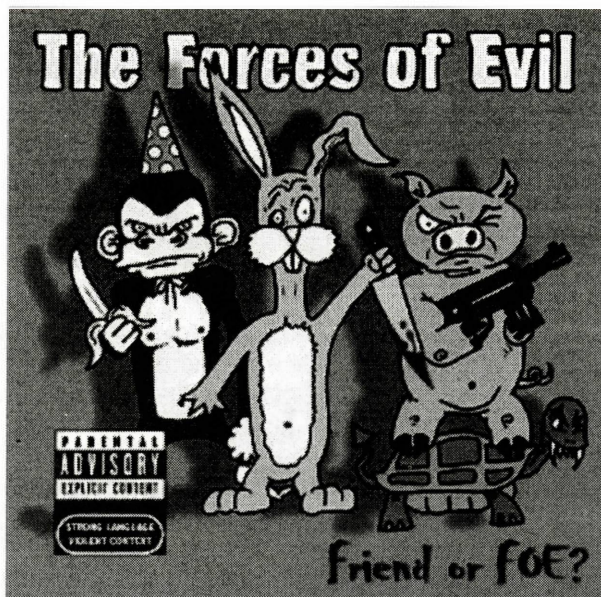
kg: Very surreal, a great honor, and you'll be hearing from my lawyers.

kp: Do you have any questions for kittenpants?

kg: So many, but to start, the name?

kp: Yes, that is the most popular question...

Thanks so very much to Keith Gordon for the interview, the advice, and for kicking Zabka's ass on that dive. Read the full interview on kittenpants.org, and look for Gordon in my upcoming buddy cop movie...



Aaron Evil of **FORCES OF EVIL** (and Reel Big Fish)

By Bryan Kremkau

So you've got this side project now? Are you getting sick of Reel Big Fish or something?

Uuuummmmm I don't understand the question. I'm just doing the forces of evil stuff, I don't know what Reel Big Fish has to do with it.

How did this band of Evildoers come about?

I was at Jeffries Fanclub's last show and I asked Justin, Derek and Chris if they wanted to make a new ska band. Kinda like picking up the widow at the funeral.

If you had to explain the difference between Reel Big Fish and The Forces of Evil to a retarded child, what would you say?

I don't know why you keep bringing up Reel Big Fish (are you trying to start a rivalry between us or something?) but I think we kick more ass and keep it way more real than them (although I am a fan). And we actually like ska punk music, go figure. Anyway, if I was asked to explain the difference to a retarded child I would probably use lollipops.

You guys aren't on a label right now correct? Are you going to pursue that or do you just want to release your music independently?

We are about to sign to Zamba/Jive cuz that ska/punk music still sells I guess. We didn't mind doing it ourselves but it will be nice to have our music more readily available in record stores even though it's all about downloading now days.

Which Ska band gets the hottest groupies?

Well the singer of sum 41 got Paris Hilton and I don't know if she'd be considered a groupie but he wins either way. Also I know Sugar Ray gets hot groupies with fake boobies. We in FOE have really really really cute and or hot girlfriends (with no fake boobies).

Was The Forces Of Evil created to mock the many angry bands in the music scene today?

Uuummmmm not really, we ARE an angry band...if you didn't notice! We started cuz there's too many people making too much bad ska out there!

Which is more evil:

George W. Bush or George Bush Sr.: George W
Christopher Walken or William Dafoe: Christopher Walken

Ernest Borgnine or Eric Roberts: Eric Roberts

Scott Baio or Willie Ames: Tie

Bill 'O Reilly or Herpes: Definitely not herpes, it's the gift that keeps on giving!

What would Jesus say about your bands?

My grandma said we make little baby Jesus sad. My dad also said that he is worried about my immortal soul burning in a lake of fire. And that is AWESOME!!!

You've toured around the world, which city smells like a pile of shit? Asbury Park right?

We've mostly just toured the southwest so far but outside the backdoor of the brick house in Arizona smelled pretty fucking terrible!

Which band has the worst live show?

I'd have to say radiohead, fucking boring self indulgent musician bullshit!

What's next for Forces of Evil and Reel Big Fish?

What exactly is your obsession with asking me about Reel Big Fish? How the fuck should I know what they are doing!? We are gonna be re-releasing our album with no typos and we're gonna play some shows and write new songs and put out albums and sacrifice virgins to our dark lord...you know, the same stuff bands usually do.

Any final comments, plugs, tour dates, etc.?

Check out our website: www.theforcesofevil-ska.com and go see Suburban Legends, they are on tour all fall and they need your support!

More of Bryan's interviews at skapunkandotherjunk.com

jordan knight

It took a number of years between the end of NKOTB and your first solo album, and there tends to be a lengthy lag between albums. What have you been up to in these in-between years?

I had a second solo record done but Interscope and I parted ways... so that meant back to the studio to start all over and negotiate a new record deal.

What can your fans expect from the new solo album, coming out this summer?

This new solo record is full of R&B / Hip Hop/ and POP. It's very 2004 with less ballads and more upbeat delivery.

Most of the former New Kids try to avoid or shed that image, but you seem to embrace it, and your latest project is a New Kids remix album. What can you tell us about it? Are the songs, like, crazy drum n' bass hardcore techno remixes, or are they fairly loyal to the originals?

The remix project is a way to thank the fans for sticking around all these years and give the old hits a new twist (flava). It was fun and it came together quickly. The music is a nice mix of pop / r&b / and new school hip/hop. The vocal arrangements are very similar to the originals except for Hanging Tough.

How have you changed personality-wise from the NKOTB Jordan of 12-13 years ago?

More mature (I'm a dad now) and more focused on the business and showing what Jordan Knight can do.

Which NKOTB release are you least proud of? Which do you feel was your worst song?

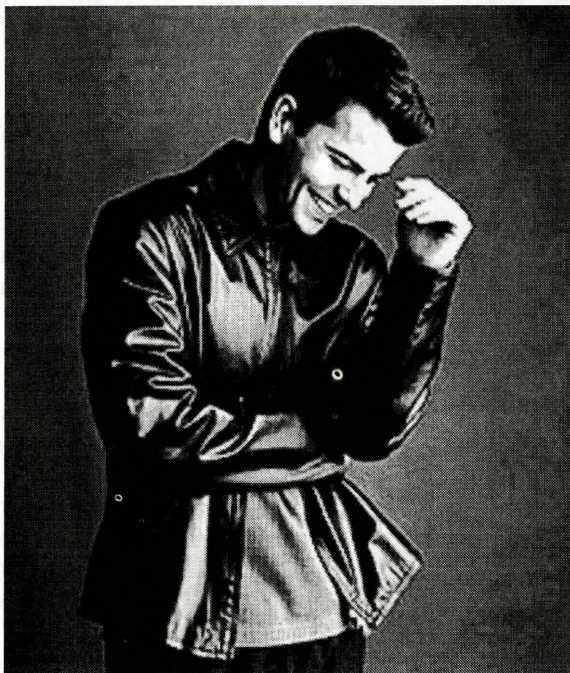
The Christmas record [*Merry, Merry Christmas*]. Worst song was Funky Funky X-Mas.

Besides the one where Donnie fell through the trap-door, what was your worst gig?

That one... can't think of one.. maybe some of the early shows in '87.

Who in the band did you hate the most? Who was the least-talented?

Nobody was least talented...they all had special talents.. maybe my brother (laughs).



Were there any choreographed dance moves that you just refused to do?

I don't want to do the Right Stuff dance anymore.. it was fun for '89 but now it's... Did I do that? (laughs).

Tell me a funny insane groupie story.

So many to go over... the moms who will do anything to get the daughters backstage... I mean anything!!

Does it piss you off that NKOTB were slagged by the press in the early 90s, and yet a decade later, the same type of boy bands are now media darlings?

The press would slam us but the fact remains we had the most success and sold the most records in that time period. We were number one and the target of the critics.. I'm still here after all these years and they are the ones out of work.

What is your biggest regret from that era?

Biggest regret...not writing and producing more on the albums. I did some but I think we all could have been more involved with the production.

Do you still speak with the other folks?

Still talk to all the guys.. Danny helped me get my new deal.. Joey just got married.. was at the wedding in NYC, Donnie I talked with last week via cell... I see my brother on a regular basis.

What comes to mind when you hear the following:

Power rock trio Rush: good Rock!!

Britney Spears: sexy and crazy

George W. Bush: trying

Ska: Mighty Bosstones

Marky Mark: "What's Up.. Don't forget where you came from".

Thanks Jordan!

Thanks dude for the support.

**Jordan Knight's new album drops soon—
visit jordanknight.com regularly for updates.**

Michael Davis and Dennis "Machine Gun" Thompson of



In an "Open Letter from Michael Davis," published on dkt-mc5.com, Davis writes: "There isn't anyone out there that can understand what it means to be one of the 'five'. No one can understand what it is to be the friend of Wayne Kramer, or Rob Tyner, or Fred Smith, or Dennis Thompson. No one has crossed the ground we crossed together. No documentary film or diatribe in a newspaper, or commentary on the validity of someone's work or bitching about whatever is kicking your ass can know truly what it means."

It may be impossible to understand what it was like being part of that whirlwind of politics, tension, and rock n' roll mayhem, but the surviving original members of MC5 – Michael Davis, Wayne Kramer, and Dennis "Machine Gun" Thompson – are going to give us another shot, touring worldwide this summer under the moniker DKT/MC5.

—Adam Liebling

Before I begin with annoying questions, let me ask – does it bother you to always be mentioned in conjunction with the MC5? Is it something you've accepted, or something you wish you could shake?

Dennis: I totally accept and am very comfortable with being mentioned in conjunction with the MC5. I'm used to it. I cannot deny my past. I'm grateful to be a surviving member of the band.

I heard that the MC5 was more of a party band before John Sinclair gave it political direction. Could you tell us how the band got involved in the 60s political revolution? Do you think the band succeeded in what it set out to do?

Dennis: What? Democrat, Republican, or tupperware party? Seriously, I really do not think of the MC5 as a 'party' band per

se. In the early days we were enthusiastically dedicated to the music, more than to anything else, including partying and politics. We preferred to call ourselves an "Avant Rock" band. As far as politics and revolution, John Sinclair's presence and Bohemian influence no doubt expanded our political awareness, but as turmoil intensified in the USA and the world, we all grew together in an ever evolving mercurial fashion. The country had polarized, and we took our stance, which *obviously* was not the conservative middle ground. Yes, I believe we partially succeeded in what we set out to do. In some ways we fell short, and in other ways we made astonishing progress. Pertinent to this truth is the fact that we can celebrate the spirit and the music of the MC5 once again as DKT/MC5, because we choose to.

Do you see any parallels with Vietnam and what's going on in Iraq today?

Michael: It is totally scary and absurd that the US is still trying to shove democracy down the throat of the entire world. Of course, that's what they call it, but we know it's all about the money and power. The whole situation is remarkably similar to what it was 35 years ago.

Dennis: The most obvious parallels I see with Vietnam and Iraq, is that our elected officials spend hundreds of billions of dollars financing the exportation of "democracy" through rule of force. In both wars, we were never asked by any of the incumbent regimes if we, the people, *desired* to go to war. For a supposedly free and democratic country, the people have so little control over what our government does, not only as regards making wars, but damn near everything else. In both cases, upon closer scrutiny, there existed cloaked agendas. Gross taxation without representation is a spiraling code of conduct today. Public opinion is conveniently ignored, till *after the fact* when the fallout hits the fan. We then find ourselves mired in debating 'consequences' of actions we did not initiate by quorum, nor ratify by majority electoral consensus.

What is the worst experience you had while in the MC5?

Michael: Has to be getting thrown out of the band in London in 1971. At the time, I was freaking out personally with drugs, and I was completely confused about the future, and the present... I had lost touch with the others musically, personally and anything else you care to talk about. I was in a state of turmoil, largely created by me, and no one else had a clue how to mend our broken spirit. Everyone was high on something, and most of us were high on the same stuff I was. We were no longer the band we started out as. Funny, how relieved I felt when I was told it was over. It also broke my heart.

Dennis: Breaking up at our final performance together at the Grande ballroom in 1972. And always being damned if we did, and damned if we didn't.

Which is your least favorite MC5 tune?

Dennis: My least favorite MC5 tune would have to be... none of them. That's sorta like asking me which one of my children I love the least (if I had children that is...). No really, I like them all, for different reasons to be sure.

Michael: I'm drawing a blank.

Do you have any funny stories about Rob Tyner and Fred Smith? I read somewhere that the rest of the band once forced Rob on a diet.

Michael: Rob diet? We were all on the diet. It was the sixties version of Atkins. T-bones, cottage cheese, 100 glasses of water, lettuce salads. After two weeks, I lost a bunch of weight, and also my sensation of being alive. It was weird...nothing I care to try again. What we made Rob do was run around the house 50 or so times every day. He did it, but I'm sure he didn't like it. When I see footage of Rob during that time, I wonder why we had such a problem about it.

Fred and I shared an apartment; actually it was the attic of an old house down on Trumbull Avenue in Detroit during those early days. For some reason, Fred was an avid baseball fan. Our "pad" was about a mile from Tiger Stadium. Back in those days you could bring your own beer into the ballpark, as long as it wasn't in a glass container. Did you know that a 1-gallon milk jug holds exactly 10 beers? It does, exactly! Also, you could sit in the upper deck bleachers for \$1. So, there we'd be. Sitting up there in the upper deck, with our gallon of beer apiece, smoking joints with everybody, getting fucked up as you please for only a buck. How much more American can you get? Fuck the FBI. Go Tigers!

Dennis: Rob Tyner once pulled a muscle in his back in 1967 onstage at a high school gig. He was in such agony, he fell to the floor and lay flat on his back. While wincing in pain, legs straight up, he still kept on singing. Fred and Wayne were making offhanded, innocent wisecracks about this spectacle over their microphones, before the audience and the band finally realized Rob was *not* joking around. We kinda thought he was goffin' on everybody. He *really* could not move. Both Wayne and Fred had to drag him off the stage into the wings. Days later when Rob was back to normal, even *he* had to laugh.

My favorite Fred Smith saga was the very first time he appeared onstage at the Grande Ballroom as "Sonic Smith". He magically appeared dressed in full super-hero fashion in a black spandex and silver lame costume replete with goggles, flowing cape, and cowed headgear. Sinclair was slack-jawed and had a shit conniption. The band and the crowd loved it. He was literally the "Man of the Future", surprising everyone! Now that was funny...

What are your thoughts on John Sinclair now?

Dennis: I now think of him as an established connoisseur and poet iconoclast. We didn't always see eye to eye in the day, but I can never thank him enough for exposing me to his great jazz record collection. It was through John's insistence that I study Coltrane's drummer extraordinaire, Elvin Jones. I learned the poly modal "wall of sound" approach to rock drumming from Elvin.

Michael: I have a lot of respect for John. It wasn't always like that. I was pissed about his writings about us, but then I couldn't really put myself in his shoes, and agree with him, could I? Now I see a man that has continued to create literary work, and be what he always was; an artist and supporter of artists. He has remained true to his school, and I hope he considers me a fellow artist and a friend. On a further note, I know John and I being around the same age, have a view on American culture that comes from being around that age. Cynical, hip, passionately detached, connoisseurs of the great things in life; sex, food, art, music, literature. Need I say more?

I have a theory that bands produce their best music when all the members hate each other. High Time, by far, is my favorite MC5 record, and you guys broke up soon after it. Could you tell me what those last days were like?



Dennis: Hate as a prime motivator for quality co-creation? Plausible... for some, but not to my way of thinking. Our best work was invented while we were still falling in love with each other as people and as musicians. Recording "High Time", (containing some of the best studio recorded music we ever made) was exciting, challenging, and downright fun. Only later down the road did we begin to lose touch with ourselves and with each other. The final days were a descent into Dante's inferno. Pure hell. Pure agony.

Michael: I didn't hate anybody other than myself. I was out of my mind about the direction of the band. I couldn't write a song to save my life. I was out of it on the political program. I didn't give a damn whether I was in the band or not. I had lost my faith in everyone, and everyone had lost their faith in me. In fact, they were probably wondering who the hell I was, anyway, because I had become rather catatonic over the course of time. It was fucked up. That's what it was like. Was "High Time" our best record? Your call.

Punks have really embraced the MC5, not to mention the garage band revival today. Do you think the punk movement picked up where the MC5 left off?

Dennis: Enthusiastic, risk laden, and idealistic musical energy is always in the air. It is the mindless following of fads and trends that tend to obscure it from time to time. In the humble opinion of this drummer, if the punk movement were to *realistically* pick up where the Five left off musically, ala "Skunk, Sonically Speaking", for example, I don't know... Energy-wise, many current groups fit the bill, but honestly, I hear a bit too much of the tried and true three chord format, which tends to restrict true originality by adherence to 'safer' formulaic structure. Don't get me wrong here, I like a lot of the new young bands, but I would like to hear some more factory experimentalism. Gotta take musical chances to break new ground, don't ya know...

Michael: Yeah...in a sense. After the 5, there was always a core of bands that wanted to remain stripped down and total assault.

For a high-energy rock drummer, you also had a lot of jazz sensibility. Who influenced you in the early days?

Dennis: From the early days to the present, I have studied and admired: Keith Moon, Mitch Mitchell, Charley Watts, Sandy Nelson, Pistol Allen, Buddy Rich, Gene Krupa, Billy Cobham, and of course, Mr. Elvin Jones.

Tell us an MC5 story that's never been told.

Dennis: The whole group spent a couple days at Dr. Timothy Leary's home, eating tiny pills out of his ever-present Sucrets tin. I vaguely remember we drove Tim and his wife absolutely crazy, and he sent us packing as we went a bit overboard ala Detroit style. In the dead of night, I remember Wayne, myself, and our road manager, driving to Tim's in a rented Mustang. We missed a turn in the hills and landed right in the middle of the garden of one of Tim's neighbors. The cops were called but they quite uncharacteristically let us go...A bit of luck and a lot of mayhem.

How did Destroy All Monsters come about?

Michael: On Halloween night in 1976 Ron [Asheton] was at his mothers' house in Ann Arbor where he lives, greeting trick or treaters in his Waffen SS uniform. He answered the door and saw Cary Loren in a Godzilla suit. They were both tripping on 2 hits of Purple Haze, and were so impressed by each others costume, that Ron invited Cary into the house for drinks. After an all night session of cocktails and cigs, Ron agreed to tell Iggy stories for the next seven years if Cary would throw in his girlfriend, Niagara. That's how it all began. How I got involved was, I was holed up in a farmhouse just outside of Ann Arbor with a scattergun and a bottle of whiskey. They, the three of them, Asheton, Loren, And Niagara came by in the middle of the night and asked me if I wanted in on their scam. I said yeah. That about sums it up.

What is the MC5's legacy?

Michael: Hard to say. Since the whole thing started 35 years ago, and today it's something unexpected than it ever was, it would be premature to make any kind of definitive statement. I'm not going to hazard a guess.

Dennis: I should hope the legacy of the MC5 is that of inspiring and encouraging personal growth and self-realization, and that this can be achieved through hard work, exploration, and applied imagination. To embrace a way of living that allows for spiritual growth and high quality musical communication. A legacy of bold pursuit of all things possible. "Let me be who I am...and let me kick out the jams!"

Who was the best: MC5, Stooges, or Radio Birdman?

Dennis: Now that is a loaded question. I'll respectfully leave this one to the personal tastes of John Q. Public, thank you...

What's next for you?

Dennis: I have been working for some time now writing two books simultaneously. Book number one entitled, "An American Night In The Round", is a full-length novel, which I refer to as a cross between satire and speculative fiction. Eight years in the making, I hope to finish this tome in 2005. Book number two is entitled, "A Walk In The Woods", and is a generous collection of short stories, philosophical musings, and inspirational essays documenting my spiritual journey, while com-

menting on the struggles of life in modern America. Currently in the editing stage, this book could be available for publishing by year's end. I spend the rest of my time in daily workouts at my local gym lifting weights, and rehearsing the drums. I am rigorously getting primed and ready for the upcoming DKT/MC5 world tour this summer, after which my company, MGT Multi-Media, is looking forward to releasing my first solo music CD.

Michael: Next is the DKT/MC5 tour of 2004. Davis, Kramer, Thompson, and special guests will tour the planet starting June 9 in Toronto, followed by dates in Detroit, Chicago, and points east, west, and overseas thereafter. I would imagine us to be touring for a period of at least 3 months, but that could change into something else. So far, we have dates in Australia, Japan, and the UK. It's unfolding at present, and I haven't any more information than what I've told you. After the tour, we're hoping to be cutting a complete new studio album, most likely in L.A.

Outside of DKT, I have three productions due for release within the year. The first one is a Swedish rock outfit named Dollhouse, who will be on some of the overseas bills with DKT/MC5. We recorded in Los Angeles recently, and the release of their record should coincide with Sonic Revolution, the DKT/MC5 DVD. They are a powerhouse guitar rock band with a sound that captures the foundation sound of rock and roll. Lisa Kakaula of the Bellrays is a guest vocalist on the record, and I'm telling you man, this chick has the voice of soul. Also on the record are backup vocals by several of the bands' label mates from Dim Mak, a very hip Los Angeles indie record label. I do background vocals on their cover of MC5's Humanbeing Lawmower. Secondly, I have a Dionysus release production of a band from Israel called The Mothers Anger. These guys are very close to a gritty Nirvana sound with a huge guitar and drum beat. A two-piece outfit, with a charisma and sound that I believe will make them very popular within the coming year. Lastly, I produced a Spanish band from Barcelona called Tokyo Sex Destruction. They are an incredible onslaught mid sixties sounding 4-piece band. It's no wonder all of these bands are big fans of MC5. Why else would they want me to produce them? So, that's exciting. My wife Angela and I also have an artist management, production, publishing, film and television music consulting company called Svengirly Music, Inc. We are super excited about all of this stuff. I might add that I am beginning an endorsement relationship with vintage legend, Kustom Amps, and I will be sporting the all-new Kustom "Groovebass" bass amp on the DKT/MC5 world tour. That is totally exciting for me on a personal level. Did I forget anything? There is a lot of energy going on these days in the Svengirly camp. Angela has some awesome fashion in rock projects in mind that I'm dying to get in to. We want to produce the most awesome, fantastic rock experiences combined with couture elegance and dynamic soul. The next is looking good!

What are your long-term plans?

Dennis: That's too easy. I really don't know. It's challenging enough for me fully live in the moment.

DKT/MC5 will be hitting the road this spring/summer, and Sonic Revolution: A Celebration of the Music of the MC5 DVD will be released July 6, 2004.
Visit <http://www.dkt-mc5.com/> for more information.

The Lawrence Arms

The Lawrence Arms are sensitive, and yet they rock with the power of a million rockin' suns. I'm not sure who answered this interview, but I think he's in love with me.

—Adam Liebling

What do you like most about me?

I don't even know who you are. This interview is nothing more than series of questions that have been emailed to me. I can't possibly answer this question.

Why am I so awesome?

You have a giant dick.

What sorts of rites do you perform in your worshipping of me?

I touch my own dick.

Please finish this sentence: I am to everything awesome in the universe as you are to.....

your dick.

What are some things you'd like to know about me?

Hmmmmmm....the real question here is, why are you so enamored by my feelings towards you? Are you in some way attracted to me, or is it an internal conflict that is the result of an inferiority complex? Or, are you just an incredibly lazy journalist? I suppose the possibilities are endless.

Apparently you're in some sort of band or something. Have you written many songs about me?

Possibly...

Is it difficult being in a relationship, when all women are attracted solely to me?

Not really.

How has being interviewed by me helped your music?

Ways too numerous to mention.

Tell us about your recent projects... and how they relate to me.

This interview is over.

Lawrence Arms is on Fat Wreck (fatwreck.com). Visit the band at thelawrencearms.net.



Lawrence Arms thinking wistfully of me.

Q & A With Tim of Ensign

By Bryan Kremkau

I'm a little slow, what's Ensign mean?

A long time ago one of the original guitar players of Ensign said he found a definition of the word that means commitment. I however have never found anything that says that's what the word means. It is basically the lowest rank in the navy and another word for a flag/symbol.

If I was a 5 year old retarded kid, how would you describe the band's style to me?

I think that Ensign is just a straight forward hardcore/punk bands. We take influences everywhere from the Cro Mags and Killing Time to the Descendents and Avail. We try not to let ourselves sit back on one particular sound or style.

Your new album just got released on Blackout Records. Tell me about it.

"Love The Music, Hate The Kids" is a one-off project we did with our friend Bill who run Blackout. Over the years, and through all the tours, Ensign has amassed a huge catalog of cover songs. We kicked around the idea for the last year or so about going in and recording them all and putting it out. Bill said he'd like to do the project. We wound up recording 19 songs in about four days and mixing them in a day and half. However in the end we were really pleased with the way it came out. We got the chance to record some of the songs that have really influenced who we are as people and a band.

What is your favorite song to cover?

Right now I have to say it's either the Replacements "Kids Don't Follow" or Christ On A Crutch "Off Target."

What's worse: Rosie O'Donnell in a g-string or the war in Iraq?

Well both are horrible in their own right. I have to go with the war in Iraq because it represents the American government lying to its people and entering into a really unjust war under false pretenses. Rosie in a g-string is just gross.

What do you think of the straight edge movement these days? I'm noticing a lot of people are losing the X.

I never really concerned myself that much about the straight-edge movement as a whole. I've always just looked at myself as someone who is straightedge as a personal choice. I'm not really into the whole straightedge as a gang/group thing. That's not to say that I don't think straight edge is a good thing, because I do. Just not when it comes with a violent connotation.

What video games are you currently playing?

I love video games. I just have no time right now. I hope to get my hands on True Crime one of these days. Plus I still have to play the new Silent Hill game.

How are the groupies in the HC scene?

I really don't know. If there are such a thing as hardcore groupies that would be really pathetic as most of us in bands are fucking losers!

What's next for Ensign?

Our main plan right now is to finish the new record and find a home for it and then hit the road.

Got any final comments or anything to plug?

Thanks a lot to anyone who bought the covers record. Our website is back up but the URL changed to ensignnj.com. Get in touch and say hi! Check out Crime IN Stereo, the Procedure, The Banner, Marathon, and the new HATEBREED! Thanks a lot!

More interviews at SkaPunkAndOtherJunk.com!

LESS THAN JAKE

Interview with JR (saxophone)

by Bryan Kremkau & Adam Liebling

How did you get started with Less Than Jake? You used to be with Spring Heeled Jack (USA har har) right?

Yes...I used to be in the REAL Spring Heeled Jack... screw that drum and bass band... they sucked donkey nuts. It was a good time, but like so many of our contemporaries, we all decided to quit playing ska and start an emo band called "I Should Just Kill Myself and Make The World A Better Place." That didn't work out because myself, Tyler and Chris were all playing keyboards instead of horns...we ended up sounding like a bad Flock of Seagulls cover band.

I hooked up with LTJ through a mutual friend. SHJ was getting ready to do our last show and I was student teaching in MA. Vinnie called me at home and left a message saying "Wanna come play with us?" Embarrassingly enough, I was unfamiliar with all of their songs and had to learn 60 songs in three weeks... it was hard, but rewarding. I went to Gainesville, rehearsed with them and they asked me to join the band. I was on tour with them four weeks later and have been on tour ever since. I wouldn't have had it any other way.

What the fuck is so special about PEZ? Why not just eat the fucking candy instead of putting it in the dispenser AND then eating it?

OK... look... here's the deal. We don't actually eat the candy... it's all about the dispensers. Roger and Vinnie have the biggest collections I've ever seen and they just look cool when you line up all the dispensers in a row...they look like a little cartoon army. And, a side note, PEZ is actually quite painful when hurled at you while standing still. Our fans rule, but it's pretty hard to LOVE them when they are pelting us with these little projectiles.

Your video for "The Science Of Selling Yourself Short" was shot really cool. I thought it was the best song on "Anthem." How was it making it? Did you feel like an idiot lip synching/playing in front of a blue screen?

Shooting videos is one of the hardest things about being in a band. I mean, you know, sitting around all day, stuffing your face with catering, staring at the hot chicks that are costarring, the hair styling and pampering by the beautiful make-up ladies, the trailer with the fridge full of beer, a TV, Playstation and other fun gadgets, getting people to kiss your butt over the stretch of a 12 to 15 hour day... it's grueling... hahaha! Seriously, did I feel like an idiot? No...this was like the fifth video I've been a part of

and the third video with LTJ. I have no ego when it comes to LTJ and if me looking or acting like an idiot makes for a good video then I'll be the idiot all day long... and I usually am anyways. I felt more silly dressed as a woman for our "Gainesville Rock City" video than jumping around in a blue room...but I was a hot chick!

What do you think about being called a sellout by kids who weren't even born when LTJ formed?

If some kid who lives with their parents, gets money from their parents to buy their spiked belts, Ramones shirts, and hair color for their "faux-hawk" at Hot Topic, don't have a job, and are still in high school call me a sellout for making choices that we as a band make, than I tell them that they should go start a band, go on tour, make your own decisions and come back and talk to me in 12 years...then we can have a discussion.

Basically, opinions are like assholes...everyone has one and everyone thinks that everyone else's stinks. No one tells us what to do. EVERYTHING that we have done, or will do in the future, is decided by US. And for all the people who keep looking in their dictionary for the definition of "punk rock", I was told the definition was "doing what you want and not caring what others think about it." Joe Strummer gave me that definition—if you don't think he was punk rock or if you're going "Who's Joe Strummer?"...wow...I feel sorry for you.

Give me 5 reasons why Ska is stupid.

How about 5 things that led people to think that ska is stupid:

1. Band names using the word "ska" or "skank" to replace a word...skank-tastic!
2. Horns. Apparently, people HATE horns...at least that's what "industry research" says...but horn sections deem if a ska band is good or bad...nothing worse than out of tune horns that play shit wrong...it's painful.
3. Bad lyrics. The downfall of many ska bands are lyrics about skanking with their girl..ugh!
4. Elitism. You know, back in the day, elitism was far more prevalent in ska than punk rock. Traditional bands would talk shit on ska-punk bands or ANY band that achieved the slightest strain of success and it just ruined the scene...in reality, the only REAL ska band ever was the Skatalites... they invented the sound... everyone else is ska-influenced... period.
5. Emo. I guess it's better to cry than have fun nowa-days...bummer.

What's the deal with Warner Brothers? Are you guys still on that label and is it true WB wanted you guys to ditch the horn section?



WB has been pretty good to us, actually. No, they never actually said "ditch the horn section," but there were certain people who thought that the horns would prevent us from getting on the radio. Guess they were wrong, because "Science" got the most airplay... and there's horns all over that shit! There were a few songs that originally had horn parts on them that didn't appear on the record, but, like I said before, we as a band made the ultimate decision on what horn parts stayed and which ones were ditched. In any event, we are all VERY proud of "Anthem" and it's not like LTJ had horns on every song EVER... just on the good ones, haha.

Do you guys try to suck or does it just come naturally?

We try SOOOOO hard to suck. It's our gimmick. It is actually harder to suck than to be good. Some bands like to go out there and play all in tune and shit...we could care less...AND IT SHOWS!!!! To quote Chris, "We're not a one hit wonder...we're a 12 year failure."

Does Chris or Roger ever bicker like little girls on who's going to sing the leads in songs? Who do you think could win in a wrestling match?

Chris and Rog fight like little girls...seriously. When they fight, it's like pulling hair and scratching and Jerry Springer-esque bitch-slapping and shit...it's pretty funny. Buddy actually chooses who sings the songs. The next record, Vinnie will be singing everything. He writes the lyrics, so we figured that it's time for the world to hear the voice of the "brain." He sounds like Clay Aiken...and he's got a nicer butt. If there ever was an actual wrestling match, I would win cause I'm the only guy that watches wrestling and I got 50 lbs on everyone else.

If you weren't a rock star, what kind of career do you think you'd have?

I'm a rockstar? Sweet. I've been trying for 12 years to tell people what I do for a living. I guess it sounds better than "Professional Loser". I would probably be a music teacher, I guess...an "Upgraded Professional Loser."

When are you guys going to be on MTV Cribs?

As soon as we all move out of our parents' houses.

Do you guys still pick up underage groupies?

Define the word "underage." I actually have a rule that as long as the girl says she's 21, I believe her...

What's the worst STD you've gotten while touring?

AIDS, followed closely by genital warts.

Which is your band's worst album?

I think they're all pretty bad.

Tell us about LTJ's worst gig.

My personal worst gig was in Feb of 2002. It was the first date back for the new year and the beginning of two months straight of touring. We were playing a show at Janus Landing in Tampa, FL. Second song of the set, I jumped up and landed on part of the stage that was uneven. As I came down, I HEARD my ankle go *SNAP*! I fell down, looked at our tour manager and said, "That was no good." They taped it up and I went to the hospital at 3 in the morning when we got back to Gainesville. I sprained it so bad, the doctor said it would have been better to break it than to sprain it this bad... So for the next three weeks I was on crutches and couldn't walk. And I played every night. So every show of those 3 weeks was the worst gig ever because it hurt so bad, I would pass out from the pain after each show. I hear these stories of these pussies who break their finger and cancel the tour...suck it up and play.

Can I have some money?

Sure...here's how you get it...buy ski masks for you and three of your friends, watch "Oceans 11", "Casino" and "Goodfellas" four or five times each and rob a casino in Las Vegas. They have lots of money at there just waiting for you to come and get.

Less Than Jake is gonna be on the "Rock Against Bush" CD on Fat Wreck Chords. Come on, what's so bad about George W Bush? He seems like a swell guy.

This is the only question I will answer completely seriously. I am not telling kids who they should vote for, but if every person between the age of 18 and 30 registered and voted, we could make a difference because there are more of us than our parents and grandparents combined. It takes 10 minutes to register and 10 minutes to vote...20 minutes out of your "busy" life to maybe make a difference. Listen to what the candidates have to say and make a decision...if you decide not to vote, then don't bitch if things are fucked...

As for my opinion (see the definition of "opinion" in question #4), all I know is "The Idiot Son of an Asshole" won by a fluke and if you want to keep going to war with other countries, watch our economy nosedive and have every country in the world think we suck because we have a guy who reads Sports Illustrated more than the world news in charge, then let your parents and their conservative friends vote for that moron again and see what's left of our country when we are their age.

If you think he's a good president, vote for him. I won't hate you...but just make sure you VOTE.

Final Comments, plugs, whatever?

Go to www.lessthanjake.com to see what we're up to. Also, you can go check our other interests, like Vinnie's clothing line www.monkeyvsrobot.net, Roger's other band www.rehasher.com, The BEST indie label going www.fueledbyramen.com, and my management company, www.ctmafia.com. Thanks to all of our fans for their support over the years. It's because of YOU that we are able to do this...you are our life and we owe it all to you. Please come up and say hi to us...we love to hear what you have to say. I'm Rick James, BITCH! IT'S A CELEBRATION!!!!



MADCAP

First off, I think you guys rock. You rock like a million rocking rocks. Would you say you're The Boss of street punk?
Johnny Madcap: Definitely!

Do the hardcore bands on Victory ever beat you up and steal your lunch money?
Hasn't happened yet but we really haven't hung out with any of them yet either. Besides they wouldn't find much green in these pockets.

What's the worst part about street punk - all the songs about the "kids" or all the oi oi oi's?

There is nothing really wrong with street punk, I think it's a great style I just don't consider MADCAP a street punk band! I never really agreed with the phrase. The streets are always there in any good music.

What were you guys like in high school?
Not the popular ones.

Have you ever killed a man just to watch him die?
No, but I heard Johnny Cash did.

Would you rather drink a small cup of your

own sperm, or a pint of someone else's urine?
You don't give much of a choice but I definitely go with my own juice.

What's the worst advice you've ever gotten?
"If that person jumps off a bridge, do you do it too?"

Tell me about the time you lost your virginity.
I don't really remember, to tell you the truth.

Who smells the worst in the band?
It's A collective thing.

What lies in Madcap's future? What rockin awesomeness awaits us?

Lots of playing the new material live. It's our best stuff yet. We are also going to Europe for the first time with BAYSIDE and GLASSEATER.

Seriously - you guys do rock. Thanks for taking the time.

Thanks, Everyone should go out and check out our new album "Under Suspicion" out now on Victory Records (victoryrecords.com) if you want to hear some heart!



Speaking of money, what's so bad about the Euro? Your country's independent, punk rock attitude is gonna hurt you in terms of favorable currency fluctuations.
What the fuck are you talkin' about? Do you have Euros? EU is the third reich. Fuck the Germans.

Would you rather take a dip in the Baltic Sea or the Gulf of Bothnia? Are people on the Skagerrak into Ska music?
Baltic Sea. It's cold - good for your balls. Ska music was invented by the people on the Skagerack.

If Sweden ever did rise up and attack another country, who would you invade?
Weird question asked to a rock band who never thought of invading anything. But if we had to, it's be Norway, cause then we could get back home the same day. We like to sleep in our own bed.

Some would say you've already invaded the US via Volvo and IKEA, flooding our capitalist market with wonderfully efficient, affordable and safe products. And soon you'll be touring the US, bringing along your fuzzy, gothic, tasty punk rock. What are you Swedes REALLY up to??
As said before, we've been very peaceful for ages and now we feel like conquering the world. On our side.

Plug your crap.
Sorry, not into pluggin. Do it yourself. Thanks for the interview. See you soon.

Visit Division of Laura Lee at Epitaph.com.

Division of Laura Lee

Greetings DOLL. I must say, you are one of the most exciting bands to come out of Sweden since ABBA. How have they influenced your music?

They haven't influenced us. Have they influenced you? If so, why do you want to interview us?

The Scandinavian countries are interesting in that they've all been pretty peaceful for centuries. How does a land of peace breed punks such as yourselves?
Unemployment, divorce, drugs, darkness.

Strangely, Sweden doesn't have any permanent crops, I assume because of the subarctic climate. Tell me, where does Division of Laura Lee get their crops?
At the supermarket.

Is King Gustaf a nice guy, or is he mad with power? Have you performed for him?
Yes we have. He's a nice guy. He used to be jammin' a lot with Lou Reed back in the days when he lived in nyc. He's taught us a lot about punk rock.

Would you rather have Sweden create a holiday in your honor, be given the title of Sweden's Ambassadors of Rock, or go on a date with Princess Victoria?
None of it. When it comes to Vic, been there, done that. Next question.

Is it worth paying a lot in taxes for a generous, universal health care and welfare system? How does your system stack up against the US?
Yeah, of course. Everybody's equal and should have the same chance to get a doctor. Can you get a heart transplant for \$10?
No, didn't think so.



by Adam Liebling
(with guest appearance by Ray Manuud)

I'll keep this intro short. Planet Smashers = DAMN GOOD SKA. I mean, I've always just thought they were just decent, but their latest album Mighty is the best ska CD to come out in years. Incredibly fun, bouncy, infectious third wave ska, like the Toasters, only not grumpy and somewhat Canadian. This interview begins as all interviews must begin - talking about Rush.

Dave, you're a bass player! And you're Canadian! So you must be all about the Rush!

Dave: I like Rush, yeah, but there are some records that disappoint me.

What?? Like what??

Dave: Well, they did Caress of Steel, which is a great record...

True. And most people don't like Caress of Steel.

Dave: Which is exactly why I like it, because I've heard everything else to death. So they put out Caress of Steel and then do things like Power Windows. Which was ridiculous. And yet at the same time they'll do something like Signals, which was great! It was the same sound and everything, but I dunno..

But it's about context. Power Windows came out in the late 80s. Did you get their new album?

Dave: No, I actually have lost track... Well, actually, I did listen to it at a listening booth in a store the other day, and it had all these great old guitar sounds that they haven't done in a long time. But the songs... they just don't have the drive they used to have. They used to tour all the time, always on the road - they were road warriors! Now they take, like, time off for fishing.

That is such fucking bullshit. Check yourself!

Dave: What are you talking about?

Because they just did a huge tour for that album, and now they're doing this huge 30th anniversary tour.

Dave: I'm not talking about right now. I'm talking about... Look at Roll the Bones, man. They did a great tour, but it was so comfy, had all these programs and big screens. Before it used to be, "He has a gong, man! He's got a fucking gong, man!" That was the highlight of the show. Now it's like they can't have enough animation surrounding them to play a song.

It enhances it man. (pause) You've totally offended me.

Dave: What? You asked. It's not about your opinion, it's about my opinion. You're the reporter.

It's not WHAT my opinion?

Dave: I didn't say "about" did I?

You did. You want me to rewind this tape?

Dave: That's okay.

Let's move on. What do you think about your new prime minister?

Dave: I don't know... who is the new prime minister? Do we have one?

Lonestar: Paul Martin. He sucks. But what do I know, I'm just a crazy American.

You're American? What are you doing in the band?

Dave: He's a good player. What, you didn't see the show?

I was... uh... at the bar.

Lonestar: I play saxophone.

Dave Hey, I saw Maiden, man. Piece of Mind tour. It was awesome, they had Twisted Sister opening for them.

Were you a metalhead before the ska?

Dave: I come from New Brunswick, it's like a rite of passage.

Lonestar: Shouldn't we wait for Matt?

What, you spineless guys can't talk about the band without Matt being around, holding your hand?

Dave: If you ask us about dates or times or numbers, fuck no.

That's fine. I'll keep it easy. I just want to say that the new Planet Smashers is the best one yet. Usually bands put out a good album and then begin their decline to suckage, but you guys keep going up and up and up. So my question to you is, can I get one of your free beers for sucking up?

Lonestar: You have to do better than that.
Your mustache is so full and bouncy. It

has so much body. It's mesmerizing.

(Someone hands me a beer)

So do you have to spend any time in Canada, even though you're not Canadian?

Lonestar: Yes. I spent winter there. The coldest month in AGES. Ever.

Why? Was it for the recording?

Lonestar: No, we had some gigs, one-offs in Quebec. It was like negative 30 celsius. And I'm from Texas. Where it was 72. And I'm like, "Whyyy?!" But it's for the love of these guys, man. That's what it's for. And you can print that!

Dave: That's very touching. It brings a tear to my eye.

Lonestar: I'm a heartfelt kind of guy.

Have you fallen in love with Canada?

Lonestar: Parts. The winter is not one of them, safe to say. Montreal is a great city.

What's the worst gig you guys have played?

Lonestar: Last night. I stopped the song.

Dave: (laughs) He fell down on stage!

Lonestar: I fell down. On stage. In New York City. With my ass hanging out.

Did the crowd point and laugh?

Lonestar: Yeah. We stopped playing cuz my ass was hanging out on stage. I tripped and fell, knocked over Matt's microphone, he stopped singing, people stopped playing, I was tangled in a mess of wires... It was a great attention grabber. The kids were entranced, like "What are they going to do next?"

Dave: If they weren't paying attention then, they were paying attention now.

Lonestar: That's right. And it was the second song of the set, so that was great.

That's when you say, "Hey everyone, this is our first show ever!"

Lonestar: Yeah! Actually, nah, we couldn't really do that in good taste.

Slipping on the stage can't possibly be your worst gig story.

Lonestar: Actually, we've had some interesting experiences in England. We were there in October for two and a half weeks. It's just a weird place to tour. It's a small little island, and there's pockets of really great ska fans, and then there's some... empty pockets of bitter nothingness. What's your worst gig, Dave?

Dave: Timmons, Ontario.

Lonestar: No! How about freakin' [some Canadian city]? Dave was sitting on the stage, about to pass out, playing Pee in the Elevator.

Dave: Oh yeah.

Lonestar: You were vomiting all over the place before the show...

Dave: That was physically the shittiest show I've played. It wasn't the shittiest atmosphere. It was a full house.

Lonestar: Yeah, it was 600 screaming kids in a

shoobox. Kids are great.

When you get pissed off at the crowd, do you ever take your spitvalve and dump it on them?

Lonestar: No, I usually just scream at them.

Cuz I would just shake the spitvalve at them. Especially if they're in the front row. Pour it right on their heads. See you guys aren't assholes like me, that's the problem. Speaking of assholes, you're from TX. What do you think about Bush?

Lonestar: He sucks ass.

You just said the magic word. [Pulls out a bag of buttons that say Bush Sucks Ass]

Lonestar: You have a pin that says Bush Sucks Ass? Fuckin A! That is great! Holy shit, that is freakin synchronicity.

We're soulmates or something. [gives pins to Leon] Okay, now tell me about your worst groupie experience.

Lonestar: Oh, I can't answer that.

Okay, tell me about the worst groupie experience that involves someone else in the band.

Lonestar: Ohhh, great question. Somebody in the band, I won't say who, got a blowjob - I heard about this, I wasn't there - in a car, and he was standing up in the car, through the sunroof.

And?

Lonestar: And... uh... there was oral sex being performed. Is that a good groupie story?

No. That sucked.

Lonestar: And it was raining too. And he broke the seat in the car.

So you guys don't have any crazy stalkers, or you did a chick and later found out it was a guy? Nothing like that? [silence] Okay. I've asked Matt, now let me ask you guys. Which is your worst album.

Dave: That would have to be this Howard Jones album, I guess. "Life In One Day?"

Lonestar: Yeah, that sucked.

Dave: Wait, you mean of our records?

Um, yeah.

Dave: Our first cassette sucked pretty bad.

Lonestar: I haven't even heard it. I want to hear it.

Dave: People are really blackmailing us with that piece of shit.

Lonestar: Matt's brother has a copy still in plastic.

Worse than when Bouncing Souls were a funk band?

Dave: Well, at least we played ska right from the start. Except for the fucking REM covers and shit. And Toad the Wet Sprocket.

Lonestar: [laughs ass off] Oh man, I need to hear that shit.

Dave: It was the early 90s. Everyone thought music was heading in that direction.



[Matt walks in]

Lonestar: Here's Matt! Matt, jump in, buddy! What's your worst groupie story?

Matt: Uh oh.

Lonestar: Answer! Answer me right now!

Matt: Uhh... There was this town, out on the coast, and there were these three girls, they told us we were going to a bonfire at their cottage, and they put us in their car and then I found out that they were married, but I just sat in the back... And I'm not a big drug user, I don't do a lot of drugs, but I couldn't handle the situation very well, and my buddy, who was a roadie at the time was getting a blowjob while I was sitting in the back, and it was kind of weird, so I ate some shrooms, and then we drove off, and it got a little crazy. We found out they were Mormons, and we found out they lived on a compound in the middle of the woods, and they said, "If our husbands find out you're here, they're gonna fucking kill you; so you gotta stay in the basement." And I'm on shrooms, freakin out. So I'm sitting in the basement until morning, and my buddy comes down, and he's like, "Holy shit, holy shit, we gotta get the fuck out!" He was up there helping them make fliers for some Mormon thing, and the screen door opened, and the girls were like "Oh my god, they're here!" So he ran down, and we got hockey sticks - cuz we're Canadian - and it was like army camp: "Get down! Get down! Go Go Go!" and we ran and piled into the car and the girls

dropped us off at some park. In the middle of nowhere, no cell range, no buses, couldn't get a hold of the band. It was crazy. Needless to say, we somehow got out alive. Anyway, that's my groupie story. They didn't actually like the band, though, but whatever, it's a good story.

Who is your least favorite person in the band?

[laughs]

Matt: You can't ask that...

Dave: Does the person still have to be in the band?

Lonestar: There's ten. I can't narrow it down...

Matt: If I have to go with one, it would have to be Lonestar's ass. Because it is its own person. Have you ever spelled a fart that has direction? Where you know where it came from, and it has its own weather system?

[Silence.]

Wow, well that just effectively ended the interview. Okay, who's the least talented person in the band?

Matt: Me.

Dave: Matt.

No, no...

Lonestar: Matt, by far.

Matt: By far.

No, no, c'mon.

Matt: Really.

Lonestar: Matt proves to the world you can do a lot with a degree in public speaking.

Can you do anything but sing? Can you play maracas, hit the tambourine?

Matt: I can't hold a beat on a tambourine. I can't even play the triangle properly.

Lonestar: He types with two fingers. He's one of those guys.

What is... My next question is... umm... Sorry I haven't really prepared for this.

Matt: I didn't either. I didn't go over my notes at all. Hey, who's this interview for?

READ.

Matt: Oh, right on! You have a very good magazine!

Aww, jeez.

Matt: You know, Nina [Union Label Group] loves you.

Really? Nina rules. What's your least favorite thing about Nina?

Matt: Her mom would probably say her new tattoos. Oops, she's not supposed to know that.

Speaking of the Union Label Group, I couldn't help notice the 2112 in Union Local 2112.

Matt: The guy who founded it lived at 2112 - it's his address.

A likely story.

Matt: [cagey] What are you talking about? I don't know what you're talking about.

You don't know what I'm talking... what?

Matt: [laughs] ABOOT!

Dave: What's all the fuss about?

Matt: Rush is a good band; that's all I'm saying. There's three of them, damnit!

Matt: I've asked the band about their least favorite album you guys have put out, and there are some discrepancies.

Matt: Dave would disagree with me, with what I said.

Dave: Well, I didn't hear what you said, so I can't disagree.

Matt: I said Attack of the Planet of the Smashers was the least favorite record we put out. Dave would say...

Dave: I would say "No Self Control".

You guys want to fight? That would be cool.

Matt: We're not drunk enough. [Picks up his bottle] This is light beer!

Isn't all beer in Canada light beer? Hey Dave, we were talking about Maiden before. What's your least favorite Maiden album?

Dave: Probably that... umm, the darkness something?

Fear of the Dark?

Dave: Fear of the Dark.

Sure, it sucked, but at least it was still with Bruce Dickinson. You don't know shit.

Matt: Editorial comment!

Lonestar: "The opinions expressed in this interview are not necessarily those of the band."

[Into the microphone] The Planet Smashers just said that I have the biggest penis of anyone in the room!

[laughs]

Do you guys want to interview each other so I can just sit back and drink your beer?

Lonestar: Ask Scotty something. He's in the band too. [points to sulky, thoroughly unmused kid who spent the interview air drumming and looking at me in distaste]

[To Scotty] What are you, the bassist or something?

Scotty: [Splashes his water on me]. What are you, the journalist? Don't interview me. [gives me a dirty look, goes back to air drumming]

He's my least favorite person in your band.

Matt: He wanted to kill you! [laughs] Hey Lonestar, how many times have you fallen down in the last four shows? He's fallen down like five times, last night with his ass into the microphone! It was horrible and horrifying! I got nothing left! This interview is over!

[After getting quite drunk, I don't even remember this part]

I'm speaking with Matt... Collyer? Is that how it's pronounced?

Matt: Yeah, yeah, that's close enough.

Mr. Collyer... Canadian bacon... or maple syrup?

Matt: Dude! Dude! What you call Canadian bacon is ham! It's just freakin ham! Your Canadian bacon is just ham!! So maple syrup.

Dave: Aunt Jemima's, straight up.

Matt: Have you ever cooked eggs in maple syrup?

No.

Matt: You should try that. It's expensive but very good.

Hey, when you're in the states, and you get interviewed by American zinesters, do you get really fucking sick of all the Canadian questions?

Matt: [laughs] Umm...

I mean don't you want to take this recorder and shove it up my ass?

Matt: No, no... because we're pacifists!

What sort of things do they have in Canada?

Matt: We have the Space Needle.

Ooooh, the Space Needle! As if we don't already have one in Seattle.

Matt: Ours is better, though. It's bigger.

What, you guys have an inferiority complex? It's a big needle, get over it. Let me ask you - the Guess Who. They sang about American women. As a Canadian band, would you agree that American women.. uh... mama let me be?

Matt: Yes, they did sing that. But we are actually all gay - no, we like all women. American, Canadian, big, small, all shapes and sizes...

And Neil Young. When he sang, "Hey hey, my my, rock n' roll, somethin' somethin'" How did you feel about that?

Matt: Yes, yes, Neil Young is very important.

He is truly the godfather of Canadiana. So yes, he is rather important.

Ray Manuud: I have a question. Why are Canadians so arrogant?

Matt: [laughs]

Ray: What, you think you're so great because you have Alan Thicke and Michael J. Fox and Alex Trebeck?

Matt: It's because we have Bryan Adams.

Ray: We're this fucking close to World War Five with you guys over this shit.

[We all start drunkenly arguing over politics]

Dave: You know, we discovered the problems with Hitler while you guys were still selling shit to the Nazis, and it took the Japanese to bomb Pearl Harbor to get you guys in the fucking war in the first place.

OH! Yes! Canada sure fought in the front lines. I remember all those Canadian WWII war heroes!

Dave: Fuck you, it's true.

Okay, it might be true, but I'm still making fun of you.

Dave: We had a bigger armed forces than the United States at one point.

Yeah, Canadian Mounties - ooooh, scary! Those Mounties sure killed a lot of Nazis and/or moose.

Dave: There's a lot you don't know, man.

That's true, I can't dispute that.

Ray: You guys are so obnoxious - you see what I mean?

I'm hoping that Canada says, "Fuck the U.S., we're not giving you any more paper or pure water." And then... that's when the bombs fall.

Matt: Dude! The US owns like 80% of Canada's corporations. I mean, what the fuck? What more do you want?

WE WANT YOUR SKAI!

Matt: Hey, we signed the Toasters to a Canadian label!

That was a greatest hits album!

Matt: Whatever, I'm counting it.

I ran out of tape at this point, but we continued to make fun of Canada well into the night. Visit the Planet Smashers at planetsmashers.com. Their latest album, Mighty, is the best third wave CD to come out in years. Seriously, their best one, and just an amazing album, ska or not.

Thanks to Nina for setting up the interview. Nina is a whole bunch of awesome.

CD REVIEWS

Note: Editor's Picks and labels who advertised with us have their reviews in full. Most of the others have been truncated (space is expensive, folks). But full versions of all of these reviews are available at www.readmag.com. The site also has batches of new reviews, updated every few weeks or so.

36 Crazyfists

A Snow Capped Romance

Their debut, *Bitterness the Star*, was a by-the-book screamo album, but their latest is surprisingly inventive and a lot more melodic. They've definitely gotten tighter, and their songwriting has taken on a positive feel, rare in this genre.

Roadrunner, roadrunnerrecords.com

40 Watt Domain

Short Wave

With *SoCal* written all over it, the debut from 40WD is mostly corny toothless skate punk (or harder-edged power-pop, I should say), which isn't bad in itself but they don't have the hooks to be another Blink 182. Hopefully future releases will show them tighter, more focused, and catchier.

Gaki, gakirecords.com

46 Short

Just A Liability

On one hand, they sound like an early 80s hardcore punk band. On the other hand, they sound really generic, sloppy and boring. If they were in high school, I'd say they have potential, but I think these guys have been around for a few years.

Go-Kart, gokartrecords.com

100 Demons

100 Demons

Fast, furious, ferocious, fluffy metalcore from CT. They are an "aural assault of unrelenting screams and catastrophic breakdowns." Yep.

Deathwish, deathwishinc.com

David Aaron

12:00 Scenery

Decent folk singer/songwriter fare. Moody and mature. *davidaaron.net*

The Academy

The Academy EP

I got a bunch of releases from LLR Recordings, and it seems like all their EPs start off with a few minutes of someone watching tv and brewing coffee. I dunno, huge intros don't belong on EPs. Anyway, you've probably heard of the Academy. They're from Chicago and they play sappy, testicle-less emo. *LLR Recordings, llrrecords.com*

Brent Adair

Pieces

Pieces of crap! This is horribly lame singer/songwriter stuff with overdramatic vocals, lyrics that involve looking at clouds and the horizon (barf), and musical accompaniment you'd expect from a smooth jazz album, fake-sounding machine-produced cheese that no self-respecting musician

would even consider. To be fair, it has a very pleasant sound... if you're over 50. This is something I wouldn't mind listening to in a dentist's waiting room, but that's it.

Subpar, POB 6267, Austin, TX 78762

Amps For Christ

The People At Large

AFC is like Savage Republic for the new generation. Pleasant multi-ethnic instruments and melodies coexist with guitar-noise and post-punk dissonance. This album covers everything from airy Spanish guitar instrumentals to Scottish folk tunes to Indian and Egyptian melodies (and some bad spoken word), all with an indie, dissonant - even eerie - feel. That indie feel keeps the album cohesive, as well as appealing to those who may not be interested in typical one-size-fits-all world music.

5RC, POB 1190, Olympia, WA 98501

Apocalipstick

Apocalipstick Now

If the singer wasn't a dominatrix, they'd prob be laughed off the stage. This is bad, bland, dopey "porn rock". The songs are grating and irritating, the guitars dead-sounding, and the vocal talent doesn't back up the swaggering delivery. Oh yeah, and the production is shit. For the same reason people like going to a dominatrix, you might like this if you're masochistic. (I do love the guitarist's book of poetry though - check out the book reviews for "Flying Under the Radar.")

Bazoom! Records, POB 590144, San Francisco, CA 94159

J. Armen

Plan B

Adult contemporary claptrap with a little Spanish guitar thrown in. Doctor office waiting room music.

www.jarmen.net

Ben Arthur

Edible Darling

Ben Arthur isn't a typical singer/songwriter who's just satisfied with guitar and vox. This album throws in a lot of overdubs and studio effects, making fairly straight-forward tunes a bit off-kilter in a radio friendly way ("Mary Ann", "Mercy", "Edible Darling"). The downside is that the overproduction makes the few cheesy songs that much more cheesy ("Tonight", "Bloomed").

Bardic, POB 8669, Red Bank, NJ 07701

Askeleton

Angry Album or Psychic Songs

Askeleton is Knol Tate (ex-Kill Sadie), a one-man band of melodic indie-pop songs with an electro/synth-heavy twist. When he sticks with catchy beats and more straight-forward song structures, Askeleton is surprisingly fun, given the twisted somber mood. It does get bogged down, though, by filler tunes of the more experimental variety.

Goodnight Records, goodnightrecords.com

Editor's Picks

at a glance

- Boxcar Satan** - Upstanding and Indigent (Dogfingers)
- Brazil** - A Hostage and the Meaning of Life (Fearless)
- Bright Eyes/Neva Dinova** - One Jug of Wine, Two Vessels (Crank)
- Broken Spindles** - Fulfilled/Complete (Saddle Creek)
- Calibretto** - Dead By Dawn EP (Standard Recording Co)
- Crime In Choir** - The Hoop (Frenetic)
- The Festival** - The Festival (s/r)
- Firewater** - The Man on the Burning Tightrope (Jetset)
- God Forbid** - Gone Forever (Century Media)
- Hidden Tracks** - The Sweet Sound of Excess (s/r)
- IfIHaDaHiFi** - No More Music (Contraphonic)
- The John Stamos Project** - North American All-Stars (Knock Knock)
- The Kite-Eating Tree** - Method: Fail, Repeat... (Suburban Home)
- Mental** - Get An Oxygen Tank (Bridge Nine)
- On The Rise** - Burning Inside (Bridge Nine)
- Paris Texas** - Like You Like An Arsonist (New Line)
- Piebald** - All Ears, All Eyes, All the Time (Side One Dummy)
- Marianne Pillsbury** - The Wrong Marianne (s/r)
- Sheek the Shayk** - Hour of the Seventh Moon (Laughing Outlaw)
- Shockwave** - The Ultimate Doom (Triple Crown)
- Single Frame** - Wetheads Come Running (Volcom Entertainment)
- Sounds Like Braille** - Right Out of Left Field, Straight to the Middle of Nowhere... (Contraphonic)

Audio Learning Center**Cope Park**

Another great ALC release chock full of bright Beatlesque harmony wrapped in dissonant indie rock delivery. Pop-rock with bite! Fave track: "The Neverwills".
Vagrant, vagrant.com

Avoid One Thing**Chopstick Bridge**

I'm trying really hard to like this album (which is admittedly better than their debut), and some of the songs, like "All That You've Heard" and "A Lot Like This", are growing on me, but overall, I can't shake that this is just a lackluster melodic punk album at best. I must be coated in Teflon, cuz nothing sticks.
SideOneDummy, sideonedummy.com

Bagheera**Twelves**

Soft indie with male-female vox and interplay. It reminds me of Poulain's first EP, though more guitar-heavy and it has its loud, sonic moments. I guess on the male-female indie rock spectrum, it lies somewhere in the middle between Galaxie 500 and the Vaselines.
Asian Man, asianmanrecords.com

Bedroom Heroes**Sea Change**

Beautiful, bubbly melodies in a quiet Radiohead meets Shins way. I think this came out in 2001, but I just got it. It really is lovely indie rock, though at an hour's length, the songs tend to run into each other.
Swim Slowly Records, swimsslowly.com

Benny**Our True Intent Is All For Your Delight**

Benny tosses together a lot of styles. It starts off the disc with a quirky pop punk song in a Boris the Sprinkler delivery, which is followed by a conventional pop-punk tune, followed by a quirky hardcore song. There's also rockabilly, old school HC, '77 punk... It's pretty eclectic, and I can't say they hold it together well, tho I do like the vocals. The best is when they do old school hardcore punk without the smirk. The worst is a goofy cover of Kumbaya, which is flat out stupid. Not really into Benny's shtick, which is too bad because they would have a great sound if they stuck to one.
Boss Tuneage, bosstuneage.com

Big Collapse**Prototype**

Since it features members of hardcore bands Burn and Shift, I was expecting something... well, punky. Instead, it's butt rock with a little garagey alterna-edge.
The Militia Group, themilitiagroup.com

The Big Creak**Just Left Town**

Decent pop-rock from Ohio with a big, airy sound. They've been compared to Ben Folds Five, but they actually kind of remind me of recent Jon Bon Jovi.
Thebigcreak.com

The Blam**Caveat Emptor**

Cute, jangly melodic indie-pop. Good songs, but the album feels long. They need to pick up the pace, inject some energy.
Theblam.com

Blue Sky Mile**Sands Once Seas**

The vocals sound like crappy mainstream emo, but this a band I'd be shocked to see on MTV2. Underneath the vocals, there's some cool shit going on: quirky, jangly guitars, dazzling Geddy Lee-inspired bass, and jazzy drumming; the music is incongruous with the vocals and vocal melodies, but all the better for it. They could've easily slapped together a straight-forward sound and be emo-band-of-the-month, so props to them for utilizing their talents and creativity.
Initial, initialrecords.com

The Bolides**Science Under Pressure**

The Bolides play chug-along, somewhat sloppy garage rock with vocals like a cockier Johnny Thunders. Without the quirky synths on a couple of their songs, this would be completely bland, one-size-fits-all garage rock, or just a sloppy attempt at '77 NY-style punk. Worse yet, the repetitive guitars and drums make the 3-4 minute songs feel like a small eternity each. And yet, I couldn't say these guys are terrible. I could see them appealing to both the moppy-haired garagey hipster and the salty old-timer punk.
Dionysus, dionysusrecords.com

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))**Boxcar Satan****Upstanding and Indigent**

I love that band name. That's what I'm gonna name my firstborn. Unless I have a son. Anyway, they live up to their name – they play twisted devil's blues in an avant-garde fashion, while sticking to a thumping, Texas hot, dry rattlesnake rock. The comparisons to Tom Waits and Captain Beefheart practically write themselves, and besides the similar gravelly vocals, they've also got that same whiskey-soaked-waltz-with-death-and-despair-at-a-circus-freakshow-deep-in-the-Delta feel, musically and lyrically. It's not the best makeout music, but pretty damn cool nonetheless.
Dogfingers Recordings, POB 2433, San Antonio, TX 78298, dogfingers.com

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))**Brazil****A Hostage and the Meaning of Life**

Killer prog punk—definitely comparable to Coheed and Cambria. Geddy Lee-ish vocals, swirling guitars and synths, pianos and bells, a wall of sound wrapped tightly in memorable, even catchy, tunes. C&C fans will love Brazil.
Fearless, fearlessrecords.com

Break the Silence**Near Life Experiences**

Emo-hardcore-punk-whatever from Chicago. Hard, heavy-percussion sound, offset by very melodic guitars. The vocals, as you can imagine, bounce between hard and melodic. Not my thing, but the kids will like it.
Hopeless, hopelessrecords.com

The Breakup Society**James At 35**

Wouldn't catch. Apparently it's a concept album about a breakup. Sounds pretty stalkish to me. But the press kit says it's a "hook-intensive blast of old-school rock n' roll with roots in vintage power-pop."
Get Hip, gethip.com

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))**Bright Eyes / Neva Dinova****One Jug Of Wine, Two Vessels EP**

Not so much a split as it is a collaboration, these six songs feature members of both bands, playing in tandem. I'm not a fan of the sadsack songwriter indie rock genre, but I can't deny that these songs sound great. Great production and songwriting, and for all the members on these tracks, the tunes aren't bogged down in a clumsy wall of sound – in fact, it sounds just like one band, a perfect melding. Fans of either band will want this gem.
Crank!, crankthis.com

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))**Broken Spindles****Fulfilled/Complete**

This is Joel from The Faint's side project, and what a departure! These MIDI-inspired twisted tunes range from electro-dance (the excellent "Move Away") to funky, catchy semi-industrial ("Italian Wardrobe") to goth ("The Dream"). This is like a really cool, indie lo-fi love child of The Church and the Orb. The hushed, distorted vocals won't be for everyone, but thankfully the album is mostly instrumental. Really cool stuff.
Saddle Creek, saddle-creek.com

The Building Press**Young Money**

A textured, tense, jerky indie album that isn't much fun to listen to, but if you're into jagged post-hardcore, you may dig it. They're good at what they do, but this music makes me neurotic.
54 50 or Fight!, fiftyfourfortyortight.com

Burnthe8track**The Ocean**

An interesting release for Abacus. Hook-filled melodic punk/indie from Winnipeg. At their best, they have a catchy, pleasant sound. At their worst, they're embarrassingly wussy (without being emo). I like that Abacus is expanding to punk and indie rock, though.
Abacus, abacusrecordings.com

The Calculators**Circuit Breaking Silency/Simplicity & Style Reissue**

A collection from the Calculators' short-lived run from '97-99. They played 80s synth-pop, in a New Order vein, and members went on to found The Rapture and Paradise Boys. Personally, I prefer the Calculators' music to their subsequent bands, as they were a lot more creative in their songwriting. Close your eyes and be warped to 1984.
PrinceHouse Records, princehouserecords.com

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))**Calibretto****Dead By Dawn EP**

Whoa, this is cool. It's like a psychobilly/pop-punk version of Firewater hanging out with Primus at a circus hosted by Mr. Bungle. Yet, even with all the bells and whistles (literally), they're really catchy and toe-tapping. Check out the 60s pop vibe on "When I Think About You", the polka-skiffle hybrid instrumental "The Doubtful Guest", the spooky "Don't Go Into The Woods", and all the rest. It's wacky, but cool wacky.
Standard Recording Co, standardrecording.com

Castle Oldchair**Sad Pants**

Droopy, sadsack indie with a poppy, sweet, lo-fi sound and some psychedelia and strings thrown in. Pleasant, but not exceptionally memorable.
Standard Recording Co., standardrecording.com

Cheval De FriseFresques Sur Les Parois Secretes Du Crane

This French duo dishes out some impressive math rock with just guitar and drums. They're both so over the place, it sounds like a full band. Great jazz-rock compositions.

Frenetic, freneticrecords.com

Noam ChomskyThe Emergency Framework of World Power

In this enthralling speech given in April of 2002, Chomsky gives an in-depth review of the U.S.'s role in state-sponsored terrorism over the past four presidencies. Using the War on Terror as a backdrop, he discusses our country's own atrocities, from actively supporting corrupt and repressive regimes to undermining democracy and development, whenever it is in our best interest to do so. It's nothing we don't already know (assuming you know your recent history), but his matter-of-fact and sensible delivery, bereft of any rhetorical flair, is gripping. If you don't know what your country's been doing in your name over the past three decades, this is a great place to start.

AK Press, Alternative Tentacles, alternativetentacles.com

ChromaticsPlaster Hounds

Luckily I enjoy goth, which enables me to dig dark, slow post-punk stuff like this: Death-disco vocals, sparse guitarwork, dripping bass, and thumping drumming. It won't shake your ass, but if you're feeling gloomy and want to light some candles, this makes a nice soundtrack.

Gold Standard Laboratories, goldstandard-labs.com

ChubbyIs It Time?

Fronted by Dennis Brockenborough (former trombonist for the Bosstones), Chubby play melodic indie rock that falls flat. Very sludgy and dark, and at their most power-pop, they're still impeded by a tuned down minor key style and annoyingly crunchy guitars. Blah.

Gigantic Music, giganticmusic.com

The Code / Whatever It TakesSplit EP

The Code play paint-by-numbers political punk (songs about revolution you've heard a million times), though musically, they have a great, punchy street punk sound. Their third song, however, has some terrible ska breakdowns. Whatever It Takes have a more original punkcore sound, though the vocals are weak. Fans of political punk may enjoy this disc a lot more. Three songs each.

A-F, a-frecords.com

((EDITOR'S PICK)))**Crime In Choir**The Hoop

Excellent modern prog rock that has as much melody as it does technical precision. Though they're compared to King Crimson and Yes, they have elements, like jazzy structures, horns, and 70s style electric piano, that bring to mind Frank Zappa's "Hot Rats" and "Weasels Ripped My Flesh". But with electronics and fast tempo, their sound is a lot fresher and doesn't feel retro or dorky. Check out the bouncy, funky title track, the acid house-ish "Magnetotail", the lush "Night Bandit", and the supercool opening track.

Frenetic, freneticrecords.com

The CropknoxRock And Rot

Kick-ass street punk from the UK. Songs are either raucous punkcore or catchy singalongs, all with great guitarwork and fun, pissed-off vocals. Check out the new punk anthem "Anger and Apathy."

Punk Core, punkcore.com

DaisycutterDaisycutter

Daisycutter is like Infectious Grooves on steroids. Funk rock meets nu-metal with big, heavy distorted guitar riffs, 80s hard rock background vox, and some bubbling industrial synths under it all. Well-produced for an unsigned band, and it's an interesting twist on metal. Even their cover of "I Am The Walrus" is pretty decent.

Daisycuttermusic.com

Days Like TheseCharity Burns Green

Radio-friendly emo that the kids will love. Think Yellowcard with better vocals.

Lobster, lobsterrecords.com

Dead KennedysLive At The Deaf Club

I was wary of this release because Jello Biafra had been bashing it, claiming the sound quality was awful and the album wasn't worth getting. Well, I think Jello's just trying to sabotage the release, because the production is better than most live albums that are recorded today, and this was recorded 25 years ago! I personally don't care who pockets the money for this release – I just want to hear good music, and that's what this disc offers.

Manifesto, manifesto.com

Dead PoeticNew Medicines

Radio-friendly emocore. For a band with occasional growly screaming, they lack edge.

Solid State, solidstaterecords.com

DescendentsCool To Be You

Wow, these guys are old enough to be my dad. And yet they still sound fresh, still singing about being dorks and not getting girls. It sounds a little watered down at first, but after a couple listens, it ranks up there with some of the Descendents' best stuff. (I love the poppy punk, sue me.) Great album, pops.

Fat Wreck, fatwreck.com

Descendents'Merican EP

It's great to see that the Descendents are back (again), though they seem more sedate this time around. The four tunes (plus bonus track) on this teaser disc are great pop-punk, but with the exception of the more punky "I Quit", the pop-punk lacks bite. Hey, not a problem for me – I like sappy pop-punk, though fans of harder Descendents stuff might be a little put off. Like I care about other fans. I like this EP and I'm looking forward to their upcoming album, *Cool To Be You*, and the rest of you can blow me.

Fat Wreck, fatwreck.com

DespistadoThe Emergency Response EP

Very cool and jerky post-hardcore from Canada. They're frenetic and energetic, with cool Perry Farrell-ish vocals, stop-and-go guitars,

and an undercurrent of upbeat poppiness. Check out the totally groovin', super percussion rockin' "Bubbles". This just barely missed being an Editor's Pick because as much as I liked it, it also gave me a raging migraine.

Boss Tuneage, bosstuneage.com

The DestroyedOutta Control

Following up on last year's discography of Bert Switzer's solo work and his tunes with forgotten 70s punk band The Destroyed, comes another visit to the dusty demos. This album features ten Destroyed tracks from the late 70s that probably should've stayed in the shoebox. I suppose fans of Johnny Thunders-era and style punk would be interested, and it's always nice to get your hands on long-lost punk artifacts, but the songs are like Osama in a synagogue – simply no good! This album also features ten new songs from Switzer and the Destroyed's singer JD Jackson, and the songs are surprisingly similar to (and better than) the music they wrote 25 years ago. Unfortunately, the production is also similar to those ancient demos. Get out of the garage and into a studio, pops!

Bertswitzer.com

The DistanceYour Closest Enemies EP

Snappy, angry hardcore without the frills. Not exactly metalcore, but more of a very angry, aggressive take on old school. Six great tracks, and only 8 minutes long!

Bridge Nine, bridge9.com

Eleven ElevenHead

I bet these guys like the Smiths. On the first track, and the others to a lesser degree, the soft, wistful vocals are eerily reminiscent of Morrissey, with stuttering, echoey guitars that would have Johnny Marr running to file a copyright infringement suit. Then on "Every Ill In The World" and "Unlovable", they channel The Cure. In-between, they play new wavey, moody bar rock with echoed vocals and harder edged guitars... While it's great to hear modernized versions of amazing shoegazing 80s bands, it...well, sort of isn't. Jury is still out on my feelings toward these guys. It's great that they wear their influences on their sleeves, but bands trying very hard to sound like bands that I hold dear is sort of like blaspheming the sacred. Is it homage or sacrilegious?

Forever Records, 296 Deborah Ct, Vineland, NJ 08361

Eyede & AbilitiesE&A

Imaginative and funky hip hop duo with a heavy hand on the turntable. The rhymes, if you can pay attention to them, are thought-provoking without being a drag, relying more on personal stories than the usual political diatribes, and delivered in fun, creative ways. It's hard to focus on the lyrics though, as the samples and scratching either engage you completely or distort and trip over them. While the accompaniment is cool, if they ever did a remix of this album, I can't see it be anything but one long record scratch. Outside of the dark production and the sleazy Kool Keith-ish "Two Men and a Lady", this is an exceptionally good album. Check out the rapid fire delivery on "One Twenty", the cool accompaniment on "Act Right", and the heartfelt lyrics on "Exhausted Love".

Epitaph, epitaph.com

Eyes Of Fire**Ashes to Embers**

For a metalcore band, Eyes of Fire have a lot of range. They've got their brutal sound, and then they've got a softer side. I mean, really soft. Like "Silent Lucidity" soft. It gets interesting when they mix the two, but I'm not sure who this would appeal to.

Century Media, centurymedia.com

Feeling Left Out**Once Upon A Time**

An emo duo with pretty dual acoustic guitars and corny vocals/lyrics. Put it on when your girlfriend is over so she thinks you're sensitive. Then slip her the salami.

LLR Recordings, llrrecords.com

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))**The Festival****The Festival**

I must first disclose that The Festival is Brandon Campbell, ska stalwart and long-time writer and illustrator for READ. That said, I can objectively say that this is the greatest folk album ever written. I can't believe that these from-the-woodlands deep vocals came out the larynx of my bud Brandon; they sound like vocals from some folksy 60s past. The acoustic guitar augment them perfectly, and some tunes have funky beats and loops, but the real show here is the vox and lyrics, the latter which mask deep emotion with absurdist imagery and brilliant rhymes, in a smooth, surefire delivery. If you like singer/songwriter stuff, be prepared to be impressed.

thefestivalonline.com

Final Word**Fools Like You EP**

Fantastic old school NYHC-inspired hardcore from Montreal. Simple, mid-tempo, pissed off, chant-along HC with some great bass playing. But it is replicating what's already been done. I mean, with songs like "Something to Prove", "No Apologies", "On My Own", "Shut You Out"... we've heard this before many, many times.

Indecision, indecisionrecords.com

Firebug**Firebug**

This great downtempo ska band from Brazil offers up a startlingly tight 70-minute debut. With an emphasis on vocals, guitars and keys, and an under use of horns, they remind me of the Hotknives, but with Vic Rice producing and playing bass, they've got a dubbier, more echoey sound that gives them a darker edge. While the songwriting isn't exceptionally catchy (with a couple of exceptions), the album is more mood-oriented than song-oriented anyway, and it works. Overall, this is an excellent trad ska album that hopefully won't fall under the radar.

Radiola, radiolarecords.com.br

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))**Firewater****The Man on the Burning Tightrope**

Firewater is so fucking cool. Another great album of eclectic instrumentation and twisted pop. Firewater is like the redheaded stepson of Tom Waits, Frank Zappa, the Residents, and a Vegas variety act. It all comes together brilliantly, as the weirdness is ingrained and works within poppy song structures, rather than be a mess of musical masturbation.

Jetset, jetsetrecords.com

Firewater**Songs We Should Have Written**

Great no-wave, twisted takes on ditties originally by Sonny Bono, Johnny Cash, the Beatles, Rolling Stones, Tom Waits and others. Check out the down-tuned, spooky version of "The Beat Goes On," and a haunting rendition of "Some Velvet Morning".

Jetset, jetsetrecords.com

Flatus**Crashing Down**

Great Bad Religion-ish poppy, spirited punk rock that's marred by hideously cheesy lyrics. The vocalist also does these Paul Stanley-ish inflections with his voice, which kinda creeps me out. But overall, this is a decent catchy punk album with a lot of heart.

Black Pumpkin, blackpumpkin.com

The Foxx**The Foxx**

The CD didn't work, so I'll just read from the press kit: "The Foxx are a 4-piece glam/power pop band from Albuquerque, NM. This is Juliet Legend's (ex-Rondells) new project. The band started in the fall of 2002 and has been going strong ever since." I'd also like to note that the CD smells like coffee. I'm also not fond of their logo, and the cover needs more pizzazz.

www.the-foxx.com

The Frequency**The Frequency**

These guys have a huge buzz, but I think people are blinded, or deafened, by the quirkiness of spacey keys and zany programming. While it gives them a fun beepy-bloopy sound, like Human League in the 30th century, the bad vocals and corny lyrics override it. This recent trend of restyling the cheesiest aspects of 80s music isn't bad in itself, but there needs to be substance to make it more than a novelty.

Noreaster Failed Industries, nfilabel.com

Gainer**You Say It Like It's A Bad Thing**

Melodic emo punk from Alabama... but they're good. I like the raspy voice, and the bass, which really drives the songs. Even if you hate this sound, which I do, check out "It's Already Been Brang!" All their songs should be this melodic.

Bent Rail, POB 2283, Birmingham, AL 35201

Give Up The Ghost**Year One**

This CD collects their OOP first two EPs, and I have to say... impressive. In fact, I liked their earlier stuff much better than Background Music and We're Down. There's less screamy stuff, more straight-up hardcore. If you're not into these guys, you may dig this CD nonetheless, if you're into aggressive NYC-style HC.

Bridge Nine, bridge9.com

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))**God Forbid****Gone Forever**

Cool aggressive metal with guitars that actually play metal, and not sludgy metalcore or nu-metal crap. The tunes have the right amount of melody and thrash, and the background vocals and 80s metal style guitar parts help temper the screamy vocals. In this genre, God Forbid are one of the best. Enthralling metal album.

Century Media, centurymedia.com

Green Day**1.039/Smoothed Out Slappy Hours**

I can't imagine any Green Day fan not already having this, as it's been re-released a few times. But this release comes with some enhanced doodads, like some old live footage, original art and handwritten lyrics. Not worth getting again, but of course you should pick it if you don't already have it.

Lookout!, lookoutrecords.com

Harkonen**Dancing**

It's misleading to call this hardcore; it's more like really aggressive indie rock. The music is a well-crafted whirlwind, the yelled-out vocals keep things grounded. As far as modern post-hardcore bands go, Harkonen (Dune reference?) do a great job in balancing aggression with melody, interplaying tension and dissonance with catchy guitar riffing and surprising musical chops. A strong, heavy release from Initial.

Initial, initialrecords.com

Haste**The Mercury Lift**

Haste have really evolved. Their latest bounces between Snapcase-ish hardcore to commercial nu-metal to cheesily melodic moments in between. I personally prefer cheesy melody over screamy metalcore, but this does seem like a blatant attempt to crossover.

Century Media, centurymedia.com

Haste The Day**Burning Bridges**

Clipped, peppy metal musicianship save this band from being god-awful cheesy nu-metal. They do the dual vocals thing - one guy taking a dump, another one wistfully cheesy when he's not doing the white boy numetal hip hop delivery. And they all thank Jesus for some reason, as if the Son of God is a fan of Carcass. C'mon, we all know He's more about the Celtic Frost. But the accompaniment, when it's not chunka-chunka, is reminiscent of talented old school thrash, and not the crap being spewed today.

Solid State, solidstaterecords.com

Haymarket Riot**Mog**

Becoming typical of the new Thick sound, Haymarket mix up melody with jagged constructs and sharp musicianship, so that you're unsure if you're listening to an exceptionally poppy post-punk band, or an exceptionally interesting pop-punk band. In either case, they're exceptionally good: great passionate vocals, strong bass, and very complex song structures that enhance, rather than distract from, the melody. Of special note, Steve Albini produced, and it doesn't sound like muddy crap. Check out "Cue" and "Plastic Bottle Kid."

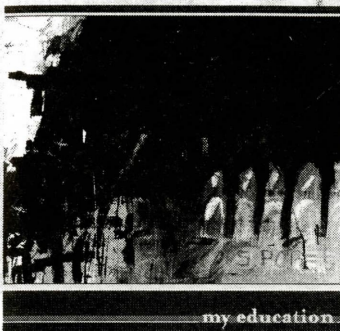
Thick, thickrecords.com

Heads Vs. Breakers**Apathy Is The New Black**

Hailing from LI, this energetic band (featuring members of Silent Majority, Strongpoint and Dropout Year) plays emotional hardcore-punk with a nifty double-guitar attack. The wistful vocals might seem annoying for those not into emo, but the great songwriting and musicianship does a good job in keeping you interested. They kind of remind me of a cross between Reunion Show and Bouncing Souls, only more emocore.

New Day Rising, newdayrising.org

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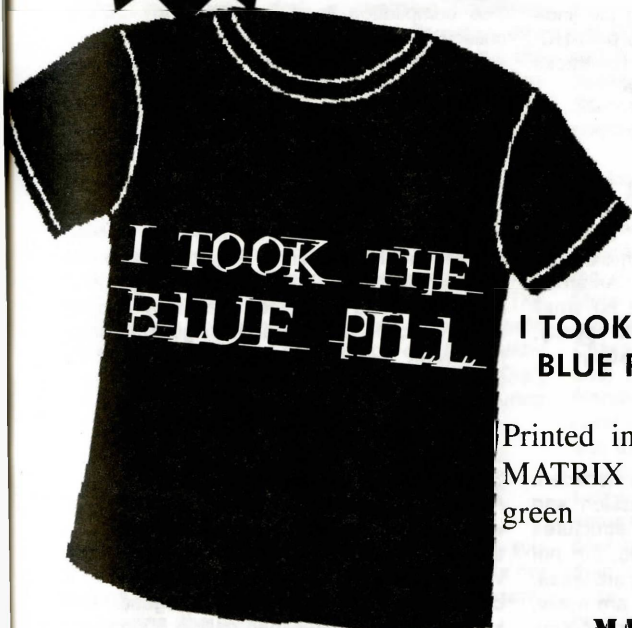
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The Heatseekers **In Praise Of**

As you can guess from their name, the Heatseekers play raucous, garage-style punk rock. A couple of songs stand out, like "Stranded", but while decent, a lot of bands do this better.
Ohev, ohevrecords.com

(((EDITOR'S PICK))) **Hidden Tracks**

The Sweet Sound of Excess

I had never heard of this band, and I don't think anyone else has, either. Googling barely brings up anything. And yet, these dozen songs (no hidden tracks ironically enough) are too good to be missed. This is toe-tapping, smile-inducing, sunny power pop, like a goofy mix of recent MTX, the Kinks, the Hollies, They Might Be Giants, Weezer, and vocals reminiscent of a young Michael Stipe meets TMBG (and Neil Young pops in my head for some reason). Fun and cute and squeaky clean, they are perilously close to cheesy, but it's dork cheese that I find endearing.
Thehiddentracks.com

The Honorary Title **Anything Else But The Truth**

My copy skipped. From the press kit: "Drawing on an eclectic range of influences that includes Elvis Costello, Bright Eyes and Jeff Buckley, The Honorary Title combines raw emotion with pop hooks and remarkably poetic lyrics to write songs that defy simple genre classifications."
Doghhouse, doghouserecords.com

Martin Hoybye **East of November**

Twangy, from-the-heartland stuff, which isn't normally my thing, but was somehow endearing. You've heard these songs before – songs about loneliness, girls who done you wrong, etc., but the stark accompaniment and dead-on vocals do it well like a younger, less gruffy Johnny Cash.
Standard Recording Co, standardrecording.com

The Hurt Process **Drive By Monologue**

From jolly ol' England comes this melodic, but bland, emo band with some hardcore breakdowns. They shine on a couple of songs, especially "Tuesday", but they're no Turtles.
Victory, victoryrecords.com

If Hope Dies **The Ground Is Running Up To Meet Us**

Hot damn, this is cool shit! While the vocals are thrash, the guitars are more melodic, and the song structures are convoluted with cool drums/guitar interplay. They pull it off brilliantly, especially on "The Hungry Ghost" and "Sugar, Free Donuts". And they seem to have a good sense of humor with songs like "Roddy Piper's Magic Sunglasses" and "Let Freedom Ring (From the Taco Liberty Bell)". There's hope yet for metalcore.
Ironclad, ironclasrecordings.com

(((EDITOR'S PICK))) **IfiHadaHiFi** **No More Music**

This album immediately explodes in one of the most energetic, fun, toe-tapping songs I've heard in a while. The chanting of "I'm gonna steal your potential energy" is accurate as they replace it with something more kinetic – your knee with bounce feverishly up and down, your head will bang, your hands will shake, making it harder

to type. The album continues to rock out in this crazy struggle between noise and hooks, with occasional synths and swirling guitars adding to the cacophony. Definitely for fans of noise bands that know how to write songs.
Contraphonic, POB 2203, Chicago, IL 60690

Insted **Proud Youth: 1986-1991**

This retrospective collects every song this influential straight-edge band (whom I've never heard of, actually) recorded. That's 44 songs, including previously unreleased stuff, demo tracks, and three new tunes. If you like straightedge or post-core, you get a lot of bang for your buck.
Indecision, indecisionrecords.com

Jet Lag **Beautiful Scars**

Power pop from Spain. Very corny.
Get Hip, gethip.com

Joe Coffee **Bright As The Stars We're Under**

Featuring Paul Bearer of Sheer Terror, Joe Coffee plays loud, sloppy hardcore with Paul's trademark cool, Lemmyish vox. They're not thrashy, but the poor production makes it sound noisier than it really is.
Street Anthem, streetanthemrecords.com

(((EDITOR'S PICK))) **The John Stamos Project** **North American All-Stars**

This is the best pop-punk band you've never heard of. They're probably a quarter of the age of the Queers, and yet they sound just like them, if not better. With the Ramones dead, Screaming Weasel defunct, the Queers sober, the Huntingtons Christian, the Lillingtons... whatever happened to the Lillingtons?, the Travoltas too European, and Dr. Frank now channeling Elvis Costello, our last best hope for fun, peppy, Ramonesy pop-punk is JSP. Find this album and bop around to it.
Knock Knock Records, knockknockrecords.com

K-Line **How You Gonna Scare Us Now**

Energetic emopunk from the UK along the lines of At The Drive In with some late 80s post-HC. Catchy stuff, if nothing new. Check out the tracks You Know We Know and Count It Down.
Boss Tuneage, bosstuneage.com

Karmella's Game **What He Doesn't Know Won't Hurt Him**

Frenetically energetic, this female-fronted group have elements that range from nu-metal (crunchy guitars), pop-punk (bright melodies), and dorky new wave (is that a moog?). An ambitious mix and they manage it well in no small part because of their strongest asset – spunky, irresistible female vocals that carry the songs.
Speedbump, speedbumponline.com

Kill Me Tomorrow **The Garbage Man and the Prostitute**

Industrial, electro-punk and goth in a decadent orgy of noise. The good: the percussion and synth effects are awesome, the song structures and lyrics are clever. The-not-so-good: I'm not married to the vocals and some songs are weak. Still very good, and the middle songs are really, really good: I Require Chocolate, Chart of You, and their great cover of Beefheart's Hot Head.
Gold Standard, goldstandardlabs.com

Kilowatthours / The Rum Diary **Split CD**

Dreamy, lo-fi indie-pop with soft vocals and cascading melodies from both bands. Neither of these bands will get you on the dancefloor, but I like them a bit – they make me want to smoke up and look at clouds.
Springman, springmanrecords.com

(((EDITOR'S PICK))) **The Kite-Eating Tree** **Method: Fail. Repeat...**

For every reason that people wouldn't like Kite-Eating Tree, I like them. Yes, they are sickly produced, radio-friendly, and can as easily be compared to grunge as to post-hardcore or emo, but they pull it all off, and the bottom line is that they sound great. This is crazy catchy shit, even when the instrumentation does some jerky post-hardcore things or when the vocals have an emo moment. I read one review that trashed the album for sugar coating post-hardcore, but that's why I applaud it. If you can make post-hardcore as pleasing to listen to as pop-punk, without sounding like you're pandering to young MTV2 fans, you deserve an editor's pick.
Suburban Home, suburbanhomerecords.com

La Motta **Love California EP**

Bright sunshiney pop-punk with a lot of background harmonies, but with a healthy dose of alterna-distortion, like a cross between a Cali power-pop band and the Pixies. The title track is a love letter to California, but besides that, these guys are a-okay in my book.
Boss Tuneage, bosstuneage.com

The Last Vegas **Lick 'Em And Leave 'Em**

LA-style raucous, sleaze-rock from Chicago. With some AC/DC hard rock and Motley Crue glam metal influences, they rock out pretty hard. Ten great, no-frills raw rock n' roll tunes.
Get Hip, gethip.com

Les Savy Fav **Inches**

The compilation itself is interesting – it's a collection of their nine singles, two songs each, that were released on nine different labels, all of it planned over eight years. It seems very artsy and complicated, terms which also describe the music. Les Savy Fav, who I hear all over the place but have only now heard their music, are part Brooklyn art student fashion rock, part dance-punk, and part dissonant post-punk, like the Talking Heads and PiL covering Fugazi. For all the obvious effort, I still like them. They manage to be catchy and fun; the energetic, bouncy rhythm section and the angular guitars somehow work together, creating a pretty funky punky kerplunky sound. File under cool shit.
Frenchkiss, frenchkissrecords.com

Lesser Birds of Paradise **String Of Bees**

A warm, lush blend of math rock and indie-pop with soft vocals and bluesy accompaniment that's both earthy and spacey. I found this a vast improvement over their last EP, but it could still stand to be more energetic. This knocks you out faster than calling a skinhead "Shirley." Fans of Pedro the Lion might dig it.
Contraphonic, POB 2203, Chicago, IL 60690

Life In Pictures**Songs From The Sawmill EP**

Crisp metalcore, with surprisingly good guitar work and vocals that, while gruff, don't make my head explode. Smart but not overbearing political lyrics, differentiating songs, and interesting structures make it a full-sounding and satisfying release, especially for a metalcore EP.

Limekiln, limekilnrecords.com

The Little Killers**The Little Killers**

A fun female-fronted garage band that has some great hand-clapping, toe-tapping bluesy riffs. Raw and fuzzy like everyone else, but with a raucous r&b barroom Von Bondies feel. Worth checking out.

Crypt Records, 3 Reading Ave, Frenchtown, NJ 08825, cryptrecords.com

Local H**Whatever Happened to P.J. Soles?**

Better than their EP, Local H rock it out full-length stylee with big guitar riff attacks and grungey vocals. Their weakness remains though – they don't know when to end the song. Long openings, long endings, and some downtempo songs that are just filler. This one-hour disc could've been cut down by half and would've been twice as good. Love the album title though – I've been asking myself that very question every lonely night.

Localh.com

Loch Lomond**When We Were Mountains**

Alternately sparse and atmospheric, Loch Lomond is sort of like an avante garde Coldplay with a bit of the Shins thrown in. This trancey, convoluted pop isn't for everyone, and I have to admit what seemed interesting at the beginning bored me to tears midway.

In Music We Trust, inmusicwetrust.com

Lowgold**Welcome To Winners**

The stark, solemn first track had me worried that this would be a Coldplay/Tindersticks wannabe thing. But the band does begin to rock out soon after, in a mostly drab, shoegazing Smashing Pumpkins way. Some songs add distortion, others add synth sounds and echo effects, but the music never gets past being a dull all-too-serious indulgence.

Sanctuary, sancturayrecordsgroup.com

Madcap**Under Suspicion**

A slower pace and less of an edge for Madcap, but still great, fun songs with Bouncing Souls-esque wistful singing and tight songwriting. They actually kind of sound like a mod version of The Clash now. Pretty neat. Definitely an iconoclastic band in the Victory pen. Check out the catchy street-punky "Turnaround" and "It Won't Die", and the skanky "Searching for Ground" (featuring Catch 22's horn section).

Victory, victoryrecords.com

Major**The Bliss Domestic**

Clean power pop that would probably get you beaten for admitting you like it. It's cornier than my poop, but that doesn't make it any less pleasant-sounding (the band, not my poop).

Laughing Outlaw, laughingoutlaw.com.au

Jennifer Marks**Jennifer Marks**

Bright, radio-friendly singer/songwriter pop that's very reminiscent of Liz Phair. Pretty vocals, but not the greatest lyrics in the world and the album is overproduced to the point of sounding canned and artificial. Liz Phair fans might be interested – some of these songs, like "Naked" and "Live", sound like something that could've made the cut on Phair's most recent release.

Bardic, POB 8669, Red Bank, NJ 07701

Martyr AD**On Earth As It Is In Hell**

You know Martyr AD. Fast metalcore, tight musicianship, chunka chunka stop-and-go guitar riffing. Nothing too earth, or hell, shattering.

Victory, victoryrecords.com

The Matches**E. Von Dahl Killed The Locals**

The promo didn't catch in my Discman, but I think I'd like them. The Matches is a great name for a band, and I assume they play catchy pop-punk. Rolling Stone says: "Hook-filled, radio-friendly punk..." I'm wary when Rolling Stone calls something radio-friendly, but I'll give these guys the benefit of the doubt cuz they have a cool name.

Epitaph, epitaph.com

((EDITOR'S PICK))**Mental****Get An Oxygen Tank**

Excellent old school-styled sXe hardcore that manages to present 16 different-sounding stand-out tracks in 23 minutes, which is how I like it. Zippy, to the point, and memorable. They hit the mark, and I think straightedge is dumb as paste (mmm... paste), so you can imagine how good it is if you subscribe to the X.

Bridge Nine, bridge9.com

Miranda Sound**Engaged in Labor**

This great indie band offers up both bright guitar pop and serious indie ballads (they're too good to be labeled emo). Above-average vocals and harmonies, well-used keys, and just the right amount of distortion. I've heard them called diverse, but their sound is definitely cohesive – I'd say they just have great range.

Standard Recording Co., standardrecording.com

Misconduct**United As One**

Oh god. The album starts off with lyrics like "No boundaries! Let's all unite! Just believe it! Fighting to stay alive!" Gag. It doesn't get better. More songs about "fighting to stay alive" (whatever that means), fighting for friendship ("Always together! Bound by blood until the end! Friendship forever – it's up to you my friend!"), fighting for freedom ("Fight for freedom! Fight for justice! Fight for freedom now!"), and ironically enough, fighting to stop the fight ("Stop the fight!"). It's all so clichéd, I'm half suspecting that this is a joke. Their redeeming feature, depending on how you look at it, is that their brand of hardcore is more melodic punk than 'core, and they also have a little funk influence. They could rock, but they need to work to be less contrived.

Union, unionlabelgroup.com

Mr. T Experience**Yesterday Rules**

This enhanced MTX CD really packs in everything you could hope for: photos, extensive discography, an exhaustive (but interesting) studio journal, and lyrics, tabs, and mp3s of every song. I wish the music were as good. I'm a huge MTX fan, and it took some adjusting, but I did fall in love with their rock-pop direction on Alcatraz, as opposed to their usual clipped fun pop-punk tunes they're known for. But this album has little emphasis on catchiness but instead on mature and sophisticated songwriting, with influences ranging from 50s rock to folk to 60s psychedelia. The genius of Dr. Frank was his ability to incorporate his whip-smart lonely-heart lyrics and musical influences into short, catchy, singalong punk songs, which are all but missing here amongst the clunky ballads. In short, it's very Dr. Frank but not really MTX. I may fall in love with this album like I did Alcatraz, but for now, I have to agree: yesterday did rule. *Lookout!, lookoutrecords.com*

Namelessnumberheadman**Your Voice Repeating**

Mostly cheesy indie-pop with a lo-fi space rock approach and vocals/lyrics that make me cringe. They have a slight electro influence, but not enough to make them interesting. Check out Broken Spindles instead.

The Record Machine, therecordmachine.net

Nap Attack**Choose Your Own Adventure EP**

Math rock has gotten a bad name, because many of the bands under that umbrella are self-indulgent or challenging to listen to. Nap Attack are neither. They're the original definition of math rock – great musicianship and jazz improvisation within a melodic indie context. Their songs – and they are songs – have lulling, pleasant harmonies, even if the time signatures look like difficult math equations. Definitely check out if you're into talented, instrumental indie similar to some of the Polyvinyl bands.

Monosyllabic, monosyllabicrecords.com

Natural Dreamers**Natural Dreamers**

Instrumental, jazzy soundscapes with bright melodies and an indie rock approach. They feature members of Deerhoof, The Curtains and Dilute, which might interest some, but the music is dull and sluggish, and they rely a lot on annoyingly jerky stop-and-go riffs. Check out Crime In Choir instead.

Frenetic, freneticrecords.com

Nekromantix**Dead Girls Don't Cry**

These great Danes are back with another spooky fun psychobilly album, marred only by a bonus track of 30 minutes of chanting. Dude, some of us are too lazy to press stop – you can't do that to us! Everything before that is fantastic – fans won't be disappointed. Your ass will be shakin' like sizzlin' bacon.

Hellcat, hell-cat.com

New Black**New Black**

There are some bands that would be awesome if it weren't for one aspect. While that usually holds true with respect to vocals or lyrics, New Black nearly messes up a perfectly kick ass new wave goth-punk sound with an overused,

loud annoying keyboard. Whether it be the pop-punky "Angels with Cockroach Wings" and "Hot Box" or the Siouxsie & the Banshees-esque "Last Wave", the majority of the songs totally kick ass... EXCEPT that they have to add these lame keys. I think they consider it spooky and it gives them a dark edge, but in fact they sound like a Castlevania game. Guys, you don't need it. You have pounding wet-sounding percussion, dark guitar riffs, cool gothy Siouxsie-ish vocals... you need spooky keyboards like Rush needs a theremin. You guys rock, but you're in danger of blowing it. *Thick, thickrecords.com*

New Radiant Storm King

Leftover Blues: 1991-2003

I'm not gonna pretend to be some smarmy rock critic who reads the press release and then writes the review as if they've actually heard of the band. You know, "For those of you who aren't aware of the brilliant indie legend NRSK, this greatest hits might be a great place to start your collection, blah blah blah." I've never heard these guys before, and frankly, they sound pretty corny to me. With the exception of the fluid, melodic tune "Scrimshaw", it's boring guitar-pop. *Contraphonic, contraphonic.com*

Number One Fan

Compromises

If the catchy, sappy indie-emo rock trend continues, you'll be seeing this Appleton, WI band on MTV2 soon. Overproduced radio-friendly indie-pop, like Jimmy Eat World meets All-American Rejects, except I like those bands. Number One Fan is okay, I mean, I'd rather hear this on the radio than Yellowcard, but they've really compromised edginess for digestibility. *Pat's Record Company, numberonefanonline.com*

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))

On The Rise

Burning Inside

Featuring current and former members of Agnostic Front and Maximum Penalty, and you can hear it. Passionate vocals, driving drums, and surprisingly melodic guitars flesh out this impressive debut from this creative down-tempo NYHC supergroup. It may not be as toughguy or "hard" as recent NYHC crappola, which is more than fine with me. You can't feel the music if you can't catch up with it. *Bridge Nine, bridge9.com*

The Operators *780*

Power Version EP

If you, like me, feel that there's something lacking in American trad ska nowadays – namely, bands who break out of that boring and overdone barroom ska beat – then look north to Edmonton, Canada's The Operators *780*. This five-piece plays kick-ass ska, punky-reggae and dub with energy that rivals the snottiest of punk bands yet still rivaling (and beating, in my opinion) the smooth musicianship of worshipped American bands like Afterhours, Deal's Gone Bad and Eastern Standard Time. This is some of the punchiest and most soulful ska-reggae that you'll likely hear from a bunch of white guys anytime soon. It's ska that rocks without any of that nasty pop-punk aftertaste – just smooth trad riddims delivered with fiercely passionate energy; I can't wait for the full-length. If you call yourself a ska fan, you owe it to yourself to check this out. (Review by James Lambert) *Longshot Records, PMB#72, 302 Bedford Avenue, Brooklyn, NY, 11211*

The Orphins

Drowning Cupid

Cool experimental geek rock with a good sense of humor and upbeat, jerky tunes that are almost danceable. I'm surprised that the guitarist was in Narcolepsy – though I guess that's comparable to Primus' Larry Lalonde being in Possessed. Anyway, this is fun, playful stuff that'll put a dopey grin on your face. *Goodnight Records, goodnightrecords.com*

Paradise Boys

The Young and the Guest List

Part synth-heavy new wave, part death-disco, Paradise Boys are a throwback to the 80s... and feel free to throw them back. Har har, they're not bad at all, but besides some techno and a little funk, they don't add anything modern or unique to this New Order-ish sound. Check out the Calculators instead. *PrinceHouse, princehouserecords.com*

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))

Paris Texas

Like You Like An Arsonist

Is this the same band that was on Polyvinyl? I don't remember them sounding this... spirited. The first song just explodes in dance-punk, guitars a-blazin', drums a booty-shakin'. And it just goes up from there. "Action Fans Help Us", "Rebel Radio", "One Hot Coma"... just about all of them are hand-clapping, punk n' roll good times. Really dynamic garage-punk with an indie precision. *New Line Records, 116 North Robertson Blvd, LA, CA 90048*

Peachfuzz

About A Bird

If you like bright 60s pop with a garagey moppo rockitude, look no further. Peachfuzz emulate that slightly psychedelic Britpop sound to a T and add on a lot of, well, fuzz. They're like Status Quo meets Oasis meets indie-band-of-the-week. Personally, I love bright, hooky pop, so this was a treat for a few minutes, but then it became a bit too much for me. You have to really like the British Invasion to enjoy this American indie band. *Dionysus, dionysusrecords.com*

Pepper

In With The Old

Hailing from Hawaii, Pepper is a hot, tangy tikki party for the ears. Nah, I'm just kidding. I've heard them called ska, but they're more like weak corny world-pop music. They sound like all those other old white guys playing bland pop with a Caribbean twist. In fact, the more I listen to it, the more I hate it. Next time, they better be a tangy tikki party for my ears. *Volcom Entertainment, volvoment.com*

Petracovich

Blue Cotton Skin

Bjorky lo-fi, dreamy electronic backgrounds with sweet, breathy female vox. This makes me feel fuzzy inside. *Red Button, redbuttonrecords.com*

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))

Piebald

All Ears, All Eyes, All the Time

I thought I didn't like Piebald, but what the hell was I thinking? Dorky, witty pop-punk with diverse indie elements. It's great hearing indie music that is FUN. Jeez, who do I have to blow to get an indie album that is balls-out fun?

Thankfully no one, cuz Piebald did it anyway. I don't know if that makes sense, I'm a little drunk. Anyway, 15 totally enjoyable Weezer-meets-Nerf Herder-in-an-indie-sorta-way tunes. If that makes sense. Anyone who thinks these guys are emo is on some seriously good crack. *Side One Dummy, sideonedummy.com*

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))

Marianne Pillsbury

The Wrong Marianne

Very strong debut from this singer/songwriter who delivers intelligent, war-of-the-sexes, early Liz Phair-ish lyrics over newer Liz Phair-ish pop rock. The juxtaposition of smart, serious lyrics over fun pop is a bitter pill dipped in honey. For instance, on first listen, "Sweet & Sour World" is a bouncy, almost disco-ish pop song, but the lyrics is a serious warning to fellow young women who might find themselves in a similar bad situation. "Supersize" and "Swallow A Fly" are jangly, fun tracks that hide sarcasm behind the typical I love you, I worship you lyrics. Other songs offer up diatribes against exes and bad experiences against the backdrop of either grungy rock beats or infectious melody. Sweet and sour, Marianne Pillsbury is food for thought. *www.mariannepillsbury.com*

Curt Porter

Blues for Beginners

Straight-forward one-man songwriter stuff, with a bluesy twist. Definitely not my thing through no fault of Porter's; he's good at what he does, though the lyrics are sometimes hackneyed. *Smother Promotions, smother.net*

The Pubert Brown Fridge Occurrence

A Once And Future Thing

Members of X (the Australian X) doing 60s British Invasion psychedelia-pop, pretty much dead-on. They sound like early Who and Abbey Road-era Beatles with a modern edge. If that's what you're looking for, you won't be disappointed. But it's not exactly reinventing the wheel. *Laughing Outlaw, laughingoutlaw.com.au*

Pulley

Matters

In listening to Pulley again for the first time in a while, it strikes me that their sound has been made famous by much younger, much stupider, much crappier bands. Pulley needs to walk over to MTV2 and crack a few skulls. Anyway, the new Pulley continues their Bad Religion-ish hook-laden pop-punk sound, with thoughtful and serious lyrics tied to a fun and energetic delivery. Check out "Insects Destroy", "Looking Back", and "Poltergeist." *Epitaph, epitaph.com*

QuarterLife Crisis

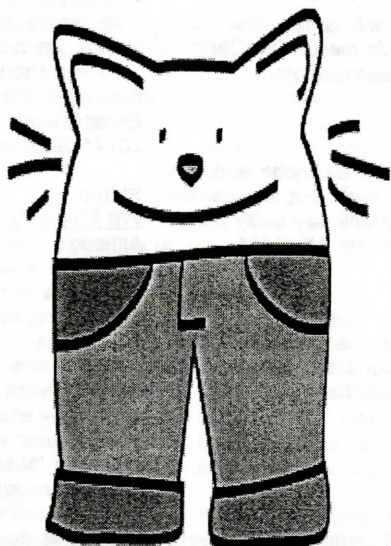
Forget The Time EP

Fast, pissed-off hardcore with non-threatening vocals (a good thing). Not bad for an unsigned hardcore band from Long Island. *Thanks4nothing.com*

Rainy Day Saints

Saturday's Haze

Great sunny power-pop from the old drummer of Guided By Voices (or so I've heard). The songs have that perfect early 90s melodic alterna-pop sound, and the remarkable thing is that Dave Swanson plays all instruments. *Get Hip, gethip.com*



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SEE PANTS ON OATS, CATS WHO LIKE
TO WEAR PANTS, KEITH GORDON



Read Yellow

Radios Burn Faster

Passionate emocore with high-pitched yelled vocals that remind me of Zack de la Rocha. Emocore fans will love it; it gave me a migraine. *Fenway, fenwayrecordings.com*

Red-Eyed Legends

The High When I'm Low

It takes a couple of listens, but REL grow on you. They're a dark noisy post-punk band with high-pitched vocals that have a constipated, yet rocking quality. They sound like if Bon Scott fronted a riot grrl band without the grrls. *Gold Standard Labs, goldstandardlabs.com*

Red Tape

Radioactivist

I wouldn't expect a straight-up political punk album on Roadrunner, but this is a nice surprise. Red Tape are lyrically left wing with the usual poli-punk targets, but the lyrics aren't annoyingly obvious or preachy (*cough* Pennywise). And the music is both pissed off and catchy with a lot of "whoa-oh-oh's". Check out "Stalingrad" and the title track. Definitely one of the better political punk albums in recent times. (Not as good as Intro5pect though - c'mon, nothing as good as the Intro5pect album. Pick that shit up.) *Roadrunner, roadrunnerrecords.com*

Riff Random

Random Love EP

Disappointing. These Aussies have generated a lot of buzz, and from their name I was expecting Ramonesy fun punk. Instead, they're identical to all those Brooklyn fashion bands. This shit was better 35 years ago when the Stooges did it. *www.riffandom.com*

Ritter

Six Degrees of Variation EP

This young PA band (named after a street they practice on, not the dead actor), plays energetic MTV2 style emopunkindie. As the title suggests, these 6 songs incorporate some variety, which is great because otherwise I wouldn't be able to tell them apart. *Jump Start, jumpstartrecords.com*

Robbers On High Street

Fine Lines EP

Well-produced melodic pop-rock with a garage rock edge. The EP feels long, and it's hit and miss. How It Falls Apart or Opal Ann, which go after more interesting styles, don't work well. They're best at doing no-frills melodic pop-rock like Hot Sluts (Say I Love You) and "A Night At Star Castle, but even then they're not exceptionally memorable. Best track: If You Let Me. *New Line, 116 North Robertson Blvd, LA, CA 90048*

The Robot Ate Me

They Ate Themselves

I'm picky with "weird rock" and singer/ songwriters, but TRAM—who fall in both realms—pass the test. Think one-man show channeling TFUL 282 and Flaming Lips: sad vocals, zany lyrics, and experimental pop accompaniment. *Swim Slowly, swimslowly.com*

Salty The Pocketknife

Salty The Pocketknife

The cover is total Manowar, but Salty plays funky alternative with Primus-ish rhythm section, ominous guitars and sultry female vox. This is music you'd probably hear in an S&M dungeon. *Sonance, sonancerecords.com*

Serene UK

The Oakland EP

Pretty, hypnotic indie rock with a dark new wave sound. Like Magnetic Fields meets The Church. Sadsack, but pleasant. *Sereneuk.com*

Sevenout

Feast of Eden

Power pop with an 80s pop rock vibe and 60s vocal harmonies. Catchy stuff, but maybe too radio-friendly. File under sunny day guilty pleasure. *Orbital, POB 2296, Monroe, MI 48161*

Sex Positions

Sex Positions

Noisy hardcore punk with some industrial/electropunk stuff in the background to make it seem more interesting. For fans of The Locust. *Deathwish, deathwishinc.com*

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))

Sheek the Shayk

Hour of the Seventh Moon

Rock n' rooooll!!! VERY reminiscent of early AC/DC and Radio Birdman, these guys rock it out Aussie style. Snotty and fun, with big ass guitar riffs and a swagger that'll knock you over. *Laughing Outlaw, laughingoutlaw.com.au*

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))

Shockwave

The Ultimate Doom

If you're gonna waste your time listening to hardcore, at least make it Shockwave. These guys know how to mix aggression and melody without compromising either. The title refers to the Transformers saga when the Decepticons tried to bridge Earth with Cybertron. That was some crazy shit. *Triple Crown, triplecrownrecords.com*

Shortcut To Newark

Heads In Hands. Hearts In Half EP

Poppy, but otherwise uninteresting, emo. You could get beaten up listening to stuff like this. *Boss Tuneage, bosstuneage.com*

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))

Single Frame

Wetheads Come Running

I love shit like this. Cartoonish, pinball-ish 80s synths and modern quirky electronica and samples smooshed into catchy indie-pop and poppy art-punk. This Austin band also mixes in everything from hip hop to acid rock to post-punk to 80s new wave, while retaining an identifiable sound under all the kitchen sink influences and three different vocalists. The press kit quotes the Austin Chronicle as saying they sound like Oingo Boingo getting thrashed by Fugazi. Include some Atom & His Package, Helen Love, TFUL 282, the Pixies, Modest Mouse, and even some Kool Keith and it's an accurate description. To give examples, "Comm. Jet" sounds like "Take a Walk on the Wild Side" done by They Might Be Giants or Atom in the year 2050. "Floral Design In A Straight Line" is Fugazi meets Rage Against the Machine in Frank Zappa's basement. And the beginning of "\$7 Haircut" sounds like Rush's "Subdivisions" before it turns into a jangly, fun pop-punk song that's equally creepy and cute. Trying to explain this band is not only extremely difficult, but it also doesn't give them justice. If you want something different, pick up this album. Granted, half the songs are throwaway filler, but the meat of the album is chateaubriand, baby. *Volcom Entertainment, volcoment.com*

Sinister Quarter

Pink Guillotine

Fragmented indie guitar melodies, a tortured Robert Smith-ish voice, and great lyrics that read like short stories. Great if you like frenetic indie with an emo twist, dull if you don't. *Exotic Fever, POB 297, College Park, MD 20741-0297, exoticfever.com*

Skitch

Will Play 4 Pants EP

Although a young band (high school, possibly?), this debut demo has a lot of potential. The lyrics are surprisingly mature - maybe too mature, like Phil Collins mature. In these four songs, two are straight up ballads, and the two ska-punk-ish tracks have similarly themed lyrics as well. The musicians are talented - especially the shuffling drumming, soulful guitar work, and the classically trained piano on "Missed Chance." The vocals work with the music - a little sappy, but not too emo, reminding me of the Umbrella Bed guy but not as dorky. My main critique is that the band needs to either embrace the cheesy bar rock style, which they do well, or, if they go with skapunk, to play with some balls. *skitchband.com*

Slapshot

Digital Warfare

This is being considered Beantown hardcore legends Slapshot's comeback album (though they haven't really gone away), and it's generating a lot of buzz. It's well-deserved—once again Slapshot offers up a strong, aggressive oi-tinged hardcore punk album full of fun ferocity. While not reinventing the wheel, Choke and pals do what they do best, not to mention the punkest version of "C Is For Cookie" I've ever heard, at least until Fearless Records puts out the inevitable "Sesame Street Goes Punk" comp. *Bridge Nine, bridge9.com*

The Sleazies

Trite Ditties and Meaningless Crap

Simple Queers/Ramonesy punk with dopey lyrics. From "I Wanna Be A Junky": "Well I don't wanna work / Don't wanna go to school / Don't wanna be no one / Just wanna sit here and drool." So you're not going to get a Dr. Frank dissertation here, but it's fun, silly pop-punk. Luckily most of their tunes are catchy or the Sleazies would be as they advertise themselves - trite and meaningless. *Pelado, peladorecords.com*

The Soma Solution

Conscious

Young, talented trio who play some original indie rock. The vocals are kind of annoying, and the production is a bit subpar, even for a self-release, but I have no doubt they'll improve with time. Sorry for condescending. *Thesomasolution.com*

Some Girls

All My Friends Are Going Death

Thrashcore all-stars! This cacophony features members from Give Up the Ghost, Unbroken, Over My Dead Body, and The Locust, and you can hear those elements in the wondrous screaming and mind-blasting, yet oddly booty-shaking, noise. *Deathwish, deathwishinc.com*

Some Kind Of Hate **Undisputed**

Like a younger, pissier version of Slapshot, these Boston hooligans play toughguy oi-tinged HC with a fuck-you punk attitude and a twist of fun. Man, Bridge 9 has been putting out good stuff lately. If you're into early hardcore, check this shit out. *Bridge Nine, bridge9.com*

(((EDITOR'S PICK)))

Sounds Like Braille

Right Out of Left Field. Straight to the Middle of Nowhere... Math rock doesn't get much better than this. Ultra-melodic, without pretense, and engaging. Strangely, they have two bassists and two drummers, but the music is more heavy on melody than rhythm. It goes without saying that the band is technically proficient, but they play with heart, and the lack of vocals don't take away from the lyrical quality of the music. Recommended for Tortoise fans.

Contraphonic, POB 2203, Chicago, IL 60690

SouthJerseySeashoreLifeguardConvention-Band S/T

A little Velvet Underground, a little Vaselines, but overall stale sounding. Not bad for a demo, but the band lacks the all-important oomp.

Thelifeguardband.com

Southkill

Southkill

Usually bands with Kill in their name bring forth nightmarish visions of music more scary in its crappiness than in its delivery. But Southkill deliver neither crappiness or scariness. They have a hard edge, but they play simplistic instrumental indie instead of metalcore. It sounds like it's just a drummer and guitarist, and they never stray too far: the drums roll by without intensity, and the guitar is played like a bass with simple, lulling strumming. Perhaps they're going more for hypnotic mood rather than math rock chops, and they do succeed in creating a dark, but dull, atmosphere. *Southkill.com*

Stand & Fight

Stand & Fight

Dopey, unoriginal sXe that does a lot of whining and bitching. Lots of songs about being proud, standing up for your beliefs, and upholding your rights. Dude, you have the right not to smoke and drink. No one's forcing you, so what's the big deal? Plus you guys are from California, where smoking is pretty much banned everywhere anyway, so what more is there to cry home to mama about? If you really want to stand and fight about your precious lungs, how about you take on the industries that are polluting the environment? Rally your fans to protest Bush's Orwellian-named "clean air" initiatives, not some dude walking down the street, minding his own business and enjoying a smoke outside. Lame.

Bridge Nine, bridge9.com

Starflyer 59

I Am The Portuguese Blues

Somewhere between heavy guitar blues-rock and dream-pop flies Starflyer 59. This is very hook-laden, melody-driven indie-pop with big, fat guitars and bluesy soul. This is my first time hearing them, and it's been said that their releases vary dramatically. Even with that warning, I'm willing to check out more of their stuff.

Tooth & Nail, toothandnail.com

Still Crossed

Love and Betrayal

As you can tell from the title, this hardcore band treads the usual hardcore territory – be yourself, don't let people grind you down, etc. They must be sXe. There's nothing new about these guys, but what I like about them, besides that they have their melodic moments, is that the singer just yells crap out like nonstop. Dude doesn't even need to take a breath. I guess there are some benefits to not smoking. *Indecision, indecisionrecords.com*

Subhumans

Live In A Dive

Probably the best installment of Fat's live series so far. It feels like the Subhumans play a bazillion songs, and you can really get a sense of the crowd and live energy thanks to the shaky quality. Excellent live album. Also comes with a comic book based on their song "Subvert City" and a short interview. *Fat Wreck, fatwreck.com*

Sugarplum Fairies

Introspective Raincoat Student Music

Title pretty much says it all. Listless guitar strumming, husky, breathy female vox, soft drumming, extraneous band room instruments, etc. Some of it is pretty, especially when the vocals slip from sulky to silky, but you can tell it takes itself too seriously. *Starfish, sugarplumfairies.com*

Sun Kil Moon

Ghosts of the Great Highway

New offering from singer/songwriter Mark Kozelek. He's the dude who put out the highly unnecessary acoustic AC/DC cover album. But here you can enjoy hearing him do what he does best—melancholy folk with some alt-country and grunge thrown in. It's a quiet album and not for everyone, but it's better than a depressing, crooning ballad version of Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap.

Jetset, jetsetrecords.com

Sunwheel Psychedelic

Burning Doves

I feel like I've been warped back to a time when songs about mythical goddesses, riding your horse along the mountainside, and putting the words "fire", "soul", and "thunder" together were cool. Very Dio. *Sunwheelpsychedelic.com*

Systems Officer

Systems Officer EP

Do you remember the brilliance of Pinback? Me neither, but if you liked them, you may be interested in this solo album from Pinback's Zach, whom I like to call Pinzach. Pretty, dreamy, lo-fi songs in the vein of the Shins and Death Cab.

Ace Fu, POB 552, New York, NY 10009

Teenage Fanclub

4766 Seconds

I never got into Teenage Fanclub and found them overrated, so this greatest hits package is perfect for me. It doesn't whet my appetite for more—I'm not going to run out and buy all their albums—but it's great to have some of their best songs on hand, if I'm ever in the mood. While I ordinarily like bands that do Hollies-style vocal harmonies over drab grunge melodies, TF never really stuck with me the way Galaxie 500 had. But after a half dozen albums, a best-of is a great idea, and maybe it will help the new generation of fans of edgy power pop discover them.

My fave songs: "Ain't That Enough", "I Need Direction", "Hang On"

Jetset, 67 Vestry Street, NY, NY 10013

Ten Benson

Benson Burner

Although they hail from the UK, they sound like they crawled out of some southwest US desert trailer. It's raucous heavy rock and dirty swamp blues that brings to mind incest and mullets, as if Queens of the Stone Age were tutored by ZZ Top but hung out too much with Butthole Surfers. Once you get past the harsh twang, it's fun. Check out "One Way Ticket", "Tits", and "I Don't Buy It."

Jetset, jetsetrecords.com

Thrills

N.A.F.I.T.C. Original Boston Punk 1977-1981

Another hit by Dionysus (check out the Twisted Roots review too). Thrills is an obscure 70s punk band that actually IS worth compiling and bringing back. This is a fine 15-track set of very catchy rock n' roll, like Deborah Harry singing for the Ramones. Outside the first few tracks, the production is rough and inconsistent, but the value of the songs still stands out. Definitely worth looking into, for not only early punk collectors, but anyone who likes catchy female-fronted punk rock.

Dionysus, dionysusrecords.com

Toys That Kill

Flys EP

From the minute-long crescendo that opens the EP, I knew this would rock. And rock it did. This is raucous, big-riffed punk n' roll with loads of distortion. AND they do a great cover of Wire's I Am The Fly, which is amazing because I was just thinking the other day what an amazing song that is, and how fucking nuts it is that no one has covered it.

Asian Man, asianmanrecords.com

Twisted Roots

Twisted 1981 LA Punk With Ex-Members of the Screemers & Gerns

Yes, that seems to be the actual title. But anyway – what a gem! This is a collection of Twisted Roots' earliest tracks, and they are a bouncy, quirky, almost 2Toney mix of art rock, punk, and 80s pop. Of all the millions of collections coming out of obscure early punk and 80s bands, this one is head and shoulders. Although the second half of the disc is raw and inferior (probably demos), this is worth getting for five or six really great tracks on here. *Dionysus, dionysusrecords.com*

Under A Dying Sun

Supernova

Don't get me wrong – these guys are more talented than I'll ever be. They're probably better looking than me too. But all the tempo changes and tone changes and vocal style changes within songs are a bit too much to keep track of. It makes 4-minute songs feel like little eternities. They're great at what they do, but I need a little consistency in my life, what with this uneasy and unknown world we live in today. *Substandard, substandard.com*

Unjust

Glow

I thought these guys were heavier, more metalcore. Luckily I'm wrong, and instead they play a blend of hard-edged indie rock, some emo, and brooding hard rock. They're able to be emotional and intense without being sappy or scary. A good midtempo heavy album. *Koolarrow, koolarrowrecords.com*

Various Artists**Blood Sweat & Ten Years**

Happy birthday to Trustkill, who celebrate their 10th anniversary in 2004. They've accomplished a lot in ten years, becoming one of the leading labels in emocore and metalcore. Bands here include Poison the Well, Walls of Jericho, Hopesfall, ArmsBendBack, Eighteen Visions, Throwdown, Most Precious Blood, and Bleeding Through. Most of the tracks seem to be from albums released in the past three or four years – I'd be interested to hear what their really early releases sounded like. Maybe Trustkill used to be a Bavarian polka label. *Trustkill, trustkill.com*

Various Artists**Delta Masters**

The tag line says "16 strange bands put their twist on classic blues", and not much else could be said. This is dark, delirious, and sometimes scary versions of old-school blues tunes, which were dark, delirious, and scary to begin with. The bands are well-suited for this genre – this isn't novelty but homage.

Dogfingers Recordings, POB 2433, San Antonio, TX 78298, dogfingers.com

Various Artists**Bring You To Your Knees: A Tribute to Guns N' Roses**

Strange, if you think about it, that there hasn't already been a tribute to G'N'R. I'm not sure if growly metalcore is the way to approach it though. I mean, a Haste version of "You're Crazy" isn't that appealing. But there is a smattering of indie bands who do pretty decent renditions, like Vaux's "14 Years" and Every Time I Die's "I Used To Love Her." (On the metalcore side, God Forbid's "Out Ta Get Me" is decent.) I suppose your enjoyment of this tribute depends on your appreciation of the bands, but considering the hype surrounding this tribute, I'm disappointed. I usually don't like carbon copies on tribute albums, but it says a lot that Break The Silence and Eighteen Visions' why-bother loyal covers of "Night Train" and "Paradise City" are the best tracks on the disc. Worst track? Most Precious Blood doing a cringe-inducing, terrible version of "Sweet Child O' Mine" that makes me feel better about my karaoke non-skills.

Law of Inertia, lawofinertia.com

Various Artists**Hello We Are The Militia Group**

Big Collapse, Beautiful Mistake, Rocket Summer, Copeland, Rufio, Noise Ratchet, and more. 16 tracks, half of which are previously unreleased or rare. *The Militia Group, themilitiagroup.com*

Vice Dolls**Die Trying**

People love Vice Dolls, and the appeal is evident. You've got old school, raw hardcore punk, big riffs, and cutesy-yet angry-female vocals. My problem is that the vocals are too squeaky for me—I keep imagining Sick Of It All hitting mice with mallets, or Warzone fronted by the Chipmunks. *Crosscheck, POB 39439, LA, CA 90039*

Voice of a Secret**Tilt EP**

This young trio plays midtempo ballady metal that doesn't leave much of an impression. The vocals are on key, but wussy; the production is clear, but with not much to show for it. The tools are there, they just need to write more interesting songs. *Voiceofasecret.com*

Walls of Jericho**All Hail the Dead**

Featuring the toughest chick on the planet, WOJ rock out the hardcore angrily and aggressively. By far their strongest release yet. Though I haven't actually heard their older albums. See, never think we critics know what we're talking about cuz half of it is pulled from the press release and other half from our ass. Anyway, great, powerful h/c album.

Trustkill, trustkill.com

The Washdown**Yes To Everything**

I've heard Mooney Suzuki comparisons, but this type of garage rock sounds more like the Hives, but a little punkier and without the European charm. Big riffs, spastic vocals, rough-around-the-edges production, and of course, fuzzy distortion and simple drums. The guitars are more jagged than the genre requires, giving them a slight post-punk dissonant feel that may annoy you further if you're already annoyed with garage rock.

Lookout, lookoutrecords.com

West**We Feel Better Now**

Decent indie-pop that has a slight dark new wave, or possibly gothic, edge. A huge irritant that almost ruins it is the overuse of echo on the vocals. The other problem is the overly-enthusiastic drumming that doesn't fit with the moody tone.

Two Dupes, 184 Kent Ave, Ste 306, Brooklyn, NY 11211, twodupes.com

Where Eagles Dare**To Come From Nowhere**

I generally consider any hardcore I'll sit through as good – so these guys must be awesome because I've been listening to this CD on repeat all day. They have a youthful, but old-school sound, especially the vocals, with lyrics you can make out and a driven band that doesn't fall back into metalcore (Iron Maiden reference be damned). Great stuff.

New Day Rising, newdayrising.org

X**Evil Rumours: Live At The Basement (2xCD)**

Before you freak out over a double-disc live X album, this isn't the punky X from LA, but Australia's pop rock X, who have been around for just as long, if not longer. This is my first time hearing Oz's X, and I'll have to stick with LA's X, I'm afraid. These guys aren't that bad; they just lack bite. *Laughing Outlaw, laughingoutlaw.com.au*

Xiu Xiu**Fabulous Muscles**

Wow. This is some heavy stuff. Incredibly depressing and harsh lyrics, apparently very personal and confessional, put forth with soul-baring intense vocals, all behind experimental mood music. It's oddly gripping and powerful, but not something you could just throw on. Play it when you're pissed at the world.

5rc, 5rc.com

We've got a lot more recent reviews up on readmag.com.

SNAP JUDGMENTS... of CDs We Haven't Listened To

Beastie Boys**To the 5 Boroughs**

Except Staten Island.

Eric Clapton**Me & Mr. Johnson**

Blues songs about his penis.

The Cure**The Cure**

Haven't they killed themselves yet?

Jerry Garcia**All Good Things**

A good thing already happened—you died.

Hanson**Underneath**

I wish Hanson were underneath a falling safe.

Jump Little Children**Between the Dim & The Dark**

Is this Michael Jackson's side project?

Lenny Kravitz**Baptism**

This is the guy poking Nicole Kidman. I didn't know he was a musician.

Avril Lavigne**Under My Skin**

She's just like herpes—never goes away.

George Michael**Patience**

George Michael's record label must have a lot of it.

Alanis Morissette**So Called Chaos**

Didn't she enjoy her time off? We sure did.

Morrissey**You Are the Quarry**

You are also getting verrrry sleepy...

Prince**Musicology**

The artist formerly considered good.

Ringo Starr & His All-Starr Band**Tour 2003**

Oh lovely, I guess I lost a bet. He's still alive.

Transplants**Police State**

Yeah, we may live in a police state, but you guys are driving Escalades.

Weezer**Weezer: The Deluxe Edition**

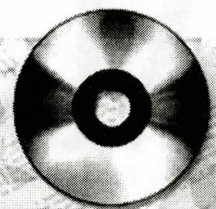
Now with more suckage!

Yellowcard**Where We Stand**

Hopefully you're standing in a lava pit.

—Bryan Kremkau & Adam Liebling
more at skapunkandotherjunk.com

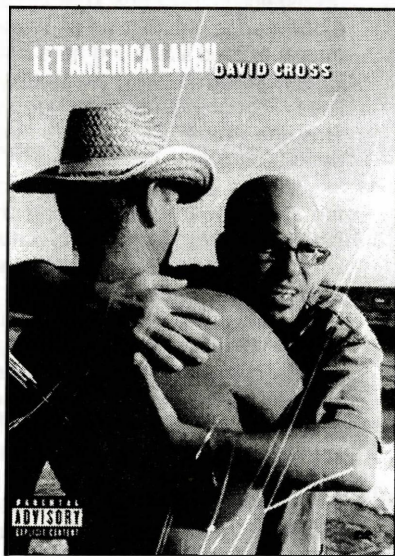
DVD REVIEWS



David Cross: Let America Laugh

I was initially disappointed, as it doesn't feature full-length standup, but instead documents Cross' tour across the South in support of "Shut Up, You Fucking Baby!" But the documentary is fairly amusing on its own: much of it is David Cross dealing with hecklers (of which there are surprisingly many), and pissing off club owners. Maybe the hecklers aren't so surprising—even though Cross is a Georgia boy, his humor is very New York-ish, and it's easy to see why it didn't go over so well across the Bible Belt dives and sleaze bars. The highpoints of the film are the sporadic interviews with people who walk out on the standup routine, interactions with drunken people, and a great reunion with the Mr. Show cast for a Virgin signing (while Cross is running late, Bob Odenkirk sabotages the press photos—very funny). But even accepting what the DVD and what it isn't, it's nonetheless not that great overall. It runs long, feels long, the sound/video quality is uneven and it's not exactly a chucklefest.

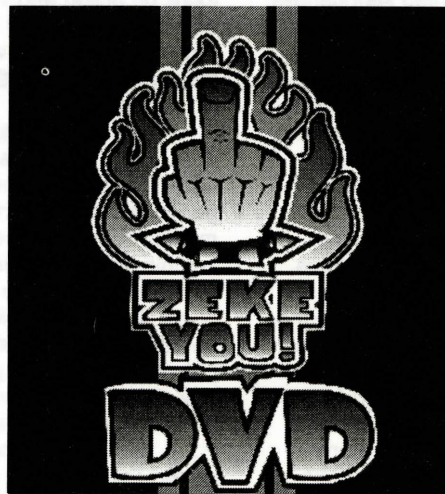
Sub Pop, subpop.com



New England Metal Hardcore Festival 2003

Over three hours of footage of this big thrash festival, featuring some of the best bands in the genre: Atreyu, Converge, Darkest Hour, Eighteen Visions, Haste, Himsa, Killswitch Engage, Lacuna Coil, Meshugga, Shadows Fall, Shai Hulud, and more. Tons of live footage and interviews, documenting what seems like an insane fest. (Note: I didn't watch the DVD because of time constraints, so I can't comment on the production, but I've heard good things.)

Trustkill, trustkill.com



The Show Must Go Off! Vol. 9

The Vandals: Live at the House of Blues

Another live DVD from the Vandals—I think this is their third. Great set list spanning their illustrious career with lots of camera angles, including a special feature to view the concert with "FreezeCam" - a camera focused on veteran drummer Josh Freeze. DVD extras also include a photo gallery, amusing commentary by the band (sans Freeze, who is constantly on tour with one band or another), and a funny video for 43210-1, which has the band badly superimposed in front of a gangsta rap video. The DVD also comes with an audio CD of the same concert, which is pretty rad.

Kung Fu, kungfurecords.com

The Show Must Go Off! Vol. 11

Goldfinger: Live at the House of Blues

It's hard to be objective since Goldfinger typify everything irritating about the SoCal punk scene (corny watered-down punk, unnecessary ska breakdowns, G-rated crowd, obsession with male nudity, etc.). But the 14-song setlist seems like fans would dig it. Multi-camera action directed by the Vandals' Joe Escalante, pretty funny band commentary (best part of the DVD), photo gallery, and homemade footage the band shot, including amateur videos for cheese-ass "Tell Me", "Spokesman", and possibly more, but I had to shut it off. Concert lighting was also poor, but all of the Show Must Go Off's are darkly lit.

Kung Fu, kungfurecords.com

Zeke You!

The irony is that the DVD's specials include documentaries, videos and live footage of the band taken by amateurs and friends of the band. But the movie itself is like a homemade, amateur documentary, and not much prettier. The live footage is atrocious—usually one handheld camera from the back row, always poorly lit. The interviews and behind-the-scenes stuff is irritating, as the band members either are or act like bra-indead heshers. The editing is disjointed, and no thought was given to sound—the guy behind the camera is booming while interview subjects are much lower, and the live footage sounds shaky at best. I like Zeke; they're not Motorhead or even Electric Frankenstein, but they do rock my ass, but being "rock n' roll" is no justification to offer up something this shoddy. The rawness and grit of rock n' roll is one thing; it's another to charge \$14 (\$18 on Amazon) for such low quality and production.

Dead Teenager, deadteenager.com

MOVIE REVIEWS



Gunn Misfires

by Christopher Campbell

Scooby Doo 2: Monsters Unleashed

Directed by Raja Gosnell

Based on characters created by Hanna-Barbera Productions

Dawn of the Dead

Directed by Zack Snyder

Based on the 1978 film by George A. Romero

Both screenplays by James Gunn

What everyone really wants to do is direct. Cinematographers, production designers, editors and other professionals may feel their current position is only a stepping stone toward the throne known as director's chair. Occupational changes of this sort are by dissatisfied personalities in an artistic field that infrequently compliments the collaborative technicians involved. Without debate Jan De Bont, Bo Welch, Mikael Solomon, Barry Sonnenfeld, John Glen, Peter Hunt and Stuart Baird were more prolific, if not more successful, in other positions before their promotion. Nicolas Roeg and Catherine Hardwicke, though, are evidence of possible transitions seeming effortless. There are plenty of screenwriters who also adapt well and those who don't, and, for that matter, there are just plain good directors and bad directors, neither of whom ever made any changeover. Still it remains a problem for those who do advance to overcome past achievements, particularly if they show no prowess in helming a feature.

Raja Gosnell is an editor-turned-director and one of the main problems seen with such a filmmaker is that editors like a lot of coverage. Never mind his obvious inexperience with actors (excusably made up for by giving them "more freedom") and a poor sense of space and movement in front of the camera (especially involving special effects), the director allows so many setups and shots that each scene becomes desultory.

Regardless of his sloppiness, there's no necessity for *Scooby-Doo 2: Monsters Unleashed* other than as a more tolerable replacement for its own predecessor, also by Gosnell. They share a self-parody hip-ness long been overkill for the based-on-TV trend. Though not expecting a cartoon adaptation to share the welcomed seriousness that made a surprise of *S.W.A.T.*, there is a disappointment found in the product placements and references to Earthly pop culture placed within an overtly fictional setting as Coolville. This is contrary to what I desired ten years ago as a fan of comic books and television: more relationship between fantasy worlds and my own. Allusion, though, can produce a time stamp that tends to drain the magic out of fantasies. While the cartoon series "*Scooby Doo, Where Are You?*" has found audiences for more than thirty years even with dated fashion, the recent movies shall disappear easily from mass consciousness. The benefit of such passing will be that, unlike good parodies and satires, these won't dent the foundation of the classic series.

Screenwriter James Gunn, an admitted fan of the 'toon, wrote the first *Scooby-Doo* with respect to the entire duration of the characters by including Scrappy-Doo, an obnoxious mini-me type introduced in a tradition of adding characters to series with nowhere else to go (votes on JumpTheShark.com point to Scrappy for the series' downfall while some fans defend their love for him). The only creative turns more repulsive toward beloved icons are the "lets see what they were like as young children/babies" attitude of the 1980s that included "*Muppet Babies*", "*Flintstone Kids*", "*The New Archies*" and, of course, "*A Pup Named Scooby-Doo*". Perhaps by making Scrappy-Doo the villain was Gunn's way of showing his own denouncement of his existence, but

then, wouldn't the inclusion add fuel to the fire?

With his screenplay of *Monsters Unleashed*, Gunn defends his fondness for the show and makes it up to the fans by referencing nothing but

the original series. Bringing back villains such as the Black Knight, Captain Cutler and Miner 49er, among others, the movie not only pays homage but also fits in with the continuity as well. Minus the gags involving a Burger King milkshake and a Sir Mix A Lot record, one might actually get the feeling of watching a live-action version of the cartoon as opposed to retrospective mockery. The unmasking in the end is less an elbow-nudge gimmick as an impossible irrelevance (if only masks existed like found here or the *Mission: Impossible* or *Charlie's Angels* films) akin to the customary episode guidelines. Though not recommended viewing, I'll admit that for fans, the sequel is the picture that the original should have been.

James Gunn's script for *Tromeo and Juliet* was the most fun Shakespearean adaptation or update of the '90s and possibly the one the Bard would have been most proud of. Packed with crude humor, splattering gore, and narration by Motorhead's Lemmy, the film may not have achieved a major release other than midnight screenings at The Angelika in an auditorium adjacent to the one playing Baz Luhrman's *Romeo + Juliet* only a month or so before. As an employee of the theater at that time, I was far more interested in the Troma release and the people going to see it. If Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes were the MTV *Romeo and Juliet*, Will Keenan and Jane Jensen were the punk 'zine.

Now Gunn is MTV (and Cartoon Network) with his re-imagining of *Dawn of the Dead*, a movie more for afternoon mall rat multiplex audiences than midnight cult screenings. With expert direction from Zack Snyder, this his first feature after many car commercials and music videos, the film is the creative opposite of *Scooby Doo 2*. I wouldn't say to go out and see that movie any more than this one but at least it is about something, albeit a sappy sitcomish something involving friendship and being yourself, but as cynical as critics might be towards such 'messages', they still aren't such a bad thing to teach the children.

Gunn wants audiences to think of both his re-imagining and the original George A. Romero *Dawn of the Dead* as co-existent stories. In this regard the script holds some curiosity into how different humans might deal with similar situations, but other than that, the movie isn't that fun to watch. Romero has satire and more human interaction while Gunn and Snyder focus on action and violent interaction. One of the better parts of the original is how Scott Reiniger and Ken Foree can just run through the mall without having to shoot every zombie in their way. Watching the new film is like passively watching a video game.

The most upsetting thing, though, is what the picture purports to be. Using the tagline and quote (also used in the original), "When there's no room in Hell, the dead walk the earth," generates very little meaning and I would hope that instead of making zombies the effect of infection, someone could make a zombie flick where Hell really is full and there is some suspense in whether the characters who are alive are Hellbound or not. Instead this picture plays on ideas of global outbreak and the subsequent morality issues. Fitting for current events but still not very fun, particularly with the realization that the new film is almost scene for scene with the more enjoyable and even less believable *Maximum Overdrive*.

I'm not the most favorable critic towards horror films unless I'm genuinely scared, amused, or given something to think about, preferably rooted in the same philosophical tradition as great science fiction (as did the recent *28 Days Later*). *Dawn of the Dead* plainly did none of these things for me.

2004 Expectations

by Christopher Campbell of LowExpectation.com

Here are the 10 most anticipated and 10 least anticipated films of the coming year (the least anticipated are movies with enough buzz to warrant my possible viewing no matter how much I'm dreading them):

10 Highest Expectations:

The Brothers Grimm ↑ Terry Gilliam's film about the fairy tale writing siblings.

A Very Long Engagement ↑ Jean-Pierre Jeunet's WWI film starring Audrey Tautou.

The Life Aquatic ↑ Wes Anderson film about an oceanographer starring Bill Murray.

Coffee and Cigarettes ↑ Jim Jarmusch film consisting of conversations about coffee and cigarettes starring Bill Murray, The White Stripes, Rza, Steven Wright and Tom Waits.

I Heart Huckabees ↑ David O. Russell existential film that seems to be attempting Charlie Kauffman territory, starring Dustin Hoffman and Naomi Watts.

Garden State ↑ The Sundance favorite starring Natalie Portman.

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban ↑ Alfonso Cuarón takes the reigns nicely after Columbus' literal adaptations.

Alien Vs. Predator ↑ If there's no dialogue, this could be cinematic brilliance.

J.M. Barrie's Neverland ↑ Maybe just because it has Johnny Depp, but that's good enough these days.

Primer ↑ Such a good trailer probably means to make up for a dull film but I am very curious about this one anyway.

10 Lowest Expectations:

Star Wars Episode III ↓ Ok the arrow lies, I will have to see this but I'm truly dreading it more than anything else in the next 12 months.

Garfield ↓ This makes the CGI Scooby-Doo look like Gollum.

Catwoman ↓ Halle Berry in an outfit straight out of *The Tick* and they want me to take her seriously?

Fat Albert ↓ Cartoon adaptations are bad enough without trying to be creative.

Cinderella Man ↓ More Ron Howard and Russell Crowe; more attempts at making a good movie and just barely failing.

Walk the Line ↓ I am just a little worried about Joaquin Phoenix playing Johnny Cash in this James Mangold helmed biopic. I am very worried about Reese Witherspoon playing June Carter.

The Manchurian Candidate ↓ After Demme's remake of *Charade* was an utter disaster, I can hope for nothing.

I Robot ↓ Will Smith and Isaac Asimov is not a pair-up I dream about.

Elektra ↓ *Daredevil* was bad enough even when Elektra died at the end.

The Village ↓ M. Night Shyamalan has the same problems as Ron Howard. They both come so close and yet haven't astonished me yet.

Expectation Key

↑
anticipating the release of this one
but we're sure to be left unsatisfied

↑
such high expectation of this film
only leaves room for disappointment

↓
we'll eventually see this
but we aren't really expecting much

↓
there's no possible way we will even see this

SPOILERS

WE TELL YOU THE
ENDING SO YOU
DON'T HAVE TO SEE IT.

By Adam & Bryan

Anacondas: The Hunt for the Blood Orchid—You know, someone actually once said, "I want to make a movie about people looking for an orchid, and the giant snake that tries to stop them", and someone else responded, "That's a great idea! Here's 50 million dollars!" Anyway, they find the orchid and the snakes are beaten, so you can breathe a sigh of relief.

Aliens Vs. Predator—Predator wins.

Anchorman—Predator wins.

Around the World in Eighty Days—Jackie Chan saves the world by fighting (once again) with household appliances.

Before Sunset—Another brainy, talky Linklater movie with Ethan Hawke, who shouldn't be allowed to be brainy or talky. You will take your own life before the credits roll.

Bourne Supremacy—At the end of this dull spy caper, umm.. anyone stay awake through it?

Breakin' All The Rules—There is surprisingly very little rule-breaking, other than Good Filmmaking 101.

Butterfly Effect—Ashton Kutcher "punks" Donnie Darko.

Catwoman—Who cares about the ending, it's Halle Berry wearing a ripped-up cat suit. Who would watch this for plot?

The Chronicles of Riddick—Vin Diesel saves the entire universe. Is there anything the man can't do? Besides act?

The Day After Tomorrow—Climate hi-jinx encases NYC in ice, making it slightly easier to find a studio apartment.

Dodgeball: A True Underdog Story—Vince Vaughn's team wins the money to save whatever it was they were trying to save. The movie only works because of the basic human need to see people being pelted really fucking hard with rubber balls.

Envy—Ben Stiller and Jack Black are envious of each other's ability to play only one type of character.

Garfield—You will leave the theater thinking, "The cost of making this movie could've been put toward feeding AIDS orphans in a war-ravaged African country."

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban—The prisoner is his uncle. Oh shut up, you know you already read it.

Hidalgo—An American dude wins a horse race in the Middle East. Terrorism begins.

I, Robot—Will Smith kills a robot because it acted better than he did.

Kill Bill Vol. 2—Bill is killed. The Bride gets her daughter back. Go Go Yubari becomes my girlfriend.

King Arthur—King Arthur gets killed by the killer rabbit.

Ladykillers—Tom Hanks and Marlon Wayans kill an old lady. Tom Hanks wins an Oscar for just being in a movie.

Mean Girls—Wow, I haven't seen this many hot underage girls since before I had my computer impounded!

Mindhunters—The killer is revealed, and it's Colonel Mustard with the candlestick in the study.

New York Minute—The Olsen Twins have only one minute left before they turn legal and people stop caring about them.

The Passion of the Christ—Jesus dies for our sins. Reappears later on a potato chip.

The Perfect Score—Kids put together genius plan to steal the SAT's. If they're such geniuses, they should've just taken the test.

Raising Helen—Kate Hudson falls in an open manhole and dies.

Shrek 2—I don't want to spoil this for you, but let's just say it involves Fiona and a Tijuana donkey show.

Soul Plane—Civil rights gets pushed back 50 years.

Spider-Man 2—Spiderman kills a metallic octopus. PETA sues.

Troy—Just like in Homer's epic, CGI computer-generated armies do battle.

Van Helsing—Vampire Hunter D meets Monster Squad. Wolfman's got nuts?

The Village—Here's the surprise twist ending: the creatures in the woods are alien superhero ghosts.

White Chicks—The Wayans brothers go down on Rick Solomon.

The Whole Ten Yards—You will be rolling on the floor laughing. Because of a medical condition whereby you roll on the floor laughing whenever you want to kill yourself.

We thought we'd do Spoilers this time instead of Snap Judgments. For some new Snaps, visit skapunkandotherjunk.com

BOOK REVIEWS

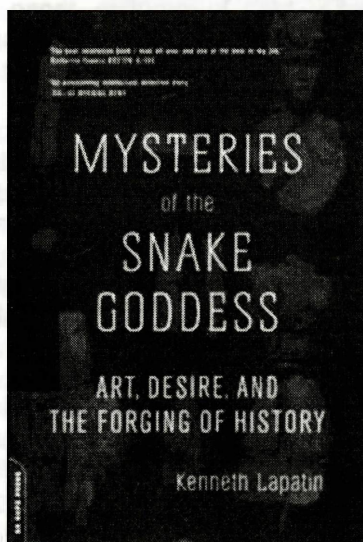


EDITOR'S PICKS

Mysteries of the Snake Goddess: Art, Desire, and the Forging of History

Kenneth Lapatin
Da Capo Press,
274 pages, \$17

Mysteries of the Snake Goddess takes a close look at the widely accepted Minoan art that has been excavated at Crete in the early 1900s, casting doubt on its authenticity. And since its authenticity is questioned, author Kenneth Lapatin argues, so should be our modern interpretations on Minoan culture that have been derived from this art.



The book is fascinating and in-depth, covering many of the famous finds at Knossos and their colorful archaeologists, and dissecting old records and letters to track down the provenance of these pieces. The focus of the book, though, is on the best known statuette, the oddly modern Snake Goddess. In surprisingly interesting detail, he weeds through the conflicting stories of its origins to conclude that it may, in fact, have been forged by artisans working at the excavation.

Lapatin, an art historian, archaeologist, and museum curator, writes persuasively and evenly, in a tone of thoughtfulness rather than overbearing opinionating. He offers no definitive answers, but asks the right questions, and his research is illuminating.

Why should anyone care? The book is written so well that even if you have no interest in the subject matter, it has a way of drawing you into the mystery of the story. And even if the origins of the Snake Goddess (and many other artifacts) are legitimate, this book makes you rethink the ways in which we have recreated history by juxtaposing our own modern values and ideas onto ancient civilizations. That is, even if the artifacts aren't forgeries, our reconstruction of the past, in a sense, is.

In the Blink of an Eye

Andrew Parker

Perseus Publishing, 316 pages, \$25

Arguably, the most dramatic, momentous event in the history of life occurred 543-538 million years ago, at the start of the Cambrian period, when suddenly, life that had consisted of simple organisms for 3.5 billion years prior exploded in unparalleled diversity.

In just a few million years, a blip in Earth's history, this evolutionary Big Bang (known as the Cambrian Explosion) transformed three animal phyla into 38 (the same number today), introducing shells and other defensive armor, different shapes and sizes, and other new external features, including eyes.

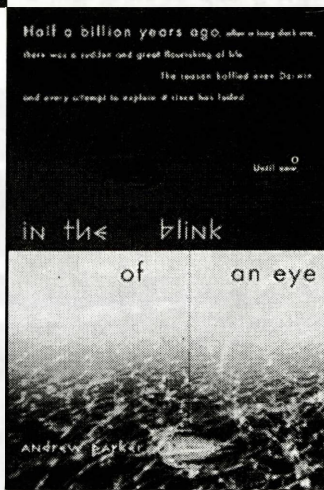
Parker's theory is that newfound vision opened the evolutionary Pandora's box. In Precambrian times, organisms lived in darkness; there was no need to look a certain way

for predators or prey, nor was there any purpose for mobility in hunting or feeding. With vision, though, organisms could actively hunt, and prey needed to adapt to survive. The predator-prey relationship, with the lights turned on, led to this explosion of external varieties.

It's a logical theory, and Parker backs it up with exhaustive multidisciplinary research. Parker delves into long explanations of optics, color, evolutionary biology, paleontology, you name it. Perhaps the simplicity of the

theory prompted him to give background information on every aspect of it, to make it meatier, but following along can be a chore.

Even so, the topic is fascinating and I learned more from this book than I had in years of school. The book might be a crash course in everything from Biology 101 to plate tectonics, but that could be its strength as well as its weakness, depending on your interests.



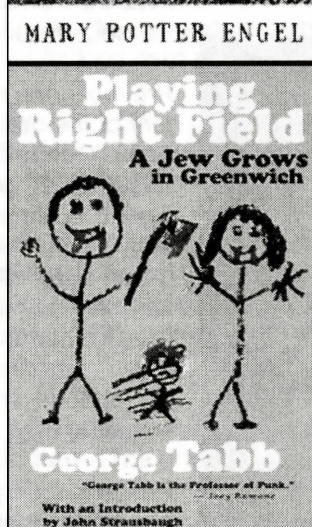
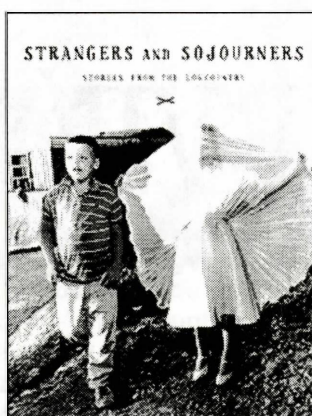
**Strangers and Sojourners:
Stories from the Lowcountry**
Mary Potter Engel
Counterpoint Press, 224 pages, \$23

I'm not usually a fan of contemporary literature from the South (unless you count John Kennedy Toole), but I do love short character portraits, and Engel is one of the best I've read.

This collection of short stories is made up of mostly first-person monologues from different townsfolk in a small South Carolina county, and Engel is faced with the challenge of not only creating compelling stories and histories for each person, but taking on their distinctive voices as well. She succeeds marvelously at both.

The common theme throughout the book is the arrival and presence of Jake Reuben, a Jewish doctor from up north, whose compassion and talents slowly gain him respect in the community.

Each of the characters are three-dimensional, and their stories, even when simple, are compelling. Engel paints a town and people just as they usually are—a mix of good and bad, wise and dumb, graceful and embarrassing, strengthened by faith and blinded by faith, accepting and hostile. It is a deeply moving book, and destined to become an Oprah's pick. Grab it before everyone else does.



**Playing Right Field:
A Jew Grows In Greenwich**
George Tabb
Soft Skull Press, 140 pages, \$14

When I was first introduced to Maximum Rocknroll in the early 90s, Tabb's pieces always stood out. When I outgrew MRR, I would still pick it up for Tabb. Soon after, I'd find his pieces in the New York Press, which became the only reason to pick up that weekly as well.

While most perzine writers fell for the eloquent prose of Aaron Cometbus or the zany verbosity of Rev. Norb, my early first-person stories tried to emulate those simple, clipped Tabb sentences that expressed a gangly, awkward, outsider mentality that I related to.

In this autobiographical collection of short stories, you can understand where that outsider mentality incubated. Tabb writes about his childhood, growing up a rare Jew in WASPy Greenwich, CT, where the physical and emotional abuse from his father gave no relief from the physical and emotional abuse from his classmates.

Anyone else would tackle this in self-pity, but Tabb is Tabb: you can't help but laugh at his descriptions of getting beaten up by just about everyone, including the blind and disabled kids in his school; but the moments of bittersweet humor strengthen the underlying sadness of the experiences, and while it's missing from the book, you can easily see how and why punk rock became his escape.

SKA, PUNK AND OTHER JUNK

"IT'S FOR LOSERS"

**'FEATURING THE WORST INTERVIEWS,
NEWS, AND REVIEWS ACROSS THE NET'**

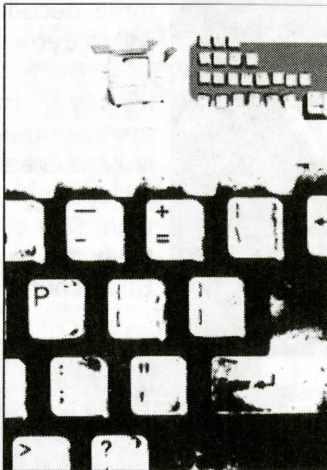
WWW.SKAPUNKANDOTHERJUNK.COM

The Zine Yearbook Volume 7

Jen Angel and Jason Kucsma, eds.
Soft Skull Press, 164 pages, \$14

The Zine Yearbook is an annual anthology that showcases the best pieces by the underground media. As a sampler, it works well in exposing the reader to a large number of zines—this volume culls pieces from 40 publications, and not just the usual suspects you see in Tower, but a wide variety of smaller press, from perzines to poli-zines to minicomics. Most I had never heard of.

Perhaps it's been a bad year for zines, or maybe I wasn't interested in many of the pieces, but there were only a few standouts in this installment: *The Bacula & Merkins Art Collective's* great Onion-esque op-ed about a middle American white guy wanting to create a totem pole to commemorate his life; *A Companion Guide to Rooftop Films* offers two extremely engaging essays on short films (my favorite pieces in the book); a heartbreaking and gripping essay from *Rejected Band Names* on the loss of the editor's sister, a well-researched and interesting piece on white power music from *Snowbound*; and great illustrated pieces and minicomics from *Cryptozoa* and *Slop*. The afterword by Al Burian is also worth checking out.

**Gigs From Hell:**

True Stories From Rock & Roll's Frontline
Sleazegrinder, ed.

Headpress/Critical Vision, 188 pages, \$20

Before I asked every band about their worst album, I was going to ask about their worst gig. Unfortunately, these guys beat me to the chase, putting out this neat collection of road stories from a ton of bands.

Focusing on the really raucous sleazy punk n' roll bands with some thrash metal thrown in, the stories tend to tread over the familiar rock n roll territory of booze, drugs and sex. Since there are a LOT of band members contributing to this book—many of whom are in desperate need of an editor—the stories are, of course, uneven, the worst ones way too long (the question is what is your worst gig, not what is your entire band's history or a rundown of every bad show you had). Other stories are just mundane—every band has had their van break down, a member getting too drunk and sick to play, and a club owner fuck them out of pay. Having any or all of those happen to you may suck, but it doesn't make for an interesting "worst gig" story. Half the book is dedicated with little variation to those themes.

But then there are a lot of great, funny, scary, fascinating, or simply well-written responses that make the book more than worth it. Some of my favorites include Porn Rock's erotic game of Twister, ZD & the One Eyed Snakes on scary groupies, The Rockets and a graphic case of diarrhea, Extreme Elvis' outrage at not being able to strip naked and piss on stage, and Shameless having their producer stolen by Eddie Money. Other good pieces include Caged Heat's harmonica player learning to accept electric shocks received on stage, the Spider Rockets being chased through a field by a mad cow after a cow-tipping gone awry, and a funny primer on bandmate types by Sawtran.

The fourth chapter offers up the most evil, and therefore most interesting tales. These are the real nutty stories involving crazy groupie action, ultraviolence, junkie mayhem, and stuff you don't even want to think about. Given the sleazy bands contributing and the nature of the book, at least as set up by the brilliant forward by the Dwarves' Vadge Moore, it's too bad the entire shebang isn't over the top and amusingly crude like the fourth section. But overall, the book is great to flip through, and it succeeds at being fulfilling toilet reading.

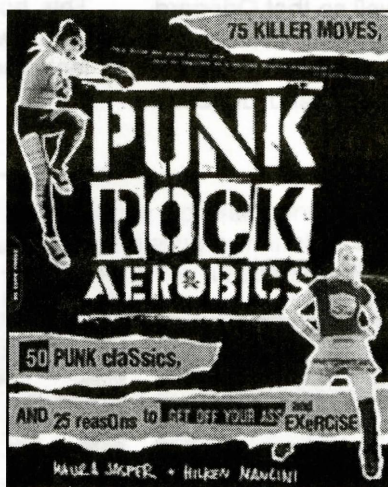
Punk Rock Aerobics:

75 Killer Moves, 50 Punk Classics, and 25 Reasons to Get Off Your Ass and Exercise

Maura Jasper and Hilken Mancini

Da Capo Press, 174 pages, \$18

I suppose if something like this HAD to come out, at least the authors seem passionate about the punk rock, and the book is set up like a zine, with band interviews, zine-ish design, headings in a Crass font, and even a hate mail section. It's not just outsiders cashing in on last year's mainstream press coverage of the punk rock aerobics classes popping up in LA and NY.



But let's face it—this book is embarrassing to read, for both the dopey pictures and bad punk/exercise puns, and I can only imagine how dorky a punk rock aerobics class would actually be. On top of that, I'm not exactly sold on mosh pit moves as exercise regiments. I can understand punks getting pumped up listening to punk, but turning mosh moves into cardiovascular steps seems forced and more than a little silly. And exercising

decked out in Doc Martens and studded leather jacket can't be that comfortable.

Lastly, the punk rock referenced is pretty standard stuff. It's everything you'd see in a Columbia House catalog, under "Punk": the standard CBGB bands, the standard early LA punk guys. Not to be elitist, but this could've accrued more punk points if it exhibited more interest in contemporary and underground punk rock.

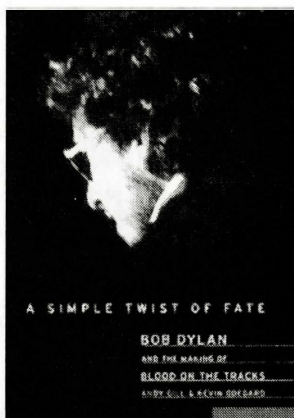
A Simple Twist of Fate:
Bob Dylan and the Making of Blood on the Tracks
 Andy Gill & Kevin Odegard
 Da Capo Press, 256 pages, \$25

Given Dylan's reluctance to talk to press, bios about him and his work tend to be disappointing, repetitive and full of conjecture. Even though this book was coauthored by one of the guitarists on BOTT, it is barely different.

The sole difference lies in the eyewitness descriptions of the re-recording of the album in Minneapolis, which offers new, if banal and ultimately uninteresting, insights. The rest of the book is poorly written rehash on the background of Dylan, his career, his breakup with wife Sara, his relationship with his brother, and irrelevant tangents about the era in which the album was recorded.

There are other annoyances: I don't like the way in which Odegard puts himself into the book in the third person—it reads dopey and the quotes from himself reeks of false modesty. The breathless and awed view of the album is also an irritant. It is NOT the greatest album of all time; it is not even the greatest Dylan album. It may be in the top five or six, but it doesn't even touch Bringin' It All Back Home, Highway 61 Revisited, Blonde on Blonde, etc. I like Planet Waves more than BOTT. I agree that BOTT is the last great album he did (which says a lot about his canon of crap over the past 30 years), but I don't consider it a legendary masterpiece. It's simply a great album.

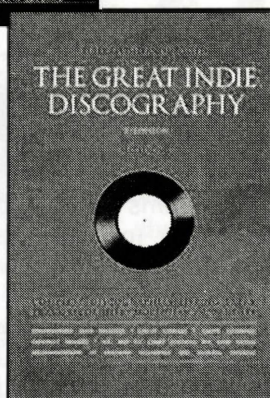
In a way, I'd like to see the book do well so that Odegard, one of the uncredited Minneapolis musicians, could make some dough off Dylan's name. But there's no way the \$25 price tag is justified on this sloppy, breezy, and unnecessary bio.



The Great Indie Discography: 2nd Edition
 M.C. Strong
 Canongate, 1088 pages, \$32

Hot damn. The complete discography, track listings, and histories of over **2,000** indie artists over three decades. The book is HUGE and packed with a tremendous amount of information.

It's silly for me to focus on exclusions, considering the book has more pages than my dictionary and is back-breakingly heavy, but be warned that the indie bands herein are mostly 80s new wave, goth, 90s alternative, and indie bands that really typify the term (Fugazi, Sunny Day, Jets to Brazil, Superchunk, Jimmy Eat World, Death Cab for Cutie, etc.). There isn't much punk (I'm sure that would take up another 2,000 pages), no hardcore or ska, and no independent or underground hip hop, metal, or jazz, though those latter genres would be less likely anyway.



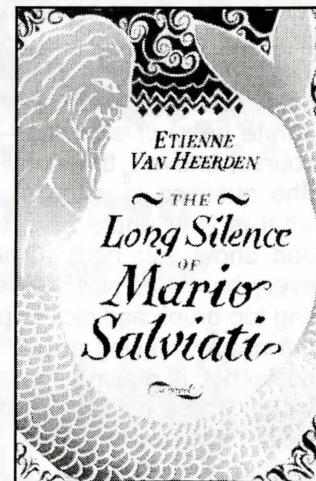
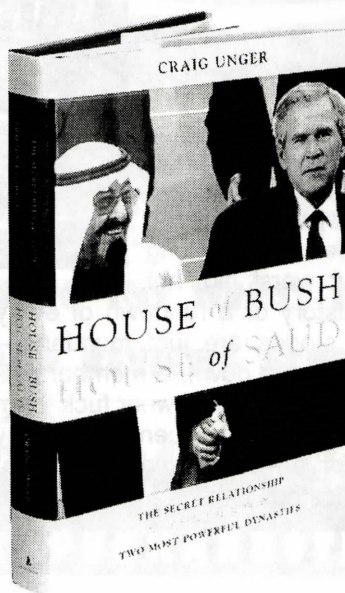
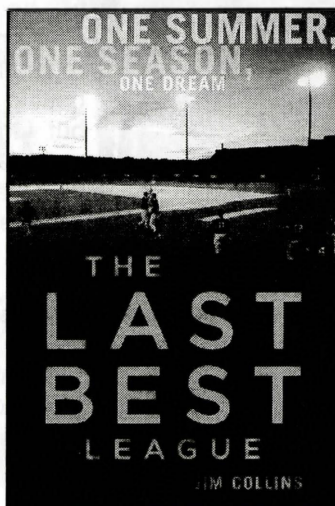
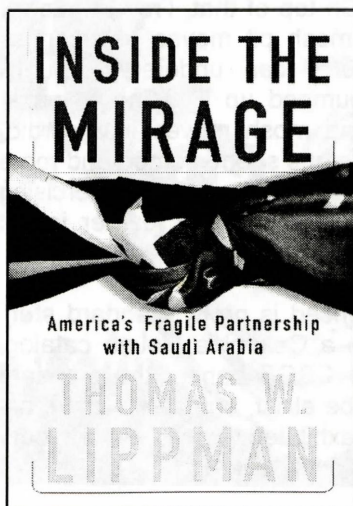
Without a doubt, this is an impressive compendium and knocks similar Billboard and Mojo "album companions" out of the water. I haven't had time to go through it closely, so I can't comment on errors (though I noticed a few bands

weren't fully updated), but I'm not dick enough to be nitpicky over what must've been an immense undertaking, especially for just one person.

This book would be difficult to read for people curious about what's outside the mainstream, but it's an excellent resource for collectors and completists.

Queued Up

To be reviewed soon on readmag.com:



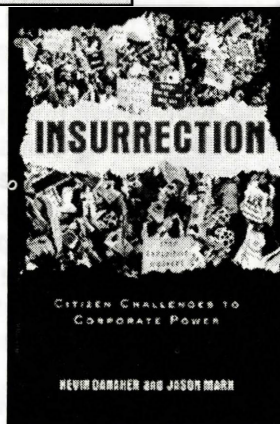
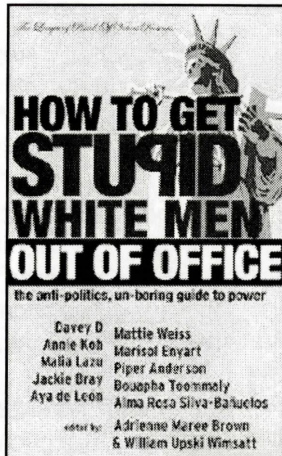
How to Get Stupid White Men Out of Office

Adrienne Maree Brown & William Upski Wimsatt, eds.
Soft Skull, 206 pages, \$13

A good collection of essays on mobilizing the disenfranchised to vote and be more civically engaged. The pieces are mostly success stories, both on the election of longshot candidates and the overturning of unfair policies and laws, hammering home the important message to our cynical and apathetic youth that all is not hopeless.

The drawback to the book is that it offers few resources for those who want to follow its advice. It also preaches to the choir (as you can tell by even just the title, which screams left-wing activism and will scare off the cynical folks they're trying to reach out to), so I don't believe it will swing the 2004 election by mobilizing the masses, as it promises. Instead, I see the book more as a byproduct of a movement already underway. Just as Perot had his army of pissed-off older, conservative males in the 90s, we now have an army of pissed-off minorities, women, youth, and others who have been traditionally marginalized.

While I don't think this book will convert many people into registered voters, it will definitely encourage and reaffirm those who are already politically minded and active.



Insurrection:

Citizen Challenges to Corporate Power

Kevin Danaher and Jason Mark
Routledge, 350 pages, \$25

Similar to *How to Get Stupid White Men Out of Office*, *Insurrection* is a series of success stories about people power. But instead of battling politicians and governments, the book is about an even more rich and powerful nemesis—corporations.

Democracy is undermined by corporate power—corporations lobby for or against legislation, their campaign donations help elect the ones they want, and they scoop up the world's resources and wealth while offering little in return.

However, there have been grand moments in recent history of people standing up to the corporate juggernauts, and if not always with the result of changing policy, they have exposed many abuses, putting media and public spotlight on corporate irresponsibility and immoral practices.

The case studies in this book cover in detail the anti-sweatshop movement, the fight for dolphin-safe tuna, opposition to Big Tobacco, the Free Burma movement, and the WTO protests. These are inspiring stories, but the book reminds us that in this age of corporate convergence and globalization, the battle for corporate accountability, fairness and human rights is just beginning.

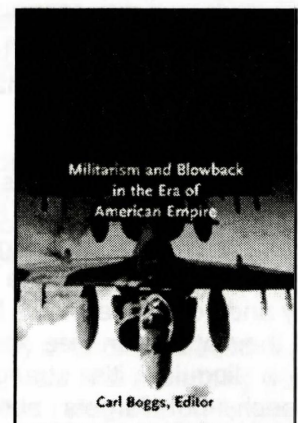
Masters of War: Militarism and Blowback in the Era of American Empire

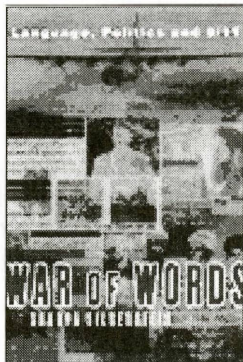
Ed. by Carl Boggs
Routledge, 371 pages, \$23

Critical essays from our most respected political science scholars and thinkers on the U.S.'s post-9/11 foreign policy (which is seemingly the extreme culmination of 50 years of Cold War foreign policy). Spanning the "war on terror" to the weaponization of space to the U.S.'s long and unfortunate history of political and economic meddling, the contributors make the persuasive case that peaceful America the Beautiful is and has been steeply involved in harsh militarism and imperialism, helped along by a complacent and self-censoring media, glorified by Hollywood, and largely ignored by its citizens.

The term "blowback", as Chalmers Johnson defines in his excellent piece "American Militarism and Blowback", is a CIA term used in the 50s "for the unintended consequences of covert operations against foreign nations and governments." Examples range from arming and training Osama Bin Laden in the 70s against the Soviet Union, to arming and aiding Saddam Hussein in the 80s against Iran. Blowback is the bed the U.S. made and the world, including the U.S., has to lie in.

All of the above is nothing new; you've heard it before. But these pieces are so well-researched and academic in tone that they can't be ignored or shrugged off as leftist jibber jabberin' or conspiracy paranoia. This collection is a factual, stark look at the U.S.'s shameful misuse of power in its quest to dominate, and should be read by anyone who wonders why the rest of the world doesn't love peaceful America the Beautiful.





War of Words:
Language, Politics and 9/11
 Sandra Silberstein
 Routledge, 172 pages, \$25

An applied linguist, Sandra Silberstein looks at how language helped transform America after the events of September 11. Specifically, she examines how Bush's speeches were designed to heal America and prepare it for war; how public service announcements promoted tolerance in an environment of revenge; on the approach the media took in educating the public on Islam; and how "patriotic" rhetoric attempted to squash dissent.

I had many problems with this book, both in content and execution. While the premise itself is promising, Silberstein rarely goes into detail regarding the field of linguistics, or how linguistics really applies to the many phrases she quotes. She shows examples of rhetoric encountered following 9/11, but doesn't tie it into the greater picture of linguistics, sociology and mass psychology. I was expecting a more academic work, but this book—only 140 pages after appendices and notes—seems rushed and shallow.

I felt the execution was lacking as well as the content. Given the brevity, she chose only a handful of examples for each of her chapters. It felt as if she were assigning all of the changes in the national identity to one speech, one interview, one advertisement, and one documentary. An in-depth analysis of one CNN man-on-the-street interview is especially excruciating in its pointlessness. After all, who remembers that one exchange, and how much could it have affected America? Or perhaps Silberstein doesn't mean to say that her examples were the prime movers for changes, but just reflections of them. It's very unclear.

To Silberstein's credit, it's difficult to pinpoint her political slant, if she has one. Early in the book, she praises Bush for his skill at using correct language to comfort America, but later on she chides the ACTA (Lynn Cheney and Joe Lieberman's McCarthy-esque organization) for their attack on free speech in higher education. But as a linguist, it's strange that she praises Bush's speech, but forgets about his nonverbal language. While many experts agree that his post-9/11 speeches were the most important and best-written political speeches in years, Bush's delivery was underwhelming: there were many Americans who were not comforted by his big-eyed, deer-caught-in-headlights look on his face; his slow and stiff demeanor; the delay in addressing the

public while being shuttled around to secure locations; and his shaky misnomers (sorry but "We're gonna get these folks" wasn't charmingly folksy, nor did it instill much confidence in his leadership).

Further, while the right words were said, were they effective? Silberstein announces with certainty that Bush's speeches healed the nation, that PSA's and the media educated the public on Islam, etc., but there is little backup to these dubious assertions.

Even without supporting evidence, many of the basic points of each chapter could have been expounded upon. "Selling America" had precious little on how the corporate sector used patriotism as a selling point. "From News to Entertainment" lacked just that: how news media fashioned the events of 9/11 into a constant deluge of disturbing images, human interest stories, and editorializing more to keep viewers tuned in and zombified than to convey actual news or offer perspective. And her examples seem to be from a scant number of CNN segments; there is very little about newspaper coverage, the Internet, and the differences in tone and language across media outlets.

The most interesting chapter, "The New McCarthyism", is also too narrow on one example (the ACTA). The pigeonholing of liberals and critics of Bush's foreign and domestic policy as traitors and unpatriotic wasn't just found in a report by the ACTA; obviously, a war of words had its battlegrounds in many areas: tv news, Internet, editorials, etc. A book on the "war of words" should have focused mainly on this piece, as it is where the nation's identity had transformed under such strong rhetoric, which in many ways didn't unite the nation, but divided it further.

Published in September 2002, probably to coincide with the one-year anniversary of the attacks, *War of Words* fails to illuminate socio-political changes through linguistics. As well as lacking much insightful analysis, it suffers from fallacy of exclusion, to misuse a linguistics term. More in-depth commentary, more background information on linguistics (and how the field applies to the book), and a broader pool of references from which to pull examples would have made this a much meatier book.

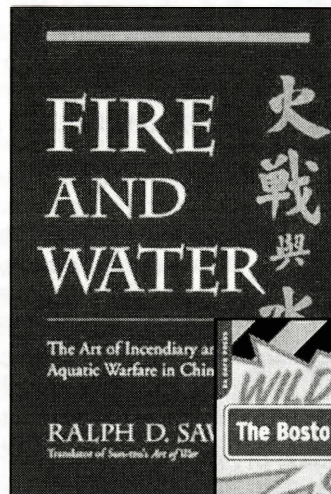
Fire and Water: The Art of Incendiary and Aquatic Warfare In China

Ralph D. Sawyer

Westview Press, 448 pages, \$26

This is everything you've ever wanted to know about how fire and water (mostly fire) was used in warfare in ancient China. How much could be said about it? Oh man... a lot. The level of detail in this book is astounding. Culling information from seemingly hundreds of ancient Chinese texts, Sawyer (who is best known for his best-selling translation of Sun-Tzu's Art of War) gives an in-depth play-by-play account of thousands of years of tribal battles.

The stories behind the creative implementations of the elements themselves are fascinating; even in this age of hi-tech gizmo warfare, there are new tricks I've learned from this book—and they were done thousands of years ago! But the actual historical background is scholarly and detailed to the point of academic overload, and it could probably only be followed (let alone remembered) by the most passionate of Sinophiles.

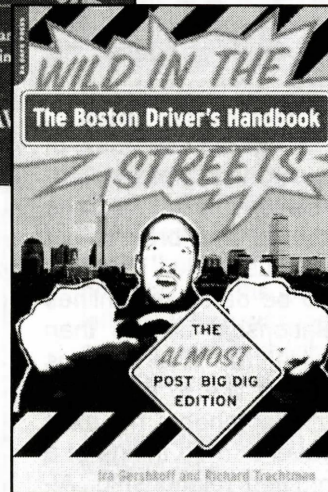


The Boston Driver's Handbook: The Almost Post Big Dig Edition

Ira Gershkoff and Richard Trachtman

Da Capo Press, 150 pages, \$11

Mostly dopey handbook on how to survive on the "wild" streets of Boston. I'm cynical toward this book because 1) I generally find anything non-comic-strip-related in the "Humor" section to be incredibly unfunny, 2) place-oriented humor is too clichéd, and 3) I've seen much worse driving in my journeys: Boston drivers are saintly, conscientious Samaritans compared to their L.A. and Jersey counterparts. I think the authors need to take a trip outside of Beantown — they're taking way too much local pride in something their locality isn't particularly notorious about.

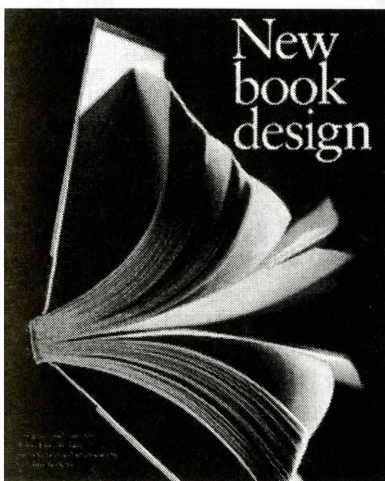


There are a couple of clever pieces in the book — a pedestrian point value system and the final exam at the back — but even as a quirky gift to a Bostonian friend (the only reason for existing, I presume), it fails. Put your money toward some Sox tickets instead.

New book design

Ed. by Roger Fawcett-Tang

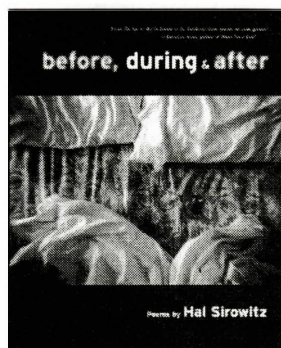
HarperDesign, 192 pages, \$30



A nicely designed coffee table book on... nicely designed coffee table books. It sounds Seinfeldian, but after seeing it you wonder why it hasn't been done before. I suppose that since books have been around for ages, we take their design for granted and don't think about the artfulness some of them project. Or when we do see a nicely designed book and its inflated price tag, we shrug it off as gimmicky.

But this book collects some of the most interesting modern designs and presents them as creative works of art. Organized in four sections—Packaging, Navigation, Layout, and Specification—each page focuses on a title that is uniquely designed, whether by its binding, hinges, slipcases, jackets, typography, inner design, or a combination of different elements.

Obviously since the title is "New book design", it's entirely of books released during the past few years, and this collection looks and feels like something you could buy at the MOMA gift shop. It strikes me though that I would've preferred a collection that reprints unusual and unconventional book designs of the past, maybe showing the evolution of this underappreciated art form (but that may be because I'm more of a bibliophile than an artist). Still, I think typography nuts and students of design and visual arts will appreciate this book, which is artfully designed itself, with clear reproductions and nice use of white space.



Before, During & After
Hal Sirowitz
Soft Skull, 124 pages, \$13

If you're not familiar with the poetry of Hal Sirowitz, just imagine a Woody Allen of poetry. His poems are invariably short one-sided conversation tidbits, usually a third person berating or critiquing the author. In typical nebbish humor, the speaker—in his last two books, his

parents (*Mother Said*) and his therapist (*My Therapist Said*)—point out in sharp, clever ways all the fallacies and neuroses of Hal Sirowitz. In his latest book of poems, his exes get their turn.

Divided in chapters of before, during, after, and later (sex, of course, being the theme), the poems chronicle Hal's misadventures in the realm of physical relationships, in a "she said" format. These poems are enjoyable and breezy, but few are as clever or original as his previous works. The payoff of these "she said" poems tend to be dated punchlines that feel more like man-woman relationship clichés than anything confessional or insightful: Hal the Everyman is horny, likes to have a lot of sex, doesn't like to cuddle or leave the apartment, and is a commitmentphobe; his exes like to cuddle, have conversations, travel and do things of a nonsexual nature, and be in a committed relationship. Although what makes Sirowitz's poems appealing is that most people can relate to them, this new set, I feel, turns the complexities of relationships into a one-dimensional gag.

Fortunately, Sirowitz is bringing it all back home in his next book, *Father Said*. Even if it's the same format, and his "father" seems like everyone's father, hopefully it'll be more inspired than the "she said" poems. In any case, you know they'll still be fun to read in the Sirowitz style.

Flying Under the Radar

KC Wilder

InfinityPublishing.com, 142 pages, \$12

Since I found the author's band Apocalipstick unlistenable, I was expecting this book of poetry to be equally unreadable. Instead, the short verse poetry is quite good — a little beat, a little punk, a little surreal. The pieces are seemingly freeform, but rhymes are occasionally interwoven, if challenging to pick up (unless you follow the rhythmic [or arrhythmic] patterns). The poems follow an autobiographical chronology — they begin with growing up and going to school in Queens, and then pieces about LA (where he moved to), with some political stuff thrown in. Wilder has a good grasp on what words and sounds work together, and what looks superficially like nonsense comes together when you read along. It has a Cap-tain Beefheart vibe.

Smooth Spines

Reviews of books we haven't fully cracked open yet

Point of Purchase:

How Shopping Changed American Culture

Sharon Zukin

Routledge, 325 pages, \$25

Synopsis: Americans' large amount of disposable income has created its own culture of shopping, associating purchasing with pleasure and filling our spiritual vacuum, even when in excess it puts us in the hole.

Good: Great idea, has some insights, and book spans all types of shopping—brand name, convenience, discounters, high couture, superstores, Internet, etc.

Bad: Author puts self into book too much, and too many dopey interviews with shoppers. Makes it fluffy for a sociology book, though I hear her urban planning books are similar. Also very New York-centric.

Jazz and Its Discontents: A Francis Davis Reader

Francis Davis

Da Capo Press, 336 pages, \$20

Synopsis: Davis has been writing about American culture (particularly jazz) for 20 years, and this book is a "best of."

Good: Davis is like the A.J. Liebling of jazz—writing about his subjects intimately, penning vivid character portraits of his heroes without masking his own enthusiasm.

Bad: I can't seem to finish any of his articles—I get bored, but maybe because of the subject matter.

Best Music Writing 2003

Ed. by Matt Groening

Da Capo Press, 297 pages, \$17

Synopsis: "The year's finest writing on rock, pop, jazz, country, & more."

Good: Essays hand-picked by Matt Groening. The first two were excellent: Bill Tuomala's alternate universe where Van Halen is a great but unknown band, and Terry McDermott's lengthy piece on the origins of gangsta rap, and the ridiculous lengths critics and politicians went to condemn it.

Bad: So far so good, no complaints yet.

Signor Marconi's Magic Box

Gavin Weightman

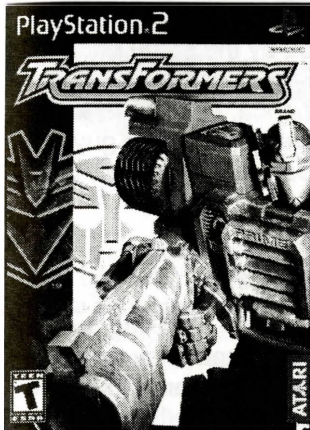
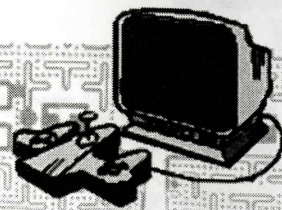
Da Capo Press, 312 pages, \$25

Synopsis: The life and times of the inventor of the radio and wireless communication.

Good: I'm dying to read this book; it's gotten rave reviews, and it's a great subject.

Bad: Looking up my man Nikola Tesla in the index, I notice he gets just a brief paragraph mention and is shrugged off as "eccentric," when in fact Tesla's discoveries may have preempted Marconi.

GAME REVIEWS



Transformers Atari

This was sent to me but it's only a trade demo so I only got to play a small portion of this PS2 game. I couldn't be any other character besides Hot Shot, and I could only play one level.

While I only played one level of the game, I certainly got the gist of it. Just like the series, you fight the Decepticons. Anyway, as you play the game, you come upon

"mini-cons", little Transformers that give you different action moves and weapons. While you play, Optimus calls you every five seconds and tells you your next mission. That tends to get annoying. They should have had him explain stuff in the beginning of the level and then let you play.

The character that you play starts out with a basic shooting weapon, and you can transform into a vehicle or stay as a robot, you can also jump and fire missiles once you get your first mini-con. The Decepticons, or clones of them, are little weak robots that explode with two shots. I'm assuming they get tougher to beat as the game progresses. I think it's cool

that you can transform or not. I usually transform if I don't feel like walking, haha. I think Hot Shot is the fastest out of the bunch you can play.

The graphics are excellent. Rendering of the game is top notch and makes the game more fun to play. If the graphics blew monkey nuts, I wouldn't be as interested in the game. When I first put it on, I was confused on how to start, but that might just be the trade demo. I'm saying to myself, how the hell do I start the game?! Maybe I'm just a retard? I don't know. I kind of wish I got the full release of the game though because I would have like to be the ultimate Transformer, Optimus Prime. You have a choice of being Optimus, Hot Shot, or Red Alert. At the end of each level, you play a more well-known Decepticon. Of course I suck and couldn't even get to the end of the first level. I'll get there eventually, but I'll probably rent the game or buy this soon to continue where I left off...which was the beginning, haha. Fans of Transformers will want to check out this game because it's a lot of fun, and looks excellent!

Is the Game Worth Buying? I think so, especially for Transformers fans.

Favorite Things About The Game: The graphics are great, and it's the freakin' Transformers man!

Graphics Rating: * * * *

Overall Gameplay: * * * ½

Life Line Konami

Lifeline is the first entirely voice-activated game on PlayStation 2. You control some things like opening doors (wow) with the controller but you have to use your voice for the most part. The game takes place in an alien-infested space station. You play a character that is stuck in the control room of the ship. You help the character Rio, who's not in the control room with you, find what she's looking for. She tries and helps you find your girlfriend that you lost on the ship. I thought the game was kind of annoying and boring. I'll tell you why.

I found myself cursing at the character because she wouldn't do what I wanted. Yeah, you are suppose to speak certain terms but when I did that, the female character Rio didn't do it and it just made me scream at the TV even more than I usually do. Instead of doing the controls yourself, you have to speak everything and that's just really annoying to do. You have to wait for the character to go somewhere or to talk before you can tell her what to do. That's why I think it's boring because I just want to get the character and do a bunch of things and not have to wait for the character to interact with me.

The voice thing makes me feel like a loser as well. You feel like you're just talking to yourself. You tell the character where to shoot like at the head or eyes and that's annoying as well. I just want to be able to aim and shoot. Not have to repeat the

word shoot over and over, and then tell the character to move to the left and shoot. Oh, and then I need to back up so then I have to say that as well. I'm so used to controlling the characters myself that I find this method tedious.

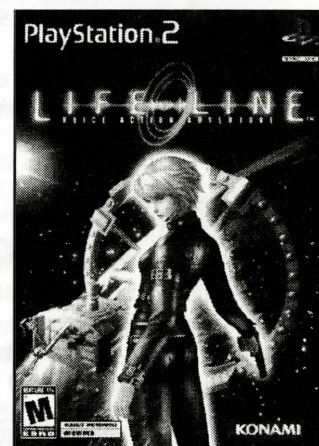
I still think the voice-activated games are a cool idea, but I think they should associate the voice thing gradually. Like have the gamer control the character but you use the voice activation to interact with the characters more. I didn't have fun playing this game. Maybe you'll think differently than me.

Is the Game Worth Buying? I found the game to be annoying so if you get past not using the controller, then try it out.

Favorite Things About The Game: It's cool you can boss around a character with your voice.

Graphics Rating: * * *

Overall Gameplay: * * ½



Reviews by Bryan Kremkau

More game reviews at skapunkandotherjunk.com

ZINE REVIEWS



66 Thousand Miles Per Hour #0

Full, 32 pgs, \$3.50

This well-illustrated comic follows the life of Evie Pryce, a disenchanted, slightly punky youth from boring Squareville, NJ, who apparently will begin weird and exciting adventures starting with issue #1. This issue just sets the stage, introducing the town and its inhabitants, and some mafia stooges who are part of the subplot. The backstory is nothing special – the “my town is boring, I hate my family and friends, I wish something cool would happen, oh wow, I’ve just been chosen to save my planet and now I have cool powers” thing has been done to death, but the art by Michael Cavallaro is very appealing, with a blocky, thick outline style that would feel at home with some of Cartoon Network’s original shows. The color is also a pleasure, but unfortunately that’s a one-off feature; the comic is b&w starting with #1. This special issue also comes with a 2-song CD from Shanti, and in a clever twist, you can play the CD along with Evie in the comic, and hear the songs she hums to, or listens to in her room. Well, I think it’s clever.

Chunksaah, PO Box 974, New Brunswick, NJ 08903

Book of Letters #18

Half, 40 pages, \$3

This installment collects letters written to corporations (and their responses) in mid- to late-2003. I have to say, I was disappointed with this batch—Nothing was laugh out loud funny, and Rich’s letters have become longer and tangential. Without the insightful humor and absurdity that makes anti-corporate/anti-marketing jabs palatable, if not downright hilarious, the letters just come off as nit-picky and shrill. Still a great, inspiring series of zines though—I often find myself watching a commercial and thinking up a good letter I could write to the advertiser.

POB 14642, Portland, OR 97293-0642

Chord Easy #2

Digest, 12 pages, \$1

“If you can play or sing a melody, you can chord or harmonize it. This booklet can help spot choices otherwise missed.” What follows might as well be a car repair manual in Korean because music charts and other technical musical jargon is a different language to me. Musicians might dig this; it seems to have good tips and ideas on chord progressions.

LLL, POB 190-CE, Phm., OR 97370

Copper Press #19

Square, 72 pages, \$5

I normally don’t like ad-filled music mags, especially ones solely on indie music, but each issue of CP is a thing of beauty. I study each issue to learn proper design, but of course I innately suck, just as some folks, like CP, are gifted at it. Anyway, as usual, there’s a bunch of indie band interviews and a nifty comp, this time a double CD. The production value of this zine is really something—I just wish there was more for the non-indie fan to read.

POB 1601, Acne, MI 49610

Off-Line #26

Digest, 72 pages, Free

Fantastic literary zine chock full o’ clever devices and lucid writing. This issue goes through the alphabet (A is for..., etc.), and each letter is its own personal story, political commentary, blurb of humor, or random thought. It completely pulls you in, from A to Z (though being a Rush/Mets fan, I was repulsed by the Dream Theater/Yankees references). Sainly gift at a free cover price, but send \$2 or a bunch of stamps.

Vincent, 35 Barker Ave. #4G, White Plains, NY 10601

Proud to Be an American

Full, 18 pgs, \$5

I’m not a fan of political poetry, but the pieces are accompanied by some cool ink drawings. Pricey for a slim tome, but the production (heavy bond paper and spiral binding) looks costly.

Brought to you by the same dude who does Whizzbanger and a ton of political zines (America, Aftermath, and Flashpoint). Very productive guy.
Shannon, POB 5591, Portland, OR 97228

Satsuma! #2

Digest, 32 pgs, \$2

I love zines like this—fun and quirky pieces, enjoyable and easy to read, and something you’ll hang on to and keep around the house. I know I will, and I’ll show my guests the really clever piece on signs (what they seem to represent to foreigners, paranoid schizophrenics and drunkards), an awesome piece called Surprised By Meat (listing scenarios in which the author was suddenly and perplexingly confronted with meat), and a pretty funny collection of rants pertaining to a trip to Hungary.

502 Prospect Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11215

Songs About Ghosts #2

Mini, 64 pages, \$2

A small perzine gem. This second issue, like the first one, is one long story, assumingly autobiographical. It’s a melancholy story about remembrances of summers past, of trying to contact the ghosts of your past and the devastation of losing again what was lost. A great, touching piece.

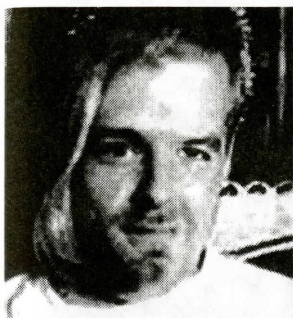
J. Wagner, 252 Norman Ave #203, Brooklyn, NY 11222

Whizzbanger Guide to Zine Distributors #8

Full, 36 pages, \$6

Self-descriptions of 40 zine distributors from around the globe, as well as lengthy zine reviews. A nice resource, but too hefty a price for it—this is something that could easily be maintained for free on a website. I think part of the price is to cover the attached 48-page catalogue of Whizzbanger zines, which could be condensed.

Shannon, POB 5591, Portland, OR 97228



Nirvana's Kurt Cobain & Sublime's Brad Nowell: Doppelgangers?

By Brett Lambert

The music world was in mourning during the week of April 5, 2004, commemorating the 10-year anniversary of the death of Nirvana frontman Kurt Cobain. But there should also be a day of mourning on May 25, 2004 for another rock star: Sublime's Brad Nowell.

On the surface, neither band seems to have much in common, other than untimely deaths: Nirvana was a grunge band from Seattle who had a penchant for flannel. Sublime was a band from Long Beach, CA that played everything from ska to punk to reggae to dub to hip-hop to hardcore, and often had a fondness for not wearing any shirts at all. But when you do some digging, you will find many startling parallels, coincidences and similarities between Brad and Kurt, the men, their bands, their lives and their deaths. Brace yourselves, ladies and gents:

- Nirvana was a trio
- Sublime was a trio
- Nirvana released three studio albums over the span of four years, before Kurt Cobain's untimely death
- Sublime released three studio albums over the span of four years, before Brad Nowell's untimely death
- Kurt Cobain died April 5, 1994 while shooting up heroin and then taking his own life with a shotgun at age 27
- Brad Nowell died May 25, 1996 of a heroin overdose in a San Francisco hotel at age 28
- Kurt Cobain was born February 20, 1967
- Brad Nowell was born February 22, 1968 (almost sharing the same birthday!)
- Kurt left behind daughter Frances Bean at age one in '94
- Brad left behind son Jakob James at 11 months in '96
- Kurt has four letters
- Brad has four letters
- Cobain has six letters
- Nowell has six letters
- Nirvana has seven letters
- Sublime has seven letters
- After Kurt's death, the posthumous releases rolled in (including greatest hits and live albums) for the mourning fans
- After Brad's death, the posthumous releases rolled in (including greatest hits and live albums) for the mourning fans
- An "unplugged" album of acoustic versions of Nirvana's hits (and notable cover versions) were released after Kurt's death
- An "unplugged" album of acoustic versions of Sublime hits (and notable cover versions)

- Brad had a heroin addiction, was not proud of it, wanted to quit but it was too late
- Kurt had a heroin addiction, was not proud of it, wanted to quit but it was too late

- Drugs featured prominently in Nirvana's lyrics (Sample drug lyric: "I got so high/ I scratched 'til I bled")
- Drugs featured prominently in Sublime's lyrics (Sample drug lyric: "I smoke two joints before I smoke two joints/ and then I smoke two more")

- Surviving members of Nirvana went on to form other bands (Dave Grohl formed Foo Fighters and his metal side project Probot, Krist Novoselic formed Sweet 75 and Eyes Adrift with Sublime drummer Bud Gaugh)

- Surviving members of Sublime went on to form other bands (Long Beach Dub All-Stars with Eric and Bud, Eyes Adrift with drummer Bud Gaugh)

- Brad had his dog, Lou Dog, to keep him company
- Kurt had his dog, Courtney Love, to keep him company

- Kurt was raw, clever, emotional, troubled, tortured, drugged
- Brad was raw, clever, emotional, troubled, tortured, drugged

- *Nevermind* was the quintessential album for grungers in the 90s
- *40 oz. to Freedom* was the quintessential album for stoners in the 90s

So what does it all mean, this kinship that these two bands and individuals shared? Could these two have been twins separated at birth? Was Kurt whisked away to the Northwest with the lumberjacks and learned to love punk while Brad was taking in the sunny SoCal rays and raised on a steady diet of reggae and dub vibes? And yet somehow, somehow, they both lived similar lives and died too young under similar circumstances.

Perhaps one day we could see a coupling between Frances Bean Cobain and Jakob James Nowell, brought together by what they share in common. Maybe they'll grow up and form their own legendary band and make some beautiful music that would make their fathers proud of them? Maybe they're doomed to follow the paths of their fathers and succumb to drugs and burn out before they fade away?

Whatever the case, I will end this piece with some words of wisdom from our two fallen rock gods.

"I found it hard, it's hard to find, oh well, whatever, nevermind." – Kurt Cobain

"I don't take pity for him and his kind, even though he now takes it in the behind!" – Brad Nowell

LOCAL

NYC on Short List for Olympics

Events to include the 30-meter run-from-the-rapist dash, avoid-the-bike-messenger, and the struggling-to-pay-the-rent-athon.

MTA Bans Cameras in Subways

Would make Abu Ghraib look like Club Med.

NATIONAL

Spanky the Clown Caught in Child Porn Raid

Parents can't understand how a man with menacing makeup and a love for children could be interested in child porn.

Ashcroft: Al-Qaeda Will Attack

...sometime around Election Day so everyone stay home!

Bush On Being President

"It's like riding a bicycle!"

Bush Defends Iraq Abuses

"My administration only has a few bad apples," he says.

Rush Limbaugh: "Iraqi Abuse Isn't So Bad"

Nothing a few bottles of painkillers couldn't fix.

INTERNATIONAL

Detainee Policy to Change in Iraq

Now instituting "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"

US Military Accidentally Slaughters Iraqi Wedding Party

They were aiming for orphanage.

Thousands Dead in Caribbean Floods

Jeez, I can't even joke about that.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

RIAA Sues 500 More File-Sharers

Out-of-court settlements their biggest source of income now.

Phish Breaking Up

Actual break up to take 3 hours

Snoop Dogg Divorces

Wants joint custodizzle.

SCIENCE

Boy Born from 21-Year Old Sperm

I guess someone finally cleaned behind my toilet.

Universe 156 Billion Light-Years Wide

Scientists to put universe on Atkins.

HEALTH

McDonalds Ends Super-Sizing

Fat people now have to order two large fries and two big fucking macs.

Face Transplants Becoming Reality

Just in time for FOX's "Fast Face Transplants for Fugly Chicks"

SPORTS

Selig Nixes Ads on Bases

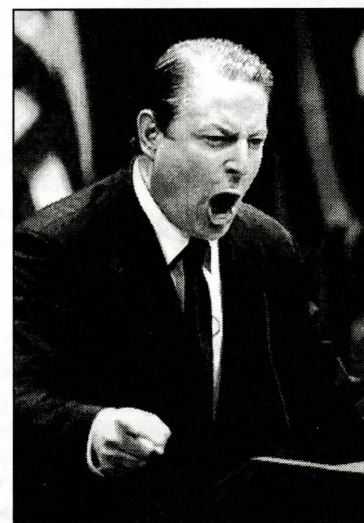
Because baseball is just too pure for advertising. That message brought to you by Budweiser: King of Beers and AFLAC at Amerquest Field and Bank One Ballpark.

Stanley Cup Finals Are Underway

The Stanley Cup is the world series of hockey. Hockey is a sport. Like lacrosse meets figure skating, but played by Czechoslovakians.

Pete Rose Wants to be Reinstated

Gives himself 3:1 odds.

**Transcript from Gore's Speech:**

George W. Bush promised us a foreign policy with humility. Instead, he has brought us humiliation in the eyes of the world. HUMILIATION!!! RARRR!!!

He promised to "restore honor and integrity to the White House." Instead, he has brought deep dishonor to our country. AND DISHONOR MAKE GORE MAAAAD!!! RARRRRRR!!!

And now he will not honor our fallen dead by attending any funerals or even by permitting photos of their flag-draped coffins. NO FLAG-DRAPED COFFINS?? GORE PUT BUSH IN COFFIN!! RARRRRRRRR!!!!

Those pictures of torture and sexual abuse came to us embedded in a wave of news about escalating casualties and growing chaos enveloping our entire policy in Iraq. But in order understand the failure of our overall policy, it is important to focus specifically on what happened in the Abu Ghraib prison, and ask whether or not those actions were representative of who we are as Americans? Obviously the quick answer is no, but unfortunately it's more complicated than that. RARRRRRR!!!!



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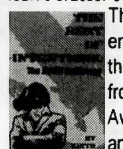
Stolen Sharpie Revolution \$4 US
Alex Wrekk compiled a 128 page DIY guide teaching how to make zines, understand zine culture, & make your own zine related crafts. Tips and tricks for photocopying, doing creative layouts, mail art, zine etiquette, how to deal with distros and stores, making paper, startlinga distro, how to put out a record, how to make your own envelopes and stationery, binding ideas, ad ideas, cures for writers block & tons more. Now a perfect bound book with a new layout including how to create/find zine libraries, lists of zine distros and stores, how to go on tour with your zine, and a new resource list! An indispensable guide for zine makers and fans. ISBN #0-97259667-2-5

Things are Meaning Less \$8 US
A new book by Al Burian (Burn Collector, Milemarker). A compilation of comics, drawings and handwritten text, from the various titles that published under Migraine in the mid to late nineties. Covers Al's usual musings over life's little intricacies and meaning as well as the mental processes of growing up from his days in Portland, moving to Providence, and a walking tour of his hometown. ISBN 0-9726967-3-3

Prices are in US dollars, postage paid. Stores, we deal direct!



Flow Chronicles \$10 US For years now The Urban Hermit has been writing these personal zine novel stories about "figuring it all out" - about the quest for enlightenment and dabbling around in a hippie subculture in the northwest - doing lots of drugs; coming out as a lesbian; and generally exploring gender bending issues. Oh yeah, and we can't forget the Hermit is also a poet and a freestyling rapper! This is the kid's first novel. It tells the story of Hermit at age 18; hanging out in the hippie house, smoking lots of pot, trying various drugs, working shitty food service jobs, reading spiritual books, trying to find identity so to speak. It flows bigtime. And it's fucking clever! If you've read the zines before, and like them, well you'll love this. (Chris Boarts, Slug & Lettuce) ISBN 0-9726967-0-9



This 280 page tome collects the entirety of Avow zine issues #11 through 16 and selected entries from the first ten issues as well. Avow is a collection of artwork and stories from Keith Rosson. \$12

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Prices include postage.

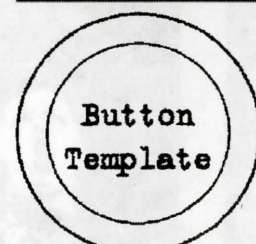
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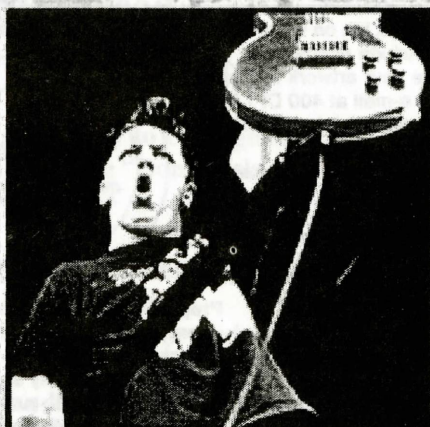


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POINT

Worst Things About Me

Adam Liebling

They say that obsessive self-criticism is still narcissism, an inverted or twisted egotism in a way, but that's fine—I'll just add narcissism to the list of bad things about me. Truth be told, I have this page to fill because two advertisers dropped out last minute (you suck!). It's only a few hours before I have to get this to the printers, and I'm struggling with writer's block and can't come up with anything better.

Well, that's not true. I was thinking of doing a "Worst Girl-friends" piece, and even drafted it, but it was probably more mean-spirited than funny, and gave the impression that I'm some sort of super stud, when in fact I'm only just a normal stud. I also considered a "Worst Job" article, but that would've taken half the mag, and it's territory I've already covered in the Work Issue (#22).

So I'll just do the easiest thing and turn the mirror on myself and report back the ugliest things. Where to begin. Well, I smoke too much, drink too much, eat too much. I have no willpower. I'm great friends with a few of the deadly sins (specifically, sloth, gluttony, lust, and pride. Avarice, envy and wrath haven't made their way to me yet). I'm messy and disorganized.

I dress poorly, I hate to buy clothes, and nothing fits right. I wear only khaki pants and gray shirts. I don't get haircuts until I really, really need to, and then I just get my head shaved so I don't have to deal with it for awhile. I bite my nails, I pick my toenails, and I flick my bellybutton lint on the bed.

I'm forgetful to the point of being inconsiderate. I don't remember birthdays and other important dates too well, but I'm too lazy to keep a calendar. I'm a hermit—I don't call my friends or family; in fact, I often avoid them.

I'm socially awkward. I'm either too quiet or too loud. I overcompensate my awkwardness around strangers with irreverent jokes, by pushing their buttons, or by trying to shock them. I hate being outsmarted or out-classed, and automatically hate anyone who's funnier or smarter than me. I'm opinionated and cynical.

I'm terrible at math.

I think I'm a lot better at things than I actually am, including cooking, driving, writing and guitar playing. I give up things I'm bad at. I can't play sports, can't even play video game sports, hate exercising, and suspicious of nature and the great outdoors. I'm New York-centric and yet I think I'm worldly.

I sometimes worry too much and obsess over worst-case scenarios. I get brain chatter at night and can't sleep. I'm addicted to caffeine.

I'm impatient with stupidity, incompetence, and unpunctuality. I hate crowds, parties, protests, and large gatherings of any kind.

I already mentioned it, but it deserves to be said again: I am cynical. That's by far my worst trait.

But for some reason, I'm surrounded by incredible friends, supportive family, and a loving wife, so maybe it's all less than I make it out to be, or my good outweighs my bad. I won't debate that here—THAT is narcissism, plus I managed to fill up the space and I'm almost out of room.

PS—Sorry this issue sucks. It truly is the worst one.

COUNTERPOINT

Worst Things About Adam

Jennifer Kao

Adam is a nervous passenger, impatient, frisky, pretty clueless when it comes to mainstream pop culture, gassy, a homebody, an incurable snacker, easily bored, exaggerates whenever he shares stories and gets annoyed when I clarify, insists on leaving three hours before any flight, likes to have his wine

with licorice, has a crush on Condoleezza Rice, runs up to the screen when significant female nudity is involved, and doesn't know how to add or multiply fractions, but I love him anyway.

Goodnight Desi

By Jaime Piña

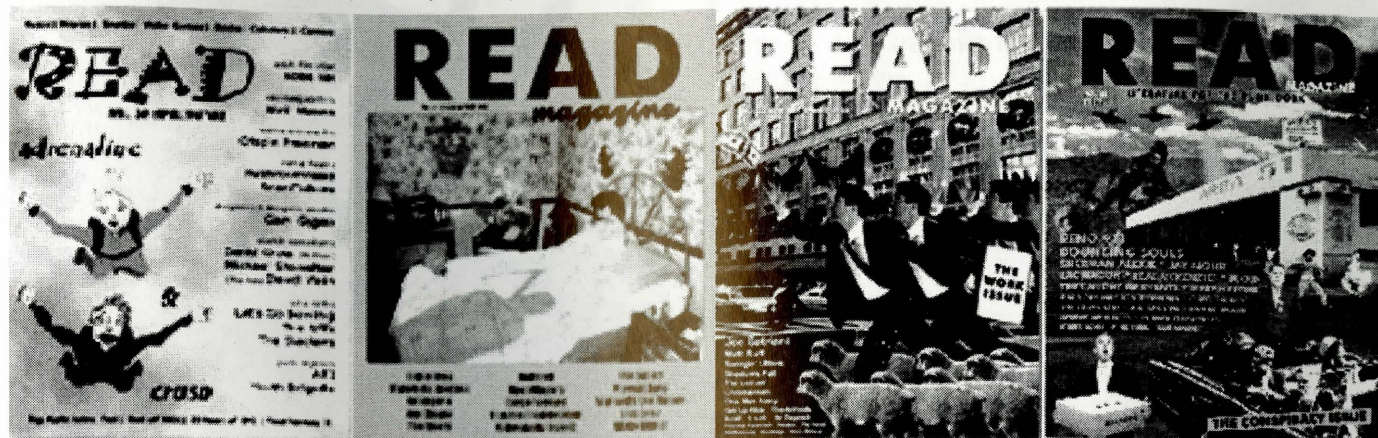
desi arnaz died of a broken heart... his death certificate might say "died of natural causes" or "killed by death" but his poor old heart just couldn't take the loneliness of being without his lucy... they had both remarried of course... she to a successful television producer... him to a young hot tamale... he was not in love again... he probably did it just to spite her... he'd get stinkin' drunk on rum or tequila and call her house and when her husband gary would answer desi would matter of factly demand, "let me speak with my wife lucy..." he sent her a dozen roses every year on their anniversary... sometimes he'd be on a drunk and call her in tears begging her "to leave that cabron..." and come back to him... of course, she would never go back to him like that... desi learned the ropes of latin love from his dad... a cuban politician who had the house with mom and the kids and then down the road he had the casita with his mistress... he stayed married and provided for his kids but he was a fucker... a well meaning one but a fucker... that's how desi was too and he couldn't understand why lucy would get pissed... desi would have a few drinks and end up in a hotel room with three or four hookers... he'd roll a blunt and whip out the bacardi and before you could say "fred mertz" everyone would be naked and desi would be singing songs... his trusty penis obscured by his acoustic guitar... lucy would go bananas and desi would try and calm her down, "but, baby... mi corazon, por favor... please... this is how it's done back home in cuba..." but lucy wasn't having it... "i'm not some quiet cuban wife who's gonna accept that little tradition," she'd scream, "i'm an american woman and i'm not gonna put up with some lousy fucker!" one day she had had enough... when they first met he was the young, handsome latin singer full of fire and she was the gorgeous blonde model/actress who wanted to touch the flame... but she got burned many many times... it made her a bitter woman through

most of her younger years... she once told dinah shore, "when you marry a latin, you really marry a latin..." and the audience chuckled but she was serious as a heart attack... he willingly gave her almost all of their joint company desilu... the kids were almost grown... desi walked away from hollywood forever after being a bigtime television player and didn't really look back (until syndication companies came sniffing around for those "i love lucy" episodes that desi had thoughtfully preserved and kept the rights to)... he just went down to mexico, got on a boat, pulled the big straw hat over his eyes and let the bottle take him away...

years later he appeared as a much older man on "saturday night live"... he was the perfect guest, a master at comedy and an old pro at working a live television audience... he was hip enough to get away with doing skits with drug references because he was desi, the cool latin cat... they made plenty of fun of him and lucy's groundbreaking tv show... gilda radner was great as the surrogate lucy... desi got aggravated and she'd do the cry of the lucy, "waaaaaahhhhhh!" at the end of the show desi rocked a killer version of "babalu" with his son desi, jr. on the timbales... on the original broadcast at the end of the show desi does his thank-yous and just as the credits are about to roll he leans forward, cups his hand on the side of his mouth, raises those eyebrows up and down and says in a spiteful voice, "goodnite, lucy..." it was his declaration of hipness... if desi was gonna come back on television he was gonna do it right... in the company of future stars like belushi and radner... he might as well have said, "ya see, honey... the kids love me... i'm still cool with the viewers... come back and love me..." but it was not to be... lucy continued to live in beverly hills and appear on tv becoming an icon of pioneering women on television... desi went fishing, got drunk, fucked whores and smoked reefers... there may have been a smile on his face but there was sorrow in his heart... goodnite, desi

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