

# TITLE AVOW 20 ISSUE



three dollars

## TEN YEAR ANNIVERSARY ISSUE!

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## CONTRIBUTIONS

Stuff done by other people.

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## STORIES

Stories written by me.

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## REMAINDERS

An amalgamation of the two, or stuff that wouldn't fit anywhere else.





# SALUTATIONS.

It's possible to try and encompass too much.

The gift and the curse is, I want this shit to be *epic*, you know?

But it's not gonna happen. I'm just gonna have to stand fast and feel good that this thing is out, that it's being held in your hands right now. One more issue down.

It's rare that a zine makes it ten years. Zine kids get bored. We move on, get burnt out. Maybe we run out of things to say, or we get publishing deals and head off to greener, more profitable pastures. No one's to blame, really, and it's not a bad thing. It's just the nature of the way things work; a lot of kids head down the same avenue in punk rock itself. They're here for a while, and then you stop hearing from them, stop seeing them around, and then you start to see their records in the used bins around town and the lightbulb goes off in your head.

For a lot of kids, you start to hit your mid-to-late twenties and I guess life just kind of catches up. Its inherent weight, other people's expectations, a routine. The fire kind of cools down, maybe. I've experienced all of this to some degree over the years. The payoff for putting a zine out regularly starts to diminish. At times, it starts to feel like *work*, and you've got to find a way to bring yourself back - find a way to bring back that joy that came with new Sharpies, exacto blades, gluesticks. The joy that came with xerox manipulation as a goddamn artform, a stack of pages growing, the feeling that you're actually getting something down that's worth saying.

Ten years is a long time for a zine to stick around. You can take it two ways. It's pretty much the same sentence either way:

1. "Man, he's been doing this zine for ten years? Cool!"

2. "Man, he's been doing this zine for ten years? Why?"

And either one is probably as apt as the other.

The simple fact is that this issue has probably been about the hardest one to put out in years. Because it's the anniversary issue, I've got this idea that it's got to be monumental, got to carry with it this awe-inspiring sense of the be-all-end-all. Like I said, I'm shooting for too much. Fact is, there's no way I can get everything down in one issue. I've never come close. That's why they keep coming out. That's why I keep trying.

So let's look at it this way:

## WELCOME TO ANOTHER ISSUE OF AVOW. IT'S TEN YEARS OLD.

But let's save the pat-on-the-back Pabst tallboys and cigarettes for some other time; this isn't a eulogy. But I guess, yeah, it is a celebration of sorts. We're here, we made it to another one and I'm so lucky that I still feel that dumbass fire glowing inside me as the pages start to build up, as the new issue starts to take shape, as it begins to become something tangible and real. That silly desire has never entirely left me, and I hope it never does

So I'm not even going to try and make this one the all-encompassing issue, the one I want thrown into the time capsule for future punks and zine nerds and fuckups to peruse. Let's just say it's a pretty good issue, one I'm happy with, but one that still doesn't come close to getting it all down.

So we'll save the history lesson for later, how AVOW got from there to here. Let's just say that by now the zine has pretty much become as central to my identity as my bad eyesight or even worse breath. It's one of the few areas of my life in which *pride* is allowed to have decent posture. There will come a time someday when I feel like I've outgrown this, and that scares the shit out of me. I don't want it to happen. I don't want to blow all of this out of proportion, but I don't want to downplay it either - friendships, lovers, enemies, ethics, apathy, moments of financial security and destitution, insecurity, bravado, community and catharsis have all been forged from the making of these pages throughout the years. I get tired sometimes, but I still love doing this so much. I want and hope to keep doing this for a long time.

So I'd like to thank all the people, way too many to name, who've had a part in this thing throughout the years. Any who have ever contributed anything to the zine throughout its marred and checkered history. Any who have ever grabbed one up in a store, sent me money through the mail, ordered one from a distro. Anyone who's ever written me a letter, sent a tape, traded their zine. And most of all, thank you for reading this right now.

We've made it to another issue.

You know, come to think of it, a beer and a smoke sound pretty goddamn good right now.

So check this one out, thanks for coming, and as always, feel free to let me know what you think.

**KEITH ROSSON**

**PORTLAND, OREGON. AUGUST, 2005.**



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# Coffee, Fucking, Melvins. Broken Bones and One Book Metaphor.

by JONATHAN SPIES



**K**ieran always said—and Kieran was the sort with something wry and depressing always on the tip of his frowning lips – staring down at his coffee, “The last sip is always too cold and too sweet.” It’s especially so at diners where the heat isn’t conserved so well in a cup-and-saucer, as opposed to the jelly jars and broken vases we drink out of at home.

Even more so with lovers, especially Katherine. She’d been living down there above the record shop in the Village. Crooked old place in the most Manhattan sort of way – the more compact the living space, the less it matters how inhuman and cave-like it is. And the more organic and living and sweating the walls become when piled high with bike-parts, the loft beds keeping you from ever standing fully upright, ceilings low enough that we had to be pressed flat against one another in the bed against the ceiling to fuck. There were holes in the ceiling from thrusting legs and arching backs and the occasional leg spasm. Katherine took a bucket of plaster and a sixer of Sierra Nevada up the ladder one day, and the next morning, a stick-figure named Sheetrock Man stared down at us, reinforced in the belly region by the six-pack carton.

All the crumbling corners and last-minute additions to the apartment—like the sink, jutting into the middle of the kitchen, or the shower, also in the middle of the kitchen, or the toilet that sat in the corner of the kitchen behind a ragged red curtain. It was a bit much to even call it a kitchen—more like a bathroom with broken stove and sagging spice rack. And the four or five bikes that hung from the ceiling which I hit my head on every single time I went to the shitter. And over seven years of punks covering it with stickers, plastering over the holes they'd blown in the walls with waterbombs and thrown beer bottles, it became streamlined, an organism of its own. Like we'd burrowed into the ear of a giant, to lay our eggs or at least get wasted and blast Melvins at all hours.

The passion was dead. We'd gone through the requisite fights, break-ups, stabbed each other in the backs right on down the checklist of red-flags that it was over—but, hell, hadn't I given up on True Love anyway? I'd settle for somebody who was nice, freegan, and offered the occasional back massage. Instead I was with Katherine, who wasn't so much those things, but was a great roommate somehow. And for whatever reason, I was a stellar boyfriend, though all previous girlfriends of mine will tell you that I don't have it in me: always being supportive and being completely understanding when she repeatedly told me that she wouldn't support *me*—never a cheating glance or an inappropriate hug—never out all night carousing with the guys, never making things worse. As if I woke up one day and realized that I could be a resource and a companion to the ones I cared about, not a source of frustration. Mating your mortal enemy makes for great drama and terrible peace of mind.

We got in bed one night, a little drunk and a little angry for whatever reason. Arguing time was over and so we turned out the lights and leaned into one another, to ignore our frustrations the cheap old-fashioned way, and after a little coaxing from both of us I was on top of her in that tiny gap between mattress and ceiling. I pushed her short, muscley legs up above her head and pressed my shoulders and neck against the ceiling and leaned into her and CRACK! Her foot found its way between me and the ceiling at just the wrong time. We went on for a while and I think went at it a second time afterwards, but the hospital proved it with x-rays: her foot was broken.

Two days later, she hobbled past me on a cane and said, almost in passing: "I think our sex life is officially over."

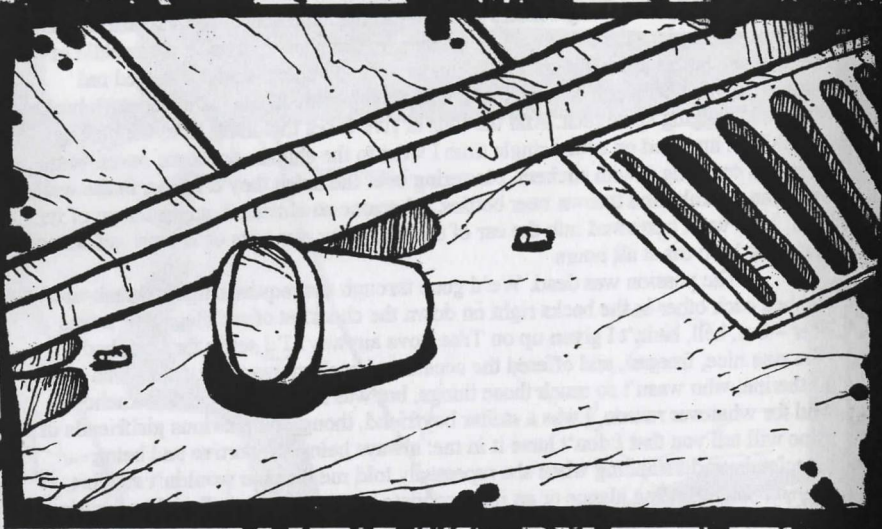
A week later, she had found someone new and offered to pay most of the rent on the condition that I get out as soon as possible. She was wasted and said that she was in love. He seems like an oogle to me, but whatever.

A few days after that, sober, she relaxed, and told me what a great friend I had been. Clumsy, drunken, lousy fuck of a friend—but great nonetheless. And I leaned over and kissed her and she looked confused, so I kissed her again and slowly she warmed up to it and our boozy sweat mixed in the damp sheets. Going at it under the watchful eye of Sheetrock Man, it was passionate and satisfying and warm and connected like we hadn't been in a long time, there finally on the same page. But neither of us could avoid noticing that the page was the very last in the book. We came together and sipped a beer and I kissed her forehead, and then he called and she ran off. Well, hobbled off.

Something like a cup of coffee, right?



# EATING SHIT FULL OF



**R**ichmond, Virginia was our next stop on tour. I wasn't in the best mood, partly because our last couple shows hadn't been so good (only a few people showed up and no one talked to us afterward) and partly because of the new tour dynamic. Nicole had taken off and Jack took her place. Jack was great, and unlike Nicole he didn't get moody when his blood sugar dropped. But he also didn't seem to get as excited about things as Nicole. With Joe, Jack and I, the tour was now three kind of quiet boys, so I spent most of the past few days in my head. And that's not where I wanted to be. I was feeling a little homesick, but moreover I felt ridiculous and egotistical for thinking I should be on tour, reading my dumb little book all over the country. If the shows weren't fun and I wasn't meeting people, what was I doing? Was I just trying to sell my book? And since I didn't feel comfortable talking about it, these thoughts festered. I felt lost and lonely. I didn't feel like anything I was doing meant anything. I felt disconnected from everything, like I was floating through this weird, fake life. I remember thinking, "I hope tonight I get to make out or read the newspaper." I thought that would ground me to reality. Maybe it was just a typical tour breakdown. I don't know, I'd never been on tour long enough to feel shitty before. But I definitely felt like I shouldn't be on the road anymore.

I was pretty sure the show in Richmond was going to be awful. I went for a walk before the show ostensibly to get something to drink, but really because I didn't know what to do with myself and I wanted to be alone. I went to a coffeeshop and under the sneer of the barista walked out with a cup of water. On the walk back to the show I snapped. Drinking tepid tapwater out of a



# BROKEN GLASS!

with Dave Roche

styrofoam cup (that I had to steal, no less) seemed the ultimate act of ridiculousness that pushed me over the edge. I threw my full cup into the street, buried my hands in my pockets and slunk back to the show. Anyone who knows me and knows how militantly anti-littering I am will realize I must be feeling awfully shitty to throw styrofoam into the street.

Things didn't get any better in Greensboro, North Carolina. It was election day. Usually I'm not the biggest proponent of voting, but I felt like this election was kind of important. I don't agree with the people who say there's no difference between the candidates, though I do feel like this election was like being forced to choose between eating a plate of shit and eating a plate of shit stuffed with broken glass. I can understand why nobody wanted to go to a show today, but it was still disappointing to drive for more hours than there were people listening to us.

After the show we went to a coffeeshop to watch the election results on a big screen TV. The people at the shop were nice enough to let us set up our books in a back room and people actually came in and bought stuff. That was awfully nice, but it didn't counterbalance the sinking feeling watching the map fill in with red. A girl started hitting on me but not only was she drunk, but an avowed alcoholic. That put a big red circle and slash over her in my eyes, but I'll admit, in the absence of real conversation and connection, I wasn't above taking solace in her beer-soaked advances. I declined the offer to spend the night at her apartment, though.

Nothing was official, but by the time we decided to call it a night, it looked like Bush was going to win. We spent the night at the house of the kid who set up the show. It was hands down the dirtiest house of the tour. To be fair, the living room and kitchen weren't too bad. The bathroom, however, was so gross I didn't want to shit there for fear my turds would get dirty. The spare mattress I slept on was duct-taped and smelled bad. I started wondering if it would have been sleazy of me to take that drunk girl up on her offer just to have a clean place to sleep. I wouldn't have done anything improper; I wouldn't have even taken my cardigan off. I'd just crawl onto her odorless mattress and go to sleep. The point was moot. The reality was I was stuck on a stinking mattress with an untrained punk dog<sup>1</sup> howling all night in the next room, trying to sleep, knowing I'd just wake up to the news that Bush had been re-elected. I felt like I had picked the worst of two shitty choices and now the whole country was following my lead. Everything was really, really bad.

<sup>1</sup> I have a problem with punk kids (especially vegan) who get dogs but don't train them or spend any time with them, so they become these unruly, attention-starved nuisances. As far as I'm concerned, that's emotional abuse of an animal and just as fucked as eating free-range meat.

# HANGOVER HOUSE

by

Joey Goebel



I can't stop drinking, and neither can my mom, my dad, my older sister, my little brother, or my grandma. We all live together in a nice two-story house in the middle of the suburbs. Our house is big enough that we all can have privacy and not get in each other's way when we're drinking ourselves into oblivion.

Dad usually stays in the rec. room and watches sports as he gets drunk off of domestic beers, often Miller Lite. We can go back there if we want to, but we can't talk or he'll yell at us. He's normally a gentleman in the daytime, almost saintly. But at night, when he gets drunk, he becomes mean. All of us have fallen victim to his drunken Mr. Hyde. Sometimes it's because we accidentally do something to infuriate him, like chewing food too loudly. Other times he's mad because his team lost. His team hardly ever wins any more.

But Dad is always quick to apologize the next day for whatever he did or said the previous night. We all are quick to apologize. Our days are filled with guilt-inspired love. We always forgive each other, we always understand, and we even end up hugging sometimes.



Dad often buys us presents to alleviate his guilt. We've almost grown to look forward to the drunken tirades he spews our way since we stand for compensation the next day. Last night, Dad told me I was ugly. Today he gave me his best gift yet: my own keg.

I keep the keg, which is full of Budweiser, in my bedroom, and I'm looking at it right now. It is so strong looking. It looks strong and serious, just like my dad. It looks like it could contain something important like a deadly virus or human organs. It even kind of resembles a bomb. And just like an austere, old air force captain must feel when he looks at a bomb, I look at my keg and I see potential.

Since Dad got me my own keg, my room has had more visitors than usual. Grandma is in here right now filling her coffee mug. I told everyone that they were more than welcome to my beer. Everyone has taken me up on my offer except my sister Jackie, who is out, and my mom who prefers the hard stuff. Mom did come in earlier just to look at my new keg. She said that it looks "nice." The others knock on my door, politely ask me how I'm doing, and then ask for some beer. I tell them they don't even have to ask. Grandma forgot to shut the door.

Mom usually stays in the master bedroom watching TV and talking on the phone while she gets drunk by way of Crown Royal whiskey, J & B scotch, Absolut vodka, or Arbor Mist wine coolers. Unlike Dad, she enjoys company, and if Jackie, Cutty, Grandma, or I aren't too intoxicated, we'll sometimes lie on the bed with Mom as long as we can stand her.

Mom becomes happy when she's drunk, and I suppose once she gets so happy, she feels her buzz is being wasted if she can't share it with someone else. She used to go from room to room once she got happy, begging us to play board games with her or to prank phone call strangers or to play practical jokes on whoever was asleep (usually Dad or Grandma). But she finally saw that none of us really wanted to be around her or each other when we had been drinking. It was embarrassing for all of us.

So nowadays, Mom just stays in her room and calls people. The conversations don't last long because the people she calls can usually tell she's drunk. It's difficult to talk or be around someone when they're on a different mental plane than you. That's why it is so hard not to drink in this house.



My older sister Jackie used to be like Mom. She'd get happy drinking her Zimas, Bacardis, or Blue Moons, and she'd bug us until we got mad. Nowadays, she goes out to bars or to parties with her friends and loves drinking malt liquor, especially Olde English. We're glad to see one of us getting out, but at the same time, we worry about Jackie. We never know exactly where she is, and there for a while, she had a really bad habit of driving drunk. One night, she inexplicably lost her car and has not found it since, so that put an end to that. No more driving for Jackie. Now strange men come and pick her up pretty much any time she wants them to.

I am starting to get substantially inebriated. I've lost count of how many red Solo cups of beer I've had. I am going to have a lot of proofreading to do on this tomorrow if I'm able. If my spelling is acceptable, it's only because of my editing. My fingers aren't doing what I'm telling them, and I'm starting to have trouble seeing straight. The screen goes down and then back up again, over and over. The screen looks drunk.



I'm not alone in drunkenness. My little brother Cutty just came in and couldn't talk worth a damn. He wanted beer. It was so cute. He was trying to conceal the fact that he was drunk. He looked everywhere in the room except at me. He's still at that stage where he doesn't know how to handle himself when he's messed up. He's still experimenting and hasn't even had his first blackout yet.

At eleven years old, Cutty lacks the experience that the rest of us have accumulated through the years. All he drinks is beer, and it takes hardly any for him to get drunk. He is pretty hyper to begin with, and once he started drinking, Mom had to hide all of our valuables. He barely weighs one-hundred-five, and most of that is his belly.

Through the wall, I can hear Grandma vomiting bile. Yes, I still have enough sense to ask myself, "Is this what I have to look forward to?" But I think my family and I share a similar perspective on the future; we prefer the present. Right now, I intensely appreciate every single note of the song that is coming from my stereo, though I don't have a clue of what I'm listening to.

To my knowledge, I'm the only member of the family that has attempted to quit drinking. I've tried four or five times, each time realizing that I was doing nothing more than needlessly depriving myself of what the rest of my family had the sense not to reject. If it were problematic, I would stop, but I seriously don't think it is. The only time I think it might be problematic is the next day when we sit at the breakfast or lunch table and none of us can talk or eat or function at all. Some of us don't bother getting out of bed. Mom usually goes with this option. And it is not uncommon for the house to smell like vomit. And we are depressed in the daytime. We hate the daytime.

But now I'm so drunk that I can't write this anymore. And I know that tomorrow if I'm able to proofread this, I will want to erase everything I've written and what I'm about to write, but I'm telling you, Joey, that you should not erase this because you wrote it when you were purely, entirely happy and inspired and unafraid of anything, and for a few fleeting seconds you loved the world. You loved yourself and your family. As you drowned you loved the world and you found peace and you hoped for a better life for yourself and your loved ones and even your enemies and it even seemed possible. Tomorrow you and your family will wake up with bloated brains and will want to die, but right now you're all right where you need to be. You love the world and you are loved. Tomorrow will be horrible for everyone. But I'm telling you that right now this home is filled with more love than any other house in the neighborhood.

I better go check to make sure everything is all right. Dad just called Grandma a fuckface.



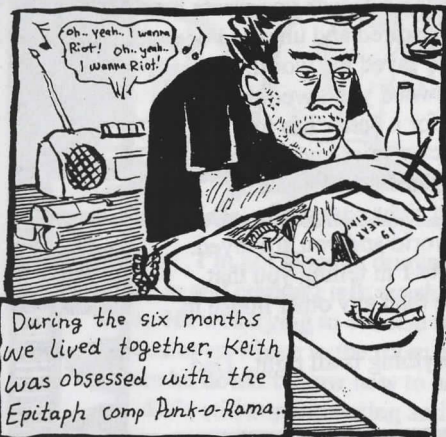


In 1995, Keith and I lived together in a particle board townhouse in Newport, Oregon

Keith had just started his zine *Avow* with Alex in Seattle..



Keith inspired me to write poetry and draw dark shit and start my own zine called *White Space*.



During the six months we lived together, Keith was obsessed with the Epitaph comp *Punk-o-Rama*..



We lived it up as trashy, underage, coastal bohemian poet drunks!



We spent many nights devising schemes to get beer..



My dad is an injured fisherman who needs a sixpack of Schlitz. He sent me with this note.

You can call him, here's his number



>KOFF< YES, THIS IS JIM.

YES. I'M FORTY-SEVEN.

WHAT?! I NEED MY SHLITZ DAMNIT!

HYUK

Hyuk!

Beer!



It turned out mumbling with a gray wig and charcoal on the face did the trick

mmblluv

hmmm



Ha! they fell for it!

KING ZAROUK'S MOTHER

AK! FLAMING QUESADILLA!



Hey, "Punkas fuck," Show me those scars on your hands again!

Whatever, Lucid Dream Boy.

Beer Bong!

Y'know, not much has changed in 10 years!

reflects on the struggle

a seasonal worker



I have three grand in the bank. I don't have too much to worry about.

The world is fucked. And I'll have to work the rest of my life. But right now I have three grand in the bank, and not a whole lot to worry about. I'll spit piss and bile when I'm back on the clock. But right now I have three grand in the bank, three months off and not a whole too much to bitch about. I'll save that for leaner days and project my anger on apathetic white-belted hipsters and cocaine-nosed artist pricks. And I'll play up my background like a trumpcard when cornered.

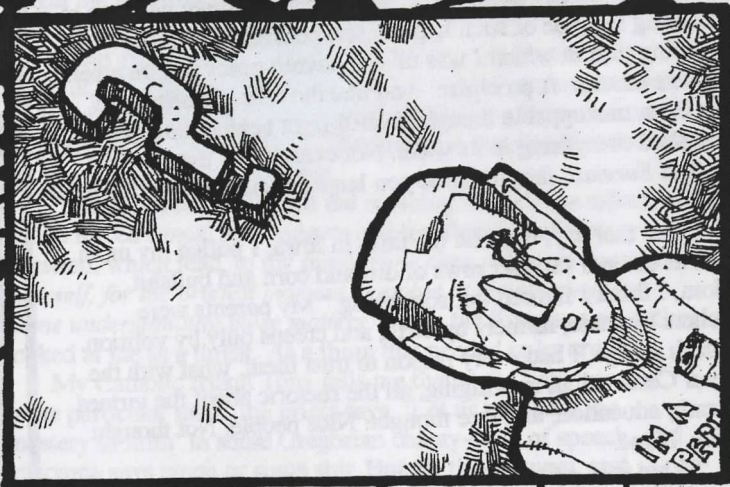
There's always someone who's had it better, when you've got three grand in the bank and not much to worry about. I'll spend it sparingly on cheap beer and force my pen to write angry screeds. I'll lash out at the over-stimulated cultural mecca I ran away to, before going to sleep in my cheap basement room in a collective house. Because I've got three grand in the bank and nothing else to worry about. I'll appropriate the struggles of people I left behind. I like to think about them and how bad some people have it, when I want to compare scars with trust-funded anarchists.

Shocking stories go a long way and worldly wise appearances are easy to pull off. But real pain doesn't speak so loudly or as cleverly worded as the diatribes of a poser with three grand in the bank and nothing to worry about. I'll take on working class titles and puff up with pride when surrounded by rich college educated lucky fucks, but there was always food on the table when I was a kid. I'll mock hatefully the drop-out subcultures. Feel helpless to stop the wars and poverty and it's all so fucked up. But there's not too much I can do with three grand in the bank, and you can't just spend your whole life worrying about it.



# SPACE SEED!

JONATHAN SPIES



remember squinting into the falls, the humidity of the Midwest washing my twelve-year-old city-boy lump of a face with salty trails and a feeling of connection with eternity. Okay, I didn't phrase it in that way when I was twelve, but man, was it fucking hot. The travelers that settle a bit in New York complain to no end about the summertime 95% humidity, but I just laugh and think of those days in South Dakota and Iowa and wipe my brow and shrug because they have no idea.

My parents were talking to my uncle, who has since bought guns, abducted his children from his recently divorced wife, and led the police on an OJ-esque chase through the slumbering streets of Sioux Falls, SD. But at the time, he was just a city planner, proud father of five, chatting my folks' ears off about what a mind-bender it is to be a city planner in that bustling megalopolis.

I stared into the falls. Twelve years old, coddled and pretty damn city compared to my backwoods cousins. At least the sons of Uncle Ted, who has few fingers after the thresher accident,

# TODD and/or SEAN and/or ETC.

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Here's the new AVOW for review.  
Pertinent info be:

· AVOW #20, 72 pages, \$3 ppd.  
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PORTLAND, OR 97214

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Hang in + thanks much,

## KEITH



always seemed to call us "city folk" and "easterners," while the kids in New Haven laughed when I called soda "pop." Never a spot for a kid.

But there on the edge of the falls, leaning on the shimmering hot black railing, oblivion lapped at my face like an old dirty dog, something went and clicked in young Jonathan's mind. "What if . . ." I thought, for no particular reason, "What if the Bible is just simply not true?" The reader will surely not gasp at the daring intrigue of such hypotheses, but from the Bible-thumping past in which I was raised, having never met an atheist, this was intense. A precipice. And like the falls, thousands of tons of an unstoppable thought rushed right behind that one, and it crushed everything in its wake. Not everything, but this was my first *Eureka!*, the first time you have a lucid thought that is all your own.

Later that day, back on the farm in Iowa, I pulled my mom aside as the sun set over rows of dirt and corn and bullshit. "Mom, I think I figured out something." My parents were teachers by trade, farmers by birth, and creeps only by volition. At such an age, I had every reason to trust them, what with the liberal Connecticut upbringing, all the rhetoric about the virtues of truth, education, and free thought. Nice people. Not thought police. Nope.


"What is it, sweetie?"

"Um... I don't know how to put this." I didn't. And when you have something unbearably moving to say, the inexperienced turn to silly, time-worn clichés, like when you care so deeply for her and you say, like an idiot, that she's the most beautiful girl in the world. You try to grasp the situation and flail your arms to communicate the dire importance of being heard and then you've gone and splashed about some nonsensical platitude, and before I knew it, I blurted: "I've figured out the meaning of life. I think God isn't real."

Had I had a shred of skepticism or real-world experience, I would have noticed the look of horror that surely swept over 35-year-old Nancy's face as her Catholic mind countenanced the vilest sin a child can make: Unabashed disbelief. "Hmm," she said after a moment. "Well, that's nice honey."

I went about. I played with toy machine guns in my grandparents' basement. Shot off fireworks that night by the old creek and chased down Shrug, the old pony that didn't give a





fuck, ran amuck like a kid's supposed't. Or whatever, some bullshit.

The next afternoon, I was wandering around looking for the fucking toy machine gun so I could ambush my sister, and suddenly I noticed a dark shadow looming over me. Batman caught me red-handed or something. My father placed a massive clenching paw on my shoulder.

"Your mother says you have something to tell me." He stared at me with a cold admonition, the look of accusation and the look of moral wrong, the twisted eyebrows which confronted only criminals and foreigners. The first time my father looked at me as a stranger. I said nothing.

"She says you discovered the meaning of life?" he asked with a forced casual air. Daggers and fire flew out of that question, which read, to my mind, *How dare you even consider yourself, for the briefest moment, capable of questioning, let alone understanding these matters.* It was the first time my father looked at me as a threat. As a thing that needed to be crushed.

My Catholic friend Tony tells me that at the beginning of some particular mass, the priest says, 'Let us proclaim the mystery of faith' in some Gregorian chanty-style of speech, and everyone says amen or some shit. But for the moment, and without the 'amen,' let us proclaim the mystery of resistance. In that hallway between the basement and the dining room of my grandparents' farmhouse in Sioux County, IA, I cowered and said simply: "Oh, I forgot." He prodded a little and then left me alone. Because the demonic hate that eclipsed my father's sense of freedom in that moment put it in no uncertain terms: my parents were not on my side. I hadn't read Orwell yet, but years later it rang disturbingly clear: We're all Mind Police. Your friends, your lovers, your family and your neighbors. We're all rats, we're all stool-pigeons, and we're all executioners.

The mystery to be thanked and explored is just that: from then on, my mind popped into three dimensions: These are people. People with fragile worlds. Worlds that can be threatened by a twelve-year old. Worlds broken over a question mark. And why did that cold stare and gravelly interrogation plant a seed in me, rather than burning down every chance I had? So many people have fallen – at that moment, why didn't I?

One thing was clear: the jig was up.



# the ANTI-PATRIOTIC PUNK PICNIC

by RYAN MISHAP

July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1993, and my excitement had been snuffed out faster than the burning plastic of a U.S. flag that had dripped onto my arm and shorts. Gauth and Donald, studded vests reflecting in the sunshine, had laughed as I cursed and hopped around the decaying wood porch, comically trying to stop the burning. Normal citizens on their way to the parade gave us dirty looks as they hiked by on the sidewalk. I had been sitting in the sun beneath our house's upside-down flag, quietly contemplating the glory of the upcoming event, when the two punks lit the flag with lighters. For them, my shock and pain was worth more than the supposedly subversive act of putting flame to Old Glory. Some friends. Some anarcho-punks. So this was how my big event was going to go.

I don't know about you, but when I first stumbled into this thing called punk, I wanted to jump in the fucking air and tell everyone about it. The anger, the making sense of this fucked-up world... the idea that there was a place for this freak. I was high as I could be and ready to change the world. How could I not be, when so much shit had started to make sense? When all those songs sent electrical shocks into my system and the ideas jazzed me up for taking on the world, fucking up the system and overthrowing the status quo? If it happened to you, take a moment. Close your eyes, remember.

Fuck yeah.



The years count off, like punching a time clock; and it is impossible not to lose some or all of that fire. But when it was first there, how beautiful. The disappointment of the first fall isn't shit: you pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and run again. The shock of the falls accumulate, start to hurt (especially when some other punk trips you), and then you start marking the falls as Important Historical Events in Your Life. There come to be so many realizations - the brick wall at the end of the tunnel. Back when you started, you'd go at that wall with fists, and now you just turn around. The Anti-Patriotic Punk Picnic was one of those early obstacles for me. It wasn't a brick wall, but I identify it as a lesson.

Fired up on punk and revolution and ready to do something, I did the flyers up and expected the amazing.

Ashland, Oregon has one hell of a Fourth of July extravaganza for such a small town with a very liberal reputation. U.S. flags fluttered in the breeze for blocks along Main Street. Lithia Park was the scene of the major gathering - the streets blocked off and filled with booths like at a Farmer's Market. My idea was to gather all the Southern Oregon punks and disrupt the patriotic proceedings with anarchist dissent in the form of a counter-celebration. We were to have a picnic, a presence, and pass out our literature (the picnic, while actually happening, was supposed to be one of those subtleties while masking our *real*, dangerous plans!). The punks would crash the party, bring the truth and... Who knows? Maybe there'd be a riot!

The burning flag on my porch was the first clue that my aspirations were, perhaps, a bit grandiose. Still, who can fault a little fun, even at the expense of my own skin? The gathering was still to come. The anti-patriotic punks would picnic, then fuck shit up!

The burning flag dripping hot, melted plastic onto me would make a good metaphor, but this story has already moved on, and there were about thirty of us punks gathered near the fountain in Lithia Park. Like the stoner kids smoking in the parking lot during the high school football game, we were set apart from the mainstream masses congregating to celebrate tradition. Ashland, as a town, is really beautiful, and Lithia Park is the best feature within city limits. Sunny and hot, the blue sky was perfect for being



outdoors with friends and family. As mentioned, the scene was like a huge Farmer's Market, with hundreds of folks meandering, buying eats from temporary tent structures, and probably feeling pretty good about themselves and the country. I hated them all.

Surveying the scene from my grassy knoll, I wanted to put a bullet in their brains. A metaphorical bullet, of course, that would wake everyone the fuck up so they could see what they were missing: the vileness of the U.S. of A. Fired-up young punks are also like cult members: arrogant in their sincere belief that they have now found the Truth and know what's best for people.



Set apart from the other punks who'd come to my picnic (my first mistake, thinking it was mine), I scowled and felt disappointed. Nobody had brought literature to hand out, like I'd suggested on the flyer. Only one guy had brought a flag to burn, but he was cooking fucking hotdogs! It said "vegan picnic" on the flyer! I glared at him having fun with some others. In fact, all the punks were just hanging out, having fun - just like the morons below. My anti-patriotic picnic was a failure and I was pissed. Here I'd done all this work and nobody else did anything!

Well, I hadn't brought any food- unlike practically everybody who had made some amazing dish. But I had come up with the idea. Well, I hadn't brought any literature, but I had made the flyers. Well, I didn't instigate a disruption of the patriotic event, but I had... You know, I hadn't done shit, and I missed out that day. Hopes defeated, I wallowed in anger and self-pity, like a controlling boyfriend who didn't get his way.



Now, I can see how amazing it was that some kid could paste together some random shit, make photocopies of the flyer to pass around, tell his friends, and wind up with thirty people coming together- some from forty miles away. My head filled with revolutionary dreams, I failed to see the uniqueness and beauty of people reaching out to each other; we were all anti-patriotic punks, and just because we didn't riot or disrupt shit didn't mean what we were doing was worthless. The punks came because they cared and wanted to support each other; we're the freaks and we have to stick together. I couldn't see it then, but I know it now.

And, I found out later, that guy was roasting tofu dogs.

an interview

with

MIKE

BUKOWSKI





## GET YOUR ART GEEK ON

**AVOW:** Alright, let's just get straight to the punk rock art geek questions. What was the first piece of art that you drew that wound up on a record?

**MIKE:** The first piece was probably the Rambo demo. There was some stuff before that, in high school, that wasn't on any record covers. We did some t-shirts, like a One For One t-shirt design (laughs).

**AVOW:** I read a review in *Heartattack* of one of the records you've done the cover for. The guy just blasted you; said you had no real understanding of the human form, that you hid behind Photoshop fuckery and that he cursed whoever it was that first had you do art for them, because now your stuff was everywhere. Any comments?

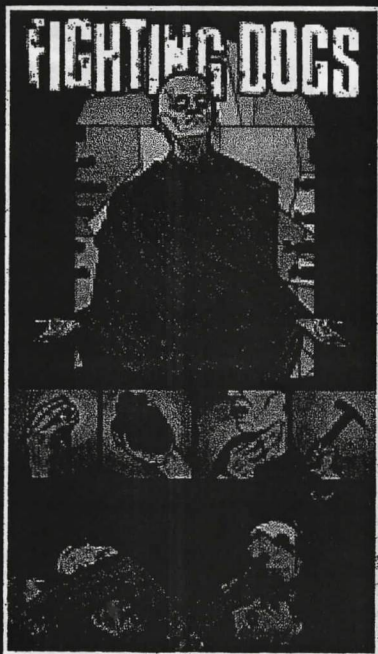
**MIKE:** (laughs) There's a lot of comments, but I'll save those for myself. It was funny, though, about that review, because I actually won an award when I went to U Arts for figure drawing and anatomy. I mean, I guess it was a good criticism, because it made me take a step back and look at my work, but I didn't take it to heart as much as I could have, because I went and read the rest of the reviews that unnamed person did, and they were all shitty. Every single band that he reviewed was shitty, he didn't like any records, nothing at all. So I just think it was someone trying to stir up the shit

**AVOW:** How do you deal with rejection? Anybody ever flat-out rejected

art that they asked for?

**MIKE:** Um... not that I can remember. There've been people that've asked me to change things or redraw something, but no one's ever said "No, we don't want this." There have been times where it's been frustrating though, when people are like, "Yeah, draw what you want, we don't have any ideas." And then I draw something and they're like, "Oh, that's not what we had in mind." (laughs) Yeah, but you told me you didn't have anything in mind

**AVOW:** What's the weirdest project that someone's asked for, like they had no idea what your previous work was.



*FIGHTING DOGS tour poster*

"We'd like some trolls here, and maybe a magic wizard." Or are people pretty well-versed in what it is that you do?

MIKE: For the most part people are pretty well-versed in what I do; that's why they contact me. I actually don't do any advertising aside from, like, putting my website and email address in all the records that I do. So people have to seek me out. Which I why I don't get too many people asking me about wizards and trolls. (laughs) Which is upsetting though, because I wouldn't mind drawing some wizards and trolls sometimes.

AVOW: Sketches and thumbnails - do you use em? And what size do you usually work in?

MIKE: Sketches and thumbnails - yes. You wouldn't be able to tell by the looks of them, because they look like a five year-old with one toe just scribbling on a

piece of paper with his foot or something. (laughs) It doesn't look like anything at all. As far as the other question, I usually work fairly large. For LPs, I usually work about 20" by 20", and for 7"s I work about 12" x 12". For t-shirt designs, probably 20" x 20".

## GET YOUR *UBER-ART* GEEK ON

AVOW: Ever heard of Geoff Darrow, Mike? Any chance *at all*?

MIKE: (laughs) Yes. There's a couple pieces that I did, specifically the PANIC shirt designs, that were pretty derivative, but since then I think I've kind of strayed away and it's more just an influence now. Although no one really notices. I think I rip off Charles Burns more than anything now.

AVOW: You ever make your own fonts?

MIKE: Uh, yes, but it's usually just already existing fonts that I've distorted.

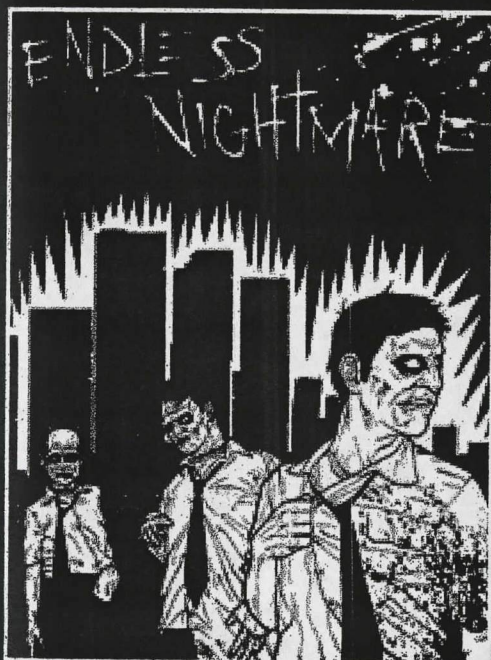
AVOW: Your favorite: handwritten text versus computer text?

MIKE: Handwritten, but it takes too long most of the time. And I'm often under deadline stress, so I don't get to do it as much as I'd like to.

## THE PERSONAL IS THE POLITICAL

AVOW: Here's one. Is your art just eye-candy for records? Or do you think there are political ramifications to what you do?

MIKE: Um, it depends on the record.



ENDLESS NIGHTMARE shirt design



Sometimes I think that there's maybe not a specific political message but there's definitely a feeling that I'm trying to go for that I think goes hand in hand with what they're about. Other times there's just... there's just not. There's just bands that are angry. And my art reflects that too, but I don't think there's always a political statement.

**AVOW:** Let's talk about war: this is something I've been thinking a lot about recently. A lot of your art is filled to the brim with war- and military-imagery. With acts of violence. Do you ever consider what it is that you're portraying with this stuff? Like, do you think it's okay to co-opt the "coolest-looking" images of war (gasmasks, shocktroops with machineguns, mushroom clouds, etc.) for bands that don't do a fuck of a lot to decry war and violence? It just seems to me that if a band is going to use war imagery to sell records, they better have a more thoughtful response, in that same record, to war than just "Fuck the system" or "Kill the government." What do you think?

**MIKE:** Well, I do agree for the most part, but I don't think that's a hundred percent fair. Because I don't think every band can be a hundred percent political. Even if the bands don't deal with war directly, they're dealing with the way their surrounding environment makes them feel. They may not be decrying war, but their angst may be a result of the war, or of the current political situation. So I think it's totally alright for them to use that kind of imagery. And on top of that, punk is an angry, violent medium, so obviously those types of images are going to go well with it, because war is angry and violent.

**AVOW:** Do you get a lot of your own emotions out in your work?

**MIKE:** Yeah. (laughs) Yes. I don't know what else to say to that

**AVOW:** Okay. (laughs) You wrote a letter to zines regarding a record cover you did - I can't remember the details, but one of the bands had contributed a blatantly homophobic song; you apologized to the punk community, stating that you didn't know that particular song was on the comp. But isn't that same record cover available for viewing on your website?

**MIKE:** Yes. Um, well, first things first I get a decent amount of emails, like probably 3 a week, asking me to do artwork for people. And there's no way that I've heard all the bands that ask me to do artwork. So I send out a little disclaimer to everyone first, to just let everyone know that I won't do artwork for any band or label that advocated sexist, racist or homophobic ideas or has those kind of lyrics. The record in question was a comp, so it was kind of hard for me to get lyrics for all the bands that were on the comp. So it was kind of a pain in the ass. And one of the bands kind of slipped through my filter. And when I got the record in the mail and I read the lyrics, I was very pissed about it, but at the same time, I did a lot of work on that record and I think it came out really good. I like the cover a lot, so why shouldn't I display it? It's a piece that I'm proud of. It's like, I didn't write the song, and I've let people know that I don't agree with the message that band supports.

**AVOW:** Has that changed the way you do business?

**MIKE:** Um, I'm a little more stringent about the disclaimer. And as far comps go, I make sure that all the bands are on the up and up, and not sketchy like that. But it's still hard to do, and I'm sure it'll slip by again, but I try, and that's more than most people can say.

them?

AVOW: Where do you draw the line?

When do you feel that you have to claim responsibility for who uses your art, for how it's used, and when do you feel that it's out of your hands?

MIKE: Well...

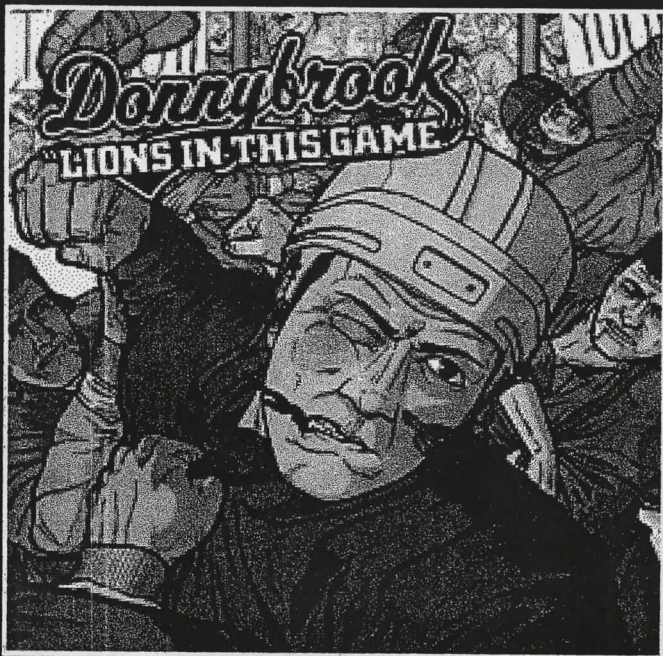
AVOW: But you kind of explained that with the last question.

MIKE: Yeah... well... see, there was a period of about a year where this was the only thing that I did to make money. So I had to make some exceptions. Not particularly as far as the sexist, racist, homophobic lyrics went, but I did stuff like the Fat Wreck Chords artwork, and I did a cover for Cornel West and some stuff like that. I mean, I prefer doing work for DIY bands, but there are times where I felt like I had to compromise, and the things like those were where I felt like it was a little out of my hands. But it also paid me enough to where I could do smaller, DIY records longer.

## PUNK ART AND PUNK ECONOMICS

AVOW: Here's one I'm sure you're sick of hearing: how did you hook up with Fat Wreck Chords, and how did you work out the sliding scale thing with

MIKE: I actually didn't work out the sliding scale thing with them because I figured they are a big enough label where they could afford to pay me as a professional illustrator. The sliding scale thing is only for DIY labels. One of the guys, an intern that worked at Fat Wreck Chords, was a real big fan of TEAR IT UP and had a bunch of the records that I'd done artwork for, and suggested it to Fat Mike. And he



CD cover for *DONNYBROOK*

actually emailed me first and asked if he could do that. And I was like, "Yeah." So I pretty much did no work at all on that one.

AVOW: So when you're approached by a band or label to illustrate something, and they're people you don't know or maybe aren't entirely comfortable with, how do you come up with a dollar fig-



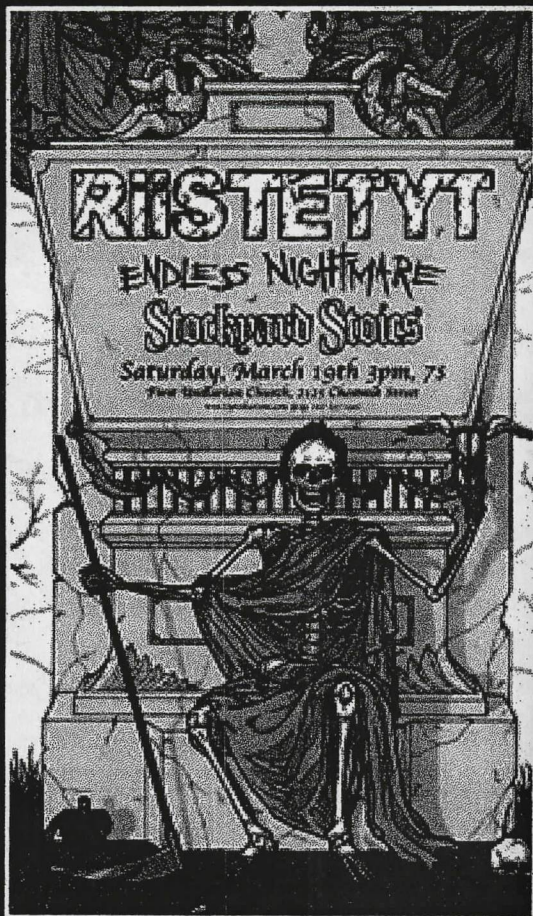
ure? Is it the drawing? By the hour?  
Or the finished project?

MIKE: Um... it's usually by the drawing. If it was by the hour, no one could afford me. (laughs) As you'd be able to attest to, because I'm always up in my room drawing. Yeah, it's usually by the drawing. The prices have gone up a little, just because I've been doing so much work throughout the years and people have been offering me more money, so I figure I'll use that as a scale, but if there's a project I really believe in and I want to do artwork for it and the people can't afford to pay me, I'll do it for free. And the things like the Fat Wreck Chords stuff helped me do that. Like, I recently got asked to do a poster for an anti-sexism show in Belarus, and I was like "Who the fuck is doing something in Belarus?" I'm definitely gonna get on that, that's awesome. I have no problem doing that sort of stuff for free. As far as if I would, like, up the price for someone I was uncomfortable with, I don't know if I would ever actually work with someone I was uncomfortable with. The Fat Wreck Chords stuff was a little weird, but I didn't really feel like I was... I don't know, selling myself out or anything.

AVOW: Did you do it because, I don't know, you saw it as an opportunity to maybe get a little more recognition and exposure?

MIKE: Um... yeah. The same with the NOFX record. First of all, it was just ridiculous to be able to say that I'd done work for Fat Wreck Chords. It was just cool in the first place. I was in Las Vegas and I went into Tower Records and they had one of the records I had done art-

work for and it was, I don't know, kind of a cool feeling for a little while. And as much as I didn't agree with the *Rock Against*



Philadelphia RIISTETTYT show flyer

*Bush* concept. I still thought that they had their hearts in the right place. They were doing something that most people weren't doing.

AVOW: How did you feel about seeing your art on a tour bus?

MIKE (laughs) That was ridiculous. Andy Wheeler actually called me up because



he was hanging out with Anti-Flag when they were playing in Philadelphia and he was like, "You've got to come over here. You've got to see this." So I rode my bike over there, and he didn't tell what was on it or anything, so I just pulled up and saw this giant drawing of mine on all four sides of the van, and I was just like, "Oh my God, this is ridiculous."

**AVOW:** Okay. Does art pay the bills?

**MIKE:** I wish it did. I mean, it does, but if that was all I did I would be barely scraping by. So I have a part-time job where I clean houses for rich people. (laughs)

**AVOW:** Okay, I know you answered this earlier, but do you generally make initial contact with people or do they seek you out?

yes, so I did shirt designs for them. There were some other bands where things didn't work out. Like Brian Lombardozi and I were talking about doing something with 1905. But that never came about. He and I were both really excited about it. I think the rest of the band wasn't.

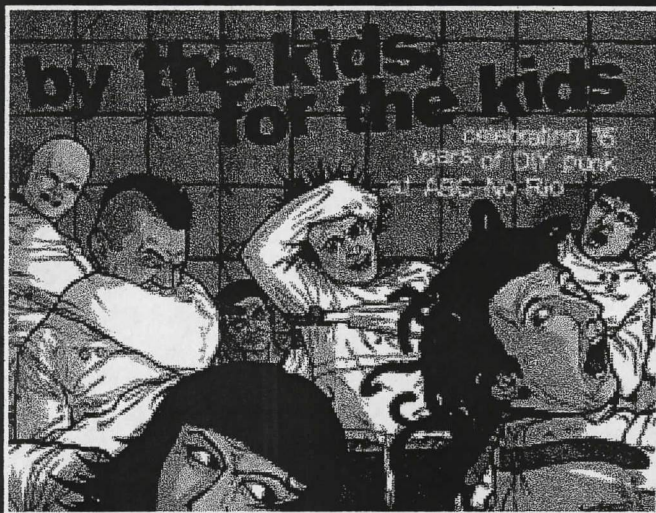
**AVOW:** Okay, as far as being an artist goes, who would you consider to be a peer?

**MIKE:** Um, a lot of Philly artists. I really like Chris Lawrence's work, Cristy Road's stuff is really fun... oh, Justin Gray (laughs) is an excellent dude and an excellent artist, makes me really jealous sometimes, when he can just bust out really sweet stuff with the utmost of ease. As far as outside of Philadelphia, I really like Ernesto Torres's work, he's in Life's Halt and does all their artwork. Mike Sutfin's stuff is good, but I think he's a little

above and beyond everyone else I've mentioned. When I saw that Killers records, I wanted to break my own fingers and never do art again. So, yeah... anyone that's doing punk records and continues to do them more than just one time. It seems like there's a lot of records where there's one really cool 7" cover and then you never hear of the person ever again. I prefer drawn covers, obviously, to crappy photos or cheap computer stuff. I'm always gonna

stick up for the artists, the punk artists.

**AVOW:** Now talk about your upcoming exhibit in Belgium.



*Cards for the "By The Kids, For The Kids" art show at ABC No Rio*

**MIKE:** Yeah, they seek me out. There was a couple bands that I really wanted to work for, so I approached them. Like Endless Nightmare, I asked them if I could do artwork for them and they said



MIKE: It's at a cultural center in Antwerp. It's actually a really cool space - they have jazz shows there, and all the gallery shows are music-based. Gee Voucher and Winston Smith have shown there, so

the cultural center and was organizing the events, and he asked me to do it. His name's Peter, he's an amazing guy and I'm really grateful.

AVOW: Can art save lives? Is that just some outdated hippie bumpersticker bullshit, or is there an element of truth to it?

MIKE: (laughs) I would say, the way the question's phrased, it definitely does sound like hippie bumpersticker bullshit, but in reality I think it does. I don't know if it helps anyone besides the artist, but I know it's definitely saved my ass multiple times. No matter what, no matter how bad anything gets, I can always just sit down and draw something. There've been plenty of times where I just wanted to give up on life and I just threw myself into my work, and it helped me get through it. So in that way it can.

AVOW: And what are you working on now, pray tell?

MIKE: (laughs) Right now, upstairs, I'm in the process of doing a shirt design for an Italian band called Strength Approach. I've got two shirt designs for a clothing company, the flyer for the kid in Belarus, the 12" design for Coma, which has a sweet drawing of stoned punks on

it with bongos (laughs) and beer cans, so that's exciting. I could prattle on with a bigger list, but I guess that's good enough for the answer to that question.

AVOW: Rambo is a band that you basically got your start drawing for and your art is pretty synonymous with their records and their flyers and their t-shirts. But I understand they got a new artist to do their new record - how did that all come about, and how do

you feel about it?

MIKE: Um.. I don't feel particularly great about it, but it was an amicable parting. We're all still friends, I still hang out with Tony and Andy. And Bull. But I think it

that excited about it, so I slacked and put it off more and more. They wanted something that was painted to look like a Bolt Thrower cover and I obviously don't paint. So I was like, "Well, I could try something," and make my style look a certain

way, and then I waited and hesitated even longer, and I think they eventually just got fed up with me. Which I don't blame them for. But there's no hard feelings, and they're all sweet dudes.

AVOW: Okay. And lastly, is the rest of your life as clean as your line work?

MIKE: (laughs) This entire interview has been done in my underwear and Denis is yelling at me because he thinks I'm gonna stink up his room. (laughs) So I guess I'll let that answer that question.



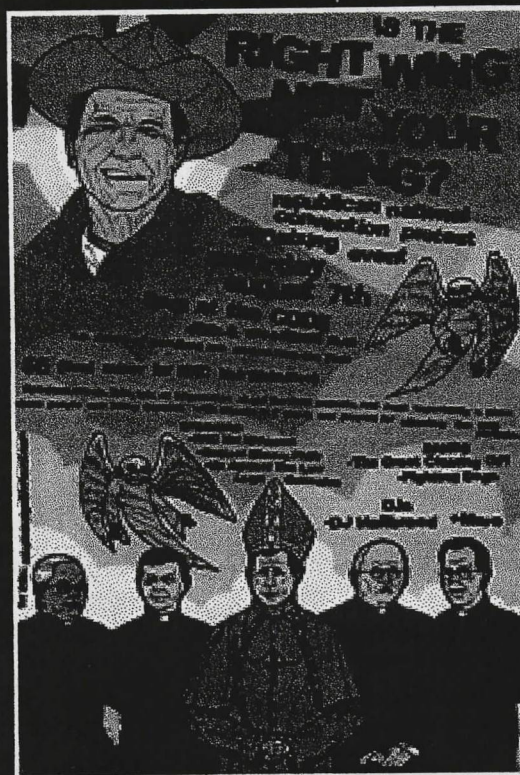
12" cover for the Italian band MORE THAN EVER

was a little bit my fault, as well as them deciding they wanted to get someone else, because for a long time I avoided starting the drawing for the new record cover. I was really too overwhelmed by the whole thing; I've been working with RAMBO for close to, what, six years? Seven years? So I noticed that when we'd go on tour I would be really excited to do the Rambo posters and t-shirt designs and as time went on I would kind of wait to do other work til the last minute, because I was more excited about that. Eventually it got to the point where I was kind of tired and wasn't really

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Poster for an anti-Republican National Convention fundraiser in Philadelphia

it's actually a little intimidating. There'll be about fifty pieces, maybe more, because I think there might be some originals. But it's mostly just prints of record covers that I've done, flyers and t-shirts and stuff like that, and a couple originals.

AVOW: How did someone in Belgium come up with this?

MIKE: It was actually someone in a band that I'd done artwork for who worked in



# FROM THE NORTHWEST TO NEWHALL...

I WAS HOME VISITING THE OTHER DAY AND I  
FOUND ~~XXXX~~ YOUR PICTURE. FOUND IT STUCK  
BETWEEN A STACK OF LETTERS ~~XXXX~~ LITTERED WITH  
POSTMARKED STAMPS AND MY ADDRESS SCRIBBLED  
IN YOUR ~~MM~~ UNMISTAKABLE  
HANDWRITING.



I FOUND MYSELF THINKING ABOUT  
THE CHAOS THAT COMES WITH  
FUCKING AND FUCKING UP, ABOUT  
ALL THE CHAOS WE SHARED WHILE  
SNEAKING AROUND FOR MONTHS  
UNDERNEATH THE RADAR OF EVERY-  
ONE'S EYES. I THOUGHT ABOUT HOW  
~~XXXX~~ WE FOUND EACH OTHER IN CLASS,  
TWO KIDS TRYING TO MAKE SENSE  
OUT OF STRIPS OF 16MM AND SUPERS.  
AND I GUESS YOU COULD SAY I  
FOUND A STING IN MY CHEST WHEN  
I REMEMBERED WHAT A FUCKED UP  
ENDING I GAVE OUR FILM,  
THE FILM THAT WAS - US.

AND I STILL DON'T HAVE A GOOD  
REASON WHY THINGS ENDED THE  
WAY THEY DID.

WASN'T THAT OUR  
AGREEMENT THOUGH?



MOVE ON WHEN THINGS GET TOO ~~SEE~~ STEADY  
OR TOO SERIOUS... OR WAS IT?

BUT THAT'S ME RIGHT, ~~KNOW~~ UNPREDICTABLY  
QUIRKY AND UNPREDICTABLY CALLOUS. I GUESS I  
THOUGHT I WAS A BETTER CHARACTER THAN THAT, OR  
AT LEAST I WRITE MYSELF TO BE.

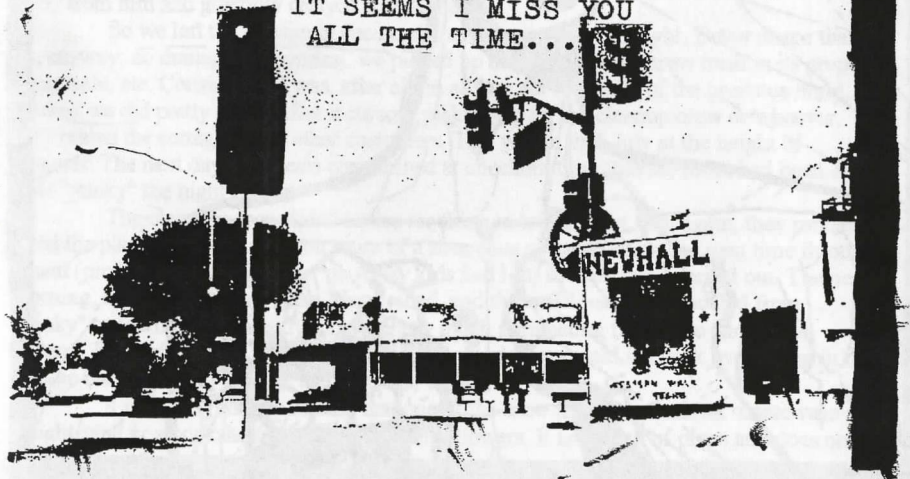
NOW I HEAR ABOUT YOU FROM TIME TO TIME,  
EVEN WHILE TRAVELING THROUGH PLACES FAR AWAY,

PEOPLE SEEM TO THRIVE ON TELLING ME  
HOW WELL YOU'RE DOING AND WHO YOU'RE DATING.  
(HOW GREAT YOUR LIFE IS NOW, WITHOUT ME IN IT)

AND IT SEEMS I COULD DRIVE AROUND OUR TOWN  
FOR WEEKS AND NEVER FIND YOU, AND WHEN I LEAST  
EXPECT IT, A STORY ABOUT YOU FINDS ME.

AND I THINK THAT'S THE HARDEST PART,  
KNOWING I MISS YOU.

I MISSED YOU BY  
A WEEK IN SAN FRANCISCO,  
BY A DAY IN SAN DIEGO,  
BY LESS THAN AN HOUR IN SEATTLE,  
IT SEEMS I MISS YOU  
ALL THE TIME...



THE  
STORIES!





# A VERY SHORT TOUR UPDATE

This one's a short addendum to last issue's tour stories - it's funny (and somehow fitting, considering the sort of quiet but constant debauchery that made up that fucking tour) that I only learn of what is possibly the best story on that entire trip nearly a year after we made it home. If you haven't read the last issue, please send me two dollars immediately in order to inform yourself, thank you. If you have read the previous issue, allow me to just briefly freshen your memory as to the scene and setting in which this story takes place.

So, Jeff and Lyndsay and I are on an AVOW reading tour- what turned out to be eight shows up and down the west coast, where I read excerpts from the zine as far north as Seattle, as far south as Santa Cruz. Two weeks of, as nearly every review I've read sums it up, "mayhem and heavy drinking." Mayhem seems to be laying it on a bit thick, but the heavy drinking part they got right. Ryan of *Mishap* wrote "Enough drinking for two UK crust bands!" and as odd as it sounds, I felt strangely honored by that.

Anyway, we were in about the middle of the tour and Adam's friend had set us up in a ridiculously quaint cottage in Ashland for about a third of the price that your average schlub would've otherwise paid. There was a bedroom and living room, a garden, flowery throwpillows everywhere, a cooler in the main anteroom with free beer, no television and an *Artesian well-water spa in the middle of the room* with a hilarious painting of the Eiffel Tower in the background. Got the picture? Point is, we had officially gotten Hooked Up that time. Touring, boy, it was rough, let me tell you.

Okay, long story short. We've made it back to the cottage after a night of, you know, the requisite heavy drinking and mayhem. I have drank to the point of blackout, nearly gotten beat up by a drunken rugby player after making fun of the font and kerning choices of his homemade t-shirt and am generally in one fuck of a sour mood by the time we make it back in the morning. I've spent a fair amount of time ranting at Jeff and Lyndsay about how they have somehow "broken the trinity of the tour" (even I don't know what the fuck I was talking about with that) and generally making a total asshole of myself, until we all passed out somewhere around the time the sun starts rising.

I figured that part of the story was over, just a stop between here and there, until Adam talked to Lyndsay earlier last month, nearly a year after this all happened. She got the story from him and gleefully relayed it to Jeff and I.

So we left the cottage in decent shape the next day, I thought. Better shape than us, anyway; no damage to anything, we picked up after ourselves, threw trash in its proper receptacle, etc. Considering I was, after all, in a blackout for much of the previous night, I'd figured we did pretty good. After a cursory picking-up by the cleanup crew or whoever, they rented the cottage out to other customers. This was in mid-July at the height of summer. The next day the guests complained at checkout time that the room had been a little "stinky" the night before.

The clean-up crew didn't notice anything untoward, but then again, they probably aired the place out and made a bit more of a strenuous cleaning effort the next time through. Again (probably a few days after us Avow kids had left) the cottage is rented out. The next morning, the customers are again complained, and the smell had been updated from "stinky" to "awful". Apparently, it was pretty much permeating the whole Cinderella cottage. The staff was up in arms and the clean-up crew was told to check everything in the cottage thoroughly, to find the source of the smell.

It is at this juncture in time that one of the crew members finds an ornate vase on a nightstand or a bookshelf, complete with silk flowers. It is not out of place and does not



seem amiss. However, upon closer inspection, it is revealed that said vase is filled nearly to the brim with piss. It was then placed exactly back in its proper spot on the nightstand, the silk flowers returned. In a usually airless room in the height of summer, one could only imagine the sort of scummy skin that had formed on the top of said receptacle.

So, yeah, my favorite tour story was told to me well after the fact: I had, in my blackout, pissed in a vase and then set it exactly back in its spot and then gone back to bed, all of us unaware. I still don't remember it.

The best part is that Adam's friend, the kid who set us up with the room, later asked Adam, "So, uh, do you think that your friends are the ones that could have done that? I mean, it's kind of looking like it."

And Adam, saint that he is, came to our defense. "No way," he said, "that kid's a writer, man. There's no way he'd do that."

A rock-solid argument if I've ever heard one.

## A SHOTGUN AND A RIFLE

You know, I'm all for the idea of punks attempting to govern themselves - attempting to turn buzzwords and catchphrases in living, working entities. Figuring out things like "boundaries" and levels of "acceptability" and "accountability". In fact, I'm not even opposed to the idea of punishing or ostracizing offenders of certain crimes in the punk community, at least in theory. I mean, there's obviously a danger inherent in reactionism, in that old mob mentality creeping in, but one hopes that the people attempting this "self-justice" are hopefully levelheaded enough to not fly off the handle, to think things out, to listen to dissenting opinions and come to a conclusion of what is best for *the group* and *the community*. That's the theory, anyway. It gets a bit harder when you realize that the community essentially consists of a group of people who've got to, through the choice of involvement in a musical (and ethical and/or fashion, if you want to go that far) subculture, hang out together much of the time. It becomes much harder when you realize that such lofty ideas aren't the answer to everything.

But there comes a point when there's only so much we can do. Situations in which "the punks" are absolutely powerless. I think we reach a point and those words do become little more than catchphrases, something on the back of a jacket.

Anna and I were still living in the old place on 16<sup>th</sup> when this happened. It was a cold night, there were still huge holes in our ceilings, the neighbor upstairs was blasting his techno bullshit at spleen-vibrating volumes, and I was just burnt and restless and pissed-off, which was turning into the norm for me.

"Get out of the house for a while," Anna said, more than a bit sick of me and nerved out by my relentless pacing around the house.

So I did. I stepped out and went for a walk. I've never been one who's into just aimlessly walking around and just seeing what there is to see, taking my time, walking for walking's sake. This is something that I actually consider a character flaw, right up there with my short temper and the fact that I just never really did like Crimpshrine that much. When I walk, I'm always walking towards a purpose, and even calculating in my head what I'll do after I arrive at that first destination. I walk like a man who has errands to run, even when I don't. I'm hardly ever just in the moment, walking for the sake of it- smelling the air,



hearing the sounds, letting my mind roll around loose in my skull, thinking about whatever comes to me. I never just *walk* and *slow down* for a minute. Doesn't happen.

So that night I step out and think, *Just a couple blocks down, turn right on Glisan or Hoyt, head back. Just a short one, get some fresh air. Come back and try to do some writing.* So I do, I hit Glisan, right there on the corner where the Mission Theater is, and wait for traffic to pass. It's not late - there's the random couple strolling by holding hands, a few people milling around in front of the theater, some dude standing next to his car across the street. The traffic all hushed as cars pass, and then I cross the street.

And the guy standing next to this car is big, a little overweight but mostly just massive, I figure maybe he's a punk at first because his hair's all bedheaded and he's decked out entirely in black. He's standing next to the rear driver's side door of his car, an old blue Chevy from the mid-60's.

He leans into the backseat of the car right before I step past him. And comes out of the backseat holding two guns, one in each hand. Both of the guns are black and thick, there's the gleam of metal; he's holding one limply by the handle, the barrel pointing down, and the other one in the middle, gripping it around the stock. My heart about shoots up into my throat, rabbit-fast, once my brain computes what my eyes are seeing. Dude's packing guns out into the street.

*I see this.* I have my glasses on, I'm looking right at him. Yeah, it's night. Yeah, I'm walking past him. But I honestly think I see this huge dude dressed in black lean into the backseat of his car and come back out with what looks like a rifle and a squat, fat shotgun. There are people walking down the street, cars passing, that couple holding hands further on down the block now. It's a mild night - this was right in the middle of winter but the streets were actually dry. There's no rain to obfuscate or obscure shit. *I see this.*



I keep walking, honestly waiting for either the sound of one of those guns going off in the street or to just be hammered down onto the ground and then hearing the crack of the gun after that. I swear - it sounds really silly and anticlimactic to be writing this so much after the fact, but I mean it when I say I walked quick to the end of the block, more than halfway expecting to get shot in the back.

I circle the block, come back up from 15<sup>th</sup>, all the while wondering if I really saw what I saw. I mean, I can only imagine that nearly every unexpected pedestrian who has ever beared witness to some random and horrific act of violence probably had much the same experience: at least a few seconds of a gap in which they just had to process what the

fuck was going on, that what was happening was really going down. When I came up 15<sup>th</sup>, the guy was gone, the street was as calm as it had been before.

Again, talk about an anticlimax: I came home fast, jazzed and freaked and adrenaline-wired, wondering what constituted the right thing to do. It's easy to talk about "community" and "accountability" in a zine or around a couple beers with well-intentioned friends. Ideas like that become a bit more vapid and vague when you think there's potential for gunplay involved.

I called the cops.

I told Anna what I thought I'd seen (and that little voice was already speaking up, even then) and called the Portland Police Bureau's non-emergency number. Told the woman at the other end of the phone what I knew, gave a description of the car, the guy I'd seen, the things I'd seen him remove from the car. I apologized to the woman over and over again, acknowledging that they probably actually *weren't* guns the guy had been toting, but willing to admit to myself that there are times where it's better to speak up and look the dipshit than say nothing and possibly have some heavy ramifications resting on your shoulders.

The woman gave me brief updates over the phone as she waited to get permission to have me hang up. From what she told me, a few cops gathered together a few streets over, and then headed to the car on foot, I guess. The woman's details were vague, at least the shit she relayed to me, but apparently the cops questioned someone near the vehicle, got acceptable answers from that person (I pictured the heavy goth dude holding up two rubber chickens or something else equally un-weapon looking, what he'd really been holding, and saying, "What, *these* guns?") and let me go.

So, yeah, it was no big thing. I felt like a jackass, hoped the dude didn't get too hard a time from the cops, but still felt it was the right thing to do. I mean, it's a little embarrassing, but it was also humbling to realize that, as proud as I am to be associated with punk rock and be a part of it, there's comes a point when we have to admit that all of our platitudes won't work in all situations, despite our intentions. I realized then that I have such a utopian idea of what punk could be and could do, and then when I realized it can't fix everything, that it isn't applicable in all situations, well, that's just a humbling place to find yourself.

Later that night, I had to go out and take a walk just to calm down from taking my walk.

## SEVEN RAMBLING DISCOURSES ON TECHNOLOGY, KIND OF

1. Things get dated. That's all I'm saying. The world moves fast.

It's funny to realize that if I ever make it to the point where I'm a grumpy, lost, (probably terrified) old man, I'll be able to tell my disinterested grandkids that I remembered what the world was like *pre-Internet*. That things that are considered cutting edge technology today (MP3s, file-sharing, cell phones as large as two fingers, shit like that) by the time our kids are grown, will probably have gone the way of the Pet Rock and (hopefully) the mullet. That my wheezy tales of a world without CD-Rs and text messaging and (Christ forbid) *blogging* will be like that odd, half-lit world my own grandfather talked



about when he would matter-of-factly state that everyone got around by horse and buggy when he was a boy. A world that was obviously real, but one that is so far removed from the world today that it's hard to really *imagine*, to really get your head around it.

It's funny to realize that people will look back on us today, and on one hand will admire our ingenuity and our resourcefulness, like historians and the Greeks, but will also quietly chuckle and shake their heads a little bit.

"They actually talked on *phones*," one girl will possibly say to another as they giggle over their Telcomm links (implanted directly in their voiceboxes, with the Memdialer mounted discreetly at the stem of their spines; it'll be standard procedure once children reach school age) about their upcoming Technological History Project. "They had to *pick up a phone* to talk to someone. How weird."

"Yeah," her friend will say. "And those computers, how they had to carry them around everywhere? Laptops or whatever?"

"And not even that, before that some of them couldn't even be moved, they had to keep them in their houses, their rooms," says the first girl while simultaneously downloading the entire discography (including all known live recordings and demos) of the Cistern Syndicate (every one of whom is *so frickin hot oh my God*), rerouting next week's homework assignments to her Memnotebook and simultaneously playing three different characters in *Kill Party North Continent*, which it looks like the Senate is going to vote (probably next week) as a "game for entertainment unsuitable for the upkeep of a moral and compassionate society" and is subsequently probably going to pass a vote making it illegal to download the game even in its edited, bloodless version, which renders the whole thing pointless anyway, so the girls are playing the Full-Gore version while it's still allowed by law and their parents.

You get what I'm saying: technologically-speaking, we're already goddamn dinosaurs.

## 2. So, think 1981.

Think perms and parachute pants. Think *Punky Brewster*, *The Dukes of Hazzard* and *Different Strokes*. Think about Pintos exploding when they get rear-ended. Think about the McDLT and how *everything* came packaged in styrofoam back then. Think about Reagan and a red-hot missile standoff, how you swallowed down the quiet threat of nuclear war everytime your folks turned on the news before they put you to bed. But mostly, think of jelly bracelets and *Barbie* and *My Little Pony* and *SpeakSpell* and *Simon Says*. Think *G.I. Joes* and *Transformers* and, as a second-tier choice, *Voltron*.

Think 1981. I was five.

From a consumption-based standpoint, I had it pretty good as a kid; around the age of eight I was blessed with the benefits of an allowance, four dollars every week. (Keep in mind, this was when comic books cost seventy-five cents. That's like four regular comics and some super-special annual or something that cost a dollar, per week. Comics cost, what, three bucks now? It's telling, the fact that the "cent" sign is now in the "insert symbol" menu on most writing programs - exotic and unnecessary, the cent symbol has seemingly gone the way of the unlaut and the sign for pi).

Holidays were always a pretty good time, as far as the accrueement of material goods went. What I mean is, when Christmas or my birthday rolled around, I would get *set up*. As ann only child being raised by a single parent, my mom and I mostly had each other to take care of, from a gift-giving standpoint and otherwise. To this day, I still love all the trappings of Christmas. I love all of the bullshit, the false good cheer, the fake snow, ornamentation and fuse-blowing strings of lights strung everywhere, candles, annoying commercials, tree-killing Christmas cards, all of it. But I was not one of those kids that was

given gifts out of the blue. There were kids that I knew who got presents for Easter, their siblings' birthdays, even fucking Valentine's Day. Not me - on Christmas and my birthday, I was veritably loaded down with loot. Inbetween the two, there stretched a dry, barren, landlocked string of months.

So when I tell you about the cop car I got for no reason, I'm telling you that it was a goddamn *event*.



3. Like I said about techonology, it's moved ridiculously fast in the past twenty, twenty-five years, and short of an absolute drylock of natural resources, I don't think the speed of innovation and advancement is going to be slowing down anytime soon. Take that as you will. Personally, it scares the shit out of me, but whatever. Things get dated and the world moves fast.

So it's 1981 and this cop car I was given was beautiful. Gorgeous. The coolest thing a five year-old kid could get. It was a cop car that could only be called a "remote-control" car if you were feeling especially generous that day; the "control" console was actually just a large plastic tube that housed 3 D-sized batteries, those big ones. The tube had one red and one yellow wire that connected directly to the rear of the cop car. Hence the "remote" part of it was kind of misleading: you could drive the car around all you wanted, but there was only about two feet of leash for you to work with. If I pressed the GO button on the tube and the car reached the end of its leash it would simply flip backwards onto its top, the wheels whirring and growling like a small dog.

And that was the other funny thing about the car: the controls. There were only two buttons. The GO button, which I just mentioned, made the car lurch forward on its plastic tires. Secondly, the RIGHT TURN button, which made the car turn, if not exactly on a dime, then at least in a fairly tight radius. There was no REVERSE button and, something that confused the hell out of me, no LEFT TURN button either. So essentially, you could drive the car forward, trailing behind it as if it were a blue and white Daschund with a red light on top, or you could drive it around your own body in a clockwise circle over and over again.

And yet, at five years old it was the coolest thing I'd ever seen.



4. I don't remember the circumstances of the gift. I don't remember my mom giving it to me, or if there was any particular reason for it. The only things I remember: for one reason or another, the car was given to me without batteries one evening and my mom, for one reason or another, steadfastly refused to go out that night, that *second*, to get them. It was awful. More importantly, it was *unfair*. Simply put, *I needed batteries for that car*. I needed to drive that car around in a circle, bad. Patience is not a quality that comes easily to most people, especially five year-olds, and I felt that if I didn't batteries for that thing right then, the world might quite possibly explode.

"We'll get batteries tomorrow after I pick you up after school," I was told, which at the time was like saying, "You can have dinner next month," or "I just wanted to inform you that I'll be burning all of your toys out in the yard tomorrow. Just so you know."

5. It's one of those things where you look back twenty, twenty-five years later and wonder what the hell you were thinking.

Restlessness is common in kids, but that nail-biting tension that accompanies the sure-fire knowledge that something must be done? That in order for the world to planet to stay on its axis, *you must act*? Rare indeed. But there I was, dropped off that morning at Anderson Christian Daycare, with its weatherbeaten brown exterior and cracked parking lot. I had just turned five: I was allowed to be shuttled from the preschool program to the kindergarten class because I could already read books. I was younger than the other kids, but as smart as my classmates, if not as emotionally mature.

I entered the class that morning, put my coat in my cubbyhole and took my seat at the table that stretched the length of the room, fully aware that I would simply need three D-sized batteries in my possession before the end of the school day. That "after work" might as well have been "in the year 2011" for the amount of time in represented to me.

So I came up with a plan.

Looking back, it wasn't the best plan ever, but when viewed from the standpoint of emotional manipulation of the adults in my life: holy shit. I was *good*.

6. My kindergarten teacher was named Janie. She was a sweet hippiesque woman who in retrospect seems ageless to me. She could have been twenty-five at the time, she could have been fifty. I just remember a thin woman in coarse dresses colored in earth tones, a pair of glasses and a shock of curly auburn hair. She was a kind, patient woman and she played "Puff The Magic Dragon" on guitar every day for us during naptime. I liked her a lot. However, for purposes of acquiring batteries, such foolish things as allegiances would be severed here.

Listen:

At around 10:15 a.m., I leaned back in my chair. Kids were constantly doing this and Janie would fruitlessly reprimand one kid, who would sheepishly place all four chairlegs back on the floor, and thirty seconds later another kid would be doing it. Much of the day was spent listening to Janie tell someone "All four feet on the floor, please." One kid, Davey, had once leaned back too far, lost his balance and fallen backwards onto the floor, which felt like concrete with rag-thin carpet stretched over the top. He had shocked us all, especially Janie, when he screamed from his place on the ground, rolling around and shrieking with a bloody nose. This memory would serve as the basis of my master plan, but considering all that was at stake here, it would be necessary to kick it up a notch.

As Tristan haltingly read a sentence aloud about some dumb kids playing catch with their dog, I leaned further back, fell backwards off the chair and resoundingly hit my head on the floor. I began screaming as if my goddamn arm had been cut off.



As Janie rushed over to my side, I began sobbing. All part of the plan.

"Honey, are you okay? Here, get up. Did you hit your head?"

"I... I can't see! I can't see anything!" I screamed.

I had hit my head and gone blind.

Janie stood there shocked, her hands twittering around me like small birds, afraid to touch me.

I rubbed my hands together internally. Insert evil laughter and a thought bubble above my head that read *I got you now, remote-control cop car. Daddy's coming home*, and you've got the idea. I wept and looked around the room, my eyes unfocused, as if my vision was trying to settle on something, anything, familiar.

Janie was, to say the least, freaking the fuck out.

She lead me to the back room where we hung our coats. If I remember right, her facial expressions alternated between a skeptical *Come on now* look and a *Holy shit, this kid might not be faking it*, horror-stricken rictus.

"Honey, are you *sure* you can't see anything?"

I wept and nodded, going so far as stare glazed-eyed over her shoulder, as if I wasn't quite sure where her voice was coming from. *Batteries, here I come. Little remote-control car with the red and yellow wires and the blue and white shell with a real red cop car light on top, I'll be seeing you soon.*

Janie left me back there in the coat room and called my mom at work. Only child, single parent; it seems like I was in that back room for hours, days, but I doubt that's how it really happened. I'd imagine that if your son's kindergarten teacher called you in tears, saying something to the effect that "Your son just fell back in his chair and has hit his head on the floor and by all appearances has now apparently gone blind," you'd probably make haste to get over there. It seems like I was back there for days, but it was probably more like fifteen minutes.

When my mom appeared in the coat room, frantic and crazy and scared shitless, I started crying real tears in about two seconds flat. The thought *You are going to be in so much trouble* flickered briefly across my mind, but even at five I knew it was too late to turn back now. And there was still the little fact that I needed batteries for the car. I had to get out of the coat room, out of the parking lot: once we were on the road, maybe I'd be able to allay her fears about my little vision problem, calm her down and then get her to stop off at the old 7-11 and pick up a few D batteries on the way home.

My mom, weeping down on her knees in the coat room said, "You can't see, honey? You can't see anything?" I shook my head, crying for real but still having enough presence of mind to do the look-over-the-shoulder trick.

Five minutes later we were in George, our rusted-out Datsun 710 hatchback. My mom was going about seventy down residential streets, crying on our way to the Emergency Room. I looked over at her and said (with, in my opinion, just the right amount of humility and hopefulness) "Can we go get batteries for my car now?"

She laid about fifteen feet of rubber on the street, screeching to a halt. She looked over at me, furious, incredulous, eyes showing the whites.

She bellowed, "*Can you see or not?*"

Then the real tears came, the hot ones that come up from the gut when you're young, the ones that shake your whole body; a mother's anger has the ability to do that.

"*Can you see?*"

I finally nodded, bawling, throwing in the towel.



My mom, never much one for physical punishment or deterrence, gave me the spanking of my young life that day. And the cop car was put away on a shelf for quite some time, still sans batteries. It was eventually presented to me again, this time with the appropriate power source, but it was a long time before that happened. In retrospect, it's amazing how time works: it really seemed like I couldn't have waited another six or seven hours to play with that car; the hours loomed ahead, impossibly large. And keep in mind, this is for something as ridiculous and archaic as the car I've spent the past few thousand words ranting about: it wasn't about the updated versions of *Kill Party North Continent*, or some other thing that'll make our future grandchildren drool with anticipation and restlessness. It wasn't even about what passes for toys today, the newest *Grand Theft Auto* or alternate-version MP3s by some back-of-the-cereal-box pop sensations. It seems like each generation is destined to be blessed and cursed with its version of the Pet Rock, its version of an Osmonds poster, its version of Skid Row's *18 to Life* cassingle: that thing that speaks to us, *that one thing that we have to have*.

That thing, totally untethered to how advanced or simple it is, that we feel has the potential to complete us.

## ONE-SIDED CONVERSATIONS

And the chances are good you'll find me right there on the porch, glassy-eyed with a beer in my hand, filled to the brim with false worth, talking shit with the worst of them. There's something happening here, something that I've apparently chosen to simply sit back and watch, something internal that I've simply sat back and stared at, fascinated and disgusted with myself, as everything unfolds with the mercilessness of a slow but inevitable trainwreck.

What I mean is, I'm a dick.

I don't think I was always a dick, though some people might argue that point. But I've found myself of late (and maybe longer than that, which *really* scares the shit out of me) turning into that motherfucker that I've always reviled: the shittalker, the lazy, brainless punk consumer, the drunken namedropper who thinks he's so rad but simultaneously holds such scorn for "hipsters". Like I'm not exactly like them just because I don't have a white belt or outdated vintage t-shirts. All of these things that I've spit venom against for the past fifteen years, all of these things I swore I'd never turn into, and there I am at one party or another, talking about this band or the guy that runs that label. Dropping names like coins in the dirt for other people to pick up, thinking I'm such hot shit and then loathing myself the next day over it. It's happening and it's almost like there's another Keith standing outside of me, maybe down the hall or a few clusters of indie rockers away, this other Keith with his mouth open and aghast, thinking, "Did you just say that about that kid? You don't even know if that shit's true. This is how rumors get started. Christ, what an idiot."

There I am, thinking myself some kind of hot shit, ticking off my punk rock resume in my head as I go grab another Pabst from the kitchen. There I go, still seemingly as desperate for acceptance and a desire to feel a part of something as I did when I was thirteen.

Anyone with half a fucking brain could take one look, one listen, and note that I'm trying way too hard. That friendships, at least meaningful ones, aren't forged from things like this. The kind folks would also tell me not to be so hard on myself, which is the last thing I want to hear, really. For someone who's gauged their own sense of self worth by

their a) supposedly staunch and righteous moral code and b) their creative output, I don't want to hear a "take it easy" as I watch one fall into the quagmire of apathy and the other one dissipate from a kind of suffocating lack of motivation I've been walking through lately.

So, like an old man popping Viagra in his car when all he's doing is going on a blind date, I'm overcompensating. I'm standing out there on the porch and there's a sea of faces around me. Some kid is standing there in a Faith shirt, and I ask him which side he likes better on the split LP - the Faith side or the Void side. It could be taken as one socially awkward record nerd to another trying to bridge a conversational gap, but that's not what's happening; I'm laying down *cred*, dude. I'm telling him I've got his number and I know where he's coming from and I'm down and all that shit. And, as Anna has mentioned before, listening to me talk bands with Ben or Adam or random kids at parties strikes her as remarkably similar to Monday-morning quarterbacks discussing last night's game around the water cooler.



Point is, I'm at this party and I'm doing it all wrong. I've got a few drinks in me and all the sudden I've got a fucking agenda. Again the Viagra reference; again with the overcompensation. Thing is I don't really dig myself too much lately, so I'm drunk at this party and crowing to anyone that'll listen just how fucking great I am.

It's an exaggeration of the situation, but the actions are there, believe it. I want to come off as a peer, a part of something, and instead I'm coming off as a drunk, loudmouthed idiot who's just about brim-full of himself and I might as well have a Power Point screen up for the presentation I'm giving.



The frightening part comes when you realize you're turning into the kind of person you'd never want to hang out with. The frightening part is when you realize you've become that namedropping jackass that you've always reviled, in a sorely misguided attempt to hold onto some self respect, in an attempt of listing your involvement and love of this scene to remind yourself that what you're doing actually means something. You understand? It's an internal problem that I'm dealing with externally.

The point is, as I've been saying a lot, I can feel myself getting isolated - my passion for the "scene" isn't waning, but that since of connection that I've always carried with me is, and it's terrifying me.

In a quite apt case of self-diagnosis, I'd say my best bet would be to hit more shows, write more letters to people who are doing worthwhile things, and do that not because I'm looking to involve myself with them, but simply to thank them for the things they've done. I should help bands load gear or help pick up the space afterwards, and most importantly, just keep my motherfucking mouth shut. Because I just don't want to be that guy anymore. I don't want to be that fucking idiot that I always thought I was incapable of becoming.

## PUTTING THE "THEM" BACK IN "US VERSUS THEM"

We can talk about moments here, that's what we can do. Small moments that are inconsequential in the long, nicotine-stained, hangover-strewn photo album of your life, but small moments that you wish you could take back and do over again.

Maybe we reach a point, a literal moment in time when we step outside ourselves and really *see the person we are*, the one we've become, and are practically un-fucking-able to reconcile it with the person we were at some point in time. We see Point A, and we see Point C, and hindsight offers no goddamn clue as to how we got there, as to that middle passage. Like we're given this moment of emotional clarity where we can see how much we've changed, how far down one particular path or another we've gone.

Thing is, somewhere along the line, like I've said before, I turned into a dick.

Quite a few people would probably argue that point, that I've always been a shithead to some degree, and there's probably more than a kernel of truth to it. But it was one of those moments where I really couldn't even recognize myself. One of those small junctions in time, man, where it turned out this half-assed idealism I've walked around with for years had apparently been cored out like an apple, dissipated like a cloud of fucking smoke. One of those small moments that hardly matter in the long run and still just about set you on your back with the precise look they offer into your own life.

One afternoon at the old apartment I was taking the garbage out. Anna and I were, big surprise, tight on money. But we had some groceries. We weren't stocked up like a bomb-shelter or anything, but we definitely had food. We had enough to eat for a while. I was taking the garbage out, holding this thin, transparent garbage bag that was slowly ripping due to about thirty fucking pounds of old coffee grounds in it, and there was a homeless guy looking through the garbage dumpster. The guy had his shopping cart, his

bedroll, his sleeping bag. He had a baseball hat turned backwards, with wiry shocks of gray hair poking out the sides. Dirty hands.

Wordlessly, I stepped past him and threw my bag of garbage into the dumpster. Wordlessly, I turned around and walked back into the apartment building.

Now stick with me on this one. One of the byproducts of doing a "per-zine" (and believe me when I tell you I loathe that term) for so long is that you hear things about yourself. I read reviews of *Avow* in other zines, I get heartfelt letters from kids who've read it and said that it spoke to them, and eventually I started to recognize that the way people described my zine (and *me*, as a result) was not at all how I would describe it myself, how I viewed it. *This is my life*, as lame or awesome or dull or self-absorbed as it is, that I'm laying, literally, on the page. And the sad thing is maybe I started to believe the hype a little bit. I started to believe in this picture other people painted through reading my shit, that I've grown over the years into this earnest, drunk-yet-staunchly ethical, DIY-loving punk rocker that could somehow change people's lives, one emotive, cliché-ridden xeroxed story at a time.



It's bullshit. You get those moments where you get to see the person that you really are; brief but telling glimpses. I let that man rifle through my garbage and didn't even give him the inherent human dignity of a nod. Ticking them off on my fingers: I could have brought a sandwich out to the guy, said hello, talked to him for a minute. Nothing big, but an act large enough to draw the line, at least to myself, that said, *You are not invisible and I am not like that, stepping up next to you and not seeing you and acting like you weren't there.*



But I couldn't be bothered, you know? It's one of those things that's so stupid and miniscule in the long run, but still something that I regret. That I wish I could take back. My supposed ethical code seems reserved for convenient-use only. When there's a good story in it, when I'll have the ability to subtly lord my moral righteousness over someone. Otherwise, when you get right down to it, at least in that moment, I was the fucking "them" in "us versus them".

## THE KIDS THAT LEAVE

It's something that I never figured would happen. Thought I was, you know, a *lifer* in this thing. Doesn't everyone think that? Probably, at one time or another. But, look, it's scaring the shit out of me. I'm wondering if this is what happens to those kids, the ones that leave - you find seven inches in the New Arrivals bin at the record store, six or seven different releases by the same band, a collection, and you know the kid that sold those things didn't just decide he didn't like that band anymore. He didn't like *any* of it anymore; he decided he was out of the whole thing. He turned in his badge at the door, cancelled his subscription to MRR and now wishes he never got them nautical star tattoos on his neck. *The kid left.* He left for good. The idea of turning into some version of that kid scares me more than just about anything, you know? But, like a junkie, it takes more and more to get me floored nowadays, to get me to feel the music, for thigns to reach out and grab me.

The worst part is, this is not a case of punk rock failing me; this is a case of passion dissipating, evaporating, and me just not knowing where the fuck it went. Wanting to burn up with it all and not knowing how to anymore, and why I don't.

I just remember being a kid in high school - even in an LP as godawful as, say, Ill Repute's *Big Rusty Balls*, I could find something listenable there, something worth hearing. Something that gave me those, like, *psychic shivers*, you know? That moment where your spine's ratcheted with lighting and you're like, *They know exactly what I'm talking about.* Or even stuff like Misfits records, where there's really nothing to relate to, where it's all just shock and camp and an off-handed B-movie doom and melody buried under the schlocky horror of it all- but I could still be moved then, down to the quick, just by the music reverberating inside me, those chords. At fourteen, it didn't take much to impress me.

What happened? I guess *inevitability* would be the term. I'm almost thirty years old now, I've been involved in punk for over half of my life, and I guess I'm just a lot harder to please. Are there future classics being carved out today somewhere? Why can't I feel it?

The eternal question: is Fucked Up my generation's answer to Black Flag?

I remember being so frustrated as a kid, hanging out with the older punks who steadfastly adhered, to the point of exclusivity, to poorly-recorded tape copies of scratched but classic records. Black Flag, Minor Threat, Circle Jerks, DI, Attitude Adjustment, Christ On Parade - coming through the one speaker, replete with hisses and pops and the tape always ending right in the middle of the best song. I'd want to show the older punks new things, new bands and records, new songs, and I'd always get brushed off, gently or otherwise. It was unsaid but obvious: *We'll stick with what we know. We'll stick with what has spoken to us for years.*

Thing is, fifteen years later, what I wouldn't give for some of those tapes. And what I wouldn't give to be fourteen again, knowing what I know now. One more night with those people (who were really still kids themselves too, but seemed infinitely cooler, more





together, more knowledgeable and kind and not lacking in that internal something that I was shit-positive I lacked) in an apartment, a smoke-filled car, a party. One more trip to the beach and back.

In a way, those kids, who I consider my mentors and haven't seen in years and years, were right. Every punk's their classics. Ones that we grew up and came of age to, ones that we lost our virginity to or put on after we got our asses kicked and limped home. The ones that just infuriated our folks. The ones that pulled on our gut and heartstrings from the first go and really made us feel a part of this thing bigger than us. I can see it now, the gift and curse of retrospection: sometimes it's hard to let go and want to move beyond that sense of attachment, that host of memories that come flooding back with every listen of a particular song. Sometimes you want to move on, let the new stuff hook you hard and loving the same way, carve out new memories that are synonymous with new songs, but they just don't have the reach.

The *other* eternal question: will the Exploited, as dumb as they were, still fire me up more than half the bands I hear now who scream out indecipherable art-school platitudes and look like tight-shirt-wearing rejects from the fashion-farm? At least the Exploited were ugly motherfuckers. I couldn't relate to the inherent evils of Maggie Thatcher or quaffing pints at the pub or whatever, but they were awkward and ugly and mean, which was how I felt, even if it wasn't how I actually was. Nowadays, I can't relate to the current armada of cooler-than-thou hipsters who tout the screamo partyline, who screech their guts out and seemingly say nothing.

The biggest and *most* eternal question: is this what getting jaded feels like? Am I on my way out? Will somebody reading this someday wind up being the person who sees all *my* records in the New Arrivals bin and pick them up cheap, stoked but having absolutely none of the emotional associations I have with those records, none of the memories or recollections of an identity being forged while listening to them? Will they figure out the person they want to be while they listen to those records, the same way I did?

I want to be overjoyed and insane with the simple act of a band in a basement. I want to feel like there's a bridge straight from their amps to my fucking nerve-endings. I want to not take it personally when yet another kid who looks like he might at least be a decent guy cold-shoulders me at a show when I try to talk to him. Most of all, I want to just feel good about being here; I want to quit wanting to point fingers, to quit looking for someone to blame at my own lack of passion. I want to quit acting like such a fucking victim all the time.

It's not your fault. It's mine. Punk rock did not, has not, failed me- nine times out of ten, and in this case especially, that's a cop out of the highest order. But, man, the things that used to speak to me don't speak to me anymore, and I just don't know how to stop it.



REMA-  
INDERS!





# THE DIAPER EXPERIMENT

Years ago, I heard mention of or read about some particular study on social conditioning- the experiment focused on the fact that by the time we're teenagers, social and familial precepts have ingrained in us such strict "moral" codes that for many of us it is incredibly difficult, at times nearly impossible, to force oneself to urinate in "inappropriate" places. That we've been conditioned so rigidly throughout the years that we feel we must avoid pissing ourselves at all costs. I would imagine that most of us, at one time or another, remember that luxurious feeling of all-emcompassing warmth when we pissed the bed, only to have the following chill and dampness wake us up from whatever dream we were having. I also remember reading, possibly in that same article, that most people consider themselves "incapable" of pissing themselves.

I found this interesting.

Therefore, in the name of science, discovery and the kind of top-notch investigative reporting AVOW is internationally famous for, Anna, Jeff, Amanda and I set about testing the boundaries of our own social conditioning.

Could we piss ourselves in public? Would we have the necessary strength of will? Could we forge ahead, and toss both social propriety and supposed "morality" in the toilet? Or rather, anywhere *but* in the toilet?

Read on.

## PARTICIPANTS:

AMANDA, ANNA, JEFF, KEITH

## PRE-MISSION WARM-UP:

Jeff and Amanda made it over to the apartment, then the four of us hit the icy streets (it was a one day snap-freeze in Portland; by the next day everything was

fine, but on that particular night everything was treacherous, totally laced with ice) and headed off to Fred Meyer's.

We purchased enough alcohol to get us prepped before we hit the taverns. The other (and central) element necessary for the experiment: an 18-pack of Kroger's Super Absorbency Disposable Adult Underwear. Kroger's was the cheapest brand, and it came with a \$1 Off coupon, so we were sold. We were also

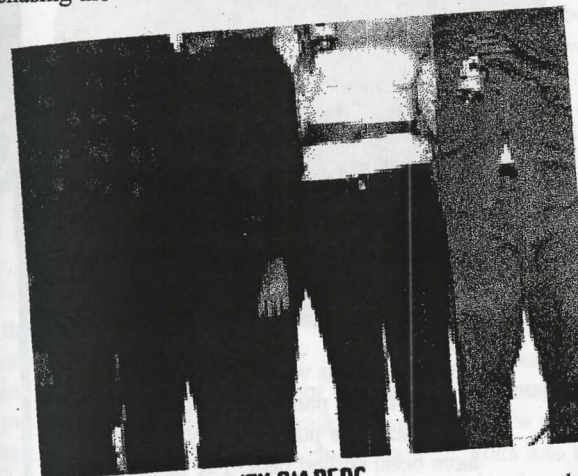


THAT IS PISS.



WITHOUT DIAPERS

mildly dismayed after we realized we had no choice but to buy 18 of the things. Adult diapers apparently come in either 18 or 36-pack exclusively. We wound up purchasing the



WITH DIAPERS

Small/Mediums (for waist sizes 34" to 46"). That was another interesting thing: it seems that once you reach the age in which adult diapers become a necessity, your waist will, across the board, not exceed thirty-four inches. I was the only one of our troupe of whom the diaper

even remotely fit. They were huge; it appears that snugness isn't really an issue.

We went back to the apartment and drank our beers, shooting the shit and listening to records. Having managed to not eat all day, and being the fastest drinker among us, I was already buzzed by the time we donned our diapers. I was pleased to see that they were fairly well-concealed under our

clothes, despite the fact that we could have pulled them up to our ribcages had we been so inclined (SEE PHOTOS). Personally, when my diaper was dry, I found it pretty comfortable.

Fortified with our last beers, we donned our coats and made it to our first destination, waddling all the way.

## DESTINATION ONE: THE MATADOR

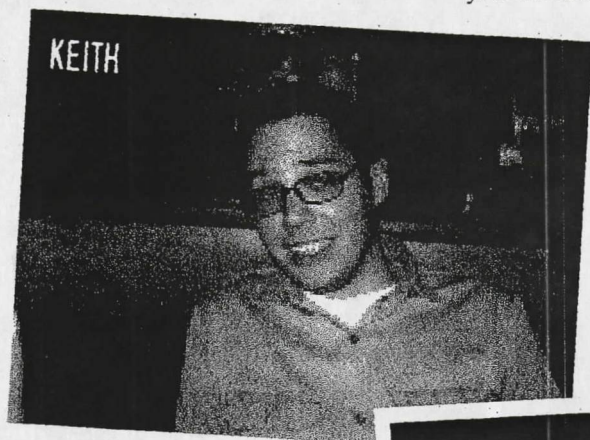
I used to nearly live at the Matador a couple years ago. Hadn't been there for a long time, and found it to be about the same; the warped, checkered floor,

the loud jukebox, the tired bar-

tenders, and of course, a plethora of tattooed hipsters eyeing each other like sharks. We lucked into the one remaining booth (it was a Saturday night). We were all a bit nervous, jittery, unsure if we could actually manage to go through with it. A pitcher helped. Another pitcher helped even more.



By this time, I was drunk, and more importantly, I hadn't pissed once since we'd started drinking back at the



apartment. I was ready.

"Okay," I said. "I'm gonna do it"

"You sure?"

"Oh yeah, I'm sure."

Jeff readied the camera, and once it was set to capture my "piss-face", he gave me the nod.

I let go. It was *easy*. More importantly, it was totally freeing. It felt *great*.

Someone asked, "Are you going?"

"Oh yeah, I'm going."

Jeff took a picture.

I kept going.

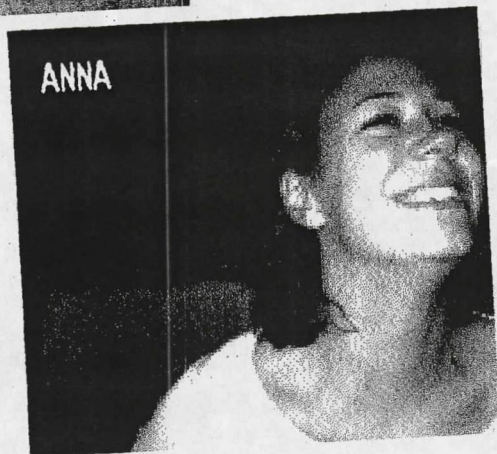
And going.

And *going*. I managed to piss for so long, Jeff was able to get three piss-face photos. I shuffled in the booth and realized I had absolutely flooded my diaper. The busser/bartender walked by, picking up the empties at our table; I politely nodded at him as piss dripped from my diaper onto the floor.

After that, I said, "Oh, dude, it's

totally getting cold now, aaaagh, shit." That child-like feeling came flooding back, no pun intended: you piss the bed in your dreams, and wake up once it gets cold. That sense, fleeting but there: *you fucked up. You done bad*. It was like that for just a second, except that they were playing Depeche Mode really loud on the jukebox.

"Is there a spot?" I asked, discreetly standing up (SEE PHOTO). There was more than a spot; Anna informed me that

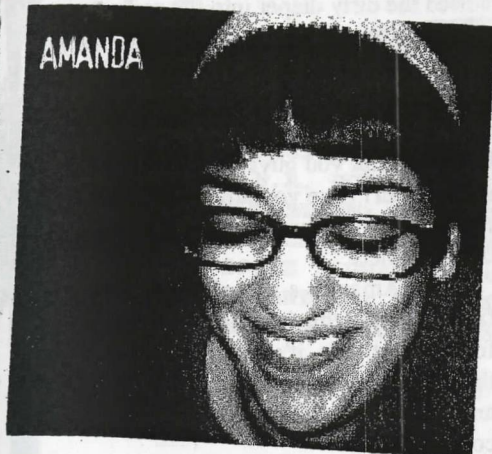


droplets of piss were falling from the creases in my pants as I stood up. There was a sizeable puddle at my feet; it could have been spilled beer. The packed bar, people jammed in booths and tables all around us, were oblivious.

I had done it. I was free: I had successfully pissed my adult diaper in the Matador. Moreso, I had flooded the thing.

After I had served as the pants-pissing spearhead, it was easy for Jeff to go as well (SEE PHOTO). The interesting thing, though, and I have no idea if it's a gender

AMANDA



she stepped out of the booth. Stepping out of the bar into the icy air, I mused on the thought of the urine-filled diaper freezing in my pants. I doubted it, but it felt like I was walking with a piss-soaked log between my legs. Pretty uncomfortable.

## DESTINATION TWO: TONY'S OLD FASHIONED TAVERN

Anna and Amanda had discreetly exchanged their soiled diapers for fresh ones while we were in the Matador. I had about three fresh diapers in my jacket pocket, and the need to get into a fresh pair seemed paramount.

Amanda knew the bouncer at Tony's; he was her co-worker at a coffeeshop down the street. This has caused her no end of embarrassment since the following events transpired.

We set about drinking more pitchers of beer; my pants, at least the huge dripping wet spot in the back, had mostly dried, though it still felt like, yeah, I was sitting in the bar wearing a piss-soaked, wet diaper. It wasn't a comfortable feeling. Again, I mused that I should really change into

a new one. A pitcher or two later, Jeff goes into the bathroom to change his. He's drunk, and I'm right there with him. Good idea.

A problem arises when I step in, but it's not that big of a deal: there's only one stall in Tony's bathroom, and Jeff was in it. No big thing though: I stepped in the stall, pulling down my pants and boxers to get to the diaper underneath.

"Hey."

JEFF



thing, or just relative to us as individuals (our subject pool of four was too small and therefore not statistically viable in regards to scientific study), but Anna and Amanda had a hell of a time pissing themselves. They had a lot of trouble and were actually unable to finish; they only pissed a little before their innards, sensing some near-cosmic social fuck-up, seized up on them and locked Ye Olde Urinary Tract down tight.

After that, it was off to next bar. Anna almost slipped in my piss-puddle as



"Hey."

"If anyone comes in," I slurred, "don't make a sound. They probably won't even see there's two pairs of feet under here."

"Okay," Jeff slurs back.

The bouncer, Amanda's co-worker, walks in two seconds later. "Hey," his disembodied voice says over the stall door, "you guys need to get out of there, now."

I manage be quiet for about two seconds before I start giggling like crazy. What's worse, those fucking Krogers Super Absorbency Diapers *claimed* to have "tear-away sides, for quicker, easier removal." This turned out to be absolute bullshit; as the bouncer stormed out of the bathroom, I could *not* tear that diaper off. That "tear-away" stitching was not giving. My tricep was sore the next day from trying to get that fucker off.

The bouncer walked up to Anna and Amanda, back at our table, and said to Amanda, "Your friends are in the bathroom doing coke."

"Oh no," they assured him, "they don't do that. They wouldn't do that."

"Well," he said, "they're in there doing *something* with each other, then."

He walked back into the bathroom, where I *still* could not get my motherfucking diaper off, and said, "Alright, guys, I'm serious. You need to get out of there now."

"Well, okay," I said, "if you say so." Trying to sound, you know, like just some regular guy taking a piss in a bathroom, like *he* was making some weird request. Trying to sound like *I don't know what your problem is, buddy, but I'll humor you*. As he stepped out, my soiled diaper finally ripped at the tear-away seam, soundlessly. God only knows how an 80 year-old person manages to do it. I

hurled the dirty diaper into the garbage can and went back to our booth.

We went and sat down and the bouncer came over. He looked at Amanda then looked at Jeff and I and shook his head. "I think you guys need to leave," he said. "I can't have you guys doing coke in the bathroom, or whatever you were doing in there."

Amanda, a pained look on her face, knowing that her hand was being forced, said, "No, it's okay. Look, here's the thing. We're all wearing adult diapers and pissing ourselves. They're not doing coke, I swear."

He looked at us blankly.

I said, "Fucking serious, dude. It's for *science*," slapped a folded and unused diaper on the face of the table.

He let us stay, but he made us take out the fucking garbage. Can you believe that? Like nobody ever pissed in their diaper in Tony's before, puh-leez. Give me a break. Still, I felt like a new man, free of the my constrictive cotton-and-polyurethane prison. We drink some more. Everyone but me has nice, fresh diapers on. Everyone but me goes again. I'm drunk.

## DESTINATION THREE: YUR'S TAVERN

We're all very drunk by the time we roll in; it's near last call. We manage to order food and drink our last sad pints. Amanda and Anna change again and even manage to piss a little bit in their new diapers, but it's not enough to lift our flagging and wasted spirits.

"I'm *drunk*," Jeff moans, nearly dropping his head into his chicken strips.

That was pretty much it.

**FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION (INTEROFFICE  
MISSIVE)**

**TO: DIRECTOR / J. EDGAR HOOVER**

**FROM: S.A. ROBBINS, CHARLES L.**

**RE: OPERATION: OLD SCHOOL**

**CLASSIFIED - INTERAGENCY USE ONLY!**

**REQUISITE SIGNATURES of DIR. HOOVER & SUB-DIR.**

**CHENEY MANDATORY for VIEWING!**

**(Federal Bureau of Investigation property - DOCKET  
#A-12278)**

**DATED: June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

Sir,

The mission is going well - this is just a short note to update you on the current status of OPERATION: OLD SCHOOL. Allow me to begin, sir, by stating that since President Bush has undertaken his (heretofore previously unheard of) third term in office, and the Administration has seen fit to awaken you from cryogenic deep-freeze, your foresight to once again attempt to infiltrate potential "troublemaking" organizations is exemplary.

As requested, here are the files on the "punk superheroes" - per your written request of 5/22/09. As I said, the mission is going well. Infiltration has been fairly easy; the temporary tattoos are still holding up, and the colored dye in this Agent's "mohawk" has yet to fade. I have, as you know, taken the codename of FROGGY for this operation. I've found the "punks" to be a generally trusting sort, and have managed to befriend many of the "superheroes" quite easily. These friendships will not, however, compromise the stated intentions of the mission, I assure you.

The "superbeings" documented here are, in this Agent's opinion, marginally superpowered at best, and do not pose much of a threat, if any, to this Administration or its intentions, clandestine or otherwise. I have found that many of the "punks" ("superheroes" included) are too self-neutralized, whether by the ingestion of substances (illegal or otherwise), apathy, self-importance or lack of political cohesion. I will, however, continue my assessments and evaluations regarding the "punks" until you deem OPERATION: OLD SCHOOL to have fulfilled its purpose.

Thank you again, sir, for allowing me the opportunity to be of service to my country.

**Sincerely,  
SPECIAL AGENT ROBBINS (FROGGY)**

**(END OF DOCKET MISSIVE #A-12278)**



# THE RETURN OF PUNK HEROES, PUNK VILLIANS!



BUM!



CHOOM!



# FATIGUE

**ORIGIN SYNOPSIS:** This Agent feels it is important note that at one time the Subject was like every other punk: passionate and excited about his "scene". This excitement lasted until his first band broke up and later became celebrated heroes. They were later considered pioneers in their particular branch or sub-genre of the punk tree. This Johnny-Come-Lately superstardom sent FATIGUE over the edge, from passion to the depths of an unspeakable bitterness. He appears occasionally in short-lived bands which tour infrequently and release records in limited and "collectable" runs. The majority of them are, most critics say, greatly inferior to his first band. His only apparent enjoyment stems from his "superstar" status among other hipsters and impressionable newcomers.

**SUPERPOWERS:** FATIGUE's only known superpower is The Yawn, though extensive documentation has proven that such yawns are capable of crippling his foes.

**ADDITIONAL WEAPONS:** An overwhelming sense of cynicism, and an unspoken but obvious sense of superiority. It is also rumored that the Subject owns extensive record collection that he doesn't listen to anymore but can't force himself to sell on E-Bay.

**WEAKNESSES:** FATIGUE has few known weaknesses. His worldview is to him so obviously the right one, and he has crafted such an impenetrable shell of "been there, done that," that it is nearly impossible to incite his emotions, short of defaming his character in the poorly-xeroxed pages of hardcore zines, which will probably only elevate his already crushing sense of self-righteousness. This Agent surmises it is best to avoid the Subject at all costs.

**QUOTE:** "Oh yeah, I have that record. It sucks."

**FAVORITE BAND:** Das Oath.

**FAVORITE ZINE:** Any that feature an interview with him.







**ORIGIN SYNOPSIS:** The Subject's origins are mostly unknown. SHITS WHERE HE EATS has done little more than tell this Agent to "fuck off" everytime I have approached him, following which he has asked if I have any change. I have witnessed him smash bottles and urinate both inside and outside of punk rock venues, something considered taboo by many punks. (This Agent believes said actions are the source from which his name is derived).

**SUPERPOWERS:** SHITS WHERE HE EATS has many defensive and offensive superpowers. He has The Finger, a physiognomically-altered middle finger which he uses to alienate and anger various facets of authority. Also has the ability (source undefined, though probably telekinetic-related) to open any 40-oz. malt liquor beverage within a thirty foot radius.

**ADDITIONAL WEAPONS:** Magnum Sharpies, poor grammar.

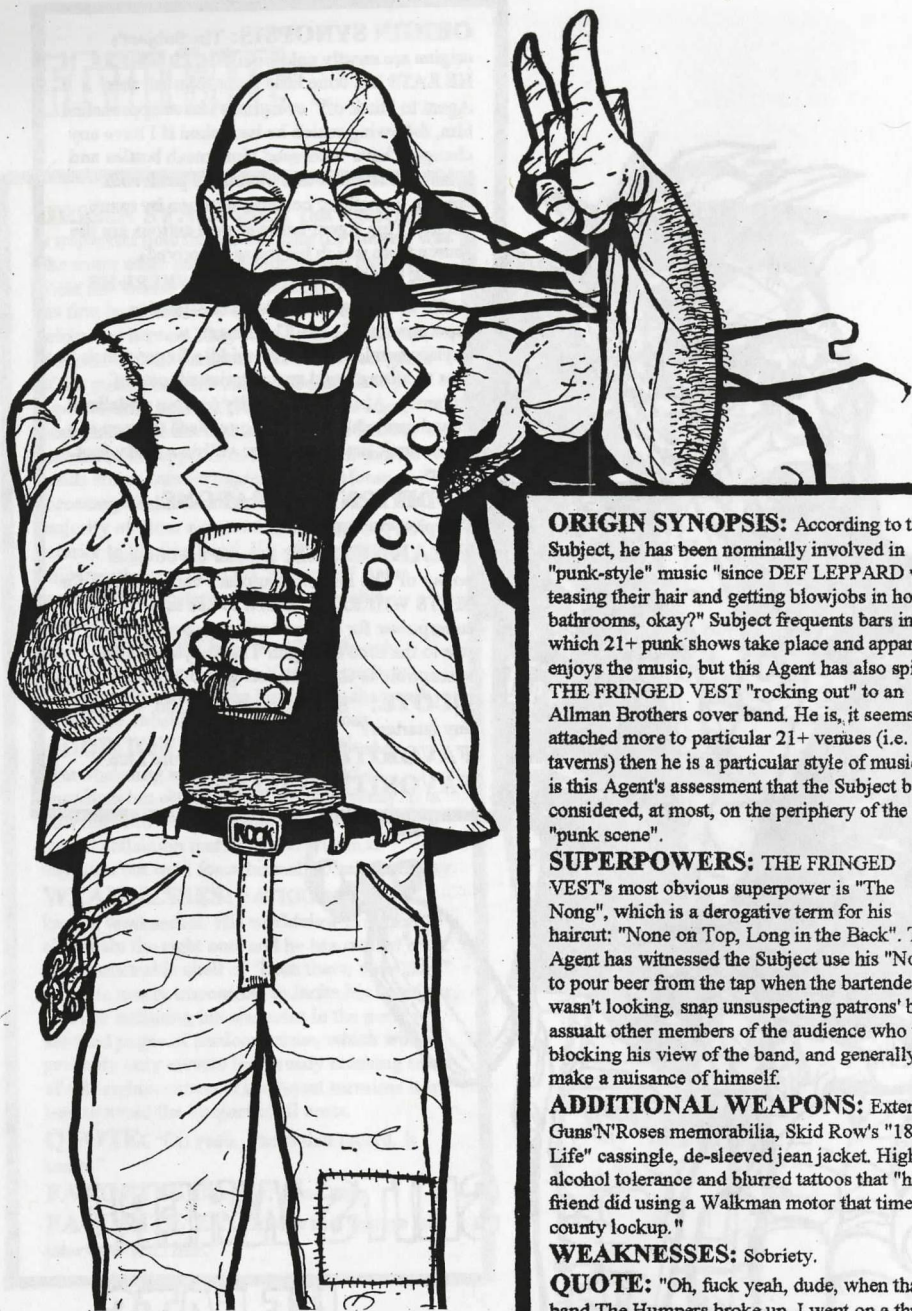
**WEAKNESSES:** Despite the obvious power of The Finger, it appears very difficult for SHITS WHERE HE EATS to use said superpower for any extensive amount of time, due to the limb's weight. The Subject is also susceptible to the punk sub-genre "emo".

**QUOTE:** "Eat me, poser. And, uh, you got any quarters?"

**FAVORITE BAND:** Fleas And Lice.

**FAVORITE ZINE:** *Evasion.*

SHITS WHERE  
HE EATS



# THE FRINGED VEST

**ORIGIN SYNOPSIS:** According to the Subject, he has been nominally involved in "punk-style" music "since DEF LEPPARD were teasing their hair and getting blowjobs in hotel bathrooms, okay?" Subject frequents bars in which 21+ punk shows take place and apparently enjoys the music, but this Agent has also spied THE FRINGED VEST "rocking out" to an Allman Brothers cover band. He is, it seems, attached more to particular 21+ venues (i.e. taverns) then he is a particular style of music. It is this Agent's assessment that the Subject be considered, at most, on the periphery of the "punk scene".

**SUPERPOWERS:** THE FRINGED VEST's most obvious superpower is "The Nong", which is a derogative term for his haircut: "None on Top, Long in the Back". This Agent has witnessed the Subject use his "Nong" to pour beer from the tap when the bartender wasn't looking, snap unsuspecting patrons' bras, assault other members of the audience who were blocking his view of the band, and generally make a nuisance of himself.

**ADDITIONAL WEAPONS:** Extensive Guns'N'Roses memorabilia, Skid Row's "18 to Life" cassingle, de-sleeved jean jacket. High alcohol tolerance and blurred tattoos that "his friend did using a Walkman motor that time I's in county lockup."

**WEAKNESSES:** Sobriety.

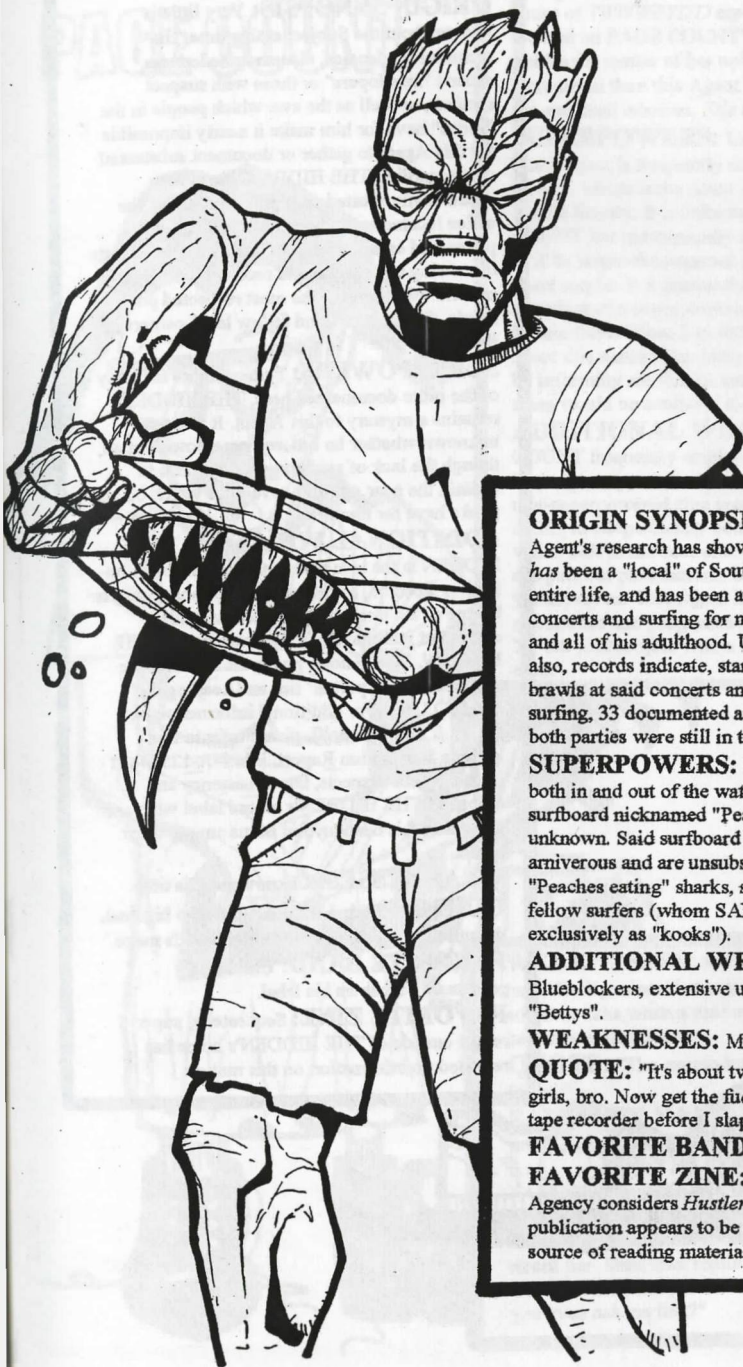
**QUOTE:** "Oh, fuck yeah, dude, when that band The Hummers broke up, I went on a three-week meth binge. Crushed, man. I mean, I hadn't done meth since Motorhead played the frickin state fair."

**FAVORITE BAND:** The Lazy Cowgirls.

**FAVORITE ZINE:** Happy-hour menus.



# H.B. SANDCRACK



**ORIGIN SYNOPSIS:** To his credit, this Agent's research has shown that SANDCRACK has been a "local" of Southern California his entire life, and has been attending punk rock concerts and surfing for much of his childhood and all of his adulthood. Unfortunately, he has also, records indicate, started a grand total of 379 brawls at said concerts and 268 fights while surfing, 33 documented as taking place while both parties were still in the water.

**SUPERPOWERS:** H.B. SANDCRACK, both in and out of the water, employs a living surfboard nicknamed "Peaches". Its origins are unknown. Said surfboard is definitely amiverous and are unsubstantiated accounts of "Peaches eating" sharks, seals, sea turtles and fellow surfers (whom SANDCRACK refers to exclusively as "kooks").

**ADDITIONAL WEAPONS:** Hair gel, Blueblockers, extensive use of the word "Betty's".

**WEAKNESSES:** Multi-syllable words.

**QUOTE:** "It's about two things: curls and girls, bro. Now get the fuck out of here with that tape recorder before I slap your fucking face."

**FAVORITE BAND:** Nofx.

**FAVORITE ZINE:** It is unknown if this Agency considers *Hustler* a "zine", but said publication appears to be SANDCRACK's only source of reading material.

# THE HIDDEN

**ORIGIN SYNOPSIS:** Very little is known about the Subject at this time. His reclusive tendencies, closemouthedness around "interlopers" or those with suspect motives, as well as the awe which people in the "scene" have for him make it nearly impossible for this Agent to gather or document substantial data regarding THE HIDDEN. He is very occasionally spotted coming in and out of the office located in his home, and sequestered phone and email records indicate he is frequently discussing distribution and record-production matters with some of the most respected punk bands, distros, zines and fellow label-owners in the world.

**SUPERPOWERS:** Perhaps more than any of the other documented here, THE HIDDEN remains a mystery to this Agent. It is actually unknown whether he has any superpowers at all, though the lack of said powers does little to explain the near god-like reverence which other punks have for him.

**ADDITIONAL WEAPONS:** THE HIDDEN is the sole owner and creator of Who Knows Records, acknowledged by most punks to be one of the largest, most effective and consistent punk labels in the country. Via THE HIDDEN, Who Knows has spent its existence disavowing "corporate" ties and keeping the label "D.I.Y." (For additional information on D.I.Y. [Do It Yourself], please refer to this Agent's Summation Report, File #-A-12557). It is, this Agent suspects, the consistency and output of THE HIDDEN's record label which gives him this near-mythic status among other punks.

**WEAKNESSES:** Unknown at this time.

**QUOTE:** "Yeah, I got a label. It's no big deal, though - I just put out records my friends make."

**FAVORITE BAND:** Unknown, presumably those on his label.

**FAVORITE ZINE:** Sequestered paper refuse outside of THE HIDDEN's home has revealed no information on this matter.





# PAGE COUNT



**ORIGIN SYNOPSIS:** Rather than documenting the Subject's origins, this Agent has considered it pertinent to simply include *The Written Word Will Punch You In The Dick* (issues #1-15), the Subject's first "zine" output, to be perused at the Director's discretion. Said issues of *TWWPYITD* are almost entirely focused on PAGE COUNT's childhood and tackles the matter of her upbringing in much more detail than this Agent is capable of. (Please see enclosed missives, File #A-12238-12253).

**SUPERPOWERS:** Unknown at this time. The Subject is frequently seen armed with "Little Missy", which is the name coined for her Jumbo Saddle Stapler. It is unknown whether PAGE COUNT has mechanically altered "Little Missy", or if its larger-than-normal size and ability to shoot staples at a greater-than-average velocity is a product of a superpowered relationship with the machine. When I questioned PAGE COUNT about this matter, she deftly avoided the subject by informing me that an anthology book of her zines would be available in the fall.

**ADDITIONAL WEAPONS:** PAGE COUNT frequently employs a manual Remington typewriter. Rumors circulate among non-superpowered zine creators that she has the ability to telepathically control said machine, which aids in the ease and frequency with which she puts out publications, but these rumors are as yet unproven. This Agent has, however, seen her manipulate and program a freestanding Cannon XP400 photocopier with a swift and terrible ease.

**WEAKNESSES:** Spelling errors, low print runs, the argument that ensues everytime someone asks when a zine stops being a zine and becomes a magazine.

**QUOTE:** "The exacto-knife is a girl's best friend."

**FAVORITE BAND:** Astrid Oto, because is has Aaron Cometbus and Cindy Overnach in it.

**FAVORITE ZINE:** When this Agent posed the question to the Subject, a horrified look came across her face. It was as if I had physically struck her. Shen then replied, quite forcefully, "All of them! Every last one of them! How can you even ask me that?"

# GREEN THUMB



**ORIGIN SYNOPSIS:** This Agent is interested in noting that the term "hippie" often incites venomous revocations from punks, and yet there is a seeming sub-genre of punk culture in which many of the same "guiding principles" of the "hippie counterculture" apply. GREEN THUMB heartily disavows any associations with hippies, and yet she concedes that much of her lifestyle is based on many of these same principles and ideals. "But," she confided in this Agent one evening over a steaming cup of wort root and saial-lavender tea, "our music's better."

**SUPERPOWERS:** GREEN THUMB has the ability to control vegetation, from the largest redwood to the tiniest seedling or sapling, telekinetically.

**ADDITIONAL WEAPONS:** Garlic tonsures and multiple back issues of *Please Don't Feed the Bears* vegan cook zine.

**WEAKNESSES:** GREEN THUMB has difficulty holding down a "straight" job, due to the fact that her hair experiences photosynthesis and grows up towards the sun like a plant. Also, this Agent has personally witnessed the GREEN THUMB just melt when you play her old episodes of *Captain Planet*.

**QUOTE:** "Don't throw that away! Put it in the compost pile, jeez!"

**FAVORITE BAND:** The Unwharria CD that came with a back issue of *Slave*, because they sing songs about acorns and jaguars and sound like the Accused.

**FAVORITE ZINE:** *Slug & Lettuce*.



# THE WHITE BELT

**ORIGIN SYNOPSIS:** This Agent has surmised that the WHITE BELT was the subject of ridicule throughout much of his academic career, beginning presumably in kindergarten. It is unknown if this contributes to THE WHITE BELT's highly-honed sense of punk rock elitism and snobbery, but after discussing the matter with Agency psychologists, it seems likely. This Agent has overheard THE WHITE BELT at multiple concerts, basement or otherwise, engaged in what many punks call "shittalking"; clandestine character assassinations of his fellow showgoers, ex-girlfriends, even current members of his own band. Were anything to happen to fellow superbeing FATIGUE, the WHITE BELT appears to be cultivating himself to "take the throne".

**SUPERPOWERS:** The White Belt, of course; an organic and sentient being telepathically and symbiotically connected to its host. It is also rumored that the WHITE BELT also has the ability to clone himself, given his frequent sightings at every shitty 21+ indie rock show on the face of the planet, though this claim remains unverified at this time.

**ADDITIONAL WEAPONS:** Disdain, perfectly-coiffed bedhead, a stunning array of vintage t-shirts, multiple nautical star tattoos.

**WEAKNESSES:** WHITE BELT is also similar to FATIGUE in the sense that he is best avoided. However, given that he is not at the same stature of "celebrity" as FATIGUE, he is easily cowed in group situations, and was at a loss for words when this Agent asked him *why* he had "the same Winnie the Pooh tattoo as every other hipster on the block."

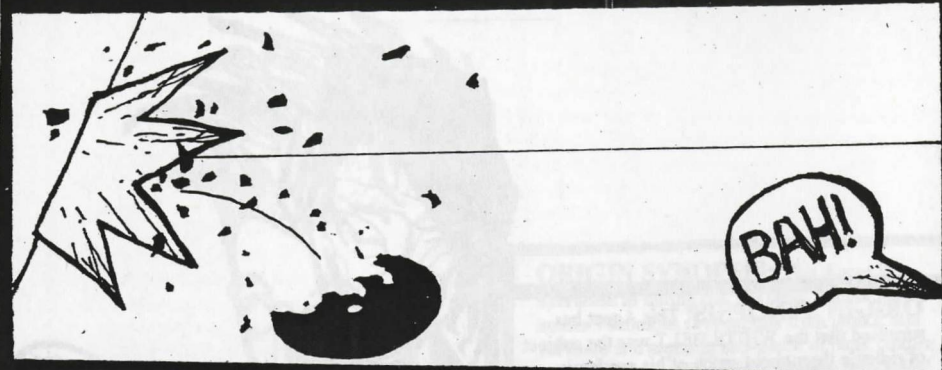
**QUOTE:** "Oh yeah, I have that record. I kind of... well, what did you think of it?"

**FAVORITE BAND:** Whatever *Heartattack* says is good.

**FAVORITE ZINE:** Whatever *Heartattack* says is good.



# RECORD REVIEWS



## REVIEW CRITERIA:

It's simple - please send ALL ARTWORK with the release. Jewel cases aren't necessary, but I've decided that stuff in the future will just not get reviewed if the complete artwork isn't included. An album with half the artwork is like beer without cigarettes, i.e. *lame*. Meanwhile, I'd like to extend a hearty thank you to the few labels that have actually continued to send material, even after I may have panned or been so-so about previous releases in past issues. I praise and appreciate your thick skin, ladies and gentlemen.

## THE BRUCE LEE BAND "Beautiful World" CDEP (Asian Man)

File this one under "You Probably Already Know If You Want It Or Not". Except the thing is, you can also file it under "If You're Not Expecting Much, You're In For A Nice Surprise". Essentially, this is Mike Park (Asian Man Records/ Chinkees/ Skankin Pickle/ etc.) backed by the RX Bandits, and it's infinitely listenable, toe-tapping ska. You won't find any ska-to-fuzzed-out-punk breakdowns here ala AAA or Op Ivy, this is straight-up ska with an acoustic track tacked on the end. The best part is that while they manage to retain a kind of unspoken "traditional" approach, the lyrics manage to come across as both guarded and political. It's a smart record all the way around. Five songs, plus the unlisted acoustic track.

## CLIT 45 "Self-Hate Crimes" CD (BYO Records)

No lyrics included with this one, but I'd assume from the title and cheery songs like "Killed By Life" and "Teeth On The Floor", they're not belting out tunes about rainbows and unicorns. An interesting release for BYO - these kids seem more suited to PunkCore or some other label of the charged-hair and bullet-belt ilk, but whatever. What we've got here is decent, proficient and appropriately pissed-off streetpunk, but with the minimum amount of packaging going on, I can't really tell you much more than that.

## DISCONNECT LP (Sedition)

That old saying applies: don't judge a book by its cover. Well, the same goes for silkscreened LP covers. Looking at this, you'd think these guys wanted to be Fifteen so bad they could taste it. Visually, between the record art and the accompanying booklet, there's that same sort of questionably hippy-dippy, vaguely "radical" aspect to it. But then you play the record and it's so obvious, in the bright guitar tone, the angular, nearly-disjointed quality of the songs and the guy's voice itself, that Disconnect has at least one of the members from This Computer Kills. I liked that band, personally; there was something nearly robotic and chilling about them, just in the metronomic and android-like way they wrote and played songs. Here, that same fractured style is still present, but it's diluted somewhat through the weird "cartoon guys holding flowers" drawings and the cursive writing all over the place. I've said it before and



I'll say it again, whether it's a mix tape or a 3-CD box set: records are sonic *and* visual. And the jangly, cold, robotic parts that I loved about This Computer Kills have been washed out on this record by its apparent attempts at... *organicness*, its warmth and somewhat off-putting peace-punk vibes. It almost feels like there's two distinctly different types of music here, fighting each other to come out on top, and as a result the entire record lacks coherency and any real lasting punch.

### **HIRESUKAN "End States" CD (G7 Welcoming Committee)**

Brings to mind 1905, just light on the positivity and heavy on the apocalypse. I mean, Hiresukan is just not fucking around here, and this is one dark, moody, atmospheric piece of music. Had an extra bonus track been thrown on the end of this, showcasing vocalist Michelle Proffit coughing her lungs up in the studio, I wouldn't have been surprised: the vocals on this pretty much define the term *searing*. Accompanying this is a band that absolutely knows how to hold their own, spitting out charged and frantic numbers that bring to mind Light The Fuse And Run or, again, 1905. It's bleak, nearly haunting stuff that manages to be memorable mostly due to the fact of its relentlessness. One of the best live bands I've ever seen, I'd say we're all fairly lucky that they've reformed and put this out. Here's to hoping they manage to build some more history without disintegrating again, but even if they do, we're all a little better off, as *End States* as a fitting and gorgeous memorial.

### **THE HOLLOWPOINTS "The Black Spot" CD (Disaster)**

These guys have been getting the Social Distortion tag in just about every review (as well as the totally unnecessary promo onesheets that accompanied this) I've read - mostly, I'd say, due to vocalist Matty's snarl and swagger in front of the mike and the fact that the band knows when to utilize catchy guitar leads at the right moment without overdoing it. Still, even at their youngest, Social Distortion always felt, to me, like they were almost phoning it in: like they all *really* wished they were sitting in some bar somewhere, leaning back on stools and smoking Lucky Strikes. What I mean is, they never struck me as a band that played like they were gonna fall off the end of the fucking earth if they didn't get through any particular song. At their best, The Hollowpoints play like that, play with that kind of desperateness and maintained ferociousness. I believe this is their second full-length, and third release overall - there's a few rerecorded songs from 2003's EP on Dirtmap, fourteen songs total. But here's the thing about the Hollowpoints - everything I've ever heard from them shows that they're getting better and better. With each comp track, each EP, each long-play shows them improving over the last. But I don't think they're anywhere near their opus, that record that's gonna go down in the books as a classic, that record that kids fifteen years from now will consider as necessary a milestone as much as Dillinger Four will be or Fucked Up should be. So, it's a mixed bag here - there are certain songs on here that give me fucking chills (see: "The Sickness" and/or the title track, among others) but there's also songs that I could absolutely do without, that aren't necessary filler but are totally at odds with the style of the other songs and make *The Black Spot* feel more than a little disjointed. Anyway, the point is this is a band that's getting smarter, catchier and just plain better with every release. When they hit their stride on *The Black Spot*, they're spitting out punk anthems with the best of them. But the consistency just isn't there yet. The way I figure it, I'd be about willing to bet that the next record will probably just about blow my fucking doors off, and yours too.

### **GREG MACPHERSON BAND "Night Flares" CD (G7 Welcoming Committee)**

I was all set to gently pan this when I first heard it, but it's grown on me considerably, and I've found myself listening to it a hell of a lot more than I initially figured. This is a rock band in the same way that The Weakerthans and later-period Joe Strummer and the Mescaleros are (or were) rock bands. There's a lot of loud/quiet instrumental interplay, cryptic lyrics that I still find myself singing along to, and at times I'd just about swear that Macpherson's somehow managed to channel Billy Bragg. Songs like "The Show Is In The Basement" showcases Macpherson at his best, I think: biting, strained vocals, one muted guitar with another occasionally searing solo played over that until the whole goddamn band comes in at the end, bringing it to a stunning crescendo. For me, about half of the record has that same kind of quality; had this been culled down to an EP it would have been absolutely unstoppable. But considering it's a full-length, I'll just have to delegate it to the "damn good record to listen to on a Sunday afternoon when you're hungover as shit" category. But I'll also note that some of these songs will probably be making their way onto mix tapes for years to come, so how's that?



## RAJBOT 7" (Sedition)

Three songs on smoky see-through vinyl. Deal is, of the three songs, only one of them has vocals and all three of them are programmed vaguely hip-hop stuff replete with bleeps, bleeps and samples. True to the name, the guy *does* sound like a robot. Or Rajbot. Or whatever. No lyric sheet included for the one song; apparently we're either supposed to be able to understand him, or the words don't matter that much. I like Sedition Records as a whole, but I'm gonna have to pass on this one.

## SCREECHING WEASEL "Boogadaboogadaboogada" CD (Asian Man)

What really needs to be said here? A remastered version of a now-seminal record, complete with new album art and extensive liner notes. All told, this one's probably my least favorite SW record, but it's also where you can totally hear the foundation being laid for what they'd later become. The entire album is obnoxious and biting as fuck; for every song that's spastic and seemingly centered around being dumb for dumb's sake, they'll kick one out that's acerbic, smart and catchy as hell. Something as wincingly bad as "Mad At The Paper Boy" will be peppered between still-fresh jawdroppers like "Psychiatrist", one of about a million of their totally spot-on pop-punk numbers that they'd eventually become famous for. And that's the reason why I'm not such a fan of this album; I think the band was at its best when they stopped dumbing themselves down and got down to it, lyrically and sonically (though many people, maybe the band included, would probably argue the whole point was to *be* dumb for dumb's sake). Still, on songs like "Sunshine", "Hey Suburbia" and their cover of Del Shannon's "Runaway", they are verging on unfrackin'-touchable. The nice thing is that the ratio of good-to-bad songs increased exponentially with their recorded output (hey, I even like the *Emo* record!) and Asian Man will be re-releasing much of their back catalog throughout the next year or so; apparently many of these new(ish/er) releases will include extra bonus material. So, yeah, after they got *BoogadaX3* out of the way, you can pretty much expect glowing reviews from me.

## SCREECHING WEASEL "My Brain Hurts" CD (Asian Man)

Now we're getting somewhere. This is one of the few records of my life in which I still have the original copy that I first purchased. This LP was my introduction to the band, bought back in 1992, and I've nearly worn the grooves off the fucker over the years. While some of my criticism of the band still applies for this record, we're finding the ratio of good-to-bad songs increasing dramatically. I don't really have much to add to this review- at this point, most of the readers of this zine already know exactly what this LP's about. For me, the period between *My Brain Hurts* and, say, *How To Make Enemies...*, that span of four or five records in the same number of years, constitutes the total pinnacle of the band. For better or worse, those records are the ones that have insured that SW's gonna remain as seminal and important in the annals of punk rock history as, say, Op Ivy or Nofx will be, for better or worse. It's not an overstatement to call these guys spearheads of a genre, just as it's not an overstatement to say that this will probably go down as one of the ten most influential (and rightly so) punk records of the 1990s.

## SPINNING HEADS "Change The Game" LP (Sedition)

Heavy, man. Think of a French version of Tragedy, perhaps, except Tragedy just woke up from a Quaalude binge and are really wishing they had cups of coffee to go around. Spinning Heads seem to be shooting for a slower-paced, more punishing type of sound, some of it so slow you'd be hard pressed to call it "mid-tempo", but rather than flooring me with their heaviness, I just end up getting kind of restless. But those times when they do kick the speed up, there's an amalgamation of some metal band on Acme and His Hero Is Gone combined, but better than I make that sound. Top it off, it's on clear vinyl and the layout is absolutely gorgeous. It's not necessarily my thing, but I'll easily admit that interested parties will be shitting their pants over this one.

## ADDRESSES:

Asian Man Records, P.O. Box 35585, Monte Sereno, CA 95030

BYO Records, P.O. Box 67609, Los Angeles, CA 90067

Disaster Records, P.O. Box 7112, Burbank, CA 91510

G7 Welcoming Committee Records, P.O. Box 27006, C-360 Main Street, Winnipeg, MB. R3C 4T3, Canada

Sedition Records, P.O. Box 4043, Bethlehem, PA 18018



## THANKS:

Anna, Alex Arnsdorf for being there from the start, Adam Mullett, Todd Taylor, Joe Biel & Microcosm Publishing, Jeff, Lyndsay, Kory, Drew, Jen Throw-Up, Small Kitties Hate Connie and the Bridgettes, Ronnie Abril, Joe Watson, and especially all the distros, letter-writers, friends and contributors who have made this worth it over the past ten years.

## CREDITS:

- **JOEY GOEBEL** wrote "Hangover House." He's the author of two novels, *The Anomalies* and *Torture the Artist*, both on McAdam/Cage Publishing. He's currently at work on a third novel.
- **NATHAN BEATY** is the ridiculously talented guy who did the "Living With Keith" comic, as well as *Brainfag Comics* and loads of other shit. I don't talk about being punk as fuck anymore, but Nathan still remains ardently convinced that Castenada is alive and well and living in Baja. Check out his work at [www.brainfag.com](http://www.brainfag.com).
- **JONATHAN SPIES** wrote "Space Seed" and "Coffee, Fucking, Melvins." He does the zine *Abort!*, and I'm gonna go out on a limb and say it's probably one of the top five "perzines" (and I loathe that word too) being put out today.
- **RYAN MISHAP** wrote "The Anti-Patriotic Punk Picnic" and is a self-confessed zine nerd. He puts out *Mishap* zine.
- **MIKE BUKOWSKI** allowed himself to be interviewed, and was very patient when the zine didn't come out even close to deadline. Check out his amazing stuff at [www.substructure.net/lci](http://www.substructure.net/lci).
- **MIKE OTT** wrote "From the Northwest to Newhall", and did his own layout. He runs Sound Virus Records and the second issue of his zine *These Days* is out now. Grab it up at [sound-virus.com](http://sound-virus.com).
- **DAVE ROCHE** wrote "Eating Shit Full Of Broken Glass" (though he had no idea that I was gonna get uber-creative and title it so nice.) Microcosm Publishing recently released a book anthology of his zine *On Subbing*, which is terrific.
- **CRAVEN ROCK** wrote "A Seasonal Worker Reflects on the Struggle." He also does the great zine *Eaves of Ass*.
- **ANNA, JEFF** and **AMANDA** graciously pissed themselves in the name of science in "The Diaper Experiment."



SHIT.

# AND THANKS FOR VISITING.

And there we go. Ten years down and still plenty of typos to go around. I hope you liked this one, I did. There's always that self-consciousness that's always the same as I gear up to put out another issue. Those little voices telling me this part's dumb, that part's too negative, there's just too many errors, dull drawings or fucked margins. It's always the same. At the same time, we're given these, uh, creative urges, and we can either quells them, squash them down and hit the remote on the TV, or we can wallow in them, revel in them. So, like them diapers we put on one icy night back in winter, I really tried my best to get down and define the term "self-absorbed".

See, there's those goddamn voices again.

Please forgive any errors you see, grammatical or otherwise- they're all due to my own carelessness and are not the fault of the contributors. And I'm sorry the stories I wrote are so negative- I wrote them all very recently, and they're a reflection of where I'm at right now. Unfortunately, there's not always unicorns and leprechauns flitting around this particular mental landscape.

Anyway, things are not all bad - Anna and I are getting along, the cat's asleep, it's five a.m. and I've got coffee, smokes and Jets Vs. Sharks coming out of the stereo. One of those moments where I would be more than happy *screaming Come and get me, coppers!* out the window and throwing the desk in front of the door, making them work at getting me out. What I mean is, I'm willing to make a go of it. I'm glad that, as tenuous as it seems sometimes, I'm one of the kids who stuck around. I'm glad you are too.

Avow will keep coming out. If you want to contact any of the contributors, let me know and I'll put the two of you in touch. In the meantime, I'll be here, older, tired much of the time, and not nearly as smart as I used to think I was. But, fuck, enjoying the moment every great once in a while.

Hang in and keep good.





## THESE ARE VERY GOOD:

Anything at all by Darrell Spencer

*I Don't Know But I Been Told* by Raul Correa

*The Toughest Indian In The World* by Sherman Alexie

*Ready, Okay!* by Adam Cadre

*Massachusetts, California, Timbuktu* by Stephanie  
Rosenfeld

*The Ha-Ha* by Dave King

*Wake Up, Sir!* by Jonathan Ames

WARSAWPACK "Stocks & Bombs" CD

RIVETHEAD "The Cheap Wine of Youth" 12"

SMALLTOWN/PRACTICE split 7"

THE LAWRENCE ARMS "Cocktails and Dreams" CD

COMBAT WOUNDED VETERAN "This Is Not An

Erect, All-Red Neon Body" CD

PINK RAZORS "Scene Suicide" cassette

DEAD MOON "Cracks In The System" CD

AGHA/1000 TRAVELS OF JAWAHARLAL split CD

RAMBO "Bring It!" LP

CAREER SUICIDE "Signals" 7"

FUCKED UP "Epics In Minutes" CD

JR EWING "The Perfect Drama" 10"

## IN THE WORKS/EVENTUALLY:

- A punk rock choose your own adventure novella, something I've been talking about for years and will really actually get down to doing someday.
- A comic issue, though I'm more than a bit nervous about it, considering the glut of insanely talented freak-ass comic kids that inhabit this town.
- There has been talk of a reprint (with new bonus crap) of *The Best of Intentions: The AVOW Anthology* to be released on Microcosm Publishing. I have no idea if it will actually happen, but write your Congressman and let them know you're all for it.

## DETAILS:

This issue is three dollars postagepaid and in person. Cash preferred, checks and MO's okay. Made out to Keith Rosson, puh-leez. Contact can be made by writing 1426 S.E. 25<sup>th</sup> #3, Portland, OR 97214. Also, if you've got a minute, check out keithrosson.com, as I can be emailed at keith@keithrosson.com. *The Best of Intentions: The AVOW Anthology* (the trade paperback collection of the first sixteen issues of AVOW) can be acquired from Microcosm Publishing: microcosmpublishing.com. If you're looking for a specific back issue between #17-20, write me for availability.



**AVOW!**