

ugly planet

RELEVANT MUSIC + MORE • ISSUE THREE • FREE

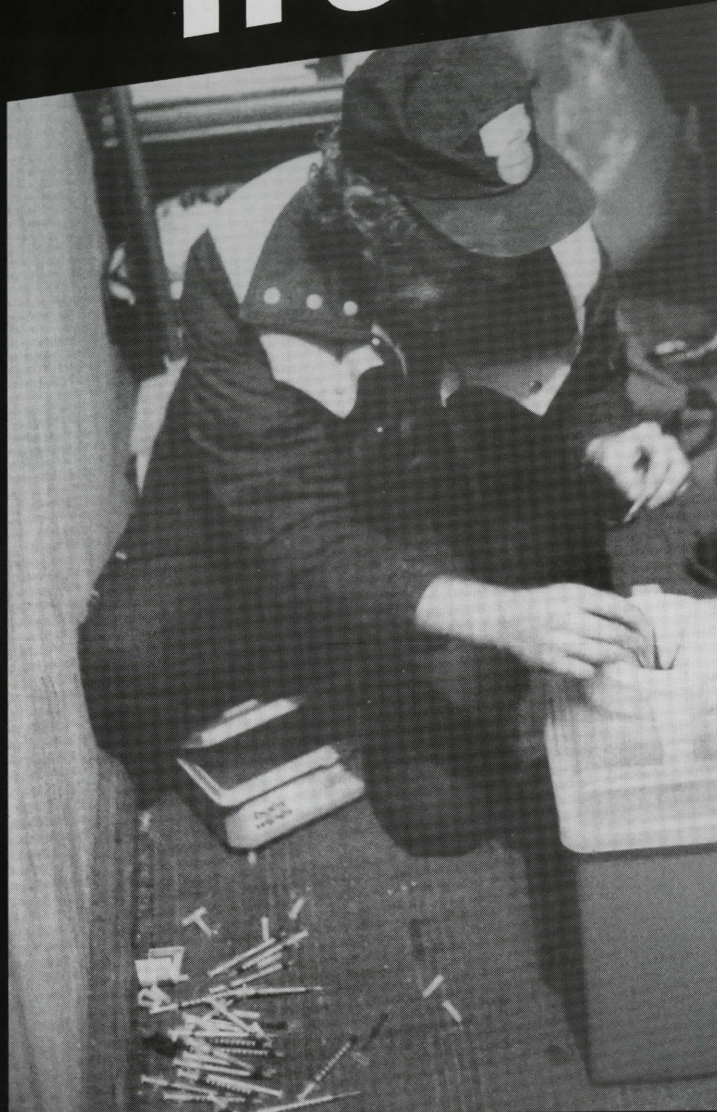
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JARBOE • VAGABOND • CORDERO • RAMSEY KANAAN • MISCELLANEOUS FLUX • CD • DVD • BOOK REVIEWS

The ugly truth...



8 of 10
drug injectors are
living with Hepatitis C.
That's ugly. In San Francisco,
More people die of overdose
every year than car accidents
and gun shots combined

The Federal Ban on the funding of
syringe exchange has now cost the lives
of tens of thousands of drug injectors.
Now that's really ugly.

People do drugs. The war on drugs is
designed to make drug taking more
dangerous than it is and has been a
great success. People die of liver fail-
ure or AIDS. Our prisons are full of
drug users. Drug users become
unemployable. Felony disenfran-
chisement cost the 2000 election.
Syringe exchange, overdose preven-
tion, pill testing, hepatitis a, b, c
prevention and care, drug treatment
on demand, access to medical care,
jobs and housing, dismantling the
prison industrial complex are impor-
tant to support. Learn to protect
yourself and your partners.

Harm reduction is a compassionate,
pragmatic approach to drug use.
It values the lives of drug users.

Now that's beautiful.

PHOTO: NYC, 1992. The Lower East Side Needle Exchange working with
the Shooting gallery to provide sterile syringes. Volunteer is disposing of
used needles in bio-hazard container. They also provided safe injection
equipment and referral assistance when these types of prevention
activities were illegal. Since 1990, syringe exchange in New York City
has reduced HIV infection among drug users from 50% to 12%.
Now that's beautiful.

www.harmreduction.org



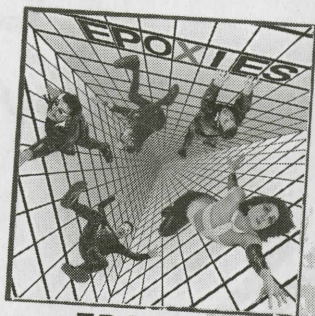
The Harm
Reduction Training
Institute

Hepatitis C Harm Reduction Project
A resource for drug users sponsored by the Harm Reduction Coalition

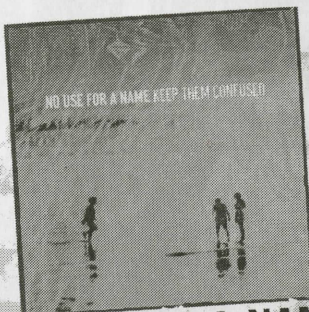


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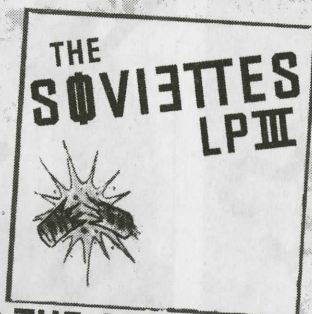
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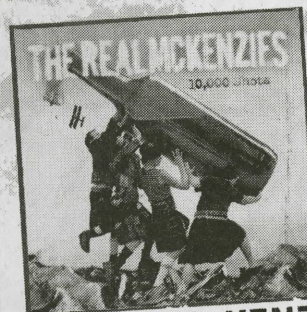
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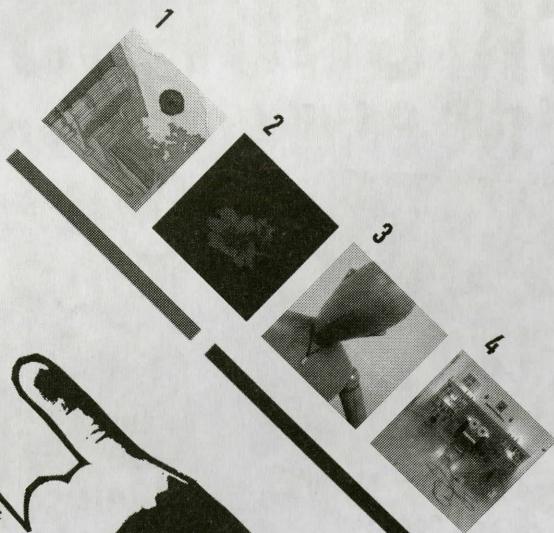
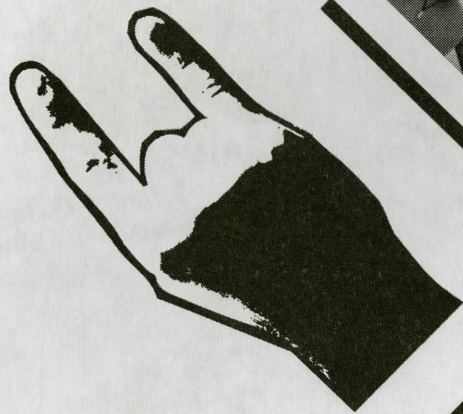


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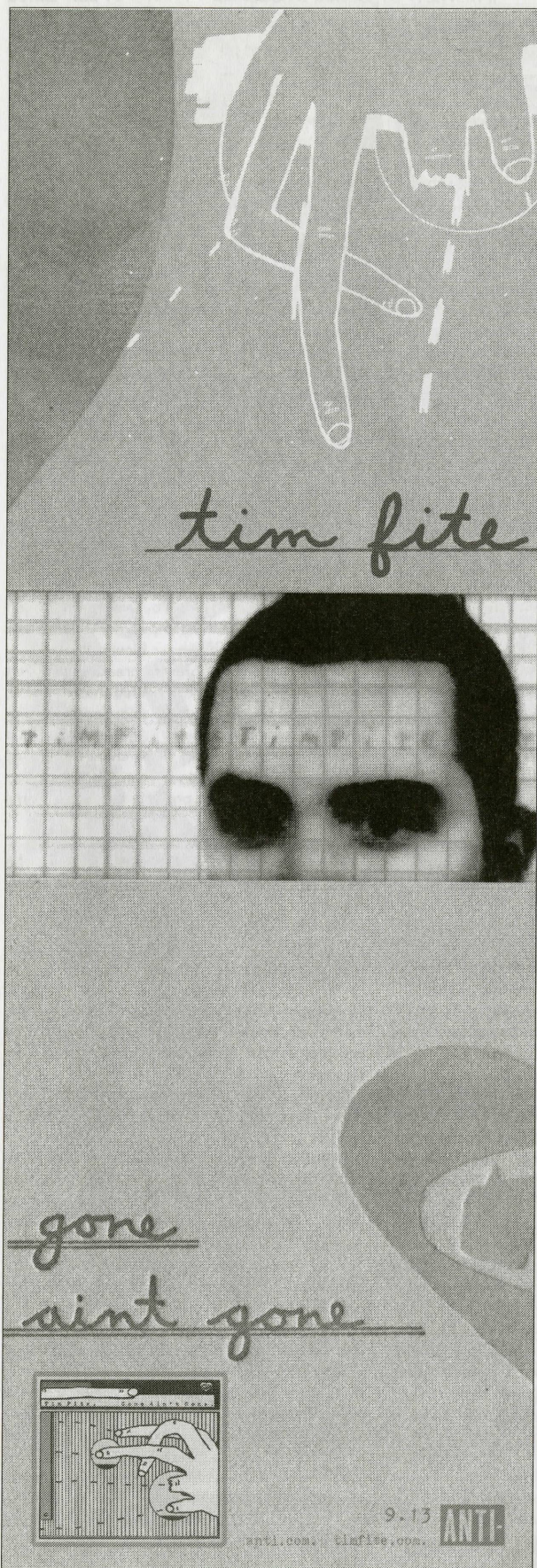
4 BUSHIDO KARAOKE - CD

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CHIEF EDITOR: Ojo Rojo. **DEPUTY EDITOR:** Pedro Taino. **CREATIVE DIRECTOR:** Samuel LaHoz.
COPY EDITORS: Andrea McCready, Hannah Wolfe. **ASSISTANT EDITORS:** Liam O'Donoghue,
Kira Yustak. **CONTRIBUTORS:** Jennifer Bleyer, Dub C., Richard John Cummins, Debra DeSalvo,
Colleen Frary, Dawn Fredericks, Fly, Mark Harris, Yasmin Hernandez, Walidah Imarisha, Tracy Jones,
Crista Laues, Serena Norr, Joan Riley-Murphy, Bad Santistevan, Ben Tyree, Jeb Toocrass.
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"Slingshot vs Tank" (front cover art) and "Cliffdwellers" (above) by Eric Drooker

WHO NEEDS FILM SCHOOL AND DADDY'S BANK ACCOUNT TO MAKE FILMS THAT COUNT? WITH HIS SELF-WRITTEN TEN POINT GHETTO GUIDE OF FALLOUT SHELTER FILM MAKING THAT HE CALLS "ILLEGALIST CINEMA," THE CINE STEALER CALLED VAGABOND MAKES FILMS THAT ATTEMPT TO FRACTURE THE RESTRICTIONS OF THE "HOLLYWOOD" FILM MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY, AND CRASH THE ART FOR PROFIT (PRIVATE) PARTY OF THE ACCEPTABLE. BY EXPROPRIATING FILM, USING THE SHITTY CITY AS HIS SETS, AND SIDE-STEPPING PERMITS, VAGABOND WRITES, DIRECTS, AND ACTS (IF NECESSARY) IN HIS OWN FELONIOUS PUNK FILMS THAT TACKLE THE POLITICAL WHILE ARMED IN THE EXPERIMENTAL.

UGLY PLANET: *There's definitely a DIY (do-it-yourself) element to your work. I read in the filmmaking "manifesto" you wrote, that you incorporate elements like risking arrest. I know other filmmakers who say they will avoid that at all costs, whereas you're just out there doing your thing.*

VAGABOND: Yeah, my anti-manifesto is actually called "Illegalist Cinema: Cinema of the Cine-Automatic." One of the things I focus on in this anti-manifesto is that art is

called "Illegalist Cinema," do you feel it's actually necessary to engage in illegal activity in the making of films?

Calling my anti-manifesto "Illegalist Cinema" was just a response to today's fascist clampdown on art and artists. Years ago, in New York City, musicians didn't need a permit to play in the subway. Now they have to audition for the Transit Authority and get permission to play in the subway. Same thing on the streets of NYC, cops are clamping down on street musicians and street performers. Used to be the streets were the streets. They belonged to anyone and everyone who wanted to claim them. Artists used to be able to find a corner somewhere, set up a few works and at best, try and sell something and at worst, at least have their work seen. Now the city comes by and confiscates your work, arrests you for blocking the sidewalk and selling without a vendor's permit. The law-and-order zealots are paving the way for the fascists. You don't necessarily have to be engaged in illegal activity to be making a film using the Illegalist Cinema anti-manifesto, but chances are it'll come to that anyway.

You've worked a great deal with the band Ricanstruction. What similarities or differences do you find between the experiences and struggles of being an indie/underground filmmaker versus an indie/underground band?

We see, critique and define the world through similar eyes and feel the need to respond in an artistic way. The only difference between music and film is that, for the most part, film is a much more expensive undertaking than recording a record is. Other than that, we are forced to deal with fighting to be seen and heard above the din of rice krispy commercialism.

Is there a scene or community for underground filmmakers of color, and if so, what initiatives have you encountered to push films by people of color onto audiences?

If there is one, I don't know about it. And if there is one, I would like to be invited to the party.

In your latest film, Machetero, you mention 9/11. The film's title is reminiscent of the Puerto Rican armed clandestine organization of the same name, which the U.S. deems terrorists.

Well, my grandfather used to like to say, "One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter." The inspiration for writing *Machetero* initially came from the fact that I was writing for people in the days after 9/11. I was waiting for people to ask the questions that needed to be asked and to look at things with a critical eye, and they weren't doing it. And so the questions needed to be asked. What would drive people to act a certain way? What drives people to strap explosives to themselves? It's like, people always disparage the Palestinians who get on a bus in Israel strapped with explosives, but then when you think about the situation of Palestinians, it's

not that much of a big jump. People like to think of people who strap explosives to themselves from their own context of their apartment on the 12th floor, watching MTV, while the heat comes up and they're waiting for Chinese food to be delivered. They don't think in the context that the Palestinians don't have a school to go to. They don't have a job to work at, because there's no work to be had. Families have been torn apart. Their homes have been demolished.

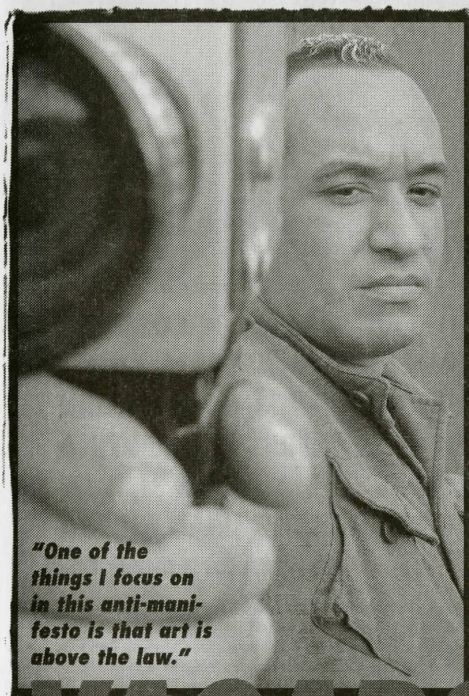
Your own production company is called Audio Visual Terrorism. I know you talk about the movie in a post 9/11 context. I'm just curious as to your views on the word terrorism.

As far as naming the company Audio Visual Terrorism, my thing was that I was trying to destroy preconceived notions. Acts like the one on 9/11 blow apart your preconceived notions on things. It really didn't blow it up for me, I mean, I was kind of expecting it. It's like Malcolm X, when they asked his opinion on the assassination of JFK, he said, "Well the chickens have come home to roost." The only thing that shocked me was, well how come this hasn't happened sooner? How come this doesn't happen more often? I mean, it happens to everybody else, but not to the United States. The name of the company actually existed before 9/11, but it was about blowing apart people's preconceived notions, creating art that shakes people up. Not to mention that after 9/11, Giuliani and George "Dubya" said, Look, we have to go back to doing things just the way we did before we were attacked. Don't change anything! So I was like, OK, not gonna change a thing. I was Audio Visual Terrorism pre-9/11; I'm Audio Visual Terrorism post-9/11!

What advice would you give to anyone who wants to get started in becoming a guerrilla filmmaker?

You just get started. You free yourself of all the preconceived notions and ideas of what's supposed to be, and you simply do it. The only advice I would have for beginners is to keep it simple. Finishing anything as complex as a film, even a film made with the Illegalist Cinema manifesto is an accomplishment in and of itself. Once you go through the whole process of creating your film, as simple as it may seem, it will boost your confidence level to try and tackle more complex endeavors.

Another piece of advice I have is going to sound strange, but here it goes: Do not go to film school or read any books on filmmaking. Just do things as you imagine they're done, and then see how close or far you came to the way things are generally done. This is a good exercise because film people have a habit of telling you that things can only be done the way they are supposed to be done, and that's never true. Finding your own way to do things with just common sense and imagination is exhilarating. Doing things your own way before knowing how they're really done can strengthen your resolve and keep you from getting bogged down in the excuses and traps the film industry likes to create to keep people from participating in an art form, so they can keep film relegated to a business rather than an art. The film industry would love to keep us all believing that they are the only ones who can do it. ☺



"One of the things I focus on in this anti-manifesto is that art is above the law."

VAGABOND

Making Art Illegal Again

above the law. If you're creating, it doesn't matter what you're creating, the process of creating is a beautiful one. If the law says, "Well, you can't be here," you say, "Fuck that, we're creating beauty, and that's above your bullshit law!" The laws are created to keep people in line. But we're not doing negative things. Creation is the only law I try to abide by.

Considering that your filmmaking manifesto is

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Cordero: Eric Eble,
Ani Cordero and
Chris Verene

"There are marches, but they're not doing anything. There are songs being sung, they're not doing anything. Do we just have to wait?"

CORDERO

Vamos Niños

ANI CORDERO AND HER COMPAÑEROS IN CRIME SIDESTEP THE MUSICAL MINUTEMEN AND CROSS THE BEAT BORDERS AND SOUND BOUNDARIES IMPOSED BY THE CORPORATE CULTURE VULTURES TO REACH THAT MYTHICAL (MUSIC) PLACE CALLED INDIE-LAND. IT'S A NICE PLACE TO VISIT, BUT YOU STILL GOTTA WATCH OUT FOR THE WOLVES.

UGLY PLANET: I read somewhere that as an isolated Puerto Rican teen growing up in Georgia, you found some consolation in the outsider punk scene in Atlanta.

ANI CORDERO: Did I fall into the punk scene because I was a distraught Puerto Rican teenager, or maybe because I really liked music? I don't know. I wanted to be a drummer from the time I was little. That was really how I fell into that scene, because from the time I was 14, I was either into punk rock or alternative rock bands. That's where all my friends were. But my identity, it was like I was two people. I was the person I am with my family and the person I was with my friends. And the person I was with my friends was this indie rock drummer that most people didn't even know was Puerto Rican, because I have light skin, and I don't look like a Nuyorican stereotype that they see on TV in Atlanta, Georgia.

So in Atlanta, were these indie rock bands that you were a part of mostly alternative bands or punk bands?

INTERVIEW BY YASMIN HERNANDEZ • PHOTO BY SAM LAHOZ

The very first band I was ever in (when I was 14) was a Misfits and Danzig cover band. It's the only cover band I've ever been in. I was in it for about three or four months. After that I had a sort of noise band that was heavily influenced by Jane's Addiction and Fugazi. I (also) played in a three-piece band called Number One Family Mover. That band did pretty well and we actually got signed to a subsidiary of Sony that was a label run by Brendan O'Brien, who was a producer at the time of bands like Stone Temple Pilots and a lot of other upcoming and big bands. We toured a lot. And that was my first real industry experience.

So how did you come from that path of your early punk/alternative rock to what Cordero is today?

I was a drummer in a band for five years, and at a certain point the band broke up. I was like wow, I just spent five years of my life working with a band and giving everything to develop the band, and I'm walking away with nothing. And with no ability to create, which was more frustrating than anything, since not too many drummers make solo records. In general, it's really hard to write songs on drums. It just doesn't come naturally for rock and roll, for that format. So I was like, this kinda sucks that I would have to be dependent on someone else to decide my creative input or output. And so I decided to start writing songs. I had always been such a fan of songwriters, but I had never ventured into it. And I was already a singer because I had always sung backup in all of my bands.

So Cordero came out of this initiative to write your own music and to be the pilot of what it is that you're creating and performing?

Yeah, I wanted to be in control. I wanted to be actively creating something, and I didn't want to depend on other people to do it. I also wanted a band that would never break up—I can't break up myself, I'm always gonna write. When you write a song, it's like getting possessed. Like this nagging thing won't leave my head. Have you ever had a song stuck in your head? That's how it is for me. They create themselves and won't leave me alone until I put them out.

That's interesting because you also have rotating musicians. So you will always be Cordero, and if people are rotating, it's not like Cordero could ever die, it's just continuing and morphing. Right. The thing is that I'm the main songwriter. Everybody I play with is an inspiration, and everybody I play with is killer. I tend to play with people who could be songwriters in their own right and are. And that's inspiring, and sometimes it leads me in different directions. Like one group of people

can play a song and interpret it in one way. Lately I've been playing with a trumpet player, a bass player, and me on guitar and drums. Six months ago, I was playing with two guitars, an accordion and saxophone. And it sounds different, and that's exciting.

I also noticed you go flawlessly from English to Spanish in your lyrics. Were you also influenced by the music coming out of Puerto Rico?

I can say that while I was interested mostly in punk rock, I was also really into merengue. Then I started getting into sad songs. I got into very dark rock that was really slow, but I also liked boleros, guaguancos and cumbias. Plenas too. Sometimes I wanna get down and party, and at that point I may get into hip-hop. But as far as how I came to write in Spanish and English, that's just who I am. I spent my entire life going between Puerto Rico and Atlanta, and my parents raised me to be bilingual. It's not anything bigger or smaller than that. Just the most honest expression.

As Cordero, you have a band named after you. You write all the music, which I'm sure is very empowering. I know that you have worked with other women indie artists. Do you still feel the pressure of this being a male-dominated industry and in the greater scope of that industry?

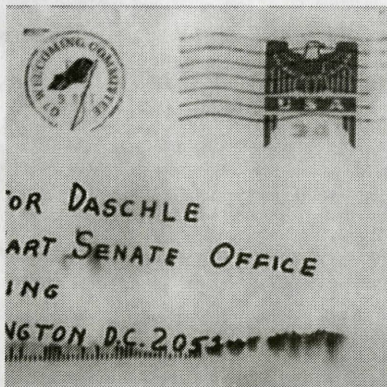
It depends on what industry compartment you're talking about. In Latin rock, people can't believe that I write my own songs. They don't understand. Because the standard is for women to just be chosen and then put in a place, given a songwriter to work with and a producer. Actually that's how it is in all major label scenarios, but the difference is there are not as many indie levels to go to in Latin music. In Latin music, you're either on the top or you're nowhere. There's no middle class of Latin rock, and so there are very few singer-songwriter women in Latin rock who are well known. Well, except maybe for Shakira. If a girl wants to go and play some guitar and have a band, what label can they be on that caters to Latin rock? Who's doing cool stuff that isn't industry driven? Where you don't have to have six-pack abs or be 19 years old.

Do you view yourself as a political artist?

I am not really outwardly political in my music. I've always believed that the personal is political. My viewpoint, I can't hide it. For instance, in one song we have called "Vamos Nenas," I talk about being pissed that guys on the street yell at me and call me "mami" and try to whisper in my ear on the subway. It bugs me, and I think it's wrong and I'm going to say so. What's political? Is it political to say that you shouldn't treat your child badly? Who's going to stop the madness that we're in at the moment, how many letters can we write, what is it going to take? There are marches, but they're not doing anything. There are songs being sung, they're not doing anything. Do we just have to wait? All of us were so disappointed and upset with the last election. New York was in mourning after the last election. But what can you do except be the person that you are and live the values that you believe in? That's what I try to do, maybe not perfectly, but I try. With everything I do, I try to live how I believe. And the music naturally falls into that. ☺

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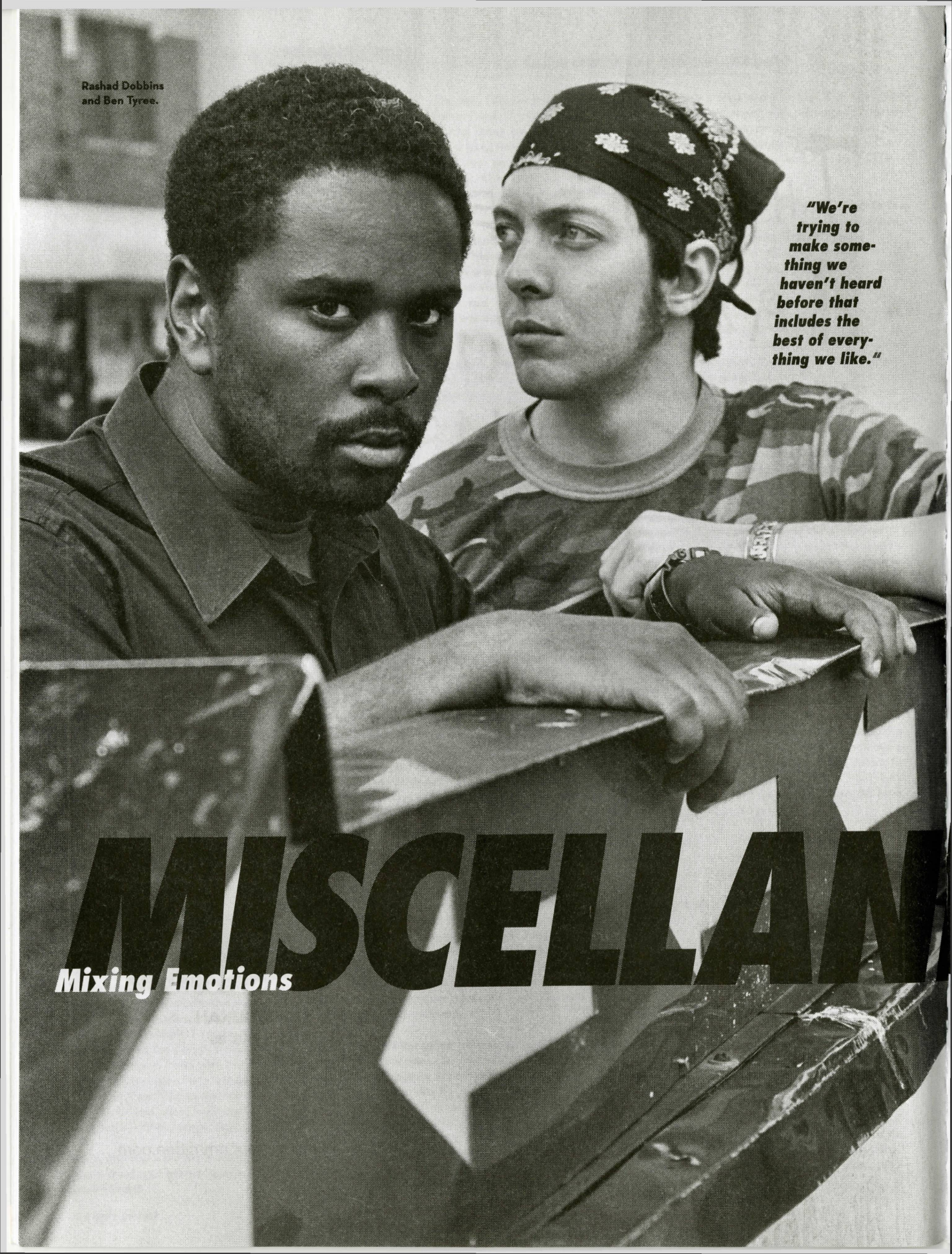
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make some-
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before that
includes the
best of every-
thing we like."*

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BEN AND RASHAD FORMED A FAST FRIENDSHIP AT DUKE ELLINGTON SCHOOL OF THE ARTS IN WASHINGTON, D.C., WENT THROUGH VARIOUS MUSICAL PERMUTATIONS BEFORE ARRIVING AT MISCELLANEOUS FLUX IN 2000, AND BROUGHT THE BAND TO NEW YORK CITY IN 2002. "DO WE GET ON EACH OTHER'S NERVES? ALL THE TIME!" BEN SAYS, LAUGHING.

THEY DESCRIBE THEIR INFLUENCES AS: "ALL INNOVATIVE AND CONSCIOUS MUSIC WITH EARNEST INTENT AND UNCOMPROMISING INTENSITY: JOHN COLTRANE, BAD BRAINS, PUBLIC ENEMY, JIMI HENDRIX, MILES DAVIS, NIRVANA, LED ZEPPELIN, IANNIS XENAKIS, FRANK ZAPPA, BLACK SABBATH, RONI SIZE, RADIOHEAD, MARS VOLTA, SUN RA, CHARLES MINGUS, TOOL, RAVI SHANKAR, WAYNE SHORTER, DONNY HATHAWAY, ETC."

UGLY PLANET: Why do you list the Bad Brains as an influence?

RASHAD: Their energy. And they were very innovative. They were mixing punk with reggae at a time when no one had done that. That was remarkable.

The Bad Brains definitely were a huge influence on musicians in D.C. but what has inspired you the most since you've moved to New York?

BEN: For me, being around a lot of musicians

albums that, you know, the first song is about someone waking up, the second song is about going to the store, the third song is about what the person bought in the store. I like to create a linear collage, and then once I get the music I'll write the lyrics.

BEN: He'll tell me the concept and then I'll try to write, although sometimes I'll just give him music and he'll write to it. But often he'll give me a concept and I'll write to the concept and it all just fits somehow.

RASHAD: We don't really ever clash musically. I think there should be 40 percent vocals and 60 percent music...and the vocals shouldn't talk that much! Besides, what I'm talking about is a sort of sci-fi/political/magick kind of thing and I don't want to talk about it too much. I want to say what I have to say and get out.

BEN: We grew up on separate sides of the same town, yet we listened to the same stuff. He listened to hip hop and rock and I listened to everything, too. What we do also came from reading and our interests in physics, metaphysics, and spirituality. Rashad came up with a phrase from a book he read to describe what we do. [Visions by physicist Michio Kaku, inspired by the civilization classifications of astronomer Nikolai Kardashev] He calls it Type-1 information.

RASHAD: Humanity is being pushed toward what this author calls a Type-1 civilization, meaning we're going to have to work together as a planet to survive. There will have to be political stability and a planetary economy involving us working together in order for humans to survive as a species. Just that idea of the planet becoming one...I thought that's what we should call our music: Type-1 art, Type-1 information. I'm trying to make art that can involve humanity—not just a certain class or a certain culture.

BEN: Art has worked economically in the past because it sections and separates different movements and genres that are inclusive to

achieve.

RASHAD: I don't want to be jazz; I don't want to be rock. I love the intricate patterns of jazz; I love the heaviness of rock; I love hip hop. As Ben said, we draw from the best of everything we like. My culture came through slavery and is now going through the effects of that in this capitalistic economy—yet knowing that at one point our art was the only thing we had to push us, now we're using our drum to enslave us. I feel like some of the rap and rhythm and blues being produced today is betraying our ancestors. It doesn't have an adventure in it. I'm not trying to dis people, but how we went from Ray Charles to Beyonce is crazy. I understand how the evolution happened, but the fight is missing now. So I really have a job to do. Like James Baldwin used to say, "I'm only responsible for the people that reduce me."

BEN: We're here to evolve; we're not put on this planet just to dance the night away. You should have fun and feel good but there has to be some dimension to your life beyond that.

RASHAD: I think Bob Marley is the great metaphor for how to dance and rejoice at the same time.

Do you think the Internet is helping musicians regain control over the means of production?

BEN: I like the idea that even if you don't "make it big," you can still have a CD out there. You don't have to wait to "get signed" or go to all these record labels' offices and beg them for a record contract. You can just put your own thing out and put up a web site. I think that's great. It connects the world. You can talk to someone across the planet and realize we're all the same and want the same thing.

RASHAD: The internet

"We're here to evolve; we're not put on this planet just to dance the night away."

You should have fun and feel good but there has to be some dimension to your life beyond that."

EOUS FLUX

who are a lot better than me. And being able to see a lot of musicians all the time.

RASHAD: New York doesn't really inspire me. But neither does D.C. I realize that it all is an internal journey so no matter where I am I can find that spark. New York is material first, then music.

Rashad, do you write to the music that Ben composes, or do you write your lyrics separately?

RASHAD: I usually have a concept. I like


some but alienate others. We're trying to do something that is all-inclusive.

Your band is a metaphor for that, in terms of the musical mix and the mix of people.

BEN: We're trying to make something we haven't heard before that includes the best of everything we like. We all came out of studying jazz yet we also love rock. I like to hit power chords now and then, even though I know all kinds of other chords, because they still have an effect that I sometimes want to

is a web of consciousness. We sit down and focus our consciousness and create a whole other world. So we have to put our stuff into that web.

BEN: I have a feeling that it's part of our biological evolution. At some point in time it's going to advance to the point where we'll be able to connect our brains to it. We read in so many mystic and religious texts about the universe coming to one, all is one. How do we know that technology is not going to play a part in that? ☺



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AP

Blind-Side by Science

MIXING HIP-HOP AND INDIE ROCK, DYNAMIC DUO DANA DIAZ-TUTAAN AND RAPHAEL LAMOTTA FORM THE NEW YORK-BASED BAND APSCI. APSCI (SHORT FOR APPLIED SCIENCE) COMBINES LIVE INSTRUMENTS WITH ELECTRONIC BEATS, AND RAP WITH SMOOTH VOCALS TO CREATE A SURPRISINGLY UNIQUE SOUND WITH AN URBAN EDGE. CLASSICALLY TRAINED DIAZ-TUTAAN MINGLES HER SHARP, SWEET VOICE WITH THE BEATS AND ELECTRONIC STYLINGS OF BRONX-BORN LAMOTTA, FORMERLY BASS PLAYER FOR VITAPUP. TOGETHER THEY PUSH MUSICAL BOUNDARIES. ON THEIR LATEST RELEASE, *THANKS FOR ASKING*, THEY TEAM UP WITH OTHERS, SUCH AS TUNDE ADEBIMPE OF TV ON THE RADIO AND MARTIN PERNA OF ANTIBALAS, TO CREATE A COLLECTION OF ENERGETIC AND SMART TRACKS.

UGLY PLANET: *What types of projects did you do before Apsci?*

DANA: I did an Australian Youth Opera production when I was about thirteen, and that amped me to perform for a living. I got into acting through singing and pursued that for a while in Australia. I did a little TV and film, but I really enjoy stage work and wound up getting more work in that world. It's something I consciously stopped when I moved to the States, cause it took me away from doing my own music seriously. I'd like to do more theater productions sometime again in the future, but for now, Apsci is where I pour myself creatively. As a performer, if all the singing and performing you do is other people's pieces as opposed to your own, it can leave you frustrated and desiring a form of expression that truly reflects you. I know a lot of theater folks like that, and I was that myself for years. Now I call the shots and I love it.

RA: I've grown up with hip-hop in NY and NJ since 1981. My first experience was listening to my grandfather's old jukebox radio, skipping around the dial and finding "The Message" by Grandmaster Flash. My hand stopped turning, and I sat up straight and listened closely. It was my first direct experience with hip-hop. It's stayed close to me like

SCI

INTERVIEW BY KIRA YUSTAK • PHOTOS BY SAM LaHOZ

"I think the majority of people don't like to be challenged or riled up. They just like their music to be entertaining and non-threatening. They want to take their minds off the hard day and just shake their ass."

that ever since. I've also played in rock bands over the years, pursuing the commonalities in the punk and indie scenes with hip-hop, and emceed in open mics and ciphers around New York City.

I enjoy your writing style...I know the words mean something to me, and perhaps something else to someone else...are you comfortable with that?

DANA: Absolutely. That's what all songs should do. There are many songs out there that I relate to as a listener where it means something totally different to someone else who is listening to it. Different people walk away with different things. And as an artist, it's an honor to have a song that you've written play the same role for someone else.

Were there any women in hip-hop or music in general who influenced or inspired you?

DANA: As a kid, I was exposed to female vocalists like Donna Summer. I loved the lightness in her voice. Anita Baker had a lot of mood and a tone that is so rich and soulful. I would be mesmerized by Roberta Flack cause she'd sing with such mood and poise. I also loved Sade's style... I also was strongly influenced by Whitney Houston. She had so much potential and was such a talented contemporary singer in the 80s. Female hip-hop artists I got into as a kid were MC Lyte, Queen Latifah, Salt-n-Pepa, Neneh Cherry. As I started to branch out musically as a teenager, I listened to Kate Bush, Laurie Anderson, Nina Simone, Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald. I was also into opera and was inspired by sopranos like Dame Kiri Te Kanawa.

Was the video for "Tirade Highway" filmed in the Philippines?

DANA: Yes, in San Fernando, La Union in PI, the town where I was born. Ra and I were there for a few weeks, and Ra fell in love with the Jeepneys out there. Jeepneys are similar to taxi/dollar cabs, where you jump in the back of this truck that seats about 16 people (and a lot more if you crouch or hang off the back) When the



"The pendulum is all the way over to the blissfully self-centered side right now. I don't necessarily want it to sway all the other way either because it'll still be unbalanced."

loved it. He got the idea to film "Tirade Highway" with us hanging in a Jeepney. So we rented one for a day, I had a cousin who's a videographer, and we put together several video cameras, loaded the family in the back and drove around San Fernando.

RA: Credit goes to Juris Ramos, Dana's cousin, who took a lot of action to make it all happen. I just put the idea out there; next thing we knew, there was a Jeepney in the driveway.

What's the political climate in the Philippines today?

DANA: The current president, Gloria Arroyo, is in her second term. There is scandal involved in voting figures for her second term, and she claims to be an economist, but the economy has shown no improvement with her in power. Philippines has been in dire straits for the longest time. 1 US dollar buys 55 pesos. Compare that to other Asian countries, and Philippines is probably one of the worst economies in Asia. Philippines needs some serious help, but the only candidates to run against corrupt politicians are famous Filipino actors-turn-wannabe-politicians with zero experience.

RA: I don't know enough to speak on it. I know that I saw a lot of poverty over there, and a huge divide between the haves and have-nots.

Dana, were there any women who inspired you from a political perspective?

DANA: When I was a kid, as a Filipino, having Corey Aquino take presidency after Ferdinand Marcos, was inspiring. But having grown up in Australia, I was exposed to Margaret Thatcher in the 80s. I wouldn't say I was inspired by her though—she was a hard-ass. In Australia, there's a fish 'n' chip shop worker, housemaker-cum-wannabe-politician who fronted a political party called One Nation in Australia. She was basically a racist and painfully ignorant. She became a laughingstock, but unfortunately her "Asians Out" ethics brought a lot of skeletons out of the closet when it comes to white Australia. So really, there wasn't anything. Fact is, I have always needed better

female role models in politics!

Would you like to see hip-hop or music in general address issues like feminism, racism, more clearly or at all?

DANA: Absolutely. Especially mainstream hip-hop. For almost the last decade in terms of lyricism, hip-hop has been dismal. I'd like to see it in R&B too. Artists from the late 90s like Lauryn Hill and Erykah Badu did something lyrically that unfortunately did not get picked up by other artists. I think the majority of people don't like to be challenged or riled up. They just like their music to be entertaining and nonthreatening. They want to take their minds off the hard day and just shake their ass. Which is fair enough...but there's no balance. The pendulum is all the way over to the blissfully self-centered side right now. I don't necessarily want it to sway all the other way either because it'll still be unbalanced. But there are so many facets to our personalities, so it should be about finding a happy medium. As a personal battle, we understand and accept that that's life. But it's still infuriating to see this huge machine called the music industry give all this financial backing to music that encourages behavior that's blatantly arrogant and self-centered. I guess it keeps people focusing on the mundane, so meanwhile, strings can be pulled in other areas while no one is looking. It'd be nice to see music in general address political and cultural issues, not because it's cool, but because it's addressing genuine concerns.

RA: I still blink sometimes when I realize how different the 90s were from today. I think there's still room for politicized messages in music, but not at the sacrifice of it being good music. I think people lost interest in "message" music for that reason. People are more about aesthetic or partying right now. Not to say that everyone's shallow; it's just where our culture seems to be focusing right now. Personally I don't want to hear a preacher onstage telling me what's wrong with the world. Most of us know what's wrong with the world, in a general sense at least. It's not hard to figure out. But I am interested in acts that can manage to speak their minds and kick out the jams at the same time.

Seems like most hip-hop is about people bragging about how great they are, or what I would call narcissistic anthems. As though that is some sort of revolutionary act. Very few people are singing about "the people" or community. Very few are using music as a real tool for revolution. Should we expect more?

DANA: I can gripe and write music about how fucked up the world is, but to offer a solution is the key. Ghandi's "We must become the change we wish to see in the world" is a quote that has been effective for me over the years. I think community is key, but that's not the only answer to revolution. I believe more importantly that self-work and treating others how you want to be treated is the revolution.

Reason why we're here on this earth is to figure out life. None of us have got it down. Otherwise we wouldn't be here. Every single one of us is gonna fuck someone else over in our lifetime then have to do our homework to correct it or even be aware of it. Although as humans we are complex beings and we have many emotions, so we come up with songs and lyrics that reflect all of these chemical reactions that shape our emotions. Revolution begins from within. There's no evil and good, no us and them. We just need to find a balance. There's a time and place for everything. Life is about finding balance, and there are some lucky people who get to voice what's going on in their heads and do it on a stage with lights. We're all still figuring it out, but I do feel there needs to be a balance which has been lacking severely for a very long time.

RA: Yeah, a lot of it is extremely hedonistic and narcissistic nowadays. But there are many "hip-hops" in this day and age. We're also looking at music from different factions of our culture. There

"Revolution begins from within. There's no evil and good, no us and them. We just need to find a balance. There's a time and place for everything."

is a poor black community in our country that's underrepresented and not catered to...that's nothing new. But you can probably point to the neglect and cuts in education over the last 10 years, the crack epidemic over the last twenty years...as well as the fact that most of us are spoonfed consumers from birth nowadays. Check out Jamel Shabazz's *A Time*

Before Crack. The people in those photos...those cats were my heroes. Looking back on it now, things were a lot more wholesome altogether. People had mothers and fathers. Parties in the parks were for communities. Things have changed. The playing field is probably less level than ever. I don't know what it's like to grow up like 50 Cent did, so I don't claim to have his number or be able to criticize his music. I don't think I'm smarter than these cats or better than them. I've had a different experience entirely, and all I can do is speak from my own experience. We all are aware of rap music, black music, music from the ghettos of America. For a time it was a source of inspiration, a voice of discontent, and it had vision for the future. I think there are a lot of factors as to why we don't have those voices anymore, or that they're not leading the way anymore. I don't have all the answers either. I do know that cats I've met from the "hood," artists who came up in the ghetto, some of whom make mainstream-sounding music...they have given me more love than some of these diehard suburban white hip-hop fanatics. All you can do is make your music; you never really know who it's going to appeal to. ☺

MEET THE FAMILY

BOREDOMS
SEADRUM / HOUSE OF SUN



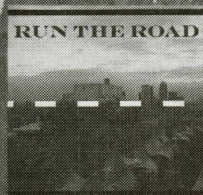
DEATH FROM ABOVE 1979
YOU'RE A WOMAN, I'M A MACHINE



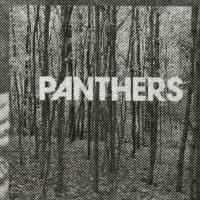
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OAKLAND'S ZION I IS THE TYPE OF CREW THAT EXCITES EVEN THE MOST JADED CATS. ON THEIR NEW, SELF-RELEASED ALBUM, *TRUE AND LIVIN'*, MC ZION AND PRODUCER AMP LIVE REVIVE THE TRADITION OF MAKING SOCIALLY CONSCIOUS HIP-HOP THAT YOU CAN GET HYFEE WITH. MC ZION GETS DEEP, BREAKING DOWN ISSUES RANGING FROM CONSUMERISM TO SPIRITUALITY, BUT AMP KEEPS IT ALL SMOOTH, MIXING BLUES RIFFS AND JAZZY NODS IN WITH THE BUMP-BUMP. IN THE MIDST OF AN INTERNATIONAL TOUR FEATURING A SET AT THIS YEAR'S MASSIVE COACHELLA, ZION I TOOK A MINUTE TO TALK WITH *UGLY PLANET* ABOUT MUSICAL GENTRIFICATION, THE RECORD INDUSTRY AND REPRESENTING THEIR HOMETOWN'S CULTURAL LEGACY.

UGLY PLANET: Back in the 80s and 90s, there were several overtly revolutionary rap stars like KRS-ONE and Public Enemy making a big splash culturally and also getting a lot of attention from the mainstream. Nowadays, there are a few MCs like Mos Def or Talib Kweli, who are selling a lot of records, but aren't so in-your-face with the politics, and then you've got the Coup or Dead Prez, who are way more radical, but not getting too much mainstream coverage. Do you think people just aren't interested in radical hip-hop anymore, or do you think that the record companies are more conscious about avoiding rappers and musicians with those kinds of messages?

MC ZION: I think it's a combination of things. With the political climate in the country right now, there aren't many alternative voices in the media... Basically, there's always escapism in art, people want to get away, but now it's so much more pronounced, people don't even want to deal with political or revolutionary ideas because—it's way too real. I think people know subconsciously what's going on in the world, but a lot of folks don't want to deal with it, and conscious music forces you to look at things that sometimes you don't want to look at.

But there are people out there craving that realness, and they're drawn to music like yours that's bringing attention to important issues and proving that all hip-hop isn't about promoting violence and materialism. Do you find it difficult to live up to the expectations of people who are looking for leaders in the hip-hop community?

MC ZION: I don't feel any pressure at all. We're just ourselves, y'know? We're not apologetic for who we are or our ideas. We just try to make it funky and tight, and we try to talk about what we think is important.

Tell me about the Gift of Gab (of Blackalicious) collaboration on the new album. "Stranger in My Home" is dealing with race issues in hip-hop, right?

MC ZION: Basically, Gab sums it up real well

when he says, "My crib's been gentrified." Growin' up, it was mostly black/Latino kids, underprivileged kids who were into hip-hop, and during the 90s it changed drastically. At this point, it's very much a white genre of music even though the core artists are mostly black. But as far as who appreciates and who comes to our shows, it's mostly white folks and this song is just addressing that, because it's kind of weird, as an artist in that culture to see how it's changed so much and nobody really talks about it. We didn't want to offend people or push anybody away, we just wanted to talk about a real situation.

It seems like a tough issue, because you're trying to make a living and maintain, but to do that, you need to make yourself accessible to a wide audience. So do you have problems doing things like going on an MTV-sponsored tour, because that's an institution that's obviously played a big part in the gentrification of hip-hop by making it more appealing to a broad, mostly white audience?
AMP LIVE: I don't think we struggle with it. I mean, you can use all kinds of ways to get your stuff out, and you don't have to change your records or what you're about. It's like when Sprite picked up KRS-ONE for that commercial; he had a chance to bring his message to millions more people. If you really look at how things are, this country is based on corporations, so with almost anything you're stepping to a company that's like MTV. Even if you put your own record out, the company that you're going through (for distribution and retail) is part of the same system.

Speaking of the record industry, the scenario of up-and-coming hip-hop crews being screwed over by industry scumbags or broke labels is such a cliché, but a lot of artists never recover. You guys survived the drama and became even stronger. I mean, starting your own label, putting out more albums, etc. How did you do it, and what advice do you have for others in that situation?

MC ZION: We were young, just getting out of college and into the world, so it was a good time for that to happen to us. We were able to really sit down and look at what direction we wanted to go with our lives. So just because we were disappointed by the fame or business aspect or whatever, it didn't change how we felt about the music. Just going through that process of getting signed, and getting to work on music, we learned a lot about making music and the industry. So we were really more hungry after that, 'cause we had almost got there to taste it, but we didn't get to, it was just like "We can't stop now."

So what are the best things about having your own label and getting to do it your way?

MC ZION: Any struggle makes you stronger, it shows you what you have inside, not just in music, but in life; you have to be persistent,

man. I mean, we went to school in Atlanta, and I see so many cats who were doing music in college, and now they're managing acts on Def Jam or DJing on the Power station in Atlanta—persistence pays off.

So why didn't you sign with any of the major labels that were interested this time around? Were you worried about being marketed in a way that you wouldn't be comfortable with?

MC ZION: We're at a point in our career where we've been shopping records for years. We know we have a fan base, we know we can go on tour, and we're smart enough. We just want to be accountable for our own actions and take it on ourselves and see what we can make happen, instead of always being upset about what someone else didn't do. Waiting for someone else to do your job is really irritating.

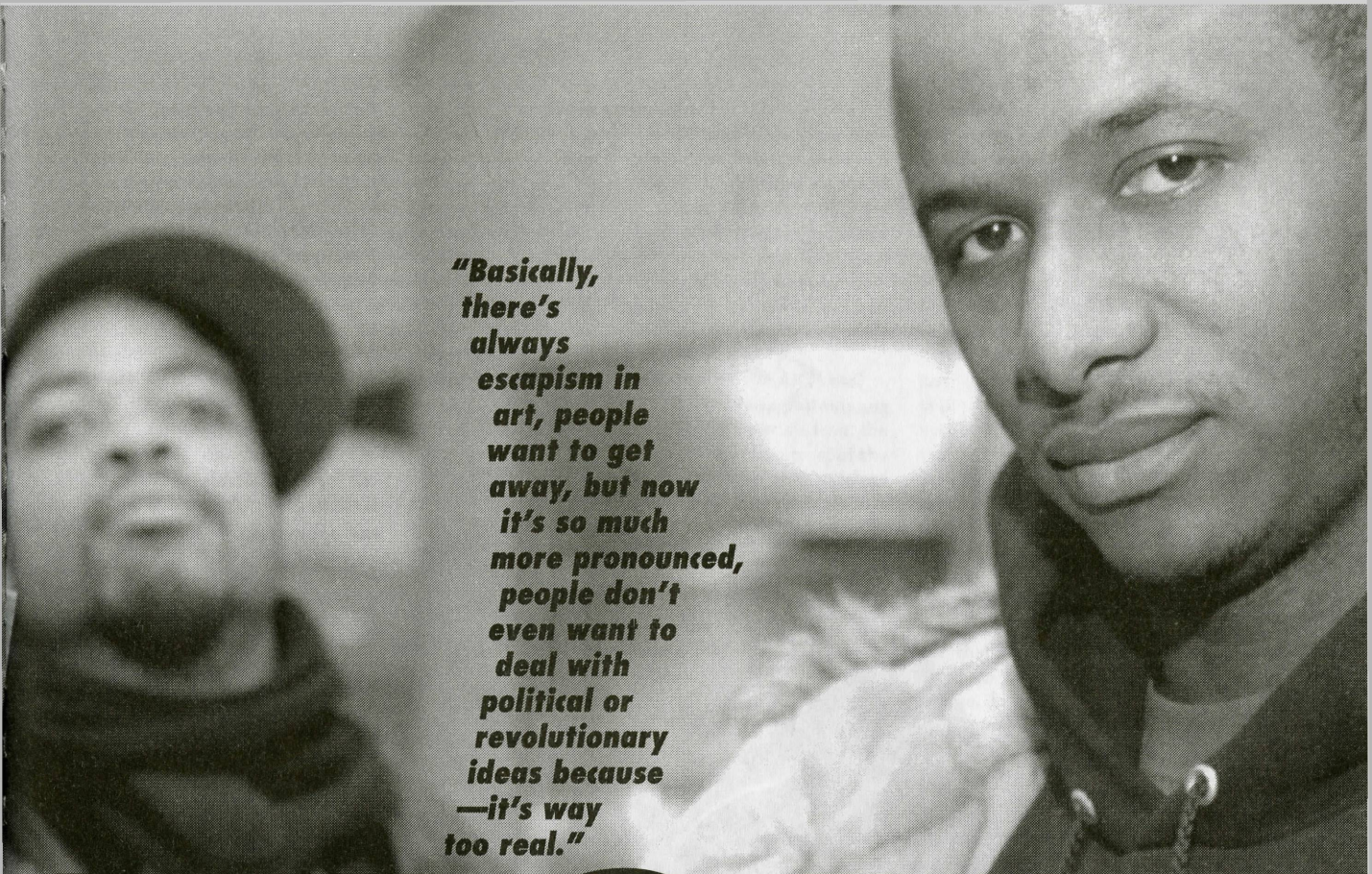
Enough of the business, I want to talk a little bit about the music. Your beats are so original. You're mixing jazz, blues, drum and bass, everything—and putting that on the template of what you need for a hip-hop beat. Is this something you're consciously doing to be a part of the evolution of music, or is it just the effect of

"Every day, blending all your influences?"

AMP LIVE: We both listen to a lot of different types of music. As a producer, I'm just trying to do all different kinds of stuff. I think it is a conscious decision, and it's a decision to keep things moving and keep things innovative 'cause you don't want to be stagnated.

Considering that a lot of hip-hop culture is heavy on machismo, have you taken much heat for any of your lyrics? So many MCs act like they don't care about women or that they don't have emotions, but you've been openly antisogynist on certain tracks and haven't been scared to rhyme about feelings and fears...

MC ZION: I don't think there's been any direct heat-taking or anything like that, but it can become a general perception, like "you're soft" simply because you talk about things that make you vulnerable, or that you're a back-



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ZION

Taking Back the Beats

packer because you don't have guns and you're not calling everybody a bitch or because you leave out those elements that somehow became associated with being "street" or "real." People are like, "Oh that's like that Common shit," but I don't even trip, because you've got to be yourself. There's always gonna be people who love you and people who hate you, and the more that love you, the more that gonna hate...but it's not really a problem.

Getting back to the new album, how did the collabo with Fred Hampton Jr. come up?

AMP LIVE: He came out to a Dead Prez show in Oakland, and then we bumped into him a bunch of times. He's such a figure in the black community that, y'know, legacy of the Black Panthers. We were just excited to figure out a way to work with him and get him into our music, so we just had him come into the

studio to speak.

MC ZION: Just to have his voice coming through...we wanted to make this album reflective of who we are and our experience. We're children of the civil rights—we just wanted to connect the whole legacy.

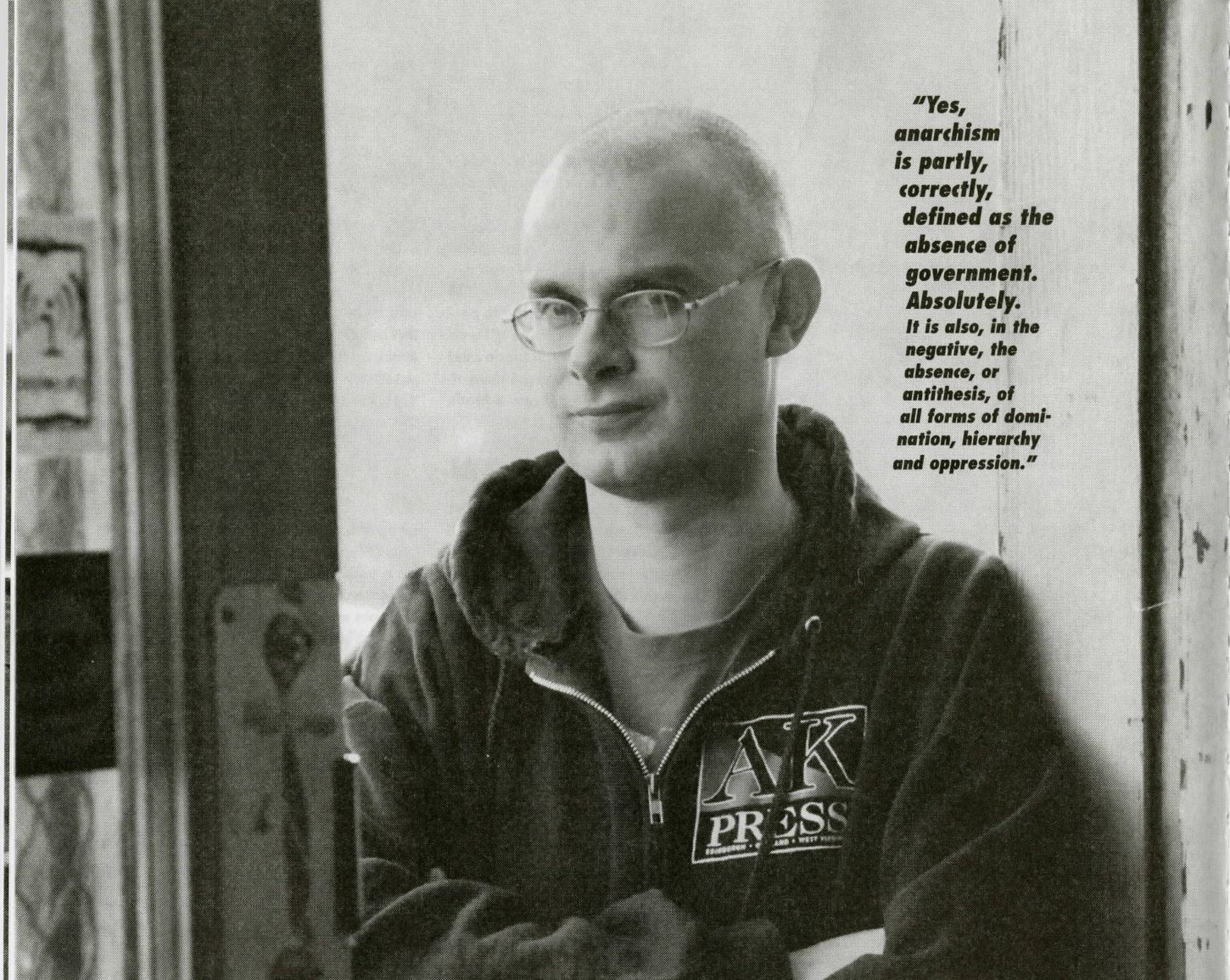
It's cool that you're all trying to make those connections, because it seems like a lot of the ultramaterialistic stuff that's been recycled so many times is just such a parody of itself, kinda like "hair" metal before grunge took over. Do you think "bling" is on the way out?

MC ZION: It's capitalism, man, it's the culture. People keep making records saying "buy more shit," and it's not helping us. I mean, black folks, we never really had nothing in this country, and people are just starting to get money—NBA guys, some rappers, some doctors and lawyers (even though they're not as visible in the black

community, on the main stage)—but most black people is broke, so the fascination with material items is basically fantasy. If you ain't never had it, you just wanna know what it's like.

Every day, out on the TV, you've got commercials telling you what you've gotta have; the whole culture is just about having things, so hip-hop is just a microcosm of that idea. I don't really see that going anywhere—I definitely see people getting sick of it and realizing slowly that it's bullshit. But it just helps the corporations when people are saying, "Buy air force 1's," "Buy these chains," "Get you a Maybach Benz." All these companies are benefiting from that, and I'm sure the corporations behind the music are tied in somewhere with the corporations making this other shit, so I don't see it going anywhere. ☹

Check out www.zioncrew.com for more info.



"Yes, anarchy is partly, correctly, defined as the absence of government. Absolutely. It is also, in the negative, the absence, or antithesis, of all forms of domination, hierarchy and oppression."

INTERVIEW BY **OJO ROJO** • PHOTO BY **SAM LaHOZ**

Ramsey Kanaan @AK PRESS

RAMSEY KANAAN IS BEST KNOWN AS FOUNDER OF AK PRESS. BACK IN THE DAY, HE WAS THE SINGER IN POLITICAL ASYLUM AND WAS IMMERSSED IN THE EARLY UK ANARCHO-PUNK SCENE. HE WAS ALSO INVOLVED IN ACTIONS AGAINST THE POLL TAX IN BRITAIN DURING THE THATCHER GOVERNMENT. TODAY HE LIVES IN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA WHERE HE CONTINUES TO WORK AT AK PRESS AND COUNTLESS OTHER PROJECTS.

UGLY PLANET: What is AK Press?

RAMSEY KANAAN: AK Press is an anarchist publisher and distributor. We're propagandists. We have a particular line to push, and we're rather keen on destroying capitalism and propagating social, and economic, revolution. As a publisher, we produce around 20-25 books, CDs and DVDs a year. As a distributor, we carry and disseminate the works—books, pamphlets,

zines, shirts, CDs, DVDs, etc, of around 350 small/independent publishers and individuals.

Who founded AK Press?

AK formally started as a collective of three folks and registered with the state back in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1990. Before that, it had been operating out of my bedroom for the previous ten years.

How did you fund your first books?

Unfortunately, AK has never had any outside source of funding, no rich patrons—though we're always receptive!—no grants. Just selling stuff. Before I published anything, I was already selling literature—punk zines in the early 80s, then more political magazines, pamphlets and books—and the money from that eventually built up and subsidized publishing the first pamphlets and books that bore the AK imprint. I never personally took a wage out of AK till we became legal, though I guess it could be argued that Britain's welfare state subsidized my nefarious activities somewhat through student grants and unemployment checks.

How did you get your books distributed when you first started?

By hand. In those early days, I wandered around with a plastic bag full of books at demonstrations, gigs, events and book fairs and sold stuff out of it. Later, I realized that it was easier to sit behind a table, where possible. And advanced to that fine stage of book-selling! Similarly, I went around to bookstores, comic stores, record stores and anywhere else I thought might be interested, and got them to take stuff. Initially on consignment. Later, as I built relationships with them, on invoice. And I eventually started producing catalogs. Pretty much the same as AK does now, just not on such a grand, ahem, scale.

What advice do you have for someone who wants to start their own publishing or distribution operation?

Go for it! Of course, don't expect to make any money. But, presumably, that wouldn't be the prime motivational factor for wanting to publish, or distribute, radical literature. Start small. Hang in there. Be sensible. It helps if you have a passion for it, too!

AK is an anarchist organization, but you live and work within a capitalist system. How are your staff, distribution, accounting and profits different than most? How do you operate?

On the one hand, we operate—and have to—like any other capitalist business. We have to provide accounting to the state; we have to pay ourselves, our landlord, our vendors who supply us with stuff, our authors' royalties, etc. We sell products. In that sense, we are no different from any other enterprise involved in producing/selling/purchasing, etc. The first difference, I guess, is that, hopefully, the products we're pushing are somewhat socially useful! Second, internally, we organize, in our daily work lives, as anarchists. We are all paid the same at AK, irrespective of the job that we do—whether it's packing boxes or networking computers. We all have the same decision-making power within the collective—we have no managers, no bosses, no owners, no hierarchy. And we all collectively take part in the decisions that affect our work—what we publish, what we choose to distribute, whether we can afford a wage increase.

Is AK Press a nonprofit?

We are not a nonprofit. Legally, we are a regular California corporation. We did look into becoming nonprofit, largely because we would love to avoid paying taxes, but nonprofits are run by an outside board of directors, who have all the final decision-making power. That is, of course, the antithesis of direct workers' control of the workplace, so we had to pass on that idea.

What are your current duties at AK Press?

I'm responsible for the ordering/attempting to keep in stock all of the materials from the publishers we distribute, and I do most of the descriptions/data entry in our print catalogs and website. I also share such collective joys as answering the phone, coordinating publishing projects, planning our future and taking out the recycling.

Why did you move to the U.S.?

Purely selfish reasons. I wanted to live in the Bay Area. Largely because of the food and the weather. I managed to convince my comrades back in Scotland that it would make sense for us to have, at that time, a San Francisco branch of AK. They agreed...the rest, I guess, is history, somewhat.

Do you think the place for activism is the U.S.?

I'm not entirely comfortable with the word activism. I believe in folks controlling their own lives. I believe in the self-management of the working class. I am very skeptical of the idea of "activists" who are somehow different from a community, a locale, a class... The place for self-management, for control, is wherever we find ourselves...our workplaces, our communities, our homes.

So, is anyone at any place at any time an activist? The person who returns a defective pair of jeans to the Gap, or the person who argues over their phone bill with the phone company, the woman who tells her husband to help with the child support?

Yes, no, perhaps, and maybe!? Activism presumably involves some sort of community. Arguing over your credit card bill is, by that definition, not activism. Consumer advocacy, i.e., helping someone else deal with their credit card bill or rent or electricity bill might be an excellent form of activism...especially if it is empowering others to take back a measure of control over their own lives... Part of the misconceptions, and certainly problems, I have with the general positing of who is an activist, or what is activism, is that it ignores much of what does already go on, which is not perceived as activism, let alone given support and/or credence by the "activist" or the "Left" for that matter. I think folks organizing collective babysitting is an excellent form of activism. Local residents organizing to get speed bumps put in their street for safety is an excellent form of activism.

You mentioned the destruction of capitalism. But many would argue that capitalism is a good thing. They would say, "Just look at all the people around the world who would love to migrate to the U.S. Capitalism obviously helps people if millions of people are lined up to be part of it."

Many do argue that capitalism is a good thing. Presumably, we're not going to point to if most, or even many, think that's a good thing, then that's right. The majority of those who voted just voted to re-elect Bush. In the last elections in pre-Nazi Germany, the Nazis got 42% of the vote and were by far the biggest single party, that is, they came to power with the popular vote... Britney Spears sells millions of records...I could go on and on in that vein, but presumably you get that point. Realistically, most migration, not just to the States, is caused by the massive economic dislocation and destruction of capitalism. If the West is destroying the South wholesale, is it any wonder that the inhabitants want to get away from that!? And, of course, if the dominant ideology/mass media is Nike,

"Throughout history, folks have organized themselves, emancipated themselves and resisted the authoritarian tendencies of bosses, rulers, kings, political parties...Some have explicitly called themselves anarchists; others have not. The labels don't actually concern me too much. The content, of course, does very much."

Coke and Disney, who wouldn't want to emigrate to the land of abundant riches? Needless to say, those who do manage the emigration to the U.S. and Western Europe, whether legally or otherwise, find that it's not necessarily all it's cracked up to be. Much of my family—from Egypt and Lebanon—have emigrated, in the last 20 years, both legally, and not so legally, to various countries, including the UK and Canada, and who can blame them; I wouldn't want to live in Egypt. But just because they get more bread in their shit sandwich in the West, they're still eating a shit sandwich...and you don't need me to tell you that good Arabic bread is a 100 times better than Wonder Bread!

In school, we are taught that without capitalism and corporate competition, we wouldn't have all the technological advances we have today. Every day, faster, more affordable computers are built. Many people are tapped into that technology, allowing for do-it-yourself publishing and filmmaking. Even Wal-

"Have ordinary folks been able to affect their lives and the course of history? Absolutely. Just look at history and at what is happening now. Look at the gains, progress, call it whatever. They have only been made by fighting against power, authority, governments and all their apparatus of repression and propaganda."

Mart's aggressive competitive pricing allows people to acquire things they could not afford years ago. Be it a DVD player, a new bike or new tires for their car. That benefits everyone. Or does it?

Of course not. It's been very well documented now, even in the mainstream media, that Wal-Mart is not really good for most people. Not for the towns that it moves into, closing down all the local stores, not for local employment, not for local producers that never supply the big chains, and certainly not for the workers in Latin American and Chinese sweatshops and labor camps that actually produce the DVD players and clothes and bicycles. We are taught lots of things in school that are complete nonsense. Of course, the myth of capitalism and progress is just one of them. Of course, the fact that most technological advances have been funded by the military and governments, and before that, by the patronage of kings and nobles, doesn't make such science necessarily good, or bad. It's what it's used for, and the impact on the environment—both human and natural—of that use.

In the media, the word anarchy is used to describe lawlessness and chaos. The dictionary defines it as "complete absence of government." Is this what AK Press represents? Presumably, no one reading this is surprised that the corporate media ridicules, obscures, denigrates, when it's not ignoring, anything and everything that doesn't fit its corporate worldview. Hence, it's no surprise that anarchism has been vilified, attacked, misrepresented, distorted and caricatured ever since it first appeared as an ideology...by governments, the media, and their agents worldwide...to expect anything different would be naive, to say the least. Yes, anarchism is partly, correctly, defined as the absence of government. Absolutely. It is also, in the negative, the absence, or antithesis, of all forms of domination, hierarchy and oppression. In the positive, it is a sys-

tematic form of social, political and economic organization. Instead of hierarchical, top-down ways of organizing, anarchism is the structure of horizontal forms of organization. And it is, above all, the self-emancipation of the working class.

So, is anarchism a "political system?" The absence of government but with some form of organization that holds it together?

It's partly semantic, of course. Anarchism is a form of social and political organization. It is also an ideology that propagates such forms, and a process, which attempts to put such forms into action. Is that a political system? Maybe.

Are there any historical examples of actual working "anarchist" communities or societies?

Yes, and not just historical, but in the here and now, too. But historically speaking, there have been numerous large-scale anarchist revolutionary organizations, and attempts. The most famous would be the Spanish Anarchists, before and during the Spanish Revolution/Civil War of 1936-38. Prior to 1936, anarchism was the prime organizer of the Spanish labor movement. The anarchist trade union, the CNT, at its height, had over 2 million members, and during the revolution, much of Spain, both industrially and rurally, was organized along anarchist lines. Like most anarchist organizations, it was, of course, smashed by a combination of fascism and communism. The other most famous large-scale example would be the Russian Revolution. Both in terms of the Factory Committees and the insurgent peasant army in the Ukraine. The Mexican Revolution of Villa, Zapata and Magón was anarchist. Organized labor, throughout much of the world, up until around the First World War, was predominately anarchist. Remember the Haymarket Martyrs and Knights of Labor, not to mention the IWW [Industrial Workers of the World] here in America? Most of the Latin American labor federations, plus those in China, Japan, France, Sweden and Italy were anarchist. Then there was the Free School movement here in America. The Utopian farm movement. More recently, one would point to the Zapatistas, the factory occupations and

"I think change can be effected, from involvement in where you are, where you find yourself, where your community is, with your peers and what you feel comfortable with and able to do..."

Horizontalidad in Argentina, the occupations and landless peasant movements in Bolivia, the self-organization and militancy of the villages fighting back against dictatorial Islam in Algeria. Throughout history, folks have organized themselves, emancipated themselves and resisted the authoritarian tendencies of bosses, rulers, kings, political parties... Some have

explicitly called themselves anarchists; others have not. The labels don't actually concern me too much. The content, of course, does very much. Colin Ward, in his seminal book *Anarchy in Action*, has very eloquently argued that anarchism is actually happening every day, here and now, in the typical action of most normal people. That it is only because of folks' ability to organize collectively, support one another, engage in mutual aid, that the world is able to function at all. It does so despite, not because of, laws and codes and governments and officialdom and bureaucracy and all the enforcement apparatus and propaganda apparatus.

Since U.S. corporate politics affects so much of the world, should people who want to fight that power stay in the U.S. and try to effect change here, from within, or should they leave and try to change things from the outside?

There is an argument, for sure, that because the U.S. controls the world, that it is in the belly of the beast that most effective change can come around. I hear that argument. I don't necessarily agree with it. Partly because I don't really agree with the typically middle-class/privileged definition of activism that is posited in the previous question. I think change can be effected, from involvement in where you are, where you find yourself, where your community is, with your peers and what you feel comfortable with and able to do...

But does fighting "the man" really work?

Have ordinary folks been able to affect their lives and the course of history? Absolutely. Just look at history and at what is happening now. Look at the gains, progress, call it whatever. They have only been made by fighting against power, authority, governments and all their apparatus of repression and propaganda. Have "professional revolutionaries" made their mark for the better? That, I find debatable.

One can argue that things have always stayed the same. The system only changes the facade, but, internally, the system works the same and may actually be getting worse...

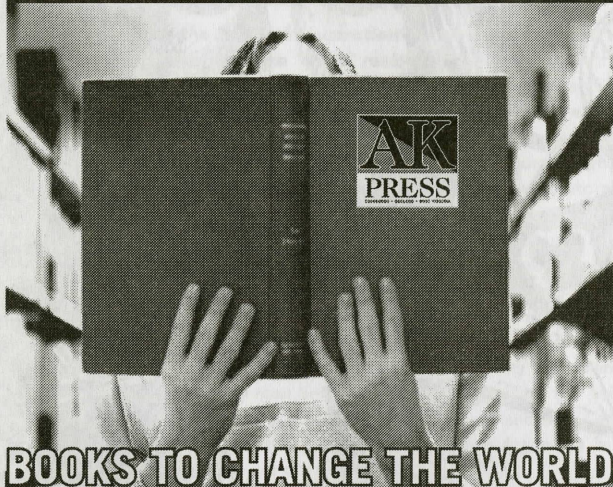
To some extent, certainly, capital and capitalism, not to mention hierarchy and domination, have found themselves to be incredibly adaptable and quick thinking. And for sure, much of the classic revolutionary theory, be it anarchism or Marxism, was predicated partly on the idea that "progress," and the inevitable collapse of capitalism under its own contradictions, was inevitable. But I do think remarkable strides, gains and emancipatory moves have been made in the last couple of hundred years, and in the last few decades. And if I thought that real, lasting revolutionary change, anarchism, wasn't possible, particularly in my lifetime, then I guess I'd be wasting my time. I'd like to think that I haven't been doing that. ☺

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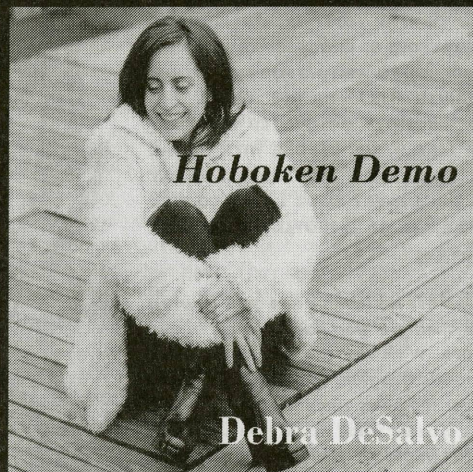
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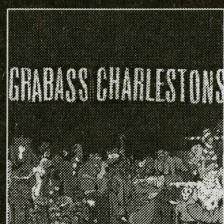
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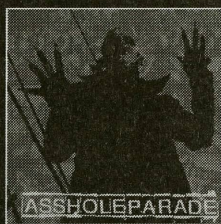


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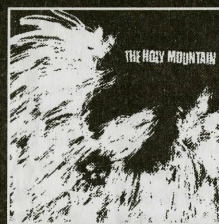
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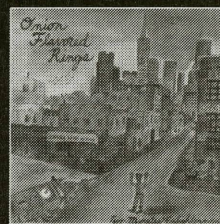
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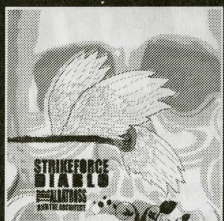
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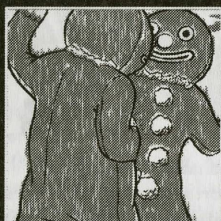
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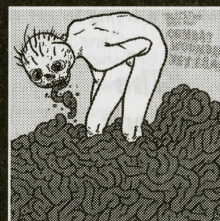
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SINCE GAINING INTERNATIONAL ACCLAIM WITH THE RELEASE OF HER BESTSELLING EXPLORATION OF CORPORATE GLOBALIZATION, *No Logo* (2000), AWARD-WINNING JOURNALIST NAOMI KLEIN HAS DEVELOPED INTO ONE OF THE MOST INSIGHTFUL AND RESPECTED VOICES OF PROGRESSIVE JOURNALISM. IN ADDITION TO WRITING FOR *THE NATION*, *THE GUARDIAN* (UK) AND *THE GLOBE AND MAIL*, SHE RECENTLY COMPLETED HER FIRST FILM, *THE TAKE*. WHEN I SPOKE WITH NAOMI, SHE WAS AT HOME IN TORONTO, PRESUMABLY READING, SINCE EVERY BOOK I SEEM TO PICK UP HAS HER SEAL OF APPROVAL ON THE BACK COVER...

UGLY PLANET: *It's looking like your country might be seeing a population jump in the near future. With the talk of progressives seeking political asylum up North is probably the loudest it's been since Viet Nam. As a Canadian citizen, what would you say to all the people tempted to flee to Canada rather than face four more years of Bush?*

NAOMI KLEIN: Well, that's how I ended up here. My family is American on both sides, and my parents were part of a huge exodus of activists who came to Canada during the Viet Nam War. We actually moved back to the U.S. for four years after I was born in Montreal, but they liked it so much, we decided to come back, largely because of the public health care system and public broadcasting. My mom worked in public broadcasting, and my dad works in public health, so I would say that we left because of the war, but we stayed because of the social safety net.

I would say "Welcome" to anybody coming to Canada, but it would be really bad for the world if too many American progressives abandoned ship. As a Canadian progressive, I think the most important place for us to concentrate our energies is making sure that American war resisters who want to refuse to fight in Iraq are welcomed in Canada, as my parents were, and given refugee status, because the war is illegal. There are three soldiers who are trying to get refugee status in Canada right now, and thinking in terms of how we could have an effect on U.S. policy, there needs to be increasingly a strategy of how to isolate American military adventurism and how to increase the costs. One way to do that is to make it a viable option for the war resisters trying to come to Canada. If they get refugee status, you'll start seeing

"The tremendous error in strategy was to build a movement against Bush, instead of against war."



NAOMI KLEIN

No Slaves, No Masters, No Logo

more and more soldiers coming to Canada and, frankly, I think that's a lot more important than just the cultural exodus of progressives, who might just be embarrassed about the election results.

Speaking of the war, seeing the effects of U.S. militarism first hand—being engulfed in the war zone—must have intensified your perspective on Iraq. Would you say that witnessing that destruction strengthened your resolve in fighting to expose the truth about the hypocrisy and violence of the U.S. occu-

pation?

I've been in situations like this before, like when I was researching Indonesian sweatshops for *No Logo* and you meet people who look you in the eye and give you a kind of sacred trust, because they don't have the power that you have to amplify their voice and bring their message to decision makers that you have (as a journalist.) We (Naomi traveled with photographer Andrew Stern—ed.) were in Sadr City while it was being bombed, and mothers would grab my arm and look me in the eye and say, "You have to tell the world

what's going on here."

The trust itself is so moving, because Iraqis have such tremendously good reasons not to trust people like us. The poorest Shia have been betrayed so many times by the so-called international community. Particularly during the first Gulf War, when they were encouraged to rise up and then left to be slaughtered; then, during the sanctions; and now, once again, after being promised liberation and democracy. But still, in the face of these serial betrayals, there is this capacity for hope that this foreigner might actually tell the truth.

So how accurate is the Bush administration's stance that the majority of the "Iraqi" resistance fighters are really border jumpers, Islamic militants pouring in from around the Arab world to derail the peace process? Also, considering the overwhelming force such as the devastating and repeated air strikes in so-called pockets of resistance like Falluja, what's your opinion on the sustainability of this resistance?

The White House spin has been tremendously contradictory, because on the one hand, they're saying it's all foreign insurgents, but at the same time, if you look at their actions in Falluja, they classified every man between the ages of 15 and 50 as an enemy combatant. The U.S. has inflicted total collective punishment on the city of Falluja, as they've done in Mosul and elsewhere. So their actions completely contradict their rhetoric of "The good people of Falluja have been kidnapped or held hostage by these outside terrorist forces," because their actions on the ground indicate that they're well aware that who they're actually fighting are Fallujans.

In terms of whether the Iraqi resistance is sustainable, I think the U.S. strategies are geared towards this idea that the resistance is a contained army, and they release these figures saying "we got 75 percent of them" or whatever, which doesn't account for the fact that they're creating new enemies with every attack. I certainly saw that when I was there. The U.S. would attack a mosque, and people who I never thought I would hear this from would say, "OK, this has gone too far. Now, I'm thinking of joining the resistance."

It certainly doesn't seem like the most effective way of rebuilding a nation. But I do want to get into The Take (see sidebar review.) So can you give an update on the legal status of the re-occupied factory movement in Argentina, because I know that you've reported that there are over 200 such workplaces employing over 10,000 workers, but despite Zanon and other collectives reaching record-high production levels, this movement is fighting for survival against capitalist interests.

The situation isn't solidified yet, but there are some concrete initiatives, some bills coming up in Congress in Argentina which would bring

definitive expropriation (of the factories.) My partner, Avi Lewis, who directed the film, is in Argentina right now, finding out more about what's going on, so we're in a better position to let people here know how they can help, because people have been really inspired after seeing the film, and they want to learn about this movement and get engaged and help out, precisely on the issue of how precarious these workplaces are. (See thetake.org for more details.)

Since Argentina was a military dictatorship where 30,000 were "disappeared," there's this history of international pressure having an effect. But the problem we have now, and I was just talking about this with some friends, is that the big NGOs like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International that played these really important roles in the 70s and 80s really have not adapted to the new face of human rights abuse, because if it's not a military dictatorship, they don't really know how to respond to situations of governments inflicting abuses at the behest of corporations, so we really need to fill these gaps with our own networks, because we can't wait for the NGOs to realize that there's a human rights crisis. That whenever people try to fight to survive, they face tremendous police repression, often under the guise of the so-called War on Terror, and this is getting worse and worse, not just in Argentina, but across Latin America.

So what are the broader implications of these unemployed workers successfully collectivizing some of the major means of production in the wake of an IMF-induced economic collapse?

Well, when we show our movie, outside of kind of trendy, urban settings, in more working-class areas or rural communities that have lost their major manufacturing bases, it resonates with them, very, very directly, because they've been feeling the effects of these same policies. In these towns that are seeing their ways of life disappear because of a factory closure or mill closure or a crisis resulting from agricultural consolidation, the crisis is already there and it's been there for a couple of decades. The slogan "occupy, resist, produce" comes from the landless peasant movement in Brazil, the MST. They use it in the rural setting to talk about how successive Brazilian governments have been promising them land and failing to deliver. So that spirit of "stop asking, start taking" has been a huge part of the MST, which is probably the largest social movement in the world; they chop down fences around unused farm land, occupy it, and turn the land into cooperative farms.

That spirit has morphed and been retrofitted from rural Brazil to suburban Buenos Aires. I'm not trying to say that now that this has happened in Argentina, it's gonna happen in Syracuse, New York; I'm just saying that you can see the similar spirit in totally different environments—the combination of direct democracy and direct action. I do think that

there are some very important things we need to learn from the arguments that the occupied factory workers are making in court. One of those arguments is about changing the bankruptcy laws, because now, whenever a company goes bankrupt, there's a list of creditors (suppliers, bank, government), and the workers, who are usually owed back wages and pensions, are usually the last ones to get paid. They want to be the first to get paid, because the way it works now is that the government usually sells off the machines and pays off the creditors with whatever little money is made, and obviously the workers almost never get their money. So what they're saying is, "Don't sell the machines, pay the workers back with the machines."

The main argument they're making is that the community has put more public money into the factories than private investors. We hear so much about the right to private property and private investment, but in Argentina, and really everywhere in the world, we have this system that tells governments what they have to do is create the best possible conditions for doing business, the best incentives to lure multinationals to their little corner of the world instead of somewhere else, which is competing with them by offering better tax rates, cheaper utility rates, cheaper workers and so on. So when a factory that has been collecting all this corporate welfare for decades decides, "I don't like it here, I'm going to move somewhere cheaper," the question is, "What rights does the community, which has been so heavily subsidizing this corporation have?" and the answer that's coming from the occupying workers is, "They have a right to the machines."

Anti-globalization question: Did Seattle matter? Disconnected from globalization? Compared to other nations?

Well, I think that the issues are there in the U.S., but it isn't articulated as being part of a movement and part of that has to do with the tendency of the mainstream leadership of the U.S. labor movement to frame issues in protectionist language; it's about fear of India, fear of China, outsourcing, really pitting workers of America against workers of other parts of the world, using language that is borderline racist at times. Most American workers don't really know why they're losing jobs. In Seattle, these national and domestic issues were being placed in a global context, so we were seeing each other's struggles and starting to drop that

"We were in Sadr City while it was being bombed, and mothers would grab my arm and look me in the eye and say, 'You have to tell the world what's going on here.'"

"...it's about fear of India, fear of China, outsourcing, really pitting workers of America against workers of other parts of the world, using language that is borderline racist at times. Most American workers don't really know why they're losing jobs."

protectionist mind-frame and see a global movement that would be connected at the grassroots.

I think the reason for the disconnect that you're citing has to deal with failure of leadership. On the part of the U.S. labor movement...and in our movements, failing to make the connections we needed to make. So much planning was framed around the actual meetings, and it became very bureaucratized. Movements aren't built around meetings; you need to build it in these communities where these policies are lived.

That said, I think that there has been tremendous progress in fighting neo-liberalism around the world and in many ways it has been stalemated. We saw this in Miami a year ago during the FTAA protests, where the protests were smaller, but because of the tremendous victories of the social movement in Latin America, the free trade agenda was halted. I think the real change was after Quebec City (2001,) because in QC, we had a huge demonstration, we had a ton of people in the streets, but inside there was still consensus, all 34 world leaders signed (the document) committing themselves to a Free Trade Zone for all of the Americas in a five-year time frame. Even Chavez signed on at that time, and then, a few years later in Miami, the resistance had moved inside, the protests in the streets were smaller (and a lot of that had to do with how incredibly militarized the streets were,) and part of it was the failure of the U.S. labor movement, but because of the victories of the progressive movements in Argentina, in Bolivia, in Brazil, in Venezuela, the leaders inside were not able to sign that document this time, because they couldn't return home if they did. It was at that meeting that the dream of the FTAA was really set back, and no progress has been made...

...And it seems farther away than ever, if you consider all these stunning victories for the Left in South America, with Chavez holding power in Venezuela, Vasquez in Uruguay, and the anti-resource privatization victories like the "Water War" against Bechtel in Bolivia... But the thing that's interesting is that I was in Uruguay a couple years ago, and they have a clause in their constitution that makes it pretty easy for them to have referendums. While

I was there, they were having a referendum on whether or not to privatize their phone system, they had one about petroleum, I think one about the shipyards...I mean, they've had it about all the major public assets, rather than just going and doing it like they did in so many other parts of Latin America. And people mobilize around these referendums, and they've defeated them. The mobilizations around these really laid the groundwork for the federal victory that just took place, and that's true about the movement in Bolivia, too. Cocachamba (the town that regained water utility ownership from Bechtel) laid groundwork for gas wars that unseated the president. I think that's a lesson for us, that we should concentrate on the policies, because in North America, we think that we can just, like, jump into a federal victory, perhaps, while skipping all the stages in between, and I think Latin and South America show that these federal victories grow directly out of social movements.

In the post-Seattle era, the summit planners have been much savvier about choosing isolated or easily guarded locations, such as the aforementioned Sea Island, making it easier to discourage, marginalize and/or control large-scale protests. But having the RNC in New York last September seemed like the perfect opportunity for those advocating direct action in the streets as a means of catalyzing social change. Activists representing a huge spectrum of interests planned and mobilized for months. Now, one of the goals of these actions was to let the rest of the world know that not all of America supports Bush, and this intention was certainly realized, but the fact that George Bush won the election would indicate that the main mission of these activists was not realized. Would you characterize the anti-RNC protests as a failure? (How were the Republicans able to escape this potential disaster relatively unscathed? What lessons can be drawn from this episode in terms of protesting more effectively?)

We can't lump all the actions together. There were the big, mainstream marches, and there was the direct action, but there were many of the same organizing principles at work. The tremendous error in strategy was to build a movement against Bush, instead of against war. I think a movement against the war in Iraq could have existed alongside the Kerry campaign, but there were somehow far too many people who bought this idea that the work would start after November 3. They thought that in the time leading up to the election, it was OK to let the Democrats set the agenda, and in their agenda, nothing mattered but electability, and whatever moral compromises were necessary in the name of electability, as defined by their incompetent experts, were acceptable compromises for this greater good, and because of that, they ran, what I consider to be, a highly morally bankrupt campaign. To give one example, John Kerry kept

saying that the U.S. was bearing 90 percent of the casualties in Iraq, and a statement like this should have been met with moral indignation, and outrage and protests by the U.S. anti-war movement, because the figures are estimated to be closer to 100 Iraqi casualties for every one U.S. casualty.

To have the hopes of the anti-war movement resting on a man who refused to mention Abu Ghraib, because it would seem unpatriotic, saying nothing about the violations of the Geneva Conventions and the continued targeting of civilian neighborhoods across Iraq...this is what I mean by morally bankrupt, and Iraqis are paying the price, right now. Now we're seeing such an overt orgy of impunity since the Bush victory—not even an hour after Bush's victory speech, the bombing campaign in Falluja entered a new, brutal stage. We saw the appointment of Alberto Gonzalez, the man who authored the torture memo, saying that the Geneva Conventions were "quaint," setting the stage for Abu Ghraib, and now, Condoleezza Rice replacing Colin Powell...I think that if there would have been an anti-war campaign, or at least if the anti-war movement had used the elections as an opportunity to insist that these issues be on the agenda (civilian casualties, war crimes, Abu Ghraib, etc.) it would have been harder, even if Bush would've won (I think a true anti-war campaign could've won,) but the atmosphere of impunity created by Kerry's moral bankruptcy would not have been possible. So now we have the worst of both worlds: Bush for four more years, and none of the key anti-war arguments anywhere on the map of national discourse. ☹

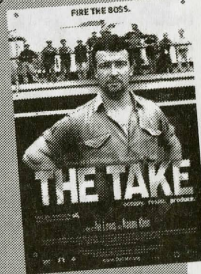
THE TAKE

A film by: Avi Lewis & Naomi Klein

Starring: Bill Clinton, Naomi Klein, Avi Lewis, Juan Domingo Peron

In the wake of the IMF-induced economic collapse of 2001, groups of Argentinian workers faced with no other employment options began tak-

ing over the shut-down factories under the slogan "Occupy. Resist. Produce." Klein and director Avi Lewis follow the struggles of one collective trying to gain legitimate ownership of their machines despite the efforts of debt-ridden owners and neo-liberal politicians. Frantic community rallies and slingshot battles against police trying to remove workers from factories emphasize the widespread support of this influential social movement. By allowing the workers to explain their stories and documenting their rollercoaster battle, *The Take* succeeds in humanizing often dry macroeconomic issues without being overly sentimental or relying on the usual talking heads. (www.thetake.org)



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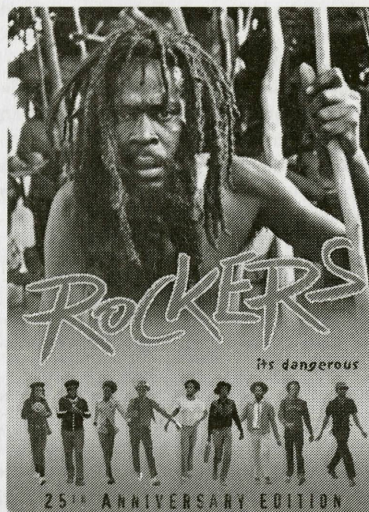
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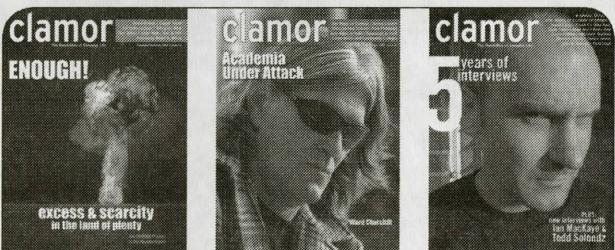
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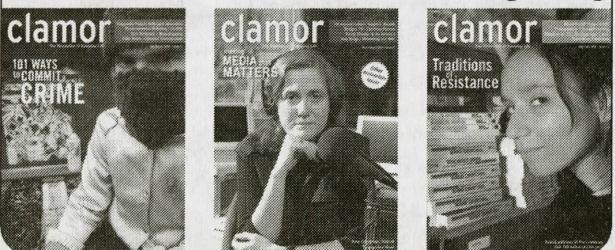
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Since the inception of culture, the history of humanity has been graced by the creative presence of a multitude of visionary female provocateurs. Following intuitive ideals in order to transcend (or simply communicate transcendence to) the primitive and stubborn collective rationale of a male/ego-dominated history, these individuals have been both rejected and celebrated almost indiscriminately. Connecting to the same rebellious and primal source, one such modern iconoclast is singer, poet and performance artist Jarboe.

In a time when the masses have almost completely turned their backs on their mystical and magical nature, Jarboe offers a unique and modern mythology that can potentially communicate, to all who may listen, a union of the light and dark forces that lie within every individual. One senses a reconciliation of multiple identities (which we all possess) integrated in the evolving conceptualizations of Jarboe. An energy that was, and still sometimes is, feared and threatened by a seemingly stagnant and dogmatic civilization, may now be the only thing that can take humanity to the next level: a new dimension of culture that expresses multiplicities and infinite personal possibilities while coming to terms with the negativity that seems to dominate history. This new cultural dimension transforms these tendencies to give life to a creative, constructive and all-inclusive future.

"I see myself as timeless," says Jarboe. "I feel ancient and ageless at the same time. I do not write or perform from any place other than the human heart."

Although, at times, the music of Jarboe is reminiscent of and categorized as industrial, it is genuinely unclassifiable. "...I am very aware of the roots of industrial music. My own music is a hybrid, an evolution of many different genres. To me, I am a modern blues singer, but if you hear "industrial" in what I do, so be it!"

Coincidentally, Jarboe, like the blues, was born and raised in the rural South, specifically in the Mississippi Delta. Her parents were both FBI agents who actually met on a firing range.

"I had no idea what they were doing there [Mississippi], but I presume it had something to do with the Civil Rights Movement."

Significantly, it was her father who planted the first seeds for her musical propensities.

"In general, my dad encouraged piano lessons. We would sit down at the piano together, and he would teach me pitch. He would play notes, and I would sing them back. Eventually, we would entertain at family cocktail parties."

Her parents, however, questioned her desire to pursue music professionally, but Jarboe was "unstoppable" and took advantage

of every opportunity to pursue singing. From her seven years of voice lessons studying light opera to studio work singing jingles, to her first lounge act in college, she always gravitated toward different and challenging musical situations, not limiting herself to the confines of one particular genre or artistic identity.

While listening to Georgia Tech. Underground Radio in college, Jarboe was first exposed to "industrial" music such as Throbbing Gristle and Coil, which would push her art into yet newer directions. Ever since, Jarboe has been determined to collaborate and create with as many artists across the board as she could. She cites many influences and sources that have inspired her over the years: "Books on spiritual exploration and avant-garde fashion and design as well as the work of painters such as Odd Nerdrum, music by bands/artists utilizing a historically collective vocabulary such as Slipknot and Messuggah and Tricky: all of these sources inform my own work as an artist."

Jarboe describes her musical vision as "...a constant process of self-discovery...never sticking to one style but taking chances to do something daring and new." She continues, "This is why I like collaborations, because they draw you into new situations and allow you to be challenged."

Jarboe has consequently had quite an impressive and extensive career to date. Receiving national recognition for her work in and outside of Swans, she has executed quite interesting collaborations with the likes of Michael Gira, Bill Laswell, Jim Thirlwell (Foetus), Lustmord, PanSonic, Mark Spybey (Dead Voices On Air), Steve Severin (Siouxsie & the Banshees), Larry Seven, Tim Bowness, Chris Connelly, Alan Sparhawk (Low), Neurosis, Meridien (with Buckethead and Bill Laswell), Edward Kaspel (Legendary Pink Dots), William Faith, David J. (Bauhaus), David Torn, Paz Lenchantin, Bill Rieflin (Ministry, NIN, KMFDM), Iva Davies (Icehouse), as well as the corporate-sponsored "Work In Progress" art program, which resulted in *The Living Jarboe* performances in New York, Chicago and Atlanta.

With a history of such contrasting varieties of projects, does Jarboe's art contain any consistent themes/concepts?

"Recently, characterwise, "Our Lady of Sorrows," Mary Magdalene, and the Virgin Mary. Conceptually, empathy for depth, a sense of sorrow/inner isolation, introspection and exploring different personalities. In college, I studied psychology, so I think and write with that state of mind."

When Jarboe performs, she transmits a definite psychological, mystical, and even supernatural mood. There are almost ritualistic and ceremonial aspects of her performance that are, as she describes on her web-

site, www.theliving-jarboe.com, "closing in on the gap between the audience/performer relationship with a complete submission and vicarious experience."

It seems, at heightened moments, that Jarboe is channeling different characters and personalities into her art that she is not consciously in control of but for which she is a conduit. "I channel as a result of intense concentration and reception to alternate realities." This sort of transpersonal expression can be said to be rooted and influenced by a variety of charged sources such as her early participation in snake-handling revivals back home, current disciplines in weightlifting, kickboxing, mountain climbing, studies in Tibetan Buddhism, and her intent to rebuild and reinvent identity by exploring the structure of persona.

"I experience life in a selective manner. I don't watch television or pay attention to most of pop culture. Things come into my awareness very intentionally, including the man I met last year who has become my close friend and lover and musical collaborator. This is a beautiful way of specific and awakened consciousness, and it only comes about through a carefully cultivated experience."

With five solo albums, 20 albums with Swans, and 50 collaborative projects with visual and sound artists all over the world, her career continues relentlessly. Her next album, *Men*, (now in the final phases) is to contain "...duets and collaborations with many noteworthy male artists from around the world." "This is something I have been working on for five years nows," she adds. Jarboe is also working on an ongoing project called *The Conduit* "It is a project in collaboration with my mailing list. Subscribers submitted names or words that I have recorded as part of the piece."

"One area I am very interested in exploring further is a heavily guitar-saturated, hard rock sound; just a non-clichéd, progressive, intense and frightening metal album!"

Indeed, it will be very interesting to follow Jarboe's career to see what she ends up doing next. Even she knows not what lies ahead.

"One thing always opens the door to something else. I want to continue to collaborate and keep my eyes open, not turning my back to any genre. I aspire to be fearless and leap before I look!" ☺

**"I see myself
as timeless...
I feel ancient
and ageless at
the same time.
I do not write
or perform
from any place
other than
the human
heart."**



"We just have to appreciate the things like the fact that there is a genderqueer on the stage at the Fillmore singing a song about butch visibility and asking the men to step aside."

LE TIGRE

Lions and Tigers and Queers

I'VE BEEN ROCKING OUT TO LE TIGRE FOR YEARS. I REMEMBER WHEN I FIRST GOT THEIR *FEMINIST SWEEPSTAKES AND SELF-TITLED ALBUMS*. I LISTENED TO NOTHING BUT THE QUEER FEMINIST-CHARGED SCREAMS, HOT BEATS, AND SAMPLES OF ARTISTS SPEAKING AND ACTIVISTS CHANTING AND SNIPPETS FROM DYKE MARCH BROUGHT TO ME BY THE TRIO MADE UP OF KATHLEEN HANNA, JOHANNA FATEMAN AND JD SAMSON. HOW HOT IS THAT? NOW LE TIGRE IS ON THE COVER OF EVERY FEMINIST MAG ON THE RACK AND IS GRACING RADIO STATIONS ACROSS THE COUNTRY, FINISHING UP THEIR U.S. TOUR AND SOON TO BE OFF TO AUSTRALIA AND JAPAN FOR MORE TOURING. I WAS ABLE TO CATCH JD FOR A MINUTE TO CHAT ABOUT THE BAND'S NEW ALBUM, SWITCHING FROM AN INDIE TO MAJOR LABEL, ART, AND QUEER VISIBILITY.

UGLY PLANET: *I wanted to talk to you a little bit about the decision made to leave Mr. Lady Records. I know that the decision to sign with Universal, a male-run, mainstream record label, was a bit of a shock to a lot of the community. Why did you choose Universal over another women-run or queer label?*

JD SAMSON: Well, we found out about three years ago that Mr. Lady was not going to be putting out any new records, so we began hunting for a new label. Honestly, we met with so many different kinds of labels trying to find our new home. It was really difficult for us to

decide what we wanted to do with this record, and what we wanted a label to do for us. I think because what we were writing was so much more dynamic and musically complex than our last record, it seemed like an interesting idea to work with a major label and try to get our message to a broader audience. We didn't end up signing to Universal/Strummer until the record was almost all the way recorded. This was actually super rad because we still had all of the power of writing and producing and recording without anyone else's input but our own and our co-producer, Nick Sansano.

Do you feel (your last) album strays from the original sounds of Le Tigre that were present while you were on Mr. Lady, and did you all go into production with the intention of making this album a more accessible sound for a larger audience?

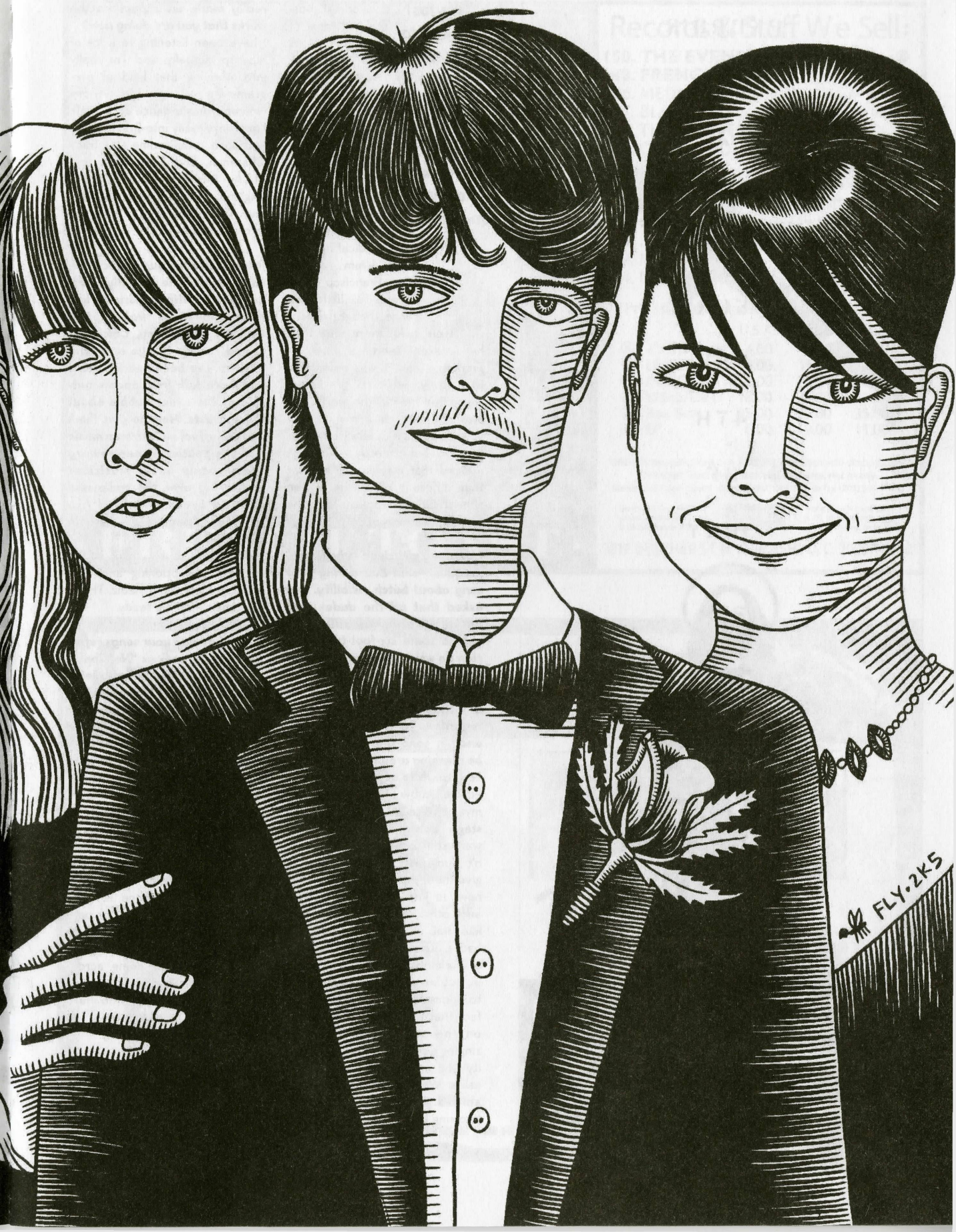
We worked on this record for actually about three years. We wanted to grow as musicians, and we spent a lot of time researching and learning about what we wanted to make. We think this record is much more dynamic and round and sonically full than our other recordings. We were psyched to work with Nick Sansano, who had worked with such bands as Sonic Youth and Public Enemy, which are both bands that we love a lot. We didn't want to make the first record over and over again; we wanted to do something a little bit more advanced in terms of production

and song structure. We had no intention of making it more accessible or for a mainstream audience at all, but we did notice that it seemed more accessible as we were finishing the record.

I noticed that on this tour some smaller, up-and-coming, fabulous electronic and hip-hop freaks opened up for you that are close friends of mine, like Robosapien and Violetta Beauregarde. Do you all insist on making those decisions of who will be opening for you?

Well, we definitely like to play with our friends and bands that inspire us. We have some control over that for sure. We have asked almost all of the bands that open for us in the States and most of them in Europe. Our rule is that bands that open for us have to be either women or queers, except for some really good bands like Measles Mumps Rubella, who we love. I guess there are exceptions to every rule. We are psyched to have had Lesbians on Ecstasy and the Gossip and Gravy Train!!!! on tour with us. It has been a blast.

In this past tour, it appears that the number of non-queer audience members—mainly men—has increased noticeably. How do you feel about more men coming into the venues and taking space in the front rows away from women and transdudes and screaming lyrics like "FYR—Fifty Years of Ridicule"?



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"We just want to give shout-outs to people who have inspired us and continue to inspire us."

It is odd, I must say. But most of the time, it is also beautiful. Most of the men at our shows are so respectful and really sweet. It's a rad thing to watch straight men respecting queers and women and enjoying radical feminist art. Hmm... at the San Francisco show, it was a little bit strange though. There were a lot more men than have ever seen us in San Francisco, and it was noticeable that they weren't the most respectful men in the world, but also not the worst men in the world. I guess it differs from show to show, but honestly we haven't noticed that many more men or that different of a vibe at the shows. On the whole, it feels the same as it ever was.

I know my girlfriend—who is genderqueer—said that during your song about butch visibility, you asked that all the dudes step back, but she was still stuck behind some six-foot-tall dude. How do we, as a community, deal with situations like that, and do you think that all of the audience is getting what you are saying in regards to feminism, or is it just another song that the guys will be moshing around to and doing keg stands to at frat parties?

Funny. I know I felt helpless then myself, because I was the one on stage with the mic, but there were still some guys that wouldn't budge. It sucked. I tried to give them the evil eye. I think we have to just be strong and feel each other's support in moments like that. It would be rad if we had a questionnaire at the front of the club before we let people in, but we can't and we just have to appreciate the things like the fact that there is a genderqueer on the stage at the Fillmore singing a song about butch visibility and asking the men to step aside. We need to feel comfortable and safe and powerful knowing that.

What artists and musicians have

really made an impact on the works that you are doing now?

I have been listening to a lot of hip-hop, actually, and I'm really into studying that kind of programming along with more women's music dance rock stuff. I'm always really into Erase Errata and Joan Armatrading and Tracy Chapman, and Sean Paul, and M.I.A., this hip-hop lady from England, and Lesbians on Ecstasy, and Timbaland, and Missy. I'm into all kinds of stuff.

It seems like the queer electronica/hip-hop scene is really starting to build with performers like Katastrophe, Robosapien, Lesbians on Ecstasy, Chicks on Speed, and Tracy and the Plastics. I've been hearing more and more talk from people outside of the queer bubble about these artists. How do you think this will affect mainstream music and the politics of our country when openly queer musicians are taking over the radio and start to become idolized like Britney Spears or Justin Timberlake?

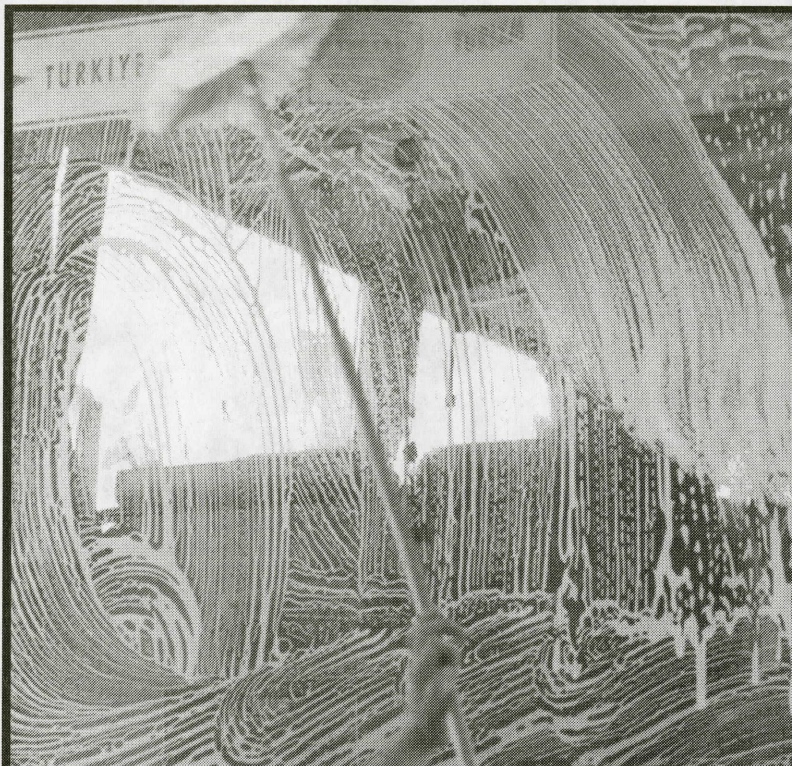
Who knows, but I think you're right. It is happening and it is exciting. I just call it vizbiz. This is our time. And I am ready.

A great deal of your songs reference artists, such as "Hot Topic" or the piece that has an excerpt of Mark Rothkowitz speaking. Is your goal here to inform your audience, and do you expect for your audience to catch these references, or is it an intervention of the art world into music venues?

I think more than anything we really just want to give props (if you will) to our favorite artists that we don't believe have gotten their due. It is super important to feel like our audience is composed of our peers and our pals. We are not trying to be uber-didactic even though I think sometimes it may come across that way. We just want to give shout-outs to people who have inspired us and continue to inspire us. ☺

Check www.letigreworld.com for more info on JD and the rest of her radical, feminist electro-punk crew.

Tina Butcher is freelance writer and the founder and artistic director of the nonprofit organization Femina Potens. Femina Potens is dedicated to promoting women and transgendered artists through workshops, events, performances and our alternative library. www.feminapotens.com



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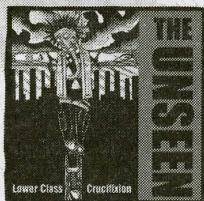


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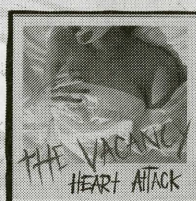
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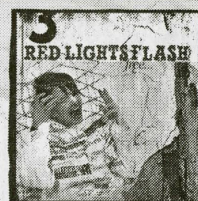
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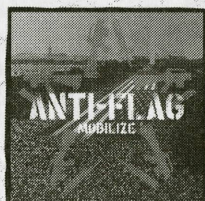
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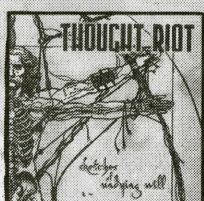
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RASPUTINA

THE EFFECT OF PLUGGING A CELLO INTO AN AMP? A THRILLING SHOCK! I DIDN'T REALIZE THAT THE CELLO COULD BE PLAYED WITH SUCH VIGOR, AND I DEFINITELY DIDN'T THINK IT COULD ROCK 'N' ROLL LIKE AN ELECTRIC GUITAR. RASPUTINA HAS BEEN PLAYING WITH ELECTRIFIED CELLOS FOR THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS AND HAS COINED THE TERM CELLO ROCK, WHICH MOST ACCURATELY DESCRIBES THE UNIQUE SOUND OF THIS TRIO. MELORA CREAGER AND ZOË KEATING CREATE LAYERED CELLO HOOKS, AND DRUMMER JONATHON TEBEEST, THE LATEST ADDITION, ADDS ANOTHER DIMENSION TO THE SIGNATURE SOUND.

SINGING DARK TALES OF VICTORIAN SOCIETY, FRONTIER LIFE, GIRLS' SCHOOLS, OPIUM AND VARIOUS CURIOSITIES, MELORA CREAGER DELIVERS VIBRATO VOCALS THAT BEWITCH AUDIENCES FAR AND WIDE. RASPUTINA DRAWS UPON THE PAST AND THE PRESENT, HISTORY AND THE LAND BEYOND, AND HAS NEVER FIT INTO CONVENTIONAL MUSIC. CALLING THEMSELVES "THE LADIES' CELLO SOCIETY," THEY PERFORM RECITALS IN VICTORIAN CORSETS AND HIGH-BUTTON SHOES WHILE UNRAVELING POETIC LYRICS THAT RANGE FROM DELICATE BALLADS AND MELANCHOLIC MOODINESS TO POWER-POP AND HUMOROUS BANTER. THE MUSIC IS SOMETIMES BIZARRE AND ALWAYS INTRIGUING. RECENTLY, MELORA CREAGER, RASPUTINA VOCALIST, CELLIST AND ORIGINAL MASTERMIND OF THE BAND COMMUNICATED WITH UGLY PLANET FOR THIS INTERVIEW.

UGLY PLANET: Where did you grow up?

MELORA: In Emporia, Kansas. A small town with a college and a slaughterhouse.

What kind of music did you listen to as a teenager?

Junior high age, I listened to obscure disco music while I rolled the papers for my sister's and my paper route. It was my black phase, and

I was into rollerskating. In high school, I liked new wave music, but different things were really hard to find there then. I was into early Tears for Fears. An art teacher who was like a mentor was really into Pink Floyd, and that affected me. Everyone loved Queen, and so did I.

I really like the CD you did called *The Lost and Found*, which is a collection of classic rock covers, but they are really good and different with the cello added in. What kind of music do you like now?

I like American vocalists from the 1930s through 1960s, a lot of old blues music, some popular things like Scissor Sisters and White Stripes. I recently studied a few old Broadway musicals, trying to analyze how those kinds of things are written.

At what point did you decide to play the cello along with a more rock and roll sound? You describe what Rasputina does as "cello rock." I mean, you probably studied classical music and learned to play that first, and after many years came up with this idea to combine it with other sounds, right?

I studied classical music pretty thoroughly as a child. I quit music in about the 8th grade and focused on visual arts for a few years. While at art school in New York, I played the cello in some bands and got involved in some "performance" scenes, for lack of a better word. Then I invented my own project combining those qualities—indie rock and female impersonators.

I really enjoy the artwork that is involved in the packaging of your CDs. There is even a book that comes with *How We Quit the Forest*. Did you do the artwork for that?

Yes, I made that book. I do most of it, and the art is yet another enjoyable, creative, Rasputina-related activity. I've also had pho-

tography by Ryan Obermeyer; I love him so.

Do you do any other visual art projects?

Pretty much only Rasputina related. There are plenty of different things to do under those auspices.

I'm planning to see you perform on Sunday with another band called *Ambitious Orchestra*.

What type of music is this, and do you have any side projects you are involved with other than Rasputina?

Ambitious Orchestra is like a real orchestra playing in rock clubs. They asked me to sing a song with them and did an arrangement of one of my songs. It was an honor, and fun. I played in the parents' band at my daughter's school fundraiser. That is the kind of commitment I tend to stress out about, ha ha.

Has having a child affected your music?

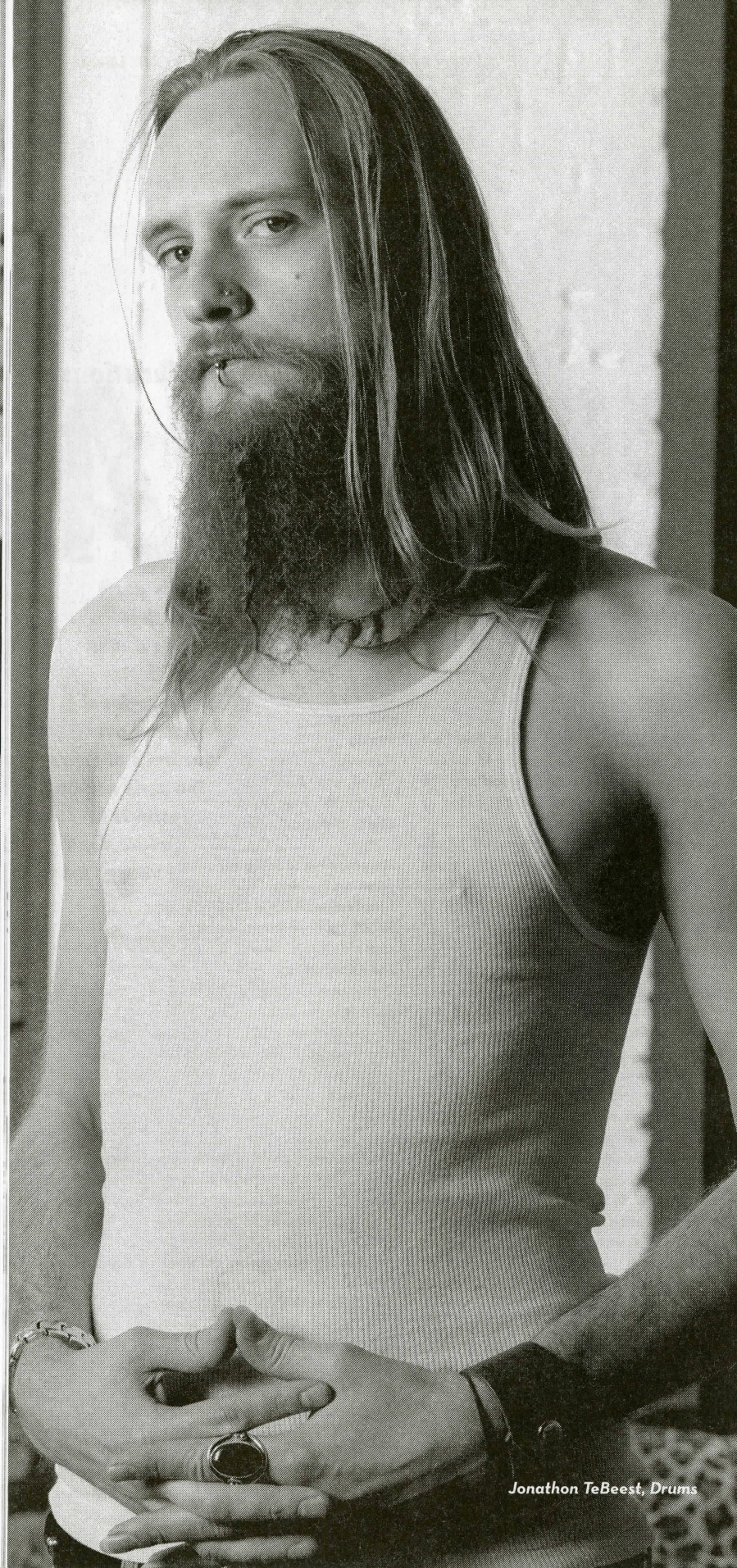
Yes, I have a better perspective about career. Having a child makes one less self-centered, which is healthier for everything.

Do people ever bring children to Rasputina shows?

Yes, when they can. Toddlers coming onstage with paper crowns that say "Rasputina." We enjoy and encourage a musical connection between parents and children.

On your latest CD, *Frustration Plantation*, you have a spoken word piece called "My Captivity by Savages." Where did you get the idea for this? Is it totally fictional, or based on

"People don't change that much, how they deal with the same emotional responses over hundreds of years. The good and bad instincts in people don't change much."



Jonathon TeBeest, Drums

something else?

I was reading about something called "captivity narratives," wherein some woman is abducted by Indians, then lives to tell, go on the lecture circuit and write a book or pamphlet. All anyone really wanted to know was did they have sex with the Indians? But it was a polite couple of hundred years there, so no one asked. But it's implicit, and these stories were marketed. It's such a crazy "genre"—I love it.

I suppose the 19th-century lecture circuit is the equivalent of today's reality TV. Do you think people are more informed and "smarter" today, or is it the same ol' bullshit?

Americans get dumber exponentially over time. The majority of people have a lazy spirit, and TV is a big part of that.

What do you think your life would have been like if you were born at the turn of the century?

Imagining your place in the past revolves around economics. People tend to want to imagine themselves as a rich or successful person, whereas the reality is that most people were poor with hard lives.

You seem very interested in the Victorian era, especially. Why does this interest you?

I'm interested in many eras, and explore them on records. *Cabin Fever!* was kind of an early 1900s Adirondack tennis camp for girls. *Frustration Plantation* was 1804 rural Louisiana.

Why do these eras interest you? Are you trying to make any form of political connections to the present?

With history, at first it seems so distant and different, but if you search it out, you can find common threads—how people don't change that much, how they deal with the same emotional responses over hundreds of years. The good and bad instincts in people don't change much.

Do you think some of your younger fans explore the history you cover in your songs, or do they just enjoy the music?

Yes, I think they do. I'm an artist trying to communicate, like, "Hey, check this out!" People send me historical stories they think I would like, and I appreciate that.

I like the references or twist on things that are a sort of role playing and about "feminine" concerns. Yes, those are issues in my head that come out in sort of a subconscious way. Early on, Rasputina

"The music business has changed a lot since I've been in it. Those big labels aren't too necessary anymore. They just waste money."

was known as a female band; all the photos were just of three ladies...but you recorded and toured with a male drummer, and he was never in the artwork or promotions. Now you have your current drummer, Jonathon, in all the photos. What made you decide that?

It was well established that we are a Ladies' Cello Society, so I didn't feel like I had to press the point anymore. And since we're a power trio, Jonathon is really pulling his weight musically; he's not just an accompanist. And he's got a fluid-sexuality vibe about him.

What is it like to perform onstage in the costumes you wear?

Zoe and I love the costuming. I think Jonathon does too, to a degree. It is pleasurable to always be hunting for costume pieces, to put together fantastical outfits. They're seldom repeated.

There are people on eBay selling items claiming they are of the "Rasputina look." Do you take that as a compliment, or does it make you uncomfortable?

Oh, I take that as a nice compliment.

Do many fellow cello players attend your shows to see what you are doing? How do classical musicians respond to Rasputina?

I think professional classical musicians haven't heard of us, but I think we contribute to students. And we talk to a lot of people who have started the cello from being excited by the discovery of how it can rock or be so versatile. We encourage everyone to try.

How did you go from being on a major label, to being on an indie label? We usually hear of artists doing it the other way around...

The music business has changed a lot since I've been in it. Those big labels aren't too necessary anymore. They just waste money. They got us started though, and I'm thankful for that. Now people can record on their own more easily. We were signed in the post-Nirvana alternative signing spree. We get smaller and more outside the music business as time passes. And it gets more lucrative and emotionally rewarding too.

In the end, do you do this for fun and money, or do you wish to accomplish anything else with your music?

I realized recently that I get a huge sense of helping people, and that that is very important to me. I get a lot of mail from people telling me how my music has helped them. It gives me a feeling of sharing and being generous. I'm interested in my audience and feel a responsibility to them.

What's the most important thing you know now, that you could have only learned through experience? In other words, what's the most important thing you've learned in your music career?

Um, that Earth is one big organism.☺



Zoë Keating, Cello

**"The only
thing I can
rant about in
this insanity,
in this fear-
mongering,
genocidal,
war-whoring
patriarchal
race to death
is that
the individual
has to revolt
every second
of the day."**

Food for Thought

LYDIA



PROFESSIONAL PROVOCATEUR AND CONSIDERED A CONFRONTATIONALIST BY SOME, LYDIA LUNCH HAS BEEN A SOURCE OF GRITTY CONTROVERSY AND HAS CARVED OUT A NICHE AGAINST THE MAINSTREAM OVER THE YEARS.

AT AGE 17, SHE WAS THE FRONTWOMAN FOR THE BAND TEENAGE JESUS AND THE JERKS, HAS BEEN ROOMMATES WITH KITTY BRUCE (THE DAUGHTER OF LENNY BRUCE), AND COLLABORATED WITH MUSICIANS SUCH AS J.G. THIRLWELL, KIM GORDON, THURSTON MOORE, NICK CAVE, MICHAEL GIRA AND HENRY ROLLINS. NEVER LIMITING HERSELF TO ONE ARTISTIC GENRE, SHE HAS BEEN A PERFORMANCE ARTIST, SPOKEN-WORD ARTIST, MUSICIAN, ACTRESS, COLLABORATOR, POET, WRITER AND OVERALL UNDERGROUND PERSONALITY. SHE HOLDS A STRONG CODE OF PERSONAL ETHICS AND YET IS ALWAYS INNOVATIVE. ALWAYS OUTSPOKEN, LYDIA LUNCH SHARED SOME OF HER POLITICAL VIEWS IN A RECENT DISCUSSION WITH UGLY PLANET.

UGLY PLANET: You are living in Europe again; any similarities to the state of U.S. politics now and the last time you were there?

LYDIA LUNCH: The last time I left America was really for one purpose, and that was to work with Roland Howard and the Birthday Party. And of course, that was in 1981 or 1982, so yeah, we've come full-circle back to the same bullshit, that's obvious. I left the States in March; I really couldn't take it anymore. Especially when you deal so heavily with the politics of it. I don't feel I need to live under the fascism that America has now blatantly turned into.

Do you feel more comfortable in Spain?

It's not even only Spain. First of all, I do much more work in Europe in general. I have more possibilities to do different kinds of work. To

have more exhibitions and installations. I always do

one or two music tours in Europe every year. I can't do three shows in America with music. Europe has always supported my political rants.

There's just no reason not to live here. (Europe has) the collaborators, the architecture, the history, the culture, the revolt... Spain has only recently crawled out from under fascism; America is now in it.

"Right now, only one percent of the population, the corporations, are the ones being served. At this point, it's obvious that everything that America proclaims to be is the exact opposite of what it really is."

Every country in Europe has witnessed war in its own backyard in the 20th century. Whereas Americans have no concept of war, unless they've been in the military and got sent abroad to a war...

I don't consider 9/11 an act of war. In the sense that...look, that kind of behavior, that kind of arrogance, America commits on a daily basis in other countries. We have one episode happen. I don't know how implicit the U.S. government was in it, the jury is still out, and we use it as an excuse to continue our genocidal behavior.

When you say Spain just got out of fascism and America just got into it, was there not any fascism in America before?

Good question... I just don't think it was as obvious as it is now. Of course, in the 50s it was very obvious what was going on. And we just went back to that.

People say that the greatest thing in America is that if you don't like something, you can change it. We have democracy. As an artist and as an activist, have you personally experienced change?

Look, there was so much protest for the last two years after 9/11. There were so many protests staged all over America, with thousands and thousands of people. What it did change is that it did incite people to gather and rally, enthused them towards protest, it did make people more active...but it also made the government more oppressive at the same time.

I've heard people say that maybe it's not the government as much as the people. And that the last election proved that.

I don't believe the numbers. They lied the first time (in 2000.) What makes anyone think they didn't lie this time, when the electronic voting booths were made by a Republican firm? I don't like the electoral vote system, I think it's nonsense. I also don't like fanatics, which is what the U.S. government is, which the Christian Right is, which fundamentalists are. Which is why we are in this most recent war in the first place. Which is why war happens.

Maybe there's a need in humans to go back to feudalism days.

[Laughs.] It is feudal time. Do we need to go back there? That's where we are. I don't know what the solution is. I've never been a solutionist. Being radical, the only possibility I think is overthrow. The whole system needs to be wiped out. And it won't be. Scandinavia works and has been working. Gender split in positions of power and positions of business. In America, we don't only need a gender balance, we also need racial and ethnic balance in positions of power, so that everyone is rep-

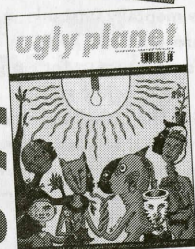
resented. Right now, only one percent of the population, the corporations, are the ones being served. At this point, it's obvious that everything that America proclaims to be is the exact opposite of what it really is. We are the most ignorant of all industrial countries. The worst education, the lowest test scores...(the low) minimum wage is an outrage. Homelessness is out of control. And there's no care for the homeless. There's no care for the mentally unstable. And I wonder why they are unstable living in a place like this. There's no concern for drug treatment, the prisons are now just gulags... How do you fix all of this? The only thing I can rant about in this insanity, in this fear-mongering, genocidal, war-whoring patriarchal race to death is that the individual has to revolt every second of the day. In small ways. Whether that's watching every dollar—you have to know who you are paying with every dollar. You have to avoid the large stores. You have to avoid the name brands. You have to avoid the labels. You have to stop buying video games, and CDs, and DVD players and the newest digital technology. You've got to just stop listening to what they are saying. And you've got to find whatever pleasure you can...even if it's the way light falls on a leaf. You've got to bring more pleasure into your life. And not distraction. I feel like the bullhorn has been permanently encased between my fucking cock stained lips at this point. The individual has many ways in which to quietly revolt.

So what's "step one?"

We have to start with ourselves, and we have to question ourselves as thoroughly as we are aggravated with them. We really just have to question exactly what it is that we are doing. Are we doing our part to protest? Are we doing our part to revolt in whatever way we can? And that's all I can suggest.

In the U.S., there's this illusion that everyone is equal and everyone is allowed to become whatever they want to...if you are not rich, it's because you are not trying hard enough. So, most people start thinking, "I'm not going to criticize Donald Trump...because if I were him, I'd do the same thing. If I work hard enough, I can be like him..." We are all equal, so he's either smarter and harder working and I'm not as smart and hard working, or the system is totally flawed and I'll never get a piece of the pie. So, in wanting the piece of the pie, they have to believe the myth and have faith in the system. Most people don't want to ruin their possibilities for the American Dream. Which is no longer a modest house and a car, but a McMansion with three SUVs parked in the driveway...

It's money driven. And it has respect only for numbers and what you are worth financially, and not what you are worth as a human being.



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And that's the big divide between America and other countries. In that they pretend that everyone is rich in America, that's the American bullshit. That's the American scam.

People respect rich people like they are gods. And "if you are not rich, you have the opportunity to be rich. Just work hard!"

Which is a lie. You don't have the chance be rich, accept it. Accept it right now. You'll probably never rise above the economic disposition that you are in right now. And within that is where you've got to try to make amends. Not by wanting more but by doing with less. By wanting less.

Do you want less?

That's the beauty with my lifestyle and in that I'm moving all the time. The beautiful part of that is that you can't collect shit. I go to people's houses in Spain, and they live so minimally, they just don't collect as much garbage. American apartments are just writhed with the art of collecting. Collecting obsessively, CDs, DVDs, video games, all of this bullshit that means nothing...it's there just to make you forget who you are and disappear into someone else's reality while you pay the big companies who produce this garbage. That's the beauty of free downloads. All my music is available for downloading. I'm not fucking complaining...the only people complaining (about free downloads) are the people with the most amounts of money.

Do you consider yourself an example of the future; in terms of DIY distribution?

The record industry has been bought and bought again, and sold and re-bought again, and again...and again. And who's benefited from it all but the corporations. I put out my last three records myself. Because I can't even count on a label like Atavistic, which is a fantastic (label), to carry the bulk of the body of my work. They just don't have the energy, the place, the time...if I want to put anything out, it's available on my website, I don't see why it has to be any other way.

There are people like you, Ian McKay and Jello Biafra, icons of the indie world. And you've all been around for a while. And anything that you do now, you have old fans and people who will say, "Oh that's the new record, I'll listen to that." As independent as it may be, people know you already. But how about new artists who no one has ever heard? How can they do things themselves?

One of the best things to do, and this is what I plan to do with my new record... My flock is small; my career is lateral. I don't see one more person in the audience than I did in 1977, to tell you the truth. And that's fine, I'm not looking to expand the audience. As long as I can keep the ones I have, I'll be happy. But one of the ways I think is basically word of mouth; people have to bring their CDs to shows and give them to the people whose music they like, and maybe they can tell other people about it. That's still the best way. You can't wait for anyone to come and find you. You have to get out there and self-promote. And give the record to people you think are going to relate to it. And who might be able to tell other people about it.

One of the main mistakes new artists make now is that, because they see how big artists are promoted, they say I need to do that too.

They have an MTV reality. Which they should disavow themselves of immediately. Because it isn't going to fucking happen. Again it's this false dream they are trying to grab onto. And that's not art, it's fucking commerce. Call it what it is. None of the artists I have the most respect for ever in their lifetime could be considered living in the lap of luxury.

What do you do for health care?

I don't have any. I had it for a while, but it was too expensive. I try not to get sick. It's ridiculous that anyone is denied decent health care because of the American medical system's backstabbing, wallet-ripping policies. The American medical system is just corrupt.

How do you get by in your lifestyle?

Moving is my most expensive extravagance. The only way I continue to support myself as an artist is, A, because of Europe, and B, because I'm extremely disciplined. I always have to think six months in advance. And at any time, the bottom can drop. It dropped

"The record industry has been bought and bought again, and sold and re-bought again, and again...and again. And who's benefited from it all but the corporations"

out in America for me. I can't get ten shows in a year in America. I'm very thankful that at 17, I had the gumption to get a job for a short period of time so I could bring Teenage Jesus here (to Europe.) That really helped, but a lot of people didn't make that opportunity for themselves. And without Europe, I would not be able to support myself. Which is why I feel no need to live in the U.S. right now. Because why should I be paying the little money I make to a country that does not support what I do? But, at the same time, I have to know what I'm doing (from) right now till next (year,) which is frustrating because it is not exactly the spontaneous life of a "bohemian artist." [Laughs.] But in doing what I do, I have to be disciplined enough to know what I'm doing and plan very carefully. If the inconvenience of not having my precious things around me is offset by having a vital existence doing exactly what I have to do and saying what I need to say, then I'm sorry, that's going to win out every time.

Is there anything you can't live without?

What do I need? What's holding us back, or what's keeping us in any one place... I need new environments; no place is the same as any place else. I need to not give my money to the enemy for unnecessary crap. What can't I live without? That's something we all need to ask ourselves. ☺

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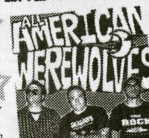


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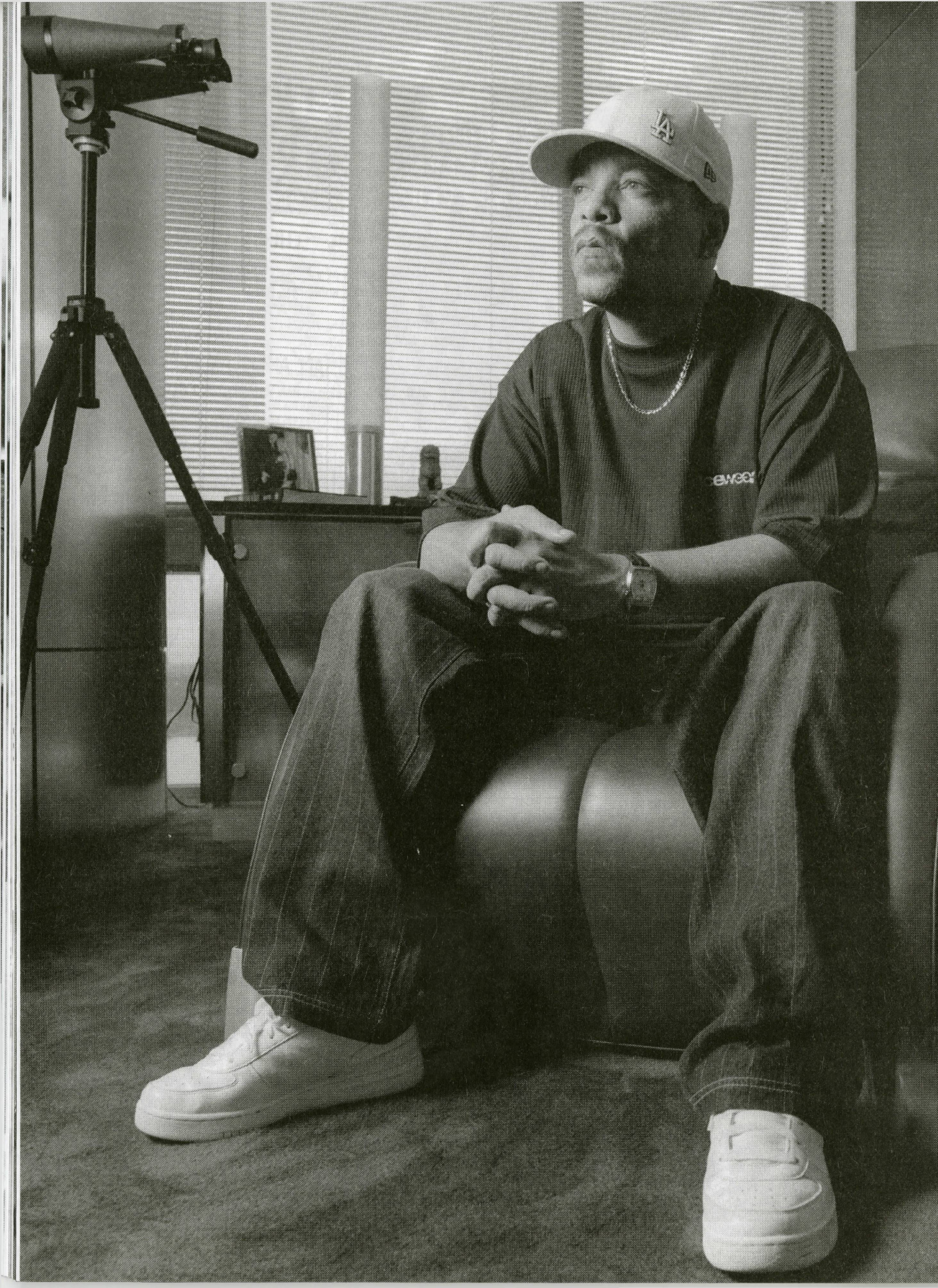
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Poli-tricks & Pimpin'

ICE-T

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UGLY PLANET: *You've been someone who's been able to be popular and well known, but your music has never gotten commercial radio airplay or been on MTV.*

ICE-T: Fortunately there are the hardcore underground people who will talk about good stuff. And will seek out good stuff. I've always been someone who just stayed out of the politics of MTV and the radio and all that begging and paying to get your record played. My stuff has always been quality, and if someone does find it, they kind of go, "Wow, why am I not hearing this on the radio?" My stuff has been too controversial, progressive; they didn't like me because I wouldn't get up in there and do the song and dance with them. I could be ten times as rich if I did things their way. But I just decided I'd take my own path. People say Ice-T you've gone mainstream, and I'm like, I've maxed out the hardcore, maxed out the underground to where everybody knows me. Like when I got on the TV show

Law and Order, people were like, "How the fuck did he get on there after he cursed out the president of the U.S. and everybody else? But he's so known, we've got to use him."

The Body Count project was the thing that crossed the borders between black and white audiences. And also created all the controversy...

Body Count brought a lot of attention to me. It was all good attention, it helped the underground know that I was serious about what I was saying—I did have an opinion. But I wouldn't advise anyone to try to get attention like that. Because you carry that with you forever. I'll be fucking 60 years old, and I'll still be the "Cop Killer." But at the time, that's how I felt. I still feel like that in many ways. Corrupt cops are the worst criminals and shit, you know. But really, there's no way I can sit back and say let's figure out a way to get the whole world to know me. It has to happen organically.

I guess it goes back to just being yourself...

And I've been very fortunate that many people line up with myself, my views are parallel to a lot of other people's views. So when I speak, I speak for a lot of people. And even people who disagree with me on one thing, they'll agree with me on another. The thing of it is that if you never say anything, how do you even know you agree with me? A lot of these people who are politically correct never say anything. You don't know who the fuck they are. Coming out of the streets, I was like, I'll be in this shit, but I ain't going to play no act. But if anything, now I just try to stay out of trouble. Because there's people out there who want to get me in a crossfire so they can sue me and take what little I've got. So I have to be on my best behavior. But besides that, try to stay as honest as I can.

"Fame is nothing more than being known by a lot of people. It doesn't mean you are great. It just means you are known."

"To me, Hugh Hefner is the biggest pimp that's ever walked the earth. What he did is that he didn't sell the actual female, he figured out a way to sell the image."

Can you elaborate on that?

You know, back in the day, if someone said something to you, you'd just punch them in the mouth. Nowadays people say things to you in order to make you punch them in the mouth, just so they can take you to court. And woop-de-doop, you dig? You become a target. For these lazy motherfuckers. So you can't do what you normally would have done in the past. Now and again I may say something that offends someone. And someone will say, "I don't like him, I'd like to fuck his life up." And a normal person, who's, like, with his family, no one is trying to fuck their life up—no one knows how they feel. But my feelings are put out there for people to know. So that allows people to hate you. People who normally would not know you. See, fame is nothing more than being known by a lot of people. It doesn't mean you are great. It just means you are known. Have you ever heard the analogy I do with the grapefruit?

No, I haven't...

Think of a grapefruit they put on television every day at 1 o'clock, it's on the channels, and the grapefruit is on a little pedestal turning really slowly. And the whole world has to watch it for 20 minutes. We can put that grapefruit in Times Square, put a rope around it and people will take pictures of themselves next to it and say, "Mommy, that's the grapefruit!" That's what fame is. People take fame and think they are special, but you are not. Let's say that grapefruit had a swastika on it; when that grapefruit went out in public, people would hate that grapefruit. That grapefruit hasn't done anything, but it represents something. So as a public figure like me, when you say something, everybody in the world hears it, and now you have to walk into them. You can be ridiculed; you can be loved. That's all fame is. Now, talent is another thing.

What did you do to earn the title "Original Gangster?"

Coming from South Central Los Angeles, I was involved with the Crip gang. And I was involved with all kinds of high-end crimes. When I came out of the Army, I came home, and we were doing robberies like [in the movie] *Heat*. I was in the lifestyle, total criminal, and with that gangbanging mentality. When rap came out, I listened to NY rap, and it all was party, throw your hands in the air. And I tried to rap like that, but the crew I was rolling with was like, "Yo nigga, rap about what we do, rap about us."

And that's when I started to rap about street cats. And it was the first blip on the radar of hardcore rap dealing with crime. Like they say, I'm the inventor of the crime rhyme. Like rap about drugs and guns. The first original gangsta record was Schoolly D's "PSK." That was him singing about a gang called Park Side Killers. And then after that came my song "Six N The Morning," which was the first rap record about someone running from the police. The kind of stuff you hear in records every day now. Then after me came NWA, Ghetto Boys, Too Short started doing dirty raps. Prior to that, you won't hear any of that stuff, it was all about parties.

Do you think gangsta has lost its meaning? Has it become a cartoon?

Let me put it like this, I don't think it's lost its true meaning; it's lost its shock value. When Too Short first yelled "bitch," it scared the shit out of people. People were really afraid when we came out, it's not that we were any more gangsta, it's just that we were new. The same way Eminem scared everybody, 'cos they've never heard a white boy talk like that. Now in his new album, you know he's gonna talk it, and it doesn't shock you. I think it's lost its shock value, and it's lost its pioneering spirit. It definitely was uncharted terrain. As far as it being a cartoon, no, the kids on the streets are just as crazy. And that's the biggest mistake that people make. Thinking that gangsta rap is fake. The lives these kids come from are extremely dangerous and hazardous. And it's not to be taken lightly.

How about pimpin', with MTV and TV commercials using the term to mean flamboyant...

Like *Pimp My Ride* on MTV... Yeah, well, the word *pimp* has been redefined. Now pimp means cool, flamboyant and outrageous. A real pimp manages prostitutes. I think Jay-Z turned the word around when he did the record "Big Pimpin'." The lyrics of that song say "spending cheese," but big pimpin' is "making cheese" from women, not spending it. You see what I'm saying? So he turned the word around to where you are a guy at a club and you are spending a lot of money. And that's the opposite of what pimpin' is. When you tell a girl, "I'm going to take you to a store and buy you shit," that's not pimpin'. Pimpin' is, "Bitch you gonna take me to the store and buy me shit." So the word has been blown out. But maybe for the best, because now it's less threatening, but there are two meanings. Kind of like I introduce a girl to one of my buddies, and I'm like, "He's a pimp," and she's like, "Yo, he's a pimp," and I'm like "No, he's a pimp!" and they go, "Oh shit!" Hip-hop has a tendency to change the meaning of things.

Do you think pimpin' is an occupation that's needed in our society?

I don't think it's an occupation that's needed. I think that if you took all the pimps away in the world, there would still be a lot of hoin'.

Is it possible to get rid of the hoin'?

Nah, there's always people who will give up themselves for money. Whether I'm hoin' at Warner Brothers or whatever. When someone puts money in front of you, there's always somebody who will step over their morals and their integrity. There will always be women who know men want to have sex, and they just, I guess, are what some people would say, "too lazy to do anything else." And they'll do that. And the pimp is the guy who comes in and organizes it. Out of all the hoin', only one half of one percent of the hos got pimps. The rest of them are just freelance trickin'. Like when a chick goes out on a date with a guy she doesn't like for dinner, whether or not she sucks his dick, she did some hoin'. And if she sucks his dick for a car, that's another level of hoin'. Most of these women who are married are hoin', because they don't really love their husbands. They're there for the security. Now if a guy manages to get himself into that kind of loop, then he's a hustler, you see. Actors have agents—that's a pimp, too. Whatever hustle there is, there's someone trying to sneak their way in. The pimp's whole swaggering style is based around ability to know he is mind-fucking somebody into giving him that money. That's why he's so cocky. "I'm making a bitch give me something she doesn't have to give me, because I'm that fly." That's why pimps are so arrogant. That's the same reason them fucking agents are so arrogant. There's not a lot of women willing to pay to be with men. But there's more men who wanna be with women, so that raises the level of that commodity, and some cats stepped in and said, let me organize this.

Are sex workers any more exploited than any other entertainer?

One thing we say in pimpin' is that the "game" is by choice, not by force. You hear all these stories about women being drugged and they can't get away...but not any more than any normal relationship where a girl is afraid to leave her boyfriend. That's looked down on in pimpin', when you terrorize your girls. Girls choose this occupation; you can't make no woman do that. I've asked women how can you do that to yourself, and they say, "Hey, I just zero out, to me sex isn't anything." If one side of your male side says, "How can a woman do that, lie on her back," but then you look to your other male side and know you too could probably fuck any broad at one time in your life, because you zeroed out sex and just turned it into an act. It's complicated. If you look at it from a high horse, it looks so terrible. You have to look at yourself during your spring break days, and how motherfuckers can do just about anything. Well, chicks have that ability, too.

We, men and women, get used to seeing the whole world from the male perspective...

It's a weird game. To me, Hugh Hefner is the

biggest pimp that's ever walked the earth. What he did is that he didn't sell the actual female, he figured out a way to sell the image. "I'm not going to let you touch my broad, I'm just going to let you see her." And he's still got a line around the block of women who want to be his hos. He ain't begging nobody. And he's selling the image, so chicks are like, "Wow, I get to show it, that's a better deal, I'll go for that." Meanwhile, he's respected in some circles. But he's looked at as a pimp in other circles.

Playboy does play that line, glamor, nudity...but nothing hardcore or too explicit. And then there are other magazines or other mediums that take it further...

Right now in the game, women determine what they are comfortable with. So if a woman says, "I like men looking at me, I'm cool with that," the next question is, "Do you wanna strip?" "Oh no, I don't even want to touch them." "You wanna go on the Internet?" "Yeah. I can control it there." "How much of yourself do you wanna show?" "I want it to stop at the playboy level, I don't want to meet the guy, I don't want to flirt with the guy, and I'm making me some money." So it's a matter of where they want to draw the line. That's why there's different publications and different levels to this game.

I've heard people say sex work is wrong because of what you do to your body. But if you look at the sports industry, you have a boxer getting the shit beat out of him. And there are other sports where people get all kinds of crazy injuries. These people really do take their bodies to extreme levels...yet they are not judged the same way.

It's actually no different unless you connect it morally to something. When you connect morals to it, it could be something different. Like sex will connect you to relationships. A girl can do something when she's single, but if she gets married...her husband may not like it. I can be a guy that says, "I don't like your sex site," but that just has to do with my own limitations. Sex is a touchy subject. There's guys who let their chick do porno and sit there and watch it. But I ain't cut like that. Everybody has a threshold of what's right and

"That's the biggest mistake that people make. Thinking that gangsta rap is fake. The lives these kids come from are extremely dangerous and hazardous. And it's not to be taken lightly."

tory rape, is a rape of the mind. Like if you had a 6-year-old kid, and I ask the kid would you do something sexual with me, you'll think I have to be put in jail. But the law reads that a 6-year-old is the same as a 17-year-old. So whatever you wouldn't do to a 6-year-old, you can't and shouldn't do to a 17-year-old. So, therefore, even suggesting sex to a 17-year-old is rape. And I understand that. And I believe in that. If anyone is forced to do something, it's wrong. But if someone is doing it, and that's what they choose to do with an adult's mind, let them do it. And if they find out they're stupid later, they can regret it. Lots of people regret shit they did.

But then it's different in other countries. Americans do have a lot of hang-ups about sex. Definitely, when I was going to Europe, I'd turn on the television and there'd be a lot of nudity. And you got the red light areas in Germany, in Amsterdam...Americans have a lot of religious hang-ups out here. Americans rather be uptight with sex and let violence go.

Yeah, kind of what I was saying before about sports. Families get together to watch wrestling or the Super Bowl, but they can't show a nipple on TV?

We are born in this culture, and it changes as you travel. So it's very interesting.

Do you believe in the American dream? If you work really hard, you get to achieve your dreams?

I think that in America, you get a good chance to win, yes. I do believe in that. In other places, it might be a bit more complex. I think women and minorities have it harder. But I do think you can win. But I think it's based more around what your dream is. You may want to have a log cabin, and be, like, bohemian up in the woods. That may be your dream. If you ask me if I captured my dream, I did. I just wanted to be a rapper and stay out of trouble. I didn't want to own the fucking world. Own buildings like Donald Trump. Let's get it clear, it's way more fucked up in other places, the United States is one of the top places to be. There's a lot wrong here, but we are not going to say it's worse than other places. But I think the thing about America is that we try to pretend like it's perfect. And that's what it's not. It's far from perfect. There's a lot of injustices that went on, there's a lot of shit that's going down now you can't sweep under the carpet.

One of the reasons why we have more resources here is because we've kicked every one else's ass here and elsewhere to get it, for the past 400 years...

And we continually kick our own selves in the ass. It's a healing process. The protest and everybody fighting and struggling, black people yelling that we need rights, women yelling, there's going to be a lot of fighting and struggling to get this thing right. It all came from such a totally wrong thing. I do think shit is get-

ting better, but it might take another 400 years, you know. If they don't just blow this whole shit up before that.

Did you see a difference between G.W. Bush and Kerry?

I thought John Kerry was more of the type of person you could talk to. More of that Clinton-type vibe. Honestly, I think Bush is the antichrist. He's on a mission. And he believes he talks to god. And once you start telling me you talk to god, you sound like every other crazy dictator psycho. Like, who would Jesus Christ have bombed?

There's also the question of people who make it quick...

One thing you have to remember is that with entertainment, people make extreme amounts of money. When you make it like that, you gotta learn how to hold onto it. That goes for musicians, that goes for actors, anybody who makes it quick. I think that people who really struggle to get it, hold onto it more and use it right.

Do you think the consumer culture is working against the black community? Bling bling and all that?

No, and I think it will go away in time. But when I first came out, and I was rapping, I was so happy to rap about having things, possessions. We achieve things and "move on up," you know. I don't think there's necessarily anything wrong with that. When a young black kid sees me with a new car, or they see Ice-T on TV, that's motivational for them. I'm just moving forward so I can show ya'll how to move forward. We aren't telling niggas to go out and sell dope and shit. We're running record labels and doing productive things, and I think kids are seeing and listening to that. You have to do things in a way that they can relate to and understand. So we are breaking down the barrier of what we can have and what we can do. But think about it, if you take away the bling bling culture, then the only person blinging would be Robin Leach talking about white people and all they have, and that just makes us think that as black people, we can't bling. We can't do anything. I think it's a good thing and a good sign for us as black people to shine for a minute. ☺

"I think the thing about America is that we try to pretend like it's perfect. And that's what it's not. It's far from perfect. There's a lot of injustices that went on, there's a lot of shit that's going down now you can't sweep under the carpet."

Not everybody knows his name, but everybody has seen his stark, iconic art. Eric Drooker is everywhere. His visions of militaristic apocalypse inevitability hang in tatters on the filthy walls of squats in burnt-out inner cities across the globe. His nightmarish depictions of frothing police dogs and "terrorist landlords" tap an inner fear that has catalyzed resistance among activists, beginning with the infamous Tompkins Square Park uprising in mid-80s Manhattan. More recently, he has pushed the limits of "art in action" by collaborating with Palestinian children on bright, utopian murals in the midst of chaos and despair. But he has also infiltrated the mainstream, winning an American Book Award in 1994 for his graphic novel *Flood!*, for which legendary beat poet Allen Ginsberg contributed words on the back cover; and several of his dizzying portraits of his hometown have even graced the cover of that old, highbrow standard the *New Yorker*.

In May, Drooker hit the road with cartoonist Keith Knight and bizarre writer Jon Longhi on the "Ink, Sweat & Tears Tour." In San Francisco, I caught the first show of the tour, jumping at the opportunity to hear about the inspiration and stories behind Drooker's art, which I have seen on so many zines, flyers and lampposts throughout the years. His stories of wild acid trips and police riots interspersed with anti-war poetry and one-man harmonica jams really added another dimension to his work. Clearly, Eric Drooker, the artist behind the curtain (or the canvas, to be more precise,) the man whose art doesn't ask nicely, but demands that we take our outrage against injustice to the streets, is not merely talking the talk when he looks at the world around him—around all of us—and makes an observation like "Doves piss me off at this point—peace is a dirty word."

UGLY PLANET: *So you just got back from the road. Tell me about how the rest of the tour went.*

ERIC DROOKER: We had a blast. We just rented a car and drove straight up the coast—seven cities in seven days—a perfect amount of time. I've done tours that dragged on six weeks, so this was just a lot of fun.

In San Francisco, you only did about 15 minutes, but it seemed like everybody in the crowd really wanted to see more. Did you end up expanding your set?

Yep, I added a batch more slides. Normally, my slide lecture lasts about an hour, when it's just me, solo. I make sure it's good and entertaining, cause I used to feel kinda embarrassed doing tours, sitting at the author's table signing a big pile of books. That's why I developed the slide performance with live music. This way I'm offering up more of a cultural event.

Yeah, you kind of spiced it up with the Ginsberg poem...

"Hum Bomb," an unfinished poem that Ginzy

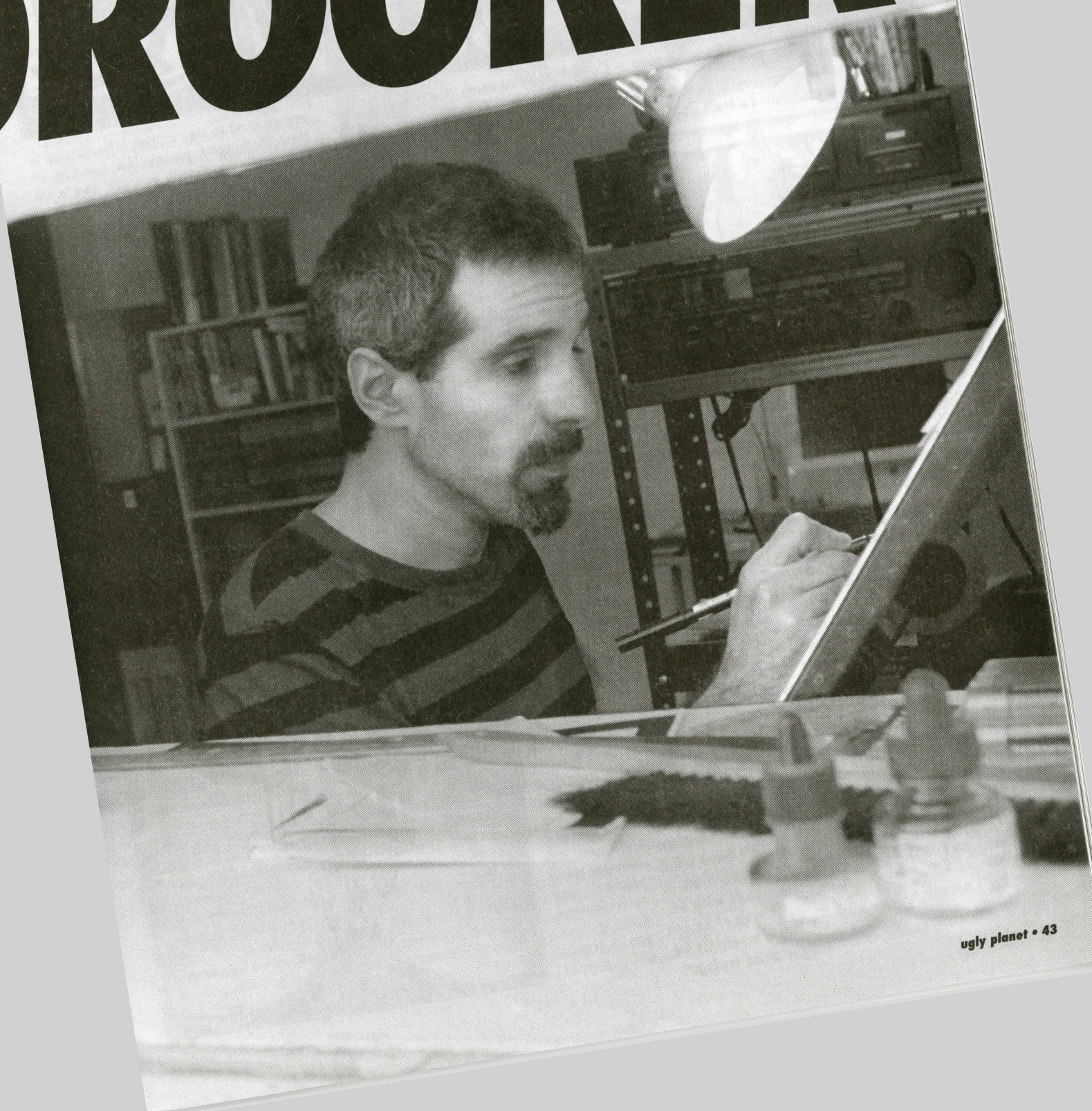
Explosive Ink

ERIC DROOKER

"I slowly but surely started to feel like a stranger in my own neighborhood. The last straw was when Giuliani got re-elected. I took that as a signal to split town for a while."



DROOKER





was always adding to. It's meant to be read at the top of one's lungs.

The slide performance is an art form distinct from my published art. When you're



reading one of my books, it's an intimate, silent experience. But when I project images onto a huge screen in a dark room full of people, it becomes more of a cinematic experience. That's why I've been experimenting more and more with sound—playing harmonica or adding a soundtrack, inviting percussionists or other musicians to join in.

One of the things you said at the show was that you "needed to come out to the West Coast to see New York clearly." (Eric Drooker now lives in Berkeley) What did you mean?

When you're born into the metropolis like I was, on Manhattan Island, you don't really get to experience the magnitude or enormity of it, because you just grow up surrounded by it. It's merely an extension of your own consciousness. I'll never have the experience of seeing the skyline for the first time and having it hit me like a kid who grew up in Kansas, say. I grew up surrounded by skyscrapers, and it all seemed very normal. I watched the Twin Towers under construction out my window, as an adolescent. It wasn't until I came out to the West

Coast that I saw some of the truly unique things about New York that I had taken for granted, namely the people. That's what's so fantastic about New York—not the monolithic architecture, but the people. It's a very unusual mixture of people from all over the planet who get along in relative harmony, especially in the neighborhood where I grew up, the Lower East Side. Out West, I've got to say, I've been disappointed at how segregated the scene is. Of course, it's not just San Francisco or LA, but just about every U.S. city has a de facto apartheid set up, like Oakland, Compton, or Chicago's South Side....

You're referring to ethnically homogenous neighborhoods like Chinatown or all-Mexican barrios?

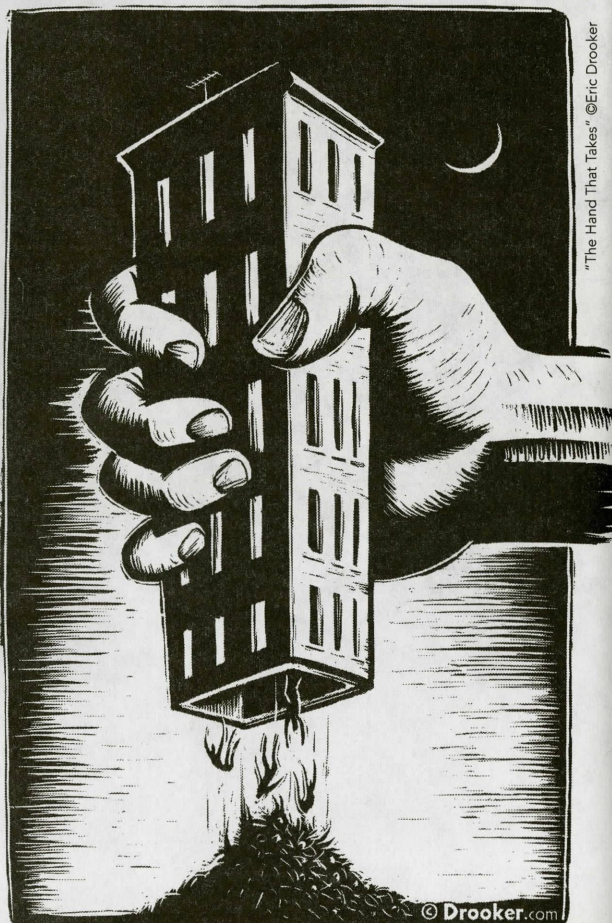
Yeah, in San Francisco, Chinatown was originally the only neighborhood Chinese people were allowed—by law—to live in. Years ago, it was overt apartheid, but even now various ethnic groups are stashed away, in their respective quadrants, commuting daily, to clean white people's toilet bowls.

And that's not the case in New York?

Economically, of course, it's the same deal. But the cultural segregation in other places strikes me as more severe. And I'm not just speaking about ethnic or racial segregation; various age groups and gender

groups tend to stay in their little cliques. In New York (and places like London or Amsterdam or Brazil), you just see a lot more mixing of cultures, more cross-pollination. Old folks hanging with young punks in Tompkins Square Park, straights hanging out with queers, interracial bands performing together. In the U.S., things started getting way more polarized economically, starting with Reagan 25 years ago.

That's interesting, because as someone who was born 25 years ago, I would have



"Artists are typically used as pawns in this game of economic displacement. Artists generally don't have much money, so we gravitate to neighborhoods with low rents. We'll take risks the bourgeoisie wouldn't be caught dead trying."

thought that the opposite is happening. We're getting farther away from the Jim Crow days, and despite Republican efforts, there's still tons of immigration from all over the world. There's definitely a much greater stigma attached to overt racism...So how do you justify this perception that on the front lines, in the cities, where these cultures are living side-by-side, the idea of America as a melting pot is more of an illusion than a reality?

You see it on TV or in commercials, or even in the Republican administrations, where they make a point of having several prominent faces of color, like Colin Powell, Alberto Gonzales and Condoleezza Rice. This is sophisticated PR, and it works quite effectively on Americans, who are so hung up on race, that it confuses them. But in real life, things are not that equitably distributed, especially in San Francisco, where the black population has been decreasing.

Yeah, I remember Keith (Knight) mentioning during his presentation that the black population in SF is down to seven percent.

Yes, it's really dwindled, due to a vigorous campaign of economic cleansing. You cross the bay to Oakland, and it's primarily black. Look at that divide: it's a colonial situation, replicated throughout the country.

So how has life on the West Coast influenced your work so far? Are you finding different sources of inspiration in your adopted environment?

The main thing that's influenced me is the landscape itself. Socially, I'm still very plugged in to my New York environment. My dreams still all take place in New York. But I've allowed the amazing plant life, all of the weird Dr. Seuss trees and flora and fauna, to make an impact on my work. *Blood Song* had a lot of tropical imagery, and that was definitely influenced by ubiquitous palm trees and hummingbirds that I sure as hell didn't have in New York.

So was there a final straw that convinced you to leave? Were you just getting sick of seeing the changes in the LES?

I slowly but surely started to feel like a stranger in my own neighborhood. The last straw was when Giuliani got re-elected. I took that as a signal to split town for a while. Of course, now I have Schwarzenegger as my governor, so it was sheer folly to think that I could escape the social and economic forces sweeping the U.S.

You moved to the Bay Area right around the beginning of the U.S. invasion of Iraq. San Francisco had the largest anti-war demos in the country, with tens of thou-

sands of protesters completely shutting down the city to voice their opposition to the war. When you found yourself witnessing this spontaneous outpouring of resistance, did you feel like you were at



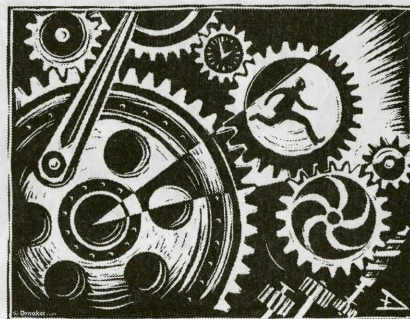
home, like you could really thrive in your new environment?

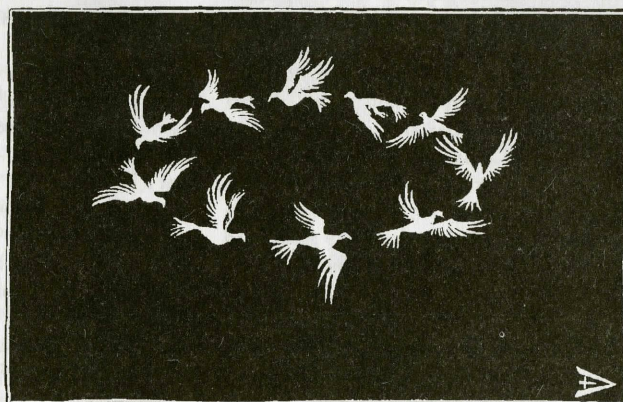
Well, yeah, I plugged right in to the large activist scene. During the first Persian Gulf War, back in '91, the outpouring on the streets of San Francisco was notably larger than in New York, and I always remembered that. There's more street activism—Direct Action—going on here. It was primarily West Coast activists who shut down the WTO in Seattle—making world history—just a few years ago. So I've learned a lot of new tactics here...like putting one's body on the line, as well as the role of guerilla street theatre...the importance of making protests fun, cultural events. In New York, protests tend to be these somber events, where people are just repeating some lame chant, and then they wonder, "Why aren't we attracting any young people?" The vibe

is so dour. The West Coast activists have realized that you need to make activism more cutting edge. Since 9/11, people are a good bit more intimidated, because the police don't just fire tear gas anymore, they've gotten a lot more violent. Police have lately been portrayed as the heroes, so their violence is more "justified."

So, considering your background

"Since 9/11, people are a good bit more intimidated, because the police don't just fire tear gas anymore, they've gotten a lot more violent. Police have lately been portrayed as the heroes, so their violence is more 'justified.'"





"Over the years, as the neighborhood struggles started to expand, I started to realize, it wasn't just my building or my block, it wasn't just individual landlords, it was real estate corporations working hand-in-glove with the police who were behind the economic displacement in my neighborhood."

I started out really local—in my own building. My activism started with organizing the tenants in my building to go on rent strike. I started using my art by making posters to get people to come to tenant meetings. Over the years, as the neighborhood struggles started to expand, I started to realize, it wasn't just my building or my block, it wasn't just individual landlords, it was real estate corporations working hand-in-glove with the police who were behind the economic displacement in my neighborhood. Things reached a boiling point in the summer of 1988; that's what the whole Tompkins Square uprising was about. So anyway, there was a logical evolution in my consciousness from my personal situation (lack of heat in the winter, increasing rent) to an understanding that this state of affairs was going on in cities throughout the country, and that it was tied into Reagan's corporate agenda of privatization, and deregulation of industry.

I know a lot of artists, especially white

with the gentrification battles during the 80s in the LES, I can see how you gravitated toward issues of displacement and oppression, but when did you really start connecting the local issues to the wider struggle of corporate globalization that's so prevalent in your work?



"Golden Gated City" ©Eric Drooker

artists, are defensive about gentrification, because it's a very thorny situation. They want cheap rents, and they don't mind living in neighborhoods that most white people wouldn't want to live in...but artists are often seen as the first wave of gentrification, a precursor to the yuppies and the Starbucks invasion, etc. You obviously showed that artists can take a very meaningful stand on their place in the community as these situations begin to unfold. So has your experience taught you anything that other artists dealing with this should be aware of?

Artists are typically used as pawns in this game of economic displacement. Artists generally don't have much money, so we gravitate to neighborhoods with low rents. We'll take risks the bourgeoisie wouldn't be caught dead trying. Living with junkies in rat-infested tenements. And we're good with our

hands; we'll move in and fix up a building for next to nothing, and gradually transform a ghetto into a new bohemia, which, in time, attracts cultural rubbernecks, who find it all so hip—just what they need to



"Apartheid Wall" ©Eric Drooker

complete their new urban lifestyle. Next thing you know, artists can't afford to live in the neighborhood. It happens everywhere, of course, not just in the U.S. After the Berlin Wall fell, opportunistic West



"Sowing Seeds of Peace" ©Eric Drooker



Germans bought up buildings in the East, and in a few short years it was yuppie haven. So, I think artists often kid themselves about their role in society, because if they're going to survive off of their work, they're inevitably going to have to do some commercial work, which is a form of prostitution...so artists need to decide who they want pimping their ass.

Well, I'm sure there are many artists who are just happy to have their work shown, regardless of the context, which brings up the issue of public space. In places like NY or SF, there's still a lot of street art, graffiti, etc. (despite diligent police efforts, of course.) But in younger cities and almost all suburbs, there's literally no open public space for art, outside of a few highly sanctioned and generally harmless displays or projects. As someone whose work is often intended for and fits so effectively in public spaces via stickers and stencils, what do you make of this, and how do you see other artists reacting to such limited opportunities?

"The concrete wall Ariel Sharon is constructing on the Occupied West Bank reminds me of the wall that Dutch settlers erected in Lower Manhattan to keep the natives out. Ever wonder why they call it Wall Street?"

It's not just the artists who are under attack; there's not much public space left, to speak of, in American cities. I've seen the public space shrinking throughout my lifetime. Every available space and resource is being privatized.

As long as we're

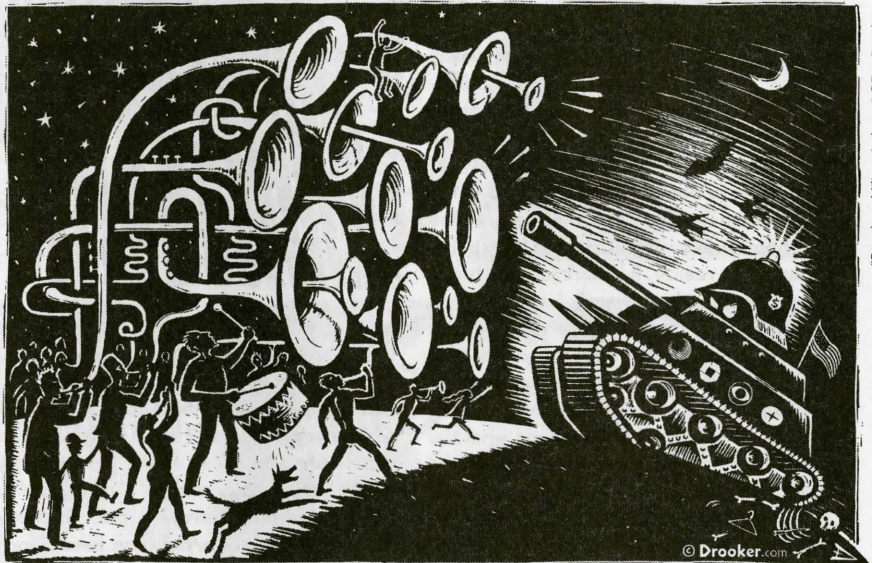
talking about displacement and oppression, tell me about your trip to Israel and the Palestinian Occupied Territories last summer. How did you begin planning such an ambitious trip?

Again, it all grew out of the gentrification battles I'd experienced on the Lower East Side of New York. The way I see it, what's taking place in Palestine is simply an advanced case of economic displacement, not unlike the ethnic cleansing which took place in early New York (then New Amsterdam.) The concrete wall Ariel Sharon is constructing on the Occupied West Bank reminds me of the wall that Dutch settlers erected in Lower Manhattan to keep the natives out. Ever wonder why they call it Wall Street? Anyhow, I'd been to the Middle East as a teenager and had been following the issue for years. So, last summer, I hooked up with an artist friend, Susan

about the Counterpunch article?

Yes, in the town of Beit Hanoun, which is in northern Gaza. A few weeks before we got there, the Israeli military had just uprooted all of the trees. Not most of them...all of them. It was known as the breadbasket of the Gaza strip because there were citrus groves everywhere, vineyards and olive groves, but all 45,000 trees had just been bulldozed, and the residents of the town were all traumatized. So, with the local teenagers, we painted this huge mural of an orange tree on the face of a community cultural center. The kids were joking the whole time that when the soldiers saw the tree mural, they would surely uproot the whole building, since it was the only tree left in town—and for all I know, the building has been bulldozed by now.

And the mural you showed at the slideshow



Green, who's a muralist from San Francisco. She's been going over there to work with Palestinians on various mural projects since 89, during the first intifada, so she has all kinds of connections throughout the Palestinian community. She arranged our trip, along with Break the Silence Mural Project. In July we went over there carrying 200 pounds of paint packed into a suitcase, which we managed to smuggle into the Occupied Territories, and we completed two murals in the West Bank and one in Gaza. Of course, Gaza was the most dangerous situation of all, because the town was under siege while we were doing the mural, and there were F-16s flying around, and machine gun fire continually in the background.

Was that the tree mural that you wrote

was the one you actually did on the wall with all of the children...

Yes, on the "Security Barrier," as the Israeli



"I took one look at it and said, 'This is the greatest blank canvas I've seen in my fucking life.' It's 400 miles long, over 20 feet high. But we gave the paint and brushes to local kids, and they just immediately started painting flowers and animals and other things that little kids everywhere like to paint."

government calls it...or the "Apartheid Wall," as the Palestinians call it. I took one look at it and said, "This is the greatest blank canvas I've seen in my fucking life." It's 400 miles long, over 20 feet high. But we gave the paint and brushes to local kids, and they just immediately started painting flowers and animals and other things that little kids everywhere like to paint. I leaned a ladder against the concrete, and painted an enormous firebird flying over the wall.

Were you surprised at how optimistic and colorful the art from these little kids was, considering their living conditions?

Yeah, I was moved to tears at how resilient they were and by how strongly they were hanging on. I asked people in Gaza how they manage to survive, and they said, "Well, things have been so bad that it can

becomes a violent, oppressive king himself, which leads to his own demise.)

That was a little comic strip I did 15 years ago, during the first intifada. I've included it in my recent slide show, which I performed in refugee camps and cultural centers in the West Bank, and the Palestinians applaud at the end of that story. Americans don't know how to respond, because it hits a little too close to home... American progressives are confused, because they don't want to be branded as anti-Semitic for speaking out



against Israel, so I think it's especially important for American Jews to make their voices heard, because these atrocities are going on in the name of Jews across the world.

So I'd like to finish up with a light question, but it's something I'm really curious about, because I've seen your art in so many places, sometimes in some fairly bizarre contexts. Where is the craziest place you've seen your art?

One of the strangest places was in Bavaria, Germany, in the town where Adolph Hitler lived as a small

boy. You can't make this shit up. The day I arrived, I saw a sticker on a lamppost with a drawing of mine of a policeman with a barking dog. (This image was used by Faith No More on their CD *King for a Day, Fool for a Lifetime*.) There were swastikas superim-

posed in the eyes of the dog. The text was in German, so I couldn't understand what the fuck it said, and, of course, I was worried that some neo-Nazi group of young fascists was using my art. Later, a young German anarchist explained that they had made these stickers *against* the fascist groups, who would soon be arriving in town for some kind of convention, or other god-damn thing...so I was relieved. I can't really control how people use my art once I put it on my website, www.drooker.com. I state that progressive or activist nonprofit groups can use it for free...but what can you do? I think it's pretty clear to anyone with eyes, what side my work is on.

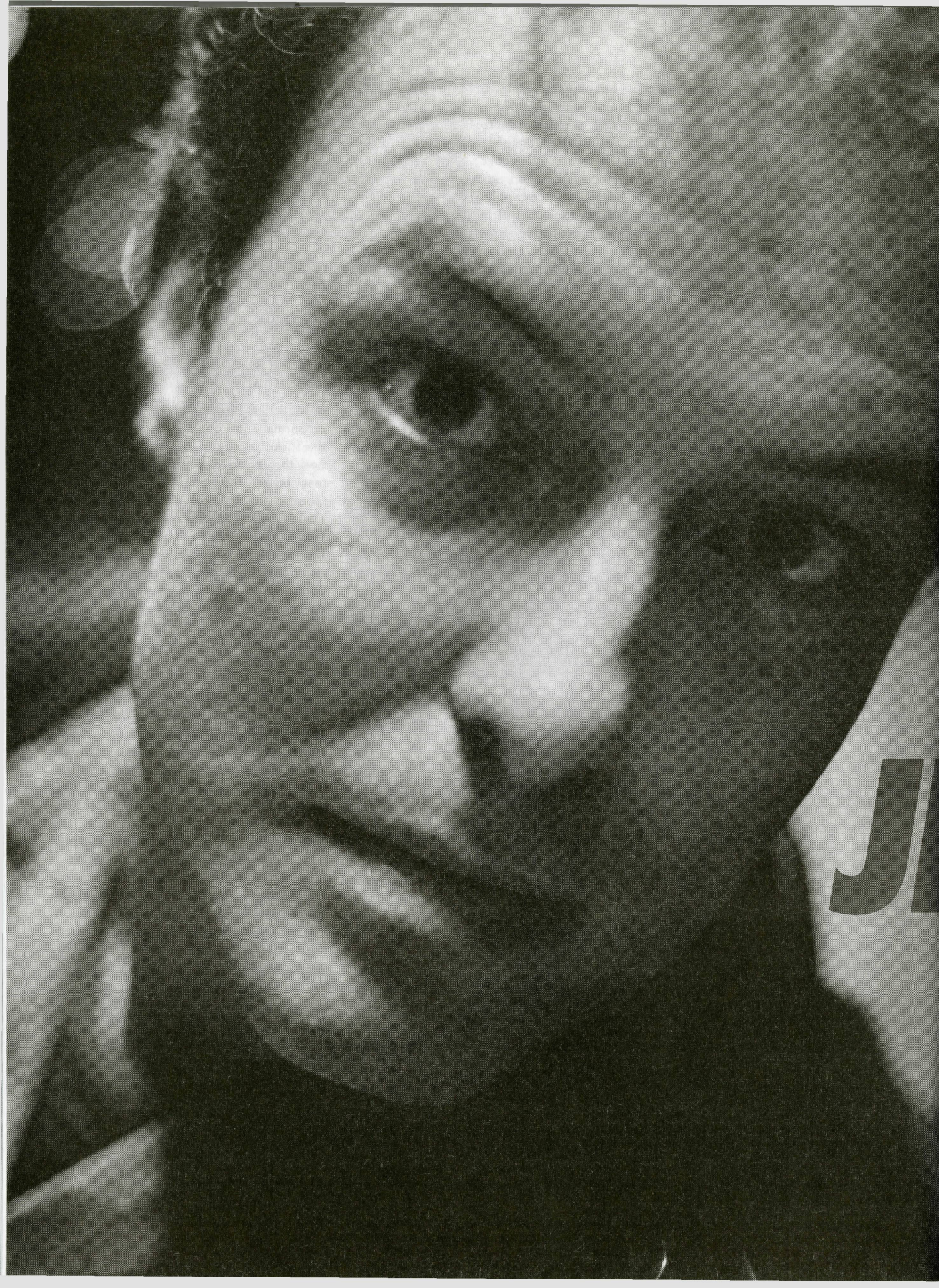
Well, I tried to end on a light note, because so much of your art is so optimistic, like the sequence of the garbage men putting flowers on the front of their truck and driving off into the sunrise, but I guess the oppression that you're fighting against is pretty inescapable...

My next book is going to be a comedy. Since we're living in such tragic times, I feel it would be inappropriate to create more tragedy, so this one will hopefully give people, me for instance, a reason to keep laughing, fighting and moving forward. ☺



only get better." The Israelis I spoke with did not have such optimism. They were pretty grim, they felt trapped and frustrated.

What kind of feedback did you get on the neo-David vs. Goliath strip? (In Drooker's version, the small boy who kills the ogre



Jello Biafra is one of America's most outspoken supporters of free speech and freedom (constitutional or otherwise.) He has released eight albums of material recorded during the spoken-word tours that carry him across the country. Each of these contains a great deal of legal and social information that he has compiled from various sources over the years. The scope and quality of the information is sure to shock even those who thought they were well informed on subjects they've heard about.

Biafra also ranks as the first musician ever to be put on trial because of the content of a record album. The Frankenchrist album he released with his band the Dead Kennedys contained in its original release a reproduction of a painting by H.R. Giger (best known for winning the Academy Award for Visual Effects for the 1979 film *Alien*.) It was because of this painting that the L.A. City attorney filed a charge of "distribution of harmful matter to minors" against Biafra and several others. During the trial the DA spent most of his time analyzing the career and lyrics of Biafra in an attempt to incriminate him on subjects other than the painting in order to set legal precedence. Fortunately the jury deadlocked and the judge dismissed the case in lieu of granting a retrial. Even so, the trial spanned over a year and ended up costing over \$100K in legal bills despite the maximum penalty of a \$2000 fine and no more than a year served. The full story can be heard on Biafra's *High Priest of Harmful Matter* album. In order to avoid corporate

and now US Senator Dianne Feinstein. His effect on the campaign upset the election so much that they later passed a resolution stating that no one would be able to run for office under anything but their legal name. Unfortunately Jello Biafra isn't his real name: it's Eric.

With an abrasive voice and a sarcastic and cynical mind, Biafra speaks his opinions based on irrefutable facts. Like the late Frank Zappa, he is a distinct individual who is willing to go up against the government to fight for those rights that some seem to think of as out of date and disposable.

UGLY PLANET: So, the first thing I want to talk to you about is the idea of DIY, you being one of the mentors of that scene. Can DIY be done today the same way you did it 30 years ago?

JELLO BIAFRA: There's more going on now than there was 30 years ago, by a long shot. Back then, it was basically Dead Kennedys saving up \$15 gig proceeds, and saving it up for years—and then financing a seven-inch record. And eventually, I wound up doing the label because (the band) didn't want to deal with it. Which was a good gift in the long run. Today, there are all kinds of music labels, DIY zines, and even DIY films are becoming more common. Not to mention microbrews for beer, soda pop and even healthier foods.

How does the DIYer survive?

As far as survival goes, each DIY person, or people starting a DIY project, needs to know

impact? Let's say the way you did it.

There weren't so many people doing it back then, so that's why maybe we made more of an impact. The number of people jumping in really mushroomed after Nirvana got so big and after the Green Day boom. And now there are way more people starting cool bands, starting cool labels, but the audience never grew in the same proportion. And now Bush is president, and people's disposable income has shrunk dramatically. So the slices of the pie got smaller and smaller. So it's tough to survive. But we've somehow found a way, at least so far. At least with things like the Internet, curious people can research these things easier. As a teenager in the mid 1970s, I had to rifle through bins at record stores constantly, almost every day. Just to find something weird and interesting. Picking stuff at random and hoping it's good. But the good stuff made it all worthwhile. One of the best albums I ever heard, *Fun House* by the Stooges, I picked up sealed for ten cents.

"Most people are brainwashed in this country to believe that we only have to look at anything as choice A and choice B. Just like a multiple-choice test where you don't have to think out an answer..."

Fresh Ideas for Rotting Vegetables

JELLO BIAFRA

censorship of Dead Kennedys' music, Biafra started the Alternative Tentacles record label. Every Dead Kennedys album and 45 was originally released on A.T., as were his spoken-word albums. Other groups released on this label include the Butthole Surfers, Lard, D.O.A., Neurosis, and Alice Donut. Alternative Tentacles, along with SST and Dischord, represent some of the earliest and longest-running indie labels in the U.S. that have stayed true to their ideals and origins.

Biafra has always been one to speak his mind and take risks. What started out as a practical joke became a serious campaign for the position of mayor of San Francisco in 1979. While he did not win, he came in fourth with 3 percent of the total vote, forcing a run-off between candidates Quentin Kopp

something in advance as to what they want out of the project. The purpose of Alternative Tentacles was never to get rich, I still have not made a dime off the label in my life. I take no salary, and I've even had to pour money in during hard times. But the reward is being able to offer so many people an outlet completely outside the mainstream music industry, or even the mainstream corporate punk industry. Do what you want, sound how you want, say what you want, and not have anyone slap a sticker on your album, telling you what you can and cannot say.

Production and equipment is so cheap these days, that the streets and the Internet are filled with people doing stuff. Sure, there are more people, but are they really making an

How are things going with Alternative Tentacles? You've done some downsizing...

Somewhat, especially after the former members (of Dead Kennedys) turned into born-again corporate thugs. And sued the shit out of me for sticking to the philosophy of the Dead Kennedys and Alternative Tentacles. Obviously, Dead Kennedys was our bread and butter. Most of the songs, I wrote. So it was very important to me that Dead Kennedys be treated with respect. And now that's out the window.

I've been seeing old Dead Kennedys material being re-released (under new record labels)...

People try to get me to sign that stuff all the time. And I refuse. I have not authorized any of those. I do not support the labels they are on.

"The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and of course the World Trade Organization, the WTO, they are not helping to prevent terrorism, they are causing it. They themselves are making our own country and our own lives less safe. By creating all these conditions that spawn terrorism."

ones that just do it because they think there's money out there. And won't even write a new song. They are welcome to do that if they want, but I'm not obligated to support it. I guess it crosses over into me getting genuinely disgusted with that when I see the sheeplike nature of the audience for some of those shows. They're really into reliving the past. Not interested if the old band plays a new song. But they turn around and refuse to support good new bands in their own town.

Do you think punk is dead?

The spirit of punk goes back, way back before punk. You can say there's some of that in Oscar Wilde, definitely in the Beat movement [of the 50s,] antiwar hippies causing trouble in the streets in the 60s and 70s...and as everything got mellowed out and co-opted, something needed to rise and shock the hell out of everyone, including those people. That 's where the original outbreak of punk came in. People weren't starting bands back then to all sound alike. The peer pressure was for all the bands to sound different from each other. And outside this tiny little diverse scene, people were genuinely frightened by punk, especially by hardcore punk. And that made it all the more fun. That spirit is still alive, the political hardcore bands and people pulling genuine pranks. It's where you find it and what you want to call it. One of the people who struck me as having the punk spirit from the moment I met him is Winston Smith, who's done a lot of the artwork on my albums over the years. He doesn't look punk at all, except for the leather jacket. He's got long, whitish hair, beard and all that, but as far as what comes out of that brain and what he does with his art—he's got a hell of a lot more in common with the spirit of punk than most of what you

will find at Hot Topic. One of the good things about punk is that a lot of the people went into it knowing they would never be great big rock stars. And in the mid 70s, punk people like me thought that was all there is. There's us, the pimply faced fans, and then there's great big glamorous rock stars playing the big arenas, and that's all. But with punk, I learned that it was actually more exciting to get so close to the band that you can see the sweat dripping off the guitar strings, and then just being able to hang out with them afterwards, because we are all in the same boat in the same little venue. Playing because we want to play, not because we think we are going to "get signed."

I also remember when I was in high school in th 80s buying records and going to all-age shows, that the bands that dressed "punk" were the most annoying and had the least to say (politically.) My fave bands were Flipper, Black Flag and Dead Kennedys...and none of them looked like punk rockers...

Black Flag made it a point not to look like cartoon punk rockers. That was planned in their case. In our case, I'm not sure. I was enough of an outcast even among other outcasts, before I was a punk, so to speak, that I always held true to my inner self. It's interesting that, 25 years later, young kids who want to find some outlet for their rebellious spirit—and stake out territory to feel good about being different from the mainstream jocks and future Republicans—they would still go towards punk rock. Even though a lot of frat boys listen to punk rock now, too. It's interesting that it has lasted for that long. The hippie thing was pretty well over as a rebellious statement by the mid 70s. I figured that by the mid-80s, punk would be obsolete, too. And there would be a new generation shocking the hell out of us with music we'd think was unlistenable, and just a bunch of noise. For some punk parents, that turns out to be hip-hop. When kids start to listen to rap music instead of the Misfits. I love laughing at those people when they complain to me about that, and the generation gap repeats itself. But I thought there would be several more cycles of that by now. And there haven't been. In a way, I'm honored that people still find my work relevant and it still fires up that same spirit in them. And the lyrics still matter, but it also has me scratching my head wondering, where are all the real wild people who would threaten the shit out of me? They are not there.

I was reading a new review of one of your old records, and the writer was saying how we are reliving the same themes over and over...

Sometimes I wonder if I should stop writing these worst-case scenario songs, because they keep coming true. Like "Islamic Bomb" came true even before the album came out. That exact same scenario is what happened when the Pakistanis started selling gift-wrapped, build-your-own-nuke kits to Libya

and Iran and North Korea for \$60 million a piece. Why were they so desperate to risk nuclear annihilation just to raise 180 million bucks? Well, in part, because they've been beaten over the head by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to pay back all these lovely, not-so-generous loans they've been saddled with. Not to feed or educate people, but build hydroelectric dams and oil pipelines. And people also wonder why there are so many so-called madrassa schools in countries like Pakistan—that teach people a very narrow Wahhabi Muslim interpretation of the Koran—and don't do much else in terms of reading, writing, history and literature...and then crank out these wannabe jihadists. Why are these madrassas multiplying like Starbucks all over Pakistan and elsewhere? Reasons are, number one, the money for them is coming from our good friends the Saudi royal family. But more importantly, it's back to the IMF and the World Bank, where they are sucking so much money out of Pakistan's annual revenue and budget. They don't have money for their own public school system anymore. The public schools and the public universities were largely shut down, and the madrassas are taking their place. The privatization dream of Bush and Schwarzenegger, but look what happens. And this is where those very institutions designed to implement corporate rule and feudalism on a worldwide basis like the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and of course the World Trade Organization, the WTO, they are not helping to prevent terrorism, they are causing it. They themselves are making our own country and our own lives less safe. By creating all these conditions that spawn terrorism.

Going back to the last U.S. presidential elections, do you think there would have been a difference between John Kerry and George W. Bush?

I didn't see enough of a difference between the two of them to vote for that guy [Kerry.] That's for damn sure. It's like he deliberately pissed the election away. Refusing to truly take on Bush. Pointing out all the lying, even the telltale hump on his back, during the debates, showing he had a prompter. He

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didn't take on any of that...he didn't even take on corporate media for distorting the truth about him when the Swift Boat Veterans, most of whom were never on Swift boats, ran those ads attacking his war record. Basically, in this day and age, King George the Second is the same sort of creature as Ronald McReagan; neither of those guys were ever really president. They were the national mascot. And they knew how to act presidential when their cue card or teleprompter was in front of them. But take away the prompter, and weird things came out of their mouths. And King George the Second is so stupid and delusional that he probably thinks he IS the president. But he's not. And if you have an actor playing president or an actor playing the winner in an election... theoretically, wouldn't you have to have an actor playing the loser as well? How else could you explain spineless, inept campaigns of people like Mondale and Dukakis, and especially Al Gore and John Kerry? They didn't fight; they didn't seem like they wanted to win. Because maybe that wasn't their job. We basically live in a one-party state masquerading as a two-party state. And call 'em what you want, the republicrats, the corporate party—they will basically do what benefits themselves or their financial backers, and that's that.

So where do people get the idea that there are two very different parties?

I think it's because most people are brainwashed in this country to believe that we only have to look at anything as choice A and choice B. Just like a multiple-choice test where you don't have to think out an answer...and that's the way it's framed both in school and especially by the corporate-controlled news media. There are not six sides to this issue, there are only two for you to worry about—right wing and ultra right wing. And that's all the debate you need to know. And a lot of people don't have access or think they don't have access to anything beyond that. That's why I tell people it's so important to stay curious and search things out and encourage other people to search things out and show them how to do it. That's what becoming the media on a one-on-one basis is all about. We can't expect our school system, let alone the Internet or television, to make people smarter. We have to do it ourselves. And if you can help one person be smarter in your life and help them make more intelligent decisions, you are helping fight the corporate Bush agenda.

Whether you are born in this country or you come to this country on a boat, the main thing that is pounded into your head is that if you work really hard, you can have whatever you want, and that's supposed to be the theory behind this country. And you can see that with reality TV, everyone is waiting for their chance to be Donald Trump...

I call it the Big Taste. Preferably for free, with-

out having to work for it. You win the lottery, god blesses you with a miracle, you sue the shit out of your friends and rip them off and wipe 'em out, but at least you win in the end. After all, aren't we taught in grade school that to be a proper American, you should think like Vince Lombardi, "Winning isn't everything; it's the only thing." And that doesn't just mean sports, that also means the business world, and even how you treat your own kids.

Do you think it's getting harder to achieve real revolution, because no one wants to give up their chance for the Big Taste?

But even revolution is, in a way, the Big Taste. Everything will change for the better all at once. It doesn't work that way. I'm not real confident we are going to totally overthrow corporate dictatorship in our lifetime if we keep fighting and making decisions in our own lives about where we are going to spend our money and how we are going to live. Things do change slowly and incrementally over time. You didn't get the Civil Rights Act of 1964 overnight; it took almost a hundred years, unfortunately, but most of the energy that forced it was in the previous 15. I was fortunate that I was enough of a news hound as a child, that I saw the impact of the civil rights movement, the birth of the environmental movement, the pro-choice movement, later, gay rights and everything else. All kinds of boundaries got pushed out, if not blown to pieces from the mid-60s to the mid-70s. And more was done after that, primarily through punk and hip-hop.

But at this point, both punk and hip-hop have become commodified and repackaged by the corporations...

As much as the bling bling culture and money über alles vibe that rules a lot of the hip-hop sickens me, I can also see where it came from. The culture of the Big Taste being dangled before the face of people who grew up being very, very poor. Sure they are going to wanna have more money and maybe get their families moved out of the ghettos so their younger brothers, sisters and cousins aren't at risk of getting shot. Or going to a crappy school, learning nothing but how to sell drugs, at least until they go to war or go to prison. The rap going in the other direction is that "punk is mostly middle-class white people who never grew up as poor as we did; you can put down money all you want, but for us, we can see the real benefits." Unfortunately that's been taken to some pretty nauseating extreme, and of course the major labels would like nothing more than to completely depoliticize hip-hop. And reduce it down as much as possible as gold chains, sexism and guns...there's this whole bullying attitude that runs down from right-wing corporate media that it is irresponsible of an artist to voice an opinion. You are abusing your stardom, unless you are Toby Keith, Mel Gibson or Arnold Schwarzenegger, then it's OK.

Did you vote for Nader in the 2004 election?

In the end, I decide to vote for Nader as a protest against all the heavy-handed mafia tactics the Democrats used to get his name off the ballot in so many states. That was really fucking uncalled for. Why call themselves the Democratic Party when they are so fucking undemocratic? If they really believe that Nader cost Gore the 2000 election, which he didn't, why weren't they reforming the platform? Why weren't they addressing why people would vote for Nader instead of Gore, even if Bush might win? They wouldn't do any of that—if they would have spent half the money and energy fighting the Republicans as they did Ralph Nader, Kerry would have won in a walk this time.

When you ran for mayor of San Francisco, did you actually think you'd get elected?

Looking back at that, I didn't think enough. I did it on a dare. I did it as a prank. I had no idea what kind of impact I was really having. Until 6,600 people showed up and voted for me. And I came in fourth out of ten. And helped force Dianne Feinstein into a runoff, which she was extremely pissed about. I actually was a lightning rod for everybody who was fed up with the lack of choice between two corrupt big-city, big-business Democrats. What I didn't know at the time was how much more I needed to do as far as going around knocking on doors, going to neighborhood meetings, different gatherings and organizations. I got invited to so many things, that I didn't think I had the time or know-how to schedule it all. There were also much stronger equal-time laws back then, so I got on the TV news and televised debates.

As far as Nader, they kept him out of the debates...

That's what happens when debates are run by private corporations. Most people don't know that. The Debate Commission is not some government organization that's impartial; the Debate Commission is a private corporation owned by the Democratic and Republican parties who solicit sponsorship for the debates, like Budweiser and AT&T. And if Budweiser doesn't want Nader in the debates, he doesn't get in. After all, he might get through to Middle America how much they are being lied to by the corporate parties, and the fact that there is, in fact, a way out, that in the long run would benefit them. And that's that brick wall that's been put up in this country, that we got to keep finding more clever ways of tunneling under, climbing over or blasting through, just to get through to the mainstream that the alternative ideas of how this country and the

"The spirit of punk goes back, way back before punk. You can say there's some of that in Oscar Wilde, definitely in the Beat movement [of the 50s,] antiwar hippies causing trouble in the streets in the 60s and 70s..."

world can be run are actually beneficial to them, too.

What's your agenda? What do you want to see change?

Like I said in one of my spoken-word albums, I'd like to see our hijacked, unconstitutional government of the people by the corporations for corporations totally overthrown. Annihilate it.

Do you think that's ever possible?

I don't know, I'm more hopeful than optimistic, but I do think it's important to stay focused on what could be going on versus what is going on. Reach out and show other people what is possible. Versus how things are actually being run. Even pointing out something as simple as how much better the train system is in Europe. You don't have to drive everywhere. You don't have to go to the airport two hours earlier just to be groped and searched and weigh and pay to go up in a plane and get blown around in a cloud and wonder if you are going to make it to the other end and then wait for your luggage and go through another traffic jam to get into town—who knows if it really would have taken you longer if you had taken a train. In Europe, I just put a backpack on my back on my spoken-word tours and head downtown and hop on the train and get to the next town and go to the show. It's so easy, it's so much better, and so much more ecological. So much less wasteful...

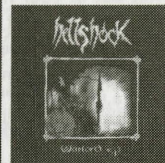
That is one of the most obvious issues that plagues our country... and it would solve so many of our problems...yet no one wants to change.

Some people do. It's just that we are not really a democracy at this point. We don't have capitalism, we have feudalism. New corporate feudalism. The corporate world order. Where the barons in high castles are people like Halliburton and Wal-Mart. Every time we buy anything from those people, we are their serfs. And they are building moats around themselves. To protect those castles and everything they think is theirs. But at the same time, one interesting buried fact of the 2000 election is that those very same people in Florida who voted for Gore but got Bush instead also passed a statewide ballot initiative earmarking money to build a high-speed train system between the major cities in Florida. Of course the governor named Bush impounded the funds, and not a dime has been spent on it...but it's not as though people were oblivious to the possibilities.

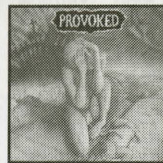
I wonder if CNN, let alone Fox news or the New York Times, are ever going to admit that the health care system is so corrupt, so costly and such a disaster, that even some of the global corporations are complaining about it. General Motors is moving more and more of its manufacturing not to Mexico but to Canada, just because they can save over five grand a year per employee on health care costs. Even the people of Chrysler Corporation have been openly in favor of a so-called single-payer health care system for years—that it would even save the corporations money. But then someone will cry out, "Oh my god, it's socialism! We can't have socialism!" Not to mention this is considered a basic human right, by law, in almost every other industrialized country.

But now, the whole way we've been cultured, so to speak, both the way you culture a germ and create a culture—, I mean both. Especially by corporate media ever since Reagan got in, is that nobody else but you matters, we are not a community, we are a marketplace...and that means it's dog-eat-dog, and if you want to get what we say we think you should be entitled to, and grab your piece of the American Dream, you'd better be ready to kick all your friends in the teeth to get there—because that is the American Way. But I think people are realizing, they are running out of money, we are running out of clean air and water and any place to build and everything else, so the prevailing attitude of the Bush mob is let's fiddle while Rome burns, let's fiddle while the earth warms up and burns. We are just going to indulge in the last big gulp. I may not be able to drive in this SUV tankmobile five years from now, but I'm sure going to waste as much as I can now. And then some of the people at the top are some of these fundamentalist holy-rollers who genuinely believe that it's the end times and Armageddon is right around the corner. And pretty soon Jesus is going to come back and put back all the oil reserves. Put back all the trees, fix up all the land that has been strip-mined; therefore, we should waste as much as we can now. I'd hate to use tired old radical terms like class war, but that's what's going on right now. This is not a blue state, red state conflict, what a myth that is...it's not the left versus right, black versus white; it's the top versus the bottom. And unfortunately the top is waging one hell of a jihad on everyone else on the bottom right now as they try to protect their stolen booty and reimpose a feudalist society. ☺

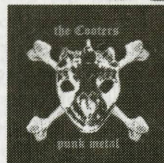
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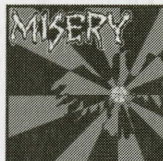
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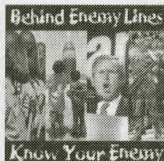
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THE ARTS AND SCIENCES

Hopeful Monsters

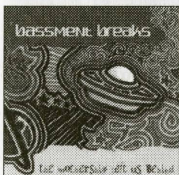
A modern folk-rock sound, singer Paul Melançon is an ear pleaser with a deliberate pace that will pacify his listeners. Bouncy, yet relaxed, *Hopeful Monsters* plays somewhat like a soundtrack for the next life-changing movie montage. Leading in slow, the narrative stories of turmoil develop into statements of love and annihilation. Raw emotion and rhythmic skill were worked into every song during the mere two weeks it took to record this vibrant album. (Daemon Records) — Crista Lautes

BARBEZ Insignificance

Gypsy rock with a touch of punk, this moody and unique band mixes a hearty stew of psychedelic and folk sounds with melodramatic delivery. Centering around the throaty vocals of Russian-born singer Ksenia Vidyaykina, the overall sound is much like a Weimar cabaret. The lyrics, sung in both Russian and English, give a theatrical feeling that takes you through a dark forest with a traveling circus across Europe in a rickety wooden carriage. The breaking point culminates in manic fits of percussion from a warm, woody marimba and passionate warbling from a theremin. It swirls in a trance-like dance. It howls at the moon. It is the soundtrack to a mysterious and unknown land. (Important Records) — Kira Yustak

BASSMENT BREAKS The Mothership Left Us Behind

One often scoffs at the "jam band" genre with cynical contempt. In an era when music listeners are divided between those who still appreciate improvised music and those who simply couldn't care less, the DC trio Basement Breaks offers an interesting and refreshing tangent of psychokinetic jazz/funk/punk madness. At times their debut recording sounds as if Ornette Coleman had actually played saxophone for Morphine (90s trio of same instrumentation). The group plays through mostly original themes written by mastermind and saxophonist Perry Conticchio, who has an extensive history



in DC underground jazz circles going back to the 1970s. These compositional frameworks then organically explore improvisational realms just in time to turn a quick corner and offer a new and energetic interpretation of a jazz standard such as McCoy Tyner's "Passion Dance" or Eddie Harris's "Freedom Jazz Dance." Definitely, dancing is a consistent theme that is not to be taken lightly. This recording is a great live recording showcasing what you may get the opportunity to hear at a live show. (Basement Breaks) — Dub C.

JELLO BIAFRA WITH THE MELVINS Sieg Howdy

Before I get to the part of this review where I rant and rave about this absolutely jaw-dropping masterpiece, let me say that I have little to no tolerance for remixes. About one-third of this sophomore effort is dedicated to remixes from the

debut, and other than novelty, I see no point. Remixes smack of ego stroking. "Hey look, we've written songs that are so superior that they can be remixed by someone else and they still are good." Wow. Move over Mozart. Blech. "Nuff said. The heart and soul of this album are the first seven tunes. Four new tracks, one rerecording of first-album classic "The Lighter Side of Global Terrorism" (a completely different beast than a remix), a 21st century reworking of "California Über Alles" that takes aim at Governor Arnold, and a cover of the Alice Cooper band's "Halo of Flies" from their classic 1971 album *Killer*. The new songs are a masterful mix of the metallic, yet otherworldly, efforts that are the epitome of the Melvins, with the biting, and unquestionably humorous, observations of Jello Biafra. I gotta say, this sounds as much a band effort as anything Jello has ever done. I wouldn't be even a little bit disappointed if this blending continued to produce albums and tour for years to come. I can guarantee that anyone who dismisses this as a novelty band hasn't listened to it. I dare you to listen to the spitfire little ditty "A Lesson in What Not to Become" and not start bopping around. Or the even better "Those Dumb Punk Kids (Will Buy Anything)" and not think to yourself that it could have fit in on any Dead Kennedys album and been the best tune on the album (admittedly ironic, since the song takes a not at all subtle swipe at the reformed DKs). I also gotta say that the Cooper band cover was a bit of a pleasant surprise. I wrote my Master of Arts thesis about Alice Cooper (yes, I'm a dork) and am usually wary of any attempt to retell the master of the macabre, but the "Jellvins" nail it. Other than making the tune heavier (no small feat, I assure you) and Jello infusing his personality throughout (with that voice, how could he not?), they stay very true to the original. Basically, any punk not in possession of this CD deserves to be "Voted off the island." (Alternative Tentacles) — Jeb

MARS BLACK Folks Music

It's refreshing to hear a rapper whose reality doesn't involve bustin' caps and Moet. Black relishes the role of Everyman, so he titled his album *Folks Music*. It's a hip-hop folk album: folksy and approachable, yet grounded in the hip-hop sound. Black's observant, folk singer state of mind proves literate and insightful, touching upon relatable subjects like teen pregnancy, maternal love and disgruntlement with the state of hip-hop. Despite the claims of so-called "gangsta rappers," it's albums like *Folks Music* that truly "keep it real." (Team Love) — Mark Harris

BLUEPRINT 1988

Yo, Blueprint is saying some shit on this album, "another good album with bad distribution/another hundred magazines my music is not reviewed in/by the time that fans in press realize I'm the best doing it/I'll be making shitty music," he spits in



"Trouble on My Mind." But then on "Liberated" he says, "way too many artists built their self-esteem around the press/cause when the press loves you and the people don't respond/you feel like the fans owe you something/and you're getting robbed." If anything, Blueprint is trying to bang on deaf ears. It comes off like he wants to be recognized as an artist with the only thing left original. His concise arrangement skills and conceptual content prove that he's more than a producer. His subject matter ranges from childhood memories, to MC battling, to relationships. On "Big Girls Need Love Too," the first verse describes his unapologetic love for fat girls and convinces the listener that his obsession is real. But then he freaks the second verse when he talks about loving skinny women. One of the dopest lines is, "you're so skinny I can see your heart-beat." Don't ask, of course the beats are fresh. Check out "Lo-Fi Funk" (featuring Aesop Rock). Other highlights include "Inner City Native Son," "Anything Is Possible" and "Boom Box." (Rhymesayers Entertainment) — Lightbulb

BRIGHT EYES I'm Wide Awake, It's Morning

In typical Conor Oberst style, this album is full of twangy, country-tinged hopeful/hopeless songs that should be listened to while lying in a warm, grassy field. Emmylou Harris adds her talents to the latest, and quite possibly greatest, Bright Eyes album to-date. (Saddle Creek) — Dawn Fredericks

BRIGHT EYES Digital Ash in a Digital Urn

Bright Eyes ventures into electronic dreamland. Taking a break from his always glued-to-body acoustic guitar, Conor Oberst gives these songs more darkness and adventure. But don't fret, the lyrics are beautifully themed and twist and turn inside and outside of Oberst's mind onto a digitally weaved canvas. Though released at the same time as *I'm Wide Awake, It's Morning*, the sound is totally different and has a more upbeat feel to it. (Saddle Creek) — Dawn Fredericks



CHRIS BROWN AND KATE FENNER Go On (Canadian Love Letter To America)

An apt title for a profound and moving statement directed toward the American voters in this past November 2004 election. These Brooklyn, NY-based conscious Canadians felt their message so urgent that they relentlessly burned the midnight oil and recorded, pressed and released this 5-song EP in 1 month to coincide with the election, rendering a beautiful disc that sounds like months of painstakingly detailed studio work. The duo, backed by their longtime band, have been working together for quite a while now and are also involved in political activism aside from the music. They are currently working hard to promote and communicate their music and to remind the citizens of the United States that the fight for truth and real freedom is far

from over. Sometimes it is important to consider a perspective far from ground zero, because often we cannot see ourselves from the right angle to see where we fall short. More power to Chris and Kate, and stay in the fight!!! (b music) — Dub C.

CHRIS BROWN AND KATE FENNER Go On

Brooklyn-based ex-Bourbon Tabernacle Choir members Chris Brown and Kate Fenner may originally come from Canada, but they love America. That's why they're so pissed off. They take umbrage with the US government's decision to go to war in Iraq, prompting them to release "Resist War" before last November's election. The song, a sort of pacifist's alternative pledge of allegiance, is representative of the EP *Go On*: ethereal folk protest songs with a touch of rock, R&B and even a throwback to adult contemporary, with quivering vocals yet unwavering, contagious fervor. (b-music) — Mark Harris

CREATURE Never Say Die (EP)

Man, this dude got me. I didn't know Creature was nice like that. I heard him for the first time on MF Doom's first Viktor Vaughn album. He rocks with Rob Sonic as his hype man, but Creature has the presence of Masta Killa of Wu-Tang: quite elusive, mad intelligent and a soldier, but a humble cat with hard times on his back. I bought Creature's album from him in downtown Manhattan, where you can always catch him pushing his music on the street. Since I didn't have any good or bad expectations about the CD, I forgot about it in my bag. Two weeks later, I put it in my CD player and felt like a dick cause I didn't do it sooner. Creature tries to show humanity without putting himself in the forefront. His ability to change up his voice from high to low and in a New York or Southern accent allows him to be more the storyteller, even when he's not telling a story. It's not until he's on his own that he shines, but then you go back and listen to any album he's featured on, and it all makes sense. Check out *Collide* (Sound Ink), Rob Sonic's *Telicatessen* (Definitive Jux) and Mike Ladd's *Infesticons* (Big Dada). Guests include Slug of Atmosphere and Jin of Ruff Ryders. Support local artists, kids! (creatureonomics@hotmail.com) — Lightbulb

BUCK 65 This Right Here is Buck 65

Turntable scratches. Pounding drums. Plucked guitars. One big "fuck you" to those who bash his work. At first glance this compilation album seems a waste of time. And truly it may be. Songs about penis size, prostitution and fishing could definitely alienate female listeners. However, Buck 65 is a one-man show to be reckoned with. Bluesy indie hip-hop beats spout from his mouth in a rugged tone, lacking little inflection. He is steady, simple and masculine. 'nuff said. (V2 Records) — Crista Lautes

BURY YOUR DEAD Cover Your Tracks

Bury Your Dead is another up-and-coming megacore band whose music hits like a baseball bat to the choppers. This is

music that is about as subtle as a chain-saw in a litter of kittens (and almost as destructive). Bury Your Dead is the type of uncompromising band that has made Victory Records a scene mainstay since the days of Insight and Only the Strong. Bury Your Dead sounds like the soundtrack to a knife fight between Blood for Blood and Hoods. The harshness of the music and the brutality hinted at in the image "story" of the booklet art is definitely counterpoised by the surprisingly personal and often sensitive lyrics. Which is another similarity to Hoods, if the truth be told. (Victory Records) — Jeb

BUZZOV-EN Welcome to Violence

In case you missed it the first time, Alternative Tentacles has compiled the earliest recordings of the monstrous musical beast known as Buzzov-en and rereleased them for mass consumption and global aural destruction. By combining the first LP with the *Wound* and *Unwilling to Explain* EPs, you get 21 tracks of earth-splitting heavycore. In the early 90s, only a handful of bands were attempting to do anything even remotely like Buzzov-en, so naturally, they are going to be remembered as icons amongst followers of the sludgcore cult. If you aren't afraid to join said cult (and, to be honest, you probably should be), then forego a vice or two for a couple of days and use the money to buy this CD (and if you have any left over, increase your life insurance policy). Sludge has had its turn as the flavor of the day and has descended back into the depths where it rightfully belongs and where it can fester and propagate. So now is the perfect time to discover or rediscover the band that (along with Eyehategod, Grief, Cavity, and maybe a couple of others) pioneered a subgenre that is, and should be, only for fans of the most extreme. (Alternative Tentacles) — Jeb

GAVIN CASTLETON Dark Age

The yin to his serene yang album *Hypotenuse*, Gavin Castleton's *Dark Age* presents a spirited trek into the world of hip-hop. Not exactly the poster child for rap music, Castleton nevertheless wins you over with charismatic vocals and humorous, thought-provoking—at times controversial—lyrics, such as his rant against the current stagnancy of hip-hop music on "Lemon." The avant-garde jazz fusion mixes with the hip-hop beats and offbeat, sometimes unrhyming lyrics to create a neobeat poetry vibe. Way cool. (Hematoma Support Group) — Mark Harris

GAVIN CASTLETON Hypotenuse

Grüvis Malt singer Gavin Castleton emerges on this solo effort with an uncanny knack for crafting melancholy jazz-rock fusion. The placid, almost ambient sound of *Hypotenuse* plays in stark contrast to Castleton's hip-hop-inclined *Dark Age*, but it works just as well, presenting fans with a meditative alternative to the more aggressive sound. Maybe it should be called *Light Age*? (Hematoma Support Group) — Mark Harris

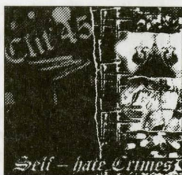
CALL ME LIGHTNING The Trouble We're In

Oh Call Me Lightning, I will call you what-

ever you'd like, just please keep making albums like *The Trouble We're In*. It's like somebody took three five-year-olds and gave them incredible musical abilities. This album is an erratic roller coaster ride of screams and whines and bursts of energy. It makes me want to eat an ice cream cone and then throw glass. It's singing about pizza and dragons while having a temper tantrum on the floor. So, basically how I feel every day. You need this album. (Revelation) — Dawn Fredericks

CLIT 45 Self-Hate Crimes

This debut album is a sledgehammer to the skull. One adrenaline rush after another, the fierce drums and grinding guitars antagonize listeners to fight their way through anything, even if it is making a grilled-cheese sandwich. Luckily, it takes almost no time to make a grilled cheese, because no track is longer than two minutes. By the end of this catastrophic beating, you will have pulverized your meal, picked up a violent affection for Clit 45 and screamed your way through tales of mischievous youth. (BYO Records) — Crista Lautes

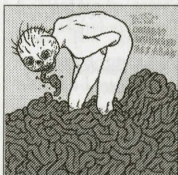


JILL COHN Seven Year Surrender

With her sixth album, *Seven Year Surrender*, singer-songwriter Jill Cohn presents an involving tapestry of tales of loss — both personal and universal. She displays a disarming vulnerability tempered by the self-determination epitomized in the song "Never Going Back." The most single-worthy track seems to be the rousing "Blind Date," although from start to finish, the entire album features mature songwriting propelled by strong melodies, a folk-country-jazz musical mélange, and a heartfelt delivery. (Box O' Beans Music) — Mark Harris

COMBAT WOUNDED VETERAN This Is Not an Erect, All-Red Neon Body

When you are a music critic, you get to a point where you start to judge CDs by their covers. After a while, you start to get it just right. This CD won't fool you or me. This CD kicked my ass. (No Idea) — Ojo Rojo



DEAD KENNEDYS Live at the Deaf Club

As led by the sometimes satirical, constantly caustic and proudly political Jello Biafra, the Dead Kennedys where one of the bands that gave punk rock its anti-establishment, "political" image/personality/aesthetic/appeal that persist even long after punk has been picked over, pilfered, packaged, and, well, punk'd by empty and the purveyors of all things pop. This "new" DK CD put out by Manifesto (the DKs' new home since Biafra's former bandmates legally lassoed the DK franchise from

him and his indie label Alternative Tentacles) is actually a not-previously released live performance from 1979 at the Deaf Club in San Francisco. While the sound quality ain't great and the performance isn't perfect (people yelling into the mics, overheard guitar tunings, badly miked drums, etc.), this is still an important document of one of the early shows by one of the relevant and groundbreaking bands in punk during the days before everyone got old, jaded, dead...and punk died. (Manifesto Records) — Pedro Taino

DEPECHE MODE Playing the Angel

I'm sort of glad that after all these years, Depeche Mode still sounds like Depeche Mode. This latest version is darker and moodier, ranging from sadness to sexy sadomasochism. Alluding to religion was always a part of their music, but these songs are more extreme, with mentions of sinners and saints, repentance, guilt, God, belief, and pain and suffering. In fact, the CD cover says on the back, "pain and suffering in various tempos." Can you dance to electronica that talks about suffering? I dunno, but the feeling is interesting enough to listen to, especially when you turn up the stereo to let the sounds fill the room. It's definitely less upbeat than the earlier stuff, but is that such a bad thing? (Sire Records) — Kira Yustak

DJ MUGGS vs. GZA Grandmasters

In a dream-team matchup, the driving forces behind two of the most influential hip-hop acts of the 90s—Wu-Tang Clan and Cypress Hill—GZA and DJ Muggs collaborate more than a decade after their groups' formation for a trip down memory lane. With GZA rapping and Muggs producing, *Grandmasters* sounds more Wu-Tang than Cypress Hill, with a sparse sound punctuated by sharp, staccato beats, quick looped samples, movie clips and of course, the chess analogies. Checkmate! (Angeles Records) — Mark Harris

THE DONNAS Gold Medal

After their last album castrated *Billboard* charts, the Donnas' newest work presents a different side. Watch your throat, though, because they are out for the jugular. "You're into me, but you're shooting blanks." OUCH! And the cuts go even deeper. Luckily, it is easy to overlook the edgy, blunt lyrics of this ass-kickin' combo when their rock style and harmonized voices are so audacious. Main complaint: need a longer album. (Atlantic Records) — Crista Lautes

DOWNTOWN Downtown

Downtown should be aware of the magnitude of their sound. Reverie has never been so sweet as with their self-titled debut album. Chock-full of ambience and electronics, your slumber will last indefinitely when you hear the highlights of drum and bass, echoed and droned vocals, and acoustical sequences strewn throughout this album. Whimsical and indolent, serenading violins and hushed piano will lull you into a trance. (Coup De Grace) — Crista Lautes

DR. MYSTERY Metaphysical Ballyhoo

This is a very interesting statement made by the surreptitious Dr. Mystery. Set to top notch drum 'n' bass break beats, augmented by the man himself playing electric bass and guitar in a psycho-blues-post-surf-punk style intertwined with various vocal samples (one such sample being a George W. speech restructured to have him saying, "What our troops need are...illegal drugs." over and over throughout one track), at times this disc sounds as though Captain Beefheart's band did a jungle record or Jimmy Page took mescaline with Goldie and tried to make a punk record. There is actually some very impressive guitar work that lies therein, especially on the second track, "Sapporo Midnight." On some tracks, it seems that the Doc is alternating bass and guitar lines live and unedited on his Ibanez double neck electric bass/guitar, but we may never know what actually happened during these recordings. I suppose it shall remain a mystery until the Doc chooses to divulge his secrets to the masses. Hopefully, Dr. Mystery will continue to challenge and mystify the status quo. (Rusty Records) — Dub C.

THE DWARVES The Dwarves Must Die

Lyrical frat boys and "Dudes" across the world unite! The Dwarves have released a new album. A new album that is all over the place, but I mean, who isn't? This album covers everything from ska to rockabilly (sort of), to rap, to punk, to gut-wrenching screams, staying catchy and upbeat all the while. This album is ridiculous, but I mean that in the best way possible. The Dwarves are the perfect match for anyone with musical ADD. Or most males ages 15-25. (Greedy Records) — Dawn Fredericks

EMOK Shove Your Head into the Ground and Feed It to the Earth

This debut release by this Brooklyn (by way of Israel) three-piece fuses relentless rock riffs with subtle Middle Eastern percussion and smart samples with intelligent lyrics that confront the conflicting emotions (and politics) of the Israeli in America. Emok have a healthy and heartfelt distrust in political systems, which is at it should be, and this CD was put out by an indie label, which is how it needs to be. And that's just alright with me. (Wrong Records) — Pedro Taino

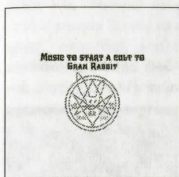
THE FENIANS Every Day's a Hooley

Never have I craved Guinness until this album. Maybe this was to eliminate the banjos and flutes playing in my head or because a celebration of Ireland was in order. Celtic rock, bluegrass and comical lyrics join to create an eclectic contemporary Irish sound on The Fenians' fifth album. Cultivated for a mature audience, "Every Day's a Hooley" exemplifies a diverse 12-track journey. You'll be dancing a jig in no time. (Mizen Head Music) — Crista Lautes

GLASS AND ASHES Aesthetic Arrest

The largest circle pit in the world could not hail a big enough thank you to these guys for egging on the most rigorous

workout ever. Bruised, bleeding and exhausted, this screamo foursome seeks no condolence. The band had to have known hospitalization might occur after listening to their album with tracks titled "Dead on Arrival" and "Bloody Knuckles." Whining, rapid guitars, heavy symbols and brutal screams beyond lyrical understanding offer a distraction from everyday life. (No Idea Records) — Crista Lautes



GRAM RABBIT
Music To Start A Cult To
This could not be a more overt as well as interesting recording. Adorned with original

magical symbols and manifestos, *Music To Start a Cult To* is anything but pretentious. Actually, the themes and imagery are derived directly from the magical teachings of Aleister Crowley and have been empowering those willing to get past all the historical misrepresentations for the past 100 years or so. The music, interestingly enough, fuses rock, folk and electronica into an accessible package for the otherwise esoteric subject matter. At times reminiscent of Psychic TV or other "acid house/rock" bands from the 1980s that adopted similar themes, this Gram Rabbit album at times sounds like it could be in a David Lynch movie. Throughout are contained very interesting, contrasting musical textures that, through closer and closer examination, fuse many more genres seamlessly through electronic sampling. This band has a very intriguing concept, and I would be very curious to see them perform live. (Stinky Records) — Dub C.

JULIANA HATFIELD **Made in China**

Although stripped even further to basics than 2000's very consciously raw *Total System Failure*, Juliana Hatfield's eighth full-length solo album, and the first for her own label, *Made in China* is a thirty-seven minute whirlwind celebrating her trademark combination of edgy cynicism, pop hooks and classic rock mastery all faultlessly framed by her lost-little-girl vocals. *Made in China* once again evidences that Hatfield is the best songwriter of her generation. The masses let her slip through their collective fingers once; let us hope this oversight does not continue to persist. (Ye Olde Records) — Richard John Cummins

THE HOLY MOUNTAIN **Bloodstains Across Your Face in Decline**

In the world of metal and hardcore, there's what some of us call Cookie Monster vocals. Sometimes it's a good thing; sometimes it's very bad. In this case, we have Elmo vocals. Not the happy dancing Elmo, but rather the sound of Elmo being tortured and left for dead. (No Idea) — Ojo Rojo

JEDI MIND TRICKS **Legacy of Blood**

Stoupe (producer/DJ) is always fresh on production with the ill dramatic violins, the Spanish guitars and his attempts to give the album a cinematic feel by using movie excerpts for sound bites. Vinnie

Paz has still got it lyrically, but the formula is getting dated. Don't get it twisted; his flow is still fire, but Jedi as a group keep falling short of making another classic like *Psycho-Social*. Who knows, may be this is their definition of "growing artists." (Baby Grande) — Lightbulb

JUDGE **What It Meant:**

The Complete Discography

This is the complete discography of the recorded output of a NYHC band that didn't put out too much. But what they did put out meant a lot to a hardcore scene that was vascillating and needed a healthy dose of angry introspection to go with its "me and my crew" paint-by-numbers positivity. Though these guys were a hardcore band, they added elements of metal. And although much of their audience was the usual, often racist, hardcore white kids, with an Asian cat in the group, they managed to rise above that scene and create some reflective, conscious music to mosh to. Something for your New York hardcore collection, kid. (Revelation) — Pedro Taino

KADDISFLY **Buy Our Intentions;** **We'll Buy You A Unicorn**

A progressive rock band with a pop twist, this quintet from Oregon is a combination of high-pitched vocals, urbane harmonization and an array of instrumentally enhanced tracks (a mandolin, piano and slide can be heard). Sometimes political, sometimes inquisitive, their dynamic musical structure is a sublime balance of intention and experimentation. Undoubtedly a catchy creation, look for them rockin' this album on multiple Warped Tour dates this year. (Hopeless Records) — Crista Lautes

THE KILLS **No Wow**

This is one of those cd's that you can just listen to over and over again. The lyrics are strong and powerful, and instrumentals are intense and intoxicating. The overall sound of the Kills is New-Age meets 80s and indie. I say this one is a keeper for anytime of the day and any mood. (RCA) — Allie

THE KRONOS QUARTET **Mugam Sayagi**

The Kronos Quartet has recorded tributes to the likes of Thelonious Monk, John Zorn, and Jimi Hendrix, but on *Mugam Sayagi*, they turn their sights to classically trained Azerbaijani pianist Ali-Zadeh, who melds the music of her homeland (particularly mugam, a traditional Azerbaijani genre) with a modern classical sound. These songs feel like stories, with tranquil build-ups of minimal music punctuated by swelling, dramatic plot twists. While there are only five tracks, *Mugam Sayagi* still adds up to 80 minutes of epic storytelling. (Nonesuch Records) — Mark Harris

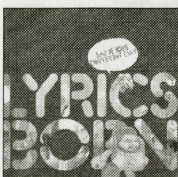
LEFT ALONE **Lonely Starts & Broken Hearts**

Do you think vocalist and guitarist Elvis Cortez foresaw his band cooking up a storm for everyone on the 2004 Warped Tour back in 1996? Well they did, while also performing and promoting their butts off, and it shows. Their album brings

together conventional punk rock elements, rapid playing and riotous vocals. While ska-influenced tracks "Another Feeling," "By My Side" and "Dead Red Roses" break up the mundane and add, just one more reason these guys should be proud to be part of the Hell Cat Records family. (Hell Cat Records) — Crista Lautes

LYRICS BORN **Same !@#\$ Different Day**

Underground Bay Area rapper Lyrics Born remixes his debut album *Later That Day...*, throws in a few extra tracks, and comes up with an eclectic opus. A breath of fresh air in the image-conscious hip-hop world, *Same !@#\$ Different Day* goes out on a limb to deliver a vibrant sound steeped as much in R&B, funk, blues and jazz as hip-hop. Lyrics Born even dares to sing on a few tracks, delivering a surprisingly evocative bluesy tone. A rapid-fire delivery, sly sense of humor (full of pop culture references from Stuart Smalley to *Rap City*) and dance-floor fillers like "Hello" make this one of the most enjoyable



hip-hop albums of the year. (Quannum Projects) — Mark Harris

NELLIE MCKAY **Pretty Little Head**

After a few minutes, I took a liking to this. It's kinda loungey pop, soft and quirky. In this follow-up to her acclaimed debut *Get Away from Me*, Nellie plays the piano, cello, vibes and synthesizer, and she sings cool duets with Cyndi Lauper and k.d. lang. Issues such as gay marriage and tenants, rights are intermingled with the overall pleasant and mellow mood, and Nellie is an activist in her own right when she's not singing and starring on Broadway. With a little retro thrown in for good measure, it's like sugar and spice and everything nice. (Columbia Records) — Kira Yustak

THE MAINLINERS **Bring on the Sweetlife**

Oh, I do love Swedish indie rockers. The Mainliners are no exception. They seem to have a sense of humor about themselves and do not hold back at all. 1960s singing/yelling/screaming/wailing really does it for me, and they do it well. I was surprised at how well they are able to make their older sound so enjoyable instead of dated and loungey. "Ordinary Night" really caught my attention. It moves past the rest of the album's 60s marinade. (Get Hip Records) — Kristina Johansson

MAD CADDIES **Live from Toronto**

Hell yes, this live album is one more reason why ska music should be more prevalent across the board. Horns and percussion give off a reggae-jazz beat to the already compelling ska-punk sound of this band's sixth tour de force. You'll get caught up in their wacky, rampant comical substance and playful presentation. Pirate tunes and circus follies ameliorate the intense vocals that preach about everything — love, monkeys,

enemies, injury... (Fat Wreck Chords) — Crista Lautes

MARILYN MANSON **Lest We Forget: The Best Of**

This one's for those of you too scared to buy the full-length CDs (or for those of us who haven't figured out how to use a CD burner to put our fave Manson songs on one CD-R). *Lest We Forget: The Best Of* includes many of the power anthems like "The Beautiful People" and "Get Your Gunn" as well as the familiar cover tunes "Tainted Love," "Sweet Dreams" and "Personal Jesus." This is a keeper. (Interscope Records) — Ojo Rojo



ME FIRST AND THE GIMME GIMMES **Ruin Jonny's Bar Mitzvah**

Ordaining themselves the "best cover band in the world," they aren't far off. Their fifth album rocks a young boy's step into manhood. Covering legendary tracks like "Stairway to Heaven," "Heart of Glass," "The Longest Time" and other decades' classics, this all-star band crystallizes these hits into dazzling gems for every generation to appreciate. San Francisco punk idols who no doubt have unparalleled talent jolt, pound and scream their way through a spectacular display of punk rock. (Fat Wreck Chords) — Crista Lautes

MF DOOM **MM...Food?**

Former KMD frontman Zev Love X returns for a second outing as the not-so-subtle Doctor Doom clone, MF Doom. The cartoon cover art, fantastic alter ego and zany samples culled from cartoons, Sesame Street and news reports about "edible wrappers" indicate that, while he's sour about the controversy over the shelved 1993 album *Black Bastards*, Doom still has a sense of humor. The savvy wordplay and cultural references should appeal to fans of Organized Konfusion and Freestyle Fellowship. Doom's unpredictable production, meanwhile, layers such diverse elements as a human beat box and Anita Baker's "Sweet Love." Fun and freewheeling, *MM...Food?* destroys the hip-hop mold. (Rhymesayers Entertainment) — Mark Harris

M.I.A. **Arular**

M.I.A. makes genre grenades in her grandmother's garage. Detonated dancehall beats and bleeps and Brazilian Brit bruised baile funk fused with hip pop cut-and-paste politics for the people with reggaeton rude boy recycled radio rids



dims that rail against the shitstem tossed in for global good measure. Finally, fun for the freedom fighters and good vibes for the guerrillas among us. M.I.A. says that we gotta take politics back from the old men, and to make herself clear, the Sri Lankan saboteur has crafted *Arular* (named after her freedom-fightin' father's

MORE MUSIC

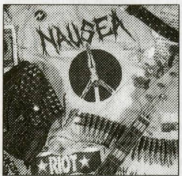
alias), 13 bombs to make you blow. Finally a revolution you can dance to. (XL/Interscope) — Pedro Taino

NEON BLONDE Headlines EP

A side project of Blood Brothers lead singer Johnny Whitney and bassist Mark Gajadhar, Neon Blonde plays something akin to audio performance art: idiosyncratic, expressive, surreal. But it's not the head-scratching, naked interpretive dance type of art; rather, the palpable melodies and soulful edge (piano, sax, hip-hop drums, electro-funk rhythms) make the art rock sound and the eccentricities of Whitney's screeching falsetto accessible and oddly comforting. Neon Blonde feels like your crazy favorite uncle on meds: close to teetering out of control, but when sedated, a rollicking good time. (Dim Mak Records) — Mark Harris

NAUSEA The Punk Terrorist Anthology, Volume 2: '85-'88

If ever the title of an album said it all, this one does (although I think everything on here was recorded in either '87 or '88). These are some of the earlier recordings by the seminal punk icons Nausea. A band that tore down barriers between punk, crust and metal, yet, for good or bad, managed to avoid being lumped into the crossover scene that was exploding at the time.



They even avoided, for the most part, the NYHC tag in spite of being pillars of the New York scene. I'm sure this was due primarily to the fact they were forging a sound far more distinctive than the predominant chugga-chugga hardcore favored by other NYHC mainstays. Politically charged and socially aware lyrics and insight were as much the hallmark of these recordings as the harsh and devouring music. As is often the case with the best of the best (and Nausea certainly were), these recordings have stood the test of time, and sound as vibrant and violent today as they did almost two decades ago. (Alternative Tentacles) — Jeb

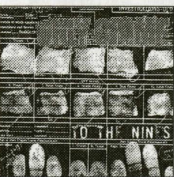
OLIVER FUTURE Oliver Future

The older I get and the more music I hear, I often wonder, does rock 'n' roll have a future? Until I heard this particular record, I had thought not. Austin, Texas's own Oliver Future have breathed new life into a seemingly stagnant art form and approach it with more energy, originality, enthusiasm and overall integrity than I have witnessed in a long time. Their self-titled debut is a beautifully coherent sonic statement from start to finish, taking the listener on an exciting journey reminiscent of Zeppelin, Radiohead, and Pet Sounds-era Beach Boys heights with some very subtle but controversial social and political statements. What's interesting about this new band is that they rock, groove and actually have something to say at the same time. This is a totally original sound that must be heard by all music lovers. To see the band perform live is almost cathartic. Keep an ear open for Oliver Future. They are definitely going

places and just may set a new precedent. (Lilywhite Records) — Dub C.

ONLY CRIME To the Nines

Once you dredge through track one, the true talent barrels out. With a vocal tempo similar to most modern punk and a sound full of guitar slides and metal renditions, Only Crime can appeal to a variety of crowds. The unfortunate thing about the album is the sound is so rambunctious at times that one dismisses the amazingly well-written lyrics. A vocal harshness heightened by screams fight the nation's control, while the ending of "On Time" guarantees to knock these guys up a notch for rockin' hard. (Fat Wreck Chords) — Crista Lautes



ONE TRUE THING Finally...

Coming at us from Long Island, New York, *Finally...*, the latest release from One True Thing, is sheer energy and female-fronted rock 'n' roll at its best. A tight band and a great voice is all a band needs these days to get some serious attention, and this band has just that. Lead vocalist Melanie Wills has the power and mastery over her own voice and style to possibly take this band as far as it wants to go. With beautiful lyrics and harmonies sometimes reminiscent of the Cranberries but at other times sounding more rooted in early-80s post-punk/new wave, this band has sounds and textures like a modern-day Police. This disc definitely puts one in a mood both refreshing and nostalgic. There seems to be a ton of fire pushing this band forward. Keep eye and an ear out for them, because they are definitely going places. (Play the Assassin Records) — Dub C.

PEBBLE THEORY Pebble Theory

Simplest, this musically enchanting album is a swirl, dip and a shuffle. This San Francisco band takes a step away from California's widespread punk/emo scene. As a casual rock band, they channel elements of past rock legends. Their lounge music background and funk style would appeal to those interested in contemporary alternative with a twist of classic rock. (Los Kamikaze Records) — Crista Lautes

PONY UP! Pony Up!

Cuddlecore lives! The sound once championed by bands like Tuscadero and Cub. Fun, hook-laden pop played with a garage-punk attitude thrives, courtesy of Montreal's Pony Up! Standout tracks include the raw "Shut Up and Kiss Me" and the 80s-flavored "Going Nowhere." Yet Pony Up!'s seemingly innocent sound proves to be something of a Trojan Horse: "Matthew Modine," paraphrases the notorious line from Liz Phair's "Flower" (yeah, you know the one) and then manages to raise the stakes. Pony up for this one, to be sure. (Dim Mak/Ten Fingers Records) — Richard John Cummins

RED ANIMAL WAR Polizida

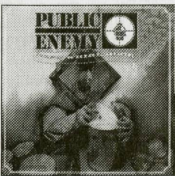
The tempo is constant and so keeps the feeling at one main level. It's good and it's something you could listen to, to remember how to feel and just zone out. This is definitely an album for all those somewhat boring/dead days, or for times when you feel you need an energy boost. (Ice Planet) — Allie

RISE AGAINST Siren Songs of the Counter Culture

Proactive. Political. Absolutely extraordinary. While their two previous releases were phenomenal, this one takes the cake. Every aspect is immaculate; containing blunt poetic lyrics, multiple change-ups, and an essence that can only be described as hardcore punk rock with grace. Simply put, everything about them is premeditated excellence with a "no bullshit" edge. Truly one of the best albums made in a long time. (Geffen Records) — Crista Lautes

PUBLIC ENEMY New Whirl Odor

For the past several years, Chuck D and his PE conspirators have been putting out (under the radar) indie (as fuck) efforts on their own label. And, while it is a glorious



thing to know that the (only) black panthers of hip-hop and the mouth that (can still) make the president mad have gone all-indie, it also means that they are completely locked out of the whole MTV-commercial-radio cabal that gets ya music heard (and seen) on a mass (media) scale. That's a pity and a crime against the culture. This is one of Public Enemy's best efforts in a while, and (in spite of the title) right up there with some of their (major label) classics, like *It Takes a Nation of Millions...* and *Fear of a Black Planet*. And Mista Chuck is STILL talkin' 'bout a revolution...hasta la muerte... Naw, you won't be seeing them on MTV anytime too soon. Buy this CD with the money you was gonna spend to see *Get Rich or Die Tryin'*, punk. (Slam Jamz) — Pedro Taino

DAVID ROVICS Behind the Barricades: The Best of David Rovics

Comical and controversial, David Rovics presents a hilarious, commentary-filled campside singalong. This live album protests national establishments, drug trafficking, treason and unionization, while heavily incorporating the audience. Rovics's plucked acoustic guitar and vocal twang make for a playful display of laconic banter about the need for survival. Patriotic at best, you can envision a conservative small town protesting about unfair factory conditions while the children are clogging in the streets. (Daemon Records) — Crista Lautes

SECOND AUDIO PROGRAM Second Audio Program

This disc really rocks!!! Boston-based hard rock outfit, Second Audio Program (S.A.P.) truly delivers on this, their first independent EP release. At times reminiscent of bands like Tool, Alice in Chains,

Pearl Jam and Faith No More, S.A.P. has quite an original and high-energy sound, adorned with catchy and melodic hooks, very rhythmic lyric delivery. A hard-edged and tight band, Second Audio Program should definitely start turning some heads in the next few months. This brief (4 tracks) but forceful disc is a very insightful preview to what this new band has to offer and what is yet to come. Keep rockin', guys! (S.A.P.) — Dub C.

SELF SCIENTIFIC Change

Los Angeles duo Self Scientific furthers the recent trend toward literate, topic-driven hip-hop with their gripping album *Change*. I mean, when was the last time you heard a rapper use the word "diaspora"? MC Chace uses a fluid gangsta delivery without the gangsta messages, preferring to delve into government corruption, religion, social ills, familial support, and life and death. "I'm not trying to be tough," he relates on "Understand Me," "I'm just being honest." DJ Khalil meanwhile provides ample musical support, with a return to old-school scratching and sampling—including several melancholy snippets of old R&B records that add weight to an already substantial album. (Angeles Records) — Mark Harris



SHAMBHALA The Lotus Of

This is conscious and powerfully positive hip-hop for a time that desperately needs it. Shambhala hails from a Washington, D.C., circle of previously undiscovered artistic brilliance who, through advancing art forms, wish to change the polarity of popular art and culture to manifest positive change. This, Shambhala's debut disc, contains beautifully tasteful samples creating some very entrancing and expansive tracks in which the lyricists humbly but aggressively flow lyrics in sutra style containing mystical messages from Hindu and Buddhist texts. In a time when the masses cynically dub conscious music as being pretentious and dated, Shambhala offers a refreshing and aggressive new take on timeless knowledge that is so powerfully executed that one cannot ignore its importance. Follow Shambhala closely, for they are sure to make some statements that will not be easily forgotten. (I99 Records) — Dub C.

SINAI BEACH Immersed

Sinai Beach is a band that seems to channel the spirits of Pantera and Fear Factory, but to their credit, they avoid sounding dated or retro. Instead, they give their precise and driving sound a very contemporary vibe that owes a thing or two to the post-Y2K metalcore juggernaut. In the end, the entire project is probably unlike anything you have heard before, although all of the various components will be very familiar. For a long time, Victory Records hasn't been shy about releasing metal albums that only manage slight nods to the hardcore roots of the label, but I gotta say that *Immersed* may be the most metallic album Victory has

yet tackled. You will have to apply your own perspective to determine if that is a good thing or not, but old-fart metalheads like me aren't complaining very loudly. (Victory Records) — Jeb

SILO 10

Silo 10
From the liner, "Guitar/synth effects, fretless guitar with sympathetic strings/loops/treatments." Recorded in a grain silo. Natural reverb. Ambient. It took a couple listens to enjoy it. It's warm, quiet, beautiful, and relaxing but still interesting. Your mind will wander but not to the grocery list. You'll fall asleep, not notice it playing, or really like it. Most people already know how they feel about ambient music, so let that be your guide. (DogFingers/Uncle Buzz Recordings) — Kristina Johansson

THE SLOW POISONERS'

Melodrama

A. GOLDFARB'S
Ogner Stump's One Thousand Sorrows
Oh, how exquisitely pleasant. By some twist of fortune, I've stumbled upon a trove of media seemingly cultured to satiate my inner demented four-year-old. I have here: A CD of 16 tracks, entitled *Melodrama*, by the Slow Poisoners, a comic book entitled, *Ogner Stump's One Thousand Sorrows* by an A. Goldfarb, and a holiday greeting card adorned with a spikey, black gilded Santa riding a shriveled swan. Inside the greeting card is the penmanship of the mastermind behind these manifestos, the signature of which I sniffed for any interesting residue, but my nose is too stuffy to tell much. But I think the way he lets the end stroke of the w in his name, Andrew, fly off into a mad corkscrew is directly symbolic of the man's insanity, spiraling off to implode in absolute brilliance. The CD, *Melodrama*, was concocted by his (on the CD booklet he calls himself Andrew Poisoner) vocals, guitars" and "a little piano," and an odd man in goggles named Fox Trot, who dictated the "drums and percussion, vocals, bass, keyboards, guitar, helmet." Fox Trot has since left the Slow Poisoners, so Andrew Poisoner is now touring as the Slow Poisoner, a "one-man surrealistic rock & roll band." I'm particularly fond of the song in Spanish, *¡Todo Es Mal!* This is coot pop made for the queer duck, the rare bird, the screwball. And A. Goldfarb has got me looking at the moon in a whole new way after having gargled his pages around my ocular cavity. In *One Thousand Sorrows*, Goldfarb attempts to chronicle the thousand sorrows of Ogner Stump (whom I've read Goldfarb swears couldn't be modeled after himself, as Ogner parts his hair in the middle), which include employment, the written word, space and ennui. I'll warn you: this book introduces you over and over to chemical states of being you never thought your brain could be in, so don't read it if you're comfortable with stasis. Bizarre stuff. (Rocktopus Records and Wonderella Printed) — Bad Ophelia

STRIKEFORCE DIABLO

The Albatross and the Architect

With over ten years of musical experience under their belt, this band's true debut album may help them reach their goal of survival. Muffled vocals and a

post-punk sound that distinguishes itself from most radio punk, this album brings together a throbbing bass, vicious guitar, steady drum and grueling vocals. Balanced, yet turbulent; blaring, yet euphoric. Strikeforce Diablo are on their way to magnificent recognition. (No Idea Records) — Crista Lautes

SUBMISSION HOLD

What Holds Back the Elephant

A masterpiece that can only be described as the Sahara Desert meets the London punk scene with a splash of Nashville, Tennessee. This borderline jam band filled with political activism and environmental awareness weave a wickedly funk-filled album. Blurting out protests of conformity and stagnation, the feminine vocals are angry and sharp but compassionate and mellow. If their beautifully chaotic sound isn't enough brain stimulation for your intellect, the album booklet is written in three languages. (G7 Records) — Crista Lautes



TAMORA

There's No Tomorrow Baby, So How About Tonight?

Tamora have the coolest song titles: "Loving Jesus is Like Kneeling in Vomit", "Where's Ian MacKaye when you need him?", "Art has the Responsibility to Alienate the Enemy", "I Don't Mind if Your Straight... As Long as you Act Gay Around Me", "It's Hard to Eat meat with Broken Fingers." And what's more, I think these hardcore kids mean every word or at least every title. I really think they do. Somebody email Ian (Hcni) — Pedro taino

CAETANO VELOSO

A Foreign Sound

This is a labor of love for the Brazilian legend, a marvelous tribute to America's musical heritage that covers jazz standards and show tunes to soul and modern rock, all in a mix of jazzy bossa nova and lush orchestral strings. While Mom and Dad reminisce over Paul Anka's "Donna" and Elvis's "Love Me Tender," Grandma can enjoy "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" and "The Man I Love" and Junior should get a kick out of Nirvana's "Come As You Are." There's an initial kitsch factor to the latter tune—like Tom Jones doing Prince's "Kiss"—but the more you hear it, the more you appreciate the serene, acoustic edge and understated vocals. Kitsch-tastic! (Nonesuch Records) — Mark Harris

VICIOUS CYCLE

Vicious Cycle

The chants of "it's over" on track one of Vicious Cycle's album may be referring to the band's musical career. Sometimes whiny and often raspy vocals. The climaxes are the classic rock guitar solos. They are a bad knockoff of acts such as Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, No Doubt and Bad Brains. And while these artists are monumental, the lyrical repetition and technical simplicity of Vicious Cycle leave me to suggest that they should become a cover band for artists circa 1993. (Sweet Ass Records) — Crista Lautes

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Azadi!

Ever feel like you are in the Amazon jungle at a Symphony Hall with a bunch of punk kids dancing to techno music? Well, now you will! This benefit compilation for the Association of the Women of Afghanistan has every genre of music available on two discs. From solely instrumental to nonstop ramblings, the simplicity and technical eeriness are enough to make you question whether your microwave is about to blow or the clouds are going to split and God appear. (Fire Museum Records) — Crista Lautes

A PERFECT MURDER

Unbroken

A Perfect Murder might just as accurately be called "a perfect merger" because they are one of the better bands attempting to merge hardcore and metal. They have achieved a stellar blend of the raw angst of hardcore with the punishing precision riffing of metallic death/thrash. They join labelmates like Darkest Hour, All Out War, Martyr A.D. and Bury Your Dead at the forefront of the neocrossover scene. This is the type of music that it can only be played in buildings that have had modern seismic upgrades, because it's as apt to crack a cement foundation as it is to splinter your skull. I just hope nobody with a weak heart ever is exposed to the intensity on tap here; it could be the last thing they ever experience. Actually, that's not such a bad thing. (Victory Records) — Jeb

PITCH BLACK

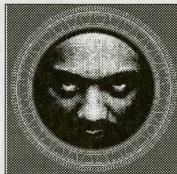
This Is the Modern Sound

Pitch Black's sophomore effort, *This Is the Modern Sound*, is a well-executed, albeit a somewhat low-energy, exercise in post-punk artcore. Reminiscent of the boundary-stretching sounds championed by labels like Alternative Tentacles (although this is on Revelation), this CD is bound to appeal to punk and hardcore fans who are hungry for a new spin on the tried-and-true formulas. Not surprisingly, Pitch Black consists of scene vets who, instead of getting jaded, got creative. (Revelation) — Jeb

C-RAYZ WALZ

Year of the Beast

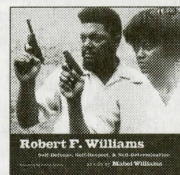
C-Rayz walks through the ghetto holding his dictionary, he exists on spit, his intellect is kung fu, he writes like Mumia, but, unlike Jay-Z, he won't dumb it down to double his dollars. And that's a wonderful thing, baby, because in this media-manipulated mumble mouth, make money millennium, it's nice to know that the hip-hop "underground" still has some integrity, cuz jah knows the mainstreams got none. This sophomore effort on Def Jux for C-Rayz is chock-full of rhymes designed to blow ya mind. Street smart but intellectually on point, and with enough of a politically minded edge to almost make ya wanna give a damn about hip-hop again. (Definitive Jux) — Pedro Taino



ROBERT F. WILLIAMS

Self-Respect, Self-Defense and Self-Determination

Robert F. Williams fought the Klan; lead the NAACP; was exiled in Cuba, China and Africa for advocating armed struggle; wrote a controversial book called *Negroes with Guns* that inspired the black nationalist and black power movements; and outlived both Malcolm and Martin. So, naturally, he is, as Howard Zinn says, largely lost in the history books. This compilation of interviews and commentaries, brought to you by Freedom Archives, is narrated by Williams's wife, Mabel, who struggled (and bore arms) right alongside him for years, and allows us to hear and learn about his powerful and provocative ideas and life in his (and Mabel's) own words and wisdom. Had this eva eva been taught in their schools, we might actually be free today. (AK Press) — Pedro Taino



SAUL WILLIAMS

Saul Williams

While sitting under the poetree in the sweet and cerebral sunshine, sometimes something disturbing happens to smart folks who should "no" better. They start writing mind-altering, metaphysical metaphors about magical moths that morph into mystic messiahs, or something like that. Fortunately, Williams didn't do that on this self-titled release. These words are a nice balance between profound palabras by a man who at this point in his career is nothing less than a master poet, and hip-hop meets punk-rock street syllables with a straight-up simplicity. Williams says he recorded before he had a deal in place, and it shows. But that's a good thing, because all these songs have an experimental feel to them that suggests that he didn't necessarily give a shit whether he could (or should) or would write at least one hit. He didn't, but this is a good record that hopefully will be bought and heard, instead of the latest sony saturated shit-stain. (Fader Label) — Pedro Taino

THE YELLOW BELTS

The Yellow Belts

I'm sick of all the retro-punk pop I see and hear everywhere. A lot of the new bands that sound old lack the sincerity, energy and danger of the old school. But how can you judge that? How can you say this band has it; this other one doesn't? I don't know, it's just there. You know it when you hear it. As is the case with the Yellow Belts. Here's the real thing. These guys rock and make you wanna rock. (Eugene Records) — Ojo Rojo

YOUTH GROUP

Skeleton Jar

This cd brings out so much emotion, it's calming with ironic lyrics. It is all about real feeling and unleashes that pondering person in everyone. The lyrics make you think of good times and the sound in general makes you feel like you're the passenger in a car watching the world go by. It's easy to fall in love with this album. (Epitaph) — Allie

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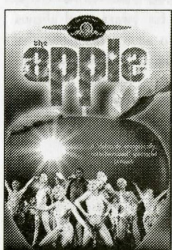
THE APPLE

Director: Menahem Golan

Starring: Catherine Mary Stewart, Alan Love, Grace Kennedy

Gone almost instantly from theaters upon its original 1980 release and mostly absent from home video availability since, *The Apple* in the past few years has gradually been finding a home on the midnight showings circuit à la *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, and is now "finally" available on DVD. Yet it's hard to imagine that Apple writer-director Menahem Golan ever expected—or even wanted—mainstream success.

In this rock musical set in the future, an evil corporation controlling all music and entertainment, led by nothing-left-to-the-imagination villain Mr.



Boogalow, now aims for total dominance of everything. When a mixed-gender, folk-singing duo from Moose Jaw, Canada, (you heard me) threatens to undermine his plot with their simplicity and innocence, Boogalow seeks to keep them under wraps by signing them and reshaping them to his whim. Yet only the girl, Bibi (Catherine Mary Stewart, destined for *Weekend at Bernie's*, and that was a step UP), goes along, leaving her partner out in the cold.

The Apple is intended to be a spectacular with Biblical subtext and instead ends up as a disaster of spectacular and Biblical proportions. Golan's competent directing and occasionally interesting production design (sometimes recalling Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*) can't atone for ferociously bad acting, production numbers so over-the-top they're way on the other side, and a score—fairly important for a musical, wouldn't you think?—which is pretty much complete shit (so where's that CD reissue of the equally long-lost soundtrack?). Still, cinematic train wrecks don't come much bigger, louder or more fun than *The Apple*. (MGM) — Richard John Cummins

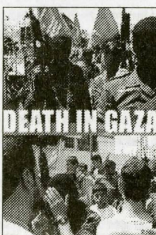
DEATH IN GAZA

Cast: James Miller, Saira Shah

Director: James Miller

In 2003, British cameraman James Miller and his fellow documentarian Saira Shah traveled to Gaza

(which fell under Israeli control in 1967 after the Six-Day War) with the intention of producing an in-depth look at the lives of Palestinian and Israeli young people who are forced to grow up in a war zone. While filming, Miller was shot dead by soldiers from the Israeli military as he walked toward them waving a white flag. Before his death, Miller was able to film some powerful and poignant footage of militants in mask, martyrs in the making and boys throwing stones at men in tanks and bulldozers. (Warner) — Pedro Taino

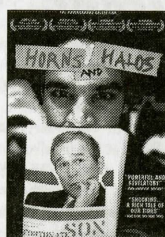


HORNS AND HALOS

Cast: George W. Bush, Lesley Stahl, Sander Hicks, J.H. Hatfield

Director: Michael Galinsky, Suki Hawley

Back before Dubya officially stole the whitey house, a book called *Fortunate Son* came out documenting George W. Bush's suspected white-powder habit and a bunch of other (un)democratic degeneracies. That book became a best-seller but was shortly thereafter pulled from the shelves when it was revealed that the author was an ex-con and, therefore, not credible enough to write about future presidents and former junkies. The book was later picked up and re-released by indie punk publishers Soft Skull, which thrust them into the ultimate battle of good against evil. Guess who won? (Go Kart Films) — Pedro Taino



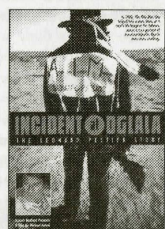
INCIDENT AT OGLALA

THE LEONARD PELTIER STORY

Cast: Leonard Peltier, Robert Redford, Bob Robideau, John Trudell, Darelle "Dino" Butler, Myrtle Poor Bear

Director: Michael Apted

On June 26, 1975, two FBI agents followed a vehicle onto a poverty-stricken Indian reservation called Pine Ridge to arrest, they said, a young American Indian man accused of stealing a pair of cowboy boots. After a shootout between the FBI and suspected members of an activists' organization called the American Indian Movement (AIM), one Native American and two FBI agents were dead. This controversial documentary follows the story of Leonard Peltier, the lone member of AIM to be found guilty by a U.S. court of law for murder and sentenced to life in prison, in spite of evidence suggesting that Peltier did not commit the shootings. This documentary is specifically about this case, but it is also one more document of the treatment of the so-called native American historically by this place we call America. Five hundred years of injustice is apparently not long enough. (Lions Gate) — Pedro Taino



MC5: KICK OUT THE JAMS

Cast: MC5, Leni Sinclair

Directors: Leni Sinclair and Cary Loren

Managed by the leader of the White (that's right) Panthers, John Sinclair (who John Lennon wrote a song about when Sinclair was arrested for smoking weed), the Motor City 5 kinda fell into politics by accident. Their sort of hippie sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll stance was transformed into a yippie sex, drugs, rock 'n' roll and politics credo at some point, and they were one of the few (if not the only) bands that played against the politics when Abbie Hoffman and the radicals of yore came a callin' with burnin' American flags and draft cards in hand. This film is pieced together from live footage and psychedelic shots taken by Sinclair's partner in crime, Leni Sinclair, and isn't exactly a documentary about the MC5, but more an artistic acid trip. And it doesn't really touch much upon the politics of the muthafuckas who wrote "Motor City Is Burning" either, but it's worth checking out if you are interested in seeing the MC5 kickin' out the jams with their cool hair flying. (MVD) — Pedro Taino

PORN STAR

THE LEGEND OF RON JEREMY

Cast: Ron Jeremy, Al Goldstein, Al Lewis, Seymore Butts, Sharon Mitchell, Larry Flynt, Tabitha Stevens, others.

Director: Scott J. Gill

An in-depth documentary of one man's life story, and the man happens to be one of the world's most famous porn stars. *Porn Star* includes film clips and interviews with people who have known Ron Jeremy and worked with him along the way. He is nicknamed the Hedgehog because he is short, fat and hairy, and not too pretty to look at, but the fact that he has a huge penis and can cum on queue has made him a legend in the industry.

Ron Jeremy began his sex film career during the golden era of porn, in the mid-seventies, before the AIDS epidemic. He has made over a thousand sex films, including *Bodacious Ta Ta's*, *Snatchbucker*, *Wizard of Ahhs*, *Terms of Endowment* and *21 Hump Street*. He is still prolific in making sex films to this day, working continually as he adapts to the changes in the industry and the monthly AIDS tests. His true dream is to be a mainstream actor.

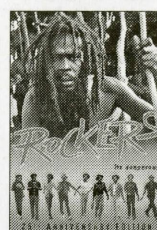
This documentary proves that Ron Jeremy is a "glutton for life" and the "clown prince of porn." Millions of people, many of whom can say that he taught them how to be better performers in bed, have viewed his films. Nobody can be Ron Jeremy "without being damaged or dysfunctional," but many people say that they wish they could have his life. (New Video Group) — Colleen Frary



ROCKERS

Director: Theodoros Bafaloukos

It's been 25 years since this film was first released, and rasta(fari) ain't quite as dangerous as it used to be, but this low-budget blackheart film still rocks harder than many music(al) movies that have come and gone since. The soundtrack alone, which includes Peter Tosh, Bunny Wailer, Burning Spear, Gregory Isaacs, Third



World, Inner Circle (with Jacob Miller), the Heptones, and Junior Murvin, is more than enough to make *Rockers* a certified roots (and culture) classic, but this

film was also the first to give outsiders (and the world) an inside glimpse at some real rasta ideology, and can also serve as a fine (and dandy) introduction to roots, rock, reggae for all the uninitiated weak hearts out there whose knowledge is limited to "One Love" and the theme from *Cops*. (MVD) — Pedro Taino

SCREAMERS:

LIVE IN SAN FRANCISCO

SEPTEMBER 2ND, 1978

Cast: The Screemers

Director: Not Available

The pope of punk himself, Jello Biafra, called the Screemers the best unrecorded band in the history of rock 'n' roll. Hard to say, since we haven't heard all the other bands that never even got this far. But this 1977 live performance by one of the early LA punk bands does reveal them to have been groundbreakers with their synth and drum sound and manic lead vocalist. Yeah, a lot of bands that came later (and were recorded) do sound an awful lot like these guys. So maybe Jello knows what he's talking about. (Target Video/MVD) — Pedro Taino

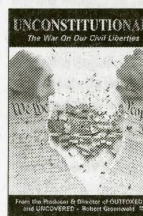
UNCONSTITUTIONAL:

THE WAR ON OUR CIVIL LIBERTIES

Cast: Aquil Abdullah, John Ashcroft

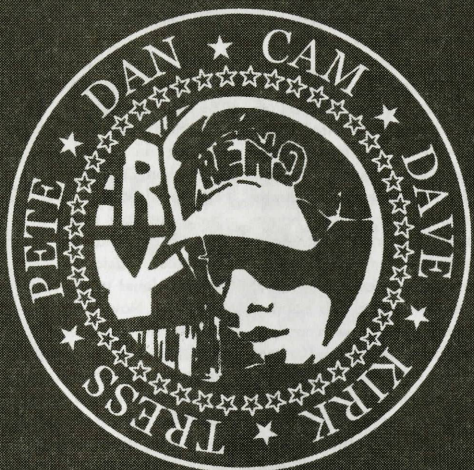
Director: Nonny de la Pena

The Bush rule, based on fear, distortions and outright lies, used 9/11 to consolidate their power and launch plans they had had in the works for years, in some cases decades. The only way to combat terror(ism)



is with truth. *Unconstitutional* is a documentary that shares that truth: raw, heavy, weighted down with human bodies in Guantanamo Bay, the faces of dead Iraqi civilians and the sound of bullets riddling an already battered Freedom. This film is heavier than a bomb; let it inspire us to stop all the other bombs. (Disinformation Company) — Walidah

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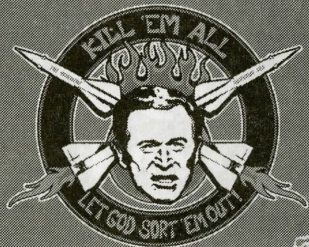
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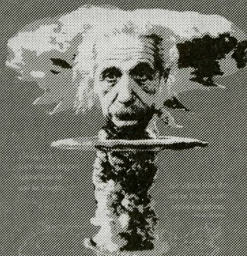
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2025 SOUTH TAMiami TRAIL
VENICE, FLORIDA 34293
PHONE: 941.497.0510
INTERNET: WWW.ILOVEIMPRINT.COM
EMAIL: INFO@ILOVEIMPRINT.COM

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When I left New York to bike across the country, I gathered up a bunch of addresses thinking that I would write postcards along the way. But most nights all I could do was collapse wherever we ended up: In the home of some kind person we'd just met half an hour earlier, in a trailer park, a farm, a forest, a desert, a cattleman's ranch, a river's lip, a Wal-Mart parking lot, a church, a drafty school gymnasium, a blacksmith shop circa 1883, all of us grimy, exhausted and dizzy with laughter. Not too many postcards were sent. But if they had been, this is what they might have said:

A couple days out of San Diego, we stopped in the sleepy California mountain town of Pine Valley, population 416. We took shelter from the midday heat on the shady

weekend house in Prescott and they'd seen our bikes outside. They invited us to stay there for the night. It was a big airy place overlooking a valley of pine trees. They fed us dinner and did our laundry. Then, they led us to their hot tub where they served us fresh strawberries and cream and fluted glasses of champagne. We couldn't stop laughing.

We were riding through the giant, 300-square mile swath of northeast Arizona that is Navajo Nation. The sun was sliding toward the horizon. We stopped at a little store to try and figure out where to camp. Everyone there was Navajo. A man eating an ice cream on the bench suggested we pitch our tents behind a wooden bead shack up at the next junction - nobody would bother us there, he said. His name was Gleve and he said that his family's

nine brothers, who had 89 children between them. Ben proudly showed us his vast woodworking shop, beautiful house he had built, barn full of animals and garden in which the family grows almost all of their food. His wife, Mary, took us down to see their canning cellar. The walls were lined with mason jars full of corn, beets, peaches, jam, meat, and tomatoes. They asked as many questions about our lives as we did about theirs.

"The sun set on the longest day of the year. The moon rose red over the cornfields. Fireflies glittered everywhere. The insatiability of the modern world seemed a million miles away."



concrete benches outside a Frosty Burger. Another cyclist rode up, a guy in serious spandex who looked like a racer. We asked if he was, and he said 'yes' just as his silver support vehicle drove up behind him. He introduced himself as Chris MacDonald, the only American qualifier who would be in the Race Across America at the end of June, one of the most grueling athletic events in the world. What we were setting off to do in two and a half months, they do in about eight days. Our jaws hit the ground. He showed us his \$10,000 carbon fiber bike. He told us about his training regimen and sixteen-person support team. "And," he added, pointing to the ice cream stand, "this Frosty Burger is actually the first checkpoint of the race." We knew this was a good omen. He said that if we saw him zip by at the end of June on the east coast, to hold up a sign that says "Frosty Burger" and he would know it was us. He signed our helmets and wished us good luck.

I got a flat in the middle of Arizona on a bumpy two-lane road lined with pipe cactus and squashed rattlesnakes. The nearest gas station was only a few miles up, so I put out my thumb to try and get a ride there. Better to fix a flat out of the heat. A truck pulled over and a stylish young Romanian couple jumped out. When I told them that we were biking home to New York City, they gasped with shock and delight. They gave us oranges and money for sandwiches and hugs when we got to the gas station. After that, the ride into Prescott was a grueling climb to over 9,000 feet in one day. We were delirious when we finally got there and collapsed for three hours, fantasizing about all the hot tubs there must be in this fancy mountain town.

"When all the ways become the same, he said, the world will be over: Boom."

Alas, such things were beyond reach for camping travelers like us. We took the next day off and went to the health food store. The Romanian couple burst in. They had a

land was along our route another 50 miles up. He invited us to come there the next day and meet his father, an 84-year-old medicine man.

We arrived at their land in the dusty hills the next afternoon. The whole family was expecting us. They fed us Indian fry bread, venison stew and blue corn mush. I talked for a long time with Gleve's niece, Sophina, a woman who was 29 like me. She assisted her medicine man grandfather, Frank Isaac, as well as her grandmother, an herbalist and hand tremoler, Juanita Isaac, who only spoke Navajo. She was learning the old ways from them.

In the morning, I drank coffee with Frank in his kitchen. He was nearly deaf and screamed when he spoke because he couldn't hear himself, and I had to sit close and scream in his ear for him to understand me. So we sat there screaming at each other. He said it was important that the Navajos keep their Navajo ways, and that everyone keeps their old ways. When all the ways become the same, he said, the world will be over: Boom. Just like that. Then Frank Isaac went outside and told us to line up facing the sun rising in the east. He put a pile of corn pollen in each of our hands and chanted a long protection prayer in Navajo. In English, he told us to sprinkle the corn pollen on ourselves and our bikes. He promised us that we would get home safely. Then he sent us on our way.

In rural southern Indiana, we stopped at a little gas station for our usual mid-morning festival of doughnuts and candy bars. An Amish man walked in to get something. He looked at us and we looked at him with mirrored curiosity. He introduced himself as Ben Girod. When we told him we had bicycled there from California, he was fascinated and invited us to visit his family's settlement 60 miles up along our route in a town called Pleasant. We arrived there the next day. Ben Girod had eight children who flocked around us like moths in their handmade cotton clothes, black bonnets and bare feet. Ben's father lived nearby, as did his

The Girods did not use electricity, telephones, or cars. They use oil lamps at night, the postal service to send letters, and horses and buggies to travel. The oldest daughter, Fanny, hitched up a horse and buggy to ride us over to an aunt's house to get a loaf of bread. She showed me how to drive the horse, and I steered it clopping down the road. When we returned, the table was spread with a huge feast for supper. After eating, two of the sons lugged out a big vat of ice cream they had churned especially for our visit. Everyone went to the front porch. We ate ice cream while Ben Girod told stories and his children sat captivated, hanging from his limbs and giggling. He told us that they knew about the world outside, but they believed that what people think is progress really is not. It was somehow hard not to agree with him. The sun set on the longest day of the year. The moon rose red over the cornfields. Fireflies glittered everywhere. The insatiability of the modern world seemed a million miles away.

There was the waitress named Darlene who held our hands and prayed to the lord Jesus that the wind be at our backs and we not get hit by any trucks before sending us off with slices of cherry pie. There was the Vietnam vet who invited us to stay at his house and, late at night, told us that he still has nightmares about the little girl he killed when he thought she had a grenade, but really she had just come to ask for candy. There were the two hillbillies near the border of Missouri who trounced around in cutoff jeans and cowboy hats, and invited us to try the turtles they were grilling outside their single-wide trailers. There were rodeo cowboys, wheat farmers, coal miners and NASCAR fans. There was more beauty than I could sometimes fathom, and a welling up of patriotism that I never quite imagined from myself - a slipping away of leftist cynicism and a feeling that for all its faults, this great experiment in pluralism and tolerance and freedom and self-determination really has worked to pretty awesome effect. ☺



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