

AMERICA?
12



STILL DOING ZINES! STILL VEGAN! STILL WILLING TO FIGHT
FOR PUNK & COLLECTIVITY & PASSIONATE FRIENDSHIP! STILL TAKING
NOTES & TRIPS & THINKING PEOPLE CARE!

STILL READS LIKE A BORING DIARY, DROWNING
UNDER THE INFLATED WEIGHT OF THE 'BIG WORDS' THEREIN!
BUT HAVE YR. LIFESTYLIST FUN WHILE WE TAKE CARE OF BUSINESS!



whole calendar years here

Afterwards, the memories inexplicable as a teenage haircut. Nights of nothing but red wine & difficult, treacherous records. Obsessed with listening to the entire album--all 6 self-indulgent sides of *Sandinista*, all 53 minutes of Cecil Taylor's abstract & still inscrutable piano pieces, the cold drone & dance of both volumes of Stereolab's *Switched On*. Further seduced by the essay in *Warehouse: Songs & Stories* & its perfidious spot in punk history. By the end, it was even as much of Dirty 3's laments as I could keep on the player, raising apostasy toasts to impossible loves. Distance can be a gift, a time for preparing as much as it is an easier way to postpone indefinitely. The way I scour the works of nigh-forgotten writers on the top floor of Library West instead of writing my own soon-to-be forgotten pieces. Drama & subterfuge: unscrewing the lid of my contraband thermos, cracking the spine of the book as reverently as though it was a bank safe. I can only say it made sense at the time. Months of mornings of letters to you, certain you'd live here soon if only I tried a little harder. Evenings of no writing other than even more furtive missives, broken only by late-night trips to the new apartment complex pool. Like an entire season not painting realistically or representationally, whatever the fuck that means. The logic is there as surely as the respectful (?) distance friends give you when you explain your current wingnut plans. Our real harvest these documents: the time willingly given & spent, the knowledge afterwards like the lines around our eyes.

whole calendar years later

At the time, it never seems that strange. There's a perforce logic in drinking a whole bottle of red wine in the middle of the day on your front porch. Eventually, the traffic & police sirens won't seem so sinister, and the worries about punk thugs showing up to stomp you will seem superfluous. How many bottles and how many days can go this way? Numbers offer a cold comfort, akin to putting letters neatly away in a drawer. Soon enough, like the tides, new patterns swell and change the grains of these days. You won't recognize your own face in the bathroom mirror. Did I really read whole volumes of poetry a night, searching vainly for some spec of divination & providence? Intimated signs from distant, alien personal ads? Watched every foreign movie from the public library? Snuck into the new movie theater for double features and actually wept at trite Hollywood happy endings, only to bike home yelling at all the passing cars? Who is this joker? Walked block after block in how many cities in search of the perfect cup of coffee and space to drink it in? Biked all night to the county line not feeling sane until the sun broke on the horizon? Staked hopes on a single plant in the garden? Sure, we're poor, in some surface, dirty-clothes way. But I stake faith in our instincts & intuition, our abilities & the strength of our friendships. The way we take discarded bike frames and turn them into the most efficient machines on Earth. The way Meredith talked about cultural capital, as opposed to the economic capital of our parents. We live in a country of waste and constant replacement. You can also help fight and create something better. I understand both choices.



Time evident in our beards, the wear of our tires, the shakiness of our handwriting (check the last years of the Peanuts strip & Charles Schulz's wavering lines if you need further doses of humanity), the rust eating at our bike frames. I've finally used that entire carton of staples and worn out the letters on my address stamper. Ate that whole jar of molasses. Had to replace the drive train on my bike (goodbye BioPace, you've been good to me despite your bad rep). Stopped taping my cleats & found new ones. Spent my tax return on a halfway decent guitar. Etc. If it isn't progress or wisdom, then it's at least survival.

Perhaps I am still writing these sorts of notes (pamphlets, reviews, futile love letters, etc.), because I do actually believe in their potential. There will always be something to read, right? Text is all-important. No less valid than biking through a stop sign, or the embrace of someone dear, but generally easier to acquire & pull out of your bag as needed. Less mess, less complex, surely. This issue's about specific places and definitive times, acknowledging survival & these small, temporal moments.

* do the comic above is a Total joke - whats funnier than a whining monkey? Funny in the SCHIZO comic sense.

me & the city, continuing

But the text reveals all--our letters and lines ever more than the words themselves. Writ on the back of flyers in the quieter moments between such events. I dream sometimes of a map, a timeline of Gainesville's punk songs: page after page of footnotes denoting context (house, job, lover, school, hangout, practice space, favorite records at the time, which books by their bed, tofu scramble recipe, city & U.S. policy--even hairstyle & shoe preference would do). A reader's guide because too often it seems we are writing the same frustrated songs & penning variants of the same lament. .

Any map is incomplete, and the map above would surely be a fool's lifework. Criticism is a good gig, but better perhaps to leave the text naked, open to individual interpretation. I don't read books that are underlined & highlighted anymore. Reference the perplexed look on the new faces here, full of knowledge of this town and its roustabouts, wholly through conduits like this one. Didn't think he'd be so short or bald, did you? Or her laugh so leonine, her stance so hoyden? The smell of beer that rank? Or the band so loud & out-of-tune? Well, here's a secret it took me 7 years to learn--it's all yours for the taking. We're serious about turning Wayward over. Serious as you are, I mean. Stakes is still high. Or, such thoughts carry me safely back to this rental home, another insignificant victory.



'florida's a long way away. in fact, it's just another grave.'

I refused for years & years to accept Florida as home. The mosquitoes, the humidity, the Margarita-ville aesthetic, Disney...the list is thousands long. So, as the Argentina van passed through Northern Virginia (where I spent my first 16 years), it felt like a truer homecoming. Nevermind that I hadn't live in Prince William County for close to ten years & that the biggest mall on the east coast (Potomac Mills, dude!) was being built there as I left. That zone between suburban D.C. & my grandparent's farm in the Piedmont still felt like a birthright. We stopped at a Denny's on US1, the decaying strip mall plaza where I'd go as a pre-teen to the carnivals & spend my allowance on crappy games of chance. Pop 3 balloons & win a ninja-etched mirror! The same plaza where the older kids huffed glue & told me to stay in school. *Don't be like us!* was a familiar refrain, both on the street & from my father as he turned into a full-time partier in his post-divorce years. Huffing glue & paint scared the hell out of me (probably based on some public service ad I'd seen in a *New Mutants* comic). But, as they raised their heads from the bag of shoplifted chemicals, their face was rapturous. Eyes slowly opening & closing, lips separating & glistening. How could I not sit in fat-kid envy of their world? So here I was years later, 2am, walking into a goddamn Denny's. The same Denny's where my punk idol Erik Grotz warned me not to become a college radio dj. There, looking at the food graphics on their menu, at the military patrons daring us to say something, smelling the greasy meat, there was no going home, *only a quiet, familiar swallowing.*

housewarming at t-coe's, fall.

So am I the asshole at the party who gets visibly upset when someone plays side 2 of the record first? Yes, of course. But before you answer, factor in that this was John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*, an album with 3 distinct movements in an unmistakable forward motion. Know too, that we were in a crucial point in the evening—still early enough for the fashionable to have arrived, but late enough that the punctual had loosened up a bit. We were celebrating Travis buying a house. No, I'm not talking about myself in the 3rd-person—there's a lot of Travis's here. Try to keep up, people.

So why did no one else notice this vinyl flub? Maybe they were busy actually having a good time, talking to each other and drinking instead of constantly being on the lookout for further proof of life's continual fucked-up-ness. It's not like I was asking everyone to stop partying or cast literal stones. Is it not disrespectful to inversely use Coltrane's master album? You don't get the buildup and chant of "a love supreme" when you play side 2 first. That chant, which appears like a *miracle* everytime I listen to the album, is easily one of the finest moments in recorded music history. Like dj's using i-pods & getting paid ridiculous amounts of money—republican dj's who've never heard of the Wedding Present. Contrast such nights with the free Tuesdays at Faces, where Pablo & Adam actually encourage others to spin records rather than cultivating further hierarchies. I let it go, like all the competing soundtracks in Gainesville.

text-based criticism

Biking these streets, these same streets. Saturday night in the summer, somehow minutes behind the parties of people I'd rather see. Reagan's dead, I know there's a party somewhere. The way the city's numeric, cardinal grid must reveal a greater pattern, even if only to the penitent, the romantic and/or nympholept. Ride usufruct, winnowing the details--length of traffic lights, number of former conspirators unavailable, the prosaic yells of passing cars versus the azalea bushes in radiant bloom.

Further interrogation & confession would be superfluous--the answers already embarassingly plain in our own songs & stories. The strength of our coffee, the temerity (or severity) of our embraces. How well we maintain our bikes. The catch in my voice when I mention certain names and certain times. How & why it didn't work out. The way my voice drops (or sings too much out) at the crucial times. The way voices break or go guiltily silent entirely. Yes, there are things we don't talk about, even in personal zines. Even amongst dearest friends in our progressive circles, whether assault, alcoholism or the cycles of burnout & depression. Why do you think that is?



the demo & the full length

Choice or providence? Whichever design, I side with the other team. Not the bands that you've heard of, but the former members that quit as the band got bigger and more awkward. The ones that left to go back to school or raise a punk kid. I hang out with the partners left behind while the tours get more distant & ridiculous. Like the bands that break up just as their songs come together. The ones who walked away entirely to paint, while others make it a day-job or sell their microscopes to the CIA. Not the soccer team of former jocks, but the punks who picked up the game way past high school.* Like the first novel, the one accused of being overwritten, as though trying too hard was some sort of gaudy crime.

How about the Julie Ruin line *'I want a revolution. You want to make your mark.'* Because what's more typical and American than splitting off to do your own thing? Rugged, bootstrap individualism that's really just capitalism and isolationism through a romantic lens. You don't have to walk away. We need each other. We could be creating real alternatives. And if we're driving people away from our scenes, then maybe we should re-examine just what is going on. Can we create functional collectives? Can we talk about internalized sexism? Can we speak desire?

* Not that any of those makes me somehow more enlightened or goddamn bohemian. Or even provides much of a shield against capitalism. But its useful knowledge when I can't understand why the rest of the world looks like a sitcom with bombs exploding just off-camera.

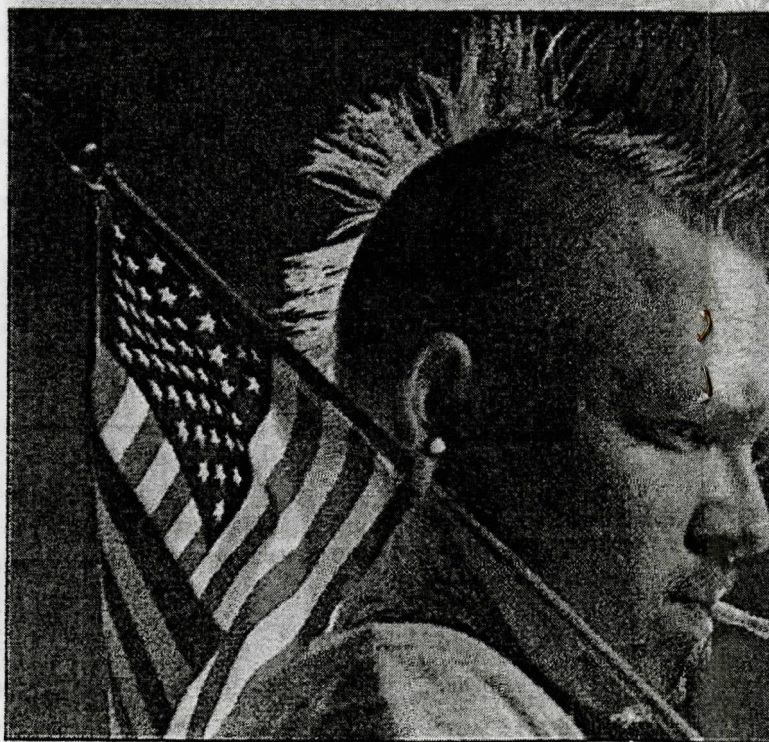


the demo & the full length. pt.2

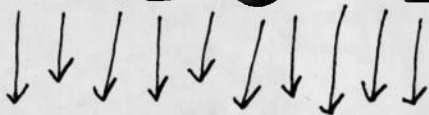
Have I told you how much I love Bob Mould's voice? There's nothing like hearing someone try to explain their passions, whether it's pro-wrestling or certain bands. We won't destroy our loves by examining them (the way I thought literature was ruined when my high school English teacher started talking about Vonnegut's symbolism). Instead we'll better understand their alchemic miracles. Which is why I'm going to grapple here with my love of Husker Du.

By 'Chartered Trips' the 3rd song on *Zen Arcade*'s hugely ambitious double-lp, I surrender. The words may be ambiguous— you have no idea where the hell his trip is to, but invoking the commercial slogan 'the sky's the limit' means the futility remains. Do I think too much about love in free-market economies? Probably, but hear it in Mould's exasperation, too. There, his *o* & *o-ho* between the lines of the song. There, the way the guitar skitters with open strings, then locks decisively back into the melody (how easy to get off-track, then the determined climb back in). On into the explosive last third of the song, the words becoming nigh unintelligible over the music, an unapologetic & inevitable howling.

See the generations running this same territory: those who cannot sing and sing anyway. Whose voices are cruder instruments revealing moreso the frustration and hope. Who understand the difference between being a 'good' musician versus being comfortable & locked-in with your bandmates. Pretentious? I guess, but I take that word as a compliment from the truly timid.



SCENE REPORT:



In response to the terrorist attacks, Fort Lauderdale resident Adam Stewart had his head shaved in the shape of a mohawk and hair dyed to match his old glory earring. "I'm just taking advantage of the fact that it's cool to be an American."

your room, any a.m.

Who would deny that the important work is not that for which we draw wages? Writing a letter back. Sending your grandmother a birthday card. Making a mix tape for a friend. Practicing these songs, these testimonials. Honing your curry recipe. Helping with child care. Who amongst us would speak out against such things? Even dropping all the books & taking a walk with your lover. More & more, I see not just the drunken sing-alongs, but moreso why we feel compelled to yell such things. The importance of ritual release. Like the goddamn deluge, circa '98 screaming, *'Alright. Listen the fuck up. This is my real name.'*

a love song, anytime you can

Ripeness of apples, flowers in full bloom- the scent of them in the morning. Birdsongs as you wake, furthered by an open window and mid-day breeze. The thought of home, of return and safe passage. The way our muscles sing when stretched the right way. The right tool for the job, the pop of a wine cork, the knife incising a pink grapefruit. Contrasting the small, sweet decadence of eating out. Like holding hands and not talking. Dreams coalesced into a fixed point, elusive & captured as portraiture. Intentional & idealized as our swallow tattoos. Easy as a walk after such a meal. Your voice humming in my ear--effulgent, whole. Not words, just tones You. You, I remember.

NO IDEA E.C.



when did we start passing to playing as a team?
must've been when i was gone on tour. progress
comes that way. why we have to invisible maybe to
those immersed. so we keep trying.

off the coast of Norway

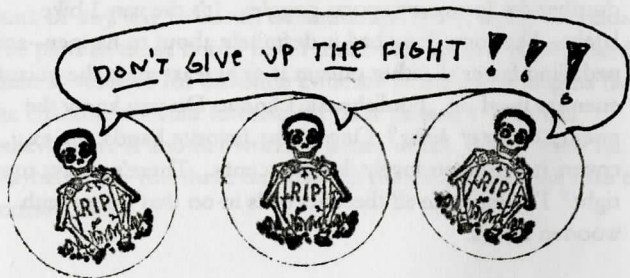
My knees quiver as the gigantic motor pulls us away from shore. The mix of morning sun and sea breeze. I'm scared to look any further over the side of the boat. Scared my glasses will drop, the ring you gave me (your grandmother's wedding ring) will slip from my finger. My passport, my wallet, my book full of letters not yet mailed—all pulsing with a weight begging to go free. Then the descent: falling overboard trying to catch them, into the breaking waves to die on gulping bursts of saltwater. How tightly I grasp these items, how deep & irretrievable the ocean.* Instead, we make it to shore, delivered safely into a new country and the humane glow of a good meal (all vegan, all shared). Let them steal my old journal, my glasses, that camera I never learned how to use, the address book I never kept up to date. Let's start anew, glad to be freed from past hesitancies. [Beware the promises of a man with a full belly, thousands of miles from home. A man with just a backpack, smiling for no apparent reason.] Unmoored is an old term, the anchoring now fathoms deeper.

* Yeah, the maritime metaphors get a bit played out (anchor tattoos & all), but, *seriously*, being on a boat is like riding a bike for the first time.



Bar scene, Bonn, Germany

Toasts in at least 4 different languages, at least one meaning "drink for the devil's sake," & they all sound appropriate. As appropriate as the free shots from record label owners & bar staff alike. Like the medicinal, scorched taste of such high grain alcohol. This is what gravity feels like, an elemental freefall, a blind joy before crashing to Earth. Waking with the taste of your own disgust still on your lips. From what I remember, the bartender passed out, the waitress started crying about unresolved sexism in the workplace, and I puked out of a moving van onto the suburban streets. In the morning we watched Dave Navarro & Carmen Electra get married on MTV Europe as we spread sweet jellies on thick brown bread. Like it was just another day. Because it was. The way that out the window from this parent's house, the birds still sing and we still bomb Iraq.



hotel stationary (excerpt), lake buena vista, florida

Hello from another hotel I never expected to be in. The water pressure's phenomenal, the coffeemaker works like a jet engine & even this chair is ergonomically superior. The library's picking up the tab on this one, but even the bourgiest hotel is a acute reminder of the last time I was in such surroundings. Mostly how there's no way in hell that someone I love is going to knock on my door tonight & take me out for a vegan donut. I'm in a goddamn Disney hotel—can any of us escape? I think humor couldn't get any blacker, then another day passes without a decisive word. I'm here for the Florida Library Conference. You know, where a bunch of people with glasses get together & talk about how to get teens to think the library is cooler than the mall. And/or come up with some viable internet usage policy in the age of free porn & rampant disinformation. Last week I broke the glasses you liked in a soccer match. Cut my nose in the game, too, and felt even dumber for losing my sports goggles. It's the way I bike lately—like something bad is definitely about to happen--and pedalling faster to either outrun it or at least meet the quixotic enemies head-on. Foolishness, I know. Do you know the poem, *'the art of losing'*? One of my favorite bands, the ex, covers it with their lovely dutch accents. There's always music, right? I'd still trade all these records in on that house with wooden floors.

excerpt cont., [letter not sent]

So why did I ask you not to call anymore? Because it was too unbearable. Can I even say that? It's not fair, in the way that I don't see much fairness around us, despite claims to be an open, loving person. All my books, all my records & letters—none of it seemed more than a temporary salve. And lambency has never been my strong point. I keep the tv on here in the hotel room, a sound barrier against the poolside parties. But the tv news is even worse: Nina Simone has died; an obese man is suing McDonald's for discrimination; & Americans act like we're fucking heroes for bombing Iraq. Are you sleeping any better these days? Nights like these I think of all of us, separate & insomniac. There's no use in asking how things reached this point, only a terrible, linear knowledge of our respective fixed points. But there's consolations, no? Back home, I have a cat to sleep with, and wherever your new home is there's a child to hug you. I can't tell what's the dream anymore & what's actually possible. Those hardboiled crime novels I devour don't seem so delectable now since I couldn't think of any way to outwit or outmuscle (yeah, right) the odds. The plots in those books never made any sense—I mostly liked them as vehicles for dissolute criticism & the awful lengths that the characters would traverse for their passions. I do still believe there is another world, a better world. There must be. Maybe I'll see you there one day. In the meantime, take care of yourself, dear.

**"80 percent of everything
built in the U.S.
has been built in the last 50 years,
and most of it is depressing,
brutal, ugly, unhealthy
& spiritually degrading."**

-James Howard Kunstler

↓ ↓ ↓
*even a liberal
admits such things.*

history lesson, pt. 3, France

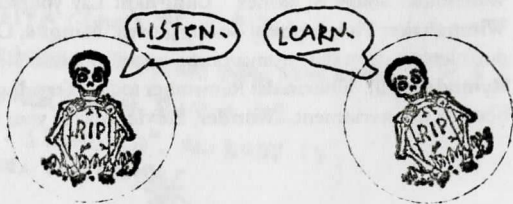
Expressing my usual, gawking reverence for the squat scene of Europe, I am put rightly into perspective by Julien, who said :

"This is nothing for the government to give us. Crumbs. They put us here, corralled, to cut off other avenues."

I'm trying, as usual, to look cool at this point, as though I'd realized this all along, but the amazement at his next-level thinking shows right through. He kindly translates further :

"It's an easy way to have all the trouble-makers in one place. This costs them nothing and softens their image. There should be community spaces like this on every block. They should be paying us even more to run the space."

Then he smiles at me, the kindness of a host allowing the guest to catch up.





bibliography

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Clowes, Daniel. Eightball #22.

Dorfman, Ariel & Mattelart, Armand. How to read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic.

Faulkner, William. Flags in the Dust.

Goldman, Emma. Living my Life.

Holt, Jacob. American Pictures.

Jin, Ha. The Crazyed.

Jones, Hettie. How I became Hettie Jones.

Silko, Leslie Marmon. Storyteller.

Yuen, Eddie et al. (eds.) Confronting Capitalism: dispatches from a global movement.

soundtrack

Allergic to Bullshit: If this is what we're for, this is what we'll get.

Amps for Christ: both 'auld syng lane' covers. **Band of Gypsies:**

Changes. **Burning Kitchen:** Emotional cripple. **the EX:** Nem ugy van

most. **Fahey, John:** On doing an evil deed blues. **Fela:** No agreement.

Fiya: Me and the city. **Hue and Cry:** Preoccupation. **Husker Du:**

Warehouse: songs & stories. **Lungfish:** Lay yourself aside. **Milky**

Wimpshake: Philosophical boxing gloves. **Mingus, Charles:** O Lord,

don't let 'em drop that atomic bomb on me. **Mirah:** Nobody has to stay.

Rymodee: (all). **Thermals:** Remember today. **Trapdoor Fucking Exit:**

Short-term investment. **Wonder, Stevie:** Maybe your baby.



"part of Americanness
in poetry
is an attitude
toward space,
the land itself,
and our attempt
to earn the right
to a place in it."

- - Bin Ramke



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so i haven't been the best (or even good) penpal
in the past year (or two), but am sick of being
down & doubtful, so let's get back into it.

DIG WORDS this issue
from my vocals. list
of FAULKNER'S swags
Trilogy.

○ FUTURE ISSUES will
go back to interviews
old style, with less
of my boring life -





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